‘VERY HARD, THAT DAY’

THE MORAL SUB-TEXT OF ABORIGINAL ORAL HISTORY FROM THE WESTERN VICTORIA RIVER REGION, NORTHERN TERRITORY

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I hereby declare that the work herein, now submitted as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the Northern Territory University, is the result of my own investigations, and all references to ideas and work of other researchers have been acknowledged. I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis has not already been accepted in substance for any degree, and is not being currently submitted in candidature for any other degree.

Ray
8-12-2000
ABSTRACT

The Aboriginal people (ngumpin) of the western Victoria River region of the Northern Territory of Australia have a one hundred and fifteen year history of interaction with non-Aboriginal Australians (kartiya), as a result of their incorporation into the northern pastoral industry since the early 1880s. It is a history that is characterised in large part by work-based oppression and exploitation.

In this thesis the transcribed texts resulting from thirty-five oral history interviews with elderly ngumpin who worked in the pastoral industry are presented and analysed. The majority of these interviews, which were conducted between November 1992 and September 1995, took place at Amanbidji and Mistake Creek Stations.

The aim of this work is to reveal and describe the moral sub-text—an evaluative and critical seam of material—which is present within at least some of the oral texts. The analysis revolves around a consideration of the presence and character of six features of these texts: explicit evaluation, simile, historical contrast, thesis, questions of the interviewer by the interviewee, and the patterned use of pronoun.

This moral sub-text is not considered in isolation. Ngumpin understand the present economic and social disparities that characterise their relationship with kartiya as the continuation and the product of decades of unequal exchange. Historical, statistical and ethnographic material is presented and analysed in order to show how the sub-text is related to general and specific circumstances—the context—of the production of ngumpin oral history. It will be demonstrated that ngumpin notions of reciprocity, of ‘coming up[to]’ and ‘working alongside’ kartiya provide some of the keys to understanding the character of the moral sub-text.

The effect of the presence of the kartiya researcher on ngumpin oral history material will also be discussed. The interpersonal dynamic of such research is considered part of the context of ngumpin oral history.
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List of Aboriginal People Referred To

AP*: middle-aged Ngarinyin man; traditional owner and resident of Amanbidji Station; sister of DP*, GP*, MP*, NP* and PP*.

BG*: senior Ngarinyin woman; traditional owner and resident of Amanbidji Station.

BO*: middle-aged man from Elliott; married to NP*’s daughter, i.e. GP*’s niece.

BP*: the deceased, Ngarinyin man father of Amanbidji traditional owners, AP*, DP*, GP*, MP*, NP* and PP*.

DC*: middle-aged Malngin man, resident of Bamboo Springs; traditional owner of Mistake Creek Station.

DD*: senior Ngarinyin woman, ex-resident of Auvergne Station; traditional owner and resident of Amanbidji Station.

DM*: senior Nyinin woman, resident of Turkey Creek, Western Australia; traditional owner of Mistake Creek Station.

DP*: senior Ngarinyin man (deceased); traditional owner and resident of Amanbidji Station; brother of AP*, GP*, MP*, NP* and PP*.

DT*: senior Malngin man, resident of East Kimberley; traditional owner of Mistake Creek Station.

EH*: middle-aged Ngarinyin woman; daughter of DD*; traditional owner and resident of Amanbidji Station.

EP*: young Miriwung woman, wife of traditional owner, DP*.

GP*: senior Ngarinyin man; traditional owner and resident of Amanbidji Station; Director of the Amanbidji Pastoral Company; eldest male member of primary land-owning group; brother of AP*, DP*, MP*, NP* and PP*.

JM*: senior Malngin man, resident of Daguragu.

JN*: senior Ngarinyin man; father’s country to the south-east of Amanbidji, mother’s country to the north-west; resident and Chairman of the Amanbidji Community in 1993.

JP*: middle-aged Ngarinyin man, the younger brother of JN*; employed as the Amanbidji Station headstockman in 1993-1994 and also a Director of the Amanbidji Pastoral Company.

KA*: middle-aged son of NP*; resident and traditional owner of Amanbidji Station.

KG*: senior Ngarinyin man; resident and traditional owner of Amanbidji Station.

KT*: senior Malngin man; resident of Turkey Creek, Western Australia; brother of TB*; traditional owner of Mistake Creek Station.
LN*: middle-aged Mudbura man; married to AP*'s eldest daughter.

MP*: senior Ngarinyman woman; resident and traditional owner of Amanbidji Station; sister of AP*, DP*, GP*, NP* and PP*.

NP*: senior Ngarinyman woman; resident and traditional owner of Amanbidji Station; mother of KA*; sister of AP*, DP*, GP*, MP* and PP*.

PL*: senior Ngarinyman man; husband of MP*; resident and traditional owner of Amanbidji Station.

PP*: middle-aged Ngarinyman woman; resident and traditional owner of Amanbidji Station; sister of AP*, DP*, GP*, MP* and NP*.

PW*: senior Ngarinyman man; resident of Amanbidji Station; Director of Amanbidji Pastoral Company.

RH*: middle-aged Ngaliwurru man; president of Ngarinyman Aboriginal Resource Centre in 1993-1994; resident of Timber Creek.

RP*: middle-aged Ngarinyman man; son of AP*; resident and traditional owner of Amanbidji Station.

RR*: senior Malngin woman; resident of Turkey Creek, Western Australia; traditional owner of Mistake Creek Station.

RY*: senior Ngarinyman woman; wife of GP*, resident of Amanbidji Station.

ST*: senior Ngarinyman man (deceased); resident of Emu Creek, Western Australia; traditional owner of Amanbidji Station.

TB*: senior Malngin man; resident of Turkey Creek, Western Australia; brother of KT*; traditional owner of Mistake Creek Station.

YY*: senior Ngarinyman woman; wife of PW*; resident of Amanbidji Station.
Glossary of Terms

allabout (alla): all of them, every (K)
alligator: salt-water crocodile
alde: always (K)
banker: flood wherein a river overflows its banks
barra, barramundi: large species of fish found in river systems throughout the region
big mob: many
bin: completive verbal auxiliary (K)
bogey: to bathe (K)
boy: historical term for male Aboriginal station worker, regardless of age
brumby: wild horse
bush: unsettled country, i.e. that country away from stations, towns and communities
bush holiday: the Wet season holiday historically taken away from the station
bushranger: outlaw, or wanted criminal living ‘in the bush’
Business: sacred, often secret, religious activity
cheeky: dangerous, aggressive
clean up: kill, exterminate (K)
coachers: domesticated or tame cattle or horse used to ‘quieten’, respectively, recently mustered cattle or unbroken horse
cockrag: cloth covering for the genitals
cooked: ripe
didjeridu: traditional Aboriginal musical instrument
droving: the overlanding of stock, usually accompanied by men on horseback.
finish: kill or dead (K)
flog: whip or beat
footwalk: the act of travelling by walking
footwalk holiday: period spent away from stations, living off the land during the Wet season
garram: having, with, by (K)
gotta: going to
grannie: mother’s mother’s brother (K)
green-stick: makeshift whip made from a supple (green) branch of a tree
half-caste: person born of union of (typically) Aboriginal woman and non-Aboriginal man
hawker: one who carries goods about for sale
init?: isn’t that the case?
jaju: mother’s mother (N)
jangana: possum (N)
jaru: language, story (N)
jawiji: mother’s father (N)
jikamaru: water lily (N)
jimari: co-initiate, mate, close member of one’s peer group (N)
jiya: kangaroo (N)
jump-up: the (often) steep exits and entries associated with unbitumenised roads at creek or river crossings
Jupanyin: an Aboriginal estate towards the Limbunya Station side of the Mistake Creek Station
kaku: father’s father (N)
karlarniny: west and/or up (N)
karnkulag: up, from river usually (N)
karnkayi: from upriver (N)
kartiya: non-Aboriginal person
killer: a bullock slaughtered to provide meat for the stockcamp or community
kulnyan: flood (N)
Kuluwarrang: a sub-group of the Kija language group
kungal: dead (N)
Kurturtu: Aboriginal estate on Mistake Creek Station
la: on, in (K)
lingo: generic term for traditional language (K)
longa: at, in, to (K)
look-out: concern, problem, e.g. ‘that his look-out’
lose: have taken away as a result of death (K)
maluga: old man (K)
marntaj: all right, finish, later (N)
mangari: vegetable food, generic (N)
manka: young woman (N)
mipala, mipalas: we, us (K)
mintupala: we two (K)
muster: to gather together livestock, usually for the purpose of branding or to transport elsewhere
ngaji: father (N)
ngamayi: mother (N)
ngawuju: father’s mother (N)
ngumali: ‘bush’ fruit (N)
ngumpin: Aboriginal person (N)
old people: typically refers to middle-aged and elderly Aboriginal people alive at the time of the speaker’s childhood
olgaman: old woman (K)
pindi: bush banana (N)
plenty: much, many (K)
proper, properly: big, very, or correct (K)
pulka: old (N)
savvy: know, recognise, understand (K)
smoko: break from working during which time small meal is eaten; also, the actual meal provided during this break
stop: stay (K)
sugarbag: honey produced by indigenous species of bee (K)
too many: very many (K)
too much: very much or very many (K)
tuck out: eat
tucker: food
tupala: two fella (i.e. those two) (K)
VRD: Victoria River Downs Station
walkabout: synonymous to some extent with ‘bush holiday’ but with an emphasis on the ‘footwalk’ aspect
waringari: a time of inter-group Aboriginal violence or warfare (N)
wipala: we fella, inclusive plural kriol pronoun (K)
yalangurlungma: then (N)
yan: go (N)
yapa: baby (N)
yawul: fish, generic (N)
yini: name (N)
yuntupala: you two fellas, you two (K)
yuwai: yes (N)

(K) — Kriol
(N) — Ngarinyman
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION
Chapter One: Introduction

Historical work is done by men and women, about men and women, for men and women (Stanford 1986:97).

1.1. The Domain of Study

This thesis is an anthropological work that takes as its primary foci Aboriginal oral history material on the one hand, and the circumstances or context of its production on the other. It is an attempt to straddle the disciplines of Anthropology and History in such a way as to show that, in the words of the anthropologist Hastrup (1992:5), ‘culture and history are adjective to one another’ (cf. Sahlins 1985:xiv).

Situated within such a project is the work of writers such as Davis (1989), Dening (1980), El-Nimr (1993), Gewertz (1983) and Tonkin (1992) but its impetus can be traced back at least as far as Evans-Pritchard’s (1962:26) assertion that ‘social anthropology is a kind of historiography’. As an example in the field of Australian Aboriginal studies, Myers (1986a:79-87) presents life history material from a Pintupi man from the Lake McDonald region in Central Australia which deals with the extensive travels undertaken by that man with his family, and their encounters and interactions with other Pintupi and Pitjantjatjarra people. Myers (1986a:79) does this in order to ‘relate statements about group life, group membership, relatedness, and living arrangements to the complex and multiple domains of [Pintupi] social reality’. Merlan (1998) also makes extensive use of Aboriginal oral history in her analysis of relationships to country and Dreamings amongst Aboriginal residents of Katherine, to the east of the Victoria River region (see Maps 1 and 2), as does Rose (1992) in her ethnography of the Ngarinyinman and Ngaliwurrnu people of Yarralin.

The notion that neither the concerns of Anthropology nor those of History can be fully understood without reference to each other alerts us to the potentially complex nature of oral history material. The quotation with which I began this chapter forms part of an argument put forward by Stanford for recognition of the complexity of historical work. Historical work is, as Stanford (1986:97) points out, ‘a very human activity’, and as such is prone to all the biases, imaginings and agendas that contribute to human enterprises.

Whilst Stanford’s words were written in relation to the work of professional, academic historians, they apply equally well to that of various others engaged in historical work, including those who predominantly or exclusively use oral means of representing the past. It is with just such a group—retired Aboriginal stockmen and women of the western Victoria
River region of the Northern Territory—that this project is concerned. Throughout this thesis I will show such Aboriginal oral history for the complex production that it is.

Within the field of Australian studies there has been some recognition of this complexity, beginning perhaps with the various works (Bradley 1997:514, Baker 1989, Baker 1999:106-111, McGrath 1987:x, Morphy and Morphy 1984, Rowse 1988:29) which have dealt in some measure with the so-called ‘Golden Age’ of Aboriginal involvement in the pastoral industry, and continuing into the myth-history debate that occupied the mid-1994 edition of the journal, *Oceania*. In Chapter 2 I will review other writers’ attempts to deal with oral history material as a complex production; as something more than just a collection of historical fact and detail, or as ‘subjectless verbal compositions’ (Tonkin 1992:92).

It is the last part of the opening quotation—that history is done for men and women—which points to its complexity. I will show that the recognition that representations of the past both have audiences and constitute purposeful activity on the part of the history-giver is fundamental to an understanding of oral history material from the western Victoria River region.

It is also here that the temporal ‘double-sidedness’ of oral history—that is, the way in which representations of the past may be responses to the present in which they are told (cf. Attwood 1989:144, Bloch 1998:118-119, Passerini 1987:17)—becomes apparent. In fact, as we will see, representations of the past may function as much to critique the present as to describe the past, and this is a consequence of the act of telling occuring within a certain socio-political context. This creates a sort of natural ‘bridge’ between Anthropology and History which requires an approach to historical work which sees it as situated within and circumscribed by a certain present.

A concern for the contextualisation of oral history can take us, as Chapman, McDonald and Tonkin (1989:5) argue, into the analysis of how ‘social, moral and political considerations can render people selective in their treatment of the past’. Like them I am concerned with the ways in which socio-political struggle in the present impacts on the telling of history; the ways in which the past can be ‘used, selectively appropriated, remembered, forgotten, or invented’ in order to ‘account for (justify, understand, criticise) the present’ (Chapman, McDonald and Tonkin 1989:5; cf. Morphy and Morphy 1984, P. Hamilton 1994:13).

At many points throughout this thesis I will use the local Aboriginal terms ‘ngumpin’, ‘blackfella’ and ‘Aborigine’ to refer to Aboriginal people of the western and wider Victoria
River region; ‘kartiya’ and ‘whitefella’ to refer to non-Aboriginal Australians. The latter are often referred to as ‘Europeans’ in the historical and anthropological literature.

1.2. Aim and Argument

It has long been noted that the ‘personal document’ research approach, of which oral history interviews are a part, has a history of unfulfilled potential. In 1945, in a review of the use of such sources, Kluckhohn (1945:133) wrote: ‘Perhaps the most salient conclusion which emerged from our survey of published life history documents was the deficiency of analysis and interpretation’. Almost forty years later, Langness and Frank (1981) drew attention to the lack of development of the life history method and its sketchy utilisation, and in the mid 1980s Joyner (1984:301) could still argue that what is ‘necessary, and long overdue, is that publication be based upon meaningful interpretation of what those testimonies mean to the people who transmitted them’.

Oral history has typically been recorded with members of groups who are alienated from the machinations of state power, who are not in control of the relations of economic production and who are denied positions of authority or prestige. Perhaps as a consequence of this, oral history has often been taken as a compendium of facts and mis-fact; as a simple listing of information. Watson & Watson-Franke (1985:1) describe life history, a variant of oral history, as the ‘unwanted stepchild’ of social science, tracing its historical and theoretical development within Anthropology from its use as ‘picturesque supplements to dry ethnographic reports’ (1985:5) in the 1920s to its sporadic use in the 1960s.

Much of the Aboriginal oral history material presented to the Australian public over the last thirty years could be said to follow in this vein—as a simple listing of information—if only in that very little analysis of the material has been offered along with the mass of printed word. All too often, it seems, the histories are left to ‘speak for themselves’, a strategy which, whilst affirming the eloquence of Aboriginal oral history, does little to reveal its political or moral significance.

This thesis has two main, interconnected aims. The first is to reveal and describe an evaluative and critical ‘seam’ in the ngumpin oral history presented here. This ‘seam’ constitutes what I will term the moral sub-text of ngumpin oral history. To facilitate this aim I will develop and utilise an approach to these oral texts which attends to certain features they commonly share: the use of explicit evaluation, historical contrast, and simile, the presence of ngumpin argument or thesis, questions of the interviewee by the interviewer, and the patterning of pronoun use in ngumpin oral texts.
The second aim is to show that this moral sub-text can be seen as a *ngumpin* response to their past and present social and economic circumstances and to certain aspects of their historically and currently reckoned relationship with *kartiya*. Whilst *ngumpin* oral history serves to evaluate social relations, events and states pertaining mainly to the past, it can be presented in such a way as to encourage *kartiya* to interact with *ngumpin* in a certain manner in the present.

I will show that at least some of the oral history material I present in this thesis can be understood as an artefact of the encounter between a *kartiya* interviewer and a *ngumpin* interviewee. I concur with Crick (1982:21) who argues that the ‘individuality of the anthropologist is not a bothersome contaminant in the field situation, it is a fundamental part of it’, and bemoans the fact that many ethnographies ‘read as if there had been no fieldworker present’ (1982:27). At the same time though, I will endeavour to produce a work that is not overly self-referential.

I situate this thesis within the program suggested by Muecke (1983b:100), who calls for a political, as against aesthetic, reading of Aboriginal texts in order to secure ‘a broader significance for them’. Whereas Muecke does not elaborate on how this can be achieved apart from his directive that Aboriginal English not be ‘corrected’ to Standard English, I will present a comprehensive and systematic approach to delineating the moral sub-text of *ngumpin* oral history and its interconnection to past and present *ngumpin* circumstances. Through this, the political significance of the material will also become apparent.

This thesis is primarily a work of interpretation, using oral history texts recorded by myself and fieldnotes written during my stay in communities in the region. I follow Briggs (1988:19) who argues that the work of interpretation is not of an arbitrary or ungrounded nature as long as it is recognised ‘that performers embed interpretations of the meaning of their utterances in the form of the discourse itself’. This was foreshadowed by the Australian writer Muecke (1983a:71) in his proposal for the close reading of texts in order to grasp their meaning:

> The discursive representation of events carries with it ... guidelines in the form of grammatical structures and tropes for the interpretation or reading of the events.

I will show that Aboriginal oral history is attuned to the context in which it occurs, is mindful of past, present and future, and has moral and political dimensions. According to Tonkin (1992:62), an adequate reading of oral history material is one that allows us to see that the speaker has been reflective, has grasped an order, and has evaluated actions. My
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The aim here is to develop an analytical method to better delineate such things. I share with Tonkin (1992:97) the notion that we must restore to the discussion of oral history a sense of work being consciously done by speakers when history is recounted.

The sort of close reading of Aboriginal oral history that I will advocate in this thesis will allow an understanding of the ways in which ngumpin continue to use the spoken word to highlight oppressive aspects of their engagement with kartiya. The method will involve consideration of aspects of ngumpin ideology in relation to their engagement with their colonisers—a project which has rarely been attempted (though see Middleton 1977). This thesis will provide insight into how certain members (mainly elderly, retired stockmen and women) of several ngumpin communities in the western Victoria River region position themselves in relation to kartiya and to certain aspects of their mutual engagement.

Hobbles Danayarti, an Aboriginal man of Yarralin in the Victoria River region, speaks of being ‘covered up’ (Rose 1991:19), or hidden away and denied a voice, as a precursor to having his land stolen. This thesis addresses the question of what happens when Aboriginal people—for many years ignored and silenced—are given a forum in which to speak, whether it be an oral history interview, community meeting or land claim hearing. We will see that the oral history interview in the western Victoria River region provides the opportunity for ngumpin to talk of the past in such a way as to make claims for being treated as the equals of kartiya in the present. In addition, it will become apparent that some ngumpin historical talk has a pedagogic or even didactic character.

1.3. Fieldwork

The region with which I am concerned is that given roughly by the boundaries of Map 2, which I call the western Victoria River region. Anthropological fieldwork and oral history work was done primarily with ngumpin belonging to the Malngin-Ngarinyman-Gurindji cultural bloc at the locations of Emu Creek, Mistake Creek, Amanbidi, Katherine, and at other locations within this region’s boundaries.

I had not intended to focus on Aboriginal oral history when I began this project and had in fact begun with a very different proposal in mind. Two years into the study, circumstances only partly within my control dictated a re-focusing of the project. The final shape of this thesis has much to do with my fieldwork experiences in Aboriginal communities in the western Victoria River region, and it is to these experiences that I now briefly turn.
In the latter part of 1992 I made contact with Aboriginal elders in the communities of Bulla, Timber Creek and Amanbidji Station, all of which lie to the west of the Victoria River, in order to ascertain the possibility of undertaking anthropological fieldwork in the region. During this brief introductory visit I recorded oral histories with Aboriginal men at each of these communities, and received an invitation to do fieldwork at Amanbidji Station, on Ngarinyman land.

I returned to the region in February and March of 1993, employed by the Central Land Council to prepare a historical survey of the land comprising the Mistake Creek Station lease. Two weeks were spent at the Mistake Creek Community, interviewing claimants about the history of the station and the work they had done there. Some of this material was used in the Aboriginal claim to Mistake Creek Station land, heard by the Aboriginal Land Commissioner the following year.

In August 1993 I took up the earlier invitation to do fieldwork at Amanbidji, having been ‘sponsored’ by an ex-resident of Amanbidji who was the daughter of a member of the main land-owning family there. I took with me gifts for her family and, once there, was advised by the ex-resident’s mother, AP*, to make a temporary camp in the community’s meeting shed, situated close to her house. The next day the senior male traditional owner, GP*, from whom I had received the initial invitation, gave his approval for this arrangement.

Most kartiya who have an ongoing relationship with ngumpin are placed within a subsection or ‘skin’ category (see section six, below). Though I had already been given a skin at Mistake Creek which made me the ‘son’ of the senior anthropologist involved in that claim, early in my stay at Amanbidji I was given another, Jabija, to make me ‘right-way’ for a female kartiya linguist, working at the Bulla community, with whom I had formed a relationship.

My explicit aim at this stage was to document the Aboriginal involvement in the operation and management of Amanbidji Station: an Aboriginal-owned cattle station. I resided in the community until mid-December, during which time I established rapport with some of the more elderly residents of the community and was given regular tuition in the local language, Ngarinyman, by two elderly sisters who were part of the main land-owning group there. I made myself useful by taking elderly residents on bush trips two or three times per week, the goal generally being the procurement of ‘bush tucker’ such as fish and bush turkey. (See Chapter 5.10 for an elaboration of fieldwork.)

In late November of 1993 I lent to one of the Amanbidji residents a collection of oral histories of Aboriginal people of Kununurra, edited by Bruce Shaw. Over the next few days
several people remarked upon how much they had enjoyed seeing the photographs and stories of men and women they had known. It became apparent that a similar project would be well received at Amanbidji and, moreover, would enable me to come to grips with the Aboriginal historical experience of working in the pastoral industry. During the next three weeks I spent a good deal of time recording oral history with some of the more senior residents.

A few days before I left, in mid-December of 1993, I was approached by AP* with a request to drive her son back with me to Darwin, where it was intended he would stay for the duration of the Wet season. I agreed to do this. Early in January 1994, several weeks after I had dropped the young man off at a hostel in Darwin, he was killed in a hit-and-run accident on the Stuart Highway.

I returned to the region in June, 1994, naively intending to spend time in the stock-camp to get a better idea of Aboriginal involvement in the running of the station. It soon became clear, however, that the elder brother, RP*, of the young man I had driven to Darwin was holding me directly responsible for his death. Berndt and Berndt (1977[1964]:329) note that the death of young and middle-aged Aborigines is considered by Aborigines to be ‘un-natural’ and that someone is typically held responsible for such occurrences. It became apparent that in moving the young man from Amanbidji to Darwin I had unknowingly been made responsible for his safe return. Precedents for this exist. Harney (1961:72,73) has documented how he was held responsible for the death of his Aboriginal wife having taken her from her country (also to Darwin) and Sansom (1981:122) notes that blame for the death of the ‘Singing Man’ in a Darwin ‘town camp’ rested on the one man who could have, but did not, drive him to hospital.

RP*’s actions towards me were such as to make further fieldwork impossible, and so fieldwork was abruptly curtailed and I returned to Darwin.

Later, in 1995, I met up with one of the Amanbidji men I had interviewed previously when he travelled to Katherine for treatment at the hospital there. There I took the opportunity to do some further oral history work with him. This brought to a close the fieldwork component of my research.

1.4. Survey of Ethnographic Sources

The elderly residents of the Amanbidji Station community are predominantly Ngarinyman speakers. Ngarinyman country extends roughly from between Rosewood and Waterloo Stations (cf. Capell 1940:426) in the west to the Limbunya Station homestead in
the south, across to Mount Sanford and onto Victoria River Downs homestead to the east and across, in a north-westerly direction, to Timber Creek in the north (see Sutton 1995:109). Malngin country abuts to the southwest, Miriwung to the north-west, Gurindji and Bilinara to the south-east, Ngaluwurru to the north-east, and Djamindjung to the north. Of these, Ngarinyman people are closely aligned, in terms of language and culture, with Malngin, Gurindji and Bilinara people, all of whom identify as ngumpin.

Berndt and Berndt (1977[1964]) have provided a comprehensive overview of Aboriginal society, economy and culture based on their and others’ fieldwork throughout the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. I will be using this work as a general explanatory guide in this section while introducing material specific to the Ngarinyman, Gurindji and Malngin, including an outline of kinship, social organisation, land-ownership, economy, Law, and Dreaming. Comprehensive accounts of such aspects of Ngarinyman life can be found in Palmer and Brady (1991) and Rose (1984a, 1992), for the Malngin in McConvell (1993) and for the Gurindji in McConvell and Hagen (1981) and McConvell (1982). Palmer and Brady (1991) conducted fieldwork in the Amanbidji Community intermittently over nine years from 1983 to 1991 for the purpose of mounting a claim to the land bounded by the Amanbidji pastoral lease under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act, 1976.

1.4.1. Kinship, social organisation and subsections

The Ngarinyman of Amanbidji use the kinship system known as the Aranda type (Radcliffe-Brown 1931) in which four grandparent terms—kaku (father’s father), jawiji (mother’s father), jaju (mother’s mother), and ngawuju (father’s mother) (Palmer and Brady 1991:11)—are used (McConvell 1993:15; see also Olney 1993:15).

Aboriginal kinship generally is organised around a classificatory system wherein ‘a limited number of kinship terms is used and extended to cover all known persons’ (Berndt and Berndt 1977[1964]:68). Thus, for the Ngarinyman of Amanbidji, there is no differentiation made between father and father’s brother, with both being referred to as ngaji (Palmer and Brady 1991:9,11; see also Rose 1992:110, and cf. Tonkinson 1978:43 on the Mardudjara of the Western Desert). Palmer and Brady (1991:11) give a list of this reduced set of kinship terms from the viewpoint of a Ngarinyman male ego.

McConvell (1982) discusses expected patterns of behaviour between classificatory kin for the Gurindji of Daguragu and Palmer and Brady (1991:11-12) discuss this also in relation to the Ngarinyman of the Amanbidji Station community. Traditional marriage was largely predicated on the reckoning of kinship and involved the ‘promising’ of a young
female child to a man on his initiation by the child’s father (McConvell 1993:19). Currently there is more flexibility in relation to marriage options in this region with marriages between Aboriginal people of similar age more common (McConvell 1993:19).

Palmer and Brady (1991:25,32) found that the dynamics of classificatory kinship at Amanbidji was such that in the early 1990s, thirteen of fourteen family groups there considered themselves to be descended from a common ancestor, even though that ancestor was only two generations removed from the senior claimants. They argued also that the existence of local group exogamy (1991:14) and the requirement that a man not marry either his parallel or cross-cousins (1991:11-12) (i.e. on the one hand his mother’s sisters’ and father’s brothers’ daughters; on the other his mother’s brothers’ and father’s sisters’ daughters) had the effect of multiplying the social bonds between Aborigines in the region.

Overlaying the system of classificatory kinship in this region is the existence of social categories given by subsections or ‘skins’ (see Berndt and Berndt (1977[1964]:46-62) for a comprehensive overview). Palmer and Brady (1991:11-13) document the presence and use of these at Amanbidji. Each subsection has a male and a female class and a person is assigned one at birth according to the social category of ‘his or her mother and father’ (Palmer and Brady 1991:11, cf McConvell and Hagen 1981:21). In contrast, Berndt and Berndt (1977[1964]:47) found that subsection categories were given only through indirect matrilineal descent (cf. Rose 1992:74-79). Berndt and Berndt (1977[1964]:49-50) give subsection data from Birrindudu and Wave Hill Stations that was recorded by them in the mid-1940s (see also C. H. Berndt 1950:18-22).

The subsection system is organised such that for each individual within it, a preferred marriage occurs with members of just one other social category. Thus, men of the Japija skin are deemed ‘right-way’ for, or correctly positioned to marry, women of the Nangari skin. Palmer and Brady (1991:12) found certain types of ‘wrong-way’ marriage at Amanbidji to be acceptable and relatively common (cf. Berndt and Berndt 1977[1964]:51, McConvell and Hagen 1981:23-24, McConvell 1982:89-90).

The subsection system allows each Aboriginal person in the Victoria River region (and indeed, well beyond this) to consider themselves related to every other Aboriginal person therein (Palmer and Brady 1991:12). It also offers a means of allocating a kinship position to outsiders (Berndt and Berndt 1977[1964]:68), including those kariya who engage with ngumpin on a regular basis.

1.4.2. Economy and reciprocity
Rose (1992:6) gives a sketch of pre-contact life for Aborigines in the Victoria River region. She notes the use of rock shelters during the Wet season (December to March) and the semi-nomadic (see Berndt and Berndt 1977[1964]:141) hunting and gathering economic activity throughout much of the year. Berndt and Berndt (1977[1964]:119-121) look at the division of traditional hunting and gathering labour by sex (see also Hamilton 1980) and age, finding that throughout Australia, Aboriginal men were involved almost exclusively in the hunting of large animals, with women providing the bulk of the diet in the form of small animals, seeds and various vegetable foods. Berndt and Berndt (1977[1964]:107-134) give an overview of the traditional Aboriginal hunter-gatherer economy and the subsistence, or lack of surplus production, that characterises it.

Rose (1992:6) argues that, for the Victoria River region, there was congregation of ‘family groups’ both towards the end of the Dry season (April to November) as a consequence of water sources becoming depleted, and immediately after the cessation of the Wet. She (1992:7) suggests, using White and Mulvaney’s (1987) revised statement of the pre-contact Aboriginal population of Australia that over four thousand Aboriginal people were living in the Victoria River region prior to 1880.

Most commentators on the Aboriginal economy have noted an ‘ethic of sharing’ (McGrath 1987:154; see also Hamilton 1981:149), especially in relation to the distribution of food. It has also been widely reported that principles of reciprocity (cf. Sahlins 1974) permeate much of Aboriginal social and economic life such that there is an array of ‘obligations which every growing [Aboriginal] child has to learn’, and a ‘network of duties and debts, rights and credits’, based largely on kin relationships (Berndt and Berndt (1977[1964]:120; see also Hamilton 1981:149, Thompson 1949:45).

A principle or ethic of reciprocity possibly developed as part of a system of social arrangements (cf. Scott 1987[1971]:305) which ensured the survival of those involved in a subsistence economy where, without surplus, fluctuations in rainfall distribution, for example, could threaten the viability of the group (Berndt 1970:234; see also Gould 1969:273). Principles of sharing and reciprocity in relation to the distribution of food are a key feature of Aboriginal life throughout Australia. In their collection of Aboriginal myths from around the continent, Berndt and Berndt (1989) present myths which detail the (usually tragic) repercussions which follow from the failure to share food (1989:40,49,53-54,94,155-156,196,217,218,224,246,320,420), the failure to engage in reciprocity in relation to giving food (1989:41,151-153,183-184,195,320), the refusal to take food offered (1989:54-56,418-419), the withholding or taking of taboo food (1989:95-96,192), conspicuous greed in relation to food (1989:104-106,109-110,121,157-158,354-358), the
failure to provide fire by means of which to cook food (1989:219-220) and the substitution of high-quality meat for that of poor-quality (1989:187-188, 222). They (1989:195) suggest that all such actions, and especially the withholding of food ‘usually leads to trouble’ for the mythical characters concerned.

The principle of reciprocity generally extends beyond the distribution of food however, with Berndt and Berndt (1977[1964]:122) arguing that in every Aboriginal community ‘all gifts and services are viewed as reciprocal’. They go on to discuss the reciprocity involved in betrothal in the Great Victoria Desert region, with compensation paid by a man to his prospective parents-in-law (cf. Rose 1992:131-133). They (1977[1964]:124-125) note that a central tenet of Aboriginal reciprocity is the exchange of women as marriage partners.

Other writers have attended to this reciprocity involved in ‘exchanges of women and ritual between men’ (Hamilton 1981:149). Palmer and Brady (1991:17), in their description of winam or traditional trade (see Kaberry 1970[1939]:166-167, Ackerman 1979:247) at Amanbidji found that trade items included cloth, cash, spears, ritual objects and women as ‘promised’ wives. Amongst the Pintupi people to the far south of this region, Myers (1982:99) argues that reciprocity, defined as ‘an expectation of transactions resulting in parity’, is ‘a vital and central principle in all Pintupi social interaction’. Reynolds (1981:57) holds that, generally within Aboriginal society, reciprocity was a key component of Aboriginal morality, impacting on the colonial encounter:

Aborigines acted to make the whites share their goods; the motivation was as much political as economic. It was not so much the possessions that mattered as affirmation of the principles of reciprocity.

Rose (1992:113,123) argues that maintenance of ‘balanced reciprocity’ is a key concern amongst the Ngarinyinman of Yarralin and a key feature of the distribution of women through marriage in the Victoria River region. She (1992:123) reports an ongoing ‘attempt to distribute women, and hence human fertility, to groups who desperately need people’. Marriage, on this account, is ‘a group concern, a group effort’ (Rose 1992:123), and, in that local groups are ideally exogamous, is used to create relationships between groups and countries.

1.4.3. Land-ownership and Dreaming

The primary land-owning group in Aboriginal society is commonly referred to as the ‘local descent group’. Berndt and Berndt (1977[1964]:40-41) describe this as a group of people ‘bound to the same locality by … ties of descent and kinship’, with its members
linked by special spiritual and ritual ties’. They (1977[1964]:41) also discuss the ‘religious unit’, made up of the men of several local descent groups who ‘combine to perform rituals associated with a body of mythology they hold in common’. The focus of such ‘collective action’ (Berndt and Berndt 1977[1964]:41) is the particular sites on Dreaming tracks which run through the country of the descent groups involved.

Palmer and Brady (1991:18-31) discuss traditional Aboriginal ownership of land amongst Ngarinyin people of Amanbidji. They (1991:18) find that recruitment to the landowning group is based on principles of cognatic descent such that there is no clear distinction between patrilineally and matrilineally recruited members of the local descent group. This is contrary to McConvell and Hagen’s (1981:38) finding that for the culturally and linguistically similar Gurindji of Daguragu the local descent group is comprised of those people descended patrilineally from a single male ancestor. However, both McConvell and Hagen (1981:34) for the Gurindji, and Rose (1992:117-118) for the Ngarinyinman of Yarralin, find significant responsibilities to ‘country’ or Aboriginal ‘estate’ (Stanner 1965) transmitted through mother’s father (jawiji).

Palmer and Brady (1991:18) argue that whilst in principle land ownership based on cognatic descent could lead to each Aboriginal person at Amanbidji laying claim to a multitude of territories through each of four grandparents, in practice ‘it is the land claimed by the local descent group at the present time which is legitimated as belonging to that group, by reference to the exclusive ownership of that country by a forebear who activated his or her rights to that country’.

The ‘spiritual and ritual ties’ to Aboriginal country are given primarily through the social category of kuning and the body of knowledge and ritual associated with the Dreaming, or ngaringkani. Kuning is, for each Aboriginal person, ‘a named natural species (usually an animal or plant) with which that person has a spiritual association such that that person is deemed to be a representation of and a part of that natural species’ (Palmer and Brady 1991:41). Kuning is inherited patrilineally (Rose 1992:85-86, C. H. Berndt 1950:17) and links a person to specific sites associated with a certain Dreaming being (Palmer and Brady 1991:41).

Sutton (1991:50) refers to Dreaming as the ‘mythic foundation of the world’ during which time Dreaming beings or ‘totemic heroes’ created the land, its features, flora and fauna, human inhabitants and their languages; indeed all the features of the natural and social worlds. Palmer and Brady (1991:14-16) outline the Dreaming as conceived at Amanbidji and Rose (1992:42-56) does the same for the Ngarinyinman of Yarralin.
Stanner (1979:23-40) and Rose (1992) both see Dreaming as ‘a kind of logos or principle of order’ (Stanner 1979:24) which continues to strongly influence Aboriginal social and cultural life. Palmer and Brady (1991:14) find that the Dreaming at Amanbidji is considered ‘as both an historical time and a contemporary reality’. The Dreaming beings are understood to have ‘ordained all Aboriginal culture, practice and ritual action which is carried on today at Amanbidji … [which gives the Dreaming] contemporary and enduring reality which informs the lives of the claimants today’ (1991:14). In this, it may be said that the Ngarinyman of Amanbidji already have a model of how past actions and states may continue to reverberate in the present and have ongoing relevancy and efficacy.

Palmer and Brady (1991:22-24,45-51; and cf. Rose 1992:106-110) discuss rights and responsibilities to land of members of the main local descent group at Amanbidji, including the obligation on parents to teach their children ‘about the country, its natural resources and the spiritual beliefs associated with it’ (Palmer and Brady 1991:24).

1.4.4. Ritual, or ‘Business’

Palmer and Brady (1991:16-17) outline ritual practices at Amanbidji, noting three categories of men’s ritual there: mantiwa, or young men’s business, karungara, business for post-initiates, and a third category whose very name is restricted but which is known as ‘men’ s’ or ‘bush’ business. They (1991:17) found that much of the latter, men’s business, was ‘restricted to initiated mature age men and the ritual involves the revelation of esoteric ritual objects’ (see Olney 1993:7).

Berndt and Berndt (1977[1964]:166-180) have described Aboriginal male initiation as practiced throughout much of central and northern Australia, and C. H. Berndt (1950:17) notes that the Gurindji, Ngarinyman, Malngin and Miriwung all practiced circumcision and subincision. Rose (1992:114) discusses women’s business at Yarralin, as does C. H. Berndt (1950:26-57) for the Gurindji, Malngin and Ngarinyman women of Limbunya Station. As occurs generally throughout Aboriginal Australia (see e.g. Hamilton 1980, Merlan 1992), Rose (1992:28) found that at Yarralin, ‘men and women control separate and secret domains of knowledge and action, usually referred to as ‘business’.

1.5. The Oral History Material

During approximately four months of fieldwork from 1992 to 1995, sixteen elderly Aboriginal men and women gave thirty-five oral history interviews, primarily at the

Throughout this thesis I refer to Aboriginal speakers by a combination of letters and asterix, e.g. ST*, so as to preserve the confidentiality of the persons involved in this study. I have taken this step because of the sensitive nature of some of the material presented here. Indeed all of the names of the speakers and of many of the other Aboriginal people referred to in the texts have been deleted and replaced by an underscore, followed by a square bracketing of that combination of letters by which the person referred to is identified. That is, '_ [ST*]’, indicates that ST*’s name has been used at the point in the text denoted by the underscore. I have already (see pp.xi-xii) presented a list of all the Aboriginal people referred to by this method and brief background notes on each.

References to the texts are given as, for example, ‘ST1:230-232’ where ST indicates the speaker, ST*, ‘1’ indicates the interview number, and ‘230-232’ the relevant line numbers.

The material recorded defies easy categorisation. Some of the interviews resulted in what can be thought of as truncated life histories (Shaw 1980) or ‘life stories’ (Cole 1991:154); others gave a more public-oriented version of history. That is, they spoke not so much of personal experience as of issues pertinent to the experience of ngumpin generally in the region (cf McGrath 1987:ix). The latter were generally given with less intervention on the interviewer’s part (cf. Featherstone's (1991:60) distinction between ‘free-standing’ and ‘interactive’ oral narratives), which suggests that such histories may constitute a public genre amongst ngumpin in the region, having the rehearsed quality of consensus versions of the past.

Indeed, Berndt and Berndt (1987) suggest that it was common practice, at least in the 1940s in this region, for ngumpin to talk of historical events concerning their interaction with kartiya. They refer to the ‘vividly recollected’ (1987:84) massacre of the Malngin people at a place they refer to as Gududu, probably the Kurturtu on the northern edge of the Mistake Creek pastoral lease described by McConvell (1993:32). Further, they suggest that one reason for the extreme disillusionment the Aboriginal people of Limbunya Station (to the south of Amanbidji) felt over their general circumstances ‘may have been the information that had been built into their everyday lives since they were children: many of their close relatives had met with violent or other unnatural death at the hands of Europeans’
One of the interviewees in this study, JM*, tells of being shown massacre sites by his father and other relatives (JM5:82-95,140-142; cf. Shaw 1986:63, Kimberly Language Resource Centre 1996:38).

In that much of the material presented here consists of eyewitness accounts of the past it does not fall into Vansina’s (1965 [1961]:19-20) definition of ‘oral tradition’ as consisting of ‘verbal testimonies which are reported statements concerning the past … that is, sources which have been transmitted from one person to another through the medium of language’.

The majority of the sixteen interviewees were speakers of Ngarinyman or Malngin, both of which languages are closely related to Gurindji and are part of the Pama-Nyungan family of Aboriginal languages (see McConvell 1988:97). All of the interviewees also spoke a cattle-station creole common throughout the north of Australia (see Sharpe and Sandefur 1976:33).

Creoles and the pidgins they develop from are generally spoken in those places where ‘two or more cultures have come in contact, with one group of people usually dominating the others economically, socially or militarily’ (DeCamp 1977:7). J.W. Harris (1993:145) differentiates between the two, noting that a pidgin ‘is a contact language, used only for limited purposes between groups of people having no common language’; a creole, on the other hand ‘is a full language’ (1993:146), arising when a pidgin becomes ‘the primary language’ of a new community.

The pidgin that developed in the Victoria River region at the end of the nineteenth century was influenced by Aboriginal stockmen from Queensland and elsewhere in eastern Australia who accompanied the first pastoralists there (see Sanders 1991:118). The process of ‘coming in’ (see Chapter 3.2) to stations by Aborigines in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries ‘institutionalised contact between linguistically different people … [and] made the cattle stations a significant milieu of pidgin development’ (J.W. Harris 1986:206). According to McConvell (1988:145), although a cattle station pidgin/creole has existed alongside Aboriginal languages in the region since the late nineteenth century as the primary means of communication with non-Aborigines, since the late 1950s ‘it has begun to replace the traditional languages of the area as the first language’.

J.W. Harris (1993:147-149) documents the history of the creolization of pidgin English in the Northern Territory, a process which he argues began at the Roper River Mission (Ngukurr) around 1908. Sandefur (1986) provides a formal description of Kriol, being the name given to that creolised pidgin common to northern Aboriginal communities (see also Sandefur 1985, J.W. Harris 1993, Rhydwen 1993). Hudson (1983) gives a linguistic
analysis of Kriol as spoken in the Fitzroy Valley region of the Kimberley region of northwestern Australia.

The spread of Kriol may also have played a part in the tendency towards greater *ngumpin* inclusivity we saw earlier. McConvell (1988:109) has argued that, beyond and encompassing the local language groups and regional speech communities of the Victoria River district, there is a wider, more inclusive category of Aboriginal people known as ‘cattle station Aborigines’, ‘who speak Pidgin/Kriol either as a first or second language’.

As with the Gurindji of McConvell’s (1988) study, in daily life most elderly Ngarinyman speakers at Amanbidji and elsewhere regularly switch between Ngarinyman and Kriol. Such switches are partly related to the identities of speaker, listener and other participants present during acts of speaking. McConvell (1991a:150) notes the ‘well-observed rule’ in Aboriginal communities that ‘English or the nearest thing to it that people can manage should be spoken in the presence of English-speaking whites’, a rule consciously articulated by Aboriginal people and ‘often reinforced’ by the whites they have contact with (cf. Sandefur 1986:82 and Harkins 1994:15-29). Koch (1991:100) notes the suppression of certain Kriol features by Aboriginal speakers during land claim testimony.

Sharpe and Sandefur (1976:64) note that at Ngukurr and Bamyili on the east coast of the Northern Territory there is a continuum of creole varieties ‘from an “old creole” form or basilect, to a form much closer to English’, which they call ‘the acrolect’, defining the latter as ‘the donor language towards which the creole is moving’. They find that two main sociolinguistic factors influence the variety of creole a given speaker uses: ‘the speaker’s degree of fluency in English and [the identity of] who he is talking with’ (1976:65). McConvell (1988:97) also notes the existence, amongst the Gurindji, of a ‘continuum of English-based variety of speech] between basilectal Creole/Pidgin and acrolectal “Aboriginal English”’.

The sixteen interviewees involved here drew upon a range of linguistic resources in telling their histories. The interviews presented here were conducted mainly in an acrolectal Kriol designed to facilitate maximum understanding on the part of the interviewer, who was not competent in Kriol, Ngarinyman or any of the other Aboriginal languages of the region. Consequently the texts exhibit many of the properties of Aboriginal English as described by Koch (1993). Occasionally also, this ‘light’ Kriol (Sharpe and Sandefur 1976:63) was interspersed with Ngarinyman terms, especially in those instances where speakers documented aspects of the traditional economy such as the use of indigenous flora and fauna, or ‘bush’ resources.
INTRODUCTION

Various writers discuss distinctive features of Kriol (e.g. Sharpe and Sandefur 1976, Sandefur 1986, 1991b, Hudson 1983) and Aboriginal English (e.g. Muecke 1981:17-26, Harkins 1994:41-105, Malcolm and Kosielecki 1997), the latter being understood as dialectal or sociolectal varieties of English ‘spoken as mother tongues or primary languages’ (Sandefur 1985:75). The following is a review of those features of Kriol which figure prominently in the texts presented here.

1.5.1. Features of Kriol

In the material presented here, JM* says of named kartiya who worked in the region in the early twentieth century, ‘That’s where they, him bin start chase im allabout and shoot im bout [Aborigines]’ (JM3:26-27). In this passage, several key features of Kriol are present.

Almost all Kriol verbs are derived from English ones (see Sandefur 1991b:210-211), with the first order suffix transitivity marker -im added where required (see Sharpe and Sandefur 1976:67, Sandefur 1979:114, Sandefur 1991b:206), as in ‘chase im … and shoot im’. The third order suffix -bout (see Sandefur 1991b:206-207 where it is rendered as ‘-bat’) gives verbs either durative or iterative aspect with the latter more common and referring either to repetition, as in ‘shoot im bout’ or to plurality of participants, as in ‘chase im allabout’ (Sandefur 1991b:206-207). The iterative and durative aspects of Kriol verbs can also be indicated by their reduplication (Sandefur 1991b:207), as in the use of ‘try’ in ‘He [Rebel Major] was live there, they [police and police trackers] bin try, try, try for him’ (JM6:37).

Extreme duration of events or states may be indicated by the lengthening a vowel of the verb and simultaneously raising the pitch on this lengthened vowel (Sandefur 1991b:207). The lengthening of vowels is indicated in text by placing a full colon between the doubled vowel. Thus in one of the interviews the speaker twice indicates that the search conducted by police trackers for the ‘Aboriginal outlaw’ Rebel Major was a long one when he says, ‘Alright, they bin come up and follow im bout now, lookabo:out. Big mob bin look about for him. Looking for him. How to find him. Alright, they bin go:o, find his track now’ (JM6:46-48).

The completive verbal auxiliary bin, as in ‘him bin start chase im’, precedes the verb and is used to refer to a state that existed before the time of speaking (Sandefur 1991b:209; see also Sharpe and Sandefur 1976:67). It is a marker of past tense. The future tense in Kriol is marked by the term garra, a verbal auxiliary used to refer to a potential or future state (Sandefur 1991b:209). This term derives from the English phrase ‘got to’ and in studies of the Aboriginal English of Central Australia has been rendered as ‘gotta’ to make it more...

The second order verb suffix, -up (see Sandefur 1991b:207 where it is rendered as ‘-ap’) usually indicates either action performed in the vertical dimension or an action carried out to its fullest extent as in ‘Used to work from after rain [i.e. March-April] right up to hot weather [i.e. December]’ (ST1:83-84).

In terms of syntax, subject is ‘always overtly marked in the clause and is identified by its position as the closest nominal or pronominal element preceding the verb’ (Sandefur 1991b:208), as in ‘I bin workin’ [as a] stockman [at] Waterloo station’ (PW21:3). Object generally follows a transitive verb (Sandefur 1991b:208) but may be moved to the beginning of the clause for topicalisation.

In relation to Kriol prepositions, belonga or bla (see Sandefur 1991b:208 on ‘blanga’ and ‘bla’; cf. J. W. Harris 1986:268) indicate a benefactive or purposive relation as in ‘Old drover bloke. He belonga Territory. Alexander [Station], all around. He bla that country’ (ST1:148-149). It may also be used to indicate possession (Sandefur 1991b:209) as in ‘That [i.e. Sturt Creek and Gordon Downs Stations] bin belonga Vestey’ (ST1:318).

Longa and la (see Sandefur 1991b:208 on ‘langa’ and ‘la’) are Kriol prepositions indicative of a locative relation as in ‘You see im longa road, put im [spear] la him bullock’ (ST1:535). Garrum indicates an associative relation (Sandefur 1991b:208) and can be used to mean ‘having’ (Sandefur 1991b:209), ‘with’ (McConvell 1985:75), or ‘by’ (Koch 1993:xi), as in ‘Old time, we bin take im back, garrum [i.e. by means of] horse’ (ST2:83).

From an English-speaking perspective there are non-standard uses of preposition such as ‘onto’ in ‘All [the stories] there onto [i.e. in] my memory’ (JM7:10-11) and ‘on’ in ‘Put a spear on him’ (JM5:53), and prepositions are often omitted altogether as in ‘cover im over [with] paperbark’ (ST1:772).

Sandefur (1991b:211) also notes semantic shift between Kriol and Standard English, with ‘cooked one’ meaning both ‘cooked’ and ‘ripe’. He argues that such shifts can cause cross-cultural miscommunication and indeed, in interview DM10:58-64, just such a communicative glitch occurs around the use of ‘cooked’ to refer to the ripening of a type of indigenous food, a ‘bush grape’.

Other confusions can occur around what is, from the Standard English speaker’s perspective, the incorrect use of double negatives as when a speaker says ‘Broke his arm. Well, he couldn’t do nothing now’ (JM3:152).
As already indicated, I will demonstrate in this thesis that the use of pronoun is a feature of ngumpin oral history that contributes to its moral sub-text. Accordingly, I will give a brief outline of the Kriol pronominal system.

Some Kriol pronouns have more in common with traditional Aboriginal languages than they do with English (cf. Harkins (1994:51) on Aboriginal English). Kimberley Language Resource Centre (1996:237) identifies three aspects of this. Firstly, Kriol pronouns make no distinction between male, female and neuter with he and him translating as ‘he/she/it’ and ‘him/her/it’ respectively, as in the use of ‘he’ in the following passage:

‘Ah, this one belonga minyu. Brother-in-law. You call him brother-in-law,’ he [i.e. the speaker’s sister] might be talk, this one sister, mine (ST2:499-500).

Secondly, Kriol pronouns have dual forms in addition to singular and plural forms, as in the use of minyu (and also yunmi (J.W. Harris 1986:270)) in the example above to refer to ‘you and I’, yuntupala for ‘you two’ and tupala for ‘those two’, as in ‘Tupala used to camp im there longa him, longa Harry Raymond, you know’ (MP23:15-16). Thirdly, there is in Kriol an exclusive/inclusive distinction on the level of the first person dual pronoun with mintupala meaning ‘we two, but not you’, and minyu (or alternatively, yunmi) meaning ‘you and I’.

Other Kriol pronominal features found in the texts here are also found in the Aboriginal English of Central Australia as outlined by Koch (1993) and Harkins (1994). Firstly, me may be used for ‘I’, as in ‘Well, I bin come back [i.e. reborn] now, man here. Me here’ (ST1:810), or even occasionally for ‘my’, as in ‘I bin learn this country. All me life’ (JM7:13). Secondly, we is often used for ‘us’ and indeed there is very little use of the latter pronoun in Kriol. Thirdly, in addition to we and us, there are the additional first person plural pronouns mipala(s) and wipala(s), as in ‘kartiya got im banana and mipala got im, mipala got im pindi’ (DM10:26-27). Fourthly, whilst the second person pronoun you is used as it is in Standard English, it may also be combined with the plural suffix, pala (or fella) found extensively in Kriol (J.W. Harris 1986:269) to give the second person plural form yupala, which means ‘you (more than two)’. Yumob is another second person plural construction occasionally encountered. Fifthly, in addition to the third person plural pronouns them and they, used in similar ways to their use in Standard English, there is the Kriol pronoun allabout, meaning ‘them (more than two)’, and which may also be used as a marker of plurality preceding a noun (J.W. Harris 1986:268). Finally, meself can mean ‘himself’ as in ‘He not belonga me. He bla the whiteman meself’ (ST*2:384).
1.5.2. Presentation of the texts

All of the interviews I recorded are transcribed and presented as Appendix A. Each line of text is numbered to assist in the referencing of them. The transcription is verbatim, in order to preserve as much as possible the content and form of what was said, and to this end I have included the questions and responses of the interviewer, myself. I agree with McConvell (1985) that the process Shaw undertook for his Kimberley series of life histories, which involved ‘careful selection and rearrangement of the material’ (Shaw 1981:9) in the translation of texts from Aboriginal English to Standard English, runs the risk of subverting the meaning and integrity of Aboriginal narrative.

A standard orthography exists for Kriol. Strict use of this would see the sentence ‘well we never have im motor car’ written as ‘wel we neva hav im mota ka’. I have chosen instead to present the texts here using an orthography more familiar to speakers of English, in order that the material is readily accessible to non-Aboriginal Australians. Such accessibility was explicitly requested by some of the more senior ngumpin people involved in this study. In the same way, and for much the same reasons as McConvell (1988:145) and Rose (1984b, 1992:31), I have retained, in the main, English spellings for words of English origin.

I note here Sandefur’s (1991a:121-124) contention that the seeming ‘transparency’ of Kriol (by which he means that the language appears to many English speakers as a simplified form of English) can lead to miscommunication as those English speakers mistakenly assume they can translate Kriol accurately. McConvell (1985:75) also notes that the tendency for incorrect translation of Kriol into English is due in part to the ‘superficial similarities’ between the two.

To further facilitate the reading of the texts by those unfamiliar with Kriol, I provide free translation in Standard English within square brackets for those passages which require it. Some of the actions of speakers and other participants (e.g. laughing, pointing) are also indicated within square brackets to assist in the understanding of the texts. Marked increases in the volume of the delivery are indicated by the use of capital letters.

1.6. Thesis Overview

In this thesis I present, alongside an analysis of ngumpin oral history, ethnographic data, a historical overview of the ngumpin experience of their encounter with kartiya, and statistical data relating to current ngumpin social and economic circumstances. In so doing I
aim to attend better to the *contextualisation* of this oral history material. I concur with Bruner (1984) who argues that it is impossible to interpret a text based on examination of the text alone.

In Chapter 2, ‘Theory and Method’, I review attempts to attend to the context of human behaviour and especially the telling of history. I introduce a typology of context and discuss the factors relevant to one of the levels of context identified: the immediate interpersonal circumstances of oral history. I then review the literature dealing with the *uses* to which history may be put, and also that which deals with the links between representations of history and statements of identity. In the penultimate section I review some approaches to the analysis of Aboriginal oral history material in the field of Australian studies and then finally, I give a broad outline of my approach to the analysis of the oral history material.

In Chapter 3, ‘Ngumpin Historical Circumstances’, I present a history of the engagement between ngumpin and kartiya within the pastoral industry in the Victoria River region and surrounding areas, an engagement which began in the 1880s in the Kimberleys. I use oral history material recorded by myself and others to give a history which documents the *ngumpin* experience of this engagement, supplementing this data, where appropriate, with written records including archival sources.

In Chapter 4, ‘The Social and Economic Circumstances of Ngumpin’, I look briefly at the climate, landform and ecology of the western Victoria River region before documenting the contemporary socio-economic and political situation of ngumpin in this region. Prior to this second task however, I review those works which consider economic and social aspects of the general Aboriginal engagement with pastoralism and other capitalist enterprises in remote Australia. I then look at the contemporary funding and administration of ngumpin, and consider statistical indicators of the economic and social circumstances of *ngumpin* *vis-à-vis* *kartiya*. I consider the operation of the Community Development Employment Projects scheme at Amanbidji Station in the 1990s and give a broad profile of the Amanbidji Station and its ngumpin community.

In Chapter 5, ‘Fieldwork’, I introduce observations from fieldwork at Amanbidji Station. I document the relationship between *ngumpin* and *kartiya* of Amanbidji Station, and between *ngumpin* residents of this station and *kartiya* regionally. I take the case of the Amanbidji Community store as a site of disquiet for *ngumpin* in their dealings with *kartiya*. I also consider *ngumpin* ideals of the proper working relationship with *kartiya*.

In this chapter I also document the critique of present-day phenomena by elderly *ngumpin* of Amanbidji Station and the variety of talk known as ‘speaking up’, designed to present political claims. I look at the use of spatial metaphors by *ngumpin* to chart the
changing fortunes of the station, community and ngumpin generally. I introduce fieldwork material which shows how ngumpin situated me in social and political space during my time at Amanbidji.

In Chapter 6, ‘The Mistake Creek Material’, I analyse, in full, two of the oral history interviews recorded during the Mistake Creek fieldwork in March and April of 1993. I also provide a summary of the other eighteen interviews by the various features of text identified as relevant to my project in Chapter 2.7.

In Chapter 7, ‘The Amanbidji Material’, I analyse, in full, one of the oral history interviews recorded at Amanbidji Community and Katherine between November 1992 and September 1995. I provide a summary of the other fourteen interviews.

In Chapter 8, ‘Interpreting the Texts’, and Chapter 9, ‘The Past in the Present’, I document and interpret the moral sub-text of ngumpin oral history, based on the analysis presented in Chapters 6 and 7. I reintroduce data from Chapters 1, 3, 4, and 5 relating to the past and present circumstances of ngumpin social, cultural and economic life and their inter-relationship with kartiya. In both these chapters I show how this moral sub-text is connected to the circumstances of its production, and specifically to the broad and specific social, cultural, economic and interpersonal aspects of the engagement between ngumpin and kartiya, past and present.

In Chapter 10, ‘Conclusion’, I present the conclusions of this thesis.
CHAPTER 2

THEORY AND METHOD
Chapter Two: Theory and Method

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter I review various works which consider (i) the contextual determinants of verbal behaviour and especially oral history, (ii) the uses to which oral history may be put, (iii) the links between representations of the past and the construction of identity, and (iv) the significance of certain features of oral history texts. I also consider several approaches to the analysis of oral history material by writers working with Aboriginal oral texts.

In section two, having reviewed the literature dealing with context, I offer a non-exhaustive schema of three layers of context especially relevant to the production of ngumpin oral history, and in section three I look more closely at one of these layers: the immediate interpersonal circumstances of the oral history research encounter.

In section four I review various works which deal with socio-political uses to which verbal behaviour, and especially oral history, may be put, and in section five with those works which deal with the links between representations of the past and statements of identity in oral history. In section five I also deal briefly with the determining effect of the sex of the oral history interviewee on their representation of the past.

In section six I review attempts within the field of Australian Aboriginal studies by writers such as Rose, Muecke and McGregor to delineate the moral sub-text of Aboriginal oral history.

In section seven I discuss six features of the ngumpin oral texts I present in this thesis—explicit evaluation, historical contrast, simile, ngumpin thesis, questions of the interviewer by the interviewee, and the patterned use of pronoun—which, when taken together, largely constitute this moral sub-text. It is in terms of these features that I analyse the oral history material presented in Chapters 6 and 7.

In section eight I provide concluding remarks to this chapter.

2.2. Reckoning Context

Broadly speaking, context refers to that complex set of conditions which have a determining effect on behaviour, verbal or otherwise. By the contextualisation of ngumpin oral history I mean showing how both the character and the giving of such history relate to, respond to, or are even determined by, the circumstances in which it is given.
An early attempt within Anthropology to analyse the effect of context on verbal behaviour was offered by Malinowski (1935) in his study of the role of language in Trobriand agriculture. In this work, concerned with the problem of translation and attempting to give the ‘correct translation of each native term’ (1935:21), Malinowski offers a complex but unsystematic outline of context. He identifies as part of the ‘context of cultural reality’ the ‘material equipment, the activities, interests, moral and aesthetic values with which the words are correlated’ (1935:22). This aspect of context is for Malinowski closely linked to the ‘context of reference’, which he understands as the physiological, intellectual and emotional reality a narrative refers to, which ‘has to be reconstructed by the hearers even as it is being evoked by the speaker’ (1935:46). These two aspects of context are held to be distinct from the ‘context of situation’ which includes the ethnographic background of the speakers involved, the genre of speech they use, the subject of their speech and inter-textual aspects of speaking, including the use of questions by the interviewer (1935:37). Malinowski (1935:214) also makes brief mention of what he terms the ‘social context’, which is connected to the ‘context of situation’ and includes the purpose, aim and direction of the activities accompanying and implicated in verbal behaviour.

Malinowski’s concern for the pragmatics of verbal behaviour found a parallel soon after in the work of Wright Mills (1940:904) who urged attention be paid to the ‘social function’ of verbal behaviour. Generally speaking, approaches which consider the effect that context has on verbal behaviour can be seen as situated within the Anglo-American school of philosophy of language, exemplified by writers such as Austin and Wittgenstein, and characterised by a functional approach to meaning which, according to Shapiro (1984:3), ‘emphasises the contexts of action within which utterances have meaning’ (see also Bruner 1984:11). Shapiro (1984:3) contrasts this approach with that of the Continental school exemplified by Derrida and Greimas, which he suggests is characterised by a semiological or post-structuralist approach which emphasises the arbitrariness of language and the ‘play of differences’ which occurs.

As Malinowski’s work suggests, the list of things which can be considered part of context is almost limitless. In fact, Malinowski (1935:22,26) posits yet another layer of context—the ‘context of speech’—which includes prosodic and non-verbal aspects of communication such as gesture, intonation, cadence and facial expression. Within the field of oral history Fox (1980) introduces kinship relations as a contextual factor in the construction of a Rotinese historical narrative and Joyner (1984:303), somewhat vaguely,
suggests that ‘values and institutions’ have relevance as determining aspects of oral history interviews.

Consideration of the context of oral history hinges on the realisation that stories of the past are ‘keyed’ (Bauman 1986:62) both to the events they recount and the events in which they are told. In the field of folklore, writers such as Toelken (1979) and Dundes (1964:23) have called for analysis and consideration of ‘the specific social situation’ in which folklore is told. In the field of Australian Aboriginal studies there has been a call for attention to be paid to the way in which the wider circumstances, or ‘situation of contact’ (Beckett 1994:101) in which Aboriginal groups exist, impacts upon various aspects of the social behaviour of the group (see also Collman 1988:236).

Malinowski’s distinction between contexts of cultural reality and situation is paralleled by Schegloff’s (1992) breakdown of context into external (or distal) and interactional (or proximate) aspects. Over the last two decades, more attention has been paid to the latter than the former. Briggs (1986:12, 1988) and Kuipers (1990), for instance, both seek to understand context as process or interpretive frame, and not as a set of conditions ‘existing prior to the emergence of performance’ (Briggs 1988:14).

As Carroll (1995:340) notes, anthropological or folkloric studies that are explicitly concerned with the social and cultural context of various forms of oral narrative often focus on seeing oral texts as performances (Bauman 1986) or ‘verbal art’ (Tedlock 1983). Various writers advocate close attention to the relationship between speaker and audience as a contextual determinant of narrative (Jackson 1982, Goodwin 1986, Bauman 1986, Brenneis 1986) and of discourse generally (Scollon and Scollon 1984, Kochman 1986, Haviland 1986). Various others advocate close attention to the relationship between interviewer and interviewee as a contextual determinant of oral history material (Watson and Watson-Franke 1985:16, Cruikshank 1992, Briggs 1988, Mishler 1986, Crapanzano 1984). In relation to the latter, Briggs (1988:13) argues that ‘the products of interviews are dialogic texts that are largely structured by the interviewer’ and Bauman (1987:197), working with a performance-centred conception of oral literature, argues for recognition by the researcher of the shaping influence of his own presence and actions on the construction of a life history.

The consideration of the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee as a fundamental unit of description and analysis can be seen, perhaps, as part of a wider movement to consider the positioning of the anthropologist in the field. This has been a fundamental concern in Anthropology since at least the early 1980s, with Leach (1989:39),
arguing against the possibility of ‘uncontaminated’ ethnographic evidence on the basis that the observer ‘is always a key part of the changing scene that he/she observes’, and Said (1989:216) contending that observation is never unproblematically objective: ‘There is no vantage point outside the actuality of relationships between cultures’ (see also Kochman 1986). Rosaldo (1989:127) has argued for a ‘double vision’ of analyst and informant in the writing of ethnography, and more recently, Hastrup (1995:31-32) has argued that anthropologists must be understood as ‘positioned subjects’ (cf. Bruner 1984:9) whose experiences can only ever allow a partial understanding.

I will show in this thesis that there is a dialogic element to the fieldwork encounter such that the relationship between the interviewer (kartiya researcher) and the interviewee (ngumpin speaker) constitutes part of the context relevant to a full understanding of the material. I will argue that it is essential that at some level we take into account the fact that, in such cases, the interviewer belongs to that group responsible for the colonisation of the land, resources and labour of the interviewee’s group.

2.2.1. Towards a Typology of Context

Approaches to context are diverse and often quite confusing, this perhaps being a reflection of the fact that they must deal with, according to Schiffrin (1994:364) ‘a world filled with people producing utterances: people who have social, cultural and personal identities, knowledge, beliefs, goals and wants, and who interact with one another in various socially and culturally defined situations’. What is required is a model of context sophisticated enough to accommodate these things but not so complicated that it cannot be used in the analysis of oral history material.

Following Malinowski, various writers offer schemas or models of context which distinguish between the cultural context of a text and the actual situation in which it occurs (eg Bruner 1984), cultural context and social context (Bauman 1983), and cultural, social, and cognitive context (Schiffrin 1987, 1994). Carroll (1995:215) further refines the category of social context by distinguishing between cultural functions (defined as collective social purposes) and goal functions (or the wants and needs of individuals).

Such models have been developed specifically for the analysis of discourse, not oral history (see, e.g. Hymes 1967), and they are not adequate for my aims in this thesis. They make little room for either the broad socio-economic circumstances of, or the history of interpersonal engagement between, those disparate groups represented here by the interviewer and the interviewee. The contextualisation of ngumpin oral history must enable
us to situate the material recorded against the socio-economic, cultural and political reality of past and present ngumpin experience in the western Victoria River region.

It will become apparent throughout this thesis that the material I am working with consists in large part of the ngumpin documentation of their historical inter-relationship with kartiya. As noted above, in this and many other cases of oral history research with ngumpin, the interviewer is a kartiya, and so identified to some degree with (but, as we will see in some respects also differentiated from) the colonisers of ngumpin. This requires an approach to context which goes beyond, but preserves, a concern for the presence of an audience, to consider historical and contemporary aspects of the social, economic and cultural inter-relationship of ngumpin and kartiya, and especially, ngumpin understandings of these things. I agree with Goodwin and Duranti (1992:4) argue that the point of departure for the analysis of context must be ‘the perspective of the participant(s) whose behaviour is being analyzed’.

Accordingly, my consideration of context is centred around the ngumpin perspective of:

- the patterns and circumstances of ngumpin-kartiya interaction, past and present,
- the broad socio-economic circumstances of ngumpin vis-à-vis kartiya, past and present, and
- the immediate interpersonal circumstances of the interview

### 2.3. The Immediate Interpersonal Context of Oral History

For Malinowski the task of contextualising is ‘best achieved by holding constantly before our eyes the background of native culture’ (1935:45) in such a way that the presence of the observer is left unconsidered. Indeed he suggests that the texts he presents should not be seen ‘as merely artificial by-products of ethnographic fieldwork’ but as fitting into ‘the normal context of tribal life’ (1935:50).

Similarly, oral historians have generally not dealt with the effect of their own presence on the material they record. Mintz (1984:310) notes that, in relation to classic life history works by American researchers such as Lewis, Simmons, and Dyk, ‘the character of the collector and the relationship between him or her and the collected remain largely obscure’. In the field of Australian studies, Johnson (1985:29) argues that Shaw, who as we have seen did extensive oral history work in the Kimberley region throughout the 1970s and 1980s, does not account for the effect of his own presence on the material he collected.
McGrath’s (1987) study of the Aboriginal experience of cattle station life in northern Australia between 1910 and 1940 also involved extensive oral history work in the late 1970s with numerous Aboriginal ex-employees of cattle stations in the Kimberley, Victoria River and Daly River regions. She (1987:178) writes of the situating of the oral history interview: ‘The interview situation is dialectically related to the actors’ past culture contact experiences, and must be interpreted in this context’. Here she suggests that the interview encounter may be considered by Aborigines as to some degree an instantiation of the general patterns of contact with non-Aborigines. At no stage in her work, however, does she explore the possible effects of this Aboriginal reckoning of the circumstances of the interview on the material produced within it (cf. Rowse 1988).

The linguist McGregor (1988b) is one of few writers dealing with Aboriginal oral history to discuss the issue of the bearing that the presence of the interviewer has on the material he or she records. He looks at the special case of the absence of listener-response when the material is given in a language the listener does not understand, a situation which occurred in his recording of the Goomiyandi stories of the Aboriginal man Jack Bohemia. In this research encounter McGregor recognised he was ‘[un]able to respond as a native speaker, in the appropriate manner and at appropriate points in the discourse’ (1988b:299).

He argues that this circumstance is a ‘context of speech [that] has influenced aspects of Bohemia’s style and possibly also aspects of the structure of the stories’, noting that Bohemia, ‘an expert and excellent storyteller’, would, if given the opportunity, ‘respond to and exploit characteristics of the speech situation’ (1988b:300), one importance aspect of which is the linguistic knowledge of the audience.

Tonkin (1992:2) argues that it is impossible to ‘detach the oral representation of pastness from the relationship of teller and audience in which it was occasioned’. In Aboriginal oral history research, the non-Aboriginal researcher-interviewee is part of what is typically a very small audience. The situating of the researcher by interviewees bears upon the character of the material. For Tonkin, the researcher is socially ‘read’ or ‘misread’ and is thus ‘not … a neutral recorder of ‘data’ but a factor in a social event’ (1992:54).

How the researcher is seen and perceived matters crucially to the questions they may be allowed to ask and the information that is given to them. This can be seen as part of a more general treatment of information and knowledge in Aboriginal society, these things being ‘elaborated differentially according to who is present and their social relations in the community’ (Carter 1988:68; cf. Michaels 1985, Walsh 1991:11 and Eades 1982:79 on the Aboriginal ‘knowledge economy’). Factors such as the interviewer’s age (Luborsky 1987)
and sex (Neuenschwander 1984:331, Myers 1976:3) may assume importance, with consideration of such determining what is and is not said.

In particular, ngumpin oral history is ‘keyed’ (Bauman 1986) to the presence of the kartiya researcher, especially in those cases where the material is concerned primarily with the encounter between the two groups represented. In Hugh-Jones’ (1989:64) account of the effect of his presence on the telling of myths by the Barasan people of South America he notes that a certain myth is often told with almost no reference at all to Europeans, ‘but when it is told to me, as one of them, my informants will usually make sure to lace the myth with as many such references as they can muster’.

The researcher may be partly differentiated from kartiya and placed within a sub-group, for example the ‘Union mob’ referred to by Rose (1989:143; cf. Riddett 1994:17). The researcher may even be perceived as a sort of conduit to wider Australian society (Rose 1992:40, McGrath 1987:viii, Carroll 1995:342, and cf. Berndt and Berndt 1987:106 where there is the suggestion of this) by means of which Aboriginal people can make known to the wider Australian public aspects of their culture and various Aboriginal concerns. Carroll (1995:344) refers to this as the ‘intercultural function’ of Aboriginal oral sources. In fact Muecke (1983c:v) argues that he represented for the Aboriginal interviewee, Roe, ‘a kind of generalized representative of white Australia’. According to McGregor (in Bohemia and McGregor 1995:13), the Aboriginal interviewee, Bohemia, came to see him as ‘an intermediary through which he could relate his life story’. In an earlier work, McGregor (1988b:300) argues that even though he was the only person present during recordings with Bohemia he is ‘convinced that the stories were intended for a much wider audience’ and that Bohemia’s wish was that McGregor ‘publicise the story of his life’.

In this notion of the researcher as a conduit to the wider Australian public we have the sketchings of the moral agendas that interviewees and interviewers bring to an oral history project. Cowlishaw (1992) notes that the work of anthropologists has generally (though certainly not without exception) been underpinned by an implicit moral program to extend understanding and respect for Aboriginal culture. This program has its corollary in Aboriginal expectations of the use and distribution of oral history and other material.

I will show that within the western Victoria River region the kartiya recorder of ngumpin oral history material (and ngumpin ethnography generally) is generally understood by the ngumpin participants to have an obligation to use the material in such a way that it effects positive change in relation to kartiya attitudes and behaviour towards ngumpin.
Shaw (1992) has in fact recorded explicit statements by Aboriginal speakers of such intentions involved in their giving oral history. John Toby, one of Shaw’s interviewees, is recorded thus:

Well I think it’s good while you’re picking this up and putting it down on the paper for the white people. So when they grab these books and read them they might think you know and start to look up on us. Instead of looking down they might look up on us and reckon, “Oh well they bin working our way for a long time, we all go back and work the same way” (Shaw 1992:76, cf. Shaw 1992:155).

### 2.4. The Act of Telling and the Use of Oral History

The tasks of attending to the context of oral history material and attending to its *use* in the present are inter-linked in that we cannot properly talk of the *use* or functions of oral history material without attending to the circumstances in which it is given.

Much recent anthropological work on the political and symbolic *use* of representations of the past has emerged from Melanesian studies, especially through the analysis of *kustom* (Tonkinson 1982a, Jolly 1982, Keesing 1982; cf. Jolly & Thomas 1992) wherein nationalistic, non-European identity is reified and actively promoted (see also Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, Shapiro 1984, Borofsky 1987, Keesing 1989). White (1991), working with the people of Santa Isabel Island in the Solomon Islands, is one of those researchers who attempts to draw attention to ‘the pervasive *use* of history within local frameworks of meaning and action’ (1991:3). In contrast to these writers I am not primarily concerned in this thesis with the question of whether ‘everyday life reproduces … the pre-colonial culture of the region’ (Trigger 1997:101).

The efficacy of verbal behaviour in human affairs has been commented on by Schiffrin (1987:6), who draws on the 1960s work of the speech act theorists Austin and Searle in noting that as well as forming structures and conveying messages, discourse ‘accomplishes actions’. She argues that this ‘social work’ effected by language is ‘locally oriented’ and ‘organized within cultural world views and sets of moral assumptions about being and acting’ (1987:12).

In the Australian context, both Kolig (1990) and Muecke (1983a) are led to consider the wider ‘socio-political ends’ (Muecke 1983a:71) towards which Aboriginal narrative may be directed. Kolig explores the ways in which modern political economy and Aboriginal myth interconnect at Nookanbah in northern Western Australia to ‘forge a political weapon’ (Kolig 1990:238) which can be used in the struggle for land rights.
In contrast, Sansom (1980) looks at the use of Aboriginal talk at the intra- and inter-
(Aboriginal) community levels. He (1980:4) argues that in the Aboriginal fringe camps
around Darwin, some ‘words’ (this term being used to refer to succinct stories) do political
action, have ‘special uses’ and serve ‘as the essential instrument for carrying the
relevancies of past experience over into futures’ (1980:267). He argues that such ‘mob
word’ acts as a mechanism for both solidarity and differentiation (1980:216) in that these
‘backed words’ or ‘warrant statements’ (1980:27) rely on ‘communal attestations and

Also existing at this intra-group level are what Malinowski (1935:48,50,51) considers
‘dogmatic texts [of Trobriand Islanders] … told with an educational aim by the elder
people to the younger ones’ which can function to maintain tradition. In this vein, the
Aboriginal man Baranga (1986:172), speaks of how stories of his ancestors, told to him by
his elders, ‘quietened us’, the Worora people of the East Kimberley region. That is, the
telling of the acts of atrocity that were meted out to Aboriginal people by non-Aborigines
in the early years of contact invited caution amongst the former in their dealings with the
latter. This tactical response of ‘quietness’ has been attested to throughout northern
Australia (Trigger 1992:18), including the western Victoria River region (Rose 1991:88,90-
91). Within Baranga’s testimony here is Aboriginal recognition of the potential of narrative
to influence and shape behaviour and action in the present.

Oral history is also efficacious at the level of the interaction within the interview itself.
I will show that at least some ngumpin oral history shares, with the Western Apache
historical tales documented by K. Basso (1984), the potential to be a ‘critical and remedial
response’ (K. Basso 1984:39) to improper behaviour. Ngumpin speakers, faced with a
deficit of shared cultural and cognitive resources in their interaction with a kartiya
researcher, may prompt and encourage that researcher to engage with the material in such a
way that a certain quality of communication ensues.

In the language of frame analysis (see Goffman 1974), the frame of fulfilling a request
for oral history (see Tannen 1993:8) may be embedded within a more general frame which
relates to the socialisation and education of the researcher. This should not come as a
surprise. Riddington (1990:17) has written on the notion of the anthropologist as a child in
relation to and in terms of the cultural and social knowledge of those whose behaviour he
documents. Similarly, Crick (1982:23) argues that in the doing of anthropological
fieldwork, ‘in many respects one does have the status of a child in terms of one’s minimal
cultural competence’. It is because of this that there may be more going on in the giving of
an oral history interview by a ngumpin interviewee to a kartiya interviewer than is at first
apparent. There may indeed be a pedagogic or didactic element to ngumpin oral history which has much to do with the history of encounters between ngumpin and kartiya and the presence and work of the kartiya interviewer as an instance of that historical relationship. The task here is to determine the alignment (Tannen 1993:8) taken by the interviewee to their material and audience.

It is, of course, difficult to ascertain just how the ngumpin interviewee is ‘aligned’ to either their material, the researcher, or the oral history project the researcher is conducting. Certain things did become apparent with fieldwork though, and these will be presented in Chapter 5. I understand my own presence in the field as another locus of ngumpin-kartiya interaction which provides its own set of data for analysis and which allows insight into the definitions of action and situation that ngumpin bring to the oral history research interview. It is these definitions which provide the means by which to register and make sense of the moral dimensions of ngumpin oral history.

2.5. History and Identity

The link between narrative and identity has been pursued within the field of folklore by Bauman since the early 1970s, his work being directed in part by the notion that narratives are vehicles for the presentation of personal information, such that they provide the means for the construction and negotiation of personal identity (1986:21). Other writers, working mainly in the fields of history and ethnohistory (Chapman, McDonald and Tonkin 1989, Tonkin 1986, 1990, Fentress and Wickham 1992, Peel 1989, Friedman 1992) have concentrated on aspects of collective identity, recognising that the ways in which history is represented by members of particular social groups can be linked to their wider, inclusive identifications.

Writers such as Tonkin (1992) and Hastrup (1995) aim not to investigate individual and personal aspects of oral history but the ways in which representations of the past can be understood as attempts by speakers to pose and answer questions of an ontological nature, e.g. ‘who are we?’, or ‘how did we become who we are?’ (Tonkin 1992:29). For Tonkin especially, oral history is structured and ‘plotted’ (1992:29) in such a way as to provide answers to such implicit questions.

Answers to such questions may at the same time answer the question ‘who are they?’. Hugh-Jones (1989:68) shows how myth is used by Tukanoan Indians to draw contrasts between categories of people and create archetypes which encapsulate group or ‘other’ identity. Reminiscent of K. Basso’s (1979) work amongst the Western Apache, Hugh-Jones
(1989-62) found that the Indian representation of outsiders is a reflex of their image of themselves.

Tonkin’s (1992) work, *Narrating Our Pasts*, is an analysis of the oral history of the Jlao Kru of south-east Liberia. In it she outlines the Jlao Kru’s long fight for territory and independence; a fight which, she claims, has engendered a ‘historically directed consciousness of identity’ (1992:27). For Tonkin, representations of the past and notions of identity must be understood as interactive phenomena which exert influence on each other and, as such, the reverse of the above also holds true: the Jlao Kru’s fight has engendered a sort of identity-directed consciousness of history, in that Jlao Kru identity ‘implicitly structures the story by the choice of events described’ (1992:44). For the Jlao Kru, events occur in a social space which is in part determined by the complex grid of reference by means of which they construct their identity (cf. Hastrup 1992:7).

For Tonkin, Jlao Kru representations of the past document a redemption from past injustice and suffering as they situate themselves and their peers as ‘a people with a sequential, differentiated history of virtuous struggle’ (1992:42). The selection of events and their ordering in narrative time allows the narrator to put forward ‘moral and other arguments’ (1992:36): these things ‘help to create a moral order, which redeems the sufferings of Sasstown’ (1992:44; cf. Tonkin 1988:482). For Tonkin there is a dialectical relationship between representations of the past and lived reality—of ‘recall and social nexus’ (1992:109)—such that just as representations of the past can effect change on the lived reality of the present, so lived reality impacts upon the ‘selection’ and ‘ordering’ of elements of, in this case, oral history.

As a corollary to the notion that representations of history are linked to the identity of their tellers, to the extent that gender is a factor in identity construction or reckoning, representations of history will have a gendered aspect. In oral history, certain things may be emphasised, certain others omitted, according to ways of seeing and expression that are, in part, determined by the gender of the speaker.

Of writings which attempt to deal with this issue, Cruikshank (1990), dealing with life histories of Athapaskan Canadian Indians, looks at the relationship of narrative theme to the gender of the speaker, Luborsky (1987:371), working with elderly American Jews, notes that men and women use different analogies or ‘conceptual templates’ in life history narrative, and Piscitelli (1996) argues that Brazilian men and women’s life stories are strikingly different. In the Australian context, Damousi (1994) posits differences between
men’s and women’s historical self-representations on the basis of her textual analysis of Anglo-Australian male and female Communist autobiography.

Several writers have combined the analysis of past representations, gendered identity, and work. Thus, Cole (1991) uses her analysis of the life histories of female residents of the Portuguese fishing village of Vila Cha to posit a relationship between women’s work and the social construction of gender (1991:xiv). Passerini (1987), in looking at life histories told by Italians who lived through the Fascist occupation in the 1930s and 1940s, also considers the gendered representation of self and past around the theme of work. She argues that for women in Fascist Italy work ‘[was] a means to an end rather than an important part of their identities’ (1987:50), noting that women’s work was ‘characteristically less skilled and given less recognition, or lacks security, making it less suitable as a basis for an identity’ (1987:50). She argues that Italian women ‘redefined themselves culturally by choosing a stereotype of rebel and men by elevating the image of hard worker’ as a consequence of this ‘marginal position forced on women by the social division of labour’ (1987:51).

There has, however, been little work done on the gendered nature of Australian Aboriginal oral history. One exception is the work of Merlan (1994), who suggests that the differing relationships to country of two of her informants as expressed in oral history material is a product of the historical work regime they lived under: ‘Bill’s experience of it was as a stockman, Elsie’s of walking through country with people temporarily released from station life who were relating to it in a rather different way’ (1994:170). For Merlan, hand in hand with the gendered experience of work came a sort of gendered political awareness of country: ‘Elsie tends to construe the local politics of relationship to land in terms of clearly delineated, segmentary relationships to particular places and areas ... Bill, on the other hand, to think in terms of broad topography and dreaming stories not as closely tied to a local politics defined by specific conjunctions of kinship and country’ (1994:170). For Merlan, even Aboriginal connection to country is ‘infused by forms of [gendered] experience’, experiences which, as we will see in Chapter 3, have a complex social history.

2.6. Analysis of Text: Australian Studies

I turn now to approaches to the analysis of Aboriginal oral history texts that attempt to come to terms with their moral sub-texts. Rose (1984b) and McGregor (1988a, 1988b) are perhaps the only writers who have worked in any detailed and systematic way on this issue, and it is their work I will mainly consider.
Rose (1984b) considers various aspects of a single text produced by a Ngarinyman (i.e. ngumpin) male speaker from the Yarralin community. It is, she argues, of the genre ‘Captain Cook saga’, and is directed by Aboriginal storytellers to an Aboriginal audience though able to be told to select non-Aborigines. Rose argues that this genre is used by Aboriginal speakers ‘to analyse European political economy as it has affected Aborigines’ (1984b:31). She does not offer a discussion of genre other than to say that the Captain Cook saga is not of the order of Dreamtime myth (they are set in ‘different kinds of time’ (1984b:30)) but should be seen rather as within the order of an Epic of Race Relations.

As a preliminary stage in her analysis, Rose gives an outline of Ngarinyman morality. She makes a distinction between moral principles and moral laws (the former being abstract and of the order of a system; the latter being particular and of the order of social obligations and responsibilities), and identifies four Ngarinyman moral principles—balance, symmetry, autonomy, and response—which, we are told, she has previously derived from Dreaming mythology through ‘an act of interpretation’ (1984b:29). Whilst she argues that such interpretation is a collaborative act between the ethnographer and the people whose texts are the object of study, it is clear that the categorisation is ultimately etic in nature: ‘I have identified four principles which I believe form the basis to Yarralin people’s concept of morality’ (Rose 1984b:29).

As with R. M. Berndt’s (1970) tracing of the link between morality and the Dreaming for Aboriginal people of the Western Desert, so Rose (1984b:25) found Aboriginal Law and morality to be ‘synonymous’ (cf Burridge 1973:80). For Berndt (1970:219), the ‘mythic characters’ of Western Desert Dreamings ‘provide a pattern or blue-print for human behaviour, including interpersonal behaviour’. In his analysis of Western Desert myth, Berndt (1970:243) argues that in such myth ‘in the majority of cases, wrong action … lead[s] to punishment, disaster and tragedy’. Neither Berndt (1970:219) nor Rose (1984b:28) found much evidence amongst the Aboriginal groups they researched of explicit moral schemas, principles or maxims.

Having isolated these principles, Rose presents an abridged version of the recorded saga and argues that whilst the principles she has derived are not made explicit in the telling of this saga, ‘Captain Cook’s defiance of them is quite overtly stated’ in that he violates each of them (1984b:37). In this way, Rose argues, the Ngarinyinman speaker is presenting the argument that non-Aboriginal law operates in defiance of Aboriginal moral principles.

Elsewhere, Rose (1992:103) argues that moral actions amongst the Ngarinyinman of Yarralin are ‘those which sustain balance’; immoral actions are ‘those which violently
threaten [balance]’. She (1992:187) looks at Ngarinyman stories which identify ‘immoral others’, with Captain Cook, the eighteenth century British explorer held by certain Yarralin speakers to be the ‘quintessential immoral European’. She also notes a parallel ‘search for moral others’ typified by ‘the Union mob’ which appear in Ngarinyman stories from Yarralin. ‘Union mob’ is a term applied to those Europeans ‘who clearly were appalled at what was happening [to Aboriginal people] and tried to change things’ (Rose 1992:192).

Returning to the ‘Captain Cook Saga’, Rose points out the lack of explicit evaluative commentary in this text, with, for instance, the description of the killing of Aboriginal babies by non-Aborigines (1984b:32-33) being unaccompanied by editorial comment of an evaluative kind. For Rose it is precisely because information is presented in this way that we can say that there is an implicit moral discourse operating in such texts. In essence Rose assumes that there is a moral discourse present in Aboriginal oral history; the lack of explicit evaluative commentary is simply evidence of an implicit moral discourse. This approach does not tackle the question of whether there is indeed a moral sub-text at all in Aboriginal oral history, and if so, how it can be delineated.

Claims to the lack of explicit evaluation in Aboriginal narrative generally, as we saw in Chapter 1, are surprisingly common. Headon (1988:32), for instance, argues that throughout all the Aboriginal testimonies of the north that he’s seen, ‘there is no attempt to criticise or judge’. Rose (1991:17) argues that a particular informant rarely distinguishes between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ managers; that he speaks of particular events in order to demonstrate the structure of injustice under which people lived, and Schebeck, in Coulthard and Schebeck (1986:218) argues that the texts of a particular Aboriginal man are ‘remarkably descriptive, with an almost complete absence of value judgements’ or moral editorial. He does note, however, the existence of an ‘implicit complaint’ centred around the issue of white men ‘interfering’ with Aboriginal women (Coulthard and Schebeck 1986:218). Berndt and Berndt (1989:3) note similarly that explicit moral commentary is rare in Dreaming stories and argue that this is so because, when the narrated actions are bad enough to warrant censure, the narrative will typically ‘go on to show … that whoever was responsible will eventually pay the penalty in one way or another, that disaster or death will befall them’ (cf. Stanner 1979:29).

McGregor (1988a) offers a more formal analysis with his approach to the story of ‘the Banjo affair’, as told by Jack Bohemia, a Gooniyandi-speaking resident of Fitzroy, in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. Briefly, this story deals with the tracking and shooting of an Aborigine, Banjo, held responsible for the shooting of two non-Aboriginal
men at Billiluna, to the south-east of Fitzroy Crossing. As with Rose (1991), Coulthard and Schebeck (1986) and Headon (1988) above, for McGregor, exposition and explicit moral commentary are rare in Aboriginal oral history and virtually non-existent in the police-tracker genre of which this story is part. Consequently, he argues, Aboriginal viewpoints and classifications are implicit in such discourse; the police tracker stories he deals with do not overtly construct arguments but ‘represent events “straight” [i.e. without exposition or commentary], in narrative texts’ (1988a:56) and formal analysis must be used to uncover ideological aspects of text. He sets himself the task of ‘suggesting’ (1988a:48) the ideology or world-view presented in and by the text as revealed by analysis of its ‘formal properties’ (1988a:46).

McGregor’s formal analysis focusses on genre and lexicogrammatical choice. He sees genre as one of the structures of discourse generally, and narrative specifically, which provide systems of constraints within which speakers operate. By choosing amongst these structures, speakers ‘construct their world of experience’ (1988a:46). McGregor argues that the police-tracker stories are built around three inherent ternary sequences: crime-punishment, hunting, and travelling (1988a:49). For him, the organisation of the genre around these sequences is not arbitrary but indicates the narrator’s view of the world, or at least, his view of the particular events described in the story. Specifically, McGregor argues that the sequence crime-punishment represents a moral, i.e. ‘that crime ... will be punished’ (1988a:50). When, within the text, this sequence is presented alongside the second sequence, hunting, in such a way that the perpetrator of the crime is pursued (i.e. ‘hunted’) by police and police-trackers, the narrator is held to be ‘projecting a view of white culture as a powerful means of enforcing a (sometimes new) morality on the Aboriginal people’ (1988a:50). McGregor argues that the generic structure of the story itself implies a classification of Banjo’s actions as criminal (1988a:53).

It is not altogether clear, however, whether the moral ‘that crime ... will be punished’, if held at all by the speaker, is held to belong to Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal systems of morality. It is possible that from an Aboriginal perspective, what McGregor classifies as crime-punishment (with the moral overtones that those terms contain) may be more along the line of action-reaction, and the speaker may not be alluding as much to moral schemas as to relations of cause and effect. In fact McGregor concedes that he is unable to distinguish between Gooniyandi concepts of crime and immorality (1988a:50). The problem with McGregor’s analysis is that he pre-empts the finding of a moral sub-text in these narratives by categorising the sequence as crime-punishment.
In relation to lexico-grammatical choice, McGregor argues that Bohemia’s choices in this story indicate a world-view wherein the antisocial agent (Banjo) is necessarily pursued by the police, the upholders of non-Aboriginal justice and morality. McGregor bases his argument here on the fact that, in Bohemia’s telling, Banjo begins as agent and ends as goal whereas the police ‘maintain actorhood throughout, with few ... exceptions’ \(^1\) (1988a:51). The anti-social agent must pay in this schema, McGregor argues, by becoming a goal of a punitive force.

In another essay McGregor (1988b) continues his analysis of the structure of police-tracker stories, suggesting that they are ‘at least in part, moral statements’ with aspects of Gooniyandi ideology and world-view ‘implicit in the narrative structure’ (1988b:303). He presents ‘circumstantial evidence’ (1988b:302) for this view: that the speaker never mentions finding lost persons who were in good health. That is, lost persons are, according to McGregor, always punished in some sense. Unfortunately, this only leaves unanswered the question of whether ‘punished’ is the most accurate term to use in relation to the Aboriginal perception of misfortunes encountered in the bush.

Any approach which attempts to deal with the evaluative elements of oral history must be attuned to the use and context of such history. The giving of Aboriginal oral history must be seen as a purposeful activity occurring within, and in response to, certain socio-political and interpersonal circumstances.

Whilst there is much of interest in the work of Rose and McGregor, neither writer systematically considers the link between particular narratives and these circumstances, i.e. the complex context in which they are elicited, which includes the circumstances of the interview itself. Rose argues that the Saga she analyses is of the order of an indigenous genre, directed to an Aboriginal audience, and McGregor similarly downplays the effect of his own presence on the telling of the stories he records. Whilst McGregor (1988a:48) does suggest that texts must be viewed ‘in terms of their ... contexts of situation and culture, and the role they fulfil therein’, this idea is left largely undeveloped, and he in fact subscribes in principle to the idea that ‘there should be no need to go beyond Jack Bohemia’s texts, in order to determine his view of the referent world’, though conceding that ‘a full appreciation of a text’ is facilitated by a consideration of ‘other texts dealing with the same or similar themes or events’ (1988a:46).

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\(^1\) Compare with Merlan (1994:166) who argues that throughout Elsie’s and others’ narratives of black-white violence, ‘the agency of whites is given clear lexico-grammatical representation. ... What is startling about [these] texts ... is the number of ergative-marked instances of ‘white’ or ‘whites’, compared to overall frequencies of ergative-marking in these and other texts’. 
In a later work (Bohemia and McGregor 1995:28), McGregor does suggest that the implicit meanings of a text, including the sociological and moral motivations of characters, are approachable through the study of similar texts and a coming to terms with cultural and social issues. McGregor’s reckoning of context here is that it is constituted in large part by that verbal interaction that occurs prior to and after the recording is made. This verbal interaction, we are told, has a significant effect on the content, themes and language of the recorded encounter (1995:12). Unfortunately though, very little of this interaction is actually presented and we do not learn of its characteristics.

Muecke, another writer working with Aboriginal texts, analyses (Muecke 1982) a corpus of stories recorded in Kimberley Aboriginal English. The central concern of his thesis is ‘the description of a specific discourse practice (storytelling) in a specific cultural setting’ (1982:255) but this setting is left largely unconnected to the social and material aspects of contemporary Aboriginal life in the Kimberley.

Even when he moves from a proposition-based structural analysis (which shares things in common with McGregor’s episodic analysis) to a functional ‘language-in-context [analysis] … which must take into account the narrator-listener relationship’ (Muecke 1982:191), only two of the six functions of text he considers, the meta-narrative and the formulaic, have any degree of ‘situational relevance’ (1982:195), and neither relate directly to the circumstances beyond the interview situation itself. He does, however, identify five functions of Kimberley Aboriginal English story-telling, including a pedagogic function which occurs when a ‘point of law’ is demonstrated (1982:265). Further, he argues that stories told in Kimberley Aboriginal English such as the ones presented in his thesis generally function to ‘maintain a coherent “Aboriginal view”’ (1982:255).

In a later work, Muecke (1983c:viii) argues that the stories of the Aboriginal man, Paddy Roe, ‘interact with and make coherent the present-day social context’. Again there is very little discussion here either of what is meant by ‘context’, or indeed what constitutes it in specific cases. It is unclear, for instance, whether he includes his own presence here. Muecke’s discussion of how the stories ‘interact with and make coherent’ context is limited to the following: Aboriginal story-telling functions as a way of dealing with social problems by ‘integrating and normalizing disruptive social events by absorbing them in narrative structures’ (1983c:viii). He leaves unsaid the manner in which this applies to the texts he presents and it is unclear to what extent this purported ability of narrative to deal with social problems applies.
2.7. Analysing Text

What I am proposing in this thesis is, in tandem with a consideration of the circumstances of ngumpin oral history, the analysis of these oral texts by certain features they share. Over the course of transcribing the oral texts presented here I noticed specific patterns of pronoun use that suggested the presence of a moral sub-text in ngumpin oral history. Some of these patterns were, as we will see in Chapter 8, present also in ngumpin oral history presented elsewhere. It became apparent that certain features of these texts—explicit evaluation, generalisations, arguments and historical contrasts—were fundamental points around which a systematic and rigorous analysis of the texts could proceed. With subsequent readings it also became apparent that the analysis of the ngumpin use of simile and questions of the interviewer by the interviewee were likely to assist in the delineation of a moral sub-text. I will now offer a discussion of each of these features.

A summary of each interview by the six discourse features outlined here appears as Appendix B.

2.7.1. Explicit Evaluation

The moral sub-text that is sometimes found in ngumpin oral history is occasionally expressed through explicit evaluation. Analysis of those instances wherein an Aboriginal speaker explicitly evaluates certain events, states, persons, actions, or things, allows further insight into the moral and social topography of ngumpin-kartiya relations from the ngumpin perspective. Here we are considering the use of words and phrases such as ‘alright’, ‘cheeky’, ‘no good’, ‘rough’ and ‘hard’ by Aboriginal speakers, and their occurrence in relation to periodisations and historical contrasts (see below).

Instances of explicit evaluation involve a change in the framing of the discourse from the reporting of events to the assessment of them (Schiffren 1987:27), and as such belong to the metanarrative component of ngumpin oral history. At such points within the oral history interview, the ngumpin interviewee ‘opens the story for audience evaluation’ (Schiffren 1987:27) in such a way as to gauge the kartiya interviewer’s attitude towards specific information presented.

Oral historians have generally not been attuned to such matters, and this may be reflected in interview procedures. Bogdan and Taylor (1975) for instance, suggest that not only should interviewers not interrupt when taking life stories or oral history, but that they should be non-evaluative. I will show that this is an impractical requirement if being ‘non-
evaluative’ requires the interviewer to refrain from commenting on or in some way acknowledging the more explicitly evaluative aspects of the material as it is presented.

2.7.2. Historical Contrast

*Ngumpin* speakers make historical contrasts, usually between the ‘hard day’ of the past and the ‘easy day’ of the present. These contrasts are usually tied to the documentation of the practices, technologies or social conditions that characterise the different eras. Much of the material I present can be understood as containing an implicit historical contrast of ‘hard day’ and ‘easy day’, but I will confine my attention principally to the explicit contrasts that occur.

Little has been written on the presence of historical contrast in Aboriginal oral history. McGregor, in his co-authored work, *Bohemia, Jagarra, McGregor and Pluto* (1993:66), briefly looks at contrasts between ‘then’ and ‘now’ in three Gooniyandi texts which deal with first contact between Aborigines and non-Aborigines, and Morphy & Morphy (1984:466) argue that images of the ‘wild blackfellow’ in Ngalakan oral history function in part to differentiate the past from the present, to create discontinuities by defining different kinds of people and relationships at different points in time.

A more comprehensive treatment of this subject comes from Briggs (1988), who, working with Mexican peasants, found an emic distinction between ‘bygone days’ and ‘nowadays’ in their genre of talk he terms ‘historical discourse’. He argues that the ‘rhetorical structure’ of this genre ‘centres on the synthesis of these oppositions [i.e. ‘bygone days’ and ‘nowadays’] in the form of basic moral principles that serve as fundamental guideposts for conducting oneself in any age’ (1988:22).

For Briggs, the ‘oppositional dynamic’ (1988:93) between past and present is at the heart of the peculiarly pedagogical discourse of elderly Mexican peasants; a discourse which he argues exists as a sub-genre of historical discourse (1988:91). Mexican pedagogical discourse turns on the identification of the absence of a feature of the past in the present, followed by an interpretation of the present which reveals the deleterious effect of this absence (1988:92).

White (1991), working with representations of history given by Santa Isabel Islanders, documents the ‘overtly moral tones of some historical narration’ (1991:8), especially that which ‘use[s] oppositions of ‘old’ and ‘new’ to revitalize contemporary Christian identity’ (1991:7). He finds this opposition to be organised around certain conceptions of personhood and to give the narratives the character of ‘moral parables’ (1991:7). I will demonstrate that in a similar way to both Brigg’s and White’s material, the moral sub-text
of Aboriginal oral history involves an opposition between the past ‘hard day’ and the present ‘easy day’.

2.7.3. Simile

I will also document the use of simile by ngumpin speakers to compare disparate entities such that a unique understanding of an action, behaviour, or social group is given. Similes, like metaphors, act to ‘cross reference domains of meaning’ (Moore and Myerhoff 1977:202) allowing an understanding of one aspect of reality in terms of another.

Hayakawa (1965:122) argues that metaphor and simile, far from being ‘ornaments of discourse’ are ‘direct expressions of evaluations and are bound to occur whenever we have strong feelings to express’. Cancel (1989:29) similarly eschews the ‘ornamental’ approach, arguing for consideration of metaphorical thought as a distinctive mode of achieving insight, and Hastrup (1995:37), looks at the pragmatics of metaphor use, arguing that it plays a part in establishing identity which in turn ‘induces people to action’.

Within the fields of oral history and oral tradition respectively, Murphy (1986:165) advocates the study of metaphor in oral history as ‘one key to a cultural reading of how the past is remembered and presented’, and Vansina (1985:137) looks at ‘collectively held’ imagery based on simile, arguing that such images add to an item of oral tradition ‘a context of emotional value’. For Vansina, images express complex relationships, situations or trains of thought ‘in a dense, concrete form, immediately grasped on an emotional and concrete level’ (1985:138) and thus can function as a sort of emotional or ideational shorthand. I will show how ngumpin speakers use simile in their representations of the past to express complex moral notions.

2.7.4. Ngumpin Thesis

Ngumpin speakers may occasionally offer arguments, generalisations, periodisations, chronologies and theories in the course of an oral history interview. There are present within the oral texts, for instance, ngumpin understandings of historical phenomena and the social world, including precedent and causation in relation to historical event and state, and reason and motivation in relation to the behaviour of historical agents.

Though a somewhat diverse grouping, all of these things may be considered part of the ideational structure of the texts and may be used by ngumpin speakers to give weight to specific aspects of oral testimony. They are often concerned with the point of the material and its expression within the research encounter and to the extent that they are, are part of
the face (see Chapter 2.5, above) of ngumpin oral history. I will refer to them collectively as ngumpin theses. I will also include within this feature of text the documentation by ngumpin of the material paucity they have endured throughout the twentieth century.

Whilst aspects of traditional Aboriginal philosophy and cognition have received attention (see e.g. Elkin 1969, Berndt 1970, Myers 1982, Rose 1992, Swain 1994, Tonkinson 1970), little has been done to interpret or even document the expression of Aboriginal ideology and argument in oral history material. As we have seen, the work of Rose (1984b,1989) is an exception here, and the ‘Captain Cook Saga’ she presents clearly ‘describes and analyses the establishment and implementation’ (1984b:39) of colonial relations. Elsewhere, McGregor, in a co-authored work (Bohemia, Jagarra, McGregor and Pluto 1993), looks at the existence of Aboriginal thesis in a certain genre (‘exposition’) of Gooniyandi text, whilst Murphy (1986:175) argues that oral history material ‘can be particularly useful for illustrating the formation and reproduction of ideologies’. McGrath (1987:3) claims that Aboriginal oral history can ‘function as Aboriginal interpretations of colonialism’ but does not really explore this interpretive bent.

Part of the problem for researchers may be that Aboriginal thesis, as I have defined it, is rarely expressed in explicit ways. Eades (1991:89) notes work amongst Aboriginal people of Arnhem Land and south-east Queensland which shows that Aboriginal people in these regions ‘present opinions cautiously and with a degree of circumspection’. Von Sturmer (1985:6) notes the presence of stylised disclaimers such as ‘I might be right, I might be wrong’ and ‘This just my idea’ which frequently occur in discussions of a serious nature amongst Aboriginal people.

Beckett (1994:101) argues for a view of Aboriginal historical narrative that understands such as ‘programs for the orientation of action within the situation of contact and as key for the interpretation of interaction within that context’. Goodall (1994:73) stresses the intellectual work that may be effected by the telling of history, arguing that the ‘interpretative memories’ of one elderly Aboriginal man of Ernabella, talking of the 1948 measles epidemic there, are ‘an analysis of colonialism’.

Other writers have documented or at least pointed to the cognitive work done by Aboriginal people attempting to come to terms with the presence and character of their non-Aboriginal colonisers. Thus Myers (1982:104) argues that amongst the Pintupi of Central Australia in the late 1970s there was an emergence of ‘an explicit political ideology as the Pintupi attempt[ed] to make sense out of otherwise incomprehensible social situations’, including the lack of fit between the Pintupi conception of the reciprocal relationship and the non-Aboriginal disregard of an obligation on the part of a boss to look
after his workers. Morris (1989:5) writes of the ‘active, critical evaluation … [of non-
Aboriginal] social processes and institutional forms’ that is present in Dhan-gardi ‘oral
testimony’, and Rowse (1988:67) argues that a considerable amount of Aboriginal thought
has been taken up, historically, by the task of ‘work[ing] out the moralities implicit in
rationing regimes which were underwritten by the possibility of violence’.

I will document the presence of ngumpin thesis in the texts presented here. I
differentiate my approach and aims from the various attempts (e.g. Polanyi 1989, Agar and
Hobbs 1985) to delineate ‘schemata’ (Bloch 1998:6,12) or ‘cultural models’ (Quinn and
Holland 1987:25) through the analysis of text (though I leave open the possibility that an
outline of such may emerge from the combination of textual analysis and ethnographic
data). I agree with Bloch (1998:47) that ‘actors’ concepts of society … are governed by
lived-in models … based as much in experience, practice, sight, and sensation as in
language’.

2.7.5 Questions of the Interviewer by the Interviewee

Ngumpin speakers may occasionally ask questions of the interviewer in oral history
interviews. Analysis of the questions that the Aboriginal speaker puts to the interviewer
may reveal both the interviewee’s reckoning of the immediate interpersonal context of the
interview and the point, argument structure or face of the material. In the first case,
questions asked by the interviewee may reveal crucial interpersonal aspects of the oral
history encounter, and so assist in determining the ‘alignment’ the interviewee takes to the
research encounter. In the second case, questions may serve to highlight historical themes
or issues deemed especially significant from the speaker’s viewpoint.

Questions by the interviewee of the interviewer can generally be seen as part of that
aspect of language which ‘indicates, mentions, or makes implicit … the reality in which the
speech event occurs: the spatial, temporal, emotional, and social connections between
participants and between them and the subjects under discussion’ (Lakoff 1990:244).

I agree with Schiffrin (1987) that phrases such as ‘y’know’ can be understood as
‘reduced questions’, which function as ‘interactional markers’ (1987:273,286; see also
Briggs 1988:16 and Kuipers 1990:68), allowing the speaker to elaborate on an established
gap in the interviewer’s knowledge base. However, the ubiquity of the phrase ‘y’know’
within the material presented here makes analysis of interviewer questions problematic. I
limit this field by looking only at those questions which are explicit and complete, and
which are directed at the interviewer in such a way that an answer of some sort is clearly
required by the speaker. Determining what is and is not a question is somewhat difficult
and can only really be done by listening to the interview, not by reading the transcription of it. It depends in part on such things as pause and intonation.

There is little written on the asking of questions of the interviewer during Aboriginal oral history interviews. Merlan (1994:169), at least, notes that one of her Aboriginal interviewees, though having told a story of past non-Aboriginal brutality towards Aborigines several times ‘without expressing an explicit judgement’, during one telling of it (and specifically in relation to her description of Aboriginal corpses being burnt) asked her ‘what for cruel like that?’ It is the presence and use of such questions by the interviewee to the interviewer that I will consider in this thesis.

2.7.6. Pronoun Use

In relation to pronoun use, I am especially interested in the patterns which occur around the use of first person singular and plural pronouns in ngumpin oral history. That is, I am interested in variations and patterns in the use of singular pronouns such as I, me, and (the possessive pronoun) my, and their plural counterparts: we, us, mipala, wipala, mintupala, and our.

Some use of these pronouns is trivial and relatively uninteresting. If something happens to an individual which also happens to some other or others at the same time, often that individual may position his or her telling of the event either from the perspective of their individual self, or from the perspective of a group of people who had the same or similar experience. For instance, when as in Interview DT9(106) the speaker uses the first person singular pronoun I in relation to his not knowing another man’s age—’I don’t know what his age’—there is little significance to such use. Significance in the varying use of singular and plural first person pronouns is a function of there being a degree of meaningful choice involved in the selection of either form.

Consider, for example, the two statements ‘I got a pay rise’ and ‘We got a pay rise’. The choice of the first person plural pronoun in the latter statement establishes a commonality of experience, and also possibly of purpose, especially if the pay rise was won through concerted action by the members of the group referred to by we. Heath and Langman (1994:99) have analysed the use of we and us in the context of sports coaching and argue that coaches use these pronouns ‘to consolidate individual identities of … youths into a group identity’.

Other writers have attended to the link between the use of the first person plural pronoun and the maintenance or construction of solidarity amongst those referred to by such terms. Thomson (1994:165) argues that through the use of the pronoun ‘us’, the
experiences of ANZAC ex-servicemen he interviewed ‘were almost always generalised in terms of the positive, collective experience of the unit’.

Johnson (1994) offers an analysis of the use of *we* in the setting of a conference on Mexican–United States relationships, arguing that this pronoun can be used to both ‘index and build social relationship’ (1994:207) and construct relationships of solidarity and opposition. She (1994:227) concludes that meanings of ‘we’ which are highly inclusive in nature ‘establish an affective or interpersonal frame for the speech … and … a solidarity framework from within which the speaker goes on to make more specific distinctions, raise controversial issues and express ideological stances’.

I will show that in *ngumpin* oral history, patterns of pronoun use emerge such that some historical topics are *almost always* associated with the use of either *singular* or *plural* first person pronoun forms. In consistently positioning the telling of specific activities, events or states from either the perspective of the individual or a group to which the speaker belongs, these activities, events or states can be understood to be firmly associated with either *singularity* or *commonality* of experience and purpose.

Attention to such patterns allows insight into the circumstances and characteristics of *ngumpin* solidarity, past and present, in the face of *kartiya* colonisation. It also gives an indication of how *ngumpin* ‘represent themselves to themselves in history’ (Bloch 1998:82). I concur with Bloch (1998:82) that it is to some extent in terms of such representations that people react to historical and contemporary events and states.

Writers such as Sansom (1980:87) have noted the manner in which the use of ‘we’ and ‘they’ lends itself to ‘moral commentary’. Indeed the work of moral philosophers such as Kovesi (1967), Shotter (1984), and MacIntyre (1981) has long emphasised the central role the *group* plays in the formation of moral principles and standards of behaviour. I will demonstrate that where it is patterned and regular, variations between the use of these pronoun forms in *ngumpin* oral history are part of a *ngumpin* discourse on identity and solidarity and contribute to the moral sub-text of *ngumpin* oral history.

Brown and Gilman (1972) have looked at choices made in relation to the use of second person formal and informal pronouns by speakers of French, German and Italian. They (1972:252) find that these pronouns are closely associated with ‘dimensions of power and solidarity’ and can indicate equality and solidarity, or alternatively, inequality and hierarchy, between participants in a social setting. Gumperz (1982:185) looks at shifts from ‘I’ to ‘we’ during a first person narrative given by a witness in a court-room context and suggests that the shift to ‘we’ signals ‘personal distance’ from events recounted or is used to ‘distinguish descriptions … from statements about personal opinions or self-initiated
actions’. Similarly, Tonkin (1990:30-1) argues that the use of ‘we’ can indicate an ‘impersonal narrative’ and a certain stylization intended to confer authority upon the speaker. Jua Sieh, though too young to be a fighter in the period about which he speaks, nevertheless uses the first person plural form. Tonkin (1990:31) argues that by doing this, Jua Sieh claims authority for himself as narrator by subsuming himself into ‘we Jlao’.

White (1991:6) looks at the interplay between pronominal forms, collective identity and morality in the talk of Santa Isabel Islanders, finding that the frequent use of the communal ‘we’ has parallels in ‘a great many representational practices that center agency and identity in collectivities’. He argues that in the ‘tightly interwoven and constantly public areas of village life … social and moral thought frequently de-emphasize the individual as the primary locus of experience’ (1991:6). In a similar vein, Passerini (1987) looks briefly at pronoun in relation to Italian worker’s memories of Fascism under Mussolini’s leadership and notes: ‘All those who have collected oral testimonies have noted that one of the constant features of the left-wing activists’ life-histories is the ‘cancelling out of individual private life’ (1987:41), in part expressed through the selective use of pronoun. I will show that something similar is happening in the material presented here, with a de-emphasis of the individual in relation to certain historical events and states.

2.8. Conclusion

In this chapter I have concentrated on the contextualisation of ngumpin oral history and the analysis of the oral texts which are the product of the research process. In relation to the former I have offered a non-exhaustive typology of context, which as we will see was directed largely by the process of doing fieldwork in ngumpin communities. I have also discussed in greater detail one layer of context, being the immediate interpersonal circumstances of the interview.

I have also outlined and discussed six features of ngumpin oral texts, the analysis of which will facilitate the revelation and description of the moral sub-text of ngumpin oral history.
CHAPTER 3

NGUMPIN HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES
Chapter Three: Ngumpin Historical Circumstances

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter I will draw on ngumpin oral history in order to present a history of the wider Victoria River region which documents the ngumpin experience of colonialism resulting from their incorporation into the pastoral industry. I will draw upon various non-Aboriginal written and oral sources where appropriate.

I will document the historical relationship between ngumpin and kartiya in this region and the social and material conditions endured by ngumpin. Following Tonkin (1992:18), such a reconstruction of the ngumpin past will allow a fuller contextualisation of ngumpin ‘representations of pastness’. Further, an appreciation of the social and material conditions endured by ngumpin throughout much of the twentieth century is essential for understanding the contemporary ngumpin notions of ‘coming up [to]’ (Chapter 5.8) and working ‘alongside’ (Chapter 5.5) kartiya.

The historical relationship between ngumpin and kartiya in this region forms the basis for ngumpin perceptions of the general circumstances of their interaction with kartiya. I agree with J.W. Harris (1986:211) that ‘the character of the Europeans with whom the Aboriginal people had to deal’ is an important aspect of the social conditions of the early twentieth century in the Northern Territory, and so will present material which shows this character in general terms.

I have divided the material into four sections in order to facilitate the writing of it. The periodisation presented here does not necessarily reflect a ngumpin reckoning of eras and chronology.

In section one I look at early kartiya explorations into the wider Victoria River region from the 1830s to the 1870s, followed by the setting up of pastoral stations in the region and initial attempts to co-opt Aboriginal labour to work these stations. I look at the violence associated with kartiya intrusion, the ‘quietening’ of ngumpin that accompanied this, and the ‘coming in’ of ngumpin to cattle stations.

In section two I look at the period from 1921 to 1945, documenting various aspects of the ngumpin experience of their incorporation into the pastoral industry. I make extensive use of Berndt and Berndt’s (1987) documentation of the fieldwork they undertook in the region in the mid-1940s for the large, British-based pastoral company Australian Investment Agency, also known as Vestey Brothers, and by ngumpin as Vestey.
In section three I document the period from 1946 to 1966, and especially the involvement of the Northern Territory Administration, through the Native Affairs Branch and the Welfare Branch, in the regulation of Aboriginal labour in the pastoral industry in this region.

All but four of the sixteen interviewees involved in this study were born between 1910 and 1930. The four who weren’t, DC*, DT*, DP* and PP*, were all born in the early to mid-1930s. As such, the material in sections two and three gives an outline of the general conditions these interviewees encountered during their early years and throughout most of their working lives.

The fourth section deals with the period from 1967 to 1990, characterised in part by the cessation of welfare involvement, the involvement of various other Commonwealth and Territory government agencies and non-government organisations and the introduction and implementation of the *Northern Territory Land Rights Act (1976)*.

### 3.2. Exploration, Pastoral Incursion and ‘Coming In’ to Stations: 1839-1920

In 1879 Alexander Forrest, following on from the explorations of Wickham and Stokes in 1839 (see Makin 1972:41) and A.C. Gregory in 1855-56 (Gregory and Elsey 1857), led a party of explorers from DeGrey in Western Australia to the Ord River. He left this river near what is now the Northern Territory border, crossed the Negri River at a point very close to the present Mistake Creek community and continued in a north-east direction, traversing the land of the Malngin people on his journey to Port Darwin. He made no specific mention of Aboriginal people in this area but noted in his report: ‘The natives were friendly all through our journey, and are, I imagine, unlikely to prove a source of any annoyance to future settlers’ (Forrest 1880:40).

Battye (1978[1924]:327) notes that Forrest’s report of some 25 million acres of available land led to ‘the opening up of the Kimberley district for pastoral and grazing purposes’ and that ‘in 1881 leases to the extent of 5,500,000 acres were taken up, an amount which ... more than trebled by June of the following year. In 1882 pastoral explorations were led by Michael Durack and Sydney Emmanuel in the Kimberley, followed in 1884 by Harry Stockdale (Shaw 1974:75). By 1883 there were eight stations in the Kimberleys, ‘employing some fifty-two white men besides numbers of natives’ (Battye 1978[1924]:327), and the Buchanans had overlanded (i.e. transported) cattle to what was to become known as Wave Hill Station (see Map 2).
In 1885, Panton and Osmond overlanded cattle to form the Ord River Station (P. M. Durack 1933:3). The period from 1880 to 1900 saw many incursions into the region as pastoralists took up land around the Victoria, Stirling and Ord Rivers (Berndt and Berndt 1987:5). The Duracks settled Lissadell Station in 1885 and Argyle Downs and Rosewood Stations in 1886 (Shaw 1992:14). Rosewood Station was taken up by Durack and T. Kilfoyle in 1888 and transferred solely to Kilfoyle in 1896.

We saw in Chapter 1.4 that there may have been as many as four thousand Aboriginal inhabitants of the Victoria River region prior to 1880, employing a hunter-gatherer mode of production:

Good tucker. That the tucker bin grow im people la this country. Not, not normal tucker. We bin, they bin only living, got a kangaroo, goanna, that’s all. Bushmen, y’know. Old time. Early day (ST1:374-377).

Aboriginal people today suggest that it was prior to or around the time of initial contact that *waringarri* became prevalent (see Rose 1992:150, Rose 1991:101-112). *Waringarri* consisted of campaigns of abduction, killing and reprisal between Aboriginal groups in the region. It is spoken of as a time when things became ‘boxed up’, i.e. socially congested, with territorial disputes prevalent, and when relations between Aboriginal people took on a war-like character:

Oh, they had, ah, all the time, you know, didn’t like im one another, blackfella. Just like you go and shoot somebody, or kill him, somebody, all this (ST25:42-44).

During the early years of the pastoral incursion, as thousands of head of cattle were introduced to the grazing lands and waters of country which, for several months of each Dry season offered scarce resources and a sometimes precarious existence, Aboriginal groups were subjected to enormous economic pressures. Berndt and Berndt (1987:6) argue that the ecological pressures associated with pastoralism, and especially disturbances to waterholes and hunting, led to cattle-spearing by Aborigines and to general hostility between them and pastoralists (see also McGrath 1987:13-16).

Such cattle-spearing can be understood, as Reynolds (1981:86) has argued, as a form of ‘economic warfare’ conducted by Aboriginal people against their European invaders (cf. Richards 1982:27). Pastoralists, intent on minimising interference to their stock and determined to counter any acts of Aboriginal resistance, reacted to the cattle-spearing activities of the Aborigines with great violence:
Blackfella bin killing bullocky ... They [kartiya] don’t get a policeman, they go out theirself. Fuckin’ grease im up rifle, and go out hunting for them. Shoot im [ngumpin] like a bloody dog. They cruel people, y’know (PW*, recorded 23/6/94).

Largely as a response to cattle-killing, a police depot was set up just north of Mistake Creek Station at a place called Wild Dog (see Map 2) around 1896 and, according to M. P. Durack, ‘a more frequent patrol was [then] being carried out between the various stations’ (see M. Durack 1983:83). M. Durack (1983:84) notes that the number of cattle speared fell abruptly in the following year and adds, ‘By what number the Aboriginal population fell in the process is a matter for speculation’.

The killing of ngumpin by kartiya alluded to here is, for obvious reasons, rarely mentioned by those kartiya who lived and worked in the region. Tom Ronan, however, who worked as a head-stockman at Durack’s Argyle Station, as station manager at Durack’s Newry Station, and at Timber Creek for Matt Wilson, has offered a fictional account of such behaviour (Ronan 1954:93-96). Lamond (1986:54) writes of the fatal spearing of John Durack at the Ord River Station in the early 1890s and ngumpin residents of the region such as the Ngarinyman man PW* tell of the reprisals which followed this event, with many Aborigines being shot. Sullivan, in Shaw and Sullivan (1979:103) suggests that at least one of the more senior Duracks enlisted his white managers to kill Aborigines when required.

It is possible to understand ngumpin involvement in the cycle of violence that ensued as ‘an attempt … to impose on the newcomers the moral standards and social obligations of traditional society’ (Reynolds 1981:70). Indeed, Rose (1992:188) notes that when Aborigines applied kinship terms to foreigners, it was done ‘to bring them [i.e. the foreigner] within a moral order’ (1992:188). Station managers and policemen throughout the region were given skin-names by the Aboriginal people they had direct contact with. For instance, Jack Kilfoyle, who took over the running of Rosewood Station in 1909 on the death of his father, was placed within the Jangala subsection (ST1:663).

The police operating out of Wild Dog police station were also involved in the recruiting of Aboriginal employees. M. Durack (1983:84) notes of the police patrols: ‘As the settlers were usually on the lookout for likely young helpers, the patrols were thus able to provide them with youths and young women’. Patrols from Wild Dog were conducted into the Northern Territory (Clement 1989:88) and this police station was used continuously until 1908 (Clement 1989:95).

Rose has documented the setting up and operations of police stations within the Victoria River region at Gordon Creek (Rose 1991:29) in the 1890s and at Timber Creek from 1898. She (1991:27-36) has also documented the murderous activities of Constable
Willshire in this period (cf. J.W. Harris 1986:211). Rose (1991) has also documented in great detail the violence visited upon Aboriginal people in the general region.

At least until 1910 there were numerous massacres of ngumpin in the region. It is a period sometimes referred to by ngumpin as a time of ‘quietening’ (see Shaw 1986:36, Rose 1991:79-92, Merlan 1978:70-71, Kimberley Language Resource Centre 1996:60,62-64). Palmer and Brady (1991:61) report that ngumpin were shot at Bamboo Springs by kartiya on horseback and MP*’s father and mother’s brother were shot near Pumuntu. One of the interviewees in this study, JM* (JM3:134-137), witnessed the murder of his own mother’s mother’s brother:

JM*: When I was on the fucking Limbunya station I see him shot my fucking own grannie.
CR*: He shot your grannie?
JM*: Yeah! Right on the bloody Limbunya homestead.

During this ‘quietening’, Aboriginal settlements or ‘black’s camps’ were established at most of the stations (see McGrath 1987:20-21) and from these labour was drawn when needed. Kaberry (1970[1939]:x) found that most Aborigines in the East Kimberley by the mid-1930s were concentrated about station homesteads, employed in stock or homestead duties, wearing European clothes and receiving rations of flour, tea, beef and tobacco.

With the establishment of these camps, usually situated near the main homestead, there came a season-based sedentism. Aborigines were released from their employment during the Wet season of December to March, encouraged to move away from the homestead, and usually told to fend for themselves for the duration of their ‘bush holiday’. McGrath (1987:159) has noted the disadvantages (e.g. heavy rain, wide dispersal of grazing animals) involved in the taking of this Wet season ‘holiday’.

Introduced diseases had a disastrous effect on Aboriginal people in the region in the early years of contact. Even into the 1930s, diseases such as leprosy were factors in the ‘quietening’ of the region (Shaw 1986:8), with this and other introduced diseases often leading either to death or the enforced removal of people suffering from them. The police diaries of the Timber Creek Police Station are illustrative of the extent of the threat to Aboriginal health. In his Quarterly Report on Aboriginals of July 1927, Hemmings (1927b:33) wrote of ‘the usual epidemics’ of colds and influenzas which had caused several deaths amongst the Aboriginal population at Timber Creek. The Quarterly Report of January 1928 noted epidemics of chicken pox and colds, that Aborigines had been escorted to Darwin for leprosy, gonorrhea, ringworm, yaws, and granuloma, and that there had been
no births in the region for the previous three months (Hemmings 1928a:127). This was to be standard fare in such reports.

Medical inspections, carried out by police officers—the designated Protectors of Aborigines in the region—‘were often more akin to military exercises’ according to Parry (1992:373). It is little wonder then that sick Aborigines often chose to hide from white authorities.

The time of ‘quietening’ proceeded apace with the process of ‘coming in’ (cf. Baker 1999:127-159). Cattle stations very quickly came to rely almost entirely on Aborigines for labour (Berndt and Berndt 1987:5) so much so that by 1892 the majority of station workers in the Northern Territory were Aboriginal (Richards 1982:28):

White people bin live longa this country and ngumpin bin all day, no mailman, only ngumpin bin alde take him mail (JM3:237-239).

At the root of much of the violence that characterised early relations between ngumpin and kartiya was the issue of access to ngumpin women by kartiya (cf. Searcy (1909:173) on the situation in far northern Australia). In Interview JM6, the Malngin speaker, JM*, relates the story of a ngumpin man who, having shot the kartiya man who ‘stole’ his wife, was then pursued by police and their trackers, killed and beheaded. Certain male ngumpin speakers involved in this study consider that the actions of kartiya men, in taking women for their own sexual purposes, sometimes after having killed their ngumpin husbands, was reprehensible:

Kartiya bin come up … rob im people for woman (ST4:21).

Jack Beasley and all them, oh, I can’t remember them ‘nother mob now, Jack Beasley. Mob of white man, chase him ‘bout blackfella and take it away young girl (ST25:334-336).

Yeah. He was start shooting now. Shoot im all the ngumpin. Some, some he go and y’know, get him ngumpin and shoot im and get the wife, woman, pull im out [i.e. take the woman away] and shoot the husband (JM3:77-80).

In 1913, the Mistake Creek lease was taken over by Vesteys, having previously been held by Osmand and Panton, who had run it as an outstation of their Ord River property, which was also in Vesteys’ hands by that time. Vesteys treated Mistake Creek, Turner and Spring Creek stations as outstations of the Ord River Station, with the daily routine of each of these being overseen by a resident head-stockman.

The labour shortage caused by World War I ‘led to a sudden awareness of the labour potential of the Aboriginal population’ (Middleton 1977:69), which led to a Queensland-
style ‘protection’ ordinance being introduced in the Northern Territory in 1918. For Middleton at least, this is evidence that ‘Protection’ was ‘a racist policy devised to control the Aborigines as a labour force’ (1977:69). This constituted the beginning of the administration of Aborigines in the Northern Territory.

3.3. Working for Bread and Beef, 1921-1945

3.3.1. Bush and Station

We saw in the previous section that most stations established a ‘black’s camp’, also called a ‘bush camp’ (Hemmings 1928b:181) separate from (Peterson 1985:90, Stevens 1974:130) but near the homestead, from which they drew labour. The camp was typically made up of Aboriginal men and women of working age and their younger and older dependants.

Throughout this period there were Aborigines, known as ‘bush people’, who chose or were forced to live outside these camps, usually in rough sandstone or limestone terrain such as that which exists to the south-west of the Amanbidji community at Pumnuntu (see Map 3), and to the east of the Mistake Creek community along the gorges of the Stirling River (see Map 2). Various interviewees involved in the research presented here, including ST*, MP*, NP*, talk of extended periods away from stations, living with these ‘bush people’. ‘Bush people’ would intermittently visit a station’s ‘blacks’ camp’ to obtain supplies of goods such as tobacco (NP24:2-4).

McGrath’s (1987:23) suggestion that Aboriginal people in the period 1910-1940 ‘could travel relatively freely between the cultural worlds of station and bush’ downplays the dangers involved in the bush life. The Ngarinyman man, ST*, has spoken of the actions of policemen such as Gordon Stott:

He bin here all around they bin chase im ‘bout blackfella. All around sandstone, all around there. VRD, all around, la Timber Creek, all around. Tie im up and send im away la Darwin, la jail (ST25:288-290).

Even if they were to escape the deprivations of the police and pastoralists, Aborigines who chose to exist outside the white economy were faced with ecological changes that threatened their ability to make a living in the bush (Berndt and Berndt 1946:10). The country was in decline as cattle consumed those plants and water sources from which native animals made their living.
Against this background, the process of ‘coming in’ to cattle stations of Aboriginal people of diverse linguistic and geographic circumstances continued into the 1930s and 1940s (cf. Long 1992:63):

And people from all that, come all way ‘round, bin working there, y’know, when I bin little boy (PW34:37-38).

The Berndts (1987), during their 1944-45 fieldwork on Vestey stations, noted that, at Waterloo Station, there were nineteen men, including three Gurindji, one Malngin, four Miriwiwong and eight Ngarinyinman (1987:94), and fourteen women, including ten Ngarinyinman and one Gurindji-Mudbura (1987:187). At nearby Limbunya Station (in Malngin country) the situation was similar: thirty-three men, including twenty-one Gurindji-Mudbura (mainly from Wave Hill), eight Malngin and one Malngin-Ngarinyinman (1987:85), and twenty-four women, including eighteen Gurindji-Mudbura and five Malngin (1987:187). Engineer Jack Japaljari, a Warlpiri man, has spoken of Gurindji, Mudburra, and Warmarla people at the Wave Hill Station in the early 1930s being ‘all mixed up’ (Read and Read 1991:89-90, Read and Japaljari 1978).

Berndt and Berndt (1987:59) also documented intermarriage between Aboriginal residents of Wave Hill and those living on other stations, including Rosewood, Mistake Creek, Ord River, Waterloo, and Limbunya, and concluded that one factor in the spread of relationships was the practice of sending young boys to stations where labour was scarce to ‘learn their trade’.

Kaberry, an anthropologist who did fieldwork in the East Kimberley in the 1930s, found a ‘breaking down of tribal boundaries’ (1937:95) amongst the Wolmeri, Jaru, Kunian, Lunga and Malngin peoples of this region. Rose and Lewis (1989:23) have posited a similar phenomenon for the Victoria River region. Kaberry found that this trend towards social amalgamation was in part facilitated by elements of traditional culture such as inter-tribal meetings and the maintenance of Aboriginal Law (1937:95) and also with the state in which ‘the majority of natives in the region are employed on the cattle stations, or else rationed by them’ (1937:90).

Richards (1982:30) argues that where blurring of tribal distinctions did occur it made room for new groupings and estrangements which in turn hastened this same process. She (1982:33) posits a new-found cooperation between diverse Aboriginal groups around the Victoria River prior in the 1920s founded on a uniform dissatisfaction amongst them with European settlement.
3.3.2. Working for Bread and Beef


Though there has been recent work on the role Aboriginal women played as stock-workers by McGrath (1987) and McGrath and Laurie (1985:84), McGrath also notes (1987:58) that such work was taken over exclusively by men some time prior to 1940 (cf. Rose 1992:19). Within the oral history material presented here, MP* talks of working on the stockcamp with her husband PL*, but notes that her work there was as an assistant to the female cook (MP23:47,51-52) and NP* talks of herself and AP* riding horses and ‘looking after bullock’ but not mustering them (NP24:181-189), and not of working in the stockcamp itself.

Amongst the female interviewees involved in this study none of them took on actual stockwork roles. NP* was responsible for the milking of goats and the production of cream at Newry and Kildurk Stations (NP24:92-93,104-105), and RR*, who came to be in charge of the laundry at Mistake Creek Station (RR20:18-19), was initially involved in kitchen duties:

When I bin here [Mistake Creek Station] … I bin working. All day right through. Tea time, dinner time. Finish, and wash all the plate. After that one we go down, bogey then, and after that one we come back, work again. Smoko time. Right through [to] supper [time]. Then after we wash im all the plate and go back again. Alright, that the finish (RR20:3-7).

Male interviewees involved in this study worked in a variety of roles, dictated by the rhythm of the working season. On their return from their ‘bush holiday’, Aboriginal workers were engaged in building and maintaining station facilities essential for the pastoral enterprise, such as stock-yards (DT8:65-67). Mustering of cattle, one of the core activities of Aboriginal workers on stations, occurred throughout much of the Dry season as the conditions allowed their easier transportation (PW34:15-18). As the Wet season approached, other tasks, such as making a stock-pile of cut wood for the station (DT8:63-64), kept workers occupied.

The Berndts (1987:66) note that, even in the 1940s, on Vestey properties stockboys were usually ‘broken in’ (i.e. introduced to the work regime) around the age of twelve, and that the Vestey’s representative in Darwin was anxious that legislation should be altered to allow boys under the age of twelve to work. Many Aboriginal ex-stockman emphasise the
direct role their fathers or other close male relatives had in their learning the skills of stockwork. Younger men were required to watch closely the procedures their fathers and uncles used in dealing with horses and cattle (cf. Read and Read 1991:114-115). PW* has spoken of this:

See [i.e. watch] my father, what he bin do. And after that, old man bin say longa [me] ‘Ah, you know, you know how to handle a horse now, after, because I’m getting little bit too old now’. I bin, I bin say, ‘Ah, don’t worry. I can see what you bin doing. That’s alright’ (PW35:127-130).

It is possible that cattle work itself engendered the maintenance of certain elements of Aboriginal social and cultural life. McGrath (1987:167) has argued that the emphasis Aboriginal stockmen give to learning stock skills ‘proper way’ points to the incorporation of station training and skills into accepted (traditional) frameworks. She suggests that links may exist between stock-work expertise, initiation, and Aboriginal notions of ‘manhood’. Similarly, Tonkinson (1974:107) has written of the co-existence of ‘cowboy’ and ‘traditional’ culture in the Western Desert, and of the interconnections and blurring of the two. Riddett (1985) also notes features of the cattle station stockcamp which, she argues, made it a suitable place for Aboriginal male initiates, and McConvell (1989:22) notes the close connection between the work methods of pastoralism in the region and traditional subsistence, finding open range cattle husbandry to be analogous to traditional hunting (cf. May 1994:53, Baker 1999:109-110). Somewhat contrary to this, though, is Berndt and Berndt’s (1987:91) finding that ‘Aborigines at Limbunya [Station] took a considerable interest in their own [traditional] activities as contrasted with those relating to Europeans and their work’ (and cf. Berndt 1950:67).

Maintenance of other traditional aspects of Aboriginal social, economic and cultural life were facilitated by the measure of autonomy afforded the residents of the ‘blacks’ camp’ by its physical and social distance from the homestead. Shaw (1986:5) argues that generally ‘the white preferred not to interfere directly with “tribal matters” ... so long as these did not disrupt the economic venture’, and Kaberry (1970[1939]:95), in relation to her fieldwork in the East Kimberley in the mid 1930s, argued that cattle stations offered greater prospects for cultural maintenance than did missions, though noting at least one instance of interference by a cattle station manager in relation to Aboriginal marriage arrangements. She (1970[1939]:68) found there was a marked tendency for older residents of cattle stations to educate children on environmental issues and noted that, in contrast, children at the Forrest River mission had not grasped the logic of the kinship system. Indeed, as Morris (1989:53) found for the Dhan-gadi people of New South Wales, it is likely that ngumpin
cultural maintenance was facilitated by the marginal role they played in the *kartiya* economy (cf. Riddett 1990:47).

This marginal role was complemented by the ongoing relevance of *winan*, or traditional trade and trade networks in the region. Palmer and Brady (1991:17) have documented the ongoing relevance of *winan* for residents of Amanbidji Station, with such trade occurring with other Aboriginal people from as far away as the towns of Port Keats, Daguragu, Timber Creek, and Kununurra, and Mistake Creek, Nicholson and Waterloo Stations. They (1991:17) argue that *winan* serves ‘to create bonds between people belonging to different language groups and living in different areas’. Berndt and Berndt (1977[1964]:127) note the trading of women’s ceremonies in the 1940s by Aboriginal women of Limbunya Station, just to the south of Amanbidji Station in Ngarinyman country.

Maintenance of *ngumpin* tradition was also facilitated by the manner in which capitalist and traditional modes of production co-existed in this region. McConvell (1989:6) has written of the ‘bush holiday’ system which facilitated the temporal separation of these modes, with *ngumpin* undergoing an enforced return to the bush for the duration of the Wet season. Various interviewees involved in this study have spoken of the preparations for, and time spent on, such ‘holidays’:

Hunting for bush tucker. Kangaroo, goanna, bush yam, fish, anything. Bush tucker. We living on that. We don’t get ah too much flour, we garram lotta bush tucker (DT9:21-23).

Holiday got us flour, tea and sugar, tobacco. And no tin of tobacco, only tea and sugar and nicky-nicky tobacco. And baking soda, creme of tartar, and soda. Baking soda and creme of tartar and soda. And from there bit of corned beef and take in holiday. And get a material from store and take him for cocking. Wear him (TB16:21-25).

The paucity of provisions provided to *ngumpin* workers and their dependants during the Wet season was matched by the general neglect of their needs during the Dry season. In 1928, J.W. Bleakley, the Chief Protector of Aborigines in Queensland, was commissioned to investigate the circumstances of Aboriginal employment in the Northern Territory (Rowley 1970:259-269). At the time there was a fixed wage of five shillings per week, and Bleakley recommended that wages of between five shillings and one pound per week be paid to Aboriginal workers. Bleakley (1929:32) found that although Aboriginal labour was indispensable to the cattle industry, work and housing conditions were unsatisfactory, remuneration varied with station, older people were not adequately cared for and there was conflict between station management and the ‘bush people’ whose land had been usurped.
At some stations he found that Aboriginal dependants were poorly fed, sometimes receiving only offal and left-overs from the workers’ meals (Bleakley 1929:9).

After further investigation by the Commonwealth, it was decided to exempt stations from paying wages to Aboriginal workers as long as they provided for the dependants of these employees (Rowley 1971:285). Regulation 14 of the Northern Territory Aborigines Ordinance, 1918-43, set up a minimum wage rate and allowed stations to be exempt from the requirement to pay wages where dependants of Aboriginal workers were being maintained by the station (cf. Berndt and Berndt 1987:13, McGrath 1987:122-144).

They bin only leaving us the bread and beef and clothes, y’know. Very hard, that day (PW34:51-52).

Never bin have im clothes everything, before. Only this, we bin working for ration. That’s all (DM10:145-146).

On many stations, particularly those owned by Vesteys, ‘maintenance’ of workers’ dependants was deplorable. Some sixteen years after the publication of the Bleakley report, the Berndts, ‘engaged in intensive observation in the camp over a period of more than five months’ at Vesteys’ Birrindudu Station, found that ‘some of these older people were actually starving’ (Berndt and Berndt 1987:108). Well into the 1940s, Vesteys’ Aboriginal workers were receiving no wages at all (Rowley 1971:286) and their dependants nothing of slaughtered cattle except offal and bones, and not much of these (Berndt and Berndt 1946, 1987:70-72).

From 1933 on, the Commonwealth adopted the Queensland system of trust accounts for the Northern Territory wherein a portion of the money due to a worker was paid over to the local Protector (Rowley 1971:288), which in this region was the Timber Creek police (cf. McGrath 1987:138-139). One of the few records during this period of money from a trust account held by Timber Creek police being given to an Aborigine is that of a police tracker being given goods and cash in order that he could walk to Delamere Station to join his wife (Hemmings 1927c:41). Access to wages held in trust in this case is probably indicative of the privileged position police trackers held in relation to other categories of Aboriginal worker: a position related to their pivotal role in assisting police with the arrests of bush people and Aboriginal ‘outlaws’.

As we have seen above, there is explicit commentary by ngumpin who endured this era, on the paucity of rations and supplies given to workers and their families, especially that which was offered at the end of the working season. Berndt and Berndt (1987:71) note the use of flour bags as clothing on stations—a practice still operating at the time of their visit to the region in the mid-1940s. Bleakley (1929:7) noted that ‘one large firm’ amongst the
stations he surveyed required their workers to return their clothes to the store at the end of
the work season (cf. Richards 1982:31, McGrath 1987:130). In fact, this was standard
practice at Vesteys stations and at the Bovril holding of Victoria River Downs:

Alright we bin [take our] holiday. ‘And you take you,’ [kartiya would] tell im
the people, ‘alright, take your clothes and take your boot off, take your hat
off, and put it back in the store and then go and wear the cockrag and go to
bush (JM3:116-119).

There were exceptions to this niggardly regime:

Yeah, long time ago, him bin start im money la old people, you know.
[Aboriginal] Workers. Yeah, them people from Rosewood [Station]. [Other
white] Bloke bin say: ‘Ah, you bin pay im blackfella too early’. But ‘My
money,’ he reckon. ‘My money’ (ST25:146-147,149-151).

As we have seen, Rosewood Station was taken up by the Duracks and T. Kilfoyle in
1888 and transferred solely to Kilfoyle in 1896. Following his father’s death in 1909, Jack
Kilfoyle took over the running of the station and it remained in his hands until 1952 (Shaw
1983:221). Around 1930, the ‘half-caste’ worker Sandy McDonald was earning two pounds
eight pence per week (Shaw 1992:306), and the Ngarinyman man, Bill Laurie, began work
there in 1934, at the age of eighteen, on eleven shillings per week (Shaw 1992:98), which
rose to three pounds ten shillings per week by 1936 (Shaw 1992:111).

Such were the lines of communication and topics of discussion amongst Aborigines in
the region that Vesteys came to blame the ‘Waterloo labour problem’, i.e. the difficulty in
obtaining and holding labour at their Waterloo Station, on Rosewood Station’s relatively
liberal treatment of Aboriginal employees (Berndt and Berndt 1987:18,97). In the 1940s,
when there were no bitumenised roads in the region, very few cars, and significant legal
constraints upon the movement of ngumpin, Berndt and Berndt (1987:91) found that
Aboriginal women at Wave Hill Station were aware of the even worse conditions that
existed for female domestics at Limbunya Station and whenever the station was mentioned
indicated that it was ‘a place to be avoided’. They (1987:123) note also that an Aboriginal
stockman visiting Vestey’s Birrindudu Station from another station not controlled by this
firm ‘contrasted the place [i.e. Birrindudu Station] unfavourably with the one he came from
… [noting that] “Vestey’s always starve their black-fellows”’.

The lines of communication present were facilitated by men’s work of mustering and
driving, which entailed travel on horseback over long distances and co-operation with other
surrounding stations in the access to and transport of cattle (cf. McGrath (1987:143). It is
clear that Aboriginal workers in the region communicated to each other their respective
work situations and were aware that alternatives existed to the terrible conditions that existed on some stations.

3.3.3. The Relationship Between Ngumpin and Kartiya

Just as the economic conditions endured by ngumpin on cattle stations in this era were generally appalling, so were the social conditions. The Berndts’ fieldwork in this region allowed them to see at first hand the almost ‘feudal’ relations that existed on Vestey’s properties (Berndt and Berndt 1987:272). These relations were premised on the hierarchical ordering of station life (1987:274) around the demarcation between white men and black ‘boys’ (1987:66).

Harney (1958:40) has suggested that a three-tiered (white bosses, white men, black men) ‘caste system’ (cf. Shaw 1981:17) held in the region and affected most aspects of life including eating and sleeping arrangements. In relation to food, bosses ate at the ‘big’ house (the station homestead), men in the kitchen, and Aboriginal workers received their food from the back door of the kitchen, eating it on the woodheap (cf. Rose 1992:193). One of Ronan’s (1954:170) non-Aboriginal characters in his fictional novel based on his experiences as a manager and stockman in the region in the 1920s and 1930s talks of the shame involved for a white man to be dismissed by a station manager ‘like a black’.

These hierarchical relations permeated work relations between ngumpin and kartiya. Berndt and Berndt (1987:101) write of the situation at Birrindudu Station and in the region generally:

One of the features that struck us most forcibly was the energetic nature of the work undertaken by the stockboys, and the comparative inactivity of European men. Many of these openly commented that there was no need for them to undertake any more than was absolutely necessary when there were plenty of Aborigines about, and expressed the opinion that their job was to supervise. This attitude was general among the majority of Europeans, both male and female, with whom we came into contact.

Not surprisingly, given these work relations, the absence of wages and the virtual starvation of older Aboriginal people, there are elderly ngumpin throughout the Victoria River region who understand labour relations during this period as a form of slavery. A Ngarnyman man of Yarralin notes the enforced nature of work in his reporting of the Administrator of the Northern Territory, Gilruth, advising other white men in the Territory on how to deal with Aboriginal men: ‘If you put them on a job, make them prisoner. Make them work for you ... All the men can die, no matter’ (Rose 1991:138).
Whilst charged with protecting Aborigines, Northern Territory Police almost invariably acted to protect the interests of the pastoralists, with ‘runaways’ from stations being pursued and made to return to their place of ‘employment’ (Berndt and Berndt 1987:97). One of the ngumpin men involved in this study has put it so:

Vestey time. Yeah. Him bin very hard. Some white man, we had a cheeky fella too, y’know. Fight la people, like a this. [If you were to] Do wrong thing, fight. Or get the police. That day, y’know. Anything go wrong, might be people get too cheeky, y’know, native people. They get a policeman [to] belt im like a dog. Tie im up la tree … Belt im, and make im slave. Work, y’know. That was very hard y’know (PW34:72-76,107-108).

It was at the operations of ‘small men’ owner-managers such as Kilfoyle’s Rosewood Station, the Farquharson brother’s Inverway Station, Charlie Schultz’s Humbert River Station, and later, R. Durack’s Kildurk Station, that ngumpin found generally better treatment. The ngumpin experience of pastoralism turned in some respects on whether the worker was employed by a ‘small man’ or a large company (Doolan 1977). Many of these small owner-managers worked their stations for a considerable period of time, as opposed to the managers hired by Bovril and Vesteys who often did two year stints in these remote and inhospitable locations before being transferred or resigning (see Stevens 1974:35-36; Riddett 1990:68; Kelly 1952:85,166 for criticism of absentee holdings generally). On the ‘small’ stations it was much more likely that a working relationship which involved mutual respect between owner-manager and Aboriginal workers would develop. On the ‘big runs’, mutual distrust and ill-feeling was the norm.

Inter-racial sexual relationships between (typically, and almost exclusively) kartiya men and ngumpin women were also a feature of station life generally during this period. Sykes (1989:65) argues that sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women and children was ‘part of the pastoral industry employment package’ for non-Aboriginal workers.

The work of McGrath (1987) has focussed on the less exploitative aspects of these sexual relations between kartiya and ngumpin. She notes the widespread taking of Aboriginal women by white men (1987:49-51,68-94) during this period and argues that the former often welcomed this, with white men providing Aboriginal women ‘with new choices which enabled them to evade due punishments, or avoid marrying a man they feared or disliked’ (1987:76, cf. Bell 1983:98). Aboriginal women, according to McGrath (1987:82), ‘learnt how to manipulate’ the economic advantages accruing to sexual relationships with white men.

In contrast to McGrath’s work, Berndt and Berndt (1987:117) write of the giving of preadolescent ngumpin girls to kartiya men and the threats made by the latter if such giving
was refused, including the ‘hunting’ away of those who refused to co-operate. They (1987:117) note also the confusion and hurt experienced by a ngumpin man at Birrindudu Station forced to leave his wife behind at the station when he took his ‘bush holiday’.

Sexual relations between ngumpin and kartiya can be understood to some extent as the expression of economic imperatives. Bleakley (1929:9) commented on the prostitution necessitated by the ‘semi-starvation’ he found on Northern Territory cattle stations, with Aboriginal women supplementing their ‘meagre resources’ by trade with ‘passing travellers’ (see also C. H. Berndt 1950:14). Berndt and Berndt (1987:82) similarly documented the ‘economy of sex’ (cf. Rose 1991:179-188) within the pastoral industry and found that workers’ dependants were often forced to beg for rations of flour, sugar and tea or to provide goods (such as dog scalps) or sexual services in exchange for such goods (Berndt and Berndt 1987:103,108).

Stanner (1979:79) notes that Aboriginal women of the Daly River area in the 1930s, both single and married, ‘were eager for association with Europeans and Chinese’ and in particular for ‘semi-permanent or permanent attachments’. He also notes that their Aboriginal menfolk ‘with few exceptions … pushed them to such service, which always led to a payment of tobacco, sugar, and tea’. Whilst it is possible that this description is to some extent an exaggeration born of the anthropological imperative to document the exotic aspects of culture, there was undoubtedly economic-sexual exchange occurring that was sanctioned by Aboriginal men.

Sexual liaisons between kartiya men and ngumpin women resulted in the birth of ‘half-caste’ children through the region during this and subsequent eras. Whilst ‘half-caste’ boys were ‘left on cattle stations to be trained as stockmen’ (Sweeney 1980:53), ‘half-caste’ girls were taken away from cattle stations to Darwin institutions as part of the Northern Territory Administration’s policy to ‘breed out’ the ‘full-blood’ (Sweeney 1980:53; cf. Parry 1992:183). As the Chief Medical Officer in the Northern Territory from 1927-1939, Dr C. E. Cook, responsible for the Protection of Aboriginal people, ‘tried to bring in a policy of marrying the half-caste girls to whites and to that end, all half-caste girls were taken out of the cattle stations … the police officers were his officers, they were protectors of Aborigines … and they [the girls] were brought to Darwin’ (Sweeney 1980:53).

Within the Timber Creek Police Letter Book of 1927 there is documentation of the removal of a ‘half-caste’ female child from Rosewood Station (Hemmings 1927c:101), despite a plea from Mrs M. P. Durack of Argyle Station that she be allowed to keep her (Fitzer 1927:48). In another case, a ‘lubra’ and her ‘half-caste’ female child were taken from Durack’s Newry Station by Mounted Constable Fitzer. Dr Cook (1927:79) advised Mounted
Constable Hemmings that M. P. Durack had requested their return and told him to use his own discretion as to whether the child should be sent to Darwin, adding that if he decided that the child should indeed be removed, ‘it is not essential that the lubra accompany it’.

Hemmings (1927d:80) did in fact decide that the child should be sent to Darwin, giving as his reason that the ‘blacks camp is not a fit place for a half-caste female’. He deemed that the mother should accompany her child to Darwin and then return to Newry Station. A relatively unexplored aspect of this policy of the preferential removal of ‘half-castes’ is that it further worsened prospects for ngumpin men in finding marriage partners over the next few decades.

Given the conditions they faced, it is of little wonder that throughout this period there was dissatisfaction amongst Aboriginal residents of cattle stations. One of the few ways of expressing this was to return to the bush or attempt to find work at another station, and this strategy was a relatively common practice, at least up until the late 1920s. Hemmings (1928c:213-214) notes that ‘all employers ... appear to have sufficient Aboriginal labour for all requirements and the Abos appear to be remaining in their employment far better than before, and not running away continually as in the past’ [emphasis mine]. One year previously, Hemmings (1927b:34) had reported several cases of Aborigines running away from their employer, and made special mention of Bullita Station, where all sixteen workers had left. This event may constitute an early instance of a group response to the work-based oppression that existed in the region.

However, it was also the case that many Aboriginal workers, and especially those on Vestey stations, could not leave their place of employment without placing themselves in serious danger. Bill Laurie, who himself lived in the bush in this region during the late 1920s, mentions that during the regime of the Waterloo manager, Cockburn-Campbell, this karrīya man and his karrīya headstockman killed ‘two old boys’ from the Sandstone region to the south of the station (Shaw 1992:110). (See Cockburn-Campbell (1985) for an account of the brutality of his father’s regime.)

The social hierarchy we have seen the Berndts (1987) document on Vestey stations was ultimately kept in place by violence such that a reputation for being ‘hard on blacks’ meant more pay for karrīya stockmen and managers (Willey 1971:52). Berndt and Berndt (1987:124) note:

The authority of European men [on Vestey’s stations] was largely based on the threat of force. Their ascendancy rested primarily on the maintenance of fear among Aborigines. Any manifestation or even hint of rebellion was met with instant physical punishment.
Rose (1991) has well documented aspects of kartiya brutality in the region and argues that Aboriginal people were, for most of their station days, ‘controlled through terror’, a terror that was made public only within the bounds of Aboriginal society, with its enforcers denying its existence (Rose 1991:24). According to Rose (1991:167), people taught their children never to argue or fight with Europeans because of the risk of violence associated with such behaviour. There is testimony to ngumpin strategies aimed at minimising conflict with kartiya in the material presented here:

We bin have to sit down [and be] good longa him [i.e. Shadforth, of Auvergne Station], work longa him. Working, you know, anything. Do something, no make a mess. No time, waste im time for work. If we bin sleep all the time, well, flog im up / Hmm. Even boy too, alde belt im up. Put im on the whip, oh yeah. Old Shadforth. That the cheeky one, that old man (BG28:71-74,76-77).

In the climate of fear that prevailed on cattle stations, Aboriginal dissent was rare and invariably met with punishment. Workers would either be ‘sent bush’ (Berndt and Berndt 1987:43) to eke out a living (with the possibility of either being murdered or imprisoned on a cattle-killing charge), physically beaten or even killed. Rose (1991:176) argues that floggings at Vestey stations were designed to discourage rebellion and Berndt and Berndt (1987:103) describe a particularly brutal ‘management strategy’ on Vestey stations wherein Aboriginal men who showed dissent were ordered to take turns ‘thrashing’ each other, while the manager looked on. Such a strategy was possibly intended to help dampen the development of solidarity amongst Aboriginal workers. Even the task of horse-breaking could double as a form of punishment, with managers sometimes making Aboriginal workers who were ‘cheeky’ perform this dangerous task (Berndt and Berndt 1987:117).

A glimmer of hope, of a suggestion of emancipation from these conditions, came with the employment of some ngumpin in Army settlements and work camps (see Berndt and Berndt 1987:155-177 for an examination of these) in towns such as Katherine, Larrimah and Mataranka. Aboriginal people recruited into these settlements found the conditions and treatment they received were better than they had experienced on the cattle stations they came from (Middleton 1977:80). As with the ‘small man’ stations discussed above, these settlements had the effect of making Aborigines aware of the possibility of alternative ways of living that were relatively well paid (Berndt and Berndt 1987:x).

Oh, get paid. That’s the, that’s the time now everybody bin, we bin look, money. Army bin bring em back money. Now we bin show em the wages then. All the time we bin work for clothes, tobacco, bread, beef. Army come through here, and bring em money, we bin look, money. “That’s the money!”
We look it, we look that paper. “What’s this, a paper?” “No, that a note!” Ten dollar, five dollar. We look around, we look longa we hand (Tracker Tommy, in Read and Read 1991:128-129).

Sweeney (1980:23) notes that the army camps ‘set a completely new standard of Aboriginal treatment’: the Aboriginal workers there being fed, clothed, housed and paid according to Army standards whilst receiving good medical attention and normal access to canteens. He reports that several thousand Aborigines passed through the camps. Of the interviewees involved in this study, ST* (ST25:174-185) reports spending time in an Army hospital camp at Larrimah and being involved in the droving of cattle for the war effort, based at Manbullo Station.

Unfortunately for Aboriginal people, conditions were to remain virtually unchanged for several more decades.

3.4. The Welfare Era, 1946-1966

3.4.1. The 1940s

In 1939, the system according to which Police were designated Protectors of Aborigines and the Chief Medical Officer was simultaneously the Chief Protector of Aborigines, gave way with the setting up of the Northern Territory Native Affairs Branch. Chinnery, the appointed Director, took over the role of Chief Protector from Dr. Cook, and Patrol Officers were employed to carry out inspections of working and living conditions on Territory cattle stations (Berndt and Berndt 1987:11, Sweeney 1980:16, Long 1992).

The onset of World War II hampered the recruitment of such workers, but some patrols did eventuate in the Victoria River District and surrounding areas. In 1943, Sweeney’s patrol included Rosewood and Auvergne Stations and Timber Creek; his 1944 patrol included Inverway and Wave Hill Stations, and, at the latter, he reports that he talked with workers there from Waterloo Station. In 1945, Harney’s patrol of the region led him to an encounter, in the field, with the Berndts who were still doing their research on Vestey stations. With the Berndts’ encouragement and support, he reported (Harney 1945b) on the poor conditions that existed at Birrindudu Station (cf. Long 1992:65-66, Rose 1991:152), where elderly dependants had been reduced to ‘cadgers and eaters of offal although their children are all working on this and other stations’.

By 1945 however, the situation in the Territory was such that the Commonwealth Minister of Native Affairs, Johnson, commented on the ‘slave conditions’ in the pastoral industry (Long 1992:78). Due mainly to the high priority accorded the production of beef
during the war, in 1945 the Director of Native Affairs recommended higher cash wages for Aboriginal workers in the pastoral industry, but with the ending of hostilities in the Pacific the matter was dropped (Rowley 1971:286). The ‘slave conditions’ continued, and with them a high rate of Aboriginal mortality:

Then when I bin get up to eighteen some fella bin passed away then. Old people. And that day was very hard too, y’know, no money we bin working, y’know (PW34:38-40).

As we have seen, many of the bigger stations continually ignored their obligations to provide for the welfare of workers’ dependants. A census report (Anon 1960) shows that the interviewee quoted above, PW*, was born in 1928. This gives a date of 1946 for this ‘very hard’ day characterised by the death of old people and the absence of money. Mounted Constable Fitzer (1952) has written of his ‘surprise’ and ‘dismay’ on returning to work at the Timber Creek police station in 1951 (having been away since 1943) to find a great reduction in the Aboriginal population of the region (cf. Duguid 1963:88-89, and Sweeny (1943) on Aboriginal depopulation). ‘Bush’ Aborigines were virtually non-existent, and the Aboriginal numbers at Victoria River Downs Station and Auvergne Station had fallen by two hundred and forty (240) and sixty (60) persons respectively. He (1952) wrote: ‘I have been talking to some of the very old natives who have come back here since my return and they tell me that the natives have mostly died’.

In September and October of 1947, Sweeney introduced Patrol Officer Evans to the ‘western stations’ (Long 1992:79) he had visited in 1943 and 1944:

And when I bin get up somewhere about to nineteen, that Welfare bin come ‘round then. He come around and talk to the people: ‘Might be some time, three or four months time, we do something about find you money’ (PW34:40-43).

As PW* turned nineteen in 1947, this account of Welfare coming to Waterloo Station is almost certainly based in part on Evans’ first visit there. Evans and Sweeney had both spent some time a few months previously with the Berndts at Yirrkala. Now, as with Harney two years previously, they condemned the conditions on Vestey stations and, it appears, spoke to the Aboriginal workers on these and other stations about their concerns, telling them that they were in effect ‘free agents’ (Long 1992:79). The workers themselves were under no illusions about the requirements of their employers:

It is possible that the patrols led to some incremental positive changes in conditions for Aborigines on the stations. Based on his field survey of Territory and Kimberley cattle stations in 1948-9 and 1951, Kelly (1952) notes that drovers he talked to considered that Aborigines were becoming more independent with the protection afforded by the Native Affairs Branch (1952:171). At the same time though, he (1952:173) wrote of the need for stricter enforcement of employer’s obligations towards Aborigines.

Vestey’s were masters of stalling tactics. Writing from Mistake Creek Station in September of 1949, E. C. Evans (1949a:112) advised the District Superintendent of ‘considerable confusion among pastoralists in my area regarding certain aspects of the new pastoral award’. Prompted by station management, he asked head office for clarification of whether the new regulations in regard to pay rates were to be made retrospective and what part of the building programme was to be attended to first. In the mid-1950s, Patrol Officer Greenfield (1955) also noted Vestey’s management’s delaying tactics in relation to housing. Given the intermittent nature of the patrols and the difficulties of communication in this era, such misunderstandings and ‘confusions’ could be, and were, carried on for decades, as a strategy of ‘passive resistance’ (Rowley 1971:307; cf. Riddett 1985) to change.

The Native Affairs Branch continued the police practice of removing ‘half-caste’ children from stations in the region (see Long 1992:80-84). E. C. Evans (1949b) reports removing five children from ‘western stations’ in late 1949 (cf. Long 1992:82). He has suggested that the news that he had taken these children became common knowledge throughout the Aboriginal station communities, and children were hidden from him on his subsequent station visits (Riddett 1990:159). Riddett (1990:160-162) notes that the practice of removing ‘half-castes’ continued at least until the late 1960s.

3.4.2. The 1950s

With the Welfare Ordinance and the Wards Employment Ordinance of 1953, all ‘full-blood’ Aborigines became wards of the state (Rowley 1971:295-99), and matters relating to Aboriginal employment were now the province of the Northern Territory’s Welfare Branch. The Wards Employment Ordinance allowed provision for the training of Aboriginal workers and established a system of licencing for employers.

The Wards Employment Ordinance also required the establishment of a station store where the Aboriginal wards employed by the station could purchase food and goods (Stevens 1974:25). E.C. Evans (1982:18-19) has noted that wages were often a ‘book entry’ only, with Aboriginal workers being directed to the store from which they drew essentials
(flour, tea, sugar) in lieu of payment for work done. Patrol Officers had the authority to approve such arrangements between a pastoralist and his Aboriginal workers (Moy 1950). Rations were ‘bought’ by workers but at grossly inflated prices which left little over from their pay, and sometimes even left them indebted to the station store.

Wages continued to be an important issue for Aboriginal workers. Coombs (1978:159) notes that around 1952 an agreement was reached between Vestey's management, the Welfare Branch, and the Aborigines of Wave Hill Station for Vestey's to provide wages, and not merely rations, in exchange for labour. It is clear that Aborigines working at Wave Hill Station were not happy with the results of this agreement as, three years later, in 1955, a strike was initiated by them. It has been reported that this action was taken because of the perceived breaking of promises made to these workers by Welfare Officers (Kijngayari 1986:306,309; cf. Long 1992:150). In 1949, the rate of pay for an experienced Aboriginal stockman was fixed at one pound per week, and this rate was to remain until 1959 (Rowley 1971:287) and, moreover, was to be paid to the Protector of Aborigines (i.e. Welfare), not the workers themselves (Rowley 1971:277-278). As we have seen, though, throughout this era pastoralists evaded the payment of wages by claiming to be providing for workers’ dependants.

Whilst it was part of the official Commonwealth stance that Aboriginal people in pastoral regions were economically dependent on Europeans (Wise 1954), it has been generally acknowledged that, to the contrary, European pastoralists were economically dependent upon their Aboriginal workers (Bleakley 1929). The 1947 Alice Springs conference between the Commonwealth and the pastoral lessee’s association, which determined the new ration scale and rates of pay, allowed for stations to be reimbursed for the food they provided to workers’ dependants (Long 1992:78). Under this regime, the Aboriginal young and elderly became convenient means by which some stations supplemented and stabilised their somewhat patchy income (Rose 1991:154). Even into the late 1960s, cattle stations, deemed institutions by the Commonwealth, received the social security pension payments of their Aboriginal elderly (Stevens 1974:157; cf. Pitts 1961). Stevens (1974:90-91) has posited Welfare complicity in allowing this so-called ‘nigger farming’, or ‘breeding [of] blacks’ (Peterson 1985:88), to reach the levels that it did.

With the break-up of the Durack empire (which included Auvergne, Ivanhoe, Argyle and Newry Stations) in the early 1950s, Reginald Durack, who had been managing the Auvergne Station, took up the Kildurk lease. Up until then, Kildurk had been little more than a mustering ground for the stations around it: Rosewood, Bullita, Waterloo, Newry and
Auvergne. He took with him one of his trusted Aboriginal workers from Newry station. This man, the father of MP*, GP*, NP*, DP*, PP* and AP*, was a traditional owner of land on the Kildurk lease.

Within the proceedings of the Amanbidji land claim there is testimony to the co-operation that took place between Durack and ngumpin in the establishment of Kildurk Station. The following exchange took place between the claimants’ solicitor (SL) and AP*, and followed a similar account given by GP*:

SL: All right. And do you know how Reggie Durack came to this place [Stewart Yard]?
AP*: Yes, him been come here from Auvergne, come here, asked my old father, old _ [her father’s name] …
SL: Yes.
AP*: … to stay here, so my old man tell him, ‘Yes you can stay here’. But he had that bore there, too salty, water, see.
SL: Right.
AP*: Went to Amanbidji.
SL: Okay.
AP*: And stayed there, that good water, and my father been go and see him, [and said] ‘Yes, you can stop here,’ and it’s the good water, see. He been stay there, now.

(Amanbidji Land Claim Transcript 1991:629)

Anderson (1989b:222), in his analysis of the relationship between the Kuku-Yalanji people of north Queensland and the conservation movement, uses the notion of ‘intervention complex’ to describe and systematise ‘the forces which entered into Aboriginal lives’ throughout the twentieth century. Such complexes, he argues, were diverse and had human focal points who ‘represented in Aboriginal eyes particular forms or instances of European society’ (1989b:222). Within the oral history material presented in this thesis there is testimony to the enlightened regime Aboriginal workers found under Reg Durack and his wife at Auvergne Station in the late 1940s:

Old Durack. Reggie. Hmm. He bin good all way, that old man. Everybody bin good to him too, good work, anything. Girl alde work good. And missus, missus bin alright, look after im girl, you know, good. They bin only love blackfella, you know. Missus and Reg. No more, no more like that, you know, other mob kartiya. Not that two, they bin love blackfella you know, really (BG28:131-137).

An owner-manager, Reg Durack belonged to the ngumpin-favoured category of ‘small men’ mentioned previously. E. C. Evans, on patrol in the region in 1952, found conditions on the station to be much better than on neighbouring stations. Evans (1952) put this down to the fact that, unlike Vestey managers, Durack was ‘not beholden to any authority’ and
furthermore, took ‘the attitude that a contented native is a good worker’. By contrast, at
Mistake Creek Station in 1953, Patrol Officer Lovegrove found that the single men’s
accommodation consisted of an iron hut with a missing wall and a dirt floor. Lovegrove
(1953) noted the absence of messroom, furniture, showers, toilets and coppers for laundry
purposes, and wrote that Mistake Creek was ‘an example of the lack of facilities for both
Natives and Europeans on Vesteys outstations’.

Despite the restrictions involved in working on the cattle stations, some traditional
activities were maintained and new patterns of ‘business’ established. McConvell and
Hagen (1981:48) have drawn attention to the cultural and social adaptation to the seasons
and rhythms of stockwork and settled existence that occurred in station communities.
Aboriginal people compensated for the limitations put upon ‘business’ and cultural life by
returning to country during the Wet season, living on bush resources and participating in
ceremonies. C. H. Berndt found that the ‘big inter-tribal gatherings take place during the
“wet” season’ (1950:17), at Limbunya Station, a Vestey’s outstation of Waterloo Station.
On Meggitt’s brief visit to Limbunya in July 1953, he was told that male initiation still
occurred during the Wet and involved ‘religious and practical instruction’ including ‘a tour
of the local dreaming sites, waterholes, etc’ (1955:48).

There is also evidence that even in the Dry season there was attention to ceremonial
life. C. H. Berndt (1950:33) described ngumpin women performing dances and songs during
the Dry season, generally for a short period in the afternoon and at night, and ceremonies
designed to ensure the early arrival of their men from mustering duties at the end of the
season. She (1950:15) notes that such activity occurred despite moves on the part of station
management to discourage it, and generally found strong evidence of cultural maintenance,
especially in the transmission of knowledge of country and sites, songs and ceremonies
(1950:24).

3.4.3. The 1960s

The regulations entailed by the Wards Employment Ordinance, which came into effect
in 1959, set out a scale of rations and wages and guidelines on conditions applicable to
wards employed in the cattle industry. It was made illegal for a ward to be ‘enticed’ to leave
their employment, whilst allowing payment of less than the prescribed wage to Aboriginal
workers and no interaction between them and the unions (Rowley 1971:299-300). Rowley
notes the passive resistance of management, which, together with Government apathy,
allowed lessees to ignore many of the ordinances (Rowley 1971:304-307).
In the 1960s, Stevens (1974:152-159,166) found that many Aboriginal people of the region perceived there to be an alignment between Welfare and station management that affected them detrimentally (cf. Hardy 1976[1968]:185-187) and Rose (1991:228) notes that many Aboriginal people in the region do not think well of Welfare. Evans and Greenfield, in particular, are criticised by the Gurindji (Kijngayarri 1986:306,309) for failing to deliver in relation to promises made on wages. On the other hand, there is some recognition amongst Aborigines in the region that Welfare acted as a ‘backstop’ (Rose 1991:163, Stevens 1974:14, PW21:35-37,50-51) protecting ngumpin from the worst excesses and violence of kartiya control.

The Social Welfare Ordinance of 1964 repealed the earlier Welfare Ordinance. Along with other legislative changes, the outcome was ‘that there was no Ordinance any longer in existence in the Northern Territory which placed any restriction on Aboriginals specifically as a race” (E. Evans 1981:10).

Aboriginal dissatisfaction continued, both with the level of wages and the conditions in which they had to work and live. An inspection of Waterloo Station in 1960, done to ascertain whether wards were rationed to the same scale as European and other members of the stock camp, found (Ryan 1960:41) that the ration ‘Varies from Bread and Beef to Beef and Bread’. In late 1963, Giese, the Director of Welfare, wrote a letter (Giese 1963) to Morris of Vesteys, raising matters affecting Aboriginal employees under Vesteys’ management. The list of concerns he had included lack of fit accommodation, the use of pensioner’s trust funds by the company, the lack of education and nursing services, and the policy of paying only minimum wages.

By 1966 the prescribed rate of pay for Aboriginal workers in the Northern Territory pastoral industry was less than half that of the unemployment benefit (Rowley 1971:348). Whilst pensions were available after 1960, for ‘legitimately’ non-working Aborigines, i.e. the aged, the sick, mothers and children, there was no category of Aboriginal ‘unemployed’ for official social security purposes in the Northern Territory (Rowse 1993a:280).

The survey of Northern Territory pastoral properties by Stevens (1974) in the late 1960s showed that, of the thirty stations surveyed, three had housing approaching the minimum requirement (1974:98) and seven followed the ration scale (1974:90). He found that children as young as nine years old were working (1974:114), and Aboriginal workers were regarded as dispensable, with ‘spares’ being taken when engaged in the hazardous work of mustering (1974:100; cf. Kelly 1952:50,56, McGrath 1987:39-41). Indeed, another of Ronan’s (1954) fictional non-Aboriginal characters talks of the imperative during World
War II to get bullocks to the Army abattoirs on time; an imperative which cost him ‘three crippled black boys’ (1954:330). Stevens (1966:25) attributed the ongoing ‘officially recognized shortage of aboriginal stockmen in both the Victoria River Downs District and the Kimberleys’ to the poor conditions they endured in these regions.

Stevens (1974:186) also remarked on the ‘overall aura of brutality’ on the cattle stations he visited, which impacted negatively, he surmised, on the possibility of Aboriginal dissent. Dissent had never been welcome as far as the pastoralists were concerned. On one station he visited, he noted (1974:177) that welfare inspections were done in the presence of the manager. Whilst the patrol officer interviewed the Aboriginal workers in turn, the workers stood in a line, with the manager overseeing the process.

The hierarchical work relations we have seen documented by the Berndts for the mid-1940s still survived. A European stockman interviewed by Stevens (1974:120) spoke of the impossibility of an Aborigine being made head-stockman and perhaps summed up the European ideology of race relations on stations in the 1960s: ‘[f]or a white man to work under a black fella would be the lowest thing that could happen to a [white] man’. Ngumpin were aware that they were being oppressed by kartiya and talked of being treated ‘like a dog’ (Hardy 1976[1968]:101; cf. Doolan 1977:107). Ngumpin men in particular resented the still-continuing practice of kartiya taking ngumpin women for sexual purposes (Hardy 1976[1968]:71,80,86,101). In the early 1960s, Aboriginal workers recruited to Waterloo Station from Port Keats (see Map 1) staged a mass walk-off from that station. Ngumpin understand this to have happened as a consequence of the kartiya horse-breaker attempting to sexually interfere with the wife of one of these workers (PW35:482-497). The welfare officer responsible for this region at the time simply notes:

The [Waterloo] station is looking for stockmen as those imported earlier in the year from Port Keats walked off (Dorling 1962:92).

Stanner (1979:262) notes, in the mid-1960s, a ‘quickening of Aboriginal political acumen’ amongst those working in the pastoral industry, associated with an increasing capacity for labour organisation and industrial bargaining. In a similar vein, Stevens (1974:152-159) noted Northern Territory Aboriginal pastoral workers’ awareness of wage exploitation, their contacts with their counterparts in the Kimberley region and their increasing knowledge of unions. Riddett (1985:13-16) has discussed Aboriginal awareness, communication and their independence from the European economy as preconditions for the strikes which were to disrupt the industry in the mid-1960s.

In 1965, the North Australian Workers’ Union applied to the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission for the removal of those clauses in the *Cattle
Station Industry (Northern Territory) Award which discriminated against Aborigines (Middleton 1977:112). In early 1966, the Commission agreed to the removal of the clauses but added a ‘slow worker’ clause aimed specifically at Aboriginal workers, and deferred full award wages to December 1968. Middleton (1977:113) argues that this decision was the catalyst for the Aboriginal strikes in the Victoria River region that were to follow. On May 1, 1966, Aboriginal workers from Newcastle Waters station went on strike, followed soon after by Aboriginal workers at Wave Hill Station (see Rose 1992:19). Middleton (1977) documents the trade union involvement, the stalemate between Vesteyes and workers during the Wet season of 1966-67, the move by the strikers in March 1967 to Wattie Creek (Daguragu), and the series of negotiations that developed between them, Vesteyes, and the Commonwealth Government (see also Hardy (1976[1968]) for an extended description of the strike and its background). The 1966 strike by workers at Wave Hill is part of the common Aboriginal folklore of the region, with stories of it told both by those who took part in it (e.g. Kijingayarri 1986) and those who did not. Rose (1992:21) documents, in relation to the strike, Ngarinyman people’s ‘perception of unbalanced reciprocity through which their land and labour had been used by others’, without adequate recompense.

3.5. Eviction and Land Rights, 1967-1990s

I bin retired now, pension up, now Mrs Fogarty bin leave im me. Alright, Yolngurfumungu he bin tell im me ‘Alright, you fella gotta shift out now. La Bulla.’ Well, I bin talk la missus ‘No, we go to Kildurk, longa _ [EH*], My daughter’ (DD29:16-19).

Aboriginal station workers were included in the Federal Pastoral Industry Act as of December 1968 and by the start of the 1969 mustering season, stations were paying full award wages but trying to limit the number of dependants to a worker’s wife and children (Coombs, McCann, Ross and Williams 1989:27). Mandi, an Aboriginal man the subject of extensive interviews by Bruce Shaw in Kununurra in the 1970s, has spoken of being turned off the station he was living at (Ivanhoe Station) in 1969, the manager telling him to go into Kununurra to ‘find a pension’ (Shaw 1986:204).

By the early 1970s, stations in northern Australia were employing fewer Aborigines as a result of both the introduction of award wages and labour-saving changes in technology and technique which included the use of wire fences, motor bikes, helicopter-mustering, and improved roads and transport (Kerr 1975:26). A ‘massive dislocation’ (Coombs, et al 1989:27) of Aboriginal people from cattle stations in the Kimberley and Northern Territory

The reaction of non-Aborigines to the growing presence of Aborigines in northern towns such as Katherine and Kununurra was largely negative. Shaw (1981:23) found, in 1970, a ‘generalised neglect and intolerance on the part of local Europeans towards the Aborigines in Kununurra’, reflected in the refusal of the Western Australian government to engage in public works on an Aboriginal reserve on the outskirts of the town.

In 1972, there was a walk-off by Aboriginal people on the Victoria River Downs Station and its outstations and at Humbert River Station (Rose 1992:20). Many of these people moved to Daguragu, which by the mid-1970s had become, according to Doolan (1977:107), ‘a symbol of protest’ throughout the region. Soon after an ‘independent [Aboriginal] camp’ (Doolan 1977:112) was established on the East Baines River. This camp, known today as the Bulla Community (see Map 1), was made up mainly of Ngarinyman people who were engaged with the owner of Auvergne Station in lengthy negotiations for an excision large enough for the running of cattle.

Federally, and partly as a response to the 1967 Commonwealth Referendum which resulted in the commonwealth having the power to make laws with respect to Aborigines (Fletcher 1992:1), the Department of Aboriginal Affairs was established in 1973. Altman & Sanders (1991a) and Fletcher (1992) plot the development, since 1972, of policies of self-determination for Aboriginal people and the growth of financial resources made available to them, especially in the 1980s, due both to their inclusion in the welfare state and the proliferation of assistance programs which targeted Aborigines.

Kildurk Station was purchased for the Amanbidji Pastoral Company in 1973 (Doolan 1977:112), with four thousand of the four thousand and two shares being held by the Mialuni Community Inc. The funds for this purchase came from the Capital Fund for Aboriginal Enterprises, set up previously by Prime Minister McMahon.

There is a ngumpin perception that Durack’s selling of Kildurk Station to facilitate their ownership of it involved his recognising the requirement for ngumpin-kartiya reciprocity. Bulla, a Miriwung man of Kununurra, suggests that male Aboriginal workers at Kildurk Station gave Durack a type of white powder, djiri, held to be efficacious in securing
a member of the opposite sex as a partner (see Shaw 1986:185). (There is a large quantity of this clay-like substance at Boxer’s Spring, to the west of the Amanbidji Community, and its importance is documented by Palmer and Brady (1991:49-50.).) Soon after, Bulla suggests, Durack persuaded a Perth woman to become his wife:

That [i.e. Kildurk Station] was his property. I reckon he gave that station to the blackfellers because they gave him the djiri to get married. I suppose that was his return to give that to the station boys (Shaw 1986:185).

With Durack and his wife gone, there were immediate problems, with the Ngarinyman man, Bill Laurie, reporting bad work conditions at the station with the introduction of a new manager there (Shaw 1992:103). Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, there was a succession of kartiya managers at the newly-named Amanbidji Station, with none of them staying more than four years.

Aboriginal political awareness in the wider region continued to ‘quicken’. Shaw (1986) has documented changes that took place in the East Kimberley, which culminated with the formation of the Kimberley Land Council in 1978, and a reaffirmation of Aboriginal religious life. He argues (1986:13) that such developments contributed to ‘a wider regional awareness among the different Aboriginal communities’ in the Kimberley and neighbouring areas, such as the Victoria River region (see also Shaw 1981:29).

The Aboriginal Land Fund Commission, a Commonwealth statutory authority, was formed in 1975 to facilitate the purchase of land for Aboriginal communities (I. Palmer 1988:5-6). This function was taken over by the Aboriginal Development Commission in 1980. I. Palmer (1988) offers a comprehensive overview of the administration of the purchasing of land for Aboriginal groups throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

According to Rose (1984b:38), ngumpin consider the implementation of the Land Rights Act to be the first major kartiya step towards properly moral relations with ngumpin. Claims to land held between 1976 and the present in this region have given ngumpin the opportunity to present their claims and their history in a public forum. The covering up (Rose 1991:19) and silencing of Aboriginal people in this region for the previous ninety-odd years was finally coming to an end.

The introduction of the Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 has had a profound effect upon Aboriginal life in the wider Victoria River region, allowing Aboriginal aspirations for land here to be addressed. A brief background to the Act is given by Young (1992) and a comprehensive overview of most aspects of its implementation by Neate (1989). The Act granted all existing Aboriginal reserves in the Northern Territory as freehold land, enabled Aboriginal claims to unalienated crown land based on traditional
ownership, and allowed for the creation of Aboriginal land councils. The Northern and Central Land Councils were charged with the responsibility to consult with Aborigines in relation to a wide range of land issues. Aboriginal people engaged in pastoralism were now able to convert their tenure from leasehold to Aboriginal freehold (Young 1988b:302).

The inter-group support (Rose 1984b:28) for the Aboriginal strikers in the mid-1960s who left Wave Hill Station to make a camp at Daguragu, foreshadowed the building, during the 1970s, of a ‘one tribe’ (McConvell and Hagen 1981:12) model and ideology amongst the culturally diverse Aboriginal people of Daguragu. The phenomenon of the increasing inclusivity of Aboriginal peoples, leading to an intensification of social ties between different, and at times disparate groups, continued.

This phenomenon, in part initiated by the historical process of ‘coming in’ to stations, became in the context of land claim work in the 1970s, a kind of modus operandi for the reckoning of Aboriginal land ownership. A senior Aboriginal claimant in the Bilinara Land Claim talks of the Aboriginal groups associated with that claim being ‘all mixed up’ (Olney 1991:18), and the claimants, it is reported (Olney 1991:23), identified as ‘all “one group” or “one mob”’.

Similar expressions of heightened and growing unity were recorded amongst those claimants involved in the land claim to Fitzroy Station, to the east of Timber Creek (see Map 2). The Aboriginal Land Commissioner, Gray (1994:25) found that the claimants:

use expressions like ‘company’, ‘fifty’ and ‘close up’ to indicate that they see the responsibilities as shared. Just as the Wantawul and Yanturi groups have become largely indistinguishable in practice, the same process is occurring between other groups.

Various anthropologists (e.g. Bauman, Akerman & Palmer 1984:33-35, Woods, Bauman & Akerman 1989:32), working within the field of Aboriginal land claims in the Victoria River region, have documented these relationships of ‘fifty’, ‘company’ and ‘one mob’ amongst ngumpin people. In addition, McConvell (1975:16) writes of how a group comprised of Ngarinyman and Ngaluwuru have come to be known as ‘one mob’ and call themselves Ngarinyman. In relation specifically to the Amanbidji Land Claim, Palmer and Brady (1991:30) note ‘company’ and ‘fifty-fifty’ shared ownership, between members of the Ngarinyman and Miriwung language groups, of land lying on the western edge of the Amanbidji claim area. Woods, Bauman and Akerman (1989:32) argue:

Notions of ‘fifty’, ‘all same family’ and ‘company’ are embedded in the common affiliations to Dreamings which are active in a number of countries, the joint performance of ritual which celebrates them, and the extensive kinship networks which are relied upon to do so.
Economic and political development for *ngumpin* throughout the 1980s was dominated by ongoing land claims and the establishment of Aboriginal-owned and controlled pastoral enterprises. In 1980, the Northern Land Council lodged a claim for the two thousand, eight hundred and thirty square kilometres comprising the Amanbidji pastoral lease (706) on behalf of twenty-nine Aboriginal claimants.

The latter half of the 1980s is also characterised by the introduction of the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme in Aboriginal communities throughout the region. This scheme, which will be looked at more closely in Chapter 4.6, allows for unemployment benefits to be communally grouped and then distributed by an Aboriginal organisation according to work done in the community. Rowse (1993a) chronicles the implementation of the scheme in Aboriginal communities from its inception in the mid-1970s to the early 1990s (cf. Sanders 1988).

Throughout the 1980s the Amanbidji Pastoral Company and the Amanbidji (Mialuni) Community were funded with a combination of Aboriginal Development Commission (ADC), Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA), and Aboriginal Benefits Trust Account monies (Young 1995:147). In 1990 the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission was established, replacing the DAA and the ADC.

In 1991, the Amanbidji Land Claim was heard and the Tjupanyin Aboriginal Corporation took over the lease of the Mistake Creek Station. In October 1992, the Amanbidji pastoral lease was recommended for grant and by virtue of the Land Rights Act was converted to Aboriginal freehold in 1994. The Mistake Creek Land Claim was heard before the Aboriginal Land Commissioner in 1993.

### 3.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, using a variety of sources including *ngumpin* oral history, I have documented their engagement with *kartiya* in this region within the pastoral industry. In using *ngumpin* oral history, I have attempted to provide a perspective on this engagement which will allow us to better understand some of the circumstances around the giving of oral history material by *ngumpin*, in the 1990s, to a *kartiya* researcher.
CHAPTER 4

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES OF NGUMPIN
Chapter Four: The Socio-Economic Circumstances of Ngumpin

4.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I gave an historical overview of the ngumpin engagement with the pastoral industry in the Victoria River region. This was done in order to facilitate an understanding of the lived experience of elderly ngumpin in this region, especially in relation to the history of their encounter with kartiya.

In this chapter I deal mainly with matters of the present. I outline aspects of the contemporary social, economic and political circumstances of ngumpin in the wider Victoria River region and at Amanbidji Station in particular. In terms of the typology of context I presented in Chapter 2.2.1, I am presenting here data relevant to the broad social and economic circumstances of the production of ngumpin oral history.

In section two I note the major Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population centres in the wider region and look briefly at statistics relating to these populations.

In section three I review those works which consider economic and social aspects of the general Aboriginal engagement with pastoralism and other industries in remote Australia and discuss theories of the articulation of the non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal economies.

In section four I look at the contemporary administration and funding of ngumpin, including the pivotal role of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). In this section I present data which reveals the share of funding that the Amanbidji Station Community receives in relation to other Aboriginal communities in the region.

In section five I consider statistical indicators of the economic and social circumstances of ngumpin vis-à-vis kartiya in the region. I will establish that the race-based economic and social disparities that characterised the incorporation of ngumpin into the pastoral industry are still in existence in the 1990s.

In section six I consider the general operation of the Commonwealth-funded Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme and outline the implementation of this scheme at Amanbidji Station in the 1990s. As we will see in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, past and present work regimes are a common object of critique and evaluation by elderly Amanbidji residents.

In section seven I give a profile of the Amanbidji Station and community (Miyaluni), as I found it during fieldwork there in 1993 and 1994.

In section eight I offer concluding remarks.
4.2. Towns, Communities and Aboriginal Groups in the Victoria River Region

The Aboriginal community at Amanbidji Station has a fluctuating population of between seventy and one hundred people, with some (mainly) middle-aged residents preferring to live in the nearby towns of Timber Creek or Kununurra during the Wet season (December to March), as these places are less likely to be isolated by floods.

The closest population centre to Amanbidji is the Aboriginal community of Bulla, some 120 kilometres by road to the north-east. The population of approximately one hundred and twenty people there comprises mainly Ngarinyman and Ngaliwurru people, with many of its elderly residents having worked at Auvergne Station.

The closest towns to Amanbidji are Timber Creek, approximately 170 km by road to the north-east and Kununurra, some 200 km by road to the north-west. Timber Creek has a population of five hundred and sixty six people, of whom two hundred and twenty one are Aborigines; Kununurra a population of four thousand eight hundred and eighty four, of whom five hundred and ninety seven are Aborigines (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1996 Census).

Nearby, there are other large Aboriginal populations at the communities of Yarralin (approximately 180 residents), Pigeon Hole (80), Daguragu (230), Kalkaringi (210), and Myatt (60). Other, smaller Aboriginal communities exist at Lingara (20), Gilwi (30), Fitzroy Station (20), Line Creek (20), Bucket Springs (15), Mistake Creek (25) and Emu Creek (30).

Table I03 of Australian Bureau of Statistics 1996 Census of Population and Housing (Victoria Balance) shows that of the people recorded for this region there were three hundred and ninety two indigenous people and four hundred and sixteen non-indigenous people. Of these, between the ages of twenty and thirty-nine there were eighty-eight Aboriginal men and fifty-nine Aboriginal women, whilst within the non-indigenous population there were one hundred and nineteen men and sixty-nine women. Thus the ratio of the total number of men to women within this age range was approximately eight to five. The relevance of this statistic will become apparent throughout the text and interpretive chapters to follow (Chapters 6 to 9) in which, amongst other things, I document and discuss Aboriginal men’s critique of sexual relationships between ngumpin and kartiya.
4.3. Internal Colonialism

In Chapter 3 I traced the history of dispossession and oppression of ngumpin in the wider Victoria River region. The elderly ngumpin residents involved in this study endured race-based economic hardship for much of their working lives. Anthropologists such as Elkin (1935) and Stanner (1935) in the 1930s and Berndt and Berndt (1946) in the 1940s pointed out some of these hardships, focussing mainly on the provision of rations to Aboriginal workers and their dependants. We also saw in Chapter 3.3.2 the criticism by Bleakley (1929) of various aspects of conditions for Aboriginal workers in the Northern Territory and, in Chapter 3.4.1, Kelly’s (1952) comments on the need for stricter enforcement of employer’s obligations.

Little else of a critical nature was published on the social and economic circumstances of Aboriginal people engaged in pastoral work in north Australia at least until the 1970s, when Rowley’s (1971) examination of the social and economic situation of Aborigines in remote Australia appeared and in which he reviewed the history of wage payment to Aboriginal workers in the Northern Territory (Rowley 1971:285-310).

Soon after, and based on the fieldwork he did in north Australia in the mid- to late 1960s, Stevens (1974) noted the disparity between Award conditions for white pastoral workers and the Wards Employment Ordinance provisions for Aboriginal pastoral workers. Aboriginal workers on Northern Territory cattle stations in the 1960s received one-fifth of the non-Aboriginal wage, no penalty rates for overtime, no public holidays, two-thirds of the annual leave, one-half of the sick leave and less variety of food (1974:23-25). Stevens (1974:108) noted also that ‘the social and economic gap existing between management [i.e. non-Aborigines] and labour [i.e. Aborigines] on properties in the Northern Territory … [had] very few parallels throughout the world’, and that regulations prohibiting the entry of unauthorised persons into the ‘native camp’ placed legal limitations upon Aborigines’ social lives.

Following this, Stanley (1976) documented various aspects of Aboriginal economic life on five Central Australian cattle stations in 1973, including incomes, wages, employment, receipt of unemployment benefits and other pensions, and housing. Later, Altman and Nieuwenhuysen (1979:8-20) presented and interpreted material from the National 1971 Census relating to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal disparities in education, employment, occupational status, income, housing, and health. They concluded that in each of these fields, Aborigines were heavily disadvantaged vis-à-vis non-Aborigines. Altman and Nieuwenhuysen (1979:59-75) also reviewed the work done by Stevens (1974), Stanley
(1976) and others on Aboriginal economic and social conditions on northern cattle stations as did Broome (1982:124-141) some three years later.

As we have already seen, Berndt and Berndt’s (1987) work, published some forty years after their fieldwork on Vestey stations in the Victoria River region in the mid-1940s, gives a fascinating historical snapshot of the social and economic conditions which confronted ngumpin. They documented the parlous conditions that existed on Vestey stations during their fieldwork period, including the employment of Aboriginal children as young as eight, the poor rations given to workers, the virtual starvation of workers’ dependants, the contempt shown to Aboriginal workers and dependants by management, and the extremely high levels of Aboriginal infant mortality.

The conditions Aboriginal people were made to endure on northern cattle stations were linked to some degree to the economically fragile position this industry occupied throughout much of the twentieth century (cf. Riddett 1990:46). Young (1995:141) notes that, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, non-Aboriginal assumptions on the potential profit-making of Aboriginal-owned cattle stations were poorly founded, and Crough (1993:14), in his overview of Aboriginal participation in the economy of northern Australia, notes the minor contribution the pastoral industry currently makes to the Northern Territory economy.

Throughout much of the twentieth century, the incorporation of Aboriginal labour into the pastoral industry in north Australia allowed pastoralists great flexibility in relation to the provision of wages, housing, food and various other services to their workers. Aboriginal workers in north Australia were denied membership of workers’ unions (Stevens 1974:191-192; cf. Rowley 1971:286-287, Long 1992:79) and were dependent upon the intervention of government officials for amelioration of their working conditions. As we saw in Chapter 3, such action was rare. Whilst wages were virtually non-existent in the region up until the 1950s, even into the 1960s Aboriginal workers were ‘let go’ for part or all of the four month Wet season from December to March, and expected to make their living in a traditional manner, using indigenous bush resources.

The co-opting of the traditional mode of production of Aborigines in such a way as to limit the requirement on pastoralists to provide wages, food, clothing and housing for their Aboriginal workers constitutes an instance of Wolpe’s (1975) ‘internal colonialism’. Beckett (1977:79) defines this as that economic and social relationship which holds when ‘capitalism develops predominantly by means of its relationship with non-capitalistic modes of production’ (cf. Hartwig 1978). Beckett (1977:77) applies this concept to the study of Torres Strait Islanders employed in the pearling industry, arguing that these people had to supplement their small wages with subsistence activities of fishing and gardening, which
resulted in their being ‘anchored to their communities, which became part of the industry’s support structure’. He notes the complicity of past Queensland State Governments in acting to maintain the Torres Strait pearling industry’s access to cheap labour and argues that the development of the cattle industry in Australia can also be understood in terms of this notion of internal colonialism. Whilst this is the case at least up until the introduction of award wages in the late 1960s, a state of ‘welfare colonialism’ (see below) is perhaps a more accurate depiction of the economic position of Aboriginal communities on northern cattle stations from the mid-1970s to the present.

Peterson (1985:87) also uses Wolpe’s model of internal colonialism to describe the relationship between Aborigines and non-Aborigines on Northern Territory cattle stations, specifically pointing to the reduction of labour costs associated with workers being ‘sent bush’ at the end of the mustering season. May (1994), too, has used the associated ‘articulation of the modes of production’ framework to situate Aboriginal people within the Queensland cattle industry.

4.4. Contemporary Administration and Funding of Ngumpin

As we saw in Chapter 3.5, the last three decades have brought some significant changes to Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, including wage parity, access to Commonwealth social security payments, the introduction of the Land Rights Act, and the formation of Aboriginal Land Councils and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. However, in some respects the overall economic and social situation of Aborigines has changed slowly, and not always to their clear advantage. In this section, I will look at aspects of the encounter between Aborigines and Territory and Federal governments in north Australia in the 1990s in order to provide a basis for understanding the economic disparities between ngumpin and kartiya. These economic disparities are the focus of Chapter 4.5, following.

Some writers (e.g. Beckett 1985, 1988, Morris 1989, Rowse 1992, Peterson 1985) have, following Paine (1977a), referred to the socio-economic and political situation in which many Aborigines find themselves today as one of ‘welfare colonialism’, whereby indigenous people can claim government assistance both as citizens and as members of a minority, dispossessed group. Indeed, Beckett (1989) and Morris (1989) both suggest that welfare colonialism contributes to the continued low socio-economic position of Aborigines vis-à-vis their colonisers. Beckett (1989:122) argues that welfare colonialism ‘is the state’s strategy for managing the political problem posed by the presence of a depressed and
disenfranchised indigenous population in an affluent and liberal democratic society’. Morris (1989:203) suggests that the ‘continuing domination’ of the Dhan-gadi people of New South Wales is ‘facilitated through the development of relations of dependency between indigenous minorities and welfare departments’.

At one level, the ngumpin critique of the operation of the CDEP scheme at Amanbidji that I present in Chapter 5.6 is a critique of the inability of successive Federal Governments to solve the problem of unemployment for residents of remote Aboriginal communities in the western Victoria River region.

In addition, the policies directed towards Aboriginal people in the region by the Northern Territory Government (NTG) over the two decades of Northern Territory self-government since 1978 have generally been to the detriment of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations. Rowse (1992:63) documents the NTG’s ongoing bid for ‘non-Aboriginal hegemony over the Aboriginal enclave’ and Crough (1993:14) documents NTG and public opposition both to Aboriginal land rights and the Aboriginal control and purchase of stations. Rose (1984b:35) argues that, for the ngumpin people of Yarralin, ‘government was, and still is, something inflicted upon them from outside which they are powerless to either change or evade’.

Aboriginal people involved in pastoral enterprise have been largely dependent on government largesse. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Aboriginal Development Commission, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, provided Aboriginal-run stations with recurrent funding for salaries, stock improvements and infrastructure items such as bores and fencing (Young 1995:147). With the advent of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) in 1990, funding to Aboriginal cattle stations was based on the submission to the Commission of long term, typically five year, plans prepared usually (and specifically in the case of Amanbidji Station) by accountants. Young (1995:148-149) criticises the funding available to Aboriginal stations in the 1990s, arguing that ATSIC funding ‘is based on the idea that a pastoral operation [on an Aboriginal-owned station] is distinct from the community to which it belongs’ and is thus not tied to a community’s employment or infrastructure needs.

It was also at the beginning of the 1990s that Altman (1990) argued that for Aborigines living in remote communities, the goal of Aboriginal economic equality with the wider Australian population was inconsistent with the goal of economic independence. He based this on locational, structural and cultural factors which made private sector investment in remote Aboriginal communities unlikely and painted a bleak economic future for such communities in the 1990s. Other writers have questioned whether economic independence
is or even should be a fundamental aim of Aboriginal communities, and Rowse (1992:35) in particular seeks to introduce a complexity to discussions of autonomy and self-determination that counters ‘the DAA [Department of Aboriginal Affairs] argument that economic dependence on welfare payments pre-empts autonomy’.

There was and is, however, general agreement (D’Abbs 1989, Crough 1993, Young 1988b) that, in Crough and Pritchard’s (1991:116) wording, a ‘massive’ infrastructure shortfall exists in relation to remote Northern Territory Aboriginal communities. Crough and Pritchard (1991:116) argue that ‘the provision of infrastructure and services by governments [Federal and Territory] is relatively uncoordinated, inefficient and lacking meaningful Aboriginal involvement’. In Chapter 5.3, I document Amanbidji residents’ perceptions of such shortfalls in resources and services.

The establishment of ATSIC saw the responsibility for the delivery of certain other services and resources to Aboriginal communities transferred from the NTG to this new organisation. The Community Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP), one of the main programs run by ATSIC, provides for such things as housing, power, water, sewerage and roads for Aboriginal residents of remote communities. It is left to the ATSIC Regional Councils to determine the distribution of such funding for each region.

In 1993, the Katherine ATSIC region, with twenty four councillors across two sub-regions, was converted into a single region with sixteen councillors. This region, managed by the Garrak-Jarru Council, covers Aboriginal communities over an area of 355,000 square kilometres, including all of the communities in the wider Victoria River region, and extends from the Western Australian border to Queensland. Within this region, the Ngarinyman Aboriginal Resource Centre (NARC), an Aboriginal organisation located in Timber Creek, provides funding and various essential services to some twelve Aboriginal communities in the region (D’Abbs 1989:251) including the Amanbidji Station community. The NARC is funded by ATSIC through the Garrak-Jarru Council.

In its Annual Report of 1995-96, the Garrak-Jarru Regional Council noted that, from 1 July 1995 to 30 June 1996, the NARC received ATSIC funding of $2,888,166 (including $1,882,504 for CDEP wages) out of a total allocation to Aboriginal groups of $27,055,255. In addition, the Amanbidji Pastoral Company received a $110,000 Land Acquisition Grant for the purchase of stock, out of $6,493,205 allocated to the Garrak-Jarru region. This grant represented just one point seven (1.7) percent of this funding available to Aboriginal enterprises in the region.

The relevance of this statistic will become apparent in Chapters 5.6 and 5.7, where I look at perceptions amongst ngumpin residents of Amanbidji Station of their relative
inability to win an equitable share of the resources and funding made available to Aboriginal people in the region.

4.5. Ngumpin-Kartiya Economic Disparities

Young (1988b:297-300) uses demographic, education and occupation, labour force participation and income statistics to chart Aboriginal inequality with non-Aboriginal Australians, finding Aborigines to be a ‘poverty-striken, disadvantaged group’ (1988b:300). In this section I will present additional statistics, which outline ngumpin-kartiya economic disparities in order to contextualise the ngumpin notion of ‘coming up [to]’ kartiya, presented in Chapter 5.8.

Before I present these statistics, I will note the work of Anderson (1988) which focusses in part on ‘the dangers of sole reliance on indicators such as income levels to gauge Aboriginal economic status’ (Anderson 1988:163). In this work, Anderson (1988:155) offers a review of those works by anthropologists, economists, historians and sociologists which look at the circumstances and effects of Aboriginal involvement in ‘the general, industrial based Australian economy’. He cites a number of works which suggest that, whilst gross economic disparities exist between Aborigines and non-Aborigines in a statistical sense, certain cultural and social factors are present and act in such a way that Aboriginal economic circumstances are not necessarily experienced as ‘poverty’.

In particular, Anderson (1988) notes Altman’s (1985) discussion of gambling in Aboriginal communities as an instrument for the redistribution and accumulation of money (cf. Anderson 1982), and Palmer’s (1982) suggestion that the commercial success of an Aboriginal-owned cattle station in the Kimberley was secondary to social and cultural aspects of life for the Aboriginal community residing there as participants in the running of the station.

Elsewhere, Young (1981) discusses the Aboriginal economy of ‘tribal communities’ in rural Australia, looking at those cultural and social aspects of Aboriginal life, such as attachment to land and the subsistence ethic, which impact on the Aboriginal economy. In a later paper, Young (1988a:117) argues that economic criteria are not appropriate in assessing the success of Aboriginal cattle stations such as Willowra and Mt. Allan in Central Australia, as for Aboriginal owners, ‘the maintenance of a satisfactory lifestyle for all is usually of greater importance’. Similarly, Doolan (1977) notes that the Gurindji had no intention of becoming serious competitors with neighbouring stations and saw owning and running a station in a much different way than did non-Aborigines, although McConvell
(1989-4) argues against this, maintaining that the Gurindji did want to run their station ‘like the kartiya’, but also wanted ‘a compromise and adjustment between the white style of running a station and some of their own traditional socio-economic structure’. Young (1995) introduces the term ‘Aboriginal pastoralism’ to refer to specifically Aboriginal ways of managing a pastoral enterprise, and finds a congruence between such pastoralism and Aboriginal subsistence in that it ‘operates within the fundamental social and cultural contexts which reflect the relationships between people and the land’ (1995:141).

Such cultural and social factors also operate at Amanbidji Station and within the region generally, and complicate any attempt to describe the ngumpin residents of cattle stations in this region as being in a state of poverty. Indeed, I am arguing in this thesis that ngumpin-kartiya disparity can only be considered a significant aspect of context to the extent that it is experienced, by ngumpin as disparity. Having noted this, I will now present statistics which outline ngumpin-kartiya economic disparities.

The ATSIC (1994) publication, Indigenous Australia Today, using figures based on the ABS Census of Population and Housing conducted in August 1991, shows that:

- Whilst the national Australian educational qualification rate stood at 31%, the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) rate was 9% and the rate for Aborigines living in the Garrak-Jarru region was between 1 and 4.7%.
- Whilst the national unemployment rate stood at 11% the national ATSI unemployment rate was 31%, which, if adjusted to include CDEP participants, climbed to 45%.
- Whilst there was a national median income of $14,000, the national ATSI median income was just $8,900 and the median income for Aborigines living in the Garrak-Jarru region was between $6,980 and $8,939.

Elsewhere, Taylor (1994) gives statistics which show that Aboriginal workers in the Territory received just forty-two percent of the non-Aboriginal wage in 1986, a rate that dropped to thirty-seven percent in 1991. Daly and Hawke (1993) plot an unemployment rate for Aboriginal men nearly four times higher than that for non-Aboriginal men.

Figures recorded five years later show little change. Table 107 of the Australian Bureau of Statistics 1996 Census of Population and Housing (Victoria Balance) shows that of the two hundred and sixty-eight Aboriginal people surveyed over the age of fifteen, just thirteen, or less than five percent of respondents, had educational qualifications. This compares unfavourably with the one hundred and forty-three non-Aboriginal people out of the three hundred and eighty surveyed, or thirty-eight percent, who had such qualifications.
Table I14 of the same document shows that one hundred and twenty of one hundred and thirty-six Aboriginal people surveyed were classified as labourers and related workers, with none being classified in the four top-ranking occupations of managers/administrators, professionals, associate professionals or tradespersons. Of the three hundred and five non-Aboriginal people surveyed, one hundred and twenty-two were classified as labourers and related workers with another one hundred and thirty-nine within the four top-ranking occupations. That is, all one hundred and thirty-nine of the top-ranking positions in the region were held by non-Aboriginal people in 1996.

A similar situation was described by Paine (1977b) for the Northwest Territories of Canada in the 1970s. Having traced Inuit-colonizer relations in this region and the continuing devaluation of the Inuit in this era, Paine (1977b:41) argues that ‘the marginal places that Inuit occupy in institutional life in the NWT [i.e. the northwest Territories] [and particularly, their non-representation in the government workforce] reflect not only a white refusal (of Inuit) but also Inuit refusals of white terms’.

There is widespread Aboriginal disenchantment with the situation suggested by the figures I have given. The Garrak-Jarru Regional Council Annual Report of 1995-96 cites the 1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey’s finding that fifty-five percent of Aboriginal people in the region were dissatisfied with their housing. Indeed, out of a total population of ninety people at Amanbidji, forty-five required housing according to the ATSIC Housing and Community Infrastructure Needs Survey of 1992. There were reported to be thirteen houses and eight ‘shelters’ then in use within the community.

In addition, the vision statement of the Garrak-Jarru Regional Council, presented within this same Annual Report, indicates an awareness of disparities and inequalities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. An explicit aim of the Council is:

To ensure that the Aboriginal people of the Garrak-Jarru region achieve a standard of living equivalent to that of the wider Australian Community consistent with cultural needs through an improved level of self-sufficiency and self-management [my emphasis].

This report noted several areas in respect of which improvements leading to greater parity with the ‘wider Australian Community’ could be made, including housing, education, training, employment opportunities, economic development, and health.

Aboriginal disenchantment and awareness of oppression in the Northern Territory pastoral industry has long been recognised. Berndt and Berndt (1987:91) documented Aboriginal pastoral workers’ awareness of exploitation and aspirations for economic and
social betterment circa 1945, noting that Aboriginal workers at Limbunya Station in particular were ‘extremely discontented about the conditions of their employment’. Meggitt (1962:34), on the basis of his fieldwork amongst the Warlpiri of nearby Hooker Creek in the period 1953 to 1960, found that these people were ‘aware that, in terms of material possessions, power and prestige, they rank low in the hierarchy of social statuses in contemporary Northern Territory society’. Stevens (1974) documented Aboriginal dissatisfaction with wages on northern cattle stations in the mid-1960s, and Rose (1985:60), writing of the situation in the region in the 1980s, notes the anguish Yarralin and Lingarra people experience ‘over treatment which marks them as second-rate citizens’.

I will show later in this thesis, but adumbrate here, that ngumpin embrace a version of what has been termed ‘moral economy’. This term, developed by Thompson (1971) and others (e.g. Scott 1987[1971], 1976), has been used mainly in relation to protest amongst peasant and rural working class peoples in their economic engagement with landlords and the state. It was used extensively in the 1970s and 1980s to examine ‘the system of rights and obligations that surround interpersonal and interclass relations in rural societies … [and] shared normative standards of what constitutes proper behaviour’ (Guggenheim and Weller 1982:3). Thompson (1971:78), in developing this notion, argued that each instance of the English ‘food riots’ of the eighteenth century involved a ‘legitimizing notion’ such that ‘the men and women in the crowd were informed by the belief that they were defending traditional rights or customs; and, in general, that they were supported by the wider consensus of the community’. He (1971:79) argued that the ‘moral economy of the [English] poor’ is constituted by ‘a consistent traditional view of social norms and obligations [and] of the proper economic functions of several parties within the community’. Similarly, Scott (1976:167) argues that ‘a common notion of what is just’ is the ‘moral heritage that … makes possible a collective (though rarely coordinated) action born of moral outrage’.

This thesis shares with the ‘moral economy’ approach a concern for the ngumpin reckoning of the colonial encounter, with this facilitated through the presentation and discussion of ngumpin theses in oral history material (see Chapters 6 and 7). In Chapter 8, I will outline the moral economy amongst ngumpin that revolves around the distribution of both women and money and which is an emergent feature of ngumpin economic engagement with kartiya in the colonial context. For elderly ngumpin, the economic and social disparities which they face today are seen not as part of a natural state but as the historical product of decades of unequal exchange, which involved ngumpin ‘working for ration’ and the ‘stealing’ of women by kartiya.
4.6. The Community Development Employment Projects Scheme

The Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme provides the only source of income for many of the Aboriginal residents of working age at Amanbidji and throughout the Victoria River region. The scheme operates by converting the unemployment benefit entitlements of individuals living in Aboriginal communities into quarterly grants for their community councils for the purpose of undertaking community works. The scheme was initiated by the Commonwealth Government in 1977 and in 1987 expanded rapidly, with the Ngarinyman CDEP scheme initiated in 1990-91. By 1994, the CDEP scheme was operating in more than two hundred and twenty Aboriginal communities, with over twenty-four thousand participants (see Sanders 1997).

Bernardi (1997) places the implementation of the CDEP scheme within the framework of welfare colonialism, arguing that the CDEP scheme has ‘bureaucratized, commodified and disciplined the Aboriginal domain with the effect of indigenising poverty’ (Bernardi 1997:41), and noting that the CDEP rates of pay do not include superannuation, sick leave, holiday pay or casual loadings—things fundamental to working conditions amongst the wider Australian population. He (1997:42) also notes that the requirement to work has resulted in a lessening of mobility amongst Aboriginal people involved in the scheme, leading to less time spent in country and thus undermining ‘a distinctive feature of Aboriginal culture’. Altman and Sanders (1991a:12), somewhat similarly, contend that the scheme can be seen as ‘a form of welfare provision’.

Rowse (1993b) notes various benefits associated with the CDEP scheme, including relatively secure funding and local control of service delivery, but suggests (1993b:59) that ‘the local political economies of the rural and remote regions ... [can be seen as] CDEP ghettos which can contribute little to meeting the long-term aspirations of Aboriginal people for full-time, skilled, well-paid employment in a greater range of industrial occupations’. He also refers to an earlier report on the CDEP scheme by Altman and Sanders (1991b), which found that CDEP funds pay ‘for services to which participating communities would be entitled anyway, allowing other government agencies (local and State/Territory) to evade their obligations’ (Rowse 1993a:269). As with Bernaldi, Rowse (1993b:58) finds that, in the absence of alternative employment, the CDEP scheme tends to lock Aboriginal people into ‘a labour market whose income levels are set by welfare policy, that is, well below the incomes that would be earned from a job in the mainstream economy’.
Some of these pitfalls of the CDEP scheme have been recognised both by ATSIC and the Auditor-General (1991) who was led to suggest (1991:10) that ‘activities undertaken through CDEP should have an underlying objective of assisting Aboriginal communities or groups to improve their social, cultural and economic prosperity’.

They have also been recognised by Aboriginal people themselves. Smith, Adams and Burgen (1990) investigated perceptions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in forty-three communities in the Northern Territory, South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia (twenty-five of which utilised the CDEP scheme), regarding the Commonwealth Government Department of Social Security (DSS) programs and services. They found (1990:39) that DSS payments and programs, including the CDEP scheme, were seen by elderly people as ‘one aspect of “whitefella ways coming in”’ and that residents of thirty-nine of the communities (i.e. 90% of the sample) identified a need for ‘real jobs, real training and real wages’ (1990:58). In relation to the latter, they found a range of criticisms of the CDEP scheme, including concerns with the menial, boring and repetitive nature of the work, a perception that it ‘locks people into community life’ (1990:58) by taking away the need to compete outside it, the fixed low income and associated low standard of living, the lack of recognition within the pay structure for experience, and the lack of mobility compared with the Unemployment Benefit due to administrative red-tape.

Despite such concerns, the introduction of CDEP schemes within Aboriginal communities has generally been welcomed by its participants. Sanders (1993) has argued that the popularity of the scheme is due in part to its effect of strengthening the position of incorporated Aboriginal organisations through the flow of large amounts of money that come through these organisations in the form of CDEP wages and associated monies. Rowe (1993b:59) also notes that the CDEP scheme contributes to Aboriginal regional political development, at least to the extent that the local organisations funded contribute to the ‘political infrastructure of regional decision-making’.

The only form of paid work at Amanbidji is that available through the CDEP scheme, though the headstockman’s wage is ‘topped-up’, or supplemented, by the Amanbidji Pastoral Company. Work under the CDEP scheme at Amanbidji is organised along gender lines, which are further underscored by locational organising principles such that there are certain locational domains of men’s and women’s work.

Men’s work under the scheme at Amanbidji is conducted mainly outside (e.g. garbage collection, house maintenance, fencing) or away from the community (e.g. mechanic, yard-building, stockwork), whilst women’s work takes place almost exclusively inside
(homestead, store, health clinic, woman’s centre, school) with a few of these work sites (school, store, homestead) on the fringe of the community. Young men are employed mainly in the garage, stock-camp, and fencing team, with some middle-aged men participating in each of these work domains but the majority of them working in the community.

Smith (1988:9), in a survey of nine Aboriginal communities in Queensland, found that within community councils, ‘emphasis tends to be upon “men’s work”, with significantly less value placed upon women’s projects in most cases’. Altman and Sanders (1991b:9) write of the ‘entrenched male-dominated public works orientation of the CDEP scheme in many communities’, despite efforts from the mid-1980s onwards to recognise such things as artefact production, cultural teaching and other traditional activities as work.

The CDEP scheme at Amanbidji, though part of a nation-wide program, has an aspect of inwardness, creating few work ties with other Aboriginal communities in the region or the wider non-Aboriginal society. The bulk of the work has as its object either the provision of services for Amanbidji residents themselves, the maintenance of community infrastructure, or work involved in the running of the cattle station. It is only this last category of work that is in any sense outward-looking in that it requires liaison and working partnerships with adjoining stations, especially during the mustering season.

Workers under the CDEP scheme at Amanbidji participate in the program for approximately four hours per week day, beginning usually at nine a.m. and finishing at one p.m. In the afternoons, the young men spend much of their time driving or repairing cars, listening to music, or playing football or cards. The rhythm of the working day has thus been dramatically altered from the ‘old days’, the subject of much of the oral history recorded here (see Chapters 6 and 7).

In that the stock-camp entails physical separation from the community, it is seen as a legitimate site for those younger male residents who act in ways that threaten the cohesion of community life. Young boys thought to be on the verge of becoming ‘trouble-maker’ are sent to the stock-camp, and there may also be a punitive element in this as stockwork is seen as a ‘hard’ work option in relation to the work available in the community, with workers often being obliged to work longer than four-hour days.

CDEP payments are made on a fortnightly basis, alternating with various Commonwealth Government Department of Social Security payments such as the Aged Pension and Single Parent Pension. While this ensures a relatively even supply of money within the community, the difficulty of stretching the basic CDEP ‘wage’, roughly equivalent to the Unemployment Benefit, to cover expenses for a fortnight at a time means
that elderly people are often ‘humbugged’ (i.e. bothered or pestered) for money by younger family members in the second week of the CDEP payment cycle, that is, the first week of the Aged Pension payment cycle.

4.7. Profile of Amanbidji

The Amanbidji community lies to the southwest of Timber Creek, on the Amanbidji Station property, at the southern end of a sixty kilometre stretch of dirt road. The northern end of this road meets the Victoria Highway at a point roughly midway between the towns of Kununurra and Timber Creek, having traversed much of the black-soil plain country which makes up the Amanbidji Station land (see Map 2).

To the south-west of the community is the area known as Pumuntu: the gorges associated with the Leichhardt River (see Map 3). This area is of major importance to traditional Aboriginal owners of land at Amanbidji (Palmer and Brady 1991:26,27), with several residents having been born there or lived there as children, and many others having visited there for the ‘bushwalk holiday’ during the course of their working lives. Pumuntu was one of the main venues for the Amanbidji Land Claim hearing in 1991 and contains sites of relevance to both men and women. On many occasions I was taken to this area by elderly Amanbidji residents on fishing and hunting trips. The Leichhardt River meets the West Baines River to the north of Ngaraltjangin, a landmark also known as Tee Dee Hill (see Map 3). The West Baines River then runs northward along the eastern boundary of Amanbidji Station.

The climate of the Victoria River area is variously described as semi-arid and dry monsoonal (Robertson 1980:3), and has uniformly high temperatures with rainfall markedly seasonal; the majority of it (500-600 mm annually) falling between November and March. The road which connects the Amanbidji community to the Victoria Highway is often impassable for several weeks or even months during this period. The vegetation around Amanbidji Station is dominated by low, open Eucalypt woodlands to the immediate north and north-east and open grassland to the north, south and west (see Smith, Wididburu, Harrington and Wightman 1993). Some fifteen kilometres to the west is an escarpment and, to the east, inaccessible ‘sandstone’ country containing numerous gorges (see Olney 1992:5).

As noted in Chapter 3, in June 1973 the Amanbidji Station was purchased for and registered by the Amanbidji Pastoral Company (APC). The APC has an elected President
and Directors. From 1992 to October 1993, the President of the Company was JP*, a Ngarinyman man who was also employed as the headstockman, with directors including the Ngarinyman men GP*, DP* and PW*. There was also a community council, in principle made up of all the adult members of the community, with, at least until October 1993, JN* (JP*'s older brother) as its elected Chairman. One of JN*'s tasks was to enforce the prohibition of alcohol regulations which exist within the station’s boundaries.

The APC relies upon ATSIC funding for such things as the purchase of breeding stock and the maintenance of station infrastructure. Its approximately fifteen pastoral workers are paid through the CDEP scheme, with the headstockman’s wage being ‘topped up’ by the company. The APC also operates the community store, located near the homestead. The store is the only profit-generating enterprise at Amanbidji.

All the ngumpin, and just one of the four kartiya resident at Amanbidji during 1993 and 1994, resided in the area variously known as the community, camp, or Miyaluni. This area is separate from the homestead and store, which are on top of a small hill, Ngamanpurru, several hundred metres to the south-west of the centre of the community. (Peterson (1985:90) notes that the layout of dwellings on northern cattle stations has historically, and virtually invariably, involved the separation of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal living areas.) This hill and the smaller one beside it are part of the Emu Dreaming: ngamanpurru is the name given to the conkerberry that forms a staple part of the emu diet.

The homestead, the residence of the kartiya station manager and book-keeper, faces the north, overlooking the school and black-soil plains to the north-west. The school is situated at the northern base of this hill, facing the community, and includes the kartiya teacher’s living quarters. The community workshop is some one hundred metres from the southern edge of the community, at the eastern base of Ngamanpurru.

During my relatively brief stay in the community it was possible to observe tensions between unity and disunity at Amanbidji which partly tie in with an emic distinction between ‘old mob’ and ‘new mob’. The former are people who, with direct ancestral links to land at Amanbidji, ‘really belong’; the latter are those who have connections to land elsewhere but who have, for various reasons (usually relating to the work opportunities afforded by the station) made Amanbidji their preferred place of residence. There was, as Tonkinson (1974:41) found for the Western Desert community of Jigalong, in some contexts a new kind of local organisation which united these two groups into the singularity known as ‘the Amanbidji mob’.
The distinction that residents such as MP* and NP*, senior Ngarinyman women and self-proclaimed members of the ‘old mob’, make between themselves and the ‘new mob’ is complicated by the fact that the senior male traditional owner at Amanbidji, GP*, is aligned with the dominant members of the ‘new mob’. These are JN* (the Chairman of the Community Council) and his brother, JP* (headstockman and President of the APC). In that MP* and NP* are GP*’s two eldest sisters, this alignment between GP* and the ‘new mob’ is in some part perhaps predicated on a brother-sister avoidance rule (see Berndt and Berndt 1977[1964]:83, Palmer and Brady 1991:11-12), the workings of which I was to directly observe on the one fishing trip I conducted in which GP*, NP* and MP* were all present. There is in fact a strongly gendered element to the frequent disagreement which characterises relations between these groups, with JN* and DP* (GP*’s brother) at various times accusing NP*, MP* and female members of their immediate families of jeopardising the work of ‘young men’s business’ (i.e. initiation) by, for example, ignoring men’s bans on the use of certain roads or vehicles during the Wet season.

GP*, JN* and JP*, along with the kartiya station manager, form the core of the decision-making body at Amanbidji. Resentment with the lack of community involvement associated with this arrangement is the cause of much of the political tensions within the community. Indeed, NP* often talked about establishing a separate camp at Boxers Spring (see Map 3), known as Pulukula, a place rich in both Dreaming significance and natural resources, to the south-west of the community. This aspiration of hers suggests a lack of fit between the ‘geographic’ and ‘social’ communities (see Crough and Pritchard 1991:11) at Amanbidji. Various writers (Palmer 1990, Doohan 1992, Sansom 1980) note problems with the use of the term ‘community’ in relation to Aboriginal residential groups.

Women are largely excluded from the structures of decision-making that exist at Amanbidji with, up until the October Annual General Meeting of the APC in 1993, all of the Directors of the Company being men, with JN* holding the position of Community Chairman, and his brother, JP* being the President of the Company. It is possible that, as Bell (1993[1983]:97,100,106,249-250) has suggested, there has been a coincidence of interests, to some extent, between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men which has led to the political devaluation of Aboriginal women in this region and the Northern Territory generally. Indeed, as we saw in Chapter 3.4, throughout the 1950s and 1960s the focus of the Department of Native Welfare was on the conditions and wages of male Aboriginal pastoral workers.

Just as germane, though, is the fact that, in this region, Aboriginal men have significantly outnumbered women as cattle workers during the last sixty years. As much of
the financial business of the station revolves around such things as cattle prices, station maintenance grants, and work programs relating to the running of the station as a pastoral enterprise, it is perhaps not surprising that men have come to take positions as decision-makers in this realm.

In addition though, women at Amanbidji are largely excluded from the structures of regional politics, with PW* representing Amanbidji at meetings of the Darwin-based Northern Land Council and GP* being the main point of contact for various government organisations (e.g. the Northern Territory Conservation Commission) with interests in the region. Even the ATSIC representative for the area of which Amanbidji is part is a senior Ngarinyin man of the Bulla community.

There are, however, at least two sites of economic activity at Amanbidji wherein women are ‘boss’. One is the store, which operates largely as a female domain, with women operating the till and book-up system and keeping the accounts. Male involvement here is limited to their involvement in unloading stores which arrive once a week by truck from Timber Creek. The other site is the Woman’s Centre, with the Ngarinyin woman EH* the ‘boss’ for this place. On the one occasion when I enquired of her husband whether I could get the key from him in order to use the kitchen, he advised me to see his wife about access: ‘I got nothing to do with Woman Centre. She the boss for that’.

That certain work sites or domains are gendered in this way finds a parallel in Aboriginal Law, where certain practices and sites similarly have gender restrictions put upon them and wherein knowledge is routinely circumscribed according to one’s sex. It is understood by elderly residents of Amanbidji that men’s and women’s practices and knowledge in relation to Law are distinct and separate. As we saw in Chapter 1.4 at Yarralin there is similarly a gendered separation of ‘business’ (Rose 1992:28). In the words of PL*, a senior male Ngarinyin resident, it is a case of ‘blackfella meself, lubra meself’, and his understanding of ‘lubra Law’ was ‘We [i.e. men] can’t get near [it]. They [i.e. the women] still got im [their Law]’.

Not only is knowledge dependent to some degree upon gender within the domain of Aboriginal Law, even when knowledge is public and accessible the expression or transmission of it may still be gender-circumscribed. In relation to a particular song used in men’s business, PL* commented: ‘Woman can hear him, no sing him. Ngumpin [i.e. Aboriginal men] sing him. That’s all’.

It is possible that this traditional separation of men’s and women’s business is used by certain senior Amanbidji men to their own advantage in the machinations of power that occur in the community. As we have seen, the exclusion of NP* from involvement in the
day-to-day running of the station and the community rests at least partly on the Law-prescribed avoidance patterns that commonly operate between a man and his sister in this region. GP*’s routine insistence on such avoidance did much to hinder communication and dialogue between the ‘old mob’ and ‘new mob’ at Amanbidji and effectively meant NP* and MP* had little say in the running of the community and station. The situation for these women was only worsened by the fact that both JN* and JP* were their classificatory brothers.

In terms of infrastructure and services, Amanbidji is not particularly well provided for. As noted above, some thirteen houses and eight ‘shelters’ house ninety people. The Amanbidji school is a one-teacher outfit that provides education for around fifteen students varying in age from six to twelve, that is, from school years one to seven. The demands upon teaching inherent in such a situation are probably one of the main factors behind the very poor teacher retention rate of this school (see Chapter 5). Young residents seeking further education are generally obliged to go to boarding school, with the preferred locations being either Darwin or Charters Towers, Queensland.

The community store, situated near the homestead, stocks a range of dry goods, frozen meat and fruit and vegetables delivered once per week. It is open only three mornings per week, for between one and a half and two hours at a time. The community workshop operates according to the CDEP time frame, being open for four hours per week-day and at other times when required.

Mail is delivered once a week by aeroplane from Katherine and every second week Timber Creek based health professionals employed by the NTG conduct a clinic in a small shelter near the community meeting shed. The ‘Woman’s Centre’, near the middle of the community, is also open for four hours per day, from around nine a.m. Several women work here on the CDEP scheme, preparing cooked meals for pensioner’s lunches.

The sole recreational facility at Amanbidji is a bitumen basketball court on the edge of the school farthest from the community. Much recreational time is spent, by young, middle-aged and elderly Aboriginal residents alike, in gambling on cards. As with the Gunwinggu people of the Maningrida region in Altman’s (1985) study, such card playing amongst Amanbidji residents ‘facilitate[s] the circulation and accumulation of cash’ (Altman 1985:58; see also McGrath 1987:170, Berndt and Berndt 1947). Sutton, in House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs (1990:59) has suggested that things such as entertainment, sport and gambling, whilst seeming to lie outside the public
domain, may be the very things ‘that contain focal and basic stages on which the Aboriginal public, political and economic life is lived out’ (cited in Rowse 1992:20).

The Amanbidji community does not fall within one of the NTG’s ‘local government areas’, which are designed to facilitate the devolvement of responsibility for the provision of certain services from the NTG to local Aboriginal councils. At Amanbidji, in the mid-1990s, the NTG still had responsibility for maintaining the supply of water and electricity, the sewerage system, and roads.

4.8. Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided information relating to the population and climate of the region and various statistics relating to ngumpin social and economic circumstances vis-à-vis kartiya.

I have given an overview of the ngumpin engagement with the pastoral industry, using the notion of internal colonialism, and an outline of the contemporary relationship between ngumpin and government using the notion of welfare colonialism. The CDEP scheme, an employment program that can be seen as an aspect of welfare colonialism, was treated separately and its implementation at Amanbidji documented.

I have also given a profile of the Amanbidji community, which addresses its physical lay-out, political divisions, infrastructure and facilities, economic activity, and the influence of gender on political activity and expression.
CHAPTER 5

FIELDWORK
Chapter Five: Fieldwork

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter I present ethnographic material garnered from fieldwork during my residency in the Amanbidji Station community. This chapter will complete the project to provide information according to which the oral history material presented in Chapters 6 and 7 can be contextualised. I am especially interested in this chapter in delineating interactions that typically take place between ngumpin and kartiya within the Amanbidji Station community. Whereas in Chapter 3 I looked at the ngumpin perspective on the history of their interaction with kartiya, in this chapter I consider the ngumpin perspective on the present circumstances of such interaction. I include here also my own interactions with ngumpin as these relate to the immediate interpersonal circumstances of ngumpin oral history.

In the second section of this chapter I look at certain aspects of the relationship between ngumpin and kartiya residents of Amanbidji Station and document various ngumpin concerns with aspects of these relationships. In the third section I look at transactions between ngumpin residents of Amanbidji and kartiya in the region generally, including the provision of services and resources by kartiya to Amanbidji residents.

In the fourth section I take the case of the Amanbidji Community Store as a site of disquiet for ngumpin people in their dealings with kartiya. I show that ngumpin residents’ perceptions of the running of the community store ties together some of the historical and social aspects of the relationship between ngumpin and kartiya in the region.

In the fifth section I outline ngumpin ideals, held largely throughout the region, of the working relationship with kartiya. I posit the existence of three requirements put upon kartiya: that they ‘work together’ with ngumpin people, develop bonds of familiarity with them, and act in such a way as to ‘make an improvement’ or contribute to their improved social and economic conditions.

In the sixth section I present common critiques made by elderly ngumpin people of aspects of life at Amanbidji and, as part of this, outline ngumpin perceptions of work relations with kartiya and the operation of the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme within the community. I will show that the nature of work offered through the CDEP scheme is held to be responsible in part for the perceived decline in work ethic and general standards of the young, and for the economic difficulties facing the
5.2. Kartiya Residents of Amanbidji Station

The only permanent kartiya residents at Amanbidji were the school-teacher, station manager, book-keeper, and a young stockman who had married into the community. I will discuss aspects of ngumpin residents’ relations with the first three of these here, and also comment on the positioning of both the school and the homestead, the latter being the residence of the station manager and book-keeper.

As we saw in Chapter 4.7, the one-teacher, Northern Territory Education Department school at Amanbidji was situated several hundred metres to the west of the community, at the bottom of the hill, Ngamanpurru, and separated from the community by the road that led from the main gate to the homestead. The school building incorporated the teacher’s living quarters, and both were completely enclosed in an iron and mesh, cage-like structure which could be padlocked shut. In the period that I resided at Amanbidji, I found the social position of the school to be analogous to its physical position in that, amongst ngumpin residents of Amanbidji, there was very little talk about its activities.

There was, however, much consternation when the teacher present in 1993 left in October of that year, having resigned abruptly. For the next week, the ngumpin children of Amanbidji were without a teacher, which led me to spend time with them each afternoon, teaching them songs. Finally, a replacement teacher and her spouse arrived from Katherine,
without an accompanying Education Department representative, and left largely to fend for herself. Whilst it may have been expected that the Education Department would send an experienced person to manage this most isolated of schools in the region, this teacher was a young woman in her early twenties who had only recently graduated from teacher’s training in New South Wales and who had little contact previously with Aboriginal people. There was concern amongst some of the older residents of Amanbidji that the children were still in some disarray from having had a week away from school. The replacement teacher had an unenviable task.

The following year at Amanbidji there was yet another new teacher running the school. In that year, 1994, a group of seven year old children listed for me the six different teachers they’d had in their short school careers. There was at the Amanbidji school a critical and chronic high turnover of teachers. This had done little to encourage ngumpin participation in the running of the school, with teachers not staying long enough within the community to build the sort of relationships that would facilitate this. There was a noticeable lack of participation by middle-aged and elderly Aborigines of Amanbidji in the running of the school (in fact, this was one of the main gripes of the teacher who resigned in 1993), with the one qualified ngumpin teacher aide at Amanbidji not working in this position during my stay there. The general state of the school may have been part of the reason for the station manager and book-keeper educating their children by correspondence, using the School of the Air, based in Katherine.

The Amanbidji station manager and book-keeper had been working in their positions for four years by mid-1993. The station manager was classified as Janama, and the book-keeper, his wife, as Nawurla. They had been given these skin names on the basis of a relationship that the station manager had with PW*’s brother-in-law, a resident of Katherine. The station manager’s ‘skin’ made PW* his classificatory father. As we saw in Chapters 1.3 and 1.4.1, the granting of classificatory relationships to kartiya is one of the main ways in which ngumpin attempt to position them within their networks of social relationships (cf. McGrath 1987:81,100).

During my stay at Amanbidji there was much discussion about the conduct and presence of the station manager and book-keeper. There was a significant group of residents who felt that these two had been at Amanbidji ‘too long’, and that it was time to find replacements for them. In October, one of the middle-aged men of this group, KA*, was voted to replace JP* as the President of the Amanbidji Pastoral Company (APC). KA*, the son of NP*, a senior female land-owner at Amanbidji, was one of the more outspoken of the


‘old mob’ in their dealings with the ‘new mob’. His election as President can be seen as the working of Anderson’s (1989a:82) dictum that the rights of land-owners as opposed to those of ‘guests’ is ‘one of the most powerful principles governing politics in Aboriginal settlements across much of Australia’ (cf. Williams 1985:263).

In late 1993, I raised with KA* the issue of a ngumpin person or persons being trained to take over the running of the station, wrongly thinking that this might be a priority for those residents such as himself who openly criticised the running of the station. KA* made it clear that he did not think that such a course of action was required, and it transpired later, in mid-1994, that he had a kartiya man, whom he’d worked for before on another station to the east, in mind for the job of station manager. At Amanbidji, contra to the situation that holds at Daguragu (McConvell, personal communication), there is little of the resentment that Williams (1987:29) found amongst the Yolngu people of East Arnhem Land over the non-Aboriginal monopoly on the position of boss, or if there is, it is tempered by other considerations.

These other considerations relate to the reluctance among Aborigines in the wider region to take on positions which, for instance, entail directing fellow residents in relation to work practices. The ngumpin notion, communicated to me by a senior male resident, PL*, that no one person is ‘boss’ in matters of Law, is extended to secular realms to the effect that ngumpin residents are virtually debarred from taking on positions of authority over fellow residents. Similarly, in Central Australia, Myers (1986a:264-265) notes that the job of enforcing regulations in things such as the docking of pay for work not done is not sought by Pintupi people: ‘When it is necessary to avoid the claims of sympathy and compassion, they characteristically prefer to shift the responsibility by delegating such jobs to an outsider … [usually] the Community Adviser’. This may partly explain why JN*, a senior Ngarrinyman man but not a traditional owner of land at Amanbidji, had the position of Community Chairman during most of 1993. As we saw in Chapter 4.7, part of his duty in this position was the potentially onerous task of enforcing the prohibition on alcohol consumption that existed at Amanbidji Station.

The senior male landowner at Amanbidji, GP*, NP*’s brother, was explicit in his desire that kartiya manage Amanbidji station: ‘We gotta have whitefella here. They can do that business for us, whitefella side’. The idea that kartiya are needed to represent and manage the business interests of the station was subscribed to by most residents, and is indeed a common one amongst Aboriginal people in other isolated regions of Australia (see e.g. Tonkinson 1982b in relation to the Aboriginal community at Jigalong).
The management of ngumpin-kartiya relationships at Amanbidji is a complex affair. One source of complexity is that, existing alongside this notion that positions of authority be given to kartiya, there was the perception amongst ngumpin residents that they were denied real responsibility in the running of the station. For many of the residents, this circumscription of Aboriginal responsibility was demonstrated when, during a hot spell in mid-November, and coinciding with the station manager’s absence from the station for a short period, the community’s water supply broke down. As it was only the station manager who knew the procedure that would get the pumps working again, the water remained off for three hot, dry days, during which time water was strictly rationed. It was suggested by EH*, the middle-aged female boss of the ‘Womans Centre’, that this incident was proof that the station manager was not willing to give residents responsibility for important things at Amanbidji. In backing up this claim, she pointed out that GP**’s brother’s wife, EP*, had been working ‘longa store’ for four or five years, but ‘missus’ (i.e. the book-keeper) would still not allow her to open up the store or take the cash for the till there by herself.

The very location of the homestead in relation to the community militates against particular ngumpin taking on the role of resident station manager or book-keeper. Amanbidji residents have a keen sense of the congruity or otherwise of the interplay between spatial and social aspects of existence. There was, for instance, a humorous mapping of dog packs by their proximity to neighbouring communities. PL* and MP**’s dogs were known as the ‘Lajamanu mob’, given their directional proximity to Lajamanu on the south-east edge of the community. This reference was humorous in that PL* and MP**’s dogs were noted for their ferocity and generally unkempt appearance—characteristics seen by Amanbidji residents to be part of the natural state of dogs belonging to the people of the Lajamanu community.

That the homestead is positioned on top of a hill overlooking the community was seen to correlate with its historical occupation by kartiya, who are known to generally understood to be inclined to place themselves apart from and above ngumpin. For this reason, though its continued occupation by kartiya is considered incongruous by many residents, given the contemporary ngumpin ideal of kartiya working ‘alongside’ them (see section 5), it is not considered a suitable residence for ngumpin either.

There were some residents who were clearly displeased with certain interactions that took place between ngumpin and kartiya around the site of the homestead, and who wanted greater separation of the community (‘the camp’ or Miyaluni) and the homestead. There was some disquiet amongst elderly ngumpin residents with the situation in which they were
required to go up to the homestead to receive their pension. NP* argued that whilst it was okay for ‘stockboys’ to receive their pay from the station, pension and CDEP money should be sent to the community to be distributed there, releasing CDEP workers and residents from the requirement to walk to the homestead to receive it. Such calls for the separation of the community and the station may have been part of a political strategy to limit the influence of the manager and the book-keeper over matters pertaining to the community.

There was also a view held by many residents that it was inappropriate for kartiya to live at Amanbidji in relatively luxurious conditions whilst the actual landowners made do with sub-standard housing. Even GP*, a Director of the APC and the main backer of the station manager and book-keeper, expressed reservations about this aspect of contemporary relations between kartiya and ngumpin at Amanbidji. He found it especially difficult to reconcile the ngumpin notion of ngumpin and kartiya ‘working together’ or ‘alongside’, and the notion of equality entailed by that, with the fact that ‘his’ manager had a bathroom and toilet inside his house but he didn’t. He expressed concern with this state of affairs, noting it was especially inappropriate given his status as ‘traditional owner’.

The lack of amenities in the majority of the houses in the Amanbidji community was an important concern for ngumpin residents. At the close of business of the first public meeting I attended there in September 1993, whilst giving notice for his position as Chairman, JN* pointed out that the house he lived in had no toilet or shower, and claimed that Chairmen in other communities were given good houses to live in.

Another primary focus of ngumpin residents’ concerns with the relationship between them and kartiya at Amanbidji was the lack of community consultation that accompanied certain decision-making processes (see Section Nine, below). The situation at Amanbidji, at least in terms of communication, was not unlike that reported for the Arnhem Land Aboriginal community of Oenpelli in the early 1980s, where Von Sturmer (1982:230) found that, with the transfer of decision-making power from the Mission to the Community Council in the 1970s, there was ‘a canalisation of communication … [and] decision-making through the hands of a very small number of individuals’. Many Amanbidji residents considered that not only were there too few people involved in the decision-making process at Amanbidji, but that those individuals who were involved (typically, the station manager, GP*, JN* and JP*) went outside the bounds of their responsibilities and made decisions about the station which affected the community.
5.3. The Provision of Services and Resources by Kartiya to Ngumpin Residents of Amanbidji Station

Amanbidji residents had regular interactions and transactions with certain *kartiya* who visited the community in order to provide infrastructure, goods and services such as food, clothing, housing and plumbing. They also interacted with *kartiya* service and goods providers in the nearby towns of Timber Creek and Kununurra. There was amongst Amanbidji residents a general dissatisfaction with the outcomes of such interactions. In particular, residents complained about such things as their living conditions, their dealings with certain *kartiya* merchants and tradespeople, and access to funding and resources for the station and the community.

Of *kartiya* merchants, fruit-sellers from Kununurra visited Amanbidji every second weekend. During one such visit, I gave MP*, eldest sister of GP*, a lift to their van to save her the walk back to her house with heavy items. She asked for a watermelon and five paw-paws and was clearly surprised when she was charged thirty dollars for them. By the next day, the paw-paws, which were over-ripe and bruised from the 230 kilometre journey to the community, were inedible. MP* complained about this to me and was of the opinion that she had been over-charged for the fruit. She explained that, having asked for the items she received, she had felt constrained to take them and relinquish her money.

Many of the more elderly Amanbidji residents were vulnerable to the ‘hard sell’ tactics of such travelling merchants, due in part perhaps to a history of conditioning which sees *ngumpin* people in this region hesitant to openly oppose *kartiya*. Myers (1982:107) notes that, for the Pintupi of central Australia, many transactions which occur in the ‘white-Aboriginal domain’ are not characterized by relations of equivalence and ‘the Aborigines seem usually to be uncertain whether they are being cheated or not’.

Another travelling merchant operation, the ‘walkabout women’, also visited Amanbidji fortnightly and set up their ‘shop’ underneath the shed whose north-west side formed the wall of my camp. This two-woman, *kartiya* outfit, had a variety of items for sale, including clothes, toys, batteries and confectionery.

Both the ‘walkabout women’ and the fruit sellers used the aggressive selling tactic of offering small items to customers in lieu of change. Whilst the fruit-sellers offered pieces of broken or over-ripe fruit, the ‘walkabout women’ offered small mangoes or, especially in the case of children purchasing toys, lollies. Their tactics with children also included ‘minding’ money for those who attempted to buy an item with less than the correct amount, and the children then being told to return to them with the correct amount.
In relation to their experience of dealing with *kartiya* service providers, Amanbidji residents perceive that there are certain *kartiya* in the region who treat their *ngumpin* customers differently from their *kartiya* customers. Though Amanbidji residents are aware that technically they enjoy the same consumer rights as *kartiya*, they understand also that, in practical terms, this equality is sometimes a fiction. Thus at least one *ngumpin* man preferred to take his car to Kununurra for repairs, even though Timber Creek was slightly closer, given that the garage at Timber Creek was known to ‘take too long with blackfella car’, prioritising the servicing and repair of cars belonging to *kartiya*.

I was to experience at first hand the difficulties involved in securing resources and services at Amanbidji when, in mid-November of 1993, I attempted to get English tutoring resources for a *ngumpin* resident. I met with gross inaction on the part of the Katherine-based Department of Education, Employment and Training field officer responsible for the area, who, in response to my telephone request for information, application forms and materials, suggested that it was too late in the year and I should call him back next year. After trying several times to get him to act on my request I liaised with his Darwin office, which promptly forwarded all the necessary documents. Relating this experience at the time to KA*, he suggested that *kartiya* in government bureaucracies responsible for service delivery to the area rarely serviced the Amanbidji community, and when they did they made no real effort to canvass the community as a whole and thus did not do their job properly. Indeed, the non-attendance of the ATSIC field officer at the October Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the APC was held to be indicative of the lack of interest shown in Amanbidji residents by government agencies.

In relation to living conditions, there was concern amongst some Amanbidji residents about the quality of the water supply to their houses in that the water that came out of the taps in some of the newer houses was black in colour and smelt of dirt. At the public meeting of September, 1993 (see section nine), the station manager requested people’s patience on this matter whilst ATSIC attempted to get the plumber who had done the recent, sub-standard work, to come back and fix the problem. At the AGM which followed, in October, the Regional Director of ATSIC admitted there were problems both with the construction of houses and their plumbing systems at Amanbidji, that some of the houses had been positioned badly and would probably be flooded with Wet season rains, and that some of the residents had problems with dirty water coming from their taps. He put the blame on both the contractors, and the consultants who were paid to look at the completed work, and promised that there would be more controls put upon such projects in the future. Some time after this meeting, JN* complained that the government had constructed these
houses at Amanbidji without any consultation with residents as to where they would be best suited, and so had not taken into account seasonal flooding.

We saw in Chapter 4.4, Crough and Pritchard’s (1991) documentation of the ‘massive’ shortfall in the provision of infrastructure to remote Northern Territory Aboriginal communities. D’Abbs (1989:253) has noted inadequate guidelines for service provision to remote Aboriginal communities on the part of both the Territory and Federal Governments and associated problems with the provision of infrastructure in the Victoria River region. He gives as an example the construction, by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, of six new houses at Bulla Community in the late 1980s, with none of them being connected to the local water supply.

Access to funding and other resources for the station and community was considered by ngumpin residents to be less than adequate. There were ongoing complaints, especially about the lack of money available for the cattle enterprise. Whilst at the public meeting in September 1993 the station manager noted that the station had received a $60,000 ‘cattle grant’ from ATSIC for the purchase of Brahmin heifers, he also noted a recurrent funding problem: there was never much ATSIC money available at the beginning of the Dry season (i.e. April) when it was needed most.

According to the station manager, a lack of communication between the station and ATSIC had resulted in a budget dilemma. The Aboriginal Development Corporation had lent the station $250,000 in 1987, but it was not until 1992 that the present manager had been made aware of this. He claimed that soon after he began as station-manager in 1990 the store alone had debt of $100,000 and the station had few vehicles (of which most were inoperative) and only four hundred head of cattle. As a result of the previous loan and alleged incompetent management, the APC was now in the position of having to pay off $20,000 per year to service its debt, whilst attempting to find money to maintain the equipment necessary (radios, saddles, vehicles, fencing equipment, etc.) for the running of the station.

5.4. A Case Example of Ngumpin Disquiet: the Community Store

The community store was run by the APC and was in fact the only profit-generating aspect of the Amanbidji station, the profits being used for such essential tasks as the maintenance of the station’s four-wheel drive vehicles. This enterprise was conducted at the interface of ngumpin-kartiya relationships, and the conflict it generated encapsulates some of the central issues of this chapter. There was dissatisfaction amongst many ngumpin
residents with the store’s opening hours, its book-up (credit) system, the lack of responsibility given to the ngumpin community in its operation, and the high cost of the groceries sold in it.

It was perceived by some residents that the kurtiya book-keeper was too prescriptive in the running of the store, leaving few aspects of its operation open to community input. In late 1993, some five weeks after becoming President of the APC, KA* indicated the sign outside the office that displayed the store opening hours (three mornings for a total of five hours per week) and commented that these hours had been arrived at by the book-keeper without community consultation. Young (1995:231) notes that the operation of stores in remote Aboriginal communities has historically occurred without effective consultation with Aboriginal people, leading to a failure to recognise the dual potential of stores as both community service and economic enterprise.

Amanbidji residents expressed concern over the lack of responsibility given to those ngumpin workers involved in the operation of the store. It was considered by one woman, EH*, that the woman (EP*) who acted as the store cashier and assistant book-keeper, should have custodianship of the store key, which was kept instead at the homestead. DP*, EP*'s husband, and a traditional owner of Amanbidji land, pointed to the fact that EP* had been entrusted with the key on those occasions when the book-keeper and the station manager took holidays as proof of her trustworthiness: ‘My wife don’t steal’.

Added to this, the store was criticised for being ‘too hard’, which was a comment both on the high price of the goods sold therein and the difficulty in getting those goods on credit. These issues were of such concern that GP* himself attempted to find a resolution to them. During a card game outside his house in late November, during which there was general agreement that the store was ‘too hard’, GP* told the card players that he would talk to the book-keeper and the station manager about this concern. One of the players, PL*, remained unconvinced, even suggesting that ‘the missus’ (i.e. the book-keeper) didn’t keep the book-up system properly and was cheating the residents. Stevens (1974:156) has also noted Aborigines’ perceptions of station stores in the Northern Territory as defrauding mechanisms.

There were no moves towards direct confrontation with the book-keeper or station manager over such issues, and critique was confined to humorous, indirect asides. One morning, when most of the community were present for the hour and a half of shopping allowed, AP* and the book-keeper were working the till when a man called out to AP*, ‘Hey auntie, how much for a pie?’ Before she could reply someone else called out, ‘One hundred dollars!’, which was greeted with laughter by most of the residents present.
The store’s high prices were coupled with a credit limit such that once a resident compiled a debt of one hundred and fifty dollars, they were allowed no more goods on credit. The majority of the elderly people at Amanbidji had a constant ‘book-up’ debt nearing the maximum allowed, with each fortnight’s Social Security cheque being deposited with the store to pay for the previous week’s shopping. (The small amount of money left over from the cheque was used for the first week of that two week cycle; ‘book-up’ was used for the second week.) This system no doubt engendered a perception amongst residents that they were permanently indebted to the store. EH*, for instance, was concerned at being constantly in debt and worried that with this type of arrangement you could never ‘see your money’.

For Amanbidji residents, the profit-making role of the store was reminiscent of the ‘hard days’ in this region wherein the ‘book-up’ was historically used as a means of holding people to particular stations by making them indebted to the station (Durack 1955:100). Historically, indebtedness to the station store allowed police to legitimately ‘round up’ station absconders and return them to their place of work. This perhaps explains some of the general sensitivity amongst Amanbidji residents to the operation of the store. From the perspective of some of the older residents, it was in fact not seen as a community store but, to some degree, an extension and continuance of the ‘hard days’ type of kartiya operation, which ‘enslaved’ people by making them indebted.

5.5. Idealised Relationships Between Ngumpin and Kartiya

At Amanbidji, and in ngumpin communities throughout the region, there is a tension between a perceived subordination to and an idealised equality with kartiya, and this tension reaches its zenith in the domain of work. As we saw in Chapter 3, the ngumpin-kartiya work relationship in this region has historical depth, derived from some one hundred years of ngumpin and kartiya working together in the pastoral industry in this region. Whilst work conditions on the various stations in the region differed according to such things as whether the station was part of a chain of stations with an absent landlord or belonged to an owner-manager (see Chapter 3.3.3), ngumpin workers throughout the twentieth century were aware of these differences.

As we will see in Chapters 6 and 7, there is a ngumpin discourse centred around the character of their work-based relationship with those kartiya involved in the pastoral industry. Such talk has probably existed in this region for much of the last century and has ensured that a historically-derived standard for work relations has developed amongst
ngumpin of the region. There currently exists a ngumpin expectation that kartiya will work together with or ‘alongside’ ngumpin (cf McGrath 1987:145), that is, work in such a way as to negate the social distinctions that have historically held in this region between kartiya overseer-boss and ngumpin worker.

The practice of working ‘alongside blackfella’ has been documented by the kartiya manager Frank Landsdowne (1980), who, like his father (see Interview DP30:58-59), worked as a station manager in the region for several decades. He gives an insight into the psychology behind such a practice:

I only chose boys that would work but I worked with them but you see the thing is, if you work with them, the boy’s got no comeback. You say, ‘Come on, get a move on!’ He can’t say ‘Oh, what you’re doing? Just standing there watching.’ But when you’ve got a sweat up and he knows that you’re doing more than he is, he’ll work. Treat him decently and he’ll work.

McGrath (1987:98) reported a similar phenomenon for this region in the period 1910 to 1940. She argues that white bosses and managers in this era ‘had to work hard in order to encourage the Aborigines to work energetically … [and] the blacks would be keen to gain status by outdoing the boss’. Against this, though, we have, as we saw in Chapter 3.3.3, Berndt and Berndt’s (1987:101) eyewitnessing and documentation of the relative inactivity of kartiya personnel on Vesteys stations in the mid-1940s.

McGrath (1987:145) has noted the existence of a general Aboriginal desire in the wider region ‘to live side by side with the white man’. For elderly ngumpin people at Amanbidji today, the work relationship between ngumpin and kartiya ideally has, as one of its defining characteristics, the practice of, in GP*’s words, ‘work together’. The Landsdowne text suggests there was perhaps a general recognition, amongst both ngumpin and kartiya, of a standard pertaining to their joint work relationship, and a measure of agreement, at least on some stations, on the terms of a reasonable and fair working relationship. Indeed, the lack of respect amongst some Amanbidji residents for the kartiya Amanbidji Station manager in 1993 was based on the perception that he was not a ‘cattleman’ in that he generally did not work alongside his workers in the stockcamp. His somewhat precarious hold on the manager’s position thus stemmed in part from a failure to act in accordance with this idealised ngumpin-kartiya working relationship.

The principle of ‘work together’ was told to me by GP*, just two weeks into my fieldwork in mid-1993, when he talked at length of the behaviour and character of the manager of the Timber Creek agency of the Northern Territory Conservation Commission, who like me was of the skin category Jabija. This kartiya was involved in ongoing consultation with GP* and other senior custodians in the region on matters relating to the
Keep River and Gregory National Parks, taking them on field trips and paying them modest consultation fees. He was considered similar to some of the owner-managers of the past in that he worked ‘alongside blackfella’, but also different in that the projects he initiated had as some of their primary aims the incorporation of certain ngumpin technologies and knowledge (e.g. the seasonal ‘burning off’ of bush land) into kartiya work practices and the dissemination of aspects of ngumpin culture to the broader public. In relation to the latter, the Dreaming significance of landscape around Timber Creek and in these National Parks had become the subject of Conservation Commission displays and tourist stops in the region. The historically-derived principle of working ‘alongside’, coupled with this contemporary kartiya focus on things pertaining to the ngumpin relationship with Aboriginal land, ‘country’, meant that this kartiya was working ‘really for blackfella’.

In the proceedings of the Amanbidji land claim, in 1991, there is a statement of this principle by KA*, who was engaged in dialogue by the solicitor (SL) representing the claimants:

SL: Why is the land claim important to you?
KA*: Why it’s important? Because I would like this land given back to me after my people.
SL: You would like to get the country back …
KA*: Yes, get the country …
SL: … for your people.
KA*: … for my people and the kids.
SL: And for your children. All right.
KA*: Also, if we get it back, you know, anybody invited here.
SL: Okay.
KA*: We all work together.
SL: All right.
KA*: Black and white.
SL: All right. Thank you __ [KA*].
KA*: We’ll share it together.
SL: Okay. Good. Well, I think that’s all the questions I’ve got for you. Thank you.

(Amanbidji Land Claim Transcript 1991:90-91.)

It is clear that the ngumpin ideal of ‘all mates’ is not of a pan-Aboriginal order. Trigger (1997:88) found that amongst Aborigines of Doomadgee and surrounding areas in the Gulf (of Carpentaria) Country of northern Australia, ‘the distinctiveness of Aboriginal life derives considerably from strategies used to distance the indigenous community from social interaction with members of the wider society’. This is certainly due to the fact that the Aboriginal people of Doomadgee had to contend with half a century of ‘authoritarian missionary rule’ (1997:87, a particularly invasive variety of colonialism.)
Young (1995:142) argues that varying attitudes towards European pastoralists by Aborigines may turn on the extent to which they were able to remain on their own, albeit alienated, land. We saw in Chapter 3.4.2 that the history of interaction between ngumpin and kartiya at Amanbidji has dimensions to it rare in regional terms. Many of the senior traditional owners of Amanbidji Station land worked for Reg Durack for many years. His was a regime considered by ngumpin people in the region to have been one of the better ones and he and his wife are generally remembered with fondness (see Interview BG28).

Durack’s regime, from 1952 to 1972, has led to a particular, Amanbidji-based understanding of the history of the encounter between ngumpin and kartiya, which finds expression in the contrast that Amanbidji residents draw between the process of gaining land at Amanbidji with that which occurred at Daguragu. AP*, having listened to NP* speak of the land rights struggle in the 1960s and 1970s at Daguragu, explained it thus: ‘We never bin fight for this place [like at Wave Hill]. Old Reggie bin give it us. He say to us ‘This your country. You gotta come back [and take over from me]’.

It was understood by Aboriginal residents of Amanbidji that the attitude of kartiya towards them was in part dependent upon the length of time that these kartiya had spent in the company of ngumpin people in the region. As a general principle, it was understood that kartiya who had spent time living and working closely with ngumpin people over a period of years were more inclined to treat ngumpin people with respect and in ways that did not violate the principle of ‘work together’. Past managers or owners who had lived on stations when young and so been ‘grown up’ (i.e. taught and generally looked after) by ngumpin residents of those stations were considered amongst those most inclined to behave in appropriate ways.

This emphasis on familiarity may be due in part to the myriad of cultural and social differences between ngumpin and kartiya, which, from both the ngumpin and the kartiya perspective, cause the other to be difficult to ‘read’. Von Sturmer (1985) documents general Aboriginal mores relating to such aspects of communication as greetings, requests, departures and public meetings and outlines the pitfalls associated with lack of knowledge of these things on the part of Europeans who attempt to communicate with Aborigines (cf. S. Harris’s (1976) work on aspects of Yolngu interpersonal communication).

There were violations of this principle of familiarity in the running of Amanbidji station. In mid-November of 1993, KA* talked of the Darwin-based consultants who were given the task of writing the annual report for the station. He expressed dismay that the job could be given to a group of people who had never even seen the station: ‘We don’t know them. How can they write about the place?’ he commented. Young (1995:5-6) argues that
One of the three main faults with development in ngumpin communities is that outside bureaucracies and agencies involved in the process generally fail to consult with those, i.e. Aborigines, undergoing the development. For KA*, the engagement of an agency with no links to the community was detrimental to its interests, and constituted another lost opportunity for its members’ wishes to be heard. The potential channel of communication between Amanbidji and this organisation was felt to be compromised such that the consultants only got the ‘homestead side of the picture’.

One main concern amongst that group of ‘old mob’ at Amanbidji who perceived themselves to be marginalised in terms of decision-making processes, was that the station manager had not overseen any significant community or station improvement during his term there. For a critique based on this perception see Section Nine, below. On one occasion, GP* expressed concern over the prospect of the station manager being replaced and questioned whether someone else would be able, like the present manager, to ‘make a [im]provement’.

For GP*, the present manager’s ability to ‘make a [im]provement’ rested partly on his ability to articulate in an effective way the needs of the station and community residents to important outsiders, including ATSIC and NTG representatives. Talking about the series of events wherein government employees, operating under the Northern Territory’s Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign, used helicopters to shoot thousands of cattle on Amanbidji Station, GP* spoke of the manager’s role in clarifying matters and getting compensation for the APC: ‘They [government workers] never tell anyone [that they were shooting Amanbidji cattle]. … [KB*, the manager] get them to talk to us. Not other manager, only this one now’. The present manager was seen by GP* as being instrumental in the ngumpin residents having a voice, and this capacity was presented as being very much in his favour.

Interestingly, Palmer and Brady (1991:45) report, using direct speech, GP* talking of the (mythical) creative actions of Dreaming beings as their way of making ‘provements’: ‘He (the dreaming ancestor) stop there all the time … when him bin finish his provements in there’). Palmer and Brady (1991:45) translate ‘provement’ as ‘proof’ or ‘evidence’, which perhaps mistakes the etymology of the term, that is, its derivation from ‘improvement’, not ‘proof’. In any event, in GP*’s notion of ‘provement’ it is possible to discern an analogy between progress or improvement and the activities of Dreaming beings.
5.6. Other Ngumpin Critiques

We have seen previously in this chapter ngumpin critique of such things as the behaviour of the kariya station manager and book-keeper and the operation of the community store. In this section I consider another very common ngumpin subject of critique at Amanbidji: the CDEP scheme. The critique of this scheme focusses on both the character and effects of this program.

Elderly ngumpin residents of Amanbidji noted that the CDEP scheme allowed the partial erasure of the spatial, activity-based separation of young men and women. This separation was a crucial aspect of traditional social relationships for today’s elderly ngumpin during their adolescence and beyond. The traditional arrangement both on stations and in the bush in this region, at least up until the 1960s, was a married camp (luku) situated between the single women’s and single men’s camps.

Contemporary work regimes under the CDEP scheme allow young men to remain within the community, whereas previously they were required to work in the stockcamp for much of the year. Many elderly people at Amanbidji found the resulting relations between young men and women in the community to be a source of concern as, in contrast to ‘before’ (i.e. the early to mid-century era when they themselves were pastoral workers), the new arrangement allowed fraternisation between young male and female members of the community. EH* mentioned that in the old days the single men’s camp had been separate from the rest of the community, on its southern edge. In those days, the situation was such that ‘no girl can come up’, and young men and women were compelled to remain apart. The behaviour of the young at Amanbidji ‘this day’ is cause for general shame amongst elderly and even some middle-aged residents.

MP* added historical depth to EH*’s assessment of ‘before’, noting that in the ‘really early days’, all the young people had to camp with the old people. The ‘old people’ taught the young how to dance and sing, and then, after about the age of ten, the girls no longer mixed with the boys of the camp. Here, at Amanbidji, things were, from the point of view of senior women such as MP*, hopelessly mixed: ‘I bin trying to tell them but no, [they] can’t [i.e. won’t] listen’. Some fifty years before, her own husband, PL*, was not allowed to marry her until he’d gone through relevant parts of the Law. The separation of the single men’s and women’s camps ‘before’ was an expression of this traditional requirement for men to have gone through the Law before finding a wife.

There are perceived consequences of this ‘mixing-up’. PL* suggested that the poor Wet season (i.e. a season of little rain) in 1992-93 was a consequence of the curtailment in
that year of Men’s Business, noting that boys were more interested these days in ‘chasing after young woman’ than going through the Law. He concluded ‘This lot myall. Like a whitefella’. This turning away from matters of Law by young men has been accompanied by a similar movement away from station work: which, as we have seen, has been integrated to some extent into traditional culture. The state of ‘boys and girls mixed up’ is held to have had the serious consequence of ‘young boys [being] buggered up for work’, according to NP*, with many of them avoiding the rigors and isolation of stockcamp for work based in the community.

Accompanying this movement away from the stockcamp (for all but the youngest men) is the perceived loss of traditional work skills and work ethic. Whilst talking about the ‘old days’ at Amanbidji, NP* expressed concern with the loss of these skills and blamed this on the attitudes of the younger generation: ‘No cow paddock here. They too lazy to learn’. Given that milk can now be brought cheaply by the carton from the community store, skills such as that of milking cows, passed on to elderly residents of Amanbidji by their elders have virtually become obsolete. The reluctance of young people to learn these skills is held by elderly ngumpin residents to be tantamount to the generational loss of a work ethic.

This perception is reinforced by the fact that the introduction of the CDEP scheme has coincided with the loss of the old rhythms of station life, wherein people rose early, worked for most of the morning and then much of the afternoon before finishing near sunset. As we have seen in Chapter 4, under the CDEP scheme ngumpin workers are required only to do a four-hour day. Late in 1993, in relation to the question of whether the station was going up or down (see section eight, below), NP*, in MP**’s presence, opined: ‘This lot too lazy to make a garden. Just sleeping, playing cards, watching t.v. No good’. From the perspective of the elderly, the work available under the CDEP scheme is of less value than the work they did to ‘build the station up’. NP* put it this way: ‘They don’t get up early. Nothing. These days different. Easy day. All them boy [these days are] buggered up for work. That other day they work proper hard, mustering, branding, catching bullock’. Though there is some support for the CDEP scheme at Amanbidji, it is also seen as allowing a lifestyle that has a deleterious effect upon the young, the station and the community.

Whilst the aged were quick to chastise the young for their perceived lack of motivation and their questionable work ethic, there was also recognition that the situation was not entirely of young people’s making. It was noted by elderly residents that, as in the past, the money available to ngumpin workers provided little incentive to work. Elderly people were aware of the fact that, though ‘sitting down’, as pensioners they were in fact receiving roughly the same money each fortnight as a CDEP worker based in the stockcamp. Early on
my return to Amanbidji in 1994, MP*, in the course of telling me that Amanbidji was ‘a bit down’ observed of the station: ‘They got no young boy. They all go la Kununurra, Katherine. Not get much money here’. Sanders (1993:15) notes ‘the increasingly frequent observation of field workers in CDEP communities, that after an initial flush of enthusiasm, some concern is often expressed about longer-term disenchantment with the scheme and the limited income that it can deliver’.

The station manager and book-keeper were also subjected to some criticism over their perceived mis-handling of the CDEP scheme at Amanbidji. There was considerable tension around the fact that some of the younger women were employed on the CDEP scheme to do domestic duties at the homestead, including laundry and the making of beds. For some residents this was a reversion to a state of affairs that had held during the paternalistic days of kartiya ownership of cattle stations. Both EH* and KA* deplored the fact that young women were still ‘working longa house, sweeping, making beds’. KA* said that this situation was a reminder to him of the old days: ‘My mother [i.e. NP*] worked [like that] for all that kartiya’.

There was also concern with the suggestion in late 1993 that the NARC in Timber Creek was planning to cut people from the CDEP scheme if they moved between communities. The reason given to Amanbidji residents for this measure was that the paperwork involved in re-establishing people on the CDEP scheme was time-consuming. It was suggested to me by several residents that this development was comparable with attempts by police and station managers in ‘the early days’ to keep people in one place. Again, as with critique of the store’s ‘book-up’ system, we have here the use of historical comparison to evaluate present-day phenomena.

The critique of the CDEP scheme and the ‘mixing up’ of young people can be placed within a more general critique of the young given by elderly residents of Amanbidji. Such criticism is often levelled at the younger generation as a group, not at specific individuals. It is also often done in parallel with general critiques of the present (‘this day’) that use representations of the past (‘before’, or ‘early day’) as standards against which the present is juxtaposed.

Critiques of the young by the elderly are often couched in pessimistic terms. NP* gave her assessment of the younger generation at Amanbidji: ‘This lot here like a whiteman. They got no language for country. Yarralin alright. We bin there. Those kids know language, they talk it. This country, nothing. Buggered up now’.
A similar situation was outlined on my first visit to the station in 1992, when I recorded the following exchange between GP* and PW*:

GP*: That’s why, that’s why la Papunya, they know their blackfella way ...
PW*: Yeah.
GP*: ... and they know ...
PW*: Whiteman way.
GP*: ... whiteman way.
PW*: Well nothing here but there might be more whiteman way here.
GP*: Yeah but, not enough.
PW*: No more really y’know.
GP*: Not really.
PW*: Not really. They don’t know much this ...
GP*: You see these young fellas, they don’t know the, whiteman way really, and they don’t know ngumpin way. They can’t speak, own lingo.
PW*: Now that’s why now that young fella won’t trying to find out see.
GP*: Yeah. No they can’t speak, own language.

(GP* and PW*, recorded 5/11/1992)

Similarly, one of the Kija-speaking contributors to Kimberley Language Resource Centre (1996:196-197) criticises, in Kriol, the nyu jenareishan, i.e. new generation, as being unmindful of either non-Aboriginal or Aboriginal law or social mores, and Trigger (1997:99) notes the tendency for older Aboriginal people in the Gulf (of Carpentaria) Country of northern Australia to criticise ‘attitudes and practices’ of the young. Rose (1992:184-185) documents a ‘good natured’ critique of younger women by older women at Yarralin.

The Ngarinyman woman, Amy Laurie (McGrath and Laurie 1985:89), has alluded to a parallel critique of the elderly by the young. This critique centres on the perceived lack of resistance shown by the elderly to the colonising activities of kartiya. McConvell (personal communication) notes that the handling of the ‘knowledge economy’ by senior Aboriginal men and women—and especially the withholding of certain information—is an issue for some of the younger generation, and has even been linked by them to the phenomena of language loss. Though it is possible that such ngumpin critiques by the younger generation of the elderly exist at Amanbudji, I was not made aware of them.

5.7. ‘Speaking Up’

The critique of the young, considered in the previous section, is usually restricted to interactions within small groups. Another mode of communication, known by ngumpin as ‘speaking up’ or ‘talking up’, usually occurs in larger public arenas such as community
meetings. ‘Speaking up’ is the means by which ngumpin present certain claims, including calls for their community to receive a greater share of resources, such as government funding. As we have seen in Chapter 4.4, funding arrangements are such that ngumpin communities within the region find themselves in the onerous situation of having to compete with each other for scarce financial and material resources. Beckett (1985:96) documents the premium Torres Strait Islanders put upon knowing ‘how to talk to white people’, relating this to the requirement for communities under a regime of ‘welfare capitalism’ (Chapter 4.4) to compete with others for amenities and infrastructure.

‘Speaking up’ is also associated with the struggle for land rights as when, in Interview ST2:584, the Ngarinyinman man ST*, in reference to ongoing work he is engaged in on the Mistake Creek land claim says ‘And I gotta talk up for country like, y’know’. In fact a resident’s right and responsibility to ‘speak up’ or ‘talk up’ in public at Amanbidji are dependent upon the depth of their traditional attachment to the land comprising the station.

The phenomena of ‘speaking up’ can be differentiated from other types of Aboriginal communication such as ‘broadcasting’ (Sansom 1980:115), known also by the Aboriginal phrase ‘tellin round’, whereby news is given out in ‘an act of public in-camp communication’ (Sansom 1980:116) designed to ‘clarify intentions and fix a definition of a situation’ (Sansom 1980:142). Walsh (1991:3) has also looked at the phenomena of Aboriginal ‘broadcasting’ wherein Aborigines ‘sometimes project bits of talk to no particular individual … [without requiring a] direct response’. It is also different from ‘proclaiming’, which Sansom (1980:89) defines as a special act of in-camp communication used for the airing of grievances.

We saw in Chapter 4.7 that men occupy most of the public-oriented positions of authority available at Amanbidji. Whilst elderly women at Amanbidji are at least as likely as men to offer critiques of the young and of present-day phenomena such as the CDEP (see previous section), it is men who, in public meetings, are more likely to ‘speak up’, though women may explicitly call for, and so prompt, this style of communication. It is possible that there are traditional elements of communication at work here. In Chapter 4.7 I outlined the traditional separation of men’s and women’s business at Amanbidji and the gendered circumscription of some Law-related discourse such that, whilst for instance ngumpin women were allowed to listen to certain men’s songs, they were prohibited from singing them. McGrath (1987:178) found that in the late 1970s that Aboriginal men were ‘usually introduced as community leaders … and were [more] articulate [than the women] in speaking to Europeans’.
A call to ‘speak up’ is a call for Amanbidji residents to present a united front to the agencies and individuals perceived to be responsible for providing resources to the community. During the AGM of the APC in October 1993, RY*, GP**’s wife remarked: ‘You fellas always arguing. That’s why all them kartiya think Amanbidji rubbish place. Blackfella always fighting’.

Along with gender, age is a major factor in relation to the act of ‘speaking up’. The young at Amanbidji and other Aboriginal communities in the region and elsewhere in the Northern Territory (Myers 1982:88) are rarely charged with responsibility to ‘speak up’ on matters affecting the community.

The correlation between age and ‘speaking up’ may have much to do with the perceived differential efficacy of young and old men’s speech. Myers (1982:92) found that amongst the Pintupi, much of the power accruing to older men derived from their ‘oratorical abilities’, with many young men ‘too shy’ to speak publicly ‘because they have not mastered the speech forms or the ... secret lore which is frequently the subject of discussion’. Similarly, at Amanbidji, whilst it is possible for a man of the younger generation, as KA* demonstrated, to become president of the APC, it transpired that he was unable to direct the actions of those higher in matters of Law than himself, even on such mundane matters as the availability of station loans (i.e. small loans, usually for the purchasing of cars, made available to residents through the APC). LN*, a middle-aged Mudurara man residing in the community and married to NP*’s daughter, disputed KA*’s right to put up a sign on the Womans Centre door indicating the unavailability of such loans, pointing out that KA* had not been put through certain higher facets of the Law. Such resistance to KA*’s actions is partly explainable also in terms of the ngumpin eschewal of being ‘bossed’ by any other ngumpin, expressed in the dictum that, as PL* put it, ‘everyone a boss in blackfella Law’.

There is also considered to be a spatial aspect to the efficacy of acts of ‘speaking up’, such that proximity to funding sources is held to be a factor influencing the distribution of funds in the region. It was believed that, in 1992, the NARC in Timber Creek had diverted ninety five thousand dollars in funds set aside for Amanbidji to build two houses at the community of Line Creek (see Map 2). JN* suggested that the people of Line Creek were ‘closer to that money [at Timber Creek]’ than those of Amanbidji and thus ‘their voices are louder’. Given this perception, it is not surprising that some resentment is felt by certain Amanbidji residents towards ATSIC staff, who, it was said, rarely ventured to the station from their administrative base in Katherine, some 450 kilometres by road to the east.
Without opportunities for face-to-face contact with those in control of funding, Amanbidji residents perceive their chances of receiving adequate resources are limited.

In fact, the Regional Director of ATSIC, present at the October AGM of the APC, correctly gauged ngumpin concerns with being heard when he advised Amanbidji residents at that meeting that, given the funding climate and recent changes to ATSIC boundaries (see Chapter 4.4), it was very important to pick people who would stand up and talk on their behalf in meetings. He noted that the Garrak-Jarru Regional Council controlled the distribution of ATSIC funding to the region, including that set aside for Resource Centres, an infrastructure item coveted by key members of both the ‘old mob’ and the ‘new mob’ at Amanbidji.

Outside the context of public meetings, GP* described as ‘speaking up for’ a certain young, male resident, his giving a character reference for that resident during criminal proceedings of the Kununurra Magistrates Court. Several days after his appearance, GP* informed me that as a result of his actions the man had received a custodial sentence half the length of what had been expected. This was seen by GP* and others as a boon for the community given the small pool of workers at Amanbidji.

We have already seen (section six) the requirement that kartiya put into positions of authority at Amanbidji contribute to its ‘[im]provement’. Those ngumpin residents of Amanbidji with positions which entailed authority were also held responsible for ‘[im]provement’ in that they were required to ‘speak up’ in such a way that they secured material benefits for the community. ‘[Im]provements’ in the provision of resources and materials or the gaining of funds were presented by those in positions of power as being principally the result of their own efforts. Myers (1982:98) discusses similar political moves by Pintupi men, and notes that aspiring leaders advance their personal position by ‘taking on responsibility’, the usual arena for this being within the Aboriginal-European domain and involving the ‘voicing ... [of] concerns and interests’. He (1982:101) notes also that a Pintupi man justified his right to the position of ‘number one councillor ... by maintaining that he had got money, tents, and vehicles for the community’. In what can be seen perhaps as a similar move, in mid-June of 1994 KA* publicly declared that his primary short-term aim as president of the APC was to secure a demountable office with thirty two thousand dollars left over from ATSIC funds.

‘Speaking up’, then, is a political act by which attempts are made to secure for the Amanbidji community those scarce resources whose distribution occurs at the regional level. In that it is often addressed to kartiya, it needs to itself be put into historical context. As outlined in Chapter 3, for much of this century ngumpin have been denied representation
or the chance to voice their concerns on a range of issues including their treatment by pastoralists. As we have seen, one Ngarinyman man suggests that from an Aboriginal perspective the program of land usurpation depended on the silencing of Aborigines by kartiya:

You covered up me with a big swag. Government covered me up. Covered me over. That’s the way he pinched it away that land (Rose 1991:19).

5.8. ‘Coming Up’, ‘Going Down’

The historical situation of working ‘under’ kartiya, as a result of the hierarchical work relations that existed on the majority of pastoral stations (see Chapter 3), provides the contextual framework for understanding the ngumpin notions of ‘working alongside’ kartiya and ‘coming up [to]’ kartiya. We have seen that acts of ‘speaking up’ are intended to secure resources for the community or station that will facilitate its ‘[im]provement’. ‘[Im]provement’ is to some extent synonymous with ‘coming up’, one half of a dichotomous notion that enables Amanbidji residents to plot and assess their community and station’s social and economic position in relation to neighbouring ngumpin communities. The other half of the notion is that of ‘going down’. These notions are also applied to the social and economic state of ngumpin generally. Such terms function, borrowing from White (1991:69), as ‘locative metaphors’ which allow the conceptualisation of social relations ‘in terms of spatial positioning’. Suggestions that another community is making progress or ‘[im]provement’ is generally given in the context of a perceived lack of progress being made at Amanbidji.

Laughren and McConvell (1999) discuss ngumpin spatial expressions and metaphors relating to up/down distinctions. They (1999:3) note that there is a metaphor of ngumpin land-ownership such that ‘a traditional owner is ‘on top of’ and ‘holding down’ land’ and that the Gurindji use the spatial verb ‘climbing’ to refer to the activities of those men undergoing advanced stages of initiation (Laughren and McConvell 1999:7).

In the oral history material presented in this thesis, PW* (PW22:78-80) talks of Amanbidji being recently ‘down’ due to the actions of previous managers, but now ‘up’. The use of similar spatial metaphors has been recorded amongst other Ngarinyman and Gurindji speakers. Rose (1984b:33) records a Ngarinyman man reporting the direct speech of Captain Cook in the following way: ‘And put all my whitefellows on top. This my country’. Kijnsgayari (1986:309), a Gurindji man, reports the direct speech of a Welfare officer promising the Gurindji people better conditions: ‘All that, houses, money, you
Aboriginals will get them level with the Whites’. Shaw (1986:208) also reports the use of the term ‘coming up’ in relation to Aboriginal advancement vis-à-vis non-Aborigines by a Miriwung man of Kununurra.

Amanbidji residents differentiate ngumpin communities in the region on the basis of various things, such as whether the community is declared ‘Dry’ (alcohol-free) or allows the drinking of alcohol, or has a Christian element (such as Bulla) or not. They also differentiate communities as to their perceived ability to maintain aspects of culture such as Law and language and their ability to secure funding for infrastructure items such as Resource Centres. Amanbidji residents are vitally interested in the communities around them and the progress or lack thereof they appear to be making. A community perceived to be ‘going down’ is likely to be one in which there is either a perceived lack of funding, a movement away from cultural maintenance (cf. McGrath 1987:162), or both.

In relation to funding, Yarralin’s perceived progress vis-a-vis Amanbidji, rested at least for one resident (EH*) on the fact that, unlike Amanbidji, it had its own Resource Centre which provided vocational training and programs designed to maintain aspects of culture.

Similarly, NP* based her differential reckoning of Yarralin and Amanbidji on the developmental infrastructure that the Yarralin community had been recently granted, noting that the Yarralin community had, in addition to a Resource Centre, its own CDEP office. For NP* these developments had allowed the Yarralin community to ‘break away’ from the regional system (i.e. administration by the NARC) that Amanbidji was part of. She believed that in doing this the Yarralin community had achieved more control over their finances and more independence: ‘More better. They can see what they got’.

Whether a community is ‘coming up’ or not is also directly tied to the flow of money within the region, such that a perceived deficit in funds is synonymous with a movement downwards. In the context of a discussion of the station’s position in June 1994, NP* held that Amanbidji was ‘going down’, explaining, ‘We got no money’. Evidence for the economic difficulties facing the station was given for NP* by the general state of disrepair of much of the station infrastructure, including fences, roads and stockyards.

There is, as Anderson (1988:162) has suggested, ‘the continuing influence of cultural values on Aboriginal economic behaviour’. ‘[Im]provement’ and strength of tradition are linked from the ngumpin perspective. As we saw in Section Six, there was concern amongst some of the more senior Amanbidji residents that the Amanbidji community was not as tradition-oriented as other communities in the region, such as Yarralin. Elderly residents would often chastise younger members of the community for their lack of such knowledge and their lack of interest in acquiring it: ‘You got no language,’ was a common charge.
levelled at the young by the old at Amanbidji. In giving a reason for Yarralin’s position vis-
avis Amanbidji, NP* related Yarralin’s progress to the maintenance of tradition at Yarralin,
and in particular to the ability of children at that community to speak their parents’
language(s). Indeed there is a general perception amongst residents of Amanbidji that the
Aboriginal people of places further south, such as Daguragu and Lajamanu, have had more
success than they in retaining key elements of their traditional lifestyle. Residents such as
JN* believe that the people at both these communities still have a ‘hard’ Law and, for him,
proof of this was in the fact that payback, or ‘injury reciprocity’ (Warner 1958:151), still
operated at these places.

5.9. A Public Meeting at Amanbidji Station Community

In this section I present material from a public meeting that occurred in September,
1993 at Amanbidji. This material helps to draw together some of the main threads of this
chapter, including the notions of working ‘alongside’ kartiya, of ‘speaking up’ and of
‘coming up’. It also provides data relating to the gendered nature of political life at
Amanbidji.

The character of talk within the public domain in Aboriginal society has been
documented by various writers (e.g. Walsh 1991, Sansom 1980, Myers 1982, 1986a, 1986b,
Eades 1991). It has been suggested that such talk often has as its object the maintenance or
creation of a commonality of interest amongst the participants. Bern (1977:105), for
instance, argues that the ‘village meeting’ in a certain southern Arnhem land community
constitutes that community’s most inclusive political forum, enfranchising all of the
community’s adults and offering ‘a focus through which to express an identity of interests’.

Myers (1986b:433) argues that amongst the Pintupi, meetings are called in order ‘to
sustain and reproduce the shared identity that culturally underwrites their continued
association’, with an ideological emphasis on members of the community being ‘from one
camp’ (cf. Liberman 1982:38-39). There are similarities here with Sansom’s (1980:160)
finding that amongst members of Aboriginal town-camps in Darwin there is a preoccupation
with the unity or ‘collective integrity’ given by public adherence to ‘one word’: statements
which can consist of whole narratives or histories. Sansom (1980) explores the production
of ‘one word’ or ‘mob word’ as it is used within the Aboriginal domain of the town-camp,
and not at its interface with non-Aboriginal society. In contrast, the ngumpin notion of
‘speaking up’ concerns the presentation of a verbal united front to the world outside the
community.
The public meeting I witnessed at Amanbidji took place in a large, two-sided shelter adjacent to the Women's Centre. As with the later AGM of the APC in October of that year, there were approximately forty adults present, arranged by age and gender into three distinct groups: women of various ages on the east side of the shed, young men in the middle, and older men on the west side. The women and younger men were seated on the ground whilst many of the older men sat on flour tins or other makeshift stools. The station manager and book-keeper sat on folding chairs facing the young men with the book-keeper closer to the women; the station manager closer to the men.

This first meeting was an extraordinary one. It was instigated by BO*, a ‘half-caste’ man from Elliott, some four hundred kilometres to the east of Amanbidji. BO* had married into the principal land-owning family at Amanbidji, to NP**’s daughter, and for some time had been instrumental in the voicing of the ‘old mob’s’ concerns with the role of the kartiya station manager.

The station manager opened the meeting, expressing dismay that someone had been ‘talking around’ in such a way as to be ‘rubbishing’ both GP* and JN*. This charge was immediately denied by BO*, who then attempted to engage the station manager on a discussion of ‘community development’, asking him whether he knew what the ‘CD’ in ‘CDEP’ stood for. BO* noted the use of a station grader to upgrade roads on the station used only by members of a kartiya mineral exploration team. He argued that this was a misuse of station resources, given the general state of the community and station, implying a downwards trend in the fortunes of both. (Rose 1992:170 notes the prevalence of conflict over the use of vehicles at Yarralin in the 1980s.)

Prior to this meeting, NP* had expressed concern over the situation wherein the station grader was used to upgrade roads for mining teams but not those used by elderly women residents to procure bush foods (cf. Interview PP31:144-150). The roads to the east of the station were in such a poor state that an earlier fieldwork trip I conducted to procure ground sugar-bag (a type of honey produced by native bees) was abandoned just a few kilometres into the journey. To make matters worse, whilst doing these road repairs for the benefit of a mining company at the end of the previous Wet season, the grader had become hopelessly bogged and remained that way for some weeks before it could be dug out.

Following this discussion, JN* accused BO* of being a liar and referred to MH*, the only kartiya man actually residing in the community, as an example of how ‘kartiya gotta work alongside blackfella’. MH* was a young, quietly-spoken man, working in the stockcamp and married to JN**’s niece. BO*, finding himself implicitly referred to as
...and thus faced with an attack on his identity as an Aborigine, argued that his mother was an Aboriginal woman and that he had complete knowledge of the Law.

The station manager again bemoaned the fact that some residents appeared to be ‘putting down’ JN* and GP*. At this point, PW* stood up and spoke eloquently and for some time on the good state of the station, asking those present to put conflict to one side and to pay GP* the respect due his age and position. This suggestion was followed by commentary by various men present as to whether the station was ‘going up’ or ‘coming down’. JN* suggested that people must work together if it was to go up, and JP*, in one of his few public statements, spoke of the men who ‘built the station up’, pointing out GP*, DP*, JN*, PW*, and KG*, as deserving of respect for their roles in this process.

KA* then suggested to the station manager that for matters such as use of the grader, the whole community council needed to be consulted, not just a few, select men. He argued that generally there should be more community meetings, greater transparency of decision-making, and that women should be given a greater say in the running of the station. Soon after this, the meeting was closed.

5.10. Situating the Ethnographer

Passerini (1987:9), writing of oral history research, considers that apart from the material collected (i.e. the recordings) the ‘actual experience of the relationship with those interviewed’ is also a source of data. In this section I will outline, in a general way, my relationship with the people I interviewed. It is a general account to reflect the fact that my involvement with eight of the sixteen speakers was confined to a two week fieldwork period at Mistake Creek, and with all but five (PW*, MP*, NP*, PL*, and ST*) of the other eight speakers my interaction was limited.

In Chapter 1, I outlined the course of my engagement with ngumpin people at Amanbidji and elsewhere in the region. As noted, I met and talked with PW* and GP* during a two day visit to Amanbidji in November 1992, during which I received permission from GP* to return to the community the following year to research the operation of the cattle station. In March and April of 1993, I spent two weeks at Kununurra and Mistake Creek, collecting data for the Mistake Creek land claim, and whilst there again talked with PW* and various other Ngarinyin man people. In mid-August of that year, I arrived at Amanbidji and stayed there until mid-December, then returned in June of 1994, intending to stay until October but returning to Darwin after just three weeks of fieldwork.
During my first few months at Amanbidji in mid- to late 1993, I established relationships with a number of residents there, but in terms of structured fieldwork was engaged primarily with MP* and NP*, who attempted to teach me the Ngarinyin language, and did so on almost a daily basis. I developed a good relationship with these women and several elderly male residents, including PW*, GP* and PL*. The latter was both the husband of MP* and my ‘father’ from the conjunction of his (Jangala) and my (Jabija) skin-groups.

My age peers were more difficult to engage with, and my friendship with KA*, only a few years my senior, began only towards the end of my stay. It was generally considered, I believe, that I was rather an odd person for living in an Aboriginal community, away from my family and friends, and my mate (i.e. male friend)-less state was commented upon more than once, usually in relation to fishing trips, when I would be told, ‘You need a mate to go with you’.

This perception of oddness was for some allayed when in mid-November I began participating in the most ubiquitous of activities at Amanbidji: gambling on card games. This development was greeted with pleasure by the elderly people I spent time with, and news of it spread so quickly around the community that, whilst at the homestead on a shopping trip the morning after my first game, the book-keeper commented on my activities. It was generally considered that kartiya were not inclined to sit amongst ngumpin and talk to them, let alone gamble on cards. As a result, my presence at Amanbidji was, when (occasionally) commented on in my presence, done so in favourable terms, with KA* telling me that I was ‘the first to sit down and talk with old people’.

Whilst I was generally made to feel welcome at Amanbidji, I was aware that my presence would have been less well tolerated at other Aboriginal communities in the region. In the first week of my fieldwork period at Amanbidji, NP* referred to the ‘Miriwang mob’ of Kununurra who wanted to ‘keep out kartiya’ and then talked of the two anthropologists who had been at Amanbidji several years prior to my arrival, engaged by the Northern Land Council to write the Amanbidji Claim Book. Their presence had been particularly welcome, I was told, because they were ‘on the side of [the] blackfella’. Like them, NP* told me, ‘we pleased to have you’. Over the next few months it became clear that this early interaction contained within it the suggestion that I, likewise, should make an effort to consider ngumpin interests during my stay in the community. On various field trips with GP*, he also made it clear that as a guest of the community I was expected, like certain other kartiya in the region, to work ‘for the blackfella’ (cf. Berndt and Berndt 1987:27). Rose (1992:194), writing of her fieldwork amongst Ngarinyin people of Yarralin in the 1980s, argues...
similarly that there was an expectation on their part that she was there to assist them and had in fact been sent there by ‘government’.

Being ‘on the side of’ and ‘working for’ Aborigines was one of three largely implicit directives I was given during my residence at Amanbidji. The other two were to make myself and my research useful, and to make an effort to understand and consider ngumpin ways of doing things. I will discuss each in turn.

Being ‘on the side of blackfella’ involved, at one level, taking note of certain ngumpin issues that arose within the field of ngumpin-kartiya interaction. I have previously documented complaints made in my presence about the operation of the community store. The longer I stayed at Amanbidji, the more I was exposed to such complaints by certain residents, particularly NP*, EH* and KA*, who were all members of the ‘old mob’: traditional owners of land at Amanbidji. I was often engaged in general conversation which had as its focus instances of ngumpin-kartiya interaction in the region and in the community. It was clear that these residents engaged with me on the basis that I held, or was amenable to holding, attitudes and beliefs consistent with being ‘on the side of blackfella’. Indeed, Von Sturmer (1985:16) argues against the possibility of doing research work amongst Aboriginal people ‘without an explicit social (and to some extent ideological) commitment’.

It became routine also, at least for those residents I established the strongest ties with, to ask me to comment on the fairness or otherwise of certain ngumpin-kartiya interactions, especially those which were held to be controversial in some way. My opinion was asked on a range of things including the lack of consultation which accompanied decision-making at Amanbidji (section two), the operation of the community store (section four), and the behaviour of the mechanic at Timber Creek (section three). Indeed these elderly residents questioned me repeatedly on various issues surrounding contemporary ngumpin-kartiya relations. In relation to the matter of the lack of consultation at Amanbidji, I expressed the view that residents were entitled to more responsibility and input (‘say’) than they appeared to be getting.

Being ‘on the side of blackfella’ was for these same residents virtually synonymous with me being aligned against the station manager. NP* was concerned with the performance of the station and subscribed to the notion expressed by LN* that the kartiya station manager was ‘not proper cattleman’. (McGrath 1987:96-98 has written on the necessity in this region for white employers of cattle station labour to prove to their Aboriginal employees their abilities as both horsemen and fighters.) When I told NP* in
June 1994 that I had arranged with the station manager to spend time in the stockcamp, she responded ‘Don’t take no notice la him. He got nothing to do [with the stockcamp]. He never ride a horse. Them paddock no good’. She then asked me to ‘have a look around’ when I was in the stockcamp, to see if ‘any paddock no good or fence or yard need fixing’.

This was as much a directive to be useful as it was a call to be ‘on the side of blackfella’. Several times per week during my residence at Amanbidji I took elderly people, including MP*, PW*, YY*, LN* and NP*, on fishing and hunting trips to the area known as Pumuntu. In addition I took GP* on site-viewing trips to Pumuntu and the Boxer Springs area, a car-buying trip to Kununurra, and on a duck-hunting trip to Police Hole, to the north of the community. I also took KA* on fishing and turkey-hunting trips to the west and north of the community. I made my car generally available to elderly residents for shopping trips to the store, and for firewood and sugarbag (ngarlu) collecting (the latter from as far away as Mt. Razorback (see Map 2) on Auvergne Station). In mid-November, I began recording life histories of senior residents and teaching KA* written English. Throughout my stay, I provided afternoon entertainment for many of the children by teaching them songs and accompanying them on guitar. Generally, I tried to make myself useful.

In relation to my research it was hoped that I would be able to compile a dictionary of Ngarinyman words for use in the community’s school. On one occasion, I was requested to record traditional songs sung by NP*, PW*, and DP* amongst others. At the request of some of the residents, I gave transcript of some of the oral history recordings to the school and to the Katherine Language Centre, and it was hoped that the histories would be made generally available to kartiya. Prior to commencing fieldwork at Amanbidji in 1993, I talked of research options with a senior male resident of the Bulla community who was anxious to know whether members of the Northern Territory Government would read my work. I, of course, could not give him an assurance of that happening.

The third directive, that I consider ngumpin ways, coincided with subtle instruction in things pertaining to the Aboriginal domain. Von Sturmer (1982:219) notes that strangers to Aboriginal domains are expected to ‘accommodate and adhere to the rules of behaving, the proper social forms, the correct social etiquette, the dominant values set and observed’. To such ends, I was given instruction in the Ngarinyman language and in aspects of Aboriginal culture, such as the skin system, relationship to country, and certain Dreaming stories.

In Section Five, I presented material which suggests that, from the ngumpin perspective, familiarity is an important precondition for moral relationships between ngumpin and kartiya in this region. Whilst I had not ‘grown up alongside blackfella’, there
was, I believe, a suggestion that I was at least a potential candidate for learning how to engage in appropriate relationships with ngumpin people. Certain comments by residents suggested also a perception that in time I could be trained to become an advocate for residents of the community, especially in matters pertaining to ngumpin-kartiya interaction.

If the actions of KA* are any indication, it was in fact hoped by some that I would settle in Amanbidji for an extended stay, for in June of 1994 he advised me that he was looking to present to a community meeting the idea of having a permanent dwelling provided for me within the community. I explained to him then that I was basing myself in Darwin for the foreseeable future.

5.11. Conclusions

In this chapter I have used fieldwork data to complete the project begun in Chapter 1.4 of delineating the context of the ngumpin oral history presented in this thesis. This chapter has been concerned mainly with documenting aspects of the patterns and circumstances of ngumpin-kartiya interaction at Amanbidji in the 1990s and providing the background to the immediate interpersonal circumstances of the interviews.

In relation to the former, I have documented various ngumpin concerns with the role of the kartiya station manager and book-keeper, including the issue of community consultation and the operation of the community store. I have presented material relating to the provision of goods, services and resources by kartiya to ngumpin of Amanbidji. I have also considered the ngumpin ideal of working ‘alongside’ kartiya and the ngumpin notions of ‘coming up’ vis-à-vis kartiya and ‘speaking up’ in the presence of kartiya. These notions help give the ngumpin perspective on the circumstances of historical and present interaction between ngumpin and kartiya. I have also documented various critiques made by elderly residents of Amanbidji, including their evaluation of the CDEP scheme.

Earlier (Chapter 4.5), I presented statistical data which established socio-economic disparities between ngumpin and kartiya in this region. In this chapter I have shown that ngumpin residents of the Amanbidji community perceive themselves to be the subject of a paucity of services, goods and resources in relation to wider Australian society. In so doing I have demonstrated that the brute facts of ngumpin-kartiya disparity are experienced as disparity, and so are in some way part of the ideational world of ngumpin. The notion of ‘coming up’ is itself indicative of this ngumpin experience of disparity.
In relation to the immediate interpersonal circumstances of the interviews I have documented aspects of my interaction with elderly residents of Amanbidji and presented material relating to my being situated in social and political space by these residents.
CHAPTER 6

THE MISTAKE CREEK MATERIAL
Chapter Six: The Mistake Creek Material

6.1. Introduction

In Chapters 3, 4 and 5 I documented the past and lived present of ngumpin. In this and the next chapter I analyse a selection of the oral history interviews I recorded in the field, paying particular attention to the features of text I outlined in Chapter 2.7: explicit evaluation, historical contrast, simile, thesis, questions by the interviewee and patterns of pronoun use. Chapter 6 is devoted to the analysis of the material recorded at the Mistake Creek community; Chapter 7 concerns the material recorded during fieldwork at Amanbidji Station.

All of the interviews considered in this chapter were conducted at the Mistake Creek community apart from ST1 (at Emu Creek, near Kununurra) and ST2 (at a waterhole beside the Duncan Highway between Rosewood Station and the Victoria River Highway). In all, I conducted twenty interviews with eight different Aboriginal people (six male, two female) during March and April of 1993 for the Mistake Creek land claim.

In Section Two, I present the analysis of two of the Mistake Creek interviews in full. The first, JM3, was conducted with JM*, a senior Malngin man who had travelled from Daguragu to be present during the land claim research. Though not a claimant himself, he was indispensable to the claim: he is generally acknowledged to be one of the most knowledgeable men on aspects of Aboriginal Law and country in the region. Prior to the interview commencing, we had talked briefly about massacre sites in the vicinity of Mistake Creek Station. My interest in these stemmed in part from reading Rose (1991) and the various histories (e.g. McConvell and Hagen 1981, Bauman and Stead 1992), written for other Aboriginal land claims in the region, which document the violence associated with non-Aboriginal settlement. Before the interview began I had established that JM* was born at Limbunya Station and lived and worked there for much of his life. DT*, ST* and several other Aboriginal men were present during the interview.

The second interview considered in full here, DM10, was conducted with DM*, a senior Malngin woman named as a claimant to an estate within the Mistake Creek lease. DM* was born at Limbunya Station, to the south-east of Mistake Creek, and had worked there for much of her life.

In Section Three I present, in summary form, the analysis of all twenty interviews by the six features of text discussed in Chapter 2.7.

In Section Four I offer concluding remarks.
6.2. Analysis of Interviews JM3 and DM10

The research team I was with arrived at Mistake Creek Station in late March of 1993. Over the next few days, while we waited for claimants to arrive from as far away as Turkey Creek in the west and Wave Hill in the east, I had unrecorded discussions with two of the Mistake Creek claimants, one of whom was the chairman, the other a director of the Aboriginal cattle company (Bluegloss Pty. Ltd.) that ran the station. Mistake Creek had been previously purchased with Aboriginal Benefits Trust Account funds on behalf of the traditional owners who controlled the station through their company. There were eleven thousand head of cattle on the property, and the previous year the company had become the first of the Territory’s Aboriginal-owned stations to secure a live export deal to Indonesia, selling two thousand head there in 1992. There was a strong sense of optimism for the station, with construction of buildings progressing at Nelson Spring, the work-centre of the station.

6.2.1. Interview JM3, recorded with JM* at Mistake Creek, 31 March 1993

This interview begins with the interviewer introducing JM* and inviting him to speak about his life at Limbunya Station (lines 1-4). JM* then introduces the subject of massacres on Limbunya Station, naming the kartiya held responsible for the first wave of killings (8-10):

CR*: ... Okay. What do you want to tell us about that country?
JM*: What kartiya bin do. I'll tell you [who the] first [one was]. First one up on the, ah up on the Stirling [River] old, what, Jack, Old [Jack] Beasley.

In this passage, JM* makes a metanarrative comment to the effect that he’ll reveal to the interviewee the identity of the first kartiya responsible for killing Aborigines in the area. Jack Beasley, reputed cattle thief (Rose 1991:67) and one time employee of the Duracks, is notorious amongst Aboriginal people of the region for the violence associated with his time there in the early twentieth century.

A brief confusion then follows over the name of the place where Beasley camped, with another Aboriginal person present suggesting the name ‘Beasley Spring’ (19), to which JM* assents. He then gives the ‘ngumpin name’, Wangkanpawu, for this place. It is from here, we are told, that ‘him bin start chase im allabout and shoot im ’bout [Aborigines]’ (26-27). JM* uses the third person pronoun form, ‘the people’, to refer to those Aborigines shot by
Beasley, and in another act of co-narration, the second speaker, DT*, corroborates JM*'s account by reiterating part of what he says (29-31):

JM*: Shooting all the people.
DT*: Shoot im.
JM*: Shooting all the people. That’s what he was doing.

Jack Beasley’s method of ‘shooting the people’ is then noted (33-36):

JM*: Everytime get up first thing in the morning, go just like a, round im [up]
like a bullock.
CR*: Yeah?
JM*: Shoot im the lot.

The simile used here to describe the manner in which Aboriginal people were brought together in order to be collectively shot is taken from the realm of stockwork and alludes to the management of cattle. It suggests that from the perspective of the speaker, at least some kartiya in this era treated ngumpin in a manner analogous to livestock. As we will see, this is a reasonably common charge made by Aborigines in northern Australia. Two of Read and Read’s (1991:44-46,54) male Warlpiri interviewees talk of Warlpiri people being ‘rounded up’ ‘like cattle’ prior to being shot during the 1928 Coniston massacre in Central Australia. Adding to the stockwork simile here is an interviewee’s description of the manner in which Warlpiri women and children were spared: ‘draftem out [like] cattle’ (Read and Read 1991:46).

Beasley is held to have ‘finished up’, i.e. killed, all those Aboriginal people living around Campbell Spring, then shifted camp and continued shooting ngumpin. It is in connection with this behaviour that JM* talks of Captain Cook (38-43):

JM*: Him bin shoot im [ngumpin]. Finish im up allabout. He go on another place, and shooting, keep shooting all the way. Because he had a, he had a idea out of [i.e. from] the old Captain Cook.
CR*: Yeah?
JM*: Old Captain Cook. That’s the fella was start off, on the Sydney. That’s the fella bin start im off anyway.

Various other writers (e.g. Rose 1984b, Chase 1985, Kolg 1979, Maddock 1988, Middleton 1977:7, Healy 1991, Mackinolty and Wainburranga 1988) have noted the existence of Aboriginal stories dealing with the eighteenth century English explorer, Captain James Cook. In the passage above, JM* presents what I have called a thesis. A reason is given for Beasley’s behaviour: he is seen to be following the ‘idea’ of Captain Cook, who, being ‘the fella was start off’, is seen as the originating cause of violence towards ngumpin by kartiya. The idea that certain kinds of behaviour amongst kartiya were
in some way officially programmed and sanctioned by the society from which they came
finds similar expression with Rose’s (1984b:33) Gurindji informant, Hobbles Danayarri,
who is reported as saying of the oppressive behaviour of the manager of Wave Hill Station,
‘he got that same book’.

In the passage which follows, JM* offers an assessment of Cook’s motivation for the
shootings (50-55):

JM*: ... Shoot him, and he want to get the land back. Ah, he want to try get
[i.e. take the] the country back [i.e. away from] ngumpin.
CR*: Yeah. Who? Captain Cook wants to get the country back or the
Aboriginal ...?
JM*: Yeah, Captain Cook.

Here we have an elaboration of this thesis. JM* suggests here that the actions of early
kartiya need to be understood in the context of the continuation of a program begun by
Captain Cook; a program that had the usurpation of land as one of its central objectives (cf.
Rose 1992:33). Again, it is ‘the people’ who are the victims of this program: ‘he [i.e.
Captain Cook] want to try and clean the people up’ (57). To ‘clean up’ is to kill many.

In an attempt to get information more relevant to the Mistake Creek land claim, the
interviewer then reintroduces the subject of Jack Beasley and his activities around and on
Mistake Creek station (60-66):

CR*: Jack Beasley done this?
JM*: Hmm. Jack Beasley. All over he was go, shooting on this [country]
now, all over. All over the country, out this way.
CR*: All this country here too, Mistake Creek country?
JM*: Yeah. Mistake Creek country. He shooting every people.
CR*: Did he shoot ‘em out in, um, Kurturtu country?
JM*: Kurturtu country, yeah!

JM* then talks of one of Beasley’s contemporaries, Charlie Whittaker, who was a
‘mate’ of Beasley and who enacted a similar program of killing, similarly sanctioned by
Captain Cook: ‘He had a, he had a story, because he had a story out of the Captain Cook’
(74-75).

Following this, JM* offers the thesis that some kartiya involved in these shootings shot
Aboriginal men in order to take their women away as their sexual partners (77-88):

JM*: Yeah. He was start shooting now. Shoot im all the ngumpin. Some,
some he go and y’know, get im ngumpin and shoot im and get the wife,
woman, pull im out [i.e. take the woman away] and shoot the husband.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: And [then] him [i.e. kartiya] married to the black woman.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: That’s why was all get up now; get breed up now. All the yellafella [i.e. ‘half-castes’] bin breed up now.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: Because he followin’ that law for the Old Captain Cook. He’s the one of the leader.

Here JM* presents the thesis that Cook’s law also ratified the usurpation of Aboriginal women, a usurpation which has given rise to the prevalence of people born of the union of an Aboriginal and a non-Aboriginal person (cf. McGrath 1987:90-94), these people usually being referred to in this region as ‘yellafella’ or ‘half-caste’. Cook’s program, and the ‘law’ it entails, are held then to have included directions as to sexual liaisons between kartiya and ngumpin.

Immediately following this, JM* uses the first person singular pronoun, ‘I’, to document his own involvement with Captain Cook and thus establish the veracity of his account (90-93):

JM*: He’s the one of the leader. Because I bin see him that Captain Cook. I know him. Because I see him right up in the Darwin too.
CR*: Yeah. Yeah?
JM*: I was work with him.

JM* may be referring here to Dr. Cecil Cook, who as we saw in Chapter 3 was the Darwin-based Protector of Aborigines from 1927 to 1939, and who oversaw the programmatic removal of ‘part-Aborigines’ (Austin 1997, Wells 1995). His involvement in this may explain his conflation with Captain Cook within ngumpin thought. At this point in the interview, concerned with its relevance as a source of data for the writing of the Mistake Creek history, the interviewer steers the talk back to matters of the region with the question ‘And you used to work [at] Limbunya [Station]?’ (98), and follows this up with a series of questions which determined that JM*’s primary affiliations were to country on Limbunya station (104-107):

CR*: And that’s your father’s country?
JM*: Yeah, that’s for my father, my grannie, my jawiï, all that country.
CR*: Kaku?
JM*: Kaku. Everything. All that country.

Soon after, and in response to the question as to whether he worked on Limbunya Station, JM* replied ‘Work on the stockcamp, mustering bullock, mustering horse, do the branding, branding cattle, throw the cattle. Watch im bullock, muster im, draft im’ (111-113). He goes on (115-122):
JM*: Draft im. In the yard. We bin done that job, long time ago. Work all the
time and brand im, get im. On holiday. Alright we bin holiday. ‘And you take
you,’ [kartiya would] tell im the people, ‘Alright, take your clothes and take
your boot off, take your hat off, and put it back in the store and then go and
wear the cockrag and go to bush.’
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: He’s a bad. And just the one stick of tobacco and pair of matches and
little bit of a flour.

This and the next passage have a number of interesting features. In the passage above,
JM* uses the first person plural pronoun, ‘we’, to refer both to those who did the work of
mustering, drafting and branding and to those who took the mandatory holiday at the end of
the Dry season. These are his first uses of this pronoun form in this history. He then offers a
dramatisation of Aboriginal workers being sent on their Wet season ‘bush holiday’ by
reporting the direct speech of an un-named kartiya station worker, possibly the manager.
The reported speech of this person serves to detail the paucity of clothing provisions made
to Aboriginal workers at the time of their seasonal release from work. JM* offers an explicit
negative evaluation of the person responsible for this behaviour (‘He’s a bad’ (121)) and
follows this up with additional information which serves to further catalogue the paucity of
supplies given to ngumpin workers (‘And just the one stick of tobacco’, etc. (121-122)).

The interviewer then asks a series of questions (‘That’s all?’, ‘Nothing else?’) in order
to draw out the details of this situation (126-133):

JM*: Nothing more. No fly [i.e. canvas], no nothing. Just go, let im
[Aboriginal workers] go like a, he’s just like a bullock, just let im go in the
bush.
CR*: Yeah? Just draft him off?
JM*: Draft him off, yeah. Just like that.
CR*: That’s no good.
JM*: That’s no good, y’know. Hmm. Bad thing he done, that.
CR*: Yeah.

Here again, a stockwork simile, ‘just like a bullock’ (127) is used which suggests that
the process of making Aboriginal people return their clothes, coupled with the general
failure of station management to provide for their sustenance during the Wet season was,
from the speaker’s perspective, tantamount to treating Aborigines as cattle. The
interviewer’s negative evaluation of this—‘That’s no good’—is confirmed by JM* who
repeats it and then offers a negative evaluation in his own words: ‘Bad thing he done, that’.

Immediately following this, and using the first person singular pronoun, ‘I’, JM*
claims to have witnessed the murder of his grandfather by the manager of Limbunya station
(134-137):
JM*: When I was on the fucking Limbunya station I see him shot my fucking own grannie [i.e. mother’s mother’s brother].
CR*: He shot your grannie?
JM*: Yeah! Right on the bloody Limbunya homestead.

JM* continues to use this pronoun form, indicating his status as an eyewitness to the events he relates (‘I was good size fuckin’ little boy’ (139)), as he names the three men responsible for the murder and gives the background to the story. We are told that JM*’s grandfather was successfully ‘belting’ these three men when one of them called his Aboriginal ‘boy’, Nipper, to shoot JM*’s grandfather. At this point the direct speech of one of the kartiya is reported (150-153):

JM*: He [Nipper] belonga Pine Creek. And he [i.e. one of the three kartiya] come [i.e. said], ‘Oh, come on this blackfella got me down, he got me down now, come on Nipper. Bring a gun’. Nipper shot him. Broke his arm. Broke his arm. Well he couldn’t do nothing now.

Pine Creek is approximately ninety kilometres north of Katherine. Pastoralists and policemen in the Victoria River region often brought in Aborigines from other parts of Northern Australia to assist them with the ‘pacification’ of ngumpin (see Rose 1991:90, Shaw 1981:38-39). The story continues with JM*’s grannie’s body being taken away in a wagonette, with a supply of wood and kerosene, to be burnt. Again, JM* uses the first person singular pronoun form to indicate his status as an observer of this event: ‘Get a kerosene, take him and burn him up. Make a big fire and burn him. I seen him that on my own eye’ (158-159).

In response to the interviewer’s negative evaluation of this event, JM* again confirms this and adds to the evaluation (163-167):

CR*: Yeah. That was pretty bad stuff.
JM*: Yeah, very bad. Very bad. No good.
CR*: No good.
JM*: No good. That’s why [i.e. how] they bin clean every people, every people la this country, through this country, all over.

Following this, the interviewer establishes that these events happened at the Limbunya Station homestead itself, not in ‘the bush’ (172-177). The interviewer then indicates that he is going to take some notes whilst the recording is in progress, and then again attempts to turn the interview to concerns more immediately relevant to the land claim research by asking JM* whether he ever worked at Mistake Creek Station (178-179). JM* then gives a brief account of his working history using the first person singular pronoun form (180-183):

JM*: I was just work down the Spring Creek.
CR*: Spring Creek? Yeah? What can you tell me about Spring Creek?


He continues with this pronoun form as he talks of his work-related shift to Waterloo Station and his eventual return to Limbunya. In another attempt to shift the focus back onto Mistake Creek, the interviewer then asks ‘Did you mix much with Malngin people back there? Did you know the Malngin people?’ (192-193). The following dialogue ensues (194-199):

JM*: YEAH. It’s the Malngin country now!

CR*: Yeah. This country here.

JM*: It’s the Malngin right up to Limbunya; Malngin right up to Wattie Creek. That’s where the Malngin is.

CR*: Right. All the way.

JM*: YEAH.

JM*’s response here can perhaps be seen as a reaction to the interviewer’s lack of knowledge of the extent of Malngin country. The interviewee uses heightened speech volume (indicated by the use of capitals) in order to emphasise and foreground the information he is giving.

The interviewer then attempts to obtain information on the chronology of the events witnessed by JM* with a series of questions relating both to the era and to his own age: ‘Were they still bush people back then?’ (202); ‘How old you reckon you are?’ (207); ‘You’d be older than, would you be older than old _[person’s name] at Bulla?’ (211-212). JM* attempts to establish his age by referring to the practice of teamsters transporting supplies deposited at Timber Creek, by boat from Darwin, to various stations in the region. He assents to the interviewer’s nomination of a particular man, Bert Drew, as one of the drivers of Vestey’s wagons during this period (230-233).

The interviewer having explicitly characterised this period in terms of the absence of motor vehicles, ‘No motorcar?’ (236), JM* introduces the subject of Wajali, an ancestor to some of the Mistake Creek claimants and one of the first Aborigines recruited into the pastoral enterprise in the region (237-239):

JM*: No motorcar. That’s why the, white people bin live longa this country and ngumpin bin all day, no mailman, only ngumpin bin alde take him mail.


The thesis presented here is that, in the early part of the twentieth century, such work as that of mailman was done exclusively by ngumpin. With the interviewer’s prompting, JM*
continues to talk of Wajali, emphasising through speech volume that he is to be included in the cataloguing of deceased people with links to Mistake Creek land (254-257,261-262):

CR*: Was he born here?
JM*: Oh, old Wajali?
CR*: Wajali?
JM*: YEAH. He belong to this place / Wajali. That’s the old man. Long, long time him bin here, first. Old man bin born la this country.

In response to the interviewer’s question ‘He passed away a long time ago?’ (275), JM* refers to man-made landmarks on the station to give some indication of the answer: ‘Long time ago’ (276). That is, we are told that Wajali died when the present Mistake Creek homestead was still not in existence (278-283):

JM*: Not this house here, [or] that house here [JM* points]. Mistake Creek, that ‘nother creek.
CR*: Old Mistake Creek?
JM*: Yeah. That’s the Mistake Creek.
CR*: First one.

Soon after, whilst providing information about the location and names of the several homesteads that have been built on the Mistake Creek lease since the early 1900s, there is a break in the continuity of the recording. During this break the interviewer clarifies that three homesteads have been built on the lease. The recording then resumes and JM* takes up the task of detailing homestead positions (299-321), in the process drawing a map on the ground with a stick.

In response to the question of why the homestead was shifted originally, JM* offers at least one, and possibly two reasons for the change of location (323-328):

JM*: Oh, he was shift from here to there, ‘Oh, well I’ll shift im from here to there’. He was shift from there down, you know.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: Might be close to flood water.
CR*: Oh, right. They get flood ...
JM*: One little boy was get killed here.

The dramatisation in the first line, above, gives the reported direct speech of (most probably) the kartiya head stockman or station manager, as the Aboriginal workers, given labour relations on Vestey stations, would have had little say in such a decision (though they may have been consulted as to what would constitute a suitable site for a homestead). As indicated above, the original station was prone to flooding, thus necessitating the shift. In this passage there may be an added reason, from the Aboriginal perspective, for the shift, as JM* notes the death of a young Aboriginal boy due to a horse-riding accident at the old
station. Such an occurrence would have left Aboriginal residents of the station especially keen to move elsewhere.

After the details of this accident have been noted, the interviewer attempts again to move the conversation towards a more in-depth discussion of land under claim by asking the question, ‘So you used to know, you know all this country ... All this Mistake Creek country?’ (344,346). The strategy does not work as JM* returns to the subject of the positioning of the three homesteads (347-348,350-351). The interviewer again intervenes, asking JM* whether he knows the ‘ngumpin names for this area’ (358-359). JM* uses the first person singular pronoun form in what, it soon becomes apparent, is a refusal to talk of country on the Mistake Creek lease (360):

JM*: No. This, this one now I only bin just travel, you know.

Here JM* is indicating that he has no claim to ownership of land on the Mistake Creek lease and though he has spent time both on the claim area and surrounding stations during his working life, he considers his presence to have been as a traveller. Persisting with his tack, however, the interviewer asks JM* if he can name the Aboriginal places between Muntukujarra, on the Stirling River, and Mistake Creek. JM*’s strategy here is to simply give the name of the former and the direction taken in travelling between the two places (367-369):

JM*: From Mistake Creek, Muntukujarra, him bin go karlarniny [i.e. west, and/or up], longa this place now. This side of creek now. Karlarninykarra [i.e. west side of creek], we call, karlarninykarra.

To the further questions ‘Any places in-between? Any other places?’ (373), JM* refers the matter to others, preferring not to speak of Aboriginal country outside of the land he traditionally owns on the Limbunya lease (374,376-377):

JM*: Ah, no, they want to tell you more, y’know. Old _ [JC*] [can tell you] ... Yeah. You know. Because that side, what I was born, I can tell you more about.

Here he uses the first person singular pronoun form in relation to the country in which he was born and what he can say about that country. The interviewer then attempts to elicit information about Jupanyin country and is again told to speak to others (402,404). JM* then questions whether some of the other Aboriginal people involved in the claim are qualified to speak of Mistake Creek country (408-411):
JM*: Yeah. That’s why, all these [other] people don’t tell you right thing, you know.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: See, you must gotta go la place, go la place, country, you know. Every place, what he done. See what, follow that. See.

In this passage he alludes to the extensive tuition of culture and country he has received. Following this, in response to the interviewer’s question of whether there is any country on the present lease upon which the interviewee can speak, JM* again responds, ‘Other people’ (414). He then talks of the wider group known as Malngin (422-426):

JM*: ... But we all same, Malngin. We all same, Malngin. Right up to Wave Hill. That’s Malngin.
CR*: So you’re Malngin too.
JM*: I’m a Malngin too.
CR*: Okay, shall we leave it there?

Here he uses the first person plural pronoun, ‘we’, to refer to his inclusion within that group indicate who identify as Malngin. In so doing, he suggests that there are strong links between the claimants of Mistake Creek country and people to the east and south-east. JM* then reverts back to the first person singular pronoun, ‘I’, in relation to his own personal identification as Malngin as the interviewer prompts him for this information.

Immediately after this, JM* begins to talk of a particular travelling Dreaming (snake) which traverses country from Wave Hill to Ord River and beyond. He speaks here of the maintenance and practice of Aboriginal Law, using the first person plural pronoun form: ‘That’s when we bring im every law on this, every country’ (429-430). At this point in the interview he lowers his delivery volume significantly, and this is clearly done in order to indicate that the matters being discussed are not for general dissemination. Accordingly, I do not include this material as part of the text and will not analyse it. It lasted for approximately two minutes, following which the interview was terminated.

6.2.2. Interview DM10, recorded with DM* at Mistake Creek, 1 April 1993

This interview was recorded on the eighth day of fieldwork and followed directly on from Interview DT9, an oral history given by DT*, a male resident of Turkey Creek in Western Australia, but a claimant of an estate on the Mistake Creek lease. DT* remained present during this interview and co-narrated at certain points. The interviewer begins by engaging DM* on the subject of footwalking through Munpu country, on the south-east section of the claim (5-7):
DM*: Munpu, all around, now we bin go. Holiday time. Camp half-way [between stations]. Camp half-way, well we never have im motor [car], y’know. Oh, hard way.

In this passage, DM* uses the first person plural pronoun ‘we’ to situate her experience of travelling during the ‘bush holiday’ without the use of motor vehicles from the group perspective. The term ‘hard’, often used to do evaluative work, is used here in relation to this practice of moving from place to place by foot. Its use here establishes that, for ngumpin, hardships were involved in the taking of the Wet season ‘bush holiday’. The interview continues, the subject being Munpu country, on the south-east edge of the claim area (16-25):

CR*: Good country?
DM*: Good country, yeah. Yawul [i.e. fish], bin alde get im ‘bout, jilili, and manarang, that day you know, mipalas bin go longa top way now from Munpu, that side, now. Manarang we call him, like a yam, y’know?
CR*: Oh yeah.
DM*: Like a potato, but little bit chewy, y’know.
CR*: Like a potato.
DM*: Hmm.
DT*: Bush potato _ [inaudible].

In response to the interviewer’s question, ‘good country?’ (16), DM* positively evaluates Munpu country. She lists some of the bush foods commonly found in Munpu country and uses the first person plural pronouns ‘mipalas’, to situate her experience of travelling through Munpu country whilst procuring bush food from the perspective of the group, and ‘we’ to refer to her inclusion amongst that group who use the Aboriginal name for a particular bush food. She uses a simile (‘like a potato’) to describe this food in terms the interviewer may readily relate to, with DT* providing the Aboriginal-English nomenclature (‘bush potato’) for this food.

Following directly on from this, DM* gives a short list of ngumpin foods and pairs them with their kartiya counterparts (26-32):

DM*: Like kartiya garram, kartiya garram banana and mipala garram, mipala garram pinti.
CR*: Poni.
DM*: We got im. Go down and get im la ground.
CR*: Bush tucker.
DM*: Yeah. Bush one. That, well kartiya have im fruit, everything, well mipala garram ngumali.

DM* uses the first person plural pronouns ‘mipala’ and ‘we’ to refer to her inclusion amongst that group who had or have possession of certain indigenous foods. DM* continues
to use ‘we’ to situate her use of these foods from the group perspective (‘Mangarri. Eat, we, jarpayiyu’ (39)), and ‘mipalas’ and ‘us’ to refer to her inclusion amongst those who were accompanied on their travels in the bush by ‘the old people’: ‘all the old people bin sit with us, mupalas y’know’ (44). The phrase ‘old people’ is used here by DM* to refer to those of her parents’ and grandparents’ generations. Soon after this, DT* speaks of particular varieties of bush food, and there is miscommunication between the interviewer and DT* (58-63):

DT*: Like a brown grape or something. Cooked [i.e. ripe].
CR*: You cook im up?
DT*: No, he cooked already.
CR*: He’s cooked already.
DT*: Yeah. [Laughs]
CR*: Right. [Laughs]. In the sun.

Here the interviewer has misunderstood the Kriol term ‘cooked’, which is equivalent to the Standard English term ‘cooked’ but can also mean ‘ripe’. DM* then continues to talk of bush food and her instruction in bush craft by her elders during her time spent away from Inverway Station (68-69,71-76):

DM*: Pikurta. Pikurta. Same way have im, have im ‘bout longa bush. They bin learn im mipala. Anything we bin learn im. / Anything, all la mangarri. Bush, they bin learning mipalas properly. Old people, y’know.
CR*: Yeah.
DM*: That how we know, now, behind one [i.e. the younger generation of which she was part], like, y’know. When we going bush well we get im mangarri, everything, beef, longa bush.

In this passage DM* uses the first person plural pronouns ‘mipala’ and ‘we’ to situate her experience of being taught by the ‘old people’ from the group perspective. This pronoun form is also used here to refer to the speaker’s inclusion amongst those who travelled through the bush and procured food therein. DM* refers here to the age-group of which she is part as ‘behind one’ in relation to those older people who taught them bush skills. Following this, DM* again uses the first person plural form to situate her travels during the ‘bush holiday’ from the perspective of the group (80-83):

DM*: We bin go Ord River, this side. And this lot [indicating DT*] bin go back now, Riyal, Turner. __ [inaudible]. We bin go Nicholson. From Nicholson now we bin go, from Maralalak.

As with most usage of the first person plural pronoun form, it is difficult to determine the bounds of the group being referred to. In this case it is not clear whether ‘we’ is used by DM* to refer to her inclusion in her age-set (i.e. the young people, or ‘behind one’) or her
inclusion in that wider group made up of her age-mates and the ‘old people’. DM* then
talks of her return to Inverway Station at the end of the ‘bush holiday’ (86-91):

DM*: Right, we bin go back la karnkulu [up, from river]. Come right back
la Inverway now. When we bin go back longa house now, we bin start off,
we’re all cookin’. They bin learn im mipala there now, properly. Learn
everything like, y’know.
CR*: Yeah.
DM*: What to do like, y’know. We never [to] go school before, nothing.

In this passage DM* uses the first person plural pronoun, ‘we’, to situate her
experience of returning to Inverway Station at the end of the ‘bush holiday’ and undertaking
homestead tasks from the perspective of the group. She also uses the first person plural
pronouns, ‘mipala’ to refer to her inclusion amongst that group who were taught domestic
skills by (probably) the ‘old [Aboriginal] people’ and ‘we’, to refer to her inclusion in that
group who were unable to attend school. Here she also offers an implicit historical contrast
between the past absence of schooling for those of her generation and the provision of
schooling for younger Aboriginal people currently: ‘We never go [to] school before,
nothing’ (91).

DM* then corrects the interviewer’s assumption that she worked at Turner homestead
(‘No, no, Inverway’ (98)) and uses the first person singular possessive pronoun, ‘my’, in
relation to her father and her father’s country (100-101):

DM*: That one, one place properly my country. From my father, from my
grandfather.

In response to the interviewer’s question ‘What sort of work did you do?’ (104), DM*
then talks of the work involved in making butter from the milk of cows and goats (105-113):

DM*: Wapaluk, milking cow, wapaluk, nanny goat.
CR*: Nanny goat.
DM*: Butter. Alla nannygoat, only get. Belonga kartiya, y’know, butter?
CR*: Yeah, butter.
DM*: Put in longa freezer, and all that. They bin learn im mipalas y’know,
What they do. Like the old people bin have that kartiya y’know, before,
brother allahbout y’know, Archie Farquharson …?
CR*: Yeah.
DM*: … Louie Farquharson, Harry Farquharson.

The Farquharson brothers’ pioneering presence in the region has been noted by Hill
(1951:170,302) and Riddett (1990). In this passage, DM* questions the interviewer to
establish whether he is aware of the use of goat milk to make butter. She again uses the first
person plural pronoun, ‘mipala’, to situate her experience of being taught domestic skills by the ‘old people’ from the group perspective. She continues (118-120):

DM*: Yeah, well, everyone bin learn like from little time y’know.
CR*: Right.
DM*: Every thing, they bin learn im mipala.

Taking into account the passage preceding the above, DM* appears here to present the thesis that just as the ‘old people’ were taught these skills by the Farquharson brothers, so her and her contemporaries were taught by the ‘old people’. She again uses the first person plural pronoun form, ‘mipala’, in relation to being taught homestead skills, and the _mipala_ / _they_ distinction set up here and elsewhere in the text distinguishes between the ‘old people’ and those belonging to the speaker’s own generation.

Soon after, DM* talks of the task of watering the garden in which ‘Mangarri [food], bla kartiya’ (133) grew. She then goes on to talk of the use of flour bags for clothing during her working days at Inverway Station (134-140):

DM*: We never know anything yet. But no clothes, anything. And you know flour bag, garram flour?
CR*: Yeah.
DM*: White bag.
CR*: Oh, the white flour bag?
DM*: Hmm. That kind of clothes they bin have im. We never have a clothe, anything.

In this passage DM* uses the first person plural pronoun ‘we’ to situate her initial ignorance of _kartiya_ goods and ways from the group perspective. She then directly questions the interviewer as to whether he is familiar with the white bags used in the packaging of flour, used also as the main source of clothing at Inverway Station. DM* then uses both the third person pronoun, ‘they’, and the first person plural pronoun, ‘we’, to refer to those who used flour bags for clothing; the second of these to refer to her inclusion within that group who experienced this state of affairs. She moves from the topic of clothing to that of working for rations generally (141-156):

CR*: You make clothes out of that?
DM*: Yeah.
[DT* laughs.]
DM*: Mother. [Laughs] _ [person’s name]. They don’t give im many ‘bout, y’know. And _ [person’s name]. Never bin have im clothes everything, before. Only this, we bin working for ration. That’s all.
DM*: Hmm. No money. This time [i.e. the time I’m speaking about] no money, we coming up. Before, we bin properly hard way. Old people bin
feed im up mipala longa tucker everything, from bush or karriya mangarr [literally, whitefellas food].

DT*: We got no money, anyway.
CR*: Yeah. No money.
DM*: No mattress or anything like, y’know. Oh, nothing. Hard way. From flour bag, they bin make im ‘bout clothes longa mipalas.

In this passage, both DM* and DT* laugh at the telling of Aboriginal people having to make clothes out of flour bags. DM* uses the first person plural pronouns, ‘we’ and ‘mipala’, to situate from the group perspective her experience of (i) ‘working [only] for ration’, (ii) undergoing a process of ‘coming up’ from the ‘properly hard way’ of working for rations, and (iii) being fed and clothed by the ‘old people’. DM* documents the absence of wages and items such as clothing and mattresses in the era of which she speaks, and it is in relation to the conditions of life which such lacunae were an intrinsic part of that the twice-used explicit, negative evaluation ‘hard way’ refers. This passage is also significant in that DM* presents the thesis that Aboriginal people have undergone a process of ‘coming up’ from the wage-less state of working merely for rations. She also presents the (implicit) historical contrast that ‘before’, in the era of wage-less work, life was ‘properly hard’. DT* also comments on the absence of wages (i.e. ‘money’) in this previous era and uses the first person plural pronoun, ‘we’, to situate his experience of being un-waged from the perspective of the group.

The interviewer then establishes that Inverway Station was owned and managed by the Farquharson brothers and never came under the control of Vesteys. DT* then takes over from DM*, speaking of the generosity shown ngumpin by the Farquharsons (170-189):

DT*: When we used to go from Ord River to Inverway, footwalk, from Vesteys company. They [i.e. the Farquharsons] used to tell people, “tell them Vestey mob bring their bag, get their ration”.
CR*: Yeah?
DT*: They were the really really good people.
CR*: So they’d give you ration?
DT*: Yeah.
CR*: Yeah.
DT*: Wouldn’t matter we bin go [i.e. come from] Vestey, they [the Farquharsons] give us, don’t matter who come in there. They give a bit of ration. Yeah. [DT* laughs.]
DM*: Oh, proper hard way.
CR*: Yeah.
DM*: Here hard working, really. Used to go in there. When wipala bin garram holiday, y’know. Holiday, take im mipalas, living out bush. ‘Nother lot go, get im work now. Mipala go holiday. After then, from holiday, big holiday, come back right back again work la station and that mob, ‘nother mob gonna go back again, go holiday again, like that. We bin give im chance,
y’know [i.e. We let them take their holiday]. Oh, big mob bin there but all, all passed on now, all bin die. Old people.

In this passage DT* uses the first person plural pronouns, ‘we’, to situate his experience of ‘footwalking’ from Ord River to Inverway Station from the group perspective, and ‘us’ to similarly situate his experience of receiving rations from the Farquharson’s having arrived at Inverway Station on holiday. He reports the direct speech of one of the Farquharsons telling Aborigines of Inverway Station to in turn tell the ‘Vestey mob’ (i.e. those who, with DT*, had walked from Ord River Station) to come to them to receive a supply of rations. DT* explicitly, positively evaluates the Farquharsons on the basis of the generosity they displayed with rations.

Also within this passage, DM* again explicitly, negatively evaluates this era as ‘proper hard way’ and uses the first person plural pronouns ‘wipala’ to situate her taking holidays from Inverway Station from the group perspective, and ‘mipala’ to similarly situate her experience of being taken on the ‘bush holiday’ by the ‘old people’. She also uses ‘we’ to refer to her inclusion within that group who would return to Inverway Station during the Wet season in order to allow another group of Aborigines working at the station to take their holiday. DT* continues with this theme (194-196):

DT*: We never change that, every year. Some people got to work the station.
How many might be go ‘bout bush, two month, come back, let them out.
Holiday then.

In this passage, DT* also uses the first person plural pronoun ‘we’ to situate his experience of taking the Wet season holiday by turns from the group perspective. The interviewer then asks permission to end the interview (‘Alright, well we might stop there. You reckon?’ (202)) following which the interview is terminated.

6.3. Summary of the Mistake Creek Interviews

6.3.1. Explicit Evaluation

In Interview JM3 the male speaker, JM*, negatively evaluates both the kartiya manager who sent Aboriginal workers on their ‘bush holiday’ without clothes and the kartiya manager who killed his mother’s mother’s brother. In Interview DM10, the female speaker, DM*, positively evaluates the Munpu estate in relation to its plenitude of bush resources. Also in this interview, the (secondary) male speaker, DT*, positively evaluated both a
certain type of bush food and the (long gone) Farquharson brothers of Inverway Station in relation to their generosity with rations.

Elsewhere in the Mistake Creek interviews, evaluation occurs around similar topics. For instance, there is positive evaluation of a certain type of bush food by a male speaker (ST2:641). This same speaker positively evaluates two named kartiya managers on the basis that one of them ‘look[ed] after [Aboriginal] people’ (ST1:623,625) and the other ‘bin pay im blackfella before’ (ST1:665). The second kartiya referred to here, Kilfoyle, was in fact (as we saw in Chapter 3) the first kartiya manager in the region to pay wages, decades before they were introduced on Vestey’s stations.

There is also positive evaluation by male speakers of the effects of the Northern Territory Land Rights Act on Aboriginal people (ST2:262), the friendship that ensued between Aboriginal people following the end of waringarri, defined as an Aboriginal war fought over access to women and country (ST4:118), the process of Aboriginal recall wherein knowledge is retained in memory and not written down (JM7:35), time spent as a Vestey’s employee (DC11:121,125-126), and of one speaker’s own ability as a bore mechanic (TB18:7). A female speaker positively evaluates the Aboriginal workers she worked with at Mistake Creek Station (RR20:65-66).

In addition, JM* positively evaluates (JM6:153) the story he presents in Interview JM6. This story of the ‘Aboriginal outlaw’, Rebel Major, is a commonly told one in the region (see e.g. that version recorded by Shaw (1986:98-101)) and details the taking of Major’s wife by a kartiya pastoral worker, the shooting of this kartiya by Major and the subsequent hunting, killing and beheading of Major by a posse of kartiya policemen and Aboriginal police trackers operating from Halls Creek police station in the Kimberley region.

The positive evaluation of this story has a parallel in the negative evaluation presented by male speakers in Interviews ST2, ST4 and JM6, much of which is concerned with the sexual depredations of kartiya, past and present, and the consequences of the miscegenation associated with it. ST* negatively evaluates ‘half-caste’ Aboriginal people (ST2:431, ST4:38), the hypothetical situation wherein he is arrested for having a sexual relationship with a kartiya woman (ST2:448), the tendency for kartiya men to ‘chase’ and woo Aboriginal women (ST2:484,510), and the presence of large numbers of ‘half-caste’ children in the region today (ST2:484, ST4:38). JM* negatively evaluates the taking of Rebel Major’s wife by a kartiya man at several points in his narrative (JM6:3,149,154,159-161), classifying this act as one of theft (JM6:3,160) and cheating (JM6:159).

Other negative evaluation by a male speaker occurs, as it did in Interview JM3, in relation to the documenting of kartiya hostilities including the shooting and chaining of
ngumpin (JM5:99,101,114-115,117,121), their unprovoked hostile occupation of ngumpin land (JM5:104,106), and the murder of family members (JM5:124).

In addition, one male speaker negatively evaluates a named kartiya manager from the perspective of ‘half-castes’, a category of person this kartiya is held to have not liked (ST1:633,635,637), the ‘bush’ Aborigines of the early days (ST2:146), and German and Japanese people, probably on the basis of their involvement in World War II (ST2:333). Another male speaker negatively evaluates the situation wherein some middle-aged Aboriginal people currently have little knowledge of their country (JM7:23).

In Interview DM10, the female speaker uses ‘hard’ in relation to work generally, and the past practices of walking between stations, working without wages, and being without items such as mattresses and clothing. This term, associated phrases such as ‘very hard’ and ‘hard way’, and also the term ‘rough’, are evaluative, but ambiguously so. Whilst often synonymous with ‘bad’ or ‘no good’, ‘hard’ can sometimes be used to accord a kind of grudging respect to the persons or things so described. This is especially so when it is used to describe the Aboriginal Law practised in places such as Lajamanu; in such cases, ‘hard’ denotes strictness, consistency and a harsh kind of strength.

This is demonstrated in the material considered here by a male speaker’s use of ‘hard’ in relation to his father and his father’s disciplinary regime (DC11:17,30) such that, whilst he was a young man he would occasionally be ‘straighten[ed] up properly’ by him (DC11:23). This speaker also uses the term in relation to the time when he was learning to break in horses (DC11:71), the process of getting ready for the commencement of the mustering season during ‘Vestey time’ (DC12:62), and the hours worked during this season (DC12:71). Another male speaker, KT* uses the term in relation to cattle work (KT13:4,10) and mustering (KT14:6,8,22, KT15:15,47), whilst another uses ‘hard’ in relation to the ‘old days’ wherein he was a young man (ST2:271), the work of droving (ST4:76,79), and the length of the working season (ST1:83-84).

6.3.2. Historical Contrast

There was no use of historical contrast in JM3 and just two such (implicit) uses in DM10, wherein the female speaker noted that there was in the past an absence of schooling for those of her generation (DM10:91) and that ‘before’, in the era of wage-less work, life was ‘properly hard’ (DM10:148-149).

In other interviews, the male speaker, ST*, makes an explicit historical contrast between (i) the use of wood for building stockyards in the past with that of iron in the
present (ST1:49-50), (ii) the large Aboriginal population at Humbert River Station and in
the region generally in the past with the absence of Aboriginal people on cattle stations
presently (ST1:419,425-427), (iii) past and present methods of moving large numbers of
cattle (ST2:80-90, ST4:76-78), (iv) the past necessity of spearing cattle for Aborigines eking
out an existence in the bush with the present change in circumstances associated with land
rights legislation and kartiya ‘com[ing] to blackfella now’ (ST2:239-240), and (v)
Aboriginal circumstances in the ‘hard’ days of the past with the ‘now coming easy’ of the
present (ST2:262-263,271).

Another male speaker, KT*, makes a similar historical contrast between the ‘hard
work’ of his youth and the ‘easy work’ of the present (KT14:25-28).

6.3.3. Simile

In Interview JM3, the simile ‘like a bullock’ is used twice by the male speaker to
describe the kartiya treatment of ngumpin in the past, in relation to their being ‘rounded up’
prior to being shot, and to their having to return their clothes to the station prior to taking
their bush holiday. In Interview DM10, the female speaker twice compares a type of ‘bush
food’ with varieties of vegetables known to be eaten by kartiya.

In other interviews the male speaker, ST*, refers to a type of ‘bush food’ as ‘like a little
potato’ (ST1:3) and ‘like a spud’ (ST1:92), and to ‘half-caste’ people as ‘like a wild dingo’
(ST2:350), specifically in relation to them not being traditional owners of Aboriginal land.

6.3.4. Ngumpin Thesis

In Interview JM3, the male speaker, JM*, presented a variety of theses, a significant
strand of which related to the early contact between ngumpin and kartiya around the
beginning of the twentieth century, the violence associated with that contact, and certain
issues of a sexual nature arising from the presence of kartiya men in the region. JM* notes
that Jack Beasley was the first kartiya to occupy Mistake Creek land and the first to shoot
ngumpin living there. He argues that Beasley’s shooting of ngumpin was part of a program,
initiated by Captain Cook to take land and women away from ngumpin men, and carried on
by other kartiya who subsequently came to the region. He argues also that the selective
shooting of Aboriginal men and the taking of their women as sexual partners by *kartiya* has resulted in the prevalence of ‘yellafella’ or ‘half-castes’ in the region currently.

*JM* also presents theses in this interview relating to the incorporation of *ngumpin* into the pastoral industry. He notes that work such as that of mailman was done exclusively by *ngumpin* in the past and that there was a paucity of rations made available to workers on their ‘bush holiday’.

In Interview DM10 the female speaker, DM*, presents several theses relating to the incorporation of *ngumpin* into the pastoral industry. She notes that just as the ‘old people’ were taught domestic skills by the Fanquharson brothers, so her generation were in turn taught by these same ‘old people’ and that at one point *ngumpin* were ignorant of *kartiya* ways and goods. DM* argues that when *ngumpin* were in the state of being unpaid workers they were undergoing a process of ‘coming up’ from a ‘properly hard way’, which involved a paucity of clothes, wages, and items such as mattresses. (The male speaker in this interview, DT*, also notes the absence of wages for Aboriginal workers in the past.) DM* also notes that the ‘old people’ nurtured the member of her generation with various kinds of food.

In the other interviews many theses are presented in relation to these and other topics or issues. Here I will consider *ngumpin* theses that have to do with (1) early contact and violence between *ngumpin* and *kartiya*, (2) the incorporation of *ngumpin* into the pastoral industry, (3) the sexual relationship between *ngumpin* and *kartiya*, and (4) the miscegenation which has resulted from this. This will account for the majority of the Mistake Creek theses. All of the theses present in this material, including those not directly considered here, are listed in the summary provided in Appendix B.

In relation to early contact and violence between *ngumpin* and *kartiya*, the male speaker, ST*, suggests that many *ngumpin* in the region were shot by *kartiya* (ST*, in JM5:60) and that coterminous with this shooting was that the latter took the former ‘for rubbish’ (ST*, in JM5:64), and that such shootings heralded the beginning of race relations in the region (ST*, in JM5:74). JM* also suggests that many *ngumpin* were shot by *kartiya* (JM5:59), also noting that *ngumpin* did not attempt to go to England and shoot *kartiya* (JM5:103-104) and that it was thus wrong for *kartiya* to treat *ngumpin* as they did, that is, by shooting them (JM5:104,106). JM* posits an alternative to the violent history of *ngumpin* and *kartiya* interaction in which the two groups ‘Live[d] together’ (JM5:110) as ‘all friend together’ (JM5:125-129).
In another interview ST* suggests that cattle-spearing was at the root of this violence (ST2:141-147) and that kartiya would often enlist policemen to arrest suspected cattle-killers (ST2:170), which policemen would occasionally arrest the wrong people (ST2:179) or even charge ngumpin over cattle that they themselves (i.e. the police) had killed (ST2:196-201).

In relation to the incorporation of ngumpin into the pastoral industry, ST* suggests, as did JM* (above), that a certain type of work (mustering of cattle) was done exclusively by ngumpin (ST1:37), that Kilfoyle’s Rosewood Station was ‘the only one station bin pay im people, before’ (ST1:680), and that Aboriginal workers of his era were ‘sick and tired’ of eating a diet made up almost entirely of beef (ST2:627).

Elsewhere, another male speaker suggests that during the Vesteys era of his younger days those working with ‘the horse and cattle’ were given no time off ‘for talking about … country’ (DC12:45-48). Similarly, the male speaker, KT*, attributes the absence of ceremonial activity amongst ngumpin during the Vesteys era to the regime of ‘too much work’ (KT14:48-53).

Another male speaker suggests that after his apprenticeship in cattle work he was able to work throughout the region, ‘like a whitefella [could] do’ (TB16:13-14), that Aboriginal men working without wages for Vesteys became ‘sick and tired for [i.e. of] watching bullock’ (TB16:17-18), soon after which ‘Vestey bin turn around to pay us now’ (TB16:19-20). This speaker also notes the absence of good tobacco (TB16:21) and the paucity of meat supplies given to Aboriginal workers taking their ‘bush holiday’ (TB16:23-24).

In relation to the sexual relationship between ngumpin and kartiya, ST* notes that kartiya ‘bin … rob im [Aboriginal people] for women’ (ST4:21), such that Aboriginal men, at some point in the past, gave away the rights they had to their women (‘blackfella bin … give it away that game’) and allowed them to do as they pleased (ST4:31,33). He notes that after the time of waringarri, or the Aboriginal war over access to women and land, ‘all [ngumpin] bin have im friend now. Good friend’ (ST4:118). It seems possible from the intertextual context of this passage that ST* is talking about the development of a good relationship between the ngumpin men of the region.

ST* points out that in the past and (possibly also) in the present, policemen did not intervene when kartiya ‘chased’ Aboriginal women, but would stop Aboriginal men from ‘chasing’ white women (ST4:450) and that in any case Aboriginal men do not ‘chase’ white women despite the depredations of kartiya men (ST4:458-459). ST* suggests that if he were
a young man ‘I might … get im one [white] girl’, noting that if he did, ‘white man [or] somebody might be put a police[man] la me’ (ST2:440-442; cf. ST4:28-29). ST* notes that not many ‘blackfellas marry im white girl’ (ST2:434) and suggests that this state of affairs constitutes ‘the trouble’ (ST2:436) with which he and other men grapple.

JM* also presents other theses in relation to this issue. In Interview JM6 he suggests that the responsibility for the violence which occurs in the story of Rebel Major rests not with Major but with the kartiya who stole his wife (JM6:144-147). He also points out that historically, whilst ‘kartiya bin … have im black woman’, Aboriginal men have not been allowed access to white women (JM6:156-157).

In relation to miscegenation, ST* argues that ‘half-castes’, in having (usually) kartiya fathers are ‘not longa Aboriginal way’ (ST2:356), may ‘just [be] bred by dog’ (ST2:360), and are without Aboriginal country (ST2:350). He also argues that they at present outnumber (‘full blood’) Aboriginal people. ST* suggests that Aboriginal men like himself have ‘nothing to do … [with] half-caste[s]’ (ST2:381-382) and especially, will not take responsibility for turning ‘half-caste’ boys into ‘young men’ through initiation (ST2:387-395). He holds that the children born of the union of a ‘full blood’ Aboriginal man and a ‘half-caste’ woman ‘go black’ (ST2:466-467), that is, become Aboriginal again.

JM* argues that with acts such as the taking of Rebel Major’s wife by a kartiya, more and more kartiya ‘bin have im that idea’, in turn fathering children with Aboriginal women (JM6:165-168) to the extent that there is ‘nearly bloody thousand fucking yellafellas on this country’ currently (JM6:170).

6.3.5. Questions by the Interviewer of the Interviewee

Questions asked of the interviewer by the interviewee can be divided into four basic types, comprising those which function to (1) establish the information state or background knowledge of the interviewer, (2) establish the parameters of the interview, (3) elicit information from the interviewer, including (3a) the interviewer’s explanation of certain events or states communicated within the interview, and (4) elicit the interviewer’s attitude or thoughts in relation to certain propositions or information presented within the interview.

In Interview JM3, the male speaker asks the interviewer a question of Type 1, to determine whether he knew of the existence of the long-disused Depot at Timber Creek. In Interview DM10, the female speaker also asks the interviewer a question of Type 1, to determine whether he is familiar with the white bags used in the packaging of flour and
which were the main source of clothing for Aborigines on Inverway Station. No other questions were asked of the interviewer in these interviews.

In the other interviews, male speakers ask questions of Type 1 to determine whether the interviewer has been to certain places (ST1:125, 550, 448; ST4:174; JM6:120-121) or knows of (i) certain people (ST1:144, 274, 295-296, 296, 405, 578-580, 625, 655), (ii) the location of a certain event (ST1:397), (iii) whether a certain man is alive or dead (ST1:298), (iv) the use of the ‘bronc’ horse (KT15:53), and (v) the large number of ‘half-caste’ people residing in Kununurra (ST2:343, 480).

The only other female speaker recorded here asks questions of Type 2 only to determine whether the interviewer wants her to continue with her account (RR20:13, 103) and whether it is appropriate for her to ‘call’ the name of another, living, Aboriginal person (RR20:40-41). ST* also asks a question of this type, to establish whether it is time for another Aboriginal man present to be interviewed (ST1:523).

Male interviewees ask questions of Type 3 to elicit information about (i) a photograph of Aboriginal workers (HK*, in ST1:4), (ii) what the interviewer is pointing towards him (ST4:6), (iii) the number of ‘half-castes’ in the region (ST4:34), (iv) the approximate age of a hypothetical boy standing about five feet high (DC11:6), (v) the name of another kariya researcher at Mistake Creek at the time of the interview (DC11:135-136), (vi) whether Aborigines of the west Kimberley engaged in cattle-killing (ST2:254, 257).

Male interviewees ask the interviewer questions of Type 4 to elicit the interviewer’s explanation as to why (i) with legislative changes such as the introduction of the Land Rights Act ‘he not look good longa [Aboriginal] people yet’ (ST2:273), (ii) the police don’t stop kariya from taking Aboriginal women when, conversely, they stop ngumpin taking white women (ST2:454), (iii) HK*, being sick, cannot get to see a doctor (ST2:538), (iv) an Aboriginal man would be frightened of kariya Welfare Officers (ST2:571), (v) ‘blackfella never bin rob im white man for ... white girl’ (ST4:23-24, 26), (vi) kariya couldn’t ‘make a friend with the [Aboriginal] people’ when they came to the region (JM5:106-108), and (vii) the interviewer wants to know of his going on the ‘bush holiday’ with another Aboriginal man (DC12:96).

Male interviewees ask the interviewer questions of Type 4 to elicit the interviewer’s attitude or thoughts in relation to the proposition that (i) the interviewee is the reincarnation of another Aboriginal man (ST1:812, 814), (ii) ‘grog’, i.e. alcohol, has ‘fucked up’ or ruined the young Aboriginal men of Kununurra (ST2:278), (iii) knives should not be used in fights (ST2:284), (iv) ‘half-castes’ are like ‘a wild dingo’ and cannot be counted as traditional owners of Aboriginal country (ST2:350, 354), (v) white men father ‘half-castes’ when they
take Aboriginal women as sexual partners (ST2:374), (vi) the state wherein very few *ngumpin* men marry white women is ‘the trouble’, i.e. a big part of the ‘half-caste’ problem from the perspective of the speaker (ST2:436), (vii) the hypothetical situation in which the speaker is arrested for having a relationship with a white woman is ‘no good’ (ST2:448), (viii) the children born of the union of a ‘full-blood’ Aboriginal man and a ‘half-caste’ woman ‘go black’ and so become Aboriginal again (ST2:467), (ix) the state wherein *kartiya* take Aboriginal women as wives is ‘no good’ (ST2:510,512), and (x) the Vesteys era was a ‘hard time’ (DC12:62).

Additionally, JM* and ST* ask the interviewer whether he considers they are correct in, respectively, believing that when Aboriginal people get together during the land claim process and make their story heard ‘everything comes to right’ (JM7:54), and criticising the state wherein *kartiya* take Aboriginal women as wives (ST2:518).

6.3.6. Pronoun Use

Because of the extensive use of pronouns in the material considered here, the analysis of pronoun will concentrate on the delineation of certain patterns of its use. It is my contention that *certain historical events and states* are situated by Aboriginal speakers either from the perspective of the individual or that of a group with which they identify and that this can be determined by attention to the various patterned use of first person singular and plural pronouns. There is a patterned use of pronoun when either the singular or plural form is used either predominantly or exclusively around certain historical events and states. Where I indicate that there is exclusive use of, say, the singular form in relation to a certain topic, this indicates that in the rest of the interviews there was no explicit use of the plural form in relation to this same topic.

In the complete set of twenty interviews under consideration, certain historical events and states are spoken of using, predominantly or exclusively, the first person singular pronouns ‘I’ and ‘me’ (and their possessive equivalents, ‘my’ and ‘mine’), as shown by the talk of male interviewees in relation to the experience of working in high status male occupations such as that of horse-breaker (DT8:46,49,55,56,83,89), bore mechanic (TB18:8,9; TB16:25-28), vehicle driver (DT8:81,82) and headstockman (DT8:133,142). However, DT* uses the plural form on one occasion in relation to horse-breaking (DT8:85). That talk of such matters is predominantly situated from the perspective of the individual is unsurprising, given that all of these occupations were specialist positions requiring a minimum of staff on each station.
More interestingly, male speakers exclusively use the *singular* form to situate their experience of learning the trade of stockwork from the perspective of the individual (ST1:397,401; DT8:11,27,30-31,42,46-47,49; DC11:13,30-31,33,68-69,71,75; KT13:14,27-28), whereas the one female speaker who talks of learning the trade of domestic work uses *plural* pronouns exclusively to situate her experience of this from the perspective of the group of which she is part (DM10:88,109,120,128).

The experience of work-related movements between stations is situated from the perspective of the individual by male speakers in their exclusive use of the *singular* form (ST1:721-722; JM3:186,188; DT8:123,133,153; DC1:144-145; KT14:3; TB16:10,14; TB19:2), whereas the one female speaker who talks of this uses both the *singular* (RR20:15,50,52,72,78) and *plural* (RR20:14) forms.

Certain other historical events and states are spoken of using (predominantly or exclusively) the first person *plural* pronouns ‘we’, ‘us’, ‘wipala’ and ‘mipala’ (and their possessive equivalents ‘our’ and, non-standardly, ‘we’). For instance, both a male speaker (DT9:78) and a female speaker (DM10:91) use this form exclusively to situate their experience of not being provided with a formal education from the group perspective.

In relation to the enduring of paucity of clothing or rations, both a female (DM10:139,146,148-149) and two male speakers (DT* in DM10:152; TB16:20) exclusively use the *plural* form to situate their accounts from the perspective of that group who endured such conditions. In relation to the related experience of either receiving or not receiving rations, clothes or wages, both female (RR20:85,89,95; DM10:146,148-149) and male speakers (TB16:18-20; DT* in DM10:152) also exclusively use the *plural* form to situate their account from a group perspective.

There is close to exclusive use of the *plural* form by male speakers in relation to the experience of doing stockwork (ST2:23-24,62,83,90; JM3:115; KT14:8,11,16-17,51; DC12:6,15,18,21,46,79-80,84; DT8:46,65,69,72,74,80,95,105,119,120; KT13:5; TB19:6,7; KT15:3,5,30,34,59,61,65; TB17:6) with just two exceptions (JM3:182; DT8:40). In comparison, the one woman who speaks of doing the female equivalent, housework, uses both *plural* (RR20:4,6,8,10,12,14,26) and *singular* (RR20:3,16,20,24,28) forms to situate her experience variously from the individual and the group perspectives.

Six male speakers predominantly situate the experience of taking the ‘bush holiday’ from the perspective of the group by using the *plural* form (ST1:294; JM3:116; DT8:63,64; DT9:7,11-12,20,35,76; DT* in DM10:194; DC12:56; KT14:58), with just one exception (ST1:719). The one female speaker who talks of the ‘bush holiday’ also uses the *plural* form (DM10:5) to situate her experience as pertaining to the group.
In relation to the hunting, preparing or eating of ‘bush food’, both male (ST1:368,375; DT9:22-23,36,38; DT* in DM10:66) and female speakers (DM10:19,27,39,43; RR20:42) exclusively use the plural form to situate their accounts from the perspective of the group.

Additionally, and in a way which can be seen as an extension of the patterns evident here a male speaker uses the plural form in relation to the experience of ‘working hard’ in the past (ST4:79,81) and a female speaker uses the same in relation to the related experience of ‘coming up’ from the ‘properly hard way’ of working without wages (DM10:148-149).

6.4. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis is to engage with the moral subtext of ngumpin oral history, where it exists. This will be facilitated by a close reading of the material, coupled with attention to the circumstances or context of the production of this oral history. In this chapter, I have concentrated on presenting a close reading of the Mistake Creek oral history material according to those features of text which, in Chapter 2.7, I suggested were most likely to assist in the aim referred to above. In Section Two I analysed two of the Mistake Creek interviews in full, and in Section Three I summarised all twenty of these interviews according to the selected features of text.

In Chapter 7, I take a similar approach to the analysis of the Amanbidji material and, in Chapters 8 and 9, I offer an interpretive discussion of the results of this analysis.
CHAPTER 7

THE AMANBIDJI MATERIAL
Chapter Seven: The Amanbidji Material

7.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I analysed the oral history material recorded at Mistake Creek and surrounding areas during fieldwork there in 1993. In this chapter I analyse the material recorded between November 1992 and September 1995 with (mainly) Amanbidji Station residents at Amanbidji and Katherine. In all, I conducted fifteen interviews with three male and five female residents of Amanbidji Station and one male resident of Emu Creek, ST*, who was visiting the Amanbidji community and whom I had interviewed previously (see Chapter 6).

In Section Two, I present the analysis of one of the Amanbidji recordings in full: Interview PW34. This interview was conducted with PW*, a Ngarinyman man with connections to country to the east of Amanbidji, Maruwul, through his mother. It took place on 23rd June 1994, just a few days before my premature departure from Amanbidji Station. I had recorded PW* on two previous occasions (Interviews PW21 and PW22), during my first visit to the station in November of 1992, and had spent time in his company since then at the Mistake Creek land claim and on various hunting and fishing trips during Amanbidji fieldwork in late 1993.

PW* was born at Waterloo Station around 1928 and, though travelling and working as far afield as the Roper River Valley and Darwin, had spent much of his working life there. He was also institutionalised for medical treatment at the East Arm Leprosarium near Darwin (see Map 1) for several years. At the time of this interview, PW* was the Northern Land Council’s representative for the Victoria River region. He proved to be an eloquent speaker and generous with his time. His skin-group, Jangari, made him my classificatory brother-in-law.

Also present at this interview were the sisters MP* and PP*, both members of the principal land-owning group at Amanbidji. At several significant points during this interview they corroborate PW*’s account, with MP*, senior to both PW* and PP* by some ten years, correcting PW*’s account on one occasion. The co-narrated quality of this interview gives the text a dialogic character that makes it stand apart from most of the other Amanbidji material, wherein interviewees giving life history material were left largely unchecked. There is in this interview a detailed but simultaneously generalised account of the ngumpin experience of pastoralism. It is a startling account of the history of relations between ngumpin and kartiya on stations in the region.
MP* was, with her other sister NP*, one of my main informants at Amanbidji. I had spent much time with both these women the previous year, as they showed me country (particularly around Pumuntu) and gave me instruction in the Ngarinyman language. MP*, born in the bush prior to the 1920s, had been orphaned at a young age, her father having been shot by an early karriyu manager of Vestey’s Waterloo Station, and had been brought up by the father of the main group of senior traditional owners of land at Amanbidji, as their sister. Her country lay to the north-east of the community, at Little Pumuntu or Paringka, in rough, inaccessible country. Her skin-group, Nanagu, made her my sister’s daughter, and me, her uncle.

In Section Three I present, in summary form, the analysis of all fifteen Amanbidji interviews by the six features of text discussed in Chapter 2.7.

In Section Four I offer concluding remarks.

7.2. Analysis of Interview PW34

7.2.1. Interview PW34, recorded with PW*, 23/6/1994, at Amanbidji Station

Prior to commencing the recording, I had requested PW* to speak of the ‘early days’ and of his early working life. PW* begins with a statement of his birth at Waterloo Station, ‘I bin born in Waterloo Station’ (1), and talks of his father’s prior shift from ‘Borroloola way’ to Waterloo, where he met and married PW*’s mother. He then talks of his siblings (4-6):

PW*: When him [i.e. his father] find im me and my sister bin, she bin passed away now. And my brother I think same mother, my big brother bin die here somewhere. They [i.e. other Aboriginal people] bin kill im.

Throughout these introductory passages, PW* situates his account from the perspective of himself, as an individual, by exclusively using the first person singular pronouns ‘I’ and ‘me’ and the possessive equivalent ‘my’. PW* then tells of his early years at Waterloo station (8-14):

PW*: But I bin, when I bin longa, Waterloo when I little boy, I bin grow up there, right up till, till, when him, from, fifteen to sixteen. I bin, my father put me la horse when I was sixteen, y’know. After that I bin learn to ride a horse. Right up till, when I was eighteen. I bin still there working. And when I bin get up to ah nineteen and y’know karriyu couldn’t find a horsebreaker to break im in horse there, he had to put me in, break im in horse for station like y’know. I bin there for break im in horse.
In this passage he continues to use the first person singular pronoun form exclusively to situate, from the individual perspective, his experience of (i) being at Waterloo Station as a young boy, (ii) early instruction in skills associated with stockwork, (iii) being trained as a horse-breaker, and (iv) the work he did in his capacity as a horse-breaker. Following this, PW* talks of the work of mustering (15-16):

PW*: Oh we start him camp, muster im bullocky y’know.

Here, for the first time in this interview, PW* uses the first person plural pronoun form to situate, from the group perspective, his experience of setting up a camp in order to begin the work of mustering at the start of the Dry season. He then offers a description of the work involved in mustering (16-20):

PW*: Go around longa every country. Like he never bin chopper that time. Only all the horse, pack horse like, y’know. Go around and bring im back and send im to Wyndham meatworks. Oh might be six hundred or seven hundred bullock, y’know. And half we cut im out [i.e. separate from the rest] and leave im la [i.e. in the] paddock.

In this passage, PW* makes a historical contrast of past and present methods of mustering cattle, noting that in the days of which he is speaking—‘that time’—there was no use of helicopters. Towards the end of this passage he returns to the topic of his experience of mustering cattle from the group perspective.

The interviewer then asks whether the cattle left ‘la [i.e. in the] paddock’ were left for the following year’s muster. This erroneous supposition is contradicted by PW*: ‘No, might be ‘nother couple of weeks time, y’know. When ‘nother mob of drover come in’ (22-23). Immediately following this, PW* returns to talk of his birth, again using the first person plural pronoun form to situate this experience (23-25):

PW*: And I bin born la old station and that old station, him name, blackfella name, old Waterloo station, old Kulangarlp.

PW* then gives the Aboriginal name of a hill, Pulnalk, close to the station, which name is the same for a native species of possum (30-32):

PW*: You know that Pulnalk what they call im that ah, bush name they give it ah, possum? Possum plenty la Darwin, eh? Possum you know? When he get up la tree?
In this passage PW* asks a series of questions of the interviewer to establish that the interviewer knows of the animal of which he is talking. He then speaks of the plenitude of possum and bandicoot around Waterloo Station in the past (33-34, 36-37):

PW*: And that day, that country, too much la that country, and bandicoot too, y’know / Big mob in that country because my father and mother tell me ‘bout it.

Here, PW* presents the thesis that prior to his birth there were many bush resources in the country around Waterloo Station (33-34). PW* then back-tracks, returning to the telling of events he experienced between the ages of eighteen and nineteen (37-43):

PW*: And people from all that come all way ‘round, bin working there, y’know, when I bin little boy. Then when I bin get up to eighteen some fellin bin passed away then. Old people. And that day was very hard too, y’know, no money we bin working, y’know. And when I bin get up somewhere about to nineteen that Welfare bin come ‘round then. He come around and talk to the people: ‘Might be some time, three or four months time, we do something about find[ing] you money’.

Back-tracking has been discussed by Hendricks (1990:14) in relation to life history material he recorded with the Shuar people of southeastern Ecuador. Hendricks argues that Shuar narratives are organised linearly with respect to time and where time manipulation does occur it ‘highlights aspects of the narrative other than the story itself, especially the narrator’s orientation to the story and his interests in telling it’. For Shuar speakers, temporal disjunction serves pragmatic purposes, drawing the audience ‘into the affective frame of his [i.e. the narrator’s] discourse, assuring him of a sympathetic audience’ (1990:25).

This instance of temporal disjunction is similarly complex. Whereas earlier in the interview PW* marked his being eighteen and nineteen with working and horse-breaking respectively, here he associates them with the death of old people and Welfare’s promise of wages respectively. Whilst he still uses the first person singular pronoun, ‘I’, to mark his age in relation to these events, he uses the first person plural pronoun, ‘we’, to situate his experience of working at Waterloo Station, without wages, from the group perspective.

This passage is also noteworthy for its use of explicit evaluation and recorded direct speech, its documentation of historical paucity and its presentation of thesis. There is, firstly, the thesis that there was an influx of Aboriginal people to Waterloo Station, circa 1930: ‘people from all that come all way ‘round’ (37). There is also an explicit, negative evaluation of the day of ‘no money’ and old people dying as ‘very hard’ and, simultaneously, the documentation of paucity experienced by Aboriginal workers of
Waterloo Station in relation to the provision of wages prior to the late 1940s. Finally, in a dramatisation, PW* reports the direct speech of the Department of Native Welfare kartiya Patrol Officer promising Aboriginal workers of Waterloo Station that they would soon receive wages (42-43).

The officer, Ted Evans, is named, and PW* surmises that he is now dead. PW* again gives a dramatisation which reports Evans’ speech, this time in relation to the actual handing over of money. MP* contributes to this dramatisation in an act of co-narration (47-51):

PW*: That’s the one bin bring im out money to give it out [to ngumpin] people, y’know give it to the manager like, y’know: So [he said], ‘we’ll have to, the old people bin working too long ...’
MP*: ‘We’ll have to pay ...’
PW*: ‘Well we’ll have to pay im, poor bugger.’

In this act of co-narration, MP* repeats and adds to the direct reported speech that PW* has attributed to the patrol officer (‘We’ll have to pay’ (50)), following which PW* repeats what MP* has added and completes the dramatisation (‘Well we’ll have to pay im, poor bugger’ (51)). As a consequence, this part of the account has a rehearsed quality to it, suggesting that the dramatisation of Ted Evans’ promise to Aboriginal workers is relatively commonly told. Also within this passage, PW* presents the historical thesis that the payment of wages to Aboriginal workers on Waterloo Station was preceded by an acknowledgement, by the kartiya patrol officer, that these wages were overdue, at least to the ‘old people’. The officer (and possibly also the Waterloo Station manager) is represented as acknowledging a moral obligation—‘we’ll have to (pay)’ is said three times—to pay their Aboriginal workers. Immediately following this, PW* talks of rations (51-52):

PW*: They bin only leaving us the bread and beef and clothes, y’know. Very hard, that day.

In this passage PW* documents the absence of wages (‘only … bread and beef and clothes’) that existed at Waterloo Station prior to the intervention of the patrol officer and uses the first person plural pronoun, ‘us’, to situate his experience of this state of endured paucity from the group perspective. He explicitly negatively evaluates the era of which he is talking as ‘very hard’. PW* then talks of the non-provision of swags to Aboriginal workers: (52-54):

PW*: And you know them swag? When you bin use im, and roll im up and put their name and put im back la store and [then] we go walkabout?
In this passage PW* questions the interviewer as to whether he knows of the requirement on Aboriginal workers to return their swags to the station store prior to going on their ‘bush holiday’ or ‘walkabout’. In his description here, PW* alternates between second person (‘you’), third person (‘their’) and first person plural pronouns (‘we’) to variously situate this experience. ‘You’ and ‘their’ are both used to refer to, perhaps, a representative or hypothetical Aboriginal person(s) required to return their swag to their store (and, in the process, having their name written on this item), and ‘we’ is used to situate the experience of taking the ‘walkabout’ or ‘bush holiday’, without a swag, from the group perspective. Immediately following this, PW* talks of the return of workers to the station and their subsequent retrieval of swags (54-56):

PW*: And [when] we come back we pick out that same swag. Him bin very hard. That day, y’know, old [GP*] was talking ‘bout.

Here PW* again uses the first person plural pronoun form to situate his experience of both returning from this swag-less holiday and then retrieving his swag from the group experience. He explicitly, negatively evaluates the era in which this occurred as ‘very hard’ and gives an implicit historical contrast between this ‘very hard’ day of having to return swags prior to taking the ‘bush holiday’—‘that day’—and a later time when this requirement no longer held. Following this, in response to the interviewer’s question ‘So what you do for a swag?’ (57), PW* says (58-61):

PW*: Ah well, we bin go out, little bit of a swag cover they bin only give us, y’know. Not really like, y’know. [i.e. It wasn’t a real swag.] Go out that way, we come back start work, they got them same clothes, everything like that. That was very hard, y’know. Hard day.

In this passage PW* documents the absence of swags for Aboriginal workers on their ‘bush holiday’. He again uses the first person plural pronoun form (‘we’ and ‘us’) to situate his experience of taking the ‘bush holiday’ without a swag from the perspective of being a member of that group, that is, Aboriginal workers, denied this item. He also sets up an explicit distinction between ‘we’, ngumpin denied swags and clothes, and ‘they’, kartiya who gave ngumpin ‘[only] little bit of swag cover’ and their clothes back on returning to the station. He again explicitly, negatively evaluates as ‘very hard’ and ‘hard’ these conditions Aboriginal workers contended with. He continues (61-65):

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2 McConvell (1991b:15-16) notes the work of ‘neo-Whorfians’ such as Harris (1990) which suggest that ‘abstraction and hypotheticals are missing in Aboriginal discourse’ and goes on to demonstrate the extensive use of hypotheticals by a Ngarinyman resident of Timber Creek.
PW*: It was very hard, and after that, when that thing bin come on now, that money, old Welfare bin give it out, give it out la we. Give it to the station manager to pay the people, y’know. Little bit of money all the way, till he bin grow big and big then. Everyday we get a big money then. So we bin alright now. The hawker used to come round.

In this passage the explicit, negative evaluation ‘very hard’ is used again in relation to the wage-less days when swags were considered by kartiya to be the property of the station and so not available during holidays. PW* uses the first person plural pronoun, ‘we’, on two occasions to situate his experience of initially receiving wages from the group perspective. He presents the thesis that it was Welfare, through the station manager, who gave Aboriginal workers at Waterloo Station their pay, and explicitly, positively evaluates as ‘alright’, the days which followed, wherein Aboriginal workers achieved ‘big money’. In relation to this state of being ‘alright’ he uses the first person plural pronoun form to situate his experience of this state from the perspective of the group with which he identifies, that is, Aboriginal workers. Following this, there is a brief discussion of the hawker’s origins. PW* continues (66-67):

PW*: Yeah we alright when I get up.

Here PW* uses the first person plural pronoun form in relation to the new, waged state of ‘alright’, and the first person singular form to index his coming into manhood at the inception of this state. In this, the previous passage and the following passage, PW* makes a historical contrast between the ‘very hard day’ prior to wages being paid to Aboriginal workers and the ‘alright now’ following the advent of wages. PW* then talks of mustering (67-70):

PW*: And we bin only muster im bullocky everything like that there, sell im la meatwork, and them store come back, y’know. Big mob money for tucker and things like that; fill him up store. Well we bin really alright now.

Again, PW* here uses the first person plural pronoun, ‘we’, to situate, from the perspective of the group, both his experience of mustering and of being ‘really alright now’ given the existence of wages and ‘big mob money’.

The interviewer then asks, ‘This was back in Vestey time?’ (71), seeking to establish whether wage payment was initiated during the time that Vestey’s controlled Waterloo Station. PW* answers affirmatively and then talks of the ‘hardness’ of that era (72-76):

PW*: Vestey time. Yeah. Him bin very hard. Some white man, we still had a cheeky fella too y’know. Fight la [ngumpin] people like a this. [If you were to]
Do [the] wrong thing, [they’d] fight [you]. Or get the police. That day, y’know. Anything go wrong, might be people get too cheeky, y’know, native people. They [i.e. kartiya] get a policeman [to] belt him like a dog. Tie him up la tree.

In this passage PW* explicitly, negatively evaluates both the Vestey era as ‘very hard’ and certain kartiya who were part of it as ‘cheeky fella’. Whilst ‘cheeky’ may appear to be a fairly tame descriptor, it is used to describe, for instance a specific, named kartiya noted for throwing Aborigines, tied with rope, into the Victoria River (see Interview BG28:77,98,109), and is also used generally to describe poisonous snakes such as death adders, king browns and taipans. He uses the first person plural pronoun form here to situate his experience of the problem of kartiya ‘cheekiness’ from the group perspective.

PW* also presents a thesis here: that if, during Vestey time, Aboriginal people were themselves ‘cheeky’, kartiya station personnel could enlist policemen to punish them by tying them to a tree and ‘belting’ them. He uses the simile ‘like a dog’ to describe the police handling of the people so punished, so suggesting that this treatment constituted a de-humanising of ngumpin by kartiya. This description is followed by a passage in which there is an act of co-narration (77-81):

MP*: By Christ …
PW*: I tell you, it’s true.
MP*: Before.
PW*: This day they got him free going now. They [i.e. young Aboriginal people] only go prison, and do their time, or community job [i.e. a community service order], y’know. But not that early days.

In this passage, PW* responds to MP*’s exclamation ‘By Christ’ with a metanarrative statement—‘I tell you, it’s true’—which is an appeal to the veracity of the material he is presenting. MP* then puts this story in its historical context, using the term ‘before’, which prompts PW* to make a historical contrast between the use of police-administered ‘beltings’ in the ‘early days’ of the past with the ‘free going’ of prison and community service orders used presently to punish Aboriginal people who break the law. Here he also presents a thesis: that young Aboriginal people today are treated leniently by policemen. PW* then reports the direct speech of a policeman asking his Aboriginal tracker to tie an un-named Aboriginal ‘boy’ (i.e. a station worker) to a tree and ‘belt the shit out of him’ (82-84). Immediately following this, PW* again makes a metanarrative statement which appeals to the veracity of his account (84-92):

PW*: I tell you it’s true you can tell [i.e. ask] this two olgaman here.
MP*: Yeah. That true.
PP*: Tie him up like a dog ...
PW*: Just like a dog and belt im.
PP*: Against the tree.
PW*: Against the tree.
MP*: Blood everywhere.
PW*: Yeah. Bleeding everywhere.

His initial statement here prompts commentary from both the women present and an extended piece of co-narration in which the simile ‘like a dog’ is again used in relation to the police treatment of ngumpin. There is a repetitious and formulaic quality to this exchange, which again gives the account a rehearsed quality and suggests that what is presented is a consensus version of the past. This repetition may also function, as Berndt and Berndt (1989:13) suggest, as a marker of emphasis. PW* continues to talk of such police behaviour towards ngumpin (92-94):

PW*: They didn’t care who, kill him, die, or nothing. It was very hard eh?
CR*: Yeah.
PW*: Very hard that day.
MP*: Very hard.

Here PW* twice explicitly, negatively evaluates this violent behaviour towards ngumpin by the police of this earlier era and questions the interviewer as to whether he agrees with this evaluation. He also presents the two theses here that the police who beat Aboriginal people during ‘Vestey time’ were undiscerning in relation to their choice of victim and untroubled by deaths resulting from their actions.

To the interviewer’s question, ‘Which policeman that?’ (97), PW* responds, ‘That old Gordon Stott. Timber Creek’ (98) which prompts the following exchange (99-105):

MP*: No …
PW*: I don’t know who first time, but after, that old Gordon Stott, him bin still have that idea, all the way.
MP*: Yeah.
PW*: Follow on, you know. Belt im, no matter where. No matter what station [they were at]. They had that same idea.
MP*: Too much …

Here, in response to MP*’s denial of Gordon Stott as being the originator of police violence, PW* uses the first person singular pronoun form to register his own relative lack of knowledge of ‘first time’. In this passage PW* presents two theses, the first being that Gordon Stott was operating according to a certain ideology that gave rise to a culture of violence passed on from policeman to policeman; the second that police were unmoved by considerations of locality (‘no matter what station’) when it came to such behaviour. PW* then continues with this second thesis (106-108):
PW*: Even Turkey Creek, or somewhere else. Wyndham like, same thing. Belt im, and make im slave. Work, y’know. That was very hard, y’know.

White (1991:71) notes that a feature of stories told by Santa Isabel Islanders is that police sent by the colonial administration to regions they were unfamiliar with are similarly represented as ‘acting without regard for prior social relations or any kind of shared history of mutual involvement’. In the passage above, PW* advances the thesis that such police behaviour contributed to, or perhaps even determined, the enslavement of Aboriginal people. He explicitly, negatively evaluates this state as ‘very hard’. To this, MP* draws attention to the current regime (‘This lot of young people’ (109)), which prompts the following (110-115):

PW*: And today now the young people get the easy going.
MP*: Yewat.
PW*: Y’know they have a … oh, they can do what they like. But they gotta get that, early days, second early day, I mean. Policeman is very hard. One little trouble, he grab im and belt the shit out of him. Lay im bloody half dead, him kill im.

In this passage PW* again makes a historical contrast between punishment regimes of his day (‘second early day’) and the present, wherein ‘the young people get the easy going’. PW*’s phrase ‘second early day’ is probably a kind of deferment to MP*’s age-seniority, with MP* being born some ten years before him and having much greater claim to speak of the ‘early day’. PW* presents the thesis that police in his day were very quick to violently punish ngumpin who made ‘one little trouble’ and again explicitly, negatively evaluates these policemen as ‘very hard’. Immediately following this, PW* again appeals to his two, female co-narrators to verify his account (113-119):

PW*: This two olgaman [i.e. old women] can tell you.
MP*: Yeah.
P*: They all with me.
PP*: Rough.
P*: Rough going.

The flogging of Aboriginal people is again explicitly, negatively evaluated as ‘rough’, this time by both PW* and PP*. The interviewer then comments ‘Good story’ (120) and invites the speaker to finish, saying ‘Stop him there?’ (120), to which PW* replies ‘Hmm’ (121). The interview is then terminated.
7.3. Summary of the Amanbidji material

7.3.1. Explicit Evaluation

In Interview PW34, we saw the male speaker positively evaluate the era when wages were paid to Aboriginal workers and negatively evaluate as ‘cheeky fella’, some of the kartiya employers and employees of Vesteys stations who would fight or ‘belt’ Aborigines who did the ‘wrong thing’. In addition he uses ‘hard’ and ‘very hard’ to refer to (i) the era defined by the absence of wages, (ii) the requirement on Aboriginal workers to return their swags and their work clothes to the station prior to taking their holiday, (iii) ‘Vestey time’, that is, the period when Vesteys were involved in the pastoral industry, when (iv) policemen would be called in to administer brutal beatings to Aboriginal residents of their stations, (v) the virtual enslavement of Aboriginal people during ‘Vestey time’ as a result of police beatings, and (vi) the policemen involved in these beatings. Both PW* and PP* use the term ‘rough’ to refer to the treatment of ngumpin by policemen during ‘Vestey time’.

In the other fourteen interviews which comprise the Amanbidji material, there is a seam of positive evaluation by male speakers in relation to the topic of kartiya managers, bosses and others they have worked for or had dealings with (PW21:75,87,90; ST25:62,66; PK* in ST25:138; PL29:184-185 and DP30:48). Such positive evaluation is sometimes linked to certain things as in the case of (i) Kilfoyle, the founder of Rosewood Station, on the basis of his payment of wages to Aboriginal workers (ST25:139) and his giving Aboriginal workers alcohol (ST25:157), (ii) Mr Bingle, a travelling manager for Vesteys, as one who ‘love im people like mipala, good worker’ (ST25:213-216), (iii) Patrol Officer Ted Evans, as the Welfare officer who brought wages to the Aboriginal workers of Waterloo Station (PW35:164), (iv) a Waterloo Station manager on the basis of his decision to pay striking Port Keats Aboriginal workers for the work they had already done (PW35:501), and (v) Humbert River Station manager Charlie Schultz, on the basis that in the fights he occasionally had with Aborigines who absconded from his station ‘he never [would] run for [a] rifle’ (ST25:73).

Another significant seam of positive evaluation by male speakers relates even more directly to work and the work environment. There is positive evaluation of (i) Aboriginal workers of the past such as the speaker himself and his contemporaries (ST25:215-216), (ii) the conditions for Aboriginal workers under Joe Case’s successor at Waterloo Station, even given the absence of wages (PW21:58), (iii) the work of horse-tailing (PW35:39), (iv) the era wherein the speaker and the other Aboriginal workers of Waterloo Station would break in many horses at a time (PW35:76), (v) the speaker’s own expertise as a horse-breaker
Additionally, there is positive evaluation of the fighting ability of a named kartiya man who lived in the region some decades ago (PW35:250), the expected outcome of the Mistake Creek land claim wherein Aboriginal claimants would receive inalienable freehold title to the land under claim (PW22:109-110), and even qualified positive evaluation of a named policeman (ST25:314-315).

Amongst female speakers similarly there is positive evaluation of both kartiya bosses (MP23:134; NP24:38,68,339; BG28:111-112,128,132,134-135; MP32:10) and ngumpin workers of Durack’s Kildurk Station (NP24:230), of Durack’s Newry Station in that they helped kartiya ‘properly way’ despite working without wages (NP24:417), and of the work environment at Auvergne Station following Reg Durack’s taking up of the manager’s position there (BG28:125,129-130,133-134). One speaker positively evaluates her own conduct during her working life as ‘good all the way’ (BG28:346). Reg Durack, the founder of Kildurk Station, in particular is positively evaluated as a ‘good man’ who ‘look after im (Aborigines) really’ and ‘give im good’ (BG28:30-32,158-160).

Another significant seam of women’s positive evaluation relates to the topic of schooling with one speaker positively evaluating the past practice of sending children to boarding schools elsewhere to stay there the full year (NP24:273-275) and her son’s ability to read and write (NP24:361-362), and another the attitude of Aboriginal children at the East Arm Leprosarium in the early 1970s towards the school there (BG28:311-312). This same speaker also offers positive evaluation of the East Arm leprosarium (BG28:164), a yam-like bush food found around Amanbidji (BG28:253), her grandchild in that she does ‘good job’ for her (BG28:327), and the previous site of the Amanbidji Aboriginal community in the 1970s and the absence of conflict in the community then (BG28:343-345).

There is negative evaluation by male speakers of the speaker’s own physical condition on retirement as ‘not too good’ (PW21:102), the state of Amanbidji Station in the recent past when some of the kartiya managers ‘bin put the place right down’ and allowed the killing of those cattle thought to be infected with tuberculosis (PW22:79-81), a named kartiya who killed many ngumpin (ST25:328), and the general shooting of ngumpin men by kartiya in the past (ST25:338).

In addition, male speakers use the term ‘hard’ to refer to (i) the task of breaking in many horses at the one time for use of various Vesteyes stations (PW21:31,33), (ii) the practice of workers returning clothes and swags prior to taking their bush holiday
(PW21:49), (iii) the wage-less regime of Waterloo Station under Joe Case (PW21:57), and (iv) the work Aboriginal people did for Kilfoyle of Rosewood Station (ST25:144). A male speaker uses the term ‘rough’ to refer to his father, specifically in relation to how his father used a whip on him whilst teaching him to ride (PW22:31), and another refers to the policeman Gordon Stott as ‘mad bugger’ (ST25:294), and ‘too cheeky’ (ST25:319), and to ‘old policemen’ and Aboriginal trackers or police boys as ‘bad bugger’ for shooting ngumpin (ST25:348,352). Another male speaker refers to the policeman Gordon Stott as ‘cheeky one’ (PK* in ST25:295).

Amongst female speakers there is negative evaluation of certain Aboriginal people in the past as ‘no good … for old people’ on the basis of their involvement in the death of the speaker’s mother (MP23:110), certain Aboriginal people of Katherine who are ‘no good la grog’ (BG:28:299) and young Aboriginal people of today who are ‘silly’ (NP24:221-222) in that they gamble their wages on card games, ‘slack off’ in relation to their work (NP24:234) and are generally ‘not good worker[s]’ (NP24:235). Another female speaker negatively evaluates her condition, having been bitten by a snake (MP26:31), and the type of snake, warrany, that bit her (MP26:62-63).

Female speakers use the term ‘hard’ to refer to ‘hard work properly’ that was done in making cream and butter at Newry Station in the 1930s (NP24:100-101), and the ‘hard day’ of Durack’s time as manager of Kildurk Station wherein Aboriginal people ‘gotta work for his [i.e. their] money’ (NP24:232). Another female speaker uses the term ‘rough’ to refer to those kartiya unable to say ‘Ngamanpurru’ properly (PP31:116) and yet another refers to Harry Shadforth, the kartiya manager of Auvergne Station (see Map 2) in the 1930s and 1940s as ‘cheeky one’ (BG28:5,77), ‘really cheeky’ (BG28:98) and ‘proper cheeky’ (BG28:109).

**7.3.2. Historical Contrast**

In Interview PW34, the male speaker contrasts past and present methods of mustering cattle and the treatment of Aboriginals at the hands of policemen. In relation to the latter, the speaker suggested that police methods of the present are much more lenient than those used in the past.

In the other interviews considered here there is a seam of historical contrast around the topics of past and present work practices and cattle husbandry in particular. In relation to cattle husbandry, a male speaker contrasts the sending of bullocks to the Wyndham meatworks for slaughtering during his working days with the mass-slaughter of cattle in the recent past under the Northern Territory’s Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication
Campaign (BTEC) scheme (PW21:9-11) and also contrasts this mass-shooting of cattle in the recent past with the absence of this activity now (PW22:87).

In relation to work practices generally, a male speaker contrasts the ‘real hard’ days of having to return work clothes prior to going on holiday with the ‘alright’ time that came with Welfare’s advent in the late 1940s (PW21:49-51). A female speaker contrasts the making of cream and butter at Newry Station in the 1930s with the buying of dairy products today (NP24:99-100), the use of coolers at Newry Station in the 1930s with that of freezers today (NP24:105-107), and the ‘slack off’ attitude of worker’s today with the ‘good blackfella’ of her day who ‘know work’ and ‘gotta work for his [i.e. their] money’ (NP24:230-237).

In the same interview this female interviewee makes an implicit contrast between young Aboriginal wage-earners of the past and those of today, the latter being ‘silly’ with their money in gambling on card games (NP24:221-222). Another female speaker contrasts past and present methods of maintaining roads (PP31:68-69).

Various other historical contrasts are made by female speakers. One contrasts the past presence of a school at East Arm Leprosarium with the absence of anything there currently (it having been closed down) (BG28:305-306), and fighting within the Amanbidji community in the present with the absence of such a few decades ago (BG28:343-345). PP* makes a historical contrast between the past and present presence of a water spring at the edge of the community (PP31:93-97) and MP* contrasts the use of boats in the present to cross flooded rivers with their absence in the past (MP33:50-54), and the absence of crocodiles at Barramundi Hole in the past with their possible presence in the present (MP:3359).

7.3.3. Simile

In Interview PW34, both the male speaker and a female co-narrator suggest that ngumpin, in being tied to a tree by policemen prior to being beaten, we re treated ‘like a dog’. There is very little use of simile in the other interviews. A male speaker suggests that, prior to Welfare’s advent, Aboriginal people on Vestey’s stations were treated ‘like a slave’ (PW21:42), and that another male resident (PL*) of Amanbidji, in biting off the finger of a karriya he fought with some decades ago, has ‘teeth like bloody razor or something’ (PW35:367). A female speaker refers to a type of bush food as ‘like a yam’ (BG28:251).
In Interview PW34 we saw the male speaker suggest that (i) prior to his birth there were many bush resources in the country around Waterloo Station (33-34), (ii) there was an influx of Aboriginal people to Waterloo Station circa 1930 (37-38), (iii) kartiya such as Ted Evans and possibly even the Waterloo Station manager recognised, circa 1946, the moral requirement to compensate the ‘old people’ and Aborigines generally for their labour by paying them wages (49-51), (iv) it was Welfare who gave Aboriginal workers at Waterloo Station their pay (62), (v) if, during Vestey time, Aboriginal people were ‘cheeky’, kartiya station personnel would get a policeman to tie them to a tree and flog them (74-76), and (vi) young Aboriginal people today are treated leniently by policemen (80). He also argued that the police who beat Aboriginal people during ‘Vestey time’ were untroubled by deaths amongst those they beat (92), were operating within a culture of violence that was passed on from policeman to policeman (100-104), and would administer these beatings regardless of which station they were at (103-104), and in doing all of these things, contributed to the enslavement of Aboriginal people (107), by beating them at the sign of ‘one little trouble’ (114).

He also noted the absence of (i) wages for Aboriginal workers at Waterloo Station prior to the late 1940s (40,51-52), and (ii) swags for Aboriginal workers during the holiday season (58).

In Chapter 6.3.4. I considered those ngumpin theses in the Mistake Creek material that were related to early contact and violence between ngumpin and kartiya, the incorporation of ngumpin into the pastoral industry, and the sexual relationship between ngumpin and kartiya.

The Amanbidji material requires a slightly different schema. Here I will consider ngumpin theses in the material which have to do with (1) police violence towards ngumpin, (2) the incorporation of ngumpin into the pastoral industry, (3) the sexual relationship between ngumpin and kartiya, and (4) the role of the Department of Native Welfare in the lives of ngumpin. These four categories account for the majority of the theses in the Amanbidji material.

In relation to police violence towards ngumpin, a male speaker suggests that early day policemen ‘chased’ blackfellas because they ‘didn’t like im might be’ (ST25:286), and another male speaker argues that the incident wherein a policeman at Mistake Creek Station threatened to tie PL* to a tree and ‘flog shit’ out of him (PW35:312-314), then fought with
him (PW35:315-317) and attempted to get his police ‘boy’ to use his gun on PL* (PW35:319-320,326-327) happened after 1946 (PW35:374-382).

In relation to the incorporation of ngumpin into the pastoral industry, one male speaker suggests that ngumpin worked the stock-camp at Matt Wilson’s Cattle Creek Station without kartiya supervision (PL27:56-57,115), and another argues that he became an expert horse-breaker and stockman by watching how his father worked (PW35:125,127). This same speaker notes that Vestey’s approached the Catholic minister at Port Keats and arranged for him to send Aboriginal men from there to work on Vestey’s stations (PW35:403-405,468-469). A female speaker posits the absence of a work ethic amongst today’s young Aboriginal workers at Amanbidji (NP24:234). In relation specifically to the contemporary incorporation of ngumpin into the pastoral industry, male speaker argues that, being a ‘blackfella station’, ‘white blokes’ employed by the Northern Territory Government to shoot cattle on Amanbidji land must ask permission of its Aboriginal owners first (PW22:85-87).

In relation specifically to past relationships with kartiya bosses, a male speaker argues that the manager of Humbert River Station, Charlie Schultz, was ‘no good for’, i.e. hard on, Aborigines who absconded from stations (ST25:68) and that Mr Bingle, a travelling manager for Vestey’s, loved good Aboriginal workers like ST* himself but didn’t like other kartiya (ST25:215-216). Another male speaker suggests that he was well liked by the manager of Bullo River Station, Henderson, and his daughters (DP30:90-91), and another, that in paying off the Port Keats Aborigines who walked off from Waterloo Station, the manager acted properly and ‘give im fair go’ (PW35:501).

In relation to this sub-topic, a female speaker suggests that all the Aboriginal workers of Auvergne Station were happy and ‘good now’, following the replacement of the particularly violent Harry Shadforth as manager there by Reg Durack (BG28:125-126) and his wife, and that these workers were more inclined then to ‘work good’ (BG28:133-134) for him. She also notes that Reg Durack had no inclination to ‘flog’ his Aboriginal workers (BG28:128), that there was an absence of such acts during his time as manager (BG:158-159), and argues that he and his wife were unique in the region in that ‘they bin love blackfella’ (BG28:135-137).

In relation specifically to relationships with kartiya bosses in the present and very recent past, one male speaker suggest that the ‘boss’ of those at Amanbidji Station at present is the head of ATSIC in Katherine (PW22:74-75), and that some of the kartiya in charge of Amanbidji Station in the 1980s ‘bin put the place right down’ (PW22:79-80) and allowed
Northern Territory Government employees to shoot Amanbidji cattle under the BTEC scheme (PW22:80-81).

In relation specifically to wage-payment, a female speaker suggests that workers at Kildurk Station received ‘too much [i.e. a lot of] money from [Reg] Durack’ (NP24:216-217) but worked hard for their money (NP24:232). She also notes that on M.P. Durack’s Newry Station prior to this, Aboriginal people were ‘Only working for dress, blanket, [mosquito] net’ (NP24:408,410-411,416) and despite this ‘bin help them kartiya, properly way’ (NP24:417). A male speaker notes that Kilfoyle of Rosewood Station was the first manager to pay wages to Aboriginal workers (ST25:146-147). Both a male speaker (PW21:34,58; PW35:39-40) and a female speaker (NP24:406) note the absence of wages for Aboriginal workers in the past.

In relation to the sexual relationship between ngumpin and kartiya, one male speaker argues that a lot of kartiya were in the region in the past, shooting ngumpin (ST25:331-332), and taking their women away (ST25:335-336). Another male speaker suggests that the cause of the walk-off from Waterloo Station by Aborigines from Port Keats in the 1960s was that the kartiya horse-breaker was ‘chasin’ after’ the wife of one of the Port Keats men (PW35:483-485).

In relation to the role of the Department of Native Welfare’s role in the lives of ngumpin, one male speaker argues that prior to Welfare visiting Waterloo Station, circa 1946, the Aboriginal workers there had no-one assisting them to gain wages (PW21:35), that Welfare’s purpose was to help Aboriginal people (PW21:37) and that they acted as a ‘backstop’, i.e. as a strong ally (PW21:51), and that work relations prior to Welfare’s advent were akin to slavery (PW21:42,44). This same speaker suggests that Welfare recognised there was an obligation to pay Aboriginal workers who had been working ‘long enough’ without wages (PW35:154-156), and that in paying them wages Welfare was the ‘boss’ of the Aboriginal workers of Waterloo Station (PW35:148-151). He also notes that the Welfare officer, Ted Evans, took ‘half-caste’ children from stations in the region (PW35:167-168), including one from Waterloo Station (PW35:180-181).

### 7.3.5. Questions of the Interviewer

In Chapter 6.3.5 I suggested that questions asked of the interviewer by the interviewee can be divided into four basic types, comprising those which function to (1) establish the information state or background knowledge of the interviewer, (2) establish the parameters of the interview, (3) elicit information from the interviewer, including (3a) the interviewer’s explanation of certain events or states communicated within the interview, and (4) elicit the
interviewer’s attitude or thoughts in relation to certain propositions or information presented within the interview.

In Interview PW34 we saw the male speaker ask questions of Type 1 to determine whether the interviewer knew of the possum, and of the requirement on Aboriginal workers to return their swags to the station store prior to going on their ‘bush holiday’ or ‘walkabout’. He also asked a question of Type 4 to determine whether the interviewer would agree to the evaluation of police brutality during ‘Vestey time’ as ‘very hard’.

In the other interviews male speakers ask questions of Type 1 to determine whether the interviewer (i) knows of a particular Bulla resident that he taught to ride (PW22:50), (ii) knows that the ‘boss’ of the Amanbidji Station is the ‘big boss’ of ATSIC in Katherine (PW22:74-75), (iii) knows of Charlie Schultz (ST25:22), (iv) knows of Mr Bingle (ST25:210), (v) knows of Victor Vincent (ST25:255), (vi) has heard of a kariyu, Washinby (approximate spelling), who killed many Aborigines in the region (ST25:321-322), (vii) has heard of a policeman called Tommy Hemmings who was also involved in shooting ngumpin (ST25:343), (viii) knows of a stock-yard he is referring to (DP30:83), and (ix) knows of wild horses (‘brumbies’) (PW35:53).

Male speakers ask just one question of Type 2 to determine what ‘sort of story’ the interviewer wants (ST25:8), and three questions of Type 3 to elicit information from the interviewer as to whether (i) Charlie Schultz, ex-manager of Humbert River Station, is ‘alright’, i.e. well (ST25:22), (ii) Mr. Bingle, the travelling manager for Vesteys has died (ST25:210-211), and (iii) he saw a named Aboriginal man from Daguragu at Mistake Creek (ST25:259).

Male speakers ask questions of Type 4 to determine whether the interviewer agrees (i) that 1972 is ‘long time back [i.e. ago]’ (PW21:97), (ii) that ‘two Christmas’, i.e. two years, is a long time (ST25:52), and (iii) with his assessment of the shooting of ngumpin by kariyu as ‘no good’ (ST25:338).

Female speakers ask the interviewer questions of Type 1 to determine whether the interviewer knows (i) that she and her siblings have a ‘half-caste’ brother (MP23:91), (ii) of her son who lives elsewhere (NP24:20), (iii) what she’s talking about in relation to the set-up of homestead and kitchen (MP26:8-9), (iv) of a particular Aboriginal man of Auvergne Station (BG28:237), (v) of the founder of Argyle Station, M.P. Durack (PP31:1), and (vi) of the conkerberry which gives Ngamanpuru its name (PP31:103). Another questions the interviewer as to whether he can see a hill she is referring to (BG28:333). The only other question by a female speaker is one of Type 2, asked in order to determine what the interviewer wants the speaker to talk about during the interview (DD29:2).
7.3.6. Pronoun Use

As in Chapter 6.3.6, I concentrate in this section on the delineation of certain patterns of pronoun use. I am interested here in those patterned uses of the first person singular and plural pronouns which hold either predominantly or exclusively around certain historical events and states. Exceptions to any of these patterns by any speaker will be noted.

In the complete set of fifteen interviews which comprises the Amanbidji material, certain events and states are spoken of using, predominantly or exclusively, the first person singular pronouns 'I' and 'me' and their possessive equivalents. Male speakers exclusively use the singular form to situate their experience of learning the trade of stockwork from an individual perspective (PW22:5,29,31-33; ST25:13,27-28; PW34:10-11; PW35:26-27,29-30,32,3,43-44), whereas one female speaker uses the singular form in relation to learning domestic work (MP23:25) and another uses the plural form (NP24:32).

The experience of work-related movements between stations is situated from an individual perspective by male speakers in their exclusive use of the singular form (PW21:71-72,78,81,86,90; ST25:267; PL:47,49,92,96,119,130,132,168-169; PW35:213) and predominantly from this perspective by female speakers (BG28:36-37; NP24:157,160,191-192,195; DD29:12) with one of them using the plural form on two occasions (NP24:24,486).

Certain other historical events and states are spoken of using, predominantly or exclusively, the first person plural pronouns ‘we’, ‘us’, ‘wipala’ and ‘mipala’ and their possessive equivalents. In relation to the enduring of paucity of clothing or rations, both a male (PW21:45; PW34:54-55,58) and a female speaker (NP24:226,229) exclusively use the plural form to situate their accounts from the perspective of that group who endured such conditions. Of the related experience of either receiving or not receiving rations, clothes or wages, one male speaker (PW21:34,37,41-42,45,50-51,58-59; PW34:40,62,64) and one female speaker (NP24:216,219-220,226) exclusively use the plural form to situate their account of this experience from a group perspective.

There is very little explicit use of either pronoun form by male speakers in relation to the experience of travelling in the bush during the Wet season, with one speaker using both the plural (ST25:51,78) and the singular (ST25:132) form. In contrast, female speakers almost exclusively use the plural form to situate their accounts from the group perspective (MP26:84-86,88-89,91,95-98,104-109,125,128-130,132-133,135-138,141-145; MP33:12,14,33-34,36,39-42,61-63,72,77,88-99,100,117,120,125; PP31:22,24,26,30,40-41,48,52,
54, 56, 118, 125, 136, 149), with sporadic use of the singular form (PP31:31; MP33:56; NP24:6).

In relation to the experience of hunting for, preparing, or eating ‘bush food’, there is predominant use of the plural form by female speakers to situate their accounts from the perspective of the group (MP26:92, 94, 98, 141, 173; MP33:82; BG28:181, 198, 200, 212) with just one exception (BG28:213).

Contra to the Mistake Creek material, the experience of stockwork is variously situated by male speakers from the perspective of the individual and the group in that they use both the singular (PW21:3; DP30:68, 72-73, 76, 78, 82, 93) and plural (PW21:10-12; PL27:115; DP30:25, 43, 48, 55, 60, 62, 80; PW34:15, 20, 67; PW35:25, 47, 227) forms.

Additionally, and in a way which can be seen as an extension of the patterns evident here, a male speaker uses the plural form to situate his account from the perspective of that group who (i) endured the ‘hard days’ of work (PW21:33), (ii) didn’t have Welfare to assist them initially (PW21:35), but later had Welfare ‘backstopping’ (PW21:50-51) and helping them to get wages (PW21:37), (iii) were told by a station manager they’d be receiving wages (PW21:40), (iv) currently have the head of ATSIC as their boss (PW22:74), and (v) may ask this ATSIC boss in Katherine to buy more cattle for the station in order to get it ‘up again’ (PW22:77-78).

7.4. Conclusion

In this chapter I have concentrated on presenting a close reading of the Amanbidji oral history material according to those features of text which, in Chapter 2.7, I suggested were most likely to assist in engaging with the moral subtext of ngumpin oral history. In Section Two, I analysed one of the Amanbidji interviews in full, and in Section Three I summarised all fifteen interviews according to the selected features of text. This concludes the analysis of text.

In the next chapter, Chapter 8, I offer an interpretive discussion of the results of the analysis presented here and in Chapter 6.
CHAPTER 8

INTERPRETING THE TEXTS
Chapter Eight: Interpreting the Texts

8.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I document and interpret the moral sub-text of ngumpin oral history, based on the analysis presented in Chapters 6 and 7. I reintroduce data from Chapters 1, 3, 4, and 5 relating to the past and present circumstances of ngumpin social, cultural and economic life and demonstrate how these circumstances relate to this sub-text. Throughout this chapter, I will, for instance, refer back to historical aspects of the engagement between ngumpin and kartiya, as it is to this that much of the sub-text refers.

In Section Two, I consider the amalgamation or fusion of diverse Aboriginal groups in the wider Victoria River region, relating this to the notions of ‘coming in’ and ‘mixing up’ considered in Chapter 3, and to various aspects of traditional ngumpin social and cultural life, including the development of Kriol as a northern cattle station Aboriginal lingua franca. I link these trends towards inclusivity with the patterned use of pronoun in relation to the ngumpin experiences of enduring paucity of rations and clothing and of receiving or not receiving rations, clothing or wages.

I also look at some unpublished oral history material recorded with a Ngarinyman man by the historian, Read, in 1977. This material provides one of the interpretive keys for understanding the patterned use of pronoun that exists in ngumpin oral history material, especially that which deals with the receipt or non-receipt of wages. The material also leads me to consideration of the moral sub-text around historical talk of kartiya violence.

In Section Three, I consider the moral sub-text, given through ngumpin thesis and explicit evaluation, around talk of the historical patterning of sexual relationships between ngumpin and kartiya. I discuss the economic imperative for ngumpin women throughout much of the twentieth century to form sexual relationships with kartiya, and consider the male ngumpin perspective on the refusal of kartiya to uphold certain obligations of reciprocity entailed by kartiya access to ngumpin women. I reintroduce the notion of moral economy as a key to understanding male ngumpin critique of ngumpin-kartiya sexual relations.

In Section Four, I consider the moral sub-text of ngumpin oral history around talk of the behaviour of specific kartiya bosses towards ngumpin. I introduce the notion of ‘looking after’, which has been used by some writers to characterise relations between the generations in Aboriginal society and document ngumpin preferences in relation to the character of their general inter-relationship with kartiya.
I posit a culture of racism that has existed throughout the wider Victoria River region since the establishment of cattle stations there and show that, generally, *kartiya* ideology was such that it relegated *ngumpin* to a separate, and inferior, category. In briefly sketching this ideology, I consider accounts given by various *kartiya* who worked in the region. Finally, I consider the *ngumpin* use of simile in oral history material presented here and elsewhere as a critique of the inter-relationship of *ngumpin* and *kartiya*.

### 8.2. Solidarity and Wage Payment

As we saw in Chapters 3.2 and 3.5, various forces leading to the amalgamation or fusion of *ngumpin* groups have operated throughout the twentieth century. In Chapter 3.2 I described the process known to elderly *ngumpin* as ‘coming in’, wherein they and their elders were incorporated into the operation of various cattle stations and consequently ‘mixed up’ with other Aboriginal people with whom they would normally not have had extended close contact. Groups of diverse but related *ngumpin* found themselves in physical proximity, similar occupation, and similar position relative to *kartiya*, and these things engendered the development of a wider solidarity facilitated by the activation and intensification of potential and existing social bonds between *ngumpin*.

Potential and actual social bonds between *ngumpin*, as we saw in Chapter 3.5, were provided by aspects of traditional *ngumpin* social and cultural life, such as the classificatory kinship system, the subsection system, *winan* or traditional trade (Chapter 3.3.2), common affiliation to Dreaming and the joint operation of ritual. In Chapter 3.5 we also saw how, in the context of Aboriginal claims to land under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*, Aboriginal people have tended to be as inclusive as possible in their reckoning of land ownership, using notions of ‘company’ and ‘fifty-fifty’ ownership to allow for shared responsibility to, and ownership of, Aboriginal country. At Amanbidji, for instance, Palmer and Brady (1991:25) found that throughout the twentieth century there has been a ‘fusion and amalgamation of interests and a consolidation of the land owners into a single group’.

We saw also in Chapter 1.5, McConvell’s (1988:109) suggestion that those Aboriginal people in northern Australia who speak Kriol belong to a highly inclusive category of ‘cattle station Aborigines’ (cf. Rumsey (1989:69-76) and Sutton (1991:52) on the emergence of ‘language groups’ as the basis for Aboriginal claims to land, following depopulation). McGrath (1987:168), somewhat similarly, argues that ties between Aborigines in the wider Victoria River region have developed both through ‘similar historical experiences, and the
lingua franca of station creole’. She (1987:170) suggests that regional race meetings were also important in the development of regional solidarity.

The ‘similar historical experiences’ that McGrath refers to led, on many stations, to uniform dissatisfaction amongst ngumpin with the conditions they encountered working for kartiya (Richards 1982). Berndt and Berndt (1987:97) have put it thus:

Against a background of indifferent working conditions and little recompense for the efforts made by Aborigines, the situation on each station [i.e. Waterloo and Limbunya] engendered dissatisfaction and disillusionment on the part of the local people. Their future and that of their children—those few who were present—was not only strictly circumscribed but seemed to lead nowhere.

There is a strong trace of this uniform dissatisfaction within the ngumpin oral history presented in this thesis, organised around the patterning of singular and plural first person pronouns around certain events and states. As we saw in Chapters 6 and 7, ngumpin relate the historical experience of enduring paucity of clothing, rations or wages in patterned ways. There is exclusive use of the first person plural pronoun in relation to this topic (DM10:139,146,148-149; DT* in DM10:152; TB16:20; PW21:45; PW34:54-55,58; NP24:226,229) such that the experience is always situated from the perspective of the group which endured such paucity. In such matters, and in similar ways to that documented by White (1991) and Passerini (1987) (see Chapter 2.7.6), the experience of the individual is suppressed in favour of an account that prioritises the experience of the group to which the individual belongs.

The patterning of talk of certain historical events and states such that they are associated exclusively or predominantly with the individual or the group can be seen as part of the ideological response of ngumpin to the presence and behaviour of kartiya. The patterned use of pronoun in ngumpin oral history contributes to a ngumpin discourse on identity and solidarity, and involves a ngumpin mapping of the relation between identity and historical event or state such that certain events and states are associated almost exclusively with the group and others with the individual.

Additionally, one male speaker explicitly, negatively evaluates a kartiya manager for sending ngumpin workers on their ‘holiday’ without clothes (JM3:132; JM5:124; cf. Chapter 3.3.2), and this same speaker uses simile to suggest that in doing this, kartiya treated ngumpin ‘like a bullock’ (JM3:126-128). Various other male speakers (JM3:126; TB16:23-24; PW34:58) note the paucity of rations provided for their ‘bush holiday’.

Berndt and Berndt (1987:70) note ngumpin dissatisfaction with the provision of ‘walkabout’, or ‘bush holiday’ rations during the 1940s. Rowse (1998) is virtually alone in
attempting to deal with the complex moral and social facets of relationships based on rationing (but see Trigger 1992:35). He (1998) looks at rationing in town camps in Central Australia from the late 1890s to the 1970s, and especially its relationship to European (i.e. non-Aboriginal) ideology and the practice of assimilation.

The topic of the provision of clothes is especially charged, both in the Victoria River region and elsewhere. We saw, in Interview DM10(141-156), the female interviewee’s documentation of how ngumpin had to use flour bags to make clothes and the simultaneous description of this era as ‘properly hard way’. A Wanggaaybuwan woman of central New South Wales, Eliza Kennedy (1986:300), suggests that the provision of clothes was fraught with the potential for the humiliation of Aboriginal recipients. She talks of how clothes were designed in such a way that they could be rearranged, not taken off, in order to urinate or defecate and suggests the European perception was ‘these blacks are know-nothings. They won’t know how to take down their pants to make a turd’.

The generally horrendous conditions that held on stations in this region throughout the twentieth century were documented in Chapters 3.3.2, 3.4.3, and 4.3. The material I have presented in Chapters 6 and 7 suggests that the niggardly provision of rations was one of the main sources of felt oppression for ngumpin incorporated into the pastoral industry. PW*’s assessment of work relations in ‘Vestey time’ being akin to slavery (PW34:106-108) is not an isolated case. Hobbles Danayarri, in his history of the region presented by Rose (1984b:33), reports the Northern Territory Administrator, Gilruth, saying of Aboriginal people, ‘just getem in one mob people … He going to work for bread and beef … make him bit of prisoner’ (cf. Kimberley Language Resource Centre 1996:218). (For writings on Aboriginal perceptions of slavery see McGrath and Saunders (1995:4-5), Holland 1995, Curthoys and Moore 1995, R. Evans 1984:203, May 1994.) In describing the economic and social relationship between ngumpin and kartiya in the Victoria River region as slavery, ngumpin oral history contains an ideational structure, built upon thesis.

Also germane to this discussion is the fact that, as we saw in Chapters 6 and 7, the historical experiences of either receiving or not receiving rations, clothes or wages are spoken of in a particular way. The three male (TB16:18-20; DT* in DM10:152; PW21:34,37,41-42,45,50-51,58-59; PW34:40,62,64) and three female (RR20:85,89,95; DM10:146,148-149; NP24:216,219-220,226) ngumpin interviewees who spoke of such experiences and used first person pronouns in so doing, all exclusively used the first person
plural form to situate their experience of these things from the perspective of being a member of an unspecified Aboriginal group.

This pattern is especially significant in that it holds across much of the oral history material recorded in the region (though see Shaw (1992:80,92) for two exceptions) and elsewhere throughout the Northern Territory. Thus, in the material recorded by Read and Read (1991), Tracker Tommy, on the subject of the Army introducing wages to Aboriginal people, talks of how before ‘we bin work for clothes’ (1991:128-129), Kaiser Bill, on the subject of working for clothes says ‘no money that time, we bin work early days’ (1991:114-115), and Big Mick, on the subject of working for rations say ‘we bin working … no money’ (1991:107-108). In Rose (1991), Anzac (1991:143) says ‘We have been long enough working cattle station … Just for bread and beef’, Old Tim (1991:144) says ‘We were promised for 800 money [i.e. eight hundred dollars], 900 pay’, Doug Campbell (1991:189) says ‘We were working for bread and meat’, and Hector Wartpiyari (1991:194): ‘We were working through might be every year—no money’. In Shaw (1992:129), Alfie Deakin says: ‘we used to work just for shirt and trousers, blanket and calico—no money at all’.

The ngumpin experience of being paid a wage for stockwork (the pattern does not hold for droving work) is situated by speakers, virtually without exception, from the perspective of being a member of a group. This phenomenon suggests that the topic—the receipt or non-receipt of wages, clothes and rations for work done—.touches on issues of ngumpin solidarity and identity. Paucity is always considered to be endured jointly; the relief of paucity (and here, the payment of wages) is likewise shared.

Of course it is probably the case that, when they were first introduced on Vesteyes and other stations from the 1940s to the 1960s, wages were paid to all of the Aboriginal workers employed there. This leaves unanswered, though, the question of why there are virtually no statements, throughout any of the oral history material recorded in this region, of the sort ‘That’s when I bin get money’.

3 As noted in Chapter 6, and as Tonkin (1992:82,135) has also found, there are difficulties involved in determining, with any real precision, the referent of ‘we’. Only very rarely are we presented with something like the following: ‘Ah, all the man bin only go away, get im ‘bout everything, kangaroo, something, turtle, goanna, and we girl bin alde go dig im ‘bout yam and get im ‘bout’ (BG28:196-199). Here the noun phrase ‘we girl’ refers reasonably unambiguously to the female residents of East Arm Leprosarium, who regularly collected bush foods with the female speaker. McConvell (1988:105) looks at the use of triangular kin terms and code-switching by Aboriginal men at Duguraga as a ‘means for the speaker to define the ‘us’ and ‘them’ that he or she is talking about at a particular time’. Unfortunately, this is of little use here as there is scant use of triangular kin terms by speakers, and the little code-switching that occurs is related to the calling of Aboriginal names for flora, fauna and places.
The almost exclusive use of first person plural pronouns in relation to talk of receiving wages for work done on stations is indicative of both ngumpin consensus on certain aspects of their shared history with kartiya, and the existence of ngumpin solidarity in relation to certain pivotal aspects of this history.

An untranscribed oral history (but see Read and Read 1991:29-32), recorded by Read (1977) with a Ngarinyman man from Yarralin, to the east of Amanbidji, is illustrative of the connection between ngumpin solidarity and the payment of wages. In this recording, the Ngarinyman man tells the story of a kartiya man, Brigalow (see Rose 1991:119-129, McGrath 1987:77-78), who ran a ‘cattle-duffing’, or cattle stealing, operation in the Victoria River region in the early 1900s (see Map 2, Brigalow Yard). He reports Brigalow talking to a ngumpin woman in an effort to procure her as his wife:

‘No, no, no,’ Brigalow said. ‘No, no, no. You can’t make a station that way. You gotta stop with me. Trying to make this place clean. And I’ll pay you. You get lot of money from me. And,’ he said, ‘tell that old feller [i.e. her Aboriginal husband] to leave you down here. You get lot of money. Save you just walking round in the bush with the dirty clothes, dirty everything.’

Here, this kartiya is represented as offering the ngumpin woman money as an incentive for her to leave her ngumpin husband. Soon after this account the same interviewee tells the story of a ngumpin man who, in league with a kartiya headstockman, cuts the throat of another ngumpin man. (For discussion of the phenomenon of Aboriginal complicity with Europeans in the colonial enterprise, see Morphy and Morphy (1984:475), Merlan (1994:153-154). Rose (1991:72) presents oral history material which also bears upon the issue.) A discussion of follows between Read (‘R’) and the interviewee (‘I’) in which the latter makes an explicit link between the receipt of money by an individual and the turning of an Aboriginal man against his own people:

R: Why’d he help that whitefella then?
I: I don’t know why. He must be a something, good mate for him, something like that. He must’ve bin buy im something. He must’ve give im good money, something like that, y’know.
R: Yeah, perhaps he did, yeah. Maybe he was frightened of that white man.
I: Yeah. Must be bin frightened.
R: White man said ‘If you don’t help me I’ll shoot you.’
I: ‘I’ll shoot you, or cut your throat,’ or something like that, y’know.
R: Yeah, I don’t know. Yeah.
I: Well, that’s what they [i.e. the man’s contemporaries] reckon. That’s no good. [They said] ‘Why you don’t help you Aboriginal people? Don’t look back to white man, white man never grow im up you, white man not, white man not father for you’.
I suggest that these stories, which are of the order of ‘oral tradition’ (see Chapter 1.5) in that they recount things the interviewer himself did not witness—having been told of them by his elders—may be of the order of ngumpin parables. Both of them introduce the notion that money can be used as a powerful tool to influence ngumpin such that one can be turned against another. As such, they provide one of the interpretive keys for understanding the obvious stress ngumpin place upon the importance of everyone being paid wages, not just isolated individuals. Rose (1992:123) notes: ‘Since the early days of invasion, Europeans have provided … opportunities for Aboriginal people to exercise their will in defiance of others’, and this has undoubtedly been at the root of what Rose (1984a:477) calls a ‘moral dissonance’ within ngumpin society as a result of European contact. Meggitt (1962:25) has documented authority conflicts between young and old in Warlpiri society with older men trying ‘to dissuade their juniors from becoming entangled with white men’.

As we have seen, it was rarely necessary for kartiya to provide money in exchange for assistance, as historically they could resort to violence when they required ngumpin compliance (see Chapters 3.2, 3.3.3, 3.4.3). There is in the ngumpin oral history presented here a seam of evaluative commentary around kartiya violence, with explicit negative evaluation of those kartiya police and their Aboriginal police-trackers who dealt violently with ngumpin (see PK* in ST25:295; ST25:294,319,348,352; PW34:113-114,119; PP* in PW34:118). As we saw also in Chapter 7, PW* presents the thesis that police during Vestey time were operating within a culture of violence (PW34:100-104), passed on from one to the other in such a way as to enslave ngumpin (PW34:107). There is also explicit negative evaluation of general kartiya violence (IM5:99,101,114-115,117,121; PW34:72-73; ST25:328,338) and, alternatively, explicit positive evaluation of Charlie Schultz, the kartiya owner-manager of Humbert River Station (see Lewis 1995) on the basis that he settled disagreements with his Aboriginal workers by using his fists, not a rifle (ST25:73).

Ngumpin were to some extent constrained in their actions by the possibility of such violence. E. C. Evans (1955) writes of the Supreme Court case wherein an Aboriginal man of Dunnara Station, charged with cattle-killing, defended his actions on the basis that his employer told him to kill ‘strangers’, or cattle without the Dunnara station brand, for food purposes. The judge, Evans noted, argued that when acting under the instructions of Europeans, ‘an Aboriginal native has little choice irrespective of his knowledge as to the right or wrong of the act he is requested to do’. Interestingly, the Aboriginal man involved here alleged he was forced into signing a confession to the charges by Constable Stott (Lyons 1955), the man nominated by PW* in Chapter 7 as one of the more violent policemen in the Victoria River region.
From the ngumpin perspective, the situation in which money could be given to isolated individuals was seen as potentially threatening. It introduced a hazardous and even potentially life-threatening state of imbalance, and involved a potential negation of Ngarinyman identity: ‘Don’t look back to white man, white man never grow im up you’. I suggest that a moral imperative developed amongst ngumpin in the early to mid-twentieth century which deemed that wages needed to be paid to everyone or none at all. This imperative is reflected in the material in the exclusive use of the first person plural pronoun form in relation to wages and their absence. Such patterning of pronoun use adds to the moral sub-text of ngumpin oral history, especially where matters of ngumpin morality are synonymous with aspects of ngumpin identity, and even more cogently, ngumpin solidarity in the face of kartiya colonisation.

8.3. Colonisation, Sex and Reproduction

… those tales which centre round vital interests, such as hunger and sex, economic values and morality, collectively serve to the building up of the moral tradition of a tribe (Malinowski 1935:47).

Numerous Aborigines [on Vestey’s stations] remarked that Europeans appeared to demand from them primarily women, and secondarily work, and to give as little as possible in return: ‘All they want from us is lubra’ [they would say] (Berndt and Berndt 1987:117-118).

Another significant seam of ngumpin critique centres on the patterned sexual relationships that have held between ngumpin and kartiya throughout the twentieth century and which were documented in Chapter 3. Theses presented in Chapter 6 show that from the perspective of certain ngumpin male interviewees, kartiya occupation of the region was done with the express intention of stealing ngumpin land, an aim facilitated by a program of genocide (JM3:38-43,50-55). This program is seen to have been backed by a kartiya ideology which conceptualised ngumpin as ‘rubbish’ (ST* in JM5:64), or not worthy of fair treatment. It also entailed the systematic ‘stealing’ (JM3:77-80; JM6:144-147,165-168; ST25:331-336; cf. ST4:21) of ngumpin women. These ngumpin theses are accompanied by the explicit negative evaluation of the sexual depredations of kartiya (ST2:484,510; JM6:3,149,154,159-161).

We have already seen, in Chapter 3.3.3, the differing perspectives on ngumpin-kartiya sexual relationships in this region offered by McGrath (1987) and Berndt and Berndt (1987). Whilst the Berndts (1987) reported widespread disenchantment amongst ngumpin men in relation to their inability to retain their women as sexual partners and wives,
McGrath’s (1987:89) female Aboriginal interviewees generally emphasised the benefits that accrued to such relationships with kartiya. I will look more closely at this differing perspective in Chapter 9.4.

Of other writers who have considered the issue of colonial sexual relations, McGregor, in his co-authored work, Bohemia, Jagarra, McGregor and Pluto (1993:69), notes possible equivocation amongst Gooniyandi speakers as to whether Aboriginal women were ‘stolen’ or went willingly to white men, whilst R. Evans (1975b:106) argues that, at least in Queensland, ‘the rape and subjugation of Aboriginal women was a key feature in [early] European/Aboriginal sexual relations’. As the Berndts (1987:109,117) did, other writers have briefly sketched the deleterious impact on Aboriginal men of such European actions. Hodson (1993:89) found that, in the 1980s, Nyungar men of the Great Southern Region of Western Australia were still ‘bitter’ about the sexual depredations of male Europeans of earlier periods, and May (1994:51) cites various writers on the negative effect of European-Aboriginal sexual relations on Aboriginal men. McGrath (1995:45) argues that European men would often flaunt their sexual monopolisation of Aboriginal women over Aboriginal men as an assertion of European power.

We saw in Chapter 1.4 that in Aboriginal society generally, and ngumpin society in particular, reciprocity is a key component of Aboriginal economic, social and moral life. From the particular circumstances of the ngumpin engagement with their land, including the lack of surplus produced by their economy, have developed Aboriginal mores and moral standards (cf. Moore 1966:497) which allow ngumpin to evaluate the behaviour of kartiya. In terms of the typology of context I offered in Chapter 2.2.1, the ngumpin recognition of the systematic, patterned failure of most kartiya to engage in relationships characterised by reciprocity, ‘equal exchange’ (Rose 1992:194) or ‘two-way exchange’ McConvell (1991b:13), is part of the general circumstances of ngumpin-kartiya interaction, as seen from the perspective of ngumpin themselves.

As we saw in Chapter 3.3.3, there was often an economic imperative for ngumpin women to form sexual relationships with kartiya men, as widespread starvation was part of the life of ngumpin on northern cattle stations. At least some of the goods given to ngumpin women for sexual services were distributed to others in the camp (see Berndt and Berndt 1987:82), usually to the immediate families of these women.

McGrath (1987:81) notes that the giving of Aboriginal women to European men in the early twentieth century often involved incorporation of these men into Aboriginal kinship through the granting of a skin name. With this, she argues, followed ‘complex reciprocal
obligations’ of an economic kind (see Chapter 3.2), which, as we have seen, were consistent with pre-contact ngumpin obligations on husbands (Chapter 1.4). Given the levels of starvation that existed and the general ngumpin documentation of paucity (see Chapters 6 and 7) as a dominant feature of the pastoral experience, these obligations on the part of kartiya were often ignored.

Whereas reciprocity is a key feature of Aboriginal economic and social life generally, non-reciprocity is, from the ngumpin perspective, a key feature of ngumpin-kartiya interaction. Reynolds (1981:58) writes of the ‘social and political ramifications of sexuality’ on the Aboriginal-European frontier, with the ‘supply of women’ to European men involving ‘expectations of reciprocity’, which generally included the supply of food and tobacco. The patterned kartiya disregard of such expectations in the wider Victoria River region would have contributed to ngumpin men’s resentment with kartiya behaviour.

Apart from the failure of kartiya to make suitable payment for their sexual use of ngumpin women, they are also seen to have failed another, more crucial, test of reciprocity. From the perspective of ngumpin men, an unequal dynamic has historically existed between ngumpin and kartiya, such that ngumpin men were (and to an extent still are—see Chapter 9.2) often denied access not only to kartiya women but to ngumpin women as well, whilst kartiya men had (and have) access to both. Thus two male speakers present the thesis that ngumpin endured an asymmetrical access to women vis-à-vis kartiya (ST4:458-459; ST2:434; JM6:156-157), and one of them, the thesis that this arrangement was enforced by police (ST2:440-442; ST4:28-29,450). Both these speakers also suggest that this asymmetry is a central ‘trouble’ with which ngumpin men have grappled (ST2:436; JM6:144-147) and ST* explicitly, negatively evaluates this asymmetry (ST2:448).

This male, ngumpin perspective is not confined to this region. In Koch (1993:29), one male Aboriginal interviewee from Central Australia talks of Europeans, or ‘whitefellas’, ‘tricking’ Aborigines into sending them Aboriginal women (‘lubras’) who were then kept in the Europeans’ camps, and makes the point ‘That’s why everything bin goin wrong, all the time’. Indeed Frances, Scates & McGrath (1994:203) report that, amongst those who participated in the walk-off at Wave Hill Station in 1966, ‘Aboriginal men such as Pincher have since stressed that a catalyst of the walk-offs was their anger at white men stealing too many women’ (cf. Doolan 1977:107). Further, McGrath (1995:45) notes that during the Wave Hill strike, European men working for Vesteyes would, on occasion, take Aboriginal women back with them to the Wave Hill homestead, much to the consternation of Vincent Lingiari, one of the pivotal leaders of the walk-off, who feared this would break the strike.
She (1995:45) writes, ‘The strike which became pivotal to land rights in Australia was significantly a protest by Aboriginal men against white men’s sexual monopoly’.

As we have seen (Chapter 1.4), access to women was undoubtedly a significant political aspect of pre-contact ngumpin life and its significance continued unabated with settlement on cattle stations. Reynolds (1981:57) argues that, generally speaking, Aboriginal women were ‘a major focus of indigenous politics[,] and control of their bestowal was perhaps the principal source of secular power in traditional society’, and Coulthard & Schebeck (1986:218) suggests that amongst Aboriginal men the ‘stealing’ of women constitutes a ‘political’ offence. From the male ngumpin perspective, in accordance with the working of the subsection system, kartiya men who take ngumpin women should at least make their sisters available to their ngumpin brothers-in-law (see Chapter 1.4.1).

Berndt and Berndt (1977[1964]:196,213) have argued that marriage is a necessary condition for an Aboriginal man attaining adulthood, and Rose (1992:133) makes a similar observation in relation to the Ngarinyin of Yarralin. This at least partly explains why marriage is generally desired by Ngarinyin men (Rose 1992:124), though Rose (1992:124) notes that other issues, relating to the continuity of the land-owning group may also be relevant: ‘Marriage, for men, is absolutely crucial to the human continuity upon which their country and, ultimately, the cosmos, depend’. That is, as we saw in Chapter 1.4.2, marriage amongst ngumpin, especially given the annihilating forces they have been opposed to since contact with kartiya, can be seen as ‘attempt[s] to distribute women, and hence human fertility, to groups who desperately need people’ (Rose 1992:123).

In the context of such an understanding of marriage and fertility, it is not surprising that, at least prior to 1965 (Rose 1992:134), there was in the wider Victoria River region a strong prohibition, backed by the threat and the actuality of physical violence, on the ‘stealing’ of another man’s wife. Rose (1992:133-135) offers a discussion of ‘wife stealing’ or the ‘running away’ of couples at Yarralin in the 1980s. Another anthropologist, F. Rose (1987:36,123-124,162-166) discusses the ‘stealing’, or alternatively, ‘elopement’ of Aboriginal women by Aboriginal men in eastern Arnhem Land. He (1987:165-166) argues that Aborigines of this region accepted such ‘stealing’ inside the local group, that is, by a man of the same local group as the woman’s husband, but ‘stealing’ which occurred outside this group was usually met with lethal violence, as such acts were held to weaken the first husband’s local group.

Given the importance placed on securing a wife, it is also not surprising that there is, amongst ngumpin men, a sort of ‘moral economy’ (Thompson 1971; see Chapter 4.5) that relates to the ‘supply’ of women. Given that there are many more instances of kartiya men
taking ngumpin women as sexual partners or wives than ngumpin men taking kartiya women, each such act can be seen to introduce the possibility that a ngumpin man would be denied the prospect of sexual partners, marriage and family. The programmatic removal of ‘half-caste’ female ngumpin by Police and Welfare (see Chapter 3.3.3) only worsened the marriage prospects for ngumpin men during much of the twentieth century.

The Malinowski quotation which opened this section can be considered an early—and neglected—version of moral economy. It is a version that privileges narrative in its expression and construction, and places sex on an equal footing with hunger. Sex, as much as hunger, is a ‘vital interest’ around which hang tales which ‘serve to the building up of the moral tradition of a tribe’ (Malinowski 1935:47). Other writers have hinted that something like a ‘moral economy’ approach is required in the analysis of the Aboriginal engagement with the wider Australian economy. Thus Rowley (1970:77-78), in relation to the provision of flour to Aborigines in South Australia in the nineteenth century, argues that the refusal by Europeans to engage in reciprocal relationships with Aborigines ‘affront[ed] the Aboriginal moral code’. Similarly, Muecke (1981:263) argues that in an Aboriginal narrative he recorded which related the killing of a ‘white settler’ by an Aborigine, the killing is accounted for by the description of ‘the settler as not sharing food properly: he refuses to give the Aborigine the appropriate share of flour’ [my emphasis].

The ‘distribution’ of women and fertility is of ‘vital interest’ to ngumpin men. They have in fact long commented on the unfairness of the asymmetrical relations favoured by kartiya. Shaw (1981:147) reports Aboriginal men in Kununurra in the 1970s often talking amongst themselves about the prospect of being able to marry white women to ‘make it square’ with kartiya. Also, Berndt and Berndt (1977[1964]:385) note the existence of an Aboriginal ceremony or ‘corroboree’ at Wave Hill Station, presumably recorded during their fieldwork there in the mid-1940s. In this ceremony a kartiya policeman (played by an Aboriginal man), attempts to bring in, from the bush, Aboriginal witnesses for a court case. The witnesses are all ‘attractive young [Aboriginal] women’ (played by Aboriginal men), chained by the neck and drawn along by the policeman. The policeman is frustrated in his efforts by a ‘bagman’, or itinerant kartiya worker, who is intent on taking away one of the young women:

The policeman, turning and seeing him [i.e. the ‘bagman’], would drive him away, kicking at him and lashing out with a stick, with a great deal of noise and commotion: he wanted the girls for himself. The side play, gestures and impromptu remarks of the actors, punctuating the singing, kept the audience in a state of hilarious laughter for over an hour (Berndt and Berndt 1977[1964]:385).
8.4. Reciprocity and Equality

They [i.e. kartiya station managers] treated us like dogs, the older people, my fathers and my mother’s brothers. We younger ones got angry about that. We younger ones made this (strike). The White [Welfare men] used to come, but they were cheating. (They said) ‘All that, houses, money, you Aboriginals will get them level with the Whites’ (Kjngayarry 1986:309).

Peterson (1985:90) argues that the provision of Aboriginal women to European men was part of an Aboriginal strategy to ‘draw them [i.e. European men] into the kin relationship system with all its attendant obligations and right to make demands’. He agrees with Hamilton (1972:42-43) that when this failed, Aborigines ‘converted to a “ritual authority” model in which they supplied labour as a group in return for the whites “looking after” them’ (cf. Sansom 1980:177).

Several writers have talked of an Aboriginal notion of being ‘looked after’ to explain aspects of the relationship between the generations in Aboriginal society and especially the responsibility of the older generation to nurture the younger. Myers (1986a) gives an extended discussion of ‘looking after’ in relation to hierarchical relations in Pintupi society, and both Palmer and Brady (1991:24) and Rose (1992) discuss the responsibilities that senior ngumpin, at Amanbidji and Yarralin respectively, have towards the more junior ngumpin members of their communities. It is possible that the ngumpin expectation of having their material and social needs attended to in exchange for working on cattle stations—an expectation clearly expressed in the oral history material—is linked to the responsibilities associated with a pre-contact ngumpin generational hierarchy.

For ngumpin, being ‘looked after’ by kartiya during the mid-twentieth century appears to have involved the recognition and implementation of a duty of care towards them on the part of the kartiya manager or owner-manager for whom they worked. As we have seen, it is clear that, for at least some ngumpin, the requirement to return work clothes prior to taking their ‘bush holiday’ constituted a kartiya failure to uphold their responsibilities as ‘boss’.

The corollary to this is that those kartiya who did provide reasonable conditions for ngumpin workers are singled out for favourable comment. In the material presented in Chapters 6 and 7, there is explicit, positive evaluation of the Farquharson brothers’ generosity during their ownership of Inverway Station (DT* in DM10:174), of Joe Case of Waterloo Station for ‘look[ing] after [Aboriginal] people’ (ST1:623,625), and of Kilfoyle of Rosewood Station for introducing wages (ST1:665; ST25:139). There is also explicit, positive evaluation of the Department of Native Welfare representative Ted Evans for his role in bringing wages to ngumpin workers (PW35:164), and of an ex-manager of Waterloo Station for paying striking Aboriginal workers from Port Keats for the work they had done
In addition, PW* presents the theses that the Welfare officer Ted Evans recognised a moral requirement to compensate the ‘old people’ for their labour by paying wages (PW34:49-51; cf. PW35:154-156), and that in paying ngumpin wages, ‘Welfare’ was their ‘boss’ (PW21:37; PW35:148-151).

Whilst work conditions were an important indicator of kartiya preparedness to ‘look after’ ngumpin workers, other factors relating to the quality of the relationship between kartiya and ngumpin were possibly even more important. Doolan’s (1977) documentation of Aboriginal cattle-station workers’ preferences in relation to employers established that they would accept less pay if it meant being treated well. Writing on events associated with the walk-off of large numbers of Aboriginal people from stations in the Victoria River region in 1972, Doolan (1977:108) argued that ‘Aborigines in this area ... will invariably work for a person who they believe has some regard and feeling for them, even if he is not able to pay high wages and provide good accommodation’ (cf. Morphy and Morphy 1984:472). He (1977:109) found the crucial aspects involved in Aboriginal decision-making in relation to whether or not to return to work lay both in whether the station manager provided an environment conducive to ‘the retention of their own identity’, and the quality of communication that existed between management and workers.

Models for relationships between ngumpin and kartiya wherein the latter had ‘some regard and feeling’ for the former existed in the region. We saw in Chapter 7 that one female ngumpin interviewee who worked for R. Durack at both Auvergne and Kildurk Stations presents the theses that all the Aboriginal workers of Auvergne were ‘good’ following his replacement of the particularly violent kartiya, Shadforth (BG28:125-126), and that they were also more inclined to ‘work good’ under Durack (BG28:133-134). She also suggests that Durack and his wife were unique in the region in that ‘they bin love blackfella’ (BG28:135-137). Durack’s preparedness to provide well for his ngumpin workers is explicitly stated: he would ‘give im [Aboriginal workers] good’ (BG28:32, 130, 137) and this speaker explicitly, positively evaluates Durack on a number of occasions (BG28:30-32, 158-160).

Generally, ngumpin were and are aware that throughout much of the twentieth century kartiya have generally failed to implement reciprocal relationships with them, have relegated them to a subordinate social position (see Chapters 3.4.3 and 4.5) as ‘rubbish’, and have treated them through a patina of ‘dislike and contempt’ (Berndt and Berndt 1987:91). The inter-linking of these things throughout much of the twentieth century found its expression through such practices as the social and spatial separation of eating and sleeping arrangements for kartiya and ngumpin, combined with sub-standard provision of food and
various other items for ngumpin. Stevens (1974:121) reports an un-named Aboriginal stockman thus:

You teach em [i.e. Europeans] but they don’t want to live with you; they live a long way away when you’re in the bush. When we [i.e. Aborigines] finish work we have to make our own camp fire. And when the tucker is ready we have to come in like ants all in a row—one after the other—to get our food—and take it away and eat it.

Other researchers have found general Aboriginal resentment with similar non-Aboriginal practices. Morris (1989:45) found that for the Dhan-gadi people of northern New South Wales the station practice of Aborigines ‘feeding outside’, that is, away from the kitchen or homestead verandah and on the ground, ‘was equated [by them] with being classified as farm animals and was greatly resented’. Given the importance Aboriginal people generally place on reciprocity in relation to food (see Chapter 1.4.2), it is not surprising that in giving ‘an alternative mode of colonisation’ (cf. JM5:110,125-129) one of Rose’s (1991:265) interviewees refers specifically to the potential that eating arrangements had as a marker of equality:

Why he never say: ‘Oh, come on mate, you and me live together. You and me living together, mates together... One table. Cart up wood together’.

The ngumpin ideal of ‘one table’ was rarely, if ever, met. Indeed, the separate provision of food to ngumpin and kartiya continued well into the 1970s on some stations in the Victoria River region. McConvell (personal communication) notes that at a Negri River race-meeting at Mistake Creek Station in the mid-1970s, a virtual ‘race-riot’ was caused by a kartiya stockman of Wave Hill Station ‘belting’ an Aboriginal stockman for the social offence of being found inside the race-track kitchen.

A culture of racism persisted on many stations in the wider Victoria River region well into the 1970s. Indeed, a non-Aboriginal stockman also interviewed by Stevens (1974:120) in the late 1960s spoke of the imperative for non-Aboriginal ‘ringers’ (i.e. stockmen) to ‘[h]ate the blackfella’ and of the gulf that existed between non-Aborigines and Aborigines: ‘In a practical work situation you find there is a quality of exchange—in mustering, tailing and chasing. But immediately work finishes there is a social gap’. A racial hierarchy encompassed most aspects of life on the stations (see Chapters 3.3.3 and 3.4.3) such that kartiya generally maintained ‘a strict social distance’ (McGrath 1987:103) from ngumpin.

Given this seemingly obligatory culture of aggressive racism, there was little chance that much rapport could develop between ngumpin and kartiya men on pastoral stations, especially as most of the latter typically worked in the region for relatively short periods of
time. Savage, a non-Aboriginal man who worked on stations in the region, talks of the complete absence of mateship shown to Aboriginal men by non-Aboriginal men (Willey 1971:52).

The work of writers such as Ronan and M. Durack, both of whom worked and lived in the region, shows that the variety of Social Darwinism which posited Aborigines as being behind Europeans in evolutionary terms, and thus not quite human, was an accepted part of the mental apparatus of the white residents of the region. Ronan (1966), for instance, in his autobiographical account of his time working as a station manager in the region in the 1920s and 1930s (see DP30:39-44; NP24:60-72), wonders how ‘any civilized westerner can hope to anticipate or interpret the workings of the primitive mind’ (1966:26), gives as a main requirement of being a white stockman the ability to ‘work the blacks’ (1966:95), and suggests that Aborigines are ‘almost impervious to pain’ (1966:93). The latter suggestion occurs also in M. Durack’s (1955) fictional account of life on a small cattle station, based on her own long association with the region and possibly also the experiences of her brother, Reg Durack, as the main character of this novel is the owner-manager of a small cattle station in the Victoria River region. The authorial voice of this novel says, with perhaps a touch of irony, ‘It was easy for black women because they felt no pain in childbirth, but half-castes were the same as white women and entitled to chloroform’ (M. Durack 1955:152).

The Berndts (1987:93) suggest that one Limbunya woman in particular, unable to understand why her work efforts went unrewarded, wanted above anything else ‘appreciation of herself as a human being’ and note that all of the Limbunya Aboriginal men and all bar one of the other Aboriginal women ‘expressed similar views’. They (1987:121) also observed:

the general assumption in the area was that Aborigines were stupid and without intelligence … [and they] were repeatedly told that they were ‘no-good-bugga ‘longa head’ [i.e. of limited intelligence], that they were filthy and useless and ‘not worth their tucker’ and should all be ‘hunted back bush’ [i.e. run off the station].

The moral sub-text in ngumpin oral history around the issue of reciprocity is linked to the ngumpin use of simile. We saw in Chapter 3.3.2, the use of the phrase ‘breaking in’ by Vesteys management to refer to the process of introducing Aboriginal boys to the work regime. Ngumpin use similar expressions to explain some of the ideological aspects of the relationship between ngumpin and kartiya in the pastoral industry, and especially the race-based hierarchy which existed between them. Similes are used to comment upon the historical treatment of ngumpin by kartiya in such a way that their use contains the
suggestion that kartiya have treated ngumpin as little different from animals. In fact ngumpin were by and large thought of as ‘a “natural resource” from the angle of station owners and managers, and treated as such’ (Berndt and Berndt 1987:83).

The use of the dog simile in relation to the police method of punishment by flogging (PW34:75-76,87,88; PP* in PW34:86) suggests that ngumpin consider such actions to have constituted an attempted or actual dehumanisation of themselves. Similarly, the use of the bullock simile in relation both to the ‘rounding up’ of ngumpin prior to shooting them (JM3:33-34), and the ‘sending off’ of ngumpin on the ‘bush holiday’, without clothes (JM3:127-128), can both be seen in a similar way. Berndt and Berndt (1987:83) describe the dehumanisation of ngumpin as such:

In general, both working and camp people were treated as something less than human, or with patronising contempt, as a subject for jokes and sneers. Although a number of Ab origines had grown accustomed to this attitude, or learned to put up with it, many of them understood and strongly resented such treatment.

There is evidence to suggest that Aboriginal people from other regions use such expressions to similarly posit a lack or loss of human qualities. Myers (1979:365) notes that amongst the Pintupi and the ‘Jigalong mob’, to be ‘like a dog’ is to be without one of the defining attributes of person-hood in the Western Desert region, that is, the capacity to feel ‘shame’:

One should behave in a manner unlike animals, that is, with shame ... the promiscuity of dogs is a subject of derision among the Pintupi, and ... people ... who copulate indiscriminately ... are said to be ‘like dogs’ (cf. Shaw 1981:60).

Other Aborigines in the region have presented comparable similes in other oral history interviews. Thus one of Rose’s (1991) speakers talks of police tying ngumpin to trees ‘like a dog’ (1991:41), another talks of the Victoria River Downs station manager Townsend, killing ngumpin ‘like a bloody dog’ (1991:51; cf. Kimberley Language Resource Centre 1996:54,70), whilst yet another suggests that kartiya, given the chance, would treat ngumpin as a ‘squashed snake’ (1991:xxi; and see Rose 1992:187). Elsewhere, Long Johnny Kjingayarri (1986:309) says of Vestey’s of Wave Hill Station that they ‘treated us like dogs’, an Aboriginal man is said to have been poisoned ‘like a dog’ by a white station manager (Shaw 1981:40), and, from the west Kimberley region, Roe (1983:6) uses the simile ‘like a dog’ in relation to police making an Aboriginal man, suspected of murder, walk for several days from his place of capture whilst chained. I suggest that in each of these can be seen the operation of a moral sub-text.
Interestingly though, Aboriginal people also seem to willingly subscribe to certain other identifications between Aborigines and livestock (cf. McGrath 1987:165-166). Thus, current throughout the region amongst older Aboriginal people is the notion that the early kartiya ‘tamed’ the ‘wild’ Aboriginal people they met with (see e.g. Sullivan, in Shaw & Sullivan 1979:99). One of Shaw’s (1986:184) Aboriginal interviewees, Bulla, talks of ‘gin cattling’ wherein Aboriginal men would ‘muster’ women by ‘singing’ them in order to make them amenable to sexual advances. Further, Sansom (1980:141) argues that ‘whenever people talk in English about their mobs the analogy between the mobbing of cattle ... and social aggregation is implicit’.

As we have seen the ngumpin perception of their lowered, animal-like (or even insect-like, see above) status in the eyes of their kartiya bosses generally accords well with the reality of the matter. Various writers (e.g. Jaenen 1987, R. Evans 1975a, Mulvaney 1985, Morris 1989, Lattas 1987, Headon 1988, Attwood 1994, Rose 1991), working with Australian and other material, have documented nineteenth and twentieth century European ideologies and practices relating to their perceived superiority over native peoples. We also have the perspective of Harney (1945a), a patrol officer for the Department of Native Affairs, who, having returned from an early 1940s patrol to the Victoria River region wrote:

On the 10th June I returned from Patrol and now submit this report in the hope that something will be done for these unfortunate people [i.e. the Aborigines of the Victoria River region], who have carried the full weight of the pastoral industry ever since it started, yet who live today in the same conditions as they did over sixty years ago.

Giving good service and loyalty to a master who—in most cases—only looks upon them in the same category as the animals that it feeds on the runs that were once the tribal area of these people [emphasis mine].

Such treatment was antithetical to the ngumpin expectation of reciprocal relationships with kartiya and their desire to work ‘alongside’ kartiya, of which we have seen a contemporary manifestation in Chapter 5.5. I argue, and will take up this point in the next chapter, that the contemporary emphasis on ‘coming up’ must be seen in relation to ngumpin awareness of their historical subordination to kartiya.

8.6. Conclusion

In Section Two I established that on northern cattle stations, groups of diverse but related ngumpin found themselves in physical proximity, similar occupation and similar position relative to kartiya. This, coupled with traditional aspects of ngumpin social and
cultural life which facilitated wider inclusivity, encouraged the development of a wider solidarity based on the shared experience of oppression by kartiya.

I also showed that the ngumpin experiences of enduring paucity of clothing or rations and of receiving or not-receiving clothes, rations or wages, are always situated from the perspective of the speaker’s inclusion in that group which endured such paucity. These historically experienced states, and the events which constitute them, are understood to be within the experiential province of the group more so than of the individual. I showed that there is a moral sub-text in ngumpin oral history around the niggardliness of many of the past kartiya bosses for whom ngumpin have worked.

I demonstrated that the patterned use of the first person plural pronoun that occurs in relation to the historical experience of receiving or not receiving rations, clothes, or wages is one that holds throughout the region and elsewhere in the Northern Territory. I argued that this patterned use of pronoun touches on ngumpin issues of solidarity and identity such that, historically, paucity is always considered to be endured jointly; the relief of paucity being likewise shared. I argued that a key to the understanding of this lies in an unpublished interview recorded by Read with a Ngarinyman man of Yarralin in the late 1970s, in which the giving of money to individual Aborigines is twice linked to the potential turning of that person against his fellow Aborigines.

The second of these accounts led me to discuss briefly the fact that ngumpin compliance with kartiya was often enforced by the threat of violence. I posited and discussed the moral sub-text in ngumpin oral history that exists around the ngumpin discussion of kartiya violence.

In Section Three, I showed, by examining ngumpin thesis and explicit evaluation, that a moral sub-text exists which centres on the patterning of sexual relationships between ngumpin and kartiya. This sub-text, I suggested, is linked to the ‘complex reciprocal obligations’, entailed by male kartiya access to ngumpin women, and largely ignored by kartiya.

The patterned historical disregard of kartiya for these obligations has contributed largely to ngumpin men’s resentment of kartiya behaviour. This finds its expression in the oral history material through ngumpin thesis and explicit, negative evaluation around the kartiya failure to initiate a symmetrical or balanced exchange of women which would have resulted in ngumpin men being granted access to kartiya women. I have indicated that asymmetrical exchange of women is a crucial issue for Aboriginal men in other regions of the Northern Territory.
Having considered the political significance of the bestowal of women, of marriage and of sexual reproduction in ngumpin society, I argue that the ‘distribution’ of women is of ‘vital interest’ to at least some ngumpin men, both in the past and in the present. There is amongst ngumpin men a sort of ‘moral economy’ of the ‘distribution’ of women such that the patterned failure of kartiya men to provide ngumpin men with kartiya women in exchange for the ngumpin women they take as sexual partners is cause for resentment and criticism. Each instance of a kartiya man taking a ngumpin woman without a kartiya woman being made available to ngumpin men introduces the possibility that ngumpin men are denied sexual or marriage partners.

In Section Four, I documented the moral sub-text in ngumpin oral history around the topic of whether particular kartiya upheld their responsibilities, as bosses, to provide for the material and social welfare of their ngumpin workers. I argued that there was an expectation amongst ngumpin, possibly based partly on their traditional reckoning of relationships of authority given by age seniority, of a recognition and implementation of a duty of care towards them on the part of the kartiya bosses for whom they worked. The moral sub-text here is made up partly of the explicit, positive evaluation of those kartiya who, usually by being relatively generous in their provision of rations, stood out from their contemporaries. This positive evaluation is accompanied by ngumpin thesis that highlights, from the ngumpin perspective, the varying effects of two opposing kartiya regimes—Durack’s and Shadforth’s—on Auvergne and Kildurk Stations.

I showed that a racial hierarchy encompassed most aspects of life on cattle stations in the wider region such that kartiya generally maintained a ‘strict social distance’ from ngumpin, or at least, ngumpin men. We saw that Aboriginal people generally point to eating arrangements between themselves and non-Aborigines as indicative of the moral tenor of their inter-relationship. Again, this can be understood in accordance with Aboriginal systems and expectations of reciprocity, which expectations, as we saw in Chapter 1.4, are particularly heightened in relation to the sharing of food.

I suggested that the kartiya notion of their racial superiority over ngumpin was widespread, prescriptive (in terms of the inter-relationship of ngumpin and kartiya), and keenly felt by the majority of ngumpin inhabitants of the region’s cattle stations. Finally, I argued that some ngumpin use of simile in the oral history material presented here and elsewhere can be understood as ngumpin critique of their inter-relationship with kartiya, and of the various dehumanising acts and processes that accompanied the racist and separatist ideologies of many of the kartiya for whom they worked.
CHAPTER 9

THE PAST IN THE PRESENT
Chapter Nine: The Past in the Present

9.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I continue to discuss the analysis presented in Chapters 6 and 7 in order to delineate the moral sub-text of ngumpin oral history. I also reintroduce elements of the contemporary circumstances, or context, of ngumpin oral history which were documented in Chapters 4 and 5. This is done in order to show how this moral sub-text is connected to the circumstances of its production, and specifically to the broad and specific socio-economic, cultural and interpersonal aspects of the engagement between ngumpin and kartiya, past and present.

In Section Two, I consider the contemporary emphasis on ngumpin ‘coming up’ in relation to kartiya and at ngumpin attempts to create bridges between themselves and kartiya such that the two can work ‘alongside’ each other. I posit sexual asymmetry between kartiya and ngumpin as an ongoing, current phenomenon in the wider Victoria River region and look at the presence of various other asymmetries and deficits from a ngumpin perspective. I also consider the use of historical contrast between the ‘hard day’ of the past and the ‘easy day’ of the present in ngumpin oral history and show how, in conjunction with explicit evaluation, such contrast adds to the moral sub-text of this history, especially in relation to the topic of work.

In Section Three, I analyse the use of ngumpin oral history in its connection to the ngumpin perception that the (ideal) researcher is ‘on the side of blackfella’. Here I also account for the immediate circumstances of the research encounter wherein a young, male kartiya does fieldwork with elderly ngumpin and suggest the general alignment taken to the former by the latter. I reintroduce and develop the notion that these circumstances involved processes of socialisation and instruction of the kartiya interviewer, and look at the pedagogic and didactic aspects of ngumpin oral history in relation to two features of the texts—the use of ambiguous evaluative terms such as ‘hard’ and ‘rough’ and questions of the interviewer by the interviewee.

In Section Four, I consider the differentially gendered expression of ngumpin oral history around patterned pronoun use and the use of thesis, explicit evaluation, questions of the interviewer by the interviewee, and simile by ngumpin interviewees. I analyse the use of simile and explicit evaluation and the patterned use of the first person plural pronoun around the topic of the rationing of ngumpin by kartiya, and especially the taking away of ngumpin work clothes at the end of the Dry season. I discuss the moral sub-text of ngumpin
men’s talk of this practice. I also look at the role of the stock-camp in the gendering of ngumpin history and at the connections between gendered history and the gendered experience of working for kariya.

9.2. The Present

In the previous chapter we saw that the moral sub-text of ngumpin oral history is centred largely around the ngumpin experience of non-reciprocal relationships with kariya. Included within this experience is that of enduring paucity of rations, receiving or being denied wages and clothing, enduring an asymmetrical exchange of women, and of generally being treated by kariya with contempt or indifference. As we saw in Chapters 6 and 7, most of the ngumpin involved in this research have had first-hand experience of such work regimes.

In line with the notion that kariya bosses should ‘look after’ ngumpin workers, for speakers such as PW* the actual ‘boss’ of ngumpin workers on stations owned by the larger pastoral companies were, from the late 1940s onwards, not the station managers but the representatives of the Native Affairs Branch and the Welfare Branch that replaced it (see Chapter 8.4). In Interview PW22 (73-78), this same speaker establishes the connection between ‘bossmanship’ and the presentation of money, presenting the thesis that the contemporary boss of Amanbidji Station is the head of ATSIC in Katherine, and linking the presentation of money with Amanbidji station ‘coming up’:

PW*: We got im here more [cattle] but our boss, ah, that ATSIC bloke in ah, Katherine. Big boss, y’know, got money.
CR*: Yeah.
PW*: Well, when he come ‘round might be some time, might be, we ask him again, ‘Well, buy some more cattle, to get this place up again’.

We have seen that ngumpin have been exposed to the discourses and practices of race-based inequality for much of the duration of the kariya occupation of their land. The female interviewee, DM*, presented the thesis that when ngumpin were in the state of being unpaid workers they were undergoing a process of ‘coming up’ from a ‘properly hard way’ which involved paucity of clothes, wages, and items such as mattresses (DM10:145-147,149-152). The contemporary emphasis on ‘coming up’ (Chapter 5.8) of ngumpin to a position of equality with kariya must be seen in relation to ngumpin recognition of their relegation, throughout much of the twentieth century, to a position ‘below’ that of kariya.
Rose (1984a:4) notes that the elderly ngumpin people of Yarralin she worked with were well aware of the gulf between their culture and that of kartiya, but despite their history of engagement were keen to create 'bridges' connecting the two. We saw also in Chapter 5.6 that KA*, during the proceedings of the Amanbidji Land Claim, spoke of 'black and white' being able to 'work together' and indeed share Ngarrinyman land. A concrete proposal in this vein was made when I was offered, by KA*, the possibility of a permanent home at Amanbidji (see Chapter 5.10). Elsewhere, Lingiari (1986:313) has referred to ngumpin and kartiya embarking on a relationship of ‘ngali jimari’, that is, as ‘mates’ or co-initiates (cf. ST1:423, where ST* refers to the interviewer as ‘mate’).

Often, it is the essential similarity of ngumpin and kartiya that is emphasised, as in the Amanbijdi Land Claim transcript (1991:508) where GP* says, ‘We just about all the same: black and white’ (cf. Shaw 1986:207). Kolig (1972), however, has reported a dual approach to the question of race relations by Aboriginal people of the Kimberley region, who posit both similarity and an essential dissimilarity between themselves and non-Aborigines. In the wider Victoria River region, while ngumpin subscribe to the idea of working ‘alongside’ and ‘together’ with kartiya, they recognise that, in practice, this situation does not hold and there is a positional imbalance in their inter-relationship. This historically and contemporaneously experienced gulf between ngumpin and kartiya can be understood as one of those ‘major group cleavages … around which durable streams of political consciousness cluster as a result of social inequality and group struggle’ (A. Morris 1992:359-360).

From a specifically male ngumpin perspective, the race-based inequality they have been exposed to was worsened by the usurpation of ngumpin women that accompanied their joint incorporation into the pastoral industry. This usurpation brought with it a sexual non-reciprocity, understood as an asymmetrical distribution of women. Lack of reciprocity in relation to access to women is part of the ‘wider context of non-reciprocity’ (Rowse 1998:21) which, from the ngumpin perspective, characterises their relationship with kartiya (cf. Maddock 1988:26).

This non-reciprocity, held to have historically characterised the exchange of women between ngumpin and kartiya, is also experienced as an ongoing phenomenon. Rose (1989, 1992:196) presents and discusses Hobbles Danayarrি’s contemporary (i.e. circa 1980) wish for ‘cross-ways marriage’, being, in this instance, marriage between ngumpin men and kartiya women, and McGrath (1987:145) sees in the general Aboriginal desire for ‘all mates now’ with non-Aborigines, a demand amongst Aboriginal men for ‘the equality they see as implicit in gaining white women as lovers and wives’.
Shnukal (1990), in her review of Shaw’s (1986) volume of oral history material recorded with Aboriginal men of the East Kimberley, asks how it is possible to accommodate new relations between Aborigines and Europeans when there is still such a discrepancy in terms of sexual relations between them. It is this very issue, and the related one of Aboriginal paternity, which, as we have seen, constitutes ‘the trouble’ (ST2:436) for at least some ngumpin men, and which lies at the root of their critique of historical and contemporary relations between ngumpin and kartiya. It is here, noting the ongoing relevance of this critique, that the statistical imbalance in the ratio of women to men between the ages of twenty and thirty-nine in the region becomes significant. As we have seen (Chapter 4.2), the imbalance is such that, of ngumpin and kartiya combined, the ratio of women to men is five to eight. Given this and the continued, contemporary sexual asymmetry in the region, ngumpin men still struggle to find ‘lovers and wives’ and thus continue to be stymied in relation to what is a central, male, ngumpin goal of becoming fathers.

The present, as we have seen (Chapters 4 and 5), is characterised by other asymmetries and deficits. At Amanbidji, specifically, a range of contemporary phenomena is cause for general resentment amongst ngumpin and is held to be evidence of their subordinate position relative to kartiya. These include ngumpin-kartiya economic disparity (Chapter 4.5), perceived lack of ngumpin decision-making and responsibility in the running of the Amanbidji Station (Chapters 5.2 and 5.6) and its store (Chapter 5.4), the sub-standard provision of services and goods to ngumpin by kartiya (Chapter 5.3), poor housing and domestic amenities (Chapter 5.2), and a perceived lack of station and community improvement or development (Chapter 5.5). The elevated position of the Amanbidji Station homestead in relation to the ngumpin community (see Figure 1) provides an ongoing, physical counter to the political, spatial metaphors ngumpin people subscribe to of ‘coming up [to]’ and working ‘alongside’ kartiya.

Whilst there is explicit, positive evaluation of the effects of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act, 1976 (ST2:262; PW22:109-110), it is felt generally by ngumpin that neither the Federal nor the Territory government is supplying the economic and material resources required to rectify these imbalances. RH*, the president of the NARC, spoke of Aboriginal frustration with the way in which they have been ‘brought up to their knees’, to be left to fend for themselves. Just as the provision of rations in the past is a crucial indicator of the moral tenor of past eras for elderly ngumpin today, so the contemporary provision of services and resources is an indicator for them of the moral tenor of the current administration of ngumpin by kartiya. As with the critique of the Amanbidji
Station store (Chapter 5.4), parallels are made between past race-based inequalities and the present state of scarce funding and poor provision of infrastructure and services.

The moral tenor of contemporary relationships between *ngumpin* and Federal and Territory government representatives is also based on the *ngumpin* understanding of the history of relationships between them and their *kartiya* bosses under colonialism and the standard of ‘working alongside’ that those in positions of authority are expected to meet. Thus, PW* presents the thesis that, Amanbidji being a ‘blackfella station’, ‘white blokes’ employed by the Northern Territory Government to shoot cattle under the BTEC program on Amanbidji land must first ask permission of the traditional owners (PW22:85-87).

As we saw in Chapter 5.8, the potential for either the Amanbidji community or station to ‘go down’ was tied to economic, infrastructural and cultural deficits. At Amanbidji Station in 1993 and 1994, *ngumpin* perceived that the station was experiencing an infrastructural and economic deficit, and the community all three of these deficits to some degree.

We saw also, in Chapter 5.8, that ‘going down’ and ‘coming up’ were used by *ngumpin* of Amanbidji Station to gauge their community’s progress vis-à-vis neighbouring *ngumpin* communities. Indeed, any discussion of contemporary *ngumpin* solidarity must consider the limitations upon regional solidarity due to current funding regimes (see Chapter 4.4), wherein *ngumpin* communities find themselves competing with each other for scarce resources. This situation to some extent militates against greater regional unity amongst *ngumpin*, as each *ngumpin* community strives to maximise its share of available resources.

Within the region, though, there are calls for continued Aboriginal solidarity. Rose (1991:238) notes that the Ngarinyin man, Hobbles Danayarri, kept ‘urging people to maintain the solidarity which he believed was their best asset in the struggle for equality’. There is the suggestion of a similar call in the material presented in this thesis when JM*, in the context of the impending land claim hearing at Mistake Creek, uses the first person plural pronoun to situate the act of talking ‘one *jaru* [i.e. one story]’ from the perspective of the linguistically and culturally diverse group of Aboriginal people involved in this claim (JM7:46). The material presented here, and especially the patterning of pronoun use, demonstrates that, as Rouse (1990:184) has argued in relation to Western scientific communities, sharing a past is both a fundamental aspect of group membership and ‘a basis for further action’.

The state of ‘going down’ is equated with the potential of a return to the ‘hard days’ when *ngumpin* were relatively even more worse off than they are now. The moral sub-text of *ngumpin* oral history is connected to the use of such historical contrast. As with White’s
(1991) documentation of moral historical narration organised around oppositions of ‘old’ and ‘new’, and Briggs’ (1988) thesis that ‘pedagogical discourse’ operates by developing contrasts between the past and the present (see Chapter 2.7.2), so certain practices and states of the ‘early day’ are represented variously as the embodiment or antithesis of the current ideal: ‘all mate now’ or ‘working alongside’.

In Chapters 6 and 7, we saw how both male (ST2:262-263,271; KT14:25-28; PW34:110,112) and female (NP24:230-237) ngumpin speakers contrast the ‘hard day’ of the past with the ‘easy day’ or ‘slack off’ of the present. As I have already suggested, there is a certain ambiguity to the terms ‘hard’ and ‘rough’, with both of these occasionally being applied in a positive way to facets of ngumpin social life, such as the tuition of young ngumpin men by their fathers. Even in Interview PW34, where the description of the violent behaviour of kartiya policemen as ‘hard’ and ‘rough’ seems unambiguously negatively evaluative, there is on the part of PW* a certain disquiet with the present situation wherein young ngumpin law-breakers are dealt with relatively leniently by the courts: ‘This day, they got a free going now’ (PW34:80).

The tendency for elderly ngumpin to explicitly, positively evaluate aspects of their past work engagement with kartiya adds to the moral ambiguity of the past. Occurring around the historical contrast of ‘hard day’ and ‘slack off’ is the explicit, positive evaluation of past ngumpin workers generally (ST25:215-216; RR20:65-66), the speaker’s own work history (BG28:346) or ability (TB18:7; PW35:123,132), past work itself (DC11:121,125-126; PW21:58; PW35:39,76), and of past ngumpin workers for Durack (BG28:125,129-130,133-134; NP24:230). Whilst it is noted that Kildurk workers under Durack received a good wage (NP24:216-217) it is also argued that they worked hard for and so deserved it (NP24:232). By contrast, workers at Amanbidji in the present are considered to ‘slack off’ from work (NP24:234) and their general work abilities are explicitly, negatively evaluated (NP24:235).

The use of historical contrast, and the associated occurrence of explicit evaluation, contribute to the moral sub-text of ngumpin oral history. The historical talk that ensues, in which past practices, technologies or social conditions are used as a yardstick for the evaluation of the present, is probably endemic to general ngumpin social life. That is, though the oral history material presented here can be seen to some extent as an artefact of the interaction between ngumpin interviewee and kartiya interviewer, it may also have things in common with contemporary ways of talking about the past that occur between younger and older ngumpin. It is clear that historical information is passed onto younger ngumpin by their elders at Amanbidji concerning such things as the conditions they (the elders) faced, the state of ngumpin-kartiya relations in the past, and the varying character of
There is some evidence for this in the fact that part of KAT’s concern with the operation of the CDEP scheme at Amanbidji Station related to the fact that ngumpin women were being employed through this scheme to clean the station homestead, inhabited by the kartiya station manager and book-keeper, just as his mother and her sisters had been employed by Durack (see Chapter 5.6).

The moral sub-text of ngumpin oral history is in part directed to contemporary ngumpin perceptions of the character and effects of work available under the CDEP scheme at Amanbidji. We saw in Chapter 5.6 that the CDEP scheme was criticised by elderly ngumpin on the basis that, on the one hand, it allowed the partial erasure of the traditional separation of young men and women; on the other, it involved a loss of traditional work skills and ethic, coinciding with the loss of the old rhythms of work in the pastoral industry.

Both these changes are critical ones from the perspective of elderly ngumpin. The facilitation of the ‘mixing up’ of young men and women is seen to have a deleterious effect on cultural maintenance at Amanbidji, and thus in turn on the ability of the station and community to maintain its level of ‘[im]provement’ and its capacity to ‘come up’. The loss of cattle-station work skills and ethic is hard felt by the elderly, as, from their perspective, given the history of their interaction with kartiya, the work domain constitutes the arena both for ngumpin oppression and for their attainment of equality with kartiya (see Chapter 8.4).

It is within the domain of work and work relations that Aborigines on cattle stations throughout the region and in adjoining regions (see Mandi in Shaw 1986:207) perceive that ngumpin-kartiya disparity and asymmetry may be tackled. As we saw in Chapters 5.5 and 5.10, working ‘alongside’ kartiya is for ngumpin today an indicator of imminent or actual equality. The CDEP scheme at Amanbidji, with its attenuated work day, limited opportunities for interaction with kartiya, apart from the station manager, and no monetary incentive for doing more than what is strictly required, is perceived by elderly ngumpin to be to some degree a source of potential damage to the economic and social standing of the station, the community and its residents.

9.3. The Immediate Interpersonal Circumstances of the Interview

Often old natives told me of their treatment and their desires but it was with lowered voice as though the trees had ears and the arm of the boss was long. Police are sometimes called to shoot their dogs ... (Harney 1945a).

As much as ‘speaking up’, the giving of ngumpin oral history should be seen in the light of the historical constraints upon Aboriginal dissent produced by the pastoral
industry’s ‘aura of brutality’ as Stevens (1974) puts it (Chapter 3.4). McGrath (1987:8) notes that during her oral history research work in north Australia in the late 1970s, Aboriginal stories which depicted European violence ‘were not easy to elicit … on early meetings’.

Aboriginal people in this region have talked of being ‘covered up’ or denied a voice as a precursor to having their land taken from them by *kartiya* (Rose 1991:19). This ‘covering up’ has clearly been accomplished by the use and the threat of violence. The anthropologist, Stanner, has documented how Aboriginal people around Port Keats appeared too scared to talk to him during his fieldwork there in the 1930s (McConvell and Palmer 1979:4), and the above quotation of Patrol Officer Harney records the circumspection shown by Aboriginal workers on Vestey’s Stations in the Victoria River region.

The circumstances of the research encounter, wherein a young, male *kartiya* does anthropological and historical fieldwork with elderly *ngumpin*, is a significant part of the context determining the oral history material presented in this thesis. In particular, the immediate interpersonal circumstances of the interviews—that the interviewer was held to be ‘on the side of blackfella’ and, furthermore, interested in things pertaining to *ngumpin* society and culture—help explain why some of the material presented here contains a moral and political sub-text and has a pedagogic or even a didactic character.

The *ngumpin* notion that a *kartiya* researcher could be ‘on the side of blackfella’ (see Chapter 5.10) is itself indicative of the *ngumpin* perception that they are engaged in an ongoing race-based struggle, the aim of which is to remove disparity between *ngumpin* and *kartiya* such that the former are no longer disadvantaged vis-à-vis the latter, and so that the two groups can work ‘alongside’ each other in a manner that allows for reciprocity and balanced exchange.

In this ongoing struggle, the *kartiya* researcher is seen as a potential conduit, allowing the circumstances of *ngumpin* life to be made known to others, and possibly even to the wider Australia public (see Chapter 2.3). Thus, in Interview JM5(72-73,149-151), JM* makes it clear that the material he is giving is directed towards the Aboriginal Land Commissioner hearing the Mistake Creek Land Claim. In such ways, *ngumpin* expect that research done with them will complement their own acts of ‘speaking up’, described in Chapter 5.7.

As we saw in Chapter 5.5, the Amanbidji station manager’s perceived ability to ‘make an [im]provement’ was linked by a senior man (GP*) to his ability to powerfully articulate station needs to important outsiders. *Ngumpin* interviewees at both Mistake Creek and Amanbidji Stations knew that I was involved in research projects that would result in
written documents. On a number of occasions, I was asked by ngumpin whether these
documents would be read by members of the Northern Territory and Federal governments
(see Chapter 5.10).

In Chapter 2.4 I suggested that, for the purpose of contextualising ngumpin oral history,
it was important to determine how the speaker was ‘aligned’ to both the researcher and his
or her research project. It is clear that I was considered by elderly ngumpin to be a potential
student of certain aspects of ngumpin life. At first, at Mistake Creek, I was mistaken for a
‘language man’, this category being usually reserved for linguists involved in the study of
Aboriginal languages. Later, at Amanbidji, I was known (and introduced to others) as a
‘history man’ on the basis of my interest in ngumpin oral history. These can both be
considered sub-categories of the wider and widening (see Rose 1991:264) category, ‘Union
mob’ which, as we saw in Chapter 2.6, is made up of kartiya and others who attempt to
engage in relationships with ngumpin which avoid the past and present patterned non-
reciprocity common between the two groups.

As a student of ngumpin social and cultural life, there were processes of socialisation
and instruction brought to bear upon me throughout the course of my fieldwork, including
but not confined to ongoing attempts by senior ngumpin women to instruct me in
Ngarinyman language and in aspects of social life such as the subsection or ‘skin’ system.
In as much as this occurred, I was treated, as most anthropologists are, as a cultural naif (see
Chapter 2.4). Consequently, at least some of the oral history material presented in this thesis
can be understood as ongoing instruction aimed at facilitating the interviewer’s ability to
engage in ‘proper’ social relationships with ngumpin, especially where this history
documents ngumpin-kartiya disparity and asymmetry.

Two features of the texts presented here bear particularly close scrutiny in relation to
this pedagogic or didactic aspect of ngumpin oral history. The first is the ambiguity of the
descriptors ‘hard’ and ‘rough’; the second, the use of questions by the interviewee to the
interviewer.

As we have seen, the terms ‘hard’ and ‘rough’ are applied to a variety of historical
states and events, including work (DC12:62,71; KT13:4,6,8,10,22; KT15:15,47; ST4:76,79;
ST1:83-84; DM10:183; NP24:100-101; NP24:232), the ‘old days’ (ST2:271; PW34:72), the
absence of wages (PW34:39-40,51-52; DM10:150), the requirement on some stations to
return swags and clothes prior to taking the ‘bush holiday’ (PW34:54-56,59-61), the state of
working and not being issued mattresses or clothing (DM10:155-156), past policemen
(PW34:113-114,119; PP* in PW34:118), and ngumpin enslavement through police violence
(PW34:106-108). In relation to such topics, these terms are usually preferred to the
unambiguously negative descriptors ‘bad’, ‘no good’ and ‘cheeky’, these latter terms usually being reserved for those kartiya who were witnessed by the interviewers themselves to engage in acts of murder (JM5:117) or violence (BG28:5,77,98) towards ngumpin.

Ngumpin interviewees use ambiguous terms such as ‘hard’ and ‘rough’ in relation to such things as the absence of wages, clothing and mattresses in order to gauge the moral sensibilities of the interviewer, and especially his or her capacity to engage in balanced exchanges with ngumpin. Indeed, one interviewee explicitly asked the interviewer a question of Type 4 to ascertain whether he agreed with that interviewee’s description of ‘Vestey time’, that is, the period between 1920 and 1960, as ‘hard’ (DC12:62); another a question of the same type to determine whether the interviewer agreed with the interviewee’s description of police violence as ‘very hard’ (PW34:92).

This brings me to consideration of those questions of the interviewer by the interviewee, especially questions of Types 3, 3a and 4, which can also be understood to function in such a way as to establish the moral sensibilities of the interviewer. As well as the questions noted above, within the oral history material presented in Chapter 6, we saw one male ngumpin interviewee use questions of Types 3a and 4 to prompt the researcher to comment directly upon such matters as the sexual rapacity of kartiya men (ST2:510,512), the presence of asymmetrical sexual relations between ngumpin and kartiya (ST4:23-24,26; ST2:374,436), and police backing of these relationships (ST2:448,454). This interviewee also asked the interviewer a question of Type 4 to ascertain whether he agreed that the general shooting of ngumpin by kartiya was ‘no good’ (ST25:338). These questions occurred in conjunction with the explicit, negative evaluation of these matters by this male speaker. In these instances I found myself invited to be an active commentator on the material presented, in much the same way as at Amambidji Station generally, I was engaged on a daily basis, in conversation that focussed on instances of ngumpin-kartiya interaction in the community and wider region (see Chapter 5.10). I suggest that in both the context of daily life and that of the oral history interview, such questions were asked in order to ascertain my views on such matters. Indeed, on one occasion ST* explicitly asks the interviewer whether his negative evaluation of sexual asymmetry between ngumpin and kartiya is ‘right or wrong’ (ST2:518).

The interviews I conducted with ST*, at least, can be seen on one level as involving the teaching of a young kartiya man (the interviewer) certain protocols relating to interaction with ngumpin people, including sexual propriety. Also of interest here is JM*’s explicit, positive evaluation of the story of Rebel Major (JM6:153), an account of the tracking, shooting and be-heading of a ngumpin man following this man’s murder of the kartiya man
who stole his wife. It is clear from the textual context of this interview that this is a ‘good story’ (JM6:153) because it demonstrates the sort of behaviour that cannot be tolerated by ngumpin men: ‘kartiya bin do the wrong thing’ (JM6:154).

In relation specifically to interviews with ngumpin men, it appears that some of these men were operating with a definition of the interview situation as one of moral instruction. We saw in Chapter 2.4 that Western Apache historical tales can function as a ‘critical and remedial response’ to a social offence (Basso 1984:39) and so have the character of ‘moral narratives’ (Basso 1984:34). At least some of the oral histories presented in this thesis are artefacts of a particular type of cross-cultural (ngumpin-kartiya) research encounter, and serve social purposes specific to this cross-cultural situation, involving a similarly didactic element.

It may also be that generally in Aboriginal society, when there is a significant discrepancy between the age of the teller and that of the listener such that the listener is much younger than the teller, what Muecke (1983b:89) calls a ‘didactic narrative’ style naturally ensues.

9.4. Gendered History

We smoked a pipe, had tobacco, wore clothes, boots, hat, fancy looking boots (Mandi, in Shaw 1986:206).

As we have seen, the unbalanced or asymmetrical exchange of women in the western Victoria River region is for ngumpin men the pivotal aspect of the gendered experience of working on cattle stations. More than anything else, the working of colonial sexual practices in this region is responsible for what Attwood (1994:126) calls ‘the differential impact of colonization upon Aboriginal men and women’, and which explains, in part, the differentially gendered expression of ngumpin oral history. In Chapter 8, we saw ngumpin men’s resentment with race-based asymmetrical access to women, which coincided with opportunities for some ngumpin women to engage in an economy based on sex, which allowed them relatively greater shares of food and clothing (see Ronan 1954:63).

In Chapters 6 and 7, I presented summaries of the analysis of ngumpin oral history which demonstrated its gendered quality: that ngumpin men and women tell history in different ways (cf. Rose 1992:28). We saw that ngumpin men generally were more likely than ngumpin women to point to sexual relationships between ngumpin and kartiya as a significant feature of the moral landscape. Specifically, we saw ngumpin men’s presentation of thesis, explicit negative evaluation and questions of the interviewer in relation to kartiya
men’s usurpation of ngumpin women and their simultaneous monopolisation of kartiya women.

We also saw that no ngumpin women asked questions of the interviewer of Type 3a or 4. That is, there was no attempt, respectively, to get the interviewer’s explanation of certain events or states or to elicit his attitude or thoughts in relation to certain propositions. As we have seen, one male interviewee in particular asked many such questions, most relating to ngumpin-kartiya sexual relations with another significant seam relating to early kartiya-initiated violence. In all, five ngumpin men (HK*, ST*, DC*, JM* and PW*) asked the interviewer questions of these types.

There was also marginally more use of that variety of simile by men (JM3:33-34,126-128; PW34:75-76) than by women (PP* in PW34:86), which suggests that from the ngumpin perspective, kartiya treated ngumpin as akin to animals. As we will see below, there were also gendered differences in the patterning of pronoun use.

There are several possible explanations for these patterns. The male speakers who contributed most of the simile, thesis and questions of the interviewer in relation to the subject of kartiya violence were JM* and ST*. The first of these men worked on Vestey’s stations for most of his life, and the other under Kilfoyle’s markedly more magnanimous regime at Rosewood Station, but also on Vestey’s stations and elsewhere throughout the region. In contrast, most of the ngumpin women interviewed at Amanbidji worked principally or exclusively for the Duracks, whose regime (especially that of Reg Durack) as we have seen (Chapters 3.4.2 and 5.5), was closer to that of Kilfoyle’s than Vestey’s. Highlighting the potential similarity between men’s and women’s testimonies, the woman who worked for the particularly violent Shadforth of (the Durack-owned) Auvergne Station gives an extended critique of this manager’s regime (see BG28:71-74,76-80).

As with the expression or transmission of knowledge associated with Law (see Chapter 4.7), the giving of certain types of oral history may be gender-circumscribed. Just as ngumpin women at Amanbidji are largely excluded from positions of authority (Chapter 4.7) and rarely called on to ‘speak up’ in order to present claims regarding Amanbidji’s share of resources to important outsiders (Chapter 5.7), so the responsibility for the telling of certain events and states experienced by ngumpin throughout the twentieth century may rest with ngumpin men.

In relation specifically to the gendered nature of talk about ngumpin-kartiya sexual relations under colonialism, Rose (1991:182) has argued that certain historical practices may impinge upon the ability to express oneself. She points to the widespread state of starvation that existed within Aboriginal communities in the region (see Chapter 3.3.3),
which allowed an economy based on sex to flourish, and notes that women are largely silent on such issues: ‘there may be little that they can say that does not arouse remembrance infused with anger’ (cf. Rosenthal 1991:34, McGrath 1987:89).

In contrast, McGrath (1987) found Aboriginal women in the Victoria River region and elsewhere generally willing to talk of such things, though inclined to focus on the less exploitative aspects of ngumpin-kartiya sexual relations. There may be cogent reasons for McGrath’s interviewees choosing to deal with this issue in this way. It is possible that the circumstances of her research, in which the majority of interviews with Aboriginal people were conducted over a five week period whilst travelling between Adelaide River, Daly River, Kununurra, Halls Creek and various cattle stations, precluded the building of those relationships of familiarity with her interviewees necessary for a more critical account of colonial sexual relations.

McGrath (1987:89) has also written of the way in which Aboriginal men’s and women’s accounts of history differ in relation to the subject of ‘sexual liaisons’:

Aboriginal men and women had differing responses to black-white sexual liaisons. When asked their views, Aboriginal men emphasised that women were stolen by whites and [that the whites] consequently met violent historical resistance. Women usually reminisce that they enjoyed the exchange …

McGrath (1987:89) relates men’s response rather simplistically to the fact that Aboriginal men ‘like to think they have control over their women … for egotistical reasons’, and women’s response to their gaining ‘more from the transaction than the men’.


It is of course also highly likely that the ngumpin women I recorded oral history with simply did not feel comfortable discussing the issue of ngumpin-kartiya sexual relationships with a male, kartiya researcher. Whilst I did not find, as Brenneis (1990:123) did in his work with Fijian Indians of Bhatgaon, an ‘inability to work extensively with women’, the character of the ngumpin women’s oral history material presented here is almost certainly affected by the interviewer being male. Here again, the immediate interpersonal circumstances of the interview are crucial to an understanding of ngumpin oral history.

On another level, the gendered nature of oral history material may be related to the fact that certain pivotal historical experiences of ngumpin have also been largely gender-
circumscribed. Given that differentially gendered historical experience facilitates a
differentially gendered historical expression, it is important here to consider the experience
of men’s and women’s work in the pastoral industry. We saw earlier (Chapter 3.3.2) that
none of the women involved in this study worked as stock-workers, as was relatively
common prior to the 1940s. This exclusion of women from the stock-camp coincided with
the incorporation of stockwork training and skills into traditional male ngumpin frameworks
that determine the relationship of younger men to older men (Chapter 3.3.2).

We saw earlier (Chapter 2.5), Merlan’s (1994) finding that the differentially gendered
experience of work that Aboriginal men and women have had in the pastoral industry,
where women worked mainly as domestics in the station camp or homestead and the men
worked mainly in the stock-camp, is paralleled by a differentially gendered reckoning of
relationship to country. Specifically, whilst her female informant construed this relationship
‘in terms of clearly delineated, segmentary relationships to particular places and areas’, her
male informant thought ‘in terms of broad topography and dreaming stories’ (Merlan

Another writer has posited a direct link between work and Aboriginal solidarity.
Writing of the historical experience of Nyungar people in the Great Southern Region of
Western Australia, Hodson (1993) posits a link between work done on a collective and self-
organised basis (such as contract ground-clearing and shearing) and the promotion of
Nyungar cultural unity. She argues that Nyungar women throughout the early to mid-
twentieth century recognised such a link and were generally loathe to accept positions as
domestics, preferring to work in groups.

Ngumpin women do not seem to have had an element of choice in such matters. There
is some evidence from the oral history material presented in this thesis that the different
experiences involved in working in the stock-camp and as a domestic worker facilitated
separate male and female perspectives on the link between work and identity. As we saw in
Chapters 6 and 7, there was exclusive use of the first person plural pronoun in relation to
stockwork by six men, with two others using this form predominantly, and one other
making prolonged use of the singular form in relation to this topic, whilst the only wom an
to explicitly use the first person pronoun in relation to domestic work used both the singular
and plural forms. This pattern suggests that the stock-camp, more so than the homestead,
promoted the tendency to consider the experience of work from the perspective of the
group, not the individual.

Interestingly, the prolonged use of the singular form by a male speaker in relation to
stockwork occurred with one of the relatively younger men involved in this project, DP*,
who was born around 1935. Throughout Interview DP30, this interviewee uses the first person singular form not only around the topic of stockwork, but also in relation to talk of the special relationship he enjoyed with the past karriya manager of Bullo River Station, Charlie Henderson, and Henderson’s daughters. At various points in this interview, other more senior men present (including PW* and ST*) variously comment on the relative recency of the material being presented (PW* in DP30:30), furt loudly immediately following DP*’s account of his being liked by Henderson’s daughters, provoking laughter from the other men present (ST*, in DP30:92), and attempt to bring the interview to a close (ST*, in DP30:104). These things can be seen as a censuring of this speaker’s historical account.

In Interview ST4 (54-57,59-61), we saw how the main Mistake Creek paddock was an off-loading place for bullocks from as far away as Wave Hill and Cattle Creek, en route to the meatworks at Wyndham. As we saw in Chapter 3.3.2, aspects of stockwork such as Dry season mustering and the aggregation of cattle prior to droving involved ngumpin stockmen traversing the region and coming into contact with ngumpin men from other stations (cf. McGrath 1987:143). There is evidence also (see Kijngaryarr 1986:307,309) of the Mistake Creek and other race or ‘rodeo’ meetings being used for wider political purposes by ngumpin men.

There is, within ngumpin social life, as Passerini (1987) found for Italian workers (see Chapter 2.5), a gendered self-representation which focusses on, and finds its sources within, the domain of work. In Chapter 8.2, we saw the significance placed upon the provision of clothing as an indicator of the moral tenor of earlier eras. This is related to the fact that, for ngumpin men in particular, stockwork came to constitute a significant site of identity (cf. McGrath 1987:46,56-57). Kolig (1990:239) contends that the pastoral economy is seen by Aborigines today as ‘almost traditional’ and ‘has cast the whole of Aboriginal existence into a ‘new mould’, and Rose (1991:93) argues that, even as early as the 1920s, stockmen skills ‘had become an important part of an Aboriginal man’s identity’. Morris (1989:31), analysing the pastoral experience of the Dhan-gadi of New South Wales wrote: ‘For the men especially, pride in the work they performed on European stations was as significant a feature of their historical self-representations as having been “put through the Rule [i.e. Law]”’.

As we saw in Chapter 5.10, in the western Victoria River region men are at least partly evaluated on the basis of whether they are ‘proper cattleman’ or not. A close look at ngumpin men’s oral history shows the existence of a sort of working-life template, involving a regimented progression from the menial task of horse-tailer to cattle-tailer and
from there to stockwork proper, with some men going on to the more specialised work of horse-breaking and droving (see e.g. DC11:1-14; PW34:8-14; TB16:9-16 ). For ngumpin men both Law and stockwork involved ordeals of physical hardship and injury (McGrath 1987:37) and in the course of a life, a ngumpin man could expect to simultaneously gain increasing expertise in stockwork and matters of Law or ‘Business’.

The use of simile to equate workers required to return their work clothes with herd animals (JM3:126-128) suggests that this practice involved, for ngumpin, a violation of their integrity as human beings. The practice possibly constituted the compromising of the process whereby ngumpin men were constructing a new and major form of identity as stockmen.

The topic of returning clothes, as we have seen, has other strongly symbolic possibilities. Rowse (1991:8) has written of a stockman’s garb as the symbolisation of ‘[Aboriginal and European] men’s shared work ethos’. As work was the locus of a rough sort of equality between the two groups (Stevens 1974:120), from a ngumpin perspective the stockman’s garb was possibly an important symbolic marker of their essential equality with kartiya. Clothes constituted one of the symbolic means by which, in reaction to and despite the behaviour of their kartiya bosses, ngumpin could assert their humanity and in doing so counter the general kartiya tendency to equate them with herd animals.

It is clear that stock-camp life facilitated a certain gendered, collective identity such that elderly ngumpin men jointly define themselves as (ex-) ‘stockmen’ or ‘cattlemen’. It is also possible that this widely inclusive category of ngumpin men enabled their ready identification with other ngumpin men in such a way as to facilitate the wider solidarity displayed in the strike actions of the 1950s onwards (see Chapters 3.4.2, 3.4.3) and the land claim work of the 1970s to the 1990s (see Chapters 3.5 and 8.2). The new site of identity given by life in the stock-camp enabled the formation of groups normally separated by boundaries of language, geography and culture, based on the shared experience of being an unpaid, or at best poorly paid, worker for kartiya.

We also saw that ngumpin men were more likely than women to present historical theses relating to the unfairness of the ngumpin-kartiya work relationship. This also may have to do with the division of work according to gender. Though work conditions and management-labour relations for domestic workers within the sphere of the homestead were probably no better than those for station workers in the stockcamp (see Berndt and Berndt 1987:91,119), the complete absence of female kartiya domestics meant that ngumpin women had no-one with whom to compare their work situation. In contrast, ngumpin men
worked alongside kartiya men who, as well as having freedom of mobility, were being paid wages, receiving better food and enjoying better work conditions generally.

9.5. Conclusion

In Section Two I argued that the contemporary ngumpin emphasis on ‘coming up’ must be seen in relation to the ngumpin recognition that for much of the twentieth century they have occupied a subordinate position relative to kartiya. I argued also that the ideal of working ‘alongside’ is rarely met, and the historically and contemporaneously experienced gulf between ngumpin and kartiya has contributed to the development of ngumpin political consciousness. The deficits and asymmetries experienced by ngumpin in relation to the contemporary provision of services and resources to them by kartiya generally, and by government specifically, is indicative for them of the moral tenor of current ngumpin-kartiya relationships.

I have also shown that there is a perception of an ongoing sexual asymmetry between ngumpin and kartiya, such that there is a contemporary lack of access to kartiya women by ngumpin men. Given this and the documented imbalance of women to men in the greater Victoria River region, many ngumpin men are still denied the possibility of married life and the goal of fatherhood.

I discussed the manner in which historical contrast of the ‘hard day’ of the past with the ‘easy day’ or ‘slack off’ of the present combines with explicit evaluation in the oral history material in such a way as to add to the moral and political sub-text of this history. Work and work relations are the focus of this particular evaluative seam and this is related to the fact that it is the work domain that constitutes the arena both for ngumpin oppression and for their attainment of equality with kartiya. Given this, the perceived loss of cattle-station work skills and ethic is of critical concern for elderly ngumpin, as is the associated introduction of the CDEP scheme at Amanbidji.

I argued that historical talk which proceeds by way of constrasting past and present practices, technologies or social conditions is probably endemic to general ngumpin social life and is present in contemporary ways of talking about the past that occur between younger and older ngumpin.

In my discussion of ‘coming up’ I suggested that there were limitations upon regional Aboriginal solidarity as a consequence of the current funding regime to Aboriginal communities in the region.
In Section Three I argued that ngumpin consider themselves to be engaged in an ongoing struggle to remove disparity and unbalanced exchange between themselves and kariya. It is within this context that the kariya researcher is seen as a potential conduit, allowing the broad dissemination of either the historical or current circumstances of ngumpin to the wider Australian public. I suggested that as much as ‘speaking up’, ngumpin oral history should be seen in light of the extreme constraints historically put upon ngumpin dissent.

I also argued that the situation wherein the young, male kariya interviewer is held to be ‘on the side of blackfella’ is a defining part of the immediate interpersonal circumstance of the research encounter and explains why some of the material presented here contains a moral and political sub-text and has a pedagogic or didactic character. I showed that there were processes of socialisation and instruction brought to bear upon me throughout the course of fieldwork and argued that at least some of the oral history can be understood in this vein: as ongoing instruction aimed at facilitating the interviewer’s ability to engage in ‘proper’ social relationships with ngumpin.

Finally, I showed how the pedagogic and didactic aspects of ngumpin oral history revolve partly around the use of ambiguously evaluative terms such as ‘hard’ and ‘rough’ and the use of certain types of questions by the interviewee of the interviewer.

In Section Four, I established that ngumpin men and women tell history in different ways; that ngumpin oral history is fundamentally gendered. One main aspect of this is that, in this study, ngumpin men were more likely than women to talk of sexual relationships between ngumpin and kariya, and further, posit these relationships as a significant feature of the moral landscape. Men were also more likely to comment on and offer evaluations of kariya violence towards ngumpin.

I suggested that a possible explanation for ngumpin men’s greater emphasis on kariya violence lay in the work histories of the individual speakers and specifically the sort of regime they had worked under. I also suggested that, paralleled by restrictions on the expression of certain other types of ngumpin knowledge, the telling of certain aspects of history may be gender-circumscribed.

I noted that the presence of a young, male kariya researcher is undoubtedly of great significance in relation to gendered talk of colonial sexual relations and the complete absence of this topic amongst the female interviewees. I also noted that of two female kariya researchers who have done oral history work with ngumpin, Rose (1991) encountered mainly silence on this issue amongst her female interviewees whereas McGrath (1987) found nostalgic reminiscence.
I also suggested that the differentially gendered experience of past work on pastoral stations needs to be considered when looking at the gendering of ngumpin oral history. I argued that the work of the stock-camp constituted a stronger basis for collective identity than did the work of the homestead. This is paralleled in the texts by the virtually exclusive use of the first person plural pronoun by men in relation to talk of stockwork such that this experience is situated from the perspective of the group: ngumpin stockmen or ‘cattlemen’. Consequently, the stock-camp facilitated a certain gendered collective identity that enabled the formation of political groups normally separated by boundaries of language, geography and culture.

I posited a men’s working-life template which shows a task—and knowledge—oriented progression through work stages from horse-tailer to horse-breaker, which to some degree parallels men’s progression through Law. As we have seen earlier, other aspects of stockwork, including the disciplining of younger men by older men and the incorporation of traditional skills within stockwork, facilitated the development of the stock-camp as a significant site of ngumpin men’s identity.

I suggested that stockmen’s clothes were an important part of this new identity and also a symbolic aspect of their essential equality with kartiya. The ngumpin use of simile shows that to be stripped of their work clothes at the end of the Dry season and ‘drafted off’ into the bush like a bullock was, for at least some ngumpin men, a violation of their new-found identity and constituted a failure on the part of kartiya to act in a proper way towards them.
CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSIONS
Chapter Ten: Conclusions

10.1. Introduction

In this chapter I provide a broad overview of the approach and findings presented in this thesis. This overview is directed toward the two interconnected aims that have driven this work:

- that ngumpin oral history contains a moral sub-text by which past social relations, events and states pertaining to the inter-relationship of ngumpin and kartiya are evaluated, and
- that this moral sub-text is a ngumpin response to the past and present circumstances of their encounter with kartiya.

10.2. The Moral Sub-Text of Ngumpin Oral History

... the point of telling stories about past events is not simply to describe events, but to build a commentary about their social and moral significance for the narrator and his or her audience (White 1990:133).

As a consequence of a prolonged, close reading of ngumpin oral history it became apparent that such history was both complex and, in some respects, patterned. It was complex in that there appeared to be a seam of evaluative material within the texts which took as its object past and, as we have seen, by implication, present social relations, events and states relating largely to the circumstances of the inter-relationship of ngumpin and kartiya. I have referred to this seam of evaluation as the moral sub-text of ngumpin oral history.

In Chapter 2.7, I discussed six features of text which were to some degree common to these ngumpin oral histories, the analysis of which would facilitate the revelation and description of their moral sub-text. They were the use of explicit evaluation, historical contrast, and simile, the presence of ngumpin argument or thesis, questions of the interviewer by the interviewee, and patterned alternations between first person singular and plural pronoun forms. In Chapters 6 and 7, I analysed several of the interviews in full and presented a summary of the patterning of these features throughout the thirty-five interviews presented here.

In Chapter 8, I discussed the patterning of these features and showed the existence of a moral sub-text in ngumpin oral history in relation to talk of:
• kartiya violence towards ngumpin,
• kartiya reciprocity and non-reciprocity towards ngumpin, and
• asymmetrical sexual relations between kartiya and ngumpin.

The moral sub-text that accompanies the ngumpin historical exposition of these three aspects of their encounter with kartiya is constituted largely by the use of explicit evaluation, thesis and simile. In relation to explicit evaluation we saw the explicit, negative evaluation of (i) specific and general acts of kartiya violence, (ii) kartiya non-reciprocity and general niggardliness, including the association of past eras of paucity with ‘hard day’, and (iii) the inability of ngumpin men to access kartiya women, and the presence in the region of large numbers of ‘half-castes’. We also saw the explicit, positive evaluation of (i) that kartiya behaviour characterised by an absence of violence, and (ii) acts of kartiya generosity.

In relation to ngumpin thesis, we saw (i) the suggestion that violence was part of a programmatic stealing of ngumpin land and women and that this was predicated on the kartiya ideology by which ngumpin were taken as ‘rubbish’, (ii) the notion that ngumpin have historically been involved in a process of ‘coming up’ from the ‘hard day’ of scarce provisions, and (iii) the documentation of the likelihood of police violence towards those ngumpin who attempted to redress the sexual asymmetry by seeking relationships with kartiya women.

In relation to simile, we saw the suggestion that ngumpin were treated as animals in being (i) gathered together prior to being shot, and (ii) discharged from work at the end of the Dry season without their work clothes.

Through this material we have seen that the issue of reciprocity lies at the heart of the moral topography of ngumpin-kartiya relations for at least some of the speakers involved in this study.

That ngumpin oral history is to some extent patterned was suggested initially by the widespread and exclusive (or predominant) use of either first person singular or plural pronouns around certain historical events and states. I have argued that this patterning indicates that the ngumpin representation and telling of certain historical experiences is organised according to whether the events or states which constitute them are perceived as being within the experiential domain of the group or the individual. In other words, the patterned use of pronoun in ngumpin oral history involves a ngumpin mapping of the
relation between identity and historical event or state such that certain events and states are associated almost exclusively with the group, and others with the individual.

We have seen also that the patterned use of pronoun in ngumpin oral history contributes to a ngumpin discourse on identity and solidarity in the face of kartiya colonisation. Such patterned use of pronoun is also of moral significance to the extent that the interconnection between the group and the individual is a significant aspect of ngumpin moral life.

We have seen throughout this thesis, but especially in Chapters 1.4 and 8, that ngumpin social life is largely regulated by principles of sharing and reciprocity, which function to ensure the proper distribution of resources within the ngumpin economy. These principles are of primary importance to ngumpin moral life, which can be thought of as fundamentally concerned with the issue of the correct distribution of resources from the individual to the group and vice-versa. Indeed we can understand ngumpin morality, as much as Western morality (see e.g. Kovesi 1967, MacIntyre 1981), as an extended dialogue on, and critique of, the complex relationship of individuals to the groups to which they belong. It is because of these things that the reckoning of various historical experiences as pertaining to either the individual or the group has moral implications and contributes to the moral sub-text of ngumpin oral history (cf. Beidelman 1986:2, Irwin-Zarecka 1994:9).

As is made clear in Interviews JM3 and PW34, both of which document the systematic oppression of ngumpin by kartiya generally, from the ngumpin perspective it is not enough for a group of people to act in concert to have their actions deemed ethical. Action must also be that which follows the fundamental ngumpin principle of reciprocity and which establishes relationships of symmetry between groups.

I suggested that the historical integrity of ngumpin society is perceived by ngumpin to have depended to some degree on their ability to retain an element of solidarity in their dealings with kartiya. We saw the widespread and exclusive use of ‘we’ in relation to enduring paucity of clothes and rations and receiving or not receiving rations, clothes or wages, and the limited but exclusive use of ‘we’ by three speakers in relation to the ngumpin experience of the ‘hard days’ characterised by the absence of external support for ngumpin (PW21:35) and poor working conditions (PW21:33; ST4:79,81), including paucity of goods received for labour (DM10:148-149). The patterned use of this first person plural pronoun denotes the ‘moral community’ (MacIntyre 1985[1981]:132,263) in which ngumpin moral life has historically been sustained.

As we saw in Chapter 2.6, there has been very little attention paid to patterns of pronoun use and how these may allow us entry into an understanding of how historical
events and actions are represented or situated by Aboriginal speakers. I have demonstrated in this thesis that these patterns are a fundamental aspect of the ngumpin representation of pastness and one of the key features of ngumpin oral history around which evaluation occurs.

In Chapter 2, I introduced Tonkin’s (1992) notion of history’s face, by which histories of the sort I have presented here can be understood as ‘arguments created by people in particular conditions’. That some ngumpin oral history consists of extended and complex argument on various aspects of their historical and contemporary engagement with kartiya is evident not only in the implicit discourse on solidarity and identity expressed through pronoun use but also in the use of simile, historical contrast, explicit evaluation and questions of the interviewer by the interviewee, and more obviously of course, in the presentation of ngumpin theses.

An engagement with these features of ngumpin oral texts allows an interpretation of them such that their point and argument can be acknowledged and assessed. Without this we cannot begin to discuss the possible use to which oral history is put by ngumpin speakers. I understand at least some of the ngumpin speakers I recorded to be engaged in activity which had purposes beyond the mere telling of events. As suggested by the White (1990:133) quotation at the beginning of this section, for some, the telling of ngumpin history involved the simultaneous presentation of its ‘social and moral significance for the narrator and his or her audience’. This brings me to a final consideration of context.

10.3. A Ngumpin Response to Past and Present Circumstances

We cannot begin to talk of the uses to which ngumpin oral history may be put without attending to the circumstances or context in which it is given. My aim throughout this thesis has been to show how ngumpin oral history relates to the ngumpin experience of their past and present engagement with kartiya. I indicated, in Chapter 2, that the special nature of ngumpin oral history required a different approach to context than that generally offered within the field of discourse analysis, as it consists in large part of the ngumpin documentation of their historical inter-relationship with kartiya. This required an approach to context which went beyond, but preserved, a concern for the presence of an audience, to consider historical and contemporary aspects of the social, economic and cultural inter-relationship of ngumpin and kartiya, and especially, ngumpin understandings of these things.
In taking this approach I allowed the contextualisation of ngumpin oral history to be directed by fieldwork, in the sense that it has been organised around the ngumpin perception of contemporary disparity and contemporary ngumpin notions of ‘coming up [to]’ and ‘working alongside’ kartiya. My consideration of context throughout this thesis has centred around the ngumpin perspective of:

- the patterns and circumstances of ngumpin-kartiya interaction, past and present,
- the broad socio-economic circumstances of ngumpin vis-à-vis kartiya, past and present, and
- the immediate interpersonal circumstances of the interview.

To this end I provided, in Chapter 3, a discussion of the history of the engagement between ngumpin and kartiya, based largely on ngumpin oral history, and in Chapters 4 and 5 a discussion of the general circumstances of their contemporary engagement, based largely on my interaction with and observance of ngumpin people on a daily basis during almost four months of fieldwork. I also included, in Chapter 4, statistical material on the socio-economic circumstances of ngumpin in the 1990s, and in Chapter 1, material on ngumpin reciprocity. It was from these sources that I interpreted and contextualised ngumpin oral history in Chapters 8 and 9.

I have shown in this thesis that the moral sub-text of ngumpin oral history can be seen as a ngumpin response to their past and present social and economic circumstances and to certain aspects of their historically and currently reckoned relationship with kartiya. The present social and economic disparities that characterise the ngumpin relationship with kartiya are seen by the former as the continuation and the product of decades of unequal exchange. The contextualisation of ngumpin oral history begins with a consideration of ngumpin notions and understandings of their engagement with kartiya.

We have seen that ngumpin residents of Amanbidji Station are generally concerned about the provision of resources and funding to their station and community (Chapter 5.3), are concerned with the loss of traditional aspects of culture (Chapter 5.6) and are committed to an idea of socio-economic development known as ‘[im]provement’ (Chapter 5.5). Each of these concerns is linked to the others in that whether the station or community is ‘coming up’, ‘going down’ or undergoing ‘[im]provement’ is seen to be determined by levels of cultural maintenance and funding.

Indeed, I have argued that within the region there operates a sort of ‘moral economy’ relating to the distribution of both money and, especially from the male, ngumpin
perspective, women. The fundamental, moral issue of reciprocity is as much an issue in the present as it is of the past.

The ngumpin history of their engagement with kartiya situates ngumpin as involved in a slow (and somewhat fragile) process of ‘coming up’. ‘Coming up’ is situated against the backdrop of ngumpin notions of reciprocity and the moral topography of their engagement with kartiya in that it is seen as the process whereby ngumpin-kartiya disparity will be overcome. Ngumpin aspirations are for ‘all mates now’ with kartiya and for the two to work ‘alongside’—aspirations which are the antithesis of much of their shared history.

Ngumpin understand that ‘coming up’ will be effected at least in part through oral means: ‘speaking up’. Indeed, there would be no requirement to ‘speak up’ if there was no experience of disparity or asymmetry. The ngumpin concern with ‘speaking up’ stems from their perception of their general social and economic circumstances on one hand, and their treatment by kartiya on the other. Both ‘speaking up’ and ngumpin oral history, as I argued in Chapter 9, should be seen in the light of the historical constraints upon ngumpin dissent.

The struggle of ngumpin against the often asymmetrical, violent and niggardly regimes favoured by kartiya is indeed ‘the struggle of memory against forgetting’ (Kundera 1982:1). It is conducted through talk on a daily basis and includes, where the opportunity presents itself, oral history research. The contradiction between the ideal of equality and the day-to-day inequality that ngumpin in communities such as Amanbidji experience, ensures that they will continue to engage in such ways of talking.

It is not enough to simply consider texts and look in them for representations of the past. As Bloch (1998:112) points out, the anthropologist is in the special position of ‘dealing with living people whose knowledge is implicit not only in what they say but also in what they do’, and this includes the relationship formed between them and the anthropologist, which in this thesis I have looked at as an aspect of context—the immediate interpersonal circumstances of ngumpin oral history.

I have argued that some of the oral history material presented here was given with the intention that its giving would prove useful and beneficial to ngumpin; that, in making kartiya aware of the ngumpin history of dispossession and oppression, it would assist in the process of ‘coming up’. Further, whilst ngumpin oral history serves to evaluate social relations, events and states pertaining to the past, it can be presented in such a way as to encourage kartiya to interact with ngumpin in a certain manner in the present. At least some of the oral history material I present in this thesis can be understood as an artefact of the
encounter between a kartiya interviewer and a ngumpin interviewee which had a decidedly pedagogic or even didactic character.

As much as my interest in their history, ngumpin speakers were interested in my views in relation to the content of their histories, and because of this it was impossible to be neutral towards the material in the interview situation. My views on the material were in fact being continually scrutinised, and the material I recorded was undoubtedly tailored to my response to it. If I had revealed myself to be unsympathetic to certain issues raised by Aboriginal speakers, I would not have been entrusted with, or exposed to, the histories I heard.

As I have demonstrated, there were generally, within the total fieldwork situation, expectations placed upon me such that it was virtually impossible to be unaligned or indifferent to ngumpin ideals of ‘coming up [to]’ and ‘working alongside’ kartiya. In general fieldwork and oral history research contexts I was given a moral vocabulary and an insight into the moral topography of ngumpin-kartiya relations from the ngumpin perspective. As also happens often within oral history and anthropological fieldwork between ngumpin and kartiya, I was recruited as an agent for change and given certain moral responsibilities.

I was also considered enough of a moral agent to be held responsible for a death. Indeed, there was a strong element of reciprocity (cf. Warner 1958:151, Reynolds 1981:59, Trompf 1994:2,11) involved in RP*’s determination that I should, at the very least, be seriously beaten to avenge the death of his brother.

As foreshadowed in Chapter 1.2, I have presented a systematic approach to delineating the moral sub-text of ngumpin oral history and its interconnection to past and present ngumpin circumstances that allows the political significance of the material to be acknowledged. I have demonstrated that paying attention to the moral sub-text gives insight into those dimensions of ngumpin oral history which deal with the relationship of ngumpin to kartiya. This thesis restores to the consideration of Aboriginal oral history a sense of communicative work being consciously done by its tellers.

This thesis is informed by the notion that oral history is a human activity that occurs in a specific and largely specifiable present, which is itself implicated in that activity in that it provides its socio-political underpinnings—its context. As a consequence of it having a context, a given representation of the past may have socio-political uses, and it is here, in the realm of the political uses and aspects of oral history, that the concerns of Anthropology and History merge.
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APPENDIX A

THE ORAL HISTORY TEXTS
CR*: So you used to have bush turkey now and then?
ST*: Bush turkey, goanna. Got im bush turkey, goanna, ah sugarbag. Little
tucker, y'know, call im yam. Like a little potato, ah not potato.
HK*: What this place? [referring to picture in interviewer's book]
CR*: Wave Hill
HK*: Oh.
CR*: And that one's Nicholson.
ST*: What that place? Where, Inverway? [to HK*]. Yeah, I bin all over,
footwalk, droving, right up Katherine.
CR*: Yeah, Katherine?
ST*: Katherine. From this, cattle from this country, y'know, bullock. We bin
take im and put im in longa train, somebella kill im there.
CR*: Yeah?
ST*: La Katherine, yeah.
CR*: Which, which stations did you have to pass through to get there?
ST*: Hey?
CR*: Which, how, which stations did you have to go through to get the cattle
from here to Katherine?
ST*: Sometime Timber Creek, sometime longa Wave Hill side.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Wave Hill, come to Top Spring, Parimpa, Katherine.
CR*: Right. Did you go through Mistake Creek?
ST*: Oh, long way, yeah.
CR*: Yeah?
ST*: We, we take im bullock from Mistake Creek.
CR*: You take im from Mistake Creek.
ST*: Big bullock paddock there.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Always send im there, Wyndham. Katherine, Darwin.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Bullock, y'know.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Only one place, big bullock paddock, longa Mistake Creek.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: We bin have im lot of p..., ah young girl, stockboys then.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Work, work, not belonga white man.
CR*: No.
ST*: Yeah.
CR*: So, what was Mistake Creek like back then?
ST*: Hey?
CR*: How big, how many people at Mistake Creek back then?
ST*: Not many there now, I think. Only little mob, y'know. Not too much.
Lot of half-caste there. Belonging to old Bob Creasy son. After they bin
come. They got that ah, yard, make im, ah, make im yard longa Mistake
Creek. 'Nother side la old station. They got a portable yard. Iron yard,
y'know.
CR*: Oh yeah. Is that new is it? Or is that back in the old days?
ST*: Old time, finish. Posts allabout. Wood, y'know. They put im up that
iron, now.
CR*: What'd you used to make them out of?
ST*: Hey?
CR*: What'd they used to be made out of, those yards?
CR*: Did you used to have to cut down timber and make fence posts?
ST*: No, no, no. Just the iron.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Angle iron, y'know.
CR*: Angle iron. How about before, before you got the angle iron?
ST*: Oh, we bin have im only wood, wood. Wood yard.
HK*: Axe.
ST*: Axe, shovel, that's all. And crowbar. And this one [indicating with hands], make a hole.
CR*: What's that one? Oh yeah, a drill?
ST*: Yeah. Not, not ...
HK*: Auger.
ST*: Auger, auger.
CR*: Right.
ST*: Where you make a hole for put im wire in through.
CR*: Yeah, and who used to have to do all that work?
ST*: Oh, too many bloke. All, what you call im, Bob Lee and all of the whitemen bin die now.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Sometime Aboriginal bin alde work la fence too, y'know.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Put im up.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Make im gate, anything, wing yard. Put your bullock in, in it. Big yard, run yard, anything.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Bull yard.
CR*: Hard days back then?
ST*: Hard day, yeah. Used to work from after rain [ie March-April] right up to hot weather [ie December]. From cold weather to hot weather.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: And knock off. Might be cool itself little, then Christmas. Holiday. Get your ration, get im everything in one.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Alright, tobacco, matches, anything you want im. Flour, bag of flour, tin of flour or something like that. Jam, butter, cheese, onion, chilli, something like that. No more bin much potato then, y'know. Spud. That 'nother kind la tin alright way, little-little one, y'know. Like a spud they bin alde make im, y'know.
CR*: And you'd take it all out bush?
ST*: Take im bush, holiday. Big, big river there, y'know, Mistake Creek.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: That way, Stirling. Mistake Creek this way, la old station way. Go on up that way, sunrise. That's the old Mistake Creek. That station, where that new station now, that only longa Stirling.
CR*: Yeah.
HK*: Negri.
CR*: Stirling River.
ST*: Negri, they call im.
CR*: Which one they call im?
ST*: Negri.

CR*: Which side?

HK*: _[inaudible].

ST*: No, that 'nother, what this 'nother name? Stirling. Not Stirling.

HK*: Stirling go to Limbunya.

ST*: That one alright, but I talk about this Munpu River. What his name?

HK*: Munpu River?

ST*: Negri?

HK*: Negri now.

ST*: Munpu River gone to old Kirkimbie Station. That way.

CR*: Yeah. So you footwalk all around there?

ST*: Yeah, all around. Right up that way, la top. Follow im' big river. Stirling. We want to go Limbunya; we want to go Inverway; we want to come back to Nicholson - we follow that river.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Oh, you want to go right up to Daguragu.

CR*:Yep.

ST*: You know Daguragu, eh?

CR*: Yeah. I've been there. Just been there couple of times.

ST*: That Wave Hill. They call im Daguragu. Daguragu only belong to settlement.

HK*: Yeah.

ST*: Wattie Creek.

ST*: Wattie Creek.

HK*: Yeah.

ST*: Properly Wave Hill. Where that police station is. 'Nother side them big place bin there belong to, Aboriginal people. 'Nother side la river. That big yard that way, lower down, little bit, not far. Stock yard, y'know.

CR*: Oh yeah. Right. And you worked at Rosewood Station most of your life.

ST*: Yeah, all the way.

HK*: No, Nine-mile.

CR*: All the time.

ST*: I bin working, start from Waterloo Station, no Rosewood. When I was a small man. Working there right up to holiday. Go to Nine-mile, droving. [There was a] Couple 'em, drover now.

HK*: _Kartiya_ , that Nugget Quinlan.

ST*: You know, might, um you hear about Nugget Quinlan?

CR*: Who's that?

ST*: Nugget Quinlan.

CR*: No, I haven't heard about him.

ST*: Old drover bloke. He belonga Territory. Alexander [Station], all around. He bla that country. Old _kartiya_ we call im, _kartiya_ old man.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: He died here la Kununurra, ah Wyndham.

CR*: Right. So he was there when back in the old days, was he?

ST*: Yeah.

CR*: So you grew up, Rosewood Station?

ST*: No. Ah Nine-mile.

CR*: Nine-mile. Where's Nine-mile?

ST*: This 'nother side, this side from ah, Mistake Creek.

CR*: This side of Mistake Creek.

ST*: When you get up, come out that big jump-up. Before you come ...
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160 HK*: [inaudible] the jump-up.
161 CR*: Jump-up.
162 ST*: Big jump-up there, you bin see im?
163 CR*: Yeah.
164 ST*: Little bit of a house that side, la Nine-mile.
165 CR*: Yeah.
166 ST*: That's the Nine-mile. And when you coming from hill side, to follow that road all around, cross the river, Nine-mile creek.
168 CR*: Yeah.
169 ST*: And you come to Spring Creek way now.
170 CR*: Spring Creek?
172 CR*: Yeah.
173 ST*: I'll show you one day, might be tomorrow, some time, when you come around again.
175 CR*: Yeah.
176 ST*: Bugaga [ie P. McConvell] know. I bin tell him 'bout it.
177 CR*: Right. Yeah. So is that road still open?
178 ST*: Yeah!
179 CR*: Get down there?
180 ST*: Hey?
181 CR*: Can you get down to Mistake Creek now, can you?
182 ST*: Yeah!
183 CR*: Yeah.
184 ST*: Or you can come in this way.
185 CR*: Yeah.
186 ST*: Oh you got im road all the way.
187 CR*: Yeah.
188 ST*: Duncan Highway.
189 CR*: Duncan Highway. That's open?
190 ST*: Yeah.
191 HK*: Yeah.
192 CR*: Do you want to drive down there, some time?
193 ST*: You want to, what time, what time you leave Kununurra?
194 CR*: Ah Friday, Saturday. Some time around there.
195 ST*: What about you come up, what time?
196 HK*: Tomorrow.
197 ST*: Tomorrow you come.
198 CR*: Yeah.
199 ST*: I'll take you right up to, we can go right up [to] Mistake Creek and come back.
201 CR*: Yeah?
202 ST*: Alright?
203 CR*: Yeah. You wanta do that?
204 ST*: Up to you. You garram motorcar.
205 CR*: Yeah, okay. I'll have a think about it. That could be a good idea.
206 ST*: Yeah.
207 CR*: Yeah, alright.
208 ST*: Might be wanta camp there, or coming back before camp. Oh, you might be camp that way, or might be you come back for camp here.
210 CR*: Yeah.
211 ST*: Something like that.
CR*: Yeah. Okay. Yeah, that could be a good idea. I'll have to speak to, I'll
talk to Patrick [McConvell] about that.
ST*: Yeah.
CR*: I'll ring up Patrick.
ST*: I'll take im for you for this, for show all the country, y'know.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Place to place, y'know.
CR*: Yeah.
Stockcamp, mustering. Country for this place, might be Mistake Creek,
might be, might be la Rosewood country, might be Spring Creek.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Different, different country there, y'know.
CR*: Right.
ST*: And ah, anyway, if you welcome, y'know, we can go take im trip, down
to Mistake Creek.
CR*: Yeah, okay. I'm not sure, I'll, I'll think about it, I'll think about that
tonight ...
ST*: Yeah.
CR*: And maybe tomorrow we could do that. But I'm not sure at this stage.
ST*: We'll have im tomorrow.
CR*: Have a think about it.
ST*: Tomorrow, what, Thursday?
ST*: Yeah. Thursday. Today W...
CR*: Ah, no tomorrow, today's Tuesday.
ST*: Wednesday.
CR*: Tomorrow's Wednesday. Yeah, tomorrow Wednesday. So um, yeah, so
tell me more about Rosewood Station. What was that like?
ST*: You can come in la Rosewood.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: You can go in and visit him, that place.
CR*: Yeah, Rosewood Station. Was it a good place to work for?
ST*: Work for?
HK*: Yeah.
CR*: Was it a good station to work for?
ST*: Oh yeah. Good manager and good missus. Plenty fowl, plenty nanny-
goat. Gobble-gobble [ie turkey] and all them. Piggy-piggy.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Pig-pig, y'know.
CR*: Yeah. So you always had plenty of food?
ST*: Plenty food, yeah. You can't starve there.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: I bin alde fill im up that place, this fella come along, take im [laughs].
[inaudible] all the time, yeah.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: I wanted to keep im tucker for this old man here [indicating HK*]. I bin
help his mother for that one.
CR*: For _ [HK*]?
back, when he coming from Ord River or Mistake Creek, he go back
got a load tucker, y'know. Load of tucker.
CR*: Yeah. So you used to look after _ [HK*]?
ST*: Yeah. He only kid.
267 CR*: Yeah.
268 ST*: I bin look after him, when he bin baby. In [je At] Ord River [Station]. I bin alde holiday from Rosewood, go to Ord River. All the time.
269 CR*: Who taught, who taught _ [HK*] how to ride horses?
270 ST*: Huh?
271 HK*: Old Joe Egan.
272 ST*: Joe Egan.
273 CR*: Joe Egan.
274 ST*: You bin see him, that man?
275 CR*: No, haven’t seen him.
276 HK*: No, too old.
277 CR*: Too old.
278 HK*: Finished.
279 ST*: Might be him finished.
280 HK*: Old manager.
281 ST*: Old manager. Good old manager.
282 CR*: Yeah.
283 ST*: By Christ, yeah.
284 CR*: He was manager at Ord River was he?
286 CR*: Yeah. Is he still around?
287 ST*: Huh?
288 CR*: Does he still live up here?
289 ST*: No.
290 CR*: Or is he finished up?
291 HK*: Finished up.
292 ST*: Somewhere, la big country, la him place.
293 HK*: All along.
294 ST*: Lie im _ [inaudible], y’know. We go holiday and lose them. Lot of bloke, whiteman, bin la this country. Mr Bingle. You know Mr. Bingle? Travelling manager for Vestey?
295 CR*: Yeah.
296 ST*: He still around?
297 CR*: I don’t know. I don’t know if he’s alive or not.
298 ST*: [laughs] He was a whatsaname?
299 HK*: Travelling boss.
300 ST*: Travelling boss, y’know.
301 CR*: Yeah.
303 CR*: He used to come up here did he?
304 HK* Yeah.
305 CR*: Right. He used to stay at the stations?
306 ST*: No, only the Ord River. They bin only have im camp, and go away, and just give it order, for cattle, that’s all. Longa station manager, something like that. And go away. Go ‘nother place. Him bin have im that top end, someplace too, might be Bililuna, not Bililuna, Birindudu way, init?
307 HK*: Yeah.
308 ST*: Ringer’s Soak.
309 HK*: Sturt Creek [Station], Gordon Downs [Station].
ST*: That bin belonga Vestey.
CR*: Yeah.
HK*: Sturt Creek, Gordon Downs, Flora Valley.
ST*: Ringer's Soak.
HK*: Creek.
CR*: Ringer's Soak.
HK*: Turner.
CR*: Right, Turner.
ST*: Flora Valley.

[Brief exchange between ST* and a woman who then leaves.]
CR*: And what were, did you ever work for Vesteys?
ST*: Hmm, or Waterloo.
CR*: What sort of work were you doing then?
ST*: Stockcamp.
CR*: Stockcamp. Yep. And how, what did they feed you back then.
ST*: Hey?
CR*: What sort of tucker did you get back then?
HK: Bread and corned beef.
ST*: Bread and beef.
CR*: Bread and beef?
ST*: Might be little bit of a stew, something.
CR*: Yeah.
CR*: Is that ah, for breakfast and ...
ST*: Breakfast. Only just a bread and beef.
CR*: Bread and beef, yeah. What about, what about lunchtime?
ST*: Lunchtime: bread and beef.
CR*: Bread and beef.
ST*: Supper time: stew.
CR*: Stew, right. They chuck a few vegies in then do they?
ST*: No.
HK*: No.
CR*: Just beef stew?
HK*: Chilli.
ST*: Chilli sometime. Sometime, onion.
ST*: Yeah. Hot chilli, something.
CR*: Did you used to have to, did you still um, get ah, hunt kangaroos and stuff then or did you just work the stockcamp.
ST*: Stockcamp.
CR*: Yeah. Did you have time to go off and hunt your bush tucker.
ST*: Oh, every Sunday like, y'know.
CR*: Every Sunday.
ST*: Yeah. Go hunt im goanna, kangaroo, fish.
CR*: Yeah, right. So you'd go and get a big mob of food and ...?
ST*: No.
CR*: No?
ST*: Someplace where we, where they know. Lily and thing, y'know.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Fruit, y'know.
CR*: Yeah.

ST*: They know im that country. And that water mussel.

CR*: Yeah. You'd get all that stuff?

ST*: Yeah, they get im 'bout that. Good tucker. That the tucker bin grow im

people la this country. Not, not normal tucker. We bin, they bin only

living, got a kangaroo, goanna, that's all. Bushmen, y'know. Old time.

Early day.

CR*: Yeah, back in the really early days.

ST*: Yeah. What we working now, we holiday now and him want to, they [ie

the old people] talk, 'All the white man tucker, come back for

Christmas'. We come back la Christmas, to eat him Christmas tucker.

Good tucker. Pudding, everything. Custard, cornflour. Anything you

want him, him there. Cake.

CR*: That's Christmas time?

ST*: Yeah.

CR*: So you'd have Christmas back at the station?

ST*: Yeah.

CR*: Or you out bush?

ST*: No, at station.

CR*: And then you’d go back out bush again?

ST*: Yeah, go back holiday again.

CR*: Yeah. And how long, until the Dry season?

ST*: Yeah. Till the work start, all come in. Go back for job.

CR*: Yep. And who taught you how to ride a horse _[ST*]?

ST*: Who?

CR*: Who taught you how to ride horses?

ST*: I bin riding horse, you know where?

CR*: Where?

ST*: Humbert River.

CR*: Humbert River.

ST*: When I was a small kid.

CR*: Right. Was that with Charlie ...?

ST*: Charlie Schultz.

CR*: Schultz, yeah.

ST*: You know him?

CR*: No, I don't know him but I've read about him.

ST*: I bin working for him. Not working, I bin stop there till I grew up, little

bit, y'know.

CR*: Yeah. You just a small kid back then?

ST*: Yeah.

CR*: What, about six or seven years old?

ST*: Something like that.

CR*: Right, right. And you, so he taught you?

ST*: Hey?

CR*: Did he teach you how to ride a horse?

ST*: Charlie Schultz.

CR*: Yeah. Or did, was there a big group of Aboriginal people there,

Humbert River?

ST*: Yeah, big mob bin there but nothing there now.

CR*: Nothing there now?

ST*: All like this country. Every station no more garram Aboriginal people

now. Might be one or two something and go back [ie return via way of

ST*: They bin do that all the way but early days we bin have im too many people in country, this way, all around. No matter where. And all gone now, holiday might be [laughs].

CR*: Yeah?

ST*: Dead and gone. Poor bugger. Somebella bad bugger, somebella good people.

Pause

ST*: No matter where.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: That sorta accident all the time in bush, y'know.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Kill im one another.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Chase im out, 'nother people from 'nother country. 'Go back to your country'. Put a spear. Take it, ah woman, girl, y'know.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Take him might be la Humbert or somewhere or Wave Hill. VRD.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: And this, that blackbella keep going, go back that way, go back to his country. Frightened to get killed.

CR*: Yeah? He thought he might get a spear in him?

ST*: Yeah.

CR*: Right.

ST*: You bin la VRD yet?

CR*: Ah, yeah, I've passed through there. Been to Yarralin. Y'know Yarralin?

ST*: Yarralin.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Six-mile they call him.

CR*: Six-mile?

ST*: Yeah.

CR*: I haven't, yeah, haven't been to Humbert River though.

ST*: This way from, ah Six-mile. Not far, might be from here to that, somewhere about like that, turn off going up to that Rosewood way.

That far from here. River going like that, y'know.

CR*: Yeah. So you've been through all that country?

ST*: Oh yeah. Footwalk. My mother and father bin alde take me la bush.

Feed me with the bush tucker.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Sugarbag, goanna, fish, barramundi about that big [indicates with outstretched arms] all about.

CR*: Yeah?

ST*: That long.

CR*: So they taught you all this stuff?

ST*: Yeah.

CR*: And were they working at Rosewood too?

ST*: Who?

CR*: Your parents, your mother and father?

ST*: Yeah, I bin lose im my mother la Rosewood now.

CR*: She still at Rosewood?

ST*: Yeah.

CR*: She work there all her life?
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477 HK*: Finish [ie dead].
478 ST*: Yeah.
479 HK*: Finish.
480 CR*: She finished up?
481 HK*: Yeah.
482 ST*: Passed away, long time.
483 CR*: Right. And your father. He worked Rosewood?
484 ST*: Yeah, he bin working la Waterloo Station.
485 CR*: Yeah.
486 ST*: My father. And he dead and gone. Poor bella.
487 CR*: Right.
488 ST*: No more, nothing. I'm on my self now.
489 HK*: Like me.
490 CR*: Yeah.
491 ST*: I got no wife, I got nothing. Only just the blanket.
492 CR*: Yeah.
493 [HK* and ST* laugh]
494 CR*: Any children?
495 ST*: Ah well, I can't tell you. Might be one of them here la town [ie Kununurra], somewhere, half-caste bloke. Junior, him name Junior, and girl went that way la Legune, ah what that place, Maralam. Big girl. More longer [ie taller] than me.
496 CR*: Yeah?
497 ST*: My kid, two of them. Boy and girl.
498 CR*: Hey?
499 HK*: I go with you.
500 CR*: Hey?
501 ST*: Just have a look, y'know.
502 CR*: Yeah.
503 [Brief interlude during which ST* and HK* talk about several people living in the community.]
504 ST*: Old man there now [indicating a man at another house, in the shade], father la allabout, laying down. He got im all the kid, that old man.
505 Somebella gone that way, Derby, Broome, all 'round. Looking for job, y'know. Married with a white girl, something like that, they bin. And maluga [old man] bin nothing. No more got a white girl.
506 [HK* laughs]
507 CR*: Yeah? [laughs]
508 ST*: Poor bugger.
509 [Pause]
510 ST*: Yeah, we, he can talk now or what?
511 CR*: Yeah you can keep talking if you like. Yeah, it's all going on the tape.
512 ST*: Bye and bye, when I bin with the full grown kid, one bloke bin run away, bring me back this way from Humbert River.
513 CR*: Yeah.
CR*: What's that one? Bulup?
ST*: Bullock.
CR*: Bullock. Oh right, so you'd spear a bullock, now and then.
ST*: Yeah, cattle, y'know.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: You see im longa road, put im [spear] la him bullock. Spear.
CR*: Right. [laughs]
ST*: Sometimes kill im kangaroo, emu, turkey. They bin alde get, old
people, y'know.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: When we bin hit im this country going to Humbert side. That river
going that way, from this Kildurk Station, that creek, river?
CR*: Yeah, this side of Kildurk?
ST*: They call it what, West Baine, ah East Baine.
CR*: Yeah, East Baine and West Baine.
ST*: Yeah. West Baine 'nother side, but no, yeah.
CR*: First one's the West Baine?
ST*: Yeah, this one here.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: That thing gone, all over. He nearly come out la old Bullita Station.
ST*: Twobella creek like that [indicating a joining with his hands], one
another.
CR*: Yeah? Right. They meet up.
ST*: Meet up. Nearly meet up, only hill now.
CR*: Oh yeah.
ST*: Bush, y'know.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: And ah this 'nother, 'nother, what they call im that place, going up to
Limbunya way? That going different way.
HK*: Yeah.
ST*: Going Mt. Sandford way.
ST*: I was in that country when I was a small kid. Mt. Sandford. Bush.
Station. Get im 'bout, take im 'bout nanny goat, 'round every yard la
stockcamp. All the girl and boy, kid y'know.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: They wanta milk from nannygoat, la bush. La stockcamp.
CR*: Right.
ST*: Get im back, all, all the nanny goat. Big mob, lot of goat. All gone now.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: I don't know who living. Nothing, nobody.
HK*: No.
ST*: Nobody live [now at Mt Sandford].
CR*: All finished up.
ST*: From Humbert River, from Mt. Sandford Station, all finished.
Limbunya Station, half of them alright. Limbunya kid all about la
Wave Hill somewhere. You know Jimmy.
CR*: No.
ST*: And you know Peter? Limbunya Peter?
CR*: No.
ST*: And, what [ie who] that [man belonging to subsection] Jangala?
HK*: Who?
ST*: Jangala.
HK*: Which one?
ST*: Huh? Belongin’ to ... [pause] anyway that Jangala, anyway _ [inaudible] half-caste.
CR*: Yeah.
HK*: _[inaudible].
ST*: Blunga. Lungga. All that lot belonga Limbunya but all that way now, la Daguragu. Wave Hill Station.
HK*: Jerry.
ST*: Hmm?
HK*: Hmm?
ST*: They call him Spider.
CR*: Oh yeah.
CR*: Yeah? Where’s he?
ST*: He only walking that way, poor bugger.
CR*: Yeah. Spider? And where’s he from?
ST*: He belong to Inverway, properly. And him bin work around here, Limbunya. All around there.
CR*: Is he coming to this Mistake Creek ...?
ST*: Yeah. He’ll come. He’ll come for meeting. Everybody come from there to Mistake Creek.
CR*: Yeah. Big mob of people?
ST*: Yeah. We only, but this one we, you and me, go only just look.
CR*: Yeah. Just have a look.
ST*: Yeah. When next we come, alright. We’ll be in there. I bin wait for that meeting yet, y’know. Alright, when we bin come up from that way from Humbert River, come back, right back to Waterloo Station. Old manager bin there, old Joe Case.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Waterloo Station. Him bin stop there till him bin, I think him bin go away, yeah, him bin go away for good now. La him country.
HK*: Turner.
ST*: La Turner him bin working. Him bin die there?
HK*: Yeah.
ST*: Yeah. Old Joe Case.
CR*: Yeah. What sort of a boss was he?
ST*: He bin alright.
CR*: He was alright?
ST*: Look after people.
CR*: You work for him?
ST*: But, ah no. Only bin small kid then. And this whats-a-name, what that one now.
[Pause]
HK*: Huh?
ST*: Anyway, oh him good bloke, him bin look after everything.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: But him bin no good for all the half-caste.
CR*: Yeah?
ST*: He didn’t like ‘em much, half-caste, that white man.
CR*: Yeah?

ST*: Cheeky old bugger.

CR*: What he used to do to them?

ST*: Chase im out. Fight la all them bella and hunt im away.

CR*: So where’d all the half-caste people go?

ST*: All dead.

CR*: Yeah? He shot ’em did he?

[ST* and HK* laugh.]

CR*: Did he chase ’em out or ..?

ST*: Chase im out; hunt im away. Some bella come up, stay there la town, ah

in the town. Oh, biggest mob.

CR*: Yeah?

ST*: ‘Nother one bin down la Rosewood.

CR*: Yeah?

ST*: That lot bin working la Waterloo, y’know.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: But old Kilfoyle bin like im all the half-caste. [He thought they were]

Good worker[s]. You know Kilfoyle?

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Jack Kilfoyle?

CR*: Yeah. He was here at Rosewood.

ST*: Hey?

CR*: Was he at Rosewood Station?

ST*: Him bin manager, Rosewood.

HK*: Johnny Kilfoyle.

ST*: Johnny Kilfoyle.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Him bin there [and was of subsection] Jangala first, I think.

CR*: He was good boss was he?

ST*: Oh Christ, yeah. He the one bin pay im blackbella before.

CR*: Paying ’em?

ST*: Yeah. Got a money, yeah.

HK*: When bullock go, well when bullock get away from boy, he tell them

boy, _ [audible], and [that boy would] go after, bring im back.

ST*: ’Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear, oh dear’, he [would sound] like. When they

let im go bullock, y’know, oh, he got a _ [inaudible] im him head, ’Oh
dear, oh dear. Dear, oh dear. Smart young fella.’ When chase im, when

he see him somebody throw im bullock, ’Oh dear, dear, good, good

young fella,’ him bin alde talk. ’Smart young fella’. Righto, he put im
down [ie give him a job by putting his name into the work register].

When him take im back allabout [ie everyone] la station, pay im off.

CR*: Yeah? Paid him up?

ST*: Hmm.

CR*: So he’d watch what you did?

ST*: That the only one station bin pay im people, before.

CR*: Yeah?

HK*: Yeah.

CR*: That’s the only station?

ST*: Yeah. Rosewood Station.

CR*: Right. So he used to pay you money too?

ST*: Yeah!

CR*: Yeah?

ST*: Working money, anything like that.
HK*: When blokes getting money for _.
CR*: Who's that?
ST*: Al ...
CR*: Albert?
HK*: He give im money, all them.
CR*: Yeah? He worked Rosewood too?
ST*: He bin born and bred there.
CR*: Is he older than you?
ST*: Oh, I bin grow im up, that one.
CR*: Right.
ST*: He only ...
CR*: You grew him up?
ST*: Yeah. He can tell you today.
HK*: And him grow me.
CR*: Yeah?
HK*: Him grow me.
CR*: So you're the oldest _ [ST*].
ST*: Oh, Christ yeah.
CR*: Albert's second oldest and _ [HK*] third oldest.
[pause]
ST*: _ [DC*]. Ah, what's that?
HK*: _ [JC*].
ST*: _ [JC*].
CR*: Yeah? You grew them up too?
ST*: Yeah.
CR*: At Rosewood.
ST*: No. Ord River. This two fella belonga Ord River.
CR*: Oh right. How long did you work at Ord River for?
ST*: Only one year, something like that.
CR*: One year, yeah.
ST*: But I bin only keep holiday.
CR*: Yeah. And then did you come back to Rosewood?
ST*: Come back to Rosewood or Spring Creek. Whatever place I bin only work, y'know. Might be Rosewood, might be Spring Creek. I bin only come back, right there. Looking for job. And holiday come, to Ord River. He [indicating HK*] can tell you.
HK*: Yeah.
CR*: Yeah. So you sort of swapped around [between jobs]?
[ST* and HK* laugh]
CR*: Sometime here and then work somewhere else?
ST*: I bin only go and footwalk, from Spring Creek to Nine-mile, Mistake Creek, Ord River. Footwalk. Walking, got a bundle of spear.
CR*: Yeah?
CR*: Yeah. So you did that all by yourself, or with other people?
ST*: Meself.
CR*: All by yourself.
ST*: From there I bin only come back to Mistake Creek, stop there might be about couple of days, might be four days, something like that. Heading for Waterloo station, footwalk. Cross, cut across, through Bamboo.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Y'know Bamboo Station, here?
CR*: Yep.
ST*: Bla_[DC*] place.
CR*: Yep, yep.
ST*: Footwalk. Camp la road. Sometime have im dinner there la spring. Dingo Spring they call im. Next morning, ah, afternoon time I camp la Shady Camp.
HK*: Moonlight.
ST*: Sometime Moonlight, sometime Shady Camp. Early in the morning, la Waterloo Station. Just like I use_[inaudible] the horse.
[HK* laughs]
ST*: Kill im kangaroo, goanna. That for my dinner or something like that. No more bin starve. No food, just_[inaudible]. I can't live on [bush] food now, today. All here, look [pointing to some tins of food].
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Too much stone, y'know. Hill country.
CR*: Yeah. So you never used to wear boots back then.
ST*: No, no.
CR*: Barefoot.
CR*: They always walked barefoot?
ST*: Barefoot. You never see im_[inaudible] dresses yet, all about old, old people, y'know.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Never see water, never see salt [water], poor bugger. No matter which way, old people, y'know. Somebella bin go pension up, die la station, somebella die la bush. Old, old people. All dead. Might be two, three fella. Might be onefella die, put im underneath, longa cave. No more make, sometimes they bin alde make im hole, cave. Might be five foot, something like that, Five foot hole. But somebella, lazy bugger bin only just take im, put im la cave, cover im over [with] paperbark.
CR*: Paperbark, yeah?
ST*: Put im rock behind to him and all along that paperbark, y'know.
CR*: Right.
ST*: Poor bugger.
CR*: That's back in the old days.
ST*: Hmm.
HK*: Sometime la tree too.
ST*: Sometime la tree.
CR*: Sometime put him in the tree?
HK*: Sometime la tree.
CR*: Sometime put him in the tree?
HK*: Yeah.
ST*: That, you got my name there_[ST*], init?
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: That the blackbella they bin hang him up, put him longa tree. Him bin die._[ST*].
CR*: Yeah? He your old father?
[ST* and HK* laugh]
CR*: No?
CR*: Oh.
ST*: When, when that old man all 'round put im longa stick [ie branch of tree], hang him up, alright, 'I want to go, might be, might be I bin go back to mother now', looking for mother [ie a woman] [in order to be
reborn], y’know, or something like that. This one, this one tree bin
jump im up this one _ [inaudible] here, ‘I want that high’.

CR*: Yeah, what’s that?
ST*: High. This one, low.
CR*: Highfella, highfella.
ST*: High this one, low this one [indicating his chest]
CR*: Yeah, the side of your chest?
ST*: Yeah. You can see bones sticking out here.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: That tree bin jump im up, that kind [with a] fork. Forky stick. They bin
hang him up there now, that old man now, what you got him, la book
[ie the man of the same name the interviewer has written down].

HK*: _ [ST*].
ST*: _ [ST*].
CR*: Yeah.
[HK* laughs]
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: You can’t believe?
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: You believe?
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: That ah, longa Aboriginal way, y’know.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: He come back to relation. That dead body. Come back to relation. Now,
he bin go here, today or tomorrow, sometime. One girl might be this
one [indicates pregnant woman], well they found him here. He look,
’ah that old man bin die. That one’. Him bin come back, la me [laughs].
Him that kind, ah, y’know. No more like a whiteman. Whiteman you
gone for good. He never will come back for you. Hey?
CR*: No, that’s right.
ST*: He gone, dead.
CR*: Finished up.
ST*: Finish. Somebella, somebella gone for good, somebella, murderer,
y’know. Bad bugger. Good people come back la mother and father.
Something like that.
CR*: Yeah. They keep coming back?
ST*: Keep coming back. Born la this country, outside again. La _.
CR*: So if you’re good ...?
ST*: Somebella gone to hell.
CR*: If you’re good you come back?
ST*: Hmm?
CR*: If you’re good you get born again?
[End of tape]
CR*: And did you used to stop off at this place [a creek beside the Duncan Highway] when you were a stockman?
ST*: What that?
CR*: Did you used to stop off here, and camp here ...?
ST*: Yeah.
CR*: In the old days?
ST*: Muster there and go back to station.
CR*: Yeah?
ST*: Yeah.
CR*: Back to Rosewood?
ST*: Yeah.
CR*: Right.
ST*: Used to do Rosewood now.
CR*: So you'd muster all the cattle up here.
ST*: Yeah, right back, there all la the top. Place, call im, Wayijap. This creek, but long way up. Big windmill there, and trucking yard there. Everything there.
CR*: Right. And how many days would you stay there?
ST*: Oh, might be about two week or three week. Stay there all day.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Y'know. Draft im bullock and a calf, anything like that. Brand im there and cut im [out], cut im, leave im there, behind. Take im bullock right to station. Bullock. We send im there now. [inaudible] bullock. Oh, we take im la station, only leave im cows and calf, behind, la camp, y'know.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: When you brand im and let im go bush.
CR*: Right.
ST*: Him breed im more and more, y'know, cattle.
CR*: Yeah. How many, how many would you brand? You brand lots ...?
ST*: Might be about, fuckin', ah, sorry [for swearing].
CR*: No, that's alright. You're right.
ST*: Might be hundred head of calf.
CR*: Yeah. Hundred.
ST*: Hmm.
CR*: And then you'd let them all go?
ST*: Yeah. Leave im there. Mother and, all the son. Calf, y'know. [inaudible]. Next time you see im might be good size, anything like, y'know.
CR*: Yeah. Right. And you'd take all the bullocks ...
ST*: Take all bullock, and some weaner. Weaner cow, weaner calf. Bull calf, y'know.
CR*: And you'd take them all to the meatworks?
ST*: No, leave im somebella la bullock paddock.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Take im all the bullock longa meatwork.
CR*: Oh right, so you'd wait till you got a big mob.
ST*: Hmm. That, that mob, all the young cattle, leave im la bullock paddock. Let im grow up there, la paddock. For next time, some other year, might be next year time.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Might be, yeah, yeah, like a that. Might be after Christmas or something like that.
CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Races time, or ...

CR*: And that was just the ah, the um, that was just for the Rosewood Station was it?

ST*: Hmm.

CR*: So, so, you wouldn't have any other, um, cattle from other stations mixed up in it? You'd have just Rosewood cattle or you'd have other cattle mixed up?

ST*: No. We give it away [ie we give stray cattle back]. Might be bloke come up and pick im up. Take im back to his station.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: What cattle for Rosewood, bring im back.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: And from boundary, y'know.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Might be different boundary; might be Argyle bin different boundary, but Spring Creek is still, ah, different boundary.

CR*: Spring Creek?

ST*: Yeah. He belonga to Vestey side.

CR*: Oh yeah.

ST*: Vestey bin claim that country, Ro.. ah, Spring Creek.

CR*: Right. So if you had any Vesteys ones, they'd take im back?

ST*: Yeah. All of them.

CR*: Right.

ST*: Stockboys, y'know.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Come up, pick im up. Now they garram motorcar to pick im up and take im back.

CR*: Yeah. So back in the old days you just used to ...

ST*: Old time, we bin take im back, garram [ie by] horse.

CR*: Hard work that stuff.

ST*: Hmm. More than the motorcar. Motorcar only come up, make it easy for people, like.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Now.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Before, we bin battling with the horses.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Hmm?

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Might be Spring Creek bullock longa to Waterloo side, Waterloo mob might be send im, [contact them by] telephone, anything like that, y'know?

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Man come up, pick im up cattle.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Come 'round top side, footwalk, ah, horseback.

CR*: Yep.

ST*: No motorcar. Motorcar can come alright, come to Rosewood and go again to Waterloo. Get them bullock, and take im back la motorcar, y'know, ah truck belong to cattle, y'know?
CR*: Right. And you, you were telling me before that the, back in the old
days when you, when people could either work for stations or they
could stay out bush ...

ST*: Yeah.

CR*: Like, like the wild brumbies. Is that ...?

[ST* laughs.]

CR*: Is that what you reckon?

ST*: Yeah, bushmen.

CR*: Yeah? They were a bit wild those people, were they?

ST*: Well, wild bloke, y’know. Because *kartiya* bin alde chase im ‘bout,
y’know.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Alright, well they had a, heard about that _[inaudible]_, y’know. ‘Don’t
matter, go back to station.’ Every night-time they come up, get im
tobacco from somebody else, from station mob, y’know.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: And go back, bush. He walk, might be, might be that
blackfella come from like that where we bin turn off this morning?

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: From there, that country belongs that man. Alright, station here.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: They come up, [and get] big mob tobacco from somebody. Might be
before dark. Go back dark time to that place again.

CR*: Yeah? Back into the hills?

ST*: Yeah.

CR*: Sandstone country?

ST*: Sandstone country.

CR*: Right. Any sandstone country ‘round Mistake Creek?

ST*: Hmm. This way, then.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Not proper sandstone, might be someplace, limestone.

CR*: Limestone, right. And did lots of people hide out from the whitemen,
from *kartiya*?

ST*: Yeah.

CR*: And what happened if, if the whitemen saw ‘em? They chase ‘em or
what?

ST*: Chase im, just ah, over the cattle might be, over bullock, y’know.

CR*: Yeah. Spearing bullocks?

ST*: Spear im bullock, and *kartiya* come up, look, ‘Oh, gotta spear’. Might
be see him _[inaudible]_, that’s all.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Y’know? And, that’s why they bin bad one another [ie for each other],

CR*: Hmm.

ST*: Now, some place, somebella, *[kartiya]* man, bin have im head
[stockman’s job] now.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Alright, might be station manager go and, he [ie *kartiya* head stockman]
might be bin go away, get sack. Alright, blackfella meet him la road.

[The blackfella said:] ‘Hullo, you here. You bin chase me from your
beef. Now, what you want im?’ ‘Ah, I, I wanna go back, go to ‘nother
station, get, I got a job,’ that whitefella might be say. [The blackfella
said:] ‘Alright.’ They follow im, right up, what he gotta do. Might be
gotta [inaudible] the horses, something, he got im. Might him wanta beef, longa road.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: He [the kartiya] might be kill im [bullock]. Well they ['bush' Aborigines] chase im up, that whiteman. He [the 'bush' Aborigine] tell them [kartiya man] too: 'You can't put a police la me, you kill im different cattle.'

CR*: Right.

ST*: 'You shoot im different killer [ie bullock chosen for slaughter].'

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: That way bin one another. Dubella argument; finish. 'Oh, we mate'.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: All the way like that. Them white bloke, before, bin alde put a police longa [ie get police to arrest] blackfella, before.

CR*: Right.

ST*: Send im to Darwin.

CR*: Yeah. Send im to jail.

ST*: Jail-house. Just over the cattle.

CR*: Yeah. 'Cause they speared cattle?

ST*: Send im to jail.

CR*: Yeah. Jail-house. Just over the cattle. 'Cause they speared cattle?

ST*: Hmm.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: But police bin make a mistake, sometime. This jail man [man in jail] bin talk 'Ah, you kill a different killer, too'. And they talk longa court now. That fella bin get im different bullock bla 'nother man too. Him bin shoot im.

CR*: Yeah? So the whitefella was shooting bullocks?

ST*: Yeah. That, longa court, y'know, when they court?

CR*: Yeah, the court.

ST*: He put that kartiya longa jail again.

CR*: So the kartiya went to jail?

ST*: Yeah.

CR*: Yeah?

ST*: Ted.

CR*: He was the same one who dabbed in the, who sent the Aboriginal people to jail?

ST*: Yeah. Anything, might be, police, police tracker take im people, y'know. Well him might be hungry for beef, that policeman.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Well he go, might be from here, to Timber Creek. [The policeman] Kill im killer there. Might be here longa Kildurk mob. Steal im, y'know.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Well that his [ie Kildurk ngumbin] look-out [ie problem] too, y'know. That policeman get im, ah blackfella, chase im again. Put im in the jail. Now two of them la jail, for talking for that bullock. Hmm?

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: That bin all the way along.

CR*: Did you know anyone who got sent to jail?

ST*: Hmm?

CR*: Did you know anyone who got sent to jail?

ST*: No.

CR*: No. None of your family?

ST*: No.

CR*: No. None of your friends?
ST*: No.
CR*: None of them speared cattle?
ST*: Yeah.
CR*: How come they speared cattle those ...
ST*: Hmm?
CR*: How come they speared the cattle back then, those bush people.
ST*: Bush, too many [ie big mob] cattle and too many blackfella.
CR*: Too many cattle?
ST*: Yeah.
CR*: None of them speared cattle?
ST*: Yeah.
CR*: Hmm?
ST*: Bush, too many [ie big mob] cattle and too many blackfella.
CR*: The cattle.
ST*: Yeah.
CR*: Right.
ST*: Might be two, three cattle. Bullock, y'know.
CR*: Yeah. So take 'em to sandstone.
ST*: Yeah.
CR*: And they kill 'em there?
ST*: Yeah.
CR*: And eat 'em.
ST*: Yeah! They bin alde eat im up. Cook im. They big cave, y'know.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: 'Oh, I wanta ...', they bin only [want a] change, y'know, for feed.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Kill im, killer.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: If him want a bullock, he kill im.
ST*: Yeah. They bin do that all the way 'long, till, blackfella, ah, white man bin come to blackfella now. Now give it blackfella country back now.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Alright. Now blackfella garram, he nearly have im house all over the hill now. In Kununurra.
CR*: Yeah? So they're giving land back in Kununurra?
ST*: Yeah.
CR*: So it's different these days.
ST*: Hmm. He do im that country, this way, every side.
CR*: Yeah, Rosewood?
ST*: No, la Derby, all around.
CR*: Oh, Derby, yeah. He give all that land back?
ST*: Country.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: But he don't make a trouble longa cattle. Kill im or what. Bullock. They kill im?
CR*: Where's that?
ST*: That country that way, Broome, all 'round. Derby. One Arm Point.
They kill im bullock too, eh?
CR*: Yeah. Oh, I don't know, don't know. I haven't been that way. I guess they would though.
ST*: That's why they get im country back, y'know.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Now, kartiya bin come in, make it good for people, now. Not this ['old time'] kartiya. Government.
CR*: Yeah.
269 ST*: Government _[inaudible]. When he [ie ngumpin] know country like,
y'know. When he'll own the country. [ie He'll be able to claim his
country.]
272 CR*: It's all different today.
273 ST*: Yeah. [Laughs]
274 CR*: Than the old days. Old days were harder?
275 ST*: Oh yeah! Bit hard. But now coming easy.
276 CR*: Changed a lot?
277 ST*: Changed a lot. Now, why, he not look good longa people yet.
278 Aboriginal people, y'know?
279 CR*: Yeah.
280 ST*: What they doin' la Kununurra all them young fellas, don't think about
job, don't think about anything, horse or something, cattle. They think
about grog. That fucked 'em up, eh?
281 CR*: Yeah. That's no good.
282 ST*: Somefella keep killing one another there la town.
283 CR*: Yeah?
284 ST*: Cut im, gut, la look around, boy, anything like that. They kill him
meself, got a knife. Knife not belong to man, he bla beef. [ie A knife
should not be used on a man but on a bullock.] That cut im 'bout beef,
init? Not for people.
285 CR*: Yeah.
286 ST*: That's what they use im that country, all 'round. No spear, no nothing,
you'll just have to use im kartiya weapon.
288 CR*: So you reckon they should go back to that spear and stuff?
289 ST*: They don't hunt im, spear. They don't know how to make im.
290 CR*: Yeah. That's no good.
291 ST*: Plenty of spear 'round here they can make im, but no. But they can't
leave im grog.
292 CR*: Yeah.
293 ST*: Hey?
294 CR*: Which tree do you make the spear out of?
295 ST*: Nothing here but, y'know.
296 CR*: Other ...
297 ST*: Yeah. Plenty this side la Cockatoo Spring, all 'round.
298 CR*: Oh yeah.
299 ST*: Sand country, y'know?
300 CR*: Yeah. So what sort of country is this?
301 ST*: Hmm?
302 CR*: What do you call this sort of country here?
303 ST*: Miriwung.
304 CR*: Miriwung. Plenty of bush tucker around here?
305 ST*: Mixed up with the Kununurra mob. That his country.
306 CR*: Yeah.
307 ST*: Right back to Rosewood.
308 CR*: So Miriwung goes all the way to Rosewood.
309 ST*: Hmm. Middle of the Miriwung.
310 CR*: Yeah.
311 ST*: But now all the Nyining bin take im that place now, Nyining, Mistake
Creek mob.
312 CR*: Yeah? Nyining?
INTERVIEW ST2

316 ST*: Blackfella. *Nyining*. Different mob from Mistake Creek, old time,
y’know?
317 CR*: Yeah.
318 ST*: Well, they bin all along, Rosewood, Mistake Creek, Spring Creek.
319 CR*: Yeah.
320 ST*: That bin to all them *Jaru* mob, ah we call im, *Jaru*.
321 CR*: *Jaril*?
322 ST*: *Jaru*.
323 CR*: *Jaru*.
324 ST*: That language mean, all about.
325 CR*: Right.
326 ST*: Longa Japanese and German and all this [laughs].
327 CR*: Yeah. [laughs]
328 ST*: India, Japanese.
329 CR*: Yeah? Japanese?
330 ST*: And Italian. All talk different, different one.
331 CR*: Yep. So they’re a different mob altogether, from you?
332 ST*: But bad lot of people there.
333 CR*: Yeah?
334 ST*: Hmm.
335 CR*: Bad mob, bad mob that lot you reckon?
336 ST*: Yeah, over American. That’s why they making big war all the time.
337 CR*: Yeah.
338 ST*: Hey? Oughts send them young fellas what they drinking grog now.
339 They oughta go there, Army. Work for Army and fighting for country.
340 But too frightened, might be. Might be not frightened but some
government [officials] don’t let ’em might be, somebody. Too many
half-caste in Kununurra. You bin see ’em?
341 CR*: Ah, yeah, yeah, seen ’em.
342 ST*: More ... 
343 CR*: How many you reckon?
344 ST*: Too much. From girl to the boy. From right up to baby. New mob, half-
caste bred, bred, bred, bred, bred, bred. Not many people, y’know,
Aboriginal people. Not much, y’know. They can’t get over, how, how
half-caste coming. He got no country, eh? He like a wild dingo.
345 CR*: Yeah?
346 ST*: He got no country.
347 [Pause]
348 ST*: You reckon?
349 CR*: Yeah, ah, I don’t know. I think, I’m not really sure.
350 ST*: He not longa Aboriginal way.
351 CR*: Yeah?
352 ST*: Nup.
353 CR*: You’d know. You’d know.
354 ST*: Yeah, him, he only just bred by dog, might be.
355 CR*: Yeah? So you reckon ...?
356 ST*: Them girl go and chase im white man. Right, him find im half-caste.
357 CR*: Yeah.
358 ST*: All the way like that they bin fill im up every country. All half-caste.
Nothing blackfella.
359 CR*: So they haven’t got, they haven’t got blackfella fathers; they got
whitefella fathers?
ST*: Yeah. That mother belong to that kid, that half-caste. You might be
grandpa or something longa him: 'That your kid now you look after
him, that your grandpa'. Something like that, from [ie says] your
daughter. Half-caste, y'know.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: But I don't believe im. White man bin go and find im woman from
blackfella, take it away. Make im half-caste. You reckon?

CR*: Yeah. That goes on.

ST*: Hey?

CR*: Is that, is that the, ah, whitefella and the black girl you're talking
about?

ST*: Him mother black one.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: And white man, father. Well, Aboriginal people got nothing to do, that
half-caste.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: He not belonga me. He bla the whiteman meself [ie himself].

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Y'know? If him want to make a young man [through Aboriginal ritual],
let him make a young man meself [ie himself], y'know. Cut him
foreskin. Sit down, learn him for, make a young man. But that nothing,
that one. We give it away that [half-caste] one, [to/from] white man. He
[ie the whiteman] go, he can go cut im foreskin. Something like that.
We let him go. He go with the whiteman, no more me.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: 'I don't know, no, he not my kid. He belonga white man'. We tell him,
that mother bla him now. Uncle bla him or somebody more, relation for
that little fella. We nothing to do. Let him go like that. Alright.

CR*: That's happening a lot is it?

ST*: Yeah.

CR*: Yeah? Too much?

ST*: Too much.

CR*: What about, what about in the old days when you had ...?

ST*: Old days ...

CR*: When you had half-caste kids. What happened back then? Back in the
old days?

ST*: They no more bin have im half-caste, mate.

CR*: Not much half-caste?

ST*: No.

CR*: Were there any though, at Rosewood Station. Any half-caste kids at
Rosewood.

ST*: No, well, _. No, different, different mob bin come there, got a half-caste
kid.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: They bin only get a work, job there.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Father and mother. Well they bin grow up there longa stockcamp now,
all around. Half-caste. He no more belonga that one boy, he belonga
white man, eh?

CR*: Yeah, yeah. Was that back when you were working there?

ST*: Yeah, too many half-caste bin there then.

CR*: And what happened to them? They stay on the station or did they go to
school in Darwin or something.
ST*: No, they just grew up in the bush.
CR*: Grew up, bush.
ST*: Hmm.
CR*: They weren't taken away anywhere?
ST*: No, they grew up there then they get in any job, anything like that. They grown up. They big enough to go, and riding horse, and all this, y'know?
CR*: Grew up, bush.
ST*: Hmm.
CR*: They weren't taken away anywhere?
ST*: No, they grew up there then they get in any job, anything like that. They grown up. They big enough to go, and riding horse, and all this, y'know?
CR*: Yeah?
ST*: He [ngumpin] never bin make im half-caste. He no good. What you ...?
CR* [laughs]. Yeah.
ST*: You can't see him that many blackfella marry im white girl.
CR*: No.
ST*: That's the trouble, eh?
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: If I bin ...
CR*: There's a few but not many.
ST*: If I bin young fella, I might be get, might be have im only get im one [white] girl. That might be that white man [or] somebody might be put a police[man] la me.
CR*: Yeah? Get the police onto you?
ST*: Yeah. Put a police on me. Over that missus.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Yeah?
CR*: Yeah, they probably would.
ST*: That no good, eh?
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: And white man come up chasing 'bout woman, police don't interfere.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: No.
CR*: No.
ST*: Why?
CR*: Yeah. I don't know. Police are quite strange about ....
ST*: He supposed to go and chase im out half-caste, y'know?
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: [Tell him] Not to chase im woman, black woman. Blackfella don't do that, chase im missus.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: No. Even half-caste girl they don't go and interfere.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: They might be alright [to be friends], but not for married.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: They might be friend alright. Half-caste and that blackfella. Half-caste girl and that black one, blackfella. You see that man, make im kid out of that half-caste, he go black, eh?
CR*: Yeah?
ST*: Yeah. He not half-caste bla him mother. He go black like him father.
CR*: Right.
ST*: Different colour, y'know. Dark colour.
CR*: So they go back to being Aboriginal?
ST*: Yeah.
CR*: Right.
ST*: That more like ...
CR*: So that's okay?
ST*: Hmm.
CR*: Is that okay then?
ST*: Hmm. No good. white man chasin', oh how much you reckon, ah, you
   bin see all the half-caste la Kununurra?
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Girl and boy?
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Oh. No good.
[Pause]
ST*: Somebella might be to: 'Oh you don't wanta chase im for white man'.
   'Ah, none of yours business,' woman say.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Black girl, y'know.
CR*: Yep.
ST*: 'I go my way. I got my own thing, to go find im anything I want im.
   Half-caste or black or blackfella or whiteman.'
[Pause]
ST*: Hmm?
CR*: Yeah.
[Pause]
ST*: Half-caste or whiteman, ah half-caste or whitefella he might be got him
   mine sister, something like that. 'That your sister?' [asks the whiteman]
   'Ah, this one belonga minyu [ie you and I]. Brother-in-law. You call
   him brother-in-law,' he [the sister] might be talk, this one sister, mine. I
talk, 'I got nothing to do that one brother-in-law'.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: 'I got no sister from him, no, no his family. He can, yundubella [ie you
   and him] can go himself. That your husband.' That we, different way
   again we tell him, y'know, give him back, y'know: 'You look after im
   that one husband and let him buy you, find your own money and
   something'.
CR*: Right.
[Pause]
ST*: [laughs] Him no good, eh?
CR*: Yeah. No good.
ST*: What you reckon?
CR*: Ah yeah, it's pretty ... [offering biscuits to ST*].
ST*: Might be _ [inaudible] long one [looking at the biscuits].
CR*: Yeah?
ST*: Where that long one?
CR*: Where's the long one? This one.
ST*: Yeah. Good. Talking here now. I might be talk right or wrong?
CR*: Yeah. It's hard to say. I mean, you say what you think. Whatever you
   think.
ST*: Well my word not too good, might be.
CR*: Yeah?
ST*: Hey?
CR*: What do other people think? What does ...
ST*: They can't believe im.
CR*: What does _ [HK*] and that think?
ST*: No.
CR*: Same thing as you?
ST*: I don’t know. He can’t; he got no memory.
CR*: Yeah. He’s lost his memory?
ST*: Too much sick, sick, sick, sick, sick, oh everything. Him bin nearly born, got im sick I think.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Why that?
CR*: He hasn’t seen a doctor? No? He should, he should go and see one.
[pause]
CR*: But you’ve still got your memory?
ST*: Me?
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Oh well, I got my memory. I think about anything I want to.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Y’know?
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: What white man want im ... Hey! [pointing to a ripple on the water’s surface].
CR*: Fish?
ST*: I_ [inaudible] im, what, why you wanta hear it-from me, something like that. Not only you, lot of bloke over, they bin alde come, pick me up and go somewhere, talking like this now. Like me and you are talking now; me and you talking.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: That ’nother lot got no memory.
CR*: Yeah. They’ve lost it all?
ST*: Too much all about see im, might be Welfare or something. ‘Hey! They call my name’. ‘That white man want im you’. ‘What for?’ ‘I don’t know, you go, look’. He frightened, that man. He can’t see im kartiya. What for. And talk big la camp, for his wife, does the English and all this, y’know.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Huh. What you know?
CR*: About Welfare?
ST*: Huh?
CR*: So do Welfare come and talk to you, do they?
ST*: I never seen im Welfare yet.
CR*: Never seen im. Nup?
ST*: Only you mob.
CR*: I’m with Patrick [McConvell].
ST*: All them man from Territory.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: All them, might come and pick me and do, do something la Mistake Creek, meeting, y’know.
CR*: Yep. That’s the stuff.
ST*: And I gotta talk up for country like, y’know.
CR*: Yep. You gonna meet up with all those other people?
ST*: They, meet up, but they can’t, no, no sense to talk.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: They talk, ‘Oh, you know that country.’ ‘Oh, I don’t know.’
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: They talk. That sorta word they got im.
CR*: Yeah. Are you gonna go ‘round to all the sacred sites around Mistake Creek.
ST*: Ah, yeah, from Spring Creek, that’s all. To Bamboo.
CR*: Spring Creek to Bamboo.
ST*: Hmm. That ‘nother side, that, ‘nother mob bin go camping out, got im motorcar and helicopter, some bloody thing.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: But I bin tell im, ‘Me, I only go far as, from Spring Creek to Bamboo. Now I give it to you mob, that your country’. And I run im big Law too, y’know?
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Business way.
CR*: So you know all that country ...?
ST*: I know all the country, but I only just talk la all about, y’know?
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Get _ [inaudible]. They bin _ [inaudible] like a horse.
CR*: Yeah?
ST*: Two-legged horse?
CR*: Hmm.
[Pause]
ST*: I think about this fish here [pointing to the water].
ST*: No, just ah, bream or something like that.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: They jumpin’ ‘bout water.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: _ [inaudible] mob bin tell im, they full up, because plenty mussel there. Whoever bin come up got im that mussel allabout and fishing here.
CR*: Yeah, so you’d get the mussel and put him on your hook?
ST*: Yeah.
CR*: And bream will eat that?
ST*: Oh, if he’s a fresh one, fish, they can eat im. Bream.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: They sick and tired, tuck out beef, y’know.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: They got little bit little, one day, might be hungry fellow, some, some fish, y’know. But not enough. But longa that thing [ie using the mussel as bait] you can get im might be more, more fish.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: La that mussel, y'know. Anything, you find a kangaroo, turkey, anything, goanna.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: You'll get im, fish.
CR*: What's that mussel like to eat? Can you eat that mussel?
ST*: Yeah, when he, you can boil im or put im longa fire. Anything you want.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Oh, good eat. Big, big one, somebella, y'know.
CR*: Put him in a stew?.
ST*: Make him your, yeah, you can make a stew. Him like that whiteman mussel, eh?
CR*: Yep, yeah. Same thing.
ST*: When they put im Ia tin?
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: All again. Same tucker. Hmm. You can mix im up, make a stew.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: That mussel. _ [inaudible], now. Make a good onion, chilli, make a good stew.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Hmm. For a freshwater mussel. He not saltwater country. Only, might be belong to freshwater, y'know.
CR*: Right.
[
Pause
]
CR*: Cup of tea's getting cold.
ST*: Mine?
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Might be more cold, yet.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Alright now [sips tea].
CR*: Is that alright?
ST*: Hmm.
[
Pause
]
ST*: [laughs]
CR*: What's that?
ST*: Ah, I think myself.
CR*: Yeah.
[
Pause
]
CR*: So why didn't _ [HK*] come today?
ST*: No, his wife bin go away la hospital.
CR*: Oh, right. He's gonna wait for her to come back is he?
ST*: Yeah. They might be there now.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Or might be him cut im him foot. And his mother very crook.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Hmm.
INTERVIEW JM3

Recorded with JM*
at Mistake Creek Station, Northern Territory
March, 1993
CR*: [I'm talking] to [JM*]. Is that right?
JM*: Yeah.
CR*: [JM*]. Ah, and he's gonna tell me about um, his days at Limbunya [station], and he's also going to talk about, what was that place where people ..., that spring, we were just talking about?
JM*: Campbell Spring?
CR*: Campbell Spring. That's right. You got a good memory. Better than me. Okay. What do you want to tell us about that country?
JM*: What karitya bin do. I'll tell you [which was the] first. First one up on the, ah up on the Stirling old, what, Jack, Old Beasley.
CR*: Jack Beasley?
JM*: Old Jack Beasley.
CR*: Yeah? Where did he camp?
JM*: He was camped there. He had a place there.
CR*: What was the name; what was the whitefella name ...
JM*: Jack Beasley.
CR*: Yeah. And what was the place name?
JM*: Ah, whatsaname ...
DT*: Beasley Spring.
JM*: Beasley Spring.
CR*: Beasley Spring.
JM*: His name Wangkanpawu. Ngumpin name Wangkanpawu.
CR*: Wangkanpawu. The Aboriginal name?
JM*: Yeah.
CR*: Right.
JM*: That's where they, him bin start chase im allabout and shoot im bout [Aborigines].
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: Shooting all the people.
DT*: Shoot im.
JM*: Shooting all the people. That's what he was doing.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: Everytime get up first thing in the morning, go just like a, round im [up] like a bullock.
CR*: Yeah?
JM*: Shoot im the lot.
CR*: Shoot the lot.
JM*: Him bin shoot im [ngumpin]. Finish im up allabout. He go on another place, and shooting, keep shooting all the way. Because he had a, he had a idea out of the old Captain Cook.
CR*: Yeah?
JM*: Old Captain Cook. That's the fella was start off, on the Sydney. That's the fella bin start im off anyway.
CR*: He started off doing that?
JM*: Yeah. Shooting the people. On the Sydney. Alright he start off and he put his men on the place. He had ah every small station, y'know.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: Just clean [ie kill] the people up.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: [inaudible], y'know. Shoot him, and he want to get the land back. Ah, he want to try get [ie take the] the country back [ie away from] [ngumpin].
CR*: Yeah. Who? Captain Cook wants to get the country back or the
Aboriginal ...?
JM*: Yeah, Captain Cook.
CR*: Captain Cook, trying to ...
JM*: Yeah, he want to try and clean the people up.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: Clean the people, shooting. Shooting all the way.
CR*: Jack Beasley done this?
JM*: Hmm. Jack Beasley. All over he was go, shooting on this [country]
now, all over. All over the country, out this way.
CR*: All this country here too, Mistake Creek country?
JM*: Yeah. Mistake Creek country. He shooting every people.
CR*: Did he shoot 'em out in, um, Kurturtu country?
JM*: Kurturtu country, yeah!
CR*: Yeah. What happened there? Who’d he shoot there?
JM*: He shooting. He had a place on old Colorado Station. He had another
place. That’s why he was, he had a mate on old Colorado. Charlie
Whittaker.
CR*: Charlie Whittaker.
JM*: Charlie Whittaker. That’s the man bin start shoot im the people.
CR*: He started it?
JM*: Yeah. He had a, he had a story, because he had a story out of the
Captain Cook.
CR*: Yeah, yeah, right, so he heard that story.
JM*: Yeah. He was start shooting now. Shoot im all the ngumpin. Some,
some he go and y’know, get him ngumpin and shoot im and get the
wife, woman, pull im out [ie take the woman away] and shoot the
husband.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: And [then] him [ie kartiya] married to the black woman.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: That’s why was all get up now; get breed up now. All the yellafella [ie
half-castes] bin breed up now.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: Because he followin’ that law for the Old Captain Cook. He’s the one
of the leader.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: He’s the one of the leader. Because I bin see him that Captain Cook. I
know him. Because I see him right up in the Darwin too.
CR*: Yeah. Yeah?
JM*: I was work with him.
CR*: You work with him, yeah.
JM*: Yeah.
CR*: In Darwin.
JM*: In the Darwin.
CR*: And you used to work Limbunya [Station]?
JM*: I was work on the Limbunya.
CR*: Were you born, how about you born ...
JM*: Right on the Limbunya.
CR*: You were born Limbunya?
JM*: Yeah.
CR*: And that’s your father’s country?
JM*: Yeah, that’s for my father, my grannie, my jawiji, all that country.
CR*: Kaku?

JM*: Kaku. Everything. All that country.

CR*: Right. Did you work, station work, on that station?

JM*: Yeah, oh yeah. Work on the stock-camp.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: Work on the stock-camp, mustering bullock, mustering horse, do the branding, branding cattle, throw the cattle. Watch im bullock, muster im, draft im.

CR*: Draft him.

JM*: Draft im. In the yard. We bin done that job, long time ago. Work all the time and brand im, get im. On holiday. Alright we bin holiday. 'And you take you,' [kartiya would] tell im the people, 'alright, take your clothes and take your boot off, take your hat off, and put it back in the store and then go and wear the cockrag and go to bush.'

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: He's a bad. And just the one stick of tobacco and pair of matches and little bit of a flour.

CR*: Yeah. And that's all?

JM*: That's all.

CR*: Nothing else?

JM*: Nothing more. No fly [ie canvas], no nothing. Just go, let im [Aboriginal workers] go like a, he's just like a bullock, just let im go in the bush.

CR*: Yeah? Just draft him off?

JM*: Draft im off, yeah. Just like that.

CR*: That's no good.

JM*: That's no good, y'know. Hmm. Bad thing he done, that.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: When I was on the fucking Limbunya station I see him shot my fucking own grannie.

CR*: He shot your grannie?

JM*: Yeah! Right on the bloody Limbunya homestead.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: I was good size fuckin' little boy like this [points out a nearby child, about seven years old]. I was crying. Old Jack, Jack Gurjik, and Jack Gurjik and Jack Carpenter. Old Al Reid.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: All that bin do it. Just come up and shot him. He was belt im them three kartiya. He was belt im.

CR*: Yeah?

JM*: Well, he got him down.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: Well, just had the boy, boy called Nipper. He belonga Pine Creek.

CR*: Yeah. Nipper?

JM*: He belonga Pine Creek. And he [ie one of the three kartiya] come [ie said]: 'Oh, come on this blacksella got me down, he got me down now, come on Nipper. Bring a gun'. Nipper shot him. Broke his arm. Broke his arm. Well, he couldn't do nothing now.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: He couldn't do nothing. He was dead. He shot him. Get the wagonette, put it in the wagonette, and take it away. Cart the wood, get a kerosene.

CR*: Yeah.
JM*: Get a kerosene, take him and burn him up. Make a big fire and burn him. I seen him that on my own eye.

CR*: Yeah. You saw that.

JM*: Hmm. What he bin doing that, long, long time. When I was fucking kid.

CR*: Yeah. That was pretty bad stuff.

JM*: Yeah, very bad. Very bad. No good.

CR*: No good.

JM*: No good. That's why [ie how] they bin clean every people, every people in this country, through this country, all over.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: That's what he was done.

CR*: Yeah. Where did all this happen?

JM*: Huh?

CR*: Where did all this happen? This was on Limbunya was it?

JM*: Yeah, right on the Limbunya.

CR*: At Campbell Spring or somewhere ...

JM*: Ah, no, right on the Limbunya homestead.

CR*: Right on Limbunya homestead.

JM*: Yeah.

CR*: Right. I might just make some notes while I'm talking to you. So, umm, yeah, so did you ever work here at this place, Mistake Creek.

JM*: I was just work down the Spring Creek.

CR*: Spring Creek? Yeah? What can you tell me about Spring Creek?


CR*: Yeah.

JM*: I come up and go, Waterloo Station. I was working at Waterloo Station.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: Work there, and from there I go back, right back what I was born. Go back to my own place.

CR*: Back to Limbunya?

JM*: Go back, right back to Limbunya.

CR*: Right. Did you mix much with Malngin people back there? Did you know the Malngin people?

JM*: YEAH. It's the Malngin country now!

CR*: Yeah. This country here.

JM*: It's the Malngin right up to Limbunya; Malngin right up to Wattie Creek. That's where the Malngin is.

CR*: Right. All the way.

JM*: YEAH.

CR*: Right. Big mob of people?

JM*: Yeah. Big mob of people.

CR*: Were they still bush people back then? Were they still hiding out in the bush, or they all on the station?

JM*: All on the station now.

CR*: All on the station back then.

JM*: Hmm.

CR*: How old you reckon you are?

JM*: Oh, I think it, oh pretty old!

CR*: Yeah. Pretty old.

JM*: Yeah.
CR*: You’d be older than, would you be older than old _ [person’s name] at Bulla?

JM*: Well, you know what [ie when] I was born, that old Depot [was operating?].

CR*: Depot?

JM*: Yeah, Timber Creek, you know.

CR*: Timber Creek. The Depot.

JM*: That’s what, old jetty _ [inaudible], that’s what [ie where] the Vestey was getting [their supplies] unload[ed].

CR*: Oh right. So you were born ‘round about the time they had the Depot.

JM*: Hmm.

CR*: At Timber Creek.

JM*: That’s why, that’s what that load bin come on the donkey wagon.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: Camel wagon.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: Bullock wagon.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: Long, long time.

CR*: Bert Drew?

JM*: Bert Drew. Yeah.


JM*: Yeah. I know him, Bert Drew.

CR*: Right. Real old time.

JM*: Oh, long, long time.

CR*: No motorcar?

JM*: No motorcar. That’s why the, white people bin live longa this country and _ ngumpin bin all day, no mailman, only _ ngumpin bin alde take him mail. That old man Wajali, him bin here. Jurlama, Wajali.

CR*: Right.

JM*: That the one ‘round the Mistake Creek. That’s the one ...

CR*: What’s that again.

JM*: Wajali.

CR*: Wajali.

JM*: Yeah, Wajali. That’s one bin now. On the Mistake Creek, long, long time. He was carrying the mail.

CR*: Oh yeah, the mail.

JM*: Mail.

CR*: And he carried that for the homestead.

JM*: Yeah. Carryim to Ord River. From Ord River down to Waterloo. Right back, right back to Limbunya.

CR*: Yeah. And he was, this was his country here?

JM*: Hey?

CR*: Was he born here?

JM*: Oh, old Wajali?

CR*: Wajali?

JM*: YEAH. He belong to this place.

CR*: He belonged here.

JM*: Yeah.

CR*: Right.

JM*: Wajali. That’s the old man. Long, long time him bin here, first. Old man bin born la this country.

CR*: Was this his father’s country, or his mother’s country?
JM*: Oh, this the father country, mother country.
CR*: Kaku?
JM*: Kaku. Everything.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: All right on Mistake Creek.
CR*: Right. And he worked for those first white fellas ...
JM*: Yeah. He was work.
CR*: Yeah. For Vestey?
JM*: Vestey? Yeah. Vestey,
CR*: He's passed away has he?
JM*: Yeah.
CR*: He passed away a long time ago?
JM*: Yeah. Long time ago.
CR*: Right.
JM*: Not this house here, [or] that house here. [JM* points]. Mistake Creek, that 'nother creek. [ie The community in which the interview takes place was not even built during the time being talked about.]
CR*: Old Mistake Creek?
JM*: Yeah. That's the Mistake Creek.
CR*: First one.
JM*: First one. And _ [inaudible] from there, come to that place, that Mistake Creek.
CR*: The next one, Mistake Creek?
JM*: Yeah.
CR*: What was the first one?
JM*: That's the ...
CR*: What was the first one called?
JM*: He was called Mistake Creek.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: That's the proper Mistake Creek.
CR*: Yeah.
[Itention to reord due to children talking. The recording is halted briefly, then resumed, during which the interviewer clarifies the location of the original Mistake Creek homestead.]
CR*: Okay, we're going to talk about the old Mistake Creek.
JM*: Here's that, there's the junction [making a line drawing on the ground].
CR*: Junction.
JM*: Here's the Stirling [River].
CR*: Stirling.
JM*: Here the Mistake Creek.
CR*: Mistake Creek.
JM*: Here the old homestead.
CR*: Old homestead.
JM*: Hmm. Alright, from there ...
CR*: Which one's this one?
JM*: This is the ...
CR*: This is Mistake Creek.
JM*: This is Mistake Creek now. Proper Mistake Creek, this.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: This one only Negri [River].
CR*: That one's Negri.
JM*: Yeah.
CR*: Right. Okay. Negri, Junction, and you got your old Mistake Creek there
[copied map into notebook]. Okay, then where.
JM*: From here, from this old Mistake Creek, he was shift here now [to the
second homestead site].
CR*: Yeah. He shift over there.
JM*: He shift here.
CR*: Why’d they shift from here to here? Why’d they do that?
JM*: Oh, he was shift from here to there, ‘Oh, well I’ll shift im from here to
there’. He was shift from there down, you know.
CR*: Yeah.
 JM*: Might be close to flood water.
CR*: Oh, right. They get flood ...
JM*: One little boy was get killed here.
CR*: Yeah, little boy got killed.
JM*: Hmm. Horse just tip him over and break his neck.
CR*: How’d he get killed?
JM*: Garram horse. He was chasing calf, y’know.
CR*: Yeah, chasing calf.
JM*: Chasing calf and come around now that, and horse get tangled on a
bullock foot, hind leg, and horse fell over, and break his neck.
CR*: Break his neck. What was his name? Do you remember his name?
JM*: No.
CR*: Too long ago?
JM*: Yeah.
CR*: Long time.
JM*: Long time ago.
CR*: Right.
JM*: Long time ago.
CR*: So you used to know, you know all this country.
JM*: Yeah.
CR*: All this Mistake Creek country.
JM*: Yeah, this the Mistake Creek. He was shift here, that Mistake Creek,
and big floodwater bin come, wash im down this one.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: Well, he shift from here [ie site number two], he come to here [ie site
number three, the present community’s location]. This the place.
CR*: Okay, so he went from number two to number three.
JM*: This one number one. This one number two. This one number three.
CR*: That’s where we are now.
JM*: Yeah.
CR*: So number one, original, over here.
JM*: This one number one. This one number two. This one number three.
CR*: That’s where we are now.
JM*: Yeah.
CR*: Right. I got you. Yeah. Okay. Um, and did you know all the um,
ngumpin names for this area? All the Aboriginal names.
JM*: No. This, this one now I only bin just travel, you know.
CR*: Yeah. How about ...
JM*: This Stirling. Up to this river.
CR*: You know all those names.
JM*: This, this is the Stirling, Ngumpin, kartiya, well they, y’know ...
CR*: So, you try and tell me all those names from Muntukujarra up to
Mistake Creek?
JM*: From Mistake Creek, Muntukujarra, him bin go karlarniny [ie west, and/or up], longa this place now. This side of creek now. Karlarninykarra, we call, karlarninykarra.

CR*: Kala ... JM*: Karlarninykarra. This one now, where you and me, this side of creek. Karlarninykarra. That new homestead.

CR*: New homestead. Any places in between? Any other places?

JM*: Ah, no, they want to tell you more, y’know. Old _ [JC*].

CR*: Oh right. Speak to him?

JM*: Yeah. You know. Because that side, what I was born, I can tell you more about.

CR*: You can tell me all about that side.

JM*: Yeah. Because I know what the place because, you know.

CR*: Is that near, is that um, Jupanyin country?

JM*: Yeah.

CR*: Can you tell me about Jupanyin country?

JM*: Jupanyin country _ [inaudible].

CR*: Okay. What can you tell me about Jupanyin country?

JM*: Well, that Jupanyin country, him, this is the start of that Jupanyin [JM* again uses his sand drawing]. See.

CR*: Stirling River.

JM*: This is the Stirling. Here’s the Munpu [River].

CR*: Munpu.

JM*: Near your finger, there. See.

CR*: So that’s Stirling, Munpu.

JM*: Munpu this one.

CR*: Which one?

JM*: This one Munpu. That river over there. No-one can cross. That’s the Munpu.

CR*: Right. And Jupanyin country, which side of the river is that one?

JM*: Jupanyin country, we come from here to cross here.

CR*: Cross the river.

JM*: Cross the river, come to here.

CR*: Yeah. And can you tell me all the ngumpin names for ...

JM*: No. _ [JC*] What I tell you ...

CR*: _ [JC*] again.

JM*: Yeah. He should, you know, he want to tell you more about it, see.

CR*: Yeah, right. Okay.

[pause]

CR*: So, need to speak to _ [JC*] about that one.

JM*: Yeah. That’s why, all these people don’t tell you right thing, you know.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: See, you must gotta go la place, go la place, country, you know. Every place, what he done. See what, follow that. See.

CR*: Okay. Can you tell me about any other country around here or should I go and see other people?

JM*: Yeah. Other people.

CR*: Other people.

JM*: Yeah.

CR*: ‘Cos this, ‘cos your father country is Limbunya.

JM*: Yeah.

CR*: So you talk about Limbunya.
420  JM*: Yeah.
421  CR*: But other people talk about this country.
422  JM*: Yuwai. But we all same, Malngin. We all same, Malngin. Right up to
423  Wave Hill. That's Malngin.
424  CR*: So you're Malngin too.
425  JM*: I'm a Malngin too.
426  CR*: Okay, shall we leave it there?
427  JM*: You can see the what's this big snake bin travel like that?
428  CR*: Oh, Jurn ... 
429  JM*: Jurntakal [softly]. That's when we bring im every law on this, every
430  country.
INTERVIEW ST4

CR*: Talkin' to _ [ST*].
OT*: _ [ST*].
CR*: _ [ST*].
ST*: Yeah.
CR*: So _ [ST*], you're gonna talk about the old days now ...
ST*: What you got him here? [ST* points to the microphone the interviewer is holding towards him].

[OT* laughs.]
ST*: Oh.
CR*: He's got a sock on him.
[OT* laughs]
ST*: _ [inaudible] from here?
CR*: Yeah [laughs].
ST*: Yeah, they [ie ngumpin] bin come round this country, y'know looking for this other, you call, war. Chasing Chinaman or, Afghan or, that kind [who] came all along [ie we here] before. Over country and over woman.

OT*: Yuwai.
ST*: Alright ...
CR*: This is the first time kartiya?
ST*: Kartiya bin come up, him bin do the same, rob im people for woman.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Alright. Why blackfella never bin rob im white man for mi[ssus], white girl?
CR*: Hmm.
ST*: Why?
CR*: Dunno.
ST*: Oh poor bugger, _ [inaudible] might be woman him find im y'know, that man might him goin' to, kartiya come and shoot im, poor bugger.
CR*: Yeah. [Others laugh.]
ST*: But that one, blackfella bin, he give it away that game.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: He bin let him go. Well how many half-caste breed la this country?
More than the blackfella now, eh?
CR*: Yeah?
ST*: Nearly all half-caste here.
CR*: And that's no good?
ST*: Yeah, he no good.

[tape break]
CR*: Okay, Sandy's going to talk about footwalk holiday from Ord River to Mistake Creek.
ST*: Take you one night la middle sometime. Sometime you might be on your own ...
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: ... you can come one day from Ord River to here.
CR*: All that way in one day?
ST*: Yeah. If you got somebody, y'know mate, garram woman, anything like that you gotta camp la road. And [by] morning time [the next day get to], here.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Tomorrow morning. _ [inaudible]. And, yeah, I bin droving from Nine-Mile to, where, to Wyndham.
CR*: All that way.
ST*: Camp [with the] bullock here all the time la Mistake Creek paddock.
Here bullock paddock, big bullock paddock, that. Bullock coming from
Wave Hill, to here. Bullock coming from Cattle Creek, Bililuna, might
be Birrundudu, someway, Ringer’s Soak. All come to this paddock.

CR*: Mistake Creek.

ST*: Mistake Creek. And our drover came put ‘em here to take ‘em to
Wyndham. Kill im there. And come back, get im more. All the way like
that till holiday.

CR*: How many would you take each time? How many bullock from Nine-
Mile to Wyndham?

ST*: Bullock?

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Oh, too many bullock. Might be, might be about thousand bullock.

CR*: Thousand bullock. Big mob.

ST*: Big mob, yeah.

CR*: How many people would you have on the droving team?

ST*: Might be four or five, that’s all.

CR*: Just four or five?

ST*: Yeah.

CR*: They look after the whole thing?

ST*: Yeah.

CR*: Hard work?

ST*: Oh, Christ [yes], hard work. Not like this road train. One day when they
kill im bullock la road. No more drover. Drover bin look after bullock,
y’know. Never get crippled anything, get sick, anything. Hmm. Now
we, we retired now. Finished for job now. We bin working hard. Yard
after yard, fence, yard, fence, and make a road for motor car or wagon
or something. That sorta job we bin have im after, after, before holiday,
y’know. ‘Rightio holiday now, well you got im plenty tucker, holiday
there the Nine-mile’.

CR*: Holiday camp at Nine-mile?

ST*: Yeah that the droving camp.

CR*: Big mob of people there?

ST*: Hmm. Too many girl!

CR*: Only bin boy then.

ST*: Hmm. All bin holiday there and come up, follow im river up, just
comin’ this way, to Mistake Creek. Big holiday here.

CR*: Big holiday, yeah. Here, at this place here, or the old Mistake Creek ...

ST*: Mistake Creek, old station.

CR*: Old station. What about this place here ...

ST*: Oh, nothing bin here yet.

CR*: Nothing here. So you’d all go ...

ST*: They only bin make im might be yesterday [ie very recently].
[Others laugh.]

CR*: Yeah, pretty new?

ST*: Yeah [laughs]. That the old station. Ord River, Mistake Creek,
Limbunya, Inverway, Nicholson, Flora Valley, Turner, Alice Down,
Mabel Down, Turkey Creek.

OT*: Lissadell.

ST*: Lissadell, Texas, Argyle. All them place, y’know.
CR*: You’d have people from all them stations coming here to Mistake Creek?

ST*: Sometimes. They all bin want to party la this country.

CR*: Yeah. Is that for the Law?

ST*: Yeah, for the Business. Anything like that.

CR*: They used to run all those dreamings?

ST*: Hmm.

CR*: Kija people?

ST*: Yeah, some Kija people. From this hill here, Ngarlkurun.

OT*: Too many.

ST*: Too much. Bin _ [inaudible] here. After that what I bin telling done together before, killing one another, take it the woman: that bin finish.

Alright, all bin all have im friend now. Good friend.

CR*: Yeah. Malngin people?

ST*: Hmm.

CR*: Malngin?

ST*: Malngin ...

OT*: Wurla.

ST*: Wurla.

OT*: Kulang ...


CR*: Miriwung. Ngarinyman?


CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Big party.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: They bin all come up here for business, everything here. Waterloo, Mistake Creek. Ah, Waterloo, Limbunya. Rosewood. No more bin Kildurk yet.

CR*: Yeah. No Kildurk yet.

ST*: Kildurk. That Kildurk only bin built up might be, ‘nother day [ie the day before yesterday]. [Others laugh.]

CR*: That was still Auvergne Station was it?

ST*: Auvergne, yeah. They bin alla come, got him, some time got him ...

OT*: Newry Station.

ST*: Newry Station. Footwalk.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Footwalk. No, some time ... No motorcar. Well, they come, footwalk.

CR*: All the way from Auvergne.

ST*: Come up, come across, come out longa Kildurk, come to Waterloo.

From Waterloo, come here. Short cut road here, behind this hill here.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: Bamboo road.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: They bin alla coming from that way. Limbunya mob come, following this river. Some time. Some time they bin alla come down that Mistake Creek.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: From Limbunya. Inverway, straight out this way, coming this way [indicating to the south-east], following river. Nicholson. Nicholson
mob, some time they bin alla go Ord River, and from Ord River they bin alla come back this way.

CR*: Right. So you always follow the river.

ST*: Hmm.

CR*: Whichever way you come.

ST*: Yeah.

CR*: Which way ... from Ord River you'd follow the Ord River up to Negri, and then come down Negri?

ST*: They bin come across here [indicating to the south-east].

CR*: Yeah. Straight across?

ST*: Yeah. Come across there. That place call im, Logan Creek?

CR*: Yep.

ST*: This that creek, chase that [ie follow that], coming from that way?

CR*: Which one's that?

ST*: That creek they got _ [inaudible] la top.

CR*: Oh yeah. I don't think I know that one.

ST*: You bin go through there yet?

CR*: No, I haven't been through there.

ST*: Yeah, going up to Nelson Spring, that _ [inaudible].

CR*: Oh the one, Nelson Spring, hang on a sec [consulting a map].
INTERVIEW JM5

Recorded with JM* and ST*
at Mistake Creek Station, Northern Territory
March, 1993
CR*: This is [ST*] and [JM*], talking about Reinbar. What do you want
to say about ...
OR*: Who?
ST*: [JM*].
JM*: Reinbar. Oh, longa Reinbar, kartiya bin put im stone. Him inside, longa
cave, and make im camp there. Right, him bin start shooting from there
now. When [him] bin see ngumpin bin come up, just put im, fire im
[rifle] through the stone, shoot the ngumpin.
CR*: Was this before you were born?
JM*: Eh?
CR*: Was this ...
ST*: Oh, long way, long way before.
JM*: No, no, some, some people shooting my time.
CR*: Yeah? Your time too?
JM*: Yeah!
CR*: From Reinbar?
JM*: Yeah. All them country.
CR*: Still shooting.
JM*: They bin shooting my time.
CR*: Who was shooting from Reinbar? Who set up that camp?
JM*: That's why that ...
ST*: What that kartiya bin there then.
CR*: What was that kartiya?
JM*: That old kartiya, might be old Beasley, because Beasley bin all over
that place, y'know.
CR*: Yeah? That was old Beasley?
JM*: Yeah. Old Beasley.
ST*: Beasley and Jack Parry. All them.
JM*: Yeah. Jack Parry. All them.
CR*: Jack ...?
ST*: Jack Parry.
CR*: Jack Parry?
JM*: Jack Parry, yeah.
CR*: Yeah, him too?
ST*: Hmm.
CR*: Right. And they set up the camp at Reinbar and ...
JM*: Yeah.
CR*: ... and put the rifle between the rock and shoot the ngumpin.
JM*: Yowai. Shoot the ngumpin.
CR*: Right.
JM*: And you know ngumpin never have a chance to kill im [kartiya] garram
[ie with a] spear.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: Y'know he inside on the cave.
CR*: Yeah?
JM*: Hmm.
CR*: They put him inside the cave?
JM*: Hmm.
CR*: They put the blackfella inside the cave?
JM*: No, the kartiya bin inside the cave, [ngumpin] man bin on the top, try,
want to kill him, y'know.
CR*: With a spear.
JM*: Put a spear on [ie in] him.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: They couldn't.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: See. He had a good rock [from which] to shoot the ngumpin.
CR*: Yeah. How many did he shoot?
JM*: Oh, fuckin' lot this country.
ST*: Too many.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Too many blackfella.
JM*: Hmm. Many, many.
ST*: Him bin take him [ie ngumpin] for rubbish.
JM*: Thousand fuckin' people him bin shooting.
CR*: Do you want the judge [ie Land Commissioner] to hear all this?
JM*: Hmm. Yeah.
CR*: You want the judge to know this?
JM*: Yeah, yeah. That's why, y'know. You got from ngumpin, story. You must gotta put it in the front.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: He gotta listen [to] that story. What bin thousand years. Shooting the people.
ST*: What bin start, and all this.
JM*: Hmm. What bin start.
CR*: Who told you this? Who told you all this?
JM*: [inaudible].
CR*: You heard this from your father?
JM*: Me? No.
ST*: From uncle and father.
CR*: From uncle and father ...
JM*: No, no, no just listen to what I speaking. I know that because I bin, my father would take me through all over the country. And I know the, where that place.
CR*: He showed you Reinbar?
JM*: Reinbar. They was show me. I was big man.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: [They showed me those places on] Every station. I was big man. When they start shooting. See.
ST*: And I bin little boy, yet.
JM*: When I bin on, when I bin on the horse. I see him that.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: See him, got a horse, big bloody chain, [and a] lock, from here to that tree! Big chain, wagon chain. Put im through the big lock on their throat.
CR*: Yeah. Where'd they take all them?
JM*: Eh?
CR*: What'd they do with all those fellas?
JM*: Oh, well y'know, whitefella bin do the cruel thing for them.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: Very bad thing.
CR*: Shoot 'em all?
JM*: Shoot 'em all. You see, ngumpin never do that to him and go down in [ie to] the England and doin' that. No, that's the wrong thing.
CR*: Yeah.
INTERVIEW JM5

JM*: That's a bad, see. He do the wrong thing. Why he, when he was come from England, and why he [ie kariya] can't make a friend with the [ngumpin] people?

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: Live together.

CR*: Yowai.

ST*: Like we now.

JM*: But he couldn't.

ST*: Well I bin alright y'know, all the way along. But white men bin done wrong.

CR*: Yeah.


CR*: Yeah.

JM*: See. Because I bin see him. He done it that, when I was big boy riding a horse, I seen him that, done that all the time. Very bad thing.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: And I bin see that, I see the my, my family, get shot. I never do that and shot his, kill his family. No, he do the wrong thing. He give it fight for country. See, ngumpin never go down to England and make a fight and make biggest war; they [ie and] kill im [Englishmen]. No. They [ie ngumpin] bin live on his [ie their] own country. That his place, and ngumpin, that his place. Well, they, he should be satisfied. See, all friend together.

CR*: Okay. So you know all this country around here. Your father showed you all this country ...

JM*: Yeah.

CR*: ... all these places where that sort of stuff ...

JM*: Yeah.

CR*: Did you ever camp at these places?

JM*: Yeah.

CR*: What places did you used to camp at?

JM*: I was camp on my father country. On Mistake Creek.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: He would take me, through, down to Waterloo. My father would take me. Never leave me behind. He showed me. And I could talk all this story what my father was telling me.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: Well, come into my brain.

CR*: Yep. Still got it all up there.

JM*: I got it all up there, see. I know what he done.

ST*: _[inaudible] [laughs].

JM*: That's why he couldn't, you know, he was doing. Now we get his _ [inaudible] now. We get him on the _ [inaudible] now. See. That's why this, you gotta put this story in there, Land Council [story] have to be behind. You on the front, all your story got to be in, right on the front.

CR*: All the ngumpin story?

JM*: Hmm. Start with ngumpin story. No more Land Council story; that ngumpin story on the front.

CR*: Right, yep. Right.

JM*: Hmm.

CR*: That's the way it'll be.

JM*: Proper this one, eh?
INTERVIEW JM6

Recorded with JM*
at Mistake Creek Station, Northern Territory
April, 1993
CR*: Okay, that should be going. This is _ [JM*], talking about Rebel Major and how the police chased him. Okay.

JM*: Alright, that kartiya, kartiya bin steal im that woman, belong to him. Belonga that boy, Major. Alright, he [ie the kartiya] couldn’t let him [ie Rebel Major] go down in him camp. Keep him out. Keep him out all the time. And what that ngumpin bin do, he [ie Rebel Major’s wife] was cooking, too. Him belonga _ [inaudible] side. Him go all around there, he was watch im all about: ‘Oh, don’t tell im that, don’t tell im that kartiya. Keep im out, keep im out that kartiya’. Alright, everybody bin going on the work now, start branding, now. But he was behind, cooking. They bin take im smoko longa yard. Send im all about. That ngumpin bin take im too, longa yard. And give it longa him [ie her] husband, [that woman] belonga that kartiya.

CR*: Oh.

JM*: Give it to him. ‘Ah well, there his smoko’. Right, him bin have im smoko. They bin brand im: finish, alright, he was start again after smoko. Get on the calf horse. Alright, he was, that true fella [ie Rebel Major] him bin think now. Picked the rifle, picked the gun. Alright, get the bullet and go on the yard. Tell im them fellas, some ngumpin him bin talk, ‘Oh don’t tell im. Don’t tell im, make im know, that kartiya. I gonna kill im. You tell im, I shoot you’. After they bin go, go down the yard, oh he was _ the calf horse. He start, rope the calf now. Rope ‘em up. Fat calf now, he was get im one, calf, and he was look through the dust.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: He was look: ‘Oh yes, he there’. He put the gun and knock im through the yard.

CR*: Yeah? Shot him?

JM*: Shot im. Shot im down. He dropped down ...

CR*: Dead?

JM*: Dead!

CR*: Yeah?

JM*: Finish. And he take the woman away. And get the mangarri ...

CR*: His wife, took him?

JM*: Take im away in the bush. They go away in the bush now. They was live longa this country now, all around the Ngarkurun. He was live there, now.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: He was live there, they bin try, try, try for him. Old Wild Dog police station, they bin try. From old Halls Creek.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: Old Halls Creek.

CR*: Halls Creek?

JM*: Yeah, not that, not that new station ...

CR*: Nup, old one.

JM*: ... that Nine-Mile. Not that one. Old Halls Creek.

CR*: Oh, right.

JM*: Old Halls Creek. That way. Alright, they bin come up and follow im ‘bout now, lookabout. Big mob bin look about for him. Looking for him. How to find im. Alright, they bin go, find his track now, “Oh might be this one here.” They bin look: “Oh yes, his track. Oh, he cross im here, him bin drag im bushes here”.

CR*: Yeah.
JM*: They see it. They bin follow im, right up to, what's name, Nine-mile.
CR*: Oh yeah. Just that, that one just up there?
JM*: Yeah.
CR*: Near RB?
JM*: Yeah. They was look there. He [ie Rebel Major] was make a camp
there, now. They was make _ [inaudible], oh yeah. _ [inaudible]. They
bin start, shoot im now.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: Shoot im, shoot im, missed im. They couldn't get im. They couldn't get
im.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: Right, next place, he start, he was start shooting now. Him bin start im
now.
CR*: He shoot 'em back?
JM*: He [ie Rebel Major] was shoot im back now.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: Blow the fucking hat for the policeman.
CR*: Blew his hat off?
JM*: Yeah! Blow the fucking hat off.
CR*: Yeah [laughs].
JM*: Knock im down and 'oh, no, he's too fucking good,' he said.
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: This nother boy, boy named Warapkaji.
CR*: Warap ...
JM*: Warapkaji. He belonga that Ngangkalu country.
CR*: Yeah, yuwai.
JM*: He was police boy.
CR*: That's to the south?
JM*: Yeah.
CR*: This way [pointing to the south].
JM*: Yeah. That one, _ [inaudible]. That one was, get a rifle. 'Ah, poor
bugger my cousin, you fella don't want to do that,' he said. Why you
can't do him straight away to, kill him one time?
CR*: Yeah.
JM*: He get the gun. Tuu! Knock him one bullet. Broke his arm.
CR*: Yeah?
JM*: Broke his arm. He [ie Rebel Major] said 'Now, come on all you fellas'.
Now he dropped the rifle; 'Come on [JM puts his hands up above his
head, mimicking Major], now you can shoot me,' ...
CR*: And they shot him?
JM*: He said. They was shoot him. Shoot him. Chop his fucking head like
this [indicating cutting motion at neck].
CR*: Yeah?
JM*: Policeman was chop his head off, take the head right up to old Halls
Creek. Old Halls Creek.
CR*: Back to the police station?
JM*: Yeah, longa, right through longa old police station.
CR*: Right.
JM*: Oh, there, that Major they cut im him now. Butchering that bloke.
Alright, they was bury im him 'nother side la camp, _ [inaudible], old
Halls Creek. He got the, he got the name in there, nother side, 'cross the
CR*: Which one?
JM*: Bushranger Major.

CR*: Bushranger ... Major, yeah. Major his name.

CR*: Yuwai. Yeah. And he, he used to, they chased him through Wild Dog [Police Station] as well?

JM*: Yeah, he ...

CR*: The police?

JM*: No, he bin live on this Ngarlkun here.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: He was live on that big hill country.

CR*: Oh yeah. That's the Ord River country?

JM*: Yeah.

CR*: Ord River country.

JM*: Yuwai. And he was cross, lower down from Black Butt. You see the big ...?


JM*: Yeah. He was cross there now.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: Go down, he want to try and beat them fellas.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: You know, they kept looking for him on the big hill country and he go out on the little hill country, now.

CR*: Yeah. He tricked them.

JM*: He trick im, that fella. But they bin catch up to him, y'know. And shoot, shoot im him right there on the Nine-mile. Right on the Nine-mile.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: Like that, on the, right on the ambush. [ie It was like an ambush.] That's why they bin shot im, him.

CR*: Nine-mile, up here?

JM*: Hmm. This Nine-mile HERE.

CR*: Yeah, yep, that one over there.

JM*: Yuwai. That side, there.

CR*: Yeah, I gotcha.

JM*: Hmm.

CR*: Nine-mile, RB, Fourteen-mile.

JM*: Yeah. There now, they bin shoot im now.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: Finish. They bin satisfied, they caught im him. Poor bugger, y'know. Y'know, that not his fault.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: Y'know that's the kartiya fault.

CR*: Yeah. They took his wife?

JM*: Yeah, bin take his wife away. See kartiya bin do the wrong thing.


JM*: Hmm. That way. Poor bugger.

CR*: True story?

JM*: Hmm. That's good story that one, y'know. He shouldn't a do that.

Y'know, ah, y'know, KARTIYA, kartiya bin do the wrong thing.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: Y'know. Kartiya bin only have im black woman and black woman, ah, ngumpin never run into [ie never meet up with] white woman.

JM*: See that's the wrong thing he give it to cheat longa blackfella. He don't give a fuck, kartiya, y'know. Because he stole im [and Rebel Major] got the blame.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: And, y'know.

CR*: Yuwai.

JM*: Well, that's what the, he the, they bin getting all, all the fucking idea kartiya bin having from that thing now. They bin have im that idea, that's why they, all the kartiya after that, you see the whitefella, yellafella breed on this country. Through the fuckin' black woman.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: See, nearly bloody thousand fucking yellafella on this country.
INTERVIEW JM7

Recorded with JM*
at Mistake Creek Station, Northern Territory
April, 1993
INTERVIEW JM7

CR*: Ah, this is [JM*], and he's talking about the things that, ah, his old people showed him.
JM*: Them old people, my old people would show me, [inaudible] no matter where the country, where the kartiya bin live. Shooting the place. Where they [ie the kartiya] bin start shooting. Right up, all over the country, they show me. Old people they show me. Don't matter where, on the creek, on the what, [inaudible] place, they bin show me. They bin show me that. All the story, what they bin tell im me. I was get that, all the story come to my memory. I got the, all of that story, all, all there. Hmm. Don't matter what story they can tell me, no. All there onto [ie in] my memory.

CR*: Yeah. And they showed you all round this country too?
JM*: All country, this one country. I bin learn this country. All me life. When I was fucking young, till I was grey.

CR*: And you still know it.
JM*: Still I remember. All there.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: That's why, that's why I like to get my children, I like to train him same as what I bin do.

CR*: Yeah. You taught them same way?

JM*: Yeah. That's what I wanta get mine, y'know. Y'know, and my kid, I don't want he goes same as what some people say, 'No. I don't know. I don't know'. That's the wrong. See I want my children to come right way. What I bin do, well he gotta follow that story. History what I was following history. A hundred years. Follow that. That's what I like to see. Just like a, what the kartiya bin do, well same thing. In my .... Different longa me. He got the book, but me, I got no book.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: All come to my memory.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: Don't matter what

CR*: You got it all up there.

JM*: Hmm. Right way.

CR*: That's better way?

JM*: Hmm. Better way. You wanna get that story, you put him in the paper ...

CR*: We gotta go back and look at him.

JM*: Yeah, you gotta go back and look that book!

CR*: Yeah [laughs].

JM*: Not this man. No, I don't go back to book. I got all that memory, don't matter what story, all here. Don't matter what story you can tell me now, I might tell you 'You wrong on that story. You come to this story. Right story'.

CR*: Yeah.

JM*: Make him to come to one.

CR*: Yuwai.

JM*: Hmm, one jaru. One jaru we talk, must be one. We make him number one [ie the most important] jaru. Hmm, garram all there, just like you garram im like that. Every story garram up like that and put all one.

CR*: All the stories in together?

JM*: All make it one.

CR*: Right.

JM*: That's why I like it that story, everything comes to right.

CR*: Yep, yuwai.
54  JM*: Hmm? That wrong or right?
55  CR*: That's right.
56  JM*: Hmm. That's why, see. That's why I like _[inaudible] this people now.
57  Well that same thing, I like it, hear im that story.
INTERVIEW DT8

Recorded with DT*
at Mistake Creek Station, Northern Territory
April, 1993
CR*: This is _[DT*], talking about where he was born and how he grew up.

DT*: I was born in Turner. When I was baby, well I have to turn [on] my belly, when I was start crawling, when I was start, stand up and fall down before walk. And then again, I had to start little walk. So when I was a boy, after being grown up Turner. When I was a man, lad, I was working Turner. In my place, my country. Then after ...

CR*: Which country's that?

DT*: Turner River.

CR*: Turner River.

DT*: Yeah, where I come from. I've got a block in there. Five year lease. So, when I was [a grown] up, man, and know how to ride a horse, they took me Ord River station.

CR*: Yeah, who took you?

DT*: Manager called Joe Egan.

CR*: Joe Egan took you. Okay, I'll just make a few notes while you're talking. Yep. Keep going. How old were you back then when you went to Ord River?

DT*: Oh, get back onto that Turner again ...

CR*: Yep.

DT*: Old Jim Egan, his brother's bin managing Turner. When I was a baby [he] used to keep me in the big house, when I was a baby. And give me goat milk.

CR*: Yeah [laughs].

DT*: Then, when I was grown up, his brother Joe Egan took me from Turner! To Ord River. When I was a man now. I was more smaller than my grand-daughter, but I was really grown up to boys. Learn to, learn to ride a horse. And when I was learn to ride a horse, put me in the first stock-camp. Tail im horse, with the horse-tailer.

CR*: Oh, yeah.

DT*: Give it to 'em, eat all the time. And ah, when I was learn to look after tail im horses they put me on tail im bullock, with the bullock-tailer.

CR*: Right. Are we still at Turner, or is this ...

DT*: Ord River now.

CR*: Ord River. Okay. So you learned all that job. Horse-tailer, bullock-tailer ...

DT*: So, before first watch, go out in mustering camp. When you watch the bullock. The first-watch man, tail im the bullock. In the night camp.

CR*: Yeah.

DT*: Holding the bullock, for them. When the time come, eight o'clock, first watch take over. I used to go back and sleep.

CR*: Right.

DT*: So. All that job, know how to work that job when I was a young feller. Used to go mustering, muster back to dinner camp. Cut out the bullock, cut out the cows and calves. Separate for branding. Bullock for meatwork. Send im in the tailers. Take the cow and calf into the yard. Next morning we brand. So. When I was a man now, they started learn me how to break in a horse.

CR*: Yeah.

DT*: I break im in myself.

CR*: Right. Hard job?

DT*: Oh, hard job. Hmm.

CR*: Get thrown off?

DT*: Yeah. Not too many times.
CR*: Yeah.

DT*: So, when I break the horses up, I make my own handy horse, make my
good stock horse for mustering. I make my own night horse, and I
make my own camp horse.

CR*: Right. Three different ...


CR*: Yeah. Did you break ‘em in differently, those three?

DT*: Yeah.

CR*: Different ways of breaking them in.

DT*: So, when the plant closing, we doing the, cutting the wood before we
holiday. Build up a big woodheap for station. Holiday. When we come
back, we do the yard before, every yard, every stock, say Mistake
Creek, Nelson Spring. All that country. All this Nicholson, ah, Mistake
Creek country.

CR*: Yeah.

DT*: Ord River, we used to go, every stock, to check up rail, whatever post.
Start, start mustering. You got a good yard. You haven’t got, have to do
something in the yard, or catch something, all them paddocks, with the
horses, anything like ... And again, we doing a contract, repairing every
yard. Before stock work. Two month earlier. And this plant start, we
got everything all fixed, all settled. _ [inaudible] yard and bullock,
everything, all good yard. No broken rail or broken post. Yeah.

CR*: Is this before the cattle season starts?

DT*: Before, yes. You can’t have yard, you can’t yard im and get away [or
the] bullock [will] just break the yard up.

CR*: So you gotta fix im all up.

DT*: Fix im first. They learn me to drive. Used to be we had, we bin carrying
split [ie wood], [for] Ord River [Station]. I drive the vehicle, go out cut
timber, timber or rail, something for yard. Stays. Something like this.
Hmm. They seen what I done, everything. Might be two hundred horse
I break in. Some I break in horse for Mistake Creek. We bring the
horses in here. All the plant horses what we breaking in here. Take ‘em
and break im in horse in the Spring Creek. Straight through, through
Parker Yard, Negri, the Nine-mile, to Spring Creek.

CR*: Yeah.

DT*: Yeah [laughs]. And then come in here. Then after, when I finish that
job, they put me here.

CR*: Mistake Creek.

DT*: Yeah. Old Mistake Creek.

CR*: Old Mistake Creek. Right.

DT*: Bigger bullock paddock, they garram big bullock paddock. Do twice
the mustering. We get up about three o’clock in the morning, y’know
you cross over Stirling ...

CR*: Yeah.


CR*: Oh yeah.

Other: That’s the _ [inaudible] up.

CR*: Yep. Is that the um, ngumpin name or the kartiya name.

DT*: Kartiya name.

CR*: Right. Okay.


Bit further up. We must, half of cattle out of the paddock. Enough
you got, might be about two and a half thousand head of bullock in the paddock. Bring im back place called Kulungyu.

CR*: Kulunyu?
DT*: Kulungyu. Up here.
CR*: That's old Mistake Creek?
DT*: Yeah, old Mistake Creek.
CR*: Right. Is that the *kartiya* name or the Aboriginal name?
DT*: Blackfella name.
CR*: I don't know if we've got that one.
DT*: This side, up from old station.
CR*: This side of the old station.
CR*: Oh, right. I can’t see it [consulting map]. Yep, anyway ...
DT*: How much fatteners we cut out for meatwork, might be five or six, seven hundred fatteners. We got a limit, we count it, we got enough, we bring im in yard. Yard up. Next morning, drover waiting, Wyndham drover waiting, other side to Mistake Creek. To deliver, next morning. When I finish that job, I went back to Ord River again. They move me around ...
CR*: Yeah.
DT*: Vestey time.
CR*: Yeah. Vestey. So you move in-between Ord River, Mistake Creek ...
DT*: Yeah.
CR*: Spring Creek?
DT*: Spring Creek. And then from up, next up to, Mistake Creek, back to Ord River ...
CR*: Yeah.
DT*: From Ord River, manager took me, ah, Spring Creek. I was, I was running camp there now.
CR*: Yeah. You actually ran the camp?
DT*: Yeah.
CR*: Which camp was this, Mistake Creek?
DT*: No.
CR*: Spring Creek?
DT*: Spring Creek.
CR*: Right. Big camp?
DT*: Oh, not too bad. I used to turn im Rosewood [ie send back stray Rosewood cattle to that station], [and the same with] Waterloo, turn im back here. Muster all that Nelson Creek country. All that country. Muster half Mistake Creek. Mustering camp. Finish that job, back to Mistake, ah, Spring Creek. And then ...
CR*: And your father’s country, your *kaku* country, that’s Munpu, isn’t it?
DT*: Munpu yeah.
CR*: Munpu. Can you tell me a bit about that country and what sort of work you did around Munpu.
DT*: I didn’t work Munpu.
CR*: Oh, right. Which country did you work around?
DT*: Spring Creek. I went to Turkey Creek.
CR*: Right, now how about the land around this place, ah, Mistake Creek?
DT*: Oh, all this country, Kurturtu.
CR*: Yeah.
DT*: Campbell Spring. All that Warkman, Bamboo, all that country, working there. All this country, Nelson Spring, Morton Yard ...
DT*: Yeah.
CR*: Yeah. Oh, what sort of work did you do around there?
DT*: Stockyard.
CR*: Okay, I'll stop it there.
CR*: Okay, this is going to be um, _ [DM*] and _ [DT*] talking about footwalk holiday through Munpu country from Inverway to Ord River. All around that place. Do you want to start off _ [DT*]?

DT*: Alright, old people used to say 'Come on, we go holiday in bush.' Through Munpu country, you know. All around.

CR*: Yep.

DT*: Kariya give, might be one or two months and a half, we put im mark [DT* indicates cutting motion across index finger] [to indicate] how many month.

CR*: Yeah? On your finger?

DT*: When about this, 'nother month, sit down, ah we look, 'ah we all gotta go back to work, now'. We go back. Right time.

CR*: So you'd make, you'd put a cut on your finger.

DT*: Yeah.

CR*: Yeah. Two cuts or three cuts.

DT*: Oh, all depend how many, how many months you holiday. Manager said you know, 'You holiday, get your ration and go'. Four week or six week, whatever. More than six week.

CR*: Yeah.

DT*: Could be eight week. Two month. Get lotta time. We got _ [inaudible] country side you know. Hunting for bush tucker. Kangaroo, goanna, bush yam, fish, anything. Bush tucker. We living on that. We don't get ah too much flour, we garram lotta bush tucker.

CR*: Yeah, you got heaps out there.

DT*: Yeah.

CR*: Yeah. Big mob.

DT*: Big mob.

CR*: Right.

DT*: Won't starve.

CR*: Right.

DT*: Well ah, bin finish there, back to Turner. And come back, right back, footwalking.

CR*: Yep.

DT*: Go back to Turner. We come up here, Spring Creek. And next following year, holiday, we meet up again. Walkabout bush, hunting bush tucker. We live on bush tucker. Living, in country.

CR*: Every year?

DT*: Every year, that. _ [inaudible] with the station. Bla the country, we go back to country, walkabout bush. Live in the bush there. Countryside.

CR*: And you went back through father's country, Munpu? How'd you get down through that Munpu way? You follow that Munpu creek down?

DT*: Well, don't know, what's the next, Kirkimbie Station.

CR*: Yeah.

DT*: Stay. Two day in Kirkimbie Station. You know, station built there.

CR*: Yeah.

DT*: That was all, through the Kirkimbie.

CR*: And then where you go to?

DT*: We come down here now. Ord River way.

CR*: Ord River way. And then where to?

DT*: We go back, Turner way now.

CR*: Back to Turner.

DT*: We split up on road, init? We split up in the middle. _ [DM*] go to Nicholson, we go to Turner.
CR*: Yeah.
DT*: Go back to job now.
CR*: Right.
[DT* laughs]
CR*: So that footwalk started, where did that footwalk start? That started back in Turner and went all the way around or did it start at Mistake Creek?
DT*: All around, from Munpu. Nicholson [inaudible]. And Nicholson ...
DT*: [inaudible], ah Munpu, and Headley Spring ...
CR*: Headley Spring.
DT*: Ord River.
CR*: Ord River.
DT*: Go back. 'Righto we stop here, camp now, we going now tomorrow'. Go back Turner, go back Nicholson. We was walk y'know. Go back Turner.
CR*: Turner this way. Turner to the east, sorry, Turner to the west, keep going west, and Nicholson, keep going south.
DT*: Yeah.
CR*: Right. And that'd take you six weeks, eight weeks? Long time?
DT*: Oh, I think we get im more than the six week.
CR*: Yeah?
DT*: That [inaudible] spend our time. Two month. Some time three month but we go back two month. And another month coming, for three month. That the beginning month. For job, coming in now. [laughs] We weren't in school but we had to [have] lessons. That from managers, bushmen. All bin bushmen.
DT*: [inaudible] to know. Old people, y'know.
CR*: When you come back.
DT*: Yeah. I was young fella.
CR*: The old people went with you on this too?
DT*: Yeah. All the old people, go back. [inaudible] not like a jimari [ie co-initiate/mate].
CR*: Yeah.
DT*: What you call kid friend.
DM*: [inaudible].
DT*: Mate.
CR*: Who's that?
DT*: Men.
CR*: Yeah, so you both ...
DT*: They call 'jimari. You say, 'them grown together'. 'Yunmi'. [Like me and] [JC*].
CR*: [JC*].
DT*: Hmm. We the same.
CR*: Yeah. So you both went together on this ...
DT*: He wasn't coming out, he was Ord River all the time.
CR*: He was at Ord River. Is he older than you or is he same ...
DT*: He's little. Little-little [ie younger than DT*].
CR*: Yeah. Little bit older?
DT*: I'm sixty five.
CR*: Yeah. And [JC*'s] a little bit older?
DT*: I don't know what his age.
CR*: He might be sixty seven.
DT*: Yeah. Might be one year.
CR*: Yeah.
DT*: Yeah. [Laughs].
CR*: Okay, so that's how the footwalk used to go _ [DM*]? Through that Munpu country?

DM*: Huh?

CR*: That footwalk through Munpu country?

DM*: Yeah. Munpu, all around, now we bin go. Holiday time. Camp half-way. Camp half-way, well we never have im motor [car], y'know. Oh, hard way. Like, you know, old people bin take im back they have im all round _ [inaudible], y'know.

CR*: Yeah.

DM*: Have im 'bout mangarri, bush goanna, beef, everything.

CR*: Yeah.

DM*: Goanna.

CR*: Yeah. And you used to find all that bush tucker around Munpu country?

DM*: Oh!. Big mob.

CR*: Good country?

DM*: Good country, yeah. Yawul [ie fish], bin alde get im 'bout, jili, and manarang, that day you know, mipalas bin go longa top way now from Munpu, that side, now. Manarang we call him, like a yam, y'know?

CR*: Oh yeah.

DM*: Like a potato, but little bit chewy, y'know.

CR*: Like a potato.

DM*: Hmm.

DT*: Bush potato _ [inaudible]

DM*: Anything like, y'know. Like kartiya garram, kartiya garram banana and mipala garram, mipala garram pinti.

CR*: Pinti.

DM*: We garram. Go down and get im la ground.

CR*: Bush tucker.

DM*: Yeah. Bush one. That, well kartiya have im fruit, everything, well mipala garram ngumali.

CR*: Ngumali?

DM*: Ngumali.

CR*: Yumali?

DM*: And bush. Him on la creek now, again, like, when they garram, what that, grape, y'know, anything like that, well jarpayiyu.

CR*: Jarpayiyu?

DM*: Mangarri. Eat, we, jarpayiyu.

DT*: That fig tree.

CR*: Oh, right.

DM*: And he red, big tree dig in the creek when get down, ngampula. That one. And again, like all that. We bin all there having 'bout that lot now, all the old people bin sit with us, mipalas y'know. Anything, sugarbag ...
DT*: Oh, nice. Yeah.
CR*: Yeah.
DM*: Any kind they bin ...
DT*: Like a brown grape or something. Cooked [ie ripe].
CR*: You cook im up?
DT*: No, he cooked already.
CR*: He's cooked already.
DT*: Yeah. [Laughs]
CR*: Right. [Laughs]. In the sun.
DT*: Yeah.
CR*: Right.
DT*: Give it a _ [inaudible]. And that one I was talking about like that. And grape.
DM*: Pikurta. Pikurta. Same way have im, have im 'bout longa bush. They bin learn im mipala. Anything we bin learn im. Wamul, get im _ [inaudible], jiya [ie kangaroo]. And ngawalala, la river. Yawul. Anything, all la mangarri. Bush, they bin learning mipalas properly.
CR*: Right. [Laughs].
DM*: That how we know, now, behind one [ie the younger generation] like, y'know. When we going bush well we get im mangarri, everything, beef, longa bush.
CR*: Right.
DM*: Right _ [inaudible].
CR*: Yuwai.
DM*: Karkinka, all go karnkayi, [ie all go upriver] from Munpu. We bin go Ord River, this side. And this lot [indicating DT*] bin go back now, Riyal, Turner. _ [inaudible]. We bin go Nicholson. From Nicholson now we bin go, from Maralalak. Marala, blackfella name, Nicholson. That Turner, Riyal.
CR*: Yeah.
DM*: And Nicholson, Marala. Right, we bin go back la karnkulag. Come right back la Inverway now. When we bin go back longa house now, we bin start off, we're all cookin'. They bin learn im mipala there now, properly. Learn everything like, y'know.
CR*: Yeah.
DM*: What to do like, y'know. We never go school before, nothing. No. We never ...
CR*: Station work.
DM*: Hey?
CR*: Did you work station?
DM*: Hmm.
CR*: You work Turner homestead?
DM*: No, no, Inverway.
CR*: Inverway homestead.
DM*: That one, one place properly my country. From my father, from my grandfather. _ [grandfather's name]. That place now. Bla my brother, went to hospital yet, he never coming yet. That _ [grandfather's name]. _ [grandfather's name] I mean.
CR*: What sort of work did you do?
DM*: Wapaluk, milking cow, wapaluk, nanny goat.
CR*: Nanny goat.
DM*: Butter. Alla nannygoat, only get. Belonga kartiya, y'know, butter?
CR*: Yeah, butter.
DM*: Put im longa freezer, and all that. They bin learn im mipalas y’know.

What they do. Like the old people bin have that kariya y’know, before,
brother allabout y’know, Archie Farquharson ...?

CR*: Right.
DM*: They taught, they taught the ngumpin people how to make butter and all that stuff?

CR*: Right.
DM*: Every thing, they bin learn im mipala.

DT*: Cream.
DM*: Huh?
DT*: Cream.
DM*: Hey?
DT*: Cream.
DM*: Yamba.
DT*: They turn the butter into cream.
DM*: Cream, everything. They bin learn im mipala.
DT*: Cream and butter. They separate it, you know.

CR*: Right.

DT*: _[inaudible] [DT* laughs].
DM*: Garden. Waluk. Water im ‘bout garden. Manager, you know, him bin stop longa garden. Mangarri, bla kariya. _[inaudible] now. We never know anything yet. But no clothes, anything. And you know flour bag,
garram flour?

CR*: Yeah.
DM*: White bag.
CR*: Oh, the white flour bag?
DM*: Hmm. That kind of clothes they bin have im. We never have a clothe,
anything.

CR*: You make clothes out of that?
DM*: Yeah.

[DT* laughs.]
DM*: Mother. [Laughs] _ [person’s name]. They don’t give im many ‘bout, y’know. And _ [person’s name]. Never bin have im clothes everything, before. Only this, we bin working for ration. That’s all.

DM*: Hmm. No money. This time no money, we coming up. Before, we bin properly hard way. Old people bin feed im up mipalas longa tucker everything, from bush or kariya mangarri [ie whitfellas’ food].

DT*: We got no money, anyway.
CR*: Yeah. No money.

DM*: No mattress or anything like, y’know. Oh, nothing. Hard way. From flour bag, they bin make im ‘bout clothes longa mipalas.

CR*: Was that for Vestey or Inverway was different?
DT*: No. Different company.
CR*: Different company.
DT*: Farquharson.
CR*: Which one?
DT*: Farquharson.
CR*: Yeah, right. And Vestey never took that one over?

DT*: Huh?

CR*: And Vestey never took that one over?

DT*: No, no. Vestey was different. That’s only one different company.

CR*: All the rest was Vestey wasn’t it?

DT*: Yeah.

CR*: From Wave Hill to Ord River. All Vestey. Except for that one.

DT*: When we used to go from Ord River to Inverway, footwalk, from Vestey company. They [ie the Farquharsons] used to tell people, ‘tell them Vestey mob bring their bag, get their ration’.

CR*: Yeah?

DT*: They were the really really good people.

CR*: So they’d give you ration?

DT*: Yeah.

CR*: Yeah.

DT*: Wouldn’t matter we bin go [ie come from] Vestey, they [the Farquharsons] give us, don’t matter who come in there. They give a bit of ration. Yeah. [DT* laughs.]

DM*: Oh, proper hard way.

CR*: Yeah.

DM*: Here hard working, really. Used to go in there. When wipala bin garram holiday, y’know. Holiday, take im mipalas, living out bush. ‘Nother lot go, get im work now. Mipala go holiday. After then, from holiday, big holiday, come back right back again work la station and that mob, ‘nother mob gonna go back again, go holiday again, like that. We bin give im chance, y’know. Oh, big mob bin there but all, all passed on now, all bin die. Old people.

DT*: Same, same story that.

DM*: That’s my ...

DT*: This mob working. Five or six, working. Other mob go bush, walk all around the bush. Come back la Christmas time, and let them out. Start again. [inaudible]. We never change that, every year. Some people got to work the station. How many might be go ‘bout bush, two month, come back, let them out. Holiday then.

CR*: So you’d take turns having that holiday?

DT*: Yeah.

CR*: So a few people stay at the station, and then they get time off? They have their holiday after you’ve had your holiday?

DT*: Yeah.

CR*: Alright, well we might stop there. You reckon?

DM*: Yeah.
INTERVIEW DC11

Recorded with DC*
at Mistake Creek Station, Northern Territory
April, 1993
DC*: Right. I born at old homestead down here, Mistake Creek. Station.
Well, I born at that place, that was 1939 ...

CR*: Yeah.

DC*: Well, I'm still having my birthday. Never forget. I'm getting on to fifty-five now. Alright. Alright, long time, how you, ah, how you call ah, lad about that high [indicates height with hand above the ground]?

CR*: Yeah, maybe, is that from the ground up?

DC*: Yeah.

CR*: Maybe seven, maybe eight, maybe nine.

DC*: Well, when I was about this high [indicates, with his hand, the height of a young boy], I bin in the horses.

CR*: Yeah? Straight on?

DC*: Straight on. I never go and chase him cattle yet. I was all the time with the horse-tailer. Tailing the horse.

CR*: Who taught you how to do that?

DC*: My father. Old _ [father's name]. Alright, and that old man, I tell you, he's a very hard man. I never do one little bit of wrong.

CR*: What would happen if you did? If you did wrong?

DC*: Hey?

CR*: What would happen ...

DC*: Hit my ear, _ [father's name]. And toe, toe up the backside.

CR*: Yeah, right.

DC*: Straighten me up properly. Hmm. [I'd] Never go with the big men and listen to what they talking about, and interfere with them. No.

CR*: So he was a pretty tough old fella?

DC*: Very tough. That old man, I tell you. Well, I'll say, y'know, he used to straighten up some young boy too, in the stock camp. Tell 'em what to do. If they not, he get into 'em with a green-stick.

CR*: Right.

DC*: Yeah. He was very hard. Well, after a while, he used to take me out and learn me how to mustering cattle. I work with the cattle, now.

CR*: Yep.

DC*: Alright, and I got, I got used to that way. Since from that time.

CR*: And this was here at Mistake Creek you learnt all that?

DC*: Yeah. Down at the old station. And there's where my, there's where my dad buried too.

CR*: Yeah? The old station.

DC*: Old station.

CR*: Right. Was that a long time ago.

DC*: Yeah.

CR*: When did he finish up?

DC*: Well, I think, ah, I think I was get on to nine or ten.

CR*: Yeah.

DC*: Then my old man died.

CR*: Yeah. How did he die? Just too old or ...?

DC*: Oh, he wasn't too old.

CR*: Yeah.

DC*: No.

CR*: He get sick or something or did he have an accident?

DC*: Oh, I don't know really.

CR*: Yeah. Too long ago.

DC*: He just took me round the big paddock, have a look at the fence all the way. We came back up at, _ [inaudible] oh, about three o'clock. Three
or four. He took the saddle off my horse and his horses, put 'em back
the saddle room and he just walk down the camp, and just make a bed
and finish, dead.

CR*: Yeah? Just dropped down? Oh, he put himself to bed and ...

DC*: Yeah.

CR*: And he was still a young man? Not too old.

DC*: Not too old. Well, middle-age anyway. But not get onto, what, what I
would say, not really get onto eighty or ninety.

CR*: Yeah. So um, so who grew you up then?

DC*: Well, I was under old, old _ [TR*]. That in the stock camp, like.

Alright.

CR*: He was, old _[TR*], he was here, working stockcamp.

DC*: Yeah.

CR*: He must've been pretty old, back then.

DC*: Yeah. Alright, then I got, y'know, then I got some idea off that old man
now, working with the cattle and horses. Alright, he learn me how to
break the horse in, teach horse into the cattle way. Shoe up horses for
me own. Yeah, that time was the hard time, eh?

CR*: Yeah. You had to do everything yourself?

DC*: Hmm.

CR*: Right.

DC*: Yeah, after that, 'ah well', when I was get up, and old man reckon, 'ah
well', Tommy reckon, 'ah well, you, you know what to do now'. Just
leave me alone. I got onto, I got onto all that business, what oldfella
taught me. I was getting on alright now.

CR*: Yeah. So he ... right.

DC*: Yeah.

CR*: And he was your uncle was he?

DC*: No. That was, that was my father's cousin-brother.

CR*: Oh right. Father's cousin-brother.

DC*: Yeah.

CR*: And you had plenty of other family here, back then?

DC*: Oh yeah.

CR*: Yeah. And have they all finished up here?

DC*: Yeah. Old people like, y'know.

CR*: Yeah.

DC*: Yeah. Even my, even my full uncle. We bury him over here [points to
spot between JC*'s house and workers' quarters] at that bottle tree.

CR*: Which one's that? [turning around]

DC*: Yeah.

CR*: Can you see him from here?

DC*: Oh, you can't see him now, too many timber.

CR*: Too many timber. Just over on that hill.

DC*: Yeah. That's the one, init?

OT*: Just straight up there.

DC*: That's the one.

CR*: Right.

DC*: Yeah. There where my full uncle died. My mother's uncle, ah brother, I
would say. Hmm.

CR*: And the rest of your family, they're all around this country too, eh?

DC*: Yeah. Them, you know, when they, some of them just like to go and
work on a different station, and all this.
CR*: Yep. Okay. Do you want to talk a bit about, about the work you did here. Like maybe from the time you were twenty, twenty onwards?

DC*: That's right. Yeah.

CR*: And you bin, you bin working for Vestey all that time?

DC*: First time. Yeah.

CR*: Up until ...? When did they stop?

DC*: Well, they, they stop this place, Vestey's, oh, wasn't only Mistake Creek. The rest of Vestey station was sold out, and given to ah, oh somebody, different mob. See like Waterloo, Limbunya, Mistake Creek, Ord River, Nicholson, Gordon Downs, Sturt Creek, Wave Hill. No, they got, they got different mob to take over that place now. Not Vestey's anymore.

CR*: Yeah.

DC*: Alright. Yeah, well, when Vestey, when Vestey had this place all this country, ah station, we used to have lot of good fun.

CR*: Yeah?

DC*: Yeah.

CR*: Good times?

DC*: Good time. Oh, plenty fun. Ride a buckjumper, or having a fun with the cattle: throw cleanskin or something. Oh plenty laugh.

CR*: Right. This was the old station wasn't it?

DC*: That one down there.

CR*: Yeah. I haven't been there yet.

DC*: Hmm. I'll show you that place.

CR*: Yeah.

DC*: Sometime if you come around again where I born in that big bloodwood tree.

CR*: Yeah? The old station?

DC*: Yeah. That where I born. I show it to whats-a-name over here? That one there? Roark.

CR*: Oh, Roark.

DC*: Yeah.

CR*: You told him about that?

DC*: Yeah.

CR*: Yeah, that's all, that's all the sort of stuff we want.

DC*: Hmm.

CR*: We gotta here all that story, so we can tell the judge all that.

DC*: Yeah. Now I was working, where? Well this is my really home, but I went for a change, I work at Waterloo station. Then from there, last I was working down WA side. Lissadell Station.

CR*: Lissadell?

DC*: Yeah.

CR*: That's another, ah, Vestey, isn't it?

DC*: No, that's for the Norton company. Alright, after that, well, eighty-two, ah, seventy-two I would say, horse fall over to me [ie on top of me] at Waterloo.

CR*: What was that?

DC*: Horse fall over to me.

CR*: Yeah.

DC*: Yeah. Up across the top. [Indicating his upper body.]

CR*: Right.

DC*: And then from there ...
CR*: What sort of damage ... did you hurt your back?
DC*: Oh, you wanta look at all my bone in that x-ray paper.
CR*: Yeah? Buggered up?
DC*: Oh, all buggered. That's why I can't sit down too long.
CR*: Yeah. You still walk around all right.
DC*: Oh, all right to walk around, but I can't stand up too long. I gotta,
y'know, lay one side. It's the one thing, I can't sleep on that mattress.
CR*: Oh.
DC*: I gotta sleep on the hard floor. Ground or something. Alright. After,
from there, ah Dr McConnell, he was in Kununurra. I went to the
hospital, then they took my x-ray. Then he, then he put me off. I'm not
allowed to work. Not with anything that I can lift it, or work with a
shovel or crowbar. Or a axe. I can't do nothing. I can't lift anything
heavy, I'm buggered. Buggered for a lifetime [ie for life].
CR*: That's no good. But up until then you'd bin working lots of jobs.
DC*: Hey?
CR*: But up until then you'd been in lots of work.
DC*: Nothing after that.
CR*: Nothing after that.
DC*: No, he put me off. Put me off on the ah, invalid pension.
CR*: Yeah. Okay, we'll just stop it there for a second.
INTERVIEW DC12

Recorded with DC*
at Mistake Creek Station, Northern Territory
April, 1993
CR*: Alright, this is [DC*] talking about the stock yard at Morton Yard in Unturun country.

DC*: Yeah, ah, no, where the yard? Here [DC* indicates using a stick to draw a diagram on the ground]. Alright, all this, all this country, oh not far off it, not far from the rail, right in the middle, all that _ [inaudible], that, kartiya call him Jibadi Spring. Alright, we used to go that far and muster all that, all that side, down to the Negri River, and up the Negri and all along that side of that Soda Spring country on top of the hill, on the side. And that, all that country, that for Morton Yard. [ie All the cattle within that area would be mustered back to Morton Yard.] And even higher up, to the Unturun, and up on top. Up on top. Black soil, limestone country. That all, that all go down to Morton Yard.

CR*: Right. So all the bullocks, from all that country, you muster 'em all up, put 'em in Morton Yard. And then what you do?

DC*: Alright. We used to brand im, and separate all the bullock together, sort of draft it, with the horses. Alright, have all the bullock separate. The next morning, have a, have about two, three bullock tailer, looking after the bullock, while we go and mustering again. That's the way we used to do it on Vesteys.

CR*: Yeah. And how many days would you be mustering before you got ...

DC*: Oh, before we finish this yard, and then we gotta go and shift to the next yard. Alright.

CR*: Yeah. How many days until you finish this yard?

DC*: Well, might be for a week.

CR*: Maybe a week.

DC*: Yeah.

CR*: Then you move on somewhere else.

DC*: Move on next yard.

CR*: Muster that country?

DC*: Muster that country, and do the same again.

CR*: And you used to muster all around Mistake Creek?

DC*: Yeah.

CR*: All this, ah, Jupanyin country? All that country as well?

DC*: Yeah.

CR*: Shady camp?

DC*: Yeah. That still for Mistake Creek country.


DC*: Yeah. Right down to Reinbar, somewhere down here.

CR*: Yeah. Down here, Reinbar?

DC*: Yeah.

CR*: Right. Did you ever hear any stories from older people who you grew up with about this country.

DC*: No. Well ...

CR*: They all worked here, this country?

DC*: Well, yeah, well when the Vestey was having this country, like, y'know, well, that time we bin on the horse and cattle. We never had any time for talking about any country, y'know. Keep working. No Saturdays off, no Sundays off. Keep working.

CR*: What about holiday time?

DC*: That's all the time you have a break.

CR*: That's the holiday time ...

DC*: You gotta take the shoe off the horses.

CR*: Yep.
DC*: Let the horses go.
CR*: Yep.

DC*: Alright, then we have holiday. Might want to go to next station, see somebody. Live with them for a week or two or something like that and come back. When the manager want us to go back to the job again, right, go back and muster plant horse, after the wet. Start shoe up [ie shoe the horses up], go and muster.

CR*: So the first job would be mustering those horses.

DC*: Yeah. Hard time, eh?

CR*: Yeah, pretty non-stop work.

DC*: True.

CR*: Yeah. So you'd only get couple of months holiday, and then you're back into it.

DC*: That's all.

CR*: Working every day.

DC*: Yeah. No, no ...

CR*: What time you get up in the morning?

DC*: Hey?

CR*: What time you get up in the morning?

DC*: One or two o'clock, mate.

CR*: Yeah?

DC*: Hey? True.

CR*: That's a bit rough.

DC*: Too hard. If you gotta do one big muster, or say you might wanta come back to the, ah have a dinner [break] out somewhere or come back to the station for, ah, I would say, back to the camp. Well, people might, we might still [be] mustering, till about after dinner [when] we come back only for supper.

CR*: Right. Gone all day.

DC*: Gone all day. So you wanta get a, y'know you wanta get a bullock? Alright, we gotta do our job, and get it. Very hard. No holiday. No Anzac Day holiday. None of them sort of business. Keep working. No public holiday either [laughs].

CR*: Yeah [laughs]. So you and _ [JC*] both born here ...

DC*: Yeah.

CR*: Both born at Old Mistake Creek.

DC*: That's right.

CR*: Both grew up together or he was a bit older than you.

DC*: Well he, older than me.

CR*: Yeah. He would've been a fair bit, ten years older?

DC*: Oh yeah. Oh, something like that. Yeah.

CR*: Did you two used to go off on footwalking holidays together?

DC*: Yeah, why?

CR*: Yeah?

DC*: Yeah [laughs].

CR*: Which places did you two walk to?

DC*: Up the river. Anywhere. Fish, hunting or something. Goanna. Whatever.

CR*: Up, ah, Unturun country?

DC*: No, not that far.

CR*: Nup. How about Kurtheru country?

DC*: Oh, all that way, right, from here to Limbunya we used to go.

CR*: Yeah.
DC*: Yeah. Footwalk. Alright. From here to Waterloo station.
CR*: Yeah.
DC*: Anywhere. Yeah.
CR*: So you’d go up, ah, Bareback Creek?
DC*: Yeah.
CR*: Go up the Stirling River then ...?
DC*: Yeah. Ah, that’s the main one. Well, that Stirling River that take you to Limbunya Station.
CR*: Oh right. So you’d footwalk all the way up there.
CR*: Right. So you’d go past Reinbar and all those places?
DC*: Yeah.
CR*: Okay, we’ll pause it there for a sec.
INTERVIEW KT13

Recorded with KT*
at Mistake Creek Station, Northern Territory
April, 1993
Okay, it's Thursday, I'm talking to KT* about, ah, he's going to talk to us about um, how he, how he moved to Nicholson and worked for Vesteys. Okay.* [KT*].

Yeah. Work for Nicholson. Bin work, very hard, y'know, not easy work, not easy work, yeah. Horse. Y'know horse? We bin always hobble im. Put the hobble on im.

CR*: Put the hobble on im.

KT*: Yeah, horse. No paddock job. [ie There were no fenced paddocks.]

CR*: Right.

KT*: [Laughs] Hard work that.

CR*: Yeah. You gotta chase 'em in the morning?

KT*: Yeah. Horse-tailer bin aide get the horse in the morning. Might be about, get up about three o'clock, get up, get the horse, come back. Bring im back all la camp. When I was little one, y'know. I always get up and tail im out them horses there.

CR*: Yuwai.

KT*: Tail im out _ [inaudible].

CR*: How long, how high were you?

KT*: Oh, about that high. [KT* indicates height with hand.]

CR*: Yeah, maybe ten or eleven.

KT*: Yeah.

CR*: Were you riding a horse back then?

KT*: Yeah.

CR*: Yeah.

KT*: Ride a horse.

CR*: They teach you, they throw you up there pretty early?

KT*: Yeah. Make me ride a horse. Don't matter that [it was] wild horse too, y'know. Wild buggers. They chuck me on there. Teach me properly. Hmm.

CR*: And this was, this was working at Nicholson Station?

KT*: Yeah. This through the Nicholson Station.

CR*: Did you, who took you, who took you there? Was that your father took you to Nicholson?

KT*: Yeah. Work, worked there now.

CR*: And your father? Which place was he born at?

KT*: Inverway.

CR*: He was born Inverway.

KT*: Yeah.

CR*: And your mother?

KT*: Mother.

CR*: Same?

KT*: Same.

CR*: And they both finished up [ie died] at Nicholson?


CR*: Right.

KT*: Buried 'em right there.

CR*: Buried 'em right there at Nicholson.

KT*: Yeah.

CR*: Okay, let's stop there for the time being.
INTERVIEW KT14

Recorded with KT*
at Mistake Creek Station, Northern Territory
April, 1993
CR*: Ah, this is _[KT*] and he's talking about how he worked for Mistake Creek when he was working for Ord River Station, for Vestey.

KT*: Yeah. Work la Ord River. After that they bin push me up here, la Spring Creek. Start work from there now. Mustering round, y'know. Bring the cattle in. Bring in the calf. Just watch im. Not put im in the yard, watch im all the time. Hard work.

CR*: Yeah.

KT*: Hard work really. Hard work. And we watch 'em. In the morning, when he, oh _ out now, just take im, tail im. Tail im out in the bush, feed im round. Might be about ten o'clock, or might be twelve o'clock, we take im into water, water 'em. Give it them cattle, drink. [ie Give the cattle water to drink.]

CR*: Oh, yeah.

KT*: Hmm [laughs]. Hard work.

CR*: Yeah, very hard work.

KT*: Hmm. Give 'em a good drink. And feed im round again. Take im back la camp. Well, we watch im.

CR*: You watch?

KT*: Yeah.

CR*: Never stop that ...

KT*: Hey?

CR*: Always working.


CR*: Full time job?

KT*: Oh, long job, yeah. No more this holidays, oh this time now. This time they easy now.

CR*: Yeah, yuwai.

KT*: Easy work now.

CR*: Yeah. So this was when you were working Mistake Creek as well?

KT*: Yeah

CR*: Yeah. Who else was working here, Mistake Creek, back in your day?

KT*: Yeah, all here. All these young fellas here.

CR*: All these young fellas?

KT*: Yeah.

CR*: All ah, ...

KT*: _[DC*]

CR*: _[DC*]

KT*: Yeah.

CR*: He [DC*] was here?

KT*: Yeah.

CR*: Yeah._ [JC*]?

KT*: Yeah.

CR*: Yeah.

KT*: Yeah. All bin here, working.

CR*: Right. You all work together?

KT*: Yeah.

CR*: Right. You still do all the songs and ceremonies back then?

KT*: Nup. Finished.

CR*: No? Okay.

KT*: Well that's the work we bin having before, well we bin start working for Vestey.

CR*: Yeah. Vestey too much work?
KT*: Too much work.
CR*: You only could do that stuff on your holiday?
KT*: Yeah.
CR*: Right. Go off, bush.
KT*: Yeah. Go, 'nother place. We always have im holiday longa Ord River.
CR*: Ord River?
KT*: Holiday there.
CR*: Right.
KT*: Go back to Nicholson and find work again.
CR*: Yeah. Yuwai. Okay, is that all you want to say about Mistake Creek?
KT*: Yeah.
CR*: Okay. Stop there.
CR*: This is, ah, this is _[KT*] again, talking about Munpu country and how
he worked there, when he was working for Nicholson Station.
KT*: Yeah. All the coachers, y’know. Big mob of coachers. Quiet one. We
had to drive im up and leave im longa spring country. _[inaudible].
Some tailers [ie young workers] hold im there. Us fellas all mustering.
Get all the, more cattle in. Bring im in, put im in the coachers.
CR*: Yeah? The gulches?
KT*: Yeah.
CR*: What are they?
KT*: Coachers. They mob of quiet cattle, y’kow.
CR*: Oh right. Quiet cattle.
KT*: Yeah. They go chase ‘em [the newly mustered cattle] into the coachers
now.
CR*: Right.
KT*: Very hard.
CR*: Yeah? Pretty hard work.
KT*: Yeah. Just gallop around them rocks. Rough country. Doesn’t matter
(if) shoe come out from horse. And you gotta start, shoe im up again.
CR*: You knew how to shoe a horse and everything?
KT*: Yeah. You gotta shoe im up horse, you can’t gallop im without a shoe.
CR*: No.
KT*: No.
CR*: Too stony?
KT*: Too stony [laughs].
CR*: Right, so you’d come from, come from, ah, Nicholson Station ...
KT*: Yeah.
CR*: And you’d set up a stockcamp so you could muster Munpu country?
KT*: Yeah.
CR*: Right.
KT*: We always going down camping that Munpu.
CR*: Whereabouts did you have your stock camp?
KT*: Right on the Munpu.
CR*: Right in the Munpu country?
KT*: Yeah. We had a yard there.
CR*: Yeah. What was the whitefella name for that, for that yard.
KT*: Huh?
CR*: Did it have a kartiya name? That yard?
KT*: Kartiya ...
CR*: That stock yard. Did it have a kartiya name or no name?
KT*: No, just a yard there.
CR*: Just a yard.
KT*: Yeah. Y’know, you bring the cattle in and you put a yard in there.
Longa that yard.
KT*: And bullock, you cut im out and watch im outside.
CR*: Yuwai.
KT*: That’s hard work.
CR*: Yeah.
KT*: [Laughs] And you tail the bullock, you tail im out. The meatwork
bullock. You tail im out after that watch im. And you gotta go brand up
now, calf now. Brand im up.
CR*: Brand im up.
KT*: Get im bronce horse. Y’know bronce horse?
CR*: Yep.
KT*: Work im the brone horse. Pull im up calf like _ [inaudible] [laughs].
CR*: So you’d get all the cattle from Munpu country ...
KT*: Yeah.
CR*: Take im all back to Nicholson?
KT*: Yeah. Bin have bullock, we bin alla take im back. Meatwork bullock.
CR*: Yeah.
KT*: The cow and calf we leave im behind.
CR*: Yeah.
KT*: Round im up and leave im behind.
CR*: Yuwai.
KT*: Only bullock we alla bin take im. Meatwork bullock.
KT*: Watch im that meatwork bullock right through to Nicholson.
CR*: Yeah.
KT*: Might be from Munpu only two days crossing.
CR*: Okay.
INTERVIEW TB16

Recorded with TB*
at Mistake Creek Station, Northern Territory
April, 1993
CR*: Okay I'm talking to _ [TB*] and he's just going to talk about when he
was born at Inverway and how he grew up and started working for
Vestey at Nicholson.

TB*: I bin born in lnverway and I bin little baby and ride around to Gordon
Downs side, right back to Nicholson. That's the place my father and
mother bin stop, back there. And they was stop there and get a job, little
bit, cutting wood. My father was cutting wood. I remember that. And
my mother was working [with the] nanny-goat. Milking goat. Right,
and after that, I bin grown up now, bin start work, la stock work, for
Vestey. Musterin' the cattle, and branding and all that. And I bin go
from there. And I bin only work la Nicholson station. Work all over.
Right through to the Territory too. But I bin big man now. I didn't
know what I can do now. Go on all over and work like a, like a man.
Like a whitefella [could] do, y'know. And, ah, I bin go from there to
Inverway again, go back la my old place where I was born and work
there for couple of years. And from there bin go droving then. Go
droving down, Brunjili [approximate spelling] way. Long way. Go
travelling. Then men get sick and tired for [ie of] watching bullock.
That's, we had money, gone, ah, like that time. Vestey bin turn around
to pay us now. But before bin work, no, no money, only ration. Water.
Holiday got us flour, tea and sugar, tobacca. And no tin of tobacca,
only tea and sugar and nicky-nicky tobacca. And baking soda, creme of
tartar, and soda. Baking soda and creme of tartar and soda. And from
there bit of corned beef and take im holiday. And get a material from
store and take him for cockrag. Wear him. [Pause.] That's all I bin do.
And I bin work longa bore, right la Nicholson Station. I know how to
pull that rod and casing. I bin know everything. One man, old bloke,
bin learn me really to work la bore. I bin do the bore I never lose any
casing, rod. And I'm still here today, I'm getting too old now. Pension
off.

CR*: Okay.
INTERVIEW TB17

Recorded with TB*
at Mistake Creek Station, Northern Territory
April, 1993
CR*: Okay, this is [TB*] again and he's going to talk a bit about Mistake Creek Station and the work he used to do here.

TB*: I bin up here at the side the old station. I bin ask old, ah man name Bill Hamill, manager for this Mistake Creek station. I went up and talk 'I want a job please'. He give me the job. I not bin bludging for anybody to work. I bin go do my work for my own feed. Right, and we bin shoe im horse, and go and start mustering the Kurturtu way. And Bill Hamill [was] the man was [ie who did] give me job. Manager for Mistake Creek. And ah, I bin work around here for a couple of years. Me and _ [DC*].

CR*: Okay.
INTERVIEW TB18

Recorded with TB*
at Mistake Creek Station, Northern Territory
April, 1993
TB*: From there we bin come back here and gone for race [ie go to the race meeting]. Where the best race, Negri the one. First [ie best] race. First race course: Negri. We had a race there, horse race, bullock riding, buckjump riding, they bin have 'em. I never ride any. I bin too frighten to fall off [laughs]. Right, from there, and I bin start, go back to Nicholson again. My, my manager bin want me back to Nicholson. Go back for work. That for bore job, now. He never have any good man like me for bore. I bin work, everything. I bin go right up longa Margaret River, he's the Vestey station. I work around there too. All over. Right up to Waterloo. Right around Mistake Creek, Ord River. All them bore. Right up la Nicholson country. All the bore. Too many bore. Right up Flora Valley, Sturt Creek, Gordon Down. That all the Vestey place we bin work all that. And I'm retired now. And I'm getting too old, pension off.

CR*: Okay.
INTERVIEW TB19

Recorded with TB*
at Mistake Creek Station, Northern Territory
April, 1993
CR*: This is [TB*] talking about, ah, mustering around Munpu country.

TB*: Righto. [TB*] talking now. Well, we bin come from Nicholson. That country not bin up around the station. There’s that Kirkimbie Station is, is the new place. But Nicholson bin up to Munpu country, right up all around the Mayiyung. That’s the Mayung. He the night camp that one side this side. Right in middle ‘em. And we bin muster round there. That wild country bin that country, wild cattle. We bin [do] all this mustering from Nicholson. He, he not bin up [ie built], that Kirkimbie station yet. He bin Birrundudu place, before. And that’s the new building this time. New house now. And they got [their] own house there and they mustering from there now. Nicholson is finished now.
INTERVIEW RR20

Recorded with RR*
at Mistake Creek Station, Northern Territory
April, 1993
CR*: This is [RR*] and she's going to be talking about working for old Mistake Creek and new Mistake Creek Station.

RR*: When I bin here, when I [inaudible]. I bin working. All day right through. Tea time, dinner time. Finish, and wash all the plate. After that one we go down, bogey then, and after that one we come back, work again. Smoko time. Right through [to] supper [time]. Then after we wash im all the plate and go back again. Alright, that the finish. Dark again. Alright. Righto, we working right through. After that one, have im lie down. Sleep time. We go back for sleep now. Plate finish im, everything do, y'gotta do. For man. Alright, alright, we used to sweep im, everything, room, for man. Clean im kitchen, everything. Big house. Do im everything proper. Right after that one we go back wash all the plate and go back then. Finish. That's right. Anymore? Right, after that one we bin comin' here then, now, new station now. Shift im, when I bin here. I greying, little bit. From old station I bin come. Along here. Get properly now olgaman now. Finish work now. I bin do the working, cooking, wash all the clothes for man, do im everything, and do im that laundry over there [RR* glances towards building]. Mine. That kitchen. Over there. That over there. Ah, that's the laundry. Camp. Washing all the clothes. Hang im up, on the line. After that I bin do im ironing. Right, put im on. Make the ironing, kitchen, do im everything for. Alright, get im 'nother mob clothes from line. Pull im up, iron im, finish, and take im back longa big house. Put im in the cupboard, everything for man and lady. That's all my job when I bin working. La laundry and _ [inaudible]. Get my dinner and go back. After ten hour we come back again, do im everything, la laundry. Do im every, do im, washing, getting sheet, now bags. Finish. Sweep im. Keep, leave im out, clean. Good. Make im ready, for washing clothes. Right, I come back for, get all the supper now. Go back again. Go back home, la camp.

CR*: Who was in the camp?

RR*: Meself. _ [inaudible]. Yeah. At the camp.

CR*: Any old people up there?

RR*: Hey?

CR*: Any old people up there?

RR*: Old people, big mob. Oh, big mob of people.

CR*: Who looked after the old people?

RR*: My husband and I bin look after them. My son, daughter, everything._ [DC*] and Riley too; he's young. Tupala bin by me. And _ [inaudible] bin do im, little bit washing the plate, helping onefeller girl. I call im name him? Neeta. Neeta._ [DC*], y'know when him bin kid, y'know, him bin follow me, _ [inaudible] the bush for yawul, we bin get him 'bout goanna, and fish, everything with _ [DC*]. Little one y'know, _ [DC*]. He young fella. I bin young, y'know, no kid yet, me. No kid.

CR*: You showed him how to do all that?

RR*: Yeah. We bin have im _ [DC*], _ [inaudible]. Teach him, everything, for goanna. And, old station, y'know. Old station. Only one kid we bin have im, _ [DC*]. I bin grow im up, _ [DC*]. Each time I bin belt im him, and make him, oh, he can help im up la shoulder. Look after him proper way. [Like a] Little brother. 'Come back; come here to mummy' [I would say to him]. Alright, I bin leave im then, Mistake Creek, old station. Alright, I bin leave im there now.

CR*: What about the big flood?
RR*: Oh.
CR*: Tell us about the big flood.
RR*: Oh, the water bin running properly [high]. _ [inaudible]. Only _ [DC*] there, he bin look after im mother and father. And we bin walk away 'Come on we get im up all the swag, going up camping la Two-mile'.
Just go mile over there. We bin camp. Swag wet, everything. We bin camping there all day, la Two-mile. Alright we bin leaving there, when him [the river] go down, we go back for _ [DC*]. Camp properly _ [DC*] there, look after mother and father and grandpa, and grannie belonga him. Alright.
CR*: Big mob of people there when the flood came?
RR*: Yeah. Big mob. Big mob of boy and girl. We bin have im big, good worker too. Righto, go back. Everything dust. That flour and sugar, everything, look around. What one, I tell you we bin eating. No food, y’know. That’s all. _ [inaudible] for clothes. No, _ [inaudible]. Dirty y’know. ‘Oh, we’ll have to clean im’. That [for] the whitefella too.
Maluga [ie the boss]. Too _ [inaudible], go wash im the clothes. All mud. All the mud. We bin work. Kitchen. One man working the kitchen, one only working la big house. I bin working that laundry, wash all blanket, all the mud.
CR*: Big job?
RR*: Big job, properly. Big job. Properly, we bin look after im. Washing.
Finish.
CR*: That’s when they moved from that old ...?
RR*: Old station, we bin leaving there, alright, I bin move back here now, la this place. New building.
CR*: Still working for Vesteyes?
RR*: Yeah, we bin working for Vestey yet.
CR*: They pay you any money?
RR*: Yeah.
CR*: Yeah? They paid you bit of money back then?
RR*: Init _ [DC*]? They bin pay ‘em. We bin, all the old people get im pay day, every day. All bin get im money.
CR*: That’s what, before that, any?
RR*: Yeah. We bin get im. We bin get pay every day, get money.
DC*: Nineteen seventy one.
CR*: Nineteen seventy one.
RR*: Yeah.
CR*: Nineteen seventy one you start getting money? Before the flood, any money then?
DC*: Yeah.
RR*: Yeah we bin get im money. We bin get a money and clothes. That washaway bin take him, him bin take it away everything, clothes, dirty one. You know, some clean. They been take it away. All the fowl, nanny-goat gone. All bin gone, everything. Alright, only one dog, bin hung up longa tree. Not my dog. Who bin that one, _ [DC*]?
DC*: _ [inaudible].
RR*: Who _ [inaudible]. Alright, he bin hung up la tree. Leave him there.
That time him bin go down, when him bin go down, that water, now.
Running. Alright. Alright? Finish?
CR*: Yeah.
INTERVIEW PW21

Recorded with PW*
at Amanbidji Station, Northern Territory
November, 1992
CR*: Yeah, I think this is working ... So, umm, so you used to work as a stockman?

grow up Waterloo station, grow up there and learn to ride a horse, when
I was a lad, about eighteen. Start break im in horse. Go out in the
stockcamp and mustering cattle. Work for them white people y'know.

CR*: Yeah.

PW*: Go out there and muster im la bullock and kill one of them bullock
y'know. We get im all the time. Not like they used to be, nowaday.
BTEC them y'know. But we just kill im might be five or six hundred.
Send im to meatwork at Wyndham. And half we leave im in the
paddock for next lot y'know. All that y'know and next time when we
get there might be, weaner, send him up to Queensland. Allen Spring or
somewhere up there. And cows and calf too y'know what they need
over there. Allen Spring might be, some cattle over there been dying
y'know. What [ie when] they want a help from Vestey y'know well
there, Vestey help them to [ie by] send im, cows and calf over there.
And, next time might do you bin send them cows and calf there, well
they send im over horse from there. Might be hundred head y'know.
For Vestey y'know what Vestey been selling [to] Waterloo or Wave
Hill like that. They send im horse back there then. Some unbroken
horse there get him up in ahh, somewhere, sandstone and all that
country y'know.

CR*: Yeah.

PW*: Wild horse y'know. Brumby.

CR*: Yeah.

PW*: Trap im and there, take im to station and handle him there. Make a
quiet [horse] and, after there, send him over to every Vestey [Station]
y'know. Might be Wave Hill got two hundred, Waterloo, Limbunya all
that y'know. And all hand-broken y'know. We break im in at Waterloo,
Limbunya. Bit hard y'know.

CR*: Yeah.

PW*: That day was hard y'know, we bin working, when I was young fella.
But no money that day because, we didn't get any money yet y'know.
We didn't have somebody else we bin just no Welfare that day, because
we work for, station y'know. And might be couple of years time,
Welfare bin come out, that's our boss y'know, to help us. Come out he
tell us 'Oh well, might be next year you bloke get money then. We'll
send the money.' Well might be one year time, he come out ...
[inaudible]. Station manager used to tell us, 'Righto you boys, we ...
you fellas gotta get pay now.' They give us the money now; pay. But
and that before in the early day we bin sort of like a SLAVE y'know.

CR*: Yeah?

PW*: Work like a slave, yeah. That's true. 'Only little bit of ration for
holiday'. That's the lot. And whatever clothes, hat, boot, we used to do
im. Because that 'You can't take him'. Put im back in the store only
and whatever clothes you had that your good one y'know. Roll im up la
that swag while he get him pen and write him over and over the swag.
All they got now [laughs]. That was real hard y'know. After that when
that money bin come out we bin alright that time y'know because we
had somebody backstopping Welfare y'know. We bin alright now but
they didn't take im back them clothes and hat and boot like that
y'know. We used to do anything now.
CR*: Who was your boss back then? Who, who did you work for?
PW*: I bin working for, Mister lo:ong time ago when I was lad, about eighteen, for Mr Joe Case. He come from America that old man. That was hard day that time. And after when that, old man bin go away, another bloke bin come. We bin alright now, but no money then that time y’know. We only bin get money on, ahh not too long [ago] because, this ahh Don, ahh I forget that young fella’s name. Don was there anyway young fella, married bloke. Robertson. Don Robertson. He bin there and paid, money for them people y’know for girls and boy. After when him bin ... after that day that that time I mean, sorry, that year, when him bin come out like, say this year bin working next year time, I bin work there for short time I went to, Darwin then. Y’know longa Darwin, what’s name, Leprosarium y’know. Stopped there for more than a twenty or thirty or forty years. Yeah I bin young fella then go out there. I was young fella stop there. Some of them manager I don’t know who lot bin there now ...

CR*: And then you, then you came back here did you?
PW*: I come back to Waterloo. After now, no I didn’t come back to Waterloo straight I went to, down this way la Katherine way down y’know, _ [inaudible]. Moroak Station. Old Les McFarlane bin manager down that way y’know, near Roper River. Worked there for, three year for that bloke. He bin alright. And after come to ahh, Manbulloo. Vestey station again. Work there. Work [for] one bloke y’know, breaking in horse. I bin sort of off-sider for him. [Then, go on] Holiday. But I didn’t like to stop there. I went to Willeroo. Stopped there for five year. Wasn’t Vestey but other bloke. No Vestey, [they] bin sold all that place now. Five year there. And after finish up there and I come to Manbulloo. Vestey station again. Work there. Work [for] one bloke y’know, breaking in horse. I bin sort of off-sider for him. [Then, go on] Holiday. But I didn’t like to stop there. I went to Willeroo. Stopped there for five year. Wasn’t Vestey but other bloke. No Vestey, [they] bin sold all that place now. Five year there. And after finish up there and I come to Timber Creek and hang around there. Y’know that shop there Timber Creek not this, farther downward, up here y’know [PW* indicates, using a stick to draw a diagram on the ground].

CR*: Yeah.
PW*: I used to give [a] hand there, [to the] carpenter there. Put that pub right there we ... Didn’t have to get im money y’know to get me plane to, come up here now. And that bloke was alright too, and him bin ask me: ‘When you finish here where you gotta go?’ ‘I’m going to, Kildurk.’ ‘Alright long way him but when you finish this house I’ll pay you fare.’ He bin alright that bloke. And I came here, longa plane, stop here for couple of week I went to Waterloo station. This bloke bin ask me: ‘Oh you you one of them Waterloo boy?’ ‘Yeah.’ ‘Oh well you’d better come back where’s your swag?’ ‘I left him to [ie at] Kildurk.’ ‘Oh well I’ll give you horse, pack-horse to go down and pick your swag.’ I had to come back and pick all my stuff here in the swag. Went back and start work there again. And I bin finish up, ringin’ on SEVENTY TWO [ie 1972]. That long time back [ie ago] eh?

CR*: Seventy two?
PW*: Yeah.
CR*: Nineteen seventy two. Yeah.
PW*: Nineteen seventy two I bin finish up. I said: ‘Oh well no use working again I’m little bit not too good now bit too old y’know.’

CR*: Yeah.
PW*: Seventy two I finish up. Give those ringing job and grog job, same time with that stockman job and get that [ie give that] [away as] rubbish y’know. Not work. I bin reckon, y’know, ah no use go back longa drink
again because [it’s worth] nothing. You only waste money. That’s true y’know.

CR*: Yeah.

PW*: You gotta get something [eg] tucker. Money for your food or a clothes or something like that. ‘Cause I bin alright till he pulled that thing [ie grog] away, but other people don’t like it little way. [ie I was okay about Amanbidji being declared a Dry community but some others weren’t.] Might be they reckon ... might be too good for them eh? But not for me mate. I wouldn’t go back to that grog. To save money y’know. Otherwise if you keep on the grog you go on to somebody: ‘I’ll ask for money.’ They might get, y’know, don’t like you. I had to leave that money.

CR*: So you don’t drink?

PW*: I don’t drink now.

CR*: You ever smoke?

PW*: No I smoke that’s why I ahh, [laughs] I eat tucker or smoke something like that. That was alright y’know.

CR*: Actually, you want one? [CR* offers PW* a cigarette.]

PW*: Yeah thank you. That not too bad y’know. But we bin look, oh sorry nother thing, nother thing we look, yesterday. Yesterday we bin look longa thing mate [CR* lights PW*’s smoke] ... Hmm thank you. We look at that smoke business la video yesterday too. Two bloke bin come out here, show that [begins drawing with stick], sorta that, made one thing y’know. Made one thing, what human being made one but, rubber something like that y’know. But it was all that heart and lung all that thing like that.

CR*: Oh yeah. These health workers were they?

PW*: Yeah.

CR*: Healthworkers?

PW*: Healthworker yeah. But I bin I bin say: ‘Well I just couldn’t help y’know ‘cause I’m old man.’ [laughs] I’m old man I used to be ohh I-I gotta give that thing away long time eh? But too late.

CR*: Too late to give it away.

PW*: Yeah. You can’t argue. Can’t live all the time eh? You gotta be going some time eh?

CR*: Yeah. That’s true.

PW*: Well nothing more mate I can tell you. That’s about [all the] story I can tell you.
INTERVIEW PW22

Recorded with PW*
at Amanbidji Station, Northern Territory
November, 1992
So, umm, who did you learn to ride a horse from? Who taught you to ride a horse and all that sort of stuff?

My father. Your father.

My father taught me how to ride horses, tell me what to do y'know. See [ie show] me all that thing y'know. My father he bin passed away. He come from Borroloola way.

Yeah?

Yeah my father from Borroloola yeah.

So what, what was he doing over this way? Was he ... of second early day, bringing a mob of bullock and ... You might've been ahh I don't think you bin see that, story book that history book longa Durack y'know.

Yeah.

Durack bin come along with a mob of cattle, to bring im all longa Argyle station, Auvergne all that country y'know. And my father bin working for bloke called, umm ol-old Ollie and his father old Jimmy Degan y'know. And Jimmy Degan bin working for, ol' Tom Degan. This his boss, white man. Bring a mob of cattle to Waterloo. Right, stop there. I wasn't born yet anyway. And might be my father bin get that old woman my mother and, brought me out into the world anyway.

Yeah. So and your umm ... so your Dad came over here and he got married to his wife who is a Kildurk woman was she?

Yeah ... She lived here?

Old Nora y'know. So him bin find me and my sister, but [she] passed away anyway. But that old man bin, sort of champion rider, and taught me how to ride horse.

Yeah. So he taught you.

Mmm and he was a rough old man too y'know. When I got thrown from horse, he used to get a whip and, flog me round too, y'know. Put me in the horse again: 'That's not the way my boy. Get on that horse again. You never learn when you get chucked off and frightened. You must get on again have another go.' So I had to go y'know, all the time like that, when [ie and then] I bin come champion rider y'know. But my old man bin sort of proud [but] he didn't say anything about [it].

So you became a champion rider too?

Yeah.

Did you win any prizes?

No I bin ahh, Linnekar [Station], long time ago when we showed there y'know. I won that bull-riding there. When I was little fella y'know [laughs]. And saddle bronc. I was a good allover [ie all-round] man anyway. But so, not allover man now, finish. I'm getting old.

And did you ...

But I know how to ...

... teach other people yourself? Did you teach ...

Hey?

Did you teach some people how to ride horses and stuff?

Yeah. One bloke la Bulla. You know that _ [JL*]?

Yeah. _ [JL*].

I taught him I show him to ride ride a horse. So, you can ask him [when] you get over there [ie Bulla] again.
PW*: So learn im to ride a horse so him come good rider again. Another bloke Tony anyway he's longa Katherine hospital now. I bin learn that two young fella how to ride horse. And when I went to Darwin [laughs] when I went to Darwin to Leprosarium now, so that two bloke bin come in to champion rider at Waterloo station then. And when I come back I see that two bloke bin ride a horse. I didn't say anything about [it]. So that fella reckon, that two bloke reckon: 'Oh, that old man bin show me how to ride horse._ [PW*] y'know he's over there.' So this young fella here again [are taught in turn]. They right.

CR*: So all the young fellas here now they're still riding horses and stuff?

PW*: Yeah, young fella, yeah.

CR*: And it's your own cattle station now, isn't it?

PW*: Yeah. Own cattle station. Blackfellow station, yeah. Just like a Mistake Creek. And here, just for awhile might be for one year y'know, next year they give it back [under the Land Rights Act] to the people.

CR*: So everyone's pretty happy about that are they?

PW*: Yeah they happy yeah. Well they got, twelve thousand cattle there. Twelve thousand. But we bin buy some, three hundred, three hundred something from that blackfella station y'know. We got im here more but our boss, ah, that ATSIC bloke in ah, Katherine. Big boss, y'know, got money?

CR*: Yeah. PW*: Well when he come 'round might be some time might be we ask him again: 'Well ... buy some more cattle, to get this place up again.' But he's up already anyway. People bin here, they bin put the place right down. Nothing bin good. Behind [our backs], white bloke bin come out, them stock inspector, shooting down lotta cattle round here. Well what they bin nine thousand cattle they bin shoot out to Leichhardt. Outside the paddock. And so we bin put the block on them y'know stop im; not to shoot im no more: 'If you want to shoot im well you can come out then. Don't just go in and, drive in and shoot im. This blackfella station you gotta come and ask people y'know. We tell you what to do.' But nothing much now. But they can't get these cattle la this along this river y'know. When the chopper fly around them cattle run down to the river in, y'know, scrub. They got no chance to shoot im, y'know. They can't find ... they can shoot im out la flat y'know. But we gotta fence along there now, along that river. Up there all that inside cattle, they can't touch 'em now. And them outside cattle they might be get im, shoot im bye and bye.

CR*: So the outside cattle ...

PW*: Yeah but nothing much outside there. Oh some cattle running round out-ahh-inside the paddock. When ahh dry season we drive down get im them killer y'know?

CR*: Yeah.

PW*: Save them in the paddock. Whatever stranger [ie cattle from other stations] come in like y'know but, we don't kill im we don't shoot im. No we just, let im through the gate, let im go out la his own boundary. Y'know we get into trouble y'know. No that's the way. Just like they bin have trouble at Mistake Creek too I think. That Waterloo manager went out there and asking what they bin do, something bad. But I wasn't there but [is so] I can't tell you if it true anyway. I wasn't there.

CR*: Is that a blackfella station too? Mistake Creek?
PW*: Yeah, blackfella yeah. Them Land Council bin get them bloke [ie the Mistake Creek claimants] back y'know. And might be next year ahh two weeks time they gotta go back have another meeting. And he'll be okay for them then.

CR*: Actually I'm going, I'm going out there next week.

PW*: Init?

CR*: Yeah.

PW*: Next week eh?

CR*: Yeah. Meeting up with someone in Kununurra.
INTERVIEW MP23

Recorded with MP*
at Amanbidji Station, Northern Territory
November, 1993
CR*: So Harry Raymond bin ...
MP*: Boss.
CR*: ... manager at Mistake Creek?
MP*: Yeah.
CR*: And he bin married to your sister?
MP*: Yeah [person's name], this one.
CR*: Oh [person's name, this one?
NP*: Kununurra init?
MP*: _ [person's name]. No, Kununurra. Yeah. _ [person's name]
CR*: Ah, right. _ [RR*].
MP*: Yeah.
NP*: Yeah.
MP*: _ [inaudible] got him Harry Raymond now, _ [person's name] and
brother mine too, this one, _ [DP*] [laughs]. Tupala used to camp
im there longa him, longa Harry Raymond, you know. Yeah:
NP*: I got girl belonga him.
MP*: Which one?
NP*: That girl bla _ [person's name].
MP*: No, belonga old man, what you call him, I forget his name now. No
more la _ [person's name].
NP* and MP* talk in Ngarinyman for a minute or so to resolve this
matter.]
CR*: Alright, you bin longa Mistake Creek?
MP*: Yeah, I bin working now, there. Alright, they bin put me longa
house. I bin working house now, I bin working all day now. Me
single yet. I bin sit down. Alright, they bin go take him
Wangkalanga, Flora Valley. My old man bin go too. And _ [PL*]
mob. _ [PL*] jingarim they bin take him. Alright, he bin tell him
there now, he bin tell him for me. He bin tell him _ [PL*]: ‘Alright,
when you go back, yuntupala gotta sit down now. My girl I give
you’. He bin tell him like that. Alright, Old man bin come back,
from half-way. Him bin come back la Mistake Creek. Right, him
bin tell im me, old man bin tell im me now: ‘Yuntupala, _ [PL*],
gotta sit down,’ he bin tell im me.
CR*: Oh right. You two married?
MP*: Yeah. ‘You sit down _ [PL*]’. Alright, we bin sit down now: _
[PL*] bin come back. Mintupala bin alla sit down now. Him bin
come back. They bin start working now. Working time. Mintupala
bin sit down all day now, working. Him bin take me la stock camp
too.
CR*: Yeah? _ [PL*] take you?
MP*: Yeah. He bin take me longa stock-camp.
CR*: You bin working longa stock-camp?
MP*: Yeah. We used to go all around longa, follow im creek ...
CR*: What sort of work you do la stock camp?
MP*: Cook job.
CR*: Cook?
MP*: Yeah.
CR*: Oh right. You make him all that bread and cook im beef?
MP*: Yeah. Mintupala, my grannie, Warlki, he used to take im me, you
know, I bin help im olgaman.
CR*: Oh, right. You bin help that old woman?
MP*: Yeah. My grannie.
CR*: And you rode a horse too?
MP*: Yeah, I bin ride a horse too.
CR*: Yeah? Did you do any droving job?
MP*: Drovelling, nothing. Ah, we used to take im bullock too.
CR*: That cook job?
MP*: Yeah, we bin alla go, all round now, mustering too.
CR*: You mustering too? You do that job, or you cooking?
MP*: Cooking.
NP*: No.
MP*: Cooking job. He never let him me, _ [PL*] never let him me go.
Alright, we bin go back la station. My father bin gardener. Alright,
[AP*] bin little one, tupala, _ [PP*], and this one [indicating NP*]
him bin take im out la bush.
CR*: _ [NP*]? Out bush?
MP*: Bringal bin take him away.
CR*: Who take him away?
MP*: Bringal.
CR*: Bringal?
MP*: Yeah. Here him finished.
CR*: Oh, he finished up now?
MP*: Yeah. Long time. Husband bla him, poor bugger [that sister of]
mine.
NP*: Old man.
CR*: He bin your husband _ [NP*]?
[NP* and MP* talk in Ngarinyman.]
MP*: Alright, mintupala bin sit down now, for good. Alright, Harry
Rayment bin finish, poor bugger, now old man bin go away now,
come away la Newry. Him bin take him _ [AP*], _ [PP*], brother
[ie GP*]; he bin take im altogether la Newry, now. My mother bin
go Derby now, hospital.
CR*: She go to Derby?
MP*: Yeah, hospital.
CR*: Oh, that hospital. What wrong with her?
MP*: He bin have im leprosy. He bin go away this one too. Last one, my
brother, half-caste, keep him longa Watikurru, Jarapan. My brother.
CR*: Yeah.
MP*: We got a half-caste [brother] you know?
CR*: Oh, right. He still alive?
MP*: Yeah, still alive! He big, big man now. He got son too.
CR*: Oh, right. He longa Kununurra?
MP*: No, longa Jaraban, that way, Fitzroy way.
CR*: Fitzroy way?
MP*: Longa Fitzroy this side now. Jaraban. Him bin tell him he gotta
come up, see im mipala. _ [inaudible].
CR*: Oh right, so you finished work at Mistake Creek?
MP*: Yeah. Finish.
CR*: And then ...?
MP*: Alright, we bin working longa new, new station now.
CR*: New Mistake Creek?
MP*: No, old Mistake Creek.
CR*: Old Mistake Creek?
MP*: Yeah. I bin go Derby hospital. No, no, mother bin come back, first
time. Mother come back, longa old station. Brother bin go from
here. Two of 'em bin come up, see mother. Alright, when I bin go
stock camp, behind [me] [ie after I left] they bin kill im mine
[mother]. Blackfella bin no good, you know, for old people.
CR*: Yeah?
MP*: That country.
CR*: Yeah? How come?
MP*: They bin do something longa olgaman mine. When I bin come back, I bin keep im sick one, now. Finish. [ie She died.] From there, me now I bin go Derby. I bin stop there now. My mother, I bin lose him, I bin longa Derby now. I bin go Derby now. Alright, my father bin finished la Newry they bin tell me, when I bin longa Derby.

CR*: Oh.

MP*: Brother bin there too. My brother. This lot bin lose him.

NP*: [inaudible].

MP*: From there, I bin come back from Derby, longa Ord River. Got him aeroplane we bin come back. I bin finished longa Derby, now I bin come back longa Ord River. Got aeroplane. Hamill bin boss.

CR*: Which one?

NP*: Hamill.

CR*: Hammond?

MP*: Billy Hamill.

CR*: Billy Hammond?

MP*: Hamill.

CR*: Hamill?

MP*: Yeah.

CR*: Billy Hamill. At Ord River?

MP*: Yeah. He good man too.

CR*: So you come back?

MP*: Come back longa new station now.

CR*: New station Ord River, ah Mistake Creek?

MP*: Yeah. I bin working there now. House.

CR*: You work that new station?

MP*: Yeah.

CR*: What sort of work?

MP*: House.

CR*: House? Like cooking and cleaning?

MP*: No, big house.

CR*: Oh, the big house?

MP*: Yeah.

CR*: You make im meal or ...?

MP*: Yeah. I used to set im table for people, I used to cart im tucker, longa table. I used to feed im. Bob Napier bin boss now.

CR*: Bob Napier?

MP*: Yeah. Alright, little one, he bin have im little one, _ [person's name]. Alright, from there, _ [person's name]. Him bin go hospital born, he bin pass him back, give it to me. I bin carry him 'bout, two or three years, that _ [person's name]! Got a paperbark, [to carry him] y'know.

CR*: Yeah?


CR*: Who his father? That _ [person's name]?

MP*: Huh?

CR*: Who his father?

MP*: Bob Napier.

CR*: Oh, Bob Napier.

MP*: His brother, what you call him, Tom Napier. Tom.

CR*: Tom Napier?

MP*: Yeah. Him got him _ [person's name] now. He look after him that, two of them, you know: 'You have him carry him about now, make him crawl'. That _ [person's name]. I tell you. I used to carry him about, got a paperbark. Till him bin walk. Well I bin carry about him here, longa shoulder. Walk around. He [ie Bob Napier] never
Let me go walkabout, no, bin there all the time. Proper. Alright, we better sit down no:ow, him go longa Waterloo.

CR*: Who bin longa Waterloo?

MP*: Bob Napier.

CR*: Bob Napier?

MP*: Yeah.

CR*: You follow him or?

MP*: No. I bin go Waterloo. Him Napier, him bin tell im me: 'I'll have to go back, pick im up all your dog'. [Laughs]

CR*:

MP*: Yeah, he bin want im me go there. But mintupala bin go back, got im motorcar. Got im 'nother motor car now.

CR*: Oh, right, your own motor car?

MP*: No.

CR*: So he bin at Waterloo, and you’d go up to Waterloo?

MP*: Yeah. Holiday.

CR*: Oh, right. But you still at Mistake Creek, eh?


CR*: _ [PL*] have a fight with him?

MP*: Yeah.

CR*: Over dog?

MP*: Yeah.

CR*: He want to, why they have that argument?

MP*: For dog now, him bin want to shoot im 'bout them [dogs belonging to PL*].

CR*:

MP*: He want to shoot im?

MP*: Yeah. He bin finish im up, some fellas.

CR*: He shoot im some?

MP*: Yeah. And _ [PL*] bin take im, that old _ [inaudible] mintupala _ [inaudible]. He never shoot them, nothing. Tupala bin argument.

CR*: Oh, you take your dog there?

MP*: Yeah. Working there now.

CR*: Who that fella shot the dog? What his name?

MP*: Horace.

CR*: Horace?

MP*: Yeah.

CR*: He like the manager of Mistake Creek?

MP*: Yeah.

CR*: After Bob Napier?

MP*: Yeah.

CR*: And then what?

MP*: I bin la Rosewood no:ow. From there, mintupala bin come here now. _ [KA*] bin there too, him bin come from Newry. Tupala bin argument: Billy Du [and PL*] now. Over _ [KA*].

CR*: Who that? Over _ [KA*]?

MP*: Yeah.

CR*: Have an argument?

MP*: Yeah.

CR*: Why they fight?

MP*: Over _ [KA*] tupala bin argument, y'know: 'What for you keep him there, longa camp, lying-bout'. 'No, not keep him lying-bout. He walk around.' 'We don’t want him young boy here,' he bin tell
him. 'You can't hunt him away him! I live here. I'm him uncle,' he
bin tell him.

CR*: Who said that? [PL*] bin said that?

MP*: Yeah, him bin tell him that Billy Du.

CR*: Who was saying you can't have _ [KA*] here? Who was saying
that?

MP*: Billy Du.

CR*: Billy Du?

MP*: Yeah.

CR*: He the manager?

MP*: Yeah. Him bin manager.

CR*: Here?

MP*: No. Longa Rosewood. Missus, no, Baxter never do that. I bin
working for Baxter for first time. When Baxter bin there. Dee
Baxter. Him bin let im this lot, boy come up there longa me. He
never say nothing la allabout. Him bin want him _ [NP*'s oldest
son] now. Him bin want to keep im working there to break im in
horse. Alright, Dee Baxter bin go away, Billy Du bin come now.
Alright, tupala bin argument now. Over _ [KA*]. Alright, we bin
come here, now, got him _ [KA*]. I bin bring him _ [KA*] too.
Mintupala bin bring him. Here now. Stop for good.

CR*: Yeah, right. And this was when Reggie Durack had this place?

MP*: Yeah. Him bin go away now, him. But 'nother one bin here.

CR*: And you bin not working here?

MP*: No.

CR*: Bin retired now; pensioner now?

MP*: Pensioner now.

CR*: When you come here?

MP*: Yeah. I bin working longa Dee Baxter, longa Rosewood. I bin
working house again, you know.

CR*: Oh, right.

MP*: I bin finish there, I bin come here, Billy Du time. I bin finish.
Pensioner now. Billy Du time. I bin come here now. Finish. We
here.

CR*: That's it?

MP*: This one [indicating NP*] gotta talk-talk la you now.
INTERVIEW NP24

Recorded with NP*
at Amanbidji Station, Northern Territory
November, 1993
NP*: Longa Newry, Tapata, Newry now, first side, Bubble Bubble, higher up, there I bin born. My mother bin walk around there and, ah, him bin take me la station. You know, him bin have im tobacco, every time they bin like tobacco, [they’d] come down from bush.

CR*: So they came in for that tobacco, eh?

NP*: Alright, go back again and I bin come this way now. My father bring im me back now, here, Pumuntu, not Pumuntu, here, Kartal. Pantajarra, that old name. Blackfella name, you know.

CR*: What he called again?

NP*: Pantajarra.

CR*: Pantajarra.

NP*: Yeah, this way. Where that bloke [ie GP*] bin take you, walking. Through that rockhole, water. Got no water. [ie That place that was found to be dry on a recent trip.]

CR*: And that like a camping place?

NP*: Hmm.

CR*: Wet season or Dry season?

NP*: Dry season. And ah, my husband, my husband him bin try to follow me on. That _ [husband’s name]. His name. Father bla _ [KA*] and ah _ [BW*]. You bin see him? He there? _ [BW*].

CR*: Oh, right.

NP*: _ [BW*], you know.

CR*: Oh, yeah.

NP*: Longa that tupala’s father. And ah, we bin go back la Newry, working there, working, oh, working all day now. Hector Fuller time.

CR*: Ah, so you working Newry?

NP*: Hmm.

CR*: Who’d you work for there? Who was the boss back then?

NP*: Hector Fuller.

CR*: Hector Fuller. What was he like?

NP*: Working la house. Just learn about mipala, ah y’know, young [people].

CR*: He have a wife?

NP*: Yeah, he gotta missus, Janet, no, _ [inaudible] now, that missus name, you know. Hector Fuller wife.

CR*: And he alright, that man?

NP*: He good bloke.

CR*: Not too hard?

NP*: Nup.

CR*: No more cheeky one?

NP*: Nup.

CR*: So you work there for a long time?

NP*: Long time we bin stop.

CR*: Was that with your old father; was he there?

NP*: Who?

CR*: Your father.

NP*: My father bin there, gardener.

CR*: And your mother, where she bin?

NP*: My mother bin there too.

CR*: So they both working there for Hector Fuller.

NP*: Hmm.

CR*: And that was a Durack place was it?

NP*: Yeah, and one kartiya, cook. Him bin there. His name Burt. They bin all _ [inaudible]. Him bin there cooking. Yeah. Some kid. Big, big kid, little bit. They bin all, that kartiya bin tell im allabout: ‘Take im nannygoat, this one now, feed im up. Cutabout that leaf,
you know, for that bulmi leaf. Cut him bout:out, feed im up, now,
nannygoat. Yeah. Alright, I bin there working right through, now,
what ‘nother manager bin come? Tom Ronan after, now.

CR*: Tom Ronan?

NP*: Hmm.

CR*: Oh right, you bin working for him?

NP*: Hmm.

CR*: He bin manager after Hector Fuller?

NP*: Hmm.

CR*: What he like?

NP*: He good.

CR*: He alright?

NP*: Hmm.

CR*: How long he stay there?

NP*: Five years.

CR*: Five years?

NP*: Every manager bin always stop five years.

CR*: Is this before that World War?

NP*: No, Hector bin there when that war bin start.

CR*: Hector there when the war started. And then after that Tom Ronan
took over?

NP*: Hmm.

CR*: That war still bin going when Tom took over?

NP*: No, nothing now.

[Pause]

CR*: So still working at Newry?

NP*: Yeah, working there all day.

CR*: Yeah, you work there for a long time, eh?

NP*: Yeah, long time.

CR*: So you started off feeding the nanny goat?

NP*: Nannygoat bin go all around, we bin only go, muster im back, put
im in the yard, and every morning go out and milk im.

CR*: So you bin doing all that job?

NP*: Two way: nannygoat, cow. They bin do im that nannygoat. Mine,
cow. Milk im cow. I bin always milk im ‘bout nannygoat, no, cow,
send im back for some kariiya, you know, early, for breakfast.

CR*: So they have that fresh milk for breakfast. You work in the house
then, or just nannygoat?

NP*: No, cow, milker.

CR*: So no housework. No making bed or anything like that?

NP*: Make im butter, too. We bin have cream, we bin have separator
meself. Make the cream, make a butter too. Throw im. This time
bin come from long one [ie milk carton]. Not before. We bin hard
work properly.

CR*: How long it take to tum that milk into butter? He take a long time?

NP*: He take im, he take im, we do im got a separator now. Right, they
do im milk, separate. Cream, separate. Alright we bin only put im
longa cooler, you know, la what-you-call-im, freezer. Not freezer
then, not like this one. No, they bin have cooler. For water and
anything. [Laughs]

CR*: That like a water cooler?

NP*: Water cooler.

[Pause]

CR*: And what then? Did you get, did you find a husband at Newry?

NP*: That old man now, here.

CR*: Guwagada?

NP*: No, this belonga _ [BW*] and whatsaname [KA*] father.
CR*: Ah, _'s [BW*'s] father.
NP*: And _ [KA*].

[Pause]

CR*: And what did you do when you finished up at Newry?
NP*: No. We bin working there till the Stan Wilson bin come.
CR*: Stan?
NP*: Wilson. Manager there. Long time I bin stop there.

[Pause]

CR*: So it bin long time?
NP*: Hmm.
CR*: You have any children at Newry?
NP*: No, one I bin have im, after, _ [BW*]. Him bin born in there. Newry.

CR*: He bin born Newry?
NP*: Hmm.
CR*: And he still around?
NP*: Yeah. He la Halls Creek.
CR*: Oh, right, Halls Creek.
NP*: Him always come 'round here.

[Pause]

CR*: So it bin long time?
NP*: From there I bin workin' right thorough, holiday. I bin come away here now. Just walk around, you know, holiday. Come here. Then _ [KA*] bin born there, la yard.
CR*: That was when that old man Reggie Durack bin here?
NP*: Yeah, him bin put his name now.
CR*: Ah, he call him that?
NP*: Him name properly, so's _ [KA*]. That kariya bin working there before.
CR*: Ah, kariya called _ [KA*]?
NP*: No, Duraek bin call his [name] now. Call his name.
CR*: So, _ [KA*] born yard, and [you] brought him back here?
NP*: Yeah. Alright I bin go back. Go back work la Newry and this Durack, he: 'You fella come. Anytime you like you can come'. 'Okay.' Alright, go back again. Work la Newry. Alright, my father bin passed away now. I bin there. My father bin passed away there.

[Noise interruption as women come into Woman Centre]

CR*: Oh, might have to stop him now.
NP*: Yeah. Till next time.

[The recorder is turned off then on again soon after.]
NP*: 'You can come here la Pantali,' him bin alde talk. He got that country now. From there, bin working la Newry:y. Finish. My father bin passed away. Alright I bin come here now. I didn't like the look of that place where my father bin working 'round.
CR*: How come?
NP*: Well, I bin have to worry for my father. Well I bin come here now, working la Durack.
CR*: And what sort of work you do here for Durack?

NP*: Milking cow too, and go back la house. _ [FR*] bin there too. This _ [FR*] here [indicating direction of house].

CR*: That one longa ...
NP*: No, this one here. Mintupala married to one old man. Father blá _ [KA*] and _ [BW*]. Working la Newry, and ah, oh him bin working that station, la Newry, my husband, and me. Right, now, I got im horse, look after paddock.
CR*: Yeah?
NP*: Yeah.

CR*: You bin riding horse?

NP*: Yeah.

CR*: Oh, right.

NP*: Camp out, camp out la bush, you know, look after paddock. Then I bin take him_[BW*], little one, la horse.

[Pause; truck noise in background]

CR*: Where'd you take _[BW*]?

NP*: Matyati all 'round now_[inaudible]. And ah, Goss Hole.

CR*: Which one?

NP*: Goss Hole, that way, nother side la Newry. Big bullock paddock bin there. We bin look after im bullock too. Look after paddock.

CR*: Ah right, so you look after paddock?

NP*: Hmm.

CR*: So you have to do a muster or nothing?

NP*: No.

CR*: Just make sure that paddock alright?

NP*: Make sure that paddock alright. Alright, and ah, I bin come back. Come back go la station, you know.

CR*: Back here, this station?

NP*: No, Newry. When that my father bin passed away now, I bin come away now, I bin come away.

CR*: You ever go back to Newry, to work, mice your father passed away?

NP*: Yeah, after, then. After, we go back la Newry. And ah, I bin come here now, working. My husband bin boss too here. That old man now. I bin have im_[KA*], little one. He's here la_[name], that old man here. He bin his.

CR*: Which old man?

NP*: Father belonga_[KA*], and_[BW*].

[Pause]

NP*: Alright, I bin working now, single fella now, working through, la Durack. Ah, me and_[FR*], this 'nother_[FR*] here.

CR*: Ah, so you both working together?

NP*: Yeah. Him bin working la house, me help im 'bout, milk им 'bout cow. Come back_[FR*] and_[PP*], he start now. Alright,[HA*] father bin come, for_[HA*] now. His name_[TY*].

Alright, my uncle bin there: 'You'll have to go now, that, my mali there'. My cousin you know, mali. 'Lookabout my son-in-law. Live with him.' Him meant to look after im kids, see. Live with him. He can look after kid, with me. My uncle, proper uncle [said this].

CR*: He was going to look after...

NP*:_[KA*], and_[BW*].

CR*: What the name of that uncle again?


CR*: Yeah, they pay you money back then?

NP*: Proper. Biggest money we bin alde get him from Durack. But we no bin alde get him every fortnight. We bin only leave him la bank, house, how much money. Stop there la office. This time they're silly. They can go getta money, play cards. Not before, nup.

CR*: So they'd just give you money at the end of the year, for holiday?

NP*: Holiday time.

CR*: And what'd you do with that money?

NP*: We get im 'bout tucker. But we no bin buy im. We bin get im money here, everything, big calico to stop rain. Calico, you know,
this one. All bin get him long, just for nothing. That for rain. That’s
before, see. We bin get im ‘bout _ [inaudible]. No *kartiya* but
blackfella bin working for it. Good blackfella too. They know work.

CR*: Hard day back then?
NP*: Yeah. Hard day. He gotta work for his money.
CR*: What about today?
NP*: Nothing now, slack off. All these young fellas, we just leave it to
them young fellas, ah, but they go. But they’re not good worker
now. Never look after paddocks. Can’t ride now you know, garram
horse. Nothing. You can see that.

CR*: Yeah?
NP*: Hmm. Alright, _ [HA*] bin born here now. Durack bin call him _
[HA*]. His name _ [HA*].
CR*: Oh right. Durack called him that?
Pause

CR*: He still here too isn’t he?
NP*: Yeah. He bin born here, now.
CR*: Were you still working then?
NP*: Yeah. Alright, any kid bin grow up now, big, Mrs Durack bin go:
‘Ah, come up on top’. Put im in la school here._ [JM*] mob. They
bin schooling here now. School, that the, you bin see him that
piano, big one.

CR*: That piano?
NP*: Yeah. That Durack bin use him ‘bout. Mrs Durack. He bin use him,
that one.

CR*: She teach im kid to play?
NP*: Yeah.
CR*: Them kid play alright?
NP*: Yeah. Learn im ‘bout them. Alright, _ [JM*] bin go away from
Kununurra now. They bin school little bit there. But we bin, this
mother bin send him now, Perth. Then we bin go back la Newry._
[KA*] bin go now, school, Beagle Bay.

CR*: Sorry?
NP*: _ [KA*] bin go now, la Beagle Bay. School.

CR*: How old was he then? He big boy or ...
NP*: Small one. Just like a that, little boy there.
CR*: Oh, right.
NP*: I’ll show you when you come around.
CR*: He stay there long?
NP*: Yeah, they bin never come back for holiday.

CR*: They bin never come back for holiday?
NP*: Nup. They bin only stop.
CR*: That that Church mob?
NP*: Yeah. Catholics.
CR*: Oh, right.
NP*: They bin only stop there, they never bin alde come. Easter time, and
nothing. And last time they come, they bin alde come back. That
proper way.

[pause]

CR*: And what then?
NP*: Then _ [TY*] bin there now. Husband. Mintupala never go holiday,
too far, long way. Just sit down there, la camp.

CR*: Too old to footwalk?
NP*: No, he bin have im motor car.
CR*: Oh, right. _ [NP*'s husband] bin have im motor car.

NP*: But we didn’t like to go. Mintupala could only stop there, keep all
the kids. And, ah, _ [SA*] bin born.
CR*: Where was she born? This station?
NP*: Newry.
CR*: Newry. Who was the manager at Newry, back then, when _ [SA*] was born?
NP*: Nothing. One kartiya bin there, manager.
CR*: Oh, right.
NP*: After Stan Wilson, you know.
CR*: Oh, right.
NP*: Yeah. I think about. One kartiya bin there. I forget now. Can't think about it now.
CR*: Oh, that's alright. Doesn't matter.
NP*: I bin go to Darwin from there.
CR*: Yeah. Why'd you go to Darwin?
NP*: I bin sick.
CR*: Oh, right. How long you stay in Darwin?
NP*: One year.
CR*: One year?
NP*: I bin sore-sore la everywhere then.
CR*: That at the Darwin hospital.
NP*: Longa Bottletree, y'know. Old hospital.
CR*: Hey?
NP*: Old hospital.
CR*: Old hospital.
NP*: Bottletree they call him. I bin there.
CR*: And what sort of sick, of sickness?
NP*: I bin too swell la everywhere.
CR*: Swollen up?
NP*: Hmm.
CR*: They know what was wrong with you?
NP*: Just like a fire you know. Hot, everywhere.
CR*: Fever?
NP*: Hmm. Fever.
CR*: Might be malaria?
NP*: Might be.
CR*: And you sick for a year?
NP*: One year I bin stop there. Doctor bin keep me. Alright, I bin go to Wyndham.
CR*: Yeah.
NP*: Got big plane.
CR*: Oh, right.
NP*: Alright I bin get mail plane from Wyndham to Newry. I bin take him _ [HA*] too, little one.
CR*: He bin with you in Darwin?
NP*: Hmm. Sister bin look after him.
CR*: Oh, your sister in Darwin?
NP*: Doctor and sister, you know.
CR*: Oh, right.
[Pause]
NP*: Alright, Campbell-Cockburn bin there now. Alright
[Side A ends here with a brief interruption as the tape is turned over.]
CR*: You talking about Campbell-Cockburn?
NP*: Cockburn. Yeah, him bin there [at Newry Station as the] manager, now.
CR*: And you were saying he grew up with the blackfellas at Auvergne.
NP*: Yeah. He know blackfella. Good bloke. Him bin go la Kununurra now.
CR*: Him bin go?
NP*: No, him gone. He bin go.

[Pause.]


CR*: Oh, he passed away.

NP*: My last son.

CR*: Oh, right.

NP*: Young son. Alright, I bin come here now. Pack up all the kid now.

Bring im out here now, working.

CR*: So what, them kid bin working out here?

NP*: Yeah. My son bin head stockman here now, that last son. Him bin left school.

CR*: Which one that? Oh, that last one?

NP*:Hmm.

CR*: He bin headstockman here?


CR*: So, he’d put im down ...

NP*: Put him down la paper, him. Him bin know, him bin know everything.

CR*: This one your last son?

NP*: Last son.

CR*: So, he bin like shopkeeper too?

NP*: Hmm.

CR*: Yeah?

NP*: That last son. Him bin only breaking in the horse. By himself.

[Pause]

NP*: We bin working all day now. When I was Newry, we bin do plenty work, there again, before, you know. They bin alde branding here longa McDarba. And one old killer well, girl bin alde go and muster him, get a killer. Might be one kartiya. Well, me and _ [AP*] bin only go. Chase the killer.

CR*: You and _ [AP*]?

NP*: Hmm.

CR*: You get a killer yourself?

NP*: Yeah.

CR*: Yeah?

NP*: Never bin have paddock, you know. And never bin have a wing yard. Nothing, before.

CR*: So that alright for a girl to get a killer?

NP*: Hmmmm. And one kartiya.

CR*: And one kartiya.

NP*: All the boy bin here, la McDarba.

CR*: This place here, called McDarba.

NP*: No, here, behind that hill, that way now. Old yard there. [NP* indicates to the north of the station.]

[Pause]

CR*: So you working for Reggie then?

NP*: Bla Durack yet, y’know.

CR*: Hey?

NP*: He bla MP Durack yet. You know, him bin owner now. MP.

CR*: Oh, MP.

NP*: Hmm.
CR*: Where he bin?
NP*: He bin la Argyle.
CR*: Auvergne?
NP*: Argyle.
CR*: You work for him too?
NP*: No, yeah, him bin owner now for that country.
CR*: Oh, right.
NP*: But no money then, that time.
CR*: Oh right. Yeah.
NP*: Only working for dress, blanket, [mosquito] net.
CR*: Oh right.
NP*: That's all. What good thing he [ie Durack] bin alde get im and [ie he would] send im up to everyfella. Clothing bin alde come. Big mob.
CR*: Which one?
NP*: Clothes, you know, tucker, everything. Blanket, calico, him bin alde send. Put im in la store.
CR*: Yeah.
NP*: And ah, that's all we bin working, for elotions, tea and sugar, before, you know. But we bin help them _kartiya_, properly way.
CR*: Yeah, help him.
NP*: Work, you know.
CR*: Yeah.
NP*: Reggie Durack bin longa Auvergne, like a that, you know. This one bin sit down, nothing. No house here [yet, at Amanbidji].
CR*: So Reggie bin longa Auvergne?
NP*: Hmm.
CR*: That before he came here?
NP*: Hmm. Before he come here.
[Pause]
CR*: Alright, what then?
NP*: Hmm.
CR*: So, they ever have a church here at Kildurk?
NP*: Nothing.
CR*: Nothing. They never had a school back in your day, except for that wife of Reggie?
NP*: After, then. This long, long time I'm telling you. Before here now.
CR*: Yeah.
NP*: Nobody bin la school, like that time.
CR*: Oh, right.
NP*: They bin only working here longa McDarba. Might be three months, solid. Branding, big branding. Woman and girl, they bin work too. [laughs] I bin think about husband.
CR*: Yeah?
CR*: And _[AP*] bin hang on?
NP*: Hmm.
CR*: That like a buckjumper, that horse?
NP*: Hmm. But that horse bla his husband too. Him bin passed away here.
CR*: Oh, that horse belong to _[AP*'s] husband?
NP*: I bin ride horse for my husband. That *kartiya* bin tell im: ‘Leave im horse [for] when they short for killer’.

CR*: Alright, that it?

NP*: Yeah.

CR*: Or you wanna keep going?

NP*: That’s all I think.

CR*: That’s all. Alright.

NP*: I never go anywhere, I bin only Newry and here. That’s all.

CR*: Yeah, right. And then you come back here and you stop here now.

NP*: When my husband bin finish I bin come away now, stop here.

CR*: You never go back to Newry?

NP*: Nup. Father bla [HA*] bin passed away la Kununurra. And _ [SA*].

CR*: Ah right. Same father?

NP*: Same father, and here, last one. Three he got. I bin bring im allabout here now. Keep im allabout here.

CR*: Yeah. And you bin here ever since. So you stopping here?

NP*: Hmm.

CR*: Alright.

NP*: ‘Come back, come back,’ Durack bin talk la me. ‘You come back’.

CR*: Oh right. He tell you, he asked you to come back, eh?

NP*: Hmm.

CR*: Oh.

NP*: ‘If yupala want to work, come back. Yupala welcome.’ We bin working for his father, MP Durack.

CR*: Right.

NP*: When MP [Durack] bin finish, [the manager from] Bullo River Station bin take [over] now.

CR*: Which one?

NP*: That *kartiya* from that way, him bin owner now, well _ [inaudible] mipala shift up now, [from] Kununurra. I bin come here now.

CR*: Which whitefella that one? Billy? Which one?

NP*: I don’t know what his name that *kartiya*. From Bullo River.

CR*: Oh, right.

NP*: And take over now. I bin finished now, come back here.

CR*: Oh right, we’ll stop him there.

NP*: Hmm.

CR*: Let’s have a listen.
INTERVIEW ST25

Recorded with ST*
at Amanbidji Station, Northern Territory
November, 1993
CR*: So this is _ [ST*]...
ST*: You hold him [the microphone] there.
CR*: You want me to hold him or you want to hold him?

PK*: Yeah, you hold him.

CR*: I'll hold him here.
ST*: And then you, you got something there?

CR*: Yeah, he switched on here. He right; he going.
ST*: Now, what sort of story you want?

CR*: Ah, whatever you like to put down. I'll put him down in a book, maybe. What story you reckon? Olden day story? Story about you, about your life, what sort of work you been doing and all that sort of stuff. What station you work for and who grew you up ...

ST*: Yeah, I bin working Rosewood. That after, then. When I was a small kid, might be about, you know, that high might be [ST* indicates height of child with hands], [I was] working longa Humbert River.

CR*: Oh, right, little kid, eh?

ST*: Long time ago.

CR*: Who was that? That Charlie Schultz?

ST*: Charlie Schultz time.

PK*: Old Charlie Schultz.

ST*: Poor fella. He alright? You bin see him?

CR*: I think he ... I never seen him. I think he down in Adelaide, ah no, he Queensland, I think.

ST*: Poor bugger.

CR*: Yeah. Pretty old.

ST*: Yeah! I know him. I bin only kid for him. Boy, you know. He bin have im me longa horse from there now. I was start riding horse there. Go tending, VRD, all around, Gordon Creek, all around.

CR*: And who took you to Humbert River? Who took you to Humbert River?

ST*: Oh, one of them old people from this country. Because my mother down that way to VRD ah, Humbert River, all around there, I had a one old, old father like, you know, not too ..., not my father, no more my father, only half, you know, half one.

CR*: Oh, stepfather?

ST*: Stepfather. My father bin die here la this country.

CR*: Oh, down at Pumuntu?

ST*: Yeah.

PK*: At Pumuntu.

CR*: What happened there?

ST*: Oh, they had, ah, all the time, you know, didn't like im one another, blackfella. Just like you go and shoot somebody, or kill him, somebody, all this. But him bin sick by, he bin have im sick all the time. [ie He was sick all the time.] Bad [ie very] sick.

CR*: And that was because of that fighting between blackfellas?

ST*: Yeah.

CR*: So they make him sick did they?

ST*: Yeah. 'Nother people bin come from that way, from Humbert side to get him my mother and take mipala too, kid, you know. Stop that country for might be about two Christmas. We bin stop there for two Christmas. That long time, eh?

CR*: Yeah.

PK*: [laughs]

ST*: And, ah, that was before this Wave Hill bin get drowned, before.

CR*: Oh, big flood.

ST*: Big flood there. That was nineteen-nineteen I think. Long time.
CR*: So you were already big kid then?
ST*: Yeah.
CR*: Long time ago.
CR*: He bin good fella to work for?
ST*: Oh, he bin alright.
CR*: He bin alright?
ST*: But no good for them runaway buggers [ie for Aborigines who absconded from stations].
CR*: Yeah? What he do with them?
ST*: They bin all runaway from station, you know. Go away, and go bush, and sneak around, and he come up to look who that man bin run away from that place: 'Ah, you hère!' They have a good fight there.
CR*: With a rifle?
ST*: No, no rifle, he never [would] run for [a] rifle, no.
CR*: He bin good fighter?
ST*: Yeah, he only bin young then. Bye and bye we bin come away from Humbert River, might be. Come away this way now. Come here, all around here. He’s my country, Pumuntu.
CR*: Father country or mother country?
ST*: Father country. Mother country little bit this way from Waterloo side. My father country Pumuntu. I bin born in Pumuntu, that’s why... anyway, I bin this lot. Other lot of people bin come this country, now, well I just give it away now.
CR*: Right, new people, eh? Different mob?
ST*: Different, different mob.
CR*: Where this mob from?
ST*: Every side, every country. Some bla sandstone, some belonga this way, some VRD, all around. All la one station.
CR*: But you’re properly boss for that ...?
ST*: Yeah. I’m boss for this place. Me and old [GP*] and [DP*]. But they bin born la sandstone, you know, la bush.
CR*: Those two?
ST*: Huh?
CR*: Which ones?
ST*: Ah...
CR*: [DP*]?
ST*: [DP*], [GP*], he bin born la my side, Pumuntu. He only bin kid. When him bin born, I bin go away then, to Humbert. Me older than him yet.
CR*: You’re older than him.
ST*: Old [GP*], and old [DP*] only kid.
CR*: Did you know ’s [GP*’s] father?
ST*: Oh yeah. Old [BP*], [GP*] and this young fella here, what this one now, [DP*], and all them girl over there. One longa, one there, got no husband [ie NP*], and ‘nother one la old man [ie MP*].
CR*: Those [family name] sisters?
ST*: Ah, daughter. Old [BP*], father for whole lot of im. For them, [DP*] mob. But all bin born la sandstone, you know.
PK*: Bush.
ST*: Bush. No more Pumuntu, no. Only me and [GP*]. This part of it. He belonga different people, this country here.
CR*: This country we standing on now?
ST*: But we half and half, like, you know.
CR*: What happened to the people who were here, this country?
ST*: Well, all bin pushed out from this country, because this country,
   people bin too strong to take it away, country.
CR*: So all this people got pushed out by other blackfellas?
ST*: Yeah. Push im back that way ...
CR*: Over towards the sunset [way]?
ST*: To Kununurra and all this. Newry and all them. All there now, bla
   this country. But this country bin push im out all, all bin push out.
   Them Auvergne mob, got nothing to do, Pumuntu. [The] Bulla
   [mob], they got nothing to do [with Amanbidji country].
CR*: And where else did you work after Humbert River?
ST*: Hey?
CR*: Where did you go to after Humbert River?
ST*: I bin come back now. I was a full grown kid now.
CR*: Working on station?
ST*: I bin come back and stop 'round little bit la bush. Find him job la
   Rosewood station. That for good now.
CR*: Who was that boss there?
ST*: Kilfoyle.
CR*: Oh yeah. He a good boss?
ST*: Oh yeah. Oh.
PK*: Good man.
ST*: Good bloke, bin pay. Work, you talk about work, you might knock
   off 'bout some allabout twelve o'clock. Night time.
CR*: Yeah?
ST*: When you garrum cattle la yard. Oh.
CR*: Hard work, eh?
ST*: Hard work, and him bin pay im.
CR*: Yeah? He bin pay blackfella? Ngumbin?
ST*: Yeah, long time ago, him bin start im money la old people, you
   know. [Aboriginal] Workers.
CR*: He's the first one?
ST*: Yeah, them people from Rosewood. [Other white] Bloke bin say:
   'Ah, you bin pay im blackfella too early'. But 'My money,' he
   reckon. 'My money'.
CR*: So he can do ...?
ST*: 'I can do what I like. Pay im people'. Girl and boy. And you talk
   about bla this one, drink. But he don't drink, but he give it to
   workers.
CR*: How much he give im?
ST*: Oh rum, anything like that. Whisky. He good ...
CR*: I never knew that.
ST*: [laughs] That long time ago. Before him bin sell that Rosewood
   station.
CR*: So you bin at Rosewood for how long?
ST*: I bin there for oh, Christ, long time. I bin get moustache, Rosewood,
   get moustache, you know.
CR*: You got a moustache.
ST*: Till I bin get married la Rosewood, and woman leave me in the
   rubbish [laughs]. But I don't bother.
CR*: That's only, from there ...
ST*: From there, when I bin, y'know, to change him job, I bin go droving
   longa Mr Quinlan. Droving to Wyndham, all around, take him
   bullock la Katherine, all over.
CR*: Was that during the second world war?
Yeah. Second war.

Yeah? That second war? That the same time you were droving.

Same time. When I bin go that way, you know, I bin feel sick and go la Army hospital. And Army bin come up and put me la train take me to Larrimah. Keep me there, only for day, you know. Bring me back to Mataranka, come back, right back to Katherine, to Manbulloo. All the drovers bin there, la Manbulloo, you know. We bin have im big trucking yard there longa, this side from Katherine, la flat that way. This way, that railway line and one side from there. La flat. Good work. Truck im. I don't know what they bin want to do, might be, but they bin talk about, they bin talk: 'We got one, one coloured people [ie person] y'know. Aboriginal people, we got one here, la Larrimah'. 'No, no, send him back to country.' So all them send me back to droving here, drover again.

CR*: Why'd they send you back?

Well, they didn't want im me to go there. Might be [they thought I] bin want to join in Army or something. But they didn't like it might be. No coloured, ah, what-you-call-im, Aboriginal bin la that place. No, only me, [the only] one now. Well, that's why all the head you know, belong the Army, bin talk about it: 'Oh, no, send him back. Send him to country'. Alright, we bin come, when I bin finished droving, working longa Spring Creek, 'nother side from Rosewood, that way.

CR*: Vestey place?

ST*: Vestey place. Work there, stop there for might be couple a Christmas. Work, you know. Go away from there again, working la Ord River, and one year, go away again, come to Lissadell, work around there. Texas, all around there. Stockcamp, you know.

CR*: Move around a lot?

ST*: Move around, yeah.

CR*: That all for Vestey or that different mob?

ST*: Waterloo, him bin Vestey. Waterloo, and Mistake Creek, Ord River, Nicholson and ah Wave Hill, and Flora Valley, Turner ...

PK*: Inverway.

ST*: Margaret Station, oh, 'nother side, long way from, in west.

PK*: Limbunya.

ST*: Limbunya. That lot all Vestey, right up to Manbulloo. Manbulloo bin for Vestey too. All the that-away country. I believe old ... that travelling boss bin belong to Vestey. You know Mr Bingle? He died?

CR*: I think he might be finished up now. I don't know.

ST*: Good bloke.

CR*: Yeah? He alright?

ST*: No good for whiteman. He bin love im people like mipala, good worker, look after bullock and horse and all this, you know.

CR*: Oh right, he liked good worker, eh?

ST*: Yeah.


ST*: Yeah. Mr Bingle.

CR*: You ever come back and work here at this station, for Reggie?

ST*: No, I work little bit la Waterloo, go away from there, go back to Rosewood. Stop there for good now, Rosewood Station. When I bin stop there, until I bin get pension, I shift out to Kununurra, Emu Creek, they call im place. This side from town.

CR*: Yeah, that was after the, umm, yeah I been there. That was after the strike and walk-off at Wave Hill was it or ...

ST*: Yeah, long way.
CR*: Long way after that?
ST*: Yeah.
CR*: Oh, right.
ST*: Long way after. That bin strike [at] that Wave Hill, long time [before]. After that water now, that boy him bin get drowned. Boy him bin get drowned, before.
CR*: Yeah. Long time before.
ST*: That time now. After that one. They bin pull out then, go away to ..., they walk out when they find im that place, this side, longa Police Station. Dagurugu they call him. Settlement, not settlement, anyway.
CR*: Community?
ST*: Hey?
CR*: Community?
ST*: Community.
CR*: Wattie Creek?
ST*: Wattie Creek. He bin there, they bin come in there, they find im place there. Old man bin find him, boss bloke belong to Wave Hill. Head boss you know. Old what's his name, what that old man name? Tommy Vincent.
PK*: Yeah, yeah. Tommy.
ST*: He bin shift im all the boys, take im la him place, keep im there. He bin find that place, he bin tell im: 'Now we got a big place now'. Until him bin passed away. Old man bin passed away then. Only his son there now. Ah, what that little one?
CR*: Victor?
CR*: Yeah.
[ST* laughs]
CR*: Yeah, I saw him at Mistake Creek.
ST*: You seen him?
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: We bin there, y'know.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Meeting time.
CR*: That right.
ST*: All that time.
CR*: Yeah.
ST*: Work little bit la Ord River, I bin pull out, not pull out, just go away, after holiday. Come back again, la country. All country but, you know, didn't like it. Want to stop.
[pause]
CR*: So that's about it, eh?
ST*: Eh?
CR*: You got any more story?
ST*: What you want im more? That's all I can tell you.
CR*: What about those police at Timber Creek? You ever have anything to do with, you ever know those policeman?
ST*: Who?
CR*: Oh, that early day policeman. Tas Fitzer and ...
ST*: Oh, that lot.
CR*: Tom Turner. Any story about them?
ST*: Oh, that lot bin alde come around and chase him 'bout la Humbert River, Gordon Creek.
CR*: Yeah? What? They chase blackfella?
ST*: Yeah.
CR*: How come?
ST*: They didn't like im might be.
CR*: Oh, right.
ST*: He bin here all around they bin chase im 'bout blackfella. All around sandstone, all around there, VRD, all around, la Timber Creek, all around. Tie im up and send im away la Darwin, la jail.
PK*: _[inaudible].
CR*: Which one?
PK*: Gordon Stott.
ST*: Oh that one, Gordon Stott, he mad bugger that one.
PK*: Oh, cheeky one.
CR*: Which one him?
ST*: Gordon Stott.
CR*: Gordon Stott.
ST*: Yeah.
CR*: He bin at Timber Creek?
ST*: Yeah, he bin la Timber Creek.
CR*: He there before Tom Turner?
ST*: Yeah, before, before that old man now. What that, ah, no, after.
CR*: After Tom Turner?
ST*: Yeah.
CR*: And Tas Fitzer?
ST*: Tas Fitzer, he the one bin la Timber Creek, first one.
CR*: He first one?
ST*: Hmm.
CR*: Oh, right. And then Tom Turner.
ST*: Yeah, and Mister, what's-a-name, Wally Linkan, you know. Wally Linkan.
CR*: What he like?
ST*: Oh, he alright but him bin all just go and humbug la people, y’know, la bush. Chase im all around, all that running away bugger you know. And go and chase im and hunt im. Chase im, shoot im or something.
CR*: And what about that Gordon Stott? What’d he do?
ST*: Gordon Stott alright but he too cheeky. Pick im up people and fight longa people. Belt im, hammer im. He like a man call ah, Washinby [approximate spelling]. You bin listen [ie hear about] that Washinby?
CR*: To which? Washinby?
ST*: Yeah.
CR*: What that?
ST*: Whiteman.
CR*: No, never.
ST*: He’s a bad people. Old Washinby. He gone. He long time.
CR*: He policeman too?
ST*: No, like a, he only bin just a worker, you know. But him bin want to try im, might be, what’s-a name, you know. Lot of bloke, kartiya, bin la this country, bin shoot im people.
CR*: Too many.
ST*: Too many. Jack Beasley and all them, oh, I can’t remember them 'nother mob now, Jack Beasley. Mob of white man, chase him 'bout blackbella and take it away young girl.
CR*: Yeah? Take that young girl away?
ST*: Shoot im blackbella. All dead. Not too ... no good, eh?
CR*: No, no.
ST*: And, yeah.
CR*: [Is] That [the] finish or what?
ST*: You know policeman call him Tommy Hemming?
CR*: Which one?
ST*: Tommy Hemming.
CR*: Tommy Hammond.
ST*: Yeah. Tommy Hemming. Old policeman. Old Jarradine, all that lot
bin bad bugger, policeman. Before.
CR*: They both from Timber Creek?
ST*: He bla Timber Creek. And them police boys helping them
policeman too, y’know, shooting people. Well, all gone, all dead,
all them bad buggers. [All those] white men and all them police
boys.
CR*: Pretty rough day back then.
ST*: Yeah.
CR*: Like the wild west.
ST*: Yeah.
CR*: No more this day.
ST*: No. You can’t shoot anybody now.
[pause]
CR*: Alright, shall we stop him there?
ST*: Yeah.
INTERVIEW MP26

Recorded with MP*
at Amanbidji Station, Northern Territory
November, 1993
MP*: Yeah. I gotta tell you about snake. Bin bite me. [inaudible].
CR*: Okay, where did that happen?
MP*: Hey?
CR*: Where did that happen?
MP*: Wait now. I bin working, you know. Alright, I bin cart im plate, you know. Longa kitchen we bin washing plate. Night-time. No light. Because we bin sit down, no light. Alright I bin take im back, clean-one plate now, longa house. Him bin that one now, you see him. This one, that kitchen?
CR*: Yeah.
MP*: And big house. Alright, I bin take im back longa house now, that lot plate, clean one. Alright, I bin go back, get im again, and him bin bit me right there [indicates foot] now.
CR*: Oh, on the ankle?
MP*: Yeah. No, here.
CR*: On the foot?
MP*: Yeah. Here. Him bin bite me. I bin feel him now. But I bin go back la kitchen, I bin feel him now this way [indicates lower leg], like a needle.
CR*: Like a needle?
MP*: Yeah.
CR*: In your leg?
MP*: Yeah. Oh, I bin proper no good now.
CR*: So, which station did all this happen on?
MP*: Mistake Creek.
CR*: Mistake Creek Station?
MP*: Yeah. Old station.
CR*: Oh right. Who was the manager there?
MP*: Hamill.
CR*: Billy?
MP*: Bill Hamill.
CR*: Bill Hamill. That before the flood or after?
MP*: No. Before. No flood bin there yet.
CR*: Oh, old station.
MP*: Yeah.
CR*: And what sort of snake was that?
MP*: That plain country, you know, pretty one. Here, these two fella [MP* indicates the eyes of the snake]. That poison one.
CR*: Yeah. He got that mark around his eye. That skinny one?
MP*: Yeah. Long one. That the poison one, you know.
CR*: What they call him, that snake?
MP*: I don’t know. We only call him poison snake, that’s all. You [MP*
indicates NP*] got a yini? He kill im emu too. He proper cheeky
one that.

NP*: Warrany. I got him here. Warrany. For blacksoil, country. He live
la blacksoil. He no more like a King Brown. He little snake. No
good. He belonga plain too there, you know, longa Mistake Creek,
old station. Plain there, you know. That’s where him bin bite me.

[A pause during which the recorder is briefly turned off.]

MP*: I bin working longa Auvergne. I bin working la Shadforths now.
Shadforth. Harry Shadforth. Alright, my father bin come from
Newry. Hector bin bring him. Him bin want to pick im up me. But
Mrs Shadforth bin stop im me [from going with him]. He couldn’t
let me go. Alright, bin sit down now, I bin think about now. My
father, because him [Mrs. Shadforth] bin knock im [MP*'s father]
back. ‘Oh, we’ll have to go away night-time now. Run away.’

Mintupala bin run away. Mintupala bin run away now.

CR*: Which two?

MP*: My husband, Kaki. My cousin too.

NP*: _[inaudible] [laughs].

MP*: No more. That my cousin too. This one belonga _ [BG*] sister.
Mipala bin go now. We bin run away. Alright we bin go longa
Kawirra. We bin swim across. We bin swim across.

CR*: You swim across?

MP*: Longa saltwater.

CR*: Oh, crocodile?

That him country now allaround, Ngalarinja. Auvergne. Alright, we
bin climb up, on top we bin camp. From there we bin go now, We
bin go:o right up longa what-you-call im. Long way we bin go.
Camp half way, longa rockhole. From there, go fishing. He bin get
him crocodile there. He bin catch hold of him, y’know [laughs]. We
bin hungry. Alright, from there, mintupala camp. From there
mintupala bin go higher up now. Come out longa Mulawul. Camp
there. From there we bin go, mintupala go right up, Bubble Bubble
Creek. Meet him. Mintupala bin get im goanna.

[MP* speaks in Ngarinyman to NP*.]

MP*: Alright, mintupala bin get im goanna. Proper fat [one] too. Cook
im [that one for] dinner. From there, mintupala bin meet him, that
little creek now, from Newry. Camp there. We bin sit down about
there now. We bin sit down about there now, catch him porcupine
too, mintupala, and cook im ‘bout. Alright, we bin go now. And
parnku bin there too, bla Henry. Where tupala, Tapat, bin sit down.

Lippy Jack, him bin there too.

CR*: Lippy Jack?

MP*: Yeah.

CR*: Oh, right.

MP*: We bin go now. They got porcupine. We bin go in the night-time
now, dark fella, little bit. We bin go now, walking. Sun go down
little bit. Cold time. We bin walking now, come out longa Branban
Creek. He bin dark now. We bin crouch him longa house now, we
bin just stand up, looking about, listen ‘bout. Night-time, you know.
We bin listen about ... My father bin talk-talk now. Him bin talk-
talk, you know. Ah, old man, allabout camping here. Allround
camping low down longa house, you know, higher up belonga boy.
Belonga allabout worker house and low down there they bin
camping, nother side. Alright, my father bin talking now. Alright,
We bin go now chuck im stone. 'Ha. Don't chuck im 'bout stone,'
father bin talk. He bin come now, come in for hunt him. Come in for hunt him [laughs]. 'Right, you fella, come up here.' We bin sit down now, talk-talk. We bin sit down talk-ta-talk. 'I gotta take him back, you. Tomorrow I gotta take you now,' him bin tell me, mintupala. 'I gotta take im yuntupala', parnkulung. That my cousin.

We bin camp there, longa creek we bin camp. Alright, morning time now, we bin go 'nother side longa, where that bitumen sit down, this side now, we bin sit down tupala, to wait for old man. Old man bin come now, pick im up mipala. We bin go now, walking now, we bin wa:alk, camp longa what-you-call-em? Julup. This way now. Julup. We bin go down, we bin go 'nother side now, right up longa what-you-call-em, what that place, ahh, Miriwilunga. Miriwilunga. Camp there. Tucking out fish, turtle, everything. Yeah.

We bin camp la Miriwilunga. We bin goin' out through longa what-you-call-em Warnkak. We bin come out la Warnkak, we bin camp there now longa Warnkak. We bin come through this way now, morning time, through this way, longa Walarlkam, come out la Kenivan Yard now. We bin come up camp longa Marrakamin. This one here, Marrakamin. Camp there. From there we bin go camp longa what-you-call-em, Tiwalapa. _ [YY*] bin little one then. We bin come out la allabout. Yeah, Longa, longa way we bin go karlarniyin [west and up], eh, Pumuntu. We bin sit down about la Pumuntu, we bin go from Pumuntu, bin go through longa Kampajam. Mampaja. Well now, this one, Mampaja. We bin go kalarra, Palyulk. Palyungka pani. Yalang wunavu putayitju kanjurra pilipa. Camp there. He bin little one then, walk kaji [ie GP*]. We bin go now, higher up. We bin tucking out mussel, you know, proper sweet one. We bin go now higher up. We bin camp longa what-you-call-em, Yellow Waterhole. We bin camp, from there we bin go kangkara, Jilwangkarra. We bin stop there now for good, longa Jilwangkarra. Alright, we all come out. When I got him husband come out now. That husband mine. Tupala bin come out. That's the one, cheeky one properly. Alright, night-time him bin talk-talk now: 'You give him _ [inaudible] one day. I gotta pull him out la you tomorrow,' he bin tell im me like that. That true. Alright, we bin go now, _ [inaudible] give it. Early fella. Daddy bin take im mintupala. We bin go la ring place now. Garam spear. Him bin kill im. No more me [ie he didn't use the spear on me, just], garam boomerang. Him bin belt im me. He bin chuck a boomerang and him bin clobber me. Alright, ah, that tupala bin fight now. Dead fella now. Ah, two of them, [who are both] dead fella[s now]. Finished. We bin go back la camp. He bin take im back me now, when I gotta _ [inaudible]. Alright, we bin go camp. Well, night-time now, init, I bin run away. Right up. Night-time. 'Ah, he bin take you la Waterloo, that alright. He bin take you la Waterloo.' Behind now. I bin sit down. Him bin belt im 'bout me all day. 'Alright,' I bin tell him, 'I can't stop la you. I gotta go away. Leave you, [in the] night-time, after'. Alright, night-time now, go-to-bed time, I bin go away. I bin want to go for meself, you know. But I bin meet im him, dead fella, now. I bin meet him. 'Come on now, yunmi'll have to go,' him bin tell me. Mintupala bin go away now. Mintupala never walk long way. They bin sing mintupala foot, you know. That's why mintupala bin sit down half-way. Alright, him bin wait here now belonga mummy I bin tell him. This one bin right. We bin look now, 'Hey, they're coming now.' From Waterloo. Him bin go Waterloo. Alright, mother bin tell me 'What
for you bin run away?’ Him bin growling me now. ‘Well, I’ll have
to take him back you.’ Him bin take im back me now, longa
Jilwangkarra again. We bin tuckin’ out beef now, init? Nothing.
Allround come out, stare, and have a look around. That lot bin look
around, you know, bla mintupala. Kaki. Alright, allround fight now.
We bin fight now. Nothing. Tupala bin double bank longa deadfella
now. Two fella bin, him bin _ [inaudible] that two. Yeah. And me,
they bin grab im now, push im me. And him bin pull im me from
arm. Alright, my father bin come up now. Punch him. Him bin want
to punch him me, you know. But him bin punch him, Kunayikarata
right here. Him bin hurt im him, you know. Finish. Him bin dead
first time, he bin get up, get a stick now, him bin hit im me this one,
I bin _ [inaudible] hit him la backbone you know, because dark. He
bin hit im with this one [MP* indicates her face], I bin finish.
CR*: Hit em in face?
MP*: Yeah. This one here.
CR*: Oh.
MP*: I bin finish now.
CR*: He hit you?
MP*: Yeah. Talk about blood. Everyone bin there, mine brother, allabout
crying about. I bin finish now, only my uncle bin wake im me up.
Him bin get a bushes now, uncle bla yumni [this directed to NP*].
Alright, father bin sleep too now, when I bin dead, he bin tell im
like that now ‘Finish, I gotta get, finish him off you tomorrow,’ he
bin tell me, like that. That true, you know. Alright, I bin get him
back wind. Well I bin vomiting and all the blood.
PL*: What I gotta talk-talk?
CR*: Where were you born?
PL*: Depot.
CR*: In the Depot. At Timber Creek?
PL*: Hmm.
CR*: And your parents worked there?
PL*: Yeah.
CR*: That your father country?
PL*: Yeah. Father country.
CR*: And what sort of work were they doing?
PL*: Eh?
CR*: What work were they doing there?
PL*: Oh, my father was working there all day. [RO*] my father.
CR*: And your mum?
PL*: [RB*], my mother.
CR*: She work there too?
PL*: Yeah, him bin working there, la old Matt Wilson. Boat bin all day come up. Get im [supplies], unload im from jetty, put im in the store. Daddy was working.
CR*: And um, who took you to Timber Creek? Was that your parents or whitefella?
PL*: What?
CR*: To Timber Creek, to the Depot. Who took you there or were you born there?
PL*: I bin born there, la Depot. Right by Depot, my place.
CR*: And your mother country?
PL*: My mother country here.
CR*: Oh, this one here?
PL*: Yeah.
CR*: What she call that country?
PL*: Country bla mother.
CR*: What that name?
PL*: Oh, I forget about his name now. This country bla me. Him bin go from here, get married, longa _[father's name].
CR*: Where’d they get married?
PL*: Right there. Depot.
CR*: How long did you work at the Depot?
PL*: Oh, long time.
CR*: Who teach you how to do that stockwork?
PL*: Me?
CR*: Yeah.
PL*: Oh, I bin there, I bin there little boy, I bin growing there, I bin go la Cattle Creek. Alright I bin teach Tas Turner, bla working bullock ... Bullock, longa Cattle Creek.
CR*: And who taught you how to do that work?
PL*: Oh, old Matt Wilson. Him bin tell im me, him bin tell im me: ‘You can go la stockcamp’. When I bin big one now. Have to go la stockcamp. He tell me: ‘You can go la stockcamp, now, to work there’. Alright, I bin go la stockcamp, working, and get im bullock, muster bullock, muster to Wyndham, sell im there.
CR*: Who else bin there?
PL*: Where?
CR*: Which other workers?
PL*: Cattle Creek?
CR*: Yeah.
PL*: No. Nobody. All the boy, all the blackella. Ngumbin, all together ngumbin.
CR*: Big mob?
PL*: Yeah. Big mob. Stop there. That's all.
CR*: Was_[WP*] there?
PL*: No. Him here. Auvergne. All of them, all la Cattle Creek, all die
now, finish. Only me one alive. All bin die.
CR*: So you work at Cattle Creek and then you come back to Depot?
PL*: Yeah. I bin alde come back la Depot, sit down there, holiday.
CR*: Did you have Christmas at the Depot?
CR*: Still any bush people around there?
PL*: Yeah, yeah.
CR*: Bush people?
PL*: Yeah.
CR*: They come in for Christmas?
PL*: Yeah. Christmas and horse race. Timber Creek, all there. From
Bradshaw, from Victoria, from Wave Hill, all bin there. Horse race,
Timber Creek. Big race. Long time.
CR*: So you finish up there?
PL*: Hmm.
CR*: When did you finish up?
PL*: Oh, all bin alde finish race. Finish race, everyone bin go back, Wave
Hill, somefella Victoria, somefella Bradshaw.
CR*: So you went to all the races?
PL*: Yeah. I bin la races too.
CR*: When did you stop working at the Depot?
PL*: No, I never work la Depot, I work la Cattle Creek stockcamp.
CR*: When did you stop working there?
PL*: Oh, I bin working there all the time, when I bin young boy, you
know.
CR*: And then old Matt Wilson died?
PL*: Yeah.
CR*: And then you moved away?
PL*: Yuwai.
CR*: And where'd you move to when he died?
PL*: When him bin die ... Him bin die I bin gone.
CR*: Oh, you go then?
PL*: Yeah.
CR*: Where'd you go to?
PL*: Cattle Creek. I bin stop la Cattle Creek, stockcamp. When my old
man bin get shot.
CR*: That old man Matt Wilson.
PL*: Yeah.
CR*: So you go back to Cattle Creek?
PL*: Yuwai.
CR*: What about your Dad? Where he go?
PL*: Daddy?
CR*: Yeah.
PL*: Daddy bin go back longa Willeroo. My father bla Willeroo. _
[father's name].
CR*: And_[mother’s name] as well?
PL*: No, olgaman bin come up longa Cattle Creek, la me. He bin stop
there, get lost there. My mother.
CR*: How long did you stay there for?
PL*: Oh, stop there for about two years. My mother bin die.
CR*: Did you ever work for that Lew James?
PL*: No.
CR*: Who you working for at Cattle Creek?
PL*: We bin working blacksella. All la ngumbin. No kariya.
CR*: No kariya.
PL*: No.
CR*: So you work there for two years?
PL*: Yeah, two years. I bin stop there two years. My father bin gone Willeroo, and I bin come away from there now this way.
CR*: Towards this country?
CR*: No kartiya.
PL*: No.
CR*: You stay out bush or work on a station?
PL*: Station?
CR*: Which one?
PL*: This one.
CR*: And that other one, Mistake Creek?
PL*: I bin go Mistake Creek, stop there little bit for a while, working, I bin, we bin pull out, have to pull out from Mistake Creek, come away. I bin go la Rosewood, stop there, I bin pull out again, come up here now.
CR*: When was that? Second world war time?
PL*: Yeah.
CR*: And that Reggie Durack here then?
PL*: Ah, he bin gone now. Old fella bin gone now. Old fella bin sell this place longa [GP*]. Give it to _ [GP*]. This one bin sell him la _ [GP*] now, this place. He bin go away, that old man. He bin sell it longa _ [GP*]. I bin la Rosewood ...
[A brief break occurred here in the recording in order to clarify chronology. Recording continued with PL* talking of an incident at Mistake Creek.]
CR*: Alright, so this was back at Mistake Creek. You tell us what happened.
PL*: Oh, I bin at Mistake Creek, we bin [have a] big fight down there. Two men bin double-bank [ie gang up] la me. Two whitebella. Only me, meself. All the stockboy somefella, mustering.
CR*: Why'd they fight you?
PL*: I don't know. I don't know what happened. Two men bin double bank la me. Belt me. Poor bugger me.
CR*: Did they use a stick or just?
PL*: No. Yeah. He bin kick me somewhere here la rib, knock im down. Tupala bin jump up [PL* indicates he took blows to his head].
CR*: Yeah? Punch you?
PL*: Punch im me la ground. Kick me all around. I bin swollen up here all round.
CR*: Oh, kick you in the face?
PL*: Yeah.
CR*: Oh, that no good.
PL*: Go away now. I bin pull out.
CR*: And then you go to Rosewood.
PL*: Yuwai.
CR*: And who the manager at Rosewood?
PL*: Ah, what you call him? What that old man? ... That old feller, he bin here. This place he bin get him.
CR*: I forget his name.
PL*: _ [inaudible]. I bin stop there, working there. Alright, I bin come away from there. I bin pull out meself, come up here now. _ [inaudible], la my country.
CR*: Was _ [MP*] with you then?
PL*: No.
CR*: This before you got married?
PL*: Mmm.
CR*: Where did you get married to [MP*]?
PL*: Here.
CR*: And where’d you go after you got married?
PL*: We stop here now, altogether. Never go anywhere. Daddy bin pick me up here. Never gone.
CR*: You bin working stock camp here?
PL*: Yeah, yeah. I bin working for awhile. I bin stop then.
CR*: And who bin the manager here, when you bin working stock camp?
PL*: Oh, I don’t know who that manager. I bin forget about that man. Good man too, you know. [He] Had [his] wife with him. Good man. I forget that name for him.
CR*: You got any more story?
PL*: No.
CR*: That it?
PL*: That’s all.
INTERVIEW BG28

Recorded with BG*
at Amanbidji Station, Northern Territory
November, 1993
Okay, off you go.

I bin born longa Winim, and mine father and mother bin take me to Auvergne, when I bin little one, you know, baby. I bin grown up there, right up, till I bin big one. Working, never miss work, work all the time, because that maluga bin little bit cheeky one, you know.

CR*: Which one that?

That old Shadforth now. Workin' all day, no mess anything, nothing. [Just] Work. All the way along. La house, clean up, everything for him. Keep im clean. When I bin proper, when him I know everything well I bin longa kitchen, y'know, longa cooking.

CR*: Oh, yeah.

Only do the cooking, to myself. Cook im 'bout tucker, feed im up, everybody. All the time. Never bin miss one [day], nothing. Keep all the way along, work. All day. I never go away, anywhere, run away, anything, nothing. Just work. Only this holiday, that's all. Have a rest, you know, holiday. When holiday finished, go back, work again. No get away. Right through, till my mother and father bin finished, you know. La Auvergne again. I never get away, nup, [or] get sulky anything, nothing. I just stay one place. Right through, all the way along. Right up, old Harry Shadforth bin go away.

CR*: Oh yeah. He bin go away?

Go away now, and old man bin come in.

CR*: Which one?

Old Reg.

CR*: Oh, Reggie?

[BG* laughs]

What was he like?

Old Reggie Durack? Oh, good, that one. Good man. Only get im up properly. Girl, and boys, look after im really. No get belting [from] him, anything. Nothing. Just give im good. Right through, right up when him bin go away now, move from there, he bin come to here now.

CR*: And you came across with him?

Well after I bin come 'round here then. From that Auvergne when I bin finish I went to Waterloo; for work, little bit. Working 'round, you know. Come from Waterloo when I bin finished up, coming up here then. Working here right through now till ...

CR*: You work up at that homestead, for Reggie?

Mmm. Working la kitchen. Cooking, helpin' him missus, you know, Mrs Durack. Help im him. Never get away, nup, right up, till him go away home now. Old Reg bin go away, you know. I don't know which one bin come here now. Old Reg bin go away, I don't know what them kartiya, bin come in here now. That other one him bin go away, I bin Winim now, Darwin, you know. I bin la Darwin then.

CR*: So Reggie go away, and then you go up to Darwin?

Yeah, I bin la hospital then, you know.

CR*: That East Arm?

Hnm. Sit down la hospital now. I bin la hospital for two year there, you know. For my arm too, you know [BG* indicates a scar on her arm].

CR*: Oh, how'd you do that?

I think I bin no good la my nerve, you know. That's why bin have an operation, you know.

CR*: Oh, operation.
BG*: I bin come here now. No more get away. Come back home. Come back right here to Kildurk again. Stay for good here now. Never go away no more now, nothing.

CR*: And Reggie bin back here then or what?

BG*: No, him bin away now I think. He never bin here now, that time.

CR*: Reggie?

BG*: Hmm. Old Durack. I don’t know one of them that kartiya, which one. Been here. No, I can’t work it out what kartiya.

CR*: You told me you had some story about Harry Shadforth.

BG*: Hmm.

CR*: You got a story about him?

BG*: Harry Shadforth?

CR*: Yeah.

BG*: Hmm. Even boy too, alde belt im up. Put im on the whip, oh yeah.

CR*: He bin tall man?

BG*: Yeah. Big fat man.

CR*: Big fat man. Belt people up?

BG*: Yeah.

CR*: He tie im up?

BG*: Tie im up and flog im.

CR*: What would he flog them with?

BG*: Whip.

CR*: A whip? That’s no good.

BG*: Sometime chuck im la water too.

CR*: Chuck im in the water?

BG*: Hmm.

CR*: What, tie im up?

BG*: Tie im up and chuck im in the water.

CR*: And they drown?

BG*: Somefella bin pick im up la bank.

CR*: Somebody pick em up.

BG*: He really cheeky that old man, bin here.

CR*: Chuck im in the water ...

BG*: Hmm. Tie im up la leg, chuck im la water. Old Shadforth. Hmm.

CR*: Anybody drown like that or they get im out?

BG*: Get im out. Somefella bin chuck im in rope, you know, and pull im back.

CR*: Who bin chuck im in rope? Some other ngumpin?

BG*: One of them ngumpin. Well him bin only to find im from that water, you know. From throw im in. He round im up everywhere now: ‘What man bin pick him out, take him from water?’.

CR*: Yeah? And what’d he do to that man?


CR*: Did he belt up his wife too?

BG*: Eh?
CR*: Did he belt up his wife too? That old Shadforth?
BG*: I think him might be slap him up too. Him proper cheeky one that kartiya. We bin only sit down. Tell im him: ‘No mess, anything, no, gotta do right thing all the way along. No mess’. If something
CR*: Oh, he come up after Shadforth go away?
BG*: Him bin Auvergne then. All bin happy. Everyone all good now, la Reg, you know.
CR*: Yeah? He much better, eh?
BG*: Yeah. More good. He never want to flog im up anybody. Girls or nothing. Ol Reggie sit ‘em down. Good longa him all the way along, right up, give im up everybody good, you know. No more get wild, something, anything, nothing, nup. Just keep im. Old Durack. Reggie. Hmm. He bin good all way, that old man. Everybody bin good to him too, good work, anything. Girl alde work good. And missus, missus bin alright, look after im girl, you know, good. They bin only love blackfella, you know. Missus and Reg. No more, no more like that, you know, other mob kartiya. Not that two, they bin love blackfella you know, really. Give im, all the way along, right up. They bin go away then. I think they bin go away when I bin longa Winim now, East Arm might be. Behind me now, I think him bin go away, you know. I bin hear im from East Arm then: ‘Ah, old Durack gone now. He’s finished.’ Go back home now they reckon, la him.
CR*: When was that? That was in the seventies or?
BG*: Where him living?
CR*: Kununurra?
BG*: I think him la Kununurra too.
CR*: Yeah.
BG*: Old Durack, Reggie.
CR*: Yeah.
BG*: He there too, but I never see him.
CR*: You never see him?
BG*: Next time when I go I might see him, you know.
CR*: He come out here, that old man?
BG*: No, he _ [inaudible]. He gotta come y’know. Visit. Visit there. Might be come cold weather, nothing. Might be proper old man now, poor bugger.
CR*: Yeah. I think so.
BG*: Pulka now, poor thing. Give im up properly way, girl, and boys. No more bin make im, belt im or anything like that, nothing. Give im good, all the way along. Old man, he good kartiya, that maluga. That way he bin go away now, go back, you know. Old Durack bin go away. Reg. That time I bin longa East Arm now.
CR*: Tell me about that East Arm?
BG*: I bin there for two year. Oh, East Arm bin alright, good. All fella working.
CR*: Who bin there from this place?
BG*: Where from? From here? Only Reg bin go away, I don’t know which one bin here now.
CR*: No, no, who bin at East Arm with you? There bin you and _ [DD*]? 
BG*: _ [DD*].
And...

This one, bin come here this morning.

I don't know which one mob now.

That...

Ah, yeah, yeah. I always forget la him. Him now. All bin la East Arm.

And what you do there?

Sit down. Walking round, hunting, anything. Get im 'bout yam, bush yam, you know. We bin dig im him 'bout, get im. And that 'nother one too, 'nother tucker again. Get im 'bout, dig im, take im back home, you know, la camp. Make im 'bout now, make im big hole, roast im, la hole. Mmm.

And kangaroo?

All they bin alde kill im, you know. Roast im. And crocodile. But I never see him, they bin never kill im no alligator. Nothing. Only [fresh-water] crocodile, alright. All bin have im.

You sleep inside or outside there?

No, la house.

You sleep in?

Room.

Sleep in dormitory?

Long dormitory we bin have im. For woman, single woman, you know, this side. That side for the mans, like a that. We bin there, ah, just all go walking 'round. Not manka; all the man. Ah, all the man bin only go away, get im 'bout everything, kangaroo, something, turtle, goanna, and we girl bin alde go dig im 'bout yam and get im 'bout. All the time them bin walking around [DD*] mob now. [MP*] and old man [ie PW*]. Oh, we bin go all over, walking 'round, right up, everywhere. Hunt im, you know. Go fishin' 'bout, anything. We sitting down all day, no go, come back this way, nothing. We never come back, come back, nup. We always sitting down one place. Till him bin to, oh we bin finished proper hospital, you know. That the time I bin come back, come back now. And they all there, right up.

And you saw a crocodile, ah alligator, there one day?

Yeah. That one alligator here, la Auvergne.

No more East Arm?

Ah, Auvergne.

Lower down, you know, that sort, right down la Wajabiny.

Ah, no more East Arm?

Yes. That one alligator here, la Auvergne. We bin alde go all fishing la saltwater, you know. I bin chuck im in line, and I bin lookin' at him then, that log, you know. Big one log. I bin look la bottom properly, under the log and I can look eye, thinking, 'Nup. What,' I reckon 'What this one?' Bin sing out la him, my husband, you know. He bin come and look. I bin show im him, him bin look: 'Go away, go away,' him reckon la me. 'Hurry up, run, run away.' I bin go up now, on top. And him bin firing shot at him, twenty-two, you know. Nothing. He never kill him properly. Well, he bin just glance [off the crocodile's skin] la that twenty-two. Hmm. That bullet, you know. He never kill him, nothing. When him bin come out from that bullet and him bin go float to anywhere. Come on down. Oh, him just like a big log. He bin get im garram three-o-three, you know.

Shoot him?

Hmm, finish him off. Go and get him anywhere through, right la middle, you know. Finish him now. Finish. That's why I never live
INTERVIEW BG28

229 no more longa salt water, no, nothing. Frightened, you know.
230 [Laughs]
231 CR*: And that husband of yours, that ...
232 BG*: No, him bin finished, my husband.
233 CR*: Oh, him bin finished.
234 BG*: La Auvergne again.
235 CR*: Oh, this back on Auvergne?
236 BG*: Belonga Winim, you know. Big brother bla you know, Wurlku.
237 You remember _ [PF*].
238 CR*: No, I never met him.
239 BG*: He like a that one too. Only oldest one now. That the one proper
240 husband mine. [He] Bin rear im up me, you know.
241 CR*: Oh right, he bin your husband?
242 BG*: Well, he bin finished now, poor thing. Not this _ [JN*]. Just sit
243 down him now all day now. Sitting down. Carry him all day, you
244 know. Look after him, me. When him bin finished now I go look
245 away, no way, I bin just stay one place, la Auvergne. Just sit down.
246 Right through. Old fella just sitting down all day, walking 'round,
247 camping, something. Turtle, and yam, anything, and that 'nother
248 one, 'nother tucker too, y'know long one. Diggin' him 'bout, diggin' him allabout and take him back, cook im 'bout now, roast
249 him 'bout. All the time all bin go about, hunting. That long one
250 allabout tucker like a yam, you know, plenty alla this place,
251 Kildurk. But nobody walking around. If they walk around well they
252 can dig him 'bout, you know, get him 'bout. Good tucker. He like a
253 yam again. All bin get him about before, but I don't know about
254 this time. Too much might be this one [BG* indicates dealing of
255 cards], just sitting down all day. All bin alde sit down, get him
256 'bout everything, all day. When that, mine, early husband bin
257 finished, I never go away, no way. I bin just sit down, thinking
258 about him all day. When him bin tell im me, 'Give im up,' you
259 know, 'stop im up, give im up'. Sit down, and I bin forget now.
260 Forget about it now. Sit down now, good. Sit down him 'bout, all
261 day now, all, everywhere, walk around, dig. Had im longa
262 Wyndham yet, that la Auvergne, init, Auvergne, that. No more bin
263 go anywhere la saltwater, nup, I never want to go, some of them
264 fella go, fishing, all that. Not me, I never want to go. Because I bin
265 find that thing now, y'know. [Laughs]
266 CR*: What that?
267 BG*: That alligator now, under the log, you know. That's why I bin
268 frightened. I never go. All day. They bin all get him 'bout fishing,
269 barramundi, barramundi, anything, and shark, anything. _
270 [inaudible].
271 CR*: When you came back from East Arm did you come back here, to
272 Kildurk, or?
273 BG*: Mmm. I never bin go to Auvergne now, I bin come back to here.
274 Back to this one, y'know.
275 CR*: So after East Arm, back here?
276 BG*: Back here.
277 CR*: And you bin working here then?
278 BG*: No, I bin pension off now, y'know. No more bin work.
280 CR*: And you're still here.
281 BG*: I'm still here. Never go away, anyway. When I bin come back from
282 hospital, you know. When I bin la hospital, I bin have im mine baby
283 la hospital again, you know.
284 CR*: Ah, you had baby in East Arm?
BG*: Hmm. I had my little son, you know. But he's finished. This the one now. Garram my grandchildren, you know. His daughter, for my son['s] daughter, I garram here now. I bin have im all the way along, him big, him la school now, you know. He had a tupala, [girl's name] and boy. Boy and girl. Well, I think they bin, I don't know what they bin do, la, might be la drinking place, they bin kill him. Might be throw him la water, anything. They reckon they bin throw him la water. La Katherine. My son. Chuck him in la water, this one [BG* indicates drinking of alcohol].

CR*: Oh right. Drinking?

BG*: Hmm. Chuck him in the water. Finished.

CR*: Who chucked him in the water?

BG*: I don't know, one of them. That Katherine mob.

CR*: That no good.

BG*: No good la grog, all right. Only bin one son, that's all, no more. Only one.

CR*: At East Arm was there a big mob of young kids and babies?

BG*: Too many. All the boy, you know. Little girl, young boy, they bin la school.

CR*: Oh, they have a school there?

BG*: At East Arm? Yeah! They bin have im school. Nothing now, this time, East Arm. All to Winim now, they _ [inaudible] , you know. They bin only sitting down all there. Teach im every time, longa Winim school. School teacher bin there too longa East Arm.

CR*: Who bin there?

BG*: La East Arm, you know, teacher bla, give im them kids la school. They bin love la school, never miss. Good la school. Good, sit down him 'bout all day there, sitting down, you know, working. When I bin come back from East Arm to here, I never work now, nothing. Sit down now. I bin give up, pension off now. No work now, nothing. Some of them bin working still. Not me.

CR*: But you're still looking after grandchildren?

BG*: Mine? Yeah.

CR*: What you gotta do for them, each day?

BG*: I bin stop im runaway, you know. Have to tell him not to run, run in the night anywhere, nup. And telling him: 'If I get you anyway I got to flog you, no little bit,' I tell him. _ [girl's name] notice, he stay.

CR*: And you make a breakfast?

BG*: Him bin get up this morning, make him, put im on kettle, boil im up, make im tea, bring im to me. 'Come on now,' him reckon, 'all have im breakfast now'. I bin have im bit of breakfast and him bin have a wash. Went to school now. He coming now, that one now. He always do the good job for me. He look after me well too.

CR*: That little boy?

BG*: And girl mine now. He look after me. That boy one, still la Winim yet, Lajamanu. Him la him old grandpa now. That the one bin have im ... When I bin come back here I bin just stay la camp now, camping that way la on top. House bin that way now. Camp, you know, that side, like that, that hill you can see him?

CR*: The other side of that homestead?

BG*: That the hill, you know. Well camping that side now, before. After they bin move im here, y'know. Sit down here then.

CR*: What that camp bin like? Just humpy or house? Did you have a house over there?

BG*: Yeah.

CR*: Or just a humpy?
BG*: No more. Little, one room, you know, house, like that my home, you know, when I live in that house. That kind of a house we bin have im, like that. That side, you know. Oh, it good there. No anything, anything, fight about anything. Nothing. Good. Here alright, all about little bit fight about [Laughs]. Always sitting down good. I bin alright, good all the way, right up, right up to I’m here now, buggered up now. Get old. Only my girl look after me, now. He look after me really good. He don’t trouble me for anything, he gotta cook my meat, anything, make my tea, pick im up me, and no go away, leave me.
INTERVIEW DD29

Recorded with DD*
at Amanbidji Station, Northern Territory
CR*: You right now?

DD*: What I gotta say again?

CR*: Yeah.

DD*: No. What have to start? I'm ah yini [DD*], Ngalyirri, yinima, Ngalyirri. Born longa Argyle, Kalimpa. Richard ngamayi. Richard. Old Durack, young Durack bin there. Young fella yet, Reggie Durack, Harry Durack, Mary Durack, Betty Durack, they bin all young fella yet. We bin little girl, longa Argyle. Me and my father bin there, mother, and that, after that I bin come to married, come up la Newry now. I bin find im all the kurtutu there now yapa-yapa, mine wilijijang. I bin work longa Eric, no, Hector Fuller. Yalangurlungma Tom Ronan, boss.

Yalangurlungma I bin finish now, pull out, Auvergne-girri. Now Fogarty, Mrs Camille [Fogarty]. Lloyd Fogarty. Yeah, and all have im work every year ironing clothes, iron im clothes, wash im clothes, working longa kitchen. Marnaj. Yalangurlungma I bin, I bin find im yapa. [JR*]. I bin retired now, pension up, now Mrs Fogarty bin leave im me. Alright, Yalangurlungma he bin tell im me 'Alright, you fella gotta shift out now. La Bulla.' Well, I bin talk la missus 'No, we go to Kildurk, longa [EH*], My daughter'. Yalangurlungma mintupala oldman bin umm [inaudible]. Stop here longa Durack now. When him bin manager here, ol' Reg Durack. Bin sit down, pension up, now. [HC*]. [inaudible] [HC*] belonga me now. I bin olgaman now. Marnaj. Yalangurlungma, I bin find im, tupala yapa wurri here me now. Sit down. And from there I bin sit down, holiday. Alright, I bin go longa, when I bin get sick, now, I bin go to East Arm, now, East Arm I bin go. When we bin have im that sickness, East Arm, they [inaudible]. Durack bin send im me longa East Arm, Darwin. Mipala bin sit down [alongside] [family name of principal Amanbidji landowners] mob. Bi:ig mob from Kildurk, Rosewood. We bin there. All meet up together. And after then, when I bin finish, Durack bin, umm, Doctor Elliott bin tell me, 'When you're finished, right, you can go back Kildurk again'. I bin come back Kildurk now. And him bin tell im mipala, 'No more East Arm, here now. Youfella gotta have im East Arm la Katherine now, that big hospital'. That the big hospital. Him name East Arm again. From there we go East Arm longa Kildurk, sit down 'bout there now. I bin have im yapa, all this one. [JR*].

Yalangurlungma, when I bin finish hospital, I bin come back now. Come back Kildurk-jirri now, malanga now. Right through now. Till this nother manager bin come up, we bin still sit down yet, when Durack bin go away. I don't, what that karitja now, forget that name now. After that, what that manager, forget all this one now. After that, what you call im then, this, who this, [KB*]. [KB*] bin come up then. Well, we altogether sit down altogether here now. We get im 'bout pensioner here now, y'know. Alright. [Pause]

CR*: Finish?

DD*: Finish.
INTERVIEW DP30

Recorded with DP*
at Amanbidji Station, Northern Territory
December, 1993
CR*: Right. Anytime you want to start. He right now.

DP*: Yeah. I bin born up here, place named Watikuwa, see and I bin
grow up in this bush, till I bin big boy, till I bin big boy. And we
went out here, Tapaksas Hole, [during] _ [BP*] time, you know.
And old Tas Fitzer bin pick us up there. Old policeman.

CR*: Timber Creek policeman?

DP*: Timber Creek police. And my ...

CR*: What was that place he picked you up from?

DP*: Over here. Little Pumuntu. And took me to Timber Creek. We was
work there awhile. My father was gardener. After, we went [to]
Auvergne.

CR*: Was Matt Wilson still at the Depot then?

DP*: Who?


DP*: Yeah, he was up, old _ [inaudible] station. Used to be there.

CR*: So you were working at the Depot?

DP*: No, only Timber Creek. And we went to Auvergne. Old Shadforth
just the manager there. And we bin stay there for awhile, and my
brother, _ [PF*], he was a kid. I was kid too. We went to garden,
steal im them tomato. Alright, old Shadforth seen me and _ [PF*].
Well, _ [PF*] got the hiding and that night my father bin take me,
runtaway. Runaway, see. Next morning they have a look around
now: 'No. He's gone'. I went to Newry. Old Hector Fuller's the
manager, Newry. Worked there for awhile, and went to Waterloo,
holiday time, and we got a job there again. Who that maluga bin
there? Old ...

PW*: Dick Hayes.

DP*: Old Dick Hayes. Used to bin managing that Waterloo. I bin get a
job there. Work around.

PW*: That not too long [ago].

DP*: No. After, now, after, I bin big boy now. Start riding horse. Met up
with _ [PW*] there. Working there, and right through. Old Dick
used to take me spaying cattle, spay im 'bout cow. To Daguragu,
Wave Hill. Spay all 'round there. Dick bin take me. Back to
Waterloo, stay around there, work la stock camp. And after my
brother _ [GP*], he stop, [on] holiday. From Newry, [he, ie GP*
did] come garram horse. Come garram horse to Waterloo, get my
father and me. We went back to Newry again, and work there now.

CR*: Who was there at Newry?

DP*: Old Hector Fuller.

CR*: Oh, still there.

DP*: Alright, I bin Newry, I bin work there, long time. When Hector
Fuller bin go away, we had old Tom Ronan.

CR*: Oh, right.

DP*: See. Him bin manager, and I bin still there. Well, after Tom Ronan
...

CR*: What that Tom Ronan like?

DP*: Good old man. After that, Stan Wilson bin come. And we still work
with that Stan Wilson. I bin big boy now. Riding horse, droving.
Used to come there and ask im, [if] drover was too short a man,
[then I'd] give im a hand to Wyndham. Droving down there, and
back to Newry. We used to have our own pack horse and all, la
droving. And come back to Newry, and we went from there. After
Tom Ronan, Mr Stan Wilson bin come. He from Queensland.
Worked for Stan, Stan went away, we had that, who that young
fella now ...

PW*: Keith Landsdowne.
DP*: Keith Landsdowne. He in Katherine somewhere now. Work for him. After, I went to, went getting bull-catching out Bullo River now. We never knock im down with a motor-car we used to throw. Throw the bull. Tie im up, and big truck there, load im up. And take im to place named Keep River. Trucking yard there, we used to put the bull there.

CR*: That pretty dangerous work that?

DP*: Yeah, you gotta throw im down. No bull-catching Toyota. You gotta chase im and just jump up and grab im.

CR*: With your bare hands?

DP*: Yeah. I bin work bull-catching, finish. Righto, old man died there [at] Bullo River. Old, what that maluga now?

PW*: Old Henderson.

DP*: Old Henderson, he come from America too. Well Henderson says to me: 'You gotta get a cattle'. Righto, I might make up somewhere. I went knocking all the young migi and young cow, throw im down, with a plant horse. Mix im up them horse, might be ten or twelve, take im back to yard, where yard is, Sandy Creek. Feed im up there, quieten im up. I bin make up more, score, throw im every afternoon, you know, when the cattle comin' in. Throw im down more, mix im up. I bin make a big mob of cattle from there, drove im back through Bullo River now, through the gap. Keep picking up wild cattle. Oh we bin make big mob, right back to Bullo River. Same old man, he said 'Very good'. Right, I bin droving from Bullo River to this place here, West Baines, you savvy that old, old yard there.

CR*: Ah, I haven't seen. Have I seen ...?

DP*: He this side the bitumen. Start trucking yard there. Droving cattle from there, bullock. Bring im in there and truck im. Old Charlie Henderson used to come and land la that road, garram aeroplane from Bullo River. Bring some tucker, and after dinner knock im back, send im back. All the young fella take the horses back, and me and Charlie la aeroplane going back to Bullo River. He always like me, that old man. And all his daughter.

[ST* farts twice. The other men present, i.e. PW* and PK*, laugh.]

DP*: Well I bin there for him for old Charlie, for long time, and went back to Newry again. And after, they got this place, old Reggie Durack bin sell this place now to all the Ngarinyman mob. I had to come back to this place.

CR*: After he sold it?

DP*: My place now. I want to stay here now.

CR*: Yeah. And you bin here ever since.

DP*: Hey?

CR*: And you bin here ever since?

DP*: Ever since. Still here today, see. Till you bin come out.

CR*: Yeah.

ST*: That the finish.

CR*: That the finish?

DP*: And my old father, died at Newry, and my mother died here.

CR*: Here at this station?

DP*: Yeah.

CR*: And when you came back after Reggie Durack sold the place, was the camp here, or still the other side?

DP*: No, other old station, other side there. He had a place there first, he bin under water see. He had to come here ...

CR*: Yeah, and then he come here ...

DP*: ... and this place bin on big spring here, big spring.
CR*: And people bin camping here in this spot or they bin camping other side?
DP*: They bin camping here.
CR*: They bin camping here when you came back?
DP*: Durack bin have that place up there.
CR*: And how long you bin have this house?
DP*: Oh, not too long.
CR*: Yeah? New one?
DP*: We used to have old house, see them old house there. Some fella bin all fall down now.
CR*: Up the back there?
DP*: Yeah.
CR*: Oh, right.
DP*: You can see that old cement up there?
CR*: Yeah.
DP*: That Durack made that himself.
CR*: Oh, right.
ST*: [inaudible].
CR*: Alright. That it?
DP*: That's all.
CR*: Alright. Let's play him back.
INTERVIEW PP31

Recorded with PP*
at Amanbidji Station, Northern Territory
June, 1994
INTERVIEW PP31

PP*: You know, old man MP Durack?
CR*: Yeah.
PP*: He was the boss for four stations.
CR*: Right.
PP*: For Newry, Auvergne, Ivanhoe, Argyle. He was the boss, y'know.
CR*: Yep.
PP*: Alright, his boundary, his border, him country bin right up to Waterloo station, that side. We call him blackfella name, Putayij.
CR*: Putayij?
PP*: That's...
CR*: That over that way?
PP*: Hmm. That side la Waterloo.
CR*: Oh, right.
PP*: That's the Putayij. That the boundary for Durack. Old MP.
CR*: Right, that's his boundary?
PP*: Yeah.
CR*: He don't go past there?
PP*: No, that his border.
CR*: Yep.
PP*: And that old man, [his land went] right up [to] this one la Matpangka, Bamboo Spring. This way, got a big mob of bamboo. Got everything, they can make a spear there. Right, we used to walk down, cut im all that bamboo, and cart everything down la Pumuntu. Alright, he used to floodwater there, and we used to go down la that high place, ah, that, Jupjupatatiti, Jupjupiti, Jupjupatatiti. We used to go down there and cross the river this side, and go la that little island. That's where the biggest holiday camp [was].
CR*: Oh, right.
PP*: Alright, we all bin there, all the family for _ [PP*'s father's name]. Only kid. Me and _ [AP*] bin only kid. And _ [MP*], _ [NP*], and my big brother. Two brother. This 'nother one here, him belonga Miriwung side, he [ie GP*] got him mother [from the] Miriwung [people], and mipala, belonga real Ngarinyman.
CR*: Yeah, mother and father.
PP*: Yeah. But this one [ie GP*] older than mipalas; father bin find im before mipalas. And that mean he the first son for that, for _ [PP*'s father's name].
CR*: Right.
PP*: [Laughs] Yeah. Alright, we used to go, longa Tee Dee [Hill], Partapa. We used to stay there la Partapa, camp [for] two night.
CR*: Tee Dee Hill?
PP*: Yeah, Tee Dee Hill. That billabong named Partapa, and that Tee Dee Hill, that kartiya name. Blackfella name Ngarraljangan.
CR*: Ngarral...
PP*: Ngarraljangan.
CR*: Ngarraljangan.
PP*: Yuwai. Alright, we used to camp there, might be two day or three night, have a spell, coming up straight up, la Waterloo Creek. Same way, swimming. No boat.
CR*: Yeah?
PP*: [Laughs] Only swimming. Cross the river, this side. We used to make him camp longa Ngamurlji. This side now, Ngamurlji. That Bringle Paddock. We used to camp there, two day. Right we used to shift again, come up walk all the way, cart im up billycan, cart im up everything, mipalas, poor bugger. All the little one. And father cart im up bamboo, oh, big, big bamboo [for making] spear. And
mother cart im up big swag, like [PP* puts her hands above her head], y’know. Cart im up like that.

PP*: Coming up, coming up all the way, down this way now, la this camp. Coming from Blue Hole, camp.

CR*: Oh right. Over to the west? Over where the sun come up?

PP*: Yeah. This side, y’know.

CR*: Yeah.

PP*: That road from Blue Hole?

CR*: Oh, yeah.

PP*: Motor car road. That road bin there. He never use im got a grader and bulldozer, that’s all. Got a wagon wheel, y’know.

CR*: Oh right. Properly old day, eh?

PP*: Yeah. Proper old day that Reggie Durack used to do that. And Reggie Durack, he never here, he bin la old station.

CR*: Right. Stewart Yard?

PP*: Yeah, Stewart Yard.

CR*: Oh, right.

PP*: He bin there. Alright, well every big rain, that Baines River [would rise] up, y’know. Well, him bin shift, that old man. Come up here, la Miyaluni.

CR*: Yeah.

PP*: Ngamanpiji. They call him that Ngamanpiji that hill. _ [inaudible].

CR*: Oh, right.

PP*: That Ngamanpiji. This Miyaluni here [PP* indicates towards the centre of the community].

CR*: Miyaluni here?

PP*: Yeah. This office. We got an office. We got new one, this one.

CR*: Ah, that new one there?

PP*: Hmm.

CR*: Right. That Miyaluni?

PP*: Miyaluni.

CR*: After that spring? The name of that spring, used to have here?

PP*: Miyaluni?

CR*: Yeah.

PP*: Yeah. After this one. Yeah, he used to spring, before.

CR*: Yeah.

PP*: Before, y’know, ah [when] mipala bin kid.

CR*: Yeah.

PP*: But nothing this time [ie now].

CR*: And that Ngamanpiji the name of that hill?


CR*: Ngamanpuru. What that mean?

PP*: Ngamanpuru?

CR*: Yeah.

PP*: You know that conkerberry?

CR*: Yeah.

PP*: That the Dreaming time. That hill now.

CR*: Right.

PP*: Ngamanpuru.

CR*: Ngamanpuru. Why they call him Ngamanpiji?

PP*: But, they call him Ngamanpiji. Him same one la Ngamanpuru.

CR*: Ah, same thing?

PP*: Yeah.

CR*: Oh, right.

PP*: They call im Ngamanpuru.

CR*: He got two name.
PP*: Because some of them kartiya can't call im Ngamanpuru. They too rough, y'know [Laughs].

CR*: Yeah.

PP*: They'll have to call im Ngamanpiji. Yeah. Alright, we used to walk from there, straight up to Manpit, that point there [PP* indicates a hill to the north].

CR*: Oh yeah. That one up there?

PP*: Yeah.

CR*: That big hill.

PP*: Yeah. This high one. From there camp two, three days la Manpit. Right, next morning, we used to go Kenivan Yard.

CR*: Oh, yeah.


CR*: Turlturl.

PP*: Yuwat. Turlturl. Sit down there three days. Right, walk from there, walk from there for the Salis Hole. La Black Hill, y'know.

CR*: Oh yeah.

PP*: Hmm. Walk there now, this time. But no more bin bore before, nothing.

CR*: Yeah.

PP*: We used to stay there, go down la that little Creek, y'know.

CR*: Right.

PP*: Sort of a, not big river, small river. And got a big mob of turtle, here longa, what that place over there?

MP*: Munyunyili.  

PP*: Yeah. Munyunyili.

MP*: Munyunyili that place, little one.

PP*: Munyunyilima. Too many turtle.

MP*: Too many turtle.

CR*: Yeah.

PP*: You can make a hole [in the dried mud] that side. You'll still get him all the turtle.

MP*: Too much. We gotta go there, init?

PP*: No road. Nothing. And we bin there all the time. I bin la Kununurra, staying there. Yeah.

CR*: Yeah. That finish?

PP*: Yeah.

CR*: Yeah? We stop him there?

PP*: Hmm.

CR*: Alright.
INTERVIEW MP32

Recorded with MP*
at Amanbidji Station, Northern Territory
June, 1994
CR*: Alright, this is _[MP*].
MP*: Alright, him [Archie Skeethorpe] bin shoe im up horses, y’know.
CR*: Yeah?
MP*: Him bin shoe im up la yard. Not la yard, y’know. Longa Sandy Camp.
CR*: Oh, yeah.
MP*: My father bin there too, youngest one, y’know. Last one. Alright, tupala bin shoe im up now. Nothing. That horse bin kick him, y’know. Him bin put it him right there [MP* indicates the side of her face]. Finish. After that, my father bin worryin’ bout it now. [About that] Head stockman [ie Skeethorpe]. Him bin good boss for him. Him bin proper worry for him.
CR*: Right.
MP*: Alright, him bin sit down now, working. Him bin go away, leave that place. Because he bin lose im his boss. He bin come away now. La bush. That’s why he never stay there.
CR*: Okay. That it?
MP*: Yeah.
CR*: That it. Anymore to that story? That finish?
INTERVIEW MP33

Recorded with MP*
at Amanbidji Station, Northern Territory
June, 1994
Alright, this is, story about Dead Man's Gap, by [MP*]. Okay.

Alright, him bin travelling from Auvergne. Come this way. Him bin go wrong place, y'know, he oughta bin go this way through longa, what-you-call-him ...

Kampajin.

Kampajinma, but him bin go wrong place. Rain time too, y'know. Hot weather. Him bin go through longa that Gap. Alright, him bin make im camp there. That horse bin cripple too. Him bin cripple and finish. Die, that horse. Alright, that old man bin stay there now. Alright, this lot blackfella bin there too.

Bush blackfella. We bin camping this side, longa hill.

Yeah.

We bin watchin' 'bout, allabout. They bin go longa hi:im. Talk-talk longa him. That old man. Talk-talk longa him. 'Me proper hungry. Starve, for sugar,' [the kariya said]. Him bin have im tea-leaf. They bin cut im 'bout sugar bag for him. They bin cut im 'bout sugar bag. They bin feed im up him, y'know. Him bin put im la tea, y'know. Sugar, y'know.

Oh.

Tea leaf. This lot [ie GP*, DP*, NP*, etc] nothing yet [ie were not born]. Only me, that's all.

Oh. Who this one [indicating a child, aged ten]?

[name of child].

[name of child].

Like a this one now.

Oh, right.

Yeah, alright, that old man bin there. Him bin feeling sick now. He proper old man, y'know. Him bin big rain too, y'know.

Yeah.

He couldn't go anywhere, now. They bin only keep mind im him, y'know. Alright when this [other] lot [of ngumpin] bin go, we bin come this side, now. We bin come through here.

[name of child].

Yeah. Longa Mutjal. Longa Mutjal now we bin camp.

Mutjal?

Yeah. Floodwater bin run im too. Proper. Alright, that old man bin stay there. Him bin finished. Poor bugger. Alright, we bin go this way now. Longa Mutjal we bin camp. We bin just sit down. Yeah, we bin la Mutjal. Right, old man, my father [said]: "Oh, we'll have to swim across". Go down there then we bin swim across. Longa Barramundi Hole. Go down there.

Yeah.

Oh, he bin proper banker, y'know.

Oh, right.

Too frightened.

Big flood?

Yeah.

That bin before. No boat.

Yeah.

No boat, y'know.

Yeah.

Even dinghy. Nothing.

Right.

Him bin put im me this way, my father. [PP* indicates with her arm]. Old man bin put im me longa shoulder.
CR*: Oh, he put you on his shoulder?
[PP* and CR* laugh]
MP*: Alright, from there we bin cross over. We bin go longa Kaparn.
Camp there. Alright, we bin follow im that Kaparn creek now,
come out longa Warlmangkarl. We bin sit down about there now.
Tuckin' out sugar bag. Ground sugar bag, and lillies they bin alla
get im 'bout.
PP*: Water lilly.
MP*: Water lilly. Old people get im 'bout.
CR*: Jikamaru?
PP*: Jikamaru, yeah.
MP*: Jikamaru mangarri. Alright, we bin singin' about for that old man
now, poor bugger: 'He might be finished now'. Somefella bin go
this way. Alright. We bin follow him that creek now, higher up.
That one got him, what-you-call-him …
PP*: Through the Pajama?
MP*: Yeah. Through the Pajama.
PP*: Yeah.
MP*: From there we bin go, climb up longa what-you-call-him now, we
bin go up here longa _ [inaudible].
PP*: Yeah. Big rockhole, garram crocodile.
MP*: Big rockhole, garram crocodile.
PP*: Too many, too many fish, too many barra[mundi], too many turtle,
this place. We can't starve. [ie There was plenty of food.] But we
haven't got a motor car, nothing.
MP*: Nothing.
PP*: This time [ie today], nothing [ie we can't get there]. Early mob
alright I think [to travel through this country]. Because him proper
sandstone. Proper wild country. Poor bugger.
MP*: From there, we bin go longa Warlarngka. We bin camping there
now longa Warlarngka.
PP*: What that yini Warlarngka?
MP*: Warlarngka!
PP*: Yeah, Warlarngka.
MP*: Yeah. This one here, Karangkata. Warlarngka. Yalangurlungmaku
PP*: Mankanti. Rockhole, this side.
CR*: Right.
MP*: Yeah. Too many fish there.
CR*: He got whitefella name or nothing?
MP*: Nothing. No whitefella name. From there we bin go, we bin camp
two night, that old man bin take im mipala, y'know.
CR*: Right.
MP*: My father. This 'nother one bin little one then, longa paperbark.
CR*: Right.
MP*: This one here.
PW*: _ [GP*].
MP*: Yeah. That one bin pick im up, me.
PP*: That the first son for that.
MP*: Yeah.
PP*: For _ [GP*’s father’s name].
CR*: Yeah.
MP*: Him bin born la him.
PP*: Him bin only second.
MP*: Yuwari.
PP*: We got a Ngarinyman from mother and he got a Miriwung mother.
CR*: Yeah.

MP*: Marntaj. Alright, from there we bin go, from Mankanti, Punpilija.

Punpilija, camp three day, tuckin' out fish [and] jikamaru.

CR*: Yeah.

MP*: We bin go footwalk, all the way. From there, now, we bin come up here.

PP*: We bin come back this way or ...

MP*: Hmm? No. We bin go that way, now. La Pikita way.

CR*: Long time ago?

MP*: Yeah. Long time ago. We bin go right across, longa Parntajarra.

PP*: Coming in longa Pumuntu.

MP*: Pumuntu now.

CR*: Right.

MP*: Coming in la Pumuntu. That one, Pumuntu. Big camp there now.

PP*: Yeah.

CR*: Right.

MP*: Never go away from there. Pumuntu.

CR*: This all in that Wet season, eh?

MP*: Yeah. Oh, that plum, y'know. Too much tucker.

CR*: Yeah. Alright, finish him there?

MP*: Yeah.
INTERVIEW PW34

Recorded with PW*
at Amanbidji Station, Northern Territory
June, 1994
PW*: I bin born in Waterloo station. I bin born there la Waterloo station because my old father he come from Borroloola way, y'know. Old _ [father's name]. He come all the way from there and married my old mother, y'know. When him find im me and my sister bin, she bin passed away now. And my brother I think, same mother, my big brother bin die here somewhere. They bin kill im.

MP*: Yeah. He bin the sick bella garram _ [inaudible].

PW*: But I bin, when I bin longa Waterloo, when I little boy, I bin grew up there, right up till, till when from fifteen to sixteen. I bin, my father put me la horse when I was sixteen, y'know. After that I bin learn to ride a horse. Right up till when I was eighteen. I bin still there working. And when I bin get up to ah nineteen and y'know kartiya couldn't find a horsebreaker to break im in horse there, he had to put me in, break im in horse for station like, y'know. I bin there for break im in horse. Well I bin finish, but it was in after the New Year, y'know. Oh we start im camp, muster im bullocky, y'know. Go around longa every country. Like he never bin chopper that time. Only all the horse, pack horse like, y'know. Go around, and bring im back and send im to Wyndham meatworks. Oh, might be six hundred or seven hundred bullock, y'know. And half we cut im out and leave im la paddock.

CR*: For next year?

PW*: No, might be 'nother couple of weeks time, y'know. When 'nother mob of drover come in. From there ... And I bin born la old station y'know, and that old station, him name, blackfella name, old Waterloo station, old Kulangarlp.  

MP*: Yuwai.  

PW*: Kulangarlp, that old station.  

MP*: Poor bugger.  

PW*: And that hill over there, big hill, right alongside that big main road going up that way. Ah, that Pulnalk. You know that Pulnalk what they call im, that bush name they give it ah, possum. Possum plenty la Darwin, eh. Eh? Possum you know? When he get up la tree? And possum kartiya call him and blackfella call him jangana. And that day, that country, too much la that country, and bandicoot too, y'know. Y'know, what they get in the grass, them bandicoot they go off like a wallaby. Big mob in that country because my father and mother tell me 'bout it. And people from all that, come all way 'round, bin working there, y'know, when I bin little boy. Then when I bin get up to eighteen some fella bin passed away then. Old people. And that day was very hard too, y'know, no money we bin working, y'know. And when I bin get up somewhere about to nineteen, that Welfare bin come 'round then. He come around and talk to the people: 'Might be some time, three or four months time, we do something about find you money'. Yeah, and this old man, he might be passed away now, old Ted Evans, Welfare, in Darwin.

CR*: Which one?

PW*: Ted Evans. He might be kungal now. That's the one bin bring im out money to give it out people, y'know, give it to the manager like, y'know. So, 'We'll have to, the old people bin working too long'.

MP*: 'We'll have to pay ...'

PW*: 'We'll have to pay im, poor bugger.' They bin only leaving us the bread and beef and clothes, y'know. Very hard, that day. And you know them swag? When you use im, and roll im up and put the name
and put im back la store and we go walkabout? And [when] we come
back we pick out that same swag. Him bin very hard. That day,
y'know, _ [GP*_] was talking 'bout.
CR*: So you had no swag for the Wet season. So what you do for a swag?
PW*: Ah well, we bin go out, little bit of a swag cover they bin only give us,
y'know. Not really like, y'know. Go out that way, we come back, start
work, they got them same clothes, everything like that. That was very
hard y'know. Hard day. It was very hard, and after that, when that thing
bin come on now, that money, old Welfare bin give it out la we. Give it
to the station manager to pay the people, y'know. Little bit of money all
the way, till he bin grow big and big then. Everyway we bin get a big
money then. So we bin alright now. The hawker used to come round,
hawker man from Mt Isa, y'know. Buy some things off la him. Yeah
we alright, when I get up. And we bin only muster im bullocky
everything like that there, sell im la meatwork, and them store, come
back, y'know. Big mob money for tucker and things like that; fill him
up store. Well, we bin really alright now.
CR*: This was back in Vesty time?
PW*: Vesty time. Yeah. Him bin very hard. Some white man, we had a
cheeky fella too, y'know. Fight la people, like a this. [If you were to]
Do wrong thing, fight. Or get the police. That day, y'know. Anything
go wrong, might be people get too cheeky, y'know, native people. They
get a policeman [to] belt im like a dog. Tie im up la tree.
MP*: By Christ ...
PW*: I tell you, it's true.
MP*: Before.
PW*: This day, they got a free going now. They only go prison, and do their
time, or community job, y'know. But not that early days. He tell him,
he tell him, policeman tell him, he tell him all the time that old man bin
die now, policeman: 'Righto George, grab that boy, bring im up here.
Tie im up and get a bloody stick and belt the shit out of him'. I tell you
it's true, you can tell these two olgaman here.
MP*: Yeah. That true.
PP*: Tie im up like a dog ...
PW*: Just like a dog, and belt im.
PP*: Against the tree.
PW*: Against the tree.
MP*: Blood everywhere.
PW*: Yeah. Bleeding everywhere. They didn't care who, kill him, die, or
nothing. It was very hard, eh?
CR*: Yeah.
PW*: Very hard that day.
MP*: Very hard.
CR*: Which policeman that?
PW*: That old Gordon Stott. Timber Creek.
MP*: No ...
PW*: I don't know who first time, but after, that old Gordon Stott, him bin
still have that idea, all the way.
MP*: Yeah.
PW*: Follow on, you know. Belt im, no matter where. No matter what
station [they were at]. They had that same idea.
PW*: Even Turkey Creek, or somewhere else. Wyndham like, same thing.
   Belt im, and make im slave. Work, y'know. That was very hard
   y'know.
MP*: This lot of young people _[inaudible].
PW*: And today, now the young people get the easy going.
MP*: Yuwai.
PW*: Y'know they have a ... oh, they can do what they like. But they gotta
   get that early days, second early day, I mean. Policeman is very hard.
   One little trouble, he grab im and belt the shit out of him. Lay im,
   bloody half dead, him kill im. These two olgaman can tell you.
MP*: Yeah.
PW*: They all with me.
PP*: Rough.
PW*: Rough going. That's all about story I can tell you, maluga.
CR*: Good story. Stop him there?
PW* Hmm.
INTERVIEW PW35

Recorded with PW*
at Katherine, Northern Territory
September, 1995
PW*: Yeah. All that story.

CR*: Just um, you bin riding a horse and you just start breaking in horse and all that sort of stuff.

PW*: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

CR*: Ah, the bit I'm interested in really is when you were about eighteen or nineteen, working at Waterloo Station.

PW*: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

CR*: So at that time ...

PW*: Yeah, I get you.

CR*: Were there people from Wave Hill at Waterloo Station?

PW*: Yeah.

CR*: Any Gurindji people?

PW*: Oh, some Gurindji people working Waterloo too, y'know. And they went back there.

CR*: They went back to Wave Hill?

PW*: Hmm.

CR*: How come they working at Waterloo?

PW*: Oh well, some of them people bin like, y'know, Vestey bin like, short of man like, y'know. Short of bloke. They send im up there to help us. Work awhile. Till, ah, we bin okay. Well, they go back.

CR*: They bring their wives from ...?

PW*: Yeah. They bring their wife, yeah.

CR*: They didn't get married to any Waterloo girls?

PW*: No, no. No. They have their wife somewhere. Wave Hill way.

CR*: Oh, right.

PW*: Gurindji way. We bin working Waterloo for long time. That was, ah, about, we bin, ah, start off with the ... when I was sixteen my father used to put me on the horse when I was sixteen year old boy, y'know.

CR*: Yeah.

PW*: Teach me how to ride a horse, like that, y'know. And see, my father teach me to ride a horse, after hunt im the cattle, anything like that.

CR*: Did you do any of that work before you were sixteen?

PW*: Yeah, ah before I bin sixteen I bin longa this sort of one, station, y'know.

CR*: Yeah. Doing the horse-tailing job?

PW*: Yeah, something like, looking after the horse, give a hand longa horse-tailer. And the horse-tailer bring im horse in the morning and I get my horse and ... [inaudible] evening, y'know. All that job, learn.

CR*: That a good job?

PW*: Good job, yeah. But that day was no more, no more money, y'know. Just only bread and beef, like that.

CR*: Oh, hard day.

PW*: Yeah. When you go holiday time, you just get your, fill your ration and go bush. [That's all] They used to give us, then. But when I bin get up from sixteen to seventeen well I bin know how to ride a horse. See all the people have to ride horse.

CR*: Right.

PW*: And after, we went to Wave Hill to get a horse from ... ah Vestey used to buy some horse from Queensland, y'know?

CR*: Right.

PW*: Somewhere around, what the first time ... Moorstone. Sell im horse from Moorstone from that, some other place, like, y'know. They don't get im them thoroughbred horse they, y'know, they get im, trap im in the bush. Y'know them wild brumby?
CR*: Oh yeah.
PW*: Trap im in the ... and after, get im out there, trap im in the water all like, y'know.
CR*: Trap im?
PW*: Longa water, y'know?
CR*: Oh yeah.
PW*: Dry weather time when they come in for water.
CR*: Oh, right.
PW*: They got a trap there. Shut up, y'know.
CR*: Oh, yeah.
PW*: When they come in, he can't get out.
CR*: Was this, um, Limbunya Station or Waterloo Station?
PW*: No, this ...
CR*: Oh, this is up north, eh?
PW*: Yeah. Queensland. Moorstone and some other place.
CR*: Moorstone?
PW*: And they get im the horse, bin rope down there allabout. Ah, after that, ah, sell im horse then. Send im to every Vestey Station, y'know?
CR*: Right.
PW*: Wave Hill get im two hundred horse. Some other place, Mistake Creek, Ord River. 'Nother two hundred come to Waterloo.
CR*: Yeah.
PW*: Oh, we had a good time, y'know. That day.
CR*: You have to break im in all them ...
PW*: Oh yeah, some of them they break im in there, some of them come unbroken, y'know.
CR*: Right. How many days would it take you to break in a horse? You do it all in one day or it take you couple of days?
PW*: Oh, they, only about ah three days.
CR*: Three days to break in horse.
PW*: Yeah, longa good man, like, y'know.
CR*: What do you do that first day?
PW*: First day you get im horse, quiet horse and let that coach[er, ie the quiet horse pacify the] unbroken horse and just take im round and round la yard, y'know? Round yard?
CR*: Yeah.
PW*: Big round yard. And you got that halter there, you got your halter, eh?
CR*: Tied to a rope or ...?
PW*: Not yet.
CR*: Not yet.
PW*: Ah, left hand side first. When he come around riding, well you see, put im on his head and buckle im up in the throat, y'know.
CR*: Oh, yeah.
PW*: And after you get that rope and put im under his head. Chin strap.
CR*: Oh, yeah.
PW*: And finish and you get off your horse; off your old horse like, _ [inaudible] horse, y'know. And when you get down his, put a hobble on it.
CR*: Put a hobble on him?
PW*: Put the hobble on him. Well, after that you pull your old horse away and you get that, hang onto that halter for a second, bag im with the bag.
CR*: Put a bag over his head?
PW*: No [laughs], just...

CR*: No [laughs].

PW*: Give im like, y'know. Well, he can't, he can't jump around, like.

You don't want that hobble, y'know.

CR*: Oh, right.

PW*: Well, he stand up quiet now.

CR*: So you'd go up to them. Put bag on his face?

PW*: Yeah. And last time, last time you _[inaudible]_ on him then. _[inaudible]_ on him, tackle him, _[inaudible]_ him back. You put that thing in.

CR*: Yeah? Bridle?


CR*: Right. That's the third day is it?

PW*: The third day.

[Pause.]

PW*: That horse can't gallop away. He gotta come back to his mate [ie the coacher]. I bin pretty good on that, y'know.

CR*: Yeah.

PW*: Because I seen my father do that.

CR*: So you watch what he done...

PW*: Yeah. See my father, what he bin do. And after that, old man bin say longa [me] 'Ah, you know, you know how to handle a horse now, after, because I'm getting little bit too old now'. I bin, I bin say, 'Ah, don't worry. I can see what you bin doing. That's alright'.

CR*: Right.

PW*: Good la horse, and that cattle. I bin see that old man. How to...

CR*: Yeah.

PW*: Father for this young fella here.

CR*: He came when you were eighteen?

PW*: Yeah. When I was eighteen him bring im out that money. 'Alright you boys, I'm a boss man for you. Welfare. So you get your money'. When him come out he give you money now. Well he had the money, all the time in that box there. Tin box.

CR*: Right. The tin box. He bring it with him did he?

PW*: Yeah. Take it with him. Sing out la station manager and stockmen: 'Right, I gotta pay these boys up now, because they gotta get their wage. They long enough, them, they bin long enough longa station work'.

CR*: Yep.

PW*: 'Shirt and trousers and bread and beef. So we give im the money now'.

CR*: Oh. And he came out before Ted Evans, eh?
PW*: *Yuwai.
CR*: Ted Evans came out after him?
PW*: After him, then. Well, that old Ted Evans bin die now.
CR*: Yeah, I think he might be ...
PW*: Poor bugger, and he was a good man, too.
CR*: He brought out money too? He kept that ...?
PW*: *Yuwai. Him bin give im money. That old man Billy Harney bin come, bring im out the money. Ted Evans bin come out second time to get all the same, y'know, half-caste kid born la station.
CR*: Oh, yeah.
PW*: Pick im up, take im to Darwin and send im up to Croker Island.
CR*: Right. How many, how many half-caste did he take?
PW*: Well, he, he find, might be two or three longa one station, maybe Wave Hill. Well, he pick im, him bin, ah, hin bin pick im up family from there. Two.
CR*: Two from ...?
PW*: Wave Hill. Young _ [name1] and what-you-call-him. _ [name1], I don’t know what his next name, but this ‘nother, _ [name2], his brother again. He’s in Darwin now.
CR*: Yeah.
PW*: Young, young cousin _ [inaudible]. He’s in Darwin. And him come ‘round Waterloo, pick him up again ‘nother bloke, _ [name3]. He’s in Darwin, from Waterloo.
CR*: Just the one?
PW*: Hey?
CR*: Just one fella from Waterloo?
PW*: Yeah, just one from Waterloo.
CR*: Ah. And um, so, what about Gordon Sweeney? He ever come out that way?
PW*: Who?
CR*: Fella called Gordon Sweeney.
PW*: That old man?
CR*: Welfare.
PW*: Yeah!
CR*: Yeah?
PW*: Him bin come out now. He tall fella, eh?
CR*: Yeah. He used to be a preacher, they reckon.
PW*: Yeah. He bin down there too. Pick im up all the kid and half-caste kid or girl, like that. Take im to Croker Island, send im over there. But they, ah, them kid never forget people back in the station, y’know.
CR*: Yeah.
PW*: Relations. Because they bin go away little bit of a kid, y’know. They never lose their language or something like that. When they, some of them bin come back they bin still talk language longa all these people, y’know. Yeah _ [inaudible] young _ [name4], he little bit old man now, he’s in Darwin. He talk that Gurindji language. Still understand. Like my step-son over here, he’s over here somewhere. _ [JL*]. And ‘nother, _ [name5], from Waterloo. She’s them brother. [ie They are her brothers.] They went to Croker again, and they bin come back, they still know [us]. Take im all the people back. So he know me, I’m stepfather because his, his father really _ [DM*], that white bloke.
CR*: Oh right. _ [DM*], he used to ... [work at] Limbunya wasn’t [ie didn’t] he?
PW*: Yeah. Him bin Limbunya. When I bin come to Waterloo. Young fella, you know.

CR*: Oh yeah.

PW*: He bin there, stock_ [inaudible], he one of them. They reckon he's one of them mob. Professional boxer.

CR*: Professional boxer?

PW*: Yeah [laughs]. One of them middle-weight.

CR*: Yeah?

PW*: One of them middle-weight, you know.

CR*: Oh.

PW*: But he make a mistake at Wyndham.

CR*: Yeah?

PW*: One of them middle-weight, you know.

CR*: Yeah?

PW*: But he make a mistake at Wyndham.

CR*: Yeah?

PW*: Hmm. Longa, we bin go out longa stockcamp, out longa _ [inaudible], anywhere, and this old bloke bin get all the cattle. Mistake Creek manager, old George Brady, and _ [DM*] bin come and ask him, 'Ah you old man, you gotta give me that, you can give me the bullock, you can take the cow and calf because I'm very ... I want im quick because three week time I want a bullock. You can give me half of them cattle for a new bullock, you know, for send im meatworks. Well, this old man reckon 'No'. Well, young fella: 'I'm sorry, if you want them bullock you might as well get im out of my hide'.

CR*: Yeah?

PW*: Hey? [Laughs]. Well, _ [DM*] he's the young fella, you see.

CR*: Yeah.

PW*: And the old man, old George Brady, he's little bit old man. Well, I tell you what, that old man bin put on a good battle there.

CR*: Yeah?

PW*: Hmm. He knock that young fella every side now.

CR*: Yeah? [Laughs]

PW*: True. Knock im out him couple of times. Because only, only with that young fella he got _ [inaudible] see, he got plenty mean. After that young fella come back in then, he hit that old man then. And [that old man] said to him, 'Oh, sorry young fella. Because you young, I'm old. If you bin come, same age, I could've finish you off [laughs]. Hey?

CR*: Yeah.

PW*: Oh, that old man, he can put up a good fight too, you know. George Brady. Anyway, him bin come Waterloo, him bin stockman there for while and Christmas time he went to, go down to, ah, Wyndham then.

CR*: Oh yeah.

PW*: Christmas time, you know.

CR*: Yeah.

PW*: Having a good party down there and something big happen. Down the Wyndham, I don't know what bin happening there. Got into this half, ah, half-caste bloke, July Oakes.

CR*: Oh yeah, I know him, ah, I've read some stuff [about him].

PW*: Hmm. July Oakes. Met him there.

CR*: Yeah.

PW*: I don't know what bin happen to him then but anyway they had a fight.

Well, that young fella bin beat him right out.

CR*: July Oakes?

PW*: July Oakes.
CR*: He got beaten up, did he?

PW*: Yeah, he beat that [DM*].

CR*: Oh, he beat [DM*] too.

PW*: That [DM*] got beaten. Grass fighter bin get through him. And after, when him bin knock him out he after him and ask him 'Oh, what your name?' 'July Oakes.' 'Oh, well, come into pub. I'll shout.' And this young fella reckon, 'Oh no, I don't drink.' But he know him bin [inaudible]. He didn't like to drink this way, he [ie July] [thought DM*] might [get] drunk and hit him too, y'know.

CR*: Right.

PW*: That's all [inaudible] the old man too, old what-you-call-him, July Oakes.

CR*: Yeah.

PW*: Oh, he's a good fighter. He not a boxer but he's a grass fighter, y'know.

CR*: Grass fighter?

PW*: Hmm.

CR*: What's that mean?

PW*: Oh good fighter, in the, like a street fighter, y'know.

CR*: Oh, yeah.

PW*: No more like a, one of them, you gotta, you, one of them mob, bloke, professional boxer in the ring? You got referee to stop you, init?

CR*: Yeah, yeah.

PW*: Y'know. Might be five rounds or something like that.

CR*: Yeah.

PW*: You got referee to block you.

PW*: Yeah.

CR*: And that. Like station you got no referee, you go straight out. Best man walk out.

CR*: Yeah [laughs].

PW*: [Laughs.] Well people, they watching, y'know.

CR*: So the people around make sure it doesn't get too ...?

PW*: Yeah. Might be pick [up] a stick or something like that. They gotta go fist or knuckle.

CR*: Yeah. Proper way.

PW*: Hmm. He no referee there. Best man walk out. Just like a that, y'know that old_ [PL*]?

CR*: Yeah.

PW*: That old_ [PL*], longa Kildurk, y'know? Old man.

CR*: Yeah.

PW*: But when he [was in his] prime, him bin la Mistake Creek and something bin happen. Him bin down the creek and this policeman went down there and ask him about, something about dog: 'I'll come and shoot your dog'. And this old_ [PL*] said, 'No, you've got no right, because you not your boundary, this is Territory'.

CR*: Yeah?

PW*: 'You come from Western Australia'. They had argument. This policeman reckon, 'Oh, listen_ [PL*], you don't want to get too smart la me, I'll tie you up la tree and flog shit out of ya'. Old_ [PL*] said, 'Before you gotta flog me, you, you gonna have a try la me'. Anyway, they had a fight down the creek there somewhere. Old_ [PL*] get stuck into him there.

CR*: Right.
PW*: And he sing out, when he got beat that policeman got beaten now, him
bin sing out for his tracker boy. Well _ [inaudible] anymore. 'Well you
can fight me, if you wanna take a place for your boss,' old _ [PL*].
‘Wait till I got a shovel spear’.

CR*: Huh.

PW*: Frighten him that tracker boy, y’know.

CR*: Right.

PW*: And he reckon, 'Just because you got that metal [ie gun] la your hand
you reckon you’re a policeman. But you black like me'. Old _ [PL*].

CR*: Yeah.

PW*: Hmm. Yeah he had a fight with policeman at Wave Hill too, y’know.

CR*: Right.

PW*: Old _ [PL*]. Fight with Mr Wyatt Cooper.

CR*: Which one that?

PW*: Wyatt Cooper.

CR*: Wyatt Cooper.

PW*: He bin sing out ‘Come on, hurry up, give us a bloody hand’. And _
[PL*] said, ‘Ah, wait a minute, I’m just come in to have lunch now. I
can’t drink this tea. Too hot’. And station manager, old station manager
say, ‘You bin there nearly past two hours. Come on _ [PL*]. I’ll come
over there and liven you up’. Well, _ [PL*] didn’t like it; he couldn’t
take it anymore._ [PL*] said to him, ‘Oh well, come on, liven me up’.
Anyway, they had a bloody fight down there, bush there, and after, they
went back to station and what-you-call-him, that old _ [PL*] bin bin
come behind and trip that old man and grab him la back and knock him
down, y’know.

CR*: Huh!

PW*: And got him down la ground. And two bloke, ah, so another bloke bin
come over, two more blackfella come and stop it that. ‘Nother bloke, y’know.

CR*: Right.

PW*: They had a fight there, _ [PL*] and old Wyatt Cooper. Anyway, that
old _ [PL*] bin, because kartiya, oh, Wyatt Cooper got him down la
ground now and _ [inaudible] _ [PL*], get up, y’know.

CR*: Yeah.

PW*: So, that old kartiya bin, he bin sort of run out of wind now. Him bin
grab old _ [PL*] here, la ear. Took half his ears off.

CR*: Yeah?

PW*: Hmm. He got a short one here, like that [PW* indicates a half-bitten
ear with his fingers].

CR*: Oh, yeah.

PW*: And old _ [PL*] just jump and grab his, got a hand, take his pointy
finger off.

CR*: Yeah? Took his finger off?


CR*: Bite him off?


CR*: [laughs]

PW*: He might be have im teeth like bloody razor or something [laughs].

CR*: [laughs]

PW*: Eh? [Laughs]

CR*: Right. Where was, what station ...?

PW*: Mistake Creek.
CR*: At Mistake Creek?
PW*: Yeah.
CR*: That was when he was a young man, init?
PW*: Oh, when he was young man.
CR*: Before the Welfare started coming out?
PW*: No, Welfare bin coming out, long time.
CR*: Oh, yeah?
PW*: After Welfare.
CR*: So after World War II?
PW*: Yeah. And then went back; they put him onto Turkey Creek. Ah, he got kicked out anyway.
CR*: Oh, yeah.
PW*: Y'know, that 'nother manager sent telegram over to Turkey Creek, 'What you tell you policeman come in the, ah, 'nother man border?'
'His border back there. Spring Creek, that his border. Not Mistake Creek; this for Wave Hill. Wave Hill police'.
CR*: Yeah, that's right.
PW*: Northern Territory, see?
CR*: Yeah.
Pause.
CR*: So, ah, what about Port Keats mob? They ever, they ever work at Waterloo Station or ...?
PW*: The Port Keats mob?
CR*: Yeah.
PW*: Yeah, they bin working Waterloo.
CR*: Yeah?
PW*: The Port Keats mob.
CR*: Right. How many from Port Keats do you reckon?
PW*: They bin, they bin send im big mob from Port Keats. Boy, y'know. Boys and girl. Well, he come half for Waterloo ...
CR*: How come, ah, did Vestey send im or someone else?
PW*: Ah Vestey bin ask, people, y'know, for make im more people to come, work. They bin ask Port Keats now. Vestey bin ask im. After that old preacher went up there.
CR*: Oh, the preacher?
PW*: Yeah.
CR*: At the mission?
PW*: Mission, y'know.
CR*: Oh yeah.
PW*: 'Alright, I'll send my boy and you look after him there until he's finished, you can ...' Well that Vestey bin say, 'You can send im over la plane'. Alright, ah, there wasn't Kununurra that time yet.
CR*: Yep.
PW*: No Kununurra, only, nothing. No, no town bin there, nothing. Turn im to Ivanhoe. Where used to be. Sometime come to Rosewood, y'know.
CR*: Yeah.
PW*: Them big truck go down there, stay one week, truck around there get all the boys now. Them people like, 'How much for Waterloo; how many people Waterloo?' They bin move this one to Mistake Creek, 'you mob go to Ord River'. This same la to come up from two 'nother people, and get him from Waterloo. _[inaudible] Limbunya.
CR*: Right.
INTERVIEW PW35

PW*: And then, when they finish work and they get their pay at station again, station fare, y’know. [As] Long as they bin work for Vestey.
CR*: Right. They fly im back.
PW*: Yeah. Fly im back.
CR*: Oh, so that just for Dry season, that?
PW*: Yeah. When they finish, now, holiday, y’know. Oh, they bin like to work there too, somefella.
CR*: They bring their wife with them too ...
PW*: Yeah, they bring wife.
CR*: Or single fella?
PW*: No. Wife.
CR*: Yeah. And everyone, like, you got Waterloo Station, you got those people from Wave Hill, and you got people from Port Keats. Everyone’s in the same spot in the same camp or they have separate camp?
PW*: Separate camp, like.
CR*: Yeah?
PW*: We bin have im number one camp, and number two camp, and number three camp. Three camp there.
CR*: Right. Who bin in number one camp?
PW*: Ah, one of them bloke, ah, white man, name [of that] old man, Old Doug Horton.
CR*: Doug Horton?
PW*: Hmm. And ‘nother bloke, this ah, bin longa number two camp. That old _ [JC*], eh?
CR*: Oh, yeah.
PW*: That old man la Mistake Creek._ [JC*].
CR*: Right. And number three camp?
PW*: Number three camp the manager himself. Old Bernie Jansen. He here somewhere.
CR*: Right.
PW*: And he had his offsider. For Bernie Jansen: old what you call him ...
CR*: Bernie Jansen? He live in Katherine does he?
PW*: He round here somewhere. He bin caretaker for while longa Vic[toria] River.
CR*: Oh, caretaker.
PW*: Yeah. Him bin living out of that put for awhile. Old man, head fella, y’know.
CR*: Yeah.
PW*: When they bin finish work la season time, well, we got a big airstrip, ah, y’know, aerodrome la Waterloo.
CR*: Oh, yeah.
PW*: And put Limbunuya, they come up to same. They get im plane there again. And the other mob went to, like Ord River and Mistake Creek, like that. Spring Creek. They get a plane longa Ord River. Them Vestey send them fella up to help im.
CR*: Right. Those ah, that Port Keats mob, I read, someone was saying that um, they had a sort of a walk-off, from Waterloo. They, one day they just sort of, couple of them, might be four or five of them ...
PW*: Hmm.
CR*: ... just packed up their gear and took off.
PW*: Yeah.
CR*: That right? You remember? Do you know about that?
INTERVIEW PW35

PW*: Yuwai.

CR*: What, how come, why’d they do that?

PW*: Well, I don’t know what they bin, ah, thing bin happening, might be.

No. One bloke had a fight with white man.

CR*: Yeah?

PW*: One bloke, had a fight longa white bloke. Longa horse-breaker, y’know. Why that bloke bin, that Port Keats boyn bin fight la that white bloke, longa horse-breaker. That horse-breaker bin chasin’ after his wife all the time.

CR*: Oh, right.

PW*: Well, that bin happen. That blackbella didn’t like it.

CR*: Yeah.

PW*: Because him walk off. When him bin walk away that young fella, this ‘nother two or three bin say ‘Oh well, we finish too, here’. So, ah man, he couldn’t say anything. ‘Alright, alright, if you want to go, you can go. If you want to stay, we stay together. If you want to stay I can put you back la plane’. ‘Oh no, we’ll be right,’ they reckon. ‘We’ll find our way’. Along here from Waterloo to Kildurk and Auvergne, eh?

CR*: Yeah? So they just walk?

PW*: They walk. Ah, he bin go, they bin walk off. Just before that, he bin pay im off like, y’know.

CR*: Oh, yeah.

PW*: Give money how many week they muster, bin working there.

CR*: Right.

PW*: Pay them money and help im get their ration. Give im fair go.

CR*: Which manager that one?

PW*: Bernie Jansen.

CR*: Oh yeah. That same one.

PW*: And that, they bin, we bin ask them people too y’know: ‘You fella know the country to go back?’ ‘Oh well,’ they bin reckon, ‘we don’t know much from here, but we know Auvergne’. ‘Well, before you go, you follow this river down a little bit [inaudible] then. Follow the river down, you might be run into, when you get up that hill you find him station there, Kildurk. And from Kildurk you [haven’t] garram too far then, you go down to Auvergne, you find your way’.

CR*: Right.

PW*: When they go back to Auvergne, they bin alright then. Because swim across the salt water.

CR*: Salt water?

PW*: Yeah, the Victoria River, y’know.

CR*: Oh, yeah.

PW*: They [inaudible] swim, maybe got a log, eh?

CR*: [laughs]

PW*: Hey?

CR*: Yeah?

PW*: I don’t know.

CR*: They swim across that on a log?

PW*: Yeah.

CR*: What about the crocodile?

PW*: Hey?

CR*: What about crocodile?

PW*: Ah, they don’t worry.

CR*: Yeah?
PW*: They talk language then, might be they know, then.
CR*: Right.
PW*: Someone reckon they [inaudible] story. Oh like, Port Keats mob talk language la them alligators, they can’t come out.
CR*: Oh [laughs].
PW*: They right, y’know.
CR*: Oh, that’s good story.
PW*: I like a bit of tobacco but might be, no tobacco here today.
CR*: Yeah, I should’ve brought some.
PW*: Hey?
CR*: I’ll bring some, this afternoon.
PW*: Yuwai.
APPENDIX B

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF ORAL HISTORY TEXTS
INTERVIEW ST1

Pronoun

This male speaker uses *I* in relation to (i) travelling during the footwalk holiday and droving (line 8), (ii) working at Rosewood Station as a 'small man', ie as a young man (140), (iii) footwalking (220), (iv) eating food at Rosewood Station (255), (v) keeping food for HK* (258) and so helping HK*'s mother provide for him (261), (vi) looking after HK* and always holidaying at Ord River Station (267), (vii) riding horses (397) as a 'small kid' (401), (viii) 'stopping' at Humbert River Station when young (407), (ix) 'losing' his mother (473), (x) being without parents and thus 'on my self' (488), (xi) being without a wife (491), (xii) not being able to tell the interviewer about his children (495), (xiii) being 'with the full grown kid' at Humbert River Station when young (525), (xiv) being at Mt Sandford as a 'small kid' (564), (xv) not knowing who is at Mt. Sandford presently (572), (xvi) waiting for the Mistake Creek land claim meeting (611), (xvii) his understanding of the movements of an old manager, Joe Case (616), (xviii) his 'growing up' of another, younger Aboriginal man (697), (xix) regularly taking his holiday at Ord River Station (719), (xx) working at places other than Rosewood Station (721,722), (xxi) footwalking from Spring Creek to Ord River (729), (xxii) footwalking to Mistake Creek (737), (xxiii) camping at Shady Camp during his footwalk (749), (xxiv) something inaudible that took place during his footwalking (750), (xxv) his birth (790), and (xxvi) his reincarnation as the spirit of a deceased man (809).

He uses *me* in relation to (i) being taken bush by his mother and father (461), (ii) being taken away from Humbert River Station (526), and (iii) his reincarnation (809).

He speaker uses *we* to refer to himself and those others who (i) did the work of droving (11,25), (ii) were in the presence of many Aboriginal workers (35), (iii) built yards out of wood, not iron (60), (iv) followed the Munpu River to Limbunya, Inverway and Nicholson Stations (120-121), (v) call the drover, Nugget Quinlan, 'old kartiya' (149), (vi) took holidays from the station (294), (vii) knew where to procure bush foods (368), (viii) lived on bush food (375), (ix) worked and took holidays at Rosewood Station (379), (x) had 'too many [Aboriginal] people in country' (425-426), (xi) travelled along the West Baines River (540), and (xii) would be attending the imminent Mistake Creek land claim meeting (611).

He uses *we* in an inclusive way to refer to both interviewee and interviewer on their planned trip to Mistake Creek the day after this interview (199, 226, 232, 609).

A we/they distinction is made between the speaker’s peer group and ‘old [Aboriginal] people’ in relation to (i) the procuring of bush food ('Someplace where we, where they know') (368), and (ii) the state of living exclusively on bush food (375).

The second person pronouns *you* and *your* are used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person in relation to receiving rations (87,89,382).

Evaluation

Perhaps precipitated by the interviewer’s question ‘Hard days then?’ the speaker uses ‘Hard day’ in relation to the cycle of working: ‘from after rain up to hot weather. From cold weather to hot weather’ (83-84).

He positively evaluates Joe Case, ex-manager of Waterloo Station: ‘He bin alright ... Look after people’ (623,625); ‘him good bloke, him bin look after everything’ (631).

He negatively evaluates Joe Case from the point of view of half-caste Aborigines: ‘him bin no good for all the half-caste [as] ... he didn’t like ‘em much’ (633,635). He was, to them, a ‘Cheeky old bugger’ (637).

He accedes to the interviewer’s positive evaluation of Jack Kilfoyle, giving as a reason for this Kilfoyle’s early paying of wages to Aboriginal workers: ‘Oh Christ, yeah. He the one bin pay im blackfella before’ (665).
**Thesis**

He suggests that (i) in the early days of which he's talking, the work of mustering was done exclusively by Aborigines: 'Work, work, not belonga white man' (37), (ii) those Aborigines who were in the region prior to non-Aboriginal occupation lived exclusively on bush resources: 'they bin only living, got a kangaroo, goanna, that's all. Bushmen, y'know. Old time. Early day' (375-377), (iii) there has been a depopulation of Aboriginal people in this region over the course of this century: 'All like this country. Every station no more garram Aboriginal people now' (421-422), (iv) during the time of *waringari*, Aboriginal men who strayed onto land belonging to others were 'chased out' (438-439), (iv) Kilfoyle's Rosewood Station was 'the only one station bin pay im people, before' (680), (v) there is no *kartiya* equivalent to Aboriginal reincarnation and that once dead, a 'whiteman' is 'gone for good' (824), and further, (vi) whilst murderers and 'bad bugger' are 'gone for good' when they die, 'good people come back la mother and father' (828-829).

**Simile**

He refers to a type of 'bush tucker' as 'like a little potato' (3) and later, 'like a spud' (92).

**Questions**

HK*, an Aboriginal man present during the interview, asks the interviewer to explain a picture in a book that the interviewer has open during the interview (4).

ST* asks the interviewer whether he knows of (i) Daguragu (125), (ii) the drover, Nugget Quinlan (144), (iii) Joe Egan, ex-manager of Ord River Station (274), (iv) Mr Bingle, ex-travelling manager for Vesteys (295-296), (v) where he began riding horses (397), (vi) Charlie Schulz, ex-manager of Humbert River Station (405), (vii) Bullita Station (550), (viii) various Aboriginal people of the region (578,580), (ix) the early day manager, Jack Kilfoyle (652,655). He asks the interviewer whether (i) Mr Bingle is 'still around [ie alive]' (298), (ii) he has been to Victoria River Downs Station (448), (iii) it is time for HK* to be interviewed (523), and (iv) he believes that the interviewee is the reincarnation of another Aboriginal man (812,814).

**Historical Contrast**

He contrasts (i) the old and new materials involved in building stock yards: 'Old time, finish. Posts allabout. Wood, y'know. They put im up that iron, now' (49-50), (ii) the diet of 'early day' people which consisted of bush foods such as goanna and kangaroo with the 'Christmas tucker' made available to workers at Rosewood Station (375-383), (iii) the big Aboriginal population present at Humbert River Station when he was young with the absence of Aboriginal people there currently (419), a situation which he considers to hold generally in the region (425-427), and (iv) the big mob of goat at Mt Sandford when he was 'small kid' which are 'all gone now' (570).

**INTERVIEW ST2**

**Pronoun**

This male speaker uses *I* in relation to (i) not believing the possibly hypothetical woman who tells him that he is the grandfather of a half-caste child (373), (ii) being the hypothetical young Aboriginal man who takes a white woman as his wife (440), (iii) reporting his possibly hypothetical conversation with a sister who has taken a *kartiya* husband (500), (iv) whether he talks 'right or wrong' (518), (v) not knowing HK*'s opinion on miscegenation (529), (vi) still having his memory (544), (vii) Welfare officers not visiting him (575), (viii) running 'big Law' (601), (ix) knowing country between Spring Creek and Bamboo Springs
(606), (x) thinking about fish that may be in the waterhole he's presently sitting beside (614), and (xi) his thoughts (669).

He uses my/mine in relation to whether his ‘word’ (ie what he says) is right or not (521).

He uses we to refer to himself and those others who (i) took the bullocks back to the station after mustering them (23,24), (ii) gave stray cattle back to neighbouring stations (62), (iii) moved cattle with horses in the ‘old time’ (83,90), (iv) ‘give away’, ie refuse to acknowledge, half-caste children born of their daughters and other female relatives (389,391), (v) tell their daughters or other female relatives they will have ‘nothing to do’ with their half-caste children (393,395), and (vi) tell their Aboriginal sisters to look to their kartiya husbands for money (504-505).

He uses we/minyu in such a way as to refer to both himself and the interviewer in relation to (i) their travels prior to the interview (122), and (ii) the dialogue of the interviewe (553-554).

No we/they distinction is made.

The second person pronouns you and your are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

Evaluation

He negatively evaluates (i) ‘bush’ Aborigines as ‘bad one another’, ie bad for each other during the early days (146), (ii) German and Japanese as ‘bad lot of people’ (333), (iii) half-castes as ‘no good’ (431), (iv) the hypothetical situation wherein he is arrested for having a relationship with a white woman as ‘no good’ (448), (v) white men ‘chasing’, ie attempting to woo, Aboriginal women (479), (vi) the large number of half-caste children in Kununurra (484), and (vii) the fact that whitefellas take Aboriginal women as wives (510).

He positively evaluates (i) the effect of implementing the Land Rights Act as having made things ‘good for [ngumpin] people’ (262), and (ii) the indigenous fresh-water mussel as ‘good eat[ing]’ (641).

He uses hard in relation to the ‘old days’ (271) in response to the interviewer’s prompt.

Thesis

He suggests that (i) cattle-spearing was at the root of the violence between kartiya and ‘bush’ Aborigines (141-147), (ii) kartiya could ‘put a police longa blackfella’, ie get police to arrest ngumpin, for indiscretions such as cattle-killing (170), (iii) police sometimes arrested the wrong Aboriginal men for cattle-killing (179) and sometimes charged Aboriginal men for the spearing of cattle that they themselves (ie the police) killed (196-201), (iv) there were many cattle and many ‘blackfella’ in the region in the early days (217), (v) the Government, with its Land Rights Act, has made it ‘good for [ngumpin] people’ (262), (vi) grog has ‘fucked ... up’, ie ruined, the young Aboriginal men of Kununurra, specifically by interfering with their ability to ‘think about’ and do cattle work (276-278), (vii) young Aboriginal men today use knives when fighting because they don’t know how to make spears, given that they ‘can’t leave im grog’, ie can’t stop drinking (287-293), (vii) half-castes are without Aboriginal country (350), are (viii) ‘not longa Aboriginal way’ (356), and (ix) may ‘just [be] bred by dog’ (360), (x) ‘Aboriginal people got nothing to do [with] ... half-caste[s]’ (381-382), (xi) Aboriginal men will not take responsibility for turning half-caste boys into young men (387-395), (xii) not many ‘blackfella marry im white girl’ (434), which state of affairs is ‘the trouble’ (436), (xiii) the police don’t interfere when white men ‘chase’ Aboriginal women and so operate from a double standard (450), (xiv) unlike white men chasing Aboriginal women, Aboriginal men do not chase white women (458-459), (xv) the child born of the union of an Aboriginal man and a half-caste woman ‘go[es] black’, ie becomes Aboriginal (466-467), (xvi) some Aboriginal people might be ‘frightened to talk’ about country during land claim research or proceedings (592), and (xvii) Aboriginal workers of his era were ‘sick and tired’ of eating only beef (627)
He presents a hypothetical: 'If I bin young fella, I might ... get im one [white] girl', noting that if he did, 'white man, [or] somebody, might be put a police la me' (440-442), ie engage a policeman to arrest him.

**Simile**

He refers to half-caste people as 'like a wild dingo', specifically in relation to them not owning Aboriginal land (350).

**Question**

He asks the interviewer (i) whether Aborigines of the west Kimberley region engaged in cattle-killing (254,257), (ii) why, with changes such as the Land Rights Act, 'he not look good longa [Aboriginal] people yet' (273), (iii) whether he thinks that grog has 'fucked ... up', ie ruined, young Aboriginal men of Kununurra (278), (iv) whether he agrees with the speaker that knives should be used only on bullocks, not men (284), (v) whether he has seen all the half-castes in Kununurra (343,480), (vi) whether he agrees that half-castes are like 'a wild dingo' and 'got no country' (350,354), (vii) whether he agrees that white men father half-caste children to Aboriginal women (374), (viii) whether he agrees that the state wherein not many ngumpin men marry kartiya women is 'the trouble' (ie a big part of the half-caste 'problem' from the perspective of the speaker) (436), (ix) whether he agrees with the speaker's negative evaluation of the hypothetical situation wherein he is arrested for having a relationship with a white woman (448), (x) why the police don't stop white men from taking Aboriginal women when they would stop Aboriginal men taking white women (454), (xi) whether he agrees with the speaker's suggestion that the children born of the union of an Aboriginal man and a half-caste woman 'go black', and so become Aboriginal again (467), (xii) whether he agrees with the speaker's assessment of the state wherein whitefellas take Aboriginal women as wives as 'no good' (510,512), (xiii) whether in criticising the state wherein whitefellas take Aboriginal women as wives he is talking 'right or wrong' (518), (xiv) why HK*, being sick, cannot go to see a doctor (538), and (xv) why an Aboriginal man would be frightened of kartiya Welfare officers (571).

**Historical Contrast**

He contrasts (i) the old method of moving cattle using horses with new methods using 'motorcar' (ie truck) (80-90), (ii) the fact that whilst Aborigines once had to make do by killing cattle, 'white man bin come to blackfella now' and has given the blacfella his.land back (239-240), (iii) Aboriginal circumstances in the time of the 'old time' kartiya with that which holds now with implementation of the Land Rights Act (262-263), and (iv) the old days 'bit hard' with 'now coming easy' (271).

**INTERVIEW JM3**

**Pronoun**

This male speaker uses *I* in relation to (i) his act of telling the story (9), (ii) being an eyewitness to the activities of Captain Cook (90-91), (iii) working at Limbunya Station, (iv) being at Limbunya Station and witnessing the murder of his grannie (134), (v) his size (ie age) at the time of his grannie's murder (139), (vi) crying at the murder of his grannie (140), (vii) being an eyewitness to the murder of his grannie (159), (viii) working at Spring Creek Station in the stockcamp (180,182), (ix) moving from Spring Creek to Waterloo Station (186) and working then at Waterloo (186), (x) returning to Limbunya Station (188), (xi) his advanced age (208), (xii) his birth (212), (xiii) his knowledge of a specific tract of Aboriginal land (360,379), (xiv) his country (376) and his ability to speak about that country (376), (xv) having already told the interviewer he cannot speak of Mistake Creek country (402), and (xvi) being Malngin (425).
He uses *we* to refer to himself and those others who (i) worked with cattle (115), (ii) took holidays from stockwork (116), (iii) are of the Malngin-Gurindji group whose land stretches from Mistake Creek to Wave Hill (422), and (iv) 'bring im every Law on this, every country' (429-430).

He uses *the people* to refer to those who were shot by Jack Beasley (29,31,45,48), by Charlie Whittaker (72) and by either or both of these men under Captain Cook's orders (57,59). The same phrase is used to refer to those Aboriginal workers who were told to remove their clothes and put them back in the storeroom prior to going bush (117).

No *we/they* distinction is made.

The second person pronouns *you* and *your* are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

**Evaluation**

He negatively evaluates (i) the *kartiya* manager who sent Aboriginal workers on their bush holiday having made them return their work clothes to the storeroom (121,132), and (ii) the *kartiya* manager who killed his grannie as 'very bad. Very bad. No good' (164,166).

**Thesis**

He suggests that (i) the first *kartiya* in the Mistake Creek region was Jack Beasley, who was based on the Stirling River (9-10), (ii) Jack Beasley was the first *kartiya* to 'chase im allabout and shoot im 'bout [Aborigines]' (26-27), (iii) Jack Beasley acted in this way because 'he had a idea out of the old Captain Cook' (39-40), (iv) it was Captain Cook who started off the process of 'cleaning' or killing Aborigines (42-43), (v) Captain Cook's motivation was 'to get the land back', ie to take the land away from the Aborigines (50-51), (vi) Charlie Whittaker, Beasley’s mate (69), was another who shot Aborigines (72), again because 'he had a story out of the Captain Cook' (74-75), (vii) Whittaker would shoot Aboriginal men and then cohabit with their women (78-79,82), and because of this 'all the yellafella [ie half-castes] bin breed up now' (84-85), (viii) the shooting of Aboriginal men and the subsequent taking of their women is another aspect of Captain Cook's 'law' (87), (ix) just as the manager of Vestey's Limbunya Station killed his grannie, so 'they bin clean every people ... Ia this country' (166-167), and (x) work such as that of 'mailman' was, in the early days, done exclusively by *ngumpin* (238-239).

He notes the paucity of rations, indicated by the use of 'just' in 'just the one stick of tobacca' (121) and the absence of various other items required for the bush holiday (126).

**Simile**

He suggests that prior to shooting Aboriginal people in the early days, Jack Beasley rounded them up 'like a bullock', ie as if they were bullocks (33-34). In addition, the *kartiya* manager who sends Aboriginal workers on their bush holiday having ordered them to remove their work clothes is represented as acting in such a way as to 'let im [Aboriginal people] go like a, he's just like a bullock' (126-127).

**Question**

He questions the interviewer as to whether he knows of the old Depot at Timber Creek (213-214).

**Historical Contrast**

None.

**INTERVIEW ST4**

**Pronoun**
This male speaker uses I in relation to (i) droving (51), and (ii) telling the story of the war-like relations between Aborigines (116).

He uses we to refer to himself and those others who (i) are retired now (79), (ii) ‘bin working hard’ in the past (79), and (iii) did hard work such as that of yard and road-making (81).

He uses our in relation to having a drover (59).

No we/they distinction is made.

The second person pronouns you and your are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

**Evaluation**

He negatively evaluates either half-caste people or the situation in which they outnumber ‘blackfella’, or both (38).

He positively evaluates the friendship that ensued between Aboriginal people following the end of the ‘war’ over women (118).

He uses hard to refer to (i) the work of droving (76), and (ii) the work that ‘we’ did prior to the use of modern transport methods (79).

**Thesis**

He suggests that (i) relations between ngumpin were at one time war-like, and involved disputes over ‘country and over women’ made more intense by the activities of Chinese and Afghan immigrants to the Northern Territory (14-16), (ii) as the Chinese and Afghan immigrants did, so kartiya ‘bin ... rob im [Aboriginal] people for women’ (21), (iii) if a blackfella tried to ‘rob im white man for ... white girl’ he would be shot by kartiya (28-29), (iv) in relation to the stealing of women by kartiya, ‘blackfella bin ... give it away that game’ and allowed Aboriginal women to do as they like (31,33), since which (v) there has been many half-caste people born such that they now outnumber ‘blackfella’ (33,34), and (vi) after the Aboriginal war over women ended, ‘all bin have im friend now. Good friend’ (118).

**Simile**

None.

**Question**

He asks the interviewer (i) what he is pointing towards him (it is a microphone) (6), (ii) why ‘blackfella never bin rob im white man for ... white girl’ (23-24,26), (iii) how many half-castes there are in the region (34), and (iv) whether he has been to a place on the Mistake Creek claim area called Logan Creek (174).

**Historical Contrast**

He contrasts droving methods of the past with the use of road trains in the present and the detrimental effect the latter has on the health of the bullocks (76-78).

**INTERVIEW JM5**

**Pronoun**

The main, male speaker, JM*, uses I in relation to (i) his act of speaking (82,117), (ii) knowing the things of which he speaks (82), and specifically (iii) the places where massacres occurred (83), (iv) being a ‘big man’, ie a young man, when he was shown massacre sites by his father and others (86), (v) being a ‘big man’ when the shooting of ngumpin was still occurring (89,91), (vi) witnessing the killing of ngumpin (120-121), (vii) witnessing a member of his own family being shot (123), (viii) camping on his father’s
country (138), (ix) being able to tell the stories his father told him (141), (x) still being able to remember the stories his father told him (146), and (xi) knowing what violent acts the early kartiya did to ngumpin (146).

He uses me in relation to (i) his father taking him to see massacre sites (83), and (ii) being shown massacres sites by his father and others (86).

He uses my/mine in relation to (i) his time and his contemporaneity with massacres of Aboriginal people (13,19), (ii) his father (82), and (iii) his family (123).

The other male speaker, ST*, uses I in relation to (i) being a 'little boy' at the time of the shooting of ngumpin (90), and (ii) being ‘alright [ie physically unhurt by kartiya] ... all the way along’ (114), (iii).

JM* uses we to refer to himself and those others who are involved in the Mistake Creek land claim (148-149).

ST* uses we to refer to that group made up of kartiya and ngumpin who ‘live together’ in the present (112).

No we/they distinction is made.

The second person pronouns you and your are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

Evaluation

JM* negatively evaluates (i) whitefella acts of shooting and chaining ngumpin as ‘the cruel thing’ (99), ‘very bad thing’ (101), ‘bad, bad, bad, bad, bad altogether (117), and ‘very bad thing’ (121), (ii) the unprovoked hostile occupation of ngumpin country by kartiya as ‘wrong thing’ (104,106) and ‘bad’ (106), and (iii) the killing of a member of his own family by kartiya as ‘wrong thing’ (124).

ST* negatively evaluates early kartiya violence as ‘wrong’ (114-115).

Thesis

JM* suggests that (i) many Aborigines of the region were shot by kartiya (59), (ii) the interviewer must put this ngumpin story of massacres and kartiya violence ‘in the [fore]front’ of the land claim (69-70), (iii) the Aboriginal Land Commissioner involved in the land claim hearing ‘gotta listen [to] that story [of massacres and shootings]’ (72-73), (iv) ngumpin did not attempt to got to England and kill kartiya (103-104), and (v) that it was wrong for kartiya, given this lack of provocation to come to this region and kill ngumpin (104,106), (vi) there was an alternative to the violent history of early ngumpin-kartiya relations in which the two ‘Live[d] together’ (110), (vii) the point that ST* is making, that ‘white men bin done wrong’ is one he has already made in this interview: ‘that’s what, what I bin tell you’ (117), and (viii) as ngumpin never went to England to fight that country’s inhabitants so kartiya should not have made war on ngumpin but should have been ‘all friend together’ with them (125-129).

ST* suggests that (i) many Aborigines of the region were shot by kartiya (60), (ii) coterminous with the shooting of Aborigines by kartiya was that the latter took the former ‘for rubbish’, ie thought of ngumpin as rubbish (64), and (iii) the shooting of Aborigines heralded the beginning of relations between ngumpin and kartiya in the region (74).

JM* posits an alternative history such that kartiya did not make war upon ngumpin and both parties ‘all friend together’ (125-129).

Simile

None.

Question

JM* asks the interviewer why kartiya couldn’t ‘make a friend with the [Aboriginal] people’ when they came from England (106-108).
INTERVIEW JM6

Pronoun
This male speaker does not use first person pronouns to refer to himself or to himself and others in this interview.

No we/they distinction is made.

The second person pronouns you and your are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

Evaluation
JM* negatively evaluates the taking of Rebel Major's wife by a kartiya (3,149,154,159-161), including the use of the phrases 'steal im that woman' (3), 'cheat longa blackfella' (159) and 'stole im' (160).

He positively evaluates the Rebel Major story as 'good story' (153).

Thesis
He suggests that (i) the responsibility for the violence which occurs in the story of Rebel Major rests not with Rebel Major but with the kartiya who stole his wife (144-147), (ii) whilst 'kartiya bin ... have im black woman', Aboriginal men were not given access to white women (156-157), and (iii) with acts such as the taking of Rebel Major's wife by a kartiya man, more and more kartiya 'bin have im that idea' and in turn took Aboriginal women as sexual partners and fathered children with them (165-168), to the extent that (iv) there is 'nearly bloody thousand fucking yellafellas on this country' (170).

Simile
None.

Question
He asks the interviewer whether he has seen a particular, prominent hill, Black Butt, on Ord River Station (120-121).

INTERVIEW JM7

Pronoun
This male speaker uses I in relation to (i) hearing stories from his 'old people' (8,9,19), (ii) learning about his country (13,14,24), (iii) wanting to tell his children of his knowledge of country and so train them (18,21,25), (iv) not wanting his children to be ignorant of their country (21), (v) wanting his children to 'come right way', ie learn from him about their country and culture (23), (vi) not having books as knowledge sources (27,39), (vii) having all his knowledge in his memory (39), (viii) hypothetically telling the interviewer he has the 'wrong' story (41), and (ix) liking the 'one [true] story' that he has in his memory (52,56,57).

He uses me in relation to (i) being shown places where kartiya killed people (3,7), (ii) his life (13), (iii) being different to kartiya in that his knowledge does not come from a book (27), and (iv) hearing other people's stories (40).
He uses *we* to refer to those involved in (i) the act of talking ‘one **jaru** [ie story]’, possibly in the context of the impending land claim hearing (46), and (ii) the act of making that ‘one **jaru**’ ‘number one’, ie the most important part of the claim (46). No *we*/they distinction is made.

The second person pronouns *you* and *your* are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

**Evaluation**

He negatively evaluates the situation wherein some Aboriginal people currently have little knowledge of their country (23).

He positively evaluates the system whereby knowledge is retained in one’s memory, not in written sources, as ‘better way’ (35).

**Thesis**

He suggests that when Aboriginal people get together during the land claim process and make their story heard, ‘everything comes to right’ (52).

**Simile**

None.

**Question**

He asks the interviewer whether he (JM*) is right or wrong in believing that, when Aboriginal people get together during the land claim process and make their story heard, ‘everything comes to right’ (54).

**Historical Contrast**

None.

**INTERVIEW DT8**

**Pronoun**

This male speaker uses *I* in relation to (i) his birth (2), (ii) being a baby (2,3,20,21), (iii) being a young child (4), (iv) being a young man (5,6), (v) his country (10), (vi) having a lease on a property in his country (10), (vii) having reached the stage of being able to ride a horse (11), (viii) being a man (25), (ix) learning to ride a horse (27), (x) learning to be a horse-tailer (30), (xi) being relieved whilst on night-watch during mustering (40), (xii) knowing the work of horse and bullock tailing as a young man (42), (xiii) learning to break in horses (46,49), (xiv) breaking in horses (55,56,83), (xv) driving a motor vehicle on a trip to get timber for the fixing of yards (81,82), (xvi) finishing the breaking-in of horses at Mistake Creek (89), (xvii) finishing a mustering job on Mistake Creek Station and returning to Ord River Station (123), (xviii) running the camp at Spring Creek (133,142), (xix) not working in Munpu country (151), and (xx) moving to Turkey Creek (153).

He uses *me* in relation to (i) being a baby (21), (ii) being taken from Turner to Ord River Station as a young man (24), (iii) being put to work in the stockcamp at Ord River, having learnt to ride a horse (27), (iv) being put to work as a bullock-tailer (31), (v) learning to break in horses (47), (vi) learning to drive a car (80), (vii) being put to work at Mistake Creek Station (90), (viii) being ‘moved around’ during ‘Vestey time’ (123), and (ix) being taken to Spring Creek to work (133).

He uses *we* to refer to those involved in (i) branding cattle (46), (ii) cutting wood for the station prior to going on the bush holiday (63), (iii) going on the bush holiday (63), (iv) returning from the bush holiday (64), (v) fixing the stock-yards on resumption of work (65,69,72,74), (vi) carrying wood to Ord River station prior to using a motor vehicle (80),
(vii) bringing in horses to be broken in at Mistake Creek (84), (viii) breaking in plant horses at Spring Creek (85), (ix) mustering cattle (95,105), and (x) 'cutting out' bullocks to be sent to the Wyndham meatworks (119,120).

No we/they distinction is made.
The second person pronouns you and your are used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person in relation to (i) taking turns watching the bullocks at night whilst working with the mustering team (36), and (ii) fixing the yards on returning from the bush holiday (70,77).

Evaluation
None.

Thesis
None.

Simile
None.

Question
None.

Historical Contrast
None.

INTERVIEW DT9

Pronoun
This male speaker uses I in relation to (i) being a young fella at the time of the events he's talking of (84), (ii) being sixty-five years old presently (104), and (iii) not knowing another man's age (106).

He uses we to refer to himself and those others who (i) took the bush holiday (7,11,12,20,35), (ii) lived on 'bush tucker' during this holiday (22,23,36,38), (iii) travelled during the bush holiday (34,48,50,52,53,68), (iv) returned to work after the holiday (76), (v) didn't attend school (78), (vi) learnt bush skills from the 'bushmen' (79), and (vii) are jimari or co-initiates (98).

He uses our in relation to time spent on the bush holiday (76).

No we/they distinction is made.
The second person pronouns you and your are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

Evaluation
None.

Thesis
He notes the paucity of provisions provided by the station for the bush holiday (22-23).

Simile
None.

Question
None.
**INTERVIEW DM10**

**Pronoun**

The female speaker uses *I* in relation to what she means by a particular reference (103).

She uses *my* in relation to (i) her country (100), and (ii) her father (100), grandfather (101), and brother (101).

She uses *we* to refer to herself and those others who (i) took the bush holiday in Munpu country (5), (ii) didn’t have motorised transport when they travelled through country (6), (iii) call a certain bush food by the Aboriginal name *manarang* (19), (iv) have the bush banana, *pindi* (27), (v) eat the bush grape, *jarpayiyu* (39), (vi) ate bush food (43), (vii) were taught bush craft by the ‘old people’ (69), (viii) became proficient in bush craft, having been taught it by the ‘old people’ (74, 75), (ix) footwalked to Ord River Station (80) and thence to Nicholson Station (82), and then left there (83) and made their way back to Inverway Station (86), (x) returned to work at the Inverway Station homestead (87, 88), (xi) weren’t given the opportunity to go to school (91), (xii) weren’t familiar with *kartiya* foods and clothing (133), (xiii) weren’t provided with clothes whilst working at Inverway Station in the early days (139), (xiv) worked ‘for ration’ only, ie received no money or even clothing for their labour (146), (xv) were in the process of ‘coming up’ from the state of working for rations only (148) and so were living ‘properly hard way’ (148-149), and (xvi) came back from their bush holiday to give other Aborigines there a chance to have a break (188).

She uses *mipala(s)* or *wipala(s)* to refer to herself and those others who (i) travelled through Munpu country (18), (ii) have the bush banana, *pindi* (27), (iii) had the ‘old people’ sit with them (44), (iv) were taught bush craft by the ‘old people’ (69, 71), (v) were taught housework skills by the ‘old people’ (88, 109, 120, 128), (vi) were given food by the ‘old people’ (149), and (vii) took holidays from Inverway Station in turn (183, 184, 185),

She uses *us* to refer to those who had the ‘old people’ sit with them (44).

She uses *behind one* to refer to her generation set or age group in relation to the ‘old people’ (74).

She sets up a *we/they* distinction between the ‘old [Aboriginal] people’ and those belonging to the speaker’s own generation in relation to the latter (i) being taught bush craft (69, 71), (ii) being taught housework skills at the Inverway Station homestead (88, 109, 120, 128), and (iii) having clothes made for them (155-156).

DT*, an Aboriginal man also present, uses *I* in relation to his earlier talk of bush food (66). He uses we to refer to himself and those others who (i) did not receive wages (152), (ii) footwalked from Ord River to Inverway (170, 178), and (iii) took holidays from work (194).

He uses *us* to refer to those who received rations from the Farquharson’s of Inverway Station (178).

The second person pronouns *you* and *your* are not used by either speaker to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

**Evaluation**

The female speaker positively evaluates Munpu country in terms of its resources (17).

The male speaker positively evaluates (i) a type of bush food (55), and (ii) the Farquharson brothers in relation to their generosity with rations (174).

The female speaker uses *hard* to refer to (i) walking through country on past ‘bush holidays’ in contrast to driving through it (7), (ii) the ‘properly hard way’ of working without wages (149), (iii) the ‘hard way’ of living without items such as mattresses (154), and (iv) the ‘proper hard way’ of working and then taking a bush holiday (181, 183).
**Thesis**

The female speaker suggests that (i) just as the 'old people' were taught housework skills by the Farquharson brothers of Inverway homestead so her generation were taught by these same 'old people' (109-111), (ii) at that period in which ngumpin were working on stations but were without things such as clothes, 'we never know anything yet' (133-134), (iii) when Aboriginal people were not paid wages they were undergoing a process of 'coming up' from a 'properly hard way' (148-149), and (iv) the 'old people' nurtured the speaker's generation with ngumpin and kartiya food (149-150).

The female speaker notes the absence of (i) clothes for ngumpin people in her early years (134, 139-140, 145), (ii) recompense for labour (ie money) apart from rations (146, 148), and (iii) mattresses for ngumpin in the early days (154).

The male speaker notes the absence of money for Aboriginal workers in the past (152).

**Simile**

The female speaker compares (i) the bush food manarang with a yam (19), and (ii) the bush food manarang with a potato (22).

**Question**

The female speaker asks the interviewer if he is familiar with the white bags used in the packaging of flour (134-135).

**Historical Contrast**

The female speaker notes that 'before', in the era of wage-less work, it was 'properly hard' (148-149).

**INTERVIEW DC11**

**Pronoun**

This male speaker uses I in relation to (i) his birth (1, 2), (ii) his birthday (4), (iii) his current age (4), (iv) his age at the time of learning to ride (10, 11), (v) working as a horsetailer, his first job (13), (vi) his telling the story of his father (16, 26), (vii) beginning to work with cattle (31), (viii) learning from his father (33), (ix) his recollection of his age at the time of his father's death (42), (x) his age at the time of his father's death (42), (xi) his lack of knowledge of why his father died (50), (xii) his act of speaking (60), (xiii) being grown up by his father's cousin-brother (63), (xiv) learning from his father's cousin-brother (68), (xv) having learnt the basics of stock and horse work (75), continuing on with this work (77), (xvi) having served his apprenticeship, getting on 'alright now' (78), (xvii) his plan to show the interviewer where he was born (130), (xviii) his birthplace (132, 135), (xix) his already having shown another researcher where he was born (135), (xx) his work history (144), (xxi) moving to other stations to work (144, 145), (xxii) the effect of his long-term injuries from a horse-riding accident (162, 164, 165, 167, 170-172), and (xxii) attending the hospital for x-rays (168).

He uses me in relation to (i) being disciplined by his father (23), (ii) being taught the work of mustering by his father (30, 31), (iii) accompanying his father on his last day alive (52), (iv) learning how to break in horses (69), (v) learning to shoe up horses (71), (vi) having served his apprenticeship, being left alone to do his work (77, 78), (vii) sustaining a severe horse-riding accident (151, 154), and (viii) being 'put off' on the disability pension (178).

He uses my in relation to (i) his father (16, 35, 44), (ii) being disciplined by his father (21), (iii) his horse (54), (iv) his uncle (101), (v) Mistake Creek, his home (144), (vi) his x-ray (169).
He uses *we* to refer to (i) his father and he checking fences together on the day the former died (53), and those who (ii) had a ‘lot of good fun’ during the Vestey days.

No *we/they* distinction is made.

The second person pronouns *you* and *your* are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

**Evaluation**

He positively evaluates his time as a Vestey's employee as ‘lot of good fun’ (121,125-126).

He says he was ‘getting on alright now’ having served his apprenticeship under his father and his father’s cousin-brother (78).

He uses *hard* to refer to (i) his father in relation to his disciplinary actions towards him such that he would ‘straighten [the speaker] up properly’ (17,30), and (ii) the time or era he is talking of, when he was learning to break in horses (71).

**Thesis**

None.

**Simile**

None.

**Question**

He asks the interviewer (i) the approximate age of a hypothetical boy standing about five feet high (6), and (ii) the name of another researcher (135-136).

**Historical Contrast**

None.

**INTERVIEW DC12**

**Pronoun**

This male speaker uses *me* in relation to his age (92).

He uses *we* to refer to himself and those others who (i) mustered cattle on Mistake Creek Station land (6,18,21,79,80) for Vestey's (18), (ii) branded cattle at Morton Yard (15), (iii) were ‘on the horse and cattle’ during the Vestey’s days (46), (iv) never had any time off during the mustering season (46), (v) took the end of season holiday (56), and (vi) had to do ‘our job’ and get bullocks (84).

He uses *we* to refer to JC* and himself on their footwalk from Mistake Creek to Limbunya Station (105).

He uses *our* in relation to the work of a stockman (84).

No *we/they* distinction is made.

The second person pronouns *you* and *your* are used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person in relation to that person not being able to take a dinner break whilst engaged in the mustering of cattle (77).

**Evaluation**

He uses *hard* to refer to (i) the ‘hard time’ of getting ready for the new season’s work during the Vestey's era (62), and (ii) the hours worked during mustering (77).

**Thesis**

He suggests that during the Vestey's era those working with ‘the horse and cattle’ were given no time off ‘for talking about … country’ (45-48).
He notes the absence of time off during the Vesteys era (46-48, 84-86).

**Simile**
None.

**Question**
He asks the interviewer (i) whether he agrees with the speaker's assessment of the Vesteys era as 'hard time' (62), and (ii) why he wants to know of his going on footwalk holiday with JC* (96)

**Historical Contrast**
None.

**INTERVIEW KT13**

**Pronoun**
This male speaker uses *I* in relation to being a young boy working as a horse-tailer (14). He uses *me* in relation to being made to ride a horse as a young boy (27, 28) and so being taught properly (28). He uses *we* to refer to himself and those others who put hobbles on horses, given the absence of paddocks (5). No *we/they* distinction is made.

The second person pronouns *you* and *your* are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

**Evaluation**
He uses *hard* to refer to the nature of cattle work during his working life, especially given the absence of fenced paddocks (4, 10).

**Thesis**
He notes the absence of fenced paddocks during his working life (8).

**Simile**
None.

**Question**
None.

**Historical Contrast**
None.

**INTERVIEW KT14**

**Pronoun**
This male speaker uses *me* in relation to being 'pushed', ie moved, from Ord River Station to Spring Creek to work (3).

He uses *we* to refer to himself and those others who (i) were involved in cattle mustering (8, 11, 17), (ii) worked on Vesteys stations (51), and (iii) had their bush holiday 'longa Ord River' (58).

No *we/they* distinction is made.
The second person pronouns *you* and *your* are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

**Evaluation**  
He uses *hard* to refer to the work of mustering (6,8,22).

**Thesis**  
He notes the absence of ceremonial activity amongst Aborigines during the Vesteys era on account of 'too much work' (48-53).

**Simile**  
None.

**Question**  
None.

**Historical Contrast**  
He contrasts the 'hard work' he encountered during his youth with the 'easy work' of today: 'This time they easy now' (25-28).

**INTERVIEW KT15**

**Pronoun**  
This male speaker does not use *I* or *me.*  
He uses *we* to refer to himself and those others who were involved in mustering (3,30,34,59,61,65); he also uses *us* to refer to those who were involved in mustering (5).  
No *we/they* distinction is made.  
The second person pronouns *you* and *your* are used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person in relation to (i) that person having to re-shoe their horse during a muster over rocky ground (18,20), (ii) that person being involved in mustering (42,45,49-50)

**Evaluation**  
He uses *hard* to refer to the work of mustering (15,47).

**Thesis**  
None.

**Simile**  
None.

**Question**  
He asks the interviewer whether he knows of the use of the 'bronc horse' (53).

**Historical Contrast**  
None.

**INTERVIEW TB16**

**Pronoun**
This male speaker uses *I* in relation to (i) his birth at Inverway Station (4,15), (ii) being a baby (4), (iii) his memory of his father (7), (iv) being grown up (9), (v) moving from Nicholson Station having become competent in the skills of stockwork (10), (vi) working at Nicholson Station (11), (vii) becoming a man and being able to work at various occupations (12-13), (viii) moving back to Inverway Station as a man (14), (ix) his working life (25), (x) working as a bore mechanic at Nicholson Station (25,26,27,28), and (xi) still being alive but being too old for work (29).

He uses *my* in relation to (i) his father (5), and (ii) his country at Inverway Station (15).

He uses *we* to refer to himself and those others who were paid wages by Vesteys (18), and *us* to refer to those who (i) were paid wages by Vesteys (19), and (ii) received meagre rations for the bush holiday from Vesteys (20).

No *we/they* distinction is made.

The second person pronouns *you* and *your* are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

**Evaluation**

None.

**Thesis**

He suggests that (i) after his apprenticeship in cattle work he was able to work throughout the region, 'like a whitefella [could] do' (13-14), (ii) Aboriginal men, working without wages for Vesteys, became 'sick and tired for [ie of] watching bullock' (17-18), soon after which 'Vestey bin tum around to pay us now' (19-20).

He notes the absence of (i) money, ie wages, from Vesteys (19-20), and (ii) tobacco for the bush holiday apart from the inferior 'nicky-nicky' type (21), and the paucity of meat supplies given to those taking their bush holiday (23-24).

**Simile**

None.

**Question**

None.

**Historical Contrast**

None.

**INTERVIEW TB17**

**Pronoun**

This male speaker uses *I* in relation to (i) his presence at the old Mistake Creek Station (3), (ii) his asking the manager of old Mistake Creek Station for work (3,4), (iii) his not 'bludging' for his food (5,6), and (iv) working at Mistake Creek Station for a few years (9).

He uses *me* in relation to (i) being given work at Mistake Creek Station (5,8), and (ii) working at Mistake Creek Station with DC*.

He uses *we* in relation to mustering in Kurturru country, Mistake Creek Station (6).

No *we/they* distinction is made.

The second person pronouns *you* and *your* are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

**Evaluation**

None.
Thesis
None.

Simile
None.

Question
None.

Historical Contrast
None.

INTERVIEW TB18

Pronoun
This male speaker uses *I* in relation to (i) not riding at the race meetings (4) as he was too frightened about falling off (4), (ii) returning to Nicholson after the Negri race meeting (5), (iii) his work as a bore mechanic on various Vestey stations (8,9), (iv) being retired and too old to work (13).

He uses *me* in relation to (i) his manager wanting him to return to work at Nicholson Station (6), and (ii) his manager not having another 'good man ... for bore' like TB* (8).

He uses *my* in relation to his manager (6).

He uses *we* to refer to himself and those others who (i) came back to Mistake Creek Station for the Negri race meeting (1), (ii) had races at the Negri race meeting (3), and (iii) worked on Vestey stations (13).

No *we/they* distinction is made.

The second person pronouns *you* and *your* are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

Evaluation
He positively evaluates himself as 'good man' in relation to his expertise as a bore mechanic (7).

Thesis
None.

Simile
None.

Question
None.

Historical Contrast
None.

INTERVIEW TB19

Pronoun
This male speaker uses *we* to refer to himself and those others who (i) came from Nicholson Station to muster Munpu country (2), and (ii) mustered Munpu country (6,7).

No *we/they* distinction is made.
The second person pronouns you and your are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

**Evaluation**
None.

**Thesis**
None.

**Simile**
None.

**Question**
None.

**Historical Contrast**
He contrasts the absence of Kirkimbie Station during the time he worked on mustering teams with its presence today (8-10).

**INTERVIEW RR20**

**Pronoun**
This female speaker uses I in relation to (i) her presence, in the past, at Mistake Creek Station (3,14), (ii) the work she did at Mistake Creek Station (3), (iii) her growing old at Mistake Creek (15), (iv) her shifting from the old station to the new one (15), (v) the word she did at the new station (16,20,24,28), (vi) looking after the 'old people' with her husband (38), (vii) her calling the name of an Aboriginal person (40), (viii) her youthfulness at the time she was looking after DC*, (ix) growing up DC* (48), by disciplining him (48), (x) leaving the old Mistake Creek Station for the new one (50,52,78), and (xi) cleaning clothes and blankets after the flood at old Mistake Creek Station (72).

She uses me in relation to not having children of her own whilst looking after DC* (44).

She uses my or mine in relation to (i) the still-existing laundry block she worked in at Mistake Creek Station (18), (ii) the work she did at the new Mistake Creek Station homestead (24), and (iii) her husband (38).

She uses we to refer to herself and those others who (i) did domestic work at the old Mistake Creek Station homestead (4,5,6,8,9,10,12,14), (ii) moved from the old station to the new station at Mistake Creek (14), (iii) did domestic work at the new Mistake Creek Station homestead (26), (iv) went collecting bush foods with the young DC* (42), (v) had custodianship of DC* (46,47), (vi) walked away from the flooded, old Mistake Creek Station (57) and camped on high ground nearby (59), (vii) returned to the old Mistake Creek Station to clean up after the flood (60,61), (viii) had a large number of Aboriginal workers at Mistake Creek Station (65) and cleaned up the homestead after the flood (60,61), (ix) ate what they could after the flood had taken most things away (67), (x) worked to clean the homestead after the flood (71,75), (xi) moved from old to new Mistake Creek Station after the flood (78), (xii) worked for Vesteys (81), (xiii) were paid wages by Vesteys (85,89,95), and (xiv) received clothes from Vesteys (95).

She uses tupala to refer to the two young Aboriginal boys from other mothers she raised (39).

No we/they distinction is made.

The second person pronouns you and your are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

**Evaluation**
She positively evaluates the Aboriginal workers she worked with at old Mistake Creek Station (65-66).

**Thesis**
None.

**Simile**
None.

**Question**
She asks the interviewer (i) whether he wants her to continue with her account (13,103), and (ii) whether she can call (ie say) the name of another Aboriginal person (40-41).

**Historical Contrast**
None.

**INTERVIEW PW21**

**Pronoun**
This male speaker uses *I* in relation to (i) working as a stockman at Waterloo Station (3), (ii) growing up at Waterloo Station (3), (iii) being a lad of about eighteen (5), (iv) being a ‘young fella’ at the time of the ‘hard’ days (33), (v) working for Joe Case (55,65), (vi) forgetting a manager’s (Don Robertson’s) name (60), (vii) what he means (63), (viii) moving to the East Arm Leprosarium near Darwin (65,67), (ix) staying at East Arm Leprosarium as a young man (68), (x) not knowing the names of the managers who were at Waterloo Station during his absence (69), (xi) returning and not returning to Waterloo station (71), (xii) travelling to Moroak Station, east of Mataranka, to work (72), (xiii) being an off-sider for the horse-breaker at Vesteyes’ Manbullo Station (77), (xiv) not wanting to stay at Manbullo Station (78) and so moving on to Willeroo Station (78), (xv) moving from Willeroo Station to Timber Creek (81), (xvi) working for the carpenter at Timber Creek (85), (xvii) travelling to Kildurk by plane (90), (xviii) having to return to Kildurk to pick up his swag (94), (xix) retiring in 1972 (96,101,104), (xx) his thoughts in relation to drinking alcohol (106), (xxi) being ‘alright’ when Amanbidji was declared a Dry community (111), (xxii) not wanting to be a drinker again (115), (xxiii) having to stop begging for money to spend on alcohol (117), and (xxiv) not drinking now (120) but eating (120).

He uses *me* in relation to (i) being sent by plane from Timber Creek to Kildurk (86), (ii) being asked by the carpenter where he is moving to after working in Timber Creek (87), and (iii) not drinking (115).

He uses *we* to refer to himself and those others who (i) in the past would have a killer (ie a slaughtered bullock) for the camp’s meat supply (9), (ii) would send bullocks to the meatworks at Wyndham (10), (iii) drafting bullocks prior to sending them to Wyndham (11,12), (iv) broke in many horses at a time at Waterloo and Limbunya Stations for use on various Vesteyes stations (30), (v) worked during the ‘hard’ days he is talking of (33), (vi) worked without wages (34), (vii) didn’t have Welfare or others to assist them prior to 1946 (35,36), (viii) worked like slaves, ie without wages (42), (ix) worked for rations and clothing (45), (x) were ‘alright’ following the introduction of wages (50,51), (xi) had Welfare ‘backstopping’ [ie helping] them after 1946 (50), (xii) could ‘do anything now’ that they were no longer required to return their work clothes to the station store prior to going on holiday (53), (xiii) were ‘alright’ working without wages for Joe Case’s successor at Waterloo Station (58), (xiv) received wages initially (59), (xv) were involved in the construction of a pub at Timber Creek (86), and (xvi) were recently shown a video on the effects of smoking (126,127).
He uses *us* to refer to those who (i) were helped by Welfare to get wages (37), (ii) were told by the station manager they would be receiving wages (40), and (iii) received wages (41).

He uses *our* in relation to Welfare being ‘the boss’ of Aboriginal people (37).

No *we/they* distinction is made.

The second person pronouns *you* and *your* are used to refer to a hypothetical person in relation to (i) sending cattle to other Vesteys stations (18) and (ii) the behaviour of drinkers of alcohol (116); to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person in relation to returning clothes to the store prior to taking the bush holiday (47).

**Evaluation**

He positively evaluates as ‘alright’ (i) life for Aboriginal workers under Joe Case’s successor at Waterloo Station, even given the absence of wages (58), (ii) Old Les McFarlane, the *kariya* manager of Moroak Station where he worked for three years (75), and (iii) the Timber Creek carpenter for whom he worked (87,90).

He negatively evaluates his physical condition on retirement as ‘not too good’ (102).

He uses *hard* to refer to (i) the task of breaking in many horses at the one time for use of various Vesteys stations (31,33), (ii) the practice of workers returning clothes and swags prior to taking their bush holiday (49), and (iii) the ‘hard day’ of Joe Case’s wage-less regime (57).

**Thesis**

He suggests that (i) prior to Welfare visiting Waterloo Station, circa 1946, the Aboriginal workers there had no-one assisting them to gain wages (35), (ii) Welfare’s purpose was to help Aboriginal people (37), (iii) work relations prior to Welfare’s advent were akin to slavery (42,44), (iv) that with the advent of Welfare and the paying of wages to Aboriginal workers, ‘we bin alright that time’ (50), (v) Welfare acted as a ‘backstop’, ie as a strong ally (51), (vi) the advent of wages was relatively recent, during Don Robertson’s time as manager of Waterloo Station (59-62), (vii) drinking alcohol is a waste of money which could be spent on food or clothes (108-109,110-111), and (viii) it is now too late for him to give up smoking (138).

He notes the absence of (i) wages for workers from Vesteys (34,58), and (ii) someone, prior to Welfare’s arrival, to assist Aboriginal workers in gaining wages (35).

**Simile**

He suggests that, prior to Welfare’s advent, Aboriginal people on Vesteys stations were treated ‘like a slave’ (42).

**Question**

He asks the interviewer whether 1972 is ‘long time back [ie ago]’ (97).

**Historical Contrast**

He contrasts (i) the sending of bullocks to the Wyndham meatworks for slaughtering during his working days with the mass-slaughter of cattle in the recent past under the Territory’s BTEC (Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign) scheme (9-11), and (ii) the ‘real hard’ days of having to return work clothes prior to going on holiday with the ‘alright’ time that came with Welfare’s advent (49-51).
This male speaker uses *I* in relation to (i) his belief that the interviewer has not seen a book which documents the Durack cattle enterprise in the region (13), (ii) not being born at the time his father overlanded cattle to Waterloo Station (21), (iii) being thrown from horses when he was learning to ride (31), (iv) becoming a champion rider (36), (v) riding at a rodeo at Linnekar Station (41) and winning the bull-riding event (42) as a ‘little fella’ (42), (vi) having been a god ‘allover’, ie all-round, man (43), (vii) getting old in the present (44), (viii) something he knows how to do (46), (ix) teaching other Aboriginal men to ride horses (52,56), (x) going to the East Arm Leprosarium (57,58), (xi) returning to Waterloo Station (59) to see that the boys he had taught to ride were now both champion riders (60), (xii) not saying anything about his role in teaching young men to become champion riders (60), (xiii) his belief that the Aboriginal people of Mistake Creek Station had some ‘trouble’ with Waterloo Station recently over the killing of Waterloo Station cattle (103), and (xiv) his not being at Mistake Creek Station to actually see the events relating to this ‘trouble’ (104,105) and so not being able to tell ‘if it true’ (105).

He uses *me* in relation to (i) being taught how to ride a horse by his father (5,29,32,33), and (ii) his being born (22,27).

He uses *my* in relation to (i) his father (5,6,9,17,37), (ii) his mother (22), and (iii) his sister (27).

He uses *we* to refer to himself and those others who (i) participated in a rodeo at Linnekar (41), (ii) bought cattle for Amanbidji Station (72,73), (iii) might ask the ATSIC boss in Katherine to buy more cattle for Amanbidji Station in order to ‘get this place up again’ (77-78), (iv) ‘put the block on’ [ie stopped] Northern Territory Government employees from shooting cattle suspected of having tuberculosis (83), (v) have a fence now separating Amanbidji cattle from those in the Pumuntu area (91), (vi) will get a killer during the Dry season, (vii) won’t shoot cattle belonging to other stations (100), (vii) let stray cattle go out of the paddock (101), and (viii) would get into trouble for killing stray cattle from other stations (102).

He uses *our* to refer to the boss of those who live and work at Amanbidji Station, the head of ATSIC in Katherine (74).

A *we/they* distinction is made between (i) the Aborigines of Mistake Creek and Amanbidji Stations (71-72), and (ii) the Aborigines of Amanbidji Station and the stock inspectors who shot many cattle on Amanbidji land without the permission of the Aboriginal owners (81-83).

The second person pronouns *you* and *your* are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

**Evaluation**

He negatively evaluates as ‘nothing bin good’, the state of Amanbidji Station in the recent past when some of the *kartiya* managers ‘bin put the place right down’ and allowed the killing of cattle thought to be infected with tuberculosis (79-81).

He positively evaluates the expected outcome wherein Aboriginal claimants in the Mistake Creek land claim would receive inalienable freehold title to the land under claim (109-110).

He uses *rough* to refer to his father, specifically in relation to how his father would whip him when he was thrown from a horse whilst learning to ride and then make him get back on it (31).

**Thesis**

He suggests that (i) his father overlanded cattle to Waterloo Station, prior to 1929, during the ‘second early day’ (11-12), (ii) the ‘boss’ of those at Amanbidji Station is the ‘big boss’ of ATSIC in Katherine (74-75), (iii) some of the *kartiya* previously in charge of Amanbidji Station ‘bin put the place right down’ (79-80) and allowed Northern Territory Government employees to shot Amanbidji cattle thought to be infected by tuberculosis (80-81), and (iv)
that Amanbidji Station being a 'blackfella station', 'white blokes' employed by the government to shoot cattle must ask permission of the Aboriginal owners first (85-87).

Simile
None.

Question
He asks the interviewer (i) whether he knows of a particular Bulla resident that he taught to ride a horse (50), and (ii) whether he knows that the ‘boss’ of the Amanbidji Station is the ‘big boss’ of ATSIC in Katherine (74-75).

Historical Contrast
He contrasts the mass-shooting of cattle thought infected with tuberculosis in the recent past with the absence of this activity presently (87).

INTERVIEW MP23

Pronoun
This female speaker uses I in relation to (i) a lapse in her memory (20), (ii) working at Mistake Creek Station homestead (25,26) and (iii) staying there for extended periods (27,187), (iv) helping her grannie cook for the stock-camp (52), (v) riding horses (56), (vi) going to Derby Hospital for treatment of leprosy (106) and later (vii) returning to the Mistake Creek stock-camp (108,114), (viii) looking after her sick mother (115), (ix) returning to Derby after her mother died (116,117), (x) ‘losing’ her sick mother (116), (xi) returning from Derby the second time (122,123), (xii) working at Mistake Creek Station homestead for Bob Napier (138), (xiii) working at Mistake Creek Station homestead for Billy Hamill (138), (xiv) working at Mistake Creek Station homestead for Bob Napier (148,149), (xv) looking after one of Bob Napier’s children at Mistake Creek (153,167,168), and (xvi) her act of telling the interviewer about this (167), (xvii) visiting Waterloo Station (177), (xviii) being at Rosewood Station for an extended period (215), (xix) working for Baxter at Rosewood Station (238,254), (xx) bringing KA* to Amanbidji Station following PL*'s argument with the Rosewood Station manager (245,257), (xxi) leaving Rosewood Station during ‘Billy Du time’ (257), (xxii) becoming a pensioner during ‘Billy Du time’ (257) and (xxiii) coming to Amanbidji Station (258).

She uses me in relation to (i) beginning work at Mistake Creek Station homestead (25), and (ii) being single at this time (27), (iii) being told by her father to marry PL* (34,35), (iv) being taken to the stockcamp by PL* (40,43), (v) not being allowed to do stock-work (64), (vi) going to Derby for leprosy treatment (116), (vii) being told about the death of her father whilst at Derby (117), (viii) being given charge of Bob Napier’s child (153), (ix) Bob Napier, manager of Waterloo Station, talking to her (177), (x) Bob Napier wanting her to move to Waterloo Station (180), and (xi) being allowed to look after young male children in the stock-camp (240).

She uses my/mine in relation to (i) her father (28,65,117), (ii) her sister (75), (iii) her mother (83,114,116), and (iv) her brother (87,88,120).

She uses we to refer to herself and those others who (i) waited for PL*'s return to Mistake Creek Station (37), (ii) travelled as part of the stock-camp (45), (iii) followed the stock-camp, mustering (58,60), (iv) returned to the station with the stock-camp (65), (v) have a half-caste brother living near Fitzroy Station (91), (vi) were working at the new Mistake Creek Station (102), (vii) returned from Derby to Ord River by aeroplane (123), (viii) ‘sat down’ at Mistake Creek Station (170), (ix) moved from Rosewood Station to Amanbidji Station following an argument there with the manager (244), and (x) settled down at Amanbidji Station (258).
She uses *mipala* to refer to herself and those others who her half-caste brother must soon visit (98).

She uses *mintupala* to refer to herself and PL* (i) sitting down at Mistake Creek Station (38,39,80), (ii) returning to Mistake Creek Station from Waterloo Station (180), (iii) going to Rosewood Station following PL*'s argument with the manager of Mistake Creek Station (203), and (iv) travelling from Rosewood Station to Amanbidji with KA* (215,246).

She also uses *mintupala* to refer to her and her grannie in their role as stock-camp cooks (51).

No *we/they* distinction is made.

The second person pronouns *you* and *your* are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

**Evaluation**

She negatively evaluates ‘blackfella’ as ‘no good ... for old people’ on the basis of their involvement in her mother’s death (110).

She positively evaluates Billy Hamill, manager of Mistake Creek Station in the 1950s (134).

**Thesis**

None.

**Simile**

None.

**Question**

She asks the interviewer if he knew that she and her siblings had a half-caste brother (91).

**Historical Contrast**

None.

**INTERVIEW NP24**

**Pronoun**

This female speaker uses *I* in relation to (i) her birth (2), (ii) being taken to Pumuntu as a young child (6), (iii) working at Newry Station for an extended period (59,121,136), (iv) milking cows at Newry (92), (v) having children (126,197), (vi) taking her holiday from Newry Station to Kildurk country where KA* was born (136), (vii) returning to Newry Station to work after the birth of KA* (147), (viii) being at Newry Station when her father died there (150), (ix) moving to Kildurk Station after the death of her father (157,160,191,192,195), (x) not ‘liking the look’ of Newry Station after her father had died there (157), (xi) worrying for her father after his death (160), (xii) checking the condition of fences by horse at Newry Station (168), and (xiii) taking her son with her on horseback (175), and (xiv) returning to the station (188), (xv) working for Durack at Kildurk Station (202), (xvi) showing the interviewer something (265), (xvii) her ability to remember (293), (xviii) moving to Darwin when she was sick (296,308,320), (xix) being sick (298,302,311), (xx) going from Darwin to Wyndham (320,325,344), and (xxi) taking HA* with her (325), (xxii) returning to Kildurk (349), (xxiii) her act of speaking (434), (xxiv) remembering her husband (440), (xxv) reporting her speech to her husband (442), (xxvi) riding a horse for her husband (454), (xxvii) coming to the end of what she has to say (460), (xxviii) spending most of her life either at Newry or Amanbidji (Kildurk) (462), (xxix) returning to Kildurk
after the death of her husband (464,491), and (xxx) bringing her children to Kildurk Station (469,487).

She uses *me* in relation to (i) being taken to Newry Station by her mother after she was born (3), (ii) her movements in the bush as a child (19), (iii) being at Newry Station with her husband (168), (iv) working with FR* at Kildurk Station (203,205), (v) living with a particular man (211), and (vi) being at Newry Station with her sister AP* (376).

She uses *my/mine* in relation to (i) her mother (2), (ii) her father (6,149,150,156, etc), (iii) her husband (18,196,454,464), (iv) her job, milking cows (91), (v) her uncle (208,211), and (vi) her son (347,352).

She uses *we* to refer to himself and those others who (i) moved from the bush to Newry Station to begin working (24), (ii) stayed working at Newry Station for an extended period (44), (iii) mustered the nanny goats in order to milk them (88), (iv) had a separator and made cream at Newry Station (98), (v) those who were working at Newry Station when Stan Wilson replaced Tom Ronan (119), (vi) looked after bullocks in a paddock at Newry Station (182), (vii) returned to Newry Station some time after her father’s death (195), (viii) received wages from Reg Durack of Kildurk Station (219,219,220,226), (ix) those who were given food at Kildurk Station (226,229), and (x) without having to pay for it (226), (xi) leave the running of the station to the ‘young fellas’ today who ‘slack off’ (234), (xii) moved back to Newry Station from Kildurk (257,258), (xiii) were ‘working all day’ at Newry Station (373), and (xiv) worked for Reg Durack’s father, MP Durack (478).

She uses *we* to refer specifically to her and her husband (283).

She uses mintupala to refer to (i) her and FR* married to the same man (166), and (ii) her and her husband (278,283).

She uses mipala(s) to refer to herself and those others who (i) as young people were taught domestic skills at Newry Station (32), (ii) received ‘too much [ie a lot of] money from Durack’ (216), and (iii) shifted from Newry Station following the retirement of MP Durack (486).

No *we/they* distinction is made.

The second person pronouns *you* and *your* are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

**Evaluation**

She positively evaluates (i) Hector Fuller, the manager of Newry Station in the 1930s (38), (ii) Tom Ronan, who took over from Hector Fuller at Newry Station (68), (iii) the Aboriginal workers of Durack’s Kildurk Station in relation to their work efforts (230), (iv) as ‘proper way’ the past practice of sending children to boarding schools elsewhere to stay there the full year (273-275), (v) Cockburn-Campbell who ‘know blackfella’ by growing up with them as the son of a manager (339), (vi) as ‘proper way’ her son’s ability to read and write (361-362), and (vii) the Aboriginal workers of Newry Station who helped kartiya ‘properly way’ and worked without wages (417).

She uses *hard* to refer to (i) the ‘hard work properly’ that ‘we’ did in making cream and butter at Newry Station in the 1930s (100-101), and (ii) the ‘hard day’ of Durack’s time as manager of Kildurk Station wherein Aboriginal people ‘gotta work for his [ie their] money’ (232).

She suggests that young people today who gamble their wages on cards are ‘silly’ (221-222) and that they ‘slack off’ in relation to their work (234) and are ‘not good worker[s]’ (235).

**Thesis**

She suggests that (i) at some stage her parents lived mainly in the bush and visited stations such as Newry when they wanted to get some tobacco (3-4), (ii) at Newry Station, each manager stayed for five years (74), (iii) Hector Fuller was the manager of Newry prior to World War II (76), (iv) workers at Kildurk Station received ‘too much [ie a lot of] money
from [Reg] Durack' (216-217), (v) Aboriginal people who earn wages today are ‘silly’ with their money, gambling it on cards (221-222), (vi) Aboriginal people working for Durack at Kildurk Station worked hard for their money (232), (vii) when the men of Newry Station were mustering on Kildurk land (also known as McDarba), Aboriginal women would muster a ‘killer’ (375-376), (viii) on Newry Station Aboriginal people were ‘Only working for dress, blanket, [mosquito] net’ (408,416), and (ix) MP Durack would send all of these things to the workers of Newry Station (410-411), and (x) the Aboriginal workers who worked without wages ‘bin help them kartiya, properly way’ (417).

She notes the absence of (i) a work ethic amongst today’s young Aboriginal workers at Amanbidji (234), and (ii) wages whilst working at Newry Station (406).

**Simile**

None.

**Question**

She asks the interviewer whether he has seen her son who lives elsewhere (20).

**Historical Contrast**

She contrasts (i) the making of cream and butter at Newry Station in the 1930s with the buying of dairy products today (99-100), (ii) the use of coolers at Newry Station in the 1930s with that of freezers today (105-107), (iii) the leaving of money in the bank by workers of her generation in the days when Durack owned Kildurk Station with the gambling on cards that accompanies pay-day in the present (220-222), and (iv) the ‘slack off attitude of worker’s today with the ‘good blackfella’ of her day who ‘know work’ and ‘gotta work for his [ie their] money’ (230-237).

**INTERVIEW ST25**

**Pronoun**

This male speaker uses *I* in relation to (i) working at Rosewood Station (13), (ii) working at Humbert River Station as ‘a small kid’ (13,27), (iii) knowing Charlie Schultz, ex-manager of Humbert River Station (27), (iv) learning to ride a horse at Humbert River Station (28), (v) having a step-father (33), (vi) his belief that there was a big flood at Wave Hill in 1919, (vii) being born at Pumuntu (83), (viii) being part of the group with strong links to Pumuntu (84), (ix) giving his country away now (85), (x) being ‘boss’ for Pumuntu (92), (xi) moving to Humbert River from Pumuntu soon after he was born (100), (xii) moving away from Humbert River (130) as a ‘full-grown child’ (130), to (xiii) ‘stop ‘round ... la bush’ (132), (xiv) being at Rosewood Station for an extended period (162), (xv) getting married at Rosewood Station (165), (xvi) not knowing about the fact that his wife left him ‘in the rubbish’ (166), (xvii) changing jobs to become a drover (168,174), (xviii) becoming sick during World War II (174), (xix) not knowing why the Army didn’t want him to stay at Larrimah with them (181), (xx) finishing his working career as a drover (192), (xxi) his belief about Mr Bingle, travelling manager for Vestleys (209), (xxii) working at Waterloo Station (222), (xxiii) being at Rosewood Station (223) until (xxiv) he began to get a pension (224), following which (xxv) he shifted to Emu Creek (224), (xxvi) his ceasing work at Ord River Station to go elsewhere after having a holiday (267), and (xxvii) not being able to remember the names of those kartiya who shot ngumpin apart from Jack Beasley (334).

He uses *me* in relation to (i) himself with GP* and DP* being ‘boss’ for Pumuntu (92,113), (ii) being older than GP* (100), (iii) being left by his wife (165), and (iv) being transported by Army train when he was sick during the time of World War II (175-177).

He uses *my* in relation to (i) his mother (32,50), (ii) his father (34,35,37), and (iii) his father(‘s) country (83,99).
He uses *we* to refer to himself and those others who (i) lived in the bush for several years when he was a child (51), and so (ii) 'come away from Humbert River' (78), (iii) are 'half and half' in relation to the occupancy of Amanbidji land (116), (iv) went somewhere undefined (192), and (v) were at Mistake Creek recently for land claim purposes (261).

He uses *we* to refer specifically to the team of drovers he was engaged with (178).

He uses *mipala* to refer to himself and those others who were taken from Humbert River Station into the bush when he was a child (51).

No *we*/they distinction is made.

The second person pronouns *you* and *your* are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

**Evaluation**

He positively evaluates (i) Charlie Schultz as 'good old fella' (62), and (ii) 'alright' (66), (iii) the fights that Charlie Schultz would have with Aborigines who absconded from his station (in that 'he never [would] run for [a] rifle' (73), (iv) Kilfoyle, the boss of Rosewood Station, in relation to his payment of wages to Aboriginal workers (139), (v) Kilfoyle in relation to his giving Aboriginal workers alcohol (157), (vi) Mr Bingle, travelling manager for Vestey's as one who 'love im people like mipala, good worker' (213-216), and (vii) the policeman Wally Linkan, though noting that he would 'humbug' bush people (314-315).

He negatively evaluates (i) the policeman Gordon Stott as 'mad bugger~' (294), and (ii) 'too cheeky' (319), (iii) the *kartiya*, Washinby, who killed many *ngumpin* (328), (iv) the shooting of *ngumpin* men by *kartiya* (338), and (v) 'old policemen' (348,352) and Aboriginal trackers or police boys (352) as 'bad bugger' for shooting *ngumpin*.

PK* positively evaluates Kilfoyle, the boss of Rosewood Station (138) and negatively evaluates the policeman Gordon Stott as 'cheeky one' (295).

He uses *hard* to refer to the work Aboriginal people did for Kilfoyle (144).

**Thesis**

He suggests that (i) at some point in the past there was animosity between Aboriginal people in this region, such that his father was killed by other Aborigines (42-45), (ii) he was alive before a particularly big flood at Wave Hill Station in 1919 (55), (iii) Charlie Schultz was 'no good', ie hard on, Aborigines who absconded from stations (68), (iv) other Aboriginal people without links to Amanbidji land have now taken it over (84-90), (v) at some point in the past some or all of the original Ngarinyman inhabitants of Amanbidji land were 'pushed out' by other Aborigines (118-119), (vi) the people of Bulla and Auvergne have nothing to do with ownership of Amanbidji land (125-126), (vii) Kilfoyle of Rosewood Station was the first manager to pay wages to Aboriginal workers (146-147), (viii) the Army didn't want him to stay at Larrimah with them during the time of World War II in case he wanted to join them (187-188), (ix) Mr Bingle, travelling manager for Vestey's, loved good Aboriginal workers like ST* himself but didn't like other 'whiteman' (215-216), (x) the Wave Hill strike in 1966 followed the drowning of a boy in flood waters at the Wave Hill Station (232-239), (xi) early day policemen chased blackfellas around because they 'didn't like im might be' (286), and (xii) a lot of *kartiya* were in the region at some point in the past, shooting *ngumpin* (331-332), and (xiii) taking their women away (335-336).

**Simile**

None.

**Question**

He asks the interviewer (i) what 'sort of story' he wants (8), (ii) whether Charlie Schultz, ex-manager of Humbert River Station is 'alright', ie well (22), (iii) whether he has seen Charlie Schultz (22), (iv) whether he thinks 'two Christmas', ie two years, is a long time (52), (v) whether he knows of Mr Bingle (210), and (vi) whether he has died (210-211), (vii)
whether he knows of Victor Vincent (255), (viii) whether he saw Victor Vincent at Mistake Creek (259), (ix) whether he has heard of a kartiya called Wassinby who killed many Aborigines (321-322), (x) whether he agrees with his assessment of the shooting of ngumpin by kartiya as ‘no good’ (338), and (xi) whether he has heard of a policeman called Tommy Hemming who was also involved in shooting ngumpin (343).

**Historical Contrast**
None.

**INTERVIEW MP26**

**Pronoun**
This female speaker uses *I* in relation to (i) her wanting to talk about a particular topic (1), (ii) working at Mistake Creek Station at the time of being bitten by a snake (5,7), (iii) taking clean plates back to the homestead at night-time in the dark (11,12), (iv) feeling the bite (17,18), (v) returning to the kitchen having been bitten (17), (vi) feeling sick from the snake-bite (23,25,26,31,35), (vii) telling others of her being bitten (24), (viii) laying down having been bitten (34,35,36), (ix) not being well enough to work (36,37), (x) not knowing the name of the snake that bit her (57), (xi) knowing the name of the snake (61), (xii) working at Auvergne Station for the Shadforths (66), (xiii) thinking of her situation in not being allowed to leave Auvergne Station (70), (xiv) having a husband (145), (xv) running away from the camp following her being beaten by her father (158), (xvi) sitting down with her husband (160), (xvii) telling her husband she is going to leave him (161), (xviii) leaving her husband (163), and (xix) meeting her lover on the way (164), (xx) talking to her lover (168), (xxi) being physically beaten (183-184), to (xxii) the point of being ‘finish now’ (188,191,193), (xxiii) getting her wind back (195), and (xxiv) vomiting and bleeding (196).

She uses *me* in relation to (i) being bitten by a snake (1,13,17,24,64), (ii) being treated for snake-bite by a ‘clever’ man (27), (iii) her father wanting to take her from Auvergne Station (68), (iv) being stopped from leaving Auvergne Station (69,70), (v) her father talking to her (118), (vi) being talked to by her husband (149), (vii) being physically beaten by her father (152-154,180,182), (viii) being taken back to the camp by her father (156), (ix) being beaten constantly by her husband (160), (x) being asked by her lover to go with him (165), (xi) being told off by her mother (170-171), (xii) being beaten by others (177-180), (xiii) being revived by her uncle after her beating (191), and (xiv) being told by her father she will get another beating the following day (195).

She uses *my/mine* in relation to (i) the ‘clever’ man, her step-father (30), (ii) her foot (32,37), (iii) her father (67,70,109,113,179), (iv) her husband (75,146), (v) her cousin (75,77), and (vi) her uncle (191).

She uses *we* to refer to herself and those others who (i) were working at the Mistake Creek Station homestead when she was bitten by a snake (6,7), (ii) returned to the camp following her being bitten (24), (iii) were in the camp whilst she was recovering (36), (iv) ran away from Auvergne Station (78,79), and (v) travelled for an extended period in the bush (84-86,88,91,96-98,104-109), (vi) chucked stones on their arrival at Newry Station (114), and (vii) were then lectured by her father (116,117), (viii) travelled to Pumuntu from Newry Station (123-125,128-130,132-133,135-138,141-145), and (ix) ate bush food on the way (141), (x) went to the ‘ring place’ for the purpose of physical punishment (150-151), (xi) returned to the camp from the ‘ring place’ (156-157), (xii) were eating beef (173), and (xiii) were involved in the fighting (176).

She uses *we* to refer specifically to herself and her cousin waiting for her father to take them to the bush from Newry Station (120-122).

She uses *we* to refer specifically to herself and her lover noticing their pursuers are close (169).
She uses mintupala to refer to herself and her cousin (i) running away from Auvergne Station (73), and (ii) travelling for an extended period in the bush (89,91,95), and (iii) obtaining bush food (92,94,98), (iv) being talked to by her father (119), and (v) being taken to the 'ring place' by her father to be punished (151).

She uses mintupala to refer to herself and her lover (i) running away from her family (165-167), and (ii) being looked at by others after their punishment (175).

She uses mipala to refer to herself and those others who ran away from Auvergne Station (78).

She uses mipala to refer specifically to herself and her cousin being taken bush by her father (123).

A mintupala/they distinction is made between herself and her lover in opposition to the larger group comprised of her extended family and her husband (166).

The second person pronouns you and your are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

**Evaluation**
She negatively evaluates (i) her condition, having been bitten by a snake (31), and (ii) the type of snake, warrany that bit her (62-63).

**Thesis**
She suggests that her and the others involved in running away from Auvergne Station were safe from crocodile attack whilst swimming across rivers because the country belonged to one of the men she was with (83).

**Simile**
None.

**Question**
She asks the interviewer if he understands what she's talking about in relation to the set-up of homestead and kitchen (8-9).

**Historical Contrast**
None.

**INTERVIEW PL*27**

**Pronoun**
This male speaker uses I in relation to (i) not knowing what the interviewer wants him to talk about (1), (ii) his birth (25), (iii) forgetting the name of his mother's country (33), (iv) growing up at the Depot (42), (v) teaching Tas Turner stockwork (43), (vi) being sent to Mat Wilson's stockcamp on growing up (47,49), (vii) always returning to the Depot at the close of the working season at Cattle Creek (64), (viii) attending race-meets in the past (81), (ix) not working at the Depot (83), (x) working at Cattle Creek stockcamp (83,85), (xi) leaving Timber Creek following the death of Mat Wilson (92), to (xii) stay at Cattle Creek (96,119), (xiii) moving from Cattle Creek to Ngarinyman country (120), (xiv) not wanting to leave his mother's country (123), (xv) moving to Mistake Creek Station (130), (xvi) moving to Rosewood Station (132,168), (xvii) leaving Rosewood Station (132,168-169), (xviii) being at Rosewood Station at the time of the selling of Kildurk Station by Durack, ie 1972 (140), (xix) being at Mistake Creek Station at the time of his fight with two men there (146), (xx) not knowing why he was beaten by the two men (150), and (xxi) the injuries he sustained (156), and (xxii) leaving Mistake Creek Station (161), (xxiii) working at
Amanbidji Station (181), and then (xxiv) retiring from work (181), and (xxv) forgetting the name of a manager of Amanbidji Station (183-184).

He uses me in relation to (i) his country (33), (ii) being talked to by Mat Wilson, owner of the Timber Creek Depot (46,48), (iii) being the only man left alive amongst the Cattle Creek stockcamp workers (62), (iv) his mother coming to stay with him at Cattle Creek (108), (v) being in his mother’s country (123), (vi) being beaten by two men at Mistake Creek Station (147,148,151,153,156), and (vii) being picked up by his father in Ngarinyman country (179).

He uses my in relation to (i) his Aboriginal father (13,105,119), (ii) his mother (15,109,111), (iii) his birth-place (25), (iv) his mother’s country (27,122,170), and (v) his adoptive kartiya father, Mat Wilson (96).

He uses we to refer to himself and those others who (i) worked at Cattle Creek stockcamp (115), (ii) 'pulled out' of Mistake Creek Station (131), (iii) fought at Mistake Creek Station (146), and (iv) stopped at Kildurk/Amanbidji Station (178).

No we/they distinction is made.

The second person pronouns you and your are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

Evaluation
He positively evaluates a past manager of Amanbidji Station who 'had wife with him' (184-185).

Thesis
He suggests that only ngumpin worked the stock-camp at Mat Wilson’s Cattle Creek Station (56-57,115).

Simile
None.

Question
None.

Historical Contrast
None.

INTERVIEW BG28

Pronoun
This female speaker uses I in relation to (i) her birth (2), (ii) being taken to Avergne Station as a child (3), (iii) growing up at Avergne Station (3-4), (iv) knowing how to cook for the homestead (10), and (v) doing this work (11), (vi) not running away from Avergne Station (15,19-20), (vii) moving to Waterloo Station from Avergne (36-37), (viii) finishing up at Waterloo Station (38), (ix) not knowing who took over at Amanbidji after Reg Durack left (43-44), (x) being in hospital when Reg Durack left (46,49,51), and (xi) her belief that she had problems with her nerves at that time (55), (xii) returning to Kildurk Station from Darwin (58,205,274,281,313,331), (xiii) her beliefs on certain matters of fact (62,64-65,116,121-122,138,140,146,167,175), (xiv) working consistently for Shadforth (78), and (xv) being frightened of his wrath (79), and (xvi) never being physically beaten by him (119), (xvii) growing older at Avergne (120), (xviii) being at East Arm when Durack left Kildurk Station (139,162), (xix) hearing of Durack's departure from Kildurk Station whilst at East Arm (140), (xx) not seeing Durack recently (150), (xxi) her next trip to Kununurra (152), and (xxii) the possibility of her then seeing Durack there (152), (xxiii) a lapse of
memory (177), (xxiv) never having seen anyone at East Arm catch an alligator, ie a salt-water crocodile (187), (xxv) fishing at Auvergne Station (213), and (xxvi) seeing a crocodile whilst doing so (213-215), and (xxvii) her reported thoughts on this event (215), (xxviii) showing her husband the crocodile (217), and (xxix) then moving away from the area at his suggestion (218), (xxx) never living near salt-water since seeing the crocodile (228), (xxxi) not moving away following the death of her husband at Auvergne (244-245,258), (xxvii) not understanding why today’s residents of Amanbidji do not collect bush food (254), (xxviii) forgetting something (260), (xxix) not wanting to fish (264-265,269), (xxx) being frightened of crocodiles (268), (xxxi) being a pensioner and so not working (279,313,314), (xxvii) being still here at Amanbidji (281), (xxviii) having her baby with her during her time at East Arm (282,285), (xxix) having grandchildren (287), (x) not knowing exactly the circumstances of her son’s death in Katherine (289), (xii) looking after her grandchildren (319), (xiii) telling her grandchild not to run away (321), (xiv) having the breakfast her grandchild prepared (325), (xv) living in her own house when the Amanbidji community was positioned to the south of the homestead in the 1970s (342), (xvi) her exemplary work and life history characterised by ‘always sitting down, good’ (346), and (xvii) her continued presence at Amanbidji (346).

She uses *me* in relation to (i) never being ‘flogged’, ie beaten, by Shadforth (78), (ii) the Duracks leaving Kildurk Station ‘behind me’ (139), (iii) her husband talking to her (218,259), (iv) being ‘reared up’ by her husband (240), (v) looking after her husband (244), (vi) not working following her return from East Arm (315), and (vii) being looked after by her grandchildren (327,347-350).

She uses *my/mine* in relation to (i) her father and mother (2), (ii) her arm (52), (iii) her nerves (55), (iv) her husband (216,240,257), (v) her son (282,285,292), (vi) her grandchildren (286,287,317,329,347), (vii) her previous home (341), and (viii) her meat and her tea (349).

She uses *we* to refer to herself and those others who (i) had to ‘sit down [and be] good longa’ Shadforth (71,117), (ii) would be flogged by Shadforth if they slept for too long (73), (iii) procured bush food at East Arm leprosarium (181), (iv) had a dormitory to sleep in at East Arm (194), (v) resided at East Arm (195), (vi) ‘sat down’ at East Arm and didn’t try to get away (202-203), (vii) were finished with East Arm and could receive treatment only at a regional hospital (204), (viii) went fishing whilst employed at Auvergne Station (212), and (ix) lived in the Aboriginal community at Kildurk Station when it was positioned to the south of the homestead (342).

She uses *we* to refer specifically to the women of East Arm who would go digging for yams whilst the men would go hunting for kangaroo, goanna or turtle (198,200).

No *we/they* distinction is made.

The second person pronouns *you* and *your* are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

**Evaluation**

She negatively evaluates (i) Harry Shadforth of Auvernge Station as ‘cheeky one’ (5,77), and (ii) ‘really cheeky’ (98), and (iii) ‘proper cheeky’ (109), and (iv) those of the Katherine mob who are ‘no good la greg’ (299).

She positively evaluates (i) Reg Durack as a ‘good man’ who ‘look after im (Aborigines) really’ and ‘give im good’ (30-32,158-160), (ii) Shadforth’s wife as ‘alright’ and ‘good’ (111-112), (iii) the work of the Aboriginal workers of Auvergne Station following Durack replacing Shadforth there as manager (125,129-130,133-134), (iv) Reg Durack as ‘more good’, ie better than Shadforth (128,132), (v) Reg Durack’s wife’s treatment of Aboriginal women (134-135), (vi) East Arm leprosarium as ‘alright, good’ (164), (vii) the yam-like bush food available around Amanbidji (253), (viii) the attitude of Aboriginal children at East Arm in the early 1970s towards school there (311-312), (ix) her grandchild in that she does ‘good job’ for her (327), (x) the site used by the Aboriginal community at Amanbidji
in the 1970s and the absence of fighting in the community then (343-345), and (xi) her conduct during her life – 'I bin alright, good all the way' (346).

**Thesis**

She suggests that (i) all the Aboriginal workers of Auvergne Station were happy and 'good now' following the replacement of Shadforth as manager by Reg Durack (125-126) and his wife, and (ii) these workers were more inclined then to 'work good' (133-134), (iii) Reg Durack had no inclination to 'flog' his Aboriginal workers (128), and (iv) he and his wife were unique in the region in that 'they bin love blackfella' (135-137), (v) there is plenty of the yam-like bush food around Kildurk, ie Amanbidji, but the residents today are too interested in card-playing to bother about collecting them, a state which is somewhat perplexing (251-256), and (vi) her son was murdered by drinkers of alcohol at Katherine (290-293).

She notes the absence of beatings during Durack's time as manager of Auvergne Station (158-159).

**Simile**

She refers to a type of bush food as 'like a yam' (251).

**Question**

She asks the interviewer (i) if he remembers a particular Aboriginal man of Auvergne Station (237), and (ii) if he can see a hill she is referring to (333).

**Historical Contrast**

She contrasts (i) the past presence of a school at East Arm Leprosarium with the absence of anything there currently (it having been closed down) (305-306), and (ii) the fighting within the Amanbidji community presently with the absence of such at the other community site in the 1970s (343-345).

**INTERVIEW DD29**

**Pronoun**

This female speaker uses *I* to (i) introduce herself on tape (4), and in relation to (ii) what she is to talk about (2), (iii) her marriage (9), (iv) having children (9,15,23), (v) working at Newry Station for Hector Fuller (10), (vi) finishing at Newry Station in order to move to Auvergne Station (12), (vii) being retired (16), (viii) growing old (22), (ix) taking a holiday from Auvergne Station (24), (x) going to the East Arm Leprosarium (24,25), (xi) being sick with leprosy (25), (xii) ending her treatment at East Arm (30), (xiii) returning to Kildurk after her treatment at East Arm (32,37), (xiv) having her children with her (36), (xv) finishing her treatment at Katherine Hospital (37), and (xvi) forgetting the name of the manager who replaced Durack at Kildurk Station (40).

She uses *me* in relation to (i) being at Argyle Station as a child (8), (ii) having her children with her (23), and (iii) being talked to by Dr Elliott (31).

She uses *my/mine* in relation to her father (8).

She uses *we* to refer to herself and those others who (i) 'bin little girl, longa Argyle' (8), (ii) moved from Auvergne Station to Kildurk Station having been told to move to Bulla, circa 1972 (18), (iii) were afflicted with leprosy (26), (iv) were at the East Arm Leprosarium (29), (v) returned to Kildurk from East Arm (35), (vi) sat down at Kildurk during the change of management when Durack left (39), and (vii) 'sit down altogether ... now' at Amanbidji as pensioners (43).
She uses *mipala* to refer to herself and those others who (i) 'bin sit down' alongside members of GP*, NP* and MP*'s family at East Arm Leprosarium (27), and (ii) were told by Dr Elliott that East Arm would cease to operate as a Leprosarium (33).

She uses *mintupala* to refer to herself and her husband (19).

No *we/they* distinction is made.

The second person pronouns *you* and *your* are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

**Evaluation**
None.

**Thesis**
None.

**Simile**
None.

**Question**
She asks the interviewer what he wants her to talk about (2).

**Historical Contrast**
None.

**INTERVIEW DP30**

**Pronoun**
This male speaker uses *I* in relation to (i) his birth (2), (ii) growing up in the bush (2,3), (iii) being a child at Auvergne Station (19), (iv) going to Newry Station having run away from Auvergne (23), (v) getting work at Newry (28), (vi) being a 'big boy' and riding horses at Waterloo Station (31), (vii) working at Newry for an extended period (42,45), (viii) being a 'big boy' at Newry (49), (ix) going to Bullo River Station to work as a bull-catcher (59), (x) working as a bull-catcher (68), (xi) mustering cattle for Henderson of Bullo River Station (72,73,76,78), and (xii) then droving them to a yard near Amanbidji (82), (xiii) working for Henderson for an extended period (93), (xiv) returning to Kildurk Station on its being sold by Durack 'to all the Ngarinyman mob' (95), and (xv) wanting to stay at Kildurk/Amanbidji now (98).

He uses *me* in relation to (i) being taken to Timber Creek by the policeman Tas Fitzer (9), (ii) being seen by Shadforth stealing tomatoes (20), (iii) being taken away from Auvergne Station by his father (22), (iv) being taken by the manager of Waterloo Station to spay cattle with him (33,34), (v) being picked up by his brother, GP* to return to Newry (37), (vi) being talked to by Henderson, manager of Bullo River Station (72), (vii) being chosen to fly with Henderson in his plane whilst the other workers took the horses back to the station (89), and (viii) being especially liked by Henderson and his daughters (90).

He uses *my/mine* in relation to (i) something unuttered (7), (ii) his father (10,21,37), (iii) his brother (18,35), (iv) his 'place', Amanbidji (98), and (v) his mother.

He uses *we* to refer to himself and those others who (i) came out of the bush and were 'picked up' by the policeman Tas Fitzer and taken to Timber Creek (3), and (ii) then worked at Timber Creek for a short time (9), and (iii) then went to Auvergne Station (10,17), (iv) stayed at Auvergne Station for some time (18), (v) got work at Waterloo Station (25), (vi) worked for Tom Ronan at Newry (43), (vii) worked for Stan Wilson at Newry (48), (viii) had their own pack horse and were involved in the droving of cattle from Newry (52,53), (ix) worked for Keith Landsdowne at Newry (55), (x) caught bulls by hand at Bullo River
(60), and (xi) put them in the trucking yard at Keep River (62), (xii) mustered a big mob of cattle for Henderson of Bullo River (80), and (xiii) lived in the old structures on the eastern edge of the community (123).

He uses we to refer specifically to himself and his classificatory brother PF* stealing tomatoes at Auvergne Station (19).

He uses we to refer specifically to himself, his father and his brother, GP* returning to Newry Station (37).

He uses us to refer to himself and those others who were ‘picked up’ by the policeman Tas Fitzer (5).

No we/they distinction is made.

The second person pronouns you and your are used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person in relation to the work of chasing, catching and throwing bulls to the ground (65-66).

**Evaluation**

He positively evaluates Tom Ronan, boss of Newry Station (48).

**Thesis**

He suggests that he was liked by Henderson of Bullo River Station, and all his daughters (90-91).

**Simile**

None.

**Question**

He asks the interviewer if he knows of a stock-yard he is referring to (83).

**Historical Contrast**

None.

**INTERVIEW PP31**

**Pronoun**

This female speaker uses I in relation to staying at Kununurra (149).

She uses me in relation to herself and AP* being children during their time out bush (31).

She uses my/mine in relation to her brother, GP* (31).

She uses we to refer to herself and those others who (i) call country on Waterloo Station by its blackfella name (8), (ii) would once walk to Bamboo Spring to get material for making spears (22), and then (iii) walk from Pumuntu to a higher place during the floods (24,26), and (iv) have a new office now within the community at Amanbidji (85).

She uses we to refer specifically to herself and the other members of her family who (i) lived at a ‘bush holiday’ place with others (30), (ii) travelled through the bush (40,54,118,125), and (iii) camped in the bush at various places (41,48,52,54,136,149).

She uses mipala to refer specifically to herself and those siblings of hers who have a Ngarrinyman mother, thus excluding GP* (33,35,36).

She uses mipala to refer specifically to herself and her siblings helping to shift camp in the bush (56).

She uses mipala to refer to those who were children when the spring at Miyaluni still flowed (95).

No we/they distinction is made.

The second person pronouns you and your are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.
Evaluation
She uses rough to refer to those kartiya unable to say ‘Ngamanpuru’ properly (116).

Thesis
She suggests that Amanbidji is called as it is because kartiya have difficulty saying Ngamanpuru as they are ‘too rough’ (115-116). She notes the absence of a road to a place nearby that is rich in bush resources (149).

Simile
None.

Question
She asks the interviewer (i) if he knows of MP Durack (1), and (ii) if he knows of the conkerberry which gives Ngamanpuru its name (103).

Historical Contrast
She contrasts (i) modern and old methods of maintaining roads (68-69), and (ii) past and present working of a spring at the edge of the community (93-97).

INTERVIEW MP32

Pronoun
This female speaker uses my in relation to her father (6,9). No we/they distinction is made. The second person pronouns you and your are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

Evaluation
She positively evaluates her father’s boss (10).

Thesis
She suggests that her father left a job because his kartiya boss, Archie Skeethorpe, was killed whilst shoeing a horse (13-15).

Simile
None.

Question
None.

Historical Contrast
None.

INTERVIEW MP33

Pronoun
This female speaker uses I in relation to (i) her age at the time of the death of the kartiya at Dead Man’s Gap (24), and (ii) her belief that ‘early mob’ travelled through the country with comparative ease (85).
She uses *me* in relation to (i) being the only one of her siblings to have been alive at the time of the death of the *kartiya* (22), (ii) being put on her father's shoulder in order to cross the West Baines River (56), and (iii) being picked up by her father (106).

She uses *my/mine* in relation to her father (102).

She uses *we* to refer to herself and those others who (i) were camping near Dead Man's Gap at the time of the death of the *kartiya* there (12), (ii) were watching the *kartiya* there (14), (iii) possibly as a family group, split up from the main group of Aborigines present there and travelled through the bush (33, 34, 39, 61-62, 72, 77, 88, 99, 117, 120, 125), and (iv) camped at various places (36, 40, 41, 63, 88, 99), and (v) swam across the West Baines River at Barramundi Hole (42, 61), and (vi) 'sang' for the *kartiya* who was dying (70), and (vii) had plenty to eat (82), and (viii) didn't possess motor cars (82).

She uses *mipala* to refer possibly to the family group taken through the bush by her father (100).

PP*, another Aboriginal woman present, uses *we* to refer specifically to that group made up of herself and her siblings who have a Ngarinyman mother (114).

No *we/they* distinction is made.

The second person pronouns *you* and *your* are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

**Evaluation**

None.

**Thesis**

Both MP* and PP* note the absence of boats and dinghies for crossing rivers when MP* was a small child (50, 52, 54).

**Simile**

None.

**Question**

None.

**Historical Contrast**

She contrasts (i) the use of boats in the present to cross flooded rivers with their absence in the past (50-54), and (ii) the absence of crocodiles at Barramundi Hole in the past with their possible presence in the present (59).

**INTERVIEW PW34**

**Pronoun**

This male speaker uses *I* in relation to (i) his birth (1, 23), (ii) his knowledge of the past (5), (iii) being at Waterloo Station as a young boy (8, 38), (iv) growing up at Waterloo (8), (v) being sixteen and learning to ride (10), (vi) being eighteen and still working at Waterloo (11), (vii) being nineteen (12), and (viii) breaking in horses (14), (ix) finishing work for the year (15), (x) being eighteen and having old people die at Waterloo (38), (xi) being nineteen and having Welfare visit Waterloo (40), (xii) his age at the time of the advent of wages (67), (xiii) his avowal of the veracity of what he is saying (78, 84), (xiv) his lack of knowledge of the first police to use brutal methods to control *ngumpin* (100), (xv) what he means (113), and (xvi) the limits of the story he can tell (119).

He uses *me* in relation to (i) his father 'finding' him (4), (ii) his father putting him on a horse for the first time (10), (iii) the manager of Waterloo having him work as a horse-breaker (13), (iv) his father and mother telling him of the past bounty in Waterloo country
(36), and (v) the Aboriginal women present, MP* and PP*, being able to corroborate what he has said (117).

He uses my/mine in relation to (i) his father (2,9,36), (ii) his mother (3,36), (iii) his sister (4), and (iv) his older brother (5).

He uses we to refer to himself and those others who (i) would start the stock-camp at the beginning of the working season (15), (ii) drafted the mustered cattle (20), (iii) worked for no money prior to Welfare's arrival, circa 1945 (40), (iv) would go on holiday having had to leave their swags behind at the station (54,58), and (v) return to the station (54,59), to (vi) have their swag given back to them (55), (vii) received wages from Welfare circa 1946 (62), (viii) began to receive 'big money' (64), (ix) were 'alright' with the advent of wages (67), (x) did the work of mustering (67), (xi) were 'really alright' with the advent of 'big money' (70), and (xii) had problems with 'cheeky' kartiya on Vesteys station (72).

He uses us to refer to himself and those others who (i) were only given bread, beef and clothes in exchange for their labour (51), and (ii) were given 'little bit of a swag cover' to compensate for having to return their swag prior to taking the bush holiday (58).

An us/they distinction is made between (i) those (ie ngumpin workers) who received merely beef, bread and clothes in exchange for their labour and those (ie kartiya) who gave them (51-52), and (ii) those (ie ngumpin workers) who received a swag cover for their bush holiday having had to return their swags and those (ie kartiya) who gave them (58).

The second person pronouns you and your are not used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person.

**Evaluation**

He positively evaluates the era when wages were paid to Aboriginal workers (65,67,70).

He negatively evaluates as 'cheeky fella', some of the kartiya employers and employees of Vesteys stations who would fight or beat Aborigines who did the 'wrong thing' (73).

He uses hard and very hard to refer to (i) the era defined by the absence of wages (40,52), (ii) the requirement for Aboriginal workers to return their swags to the station prior to taking their holiday (55), (iii) the requirement for Aboriginal workers to return their work clothes prior to taking their holiday (60-61), (iv) 'Vestey time', ie the period when Vesteys were involved in the pastoral industry (72), when (v) policemen would be called in to administer brutal beatings to Aboriginal residents of their stations (93,95), (vi) the virtual enslavement of Aboriginal people during 'Vestey time' as a result of police beatings (107-108), and (vii) the policemen involved in these beatings (113).

He uses rough to refer to the treatment of ngumpin by policemen during 'Vestey time' (119).

PP*, an Aboriginal woman present, also uses rough to refer to the treatment of ngumpin by policemen during 'Vestey time' (118).

**Thesis**

He suggests that (i) prior to his birth there were many bush resources in the country around Waterloo Station (33-34), (ii) there was an influx of Aboriginal people to Waterloo Station circa 1930 (37-38), (iii) prior to the mid 1940s life was 'very hard' and characterised by the absence of wages (39-40), (iv) kartiya such as Ted Evans and possibly even the Waterloo Station manager recognised, circa 1946, the moral requirement to compensate the 'old people' and Aborigines generally for their labour by paying them wages (49-51), (v) it was Welfare who gave Aboriginal workers at Waterloo Station their pay (62), (vi) if, during Vestey time, Aboriginal people were 'cheeky', kartiya station personnel would get a policeman to tie them to a tree and flog them (74-76), (vii) young Aboriginal people today are treated leniently by policemen (80), (viii) the police who beat Aboriginal people during 'Vestey time' were untroubled by deaths amongst those they beat (92), and (ix) were operating within a culture of violence that was passed on from policeman to policeman (100-104), and (x) would administer these beatings regardless of which station they were at.
(103-104), and (xi) in doing all of these things, contributed to the enslavement of Aboriginal people (107), by (xii) beating Aborigines at the sign of 'one little trouble' (114).

He notes the absence of (i) wages for Aboriginal workers at Waterloo Station prior to the late 1940s (40,51-52), and (ii) swags for Aboriginal workers during the holiday season (58).

**Simile**

He suggests that Aborigines in being tied to a tree by policemen prior to being beaten were treated 'like a dog' (76,88).

PP* also suggests that Aborigines were treated 'like a dog' in being tied to a tree prior to being beaten by police (87).

**Question**

He asks the interviewer (i) if he knows of the possum (32), (ii) whether he knows of the requirement on Aboriginal workers to return their swags to the station store prior to going on their 'bush holiday' or 'walkabout' (52-54), and (iii) whether he agrees with his assessment of the era in which policemen could tie Aborigines to trees and 'belt' them as 'very hard' (93).

**Historical Contrast**

He contrasts (i) methods of mustering cattle in the past with the use of helicopters in the present (17),
(ii) the 'very hard' day of having to return swags prior to taking the 'bush holiday' with, implicitly, a relaxation of this requirement at some point (54-56)
(iii) the 'really alright' of the period following the introduction of wages and 'big mob [of] money' with the 'hard day' prior to this (66-67,69-70)
(iv) past and present treatment of Aborigines at the hands-of policemen, finding the latter to be much more lenient than the former (80-81).

**INTERVIEW PW35**

**Pronoun**

This male speaker uses I in relation to (i) understanding the interviewer's focus (8), (ii) being sixteen at the time of being 'put ... on the horse' (26,27), (iii) being younger than sixteen and working as a horse-tailer (32,36), (iv) becoming seventeen and knowing how to ride a horse (43,44), (v) being 'pretty good' at breaking in horses (123), (vi) watching his father break in horses (124), (vii) telling his father he'd take over from him the work of breaking in horses (129), (viii) being eighteen at the time of Welfare's first visit to Waterloo (139), (ix) being eighteen at the time of Welfare's bringing of wages to Aboriginal workers at Waterloo (148), (x) forgetting the surname of one of the half-caste children taken from Wave Hill by Welfare in the 1950s (176), (xi) being a step-father to a half-caste boy taken from Waterloo Station (209-210), (xii) coming to Waterloo Station (213), (xiii) his act of telling stories (239), (xiv) not knowing exactly what happened in relation to the fight between a kartiya and a half-caste man that took place some decades ago (257,262), (xv) not knowing exactly what happened in relation to the walk-off of Port Keats workers from Waterloo Station (479), (xvi) not knowing how the Port Keats men crossed the Victoria River to get back to Port Keats from Waterloo Station (522), and (xvii) wanting some tobacco (537).

He uses me in relation to (i) being 'put ... on the horse' to learn to ride by his father (27,29,30), and (ii) his step-son knowing him despite having been taken to Croker Island when young (209).

He use my/mine in relation to (i) his father (26,29,125,127), (ii) his horse (36), and (iii) his step-son (206).
He uses *we* to refer to himself and those others who (i) at Waterloo Station were ‘okay’, having been helped out by Aboriginal workers from other Vesteys stations (19), (ii) worked at Waterloo Station for a long time (25), (iii) would travel to Wave Hill Station to get horses for Waterloo (47), (iv) had a ‘good time’ working at Waterloo especially in relation to the breaking in of horses (76), (v) worked on the Waterloo Station stockcamp (227), (vi) had three different stockcamps at Waterloo (441), (vii) had an aerodrome at Waterloo (463), and (viii) asked the Aboriginal workers from Port Keats whether they knew how to get back to their community from Waterloo Station (505).

He uses *us* to refer to himself and those others who at Waterloo were helped out when short-handed by Aboriginal workers from other Vesteys stations (18).

A *we*/they distinction is made between (i) the workers of Waterloo Station and those Aboriginal workers from other Vesteys stations sent to help them (19), and (ii) the Aboriginal workers of Waterloo Station and the Aborigines of Port Keats sent to work there (505).

An *us*/they distinction is made between those (ie ngumpin) who received rations but no money when they went on holiday and those (ie kartiya) who both gave and withheld these things (43).

The second person pronouns you and your are used to refer to a hypothetical or representative Aboriginal person in relation to (i) going on holiday with some rations but no money (42-43), (ii) the work of breaking in horses (86,90,97,99,103,114-115), and (iii) receiving wages from Welfare (150).

**Evaluation**

He positively evaluates (i) the work of horse-tailing (39), (ii) the era wherein he and the other Aboriginal workers of Waterloo would break in many horses at a time (76), (iii) his own expertise as a horse-breaker (123,132) and stockman (132), (iv) Ted Evans, another Welfare officer to bring wages to the Aboriginal workers of Waterloo Station (164), (v) the fighting ability of a middle-aged kartiya man some decades ago (250), and (vi) the Waterloo Station manager’s decision-to pay the striking Port Keats workers for the work they had already done (501).

**Thesis**

He suggests that (i) a ‘good man’ would take three days to break in a horse (84), (ii) he became an expert horse-breaker and stockman by watching how his father worked (125,127), (iii) one of the defining characteristics of ‘Welfare time’ was that ‘money bin come out’ for Aboriginal workers (138), (iv) Welfare was the ‘boss’ of the Aboriginal workers of Waterloo Station and brought out wages for them (148-151), (v) Welfare recognised there was an obligation to pay Aboriginal workers who had been working ‘long en01,11gh’ without wages (154-156), (vi) the Welfare officer Ted Evans took half-caste children from stations in the region (180-181), (vii) the half-caste children who were taken away from the region by Welfare officers never forget their people (199) nor their language (202), (viii) the incident wherein a policeman at Mistake Creek Station threatened to tie PL* to a tree and ‘flog shit’ out of him (312-314), then fought with him (315-317) and attempted to get his police ‘boy’ to help him (319-320) happened a ‘long time’ after 1946, and so possibly in the 1950s (374-382), (ix) Vesteys approached the Catholic minister at Port Keats for him to send Aboriginal men from there to work on Vesteys stations (403-405), in order, (x) to help Vesteys (468-469), (xi) the cause of the walk-off from Waterloo Station by Aborigines from Port Keats in the 1960s was that the kartiya horse-breaker was ‘chasin’ after’ one of those men’s wife (483-485), (xii) in paying off the Port Keats Aborigines on walk-off from Waterloo Station the manager acted properly: ‘give im fair go’ (501), and (xiii) the Port Keats Aborigines safely negotiated the salt-water crocodile-infested Victoria River because they could ‘talk language la them alligators’ (530,532-533).
He notes the absence of (i) wages during the time he was learning to become a stockman, circa 1945 (39-40), and (ii) tobacco at the hostel in which the interview is taking place (537).

**Simile**

He suggests that PL* has 'teeth like bloody razor or something' (367).

**Question**

He asks the interviewer whether he knows of wild horses (brumbies) (53).

**Historical Contrast**

None.