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THE SACRED REVEALED: AN ICONOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE BERNDT COLLECTION OF ARNHEM LAND BARK PAINTINGS AT THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

by

EMILY REKOW CAGLAYAN

VOLUME I

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

THE SACRED REVEALED: AN ICONOGRAPHIC STUDY OF
THE BERNDT COLLECTION OF ARNHEM LAND BARK PAINTINGS AT THE
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by

EMILY REKOW CAGLAYAN

Adviser: Professor George A. Corbin

Bark painting, the act of applying natural pigments to flattened, dried and smoothed sheets of eucalyptus bark, is an indigenous art form of Australia. Although it was once widespread throughout the entire continent, the tradition of bark painting (which continues to the present day) is most often associated with Arnhem Land, a region that is primarily an Aboriginal reserve located in the northeastern section of the Northern Territory. Early Arnhem Land bark paintings served both secular and sacred functions, depending upon the context and audience for whom they were made.

This dissertation is the first comprehensive art historical study of Western and Northeastern Arnhem Land bark painting to focus on critical analyses of style and iconography. No scholar to date has done a diachronic analysis of bark paintings utilizing multiple collections from two distinct regions of Arnhem Land. The primary focus of this dissertation is on the AMNH Berndt Collection, a series of ninety bark paintings, collected by the social anthropologists Ronald and Catherine Berndt in 1958 for the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), New York.

The AMNH Berndt Collection of bark paintings reflects traditional styles and subject matter, since it was acquired prior to the establishment of a commercial art market. Significantly, it is one of the earliest bark painting collections to be thoroughly

documented with the artists' names, social groups, and detailed explanations of the painted imagery. Moreover, it encompasses, within a single collection, artwork from both Western Arnhem Land and Northeastern Arnhem Land, and includes works by twenty-nine artists from fourteen clans or language groups.

Using the AMNH Berndt Collection as a baseline, this dissertation explores how Arnhem Land bark paintings have changed (both stylistically and iconographically) over time. Works from both earlier and later collections of Arnhem Land bark paintings have been analyzed, specifically eight important and related collections created over the fifty-eight year period between 1912 and 1971. Although the majority of the works included in this study remain unpublished, they are significant in terms of establishing regional artistic styles, as well as charting the introduction of innovative trends in Arnhem Land bark painting.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Bark painting, the act of applying natural pigments to flattened, dried and smoothed sheets of eucalyptus bark, is an indigenous art form of Australia. Although it was once widespread throughout the entire continent, the tradition of bark painting (which continues to the present day) is most often associated with Arnhem Land, a region that today is primarily an Aboriginal reserve located in the northeastern section of the Northern Territory [figure 1.1][1].

Prior to sustained European contact in the nineteenth century, senior male clan members in Arnhem Land used sacred (or religious) bark paintings to evoke the presence of ancestral spirits. These bark paintings contained information that was kept secret from women and uninitiated males, and only the creators of these paintings could accurately decipher their sacred imagery. They were also produced in secluded areas and were commonly destroyed either during or shortly after they had served their ceremonial purpose.[2]

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[1] The official name of the reserve is "Arnhem Land Aboriginal Reserve."

[2] There is a distinction between *sacred bark paintings* and *bark paintings with sacred imagery*. Sacred bark paintings were created by senior clan members away from the general camp, in shelters erected on the ceremonial ground. By chanting songs over them as they worked, the elders endowed the paintings with the supernatural power of the spirits. These works would have been created for specific (usually initiation) ceremonies, and were never meant to exist beyond these ceremonies. Therefore, I would argue that very few (if any) early sacred bark paintings exist today. The focus of this dissertation is on bark paintings with sacred imagery, works that were created not for ceremonial use, but rather as a way of preserving (for themselves) and communicating (with outsiders) sacred information related to the artists' religion. Like sacred bark paintings, these works were also created by senior clan members and contained imagery related to the major creator spirits. However, unlike sacred bark paintings, these works were not endowed with supernatural power, and therefore, could be revealed to outsiders and preserved in public institutions.

Although bark paintings with secular imagery began to be collected from Arnhem Land in the 1870s, bark paintings with sacred imagery were not "revealed" by senior clan members to the outside world until the 1930s. For the purposes of this study, *bark paintings with secular imagery* are defined as works of art that are associated with the mundane realm and illustrate various aspects of everyday life, particularly hunting and fishing.[3] Conversely, *bark paintings with sacred imagery* are defined as works of art that visually condense complex information regarding sacred sites and the epic journeys of the creator spirits. Early collectors, such as the English biologist Sir Baldwin Spencer, believed that the indigenous peoples of Australia, known collectively as the "Aborigines," represented an earlier stage of human cultural evolution. Like other scientists trained during the late-nineteenth century, Spencer subscribed to the theory of Social Evolutionism, which claimed that the human mind (and associated culture) developed from the simple to complex and from the homogenous to the heterogeneous.[4] It also claimed that hunting and gathering societies (like those of the Aborigines) were on the lowest rung of the social evolutionary ladder, were precursors to more "civilized" agricultural societies, and existed without religion or art.[5] Despite his belief in Social Evolutionism, what impressed Spencer most about Arnhem Land bark painting was the

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[3] Traditionally, bark paintings with secular imagery were created either for educational or entertainment purposes, and the subject matter as well as the style of the work was dictated by the artist himself. This category is analyzed in depth in Chapters 4 and 5.

[4] For more information on Social Evolutionism see George W. Stocking, Jr., *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), and D. K. von Keusen, "Museum and Ideology: Augustus Pitt-Rivers, Anthropological Museums and Social Change in Late Victorian Britain," *Victorian Studies* vol. 28 (1984): 171-189.

[5] It is interesting to note that Social Evolutionism emerged in England during the 1860s, which coincided with British colonial expansion in India, Canada, the West Indies, and Australia. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology,* 240.

accuracy in representation of specific species. In turn, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Spencer collected bark paintings with secular imagery with easily recognizable subject matter.[6]

Beginning in the 1930s, however, the perception of the indigenous cultures of Australia changed dramatically, as anthropologists such as Donald Thomson, Charles Mountford, and Ronald and Catherine Berndt asserted that Aboriginal peoples possessed features of high culture, including religion and art. In response, the above named sought to collect bark paintings with sacred imagery in addition to bark paintings with secular imagery. As these anthropologists entered into a realm of Aboriginal culture previously reserved only for male initiates, they did so at what proved to be a unique moment in time. This was the first time that Aboriginal artists in Arnhem Land had agreed to share sacred imagery with outsiders, and it was a few decades before the establishment of a commercial art market in the 1960s. With the advent of commercialization came the mass production of artwork and the introduction of new materials. Thus, after the 1960s, the production of Arnhem Land bark paintings would never be the same.

The primary focus of this dissertation is on a series of ninety bark paintings, collected by the social anthropologists Ronald and Catherine Berndt in 1958 for the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) in New York, hereafter referred to as "The AMNH Berndt Collection." The AMNH Berndt Collection is an early bark painting collection reflecting traditional styles and subject matter, and was acquired prior to the establishment of a commercial art market. It is one of the earliest collections of bark paintings to be thoroughly documented, recording the artists' names and social

[6] The Spencer Collection of bark paintings is discussed in Chapter 2.

groups, as well as detailed explanations of the painted imagery. Representing works by twenty-nine artists from fourteen different clans and/or language groups, it also encompasses artwork from the two primary stylistic regions of Arnhem Land, Western Arnhem Land and Northeastern Arnhem Land.[7] Using the AMNH Berndt Collection as a baseline, this dissertation will explore how Arnhem Land bark paintings have changed (both stylistically and iconographically) over time.

For over four decades, the AMNH Berndt Collection has remained unpublished, largely unexhibited, and little known to scholars of Aboriginal art.[8] In fact, it took almost thirteen years for six of the bark paintings (out of the ninety) to go on permanent display at the AMNH after they were collected in 1958. These six works were chosen by the anthropologist Margaret Mead for the opening of the Hall of the Pacific Peoples at the

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[7] Bark paintings are also produced in Central Arnhem Land which occupies the area between Western and Northeastern Arnhem Land.

[8] From September 12 to November 15, 1959, a select group of the bark paintings from the AMNH Berndt Collection were placed on temporary display in the Corner Gallery at the American Museum of Natural History. Unfortunately, there are no records or photographs of this temporary exhibition in the archival files at the AMNH. The only documentation of this exhibition is a small article entitled "Bark Paintings by Aborigines in Australia, Put on View Here," *New York Times*, 12 September 1959, 23. In 1966, the American Dr. Edward L. Ruhe, who was an English Professor at the University of Kansas, viewed the AMNH Berndt Collection. His interest in Aboriginal art began as a Fulbright Visiting Lecturer at the University of Adelaide in 1965 and intensified after a trip to Arnhem Land in 1972. Around this same time, the French artist/art dealer Karel Kupka, who was associated with the Centre Documentaire pour l'Oceania Paris, became interested in the AMNH Berndt Collection as it related to his project of making an inventory of all documented bark paintings from Arnhem Land. Archive Files, AMNH Collection, Berndt Museum of Anthropology, University of Western Australia, Perth. In a letter dated November 17, 1966, Ronald Berndt states that he has no objection to Mr. Ruhe using the collection. In terms of Kupka, Berndt states, "This is a rather difficult request since I am critical of Mr. Kupka's writing on Australian Aboriginal art, and disagree with much of his interpretation…I suppose I would have no objection to his inspecting the paintings…Regarding the descriptions of each which I sent to the Museum, along with the collection, I would not be happy if he were to have access to that information. I do not know how he would use it, or misuse it, and I am not anxious to have my name coupled with his, or to make it 'easy' for him to write up something on the basis of that material." Ronald Berndt to the American Museum of Natural History, 17 November 1966, Archive Files, AMNH Collection, Berndt Museum of Anthropology, University of Western Australia, Perth. Unfortunately, the work of these two scholars remains unknown since neither Ruhe nor Kupka ever published material (or photographs) relating to the collection.

AMNH in May of 1971.[9] Six years later, the hall (initially located on the fourth floor of the museum) was closed, and reopened as an identical installation on the third floor of the museum in 1984. In 1997, the hall once again closed, and reopened in 2001 as the "Margaret Mead Hall of Pacific Peoples."[10] In 1999, Dr. George A. Corbin, the guest curator for the 2001 reinstallation, rediscovered the Berndt collection of bark paintings (which had previously been in storage), and selected eleven works for permanent display, three of which had been previously chosen by Mead.[11] At the same time, the remaining bark paintings were transferred at the behest of Paul Beelitz, the Director of Collections and Archives at the AMNH, to recently renovated storage facilities within the Anthropology Department, where they remain to this day.

This dissertation explores Arnhem Land bark painting as an indigenous art form that has evolved over time, in response to changing cultural and economic factors. Regional differences that exist within Arnhem Land are also addressed, as are specific characteristics of representative imagery and stylistic traits of individual artists. Also analyzed are works from both earlier and later collections of Arnhem Land bark paintings, specifically, eight important and related collections assembled over the fifty-eight year period between 1912 and 1971. Although the majority of the works included in this study remain unpublished, they are significant in terms of establishing regional

[9] These bark paintings were figures 3.43, 4.1, 4.10, 5.19, 5.52, and 5.56.

[10] Archive Files, Exhibition Files, Margaret Mead Hall of Pacific Peoples, Anthropology Department, AMNH, New York.

[11] Three of the bark paintings were included in the original installation of the Hall of the Pacific Peoples: figures 4.1, 5.19, and 5.56. Eight of the bark paintings were placed on display for the first time: figures 3.3, 3.9, 3.16, 3.37, 4.8, 4.18, 4.19, 5.24.

artistic styles, as well as charting the introduction of innovative trends in Arnhem Land bark painting.

Until recently, the literature on Arnhem Land bark paintings has tended to focus on a single stylistic region, depending on the scholar's own field of expertise, generally to the exclusion of an analysis of artistic and stylistic changes over time.[12] The majority of past studies on Arnhem Land bark paintings have also centered on anthropological issues, such as language, clan affiliation, kinship, etc. This dissertation is the first comprehensive art historical study of Western and Northeastern Arnhem Land bark painting to focus on critical analyses of style and iconography. No scholar to date has done a diachronic analysis of bark paintings utilizing multiple collections from two distinct regions of Arnhem Land.

Methodologically, this dissertation takes a combined approach of formal and iconographic analysis. Formal analysis considers the aesthetic effects created by visual elements (line, shape, space, color, light, and dark), as well as their arrangement, or the "composition" of the work.[13] An analysis of "style" (defined as the characteristic way in which a particular artist deploys formal elements) is also employed for the purposes of delineating the regional differences that exist within Arnhem Land bark painting, the specific characteristics of their representative imagery, and the stylistic traits of the individual artists.[14] Iconography considers the meaning (or meanings) of the subject

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[12] A detailed discussion of the literature pertaining to Western and Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings appears later in this chapter under the Literature Review.

[13] The English critic Roger Fry (1866-1934) was one of the major proponents of a formalist approach to art. See Roger Fry, *Vision and Design* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1920).

[14] See Meyer Schapiro, "Style," in *Anthropology Today: An Encyclopedic Inventory,* ed. A.L. Kroeber (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 287-312.

matter, based on the methodology established by the German scholar Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968).[15] In his 1939 publication, Panofsky distinguished three levels of iconographic "reading." The first level, which he called "pre-iconographic," involves basic description of imagistic components. The second level recognizes the conventions and symbols that operate within an image, and introduces an underlying text. The third level explores the intrinsic meaning of the image, taking into account the time, place, and cultural context in which it was made.[16] In order to compare the AMNH collection to both earlier and later collections of bark paintings, a comparative methodology is used to gain a greater understanding of the evolution of Arnhem Land bark painting from 1912 to 1971.

THE CONCEPT OF SACRED

The word "sacred" comes from the Latin *sacrare*, which means "to set apart as holy." In the Western world, sacred is used as an adjective to describe an object relating to or in the service of religion. It also has connotations associated with the eternal, the soul and the spiritual realm. The opposite of sacred is secular, defined as the worldly realm (that is, the present world that humans occupy) and is used to describe all things material, including the body.

In Arnhem Land, the term sacred is most often applied to sites. A sacred site is defined as an area of land owned by a specific clan, which contains the presence and

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[15] Iconography literally means "the writing of" images and includes the study of symbols.

[16] See Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), and Ernst Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960).

power of one or more of that clan's ancestral beings or *creator spirits*.[17] These creator spirits (*djang* in Western Arnhem Land and *wangarr* in Northeastern Arnhem Land) are believed to have existed from the beginning of time, and continue to have an eternal presence in all aspects of life. During the "Dreamtime," an undefined era in the remote past, these spirits created landscape features, gave birth to the first humans, and established ceremonial law. Creator spirits have the ability to manifest themselves in multiple forms (as humans, animals, or inanimate objects) and are dependent upon humans to keep their power alive through various ceremonial cycles.[18] In turn, humans are dependent on the power and intervention of these spirits during the course of their lifetimes. It is believed that these creator spirits animate the physical body (entering a woman's womb at the point of conception to become the spirit of the child), regulate the fertility and growth of all living things, and ensure the survival of the human soul after physical death. Any site, object (including bark paintings), design, song, narrative, dance or dramatic performance that relates to or evokes the presence of these creator spirits is considered sacred.[19] Conversely, any site, object, design, song, narrative, dance or dramatic performance that is used strictly for entertainment or relates to the mundane sphere of everyday life is considered secular.

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[17] Traditionally, an area of land would have been recognized as being "owned" (or belonging to) a particular clan. Ownership was conditional based on the clan's ability to maintain the sacred law, which was established by creator spirits. Ronald Berndt and Catherine Berndt, *Man, Land, and Myth in North Australia: The Gunwinggu People* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1970), 9.

[18] Ceremonial cycles for Northeastern and Western Arnhem Land are discussed in Chapters 3 and 5.

[19] According to Ronald Berndt, "Many Aboriginal myths are told in song, not as prose narratives. These sacred songs, as they may be called, are usually sung in a special setting: on the men's dancing ground, or in association with ritual sequences. Each is incomplete in itself; it is one of a series, to be understood only in relation to the rest of the series." Ronald Berndt and Catherine Berndt, *The World of the First Australians: An Introduction to the Traditional Life of the Australian Aborigines: Past and Present* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1992), 369.

ARNHEM LAND

The country of Australia [figure 1.1] is divided into six states (Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland) and two territories (Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory). Arnhem Land is located in the northeastern section of the Northern Territory [figure 1.2]. It comprises an area that measures 37,167 square miles and stretches from the East Alligator River to the Gove Peninsula (including the surrounding islands). Arnhem Land has been a protected reserve since 1931, and is now Aboriginal Land as a result of the passing of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act in 1976. Today, it is estimated that approximately 18,000 people live in Arnhem Land. Arnhem Land art traditionally utilizes a variety of media and techniques, including rock art, body painting and decoration, drawing in soft earth, sculpture and bark painting. Each of these forms of visual expression has both secular and sacred forms, depending upon the context and audience for whom they are made.

The art of Arnhem Land is commonly divided into three stylistic regions [figure 1.3]: Western Arnhem Land, Central Arnhem Land, and Northeastern Arnhem Land.[20] Western Arnhem Land stretches from the East Alligator River to the Liverpool and Mann Rivers, including the Cobourg Peninsula and its adjacent islands. Central Arnhem Land includes the land between the Mann River to the Goyder and Glyde Rivers.[21]

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[20] Judith Ryan, *Spirit in Land: Bark Paintings from Arnhem Land* (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 1990), 2. Melville Island and Groote Eylandt are considered to be separate stylistic regions.

[21] Central Arnhem Land is occupied by a number of language groups, including the Dangbon, Kurrkoni, Gunardba and Rembarrnga, who share ceremonies, customs and beliefs with the Kuninjku of Western Arnhem Land. It is also home to a number of Yolngu clans (from Ramingining and the island of Milingimbi), who are more closely affiliated to and share ceremonies with the Yolngu of Northeastern Arnhem Land. Thus, the artistic style of this region is varied and, according to Caruana, represents "…a transition from the figurative images of the west to the more conventionalized designs and complex

Northeastern Arnhem Land stretches from the Goyder and Glyde Rivers to the Gulf of Carpentaria, including the islands off the northern coast. Since the AMNH Berndt Collection contains only bark paintings from Western and Northeastern Arnhem Land, this dissertation will focus exclusively on these two stylistic regions.

Western Arnhem Land and Social Organization

The three main post-contact settlements of Western Arnhem Land [figure 1.4] are Oenpelli (or *Gunbalunya,* which was founded in 1906 as a dairy farm and became an Anglican Church mission station in 1925), Croker Island (or *Minjilang*, founded in 1877 which became a Methodist Overseas mission station in 1941), and Maningrida (founded in the late 19th century as a trading post, which became a Government settlement in 1957).[22] In addition to low-lying coastal flats and stretches of bush, this region is dominated by a rocky escarpment of steep quartzite and sandstone cliffs, 300 meters high in some places, known as the "Arnhem Land Plateau." From the plateau to the Arafura Sea, a number of rivers run in a northerly direction, including the East Alligator River, the Goomaderr River, the Liverpool River and the Mann River. This area, rich in natural resources (including fresh water), is home to a variety of wildlife, including kangaroos, wallaroos, bandicoots, possums, tortoises and several species of fish.

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compositions found in the east." Wally Caruana, *Aboriginal Art*, World of Art Series (London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 1993): 38. For additional information on Central Arnhem Land see Djon Mundine, *The Native Born: Objects and Representations from Ramingining, Arnhem Land* (Sydney: Museum of Contemporary Art, in association with Bula'bula Arts, Ramingining, 2000).

[22] Until 1968, Croker Island was primarily a settlement for children of part-Aboriginal descent. Berndt and Berndt, *Man, Land, and Myth*, 3. All of these settlements are post-contact and colonial in origin. Ryan, *Spirit in Land,* 9. The pre-contact pattern of Aboriginal life was seasonal movements within clan territories.

The people of Western Arnhem Land are divided into a number of different language groups, and each language group is further subdivided into several clans or *kunmokurrkurr*.[23] A clan is defined as a landowning group which acknowledges common ancestry and shares a common sacred law. Generally, the people of a clan also speak a distinct dialect of their local language. According to the anthropologist Howard Morphy, "Clan names are the ones most frequently given when an individual is asked what group/clan/tribe/people he or she belongs to."[24]

In Western Arnhem Land, both language groups and clans descend patrilineally (meaning a child inherits the social affiliations of his father) and are exogamous (meaning a person must marry outside his or her own social group).[25] At the time of European contact, there were approximately twenty-one different language groups living in Western Arnhem Land [figure 1.5].[26] Today, this number has been dramatically

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[23] Luke Taylor, *Seeing the Inside: Bark Painting in Western Arnhem Land* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1996), 53.

[24] Howard Morphy, *Ancestral Connections: Art and an Aboriginal System of Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 47.

[25] In Western Arnhem Land, in addition to the patrilineal social structure (which dictates a person's language and clan affiliation), a matrilineal social structure also exists which focuses on kin relationships and marriage laws. For example, the Kunwinjku matrilineal social structure consists of two moieties, eight sub-moieties, and four subsections or "skin groups." The two moieties are the Namardku and the Nangarradjku, which are divided into four semi-moieties each: Nabangardi, Nakodjok, Nakangila and Nawakadj (of the Namardku moiety) and the Nangarridj, Nabulanj, Nawamud and Nakamarrang (of the Nangarradjku moiety). Each moiety is also divided into four subsections: Ngalwagaidj, Ngalbangari, Ngalgangila, and Ngalgudjug. A skin group (which can also be used as an informal reference to a person) indicates one's generational level (since the order of skin groups is sequential and changes with each subsequent generation) and plays an important role in arranged marriages. Although the matrilineal social structure is important (and all individuals are able to identify their matrilineal affiliations), it remains separate from the artistic system in Western Arnhem Land. For this reason, I have chosen to focus exclusively on the patrilineal social structure. For more information on the matrilineal social structure see Berndt and Berndt, *Man, Land, and Myth*, 60-71 or Taylor, *Seeing the Inside,* 50-53.

[26] See George Chaloupka, *Journey in Time: The World's Longest Continuing Art Tradition: The 50,000 Year Story of the Australian Aboriginal Rock Art of Arnhem Land* (Chatswood, NSW: Reed, 1993), 70.

reduced, to approximately nine major language groups, due to declining numbers and westward migration.

All of the bark paintings in the AMNH Berndt Collection were obtained from Oenpelli, which was originally established as a government-funded dairy farm in 1906 by the European buffalo shooter Patrick "Paddy" Cahill.[27] In 1894, Cahill was the first buffalo shooter to enter the Alligator River region, at a time when the water buffalo population numbered in the thousands.[28] He established a buffalo camp on the East Alligator River, in the land of Gagudju (Kakadu) speakers [figure 1.5], many of which he employed as indigenous laborers.[29] In 1906, Cahill was encouraged by the government to establish a settlement to the north of his buffalo camp that would serve as a dairy farm, with the expectation that it would provide fresh dairy products to the nearby town of Darwin. Cahill accepted the offer, and named his settlement Oenpelli, a Europeanized rendering of the word *Awunbelenja,* the name for the land used by the traditional owners, the Mengerdji.[30] With the establishment of this new venture, Cahill persuaded a large

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[27] Ibid., 26.

[28] Water buffaloes were originally shipped to Australia in 1827 from Timor, to provide a reliable food supply for the European population living at Fort Wellington (on the Cobourg Peninsula). After this settlement and the nearby settlement of Port Essington were abandoned, these animals quickly multiplied into vast herds which roamed the floodplains. Ibid., 198.

[29] In other parts of Western Arnhem Land, additional entrepreneurs soon followed Cahill's lead, and during the first twenty five years of the enterprise, more than 100,000 hides were exported. This industry flourished as the demand for tough buffalo hides (to be used as belts to drive industrial machinery) steadily increased. The success of a buffalo camp depended on its Aboriginal workforce, which varied according to the scale of the operation. According to Chaloupka, "Workforces generally numbered between 10 and 60 people, although there are claims that up to 100 men, women and youth were employed in a single camp. Once removed from the carcasses, the hides were washed clean of blood, and any adhering flesh and fat were removed. The hides were then brought to a bough shed and salt was [applied]… A hide that weighed up to 100 kilograms wet, dried out to about 35 kilograms." Ibid., 200.

[30] Keith Cole, *A History of Oenpelli* (Darwin: Nungalinya Publications, 1975), 2. In the anthropological literature, Mengerdji is also spelled: Mangeredji, Mangeri, and Mengerr.

number of Gagudju speakers to move with him to Oenpelli as his workers. This shift in population consequently displaced many of the Mengerdji and created a new dominant language group within the area.[31]

When Baldwin Spencer visited Oenpelli in 1912, Cahill was both his host and his main informant. Since Cahill was fluent in Gagudju, it is not surprising that Spencer focused the majority of his study on the Gagudju people (which he called the "Kakadu").[32] Although Spencer acknowledged that other language groups did exist within the area, he recorded much of his data from a Gagudju perspective, even referring to the Mengerdji as the "Geimbio" (a name that the Gagudju used for these people).[33] After two decades of failing to make the dairy farm successful, Cahill left the region in 1924.

In 1925, the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS) took over Oenpelli and converted it into an overseas mission station. By then, the majority of Gagudju and Mengerdji inhabitants had either died or moved farther west, to what was known as the "buffalo country."[34] In an attempt to attract other language groups, missionaries readily gave handouts (such as tobacco, flour and sugar) to the Aborigines; however, most were reluctant to settle permanently and preferred, instead, to return to their own "countries" or clan lands.

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[31] According to Annemarie Brody, "During Land Rights discussions at Oenpelli in the 1970s, the older men were adamant that Kakadu country lay on the western side of the East Alligator River and near the mouth of the south Alligator River and that the Kakadu people had only come to the Oenpelli area with Cahill." Annemarie M. Brody, *Kunwinjku Bim: Western Arnhem Land Bark Paintings from the Collection of the Aboriginal Arts Board* (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 1984), 9.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Chaloupka, *Journey in Time*, 71.

[34] Ibid., 26.

During World War II, many Kunwinjku speakers, whose traditional lands were located on the Goomaderr River [figure 1.5], and Kuninjku speakers, whose traditional lands were located on the Liverpool River, were moved to mission stations where they were conscripted for the war effort.[35] After the war, many returned briefly to their traditional lands, but soon chose to move westward in search of tobacco and other goods that they had grown accustomed to using.[36] This prompted a massive westward migration of both Kunwinjku and Kuninjku speakers to Oenpelli, prompting once again a significant shift in population. By 1958, the majority of the inhabitants of Oenpelli identified themselves as "Kunwinjku" regardless of whether they were originally from the east or west of the Liverpool River. This is why four of the artists represented in the AMNH Berndt Collection were documented by Ronald Berndt as being Kunwinjku, even though their original clan lands reveal that two artists (Anchor Kulunba and Deidjeli) were actually Kuninjku.[37]

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[35] The Kunwinjku are also known as the Gunwinjgu or Gunwinggu, and the Kuninjku are sometimes referred to as the Eastern Kunwinjku. According to Judith Ryan, the Kunwinjku and Kuninjku "…are associated with different dialects of Kunwinjku. When speaking English, Kunwinjku characterize these different dialects as 'soft' and 'hard.' The 'soft' dialect is spoken by Liverpool/Mann Rivers groups [Kuninjku] and the 'hard' dialect by the western groups…Marriage ties are particularly numerous within, rather than between these two communities." Ryan, *Spirit in Land*, 79.

[36] Margie West, "Growing Up in the Stone Country, The Lives of Bardayal and Kubarkku," in *Rainbow, Sugarbag, and Moon,* ed. Margie West (Darwin: Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, 1995), 9.

[37] This is further supported by the fact that the majority of the paintings with sacred imagery created by Anchor Kulunba and Deidjeli reference sacred sites located along the Liverpool River region, as opposed to the Goomaderr River which was the traditional clan lands of the Kunwinjku.

Northeastern Arnhem Land and Social Organization

The two main post-contact settlements of Northeastern Arnhem Land [figure 1.6] are Yirrkala (which was founded in 1935) and Elcho Island (or *Galiwin'ku*, which was founded in 1942), both of which were originally Methodist mission stations. The vegetation in this region is open savanna woodland, with eucalyptus forests that are filled with animals, such as sand monitors and bandicoots. The well-watered areas are rich in "bush tucker" (wild vegetable and animal foods), whereas the coastal areas attract a variety of birds, fish, and turtles.

The main language spoken in this region is Yolngu (also known as Murningin, Wulamba, Miwuyt, or Miwaidj).[38] This language has been the dominant one for the past one hundred years at least. In response to the establishment of European settlements, there has been a similar desire for clan members to relocate to mission stations such as Yirrkala and Elcho Island. This, more recently, has resulted in a significant shift in clan territories and boundaries.

In terms of social structure, the Yolngu are divided into two interdependent halves or "moieties," Dhuwa and Yirritja, which are exogamous (meaning that an individual must marry a person from the opposite moiety). The two moieties are further subdivided into clans with eight clans each. Clans (like moieties) are patrilineal

[38] *Yolngu* means "human being" which is also the word the people of Northeastern Arnhem Land use to refer to themselves. The Aboriginal peoples of Australia did not practice writing prior to European contact. Early missionaries, settlers and anthropologists made an attempt to transcribe words and names; however, their spellings were approximate, idiosyncratic, and inconsistent. More recently, there has been an attempt to create a standard orthography for each language group. These various orthographies are utilized in *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture,* which I have used for this dissertation as a guide to standardize spellings. In addition, I have used the following guidelines set forth by *The Oxford Companion*: Indigenous words appear in italics, proper names, languages, and names of ceremonies are capitalized, and the sound /ŋ/ is always written as "ng," regardless of whether this is the convention of the orthography for a specific language. Sylvia Kleinert and Margo Neale, *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), xiv-xv.

(meaning that children belong to the same social group as their father).[39] Members of a clan speak the same dialect and share a common sacred law (*mardayin*), comprised of a set of songs, dances, paintings, and sacred objects which are believed to have originated from their major creator spirits (*wangarr*).

Perhaps, this social structure is best explained through the use of an example. When a child is born, he will have parents belonging to two different clans and opposite moieties. Although the child is believed to belong to the same clan and moiety as his father, he will also gain an understanding of his mother's clan and moiety through the teachings of his maternal uncles and grandfather. A young child will also learn to speak the dialect of his mother's clan (*ngärndi*) first, since he will spend the majority of his early years with his mother. However, as the child grows up, he will be expected to learn and speak the dialect of his father's clan, which is the clan he will acknowledge as his own. A child's maternal grandmother is another important figure, and her clan is referred to as the *märi*, "backbone" of the child.[40] During the course of a young boy's life, it is the responsibility of his father's clan and his maternal grandmother's clan (which are always of the same moiety) to defend him in the face of accusation or attack, teach him the sacred law, and manage his initiation and circumcision ceremonies. These clans are also responsible for the young boy's first marriage and the selection of a "promised

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[39] In the late 1960s, the Australian government mandated the use of surnames in Yirrkala. According to Gillian Hutcherson, "…all members of the same clan, or of the same branch of an unusually large clan, have borne the same surname. After marriage, some women retain their clan surnames, while other follow the Balanda [white, European] custom of changing their surnames to those of their husbands, and yet others choose to hyphenate the two." Gillian Hutcherson, *Gong-Wapitja: Women and Art from Yirrkala* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1998), 6.

[40] Djon Mundine, *Saltwater: Yirrkala Bark Paintings of Sea Country: Recognising Indigenous Sea Rights* (Yirrkala: Buku-Larrŋgay Mulka Centre, 1999), 106.

spouse," a girl who belongs to a clan in the opposite moiety (consequently, the same moiety as the boy's mother).[41] The moieties are therefore divided yet interconnected within a single family.

BARK PAINTING: MATERIALS AND PROCESS

Throughout the years, the process of creating a bark painting has gone relatively unchanged. The materials required have also remained consistent: a sheet of bark obtained from a Darwin stringybark tree (*Eucalyptus tetrodonta*, family Myrtaceae), natural ochres (red or yellow impure iron ore used as pigment), and brushes made out of chewed twigs, small cylindrical sticks, palm-leaf fibers, or small feathers.[42] An artist traditionally begins the process by collecting the bark himself.[43] The ideal time of year to harvest the bark is just after the wet season, when the tree sap level is at its highest.[44] When exactly this takes place during the calendar year is unclear. Jennifer Isaacs states that it is around December, whereas Susan McCulloch believes it is anytime from

[41] Within Yolngu society, polygamy was permitted, and men traditionally took more than one wife.

[42] Charles Mountford, "The Art of Arnhem Land," in *Australian Aboriginal Art,* ed. Ronald Berndt (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1964), 22.

[43] More recently, this task of "harvesting bark" has been taken over by specific individuals employed by various art centers. According to the anthropologist Sally May, who spent nine months living in Oenpelli in 2002, the art center at Oenpelli would typically employ certain individuals to bring back multiple sheets of bark. The sheets were then prepared at the art center, and distributed directly to the artists. Pers. comm., Sally May, Ph.D. Candidate in Anthropology at the Centre for Cross Cultural Learning, Australian National University, Canberra, 11 June 2003.

[44] Most authors agree that the ideal time to collect bark is either during or after the monsoonal wet season. See Adolphus P. Elkin, Catherine Berndt, and Ronald Berndt, *Art in Arnhem Land* (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1950), 64. Helen Groger-Wurm, "Bark Painting," in *The Australian Aboriginal Heritage: An Introduction through the Arts*, eds. R. Berndt and E.S. Phillips (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1973), 202.

November to March.[45] The level of the tree sap is important, since the higher the level, the easier it is to strip the bark away from the tree trunk.[46] The artist travels to a heavily forested area, away from where he lives, and selects a tree based on the straightness of its trunk, its height, and the lack of any visible signs of imperfections or damage caused by insects.[47] If he suspects that a tree is good, he confirms his hunch by removing with his axe a small portion of the periderm (the rough, outer layer of the bark) to inspect the interior. In actuality, the artist is more concerned with the phloem (inner bark), since this is ultimately will become the surface of his painting.

Once an appropriate tree is selected, the artist then makes a horizontal incision all the way around the circumference of the tree trunk with his axe.[48] The initial horizontal (bottom) cut is usually somewhere between the base of the tree trunk and two feet off the ground. After establishing the length of the sheet, the artist then creates a second horizontal (top) cut.[49] A vertical incision is made next, connecting the bottom to the top cut. Finally, after the width of the sheet of bark is determined, the last cut, which is also

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[45] Jennifer Isaacs, *Australian Aboriginal Paintings* (Sydney: Lansdowne Publishing Pty. Ltd., 1989), 123. Susan McCulloch, *Contemporary Aboriginal Art: A Guide to the Rebirth of an Ancient Culture* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2001), 149.

[46] Isaacs, *Australian Aboriginal Paintings,* 123.

[47] Edwards and Guerin state that the stringybark trees are not only tough, but they are known for growing straight and tall. Also, due to the fact that their first branches begin near the top of the tree trunk, they also offer many feet of firm, knot-free bark. Robert Edwards and Bruce Guerin, *Aboriginal Bark Paintings* (London: Robert Hale & Company, 1973), 2.

[48] According to Ronald Berndt, the axes are now iron, but traditionally, a stone axe or a Macassan trade tomahawk would have been used. Elkin, Berndt, and Berndt, *Art in Arnhem Land,* 64.

[49] As to where the second horizontal cut would be placed depended on a number of factors: how large the sheet of bark needed to be, how tall the artist was, and whether or not the artist was willing to climb up the trunk to reach the height of the tree.

the second vertical incision, is made.[50] The artist carefully peels the bark off the tree [figure 1.7], easing his axe or a large sharpened stick to sever the fibers that connect the sheet of bark to the tree trunk [figure 1.8].[51] Even though this process may appear to be laborious, even the most difficult bark apparently takes only a few minutes to remove [figure 1.9].[52]

After obtaining the desired number of sheets, the artist begins to prepare the barks by quickly removing the periderm (external surface of the tree) while he is still at the site where he has collected the bark. He then returns to where he lives and creates a fire of dry leaves, grass and twigs. Meantime, he continues to trim each sheet of bark until only the phloem remains. Even after they are trimmed, the sheets are still cylindrical (retaining the original shape of the tree trunk) [figure 1.9]. Therefore, the artist's next objective is to flatten out each sheet by removing the moisture in the bark. Typically, the sheets are placed directly on top of a fire for a few minutes on each side. Upon contact with the direct heat, the sheet of bark begins to flatten out and becomes much more pliable.

Once the moisture had been sufficiently removed, the artist takes the sheet off the fire, places it on the ground, and begins sanding the inner surface.[53] It is the inner

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[50] The process that I have described is outlined in Helen Groger-Wurm's 1973 essay. Groger-Wurm, "Bark Painting," 202. I should note that Tony Tuckson gives a slightly different explanation of the process, stating that after the initial horizontal incision is made, a vertical incision comes next, and finally the artist climbs up the tree to make his final cut. J.A. (Tony) Tuckson, "Making a Bark Painting," *Art Gallery of New South Wales Quarterly* volume 1 (1960), 34.

[51] Groger-Wurm, "Bark Painting," 202.

[52] Edwards and Guerin, *Aboriginal Bark Paintings*, 2-4.

[53] Traditionally, sharkskin was used, but today sandpaper is more common. Groger-Wurm, "Bark Painting," 202.

surface, which will become the paint surface, that needs to be smooth. After the sanding is completed, and if the artist desires a uniform background color, he rubs the entire inner surface with red ochre.[54] To keep the bark from returning to its cylindrical form, he typically places heavy rocks on top of the bark and lets it rest in the heat of the sun for several days.[55] After the bark is determined to be dry enough, the rocks are removed, the sheet is trimmed a final time, and any flakes of bark on the surface are discarded.[56]

Once a sheet of bark is ready, the artist prepares the pigments. Whether the artist is painting a rock surface, a human body, or a sheet of bark, he uses the same palette, which consists of just four colors: red, yellow, white and black. These four colors are always used in their pure forms (never mixed to create secondary colors), and they are obtained from substances found in the surrounding environment. Red comes from red blocks of ochre (composed of iron oxide and clay, called hematite), and yellow comes from rich deposits of yellow ochre (composed of hydrated iron oxide and clay, called limonite).[57] According to Ronald Berndt, ochre had "…great trading value, and may be bartered over a wide area for other goods." [58] White comes from pipeclay, gypsum or

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[54] Elkin, Berndt, and Berndt, *Art in Arnhem Land,* 64.

[55] McCulloch, *Contemporary Aboriginal Art,* 149.

[56] There are many similarities between a "prepared" sheet of bark and a stretched canvas. Both originate from living organisms (bark from trees, and canvas from cotton or flax) and unless properly cared for, are relatively fragile mediums. They are also both flat, two-dimensional mediums, usually rectangular in shape, and created with the intention of applying paint or pigment to their surface.

[57] Groger-Wurm, "Bark Painting," 202.

[58] Elkin, Berndt, and Berndt, *Art in Arnhem Land,* 64.

kaolin, and black comes from charcoal mixed with water or deposits of manganese ore found on Groote Eylandt.[59]

Throughout Arnhem Land, colors are held to have symbolic associations. Some are considered the property of certain subsets of the population. For instance, the anthropologist Helen Groger-Wurm observed that in Yirrkala:

> …certain pigments belong to, and can only be gathered by men belonging to certain groups, this right being based on mythology. Yellow and black are the property of the *jiridja* [Yirritja] moiety; red and white of the *dua* [Dhuwa] moiety. Both moieties exchange ochres.[60]

On Elcho Island, yellow ochre is symbolically associated with the fat of a turtle, and in Western Arnhem Land, white (derived from pipeclay) is considered to be the feces of Ngalyod, the Rainbow Serpent (one of the major creator spirits in that region). This association in Western Arnhem Land even dictates that white can only be collected during the dry season, when Ngalyod is believed to be asleep.[61]

After obtaining the proper pigment sources, the artist mixes paints on the surface of a flat rock. In order to create red and yellow, he rubs ochre on a rock, gradually moistening it with water, creating a paste-like pigment. If the artist is concerned about the durability of the paint, he first rubs the rock surface (or in some instances, the bark

[59] More recently, artists have even created black paint out of the carbon of dry-cell batteries. Groger-Wurm, "Bark Painting," 202.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Isaacs, *Australian Aboriginal Paintings,* 124.

surface itself) with a natural fixative of oil obtained from an aerial root of a tree orchid.[62] During the painting process, the artist continuously rubs the rock surface with ochre and mixes it with water, since only a small amount of pigment is used at a time. White paint is created by crushing a large piece of pipeclay, gypsum or kaolin into an appropriate container (such as a shell or tin can). The resulting powdery substance is then mixed with water, and stored until it is needed for the painting process. Black paint is made in a similar way, but in this case charcoal (or manganese) is crushed and a mixture is created by adding water. Again, if a fixative is desired, the orchid root oil is added to these mixtures.

During the creation of a single painting, the artist uses multiple brushes (making new ones as needed), and discards them once they have been used.[63] For small, delicate imagery and/or crosshatching, the artist uses a brush with a fine, long and flexible tip. This kind of brush is made out of a thin piece of twig with either a palm-leaf fiber, human hair or feather attached to the end. For drawing slightly thicker lines, outlines, and dots, the artist uses a small twig chewed at one end. For thicker lines, a larger twig is used, one that has been chewed at one end or frayed with the back edge of an axe.

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[62] Helen Groger-Wurm states that another fixative is obtained at Port Keats "…through boiling the resins from a species of eucalyptus." Groger-Wurm, "Bark Painting," 202. Edwards and Guerin state that other natural fixatives used are "…the wax and honey of wild bees, the yolk of certain eggs, and a preparation from chopped, boiled bloodwood [*Eucalyptus miniata*] leaves." Edwards and Guerin, *Aboriginal Bark Paintings*, 8. Finally, Jennifer Isaacs states that the traditional bonding agents include "…stems of the *dendrobium* species of wild orchids cut or broken in two and rubbed on the bark or on the grinding stone and mixed with the ochres. Other sources in the past were the gums and resins which exude from eucalyptus trees, beeswax, and the yolk of white-breasted sea eagle and turtle eggs. For the last few decades, due to the economic importance of selling the paintings, most communities have stocked the modern wood glue fixative, aquadhere, in their local stores or arts and craft centres. The artists mix this with the watery pigment on their grinding stones." Isaacs, *Australian Aboriginal Paintings,* 125.

[63] Groger-Wurm, "Bark Painting," 203.

After the artist has prepared his sheet of bark, his pigments, and his brushes, he is ready to begin painting. Painting is an art form that is traditionally passed down from father to son, and virtually every adult male is taught to paint. According to Wandjuk Marika (1929-1987; Rirratjingu clan, Dhuwa moiety), one of the Northeastern Arnhem Land artists included in the AMNH Berndt Collection, "My father knew all the designs or the stories of our ancestors and he showed me how to paint these. In this way I learnt from my father all the important things I need to know about life, about our history, our customs and our ceremonies."[64]

The time spent on a particular bark painting varies, depending on the concentration of the artist and the amount of detail included in the composition. On average, a bark painting takes two days to complete, although larger barks require up to a week.[65] During the process of painting, an artist rests his prepared sheet of bark on his legs (while sitting cross-legged) and/or places it directly on the ground, thereby, giving him an oblique, aerial perspective of his work [figure 1.10][66]. As he works on various sections of the painting, he can either turn the sheet of bark to the desired side, or leave the bark stationary and move himself around the bark. Because of this horizontal painting process, it oftentimes becomes difficult to understand the orientation of a bark

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[64] Wandjuk Marika, *Wandjuk Marika: Life Story as told to Jennifer Isaacs* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1995), 36.

[65] Helen Groger-Wurm, *Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings and Their Mythological Interpretation. Volume 1: Eastern Arnhem Land* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1973), 10.

[66] Navajo sand (or dry) paintings from the Southwest region of Native North America are similar in their "on the ground" orientation, although they are often much larger in size. For more information on Navajo sand paintings see Janet C. Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips, *Native North American Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 62-63, and Christian F. Feest, *Native Arts of North America* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 101-104.

painting. In truth, there is no "right way up," unless there is something to indicate this in the painting itself.[67]

The background color, most commonly red ochre in Western and Northeastern Arnhem Land, is always applied to the sheet of bark first. The main outlines of the designs are created next, reserving the filling-in of details for last. It is left up to the artist as to whether he prefers to sketch the entire composition first, or finish the painting section by section (in other words, completing one section entirely before starting on the next). As discussed in subsequent chapters, the subject matter, the composition, and the choice of colors depend on an artist's moiety, clan, and/or language group, as well as a particular region's style.

REGIONAL ART STYLES AND THE COMPONENTS OF A BARK PAINTING

In an effort to discuss the bark paintings in a uniform and systematic way, I have created explanatory diagrams for the two regional art styles that are represented in the AMNH Berndt Collection: a diagram for Western Arnhem Land [figure 1.11] and a diagram for Northeastern Arnhem Land [figure 1.15].[68] These diagrams identify the various components of the two regions by utilizing representative bark paintings from each. I have included these diagrams as a point of reference, and encourage the reader to

[67] Typically, bark paintings are hung vertically on the walls of museums (or art galleries), similar to the way Western paintings are displayed. I would argue that a more appropriate way of exhibiting a bark painting (in keeping with the way the artist created it) is to display it in a horizontal position, perhaps enclosed inside a glass display case. Only the Australian Museum, Sydney includes this type of display in their installation of Aboriginal bark paintings from Arnhem Land.

[68] These diagrams were inspired by Howard Morphy's sketch illustrating "the components of a painting." Howard Morphy, *Ancestral Connections*, 147. I have also used some of the same terms used by Morphy, such as clan designs, feature block, crosshatching and figurative representation. Unlike Morphy, my diagrams are based on reproductions of actual bark paintings (as opposed to sketches), and I have created diagrams for both Western and Northeastern Arnhem Land (whereas Morphy's deals exclusively with Northeastern Arnhem Land).

use them throughout the dissertation, particularly when individual bark paintings are being discussed.

Western Arnhem Land bark paintings can be divided into six major components [figure 1.11]. The (1) "background" of a painting is the painted surface upon which the figures are depicted. Each painting typically has either one or two figures, or (2) "figurative representations," depicting humans, animals, or spirits. The (3) "internal structure" is the representation of the internal anatomy of a figure (i.e., the bones, muscles, joints and/or organs). The (4) "infill design" is a geometric pattern of a single element that is used to fill in a designated area. (5) "Crosshatching" is defined as a design element which is created by two sets of parallel lines that intersect, and (6) "clan designs" are specific geometric patterns owned by individual clans or a group of clans within the same moiety.

Bark paintings from Western Arnhem Land are characterized by a limited number of large figurative representations depicted against an unframed, monochromatic background which is either painted with a single pigment or left the scorched color it assumed when the bark was flattened over a fire.[69] Generally, the compositions are balanced and there is a clear figure/ground relationship. The standard colors are referred to as *yamidj* (red), *delek* (white), *karlba* (yellow), and *kunnjirrke* (black).[70] Figurative representations are flat, outlined in a contrasting color, and have a tendency to dominate the composition. They are usually painted a solid color with either internal structures

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[69] In the AMNH Berndt Collection, eleven works from Western Arnhem Land have a solid red background, one has a solid white background, and nineteen were left the scorched color the sheets assumed when they were initially flattened over a fire.

[70] Taylor, *Seeing the Inside,* 129-30.

and/or an infill design appearing within their outlines. Zoomorphic figures are also commonly represented with outstretched limbs positioned to indicate a passive state and depicted in profile, aerial, or frontal view. Anthropomorphic figures are usually depicted from the front, and in static postures, whether standing or splayed.

The distinctive feature of Western Arnhem Land paintings is the use of the "X-ray style," an approach that shows a figure's external shape and internal organs simultaneously [figure 1.12].[71] Although all types of figures may appear in X-ray style, the anthropomorphic figures that appear in this way usually have fewer anatomical details represented than do their animal counterparts [figure 1.11]. Anthropomorphic subjects (which include creator spirits) typically have backbones, joint marks, ribs, long bones appearing within limbs, and body cavities when shown in X-ray style, but organs, fat, muscles, and soft tissue are rarely shown.[72] In addition to internal structures, other types of infill (solid, stroked, hatched, dashed, stippled, dotted, or crosshatched designs) are often applied to figural representations.[73]

Bark painting in Western Arnhem Land emerged from a long tradition of painting on rock surfaces, commonly referred to as "rock art." During the wet season (which lasts

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[71] Baldwin Spencer coined the term "X-ray" in relation to Western Arnhem Land bark paintings in 1928. See Baldwin Spencer, *Wanderings in Wild Australia,* volume 2 (London: Macmillan, 1928), 793-4.

[72] When asked about this modified form of the X-ray style used for anthropomorphic figures in rock art, Aboriginal informants explained that it was a protective device against evil *namorodo* spirits. These spirits, who could assume the form of eagles during the day and shooting stars at night, and were known to cause death "…by eating the guts, heart, or other organs of humans…" It was believed that artists might attract *namorodo* spirits by including these features, thereby placing the entire camp in danger. Paul S.C. Taçon, "Art and the Essence of Being: Symbolic and Economic Aspects of Fish Among the Peoples of Western Arnhem Land, Australia," in *Animals Into Art,* ed. Howard Morphy (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 239.

[73] The significance of these different types of infill designs are explored in Chapter 5.

from December to April), clans would seek shelter high up in the cliffs, as monsoonal rains flooded the plains and caused rivers to overflow.[74] It was during this season that artists would paint, or repaint, images on rock surfaces at a variety of sites [figure 1.12].[75] Sites might feature just one motif or (most frequently) numerous overlapping renderings of varied motifs.[76]

Each rock art site served a specific purpose that dictated its subject matter.[77] For instance, the walls and ceilings of larger shelters (in which entire families lived for extended periods of time) were oftentimes painted with imagery taken from everyday life and/or illustrations of "outside" (or public) versions of mythological events. These shelters were also painted with linear representations of animated trickster spirits, known as *mimih,* as well as naturalistic representations of food animals (*mayh*), typically painted in the X-ray style [figure 1.12].[78]

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[74] Cole, *A History of Oenpelli,* 2.

[75] The photographs of rock art taken by George Chaloupka were published only with the Aboriginal names of their locations (with no other information given or map provided); therefore, it is impossible to identify the specific locations of these rock art sites. According to the anthropologist Sally May, who is working on contemporary bark paintings produced at Oenpelli, Chaloupka intentionally left out this information as a protective measure for the sites themselves. Sally May, interview with author, New York, 26 January 2005.

[76] Margie K.C. West, ed., *The Inspired Dream: Life as Art in Aboriginal Australia* (Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery, 1988), 20.

[77] It is possible to decipher the specific purpose of a rock art site based on how the imagery was painted on the walls and/or ceiling, as well as the imagery itself. For example, public shelters tended to have overlapping images of food animals, *mimih* spirits, and other secular imagery, whereas sacred sites were reserved more for figurative representations of creator spirits which were traditionally painted as isolated forms.

[78] *Mimih* spirits (also known as "mimi" in earlier publications) are non-creator spirits who live inside the rocks of the Arnhem Land escarpment. They are believed to be shy and harmless, and as a rule, do not interfere in the lives of humans. On rare occasions, wise men or *marrkidjbu* have been known to see *mimih* spirits, before they slip back into their own world through the cracks of the cave walls. It is also believed that representations of *mimih* spirits on rock surfaces were created by the *mimih* themselves, not human artists. Berndt, *Australian Aboriginal Art*, 26. See also Luke Taylor, "Flesh, Bone, and Spirit: Western Arnhem Land Bark Painting," in *Art from the Land: Dialogues with the Kluge-Ruhe Collection of*

More remote sites were reserved for sorcery practices, and here disfigured forms were painted to inflict malevolent energy on specific individuals [figure 1.13]. Sorcery paintings often displayed one or more anthropomorphic figures with elongated limbs, positioned in unnaturally twisted postures, with stingray spines stuck into their enlarged genitals or joints.[79] As Peter Sutton noted, sorcery paintings "generally show at least one of four negative states in the body: inversion, distortion, dismemberment, and undesired penetration."[80] Sorcery painting is a unique category, in which the human form is approached differently than they are in other paintings. A final sort of site for rock painting is the sacred site (with access limited to initiated males). Sacred sites are most often adorned with images of creator spirits (*djang*) [figure 1.14]. These images serve as evidence of the creator spirits' existence and their role in forming the site in question.[81]

Although some scholars date the earliest rock art of Western Arnhem Land to as far back as 50,000 years ago, most paintings were created or repainted during the last one hundred years.[82] Many Western Arnhem Land artists, who achieved artistic acclaim in

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Australian Aboriginal Art, eds. Howard Morphy and Margaret Smith Bowles (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1999), 54.

[79] In Western Arnhem Land, stingray spines are traditionally associated with sorcery and "clever men" (men who among other powers have the ability to summon the Rainbow Snake). Stingray spines are the large, sharp, barbed dorsal spines located near the base of the whip like tail of rays (family *Dasyatidae*). Rays may have one or more spines, and commonly use them to inflict serious wounds on their prey or in defending themselves from predators.

[80] Peter Sutton, ed. *Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia* (New York: George Braziller Publishers, in association with the Asia Society Galleries, New York, 1988), 73.

[81] According to Luke Taylor, "Here the ancestral beings (*djang*) 'made themselves rock.' The image on the rock surface is considered to be the trace and actual bodily presence of the ancestral being which ended its creation journey at this place by entering the rock." Kleinert and Neale, *The Oxford Companion,* 112.

[82] The dating of rock art in Western Arnhem Land is much debated among scholars, and beyond the scope of this dissertation. According to A.L. Watchman, "Preliminary determinations of the age and composition on mineral salts on rock and surfaces in the Kakadu National Park," in *Archaeometry: Further Australasian Studies*, eds. W. R. Ambrose and J. M. J. Mummery (Canberra: Australian National

the 1960s and 1970s as bark painters, first learned to paint on rock surfaces, and were the sons of rock artists.[83] For example, Anchor Kulunba (c.1917-1996; Kurulk clan, Kuninjku language group), one of the artists represented in the AMNH Berndt Collection, first learned to paint from his father, Narraruk, a rock artist of the Kurulk clan who lived in the Liverpool and Mann Rivers district.[84]

While Western Arnhem Land bark paintings comprise six main components, Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings can be divided into nine [figure 1.15]. In addition to background, figurative representations, internal structure, infill design, crosshatching, and clan design, bark paintings from the Northeast include three components unique to this region. Most Northeastern Arnhem Land compositions are contained within a well-defined border or (7) "painted frame," and are subdivided by (8) "dividing lines." These dividing lines break up the composition into smaller, usually geometrically shaped (9) "feature blocks," whose images may or may not relate to one another.

University, 1987, 36-42), rock art in this region is 10,000 years old; however, R. Jones and L. Johnson, "Deaf Adder George Lindner site, Nauwalabila 1," in *Archaeological research in Kakadu National Park*, R. Jones, ed. (Canberra: Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service Special Publication 13, 1985, 165-227) claim that is closer to 30,000 years old based on C14 dating. More recently, R. Roberts, R. Jones and M. A. Smith ("Thermoluminescence dating of a 50,000-year old human occupation site in northern Australia," *Nature* 345 (1990): 153-56), through their use of thermoluminescence, claim that some rock art was created 50,000 years ago.

[83] Kleinert and Neale, *The Oxford Companion*, 110. In a seminal publication, Haskovec and Sullivan focus on the artist Najombolmi who was the major individual contributor to the rock art in the Oenpelli area during the past one hundred years. He created at least 604 individual paintings at over 46 sites, spread over an area of 1800 kilometers squared. Ivan P. Haskovec and Hilary Sullivan, "Reflections and rejections of an Aboriginal artist," in *Animals Into Art,* Howard Morphy, ed. (London: Unwin Hywman, 1989), 57-74.

[84] Other artists include Najombolmi, who painted rock shelters in the Kakadu region up until 1964, Wally Mandarrk who learned to paint on rock in the upper reaches of the Blyth and Liverpool Rivers, Bobby Barrdjaray Nganjmira who learned to paint on the surfaces of the Injalak rock shelter at Oenpelli, and Bardayal Nadjamerrek who painted on rock shelters in the upper Mann River region. Kleinert and Neale, *The Oxford Companion,* 112.

Bark paintings from Northeastern Arnhem Land are characterized today by an abundance of crosshatching, painted frames (outlined in yellow), and a combination of figurative representations and abstract designs.[85] Generally, the compositions are balanced, and subdivided into smaller feature blocks with dividing lines that can contain crosshatching, figurative representations, or a combination of both. The standard colors are referred to as *murnggun* (red), *gapan* (white), *buthalak* (yellow), and *lirrwi* (black). Figurative representations, though smaller in scale, are like those from Western Arnhem Land—flat and outlined in a contrasting color.[86] As in Western Arnhem Land, zoomorphic figures are commonly represented with limbs outstretched to suggest a passive state, and depicted from an aerial view. Anthropomorphic figures, usually depicted in static postures, appear in both profile and frontal views. There is an absence of differentiation between foreground and background, and compositions often are crowded and dense, due to proliferate images and design elements.

Geometric designs in Yolngu art were believed by Berndt to have been based upon late seventeenth century batik and woven designs created by visiting Indonesian traders known as "Macassans."[87] Until 1907, Macassans traveled annually to Northeastern Arnhem Land from Ujung Pandang in southern Sulawesi (formerly known

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[85] In this study, "abstract" refers to the formal qualities of an image as perceived by a Western observer. To the Aboriginal artist, these same images would have been viewed as representational, although non-figurative.

[86] Judith Ryan states that "When Yolngu artists from Yirrkala confront a large bark they usually choose to subdivide it into small sections, the scale of a man's chest, which stems from a tendency to miniaturize rather than monumentalize abstract and figurative motifs." Ryan, *Spirit in Land,* 26. I would agree with Ryan's comment that early bark paintings from Northeastern Arnhem Land are approximately the size of a man's chest. This is significant in terms of its connection to ritual body painting. However, Yolngu bark paintings did increase in size after 1959, which is discussed in Chapter 2.

[87] Ronald Berndt, "External Influences on the Aboriginal," *Hemisphere* vol. 9, no. 3 (1965): 9.

as the Celebes) [figure 1.16].[88] During the wet season, they collected trepang (the sea cucumber *Holothuria edulis,* known as sea slug or *bêche-de-mer*) which was sold to the Chinese as an exotic culinary delight [figure 1.17]. The interaction between the Aborigines and Macassans is well-documented, and ultimately resulted in the introduction of previously unknown items, including dug-out canoes, iron knives, long Malay tobacco pipes, and metal axes.[89] Given the level of exchange and interaction that existed, it is also highly probable that the Yolngu became interested in reproducing the geometric designs that appeared on the textiles used by the Macassans.

It is Ronald Berndt's hypothesis that these designs became incorporated specifically into the clan designs of the Yirritja moiety, since "everything that had to do with the 'foreign' or non-Aboriginal" was associated with the Yirritja moiety.[90] I would argue, however, that Macassan textiles [figure 1.18] are stylistically very similar to most Yolngu bark paintings with sacred imagery [figure 1.21]. Both the textiles and the bark paintings are rectangular in shape, and the compositions are oftentimes contained within an internal frame. Both the textiles and the paintings feature compositions divided into

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[88] According to Ian McIntosh, "Macassans would arrive every year in November and stay for approximately three months in search of the trepang…Seasonal voyages were made from Sulawesi from at least 1700 until 1907, when the arrival of people from the north was prohibited by federal law as part of the country's 'white Australia policy.'" Ian McIntosh, *Aboriginal Reconciliation and the Dreaming: Warramiri Yolngu and the Quest for Equality* (Massachusetts: Allyn & Bacon, 2000), 44.

[89] Yolngu men were employed by the Macassans to collect trepang, tortoiseshell, and pearls. According to Ronald Berndt, "North-eastern Arnhem Landers…were also employed on these [Macassan] vessels and had an opportunity to widen their experience by visiting Indonesian ports—particularly Macassar, since this was the main centre for trade. The Aborigines were recompensed for work carried out, as well as for the trepang and other things they supplied to the visitors." Berndt, "External Influences," 8. For a more detailed study see C.C. Macknight, *The Voyage to Marege: Macassan Trepangers in Northern Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1976). A more detailed discussion of the Macassans appears in Chapter 4.

[90] Berndt, "External Influences," 5.

smaller feature blocks, with an emphasis on geometric shapes. Also similar is the desire to fill the entire composition with a repeated motif.[91]

The Artistic System of Western Arnhem Land

In Western Arnhem Land, all young artists begin their training as apprentices (usually to their fathers) and learn to paint secular subjects first, such as representations of *mimih* spirits and illustrations of food animals.[92] The depiction of food animals, in particular, is carefully regulated by clan elders, and perspective is dictated according to the species of the animal represented. For example, fish and crocodiles are always painted in profile, whereas turtles, snakes and monitors are painted from an aerial perspective. Land mammals and birds are also depicted in profile, whereas the obverse or frontal view is reserved for flying-foxes (a type of fruit bat). The objective is to achieve the most easily recognizable (or iconic) form and the ultimate compliment is that a painting is considered 'lifelike' by other Aboriginal viewers.[93] As a young artist works toward this goal, it is not uncommon for a senior artist to correct his initial white outlined (usually by over-painting the original form with red, and painting the corrected figure in white), or to simply paint the entire white outline of the figure from the start, leaving only the infill decoration to his young apprentice.[94]

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[91] This connection between Indonesian textiles and Yolngu clan designs has never been studied in depth, and merits further exploration. I plan to analyze this connection in a separate study.

[92] Taylor, "Flesh, Bone, and Spirit," 54.

[93] Ibid., 49. In European art, this would be analogous to contour drawing.

[94] Ibid.

Once a young artist has mastered the contour drawings of a variety of species, he is taught a number of infill designs. The most public style of infill and one that every young artist is expected to learn is the X-ray style. Unique to Western Arnhem Land, this mode of representation not only illustrates the various features of an animal's internal anatomy, but also references butchering methods of this region.[95]

After a young artist is initiated, his repertoire of subjects increases dramatically.[96] He is exposed to his own *clan paintings* for the first time, which are passed down to him through his father.[97] Clan paintings are defined as works that are unique to an individual clan and usually reference sacred sites. As such, paintings that depict sacred sites are subject to "copyright," since only those clan members who own these sacred sites are permitted to paint the creator spirits associated with them.

During initiation ceremonies, a young artist also becomes familiar with his own *clan designs*. A clan design is defined as a specific geometric pattern owned by an individual clan or group of clans within the same moiety. These clan designs are typically painted on the chest and upper thighs of participants during important ceremonies [figure 1.19]. In addition, the sacred objects of a clan [figure 1.20] are painted with clan designs, creating a visual association between the two.[98] Young artists are taught how to decipher clan designs as part of their initiatory experience, and from that point on are permitted to create this type of sacred imagery. However, many years

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[95] The X-ray style in relation to butchering methods is discussed in further detail in Chapter 5.

[96] Adrian Parker, *Images in Ochre: The Art and Craft of the Kunwinjku* (Roseville: Kangaroo Press, 1997), 19.

[97] According to Ronald Berndt, "Patrilineal descent is of predominant significance in all sacred ritual." Berndt and Berndt, *Man, Land, and Myth*, 113.

and participation in numerous ceremonies are required for an artist to understand all the subtle nuances of meaning within a single painted image.

The Artistic System of Northeastern Arnhem Land

In Northeastern Arnhem Land, the imagery of bark paintings with sacred imagery is strictly governed by the Yolngu clan system. For example, an artist has primary rights over his own clan paintings. At the same time, it is his right and his duty to learn the paintings of his mother's clan (*ngärndi*), as well as those of his maternal grandmother's clan (*märi*).[99] According to Howard Morphy, an artist must know the paintings of his mother's and maternal grandmother's clans in case the clans become extinct or the clan elders die before passing on their knowledge to the younger generation. These safeguards are in place to reduce the risk of what Morphy terms "knowledge extinction."[100] If an artist creates a painting associated with a clan other than his own, he will always identify (to others) the rights to the image as belonging to that clan. In other words, it is the clan owning the imagery of a bark painting that always takes precedence over the clan of the artist.

Clan paintings from Northeastern Arnhem Land usually contain a prescribed set of images and have multiple layers of meaning, access to which depends on the viewer's age, gender and social status, as well as the context in which they are viewed. These meanings exist along a continuum running from "outside" or public knowledge, to

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[98] Taylor, "Flesh, Bone, and Spirit," 51.

[99] A young man will learn the paintings of his mother's clan after he has learned the paintings of his own clan, and he will learn the paintings of his maternal grandmother's clan last.

[100] Morphy, *Ancestral Connections,* 63-70.

"inside" or secret knowledge. "Outside" meanings are accessible to all, while "inside" meanings are reserved for initiated males.[101] For example, a bark painting from the 1946-50 Berndt Collection at the Macleay Museum, Sydney, by Mawalan Marika (c. 1908-1967; Rirratjingu clan, Dhuwa moiety) [figure 1.21] has two figurative representations of sand monitors (*djanda; Varanus gouldii*) positioned along the vertical axis.[102] The "outside" meaning identifies the animals only as representations of a common species found in Northeastern Arnhem Land. The "inside" meaning reveals the animals as representations of major creator spirits, which connect the work to important mythological stories associated with the Rirratjingu clan. The most "inside" meanings of a painting would go beyond the figurative representations, and reveal philosophical meanings hidden within the abstract designs.[103] Possession of the knowledge necessary to "decode" the hidden or esoteric meaning of a painting lies at the heart of the Yolngu religion.

As a major component of clan paintings, clan designs are either used as background motifs or incorporated into the figurative representations themselves. In Northeastern Arnhem Land, there are three major functions of clan designs. First, clan designs serve as identifying markers or symbols for a particular clan. Within a social

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[101] Anthony Forge documented a similar phenomenon in his study of Abelam men's ceremonial houses. Anthony Forge, "The Abelam Artist," in *Social Organization: Essays Presented to Raymond Firth,* ed. M. Freedman (London: F. Cass, 1967).

[102] A more detailed analysis of this bark painting appears in Chapter 3. For the majority of the animals represented in the bark paintings, I have tried to use their common names. I have also tried to identify, when possible, the Aboriginal name of the animal (as indicated by the artist) as well as the scientific names of the species, both of which appear in parentheses the first time the common name appears in the text. For images of these identified animals, see Appendices B through E.

[103] Gillian Hutcherson, *Djalkiri Wanga: The Land is My Foundation – 50 Years of Aboriginal Art from Yirrkala, Northeast Arnhem Land* (Perth: Berndt Museum of Anthropology, 1995), 14.

structure that has strict rules governing marriage and kinship associations, clan designs make it possible to easily identify the members of a specific clan within a ceremonial context.[104] Second, clan designs reveal a clan's affiliation to a particular moiety. Although each clan design is unique, designs of clans that belong to the same moiety have a general similarity that distinguishes them from those of the opposite moiety. Third, it is believed that the clan designs themselves possess the power of the creator spirits. When they are painted on the bodies of the Yolngu or on sacred objects, they are not mere representations of the creator spirits, but tangible manifestations of those spirits, a presence that is necessary to ensure a successful ceremony, one that will bring good fortune to the clan as well as protect all of its members from harm and disease.[105]

In Northeastern Arnhem Land, a boy is first exposed to his clan designs during his circumcision ceremony, which generally takes place around puberty (between the ages of nine and thirteen).[106] During this ceremony, modified versions of his clan designs are painted on his chest for the first time [figure 1.22].[107] After this initial exposure, the young boy must learn his clan's sacred songs as a prerequisite for learning

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[104] Morphy, *Ancestral Connections,* 135.

[105] Howard Morphy, "From Dull to Brilliant: The Aesthetics of Spiritual Power among the Yolngu," *Man* vol. 24, no. 1 (1989): 25.

[106] Although the circumcision ceremony marks a turning point, some artists recall seeing their clan paintings much earlier. According to Wandjuk Marika, "I see the designs on my body, painting on for a circumcision first, to make me young man, but, before that, I saw some other people who painted them on other bodies when they first come to Yirrkala for special ceremonies, like Djaŋkawu ceremony, or for special burial, and on special objects. For my circumcision that's when I began to learn stories, men came from many areas…" Marika, *Life Story,* 110-112.

[107] Ritual body painting is used throughout a man's life, and the last time it will be done is at his funerary ceremony, just prior to burial. According to Howard Morphy, "…a male may have either design [of his father's clan or his *märi* clan] painted on his body at circumcision, and either or both painted on his body or coffin after death." Morphy, *Ancestral Connections,* 67.

how to paint.[108] If, after a few years, a boy is successful in learning the songs, he is permitted to watch his father paint, and, is eventually able to assist his father by infilling designs on half-finished paintings. Once he masters his father's technique, the son is given permission to produce bark paintings with secular imagery on his own.[109]

Around the same time, a young man may also begin to assist his father and elder brothers in the creation of bark paintings with sacred imagery; however, he is not allowed to create these on his own until he is able to produce "correct" contour drawings, and demonstrate mastery of his clan design. Furthermore, a young artist must be able to make fine crosshatched lines that are straight (not shaking), one of the most important aspects of Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings with sacred imagery [as shown in figure 1.21].[110]

In his seminal essay "From Dull to Brilliant: The Aesthetics of Spiritual Power among the Yolngu," Howard Morphy discusses the effect that crosshatching has on bark paintings with sacred imagery from Northeastern Arnhem Land. According to Morphy, "brilliance" (*bir'yun*) is defined as the brightness of a painting, attained through the application of fine white crosshatching. It is one of the main criteria used to judge a

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[108] According to Morphy, "Songs are considered the most public medium for expressing the mardayin and should be the first thing learned." Ibid., 61.

[109] According to Wandjuk Marika, "…I start on the bark maybe when I was about 15 years of age. But my father was still holding my hand. I used to shake my hand, but he was holding it. And he always said to me, 'Hold you brush straight, paint away from your body. Use your wrist with the brush. Just put the line there. Most important is the line. Most important is the animal you draw,' he said to me." Marika, *Life Story,* 110.

[110] It is important to understand that within the Yolngu social structure, even after a young man is given permission to create his own clan's paintings, he must still respect the rights of the senior male members of his clan. For example, it is the right of the clan elders to determine who can produce a clan painting and how that painting can ultimately be used. The right to interpret a painting is also reserved for clan elders, and a younger artist must always defer to an older artist when discussing a painting, even if he created it himself. Morphy, *Ancestral Connections,* 58.

Yolngu painting.[111] Morphy writes that the "brilliance" of a painting connects it to the creator spirits and consequently endows it with ancestral power, and he ends his essay by commenting on the way that crosshatching conveys an effect of movement, which he compares to that seen in the work of British Op artist Bridget Riley (b. 1931) [figure 1.23]. Morphy expands on this idea in a later essay entitled "Life Through Art: Religion and Society in Eastern Arnhem Land." He writes there that the overall effect in Yolngu bark painting "is an illusion of movement—the surface of the painting shimmers, it is difficult to fix the eye on a single point, but the forms emerge sharply and clearly."[112]

Although I would agree with Morphy that an effect of "brilliance" is created by fine white crosshatching, I would disagree with his assessment that such crosshatching is meant to convey movement. I would argue that the effect is more akin to that achieved in gilded icons made in Medieval and Renaissance Europe than to the eye-popping effects of Op Art (a movement in the 1960s). For example, paintings made in late Gothic Italy, Byzantium, and the Northern Renaissance that depict sacred imagery, such as the Virgin Mary or Christ, were oftentimes gilded (overlaid with a thin covering of gold leaf) to signify a figure's holiness, importance, and/or connection to a higher power [figure 1.24].[113] Since gold has the ability to reflect light, the more gold that is used within a single composition, the more vibrant the composition becomes. Similarly, since white as a neutral pigment also has the ability to reflect the light which is cast upon it, the

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[111] Morphy, "From Dull to Brilliant," 28.

[112] Howard Morphy, "Life Through Art: Religion and Society in Eastern Arnhem Land," in *Art from the Land: Dialogues with the Kluge-Ruhe Collection of Australian Aboriginal Art,* eds. Howard Morphy and Margaret Smith Bowles (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1999), 80.

[113] It is also sometimes used to denote a sacred place (i.e., the celestial realm).

brightness of a Yolngu bark painting is regulated by the prevalence (or conversely, the absence) of white crosshatching.[114] A vibrant painting (whether its vibrancy results from the use of gold or white crosshatching) denotes energy and power, as well as has the ability to illicit an emotional response from its viewer. Engendering this sort of response is an important objective for any religious painting, regardless of the culture in and for which it is made.

THE AMNH BERNDT COLLECTION

In January and February 1958, the social anthropologists Ronald and Catherine Berndt traveled to Arnhem Land on a survey expedition supported by grants from the Research Committee of the University of Western Australia, and the American Museum of Natural History in New York.[115] Dr. Harry Shapiro, who at the time was the Chairman of the Department of Anthropology at the AMNH, had awarded Ronald Berndt a $700 grant-in-aid for the collection of ethnological specimens for the museum.[116] Berndt later

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[114] In Yolngu bark paintings, crosshatching can either be white, yellow, red, black, or any combination thereof. When the crosshatching uses white pigment for both sets of parallel lines, the end result is a compositional element that sparkles and shines. Similarly, when the crosshatching is multi-colored and employs white as one set of its parallel lines, it appears brighter and more vibrant.

[115] Ronald Murray Berndt (1916-1990) met Catherine Helen Webb (1918-1994) when they were students in Elkin's Anthropology Department at the University of Sydney. After marrying in 1941, the Berndts conducted fieldwork among the Western Desert Aborigines of Ooldea. In 1943, they both obtained diplomas in Anthropology, and by 1951, both received Master's degrees with first class honors. From 1942 to 1944, Ronald and Catherine Berndt conducted a survey of Aboriginal-European relations in South Australia, funded by a grant from the Australian National Research Council. In 1946, Elkin appointed both Ronald and Catherine to research positions in the Anthropology Department at the University of Sydney. That same year, the Berndts traveled to Arnhem Land for the first time, to conduct research. For more detailed information on the Berndt's 1946-47 fieldwork in Arnhem Land see Chapter 2. In 1956, the Berndts moved from Sydney to Perth to develop a new anthropology department at the University of Western Australia. Ronald and Catherine lived and worked in Perth until their deaths in 1990 and 1994 respectively. Robert Tonkinson and Michael Howard, "The Berndts: A Biographical Sketch," in *Going It Alone? Prospects for Aboriginal Autonomy. Essays in Honour of Ronald and Catherine Berndt,* eds. Robert Tonkinson and Michael Howard (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1990): 17-43.

[116] Ronald Berndt, *An Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land: Northern Territory of Australia* (Paris: Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, 1962), 23. According to a letter dated September 26, 1956, Dr. Harry

stated in a letter that he had acquired the collection specifically for the AMNH, and at the suggestion of Shapiro had focused his attention on bark paintings.[117] The money that Berndt received from the AMNH was used almost entirely to purchase film, a commodity that was both expensive and difficult to obtain in Australia at that time.[118] Berndt also stated that his objective for the 1958 trip was to see if any changes had occurred in Western and Northeastern Arnhem Land since his and his wife's initial fieldwork there almost a decade earlier.[119]

Three years prior to their 1958 trip, Ronald and Catherine Berndt traveled to North America for the first time, during which time they visited a number of

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Shapiro stated that he wanted, "…a better Australian representation than we now have." Harry Shapiro to Ronald Berndt, 26 September 1956, Archive Files, Accession Number 1958-64, Dr. Ronald M. Berndt Purchase, cat. # 80.1, 3665-3825 (Australia), Anthropology Department, AMNH, New York Shapiro also stated in a letter to Berndt dated January 22, 1957, "…what I am anxious to get is a good representative collection from northern Australia." Harry Shapiro to Ronald Berndt, 22 January 1957, Archive Files, Accession Number 1958-64, Dr. Ronald M. Berndt Purchase, cat. # 80.1, 3665-3825 (Australia), Anthropology Department, AMNH, New York. Dr. Harry Shapiro died in 1990. Pers. comm., Kristen Mable, Registrar for Archives & Loans, Anthropology Department, AMNH, 21 October 2004.

[117] Ronald Berndt to Elizabeth Weiner, 15 April 1982, Archive Files, AMNH Collection, Berndt Museum of Anthropology, University of Western Australia, Perth. In addition to bark paintings, the Berndts collected for the AMNH four carved figures, one sea eagle's head, a sacred string, red feathers from a rainbow lorikeet, a string with feathers, two crab claw pipes, brushes, ochre, and a wild orchid root from Yirrkala; two pipes, a spearthrower, two stone blades, four bone daggers, and two brushes from Elcho Island; and two sacred *mareiin* emblems from Oenpelli. Ronald Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," August 1958, Archive Files, Accession Number 1958-64, Dr. Ronald M. Berndt Purchase, cat. # 80.1, 3665-3825 (Australia), Anthropology Department, AMNH, New York.

[118] In a letter to Berndt dated May 6, 1957, Harry Shapiro stated that he paid $700.00 for the collection (which included ninety bark paintings, four carved figures and over sixty other objects). Harry Shapiro to Ronald Berndt, 6 May 1957, Archive Files, Accession Number 1958-64, Dr. Ronald M. Berndt Purchase, cat. # 80.1, 3665-3825 (Australia), Anthropology Department, AMNH, New York. In another letter to Shaprio dated August 12, 1958, Ronald Berndt assessed the bark paintings alone to be worth "…around 900 to 1,000 pounds." However, he goes on to state that it would be "…doubly valuable because they are fully annotated. In addition, they are becoming increasingly rare, particularly the sacred designs and those from Western Arnhem Land (31 in all)." Ronald Berndt to Harry Shapiro, 12 August 1958, Archive Files, Accession Number 1958-64, Dr. Ronald M. Berndt Purchase, cat. # 80.1, 3665-3825 (Australia), Anthropology Department, AMNH, New York. John Stanton explained that the money Berndt received from the AMNH was used for film. John Stanton, Director/Curator of Berndt Museum of Anthropology, University of Western Australia, interview with author, Perth, Western Australia, 29 May 2003.

[119] Berndt, *An Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land,* 23.

anthropology departments throughout the United States and Canada in order to gain an understanding of North American anthropology.[120] It was during this trip that Ronald Berndt visited the AMNH for the first time, where he met Shapiro and discussed the possibility of making a collection of Australian "ethnological objects" for the museum.[121] The period of the Berndts' trip to the United States was also significant in the fact that while in New York Ronald Berndt was offered an appointment as Senior Lecturer at the University of Western Australia in Perth.[122] At the prospect of being able to develop a new anthropology department (that would be only the third in Australia), he resigned from the University of Sydney. Upon their return to Australia in early 1956, Ronald and Catherine moved to Perth and began a career at the University of Western Australia that would span more than three decades.[123]

The Berndts' involvement in developing a new anthropology department afforded them little time for fieldwork, and research expeditions rarely lasted more than a few weeks. This was the case in 1958, when their trip lasted just nineteen days, six of which

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[120] Prior to their trip, the Berndts also traveled to Europe which they found to be "small-scale and conservative." The trip was made possible by a traveling scholarship from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The Berndts were already aware of the ideology in Australia and Great Britain since they both completed by 1951 undergraduate and masters degrees in Australia, and doctorates in 1953 from the London School of Economics. Tonkinson and Howard, "The Berndts," 30.

[121] The AMNH did not begin a visitors' log until the late 1980s. Pers. comm., Kristen Mable, Registrar for Archives & Loans, Anthropology Department, AMNH, 21 October 2004. However, in a letter dated July 23, 1956 to Harry Shapiro, Ronald Berndt states, "…the proposition we discussed when we were in New York…[about] making a collection of ethnological objects for your Museum" and concludes by stating, "With all very best wishes from Catherine and myself to you and to other members of your staff whom we met while in New York." Ronald Berndt to Harry Shapiro, 23 July 1956, AMNH Archive Files, Accession Number 1958-64, Dr. Ronald M. Berndt Purchase, cat. # 80.1, 3665-3825 (Australia), Anthropology Department, AMNH, New York. This letter indicates that Ronald Berndt did visit the AMNH and met Dr. Shapiro during his visit to New York.

[122] Ronald Berndt to Harry Shapiro, 23 July 1956, Archive Files, Accession Number 1958-64, Dr. Ronald M. Berndt Purchase, cat. # 80.1, 3665-3825 (Australia), Anthropology Department, AMNH, New York.

were spent in Yirrkala (January 30 - February 4), seven on Elcho Island (February 5 - 11), and six in Oenpelli (February 12 - 17).[124] Although their stay in each location was brief, it was likely considered an adequate amount of time to obtain a limited number of bark paintings from artists with whom they had formed a close relationship a decade earlier. The Berndts had spent a significant amount of time in both Yirrkala (seven months) and Oenpelli (over a year) during their sojourns in 1946 and 1949-50 respectively. They had not previously visited Elcho Island, but the fact that it was a mission in Northeastern Arnhem Land and had a population of Yolngu-speaking people made Elcho Island very similar to other parts of that region, primarily Yirrkala.[125] At each of the three locations, Ronald Berndt constructed a temporary shelter or "work shack" away from the main settlement, where he would invite artists to bring bark paintings they had created.[126] Although the subject matter was never dictated to the

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[123] Firth, "The Berndts," 33-34.

[124] According to Stanton, the Berndts chose these three particular locations because they were missionary settlements and "…with the inroads of the missionaries from the 1920s, many Aboriginal people had shifted to live at or near the missions, which were run by different Christian churches, and were scattered along the Arnhem Land coastline…there were no roads into the interior until the 70s." In order to travel to Arnhem Land, the Berndts "…had to get approval from the Territory Department of Native Welfare to enter the Arnhem Land Reserve, which Elkin in Sydney arranged. Once there, they arranged to say on missions through the Church societies that ran them, were provided some basic accommodation (which they rented) and paid their own way in buying local food from the mission stores, or as it happens, by employing local Aboriginal men like Wandjuk Marika, to shoot game with Prof's [Ronald Berndt's] rifle." In terms of traveling from place to place, Stanton recalled, "In the 1950s they flew in Sheppy's light aeroplane (Shepherdson was the Missionary at one of the Missions, Elcho I think, but he ferried them around). Previously, in the 1940s, they traveled by mission lugger from Darwin. Later, in the 1960s and onwards, they traveled by scheduled commercial flights. Neither had their driving license, but since in the 1940s and 50s there were no roads, there wasn't really any point in having one!" Pers. comm., John Stanton, 20 October 2004.

[125] According to Stanton, the Berndts had not written to the artists prior to their trip and "…all the work was negotiated with Aboriginal participants at the time, and the bark paintings…were requested at the time." The only exception is a group of eleven bark paintings that were sent from Yirrkala after the Berndts returned to Perth. Stanton explained that "…the missionaries at the store were asked to keep an eye out for other works that were increasingly produced, very much a response to the demand for portable art from Prof [Ronald Berndt]!" Pers. comm., John Stanton, 20 October 2004.

artists, Berndt did commission the bark paintings, in an effort, he wrote "to compile a record of their traditional culture as they saw it and as they lived it – a record as accurate, faithful and complete as their efforts…could make it."[127] Berndt, in turn, meticulously recorded information about the artists, their imagery, and the mythological stories connected to the paintings.[128] Direct payment was never made for the individual bark paintings, but rather a sum of money was given to each of the men to compensate them for their time.[129]

During their fieldwork on Elcho Island, Ronald and Catherine Berndt also witnessed what they would later call the "The Elcho Island Adjustment Movement."[130] This movement was sparked by the creation of a memorial by the Yolngu clan elders, outside the Elcho Island missionary church [figure 1.25]. The clan leaders decided to

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[126] According to Stanton, "Ronald Berndt had his work shack maintained by the men in his absence…ready for his (or their) return, and he always worked there and documented the works there in the course of his other research, which was recorded in notebooks (no tape recorders were available in Australia until the late 1950s early 1960s period. I don't think he used a tape recorder on the 1958 trip, but did when he went to Balgo later in the same year." Pers. comm., John Stanton, 20 October 2004. Stanton had previously stated that Ronald Berndt never dictated to the artists what the exact imagery of the bark paintings should be. Berndt only requested that the imagery on the bark paintings should relate to their traditional culture. John Stanton, interview with author, Perth, Western Australia, 29 May 2003. Further investigation on my part was prohibited due to the fact that there is a 30 year embargo on Ronald and Catherine Berndt's field notes and diaries, which began in 1994, the year of Catherine Berndt's death.

[127] Ronald Berndt, "Transformation of Persons, Objects and Country: Some Comments," in *Readings in Material Culture,* ed. Peter K. Lauer (St. Lucia: Anthropology Museum, University of Queensland, 1979), 145.

[128] According to Stanton, the interpretations of the bark paintings were recorded from the artists themselves as well as discussed "…more generally with the group of men with whom he was working." Pers. comm., John Stanton, 20 October 2004.

[129] John Stanton, interview with author, Perth, Western Australia, 29 May 2003. Stanton later explained that "In the 1940s there was no cash economy, just sugar, tea and tobacco. Although money was increasingly being used, even in the 1950s, Prof [Ronald Berndt] paid in kind, which was customary, rather than in cash (which had limited use at the mission store). Tobacco was much more highly prized!" Pers. comm., John Stanton, 20 October 2004.

[130] For more information on the Elcho Island Adjustment Movement and the Elcho Island Memorial see Berndt, *An Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land*.

publicly display (in the form of a memorial) their most valuable property, including sacred bark paintings and carved figural sculpture. The majority of this art had never been shown to uninitiated Yolngu males or women; however, these taboos were temporarily suspended in an effort to build better relations with the European population. The clan leaders had long felt a lack of respect from the missionaries, and desired more assistance, particularly in the areas of health services, employment and education. Their display of the objects outside the missionary church was a considered decision, intended to show the Europeans that they, too, had objects of great spiritual power.

In total, the Berndts collected ninety bark paintings in 1958: thirty-three from Yirrkala, twenty-six from Elcho Island, and thirty-one from Oenpelli.[131] After returning to Perth, Ronald Berndt compiled a detailed inventory of the collection, identifying each object in terms of the date it was obtained, the name and clan of the artist, and an explanation of its secular or sacred functional use. In August of that year, the collection was sent to the AMNH, and in November, the AMNH also received Ronald Berndt's "Catalogue of Objects Sent," a detailed inventory of the collection identifying each object, giving the date it was obtained, the name and social group of the artist, and an explanation of the imagery.[132] Upon entering the permanent collection of the AMNH, the bark paintings were flattened under great pressure and mounted on pieces of plywood, presumably in an attempt to preserve them. Although this process made the barks much easier to store, it is a problematic method of conservation which greatly distorts the

[131] As previously stated, Berndt originally collected only twenty-two bark paintings from Yirrkala himself, and an additional eleven paintings were later sent to Perth by a local missionary. Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 37-39.

[132] The collection was also accompanied by fourteen additional objects from the Warburton Range in Western Australia.

nature of the original barks. After they were mounted on boards, most of the bark paintings were stacked in cardboard boxes and placed in storage, where they remained for over forty years.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on bark paintings from Arnhem Land begins in the nineteenth century, with early accounts by travelers and explorers. In 1834, Major John Campbell, the former Commandant of Melville Island, mentioned bark paintings (the first known mention of them in the West) in his essay "Geographical Memoir of Melville Island and Port Essington, on the Cobourg Peninsula, Northern Australia." Campbell described white-painted figures on the inner walls of temporary architectural structures made out of bark, known today as wet-season bark shelters [figure 1.26].[133] In 1879, the explorer James C. Cox, in his essay "Drawings by Australian Aborigines," provided the first detailed description of "bark drawings" (as they were referred to at the time), based on eleven of the barks that were collected from the Port Essington region of Western Arnhem Land, located on the tip of the Cobourg Peninsula [figure 1.4].[134] These twenty-eight works (two of which are figures 1.27 and 1.28), painted by artists from the Iwaidja language group, are considered to be the oldest Arnhem Land bark paintings in existence.[135]

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[133] John Campbell, "Geographical memoir of Melville Island and Port Essington, on the Coburg Peninsula, Northern Australia," *Royal Geographic Society Journal* vol. 4 (1834): 129-181.

[134] James C. Cox, "Drawings by Australian Aborigines," *Linnean Society of New South Wales: Proceedings* vol. 3 (1879): 155-160.

[135] These bark paintings are now housed at the Macleay Museum (University of Sydney), the British Museum, the Australian Museum (Sydney), and the Berndt Museum of Anthropology (Perth). In a recent publication, Paul S.C. Taçon and Susan M. Davies examine the twenty-eight extant bark paintings thought

In 1884, five more "bark drawings" were collected by a Captain Carrington on Field Island, near the mouth of the South Alligator River, during a survey expedition of the rivers of the Northern Territory.[136] All five of the works (one of which is figure 1.29), collected by Carrington were painted by artists from the Gagudju language group and appeared in the 1887 "Dawn of Art" exhibition in Adelaide.[137] This exhibition, organized by the Royal Geographical Society of Australia, was the world's first exhibition of Aboriginal material displayed as "art."[138] A decade later, discussion of the Carrington barks, accompanied by a few sketches, appeared in Thomas Worsnop's *The Prehistoric Arts, Manufactures, Works, Weapons, Etc., of the Aborigines of Australia.*[139]

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to be from the Port Essington region, and dispute the previously held belief that these barks were acquired by James Cox. The authors state that it is their belief that the majority of the bark paintings were actually collected by Paul Foelsche, who was Inspector-in-Charge for the Northern Territory Mounted Police from 1870 to 1904. They also contend that it was Foelsche, not Spencer, who initiated the bark painting "industry" that now dominates the art of Arnhem Land. See Paul S.C. Taçon and Susan M. Davies, "Transitional Traditions: 'Port Essington' Bark-Paintings and the European Discovery of Aboriginal Aesthetics," *Australian Aboriginal Studies* no. 2 (2004): 72-86.

[136] The bark paintings collected from Port Essington and Field Island have two things in common: they all contain images primarily of animals or birds, and they were all taken directly from the walls of wet-season bark shelters. The fact that these early bark paintings were removed from wet-season bark shelters is particularly significant in that it establishes a sequence of events. Before the bark paintings were introduced to (as opposed to discovered by) the Western world, they had already been created by Aboriginal artists. This proves that bark painting was an indigenous art form of Aboriginal Australia, prior to European contact.

[137] The bark paintings collected by Carrington are now housed at the South Australian Museum, Adelaide.

[138] In many ways, the *Dawn of Art* exhibition was ahead of its time in recognizing these works as "art." More commonly, Aboriginal works were referred to as ethnographic specimens or examples of material culture. The exhibition consisted of eighteen sketches and drawings by "Aboriginal natives" and was organized by John George Knight, deputy sheriff of Palmerston (known today as Darwin). The unidentified artists in the exhibition were either prisoners or worked at the Palmerston jail.

[139] Thomas Worsnop, *The Prehistoric Arts, Manufactures, Works, Weapons, Etc., of the Aborigines of Australia* (South Australia: C.E. Bristow, Government Printer, North-Terrace, Adelaide, 1897).

Like the organizers of the "Dawn of Art" exhibition, Worsnop referred to the bark drawings as "art." His book was the first publication to do so.[140]

The first publication to include photographs of Arnhem Land bark paintings was Sir Baldwin Spencer's *Native Tribes of the Northern Territory of Australia* (1914), which was based on his two months of fieldwork in 1912 at Oenpelli in Western Arnhem Land.[141] Although Spencer was a professor of biology at Melbourne University, his publication constitutes an early anthropological survey, with information on general ecology, social organization, and marriage regulations.[142] In the section entitled

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[140] It appears that Worsnop, who was the town clerk of Adelaide (where the exhibition was held) was familiar with the *Dawn of Art* exhibition, in large part because both the exhibition and his publication contained works from the Carrington collection. Worsnop's view was an exception to the dominant belief at the time that the Aborigines of Australia lacked the features of high culture, such as religion and art. A more typical example of how Aboriginal art was perceived in the nineteenth century, is exemplified in John Mathew's *Eaglehawk and Crow*. Mathew states, "…the art of painting has been so little practiced by the aborigines of Australia, that to say they were ignorant of it altogether would not be far from the truth…" John Mathew, *Eaglehawk and Crow: A Study of the Australian Aborigines, including an inquiry into their origin and a survey of Australian languages* (London: Nutt, 1899), 126.

[141] Baldwin Spencer, *Native Tribes of the Northern Territory of Australia* (London: Macmillan, 1914). Previously two publications had reproduced bark paintings from other parts of Australia. In 1897, Thomas Worsnop reproduced a bark painting from Lake Tyrrel in Victoria, and in 1907, Herbert Basedow reproduced three bark paintings from the Katherine River. Spencer, like most scientists at the time, believed that Aboriginal Australia was rapidly becoming extinct. Emphasis was placed on the "preservation" of their material culture, and it was considered the responsibility of science to collect as many ethnographic specimens as possible.

[142] While a student at Oxford, Spencer did attend lectures by Edward Tylor (who is considered the founder of anthropology in England) and Sir James Frazer (who formulated the nineteenth-century Social Evolutionism theory). Spencer traveled to Australia for the first time in 1887, and in 1894, was selected as a biologist for the Horn Expedition to Central Australia. While editing the Horn Expedition manuscript, Spencer began to shift his focus from biology to anthropology. Shortly thereafter, he began working with Frank Gillen, who lived in Alice Springs (Central Australia) as Protector of Aborigines, and the two published their account of the Arrernte society in 1896. D.J. (John) Mulvaney, Howard Morphy, and Alison Petch, *"My Dear Spencer" The Letters of F.J. Gillen to Baldwin Spencer* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1997), 27. In 1903, the AMNH gave the Museum Victoria, Melbourne "…a collection illustrating totemism of the Northwest Coast" of Native North America (comprised of eighty-two objects from Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, Bella Coola and Kwakiutl). In exchange, Baldwin Spencer sent the AMNH "…eighty-eight objects collected on the Spencer-Gillen Expedition to Central Australia in 1901-1902." Franz Boas to Baldwin Spencer, 28 September 1900, Archive Files, Accession Number 1903-14, Australia, Donor: W.B. Spencer Exchange, S/4104-4227, Anthropology Department, AMNH, New York. In 1912, following Gillen's death, Spencer traveled to Oenpelli and worked with Patrick "Paddy" Cahill (c.1863-1923) on the Gagudju (or Kakadu) language group. In his 1914 publication, he uses the *Notes and Queries* format introduced by the Anthropological Society of London in 1874 when a committee (led by Edward

"Decorative Art," Spencer describes fifteen bark paintings (reproduced in black-and-white photographs in the back of the book) from two indigenous cultures in Western Arnhem Land: the Gagudju (which he called the "Kakadu") and the Mengerdji (which he called the "Geimbio").[143] Although his analyses of the bark paintings are somewhat cursory and he fails to mention any artists' names, Spencer does record the subject matter of the works and likens the imagery to rock art, which are both firsts for a publication. Spencer concludes his discussion of bark painting by questioning whether or not the practice could have actually originated in Australia.[144]

The first time that works from Arnhem Land were referred to as "bark paintings" (as opposed to "bark drawings") was in the 1929 exhibition catalogue *Australian Aboriginal Art* [figure 1.30]. This catalogue, which accompanied an exhibition of the same name, was published by the influential Bread and Cheese Club, a Melbourne literary society. Alexander S. Kenyon, an engineer and co-author of the catalogue, wrote an essay entitled "The Art of the Australian Aboriginal" in which he discusses "bark paintings" (coining the term still used today) as the greatest artistic development from the Northern Territory. Unfortunately, this high praise is tempered by his concluding remark

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Tylor) produced the first edition of *Notes and Queries on Anthropology for the Use of Travellers and Residents of Uncivilized Lands*. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology,* 258. A more detailed explanation of Spencer's background appears in Chapter 2.

[143] Out of the fifteen bark paintings reproduced, fourteen are identified as "Kakadu" and only one is identified as "Geimbio."

[144] Spencer states that, in his opinion, the works were influenced by "…some culture outside that of the Australian continent…" but fails to hypothesize as to which cultures these might be. Spencer, *Native Tribes,* 439.

that the "realism" found in the bark paintings "is characteristic also of the pictorial efforts of children."[145]

The image on the cover of *Australian Aboriginal Art*, painted by the Western artist Percy Leason, illustrates how Aboriginal artists were perceived by European audiences at the time. The artist is depicted out-of-doors and seated on the ground, drawing with one hand on a sheet of bark. The image he is making is either a kangaroo or a wallaroo, a reference, probably, to the large number of bark paintings with those animals in Spencer's collection.[146] The Aboriginal artist is shown with disheveled hair and a full beard, naked, and exaggeratedly hunched over. Interestingly, his sheet of bark is propped up against a tree, a configuration that is very reminiscent of a European easel. This imaged scene, informed by European perceptions of painters' practice, is grossly inaccurate. As previously mentioned, in Arnhem Land artists painted with their bark sheets flat on the ground or resting in their laps [figure 1.10].

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[145] Alfred S. Kenyon, "The Art of the Australian Aboriginal," in *Australian Aboriginal Art*, ed. Charles Barrett and Alfred Kenyon (Melbourne: National Museum of Victoria, 1929), 39. The exhibition, held at the National Museum of Victoria, Melbourne (now the Museum Victoria), generated considerable public interest mainly because of the inclusion of two Wangkangurru men who traveled to Melbourne to demonstrate the production of boomerangs and ceremonial headgear. It was also the first major exhibition of Aboriginal art which featured the Spencer Collection of Arnhem Land bark paintings. Contrary to Howard Morphy's claim, it was not the first time the Spencer Collection had been placed on public display. Howard Morphy, "Audiences for Art," in *Australians: A Historical Library. Australians from 1939* (New South Wales: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, 1987), 168. In 1915, fifty-six bark paintings from the Spencer Collection were placed on permanent display (in cases 84 and 85) in the "Spencer Hall" at the National Museum of Victoria (now Museum Victoria), Melbourne. According to Lindy Allen, "The works that went on display in 1915 included the entire 38 works collected in 1912 from the Alligator, East Alligator and South Alligator Rivers area of Western Arnhem Land by Baldwin Spencer, plus 18 others that arrived in 1914 from Paddy Cahill at Oenpelli." Allen goes on to say that the exhibition *Australian Aboriginal Art* "…was perhaps the first major exhibition of Aboriginal art and the 'Spencer paintings' formed the core of that exhibition, but not their first time being exhibited." Pers. comm., Lindy Allen, Senior Curator of the Indigenous Cultures Department of Museum Victoria, Melbourne, 21 February 2005.

[146] See Appendix D.

After the First World War, the most significant event in the history of Aboriginal studies occurred in 1926, when the University of Sydney established the first Anthropology Department in Australia, and appointed A.R. Radcliffe-Brown (1881-1955) as its first chair.[147] That same year, the Rockefeller Foundation created a fund for anthropological research on the "native peoples" of Australia, New Guinea, and Melanesia, which was to be administered by the newly-created Australian National Research Council (ANRC). Adolphus Peter (A.P.) Elkin was the first research fellow in anthropology to be appointed by the ANRC, and in 1934, Elkin succeeded Radcliffe-Brown by becoming the second chair of anthropology at the University of Sydney.[148] Elkin held this position for twenty-two years (1934-1956), for twelve of which he was the only professor of anthropology in Australia. During this time period, Elkin was also editor and manager of the well-known anthropological journal *Oceania*.[149] Throughout

[147] A.R. Radcliffe-Brown studied anthropology at Cambridge under Alfred Cort (A.C.) Haddon. From 1906 to 1908, he conducted anthropological fieldwork in the Andaman Islands, and in 1909-10 he lectured both in Cambridge and at the London School of Economics. In 1926, he became the first Chair of Anthropology at the University of Syndey, which he occupied until 1931, when he left Australia to become a Professor of Anthropology at the University of Chicago. In 1939, he became a Professor of Social Anthropology at Oxford, where he stayed until his retirement in 1948. John Beattie, "A.R. Radcliffe-Brown," in *The Founding Fathers of Social Science,* ed. Timothy Raison (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), 179-187.

[148] Prior to receiving his B.A. in 1915 from St. Paul's College at the University of Sydney, Elkin was ordained as an Anglican minister. Soon after his graduation, Elkin moved to be in charge of a large parish. By writing his Master's thesis on Aboriginal religion (completed in 1922 from the School of Philosophy at Newcastle), Elkin was able to combine his love of religion with his passion for anthropology. Elkin resigned from the church in 1925. The same year he traveled to London to pursue a doctorate in Anthropology at the University College, University of London. Ronald Berndt and Catherine Berndt, "Obituary: Adolphus Peter Elkin, 1891-1979," *Oceania* no. 2 (December 1979): 82. While in London, Elkin attended lectures by Bronislaw Malinowski at the London School of Economics. He also met A.M. Hocart, C.G. Seligmann, and Sir James Frazer, and made the passing acquaintance of A.R. Radcliffe-Brown. He was also invited by Raymond Firth to attend a meeting of the LS.E. Anthropology Society. Timothy Raison, ed., *The Founding Fathers of Social Science* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), 5-9.

[149] The first volume of *Oceania* was published in April of 1930, and was edited by A.R. Radcliffe-Brown. Since it was based at the University of Sydney, the editorial position was handed down to Elkin when he became chair of the department.

his career, Elkin conducted extensive fieldwork throughout Australia, and in 1938, he published *Australian Aborigines: How to Understand Them*, which became a seminal work in Australian anthropology.[150] In his chapter "Art and Ritual," Elkin discusses bark paintings, and notes their source in ritual. This was the first time that bark paintings were discussed in the literature as having religious and/or ceremonial associations.

Elkin's emphasis on social anthropology and religion heavily influenced the first generation of professional anthropologists in Australia. His graduates included Frederick McCarthy (the first museum curator in Australia to be trained in social anthropology), Donald Thomson (a professor at the University of Melbourne), and Ronald and Catherine Berndt. These graduates, in addition to a handful of others, subsequently became the key players of Aboriginal studies in the 1940s and 1950s, and in their individual publications are linked by a belief that Aboriginal art should be explored in terms of its connection to religion, mythology and ritual.

As curator of anthropology at the Australian Museum in Sydney, Frederick McCarthy wrote a seminal publication in 1938, entitled *Australian Aboriginal Decorative Art*, a survey of all Aboriginal art of Australia that includes a brief section on Arnhem Land bark paintings.[151] One year later, McCarthy published his essay "Aboriginal Art," in the popular journal *Art in Australia.*[152] This article was one of just six articles on Aboriginal art published in *Art in Australia* between 1916 and 1942. Although the

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[150] A.P. Elkin, *The Australian Aborigines: How to Understand Them* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1964).

[151] Frederick McCarthy, *Australian Aboriginal Decorative Art* (Sydney: Trustees of the Australian Museum, 1938).

[152] Frederick McCarthy, "Aboriginal Art," *Art in Australia* no. 77 (Nov. 15, 1939): 53-62.

article focuses mainly on rock art and rock engraving, McCarthy acknowledges the growing appreciation of Aboriginal art in general by white Australian artists and architects. McCarthy was probably thinking especially of the artist Margaret Preston, who had been an ardent admirer of Aboriginal art since 1925, and was the author of four of the articles on Aboriginal art that appeared in *Art in Australia*. She stressed, in each, the need to create "a national Australian art," and suggested that Aboriginal art be used as an inspiration for a contemporary national school. She also advocated the use of Aboriginal decorative motifs in household design and public architecture. Preston believed that the use of Aboriginals' "simple symbols" could help rid Australia of foreign (European) design elements, the dominance of which, according to the author, had long "plagued" the country.

In 1941, Preston also played a pivotal role in the exhibition "Art of Australia 1788-1941," sponsored by the Carnegie Institute in New York, which toured the United States and Canada for two years.[153] The "Art of Australia" exhibition included eleven

[153] The exhibition "Art of Australia 1788-1941" was the first comprehensive exhibition of Australian art to be sent to the United States and Canada, and toured twenty-nine venues in North America. It included seventy-three items which were lent by Australian museums, private collectors and artists. According to the exhibition catalogue, "The idea of a trans-Pacific exhibition was conceived by the Commonwealth Government, which appointed a Committee of Selection to assemble the material. Professor Theodore Sizer, Director of the Yale University Art Gallery, journeyed to Australia at the invitation of the Australian and New Zealand Museums and Art Galleries Association, under the auspices of the Carnegie Corporation, to advise the Committee as to the kind of work most likely to interest the American public. The cost of assembling the exhibition and shipping it to Washington has been underwritten by the Commonwealth Government; expenses in America, other than transportation, are being borne by the Carnegie Corporation. The Museum of Modern Art is circulating the exhibition in the United States and the National Gallery of Canada is arranging the tour in that Dominion…the opening exhibitions are to be held in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, and at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York." The exhibition also traveled to Yale University Art Gallery and the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh. *Art of Australia 1788-1941: An Exhibition of Australian Art held in the United States of America and the Dominion of Canada under the Auspices of the Carnegie Corporation* (Syndey: Ure Smith, 1941), 7. For articles and reviews of the exhibition see "Australian Art Show Here for Tour of U.S." *New York Times,* 21 September 1941, 23; "Art of Australia Put on Exhibition: National Gallery Scene of First Display in this Country from Commonwealth," *New York Times,* 2 October 1941, 23; Howard Devree, "Brief Comment on Some of the Recently Opened Exhibitions in the Galleries," *New*

bark paintings and three pen drawings, and marked the first time that Aboriginal material had been exhibited outside Australia as "art."[154] In the exhibition catalogue of the same name, Preston states in her introduction to the section on Aboriginal art:

> The aborigines of Australia have always been regarded as the lowest branch of civilization. That this is not the case, is shown by a study of their native art…They have many ways of expressing themselves as artists; the bark painting in this exhibition is one of them.[155]

Four of the bark paintings in the exhibition were reproduced in the catalogue as small, black-and-white photographs. The caption under the photographs stated that the bark paintings had "no religious or ceremonial significance." This statement is important, since Elkin had argued the contrary just three years prior.[156]

In 1943, the National Gallery of Victoria and the National Museum of Victoria, Melbourne, jointly staged the exhibition "Primitive Art."[157] This exhibition was the first

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York Times, 19 October 1941, X10; "Events Here and There: Metropolitan Museum to Show Paintings from Australia- Death of Aba-Novak," *New York Times,* 9 November 1941, X9; "Australian Art Shown Tuesday: First Exhibit of Kind to be Seen in U.S. is now at Metropolitan Museum," *New York Times*, 16 November 1941, D8; and Edward Alden Jewell, "From the Antipodes to Surrealism," *New York Times,* 23 November 1941, X9.

[154] All the bark paintings were collected in 1912 in Oenpelli by Baldwin Spencer and were from the National Museum of Victoria (or Museum Victoria), Melbourne. Pers. comm., Lindy Allen, 21 February 2005.

[155] Margaret Preston, "Aboriginal Art of Australia," in *Art of Australia 1788-1941* (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1941), 16.

[156] It would take almost ten more years, with the publication of Elkin, Berndt and Berndt's *Art in Arnhem Land* (1950) for bark paintings to become widely accepted as having religious significance. But even then, there remained a contested debate as to whether Arnhem Land bark paintings were related to religion or "art for art's sake." It was assumed that they most definitely could not be both. This narrow definition of what bark paintings are (or could be) was repeatedly addressed by Ronald and Catherine Berndt in their various publications. Their hope was that eventually bark paintings would be recognized as "art" but also acknowledged as having a connection to the ceremonial realm.

[157] In Australia, art museums are referred to as "galleries," while natural history museums are referred to as "museums."

full-scale Australian exhibition of non-Western art, and included works from Australia, New Guinea, Africa, Island Melanesia, Polynesia, North and South America, Asia and western Iran. There were eighteen works from Australia displayed, including four bark paintings from the National Museum of Victoria, collected by Spencer. In a booklet published in conjunction with the "Primitive Art" exhibition, there were two important essays written by Charles Barrett and Robert H. Croll.[158] In his essay "Art in Arnhem Land," Barrett acknowledges Spencer's contribution (as both essayist and collector) to the study of Arnhem Land bark paintings, but adds that this art form is also present at Yirrkala, where Barrett had personally observed "numerous examples…comparable with the finest pieces in the Baldwin Spencer Collection."[159] Barrett goes on to describe commissioning the artist Wonggu ("or Wonga, headman of the Caledon Bay tribe") to create a bark painting for the fee of "six sticks of tobacco and an old pipe"[160] Barrett's essay marks the first time that Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings are discussed in the literature, as well as the first time that a publication included the name of an artist from Arnhem Land.

In his essay "The Australian Aboriginal as Artist," Robert Croll names three Aboriginal artists (William Barak, Tommy McCrae and Albert Namatjira), none of whom were from Arnhem Land. Croll also includes a photograph of Albert Namatjira (an

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[158] Charles Barrett and Robert H. Croll were members of the Bread and Cheese Club, and helped organize the exhibition. Croll later became involved in the "discovery" of the Arrernte artist Albert Namatjira. Philip Jones, "Perceptions of Aboriginal Art: A History," in *Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia*, ed. Peter Sutton (New York: George Braziller Publishers, in association with the Asia Society Galleries, New York, 1988), 166.

[159] Charles Barrett, "Art in Arnhem Land" in *Art of the Australian Aboriginal,* eds. Charles Barrett and Robert Croll (Melbourne: The Bread and Cheese Club, 1943): 68.

[160] Ibid.

Arrernte watercolor painter who made Western-style landscapes), which was a significant first.[161] Croll's decision to focus on Namatjira probably was influenced by widespread interest in his work.[162]

The next major exhibition of Aboriginal art, "Art of Australian Aborigines of Arnhem Land, Northern Australia," was not held until 1949. It was mounted in the David Jones Gallery, a commercial space in a Sydney department store, and included bark paintings from Yirrkala and Oenpelli that had been collected by Ronald and Catherine Berndt during their fieldwork in 1946-47.[163] At Elkin's suggestion the Berndts focused this 1949 exhibition solely on the art of Arnhem Land in hopes of changing perceptions of Aboriginal production.[164] According to Ronald Berndt, the exhibition "achieved considerable publicity and large numbers of people visited it…As a result, the great diversity of Aboriginal art and its unique appeal and maturity gradually became

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[161] Albert Namatjira (1902-1959), an Arrente man from Central Australia, was the first "professional" Aboriginal artist and the first to gain wide acceptance/acclaim among Europeans. His success was due largely to his ability to paint landscape in a Western mode. He was taught by the European-Australian artist Rex Battarbee (1893-1973) from Victoria. In 1932, Battarbee caravanned to Central Australia with fellow artist John A. Gardner. An exhibition of the two artists' work was shown at Hermannsburg Lutheran Mission Station near Alice Springs in 1934 for two days. Among those who attended was Namatjira, who expressed interest in learning to paint with watercolors; Battarbee taught Namatjira to paint landscapes initiating what has been termed "The Aboriginal Art Movement in Central Australia." For further information on Albert Namatjira see A.P. Elkin, "A Modern Aboriginal Artist," *Social Horizons* vol. 2 (1945): 34-39; J.K. Moir, "Publishing the Art of Albert Namatjira," *Biblionews* vol. 3 (1950): 38-39; Charles Mountford *The Art of Albert Namatjira* (Melbourne: Bread and Cheese Club, 1944); Evelyn Patuaua, "Albert Namatjira; Australian Aboriginal Painter, 1902-1959," *Te Ao Hou* vol. 8, no. 3 (1960): 24-29; and Ronald Rose, "Albert Namatjira," *Australian Territories* vol. 2, no. 6 (1962): 24-34.

[162] In 1938, Namatjira's watercolors were exhibited in a solo exhibition, which was the first solo exhibition of an Aboriginal artist. In 1939, the Art Gallery of South Australia purchased Namatjira's "Haasts Bluff (Alakaura)," which was the first acquisition by a gallery of a painting by an Aboriginal artist.

[163] It is important to note that despite the fact that the exhibition was held in a commercial art gallery, none of the works on display were on sale to the public. The exhibition was not perceived as an opportunity to market the art, but rather to inform the public about the diverse styles that existed among Aboriginal artists.

[164] A more detailed explanation of the 1946-47 Berndt Collection appears in Chapter 2.

widely known."[165] For the first time, bark paintings and sculpture, which utilized traditional styles of painting and traditional materials, were displayed as "art" in an art gallery context.[166]

In 1950, one year after the David Jones exhibition, Elkin and the Berndts published *Art in Arnhem Land,* the first book devoted strictly to that topic. Except for the introduction and conclusion (which were written by Elkin), the book was based on the Berndt's fieldwork in Arnhem Land in 1946 and 1947.[167] For the first time ever, Arnhem Land bark paintings were reproduced in a book, three of the twelve in color, and a photograph of an Arnhem Land artist was included. Another important first was that the book included quotes from indigenous artists. The Berndts discussed "schools of art" and "stylistic regions" in Arnhem Land (dividing the bark paintings into Northeastern and Western Arnhem Land), and most, importantly, for the first time in any publication Arnhem Land bark paintings were attributed to individual artists (who were in turn identified by their clan, language group and/or moiety), thus helping to put an end to the "anonymity of the Aboriginal artist." [168]

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[165] Berndt, "A Living Aboriginal Art," 30.

[166] See A.P. Elkin, "Art in Arnhem Land – A Notice," *Oceania* vol. xx, no. 1 (September 1949): 80-82. The exhibition was also seen by the artist J.A. (Tony) Tuckson who immediately fell in love with Arnhem Land bark paintings. In the late 1950s, Tuckson, then Deputy Director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales and a member of the Australian art establishment, would become a major figure in promoting the inclusion of Arnhem Land bark paintings in the collections of major Australian art institutions. Tuckson and the Art Gallery of New South Wales are discussed in further detail in Chapter 2.

[167] A more detailed explanation of the Berndt's 1946-47 fieldwork in Arnhem Land appears in Chapter 2.

[168] All in all, Ronald Berndt's most important contribution was his interest in the social identity of the artists, in addition to recording the "story" associated with the work. For each bark painting he collected, Berndt meticulously documented the artist's name, moiety and language group. The only anthropologist prior to Ronald Berndt who had documented such information was the Australian Donald Thomson, and even Thomson's work (which was restricted to Northeastern Arnhem Land) was largely unknown until after his death. In Western Arnhem Land, never before had an anthropologist recorded even the artist's name. This seemingly small act of recording an artist's name, would prove to be a huge turning point in

Art in Arnhem Land also addressed, for the first time in a publication, the issue of sacred versus secular subject matter in relation to Arnhem Land art. In his introductory chapter, Elkin states that although "the sacred and profane" are set apart by the sacred's connection to ritual, "the designs on the everyday objects in a region are often the same as or similar to those used in the sacred sphere in the same region."[169] In the subsequent chapters, the Berndts state that in Northeastern Arnhem Land, both bark paintings and body paintings contain sacred imagery, including "conventionalized representations of the clan country and its mythology."[170] Non-religious bark paintings are characterized by the absence of this imagery, and described as "desultory, and comparatively unimportant."[171] In Western Arnhem Land, according to the Berndt's text, the division between sacred and secular is less well-defined. They describe sacred bark paintings from this region as "magico-religious," and secular bark paintings as "illustrative."[172]

In 1950 (the same year that *Art in Arnhem Land* was published), Charles Mountford, an American ethnologist who worked on Aboriginal art under the auspices of the South Australian Museum in Adelaide, discussed the 1948 American-Australian Scientific Expedition in an article in the monthly journal *Australian-American*

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the history of Arnhem Land bark paintings. Even though Berndt felt that this was the first step in legitimizing these works as "art," it is this lack of information that continues to plague the study of Arnhem Land bark paintings to this day. Howard Morphy eloquently stated, "The anonymity of primitive art is a symptom of the usurpation of the cultural heritage of indigenous peoples and the disregarding of their rights by colonizing cultures." Howard Morphy, "Geology in Ochre," *Hemisphere* vol. 23, no. 2 (March/April 1979): 123.

[169] Elkin, Berndt and Berndt, *Art in Arnhem Land,* 12.

[170] Ibid., 61.

[171] Ibid., 70.

[172] Western Arnhem Land bark paintings of static animals are categorized as magico-religious, because according to the Berndts, they were used as part of rituals "for the increase of species." This is the first time that Western Arnhem Land bark paintings had been described as such.

Association.[173] Three years later, Mountford organized a major exhibition at the South Australian Museum, Adelaide, entitled "Aboriginal Bark Paintings and Objects of Native Culture," which displayed many of the bark paintings he had collected during his fieldwork in Arnhem Land.

In 1956, half of the bark paintings Mountford had collected were distributed to galleries throughout Australia, under government auspices, in order to establish Aboriginal collections in major Australian art institutions. Each received some two dozen works. That same year, Mountford published his seminal work, *Records of the American-Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land, Volume 1: Art, Myth and Symbolism.* The book is divided into three major sections based on geographic regions: Groote Eylandt (the first time Groote Eylandt appeared in a publication as a major stylistic region), Oenpelli, and Yirrkala. In each section, Mountford discusses the mythical interpretations of bark paintings, gives detailed descriptions of their imagery, and provides small black-and-white photographs of the works. Every bark painting Mountford collected is illustrated, including 150 from Oenpelli and 156 from Yirrkala. Unfortunately, he fails to mention artists' names in association with specific paintings. Indeed, only four artists are mentioned by name (in the introductory chapter).[174] For the

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[173] The title of the article was "Primitive Art in Arnhem Land." 1948 American-Australian Scientific Expedition was funded by the National Geographic Society, Smithsonian Institution, and the Commonwealth Government of Australia. A more detailed explanation of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition appears in Chapter 2.

[174] At the time of the publication, Mountford was severely criticized by his peers. In 1957, the anthropologist Peter Worsley scathingly remarked, "The errors, major and minor, are so numerous that it would take a book of comparable size to correct them." Peter Worsley, "Review of *Records of the Australian-Australian Expedition to Arnhem Land,*" *Man* vol. LVII (December 1957): 241. One year later, Ronald Berndt stated in his review of Mountford's book, "If one were to assess this as an 'art book', there could be nothing but praise for the superb illustrations—a field in which Mountford has always excelled. One can only regret that the text doesn't match: and this is all the more regrettable in the light of

first time in a publication, Mountford explores the relationship between social organization and design, and proposed that Aboriginal artists painted and carved their artwork primarily for art's sake.[175]

One year after Mountford's book saw print, the Berndts organized an exhibition at the Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, entitled "The Art of Arnhem Land." An accompanying catalogue of the same title included descriptions of eighty Arnhem Land bark paintings and sculptures, all collected by the Berndts during their fieldwork.[176] Twenty-three artists were included, each one identified by name, language group, and/or moiety. That same year, the French artist Karel Kupka published an article based on his research on bark painting in Arnhem Land in 1956 (in co-operation with the Basel Ethnographic Museum). Noting the effects of European contact on traditional art, Kupka argues that outside contact is not necessarily bad, and may even encourage artistic production. He concludes by stating that the Aboriginal painter "often forgets in his

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its claims to be a comprehensive, authoritative, and 'scientific' study." Ronald Berndt, "The Mountford Volume on Arnhem Land Art, Myth, and Symbolism: A Critical Review," *Mankind* vol. 5, no. 6 (October 1958): 261. Although Mountford defended himself and his publication in print, he would forever be viewed by the field as an "amateur anthropologist." The anthropologist Helen Groger-Wurm stated "…you have to take Mountford's stories with five grains of salt!" She also explained that during her fieldwork in Arnhem Land, she would ask the artists, "But this isn't what Mountford recorded," and they would explain that not only did he have trouble hearing, but he would even make up or finish the stories himself. Groger-Wurm went on to discuss Mountford's role in the American-Australian Scientific Expedition, "Mountford was a photographer and was never properly educated as an anthropologist. His name was known because of his photographs. But there was no one else, so he was chosen for the National Geographic Expedition…but he was such a bad choice…" Helen Groger-Wurm, interview with author, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, 13 June 2003. Stanton also stated that "…the Australian-American Expedition had a very strong connection to Adelaide and that both Monty [Mountford] and Tinnie [Tindale] were somewhat of amateur anthropologists…Monte was partially deaf, and so he didn't hear things very well…so this should be taken into consideration when reading his publications." John Stanton, interview with author, Perth, Western Australia, 29 May 2003.

[175] Charles Mountford, *Records of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land: Art, Myth, and Symbolism* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1956), 6.

[176] Ronald Berndt and Catherine Berndt, *The Art of Arnhem Land* (Perth: The Art Gallery of Western Australia, 1957).

work the primary impulse [being an illustrated story of the Australian Aborigines] and enjoys with sovereign artistic freedom the pleasure of line and colour."[177]

In 1962, Kupka published a more detailed account of his travels to Arnhem Land, *Un Art a l'Etat Brut*, wherein he writes that he traveled to Arnhem Land in search of an "uncorrupted" and truly "primitive" art form. Divided into nine chapters, Kupka's book includes a checklist of each bark painting reproduced with detailed information about it. No artists are mentioned by name, save the few identified in field photographs. In 1965, an English translation of Kupka's book (in slightly modified form) was published as *Dawn of Art: Painting and Sculpture of Australian Aborigines.*[178]

In response to both Mountford's publication (1956) and Kupka's article (1957), Ronald Berndt published a lengthy article in *Oceania* in 1958: "Some Methodological Considerations in the Study of Australian Aboriginal Art." In contrast to Mountford's belief that Aboriginal artists paint purely for pleasure and Kupka's assertion that they enjoy "sovereign artistic freedom," Berndt asserts:

> In Aboriginal artistic expression the artist is always confined to a set of rules (irrespective of limitations as regards techniques and material) that are traditionally defined in terms of both design and subject matter…Individual expressiveness in a "creative" sense is restricted, and can flourish only to a limited degree.[179]

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[177] Karel Kupka, "Australian Aboriginal Bark Painting," *Oceania* no. 4 (June 1957): 267.

[178] Karel Kupka, *Dawn of Art: Painting and Sculpture of Australian Aborigines* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1965).

[179] Ronald Berndt, "Some Methodological Considerations in the study of Australian Aboriginal Art," *Oceania* vol. 29, no. 1 (1958): 29.

Berndt describes Australian Aboriginal art as "utilitarian," but qualifies that statement, writing that this "does not necessarily affect its aesthetic quality or the 'pleasure' it may give both artist and others."[180] Berndt, then, was intent on calling attention to Aboriginal art's religious and social function, as well as its aesthetic qualities.

During the 1960s, there were only two major exhibitions of Aboriginal art. The first was a touring exhibition in 1960 entitled "Australian Aboriginal Art," organized by the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW) in Sydney. Including some 115 works, it was the first major exhibition of Aboriginal art that was shown in all six state capitals of Australia, and kindled widespread public interest.[181] Tony Tuckson, the Deputy Director of the AGNSW, himself an artist, organized the exhibition and included bark paintings he had collected in Northeastern Arnhem Land in 1959 with Dr. Stuart Scougall, an orthopedic surgeon.[182] The Tuckson/Scougall Collection, the first put together by non-anthropologists, also was an early instance of a museum collecting Aboriginal works directly from their makers (albeit by way of intermediaries). It would take almost thirty more years for another major Australian art museum to follow suit. No doubt Tuckson's own practice as an artist contributed heavily to his early acknowledgment of Aboriginal bark paintings as "art."

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[180] Ibid., 30.

[181] The exhibition was shown at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the Queensland Art Gallery, the National Gallery of Victoria, the Western Australian Art Gallery, the National Gallery of South Australia, and the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

[182] Additional information on the 1959 Tuckson/Scougall Collection of Arnhem Land bark paintings appears in Chapter 2.

The 1960 exhibition provided the inspiration for a book of the same title, edited by Ronald Berndt.[183] Published in 1964, it includes chapters by Elkin ("Art and Life"), Mountford ("The Art of Arnhem Land"), McCarthy ("The Art of the Rock-Faces"), rock art specialist T.G.H. Strehlow ("The Art of Circle, Line, and Square"), and Tuckson ("Aboriginal Art and the Western World"). It was the most comprehensive study to date, and dealt with all aspects of Aboriginal art. For the first time in the literature, Berndt compares and contrasts the subject matter of sacred and secular bark paintings from both Western and Northeastern Arnhem Land, and provides visual analyses of thirty-five works, which are illustrated in full-page color. Mountford's essay divides the art of Arnhem Land into five stylistic regions (Northeastern Arnhem Land, Western Arnhem Land, Groote Eylandt, Melville Island, and Wandjina Paintings), discusses the style of each region in general terms, and explores the iconography of individual paintings, but does not name individual artists.

The other major exhibition of Arnhem Land bark paintings in this period was held in the United States, at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. This 1965 exhibition of "Aboriginal Bark Paintings from the Cahill and Chaseling Collections" focused on two of the earliest bark painting collections. The Cahill Collection, better known as the "Spencer Collection" was collected in Oenpelli in 1912, and the Chaseling Collection, was collected in Yirrkala in 1940.[184] It was the first time that the Museum Victoria, Melbourne, had allowed a full-scale exhibition of works from their collections to leave Australia. The exhibition catalogue featured reproductions of twenty-four bark paintings

[183] Ronald Berndt, ed., *Australian Aboriginal Art* (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1964).

[184] For more information on the Cahill (also known as the Spencer) Collection and the Chaseling Collection see Chapter 2.

(seventeen from Western Arnhem Land and seven from Northeastern Arnhem Land), as well as a checklist that included a description of each work's imagery, collection date, museum number, location collected, and size.[185] The artists, however, were not identified by name, and the paintings were not characterized along "secular" versus "sacred" lines.

Around the same time, a series of significant events related to bark paintings occurred in Arnhem Land. In 1962, the Reverend Edgar Wells commissioned Aboriginal artists to create two twelve-foot-high painted panels for display at the front of the Yirrkala missionary church. The Dhuwa moiety painted one panel [figure 1.31], while the Yirritja moiety painted the other [figure 1.32]. Both contained sacred imagery and were believed to possess spiritual power, by the artists as well as the missionaries.[186]

One year later, "The Bark Petition" [figure 1.33] was sent by Yolngu artists of Yirrkala to the Commonwealth Government of Australia in Canberra. Sent in response to the government's proposal of leasing an area of Yolngu land to the French mining company Pechiney (which planned a large-scale development of mineral deposits on Groote Eylandt and the Gove Peninsula where Yirrkala is located), the petition called for land rights to be protected, and ownership of traditional lands be recognized. Written in dual texts of English and Yolngu, the petition was affixed to two sheets of bark bordered

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[185] The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, *Aboriginal Bark Paintings from the Cahill and Chaseling Collections, National Museum of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia* (Houston, Texas: The Museum of Fine Arts, 1965).

[186] In 1971, Ann Wells, the wife of Edgar Wells, published *This Their Dreaming*, which illustrates and discusses these two panels. Wells was able to document the "true meanings" of the imagery (section by section), as told to her by the artists themselves. It is an important publication, especially since the panels were taken down approximately a decade later by a more fundamentalist minister. Ann Wells, *This Their Dreaming* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1971). Specific sections of these two panels are discussed in further detail in Chapter 3.

by sacred clan designs.[187] These painted borders were considered an important part of the petition; according to Galarrwuy Yunupingu (a nephew of Bununggu Yunupingu, one of the artists represented in the AMNH Berndt Collection):

> It was not an ordinary petition; it was presented as a bark painting and showed the clan designs of all of the areas that were threatened by mining…[It was] not just a series of pictures but represented the title to our country under our law.[188]

Though the Bark Petition proved unsuccessful, it did lead to appointment of the Parliamentary committee that eventually drafted the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* passed in 1976.[189] It also became an icon of indigenous political art, and today is displayed in the Parliament House in Canberra.

Also during the 1960s, a commercial art market began to develop for both Western and Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings, fueled especially by the efforts of two non-Aboriginal entrepreneurs, Dorothy Bennett and Jim Davidson. A Yolngu artist, Mawalan Marika, asked Bennett, who had accompanied Tuckson and Scougall on their 1959 trip to Arnhem Land, to move to the Northern Territory to become his personal advisor. Mawalan, one of several artists from Arnhem Land whose works had begun to enjoy popular acclaim, seems to have felt a bit overwhelmed by the attention given to his work. Bennett agreed and moved to Darwin, Northern Territory, becoming

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[187] The clans included in the petition were those most immediately threatened by the mining.

[188] Kleinert and Neale, *The Oxford Companion,* 100.

[189] For more information about the court battle over land rights in Northeastern Arnhem Land, see Nancy Williams, *The Yolngu and their Land: A System of Land Tenure and the Fight for its Recognition* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986).

the first full-time entrepreneur of Aboriginal art, advising artists, marketing their work, and organizing exhibitions in both Australia and Japan.[190] In addition to raising public awareness of Aboriginal art, Bennett hoped to build patronage in an emerging market.

Davidson, a Melbourne businessman, was invited by the Director of Social Welfare in Darwin to promote commerce in Aboriginal art. Beginning in 1962, Davidson traveled to Arnhem Land once a year to garner the bark paintings he sold out of his suburban home in Melbourne. Louis Allen, an American millionaire whose collection is featured in his book *Time Before Morning: Art and Myth of the Australian Aborigines,* was one of Davidson's overseas clients.[191]

Even as entrepreneurs and private collectors were creating a market in Aboriginal production, missionaries, too, began to view bark paintings as a saleable commodity. In 1962, the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS) opened a store in Sydney that sold art and handicrafts from Western Arnhem Land, and, for the first time, placed advertisements in popular tourist magazines. Over the course of the decade, Arnhem Land became the focus of an ever-expanding art market, and according to Howard Morphy:

> At Oenpelli bark paintings began to dominate production, and as at Yirrkala, sales that had built up slowly over the 1960s increased faster at the end of the decade. Bark painting production increased fivefold between 1968 and 1969 and by the financial year 1969-70 was providing an annual return of $33,000. Yirrkala yielded $22,000 in

[190] For more information on Dorothy Bennett and on the evolution of the art market, see Susan Kennedy Zeller, "Contemporary Aboriginal Art 1948-2000: Constructing the Canon" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2002).

[191] Allen's book contributed to the popular literature on Aboriginal art. Louis Allen, *Time Before Morning: Art and Myth of the Australian Aborigines* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1975).

> 1970. Since 1976 the art and craft industry has grown at an annual rate of some 14 per cent.[192]

Thus, from the 1970s on, the newly established commercial art market continued to grow. An increase in major exhibitions of Aboriginal art reflected this interest and demand. The first exhibition of an individual Arnhem Land artist's work was held in 1971 at the University of Sydney. Organized by the collector Sandra Le Brun Holmes, it focused on the work of Billy Yirawala (1903-1978; Born clan, Kuninjku language group). Holmes had met Yirawala while producing a number of documentary films on Aboriginal culture with her husband Cecil. One year later, Holmes published *Yirawala: Artist and Man*, the first monograph on an individual Arnhem Land artist.[193] In total, there were nineteen major exhibitions in the 1970s (compared to two in the 1960s), and over twenty major exhibitions in the first half of the 1980s. It soon became evident that Arnhem Land bark paintings had become a cultural symbol of Australia as well as a profitable export.

In Arnhem Land, as Aboriginal art gained recognition, clan elders became increasingly concerned about young men leaving traditional communities in favor of the big cities. Darwin, which seemed to have a plethora of jobs, alcohol, and dance clubs, became a popular destination. Although the elders worried about the division of families, they were most concerned about young men's failure to participate in initiation rituals that were a part of major ceremonial cycles.[194] Traditionally, each initiation ritual lasted

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[192] Morphy, "Audiences for Art," 171.

[193] Sandra Le Brun Holmes, *Yirawala: Artist and Man* (Sydney: Jacaranda Press, 1972).

[194] The major ceremonial cycles referenced sacred sites by reenacting the lives and epic journeys of the creator spirits. The components of these ceremonies include body painting, song, dance, oral history, and

many weeks, and it was impossible to progress to the next initiation stage without completion of the previous one. If a young man missed one stage, it was impossible to go back and acquire that knowledge, and once he left the initiation process he could never go beyond that level. This growing problem (coupled with the alcoholism many blamed on the development of new mining towns) prompted the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (today known as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Studies or AIATSIS) to create a scientific panel to study the problems facing Arnhem Land.[195] One of their recommendations was the creation of a comprehensive collection of Arnhem Land "traditional" artifacts; the person charged with this assignment (at McCarthy's recommendation) was the anthropologist Helen Groger-Wurm.[196]

Between 1965 and 1970, Groger-Wurm conducted fieldwork in Western and Northeastern Arnhem Land, collecting some 1250 items. In 1973, her fieldwork resulted in *Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings and their Mythological Interpretation, Vol 1: Eastern Arnhem Land*, which included reproductions of 194 bark paintings, sixteen in color.[197] Their imagery was described and elucidated by the seventy-two artists who had

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bark painting. Traditionally, senior male clan members reserved sacred imagery only for ceremonial contexts, and revealed the "inside" or most sacred meanings during these times. Young men were also taught how to create sacred bark paintings during these ceremonies.

[195] The Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies was established in the early 1960s, with the sole purpose of coordinating all research related to Aboriginal peoples.

[196] A more detailed explanation of Groger-Wurm's background appears in Chapter 2.

[197] The publication was intended to be the first of a three-part series on Australian Aboriginal bark paintings, but the other two volumes were never written. The series was to include: 1) Eastern Arnhem Land; 2) Western Arnhem Land and Groote Eylandt and 3) Melville Island and Port Keats. Groger-Wurm explained in an interview that the reason the other two volumes were never published was because of the politics that surrounded the first volume when it came out. Since the volume contained sacred information, every time the book was sold, the purchaser had to sign a form that it would not be shown to Aborigines or women. According to Groger-Wurm, even though Ronald Berndt's review of her first book was glowing,

made them.[198] In her introduction, Groger-Wurm provides a cultural context for the paintings by summarizing the bark painting process and the role of sacred bark paintings within Aboriginal society. She writes that Northeastern Arnhem land bark paintings are "predominantly of a sacred and often secret nature, that is, their subject matter evolves from the religious doctrines and mythology of the people."[199] Conversely, secular bark paintings from this region, according to Groger-Wurm, have "designs which are not related to the great sacred mythical beings of the Dreamtime and…play a subordinate role"[200] She divides the bark paintings into three categories, based on moiety and subject matter: Sacred Bark Paintings of the Dua [Dhuwa] Moiety; Sacred Bark Paintings of the Jiridja [Yirritja] Moiety; and Secular Bark Paintings from both moieties. The most comprehensive study of sacred bark paintings from Northeastern Arnhem Land to date, the book nonetheless falls short in its discussion of the bark paintings themselves. Groger-Wurm neither discusses the works in relation to broader cultural contexts (such as great myth cycles) nor attempts to define artistic styles. Moreover, artists' explanations of the painted imagery are recorded without discussion or commentary.

Groger-Wurm's publication fueled growing interest in Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings. In 1976, the anthropologist Nancy Williams published "Australian

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he was so mean in his personal comments that she did not want to do volumes two and three. Helen Groger-Wurm, interview with author, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, 13 June 2003. Each plate contains a detailed description of the imagery (provided by the artist himself), in addition to captions identifying the work's size, artist name, moiety, clan, and/or language group, original number, and collection place and date.

[198] Six of the artists in Groger-Wurm's publication are represented in the AMNH Berndt Collection: Mawalan Marika, Milirbum, Munuparriwuy Wanambi, Gunguyama Dhamarrandji, Woreimu, and Djunmal.

[199] Groger-Wurm, *Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings*, 9.

[200] Ibid., 103.

Aboriginal Art at Yirrkala: Introduction and Development of Marketing," an overview of the history of Yirrkala and the creation of a commercial art market for bark paintings that includes interviews with missionaries (i.e., the Rev. Wilbur Chaseling), as well as a number of artists.[201] Although Williams' article does not address style or iconography, it is important for discussing the evolution of the commercial art market in Northeastern Arnhem Land bark painting. It also draws attention to the importance of the anthropologist Donald Thomson, who, she writes, instigated the creation of bark paintings in their present form in the 1930s. Thomson's contribution to Aboriginal art was largely unrecognized up to this point, in large part because his field notes and early collection of bark paintings were not discovered until after his death in 1970.[202]

In 1977, the anthropologist Howard Morphy published "Schematisaton to Conventionalization: A Possible Trend in Yirrkala Bark Paintings," based on his fieldwork in Yirrkala from 1974 to 1976.[203] Morphy provides (for the first time) an analysis, in European terms, of the artistic system of contemporary Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings. One year later, in 1978, he organized the first artists-in-residence program for two Aboriginal artists from Arnhem Land, Narritjin Maymuru and his son Banapana, at the Australian National University in Canberra.[204] At the end of their

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[201] Nancy Williams, "Australian Aboriginal Art at Yirrkala: Introduction and Development of Marketing," in *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World*, ed. Nelson Graburn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

[202] A more detailed explanation of Donald Thomson appears in Chapter 2.

[203] Howard Morphy, "Schematisation to Conventionalisation: A Possible Trend in Yirrkala Bark Paintings," in *Form in Indigenous Art: Schematisation in the Art of Aboriginal Australia and Prehistoric Europe,* ed. Peter J. Ucko (London: Gerald Duckworth and Company, Ltd., 1977).

[204] For more information see Morphy, "Geology in Ochre."

residency, "Manggalili Art," an exhibition of their work, was held at the university's gallery. This was the first show to focus on multiple Arnhem Land artists of a single clan.

Morphy's Ph.D. dissertation (Australian National University, 1977) and the book he based on it, *Ancestral Connections: Art and an Aboriginal System of Knowledge* (1991), also focused on Narritjin Maymuru.[205] Morphy's work draws upon anthropological as well as art historical methods to analyze both individual works and the role bark paintings play in Aboriginal society. Although Morphy provides the first stylistic analysis of Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings, his material is limited to his own field data from the 1970s.

Luke Taylor's Ph.D. dissertation, *"The Same But Different:" Social Reproduction and Innovation in the Art of the Kunwinjku of Western Arnhem Land* (Australian National University, 1987), was the first comprehensive stylistic analysis of Western Arnhem Land bark paintings. Nine years later, Taylor, an anthropologist, published *Seeing the Inside: Bark Painting in Western Arnhem Land*, a book based on his dissertation and enhanced by further fieldwork in Western Arnhem Land.[206] Taylor's major contribution is his identification of a number of contemporary "schools" within the arts production of Western Arnhem Land, classifications based on both style and content. Taylor also explores the relationship between rock art and bark painting, a connection first recognized by Spencer in 1914.[207]

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[205] Howard Morphy, *Ancestral Connections*.

[206] Taylor, *Seeing the Inside*.

[207] Spencer, *Native Tribes,* 433.

From the late 1980s until the present, exhibitions and their associated catalogues have played a critical role in advancing the study and analysis of Arnhem Land bark paintings. In 1988, the Asia Society Galleries in New York organized *Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia*, curated by Dr. Peter Sutton, head of the Division of Anthropology at the South Australian Museum, Adelaide.[208] The exhibition as well as the accompanying catalogue included historical and contemporary works by Aboriginal artists, and examined the religious base, the aesthetic systems and stylistic patterns of the works presented. One year later, the Australian National Gallery, Canberra, organized *Windows on the Dreaming: Aboriginal Paintings in the Australian National Gallery.*[209] Aboriginal artists wrote entire chapters for its catalogue, giving it a prominent "Aboriginal voice." In the chapter entitled "Bark Painting: A Personal View," the Ganalbingu artist George Milpurrurru from Ramingining states:

> We can share our religious pictures, because that is what bark paintings are, with *balanda* [white people]…and perhaps they will learn something about us from the paintings…There are some things we paint differently on bark for sale to what we would paint in *mindtji* [body painting]—we might change the colors or mix ochres to make other colors.[210]

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[208] For reviews of the exhibition see "Dreamscapes," *New York Times*, 13 November 1988, SM52; Robert Smith, "From Alien to Familiar," *New York Times,* 16 December 1988, C32; and Paul Taylor, "Primitive Dreams are Hitting the Big Time," *New York Times,* 21 May 1989, H31. Baldwin Spencer and F.J. Gillen were the first to introduce the concept of Alcheringa or "Dreamtime" in relation to how the Arrernte understood this dimension of existence. According to Mulvaney et al., "…they were responsible for articulating the concept that has now become almost irresistibly associated with the word 'Dreaming' or 'Dreamtime.'" Mulvaney et al., *"My Dear Spencer,"* 38.

[209] Wally Caruana, ed., *Windows on the Dreaming: Aboriginal Paintings in the Australian National Gallery* (Canberra: Australian National Gallery, 1989).

[210] Ibid., 18-19.

In this passage, Milpurrurru states that Aboriginal artists "share" bark paintings with others as a means of communication. Importantly, he remarks that the bark paintings may be altered if they are to be sold to non-Aboriginals. In 1993, the curator Wally Caruana expanded on this idea:

> As the market for Aboriginal art began to flourish in the 1960s, artists became concerned that some of the purely conventionalized designs, as painted on to objects in ceremony, were too sacred in nature to be seen by outsiders. Since each geometric design carries many layers of meaning, and there is a range of figurative versions to represent each of these, artists were able to de-sanctify paintings by introducing figurative images. In this way paintings retain deeper meanings…but are made suitable for public display.[211]

In 1990, the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, mounted *Spirit in Land: Bark Paintings from Arnhem Land.*[212] In its catalogue, Judith Ryan establishes for the first time the three major stylistic regions recognized today: Western Arnhem Land, Northeastern Arnhem Land, and Central Arnhem Land. Although the majority of the bark paintings included in the publication are from the collection of the National Gallery of Victoria, the catalogue contains a general summary of the history of Arnhem Land bark paintings, early collections, and regional styles.

In 1993, the National Gallery of Australia (NGA), Canberra organized *The Art of George Milpurrurru,* their first solo show of a living Aboriginal artist. Four years later, the NGA also organized *The Painters of the Wagilag Sisters Story, 1937-1997*, an

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[211] Caruana, *Aboriginal Art*, 59.

[212] Ryan, *Spirit in Land*.

exhibition of bark paintings from Central and Northeastern Arnhem Land.[213] This exhibition focused on a single mythological story of the Dhuwa moiety, the Wagilag Sisters Story, and traces its representation in Arnhem Land bark paintings from one generation to the next. Its catalogue features a discussion of female artists of Northeastern Arnhem Land, who created bark paintings similar in style to those of their fathers. One year later, Gillian Hutcherson devoted an entire publication to the growing number of women artists in Northeastern Arnhem Land entitled *Gong-Wapitja: Women and Art from Yirrkala.*[214] This book takes up art made by women artists in the 1990s, and includes sections on weaving, carving, and painting in which each artist describes her own work, in her own words.

In 1995, the first autobiography written by an Aboriginal artist from Arnhem Land, *Wandjuk Marika: Life Story,* was published.[215] Marika's account of his life touches on missionaries, World War II, and the first Aboriginal Lands Rights case, as well as on bark painting.

During the past ten years, Aboriginal bark painters have participated ever more directly in the exhibition and interpretation of their work. For example, in 1999, the exhibition *Saltwater: Yirrkala Bark Paintings of Sea Country* was organized in response to the discovery of an illegal barramundi fishing camp set up by Europeans, which had desecrated sacred Yolngu land in Northeastern Arnhem Land.[216] Eighty bark paintings

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[213] Wally Caruana and Nigel Lendon, eds., *The Painters of the Wagilag Sisters Story, 1937-1997* (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 1997).

[214] Hutcherson, *Gong-Wapitja.*

[215] Marika, *Life Story.*

[216] Mundine, *Saltwater*, 6.

made by forty-seven different Yolngu artists (representing fifteen clans, eighteen homelands, and both the Dhuwa and Yirritja moieties) toured five cities in Australia from June 1999 to January 2001.[217] The bark paintings included heretofore unseen sacred imagery in an effort to educate a non-Aboriginal audience. According to the Munuku artist Dula Ngurruwuthun (born c.1936):

> That is why we say this. This is our sacred design. Our art is for us. You are paper. We are sacred design. You make paper. Your wisdom is paper. Our intellect is sacred design, homeland and ancestral hearth of ancient origin. We do not understand the English language. Thus speaks the songlines, knowledge and Law…This is our law and our art. We have been strengthened by our law which has remained strong from the beginning because of these sacred designs. Yes, our old people. By painting these designs we are telling you a story. From time immemorial we have painted just like you use a pencil to write with. Yes we use our knowledge to paint from the ancient homelands to the bottom of the open ocean.[218]

The catalogue that accompanied the exhibition, includes five artists' declarations and thirty-three full-page color reproductions of bark paintings with sacred imagery.[219] Every participant in the show explains the iconography of his or her own work, and each

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[217] The exhibition traveled to Canberra (The Drill Hall Gallery), Perth (John Curtin Gallery), Sydney (Australian National Maritime Museum), Melbourne (The Museum of Modern Art at Heide), and Alice Springs (The Araluen Centre).

[218] Mundine, *Saltwater,* 10.

[219] In addition, forty-seven additional color reproductions of bark paintings with sacred imagery appeared in the back of the catalogue as much smaller images.

explanation is accompanied by a color photograph of its author. Focus on individual artists is commonplace in the current literature.[220]

The most recent scholarly treatment of Arnhem Land bark paintings is Susan Kennedy Zeller's Ph.D. dissertation, "Contemporary Aboriginal Art, 1948-2000: Constructing the Canon" (Columbia University, 2002). Zeller's dissertation examines the construction of an internationally recognized canon for Arnhem Land bark paintings produced between 1948 and 2000, and circulated between Australia and North America.

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[220] During the last decade, there has also been an increase in the number of surveys of Aboriginal art. In 1993, Wally Caruana, the former Senior Curator of Aboriginal Art at the National Gallery of Australia, published *Aboriginal Art,* as part of the Thames and Hudson "World of Art" series. Caruana's publication was the first concise survey of the full range of the Aboriginal art from all parts of the continent. Approximately half the book is devoted to Arnhem Land bark painting. Caruana, *Aboriginal Art.* In 1998, Howard Morphy, now a Professor of Social Anthropology at University College, London, and the Australian Research Council Senior Fellow at the Australian National University, Canberra, published the book *Aboriginal Art*, as part of the Phaidon "Art and Ideas" series. In contrast to Caruana's chapters divided by geographical location, Morphy divides his book into thematic topics, such as "A Totemic Landscape" and "Transformations," combining different regions of Australia under a single idea or concept. Morphy's publication is also longer and features reproductions (of many works never before published) in full color. In short, Morphy provides a different approach to Aboriginal art emphasizing the similarities (as opposed to differences) between regions of Aboriginal Australia. Howard Morphy, *Aboriginal Art,* 3rd edition (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1998). In 2000, the major reference source *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture* was published, edited by Sylvia Kleinert (a postdoctoral fellow in the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research, Australian National University) and Margo Neale (head of the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia, National Museum of Australia). This encyclopedic compilation of essays, written by both indigenous and non-indigenous scholars, is divided into two sections, is well-illustrated, and contains both black-and-white and color photographs. The first section acts as an encyclopedia and includes twenty-three general essays, which are organized by topic and focus on such issues as cross-cultural exchanges, gender, religion, literature, music, architecture and performance. The second section acts as a dictionary and provides definitions of terms, organizations and people (including important Aboriginal artists), arranged alphabetically. Unfortunately, the index to the first section is found at the end of Part I, as opposed to the back of the book where one might expect it to be located. However, all in all, it is a unique resource for both academic and general audiences who wish to learn more about all aspects of Aboriginal art and life. Kleinert and Neale, *The Oxford Companion,* 2000. In 2001, Andrew Sayers' survey text *Australian Art* devoted two chapters to Arnhem Land bark paintings, "Art and the Dreaming" and "Aboriginal Art and Its Reception, 1934-49." Although it is significant that a survey of Australian art included Arnhem Land bark paintings, the discussion was confined to a time period pre-1950, giving the impression that contemporary bark paintings do not exist. Andrew Sayers, *Australian Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). This misconception was countered and corrected by Susan McCulloch's publication (of the same year) entitled *Contemporary Aboriginal Art: A Guide to the Rebirth of an Ancient Culture.* In her book, McCulloch discusses every part of Aboriginal Australia in terms of its contemporary art production, including Arnhem Land bark paintings. McCulloch even lists the major artists of each region, the contact information for the various art centers, and detailed information as to where to buy the art. She also includes recommended reading, and a list of commercial specialists in southern Australia. Susan McCulloch, *Contemporary Aboriginal Art.*

Zeller focuses specifically on the Barnett Collection at Columbia University (which was collected by Dorothy Bennett for the collector Ted Barnett), which she sees as a representative selection of Arnhem Land bark paintings of the 1960s. She traces the collection's history from the time Dorothy Bennett amassed it to the paintings' sale at auction in 1997, and describes works with an eye to their reception by an outside (and largely Western) audience. She provides a considerable amount of background information on Dorothy Bennett, and for the first time does a comprehensive analysis of the commercial market for Arnhem Land bark paintings, which emerged and continues to the present day.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I introduced the focus of my dissertation, the AMNH Berndt Collection, and highlighted the importance of this collection in relation to the study of Arnhem Land bark paintings. I defined the terms sacred and secular, specifically in relation to imagery created on bark paintings. I reviewed the geographical locations and social organizations of the two stylistic regions represented in the Berndt Collection: Western Arnhem Land and Northeastern Arnhem Land. I discussed the materials and process of creating a bark painting, including the harvesting of the bark, the preparation of the pigments, and the specific types of brushes used. I discussed the artistic systems, possible sources of stylistic imagery, and regional art styles of Western and Northeastern Arnhem Land. I provided background information on the AMNH Berndt Collection, explaining how this particular collection of ninety bark paintings became housed in a Natural History museum in New York. Finally, I provided a literature review in which I

analyzed the way previous scholars have classified and interpreted Western and Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings.

In Chapter 2, "Major Collections of Arnhem Land Bark Paintings, 1912-1971," I examine eight major collections of Western and Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings assembled between 1912 and 1971. For each collection, I provide background information on the collector, give a brief description of the expedition, and give a formal and iconographic analysis of a select number of bark paintings which are representative of each collection.

In Chapters 3, 4 and 5, I focus specifically on the AMNH Berndt Collection. Regional art styles are discussed, including possible sources of stylistic imagery and/or pattern designs. Chapter 3, "Concealed Meanings within Abstract Designs," focuses on bark paintings with sacred imagery from Northeastern Arnhem Land, and Chapter 4, "Illustrating the Everyday," considers bark paintings with secular imagery from Northeastern Arnhem Land. Chapter 5, "Exposing the Interior of the Figurative Form," concentrates on bark paintings with sacred and secular imagery from Western Arnhem Land. In Chapter 6, I reiterate my contribution to the field and summarize the conclusions made in previous chapters.

CHAPTER 2

MAJOR COLLECTIONS OF ARNHEM LAND BARK PAINTINGS, 1912-1971

In this chapter, I will examine eight major collections of Western and Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings assembled from 1912 to 1971: the Spencer Collection (1912-1922), the Warner Collection (1926-1929), the Chaseling Collection (1935-1939), the Thomson Collection (1935-1942), the Berndt Collection (1946-1950), the Mountford Collection (1948-1949), the Tuckson/Scougall Collection (1959), and the Groger-Wurm Collection (1965-1971).[221] I have chosen these collections because each is unique, formed under a different set of circumstances, and because each was also the product of a specific moment in history, interconnected with the changing perceptions of the indigenous cultures of Australia.

I will present these collections in chronological order, reflecting the sequence in which bark paintings were originally introduced to the southern states of Australia, and later to Europe and the United States. In addition to providing background information on its collector and a description of the expedition on which it was amassed, I will give a formal and iconographic analysis of representative paintings from each collection. Although the majority of the works I have chosen remain unpublished, they are significant in terms of establishing regional artistic styles, as well as charting

[221] Although the importance of these collections is acknowledged throughout the literature, rarely are they discussed at length. See Berndt, *Australian Aboriginal Art*; Caruana, *Aboriginal Art*; Groger-Wurm, *Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings*; Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*; Ryan, *Spirit in Land*; and Sutton, *Dreamings*.

innovations.[222] Additional works from these collections will be discussed in subsequent chapters, as I focus on the specific artists and language groups represented in the AMNH Berndt Collection.

In 2003, I was able to examine all of these collections first-hand as well as photograph a significant number of the bark paintings.[223] On separate occasions, I also interviewed the only two people still living who can provide first-hand accounts of the collecting expeditions: Margaret Tuckson (connected to the Tuckson/Scougall Collection) and Dr. Helen Groger-Wurm (the collector of the Groger-Wurm Collection).[224] Each interview provided invaluable insights into the collections in question, and illuminated larger issues as well.

THE SPENCER COLLECTION

In 1912, Sir Baldwin Spencer (1860-1929), a professor of biology at the University of Melbourne, made the first systematic collection of bark paintings from Arnhem Land [figure 2.1]. Spencer was sent by the Commonwealth Government of Australia to survey land in the Northern Territory in 1911. Shortly thereafter, the minister for external affairs asked him to return to the Territory for twelve months (from December 25, 1911 to December 25, 1912) as Special Commissioner for Aboriginals and

[222] Out of the twenty-six bark paintings that I analyze in this chapter, only seven have been published in the literature: figures 2.7, 2.14, 2.16, 2.23, 2.26, 2.37, and 2.38.

[223] The only two collections that I was unable to examine as a whole were the Spencer Collection and Thomson Collection, both housed at the Museum Victoria, Melbourne. I was, however, permitted to photograph works from these two collections which were on display in the galleries, as well as a select number of bark paintings in storage. Upon my return to New York, the Museum Victoria also provided me with a CD-Rom of additional works from both collections.

[224] At the time of each interview, Margaret Tuckson lived in Sydney, and Dr. Helen Groger-Wurm lived in Canberra. In June 2003, before I had an opportunity to interview Dorothy Bennett (connected to the Tuckson/Scougall Collection), she died at her home in Darwin.

Chief Protector. In Spencer's own words, he was "in charge of the Department that the Government had instituted to safeguard the interests of the aboriginal population."[225]

During Spencer's two-month stay in Oenpelli [figure 1.4] in June and July of 1912, his host and main informant was Patrick "Paddy" Cahill (1863-1923), an Australian of European descent who had lived in Arnhem Land as a buffalo shooter since 1894.[226] In 1906, Cahill gave up his life as a hunter, and at the urging of the Commonwealth Government, started a dairy farm on the plains of Oenpelli, just below a large rocky escarpment of the Arnhem Land Plateau [figure 2.2].[227] Cahill employed numerous Gagudju workers on his farm, and helped Spencer get to know the Gagudju speakers (or "Kakadu," as Spencer referred to them), the dominant language group of Oenpelli at the time.[228]

Spencer was most impressed during his stay at Oenpelli by the prevalence and quality of the "rock drawings" produced by the Gagudju.[229] Spencer commented that the Gagudju produced "rock and bark drawings superior to any amongst the central tribes."[230] To compare Gagudju rock art with the artistic production of the Arrernte of

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[225] Spencer, *Native Tribes*, vii.

[226] Chaloupka, *Journey in Time,* 26.

[227] Cole, *A History of Oenpelli*, 15-17.

[228] As previously mentioned in Chapter 1, the majority of workers on Cahill's farm were Gagudju speakers who had moved north with Cahill to work as indigenous laborers. This shift in population displaced many of the Mengerdji, the traditional owners of the Oenpelli region, and created a new dominant language group in the area.

[229] In his 1914 publication, Spencer states, "Up on the hill sides, among the rocks, wherever there is an overhanging shelter where the native can screen himself from the sun and rain, these drawings are certain to be found in the country of the Kakadu." Spencer, *Native Tribes,* 432.

[230] Ibid., 408.

Central Australia was high praise from Spencer, who greatly respected the indigenous men of the central desert region.[231]

Spencer's interest in Gagudju rock art likely stemmed from both his passion for art and his background in biology. As a college student, Spencer studied art for a year at Owens College (the future Manchester University), and then transferred to the University of Melbourne to pursue a degree in biology.[232] A drawing of a lizard (*Lacerta lepida*) taken from Spencer's laboratory notebook [figure 2.3] illustrates not only his artistic ability but also his interest in anatomically correct representations of animals. The various sections of the lizard's body are carefully rendered, details are drawn to scale, and each anatomical part is labeled by hand. Spencer also combines three images in one: a detailed representation of the underside of a lizard's body and two views (profile and aerial) of the animal's head, providing the maximum amount of information with great economy of means.

When Spencer traveled to Oenpelli, he observed (mainly in the rock art) an alternate way of creating accurate, anatomically-correct representations of animals [figure 2.4]. It is here that he encountered the X-ray style, and observed that in Western Arnhem Land, animals "…are always more or less anatomical, that is, they [the Gagudju]

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[231] Ibid., x. Prior to his expedition to Arnhem Land, Spencer had spent a considerable amount of time with the Arrernte (or Arunta) speakers of Central Australia, and both he and F. Gillen had become fully initiated members of their culture. Spencer's comment also reveals a bias on the part of Europeans in the late nineteenth-early twentieth century towards representational art (Gagudju rock art) versus abstract art (Arrernte). Today, in the Aboriginal art market, this preference is reversed and there is more of a desire for "abstract" images.

[232] D.J. (John) Mulvaney and J.H. Calaby, *'So Much That Is New:" Baldwin Spencer, 1860-1929, A Biography* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1985), 28-29. See also J. A. Tuckson, "Aboriginal Art and the Western World," in *Australian Aboriginal Art,* ed. Ronald Berndt (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1964), 62.

represent not only the external form, but, to a certain extent, the internal structure."[233] I would argue that Spencer, who was a trained biologist, was primarily interested in these drawings as scientifically accurate representations of animals. When Spencer discovered that similar life-size images were being painted on the walls of bark shelters (erected for protection from wet season rains), he realized that this art form, unlike rock art, was transportable, and began collecting painted sheets of bark for the National Museum of Victoria (now the Museum Victoria) in Melbourne.[234] In his own words, he collected these works from individual "studios, which meant taking down the slabs on which they were drawn, that formed, incidentally, the walls of their [bark shelters]."[235]

In all, Spencer collected thirty-eight "bark drawings," all originally made for wet-season bark shelters.[236] Spencer commissioned sixty-nine additional works by a select group of artists; these were shipped to Melbourne by Cahill in 1918 and 1922.[237] Spencer's act of commissioning works of art was unprecedented in Arnhem Land at the time, and established a working relationship between Aboriginal artists and white

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[233] Spencer, *Native Tribes,* 433.

[234] The average size of the thirty-eight bark paintings Spencer collected from wet-season bark shelters in 1912 is 4 feet x 17.5 inches. The other sixty-nine bark paintings that were commissioned and sent to Melbourne by Cahill are roughly the same size.

[235] Spencer, *Wanderings in Wild Australia,* 793-4.

[236] According to Lindy Allen, all of the thirty-eight bark paintings collected by Spencer in 1912 were taken from wet-season bark shelters. Pers. comm., Lindy Allen, 5 November 2004.

[237] Spencer states, "It was interesting to find that the natives themselves very clearly distinguished between the ability of different artists and that my own non-expert opinion in regard to their relative merits coincided with their own." Spencer, *Wanderings in Wild Australia,* 794. According to acquisition records in the Spencer Archive at the Museum Victoria: 38 bark paintings were collected by Spencer in 1912, 44 additional works were commissioned and arrived at the museum on December 3, 1918, and 25 works arrived on September 27, 1922. Archive Files, Spencer Collection, Museum Victoria, Melbourne. This total of 107 bark paintings differs from the total of 150, published by Mulvaney and Calaby, *"So Much That Is New,"* 292-303.

collectors that continues to the present day. Neither Spencer nor Cahill recorded the names of the artists, labeling their paintings only by the artists' language groups.[238] The bark paintings included in the Spencer Collection are now housed at the Museum Victoria, and consist primarily of secular images, with themes that are also prevalent in rock art. The three major categories of imagery include static representations of animals [figure 2.5], hunting scenes [figure 2.6], and illustrations of mythical beings identified by Spencer as *mormo* [figure 2.7].

One of these paintings, for example, is a static representation of two animals, an antilopine wallaroo (*Macropus antilopinus*; a smaller relative of the kangaroo) positioned above a barramundi fish (*Lates calcarifer*) that is approximately one-third the size of the wallaroo [figure 2.5].[239] The wallaroo is depicted in right profile view, and the barramundi in left profile. The wallaroo's head is tilted up and slightly back, while its limbs are extended out in front of its body. According to Spencer:

> The most striking feature…to anyone who is acquainted with the [wallaroo] in its natural state is the really wonderful way in which the savage artist has depicted the pose that is always assumed by the animal when alarmed—the erect position of the body, the head thrown well up and slightly back, and the two little fore limbs held forwards helplessly.[240]

[238] The majority of the works were identified as "Kakadu Tribe" (or Gagudju); however, there were also some works identified as "Geimbio" (which is the Gagudju name for the Mengerdji language group). Chaloupka, *Journey in Time,* 71.

[239] See Appendices C and D.

[240] Spencer, *Wanderings in Wild Australia,* 810.

Unlike the overlapping figures in figure 2.4, both animals in this bark painting are set against a solid red background.[241] As in the rock art example, however, the animals are represented in X-ray style. The wallaroo's heart, lungs, liver and intestines are depicted, and the spinal column runs the length of its body (from the base of the head to the tip of the tail). The wallaroo of the painting has more muscles than the barramundi (depicted as red hatch marks and located in its back, arms, legs, and tail), but both animals have a considerable amount of flesh represented in white pigment, as well as complex bone structures depicted in red.

Spencer correctly observed that only a select number of animals were imaged in rock or bark drawings, and they were "those that are of value to him [the Aborigines] as food."[242] Perhaps this may also explain why both animals are represented in the X-ray style. The artists (who were also hunters) would have known the internal structures as well as the external forms of these particular animals, since they were routinely butchered.

Another painting from the Spencer Collection depicts a hunting scene [figure 2.6]. Its figurative elements include two large birds (possibly brolgas, *Grus rubicunda*) and a small, stick-like human figure, set against a solid red background.[243] The birds (which are approximately six times the size of the figure) are depicted in X-ray style, whereas the human figure is represented in linear form. Both birds are depicted in left-side profile

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[241] The overlapping figures are the result of many layers of overpainting from re-use of the surface (a phenomenon that does not occur with bark paintings but is typical of rock art).

[242] Ibid.

[243] See Appendix B. Figure 2.6 has been largely published as a representative work of the Spencer Collection. See, for example, George Corbin, *Native Arts of North America, Africa, and the South Pacific:*

view, with their internal organs, musculature, and external forms represented simultaneously. As is common in X-ray style, the larger bird has both eyes depicted frontally, even though his head is in profile. The lines to the eyes are thought to represent the optic nerves. In contrast to the static forms of the two birds, the small human figure is shown running towards the animals with a crescent-shaped form in his right hand, almost certainly a spearthrower.[244] Just above this figure's head, a spear in flight is about to strike the chest of the larger bird. In recent literature, the small and elongated human figure has been interpreted as a *mimih* (a type of small spirit that lives in the cracks of the rock plateaus), but Spencer refers to the figure simply as a "native."[245]

In addition to X-ray representations of animals and hunting scenes, a large number of bark paintings in the Spencer Collection represent the mythical beings known collectively as *mormo*. One depicts a single human/animal form, painted mostly in red (with accents of white and yellow), which fills the entire composition and is set against a solid red background [figure 2.7]. This figure has its arms extended above its head, and wing-like forms on either side of its body connecting its hands to its feet. According to Spencer, a figure with this particular shape is usually referred to as a *warraguk,* and its

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An Introduction (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988), fig. 23, and Ryan, *Spirit in Land,* fig. 5. A similar bark painting is also reproduced in Berndt, *Australian Aboriginal Art,* plate 22.

[244] A spearthrower is a traditional Aboriginal hunting device which is carved out of wood. According to Chaloupka, "…it varies in shape and size in different parts of the country but the basic feature is a blade, one end of which has a small spur or peg that engages into a hole at the proximal or butt end of the spear shaft. The implement effectively extends the length of the hunter's arm, providing added leverage and increased force when launching the weapon. As the entire force is concentrated along the shaft, the spear travels further and with greater accuracy." Chaloupka, *Journey in Time,* 150.

[245] Ryan, *Spirit in Land,* 14. Spencer, *Native Tribes,* 438. This would suggest size-differential perspective with the human figure positioned in the background, and the birds positioned in the foreground of the composition. A more detailed explanation of *mimih* spirits is also included in Chapter 5.

"general form has certainly been suggested by that of the flying-fox, a large bat that is very commonly met within the jungle along the river flats in the Kakadu [Gagudju] country."[246] The figure's eyes are geometric shapes outlined in red and filled in with solid yellow. They are the darkest feature of the figure and immediately command the viewer's attention. The figure's arms and leg's have long, articulated bones with "joint marks." It also has a spinal column, but instead of internal organs, it has a linked diamond pattern on either side of the indicated column. On the left side, the linked diamonds are in-filled with red crosshatching, and on the right, the diamonds are in-filled with solid white pigment (surrounded by red crosshatching). This bark painting demonstrates that early works from Western Arnhem Land had infill designs.

The bark paintings in the Spencer Collection helped to define a distinctive artistic style for Western Arnhem Land, one that is characterized by a limited number of figurative representations portrayed against a solid background. These figures have a tendency to dominate the composition. The Spencer Collection's holdings feature distinctive artistic components of Western Arnhem Land bark painting: the X-ray style, small animated stick-like human figures (*mimih*), joint marks, crosshatching, and infill designs.[247]

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[246] Ibid., 436. Flying-foxes are indigenous to the Oenpelli region, and most likely were used as a food source. See Appendix D.

[247] In 1925, Oenpelli became an Anglican church mission station, and eventually the Kunwinjku and the Kuninjku became the dominant language groups. Taylor, *Seeing the Inside,* 21. Unfortunately, the missionaries discouraged artists from creating bark paintings as they were viewed as being sacrilegious. Ryan, *Spirit in Land,* 15. In fact, missionaries in Western Arnhem Land did not become actively involved in marketing and distributing bark paintings from that region until the 1960s. Berndt and Berndt, *Man, Land, and Myth,* 193.

THE WARNER COLLECTION

The earliest anthropological interest in Northeastern Arnhem Land came much later than that in Western Arnhem Land. It was instigated by the American anthropologist William Lloyd Warner (1898-1970), who conducted fieldwork from 1926 to 1929 on Milingimbi, an island southwest of Elcho Island [figure 1.3].[248] Although Warner was highly critical of the missionary movement, he chose to work at the only mission station in Northeastern Arnhem Land at the time, presumably because it provided access to European goods and transportation, and attracted a large number of Aborigines from various language groups.

Warner was a Social Evolutionist who believed that the indigenous cultures of Australia were at a stage of cultural development that preceded the development of art and religion.[249] Consequently, he focused on Aboriginal kinship systems and initiation ceremonies. He did, however, collect a small number of bark paintings, objects he neither discusses nor illustrates in his 1937 publication, *A Black Civilization: A Social Study of an Australian Tribe*.[250]

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[248] Warner used the term "Murngin" to refer to the indigenous cultures that lived in Northeastern Arnhem Land. The Aboriginal language groups who live there today, prefer the term "Yolngu." W. Lloyd Warner, *A Black Civilization: A Social Study of an Australian Tribe* (New York: Harper & Row, 1937).

[249] In the introduction to Warner's book, Robert H. Lowie summarizes the early view of Australian Aborigines known as "blackfellows:" He states, "…these 'blackfellows' lacked woolly hair, were heavily bearded, and had unusually strong brow-ridges, which seemed to stamp them with a morphologically inferior character. Their mode of life in its obvious external features—the lack of bow and arrow, pottery, weaving and farming—was unequivocally rude, corresponding to that of 'lower hunters.' Thus there developed the picture of a singularly low surviving sample of Stone Age humanity, which some definitely identified with the Mousterian culture stage and with the Neanderthal race of that period." Ibid., xiii.

[250] It is unknown exactly how many bark paintings were collected by Warner. It is also unknown as to whether the bark paintings were removed directly from wet-season shelters or commissioned directly from artists. Based on the fact that the figurative representations extend beyond the edges of the bark and vast amounts of pigment have rubbed off, I would venture to guess that the barks were removed from shelters. They are also strikingly similar to the barks removed from shelters in the Port Essington region discussed

One of the bark paintings collected by Warner depicts two birds, a turtle and two snakes [figure 2.8]. There is no painted border, and the composition appears to extend beyond the edges of the sheet of bark. Relatively large figurative representations dominate the composition, the most pronounced being the central bird, possibly an ibis (*Threskiornis aethiopica*), depicted in profile.[251] White pigment may have covered the entire bird's body at one time, though the majority of it has since rubbed off. To the left of the central bird is another bird that is almost identical in size, but upside down and facing the opposite direction. This second bird is also depicted in profile, and its body is painted almost entirely in white. To the right of these two figures is a turtle, possibly a hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata)*, which is outlined in white and depicted from above.[252] Below these three figures, on the left-hand side, is a red-contoured abstract bee hive which has an infill design of white, black, and yellow dots. On the right-hand side, just below the central bird's legs, there is a small amount of crosshatching contained within a diamond pattern. The crosshatching is composed of white lines positioned diagonally with yellow lines crossing them in the opposite direction. On the bottom of the composition are two figurative representations of snakes (a fat, rounded snake painted just above a thin, angular snake). The body of the thin snake also creates a zigzagging line along the lower edge of the painting. Three-fourths of the background is painted

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in Chapter 1. During the course of my research, I encountered only four similar bark paintings at the Australian Museum, Sydney and one at the Macleay Museum, Sydney. Even though I have chosen to discuss the bark painting from the Macleay Museum, the style and composition are very similar to the other works I saw at the Australian Museum.

[251] See Appendix B.

[252] See Appendix E.

black (ending just above the central bird's head), while the remaining top portion has been left unpainted.

The bark paintings in the Warner Collection are representative examples of the style of bark painting made in Northeastern Arnhem Land with their infill designs and crosshatching. Unlike later bark paintings from the region, those Warner collected in the 1920s are characterized by two-toned backgrounds, the absence of painted frames or background designs, and large figurative representations of animals.

THE CHASELING COLLECTION

In 1935, just six years after Warner left Northeastern Arnhem Land, the Reverend Wilbur Chaseling established the first Methodist mission station in Yirrkala. In contrast to missionaries in Western Arnhem Land, those in Northeastern Arnhem Land were sensitive to and interested in indigenous Aboriginal culture. The region's missionaries found value in Aboriginal belief systems, and felt strongly that the survival of these indigenous peoples was directly related to the preservation of their traditional way of life. In addition, they encouraged the production of bark paintings that other missionaries considered sacrilegious.[253]

Upon his arrival in Yirrkala, Chaseling noticed paintings on wet-season bark shelters, and observed artists removing pieces of bark from these shelters for the sole purpose of creating bark paintings. Once the paintings were completed; however, they were quickly discarded by the artists.[254] After observing this practice, Chaseling began to commission bark paintings from various Aboriginal men, with the intention of selling

[253] Berndt and Berndt, *Man, Land, and Myth,* 193.

the works to museums in southern Australia. In a 1970 interview with anthropologist Nancy Williams, Chaseling explained that he "encouraged Aborigines at Yirrkala to manufacture their traditional arts in order to stimulate a sense of pride in their culture." He went on to say that "the Aborigines [in Yirrkala]…were apparently surprised at his appreciation of their work, commenting to him that he was the first white person to express any kind of admiration for their art."[255]

In Arnhem Land, the biggest hurdle any mission faced was how to successfully entice the indigenous people to stay for an extended period of time at the mission station. Chaseling believed that an agricultural settlement was necessary to ensure the mission's success, as well as to provide an adequate amount of food for the congregation. The missionaries needed a stable, sedentary Aboriginal population to carry out their goals of learning the native language, translating the Bible into that language, and converting the Aborigines. One way Chaseling was able to convince the Aborigines to stay on the mission was to give them tobacco.[256] Another way was to commission bark paintings. By selling the bark paintings to universities and museums in southern Australia, Chaseling was also able to generate a small income for the mission, and maintain a certain level of economic self-sufficiency.

Chaseling also believed that circulation of bark paintings could promote a more positive view of Arnhem Land and its indigenous peoples. In the late 1920s and early

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[254] Williams, "Australian Aboriginal Art at Yirrkala," 272.

[255] Ibid.

[256] In Northeastern Arnhem Land, tobacco was a desired item of trade that had already been established by the Macassans in the seventeenth century. Berndt, "External Influences," 2-9. Macassans were a group of Indonesian sailors who gathered trepang (sea cucumber) on the shores of Northeastern Arnhem Land and sold to the Chinese as a delicacy. Additional information on the Macassans appears in Chapter 4.

1930s, Northeastern Arnhem Land was known primarily as a dangerous place for Europeans to live or visit as the result of growing tensions between the Aborigines and foreigners. This disharmony began in Yirrkala in 1910, following an unprovoked massacre of local Aboriginal men. According to Howard Morphy:

> In that massacre many Yolngu were killed, mainly at Gaarngarn, inland from Blue Mud Bay, and at Caledon Bay and Trial Bay. The killings seem to have been part of a punitive expedition that was launched in error. A party of [European] police and stockmen set out to exact vengeance on the Aborigines for the supposed murder of the geologist and explorer S. Love. Love, it turned out in the end, had not been killed or even attacked, but was merely late returning.[257]

Although the 1910 massacre was never discussed in the newspapers, two subsequent events in Northeastern Arnhem Land launched a frenzied media campaign in southern Australia. In 1932, a policeman named Constable McColl was killed on Woodah Island northwest of Groote Eylandt [figure 1.2], and one year later, five Japanese fishermen were killed at Caledon Bay near Point Alexander on the Gove Peninsula.[258] The press coverage of both events contributed to a negative perception of indigenous peoples there. Chaseling, having lived among the Aborigines in Arnhem Land, believed that this perception was unjust, and, by sending bark paintings to the southern states, aimed to counteract the negative press Aborigines of Northeastern Arnhem Land had garnered.

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[257] Morphy, *Ancestral Connections*, 15.

[258] The Japanese fishermen were murdered after they had raped a number of Aboriginal women. Ronald Berndt and Catherine Berndt, *Arnhem Land: Its History and People* (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1954).

Chaseling collected 150 bark paintings between 1935 and 1939.[259] These works are now housed at the Queensland Museum in Brisbane, the Australian Museum in Sydney, and the Museum Victoria in Melbourne. In comparison to the Spencer Collection, the bark paintings in the Chaseling Collection are significantly smaller, and their size may have been dictated by Chaseling himself.[260] Despite the fact that artists' names were not recorded, the Chaseling Collection, according to Howard Morphy, "is fairly large, and…provides the only means of establishing a baseline art style for the Yirrkala region as it was at, or soon after, the beginning of continuous contact with Europeans."[261]

There are two major categories of imagery on these early Yirrkala barks: foreign sea and air vessels [figure 2.9], and indigenous land and sea animals [figures 2.10 and 2.11]. The latter category can be subdivided between compositions in which the animals appear to be randomly distributed [figure 2.10] and those that place them within feature blocks and enclosed within a painted frame [figure 2.11].

An example of the first type of bark painting, dated 1939, is seen in figure 2.9. Set against a solid red background, it shows two Australian airplanes positioned above a large Japanese boat with two raised sails. The hull of the boat is somewhat rectangular in shape, with curved ends, and is outlined in white and black and in-filled with yellow. It is shown from the side, at the level of the water-line. The triangular sails are white with their red masts painted along the vertical axis of each. These apparently secure the sails

[259] Morphy, "Schematisation to Conventionalisation ," 101.

[260] Since Chaseling collected bark paintings with the specific intention of shipping them to the southern states, he most likely preferred the barks to be no larger than two to three feet in length.

[261] Ibid., 201.

to the hull of the boat, and in between the two rectangular forms is a solid block of yellow. To the left and right of the rectangular forms, the body of the boat has infill designs of white and black dots. Along the two sides of the left sail is white crosshatching representing rigging, and along the two sides of the right sail are white and black dots. It looks as though the artist attempted to depict the left sail as if it were positioned in front of the right sail.

The airplanes, in-filled with white, are positioned above the boat and portrayed as if viewed from below. The left plane is much smaller than the one on the right. This, and the black outlining of the right plane, suggest that the artist is attempting to show that the left one is further away (reminiscent of figure 2.6). It is highly unusual for Aboriginal artists to use such illusionary devices in their art, but this practice might have been permitted in the absence of traditional imagery.

A representative example of a bark painting with figurative representations of indigenous land and sea animals randomly scattered throughout the composition is dated 1938 [figure 2.10]. The two largest figures in the painting are manta rays (*Manta hypotremata*) that appear in the upper right-hand corner and are the only two animals painted predominantly in black (the other animals are painted in yellow, white and red). The manta ray on the left is larger than the one on the right, and they are facing one another. Above the larger manta ray is a swimming frog and similar frogs are found on the far left side, just below (and to the left of) center. All of the frogs face toward the center of the composition. Below the manta rays are two turtles (perhaps representing male and female), two catfish, a few octopi, and a single canoe with three small red

turtles inside, perhaps evidence of a successful day's hunt. The inclusion of the canoe may indicate that this is a hunting scene, though no human figures appear in the composition. To the left of the larger manta ray is a single monitor and a much larger fish in profile view, with a stingray positioned near its mouth; both have infill designs of crosshatching. Only this large fish and the canoe are depicted in profile; all the other creatures are seen from above. The markings on some of these animals, especially the manta rays, might be indicative of specific sub-species.

Three geometric designs also appear in the composition, one in the top center and two in the lower center. The semi-rectangular shape at the top is actually quite similar to the overall composition of figure 2.11 (see below). Both images have a central circle design with concentric lines radiating from the center to the outside edges. In this painting, however, the divisions are not inhabited by animals and tracks, but rather by crosshatched designs. The two rectangular shapes that are on the lower center are divided into smaller rectangles and in-filled with crosshatching. The rectangular form on the right is approximately three times larger than the form on the left. These geometric shapes may be merely decorative, but perhaps as in later works, they are place markers that identify sacred sites or clan designs.

A representative example of a bark painting with figurative representations of indigenous land and sea animals organized into feature blocks is dated 1939 [figure 2.11]. A painted rectangular frame surrounds the composition. It is outlined in yellow and in-filled with white crosshatching. The painting's central motif is a red circular design which has a dot in its center and thin white lines radiating from the dot to the outer edges of the circle. Thick dividing lines also radiate outward from the edges of this central

circle to the painted frame. These dividing lines create a cross design composed of four semi-rectangular feature blocks (above, below, and on either side of the center circle). In between these feature blocks (which form the corners of the painting) are four more. Two of the dividers are thin yellow lines, four are small rectangular shapes in-filled with white crosshatching, and two are larger rectangles with linked diamond designs in-filled with crosshatching.

The figurative elements within the blocks are various animals and bird tracks of approximately the same size and primarily yellow (with accents of red and white). Beginning with the top center feature block and going clockwise, one sees a monitor, a sea turtle, a dolphin, a dugong, another smaller monitor (in the lower center feature block), a large monitor with six land turtles, a series of fifteen large and small bird tracks, and six yellow and two red birds (species unknown). None of the figures overlap and all are set against a solid red ground, except in the lower center feature block, which is black. The largest monitor (which appears with six turtles) is noteworthy, since its head and tail extend beyond the block, into the crosshatching of the dividing lines.

The bark paintings in the Chaseling Collection are characterized by solid red backgrounds, which contrast significantly with the elaborate crosshatching in later works. These bark paintings document the style of Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings in the 1930s. Painted frames, dividing lines and feature blocks, which will become common features of later bark paintings from Northeastern Arnhem Land appear for the first time in some of these early works. Other aspects of the bark paintings of the Chaseling Collection include figures extending out into dividing lines, animal track

motifs, geometrical shapes (probably representing clan designs), and crosshatching used as an infill design in dividing lines and painted frames.

THE THOMSON COLLECTION

From 1935 to 1937, at the same time that Chaseling was the mission superintendent in Yirrkala, the anthropologist Donald Thomson (1901-1970) traveled to Northeastern Arnhem Land on a fact-finding mission funded by the Australian Commonwealth Government. Thomson, who was an anthropology professor at the University of Melbourne and considered an expert on Aborigines, had been asked by the government how they should handle the 1933 incident involving the killing of the Japanese fishermen. The government had considered forming a punitive expedition, but Thomson convinced them that he should first travel to Yirrkala in an effort to find out exactly what happened, both leading up to and including the conflict.[262] Only then, in Thomson's opinion, could he recommend a government response.[263]

In Yirrkala [figure 2.12], Thomson befriended a man named Wonggu, the son of one of clan elders whose was murdered in 1910.[264] He decided to gather as much information as he could about the people's belief systems, religion, and way of life. As a means of documenting aspects of their religion, Thomson commissioned bark paintings that contained sacred imagery, and thus became the first anthropologist to collect bark

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[262] Nicolas Peterson, *Donald Thomson in Arnhem Land* (Melbourne: Currey O'Neil, 1983).

[263] Keith Cole, "A Critical Appraisal of Anglican Mission Policy and Practice in Arnhem Land 1908-1939," in *Aborigines and Change: Australia in the '70s,* ed. Ronald Berndt (New Jersey: Humanities Press, Inc., 1977), 194.

[264] Morphy states that Wonggu's father was one of the men murdered in 1910. Morphy, *Ancestral Connections,* 15. Judith Ryan states that Wonggu became Thomson's chief confidante. Ryan, *Spirit in Land,* 15. He also was the same artist that appeared in Charles Barrett's 1943 essay "Art in Arnhem Land," 68.

paintings of this sort. He was also the first to record artists' names and language group affiliations.[265]

Thomson collected seventy-six works from Yirrkala, mostly between 1935 and 1937 (approximately ten works from his collection were acquired during 1941-2).[266] In his field notes, Thompson grouped them into six major categories: nonsacred or ordinary designs, referred to as *wakinggu* by Thomson; public paintings of totemic species, called *garma* [figure 2.13]; roughly executed paintings with sacred imagery or *bulgu*; paintings of totemic species or *ngaarrapuy*; paintings with sacred imagery that is traditionally reserved for sacred objects, bodies of male initiates, and dead persons, or *likanbuy* [figure 2.15]; and monochrome paintings (white, red, or yellow).[267]

One of Thomson's *ngaarrapuy* (sacred) paintings [figure 2.13] was made by the artist Tjam (Sam) Yilkarri Kitani in 1937 [figure 2.14].[268] The composition is rectangular, and it is positioned far enough from the edges of the sheet of bark that it appears surrounded by a four- to five-inch frame. It is also bounded by a painted frame, in the form of a single yellow line. A rectangular dividing line, placed roughly along the horizontal axis, divides the composition into a top and bottom section. This line is in-filled with alternating red and white crosshatching. The top section carries the image of a snake, whose undulating body extends downward, with the head and upper body

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[265] Ryan, *Spirit in Land,* 15.

[266] Pers. comm., Lindy Allen, 31 October 2002.

[267] Howard Morphy also discusses these six categories in his book *Ancestral Connections*, 183-185.

[268] Upon careful examination of this field photograph, it is possible to observe the painting process as well. For example, just above Kitani's left hand, one can see dark outlines that he used to create the shapes which were later filled in.

encircling four tiny rectangles. On either side of the snake's body are human footprints that move in two directions. Both the body of the snake and the footprints are in-filled with crosshatching. To the left and right of the snake are triangular shapes (possibly termite mounds) that alternate in orientation and are painted a solid red. In the bottom section, there is a small human figure at lower right. To the right of this figure are small, abstract forms, and to the left are two rectangular motifs and a single triangular form. All of the figurative representations in the top section are in-filled with crosshatching. The most striking aspect of this painting is the background design, which has been divided into a grid-like system of small rectangles, in-filled with crosshatching. This background design fills the entire composition, except for the immediate space surrounding the figurative representations.

An example of a *likanbuy* painting from the Thomson Collection painted by an unidentified artist in 1942 [figure 2.15], also features a composition that is centered on the bark sheet so as to create the effect of an unpainted "frame." This painting, however, has additional elements both above and below the rectangular composition at its center: two solid red diagonal lines, and two half-circle designs in-filled with clan designs. Comparison of this bark painting to body painting designs published in Mountford's 1956 *Records of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition* (for instance, the lower left image in figure 2.16) reveals striking similarities. Both designs have a main rectangular composition with thin diagonal lines above and two designs extending below. According to Mountford, these patterns were clan designs, and, in the case of body painting, each one represented the clan to which an initiate belonged. The clan design shown in the lower left corner of figure 2.16 was originally painted on a Yirritja boy of

the Gumatj clan of Caledon Bay and, according to Mountford, illustrated the following mythological story:

> During creation times some men, whilst performing a ceremony at the Gainmaui swamp, south of Caledon Bay, left a camp-fire unattended. The fire spread, burning the whole countryside, including the men themselves. They are now white-barked eucalyptus trees, *guriri,* which, at certain times in the year, shed small flakes of bark from their trunks, exposing the whiter bark underneath…The vertical crosshatched panels on the body are three totemic eucalyptus trees at the Gainmaui swamp and the three transverse panels across the shoulders, abdomen and hips, their branches. The vertical lines of lozenge-shaped designs on the body and the legs have two meanings, the bush-fire caused by the careless men, and the white patches on the trunks of the totemic eucalyptus trees.[269]

As a clan design, the main rectangular composition of figure 2.15 would have been painted on an initiate's torso, the thin diagonal lines would have extended over each shoulder, and the lower additional elements would have been painted on his upper thighs.[270] The main rectangular composition has a painted frame, but only the bottom edge is in-filled with crosshatching. There is a solid dividing line (along the horizontal axis) which creates two major sections, the top one divided into two vertical feature blocks. Only the top right feature block contains a figurative representation of a turtle (species unknown).

Although the Thomson Collection was acquired during the same time period as the Chaseling Collection, the works are remarkably different in terms of both

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[269] Mountford, *Records of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition*, 404.

[270] I would argue that because of the similarities to the body painting designs, this is the correct orientation of the bark painting under discussion. However, Judith Ryan illustrates the painting with the diagonal lines at the bottom. Ryan, *Spirit in Land,* fig. 7.

iconography and style. With the inclusion of bark paintings with sacred imagery, this collection has works that feature clan designs, background patterns, and an emphasis on crosshatching previously unseen in the corpus of Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings.

Thomson's extensive collection and field notes which remained virtually unknown until his death in 1970, had little impact on the generation of anthropologists that followed him. Ronald and Catherine Berndt's interest in sacred bark paintings (which arose almost a decade after Thomson's) and their documentation of artists' names were, by contrast, very influential. After Thomson died, his collection, field notes, and archives were all donated to the University of Melbourne. They are now housed at the Museum Victoria.

THE 1946-50 BERNDT COLLECTION

In 1946, Ronald and Catherine Berndt traveled to Arnhem Land to conduct ten months of fieldwork, seven months in Yirrkala and three in Oenpelli. Never before had anthropologists traveled to both Western and Northeastern Arnhem Land. Catherine Berndt worked with women, collecting data on social relationships and genealogy, while her husband worked exclusively with men, and focused on religion, mythology, and song cycles.

According to John Stanton, "While in Yirrkala, Prof [as Ronald Berndt was known during his lifetime] constructed a temporary shelter where he would invite either initiated males or clan elders to meet with him to discuss their religion, mythology,

etc"[271] It was in this temporary shelter that a select group of men would spend long hours explaining their religious beliefs and practices. According to Stanton, the men sometimes became so exhausted that they fell asleep inside the shelter, and "since it was believed that their dreaming spirit would enter their body when they were asleep, in order to wake them up, you had to tickle their foot with a feather, so as not to shock their spirit."[272] Even though Ronald Berndt had learned the Yolngu language, there were times when he had difficulty understanding his informants' assertions. Berndt later recalled that it was the men's frustration that prompted them, of their own volition, to begin painting on sheets of bark:

> I was learning about the country and its religious associations as manifested through myth, ritual and song. On their own initiative, the men who were explaining such matters to me undertook the task of representing what they were telling me in another dimension—by painting on bark. I assiduously recorded the details of these barks, watching them expand into a veritable "library," depicting virtually all aspects of their life…What I am saying here is that most of these bark paintings were deliberately used as an information-aid, amplifying oral information and providing a complementary dimension to my research. They were part of the process of information-flow, similar to what I was writing down in my notebooks.[273]

It was Berndt's view, therefore, that the bark paintings added another dimension to the data he was collecting. He emphasized that it was his informants themselves who

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[271] John Stanton, interview with author, Perth, Western Australia, 27 May 2003.

[272] John Stanton, interview with author, Perth, Western Australia, 29 May 2003.

[273] Ronald Berndt, "A Living Aboriginal Art: The Changing Inside and Outside Contexts," in *Aboriginal Arts and Crafts and the Market,* eds. P. Loveday and P. Cooke (Darwin: The Australian National University North Australian Research Unit, 1983), 29.

thought to use bark paintings as teaching tools to amplify concepts under discussion. Direct payment was never made for the individual bark paintings, but a lump sum of money was given to the men as compensation for their time.[274] According to Berndt, the men were not motivated by this remuneration, but rather a desire "to compile a record of their traditional culture as they saw it and as they lived it—a record as accurate, faithful and complete as their efforts and mine together could make it."[275] The three artists with whom Berndt worked most closely were Mawalan Marika (c.1908-1967; Rirratjingu clan, Dhuwa moiety) [figure 2.17], Mawalan's son Wandjuk Marika (c.1930-1987; Rirratjingu clan, Dhuwa moiety) [figure 2.18] and Bununggu Yunupingu (c.1917-1974; Gumatj clan, Yirritja moiety).[276]

Eventually, as the number of bark paintings produced exceeded two hundred, Berndt became concerned about how the fragile works from Yirrkala would be transported to the University of Sydney. Fearing damage and/or loss of this aspect of his data, he requested reams of brown paper and colored lumber crayons from his father in Adelaide, which he had his informants use to create back-up copies of their bark paintings' imagery.[277] The men had never used these sorts of materials, and to Berndt's

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[274] John Stanton, interview with author, Perth, Western Australia, 27 May 2003.

[275] Berndt, "Transformation of Persons," 145.

[276] In terms of artists' names, even though they are now routinely documented in connection to works of art, there has been no attempt to create a master database of Arnhem Land artists which would provide a consistent (and "correct") spelling to be used by scholars and museums alike. For example, alternate spellings of Mawalan's name include: Mauwulan, Mawalan #1, Molun, Mawuwalan, and Mawulan. Alternate spellings of Wandjuk's name include: Wondjug, Wondjuk, and Wanjug. Alternate spellings of Bununggu's name include: Bunuŋgu, Bunungu, and Bununngu. In an attempt to provide some sort of consistency in spelling the names of artists, I have spelled artists' names according to the most recent authoritative literature, and have also listed alternative spellings that I have encountered during the course of my research. I believe this will aid future scholars in their research of the same Arnhem Land artists.

[277] According to Ronald Berndt, it was Mountford who first stimulated his interest in brown paper drawings. He had first used the technique in Ooldea (South Australia), and later in Yirrkala. Ibid.

surprise, they did not make copies of the original paintings, but rather innovative works of art. As Berndt recalled:

> I became worried about their [the bark paintings'] storage during the wet season, and about getting them safely into Darwin by the mission lugger. So I tried to get as near a duplicate set as was possible under the circumstances. In this I was not successful. Instead, I obtained virtually another series of drawings, depicting aspects not represented among the bark paintings.[278]

By the end of his time in Yirrkala, Ronald Berndt had collected 218 bark paintings and 365 crayon drawings, a collection originally given to the Macleay Museum at the University of Sydney.[279] After Berndt moved to Perth, the collection was divided between the Macleay Museum, the Australian Museum, and the Berndt Museum of Anthropology.[280] Its bark paintings are smaller than those collected by Thomson and have very little bark visible around the edges. The compositions are more symmetrical, usually containing a strong dividing line positioned along the central vertical axis. Similar to those in the Thomson Collection, the paintings Berndt collected include clan designs in-filled with crosshatching, and compositions surrounded by painted frames [figures 2.19 and 2.20].

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[278] Ibid.

[279] Seventeen of the crayon drawings were published in the exhibition catalogue *Djalkiri Wanga.* Hutcherson, *Djalkiri Wanga.* In June 2003, I had an opportunity to see some of the drawings at the Berndt Museum of Anthropology, University of Western Australia, Perth, where all 365 are housed today. In the catalogue, Hutcherson states that the Berndts collected 216 bark paintings from Yirrkala (page 4); however, according to Ronald Berndt's records, the number is actually 218.

[280] According to Gillian Hutcherson, the Macleay Museum holds 102 of these works, the Berndt Museum of Anthropology 68, the Australian Museum 13, and the location of the remaining 33 is unknown. Hutcherson, *Djalkiri Wanga,* 48.

Mawalan Marika made a bark painting associated with the Rirratjingu clan of the Dhuwa moiety in 1946 [figure 2.19]. This work consists of a painted frame in-filled with crosshatching, and a dividing line positioned along the vertical axis that separates the composition into two major sections. The left section is divided into two horizontal feature blocks, whereas the right section has three. The figurative representations include a single sand monitor (*Varanus gouldii*) in the upper left feature block; two overlapping (or crossed) sand monitors in the lower left feature block; two small fish in the upper right feature block; a single sand monitor in the center right feature block; and two fish in the lower right feature block.[281] The fish are painted solid red, whereas the sand monitors are in-filled with red and white crosshatching. The background pattern consists of the Rirratjingu clan design, which is characterized by yellow parallel lines that are in-filled with alternating rows of red and white crosshatching. According to the artist, this painting represents the sacred site Daralilji (Arnhem Bay), and depicts an episode from the Djang'kawu myth cycle (see Chapter 3).[282]

In 1947, Bununggu Yunupingu made a bark painting associated with the Gumatj clan of the Yirritja moiety [figure 2.20]. Like Marika's composition, this one is surrounded by a painted frame in-filled with crosshatching. Two dividing lines, one along the vertical axis and another along the horizontal axis, divide the composition into four roughly equal feature blocks. Within each feature block, the linked diamonds of the Gumatj clan design are repeated in alternating colors and in-filled with either red or white crosshatching. They are evenly spaced, with small dots of white pigment interspersed.

[281] See Appendix E.

[282] Archive Files, AMNH Collection, Berndt Museum of Anthropology, University of Western Australia, Perth.

The background alternates between solid red and solid black. According to the artist, this clan design represents a paperbark tree (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*) whose bark has just been removed. The white dots symbolize the bees eating the exposed sap, and the central dividing lines are the sticks used to wedge the bark off the tree. [283]

In 1947, the Berndts visited Oenpelli in Western Arnhem Land, but their stay there was brief. They hoped to organize a longer expedition to Oenpelli in 1949, when they could conduct more extensive research.[284] The bark paintings they collected in Oenpelli were, according to Berndt, "rather similar to those collected by Spencer in 1912," but unlike Spencer, Berndt believed that their representations of static animals in X-ray style and animated anthropomorphic figures were not mere depictions of everyday life.[285] In his 1950 publication *Art in Arnhem Land,* Berndt suggested that these paintings were connected to hunting ceremonies, and used to ensure success. This assertion has since been countered by the rock art specialist Paul S.C. Taçon, who writes:

> It was explained that often when someone returned to a shelter with fauna, someone else would suggest that its likeness be painted on the shelter wall or ceiling. When this was done the artist would sometimes refer to the actual species brought back as a model, but the final painted

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[283] Ibid.

[284] Even though the visit was brief, the Berndts were able to learn Kunwinjku.

[285] Elkin, Berndt, and Berndt, *Art in Arnhem Land,* 76. Between 1912 and 1947, no anthropological research had been conducted in Oenpelli. Berndt, "A Living Aboriginal Art," 30. Berndt is quick to state once again that the bark paintings were "…produced without any stimulus on my part." Ronald Berndt would likely have known the Spencer collection from Spencer's two publications (1914, 1928), and the fact that all thirty-eight of the bark paintings collected by Spencer in 1912 were on display in the "Spencer Hall" of the National Museum of Victoria (Museum Victoria), Melbourne beginning in 1915. Pers. comm., Lindy Allen, 5 November 2004. See also Baldwin Spencer, *Guide to the Australian Ethnological Collection Exhibited in the National Museum of Victoria* (Melbourne: Albert J. Mullett Government Printer, 1922), 128-133.

> product always conformed to the stylistic conventions of the group…Most elders, however, were insistent that painting was done after hunting and not before, and that usually only food-animals were painted…a very good subject to paint.[286]

In Oenpelli, the Berndts collected bark paintings of malignant spirits that are similar to Spencer's *mormo* figures [figure 2.21]. They also discovered an entirely new category of figurative representation in Western Arnhem Land bark painting: distorted figures associated with love magic and sorcery [figure 2.22]. Berndt first encountered these sorcery figures in rock art when he was allowed to enter several small rock shelters which he describes as "almost inaccessible, and [which] can be found only with the aid of an experienced elderly native guide."[287]

An example of a bark painting of a malignant spirit was painted by Samuel Manggudja Garnarradj (1909-1983; Namayirrkulidj clan, Kunwinjku language group) in 1947 [figure 2.21]. Like some of the *mormo* spirit images seen in the Spencer Collection paintings [figure 2.7], this figure has both anthropomorphic and zoomorphic traits. Set against a solid red background, its body is painted white, with black lines demarcating the figure's skeletal structure, and an in-fill design of red and black dots. The spirit is depicted with an exaggeratedly large penis and both knees bent, one foot off the ground as if walking. He is also holding a spear (?) in his left hand and the bottom half of a tiny human body over his right shoulder.

According to the artist, this spirit was said to have fallen in love with the two wives of a man named Lumbuk. One day, the spirit hid in some bushes and extended his

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[286] Taçon, "Art and the Essence of Being," 241.

[287] Elkin, Berndt, and Berndt, *Art in Arnhem Land*, 78.

penis under the ground so that it emerged at the place where one of the wives made her bed. When this wife returned and sat down, the spirit's penis entered her body and broke her in half. Afterwards, the spirit took the bottom half of the woman back to his home.[288]

Samuel Manggudja Garnarradj painted another example of a sorcery figure in 1947 [figure 2.22], centralized on a solid red ground. Depicted in black and outlined in white, this elongated figure is clearly female; two white breasts appear on either side of the torso and there is an inverted triangle with pubic hair between the legs. The only in-fill patterning is along the figure's spine, which consists of a series of chevron marks painted alternately black and white. The limbs of the figure are contorted, and small stingray spines have been inserted at almost every joint. According to the artist, this figure has a head of a black-necked stork (*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*) and a long feather is falling from her head (represented by a white form).[289] It represents an unfaithful wife, and Berndt's notes record that after creating such an image, usually on the wall of a cave, a wronged husband would call out his wife's name. At that moment, the woman would begin to feel sick, and after a few days she would die.[290]

The 1946-50 Berndt Collection is the first bark painting collection to contain works from both Northeastern and Western Arnhem Land. It illustrates the styles of these two regions in the 1940s. For the first time, Northeastern Arnhem Land artists identified clan designs in collected works, and linked them to sacred sites and mythology.

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[288] Archive Files, Berndt Collection, Berndt Museum of Anthropology, University of Western Australia, Perth.

[289] See Appendix B.

[290] Ibid.

The works the Berndts collected from Western Arnhem Land showed a theretofore unknown category of figurative representation, sorcery figures. Ronald Berndt's most important contribution, however, was to establish the practice of recording the names and social affiliations of artists he collected from, as well as recording the "stories" artists associated with their paintings. According to Luke Taylor:

> The work of the Berndts helped these artists to become well known to the outside world, expanded the market for their work, and probably had the indirect effect of reinforcing the wider art market's interest in variations between individual artists.[291]

THE MOUNTFORD COLLECTION

In 1948, a year after the Berndts left Arnhem Land, the American ethnologist and film maker Charles Percy Mountford (1890-1976) led an eight-month expedition of American and Australian scientists to Western and Northeastern Arnhem Land [figure 2.23]. The expedition was funded and co-sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution, the National Geographic Society, and the Australian government.

Five years earlier, Mountford had received a grant from the Australian Director-General of Information to conduct a U.S. lecture tour based on two of his films, "Tjurunga" and "Walkabout," both of which focused on Aboriginal life in Central Australia. After attending one of his lectures, officials from the National Geographic Society encouraged Mountford to submit a proposal for a joint American-Australian scientific expedition to Arnhem Land, and he was eventually chosen to lead.[292]

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[291] Taylor, *Seeing the Inside,* 29.

[292] Mountford, *Records of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition,* ix.

The members of the expedition included Mountford (who at the time was affiliated with the South Australian Museum, Adelaide), the archaeologist Frank M. Setzler (Head Curator, Smithsonian Institution), four other Smithsonian scientists (Herbert Deignan, ornithology; David Johnson, mammology; Robert Miller, ichthyology; and Raymond Sprecht, botany), National Geographic Society photographer Harrison Walker, and the anthropologist Frederick D. McCarthy (Australian Museum, Sydney). Mountford's wife, Bessie Mountford, was honorary secretary, William "Bill" Harney served as the local liaison officer, Peter Basset-Smith was the cine-photographer, Keith Cordon was the transport officer, and the cooks (and honorary entomologists) were John Bray and Reginald Hollow. In addition, the Institute of Anatomy, Canberra, sent a nutritional unit, comprised of Brian Billington, Margaret McArthur, and Kelvin Hodges, to study Aboriginal health and food.[293]

During the eight-month expedition, three main research camps were established at Groote Eylandt, Yirrkala, and Oenpelli. In a letter dated October 20, 1947 to Frank Setzler, Mountford wrote, "The general pattern of the expedition is to ascertain 'How the aborigines live off the land.'" [294] Ethnologist Mountford, however, hoped to "work on the art and associated legends of the tribes we contact," and planned to photograph rock art and obtain a collection of bark paintings from both Western and Northeastern Arnhem Land.[295] He had intended to be the first scientist to travel to both Western and

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[293] Ibid., xi.

[294] Archive Files, Setzler Archives, General Correspondence, 1948, Box 7, Smithsonian Institution Museum Support Center, Suitland, Maryland.

[295] Ibid. By the end of the expedition, the scientists had collected over 13,500 plant specimens, 30,000 fish, 850 birds, and 460 mammals. Mountford, *Records of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition,* xxx.

Northeastern Arnhem Land, but because the expedition took almost five years to organize, he was preceded by the Berndts. According to John Stanton, "When 'Monte' [as Charles Mountford was known at the time] found out that the Berndts were going to travel to Arnhem Land, he literally cried and begged the Berndts not to go…because he wanted to be the first one there." Stanton also noted that the Berndt's decision to go on as planned "caused a bit of a rift in their friendship, but it didn't last very long."[296] Unlike Ronald Berndt, Mountford was not interested in the social affiliations of the artists, and found it unnecessary to record their names in connection with specific works. Mountford's collecting methods also differed from the Berndts' in that he commissioned individual bark paintings for money, rather than acquiring them as part of the course of general research.[297]

The Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings from the Mountford Collection are quite similar in style and subject matter to the works collected by Ronald Berndt in 1946-1947. The majority of them have painted frames with crosshatching, one or more dividing lines, and sections that are further subdivided into feature blocks. Figurative representations are prevalent.

A Northeastern Arnhem Land bark painting in the Mountford Collection (1949, artist unknown) [figure 2.24] has no painted frame, but there is a strong dividing line in-filled with crosshatching that extends down the vertical axis, dividing the composition roughly into two sections. Another dividing line occurs along the horizontal axis in the form of an extended, meandering form. Both above and below the horizontal dividing

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[296] John Stanton, interview with author, Perth, Western Australia, 29 May 2003.

[297] Mountford, *Records of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition,* 8.

line are four feature blocks. The figurative representations in the upper feature blocks are a small monitor facing upwards, a small monitor facing downwards, a snake, and a large monitor facing downwards. Only three of the four lower feature blocks contain figurative representations: a small monitor, five snakes, and two quadrupeds (possibly northern brown bandicoots, *Isoodon macrourus*).[298] As in some earlier works, the figures are portrayed from several perspectives. The feature block with the two quadrupeds constitutes the first known instance of animals depicted in a landscape (in this case standing on a hill). In all previous bark painting, figurative representations are shown either floating against a blank background or surrounded by some type of abstract design. This representation of landscape is significant and connects this bark painting stylistically to figure 2.25.

The rest of this bark painting's feature blocks are either solid black (an unusual feature of Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings Mountford collected) or in-filled with background designs of red and white dots. The crosshatching consists of thick lines, with very large gaps between the brushstrokes. There are instances (for example on the right-hand border) in which only half of the crosshatching design has been painted.

Another bark painting Mountford collected (1949, artist unknown) from Northeastern Arnhem Land also includes landscape features [figure 2.25]. A painted frame, in-filled with crosshatching, encloses the composition, which is divided into two feature blocks of roughly equal size by a central dividing line running along the vertical axis. The right feature block is completely filled with rows of horizontal bars in-filled with either red or white crosshatching. The left feature block contains figurative

representations of three anthropomorphic figures with bodies, heads and arms shown frontally, and legs depicted in profile. The largest of these is clearly the male and the others are of indeterminate gender. They are painted solid yellow, outlined in white, and set against a solid black background. Although the figures' facial features are not shown, the male figures seems to be wearing a large red rectangular object around his neck, which may be a dillybag (a woven carrying bag made from pandanus leaves). Below these three figures is a "landscape" comprised of figurative representations of seven trees, also painted yellow and outlined in white.

Many of the works collected by Mountford in Western Arnhem Land include X-ray style images of static animals and animated anthropomorphic figures similar to those seen in some of the paintings in the Spencer Collection. The Mountford Collection also contains some previously unseen types of figural representation, including animals and human figures in-filled with clan designs (known as *rarrk* in Western Arnhem Land) [figures 2.26 and 2.27], abstract or geometric forms [figure 2.28], and *mimih* (small anthropomorphic figures) depicted in splayed position [figure 2.29].[299] Up until World War II, crosshatching was believed to exist only in bark paintings from Northeastern Arnhem Land. Traditionally, clan designs were used exclusively during sacred ceremonial activities, painted on the bodies of male initiates.[300] Thus the inclusion of clan designs in some of the bark paintings in this collection, would seem to be the earliest instance of a feature that continues to this day.

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[298] See Appendix D.

[299] Western Arnhem Land *rarrk* patterns and *mimih* figures are discussed further in Chapter 5.

[300] The use of crosshatching in Western Arnhem Land is discussed in further detail in Chapter 5.

A Western Arnhem Land bark painting made by an unknown artist in 1949 [figure 2.28] features an abstract shape that is centered against a solid red background. The mainly rectangular form has five semi-circles of varying sizes protruding from its top. The semi-circles are black, and four vertical lines, also black, extend from the top of the rectangle to the bottom. Between the divisions created by these black lines is crosshatching in red and white. According to Mountford, this bark painting illustrates a rocky hill called Raba-awil near the Liverpool River, presumably a sacred site:

> Raba-awil is the metamorphosed body and totemic place of a mythical man called *Junaduria.* The serrated upper edge represents the rocky spires on the hill; the crosshatched areas are the cliff faces; lines of dots, the footholds by which the aborigines climb to the top.[301]

Thus, this work would seem to include another representation of landscape, albeit in abstract form.

A painting in the Mountford Collection depicting multiple *mimih* figures in a splayed position was painted by an unknown artist in 1948 [figure 2.29]. Two large figures, surrounded by fourteen smaller ones positioned in a similar stance, are set against a solid red background. These figures are depicted in splayed position, with both elbows and knees are sharply bent. They lack genitalia and are red, with white lines marking their torsos. They lack facial features and bodily details.

The Mountford Collection contains some 200 paintings from Northeastern and Western Arnhem Land, all made in the late 1940s. The collection initially was divided between the Smithsonian Institution and the Australian government. In 1956, the

[301] Mountford, *Records of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition,* 232-234.

Australian government further subdivided their half among state galleries and museums in Australia. According to Susan Cochrane, these donations marked the establishment of Aboriginal art collections for many of these institutions. [302]

THE TUCKSON/SCOUGALL COLLECTION

In 1959, the artist John Anthony "Tony" Tuckson (1921-1973) traveled to Yirrkala as Deputy Director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Unlike the previous anthropological expeditions, Tuckson's was organized expressly to collect bark paintings. The trip was financed by an orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Stuart Scougall, who was also an expedition member. Sougall's secretary, Dorothy Bennett, accompanied the expedition, as did Tuckson's wife Margaret, the unofficial photographer for the group [figure 2.30].

Tuckson began his career as an art student in England. He moved to Australia in 1947 with the intention of continuing his career as a painter, but found that his work was out of sync with that which was popular in Australia at the time. Taking this as a challenge, he became "an energetic proselytizer for modern art, and for abstract painting especially."[303] At the same time, he became a champion of Aboriginal art, which he considered a potential inspiration to contemporary European artists. Tuckson first saw Aboriginal art at the 1949 exhibition at the David Jones Art Gallery, Sydney.[304] Shortly

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[302] Susan Cochrane, ed., *Aboriginal Art Collections: Highlights from Australia's Public Museums and Galleries* (Sydney: Fine Art Publishing Pty. Ltd., 2001), 10.

[303] National Gallery of Australia, *Painting Forever: Tony Tuckson* (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 2000), 10.

[304] This exhibition, entitled "Art of Australian Aborigines of Arnhem Land, Northern Australia," included Arnhem Land bark paintings and figural sculpture collected by Ronald and Catherine Berndt in 1946-47. Ibid., 14. For more information about the 1949 exhibition, see Chapter 1.

thereafter, Tuckson became Deputy Director at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, where he was also the unofficial curator of Aboriginal art.[305] In 1956, when the AGNSW received twenty-four of the bark paintings Mountford had collected in Arnhem Land, Tuckson was given responsibility for them. He hoped to build on this small collection and one day devote an entire gallery to Aboriginal art.[306]

In 1957, Tuckson met Scougall, a fellow devotee of Aboriginal art. The orthopedist had originally become interested in Aboriginal cultures while researching the "one-legged stance," a position assumed by bending one leg and resting it on the other leg while standing. This stance was often assumed by Aboriginal men, most especially those who lived in Arnhem Land. According to Margaret Tuckson, Scougall wanted to study this phenomenon in Arnhem Land, among the Aborigines themselves, and asked her husband if he would be interested in traveling to Melville Island. Since Tuckson lacked funding for the trip, Scougall financed it.[307]

In 1959, Scougall proposed a second trip to Arnhem Land, this one to Yirrkala and focused on collecting bark paintings. During their stay, the group spent the majority of their time with the artists Mawalan and Wandjuk Marika. The latter, who had learned English while living in Darwin, became their translator.[308] The artists invited the group along to collect bark and observe its preparation and painting [figure 2.31].

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[305] According to Margaret Tuckson this was in 1957. Margaret Tuckson, interview with author, Syndey, New South Wales, 23 May 2003.

[306] Ibid.

[307] Ibid. Scougall also paid for Tony's wife, Margaret, who had agreed to be their cook.

[308] According to Margaret Tuckson, "…Wandjuk had contracted leprosy and was quarantined in Darwin for two years…during which time, he learned English. He was the only one who knew English, therefore,

After this trip, Tuckson and Scougall continued to collect, and by 1964 had amassed 116 bark paintings from Yirrkala. Now housed in the AGNSW, the Tuckson/Scougall Collection contains the largest bark paintings collected from Northeastern Arnhem Land [figure 2.32]. These works are also distinctive in the fact that their crosshatching appears only in clan designs, not in painted frames, dividing lines, figurative representations or backgrounds, as it does in earlier collections (such as the Berndt and Mountford Collections). The Tuckson/Scougall paintings are of two main sorts: those with secular imagery [figure 2.33] and those with sacred imagery [figure 2.34].

One of the paintings with secular imagery, painted by Munggerawuy Yunupingu (life dates unknown; Gumatj clan, Yirritja moiety) [figure 2.33], represents a hunting scene. The composition is filled with yellow figurative representations that are outlined in white and set against a solid red ground. They include snakes, birds, fish, turtles, monitors, frogs, stingrays, sharks, and wallaroos. Positioned at the bottom center of the composition is a single human figure, whose arms extend upwards as if reaching toward the animals. All these figures, including the human, have white eyes, and most have two parallel lines, painted in white and outlined in red, which divide the body horizontally into three roughly equal sections. The upper half of the composition is framed by a single white band, while the bottom half extends to the edge of the sheet of bark. The top and bottom borders are also marked by the same white band, and the background is a solid yellow.

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he had to act as translator…this was great especially when Tony was recording the stories of the paintings from the artists." Ibid.

One of the bark paintings with sacred imagery in the Tuckson/Scougall Collection, painted by Mawalan Marika [figure 2.34], represents a section of the Djang'kawu myth cycle. According to the artist, his subject was the landing of the Djang'kawu sisters on the coast of the Port Bradshaw [#4 on figure 3.1].[309] This extremely large bark painting has a painted frame consisting of a single white line, and is divided into eight equal feature blocks. These blocks are separated by a single yellow line (outlined in white), except for the lower two feature blocks, which have more elaborate top and bottom borders. The block on the lower left has an identical border, on top and bottom, consisting of three solid black circles, outlined in red, and surrounded by the Rirratjingu clan design. The feature block on the lower right has a top and bottom border in-filled with two variations of the clan design. Although the imagery of these blocks differs, each one has either a geometric shape or a figurative representation surrounding by the clan design. Two of the feature blocks have either full or partial representations of yellow sand monitors, whereas the rest of the feature blocks have images of ovals, circles, or ceremonial walking sticks. Although the Rirratjingu clan design is present in each of the feature blocks, the direction of the parallel lines varies, running either vertically, horizontally, diagonally, or any combination of the three. They are also in-filled either with white, yellow, red, or black crosshatching.

In 1961 and 1962, Scougall traveled to Oenpelli to collect bark paintings from a different stylistic region of Arnhem Land. The bark paintings he collected, and subsequently donated to the AGNSW, are very similar to previous Western Arnhem Land bark paintings discussed in this chapter, with the exception that the Scougall bark

[309] This section of the Djang'kawu myth cycle is explored in greater detail in Chapter 3.

paintings include examples of landscape features used in combination with figurative representations of *mimih* spirits [figure 2.35].

One such painting, made by Anchor Kulunba (c.1917-1996; Kurulk clan, Kuninjku language group) in 1962 [figure 2.35], shows *mimih* spirits engaged in a ceremony. Set against a solid red background, one large *mimih* figure (painted in white and outlined in yellow) carries a spear in one hand and a small wallaroo over his shoulders. To the right of the large figure are five smaller figures in linear form, also white. Two of the five small figures seem to be seated (and seem to be playing musical instruments—a dijeridu and clapsticks), while the other three figures are shown with bent legs dancing. What is so innovative about this composition is the solid white mountain-like form to the right of the figures, which begins below the larger figure's feet and extends all the way up along the right side of the composition. This would seem to be an unprecedented incidence of figurative representations placed within a landscape (albeit an abstracted one), as opposed to being simply portrayed against blank ground.

The Tuckson/Scougall Collection also includes multiple examples of an innovative style developed in Northeastern Arnhem Land, known as the "storyboard design." A significant number of works, including figures 2.32 and 2.35, contain compositions that are divided into large feature blocks that look almost like separate paintings adjoined to depict a sequence of episodes from the same myth cycle. Margaret Tuckson later recalled that this "storyboard design" was instigated by the collector, noting, "Scougall actually requested that the artists try to create larger bark paintings, and

with multiple images."[310] She went on to remark, "Anthropologists have gotten very upset by this fact, because white man is not supposed to interfere in such a way, and suggest alterations to the art form…but this is what happened."[311] Although there is one work in the AMNH Berndt Collection which uses the "storyboard design" [figure 3.3] (on a smaller scale), it does not become a prominent feature of bark paintings produced in this region until one year later, when Scougall began commissioning works that utilized this device. This mode has since become a defining characteristic of Northeastern Arnhem Land bark painting.[312]

THE GROGER-WURM COLLECTION

The final bark painting collection I will introduce was obtained by Dr. Helen Groger-Wurm (b. 1921) between 1965 and 1971. Groger-Wurm received her undergraduate degree in anthropology (concentrating on material culture) at the Viennese School of Anthropology, Vienna University, and her doctorate in social anthropology from the London School of Economics. After completing her studies, she moved with her husband Stephen Wurm, a renowned linguist, to Canberra, where she began working as the curator of anthropology at the Australian Institute of Anatomy. As a founding member of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Groger-Wurm was selected to chair the committee devoted to the study of material culture, and in that capacity she traveled to the Northern Territory in 1965 to collect artifacts and conduct fieldwork

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[310] Ibid.

[311] I went on to ask Margaret if the artists were reluctant to adapt their bark paintings to the suggestions of Scougall, and she said, "I'm not sure, but it didn't take long for them to start creating these much larger barks with multiple scenes." Ibid.

[312] See, for example, Corbin, *Native Arts*, 206, and Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, 74 and 244.

among all the major language groups of Arnhem Land. During a six-year period, Groger-Wurm collected approximately 1250 items from thirteen different locations, including Yirrkala and Oenpelli.

As Groger-Wurm collected bark paintings with both secular and sacred imagery, she recorded information about their subject matter, provided by the artists themselves.[313] Since she did not speak any Aboriginal language fluently, Groger-Wurm used an interpreter, or asked an artist who knew English to translate. The information she obtained was then verified for content and accuracy; according to Groger-Wurm, "The comments and information were checked thoroughly at various stages not only locally but also with old people of the appropriate moiety affiliation living at different places and unaware of the original interpretation given to the author."[314]

When Groger-Wurm first arrived in Yirrkala, she did not know if she would be allowed to view bark paintings with sacred imagery, much less obtain the information needed to interpret them. She had been warned by colleagues in Canberra that Aboriginal men would never reveal such important and highly guarded information to a white woman.[315] One of her first contacts was Mawalan Marika, who by that time had a "fluent command of English," and he, in turn, introduced her to Gawerin, the ceremonial

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[313] Groger-Wurm stated that when this was not possible, she would obtain information from the respective headmen and ceremonial leaders. Groger-Wurm, *Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings*, ix.

[314] Oftentimes, Groger-Wurm would double check the information with more than one source, in order to ensure its accuracy. In a personal interview she stated, "…I knew that I needed to check everything ten times, because everyone [in Canberra] would say that I was wrong!" Helen Groger-Wurm, interview with author, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, 13 June 2003.

[315] Ibid.

leader of the Dalwongu language group.[316] Groger-Wurm explained her project as best she could to the two men, who took the information to the clan elders to consider. After nine days of deliberations,

> they told me that they had agreed to produce the paintings because they were aware that their old heritage might be lost and they wanted it preserved. However, they stressed that everything must be recorded correctly, that they would tell me the 'true inside' meaning and that I was to ask should I not understand or was not sure of the interpretation.[317]

Groger-Wurm was therefore granted permission to be present at secret discussions and view sacred imagery, because of the older generation's desire to preserve their culture.

Groger-Wurm collected 192 bark paintings, all of which were originally given to the Australian Institute of Anatomy. In the mid-1980s, they were transferred to the National Museum of Australia, Canberra, where they are housed today. In the Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings, as in those of the Tuckson/Scougall Collection, crosshatching does not appear in the painted frames, figurative representations or the background, but instead is reserved largely for clan designs and dividing lines. Unique to the Groger-Wurm Collection is the fact that figurative representations are at times used to separate individual feature blocks [figure 2.36]. There is also a pronounced figure/ground reversal effect, and the figurative representations in the Groger-Wurm Collection are both larger and more detailed than in bark paintings from earlier collections [figure 2.37].

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[316] Groger-Wurm, *Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings,* x.

[317] Ibid.

Millirpum Marika (born 1908; Rirratjingu clan, Dhuwa moiety), for example, made a bark painting that uses a figurative representation to separate individual feature blocks in 1967 [figure 2.36]. A painted frame, consisting of a single white line, surrounds the composition, which has a main horizontal dividing line, in-filled with red and white crosshatching, that roughly separates the composition into a top and bottom section. These are subdivided into feature blocks. The bottom section is divided into three feature blocks, each of which is filled with human footprints and clan designs. Separating the feature blocks are two large black forms (half triangle, half rectangle, the tops of which are echoed at the top of the painting). According to Marika, the lower half of his painting represents Wobilinga Island.[318] The top section is subdivided into two almost identical feature blocks, each of which shows anthropomorphic figure holding a black stick in each hand. Above the figures are two large conical forms, painted in solid black and surrounded by clan designs. A figurative representation of a tree, painted mostly in solid black, separates these blocks. Marika explained that these two figures are young male initiates, whom the Djang'kawu have designated as custodians for all sacred emblems. The two black conical forms are dillybags, placed there by the Djang'kawu. The tree they hang from symbolizes a "bush shelter."[319]

A painting made by Yama (born 1920; Gumaidj clan, Yirritja moiety) in 1967 [figure 2.37] features a composition that is divided into three unequal sections and enclosed by a painted frame that consists of a thin yellow line. Both the top and bottom sections are in-filled with a linked-diamond motif associated with the Yirritja moiety.

[318] Archive Files, Groger-Wurm Collection, National Museum of Australia, Canberra. Wobilinga Island is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

[319] Ibid.

Figurative representations in the middle section include a freshwater crocodile (*Crocodylus johnstoni)* flanked by four yellow fish (possibly a type of herring, *Spratelloides delicatulus)*, two on either side.[320] The crocodile, larger in scale than animals in earlier bark paintings, is detailed with eyes, nose, and claws; the fishes' eyes, mouths, and gills are depicted. A strong figure/ground reversal effect, of the sort seen in several of the bark paintings in the Groger-Wurm Collection, is apparent here.

The Western Arnhem Land bark paintings Groger-Wurm collected have more pattern design found in their figurative representations [figure 2.38], than is seen in earlier works, and for the first time, works depict anthropomorphic figures against backgrounds of crosshatching [figure 2.39], an innovative usage for this region.

In 1968, Jimmi Naguridjilmi (born 1919; Nawagadj clan, Yirritja moiety) made a bark painting in which a *mimih* spirit is depicted next to a short-beaked echidna (*Tachyglossus aculeatus),* both set against a solid red background [figure 2.38].[321] The *mimih* is shown in X-ray style, with not only his musculature but his skeletal structure painted in red against a white background. The echidna is also represented in X-ray style; its backbone, muscles, and skeleton are painted white and outlined in red, and each spine on its back and claw of its paws is carefully delineated. This image is particularly notable for the proliferate patterning in its figurative representations.

Anthropomorphic figures set against a background of crosshatching are seen in a painting by Samuel Manggudja Garnarradj made in 1968 [figure 2.39]. Garnarradj said this work depicts the myth of Wurragag, the husband of the major regional ceremonial

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[320] See Appendices C and E.

[321] See Appendix D.

figure Yingarna.[322] Three anthropomorphic figures are enclosed within amorphous forms and set against a solid red background. The largest, at left, is presented in profile, with one leg bent as if moving leftward. The other two figures are smaller, the top one standing and facing the viewer, the other seated and seen in profile. All three are painted in solid red with a thin, black outline, while the three amorphous forms that contain them are in-filled with alternating rows of red, black, and yellow crosshatching. Though the crosshatching is contained, its use as a backdrop for figures is unique.

The bark paintings of Groger-Wurm Collection are important in that they illustrate the styles of Western and Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The collection also includes previously unseen stylistic components in bark paintings from each stylistic region. In Northeastern Arnhem Land, it is the first instance in which figurative representations are used to separate individual feature blocks. The works from this region also show a more pronounced figure/ground reversal effect, as well as larger and more detailed figurative representations. The Western Arnhem Land bark paintings include an increase in pattern design, as well as crosshatched backgrounds for anthropomorphic figures.

CONCLUSION

Each of the eight collections described here is important in terms of establishing the styles of Western and Northeastern Arnhem Land bark painting, as well as charting a chronology of innovative elements and trends within each region over time. The Spencer Collection established a distinctive artistic style for Western Arnhem Land characterized

by a limited number of figurative representations depicted against a solid red background, as well as the X-ray style and the presence of small animated stick-like figures, spirit beings, joint marks, crosshatching, and infill designs. To this, the 1946-50 Berndt Collection introduced a new category of figurative representation, sorcery figures. The Mountford Collection for the first time included bark paintings with representations of animals and human figures in-filled with crosshatching, the presence of distinct abstract or geometric forms, as well as *mimih* figures depicted in a splayed position. The Scougall Collection included the first instance in which landscape features appear in combination with figurative representations of *mimih* spirits, while the Western Arnhem Land works in the Groger-Wurm Collection include an increase in pattern designs, as well as anthropomorphic figures set within a delineated shapes in-filled with crosshatching.

The Chaseling Collection first established the stylistic features of Northeastern Arnhem Land characterized by compositions surrounded by a painted frame and divided into distinct feature blocks. It also introduced figurative representations that extend out into the dividing lines, and the inclusion of animal tracks, geometric shapes, and crosshatching. The bark paintings from the Warner Collection from this region include figurative representations of animals and infill designs. The bark paintings in the Thomson Collection were the first to include clan designs, background patterns, as well as an emphasis on crosshatching previously unseen. The 1946-50 Berndt Collection first identified and linked such clan designs to sacred sites and clan mythology, while the Mountford Collection is distinctive for bark paintings that use black as a background

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[322] Groger-Wurm's field notes, National Museum of Australia, Canberra. Both Yingarna and Wurragag

color as well as the first representations of landscape features. The Tuckson/Scougall Collection represents, and may have inspired, some of the earliest instances of the "storyboard" composition, and the Groger-Wurm Collection is distinguished by bark paintings that show a more pronounced figure/ground reversal effect, as well as larger and more detailed figurative representations.

In Chapter 3, I will analyze the forty-two bark paintings with sacred imagery from Northeastern Arnhem Land that are in the AMNH Berndt Collection.

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are discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 3

CONCEALED MEANINGS WITHIN ABSTRACT DESIGNS: BARK PAINTINGS WITH SACRED IMAGERY FROM NORTHEASTERN ARNHEM LAND

In this chapter, I will focus on bark paintings with sacred imagery from Northeastern Arnhem Land, the first major stylistic region represented in the AMNH Berndt Collection. I will analyze the forty-two bark paintings with sacred imagery from Northeastern Arnhem Land that are in the AMNH Berndt Collection. These works will first be organized by moiety, then by clan and individual artist. I will discuss the bark paintings in terms of style and iconography, paying close attention to individual stylistic trends as well as similarities and/or differences that exist between works that belong to the same social group.

THE AMNH BERNDT COLLECTION

The AMNH Berndt Collection includes forty-two bark paintings with sacred imagery from Northeastern Arnhem Land, twenty-eight from Yirrkala and fourteen from Elcho Island.[323] Bark paintings with sacred imagery are works of art that visually condense complex information on sacred sites and the epic journeys of the creator spirits. Similar to those in the 1946-50 Berndt Collection at the Berndt Museum of Anthropology, Perth, these bark paintings have very little bark visible around the edges

[323] I have chosen to combine the bark paintings from Yirrkala with the bark paintings from Elcho Island for a number of reasons. First, they are two main settlements of the Yolngu of Northeastern Arnhem Land (both of which were originally founded as Methodist missionary stations). Second, the two communities have identical social structures, and the same clans are represented in both locations. Third, similar imagery appears on the bark paintings, and they relate to the same myth cycles. These similarities outweigh the differences, thus I have grouped the bark paintings together under a single heading of "Northeastern Arnhem Land."

of their compositions, and are relatively small (the average size being 12 x 20 inches). Thirty-one are associated with the Dhuwa moiety, eleven with the Yirritja moiety.

Each moiety has its own set of creator spirits and *great myth cycles*. Great myth cycles are sacred stories that explain how the actions of the creator spirits formed the landscape, gave birth to the clans, and established sacred law (*mardayin*). Each clan owns a particular section of these myth cycles, which are related to their territory and sacred sites, and each clan has exclusive rights over its own section. For major ceremonies, clans come together to perform a great myth cycle, during which each clan acts out and/or sings its own section. The interconnected stories of the myth cycles thus embrace a wide geographical area and connect the clans of a single moiety. Bark painters often use episodes from these myth cycles as subject matter, and works produced within the same moiety often are similar in style. Bark paintings with sacred imagery that belong to the same clan often are thematically allied, since these paintings tend to reference specific sacred sites.

Dhuwa Moiety

The most important great myth cycle of the Dhuwa moiety, particularly in the coastal regions of Northeastern Arnhem Land, is the Djang'kawu, which centers on the lives and travels of a brother and his two sisters.[324] The three are said to come from the mythical island of Burralku (located somewhere beyond Groote Eylandt).[325] The

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[324] Alternate spellings include: Djanggawul, Djanggau, Djukgao, and Djankgowa.

[325] Louis Allen states that according to the myth, the brother (who was the husband of Walu, the Sun Woman) committed incest with his sisters, and it was because of this that they were banished from the island of Burralku. Allen, *Time Before Morning,* 43. Wandjuk Marika states in his autobiography, that the inside secret about the sisters is that they are probably the wives of the brother. Marika, *Life Story,* 35.

designation "Djang'kawu" is used to refer to the brother as a single entity, as well as to the brother and his sisters collectively.[326] For the purposes of this discussion, I will use "Djang'kawu" to refer to the three siblings as a group. The vast majority of Dhuwa moiety bark paintings in the AMNH Berndt Collection relate to the Djang'kawu myth cycle, the main themes of which are fertility, the procreation of man, and the creation of the environment.[327] According to the myth, when the brother and his two sisters left Burralku, they traveled by canoe for forty days and forty nights to reach the shores of Arnhem Land, carrying only their most important sacred emblems.[328] The Djang'kawu first landed at Port Bradshaw (also known as Yalangbara, which translates as "sunrise beach") [#4 on figure 3.1], a place of high importance for all members of the Dhuwa moiety (not just the Rirratjingu clan who owns the land). Having reached the mainland, the group followed the sun from east to west, creating all the physical features of the landscape as they went. At each place they stopped, the Djang'kawu created animals (by singing their names), and gave birth to the clans who today inhabit the land. The words of their songs varied as they journeyed from place to place, and gave rise to the languages of the clans they created. According to Wandjuk Marika, "That's why we are different tribes and different languages but we can understand each other."[329] The

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[326] Groger-Wurm, *Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings,* 19.

[327] To date this myth cycle has not been analyzed in depth, nor has it ever been connected to bark paintings (in multiple collections) that date from 1946 to 1970. Traditionally, the Djang'kawu myth was passed down from one generation to the next through song. According to Berndt there are approximately 188 separate songs related to the Yirrkala version of the Djang'kawu myth. Ronald Berndt, *Djanggawul: An Aboriginal Religious Cult of North-Eastern Arnhem Land* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1952), xxi.

[328] Marika, *Life Story,* 33.

[329] Ibid.

Djang'kawu also used their sacred digging sticks (*mawalan*) to create freshwater springs. Finally, they instituted sacred ceremonies and provided the people with sacred emblems.

In 1952, Ronald Berndt published a complete translation of the Djang'kawu myth, based on information he had obtained in Yirrkala.[330] According to Berndt, his main informants were clan leaders from various linguistic groups, well-versed in the story and its associated song cycle. The information was enhanced by that which his wife gleaned from discussions of the myth with Aboriginal women, and thus "does not express solely the information and attitudes of male natives, but takes into account both male and female elements in the culture."[331] Berndt accompanied his translation with a map that charts the journey of the Djang'kawu [figure 3.2]. I have modified this map to highlight the sacred sites discussed in this chapter [figure 3.1].

RIRRATJINGU CLAN PAINTINGS

There are thirteen Rirratjingu clan paintings with sacred imagery in the AMNH Berndt Collection.[332] Seven were painted by artists from the Rirratjingu clan, three by artists who gained rights to the clan paintings through their mothers (*ngärndi*), and three who gained rights to the clan paintings through their maternal grandmothers (*märi*).[333]

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[330] W.L. Warner was the first to record the Djang'kawu myth (which he spelled Djunkgao) and its associated *nara* ritual, based on information obtained from Milingimbi. Warner, *A Black Civilization.* Ronald Berndt was the first to publish a complete translation of the Djang'kawu Song Cycle (which he spelled Djanggawul) from Yirrkala. In Berndt's publication, he also discusses the significance and symbolism inherent in the myth, and compares his translation to the one published by Warner. Berndt, *Djanggawul.* Neither author used bark paintings to illustrate the myth.

[331] Berndt, *Djanggawul,* xix.

[332] Alternate spellings include: Rirratjiŋu and Riradjingu.

[333] Bark paintings in this chapter are organized based on the clan with which their imagery is associated, regardless of whether the artist belongs to that particular clan or gained rights to create the clan paintings

All of these paintings depict sacred sites that belong to the Rirratjingu clan: the route the Djang'kawu traveled from Burralku (or Bralgu) Island [#3 on figure 3.1], Port Bradshaw or Yalangbara [#4 on figure 3.1], and Wobilinga Island [#5 on figure 3.1]. Nine include figurative representations; while four are abstractions. Almost all have painted frames outlined in yellow, and contain a background pattern that incorporates the Rirratjingu clan design (yellow parallel lines that are in-filled with alternating rows of red and white crosshatching).

A painting [figure 3.3] by Garmali (life dates unknown; Gumatj clan, Yirritja moiety), who gained rights to Rirratjingu clan paintings through his mother, depicts multiple scenes from the Djang'kawu myth within a single pictorial space.[334] The scenes are not arranged sequentially, but all relate to the beginning of the myth cycle, which describes the travels of the Djang'kawu from Burralku Island to the shores of Arnhem Land [#3 on figure 3.1].

Garmali's painting contains a painted frame in-filled with crosshatching and a dividing line positioned along the horizontal axis, separating the composition into two major sections. Each section is further subdivided into three vertical feature blocks. There are one or two figurative representations in each feature block, except for the lower left, and Garmali has utilized multiple formal perspectives to depict the figures in their

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through his mother or maternal grandmother. Fortunately, in his "Catalogue of Objects Sent," Ronald Berndt indicated (for the majority of the works) not only the clan of the artist but also the clan that owns the rights to the image.

[334] According to Berndt, this painting is associated with the clan of the artist's mother. Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 6-7.

most easily recognizable form.[335] All of the figures, which are roughly equal in size, are painted in solid yellow and outlined in red, except for the red and black birds which are both in-filled and outlined in their respective colors. Each figure is surrounded by the Rirratjingu clan design, which also serves as the background design for the painting (with two exceptions, the red and black birds being contained within solid yellow rectangular boxes). Garmali has chosen to enclose the clan design inside various rectangular shapes scattered throughout the composition, which simultaneously breaks up the composition into smaller components and, conversely, also serves to unify the work as a whole. The end result is a checkerboard effect, although the pattern is not uniform.[336]

According to the artist, the upper left feature block that contains a male figure holding two long sticks positioned above an upside-down yellow bird represents the Djang'kawu brother with his walking sticks facing a mangrove bird (*djawuldjawul,* species unknown).[337] This scene appears to represent the Djang'kawu on the island of Burralku, just prior to their journey to Arnhem Land. The brother symbolizes all three of the Djang'kawu siblings, and the objects in his hands are meant to represent all the sacred objects (*rangga*) brought by the Djang'kawu to Arnhem Land. According to Berndt's 1952 publication, the Djang'kawu had many sacred objects on Burralku, "but because

[335] For example, the standing male figure is depicted in frontal view, the three birds and fish are depicted in profile view, and the turtle is depicted from an aerial perspective.

[336] The patterns may also be an attempt to orient the viewer's gaze in that the lines immediately surrounding a figurative representation seem to run parallel to a hypothetical ground line.

[337] Ronald Berndt documented the explanations of the paintings provided by the artists themselves. As previously discussed in Chapter 1, these field notes were then compiled and sent to the AMNH in August 1958 as the "Catalogue of Objects Sent."

they had only a bark canoe to get to the Australian mainland they were obliged to leave many behind."[338]

The lower center feature block includes a profile representation of the Djang'kawu canoe with only the brother's head and torso visible. According to the artist, the two sisters are not depicted in the painting, because they were asleep inside the canoe.[339] The alternating blocks of vertical and horizontal lines surrounding the canoe represent the waves of the water and the foam made by the strokes of the paddle. The feature blocks above and to the right of the canoe depict animals that the Djang'kawu saw along the way, as well as the three islands that the Djang'kawu passed during the course of their journey. According to the artist, the upper center feature block contains a "nail" fish or *jigada* (possibly a type of half-beak fish; *Zenarchopterus caudovittatus*), and the upper right feature block depicts a rainbow lorikeet (*lindaridj; Trichoglossus chlorolepidotus)* perched on the rocks of Wobilinga Island (represented as a solid yellow rectangular form).[340] According to the myth, the Djang'kawu "saw some trees…in the branches of which were perched two [lorikeets], drying themselves in the first rays of the sun."[341] Even today, red feathers from a rainbow lorikeet are worn by Dhuwa men for ceremonial occasions and used to adorn sacred dillybags [figure 3.4]. According to Ronald Berndt, these feathers symbolize either "the rays of the sun, the red sky at sunset,

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[338] Berndt, *Djanggawul,* 2.

[339] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 7.

[340] Ibid. See Appendices B and C.

[341] Berndt, *Djanggawul,* 26.

or blood from the [Djang'kawu] Sisters."[342] Above the rainbow lorikeet, in the same feature block, is a representation of a green turtle (*dalwadbu; Chelonia mydas*), which may be symbolic of the Bremer Island Turtle Hunter named Mururuma.[343] The lower right feature block depicts Balwuli Island and Garingarinbi Island (again represented as solid yellow rectangular forms), and a red-nosed blackbird (*gadalga; Turdus merula)* is perched on the rocks of Balwuli Island.[344] According to the myth, the Djang'kawu saw these animals, and by singing their names, designated them as sacred totems of the Dhuwa moiety.

Some of the animals may also be symbolic representations of the creator spirits themselves, since the Djang'kawu had the ability to transform themselves into multiple human and animal forms. For example, the image of the "nail" fish could also represent the brother, since one of the names given to the brother is Ganjudingu which translates as "nail or spike of a nail fish."[345] Similarly, the green turtle could also represent the younger sister, who is usually called Madalatj, which translates as the "younger green turtle."[346] Finally, the lower left feature block (which is unique in its absence of

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[342] Ibid., 5.

[343] According to Helen Groger-Wurm, "In the *wongar* time, there was a Riradjingu headman called Mururuma who was a very famous turtle hunter. He had several wives…She refused to have anything to do with him and was very homesick for her own country, Dalinngura. Mururuma, enraged by this, murdered her. When her relatives found out what had happened they sent a Waramiri man…to avenge her. He speared the *wongar* Turtle Hunter whose spirit turned into a rock which can still be seen today." Groger-Wurm, *Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings,* 67. See Appendix E.

[344] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 7. See Appendix B.

[345] According to Ronald Berndt, "The Brother…is also called, less frequently, Ganjudingu. His 'inside' name is Gundanguru, which means the 'nail' or spike of a 'nail' fish; an alternative 'inside' name is Balwadjar, which has a similar meaning." Berndt, *Djanggawul,* 1.

[346] Ibid., 2. Alternate spellings of her name include Miralaidj, Malalait or Mandalaidj.

figurative representation) depicts an image of land.[347] This could represent the shore of Port Bradshaw upon which the Djang'kawu first landed, with the vertical lines representing the beach and the horizontal lines representing the incoming tide.

A bark painting from the 1959 Tuckson/Scougall Collection at the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW) that also uses a "storyboard" format to depict multiple events of a single story [figure 3.5] was created by Mawalan Marika, his half-brother Mathaman Marika (c.1920-1970; Rirratjingu clan, Dhuwa moiety), and his son Wandjuk Marika, all members of the Rirratjingu clan.[348] Despite the fact the AGNSW painting is much larger in size and has eight feature blocks (as opposed to six), it has strikingly similar imagery. For example, the feature block on the right-hand side, second from the top, in the AGNSW painting is similar to the two feature blocks (upper and lower) in the center of the AMNH painting. Both paintings depict the Djang'kawu inside their canoe paddling through rough seas, with similar-looking fish swimming in front. However, the AGNSW painting depicts all three siblings, as opposed to just the brother. They are seen in semi-profile view, and painted black rather than yellow. The AGNSW painting also includes a representation of a paddle in one of the figures' hands, suggesting action or movement. Similarly, the lower right feature block in the AGNSW painting is analogous to the upper left feature block in the AMNH painting in that both paintings depict the Djang'kawu brother holding two walking sticks and facing a yellow mangrove bird (species unknown).[349] The AGNSW painting, however, depicts the bird in flight, perhaps

[347] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 7.

[348] Alternate spellings of Mathaman's name include: Madaman.

[349] The upper right feature block in the AGNSW painting is also similar, but according to Tony Tuckson's field notes this image depicts the Djang'kawu landing at Port Bradshaw. Unlike the AGNSW painting that

an allusion to the impending journey of the Djang'kawu. In both paintings, the Djang'kawu brother is also shown with two sets of parallel lines on his torso. The lines near the neck are most likely ritual scarification marks (as seen in the Thomson field photograph of Tjam Yilkarri Kitani in 1937 [figure 2.14]), and the lines near the groin may represent a ceremonial waistband made out of red feathers from a rainbow lorikeet. It is significant that these lines appear on other figures as well (for example, on the body of the mangrove bird, the green turtle, and on the canoe itself in the AMNH painting), perhaps as an indication of the sacred nature of these particular figurative representations.

Unlike these two works which use a "storyboard" format, most bark paintings from Northeastern Arnhem Land produced prior to 1959 concentrate on a single scene or sacred site. For example, two paintings in the AMNH Collection [figures 3.6 & 3.7] that also reference the journey of the Djang'kawu from Burralku to Arnhem Land, focus solely on a green turtle (*dalwadbu;* an image that appeared in the upper right feature block in Garmali's painting [figure 3.3]). As previously mentioned, the green turtle within a Rirratjingu clan painting is typically associated with Mururuma, the Bremer Island Turtle Hunter. It may also refer to a specific location in the sea near Yirrkala where the Turtle Hunter's spirit was turned into a rock.[350] Although these paintings are similar in subject matter, their compositions are strikingly different.

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separates these two events into two similar yet distinct feature blocks, it is quite possible that Garmali chose to combine these two events into a single feature block to serve both as a beginning and an endpoint for story being told. Archive Files, Tuckson/Scougall Collection, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, New South Wales.

[350] Groger-Wurm, *Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings,* 67.

In the first work [figure 3.6] by Bununggu Yunupingu (c. 1917-1974; Gumatj clan, Yirritja moiety), who gained rights to Rirratjingu clan paintings through his mother, two identical green turtles are represented in the center of the composition, facing each other and separated by a horizontal dividing line.[351] This bark painting contains a background design that attempts to mimic the Rirratjingu clan design but does not do so exactly, since the lines are diagonal, as opposed to vertical or horizontal, and are in-filled with thick red and black crosshatching, as opposed to red and white. Nevertheless, the figurative representations are almost identical in form to Garmali's painting and are painted using almost the same palette. According to Bununggu, his painting depicts Djalwulboi (a location in the sea near Yirrkala) in which two green turtles (a male and female) eat seaweed and are separated by a reef.[352]

In the second work [figure 3.7], by Gunguyama Dhamarrandji (c. 1916-1970; Djambarrpuyngu clan, Dhuwa moiety), a single green turtle is positioned near the center of the composition, surrounded by waves.[353] As in Garmali's painting, the turtle is depicted from an aerial perspective and the background design utilizes yellow lines with red and white crosshatching. However, the background design is slightly different from the Rirratjingu clan design in that the lines in Gunguyama's painting are wavy as opposed to being straight or curvilinear. Similar wavy lines appear in other bark paintings created by Gunguyama and may represent an individual stylistic trait of this

[351] According to Berndt, this painting is associated with the clan of the artist's mother.

[352] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 7.

[353] Alternate spellings of his name include: Guŋguyama, Gungujema, Gungoilma, Gunyuma, Gungujuma, and Gunguyuma Although Berndt does not specify as to whether this is a Rirratjingu clan painting, I believe that this must be the case based on its imagery and inclusion of a modified Rirratjingu clan design.

painter. For example in a work from the 1959 Tuckson/Scougall Collection at the AGNSW [figure 3.8], such wavy lines appear in the top section of the painting surrounding a single turtle.[354] The use of wavy lines in this painting symbolizes the ripples in the water caused by the continuous movements of the turtle's legs. This makes sense, since the lines to the left and right of the turtle's body are positioned along a horizontal axis, whereas the lines above and below the turtle are vertical. This differentiation of the lines immediately surrounding the turtle's body can also be seen in figure 3.7.[355]

A third painting in the AMNH Collection [figure 3.9] that relates to the Djang'kawu's journey from Burralku to Arnhem Land was painted by Millirpum Marika (c.1923-1983; Rirratjingu clan, Dhuwa moiety), Mawalan's younger brother.[356] According to the myth, when the Djang'kawu were in their canoe they experienced extremely rough seas and stormy weather.[357] Instead of illustrating the rough seas surrounding the Djang'kawu canoe, as in Garmali's version, Millirpum has chosen to represent the source of the bad weather: the Thunder Man, also known as Djambawal.[358] According to Helen Groger-Wurm, when the Thunder Man "…walks in the water he

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Since Gungguyama belonged to the Djambarrpuyngu clan, he would have gained rights to Rirratjingu clan paintings through his maternal grandmother.

[354] This work was published in Berndt, *Australian Aboriginal Art,* plate 58.

[355] Since Gungguyama's painting has a painted frame in which the crosshatching is conspicuously absent and three out of the four corners also lack crosshatching, this particular painting may have been unfinished at the time it was collected.

[356] Alternate spellings of his name include: Milirbum, and Mileibum (Jackie).

[357] Berndt, *Djanggawul,* 26.

[358] Other names for the Thunder Man include Budngu (used by Berndt), Tjambuwal (used by Mountford), Bodngu (used by Groger-Wurm) and Bolngo.

creates big waves which are dangerous to canoes."[359] He is also believed to control lightning and storms, the changing of the seasons, as well as the meteors that are seen as shooting stars in the night sky.[360]

Millirpum's bark painting contains a painted frame (in-filled with crosshatching only on the top and bottom) and a dividing line positioned along the horizontal axis. The top section contains an image of the Thunder Man, who is shown urinating, the method by which he creates rain. The figure is shown frontally, his outstretched arms holding two large clubs. According to the artist, it was the Djang'kawu who first painted this design and gave it to the Rirratjingu clan.[361] Berndt goes on to explain that the Thunder Man uses clubs (*balaid*) to beat rock cod. Above his head is an arched cloud (*larrpan*), which is Djambawal's connection to the heavens.[362]

In the bottom half of the painting is an enlarged representation of the double-ended yam stick (*burungunda*) used by the Thunder Man to create thunder. Red diagonal lines appear on either side of the stick, representing the clouds being divided by the stick.[363] Once again, the Rirratjingu clan design occurs throughout the composition. However, in Millirpum's painting, the linear form of the design has been transformed

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[359] Groger-Wurm goes on to state that songs and dances related to the Thunder Man "…are also performed during the circumcision ceremonies and before a fight." Groger-Wurm, *Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings,* 61.

[360] Mundine, *Saltwater,* 108. According to Wandjuk Marika's autobiography, Djang'kawu activities "…set the pattern of behavior for modern [Yolngu] life. The appearance of the wulma, the thunderhead clouds, once indicated the time to move camp and travel inland for hunting. As the monsoon approaches, it is time to leave the coast where food will soon be difficult to get." Marika, *Life Story,* 32.

[361] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 4.

[362] Mundine, *Saltwater,* 108.

[363] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 4.

into a series of curvilinear lines. These lines form a background design that is both a version of the Rirratjingu clan design and symbolic of the fierce winds and turbulent weather created by the Thunder Man. This is a clever artistic solution that creates multiple meanings while maintaining the integrity of the clan design itself.

In the bark painting from the 1959 Tuckson/Scougall Collection at the AGNSW [figure 3.5], an image of the Thunder Man appears on the left-hand side, in the feature block second from the bottom. Like the figure in the AMNH painting, the Thunder Man is shown with arms outstretched, positioned below an arched cloud, and surrounded by curvilinear lines in-filled with crosshatching. Unlike the AMNH painting; however, the Thunder Man has an elongated penis and his face is shown in profile.

In an earlier bark painting by an unknown artist [figure 3.10] from the 1948-49 Mountford Collection at the Smithsonian Institute, D.C., multiple images of the Thunder Man appear on the right-hand side of the painting. According to Mountford:

> ...on the upper right-hand panel…[is] a large rain cloud, while below it are several thunder-men who have come down from the cloud; rain is still falling from their feet (shown as vertical parallel lines). In their left hands the thunder-men hold the club, *barlait,* and in their right the spear, *larapan,* with which they have transfixed the rock cod, *akurata.* They are holding the rock cod in the sky on the ends of their spears. Immediately to the left of the figures of [the Thunder Men] is a double-ended club, *burununda,* and a spear.[364]

It is clear that the objects associated with the Thunder Man have remained the same, even though Mountford uses alternate spellings. This painting, however, has Thunder Man

[364] Mountford, *Records of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition,* 285.

figures, depicted against a solid red background, and two green turtles on the left, which suggests a connection between Mururuma (the Bremer Island Turtle Hunter discussed previously) and the Thunder Man.[365]

For the Rirratjingu clan, the most important part of the Djang'kawu myth cycle occurred when the brother and his two sisters landed on the beach of Port Bradshaw or Yalangbara [#4 on figure 3.1]. There are eight bark paintings in the AMNH Berndt Collection that illustrate this episode from the myth.[366] When the Djang'kawu landed at Port Bradshaw, the first creatures they saw were sand monitors resting on the peak of a sandhill.[367] According to the myth, as the monitors crawled up the sandhill, their tails left marks and their feet caused small streams of sand to run down the face of the dune, creating the Rirratjingu clan design.[368] All of the bark paintings that depict this particular section of the myth [as illustrated in figure 3.12] contain sand monitors as their primary figurative representations, positioned either along a vertical, horizontal, or diagonal axis. All of the sand monitors are depicted from an aerial perspective, as static forms with limbs outstretched, and they are painted primarily in solid yellow. Some of the sand monitors have their backbones delineated; while others have their torsos in-filled with crosshatching. This particular type of painting is a traditional Rirratjingu clan painting

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[365] This connection was noted by Helen Groger-Wurm who stated that Mururuma "…is associated with the Thunder Man." Groger-Wurm, *Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings,* 67. The 1999 catalogue *Saltwater* also commented on this connection as it was represented in a 1999 bark painting created by one of Mawalan's daughters, Banduk Marika (b. 1954). Mundine, *Saltwater,* 109.

[366] According to Wandjuk Marika, the Djang'kawu spent twelve months in Port Bradshaw. (Marika, 1995, 33) Wandjuk went on to state that Yirrkala, "…is my spirit landing, but most important land is Port Bradshaw, which is sacred area and Djangkawu's creation land, which I have today." Marika, *Life Story,* 96.

[367] Berndt, *Djanggawul,* 27.

[368] Caruana, *Aboriginal Art*, 60.

which was used by Mawalan Marika, the leader of the Rirratjingu clan and land owner of Port Bradshaw, as well as other artists associated with the Rirratjingu clan.

Beginning in 1935, Mawalan Marika [figure 2.17] became a prominent figure in the Yolngu community at Yirrkala, primarily because his clan owned Port Bradshaw where the Methodist mission was established. As a prominent clan leader, Mawalan sought to create an atmosphere of mutual understanding and respect between the Yolngu and the missionaries. By giving them bark paintings, Mawalan was continuing a tradition that had long been established within his own culture. According to Howard Morphy, "The exchange of paintings and sacred objects with neighbouring Aboriginal groups was one of the ways of establishing mutual respect and understanding, of cementing alliances, or arranging marriages."[369] As the ritual leader of the Rirratjingu clan, Mawalan also had the responsibility of preserving the traditional templates of clan paintings. As such, his style may have dictated the "correct" look of Rirratjingu clan paintings, and greatly influenced artists within his own clan, as well as artists from other clans at Yirrkala.

In a work created by Mawalan from the 1946-50 Berndt Collection at the Macleay Museum [figure 1.21] the template for a Rirratjingu clan painting of Port Bradshaw had already been established. The composition is divided along the vertical axis, and two sand monitors are represented in the center of the composition facing each other. According to the myth, the Djang'kawu originally saw both male and female sand monitors, which became sacred totems of the Dhuwa moiety. According to Wandjuk Marika:

> …if we kill our own relative or totem we get sick…We're not allowed to kill djanda [sand monitor] or any other Dhuwa animal. There are two kinds of djanda, the Yirritja have spots everywhere and yellow tail, but Dhuwa djanda is all black. If you see these Dhuwa [monitors] you are not allowed to kill, if you see the Yirritja you can kill for your food.[370]

These two sand monitors may also be symbolic representations of the two Djang'kawu sisters. This attribution is based on the belief that depicting figural or at least anthropomorphic forms of the two sisters may have been considered too powerful, and thus it was necessary to represent these creator spirits symbolically in the form of animals (i.e. symbolic substitution).[371]

In the 1946 painting, on either side of the sand monitors are horizontal bars that alternate between the tracks and marks made by the monitors' feet and tails [figure 3.11] and the Rirratjingu clan design. According to the artist, this painting actually represents a three-dimensional sandhill that has been flattened out onto a two-dimensional plane. In other words, the vertical axis represents the crest of a sandhill upon which two monitors rest, and running down the sides of the sandhill are streams of sand as well as track marks made by the monitors themselves.[372]

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[369] Mundine, *Saltwater,* 105.

[370] Marika, *Life Story,* 44.

[371] In a reference to a different painting related to the Djang'kawu myth, the artist Gäwiny Ganambarr commented, "The two [monitors] represent the two Sisters…" Hutcherson, *Gong-Wapitja,* 44.

[372] According to Groger-Wurm, a representation of a sandhill is particularly sacred to the Rirratjingu clan "…and is symbolically represented by a mound of earth on every *nara* [ceremonial] ground." Groger-Wurm, *Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings,* 22. For more information on *nara* (or *ngärra*) ceremonies, see Kleinert and Neale, *The Oxford Companion,* 139.

There are clear similarities between the 1946 work [figure 1.21] at the Macleay Museum and the AMNH bark painting [figure 3.12], both created by Mawalan. These paintings are roughly equal in size: the bark painting at the Macleay Museum measures 21 x 25 ½ inches and the AMNH painting measures 17 ½ x 28 1/8 inches. Both contain two sand monitors positioned along the vertical axis, with background patterns devoted to track marks as well as the Rirratjingu clan design. This, however, is where the similarities end.

In the AMNH painting [figure 3.12], Mawalan has chosen to divide the composition along both a vertical and a horizontal axis, creating four rectangular quadrants at the corners. The two sand monitors are positioned facing a large central circular form, and the monitors, as well as the circle, are painted in solid yellow and outlined in white. The backbones of the monitors are also delineated in white; while the circular form contains two red stripes and white dots. According to the myth, after the brother and his two sisters sat down to rest, they started to sing. When they saw two sand monitors searching desperately for water, they sank their digging sticks (*mawalan*) into the ground and made a freshwater spring.[373] In the AMNH painting, the freshwater spring is represented by a central circular design, and the red and white crosshatched designs to the right and left of the central circle are the waters flowing from the spring. The Rirratjingu clans believe that these waters fertilized the land of their ancestors; thereby permitting life to flourish.[374] The crosshatched designs also divide the composition approximately in half.

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[373] Berndt, *Djanggawul*, 27.

[374] Caruana, "Wägilak and Djan'kawu,"147.

In the AMNH painting, the two sand monitors are immediately surrounded by parallel lines which are different in the upper and lower sections. In the upper section, the parallel lines are horizontal, whereas the lines in the lower section create a chevron pattern. On either side of the monitors are red vertical bands, which run the length of the bark, and alternate with rows of red and white diagonally-striped crosshatching. Depicted within each red vertical band are the tracks of a wild brush turkey (*Alectura lathami)*.[375] The wild brush turkey was the second living creature that the Djang'kawu saw at Port Bradshaw, and according to the myth, it burned its feet on the hot sand (which may explain why Mawalan chose to represent the turkey not in figural form, but rather as tracks across the surface of the land).

Another sand monitor painting [figure 3.13] with a very similar composition was created by Garmali.[376] Like the previous painting [figure 3.12], this work is divided along both a vertical and a horizontal axis. Two figurative representations of sand monitors appear along the vertical dividing line and the four corner quadrants contain almost identical imagery. Unlike Mawalan's painting, there is no central circular design in Garmali's work. The corner quadrants contain two solid red squares interspersed with vertical and horizontal bars of crosshatching. As in Mawalan's 1946 painting [figure 1.21], the torso of the top monitor is in-filled with red crosshatching and the torso of the lower monitor is in-filled with white crosshatching. If one views this painting as a three-dimensional form flattened onto a two-dimensional plane, it would again read as two monitors on top of a sandhill. On the sides of the sandhill are Rirratjingu clan designs.

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[375] See Appendix B.

[376] According to Berndt, this painting is associated with the clan of the artist's mother. Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 5.

According to the artist, the red squares scattered throughout the composition "represent special *mareiin* (sacred) shelters."[377]

A painting created by Mawalan's son, Wandjuk Marika, also has figurative representations of two sand monitors [figure 3.14], but their placement is quite different from the previous two works. Instead of depicting the two monitors facing one another, Wandjuk has placed both monitors at the top of the painting with their bodies intersecting in a criss-cross form. According to the artist, the two sand monitors are "playing" on a sandhill, which in my opinion, may mean that they are engaged in coitus. The top monitor does have a placement similar to the previous three paintings, that is in the center of the top section with its nose facing downward and the top of its tail touching the painted frame; however, the second monitor (which is underneath the first) is positioned along a diagonal axis, with its tail extended toward the upper right-hand corner of the painting and its nose toward the lower left. The bodies of the monitors are outlined in red instead of white and their torsos are in-filled with alternating red and white crosshatching that spirals down their bodies similar to the crosshatching found in the composition of Mawalan's painting. The two monitors are surrounded by the Rirratjingu clan design which is contained within rectangular forms which alternate between vertical lines and horizontal lines.

Wandjuk has chosen to divide the composition along the horizontal axis only, and the dividing line encloses an elongated zigzag form that extends from one side of the painting to the other. Both above and below this shape are short vertical lines in-filled with alternating red and white crosshatching. According to the artist, the zigzag form

represents the tracks of the monitor, which are now present in the landscape as two hills and a creek.[378] Finally, in the lower section of the painting is a representation of a sand monitor's tail, one of the sacred emblems that the Djang'kawu gave to the Rirratjingu clan.[379] It, too, has red parallel lines both at the top and bottom of the image. Representations of feathered strings appear on either side of the monitor's tail, the red feathers having been gathered from the breasts of rainbow lorikeets, which appear to be attached to either side of the sacred emblem.

A painting [figure 3.15] by Millirpum Marika is also similar to the template used by Mawalan, but is simpler in form and composition. The painted frame is in-filled with white crosshatching, and the composition is divided along the horizontal axis. Instead of two sand monitors, Millirpum has chosen to show only one, which appears along the horizontal dividing line surrounded by the Rirratjingu clan design. Both above and below the horizontal dividing line are three half-circles in-filled with solid red. According to the artist, these half-circles represent monitor holes with tracks leading to them.[380] These half-circles, the track marks, and even the crosshatching of the monitor's torso combined with a delineation of the spine are all reminiscent of Mawalan's 1946 painting [figure 1.21].

The final painting [figure 3.16] incorporating figurative representations of the sand monitors from Port Bradshaw was also created by Mawalan Marika. The

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[377] Ibid.

[378] Ibid., 3.

[379] Ibid.

[380] Ibid., 9.

composition is divided along both a horizontal and a vertical axis with strong diagonal axis as well. It also has four corner quadrants that contain almost identical imagery. Similar to figure 3.12, the central motif also represents the sacred spring at Port Bradshaw. Also similar are the sand monitors' images, which are painted in yellow and outlined in white, and the wild brush turkey tracks that appear against a solid red background. What is unique about this painting is the number of sand monitors (four instead of two) and their placement. Each of the four corner quadrants is divided diagonally in half into two roughly equal triangles. In one triangle, a monitor is shown surrounded by short, vertical lines while in the other, there are white turkey tracks set against a red background. Although the turkey tracks face inwards toward the central circular design (the sacred spring), the bodies of the four sand monitors face outward toward the painted frame. The overall composition of the painting is reminiscent of a Western sunburst design as seen in the lower left feature block of the AGNSW bark painting [figure 3.5]. It may also symbolize water flowing from the sacred spring.[381]

The final three works that are associated with Port Bradshaw are all abstract works. The first work [figure 3.17] is by Mawalan Marika. The composition is divided into four feature blocks, each one cut in half by a diagonal line (creating roughly two equal triangular shapes in each quadrant). Each triangle is comprised of solid yellow parallel lines with alternating red and white crosshatching in between. Red dots also appear in some of the solid yellow lines. The central dividing line, which is positioned along the horizontal axis, is visually incongruous with the rest of the composition in that it consists of a series of thin, white parallel lines that form a zigzag design against a solid

[381] Ibid., 39.

red background. According to the artist, the bark painting as a whole represents a swamp and billabong with sandbanks.[382] When compared to a bark painting created by Wandjuk Marika from the 1959 Tuckson/Scougall Collection at the AGNSW [figure 3.18], the two works appear almost identical in terms of palette, composition, and style. Tuckson's field notes connected to the 1959 painting indicate that Wandjuk identified the painting as representing the sun rising which may be an "inside" meaning of Mawalan's work as well. Perhaps both works are more abstract representations of the sunburst design seen in the previous painting [figure 3.16].

Munuparriwuy Wanambi (c.1920-1973; Marrakulu clan, Dhuwa moiety), who most likely gained rights to this Rirratjingu clan painting through his maternal grandmother, also created an abstract work connected with Port Bradshaw [figure 3.19].[383] The work consists of a painted frame in-filled with crosshatching and a dividing line positioned along the vertical axis. The composition is divided into four equal quadrants. The upper left and lower right quadrants contain thick diagonal lines that alternate between red and white crosshatching. The upper right and lower left quadrants contain thinner horizontal lines that alternate between red and white crosshatching. The yellow lines that appear on the right-hand side of the painting also contain alternating red and white dots, whereas the dots that appear on the left-hand side also include black dots.

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[382] Ibid. A billabong (a colloquial term native to Australia) is a stagnant pool formed by backwater.

[383] Alternate spellings of his name include: Munubäruwi and Munabariwui. Berndt does state that this is a Rirratjingu clan painting, but does not specify the clan of Munuparriwuy's maternal grandmother.

According to the artist, the vertical band represents a sandhill, and on either side of it are plants (*murnji*) eaten by wild brush turkeys.[384]

The eighth and last bark painting associated with Port Bradshaw [figure 3.20] was created by Gagguba (life dates unknown; Gälpu clan, Dhuwa moiety) from Elcho Island.[385] This work contains a painted frame in-filled with crosshatching and a dividing line positioned along the vertical axis that separates the composition into two major sections. The left section is further subdivided into two horizontal feature blocks, and the upper left feature block contains a central rectangular bar that has lines radiating out from the sides and top. The lower left feature block contains a series of horizontal lines that are in-filled with crosshatching. In the lower half of the feature block, two diagonal lines overlap the design, creating an upside down "V" shape. The upper right feature block contains a similar and more defined design in comparison to the upper left feature block. The lower right feature block contains a circular form in the center with diagonal lines radiating out from the center. Again, similar to the lower left feature block, two diagonal lines form an upside down "V" shape, which according to Berndt, may represent the tracks of a monitor's tail. According to the artist, this bark painting represents marks made by digging sticks (the circular form in the center of lower right feature block), mats (the upside down "V" shapes in the lower two feature blocks), and palms (the rectangular

[384] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 2.

[385] Since Berndt states that this bark painting illustrates Port Bradshaw (a Rirratjingu sacred site), and Gagguba belongs to the Gälpu clan, I believe the artist gained rights to Rirratjingu clan paintings through his maternal grandmother.

shapes with diagonal lines extending out from them in the top two feature blocks).[386] Unique to this painting is the amount of unpainted bark visible at the edges. Another difference is the size of the crosshatching (which is much larger than most).[387]

The final painting associated with the Rirratjingu clan illustrates the sacred site of Wobilinga Island [#5 on figure 3.1]. This is the site where the Djang'kawu came in contact with the Baijini (or Bejini), a pre-Macassan Indonesian people who have been incorporated into the Djang'kawu myth cycle.[388] According to the myth, when the Djang'kawu first encountered the Baijini, they were cooking trepang.[389] According to Helen Groger-Wurm, some of her informants at Yirrkala actually referred to the Baijini as Macassan:

> …but this is due to the fact that later, Wabilinga [sic] became a Macassan settlement. However, there is some contradiction here because the Djanggawul [sic] and the Baijini were not contemporaries. The Baijini were pre-

[386] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 17. These mats, known as *ngainmara,* are round in shape with shallow peaks in the center, made of plaited pandanus fiber, and used by Aboriginal women in the past for providing cover and protection.

[387] These features may suggest inexperience on the part of the artist.

[388] According to Ronald Berndt, "In the 1940s older men and women of north-eastern Arnhem Land spoke of their first visitors as the Baiini [Baijini], from the western islands somewhere beyond the Arafura and Timor Seas. Songs still commemorate this period, which could have been several hundreds of years ago. They tell of the ships the travelers came in, their golden brown or copper coloured skin, the women the crews brought with them, the stone dwellings they built on the coast, the cloth they wove and dyed, the small gardens they made, and their special way of spearing fish. Possibly they were early traders from the East Indies, as the mythical accounts suggested. Elderly singers and story-tellers used to insist that the Baiini were different from the 'Macassans' who came after them, but in recent years these differences have become blurred.…Whether or not the Baiini were historically distinct from the Macassans is from one point of view irrelevant, and in any case the two are now 'telescoped' as far as traditions are concerned. But perhaps in the early part of the sixteenth century 'Macassan' (Indonesian) contact of a more easily identifiable sort began." Berndt and Berndt, *The World of the First Australians,* 18-19.

[389] According to Louis Allen, Aboriginal men "…dove for [trepang or sea-slugs] in twenty feet or more of water and exchanged it with [Indonesian traders] for cloth, axes, fish hooks, pipes and tobacco, as well as other items. The visiting traders set up depots on shore, where they boiled the trepang in iron kettles, dried it in the sun and the smoke of their fires…" Allen, *Time Before Morning,* 243.

> Macassan traders and did not live in the mythical era. A historical fact of long ago, was transferred back to the time of creation, eventually becoming incorporated into the sacred mythology. [390]

The painting that refers to this section of the myth was created by Millirpum Marika [figure 3.21]. This work contains a painted frame in-filled with white and red crosshatching, and a dividing line, positioned along the horizontal axis, separating the composition into two major sections. The top section contains a solid yellow "Y"-shaped form lying on its side, surrounded by a series of parallel lines. The lower section mimics the top section; however, the "Y"-shaped form is positioned facing the opposite direction. According to the artist, the "Y"-shaped forms are trepang-stirrers and the sides of the painting are ashes from boiling trepang.[391] Throughout the composition, vertical and horizontal lines surround the two forms and alternate between solid red, solid black, white crosshatching and red crosshatching. These lines create a unique background design which differs considerably from the other Rirratjingu clan paintings, primarily in the inclusion of solid black pigment.[392] According to the myth, when the Baijini left their original settlement on Wobilinga Island, they left behind ashes from their fires, criss-cross bars upon which they dried the trepang, some huts and trepang stirrers or ladles (*djiru*). When the Djang'kawu brother picked up the trepang stirrers,

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[390] Groger-Wurm, *Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings,* 23.

[391] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 1. The process of preparing trepang for export is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

[392] In Berndt's "Catalogue of Objects Sent," Millirpum is referred to as "Jackie." When I asked the anthropologist Sally May about the nickname, she stated that it translates roughly as "the black one." Pers. comm., Sally May, 11 June 2003. I assumed that this referred to the pigmentation of the artist's skin, but perhaps it could have also referred to his use of black pigment in his bark paintings. Judith Ryan also notes that black used as a pigment is "…more customary in the art of Millirpum." Ryan, *Spirit in Land,* 26.

> "Ah," he said, "this is a good colour. I shall have it for myself." The *djiru* [trepang stirrer] was black, a colour that the Djanggawul [sic] now used for the first time, together with blackness from the charcoal in the ashes of the Baijini fires. [393]

Thus, it is believed that the color black was actually introduced by the Baijini.[394]

In a much more representational work created almost a decade later [figure 2.36] also by Millirpum in the 1965-71 Groger-Wurm Collection at the National Museum of Australia, Canberra, the same subject matter reappears. According to Helen Groger-Wurm, the lower section represents Wobilinga Island with three circles symbolizing pots used to boil trepang.[395] Similar to the AMNH painting, two trepang stirrers ("Y"-shaped forms) appear as prominent features within the composition, but in this work they are painted in solid black with yellow stripes. They are surrounded by vertical and horizontal lines that alternate between solid red, solid black, white crosshatching and red crosshatching. According to Groger-Wurm, the horizontal lines represent the home of the Baijini, and the vertical lines symbolize the wooden racks for drying trepang. Within the solid red vertical lines, yellow and black human footprints appear (an unusual feature for Northeastern Arnhem Land). These footprints are meant to represent "the Baijini as they walked around to see whether the trepang was already dry."[396]

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[393] Marika, *Life Story,* 44.

[394] The color black may also symbolize the origin of fire (used for cooking).

[395] The upper section represents Galibingu Island in which two novices for circumcision are shown standing underneath a *djuda* tree (possibly the tamarind tree, *Tamarindus indica*). In the branches of the *djuda* tree hang their sacred dillybags. Groger-Wurm, *Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings,* 22.

[396] Ibid., 23.

NGAYMIL CLAN PAINTINGS

There is only one Ngaymil clan painting with sacred imagery in the AMNH Berndt Collection [figure 3.22].[397] It was painted by Woreimu (life dates unknown; Ngaymil clan, Dhuwa moiety), and illustrates the site of Miliba at Arnhem Bay [#6 on figure 3.1], one of the sacred sites of the Ngaymil clan.[398] The Ngaymil clan had close relations with the Rirratjingu clan, so it is not surprising that the works are similar in style.

This work by Woreimu is strikingly similar to the Rirratjingu clan paintings of Port Bradshaw. Like figures 3.12 and 3.13, the composition is divided both along a vertical and a horizontal axis and inside the vertical dividing line are two sand monitors, painted in yellow and outlined in white, depicted facing each other. The aerial perspective, size and shape of the monitors are also consistent with figures 3.12, 3.13, 3.14, 3.15, and 3.16. As seen also in figure 3.12, the heads of the two monitors overlap a central circular form in-filled with solid yellow. Unique to this painting [figure 3.22], however, is a large white dot outlined in red that appears in the middle of the central circle, as well as the inclusion of small representations of two fish depicted inside the upper half of the vertical dividing line. The palette also uses a darker yellow with an orange hue. In addition, a background pattern which can be identified as the Ngaymil clan design surrounds the figures.

The Ngaymil clan design is characterized by two long vertical bars, one in-filled with red crosshatching and the other in white, interspersed with short horizontal bars in-

[397] Alternate spellings include: Ṇaymil, Ngemil, and Ngeimil.

[398] Alternate spellings include: Waremu ("Shorty").

filled with alternating rows of red and white crosshatching. According to Groger-Wurm, the sacred clan pattern of the Ngaymil represents overflowing water covered with wild banana leaves (*dara*).[399]

According to Woreimu, his painting depicts two Mitchell's water monitors (*djalga; Varanus mitchelli*) drinking from a spring that has a round rock in the middle of the water.[400] The Djang'kawu created this spring by inserting their digging sticks into it, and the water "gushed out so freely it spread widely."[401] The two small representations of fish, one in the upper portion of the vertical dividing line (to the left of the upper monitor), and one on the top right side of the central circular form, are small freshwater fish (*ngalganbalg;* species unknown).[402] According to the myth, when the Djang'kawu traveled to Ngaymil territory in Arnhem Bay, they "made a camp, putting many dreamings there. They made a fish trap and caught many fish to eat. They also put the wild banana palm, and…poked holes in the ground from which water flowed." Eventually, they saw a water monitor "in a fresh-water swamp that was covered with wild banana *dara* leaves."[403]

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[399] Groger-Wurm, *Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings,* 24. This pattern may also be an abstract representation of a banana leaf with the long vertical bars representing the main veins of the leaf and the short horizontal bars representing the branches of the veins.

[400] See Appendix E.

[401] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 9-10.

[402] Ibid. An alternative spelling is *ngarganbal.*

[403] Berndt, *Djanggawul,* 30.

DJAMBARRPUYNGU CLAN PAINTINGS

There are nine Djambarrpuyngu clan paintings with sacred imagery in the AMNH Berndt Collection.[404] Five of the bark paintings were painted by artists from the Djambarrpuyngu clan, three were painted by artists who gained rights to the clan paintings through their mother (*ngärndi*), and one was painted by an artist who gained rights to the clan paintings through his maternal grandmother (*märi*). All of the bark paintings illustrate one of the three sacred sites that belong to the Djambarrpuyngu clan: Marabai at Arnhem Bay [#7 on figure 3.1], Duwalgidj at Buckingham Bay [#8 on figure 3.1], and Ngainmarangura at Flinder's Point [#9 on figure 3.1]. Four of the bark paintings include figurative representations; while the other five are purely abstract. Almost all of the works have a painted frame outlined in either yellow or red, and most of them contain circular forms symbolic of freshwater springs, a prominent feature of Djambarrpuyngu bark paintings, which is also seen in the Djambarrpuyngu section of the 1962-63 Yirrkala Church Panels [figure 1.31 and 3.23].[405]

For clans living along the coast (known as "saltwater clans"), freshwater springs are not only necessary for survival, but are believed to be passageways to the spiritual realm. Creator spirits are believed to inhabit these springs, which also contain individual souls. When a woman becomes pregnant, it is believed that a spirit will leave the sacred

[404] Alternate spellings include: Djambarrpuyŋu, and Djambadbingu.

[405] Wally Caruana refers to these as a "Union Jack" design. Caruana, "Wägilak and Djan'kawu," 151. The Djambarrpuyngu section of the Yirrkala Church Panels was painted by Gunguyama Dhamarrandji, one of the artists represented in the AMNH Berndt Collection.

spring and enter her body, thereby animating the fetus of her unborn child.[406] The spirit then becomes the soul of the individual remaining inside the body until the moment of death. Upon death, the soul must be transported back to its original sacred spring, to the realm of the ancestors. According to the curator Djon Mundine:

> The spirit of the deceased is sung back to its originating reservoir or well from where it can later be reborn. During the decade or so that the spirit takes to make its journey along the songlines, it is a distraction to utter its earthly name. In effect this calls the eternal component of the individual's soul back to its old haunts and delays its arrival at the body of water which holds the souls of that clan or group. All people who share the name of the deceased therefore use one of their other names. All names or words which are phonetically similar fall into disuse and are replaced with synonyms or alternatives.[407]

The process involved in creating the sacred springs is also highly significant. According to the myth, wherever the Djang'kawu made camp, the brother inserted his digging stick into the ground and, by withdrawing it, created a freshwater spring.[408] This act is interpreted by Ronald Berndt as symbolic of human coitus:

> The [digging sticks] are themselves penis symbols, an interpretation made quite frankly by the Aborigines themselves…[the digging sticks were] plunged into the earth, so that water gushes forth at its removal; this is compared to coitus, the removal of the penis from the vagina, and the subsequent flow of seminal and vaginal juices when the Sisters stand up again. Waterholes

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[406] Berndt and Berndt, *The World of the First Australians,* 137-138.

[407] Mundine, *Saltwater*, 105. This explanation clarifies why there are strict prohibitions in Northeastern Arnhem Land surrounding a person's death. These prohibitions are meant to keep the deceased individual's soul from becoming distracted while making its way back to its sacred spring.

[408] Berndt, *Djanggawul,* 36.

> themselves are vulva symbols, used frequently in Aboriginal song and mythology…[409]

Since it was the duty of the Djang'kawu to nourish as well as populate the land, which resulted in the many clans of the Dhuwa moiety, it makes sense that this analogy to human copulation exists.

One of the sacred sites of the Djambarrpuyngu clan is Marabai, which is the "inside" name for Mialbungara [#7 on figure 3.1]. According to the myth, Marabai is known for its numerous freshwater springs made by the digging sticks of the Djang'kawu.[410] The first two paintings that represent Marabai were created by Djuwali (life dates unknown; Gumatj clan, Dhuwa moiety), who gained the rights to these paintings through his mother.[411] The first work [figure 3.24] contains a circular form in-filled with yellow crosshatching as its central image. Yellow crosshatching (in which both rows of intersecting parallel lines are created from yellow ochre) may be a stylistic feature of clans that were originally located close to Elcho Island, as it appears in almost all the bark paintings by the Djambarrpuyngu and Liyagawumirr clans. Radiating out from this central circular form are lines that are positioned along both a horizontal and a vertical axis that divide the asymmetrical composition into four quadrants. Two smaller circles are positioned on either side of the central circular form, and all three circles are

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[409] Ibid., 6. According to Helen Groger-Wurm, the most secret aspects of Yolngu mythology are the allusions to sexual intercourse. Helen Groger-Wurm, interview with author, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, 13 June 2003.

[410] Ibid., 38. According to Helen Groger-Wurm, the Djambarrpuyngu "…do not mention the Djanggawul brother. He disappears from the myth and the two sisters are referred to as the Djanggawul. They are said to have made the wells with their digging or yam stick *rangga* emblems…and are said to have placed the various clan *rangga* emblems in them." Groger-Wurm, *Djanggawul,* 26.

[411] According to Berndt, this painting is associated with the clan of the artist's mother. Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 3-4.

in-filled with yellow crosshatching. The four corner quadrants all contain similar imagery: two vertical bars of red crosshatching, one vertical bar of white crosshatching, a solid yellow mangrove monitor (*iribangan; Varanus indicus*) outlined in white and a bar of yellow crosshatching.[412] The bodies of the four monitors, which are situated half inside the red crosshatching and half in the white crosshatching, serve as a visual transition between darker and lighter areas of crosshatching. According to the artist, the Djang'kawu brother used his digging stick to make three springs, represented in the painting with water flowing out of them, which attracted four mangrove monitors.[413]

In a second work by Djuwali [figure 3.25] sacred springs become the main focus of the painting, creating a loose grid-like structure. According to Wally Caruana, the regularity of this design "suggests the ordered nature of the creation of the land."[414] The main vertical dividing line is in-filled with yellow crosshatching with three circular forms placed along the line. The upper section of the painting has eight rectangular shapes created by one horizontal line and three vertical lines, with three additional circular forms positioned at the points of intersection. Three of the rectangular shapes contain abstract shapes in-filled with red crosshatching, and two contain abstract shapes in-filled with yellow crosshatching. In the lower section of the painting, the grid-like form breaks down particularly on the left-hand side, and only three of the feature blocks contain abstract shapes in-filled with red crosshatching. According to the artist, this painting depicts sacred springs and mangrove shells (*minau*; represented by the darker shapes)

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[412] See Appendix E.

[413] Ibid.

[414] Caruana, *Aboriginal Art,* 60.

surrounded by water and mud. Berndt also states that this work depicts the same story as in figure 3.26, also painted by Gunguyama.[415]

Figure 3.26 is divided into two major sections by a dividing line positioned along the horizontal axis.[416] The top section has eight feature blocks created by one horizontal line and three vertical lines, with three circular forms positioned at the points of intersection, reminiscent of the previous painting by Djuwali, which is also loose and asymmetrical [figure 3.25]. According to the artist, these three sacred springs represent the brother and his two sisters.[417] This is the first time in the AMNH Berndt Collection that a geometric shape has been identified as representing the Djang'kawu, which is significant. Each of the eight feature blocks contains a solid red abstract shape, surrounded by alternating red and white crosshatching. The four abstract shapes at the top of the painting represent four sacred dillybags hanging from a tree, and just below the dillybags, are two mangrove shells and two mudfish (*wonduma; Galaxias cleaveri*) on either side.[418]

The lower section of the painting is divided into two unequal subsections. The right (smaller) side is divided in half by a diagonal line, and the left side has a circular form off-center to the right, with bars of crosshatching radiating out from it. To the upper right of the circular form is another representation of a mudfish, to the lower right is the fourth mudfish, and to the lower left are two mangrove shells. To the upper left of

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[415] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent, " 8-9.

[416] As previously mentioned, Gunguyama belonged to the Djambarrpuyngu clan, Dhuwa moiety.

[417] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 8.

[418] Ibid.

the circular form and left of the mangrove shells are two rectangular forms in-filled with a repeating diamond pattern, with some diamonds in-filled with white crosshatching and some in-filled with red crosshatching. This diamond pattern contrasts significantly with the rest of the painting. According to the artist, the diamond pattern represents the moment that the Djang'kawu saw Banaidja (the son of the Yirritja creator spirit Laitjung) "…and took part of this painting from him."[419] This interpretation is consistent with the myth cycle, which states that while the Djang'kawu were in Djambarrpuyngu territory creating sacred springs, Banaidja came out one of the springs as well.[420] Since Banaidja is a major creator spirit of the Yirritja moiety, the artist has used a diamond pattern (the characteristic motif prevalent in almost all Yirritja moiety paintings) to symbolize his presence within the story. Based on stylistic similarities, I believe that this specific diamond pattern belongs to the Dhalwangu clan of the Yirritja moiety (a clan that is not represented in the AMNH collection). Comparing this diamond design to the Dhalwangu section (the lower four paintings) of the Yirrkala Church Panels [figures 1.32 and 3.27] created by Birrikitji Gumana (c. 1898-82), Gawirrin Gumana (b. c. 1935), and Yanggarriny Wunungmurra (born c. 1932), there is a strong similarity in the size, shape and placement of the diamonds.

Two additional paintings connected to the Djambarrpuyngu clan that utilize a similar repeating diamond design were collected from Elcho Island. A painting by Baidju (life dates unknown; Gubabingu clan; Yirritja moiety) [figure 3.28] is divided into

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[419] Ibid.

[420] Berndt, *Djanggawul,* 36.

four sections.[421] Moving from top to bottom, the first section contains a profile view of what is probably a pied heron (*banibar; Ardea picata*) whose body is in-filled with crosshatching and has a series of triangular forms on either side, which represent clouds.[422] The second section has three abstract forms that are in-filled with crosshatching, perhaps images of dillybags. The third section contains a large square in-filled with a repeating diamond design. However, unlike the previous painting, the diamonds are in-filled with red, white and yellow crosshatching. Finally, the fourth section has almost identical imagery to the second section; however, the three abstract forms seem to be facing the opposite direction.

A painting by Banggalawi (life dates unknown; Djambarrpuyngu clan, Dhuwa moiety) [figure 3.29] depicts the Barrama waterhole at Duwalgidj (Buckingham Bay) [#8 on figure 3.1]. This painting contains a painted frame that is in-filled only on the top and bottom. The composition is divided into two major sections with a dividing line along the horizontal axis. The top section contains an oval shape, in-filled with red and white crosshatching, surrounded by red horizontal lines in-filled with crosshatching. Above the oval form are red vertical lines, again with alternating crosshatching of the same colors. The bottom half of the painting contains a more circular form in-filled with the repeating diamond pattern. Above and below the circular form are red vertical lines in-filled with

[421] Although Berndt does not specify that this is a Djambarrpuyngu clan painting, I believe that it is based on its style and imagery. Since Baidju belonged to the Gubabingu clan, he would have gained rights to Djambarrpuyngu clan paintings through his mother.

[422] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 22. A very similar bird appears in a 1948 bark painting by Birrikitji Gumana, which was collected by Charles Mountford. According to Judith Ryan, this bird represents a pied heron (a Dhalwangu totem) which is "…shown catching fish by the creek where Barrama and Laitjung made a fish-trap in the Ancestral period." Ryan, *Spirit in Land,* 105. The fact that a totem of the Dhalwangu clan appears in conjunction with the repeating diamond pattern, reinforces my hypothesis that the diamond design belongs to the Dhalwangu clan. See Appendix B.

crosshatching. According to the artist, this painting represents sacred rituals, which are performed jointly by members of both the Dhuwa and the Yirritja moieties. For the rituals, each moiety must provide their sacred emblems (*rangga*), depicted in the painting as abstract designs inside the round shapes which symbolize waterholes. The Dhuwa sacred emblems are represented in the top half of the painting and the Yirritja sacred emblems in the bottom half.[423]

In a work by Woibanggi (life dates unknown; Djambarrpuyngu clan, Dhuwa moiety), [figure 3.30] the sacred site of Ngainmarangura (Flinder's Point) is illustrated [#9 on figure 3.1]. This work contains only a single circular design, positioned in the center of the composition. A horizontal dividing line extends on either side of the central circle, and overlaps the painted frame. Approximately equidistant above and below the central horizontal line are additional horizontal bars of crosshatching, which divide the composition roughly into four sections. Each section is further subdivided into four rectangular shapes in-filled with diagonal stripes of red, white, and yellow crosshatching. This work is unique in that the painted frame is interrupted by the horizontal dividing lines, and the lines are not consistently straight throughout the composition. According to the artist, the circle represents a sacred spring associated with the Djang'kawu and the bars of crosshatching represent running water.[424]

Two additional works by Banggalawi [figures 3.31 & 3.32] represent Milmindjulg—freshwater springs at the sacred site of Duwalgidj (Buckingham Bay) [#8

[423] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 22.

[424] Ibid., 18.

on figure 3.1].[425] Both paintings have an abundance of black crosshatching which is not seen in works produced by artists further east. The first work [figure 3.31] contains a painted frame in-filled with crosshatching, and a dividing line, positioned along the horizontal axis, separating the composition into two major sections. The top section is further subdivided into two feature blocks. The top left feature block has a grid design composed of two vertical lines and three horizontal lines with circular shapes at the six points of intersection. Two additional circular shapes appear in the upper right-hand side of the feature block, but are not incorporated into the overall design. The top right feature block is divided into four vertical bars that alternate between a series of horizontal lines in-filled with crosshatching and solid black bars that contain representations of elongated snakes. The snakes are outlined in red and also contain crosshatching. The entire composition is adorned with diagonal crosshatching that alternates between the colors of red, white, and black. According to the artist, the left side of the top section of the painting represents freshwater springs, while the right side represents two lightning snakes (*gunduru*) in between clouds (*mangan*).

The lower section is also divided into two feature blocks. The lower left feature block contains a grid design, similar to the feature block just above it, composed of three vertical and three horizontal lines that contain small circles at the nine points of intersection. The lines as well as the rectangular spaces between them are in-filled with crosshatching and the circular designs are outlined in black and in-filled with white dots set against a solid red background. The lower right feature block contains two columns of short, horizontal bars in-filled with red, white and black crosshatching. In between the

[425] As previously mentioned, Banggalawi belonged to the Djambarrpuyngu clan.

two columns are two vertical bars in-filled with diagonal crosshatching. The white crosshatching in the center of each horizontal bar, creates a zigzag design that descends downwards, reminiscent of a lightning bolt. Just above these bars, are small red and white dots set against a black background. According to the artist, the dots symbolize rain drops (*gong*) falling from the sky.[426]

Another painting by Banggalawi [figure 3.32] is remarkably similar in composition to the left-hand side of the previous painting [figure 3.31], and contains two major feature blocks divided along the horizontal axis. In the top feature block, there is a grid design, composed of two vertical lines and three horizontal lines with oval shapes at the six points of intersection. In the middle two squares created by the grid are tracks, two in each square. According to the artist, these are tracks of magpie geese (*gurumadji; Anseranas semipalmata*) searching for roots (*ragai*), and the black and white dots inside the oval shapes are the holes, created by the geese in digging for them.[427] In the bottom feature block, there is also a grid design composed of three vertical and three horizontal lines with circular shapes at the nine points of intersection. Unlike the previous painting, however, the circles in the upper section are outlined in yellow instead of red. This painting also lacks a painted frame in-filled with crosshatching on all four sides.

The final painting that belongs to the Djambarrpuyngu clan [figure 3.33] was created by the artist Gagguba.[428] This work's discrete figurative imagery set against a

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[426] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 15.

[427] Ibid., 17. See Appendix B.

[428] Although Berndt does not specify that this is a Djambarrpuyngu clan painting, I believe that it is based on its imagery and its association with the Djang'kawu myth. Since Gagguba belonged to the Gälpu clan, he would have gained rights to Djambarrpuyngu clan paintings through his maternal grandmother.

solid red background is unusual for Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings. It also lacks the hallmark features of a Dhuwa painting with sacred imagery such as a painted frame, dividing lines, and a balanced composition. It does, however, have some familiar figurative elements, such as the dillybag in the lower right-hand side, and the bird tracks in the lower center of the composition. According to the myth, when the Djang'kawu were in Djambarrpuyngu country, they heard the cry of a black cockatoo (*ngadilili*) and saw "edible *winigamu* roots (or 'jungle tucker'); so they collected these, and sang about them. In the branches of a tree they hung a special dillybag; and they constructed two large shades, one for the two sisters and one for the Brother."[429] It is my belief that this is the episode represented in Gagguba's painting, since many of the elements mentioned in it are included in this work. The bird tracks may be those of the black cockatoo, the tree (on the right-hand side) may represent the tree upon which the Djang'kawu hung their dillybag, while on the left-hand side of the painting is a representation of the jungle tucker roots the Djang'kawu ate.[430]

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[429] Berndt, *Djanggawul*, 35. Jungle tucker translates as food found in the wild.

[430] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 21.

LIYAGAWUMIRR CLAN PAINTINGS

In all, there are eight Liyagawumirr clan paintings with sacred imagery in the AMNH Berndt Collection.[431] Three of them were painted by artists from the Liyagawumirr clan, two were painted by artists who gained rights to the clan paintings through their mother (*ngärndi*), and three were painted by artists who gained rights to the clan paintings through their maternal grandmother (*märi*). All of the bark paintings illustrate one of the three sacred sites that belong to the Liyagawumirr clan: Jalwuljalwulngura at Buckingham Bay [#8 on figure 3.1], Jalwajalwuri (near Elcho Island) [#10 on figure 3.1], and Marejuma at Flinder's Point [#9 on figure 3.1]. Seven of the bark paintings include figurative representations; while one of the bark paintings is purely abstract.

A bark painting by Banggalawi [figure 3.34], who most likely gained rights to Liyagawumirr clan paintings through his maternal grandmother, illustrates Jalwuljalwulngura at Buckingham Bay [#8 on figure 3.1].[432] This work contains a painted frame in-filled with red and yellow crosshatching and a dividing line positioned along the horizontal axis, separating the composition into two major sections. The top section contains vertical lines in-filled with alternating red and yellow crosshatching, and the bottom section contains a single large image of a monitor surrounded by red horizontal lines with alternating red and yellow crosshatching in between. According to the artist, the bottom section represents a water monitor (possibly a Mitchell's water

[431] Alternate spellings include: Liyagawumirr, Liagalwamiri, and Liagalwumiri. The Liyagawumirr clan has always been the dominant Dhuwa moiety clan on Elcho Island.

[432] Berndt does state that this is a Liyagawumirr clan painting, but does not specify the clan of Banggalawi's maternal grandmother.

monitor, *Varanus mitchelli*) drinking from a billabong, while the top section represents the sacred foreskin of the monitor (*dalba rangga*).[433] The body of the monitor has a chevron-type pattern of red and yellow crosshatching placed on either side of the backbone. According to Groger-Wurm, in Liyagawumirr clan paintings such as this:

> the white and red colour indicates clean water and the yellow is the muddy water stirred up by the well waters "boiling" underground. The "dirty" water is called *mejelg,* which means woman.[434]

Another work that represents Jalwuljalwulngura [figure 3.35] was painted by Djunmal (life dates unknown; Liyagawumirr clan, Dhuwa moiety). This work is also divided into two major sections, but only the lower one contains a painted frame in-filled with crosshatching, and within that frame Djunmal has painted one large central sacred spring shown as a circular form. From that central spring, water flows into eight secondary springs, which form a rectangle around the one in the center. Stylistically, this design creates a frame within a frame. Above the nine springs, are four unframed images. These are, from left to right, a monitor, a rectangular design, a dillybag, and a second monitor. According to the artist, these figures represent two mangrove monitors (*djumbubu*), a sacred dillybag adorned with feathers, and an unidentified rectangular form which may represent a decorated mortuary hollow log used to contain human bones [figure 3.36].[435] The monitors are strikingly different from any of the monitors seen thus

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[433] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent,"19-20. See Appendix E.

[434] Groger-Wurm, *Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings,* 29. Perhaps there is an analogy between muddy water and a woman's menses.

[435] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 18.

far, in that their hind legs are turned downwards instead of upwards more similar to the position of a human laying down, and their heads are tilted to the left side. The two monitors, each with different markings on their backs, may represent the two Djang'kawu sisters, while the dillybag may represent the brother. According to the artist, the brother changed himself into the sacred emblems contained within the dillybag, and then changed himself back into a man.[436]

Based on the imagery, this bark painting most likely represents the episode from the Djang'kawu myth that explains why men are the ceremonial leaders in Northeastern Arnhem Land. According to the myth, it was the two sisters who were originally the ceremonial leaders, since they possessed the sacred dillybags which contained all the sacred emblems of the Dhuwa moiety. One day, however, their sons (along with their brother) stole their sacred dillybags, thereby transferring the power from the women to the men and giving the men control over all sacred ceremonies from that point forward. According to the myth:

> As soon as the Sisters heard the beat of the singing sticks, and the sounds of the men's singing, they fell down and began to crawl along the ground. They were too "frightened" to go near that dreaming place, the shade of the Djanggawul Brother. They were fearful not of the men, but of the power of the sacred songs. The men had taken from them not only these songs, and the emblems, but also the power to perform sacred ritual, a power which had formerly belonged only to the Sisters.[437]

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[436] Ibid.

[437] Berndt, *Djanggawul,* 40.

After this act of theft, the two sisters decided to forgive the men and allowed them to be the ceremonial leaders since they still had their wombs and their ability to give birth, a visible sign of power which men could never steal.[438]

The sacred site of Jalwajalwurmi [#10 in figure 3.1] is illustrated in a work [figure 3.37] painted by Banja (life dates unknown; Liyagawumirr clan, Dhuwa moiety).[439] This work contains a painted frame in-filled with red, white, and yellow crosshatching. A large circular form in-filled with yellow crosshatching is positioned in the center of the composition, and two smaller circular forms are located above and below the center circle. Solid yellow lines radiate out from the central circle, creating triangular forms that are either in-filled with yellow crosshatching or crosshatching that alternates between red, white, and yellow. It is reminiscent of Mawalan's painting with the sunburst design [figure 3.16], but lacks Mawalan's balanced and symmetrical composition. It also appears less vibrant than Mawalan's painting due to the abundance of yellow crosshatching. Again, according to Groger-Wurm, yellow crosshatching "symbolizes the muddy water carried into the well after heavy rain."[440]

According to the myth, after leaving Buckingham Bay, the Djang'kawu traveled to Elcho Island where they gave birth to a number of clans and established their associated sacred sites. On their journey back to the mainland, they encountered the

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[438] In fact, the two sisters replied, "We know everything. We have really lost nothing, for we remember it all, and we can let them have that small part. For aren't we still sacred, even if we have lost the bags? Haven't we still our uteri?" Ibid., 40-41.

[439] Although Berndt states that Banja belonged to the Majamaja clan, I have not been able to find any record of this clan during the course of my research. Instead, I have discovered a subgroup of the Liyagawumirr clan by the name of "Majarmajar." Groger-Wurm, *Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings,* 42. Based on this discovery and the stylistic similarities that exist with other works in this clan, I have attributed the works by Banja to the Liyagawumirr clan.

[440] Groger-Wurm, *Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings,* 29.

Waruwi River, which ran down towards the sea. The Waruwi River belongs to three clans of the Yirritja moiety, one of which is the Warramiri clan:

> "Look," said the Brother and Sisters, "the [Yirritja] waters block us. We shall walk fast and pass them." When they had gone past Waruwi, they heard the sound of the [Yirritja] honey bee. "Ah," said the Sisters, "another [Yirritja] blocks us! What are we going to do now? Then the Djanggawul Brother replied, "I think we will just go past, and not bother about that."[441]

This section of the myth is represented in an abstract bark painting [figure 3.38] by Wandjuk Marika.[442] This work is divided into six feature blocks enclosed within an uneven painted frame, in-filled with crosshatching. The two center feature blocks contain a simplified form of the Rirratjingu clan design with yellow lines in-filled with alternating red and white crosshatching. The remaining feature blocks contain vertical lines of linked diamonds set against a solid red background. The upper left and lower right feature blocks have diamonds that are in-filled with yellow and red crosshatching, whereas the upper right and lower left feature blocks have diamonds that are in-filled with red crosshatching. The linked diamond design is reminiscent of the Warramiri clan design (Yirritja moiety) that appears on the right-hand side of a painting by Djunmal [figure 3.39] at the Museum Victoria, Melbourne. Though Berndt's entry in the "Catalogue of Objects Sent" is unclear about this particular painting, it is my guess that the linked diamonds represent the Warramiri clan design and the Yirritja waters that

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[441] Berndt, *Djanggawul,* 40.

[442] Berndt does not state that this is a Liyagawumirr clan painting; however, I have made this attribution based on the style and imagery. Wandjuk would have received rights to these clan paintings through his maternal grandmother.

blocked the Djang'kawu on their journey. Since Wandjuk's mother belonged to the Warramiri clan, it would have been logical to include this familiar clan design within the composition itself.[443]

Another bark painting that may represent this section of the myth [figure 3.40] was created by Djingulul (life dates unknown; Gälpu clan, Dhuwa moiety).[444] Like the aforementioned painting by Wandjuk, this work is divided into six feature blocks. The upper center feature block contains two triangular forms (one stacked on top of the other) that are in-filled with crosshatching, face each other, and are surrounded by white, red, and yellow dots. The lower center feature block contains a similar design, though, the triangles have been replaced by oval shapes.[445] The remaining four feature blocks (one in each corner) have vertical columns of linked diamonds in-filled with white and yellow crosshatching. Again, this linked-diamond pattern is reminiscent of the Warramiri clan design. Djingulul's painting is the final work (number twenty-eight) in the AMNH Berndt Collection that deals with the Djang'kawu myth cycle.

The remaining three bark paintings with sacred imagery that belong to the Dhuwa moiety are all connected to the second major myth cycle: the Wägilak Sisters Story.[446]

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[443] Marika, *Life Story,* 38.

[444] Again, Berndt does not state that this is a Liyagawumirr clan painting; however, I have made this attribution based on the style and imagery. Djingulul would have received rights to these clan paintings through his maternal grandmother.

[445] Unfortunately, Berndt does not give any explanation for the upper triangles or the lower cut-off oval shapes. Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 20.

[446] In Northeastern Arnhem Land, this cycle is referred to as the Wägilak Sisters Story, whereas in Central Arnhem Land it is referred to as the Wagilag Sisters Story. Wally Caruana, "Wägilak and Djan'kawu: Ancestral Paintings in the Public Domain," in *Art from the Land: Dialogues with the Kluge-Ruhe Collection of Australian Aboriginal Art*, eds. Howard Morphy and Margaret Smith Bowles (Charlottesville, University of Virginia, 1999), 121.

This myth focuses on two sisters, an older sister and a pregnant younger sister, who are believed to be the daughters of the Djang'kawu.[447] According to the story, the sisters traveled north from south-eastern Arnhem Land, and made camp near the Mirrarrmina waterhole in Liyagawumirr country, the sacred home of Wititj, the olive python. It is here that the younger sister gave birth, and in so doing, polluted the waterhole, causing everything to go terribly wrong. According to the story, when the sisters attempted to cook some animals that they had caught, one by one the animals sprung to life and lept into the waterhole. Wititj, who became increasingly angry, finally emerged from his home, swallowed all the waters of the lagoon, and stood erect in the sky. By spitting out the waters of the lagoon, he created the first monsoon or "wet" season. The sisters performed songs and dances to avoid the heavy rains, but are eventually forced to take refuge in a wet-season bark shelter. Wititj then descended from the sky and swallowed the two sisters, which resulted in Wititj developing a terrible stomach ache. When he ascended once again into the sky and explained his actions to the ancestral pythons of other clans, who had also ascended up into the sky, he was told the reason he was sick was because he ate two members of his moiety. Eventually, the pain became so great that Wititj fell to the earth, vomited up the sisters creating a strong wind, which caused the floodwaters to abate. The myth concludes with the sisters being brought miraculously back to life after being bitten by stinging caterpillars.

The first work associated with the Wägilak Sisters Story [figure 3.41] was painted by Badangga (life dates unknown; Wangurri clan; Yirritja moiety), who most likely

[447] Berndt, *Djanggawul,* 18. For a comprehensive study on this particular myth cycle, see Caruana and Lendon, *The Painters of the Wagilag Sisters Story.*

gained rights to Liyagawumirr clan paintings through his mother.[448] This work, which has neither a painted frame nor background design, depicts Marejuma (Flinder's Point) [#9 on figure 3.1], and is divided into approximately three vertical sections. The left section contains four figurative representations: possibly a type of half-beak fish (*bulmidi*; *Zenarchopterus rasori*), two green turtles, and a type of snapper fish (*warugal; Lutjanus johni*) near the beach.[449] All of the animals are in-filled with white crosshatching, and two of the animals (the half-beak fish and the lower turtle) have an additional stripe of yellow and black crosshatching. The center section contains figurative representations of two snakes (*ubag;* species unknown) and two smaller Northern death adders (*badigrarimiri; Acanthophis praelongus*), all of which are in-filled with crosshatching.[450] On either side, linked circular forms appear in-filled with solid black. According to the artist, the black circles are holes of the snakes.[451] The right section contains a larger circular form and an elongated serpent form, representing a snake about to enter a hole. They are surrounded by white linear forms composed of herring bone-like shapes. All the figures in the composition are set against a solid red background with the crosshatching reserved as infill designs within the forms.

Badangga's work is very similar to a bark painting [figure 3.42] at the Museum Victoria, Melbourne. This work was created around 1960 by Dawidi Djulwarak (1921-1970; Liyagawumirr clan, Dhuwa moiety), the clan leader of the Liyagawumirr clan in

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[448] Berndt does indicate that this is a Liyagawumirr clan painting, but does not specify the clan of Badangga's mother.

[449] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 18. See Appendix C.

[450] See Appendix E.

[451] Ibid., 19.

Central Arnhem Land. Both paintings depict a serpent with a zigzag body in-filled with diagonal crosshatching, set against a solid red background, and surrounded by various figurative representations of animals. Dawidi's painting, however, contains a painted frame and upside down human footprints appear in a vertical row on the left side of the painting and just above the snake. An inverted anthropomorphic figure appears above a representation of a large monitor, and both figures are in-filled with diagonal crosshatching. Cascading down the center of the composition are multiple representations of small caterpillars, arranged in approximately six multicolored columns with thirteen caterpillars in each column. According to the artist, Dawidi's painting represents the beginning of the wet season, in which Wititj (the snake) stands erect in the sky and spits water to create the monsoon season. Unlike Badangga's work, Dawidi has chosen to combine a number of different scenes from the myth cycle into a single image. For example, he includes a figurative representation of the younger Wägilak sister, her footprints, a reference to the sisters' dances, and the numerous multi-colored stinging caterpillars, which brought the sisters back to life.

The second work associated with the Wägilak Sisters Story in the AMNH Berndt Collection [figure 3.43] was painted by Bununggu Yunupingu, who obtained rights to Liyagawumirr clan paintings through his mother.[452] This work depicts five solid yellow figurative representations of snakes, all facing the top of the painting. Each serpent is similar in form, yet no two are identical. They are all outlined in white, have two white eyes, and a band of alternating red and white lines on their head. They are surrounded by

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[452] Berndt does not state that this is a Liyagawumirr clan painting; however, I have made this attribution based on the style and imagery. Bununggu would have received rights to these clan paintings through his mother.

a unique pattern of thick bars of white crosshatching that overlap thick bars of red crosshatching set against a solid red background.[453] This work most likely depicts the ancestral pythons of other clans, who have ascended up into the sky and tell Wititj the reason he is sick is because he ate two members of his same moiety.

In another work at the Museum Victoria [figure 3.44] by Dawidi, the subject matter is almost identical. Similar to Bununggu's painting, Dawidi's work has five elongated snakes (almost identical in form), all facing towards the top of the painting. Unlike Bununggu's painting, Dawidi's work includes a "V"-shaped form (symbolizing clouds) above the figurative representations of the stinging caterpillars which brought the sisters back to life.

The third and final work in the AMNH Berndt Collection that relates to the Wägilak Sisters Story [figure 3.45] was painted by Banja.[454] This painting is divided into three major sections, separated by two horizontal dividing lines. The top section contains three anthropomorphic figures of varying heights surrounded by solid yellow rectangular and curvilinear forms set against a solid red background. The anthropomorphic figures have linear forms with accentuated phalluses and an "X"-shaped design across their torsos. The lower section contains a single inverted anthropomorphic figure depicted in a very similar linear form surrounded by numerous solid yellow rectangular shapes and two larger bulbous shapes, set against a solid red background. All of the figures, in both the upper and lower sections, seem to face the center of the composition. The middle section has a large oval design that is in-filled with yellow, white, black, and red

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[453] Unfortunately, Berndt does provide an explanation for the thick bars of crosshatching.

[454] As previously mentioned, I have attributed the works by Banja to the Liyagawumirr clan.

crosshatching, and is outlined by a series of yellow, white, and black dots. To the left and right of the oval for are "Y"-shaped forms that are in-filled with red crosshatching.

According to the artist, this painting represents the Kunapipi ceremony, one of four ceremonies based on the Wägilak Sisters Story. The Kunapipi ceremony is an initiation ceremony in which young male initiates are ceremonially swallowed by Wititj, the olive python, and then vomited up just like the Wägilak sisters restoring them to life. In undergoing this initiation, the young men are believed to be ritually reborn, and through this process obtain sacred knowledge.[455] The central oval represents the sacred drum (*uwaz*) with two bamboo spears (*gundid*) standing on each side of it. The sacred drum is also surrounded by spearthrowers (*galbu*, in the upper left and upper right corners) and stone spear heads used for smoothing bark (*gwiara*, indicated by the triangular forms in the lower left and lower right corners). In the feature block at the top of the painting are representations of three men who serve as initiators in the ceremony. They are surrounded by representations of boomerangs (*gunjalili*). In the feature block at the bottom is another representation of an initiator at the center. To the right are more boomerangs, and to the left are two dillybags (*bandage*).[456] According to Groger-Wurm, in the Kunapipi ceremony, Wititj is personified by the sacred *uwaz* drum, the sounds being his voice.[457] On either side at the top and bottom of the painting are figurative representations of men beating the sacred drum.[458]

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[455] Groger-Wurm, *Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings,* 47.

[456] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 10-11.

[457] Groger-Wurm, *Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings,* 47.

[458] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 10-11.

Yirritja Moiety

There are eleven bark paintings with sacred imagery from the Yirritja moiety in the AMNH Berndt Collection. Six of the paintings relate to the great myth cycle of Bäru and the "Fire Dreaming." Five additional works relate to a secondary myth cycle that focuses on the formation of giant storm clouds, which will be discussed later in this chapter. I will begin by analyzing the clan paintings of the Gumatj clan, then the Wangurri clan, and finally the Warramiri clan.

According to the myth cycle, the creator spirit Bäru was a contemporary of the Djang'kawu and lived with his wife at Blue Mud Bay (Yathikpa) [#11 in figure 3.1]. One day, Bäru demanded some of the shellfish his wife was roasting over a fire, but she refused to give him any. In a moment of rage, Bäru pushed his wife into the fire, and she changed into an Eastern blue-tongue lizard (*Tiliqua scincoides*).[459] When her clan (from the Dhuwa moiety) found out what had happened, they created a great fire and threw burning coals on Bäru's back. Bäru was burned so badly, that he jumped into the water and changed into a freshwater crocodile.[460] From that point on, he became known as the "Crocodile Man."

The fire that was created at Blue Mud Bay quickly spread to other territories including Caledon Bay, where it merged with another fire that was started by two brothers.[461] According to Howard Morphy:

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[459] See Appendix E.

[460] Groger-Wurm, *Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings,* 83-85.

[461] According to the myth, the two brothers had created a bush fire to drive out the game so it could be speared by the waiting hunters.

> The fire started by the two men spread and many things were caught up in it. In the estuary the crocodile had one of its limbs burned and a fish had a brown patch burned into its back. A little further on the fire went through a ceremonial ground, burning a diamond design into a ceremonial clap stick.[462]

Eventually, the fire spread to all the territories owned by the Yirritja moiety, and became known as the "Fire Dreaming." Just as the travels of the Djang'kawu connect all the clans of the Dhuwa moiety, so too does the "Fire Dreaming" connect all the clans of the Yirritja moiety.

Only one of the works in the AMNH Collection [figure 3.46] depicts Bäru in figural form. In this work by Liogang (life dates unknown; Warramiri clan, Yirritja moiety), Bäru is depicted as a freshwater crocodile in the center of the composition, swimming in the sea. According to the artist, on either side of Bäru's body are figurative representations of an unknown species of turtle called *gwuwadji*, which are a sacred totem of the Warramiri clan.[463] Throughout the composition, diagonal bands of crosshatching alternate between the colors of red, yellow, white, and black. Since the crosshatching found on Bäru's body is almost identical to the background crosshatching, his body practically disappears within the composition. This stylistic feature is common among artists of the Warramiri clan. This particular work probably represents the moment that Bäru jumped into the water and transformed into a freshwater crocodile. Since an anthropomorphic figure of Bäru may have been too sacred, Liogang chose to

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[462] Morphy, "Life Through Art," 66.

[463] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 16-17.

depict this miraculous transformation by giving Bäru the body of a crocodile and the tail of a fish.

GUMATJ CLAN PAINTINGS

There are six Gumatj clan paintings with sacred imagery in the AMNH Berndt Collection.[464] All six of the bark paintings were painted by artists who were members of the Gumatj clan. Three of the bark paintings include figurative representations; while the others are purely abstract. Most of the bark paintings have a painted frame outlined in yellow, and contain background patterns that incorporate the Gumatj clan design. The Gumatj clan design is characterized by linked diamonds in-filled with either red, white, or black crosshatching. Generally, these linked diamonds appear against a solid background that alternates between red and black. According to Howard Morphy:

> The diamond pattern represents the passage of the fire and the pattern, burnt into the ancestral skin, that is characteristic of crocodiles today. The red diamonds represent flames, the white ones ash, and the black ones wood charred by the fire.[465]

When the fire reached Biranybirany (at Caledon Bay) [#12 on figure 3.1], the Northern brown bandicoots (*wan'kurra*), a sacred totem of the Gumatj clan, became frightened and took shelter inside a hollow log. This scene is illustrated in a work by Bununggu Yunupingu [figure 3.47], which contains a painted frame in-filled with crosshatching and a dividing line positioned along the horizontal axis.[466] The dividing

[464] Alternate spellings include: Gumaidj.

[465] Morphy, "Life Through Art," 66.

[466] As previously mentioned, Bununggu belonged to the Gumatj clan.

line separates the work into two major sections (upper and lower), creating a composition that is symmetrical. Each section contains a figurative representation of a bandicoot, painted in yellow and outlined in white, surrounded by the Gumatj clan design. The bandicoots face away from the horizontal dividing line towards the edges of the painting. At the top and bottom edges of the painting are truncated columns of linked diamond patterns that are positioned vertically as opposed to horizontally. According to the artist, the two bandicoots are facing the burning bushes being consumed by the fire. Since there is no black pigment, this work must depict the early stages of the fire at Biranybirany before the bandicoots became frightened and ran into the hollow log to escape it.

In terms of the composition, Bununggu's painting is very similar to the template used by Mawalan [figure 1.21]. For example, both paintings depict two figurative representations of the same animal at the center of the composition, positioned along the vertical axis. The figurative representations included in each painting are painted in yellow and outlined in white, and are surrounded by the clan designs of the artists. The works differ, however, in that Bununggu's work is divided only along the horizontal axis, and there is no reference to a three-dimensional land form, such as a sandhill. Bununggu's work also does not have animal tracks, which are included in Mawalan's painting.

The next section of the Fire Dreaming myth is illustrated in a painting [figure 3.48] by Djuwali (life dates unknown; Gumatj clan; Yirritja moiety). In Djuwali's painting, there is a prevalence of black pigment, which indicates that the fire at Biranybirany has died down. Black, as previously mentioned, symbolizes the wood

charred by the fire in the story. According to the myth, once the fire died down brown quails (*djirrikitj; Coturnix australis*) appeared.[467] These quails continued the spread of the fire by placing burning twigs in their beaks and flying off. As they passed over Yirritja territories, they dropped the burning embers causing the fire to spread.[468] According to the contemporary artist Djolu (b.1945), who is the niece of Bununggu:

> The little birds, *miyalk* [women] really, they changed to *wäyin* [birds] afterwards. They were walking to *wan'kurra's wäna* [bandicoot's home]. They brought fire and burned *wan'kurra's* nest. The little bird brings all the time the fire, carrying the fire…First [we dance] *bäru* [crocodile], then *djirrikitj* [quail], then *wan'kurra* [bandicoot]…The diamonds are the fire: red and yellow ones are the flames, the white ones are ashes.[469]

This work contains a painted frame in-filled with red, black, and white crosshatching, and a dividing line positioned along the horizontal axis separating the composition into two major sections. Both the top section and the bottom section are further subdivided into two vertical feature blocks, separated by elongated oval forms that contain three linked-diamond designs set against a solid yellow background. All four quadrants are in-filled with the Gumatj clan design except for the one at the lower right contain three small figurative representations of brown quails shown in profile view. No bandicoots are depicted, most likely because they are believed to be hiding inside the hollow log. They are referenced, however, in that the horizontal dividing line

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[467] See Appendix B.

[468] Helen Groger-Wurm, *Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings,* 85.

[469] Hutcherson, *Gong-Wapitja,* 29-30.

represents the hollow log, and the elongated oval forms are the homes of the bandicoots.[470]

Three other abstract bark paintings were created by Bununggu, which focus solely on the Gumatj clan design, composed of linked diamonds. The first painting [figure 3.49] contains five rows of linked diamonds in-filled with alternating red and black crosshatching. These diamonds are set against a solid background that also alternates between rows of either red or black. The result is a figure-ground reversal effect in which either the crosshatching or the solid rows can be read as the background of the composition. According to the artist, the linked diamond design represents paperbark trees and ashes from fire.[471]

Another work by Bununggu [figure 3.50] is divided into two unequal sections with the top section containing two rows of linked diamonds in-filled with crosshatching, and the bottom section containing three rows. Similar to the previous painting, the linked diamonds are in-filled either with red or black crosshatching and the spaces in between the diamonds alternate between solid black and solid red. The diamond shapes are outlined in yellow with white dots placed in between the diamonds which represents the same imagery of paperbark trees and ashes.

A third painting by Bununggu [figure 3.51] contains the same linked diamond design. Unlike the two previous paintings; however, this painting does not have a painted frame in-filled with crosshatching, but rather has a solid red frame that is outlined

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[470] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 2. Nests of bandicoots are constructed to resemble the surrounding ground cover, and are composed of short pieces of dried sticks, coarse grass, leaves, and earth. Peter Stanbury and Graeme Phipps, *Australia's Animals Discovered* (Sydney: Pergamon Press, 1980), 35.

[471] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 37.

in yellow. The composition is also divided into four quadrants with either two or three rows of linked diamonds in-filled with alternating red and black crosshatching in each. It is unusual to have a dividing line and painted frame with no crosshatching; therefore, I would guess that this painting may be unfinished. According to the artist, the linked diamond design again symbolizes paperbark trees and ashes from fire.[472]

Two additional works created by the same artist (Bununggu) demonstrate a continuity in style in Yirrkala that lasted almost two decades. In a work [figure 3.52] that belongs to the 1946-50 Berndt Collection (at the Macleay Museum, Sydney), the composition is divided into two sections with a dividing line positioned along the horizontal axis. Both the upper and lower sections are in-filled with the Gumatj clan design, enclosed within a painted frame in-filled with red and white crosshatching. The works appear almost identical in style, except for the crosshatching and the orientation of the painting. The crosshatching in this work appears smaller when compared to later works, and the composition seems to be oriented along a vertical (as opposed to a horizontal) axis if one reads the linked diamonds as horizontal rows instead of vertical columns.

In a work [figure 3.53] in the 1959 Tuckson/Scougall Collection at the AGNSW, the scale of the linked diamonds has been adjusted to accommodate a much larger sheet of bark. However, the imagery is almost identical to the earlier paintings created by Bununggu. The composition is divided into four roughly equal quadrants, and each quadrant is in-filled with the Gumatj clan design. The only unique feature in this painting is the inclusion of human footprints which appear at the upper right-hand side.

The final five paintings in the AMNH Berndt Collection relate to a secondary myth of the Yirritja moiety that describes the formation of giant storm clouds. This myth cycle explains how rain, lightning and thunder are created, similar to the Dhuwa moiety's myth cycle of the Thunder Man. Each clan within the Yirritja moiety has its own set of beliefs, but the paintings all have similar features.

According to Gumatj clan tradition, the storm clouds (*marratjula*) were created when the ancestral snake Wunhangu rose up from its sacred home at the bottom of the sea. As it entered the sky, it released its energy, producing rain.[473] This myth is illustrated in a work by Bununggu [figure 3.54]. The exact location depicted in this painting is the site of Dalingura, near Cape Arnhem [#13 on figure 3.1]. This work contains a painted frame, which is in-filled with crosshatching only at the top and bottom edges, and is divided into two main sections by a dividing line along the horizontal axis. The top section has a figurative representation of the serpent Wunhangu positioned along the vertical axis, with two large rectangular forms on either side. According to the artist, the black rectangular form on the left represents stormy skies, and the yellow rectangular form on the right represents a cloud with rain falling from it. The bottom section is divided into almost identical imagery showing two estuary stingrays (*galwanalgmiri; Dasyatis fluvorium*) on either side. The stingrays on the left are set against a solid black background, while the stingrays on the right are surrounded by white and yellow dots

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[472] Ibid., 38.

[473] Mundine, *Saltwater,* 76. See also Groger-Wurm, *Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings,* 80.

representing rain. According to the artist, when rain falls on the sea, the stingrays appear on the surface with their young.[474]

WANGURRI CLAN PAINTINGS

There is only one Wangurri clan painting with sacred imagery in the AMNH Berndt Collection [figure 3.55].[475] It was painted by Badangga (life dates unknown; Wangurri clan, Yirritja moiety) and illustrates a reef near Cape Arnhem [#13 on figure 3.1], one of the sacred sites of the Wangurri clan. The Wangurri clan has close relations with the Gumatj clan which explains the stylistic similarities of the works.

Badangga's work is strikingly similar in subject matter to the bark painting by Bununggu [figure 3.54]. Both bark paintings are divided along the horizontal axis, separated into two major sections. Both contain storm clouds in the upper section that are separated by a lightning snake, as well as various sea creatures in the bottom section. However, Badangga's painting contains four clouds as opposed to two, with the two clouds in the center in-filled with a distorted zigzag form surrounded by solid black. The two clouds on the sides are in-filled with a single linked diamond design (the Wangurri clan design) surrounded by crosshatching. Unlike the previous work, there is no lightning snake (*gulngura*) represented in this painting, but he may be symbolically represented as the distorted zigzag forms in the two central clouds.[476] The lower section contains two large black birds (possibly pied herons), and twelve small fish (species

[474] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 5. No interpretation is given for the five circles that appear beneath the serpent.

[475] Alternate spellings include: Waŋgurri and Wonguri.

[476] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 14.

unknown) surrounding a central circle in-filled with crosshatching. According to the artist, the lower section represents the origin of a sacred dance of the Wangurri clan.[477] This dance most likely is performed just prior to the wet season, causing the lighting snake to ascend up to the sky, resulting in storm clouds and, eventually, rain.

WARRAMIRI CLAN PAINTINGS

There are three Warramiri clan paintings with sacred imagery in the AMNH Berndt Collection.[478] One was painted by an artist from the Warramiri clan, and two were painted by an artist who gained rights to the clan paintings through his maternal grandmother (*märi*). All three of the bark paintings include figurative representations of whales (possibly *Mesoplodon bowdoini)* positioned at the center of the composition.[479] According to the Warramiri clan, the storm clouds (*mangan*) were created by a whale named Wuimiri. During the Dreamtime, a mythical ancestor went out to sea to catch a whale, and to his delight caught Wuimiri. Unfortunately, Wuimiri was too big to load into the ancestor's canoe, so he decided to cut the whale into smaller pieces. But before he had a chance to do so, Wuimiri sucked in all the water of the seas and blew it out of his blow hole. As the spray rose up into the sky, it formed storm clouds.[480] The cloud

[477] Ibid., 14.

[478] Alternate spellings include: Waramiri. The Warramiri clan has always been the dominant Yirritja moiety clan on Elcho Island.

[479] According to Ian McIntosh, the whale is the highest of Warramiri totems. McIntosh, *Aboriginal Reconciliation,* 102. John Cawte also discusses the importance of the whale to the Warramiri clan in his 1993 publication. John Cawte, *The Universe of the Warramiri* (New South Wales: New South Wales University Press, 1993).

[480] Groger-Wurm, *Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings,* 96.

design, the whale, and its backbone have all become sacred emblems for the Warramiri clan.[481]

The first work [figure 3.56] by Wuragi (life dates unknown; Warramiri clan; Yirritja moiety) is a detail of the lower half of a whale's body set against a solid red background with no painted frame. The whale's body is divided into five vertical subsections, in-filled with red, white, and black crosshatching. The upper part of the whale is reminiscent of the abstract cloud shapes in the upper section of figure 3.54, and according to the artist, the representation of the whale in figure 3.56 is also symbolic of rain and clouds.[482]

In another work [figure 3.57] three figurative representations of whales are depicted, with the central whale being the largest. Created by Djuwali, who most likely gained rights to Warramiri clan paintings through his maternal grandmother, the bodies of the whales are outlined in white and have solid yellow tails.[483] They are also divided into various sections by solid red lines and in-filled with either red, white, or yellow crosshatching. The figures are positioned against a solid red background, and a series of triangles in-filled with crosshatching appear above the whales' heads. According to the artist, these three whales are identified with rain falling on the sea.[484] Due to the fact that some of the triangular forms do not contain crosshatching and there seems to be no regularity in the patterning, my guess is that this may be an unfinished work.

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[481] McIntosh, *Aboriginal Reconciliation,* 3.

[482] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 15.

[483] Berndt does not state that this is a Warramiri clan painting; however, I have made this attribution based on the style and imagery. Since Djuwali belonged to the Gumatj clan, he would have gained rights to Warramiri clan paintings through his maternal grandmother.

In the third and final work connected to the Warramiri clan [figure 3.58], a single representation of a whale is surrounded by an intricate clan design. This work, which was also created by Djuwali, contains a simple painted frame with white and yellow stripes and a composition that is divided into three vertical sections. The center section contains a figurative representation of a whale, whose body blends into the background pattern so well that it almost disappears altogether. The design inside the whale's body is characterized by parallel yellow lines in-filled with alternating red and white crosshatching and yellow and white dashes. On either side of the whale's body are variations on this pattern; however, the lines are curved and alternate between being vertical and horizontal. It is only the solid yellow tail and the solid yellow band positioned half way up its body (in-filled with red and white dashes) that keeps the whale from being completely hidden in the surrounding background. The vibrant quality of design in this painting evokes the movement of waves in the ocean, and according to the artist, the large whale in the painting is surrounded by waves.[485]

The prominence of the whale's tail (also seen in the previous two bark paintings) may also reference historical times when Sama-Bajau ("sea gypsies" or whale hunters) accompanied Macassan trepangers to the shores of Arnhem Land. According to Ian McIntosh, when these whale hunters killed their prey, they would keep the head and upper body for themselves, and give the tail to the Yolngu, which was divided amongst the clans of the Yirritja moiety. McIntosh goes on to state that because of this, the whale's tail has become a symbol of the Yirritja moiety, and when the Yolngu see whales

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[484] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 38.

[485] Ibid., 39.

swimming, "…they are reminded not only of a law that binds clans to the moiety, but also their age-old partnership with non-Aborigines."[486]

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I analyzed the forty-two bark paintings with sacred imagery from Northeastern Arnhem Land in the AMNH Berndt Collection. Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings with sacred imagery are usually connected to sacred sites, and illustrate one or more episodes from great myth cycles. They also contain multiple meanings, depending on the viewer's age, gender and social status, as well as the context in which they are viewed. These meanings exist along a continuum from "outside" or public knowledge, to "inside" or secret knowledge.[487]

Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings with sacred imagery are also connected to particular clans, which may or may not be the clan of the artist. If an artist creates a painting associated with a clan other than his own, he will always identify the rights to the image as belonging to that clan. An artist will also change his style to reflect the style of the clan who owns the painting.

For instance, the artist Djuwali created five bark paintings in the AMNH Berndt Collection. However, only one belongs to the Gumatj clan, the artist's own clan [figure 3.48]. Two works [figures 3.24 & 3.25] belong to the Djambarrpuyngu clan, the clan of the artist's mother (*ngärndi*), and the final two works [figures 3.57 & 3.58] belong to the Warramiri clan, the clan of the artist's maternal grandmother (*mari*). Although all these

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[486] McIntosh, *Aboriginal Reconciliation,* 103.

[487] According to Stanton, the information given to the Berndts by the artists is considered "inside" knowledge. John Stanton, interview with author, Perth, Western Australia, 29 May 2003.

works were made by the same artist, the styles differ significantly depending on the specific clan that owns the image in each painting. For example, figure 3.48 which relates to the Gumatj clan is the only painting that utilizes black pigment and the linked diamond motif. The bark paintings associated with the Djambarrpuyngu clan [figures 3.24 and 3.25] have yellow crosshatching and a grid design with circles positioned at the points of intersection. The Warramiri clan paintings [figures 3.57 and 3.58] are characterized by figurative representations of whales, whose bodies are in-filled with crosshatching and have solid yellow tails. Examining these works not only proves that an artist has the ability to work in multiple styles, but once again, that it is the clan that owns the painting that dictates its style and imagery.[488]

In Chapter 4, I will turn to bark paintings with secular imagery from Northeastern Arnhem Land in the AMNH Berndt Collection.

[488] This holds true for other artists in the AMNH Berndt Collection as well, including Bununggu Yunupingu (figures 3.6, 3.43, 3.47, 3.49, 3.50, 3.51, 3.54), Gunguyama Dhamarrandji (figures 3.7 and 3.26), Gagguba (figures 3.20 and 3.33), Banggalawi (figures 3.29, 3.31, 3.32, 3.34), Banja (figures 3.37 and 3.45), and Badangga (figures 3.41 and 3.55).

CHAPTER 4

ILLUSTRATING THE EVERYDAY: BARK PAINTINGS WITH SECULAR IMAGERY FROM NORTHEASTERN ARNHEM LAND

In this chapter, I will focus on bark paintings with secular imagery from Northeastern Arnhem Land. I will analyze the seventeen bark paintings that are in the AMNH Berndt Collection, including five works collected from Yirrkala and twelve works from Elcho Island. These works will first be organized by subject matter, moiety, then by clan and individual artist. I will discuss the bark paintings in terms of style and iconography, paying close attention to individual stylistic trends as well as similarities and/or differences that exist between artists of the same social group.

BARK PAINTINGS WITH SECULAR IMAGERY

Bark paintings with secular imagery are defined as works that are associated with the mundane realm and illustrate various aspects of everyday life, particularly hunting and fishing. Traditionally, they played a less important role than bark paintings with sacred imagery in Northeastern Arnhem Land, where they are believed to have originated as paintings on the walls of wet-season bark shelters.[489] The subject matter of bark paintings with secular imagery is open to all artists, regardless of their age or initiation level, and clan elders do not regulate the finished products. According to Helen Groger-Wurm, such paintings are created purely for the artist's pleasure, and, as such, lie outside the ceremonial realm and the strictly governed Yolngu clan system. Instead, "the artist

[489] Groger-Wurm, *Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings*, 103.

has absolute freedom as far as his choice of subject matter is concerned and the way he wishes to portray it."[490]

THE AMNH BERNDT COLLECTION

In all, seventeen Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings in the AMNH Berndt Collection contain secular imagery. They were painted by twelve artists from seven different clans.[491] Similar to the Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings with sacred imagery, these works are relatively small, with the average size being 13 x 18 inches. However, unlike the bark paintings with sacred imagery, these works do not contain clan designs, nor do they reference specific sacred sites.[492] Crosshatching is used most often as an infill pattern within figurative representations, and there is a conspicuous absence of clan designs being used as background patterns.

The bark paintings with secular imagery in the AMNH Berndt Collection fall into two broad categories: representations of Macassan *praus* (Indonesian sailing vessels) and hunting scenes. Both categories of subject matter were considered unrestricted, meaning that any artist could paint them, regardless of his clan or language group affiliation. These subject taken from everyday life were oftentimes referred to as "children's stories." According to the artist Wandjuk Marika, after young children were tired from playing, they would ask their mothers and fathers

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[490] Ibid.

[491] Seven of these artists also painted bark paintings with sacred imagery in the AMNH Berndt Collection: Mawalan Marika, Wandjuk Marika, Gagguba, Garmali, Bununggu, Liogang, and Wuragi.

[492] Although some of the bark paintings with secular imagery in the AMNH Berndt Collection reference specific locations, as identified by the artists themselves, these are not considered to be sacred sites, nor are they associated with major creator spirits.

> to tell them about the story…What's this animal again, friendly in the sea or in the land. Two different story; one for the land story and one in the sea, sea story; the children to make them sleep. This is the sort of [an]…ordinary story, just the children story. [493]

In addition, these paintings do not contain "inside" or secret knowledge, nor are they associated with great myth cycles or major creator spirits. Instead, they illustrate everyday subjects, with no hidden meanings, and reflect the various aspects of ordinary life.

Macassan *Praus*

Beginning in the late seventeenth century, Macassans (traders from Indonesia) traveled annually to the shores of Northeastern Arnhem Land.[494] During the wet season, around January-February, approximately thirty Macassan *praus* (sailing vessels) would leave from the island of Sulawesi (formerly known as the Celebes) and travel south on the northwest monsoon winds.[495] When the winds changed to the southeast around April-May, the *praus* would return to Sulawesi, retracing their outward route along the coast and through the various islands of Indonesia [figure 1.16]. Each *prau* had a crew

[493] Archive Files, Berndt Collection, Bark Painting #P2056, Transcript from recording of Wandjuk Marika in October 1975, Macleay Museum, University of Sydney, Sydney.

[494] According to C.C. Macknight, "The term 'Macassan' does not refer to any racial, linguistic or cultural group as such. It refers simply to any person who came on the annual fleet of *praus* to the Northern Territory." The majority of the crews were comprised of young boys that were either Bugis, Javanese, Bajau or Malay. Macknight, *The Voyage to Marege*, 1-2.

[495] According to Macknight, the route extended "…down past Salayar and then southeast towards Timor and the islands fronting it. Dugout fishing canoes were often obtained from the island of Tanahjampea, which was passed on the way. The anchorage on the south of this island is still known as Labuan Marege. The usual route to the Northern Territory passed around the northeast end of Timor, where the *praus* sometimes called to fill up with fresh water or to collect, from the neighbouring island of Kisar, a supply of bamboo and rattan…It was important before setting out on the next long stage across the open sea to ensure that the northwest monsoon was blowing constantly…Even with due care, one could never be quite sure what would happen." Ibid., 33-34.

that ranged from twenty-five to fifty men, and it has been estimated that each year at least a thousand men would embark on this ten- to fifteen-day, two-thousand-kilometer journey.[496] The purpose of their voyage to *Marege* (the Macassan word for Northeastern Arnhem Land) was to collect trepang [figure 1.17]. During the Macassans' return journey, at a meeting place somewhere in the Timor Sea, the processed trepang was sold to Chinese traders who valued it as an aphrodisiac delicacy.[497]

Upon their arrival to the shores of Northeastern Arnhem Land, the Macassans established (or revisited) trepang camps that were close to the shallow water in which the trepang could be collected.[498] These sites were also selected for their adequate supply of trees, which were used as firewood for smoking the trepang. *Praus* usually worked in small groups of two to six vessels, and each campsite contained approximately two hundred men. Some of the men were responsible for collecting the trepang (using dugout canoes), while others stayed in the camp and processed the trepang that was brought back.[499]

Until 1907, the Macassan trepang industry flourished in Northeastern Arnhem Land, and trepang campsites became important trading centers for the Yolngu.[500] For over two centuries, the Yolngu traded tortoiseshell, pearlshell and pearls for food,

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[496] Ibid., 1.

[497] Archive Files, Ethnographic Collection, Bark Painting X81369, Museum Victoria, Melbourne.

[498] Macknight, *The Voyage to Marege,* 48.

[499] The first stage in the preparation of trepang is boiling it in sea water and gutting the animal with a longitudinal cut. The second stage involves burying it in sand, and the final stage is to dry it in the sun and then smoke it over a slow fire for one or two days. According to Macknight, "When finally dried, the trepang had to be kept in that condition, by no means an easy task at sea in the wet season." Ibid., 55.

[500] Ryan, *Spirit in Land*, 5-6.

tobacco, alcohol, cloth, iron axes and knives.[501] During this time, the Yolngu also were exposed to Macassan ceremonies and customs, and were introduced to dugout canoes, batiks and other woven textiles, houses on stilts, pottery, coins, and long wooden pipes.[502] It was a mutually beneficial trade relationship, and according to Judith Ryan, long after the Macassan trepang industry ended, "The Macassans and their *praus* became a symbol of days shared with foreign visitors and of dynamic cultural exchange."[503]

In the AMNH Berndt Collection, one bark painting painted by Mawalan Marika (c.1908-67; Rirratjingu clan, Dhuwa moiety) depicts a side view of a single Macassan *prau* [figure 4.1]. According to the artist, the name of this particular vessel was Buldjimara and it was commanded by the captain Babalingdji.[504] Set against a solid red background and contained within a thin solid yellow painted frame outlined in white, the large vessel dominates the entire composition with very little bark visible around the edges. Positioned in the upper half of the composition is a large rectangular sail (with curvilinear sides), painted solid yellow and outlined in white. In the lower half of the painting is the body of the vessel, which is of roughly equal size to the rectangular sail, and two circular forms extending out from either side of the prow and stern. These circular forms could either be the vessel's rudders, or wooden paddles used to navigate the *prau*. The rectangular sail and body of the vessel are connected by a large red and white triangular-shaped mast, positioned just to the right of the vertical axis of the

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[501] Macknight, *The Voyage to Marege,* 84.

[502] Ibid., 90-91.

[503] Ryan, *Spirit in Land,* 7.

[504] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 9.

composition, as well as by two red lines, possibly stays or rigging, that extend up from the vessel and are attached to the sail on its left and right sides. The background immediately surrounding the rectangular sail and the body of the vessel itself have been divided into various geometrical shapes and in-filled with a combination of red and white crosshatching. Although the palette is similar to Rirratjingu paintings analyzed in Chapter 3, the pattern that is in-filled with crosshatching differs significantly from the Rirratjingu clan design.

An interesting comparison can be made between Marika's bark painting and an etching of three Macassan *praus* made by a European artist L. Le Breton in 1839 [figure 4.2].[505] Both the *prau* in Marika's painting and the *prau* on the right in the etching are depicted in side view, with the sails extended along a horizontal axis. In both works, the large sails dominate the compositions, and both have similar triangular masts. Breton's etching, however, is much more naturalistic, and includes far more details, such as objects contained within the vessel and three Macassan sailors on the far right side. Breton's work also situates the vessels within the water, exposed to various atmospheric elements, and uses shading to indicate three-dimensionality. Marika's bark painting is a more abstract representation of a free-floating two-dimensional form. There are places in which Marika has indicated depth, by overlapping such as the overlay of the red triangular form on top of the solid yellow sail, but these are relatively few.

Marika's bark painting is much more similar to other bark paintings created in the region, such as a work by the artist Wonggu around 1942 [figure 4.3]. This work, originally collected by Donald Thomson, is now housed at the Museum Victoria. Similar

to Marika's, this bark painting depicts a large Macassan *prau* in the center of the composition. The body of the vessel, the large rectangular sail, and the triangular mast are all of a similar size and shape to Marika's painting, as is the palette, which is yellow, red and white. Wonggu's painting, however, depicts a narrative scene with at least fourteen anthropomorphic figures surrounding the vessel on the left-hand side and four anthropomorphic figures on the right. The figures on the right seem to be engaged in the trepang collecting process (with three men in a dugout canoe in the upper right corner and one man diving into the sea), whereas the men on the left are likely processing the trepang that has been brought back to the camp. Also unique to Wonggu's bark painting is the lack of crosshatching, and the fact that the artist has combined a frontal viewpoint (used for the rectangular sail and the dugout canoes) with an aerial perspective (used for the body of the vessel and the men processing the trepang). By doing so, the artist has chosen the most easily recognizable form for each element of the painting, and is able to illustrate the interior of the vessel as well. Finally, Wonggu's painting has a partial painted frame that appears only on the left and right sides of the composition, with a great deal of bark visible on either side.

In another *prau* image created by Mawalan Marika in 1963 [figure 4.4], it is evident that the artist's style changed dramatically in a relatively short time. In this work, Marika has again depicted a Macassan *prau*; however, instead of using a frontal viewpoint, he has chosen an aerial perspective. Roughly in the center of the composition is a nearly rectangular form illustrating the body of the vessel. Inside the vessel are five men (two painted black and three painted yellow) and two dug-out canoes. Just above

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[505] This is possibly the French artist Louis Le Breton (1818-1866) who also visited the Marquesas Islands.

this rectangular form are two men (one black and one yellow) standing on the deck with two animals (a goat and a rooster). According to the artist, these animals "were carried on the *prau* to be offered for sacrifices as thanks for their harvest of trepang."[506] Above the two men is a triangular mast and a flag positioned in the top center of the composition. Positioned along three sides of the vessel (the top, left side, and bottom) are numerous figurative representations of dug-out canoes used for collecting trepang, as well as two large paddles used to steer the *prau*. To the right of the vessel are additional anthropomorphic figures (three yellow men) as well as circular forms (representing pots used to process the trepang). What is unusual about this bark painting, in addition to its large size, is the fact that the artist has chosen to include a background pattern in-filled with rows of crosshatching. Nevertheless, the pattern is once again significantly different from the Rirratjingu clan design.

Hunting Scenes (Land and Sea Stories)

There are sixteen bark paintings in the AMNH Berndt Collection that depict hunting scenes, and each work contains, almost exclusively, figurative representations of zoomorphic figures. Traditionally, hunting scenes painted by the Yolngu were used to entertain young children, and also used to teach life skills. According to Wandjuk Marika, when he was about eleven years old, his father taught him how to paint hunting scenes,

> but also at the same time, he taught me who's the hunter, of hunting, and good hunter. And we must learn that sort of thing and follow them, he said to me. One day you going

[506] Archive Files, Ethnographic Collection, Bark Painting X81369, Museum Victoria, Melbourne.

> to have a good hunter for a turtle or for a fish or for animals, and then I learnt all those, not only the story, but also for a hunting and a story of, bush story, or anything, how to hunt, how to keep myself alive and so on.[507]

According to Wandjuk Marika, there are two types of hunting scenes: "land stories" and "sea stories."[508] In the AMNH Berndt Collection, one bark painting depicts a land story and contains figurative representations of animals that live on the land. The remaining fifteen bark paintings illustrate sea stories and contain figurative representations of fish, turtles, and other sea creatures.

LAND STORIES

The first work by Garmali (life dates unknown; Gumatj clan, Yirritja moiety) contains a painted frame in-filled with white crosshatching [figure 4.5]. Set against a solid red background are numerous figurative representations of land animals, including four black wallaroos (*Macropus bernadus*, in the upper half of the composition), one emu (*Dromaius novaehollandiae*, on the right-hand side), two Eastern blue-tongued lizards (on the lower right-hand side), one frilled lizard (*Chlamydosaurus kingii*, on the lower left-hand side), and one snake (species unknown, on the lower left-hand side).[509] All of

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[507] Archive Files, Berndt Collection, Bark Painting #P2069, Transcript from recording of Wandjuk Marika on 17 December 1975, Macleay Museum, University of Sydney, Sydney.

[508] These two categories refer back to a statement made by Marika in October 1975, an excerpt of which appears at the beginning of this chapter. Archive Files, Berndt Collection, Bark Painting #P2056, Transcript from recording of Wandjuk Marika in October 1975, Macleay Museum, University of Sydney, Sydney.

[509] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 11. In Northeastern Arnhem Land, most bark paintings with secular imagery depict zoomorphic figures and perspective was dictated according to the species of the specific animal represented. For example, fish and birds are almost always painted in profile, whereas lizards, snakes, turtles, and manta rays are painted from an aerial perspective. The objective was to achieve the most easily recognizable form, resulting in an iconic image. See Appendices B, D and E.

the figurative representations, except for the snake, have torsos in-filled with white crosshatching, while their heads, limbs, and tails are painted solid yellow and outlined in white. All of the animals in the lower half of the composition seem to be facing the top of the painting, whereas the four wallaroos in the upper half of the composition are directed towards the upper right-hand corner. The artist has chosen to use a combination of a profile viewpoint (for the kangaroos and emu) and an aerial perspective (for the lizards and snake), to show each animal in its most easily recognizable form.

For over three decades, there seems to be a consistency in style for Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings representing "land stories." In a work created by an unknown artist and collected by William Lloyd Warner around 1926 [figure 2.8], the basic composition is the same. This work depicts a variety of animals including two birds (possibly ibis) in the center and upper left corner, a turtle in the upper right corner, and two snakes positioned along the lower edge. Similar to Garmali's painting, this painting utilizes both a profile viewpoint for the birds as well as an aerial perspective for the turtle and snakes. The figurative representations are also set against a solid background, with hardly any background pattern.[510]

A similar style also appears in a bark painting by the artist Munggerrawuy Yunupingu (c.1905-1979; Gumatj clan, Yirritja moiety), part of the 1959 Tuckson/Scougall Collection at the AGNSW, Sydney [figure 2.33]. Although this work is much larger (measuring 22 ½ x 46 inches) and depicts more animals from both the land and sea, it is similar in its basic composition. Contained within a painted frame are figurative representations of land and sea animals, painted in yellow and outlined in

[510] For a more detailed analysis of this bark painting, see Chapter 2.

white, depicted either in profile or in aerial perspective. Once again, the artist appears to be attempting to depict animals in their most easily recognizable form. These figurative representations are also set against a solid background, with hardly any background pattern. Unique to the 1959 work, however, is a single representation of an anthropomorphic figure (positioned in the bottom center of the composition), which is atypical of hunting scenes from Northeastern Arnhem Land.[511]

SEA STORIES

The vast majority of Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings with secular imagery in the AMNH Berndt Collection are "sea stories" that depict creatures found in the sea. In all, there are fifteen works created by seven artists, who represent seven different clans: the Rirratjingu, Gälpu, Dätiwuy, Djambarrpungu, Gumatj, Gubabingu, and Warramiri. All of the paintings include figurative representations of animals, and most have painted frames in-filled with crosshatching. Ten are associated with the Dhuwa moiety, and five are from the Yirritja moiety.

DHUWA MOIETY

Rirratjingu Clan Paintings

The first "sea story" painting was created by Wandjuk Marika (1929-1987; Rirratjingu clan, Dhuwa moiety; Mawalan Marika's son) [figure 4.6]. Set within a painted frame consisting of a double yellow line outlined in white, this work contains a figurative representation of a turtle (possibly a green turtle, on the left) painted from an aerial perspective, and a figurative representation of a fish (possibly an estuary catfish,

Cnidoglanis macrocephalus, on the right near the center of the composition) painted in profile view.[512] Both figurative representations appear in the center of the composition, positioned along the horizontal axis. Painted in solid yellow and outlined in white, both animals are surrounded by thick diagonal stripes of alternating red and white crosshatching. Surrounding the central design is a background pattern (in horizontal bands parallel to the central band) that represents lily plants and weeds.[513] The pattern consists of a repeating motif of a single diamond shape contained within a square, and the diamond is in-filled with either red or white crosshatching. Most of the squares are also in-filled with similar crosshatching, except for the squares that appear at the bottom of the composition.

In a work collected c.1935 by Chaseling and attributed to Mawalan Marika [figure 4.7] a consistency in style is again apparent. Set against a solid red background, the focus of the composition is along the horizontal axis in which four figurative representations of turtles (possibly green turtles) have been painted from an aerial perspective. The turtles are separated by abstract forms (similar to hourglass forms) and enclosed within two zigzag lines (above and below) that are painted in yellow and outlined in white.[514] Profile representations of three porpoises (possibly spectacled porpoises, *Australophocaena diotropica*) appear both above and below the turtles, creating a balanced composition along the horizontal axis. The entire composition is

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[511] Again, for a more detailed analysis of this bark painting, see Chapter 2.

[512] Nine additional bark paintings in the AMNH Berndt Collection contain figurative representations of turtles: figures 4.8, 4.9, 4.11, 4.12, 4.15, 4.16, 4.17, 4.18, 4.21.

[513] Ibid., 38.

[514] These zigzag forms may be abstract representations of Macleay's water snakes.

surrounded by a painted frame, and protruding out from the frame are various abstract shapes that are in-filled with red and yellow crosshatching. Unlike figure 4.6, this work does not contain any background patterning.

Gälpu Clan Paintings

There are four "sea story" paintings in the AMNH Berndt Collection associated with the Gälpu clan. The first work was painted by the artist Junju (life dates unknown; Gälpu clan, Dhuwa moiety) [figure 4.8], and as in figures 4.6 and 4.7, depicts figurative representations of turtles and fish. Unlike the two previous works, however, the composition is surrounded by a painted frame in-filled with alternating bands of red, white, yellow and black crosshatching, and has a background that alternates between solid yellow and solid black. Junju's work also has an innovative composition in which a central diagonal dividing line (painted in yellow and outlined in white) separates the work into two major sections. The top section is further subdivided into two feature blocks (by a dividing line in-filled with red, white and yellow crosshatching), and each feature block contains a figurative representation of a green turtle (painted from an aerial perspective) and a curvilinear form representing seaweed.[515] According to the artist, the reason the heads of the turtles are positioned towards the seaweed is because they are eating.[516] In the top left feature block, the turtle is also surrounded by linear representations of leaves floating on the water.[517] The bottom section contains multiple

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[515] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 13.

[516] Ibid.

[517] Ibid.

figurative representations of animals including (from left to right): two fish painted from a profile viewpoint, possibly a grunter or tiger perch (*miliga; Helotes sexlineatus*) and a type of sergeant major fish (*gulbu; Abudefduf xanthonotus*), and two additional green turtles are situated above a single porpoise or *rindjabuna* (possibly a spectacled porpoise).[518] Also unique to this painting are rows of black circular forms with white lines radiating outwards. These forms appear both above the top two green-back turtles as well as above the lower sea animals. According to the artist these "stars" are representations of turtle eggs, known as *jadin.*[519]

Three additional works associated with the Gälpu clan were painted by the artist Gagguba (life dates unknown; Gälpu clan, Dhuwa moiety). The first is divided into two sections with a painted frame only around the left half of the composition [figure 4.9]. Within the painted frame, in-filled with red, white, yellow, and black crosshatching, are representations of four turtle eggs (*jadin;* on the left-hand side), a green turtle (below the turtle eggs) painted from an aerial perspective, and three profile representations of fish, possibly a type of snapper (*buruwa; Lutjanus erythropterus*).[520] To the right of the fish are abstract representations of rain falling on the sea, and the bars of crosshatching (on the left-hand side) represent thunder clouds (*wirigada*).[521] The right half of the

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[518] Ibid. See Appendix C. One additional bark painting in the AMNH Berndt Collection contains a representation of a porpoise: figure 4.9.

[519] Ibid. Four additional bark paintings in the AMNH Berndt Collection contain representations of turtle eggs: figures 4.9, 4.15, 4.16, and 4.21. Interestingly, turtle eggs are never shown without figurative representations of turtles as well. The way Junju has chosen to represent the turtle eggs in this is bark painting is very similar to Burula's work, figure 4.15.

[520] Ibid., 16. One additional bark painting in the AMNH Berndt Collection contains a representation of a *gariwa* turtle: figure 4.11.

[521] Ibid.

composition (which is not enclosed within a painted frame) contains a number of figurative representations of sea creatures set against a solid red background. The four largest sea animals (beginning from the top to bottom) are possibly a porpoise, a type of rainbow fish (*warugai; Melanotaenia trifasciata*), a Macleay's water snake (*jalur; Enhydris polylepis*), and another rainbow fish.[522] Only the snake is shown from an aerial perspective, all the other large animals are painted in profile. All four of these figurative representations have torsos that are in-filled with alternating bands of red, white, yellow and black crosshatching, yet their heads and tails are painted solid yellow and outlined in white. In between the larger figurative representations are numerous smaller fish (*bulmidi;* species unknown) painted in solid white, and representations of white rocks found within the sea.[523]

The second painting by Gagguba depicts three large profile representations of fish, possibly a type of snapper (*gwibulu; Lutjanus lineolatus*) positioned roughly in the center of the composition [figure 4.10].[524] The three fish are positioned towards the left-side of the painting and are in-filled with alternating red, white, yellow and black crosshatching. Above these three fish are two circular forms with white lines radiating out from the right side, which (according to the artist) represent shellfish (*malal*).[525] Below the three fish are diagonal rows in-filled with crosshatching which connects the

[522] Ibid. See Appendices C and E.

[523] According to the artist, the bark painting is an illustration of Manala, located close to Yirrkala. Ibid. One additional bark painting in the AMNH Berndt Collection contains representations of small fish (or *bulmidi*): figure 4.14.

[524] Ibid. See Appendix C.

[525] Ibid.

lower fish to a representation of an estuary stingray (*groidbi*).[526] Finally, to the left of the three fish and below the stingray are numerous profile representations of very small birds, possibly ibis (*bralgegi; Threskiornis aethiopica)*.[527] Although they have been painted white, their torsos are in-filled with red and white crosshatching. All of the figurative representations are set against a solid red background, with no painted frame.

The third painting by Gagguba is much less precise in form and execution [figure 4.11]. It contains two profile representations of fish, possibly cardinal fish (*garingiri; Apogon rueppelli*) and one figurative representation of a turtle, possibly a green turtle, painted from an aerial perspective.[528] The two fish are in-filled with white crosshatching, whereas the turtle is in-filled with alternating red, white and yellow crosshatching. The turtle is also surrounded by white dots, which according to the artist, represent food for the turtle.[529] Similar to the last painting, the figurative representations are set against a solid red background in the absence of a painted frame.

Dätiwuy Clan Paintings

Only one "sea story" painting is associated with the Dätiwuy clan, and was created by the artist Garimu (life dates unknown; Dätiwuy clan, Dhuwa moiety) [figure 4.12]. Set against a solid red background, this work has been divided into three major sections by solid yellow dividing lines. The first section (on the left-hand side) contains a profile representation of a fish, possibly a type of rainbow fish (*Melanotaenia solata*)

[526] Ibid.

[527] Ibid. See Appendix B.

[528] Ibid., 21. See Appendix C.

[529] Ibid.

positioned towards the top of the painting, whose body has been in-filled with alternating red, white and yellow crosshatching. The contour line of the fish has also been in-filled with black dots, and the fish has two black eyes. The second section (situated in the center of the composition) has been further subdivided into three feature blocks. The top and bottom feature blocks contain profile representations of fish (possibly a type of sergeant major fish, *Abudefduf bankieri* on top and another type of rainbow fish, *Melanotaenia trifasciata* on bottom), while the middle feature block contains a figurative representation of a turtle (possibly a green turtle) painted from an aerial perspective.[530] Each of the animals is in-filled with crosshatching, and the contour lines of the turtle have also been in-filled with black dots. Finally, the third section (on the right-hand side) has also been subdivided into three feature blocks; however, only the center feature block contains imagery: a figurative representation of possibly a green turtle. Although this turtle is almost identical to the turtle in the second section, it faces the opposite direction (towards the right-hand side of the painting). Although the artist has outlined a painted frame on all sides of the composition, it is only in-filled with crosshatching on the top and bottom.

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[530] Unfortunately, the only explanation provided by the artist was that this painting represented "turtle and fish." Ibid., 22. See Appendix C.

Djambarrpuyngu Clan Paintings

There are four "sea story" paintings in the AMNH Berndt Collection associated with the Djambarrpuyngu clan. Three of the paintings were painted by artists from the Djambarrpuyngu clan, and one painting was painted by a Dätiwuy artist for a Djambarrpuyngu artist.[531] All four of the paintings contain a similar pattern of crosshatching that alternates between red, yellow, black, and white crosshatching.

The first painting by Majamaja (life dates unknown; Djambarrpuyngu clan, Dhuwa moiety) contains two profile representations of fish, possibly a type of herring (*gubu; Spratelloides delicatulus*), surrounded by crosshatching on one side of their bodies and solid black on the other [figure 4.13].[532] According to the artist, the crosshatching represents freshwater, whereas the solid black infill signifies saltwater.[533] The fish are positioned horizontally, approximately in the center of the composition, and are facing opposite directions. Surrounding the composition is a painted frame in-filled with alternating bands of red, white, yellow and black crosshatching, with a similar infill pattern used as a background design.

Two bark paintings were created by the artist Burula (life dates unknown; Djambarrpuyngu clan; Dhuwa moiety). The first work [figure 4.14] is similar in composition to Majamaja's painting [figure 4.13] in that it depicts two large fish roughly in the center of the composition, in-filled with alternating bands of red, white, yellow and

[531] It is unclear in Berndt's "Catalogue of Objects Sent" as to whether or not this artist was related or had social connections to the Djambarrpuyngu clan.

[532] Ibid., 14. See Appendix C. The way Majamaja has chosen to represent the fish is very similar to Garimu's work, figure 4.16.

[533] Ibid.

black crosshatching. The fish in Burula's painting differ, however, in that the top fish is, according to the artist, a flat fish with a long 'nose' and sharp points at either side (*balga*; possibly a type of half-beak fish, *Zenarchopterus rasori*), and the bottom fish is a 'slow' shark (*jangbidjili*; possibly *Cetorhinus maximus*).[534] These fish are also accompanied by a row of smaller fish (along the top edge of the painting) which represent *bulmidi* fish (species unknown).[535] Finally, the fish are surrounded not only by crosshatching, but also by white dots set against a black background and black dots set against a white background. According to the artist, these dots represent rain as it hits the surface of the water.[536]

A second bark painting by Burula [figure 4.15] is set against a solid red background, and the composition is balanced along a horizontal axis, although there is no visible dividing line. Instead, the composition is divided into numerous vertical columns (or feature blocks) by white dividing lines, outlined in red. The far left feature block contains three large figurative representations of hawksbill turtles (*garun*), painted from an aerial viewpoint and positioned facing the right side of the painting.[537] The torsos and heads of the turtles have been in-filled with alternating bands of crosshatching, and the contour lines have been painted in white. Just above the upper turtle are additional bands of crosshatching, and in between the three turtles are triangular forms (protruding from the painted frame) which have also been in-filled with crosshatching. To the right of the

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[534] Ibid., 21.

[535] Ibid.

[536] Ibid.

turtles, are small linear representations of three flying white-breasted sea eagles (*djerag*; *Haliaeetus leucogaster*) and three small fish (*djadbula;* species unknown) painted entirely in white.[538] To the right of this feature block is a vertical column in-filled by alternating red, white, yellow and black crosshatching. To the right of this column is a feature block containing multiple representations of turtle eggs (*jadin*) set against a solid red background.[539] To the right of this feature block is another vertical column in-filled with crosshatching, and to the right of that is a feature block containing more small linear representations of four white-breasted sea eagles walking on land, and two or three small fish painted in white. The last two vertical columns are in-filled with crosshatching. According to the artist, the vertical columns of crosshatching, throughout the composition, represent water.[540]

The last work was painted by Garimu [figure 4.16], and according to the artist, illustrates Murbenmiri, a place on the island of Galu (or Cunningham Island, near Elcho Island and the Napier Peninsula) [figure 1.2].[541] This work has a painted frame completely in-filled with crosshatching on all four sides, and a dividing line positioned along the vertical axis. Both the painted frame and the dividing line are in-filled with

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[537] Ibid., 12. One additional bark painting in the AMNH Berndt Collection contains a representation of a red-backed turtle (or *garun*): figure 4.21.

[538] Ibid. See Appendix B.

[539] Ibid.

[540] Ibid.

[541] Although Garimu is associated with the Dätiwuy clan, according to "The Catalogue of Objects Sent," the painting belongs to the artist Majamaja and the Djambarrpuyngu clan. It is unclear, however, as to what aspects of the painting belong to the Djambarrpuyngu clan. Without further information, it is difficult to ascertain as to why this work is an exception, since most Yolngu bark paintings with secular imagery are unrestricted. Ibid., 15.

alternating bands of red, white, yellow, and black crosshatching. The two feature blocks, created by the central dividing line, contain almost identical imagery. At the top and bottom of the feature blocks are profile representations of fish (*gubu*), possibly a type of herring, in-filled with crosshatching, and in between the fish are figurative representations of green turtles (*marban*).[542] Set against a solid red background, these figurative representations are also surrounded by turtle eggs.[543] The only major difference between the two feature blocks, is the fact that the top fish and the two turtles are facing opposite directions, and the turtle in the left feature block has a contour line in-filled with black dots. In addition, the left feature block contains an additional figurative representation of a canoe between the upper fish and the turtle, near the upper left-hand corner. This is no doubt an allusion to the fact that hunting expeditions require the presence of a human hunter.

YIRRITJA MOIETY

Gumatj Clan Paintings

There are two "sea story" paintings in the AMNH Berndt Collection associated with the Gumatj clan. Both were created by the artist Bununggu Yunupingu (c.1917-1974; Gumatj clan, Yirritja moiety) and in addition to fish and turtles, depict manta rays (*malara*). According to the artist, both works illustrate scenes near Cape Arnhem.[544]

The first work contains a painted frame in-filled with white crosshatching, and is divided into three feature blocks [figure 4.17]. The left feature block contains a

[542] Ibid.

[543] Ibid.

[544] Ibid., 11 and 38.

figurative representation of a manta ray, the center feature block contains a figurative representation of a green turtle (*bilimbu*), and the right feature block contains a profile representation of a fish, possibly a type of anchovie (*Thryssa scratchleyi*).[545] Each animal is shown facing a different direction, with the manta ray facing the center of the painting, the turtle facing the left, and the fish facing the bottom of the painting. Each is painted yellow, outlined in white, and both the manta ray and the turtle have some of their internal structures delineated. Each figurative representation is also set against a solid red background, separated by multiple bands of white crosshatching.

The second painting by Yunupingu contains a painted frame and a dividing line (that extends down the vertical axis) both of which are painted red and outlined in yellow [figure 4.18]. The dividing line separates the composition into two sections and each section is divided into three feature blocks. On the left, the top feature block contains a figurative representation of a turtle, possibly a green turtle. The middle feature block contains a figurative representation of an estuary stingray, and the lower feature block contains another turtle (positioned in the opposite direction from the top turtle). On the right, the top feature block contains a large figurative representation of a manta ray and a profile representation of a small fish, possibly a type of anchovie, in the upper right corner.[546] The middle feature block contains another profile representation of a moon fish, and the lower feature block contains a second figurative representation of a manta ray (again, positioned in the opposite direction from the top manta ray). Each animal is

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[545] Ibid., 11. See Appendix C. No indigenous name was given for the fish. Two additional bark paintings in the AMNH Berndt Collection contain representations of manta rays: figures 4.18 and 4.20.

[546] Ibid., 38. No indigenous name was given for the small fish.

painted in yellow and outlined in white, and is surrounded by a background pattern which divides the composition into various geometric shapes. Each shape is outlined in yellow and in-filled with white hatched lines. According to the artist, these hatched lines represent the waves of the sea.[547] The one exception is the lower right corner of the painting which is in-filled with alternating solid red lines and solid black lines with white hatching in between, which represent sand banks.[548]

Gubabingu Clan Paintings

Only one "sea story" painting is associated with the Gubabingu clan and was painted by the artist Dudarg (life dates unknown; Gubabingu clan, Yirritja moiety) [figure 4.19]. Set against a solid red background and contained within a painted frame, the composition is divided into two feature blocks by a dividing line positioned along the vertical axis (which is strikingly similar to Garimu's painting [figure 4.16]). Both the painted frame and the dividing line are in-filled with alternating diagonal rows of red, white and yellow crosshatching. The left feature block contains numerous figurative representations of sea animals and rocks, including (from the top to bottom): possibly a grunter or tiger perch, three black snapper fish (*beiwala*; *Macolor niger*), two red damsel fish (*wudji; Pomacentus darwiniensis*), numerous abstract forms representing different stages of the moon, and three yellow "X"-shaped rocks.[549] Set against a solid red background, all of the fish are in-filled with crosshatching, and the rocks and representations of the moon are in-filled with simpler linear patterns. The right feature

[547] Ibid.

[548] Ibid.

[549] Ibid., 20.

block contains more abstract imagery, including (from the top to bottom): four representations of spider webs, a representation of a 'cassava' plant (*ganima*), a zigzag line of crosshatching representing the beach, and three horizontal rows of crosshatching representing sandhills.[550] According to the artist this work illustrates the sea at Maidjanba or Cape Wessel, located to the north of the Gove Peninsula and the Wessel Islands [figure 1.2].[551]

Warramiri Clan Paintings

The last two Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings with secular imagery in the AMNH Berndt Collection were painted by two artists from the Warramiri clan. The first work by Liogang (life dates unknown; Warramiri clan; Yirritja moiety) is separated by a dividing line (in-filled with crosshatching and positioned along the vertical axis) into two feature blocks [figure 4.20]. According to the artist, this dividing line also represents a water channel.[552] The left feature block contains two figurative representations of black estuary stingrays positioned toward the top of the painting.[553] Surrounding the stingrays are triangular forms which are in-filled either with crosshatching or solid black. Unlike the left feature block, the right feature block is contained within a painted frame that is in-filled with alternating red, white, yellow and black crosshatching. In the center of the feature block are randomly scattered representations of five fish (*gugawal*), possibly

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[550] Ibid.

[551] Ibid.

[552] Ibid., 21.

[553] Ibid.

damsel fish, which are also in-filled with crosshatching.[554] Interspersed in between the fish are abstract curvilinear shapes painted in solid yellow and outlined in white. According to the artist this painting illustrates a reef at Maidjanba on the Wessel Islands, located to the north of Gove Peninsula [figure 1.2].[555]

The final painting, by Wuragi (life dates unknown; Warramiri clan; Yirritja moiety), is divided into two feature blocks by a slightly diagonal dividing line, also representing water [figure 4.21].[556] Inside the dividing line are three linked diamond shapes that vary in size and are all in-filled with crosshatching. The left feature block contains six profile representations of fish (*binimbu*), possibly herring.[557] These fish appear in the lower part of the feature block surrounded by thick bands of crosshatching. The white lines separating the bands of crosshatching are also in-filled with red and black dots. The right feature block contains three figurative representations of hawksbill turtles (*garun*), painted in white with torsos in-filled with crosshatching.[558] The turtles are positioned facing the left side of the painting, and near their heads is a row of turtle eggs. Near the turtles' tails are triangular forms protruding from the right edge of the painting, which are also in-filled with crosshatching and are meant to represent rocks.[559] Finally, the top turtle is surrounded by black dots, whereas the lower two turtles are surrounded

[554] Ibid.

[555] Ibid.

[556] Ibid., 12.

[557] Ibid.

[558] Ibid.

[559] Ibid.

by white dots, which may, in my opinion, indicate air bubbles made by the turtles in the water.

CONCLUSION

In the beginning of this chapter, I defined bark paintings with secular imagery, and discussed the two major categories of Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings with secular imagery represented in the AMNH Berndt Collection. I then analyzed the seventeen bark paintings with secular imagery that are in the AMNH Berndt Collection, including five works collected from Yirrkala and twelve works from Elcho Island.

Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings with secular imagery do not contain clan designs, nor do they reference specific sacred sites. They also do not contain "inside" or secret knowledge, nor are they associated with great myth cycles or major creator spirits. Instead, bark paintings with scular imagery illustrate everyday subjects, with no hidden meanings, and reflect the various aspects of ordinary life such as fishing, hunting, and encounters with foreign cultures.

When compared to Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings with sacred imagery, these works are also significantly different in terms of style and iconography. The compositions of the bark paintings with secular imagery are more asymmetrical, less balanced, and crosshatching is used more as an infill pattern within the figurative representations. Finally, there seems to be a greater emphasis on individual style and artistic innovation in Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings with secular imagery. I

have never seen two identical bark paintings, nor have I found a work that may have served as a "template" for other artists to follow.[560]

In Chapter 5, I will focus on bark paintings with sacred and secular imagery from Western Arnhem Land, the second major stylistic region represented in the AMNH Berndt Collection.

[560] This observation may be the result of a "sampling error" based on the number of works included in the AMNH Berndt Collection; however, it seems to hold true for bark paintings in other collections as well.

CHAPTER 5

EXPOSING THE INTERIOR OF THE FIGURATIVE FORM: BARK PAINTINGS WITH SACRED AND SECULAR IMAGERY FROM WESTERN ARNHEM LAND

In this chapter, I will focus on Western Arnhem Land, the second major stylistic region represented in the AMNH Berndt Collection. I will analyze the thirty-one bark paintings from Western Arnhem Land included in the AMNH Berndt Collection. The works will first be divided by subject matter, language group, and then by individual artist. I will discuss the bark paintings in terms of style and iconography, paying close attention to similarities and/or differences that exist among social groups, as well as individual stylistic trends.

THE AMNH BERNDT COLLECTION

In all, the Berndts collected thirty-one bark paintings from Western Arnhem Land, including twenty-six works with sacred imagery and five works with secular imagery. Similar to the 1946-47 Berndt Collection at the Berndt Museum of Anthropology, Perth, these bark paintings are relatively small, with the average size being 12 x 23 ½ inches. Only five artists from Western Arnhem Land are represented in this collection, a much smaller number in comparison to Northeastern Arnhem Land.[561]

Also in contrast to Northeastern Arnhem Land, Ronald Berndt failed to record, at the time of collection, the patrilineal clans of the artists from this region.[562] This missing

[561] There are twenty-four artists from Northeastern Arnhem Land represented in the AMNH Berndt Collection.

[562] For three of the artists, I have been able to recover this information during the course of my research. Given the thoroughness of Berndt's documentation and his particular interest in Western Arnhem Land, it

information makes it virtually impossible to discuss the works in terms of their specific clan affiliations, which were undoubtedly significant to a certain extent. However, based on the style of the paintings depicting creator spirits, I suspect that each artist actually belonged to a different clan. Therefore, I have chosen to broaden the discussion of these bark paintings and focus on the three different language groups represented in the AMNH Berndt Collection. Since there are two Kunwinjku artists and two Kuninjku artists, it is possible to draw interesting parallels in style and composition between artists of the same language group. Six bark paintings were created by an artist from the Mengerdji language group, fifteen were created by two Kunwinjku artists, and the remaining ten works were created by two Kuninjku artists. As in the previous analysis of Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings, I will first discuss the bark paintings with sacred imagery, followed by a discussion of the bark paintings with secular imagery.

Bark Paintings with Sacred Imagery

Bark paintings with sacred imagery are defined as works of art that visually condense complex information regarding sacred sites and the epic journeys of the creator spirits. In all, there are twenty-six works from Western Arnhem Land that contain sacred imagery, which fall into two broad categories: major regional ceremonial figures and local creator spirits.[563] Major regional ceremonial figures are believed to be the original ancestors of the people of Western Arnhem Land, from which all subsequent humans descend. These figures are communally owned by all language groups; therefore, every

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is puzzling as to why the artists' clans were not recorded. It is possible that this information was deemed unnecessary by the artists themselves or they may have simply assumed that Ronald Berndt already knew their clan affiliations.

[563] Both major regional ceremonial figures and creator spirits are referred to as *djang* by the Kunwinjku.

artist has the right to paint either their image or an image associated with them, regardless of their specific clan affiliation. The most important major regional ceremonial figures of Western Arnhem Land are Yingarna (the mother goddess), Lumaluma (the creator of the Mardayin ceremony), Yirawadbad (the creator of the Wubarr ceremony), and Namarrkon (the Lightning Spirit), all of which are represented in the AMNH Berndt Collection.[564]

By contrast, local creator spirits are not communally owned, but instead belong to specific clans, whose members are the only individuals permitted to reproduce their images either on rock or bark. These creator spirits are believed to have been originally created by Yingarna, and in many ways were able to continue her work by creating the sacred sites of each clan.[565] These sacred sites usually represent the end point of their short creation journeys, where they 'made themselves rock'—that is, transformed themselves into an image on the rock surface. These sacred sites continue to be important to each clan since it is believed that the souls of all clan members ultimately return to these sites upon death, and are reborn as future generations.[566] In the AMNH Berndt Collection, there are four paintings depicting creator spirits from the Mengerdji language group, six from the Kunwinjku language group, and six from the Kuninjku language group.

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[564] It is believed that only Yingarna created human beings, the other major ceremonial figures (Lumaluma, Yirawadbad and Namarrkon) were her contemporaries and responsible either for establishment of ceremonies or natural phenomena (such as lightning and thunder). Berndt and Berndt, *Man, Land, and Myth*, 119.

[565] Ibid., 118.

[566] As previously discussed in Chapter 1.

MAJOR REGIONAL CEREMONIAL FIGURES

According to the great myth cycles of the region, the most important ceremonial figure is Yingarna (also known as Warramurrunggundji) who is said to have androgynous qualities, or in some instances, believed to be have been two women instead of a single being.[567] During the Dreamtime and before any humans existed on the earth, Yingarna supposedly emerged from the Arafura Sea, traveled down the Cobourg Peninsula, and began a journey across Arnhem Land, all the while preparing the land for her future descendents. During the course of her journey, she met a man named Wurragag and took him as her husband.[568] She then continued her travels, and wherever she went made local creator spirits and planted yams for the next generations to eat. At the end of their long journey, Wurragag transformed into the landscape feature known as Tor Rock (located south of Oenpelli).[569] Yingarna, herself, transformed into the Rainbow Serpent, named Ngalyod, and continues to exist in this form as a personification of fertility, increase and rain.[570]

There are four bark paintings in the AMNH Berndt Collection that relate to Yingarna. Two were painted by a Mengerdji artist, and two by a Kunwinjku artist. All

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[567] Those who refer to her as Warramurrunggundji, for example, are more adamant that there were two women, the reason being that "warra" is a plural prefix. (Chaloupka, 1993, 47) Ronald Berndt also notes that "As Warramurrunggundji, the Mother is rather like the Djanggawul [Djang'kawu] Sisters from eastern Arnhem Land, although she is said to have come from…somewhere to the north-west beyond Melville and Bathurst islands." Berndt and Berndt, *Man, Land, and Myth,* 118.

[568] Chaloupka, *Journey in Time*, 46.

[569] According to Chaloupka, the reason Wuraka transformed into Tor Rock was because he said "…that he was too tired and his penis too heavy to carry." Ibid. In Northeastern Arnhem Land, a similar explanation was given as to why the Djang'kawu brother ended his long journey (see Chapter 3).

[570] Ngalyod the Rainbow Snake (also known as Ngalmudj), who is either a transformation of Yingarna herself or Yingarna's son, is also a major regional ceremonial figure, whose gender is equally ambiguous as Yingarna's, but more often than not, is considered to be male. Ibid., 47.

of them illustrate specific sacred sites, and include one, two or three large figurative representations, all of which relate to Yingarna. Three of the paintings depict anthropomorphic figures, and one is a representation of a plant form set against a solid background and in the absence of any painted frames.

The first painting [figure 5.1] by "Old Nipper" Maragar (life dates unknown; clan unknown, Mengerdji language group), depicts a simple male figure in a splayed position.[571] This work reproduces a drawing in a cave called Malagunaing, and most likely is a representation of Yingarna as a male.[572] Painted in solid white and outlined in yellow, the figure has a modified X-ray infill design, painted in yellow, the only exception being two black dots which serve as his eyes. In terms of his facial features, the brow, nose, eye sockets, and mouth are all articulated, as are the joint marks throughout his body (at the neck, shoulders, elbows, wrists, groin, knees and ankles). Across his neck and torso, the artist has painted a herringbone design (separated by a segmented backbone or spinal column) which may be an abstract representation of ribs and/or internal organs. The figure has been depicted from a frontal viewpoint, in a resting or sitting position, and in between his two open legs is an exaggeratedly large penis and scrotum. Known as the "splayed" position, this stance is common in images of major regional ceremonial figures as well as creator spirits, and relates to the idea that,

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[571] "Old Nipper" Maragar, also known as Nipper Murrakarra, Maraggara, Nipper Marakara, and Kumutan, probably had a status equivalent to Mawalan Marika in Yirrkala, since he was a prominent clan leader and it was his clan who owned the land upon which Oenpelli was settled. Sally May, interview with author, New York, 26 January 2005. According to May, "He was the traditional owner of Oenpelli and a very important man. His son is traditional owner today but does not paint." Pers. comm., Sally May, 14 March 2005.

[572] According to the artist, this "ancestral man…'turned' himself from a snake into a man, and from that to a drawing on the cave wall." Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 24.

once their journeys were complete, these figures "sat down" at a sacred site where they "turned themselves into rock."[573]

In 1950, the Berndts collected a similar painting [figure 5.2], also by Maragar. In this painting Yingarna is shown as a female as opposed to a male, and has more surface decoration than in the previous image.[574] The paintings are roughly equal in size and have similar compositions as well as palettes. Both figures have joint marks (in this painting, they appear at the elbows, wrists, groin, knees, and ankles), and two large eyes dominate their faces. They have similarly-shaped heads, arms, hands and feet, and the fingers and toes are not articulated. The infill, however, is remarkably different. Rather than being shown in X-ray style, the figure in the 1950 painting is in-filled with a few scattered dots and a series of thick black parallel lines across the lower torso.

The next painting in the AMNH Berndt Collection, also by Maragar, [figure 5.3] depicts two standing female figures positioned side-by-side. This work depicts Yingarna, in this instance as two females, from a sacred site near the Liverpool River known as Malwun.[575] With their heads almost touching the top edge of the painting and their feet suspended well above the bottom edge, the two figures are not spaced evenly on the sheet of bark. Instead, they have been positioned within the top three-quarters of the painting, almost as if they are hovering. Painted in yellow, and outlined in white, these figures have a modified X-ray infill (seen in figure 5.1 as well). The figures are extremely

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[573] Kleinert and Neale, *The Oxford Companion*, 112.

[574] The artist, in fact, identified the figure as a female even though there are no articulated secondary sexual characteristics (i.e. breasts or a vagina). Archive Files, Bark Painting #780, Berndt Museum of Anthropology, University of Western Australia, Perth.

[575] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 24-25.

similar to each other in terms of their size, infill design, and palette. The only major difference is that the figure on the right has her right arm raised as if in a waving position, whereas the left figure has both arms down on either side of her torso. Both figures have faces painted in white, with only two eyes and a mouth articulated, as well as segmented backbones running down the middle of their torsos. Their necks have a single triangular design, and an "X"-shaped design on their upper torsos. Joint marks appear at their necks, shoulders, elbows, wrists, waists, knees and ankles, and again, a herringbone design appears across their torsos. Finally, both figures have exaggeratedly large vaginas which hang down between their legs.[576]

The third painting that relates to Yingarna [figure 5.4] was painted by Ngaiiwul (life dates unknown; Namanilakarr clan, Kunwinjku language group).[577] This work has a composition similar to the last painting, showing two standing female figures. The style, however, is completely different. Painted in white and outlined in black, the two figures in this painting are almost identical, although, the figure on the right is slightly smaller. Both are depicted from a frontal viewpoint, and their hands are turned towards their bodies, whereas their feet are turned outwards with the toes clearly articulated. Both have short necks, elongated torsos, and arms that seem to be exaggeratedly long. The arms extend down on either side of their torsos, and the elbows are slightly bent, the forearms creating a bell-shaped form. Well-defined breasts appear on their upper torsos,

[576] According to Paul S.C. Taçon, this also appears in rock art, "X-ray and non-X-ray paintings of human figures…show extreme sexual dimorphism with exaggerated sexual organs in males and full, prominent breasts in females." Taçon, "Art and the Essence of Being," 239.

[577] Alternate spellings of his name include: Nayinggul and Nayingul. I have also seen him referred to as "Jacob." According to Sally May, this artist may be the father of the contemporary artist Jacob Nayinggul, who is also the traditional owner of Mikinj Valley (nearby to Oenpelli). Pers. comm., Sally May, 14 March 2005.

and joint marks appear at their necks, elbows, wrists, upper and lower torsos, knees and ankles. Their faces and triangular pubic areas have been lightly shaded in with black, without clearly articulated vaginas as in figure 5.3, and the rest of their bodies are in-filled with red and black parallel lines or striations. Finally, two dillybags (woven carrying bags) are depicted between the two figures, and two long poles appear on either side, close to the edges of the painting. The long poles represent digging sticks and relate to the myth that accompanies this painting. According to the artist, Yingarna, here represented as two figures, traveled throughout Western Arnhem Land in search of good drinking water. When they reached Bubudji, east of the Goomaderr River, they dug a deep well, and

> as they dug they heard the noise of a *duberg* snail; they became frightened and left this place. They continued traveling, calling the names of various places where people were to live later on. Eventually they came to Djalar, where they made a small well; but they saw a centipede (*djalar*) and, frightened, left this place. They were very thirsty. They came to Gunad ('Sugar-bag', wild honey) where they dug a well, but they heard the noise of the *manjalg* bee and, frightened, went on. Finally they found a small hole and began to dig. They sat there digging and heard no noise; they went on digging until a little water surged up; both were pleased, as they were so thirsty and had come such a long way. As they dug, more water came up; they made a big well; they washed themselves. The water began coming up more and more, until it covered their heads. They tried to escape, but the well became larger and larger, until even a waterfall formed. They 'turned' themselves into [Ngalyod] Rainbow snakes. This was at Djuluga.[578]

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[578] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 33-34.

It is unusual for a bark painting in the AMNH Berndt Collection to have such a long and detailed explanation. What is striking about this particular story is its similarity to the Djang'kawu myth from Northeastern Arnhem Land. Both stories focus on the journeys of two sisters, who named animals as they transversed the land, and created sacred springs filled with fresh drinking water. Perhaps this bark painting illustrates the shared concepts of female progenitors in both regions, and/or the influence Northeastern Arnhem Land mythology may have had Western Arnhem Land.[579]

The fourth and last painting that most likely relates to Yingarna [figure 5.5] was also painted by Ngaiiwul. It depicts three large oval forms that have been painted in yellow and outlined in white. According to the artist, these are figurative representations of long yams (*karrbarda; Dioscorea transversa*) in Western Arnhem Land.[580] Yams oftentimes serve as a symbol of Yingarna, since it is believed that she introduced yams to the region, and planted them throughout Western Arnhem Land during the course of her journey.[581] It is also believed that Yingarna instructed her spirit children that yams were

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[579] Western Arnhem Land artists were influenced by Northeastern Arnhem Land artists, especially during WWII, when artists from both regions lived together at Milingimbi and Maningrida. The artist Mick Kubarkku also recalls this influence as it pertains specifically to carved sculpture. He once recalled, "We didn't do sculpture before, that's recent. I got the idea for carving from the eastern people, especially Banggala. He did carvings to represent his Dreamings and we saw them and decided to do them also." West, "Growing Up in the Stone Country," 12.

[580] According to Chaloupka, "The genus…*Dioscorea*, originated in what is now South East Asia, and the species found in Australia's tropical north are closely related to those of that region. However, the term 'yam' is often incorrectly applied to other tropical and sub-tropical root and tuber crops and to aroids, a family of plants easily identified by the distinctive inflorescence of a cylindrical mass of flowers enclosed by a leafy sheath, such as those of the Amorphophallus species, none of which are connected with the yam figures painting style." Chaloupka, *Journey in Time,* 142.

[581] The evidence of this is said to be the fact that yams now grow prolifically, especially in the fertile lower areas of the Liverpool and Alligator Rivers. Similar to the sweet potato, yams have a long branching tuber and vine-like foliage. Wandjuk Marika, *Oenpelli Paintings on Bark* (Sydney: Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australian Council, 1973), 30.

an important food item, and that they should be eaten, along with water lilies, 'sugarbag' (wild honey) and a variety of other foods.[582]

Each yam depicted in figure 5.5 is very similar in terms of shape, palette and infill design. They are all in-filled with a similar pattern consisting of a white zigzag line that descends from the top to the bottom of the form, and on either side of the line appears white and yellow crosshatching. At the bottom of each yam, the artist has painted a white "X" surrounded by numerous white dots. At the top of each yam, three or four short, white tendrils project away from the form at an angle on either side. In addition, two long tendrils radiate out from the tops. The center and right yams have two straight tendrils which extend to the very top edge of the painting, whereas the left-hand yam has two curvilinear tendrils which extend to the left side of the painting.

According to the artist, these particular yams are associated with a sacred site known as Walmanbalg, located close to the King River, on the coast near the Goulburn Islands. The yams are described as "cheeky," meaning in this case that they are inedible, and if eaten, they will make people "mad" or crazy.[583] This refers to the fact that this species of yam contains toxic alkaloids which are poisonous and must be removed prior to eating. Since the alkaloids are water soluble, the tuber can be made edible by being sliced, placed in a dillybag, and left under running water overnight.[584] After the alkaloids are removed, however, the yams are nutritious, composed of water, carbohydrate (in the

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[582] Chaloupka, *Journey in Time,* 46.

[583] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 26.

[584] Chaloupka goes on to explain that artists who were well aware of "these poisonous properties" mixed alkaloids from these yams "…with their pigments when executing sorcery paintings to enhance the potency of their images." Chaloupka, *Journey in Time,* 142.

form of starch), and some protein. Yams can also be stored for considerable periods and easily transported. Yams are therefore an important food source in Western Arnhem Land, and are also used during ceremonial occasions as food for the participants.[585]

Representations of yams appear in rock art as well [figure 5.6]. For example, at the site of Gubarra, at least two distinct yam figures have been painted. Similar to those in Ngaiiwul's painting, the yams are oval in shape with long tendrils extending out from the top. They also have an infill design of crosshatching, which reinforces the idea that these forms are sacred rather than secular.

One of the bark paintings collected in 1949 by Charles Mountford and painted by an unknown artist [figure 5.7] also has multiple representations of yams centered roughly in the center of the composition. This painting is remarkably similar in composition to Ngaiiwul's painting, although it has two yams as opposed to three. There is a difference in the infill pattern; however, in that the 1949 painting has an infill design of tiny white dots, as opposed to the white and yellow crosshatching found in Ngaiiwul's work.[586] The yams in this painting are also oval in shape, and at the top, have two or three short, white tendrils that project away from the form at an angle on either side, as well as two long

[585] Ibid. Chaloupka also explains, "When Ronald and Catherine Berndt visited Oenpelli in the late 1940s they recorded a [Kunwinjku] version of *angindjek,* a Gundjeihmi ceremony held between the *ubarr* and *marrayin* rituals. *Ubarr* was the first in a sequence of initiatory rites during which novices were told not to eat certain foods. The restriction included barramundi and fork-tail catfish, a number of reptiles and birds, and any bitter or dangerous foods such as the round yam. The novices had to participate in three *ubarr* rites before the taboos were repealed by the *angindjek* ceremony. During the latter ritual the participants' bodies were decorated with stylized representations of *angindjek,* the round yam. The primary purpose of this rite, like that of the Gagudju's *kulori,* was to terminate food restrictions associated with this yam." Ibid., 143.

[586] The white dots are a characteristic infill design of the Kuninjku, which are discussed later in this chapter.

white tendrils that extend up to the top of the painting. According to Mountford's field notes, this type of yam

> is found all over the country. Being poisonous in its raw state, it cannot be eaten until shredded and soaked in water for about twenty-four hours. The soaking removes the poison. The young men of the tribe are not allowed to eat this yam until they have passed through the rituals of the [*Wubarr*] ceremony.[587]

In 1950, the Berndts collected another yam painting by Ngaiiwul [figure 5.8] that is now housed at the Berndt Museum of Anthropology, Perth. Although the paintings depict the same subject matter, their imagery is quite different. Instead of multiple yams, in this painting, Ngaiiwul chose to focus on a single tuber, which has more of an inverted "Y"-shaped form. At the bottom of the form are four curvilinear bulbous projections, which symbolize the wet soil adhering to the bulb.[588] At the top of the yam is a long, cylindrical form, and attached to its base are five tendrils projecting upwards on either side. The infill design is somewhat similar to the 1958 painting, in that it consists of triangular-shaped areas in-filled with crosshatching; however, in this earlier work, it is combined with a multitude of tiny black dots.

The second major regional ceremonial figure in Western Arnhem Land is Lumaluma, the creator of the Mardayin ceremony.[589] Traditionally in this region, young boys prior to marriage were required to participate in a number of major ceremonies.

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[587] Mountford, *Records of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition,* 256.

[588] Archive Files, Bark Painting #450, Berndt Museum of Anthropology, University of Western Australia, Perth.

[589] Ryan, *Spirit in Land,* 114.

During these ceremonies, male initiates were taught in a relatively formal manner about their religion, their role within society, their belief system, and the ancestral realm.[590] Circumcision was not practiced in Western Arnhem Land (in contrast to Northeastern Arnhem Land); participation in these ceremonies required a young man to travel great distances, as well as endure long periods of seclusion while the ceremonies took place.[591] The three major traditional ceremonies in the region were the Mardayin (or Maraiin), the Wubarr (or Ubar), and the Kunabibi (or Kunapipi) ceremonies.[592]

The purpose of the Mardayin ceremony was the ceremonial transfer of sacred objects from important deceased men to other senior men of the clan.[593] It also provided an opportunity for male initiates to be painted with their clan designs (*rarrk*) [figures 1.19 and 5.9] and to see the sacred objects of their clan for the first time [figure 1.20]. By painting the initiates' bodies with the same clan design found on the sacred objects, a strong visual association was created between the two. Traditionally, the Mardayin

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[590] According to Ronald Berndt, "…initiation does not include a physical operation or test as it does in many other cultural regions in Aboriginal Australia. Circumcision and subincision have not been adopted to any extent, except on the fringes. The major trials of novices consist of learning at varying levels the significance, actual and symbolic, of the great cycles and gradually becoming active participants. It is a process of incorporation and acceptance into the secret-sacred life of fully initiated men." Berndt and Berndt, *Man, Land, and Myth,* 115.

[591] Since these ceremonies required more people than are locally available at any one time, messengers were oftentimes sent out to summon participants. Ibid., 116.

[592] A detailed account of these ceremonies is beyond the scope of this dissertation; however, a general introduction to Kunwinjku ceremonies was written by Berndt and Berndt, *Man, Land, and Myth,* 117, and Taylor, *Seeing the Inside*, 105. For more information on the Kunabibi (or Kunapipi) ceremony, see Ronald Berndt, *Kunapipi: A Study of an Australian Aboriginal Religious Cult* (New York: International Universities Press, 1951), L. R. Hiatt, ed., *Australian Aboriginal Mythology* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1975), and Ian Keen, *Knowledge and Secrecy in an Aboriginal Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

[593] Taylor, *Seeing the Inside,* 118.

ceremony also completed the mortuary cycle of a particular individual and re-enacted the return of his spirit to his own clan lands.[594]

Each ceremony is accompanied by a great myth cycle that serves to explain its origin and importance within society. According to the Mardayin, Lumaluma originally came from a far off land near Indonesia, on the back of an estuary stingray, and when he reached the shore, began a long journey throughout Western Arnhem Land accompanied by Ngalyod (the Rainbow Serpent).[595] At one point in his travels, Lumaluma encountered two men named Laradjeidja and Gundamara, whom he tried to kill unsuccessfully. As he threw spears at them, Lumaluma called the names of various animals, and as their names were called, they instantly took shape and came to life.[596] Angry at Lumaluma's attempt to kill them and his reputation for stealing women and devouring them, Laradjeidja and Gundamara decided he must be killed. So, the men lured the ancestral giant into an ambush, and pelted him with spears. Lumaluma begged for his life in return for full disclosure of the Mardayin ceremony. The men agreed, and Lumaluma taught the men the dances, sacred songs, and body designs that characterize the ceremony. Lumaluma then tried to get away without success, and upon his death, sacred objects used in the Mardayin ceremony were released from his body.[597]

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[594] Ibid.

[595] Berndt and Berndt, *Man, Land, and Myth,* 121.

[596] Ibid., 122.

[597] Ryan, *Spirit in Land,* 114.

According to some versions of the myth, Lumaluma's spirit was transformed into a whale that swam out to sea.[598]

Two bark paintings in the AMNH Berndt Collection related to Lumaluma were painted by Anchor Kulunba (c.1917-1996; Kurulk clan, Kuninjku language group).[599] The first work [figure 5.10] depicts a figurative representation of an estuary stingray in-filled with clan designs. I believe this painting is related to Lumaluma because of the inclusion of clan designs within the interior of the figure, and the fact that, according to the great myth cycle, Lumaluma was transported to Arnhem Land on the back of an estuary stingray.[600]

The round-shaped figure has a double outline painted in yellow and white, and a clan design that consists of large bands of alternating red and white crosshatching, which are separated by yellow dividing lines in-filled with white dots. At the top of the figure, the stingray's head is painted in yellow and has three small white dots that represent its eyes and mouth. At the bottom of the figure, two lobes (also in-filled with clan designs) extend downward, with a curvilinear tail in between, a tail that wraps around and touches the lower right edge of the bark painting. The clan design, used as an infill pattern, is divided down the vertical axis by a yellow line in-filled with white dots. On either side of this center line, four additional horizontal dividing lines (also painted in yellow and in-filled with white dots) extend out to the edge of the figure's form, and at the very bottom

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[598] Berndt and Berndt, *Man, Land, and Myth,* 122.

[599] Alternate spellings of his name include Anchor Kalunba, Anchor Balbuwa, Anchor Barbuwa Wurrkgidj, Barlbuwa, Barrbuwa, and Bairbuwa. Professor Jon Altman is currently working on an exhibition of the work of John Mawurndjul, Anchor Kulunba's son. Pers. comm., Jon Altman, Director for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University, Canberra, 4 April 2005.

[600] Ryan, *Spirit in Land*, 116.

of the figure two additional lines form an inverted "U" shape. These lines divide the image of the stingray into roughly equal segments that are then in-filled with broad bands of alternating red and white crosshatching. The pattern does not follow a consistent direction, and its asymmetrical effect seems intentional.

The designs painted on the bodies of two male participants of a Mardayin ceremony [figure 5.9] and the clan designs used in Kulunba's painting are strikingly similar. Both designs utilize yellow dividing lines in-filled with white dots, which divide the composition into numerous geometric shapes in-filled with broad bands of alternating red and white crosshatching. The crosshatching is painted in a relatively loose manner and is strongly directional within each segment. According to Luke Taylor, these clan designs were given to the clans by their major creator spirits, who originally wore them on their own bodies.[601] They are, therefore, symbolic of particular ancestors, as well as visual records of their creative journeys.[602]

Prior to European contact, clan designs in Western Arnhem Land were most often used within sacred ceremonial contexts, as body painting designs and/or on sacred objects.[603] Figurative representations which appeared on rock or bark surfaces, on the other hand, were traditionally in-filled with a solid pigment, as seen in two estuary stingrays that were painted on a rock surface in Western Arnhem Land [figure 5.11]. In addition, multiple dots were oftentimes used as an infill design, as seen in a bark painting

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[601] Taylor, *Seeing the Inside*, 120.

[602] It is believed that the dividing lines (which are in-filled with white dots) can symbolize either the skeletal structure of the Ancestor, or the pathways across the landscape which characterized their journeys.

[603] Ronald Berndt, Catherine Berndt, and John E. Stanton, *Aboriginal Australian Art: A Visual Perspective* (Sydney: Methuen Australia, 1998), 62. See also Taylor, "Flesh, Bone, and Spirit," 50.

by an unknown artist and collected in 1949 by Charles Mountford [figure 5.12]. Similar to Kulunba's painting, the 1949 work depicts an estuary stingray from an aerial perspective, and has two lobes and a tail extending from the bottom of the form. Indeed, the only significant difference between the two is their infill design.

In the exhibition catalogue *Spirit in Land: Bark Paintings from Arnhem Land,* Judith Ryan asserts that the use of clan designs in bark paintings was established in the late 1960s by the artist Billy Yirawala, but there are two bark paintings included in the AMNH Berndt Collection (figures 5.10 and 5.13) that seem to indicate that as early as 1958, Anchor Kulunba was using clan designs as an infill pattern.[604] His usages of clan designs in bark painting predate Yirawala's works by almost a decade. I believe this is a significant discovery, and one that is important to the understanding of the history of Western Arnhem Land bark paintings.

The second painting by Anchor Kulunba [figure 5.13] depicts a figurative representation of a rock wallaby (*Macropus bernadus*), also in-filled with clan designs. Again, due to the clan designs, I believe this painting represents one of the creatures Lumaluma named, which in turn, brought this species to life. Painted in red and outlined in white, the wallaby is shown in profile, with limbs and tail extended out in front of its body. The end of the animal's tail has been in-filled with small white parallel lines, which according to Luke Taylor, represent a "brush-shaped tail," which is a characteristic feature identifying this animal as a rock wallaby.[605] The only parts of the wallaby's body that are not in-filled with crosshatching are the head, one arm, and the upper chest. The

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[604] Ryan, *Spirit in Land,* 77.

[605] Taylor, *Seeing the Inside,* 174.

head has been painted red, and the facial features are limited to two eyes surrounded by a series of white lines, a black nose and two black ears. The upper arm is in-filled with black, and the upper chest contains an X-ray representation of the windpipe, with lungs branching out of it, set against a black background.

As in figure 5.10, the animal's body has been in-filled with clan designs, with dividing lines breaking up the pattern into various geometric shapes which are then in-filled with broad bands of alternating red and white crosshatching. This type of infill is again similar to the clan designs painted on bodies of initiates during the Mardayin ceremony, as depicted in figure 5.9. Unlike those in Kulunba's stingray painting, however, the dividing lines in this work are painted in red (as opposed to yellow) and in-filled with white dots. This shift in palette may be an indication of each painting's moiety affiliation. Yellow is more often associated with the Yirritja moiety, whereas red is more often associated with the Dhuwa moiety.[606] According to Luke Taylor, red in clan designs is also typically "associated with blood, and yellow with the fat of the Ancestral being."[607]

The third major regional ceremonial figure represented in the AMNH Berndt Collection is Yirawadbad, the creator of the Wubarr ceremony.[608] The Wubarr ceremony is a major regional ceremony that ensures the fertility of humans and nature, as well as

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[606] Although the patrilineal moiety system did not traditionally exist in Western Arnhem Land, it was adopted in this region post-European contact. Chaloupka, *Journey in Time,* 75.

[607] Taylor, *Seeing the Inside,* 120.

[608] Berndt and Berndt, *Man, Land, and Myth,* 119.

promoting the onset of the wet season.[609] The songs and dances that are performed during the Wubarr ceremony reference sexual union of specific animal species (particularly the wallaroo), and rejuvenation.[610] Some dancers wear figurative body paintings of ancestral species that are in-filled with the X-ray style (not depicted in the field photograph), while the majority of the participants are painted with numerous white dots on their shoulders, upper arms, and torsos in a style known as *kunmed* [figure 5.14].[611]

The great myth cycle which explains the origin of the Wubarr ceremony focuses on Yirawadbad, his wife and her mother. According to the myth, Yirawadbad took a young girl, Mirnaliwo (or Minaliwu), from a neighboring camp to be his wife, but because she thought he was too old and ugly, refused to sleep with Yirawadbad and kept running back to her mother.[612] Angry at both Mirnaliwo for rejecting him and her mother for taking her side, Yirawadbad decided to kill them.

The next day, he cut down a tree and created the first sacred hollow log (*wubarr*), then placed it on the route used by Mirnaliwo and her mother. Yirawadbad then transformed himself into Ngalyod (the androgynous Rainbow Serpent), and inserted "poisonous teeth" into his mouth. When Mirnaliwo and her mother passed by, he made scratching noises inside the log, as if a bandicoot or monitor had crawled inside. As Mirnaliwo reached into one side of the hollow log and her mother into the other,

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[609] Taylor, *Seeing the Inside*, 123.

[610] The dances also re-enact the activities of Yirawadbad, and the hollow log he created is now used as a sacred drum in these ceremonies. Marika, *Oenpelli Paintings on Bark,* 40.

[611] Taylor, *Seeing the Inside*, 123.

[612] Brody, *Kunwinjku Bim*, 74. See also Berndt and Berndt, *Man, Land, and Myth*, 119.

Yirawadbad bit both, causing them to die instantly.[613] He then transformed back into a man, and returned to his camp.[614]

Yirawadbad soon felt remorse for what he had done and decided that he must institute a major ceremony "in order to atone for his deed."[615] He met a large antilopine wallaroo (who was actually a man named Nadulmi in disguise), gave him a long stick, and designated him as the keeper of the ceremony. Yirawadbad then showed Nadulmi how to perform the Wubarr ceremony, and explained that the stick should be used for beating the hollow log (*wubarr* drum). He also explained that the ceremonial ground was symbolic of the body of the Rainbow Serpent. When participants enter it, they symbolically enter the serpent's uterus.[616]

There are three bark paintings painted by two Kunwinjku artists in the AMNH Berndt Collection that relate to Yirawadbad and the Wubarr Ceremony. All three works depict either two or three anthropomorphic figures against a solid background. Two paintings were created by Samuel Manggudja Garnarradj (1909-1983; Namayirrkulidj clan, Kunwinjku language group).[617] The first work [figure 5.15] depicts three standing figures, a large male figure and two smaller female figures, painted in yellow with a thick white outline. The male is the largest figure (twice as large as the two female figures)

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[613] Ronald M. and Catherine H. Berndt, *Sexual Behavior in Western Arnhem Land* (New York: The Viking Fund, 1951), 114-120.

[614] There are similarities between this myth and the Wägilak Sisters Story from Northeastern Arnhem Land.

[615] Ryan, *Spirit in Land*, 114.

[616] Ibid., 83.

[617] Alternate spellings of his name include Mandaynjku.

and occupies more than half of the composition. He is positioned on the left-hand side of the painting in a largely frontal pose, with a profile view of his feet and displaced penis, while his scrotum appears in between his two legs. His left arm extends out across the middle of the painting, above which is positioned one female figure, and below, is another female figure. In his right hand, he holds what appears to be a small white axe (which may be the axe that Yirawadbad used to cut down the tree which he converted into the first *wubarr* drum).

It is evident that the two smaller figures are female, since they both have small white breasts (appearing on either side of their upper torsos), and the female figure positioned above the man's arms has a tiny representation of a baby inside her body (painted in red) signifying that she is pregnant. Both female figures have dillybags around their heads, and each one holds a long cylindrical pole (perhaps a digging stick). Like the male figure, they are depicted in a frontal position, with their feet and toes clearly articulated from an aerial view. None of the figures have facial features delineated, nor are they wearing any clothing. All three figures have some red dots painted inside the white outline of their bodies, but these take on no particular pattern.

Based on the information provided by the artist, this painting depicts Yirabadwad, his young wife and her mother. However, Mirnaliwo is shown pregnant, which relates to another version of the myth.[618] According to this version, the true reason why Yirabadwad became so angry was because Mirnaliwo had become pregnant, and since

[618] Samuel Manggudja shortens the myth, however, and states only that the wife "…consistently evaded the attentions of her husband, and as a result [he] persuaded a *ngaljod* (Rainbow snake) to swallow her." The artist also refers to the three characters as Nabingulawul (instead of Yirawadbad), Minaliwul (instead of Mirnaliwo), and Maralungananinja (as his wife's half-sister, instead of her mother). I believe the second set of names were probably "outside" or public names recorded by Berndt. Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 26.

she had refused to sleep with him, he knew the baby was not his.[619] This was why Yirabadwad decided to kill Mirnaliwo and her mother, and after he swallowed them (in the guise of the Rainbow Serpent), he vomited their images onto the wall of a cave at Indjuwandjaid (near Tor Rock).[620] At that exact moment, the baby came out of Mirnaliwo's mouth and also became an image on the wall.

The way that this artist has chosen to represent pregnancy is similar to a rock art image of a splayed female with two fetuses inside her body [figure 5.16].[621] On the left side of her segmented backbone is a female fetus, on the right is a male, both of which have been painted in red and in linear form. Perhaps Samuel Manggudja was familiar with rock art images such as this, and, in turn, was influenced by them.[622]

If one compares figure 5.15 with a bark painting collected in 1949 by Charles Mountford [figure 5.17], it becomes evident that the 1949 painting is almost certainly an earlier work by Samuel Manggudja.[623] Although the compositions differ, the palette and subject matter are quite similar. Both paintings depict three standing figures: a larger male and two smaller females, one of whom is obviously pregnant. All three figures are shown in profile; however, the upper bodies and heads are depicted from a frontal perspective. The figures are in-filled with yellow and outlined in white, with occasional

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[619] Berndt and Berndt, *Man, Land, and Myth*, 156.

[620] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 26.

[621] This rock art image is located in a shallow cave at Cannon Hill, just west of Oenpelli.

[622] This indeed may have been possible, since Samuel Manggudja was very familiar with the Oenpelli area, having lived there since 1930, as well as with the surrounding area including the rock art. Additional information on Samuel Manggudja's life is given later in the chapter. Aboriginal Arts Board, *Oenpelli Bark Painting* (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1979), 51.

[623] This is my attribution, since Mountford did not document any names of artists.

red dots painted inside the white outline. The 1949 painting, however, has a tree at its center. Since it was unusual for features of landscape to appear in early bark paintings, this may be an attempt to show a narrative element, indicating the source of Yirawadbad's hollow log and, by extension, the *wubarr* drum.

An additional comparison may be made between figure 5.15 and a painting by Samuel Manggudja that was included in the 1984 exhibition *Kunwinjku Bim* [figure 5.18]. The paintings depict the same cast of characters, and refer back to the same myth associated with Yirabadwad and the Wubarr Ceremony. In this later painting, however, the figures have facial features and are clearly positioned in profile (although the pregnant female still has one breast painted on either side of her torso). The figures also have clearly delineated hands and feet, and elaborate infill designs of red, white and black hatched lines. Despite the increase in details, however, there is a lack of genitalia (in particular for the male figure).

Another work in the in the AMNH Berndt Collection by Samuel Manggudja Garnarradj [figure 5.19] relates to the *kunmed* body painting design used in the Wubarr Ceremony. This style of body painting [figure 5.14] is believed to have originated with two sisters who lived near the Goomaderr River.[624]

According to the myth, these two sisters were the wives of an old man named Balangdjagindjag (or Djanbalgon). One day, Balangdjagindjag told them to bring "tucker" (food) from the east, since there was not enough to eat in their own camp. Obediently, the two sisters took their dillybags, crossed over the Liverpool River, and continued eastward in search of food. As they traveled, however, they became bored and

decided to engage in sexual relations with various men they encountered along the way. Once their dillybags were filled with roots (*mangulaidj*), the sisters turned homeward, but discovered that their vaginas were leaking semen.[625] Not knowing what else to do, they painted their bodies with the semen, creating a pattern of white dots on their upper arms, chests, and torsos.[626] When their husband saw the semen, he decided they must be punished, and one day during a rain storm, he lured them into a high cave and removed the ladder. According to different versions of the myth, the women either experienced a lingering death, turned into two ant hills, or were transformed into paintings on the wall of a cave at a site near the Goomaderr River.[627]

Samuel Manggudja's painting [figure 5.19] depicts the moment that the two sisters returned home to Balangdjangindjag, who observes the semen on their bodies. In comparison to the previous painting [figure 5.15], this one shows the two women as the dominant figures, frontally positioned while the male is squatting in the lower right corner. Their bodies are in-filled with solid yellow and outlined with white, and they have elongated arms that seem awkwardly bent below their elbows (as seen in Ngaiiwul's painting figure 5.4 and perhaps a stylistic trait of Kunwinjku artists). Their hair consists of white lines radiating out from the tops of their heads, and neither figure has any facial features. Their legs are in-filled with black and white striations, whereas their faces,

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[624] Berndt and Berndt, *Sexual Behavior in Western Arnhem Land*, 151-152.

[625] Ibid.

[626] According to the myth recorded by Ronald Berndt, "Each dot (and their breasts were covered with them) represented an ejaculation." Ibid., 151.

[627] Ibid., 152., and Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 28.

torsos, breasts, and upper arms are covered in white dots, like the body painting used in the Wubarr ceremony [figure 5.14].

To the left of each figure is an oval-shaped object in-filled with white dots, and in between the two females is a long pole in-filled with yellow and outlined in white. These are the women's dillybags and a digging stick, which were used during the course of their long journey. In the upper right section of the painting is a linear representation of a tree with two bulbous forms hanging from the branches. Just below the tree, Balangdjangindjag is shown in profile, with his right hand covering his mouth. He is shown eating pandanus nuts (*malbad*), the only food source he had while his wives were away.[628]

In 1947, the Berndts collected another bark painting by Samuel Manggudja [figure 5.20] depicts the same subject, though the male figure dominates the composition and is standing. There is an absence of any landscape features (such as trees), dillybags or digging sticks. The two works are similar in that none of the figures have any facial features, and they are all in-filled with similar designs: the females are covered in painted dots, and the male is in-filled with yellow and black striations. Also similar are the arm positions of the female figures, which are rather distorted below the elbow.

If one compares figure 5.19 with a work collected in 1949 by Charles Mountford [figure 5.21], there are even more similarities in terms of style and palette. Both paintings have three figures (a male and two females), a tree with pandanus nuts hanging from its branches, and square-shaped "keys" (fruit of the pandanus tree) placed in front of the male figure. The two female figures are again standing, and once again have an infill

[628] Ibid.

design of painted dots. The difference between to the two paintings is the placement of the tree and the three figures, as well as the fact that the females are depicted in profile with their breasts shown on either side of their torsos. Given their similarities, however, I believe that this earlier painting, collected by Mountford, was made by Samuel Manggudja, and documents a consistency in his style and subject matter for well over a decade.

Another work in the AMNH Berndt Collection that relates to the Wubarr Ceremony [figure 5.22] was painted by Ngaiiwul. According to the artist, the two male figures depicted in this painting are Nadulmi messengers "sent out to inform people of adjacent groups that the [Wubarr] ceremonies are to begin."[629] The composition is balanced and symmetrical along a vertical axis with the two male figures shown in profile, facing one another. Each is painted in red, outlined in white, and has a torso in-filled with a rudimentary white and yellow crosshatching design. Each has joint marks and long bones articulated in the legs and feet, as well as genitalia represented in front of their bodies. A single eye, ear and mouth of each figure are visible, as well as is a single feather protruding from the head of each, indicating connection of a sacred ceremony.

In Western Arnhem Land, the Wubarr ceremony was held at the beginning of the wet season. Therefore, the planning of the ceremony took place during the middle of the "cold, dry" season, and once the planning was complete, Wubarr messengers were sent out in pairs to summon participants from distant lands.[630] These messengers were known as *Nadulmi,* which is also the name of the antilopine wallaroo who served as the "official

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[629] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 36.

[630] Berndt and Berndt, *Man, Land, and Myth,* 128.

leader" of the Wubarr ceremony.[631] These messengers carried no weapons, only a special message-stick (*manlarbi* or *malbinbin*) [figure 5.23] that is presented to the elders of the camp they visited. For three days, these messengers travel from camp to camp requesting the presence of participants in the upcoming Wubarr ceremony.[632]

The fourth and final major regional ceremonial figure represented in the AMNH Berndt Collection is Namarrkon, the Lightning Man.[633] According to the myth cycle surrounding Namarrkon, he originally entered Arnhem Land from the northern coast, accompanied by his wife Barrginj and their children. Eventually, he entered the "stone country" (the Arnhem Land Plateau) and finally settled permanently between the Mann and Liverpool Rivers. From here, he made one last journey westward to the edge of the escarpment, where he took one of his eyes out and placed it high on top of a cliff. By doing so, it is believed that Namarrkon is able to see the arrival of the next monsoon.[634]

During the dry season, Namarrkon is believed to live quietly at the bottom of a deep waterhole. Occasionally, however, he leaves his home and goes in search of cabbage-palms, which are his food of choice. If someone should disturb his waterhole, however, Namarrkon will instantly rise up into the sky and create large thunderstorms, which will flood the land and drown the people.[635] During the wet season, it is believed

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[631] Ibid., 119.

[632] Ibid., 129.

[633] Alternate spellings include: Namarrgon, Ngalmargan, Mamaragan, Nammoran, and Namorren.

[634] According to one myth, he then returned to his home and produced many children which transformed into spectacular grasshoppers (Petasida ephippigera), which to this day are still active during the wet season. Chaloupka, *Journey in Time,* 58.

[635] This is why Namarrkon's name is often spoken in a hushed voice. When Namarrkon is talked about, it is usually in relation to a story about a young boy named Namorul who disregarded the advice of the clan

that Namarrkon leaves his waterhole and travels from place to place on the tops of thunderclouds. When angry, he "roars with a loud voice…and, striking downward with stone axes which grow on his hands and knees, shatters the trees, frightens the…people, and sometimes kills."[636]

Only one bark painting in the AMNH Berndt Collection relates to Namarrkon [figure 5.24]. It is associated with the sacred site of Rugnagen, located east of Oenpelli Hills, and most likely is a representation of his female cousin.[637] According to the contemporary Kuninjku artist Mick Kubarkku (born c.1922; Kulmarru clan; Kuninjku language group), Namarrkon's female cousin is occasionally depicted in bark paintings as a reminder that if a man is involved in a fight, it is only his cousin who can effectively restrain him. This lesson was learned a long time ago, when Namarrkon, in a fit of anger, created a destructive storm. According to the story:

> His cousin, a Lightning Woman, saw what was happening and was sorry for the humans who were killed in this terrifying storm. As cousins, they observed an avoidance relationship, so when she grabbed him by the arm, Namarrkon was instantly subdued and let the people live.[638]

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elders. According to the story, a long time ago, a young boy was warned not wash or drink from a sacred well, since it was the home of Namarrkon. Foolishly, the young boy disobeyed and drank water from it, which in turn, roused Namarrkon from his sleep. That night, Namarrkon rose up into the sky and struck the young boy with lightning, severing his head and slicing his body down his backbone to his genitals. This story is used as a warning to young boys to always obey the authority of clan elders. Holmes, *Yirawala*, 144.

[636] Mountford, *Records of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition,* 208.

[637] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 32-33.

[638] Margie West, *Rainbow, Sugarbag and Moon* (Darwin: Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, 1995), 44.

This work depicts a large female figure in a splayed position, outlined in white and in-filled with three different kinds of patterning. On her arms and breasts are a series of parallel lines or striations. On her torso and legs is white crosshatching, and on her enlarged vagina is a series of white dots. Her head is trapezoidal (which is typical of early Kuninjku artists from the Liverpool River Region), and her hair is composed of short white lines that radiate out from the top of her head towards the upper edge of the painting. Her facial features include two eyes and a small mouth, whereas her hands and feet are relatively naturalistic, with five digits clearly delineated. Attached to her knees and ankles are bulbous forms, which represent thunder axes. It is believed that when Namarrkon or his cousin throw the thunder axes that grow on their bodies, zigzag lightning appears in the sky and thunder is heard when they finally reach the earth.[639] Connecting her neck to her ankles is an arc of lightning which consists of a thick solid white line which frames her entire body.

If one compares Kulunba's 1958 painting with three figurative representations of Namarrkon from rock art [figures 5.25-5.27] a number of formal stylistic similarities can be noted.[640] All three rock art images depict a single figure in a splayed position with an arc of lightning surrounding the figure's body (although in these instances it is connected to the figure's head and feet, as opposed to neck and ankles). The eyes as well as the genitals are exaggeratedly large, and thunder axes appear once again attached to the figures' bodies.

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[639] According to Mountford, it is believed that "…if a thunder axe is built into the wall of a house, or under its roof, the house will not be struck by lightning." Charles Mountford, "The Lightning Man in Australian Mythology," in *Man* vol. 55 (September 1955): 129.

[640] These three rock art images were found at two separate locations: Madjana and Anbangbang.

In a bark painting by an unknown artist collected in 1949 by Charles Mountford [figure 5.28] Namarrkon's female cousin is also depicted. The arc of lightning is connected to her hands and feet, and her facial features consist of two eyes and a brow line. Painted in red and outlined in yellow, the figure possesses joint marks, and has an articulated backbone that runs down the center of her torso. White crosshatching also appears on her torso, as well as inside the arc of lightning.

Finally, in a 1964 bark painting by an artist named Urlunga (life dates unknown; clan and language group unknown) Namarrkon is depicted [figure 5.29]. Similar to figure 5.24, the 1964 work depicts Namarrkon in a splayed position with enlarged genitals and thunder axes attached to his knees and elbows. Unlike the arc in Kulunba's painting, this one completely encircles the figure's body, and is in-filled with red and black crosshatching. The figure is painted white and in-filled with red and black hatched lines—much more intricate infill design than that seen in Kulunba's painting.

CREATOR SPIRITS

During the Dreamtime, it is believed that local creator spirits (known as *djang*) engaged in brief journeys across the land, and at the end of their travels "made themselves rock" (transformed into certain features of the landscape).[641] Regardless of where the creator spirits originated, it is the endpoint of their journey that was most important. These locations held the power of the creator spirits and became sacred sites. As long as the clan members abided by traditional law, it was believed, the power of the creator spirits would remain strong at these sites.

[641] Kleinert and Neale, *The Oxford Companion*, 112.

Bark paintings of creator spirits serve to differentiate the social group of an artist in a manner that paintings of other subjects do not, since creator spirits (unlike major regional ceremonial figures) are neither communally owned nor shared by more than one clan. Instead, they are associated with specific sacred sites that are owned by specific clans. Ronald Berndt was one of the first anthropologists to become interested in bark paintings of creator spirits, and to document the indigenous names of their associated sacred sites. Only the members of the clan who own a sacred site are permitted to paint the creator spirits associated with it. Artists of the same clan group share the same creator spirits, just as artists of the same language group seem to have traditionally shared the same artistic style.

Originally images of creator spirits were painted on the rock surfaces of sacred sites. More recently, they have been depicted in bark paintings.[642] As contemporary artist Mick Kubarkku explained in 1993,

> We want to show non-Aboriginal people our sacred places…[and] *djang* [creator spirits] so they will understand them and for them to know the names of all those places…and know about our Dreamings. When we do these paintings we can help *Balanda* [non-Aborigines] to learn and understand.[643]

The AMNH Berndt Collection contains sixteen bark paintings with imagery of creator spirits. Four were painted by a Mengerdji artist, six by Kunwinjku artists, and six by Kuninjku artists. All are associated with specific sacred sites (although their exact

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[642] Ibid.

[643] Paul S.C. Taçon and Murray Garde, "Kun-wardde Bim, Rock Art from Western and Central Arnhem Land," in *Rainbow, Sugarbag, and Moon,* ed. Margie West (Darwin: Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, 1995), 36.

locations are unrecorded), and all but two contain figurative representations of anthropomorphic figures. Though their imagery is varied, the artistic style within each language group is quite similar.

Mengerdji Paintings

There are four bark paintings with creator spirit imagery in the AMNH Berndt Collection created by "Old Nipper" Maragar. The first work [figure 5.30] is the only painting in the collection with a solid white background. This unusual stylistic feature, usually associated with the artist Billy Yirawala, is described as an innovation on his part, but figure 5.30 shows that Maragar used solid white backgrounds first.[644]

In this work, Maragar has painted four standing anthropomorphic figures, from a frontal viewpoint, positioned above an abstract curvilinear form with three bulbous protrusions. The anthropomorphic figures are all very similar, with their backbones and joint marks delineated. Painted in yellow and outlined in red, the figures have no hands and their feet remain undetailed. The facial features, painted in white, consist solely of two large eyes and a mouth. The infill design on their torsos is a series of white dots similar in size and shape to the figures' eyes. Two of the figures have their arms resting on either side of their torsos, while two have one arm raised as if waving. The abstract, curvilinear form that appears below the four figures has been painted in yellow and outlined in white, and has an infill design of large red diamonds which are linked side-by-side.

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[644] Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, 165.

According to the artist, this work is associated with the sacred site of Lurnag, located near the Red Lily Lagoon on the western side of the East Alligator River. Legend holds that one day, four men, Nawabu, Nalind, Maril and Inbulman (represented at the top of the painting), went looking for three other men (Djumbirma, Manjuluwi, and Malan). The three men they were looking for had been straightening small bamboo spears (*maidjawar*) in a cave when suddenly they turned into rocks.[645] A representation of the three men after their transformation into rocks appears at the bottom of the painting, each bulbous projection representing one of the three men.

The second painting by Maragar" [figure 5.31] depicts a large female figure in a splayed position, with two dillybags just below her body and two small white linear forms on either side of her torso. Painted in white and outlined in yellow, the figure has an infill pattern which seems to combine a modified X-ray style with decorative patterning. A segmented backbone is flanked on either side with a herringbone design, and on either side of that design is a linked diamond pattern. The diamonds, however, are positioned vertically, instead of horizontally as in the previous painting. Each diamond is painted a solid white, while the space in between is filled with red hatch lines. These red hatch lines also appear interspersed with the herringbone design, on the figure's arms, neck, and legs. The figure lacks breasts, but does have a vagina, which is painted white and outlined with a line of black dots. She has white fingers protruding from her arms, which are balanced by undetailed feet. The contour of her head is painted yellow with white dots interspersed around her facial features and red lines radiating out from the center.

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[645] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 33.

According to the artist, the name of this creator spirit is Biriwil and her picture is now on the cave wall of the sacred site known as Gunganin (or Red Lily Lagoon, near Oenpelli). The dillybag on the left contains lily roots (*mandem*) and turtle, while the dillybag on the right is filled with bulrush roots (*baridjungga*), all foods she enjoys eating. The small white cylindrical forms on either side of her torso are sticks that she uses to kill turtle (*gunganing*).[646]

If one compares this painting with an earlier work of a *mormo* figure collected in 1912 by Baldwin Spencer [figure 2.7], a number of similarities are apparent. Both paintings depict solitary anthropomorphic figures with arms raised to either side, and have a very similar palette. The eyes of both figures are emphasized (either by color or size), and joint marks, long bones, as well as segmented backbones are articulated. The infill pattern is also extremely similar; both figures are in-filled with a linked diamond motif and red hatch lines painted in between. This same diamond motif appears in figure 5.30, though there the diamonds are in-filled with the red hatch lines and surrounded by solid yellow. I suspect that this diamond motif likely represents a specific pattern of body painting used by the Mengerdji, which was then applied to the bodies of local creator spirits.[647]

The third painting by Maragar [figure 5.32] depicts a standing female figure shown in profile surrounded by five birds, two snakes, and an abstract form that represents a cave. Painted in white and outlined in red, the figure stands with arms bent and raised out in front of her. Joint marks as well as long bones are shown, and her torso

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[646] Ibid., 30-31.

[647] For a more detailed analysis of figure 2.7, see Chapter 2.

has been painted with alternating red and black stripes, with the red stripes being in-filled with black dots. A multitude of small black dots have also been used as an infill design throughout the rest of her body. According to the artist, the creator spirit depicted in this work is named Marura and she lives in a cave inside a large hill with birds and snakes.[648] The cave is represented in the painting as a "U"-shaped form, painted in white and outlined in black, positioned just in front of the figure. On the walls of this cave are images of her animals, which are also depicted in this painting: blackbirds (*nalmandilga*), Macleay's water snakes (*bulugu*), and poisonous snakes (*jurawadbad;* species unknown). Stylistically, this painting is very different from the previous two [figures 5.30 and 5.31], perhaps because those were associated the previous two works were both associated with sacred sites on the Red Lily Lagoon (near Oenpelli), whereas this creator spirit is associated with the sacred site Iwaga, located at the mouth of the East Alligator River.[649]

The last painting by Maragar [figure 5.33] represents a creator spirit who, according to the artist, belongs to the Gagudju language group.[650] This is the only painting by Maragar in this collection that is oriented horizontally, and the only painting in which the figures are outlined in white and in-filled with solid red. It is also the only painting by Maragar to show stingray spines protruding from the figures' bodies. In terms of the number of elements included, the composition of the painting is unusual. Beginning from the left to right, the male figure is shown from a frontal perspective

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[648] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 36.

[649] Ibid.

[650] Ibid., 23.

(although his penis and scrotum are depicted in profile and appear on the side of his body). His right arm rests at his side while his left arm is raised in a waving gesture. To his right, are a spearthrower and three spears, identified by the artist as an iron wood-tipped spear, a wooden fishing spear, and an iron-tipped spear.[651] Below the spearthrower, are two large circular forms, painted in solid white. To the right of the third spear is a female figure, shown in profile, who like the male figure, has stingray spines protruding from her body. To the right of her is a small representation of a dillybag, in-filled with white dots, and to the right of the dillybag are twelve additional large circular forms painted in solid white. According to the artist, the white dots shown in her dillybag as well as the large circular forms on the right side of the painting represent goose eggs. The name of the male creator spirit is Marawalagara and he is associated with the sacred site of Mangaragu (located near the mouth of the East Alligator River). In this painting, he is accompanied by his wife, Marabarag, who carries a dillybag full of goose eggs. The reason why Marawalagara and his wife have stingray spines protruding from the bodies is because they are "clever" (*margidbu*), meaning they are endowed with great powers of sorcery and are able to summon the Rainbow Serpent at anytime.[652]

Kunwinjku Paintings

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[651] Ibid.

[652] What is interesting is that stingray spines usually appear exclusively on sorcery figures (which will be discussed later in the chapter). Perhaps, it was the Gagudju who initiated sorcery practices and were the ones who originally painted sorcery images on the walls of caves. Kunwinjku artists, such as Samuel Manggudja Garnarradj, may have been exposed to such imagery, and in turn, began creating bark paintings that mimicked the rock art of the area. Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 23. For more information on clever men (or *margidbu*), see Berndt and Berndt, *Man, Land, and Myth*, 145.

The AMNH Berndt Collection contains six bark paintings of creator spirits by Kunwinjku artists, five of them by Ngaiiwul. The other is by Samuel Manggudja Garnarradj. One of Ngaiiwul's paintings [figure 5.34] depicts a large female, shown in a splayed position, with arms, legs, and breasts portrayed to either side of her torso. According to Ngaiiwul, this creator spirit is named Djiligudjba, whose sacred site is at Migulid, along the Goomaderr River. During the Dreamtime, she came from Balpinara (near the Liverpool River) and traveled westwards looking for people with whom she could settle. At the end of her journey, she turned herself into stone.[653] Painted in yellow and outlined in red, the figure has an enlarged vagina and her feet are painted from an aerial viewpoint. The joint marks throughout her body are painted in white and in-filled with black dots, while the rest of the body is primarily in-filled with slightly larger dots painted in white. The only two areas on her body that are not in-filled with dots are her head and the middle of her torso. Instead, her torso has been painted with a segmented backbone with a herringbone design on either side. Her facial features consist solely of two black eyes, outlined in white. Interestingly, Ngaiiwul has chosen to illustrate the optic nerves in white, which cross behind the two eyes, as they do in real life.[654]

The second painting by Ngaiiwul [figure 5.35] depicts a similar female figure in a splayed position, painted in yellow and outlined in white. She, too, has an infill pattern of white dots, with an articulated backbone (painted solid white) with a herringbone design on either side. She also has her feet painted from an aerial view and turned to the right-side of the painting. According to the artist, the name of this creator spirit is

[653] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 30.

[654] According to Luke Taylor, the optic nerve is described by the Kunwinjku as "the string behind the eye." Taylor, *Seeing the Inside,* 135.

Ngadjadbim, and she is associated with the sacred site of Gunulgdi, near Goomaderr River.[655] Unlike the previous painting, this representation of a female creator spirit has a geometric-shaped form above her head, which is painted yellow, outlined in white and in-filled with white dots. According to the artist, this form represents her dillybag, which is shown filled with wild grapes (*manjulgu*). The white dots that appear inside the figure's body symbolize the grapes she has already eaten. According to Kunwinjku mythology, when it rains this particular creator spirit vomits, and the grapes inside her stomach transform into rocks all over the country.[656] Another feature unique to this figure is the fact that the optic nerves connected to her eyes do not cross as in the previous painting, nor does she have breasts painted on either side of her torso. Finally, her right hand is missing, and given this absence as well as the lack of details throughout the composition, it is possible this work was purposely left unfinished by the artist.

The third painting by Ngaiiwul [figure 5.36] depicts a male figure in a crouching position with one hand raised above his head (holding an axe), and the other hand holding a circular form. According to the artist, this painting represents a creator spirit named Djanbalgon who is associated with the sacred site Gabari, located inland from the Goomaderr River. He is shown hitting cycad 'nuts' (*mandaneg*) which are his food.[657] Painted in yellow and outlined in white, this figure is extremely similar to the crouching man in the right-hand corner of the painting associated with the Wubarr ceremony [figure 5.19] painted by Samuel Manggudja, another Kunwinjku artist. Both have similar shaped

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[655] Ibid., 29.

[656] Ibid.

[657] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 35.

bodies and are in almost identical crouching positions in front of small free-floating objects. They also have similarly shaped heads, with hair depicted as short white lines radiating out of their heads. The only differences are that the legs of Ngaiiwul's figure are in-filled with long white lines, whereas his torso and upper arms are in-filled with a connected diamond pattern.

The fourth painting by Ngaiiwul [figure 5.37] depicts, according to the artist, an abstract representation of the same creator spirit Djanbalgon.[658] However, instead of a figurative representation, Ngaiiwul has painted six rectangular forms and nine circular shapes which symbolize Djanbalgon and his sacred site. It is a rare example of an abstract painting from Western Arnhem Land, and represents a sharp departure from the more typical figurative style of this region. The six rectangular forms are divided into two groups of three, and are in-filled with alternating black and white lines. The rectangles (whose significance was not identified by the artist) are uniform, yet not identical, and the rectangle in the upper left-hand corner is distinguished by an additional black border painted around it. Just below the six rectangles are nine geometric shapes painted in black, outlined in white, and in-filled with white dots. They may represent the cycad nuts associated with Djanbalgon in figure 5.36 above. The composition of this painting is also balanced along a vertical axis, but is not perfectly symmetrical.

According to Mountford, there is a belief in Western Arnhem Land that during the Dreamtime, stars came down from the sky and transformed into cycad-nut men.[659]

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[658] Ibid.

[659] A cycad is "…any of an order (Cycadales) of gymnosperms that are represented by a single surviving family (Cycadaceae) of tropical plants resembling palms but reproducing by means of spermatozoids.

These men wandered around the plateau region, and after finding a good place to stay, transformed once again into paintings of cycad nuts. Upon so doing, they declared that if people desired cycad nuts, they merely had to hit the paintings and indicate from which locality they came. In reponse, the men would send cycad nuts to those locations, making sure there is plenty of food for all to eat.[660] Apparently Ngaiiwul has painted two separate states of transformation of these cycad-nut men. First, he painted a cycad-nut man in human form, and in a separate work, painted the man transformed into actual cycad nuts. These paintings may have assisted the artists in explaining the transformation of this particular creator spirit.

The fifth painting [figure 5.38] is the only work by Ngaiiwul in the AMNH Berndt Collection that has a clear horizontal orientation. It depicts, from left to right, a cluster of thirty-four circular forms painted in white and outlined in red, an extremely large (in relation to the figure) representation of a dillybag, and a male figure with a large penis and scrotum that extend out from the left-side of his body. According to the artist, this work depicts a creator spirit named Nagaloi, who is associated with the sacred site of Gugalag (located southeast of Oenpelli). During the Dreamtime, Nagaloi possessed a sacred dillybag (*wonggur*) which contained sacred star emblems (*mangulgag*). One day, his star emblems became wet and when Nagaloi tipped them out of his bag to dry, they became the stars we see in the heavens today.[661] In the painting, the male figure likely represents Nagaloi and next to him is his sacred dillybag, while the circular forms are star

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Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster Inc., Publishers, 1989), 319.

[660] Mountford, *Records of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition*, 238.

[661] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 27.

emblems which eventually became the stars in the heavens. The male figure and the dillybag are painted in white and outlined in red; however, they have an infill pattern of red parallel lines that are, for the most part, positioned along a horizontal axis. The one exception, is that the red parallel lines on the male figure's torso form a herringbone design on either side of his articulated backbone. Based on the palette and composition, there is a strong visual connection between the male figure, the dillybag and the round forms.

The last painting of a creator spirit was painted by the Kunwinjku artist [figure 5.39] Samuel Manggudja Garnarradj. It depicts a frontal view of a male-female couple, with elongated arms that are somewhat distorted below the elbow. According to the artist, the man is named Djabo and the woman is named Ngainma, and both are associated with the site of Golinga, near the Goomaderr River.[662] The style of this painting is extremely similar to Ngaiiwul's painting of two young girls [figure 5.4] which was previously discussed in connection to Yingarna. Both paintings have two standing figures, depicted from a frontal position, with similar shaped heads and bodies. The figures in both paintings are painted white, outlined in a contrasting color, and are in-filled with multicolored striations. The females' breasts are similar in shape and positioned on top of their chests (as opposed to either side of their torsos) and their pubic regions are indicated by upside-down triangles. The figures also have similar hair (shown as white lines radiating out from the tops of their heads) and in this painting, the male's feet (shown from an aerial view) are turned out in opposite directions in a manner similar to Ngaiiwul's work. In both paintings the joint marks, long bones, and simple

facial features are also articulated. The only difference between the two paintings is that Ngaiiwul's work contains two females, while Manggudja's portrays a male-female couple. Ngaiiwul also includes two dillybags and two walking sticks inside the composition, whereas no additional items accompany the figures in Manggudja's work.

Kuninjku Paintings

There are six bark paintings depicting creator spirits in the AMNH Berndt Collection that were created by two Kuninjku artists. One was painted by Anchor Kulunba, and five were painted by Deidjeli. The Kuninjku style is dramatically different from either the Mengerdji or the Kunwinjku. The figures' bodies are more simplified, their heads trapezoidal, and lacking facial features. The infill design most often used by Kuninjku artists is either a multitude of white dots or a red diamond pattern cascading down the figure's torso.

The first work by Anchor Kulunba [figure 5.40] depicts two anthropomorphic figures positioned perpendicularly to one another, the first being an upright representation of a splayed female and the second (identified by the artist) is a small male figure.[663] According to Kulunba, this painting represents a mother named Ngaldanjirgi and her son Djalgnadjang, both associated with the sacred site of Malngjanganag which is inland from the Liverpool River. The female figure has two enlarged breasts painted in profile on either side of her torso, in addition to an exaggeratedly large vagina, while the male lacks articulated genitalia. According to the artist, this work depicts the moment that Djalgnadjang was born, which may explain his mother's enlarged breasts and

[662] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 32.
[663] Ibid., 28-29.

genitalia. Both figures are painted in yellow, outlined in white, and the majority of their bodies are in-filled with white dots. The exception is the female figure's torso, which is divided into various odd-shaped segments in-filled either in solid red, solid black or solid white. Anchor Kulunba states that the marks on the woman's stomach signify her internal organs.[664] Both figures have hair consisting of lines radiating out from the tops of their heads, with multiple white lines serving as their fingers and toes. Both figures lack facial features; however, a large area in the center of their faces has been painted with solid white.

The remaining five bark paintings of creator spirits were created by Deidjeli (life dates unknown; Kardbam clan, Kuninjku language group).[665] The first [figure 5.41] depicts a standing male figure, painted in yellow, outlined in white, and has an infill pattern of white dots. According to Deidjeli, the name of this creator spirit is Manwuriwuri who is believed to have transformed into a speckled stone at the sacred site of Margulidjban, located in the Liverpool River area. He is known for having the ability to call fish to the surface of the water.[666] What makes this figure different from the other paintings by Deidjeli is that he has hair (appearing as white and yellow lines radiating out from the top of his head), as well as an erect penis and scrotum shown on either side of his body, creating a somewhat disjointed effect (the rest of the paintings by Deidjeli lack any sort of genitalia whatsoever). Similar to some of the other figures created by

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[664] Ibid.

[665] According to Professor Luke Taylor, "Marralwanga [a contemporary Kuninjku artist] says his father was Regele I think and by twisting things a little it could be Deidjeli. Said to have been a rock painter in Kardbam clan lands, etc." Pers. comm., Luke Taylor, Centre for Cross Cultural Learning, Australian National University, Canberra, 15 March 2005.

[666] Ibid., 29.

Deidjeli, this one has rectangular feet, no facial features, and a series of multicolored lines used to represent his fingers.

Deidjeli's painting is very similar in style to the previous work by Anchor Kulunba [figure 5.40]. Although the two paintings depict different genders and the figures are arranged in different positions, they share the same palette, the same hair, the same infill design, and the same area of white painted in the center of their faces.

The second painting by Deidjeli [figure 5.42] is also associated with the sacred site of Margulidjban in the Liverpool River area. According to the artist, this creator spirit is named Wulaliba, and is known for eating cakes of rice, shown in the painting as circular forms being held in the spirit's left hand. The designs on his body represent bones, while the linear forms that extend out on either side of his body are stone knives and kangaroo bone daggers worn around his waist.[667] The trapezoidal head is reminiscent of other paintings by Deidjeli. However, it is in-filled with two lines which divide it into three roughly equal parts. The arms appear anthropomorphic, whereas the legs seem to resemble those of a kangaroo or wallaroo. The figure's torso has an articulated backbone with a zigzag design appearing on either side.

The third painting by Deidjeli [figure 5.43] depicts a standing male figure holding a small animal with his left arm. This particular creator spirit (not identified by the artist) is associated with the sacred site of Namugaragu, on the Liverpool River.[668] It is believed that this creator spirit taught humans how to hunt with dogs.[669] The figure is

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[667] Ibid., 25.

[668] Ibid., 35.

[669] Ibid., 35.

painted in white and outlined in red, and his right arm, painted in the reverse color scheme of red outlined in white, is lifted up at the side of his body as if waving. Long bones are shown in the figure's upper legs. However, his feet are rectangular, and the hand raised above his head has nine red and white lines representing fingers. A prominent red diamond pattern cascades down his torso, and the animal he is holding is identified by the artist as a dog.

The fourth painting by Deidjeli [figure 5.44] depicts a large standing female figure, painted and outlined in white, with a crescent shape around her genital area that extends out on either side of her body. According to the artist, this creator spirit (name not given) is associated with the sacred site of Mugeling on the Liverpool River. It is believed that when she is not in her cave, she sends fish to human beings.[670] She has a trapezoidal head, no feet, and arms that extend outward with round bulbous forms that serve as undetailed representations of her hands. Once again, the figure has a large diamond pattern (created out of red dots) painted on her torso, whereas the rest of her body, face, and limbs are in-filled with red dots.

A painted dot infill design is typical of much of the rock art and traditional bark paintings created by artists from the Liverpool River region.[671] For example, in a rock art image from this region [figure 5.45], a walking male is executed in yellow ochre and has

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[670] Ibid., 25.

[671] This has been documented in the work of the rock art specialist Paul S.C. Taçon. See Paul S.C. Taçon, "Socialising Landscapes: the Long-term Implications of Signs, Symbols and Marks on the Land," *Archaeology in Oceania* vol. 29, no. 3 (October 1994): 117-129.

been in-filled with a series of painted white dots.[672] This style of infill also appears in a 1949 painting by an unknown artist collected by Mountford [figure 5.46]. In this painting, two male anthropomorphic figures are depicted, both of whom are in-filled with white dots. As in Deidjeli's painting [figure 5.44], the figures have trapezoidal heads, and bulbous forms that serve as abstract representations of hands. In the 1949 painting, the figure on the right also has the descending diamond-shaped design that cascades down his head and torso.

The fifth and last painting by Deidjeli [figure 5.47] depicts a large female figure standing next to an abstract representation of a fish (*marnum*, species unknown).[673] According to the artist, her name is Jinboiboi (or Yinboiboi) and she is associated with the sacred site of Gugululu in the Liverpool River region. It is believed she originally came from the east in search of a husband because she wanted to have a child. Unable to find one, she ate nail fish and then turned herself into a painting on the cave wall.[674] Painted in white, the female figure is in-filled with a variety of patterns including white dots on her head, two breasts, and lower legs. White hatching appears on her upper chest, and white crosshatching is used on her torso and half of her left upper leg. A white herringbone design appears on her right upper leg and the other half of her left leg.

This is one of the few bark paintings in the collection to include a representation of a landscape feature, in this case an abstract representation of the sacred site, shown

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[672] Almost none of the rock art that exists around the Goomaderr and Liverpool Rivers has ever been studied, much less photographed and published. Sally May, interview with author, New York, 26 January 2005.

[673] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 32.

[674] Ibid.

just above her head. On either side of her body are two white lines, which according to the artist, represent the entrance to the cave in which she lives.[675]

Bark Paintings with Secular Imagery

Bark paintings with secular imagery are works of art that are associated with the mundane realm and illustrate various aspects of everyday life, particularly hunting and fishing. In all, five works from Western Arnhem Land in the AMNH Berndt Collection contain secular imagery, and fall into one of two broad categories: representations of food animals (*mayh*), and sorcery figures (*malamoli*). Both types of subject matter are found in rock art, and were painted by all artists regardless of their clan or language group affiliation. The two categories differ in the fact that food animal images are (by definition) zoomorphic figures, whereas sorcery figures have both anthropomorphic and zoomorphic features. They also differ in terms of where they were traditionally painted as rock art images. Representations of food animals could be painted anywhere, but more often than not, were painted in public rock shelters [figure 1.12] in which entire families would live during the wet season. On the other hand, sorcery figures appeared in much more secluded locations where magic could be performed in secret and the imagery could remain powerful.

Four of the five works with secular imagery were painted by the Kunwinjku artist Samuel Manggudja Garnarradj [figure 5.48], one of Ronald Berndt's main informants. Born in 1909, Manggudja left his clan lands along the Goomaderr River as a small boy, and attended school on Goulburn Island. In 1930 (at the age of twenty-one), Manggudja

[675] Ibid.

moved to the Oenpelli mission station, where his "promised" wife was living at the time. He worked on a range of building and development projects at the mission, as well as devoted a considerable amount of time to painting and carving. When the Aboriginal Arts Board was formed in 1973, Manggudja was nominated by his community to be the representative for Western Arnhem Land. After serving for two years, he returned to Oenpelli where he continued to create art until his death in 1983.[676]

During his visit to Oenpelli in 1958, Ronald Berndt photographed Manggudja on at least two separate occasions. In one photograph taken on February 12, 1958 [figure 1.10], Manggudja is shown painting a sorcery figure, and the finished work is in the AMNH Berndt Collection [figure 5.57]. Three days later, the artist was photographed once again [figure 5.49] this time painting a figurative representation of an antilopine wallaroo in the X-ray style [figure 5.50]. Both photographs focus on the process of bark painting as opposed to the artist himself.[677]

FOOD ANIMALS

There are three bark paintings in the AMNH Berndt Collection that depict food animals (*mayh*). Two of the works were painted by Samuel Manggudja Garnarradj, and one was painted by the Kuninjku artist Deidjeli. All three paintings depict one or two figurative representations of animals against a monochrome background, and utilize the X-ray style.

[676] Aboriginal Arts Board, *Oenpelli Bark Painting*, 51.

[677] The images were subsequently published in 1970. Berndt and Berndt, *Man, Land, and Myth,* 158-159.

Taçon (1989) has documented that food animal imagery in Western Arnhem Land was traditionally painted on rock surfaces after a hunt was completed.[678] During the wet season, animals successfully hunted are painted on the shelter's wall or ceiling, as a record of a day's hunt. It could also illustrate the proper butchering techniques used in the region, which are believed to have originated with the *mimih* spirits who taught the people how to hunt, cook and distribute food animals. According to Manggudja:

> Long ago men did not know how to cut [wallaroo] until they saw Mimi [*mimih*] doing it. They watched Mimi and Mimi showed them how to do it. Now they copy Mimi. They cut the feet, the hands and the head separately, then one leg and then the other. After that the back, chest and shoulders and then the tail and the hind quarters. In the old days Mimi showed the clever men (*marrkidjbu*) how to cut the [wallaroo]. Today we do it in the same way as Mimi first showed us. The old men show the young men how to do it, when they have speared a [wallaroo]. They cut it in the same way. Many other tribes cut it similarly—they do not do it differently. We cut and cook [wallaroo] in the same way that Mimi showed us…I show my children how to cut [wallaroo] in the right way.[679]

This precise method of butchering a wallaroo is illustrated in Garnarradj's painting [figure 5.50]. This work is a figurative representation of an antilopine wallaroo, painted in white and outlined in red. Each major division within the animal's body is indicated by a separate joint mark, shown as a solid red line. For example, joint marks appear at the base of the head, the ends of the hands and feet, and at the tops of the legs. A segmented backbone, which echoes the curvilinear shape of the animal's backside,

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[678] Taçon, "Art and Essence of Being," 241.

[679] Peter J. Carroll, "Mimi from Western Arnhem Land," in *Form in Indigenous Art: Schematisation in the Art of Aboriginal Australia and Prehistoric Europe,* ed. Peter J. Ucko (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1977), 124.

extends down to the base of the tail. Internal organs are depicted in the wallaroo's upper torso and include the heart and lungs (depicted as a three-lobed form just below the arms), the liver (depicted as two upside-down triangles below a horizontal line), and the stomach and intestines. To either side of the internal organs, red crosshatching indicates muscle or fat.

The wallaroo is depicted in profile, with arms, legs and tail extended out in front of the animal's body, with its two ears facing the opposite direction. If one compares this image with an actual field photograph of a dead wallaroo [figure 5.51] the position of the animal is roughly identical. This comparison illustrates not only that the artist chose a realistic pose, but also supports the fact that food animal imagery was painted after a hunt.

If one compares Manggudja's painting with an example of an antilopine wallaroo painted on a rock surface [figure 2.4], even more profound similarities can be seen. The rock art figure is painted from the same formal perspective (profile), has the same general body shape and the same pose. The figures also have similar internal structures represented: a heart and lungs, a segmented backbone, and long bones in the legs. Both have similarly shaped ears, hands, fingers, tails, and hind legs, and have joint marks at the elbows, hands, knees and feet. The only major difference between the two is that in Manggudja's painting, red crosshatching appears inside the animal's body, which indicates muscle or fat.

In a much earlier bark painting collected by Baldwin Spencer in Western Arnhem Land in 1912 [figure 2.5], an almost life-size representation of an antilopine wallaroo

appears suspended above an X-ray representation of a barramundi fish. Although the representation of the wallaroo in the 1912 work is much larger in comparison to Manggudja's painting, both works utilize a palette of red and white, the same perspective, and the same pose. The internal structures represented include a heart and lungs, a digestive system, and a segmented backbone. The only major difference between the two figures is that the earlier one has fine hatched lines indicating muscle or fat on the animal, as opposed to crosshatching.[680]

A second painting [figure 5.52] by Garnarradj depicts a two figurative representation: a dingo (*Canis familiaris)* on the left and an antilopine wallaroo on the right.[681] Painted in yellow and outlined in white, the two animals are shown facing one another. The X-ray style has only been used on the wallaroo, and once again, the internal structures represented include the heart and lungs, liver, digestive system, segmented backbone, and long bones in the arms and legs. White crosshatching appears on the shoulders, hind quarters, and back of the head of the wallaroo, and unlike the one in the previous painting, the animal has an eye. According to the artist, the following story accompanies this bark painting:

> The dingo drew the *gulubar* [antilopine wallaroo]; then the *gulubar* made the dingo. However, the latter looked at himself and was displeased at what he saw. He accused the *gulubar* "I made you look good, but you have made me an ugly man…" And they began to fight. Then the dingo chased the *gulubar,* who went into a hole; here the dingo put an ironwood tree (still there) to mark the place..[682]

[680] For a more detailed analysis of this bark painting see Chapter 2.

[681] See Appendix D.

[682] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 31.

This story was also recorded in Chaloupka's 1993 publication *Journey in Time* as an explanation of the origin of the X-ray style.[683] Chaloupka's version gives far more details, including the names of the two figures: Gandagidj who was the antilopine wallaroo, and Duruk who was the dingo. According to Chaloupka, these two figures were originally in the guise of men, who traveled during the Dreamtime over much of the land observing the various rock art. Even though the rock surfaces were covered with imagery, "only the outside form of each creature was depicted as nobody knew what their insides looked like."[684] One day, these two men decided to draw each other's portraits on a cave wall. To their surprise, instead of drawing men, they actually drew two animals, and for the first time included the internal organs and muscular structures as well. At the end of their journey, they turned themselves into their paintings where they remain to this day.[685]

The third food animal painting in the AMNH Berndt Collection was created by the Kuninjku artist Deidjeli [figure 5.53]. This work depicts a spotted eagle ray (*Myliobatis ferminvillii*) painted in white, outlined in red with an infill pattern of black dots. It also has a series of red lines that appear to be an X-ray representation of either a skeletal structure or a muscle pattern. At first glance, it may appear that this figure is represented in profile; however, if one compares it to a biological sketch of an actual

[683] Chaloupka, *Journey in Time*, 171.

[684] Chaloupka, *Journey in Time*, 171.

[685] Ibid.

spotted eagle ray [figure 5.54], it becomes clear that the artist has actually used an aerial vantage point.

Stylistically, this painting is very similar to a bark painting by an unknown artist from the Liverpool River region [figure 5.55], collected in 1949 by Mountford. Although two spotted eagle rays are depicted (as opposed to just one), the animals are similar in shape and are in-filled with a multitude of dots reminiscent of the actual appearance of their skin [figure 5.54]. Although the 1949 painting includes more detailed features (eyes, internal organs, and a tail), the subject matter is clear in Deidjeli's painting which is the objective for all food animal paintings. As Margie West notes, it is the artist's job to ensure that the viewer can "identify the species in a clear and unambiguous way."[686]

SORCERY FIGURES

Ronald Berndt first collected bark paintings of sorcery figures (representations of distorted beings associated with love magic and sorcery) in 1947. Previously, sorcery paintings had not been seen by Westerners, and none had been collected.

Traditionally, sorcery figures were painted on rock surfaces, most often by jealous husbands who wanted to perform malevolent magic on their wives. According to Berndt, the most common type of sorcery resulted from a wife's infidelity. In retaliation, the husband would seek out a secluded rock shelter, and paint either an image of his wife, the man whom he believed had seduced his wife, or both. The husband would commonly depict the figures with animal heads, distorted limbs, and/or stingray spines piercing their bodies, features which were all meant to cause pain and instigate sickness. Supposedly,

[686] West, *The Inspired Dream*, 27.

the individuals would become ill the instant the husband called their names, and after a few days would die, seemingly for no reason. Only the husband would know the true cause of death.[687]

The first bark painting of a sorcery figure in the AMNH Berndt Collection [figure 5.56] depicts a single splayed female figure. According to the artist, this particular sorcery figure represents an unfaithful wife named Lumbu. The painting is based upon a rock art image located at Anbadbaralijagud cave on Cooper's Creek (north of Oenpelli), and it is believed that this painting is what ultimately killed her.[688] Positioned in the center of the composition, the figure has distorted, elongated limbs, a curvilinear torso, and an exaggeratedly large vagina. The figure does not have any realistic fingers or toes, but rather two-pronged extensions which appear hoof-like. The profile head is small in scale relative to the rest of the body and she has a beak-like mouth. The entire figure is painted in yellow, with the limbs in-filled with white and black striations, and breasts in-filled with white and black dots. The figure's torso is also in-filled with white and black crosshatching, and stingray spines protrude from her head, shoulders, elbows, wrists, knees, ankles and vagina.

The second painting of a sorcery figure [figure 5.57] depicts two figures, a male-female couple, painted in yellow with a thick white outline (reminiscent of figure 5.15). According to the artist, the man's name is Dalwanggid and he is shown with another man's wife, with whom he committed adultery.[689] Similar to the previous painting, the

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[687] Ibid., 80-81.

[688] Berndt, "Catalogue of Objects Sent," 27.

[689] Ibid., 23-24.

figures have curvilinear torsos with elongated, distorted limbs. The heads are also small in scale and somewhat bird-like. Both figures have three-digit hands and feet, exaggeratedly large genitals, and stingray spines protruding from their heads, shoulders, elbows, knees, ankles, and in the case of the female, her vagina. Although the two figures are in a splayed position, their heads are in profile, and they are turned toward one another as if conversing.

There are many similarities between Manggudja's paintings and sorcery figures found in rock art [figure 5.58]. Rock art sorcery figures are also depicted in splayed positions, with profile heads, and have elongated, distorted limbs. Like figure 5.56, this particular image is also female (with large breasts represented on either side of her torsos), and has stingray spines protruding from her knees and genitals.

In 1947, the Berndts collected an earlier sorcery figure by Samuel Manggudja [figure 2.22]. Similar to figure 5.56, this painting depicts a single female with elongated limbs and a curvilinear torso, positioned in a splayed posture. The figures in both paintings have heads shown in profile, and stingray spines protruding from various joints and parts of their bodies. The main differences between the two works is the predominance of black used as an infill color in the 1947 painting, and the herringbone design that appears on the torso of the figure in the earlier painting.

A final comparison could be made to a 1947 sorcery figure painted by the artist Jimmy Midjawmidjaw (1897-c.1985; Mirarr clan, Kunwinjku language group) [figure 5.59]. Although it is very similar to Manggudja's work [figure 5.56] in terms of representing a single female figure in a splayed position, the head of the figure in Midjawmidjaw's work is more bird-like, the breasts are larger, and the figure seems to

have multiple limbs including at least two sets of legs. There is also more stingray spines inserted into the figure's body, and unlike Manggudja's painting, this figure is clearly pregnant with a small representation of a baby suspended inside her body.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I analyzed twenty-six bark paintings with sacred imagery and five bark paintings with secular imagery from Western Arnhem Land in the AMNH Berndt Collection. I discussed in depth the two categories of subject matter for bark paintings with sacred imagery, major regional ceremonial figures and local creator spirits, and the two categories for bark paintings with secular imagery, food animals and sorcery figures. Western Arnhem Land bark paintings with sacred imagery that depict creator spirits (*djang*) serve to differentiate the social group of an artist in a way that other painted subjects are unable to do. Since creator spirits are associated with specific sacred sites, and in turn are owned by specific clans, artists of the same clan group share the same creator spirits, just as artists of the same language group seem to have traditionally shared the same artistic style.

Ronald Berndt did not record the patrilineal clans of the five artists from Western Arnhem Land represented in the AMNH Berndt Collection, but careful analysis of the paintings that depict creator spirits helps to differentiate three language groups (Mengerdji, Kunwinjku and Kuninjku) represented in the collection, and elucidate parallels in style and composition that exist between artists of the same language group.

For example, figures 5.4 and 5.39 are two bark paintings created by two Kunwinjku artists, Ngaiiwul and Samuel Manggudja Garnarradj, respectively. Although I believe that these two artists probably belonged to separate clans, the fact that they

belonged to the same language group is apparent in their remarkably similar styles. Their figures are similar in form, size and shape, and are all painted white, outlined in black, and in-filled with striations in either red, black, or a combination of both. The figures' hair, facial features, hands and feet are also similar, and they share a distinctive arm gesture (in which the lower arms are bent away from the torso).

Figures 5.40 and 5.41 were made by two Kuninjku artists, Anchor Kulunba and Ngaiiwul, respectively. Although these artists most likely belonged to separate clans, similarities in style may be attributed to their shared language group. Both paintings depict figures painted in yellow, outlined in white, and have an infill design of white dots. Both the female in Anchor Kulunba's painting [figure 5.40] and the male in Ngaiiwul's painting [figure 5.41] have the same type of hair, the same infill patterning, the same white area painted in the center of their heads, and they both have exaggeratedly large genitalia. It is almost as if these two figures were painted into the same work and separated.

It seems clear that, in Western Arnhem Land, artistic style had more to do with social group than community, contrary to Luke Taylor's widely accepted views.[690] In *Seeing the Inside: Bark Paintings in Western Arnhem Land*, Taylor identifies a number of contemporary "schools" of Kunwinjku art, identifiable by both style and content, and concludes that in Western Arnhem Land, an artist's style is determined by the community in which he lives (i.e. his "school"). In 1999, Taylor went on to expand this theory in an essay entitled "Flesh, Bone and Spirit: Western Arnhem Land Bark Paintings."

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[690] Taylor, *Seeing the Inside,* 73-82. The two surveys are: Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, 163-172 and Wally Caruana, *Aboriginal Art*, 28-38.

> Young Kunwinjku artists learn to paint through a system of apprenticeship to senior artists. Thus there are often a number of junior artists in a particular camp who paint in a manner very like that of the senor artist who is teaching them. Similarly a group of senior artists may share certain stylistic features as an expression of their perceived sense of group identity *vis-à-vis* other clusters of households in a town or outstation.[691]

Taylor's theory, however, does not seem to hold true for the works in the AMNH Berndt Collection, a group of bark paintings made in the same community at the same time that are often stylistically and iconographically dissimilar. The differences within this group of works suggests that at least until 1958, an artist's social group was still more important in determining his style than the community in which he lived. While Taylor's theory may hold true for contemporary Western Arnhem Land artists, it seems inapplicable to work produced prior to the establishment of commercialization, a period in which style in Western Arnhem Land was dictated by clan and language group.

In the final chapter, I will I reiterate my contribution to the field and summarize the conclusions made in previous chapters.

[691] Taylor, "Flesh, Bone, and Spirit," 36.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This dissertation is the first comprehensive art historical study of Western and Northeastern Arnhem Land bark painting to focus on critical analyses of style and iconography. No scholar to date has done a diachronic analysis of bark paintings utilizing multiple collections from two distinct regions of Arnhem Land. The primary focus of this dissertation is on the AMNH Berndt Collection, a series of ninety bark paintings, collected by the social anthropologists Ronald and Catherine Berndt in 1958 for the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), New York.

The AMNH Berndt Collection of bark paintings reflects traditional styles and subject matter, since it was acquired prior to the establishment of a commercial art market. Significantly, it is one of the earliest bark painting collections to be thoroughly documented with the artists' names, social groups, and detailed explanations of the painted imagery. Moreover, it encompasses, within a single collection, artwork from both Western Arnhem Land and Northeastern Arnhem Land, and includes works by twenty-nine artists from fourteen different clans or language groups.

In the preceding chapters I have explored (and illustrated) for the first time how Arnhem Land bark paintings have changed both stylistically and iconographically over time, by examining works from eight collections amassed between 1912 and 1971. The works discussed, largely unpublished, help define regional artistic styles, and chart innovative trends in Arnhem Land bark painting.

A diachronic study of Arnhem Land bark paintings is hindered by gaps in the literature and in museum records. Those who collected bark paintings prior to 1959 rarely documented artists' names or clans, or the clan that owns a painting's imagery; however, Berndt pioneered the recording of such information, so I have been able to focus on groups of works by specific artists. Using stylistic analysis, I have then attributed works whose artists were unknown to named artists whose work Berndt collected and documented.

In Chapter 1, I introduced the focus of my dissertation, which is on the AMNH Berndt Collection, and highlighted the importance of this collection in relation to the study of Arnhem Land bark paintings. I defined the terms sacred and secular, specifically in relation to imagery created in bark paintings. I reviewed the geographical locations and social organizations of the two stylistic regions represented in the Berndt Collection: Western Arnhem Land and Northeastern Arnhem Land. I discussed the materials and process of creating a bark painting, including the harvesting of the bark, the preparation of the pigments, and the specific types of brushes used. I discussed the artistic systems, possible sources of stylistic imagery, and regional art styles of Western and Northeastern Arnhem Land. I provided background information on the AMNH Berndt Collection, explaining how this particular collection of ninety bark paintings came to be housed at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. Finally, I provided a literature review in which I analyzed the way previous scholars have classified and interpreted Western and Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings.

In Chapter 2, "Major Collections of Arnhem Land Bark Paintings," I examined eight major collections of Western and Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings: the

Spencer Collection (1912-1922), the Warner Collection (1926-1929), the Chaseling Collection (1935-1939), the Thomson Collection (1935-1942), the Berndt Collection (1946-1950), the Mountford Collection (1948-1949), the Tuckson/Scougall Collection (1959), and the Groger-Wurm Collection (1965-1971). During the course of my research, I was able to examine all of these collections first-hand, and photograph the majority of bark paintings treated in this study. On separate occasions, I also interviewed the only two people still living who could provide a first-hand account of the collecting expeditions: Margaret Tuckson (connected to the Tuckson/Scougall Collection) and Dr. Helen Groger-Wurm (the collector of the Groger-Wurm Collection). Each interview provided invaluable insights into that particular collection as well as a broader understanding of the history of collecting Arnhem Land bark paintings. For each collection, I provided background information on the collector, gave a brief description of the collecting expedition, and gave a formal and iconographic analysis of significant bark paintings within each collection. Additional works from these collections also appeared in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 (as points of comparison), as I focused on specific artists, clans and language groups represented in the AMNH Berndt Collection.

In Chapter 3, "Concealed Meanings within Abstract Designs," I focused on bark paintings with sacred imagery from Northeastern Arnhem Land. I analyzed the forty-two bark paintings in the AMNH Berndt Collection, and introduced the concept of clan paintings, or works that are unique to an individual clan and contain a prescribed set of imagery. Due to Ronald Berndt's documentation of the bark paintings in the AMNH Berndt Collection, I was able to discuss the works in relation to the particular clan who owned their imagery and motifs, whether it was the artist's clan, his mother's clan

(*ngärndi*) or his maternal grandmother's clan (*märi*). In so doing, I discovered that an artist frequently changed his style to reflect the style of the clan who owned the painting (see the end of Chapter 3 for specific examples). I observed that not only does an artist from Northeastern Arnhem Land have the ability to work in multiple styles, but it is the clan that owns the painting that dictates its style and imagery.

In Chapter 4, "Illustrating the Everyday," I focused on bark paintings with secular imagery from Northeastern Arnhem Land. I discussed the two major categories of Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings with secular imagery represented in the AMNH Collection (Macassan *praus* and hunting scenes), and then analyzed the seventeen bark paintings in the AMNH Berndt Collection. These bark paintings are associated with the mundane realm and illustrate various aspects of everyday life, particularly hunting and fishing. They not only differ in theme, but, significantly, in style from Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings with sacred imagery. The compositions of the bark paintings with secular imagery are more asymmetrical, and crosshatching is used more as an infill pattern within the figurative representations rather than as a background design. There is also a lack of anthropomorphic figures in Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings with secular imagery, as well as a conspicuous absence of background patterning.

In Chapter 5, "Exposing the Interior of the Figurative Form," I focused on bark paintings with sacred and secular imagery from Western Arnhem Land, and analyzed the thirty-one bark paintings included in the AMNH Berndt Collection. I observed that Western Arnhem Land bark paintings with sacred imagery that depict creator spirits (*djang*) serve to differentiate the social group of an artist in a way that other painted

subjects are unable to do (see Chapter 5 for specific examples), because creator spirits are associated with specific sacred sites, and in turn, are owned by specific clans. Artists of the same clan group, therefore, share the same creator spirits, just as artists of the same language group seem to have traditionally shared the same artistic style. Unfortunately, Ronald Berndt did not record the patrilineal clans of the five artists from Western Arnhem Land represented in the AMNH Berndt Collection. Through careful stylistic analysis of the paintings, I was able to differentiate three different language groups (Mengerdji, Kunwinjku and Kuninjku) represented in the collection, which revealed parallels in style and composition that exist between artists of the same language group. Clearly then an artist's style in Western Arnhem Land was influenced more by his social group than his community.

Throughout this study, I have illustrated how the styles of Western and Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings differ. The style of Western Arnhem Land bark paintings is characterized by a limited number of figurative representations depicted against a homogenous, oftentimes red, background. The figures have a tendency to dominate the entire composition, and are often shown in the X-ray style. The style of Northeastern Arnhem Land bark paintings is characterized by compositions that are divided into various feature blocks and contained within a painted frame. Figurative representations are usually small, and rendered in frontal, side or aerial views. The most prevalent feature of Northeastern Arnhem Land bark painting is fine crosshatching.

During the course of this study, I have also shown how bark paintings with sacred imagery, collected from both stylistic regions, differ significantly from bark paintings with secular imagery. I believe the reason for these differences is that traditionally bark

paintings with sacred imagery were taught and regulated by clan elders. As a result, bark paintings with sacred imagery tend to be less diverse in terms of iconography and style. In addition, there seems to have been a shift in the ratio of bark paintings with figurative imagery to bark paintings with abstract imagery over time. In earlier bark painting collections (as seen in the Spencer Collection, the Warner Collection, and the Chaseling Collection), the number of paintings with figurative imagery far outnumberd bark paintings with abstract imagery. Gradually, the number of works with abstract imagery increased (as seen in the 1946-50 Berndt Collection, the Mountford Collection, and the AMNH Berndt Collection), as did their size and complexity (reflected in the Tuckson/Scougall Collection and the Groger-Wurm Collection).

In 1958 (the same year that the AMNH Berndt Collection was amassed), Ronald Berndt published an essay entitled "Some Methodological Considerations in the study of Australian Aboriginal Art," in which he discussed the styles of Western and Northeastern Arnhem Land in relation to their social structure, and argued that complexity of design directly relates to social complexity.[692] More specifically, Berndt asserts Northeastern Arnhem Land's complicated social structure accounts for its complex style, while Western Arnhem Land, which is less complicated in terms of social structure, has a style which is less complex.

True to some degree, Berndt's conclusion is unduly overarching, masking "exceptions to the rule" that exist in bark paintings from both regions. These exceptions have been little discussed in the existing literature on Arnhem Land, which tends toward well-established typologies (such as "storyboard" compositions from Northeastern

[692] Berndt, "Some Methodological Considerations," 26-43.

Arnhem Land or X-ray paintings from Western Arnhem Land) that have been perpetuated by art market forces and collectors, dealers, and art advisors, who often favor the characteristic and quintessential over the odd or eccentric example. My study focuses on the variability of Arnhem Land bark painting in an attempt to move beyond the prevailing stereotypic thinking on this subject. For example, I have described instances of bark paintings from Northeastern Arnhem Land with little or no background patterning (figures 3.33, 3.41, 3.56, 3.57, and 4.5), as well as bark paintings from Western Arnhem Land that contain a tremendous amount of detail and intricate crosshatching (figures 5.10 and 5.13). Although the styles in the two regions differ, Berndt's assertion that one is "more complex" than the other is not borne out by visual evidence.

Indeed, the social premise upon which Berndt's assertion is built bears rethinking. His statement that Western Arnhem Land peoples have a simpler social structure than that of Northeastern Arnhem Landers would seem to reflect widespread lack of knowledge about the clan system of this region, which has not been analyzed in relation to arts production to the same extent as that of Northeastern Arnhem Land. Further fieldwork in Western Arnhem Land is needed to analyze Western Arnhem Land bark paintings more thoroughly.

More recently, bark paintings throughout Arnhem Land have changed with the establishment of a commercial art market and continue to do so. For example, Western Arnhem Land artists have recently begun painting on paper (rather than bark), and since the 1990s, a strong printmaking movement has evolved among Northeastern Arnhem Land artists. An emerging generation of female artists (many of whom were taught by

fathers represented in the AMNH Berndt Collection) is now producing artwork in Arnhem Land. In future studies, more varied methodologies should be brought to bear on Arnhem Land art in general and on this newer production in particular.

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THE SACRED REVEALED: AN ICONOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE BERNDT COLLECTION OF ARNHEM LAND BARK PAINTINGS AT THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

by

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VOLUME II

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Table 1: List of Northeastern Arnhem Land Artists represented in the AMNH Berndt Collection

Artist	Clan	Moiety	Settlement	Figures
Badangga	Wangurri	Yirritja	Elcho Island	3.41, 3.55
Baidju	Gubabingu	Yirritja	Elcho Island	3.28
Banggalawi	Djambarrpuyngu	Dhuwa	Elcho Island	3.29, 3.31, 3.32, 3.34
Banja	Liyagawumirr	Dhuwa	Yirrkala	3.37, 3.45
Bununggu Yunupingu	Gumatj	Yirritja	Yirrkala	2.20, 3.6, 3.43, 3.47, 3.49, 3.50-3.54, 4.17, 4.18
Burula	Djambarrpuyngu	Dhuwa	Elcho Island	4.14, 4.15
Djingulul	Gälpu	Dhuwa	Elcho Island	3.4
Djunmal	Liyagawumirr	Dhuwa	Elcho Island	3.35, 3.39
Djuwali	Gumatj	Yirritja	Yirrkala	3.24, 3.25, 3.48, 3.57, 3.58
Dudarg	Gubabingu	Yirritja	Elcho Island	4.19
Gagguba	Gälpu	Dhuwa	Elcho Island	3.20, 3.33, 4.9, 4.10, 4.11
Garimu	Dätiwuy	Dhuwa	Elcho Island	4.12, 4.16
Garmali	Gumatj	Yirritja	Yirrkala	3.3, 3.13, 4.5
Gunguyama Dhamarrandji	Djambarrpuyngu	Dhuwa	Yirrkala	3.7, 3.8, 3.26
Junju	Gälpu	Dhuwa	Elcho Island	4.8
Liogang	Warramiri	Yirritja	Elcho Island	3.46, 4.20
Majamaja	Djambarrpuyngu	Dhuwa	Elcho Island	4.13
Mawalan Marika	Rirratjingu	Dhuwa	Yirrkala	1.20, 2.17, 2.19, 2.31, 2.32, 2.34, 3.5, 3.12, 3.16, 3.17, 4.1, 4.4, 4.7
Millirpum Marika	Rirratjingu	Dhuwa	Yirrkala	2.36, 3.9, 3.15, 3.21
Munuparriwuy Wanambi	Marrakulu	Dhuwa	Yirrkala	3.19
Woreimu	Ngaymil	Dhuwa	Yirrkala	3.22

Table 1: List of Northeastern Arnhem Land Artists represented in the AMNH Berndt Collection

Artist	Clan	Moiety	Settlement	Figures
Woibanggi	Djambarrpuyngu	Dhuwa	Elcho Island	3.3
Wandjuk Marika	Rirratjingu	Dhuwa	Yirrkala	2.18, 3.5, 3.14, 3.18, 3.38 4.6
Wuragi	Warramiri	Yirritja	Elcho Island	3.56, 4.21

Table 2: List of Western Arnhem Land Artists represented in the AMNH Berndt Collection

Artist	Language Group	Clan	Settlement	Figures
Anchor Kulunba	Kuninjku	Kurulk	Oenpelli	2.35, 5.10, 5.13, 5.24, 5.4
Deidjeli	Kuninjku	unknown	Oenpelli	5.41, 5.42, 5.43, 5.44, 5.47, 5.53
Ngaiiwul	Kunwinjku	Namanilal	Oenpelli	5.4, 5.5, 5.8, 5.22, 5.34, 5.35, 5.36, 5.37, 5.38
"Old Nipper" Maragar	Mengerdji	unknown	Oenpelli	5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.30, 5.31, 5.32, 5.33
Sam Manggudja Garnarradj	Kunwinjku	Namayirrkulidj	Oenpelli	2.21, 2.22, 2.39, 5.15, 5.17, 5.18, 5.19, 5.20, 5.21, 5.39, 5.48, 5.49, 5.50, 5.52, 5.56, 5.57

Appendix A: GLOSSARY

Aborigines – the indigenous peoples of Australia.

Arnhem Land – a region located in the northeastern section of the Northern Territory of Australia that today is primarily a reserve.

Arnhem Land Plateau - a rocky escarpment of steep quartzite and sandstone cliffs in Western Arnhem Land.

background - the painted surface upon which the figures are depicted.

Baijini – a pre-Macassan Indonesian people who have become incorporated into the Djang'kawu myth in Northeastern Arnhem Land.

Banaidja – a major creator spirit of the Yirritja moiety in Northeastern Arnhem Land, and the son of Laitjung.

bark painting – the act of applying natural pigments to flattened, dried and smoothed sheets of eucalyptus bark.

bark paintings with sacred imagery – works of art that visually condense complex information regarding sacred sites and the epic journeys of the creator spirits.

bark paintings with secular imagery – works of art that are associated with the mundane realm and illustrate various aspects of everyday life, particularly hunting and fishing.

Bäru – the most important creator spirit of the Yirritja moiety in Northeastern Arnhem Land. He was a contemporary of the Djang'kawu and lived during the Dreamtime.

billabong – small lake or a dead-end river branch.

Bitjiwurrurru – the name of the elder Djang'kawu sister in Northeastern Arnhem Land.

Burralku Island – a mythical island, the Land of the Dead for the Dhuwa moiety in Northeastern Arnhem Land.

"bush tucker" – wild vegetable and animal foods.

clan – a landowning group of patrilineal descent, which acknowledges common ancestry and shares a common sacred law.

clan design – a specific geometric pattern owned by an individual clan, or a group of clans within the same moiety.

clan painting – a work that is unique to an individual clan and contains a prescribed set of imagery.

creator spirits – beings who lived in the mythological time.

crosshatching – a design element which is created by two sets of parallel lines that intersect.

didjeridu – a hollow wooden tube used as a musical instrument. Also known as a drone pipe.

dillybag – a woven carrying bag.

dividing line – lines that subdivide a composition.

Djambawal – the Thunder Man in Northeastern Arnhem Land.

djang – Kunwinjku word creator spirits in Western Arnhem Land.

Djang'kawu – the most important creator spirits (a brother and his two sisters) and great myth cycle and of the Dhuwa moiety in Northeastern Arnhem Land.

Dreamtime – an unidentified era in the remote past when the creator spirits created landscape features, gave birth to the first humans, and established ceremonial law.

Dhuwa – one of the two moieties that exist in Arnhem Land.

feature block – unified segments of a composition whose images may or may not relate to one another.

figurative representation – painted forms of either humans, animals or spirits.

Gagudju – the dominant language group in Oenpelli (Western Arnhem Land) at the beginning of the twentieth century. Also known as "Kakadu."

Galiwin'ku – Yolngu name for Elcho Island.

Ganjudjingu – the name of the Djang'kawu brother in Northeastern Arnhem Land.

Gunbalunya – Kunwinjku name for Oenpelli.

infill design – a geometric pattern of a repeating single element that is used to fill-in a designated area.

"inside" meaning – secret knowledge reserved only for initiated males.

internal structure – the representation of the internal anatomy of a figure.

karrbarda – long yams (*Dioscorea transversa*) in Western Arnhem Land.

Kunabibi – one of the three major traditional ceremonies in Western Arnhem Land.

Kuninjku – one of the two major languages spoken in Western Arnhem Land today. Their traditional lands were located on the Liverpool River.

kunmokurrkurr – the Kunwinjku word for clan in Western Arnhem Land.

Kunwinjku – one of the two major languages spoken in Western Arnhem Land today. Their traditional lands were located on the Goomaderr River.

"land stories" – secular works of art that contain figurative representations of animals that live on the land.

Lumaluma – a major regional ceremonial figures in Western Arnhem Land. He is also the creator of the Mardayin ceremony.

Macassans – Indonesian traders who came in their praus to the Arnhem Land coast to collect trepang.

Madalatj – the name of the younger Djang'kawu sister in Northeastern Arnhem Land.

major regional ceremonial figures - the original ancestors of Western Arnhem Land, from which all subsequent people have descended.

malamoli – sorcery figures from Western Arnhem Land.

mangan – storm clouds created by the whale Wuimiri in Northeastern Arnhem Land.

mardayin – the Yolngu word for sacred law. It is comprised of a set of songs, narratives, dances, paintings, and sacred objects which are believed to have originated from their major creator spirits.

Mardayin – one of the three major traditional ceremonies in Western Arnhem Land.

Marege – the Macassan word for Northeastern Arnhem Land.

märi – the Yolngu word for maternal grandmother's clan.

mawalan – digging stick used by the Djang'kawu to create sacred springs.

mayh – the Kunwinjku word for food animals in Western Arnhem Land.

Mengerdji – the traditional "owners" of the Oenpelli region in Western Arnhem Land.

mimih – a type of small spirit that is believed to live in the cracks of the rock plateaus in Western Arnhem Land.

mission station – a settlement established by a church organization.

moiety – dual organization, which is patrilineal in descent and exogamous. See Dhuwa and Yirritja.

mortuary hollow log – used to contain human bones of deceased individuals.

Mururuma – the Bremer Island Turtle Hunter in Northeastern Arnhem Land.

myth cycles – sacred stories that explain how the actions of the creator spirits formed the landscape, gave birth to the clans, and established sacred law.

Namarrkon- the Lightning Spirit in Western Arnhem Land.

namorodo – evil spirits who were known to cause death in Western Arnhem Land.

ngainmara – a round mat with a shallow peak in the center, made of plaited pandanus fiber, used by women in the past for providing cover and protection.

Ngalyod – the Rainbow Serpent in Western Arnhem Land.

ngärndi – the Yolngu word for mother's clan.

"outside" meaning – public knowledge.

painted frame – a well-defined border.

praus – Indonesian sailing vessels.

rangga – sacred emblems which must not be seen by uninitiated men or women.

rock art – the art of painting on rock surfaces.

sacred – relating to or in the service of religion.

sacred site – an area of land that is owned by a specific clan, and contains the presence and power of that clan's major creator spirits.

sacred springs – bodies of freshwater which are believed to be passageways to the spiritual realm. Creator spirits are believed to inhabit these springs, which also contain the souls of individuals.

"sea stories" – secular works of art that contain figurative representations of fish, turtles, and other animals found in the sea.

secular – belonging to the worldly realm.

shade – sacred bough shelter erected on the ceremonial ground where the *rangga* emblems are made and stored.

sorcery figures - representations of distorted figures associated with love magic and sorcery from Western Arnhem Land.

spearthrower – is a traditional Aboriginal hunting device which is carved out of wood.

"storyboard" format – depicting multiple events of a single story.

sugarbag – wild honey and native bee.

trepang – *Holothuria edulis,* also known as sea slug, sea cucumber, and *běche-de-mer.*

Wägilak Sisters Story – the second major myth cycle of the Dhuwa moiety in Northeastern Arnhem Land.

wangarr – Yolngu word for creator spirits.

wet-season bark shelter – temporary architectural structure made out of bark.

Wubarr – one of the three major traditional ceremonies of Western Arnhem Land.

X-ray style – a technique in which a figure's external shape and internal organs are depicted simultaneously

Yingarna – the mother goddess, the most important major regional ceremonial figure of Western Arnhem Land.

Yirawadbad – a major regional ceremonial figure in Western Arnhem Land. He is also the creator of the Wubarr ceremony.

Yirritja – one of the two moieties that exist in Arnhem Land.

Yolngu – main language spoken in Northeastern Arnhem Land.

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Appendices B, C, D, E

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