

# WARLMANPA LANGUAGE & COUNTRY

David Nash

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## ABSTRACT

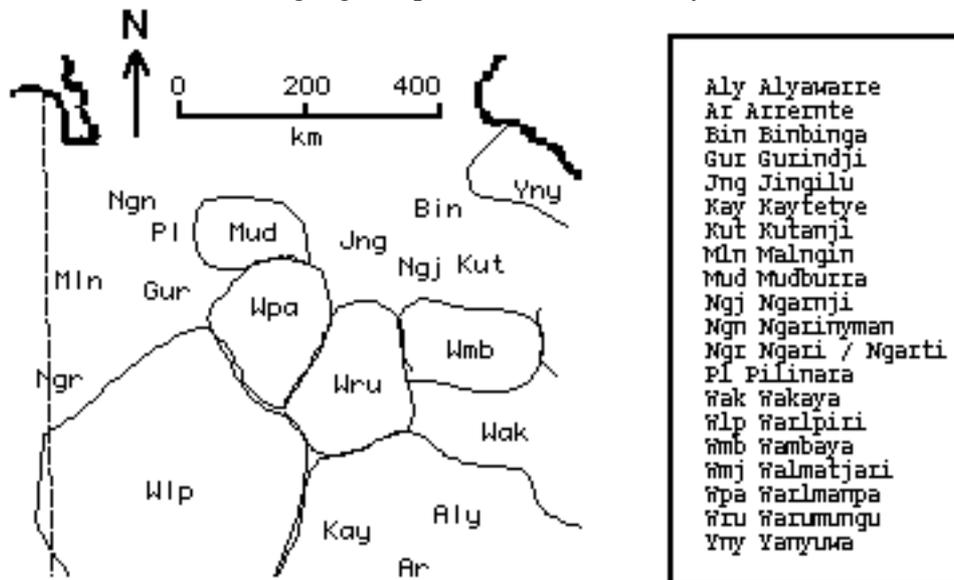
The Warlmanpa language of the west-central Northern Territory is referred to in writing only in the last half-century, long after all its neighbours were recognised by travellers and settlers. An explanation for this is proposed in terms of speakers' multi-lingual identity combined with the ideology of affiliation of language and country.

## CONTENTS

1. Recognition of Warlmanpa .....	2
1.1. Travellers through Warlmanpa country.....	3
1.1.1. The term "Warrmarla" .....	5
1.2. Recognition of Warlmanpa from 1934 .....	5
1.2.1. Strehlow 1938.....	6
1.2.2. Tindale 1974.....	6
1.2.3. Capell 1952.....	6
1.2.4. Register of Wards 1957.....	6
1.2.5. Comment.....	7
2. Factors affecting language choice by polylinguals.....	7
3. Affiliation of language and country.....	9
3.1. Language-land relationships in Aboriginal Australia.....	9
3.2. Linguistic territory in the central Northern Territory.....	10
4. Warlmanpa among other languages.....	11
5. Postscript: A bilingual puzzle.....	11
6. References .....	12

The Warlmanpa language of the west-central Northern Territory is referred to in writing only in the last half-century, long after all its neighbours were recognised by travellers and settlers. In the first part of this paper<sup>1</sup> I set out the evidence for this blind spot, and track the emergence of the name in documented history, and then suggest a range of explanatory factors.

The location of Warlmanpa country is in the northern Tanami Desert, surrounded by that of the Warlpiri, Warumungu, Jingili, Mudburra and Gurindji and Kartangaruru. This accords with the picture of Meggitt 1962 ("Walmanba"), and has been filled in more from land claim and other enquiries of the last fifteen years (of which the main one is reported by the Aboriginal Land Commission 1982). These neighbours are much as shown on the most recently published Australian language map (Australian Academy of the Humanities 1981):<sup>2</sup>



*Schematic map with relative location of languages referred to.*

## 1. Recognition of Warlmanpa

The first known record of Warlmanpa vocabulary, or indeed of the name Warlmanpa, is in Stanner (1979:183)'s 1934 report. Stanner said the name applied to country "north-north-west to north-west of Tennant's Creek" and "west-south-west" of Powell's Creek, which accords with the general area said today to be Warlmanpa.

Warlmanpa are in some contexts referred to as Warlpiri. I have noticed this among older Warumungu people in Tennant Creek. From their point of view, I suppose, the Warlmanpa are the Warlpiri-like people from the west, and the other Warlpiri used not to have little to do with the Warumungu.<sup>3</sup> Stanner (1979:47) also recorded that the Warumungu use the term Warlpiri to refer to the Warlmanpa, at least the group that were then living near Powell Creek Telegraph Station. He puts it like this:

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to the Warlmanpa people who have taught me some of their language and country, to my erstwhile adviser Kenneth Hale for originally suggesting the possibility and seeing that I tried it, and to the AIAS (now AIATSIS) and CLC for essential support. I am grateful to Harold Koch, Jane Simpson, Peter Sutton, and Patrick McConvell for discussing with me some of the issues in this paper, and to Mrs P. Stanner for access to her late husband's notebooks. The preparation of the paper has been supported by the Australian Research Council (no. A58932251).

<sup>2</sup> Even though the lines on that map are to be taken schematically, the Warlmanpa area shown extends too far to the north and east, taking in what is the Jingili and Mudburra country of Elliott and Newcastle Creek and east of Lake Woods.

<sup>3</sup> This is confirmed by a commentary by the late Max Jangali, a Warumungu elder recorded by P. Chakravarti in 1966.

This tribe is known as the Walmunba by the Warramunga, but Walpari is the true tribal name.

However the vocabulary items he recorded for “Walmunba” comprises some kinship terms including distinctive Warlmanpa “FSis pimbidina” (*pimpirtina*, cf. Warlpiri *pimirdi*) and “MF Djambirdina” (*jampirtina*, cf. Warlpiri *jamirdi*).

Stanner 1934 also made a record in his 1934 notebook of the names and particulars of the adult Aboriginal residents at places along the Overland Telegraph Line, including Morphett Creek (Banka Banka) and Powell Creek. He carefully recorded the patrilineal Dreaming and matrilineal *ngurlu* affiliations along with the genealogical connections of just about all the adults in these places.

It is notable that Stanner at first did not record particular language affiliations of individuals (at Tennant Creek, Banka Banka or Powell Creek), but rather assigned a language name to each camp (Warumungu at the former two, and Warlmanpa at the first Powell Creek camp). Then later at a second camp at Powell Creek he records individuals as “Tjingili” or “Mudbura”. I presume this is because he was told that such and such a language was the language of the group as a whole, probably the lingua franca of the camp. In which case, it is interesting to note that while Stanner noted the existence of Warlmanpa first when he was at Tennant Creek it was not until he visited the camp at Powell Creek that he recorded words of the language, or assigned the name Warlmanpa to the resident group. His lists of residents can be summarised as:

place <sup>4</sup>	‘tribe’	adults	children mentioned
Tennant Creek	Warumungu	23	10
Powell Creek	Warlmanpa	22	3
Powell Creek	Jingili	5	
Powell Creek	Mudburra	3	

Stanner’s 1934 notebook also records an otherwise unknown language name, Warnmũ ngũ, which seems like a blend of ‘Warumungu’ and ‘Warlmanpa’:

Walmunba [...] between Warramunga who finish at Banka; Warn.mungu round about Powell Creek. Djingulu further north.

In summary, the first record of the term “Warlmanpa” came from Stanner: someone who spent a few weeks at Tennant Creek, and, unlike a number of travellers before him, did not travel away from the Overland Telegraph Line to Warlmanpa country.

For completeness, I now list the travellers who passed through Warlmanpa country before Stanner’s 1934 trip.

### 1.1. Travellers through Warlmanpa country

Numerous travellers along the Overland Telegraph Line from its establishment in 1871 have recorded the group names Warumungu and Jingili in the central Northern Territory. Less common is any mention of the names of groups whose main country is away from the Telegraph Line.

Among the keenest observers were Spencer & Gillen (1904:184-5), who mention “Walpiri/Walpari” people visiting Tennant Creek in 1901. They record only a few terms of their language, just the subsection terms and the word for Dreaming’. The last is the only distinctive word, and is clearly the modern Mudburra term *buwarraja* ‘Dreaming’, or Warlmanpa *puwarrija*, quite different from Warlpiri *jukurra* (which Spencer & Gillen do not record). Similarly, Spencer and Gillen record that the “Walpiri/Walpari” they met had named patrimoieties. Now the Warlmanpa do have named patrimoieties, like their neighbours the Warumungu and Mudburra, which thereby resolves what puzzled Meggitt (1962) for instance (that Warlpiri say that these patrimoiety names are not Warlpiri). In other words, the Walpiri that Spencer & Gillen met may well have been Warlmanpa speakers. That encounter is illuminated by Stanner’s 1934 experience: his Warlmanpa vocabulary includes “*boardtha*”

<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately Stanner did not visit Helen Springs, and Strehlow four years later (see below) did not visit Powell Creek, so in that area their figures are not directly comparable. Further, Stanner seems not to have made a full list at Banka Banka the way he did at Tennant Creek and Powell Creek.

'Dreaming', and the patrimoiety names "the same as the Warramunga, Uluuru and Kingili" (1979:48).

What of the few travellers who have ventured away from the Telegraph Line?

Those who passed through the Warlmanpa area and recorded signs of Aboriginal presence are John McDouall Stuart in 1861 (1862, 1865), Nathaniel Buchanan in 1896 (1896), Barclay-Macpherson-Hill in 1911 (Strong 1989<sup>5</sup>) and, marginally, Alan A. Davidson in 1900 (1901). All these however had no spoken interactions.

The first (and probably only) recorded face-to-face interaction on Warlmanpa country was on the Commonwealth-funded 1911 Barclay-Macpherson-Hill expedition. It is worth repeating here to illustrate the kind of minimal interaction that was probably typical of the albeit rare encounters in Warlmanpa country. Gerald Hill and Ronald Macpherson recorded in their respective journals<sup>6</sup>:

5.7.11 Left camp at 9.25 a.m. travelled 26 1/2 miles in northerly direction over country for the most part similar to that of yesterday. [...] Camped for night on wide gum clay-pan or depression on which a party of natives had just made their wurlies (4 in number). We rode into this camp at dusk, just in time to see the last of the natives running away. They left all their weapons and food and did not return until after we left next day, though we heard the women calling during the night. Amongst the weapons were several womeras of similar pattern to those used in Kimberley & further north in the Territory. [sketch 1] <flat stick>, a light weapon for chopping made from a shear blade [sketch 2] <3 ft long x 3/4 inch diameter.> Several knives made from shear blades, spears with shear-blade points and spears with 3 prongs of gal. iron wire--used further up for fish spears. There was good water at 8 ft in burrow like hole made by the natives in the centre of the claypan. A handsome tree (439) grows about this hollow. A heavy due [sic] fell at night the first we have experienced during the trip.

6.7.11 Visited all the native wurlies and examined the weapons, but took none (by Capt. Barclay's orders). After leaving last night's camp about 1 mile behind a party of about 10 men and 4 or 5 children followed our tracks. I went back a short distance to met [sc. meet] them but found they could speak no English nor understand the signs I made to them. They were very shy and only 2 of them would approach me closely. After a good deal of shouting to each other they ran off into the scrub. Travelled 23 1/2 miles north today. [...]

5 JULY WED.

Left Camp 9.25 am Camped 7 pm. [...] Trav. northerly spinifex very bad & allied with dense acacia scrub during the forenoon - more open country in the afternoon, with occasional gum flats. Native smokes in all directions. Came unexpectedly on a blackfellows' camp on a gum flat at sundown, the natives all bolting into the scrub, leaving their food cooking on the fires & their spears & other weapons lying about in all directions. Found small native well about a hundred yards away & camped there for the night, leaving the blackfellows' camp & possessions undisturbed.

6 JULY THUR.

Left camp 9.45 am. Camped 6.55 pm. No sign of the blackfellows returning to their camp before our departure, though continued calls in the bush round the camp during the night testified to their proximity. Several of them seen at a distance following up on our tracks even after leaving camp, but they invariably bolted into the scrub if any of the party rode towards them. [...] Lat. Mer Alt O 18°26'51"S.

<sup>5</sup> See the references therein, especially: Australian Archives. NT Branch. A3/XR 1913/7162. Barclay - McPherson Expedition, NT 1911-1913.

<sup>6</sup> Both journals are unpublished. Hill's original journal is held at the National Herbarium, Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne, and his 'Private Diary, From 11 Jan 1911 to 17 Nov 1911' is held by his son W.R. Hill. The extract from Ronald H. Macpherson's journal (in the right-hand column) is taken from a copy provided to me by Bruce Strong.

Apart from the above-mentioned travellers in the area, there were others who did travel with local Aboriginal guides, including G.H. Lamond in 1885 (1986), 'Greenhide Sam' Croker (Hemphill 1901), and Charles Chewings in 1909 (1930). However their publications record no personal or linguistic information about the Aborigines involved. I know of no trips through Warlmanpa country between 1911 and that of Gerald Whitlock's party in 1941 and 1942<sup>7</sup>, and by the time of Whitlock's traverses Warlmanpa country had been depopulated. The prospectors such as the well-known Joe Brown, and Jack Simpson and Doug Cooper, who had close dealings with local Aborigines and probably traversed the area in the 1920s and 1930s, were either not given to writing, or their journals have disappeared without trace.

In short, no traveller in Warlmanpa country (before the post-1975 land claim era) recorded any Warlmanpa language, or even the name of the language affiliated with the country crossed.

#### 1.1.1. The term "Warrmarla"

To fully establish my claim that Warlmanpa long went unnoticed, it is necessary to examine and distinguish the recurrent recordings of a somewhat similar term, applied to people roughly to the south of Warlmanpa country.

Spencer & Gillen's (1904) map from their 1901 expedition has roughly in the Warlmanpa area the tribal name "Walpari", distinguished from "Wulmala" on the Hanson. Chewings' (1936) map of the situation he found in 1909 has in the Warlmanpa area the tribal name "Walpari or Ilpirra", which he distinguished from "Ilpirra<sup>8</sup> or Wolpari" on the Lander. West of the Lander he has "Wommana or Walmala", and around Winnecke Creek "Uramulla". Variants of this last term recur in writings early this century, and corresponds to the current Warlpiri term *warrmarla* or *warlmarla* 'warriors'.<sup>9</sup> For instance, mid-1930s police reports from Tennant Creek (Commonwealth of Australia 1937) assign Aborigines of the area to the 'Warramunga (Local Tribe)' or 'Warramulla (Desert Tribe)'.

In a similar area to Chewings' "Wommana or Walmala" it was said that the Aborigines "spoke only the Wallmune dialect".<sup>10</sup> The nasal beginning the third syllable of the terms "Wommana" and "Wallmune" may be a clue that the term heard was *Warlmanpa*. This is helped by the fact that Warlpiri assimilates a lateral before a nasal (in loans) to the corresponding nasal, so that the Warlpiri pronunciation is *Warnmanpa*. Further, a Mudburra pronunciation of the name is *Warlmana*.

## 1.2. Recognition of Warlmanpa from 1934

The first occurrence of the name Warlmanpa in print is in press reports of the 1936 Tennant Creek gold mining celebrations; these mention the Warlmanpa, but concentrate on the Warumungu and "Warramulla".

A summary of the Aboriginal population at the Tennant Creek Telegraph Station was made by Senior Constable Reid in early 1937 (Commonwealth of Australia 1937). He uses

<sup>7</sup> Whitlock's two routes are shown on the N.T. Pastoral Map showing 'Pastoral holdings as at 30-6-45', held at Australian Archives, Darwin. His efforts are also known from two plans held by NT Department of Lands (CP4619-20 Fire Plough Tracks 1942 Ref. S83/1112/4), Milligan et al (1966) (Figure 5 'Wisio Basin - Routes of Surface Geological Topographic and Land Surveys'), and from recollections of people I have talked to, especially the late Frank Glastonbury who was employed by Whitlock on the 1941(?) effort.

<sup>8</sup> This term is *Warlpiri* or its Arandic pronunciation, with stress on the second syllable, so rendered "Ilpirra".

<sup>9</sup> The Warlpiri term *warrmarla* has been extended to name one of the chess pieces (the bishop?). The term is used in a number of languages to mean 'bush people, people further away' (including at Broome, A. Moyle 1977:16). The only word list, recorded as Warrmarla was by Terry 1930:342 (Record of the Terry Expedition 18 June - 29 November 1928, Appendix VI "Aboriginal words collected") in a table where none of the column headings are actually language names: "De Grey, Moola Bulla, Walmulla"; the words are Warlpiri. Rarely are there first-hand reports in the literature of meetings of people who identified themselves as Warrmarla; it is usually applied to absent others.

<sup>10</sup> O'Grady (1977:21-22) reports the conversation between his subject Frank McGarry, and the late Alick (Alex Jupurrula) Wilson at Tippenbar (Rdipinpa) (near the Lander south of present-day Willowra) on 13 September 1935, speaking of "[t]he many blacks to the westward where there was permanent water".

just two names: “Warramulla (Desert Tribe) and Warramunga (Local Tribe), and gives the following population figures:

	Tribe		
	Warramulla	Warramunga	
women (over 12)	20	22	42
children	12	20	32
men (over 16)	16	20	36
total	48 <sup>11</sup>	62	110

### 1.2.1. Strehlow 1938

Strehlow’s detailed October 1938 census<sup>12</sup> of Aboriginals between Tennant Creek and Daly Waters records details of each person’s “tribe”. The ‘tribe’ affiliations Strehlow recorded at Tennant Creek, Banka Banka and Helen Springs were as follows:

residence	language						total
	Waru.	Warlpiri	Jingili	Kaititj	Wambaya	not stated	
Tennant Creek	39/45	9/9	1/1	1/3	0	4/21	54/79
Banka Banka	22/28	7/10	0	0	1/1	4/12	34/51
Helen Springs	4/4	3/6	1/1	0	0	0/4	8/15
Newcastle Waters	0	0	46/47	0	0	0/4	46/51
total	65/77	14/25	48/49	1/3	1/1	8/41	137/196

Note: Two figures are given for each entry, separated by a slash, giving those aged 20 or over, followed by the total population of all ages. Thus the entry 39/45 means that there were 39 adults among the 45 Warumungu at Tennant Creek.

Basically Strehlow continued the ‘tribal names’ recorded by Spencer & Gillen, and introduces no additional names. People whose country I know to be in the Warlmanpa area were generally recorded as “Warramungu”, “Tjingili” (Jingili) or “Wailpri” (Warlpiri). Strehlow has no instance of Warlmanpa, *warrmarla*, Mudburra, or Bingangana, terms recorded by Stanner on the same route four years earlier.

### 1.2.2. Tindale 1974

Tindale 1974 (and the earlier 1940 edition) did not use Warlmanpa as a term on his map, and lists “Walmanba” as an alternate of “Walpiri”, listed immediately after “Walmala (general term)”. Warlmanpa country generally falls within the area assigned to Bingongina on Tindale’s map, and also in the neighbouring Warlpiri and Mudburra and Warumungu areas. Tindale apparently had little evidence for the area beyond Spencer & Gillen’s reports (pers. comm., NB Tindale, 1979?).

### 1.2.3. Capell 1952

The first record of Warlmanpa grammar was made by A. Capell (1952:111-112,129; 1962:44-47) in 1952,<sup>13</sup> in the course of his study of Warlpiri. The only further study of the language made before the writer began his in 1977, was that of Ken Hale and P. Chakravarti separately in 1966<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> “Warramungas are permanent but the Warramulla come and go at some time there are about six or seven and at others between 30 and 40 in number.”

<sup>12</sup> Strehlow’s report of 10 December 1938 to the Chief Protector and letter of 13 December 1938 give the background to his visits to Newcastle Waters (10 October 1938), Banka Banka, Helen Springs (14 October) and Tennant Creek (15 October).

The report includes a virtual census of Aboriginal people at Tennant Creek, Banka Banka and Helen Springs including for most their personal (Aboriginal) name, ‘totem’, language (Warumungu or Warlpiri), and where they came from. There are 136 references to Aboriginal people in his report; Jane Simpson and I identified eight instances of repetition.

<sup>13</sup> Capell (1952:129) says that the Warlmanpa text he recorded “was taken at Banka Banka”, yet he later said (p.c. 2/2/80) that he did not visit Banka Banka, but recorded the Warlmanpa at Hooker Creek (now Lajamanu). However his article does not mention any visit there, but rather to Yuendumu and Phillip Creek.

<sup>14</sup> The daughters of Mr Fred Ulyatt, lessee of Muckaty, had in their school days in the 1940’s added some twenty extra vocabulary items to the list of Warumungu at the back of their copy of Linklater (1946). I am grateful to

1.2.4. *Register of Wards 1957*

The first administrative record of the term Warlmanpa is apparently in the Northern Territory Administration's 1957 *Register of Wards*, which lists ten individuals as 'Walmamba' (6 men, 4 women, no children):

residence	language						total
	Waru.	Warlmanpa	Mudburra	Warlpiri	Bingangana	Jingili	
Tennant Creek	1	0	0		0		
Banka Banka	33	1	1	12 <sup>15</sup>	0	0	47
Muckaty	2	0	0	1	0	0	3
Brunchilly	9	1	0	0	0		
Rockhampton Dns	46	0			0		
Alroy	42	0			0		
Helen Springs	6	4	0	0	0	0	10
Renner Springs	3	2	0	0	5	0	10
Powell Creek	1	0	0	1	2	0	4
Elliott	3	0	9	0	3	5	20
Montejinnie	1	2					
Warrabri	61	0					
other	62	0			1		
total	270	10	10	14	11	5	320

Note: The above counts include everyone at Elliott, Powell Creek, Renner Springs, and Banka Banka residence. It also includes all people given as Warumungu and Warlmanpa, and all given as Bingangana from the 'Barkly Subdistrict'. The blank cells are for categories I have not counted.

Among the many identified as Warumungu at Banka Banka are many people who in my experience are just as strong in their claims to be Warlmanpa.

1.2.5. *Comment*

Several factors can be identified which lead to the under-representation in official records of smaller language groups.

(a) The preconceptions of the European recorder of the language names are towards hearing of language names with which they are already familiar. In particular there is some truth to the shorthand formulas linking languages and centres of population, such as that 'Tennant Creek is Warumungu'. For instance, the Banka Banka census would be biased towards Warumungu identifications by the belief of the station management there that all the Banka Banka Aborigines there were simply Warumungu.

(b) The emergence of lingua franca in sedentary camps would mask the polylingualism of individuals. Thus for Banka Banka probably all the Aborigines there (in the 1930s-1960s) could understand Warumungu, and were aware of the Warumungu affiliation of the country at Banka Banka (as reinforced, for instance, by toponyms, as discussed below; such as ones of obvious Warumungu derivation with the *-lkki* 'having' suffix).

Even when a subgroup wishes to identify themselves separately, a distinctive but well-known term is likely to be used. For example, when one looks behind the Warlpiri counts in the *Register of Wards*, one finds individuals, such as the three adult women at Banka Banka, who in my experience identify mainly as Warlmanpa, and who prefer to speak Warlmanpa. They may know Warlpiri language as well, but it seems that they have identified (or been identified) as Warlpiri to distinguish themselves from Warumungu.

(b) The groups whose country is away from main corridors such as the telegraph line simply would have been encountered far less. The drift of people from less well watered regions, for a great variety of reasons which have been the subject of discussion in recent years, has led to an establishment of their residence as of right beside and among the peoples who were already living at the main centres (such as Telegraph Stations). Hence it is to be expected that the numbers of different groups would have increased since the mid-20th century depopulation of the semi-desert regions.

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Miriam Hagan and Lois Ulyatt for bringing this to my attention. The additional words are actually a mixture of Warumungu and Warlmanpa.

<sup>15</sup> 3 women and 9 children

## 2. Factors affecting language choice by polylinguals

When a multilingual individual is speaking, they constantly have the potential to switch languages. The factors influencing language choice in this situation are numerous and varied, grammatical and social, and presumably indeterminate.

Brandl & Walsh 1982 draw attention to the common multilingualism of Australian Aboriginal communities, and the common occurrence of polylingual individuals in those communities. There are numerous factors relevant to which language is used in a particular situation by a multilingual group, and this has been much-studied in Europe and other parts of the world. In the smaller-scale societies of Aboriginal Australia some factors come into play which are less relevant to large societies. For instance, when a particular language or dialect is a badge of identity in a group, an Aboriginal speaker may not “accommodate” to his interlocutors’ speech; this has been observed for instance for dialects of the Western Desert language by Wallace 1990:53:

Because I’m ‘Pitjantjatjara man’, I’ve got to use Pitjantjatjara words or nobody will know where I come from.

A comprehensive inventory of factors affecting language choice in the multilingual Aboriginal context has been made by Sutton (1978:186ff, 1984). Here I repeat Sutton’s nine factors, which I have re-arranged into four main types. For brevity, I have listed each factor without the necessary qualification that it is a preference which may be of course be overruled by the weight of other factors.<sup>16</sup>

- (A) the language of each participant in the speech act:
  1. the range of competence of each participant (cf. 1978:204)
  2. the addressee’s, and the host’s language, particularly at the beginning of the conversation
  3. true versus phantom addressee, i.e. intended recipient versus prima facie addressee
- (B) the speaker’s own patriclan’s language
- (C) the dominant language
  1. the politically, or numerically, dominant language in the community or region
  2. the addressee’s dialect, for détente after an argument
  3. Kriol or English (i) to young people, “to ease their path at school”; (ii) in fights, as “quoting” whites and not meaning insults; and to drunks as alcohol comes from whites
- (D) quote retains original language

Interestingly, Sutton (1978:204) notes that the addressee can be country, and then one should use the locale’s language “meant for the ears of the resident ancestral spirits”. Of course this is a combination of (A)2, and partly (C)1, and, if formulas are used, probably (D).

Sutton is generalising about multi-dialectalism (in the Wik area in western Cape York), whereas my experience relates more to choice across wider linguistic differences. However, although Sutton does not propose his generalisations to apply more widely, my own experience bears out most of them in the multi-lingual west-central Northern Territory.

I would elaborate Sutton’s factor (C)1 to recognise that **being on the country of a particular language adds to its dominance.**

A particularly noticeable feature of some of the multilingualism I have observed is **bilingual conversation**. By this I mean a conversation wherein each participant speaks consistently in one language, but the language spoken by each person is different. I have heard such conversations in Warlmanpa and Warlpiri, Warlmanpa and Mudburra, and Warlmanpa and Warumungu.

The studies I have seen of code-switching do not encompass a stable bilingual conversation with monolingual contributions. The closest reported parallel situation is in language death (and acquisition):

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<sup>16</sup> Sutton (1978:191ff) mentions that a similar range of factors affects choice of special speech styles within a language, particularly considerations of sarcasm, ingratiating, threat, détente, and humour.

These less-proficient [Young Dyirbal] speakers use the language mainly within their in-group and not so much to old [Traditional Dyirbal] speakers (although they are addressed in TD by these older people and can understand them). (Schmidt, 1985:226)

The conversation between the old person (speaking Dyirbal) and the young person (speaking English) would probably fall under my definition of bilingual conversation, but occurs for quite different reasons than that between polylingual peers.

Insofar as two dialects of a language are both languages, a cross-dialect conversation also would fit my definition of bilingual conversation. The difference in the conversations I am considering is the intelligibility distance between the two languages employed, where competence in one of the languages does not of itself provide sufficient understanding of the other for conversation.

It is difficult to be clear about the conditions favouring bilingual conversation in the Tennant Creek area. The examples I am aware of are generally between senior people of similar status. Older polylingual people usually do not 'code-switch' between Aboriginal languages (other than their varieties of Aboriginal English) unless there is a change in the composition of the conversational group. Each person seems to have their favourite speaking language, which they will use provided they know every relevant hearer can understand it. Thus for a bilingual conversation to occur the whole group would be composed of polylinguals.

McConvell 1988 analyses in detail code-switching between varieties of Gurindji and Kriol/English, in the area to the north-west of Warlmanpa country. He reports that [c]ode-switching in conversation between Aboriginal dialects and languages occurs frequently.... In traditional situations such switching would have been used and is used mainly 'stylistically', to express *meanings* about social situations ... very little of it is amenable to analysis in terms of *determination* by situation... In the modern situation, this type of traditional code-switching is often combined with code-switching between vernacular and a creole and/or a form of English. (McConvell 1988:113)

Much the same applies to the use of language that I have seen in the Warlmanpa-Warumungu-Warlmanpa areas, with one modification. The code-switching of more senior people, in my experience, is far more likely to involve one of their languages and English or creole. As a learner of more than one language, I soon found that it is a social error to 'mix up' languages, and capriciously switch from one Aboriginal language to another. It seems that in a particular conversational 'phase', one should settle quickly on speaking in just one language (albeit possibly different from that being used by other participants). I was also told that ideally one should speak Warumungu at Tennant Creek, Warlmanpa in the Banka Banka area, and Mudburra at Elliott.

### 3. Affiliation of language and country

#### 3.1. Language-land relationships in Aboriginal Australia

In this section I summarise the literature which has advocated considering a direct land-language relationship in Aboriginal Australia.

Merlan 1981 shows how land and language are fairly directly related in the western Roper River area of the Northern Territory, and compares the language-land relationship in the Western Desert and Cape York.

...in multilingual and multilectal Australia, questions about individual linguistic repertoire will always be found to have potentially complex answers. These answers may vary considerably depending on how the information is obtained. (Merlan 1981:139)

totemic figures which originate from different places and follow different trajectories frequently meet with each other, discuss their identities,...

...many of these definitional encounters revolve around the linguistic and cultural affiliation, not directly of the totemic figure itself, but of the *country* in which it is travelling. (Merlan 1981:142-3)

This situation strongly suggests that 'Mangarayi country', conceptually associated with the Mangarayi language, has in fact been much more stable an

entity, at least over the past several generations since contact, than has the personnel. (Merlan 1981:144)

Rumsey (1989, to appear) discusses this further, and describes how the language-land relationship has been evidenced in some land claim hearings. Indeed, it is not uncommon in Aboriginal Australia for the language group to be identified with the land holding group. Kesteven 1984:51-2 exemplifies this for western Arnhem Land, and summarises her experience there succinctly (1984:49):

Country 'has' language. On mapping trips one can ask, 'What language is this country?' and be told 'Amurrak', or 'Amurrak-Iwaidja mixed'. Since it is the clan which owns the land, language affiliations of country may be derived through the clan that owns the land, but factors may be more complicated than this. [...] If one owns land said to be of language x, then that is one's language whether one speaks it or not.

Trigger 1987 describes the linguistic situation at Doomadgee in north west Queensland, where he finds evidence for "[t]he concept of language as a fundamental characteristic of landscape" (1987:218). Trigger joins writers of a number of NT land claim books in distinguishing the affiliation of a person to a particular language from the person's competence in that language. Nevertheless, affiliation and competence are connected if only indirectly in that [w]hen in that area [where a particular language 'belongs'] using bush resources, and certainly when formally dealing with many totemic and other extra-human features of the landscape, it is appropriate to speak the language which belongs there. (1987:217)

Rigsby 1987 concentrates on the aspects of the language situation common to indigenous peoples dispossessed within modern nations (the Fourth World). Although he does not specifically relate absence from homeland to shift away from a language, he does point to the language-relatedness of country through place names:

...the chiefs and elders who speak Gitksan know well that their homeland is a humanised landscape that has a myriad of place names and associated legends and historical narratives. There is also a rich folk knowledge of animal and plant species and of their origins and uses, not to mention the high culture of the chiefs and Indian doctors. (Rigsby 1987:371)

No less so in Australia, and, it may be stressed, these kinds of knowledge have a significant local component, so that one can go further than the observation that

Unfortunately, Gitksan children today are learning only a small fraction of their heritage because they mainly have access only to what they hear in English. (Rigsby 1987:371)

to also observe that the children of relocated families mainly have access only to places and traditions of another language (whether English or another Aboriginal language).

Sutton 1991 makes a strong case for the primacy of the land-language relationship across Aboriginal Australia, and provides a way of reinterpreting other accounts of namings (or lack of naming) of various social and linguistic groupings.

Black 1991:29 makes a tongue-in-cheek list of ways to influence a people to give up their native language, and includes the observation "In any case it is important to get the people away from their land..."

### 3.2. Linguistic territory in the central Northern Territory

The factors defining linguistic territories, the country affiliated with particular languages, include those discussed by Merlan 1981 (western Roper) and Trigger 1987 (southern Gulf region): use of particular languages by ancestors at particular places, the languages of songs, sometimes related to prominent geographic boundaries. Here I wish to expand on a couple of factors not directly treated in the above accounts: the linguistic content of place names, and named patrilects.

Place names (toponyms) are a further mark of linguistic territory, to the extent that they are assignable to a particular language. The usual implication that the language of a place name is also that of the surrounding country.

However a toponym is sometimes distinctively of a language different from the language usually applicable to the surrounding tract of country. For instance, the Warlpiri country of Pawurrinji (south-west of Tennant Creek) includes a small creek named Karlampi. Now *karlampi* is a distinctively Warumungu word, meaning 'creek, waterhole', and the place is a focus of secondary interest in the area of Warumungu and Kaytety speaking people. Another example is the outstation Mangarlawurru (in Warlpiri/Warlmanpa country north-west of Tennant Creek), the name of which includes the distinctive Mudburra 'having' affix *-wurru*.<sup>17</sup> Another example is the Warlpiri and Warlmanpa site called Kurrkuminti, purely a name in those languages, but a Walmajarri common noun meaning 'hollow in a sandhill'.

In the region of the Warlmanpa there are links between language and specific country which run deeper than the linguistic content of toponyms, and which provides another specific example of Sutton's 1991:50 reinterpretation of Tindale's 1974 'tribal map':

It is more accurately seen as a religious statement. What it marks are the lands whose owners under Aboriginal customary law were given particular languages during the mythic foundation of the world, the Dreaming, and it plots those land/language associations.

These are the named patrilects (Nash 1990) in the ideology of people from the Warumungu and Warlmanpa north-west to the eastern Kimberley. These people name specific 'ways of talking' which are inherited patrilineally along with particular Dreamings. Language is intimately linked to Dreaming, and therefore to country. The link with country is all the more specific for a Dreaming "handover" expressions (P. McConvell, cited in Nash 1990).

#### 4. Warlmanpa among other languages

It is reasonable to suppose, then, that a language is less likely to be used if the people who speak it are not living in the country to which the language is affiliated.

The Warlmanpa offer a good illustration of this. They have suffered this century as much as any neighbouring Aboriginal groups from disease and dispossession, but in one respect their history differs from the Warumungu, Jingili, Mudburra, Gurindji or Warlpiri,: their institutionalised confinement has been away from the country of their language. If there is strong Aboriginal observance of language affiliation of location, then how is that the language has survived at all?

One relevant factor is presumably that language affiliation of country may not be exclusive to one language. The main centres where the Warlmanpa have lived this century are Powell Creek, Helen Springs, Muckaty, Banka Banka, Newcastle Waters and Elliott, and Tennant Creek, and all of these places have Dreaming connections to country affiliated primarily with Warlmanpa.

My conclusion in the context of discussion of language maintenance is that a language is further endangered when its speakers are not living on their own country. Fairly direct affiliation of language and country implies that language use shifts towards the languages of the country where people reside.

I have dwelt above on Warlmanpa as a case study. The extent of the effect of location on language shift could also be tested against the history of language use at Alekareng (Ali Curung, formerly Warrabri), and the Pintupi / Luritja situation in the Papunya area (see Heffernan & Sommer 1982).

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<sup>17</sup> The stem is possibly Mudburra **mangurlu** 'bush cereal', cf. Jingulu **mangurla** '*Acacia holoserica*'.



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