



**PRE-COPYEDITED VERSION — PUBLISHED AS**

Musharbash, Yasmine 2017. Telling Warlpiri Dog Stories. *Anthropological Forum*, 27(2): 95-113.

Downloaded from <http://www.anthropologicalforum.net>

**COPYRIGHT**

All rights held by Yasmine Musharbash. You need to get the author's permission for uses other than teaching and personal research.

## Telling Warlpiri Dog Stories

Yasmine Musharbash<sup>1</sup>

Department of Anthropology, The University of Sydney, Sydney

**Abstract:** *Ostensibly about dingoes and dogs, this paper explores aspects of the contemporary social world of Warlpiri people in the camps of the central Australian settlement of Yuendumu (Northern Territory) through canines. Analyses of dog socialisation, kinds of domestication, and the roles that camp dogs perform (such as protector, family, and witness) provide insights into Warlpiri notions of moral personhood, and are employed to reflect about the ethical foundations of how the oppositional categories of Yapa (self, Indigenous, Black, colonised) and Kardiya (other, non-Indigenous, 'whitefella', coloniser) are conceptualised.*

**Keywords:** Human-Animal Relations; Settler-Colonial Relations; Canines; Domestication; Central Australia

---

<sup>1</sup> Acknowledgements: Thank you, *maliki-patu*, for being such wonderful *marlpa*. As always, I am immensely indebted to the Yapa of Yuendumu, for welcoming me into their homes and for helping me understand. I greatly benefitted from (and thoroughly enjoyed) many dog talks with Gloria Morales, Noah Pleshet, Jane Blackwood, and Crystal Sinclair. Many thanks for wonderfully constructive comments from the anonymous reviewers and Anthropological Forum's Katie Glaskin, as well as the audiences at the Anthropology Seminars of Sydney University and ANU, where I presented versions of this paper, as well as the organisers (Edmond Dounias and Lye Tuck-Po) and attendants of the 2015 CHAGS panel *Animal Auxiliaries Among Hunting and Gathering Societies*. I thank David Nash and Mary Laughren for conferring with me about Warlpiri semantics. This paper is part of my ARC Future Fellowship research FT130100415.

This paper is set in Yuendumu, a central Australian Aboriginal settlement located about 300 kilometers northwest of Alice Springs, on the margins of the Tanami Desert. Yuendumu is home to between 400 and 1,000 Aboriginal residents (mostly Warlpiri-speakers), who call themselves *Yapa*, and about 150 non-Indigenous service providers (referred to as *Kardiya* in Warlpiri). There are also numerous dogs at Yuendumu. The dogs are everywhere—or, it can seem that way. It all depends on whether you look at them, whether you have the dogs in focus, so to say. If you don't pay attention to them, if you are occupied with other matters, then the dogs can fade into invisibility. The same is true on other sensorial levels: One of Yuendumu's most characteristic sounds is the barking of dogs, not so much single barks, those you hear briefly from leading dogs before the rest of their pack falls in. Yuendumu barking is the united barking of packs and you can hear it at all times, or, you can filter it out as a background noise, like birdsong, or the noise of planes overhead. To the casual observer, packs of camp dogs can easily appear to not serve any particular purpose; animals which indeed recede into the background once the visitor is welcomed into the camp. Camp dogs do not crowd residents in, do not come for pats, they mind their own business. To the Warlpiri camp residents, however, their pack is made up of dog individuals:<sup>2</sup> A person's own dear companions, to whom titbits are thrown at meal times, and those of one's co-residents. Sometimes, there are dogs who have come visiting with relatives, who, like their human counterparts, are part of the camp for the duration of their stay. That the dogs are more central than appears at first also becomes evident in the ebb and flow of camp talk, which can be as much concerned with dogs as it is with relatives. Dog genealogies, the birth of puppies, fights between certain dogs, funny dog incidents, and a steady running commentary on what the dogs are up to right here right now—all these are a staple of everyday conversation.

My title *Telling Warlpiri dog stories* in the first instance references this quotidian preoccupation with dog talk. More importantly, I understand the *telling* of the title also as an adjective meaning striking or revealing, in the sense that the yarning about dogs tellingly veils and reveals an absence: while Yapa can talk incessantly about dogs, camp talk about Kardiya (non-Indigenous people) is comparatively sparse despite their pervading presence in the settlement and in Yapa lives, generally. I address the implications flowing from this by telling Warlpiri dog stories in a third sense, this one anthropological. This paper constitutes my Warlpiri dog story; it is an ethnographic exploration of the ways in which Warlpiri people

---

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, I do not have space to discuss the different lives of Kardiya dogs at Yuendumu.

relate to their dogs. Its underpinning aim is to bring into relief some features of Yapa-Kardiya relations through contrasting them with Yapa-dog relations. Ultimately, then, this paper is a story about three kinds of socialities lived side by side at Yuendumu, about how the lives of Yapa, dogs, and Kardiya are simultaneously entangled with and separated from each other.

Through this angle, the paper becomes less of an interspecies ethnography (most prominently championed by Donna Haraway 2003; 2008) and more of an ‘ethnocanidology’ to borrow a term from Bion Griffin (2015). Investigating the socio-cultural specificities of the canine-Yapa relationship allows me to position the dogs as a contrastive lens that opens novel perspectives on Yapa-Kardiya relations. In other words, the dogs ethnographically assist me in my analytical aim: exploring human and non-human properties and different moral worlds at Yuendumu.

There are five sections primarily concerned with canines, based on interview data from Yapa but mostly from participant observation in the camps of Yuendumu I have undertaken over the past twenty years. The first of these is about Warlpiri dog socialisation, informing the non-Yapa reader about the Yapa/dog relationship’s socio-cultural distinctiveness. The next section adds historical depth by providing an overview on dogs, dingoes, and the matter of ‘domestication’ in Aboriginal Australia. The following three sections are concerned with dogs as protectors, as family, and as witnesses to Warlpiri being-in-the-world, respectively.

In tandem, these five sections reveal Warlpiri notions of moral personhood, and I employ them in the discussion to reflect about the ethical foundations of how the oppositional categories of Yapa (self, Indigenous, Black, colonised) and Kardiya (other, non-Indigenous, ‘whitefella’, coloniser) are conceptualised. Specifically, I call attention to the significance of proximity in Yapa relations as revealed in the ethnocanidology. The notion of proximity, in combination with linguistic data, allows me to lay out conceptual grids of contrasts: between human and non-human, on the one hand, and between different kinds of morality and ways of being in the world, on the other. The crux of the discussion is that along these grids, Yapa and Kardiya are positioned in different (if partly overlapping and permeable) moral worlds, with camp dogs participating in the Yapa one. The discussion highlights Warlpiri understandings of dogness and Yapaness, and how they are contrasted with Kardiya as category with own its attendant ethical and normative implications.

In the conclusion, I ponder the insights that can be drawn from telling dog stories in a final revisit of the issue of domestication. A vignette of a small interaction between myself and my adopted camp dog Kunyap, and my Warlpiri friend Helene's couched criticism of my stance towards him, serves to throw into sharp relief the clashing moral compasses of Yapa and Kardiya, as highlighted in their different stances towards controlling others.

### **Dog Socialisation**

Most every Yapa camp at Yuendumu has its own pack of dogs, mongrels mainly, some with a bit of dingo thrown in, most long legged and strong, but there are also 'sausage dogs' (various kinds of short-legged canines) and little, fluffy ones. Packs these days number between five and 15 dogs.<sup>3</sup> Pack size waxes and wanes naturally through deaths and the acquisition of new dogs, and through the comings and goings of human counterparts. There are at least five different ways of adding a new dog: keeping one or two puppies, when one of the camp's bitches had a litter; requesting a puppy from a relative whose bitch had a litter (and receiving it when it is old enough to leave its mother); purchasing a dog during a city visit; being given a purchased dog as a present (usually for a child); adopting a deceased relative's dog (or that of a relative who moved away). Preferences as to gender, height, colour, coat, ear shape, type of tail, and temperament are different from one person to the next. One common preference is for either dogs who grew up as camp dogs or for puppies—this is rarely stated as such, but expressed in the negative, for example, when Dorothy told me about how at her cousin's camp there lives a dog who rushes children, runs them over, and sometimes even nips or bites them: 'it must have grown up somewhere else, without kids around'.

Indeed, the most dedicated human to canine socialisation happens to puppies and is undertaken by children. This socialisation manifests the one glaring exception in Aboriginal behaviours towards children and pups, which Hamilton (1972:294-5) otherwise described as 'parallel': both, young children and puppies, are treated with great indulgence, are rarely disciplined, received no consistent training, are not chided for disruptive behaviour, and so forth. However, toddlers are allowed, indeed often encouraged to, and generally delight in 'playing rough' with puppies. Such rough play includes puppies being thrown like a ball; being hit with bare hands, sticks, and other implements; being dragged around by one leg;

---

<sup>3</sup> Gloria Morales (pers. com.) says that since she first arrived at Yuendumu in 2003, the camp dog population seems halved from 800+ back then.

being pushed, kicked, or pinched; or caught under buckets or boxes; and whatever else toddlers might think of. If this kind of behaviour were displayed towards another child, adults would immediately interfere; towards puppies, however, it is even ‘taught’: I well remember a scene from my early days of fieldwork where Polly, her two-year-old granddaughter and a puppy shared a blanket. ‘Pakaka! Pakaka!’ [Hit it! Hit it!] Polly said to her granddaughter while hitting the puppy with a wooden spoon, then handing the spoon to her granddaughter and guiding her unsteady little arm in hitting the puppy. Having been shown myself as a child how to gently pat a dog on the head, what I then perceived as cruelty shocked me a little. But as Dorothy implied, the ‘results’ of this socialisation—for both humans and canines—is elementary for later co-existence: Grown Yapa camp dogs have a healthy respect of toddlers and would never attack (push, bite, etc) any human member of the camp. Yapa, in turn, as a rule, are not afraid of dogs. In short, this ‘cruelling’ of puppies by toddlers instils in both Yapa and camp dogs the notion that Yapa, including the very young, are ‘stronger’ (negating the actuality of dogs’ superior strength, especially of the jaw).

Those that survive puppyhood are given a name by their owner once they leave their mother; either a skinname (more on these, below) and/or a proper name. Proper names include old-fashioned dog names taken from renowned dogs of one’s parents or grandparents (e.g. Wardalapi), names describing natural features (e.g. Marrmanu, meaning thunder); sacred landmarks (e.g. Kunyarrka); or names describing features of the dog (e.g. Langa-rdilyki, ripped ear). Many, today, are English and range from standard Australian dog names (e.g. Bluey) to the more creative (e.g. Ask’im). Some dogs, mostly those who stay in the same camp where their mother lives, are not given names. ‘That one, that one, and that one’, Maudie (in her eighties) always tells me, pointing at three brothers, all sons of Maudie’s dog Nakamarra, ‘they have no name’—this does not mean, however, that they are any less hers than Nakamarra, Blacky, Spam, and the rest. One distinction between dog names and human names is that the former do not become taboo at death.

Another is that dog names are used by humans in their conversations *about* the dogs, *not* to call individual dogs (the name may be used to greet a dog, or to alert it that it is being spoken about, and senior people sometimes sing to their dogs in the evenings, singing their names and verses from their Dreaming if they have a site name). Indeed, there is minimal verbal communication *with* dogs, and it is mostly limited to two different, dog-specific, terms: *jujuju*

and *qwaaan*.<sup>4</sup> The first term, *jujuju*, means ‘puppy’ but is used as a collective call for all the dogs of a camp when there are leftovers to feed them, for example, stock and noodles after humans ate the meat and vegetables of a big pot of soup. Singing out ‘*jujuju jujuju*’ attracts the entire pack to where one empties the pot. *Qwaaan*, on the other hand, is always growled at a dog with a deep and angry voice, and is used to signal to a dog that it better move away, and quickly, from the person growling it. ‘*Qwaaan!*’ is also yelled at dogs when they are fighting, accompanied by the throwing of sticks, stones, and anything else that is lying at hand to break up the fight. I am unsure whether *qwaaan* is a shortened version of ‘go on!’, but more important than the meaning of the actual word is the tone in which it is delivered. The only other verbal engagement between Yapa and dogs that I am aware of is between some boys and men and dogs they are close to, with whom they engage in teasing behaviour. This involves them ‘scaring’ the dog with quick hand movements towards its snout, and saying ‘get it, get it’; that is trying to goad the dog into biting their hands knowing full well that the dog won’t.

Much as camp dogs can tell the difference in meaning between a kind word and a roared ‘*qwaaaaan*’, Yapa know how to read different barks, yips, yelps, growls, and snarls of their dogs (see below). The crucial point about human verbal engagement, though, is that it is negligible: Yapa use no commands (no ‘sit!’, ‘drop!’, ‘stay!’) to tell the dogs what to do, they do not call their names to make the dogs come to them; nor do they talk to their dogs.<sup>5</sup>

Tactile engagement between canines and humans is minimal, as well. In fact, it is at its height when puppies are ‘manhandled’ by toddlers, and wanes after that. The tactile engagement between most adult Yapa and their grown dogs is limited to a ‘loving’ elbowing the dog receives when it walks too close past its owner and to the space they are granted on their owner’s blankets at night (although, dogs also often get kicked off the blankets, especially if there are too many dogs or if it is hot). Dogs are not patted, cuddled, or groomed. Injured dogs are cared for as best as people can manage but often left to their own devices.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> As third term is “outside!”, which is yelled at the dogs every so often when too many are inside of a house.

<sup>5</sup> as I often do to mine—which makes Yapa think I am slightly mad, knowing full well that the dog is unable to understand me, they fail to see the use in talking to it.

<sup>6</sup> Some colleagues pointed out what they call Aboriginal ‘indifference’ towards the suffering of camp dogs. I am not convinced that ‘indifference’ is the right word. The first clue lies in the reparations to be made when one injures or kills another person’s dog (apologies and money). More importantly, there is the fact that Yapa generally *try* to help their injured dogs. For example, Celeste successfully cured one of her dogs after it got badly mauled with urine and Wicks—the only ‘medicines’ available to her. What may look like indifference could be helplessness, something confirmed by Gloria Morales (pers.com.), the ‘Dog Lady’ of Yuendumu (see

Once a puppy is weaned from its mother, the stage of intense tactile engagement with toddlers comes to an end, and it progressively eases into becoming a pack member. Young dogs are exhaustively interested in play with age-mates if present or otherwise the younger members of the pack, whom they invite with nips to play chase; with a stick or rag to play tug of war; or mouthing each other. The older dogs ignore such invitations, preferring to sleep or engaging in serious pack business: protecting the camp. As a young dog becomes more mature, it more regularly takes note of and increasingly participates in the chases initiated by older pack members. In other words, as a dog grows up it more fully enters the sociality of its pack, which lives both with and in parallel to its human co-residents. This particular form of co-living has a long history going back to initial Yapa engagements with dingoes.

### **Dingoes, Dogs, and the Issue of Domestication**

The ancestors of today's dingoes are said to have arrived on boats in the north of the Australian mainland between 4 - 5,000 years ago. The boat arrival is important, indicating that the arriving canines were domesticated before they dispersed quickly across the continent, both, one must assume along human trade routes and on their own, becoming feral (see Smith and Savolainen 2015 for an outline of the complexities of dingo arrival). By the time colonisation commenced, dingoes had long fully integrated themselves into all mainland ecosystems as wild canines. They also became the only animal with which Aboriginal people in Australia historically formed a partnership in which both sides found strong reciprocal benefit in collaboration. Their presence in Aboriginal camps at the beginning of colonisation was virtually ubiquitous, so much so that Balme and O'Connor (2015:3) say it 'is difficult to find an ethnographic/historic image of mainland Aboriginal camp life or gathering that does not include dingoes'.

As Aboriginal people tended to raid dingo dens for pups, which they nursed and kept unless or until they deserted camp for the bush (see also Hamilton 1972; Kolig 1978; Meggitt 1965), there was some debate amongst anthropologists whether dingoes were 'properly' domesticated. Meggitt (1965:23) suggested the term quasi-domestication, which he defined

---

<https://open.abc.net.au/explore/80905>). She single-handedly improved dog health at Yuendumu by providing medical care for camp dogs herself and organising and coordinating activities with visiting vets and AMRRIC (Animal Management in Rural and Remote Indigenous Communities, see <http://www.amrric.org/>). She told me how grateful Yapa were, who had assumed medical assistance was only for non-Indigenous dogs.

as ‘repeated training of randomly acquired individuals in successive generations, not the domestication of the whole species.’ The same paper sparked what I call the great dog/dingo debate, which raged through the late 1960s and 1970s.<sup>7</sup> The original question participants were battling over was whether or not dingoes were useful hunting aides (provocatively refuted by Meggitt). Interestingly, hunting seemed to play the most important role in Tasmania (which never had dingoes) once European dogs were introduced (Jones 1970), and where it was found of significance elsewhere it was with dogs rather than dingoes (e.g. Hamilton 1972; White 1972 but see Hayden 1975).

Through discussing dingoes, dogs and domestication in Aboriginal Australia, participants were invested in positioning themselves and anthropology within a paradigm-shifting environment: ideologies about man the hunter—picturing man’s mastery of dogs as civilisation-creating—began to be questioned.<sup>8</sup> In a tentative way, future theories including Haraway’s (2003) *Companion Species Manifesto* were foreshadowed by shifting the debate away from canines’ economic, rational, and energy-saving potential and towards more enlightened questions, namely, what apart from possible hunting assistance motivated Aboriginal people to form their unique bond with dingoes. Ideas put forward ranged from the warmth canines provide during cold winter nights (Hamilton 1972; Hayden 1975; Jones 1970; Kimber 1976; Kolig 1978; Meggitt 1965; White 1972); their eating of any food leftovers around the camp fulfilling hygienic functions (Jones 1970; White 1972); their ritual and symbolic importance (Hamilton 1972; Kimber 1976; Kolig 1978); and them providing an ‘emotional release for nurturant behaviour’ (Hamilton 1972:294). The one reason not disputed but listed as secondary by all participants was the protection canines provide through alerting a camp to the arrival of strangers, be they human or spirits (see especially Kolig 1973). One reason not mentioned in the debate, is entertainment value. This should not be underestimated, as canines provide a kind of live soap opera enjoyed by all (as six-year-old Teddy tells me frequently: “Dogs make me laugh”).

---

<sup>7</sup> For a review of the dog/dingo relationship and Aboriginal people from a non-anthropological perspective see Smith and Litchfield (2009).

<sup>8</sup> As Meehan et al. (1999) pointed, dogs/dingoes might have been woman’s (rather than man’s) best friend, while the earlier debate overwhelmingly associated hunting with males and large game. Archaeology has recently taken up this point with renewed interest, studying the potentially significant role dingoes played in aiding women in small game hunts (Balme and O’Connor 2015; and for a contemporary non-archaeological take see Kästner 2012).

By the 1960s, the distinction between dingoes and dogs was muddled in the debate, much as in real life.<sup>9</sup> It seems that as rapidly as Aboriginal people adopted the ancestors of dingoes, so they welcomed dogs into their camp (see also Meggitt 1965:21-22). Dingoes and dogs interbred, eventually bringing about those contemporary canines that Alice Springs vets label ‘camp dogs’.

While Warlpiri people distinguish dingoes (*warnapari*) from dogs (*jarntu*) linguistically and conceptually, they also understand both as canines (*maliki*).<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, they tend to highlight commonalities over differences between dogs and dingoes. In this, they markedly differ from people at Yarralin (in Western Australia), whom Debbie Bird Rose (1992) describes in *Dingo Makes us Human*. People at Yarralin, she elucidates, in conceptually potent terms contrast dingoes and camp dogs in terms of wildness and tameness.<sup>11</sup> At Yarralin, camp dogs

[[are dependants [...and] like children in that adults give them skin identities, personal names, food, and shelter [... through living with humans, camp dogs become] recipient[s] of human culture without being [...] participant[s]. (Rose 1992:176)]]

Dingoes, by living apart from humans and human culture, at Yarralin constitute the other of two poles in between which humanness is defined: ‘neither totally dependent nor totally wild’ (ibid). At Yuendumu, as the following sections illustrate, the relationship between canines and Yapa, is more reciprocal, and throws a different light on understandings on humanness, including the distinction between Yapa and Kardiya.

### **Dogs as Protectors**

When I first met Wanguwangu, he was already an old dog, almost hairless from years of mange, his leathery skin crisscrossed by scars bearing witness to his fighting prowess. The name Wanguwangu is given to dogs whose human has passed away, it literally translates as ‘without-without’, and is a dog-specific term meaning orphaned or bereft. There are packs of Wanguwangu in the vicinity of Yuendumu, former camp dogs who went feral after losing

---

<sup>9</sup> A situation further complicated by dingo scalping, see for example Young (2010).

<sup>10</sup> Like in English, a dingo (*warnapari*) can be called a dog (I have heard both *maliki* and *jarntu* used) but camp dogs are never called *warnapari*.

<sup>11</sup> Contrastingly, see Pleshch (forthcoming) for wild and tame in relation to dogs/dingoes in South Australia.

their humans. Others, like this particular Wanguwangu, stay on in the camps. I was surprised, at first, that the camp's senior residents shared morsels with Wanguwangu and generally treated him with respect and kindness. Such gestures are not regularly extended to a dog that is of the pack but not one's own. Later, I found out that the camp's residents' treats for Wanguwangu were tokens of gratitude, as they relied on him as the one who alerted the camp to the presence of *jarnpa* when they were around.

*Jarnpa* are a kind of monster, whose purpose in life it is to ensorcel, maim, rape and kill Warlpiri people (Meggitt 1955). Aggravating the danger *jarnpa* pose to humans is the fact that they are invisible to Warlpiri people (I have discussed some of the implications of this in Musharbash 2014a; 2014b). Dogs, however, are said to be able to hear, smell and generally sense their presence (see also Meggitt 1955). If *jarnpa* are around, dogs like Wanguwangu alert their camp by a special yelping bark and set off into the night leading their pack in hot pursuit of the monsters.

Peter (in his early forties) explained: 'Dogs help people from *jarnpa*—they can see and smell them, they bark, or push you away from that *jarnpa*, try and take you another way. It's a different bark from their snake warning. And different again from when ordinary person, [a] stranger comes'. His wife Dorothy added: 'Dogs, sometimes they can save your life. For *jarnpa*, it barks, wake you up at night, snake or scorpion crawling there, dog will jump and try to get that thing to keep it away from you. I've seen it times over with my dogs.' Her grandmother elaborated: 'that's why we give them the same skinnames as our parents because dogs look after you.'

Skinname is the Aboriginal English word for subsection terms, a set of 16 sociocentric kin terms (eight for each gender), which are used as terms of address (among numerous other purposes; on the complexity of the subsection system, see Meggitt 1987). In an interesting twist to Rose's case of dogs receiving names by humans like children do, at Yuendumu, it is true that, yes, dogs receive their skinname from humans, but, importantly, the skinname puts the canine in a parental position towards the name-giving human. Dorothy's grandmother sums up why when she says: 'we give them the same skinnames as our parents because dogs

look after you'.<sup>12</sup> She spoke in Warlpiri at the time and the verb she used for 'looking after' (*jina-mardani*) has the same range of meanings as the one that Fred Myers (1976) in the Pintupi context translated as 'having and holding, looking after'. This verb has quite quotidian meanings of looking after, taking care of, keeping watch over, but also more weighty connotations of bringing up and, most crucially, it is used for the relationship between Aboriginal people and the Dreaming (see Musharbash 2013 for a more detailed discussion of 'looking after' terminology).

Not infantilised, then, Warlpiri dogs are quite the opposite: charged with parental protection they are relied on in every camp. Tamsin (in her thirties) said about her dogs: 'if you are sleeping and someone or something comes around at night at your place, I think they sense them, they know if something is approaching, that must be why they have the biggest ears, to listen.' The sensory superiority of dogs' hearing skills (which Warlpiri people emphasise over their olfactory capabilities) and the fact that they will employ these skills to protect humans, who ignore canine warning services at their own peril, are also enshrined in Warlpiri myths and folklore, as in the following story:

[[A man and a women were sleeping with their dogs. They had made a big wind-break and lit a fire. Then they were tired and they went to sleep. Early in the morning they woke up. They sat in the wind-break. The dogs crouched on the bed. A few nights later when they were sleeping, a devil-man [*jarnpa* in the Warlpiri text] went to that same camp. The two people who were sound asleep didn't hear him. The devil-man was sneaking up to attack them. The dogs heard the devil-man. They barked in warning. But the two people were fast asleep and didn't hear anything. The devil-man was sneaking up very close. The dogs were barking to warn the people. They frightened the devil-man away. In the early morning the people woke up and looked for tracks [which they did not find as *jarnpa* often wear feather shoes to cover their tracks]. The man said, 'What were the dogs barking at? These dogs are always barking at nothing.' The women [sic] went back to sleep again. She didn't hear a thing. The man cut off the dogs' ears to stop them from hearing things. He cut their ears right off. The dogs lay down hearing nothing. The devil-man once again sneaked up on the two people in the

---

<sup>12</sup> A recent generational change is observable: younger generations use skinnames less regularly when naming their dogs than senior generations. Strikingly, when they do, they often chose the one for a child, not a parent. I can think of two possible explanations: confusion about prior practice as for males the skinname for father is the same as for son (and this mistakenly could be used as the naming principle when naming female dogs, or females naming dogs); or, the influence of Western ways of perceiving pets as children may play a role.

windbreak. He killed them both while they were sleeping. (Napanangka and Nakamarra 1981:11)]]

Canines living with Aboriginal people were aptly characterised by Meehan et al. (1999:100) as ‘the mangy sentinels of the night’ and this section’s point is that camp dogs are indeed treasured by Yapa for the protection services they provide, so much so that dogs are ascribed parental status. The next section fathoms further the ways in which dogs are considered kin.

### **Dogs as Family**

I was in Alice Springs answering a phonecall from Heather at Yuendumu, when I heard tell-tale wailing in the background ‘Oh, no!’ I thought, ‘somebody passed away’ as Heather said ‘Bad News. Mabel is crying, Brownie got run over’ whereupon both Heather and I started crying, too, genuinely saddened: Brownie was a cracker of a dog, a little sausage dog, her right ear always upright and alert, her left mischievously floppy. She was popular with humans and dogs alike. She often jumped into my car and came along when Yapa and I went hunting or visiting; in fact, she loved driving so much, she became famous for travelling on her own on the Bush Bus to Alice Springs, finding some of her humans’ relatives in town and staying with them for a while before returning. She was a smart dog, and highly independent: Brownie moved around as she chose, and lived as a member of many packs, and was claimed by quite a few humans. She was a true adventuress; her escapades continue to be stock in trade dog stories and she is sorely missed.

Warlpiri people say ‘We love our dogs. We cry for them when they die.’ And while they do not cry for every dead dog—this depends on the dog, its history, and its human network—any camp dog that dies, gets buried. In an archaeological aside, note that ‘dingos were the only animals that were given formal burials’ by Aboriginal people (Balme and O’Connor 2015:3; see also Gunn, et al. 2010; Meehan, et al. 1999; and for dog burials globally, see Morey 2006).

In the past, Warlpiri people practiced primary burials on tree platforms, and dogs were ‘buried’ on top of bushes. Ground burials for Yapa were instituted with missionisation, while I found dog burial practices when I first arrived at Yuendumu only slightly modified, in that deceased dogs were wrapped in blankets, shroud-like, and then placed on bushes. Lagging

just a little behind in burial fashion, camp dogs today are buried in the ground, as well, and particularly well-loved ones even have crosses erected on their graves.<sup>13</sup>

Much as people cry when their dogs die, so do dogs when their humans pass away. Dorothy's grandmother elaborates: 'Dogs look after you, they are family, *warlalja*. They get upset, they cry when someone passes away, they are like people in that way, they grieve. They worry for their humans, and they are happy when you are happy, they are relatives for you. They make us happy like family.' The Warlpiri term she used, *warlalja*, is one of a wealth of Warlpiri words for kin, broadly meaning relatives, relations, family. And like family, dogs do not only share in their human companions' grief, but also in the other emotions that characterise camp life: in the joy of sharing the bounty of a kangaroo or killer [bullock], in the content happiness of snoozing in the shade under a tree on a lazy afternoon, in being on edge when there is strife or fighting.

Like human family, dogs are missed when one is absent from Yuendumu, and so, every time I visit Jamie in Alice Springs jail, he asks me about his daughters, his aunties, and about the dogs—his dogs and the dogs at the camps he stays at when at Yuendumu, as well as my own dog. The same is true for phonecalls when I am away from Yuendumu, Yapa regularly ask about my dog and update me on the dogs in the camps.

Just like human family, not all dogs are the same, each dog has its own network of canine friends and foes as well as human ones, humans they are bonded with, humans they ignore and humans they avoid. And while dogs, today, mostly stay in their respective camp with their canine pack and their human co-residents (two groups whose constitution changes continually based on the comings and goings of people and dogs), they know how to distinguish between strangers (who might potentially be dangerous, and hence must be barked at) and human family members visiting camp residents.

A camp dog will get told off for barking at Yapa family, and indeed, for fighting with the dogs of Yapa family. This acknowledgement of family beyond the confines of the camp can work for dogs, as well, as Dorothy explains: 'Remember that really big dog, Japangardi, that comes to my place when there is no people at his camp? He's like family, when he's alone,

---

<sup>13</sup> Gloria Morales describes a Yapa dog funeral in Darcy (2014:22).

he knows me, he comes around to my place. He's not the only dog at their place, there's more but they don't come around. Family to have around is more important to him than those [dogs of his own pack].'

When Warlpiri people speak of their camp dogs as family, as they often do, they emphasise reciprocity between humans and canines, rather than considering their dogs as recipients of human culture within a hierarchical parent-child relationship as described by Rose. This reciprocity is further mirrored in Warlpiri myths and folktales about dingoes, many of which share a basic plotline: In the absence of its parents who are away hunting, a young child or pup is taken by dingoes in the case of a child, or by Yapa in the case of a pup and is raised by its new respective parents, who care for it as if it were their own.

The bond between canines and humans also has a physical/sensuous element to it, as Peter explained: 'good one dog, we see him, how it acts, if he wants to stay with you, you put his nose in your armpit, he's yours now, he'll smell you everywhere, and follow you now. Like Trash, he was Alphie's first, and when Alphie left [for Adelaide] Trash hung around here, making trouble, so I went out there, put his nose in my armpit, he's here now, in my camp.' This co-presence, and the emotional and sensuous connections it engenders through sharing time, space, resources and everyday experience causes people to say, as Hannah (in her thirties) did: 'We live with *warlalja* and *warlalja* includes our dogs.'

Next to *warlalja* (family) there is a second term, *marlpa*, used as frequently to describe Yapa-canine relations. When applied to humans, *marlpa* means companion and co-resident. Those one spends time and space with are *marlpa* and to be without *marlpa*, to be alone, is a state most Warlpiri people try to avoid at all costs. For example, when some camp residents leave to travel, often the remaining residents declare that there is not enough *marlpa* left at the camp, and move in with relatives at another camp until there are enough people to move back home. Even Simone (in her fifties), one of the very few Warlpiri people I know who sometimes seeks solitude said, when I asked her why she always had such a large pack of dogs: 'the best thing about dogs [is that] they are *marlpa*.'

*Marlpa* has much in common with the term companion in companion species (see Haraway 2008:16-19 on the term's layers of meaning), with two caveats: (1) *Marlpa* has strong connotations of a critical mass of sociality rather than one-on-one companionship, and (2) it

is applicable only to Yapa and to dogs, never to other species, nor, indeed to Kardiya as category. The same is true for *warlalja* as well: While Warlpiri people often state ‘dogs are *marlpa/warlalja*’, I have never heard the sentence ‘Kardiya are *warlalja*’ (or: *marlpa*). Either term may be extended to *individual* Kardiya, but even here I would be cautious. For example, the non-Indigenous spouse of a Warlpiri woman who lives at Yuendumu is always referred to as ‘X’s spouse’ but never described as *warlalja*. And I have heard Warlpiri people describe their holidays down south where they stayed with non-Indigenous friends as ‘I was lonely, there was no *marlpa*.’

This section’s point, then, is that that co-habitation, inter-reliance, cooperation, and the sharing of time, space, food, and experiences generate emotional bonds between dogs and Warlpiri people that are couched in terms of family and *marlpa*; and that there is crucial significance in the fact that these terms are extended only to canines, not to other species, nor, indeed to non-Indigenous Australians as a category. In the next section I add to this a temporal dimension.

### **Dogs as Witnesses**

Often, when people talk about Old Man they mention his dog Kutangiyi in the same breath. Old Man always had a big pack of dogs, but Kutangiyi was special. Kutangiyi was a smallish dog, tough, with quite a lot of Blue Heeler in him. He was devotedly loyal to Old Man, and out of his large pack, was the only one that followed Old Man everywhere, always. When Old Man walked through Yuendumu Kutangiyi was beside him, as he was on Old Man’s many walking trips. I often dropped the two of them off in my car at considerable distances from Yuendumu. Equipped with just a water bottle and an axe, they would set out, and a few days later I would see them walk back into their camp, tired but happy, with spears, wood for a boomerang, or a perentie. On the rare occasion that Old Man couldn’t take Kutangiyi along, Kutangiyi sat at home, despondently, waiting for Old Man to return. Once back, Old Man would sit next to the fire and sing to himself, Kutangiyi and the pack, of his travels and his country.

Warlpiri people would say Kutangiyi was ‘witness’ for Old Man; ‘witness’ being an important term in Aboriginal English. The term has been analysed by Basil Sansom, who explains:

[[The oft invoked phrase ‘we got witness for that’ can be turned to yield: ‘Themfella helpin for this trouble, they all witness for that,’ [and as Aboriginal witnessing is not at all neutral], it seems appropriate to refer to the Aboriginal witness as a ‘trouble helper’ (Sansom 1980:205). ]]

I want to suggest that the notion of witness captures significant elements of Kuntangiyi’s relationship with Old Man, and that the same can be said for the relationship between a camp’s pack of dogs and the Yapa of that camp, and, indeed, for the relationship between canines and Yapa across time. Focussing on post-contact history, I outline how canines, through following Yapa from the desert to today’s towns, did not just neutrally observe Yapa undergo monumental, world-altering changes but acted as witness in the Aboriginal English sense, by subjecting themselves to the same processes even if, in true witnessing-style, the consequences were not always the same.

After millennia of dingo companions moving across the Tanami with hunting and gathering Warlpiri people (see also Rose 1992; 2011), they, or more specifically, their descendants from interbreeding with dogs encountered at stations, mines and missions, became sedentised—just like Yapa.<sup>14</sup> As Warlpiri people left the desert for the new rations stations, canines moved with them, now criss-crossing the settlements with their humans. With the accompanying transformations brought about by first assimilation, then self-determination, and now intervention policies, canines became progressively camp-centric. In the early 1990s, for example, a senior Warlpiri person walking through the settlement followed by a large pack dogs was still a common sight. Since then, as Warlpiri people gained increasing access to cars they walked less and as a result, left the dogs at home more often. As Peter pointed out: ‘Before, when dogs followed people, families’ dogs knew each other, now they know family but not the other dogs’. In other words, since initial sedentisation the social and physical cosmos of camp dogs has been progressively transforming. Across the same period, dog burials began to change with the Christianisation of Yapa. New nutritional and medical regimes were implemented. Diabetes, renal failure, rheumatic heart fever, respiratory issues,

---

<sup>14</sup> Canine sexuality in the Tanami Desert deserves a paper on its own: how breeding cycles changed from *canis dingo* to *canis lupus familiaris*, how this lead to an overpopulation of dogs, and the politics of past and contemporary regimes of dog population control.

a multitude of infections, including STIs began plaguing and killing Yapa, while dog health improved, mange was eradicated, and dogs now live almost twice as long than before.

Furthermore, and just like Warlpiri people, camp dogs increasingly came under the gaze of the state. Frequent dog fights at the shop and the postoffice, the non-Indigenous assumption that dogs contributed to Aboriginal ill health, as well as racist violence lead to dog culls and dog shootings by police (for a moving analysis of dog shootings, see Rose 2011). Over the decades, the camp dog population of Yuendumu declined significantly, and the size of packs shrank from up to 50 to an average of 6-8. Today, the same neoliberal state that is attempting to regulate Aboriginal everyday life in all of its facets also attempts to control the lives of dogs, through trying to impose rules such as two dogs per camp maximums and extending surveillance by requiring registration.

The value of ‘having witness’ across time cannot be underestimated. It hinges on the particularities of the human/canine bond, which Rose, speaking about dingos, condensed as:

[[Dingoes provided a companionship that had never before existed in Australia. These creatures were the first nonhumans who answered back, came when called, helped in the hunt, slept with people, and learned to understand some of the vocabulary of human languages. (Rose 2011:63)]]

Warlpiri canines do not come when called, do not (generally) help in the hunt, nor do they understand human vocabulary, yet, they as well ‘answer back’. This ‘answering back’ is the result of millennia of co-residency, of engaging with and learning from each other. The closeness it encapsulates is mirrored in the bonds found anywhere where humans and canids co-evolved. And like the temporally more extensive co-evolutionary developments elsewhere, such engagement in the Tanami can be viewed as either uni-directional or as mutual. In regards to the latter, and speaking of general canine-human co-evolution, Haraway celebrates the reworking of conventional accounts which make man the master of domestication, saying ‘I like these metaplastic, remodelled versions that give dogs (...) the first moves in domestication’ (Haraway 2003:28). Others go so far as to propose that

[[The closest approximation to human morality ... is that of the gray wolf. ... The impact of wolves' ethics on our own may well equal or even exceed that of our effect on wolves' changes in their becoming dogs. (Schleidt and Shalter 2003:58)]]

Without wanting to get entangled in vexed questions of who-learned-what-from-whom, I would like to put forward that the bond between canines and humans is not only one of closeness but that such closeness is manifested in socio-culturally specific ways. Much as dogs in the inner cities of, say Sydney or Paris, share a significant number of characteristics, social practices and habits with their humans—think puppy school, dog salons, canine psychologists, and gourmet dog food (for starters)—so do camp dogs and Yapa.<sup>15</sup> These include, but are not limited to:

- giving prominence to welcomes rather than good byes;
- pointing with one's nose;
- learning by doing;
- growling to express displeasure (to growl is a transitive verb in Warlpiri English);
- living in the immediate present (see Musharbash 2008: on immediacy as a core value of Warlpiri being-in-the-world);
- shared sleep patterns: sleeping when tired rather than in nightly blocks, being ungrumpy and alert when woken up in the middle of sleep;
- loosely egalitarian power structures with gerontocratic and patriarchal leanings;
- a propensity to rush forwards and support companions in fights; and, most poignantly,
- experiencing/expressing the self in astonishingly similar ways:

Since Fred Myers's (1986) seminal book *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*, Aboriginal personhood has been theorised as constituted through the ongoing negotiation between two contradictory desires: one for autonomy, or, as it is called in Aboriginal English, striving to 'be boss for oneself' and the other for relatedness, the need to be with others. I think it is possible to pose that this constant negotiation of the pushes and pulls between autonomy and relatedness characterises three kinds of relations:

- 1) between the Aboriginal self and their 'mob';
- 2) between an individual camp dog and its pack;

---

<sup>15</sup> For a comparative example from Amazonia, see Kohn (2007).

3) between Yapa and their camp dogs.

Some of the overlaps in these traits and practices may be coincidental, others meaningless, but as a whole, I believe, they make a case for why canine witnessing is emotionally and morally meaningful for Yapa. Canines (meaning both dingos and camp dogs) are expressive of an ‘answering back’ not in terms of sharing language but in terms of sharing parts of the grammar that structures ways of being-in-the-world.

My point here, then, is that the lives of Warlpiri canines have changed in tandem with those of their humans, making them witnesses par excellence of Warlpiri being through time, and that such witnessing is given and received as a sign of not being alone in the world.

### **Discussion: Human and Non-Human Properties and Different Moral Worlds**

Of course, it has been more than a century since first contact with non-Indigenous Australians (Kardiya) in the Tanami and, ever since, canines have not been the only presence that ‘answers back’. However, while canines, as I have shown, ‘answer back’ by sharing parts of the grammar that structures Warlpiri ways of being-in-the-world the same is not exactly true of Kardiya. Elsewhere, I have discussed in great depth the divergence of some core values underlying Warlpiri and Kardiya ways of being-in-the-world (focussing on immediacy, intimacy, and mobility versus future-orientation, privacy, and stability, see Musharbash 2008). Different core values are underpinning the distinctly different lives Yapa and Kardiya live at Yuendumu, exemplified, not least, in domestic space.<sup>16</sup> Yuendumu houses are instantly recognisable as being the home of either Kardiya or Yapa. Kardiya houses and yards are neat, have straight fences, locked gates and a locked front door; their residents live inside. In contrast, Yapa use the outside space more than inside, their yards are often used for cooking and socialising, full of people and dogs, mobs of playing children, and strewn with what looks like rubbish to the Kardiya eye (firewood, piles of blankets, plastic sheets, broken rakes, car parts, and so forth). This opposition is also linguistically enshrined in the Aboriginal English translations of Yapa and Kardiya as ‘whitefella’ and ‘blackfella’ as used in common parlance across central Australia, and in the perhaps more apposite translations as ‘colonised’ and ‘colonisers’—always keeping in mind that the term ‘Yapa’ originally had no

---

<sup>16</sup> Note that intermarriage is rare indeed and in most cases, such couples form or move away from the settlement.

connotations of either blackness or colonised status and that these only became fitting with ‘contact’.<sup>17</sup>

Here then is the crux of my discussion: what are we to make of the fact that a particular kind of animal, canines, are thought of and talked about as family and *marlpa* while a particular kind of human, Kardiya, are not? My focus here is on moral personhood, not in terms of the body. In regards to the latter, at Yuendumu the boundaries between dogness and humanness are sharply drawn; much more so than, for example at Ernabella in South Australia where Pitjantjatjara people can morph into dogs and vice versa (see Eickelkamp 2014).<sup>18</sup> Warlpiri dogness is enshrined in canine bodies, their lack of language, their carrion eating, and not least, their lack of etiquette in regards to sexuality (see also Hamilton 1972; Rose 1992). Rather, my focus is on moral judgements and their associated ethos; which I propose can be illuminated by exploring how canines and Kardiya, respectively, are positioned vis-à-vis Yapa.

Let me start with the literal positioning of canines, visually captured in an oft-witnessed Yuendumu scene: It is evening, and camp residents sit around a single fire for dinner. The circle of people around the fire, in turn, is surrounded by another, this one a circle of dogs. Not too close to annoy people but close enough to be able to catch the tidbits that people around the fire chuck over their shoulders, the dogs are like a shield between the people bathed in fire light at the centre of the camp and the darkness of the night surrounding it. Camp dogs at Yuendumu participate in and contribute to Warlpiri life (rather than being passive recipients of human culture like dogs at Yarralin). (rather than being passive recipients of human culture like dogs at Yarralin). Not least, they do this through

- 1) protecting Yapa from strangers, dangers, and monsters;
- 2) sharing the everyday of camp life from grief and joy to food and fights; and
- 3) rendering witnessing services across time.

Through this, they shield people around the hearth by standing between them and all-others-not-of-the-camp, literally and metaphorically. This positions the dogs close to the self, and emotional aspects of this ‘standing closer’ are encapsulated in the application of terms such

---

<sup>17</sup> Relatedly, see Merlan’s (forthcoming) careful analysis of how Indigenous people have gradually adopted ‘racial’ distinctions between self and non-indigenous others.

<sup>18</sup> For an analysis into how, in the West, it is “possible for dogs to become men, just as men behaved and lived like ‘dogs’” see Allon and Barrett (2015).

as family and *marlpa* to the dogs. Simultaneously, through their ‘standing between’ the people around the hearth and others canines embody a crucial Warlpiri axiom: equating moral good with proximity in all its senses (emotional, spatial, temporal, socio-cultural). This axiom is captured also in three Warlpiri terms which can be arranged to mark waypoints on a spectrum ranging from close/good to distant/evil:

- 1) YAPA (the collective term for Warlpiri people radiating multiple meanings from self, body and person to human)
- 2) YAPA-KARI (the suffix *-kari* means ‘different, another’ and as Tamsin explains: ‘Yapa means person. Yapa-kari means someone from another community, where we don’t know that person, sort of like a stranger.’).
- 3) YAPA-WANGU (the suffix *-wangu* means ‘without’ and in this context Yapa-wangu literally means without humanness and can be translated as either inhuman or monstrous)

The moral spectrum framed by these terms looks as follows:

Yapa [human] — Yapa-kari [stranger] — Yapa-wangu [inhuman, monstrous]  
 Good/Proximate ————— Evil/Distant

A whole raft of terms for categories of persons can be located along this spectrum with each placement conveying a moral evaluation, where increasing closeness to the Yapa-end of the spectrum equates with increasing ‘goodness’. Not only the dogs, but different categories of persons are located towards the morally good end of the spectrum depending on their closeness to ego: co-residing family the closest, other kin and countrymen a bit further away, but closer to the self than strangers or enemies. The case of Yapa-kari (‘where we don’t know that person’) is significant: Yapa-kari are strangers *ipso facto* through being distant from Yapa and are therefore considered with suspicion: they, their motives, and their intentions are unknown. Importantly, though, as individuals, strangers can become Yapa (family or *marlpa*) by becoming ‘close’ through ‘living with’. The conversion from stranger to Yapa is accomplished through proximity where being in (emotional, spatial, temporal, socio-cultural) proximity reveals a stranger’s moral humanness and they are included around the hearth, and under the protection of the dogs who will shield them from (actual) strangers as well as from monsters. The latter constitute explicit physical and spiritual threats and, accordingly, they

manifest the furthest away from the ‘good’ end of the spectrum, embodying evil with no option (nor intention) of moving towards the ‘good’ end of the spectrum.

As Kardiya do not, as a rule, live in Yapa camps (nor embrace the ways of being-in-the-world that flow from this: sharing time, space, resources, and experiences) their moral personhood is not captured in this particular spectrum which equates proximity with goodness and distance with evil. Yet, the term ‘Yapa’ can be broadened out to mean human in general and as such clearly incorporates Kardiya. Even though Kardiya (as category) are not engaging in moral personhood through proximity, this is not to say that the category Kardiya cannot be broken down by moral assessment, quite to the contrary: the Warlpiri English term ‘friend’, for example, is reserved exclusively for Kardiya (it is not applied to Aboriginal people). A ‘friend’ is a Kardiya person, who is trusted, can be asked for help, and has shown themselves to be kind. A caring disposition rather than proximity equates with good here, so that a Kardiya shopkeeper with a friendly demeanour and a willingness to do ‘book up’, a kind teacher, and Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, who is seen as the political champion on land rights, are all seen as ‘friends’. On the other hand, an impersonal Kardiya shopkeeper, an impatient teacher, or Prime Minister John Howard, the architect of the unpopular ongoing neo-assimilationist policies affecting Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, are characterised as bossy, hard, or cruel.<sup>19</sup>

This, then, is what is most telling about the dog stories: Contrasting Warlpiri relations to dogs and to Kardiya, respectively, throws sharply into relief that while Kardiya are ostensibly at Yuendumu to help, as nurses, teachers, administrators and so on, they are nonetheless representatives of colonial and neo-colonial threats to Warlpiri life. Dogs, not Kardiya, are thought of as protectors, companions, and witnesses. Dogs, not Kardiya, accompany Warlpiri people through life and relate to them as family should: looking after and guarding those close to them, sharing time, space, resources, and experiences of both good times and the bad. Dogs and Warlpiri people meet each other on their own equal terms. Contrastingly, Kardiya disinterest in proximity is expressive of their unwillingness to share on equal terms (this is putting as positive a spin on colonialism and neo-colonialism as I can muster). It positions Kardiya in a moral universe, where good and evil are not equated with proximity and distance but are oriented according to a different moral compass. So different, indeed, that some non-

---

<sup>19</sup> see Merlan (forthcoming) on the differences and moral implications of ‘cheeky’ and ‘cruel’ for Jawoyn and Kriol speakers.

physical characteristics of what it means to be human are attributed to dogs rather than to Kardiya.

### **Conclusion: Moral Compasses**

One day, I tried to train my adopted camp dog puppy, Kunyap, to walk on a leash (for his own safety during a forthcoming long distance trip along a busy highway). Kunyap absolutely refused to move with the leash clipped on. I tried to coach him with a combination of treats and pulling and pleading, to no avail. “Yasmine”, said Helene, who had been watching us, “he doesn’t want to”.

Helene’s simple statement implied a reproach, or if not that, than minimally a question: Who was I to force a dog to do something it did not want to do? The fact that Yapa, with obvious bafflement, were ever so mildly questioning what I was doing to/with my dog, forced me to *really* look at the implications of what I was doing. I prioritised my knowledge of what I thought was good for Kunyap over his autonomy and in the process tried to bend his will to mine. In Warlpiri terms, I was trying to ‘be boss for’ my dog, trying to ‘boss’ it into doing things it didn’t want to do. Warlpiri people, I knew, do not like being bossed, nor bossing others. Bossing is frowned upon because it impinges on another person’s autonomy; and, as my ethnocanidology showed, it is frowned upon also when impinging a dog’s autonomy. My (Kardiya) moral compass clashed with that of my Yapa co-residents over the dog. The implications of the Yapa moral compass are summed up neatly by Fijn, who argues that

[[Part of the reason [Aboriginal] communities did not retain dingoes or breed them in captivity (in other words domesticate them) is that it did not (and still does not) run in accordance with Aboriginal philosophy. The process of domestication would not align with their social ecology. (Fijn forthcoming:unpaginated)]]

The Kardiya moral compass is a ‘bossing’ or controlling ethos: It establishes domestication as a human achievement, and in tandem, permits colonialism. It does not promote reciprocal and mutually beneficent relations of care and as a result, those who live by it are omitted from Warlpiri reckonings of what makes a good person, or for that matter, a good dog.

## References

- Allon, F, and L. Barrett 2015. That Dog was Marine! Human-Dog Assemblages in the Pacific War. *Animal Studies Journal* 4(1):126-147.
- Balme, J., and S. O'Connor 2015. Dingoes and Aboriginal Social Organization in Holocene Australia. *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports* <http://dx.doi/10.1016/j.jasrep.2015.08.015>.
- Darcy, D. 2014. *A Girl's Best Friend*. Crows Nest, NSW: Murdoch Books.
- Eickelkamp, U. 2014. Specters of Reality: Mamu in the Eastern Western Desert of Australia. In *Monster Anthropology in Australasia and Beyond*, edited by Y. Musharbash and G.H. Presterudstuen, 57-73. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fijn, N. forthcoming. Dog Ears and Tails: Different Relational Ways of Being with Dogs in Aboriginal Australia and Mongolia. In *Decentering Domestication*, edited by H. Swanson and M. Lien. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Griffin, B. 2015. *Dogs in Agta Hunting and Raiding*. Paper presented at CHAGS XI, Vienna, September 7-11, 2015.
- Gunn, R.G., R. Whear, and L.C. Douglas 2010. A Dingo Burial from Arnhem Land Plateau. *Australian Archaeology* 71:11-16.
- Hamilton, A. 1972. Aboriginal Man's Best Friend? *Mankind* 8(4):287-95.
- Haraway, D.J. 2003. *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press.
- 2008. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Hayden, B. 1975. Dingoes: Pets or Producers? *Mankind* 10:11-15.
- Jones, R. 1970. Tasmanian Aborigines and dogs. *Mankind* 7(256-71).
- Kästner, S. 2012. *Jagende Sammlerinnen und sammelnde Jägerinnen. Wie australische Aborigines-Frauen Tiere erbeuten*. Münster: Lit Verlag.
- Kimber, R. G. 1976. Beginnings of Farming? Some Man-Plant-Animal Relationships in Central Australia. *Mankind* 10(3):142-150.
- Kohn, E. 2007. How Dogs Dream: Amazonian Natures and the Politics of Transspecies Engagement. *American Ethnologist* 34(1):3-24.
- Kolig, E. 1973. Aboriginal Man's Best Foe? *Mankind* 9(2):122-24.
- 1978. Aboriginal Dogmatics: Canines in Theory, Myth and Dogma. *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 134(1):84-115.
- Meehan, B., R. Jones, and A. Vincent 1999. Gulu-kula: Dogs in Anbarra Society, Arnhem Land. *Aboriginal History* 23:83-106.
- Meggitt, M.J. 1955. Djanba among the Walbiri, Central Australia. *Anthropos* 50:375-403.
- 1965. The Association Between Australian Aborigines and Dingoes. In *Man, Culture and Animals* edited by A. Leeds and A.P. Vayda, 7-26. Washington, DC: American Association for the Advancement of Science.
- 1987[1972] Understanding Australian Aboriginal Society: Kinship Systems or Cultural Categories? In *Traditional Aboriginal Society* edited by W.H. Edwards, 113-37. Melbourne: Macmillan.
- Merlan, F. forthcoming. Dynamics of Difference: Indigenous Past and Present in a Settler Country. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Morey, D.F. 2006. Burying Key Evidence: The Social Bond between Dogs and People. *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports* 33(2):158-175.

- Musharbash, Y. 2008. *Yuendumu Everyday. Contemporary Life in Remote Aboriginal Australia*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press.
- 2013. Night, Sight, and Feeling Safe: An Exploration of Aspects of Warlpiri and Western Sleep. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* (TAJA) 24(1):48-63.
- 2014a. Here be Kurdaitcha: Towards an Ethnography of the Monstrous on the Margins of a Central Australian Aboriginal Town. In *Places and Spaces of Monstrosity*, edited by C. Douglas and R. Monacella, 117-124. Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press.
- 2014b. Monstrous Transformations: A Case Study from Central Australia. In *Monster Anthropology from Australasia and Beyond*, edited by Y. Musharbash and G.H. Presterudstuen, 39-55. New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Myers, F.R. 1976. "To Have and to Hold": A Study of Persistence and Change in Pintupi Social Life. PhD Thesis, Bryn Mawr College.
- 1986. Country, Pintupi Self. Sentiment, Place and Politics among Western Desert Aborigines. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Napanangka, J. and C. Nakamarra 1981. *Jarnpa-kurlu*. Yuendumu: Bilingual Resource Development Unit.
- Pleshch, N. forthcoming. *Man, Dog, Dingo: Canine Conjunctures and Indigenous Transformations in Central Australia*. PhD Thesis, New York University.
- Rose, D.B. 1992. *Dingo Makes us Human: Life and Land in an Australian Aboriginal Culture*. Cambridge: CUP.
- 2011. *Wild Dog Dreaming. Love and Extinction*. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press.
- Sansom, B. 1980. *The Camp at Wallaby Cross: Aboriginal Fringe Dwellers in Darwin*. Canberra: AIAS.
- Schleidt, W.M., and M.D. Shalter 2003. Co-Evolution of Humans and Canids. An Alternative View of Dog Domestication: Homo Homini Lupus? *Evolution and Cognition* 57(9):57-72.
- Smith, B.P. and C.A. Litchfield 2009. A Review of the Relationship between Indigenous Australians, Dingoes (*Canis Dingo*) and Domestic Dogs (*Canis Familiaris*). *Anthrozoös* 22(2):111-128.
- Smith, B. and P. Savolainen 2015. The Origin and Ancestry of the Dingo. In *The Dingo Debate. Origins, Behaviours and Conservation*, edited by B. Smith, 55-79. Clayton, Vic: CSIRO Publishing.
- White, I.M. 1972. Hunting dogs at Yalata. *Mankind* 8(3):201-205.
- Young, D. 2010. Dingo Scalping and the Frontier Economy in the North-west of South Australia. In *Indigenous Participation in Australian Economies. Historical and Anthropological Perspectives*, edited by I. Keen, 91-108. Canberra: ANU EPress.