

“Can we be equal in your eyes?”

A Perspective on Reconciliation from north-east Arnhem Land.

Ian Stuart McIntosh

B. App. Science. Q.U.T.

Grad. Dip. Education. N.T.U.

Grad. Dip. Intercultural Studies. Edith Cowan.

Mast. of Lett. Aboriginal Studies. U.N.E.

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Social Sciences, Northern Territory University. August 1996.

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



Ian McIntosh
August 1996

Illustration 1a. The Warramiri Flag Treaty Proposal creators, Burrumarra (centre), Liwukang (left) and Wulanybuma with their design.



"Today, people live as one group. 'Black' can marry 'white' and vice versa. This is part of the lesson of the Treaty. We are different today than before. We live by a new law. Our histories have merged. The law of the past was *Bayini* ['pre-Macassans'] for *Bayini* and *Yolngu* [Aborigines] for *Yolngu*. This is *Birrinydji's* law. We do not mix. Outsiders tried to steal the women and steal the land. We would lose everything. But we can share the future if there is equality...We ask Bill Hayden, Can we be equal in your eyes?"

David Burrumarra, M.B.E. 1990

Abstract

In this thesis, I examine the ways in which the 'memory' of contacts between *Yolngu* (Aborigines from north-east Arnhem Land) and Indonesian fishermen in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is relevant today in the way certain Elcho Islanders are negotiating for the recognition of Aboriginal rights within the broader Australian community. In particular I look at one proposal for Aboriginal reconciliation from one group of *Yolngu* (Aborigines from north-east Arnhem Land). Called the Warramiri Flag Treaty proposal, its aim was to encourage dialogue on the subject of a treaty between Aborigines and non-Aborigines. Inspired and initiated by the late David Burrumarra M.B.E. of Elcho Island, the proposal called for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders Australia-wide to construct their own reconciliation flags, each containing sacred symbols relevant to the lands in which they were living, combined with symbols representing the non-Aboriginal world.

This study contends that for the Warramiri, the flag proposal is a necessary outcome of a particular way of looking at themselves and at their past. For a very long time, the *Yolngu* have attempted to negotiate their place in relation to outsiders. Diverse narratives referring to the non-Aboriginal 'Other' (eg. Sama-Bajau, Macassans and Europeans) have traditionally been viewed as secret/sacred, but now, the Australian Government is speaking of reconciliation and a merging of histories. Consequently in recent times there has been a re-focussing of attention by the Warramiri on previously unrecorded bodies of *Rom* (Aboriginal law), and what I present for analysis has been framed in the light of changing historical and social realities.

This thesis deals with the ways in which such knowledge is re-oriented, re-emphasised and revealed both within Aboriginal society and in the wider Australian community. I explore how and why the Warramiri leaders have come to understand the way they see their relationship with the 'Other'; why they see themselves as having a mandate for mediation between outsiders and Aborigines; and why the flag, which means different things to different peoples, has been chosen as an appropriate symbolic device for facilitating the reconciliation process.

Three main areas are covered in the study. Firstly, it is concerned with Burrumarra's perception of his and *Yolngu* people's place in the contemporary world, (and my understanding and presentation of it). Secondly, it is about the nature of the experience of change in a broad sense, ie. how cosmology is matched with experience, and experience with cosmology. Lastly, in dealing with the former, it is about the representation of Aboriginal culture and cosmology in contemporary circumstances. It is concerned with the problems of representing an Aboriginal 'Other' when that 'Other' has represented non-Aborigines as such in complex and often ambiguous and now anachronistic forms.

Acknowledgments

In preparing this thesis I have received invaluable help from a number of sources. Firstly, I was in receipt of a University post-graduate research scholarship from the Northern Territory University, and the assistance and support shown by staff of Faculty of Social Sciences has been greatly appreciated. Secondly, the study would not have been possible without the co-operation of the residents of Galiwin'ku, Elcho Island. In particular, the late David Burrumarra and Timothy Buthimang showed interest. It was with Burrumarra's approval that this topic was chosen. The implementation of a treaty of reconciliation between Aborigines and non-Aborigines had been his life long pursuit, and this work is dedicated to his efforts.

I also express my appreciation to my supervisor David Mearns for his encouragement and assistance. Thanks also to the late Ronald Berndt, Campbell Macknight, John Cawte and my parents Jean and Stuart McIntosh, for help along the way.

Table of Contents

Abstract	4
List of Tables	8
Glossary	10
Chapter 1: Introduction	14
Chapter 2: Warramiri Cosmology	47
Chapter 3: The Past in the Present	81
Chapter 4: Dog-Macassan 'Encounters'	117
Chapter 5: 'Totem hunters' and <i>Yolngu</i> Sea Rights	146
Chapter 6: <i>Birrinydji</i> and <i>Bayini</i> : Bounty and 'Loss'	177
Chapter 7: <i>Walitha'walitha</i> : Reconciliation and the Flag	214
Chapter 8: Christianity and Change	245
Chapter 9: Conclusion	273
Appendix 1: The Warramiri Flag Treaty Proposal	289
Appendix 2 : Orthography for Spelling <i>Yolngu</i> Words	291
Appendix 3: Totemic Affiliations of <i>Murrnginy Mala</i>	292
Appendix 4: Songs Displaying External Influences	294
Appendix 5: The Dog/Macassan 'Encounter' Narratives	298
Appendix 6: 'Totem Hunters' as Sama-Bajau	305
Appendix 7: The Spread of Islam in Indonesia	307
Bibliography	309

List of Maps

1. North-east Arnhem Land	13
2. Warramiri Lands in north-east Arnhem Land	26
3. Eastern Indonesia and Northern Australia	89
4. <i>Mala</i> alliances formed as a result of the travels of the totemic Dog	141
5. Sites referred to in Chapter Five	149

List of Tables

1. The alignment of the sub-units of the Warramiri <i>Mala</i> over time	25
2. Moiety Social Relationships from a Warramiri perspective	51
3. <i>Mala</i> are linked in the moiety in two overlapping ways	52
4. Major Warramiri Totems	65

List of Illustrations

1a. The Warramiri Flag Treaty Proposal creators	3
1b. The Warramiri flag in detail	17
1c. A 1990 version of the Warramiri flag	17
1d. Key Warramiri sites	27
1e. The author and the Golumala leader Balngu at Dholtji	32
1f. Burrumarra with anthropologist R. M. Berndt	32
2a. Burrumarra holding a cycad seed grinding stone	59
2b. A <i>Lany'tjun rangga</i> associated with the travels of the <i>Milka</i>	63
2c. <i>Marryalyan</i> bridging Warramiri and Wangurri territories	70
2d. The transformation of <i>Marryalyan</i> into an octopus	70
2e. A close-up of the octopus design in the Warramiri flag	70
2f. Mayunga (Yumaynga), a small island off Cape Wilberforce	73
2g. A Yalukal/Warramiri totemic being, a crocodile with a whale's tail	73
3a. The body of the whale and its backbone	93
3b. The <i>Bayini</i> at Port Bradshaw	93
3c. A 'Macassan' prau under sail	96
3d. 'Macassan' sailing canoe	96
3e. Elcho Islanders demonstrate the techniques used by the 'Macassans'	97
3f. The products of the 'Macassan' trade	98
3g. A Ritual of celebration	99
3h. The Malay Road, between Wigram and Cotton Islands	99

3i. The abduction	101
3j. Inter-cultural conflict	101
3k. Cave paintings from the Wessel Islands	103
3l. A line drawing of <i>Birrinydji</i>	109
3m. An image of <i>Birrinydji</i>	109
4a. The site where Djuranydjura rejected the 'Macassans'	124
4b. The Dog rock at Alice Springs	130
4c. A megalith at Nangingburra representing the 'Macassan Captain'	136
4d. A cave painting from Chasm Island	136
4e. An effigy of the Mildjingi Dog <i>Gurumul</i>	140
5a. A cave painting from Booby Island in Torres Strait	151
5b. A hunting scene depicted in a cave at Chasm Island	151
5c. The remains of two dug-out canoes	151
5d. Examples of carved and painted paddles	162
5e. A sacred <i>rangga</i> emblem depicting the <i>Gulthana</i>	167
6a. Warramiri mortuary sand sculpture depicting <i>Birrinydji's</i> boat	187
6b. The talisman given to the Warramiri by a 'Macassan'	211
6c. Liwukang and other Elcho Islanders, and the Tallo priest	211
7a. <i>Walitha'walitha</i> , an 'angel of God'	218
7b. Various depictions of the <i>Wurramu</i> at Elcho Island	227
7c. A depiction of a <i>Wurramu</i> ceremony in art	231
7d. Elcho Island dancers greet visiting 'Macassans'	234
7e. Liwukang and Daeng Puppa in Macassar	234
7f. Elcho Islanders visit the grave of the trepang entrepreneur	234
7g. The Warramiri mast at the Elcho Island 'beach camp'	237
7h. An old mast and flag at Howard Island	239
8a. The Adjustment Movement 'Memorial'	250
8b. A baptism in the sea at Elcho Island in 1990	255
8c. Elcho Island men in their distinctive black and white outfits	255
8d. Elcho Island men honour the work of the missionary H. Shepherdson	255
8e. The Warramiri flag is used in community celebrations	264
8f. The presentation of a bark painting to the Governor General	264

Glossary

BABAYILI - whale or 'totem hunter'

BADU - In *yirritja* moiety mythology, it is the land of the dead to the north and north-east of Arnhem Land. (Also known as *Banda*, *Mutilnga*, *Nalkuma* etc.)

BADURRU - Milky Way

BALANDA - Non-Aboriginal, a European and/or 'Macassan'

BAMAN/BAMAN'BIRR - the distant past

BANATJA - see *Lany'tjun*

BANDIRRA - flag

BAPURRU - a 'clan' (see Chapter One)

BARRAMA - see *Lany'tjun*

BATI - the common bond between people who come together in prayer (from *Pacce*, a Macassarese word)

BAWURRAMU - *Grokman* or 'killer' in *Wurramu* mythology

BAYINI - A 'white' woman, or alternatively, the wife of *Birrinydji*, an ancestor for Warramiri peoples. This was a term coined by Prof. R.M. Berndt for early Asian traders to Australia, the so-called 'pre-Macassans'

BILMA - clapsticks

BIRRINYDJI - 'Man of iron', or 'King of the *Murrnginy*'; a creation figure associated with the *yirritja* moiety (see Chapters Three and Six)

BUKULATJPI - An historical Warramiri leader credited with 'finding' the ceremonies of *Birrinydji*

BUNGGAWA - Aboriginal and/or 'Macassan' leader or 'Captain'

BUNGGUL - An Aboriginal dance or ceremony.

DHOLTJI - Warramiri homeland

DHUKARR - road

DHURRITJINI (*Turijene*) - whale or 'totem' hunter. Also an historical Bajau population associated with the islands off Ujung Pandang in the seventeenth century (see Chapter Five)

DHUWA - The north-east Arnhem Land social and cultural world is divided into halves or moieties. One is *dhuwa* and the other *yirritja*.

DHUWAY - husband or sister's husband

DJAMULAPU - whale meat "eaters" (see Chapter Five)

DJANG'KAWU - Major creation and ancestral figure in *dhuwa* mythology (see Chapter Three)

DJULPAN (*Lambu*) - Seacraft associated with whale or 'totem hunters'

GALAY - wife or wife's brother

GALKA - sorcerer or killer

GALPARRIMUN - Ancestral figure associated with *Lany'tjun*

GARAENG - a title for an Aboriginal or 'Macassan' leader or Holy figure

GARMA - public or 'outside' knowledge or *Rom*

GARAMAT - above, in the heavens

GARRAWARRK - a creational being in the image of the hollow log (see Chapter Three)

GELURRU - whale or 'totem hunter'

GIRRI - one's possessions

GROKMAN - an evil spirit in *yirritja* mythology; associated with the *Wurramu* (see Chapter Seven)

GULTHANA - whale meat "cookers"

GUNAPIPI - sacred *dhuwa* moiety Aboriginal ceremony

GURRTHA - fire or matches

GURRUNG - nephew, one's sisters son-in-law

GURRUTU - kinship

GUTHARRA - reciprocal of term *Maari*, grandchild of the same moiety

LANY'TJUN - Major creation and ancestral figure in *yirritja* mythology. Narrative variations emphasise the relative importance of this figure, and also *Barrama*, *Ban̄atja* and *Galparrimun*

LUKI - the "Captain" of *Birrinydji's* boat, the *Yinderama* (see Chapter Six)

MAALK - kinship subsection category

MAARR - one's strength and desire

MAARI - grandmother or grandmother's brother of same moiety (see *Gutharra*)

MAARI'MU - one's father's father

MACASSAN - see *Manggatharra*

MACASSAR (Makassar) - Ujung Pandang, South Sulawesi

MADAYIN - object or idea of religious or ceremonial significance

MAKARRATA - a peace making ceremony

MALA - clan group (see Chapter Two)

MANAANGGAN - evil spirit in *yirritja* mythology, associated with the *Wurramu* and *Walitha'walitha*

MANDA - octopus

MANGGATHARRA ('Macassans') - A problematic term, but generally associated with seafarers and trepangers from Ujung Pandang in Sulawesi

MANIKAY - song

MARALKUR - uncle, mother- in-laws brother

MARDI - crayfish

MARRYALYUN - Creation figure in Warramiri mythology; a transformation of *Ngulwardo*, the 'king' of the sea

MATJURR - the small golden brown *yirritja* flying fox

MILKA - mangrove worm

MIRRINYUNGU - whale

MITJIANG (Marrthangay)- boat

MIYALK - woman

MOKUY - evil spirit

MORI - a *gurrutu* term for one's father

MOTJ - A non-specific *Wangarr* being/spiritual beliefs of the *Yolngu*

MUNANGA - a *Balanda* or European.

MURRNGINY (Murngin) - a word referring to the 'pre-Macassan' iron age of *Birrinydji*, though once used by Warner (1937) to refer to a collection of *dhuwa* and *yirritja* 'clan' groups. It now refers to the Warramiri, Gumatj, Dhalwangu, Wangurri and Gupapuyngu-Birrkili *Mala*, who share *Birrinydji* information.

MUTHALI - duck

NGAARRA - sacred ceremony for a *Mala*

NGATHI - one's maternal grandfather

NGULWARDO - Creation figure in Warramiri mythology; the 'king' of the sea; associated with the sea floor bedrock and coral reef

NYUNYUL - cuttlefish

RAAKAY - water nut found in billabongs

RANGGA - sacred objects

ROM - *Yolngu* law

RRINGITJ - a complex term relating to the relationship between *Mala* and the land

WAAWA - brother

WAKU - a man's sisters daughter

WALITHA'WALITHA - Allah, a creation figure in Warramiri mythology; associated with *Birrinydji* and *Wurramu*

WANGA - *Yolngu* homelands

WANGARR - creational period

WAARRANG (wakinngu) - dingo

WATU (Wunggan) - domesticated dog

WURRAMALA - whale or 'totem hunter'

WURRAMU - spirit of the dead in *yirritja* mythology

YIDAKI - didgeridoo

YINDI BUNGGAWA - a great leader

YIRRITJA - a moiety, see *Dhuwa*

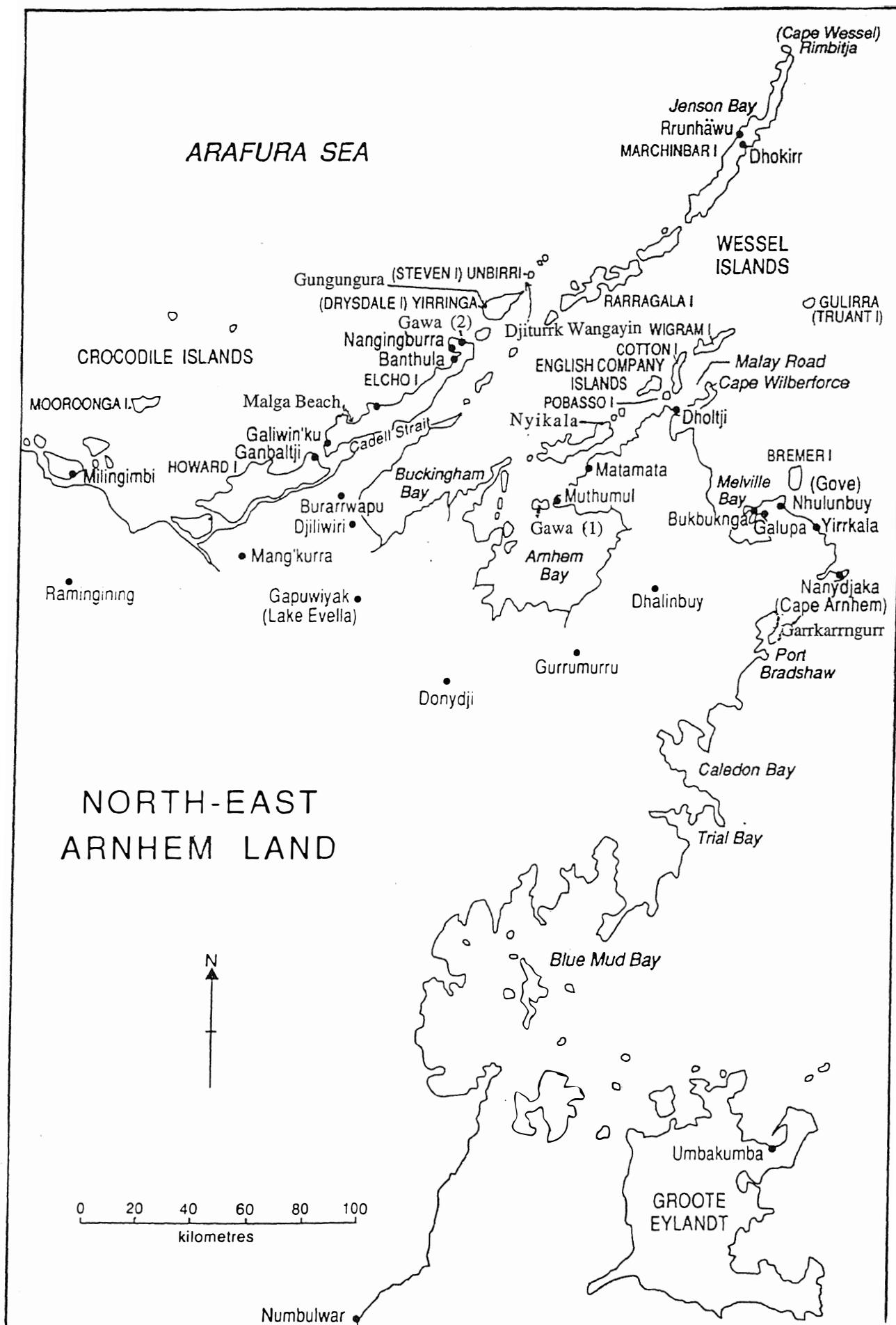
YOLNGU - an Aboriginal from north-east Arnhem Land

YOLNGU MATHA - Aboriginal languages of north-east Arnhem Land

YOTHU - child

CHAPTER ONE

Map 1. North-east Arnhem Land



1: Introduction

In 1989 David Burrumarra and his two brothers, Liwukang and Wulanybuma of the Warramiri *Mala*¹ from north-east Arnhem Land, created a large flag painting as the basis for deliberation on the need for a treaty between Aborigines and non-Aborigines in Australia. Private meetings were then held by the Warramiri with *Mala* leaders from around the region where Burrumarra revealed the design and explained its significance. Some of the images had not been openly displayed before and the Warramiri action provoked much discussion at Galiwin'ku and neighbouring communities.

In a colour leaflet distributed to Aboriginal organisations and government bodies some months later (see Burrumarra n.d., Appendix One), the Warramiri leaders made a public call for Aborigines to construct a series of new Australian flags incorporating sacred symbols which would unite 'black' and 'white' people under the laws of the land and sea (see illustrations 1a; 1b; 1c), as in the Warramiri painting. The idea was that in the future Australia would have not one but many national flags, each containing Aboriginal symbols relevant to the area in which it was flying, depending on what it meant to the inhabitants. For instance if one was in Sydney, the flag might incorporate images of the possum, rainbow serpent and dolphin or other designs, reflecting the law or *Rom* in that area.² The common thing with all the Australian flags would be that the 'sacred' symbol of Great Britain, the Union Jack, would appear in the upper left hand corner, as in the current Australian flag. The uniting of the symbols in a common design would be symbolic of a wider coming together, Burrumarra suggested. Respective histories would be united, and people could share in the riches of the land and sea as equals.

¹ For the Warramiri, the words *Mala* and clan are to a degree interchangeable. As I detail later and in Chapter Two, in the literature, the expression clan is somewhat ambiguous. It may refer to either a discrete patrilineal lineage or any number of lineages. Following Warramiri usage, in this thesis I use the expression *Mala* throughout.

²*Rom* is a multi-purpose term that roughly translates as law in north-east Arnhem Land. In central Arnhem Land, it is also the name of a ceremony which has as a central aim, to build alliances between peoples. *Ngurru nanggal Rom* is described by Burrumarra as those laws deemed to be of greatest significance. In his opinion, for the Warramiri, *Ngurru nanggal Rom* is associated with *Birinydji*, *Ngulwardo* ('the king of the sea'), the whale and the octopus (see later in this Chapter and Chapter Two).

The Warramiri treaty painting was later donated to the University of New South Wales on the understanding that it would be on permanent display. For the university, it was one painting amongst many Warramiri barks and all were considered unique in that they depicted aspects of *Rom* not previously recorded in the anthropological literature (see Cawte 1993). From Burrumarra's perspective, however, it was hoped that non-Aboriginal intellectuals would be encouraged to learn what the land and sea meant to Aborigines by studying the Warramiri designs and their significance. In this way, he believed, they would come to an understanding of the need for a treaty between Aborigines and non-Aborigines.

While perhaps overly idealistic and impractical, it is the deeper meaning of this action for the Warramiri, and the processes which brought it about, that is a focus of the thesis. For instance, in a press release dated 15 December 1989, Burrumarra said,

"Aborigines own the continent of Australia. This has, and always will be. Some two hundred years ago strangers declared war on the Aboriginal owners and the strangers won, but the land did not recognise it."

"These newcomers came from a place far away yet now their descendants call themselves the owners of the land. This is wrong!" The newcomers have no right to say this. They are still strangers to the land and they have always behaved as strangers to the Aborigines. The newcomers do not honour the land and do not belong to it."

"The planting of the Union Jack in...Sydney...by Cook [marks] the start of a war against the Aboriginal people, and the present Australian flag is a symbol of this... We cannot forget this. The Union Jack is a memorial to those who died in defence of their land..."

"In World War Two Australian Armed Forces died in defence of the land of Australia, just as Aborigines had done throughout the history of contact with the newcomers. It is my belief that we should now both belong to the land."

"Yet Aborigines and the newcomers are still strangers to each other. I am a stranger to 'white' law and the land has always seen 'Europeans' ...as outsiders. But the war between 'black' and 'white' is nearly over. We are just about in a position to use both of our eyes to look at each other. In the past, it has always been with one eye - looking at each other sideways with much suspicion. Why can't we live together on equal terms?"

"The Federal Government is always saying, 'we will give you land rights or sea rights.' I can't understand this talk. We remain the owners of the land and the sea...We have never

relinquished the traditional ties we have with the land, but are now prepared to make concessions so we can both live together with pride in this wonderful country..."

"The Federal Government has talked about a treaty or compact without any real commitment...I feel... that to recognise each and every aspect of the country by the laws by which it exists is much more than a treaty between people. It is a show of respect to the land. [The Warramiri Treaty proposal] is a step towards a time when 'white' and 'black' can all live with pride in their community and their country."

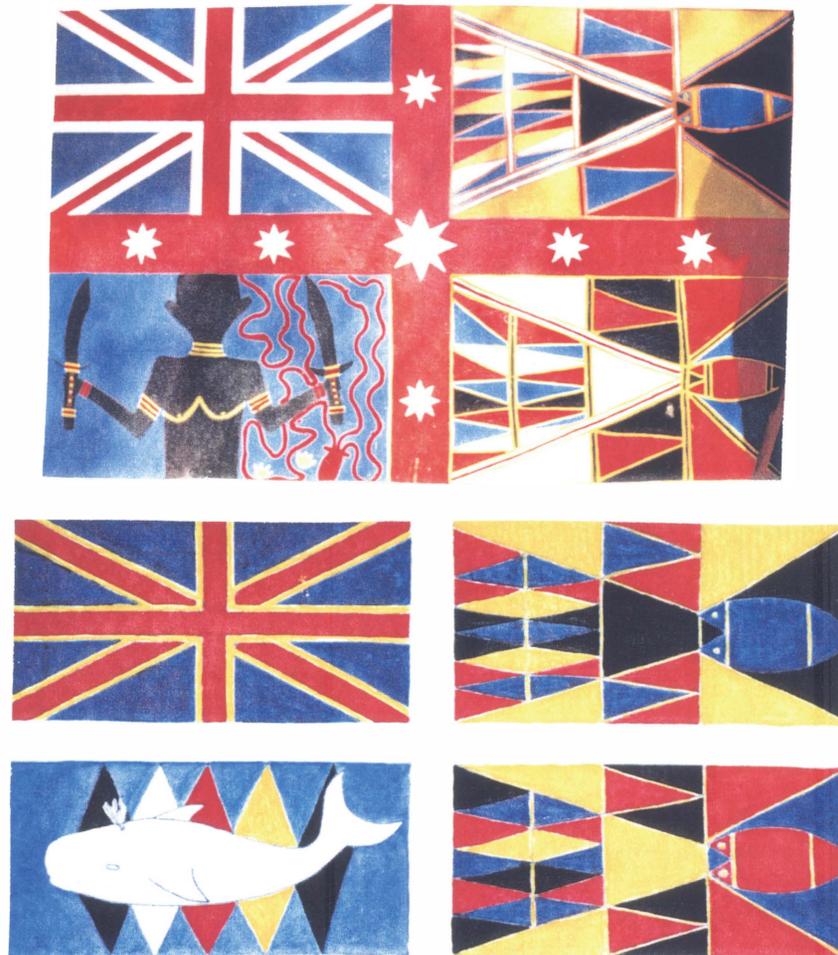
In the Warramiri plan, flags as shown in illustrations 1b and 1c would fly only in Warramiri territories in north-east Arnhem Land, but they would be recognised Australia-wide, as a 'starter', Burrumarra said. Like a myth variation on a theme, they would be the versions from which all other flags would evolve. In Burrumarra's eyes, their flag was to be the 'big one'. Thus in a united Australia, the position of the Warramiri would presumably be paramount. Yet, the Treaty proposal was not really a case of one group attempting to elevate its status over and above others. The Warramiri proposal had as its central aim, a desire to re-order the way Aborigines and non-Aborigines related to one another, and it was seen as the logical outcome of a particular way of viewing the history of contacts with the 'Other'.³ Fundamental to this view was Warramiri 'ownership' of a body of *Rom* associated with the ancestral being *Birrinydji*,⁴ depicted and revealed to the public for the first time in the treaty proposal. It is the opinion of the author that this body of *Rom* is a legacy of contact with 'Macassans'.⁵

³The constitution of the 'Other' by anthropologists and indigenous peoples is a major issue in contemporary anthropology (see Fabian 1983). The 'Other' in this instance encompasses all those peoples not considered by Aborigines to be land owners, or recognised members of Aboriginal society. As I detail later, this thesis looks at both the representation by academics of Aboriginal views of the past, and the representation of Aboriginal representations of the 'Other' in myth and oral history.

⁴There are very few references to *Birrinydji* in the literature. As I detail in Chapters Three and Six, it is a *Yolngu* law associated with cross-cultural contacts with both Indonesian fishing people and Europeans (see also Cawte 1993).

⁵ By 'Macassan', I am referring to those peoples who were engaged in the trepang industry on the northern Australian coast and who were associated with the port of Macassar (Ujung Pandang), and who are referred to by *Yolngu* as such, i.e. *Manggatharra*. It needs to be noted however that such a definition overlooks the fact that the crews included peoples from as far afield as Tanimbar, Timor and Irian (Macknight 1976:17-18). For this reason, throughout this thesis the expression 'Macassan' is in inverted commas. I use the term as the Warramiri leaders do, i.e. as the third 'wave' of external

Illustration 1b. The Warramiri Flag in detail, showing their strong 'sea' connections through 'ownership' of the *Ngulwardo* narrative. The upper left panel contains a representation of the Union Jack, but significantly, there are strong similarities between this sacred symbol of Great Britain and Warramiri whale designs (see Cawte 1993). The lower left panel contains the image of the creational being *Birrinydji*, with his jewel encrusted knives. He is wearing a gold necklace and arm bangles. On the right hand side of this figure is the Warramiri totem *Nyunyul*, the cuttlefish. Its tentacles connect to *Birrinydji's* head. The footprints of a Warramiri Dog are also portrayed. Both right hand panels show representations of the Warramiri totem *Manda*, the octopus. A surface similarity to the Union Jack is also noticeable. The central cross is based on the Eureka flag, and was the idea of a non-Aboriginal public servant based at Elcho Island in 1988.



Dholtji-Warramirri AUSTRALIA

Illustration 1c. A 1990 version of the Warramiri flag. The whale emblem has replaced *Birrinydji*.

influence. As I show in Chapter Six, also, reference to 'Macassan' loan words in *Yolngu Matha* is similarly problematic.

Through it, the Warramiri leaders believed they had a mandate for mediation with non-Aborigines.

So with the Warramiri treaty proposal as the organisational framework, the broader topic of this study is the way in which the 'memory' of contact with 'Macassans', who visited the Arnhem Land coast from at least 1720 to 1907 (see Macknight 1976 and Chapter Three), is relevant in the on-going struggle by *Yolngu* for the recognition of their rights in relation to *Balanda* (non-Aborigines). Thus I look at how the Warramiri leaders have also been involved in a call for the recognition of sea rights in the Arafura Sea (Chapter Five); in landmark Christian movements such as the Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land in which there was a desire to build relationships of mutual respect and understanding between Aborigines and non-Aborigines (Chapter Eight), and in efforts to re-establish contacts with 'Macassans' through a celebration of their shared history (Chapter Seven). In all these cases, the law of *Birrinydji* has been evoked, and the desire has been to try to create a living environment for *Yolngu* in which there is respect for things Aboriginal and co-operation in the management of land and sea resources.

1.1 A Perspective on the Need to Change the Flag

In Australia over the past ten years, there has been a major push to change the national flag in line with a desire to see Australia become a republic by the year 2001, the centenary of Australia's Federation. The Warramiri proposal is not directly linked to this, however. In a press release in 1979, Burrumarra said,

"There are those who respect Aboriginal people and their law, who want to see the Aboriginal people be trained and take their place in the running and government of the country. On the other hand there are those who have no respect for Aboriginal ways. Such a division is within each of the main political parties in Australia."

"The Whitlam era saw a raising of the Aboriginal people to a level previously unknown. There was an expectation that the Aboriginal people would achieve a status that existed in pre-white days, when [we] were masters of [our] own destiny. Since [the Whitlam years] the status of the Aboriginal people has gone down. Certainly the money is still forthcoming, but it is giving without listening. There is no sense of partnership, no real respect for the Aboriginal law and feelings...We believe that all things dealing with mining, fishing, forestry or other occupations, which effect the Aboriginal people, should be

discussed between *Balanda* and *Yolngu*. This is the proper way to do things for Australia..."

"We Aborigines call ourselves citizens of Australia since assimilation in 1962⁶ when we signed ourselves into the book of Australia. Yet we are not fully connected with the important things. Our standard should be in Parliament House where the law is made; in the law courts where it is carried out, and in the hospitals where the miracles of healing are done. In all these places we should be equal." (McIntosh 1994b:115).

In his biography (McIntosh 1994b), Burrumarra spoke of the Treaty proposal as being the culmination of the Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land, in which there had been a reconciliation of Christian and *Yolngu* ideas in the form of a monument or 'memorial' (see Chapter Eight). One sacred *yirritja* moiety post (*rangga* or *maḍayin*) amongst many others in the 'memorial' incorporated a Christian cross as a symbol of the fact that various leaders were now following two laws, ie. traditional Aboriginal law and the Bible (McIntosh 1994b:115). In the same way, the Warramiri Flag Treaty idea was about such a merging of laws according to Burrumarra, in ways which were consistent with the past. He said,

"We should have done this in 1957 during the Adjustment Movement. It was never really finished. Now it's time to finish what we started. In 1957 we brought out the honourable *maḍayin* of the *Yolngu* people. Now it is time to bring out the honourable *maḍayin* of the *Balanda*, the *bandirra* (flag)," (McIntosh 1994b:115).

Burrumarra's other public statements on the treaty, or of the relevance of *Birrinydji* in the reconciliation process, were equally cryptic. Apart from the distribution of the colour brochure and several other press releases, information has been limited, and the reason for this is that we are dealing with subject matter of significance at a number of levels. For *Yolngu*, flags are *rangga* (sacred objects) and they are a legacy of the creational being *Birrinydji*. Apart from this, both Warramiri Treaty flags were decorated with totemic emblems relevant to Warramiri history and contained references to what Burrumarra suggested were three 'waves' of historical experience from before the time of the coming of Japanese and Europeans at the beginning of the century. In a selective reading by Burrumarra of this past, these stories (which are all interpreted in relation

⁶Aborigines in the Northern Territory received the vote in 1962.

to the mythology of *Birrinydji*) point to the current need for a re-evaluation of the relationship between Aborigines and non-Aborigines.

Central to Burrumarra's interpretation of *Birrinydji* law is the idea that at the 'beginning of time', Warramiri *Yolngu* possessed the wealth of the 'Other' (both 'Macassans' and Europeans), but through misadventure, this was lost. In illustration 1b, for example, the ancestral being *Birrinydji* is shown as the foundation of the Union Jack. This was done deliberately. The Union Jack is 'all the same' as *Birrinydji's* flag, Burrumarra said. It represents the same idea, but with one major difference. *Birrinydji* is for the *Yolngu*. The Union Jack symbolises the taking of the land and ignoring Aboriginal rights. There is a desire however, to 'bring the Union Jack on side'. *Birrinydji's* flag is associated with the concept of honouring partnerships, whereas the Union Jack is not, but should be, Burrumarra said.⁷

In this thesis it is Burrumarra's interpretations of the past that I am particularly interested in, and how he is able to reconcile cosmology and past and present experience in the Treaty proposal and in related projects. The present day living conditions of Aborigines in Arnhem Land and the complex nature of relationships with non-Aborigines, warranted a change in the status of *Birrinydji*. Burrumarra saw a need for new laws that would confirm the respective rights of Aborigines and non-Aborigines. He said,

"Today, people live as one group. 'Black' can marry 'white' and vice versa. This is part of the lesson of the Treaty. We are different today than before. We live by a new law. Our histories have merged. The law of the past was *Bayini* ['pre-Macassans'] for *Bayini* and *Yolngu* for *Yolngu*. This is *Birrinydji's* law. We do not mix. Outsiders tried to steal the women and steal the land. We would lose everything. But we can share the future if there is equality...We ask Bill Hayden, Can we be equal in your eyes?"

"*Birrinydji* in the past dictated that we must honour him and follow his law. In the new world we seek equality of a different sort than before. Equality in the new world where we live together not apart. This is why [our homeland] is still important in today's world, just as before."

⁷Interestingly however, the Warramiri cultural repertoire includes a design which bears a close resemblance to the Union Jack, but it represents the whale and its spout, which is sacred to the Warramiri (Cawte 1993:83). This type of double meaning, i.e. where a symbol makes reference to both an external dominating power but is also a sacred local Dreaming, features in many Warramiri narratives about non-Aborigines (see also Rasnake 1988).

The Warramiri leaders are seeking to plot a course forward for all *Yolngu*, to direct their thoughts and actions along specific paths, and their mandate is seen to come from their cultural heritage.

1.2 The Study Area

North-east Arnhem Land is an area which has seen extensive contacts with non-Aborigines over many centuries. In Chapter Three I look at the history of the documentation of this past from both an Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal viewpoints. In Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven, I detail Warramiri views on the various aspects of their history as they are seen to relate to the contemporary social and political environment.

In terms of colonisation, owing to the remoteness of the north-east Arnhem Land region, the *Yolngu* were spared the worst aspects of European contact. The unsuitability of the land for cattle, local resistance to this industry, and also the establishment of the Arnhem Land Reserve in the late 1920s, saw Aborigines living in relative isolation prior to the Second World War. Only missionaries, whose activities were concentrated in the coastal settlements of Milingimbi (established in 1923), Yirrkala (1935) and Galiwin'ku, Elcho Island (1942), Japanese pearl-ers, European beachcombers and anthropologists, were in regular contact with indigenous populations.

While the impact of Christian missions has been profound, Keen (1994:26-27) says that the policies followed in the north-east Arnhem Land region were in strong contrast to those in other areas of Australia. The dormitory system was not employed, nor were Aboriginal ceremonies banned or people forced to speak English. As I suggest (McIntosh 1994b), the movement of people into missions such as Milingimbi and Galiwin'ku was voluntary. In 1974, the Methodist Church withdrew from direct involvement and control of the missions in north-east Arnhem Land, and the *Yolngu* have since that time, taken over the administration of settlement affairs.

Keen (1994:28) says that Elcho Island, the area in which this study was conducted, was distinguished from its inception as a centre for Aboriginal Christianity, and there has always been a close relation between local systems of authority and the Church. The local adoption of Christianity seems to have gone hand in hand with a desire by Aborigines to be united with non-Aborigines under a set of laws having their foundation in the

Aboriginal past. In the Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land in 1957, for instance, there had been a 'changing of Genesis' to allow a place for such new beliefs in the Aboriginal world view (Berndt 1962:40; see Chapter Eight).

While only one of the three senior men involved in the Treaty proposal identified himself as a Christian, all agreed that the relationship between Christianity and 'traditional' beliefs and practices, was something they were still working through. While in the Adjustment Movement there was an expectation on the part of the Warramiri leaders that *Balanda* and *Yolngu* would share equally in the wealth of the land, there was no flow on in terms of material benefits by following Church 'law', and abuses of Aboriginal land and sea continued by miners and fishermen.⁸ For instance in the early 1960s, Aboriginal rights to determine what would happen in their country were denied with the establishment of the bauxite mine and the associated township of Gove (Nhulunbuy). Aboriginal protests brought on the historic court case 'Milirrpum and Others versus Nabalco and the Commonwealth of Australia', which Burrumarra attended and gave evidence in. This led eventually to the proclamation of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act (Northern Territory) 1976, which gave Aborigines the right to claim title to unalienated land to which they were historically associated, and also to veto the activities of mining companies.

The Warramiri Treaty Proposal and the related social actions discussed in this thesis need to be seen in this context. In all cases, the stated aim of the Warramiri has been to re-define relationships with the 'Other' in more equitable ways. There is a desire to unite with the 'Other', but only if Aboriginal rights are recognised and respected.

1.3 The Study Group

In the analysis of those mythologies relating to the 'Other' that have been drawn upon by the treaty proposal instigators, I will be focussing entirely on the *yirritja* moiety or half of *Yolngu* society. It is within this collective that the narratives of *Birrinydji* are located (see Chapters Three and Six). Further, I will be focussing on a smaller collection of *Mala* referred to by Warner (1958) as the *Murngin* (*Murrnginy*). While Warner used this as a label for both *dhuwa* and *yirritja* peoples of the region in the 1920s, the

⁸As Lattas (1992b) suggests, the situation is dynamic, and the desire is to discover what empowers the 'Other' in order to alleviate inequality (see Chapter Six).

term, in current usage, has a range of significations and is of importance only for the *yirritja* half of *Yolngu* society. Warner (1958:15) defined it as meaning 'fire sparks'. For the Warramiri leaders however, it refers to the 'iron age' of *Birrinydji* and the modern world, but also to a *yirritja* moiety 'Mala aggregate' that share certain *Garma* or 'public' totems linked to *Birrinydji*, ie. bamboo, the canoe's mast (*Marrayarr* or flag pole) and the grave post or *Wurramu* (Warner 1958:41). The five *Mala*⁹ currently involved are the Warramiri, Wangurri, Gumatj, Dhalwangu and Gupapuyngu-Birrkili. According to Burrumarra they jointly possess knowledge, as well as sites, *rangga* and ceremonies for *Birrinydji*.

For Burrumarra, Liwukang and Wulanybuma, the primary focus of *Birrinydji's* creational actions was in Warramiri territory at Dholtji, on Cape Wilberforce, and it is Warramiri informants alone who have utilised aspects of this law in negotiations for a treaty and in the call for sea rights. My source material is almost exclusively from them, and to a lesser degree, from closely related Wangurri and Gumatj informants.

The Dhalwangu *Mala* is the only other group associated with the 'inside' law for *Birrinydji*, and in the Warramiri view, they are second in the hierarchy of knowledge (see Chapter Six). The priority of the Warramiri is said to be due to historical and social factors, but this is a view that requires clarification. Dhalwangu leaders were not prepared to speak about Burrumarra's interpretation of the laws of *Birrinydji*.

1.3-1 *Mala* Identity

The *Mala* or clan focus in the literature reflects the way in which the *Yolngu* think about and act in the world (Morphy 1988b:265), but as Keen (1994:63) says, the nature of what might be termed a clan is a highly ambiguous. This *Yolngu* collective, he says, has been variously represented as a 'linguistic group', a 'phratry', 'clan-set', 'song-set', 'totemic-union or exogamous patrilineal descent group (Keen 1994:63). It gives an impression of distinct bands of people spread evenly over the landscape, but this is not the case. As Keen (1994:63) adds, north-east Arnhem Land social interaction entails a "...structure of overlapping, interlocking, and open social networks rather than a segmentary structure of clearly defined groups." Rather than

⁹It was six until the last member of the Lamamirri *Mala*, Gumuk, died at Elcho Island in 1995.

being constituted by enclosure within boundaries, there is a tendency at Elcho Island to describe *Mala* groups in terms of key sites, for instance as shown in Map 2 (see also illustrations 1d and 1e).

YoIngu use the expression 'Warramiri' as a means of referring to a collection of *Mala* (eg. the Budalpudal and Mandjikay) sharing certain bodies of *Rom* associated with *Ngulwardo*, the 'king of the sea' and *Birrinydji* (Burrumarra, pers. comm. 1992, Chapter Two), but boundaries are not clear. The word 'Warramiri' means 'high red cloud' (Cawte 1993:106), yet the Gumatj-Rayung *Mala* is also linked to the Warramiri through the 'high red cloud', but they have more connections with other Gumatj groups, and may thus identify themselves either with or separately from the Warramiri in certain contexts. Identity therefore is something that is constructed for specific purposes and is a matter of agreement by all concerned, rather than something unambiguous or 'fixed'.

The term 'Warramiri' also refers to what Berndt (1976:135) referred to as a *Matha* (*Mada*) or language, which certain *Mala* groups share. Yet, senior members of the Gupapuyngu-Birrkili who are associated with the Nangingburra and Matamata homelands, also speak the Warramiri *Matha*, and have done so as long as anyone can remember. Today, most Warramiri, particularly the young, speak the lingua franca Djambarrpuyngu, a *dhuwa* moiety language. The point is that in saying one is Warramiri, one is referring to membership of a *Mala* associated with particular laws based on the sea and *Birrinydji*, and that one is linked to specific tracts of land and has access to a language historically used in those areas. As Keen (1994:72) adds, *Mala* identity refers to common rights in song, designs, and ceremonies, and a group-pattern. *Mala* members claim rights of access to knowledge in such matters and elders carefully control its access and distribution.¹⁰

1.3-2 Warramiri *Mala*

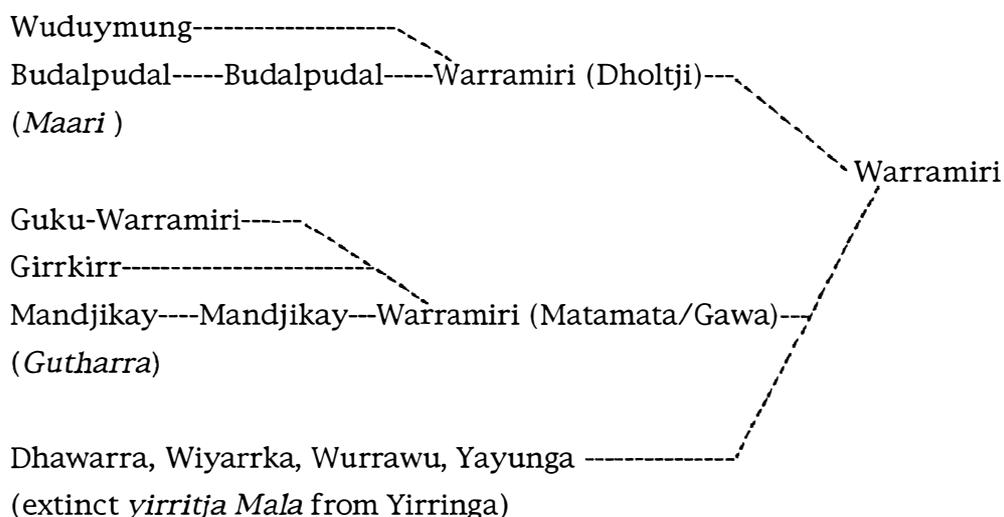
There are two branches in the broader Warramiri *Mala*. There is the Warramiri-Budalpudal, whose homeland is Dholtji, and the Warramiri-Mandjikay, who are linked to Matamata and Gawa. Each of these groups is

¹⁰Due to the fluid nature of *Mala* identity, I prefer the term custodian rather than 'owner' of law, or use it in inverted commas for this reason. Of course, such a view is at odds with the way some informants make reference to an 'unchanging cosmos' and that these laws have always been 'in the land' (Bos 1988; Rudder 1993).

allied to different *yirritja* moiety *Mala* in varying ways. The Warramiri-Budalpudal has strong associations with the Gumatj and Golpa *Mala*, whereas the Warramiri-Mandjikay is associated more with the Wangurri and Gupapuyngu-Birrkili *Mala*. Members of both Warramiri branches refer to themselves simply as Warramiri, however, in relation to other collectives. This sense of unity is strengthened by the fact that a majority of members have the surname Bukulatjpi, which was the name of an historical Warramiri leader (see Chapter Six).

In the living memory of the senior informants, there used to be other Warramiri *Mala*. According to Burrumarra, there was the Wuduymung, who were based at Dholtji; the Guku-Warramiri of Gawa₁ (Mallison Island) at the entrance to Arnhem Bay; and the Girrkirr (Rika) group, whose homeland was at Gawa₂. Other groups are also known to have preceded these, and there are references to such populations in Warramiri personal names (see Table 1). The Wuduymung and Budalpudal groups were related to the Mandjikay, Guku-Warramiri and Girrkirr groups as *Maari* to *Gutharra*.¹¹ Today, as stated, there is only considered to be one Warramiri *Mala*, but within it, personal relationships are distinguished along the *Maari-Gutharra* line, and each branch maintains separate homeland centres.

Table 1 The alignment of the branches of the Warramiri *Mala* over time.



¹¹Maternal grandmother or grandmother's brother of the same moiety. This is a very special relationship and I look at its significance in Chapter Two.

Map 2. Warramiri lands in north-east Arnhem Land.

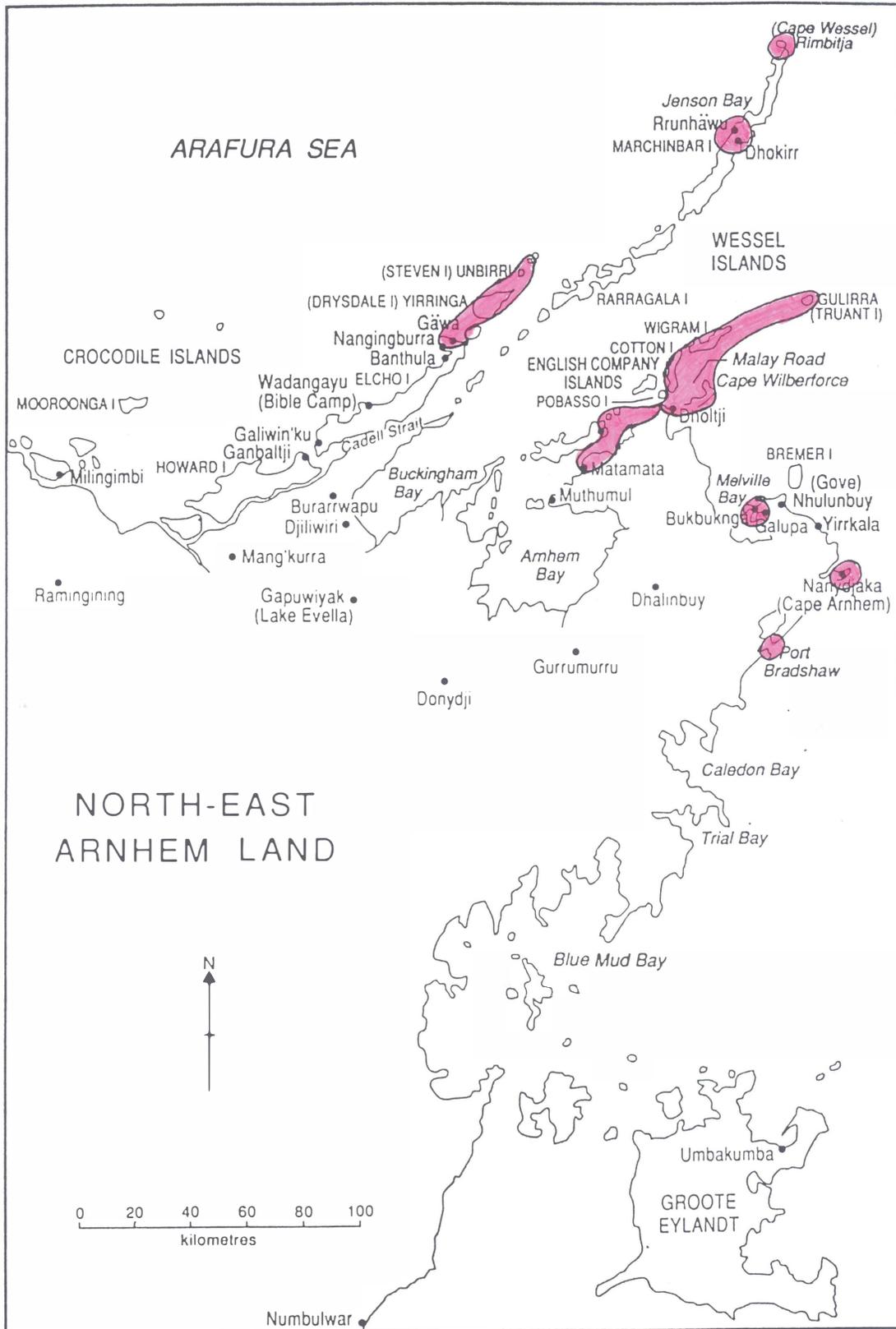
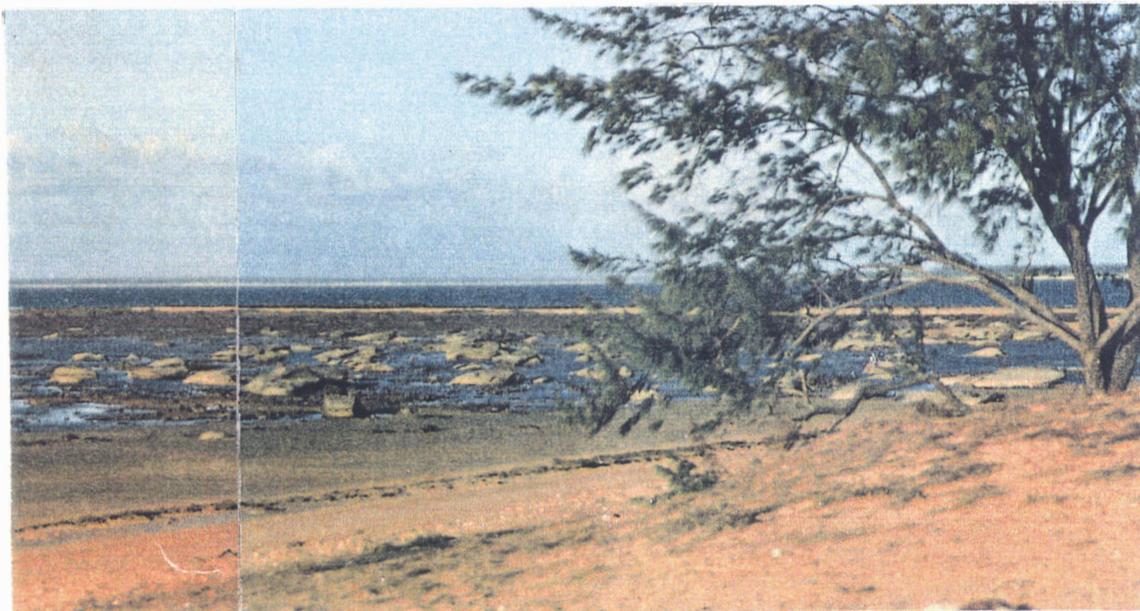


Illustration 1d. Key Warramiri sites, from the top, Cape Wilberforce, Nyikala, and Gawa.



Because of a serious decline in Warramiri populations at the start of the century,¹² children were assigned to the lands of deceased *Mala*, including those of other closely related *Mala* groups (eg. Wurambil-Golpa) in order to maintain the diversity of Warramiri land ownership. Thus Burrumarra, a member of the Warramiri-Budalpuḍal *Mala*, is linked to Dholtji and the English Company Islands by birth, but is also associated with Yirringa and the Wessel Islands (see Chapter Two). His younger brother Liwukang is responsible for Dholtji and also Gawa₁, even though the Wangurri look after this latter area now. A further brother, Dhokong, took control of Nangingburra, Yirringa and Unbirri, to the north of Elcho Island. Wulanybuma, also of the Budalpuḍal *Mala*, has established an outstation at Nyikala on Inglis Island, and has the option to occupy Rrangganiana on Cape Wilberforce. Ngulpurray, from the Warramiri-Mandjikay *Mala* associated with Matamata, assumed control of Gawa₂¹³ on Elcho Island in the 1950s, which his sons and daughters now manage. Parts of Port Bradshaw, Cape Arnhem and Melville Bay are also considered to be Warramiri lands, once being shared with the Lamamirri, but are now managed by the Gumatj *Mala*.

All Warramiri members claim joint ancestry because of shared beliefs in certain totemic species and ancestral laws associated with the sea, and the possession of *rangga* linked to these and particular lands confirms this. In Chapter Two I look at the major bodies of totemic law which unite and distinguish the Warramiri from other *yirritja* moiety *Mala*.¹⁴

1.3-3 Current Situation

In terms of population, about 300 out of a total *Yolngu* population of around 5,000 identify themselves as Warramiri. This represents a substantial increase from pre-mission days, where Warner (1958), traversing the area in the late 1920s, suggested that average *Mala* numbers were around fifty, though fluctuating constantly as a result of warfare.

¹²Warner (1969:17) says how in the 1920s, Warramiri numbers were down to forty. The preceding generation had suffered a severe loss through a disastrous fight with the Wangurri over promised wives.

¹³The denomination ₁ or ₂ after a place name reflects the fact that certain laws in one area are replicated in the other.

¹⁴As mentioned earlier, the Warramiri sea focus is a result of their custodianship of laws relating to the ancestral being *Ngulwardo*, colloquially referred to as the 'king of the sea' (see Chapter Two), and also to *Birrinydji*.

The Warramiri live predominantly at Galiwin'ku, Elcho Island, and to a lesser extent, at the other coastal communities of Milingimbi and Yirrkala, and at outstations at the northern end of Elcho Island, at Ban'thula, Nangingburra, Gawa₂, and at Yirringa (Drysdale Island). Dholtji and the English Company Islands, major centres in Warramiri law, are uninhabited and visited infrequently, although discussions are on-going about a desire to make Dholtji a large settlement with 'many fine houses', as the *Birrinydji* narratives suggest was once the case. The outstation of Matamata is occupied by members of the Gumatj-Burarrwanga *Mala* (see Chapter Two). Mallison Island (Gawa₁ or Dharring), at the entrance of Arnhem Bay, has been unoccupied for most of this century and the Wangurri *Mala* look after this area.

The actual spread of *Yolngu* peoples over the landscape is reflected in miniature at the settlement at Galiwin'ku on Elcho Island. Here there are broadly designated *Mala* areas which reflect the geographical distribution of collectives in the wider landscape (see Rudder 1993:227). Warramiri men and women however live not only at the 'beach' camp but also with groups into which the *Mala* has traditionally married ie. the *dhuwa* moiety Galpu and Liagawumirr *Mala*. Warramiri also occupy some of the Government Department housing which is not related to any specific *Mala* territories.

In terms of employment, Warramiri are to be found working in the local school, health centre, workshop, and resource centre. Terry Yumbulul, Burrumarra's son, was recently employed as the Galiwin'ku Town Clerk. A majority of Warramiri however are either in receipt of a Government pension or are involved in a 'work for the dole' scheme called the 'Community Development Employment Program' (C.D.E.P.).

Most Warramiri men and women at Galiwin'ku identify themselves as Christian, and the relationship between presently popular fundamentalist beliefs and 'traditional' Warramiri totemic and ancestral beliefs is the subject of continuous debate, as mentioned earlier. Very little has been published on the *Wangarr* (Dreaming) of the Warramiri apart from a recent study by Cawte (1993) which focussed on the interpretation of various bark paintings. Even then, there was considerable discussion about what would and would not be included (Cawte 1993:110).

The Warramiri language, from the Pama-Nyungan group, is not widely spoken, and unlike many of the other *Yolngu* languages, has not been the subject of detailed linguistic studies. As Burrumarra said, it was being 'sent to the ground'. Apart from senior men and women, who are themselves multi-lingual, most younger Warramiri speak Djambarrpuyngu, which is a lingua franca at Elcho Island, and which is taught in the local school's bilingual program. Since 1992 however, a dialect program commenced and twice a week, Warramiri school children have the opportunity to hear, speak and write in their own Warramiri language, and this is seen as vital in maintaining cultural traditions.

1.3-4 The Treaty Proposal Instigator

The primary informant for this thesis has been David Burrumarra. In his lifetime, he was a chief informant of many anthropologists and historians, including C.P. Mountford, D. Thomson, R.M. and C.H. Berndt, and also J. Money, J. Mulvaney and C.C. Macknight (see illustration 1f). An influential man with a very strong personality, Burrumarra often sparked debate in north-east Arnhem Land on the relationship of *Balanda* to *Yolngu* and in a previous work (McIntosh, 1992), I described him as a myth maker. He is the eccentric and charismatic figure so often associated with periods of rapid change characterised as 'cargo cults'.

Wherever I have travelled throughout north-east Arnhem Land, and inquired about the relevance of the 'Macassan' past in the present, or about *Birrinydji* or *Bayini*,¹⁵ everyone, without exception deferred to the Warramiri leader. They said "You will have to talk to Burrumarra." This was the case with leaders of all groups from both moieties. I inquired of Buthimang and Dayngumbu of the Wangurri *Mala*; Gumatj-Burarrwanga leaders Mattjuwi and Wulki and Gupapuyngu-Birrkili leaders Djupandawuy and Galangalawuy. All referred me to Burrumarra. He had a better grasp of English than the other old men, but this was not the only determining factor. At Elcho Island it appears well established that the Warramiri are the principal custodians of the laws of *Birrinydji*. Up until the late 1980s they had a policy of strict secrecy and no-one would speak openly on the subject. The first public reference to the term *Birrinydji* was in a press release by

¹⁵Also known in the literature as 'pre-Macassans', they are associated with *Birrinydji*. It is unclear if the narratives relate to an actual historical population or whether they are a mythological creation of the *Yolngu* following contact with 'Macassans' (see Chapters Two and Six).

Burrumarra in 1979, where he linked it with two other *yirritja* creational figures, *Marryalyan* and *Lany'tjun*, in a call for the recognition of Aboriginal equality (see Burrumarra 1980:11).

Burrumarra died on October 13 1994, at the age of 77. In an obituary in *The Australian* (21 October 1994), his lifelong work towards reconciliation was emphasised. His first major achievement in this area was in 1957, when he gained international exposure for his involvement in what has come to be known as the Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land. Briefly, this involved the public showing of previously secret/sacred objects or *rangga*, as a sign that Aborigines were prepared to live together with non-Aborigines, but on their own terms (see Chapter Eight). Burrumarra was looking for respect and recognition for Aboriginal rights within a framework of national unity, and was pushing reconciliation at a time when the Australian Government was advocating a policy of assimilation. Regarded by eastern Arnhem Landers as the 'father' of sea rights,¹⁶ Burrumarra envisaged a time when there would be a partnership between Aborigines and non-Aborigines in the management of sea resources, just as there is negotiation for the utilisation of Aboriginal land by non-Aborigines.

In 1978 Burrumarra was awarded an M.B.E. for his services to the Aboriginal community, and in the 1980s there were other national awards from the medical profession, and he came to see himself as a spokesperson for Aborigines generally (see McIntosh 1994b). One might suggest that he was predisposed towards reconciliation, but as I show in this thesis, his motivation was far more complex.

In many ways, Burrumarra represented a special case. He referred to himself as Australia's first Aboriginal anthropologist (McIntosh 1994b). Burrumarra did not see a problem in supporting non-Aboriginal interests against those of Aborigines if the actions of the latter were not in the interests of reconciliation. In 1988 for example, at the opening of the new Parliament House in Canberra, there was an Aboriginal demonstration. In a letter to the media at the time, Burrumarra criticised the protesters for lacking an historical perspective (*NT News*, 1995, February 21:26), and said that people must work together and respect each other's beliefs and laws.

¹⁶In Chapter Five, I look at Burrumarra's role in the present call for recognition of *Yolngu* rights in the Arafura Sea.

Illustration 1e. The author and the Golumala leader Balngu at Dholtji, 1990.



Illustration 1f. Burrumarra (far right) with Prof. R.M. Berndt in the 1960s.



Burrumarra was also a critic of those calling for separate development for Aborigines, but this did not mean that he would follow Government policy in other instances, and this was evident in his views on the national flag. According to Burrumarra, the current Australian flag did not represent Aborigines, their history or their place in contemporary society. Rather, it represented the authority of the King or Queen of England, and was a symbol of oppression.¹⁷

For the purpose of 'selling the treaty idea' to a wider audience, Burrumarra claimed the right to make Warramiri information available for public release. In his biography he went so far as to say that this 'information' was his 'backbone' and he stressed that as the oldest member of the Warramiri *Mala*, he alone had the authority to tell, amend or extend narratives pertaining to what he saw as the Warramiri legacy. At one meeting he is reputed to have said, "This is the law as I have changed it," (P. Cook pers. comm. 1995). Such a stance sets up an immediate dialogue with recent research on *Yolngu* cosmology which posits a view of changelessness in change as being a central tenet of the *Yolngu* mytho-religious system, and I discuss this in the next section.

1.4 Change in the *Yolngu* World

Social discourse entails continual variation and transformation in knowledge, and as Keen (1994:3) says, *Yolngu* beliefs have been in a state of continual flux since long before European and Chinese colonisation of the north of Australia. Yet, widely reported in the anthropological literature is the view that change in the *Yolngu* world is always couched in terms of an unchanging cosmos. For instance Rudder (1993:340) says that older *Yolngu* men say that the law (*Rom*) does not change like 'white' man's law, but stays the same. As Bos (1988b) says, *Yolngu* confess there to have been no change in Aboriginal religion since the beginning of time. He says:

“That which is new and true is simply a revelation of what has always been.”

“The Dreaming is expressed in symbolic thought; in symbols which are multivocal and open-ended, and therefore open to

¹⁷As we will see in later and in Chapter Seven, for *Yolngu*, flags have a wealth of meaning generally at odds with the ways in which they are viewed by non-Aboriginal Australians. They are linked to contact with 'early' and 'pre-Macassans', and are symbolic of partnerships between peoples, and the after-life.

different interpretations and adjustment. What Aboriginal culture does is to embrace 'an ideology of non-change'...but from an anthropological point of view this is not at all the same thing as regarding The Dreaming as unchanged, unchanging and unchangeable."

"Aboriginal people protect and uphold the unquestioned and final authority of The Dreaming as the foundation of human existence and the basis for personal meaning structures...this in no way precludes an ability to come to grips with new experienced realities...[which] come to be regarded as emanating from the supernatural beings..." (Bos 1988b:435).

Thus, Marika-Mununggiritj (1991:22), a *Yolngu* from Yirrkala, says:

"...When the anthropologists came here they had the privilege of learning about our life. But they wrote it down and recorded it as if it were from a fairytale, as if it were dead...Yolngu knowledge is living, and it comes from a real world, it has real life... That's what happens with the old ancestral stories, we still relive that past history, we still sing it, dance and still bring it and fit it into the present."

Previously, such a process had been referred to as 'change through incorporation', but as Borsboom (1992) and Swain (1993) declare, this reinforces stereotypes of an ahistorical and static 'Other'. As Carrier (1992:16) points out, it also suggests a process of acculturation or merely of the reassertion of a 'timeless' order of things.

Rudder (1993:275) referred to the *Yolngu* way of viewing time as 'changelessness in change'. He says events described in mythical terms are considered as 'outside' or public stories, each of which analogically carries meanings that refer to things of an 'inside' private, secret or sacred nature and which are unchanging. What is observed in the here and now is merely an outward transformation of this unchanging inner state.

Yet how does 'changelessness in change' account for the creative and innovative potential of Aboriginal religion? It seems quite out of place in terms of the Warramiri action, where the leaders are reviewing the past as a means of confronting the realities of the present in a decisive way. They were seeking change, not changelessness, and how this fits in with established representations of the *Yolngu* cosmos is to be examined.

We also need to come to an understanding of the ways in which *Yolngu* refer to and understand the past. Rudder (1993:270) says that events in the

Yolngu past are located either through imprecise terms such as *baman*, or *baman'birr*, meaning long ago, or in relation to the lives of specific individuals or events of major historical or religious significance, ie. *Womirriy* (World War Two) or *Manggatharramirriy* (during the time of the 'Macassans'). Some events might be so long ago as to have been concurrent with the journeys of ancestral beings, which is referred to as the *Wangarr* period (Morphy 1984:17; Williams 1986:28).

The problem of locating a mythological event presented as having occurred in the far distant past is that it often cannot be checked against any existing historical records. It may refer to relatively recent happenings, though have qualities which place it simultaneously at the 'beginning of time' and in the present. As Rudder (1993:274) says, "In the narration of myth and in the location of mythical events, time is irrelevant...an event's relationship to the 'inside' reality is what is significant." He adds,

"As all that has an identity, is perceived to have a continuing existence, 'inside', is where all things which have been previously experienced as 'outside' have their continuing existence, (Rudder 1993:30)."

By implication, Rudder (1993:30) says all new things which come to be experienced must have existed before, and must have been either 'inside' or somewhere else 'outside' prior to their being experienced. All mythical events, he says, are therefore part of an unchanging eternal, which is past, present and future (Rudder 1993:278).

This is quite different to the standard 'cyclical' view of time in which the present is thought to be determined by the ancestral past or people consider real only those events that re-enacted 'primordial' events (Bloch 1977). The new does not simply slip out of memory allowing the past to continue as it always has (Morphy and Morphy 1984:461). The practitioner creates new 'outside' expressions of 'inner' reality each time a story is told, and expresses his own power and identity as a spokesperson for a law in so doing. But there remain problems in understanding how transformations in the cultural repertoire effect understandings of the past. To what extent is the 'unchanging eternal' able to be manipulated by certain individuals or groups and to what extent is it fixed and under what social conditions?

1.5 Participant Observation and Writing the Text

Apart from the writings of *Yolngu* theologians (eg. Gondarra 1988), and school teachers (eg. Marika-Mununggiritj 1991) which principally relate to the interface of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal beliefs and practices in specific areas, there are no major works by the Aborigines of north-east Arnhem Land on such things as *Yolngu* history, social change or reconciliation. Historically, the representation of the larger picture has been the task of visiting scholars, who based their authority on professional training and the fieldwork experience, ie. being there (see Clifford 1990:22).

Yet, participant observation as a means of claiming ethnographic authority has come into question in recent times. People within any group do not share common experiences, understandings or interpretations, and Clifford (1990:25) asks how any encounter based as it is on unruly experience shot through with power relations and personal cross-purposes, can be accepted as an authoritative statement of 'how things are'. Whether one was inducted into a community and gradually revealed knowledge, or dispassionately interprets culture as a series of texts, there are problems in justifying the authority of any representation of 'objective reality'.

While Morphy (1988a:241) classifies many of the anthropologists who have worked in north-east Arnhem Land as being part of an ethnographic-exegetical tradition, with informants being visible from an early point, such people are often abstracted into stereotypes, as "...representatives of their ancestors, living in the ethnographic present...a timeless world of 'culture'," (Keesing and Jolly 1992:228). There is no hint of the degree to which such informants directed the research in particular ways, or if their interests had any bearing or relevance to the field workers project. For instance, the Wangurri leader Makarrwola, Warner's chief informant in the 1920s for the pioneering anthropological work *A Black Civilisation* (first published in 1937), was considered astute and intelligent and a close friend (Warner 1969:467-490). At no point however, is the reader given a chance to understand Makarrwola's motives for spending so much time with Warner, and one suspects that he was assigned to the task by missionaries. Similarly, why Raywalla assisted the anthropologist Donald Thomson in his epic treks across Arnhem Land is only hinted at in a passage where Thomson (1949a) refers to the prestige linked to the association and the many gifts lavished upon the visitors by neighbouring *Mala*.

As in the case of Malinowski (1967) and his famous diaries, we are uncertain as to the place of the Arnhem Land ethnographer in the society concerned and how such a positioning is reflected in the types of data presented. For instance, informants told me that both Warner and Ronald Berndt were adopted into the Wangurri *Mala*, whereas Thomson was aligned with the Mildjingi, reflecting their involvement with particular sets of informants. As Morphy (1994:144) says, anthropologists often fail to recognise that they are positioned subjects. They may wish to act outside their place in the society in order to be more objective, but will be treated in accordance with the place they have been given by their informants, and one must presume that their accounts will to some degree reflect this.

Morphy (1983:114; 1991:98) says that the adoption of people, including anthropologists, into the *Yolngu* kinship system, and the revealing of knowledge to *Balanda* generally, is a means of having outsiders affirm the value of sacred traditions and *Yolngu* rights to them. Yet the attempt to maintain control of local knowledge once in the public domain is an ongoing concern for *Mala* leaders. The 'fixing' of culture in texts has the potential side effect of both local Aborigines and others seeing any deviation from the 'truth' as written, as culture loss. Morphy (1994:144) for instance says,

"The movement of meaning from a system of restricted knowledge into a system of open knowledge, which a Western academic audience theoretically reflects, inevitably changes its significance. Yolngu are aware of the problem and of the possibilities of misinterpretation, and are cautious about revealing inside interpretations."

Misrepresentation of information can pose real problems in terms of local autonomy, and the giving or not giving of permission to complete fieldwork or restricting access to the finished product, is perhaps the only means available to community leaders to help mould the various truths from the multiplicity of voices that make up the *Yolngu* world, in a present where others are trying to do it for them.

As a result of this sort of issue, Clifford (1990:41) says it has become necessary to conceive of ethnography not as the experience and interpretation of a circumscribed 'other' reality, but rather as a constructive negotiation involving at least two significant subjects. There is no neutral standpoint in the power-laden field of discourse, he says. Both the

interviewer and interviewee are historically and socially constituted, and together they negotiate a shared vision of reality. Stoller (1994:362) says the final product will combine narrative and exposition, individual and social, and local and global perspectives. It will be the product of a particular time and place, and of the values and interests of specific individuals with their own unique places within a community.

As Keen (1994) points out, no-one's experiences, beliefs or interpretations of anything are the same, and within patrifilial collectives, the body of shared items of cosmological knowledge is an ever-changing inheritance, and only approximately shared (see Chapter Two). Secrecy, gender relations and 'inside' and 'outside' interpretations of law contribute to this.

This has implications in the recording of narrative. Within the Warramiri *Mala* itself, views on *Birrinydji* vary considerably, and not just as a result of young/old, male/female divisions. Knowledge of *Birrinydji* was not passed on in any systematic way by Warramiri leaders to their children or allied *yirritja* moiety members from the early mission period onwards, according to Burrumarra. The stories, connected with the existence and presence of the 'Other' on Aboriginal land, were 'too big, too sad, and too hard to understand', and they were getting 'mucked up'. Substantial changes were taking place in Aboriginal lifestyles, and this is why, Burrumarra said, it had not been openly revealed to anthropologists previously.

The Treaty proposal, and the way it was presented by Burrumarra, at once affirmed his standing as head of the Warramiri *Mala*, the Warramiri *Mala's* relationship to other collectives, and their perceived historical role as mediators in terms of the 'Other'. It was recognised by Wulanybuma and Liwukang as being very much Burrumarra's project, and they have not publicly disagreed with his utilisation of *Birrinydji*. Undoubtedly however, they have their own views on this inheritance. The version of 'truth' that I was getting from Burrumarra was necessarily seen as his own, and in 'fixing' narratives in a text I have tried to make this point clear. It is one possible interpretation. Following Burrumarra's death, it is almost certain that views on the subject of *Birrinydji*, if raised again in public, will change significantly.

In compiling data into a text we are therefore dealing with personal histories and ambitions, *Mala* histories and moiety dispositions, and the more lofty goal of social justice. What is presented is therefore to be seen as a negotiated 'truth', a means of telling a particular story. In this case the aim is to re-order relationships between Aborigines and the 'Other', and the anthropologist is seen by informants as being an agent facilitating this process.

1.6-1 Placing the Researcher in the Field of Study

This work is based on detailed library research and in-depth field studies, and builds on my Master of Letters thesis completed in 1991, which is summarised and extended in Chapter Four. Consultations with leaders of the *yirritja* moiety were held regularly between 1987 and 1992, at a time when I was employed as an outstation teacher with the Northern Territory Education Department and Teacher Linguist at the local school. In 1991 I received two grants from the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies to complete a biography of Burrumarra. Between 1993 and 1995, intensive study was undertaken on the Treaty proposal and related social actions.

Of particular relevance is the placing of the researcher in the field of practice of the people with whom I worked. Being closely associated with the *Yolngu* community of Elcho Island, I have for many years been seen a mediator between Aborigines and non-Aborigines. I am an adopted member of the Wangurri *Mala*. The Warramiri and Wangurri *Mala* are very close. In kinship terms they call each other 'brother' (see Chapter Two). While Warner (1969) says that they were constantly at war because of competition for wives in the early years of this century, members of the Wangurri *Mala* have been the nominal heads of the Warramiri *Mala* and vice versa, in the absence of old men from either group, (pers. comm. Burrumarra 1992).

In kinship terms, I called Burrumarra *Maari'mu*, or paternal grandfather. Burrumarra's younger brothers, however, called me *Mori*, or father, through a separate kinship line. Wangurri elders, while not directly involved in the Treaty proposal, had much to say on the subject. The leaders, Dayngumbu and Buthimang, I called *Mori* and brother (*Waawa*) respectively.

Each Warramiri and Wangurri leader had different ideas on the treaty proposal. For some, *Birinydji* was seen to be the only avenue open to *Yolngu*

in their attempts to direct a change in the nature of relationships with the 'Other'. For instance Liwukang and Wulanybuma said to me that they saw 'ceremony' as the Aboriginal 'Bible' (see Chapter Eight), which was an indirect reference to the fact that *Birrinydji* united all peoples, and *Yolngu* custodianship of this law needed to be recognised by non-Aboriginal authorities. Dayngumbu on the other hand, was a fundamentalist and believed in following the Christian path to reconciliation. For others, it was somewhere in between. Buthimang and Burrumarra followed the 'two laws' approach, whereby neither Christianity nor Aboriginal law had primacy.

Although a non-Christian, I have been involved in Church affairs at Elcho Island since 1986. I was also involved with the Warramiri in the publication of pamphlets and letters on the Treaty proposal, and in the production of the flag prototype, as were a range of other non-Aborigines resident at Galiwin'ku at the time. As part of my involvement in this project, I was told aspects of the 'inside' law of *Birrinydji* and the related ancestral figures *Bayini* and *Walitha'walitha*. This was not, Burrumarra said, so that I could parade it in front of a non-Aboriginal audience in my own self-interest, but rather, so that I would work for *Yolngu* for the furtherance of their political ambitions. This was an important consideration in writing the thesis. As Burrumarra said to me, if I was to make a study of Warramiri social and cultural history for my own personal gain, then the answer to any question would be 'no'. If I was working as a member of a team on the other hand, then he and other Warramiri elders could have no secrets from me. While obviously a generalisation, the feeling was nonetheless genuine.

Fieldwork was done in public and there was symbolic value in the way interviews were carried out. Burrumarra was already aged when I first met him, and I was considerably younger. He played up on this point, ie. the elder Aboriginal and the younger non-Aboriginal; the 'old hand' teaching the newcomer. For him it was symbolic of Warramiri mediating traditions, and more generally, of the way relationships between Aborigines and non-Aborigines in Australia should be viewed. Aborigines were the first Australians, and while this fact is openly acknowledged by Australian government authorities, there has been no flow on in terms of responsibilities, Burrumarra believed.

After being adopted into a particular moiety and *Mala* group, one is, to a point, limited in terms of who one might turn to for anthropological data.

As I was dealing with *yirritja* themes, I was only to speak to *yirritja* people, and then, mainly Warramiri and Wangurri informants. Members of other *Mala* would simply suggest that I ask one of 'my own' people. *Mala* members do not generally speak openly about the laws of other collectives, although of course there is considerable discussion about how groups are related, and as Burrumarra said, shared knowledge was always being disputed.

1.6 The Task

It was evident from an early point in discussions with *Yolngu* leaders that while nearly one hundred years had elapsed since the departure of 'Macassans' from northern Australian shores, events and perceptions from this period of contact had remained, to a significant degree, relevant in the way *Yolngu* understood and attempted to direct their relationships with *Balanda*. This is not a new topic. It is one which has aroused considerable curiosity in academic circles and there has been much speculation as to the nature of the legacy of contact with foreign fishermen. It is commonly reported, for instance, that *Yolngu* were far better equipped than other Aborigines to deal with the chaos and disruption that came in the wake of colonisation, because of this experience. Yet, to date, there have been no detailed studies on why this might be the case. Macknight (1972:317; 1986:72), for instance, has called for an analysis of the way the memory of the often turbulent indigenous experience has been transformed over time and is relevant in contemporary Aboriginal politics. Keen (1994:296) likewise suggests a need to "...trace trajectories of transformation in relations, powers, trends, events, and the forms into which people try to shape their worlds."

Burrumarra's rationale for the treaty proposal drew on a complex view of the past, involving three 'waves' of visitors from the north, a view in conflict with that of historians and archaeologists. Such a stance leads to a need to come to terms with conflicting understandings on the part of some non-Aborigines and some Aborigines, on the meaning of such terms as myth and history, and the place of such understandings in the *Yolngu* world. In particular it presents an opportunity to critique Swain's (1993) work where he dismisses the significance of time for Aborigines in favour of a place-centred ontology.

The world of the non-Aborigine is of course a part of the *Yolngu* cosmos, but the ways in which Aborigines perceive of their place in the

wider society is unclear. For this reason, the whole subject of *Birrinydji* raises multiple questions and problems in terms of analysis. While apparently associated with the presence of 'Macassans' and other outsiders, this law appears in the literature only in recent times, and has not previously been raised in discussions with historians or anthropologists working in north-east Arnhem Land. This leads one to ask, are the *Birrinydji* stories something revealed from the 'inside' as Burrumarra suggested, or were they created in their present form in response to current social conditions? Also, discussions on the significance of other bodies of *Rom* depicted on the treaty flag (ie. octopus, whale, dog etc) were framed in terms of the need for reconciliation in Australia as though there were some intrinsic connection between the 'totemic' subject matter and 'white'/'black' relations in the broader community. What is the significance of Warramiri *Rom* for the *Mala*, for the moiety, and also in the wider Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community for the treaty instigators?

The form of the call for reconciliation, a flag, appears novel. While pieces of cloth on bamboo poles are a common sight in all north-east Arnhem Land communities at the place where a mortuary ritual has been performed, (as well as at sites where a whale has beached itself, or which is associated with *Bayini* or *Birrinydji*), there is little in the literature describing their meaning for *Yolngu*. This highlights the need to see the significance of the treaty proposal on its own terms. Rather than being associated with the current nationwide push to change the design of the Australian flag, I suggest the Warramiri were drawing on local understandings of the meaning of the flag, an aspect of *Yolngu* material culture drawn from the days of 'Macassan' contact. As I detail in Chapter Seven, the flag was seen as a symbol of the unity of all peoples, and also between *Yolngu* and a universal being known as *Walitha'walitha*, or Allah. Again, no details on this body of *Rom* have previously been recorded in the literature. Is it a case like the Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land (see Berndt 1962); or the Bark Petition (see Williams 1986), where *Yolngu* leaders were releasing information into the public domain as a means of affirming their status in relation to *Balanda* and trying to direct change in their favour? Also, the treaty flag has a Christian cross in the centre, suggesting the over-riding place of Christian values as a force for reconciliation in Australia. This leads to questions of how Christianity ties in with *Yolngu* totemic law and again it brings the recent work of Rudder (1993) on *Yolngu* cosmology and 'changelessness in change' into the spotlight.

Inseparable from this is the need to review the standing that Warramiri interpretations have in the *Yolngu* community as a whole. The images in the treaty design were Warramiri symbols, it was stated, but it was acknowledged by the Warramiri leaders that other *Mala* within the *yirritja* moiety had associations with these laws, although they were not consulted prior to the release of the design. I therefore analyse the way Aboriginal groups relate to one another in the context of inter-cultural relations. I explain how the Warramiri leaders have come to understand the way they see relationships with the 'Other' and try to answer the question, do the Warramiri have a mandate for mediating relations with outsiders?

So this is a study of how a particular set of interpretations of the past is relevant now in attempts to re-order the nature of relations between Aborigines and non-Aborigines. The current anthropological debates on the immutability of the Dreaming, versus the constancy of change; the politics of representation; and the interface of myth and history are to be discussed. How to represent the process of the engagement of Aboriginal and other societies without doing significant disservice to Aboriginal interpretations, is a major theme throughout.

1.7 Chapter Overviews

As the first stage in coming to a deeper understanding of the Warramiri ambition, in Chapter Two I examine those bodies of *Rom* which, in the literature, define the *Yolngu* world. I then present an overview of Warramiri cosmology and how it provides a framework for viewing the actions of Warramiri leaders. While cosmology is presented by certain Aborigines as being 'timeless', the examples given suggest the ways in which the Warramiri have continually struggled to achieve unity and reciprocity in dealings with other collectives over time. This is a fundamental aspect of the *Yolngu* mytho-religious system (see Keen 1994) and is a recurrent theme in the 'contact' narratives.

Following a discussion on the myth-history debate, in a literature review of representations of the *Yolngu*-Macassan' past in Chapter Three, I examine the often contradictory representations of historians, anthropologists and Aborigines. I show how Warramiri leaders have structured the past in complex ways, for complex reasons, which appear to be fundamental to their role as mediators between *Yolngu* and the 'Other'. I

show that accounts of the past are related to the context of the telling, the prevailing views on the value of oral traditions by writers of the time, and the nature of inter-cultural relations between groups represented in the encounter. I introduce the ancestral being *Birrinydji* and suggest that it is the central character in what might be termed a 'cargo cult'. Based on perceived feelings of inequality, it reads as an attempt to explain why Aborigines did/do not share the wealth of the 'Other'. The analysis here is an attempt to locate the idea of *Birrinydji* and *Bayini* both in terms of the literature and for the Warramiri, because in the chapters that follow, it is interpretations of these laws that are called upon in validating Warramiri concerns.

In Chapter Four I look in detail at anthropological analyses of Dog-‘Macassan’ narratives, the only body of *Rom* relating to cross-cultural relations documented to date. I show that some very fundamental principals underlie these contact stories, for in both moieties, mythological Dogs, as well as other totems, reject the visitors. The purpose of the Chapter is to see how these narratives situate Aborigines in relation to outsiders, and to show how they take on new meaning when seen in the light of *Birrinydji*. Building on a structural analysis of Dog-‘Macassan’ narratives by other scholars, I show that *Birrinydji* mythology provides the framework for trade in 'Macassan' goods. Aborigines would work for the visitors in a one-sided relationship, but would not compromise what was deemed to be their inalienable rights, ie. land ownership or identity as a people. According to interviews with the Warramiri leaders, this is *Birrinydji's* law, and it underlies all Warramiri dealings with the ‘Other’. In the ensuing chapters, I show how this same principle is brought out again and again in a variety of ways.

In 1994, *Yolngu* at Elcho Island made a public call for the implementation of an Indigenous Marine Protection Strategy for the Arafura Sea. In Chapter Five, I look at Warramiri laws associated with the sea, in particular *Ngulwardo*, the whale, and the octopus and show how they are the basis of the Warramiri claim. In terms of relationships with the ‘Other’, I show that these same totems are associated with what Burrumarra said was the first 'wave' of historical contact with non-Aborigines. Burrumarra called them whale hunters or whale killers, though throughout the text I refer to them as ‘totem hunters’, for they also feature in narratives about the hunt for the dugong, turtle and stingray. They were 'black' men, 'brothers' of the

Yolngu, and their dealings with the Warramiri were based on the principle of reciprocity, Burrumarra said. Both shared in the 'ownership' of the laws of the whale and the octopus, and these stories provide a strong contrast to those narratives referring to contact with 'Macassans', as detailed in Chapter Four. On this basis, Burrumarra said there was equality with the 'Other' in the past. The aim of the Chapter is to continue to direct attention to the varied and complex ways in which the *Yolngu* have categorised the 'Other' and how such interpretations are utilised and manipulated now by the Warramiri leaders for specific purposes.

Following an overview of 'cargo cults' in Australia, in Chapter Six, I give a perspective on the *Bayini* or 'pre-Macassan' era, which, in Burrumarra's view, is associated with the 'beginning of time'. I show that the perception of the Warramiri leaders is that this was a time of a perceived unity of all peoples, both 'black' and 'white', under a single law, ie. that of *Birrinydji* and the land. The desire is to focus on the perceived lack of reciprocity in dealings between Aborigines and the 'Other', and how it is seen to be part of *Birrinydji's* plan that there be a treaty in Australia. More than a 'cargo cult', the narratives of *Birrinydji* and *Bayini* are viewed as a rationale for social and political action. They allow for a vision of the future in which Aborigines share in the wealth of the country and are respected as land and sea owners by other Australians.

Chapter Seven takes a different tack and looks at how the Warramiri leaders are pushing not only for reconciliation in Australia, but are attempting to re-establish links with 'Macassans'. The vehicle for this is a dance exchange to be undertaken in 1996. This chapter looks at the nature of the ritual, which is linked to the ancestral beings *Walitha'walitha* and the *Wurramu*, which Burrumarra said were *Birrinydji's* legacy in Arnhem Land. He also said that these laws united Aborigines and 'Macassans'. That such a reunion is possible and desired allows for a commentary on the way Aborigines and non-Aborigines relate to one another in Australia. On what grounds can they come together in a celebration of the past, I ask.

Another theme in Chapter Seven is the investigation of the significance of flags in Warramiri cosmology. Not only a symbol of the heavens above, flags are symbolic of the law of *Birrinydji* and *Walitha'walitha*, and the partnership that is said to have existed between 'black' and 'white' peoples in what is deemed to be the 'pre-Macassan' era.

The Warramiri Flag Treaty proposal builds on this inheritance. The flag design is symbolic of a desired unity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Australia today, as there was perceived to have been in Arnhem Land in the past, according to Burrumarra.

The call for reconciliation by Warramiri *Yolngu*, or for the recognition of *Yolngu* sea rights, or even to be re-united with ‘Macassans’, cannot be fully understood in isolation from the developments in Arnhem Land over the past forty years. In Chapter Eight, the Christian era is the topic of discussion. In an analysis of Elcho Island *Yolngu* Christianity and change, I show how the treaty proposal is the culmination of more recent efforts to bring about a reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal law, from the Warramiri viewpoint. The Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land of 1957, also instigated by Burrumarra, was an attempt to unite Aboriginal law and Christianity. The memorial created at this time was a sign to the outside world that Aborigines were the land owners, and that they controlled the truths responsible for who they were. Yet belief in Christianity had not ensured justice and equity for Aborigines, and in the Treaty proposal, Burrumarra looked at ways in which such rights would be enshrined in Commonwealth law.

Chapter Nine retraces the journey of understanding the deeper significance of the Treaty proposal and related actions, and I highlight the main theoretical findings from the analysis.

CHAPTER TWO

2: Warramiri Cosmology

In this Chapter I look at the place of the Warramiri in the wider *Yolngu* community and I ask the question, can the *yirritja* association with the new or Warramiri ties to the sea provide an explanation for the actions of the Warramiri leaders in formulating the Treaty proposal? I begin with an overview of the way *Yolngu* society has been portrayed in the literature and then look at how *Yolngu* construct their world. In particular I focus on the relationship of the *Mala* to the moiety and I investigate Burrumarra's view that the Warramiri have a marginal place in terms of moiety law. I then examine the ambiguous nature of Warramiri *Mala* identity, before taking a detailed look at Warramiri sea beliefs.

The Warramiri occupy the sea-land boundary but their 'totemic' identity is centred on the coral reef and open sea. Warramiri ancestral beings mimic, in many ways, the creational activities of the major moiety ancestral figures. While the literature presents a 'timeless' picture of unity and reciprocity in dealings between Warramiri Aborigines and other collectives, I show that the reality is quite different. Following on from Marcus and Fischer (1986) I show that moiety harmony is an ideal towards which *Mala* continually strive, as a means of promoting their own interests.

Comparing the actions of the Warramiri leaders in the Treaty proposal with the ways *Mala* groups unite within the moiety, I suggest that the Warramiri flag idea is a variation on a well established theme. In the moiety, groups are united through the exchange of sacred *rangga* and relationships of reciprocity, and these are constantly reviewed and/or renewed over time. With the Flag Treaty proposal, the Warramiri leaders aim to become 'one' with the 'Other' in a framework of equality, though of course still maintaining separate identities.

2.1 Representing the *Yolngu* world

The established picture of north-east Arnhem Land is of a bounded community in which dwell a collection of peoples organised into *Mala* in two exogamous moieties, the *dhuwa* and the *yirritja*, with two creational or *Wangarr* beings as their foundation, ie. *Djang'kawu* for the *dhuwa* moiety, and *Lany'tjun* (*Barrama*, *Galparrimun*, *Banatja*) for the *yirritja* (Berndt and Berndt 1948:309-328; 1988:253-256). The perception is one of cultural homogeneity, with the beliefs and social structure, as described, being

established once and for all at the 'beginning of time'. A recent publication by Keen (1994) challenges this view. His portrayal of *Yolngu* society is very much in line with the views of Marcus and Fischer (1986), who say that most cultures, worldwide, are products of a history of appropriations, resistances and accommodations. Consequently, they suggested that ethnographic description must move,

"...away from...self-contained, homogenous, and largely ahistoric framing of the cultural unit toward a view of cultural situations as *always* in flux, in a perpetual historically sensitive state of resistance and accommodation to broader processes of influence that are as much inside as outside the local context," (Marcus and Fischer 1986:78).

Rudder (1993:335) describes the *Yolngu* cosmos as an ordered whole, with its own unique framework of concepts and realities, "...a framework which brings descriptive order to the whole and to man's place in it." Keen (1994:295) sees the objective social reality of the *Yolngu* world as a kaleidoscope of relative viewpoints, within a matrix of co-operation and conflict. Each patrifilial group or collective has its own body of religious practices and myths, and knowledge is unevenly spread within it by means of secrecy and 'inside' and 'outside' versions between men and women and young and old (Keen 1994:1). Senior men control access to knowledge as a means of maintaining authority (see also Rudder 1993:69). This 'vertical' control is enhanced through the encoding of information in ambiguous forms (ie. dance, song, art, myth) for which certain conceptual 'keys' are needed to unlock potentially unlimited levels of meaning.

Keen (1994) says that the ways in which members of various *Mala* groups in north-east Arnhem Land construct their world has more in common than with the ways that Aborigines in central and south-east Arnhem Land construct theirs. Yet, the *Yolngu* world is not a community with clear cultural boundaries. The *Yolngu* are not a single clearly defined group. Transitional forms are found between *Yolngu* territories and their neighbours (see also Biernoff 1975), and there is intermarriage and ritual alliances across what have been deemed to be barriers.

Yet, on the other hand, Keen (1994) says that general assumptions underlying things such as *gurrutu* (kinship), *bapurru* (land and kin associations), *wanga* (homelands), and *maḍayin* (sacred ideas, objects and activities) were probably uncontested in those areas that made up the *Yolngu*

world. At the same time however, within this area "...aspects of the definition and content of these broad domains was variable and highly contestable," (Keen 1994:14). He adds,

"The body of shared items of cosmological knowledge...is a moveable, impressionable, and ever-changing inheritance, only approximately shared in the group [ie. family, 'clan' or moiety]. [There is no] unified system of knowledge agreed by all, but [rather] a range of understandings, 'sufficient so its members can be moved by the same symbols and thoughts,'" (Keen 1994:9).

Just as placing a boundary on north-east Arnhem Land and the *Yolngu* world is problematic, so is the depiction of the clan according to Keen (1994). While associated with specific tracts of country and totemic species, their ambiguous structure has allowed them to be portrayed in a variety of ways by various scholars, ie. as *Matha* or language groups, *Mala* groups, *Bapurru* or sibs. As the locus of the greatest orthodoxy in belief and religious practice (Morphy 1988b:265), the clan strives to maintain autonomy "...within an order of 'law' more or less agreed to by their neighbours, while sending out tentacles of co-operation or attempted domination, or coming under the temporary sway of others," (Keen 1994:294). It is not surprising therefore that some of the groups identified by Warner in the 1920s no longer exist as such, having either become extinct, absorbed into other groups, or are known by different terms.

2.2 Moiety Law

It is within the *yirritja* moiety or half of *Yolngu* society that the 'Other' has traditionally been accommodated. Thomson (1939) for instance shows how certain items of material culture associated with 'Macassans' have been elevated to the status of a *yirritja* moiety *Mala* totem. Warner (1932:493; 1969:31) likewise says that both the 'Macassans' and the 'whiteman' (Europeans) were *yirritja*,¹ although this is not the case today. Outsiders are adopted into a moiety and *Mala* on the basis of their association with particular *Yolngu*.

It is for reasons such as this that the *yirritja* moiety is said to be innovative in comparison to the *dhuwa* moiety (Berndt and Berndt 1954;

¹ Somewhat confusingly, however, both Warner (1932:493) and Thomson (1949a:60) otherwise stress the conservatism of *Yolngu*, and how they have resisted outside influences.

Warner 1969:31), but why this is so is far from clear, and I take this up in later chapters. The predominant view in the literature regarding the *yirritja* moiety legacy is of land-based (fresh water) figures linking Aboriginal *Mala* through the sharing of aspects of *Rom* and *rangga*. The significance of outsiders arriving on Aboriginal land from the sea, or the sea itself, and consequently the place of the Warramiri within the moiety, remains largely unexamined.

2.2-1 The Legacy of *Lany'tjun* and *Djang'kawu*.

At a moiety level of *Rom*, Berndt and Berndt (1948:313) say that two creational beings stand out. They are *Lany'tjun* for the *yirritja* moiety and *Djang'kawu* for the *dhuwa*. Berndt and Berndt (1975:254) also suggest that there is a fundamental difference between the two. *Djang'kawu* is responsible for the creation of natural species and human populations, whereas *Lany'tjun* is credited more with social and ceremonial innovations.

Morphy (1990) takes as a basic assumption that totemic beliefs preceded the emergence of moiety themes. He suggests that in *dhuwa* moiety mythology, all totemic and ancestral beings have been reabsorbed into the *Djang'kawu* to be born again with the first humans (Morphy 1990:327). *Djang'kawu* is therefore considered to be the creating ancestor of all *dhuwa* people, totems, as well as *maḍayin*. In the case of *Lany'tjun*, Morphy (1990:318-319) says totems and *maḍayin* appear to conceptually pre-date his teachings, though are seen as coming under *Lany'tjun's* direction.

The mythology of *Djang'kawu* and *Lany'tjun* have many elements in common however (see Table 2):

1. They ascribe to each *Mala* certain totemic affiliations and bodies of law, eg the Gupapuyngu with the honey bee; Gumatj - crocodile; Warramiri - whale and octopus; Wangurri - cycad (see Appendix Four). Each area of *Rom* is viewed as the legitimate heritage of the collective and is something that can never be lost or taken away, although it might be inherited by another group if a *Mala* becomes extinct. So *Mala* members 'own' these laws, in so far as they are temporary custodians of them, and of associated *rangga*.

2. *Djang'kawu* and *Lany'tjun* initiated the use of these *rangga* and specific designs in artwork for each *Mala*. Burrumarra said, "We did not know the meaning of symbols until *Djang'kawu* and *Lany'tjun*". *Rangga* are a physical

manifestation of creational and totemic beings, and are considered to be the 'only real wealth of a clan' (Berndt 1962:40). As I suggested in Chapter One, senior men control access to these *rangga*. Knowledge of their significance is encoded in ambiguous forms, such as myth.

3. *Djang'kawu* and *Lany'tjun* also provided rights in land for the respective groups, as well as ceremonies and land management techniques. As Burrumarra (1982:11) wrote, "*Lany'tjun* said, 'Warramiri land is for Warramiri only'". Performing sacred ceremonies is a way of honouring the land, and 'holding oneself to it', he said (McIntosh 1994b:68).

Table 2 In both moieties, there are two overlapping ways in which *Mala* are linked. In a much simplified view looking at a selection of *Mala*, in diagrammatic form, it looks like this:

Golpa	Golpa-sandfly
Gupapuyngu	Gupapuyngu-honey, fire
Yalukal	Yalukal-whale, crocodile
Warramiri	Warramiri-whale, octopus
Wangurri	Wangurri-barramundi, cycad
Gumatj	Gumatj-crocodile, red kangaroo
Dhalwangu	Dhalwangu-long-necked turtle, frog
Lamamirri	Lamamirri-whale, dugong
Ritharrngu	Ritharrngu-emu

The teachings of *Lany'tjun* unite all *yirritja Mala* as a moiety

The teachings of *Lany'tjun* distinguishes all groups within the moiety

the Warramiri-Budalpudal are *Gutharra* to the Golpa, Gupapuyngu-Lialanmirr and Daygurrigurr clans, and receive wives via those lines.

The Warramiri-Budalpudal is a 'brother' for the Wangurri *Mala*, and 'brother' *Mala* within the moiety compete for wives. For the Warramiri, wives traditionally came from the *dhuwa* moiety Djambarrpuyngu-Wutjara (a sea clan like the Warramiri), Galpu-Golumala, Liagawumirr and Rirratjingu *Mala*. As Warner (1969:27-28) indicates, this competition was a cause for constant warfare between groups up until the 1920s. Despite being united in terms of *Lany'tjun*, relationships between *yirritja Mala* were thus in constant flux. They could be affirmed through ceremonial exchange as the situation demanded, but relations were far from stable.

'Timeless' or harmonious representations of moiety affairs also come into question when it is realised that there is no single story by which one can describe the legacy of moiety ancestral beings which is agreed to by all (see Keen 1994). As mentioned earlier, *Mala* groups have their own perspectives on key events, though certain shared understandings allow for moiety-wide co-operation. *Yirritja* moiety narratives in particular are highly ambiguous. As Biernoff (1975) shows, some collectives at Numbulwar, to the south of the study area, have *Lany'tjun* stories, but interpretations are quite different from any descriptions found in north-east Arnhem Land. In addition, people as far afield as Gunbalanya in western Arnhem Land classify themselves as either *dhuwa* or *yirritja*, but the significance of such categories is of quite a separate order to that in north-east Arnhem Land (Bluey Ilkgirr, pers. comm. 1995).

Along these lines, Burrumarra, at various times, stressed that the situation of the Warramiri in relation to *Lany'tjun* and the *yirritja* moiety was unique in north-east Arnhem Land. But such a view is not justified in terms of the literature. Burrumarra would say that the Warramiri had nothing from *Lany'tjun* in their history, yet he contradicts himself in the accounts that follow. The point Burrumarra wanted to strongly make was that the Warramiri came from the open sea, and *Lany'tjun* and other related moiety ancestral figures were not linked to that domain. What Burrumarra saw as distinguishing the Warramiri was the possession of laws and totemic

moiety. Wives of Warramiri men maintain their own separate *Mala* affiliation, but their children are of the *Mala* and moiety of the father.

beings which either paralleled or 'acted on behalf of' *Lany'tjun*, but which were linked to the coral reef and deep water.

As I try to show in later sections, the Warramiri have aspired to a 'timeless' unity and equality in their dealings with others, and they have done this in their own unique ways. So representations of a world and laws that were created or ordained once and for all at the 'beginning of time', are inaccurate. Before I look at these Warramiri narratives, I will first outline the stories of the major land-based *yirritja* ancestral beings.

2.2-2 The Moiety All-Being *Lany'tjun*

Warramiri and Wangurri informants at Elcho Island referred to *Lany'tjun* as a bringer of law and order, rather than an all-embracing creator like *Djang'kawu*. He is linked to the introduction of new forms of technology and hunting skills, and on a sacred level, of issuing forth songs and rituals relating to *yirritja* lands. Allen (1975:59) records that at the time of *Lany'tjun*, the people of his 'barramundi' (*Ratjuk*) 'totem' were starving. These were times of chaos and drought, and there was much warfare. The *yirritja* people could not feed themselves and *Lany'tjun* felt sorry for them. So, in the form of a barramundi, he swam from the fresh water to the sea where he changed into a man, and came ashore. In his arms were *rangga* and sacred totems of the long-neck turtle, kangaroo, bee, orchid and lily, which would help the people. He told the *Yolngu* how to protect the *rangga*, and to perform sacred ceremonies, and how to live peacefully together. He also brought rain which flooded the water-holes, filling the land with kangaroos which were easy to kill.

In more detailed accounts of the *yirritja* moiety legacy, *Mala* variations predominate. There is however agreement in the fact that a moiety figure came ashore at Blue Mud Bay in Dhalwangu territory. I will begin with the view of Berndt and Berndt (1948:313-314). They say,

"[*Lany'tjun*] came out of the sea, emerging from the waters like a giant stone from the receding tide...near Blue Mud Bay. His body bore variegated water-marks...that formed patterns... Now [*Barrama*], a [*yirritja*] man, saw [*Lany'tjun*] for the first time as he stood on the beach, leaning on a sacred *rangga* yam stick, and was surprised to observe these watermarks. 'I am [*Lany'tjun*],' said the Ancestral being. 'I bring all the [*yirritja*] dreaming and painting: these will belong to you people, no matter what language and what tribe.' Then he gave to [*Barrama*] the sacred paintings and the *rangga*, so that the

totemic designs were distributed among the clans...[*Lany'tjun's*] voice went to all the [*yirritja*] clans, and his law became established."

While it is not known from which *Mala* perspective this account is drawn, it is obviously not from the Dhalwangu, who see *Barrama* as the foundation of this law (Gawirrin pers. comm. 1993; Groger-Wurm 1973:73). He sent out emissaries such as *Galparrimun* and *Lany'tjun* to other areas. Allen (1975:59) says that *Lany'tjun* came out of the sea and met *Galparrimun*, though he admits to having compiled various stories into one. Rudder's (1993:47) version of this story gives more detail. He says *Barrama* came out of the seas in Dhalwangu territory and instructed *Lany'tjun*, who travelled to the north, and *Galparrimun*, who travelled to the south. They distributed the sacred *rangga* to all the *Mala*. Burrumarra acknowledged this confusion in detail and compared the situation to Ministers in a Government with portfolios such as Commerce, Economics, or the Treasury. He said "It is not always known where one stops and the other starts."

The impact of *Lany'tjun* and others was revolutionary, but some people were jealous (including *Barrama* according to Groger-Wurm 1973:74) and they decided to kill him. Following his slaying, his body sank to the depths of the lake of Gululdji from where he had emerged. The frogs, long-neck turtles and barramundi rekindled his spirit, however, and it lived on in *Banatja*, who is referred to variously as a manifestation, or his son. *Lany'tjun* himself was transformed into a paper bark tree (Groger-Wurm 1973:74; Rudder 1993:48). *Banatja* reminded the people of his predecessors teachings and taught new things - to soak bitter yams, to make digging sticks, and to make huts to keep out rain (Allen 1975:66).

Of *Banatja*, Berndt and Berndt (1948:314) say,

"...[he] was [also] a great religious leader, who was able to elaborate on the ritual and dogma laid down in the beginning by [*Lany'tjun*]...He began to teach men, but his disciples became frightened and talked among themselves. 'Is this man really connected with [*Lany'tjun*]...? What have we got to do?' And they climbed trees with their spears...But when they had killed him, the murderers realized that [*Banatja*] was really a great man, and... had a great deal more to tell them; and they were 'sorry'."

Ban̄atja's spirit returned to the sacred lake of Gululdji in Dhalwangu country, and his body turned into a paperbark tree (Allen 1975:66). Though killed by their own people, *Lany'tjun* and *Ban̄atja's* 'barramundi' law spread throughout the land, and lives on in the sacred ceremonies (*Ngaarra*) introduced at this time.

Yet Warramiri marginality in terms of *Lany'tjun* and *Ban̄atja* was suggested, to a degree, in this statement by Burrumarra. He said,

"The stories of *Lany'tjun* are... the law of the land, but not the sea. *Lany'tjun* is all these things. He is a man, the rock, the animals, *rangga*, and songs. It's broken up so it's easy for the *Yolngu* to handle. When we bring it all together in the *bunggul* we are *Lany'tjun*, acting out his will."

"He named all the [*Mala*], the Dhalwangu, Wangurri, Gumatj, Lamamirri, Gupapuyngu, and the other *yirritja* groups, and gave them paintings and land. We Warramiri are from the sea, the only one. When *Lany'tjun* was naming all the groups, we were already there. But they couldn't leave us out. We have *maḍayin* from *Lany'tjun* too. Through *Lany'tjun*, all *yirritja* [*Mala*] are linked," (Burrumarra pers. comm. 1992).

I look further at this contradiction later.

2.2-3 The Place of the *Mala* in the *Yirritja* moiety.

The chief totemic symbols connected to the *Lany'tjun* narratives just described are the frog, barramundi, and the long-neck turtle, but these are also totems of specific importance to the Dhalwangu, Wangurri and Gupapuyngu-Daygurrurr collectives, and at a *Mala* level, these narratives do not necessarily make mention of *Lany'tjun* at all. Being associated with both *Mala* creational activities and also moiety laws might suggest that the custodians of these laws have a primary place in moiety affairs, but this is not the case. Each collective tends to see their place as being of unique or primary significance, as the Warramiri does. There is not a hierarchy of *Mala*, for the various groups which make up the moiety have related bodies of law which are the basis of *Mala* identity and alliances with others, as I show later. The end result of this is of course, perceived equality.

The interplay between *Mala* and moiety narratives was the subject of studies by Morphy (1990). He said that the *Yolngu* religious-mythological system was characterised by the existence of two types of narrative, those of creation and inheritance. Creation stories are those 'timeless' laws which

refer to events outside of direct human experience, ie. the exploits of various land creating totemic beings. The other category are moiety myths of inheritance. They link specific lands to a particular group of people through an unbroken line of descent from creational times to the present. For some *yirritja* moiety *Mala* there is thus a human intermediary, ie. *Barrama* for *Lany'tjun* (or vice versa).⁴ All *Mala* members are descended from this person. This is not the case for the Warramiri however, but as I detail in Chapter Six, they have a parallel story of inheritance with *Bukulatjpi* and the narratives of *Birrinydji*.

In order to promote *Mala* autonomy within the moiety, and ensure equality between all groups in this law, different symbols are utilised in the various versions of the *yirritja* moiety *Ngaarra* ceremony. Here, *Mala* creational narrative and ritual are employed in a moiety framework. In the Wangurri/Warramiri version, for instance, ceremonial action focuses on the *Muthali* (Duck), the *Milka* (Mangrove Worm), and the idea of the mixing of fresh and saltwater. In a performance of the *Gumatj/Gupapuyngu Ngaarra* at Elcho Island in 1990, to which all *yirritja* men at Elcho Island were invited to participate, the primary symbols painted on the chests of the dancers related to honey and also fire (Mattjuwi, pers. comm. 1990). There was still said to be only one *yirritja Ngaarra*, but the stories referred to and the dances presented were different in each case and reflected one law, a number of informants said.

In the next section, I begin to look at the place of the Warramiri in the *yirritja* moiety to show that while they have links to *Banatja* through the Wangurri *Mala*, their cultural repertoire includes no direct links to any land-based moiety figures. Rather, they have creational links with mainland *Mala* via sea totems and also ancestral beings such as *Ngulwardo*, which parallel moiety inheritance laws.

2.2-4 The Ritharrngu *Muthali* (Duck) as a Symbol of *Mala* and Moiety *Rom*.

The *Muthali* is an inland totem belonging to the Ritharrngu *Mala*. It links as 'one' the Warramiri and Ritharrngu groups (Groger-Wurm 1973:95).

⁴ Throughout this thesis, I refer to *Lany'tjun* as the chief *yirritja* moiety figure, as Wangurri and Warramiri informants suggest, but it needs to be noted that in referring to *Lany'tjun*, what I say is applicable also to *Barrama*, *Banatja*, and *Galparrimun* in other contexts.

As *Maari* for the Ritharrngu, Warramiri mothers-in-law provide daughters as wives for Ritharrngu men, although this relationship is not an obvious one today.

This 'Duck' alliance between the Warramiri and Ritharrngu is said to have its origins at the very 'beginning of time', when the English Company Islands were being formed by sea totems such as the whale and octopus. Informants say that the *Muthali* shaped these islands into their present form, creating the vertical cliffs that rise straight out of the water from the wind caused by the speed of the duck's flight (Burrumarra pers. comm. 1988). (see illustration 3a)

Groger-Wurm (1973:95) mentions the story of the Duck. She says,

"[*Muthali*] the Black Duck Woman, originally lived in ...[Ritharrngu] ...country. One day when a heavy flood covered the country, she changed herself into a duck and flew away towards the English Company Islands. She was carrying eggs inside her. Her totemic site is Bulimiri (near Cape Wilberforce) where she made a nest and laid her eggs. The duck population increased rapidly and all the islands of the group were created. One day, during a king tide, a very big wave broke over the locality and split [*Muthali's*] eggs. They turned into rocks still seen today and are a sacred site of the [Warramiri]...The nest also became a rock belonging to the Ritharrngu..."

Elkin, Berndt and Berndt (1950:31) also describe this alliance between the Warramiri and Ritharrngu, but their version refers to a separate totemic site. They say that the *Manda* (octopus) is linked to the sea off Cotton Island. Its 'Dreaming' centre is a cave under the water, and nearby on the shore is a black rock representing the Whistling Duck's nest. The site is associated with the Ritharrngu *Mala*, for the Duck had come over from that territory. Not liking the fresh water billabong, she came to the sea, and laid her eggs in the nest. There she lived with the *Manda* and on her eggs are marks representing her string girdle which she wore, which young *yirritja* women also used to wear.

To describe this story as either a myth of creation or a myth of inheritance is problematic. In both cases, informants say, the Duck brought kinship beliefs to Warramiri lands, which is an indirect reference to the

Illustration 2a. Burrumarra holding a cycad seed grinding stone, a symbol of the Duck's egg. Here it is used as a sign of ritual authority at a mortuary ritual at Elcho Island in the late 1970s.



legacy of the moiety all-being *Lany'tjun*. This view is backed up by Warner (1969:351), who says the Duck is symbolic of moiety law in Ritharrngu *Rom*. The Duck is operating at two levels, at a creational and alliance level, and at moiety level, on behalf of *Lany'tjun*.

Apart from the *Muthali*, through their association with the Wangurri, the Warramiri also possess other laws which tie in with *Lany'tjun's* legacy. In the next section I look at the hollow log 'Dreaming', and the idea of the mixing of fresh and salt water as a metaphor for the unity of diverse *yirritja Mala* as a moiety.

2.2-5 The Freshwater-Saltwater Metaphor of Alliance

There are extensive bodies of totemic or creation mythology in north-east Arnhem Land which make reference to the meeting of fresh and sea water.⁵ As Coombs (1994) says, it is a metaphor for the unity of *Yolngu Mala*.

"Two streams of water flow into a coastal lagoon: one stream is tidal and salt from the sea; the other fresh from the rain on nearby hills. As the streams enter the lagoon there is, on the surface, the chaotic froth of their interaction which gradually establishes a recognisable pattern as the streams merge with the lagoon. But the separate identity is not wholly lost. At various levels the streams continue to exist, influencing and changing, but not destroying the diversity in the character of the lagoon," (Coombs 1994:230).

The mixing of ideas from fresh and saltwater groups reflects *Lany'tjun's* desire to unite *Mala* under a single law, Burrumarra said. This is highlighted in an account of the creation of the world symbolically re-enacted in the *Ngaarra* ceremony of the Warramiri and Wangurri. Warner (1969:350) says,

"Before this world there was only the ocean. The rain fell down and made the foam. That made some of this land. That white stuff (foam) went from the [Warramiri] country to the Crocodile Islands. [Garrawarrk], the great [yirritja] totem, floated in on this and made [yirritja] camps by sticking his horns in the land and splitting the ground and making wells and creeks."

⁵ This is an 'inside' theme of the Warramiri/Wangurri *Ngaarra* ceremony. As Warner (1969:358-359) says, people split up according to whether they are fresh or salt water people.

Warner (1969:344) says that it was *Garrawarrk* that named places, and gave them their power names. He adds, "All the [*Yirritja rangga*] were brought by the flood and the tides. The big rain made that big flood," (Warner 1969:344).

Garrawarrk here is a creational being in the image of the hollow log.⁶ There is no reference to moiety ancestral figures, but informants say that the *Garrawarrk* is the spirit of *Lany'tjun* and that it links as one, Warramiri sea peoples and all Mandjikay collectives from the Mangalili in the south, to the Burera in the west. Such a view tends to explain Burrumarra's statement that while the Warramiri have nothing in their history from *Lany'tjun* (in McIntosh 1994b:76), all that *Lany'tjun* had was already in their domain. Their alliances with mainland groups through particular totems are based on 'his' legacy and reflect 'his' teachings.

This point is also made in the work of Berndt and Berndt (1948). They say that the *Milka* (mangrove worm), inside the hollow log, travelled from the fresh water to the sea and along the coast, and that it originally belonged to the Manggalili *Mala*,

"...but this big log [*Garrawarrk*] 'said he was in the wrong place: he had become rotten from lying in fresh water'. He (ie. the log) left that place and, travelling under the ground, came out at Druru'lapa at Arnhem Bay [*Dhalinbuy*]... with the *Milka* inside; the latter was alive because it came out in salt water. The log (which is used as a sacred object) went on, coming out from the ground at Danangalpi...; later it went on to [*Ganbaltji*] (on the mainland opposite Elcho Island), and then on to Milawa (near Milingimbi), so that now all these places from Blue Mud Bay to Milingimbi are ritually connected through the [*yirritja*] clans," (Berndt and Berndt 1948:319).

That *Garrawarrk* was 'doing the business' of *Lany'tjun* is supported by the fact that totemic symbols representing aspects of this story are depicted in a wooden *rangga* image of *Lany'tjun* (see illustration 3b). *Garrawarrk* and *Lany'tjun* appear to be one, though quite separate, as are the stories of the Duck from *Mala* and moiety perspectives. In the former, *Garrawarrk* is a creation totem for certain coastal groups. In the latter, it is the basis of a

⁶ Warner (1969:353, 409) in an account of the eastern *yirritja* sea cycle and *Ngaara*, refers to the movement onto the coast of the hollow log (*Garrawarrk*), the coconut and a plank of timber, and also of people who are 'not true *Yolngu*', *Kiloro* (*Gelurru*), who also come in on the tide (see Chapter Five).

bond between these groups, and is 'doing the business' of *Lany'tjun* (see also Groger-Wurm 1973:87-90).

So we have the idea of unity within the moiety between various collectives, each with their own unique inheritance, but all operating within an agreed framework of law. The Warramiri flag design depicts the whale, cuttlefish and octopus and their presence suggests that they also invoke such company. In the next section I look at various sea laws which are fundamental to Warramiri identity. I introduce the ancestral figures *Ngulwardo* and *Marryalyan* which unite *Mala* in ways not dissimilar to the *Milka*, and also creational totems such as the whale which align groups in more localised ways, but still through the all-pervasive moiety idea of unity in diversity.

2.3 Warramiri Totemism

Just as defining the Warramiri *Mala* can be problematic, so too is giving an overview of Warramiri totemic beliefs. As I mentioned in Chapter One, the various collectives that now make up the Warramiri whole have inherited relationships 'embedded' in lands now occupied. Thus the Warramiri-Girrkirr of northern Elcho Island had totemic links with the Gupapuyngu-Daygurgurr, Mildjingi and Yalukal *Mala* through various totems, and Warramiri-Budalpudal and Mandjikay peoples have inherited these associations. Therefore while the Warramiri-Budalpudal call themselves *Gutharra* to the Gupapuyngu-Daygurgurr in some contexts, they are also the *Maari* in terms of these inherited lands. Similarly, the Guku-Warramiri, as the name suggests,⁷ was allied to 'honey' peoples such as the Gupapuyngu, but this was not a totemic symbol differentiating the Warramiri from other collectives.

Relatively little work has been done on Warramiri totemic beliefs apart from a recent work by Cawte (1993), which focussed almost exclusively on bark paintings from the Warramiri-Budalpudal *Mala*. A small number of other useful references are to be found in discussions of Warramiri songs (Elkin 1953), in descriptions of bark paintings (Elkin, Berndt and Berndt 1950; Groger-Wurm 1973; Mountford 1956-64), and fleeting references to the *Mala* appear in Keen (1978; 1994), Morphy (1991) and Williams (1986). Of

⁷ Guku is a *Yolngu matha* word for honey.

Illustration 2b. A *Lany'tjun rangga* associated with the travels of the *Milka*, or mangrove worm, inside the hollow log *Garrawarrk*, from Berndt and Berndt (1948).



particular note is Warner (1958) who made brief lists of *Mala* totemic affiliations, including the Warramiri-Mandjikay (see Appendix Three). He also showed how various *yirritja Mala* share certain public or *Garma* totems associated with external influences, ie. the canoe mast (*Marrayarr* or flagpole), bamboo and the grave post (*Wurramu*), and that these were the basis of an alliance within what he termed the *Murrnginy*, which I look at in Chapter Six.

An extensive list of totemic species and their *Mala* affiliations was made as an initial step in exploring the Warramiri cosmos, building on Warner's work and Rudder (1977). A study of the meanings of over 1,000 *yirritja* moiety personal names also helped to define the place of the Warramiri in terms of other *yirritja Mala*.

In brief, the findings are as follows. Major Warramiri 'Dreamings' are associated with the sea alone. Warramiri flora include only those species found on the coastline or which float in on the tide. Some Warramiri totems, however, belong to both fresh and saltwater eg. the *Mardi* or crayfish (ie. with freshwater and saltwater varieties), the *Matjurr* or flying fox (sea origins, but a sky being associated with land creation), the *Muthali* (which travels from the inland to the sea), and the *Mirrinyungu* or whale, which comes from the deep sea waters to the north and beaches itself.

Table 4 details major Warramiri totemic beliefs, but any list cannot do justice to the extent and complexity of a *Mala's* heritage. There are literally thousands of stories connected with Warramiri totems, and their association with other species and peoples. Each has *rangga*, a history and is associated with particular sites in the landscape.⁸

Warramiri cosmology is not limited to the laws associated with totems however, although some Aboriginal accounts emphasise this above all else. For instance, just as Gumatj populations are said to have 'grown up' at that place where the *Wangarr* crocodile built its nest, or Wangurri and Guyamilili

⁸ The names of the Warramiri leaders involved in the Treaty proposal hint at this complexity. The name Burrumarra, for instance, refers to the skeleton of the large white-tailed stingray (*Gundjurru*) a Warramiri totem. Yet Burrumarra is also known as Wurrthunbuy (a whale site at Yirringa); Djumidjumi (a squid), and Raymarrka, white cloud linked to the legacy of *Walitha'walitha* (see Chapter Seven).

Table 4 Major Warramiri Totems

Sea Creatures	Other Clans Involved
Squid (<i>Limin, Djumidjumi</i>)-	Gumatj, Wangurri, Dhalwangu, Munyuku
Octopus (<i>Manda</i>)-	Gumatj, Wangurri, Munyuku.
Queenfish (<i>Yarrwadi</i>)-	" " "
Mackarel (<i>Dhinimbu</i>) -	Gumatj, Munyuku, Lamamirri, Dhalwangu, Golpa
Hawksbill Turtle (<i>Guwarrtji</i>) -	Gumatj, Dhalwangu, Wangurri.
Devil Ray ('Diamond fish' or <i>Malarra</i>) -	" " "
Stingrays (<i>Gundjuru, Gatarangay, Ditjpongarr</i>) -	Gumatj, Dhalwangu, Gup-Birrkili
Cuttlefish (<i>Nyunyul</i>) -	Gumatj, Munyuku, Lamamirri, Golpa, Dhalwangu
Crayfish (<i>Madi</i>) -	" " " "
Pearl, Pearl shell (<i>Muthiyara</i>) -	" " " "
Clam (<i>Dhalimbu</i>) -	" " " "
Reef Fish (<i>Gukuwal, Ngarrwili, Wanarrpa, Mingirri, Badukurra</i>) -	Munyuku, Golpa
Marlin (<i>Ganhdharrangu</i>) -	Gumatj.
Angelfish (<i>Garurunganing</i>) -	Gumatj, Dhalwangu, Wangurri.
Oyster (<i>Mekawu</i>) -	Wangurri, Dhalwangu.

Whale (*Mirrinyungu*) and Whale hunters--Yalukal, Lamamirri, Gumatj Wangurri, Gupapuyngu-Birrkili.

Plants and Trees growing along the foreshore.

Balkpalk, Buyama, Dilminyin, Ganarri (Hawaiian Beauty Leaf), *Wudarritj*.

Miscellaneous

Dog (Dingo - *Bulunha, Bol'lili, Djirrwadjirra, Yanydja*)

Snake (*Luthay*) - Lamamirri, Yalukal, Gumatj, Gup.-Birrkili.

Flying Fox (*Matjurr*) - Gumatj, Dhalwangu, Ganalpingu, Golpa

Duck (*Muthali*)- Ritharrngu, Wangurri.

Pied Cormorant (*Manba*) - Gumatj, Dhalwangu, Gupapuyngu-Birrkili

White and black eagle (*Darrpunangu*) - Gumatj.

Unidentified black bird (*Dhakulaning*)- Gumatj, Dhalwangu, Wangurri, Gup-Birrkili

Rice (*Berratha*) - Gumatj, Dhalwangu, Wangurri, Lamamirri, Gupapuyngu-Birrkili.

Birrinydji's Totems

Flag (*Bandirra*), Mast (*Marayarr*), Knife, Axe, Spirit of the dead (*Wurramu*)

Tamarind (*Djambang*), *Bolu* (Bamboo), *Djanydjurrk* (Poinciana).

peoples where the *Gomolo* sea bird built its, or the Ritharrngu emu (*Wurrpan*) layed its eggs, Warramiri people 'grew up' where the whale beached itself at the 'beginning of time' (Buthimang pers. comm. 1994). Other Warramiri leaders however say it is the octopus or *Birrinydji* that is their foundation.

Within Warramiri cosmology there are other bodies of law which appear to be 'sea' equivalents of the *Lany'tjun* story. *Ngulwardo* and its manifestation, *Marryalyan*, are to Warramiri sea totems, what *Lany'tjun* and *Barrama* are to the *Milka* or long-necked turtle, as I detail in the next section.

2.3-1 *Ngulwardo* and *Lany'tjun*

According to Burrumarra, *Lany'tjun* is associated with totems from the land and coastal fringe, but the Warramiri heritage centres on the ocean and the law here focuses on the creational being *Ngulwardo*, the 'old man' or 'king' of the sea. Cawte (1993:20-21) describes *Ngulwardo's* form thus,

"The God of the Reef...[*Ngulwardo*]...is formed like a man, but...senses like a fish through currents deep in the sea, currents from far-off places."

Ngulwardo is the ocean floor bedrock and coral reef, and is the basis of Warramiri rights to lands associated with various sea totems under 'his' direction. Burrumarra's private collection of paintings includes one of *Ngulwardo*. He is depicted as an aged man, with fishing lines (with shell hooks) in each hand, catching the Warramiri totem, *Yarrwadi* (Queenfish).

Ngulwardo is the creational entity responsible for the emergence of various *yirritja* sea creatures and also Warramiri humans (Cawte, 1993), but this law does not have the same widespread significance as *Lany'tjun*. *Ngulwardo* does not comment on the social arrangements of living populations or the moral dimension of life as the moiety 'All-beings' do.

The 'boundary' between salt and freshwater is perceived to be the meeting place of these two major branches of ancestral and moiety law. Burrumarra described the distinction between the domains in this way,

"What is the difference in taste between the barramundi and the mullet? One comes from the creek and the other from the open sea. Where does this difference come from?"

Douglas (1970:114-128), in a discussion on the crossing of boundaries by people or entities, says that they are problematic conceptually. She also suggests that they are redolent with symbolic input. It is apparent that while Warramiri identity is bound to the sea, it is defined in terms of its interstitial status between land and sea, for most Warramiri totems have a mediating role between the two.

'Boundaries' between these two spheres of influence are far from clear cut, and Burrumarra was the first to highlight this.⁹ It is a conceptual rather than a geographic divide. Thus we have the story of how the barramundi, a symbol of *Lany'tjun*, wanting to travel out to the deep water, and the islands off the coast, but is prevented from entering *Ngulwardo's* territory by Warramiri totems. As Warner (1969:34) says,

"...in the days of [*Wangarr*] (when totems walked the earth as men), Barramundi came from the Wangurri country and tried to go on through to the other clans, but the whale and crayfish totems prevented him; in his efforts to force his way through, he smashed himself into many pieces which flew for many miles and landed in the territories of the other totemic clans in his phratry group [ie. *Mandjikay*] and made their totemic water holes."

Lany'tjun has no direct role in *Ngulwardo's* territory, Burrumarra said. This law terminates on the coast, and the two bodies of law are completely separate, except for the fact that *Ngulwardo* is also *yirritja*, and so in a way, is allied to *Lany'tjun*, although I have never heard anyone suggest this. *Lany'tjun* is associated with the mainland and the freshwater/saltwater interface. *Ngulwardo* is associated with sea water and what Burrumarra referred to as 'oceanal' totems. The barramundi, a manifestation of *Lany'tjun*, links both of these domains, as do other ancestral beings such as the *Milka*, and *Marryalyan* which I discuss in the next section.

2.3-2 The Transformations of *Ngulwardo*

Ngulwardo communicates directly with Warramiri *YoIngu* as they travel by canoe or swim in deep water or over coral reefs and also indirectly, through an intermediary, the totemic being *Marryalyan* (see Cawte 1993). This being works in a 'laboratory' (to use Burrumarra's terminology) under the coral reef, transforming itself into the various creatures that inhabit the

⁹ I return to this subject in Chapter Five, in a discussion of Warramiri relations with people referred to as 'whale hunters'.

seas, such as the *Limin* (squid), *Manda* (octopus), *Nyunyul* (cuttlefish), the *Matjurr* (flying fox) and also *Luthay*, the sea/land/sky snake. Each of these has its own special significance. The cuttlefish, for instance, is a symbol of Warramiri intelligence and healing, and the snake, of sexual prowess.

Marryalyan is also deemed to be the force which drives the seasons, initiating and terminating the 'wet' and the 'dry' (Cawte 1993:74) (see illustration 2d), and as with the *Milka* and *Lany'tjun* himself, it is seen to link salt and fresh water domains. A Wangurri painting of this totemic being was made by Buthimang in 1990 as a means of affirming rights to the Wangurri homeland of Muthumul. This community is perceived as being the meeting place of outgoing freshwater from the Wangurri hinterland, and incoming water from well off the coast in the Warramiri domain.¹⁰ (see illustrations 2c).

Of note is that while manifestations of *Ngulwardo* and *Marryalyan* are land creating beings in their own right, their influence is understood to extend well out to sea and to other lands. The *Manda* is linked to Wigram and Cotton Islands in the English Company group and also to Golpa lands in the Wessel Islands (see illustration 2e). It is deemed to be the guardian of the sea, and can stretch out its tentacles well over the horizon in order to bring relief to those in distress (Burrumarra n.d.). *Luthay*, on the other hand, is linked to Gulirra (Truant Island) and Nangingburra, and also in the skies over Aboriginal land and the seas to the north. The *Yarrwadi* (Queenfish) is associated with the Bromby Islands, and *Guwarrtji* (hawksbill turtle) with many sites throughout the English Company Island group, and both with 'deep' water. The *Nyunyul* site shown in illustration 2f, depicts the cuttlefish rising out from the water, creating the island of Mayunga (Yumaynga). Significantly however, this landform is also symbolic of a boat belonging to the *Bayini*, which was pulled up on the shore (see Chapters Six and Eight).

Another transformation of *Ngulwardo* and *Marryalyan* is the flying fox *Matjurr*. As I show in the next Chapter, the flying fox is also linked to the *Bayini* in narratives. These 'pre-Macassan' visitors were the same colour as this totem and could transform themselves into flying foxes and back again,

¹⁰ Makarrwola, Warner's (1969) chief informant, spoke of how Wangurri land meets the saltwater in only one place in Arnhem Bay (Warner 1969:469). It appears that he was speaking in terms of the *Marryalyan* narrative, and how the Wangurri are seen inhabit the sea/fresh water interface.

suggesting structural links to *Marryalyan* in the construction of 'pre-Macassan' stories.

While the origin of the flying fox is in the sea, this totem is also a central character in the mythologies of the 'land centred' Ganalpingu and Golpa *Mala*. In both Warramiri and Golpa narratives, the flying fox travels to the north each year to some unknown (but named) lands where it gets fat. Like another Warramiri totem, the white and black eagle (*Darrpungangu*), the flying fox comes for the spirit of the deceased upon death. On a more general level, it is perceived to be evil and is associated with sorcery and the spirit of the dead (Warner 1969:206).

The transformative potential of Warramiri totems is highlighted in the following narrative recorded by Mountford (1973:90-91) from the Wessel Islands, entitled '*Naruwilya* and the Intruder'.

"In the early days of the world, a human creator, *Naruwilya*, made his home in the rugged and inhospitable Wessel Islands of north-[east] Arnhem Land."

"After a while, *Naruwilya* became dissatisfied with human existence. Being attracted by the colour and life of the sea, he changed himself into a fish. But even this did not suit him, so he took the form of an octopus, and spent his time searching for food among the outcrops of coral."

"Deciding that the trees and open sky would make the best home of all, he finally transformed himself into a flying fox, and has remained in that form ever since."

"There is a place in the Wessel Islands [Dhokirr], where the flying foxes now live, that is forbidden to all Aborigines.¹¹ Should anyone trespass on that area, and particularly if he should injure or kill one of the flying foxes, *Naruwilya* will change himself again into an octopus, enter the body of the intruder, wrap its tentacles around his heart and kill him."

The *Naruwilya* narrative highlights the fact that the crossing of boundaries in narrative is redolent with significance. In this case, a land-creating being becomes a sea creature, who becomes a sky being. All environments are accessible by transformations of *Marryalyan*, a major

¹¹ This was the site of Burrumarra's initiation in the 1920s (McIntosh 1994b:68).

Illustration 2c. Top left. *Marryalyan*, bridging Warramiri and Wangurri territories in a painting by Buthimang of the Wangurri clan.

Illustration 2d. Top right. The Transformation of *Marryalyan* into an octopus, in a painting by Burrumarra 1992.

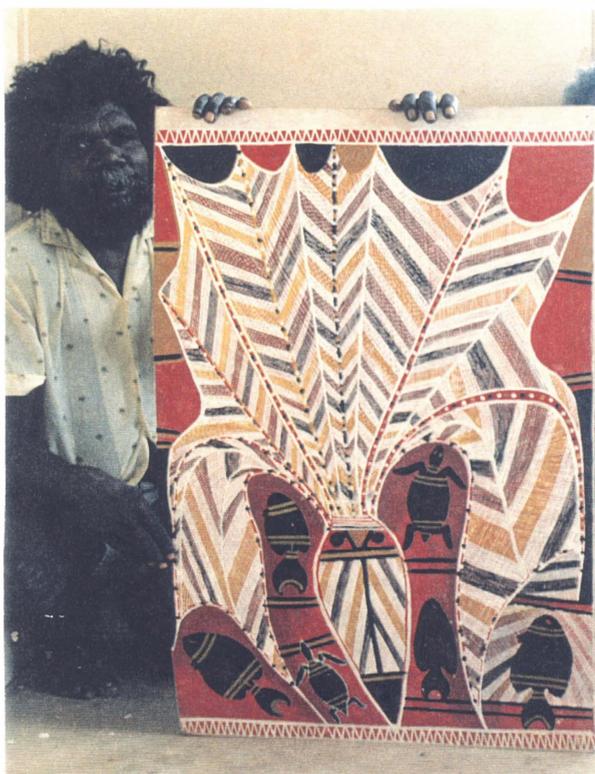


Illustration 2e. A close-up of the octopus design in the Warramiri flag.



Warramiri creational figure. The human transformation of *Naruwilya* is a 'clear-skin' man and on rare occasions, it communicates directly with human beings.¹² Burrumarra's reference to this elusive non-social (human) being focussed attention on what he perceived to be a unique inheritance for the Warramiri. Both this being and the Warramiri themselves are seen to exist on boundaries. In Chapter Six, I show the link between narratives relating to what are perceived to be the very first visitors to Arnhem Land (*Bayini*) and such incarnations of *Ngulwardo* or *Marryalyan*. Both are viewed as creatures of the sea, and the narratives might be seen as variations on the one theme.

2.3-3 The Whale *Mirrinyungu*

For Burrumarra, Liwukang and Wulanybuma, the whale was the major totem of the Warramiri *Mala*. Like the *Manda*, it too is a creational being in its own right. Though the whale's bones are said to come from the coral reef which links it with *Ngulwardo*, and it is *yirritja*, which links it with *Lany'tjun*, the whale is not associated in a creational sense to either of these. As Burrumarra said, it is a product of the sea water itself. It is a symbol of the sea (Warner 1969:353). Its beaching is said to be a blessing for the land (McIntosh 1994b:77).

The *Mirrinyungu* is associated with the creation of various tracts of land, most notably Yirringa (Drysdale Island), Gulirra (Truant Island), Rimitja (Cape Wessel); Nanydjaka (Cape Arnhem) and Nangingburra, which are its major totemic sites. Apart from these, references to the actions of the totemic whale appear in numerous contexts. In a discussion of the *yirritja* *Ngaarra* ceremony, Warner (1969:350) describes how performers go through the motions of whales copulating, and also says that the whale is associated with the *yirritja* moiety land of the dead, carrying the spirit of the dead Warramiri on their backs to that place (see Chapter Five). There are alliance narratives between the Warramiri and a range of other clans based on the beaching of a whale, eg. with the Munyuku at Blue Mud Bay; stories of how the dugong got its tail from the whale at Gulirra; of *Yolngu* being swallowed by the whale and being regurgitated as 'white' men (Groger-Wurm 1973:127); and most interestingly, there are stories which suggest external influences, such as a whale hunting party being towed by a harpooned whale to Gulirra (see Chapter Five). An example of such a story is quoted in Groger-Wurm (1973) in a description of a Warramiri bark painting by Bapayili, collected in

¹² Burrumarra called it 'Dr. John' and said the name came to him in a dream.

1968. (see illustration 2a) It depicts the 'Dreaming' place of the whale at Gurungguru, at Yirringa, and Groger-Wurm writes:

"In the [*Wangarr*] time [*Wurramala*], a mythical [*Wangurri*] ancestor went out to sea and caught a whale. It was too big to load into the canoe so he cut it up and put the pieces into his canoe. When he looked back he saw clouds, *Mangan*, in the sky [triangular pattern]. The whale had sucked in water and when he blew it out the spray rose up and formed the clouds. The cloud design is a sacred pattern of the [*Warramiri*]...and the [*Yalukal*], [*Birrkili*] and Mildjingi *Mala* and the whale and its backbone...became a *rangga* emblem," (Groger-Wurm 1973:96).

Closely associated with the whale in Warramiri cosmology are the *Malarra* (Devil Ray) and *Gundjurru* (Stingray). As Burrumarra says, wherever the whale travels, they follow, and all three appear together in many of the narratives (Warner 1969:353). The *Muthiyara* (pearl shell) is said to have the same colourful sheen as seen on the whale's body and the two are also linked in narratives. The reef fish *Gukuwal*, *Wanarrpa* and *Ngarrwili* are also associated with the whale and the whale hunter (see later in this Chapter, and Chapter Five), and also to *Ngulwardo* and *Birryndji*.

The only other totem of the Warramiri associated with the whale that I will mention is the deep water crocodile. While the Gumatj and Maḍarrpa 'own' the crocodile that lives along the coastline, the ones that find themselves on the outer islands or way out to sea, like the whale, 'belong' to the Warramiri. The Wurambil-Girrkirr and the Yalukal 'owned' this story in the past, and significantly, one of their sacred totemic beings is a crocodile with a whale's tail. Custodianship of this law is now in Warramiri hands, and the design has been used in Warramiri mortuary sand sculptures (see illustration 2g). The point is that totems from the mainland lose their *Mala* affiliation on leaving the coast and become associated with ideas from the only *Mala* linked entirely to the sea, ie. the Warramiri.

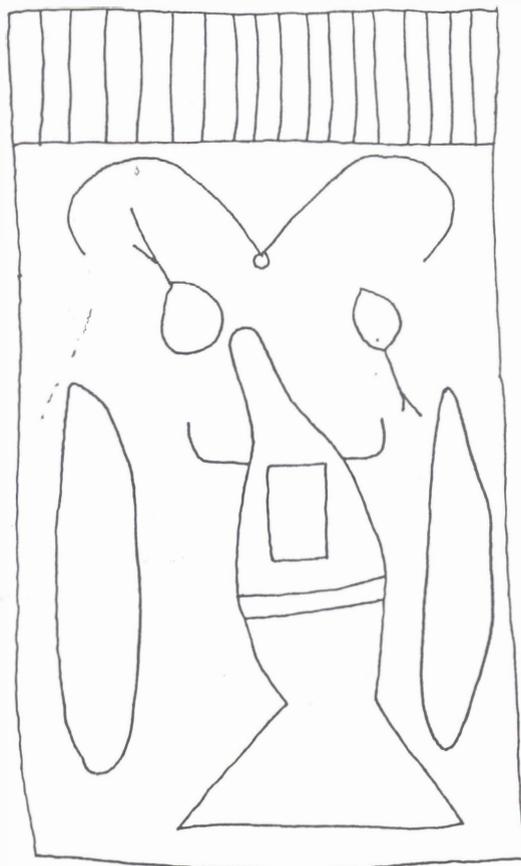
2.3-4 Other Totems

Various other Warramiri totems are associated with the legacy of *Birryndji*, *Bayini* and *Walitha'walitha*, such as the *Garma* symbols referred to by Warner (1958). These include those natural species which have either been introduced by outsiders eg. *Djambang* (Tamarind); occur naturally but

Illustration 2f. Mayunga (Yumaynga), a small island off Cape Wilberforce symbolic of both a cuttlefish and a *Bayini* boat.



Illustration 2g. A Yalukal/Warramiri totemic being, a Crocodile with a whale's tail, as depicted in a mortuary sand sculpture in north-east Arnhem Land (see D. Williams 1982:6).



rain

head of snake emerging

stingrays

sandbank

crocodile with a whales' tail

are linked to the 'Other' eg. bamboo; and also totems which have qualities which resemble the technology of the visitors, eg. the *Ganhdharrangu* (swordfish); the *Dhakulaning*, a bird with a tail in the shape of an axe. I look at this further in Chapters Six and Seven.

The dingo, as I describe in the next Chapter, is a totem of significance to all *Yolngu Mala*. It is *dhuwa* in *dhuwa* land, and *yirritja* in *yirritja* land. Individually named totemic Dogs are linked to specific collectives and tracts of land, however. While often a symbol of anti-social behaviour, the dingo is often depicted as a 'land owner' and is seen as an intermediary between human and totemic worlds. It creates roads or *dhukarr* between *Mala* territories in its epic travels. The major totemic Dog narratives of relevance to the Warramiri are those relating to *Djirrwadjirra*, *Djuranydjura*, *Bulunha* and *Bol'lili*. In most of these, and others, the dingo, a land symbol, comes into contact with the whale, the symbol of the sea, at the boundaries of their own territories (see Chapter Four).

The scrub fowl (*Wayathul*), like the dingo and flying fox, is a symbol that is prominent in Warramiri narratives relating to the 'Other', and it is a *yirritja* totem. It is symbolic of the dead, but like the totemic Dog, is also referred to as a 'land owner' in some contexts (see Chapter Four, and Warner 1969:366). It alerts *Yolngu* to the death of one of their members, and also directs the passage of the soul of *yirritja* on their travels to the land of the dead through its cry (see Chapter Five).

Rose (1947) suggested that at Groote Eylandt, following 'Macassan' contact, certain winds identifying particular Aboriginal groups took on names that were drawn from 'Macassan' terms. It is not known however if *Mala* identity was already organised in such a way. This is also the case in north-east Arnhem Land. *Lungurrma* (the wind from the north) is of significance to the Warramiri and other coastal *yirritja Mala*. This is the wind associated with the movement of objects and ideas onto the coast, eg. *Garrawarrk*, flotsam and jetsam, 'totem' hunters, and 'Macassans'. It blows at that time of year when black storm clouds and immense white clouds tower into the sky. It is symbolic of renewal. The rains flood the land and as Burrumarra said, at the end of the wet season, it is as though the world is made new again (pers. comm. 1990; Warner 1969:392). It removes contamination, and frees people from the past, an idea which as I suggest in

Chapter Seven, the myth maker appears to have used in dealing with the negative outcomes of 'Macassan' contact.

2.4 Warramiri Narratives in *Mala* and Moiety Alliances

Just as Warner (1969) documented the almost ceaseless state of war between *Mala* in north-east Arnhem Land in the 1920s, so there have been continual attempts to achieve unity and reciprocity in dealings with others, as a means of promoting one's own *Mala* interests. This is a point strongly made by Keen (1994) and in this section, I show how Warramiri totems are the basis of what appear to be 'timeless' links with other *Mala*, but which may in fact be quite recent developments.

As Keen (1994) points out, *Mala* are constantly attempting to maintain autonomy. Over time they send out tentacles of attempted co-operation, or domination, or themselves temporarily come under the sway of other groups. Morphy (1990) explains the rationale for this as follows:

"The strategy of Yolngu political action is to increase the number of people one is related to actively through exchange relations, marriage, ceremony, and generally through acquiring knowledge of others' [*madayin*], while at the same time ensuring autonomy by maintaining control of the exchanges and of one's own [*madayin*]," (Morphy 1990:326).

Creation mythology is flexible and allows for the constant formation and re-formation of *Mala* alliances (Morphy 1990). The two examples I will look at here are between *Mala* of the Warramiri and Golpa, and the Warramiri and Gumatj. The first is the *Gukuwal/Ngarrwili/ Wanarrpa* (reef fish) alliance formed earlier this century. The other is a *Mirrinyungu* (whale) link which is an creation narrative for the Gumatj-Burarrwanga and therefore 'timeless'.

Example One

While one might say the two collectives, the Warramiri-Budalpudal and Golpa-Mandjikay were already linked as *Gutharra* and *Maari* through *Lany'tjun* (and through other totemic links such as the crayfish, octopus, flying fox, clam shell, whale and pearl shell), the 'reef fish' link was the basis of a new bond of solidarity between them, and Burrumarra said it dates back to the early years of this century (McIntosh 1992:40-41). Golpa-Mandjikay numbers had dwindled following prolonged warfare and they needed people 'on the ground' in the Wessel Islands to manage the country

(see Warner 1969:17). The Warramiri-Budalpudal, likewise, with their numbers depleted, had temporarily left their home at Dholtji to consolidate in the land of their *Maari*. The foundation of the re-newed alliance was the gift of the sacred *rangga* associated with the *Gukuwal*, *Ngarrwili* and *Wanarrpa* from the Warramiri-Budalpudal to the Golpa-Mandjikay (McIntosh 1992:40-41). These colourful reef fish are Warramiri totems. The *Gukuwal* is a small black and white and has a lance or '*Birinydji's* knife' on its tail. *Wanarrpa* is blue and yellow and has a similar lance on its jaw. *Ngarrwili*, on the other hand, has poisonous barbs or 'knives' on its spine.

According to the agreement between the *Mala*, the Golpa-Mandjikay could use these *rangga* in ceremonies and harness their powers, but they would always remember the partnership they entailed. Through the sharing of these *rangga*, the two groups were seen to become 'one'¹³ and the bond was deemed to be the will of the totemic beings themselves (McIntosh 1992:40-41). As part of the agreement, the Golpa-Mandjikay bestowed mother-in-laws and subsequently wives on the Warramiri-Budalpudal. Burrumarra and his younger brother Liwukang were children of this union, and on this basis, they claimed rights in the Wessel Islands (pers. comm. Burrumarra 1991).

The relationship between the Warramiri-Budalpudal and Golpa-Mandjikay soured in the 1980s over the respective rights of each party to the Wessel Islands (see McIntosh 1994b) and the reciprocal bonds that once characterised relations is not the case today. The same applies to the relationship between the Warramiri and Ritharrngu via the Duck. It has diminished in importance since the latter group moved to missions in the south-east of Arnhem Land earlier this century, but the bonds remain a potential, however, should the need to re-unite arise in the future.

While there is no narrative involved in the Wessel Island 'reef fish' transaction that I am aware of, or sites specifically linked to it, it is as though the existence of a myth or a site is of less importance today than the knowledge by Golpa-Mandjikay and Warramiri-Budalpudal members that there is a sacred alliance between them, and that it is based on these totems.

¹³ They remain of course in a *Maari-Gutharra* relationship, but are 'one' in so far as they share this law.

Example Two

An 'alliance' of another variety is that of the 'whale' link between the Warramiri-Budalpudal and Gumatj-Burarrwanga, who are also in the relationship *Maari/Gutharra*. The Gumatj-Burarrwanga hold sacred *rangga* associated with a particular species of whale, one that is said to have 'fire' in its facial and body markings.¹⁴

The Warramiri are custodians of this creational story but both collectives refer to the species' unique body markings as evidence that the creational 'Dreamings' of the two groups were linked at the 'beginning of time'. Thus it is said that a Warramiri whale travelled to Gumatj territory where it was transformed by contact with Gumatj 'fire' at the bottom of the sea, resulting in its transformation (or creation). People contemplating this species today will recognise that the two collectives are really 'one' because of this link (Burrumarra, pers. comm. 1992).

This unity in law is reinforced by the fact that both groups share the *rangga* associated with the whale and fire, which is exchanged in order to reaffirm this bond. This again is a matter of negotiation and while one group may request such an exchange, the response of the other is not automatic (see McIntosh 1994b:87-88). Of note however, is that senior Gumatj-Burarrwanga members Mattjuwi and Wulki see this narrative as a creation story (pers. comm. 1992).

Earlier this century the alliance was renewed by Burrumarra's father, Ganimbirngu, through his association with the Gumatj-Burarrwanga leader, Barraytjuna. This Gumatj group had left their land at Caledon Bay and travelled to the land of their *Maari*, the Warramiri, in the 'early Macassan' era (pers. comm. Mattjuwi 1992). At the beginning of this century, the Warramiri-Budalpudal and Warramiri-Mandjikay left the Gove peninsula and gave control of Matamata to this branch of the Gumatj, who also claimed rights to it because of its fire 'Dreaming' associations (see Elkin, Berndt and Berndt 1950:43). While the land still belongs to the Warramiri, it is now also a creational centre and homeland for the Gumatj-Burarrwanga people.

In neither of the alliances detailed above is there any mention of *Lany'tjun* or his emissaries. Totemic movements are between *Gutharra* and

¹⁴ The Burarrwanga whale - species unknown.

Maari territories, but such relationships between peoples are the legacy of *Lany'tjun*. Similarly, sacred *rangga* are themselves a legacy of this being, as I mentioned earlier. So while there is no reference to moiety law in these narratives, such alliances derive their authority from the moiety/*Mala* framework, and are based on the idea of unity and reciprocity between collectives.

Creational mythology allows *Mala* to pursue alliances according to their needs, without threatening established ideas of identity. In the form of an actual transfer of sacred *rangga*, the basis is laid for the emergence of entirely new narratives, and this, I later suggest, is what has been happening in terms of the 'Other' for many hundreds of years.

2.5 *Mala* and Moiety Alliances and the Treaty Proposal

How does this tie in with the Treaty Proposal? The images displayed on the Warramiri flag include references to the octopus, the cuttlefish, the dog, *Birrinydji* and the whale. At one level at least, it is a statement that the Warramiri are custodians of these bodies of law and of the associated lands. But how is this of relevance to other Aborigines or Australians more generally?

The Warramiri are strongly associated with the sea, suggesting that they are ideally suited to take on a mediating role in terms of peoples and ideas which also come onto the coast, but at the moment, we do not have enough data to make such a connection. All we have is Warner's (1958) reference to the Warramiri association with *Garma* totems reflecting external influences, hints of contact with others in the flying fox and whale narratives and in the naming of winds, and in ceremonies linked to the movement of ideas and objects onto the coastline.

Yet with the data at hand, it is possible to suggest that the action of the Warramiri leaders reflects the very same principles which are at the heart of the *Yolngu* mythological/religious system. It is the interplay of creation and inheritance myths, or rather ideas of several levels of significance, that allow statements to be made about *Yolngu* solidarity on the one hand, and diversity on the other. The Warramiri aim is for the recognition of *Yolngu* as partners in the land of Australia, but this is not a statement of a desire for assimilation. As in moiety arrangements, each party maintains a distinct inheritance and has an equal though different role in moiety affairs.

All Aboriginal groups share a common problem of how to deal with outside influences, and the Treaty proposal is one of a range of possible solutions. For the Warramiri leaders, the actions of creating a new *rangga* to link all peoples follows the established practice undertaken when *Mala* align, a point again strongly made by Keen (1994). The Warramiri have created an emblem reflecting their own laws, and placed it in the context of a proposal which links together all Aborigines (via the use of symbols from all groups) and Australian society as a whole, symbolised by the Union Jack. The Treaty action represents a desire for a partnership, at an Australia-wide level, between Aborigines and non-Aborigines, just as in the sharing of *rangga* at a local level is based on the moiety legacy. Like a myth variation linking groups, the Warramiri are anticipating positive changes and a flow on in terms of benefits. It is a call for reciprocity in dealings with the 'Other', but is also saying that this alliance cannot be a one sided affair.

2.6 Conclusion

The Warramiri occupy the land-sea boundary, and their 'totemic' identity is centred on the sea. Narratives associated with Warramiri ancestral beings in some ways parallel moiety themes. Thus what *Lany'tjun* is for the land, *Ngulwardo* and *Marryalyan* are for the sea, at least in Burrumarra's perspective. Major Warramiri totems are all, in one way or another, mediating or boundary crossing symbols. The whale is a product of the sea water itself, and through it, the Warramiri are linked to all the lands that it travels to, both in other *yirritja* lands and across the seas to the north.

In this Chapter I have also highlighted the way that cosmology is open to change and I have detailed the way in which *Mala* align through the sharing of *rangga*, becoming 'one' in a law. I showed that this is based on moiety principles of unity and reciprocity. While a 'timeless' picture of unity is a feature of representations of the *Yolngu* cosmos, the reality is that there are on-going attempts to achieve it and promote one's own interests at the same time.

The Warramiri Treaty design, I suggest, is like a myth variation on a theme. The Warramiri want to see an alliance between Aborigines and the 'Other', and separate flags representing the discrete heritages of each collective will symbolise this unity in diversity.

In the next Chapter, I begin to look at the history of the ways in which the Warramiri approached the problem of dealings with others. I try to show that the Warramiri leaders have structured the past in complex ways for complex reasons, which appear to be fundamental in terms of their perceived role as mediators with non-Aborigines. The aim is to try to show how the Warramiri have applied their cultural repertoire in new and innovative ways through time in order to try and achieve equity in relationships with the 'Other'.

CHAPTER THREE

3: The Past in the Present

The first stage in looking at how the 'memory' of contacts between *Yolngu* and others is relevant now in the way the Warramiri are negotiating for the recognition of their rights in the Australian community, is in a search of the literature. But what has been recorded of the 'Macassan' past is obscure, incomplete and often contradictory. Burrumarra suggests that there were waves of contact prior to the arrival of 'Macassan' trepangers but such divisions are not prominent today in discussions with other *Yolngu* at the community of Elcho Island. They were however when the first detailed accounts of external influences were undertaken in the 1940s. The views of the Warramiri leaders have not substantially changed, though they admit that many of the stories have been 'mucked up', and most people refer only to 'Macassans' in speaking about historic encounters with the 'Other'.

While I look in detail at Warramiri views on the various 'waves' of contact in Chapters Four to Six, I do not attempt to prove that such a past is necessarily historically valid. As Turner (1988:276) says, members of a society define their relations with others in the same way as they define themselves, ie. in multi-focal and ambiguous forms.

The most striking image in the Warramiri Treaty Proposal flag is that of *Birrinydji*, but there was considerable discussion during the design stage about whether it would be more appropriate to use the image of a woman, *Nona*, (ie. associated with the *Bayini*) in place of the man with swords, for the image of *Birrinydji* had never been released previously. Burrumarra insisted however that it be depicted, and the artists Liwukang and Burrumarra's son Mangutu, complied with his wish. In the same way, I suggest that researchers attempting to come to terms with *Yolngu* representations of the past have been directed along certain paths by informants, and different aspects of what Rudder (1993) terms the 'unchanging eternal' have been emphasised in 'inside' or secret and 'outside' or public accounts. Notwithstanding that there is no such thing as 'truth' and that narratives change each time they are told, I suggest that what has been recorded about the 'Other' is directly linked to the context of delivery, the prevailing views on the value of oral traditions by the writers of the time, and the nature of inter-cultural relations between the groups represented in the encounter. The Treaty proposal must be seen in this light. It is a contemporary

manifestation of Warramiri cultural relations, based on the need to reconcile cosmology and present day realities of Aboriginal dealings with outsiders.

3.1 Representing *Yolngu* Myth, History and Identity

One of the primary aims of the thesis is to highlight how an anthropological approach can help our understanding of the Warramiri position. In this section, I address the myth/history debate, and also look at some of the issues raised by people such as Bloch (1977) on the way that anthropological analysis must take into account the changing meaning of the past in the present.

3.1-1 The Myth/History Debate

The way in which historical processes in oral societies are represented is the subject of continuing debate across the disciplines of history and social anthropology. There are basically three schools of thought. The first model is characterised by the perceived superiority of Western social scientific documentary techniques. A common problem in such representations is that what people say about their own lives is often lost, ignored or edited out of the final product, in the search for objective 'truths' about the past. Such an approach reflects what Fabian (1983) has referred to a denial of coevalness or a failure to acknowledge the historical consciousness of the 'Other'.

The second school of thought builds on the work of Vansina (1985) whose view is that when oral historical accounts are reinforced by findings from linguistics and archaeology, their historical reliability can be impressive. His method, however, has been criticised as it entails the separation of mythical or symbolic meaning from historical fact which risks misunderstanding meanings (Willis 1980:31; Rosaldo 1980:92). Oral sources are cultural documents that organise perceptions about the past, and as Rosaldo (1980:97) says, are "...texts to be read, rather than documents to be restored." They do not necessarily present an historical truth, but rather, make reference to a sacred history. There are no degrees of facticity - true, probable, possible, false, but there is a need to know when narratives should be taken literally, figuratively or even ironically (Rosaldo 1980:97).

The third model, the 'invention of tradition' school, centres around the argument that tradition is constructed in the present and reflects current political concerns (Handler and Linnekin 1984; Keesing 1989). For instance, Feinberg (1994:28) says,

"History is contested ground and there are no disinterested observers. Therefore, we can never hope to get at...objective truth."

What passes for history has little if any correspondence with 'real' historical events, or if historical events can be documented by drawing on appropriate evidence, it is subject to manipulation by interested parties and 'truth' is sacrificed to political expediency (Feinberg 1994:28). There is not 'one' history and what is 'truth' is always relative and changing. Echoing the much earlier work of Radcliffe-Brown (1971:3), Feinberg (1994) suggests that attempts at historical reconstruction, testing and validation are a waste of time, and

"...energy [should rather be devoted] to understanding contemporary political and social forces and the way in which people's representations of themselves and their own cultures fit with their political agendas," (Feinberg 1994:28).

Yet as Feinberg (1994:28) says, such a view contradicts a basic tenet of post-modern anthropology, ie. that cultures, actors and events are historically situated. People's understandings are influenced by current concerns, but knowledge of the past is the product of both history and culture and the process of discussion, negotiation and resolution (Sutton 1988:254).

In dealing with the question of historical authenticity, it needs to be considered that there is no single correct original description of anything and no value-neutral explanation of any event, real or imaginary (White 1978:129), as the current debate between Obeyesekere (1992) and Sahlins (1981; 1985) affirms. Facts do not speak for themselves. Informants and researchers speak for them and fashion the fragments into a whole whose integrity is in the representation (White 1978:125). This is a view shared by Hoover (1980:14), who says,

"Any oral history ...is an edited history. Some details are purposefully omitted, and others are created to fill gaps or make sense of scattered data. The editing takes place both consciously and subconsciously."

This is true for both the spokesperson for the past, and the one who writes about the 'Others' depictions. It is not a question of the search for

objective 'truth', but how events are to be described in order to sanction one mode of explanation as opposed to another.

Lévi-Strauss' distinction between 'cold' unchanging mythic societies as opposed to 'hot' ones, is no longer valid in discussions of Aborigines and change (Beckett 1993; Hill 1988). As both Hill (1988) and Turner (1988:235) say, both myth and history are modes of social consciousness associated with the emergence, reproduction, and transformation of shared world-meanings. Rather than being a machine for the suppression of time (Lévi-Strauss 1966), or as a passive device for classifying historical events, myth is a program for orienting social, political, ritual, and other forms of historical action (Turner 1988:235).

3.1-2 *Birrinydji* and the 'Cargo Cult'

Swain's (1993) work on the analysis of so-called 'traditional' Aboriginal beliefs points out that everything that has been documented about Aboriginal culture is post 1788, and there is uncertainty as to the degree to which narratives reflect on-going relationships with the 'Other'. For instance it has only been in the past twenty years or so in Australia that there have been major studies on what have been termed 'cargo cults'. The apparent 'discovery' of these (see Kolig 1987; Petri and Petri-Odermann 1988; Koepping 1988) has helped shatter the long held notion that Aborigines were somehow locked into 'primitive' ways of looking at the world and unable to change or adapt to new circumstances.

The analytical problems associated with such studies have been the subject of revisions of the anthropological concept of 'cargo cult' in recent times. Kempf (1992:74) for instance says that features of such movements were taken out of context and rearranged to form a separate analytical category, and as Lattas (1992a:1) says, its application tells us more about the classifier than about the belief itself. There has also been an attempt to move beyond criticising western cultural constructions by exploring the historical effects such evaluations have on the people themselves, and the role these had in the articulation of the 'Others' power (Lattas 1992a:1).

Recent work on the contact myth-histories of South American Indians is also relevant in bringing to light the complexities of this subject. Rasnake (1988), for instance, looks beyond the ways in which historical events are relocated by incorporation in narrative in oral societies. Myths emerging as

a result of contact are an attempt to deal with the contradictions that necessarily result. Rasnake (1988:136) says,

"...the subjects' model addresses the present situation with a consciousness of transformation as well as an awareness of the past. Symbolic forms, and especially myths, thus picture the past as an arena in which the present situation of paradox was created. Myth becomes history - the mythic vision becomes imbued with a consciousness of time and transformation - and, at the same time, history becomes myth - "real" events in the past...are modified and shaped not only to conform to principles of order in a particular cultural tradition but also to express the contemporary perception of the meaning of past events; and this is done in such a way that the remembered transformation creates a contradiction, or a paradox, that is yet to be resolved."

In a case study from the Yura of Bolivia, Rasnake (1988) details how certain narratives comment on a present reality of inequality and domination by the 'Other', and how there is a well developed perception that the contemporary social order is a product of past conflicts between two distinct cultural complexes which are presented in myth as being irreconcilable. He describes multivocal ancestral figures inspired by the Spanish presence, which have an ambiguous relationship with the Yura. They 'belong' to the indigenous people, and yet in essential ways, to the dominating outsiders. They give the Yura land to cultivate, and subsequently life and power, but placed over them a race of outsiders who control and exploit them. Rasnake (1988) suggests that such narratives confront the existential dilemmas of life and order them. In creating an arena for the unity and identity of the social group, such myths are a licence for action, but also reflect the ambiguities of powerlessness in the face of the 'Other'.

Applying such logic in an Australian setting, Beckett (1993:675) says that indigenous people desire to incorporate themselves into the 'Other's' world as the basis for making claims upon it, but simultaneously, contest such incorporation in an attempt to achieve autonomy. So in terms of the Treaty proposal, I will be looking at relationships with the 'Other' embedded in north-east Arnhem Land *Birrinydji* narratives, and whether this Warramiri ancestral being also exhibits such ambiguous qualities.

3.2 What has been Written about the *Yolngu* Past?

In this section I give an overview of the work that has been in the study of the 'Macassan' past across a range of disciplines, before looking in detail at the most authoritative accounts of external influences on the

Yolngu. Under the headings 'totem hunters', the *Bayini*, and 'Macassans' I summarise published accounts. At the end of the section, I compare Burrumarra's perspective with the work of historians and anthropologists as a prelude to an examination of the significance of these 'waves' in the Warramiri leader's world view.

3.2-1 The Significance of the 'Macassan' Past

Despite a significant interest across a range of disciplines in the annual voyages of 'Macassan' trepangers to northern Australia in pre-colonial and colonial times, the question of Aboriginal-'Macassan' relations and the consequent changes brought about in Aboriginal society, remains largely unexamined (see Capell 1965:74; Swain 1993; Urry and Walsh 1981:98). In the field of social anthropology, the detailed reports of the Berndts (1947b; 1949; 1954 etc) have not been seriously debated, and much of the material collected remains unpublished (pers. comm. R.M. Berndt 1989). Thus a statement such as that of Worsley (1955:5) that the important religious ceremonies of north-east Arnhem Land were "...all shot through with Macassarese influences", remains largely unexplained.

Apart from linguistic work (Walker 1988; Walker and Zorc 1981; Zorc 1986), recent detailed descriptions of *Yolngu* cosmology (Rudder 1993) and systems of knowledge (Keen 1994) omit or downplay the significance of subjects which are an obvious legacy of 'Macassan' contact. Similarly, historical and archaeological studies have focussed on what might be termed 'hard' evidence (see Macknight 1976; Mitchell 1994) and Aboriginal perspectives, couched as they are in myth, have received little attention. Recent work by Swain (1993), while not introducing significant new material, has reopened the debate on the subject.

According to Hill (1988:2), both individuals and groups change over time as they actively participate in changing objective conditions. Hill says history includes "...the totality of processes whereby individuals experience, interpret, and create changes within social orders," (Hill 1988:2). To say that the legacy of the 'Macassan' presence was the introduction of various material items of technology, or a few ceremonial complexes borrowed from the visitors, is therefore simplistic. The overriding supposition that no appreciable changes in Aboriginal lifestyles or values resulted is also no longer tenable (Swain 1993:160-162).

What is known is that in dealing with the new, Aborigines made certain interpretations which, when handed down through the generations, became institutionalised in what is termed myth by social scientists, and *Rom* or law by *Yolngu*. In the present we are dealing with oral traditions which have passed through many hands and interpretive processes. While not being able to be literally read as a direct account of the past, a study of *Rom* can throw light on the ways in which Aborigines continue to make sense of, and respond to, complex or contradictory situations.

3.2-2 External Influences

The most authoritative accounts of external influences on the *Yolngu* world are Warner's (1958/69) *A Black Civilization*; R.M. and C.H. Berndt's (1954) *Arnhem Land, Its History and its People*, and Macknight's (1976) *The Voyage to Marege*. Warner (1969:445) says that *Murrnginy* society had been constantly enriched by cultural waves from the south probably from time immemorial, but that technological borrowings of recent times had come from contact with Malay ('Macassan') traders from the west. He also makes reference to people from the north known as Ki-luro (*Gelurru*) but there is no attempt to locate them in time or space. Berndt and Berndt (1954:64) on the other hand, attempted to show that there were a number of discrete phases of contact. R.M. Berndt (1965) however acknowledged that it was difficult to locate these with any certainty because Aborigines have,

"...enshrined their past in contemporary song, story and ritual. It is, of course, a past seen through the eyes of the present,...a present...which is rapidly changing; and for this reason alone it is not possible to speak strictly in terms of dates," (Berndt 1965:4).

Burrumarra agreed with the published view put forward by the Berndts (1954) and also Mountford (1956-64) that the *Bayini* were the first significant 'wave' of historical influence in north-east Arnhem Land. But he said however that they came after the whale and 'totem hunters', (ie. *Gelurru*, who are linked to sites along the Arnhem Land coast), and before 'early' and 'late Macassans'. In Warramiri views there is a significant connection between these 'waves' of contact, through *Birrinydji*. 'Totem hunters' lived for the sea and all their technology was from *Birrinydji*, and the *Bayini* 'lived' for *Birrinydji*, Burrumarra said. 'Macassans', on the other hand, like the Japanese and Europeans that followed them, were a law unto

themselves. Yet all came to Arnhem Land at the behest of *Birrinydji*, Burrumarra added.

Macknight (1976) omitted any reference to 'totem hunters' and dismissed the possibility that the *Bayini* were an historical reality, presumably viewing such narratives as reflections on the various stages in the establishment of the trepang industry by 'Macassans'. His focus of attention was the organisation and history of Macassan voyages to the Northern Territory.

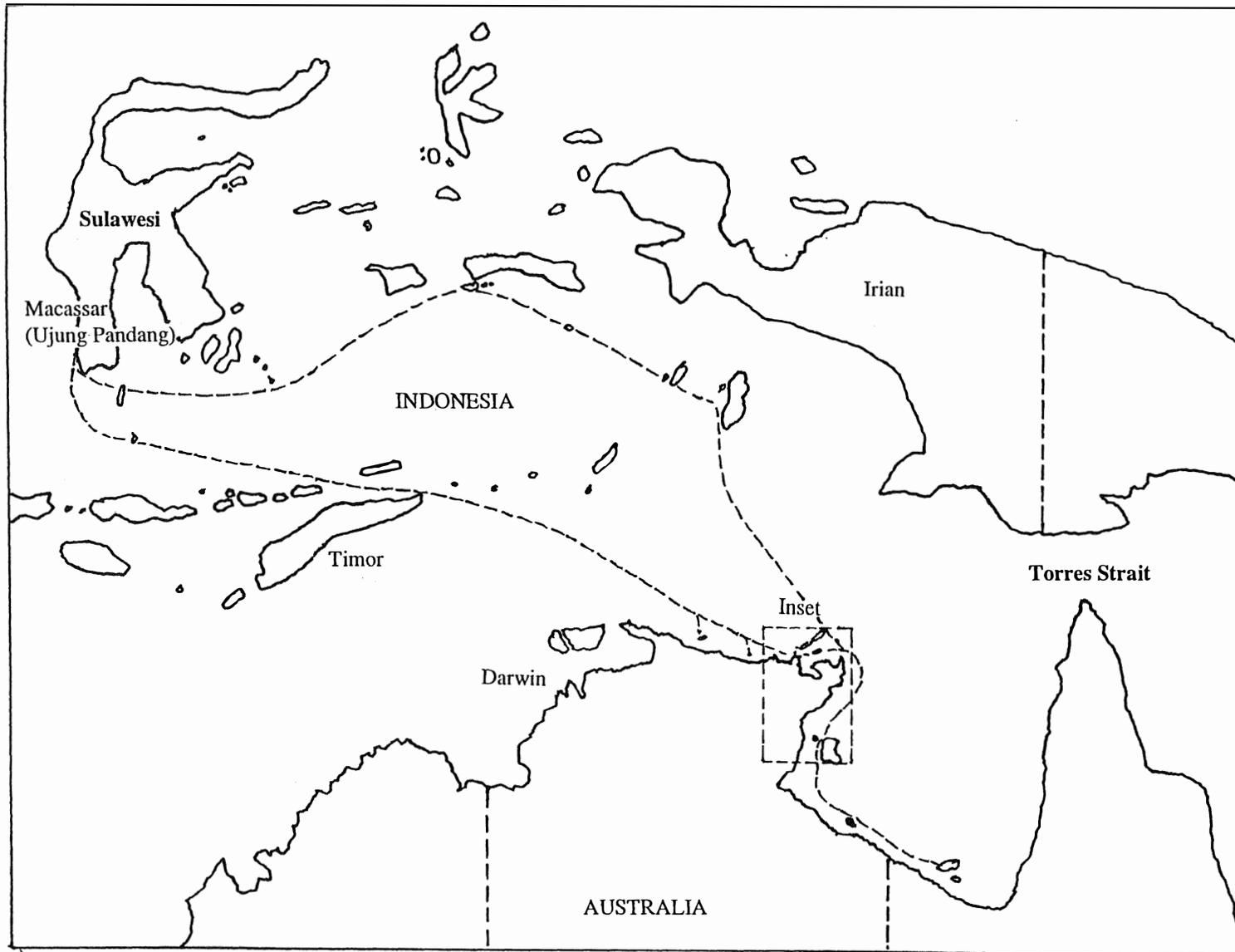
In the next section I give an overview of the Aboriginal past as recorded in the literature. Following this, I look in more detail at the stories of *Birrinydji*, which have appeared in the literature only in recent times, as a means of coming to an understanding of the significance of the way the past has been structured by Warramiri informants.

3.2-3 'Totem Hunters'

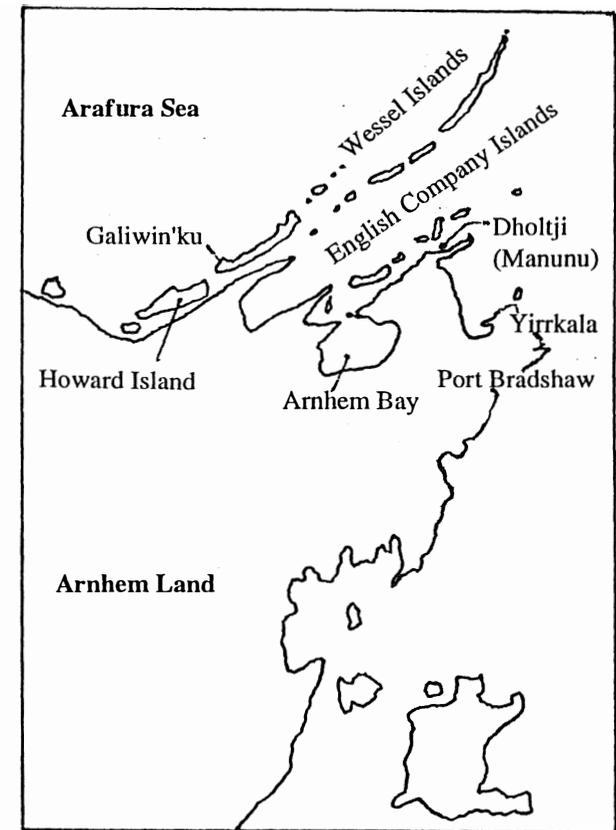
Burrumarra referred to the first 'wave' of contact by the expression 'whale hunters', or 'whale killers' or *Gelurru*, *Wurramala*, *Babayili* and *Dhurritjini*.¹ 'Totem hunters' were said to be associated not so much with Aboriginal land, but with the waters adjacent to the Arnhem Land coast. The most comprehensive accounts of this 'wave' of influence are by Berndt (1948) and the Berndts (1954), but conclusions were tentative. It was suggested that for countless centuries Aborigines had been aware of a people known as *Wurramala* (Berndt and Berndt 1954:64). Song cycles relating to their activities had their origins in the very earliest odds and ends brought in by the tides from the islands to the north, and also by irregular visits by peoples from there, Berndt suggests (1948:103).

Accounts are quite ambiguous. In some interpretations, 'totem hunters' are spirit beings associated with the 'land of the dead' and they assist in the passage of the *yirritja* soul of the deceased to this place, known variously as *Badu*, *Banda*, *Mutilnga* or *Nalkuma* (see Chapter Five), and are associated with the last stage of what the Berndts (1954) refer to as the great *yirritja* contact trilogy of song cycles (ie. the *Bayini*, the 'Macassans', and

¹ For other *Mala*, these same characters are involved in the hunt for the dugong, turtle and stingray, and for the purposes of analysis, I refer to them as 'totem hunters'.



----- 'Macassan' Trepang voyages



Map 3. Eastern Indonesia and Northern Australia

Badu). In other accounts, the songs are said to be about reflections on travel aboard 'Macassan' praus (Berndt 1948), but informants in the 1940s were divided on whether eastern Indonesia and/or Torres Strait was involved (Berndt 1978/79:65-67).

The Berndts (1954) and also Mountford (1956-64), do suggest however, that 'totem hunter' narratives are quite distinct from the stories of 'Macassans' from Ujung Pandang, and it is hinted that they are linked in unknown and complex ways with the Islamic mast and flag mourning ceremonies associated with *Wangarr* or 'Spirit Macassans' (see Warner 1969:421; Walker 1988:32).

Representations in art of 'totem hunters' are few and more often than not, their presence is inferred, ie. in the journey of the spirit of the *Yolngu* deceased to a land across the seas to the north (Mountford 1956-64:314), or through association with sacred totemic emblems, ie. the tail of the whale cut off by the whale hunter *Wurramala* (see illustration 3a).

In Chapter Five I look at a range of 'totem hunter' narratives, in particular how the visitors hunt for the whale, dugong and turtle in order to feed the *Yolngu* 'spirits of the dead'. Such narratives are closely allied with *yirritja* creation narratives, with the Warramiri dead, for instance, being taken to their totemic centre in the north of Arnhem Land on the back of a whale (Warner 1969:356).

3.2-4 The *Bayini*

The next 'wave' of visitors comprised the first outsiders to settle on Aboriginal land, according to Burrumarra, and were known as the *Bayini*. Little information has been published on this group, apart from Berndt and Berndt (1954) and Mountford (1956-64).

The Berndt's (1954:34) describe the word *Bayini* thus:

"...[It] is used to classify the first visitors to [settle on] the northern coast of Arnhem Land...All along the coast...special sites are said to have been associated with them. There are certain rocks that symbolise a wrecked [*Bayini*] boat, or a lost anchor, and various places are named after incidents that occurred during their stay. Personal names of many Aborigines today signify their [*Bayini*] derivation..."

"...We cannot be certain just who these [*Bayini*] people were...The Aborigines are quite decided that [they] were not like the Macassans who came after them, because they are remembered particularly for the golden copper colour of their skin."

Unlike 'white' 'Macassans', the *Bayini* are said to have built stone houses in north-east Arnhem Land. The women cultivated the ground, growing rice in Gumatj and Warramiri territory, and made pottery with the assistance of local Aboriginal people (Berndt and Berndt 1954:220). In all accounts, the emphasis in story telling is on women, and the Berndts could offer no explanation for this.

While the Warramiri themselves sometimes ponder the identity of the *Bayini* (see Chapter Six), within the non-Aboriginal community speculation has been rife. The word is in common use in the islands off southern Sulawesi (eg. Selayar and Bouton), and means a girl or woman, and on this basis, Berndt (1965:5) suggested they might have been Sama-Bajau or sea gypsies, a view shared by Walker and Zorc (1981:118) and Spillett (1992:5). Others however believe them to have been Gudjeratis from India (Halls 1965:4), Chinese (Levathes 1994; Worsley 1955:2), Dutch or even Portuguese (Mountford 1956-64:334). In one extreme case, they were brought to the attention of the 'science' writer Von Daniken because of celestial references in some of the stories (pers. comm. E. Saffi 1993; see Chapter Five). It is fair to say that the question of the identity of the *Bayini* represents one of the longer standing puzzles of Northern Australian history and anthropology (Capell 1965:68).

The Berndts (1947b:133) remained undecided as to whether *Bayini* settlement was planned or enforced. They say that contact could have been before the sixteenth century although they said that more archaeological or other evidence would be needed to clarify this.

Of contact in general, Berndt and Berndt (1954:38) suggested that Aborigines did not desire to imitate the *Bayini*, preferring their own way of life, and while the two groups co-existed, they did not seem to have been willing to learn from each other, the *Bayini*, for instance, keeping the secret of weaving to themselves.

Representations of the *Bayini* in art are rare (see illustration 3b) and in the associated documentation, there is a degree of confusion between them, 'Macassans' and Aborigines. In one case, a *Bayini* man identified by the Berndts (1954:36) as *Wonatjay* is described by Mountford (1956-64:299) as an Aborigine who had been to Macassar. In another example, the image of *Bayini* women at work at their weaving looms in a painting by Liwukang of the Warramiri clan (in Cawte 1993:83) is identical in many respects to a Gumatj painting by Mungurrawuy in the 1950s, though Mountford (1956-64:293) describes the female figures as 'Macassan'.

3.2-5 The 'Macassans'

According to Burrumarra, and also the Berndts (1954), after the *Bayini* there were two further phases of contact, the 'early' and 'late Macassans'. Berndt and Berndt (1954:40) speculate that the first period lasted from 1700 until the 1820s and the second until 1906, when 'Macassans' were banned from entering Australian waters for the purposes of trepanging.²

Warramiri Aborigines clearly differentiate the *Bayini* from the 'Macassan' collective, and herein lies the problem from an anthropological viewpoint. The *Bayini* are also connected with Macassar (Ujung Pandang), and, according to Berndt and Berndt (1954:37) and Mountford (1956-64:334), to the trepang industry, although Burrumarra disagrees with this. As the historian Macknight (1972:313) shows, much of the terminology associated with them is also 'Macassan'. Why there is a distinction between the two has not been seriously addressed to date, and I pursue this later in the Chapter as a means of throwing light on the meaning and significance of the Warramiri treaty proposal.

As with the *Bayini* and 'totem hunters', images of specific 'Macassans' are rare. They appear as silhouette figures aboard praus, as in illustrations 3c and 3d. Yet in contrast to the other 'waves' of contact, for the 'Macassan' period much has been written. Macknight (1976:1), in giving an overview of the trepang industry, says,

² As I detail later, there was growing concern about the 'Macassans' treatment of Aborigines, the threat of introduced diseases, and the fact that 'Macassans' were not paying taxes.

Illustration 3a. The body of the whale, and its back bone (left) which was cut up by *Wurramala* (from Groger-Wurm 1973:96). Also, see Chapters Three and Five.

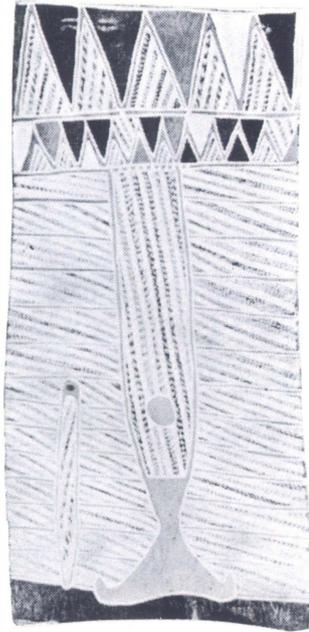
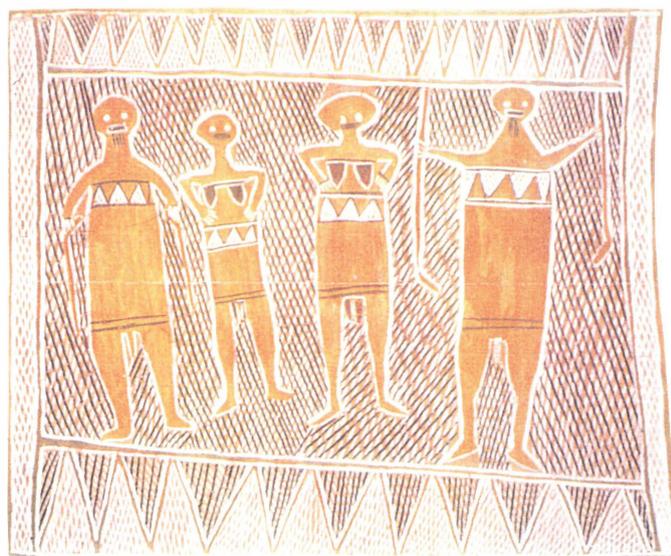


Illustration 3b. The Bayini at Port Bradshaw. 1950s. Art Gallery of New South Wales. Artist unknown. In one of only a few depictions of *Bayini* men, this 'inside' or sacred Gumatj/Warramiri painting depicts two *Bayini* men holding swords in either hand, and two *Bayini* women. The figures are bright yellow in colour, which Berndt and Berndt (1947b:133) say is the same as that of a certain species of flying fox. The *Bayini* were able to transform themselves into this totem.



"It began in about A.D. 1700 and continued on until the early years of this century. For most of the nineteenth century, and probably the hundred years before that as well, at least a thousand men made the voyage each year...their product was exported to an international market. Their object was purely commercial, for they themselves had no use whatsoever for trepang."

The established picture presented in the literature is that the 'Macassans' and Aborigines co-existed, on the whole, in peace and harmony, although this is a somewhat problematic view (Worsley 1955:9; Macknight 1972:289), and any generalisations about contact are of questionable validity. According to Macknight (1972:303) there was a degree of mutual trust between the groups, and certain 'Macassan' boat captains had a basic knowledge of Aboriginal culture, languages and place names. It also appears that the visitors had little or no interest in changing Aboriginal lifestyles, or of exploring inland rivers for the purposes of colonisation (Flinders 1812; Warner 1969:449).

Aborigines were involved in diving for trepang, smoking and curing the sea slug, fishing, building smoke houses, cutting firewood and digging wells (Campbell 1917; Worsley 1955:3). Not only were they wage labourers, they also stockpiled turtle shell, pearls and trepang which they later exchanged for trade goods such as axes, knives and tobacco (Macknight 1972:308; Worsley 1955:3). (see illustrations 3e, 3f)

While there is very little evidence from a western historical standpoint to support the Aboriginal view that there were distinct phases of 'Macassan' contact in the trepanging industry (see Macknight 1972:289), Burrumarra remained adamant on this point. He singled out the 'latter' phase as being associated with breaches of Aboriginal law and atrocities. The 'early' phase, in comparison, appeared to overlap to a considerable degree with descriptions of the *Bayini* or 'pre-Macassan' era (see Chapter Six). The prodigious wealth of the visitors and their desire to share it with Aborigines (Worsley 1955:3)³ and accounts of rituals held jointly by the visitors and Aborigines (see illustration 3g) feature in recently completed bark

³ The Warramiri have a 'card gambling' song (see Elkin 1953:91) in which Aborigines sit at a table. The gambling 'ring' is extended to allow the 'white' man to join in. There is equality in dealings between 'black' and 'white'.

paintings from Elcho Island. Of such ceremonies, Berndt and Berndt (1954:46) write:

"...[T]he most colourful of all...['Macassan'] ceremonies, so Aborigines say, was the gala Bau'wulji, translated...by [Aborigines]... as 'Christmas Day'. It was held during the 'cold' season at [Manunu or Dholtji], in country called by the Macassans Wusing-djaladjari, 'the Last Point'- their last main meeting place on the coast, prior to the homeward trip with the south-east winds. This was during the first phase of contact, before they extended their operations further into the west of Arnhem Land. Here in the sheltered waters behind Cape Wilberforce all the praus assembled, their cargoes were checked, and they held a great ceremony of farewell...they played musical instruments, let off fireworks, and both the Indonesians and their Aboriginal employees joined in dancing and singing."

Curiously, the place where this ritual is said to have occurred is in the very same area that Matthew Flinders met the 'Macassan' Pobasso in 1803. (see illustration 3h) Flinders reported having very little contact with the Aborigines, believing them to be treacherous (see Flinders 1814). Berndt and Berndt (1954) locate the period of joint celebration referred to in the 'early' stage of 'Macassan' contact, in line with Burrumarra's view that there was some difference in the nature of contacts between two phases of 'Macassan' contact. Thus in his view, while the 'Macassans' were welcomed initially, relations deteriorated in the 'last' phase of contact. As the Berndts (1954:47) say,

"In the old days,...trading partnerships were established between the two groups. These involved reciprocal obligations and created classificatory ties of kinship."

Alcohol however, changed all that. Although Macknight (1972:307) suggests that the amounts of liquor introduced may have been overestimated, in Aboriginal oral tradition, it led to prostitution in the 'Macassan' camps, fights of retribution and the death of many Aborigines by gun or sword (Berndt and Berndt 1954:47). There were many murders of crew members as well, and the Berndts (1954:110) suggest that in the final stages of the industry, "...the Aborigines began to feel that they were being exploited, and were not receiving adequate 'pay', in goods and kind, for their work." The atrocities described by Searcy (1909; 1911) are linked to this time (see illustrations 3i, 3j), and are also depicted in recently completed bark paintings from Elcho Island.

Illustration 3c. A 'Macassan' prau under sail. Artist unknown. c.1970. This 'outside' or public painting depicts the annual voyages of 'Macassans' to and from Arnhem Land. The black triangle represents the north wind *Lungurrma*, which brought the praus on to the coast, and identifies the painting as belonging to the *yirritja* moiety. Four 'Macassans' (at the oars and below deck) and an Aboriginal (on top) are aboard. Photo courtesy of P. Lane.

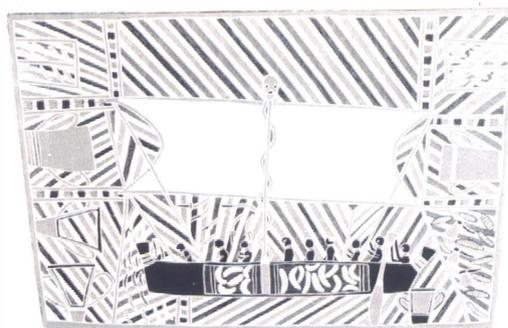


Illustration 3d. 'Macassan' sailing canoe. Artist - Liwukang of the Warramiri clan. 1993. Trepang in the sailing canoe and on the sides of the painting links it with the 'Macassan' era, and not the *Bayini*, according to the artist. It is an 'outside' or public painting referring to historical encounters. Courtesy of the Northern Territory Museum of Arts and Sciences.

Illustration 3e. Elcho Islanders demonstrating the techniques used by 'Macassans' in preparing trepang for smoking, and a representation of the smoke houses that were constructed on Arnhem Land shores.

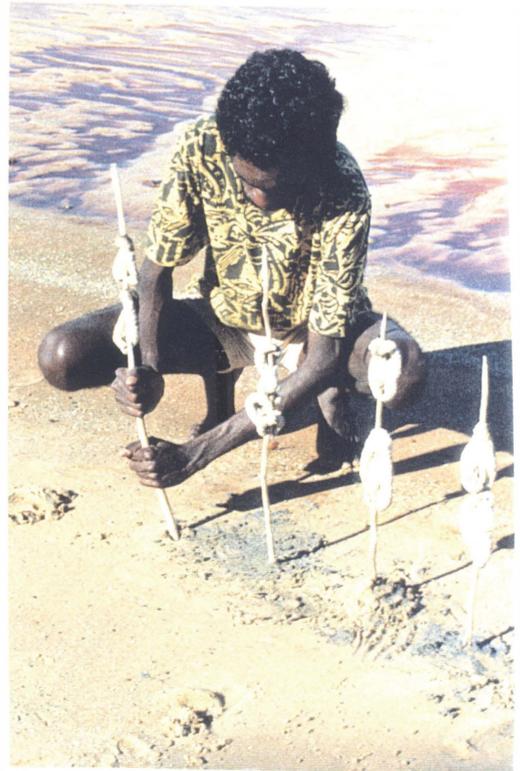
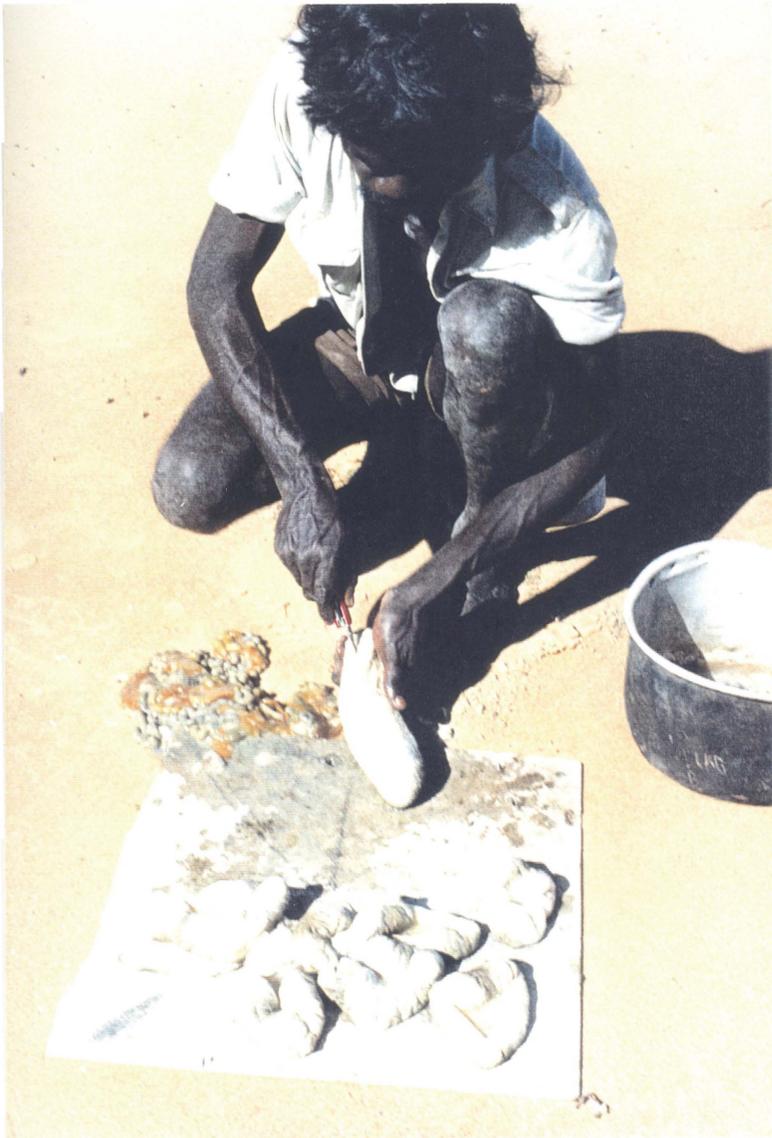


Illustration 3f. The products of the 'Macassan' trade.



Illustration 3g. Ritual of celebration. This 'outside' painting by Mattjuwi of the Gumatj clan in 1993, depicts a scene from the early 'Macassan' era. Two 'Macassan' praus are shown, and on the top left are items of trade. On the top right, 'Macassan' men (with crosses on their chests) and Aborigines, are seen performing a ceremony together. Courtesy of the Northern Territory Museum of Arts and Sciences.

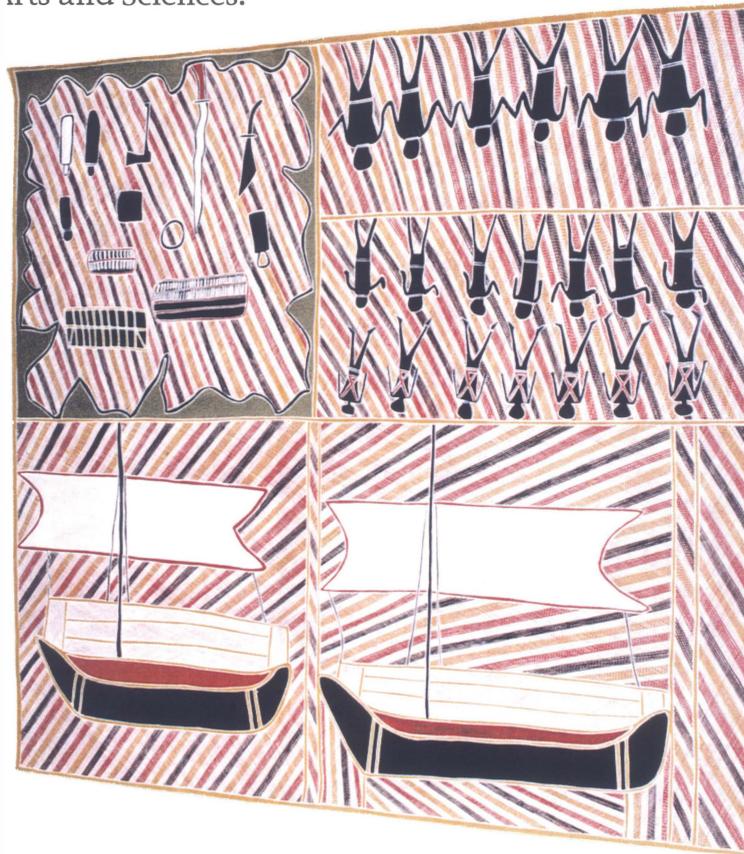


Illustration 3h. The Malay Road between Wigram and Cotton Islands in the English Company group. This is the site where Matthew Flinders met the 'Macassan' captain Pobasso, in 1803.

By the late nineteenth century there was a growing concern by Australian authorities about the trepang trade. The 'Macassans' were not paying taxes and there was a question about their treatment of Aborigines. In 1907, after continued pressure for 'white' Australians to take control of the industry, the Government prohibited the entry of these peoples and a major chapter in Australian history came to an end (Macknight 1986:73).

The atrocities of the later 'Macassan' era were replicated for a brief time in contact with Japanese fishermen and European pastoralists following the departure of the Indonesians (see Searcy 1909 and 1911; illustration 3k). While the Warramiri were not directly affected by the latter, there were some bitter conflicts with Japanese between c1920 up to the period immediately prior to World War Two (see Berndt and Berndt 1954:155; McIntosh 1994b:21). The Warramiri were also aware of the outcomes of colonial expansion and knew of the fate of the Larrakia in Darwin (Webb 1952:6), and of the exploits of pastoralists in south-east Arnhem Land, in which many *Yolngu* were killed (pers. comm. Djiniyini Gondarra, 1992). Missions established in north-east Arnhem Land from the 1920s onwards, provided a refuge for Aborigines.⁴

3.2-6 Approaching the Complexities of Memories of the Past

What we have so far is a comparison in perspectives. We have historians piecing together details of the north Australian past from written records, and also the attempt by anthropologists and historians to locate Aboriginal perspectives within this western historical framework. Historians, unable to find any supporting data for Aboriginal assertions, have rejected them, and very little work has been done by anthropologists on the significance of the stories to Aboriginal people themselves. Macknight, in correspondence with the author (1994) indeed says that while collecting his data, he was confronted by Aboriginal mythology relating to the 'Macassan' past, but did not know how to deal with it, and so omitted most of it from his published accounts. Yet for Burrumarra, the capture of the whale by 'totem hunters', the *Bayini* making pottery on the Arnhem Land coast, and joint ceremonies with 'early Macassans' is history. It did happen and it is true.

⁴ See also Read and Read 1991.

Illustration 3i. The Abduction. As with Illustration 2d, this 1993 painting shows articles of trade and also a trepang cooking area. On board the boat is a lone person, Lul'wariwuy of the Ngaymil *Mala*, an Aboriginal woman abducted by the 'Macassan' Captain Maliwa from Arnhem Bay in the 1890s. She never returned. This was a classificatory mother of the Gumatj artist, Mattjuwi (Cooke 1987:33-34; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Good Weekend', 2 October, 1993: 11-16). Courtesy of the Northern Territory Museum of Arts and Sciences.



Illustration 3j. Inter-cultural conflict. This painting by the artist Daypurryun of the Liagawumirr *Mala*, painted in 1993, also refers specifically to an historical incident from his clan territory at Elcho Island in the later period of 'Macassan' contact. On the bottom one can see three men (Aborigines) and a boy (a 'Macassan'). They face a 'Macassan' firing squad for the murder of a crew of trepangers, but on the strength of evidence from the young man, the Aborigines are spared, and one clan leader is taken to prison in Macassar (Isaacs 1980:84; Read and Read 1991:16-18; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Good Weekend', 2 October, 1993: 11-16). Courtesy of the Northern Territory Museum of Arts and Sciences.

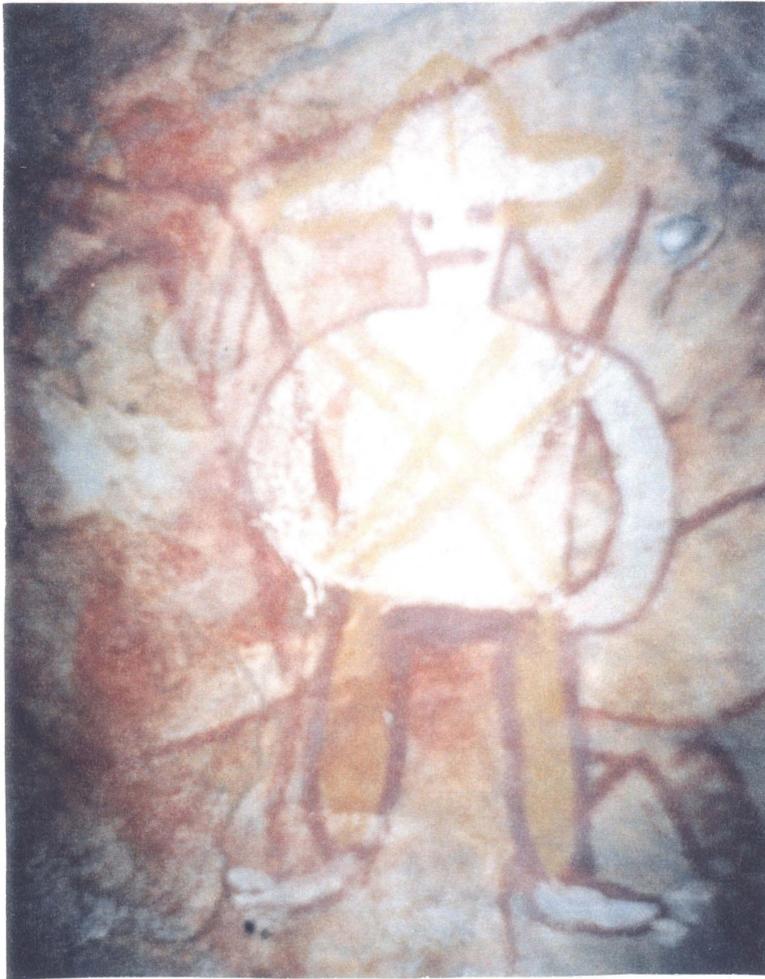
In the next two sections, the aim is to uncover the reasons why there is a separation in accounts of the *Bayini* and 'Macassans' and 'early' and 'later Macassans', in Burrumarra's account. I try to answer the question, why do Warramiri leaders still proffer such views when many other community members no longer do so? Initially I look at what has been recorded to date on the *Bayini*.

3.3 Who are the *Bayini*?

The earliest anthropological studies in north-east Arnhem Land were undertaken by Warner in the 1920s and Donald Thomson in the 1930s, and neither mentions the *Bayini*. Warner (1969) wrote in detail of the social effects of Malay ('Macassan') contact and discussed the impact of what he termed the *Wangarr* 'Macassans' on Aboriginal mythology, and in particular, mortuary ritual. Thomson's (1957:30) approach was somewhat different. He raised questions of the psychological impact of early 'Macassans' on Aborigines, but apart from a few lines on acculturation and the apparent hero worship of the early traders, he did not pursue the matter in any detail. In an earlier text (Thomson 1949a), the focus was on the impact of a 'virile' culture from Indonesia on local Arnhem Land trade networks and there was speculation as to the ancient nature of the visits. As with Warner, there is a presumption that 'Macassans' were the only group of visitors to have been involved with Aborigines, and that complex mythologies were in place explaining their origin and purpose.

It was in the 1940s that the term *Bayini* first appeared in the literature, and it was evident that in the various accounts they were seen not only as *Wangarr* or 'Spirit Macassans', but also as a 'wave' of historical influence prior to 'Macassans'. Berndt and Berndt (1954:33) for instance say that the *Bayini* came at the beginning of the historical period, after the 'golden age' of the creator beings. *Djang'kawu* had already peopled the region but the arrival of the *Bayini* was considered so early that "...they are regarded less as historical figures than as mythological spirits contemporaneous with the major Ancestral beings," (Berndt and Berndt 1954:33). Thus Mountford (1956-64:277) shows a representation in art of the meeting of *Djang'kawu* and *Bayini*, and Berndt and Berndt (1954:33) say that *Lany'tjun* ate rice that the visitors had grown. They also describe how the *Bayini* removed themselves from Port Bradshaw to Dagu, not far away, following contact with

Illustration 3k. Cave paintings from the Wessel Islands showing evidence of contacts with pearlery, either Japanese or European. Images of weaponry feature in many of the images.



Djang'kawu. There was, however, an exchange of feathered string between them and,

"[*Djang'kawu*] took from [*Bayini*] his charcoal colouring, which he used in painting sacred designs, because [*Bayini*] forgot to take with him his black trepang-stirring 'spoon' when he left Port Bradshaw," (Berndt and Berndt 1954:33).

As *Wangarr* or 'Spirit Macassans', the *Bayini* were seen to be of a similar order to other totemic or ancestral figures, ie. creating sacred sites and transforming the landscape, with Aborigines acquiring their qualities, characteristics and laws. For instance Williams (1986:28) says,

"...when the Macassans first arrived on the coast, the Aborigines then living there were expecting them. This was because during that time in the far distant past when spirit-beings were investing the world with meaning, spirit-Macassans had appeared. They brought with them in spirit form the things that 'real' Macassans would later bring and explained their use to Yolngu."

Mountford (1956-64:334) includes one of the very few narratives published on the *Bayini*. He tells of how 'golden' skinned people from Jumaina⁵ brought their women and children with them to Arnhem Land (see illustration 3b). At the totemic centre at Port Bradshaw there are two wells in which the *Bayini* ancestors still live today, Mountford says.

"Gurumuluna, the headman of the [*Bayini*] and his sister camped at a waterhole...[at] Port Bradshaw. After a while, transforming themselves into flying foxes, the brother and sister flew...to the western shore of the port where they changed themselves back into human beings and copulated. Both their footprints and the marks of the woman's buttocks can be seen on the rocks at Dalmumnia. Later, as flying foxes, they flew to Melville Bay, where again, transforming themselves into human beings, they lived as man and wife," (Mountford 1956-64:336).

Of the relationship between the *Bayini* and Aborigines, Berndt and Berndt (1954:37) say that totemic 'bird' people, the ancestors of present day Aborigines, worked for the visitors. In a similar vein, Don Williams (1982:5-

⁵ Jumaina (Yumaynga) is identified by Warramiri informants as a small island just off the coast of Cape Wilberforce but it is also linked to both Darwin and Macassar. Macknight (1972:304) suggests it is the old 'Macassan' capital of Goa in South Sulawesi (see Chapter Six).

6) says that flying foxes made a boat at an inland place and sailed it to the sea, and that these beings are linked to the creation of Warramiri land.⁶

So in the 1940s Aborigines stressed the differences between *Wangarr* or 'Spirit Macassans'/*Bayini* and the exploits of 'Macassan' trepangers (Berndt 1965:5). Apart from differences in terminology for common items of trade and their different skin colour, the *Bayini* were said to have brought women with them. No women were present on the 'Macassan' boats (Berndt and Berndt 1954:36), although one reference suggests that Asian women might have been 'given' to Aboriginal men in exchange for access to land (Berndt and Berndt 1947a:249), but this was questioned by informants I spoke with. Some stories, however, suggested a relationship between *Bayini* and 'Macassans'. Berndt and Berndt (1954:37-38) for instance record that,

"Before the [*Bayini*] left the Australian mainland, they looked around and saw smoke rising from a fire far away at Macassar. Then the *Bayini* headman spoke; 'We have to go there and leave this place. It is better that native people should work for us there'. When they reached Macassar the [*Bayini*] built a big tank and filled it with hot water. They climbed into it and soaped themselves until they became 'white' in colouring, just like ['Macassans' and] Europeans. Aborigines say that this is why the [*Bayini*] songs are mixed with those relating to Macassans."

While R.M. Berndt saw the historical aspect of the *Bayini* stories as being of primary significance (pers. comm. 21/8/89), there are other pieces of information which he recorded which hint more at the material's deeper significance to the *yirritja* moiety and for Warramiri identity. For instance (Berndt and Berndt 1949:221) note that apart from the *yirritja* secular ceremonies associated with the *Bayini*, the Warramiri have sacred *Bayini* ceremonies called *Gwolwunbulma*, *Lil'garun*, *Mara'raguma* or *Djanderalguma*, relating to the 'shovel-nose' iron-bladed spear, the knife and axe, and in these, *Bayini* figures are used as a *maḍayin* or *rangga*. Berndt and Berndt (1949) also note that,

"The *Bayini*...sent out their ideas and customs, (mainly ritual and ceremony), called 'law', to different *yirritja* groups of aborigines, from Cape Wilberforce [ie. Warramiri land] to Caledon Bay [Gumatj territory], so they could continue when the [*Bayini*] left," (Berndt and Berndt (1949:221).

⁶ This link between flying foxes and the *Bayini* mentioned earlier hints at a process of structuration, and I take this up in later Chapters.

In the late 1960s the historian Macknight set about debunking what he deemed to be inventions in Aboriginal accounts of the past. In his work '*The Voyage to Marege*' Macknight (1976) refers to puzzling ceremonies with 'Macassan' associations.

"Most remarkable of all are certain stories, associated with particular places in Australia, that I believe to be derived from experience and observation in South Celebes and possibly elsewhere. The idea of things which properly belong overseas has been transferred to familiar places in order to integrate this knowledge into the spatially oriented framework of Aboriginal thought," (Macknight 1976:92).

He adds that the stories of the *Bayini* are, "...a most remarkable instance of the need to distinguish between the account of the past current in a society and the actual events of the past," (Macknight 1976:161), and that,

"Whatever one makes of the [*Bayini*] stories, there are no details in this material or in any other Aboriginal information about the Macassans that can be assigned with confidence to a period other than the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The time needed to produce the effects of Macassan contact seen in some Aboriginal societies is a matter of opinion. I believe that two centuries is more than enough time," (Macknight 1976:97-98).

Berndt and Berndt (1954:55) agree that the *Bayini* phenomenon is an example of the projection of the historical into the mythological past, and so the overwhelming presumption is that the stories of the *Bayini* are largely invention based on actual 'Macassan' and perhaps other contacts, and also Aboriginal experiences overseas. But what is the '*Bayini*' law that the Berndts (1954) refer to, and of what relevance is it now? Why did Aborigines insist in the separation of the *Bayini* from 'Macassans', and why did they focus on the activities of women in accounts of 'pre-Macassans'? The situation is complex and even more so now since the term '*Bayini*' has largely vanished from public use as a reference to a discrete historical episode. It is now used almost exclusively as a personal name for a female member of the *yirritja* moiety. It means 'white' woman in *Yolngu matha* (see Zorc, 1986). In the next section I look in more detail at this puzzle.

3.4 Comparing the Earliest and Most Recent Recorded Narratives

The recent appearance in the literature of the 'man of iron' *Birrinydji* (Cawte 1993:42; McIntosh 1992:101; 1994a:78-79; 1994b:90-92) provides an opportunity to speculate on the separation of the *Bayini* and 'Macassans' in Warramiri accounts. Is it a revelation from the 'inside' as Burrumarra contends, or is it a response to the specific conditions of the present? In this section I compare and contrast the earliest and most recent reports from the anthropological literature in order to throw some light on this conundrum.

Cawte (1993:42) refers to *Birrinydji* as both an ancestor of the Warramiri, and the husband of a female ancestral being called *Bayini*. *Birrinydji* is the perceived source of the 'Other's' power (see illustration 3l, 3m). According to Burrumarra, he brought not only the historical 'pre-Macassans' but also 'totem hunters', 'Macassans' and Europeans to Arnhem Land. So for the Warramiri, the term *Bayini* currently has a double meaning. It is the name of a Warramiri ancestor, and also a 'wave' of historical contact ('pre-Macassans'), and is linked with the emergence of the sacred or 'inside' law of *Birrinydji* (McIntosh 1992:101). Take the following quote for example. Burrumarra (in McIntosh 1992:101) says,

"*Birrinydji* and *Bayini* are for Dholtji. All things come from *Birrinydji*. Two thousand years ago people came to our land. They had a job to do. They wanted to make the land and the people strong. It was at *Birrinydji's* command that they came. The iron in the ground acted like a magnet, drawing them in."

"*Birrinydji* was like a blanket over the land. Everything came under him. He was both 'white' and 'black'. He was very rich and had many things. He was an iron-maker. *Bayini* made clothing, planted rice and directed *Yolngu* women in this. *Birrinydji* came from the ground, from the gold beneath..."

"Visitors to Dholtji had settlements all along Cape Wilberforce. There were thousands of people, men, women and children...When we followed *Birrinydji's* law, we prospered. But then things started to go wrong. We wanted only good but bad came too... We turned our back on the laws of *Birrinydji* and we lost everything. There is great sadness in our memory and this is why we don't like to bring it up. Today we follow the laws of *Birrinydji*. We have only the song and the ceremony but we have lost the ability to make iron. But if we follow this law, maybe these things will come to us again."

Then compare this with a narrative recorded by Warner in the 1920s, which is the only other reference to this 'fall' in the literature. It concerns

the activities of the Warramiri totemic Dog *Bol'lili*, and its meeting with 'Macassans'.⁷ The informant, not identified by Warner (1958:537) told that,

A very, very long time ago everything was different. People who lived in this place had skin just like Macassar men and Macassar men had skin like black men. Macassar men worked for black men then, just like we work for Macassar men by and by.

Dog was talking to his master. "We better break this house down and throw him away and live without houses."

The master of the dog talked to him. He said, "What do you want? Do you want something? He imitated the master's speech. The man said, "No, I asked you."

Dog said, "No, I asked you."

They repeated this...several times. That dog did not understand what that black fellow-white man saying. The black man who was a white man said, "You don't understand what I am asking you for." He said that to the dog.

The dog continued acting silly, and said he did not want anything. The white man said, "You're the black man now and I the white. I am the master. I'll give you matches and tobacco and a sailing boat and tomahawks."

The dog said, "I don't want them. You can have them."

That master went back and another headman came. The first headman said, "I have come back."

The other said, "Why have you come back?"

He said, "Because Dog talked badly to me. I offered to give him all of those things and he said he didn't want them."

The other Macassan man said, "All right, all we people will keep all these things and we won't give them to black people because Dog talked that way. We'll let them work for us."

The Macassar men came in their boats for trepang. The black people who belonged to Dog went out to work for them. They became more and more black because Dog had acted so silly. A long time ago we people were white, now we are black. The name of this time a long time ago was [*Wangarr*] time. This happened when the world started.

The visitors that Burrumarra was referring to in the first quote are the *Bayini*, and not 'Macassans'. He saw the *Bayini* as being an ahistorical population instigating the law of *Birrinydji* at the 'beginning of time'. The implication is that 'Macassans' and Europeans enjoy the wealth that Aborigines once possessed according to a 'cargo-cult' type perspective of

⁷ Here the term 'Macassan' is a reference to a 'wave' of visitors, but it is also a totemic category associated with a 'timeless' 'Other', see Chapter Four.

Illustration 3l. A line drawing of *Birrinydji*, the 'man of iron' from Cawte (1993:78).

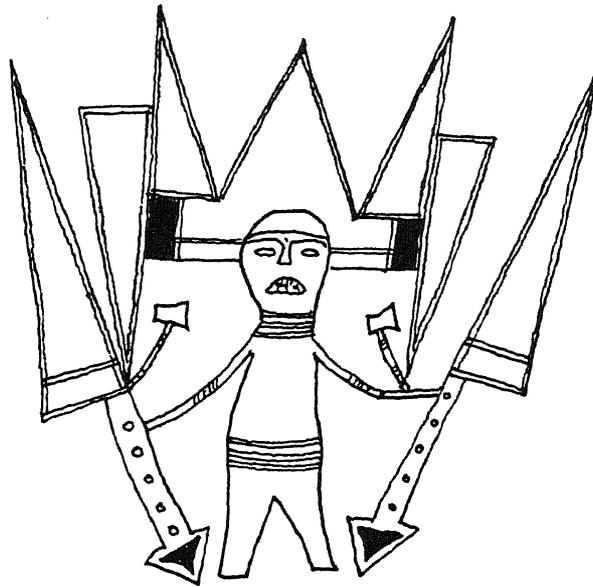
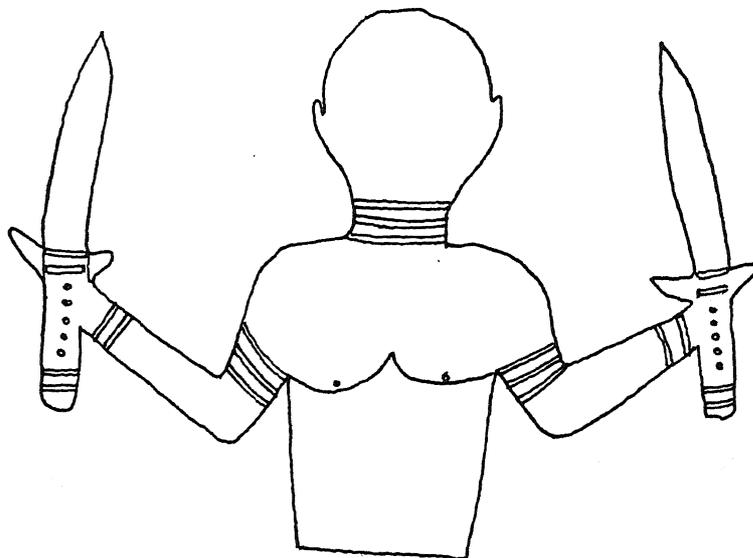


Illustration 3m. An image of *Birrinydji* on the Warramiri flag treaty design (see Burrumarra n.d.).



'loss'. The *Bayini* era is both a time in which Aborigines possessed the wealth of the 'Other' and are in the image of that 'Other'. Simultaneously, the 'Other' (ie. 'Macassans' in the Dog narrative) are present on Aboriginal land and possess the wealth which Aborigines desire. Both narratives are therefore an explanation of a perceived inequality between Aborigines and outsiders, and how one group came to be in a subordinate position in relation to the other.

For Burrumarra, the 'fall' was therefore crucial in understanding the distinction between the *Bayini* (and *Wangarr* or 'Spirit Macassans') and 'Macassans'. It is a distinction between the 'inside' law of *Birrinydji* and *Bayini*, and an associated sacred past, and 'outside' 'Macassan' history, that period of contact with trepangers.

In all narratives which mention 'Macassans', the visitors are rejected. Mountford (1956-64:282) refers to a bloody battle between the Thunderman and 'Macassans', in which the latter are turned away, and Berndt and Berndt (1954:89) tell of a similar conflict over territory between the sawfish and the visitors (see Chapter Four). In examining this rejection, McIntosh (1992; 1994a) looked at the somewhat ambiguous Dog/'Macassan' encounters and came to the conclusion that the two totemic operators (Dog and 'Macassan') are seen to be of the same cosmic class, ie. being lawless or outside the law, and I look further at this in Chapter Four.

Unlike the stories which focus on 'Macassans', *Bayini* narratives, for the Warramiri, represent sacred 'inside' Aboriginal law, and there is no equivalent battle over entry or rejection by totemic beings. There is, however, a division in terms of material wealth between them and Aborigines. So both the earliest and the most recent accounts of 'inside' law paint a picture of Aboriginal 'loss' relative to the 'Other'.

Burrumarra says that neither he nor his father or brothers spoke publicly of *Birrinydji* in the past. Explanations were always given in terms of the *Bayini*, and then only 'women's' stories were revealed. It was because 'all things from women are free,' (Burrumarra pers. comm. 1990). *Birrinydji* stories on the other hand were 'too strange, too strong, and too hard to understand'.

"*Birrinydji* is too deep in us, too close to our heart. He is the King and we are his subjects. We can talk of *Bayini* only. These *Yolngu* women had many children who grew up to be *bunggawa*. We are the children of those women; the children of *Birrinydji* and *Bayini*. *Bayini* is a *Yolngu* woman, Gumatj, Warramiri, Wangurri and so on. *Birrinydji* is our father," (Burrumarra, pers. comm. 1990).

Belief in *Birrinydji* is for Aborigines alone, Burrumarra said. It is not about 'Macassans' or Europeans, but rather who Aborigines are, or should be, in relation to them, ie. respected as people of equal status if not wealth.

So there is some overlap between the earliest and most recent recorded narratives on the 'fall', from the Warramiri perspective. Both refer to what Rudder (1993) terms, an unchanging eternal, which is past, present and future. Yet Rudder adds, what is observed or related in the here and now is merely an outward transformation of this unchanging inner state. So in the next section, I look at how 'outside' representations of contact have indeed been in constant flux.

3.5 Interpretations and Revelations in Transition

Building on Rudder's (1993) work and Worsley's (1955:9) view that descriptions of the 'Macassan' era are coloured by the contemporary social situation and relations with 'whites', my hypothesis is that *Birrinydji/Bayini* narratives are constituted in the ever-changing relations between Aborigines and non-Aborigines, and their decline in relevance since mission times and their emergence in the public domain recently, correlate with developments in this area. This is a theme that I develop throughout the remainder of the thesis.

In the 1920s, a recorded view was that 'Spirit Macassans' had been present at the 'beginning of time', and that Aborigines once possessed the wealth that now only the 'Other' enjoys. In the 1940s and 1950s, these *Wangarr* beings were referred to as the *Bayini* by certain members of the *yirritja* moiety, and were also seen to be associated with the exploits of actual historical voyagers to the Arnhem Land coast. In the 1960s, Macknight (1972:312-313) found that knowledge of the *Bayini* had all but disappeared, with detailed knowledge limited to a few older men, in particular Burrumarra. In the 1990s, an 'inside' perspective on the law was openly discussed for the first time, suggesting that rather than the *Bayini* material being irretrievably lost, or invented in the present, aspects of this

'unchanging eternal law' had been obliquely referred to in the 1920s in Warner's account, partially revealed to the Berndts and Mountford in the 1940s, and restricted in Macknight's time. Aborigines were not being deceptive in highlighting or downplaying this law, but rather were being cautious about revealing aspects of an 'inside' law which has its foundation in the knowledge of the existence of the 'Other' and the presence of that 'Other' on Aboriginal land.

In discussions with Burrumarra, it was apparent that there was a diversity of ways of both speaking about 'Macassans' and also for making adjustments in what is to be publicly known of the past. Examples of this are numerous. Following contact with academic historians, scientists and missionaries, certain 'outside' changes appear to have been made by Aborigines in accounts of the trepangers. Tamarind trees contain the spirit of *Birrinydji* in 'inside' interpretations (Burrumarra, pers. comm. 1992), or 'Macassans' according to Berndt (1964:285), but are also 'outside' historical markers of 'Macassan' campsites. Similarly, an 'inside' view sees the dug-out canoe as the legacy of *Birrinydji* via contact with the *Bayini*, whereas in 'outside' accounts, they were a gift of 'Macassan' trepangers at the end of the season (pers. comm. Burrumarra 1992).

The considerable change in accounts from the 1920s up to the present can be seen in terms of this management of 'inside' and 'outside' interpretations of law by *Yolngu* leaders. For instance I was present at meetings held to discuss access to 'Macassan' sites by various researchers. At these 1987 gatherings, it was made clear by the assembled group that it was the 'Macassan' past that was to be investigated, and 'totem hunter', and *Birrinydji* and *Bayini* sites were not to be accessed.

Pronouncements of this sort are governed by a complex range of factors, including, I suggest, the current political standing between Aborigines and non-Aborigines.⁸ With this in mind, one can speculate on the changing nature of data on 'Macassans' in the literature. For instance, when Warner and Thomson were doing their fieldwork, the Methodist missions were just beginning (ie. 1920s-1940s). According to Burrumarra, the movement of people to the communities of Milingimbi, Yirrkala and Galiwin'ku was seen by some as part of *Birrinydji's* plan (McIntosh

⁸ I look at this in more detail in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight.

1994b:102).⁹ It was to be the fulfilment of *Birrinydji's* 'promise'. Aborigines and Europeans would share in the wealth of the land. There was no reference to the *Bayini* as an historical phenomenon at this time. What was recorded in the literature was an 'outside' version of the unchanging eternal, ie the *Bol'lili* Dog story, for it was only later that there was motivation to create an 'outside' term for this 'inside' body of law, so as to restrict access to sensitive material.

If one accepts the view that the necessity for maintaining traditions relating to the perceived motives and power of the 'Other' came into question in the mission period, it is not therefore surprising that there would be a corresponding emphasis on Aboriginal history as opposed to openly revealing narratives of questionable validity for western historians, when 'black' and 'white' Australians lived together in a single community. Just as followers of 'cargo cults' in Melanesia now deny they were ever involved in such movements (Hermann 1992:66), there remains a degree of uncertainty associated with older beliefs associated with 'Macassans', ie. that Warramiri Aborigines were once 'white'. According to Burrumarra, the stories of *Birrinydji* and *Bayini* largely disappeared from general usage in the 1960s, explaining in part why researchers from the 1960s onwards were not shown or told about the major *Bayini* and *Birrinydji* sites, even though some of these are also major 'Macassan' trepanning areas.

Birrinydji ceremonies are still performed today at initiations, funerals, community celebrations and even in some cases, Christian gatherings (see Chapter Six and Eight), but it is not a celebration of the past and performance makes only indirect reference to the visits of 'Macassans'. Even though the significance of such rituals is largely unspoken and poorly understood, these, as well as sites in the landscape and sacred objects connected to this law, remain of fundamental significance to the identity of many *Yolngu* groups. This is highlighted in *Yothu Yindi's*¹⁰ hit songs 'Treaty' and *Djapana* (Sunset Dreaming), which both refer to the *Birrinydji* theme and to *Yolngu* solidarity in the face of the non-Aboriginal presence (Burrumarra, pers. comm. 1992). In the associated film clips, segments of a *Birrinydji* ritual are performed (see Chapter Seven). As Burrumarra said, this is a law about who the *Bayini Yolngu* (Warramiri, Wangurri, Gumatj,

⁹ See Chapter Six.

¹⁰ A *Yolngu* 'rock' band from north-east Arnhem Land.

Dhalwangu, Gupapuyngu-Birrkili) are in relation to the land, to other *Yolngu* and to the 'Other' (pers. comm. 1990).

Certain events, I suggest, have ensured *Birrinydji's* continuing relevance, even if detailed knowledge of this law is restricted to a single generation of older men. The mining operation at Gove, and the ignorance or flagrant denial of Aboriginal rights by fishermen and tourists has seen the re-emergence in new forms, of action based around the *Birrinydji* theme - in the case under examination here, a treaty proposal for Australia by Burrumarra and two other senior men of the Warramiri clan, Liwukang and Wulanybuma.

In Burrumarra's vision, the past and present seen through the *Birrinydji* narrative creates an image of a future in which Aborigines will be recognised as spokespersons for the country and have the riches of non-Aborigines. Burrumarra felt that Warramiri history provided a 'recipe' for the future of Australia. What had happened on Aboriginal land allowed all Australians to reflect on what was happening now in Aboriginal dealings with non-Aborigines. From the earliest memories of Warramiri history when 'black' and 'white' people danced together, to the 'fall', to fights against domination by outsiders (both 'Macassans' and miners), the Warramiri have come to an understanding about how events should and must proceed. As Burrumarra said, "The policy we have in relation to the *Balanda* is the same now as it was in the beginning." This is the policy of *Birrinydji*. It was only by telling the story of the past that a deeper understanding of the rights of Aborigines can be understood and respected. *Birrinydji* narratives are not located in a remote 'Dreamtime'. *Birrinydji* is about the future and what actions need to be taken to make it coincide with a utopian vision of how things were in the past, prior to the 'fall'.

3.5 Conclusion/Discussion

A tension exists between Burrumarra's highly perspectival and contextualised representations of 'encounters' with the non-Aboriginal 'Other', northern Australian historiography in which Aborigines are the 'Other', and the contemporary issue of how scholars should represent the past in the present.

In terms of this thesis, one of the most important questions has been to ask why Warramiri Aborigines represent the past as they have done, and

why certain categories have been used at different times. The significance of the term *Bayini* is the case in point. It is the name of a female ancestral being of the Warramiri and other clans in north-east Arnhem Land, but also a personal name for a female Aboriginal, meaning 'white woman' (Zorc 1986). It has been used in reference to 'pre-Macassans', although, as stated, this is a view of limited currency today. It was used in the past as a means of not openly speaking about *Birrinydji*, the 'Wangarr Macassan'. It allowed for a distinction between the 'inside' 'unchanging eternal', and 'outside' accounts of 'Macassan' trepangers. *Birrinydji* and *Bayini* are ancestors of the Warramiri, not in a biological sense, but in a deeply held view that in the past, Aborigines and the 'visitors' were united in the laws of *Birrinydji*. The failure of *Yolngu* to follow this law has become an explanation for the perceived inequality or 'loss' in terms of the 'Other'. So the people Aborigines dealt with on a day to day basis in the 'Macassan' trepanging era necessarily came after those that Aborigines were separated from at the 'beginning of time'.

For the Warramiri leaders, the narratives of *Birrinydji* provide a reference point for representations relating to the 'Macassan' era, and all other contacts with the 'Other' down to the present, explaining the presence of the 'man of iron' in the flag treaty design. This body of 'inside' law is symbolised by the use of the 'outside' expression *Bayini*. It remains of profound significance to the *Yolngu* today, being associated with particular tracts of land and sacred ceremonies (see Chapter Six). While it is questionable as to whether people still believe that *Birrinydji* is the foundation of the wealth of the 'Other', such laws continue to motivate action designed to affirm the place of the *Yolngu* in relation to the 'Other', as it must have done in the past, though under quite different circumstances.

While we can see the way that reflections on the *Birrinydji* theme might have provided inspiration for the Treaty proposal, the significance of the various other perceived 'waves' of contact still remains unclear. What distinguishes 'totem hunters' and the *Bayini* from 'early' and 'later Macassans' and why are such details relevant now in negotiations for reconciliation between Aborigines and non-Aborigines?

In the next Chapter I look at the only recorded narratives relating to the 'unchanging eternal' of *Birrinydji*, in an examination of Dog-'Macassan' narratives. The object here, and in the following chapters, is to see how such

narratives situate Aborigines in relation to outsiders. Throughout the remainder of the thesis, I draw on, and elaborate upon, the hypothesis enunciated in this chapter, that is, that belief in *Birrinydji* is constituted in the ever-changing relations between Aborigines and non-Aborigines. The flag treaty and the *Yolngu* call for the recognition of their rights to the Arafura Sea, are a contemporary manifestation of Warramiri cultural relations, based on the need to reconcile cosmology and present day conditions of inequality.

CHAPTER FOUR

4: Dog-Macassan 'Encounters'

In this Chapter I explore those narratives that explicitly mention 'Macassans'. The first section looks at how widespread the notion of rejection is in these stories, as in Burrumarra's statements on the nature of this 'wave' of historical contact. I show how there is a refusal to accept goods from the visitors or to acknowledge their place in the *Yolngu* cosmos, and I look at Warramiri understandings on the significance of this. I then detail some of the best known Dog/Macassan 'encounter' narratives, in particular *Djuranydjura* and *Bol'lili*, both of which have been commented upon by a number of researchers, going back as far as the 1920s.

The aim is twofold. Firstly, it is to see how such narratives situate Aborigines in relation to outsiders. I suggest that while Aborigines would work for the visitors in a one-sided relationship, they would not compromise what was deemed to be their inalienable rights - land ownership or identity as a people. According to the Warramiri leaders, the Dog-'Encounter' narratives reflect the law of *Birrinydji*, and this same law underlies all Warramiri dealings with the 'Other'. Secondly, in relation to the Treaty Proposal, I want to examine the view that when told in the present, such 'encounter' narratives provide a commentary on perceived present day conditions of inequality.

4.1 Lévi-Straussian Structural Analysis

As most of the existing studies of 'encounter' narratives employ structural analysis, in this Chapter I begin by also utilising this method. But there is a tension between it and the view put forward in Chapter Two of a cosmology open to constant change. Lévi-Strauss classified societies such as that of the Australian Aborigines as 'cold' or unchanging. Myth making as opposed to history writing was a feature of such collectives, he suggested. Lévi-Straussian structural analysis therefore has considerable limitations in terms of my attempt to show the ways in which people actively participate in re-ordering world views in response to changing realities.

A hallmark of Lévi-Strauss' work on myth was the statement that analysis cannot have as its aim, to show how people think. Rather, he desired to show "...how myths operate in men's minds without their being aware of it," (Lévi-Strauss 1969b:12). He considered that myth demands that its properties remain hidden, otherwise, "...the subject would find himself in the

position of the mythologist, who cannot believe his myths because it is his task to take them to pieces," (Lévi-Strauss 1969b:12). Lévi-Strauss admits to disregarding the thinking subject completely, and proceeds as if the thinking process were taking place in the myths themselves (Lévi-Strauss 1969b:12).

Lévi-Strauss saw the origin of myth as being with the collective, but emphasised that the manner in which it is experienced by the listener, suggests otherwise, ie. that myth is not a human product at all. He says,

"Myths are anonymous: from the moment they are seen as myths, and whatever their real origins, they exist only as elements embodied in a tradition. When the myth is repeated, the individual listeners are receiving a message that, properly speaking, is coming from nowhere; this is why it is credited with supernatural origin," (Lévi-Strauss 1969b:18)

Such a perspective takes away the necessity for considering author, agency or history, and is at odds with Burrumarra's interpretation and manipulation of the cultural repertoire in the here and now.

While there is considerable usefulness in Lévi-Strauss' bricoleur analogy, there are difficulties here as well. 'Bricoleur', is a French word for a handyman, and his craft is distinguished by the fact that he uses whatever is at hand to suit a particular job, and "...is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks," (Lévi-Strauss 1966:17). Lévi-Strauss tried to show that the way the myth maker goes about the work of constructing myth is of a similar order. Each of the elements at the bricoleur's table is an operator. Each represents "...a set of actual and possible relations," a symbol within a set of symbols, (Lévi-Strauss 1966:18). He says the way elements are used is "...the contingent result of all the occasions there have been to renew or enrich the stock or to maintain it," (Lévi-Strauss 1966:17). There is a limit, however, on the bricoleur's freedom of manoeuvre. The fact that elements are drawn from a language in which they possess a sense, determines the scope of application (Lévi-Strauss 1966:19).

Lévi-Strauss showed that by comparing myth to language, the former could be decoded. To do this, the myth had to be broken down into its constituent parts in order to reveal an underlying logic. He was also able to demonstrate that the sequence of opposition, mediation and transformation in myth is not found in any one narrative but dispersed throughout the

universe of myths. He says, "An opposition may be established in one myth and mediated or transformed in myths from a distant society," (in Clarke 1981:194). He adds that one needs to look at all versions of myths as, "Each...taken separately exists as the limited application of a pattern, which is gradually revealed by the relations of reciprocal intelligibility discerned between several myths," (Lévi-Strauss 1969b:13).

I am looking at myth variations in a different way, however. Lévi-Strauss' (1969a) pre-occupation was a search for universal truths about the human mind from a study of the totality of myths. As Morphy (1988a:248) says, there is a need to view Aboriginal religion in terms of human action, social organisation and world view, rather than as part of a search for such 'timeless' fundamentals. Burrumarra selectively reviews, relates and develops the stories of 'Macassans' in particular ways for particular purposes, in response to changing realities. These attempts at reconciling cosmology and experience, I argue, are highly significant in terms of understanding the process of change. In line with post-structural approaches to the understanding of the transformation of beliefs in response to changing historical realities (eg. Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1979), what I intend to do is bring agency to the bricoleur analogy.

I begin the analysis of 'encounter' narratives by comparing and contrasting the way 'Macassans' are dealt with in all published versions of 'encounters', and at the various symbols employed in these constructions, in a search for an underlying logic, or 'unchanging eternal'. Later I look at Burrumarra's unpacking of the significance of this 'code' as a means of showing how the 'Macassan' past remains of considerable relevance in the present.

4.2 The Rejection of 'Macassans'

According to the Warramiri leaders, there were three discrete 'waves' of historical experience prior to the Japanese and Europeans, as I mentioned in Chapter Three. In narrative, the stories of contact are somewhat distinct, though all are, to a degree, associated with the 'beginning of time'. 'Totem hunters' are linked to the origins of *Mala* symbols and sites in the landscape, and the *Bayini* are able to transform themselves into flying foxes and are contemporaneous with the *Wangarr* creational beings *Lany'tjun* and *Djang'kawu*.

'Macassans' in some narratives, while also 'timeless' entities, are of a different order of significance in the eyes of Warramiri informants. As McIntosh (1992) indicated, all published narratives indicate that their presence was undesirable, and rejection by totemic beings appears to be across the board. Such a view however is inconsistent with the acquisition and incorporation of trade goods, ideas and ceremonies into the Aboriginal way of life, which is recorded fact (Macknight 1976; Warner 1969).

Mountford (1956-64:282) gives a number of examples of this rejection. From a *dhuwa* perspective, he describes a bloody battle between the *dhuwa* moiety thunderman, *Djambuwal*, and Malays ('Macassans') in which the visitor's boat was dragged in to shore. The Thunderman was seriously wounded by the visitors swords and the drama ends with the intruders being expelled. In a similar story, Berndt and Berndt (1954:89) describe the case of the *dhuwa* moiety sawfish *Marabinjin* that capsizes a 'Macassan' boat in what appears to be a battle over territory. While these examples seem to indicate that the *dhuwa* moiety is not associated with the 'Macassans', there are just as many rejection stories from the *yirritja* moiety and in the next section, I focus on some of the best documented versions.

4.3 Totem/Macassan 'Encounter' Narratives

Narratives involving totemic 'encounters' with the 'Other' are commonly told throughout north-east Arnhem Land. In this section, I focus on the rejection of visitors by the Dog totem, but it needs to be recognised that other species are also involved in other narratives. In Gupapuyngu territory, a man (or a boat according to Burrumarra) called *Nowah* (*Noah*, see Keen 1977:178), lands in Buckingham Bay and his fellow 'Macassans' set up camp. They want to make a town, but honey bees, sacred totems of the Gupapuyngu *Mala*, drive them out following a battle in which the 'Macassans' (ie. *Nowah*) try to boil the bees in a cooking pot.

In the Wessel Islands, a similar situation arises as a result of contact between 'Macassans', the Golpa *Mala*, and the totemic scrub fowl. The story, as recorded by Warner (1958:530-531), is as follows:

Golpa Robbers and 'Macassan' Men

“In the [Golpa] clan's country¹, called Kai-in-i a [Wangarr] Macassar man lived. He was called Pa-po-a. He had built himself a large house with windows and doors and everything. A robber [Golpa] man came down from the bush and stole the clothes and blankets from the Macassar man. The Macassar man decided to kill him. When the robber came again to steal from the Macassar man's belongings, the owner stood with his gun and shot at him. The robber stole a lot of the Macassar man's food. After several raids had been made by the [Golpa] robber several of the Macassar men marched in a line with their guns to the [Golpa] country. They were going to fight this [Golpa] robber.”

“After they had gone a little while Jungle Fowl cried out. Jungle fowl went into the big house where the Macassar men had left their food. He found many bags of rice. He tore the bags with his bill and scratched them like a fowl. He put over a half bag in his craw. The men came back and tried to shoot him but missed. When they tried to get in the robber's house it was all of stone and they couldn't force their way into it. They all decided to go get some poison and poison the [Golpa] robber and Jungle Fowl. The robber overheard them so he stole some matches from them and burned the grass around the house, which finally also burned the house down. The Macassar men gathered up their other belongings and left the country.”

This narrative presents a picture in which both Aborigines and 'Macassans' are anti-social and differences between them are irreconcilable. The inviolable stone house of the Golpa 'robber' as opposed to the elaborate though fragile dwelling of the 'Macassans', and the fact that the Golpa totem, the scrub fowl, acts in defence of Aborigines, appears to be a comment on Aboriginal rights in relation to the 'Other', and I return to this point later.

Dog/Macassan 'encounter' narratives are of a similar order to Scrub Fowl/Macassan 'encounters'. In the former, the visitors are referred to as 'Wangarr Macassar' Men, but whales and dugong also feature in the variations, suggesting an overlap with 'totem hunter' narratives (see Chapter Five). In a majority, the *Balanda* ('whites', 'Big Man' or 'Captain') arrive on the coast and start up their business oblivious to the presence of the Aboriginal population. The most curious feature of Dog 'encounters' is

¹ Of note is that the site (Cape Wessel) associated with this story, was not historically associated with trepanging 'Macassans' (Macknight 1969a). Macknight (1972:289), for instance, makes reference to an account from the 1840s which suggests that the 'Macassans' had an aversion to the people of Cape Wessel and the north coast generally.

the absolute refusal of the totem to be influenced by the 'Macassans'' wealth or the 'Macassans'' desire to share it with Aborigines. The best known of all are the two variations recorded by Warner in the 1920s. The first concerns the Dog *Djuranydjura*. This is a public or 'outside' story and it appears not to have changed significantly since first recorded (see Stories 2-7, Appendix Five). It 'belongs' to the Gupapuyngu people.²

Djuranydjura and the Macassar Man at Howard Island (Adapted from Berndt and Berndt 1989:418; Rraying n.d.; and Warner 1958:536)

When the Macassans arrived at Howard Island and started to build their houses, Djuranydjura came down to meet them. The Macassar man said, 'I will give you matches.'
The Dog was excited, but said, 'I use fire sticks. It takes longer but that's the way I do it.'

The Macassar man offered the Dog rice, but he rejected it saying that he had plenty of bush food to eat and did not need any more.

The Macassar man offered the Dog tobacco, tomahawks and canoes, all the things that his people had, but the Dog said, 'No, I don't want them.'

The Macassar man said, "Why do you act like this?"

The Dog replied, 'I want you to be a Macassar man. I am a black man. If I get all these things I will become a white man and you will become a black man.'

So the Macassar man packed up his house and went away, and the Dog went back to his home.

Later, on trying to cross from Howard to Elcho Island in his bark canoe, the seas rose and Djuranydjura's canoe sank. It can be seen today among the rocks of the Strait. When people look at this rock today they are able to think about why the black man has so little and the Macassar man and the white man have so much. Djuranydjura had rejected these things at the beginning of time.

In the many published versions of this story, *Djuranydjura* is a black (or black and white) male dog, and it represents the 'law' of the Gupapuyngu people (pers. comm. Djapany 1992). It speaks the Gupapuyngu language and is related through kinship to other *Mala*, lands and totems. Its mythical actions have an impact on the landscape (Djalparrmiwuy n.d.; Rraying n.d.), and it is sometimes referred to as the land owner, or a representative of the land and people, as is the scrub fowl in the previous narrative. At other

² Gupapuyngu *Mala* leaders relayed a version of this story to Aboriginal children at Shepherdson College as part of the dialect program at Elcho Island in 1992.

times, this Dog is seen to be on an errand of Aboriginal leaders (pers. comm. Burrumarra 1990). The end of the story is always the same, however. 'Macassans' and Aborigines part company with no exchange of gifts, and no alliance. Each party has their own land, their own food sources, and their own ways of doing things (Robinson 1956:53-54).³

At the end of the narrative in one version (Berndt and Berndt 1989:418), the 'Macassans' see a fire burning in the west (ie. in Macassar) and are concerned for the well-being of their countrymen, and they depart. In still another (Djalparrmiwuy n.d.), following the departure of the visitors, the Dog sees clouds of smoke coming from the land of its *Maari* in Warramiri territory, at the northern tip of Elcho Island, and it heads off across the straits to visit them. In this case, the stringy-bark canoe in which the Dog is travelling, sinks.

The mention of matches in both the Scrub Fowl 'encounter' and the *Djuranydjura* narrative is significant. The only other narrative I have heard in which matches are mentioned is a contact variation from a 'Macassan' trepanning site in Lamamirri/ Warramiri territory at Galupa in Melville Bay. Here, however, it is *Wurramala*, the 'totem hunter', that offers the Dog matches, and it accepts them, but the Dog is reluctant and says that they still belong to the 'Other' (pers. comm. Rruwayi 1994). Details on this exchange are limited however. Matches are a symbol of the wealth and power of the 'Other', and in the three examples mentioned, we have considerable variation in their use and meaning. They are the basis of a link with *Wurramala*; are rejected by the Dog as 'foreign'; and are used by the Golpa 'robber' as the means of terminating a 'timeless' relationship with the 'Other'. Acceptance from the 'totem hunter' might be seen as a means of separating the 'waves' of contact in narrative, but we need to focus on further variations of 'encounter' stories to achieve a deeper understanding of the rejection of 'Macassans'.

³ Of note is that the site where *Djuranydjura* rejected the visitors (see illustration 4a), as in the case of the 'Scrub Fowl', there was no further trepanning according to local tradition (see also Macknight 1969), as though the actions of the totem provided the law that people also followed. Howard Island as a whole was known by 'Macassans' as *Marege Sikki*. 'Marege' was the term for Arnhem Land, and 'Sikki' means danger (pers. comm. Peter Lanhapuy 1991).

Illustration 4a. The site where *Djuranydjura* rejected the 'Macassans' at Howard Island, and the mark left at the site by the 'Macassan' Big-Man (see Berndt and Berndt 1989:418; Story 2, Appendix Five).



The other well known rejection story, also recorded by Warner (1958), is from the Warramiri repertoire. As I documented in Chapter Three (page 103), the Warramiri Aborigines begin as 'white' and rich and through the rudeness of the Dog *Bol'lili*, they are transformed to 'black', poor and subservient.⁴

Rejection in this narrative is of a different order to previous examples. While there is a relationship between the Aborigines and *Bol'lili*, this is not the case between the 'Macassan' and the Dog. They cannot communicate, and the Dog's intolerance of outsiders results in the transformation of the social order. Aborigines must now work for 'Macassans'.

Along with the Scrub Fowl 'encounter' described earlier, these narratives were the only ones from north-east Arnhem Land that Turner (1982), Maddock (1988) and Swain (1993) had at their disposal in their analyses of 'Macassan' contact. An overview of their findings helps to clarify the issues involved.

4.3-1 Turner's View

Turner (1982) focused on the master/servant relationship evident in both Dog/Macassan 'encounters'. He said the narratives show that while some Australian Aborigines entertained the possibility of establishing or accepting a caste-like relationship in their dealings with 'Macassans' (Turner 1982:41) (ie. referring to them as 'Master' and accepting an inferior status), separation is seen as a solution to the problem of individual and *Mala* identity posed (Turner 1982:49).

In the *Djuranydjura* story, Aborigines and 'Macassans' are co-resident but there is no permanent unity as the 'Macassans' are visitors. The Dog is silly and refuses goods offered, and consequently the 'Macassan' master takes away from the Dog what has already been given. Dog rejects the goods as it undermines his own culture. Acceptance will make him 'white' and he does not want the 'Macassans' to be 'black'. In this case separation is idealised, the Dog finding each culture suited to its own people (Turner 1982:49).

⁴ This narrative is associated with two Warramiri homelands, Nyikala on Inglis Island in the English Company group, and Dholtji on the Cape Wilberforce peninsula (McIntosh 1992:97), and both were 'Macassan' trepanning sites.

The *Bol'lili* narrative, on the other hand, starts with a caste-like relationship between Aboriginal managers and 'Macassan' workers and ends with a class-like relationship of an employer-employee nature, Turner (1982:48) says. Co-residence as a principle of group membership is rejected, and separation was on 'Macassan' terms (Turner 1982:49). He concludes, however, by saying,

"...there is considerable ambiguity in all myths about the ultimate superiority of Macassan culture, and the question is raised whether Aboriginal culture is worth abandoning merely for the sake of a few technological gadgets," (Turner 1982:49).

4.3-2 Maddock's View

Despite the relatively recent origin of these stories, Maddock (1988:23) says that they are similar in form to 'Dreamtime' narratives and he says that the Dog's actions were decisive for the Aboriginal future. Maddock sees their function as setting a place for Aborigines in relation to aliens and agrees with Turner (1982) that the stories have a double focus - the problem of the existence of people different to Aborigines, and the 'Other's' presence among Aborigines. He says, "[t]he myth-makers 'solved' these problems by constructing a hierarchy out of such pairs of contrasts as lighter/darker in skin colour, superior/inferior in technology, and dominant/subordinate in sociopolitical standing," (Maddock 1988:23). He adds,

"...relations between Aboriginal and alien are treated as a medium for transferring property, yet anything like balanced exchange is missing... Dog fears that acceptance would transform the relation between Aborigines and Macassans...but there is also a hint of self-sufficiency: having fire sticks, Dog does not need matches..." (Maddock 1988:25).

Maddock asks,

"Can it be that the myth-makers were unable (or unwilling) to conceive of equality in relations between persons of different cultures, so that unavoidably a hierarchy had to be imagined? Or does equality presuppose that each has something of value to offer the other, as well as something of value to receive, and that the myth-makers were unable (or unwilling) to envisage what objects were required for such two-sidedness?" (1988:27).

4.3-3 Swain's View

Swain makes broad generalisations about the significance of 'encounter' narratives in his discussions on the changing ontological

orientation of Australian Aboriginal religion following contacts with the 'Other'. On the question of reciprocal relationships with Aborigines, he says,

"The solution [to the problem posed by the presence of the 'Other']...was to give Macassans and Macassan culture a clearly defined yet contained position within the Aboriginal spatial ontology. This was most fully developed in the Yolngu case, where the new cultural items were located within the geo-spiritual order of one half of society so that marriage between the exogamous moieties constantly brought the Macassans, at a symbolic level, into quasi-affinal relationships with Aborigines. This process was further empowered and endorsed by truly acknowledging the eternal basis of their reciprocal relationships and by asserting that, while there could be no possibility of Macassans taking custodianship of Aboriginal lands, both people belonged to a shared cosmos in which one's spirit was something forever at home and yet eternally a part of another people's place," (Swain 1993:177).

In a version of the *Djuranydjura* story that Swain (1993:169-170) quotes (see Appendix Five), the Aborigines refer to the 'Macassan' Captain as Daeng Rangka, an actual historical figure and the last 'Macassan' on the coast (Macknight 1976). The 'Macassan' is referred to as the *Gutharra* of the Dog-Man, suggesting that there is a relationship between 'Macassans' and Aborigines. But Warramiri informants suggested that this is in fact the relationship between the Gupapuyngu, in whose territory the action takes place, and the Warramiri, with whom Daeng Rangka was actually associated (pers. comm. Burrumarra 1990). Historical fact has been used in this case to make a 'timeless' statement of relations between the Aboriginal groups and between the Warramiri and others, rather than between Aborigines and 'Macassans' generally.

Swain refers to the fact that because the *yirritja* moiety is considered to be innovative, then such innovations as the goods brought by Macassans are necessarily associated with this moiety, and through marriage, all *Mala* have access to them. So on the one hand the new is able to be seen as part of the *Yolngu* cosmos, on the other, rejection sees the visitors as having a more ambiguous place in the scheme of things. But what is one to make of the remorse shown by the *Djuranydjura*, or *Bol'lili's* defiance and yet its apparent acceptance of its fate as being of inferior status?

4.4 An 'Inside' Story

No real solutions to the questions raised in the last section are available with the data at hand. In this section I suggest that it is only

through an appreciation of the significance of the Dog totem and knowledge of 'inside' versions of the stories presented so far, that they can be understood to be of on-going relevance in ever-changing relationships between Aborigines and the 'Other'.

4.4-1 The Totemic Dog

As one goes through the literature on the totemic Dog in Aboriginal cosmology, one finds a curious association between it and the 'whiteman', and it is therefore not surprising that the Dog would meet 'Macassans' on the beaches of Arnhem Land. Examples are widespread. On Bathurst Island, Pye (1977:8) recorded the story of *Murantani*, a mythical 'whiteman' who lived alone and was self-sufficient. One day he is attacked and partially eaten by wild dingoes. The Tiwi people use the expression *Murantani* for non-Aborigines.

In Alice Springs, Spencer and Gillen (1927:92) relate the story of how, when 'white' men first came to the area, old Aborigines rubbed the sacred Dog rock, now a local tourist attraction, so that wild dingoes would attack and drive them away. (see illustration 4b)

In Xavier Herbert's 'Capricornia', reference is made to the fact that the native animals were no match for the vicious dingo, and this is equated with European destruction of Aboriginal Australia.

"When dingoes came to the waterhole, the ancient kangaroos, not having teeth or ferocity sharp enough to defend their heritage, must relinquish it or die," (Herbert 1981:3)

All of these examples demonstrate the one point. Non-Aborigines are perceived as a threat to the established order, and in narrative, a totem of the same order is brought into play to deal with the associated destabilising effects. While further research would verify the extent to which this is the case, in a number of narratives reported from around Australia, the Dog is regarded as a symbol of anti-social behaviour. In the Kimberley it is associated with the origin of death (pers. comm. P. McConvell 1994). In north-east Arnhem Land, the wild dog (dingo) is known as *Warrang* or *wakinngu*, which means literally, 'having nothing or belonging to no-one' (Bapulu pers. comm. 1992). Camp dogs, on the other hand, are referred to as *Watu* or *Wunggan* and are viewed almost as family members. They have individual names and kinship titles, yet their actions are incompatible with

the rules of society. Dogs live by a law of their own. If humans acted in a similar way it would threaten the very foundations of society. The Dog is therefore a symbol of excess but for people it is also a symbol for moderation in behaviour. Human beings are not animals. They live by cultural laws and must adhere to the standards established in the founding dramas (McIntosh 1992).

Kolig (1978) has done considerable work on what he terms 'Aboriginal dogmatics' in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. He says that for the sheer quantity and complexity of Dog beliefs, there is no comparable totemic symbol or species, except perhaps for the water snake. He characterises the dingo as a destroyer of cultural traditions. Australia-wide, apart from pups, the dingo appears to be not well liked. It is poor at hunting and a burden on a community. In the sphere of religion however, the Dog is, Kolig (1978:98) says, "ideologically power charged." It is a symbol of the destruction of the status quo, and as such is a useful reference point for Aboriginal customs and social structure. He says, "The wild and uncontrollable aspects of the dingo were woven into religious beliefs that underlie the need for order and social stability in Aboriginal society," (Kolig, in Breckwoldt 1988:67).

As I said in Chapter Two, unlike totems which are linked to specific sets of *Mala*, the Dog is *dhuwa* in *dhuwa* land, and *yirritja* in *yirritja* land. All *yirritja Mala* have Dog totems, however they are known by specific names in each area, explaining why they do not appear in *Mala* totem lists (ie. in Warner 1958, see Appendix Three). The Dog traverses boundaries, and as Douglas' (1970) work would suggest, is ritually charged.⁵ It is at once a part of human society and also a part of the totemic world, and is seen as a mediator between these two spheres.

Of all *yirritja* Dog stories which refer to the 'Other', Burrumarra singled out one which he referred to as a 'starter', ie. the version upon which all others are based. This was the story of *Umbulka*, from the Wangurri and Warramiri-Mandjikay *Mala* and which was recorded by Warner (1958:535) in the 1920s. In this narrative, *Umbulka* the Dog-Man travels from his country at Matamata to Cape Wilberforce, where it meets the Warramiri Dog *Bulunha*, who is the leader of 'white' Aborigines, as in the

⁵ It needs to be acknowledged that the Dog symbol is not alone in being ritually charged in such a way, but for the Warramiri, this totem was highlighted to a far greater extent than any other.

Illustration 4b. The Dog rock at Alice Springs which the Aranta Aboriginal men rubbed so that dingoes would drive away the 'white' men.



Bol'lili story (Burrumarra, pers. comm. 1992; see Story 1, Appendix Five). On his return to his country, *Umbulka* kills his male and female Wangurri Aboriginal 'masters' and forms a *rangga* emblem with their partially buried bodies. He retreats south to Dhalwangu territory and there is frightened by the sound of men cutting timber, and is transformed into a wild dingo living in the bush, away from people. Thus we see the Dog as being involved with sacred business in its dealings with *Bulunha* and the Warramiri, and in creating *rangga* emblems, but also being profoundly anti-social.

When the totem Dog and the *Wangarr* 'Macassan' are lined up side by side, many oppositions are apparent. There are owner:visitor, land:sea, animal:human, black:white divisions. The two totemic operators come together, McIntosh (1992) suggested, in their basic anti-social qualities. Both the Dog and the 'Macassan' are law breakers. Both are a perceived threat to the social order. The Dog is therefore an obvious choice for the bricoleur in cases where 'lawless' 'Macassans', not a part of the kinship of Arnhem Land, come to the region and carry out their trepanning activities. It provides for a powerful statement to be made on how Aborigines viewed 'Macassans' and 'Macassan' influences.

I now want to look at an 'inside' version of the *Djuranydjura* story to learn more about the significance of rejection in terms of *Birrinydji* belief, from Burrumarra's perspective.

4.4-2 The Interplay of 'Inside' and 'Outside' Variations

With the rejection of 'Macassans', established law is not compromised and yet Aborigines are relegated to a lesser place in the scheme of things, as Turner (1982) and Maddock (1988) suggested. Is Aboriginal autonomy only achievable through the rejection of the 'Other'? Does acceptance of 'Macassan' goods lead to domination by the 'Other'? The answer is not to be found in 'outside' or public versions of these narratives, McIntosh (1992) showed. *Djuranydjura* feels remorse at the inadequacies of its own technology in some versions and this is the opening for entirely new totemic journeys, hinted at in some of the versions mentioned earlier.

In an 'inside' interpretation of the story which links the Gupapuyngu and Warramiri *Mala*, *Djuranydjura* (now associated with a range of other Dogs, eg. *Bawal*, her brother or husband) travels away from its territory, and undergoes a transformation, and accepts goods from the visitors under

certain conditions. In this section I want to show how the interplay of 'inside' and 'outside' versions allowed for the introduction of 'Macassan' goods and yet could be seen as promoting Aboriginal autonomy at the same time.

In one 'inside' version told by a Gupapuyngu elder (in Rudder 1993), *Djuranydjura* travels from Howard Island to the northern tip of Elcho Island where it eats whale meat and forms an alliance between the Gupapuyngu and Warramiri *Mala*. There is no mention of 'Macassans' or 'Macassan' goods. While the Dog's sex has changed from male to female, as has its language, from Gupapuyngu to Warramiri, no explanation is given for these transformations. In a Warramiri version of this same story, the eating of whale meat is equated with the acceptance of goods from the 'Macassan Captain' (McIntosh 1992:55). This is a crucial detail. Although I heard the 'inside' version on many occasions, only once was it explained in this way.⁶ I summarise the story as told to me by Burrumarra, and then look at the transformations in detail.

Djuranydjura at Nangingburra, Elcho Island

At her master's command, *Djuranydjura* set out for Nangingburra, on Elcho Island. There was a smell in the air, one that she had never smelt before, and the Dog's owners sent it to investigate. The smell was rotting whale flesh.

When she started, *Djuranydjura* spoke the Gupapuyngu language, but half way, her language changed. She was now speaking Warramiri just like the Gupapuyngu people of Nangingburra do today. When the Dog left, she was a black and male, but now she was white and female.

When she reached Nangingburra, she saw a whale in the shallow waters. It had been cut up by 'Macassan' men using their long knives. She tasted some of the meat and understood that there was a new law in the land, *Birrinydji's* law. *Djuranydjura* was offered some things by the Macassans and she accepted as gifts, necklaces, armbands, fishing hooks and a basket, but said to the 'Macassan' man, 'I'll take these now but only because you want me to. They still belong to you'.

All three characters, the Dogs, the whale and the 'Macassan Captain' are represented in the Nangingburra landscape. The whale is a line in the water, the edge of the reef. The Dogs are low flat rocks in the intertidal zone, and the 'Macassan Captain' is in the

⁶ The overlap with what appears to be a 'totem hunter' 'encounters' is not seen as problematic for the narrator. This story is clearly associated with *Mangatharra* ('Macassans') and Ujung Pandang.

form of a megalith with a hat of coral, and he sits alongside an old well (see illustration 4c).

The changes that have taken place between 'outside' and 'inside' versions give the *Djuranydjura* story a whole new significance. The rationale for the transformation of the Dog (allowing it to accept goods from the 'Macassan') is via the law of *Birrinydji*, which sees both 'Macassans' and their goods as having originated in Arnhem Land (see Chapter Six; and McIntosh 1992). This is quite different to Maddock's or Swain's (1993) interpretations. As 'owners' of the land and observers of *Birrinydji's* law, Aborigines should be in possession of trade goods, and so in history, 'Macassans' were seen as merely the vehicle for bringing to Aborigines what was really their own. To accept goods is to accept an inferior status in relation to outsiders, and the Dog, as totem and spokesperson for the community, was not prepared to do this. So we are dealing here with what appears to be a paradoxical situation. By looking closely at the totemic operators and their transformations however, Burrumarra takes us through this.

1. The Dog Totem

In choosing the Dog as the chief character, the bricoleur is making a comment on the threat to Aboriginal law posed by the visitors. People will know the law says to reject them and to reject what they stand for, ie. being outside the law. Rejection is also an anti-social act, however. It goes against codes of hospitality which should apply when *Mala* members come together (Burrumarra pers. comm. 1992). Such meetings, Burrumarra suggested, were governed by moiety principles of reciprocity and equality (see later in this section). The transformation of the Dog in 'inside' versions and its acceptance of gifts does not transform its image. It is the 'Macassans' wish that *Djuranydjura* have these things, and not the Dog's. It remains a symbol of defiance in the face of outside intrusion.

2. The Whale Totem

The place that the Dog occupies in the *Yolngu* cosmos also describes the place of the whale, to a degree. It is neither the creation of *Lany'tjun* nor *Ngulwardo*, but of the salt water itself, as I mentioned in Chapter Two. In contrast, the Dog is a land being, a fresh water animal. The two totems have entirely separate domains and yet both come together in the real world. The whale often beaches itself at the end of the dry season when the land is hot.

Similarly, this is also the time when dingoes come onto the beach for relief from the heat of the day (pers. comm. Bapulu 1992). This meeting appears to be the basis for many of the narratives. A sea being comes ashore, and a land being travels to the sea, both to the margins of their own territories.

McIntosh (1992) showed that in a number of related narratives, the totemic dog and the whale interact. The whale speaks to the dog (Berndt 1964:275); the dog eats raw or rotten whale meat (McIntosh 1992:95); it eats cooked meat (Thomson 1939:277); it is named after the whale (McIntosh 1992:100); it creates totemic emblems by blowing up sea vapour as does the whale (Groger-Wurm 1973:98); it visits the totemic areas associated with the whale (Warner 1958:535) and so on. These enable one to see the association of the dog and the whale as that of the land (*Lany'tjun's* domain) and the sea (*Ngulwardo's* domain) and subsequently as Aborigines to 'Macassans'. While none of the stories mentions 'Macassans', it is implied in many 'encounters', McIntosh (1992) suggested.

Following such totemic logic, in the variations described, the Dog meets a 'Macassan', who, like the whale, is a sea being.⁷ Once beached, a whale is a source of valuable ritual objects (Warner 1969). 'Beached' 'Macassans' should also be such a source, but this poses a problem. Whales are a totemic category associated with the Warramiri, Gumatj, Lamamirri, Yalukal and Munyuku *Mala*. The 'Macassans' do not 'belong' to anyone, and neither does their technology. 'Macassans' therefore need to be brought within the framework of Aboriginal law, and this is facilitated by the law of *Birrinydji*. In this way, as Swain (1993) says, 'Macassans' can be seen as having quasi-affinal relations with the Aborigines. In narrative they are a *yirritja* totemic group allied to the whale, but anti-social like the dog.

3. The Eating of the Whale

In the 'inside' version of the *Djuranydjura* story, the Gupapuyngu people represent themselves as the Dog, a land symbol, and the Warramiri are represented by the Whale, a sea symbol, a view which is supported by Rudder (1993:63-65). The eating of whale meat is symbolic of an alliance and sexual union between these *Mala*. While the Gupapuyngu were not prepared to enter into any arrangements with the 'Macassans' in their own territory,

⁷ That such associations are widespread is hinted at in a cave painting from the Groote Eylandt region which shows men in a canoe superimposed on a whale's body. (see illustration 4d)

they would do so with the Warramiri, the 'owners' of *Birrinydji*. The sacred transfer that bound these groups, in this case, included replicas of the items given by the 'Macassan' to the Dog, ie. a necklace and armband (as shown in the image of *Birrinydji* in the Treaty design, illustration 1b) and a dilly bag (see McIntosh 1994b:87). These are now *rangga* held jointly by the two *Mala*. As Burrumarra said, because of this link, "the Gupapuyngu are half on *Birrinydji*. We Warramiri are for *Birrinydji*."

4. *Djuranydjura's* Colour and Sex

Colour is only mentioned in a few versions of the 'outside' stories, and in all cases, *Djuranydjura* is either black or black and white. In the 'inside' story, *Djuranydjura* is white. The white/black opposition is a guide, Burrumarra said, to understanding the story. The colour black indicates non-compliance with 'white' 'Macassans', and domination by them, as in the *Bol'lili* story. 'White' reflects the association of the Warramiri and 'white' 'Macassans', and the Gupapuyngu *Mala's* acceptance of *Birrinydji's* laws.

As with colour, the sex of *Djuranydjura* is rarely mentioned in 'outside' variations. It is presumed to be male, but there is some uncertainty about this. In the 'inside' story, however, *Djuranydjura* is female. Burrumarra said the colour and sex of the Dog symbolised the friendship between Aborigines and 'Macassans'. He said the black/white, male/female transformations were a mandate for the intermarriage of the two groups, although he was not sure if this ever occurred. The Dog and the 'Macassan' were united by a common colour - white. The Dog is female and the 'Macassan' male. Opposites come together as a sign of reconciliation.

Burrumarra also said that *Djuranydjura* had to be female, because a male, in narrative or in real life, travelling to someone else's country, would be carrying sacred items with him. *Djuranydjura* is female and is not carrying these things. She is therefore not on 'sacred' business, at least as far as the 'Macassans' are concerned. One presumes that this is why her brother or husband *Bawal*, was travelling with her.

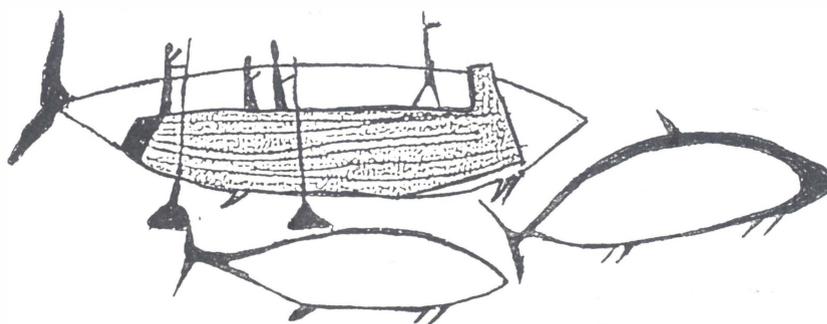
5. Language and Land

Half way through its journey, *Djuranydjura's* language changed from Gupapuyngu to Warramiri. The Gupapuyngu people of Nangingburra speak the Warramiri language today because of *Djuranydjura's* actions, (pers.

Illustration 4c. A megalith at Nangingburra symbolic of the 'Macassan Captain' from the *Djuranydjura* story.



Illustration 4d. A cave painting from Chasm Island, north of Groote Eylandt, showing the association of the whale and sea hunters. Courtesy of George Chaloupka.



comm. Djapany 1992). This fact also provides legitimacy for their claims over this site.

In 1990, the rock representing *Djuranydjura* disintegrated, and there was considerable discussion about whether the parts should be taken back to the inland Gupapuyngu territories. Burrumarra would not allow this, saying that when the Dog reached the Warramiri camp and ate the whale meat, she simultaneously accepted the laws of *Birrinydji*. Because of this, Burrumarra referred to it as a Warramiri Dog. It had tasted the salt water, and he said "She could never go home again."

Burrumarra's unpacking of the 'inside' version of the *Djuranydjura* narrative confronts Lévi-Strauss' view that myths think themselves out in people's minds without them being aware of it, or that people do not analyse the tale as it is told. Even though Burrumarra referred to himself as Australia's first Aboriginal anthropologist (McIntosh 1994b:viii), it would appear that without the background knowledge that a teller or listener brings to the task, 'outside' and some 'inside' narratives are able to be understood only at very superficial levels, ie. Aborigines do not bow down to 'Macassans', or if there was contact, it was through the female line, and therefore not 'sacred'. Even the knowledge that the story links the Gupapuyngu and Warramiri is obscure.

It is from the 'inside' that the bricoleur and the teller of the story, constructs, re-evaluates and adjusts the stories to conform with political realities and *Mala* interests. In the next section, I speculate that the 'inside' version of the story unpacked here, ie. contact with 'Macassans' via an intermediary Aboriginal *Mala* possessing the law of *Birrinydji*, has been taken on by myth makers throughout north-east Arnhem Land as a means of dealing with the 'Other'. Trade in 'Macassan' goods was facilitated while still keeping the visitors at an arm's length. I propose that the land/sea and dog/whale oppositions can be read as Aboriginal/'Macassan', *Lany'tjun/Ngulwardo*, and subsequently, as *Lany'tjun/Birrinydji*, and the interaction of these broad domains provides the basis for exchange between groups while not compromising identity or law. This is what the Warramiri leaders are attempting to do, in an elaborate variation on a theme, in the Treaty Proposal, and again it is based on the *Birrinydji* legacy.

4.5 *Mala* Alliances and Autonomy

Burrumarra and other Warramiri leaders were not specific in naming the Dog whose footprints were represented in the Flag treaty design, except to say that it was Warramiri. Within this *Mala* however, there are innumerable Dog narratives, and many create *dhukarr* or 'roads' between territories (McIntosh 1992). The stories are very different however. The accounts of *Umbulka*, *Djuranydjura*, *Bulunha* and *Bol'lili* represent the full gamut of relations with the 'Other', from outright rejection, to fear of contact, to limited contact but no relationship, to full acceptance. One fact of particular significance analytically, is that *Umbulka* and *Djirrwadjirra* are *Lany'tjun's* dogs whereas *Bulunha* and *Bol'lili* are *Birrinydji's* (Burrumarra pers. comm. 1990). As Jarrat (1992:130) reports, the Warramiri-Budalpuḍal spokesperson Terry Yumbulul says that *Birrinydji* gave each of the islands of the English Company group (Warramiri land) an animal totem, and a Dog to Cape Wilberforce. This is *Bulunha*. *Bol'lili*, as stated earlier, is linked to other areas, but is also *Birrinydji's*.

Umbulka meeting *Bulunha* in the variation described earlier can therefore be read as the meeting of *Lany'tjun* and *Birrinydji*, as was seen to be the case with *Djuranydjura* eating the whale. Of note here is that in the second version of the Flag Treaty design, the whale is in the place of *Birrinydji*. It is an 'outside' reference to *Birrinydji's* law, and as suggested earlier, is seen to be synonymous with a manned sea craft in certain contexts. *Bol'lili's* rejection of 'Macassans' thus highlights the view that *Birrinydji* belongs to the *Yolngu*, and not the 'Macassans'. It is an Aboriginal law for Aboriginal people. As Burrumarra says, "Macassan' business and talk is nothing. All things come from *Birrinydji*." The meeting of these two bodies of Aboriginal law allows 'Macassans' and their goods to be seen as coming under the domain of those groups who are custodians of *Birrinydji*. Through normal processes of alliance, the benefits of contact could be shared amongst all groups. In the remainder of this section, I look for evidence of this in other 'encounter' stories.

In one Dog narrative from the Mildjingi *Mala*, the actions of the totem suggest the desire for alliance with the 'Other' but it comes to nothing (see Thomson 1939). The scene is the immense mud flats at the mouth of the Glyde River near Ramangining. A whale has stranded itself and died, and *Madagarrk*, a visitor to the area, is cooking its meat on a sand bank. Thomson implies that he is 'Macassan', although he is not referred to as such in the

article. Burrumarra (in McIntosh 1992) links *Madagarrk* with the Yalukal *Mala* of Elcho Island and suggests that this narrative represents a totemic alliance between the two Aboriginal groups. The Dog (*Gurrumul*) (see illustration 4e) is fed cooked whale meat by the 'Macassan' in this story, but it is greedy and not content with these offerings. It wants the whole raw whale carcass, and its selfishness becomes an anti-social act threatening its survival. In an attempt to reach the stranded whale, the Dog becomes stuck in the mud and drowns as the tide rushes in. The Dog turned to stone and the site is still considered to be a threat to passing ships today (see Story 8, Appendix Five).

Significantly however, there is a further published narrative from the Mildjingi *Mala* which in many ways parallels the 'inside' *Djuranydjura* variation, and relationships with 'Macassans' through a mediating group. In this second story, the Mildjingi Dogs *Gurarrgarinya* and *Gurarrinya* (Groger-Wurm 1973:98) again smell something new, and go to investigate. The Mildjingi are associated with the coastal plains and the Dogs travel to the margins of their territory, where they find Warramiri *Yolngu* cooking the *Yarrwarri* (Queenfish). McIntosh (1992) suggested that this narrative was the foundation of an alliance between the Warramiri and Mildjingi, and one might suggest that, again, it is through the law of *Birrinydji*, although details are scarce. No trepanging was carried out in Mildjingi territory, as in the 'outside' *Djuranydjura* versions and yet through this new alliance, the Mildjingi *Mala* had access to 'Macassan' trade goods. The Mildjingi link to the Warramiri is evidenced in the name of Thomson's chief informant, Raywalla. It refers to the *Birrinydji* site of Cape Wilberforce (Raywalla Bakitju). Members of the Mildjingi *Mala* call the Warramiri *Maari*, and Raywalla received his name from an actual mother's mother's brother from the Warramiri *Mala* (pers. comm. Burrumarra 1990).

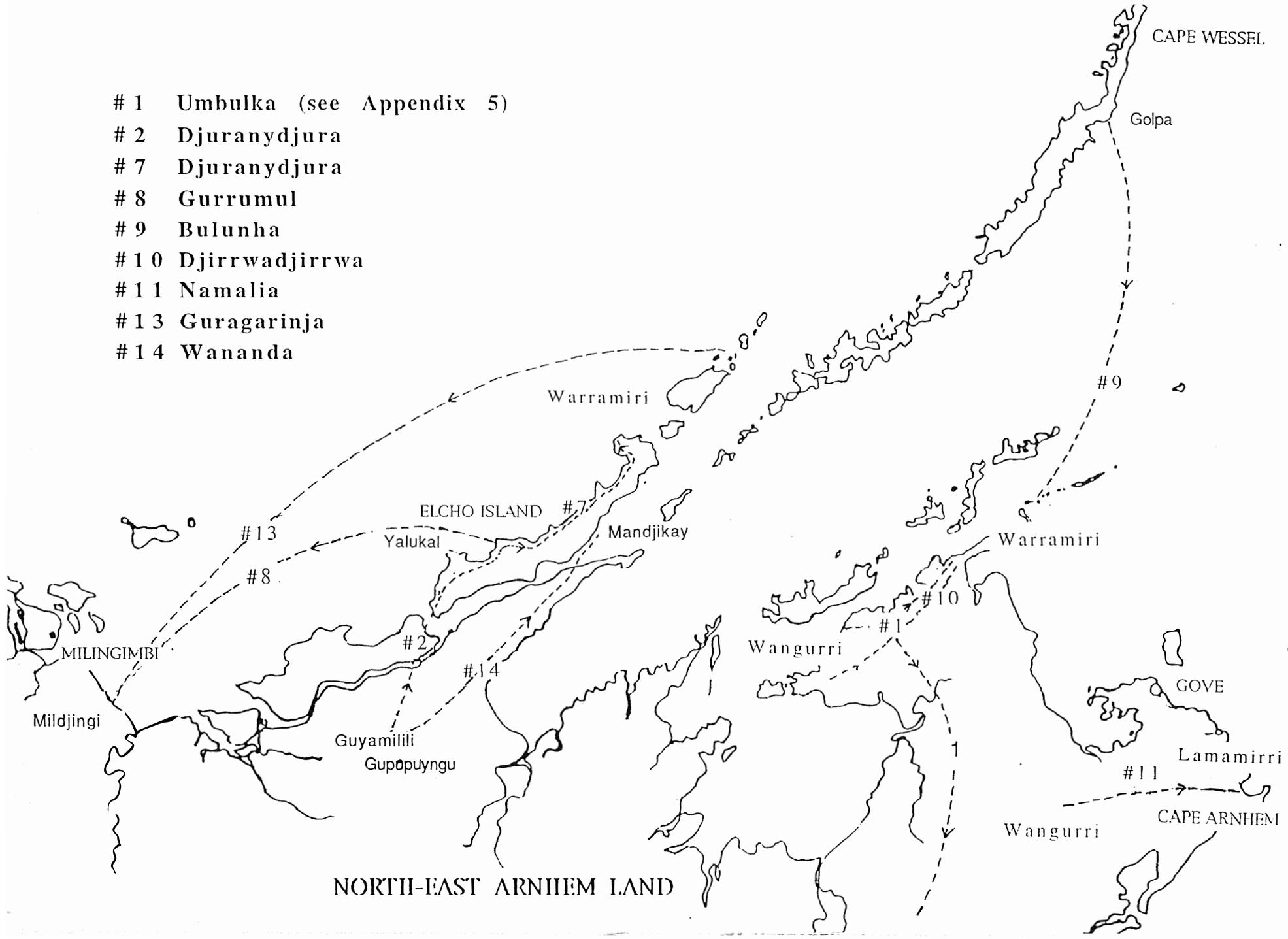
In other Dog 'encounter' variations, the pattern repeats itself, though data is again limited. Travel is usually from inland territories to the sea, and from the land of a *Gutharra Mala* to that of the *Maari*. For instance in one narrative from the Guyamilili *Mala*, the Dog travels from the mainland (from Djiliwiri, where the honey bee totem evicted the 'Macassans') to Gulamari on Elcho Island, where it is fed dugong meat, and forms a link with the Mandjikay-Manjeri in the process (Berndt 1976; see Story 14, Appendix Five). Of note is that this was a major 'Macassan' trepanging area, and has been the subject of archaeological attention (pers. comm. J. Mulvaney 1989).

Illustration 4e. An effigy of the Mildjingi Dog *Gurrumul* as used in a *Ngaarra* ritual (from Thomson 1939).



Map 4. Alliances formed as a result of the travels of totemic Dogs.

- # 1 Umbulka (see Appendix 5)
- # 2 Djuranydjura
- # 7 Djuranydjura
- # 8 Gurrumul
- # 9 Bulunha
- # 10 Djirrwadjirra
- # 11 Namalia
- # 13 Guragarinja
- # 14 Wananda



Similarly, in other stories, Dogs travel from the inland in Wangurri territory to Cape Wilberforce and to Cape Arnhem, forming alliances in the process (see McIntosh 1992; Story 11, Appendix Five). Map 4 indicates several of these Dog-‘Encounter’ alliances.

In the next section, I highlight the fact that 'encounter' stories also allow for more detailed readings of the ongoing significance of contact with the 'Other' and provide a view on how relationships with non-Aborigines should proceed. I also put forward a possible explanation for the presence of the footprints of the Dog next to *Birrinydji* in the Flag Treaty design.

4.6 Dog 'Encounters' and the Treaty Proposal

Burrumarra stressed that the 'encounter' stories were strong statements that what Aborigines had was for Aborigines alone, although this view was somewhat ambiguous, for partnership is hinted at strongly in several of the narratives. The Warramiri story of *Bulunha* is a good example. This Dog had travelled overland from Warramiri-Mandjikay territory at Matamata to Cape Wilberforce (Warramiri-Budalpudal land) and formed a *dhukarr* or road, as in other alliance or trade narratives. The Dog now sits on the shoreline facing out to sea. At its side is a large stone symbolic of the turtle egg. Like *Bol'lili*, this is *Birrinydji's* Dog, and it is a 'land owner'. The message of the site, according to Burrumarra, was that the Dog would share the produce of the sea with the 'black' man if he was hungry, tying this narrative in with the *Bol'lili* story in which Aborigines were once 'white' and rich, and the 'Macassans' 'black' and poor. *Bulunha* had seen the *yindi bunggul* (ceremony) of *Birrinydji* and recognised that one law ie. *Birrinydji's*, united all peoples,⁸ Burrumarra said (see McIntosh 1992; Story 9, Appendix Five).

Another Warramiri story hinting at acceptance of the 'Other' involves the Dog *Djirrwadjirra* who, like *Bulunha*, forms a 'road' between Warramiri-Mandjikay and Warramiri-Budalpudal territories for both 'black' and 'white' people to travel on (Story 10, Appendix Five). *Djirrwadjirra* is represented in the landscape by a long low mountain range and was the only site marked for protection in a sacred site survey of the area in 1989 in preparation for mining exploration (pers. comm. Mattjuwi 1989). In this

⁸ In a similar way, *Djuranydjura* recognised that there was a new law in the land at Nanginburra, that of *Birrinydji*, see earlier.

narrative, the Dog wants the *Balanda* to stay in his land, but again, only on Aboriginal terms. The outsiders must follow Aboriginal law and recognise Aboriginal ownership of the land. *Djirrwadjirra* had no immediate contact with the visitors however, and was described as a 'real bush Aborigine' by Burrumarra.

Other Warramiri Dog variations, such as that of *Bandhurrk* and *Buramanda* from Yirringa, stress Aboriginal autonomy in the face of outside contact, and have some elements in common with the *Djuranydjura* story. Burrumarra (pers. comm. 1990) said,

"*Bandhurrk*, the Dog, was making a stringy-bark canoe so he could sail to the other islands looking for *Yolngu*. Each time he put the canoe in the water, it sank. *Burumanda*, another Dog, brought fire to that canoe. He singed the bark and made it strong so it would stay afloat. This is the way [stringy bark] canoes are still made today. We learnt this from *Bandhurrk* and *Burumanda*."

"*Burrngitj*, another Dog looked after that canoe and would not lend it to anyone and made sure no-one stole it. You can see those three Dogs there today on the beach at Yirringa and in the Wessel Islands. They have turned to stone. *Boria*, another Dog at Yirringa made himself a bark canoe the same way."

The 'traditional' stringy bark canoe is associated with 'old' law. The dug-out canoe, on the other hand, as I mentioned in Chapter Three, is linked to *Birrinydji's* law and the *Murrnginy* era or modern world. While great numbers of oysters grow on the sacred rocks representing the Dogs, only old people may collect these, and then they are not allowed to take them away in any form of container, such as a tin (Djoymi pers. comm. 1990). The point here appears to be that the 'old' cannot be compromised by the 'new'. The technology of the 'Macassans' and Europeans is thus seen in perspective. It is linked to the law of *Birrinydji*, and this is one law amongst many others, and does not have primacy. The stone house of the Golpa 'robber' as opposed to the flimsy, temporary wooden house of the 'Macassans' also seems to reflect this same point.

The significance of this chapter can be summed up in a further 'outside' or public story, relevant to both moieties. It again affirms the view that what Aborigines have is for Aborigines alone. It was told by Burrumarra, and McIntosh (1994b:19) in a summarised form records:

"In *dhuwa* mythology...a meteorite is the eye of the thunderman, Djambuwal. One [meteor] had fallen in Rirratjingu country in Melville Bay. It was about twenty cm in diameter. Daeng Rangka, [the 'Macassan' Captain] on seeing it, asked... if he could keep it for good luck. His wish was met and he placed the meteorite at the base of his boat's mast and headed back to Macassar via Timor. As the story goes, when they passed Melville Island, a terrific storm blew up threatening to sink the craft. At that point Daeng Rangka remembered the stone and gave the order to heave it overboard. Almost immediately, the storm subsided. Djambuwal was satisfied."

The inclusion of the Dog footprints alongside the image of *Birrinydji* is therefore perhaps a reminder that Aborigines desired a relationship with the 'Other' but would not compromise their law in attempting to achieve it. As such, it is a statement of hope and a wish for an ideal type of association which has been lacking in Aboriginal dealings with non-Aborigines to date.

4.7 Conclusion

The narrator of myth creates 'meaning' by manipulating the qualities of the totemic operators, building on the way a totem has been used in the past, either from examples within the region or further afield. The characteristics of the dingo, ie. its anti-social nature, are relevant in conveying particular messages. In this instance, the Dog was considered to be of the same 'cosmic' class as the 'whiteman'. As long as 'Macassan' narratives are told in terms of the Dog, there can only be one view, and this is not able to be manipulated at the whim of the teller. The view from the 'unchanging eternal' is that 'Macassans' were 'outside' the law, and there was no relationship between them and Aborigines. Both are law breakers and do not live by the rules of human society. The 'Macassans' have to be rejected and they are, but the law of *Birrinydji* allows for a deeper understanding of the place of Aborigines in relation to them. It is a perspective that takes into consideration that while the 'Other' could not be ignored, their presence could be contained and benefited from. In some ways, this is the motive being expressed in the Treaty Proposal. The Warramiri want to control and contain experiences with the 'Other' in ways which do not threaten the established social order.

We can see how useful structural analysis has been in decoding Warramiri narrative, but also how, in purely Lévi-Straussian terms, it cannot throw light on the on-going ways in which the Warramiri strive for unity and reciprocity in dealings with others. We have seen also that there

are structural limitations to agency. Aborigines are continually negotiating a new order of understandings with regard to the 'Other', but such understandings find legitimacy only through their perceived 'timelessness'. The material is presented in such a way that cosmology is seen to match experience, and experience, cosmology. For instance, Burrumarra saw *Bulunha* as the most significant Dog narrative, given his particular interests in reconciliation. The story of *Bol'lili*, on the other hand, is known to all of the Warramiri leaders, but was never spoken about in detail, suggesting that its relevance was questionable in the current Treaty project. As I will show in Chapter Seven, *yirritja* leaders also speak of how Aborigines have 'one ceremony' with 'Macassans' in a perspective drawn from other 'memories', and other bodies of law. This is the ritual complex associated with *Walitha'walitha* (Allah) and in 1996, Aborigines will share this ceremony with the 'Macassans' in a dance exchange designed to re-unite these old trading partners. What is related in the here and now depends very much on context, as discussed in Chapter Three.

What I want to do now is look at the other major way in which the Warramiri are drawing on the 'memory' of the past as motivation for asserting their rights in the wider Australian community. In this case, it is in a call for the implementation of an Indigenous Marine Protection Strategy for the Arafura Sea. This claim draws on the 'memory' of *Yolngu* contact with 'whale hunters' and the law of *Birrinydji* once again. From Burrumarra's perspective, there was an alliance between Warramiri *Yolngu* and these 'totem hunters' in the past, and the relationship was of a completely different order to that with 'Macassans'. Warramiri *Yolngu* and 'totem hunters' both followed the laws of the sea, but from 'different sides'. This is the type of arrangement that Burrumarra wants to see become a feature of Australian law. There will be mutual respect for things Aboriginal in an environment of shared law.

CHAPTER FIVE

5: 'Totem Hunters' and *Yolngu* Sea Rights

In October 1994, *Yolngu* at Galiwin'ku, Elcho Island held a press conference and made a televised call for an indigenous marine protection strategy for Northern Territory coastal waters between Maningrida and Numbulwar and to the north to the Australian - Indonesian boundary. In this zone, the *Yolngu* said, were sacred Aboriginal totems, song cycles, ceremonies and the pathways of creational beings. The aim of the call was to initiate discussion on the need to combine both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal knowledge in the management of the Arafura Sea, which the *Yolngu* call *Manbuynga ga Rulyapa* and for Aboriginal people to progressively reassume responsibility for various levels of management of the area, based on their customary laws.

In this Chapter, I show that we have another example of how the 'memory' of contact with non-Aborigines is relevant now in the way certain *Yolngu* are negotiating for the recognition of their rights in the wider Australian community. This thesis revolves around Warramiri involvement in the call for reconciliation between Aborigines and non-Aborigines in Australia. But a related step in achieving this, according to Burrumarra, was in the fight for the recognition of *Yolngu* sea rights. In later Chapters, I deal with the *Yolngu* ambition to re-unite with the ancestors of trepangers in a ritual exchange planned for 1996, and also how the way Warramiri *Yolngu* approach Christianity also draws on, or has been influenced by, the 'memory' of 'Macassan' contact.

It is not my intention here to write in support of the *Yolngu* claim that they have interests far out to sea, in some cases in areas which in all probability are now a part of Indonesia (see McIntosh 1995). Rather, I will focus on the nature of shared belief in the sea by Aborigines and 'whale hunters' and look at why this is an important aspect of the *Yolngu* claim. There was a perceived unity between *Yolngu* and 'totem hunters' in the one law, the law of the sea, Burrumarra said, and this law 'came under *Birrinydji*.' At other times Burrumarra said that the visitors were more 'on the law' than the Warramiri. These people actually lived on the water, whereas the Warramiri lived on the sea-land margin and *yirritja Yolngu* acknowledged their ritual superiority. For this reason, Burrumarra referred

to these 'pre-Macassan' voyagers by the Bahasa Indonesian title of *bunggawa* (leaders).

I begin the chapter with an overview of the proposed Indigenous Marine Protection Strategy and then look at what has been written on the subject of 'totem hunters' before detailing Warramiri views of the significance of this 'wave' of contact. As with Chapter Four, the object is to situate Aborigines in relation to these 'visitors' as a means of throwing light on the complex ways in which the Warramiri selectively interpret this 'memory' in the present.

5.1 Indigenous Marine Protection Strategy

The *Indigenous Marine Protection Strategy* (1994) was launched at Burrumarra's funeral. According to his son, Terry Yumbulul, it was Burrumarra's lifelong wish that Aboriginal rights to the sea be acknowledged by Australian and Northern Territory authorities. Burrumarra believed that *Yolngu* should not only be consulted in matters to do with the sea, but also play an active role in the management of sea resources.

A draft proposal was released by the *Ginytjirrang Mala* at the press conference held at Burrumarra's gravesite, and the following recommendations were put forward:

- . Australian maps should refer to the area in question as *Manbuynga ga Rulyapa*;
- . Australian Government should consult with *Yolngu* about Aboriginal interests in the sea;
- . a bilateral co-management arrangement with Indonesia should be pursued by the Australian government and *Yolngu*;
- . the marine strategy should be based on *Yolngu* management principles;
- . government recognition of *Yolngu* sea laws;
- . the *Yolngu* should set minimum safety standards for ships traversing *Manbuynga ga Rulyapa*;
- . *Yolngu* should own and operate their own fishing enterprises; and
- . mining proposals for the sea should proceed according to *Yolngu* law.

It was suggested that if the call was ignored, the *Yolngu* may attempt to claim the entire Arafura Sea under the *Native Title Act 1993*, and force the Government to the negotiating table.

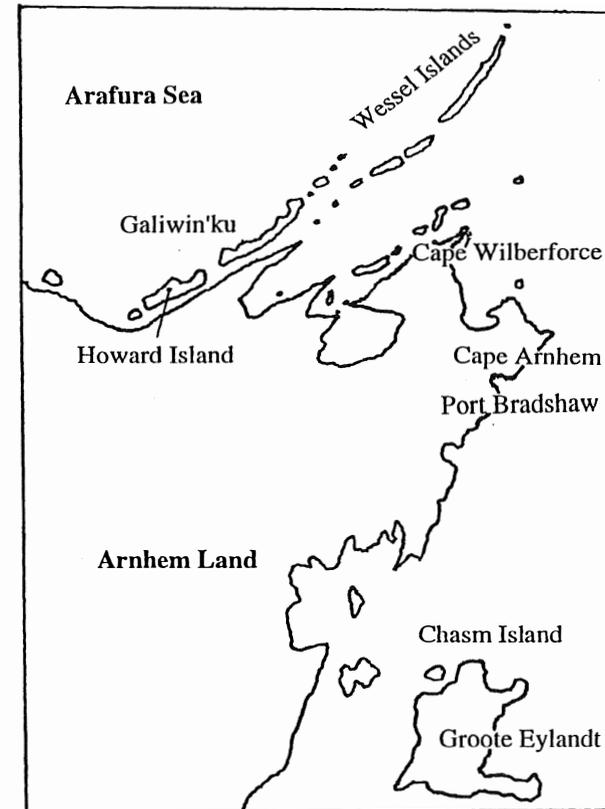
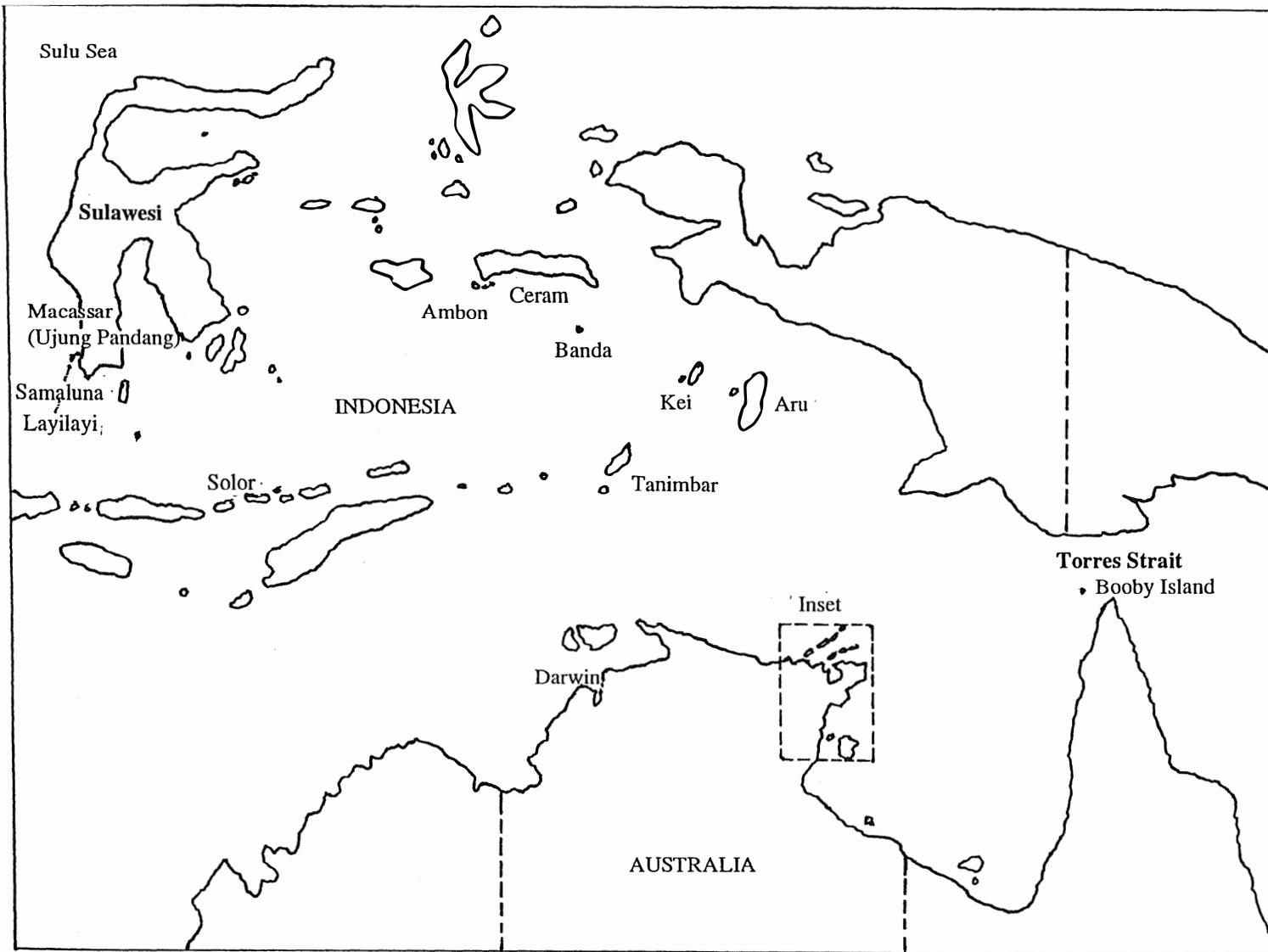
The word *Manbuynga* refers to *yirritja* moiety waters in north-east Arnhem Land and *Rulyapa* to *dhuwa* moiety waters. The steering committee (*Ginytjirrang Mala*) established to represent *Yolngu* interests includes members of a range of groups from both of these moieties, including the Wangurri, Gumatj, Dhalwangu, Gupapuyngu, Ritharrngu, Djambarrpuyngu and Galpu *Mala*. Only two groups however have dreamings exclusively from the sea and representatives of these act as spokespersons for the *Yolngu* as a whole. They are Terry Yumbulul of the *yirritja* moiety Warramiri-Budalpudal *Mala* and Keith Djiniyini of the *dhuwa* moiety Djambarrpuyngu-Wutjara *Mala*.

Burrumarra never used European terms such as 'ownership' when describing the Warramiri-Budalpudal relationship with the sea. He spoke instead about *Yolngu* 'holding' the sea through *maarr*, which Thomson (1975) equated with *mana*. It is that feeling of confidence or certainty with regard to one's belief and purpose in life and is directly linked to the possession of sacred objects and knowledge associated with particular tracts of country, including the sea (see also Keen 1995:512).

When pushed on the question of ownership, Burrumarra said that the *Yolngu* were custodians of laws associated with the 'real' owners of *Manbuynga ga Rulyapa*, the totemic whale and octopus creational beings. Non-Aboriginal Australians had no say at this level and were viewed as strangers or interlopers in the eyes of these ancestors. It was Burrumarra's firmly held belief that Aborigines never relinquished 'traditional' rights to Europeans following colonisation. Neither were such rights forfeited to 'Macassan' fishermen, who had been visiting north-east Arnhem Land at least one hundred years before the arrival of the English.

In discussions with government authorities, Burrumarra tried to encourage the view that any business involving the sea should 'go through' the *Yolngu*, that is, it should be a matter of negotiation. He saw a need for some form of alliance or partnership so that sea resources could be protected for the enjoyment of future generations of all Australians. His call was largely ignored.

The foundation for this sense of partnership that Burrumarra and now his son Yumbulul are bringing to the negotiating table, is to be found in



Map 5. Sites referred to in Chapter Five

Warramiri history, Burrumarra believed. It was through contact with the whale hunter, and in the next section, I review what has been written on the subject of 'totem hunters' generally.

5.2 Literature Review

Burrumarra strived to create a seamless whole in his accounts of the past, but he realised that it was not always possible to do so. There were too many inconsistencies and too much overlap in stories about the various 'waves' of outsiders. In the light of negotiations for the recognition of *Yolngu* sea rights and of reconciliation, Burrumarra gave a highly perspectival account of the significance of 'totem hunters'. He said that there was a 'timeless' relationship of reciprocity between Warramiri Aborigines and a dark skinned collective from the north who also followed the laws of the sea.

Very little has been recorded on the exploits of 'totem hunters' although Berndt (1948) recorded Aboriginal songs describing the long nosed canoes, in which men stand as they paddle along. The following quote refers to the travels of these hunters northwards to the land of the *yirritja* moiety dead.

"Come on, we'll paddle along," the [hunters] are saying. [Gelurru], Duriduri, [Dhurritjini], [Bapayili], [Wurramala], [Garmali], all go paddling along. They take that long-nosed canoe...and paddle along through the water..."

"Standing, they pole with the paddle, pushing the water, With arms flexed, paddling. The wet paddle gleams in the sun. The canoe prow cleaves the water; the paddle is rhythmically dipping...The paddle keeps moving; the sound of pushing the water...To the islands of Badu, past the Wessels to Badu, to the land of the Badu [Gumatj]...Up to the islands of Badu...The flattened end of the paddle moves, dipping, pushing the water...Towards New Guinea...far out at sea..." (Berndt 1948:98).

In mortuary ceremonies, these songs are presented and up to sixty people in two lines mimic the actions of the hunters. Sticks are commonly deployed instead of paddles, but on rare occasions, the oars used are realistic (see Mountford 1956-64:342), and have a carved wooden barb at one end (see later in this Chapter).

On the basis of ambiguous statements by informants, Berndt (1948) remained undecided whether this 'wave' of contact originated in the Torres

Illustration 5a. A cave painting from Booby Island in Torres Strait showing an canoe, similar to the *Lanong* of the southern Philippines and eastern Indonesia.

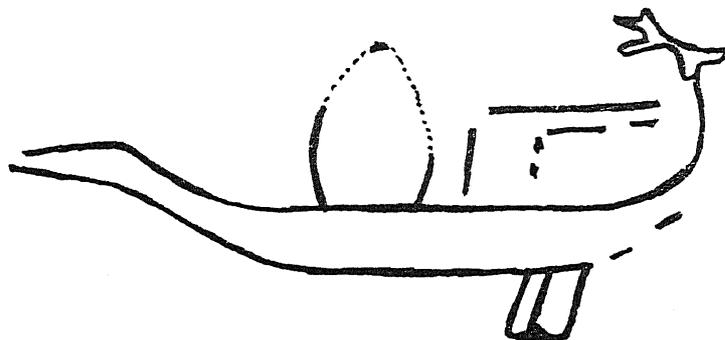


Illustration 5b. A hunting scene depicted in a cave painting from Chasm Island, Groote Eylandt. Of note is the fact that these paintings were considered to be of great age even in Flinder's time, ie. 1803. Courtesy of George Chaloupka.

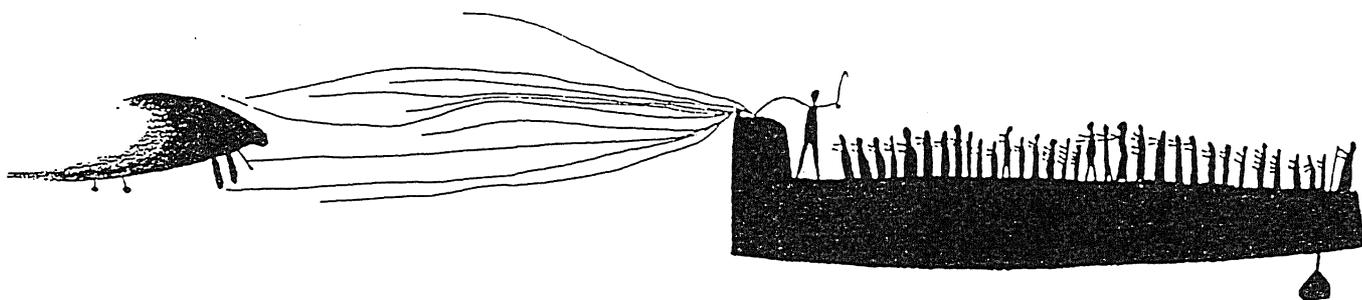
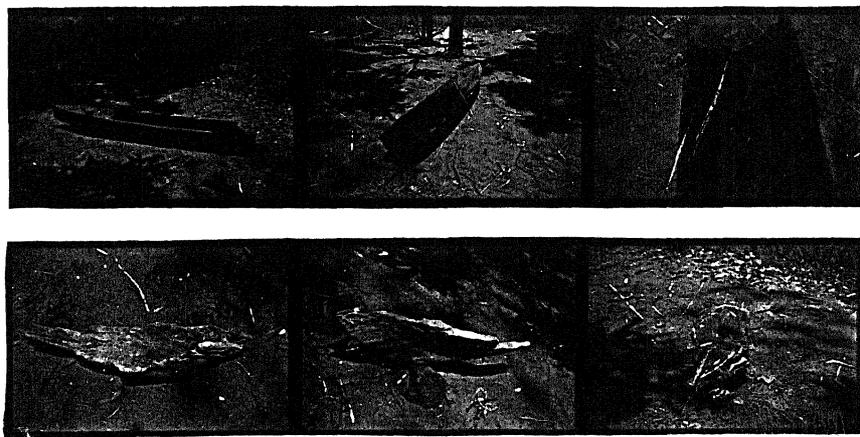


Illustration 5c. The remains of two dug-out canoes that drifted onto the Elcho Island coast in 1989.



Strait or eastern Indonesia. Burrumarra was adamant however that they came from the north and north-east of Arnhem Land, whereas the 'Macassans' had come from the west. They were not Torres Strait Islanders either, Burrumarra said, although this was the prevailing view of many *Yolngu* in the 1940s (see Berndt 1948), and is still the case for some Gumatj elders. The visitors were followers of Allah, and were the ceremonial 'owners' of the laws associated with the whale and the octopus. Their boats were known as *Djulpan*, and in some instances, *Lambu*, distinguishing them from the *Mitjiang* or *Marrthangay* of the 'Macassans', from the *Yolngu* point of view. Yet *Lambu* is a type of craft associated with southern Sulawesi (pers. com. P. Clarke, Northern Territory Museum, 1994), and *Djulpan* may be a lexical variation of *Sope*,¹ a craft associated with the Sama-Bajau of this area.

Of particular note is the fact that the visitors were 'black' like Aborigines, and apart from their having dug-out sailing canoes, knives and tobacco, were seen as being equal, 'one', or 'brothers' to *Yolngu*, according to Warramiri leaders.

5.3 Representing Encounters in Narrative

Despite the fact that Burrumarra never travelled north to Indonesia himself, he was able to pass on to the current generation of Warramiri leaders extensive information about this ongoing association of *Yolngu* with sites in the open sea in the waters off Arnhem Land. The Warramiri repertoire includes references to vast numbers of reefs and shoals associated with the travels of the mythical whale, octopus, flying fox and the 'whale hunter'. Stories concerning the latter are the most numerous and the night sky, the open sea and unknown lands to the north feature prominently in what Burrumarra suggested were first contact narratives.

Stories of Aboriginal hunters in their canoes at the time of year when fish are plentiful and storms threaten, are synonymous with 'totem hunters' coming from lands off the coast, in variations on a theme. This Wangurri variation, for instance, centres on the constellation Orion. In abbreviated form (from Wells 1973:37-44), it goes thus:

¹ Following on from Walker (1988:28), there are two primary requirements for identifying loan words. a. There is a regular pattern in the way certain sounds in the source language are pronounced in the destination language. b. The words must be semantically plausible, i.e. have similar meanings. In this case, there is a regular shift from the Macassarese 's' to the *Yolngu matha* 'dj', and both words refer to a seacraft.

Three *yirritja* hunters, *Ngurruwilpil*, *Berrupirru*, and *Djaandurrngala* gathered their string fishing lines, harpoon spears and twine and paddled their sailing canoe, the *Djulpan*, into deep water. They were in search of dugong and turtle or fish, but were forbidden from keeping or eating the kingfish *Nguykal*, which was their totem. It was the beginning of the wet season, and the weather was turning bad. All they had caught were kingfish, however, and they had to release them, but they did not want to go back empty handed. They broke the taboo and kept some kingfish, and then all of a sudden, the *Djulpan* and the men, with the fish still on their lines, were sucked up into the sky in a waterspout. They had no way of returning to earth and there they sail to this day. Orion's belt is their canoe. The fish trail down on lines from the canoe as a row of stars.²

Several writers have commented on this story. Jennison (1927:182), in a review of the vocabulary of Elcho Island, identified the Milky Way as a river known as *Badurru*. Orion's belt was a canoe called the *Djulpan*. *Yarrata* is a star symbolic of a fish caught by the men in the canoe. Nearby Pleiades, known as *Djunggaliwarr*, is a bailing shell from the *Djulpan*. The Southern Cross, *Wurdegugu*, is the fire that is always burning for the hunters.

Zorc (1986) gave a slightly different though complementary view of the meaning of the words *Ngurruwilpil*, *Berrupirru*, and *Djaandurrngala*. He says they are stars in the sky. The *Djulpan* is a constellation which looks like a canoe. The Milky Way is *Badurru*, but this word also means fog or mist, and is associated with the presence of the whale (Burrumarra pers. comm. 1990). *Yarrata* is a string for holding fish, and *Djungaliwarr* is another word for the trumpet shell, *Djulku*.

The Lamamirri people of Cape Arnhem have a slightly different version of this story, but this time, the point of origin of the hunters is somewhere to the east of Arnhem Land, in an unspecified place. While the hunters in the first narrative were Wangurri men, *Mala* affiliation in this narrative is unclear. The story, from Mountford (1956-64:498) is as follows:

Two canoes or *Tjilulpuna* (*Djulpan*), one with men in it and another with women, are travelling towards the coast of north-

² Wangurri informant Timothy Buthimang suggests that this story is not only about adherence to totemic law, but also about the changing seasons. With the wet season immanent, it is dangerous to travel too far off the coast, even though fish are plentiful at this time. See also the bark painting in Mountford 1956-64:330.

east Arnhem Land. They had caught turtle, two fish and a whale (?) and loaded these into the canoes. At Cape Arnhem a storm developed and capsized them. The two fish, the turtle and the whale are now constellations in the sky, and also features of the coastal seascape. The male hunters and their canoe became the belt of Orion, while the women's canoe is Pleiades. Other constellations such as Gemini, Eridinus, Hyades are also connected to this drama. (See bark painting of the canoe in Mountford 1956-64:494).

Of major interest however is that variations of these stories relate specifically to the presence of outsiders. Thus when a whale hunting canoe, the *Djulpan*, was towed onto the coast from Truant Island by a harpooned whale at the 'beginning of time', or when visitors mysteriously arrive in other locations (see later in this Chapter), they are said to have come down from the heavens. As I detail later, it is also the *Djulpan* which takes the souls of the dead to the islands of the north, in other accounts. The land of the dead and the heavens above are synonymous, as are the visitors and *Yolngu* in some contexts.

While associated with the 'Milky Way' or *Badurru*, these 'universal travellers' as Burrumarra referred to them, were said to have been real people, and he said they now dwell on islands to the north and east of Arnhem Land. Berndt and Berndt (1954:64) for instance tell of how outrigger canoes float in on the tide at Port Bradshaw or Cape Arnhem at irregular intervals, and that they were not cause for wonder. In one account he says they are referred to as *Birugiru* (*Berrupirru*) which was one of the hunters in the *Djulpan* in the 'Orion' narrative. The Berndts (1954:65) add,

"Traditional drawings show 'spirit canoes', some of them fairly large hulks, which were brought in by the waves along the north-eastern coast. The Aborigines called the people in them [*Wurramala*]. 'They were really people who have been here,' they say, 'but we call them spirit men and women.'"

5.4 'Totem Hunter' Narrative Variations

'Totem' hunter narrative variations cover three broad inter-related areas. While it is not theoretically valid to distinguish them, as 'bundles' they do reflect somewhat different foci. The first are those stories linked to the creation of Aboriginal *Mala* emblems and totemic sites in the landscape. The second group are those in which totemic forces reject the visitors, as in Chapter Four, although there is no specific talk of 'Macassans'. The third group are the best documented, and detail how 'totem hunters' are in

alliance with Aborigines, and are agents in the movement of the souls of Aboriginal dead from the Australian coast to some unknown 'land of the dead' in the north, known by a number of terms, including *Badurru*, *Badu*, *Banda*, *Nalkuma*, or *Mutilnga*.

In the next three sections, I give an overview of these stories. Later in the chapter I look in detail at how the partnership envisaged between 'totem hunters' and *Yolngu* is the view that the Warramiri have brought to the negotiating table in their fight for the recognition of *Yolngu* rights to the Arafura Sea, and also in the Treaty Proposal.

5.4-1 The 'Other' as 'totem hunter'.

The first category of 'totem hunter' stories is that associated with sacred Aboriginal traditions, and there are many variations. Mountford (1956-64:338) for instance tells of the expert fishermen, *Rangi-rangi* and *Kultana* (*Gulthana*) who had come to Port Bradshaw to spear dugong. The day was windy and the spray from the waves hitting the sides of their canoe rose to form heavy thunder clouds and rain. This is said to be the origin of the first wet season. When this happened, the stingrays travelled to the mangroves and give birth among the tree roots, where the visitors hunted for them. At the end of their activities, *Rangi-rangi* and *Gulthana* were transformed into paperbark trees. The pregnant stingray was transformed into a mangrove creek at the totemic centre at Port Bradshaw (Mountford 1956-64:338).

More complex narratives in this category refer to the activities of the mythical ancestor, *Wurramala*, and there are a number of variations.

5.4-2 *Wurramala* in Warramiri Interpretations

While Groger-Wurm (1973:96) refers to *Wurramala* as a Wangurri ancestral being, she says they are associated with the creation of Warramiri, Mildjingi and Gupapuyngu-Birrkili totemic emblems, as I mentioned in Chapter Two. In a version of the *Wurramala* story narrated by Liwukang of the Warramiri *Mala*, the action takes place at Cape Arnhem, but connects with those sites in the Wessel Islands and Yirringa referred to by Groger-Wurm.³

³ This version was translated by Djawa of the Gumatj *Mala* and the author, following Liwukang's presentation to a group of Trainee Rangers managing

A *Yolngu* named *Yumbulul* had travelled to Nanydjaka (Cape Arnhem) and had left his canoe, the *Djulpan*, there. This is now a sacred rock in the sea. *Yumbulul* was transformed at this place. He became a whale and traversed the icy waters of the north where he was hunted and caught by *Wurramala*. The whale was too big, so *Wurramala* cut it up and put the pieces into his canoe. Later the whale was cooked and eaten.

As I mentioned in Chapter Two, following the harpooning of the whale, when *Wurramala* looked back towards the Australian coast, he saw great clouds in the sky. The whale had sucked in water and when it blew it out, the spray rose up to form clouds, now depicted as a sacred emblem of various coastal *yirritja* groups. The site where this happened was simultaneously at Yirringa and in the Wessel Islands, at a place called Gunggungura, and in paintings, it is depicted by the whale's spine (see Cawte 1993:85).

The place where *Yumbulul* left his canoe is known by the Indonesian title Wutjungduru (Ujung Duru). For Burrumarra and Liwukang, this rock was symbolic of the whale. It rises and falls with the changing tides. Warner (1958:42) says the name Utjingduru (Wutjungduru) refers to the nose of the whale, and that it is a sacred word for the whale. Mountford (1956-64:348) says Waitjundudu (Wutjungduru) is connected with the actions of *Mokuy* (spirit) *Jambula* and his son *Bulanuna*, the turtle hunters. It was here that the whale and dugong blow up smoke and fire to destroy their enemies (Mountford 1956-64:332). He adds that the people of *Nalkuma* (*Badu*) regularly travelled to their totemic place on the south side of Cape Arnhem, a place which coincides with Wutjungduru (Mountford 1956-64:343). Mountford (1956-64:346) repeats this assertion later when he says it is the totem place of the *Mokuy*, the place where they procure turtle, dugong and fish for the people of *Nalkuma*. Berndt (1964) says the island of Wutjungduru is the result of the spraying of water by the creator being *Mirrinyungu* whale.

"This is a [*Wangarr*] place. [The whale's] body is now an island: it splashes water with its tail. There is a hole at each end of the island (whale's body) where the sea surges in and then sprays out," (Berndt 1964:275-276).

the Cape Arnhem area on behalf of the Warramiri and Lamamirri land owners.

Thus it is evident that Wutjungduru is both a 'whale', an ancestral Aboriginal hunter in his canoe, and a place associated with the people of *Nalkuma* (*Baḍu*).⁴ For the purposes of analysis, the relevant feature of this narrative is that it contains references to sites which are a focus of both the totemic interests of the land-owning Aboriginal groups, and the 'Other', and it suggests that there is a relationship between them.

5.4-3 *Wurramala* in Munyuku Territory

At the 1994 National Aboriginal Art Awards exhibition, paintings by Munyuku artists Dula and Gambali Ngurrwuthun highlighted the exploits of the totem hunting *Wurramala* from their *Mala* perspective, and while quite different to the Warramiri version, common elements link the two. An abbreviated version of the accounts is as follows.

The whale ancestral being, *Mirrinyungu*, was living in Munyuku waters when spirit men, *Wurramala* or *Matjitji*, also of the Munyuku clan, hunted and killed it. When the carcass was washed onto the shore, *Wurramala* cut it up with his stone knives called *Garrpana*. The tail was cut off and this is said to represent the Munyuku clan itself. The rest of the body belonged to the Warramiri clan.

After completing the task, the stone knives, being contaminated, were thrown into the sea, becoming a rock known as *Garrpana*. This is a place also associated with the sacred octopus of the Munyuku clan. The knife rock is also equated with an anchor, and called *Garrpana Lawarrwarr*. Munyuku people 'belong' to it, for it also contains the spirit of the whale. It is an important place with regards clan identity, and a potent place in terms of fertility. Spirit children come from here, and the soul returns to this place on the death of the clan member. It is forbidden for anyone to hunt here.

The blood, flesh and smell of the dead whale contaminated the water and shore, but attracted the crayfish *Madi*, and the reef fish *Gukuwal* and *Ngarrwili*, all sacred to the Munyuku. *Ngarrwili* is said to have a stone knife or *Yiki* on its tail, which links it with the activities of the *Wurramala*.⁵

Two Munyuku women, *Nyulinyuli* and *Gambudal* were sisters of the whale, and were disturbed by flies which had been on the whale carcass, and then smelt *Ganburrk*, the decaying meat, and started to wail for their lost brother. The north wind *Dirimala* (*Lungurrma*) freed them from the contamination of the odour, and they sat under the shade of the *Dharul* or *Wulpundu* tree, where they continued to mourn. They became

⁴ See illustration 4d in the last Chapter.

⁵ *Yiki* is a 'Macassan' loan word, according to Zorc (1986). It means iron-bladed knife, and in the painting, swords rather than stone knives are depicted.

rocks. Scrub fowls, *Gurrwawu*, represent the women in the painting by Gambali.

Today, the *Ngarrwili* and *Guwarrtji* (Hawksbill Turtle) swim around the knife rock, and call up the dry north *yirritja* winds which blow from October to December.⁶

5.4-4 *Wurramala*, the 'Other', and Aboriginal *Mala* Alliances

It is immediately apparent that in both Warramiri and Munyuku accounts, details of the 'Other' are almost non-existent. Such narratives are what Morphy (1990) referred to as myths of creation, and refer to founding ancestral dramas, which take place without reference to living populations. In the Warramiri account, *Wurramala* is a mythical sea being in the form of a human being intimately linked to the whale. In Munyuku variations, the hunter is an ancestral member of that *Mala*, and the only people mentioned are 'sisters' of the whale. In one version the hunter cuts the meat up at sea, and in the other it is on the land, but this appears to be a statement of the relationship between the Aboriginal groups. The Munyuku have strong links to *Lany'tjun*, but are 'brothers' of the Warramiri because of their equally strong association with sea totems. The Warramiri have links to moiety narratives through their alliance with the Munyuku, and likewise the Munyuku to the laws of the sea through the Warramiri. This partnership is symbolised in the body of the dissected whale. The tail belongs to the Munyuku whereas the body belongs to the Warramiri, and together they are 'one' in certain contexts.

While the eating of the Warramiri whale by *Wurramala* may be a metaphor for the establishment of a relationship between Aborigines and others, this is unspecified, and there is no similar alliance in the Munyuku story. Yet the visitors technology and activities have been accommodated in narratives from both groups (eg. anchors, knives, whale hunting), but this again is a statement of Aboriginal *Mala* relations, rather than between Aborigines and outsiders, as in the case of Dog/Macassan 'encounter' variations. The reference to stone *Yiki* in the Munyuku variation is curious, for in Warramiri stories of 'totem hunters', as I show later, they use iron-bladed knives. The reference to the 'knife/anchor' binding the *Mala* to the land is a prominent motif in *Birrinydji* stories, (see Chapter Six).

⁶ Of note is the fact that it is this time of the year that the Warramiri say that whales often beach themselves, and it is also the time that the 'Macassan' voyages to Australia would begin.

5.4-5 Related Stories of *Wurramala* and/or the *Djulpan*

There are many other related references to the actions of 'totem hunters' in Arnhem Land. For instance, at Galupa in Melville Bay, *Wurramala* offered the Dog matches, and it accepted them under certain unspecified conditions (see Chapter Four). At Yirringa there are stories of a female 'universal traveller' arriving in her canoe, the *Djulpan*, at a place now known as *Narrakamarthanayngur* (literally, the bones of the boat). At Gulirra (Truant Island), the *Djulpan* was towed ashore by a harpooned whale, and so on. Details are scarce however.

In Yalukal territory at Elcho Island is a site named Maluwa which is a submerged reef symbolic of the tail of the whale, cut off by the whale hunter, *Madagarrk*. Some of the exploits of this being were documented by Thomson (1939) in an essay entitled, 'Proof of the Indonesian Influence on the Aborigines of Arnhemland', as I mentioned in the last Chapter. Thomson infers that *Madagarrk* is of Indonesian descent, but this is hard to justify on the evidence presented (see Macknight 1972:314).

5.5 Myths of Rejection

The second group of narratives relating to 'totem hunters' is similar to those referred to in Chapter Four. There is no relationship between the parties. The narratives detail the way the totemic world resists the efforts of the visitors to procure sea produce, and also how the visitors run in fear from approaching Aborigines.

In the Port Bradshaw/Cape Arnhem region of eastern Arnhem Land, Mountford (1956-64) documents how normally harmless *yirritja* marine creatures (of which a majority are linked to the Warramiri *Mala*) take on a terrible aspect when their territory is threatened by the presence of people. He writes:

"...in a group of submerged rocks ...between Cape Arnhem and Port Bradshaw, lives the serpent, bilumbira [*Luthay*]. Should aborigines paddle too near his home, bilumbira will rise to the surface and with his long teeth, tear them and their canoe to pieces. The dugong... [whale ?] at [Nanydjaka or Wutjungduru], south of Cape Arnhem, blows up smoke and fire to destroy his enemies, while the hawkbill turtle, [*Guwarrtji*], creates heavy seas which drown those who intrude on his domain. Within Port Bradshaw are two other dangerous creatures, the devil-ray, [*Malara*], and the trepang, [*Derripa*]. The former creates

huge waves, and the latter squirts up fountains of water to destroy any trespassers," (Mountford 1956-64:332).

That such stories are linked to visitors is given credence by the fact that some of the 'deadly' creatures mentioned are those of interest to 'Macassans', ie. the trepang, the turtle for its shell and the dugong for its meat (see Macknight 1976:30).

Other stories tell of the fear the visitors have of Aborigines. Mountford (1956-64:346) says *Delururu* and *Rangi-rangi* are brothers, and they accompany *Gulthana* on the hunt for totems. After catching some dugong they rested on the beach. When they saw an Aborigine looking for turtle eggs, they were very frightened and hurried back to their canoe and paddled out to sea. Another hunter from *Nalkuma* (the 'land of the dead'), *Birikiri*, travelled to the totemic site at Cape Arnhem. On arrival he was tired and slept on the beach. The shady Kanari (*Ganarri*) tree is associated with such visits, Mountford says (1956-64:331). When the hunter awoke, he saw a *Yolngu* called *Junbulu* moving toward him. He rushed to his canoe, fumbling with his gear and quickly paddled away (Mountford 1956-64:348).

Other narratives suggest a different order of contact between the parties. As I mentioned in the last Chapter, McIntosh (1992:69) argued that the dog/whale pairing in narratives corresponds to a sea/land and visitor/land owner opposition. The authority of the Lamamirri 'sea' people is tested in a Dog narrative from Cape Arnhem. In a story narrated by Burrumarra (in McIntosh 1992:100), a Lamamirri Dog is sailing in a canoe with other 'Aborigines' (presumably outsiders). These people share whale beliefs with the land owners but are not welcome. The 'Captain' of the boat names the Dog *Ngalalwanga*, a sacred name for the whale. The Lamamirri on the shore, of a higher status to those on the boat, recognise the breaking of a *maḍayin* law, and the 'Captain' is killed. The Dog retreats to the inland and forms an alliance/trade link with the Wangurri *Mala* through an exchange of sacred *rangga*, along the lines of similar transactions discussed in the last Chapter. What is of interest is that the sacred *rangga* associated with this exchange is a carved and painted canoe paddle, similar to those collected by Mountford (1956-64:342), with designs of whales, dugong and octopus adorning it. (see Illustration 5d) One significant difference however is that at the handle end is a wooden replica of a whale harpoon, as used by whale or

'totem hunters'.⁷ As in the *Wurramala* stories, the technology of the 'Other' has become an integral part of a *Mala* alliance, in this case linking the Warramiri, Lamamirri and Wangurri as 'one' (Burrumarra pers. comm. 1990).

5.6 *Badu* - The 'Land of the Dead'

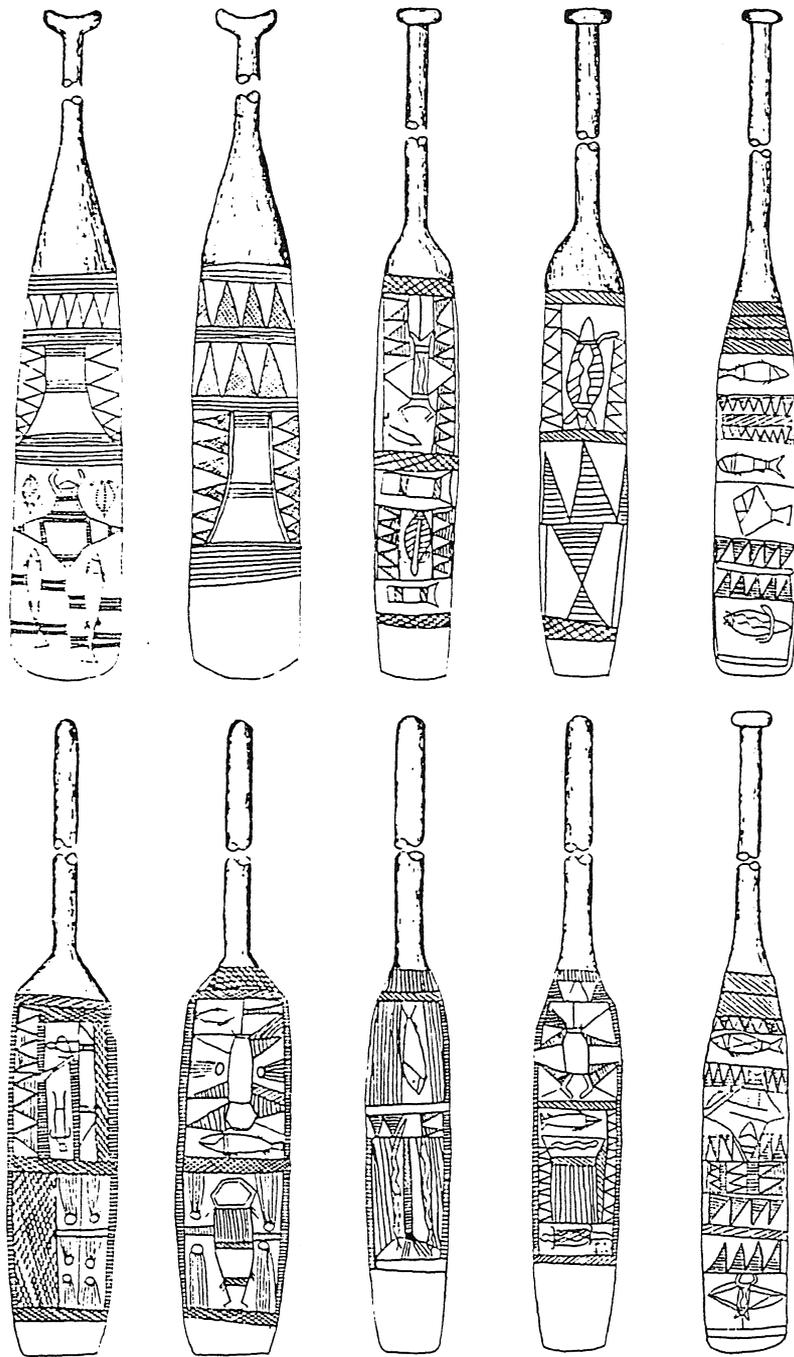
Most accounts of the final resting place of the souls of the *Yolngu* dead suggest an association with the sacred water hole of the *Mala* (see Warner 1969:19), but *Yolngu* of the *yirritja* moiety also have a series of stories that suggest that upon death, hunters such as *Gelurru*, *Gulthana* and *Wurramala* collect the souls, or assist in their passage to the islands of *Badu* (*Nalkuma*) in the north (Berndt 1948). The ways in which these narratives come together is unclear, but one recorded narrative from the 1920s suggests how beliefs associated with the totemic well have undergone a transformation. In a description of a Warramiri mortuary ritual, Warner (1969:427) says,

"When the grave is opened the chorus sings canoe, then paddling, which is a signal for the old women to come out with the symbolic spear-thrower while imitating a man paddling a canoe. The chorus then sings whale hunter, harpoon and rope. At this time the other woman sticks the 'spear' in the body. The body is a whale. The whale is the totem emblem for the [Warramiri]. Before a man was on the earth two [Wangarr] men [Wurramala] went to the totem well of the [Warramiri] and kept hitting and hitting and cutting it up. Cutting the whale is next sung."

Neither Burrumarra nor Liwukang was able to comment further on this narrative except to say that it referred to *Yumbulul/Wurramala*, a mentioned earlier. Warner (1969) does not speculate on the identity of the hunters or spirit beings, or the significance of this ritual episode, although it strongly suggests that both beliefs, ie. the association of the soul with the totemic well and the land of the north, co-exist. This is an idea supported by Morphy (1984:41), and Rudder (1993). The latter for instance quotes an Elcho Island informant, Mutilnga of the Gumatj-Burarrwanga *Mala* as saying that part of the soul goes to heaven, part to the sacred water-hole, and part to *Badu*. She says,

⁷ Aborigines do not use a similar technology in their hunt for the dugong. Rather, they employ a long pole with a detachable barb, as when hunting for turtle. The Warramiri have never hunted for the whale, Burrumarra said. The meat is considered unpalatable, as is the dolphin's. However the oil, teeth and bones of the whale are utilised for ceremonial purposes.

Illustration 5d. Examples of carved and painted paddles linked to the activities of 'totem' hunters, from Cape Arnhem (from Mountford 1956-64:342).



"*Burralku* is the place for Dhuwa [spirits], and *Baa'tu* [*Baḍu*] is the place for Yirritja. At *Burralku* food is *galun* (a yam) and at *Baa'tu* the food is *berratha/lanydjarrnga* (rice). We don't know where it is but we know that when we die that *birrimbirr* [soul] goes there," (Rudder 1993:107).

Berndt and Berndt (1948) say that *Baḍu* narratives held in common by all *yirritja Mala*, but there is little evidence for this. While the *dhuwa* moiety *Burralku* narratives are associated with *Djang'kawu* and Morning Star mythology (Rudder 1993:106), there are no immediate connections between *Baḍu* variations and *yirritja* moiety 'All-beings' such as *Lany'tjun*.⁸ This type of belief appears to be restricted to *Mala* with strong sea affiliations. For instance, the Warramiri dead are said to go to *Baḍu* on the back of the whale, which is simultaneously a whale hunter's canoe (see Warner 1969:356; McIntosh 1992:77). It is hard to imagine that inland *Mala* such as the Ritharrngu would share such a belief.

From the literature, it is evident that the three major contributors to knowledge of *Baḍu* mythology, ie. Berndt (1948), Mountford (1956-64) and Warner (1969), basically tell the same story from slightly different perspectives. Variations would be expected if their informants were from different *Mala*. They would reflect the particular circumstances and interests of each group. Warner's (1969) main informant was a member of the Wangurri *Mala*. Harry Makarrwola was adopted at an early age by the Warramiri leader Ganimbirngu (McIntosh 1994b:19) and Warner's accounts of 'totem hunters' focus on the whale. It is not known for whom Berndt (1948) relied on for his data, but the wooden sculptures relating to the 'totem' hunters he collected were by Gumatj artists. The major Gumatj *Baḍu* site is in the vicinity of Port Bradshaw, and is associated with the stingray, dugong and turtle amongst other totems (Burrumarra pers. comm. 1990). Consequently, *Baḍu* narratives in this area focus on these. The wealth of paintings acquired by Mountford which detail the adventures of 'Spirit hunters' from *Nalkuma* (*Baḍu*) in the Cape Arnhem region, concentrate on the hunt for the dugong. It is not unexpected therefore, that *Baḍu* narratives from this area would focus on it. Warner (1969:356) actually says that in the ceremony for the dead, the whale and the dugong were treated in exactly the same way, and the dugong dance and the whale dance were substitutable,

⁸ The linking of *Rangi-rangi* and *Gulthana* with the paper bark tree hints at an association with moiety themes, for it is a transformation of *Banatja*.

supporting the view that it is one ceremony with a number of variations. Next I compare and contrast the reports of these authors.

5.6-1 Mountford - The Journey to the Land of the *Yirritja* Dead

Mountford (1956-64:329) says that when the bones of the dead are in the coffin, the spirit departs. Guided by the call of the scrub fowl, it makes its way to the jungle north of Port Bradshaw. Female spirits (*Wulu-wulu*) assist in the travel. They take the spirit to *Kultana* (*Gulthana*) the headman of *Nalkuma*, who gives him two paddles and shows him how to make a wooden canoe, called *Jilibun* (*Djulpan* or *Lambu*, Mountford 1956-64:340) so he can travel to *Nalkuma*. When he is ready, the *Wulu-wulu* give the spirit two seed pods, *Gurung-guru*, of the menin vine, which serve as a passport. They are asked for these when they arrive.

In anticipation of the arrival of the spirits of the dead, the people of *Nalkuma*, in particular *Teri-Teri* (*Deri-Deri*), *Deiluru* (*Gelurru*) and *Uramala* (*Wurramala*) have paddled to Cape Arnhem to capture a dugong as food for a welcoming ceremony. Others light grass fires to guide *Gulthana* on to *Nalkuma*. When they arrive, all the people have assembled on the beach, old friends meet them and they eat the fresh dugong. Later they perform their favourite ceremonies, and they are helped to make camp. All of this stirs dust which rises to form large clouds. Aborigines back on the mainland, when seeing this, know that the dead have arrived and the time of mourning is over (Mountford 1956-64:329-331).

Mountford paints a picture of *Nalkuma* that is not dissimilar to that of the Islamic paradise garden (Lehrman 1980; Moynihan 1979). The emphasis in the description is on water, trees and pleasure. He says everyone is happy, good tempered and healthy. The weather is fine, there is lots of food. The people sit in the sun, talk to old friends, perform their favourite ceremonies and sing their favourite songs. The seas are still and perfect for hunting, and tobacco is in abundant supply (Mountford 1956-64:323).

5.6-2 R.M. Berndt - The Gumatj Journey To *Baḍu*

In his study of *Baḍu* (*Nalkuma*) narrative and song, Berndt (1948) refers to bonds of reciprocity and kinship between Aborigines and the 'Other'. He says,

"The Aborigines...regard Badu, inhabited...by people whom they considered to be in many respects not unlike themselves, as a resting place for their [*yirritja*] dead."

"Songs tell of native villages; of hut building, coconut palms and exotic foods; of beaches fringing islands with running fresh water streams and coral reefs; of the local dancing; and of the marine animals, fish and so on caught by these islanders. The latter, too, are said to be constantly manipulating clouds and wind to send over to the mainland people; while at the time of the north-east winds,...coconuts, cones...bread-fruit and timber, with occasional canoes...are washed up on to the mainland beaches, and are said to have been sent by the spirits that inhabit Badu," (Berndt 1948:94).

In the opening song of the *Badu* series, male turtle hunters *Duriduri*, *Duradjini* (*Dhurritjini*) *Kiloro* (*Gelurru*) and others, are standing as they paddle their long canoes, *Djulpan* or *Lambu*, towards the north, past the Wessels, to the resting place of the Gumatj dead (see earlier this Chapter). Helping the Aboriginal spirits on their journey are male and female spirits, the *Gulthana*. They are associated with Aboriginal land at Port Bradshaw and also with a place to the north of the Wessels known as *Mudilnga* (*Mutilnga*) or *Badu* (Berndt and Berndt 1948:324).

It is the *Gulthana*⁹ that light the large grass fires that attract the spirits on their way to *Badu* (Berndt and Berndt 1948:324). When not occupied in supervising the journey of the spirits, they hunt for stingray in mangrove swamps when the rain is falling. *Gulthana's* wife gathers fire wood and collects scrub fowl eggs, and spends time in the jungles fringing the beach, and sends the cold *yirritja* winds to coastal areas.

Sacred wooden representations of the *Gulthana* reveal more information. (see illustration 5e) Elkin, Berndt and Berndt (1950:58) for instance say,

"...on one side of the neck is the spirit of a dead man, coming to the Kultana [*Gulthana*] after death; it walks among the mangroves in its spirit-form looking for stingray. The Kultana... is really the person who has just died; that is, the Dreaming concept is extended into secular everyday life, and the deceased is treated as Kultana, although his spirit is recognized as being separate. It is on its way to procure a paddle, canoe, spears and opossum bones, in readiness for its journey...to Badu..."

⁹ The *Gulthana* have a range of other names, see Berndt 1948.

Yet the soul not only goes to the north, but also comes from there to *Yolngu*, as in the following dream sequence. Here, rather than the whale taking the spirit of the dead to *Badu*, it is bringing a spirit to the mother of a Wangurri man. Berndt (1962:62) says,

"This dream was of the variety called 'Spirit Landing'...In the dream Badanga sees a canoe at Malga beach on Elcho Island. The canoe is not really a canoe but a whale. In it are a little boy [Badanga's son's spirit] and [Burrumarra's] father [Ganimbirrngu]...The boy has *ngadu* damper...while [Ganimbirrngu] gives damper (the spirit child) to Badanga's wife Mundu, who also appears in the dream: the spirit enters her, and Badanga's son is born later."

Berndt (1948:102) says the concept of a 'land of the dead' may be an extension of an original idea of some place north of the Wessels, and that spirits such as *Gulthana* were inspired by the outsiders themselves (Berndt and Berndt 1954:68). Walker (1988:30) agrees and says, "This belief of dead spirits travelling by water craft to their spiritual resting place undoubtedly preceded the arrival of Macassans".

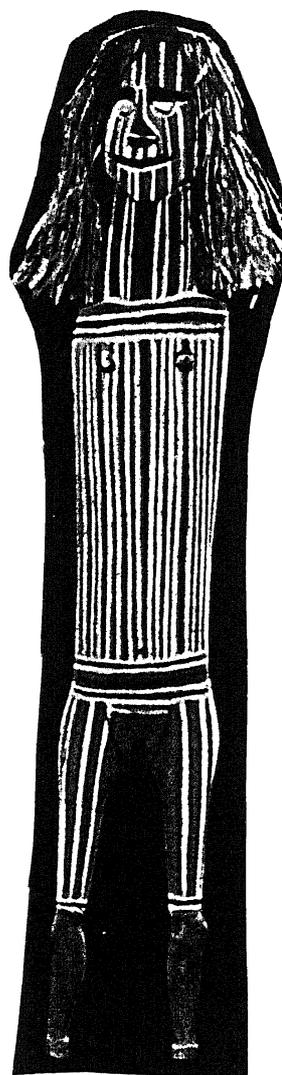
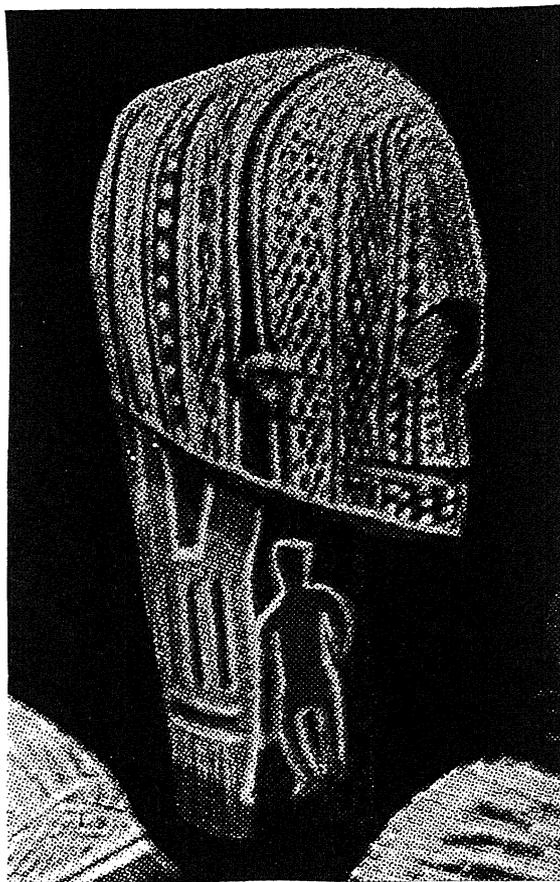
Berndt and Berndt (1948:324) say that while there are some secular dances, there are no ceremonies for the *Badu* people. There are some sacred and camp songs relating to their activities, they suggest, and these are referred to in what Warner (1969) termed, the Eastern *Yirritja* Sea Cycle.

5.6-4 Warner - The Eastern *Yirritja* Sea Cycle.

In the Warramiri/Wangurri *Ngaarra*, as I mentioned in Chapter Two, there is a reference to *Wangarr Yolngu* from the north who live in far off places but are not 'true' *Yolngu*. Warner (1969:353) calls them *Kiloro* (*Gelurru*) and says they are associated with the *yirritja* moiety land of the dead. These '*Yolngu*' also receive a mention in the eastern *yirritja* sea cycle, which is a focus of *Yolngu* mortuary rituals (Warner 1969:409). Warner (1969) recorded 47 song titles relating to this ceremony (see Appendix Four) but gives little idea of their content.

The sea cycle begins with an island far out to sea, the place of origin of *Gelurru*. Lightning is next, then the black cloud, and the sea wind *Lungurra*. The whale is sung and is followed by 'diamond fish' (*Malara* or Devil Ray) and crocodile. Following this are songs linked to flotsam and

Illustration 5e. A sacred *rangga* emblem depicting the *Gulthana* (see Elkin, Berndt and Berndt 1950:58), with the spirit of the deceased *Yolngu* on one side of its neck. Below right is a female representation of *Gulthana* (Berndt and Berndt 1948:328).



jetsam - a plank that floats in with the tide called *papung* (*baapung* - a 'Macassan' loan word, Zorc 1986:14) and also the coconut (*Galuku*) and the hollow log (*Garrawarrk*). All of these are drifting onto the coast, to *yirritja* lands.

The country or island of the north where these items come from is sung next, then the hawksbill turtle (*Guwarrtji*). The people that come from this place are then named (ie. *Gelurru*). Paddle and canoe are sung next. A small bird (*Guluwitpitj*) cries out when it sees the visitors coming in their canoe. Paddles are thrown on the beach; the canoe is rolling about; men are walking along the beach looking for turtle eggs; they drink the white of the eggs; clean out the water well and wash themselves; and then make a fire in the shade of a big tree and go to sleep. After waking the men smoke a cigarette which makes a red cloud in the sky, and the cycle is completed. In association with mortuary rituals, following this comes aspects of a ceremonial complex linked to the mast, with its references to Allah (see Warner 1969:421; Appendix Four), which I look at in Chapter Seven.

5.7 Outsiders in the *Yolngu* Cosmos

The various stories associated with 'totem hunters' are linked to specific sites in the landscape and to creation narratives and *Mala* emblems. Some refer to *Mala* identity and others to alliances and moiety themes. The visitors are ancestral beings in some, unwanted visitors in others, and people in reciprocal relations with *Yolngu* in still others, yet it is the same ambiguous characters in each. Just as the totemic whale and the dog blow up sea vapour to form clouds, creating an emblem for the *yirritja* moiety, so too does *Gelurru*, but with the smoke from his tobacco.

From one perspective, the visitors are people not unlike Aborigines, but they had come from an unknown place in the north, another dimension associated with the 'inside' laws of creation, applying Rudder's (1993) ideas of the interplay of 'inside' and 'outside' knowledge. On another level, the visitors are totemic spirits associated with Aboriginal land. The whale is a symbol of life to its followers, and the whale hunter is inextricably linked to it. 'Totem hunters' are agents for the travel of a soul from the sacred area in the sea to a mother on the land. Upon death, the Warramiri return to the whale spirit in the sea, and concomitantly travel to the whale hunter's paradise to the north, in a sailing canoe paddled by the hunters, which is also a whale.

If we focus on the most developed of the 'totem hunter' narratives, ie. *Badu*, the relationship between Aborigines and the 'Other' is a variation on the way *Mala* would normally align, as we saw in Chapter Two. The groups are seen to be basically at the same level of technology, although one has tobacco, canoes and knives. While contact is said to have been in the distant past, now direct contact occurs only in death, when the souls of the deceased *Yolngu* travel to the north. In return, the hunters send clouds, winds, and coconuts onto the coast. The perception is that while this contact established a definite place of origin for items which do not come from the Australian mainland (Berndt 1948:103), it also set in train a belief in reciprocity between Aborigines and others.

In the next section, I look in detail at Burrumarra's account on 'totem hunters' to show how he emphasises the historical nature of the visits, and how contact is seen to have been in stark contrast to that with 'Macassans'.

5.8 The Visitors in Oral History

Burrumarra said the visitors were 'black' men or *Yolngu*. They were known by a range of names including *Dhurritjini*, *Bapayili*, *Wurramala*, *Gelurru*, *Duri-Duri* and *Garmali*. In their place of origin lived the *Gulthana*, the cooks of the whale and dugong, and the *Djamulapu*, the eaters of the whale meat. With the exception of the last group, all of these hunters had come to Arnhem Land for many, many years, and even today are said to be just over the horizon, ready to come in during the 'wet' season (ie. the usual time when 'Macassan' trepangers visited).

Although Burrumarra said that *Yolngu* travelled with *Badu* Islanders as far as the Wessel Islands, and according to Berndt (1948:94), to *Badu* itself, detailed knowledge of them and their perceived place of origin is limited. They are said to have been long time associates of the Warramiri in particular, but also to have been very timid. The Warramiri have 'one ceremony' with them, a reference to their being linked by sacred laws of the sea, and Burrumarra hoped that they still knew these rituals today.

Burrumarra was adamant that whale hunters first came to Arnhem Land prior to the 'Macassan' trepangers. Later however, they travelled with the *Bayini* and 'early Macassans', possibly explaining much of the overlap in

the accounts.¹⁰ As I mentioned earlier, Berndt and Berndt (1954:65) quote an informant as saying the *Wurramala* were real people who had been on the coast, but that they are referred to as 'spirit' people now. Warner (1969:410) also reports an informant as saying, "We do not know where [the home of the hunters] is. We only sing [for them] that way because the old people did." Burrumarra added to this saying,

"From *Mutilnga* [*Badu*, *Nalkuma*] come canoes, coconuts and winds. Those people send it. We see the canoe and we know where it comes from. Real men made this canoe. It comes from a real place. To *Mutilnga* goes the souls of *Yolngu*. We are 'company' with them. Real men look after the souls, not spirit men. *Bapayili* are real men. Our souls go there."¹¹

Unlike any of the accounts discussed so far in this Chapter, when Burrumarra talked of the people of *Badu*, it was in terms of *Birrinydji*. *Badu* is part of *Birrinydji*'s domain, but the narratives associated with the hunters are quite distinct from those of *Birrinydji* or 'Macassans'. Burrumarra referred to 'totem hunter' narratives as an 'introduction'. He said that the songs did not mention *Birrinydji*, but that this law was 'underneath.' Thus the whale itself was said to have *Birrinydji*'s furnace inside and it threw up steam from the 'factory' or iron furnace within. Similarly, in whale hunter songs, there were no direct references to *Birrinydji*, and yet Burrumarra said,

"The *Dhurritjini* lived right on *Birrinydji*'s head [ie. they were his followers]. Their knives and rope are all from *Birrinydji*. They have the skills of iron-making in their hands."

The terms *Dhurritjini*, *Gelurru* and so on, do not refer to individual people, Burrumarra said, but rather, to groups of people who were completely separate from 'Macassans', "...like an army and navy."

Berndt (1948) described these hunters from informants' descriptions of sacred carved figures. He wrote,

"...*Duriduri* (meaning 'for spearing turtle');... is sometimes used collectively, in reference to a whole group of male and female [*mokuy*] living at *Badu*. Their alternate names are [*Dhurritjini*]

¹⁰ In some accounts, the *Bayini* are also 'totem hunters', and I return to this in Chapter Six.

¹¹ Burrumarra said he grew up with this belief but had difficulty accepting it as truth. See Chapters Six and Seven.

(also referring to turtle spearing), [*Gelurru*] (meaning 'standing sideways when looking at the turtle), [*Wurramala*] ('spearing the turtle) and [*Babayili*] (the 'singing' name for 'hunting the turtle')," (Berndt 1948:95).

The following is a summary of descriptions of these various peoples by Burrumarra, from a 1990s perspective.

Dhurritjini - "This group of men are the leaders of the hunt and the first on the scene in the whale chase. Upon capture, they take the whale to the assembled group, the *Bapayili*, in a discussion area".

Duri Duri - another name for the *Dhurritjini*.

Wurramala - "This is the champion hunter. He never misses his target. The name itself means light coming from the whale or iron". The captured whale sends up steam forming clouds, as in the story recorded by Groger-Wurm (1973).

Gelurru - "This is the killer of the whale. With *Dhurritjini*, he is the first on the scene in the hunt. He is a leader of the people and a leader in 'ceremonial business'. Together with *Dhurritjini*, he separates the whale meat from the fat with his long knives. [Following the kill] he rubs blood and grease all over the top half of his body."

Gulthana - Apart from their role as a guide of the spirit of the dead, and being spoken of as whale meat cookers, *Gulthana* is said to be an actual place, a long way past *Mutilnga* (*Badu*), off the coast of New Guinea, or perhaps Fiji. This is where the whale meat is eaten, Burrumarra said.

Djamulapu - These people have a different language to the *Dhurritjini* but in organisational terms, they come under them, Burrumarra said. If they want to know more about the whale, they seek advice from *Dhurritjini*. These people are described as whale meat eaters, to distinguish them from the travelling hunters, the *Dhurritjini* and *Bapayili*, and the cookers of the whale, the *Gulthana*.

Bapayili - This refers to a group of men, also hunters, who have come together for discussion. The name itself however is said to be connected with whale oil and fat. These men are linked to the seas off Cape Arnhem, Yirringa, Rrunhawu, Nangingburra and Dholtji, and are a distinct group to the *Dhurritjini*. Actual differences could not be specified.

Garrmali - This is an alternate name for the *Bapayili*. "He is a champion whale hunter, who never misses with the spear."

Nyiwunba - "Whale business". The word refers to the red glow of the sunset. *Bapayili* is said to have done magical things there. It is a place linked to *Gulthana* and is a very long way from Arnhem Land, Burrumarra says.¹²

The 'memory' of the personal qualities of 'totem hunters' is kept alive by the Warramiri. As Burrumarra said, "What people know of [the Warramiri], what skills we have, all come from [the sea]." The seafaring skills of the visitors were a sign of great ritual knowledge. Aborigines at that time did not have the ability to catch the whale, he said, and the visitors' ability to do so was put down to the powerful magic they possessed. Burrumarra said,

"The sea is not for *Yolngu*. It is for the whale. We are friends of the whale, dugong and dolphin... The whale hunter is for our whale places... We honour the whale. The whale hunter is more on the whale than us, so we can call them *bunggawa* [leader]."

"*Wurramala*, *Gelurru*, *Dhurritjini* and *Bapayili* had a business to do. We can't interfere with that. We want them to be in charge of that business. We are not *bunggawa* like them. We do not have the same skills."

"...We are of one mind with them. We call them brother. The skills and knowledge they have to catch the whale from close up, when the whale is above the water... makes them managers. Their business is honourable. We are linked to their business and they to ours."

"...They follow the law of cutting the whale. It must be done according to the rule otherwise there is trouble."

"...They are followers of *Walitha'walitha* [Allah]. In the teeming sea life they see a mirror reflection of [him]. *Walitha'walitha* is the giver of bread to the people. The seafood is their bread. They believe in him. They were 'company' for [us] in ancient times and are a part of Warramiri *maḍayin*, like the cuttlefish,

¹² Words referring to the technology of the whale hunter are as follows:

Balupalu - stick for hitting turtle over the head after spearing it from the canoe.

Boki - curved hook on a whale spear to prevent the catch getting off.

Bokipanda - whale spear [*Panda* is the name for a Sama-Bajau fishing spear - pers. comm. Prof. K. Tauchman 1994]

Bungurrṭja - rope, thick fishing line for catching a whale or dugong

Djulpan - sailing canoe [perhaps derived from *Sope*, a Sama-Bajau canoe].

Lambu - a further term for *Djulpan* [The *Lambu* is a sea craft associated with South Sulawesi and Macassar].

Latarri - paddle for whale hunter's canoe.

diamond fish [*Malara*], squid and octopus. The Warramiri collected all these things from near and far for the centre of Dholtji. The Warramiri mind has collected these."

The last paragraph is significant. Apart from the Islamic reference and the idea of unity through such laws and those of the sea, here Burrumarra was suggesting that whale hunters were a totemic category that the Warramiri 'own', and that it was a result of the actions of Warramiri 'thinkers'. The Warramiri see their origins in terms of laws based on and around certain totemic species, and such beliefs have been enhanced through the addition of a new category of totemism, ie. the whale hunter. These laws were expressed in terms of 'honour', Burrumarra said, referring to the fact that it bound these groups as 'one', and that the *YoIngu* 'lived for the law all of their lives'. He defined 'honour' in this way:

"You see that orange. When you eat it do you belong to it? It's like this. If you belong to the whale and do the actions for it only, and not the kangaroo or boomerang, then you can call yourself *Nyiwunba*, living for the whale. Today *YoIngu* live for the whale by *yidaki* (didgeridoo), *bilma* (clap sticks) and *manikay* (song), just like the hunter does with the spear."

Thus, as in case studies discussed in earlier sections, Warramiri creational narratives are seen to be inextricably bound to the actions of the 'Other'. Indeed, Burrumarra said that the whale hunters were the real 'owners' of the whale and the octopus. But just who they are remains a mystery.¹³ Burrumarra had wanted several of the Treaty proposal flags to be sent to the north as a symbol of their historical association, but at another time he said that if one went looking for *Badu*, one would not find it, saying

¹³ It is known for instance that the Sama-Bajau or *Dhurritjini* (Turijene) travelled with 'Macassans' on their expeditions to Australia (Sopher 1965:145), but the nature of their relationship with Aborigines and why, in some contexts, they are they referred to in such different and varied ways to trepangers, is unknown (see Appendix Six). The only known localities to the north of Australia where traditional whale hunting is performed is in the seas to the east of Flores, in the Solor Islands, and records from the seventeenth century suggest that even then, they were the only systematic hunters of the whale known to Dutch authorities (Weber 1902:89-93). These coastal peoples claim descent from South Sulawesi, and Sopher (1965:147) says that these Orang Baju or Orang Pantei (coastal peoples) are still distinguished from the inland or mountain people. They may be related to *Badu* populations, but there does not appear to be any immediate links either in place names or in hunting terminology with the visitors that came to Australia. It may be that Aborigines witnessed whale hunting on their journey to Macassar aboard the praus, but again, this can neither be proved nor disproved.

that it exists only in dreams, suggesting that we are dealing with imagination as much as reality in the accounts.¹⁴

5.9 The Claim for Rights to the Arafura Sea

The fact that the *Yolngu* stress that there was a sense of partnership in law with the 'whale hunter' in the distant past has implications in terms of the claim by Aborigines for recognition of rights to reefs and shoals in *Manbuynga ga Rulyapa*. Yumbulul, in public announcements on this subject, always makes reference to the legacy of *Birrinydji* and *Bayini*, as well as the 'whale hunter', as his father did. Some sites in Australian coastal waters are said to be held by the Warramiri through these laws, but this does not mean that the 'whale hunter' 'owns' these sites. The Warramiri assert their rights in relation to other Aboriginal collectives via such beliefs. A quite different situation arises with regard to sites some hundreds of kilometres off the Australian coast. Several of these were deemed to be the joint responsibility of Aborigines and the 'whale hunter', but it was Burrumarra's view that in the absence of the latter, the *Yolngu* alone speak for those places.

Burrumarra's feelings on belief in the sea were summed up in his often quoted view that: 'What gold is to the land, the whale is to the sea.' With such a statement, Burrumarra of course signalled the fact that in his opinion, the *Yolngu* and 'totem hunter' approach to the sea was of a different order to that of the *Balanda*. At one level, Aboriginal and 'totem hunter' interest was seen to be of a spiritual order, whereas non-Aboriginal interest was primarily economic. At another level, the material and social benefits that non-Aborigines enjoy as a result of the exploitation of Aboriginal land in the form of mining, were seen to have their equivalent in ritual practice associated with belief in the whale. Belief in the whale, the 'highest' of sea totems and most redolent with meaning, was the foundation of the wealth of sea people, Burrumarra said.

So in the indigenous marine protection strategy, there is a desire to combine both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal knowledge in the management of the sea, and for Aboriginal people to progressively re-assume responsibility for various levels of management, based on the laws of the sea, which link *Yolngu* and 'totem hunters' as one.

¹⁴ Yet later on, I suggest that the contemporary relevance of this belief and the way it places Aborigines in terms of the 'Other', are important markers for defining relationships with others, now.

5.10 Conclusion

The purpose of this Chapter has been to examine the perceived 'timeless' relationship of reciprocity between Aborigines and a dark-skinned collective to the north of Australia known to the Warramiri as whale hunters. In Burrumarra's view, reflection upon this 'wave' of contact is relevant in treaty negotiations with non-Aborigines in Australia today, and in the *Yolngu* call for recognition of their rights to co-manage the Arafura Sea. It is the 'memory' of this perceived alliance that the Warramiri now bring to the negotiating table in their call for the implementation of an indigenous marine protection strategy.

A review of the literature has shown that there are many ways of viewing 'totem hunter' narratives, eg. as variations on a story line associated with the seasonal availability of certain resources; as part of *yirritja* creation narratives linked to various sites in the landscape; as a reaction to first contacts with the concomitant belief that the visitors are the returned dead and that Aborigines are somehow linked to their place of origin; or as oral history.

I presented a series of narratives from a range of perspectives in order to show how Burrumarra's selective viewing of this past was an interpretive act based on a complex and ambiguous cultural inheritance. Burrumarra's version emphasised history. He was not inventing this past, but rather highlighting certain aspects and omitting others in order to tell a particular story. He differentiated between 'totem hunters' and 'Macassans' in a number of ways. The former were 'black' and the latter, 'white'. 'Totem hunters' were from the north and north-east of Arnhem Land, whereas 'Macassans' came from the west. Their sea craft were different. Most importantly however, the 'totem hunters' were 'brothers' for the *Yolngu*. Unlike Aboriginal dealings with trepangers, with whom there was no clearly defined relationship according to Burrumarra, there were reciprocal dealings between Aborigines and whale hunters.

The inclusion of the whale, octopus and cuttlefish in the Flag Treaty thus has two levels of significance. Firstly, such symbols signify the Warramiri and *yirritja* moiety ancestral heritage. Secondly, they are symbolic of an association with the 'Other'. In focussing his account around reciprocity in dealings with the 'Other', Burrumarra's interpretation of the

past allowed for a powerful comparison to be drawn with dealings with other outsiders, in particular 'Macassans'. These 'totem hunters' were real, and still out there, over the horizon, and while no-one had any direct contact with them any more, their existence is important in present day statements as to what should and can be in terms of inter-cultural relations.

The law of *Birrinydji* underlies all Warramiri interpretations of past contacts with the 'Other' and this law is also pivotal in terms of the Treaty Proposal and the call for rights in the Arafura Sea. So in the next Chapter, I give a detailed account from Burrumarra on the legacy of the creational being *Birrinydji* from a 1990s perspective.

CHAPTER SIX

6: *Birrinydji, Bayini*: Bounty and Loss

Burrumarra's interpretation of contact history revolved around and operated through tellings of the stories of *Birrinydji* and *Bayini*. In this chapter, I compare and contrast his views on the past with the findings of recent studies into 'cargo' cults from other parts of Australia and elsewhere. I focus on the paradox of such beliefs. The stories are a response to domination by an external force but Aborigines see themselves as being in the image of *Birrinydji*, ie. the 'Other'. Consequently, a sense of 'loss' is evoked, for historically Aborigines did not have the same level of material wealth as non-Aborigines. They were forced to accept an inferior status in relation to outsiders and to work to obtain trade goods that were deemed to have once been their own.

I show that it was Burrumarra's desire, in the implementation of his Treaty proposal, to confront this inherited line of thought. In his attempt to match 'timeless' Aboriginal traditions with the realities of the 1990s, Burrumarra envisaged an end to the relevance of *Birrinydji* at a pan-Aboriginal level of significance. With the adoption of Christianity and the enactment of a treaty between Aborigines and non-Aborigines in Australia, *Birrinydji* would become a symbol of largely *Mala* significance rather than being a reference point in thinking about the 'Other'.

In detailing the laws of *Birrinydji*, it needs to be recognised that it is written from a 1994 perspective and that this is one possible 'fixing' which relates closely the timing of the telling, and the political ambitions of the Warramiri leaders. While the ceremonies, sacred names, and major sites of *Birrinydji* will probably not change in the immediate future, interpretations of their significance are always in flux. They are constantly being reinterpreted and restructured in the light of changing social realities.

6.1 *Birrinydji* as a 'Cargo' or Millenarian Movement

Even with what we know of *Birrinydji* so far, the belief appears to have its equivalent in other well documented areas of Aboriginal law. As with All-Father beliefs of New South Wales and Victoria (Kolig 1987; 1992), 'Captain Cook' narratives of northern Australia (Kolig 1979; and Wainburranga 1988; Rose 1984), and the *Mulunga* and *Djinimin-Jesus* cults of central and western Australia (Swain 1993), the emergence of *Birrinydji* was

a response to the challenge to local autonomy and systems of belief that came in the wake of first contacts and/or colonisation. As Kolig (1992:28) says,

"The dilemma Aboriginal society, or that sector entrusted with a leading role in an intellectual and political sense, faced was on the one hand a need for change, for reorientation to take in new realities, and to empower society at large vis-a-vis an intruding society and disruptive forces brought in the train of this intrusion, and on the other to maintain its position."

In All-Father and some 'Cook' narratives, the perceived source of power of the 'Other' appears to have become a central feature of traditions affirming Aboriginal identity and rights in relation to outsiders. For instance Kolig (1992) suggests that knowledge of a belief in a High God by the colonisers inspired the re-working by Aborigines of older beliefs in such a way that formerly land-based ancestral beings took on some the characteristics of the Christian God (see also Swain 1990). Such a view needs to be treated with some caution however. It is one thing for Burrumarra to make connections of this sort in relation to *Birrinydji*, and another altogether for an outsider to say that this is what Aboriginal thinkers actually constructed in the past.

Mackinolty's discussions with Wainburranga on the subject of 'Cook' show that technology was perceived to be the source of the 'Other's' power (see Mackinolty and Wainburranga 1988). This central Arnhem Land version of the 'Cook' story provides one of the only references to *Birrinydji* in the literature. Mackinolty and Wainburranga (1988:356-359) write,

"Captain Cook was a yirritja man, from the yirritja group. Captain Cook was really a business man (involved with law and ceremony). All these people from the Rembarrnga side, from [Warramiri] side, [Gupapuyngu], [Golpa], Dhalwangu,... Gumatj, Nunggubuyu, all the yirritja people have a corroboree for him. From the earliest days. Captain Cook didn't do any wrong. Because people can't have a ceremony for him for nothing. Captain Cook didn't do any bad things."

"When Captain Cook died yirritja people took it over. My mob...call it *barrambarra*....material stuff, blankets, calico. All the sort of stuff we have - it's got a song...Captain Cook was never a bad man...Since he died we have had business (ceremony) for him..."

"He was a very serious (important) man. He was very kind to Aboriginal people in the early, early days, because Captain Cook went all over the world. He didn't interfere. He knew not to interfere...."

"...People know he had white man's power, white man's things. [Aborigines] never had those things. Axes, steel knives; all came from Captain Cook...He came to the good law. But when the new Captain Cook's came over - bad things happened..."

"...They started shooting people then. New Captain Cook people...They are the ones who have been stealing all the women and killing people. They have made war...They wanted to take all of Australia."

Just as *Yolngu* informants in the 1940s distinguished the *Bayini* (*Wangarr* 'Macassans') and 'Macassans' in an historical sense (as Burrumarra continued to do), Mackinolty and Wainburranga distinguish between early and late 'Captain Cooks'. This is a somewhat ambiguous division, but in all probability this is both a reference to the perceived separation of *Bayini* and 'Macassans' in time, and also that of 'early Macassans' and 'later Macassans', Japanese and Europeans.

The focus of this aspect of the 'Cook' narrative is on the sacred 'inside' meaning and perceived origin of those items introduced by the 'Other' and which are seen to be the source of the 'whiteman's' wealth. The view is that Aborigines acquired these things in a similar way that groups were apportioned a particular heritage by creational beings at the 'beginning of time'.

That 'Cook' is indeed an 'outside' reference to *Birrinydji* in this account is supported by the fact that in recent times at Elcho Island, sites linked to this law at Nangingburra and Cape Wessel have been referred to as 'Captain Cook' by some of the younger Warramiri and Golpa men as 'outside' terminology.¹ While Burrumarra never used the expression 'Cook' in relation to *Birrinydji* in my presence, he had a solid understanding of 'Cook's' impact in other areas. In reflecting on the experiences of Aborigines in southern states, he said that 'Captain Cook' must have done "some sacred things to the land there", just as *Birrinydji* had put something in the ground at Dholtji, which was the source of wealth for both *Balanda* and *Yolngu*. (The word Dholtji actually means 'the gift' according to Burrumarra.) In Sydney however, the effect was devastating. Burrumarra said,

¹ I questioned Kolig as to whether the Western Australian 'Cook' stories were likewise linked to Indonesian contact sites and/or other mythologies but to his knowledge, there was no connection (pers. comm. 20/11/1989).

"He [Cook] did wrong. A lot of Aboriginal lives are tied to the sea. The *Balanda* had been tying up their big boats on the jetties, killing all the *maḍayin* fish. This means a short life for us all. This happened on Wigram Island and Yirrkala too, and right across the country," (Burrumarra pers. comm. 1990)²

The absorption of aspects of the ideologies, technologies and ceremonial practices of the visitors into one's own cultural repertoire has a paradoxical side. As Beckett (1993) says, there is a desire to both unite with the 'Other', and yet simultaneously to maintain a separate identity and in particular, preserve local autonomy. In some 'Cook' variations, Aborigines are powerless to stop the arrival of outsiders or to ensure that their rights are respected (Mackinolty and Wainburranga 1988). As in the case of *Bol'lili's* encounter with 'Macassans', *Yolngu* appear to accept their fate as being poor and subservient to 'whites'. Yet in other versions, the stories provide motivation for social action designed to reverse an undesirable situation. Rose (1984) for instance says that Aborigines believe that by making public the atrocities perpetrated by 'Cook', changes in the laws defining relationships between Aborigines and non-Aborigines will result. This is also evident in the *Mulunga* and *Djinimin-Jesus* cults from central and western Australia.

The *Mulunga* cult, of which little is known, has been reported in many localities, and is deemed to have emerged in the Cloncurry area following the massacre of the Kalkatunga people at Battle Mountain in the mid 1800s (Swain 1993:230). The cult spread rapidly across Australia in the wake of pastoral expansion. Swain (1993) says it was a ceremonial complex,

² Insight into the parallels with the destroyer 'Cook' described in other parts of northern Australia (see Rose 1984; Kolig 1980) comes from speculation that the word *Birrinydji* is derived from a general term for the Portuguese or Europeans, the 'Franks' (see McKay 1976:98). The various linguistic shifts involved in the transfer from Macassarese to *Yolngu matha*, are in many ways consistent with guidelines outlined by Walker (1988). Variations of the word for the 'Franks' appear wherever the Portuguese travelled, i.e. *Falang*, *Feringhi* or *Frinji's* (Abdurachman 1978:162); *Parrangi* in Sulawesi (Reid 1983:139); and *Fo-lang-ki* in China (Bayly 1989:20). It is still used in various parts of the world to refer to Europeans, i.e. *Batu Ferringhi*, a tourist beach in Penang, Malaysia, while in the Moluccas, the descendants of Portuguese are known as 'Orang Feringghi'. In *Yolngu matha* another word for *Birrinydji* is *Gompania* (Compania), the Dutch East India Company. In history, the Portuguese and Dutch colonial powers were involved in great power struggles with each other and with local populations for the control of local resources, just as the European 'Cook' was believed by Aborigines to be in battle with them over the control of land.

"...addressing the situation of Aboriginal people who had recently had their lands invaded by pastoral interests...people found themselves torn from their places while yet unwilling to concede the inevitability of a White presence. The solution was aggressive and pragmatic. With a rich knowledge of their eternal homes still firmly held in memory, it was possible to envisage a return to the pre-colonial equilibrium," (Swain 1993:232).

Again, as with Kolig's speculation on the significance of the All-Father, there is very little evidence to support such a view. For instance Swain (1993:227) suggests that the cults extraordinary popularity was its central focus of revenge. The enacted performance deals with the shooting of Aborigines and ends climactically with the extermination of all 'whites'. It was designed to bring death to the 'whites' allowing Aborigines to re-take the land, he says. The cult was marked by very strong in-group behaviour, with those not participating, or performing the movements incorrectly being harshly dealt with, in a manner comparable to the settlers treatment of Aborigines (Swain 1993:224).

The *Djinimin-Jesus* cult, for which there are Aboriginal commentators, is more recent but also makes a powerful statement on the need for change in the nature of relations between groups. It also exhibits paradoxical features. In abbreviated form, from Borsboom (1992:14), Kolig (1980) and Petri and Petri-Odermann (1988:393), the narrative is as follows.

Jesus appeared to the people. He had both 'black' and 'white' skin. The prophet proclaimed that all land belonged to Aborigines and they must fight the 'whites' in order to attain a position from which they could get their own way. There would be a reversal of the present conditions in life. Aborigines were to get 'white' skins, and be equal if not superior to 'whites'. There is also an expectation that a flood will destroy the evil world, and cult followers will be saved by Noah's Ark. The ark is full of gold and other valuables which will ensure the survivors live in great splendour for the rest of their lives.

In the cases discussed in this Chapter, the status quo was disrupted by the presence of the 'Other'. With the prospect of being subservient to or consumed by Western civilisation, Aborigines employed traditional assumptions about power as part of a search for a new power stratagem necessary to cope with the new realities (Kolig 1992:27). Burrumarra's review of the significance of *Birrinydji* therefore represented a new tack in this 'silent revolution' that has been taking place across Australia since at

least 1788. In the Treaty proposal the Warramiri leaders were utilising and re-interpreting their cultural repertoire as a means of trying to bring about a desired re-orientation of relations with the 'Other'.

Now while Aboriginal experience of European colonisation is well documented in the literature, *Yolngu* perspectives on the 'pre-Macassan' and 'Macassan' past are largely undocumented. Does this contact, as Berndt and Berndt (1954:70) speculate, provide a powerful contrast to relations between outsiders and Aborigines in other parts of the continent? While in Chapter Three I suggested that *Bayini* stories were a complex mix of invention and memories of the 'Macassan' era, here I give a picture of the richness of those times prior to the 'fall', in order to show the contrast it provides (real or otherwise) with conditions described as being representative of the trepanging era and those of today, where Aborigines are said to have 'plenty but nothing'. Burrumarra drew upon the 'memory' of the 'pre-Macassan' period in his reflections upon a need for change now, and in the opening sections, I present a detailed picture of this legacy.

It needs to be pointed out that there is not one narrative which encapsulates the complexities of this body of *Rom*, and there are multiple levels of significance in all the accounts that follow. Secrecy surrounds all of these, and indeed many episodes are vague. As Burrumarra described in his biography (McIntosh 1994b:70), a standard technique in speaking about such matters was 'telling you and not telling you at the same time'. Presented here are a selection of these narratives, sometimes contradictory, which are the result of discussions with Warramiri, Wangurri and Gumatj informants between 1987 and 1994.

6.2 *Birrinydji* and *Bayini* in Warramiri Cosmology

In this first section, I document a perspective on various aspects of the complex legacy of the *Wangarr* beings *Birrinydji* and *Bayini*. I look at totems associated with this heritage, views on Warramiri 'ownership' of this law, and its spread within and beyond Arnhem Land.

6.2-1 *Birrinydji* and *Bayini* as *Wangarr* Beings

Informants say that there is one *Birrinydji* and five *Bayini*, one for each of the *yirritja Mala* linked to this law. In describing these ancestors, Burrumarra said,

"*Birrinydji* is a tall *Yolngu* man, and *Bayini* is his wife. *Bayini* operated under the control and authority of *Birrinydji*."

"*Birrinydji* is all the dances, the hat, ship, red cloud, trumpet, mouth organ, bulldozer. *Birrinydji* represents the desires and wishes of the *Murrnginy*. His *Mala* is all the north-east Arnhem Land *yirritja* groups."

"*Birrinydji* had the mind of a *Balanda*, but the skin was not the same. *Birrinydji* has 'brown' skin but his law is for all, not just for 'brown' and 'white', but 'black' as well, and all the people of the world."

"Macassans had *Birrinydji* in common with Arnhem Land but the spirit of *Birrinydji* is Dholtji. All things came to the Warramiri from *Birrinydji* and then to other clans," (pers. comm. 1992).

Burrumarra said that people as far as Groote Eylandt and Western Australia knew of *Birrinydji*. At Mornington Island, Dick Roughsey knew of *Birrinydji*, but called him by a different name, Burrumarra said. This was the case with leaders from Port Keats, Bathurst Island, and even the Nyungar of Perth. They referred to *Birrinydji* as 'Captain Cook', *Balanda*, *Ngapagi*, *Munanga*, *Wurupanda* or *Wurubalanda*, Burrumarra said. (All of these terms refer to the 'whiteman' ie. Europeans and 'Macassans').

As a name, *Birrinydji* is an 'inside' term for the Cape Wilberforce peninsula. It is said that *Birrinydji* lived in an underground cave there in the past, and also in a hole in the reef which is exposed during 'king' tides. On the land he made all sorts of 'special *girri*' (belongings), such as his crown, knives and axes.

The purpose of *Bayini*, the female ancestor, was to bring forth lots of children, '*bunggawa* children, leaders for the land, followers of *Birrinydji*,' (Burrumarra pers. comm. 1990). *Bayini* was a *bunggawa* herself, however, Burrumarra said, but her followers did all the work. They made pottery, grew rice, and worked on weaving looms. *Birrinydji's* men were iron makers, ship builders, and commanders, as well as hunters of the whale and turtle.³

³ See Elkin 1953:91 for a reference to the 'song of the anvil', which vividly describes the darting sparks and the 'cry' or resounding noise when the heated iron is struck with the hammer. There is also a Warramiri 'washing' song where clothes are washed, hung on a line and later ironed. The link between 'totem hunters' and the *Bayini* in Burrumarra's quote is discussed later in this Chapter.

Birrinydji brought order and leadership to the *Yolngu* in times of chaos. He 'made the land strong and gave the *Yolngu* a long life,' Burrumarra said.

"*Birrinydji* gives us all the new things, the things we desire, occupations, the new world. All things come from him. *Birrinydji* is like the King... (Burrumarra pers. comm. 1992).

Birrinydji was a great leader but also a fierce killer. "He had many policemen (*Wupatha*) at his side, people who could kill, on order, in his name," Burrumarra said.

"He would kill those who wouldn't follow, or who broke the law. Some would run away. He would dance after killing someone with the sword. We have that dance," (Burrumarra pers. comm. 1991).

6.2-2 *Birrinydji's* Totems

To *Birrinydji* is attributed the creation of various totems, including the reef fish *Gukuwal*, *Wanarrpa*, and *Ngarrwili* (also known as *Yikimirr*), all which have 'knives' (*Yiki*) on their bodies. Likewise, he created the *Dhakulaning*, a bird with an 'axe' on its tail, the Angelfish (*Garurunganing*) whose fins resemble the sails of a boat⁴; the Marlin or swordfish (*Ganhdharrangu*), and also the totemic Dogs *Bulunha* and *Bol'lili*. The Tamarind (*Djambang*), Poinciana (*Djanydjurrk*) and Bamboo (*Bolu*) are also associated with his legacy, being from *Birrinydji's* overseas territories, as are the shady beach trees, *Wudarritj* and *Ganarri* (Hawaiian Beauty Leaf). While the latter is used in boat building, and resembles the tree by the same name found throughout eastern Indonesia, it is a separate species. *Darranggi*, a form of damper made from the stems and roots of the water lily, is also associated with *Birrinydji*, but details were limited as to its local or intercultural significance.

6.2-3 Warramiri Custodianship of *Birrinydji's* Law

The law of *Birrinydji* suggests a place for a 'king-ruler', with the Aboriginal leader acting as *Birrinydji's* representative or replacement. This was Burrumarra's view and he said that traditionally, the head of the

⁴ *Dhakul* and *Garuru* are considered by senior *Yolngu* to be 'Macassan' loan words. The former means axe, and the latter, a sail (see Zorc 1986). As I detail later, there are problems in classifying loan words in such a way, for some have currency throughout south-east Asia.

Warramiri *Mala* has been the spokesperson for this law.⁵ Burrumarra's views on the relationship between the *Mala* leader and *Birrinydji* were expressed as follows. He said,

"[*Birrinydji*] was the king just as my father was king. My father was also a servant... My father is *Birrinydji*. He is the *bunggawa*. When he looks in the mirror he sees *Birrinydji*, but also the whale and the octopus. The Warramiri honour all three."

Burrumarra's education in the law of *Birrinydji* was from members of both *yirritja* and *dhuwa Mala* (see McIntosh 1994b:134-137), including people from the Dhalwangu *Mala*. It was his view that the Warramiri were acknowledged as being the primary custodians of the ceremonies and *rangga* associated with *Birrinydji*. This was because *Birrinydji* 'appeared' in Warramiri territory first and only later in Dhalwangu land, and because the Warramiri have a bricoleur for *Birrinydji*. The Warramiri leader *Bukulatjpi*, 'did the thinking about *Birrinydji*,' Burrumarra said (see later in this Chapter). Other *Mala* had no equivalent historical figure, he said. Also, the Dhalwangu do not have the same amount of information as the Warramiri regarding *Birrinydji*, Burrumarra believed.

"They only have the *bunggul*. They can't do the big ceremonies. They have the policy only, but not the licence. This is *Yolngu* law. They are afraid to do or say too much on this subject because they know the Warramiri and what we have."

Other *Murrnginy Mala* such as the Gumatj or Guyamilili are said to have the *bunggul* but 'no policy'. Burrumarra suggested this was why they do not speak publicly on the subject. He said,

"Mapuru [Guyamilili *Mala*] can do the *bunggul* for *Djuranydjura* and *Nowah* but not *maḍayin*. They've got no entry to go deeper. How can they? Like at Yirrkala there are plenty of grandchildren of the Warramiri, so they love that [*Birrinydji's*] *bunggul* and they do it all the time, an ugly way since the mission. But they have no *maḍayin*. They call Dholtji *Maari*. That's their entry. Other places have *Birrinydji* 'like' dances, but not *Birrinydji*."

⁵ Such a view however, would in all probability be contested by Dhalwangu leaders. However, Burrumarra's assertion at least appeared to be affirmed when arguments erupted after the first public display of the *Birrinydji* image in the Flag Treaty design. The Dhalwangu leader Yepaynga was unhappy about not being consulted on the issue, but later asked permission from Burrumarra to use the same image on the Gurrumurru outstation school flag, and this was granted.

Only the Warramiri have *rangga* for the *bunggawa*, Burrumarra said, although this definitely is a view contested by Dhalwangu leaders. Burrumarra said:

"In these days, the *bunggawa bunggul* is very popular [but]...the people are very restrained. They know it is not theirs. For many years in mission times the other *Mala* persecuted the Warramiri over this and tried to take it from us. But how can they? They have no history. The *bunggawa* [*Birrinydji*] was in Warramiri territory, nowhere else."

The sand sculpture (illustration 6a) relates to *Birrinydji's* legacy, and details the relationship between the Warramiri, Dhalwangu and Gumatj *Mala* via this law. It was created during a mortuary ritual at Elcho Island for Burrumarra's sister in the 1970s. Don Williams (1982:56) says the design is associated with the activities of an ancestral being referred to as *Motj* (a non-specific *Wangarr*⁶) which he says is linked to the *Gurarrarr* (flying fox) 'white' people who made Warramiri land. He says the design depicts a 'Macassan' prau.

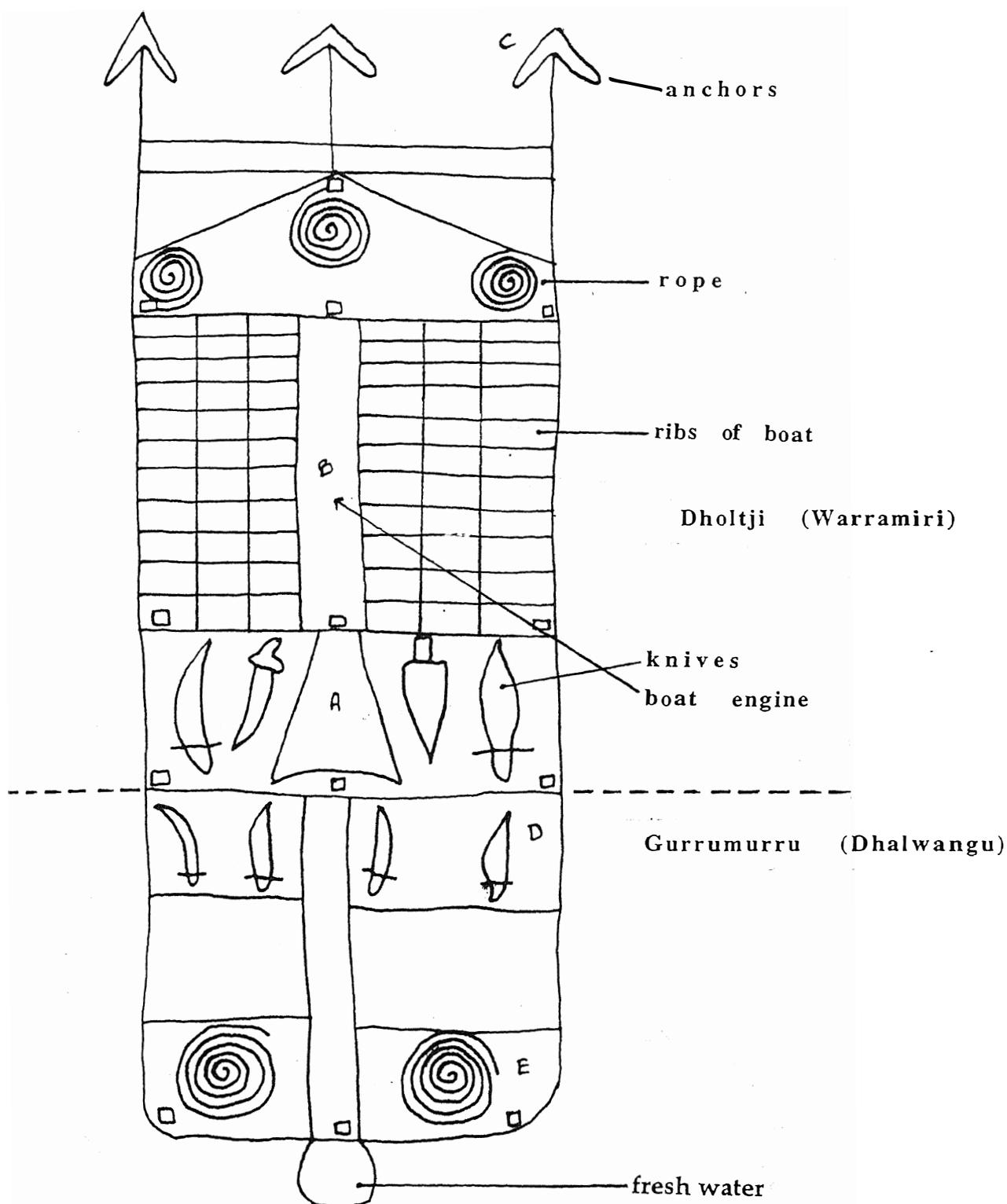
"The three arrows at the top are anchors which are connected to three coils of rope in the bow of the vessel. In the middle section a rectangular engine is shown although the Macassans did not have engines in their praus. The parallel lines represent the ribs of the wooden vessel. Knives and other coils of rope are found on the stern of the vessel," (D. Williams 1982:56).

Warramiri informants I spoke with say that this design has nothing to do with 'Macassans'. Rather, it is the legacy of *Birrinydji*. They say that there is a motor in *Birrinydji's* boat, and it is referred to as *Gaymuning*. Elkin (1953:91) lends weight to this view. He says that a Warramiri 'boat' song recorded in the 1950s pictures the singer travelling on a sea craft which has sails and a mast and also an auxiliary engine (see Chapter Eight).

The three anchors depicted in the design represent the three *Mala* most closely tied to *Birrinydji*, ie. the Warramiri in the centre, flanked by the Gumatj and Dhalwangu. The larger space in the construction for Dholtji is said to be representative of its prominence in terms of *Birrinydji*, but is probably also linked to the fact that the deceased was a member of this *Mala*.

⁶ Alternatively, Keen (1994:46) says *Motj* is a dangerous serpent of the deep waters and that it causes tropical thunderstorms.

Illustration 6a. Warramiri Mortuary sand sculpture depicting *Birrinydji's* boat, from Williams (1982:56). Additional detail was added following discussions with Burrumarra and Liwukang. (For a variation from another *Mala* group, see Thomson 1949b:60). Liwukang and Burrumarra referred to the propeller (A) as *Maypilama*, and the engine (B) as *Gaymuning*. *Rrandhing* (C) is the anchor, and *Lati* and *Barrang* (D) are the names of *Birrinydji's* knives. *Rawala* or *Rrawukang* (E) is the rope or chain folded in a circular pile.



Of the design itself, Burrumarra said, "It symbolises *Birrinydji*, the King and the creator of Dholtji." Its purpose is to,

"...remind *Yolngu* of the good things that the first ones [ie. *Birrinydji*] did for the ones who came along later...for the followers of *Birrinydji* to act on in the *bunggul*, to know the *Yiki* dance, the workers in the factory of *Birrinydji*, to remind us of him, his qualities, capabilities, to honour what he represents."

6.2-4 A Perspective on *Birrinydji* Sites across the region.

Aboriginal experiences with outsiders along the coast were not uniform (Macknight 1972:284-290), and it is apparent that contemporary Warramiri accounts take into consideration unique events that occurred in neighbouring territories in ways that conform with and promote Warramiri interests. At Nangingburra, for instance, there is a rock symbolic of the 'Captain' (see Chapter Four). Burrumarra fell short of linking this site with the legacy of *Birrinydji*, but because this area is now a part of the Warramiri heritage, through succession, he said that he would be lying if he deemed it not to be connected with it.

"The rock of Nangingburra is all the same as the mast and flag [of *Birrinydji*], only less. The Nangingburra people do not have it all. This is their attempt at what Dholtji has." (Burrumarra pers. comm. 1990. See Chapter Seven for details of mast and flag symbolism)

According to Burrumarra, major sites associated with *Birrinydji* are restricted to Warramiri and Dhalwangu land, with minor sites in Gumatj and Gupapuyngu country. Of particular note is the 'anchor' chain at Dholtji (see Berndt and Berndt 1954:37; Stone 1988), which is a several kilometre long line of sedimentary rock, from which it is said, *Birrinydji* anchored his boats. A similar site is a sandy 'anchor' at the northern entrance to Port Bradshaw at a place called Garrkarrngur. Mountford (1956-64:340) refers to a sand bank 'anchor' for the *Bayini* at this location, but both it and a nearby rocky point known as Banguyarri, are associated with *Birrinydji*, Burrumarra said. This site is now in Gumatj territory, and was said to 'come under' Dholtji, by Galarrwuy Yunupingu and Mattjuwi, both Gumatj leaders. At Gurrumurru there is an 'iron-working' site and in Gupapuyngu land, a small mountain range is linked to the activities of *Birrinydji's* blacksmith (Cawte 1993:45). *Bayini* sites, on the other hand, are found throughout the region. In some instances these overlap with 'Macassan' trepanning camps (see Berndt and Berndt 1954:34; 1964; Macknight 1972).

Places like Howard Island where *Djuranydjura* rejected the 'Macassans', or Unbirri where the *Bayini* arose, or the *Bayini* site at Galupa (see Berndt 1964), are all called Bambalngur, Warramiri informants say (see Berndt and Berndt 1989:418). It means 'a place of honour', where the laws of *Birrinydji* are made and followed. As Burrumarra said,

"The land at these places is set up with a sort of coat of arms... the kangaroo and emu can only be used in official ceremonial purposes [for the Australian Government], so it is with Bambalngur. It is for honour and the laws of one's own *bunggawa*, the land's laws. No-one can question laws here, or bring up others, unless they be punished severely. The real Bambal is Dholtji."

6.3 The Warramiri and the 'Other'

There are a vast number of contact stories in the Warramiri repertoire, but they are not all neatly divided into the categories that Berndt and Berndt (1954) and Mountford (1956-64) outlined, and not all refer to an 'Other'. For instance at Dholtji, there are stories of anonymous 'white' or clear-skinned people who lived as Aborigines once used to, ie. off the land. At Yirringa and the Wessels there are stories of shipwrecked sailors such as Buthimang, who is credited with the creation of certain whale songs and with giving the name *Markurri* to the whale (pers. comm. Burrumarra 1990).⁷ The exploits of some visitors are commemorated in the landscape. A man named Djiturrk, presumably a 'Macassan', was fishing when he caught his foot in the coral reef when the tide turned. The place name 'Djiturrk Wangayin' (see Map 1) refers to his cries for help and subsequent drowning. There are boat 'Captains' such as Leku, as well as references to the whale hunters, *Babayili*, off the coast at Nangingburra, and *Wurramala* at Yirringa and the Wessels. Attempts to put these various characters into the categories *Badu*, *Bayini*, or 'early' or 'late Macassans', create much confusion for informants. It appears that the neat boundaries that the *Yolngu* once used to classify outsiders in discussions about the past were primarily for the purposes of making certain generalisations in line with particular interpretations of the *Birrinydji* narrative. As I mentioned in Chapter Three,

⁷ This Buthimang is not to be confused with the Wangurri man who now shares this name, nor his Gupapuyngu or Lamamirri predecessors. The name has been handed down through three generations from *Maari* to *Gutharra*. Macknight (1976:130) refers to a Boodieman as a commander of the trepaning prau 'Mara Maree' in 1828/29 but whether there is a connection or not is unknown.

the necessity for such categories revolved around a deeply held view that Aborigines had once enjoyed the wealth of the 'early Macassans' and *Bayini*, but as stated, this view has little currency today. Apart from Burrumarra and the other Warramiri leaders, people tend to talk only about 'Macassans' in making reference to the pre-European 'Other'.

In this section, I detail a range of stories about experiences with the 'Other'. The aim is to highlight the paradoxical view that the *Bayini*, other 'pre-Macassans' and the Aborigines are 'one', or once shared in the wealth of the land. This sense of equality, dual nature or partnership was lost however through a failure to follow *Birrinydji's* laws, and Aborigines were left with 'plenty but nothing', Burrumarra said. It is this sense of loss and an apparent acceptance of their fate as being impoverished which I want to highlight. It figures largely in 'encounter' narratives, and is a central theme of *Birrinydji's* law, and it was Burrumarra's motivation in his attempt to change the way that Aborigines and non-Aborigines relate to one another, in the Treaty Proposal.

6.3-1 'In the Beginning'

In the 'beginning', 'white' people lived at Dholtji. Likened to the 'clear-skin' manifestations of *Marryalyan* and the flying fox, they lived just as the Aborigines did. They were naked and lived off the land and sea. These 'white' people lived as a community but later vanished and no-one knows what happened to them. They either 'went into the ground or vanished with the wind', it is said. These 'whites' called the present day Aborigines 'father', a highly significant hierarchical relationship of precedence.

The relationship between these 'whites' and the ancestral figures *Birrinydji* and *Bayini* is unspecified but it is said that there has never been a time before *Birrinydji*. "He has always been here," (Burrumarra pers. comm. 1990). *Birrinydji* and *Bayini* came from Arnhem Land, Burrumarra said.

"They were here at the beginning and are still here. They did not die like *Lany'tjun*".

The implication appears to be that there is some link between these 'early whites' and the narratives of *Marryalyan* and *Birrinydji*, and it suggests the way in which the new was comprehended in terms of sea Dreamings. Thus *Birrinydji* has a cave dwelling on the sea floor which is at

once reminiscent of the caves of *Marryalyan*. Both work in their 'laboratories' according to Burrumarra. The latter creates the various Warramiri sea totems, and *Birrinydji* makes his 'special *girri*, such as iron tools and swords.

6.3-2 The *Bayini* at Unbirri

In the last Chapter I mentioned the female 'universal traveller' who arrived at Yirringa aboard the sailing canoe, *Djulpan*. It is in this same area, at Unbirri, that the *Bayini* first emerged from the ground (see Berndt 1976:148). This story is viewed in a completely different way to the 'universal traveller', however, and is also distinguished in time. Burrumarra called the woman who came from the ground, a 'land traveller,' and said that she came after the 'universal traveller', who in turn came 'after the whale' (ie. the creational or *Wangarr* period).

Aborigines speaking of Unbirri say a single female 'white' woman arose here. She did not come from somewhere else, however, although one informant suggested that *Birrinydji* might have 'dropped her off' on this island. There is considerable speculation about the 'white' woman's origins on the part of Warramiri leaders. Aboriginal babies are born 'white' or light brown, and change colour over a matter of weeks. This child however did not change colour. Whereas it may have been an albino, the possibility exists that it was the product of an inter-cultural liaison. It is said to have happened at the 'beginning of the world', or at least at that point when Aborigines realised they were not alone in the world. As Burrumarra said,

"The very first *Yothu* (baby) was not 'black' but 'brown'. We need colour to be called *Yolngu*. The *Gutu* tree has black bark. *Gutu* is also the place for that *Bayini miyalk* (female) *Yothu*. The mother might have seen the colour of the *Yothu*, called for the *Momo* (paternal grandmother) to rub something on their skin to make it dark and let the sun do the rest. That place where *Bayini* arose we call Gutungur, from that tree."

So one perspective on Warramiri origins stresses links to the *Bayini*. Aborigines were light coloured but became darker in skin colour, separating them from the 'Other', as in the *Bol'lili* story.

6.3-3 *Birrinydji's* World

There is an essential ambiguity in the *Birrinydji* stories as to the place of outsiders. In accounts that I detail below, the Warramiri refer to

themselves as being in the image of *Bayini* and *Birrinydji* and having the same wealth as the 'Other'. On the other hand, as I show in the following section, the *Bayini* are also referred to as a separate group who lived in isolation from Aborigines. But these versions are not mutually exclusive. The story teller can refer to the *Bayini* either as the way the Warramiri lived in the past, or as an historical 'pre-Macassan' 'Other', depending on the context.

In the first scenario, in the beginning, the Warramiri were 'white' and enjoyed considerable material wealth. Men travelled on the boats and made iron implements under *Birrinydji's* supervision, while the women, under *Bayini's* direction, grew rice, made pottery and clothing. There is a vast amount of data from this 'pre-Macassan' period, although according to Burrumarra, ethnographers, linguists and historians have wrongly attributed much of the data to the 'Macassan' era. He suggests that a majority of those words commonly associated with trepangers are in fact from the *Bayini*, but on the linguistic works of Macknight (1972), Walker and Zorc (1981) and Walker (1988), suggest that we are dealing with 'Macassan' borrowings.⁸

The range and complexity of the occupations, technologies and beliefs introduced in the *Bayini* era, as referred to below, are drawn from the personal names of *yirritja Yolngu* and the songs of *Birrinydji*, and give a picture of this rich 'pre-Macassan' world. Most have not been documented previously, and except where in brackets, the meanings are from Burrumarra.

Birrinydji's Domain

Dhundhana - "area thoroughly cleaned for town at Dholtji and Gurrumurru. Many people are planting flowers and trees."

Gumandah - "business in common world. *Birrinydji* brought many things in his day." (i.e. commendah - trade)

Kampong Maluku - Dholtji. *Birrinydji's* land. (Ujung Pandang)

Ujung Tanah - Dholtji, the 'King's' land. (The site of an old fort in Ujung Pandang)

Waradika - "*Birrinydji's* name for a large town or village, like a kampong".

⁸ Care needs to be taken in assigning loan words as 'Macassan' however, for as Walker and Zorc (1981) have indicated, loan words in current use in *Yolngu matha* have been identified as Austronesian, Bajau, Bisayan, Buginese, Indonesian, Javanese, Malay, Maranao, Minangkaban Malay, Macassarese, Sanskrit, Portuguese, and from the Southern Philippines. Words may also be similar in many of these languages, in particular instances. So for the purposes of this thesis, I use the expression 'Macassan' loan word in inverted commas, whether it was attributed to the *Bayini* or 'Macassans' by informants.

Yumaynga - Also known as Banjarri, or, "where the king was". It is a small island off Cape Wilberforce, but also refers to Darwin and Macassar.

Ceremony

Bathitjawa - "...bowing down, saluting to Captain, perhaps when he puts on his hat. Honour to that person, male or female, alive or dead."

Barraytjuna - honour.

Bayung - sacred regalia for *Birrinydji*, (i.e. payung - umbrella, sacred regalia for the Sultan of Gowa, and many other south and south-east Asian deities).

Dhawa - "honour for people. Entry to meet important people".

Djalung - "Macassans or *Bayini* singing special words in *manikay*"

Djambayang - "*Birrinydji's* dance", prayer. (In Macassarese it is the formal worship required of Muslims, according to Macknight 1972:314).

Djelawar - prayer, "a part of *Birrinydji's* ceremony".

Lenggu - "*Birrinydji's* ceremony".

Rraya - "replacement/association for what the people before had done. For example, Fred Gray (a European fisherman) trepanning at a 'Macassan' site, or Aborigines performing *Birrinydji's* ceremony at Dholtji."

Rrondu - "When the mast is ready to be put up, *Birrinydji's* men and/or 'Macassans' sit on either side and sing."

Walitha'walitha's Domain

Binindjirri - bow and arrow, "part of *Walitha'walitha's* legacy".

Buwatutja - "*Walitha'walitha* in the ceremony. Acting out his wishes in the *bunggul*."

Garamat - "above, 'on top', or heaven. *Walitha'walitha's* domain" (saintly, working miracles, Walker and Zorc 1981:131)

Murrayilyil - "rich place in heaven above, nice grass, fresh water, fruits, dwelling place of *Walitha'walitha*, a paradise".

Wurramu - "spirit of the dead"

Wawurru - "red clouds of sunset".

Birrinydji's Men

Batingarra - iron smith, "engineer, associate and worker for *Birrinydji*. He makes knives and swords and puts handles on."

Djamanggi - Captain of the *Birrinydji's* boat '*Matjala*'. "He stands on the deck." (*Matjala* is *Patjala*, which Macknight (1969b:10) describes as an original type of Macassan sea craft, devoid of European influence. It had a light bamboo platform, fore and aft and a mat shelter amidships.

Djarrambi - "*Birrinydji's* special helper. General or commander of *Birrinydji's* land based army".

Djeki - "He is a savage killer. *Birrinydji* killing someone." Another name for Dholtji is Gampodjeki (Kampong Djeki).

Lela - *Birrinydji's* assistant.

Luki - "The Captain of all the boats, *Birrinydji's* replacement in the land"

Mangirri - "...savage *bunggawa*, *Grokman* [see Chapter Seven], kills with the sword on hearing a complaint."

Munbirngu - "*Birrinydji's* iron smith".

Rrawili - "*bunggawa*, No.2 man for *Birrinydji*."

Wupatha - "*Birrinydji's* policeman". (This word is 'old' Macassarese for a personal bodyguard, according to Arifuddin, pers. comm. 1988).

Bayini's Women

Barambor - "white woman, *Bayini* herself".

Datiyalan - "making dresses with a sewing machine".

Daylulu - "pretty woman. *Bayini* and her workers looking good, nice face and smile."

Daymatharra - "*Bayini*, *bunggawa* woman for cooking and making clothes".

Dela - "*Bayini* 'sewing centre' at Dholtji".

Djambalulu - "Bayini's workers. Bayini herself does no work. She is 'on top'."

Mangatjay - lipstick, nail polish.

Technology

Bakutju - cigarettes

Bandirra - flag (from the Portuguese word *bandeira*, or flag)

Banul - "exhaust pipe for smoke emission." (Also *Dhaatu* - "chimney of iron furnace.")

Barrupu/Lapurru - "tobacco - old, black and strong." (Also *Londung* - "black tobacco but weaker than *Lapurru*.")

Beta - sarong "*Birrinydji*'s holiday wear."

Birrarrapi - "workshop for making iron." (Bahasa Indonesian term for a fireplace)

Daypaniny/Dhaykamalu - "name for matches in the *bunggul*."

Dharrima - wage payment

Djandju - pipe

Djulima- mouth organ or whistle player (Also *Ganydjuling*, *Batjukarri*, *Mulaliny*-mouth organ.)

Gayunggi - *Birrinydji*'s dinghy.

Guwala - "navigation equipment on *Birrinydji*'s boat."

Lanhdhamu - lantern

Mulkaruy - *Birrinydji*'s hat.

Rrandhing- anchor

Rranhdhika- anchor chain

Yitja- "flashing oneself up"

Yurranydjil- musical instrument for *Birrinydji*

These and other words pertaining to the 'pre-Macassan' era, picture a hierarchically ordered, highly organised, military minded society. Men and women are divided according to the tasks they perform, and they possess a wealth of technological marvels. Men are involved in sailing and iron making, while women make clothes and use make-up. The society has a police force and strict law enforcement. Ceremonial life is rich, and the concept of honour figures largely. (In the last Chapter, the expression 'honour' was explained by Burrumarra as referring to a partnership in law between the *Yolngu* and 'totem hunters'. In relation to *Birrinydji*'s law it also refers this same sense of 'oneness' with the 'Other'.)

All of what has been seen and experienced is acknowledged as being the result of the creational activities of *Birrinydji* and *Bayini* (see Thomson 1949b:60). *Yirritja* Aborigines have a charter for the production, possession and use of such technology, and have inherited knowledge of the associated professions, handing down the various titles along gender-specific lines. They also had a mandate to perform the ceremonies and manage those lands associated with this law. While primarily linked to Arnhem Land, there is also an understanding that *Birrinydji*'s law extends overseas, and somehow the Aborigines are tied to the peoples who dwell there. Exact details of the connection are vague and are said to have been lost in time.

The picture is of a world in which Aborigines have all that the 'Other' has, and in some Warramiri interpretations, this is the way they lived in the past. As Bakhtin (1981:147) says however, through historical inversion, myths about paradise, a golden or heroic age, or an ancient truth, which are in no way a part of the past, can only be realised exclusively in the future. Oral traditions relating to *Birrinydji* represent a potential, a dream of how things should be if the law is followed. I return to this point later.

6.3-4 The Visitors Arrive

In the second scenario relating to views on the nature of contact, the *Bayini* are seen as the 'Other' and there is a partnership between them and Aborigines. *Birrinydji* had become tired and he went into the ground on the Cape Wilberforce peninsula, and then sent for 'whites' (the *Bayini*) to bring the *Yolngu* 'up to date'. Burrumarra did not call these people *Bayini* or 'Macassan' however, but rather *bunggawa*, or 'bringers of law'. At one time he said that he would rather call them Warramiri than 'Macassans', so different are the perceptions of these various 'waves' of contact.

There is a commonly held view that Dholtji was a very big town at this time, and not only Warramiri lived at the great camps that stretched along the Cape Wilberforce peninsula. Representatives of all the *Murrnginy* groups were present. It was a period of great happiness, a 'golden era' (see Thomson 1957). George Guymarrowuy of the Warramiri *Mala* likened Dholtji to Mecca, but adds that little evidence exists today. As Burrumarra said,

"Two thousand years ago...'white' people came to Dholtji. They had a business to do. They cleared the land and built all kinds of houses of clay and timber. There is nothing left now. It's all in the memory. *Dhungguparri* was the name of the meeting/discussion/*bunggul* area at Dholtji for the *bunggawa* with 'white' skin. *Yolngu* go there today to reflect on what happened, what it means and what we got."

Yumaynga is another place associated with these 'pre-Macassan' *bunggawa*. As Burrumarra said, "All the big songs talk about the big places. Yumaynga [or Jumay; Jumaynga] is in them all." Not only is it associated with Cape Wilberforce (see illustration 3g), but the name also refers to a large settlement to the west of Arnhem Land (Darwin), and also Macassar.⁹

⁹ The only reference to such a place is an account from Pires (Reid 1983:127) in the 1500s of how the Bajau of Macassar would launder the spoils of their

The first large boat^o that landed at Dholtji was *Birrinydji's* boat. It was called the '*Yinderama*', and *Luki* was its Captain. Then came the '*Matjala*',¹⁰ which is revered as the bringer of great riches to the Warramiri. It was one of *Birrinydji's* boats and its Captain was *Djammangi*. Apart from this, the word *Matjala* today has come to mean anything that cannot be bought for any amount of money; 'the richest and most precious of possessions' (Burrumarra pers. comm. 1993). This is how the law of *Birrinydji* and the partnership between 'black' and 'white' were viewed by the Warramiri leaders.

Following the arrival and departure of the *Matjala*, many boats came all at once, of all different types. Personalities such as *Lela*, *Djeki*, *Damung*, *Dayngumbu*, and *Bambung* are associated with this time. They are *Birrinydji's* men, '*bunggawa* of iron', according to informants. *Yirritja* Aborigines today also go by such names. They have been passed down from *Maari* to *Gutharra* to the present.

6.3-5 *Luki*, the King of Dholtji

Luki is a central figure in *Birrinydji's* law. He was the 'King' of Dholtji and the headman of the 'pre-Macassans', according to both Warramiri and Wangurri informants, and he appears to be a role model for *Birrinydji*. His main base was Dholtji but he first established a camp at Banjarri (Yumaynga) on Cape Wilberforce. Here, it is said, were many fine houses in the past. In describing this man, Burrumarra said,

"*Luki* was a *Ngapagi* [non-Aboriginal]. He had brown skin. He was a customer. I say it that way to make it easier for you to understand. He was in charge of all the boat building and carpenters. All produce had to come to him. He was the king...a Godly figure."

"*Luki* spread honour to all the land out from Dholtji. Then up came children, new generations from that time. *Luki* is my

piracy at Jumaia. According to Macknight (1972:304) Jumaia refers to the old 'Macassan' (Gowa) capital of Djongaya.

¹⁰ As I noted earlier, Macknight (1969b:10) says the design of the *Patjala* has no European influence, and represents an original form of 'Macassan' sea craft. The *Yolngu* music group *Yothu Yindi*, have written a song called *Matjala* which affirms the sacred significance of this event in terms of 'honour'.

heritage. We call him a Warramiri man. He must have been a follower of *Birrinydji*."¹¹

While sometimes the expression *Garaeng* is used in relation to *Luki*, linking him to Macassar, he is also called a *Garandalu*, a term in *Yolngu matha* meaning 'king of kings', which is linked to the term *Arang*, a Bugis expression for leader.¹²

Why did *Luki* leave Arnhem Land? Burrumarra suggested language problems were a factor, but he was speculating. "We don't know. The language of *Luki* was a little bit the same as Warramiri, but still we had trouble understanding."

6.3-8 'Blacks' work for 'Whites'

Not only 'white' people are associated with the 'pre-Macassan' or *Bayini* era. 'Black' 'totem hunters' were now working for the 'whiteman', and accompanied the *Bayini* on their voyages.

While various sites in north-east Arnhem Land are associated only with a 'black' 'Other', ie. *Bapayili* at Nangingburra or *Wurramala* at Yirringa, Dholtji is associated with both, and in particular, the *Dhurritjini*.¹³ Burrumarra said for instance,

"Nangingburra has stories of 'black' men with swords, but Dholtji has stories of 'white' and 'black' men and women on its

¹¹ The apparent doubt in the last sentence highlights the essential ambiguity of the stories.

¹² It is not therefore possible to identify *Luki* as either Bugis or 'Macassan' on this evidence. The only reference to an historical figure by this name is that of the legendary hero *Garaeng Semerluki*. He is a Bajau prince sent from Macassar to Ujung Tanah to find a wife (Ujung Tanah is the southern coast of Singapore according to Sopher 1965:198). He later became the Rajah of Macassar and his ambition was to conquer all countries below the wind (see Brown 1953:126). Apart from the fact that Ujung Tanah is *Birrinydji's* 'inside' name for Dholtji, there are no other details to suggest any link here.

¹³ The *Dhurritjini*, a Sama-Bajau or Sea Nomad group, are known to have been associated with trepangers departing from Ujung Pandang in the early 1700s, and there is considerable historical evidence of the sacred link between these parties. The partnership was as servant to master or client to patron, and references to this date to the 1600s. (see Speelman in Reid 1983:126). In the 1700s, the Bajau were in a similar relationship with the Bugis (Velthoen and Acciaioli 1993:3). In the 1800s, Macassar was still a rendezvous point for Bajau boats, and there was a large settlement at Kodingaring, and they were reputed to sell the best quality trepang in the Chine trade. (see Vosmaer in Sopher 1965:145).

shores. Nangingburra has good stories. Dholtji has good and bad, and many stories. The voice of the 'white' man is in our ears at Dholtji."

In the Warramiri view, the relationship between *Dhurritjini* and 'Macassans' has assumed considerable importance. The 'black' man worked for and paid tribute to the 'white', Burrumarra said. Pelras (1993:4) indeed refers to the dark colour of Bajau in comparison to 'Macassans'. As Burrumarra said, "We learned the truth about the world from the whale hunter." While a somewhat cryptic comment, it was referring to relationships between peoples, and the dominance of 'white' over 'black', which was reflected in Aboriginal relationships with 'Macassans', and referred to in Dog/Macassan 'encounter' narratives.

6.3-7 The Origin of the Visitors

No-one knows where the early visitors came from, Burrumarra said. It was either from the sea water or the *Garamat* (heavens) but not from the land itself. When these people first landed at Warramiri sacred areas, Burrumarra said,

"...we told them to go back to where they had come from, to their places...Then we thought, maybe they should be there. Perhaps they were here a long time ago....Maybe they were the real owners. So we let them stay..."¹⁴

At another time Burrumarra said that *Birrinydji* had brought them to Dholtji. He says "...although we were different colours, we were one people linked in life, in ceremony and history." The dances of *Birrinydji* are known to have been copied by Aborigines from these 'white' men. Burrumarra indeed said, "We got the *Lenggu bunggul* from the *Balanda* [ie. the *Bayini* men]. They did the *bunggul* and then lay down on the sand". Yet the meanings are more important than its source, it seems. "Yes it comes from the *Balanda*, but we did it. We have that. There are no doubts," Burrumarra said. He added,

"They came to make the land strong and the people strong. They had many rich things, all that *Birrinydji* had given them.

¹⁴ Liwukang suggests that this is one reason for the secrecy surrounding the exploits of the *Bayini*. Aborigines do not want 'whites' to think they have a privileged place in relation to the land because of such stories, because they do not.

This power and knowledge came from the land of Dholtji itself, the minerals that are the body of *Birrinydji*."

The only hint of the antiquity of the 'pre-Macassan' stories is in relation to the sandy 'anchor' *Bayini* site on the northern entrance to Port Bradshaw. In 'Macassan' oral history this area is associated with the retreat of twenty-five 'Macassan' praus following a sea battle against the Dutch in 1667 (Macknight 1976:96). In versions of the story, the boats fled to the Gulf of Carpentaria and the crews stayed there for either several months or up to twenty years. The names of the various Captains are commemorated in Aboriginal place names as far as Groote Eylandt, Macknight (1976:96) says. He adds that the place called Garrkarrngur (the *Bayini* 'anchor' site), refers to the place where the Karaeng (*Garaeng* or leaders) met. Interestingly, in Aboriginal oral tradition, the Port Bradshaw *Birrinydji* site is said to be of considerably less significance than Dholtji and Gurrumurru. Contact at these areas was very much earlier according to Burrumarra, and was far more complex and meaningful. Thus we have Burrumarra saying, 'while *Birrinydji* might have been at Garrkarrngur, he did not do anything there'.

6.3-8 A Wangurri Perspective

Buthimang of the Wangurri *Mala* gave a slightly different perspective on the arrival of the 'pre-Macassans'. He said that in the distant past, people planted flags all along the coast at various sites now associated with the *Bayini*. He also referred to the visitors as *bunggawa* but he had no idea where they came from. He suggested they might be Indian, but definitely not 'Macassan'. Replicas of the flags they planted at remote localities along the coast still fly, and are said to represent the law 'between *Balanda* and *Yolngu* governments'. They were given by the *bunggawa* to the people of Arnhem Land a long time ago in 'remembership' of the partnership that existed between the peoples, Buthimang said. As I detail in the next Chapter, flags also fly at sites where whales have beached themselves, as well as on the graves of both *dhuwa* and *yirritja Mala* members, and are associated with not only *Birrinydji*, but also *Walitha'walitha*.

6.4 The World is Turned Upside Down

Just as the accounts of the *Bayini* era have two aspects, so too does the 'fall' introduced in Chapter Three, but the two versions overlap in important ways. Thus while Aborigines turned their backs on the laws of *Birrinydji* at the 'beginning of time' in an 'inside' account, and became 'black' and poor in

relation to a dominating 'Other', at the end of the 'early Macassan' era, the devastating effects of contact nearly brought an end to the Warramiri and other *Mala*, according to informants. In both cases there is a 'fall'. One is based on the near extinction of the *Murrnginy* and in particular, the Warramiri, and a large burial ground at Dholtji is pointed to as evidence of this past, and the other, no less real, is presented as a 'timeless' narrative, providing an explanation for the perceived inequality of Aborigines in relation to the visitors. The two versions however refer to one and the same event according to Burrumarra.

In both accounts, a 'fire' is said to have come to the *Yolngu*. Aborigines were killing one another as a result of the greed and jealousy brought about by a desire for material products, and the effects of alcohol or tobacco addiction. The term *Murrnginy*, while meaning iron and the 'iron age' of *Birrinydji*, also refers to this period of pent up anger and resentment which is equated with turning one's back on *Birrinydji*. People started to follow their own ideas and infighting reached dramatic proportions, Burrumarra said. The 'spirit of the dead', the *Wurramu* or *Grokman* took over the people's lives (see Chapter Seven). Speaking as an anthropologist, Burrumarra said that it was at this time that Warramiri Aborigines took *Birrinydji* as their 'standard'. I expand on this later.

Walitha'walitha came to the Aborigines in their time of need to advise on the '*Birrinydji* situation'. In this time of 'fire', *Birrinydji* wanted more houses for his *girri* but *Walitha'walitha* said no and sent him away. *Birrinydji* retreated, and his replacements, the 'white' men, left for Yumaynga and Macassar. Aborigines were left on their own. As Mattjuwi, the Gumatj-Burarrwanga leader says, "No-one knows where *Birrinydji* is." Burrumarra adds, "*Birrinydji* did not want to stay in Australia. But he left his men, *Walitha'walitha* and *Wurramu* at Dholtji and Gurrumurru." (see Chapters Seven and Eight)

6.4-1 The 'Fall'

The 'fall' corresponds with the departure for the final time of the *Bayini*, in Burrumarra's view, but it also appears to be the point of the division between 'early' and 'late Macassans' in other accounts he gave. Various sites in the landscape commemorate the departure of the visitors. At Muthumul in Wangurri country, behind a deep grove of mangrove trees, sits a lone spherical red rock not more than 50cm in diameter. According to

Buthimang, it is known as *Dharring* (a 'Macassan' loan word for a boiler) and it has a message for the *Yolngu*. The 'pre-Macassan' is saying to the Wangurri *Yolngu*, "We are going away. From now on you will have to look after yourself."

Burrumarra, in looking at events leading up to the 'fall', said that the sadness of the story is one reason why it is rarely told. He does not want people dwelling on it. The deaths that occurred in the *Murrnginy* era happened at a time of great bitterness between 'black' and 'white' people, he said, and such thoughts are not conducive to building partnerships with the 'Other' in the here and now. Yet paradoxically, it was the visitors who are said to have performed last rites for many of the *Yolngu*.

As Burrumarra detailed, all the *Yolngu* living at Dholtji, save one, either ran away or were killed. He said,

"We wanted only good but bad came too. People turned their back on... [*Birrinydji's*] law, married the wrong way, and then up came a new generation...What can you do when there is one man left? The bodies [of the *Yolngu*] lay in shallow graves, where the crocodiles or dogs could dig them up. [The survivor] was a young man. If he was old with gray hair he could have buried them the proper way, but he was too young. He had to go to the *bunggawa*. Some said this was wrong, but what else could he do?"

As in the case of the Dog/Macassan 'encounter' narratives, there is a resistance to the idea of accepting anything from outsiders, but the young *Yolngu* man was asking for help from the visitors to bury his family members, Burrumarra said. Outsiders performed the last rites for those who lay on the shores of Cape Wilberforce and then they left the coast for the last time. As Burrumarra said,

"There was an agreement. We were talking about honour; honour for the land and sea, honour between 'black' and 'white'."

"The dead were part of the wish of the *bunggawa* [*Birrinydji*], part of [his] plan, his task for Dholtji. Until the funeral was over, the visitors said, 'You can't kick me out. I'm here with his [the dead's] agreement.' It was an honour thing, memory, that he will stay. He has a job to finish. After the *bunggul*, he can go," (Burrumarra pers. comm. 1990).

The *bunggawa* in this case were referred to by both Liwukang and Burrumarra as 'early Macassans' and not *Bayini*. The use of the latter term appears to be restricted to those versions of the narrative in which Aborigines are in the image of the 'Other' but even this is problematic. The *Bayini* were said to have known the *Wurramu* dance, but they did not do it, Burrumarra said. The 'fall' was a long time after *Bayini*, he said, and he was adamant about the ordering. "*Birrinydji* came first. *Wurramu* later."

Even so, there is a considerable degree of overlap in accounts of the *Bayini* and 'early Macassans', and they are viewed in almost the same light. In a similar way, *Luki* is in the image of *Birrinydji*, and both are considered to be kings. This confusion was also hinted at by Burrumarra when he said 'early Macassans' and *Yolngu* "...must have done the *yindi bunggul* before they exchanged gifts." They would say,

"We are the same, let's do the flag dance together, let's do the axe dance, We have the same ancestry, same things, all comes from *Birrinydji*."

The end result of the 'fall' and the departure of the *Bayini* and/or 'early Macassans' is that Aborigines, left on their own, could no longer make iron tools or pottery, and they had no tobacco or cloth or the other things that they desired. They had ceremonies and songs, but as Burrumarra said, 'plenty but nothing'.

The 'anchor' site at Dholtji takes on a powerful significance in the light of the 'fall'. Its message is that the Warramiri will never run from their law (ie. *Birrinydji's* law) in the future. In running away, as many had done in the *Murrnginy* period, they lost everything, a point strongly made by Burrumarra in his biography (McIntosh 1994b). In the future, Aborigines will stand firm on what they believe, for the 'anchor [of *Birrinydji*] is in place'.

6.4-2 Trepanging 'Macassans' Arrive

Events turned around with the arrival of 'later Macassans' or trepangers who also brought with them many 'rich' things. Burrumarra remembered the old people saying that when these visitors first returned, the Aborigines could not look at them, for they were ashamed of what had happened in the past. But there was a major difference between the newcomers and the ones who had come before, he said. Unlike the *Bayini* or

'early Macassans', this group did not respect Aboriginal rights to the land and interfered with the women. These were the new 'Captain Cook's', to use the terminology of Mackinolty and Wainburranga (1988).

As in Worsley's (1955) view that there had been an idealisation of the memory of 'Macassans' as a result of contact with Europeans, it appears that 'early Macassans' (ie. those who came before the 'fall'), were viewed favourably when compared to later or 'post-fall Macassans'. The former became associated with an idyllic past, and were seen as acting on behalf of the ancestral being *Birrinydji*. Burrumarra recognised the difficulties people have in accepting such views (see Cawte 1993:44) but he said that all he had to go on were what the songs say and these were specific and detailed. He accepted them as truth.

6.5 The Emergence of *Birrinydji* Law

In this section I examine the origin of the *Birrinydji* laws from a range of perspectives. I ask the question, were traditional assumptions about the nature of the 'Other's' power a relevant factor in the emergence of the law of *Birrinydji*? Then both in this section and the next, I discuss how these findings are relevant in Warramiri Treaty proposal negotiations.

6.5-1 *Birrinydji* and *Lany'tjun*

That traditional assumptions about the nature of the 'Other's' power were relevant in terms of the emergence of the law of *Birrinydji*, is evidenced by the fact that *Birrinydji* narratives echo the major moiety themes. On the *dhuwa* side, in the *Djang'kawu* narrative (see Berndt and Berndt 1954), women originally possessed all things sacred, but these were stolen from them. Now only men have rights in the ceremonial manufacture and ritual manipulation of such sacred objects. In the same way, in *Birrinydji* narratives, Aborigines as a whole once possessed the wealth of the 'Other', but through misadventure, now only 'whites' enjoy this privilege.

From the *yirritja* moiety, the 'movement' of the law of *Lany'tjun* out from Dhalwangu territory to all other *yirritja* lands (Rudder 1993:47) is at once reminiscent of Berndt and Berndt (1949:22) saying that the law of *Bayini* came out of Cape Wilberforce and went to all *Mala* from there. Similarly, just as *Lany'tjun* comes from the sacred water hole, the origin of the barramundi and the long-necked turtle (which are essential food sources), *Birrinydji* comes from the minerals in the ground, the source of

the wealth and power of the visitors. While *Lany'tjun* 'fixed' the relationship between totems and *Mala*, *Birrinydji* is also credited with assigning particular totems to *Yolngu* collectives.

Lany'tjun helps Aborigines survive and prosper. There will be peace and harmony and people will lead bountiful lives as a result of the revolutionary hunting techniques, land management practices and social laws he implemented. In the case of *Birrinydji*, new ceremonial law and such techniques as iron-making, boat-building and rice production, led Aborigines to aspire to a level of wealth comparable to that of the visitors. In both cases, an ideal is suggested, and people strive for this in their lives. The demise of *Lany'tjun* and *Banatja* at the hands of *Yolngu* is also reminiscent of how Aborigines turned their back on *Birrinydji's* laws.

Both *Lany'tjun* and *Birrinydji* are associated with the new and innovative. But they do not represent a belief in something coming from outside of the *Yolngu* domain. *Lany'tjun*, in the form of the barramundi, appeared to the people as a man of extraordinary abilities, knowledge and power. *Birrinydji* and *Bayini*, likewise, come from the land itself. Their followers were men and women quite different to present day Aborigines. They had light skin and great skills and riches, but were in the image of an Aboriginal ancestral being.

The principal difference between these bodies of law is the fact that interpretations of the story of *Birrinydji* are based around the changing nature of relationships with others and, in all probability, represent a completely new indigenous creation of the past three hundred years. Burrumarra stressed that *Yolngu* took *Birrinydji* as their 'standard' during a time of chaos. Just as in the *Lany'tjun* era, there was hunger, confusion and infighting. Burrumarra said that the *bunggawa* would say to the *Yolngu*, "...don't look at things that way. Do it this way." Yet, Burrumarra also singled out the Aboriginal leader Bukulatjpi as the principal instigator of the law. So again we have two sides to a story: the contribution of the 'Other' and the Aboriginal re-working of this.

I now want to look at another aspect of the origins of this complex. The *Birrinydji* narrative can be referred to as a myth of inheritance, using Morphy's (1990) terminology, and for Burrumarra, the origin of the complex dates back to the time of the Warramiri leader, Bukulatjpi.

6.5-2 Bukulatjpi and the Law of *Birrinydji*

Bukulatjpi, the Warramiri leader at the time immediately following the 'fall', was the one who first came upon the 'truth', all Warramiri leaders said. He was the first to pick up *Birrinydji's* swords and 'do the *bunggul*'. The name Bukulatjpi in fact refers to this 'discovery'. It comes from the word *Latjparrk* which means "...a light that draws the mind to the heavens," Burrumarra said. As with *Barrama* and *Lany'tjun*, Bukulatjpi instituted a line of inheritance for the Warramiri people in terms of the laws of *Birrinydji*. As Burrumarra said,

"*Birrinydji* must have thought the Warramiri should have it. Bukulatjpi got many things from *Birrinydji*: swords, arm bands, a dilly bag, belt, red calico. He would dance with the white paint on his shoulders and head. The policy is that if the *bunggawa* dances, everyone must dance. It was Bukulatjpi that did the thinking about Dholtji and who must do the *manikay* [song]."

"Bukulatjpi was a real killer too. He could kill anyone. He'd pick up the sword every time. He lived [at]... Dholtji... At this place he cooked all the *madayin* foods: whale, octopus, crayfish. He got the *bunggul* from *Birrinydji*."

"Bukulatjpi was like a Prime Minister for *Birrinydji*. He is the shadow of *Birrinydji*. *Birrinydji* is the man of highest order. We can't be like him. He is the creator. The Dhalwangu of Gurrumurru have no man like Bukulatjpi, only *Birrinydji* itself. *Birrinydji* is the creator of the people, the land and the law."

Attempts to locate Bukulatjpi in time have been somewhat difficult. Some speak of him living thousands, while others, hundreds of years ago. Berndt and Berndt (1989:360) refer to some of his exploits in historical terms, and all Warramiri are said to trace their ancestry back to him. For instance, the Warramiri-Mandjikay leader, Gaymuning, says that Bukulatjpi was his grandfather's *Maari*. Yet Burrumarra, in tracing back the leaders of the Warramiri clan back seven generations, could not place Bukulatjpi exactly, but he said that both his grandfathers, Lela and Yamaliny, were *Gutharra* for him.¹⁵ All indications are that we are looking at around the early 1800s. This was perhaps 100 years after the first arrival of 'Macassans' on the coast.

¹⁵ From Burrumarra (born 1917), the line of Warramiri leaders back in time proceeds thus: to his brother Nyambi (born 1904), Djarrambi also his brother (c1890), Ganimbirngu their father (c 1865), his older brother Bambang (1860), their father Lela (c1835), his brother Yamaliny (c1830), their father Wurranydjura (c1805). (The last six men have names drawn from *Birrinydji* themes) Bukulatjpi is said to be Lela's *Maari*, which would put him next in

Apart from the fact that the law of *Birrinydji* has many aspects in common with the *Lany'tjun* theme, Bukulatjpi also initiated several lines of descent for the Warramiri *Mala*, just as *Barrama* instituted a line of descent for Dhalwangu people following his meeting with *Lany'tjun*. Both laws may be referred to as myths of inheritance, and in the next section, I suggest that some of the details of this legacy are in part, an Indonesian tradition transferred in location from Macassar, or elsewhere, to Arnhem Land.

6.5-3 A 'Partnership' between 'Black' and 'White'

In the accounts above, the Warramiri came upon *Birrinydji's* laws via divine intervention. In an alternate interpretation, Aborigines and the visitors became 'one' through a sharing of *Rom* with the 'Other', and in this section, I investigate the perceived nature of this sense of partnership.

I have already talked of how groups of people can become 'one' through common understandings of the past, based on joint ownership of *rangga*. In Chapter Three, I looked at how the totemic whale was seen to have been transformed by fire and, as a result, people see this species as evidence that the Gumatj-Burarrwanga and the Warramiri-Budalpuḍal, are 'one', and that this relationship has its origins at the 'beginning of time'. There is a strong suggestion in *Birrinydji's* law that there was a perceived partnership or negotiated settlement between Aborigines and 'early Macassans' (ie. *Bayini*) and the flag and mast are symbols of this. Thus we had the earlier statement by Buthimang about men planting flags on Australian soil and these becoming associated with the sacred 'inside' laws of Aboriginal land. Burrumarra also spoke of the flag and mast in terms of this 'company' or partnership with the 'Other', and he referred to it as a code of honour.

For instance, in *Yolngu matha* there is the word *Bati* (ie. *Pacce*), which is a 'Macassan' loan word. In Macassarese, it refers to the unity of peoples in a community. For the Warramiri, it refers to a very special concept, not dissimilar to that described above.¹⁶ It is a word linked to the traditions of *Birrinydji* and *Walitha'walitha*, and relations with outsiders. Burrumarra, in

line, but there is some confusion about this, which might be attributed to the chaos surrounding the 'fall'.

¹⁶ The sound shift in this instance is straightforward, and in accordance with conventions detailed by Walker (1988). The letters 'b' and 'p' are substitutable, and the letter 'c' in 'Macassan' can be either 'dj' or 't'.

giving his definition, said that someone with this name would today be considered a mission worker. He said it was "membership of a Church, an aid to life, ways of helping; liaison, memory between *Balanda* and *Yolngu*." It was the common bond between people who come together in prayer, under the direction of a spiritual leader or Minister, he said.

Another *Yolngu matha* word which Burrumarra referred to as evidence of the bond between Aborigines and the 'Other' comes from comparable definitions of the expression 'Ulu anang', a word for a Macassarese community leader (see Andaya 1975:118), which is also the Warramiri personal name, 'Wulukang'.¹⁷ For the Warramiri, it means 'the name given to the *bunggawa* by the *bunggawa*.' As Burrumarra said, "His name has been transformed from an ordinary one to a big one by *Birrinydji*."

Burrumarra's belief in a code of honour uniting *yirritja Yolngu* and the *Bayini* (and 'early Macassans') provides a major point of comparison with other outsiders in north-east Arnhem Land oral history. *Yolngu* do not express this same feeling of 'company' for trepangers, for example. As Burrumarra said, "We are soldiers for the flag. We are not soldiers for trepang!" As I said in Chapter One, the Union Jack was seen by Burrumarra as a symbol that allows Europeans to take over the land and ignore Aborigines. There was a desire in the Treaty proposal to 'bring the Union Jack on side', and the concept of honour helps explain why it was included in the Warramiri flag treaty proposal design. *Birrinydji's* flag was associated with the idea of honouring partnerships, whereas the Union Jack was not, but should be, Burrumarra said.

6.6 *Birrinydji* the Coloniser

Building on the ideas introduced in the last section, here I ask the question, was the emergence of *Birrinydji* part of a search for a new power stratagem by Aborigines in their attempt to re-order the nature of relationships with outsiders? How does this tie in with Burrumarra's desire to re-interpret cosmology in line with contemporary experience?

¹⁷ The letters 'u' and 'w' are interchangeable in terms of pronunciation, and 'anang' at the end of the 'Macassan' word has become 'ukang' in *Yolngu matha*, again following a regular pattern. In this case, the connection is semantically plausible, for meanings are in some ways similar.

The reality of the past is that generations have grown up with a vision of *Birrinydji* as an Aboriginal ancestor who possessed great wealth and has the potential to bring this to Aborigines. Yet at the same time, *Birrinydji* is attributed with the characteristics of the coloniser and is associated with atrocities. Mackinolty and Wainburranga (1988) get around this contradiction by making a distinction between early and late 'Cook's', but Burrumarra did not hide the negative side of the exploits of the early visitors.

The case study documented by Rasnake (1988) in Chapter Three, on the effects of Spanish colonisation on certain Indian tribes of South America, appears to have much in common with the ways in which Aborigines dealt with the experience of 'Macassans'. Rasnake (1988) says that for the Yura of Bolivia, a particular creational entity is believed to have provided the Indians with access to and control of certain lands, and given them knowledge of the ways and means necessary to utilise it. Yet this being also brought colonisers in train who took possession of Indian lands and destroyed the Indian way of life. Such a paradox provides the impetus for on-going social action, Rasnake (1988) says, and in the *Yolngu* case, this is also true.

Birrinydji is a part of the Aboriginal heritage, but the wealth which once belonged to the *Yolngu* no longer exists because they broke *Birrinydji's* law. Yet Aborigines will resist being subservient to the 'Other' and will do all that is possible to maintain identity and achieve the wealth of the 'Other'. This was one of the messages of a study of the 'encounter' narratives. As Bakhtin (1981:147) says, visions of an idyllic past are in fact a potential, a dream of how things should be in the future. And now the world has changed, and in the Warramiri Treaty proposal, Burrumarra envisaged a partnership between 'black' and 'white', and he sought to reconcile the legacy of *Birrinydji* with current beliefs and lifestyles. In the next section, in a case study focussing on the gift of a *Birrinydji* talisman to the Warramiri, I highlight the reasons why Burrumarra saw a need for changes in the way people think and act in relation to non-Aborigines, and consequently, why the negative side of *Birrinydji's* legacy was now being made public.

6.6-1 Reflections upon a *Birrinydji* Talisman

The darker side of *Birrinydji* was highlighted in discussions with Burrumarra following a trip to Ujung Pandang (Macassar) by the author and a party from Elcho Island in 1988. A talisman was presented to the Warramiri by a 'Macassan' religious leader (see illustration 6b). The object came from Tallo, a Sultanate once in partnership with Gowa, and which held sway over much of the eastern seas in the early seventeenth century (Reid and Reid 1988:7). The talisman was made of cloth, with a cardboard stiffener forming the shape. One square is red and the other black and they are joined by a pin. Small rocks are said to be inside which gives the object its power.¹⁸

The man who gave the talisman to the Warramiri was well aware of the links between Macassar and Arnhem Land (see illustration 6c). He was a *Bitju*, a priest, and lived in the vicinity of the royal tombs of Tallo, near the old fort which was destroyed by the Dutch following the taking of Macassar in 1669. He was in possession of many of the old *Gaukang* or sacred emblems which legitimised the rule of the Sultan of Tallo, eg. strangely shaped pieces of timber and coral, sacred *kris* (knives), and old flags.

Burrumarra did not make the trip, but as the oldest member of the *Mala*, he was presented with the talisman by Liwukang. Burrumarra very much appreciated the gift and recognised the object at once as being associated with *Birrinydji*.¹⁹ At that time however, he was involved in the production of a new Australian flag and writing letters to Australian Governments about a reconciliation between Aborigines and non-Aborigines. The possession of such a powerful magical object did not sit easily with him. While Burrumarra said the object filled him with a sense of power, he wanted it returned, for Christianity had superseded *Birrinydji*'s laws. The two could not co-exist. He said the Tallo object, like *Birrinydji*, reached out for you, and wanted you to stay with it.

"It collects all the people, good and bad, for its purpose, which is to conquer. It wants to conquer all of Australia. It wants to make you forget your own law and to accept it. It attaches to you and makes you strong, but I'm already a part of it, but not for its purpose, but for Warramiri purposes."

¹⁸ Sailors to Australia in the 1988 bicentennial voyage from Ujung Pandang to Arnhem Land (see Spillett 1987), all carried similar talisman for good luck.

¹⁹ The Tallo priest did not view the object in the same way as Burrumarra however.

In the presence of this object, which he said he knew of from the Warramiri past, Burrumarra spoke of the role of *Birrinydji* as being to over-run and bring all under his law. Burrumarra equated this 'taking of mind and country' with communism. He said there was no place for it in the world today.

"The Macassans have it [ie. the law of the talisman] and we have it. It's *Birrinydji's*, but *Birrinydji* didn't want to stay in Australia."

He added however that it was still a very important part of the system of honour. "We have honour on it," he said.

6.6-2 Relegating Beliefs to the Past

In the case study detailed above, one sees *Birrinydji* beliefs in a similar light to the so-called millenarian *Mulunga* and *Djinimin-Jesus* cults of central and western Australia, but Burrumarra was able to see this aspect of Warramiri identity in a detached way, because of the advent of Christianity. Prior to this, *Birrinydji* was the only framework from which to view outsiders (see also Morphy and Morphy 1984). He said,

"We could not bring ourselves to tell [non-Aborigines] the stories of *Birrinydji* otherwise we would lose everything...The Warramiri have this standard so they can be strong and keep the country strong," (Burrumarra pers. comm. 1990).

Yolngu took on the very characteristics of the 'virile culture of Indonesia', (or Europeans, as suggested was the case of the 'All-Father' and *Mulunga*), as a means of promoting their own interests, but were also bound by the fear of indiscriminate actions of outsiders, whose very brutality had become a conceptual means of promoting Aboriginal integrity.

This fear was particularly evident when Burrumarra asked his elderly brothers to paint the Union Jack on the Warramiri Treaty flag. They were afraid to do so, but Burrumarra said to them that *Birrinydji* was "all the same as the Union Jack, Government, army and technology." He said that it was common for people to feel that if they disobeyed the *bungawa*, (ie. the Government) they would be killed by gun or sword, or put in jail.

Illustration 6b. The talisman given to the Warramiri by a 'Macassan' *Bitju* or priest in 1988.

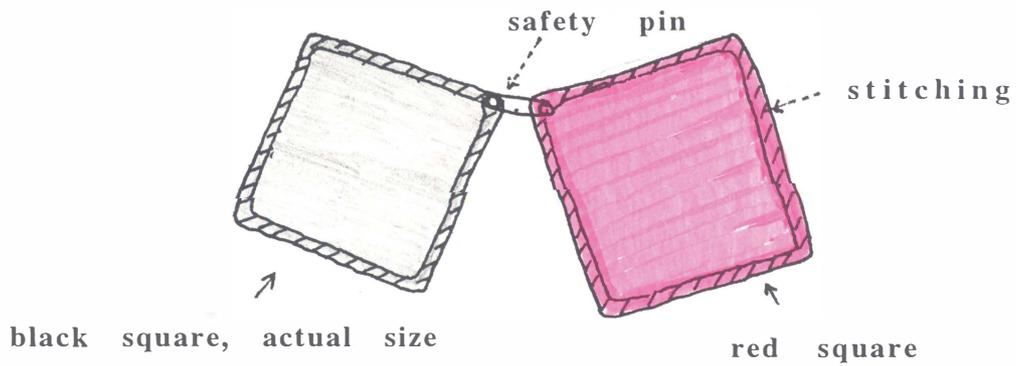


Illustration 6c. Liwukang (second from left) and other Elcho Islanders, and the Tallo priest (third from right), in Macassar, 1988.



To break free of the master/servant view had been one of Burrumarra's main aims in the Treaty proposal. Burrumarra's reworking of the *Birrinydji* narrative allowed for a vision of a perfect world in which there was a partnership between 'black' and 'white' on Aboriginal land. In Burrumarra's plan, the flag, the legacy of the first visitors, was to provide the framework for the expression of this ambition. Whereas, he said, "...the Union Jack allowed outsiders to take over and ignore Aborigines," the flag Treaty would be, "... a means whereby 'whites' can be led by the hand into a deeper understanding of the Aboriginal way of life". As with the call by people of Victoria River Downs to remove 'Captain Cook's' laws (Rose 1984), Burrumarra said,

"We want the *Balanda* to realise that the law of old, this has to go. We want *Balanda* to talk about what they were doing in the past and to say to themselves, this was wrong. We cannot do it any more...It's like this. if the Governor-General Bill Hayden reaches out to us, then we will do the *bunggul* and bring him in. We can share the country between us."

6.8 Conclusion

The complex bits and pieces of narrative that were presented in this chapter do not add up to one unambiguous or clear picture. We have the forerunners of 'whites' living on Arnhem Land shores and calling Aborigines 'father'; *Bayini* emerging from the ground, and other visitors being seen as the land owners over and above Aborigines. It is thus not surprising that there has been so much variation in oral accounts to date. The material is sensitive, and as I mentioned in Chapter two, *Birrinydji* can be spoken of as the legacy of an historical association with the 'Other', or as a myth of inheritance through an association between an ancestral being and the Warramiri leader Bukulatjpi.

When discussing the emergence and significance of *Birrinydji*, one can see an immediate parallel with case studies from other parts of Australia and elsewhere on the way in which *Yolngu* interpreted the experience of history and attempted to steer relations along particular paths. As in the case study of South American Indian accounts of Spanish contact, *Birrinydji* embodies a paradox. Aborigines are in the image of this ancestral being, his 'replacements in the land', but *Birrinydji* is also a coloniser, a destroyer of Aboriginal life.

While there is a sense of powerlessness and loss in the face of a dominating 'Other' in these narratives, there is also a strong perception of unity between 'black' and 'white'. But this was not a feature of relations with 'later Macassans', Japanese or Europeans, according to Burrumarra.

The way that Burrumarra ordered his views of the past is based on a belief that there was a 'fall'. The stories of *Birrinydji* thus evoke a profound sense of loss, and what Aborigines believed they once had, is now the basis of a dream to be realised in the future. Today, with Aborigines and non-Aborigines living as a single community, the Warramiri leaders are looking beyond *Birrinydji* for a solution to perceived inequalities. They are looking for a change in Australian law and a new national flag to represent the partnership that was once, and must be between peoples in the future.

In the next Chapter I look at the ceremonial cycle associated with *Walitha'walitha* and how in earlier times and to a lesser extent today, it provides the promise of redemption for *Yolngu* in their struggle with the 'Other'. Building on the suppositions of Kolig, in this case, it is another religion of the 'Other' (Islam) which is being re-worked in an attempt to contain and control the new.

CHAPTER SEVEN

7: *Walitha'walitha*, Reconciliation, and the Flag

The aim of this Chapter is to show that *Yolngu* at Elcho Island are pursuing reconciliation not only with non-Aborigines in Australia, but also with their old trading partners, the 'Macassans', and so in one sense, I am comparing and contrasting the methods being adopted in each case. The basis of the push for renewed links with the people of Ujung Pandang is to be in a ritual exchange, planned for October 1996. From the *Yolngu* side, it is a ceremony which is deemed to be the legacy of the creational being, *Walitha'walitha*, or Allah.

Reconciliation with 'Macassans' is achievable, Burrumarra believed, because the two peoples were 'one' in this law. Burrumarra was also quick to point out that no comparable laws united Aborigines and non-Aborigines in Australia. Thus in detailing the way Aborigines and 'Macassans' were connected in the past, he was also making a statement about the need for a similar set of laws to unite all peoples in Australia. He saw the Warramiri Treaty Proposal as being a necessary first step in this process.

So this Chapter presents a perspective on the history of contact between Aborigines and 'Macassans' as seen through *Walitha'walitha Rom*. The effects of these external contacts were catastrophic, Burrumarra suggested, and my aim is to detail one viewpoint on the ways in which belief in *Walitha'walitha* is seen to have provided the *Yolngu* with a means of both comprehending and coping with developments at this time, up to the present.

An essential aspect of this is to again highlight the idea of 'company' or partnership with the 'Other' implicit in the narratives of *Walitha'walitha*. As an ancestral being, *Walitha'walitha* is in the image of the Islamic God figure, Allah, and it unites all peoples under a single law. Yet simultaneously, it is a conceptual weapon of Aborigines in the struggle against domination by the 'Other'. This ambiguity is relevant in terms of the direction people seek to give to the ways in which relationships with the 'Other' are seen and understood.

A second theme of the Chapter is an examination of the significance of masts and flags for the Warramiri and show how they are symbolic of

Birinydji and *Walitha'walitha* respectively, and how these figure largely in the ritual to be taken overseas. After an analysis of the ritual exchange from Warramiri viewpoints, I conclude the Chapter by suggesting that just as Elcho Islanders have continually re-interpreted the past in line with contemporary desires, Burrumarra was also applying the cultural repertoire for the same purpose in the Warramiri Treaty proposal. He was using a sacred object drawn from the legacy of *Walitha'walitha* (ie. the flag) and in bringing together symbols from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal worlds in a single design, was making a statement on the need for unity between peoples.

7.1 Literature Review

The first records of Islamic peoples on the Australian coast are in the trepanging era, and Berndt and Berndt (1954) say that priests accompanied the praus to Australia. They record an Aboriginal informant saying that when,

"...the mast of a prau was erected, as it prepared to set out on the journey to another settlement or to return to the Celebes, a prayer-man would climb the mast and chant [*Djelawar*]. Or at sunset the prayer-man would emerge from his hut and bow towards the west, repeating the name of Allah. This prayer-man, whom the Aborigines called a 'sick man', *buwagerul*, was known as *Deingaru* or sometimes as *Baleidjaka*. He would move his head from side to side; then, holding it with one hand, he would seize with the other the post of his hut, and look towards the sunset, saying: '*ama!*' Then he would bow his head to the ground, calling out [*Walitha'walitha*]," (Berndt and Berndt 1954:45-46).

In a linguistic analysis of this particular memory, Walker (1988:32) says, the prayer-man first addresses God as 'Father', then addresses him as the Most High God, ie. *Walitha'walitha*. (See Appendix Six for an overview of the spread of Islam in Indonesia).

The earliest reference to Allah, as opposed to *Walitha'walitha*, however, is from Warner (1969), who completed field work at Milingimbi in the 1920s. In his text entitled *A Black Civilization*, Warner made reference to a mortuary ceremony, part of the *Wurramu* song cycle, which he says was performed when the mast of the 'Macassan's' boat had broken or a man was about to die. He writes,

"[During the funeral]...Two or more men pick up the dead body and move it up and down as though they were lifting a mast.

The chorus sings 'Oh-a-ha-la!' while the 'mast' is laid down. When it is picked up again they sing

'O-o-o-o-o-a-ha-la!
A-ha-la!!
A-ha-la!!'

"...Two men stand over the [dead] body, each with one hand over his face and one hand thrust out straight over 'the mast'. The first two men continue to move the 'mast' up and down....two other men...dance as though they were pulling on ropes that raise the mast...Two men in unison say what the natives believe to be a Macassan prayer...:

'Si-li-la-mo-ha-mo ha-mo-sil-li-li,'
'...Si-li-nai-yu ma-u-lai,' ('They are asking something in the clouds or maybe it is in the moon')

'Ra-bin-a-la la-ha-ma-ha-ma,' ('They ask again for something from that man god who lives in the moon')

'Ser-ri ma-kas-si'
'...Be-la bel-la,'
'...Daung.'¹ (Warner 1969:420)

Allah (*Walitha'walitha*) in this passage is likened to God, Burrumarra said.

"Intelligence, memory, merit, talents all come from one source. *Walitha'walitha* is part of a code of behaviour. Not proud, sort of humble, easy to slip down... to be tempted to the other side by the *Grokman*".

While the last few words of the chant were not translated by Warner's informants, 'Serri-makasi' (terima kasih) means 'thank you' in Bahasa Indonesian. Burrumarra was unsure of the full meaning of *Bela bela Daung*, but said it related to the idea of 'the humble one' being held 'on high', and then 'coming down to the dust again'.

The only other reference to Islam is in relation to 'totem hunters' (see Chapter Five). Burrumarra said,

"*Wurramala, Gelurru, Dhurritjini* and *Bapayili*...are followers of *Walitha'walitha*... In the teeming sea life they see a mirror reflection of [him]. Allah is the giver of bread to the people. The seafood is their bread. They believe in him."

¹ The lifting of the body in this fashion ceased at the beginning of the mission period at Elcho Island (see McIntosh 1994b:22). Today in the *Wurramu* ceremony either the coffin is lifted and moved as though it were a mast, or men simply mimic the actions of lifting the body.

So in the literature, we have observations of 'Macassans' performing Islamic rites, knowledge that people other than 'Macassans' also follow *Walitha'walitha*, and Aboriginal ceremonies relating to Allah, but how all of these come together is a mystery. To look further, I detail a contemporary perspective on *Walitha'walitha*.

7.2 Beliefs Concerning *Walitha'walitha*

There is only one known image of *Walitha'walitha* in the literature, and it was done by the Wangurri leader, Makarrwola, in the 1950s (see illustration 7a). Of its physical appearance, the Warramiri elders said that *Walitha'walitha* was male, young and had no hair. Others said it was very small, not more than half a metre high while one person said it could fit in one's pocket. In some cases, *Walitha'walitha* is said to wear white cloth from head to foot, and to call the *Yolngu* 'owner' *Bapa* (father).³

While most adults at Elcho Island know that Islam is the religion of the 'Macassans', only some older informants appear to be aware of the *Walitha'walitha*-Allah link. More commonly, *Walitha'walitha* is seen as a personal familiar for certain *yirritja* men and women. For instance Rudder (1993:54) quotes one informant as saying,

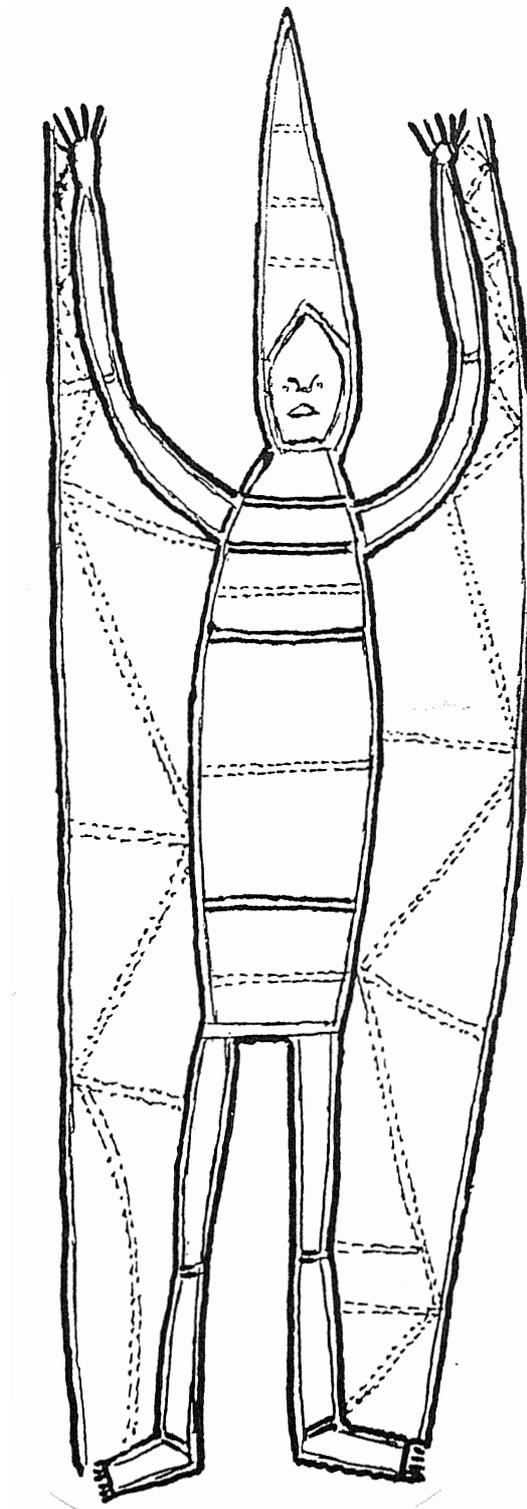
"Alatha'alatha [*Walitha'walitha*] are children on Yirritja shoulder, something like Timor or Macassar magic."

In describing *Walitha'walitha*, one informant said that these little creatures were the 'magic children of *Balanda*'. They send a message through the pillow to *Yolngu* if someone has died. One lady said her mother, a Warramiri-Mandjikay woman, had a black bus as *Walitha'walitha*. If someone had died, the *Walitha'walitha*, in this form, would come and take the spirit away. A number of people told me that Burrumarra himself had a helicopter as *Walitha'walitha*. At one funeral at Elcho Island people saw a helicopter approach and one person was concerned for Burrumarra's health, believing the helicopter's appearance to be a sign that he might have died and *Walitha'walitha* was coming for him.⁴

³ The reference to 'father' in these stories suggests a parallel with the 'white' or clear-skin transformations of *Marryalyan* which periodically visit *Yolngu*, and also the totemic 'whites' mentioned in the last Chapter. They also call *Yolngu* 'father.'

⁴ There is an immediate parallel with the idea of travel to the land of the dead across the seas to the north via the whale (which is simultaneously the

Illustration 7a *Walitha'walitha*, an 'Angel of God', by Makarrwola (in Allen 1975:13). The 'web' surrounding *Walitha'walitha* identifies the painting as belonging to the Warramiri *Mala*, and is at once reminiscent of other Warramiri paintings, in particular *Marryalyan* (see illustration 2c).



whale hunter's canoe). In modern times, it is the bus or helicopter, yet in the literature, the old story is presented as if it were a fixed unchanging truth.

A person has *Walitha'walitha* with him or her at all times as a guide and protector, and these beings are owned by specific individuals, and passed on the other moiety members upon death, on the instruction of the owner.

7.2-1 *Walitha'walitha*: A Warramiri Perspective

The personal familiar side of the *Walitha'walitha* belief is but one aspect of this complex being. According to Warramiri belief, it is also a universal entity that looks down on Warramiri lands from the heavens above. It is linked to certain healing rituals in which the left hand is used to remove pain from the sufferer. It also has a number of totemic affiliations. It is linked to the red clouds of the sunset (*Waalung* or *Djapana*), the turtle egg (a symbol of sharing), the bow and arrow (*Bininydjirri* - distinguishing this law from the gun and sword of *Birrinydji*), and the *Bunaka* or *Ganarri* tree, from which the bow and arrow was made. Of note also is that the whale/whale hunter dance is said to be the same as that for *Walitha'walitha*, though in terms of narrative, the two stories are completely separate.

In his life, Burrumarra had no direct experience with Islam, although aspects of what he knew could feasibly have been acquired in recent times. On the whole however, the knowledge he possessed on *Walitha'walitha* and Allah came from those stories that had been handed down through the generations, and also from private reflections upon the song cycles associated with this being.

Warramiri *Yolngu* are said to be servants of *Birrinydji*, but *Walitha'walitha* is a servant and protector of the people. Burrumarra for instance said "*Birrinydji* and *Walitha'walitha* are like the heart and mind: each needs the other." Another person added, "We do not know how *Birrinydji* and *Walitha'walitha* came together. They are two separate things, but *Birrinydji* has *Walitha'walitha* as well." *Walitha'walitha* is said to be present whenever *Birrinydji's* ceremony is performed.

Like *Birrinydji*, *Walitha'walitha* is a male figure, and its significance is universal. It represents intelligence and a high order of living, Burrumarra said.

"*Yolngu* at Dholtji have two bosses, *Birrinydji* and *Walitha'walitha*. Each limits the other."

"*Walitha'walitha* is Allah. He dwells on top. If it is not the holy spirit, it is an angel of God. *Walitha'walitha* tells us of right and wrong. It's sort of a sixth sense. It can judge a situation. It tells you what is going on in people's minds, like a warning."

"*Walitha'walitha* has the power of mockery over governments. He can kill straight away those who would follow on the Warramiri shoulder...or tell them to run away to another place, to go and join his own people, and look after them. He can have anyone shot for trying to make someone do the wrong thing," (pers. comm. 1990).

Of belief in *Walitha'walitha*, Burrumarra said,

"The Earth is full of bad. In the *Garamat* (heaven), is good and bad. When we die we go to on top, to a world of beautiful things, colours, and the bad spirit comes down. All goes up. The shooting star gives us this message that someone is to die, and the bad is coming down...⁵ *Walitha'walitha* will have its pleasure in the spirit of the dead. No-one knows what happens next. Only *Birrinydji*."

"Where is that place? You can see it with *Birrinydji's* binoculars. It is on top. The flag flies there for us. We call this place *Murrayilyil*, the paradise. But there will be a time in the future when all the heavenly things will come to the earth and it will be one."

At another time, he said,

"We do not know what happens after death or where the paradise of lovely things is. There was much discussion about this in the past. All we know is the *bunggul*. It is about honour. *Walitha'walitha* is concerned with truth. He has been appointed to us for this. He helps when something is wrong. He advises us of danger, and gives a warning on behaviour. When a person dies, the spirit is dealt with, so it is gone, at peace. If death was caused by new situations, guns, knives...or by the *Grokman*, then we gave it something extra [ie. a *Wurramu* post will be constructed, see later]."

According to Burrumarra, the primary role of *Walitha'walitha* was to take all the 'robbers and crooks' away with him, and "to stop the foreign takeover." He was sent by God to Dholtji and his function was to 'judge the judgements' of the *Yolngu* and to protect them from wrong,

"...for at that time [ie. the *Murrnginy* era] the people were killing themselves. People were marrying into the wrong *Mala*."

⁵ Burrumarra said he did not believe this.

Bad was coming up, mocking the people. So *Walitha'walitha* came down to sort it all out," (Burrumarra pers. comm. 1992).

7.3 The Catastrophic Effects of Contact

The accepted picture in the literature on 'Macassan' contact is that apart from the last stages of the industry, the visitors and Aborigines co-existed, largely in peace and harmony, and while there was some impact on Aboriginal ceremonial practices, no significant changes took place in lifestyles. An examination of the situation in north-east Arnhem Land might appear to affirm this point. The fact that the trepang industry lasted 200 years or longer does suggest that some form of negotiated settlement or understanding was reached between the parties over access to land, but this in no way ensured that dealings would run smoothly. We are talking about an immense and convoluted coastline of over one thousand kilometres from the Cobourg peninsula to Groote Eylandt and beyond, and innumerable *Mala*, each with their own institutionalised outlooks and beliefs relating to visitors. Also, within each of these groups, dealings with individual 'Macassans' would have undoubtedly varied, as would the nature of the visits over time, reflecting happenings in the economic and political situation overseas.

For the Warramiri, the effects of contact were extreme and the outcome is represented in the narratives of the *Wurramu* or *Grokman*, which Berndt and Berndt (1949:214) say is linked to *Walitha'walitha*. The *Grokman* is now equated with the Devil, and the stories of *Walitha'walitha* and *Wurramu* are framed in terms of good and evil respectively. The origin of these beliefs dates from the *Murrnginy* or 'pre-Macassan' era, a time of great struggles between 'white' and 'black', Burrumarra said.

The most profound lesson was when *Walitha'walitha* descended to earth to advise people on the '*Birrinydji* situation'. While there is no explicit talk of visitors killing Aborigines, it can be presumed in some cases.⁶ On the

⁶ Reports from the 1760s suggest that the 'Macassans' had an aversion to the people of the north coast (Macknight 1972:289). Pobasso, who met Matthew Flinders in Warramiri territory in the English Company Islands in 1803 (see Flinders 1814) also reported poor relations with the people of north-east Arnhem Land. In terms of Aboriginal oral tradition, the *bunggawa Djeki* and *Mangirri*, for instance, are remembered as savage killers by some *Yolngu*. In other interpretations, the atrocities they committed are referred to as *Birrinydji* killing law-breakers. Attempts to locate such figures in history have proved difficult, but *Djeki* may in fact be *Reekee*, the owner and captain of the trepang boat *Bondeng Catupa* that visited Australia in 1829 (see Macknight 1976:130-131).

whole, however, the atrocities are spoken of as being perpetrated by law breakers and their victims were described in the same way, both 'white' and 'black'. These were 'military' times, Burrumarra said, a period of unsurpassed instability.

"People were marrying into the wrong *Mala*. Bad was coming up, mocking the people. So *Walitha'walitha* came down to sort it all out..."

Insight into the nature of the atrocities committed at this time is alluded to in detailed Aboriginal knowledge of 'Macassan' weaponry, and what it could do to a person. Berndt and Berndt (1954:47-48) refer to the *djaking* or kris which was used for stabbing and decapitation, while the *badi* served to rip open someone's body. One was placed at the victim's side and twisted around, while the other *badi* was jabbed into the navel and twisted to make an aperture for removing the entrails.

7.3-1 The *Wurramu*, *Grokman*, and *Walitha'walitha*

In the last Chapter we saw how Aborigines attempted to evaluate, accommodate and control the new, in terms of the ways they viewed the world. Yet in the 'time of fire', immersed in a headlong desire for material gain, people would forget *Gurrutu* (kinship), forget ceremonial obligations, and indeed, who they were, Burrumarra said. Something was said to land on them from above and take control of their mind and body. Known generally as the *Wurramu* or *Grokman*, 'the spirit of the dead', it would turn them from an orderly existence.

A definition of a *Grokman*, Burrumarra said was "when a lie became truth and truth a lie". These were times of mayhem, and the disruptive forces tearing society apart became personified in a range of ancestral or mythical beings associated with the liar, the robber, and the murderer. These archetypal 'crooks' as the Berndts (1949) called them, are said to be based around the activities of real people who had lived in Warramiri territory in the *Murrnginy* era. There was :

Balala - greedy, a double crosser

Baluka - robber

Balulu - double crosser, a killer, a bad person

Bakurra - female *Grokman*

Baluka - robber

Bawurramu - murderer

Buwakurru - a *Wurramu*, 'perhaps a *Grokman*, perhaps not'

Djukutjuku - capable of any crime, "will steal money, boat, clothes, a husband or wife"

Gayingdingu - murderer, *Grokman*

Manaanggan - *Grokman*, a robber⁷

The chief of all the *Wurramu* was *Bawurramu*, who represented "...the head and wishes of the people in *Birrinydji's* time...the chief *Grokman* and the head of the dirty business," Burrumarra said.

The types of problems introduced into Aboriginal lives in this period were not restricted to the 'pre-Macassan' or 'Macassan' era however, Burrumarra said. They are an on-going consequence of contact. Burrumarra, for example, in the following quote, explained how the *Grokman*, or 'spirit of the dead' worked, and still works today. He said,

"*Bakurra* tries to make peace. He is a Warramiri, Gumatj, Wangurri, Dhalwangu or Birrkili *Yolngu*, only *yirritja*. He sees *Balulu*, the killer, doing the wrong thing and he intercepts. He sees his countrymen with knife and gun wounds and becomes a *Grokman* himself. He kills *Balulu*."

"The *Wurramu* enters people, changes them, making them break laws, and spread disorder and hatred."

"*Yolngu* can be *Balulu* or *Bakurra*. There is no other meaning for these words. It is *Walitha'walitha's* job to take the bad memory out of *Yolngu*...to take all the 'robbers and crooks' away with him... To remove this bad spirit can take years. That person with the *Grokman* in him is a real burden to a community. *Walitha'walitha* sorts out the bad, makes them good, brings them into line. He brings to that person the spirit of the nation, for the nation, only. He brings unity," (Burrumarra pers. comm. 1992).

The turmoil brought about by deception, theft or murder, is an ever-present threat to social harmony, and is depicted not only in the narratives of the *Grokman*, but in the related ceremonies of the *Wurramu* 'crook', 'stealing' or 'collection' man, which as Berndt and Berndt say (1954:61), come

⁷ Walker (1988:32-33) suggests that a majority of the terms for the *Wurramu* or *Grokman* are variations of the Macassarese words *pagurra* and *palakka*, which both mean robber or thief. *Manaanggan*, on the other hand, is drawn from the expression, *menangkan*, a Macassarese word meaning "to help to win."

under the general heading of *Walitha'walitha* (see later in this Chapter). Burrumarra indeed said this ritual should be labelled *Walitha'walitha*, but added that the dancing actions are those of *Birrinydji*.

As to the relationship between *Walitha'walitha*, *Wurramu* and *Birrinydji*, Burrumarra said,

"We speak to *Walitha'walitha* in *Birrinydji's bunggul*. *Birrinydji* tells the *Wurramu* [dead's spirit], everything about the *bunggul*, but the *Wurramu* does not know what to do until *Walitha'walitha* advises it to do it a particular way."

"*Wurramu* is close to *Birrinydji*, like his shadow, but further from *Walitha'walitha*. *Wurramu* is that within us that is replaced by sand when we are dead. It has no living spirit in it. The image and personality of the person is contained in the carved figure and when it is burnt, it is gone. *Walitha'walitha* does something with it. We do not know further."

The possession of a body of laws such as that embodied by *Walitha'walitha*, might be likened to a survival mechanism, and it shows how readily people negotiate change. As Burrumarra said,

"In those days we said, 'if heaven has this wish for us, if it wants it this way, then we must follow it'."

In other areas there was no salvation. A number of *dhuwa* and *yirritja* groups, including the Yalukal and Girkirri (Rika) of Elcho Island and the Wurambil Golpa of the Wessels, all closely aligned to the Warramiri, died out earlier this century and it is said that "the *Grokman* mob got them." Lessons from the Warramiri *Mala* were therefore seen to provide an understanding what was happening to the *Yolngu* as a whole in the 'Macassan' and 'post-Macassan' period, Burrumarra believed.

7.3-2 *Wurramu* Grave Posts

A carved post representing the *Wurramu* described above, was often constructed in performances of the *Wurramu* ceremony (see illustration 7b). Thomson (1949b:61) says it is placed on the grave and that it represents the spirit of the dead, and it guards the grave. It brandishes great knives and is also referred to as *Gongyikimirr* (hand on the knife) thus indicating a

strong link to *Birrinydji*.⁸ Of its significance, Burrumarra said it "...focuses evil into one place only and [when it is burnt] it is gone, perhaps to another *Wurramu* somewhere else."

Berndt and Berndt (1949:214) contend that such sculptures are of foreign origin. They write,

"The [*Wurramu*] figures...are... known as [*Bakurra*] (the female variety) or more generally as [*Walitha'walitha*]. They came from Macassar in the Celebes [Sulawesi]. The [*Wurramu*] is a 'crook', 'collection' or 'stealing' man..."

"The [carved *Wurramu*] figure... is possibly derived from following customs relating to Macassan burials, as told by aborigines who had witnessed such incidents during their visits to the East Indies Islands, and as witnessed on the Australian mainland."

Some variations of the *Wurramu* sculptures include the head and shoulders of a man or woman (see Berndt and Berndt 1949; Hoff 1977; illustration 7b). Macknight (1972:314) says that such examples have no equivalent in 'Macassan' sculpture, and he suggests that they represent a re-working of an introduced theme, and that one must look to Aboriginal beliefs rather than to Sulawesi for a deeper understanding of their local significance.

Burrumarra, in his account of the meaning of these artefacts, said that people may have a dream about the dead, and then this post, with the head of *Bawurramu*. It represents life on earth, for this is where the *Grokman* are, he said. "Only on top can changes be made."

"As a burial post, people remember the dead, what [they] had, what [they] did, and what [they were] capable of. The *Wurramu* completed things, closed it up, settled matters."

Of the markings on the *Wurramu* post, Burrumarra said,

"We never tell anyone about the meaning of the markings. It is too big, too sacred. It represents the belief of the Warramiri before the coming of Christianity. *Wurramu* is for big ideas, and goes into the grave with the skeleton, and then we say goodbye."

⁸ The practice of carving *Wurramu* posts was largely discontinued in mission times as a personal choice by Aboriginal leaders because the belief was seen to be in conflict with Christianity, Burrumarra said.

Though representing a *Grokman* or killer, the *Wurramu* post is simultaneously an image of the highest things, or a pointer to these higher things, Burrumarra said. It is symbolic of *Bakurra*, the 'crook', and of salvation in *Walitha'walitha*.

Of the construction of *Wurramu* posts, Burrumarra said that they had to be made of wood so they could fade away with time.

"*Walitha'walitha* was not of this world, but the heavens, in the *Garamat*. The *Wurramu* stands for that law. *Wurramu* is not rock. That does not go away. They could not be of stone for this is associated with *Lany'tjun* and the whale and so on. *Wurramu* is in the image of *Walitha'walitha*. Its form is *Birrinydji* but its purpose is *Walitha'walitha*."⁹

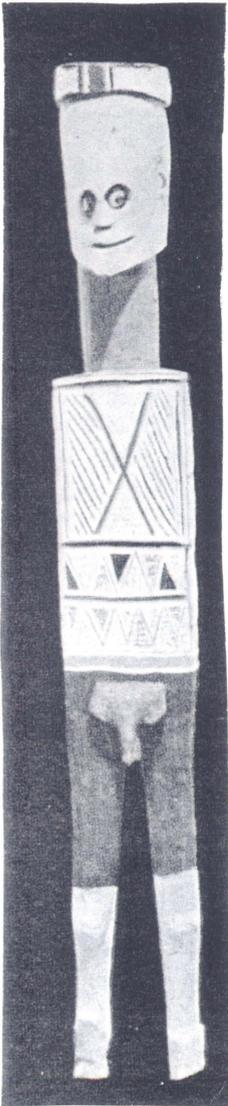
7.4 The *Walitha'walitha-Wurramu* Ritual

One of the most significant underlying feature of the planned dance exchange with the 'Macassans' in October 1996 is the perception that the *Walitha'walitha-Wurramu* ritual was first performed by the 'early Macassans' for the Aboriginal dead at Dholtji at some unknown point in the past (possibly the 1820s). It was a tribute to the Aborigines in memory of their historical partnership, Burrumarra said. Reflecting on this sacred memory, Burrumarra said that the *Yolngu* "...took this [action] as their standard" (ie. the behaviour of the visitors). It was part of the 'code of honour' of *Birrinydji*, and an indication that Aborigines and 'Macassans' were followers of one law.

While Berndt and Berndt (1954) acknowledge that this ceremony is 'owned' by certain *yirritja Mala* who are said to have come into contact first with the visitors, they have not associated *Walitha'walitha* with Allah or acknowledged a possible Aboriginal re-working of an introduced theme. They see it as a direct borrowing. Yet as Burrumarra said, even though the *Wurramu* dance is directly linked to the presence of 'early Macassans', it comes from *Birrinydji*. He said,

⁹ Burrumarra said that many years ago, in discussions with a Japanese visitor to Elcho Island, he was told of a *Wurramu* near Tokyo that was made of stone, a fact that undoubtedly affected his interpretations of the meaning of this law.

Illustration 7b. Various depictions of the *Wurramu*. On the left is a *Wurramu* in the shape of a Dutchman (*Balanda*). On the bottom right is the remains of one *Wurramu* post on the grave of a Warramiri man at a Macassan trepanning area near Galiwin'ku, Elcho Island. It stands about 0.5 metre high with a diameter of roughly 0.06 metres, and is square in section. On the upper right is a newly constructed variation by Burrumarra's brother Nyambi in 1961 (from Berndt and Berndt 1988:416). The *Wurramu* post depicted in all cases is the archetypal 'murderer' *Bawurramu*, who is described as "...the head and wishes of the people in *Birrinydji's* time, Burrumarra said."



"*Birrinydji* would do the *Wurramu bunggul* and warn everyone not to fool around and be serious. When the mast was up and the flag flying, he would do the *Djambayang* dance.¹⁰ This means he has achieved oneness [see later]."

What the *Yolngu* leaders are contemplating taking to Ujung Pandang is a modified and shortened version of the *Walitha'walitha* mortuary ritual, which has been described in the literature in some detail. Elkin, Berndt and Berndt (1950:55) for instance say,

"The actual ceremony takes place during the daytime in the main camp. The maker of the [*Wurramu* post] has attached to [it]...long [*yirritja*] bird-feathered strings...As most traditionally designed [*Wurramu*] are carved without arms, these strings represent the arms,...When the object and its feathers are being sung by the artist...word spreads that the 'Crook' man [*Grokman*] is coming, and there is great excitement. People in the camp know what the songs mean, and run to hide their clothing, spears...and tobacco; for [*Wurramu*] is a 'stealing' man, ready to pick up anything lying around...When every camp has been visited, all of the objects the [*Wurramu*] has taken are piled up in the middle of the camp. The figure itself is firmly placed into the ground, ...and then the artist [and] his companions ...begin to sing part of the Macassan song cycle. They sing of the [*Wurramu*]; of the Macassan wharfs; of the rice fields; money; the making of iron; the cutting of timber; the making of proas; of the women gathering lily roots; ...and the like. All the colourful life of an East Indian town is related in these poetic aboriginal songs, which are composed on traditional lines by aborigines who in earlier days travelled to the northern islands..."

In another article Berndt and Berndt (1954) describe the 'Macassan' ritual from which the Aboriginal 'collection' ceremony is based. They write,

"...when a Macassan dies, a *djira* grave-yard is made, and a hole dug in the ground. After the burial, the officiating Macassan sings; the others wait quietly, and when he has finished they all reply *djialji! djilalji!*. Then the [*Wurramu*] post is placed on the grave; it is carved to represent the dead man, and symbolises his spirit. All the Macassans dance for him in a special way, bending forward in a ring with their [backs] to the post, eyes closed and heads bowed. Then they open their eyes and sing; and this continues for several hours, (Berndt and Berndt 1954:61)."

¹⁰ Local interpretations of *Djambayang* include prayer (Macknight 1972:296) but in Macassarese it is the formal worship required of Muslims, lending support to the view that while elements of the ceremony have been borrowed, it has a unique place in Aboriginal cosmology. Sembayang is Malay for Hindu prayer (puja) amongst Melaka Chitties (pers. comm. D. Mearns 1995).

The sequence of songs outlined by Warramiri and Gumatj leaders to be shared with the 'Macassans' are as follows:

1. *Wurramu* (*Walitha'walitha*) - spirit of the dead
2. *Nganadji* - Alcohol
3. *Yiki* - knife
4. *Djagura* - boxing with hands, and *Lanytja*, boxing with the feet
5. *Warraliny* - smoke from tobacco or opium pipes
6. *Djarrung* - calico, a flag
7. *Wayathul* - the cry of the scrub fowl
8. *Lunggurrma* - north wind
9. *Djapana* - red cloud, the abode of *Walitha'walitha*

The words of the songs are a complex mix of *Yolngu matha* and 'old Macassan' (Arrifudin pers. comm. 1988), and are not accessible to a general audience. They are composed in an 'inside' language, and keys to deeper understanding are given as a privilege by older men in ritual settings (McIntosh 1994b:67). The dances are clearly of external origin however, resembling in form, movements commonly associated with dance in south-east Asia. They are also quite dramatic, and depict, amongst other things, the slaughter of men and women by sword and gun. Some depict men rubbing their hands together preparing a cigarette, while others have men engaged in a drunken brawl, while still attempting to manage complex arm and leg dance movements, much to the amusement of onlookers. The entire song sequence was recorded by the Berndts in the 1940s at Yirrkala, but little has been published on it to date (R.M. Berndt pers. comm. 1989).

In the text, *Arnhem Land, Its History and Its People*, the Berndts (1954) included a charcoal drawing of a *Wurramu* ceremony performed at Port Bradshaw in the 1940s, but did not comment on its significance (see illustration 7c). Burrumarra was able to throw light on this however, being present at the time. He says that the *Wurramu bunggul* was about one's life and who it belonged to.

"There are a lot of songs ...[about] sailing, eating, cooking; all come under *Birrinydji*. It represents the land of each *Mala*. These dances come under the sword, but *Walitha'walitha* overlooks the whole procedure. *Walitha'walitha* is there, on top, looking out to see who killed one of our people. The law is a life for a life. One person dies because of another."

"The dead spirit after the *Grokman* has killed them, can still be a *Grokman*. The dead can still harm the *Yolngu*... The *Wurramu bunggul* finishes this, with *Walitha'walitha's* help."

"*Walitha'walitha* will deliver the bad ones to God. Remove them all from where they should not be. He collects the good and the bad. This is the meaning of the 'collection' *bunggul*."

"The *bunggul* is about the passage of the soul to heaven, the rich place. When the lifestyle is followed and problems arise, the answers will come down from above. When the *Wurramu bunggul* is done properly, *Walitha'walitha* will reveal advanced knowledge of understanding and purpose to the headman."

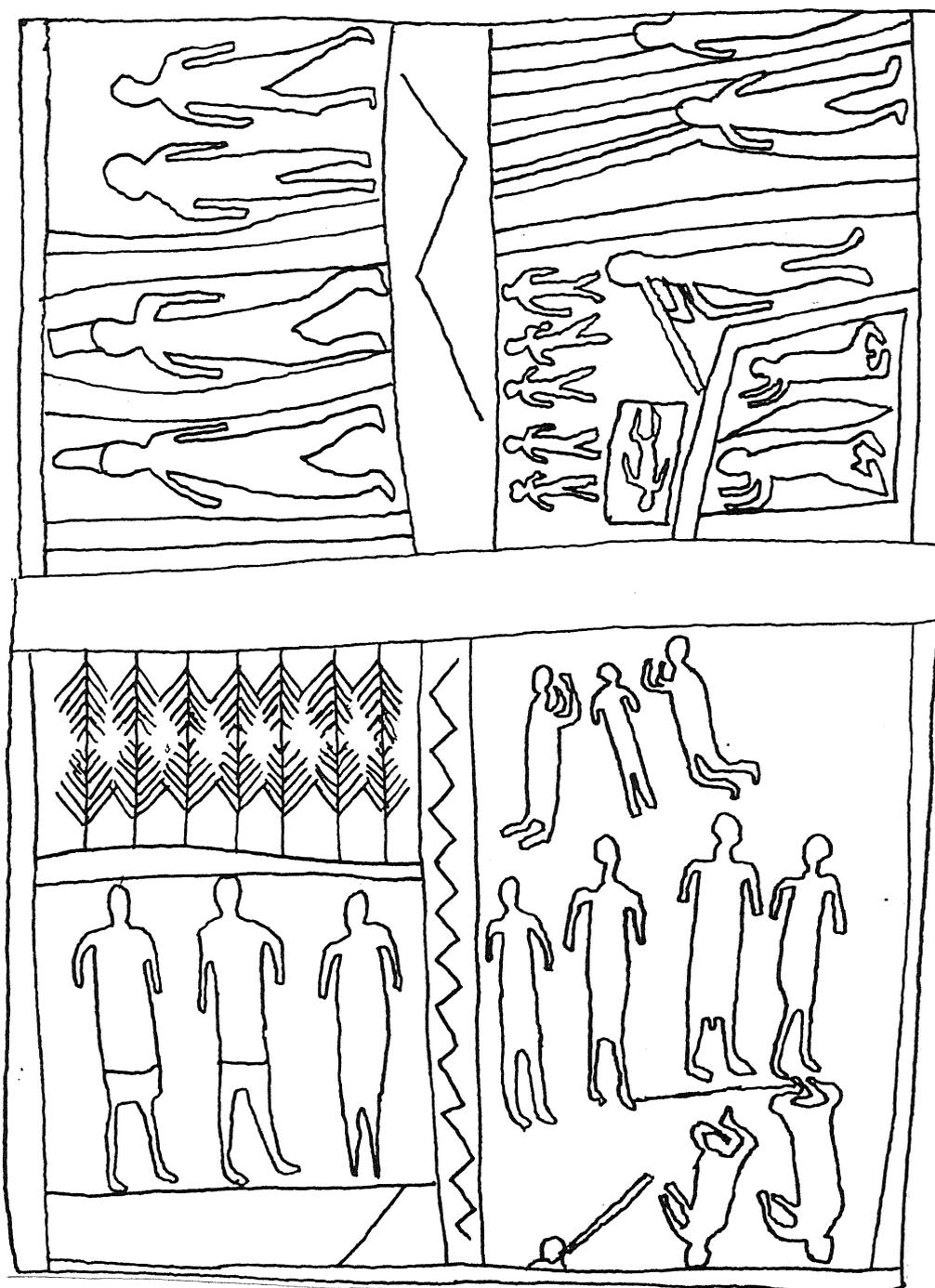
These dances are very powerful, Burrumarra said. "We thought that when we first saw the *bunggawa* men and women do that. We wanted it for ourselves." In *Birrinydji's* ceremony, the flag is planted. "This is the way law is carried," Burrumarra said. "*Birrinydji* is the 'King' of the *Murrnginy*, and *Wutjungdanah* (Ujung Tanah or Cape Wilberforce) is the King's land." The flag represents honour and unity of the *Yolngu* under *Birrinydji* and for *Birrinydji*, he said.

"When the flag flies it symbolises that unity, that oneness that the *bunggawa* achieved for us. There can be happiness, peace and riches, and a long life for the *Yolngu*."

Today, the *Yolngu* perform these same dances and, when the *bandirra* (flag) is raised, it is said that the *bunggawa* (ie. the leader of the Warramiri) achieves oneness. This is cryptic, but is connected to local understandings of the relationship between *Birrinydji* and *Walitha'walitha*. *Walitha'walitha* bestows deeper levels of knowledge and understanding upon the leader during the performance of this *bunggul*, and this sense of unity is passed on to all followers of the law. Burrumarra added that the ultimate purpose of the *bunggul* was to show people's desire for *Walitha'walitha*. He said that in the old days, everyone wanted this communication with God, but lamented that this was not the case today.

So this ceremony might be interpreted as being about an idealised unity between all peoples through their joint association with a particular body of law, ie. *Birrinydji* and *Walitha'walitha*, but it is also concerned with salvation. Disruptive forces had torn Aboriginal lives apart, and adherence to *Walitha'walitha* brought a promise of a return to the status quo, and in

Illustration 7c. A depiction of the *Wurramu* ceremony in art. Two people in the heavens (*Garamat*), on the top left, are coming to collect the spirit of the deceased in this representation of a *Wurramu* ritual at Port Bradshaw in the 1940s (in Berndt and Berndt 1954:119). On the right, top, the two people witness the mortuary ritual, and then the spirit ascends to heaven in the bottom left panel. The arrows pointing both upwards and to the ground are explained by Dhokong of the Warramiri *Mala*. He says, "*Wurramu* is in death. *Walitha'walitha* is in life. *Wurramu* needs help from two places, on top (*Walitha'walitha*), and from the land (*Birrinjdji*).



train, dreams of an idyllic future in paradise.

7.5 A Cultural Exchange with the 'Macassans'

To take a ceremonial sequence normally associated with *yirritja* moiety funerals and turn it into a spectacle designed to re-unite people long separated by time and circumstance might appear curious to the outside observer. It might be considered especially so because of the Islamic connection, for most *Yolngu* at Elcho Island identify themselves as being Christian. Yet, most adults are familiar with the 'Macassan' references in the *Wurramu* ritual, although the details of the associated beliefs are not widely known at Elcho Island. Indeed Burrumarra freely admitted that knowledge was concealed by his generation as a means of promoting Christianity. The two religions (Islam and Christianity) were close to each other, Burrumarra said, and the possibility for confusion was considerable. The cultural exchange is therefore to be purely on a secular level. A historical association of long duration is being celebrated, and not Islam. What the *Yolngu* tell the visitors is of course a matter of negotiation. In this section I explore the view that in all probability, the negative aspects of contact will be down played, while the fact that they shared 'one ceremony' will be highlighted.

7.5-1 *Walitha'walitha, Birrinydji, and Intercultural Relations*

While the inspiration for the dance exchange has come from outside of *Yolngu* circles,¹¹ local interest in the project is strong. In 1988, a traditional wooden prau was constructed in Sulawesi and sailed to the Northern Territory as part of Australia's bicentennial celebrations, and impromptu dances were held on the beach at Galiwin'ku by Aborigines and 'Macassans' alike, sparking interest in the project (see illustration 7d). Also, *Yolngu* groups have been regular visitors to Ujung Pandang for at least the past ten years (see illustrations 7e and 7f, and also Cooke 1987; McIntosh 1989; Spillett 1987).

Senior Aborigines at Elcho Island say that the dances to be taken to Ujung Pandang reflect the fact that they and 'Macassans' were 'one' in the past, but they are not idealising contact as Worsley's findings (1955:9) might say. Also, it in no way suggests that the 'Macassans' 'own' the laws on which the dances are based, Burrumarra said. While the actions are known to have

¹¹ Dance promoter Andrish St. Clare received a grant from the Australia Council in 1994 to commence negotiations.

been copied from the visitors, the deeper significance of this law is for Aborigines alone, and any suggestion that *Birrinydji* originated or belongs with the 'Macassans' is denied (Cawte 1993:43). Burrumarra also suggested that the *Wurramu* dance is as much about local rights in relation to the 'Other' as it is about the passage of the soul to the afterworld. He said,

"When you are in someone else's country, you must do things the way they do them. If not you are in danger. *Birrinydji's Wurramu* dance is a danger one. It's about people going to other places where they don't belong."

A good indicator of the separation of 'Macassans' and Aborigines in terms of 'inside' perceptions of law come from interpretations of the significance of a separate song series, known as *Wathi Katika*, which was also said to have been acquired by Aborigines from the 'Macassans' (Cooke 1987:18; Isaacs 1980:75). According to Burrumarra the songs refer to 'black' and 'white' people working together to pull up the sails and the mast, but he insisted that "...there is no law here. 'Macassan' talk and action is cheap!" In contrast, the Warramiri own the 'inside' *Birrinydji* dances eg. *Djambayang*, *Lilgerun* and *Lenggu*, which refer to similar ideas. These songs are about 'white' and 'black' men working and praying together, and pulling on the boat's anchor rope and slackening off and then pulling hard once again etc.¹² Similarities aside, one is 'inside' law and the other is not. *Walitha'walitha* is only present when *Birrinydji's bunggul* is performed. 'Macassan' songs and ceremonies do not have the same spiritual content.

Yet the *Wurramu bunggul* has both 'inside' and 'outside' aspects. In current 'outside' interpretations it was copied from the visitors, and symbolic of an age-old historical association. In 'inside' interpretations, the songs and stories of *Birrinydji* and *Walitha'walitha* point to a future in which Aborigines will live in paradise. They will be in a partnership with the 'Other' and will share in the wealth of the land.

Despite the fact that relations between Aborigines and 'Macassans' deteriorated considerably in the latter nineteenth century, the 'memory' of events in the 'early' years of the trepang industry remains sacred, and

¹² Elkin (1953:91) records a number of Warramiri songs which highlight this sense of partnership between peoples.

Illustration 7d. Elcho Island dancers greet visiting 'Macassans' during a voyage to commemorate the ancient links between Arnhem Land and north Australia, 1988. Photo - P. Spillett.



Illustration 7e. Liwukang and Daeng Puppa in Macassar in 1988. Daeng Puppa's uncle, Daeng Ewa, had been on trepanging voyages to Australia in the 1890s.



Illustration 7f. Elcho Islanders visit the grave of the trepang entrepreneur Daeng Tompo in Ujung Pandang. According to Burrumarra, he was a 'friend of the Warramiri', having visited Dholtji in the 1890s with Daeng Rangka.



people look forward to the re-union with much excitement. As Burrumarra said, "We don't know for how long the 'Macassans' have been coming here. They are a part of our history, and we are in theirs." *Walitha'walitha* mythology can therefore be seen both as a statement of local identity, but it is an identity Aborigines negotiated in the presence of outsiders, and is of relevance now in determining relations with the 'Other' in a new world.

I now want to contrast the ways in which the *Yolngu* of Elcho Island are re-interpreting or selectively highlighting certain aspects of 'Macassan' contact in order to promote relations with the 'Other', with the way the Warramiri leaders are also trying to direct the thoughts and actions of people along a path towards reconciliation. The first step is to look at the deeper significance of masts and flags in Warramiri cosmology, for Burrumarra is utilising these as a vehicle for achieving his Treaty ambitions.

7.6 Masts and Flags

In Burrumarra's opinion, Dholtji was a twice honoured place. At the 'beginning of time' *Birrinydji* planted a mast and flag at Dholtji, and at the end of the trepanging era, Daeng Rangka gave a mast and white calico flag to Ganimbirngu, Burrumarra's father, as a sign of their friendship and so they would remember each other. For *yirritja Yolngu*, masts and flags are symbols of partnership with the 'Other'. Yet Burrumarra also said that they represent God's wish for the people and the land, and in this section, I try to throw light on their complex significance.

7.6-1 Masts and *Birrinydji*

Wherever one travels in north-east Arnhem Land, one sees replicas of boat's masts set up in the middle of communities (Macknight 1972:314) and literally hundreds of flags adorning graves sites of people from both moieties and at places where the *Birrinydji bunggul* has been performed. Both the mast and the flag have a prominent place in *Yolngu* cosmology, but to date, they have received only scant attention in the literature.

Walker (1988:30) in his studies of 'Macassan' loan words rightly links *Birrinydji* with the mast, but he suggests it ties in with the Macassarese words *biring+dji*, which would mean edge and jib (sailing terminology). As I mentioned in the last Chapter, however, this is probably not the case. More likely, the term is drawn from a word for the colonial Portuguese.

In Warramiri belief, the mast (*Marayarr*) is symbolic of *Birrinydji's* law. In form, it represents the mast of *Birrinydji's* boat, but this is just one aspect of its meaning. It is also said to be derived from an original iron post which stood on the shores of Dholtji in the *Murrnginy* era.¹³ The mast was symbolic of *Birrinydji*, and 'the people of the iron age', Burrumarra said, and many Warramiri songs refer to it (see Cawte 1993:44).

Flags fly from replicas of *Birrinydji's* masts. On special occasions, the Warramiri colours, which are said to have been those on *Birrinydji's* boat, are flown. The colours are blue, red and blue, and are symbolic of the sea, the sunset and the heavens. The Gurrumurru branch of the Dhalwangu *Mala* also have masts in their material culture repertoire. Their flag is red only, Burrumarra said, representing "the circle of iron" in the fire, for the local preparation of iron knives. Flags also fly elsewhere in the communities on Elcho Island, but they are quite different in meaning from the mast itself.¹⁴ They are symbolic of *Walitha'walitha*. (See later in this chapter)

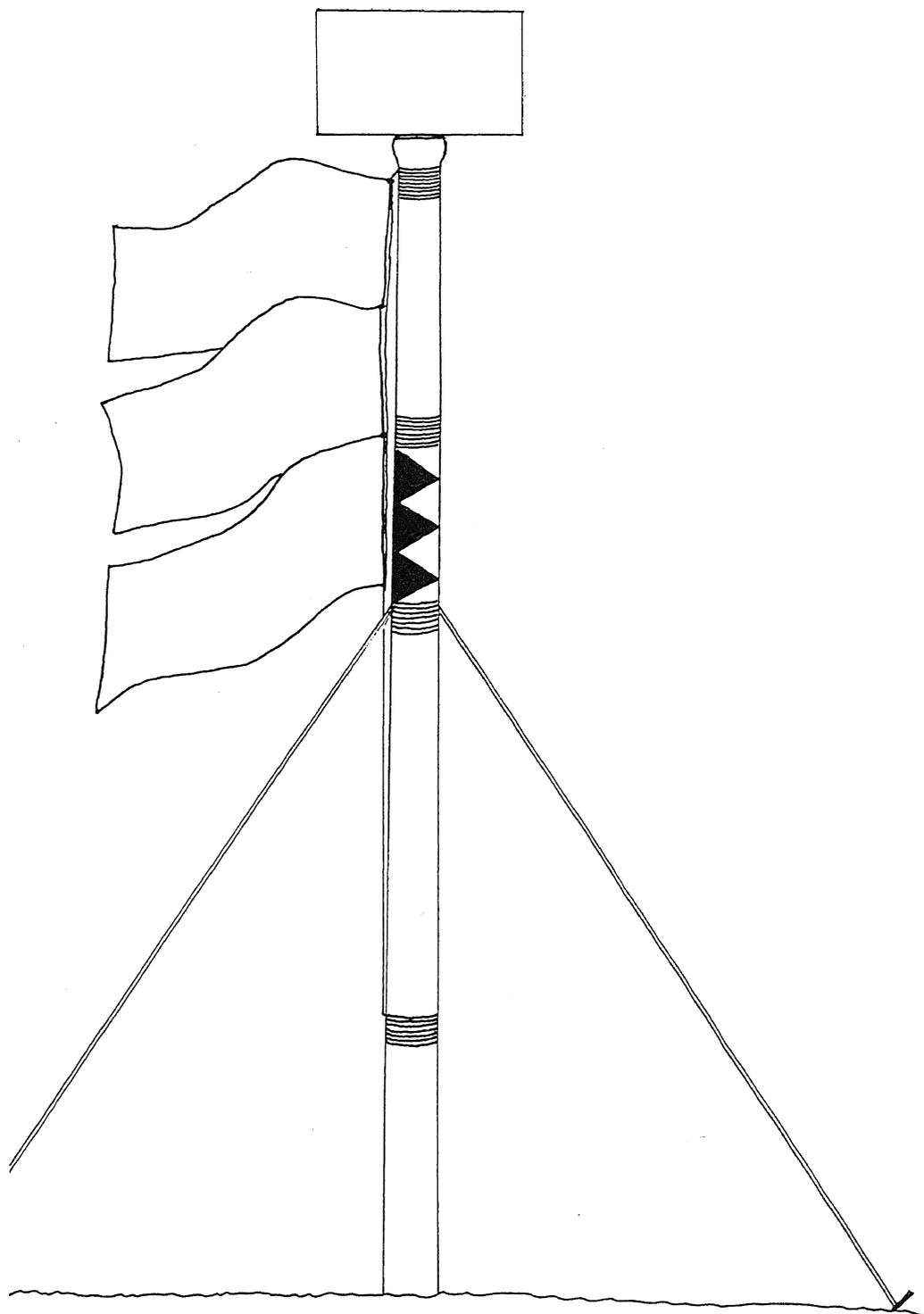
At the community of Galiwin'ku on Elcho Island there are two carved and painted wooden masts (see illustration 7g). The Warramiri version is perhaps thirty years old, and stands about four metres high. The Gumatj variation is shorter and of more recent construction (see 'Good Weekend, *Sydney Morning Herald*, Oct. 2, 1993). They are both in the form of a boat mast with rigging, and flags of different colours fly from them. They are painted with similar designs to those found on *Wurramu* posts and the flags are changed at irregular intervals by senior *Mala* members during initiations or mortuary ceremonies.

Both the Gumatj and Warramiri masts are located in those areas of the community where the majority of *Mala* members live. The Warramiri one is at the 'beach camp', at the place where a previous Warramiri leader, Nyambi, had lived and died. The Gumatj mast flies behind the house of the Gumatj-Burarrwanga leader, Mattjuwi. His younger brother is buried next to it, as are the bones of a crocodile, a Gumatj totem, caught in a fisherman's net at Elcho Island in 1991.

¹³ This may in fact refer to an iron foundry. It was described as being the height of a common electricity pole, but round in section. Informants say that it is now covered by sand.

¹⁴ This is the case in various parts of Indonesia, see Traube 1986:51-61.

Illustration 7g. The Warramiri mast at the Elcho Island 'beach camp'. A Christian message was placed on the top of the mast in 1993 during a performance of the Warramiri/Wangurri *Ngaarra* ceremony (see Chapter Eight).



The mast is said to represent a behavioural standard; ie. the 'honour' of the *Murrnginy* as a unified group, based on the partnership they had with the *Balanda*, through *Birrinydji*, as I discussed in the last Chapter.

The significance of the mast in these terms was brought into focus when communication between the Gumatj and Warramiri was threatened by mutual accusations of sorcery in 1989, and there was potential for relations to deteriorate. At this time, there was only one mast at Elcho. It was the one belonging to the Warramiri. As a result of the disturbance, this mast was uprooted by a senior male *Waku*¹⁵ of the Warramiri and Gumatj *Mala*, a *dhuwa* moiety Liagawumirr man, and it was replanted at a *Bayini* sacred site at Gawa₂. Apart from its 'pre-Macassan' connections, this is where Burrumarra's father had died in the 1920s. He had made the *Murrnginy* confederation a powerful one (see McIntosh 1994b:18) and the replacing of the mast at this new site away from the Warramiri camp reinforced in everyone's minds that order had to prevail. Warramiri and Gumatj are *Maari* and *Gutharra* and should never be at loggerheads.

When peace was restored at Galiwin'ku some months later, the mast was moved back to the Warramiri camp. It now stands as a symbol not only of Warramiri/Gumatj solidarity, but also of *Yolngu* belief in *Birrinydji*, and of a wider 'company', in honour of a partnership with others which is implicit in this belief. In the next section I focus attention on the deeper meaning of the flag, for it too is linked to ideas of 'company'.

7.6-2 Flags and *Walitha'walitha*

Apart from the masts described above, bamboo posts with flags attached are very common sights right throughout north-east Arnhem Land, both along the coast and in inland areas. They are commonly associated with grave sites, but also fly at remote sacred sites associated with the *Bayini* or *Birrinydji*, and at sites where whales beached themselves (see illustration 7h), showing the connection between Warramiri totemic ideas and this body of contact law.

¹⁵ According to Williams (1986) the *Waku* has an important role in the ceremonial affairs of the 'mother' *Mala*, which in this case was the Warramiri.

Illustration 7h. An old mast and flag was placed on this site at Howard Island in the 1960s by Ngulpurray of the Warramiri-Mandjikay *Mala*. A whale had beached itself near here. This is also the site where the Dog *Djuranydjura* rejected the 'Macassans'.



Berndt and Berndt (1954) and Warner (1969) referred to the departure of 'Macassan' boats as a source of inspiration for flag and mast symbolism, and said it was symbolic of the journey of the soul of the *yirritja* dead to *Badu*. Such a view has not been questioned or developed by researchers, and one often sees such statements repeated as though representing a fixed 'truth'. For instance Keen (1994:23) says that the soul of the dead travels to both *Badu* and Macassar and he suggests that such ideas have become interwoven with Christian missionary teachings in recent times, but he gives no details. It is my intention to raise this connection here and develop it in the next Chapter.

I contend that the flag is an 'outside' non-specific reference to a belief in a universal being/heavenly abode, and also of the unity of all peoples through one law. This would explain why both *dhuwa* and *yirritja Yolngu* have flags flying on their graves. If it were only connected with *Badu* or Macassar this would not be the case. The *dhuwa* moiety do not have a law for *Walitha'walitha*, and apart from the view that they are the children of *yirritja* mothers, there is no hint in the literature as to why flags are of significance to them. It appears to be a belief that transcends specific *Mala* or moieties, though in specific cases, groups have particular interpretations on its meaning.

Flags are carried at *yirritja* moiety funerals. The following quote comes from Theodore Webb (1952:6) in the *Missionary Review* and relates to the funeral of the Wangurri leader, Harry Makarrwola in 1951, at Milingimbi.

"...[We] moved off to the cemetery with the mourners [*Yolngu*] streaming behind and every flag and piece of cloth that could be found was flying from a pole held in the hand of someone paying a last tribute..."

The Warramiri have many songs about flags or *Bandirra* as they call them, and all are drawn from *Birrinydji's* ceremonies (Cawte 1993:44). The flag, Burrumarra said, has two broad meanings. Like the mast, it is about *Birrinydji*, but primarily, it is a symbol of the afterworld. It is associated with the heavens above the earth, the *Garamat*,¹⁶ and *Walitha'walitha*. The word

¹⁶ An Austronesian loan word (Walker 1988:131), *Garamat* means 'the working of miracles' in Bahasa Indonesian. In Malay it has the more general

Garamat means 'up', but in terms of the flag ceremony of *Birrinydji*, it is heaven. As Burrumarra said,

"We say that word [*Garamat*] whenever we raise the flag to the top of the mast, but there is a place higher, in the sky, the real meaning is heaven, the only place where changes can be made."

As I said earlier in this Chapter, implicit in *Walitha'walitha* belief is the view that the earth is a place of troubles and misery. Only in paradise above is there harmony. Yet there is a vision of a time in the future when the heavens will descend to the earth and peace will reign. This same vision of redemption also features in Christianity, as practiced at Elcho Island, and as I detail in the next Chapter, the two beliefs have become enmeshed. The flag, once perhaps a symbol of Islam in the eyes of 'Macassans', as Downing (1993) suggested, is for the *Yolngu*, a symbol of 'traditional' law, and a sign that the deceased live on in the memory of the living, and in a 'paradise' above.

7.6-3 Flags and the 'Other'

It was Burrumarra who initiated the practice of flying the Union Jack, the Australian and Northern Territory flags as well as the Aboriginal flag at north-east Arnhem Land funerals, not only as a sign of 'traditional' belief, but also to give wider recognition to the deceased. They were more than just members of a *Mala*, he said. They also belonged to the nation. This recognition is generally referred to as 'membership' or 'company', and is linked to the partnership that once existed in the land through *Birrinydji*. *Birrinydji* allows different peoples from different lands to be seen as sharing a common origin and purpose, and the flag is symbolic of this, Burrumarra said. All people were equal in *Walitha'walitha's* eyes.

In the 1960s, a procession honouring Makarrwola's younger brother, Badanga, led by the current Wangurri leader Daynumbu, was held at Elcho Island and is recorded by Berndt (1962). In this case, the flag was the Union Jack and hundreds of people rallied behind it. It was a statement of solidarity in what Badanga had tried to achieve in his life, Burrumarra said.¹⁷ The

meaning of 'holy' or 'holy place' or 'place of miracles,' (D. Mearns pers. comm. 1993).

¹⁷ Badanga, along with Burrumarra, was an instigator of the Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land, see Chapter Eight.

English King and the Union Jack were seen to be of a similar order to *Birrinydji* and his flag, as I mentioned in Chapter One.

Gumatj leader Mungurrawuy had the flag of the Nabalco Mining Company flying on his grave in the 1970s. Thornell (1986:57) presumes this to be a sign that he was the 'owner' of the land now being mined, but it is also showing an awareness by whoever erected the flag, of the wider significance and struggles that Mungurrawuy had been involved in. Mungurrawuy was a leader of the protest against the large multi-national corporation establishing its factory at Galupa in Gove. That Nabalco went ahead and had their plant built on a *Birrinydji* site, on top of the grave of the Warramiri ancestral hero, Bukulatjpi, was an outrage, Burrumarra said (see McIntosh 1994b:5-6). Just as *Birrinydji* overran the land, so too did Nabalco. As Burrumarra added however, *Yolngu* lived for *Birrinydji*. The placing of the Nabalco flag on Mungurrawuy's grave could therefore be interpreted as being symbolic of this wish for 'company' or respect in relation to the land and its Aboriginal ownership.

The late Roy Marika of the *dhuwa* moiety Rirratjingu *Mala* had a United States ensign covering his coffin at his funeral in 1993. This could also be viewed as a statement of 'company' with outsiders, and that the significance of one's life was not limited to existing territorial *Mala* boundaries. In this case, it may have been a statement of Aboriginal-American relations during World War Two and how they contrasted with European-Aboriginal relations at the time. The contact was significant and undoubtedly influenced the way intercultural relations developed in the region after the war, right up to the present.

So it is evident that the choice of the flag as a vehicle for the Warramiri treaty proposal has a significant depth to it. It has not been produced merely in response to the current debate on the need to change the Australian flag, but comes instead from reflections upon Warramiri *Rom*, and experience with the 'Other'. It is a statement on the need for a partnership between 'black' and 'white' in law, as is deemed to have been the case in the past.

7.7 Conclusion

This Chapter has detailed how the effects of contact between Aborigines and 'Macassans' were viewed in 'inside' interpretations of the

past by Warramiri leaders. The world was turned upside down by the evil doings of the *Wurramu*, but *Walitha'walitha* brought salvation to the people, and through ceremonial means, the status quo was something that could be restored.

The essential ambiguity of the stories about *Walitha'walitha* and the 'Macassan' past allows for a diverse number of possible interpretations. Despite the atrocities committed by Aborigines and 'Macassans' against each other, there are still laws that bind the groups, from the viewpoint of certain Elcho Island informants. The extent to which this feeling is reciprocated in the dance exchange is still to be seen however, for 'Macassan' history over the past three hundred years has been turbulent and it is doubtful if they still possess the old rituals which they shared with Aborigines in the past. This is but one reason for the interest in the project from the Indonesian side.

This coming together through law in the here and now entails a recognition that different peoples have different perspectives on that law and the past. Just as the Warramiri say they were united with 'totem hunters' in terms of the whale, there can be a partnership between 'black' and 'white' through the flag, but only if there is mutual recognition of each other's rights.

The ability of Aborigines to apply their cultural repertoire as a means of fostering relations with the 'Macassan' 'Other', also provides a powerful commentary on the nature of relations between Aborigines and non-Aborigines in Australia today. Despite a similarly disastrous contact in the early years of colonisation, the question still needs to be asked, how can the various parties come together? What laws bind the various parties as 'one'? This is a subject of considerable concern for the Warramiri leaders. Christianity might now be considered the framework that binds *Balanda* and *Yolngu*, yet Aborigines remain powerless and in a position of 'loss' in relation to the 'Other', according to Burrumarra.

In the next Chapter I look at the way Christianity has been dealt with by the *Yolngu*, and how at certain levels, it is an alternate strategy for achieving 'oneness' or unity in Australia. I show that for some Warramiri at least, *Walitha'walitha* is seen to be, in many regards, one and the same as the Christian God. Such beliefs are changing however, in line with changes in

the nature of relations between Aborigines and non-Aborigines. The successful implementation of the Treaty proposal will also warrant further changes in such beliefs, Burrumarra suggested.

CHAPTER EIGHT

8: Christianity and Change

The call for reconciliation in Australia by Warramiri *Yolngu*, or for the recognition of *Yolngu* sea rights, or even to be re-united with 'Macassans', cannot be fully understood in isolation from the developments in Arnhem Land over the past forty years. In this Chapter, the Christian era is the topic of discussion. In an analysis of Elcho Island *Yolngu* Christianity and change, I show how the treaty proposal is the culmination of more recent efforts to bring about a reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal law.

The Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land of 1957, instigated by Burrumarra, was a sign to the outside world that Aborigines were the land owners, and that they controlled the truths responsible for who they were. For Burrumarra, the treaty proposal 'finished' what was started then. As Keen (1994:256) says, in recent times *Yolngu* have tended to favour universalistic religious forms which united groups and moieties, as in the *Gunapipi*, and in belief in Christianity. The latter, for instance, has overcome the traditional separation of men and women in terms of religious secrecy and it is a belief which provides a bridge between *Yolngu* and *Balanda* worlds. Yet in the Warramiri view, belief in Christianity had not ensured justice and equity for Aborigines, and in the Treaty proposal, Burrumarra looked at ways in which such rights would be enshrined in Commonwealth law.

This Chapter is therefore an exploration of change in the *Yolngu* world. In an examination of those events that have taken place at Elcho Island in the past forty years in which moiety and *Mala* beliefs have been re-interpreted to accommodate Christian teachings, I review the process of incorporation referred to by some *Yolngu* as 'membership and remembrance'. In brief, new beliefs may be embraced and the old re-interpreted in relation to it, so long as the two are seen to be of significance to discrete social domains (see Keen 1994). *Birrinydji* and *Walitha'walitha* are thus said to represent the 'first wave' of missionary influence in Arnhem Land, and this 'memory' is understood in terms of the 'second wave' or Christianity, because the beliefs have been re-interpreted as being of *Mala*/Moiety and universal significance respectively.

The Warramiri Treaty proposal was an expression of the 'inside', Burrumarra believed, while at the same time, it was a political device designed to foster change in the nature of relations between Aborigines and non-Aborigines. Burrumarra was seeking the implementation of a law that would unite all people, but at the same time, it would affirm all the other levels of belief that constitute *Yolngu* identity.

8.1 Introduction

Attempts by *Yolngu* at reconciling Christian teachings and traditional Aboriginal beliefs at Elcho Island have persisted since the community of Galiwin'ku was founded in the 1940s. Landmark indigenous movements such as the Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land in 1957 and the Christian Revival of 1978 have attracted considerable scholarly interest, with some commentators referring to them as millenarian or chiliastic (Borsboom 1992:16-17; Burrridge 1971:172).

The major struggle for Elcho Island Christians has been to allow a place for Christianity, but also achieve a sense of continuity with the past. Examples of this process abound. In a sermon in July 1992, the Aboriginal Minister Mawunydjil Garrawiritja, asked the congregation, "When did the Good News first come to Arnhem Land?" Some people said it came with the missionaries, but then the Minister said, "But God has always been here, preparing our minds and bodies for the message". Another Christian Minister from Elcho Island, Rronang Garrawurra (1982:4) in a similar way, writes,

"Before the white man came, God revealed Himself, to show that He is God. He chose our ancestors and showed them how to make a Law. This was passed on from generation to generation until now. We remember our sacred areas because of this."

Aboriginal elders from both *dhuwa* and *yirritja Mala* at Elcho Island have stories associating Christianity with their own groups cultural heritage. In many cases, *Lany'tjun* and *Djang'kawu* are viewed as 'prophets' or 'angels of God' in the style of the Old Testament (see Berndt 1962:72; Keen 1994:284). For Burrumarra and Liwukang, *Walitha'walitha* has been re-assigned this role.

The process of aligning Christianity with 'traditional' beliefs is not problem-free however. Some major bodies of law relevant to both moieties

are seen as antithetical. For instance there has been continuing pressure to have the *Gunapipi* ceremony banned from Elcho Island, in line with some Christian views on the part played by the serpent in the 'Garden of Eden' (Keen 1994:284).

This ceremony is new to north-east Arnhem Land. According to Burrumarra it arrived at Milingimbi from the south in the 1920s as a payback for the murder of a *Yolngu* at Numbulwar (see also Keen 1994:142). Burrumarra participated in this ceremony in the 1930s but since that time had no involvement, even though he was continually asked to do so. While some members of the Warramiri *Mala* regularly participated in this ritual, Burrumarra openly defied its authority.¹

As Keen (1994:267) notes, prior to the Christian Revival of 1979, the *Gunapipi* united *Yolngu* over a very wide area, reflecting a desire for universalism in religious practice. This appeared to be the case in Warner's time (1920s following the departure of 'Macassans' from Arnhem Land shores, and in the early mission era, but at places like Elcho Island there was considerable conflict between the beliefs associated with the *Gunapipi* and Christianity from at least the 1950s (see later). Burrumarra deemed the *Gunapipi* to be foreign to both the history of the *Mala* and the way people should be living. One feature in particular that he found offensive was the necessity to engage in ritual promiscuity with one's classificatory mothers-in-law, but he also found disturbing the pervasive association of the snake with an all-Being (pers. comm. 1991). This is a view shared by the Aboriginal Minister, Mawunydjil. On a number of occasions in Church sermons in 1992 the Minister publicly announced, "God does not crawl on its belly like a snake".

It is this manoeuvring, this redefining of law in response to the new that is my central concern. As in other case studies, the recurrent theme is, I suggest, the attempt to define the position of Aborigines in relation to one another and to non-Aborigines, and how the cultural repertoire is brought into play in such instances, in ways which achieve what Rudder (1993) refers to as 'changelessness in change'.

¹ Apart from the Minister, Burrumarra suggested that he was the only one to have ever done this and lived (pers. comm. 1991).

8.2 Major Events in the Reconciliation of Aboriginal Traditions and Christianity at Elcho Island

In order to analyse the progressive attempts to clarify the relationship between old and new beliefs by successive generations at Elcho Island over the past forty years, three events are here investigated: the Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land in 1957; the Christian Revival of 1978; and the performance of a *Ngaarra* ceremony by the Warramiri and Wangurri in 1993.

8.2-1 The Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land

Undoubtedly one of the most significant and controversial events in recent Elcho Island history was the Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land. By all accounts, it was an attempt to reconcile Christianity and 'traditional' Aboriginal beliefs (Beckett 1993:679-680; Berndt 1962; Borsboom 1992:15-16; Bos 1988a, 1988b; Keen 1994:277-278; Maddock 1972:1-3; Morphy 1983:110-113; Rudder 1993:74-75). While there was far from universal agreement among senior *Mala* members in north-east Arnhem Land, sacred *rangga* representing all groups from across the region were revealed for public scrutiny for the first time, altering their character irrevocably for future generations (see illustration 8a). Not all the *rangga* were revealed however, a point which various commentators use as evidence that Aborigines were at least in part, leaving their options open. I refer to this point later.

As the first major step in reconciling *Yolngu* culture and Christianity, the Adjustment Movement represented a comprehensive break with the past, and Berndt (1962) firmly places the initial stirring for the movement with Burrumarra, who was then forty years of age. It was he who convinced the more established leaders to join the movement and reveal their *rangga*. He says Burrumarra had,

"...for some years been thinking...about the general problem of adjusting or bringing together traditional Aboriginal and introduced ways, in order to achieve the maximum benefit from the latter...On the one hand he wanted changes from the outside to come with greater rapidity. On the other he did not want them to overwhelm his own society and culture...[If] this loss of identity were to be avoided, some re-orientation of traditional life would be necessary," (Berndt 1962:39).

Events came to a head, Berndt (1962:39) says, after the visits of the American-Australian Expedition to Arnhem Land in 1948 led by C.P.

Mountford and of Dr. Richard Waterman and his wife to Yirrkala in 1952. Berndt (1962:40) quotes Burrumarra as saying,

"They took pictures of our sacred ceremonies and *rangga* and we got excited. Why do they do this? We understand this when Warner, Thomson and the Berndts were here. But why do they come again and again to study us? They take photographs of sacred things and show them to all the people throughout Australia and other places...We got a shock. We're not supposed to show these [*madayin*], these *rangga* to just anybody...All this made us think...Then we saw a film at the Elcho Church. It was from the American-Australian Expedition, and it showed the sacred ceremonies and emblems. And everybody saw it...We've got no power to hide (these *rangga*): they are taking away our possessions. Are we to lose all this? Our most precious possessions, our *rangga*! We have nothing else; this is really our only wealth."

As mentioned earlier, various scholars suggested the movement was something akin to a 'cargo cult' in which the *Yolngu*, in return for showing their most precious belongings, expected great riches. Burrumarra rejected this saying,

"It was a sign to the world of our ownership of the land and our heritage. The 'clans' would come together in peace...We did it for our own lives and for the future. We believed if the *Yolngu* could adapt the old with the new we could lead more bountiful lives. We were building up the community. We wanted a school, a hospital, a library and other things. We wanted recognition that we had a right to these things."

So on the one hand there was a desire for the recognition of *Yolngu* rights. On the other, there was an expectation for some form of material compensation as a result of the changes that were being forced upon the people. The imbalance in wealth between Aborigines and non-Aborigines was to be alleviated. Relations between Aboriginal groups in Arnhem Land, for the first time living together as a single community, were also to be consolidated. Prior to the Adjustment Movement, Burrumarra said all the groups had their own ideas about right and wrong. As Cawte (1993:16) adds, there was widespread feuding and this jeopardised the growing community. Christianity however, was to provide the means for all (both 'black' and 'white') to live together as a united group. As Burrumarra (in Berndt 1962:73) said:

Illustration 8a. The Adjustment Movement 'Memorial', Elcho Island, 1959.



"We must have rules in common...what the 'tribe' thinks right, we must follow. But people are always going contrary. They have an argument about fish, but it is not long before that point is forgotten and they jump into an argument about women or *rangga* - and so Arnhem Land is turned upside down."

Burrumarra added,

"Here were people with the same *rangga*, the same songs - and they were jealous of one another:...calling each other *mulguru* ('stranger'): saying to one person, 'You don't belong to this: you go away. I'll cut you off from the *bapurru* ['clan']. And all this happened just because the *bunggawa* [Aboriginal leader] did not stand firm...the people were not taught properly... [*Lany'tjun*] and [*Djang'kawu*] were good leaders, but the people didn't follow what they taught at the beginning: the people lost themselves, and so trouble came up," (Berndt 1962:71-72).

While the Adjustment Movement is now viewed in terms of key individuals and key *Mala*, ie. Badanga of the Wangurri *Mala* and Burrumarra, and *dhuwa* leaders Wili and Mayamaya, at the time, it was under the leadership of one man. As Berndt (1962:41) explained, the people were 'lifting up' Badanga to lead all community groups, both *dhuwa* and *yirritja*, presumably in line with an image of *Yolngu* as followers of one God. With one leader for all the people, and the presence of *rangga* in the open, Burrumarra believed things would improve. He said,

"By putting the *rangga* in an open area people would have to behave. They couldn't kill because the *rangga* was there. In the sacred [*Ngaarra*] ceremonies, the men would make these *rangga*. At this time we would sit around and share the sacred damper [*Ngadu* - cycad] and discuss any differences...Any problems would be brought up then and there in front of the *rangga* and it would be finished with, never brought up again. With the *rangga* from all the clans on display everyone had to be on guard, behaving according to the proper laws of the *Mala*."

So there was a conscious attempt at re-defining social organisation. The *Yolngu*, at one level, were to be a single unified block of *Mala*, and Christianity was put forward in order to legitimise such unity. Yet, *Yolngu* belief in Christianity was not emphasised in Berndt's (1962) account of the Adjustment Movement, as Rudder (1993:73-74) points out. Badanga (in Berndt 1962:60), for instance had said,

"We believe in the old law and we want to keep it: and we believe in the Bible too. So we have selected the good laws from both and put them together."

One striking sculpture in the memorial by Badanga, which was based on the *Lany'tjun* theme, had a cross built on top. Of its significance, Berndt wrote (1962:60),

The Christian cross ...at the apex of the *rangga* is 'Badanga's believing'. In his own words, 'helped' by Burrumarra, [he said] 'Before, [Badanga] was leaning on the old laws. But in 1956 he changed himself, and he also changed genesis (the traditional *Wangarr*) to follow Christian fellowship. He kept this [*maḍayin*], but the Bible is there too. He would like to keep both laws... [He] has combined both ways, so that he can put all his children in school to become missionaries.'"

The motto of the movement was agreed to by all (Burrumarra pers. comm. 1990). It read, '*Dhuwala limuru yurru gurrupan Godkala*,' which means, 'We give ourselves and our *rangga* and *maḍayin* to God.'

"Each person had to dedicate their lives to God, to come forward and say it. This did not mean we forget the past or that the *Balanda* can do what they like. This is the *YoIngu* saying to the *Balanda*, this is the level that we can come together," (Burrumarra pers. comm. 1990).

Some non-Aboriginal commentators dismissed the Adjustment Movement as a failure perhaps because the social reforms Burrumarra tried to implement were unsuccessful. He desired an end to the promised system of marriage and wished to introduce monogamy, in line with Biblical teachings, but there was too much opposition from older men (Shepherdson 1981:23). Also, if one looks at the movement in terms of Burrumarra's attempt to set up negotiations with the Government over a number of demands, including claims for compensation in the form of community services and recognition of Aboriginal rights (Morphy 1983:111), then the movement was as Maddock (1972:2) says, 'deluded or misguided'. The community of Galiwin'ku was remote and just one of many Aboriginal settlements across the Top End, and as the missionary Harold Shepherdson (pers. comm. 1990) perceived it, the effects of the movement were primarily local. Also, it was only a matter of years after the 'Memorial' of the Adjustment Movement was erected that mining operations commenced in Gove, with the rights and wishes of the Aboriginal people being largely ignored. It was as if the movement had come to nothing. But to call the movement a failure on these grounds alone is

inaccurate, as it is not how many of the people of Elcho Island now view it. Within Christian circles it was a momentous occasion, and the perception still is that it allowed a freedom and peace that most people had not previously known in their lives (see Keen 1994:285-286).²

As with the contact narratives discussed in earlier Chapters, we are dealing with a social action that has both spiritual and material aspects. On the one hand, religious belief is concerned with delivering identity, systems of meaning and the interpretation of human existence (Mol 1976:181). On the other hand, the Adjustment Movement was about building bridges between Aborigines and the 'Other' in ways which brought material benefit to the former. As Kolig (1988:386) says, religion is informed by practical concern and it pursues the power to solve real problems in real life. Both aspects are of concern for Elcho Islanders.

8.2-2 The Christian Revival

The Elcho Island Christian Revival began in 1978 when, *Yolngu* claim, the Holy Spirit came to Galiwin'ku (Rudder 1993:72). It is an event which is commemorated each year in a Revival weekend in March, with visitors coming from all over Australia to celebrate.

This was a time of prophecies and visions. For instance, in one case, an Aboriginal fisherman, Djaymila, found a rock at the bottom of the sea in the shape of Australia (see also Bos 1988). This was deemed to be the fulfilment of a dream by Buthimang, who believed that the *Yolngu* would bring Christianity to all Australians. *Yolngu* at Elcho Island saw themselves as having a mandate for this, and in the years following the Revival, Elcho Islanders travelled throughout the outback bringing the 'Good News' to others. They were known outside of Arnhem Land as the 'Black Crusade', (see Bos 1988a; Keen 1994:285).

Prior to the Revival, only a small percentage of community members were baptised Christians and there were few regular Church goers (Rudder 1993:53). Leading up to and following the Revival however, prayer meetings

² This is a view shared by a majority of leaders in the Galiwin'ku community (pers. comm. Wirriyi (Liagawumirr); Motijpuy and Djiniyini (Golumala); Gambika and Gurrwanhawuy (Djambarrpuynngu); Belu (Dhalwangu); Wulki (Gumatj-Burrarrwanga); Djalu (Galpu); Dayngumbu and Buthimang (Wangurri); 1993).

became a nightly occurrence and a majority of island residents were involved in one way or another (Buthimang pers. comm. 1990). (see illustrations 8b, 8c and 8d)

Rudder (1993:73-74) says that in many ways the 1978 event was seen as the 'second' Revival, the first being the Adjustment Movement. The links were obvious. It was the sons and daughters of the major figures of the 1957 movement who led the fundamentalist charge. Wuyatiwuy and Rrurambu, sons of Badanga of the Wangurri *Mala*, and Djiniyini Gondarra, the son of Wili of the Golumala *Mala*, amongst others, were the chief instigators.

In contrast to Wangurri involvement, senior male Warramiri leaders did not play a significant part in the Revival. While sympathetic, Burrumarra and Liwukang stood by the original Adjustment Movement position in which both 'traditional' Aboriginal beliefs and Christianity would be held side by side. Neither would have precedence for each was relevant at different levels, just as the *Ngaarra* linked *Mala* in the moiety, and the *Gunapipi* united the moieties, and Christianity provided the basis of links between *Yolngu* and *Balanda* (see Keen 1994; also pers. comm. Liwukang 1990). The Revival position was for Christianity to be the one and only law in the community, and little public reference was made to the important ways in which older beliefs were still relevant in people's lives, even though it appears to have been a subject on many people's minds (pers. comm. Roy Marika 1990; Buthimang 1990).

The growing trend was to associate the major moiety figures, *Djang'kawu* and *Lany'tjun*, with Old Testament prophets, as mentioned earlier, and to see Christianity as the foundation of the Aboriginal way of life. As Keen (1994:284) said,

"Leaders likened [*Wangarr*] such as the *Djang'kawu* to Adam and Eve or to Moses...[s]ome Christian symbols were decorated with lorikeet feathers like other sacred objects...[s]ongs were similar in form to *manikay*...[b]aptism was modelled on the *bukulup* washing-ceremony."

If the Adjustment Movement was about a demand for recognition of the value of *Yolngu* culture by 'white' Australians, as Morphy (1983:112) suggests, then the Revival can be seen as the assertion of local autonomy

Illustration 8b. A baptism in the sea at Elcho Island in 1990. The women of the Church Choir wear distinctive white clothes.



Illustration 8c. Elcho Island men in their distinctive black and white outfits at the funeral of the Wangurri leader, Rrurambu 1992. Their heads are painted with white clay in a manner symbolic of Bukulatjpi.



Illustration 8d. Elcho Island men honour the work of the missionary Harold Shepherdson at the fiftieth anniversary of the Elcho Island community in 1992.



through acceptance of Christian mores. Christian groups saw respect for the law of the Bible as the way to bring about reconciliation in Australia. All people were equal in God's law (Maratja pers. comm. 1990). As Keen (1994:285) says,

"*Yolngu* people...were... hoping that religious arguments would lead the white community to understand their point of view and bind them in a way that arguments solely related to the *wangarr* ancestors would not."

As stated earlier, *Yolngu* have in recent times favoured universalistic forms of religious practice (Keen 1994). Just as the *Gunapipi* had such a role for the people of central Arnhem Land where Keen completed his fieldwork in the 1970s (see 1994:279), Christianity was a new 'blanket over the land', just as *Birrinydji* had been in the past, in Burrumarra's view. But this alone was not enough to ensure that Aboriginal rights were safeguarded, Burrumarra believed. As a political solution, Burrumarra was sceptical, saying that if the *Yolngu* did not maintain their cultural heritage, how could they protect their land from unwanted intrusions by outsiders. At a public meeting on the subject of reconciliation of Church and Aboriginal law at Elcho Island in 1990, Burrumarra said, "On whose authority would we say no when the *Balanda* come and ask, 'Can we have this island?'" Without *rangga* this would not be possible. In what appeared to be an almost complete turn around from his 1957 position, he said,

"I can't change what I believe and they can't force change in the community. They want to bring out more *rangga*. They came and asked me and I agreed but I still feel sad. Badanga's son brought out the Wangurri fighting stick *rangga* at the Church. This is what sustained the Wangurri *Yolngu* in the past. But God is much more than these wooden objects. God sustains the people today. This is the way we have to follow now. But in years to come you'll find all the people living as one group and they'll be crying because they've got no *rangga*. But who's to blame?"

Despite attempts by some *Yolngu* to downplay it, a largely unspoken fear in the community is that Christianity poses a threat to Aboriginal identity. Buthimang, the Wangurri and Christian leader, following on from Burrumarra, says that he also fears that in the future, there would only be one *Mala* at Galiwin'ku, the Christian *Mala*. Laws at a *Mala* and moiety level determine links to country, inter-group relations and marriage procedures, and this is at risk if one law dominates all others. Looming in some people's

minds is the threat of complete social chaos, and the loss of authority by leaders (Buthimang pers. comm. 1993).

While the alignment of Christianity with Aboriginal traditions was supported by Buthimang and Burrumarra and other Warramiri leaders, they stood by the Adjustment Movement position of laws overlapping and entwining in important ways, but with neither having precedence. For them, a political solution which protected Aboriginal rights and values was required. The Warramiri Treaty proposal was Burrumarra's answer, but its links with the Christian movement did not become apparent until the performance in 1993 of the Wangurri/Warramiri *Ngaarra*, the first time this ceremony had been held since the 1950s.

8.2-3 The Wangurri/Warramiri *Ngaarra* Ceremony

One of the most influential events in reconciling Christianity with the legacy of Arnhem Land ancestral beings came with this performance of the *Ngaarra* ceremony at Elcho Island in December 1993. While some *Mala*, both *dhuwa* and *yirritja*, had held their *Ngaarra* ceremonies, the Wangurri and Warramiri had not performed their version since before the time of the Adjustment Movement. The performance in 1993 was like a restaging of this Movement according to various Aboriginal leaders. In 1957 the sacred *rangga* had been brought out but there was no *bunggul* or public statement. Berndt's (1962) text that was published some years later was geared mainly at a non-Aboriginal audience. While Burrumarra saw the Flag Treaty proposal as the culmination of the Adjustment Movement, other community leaders saw the *Ngaarra* in 1993 as a final statement on this matter.

As with the *Gunapipi*, involvement in the Warramiri/Wangurri *Ngaarra* ceremony was discontinued following the Adjustment Movement, with Burrumarra stressing that while such ceremonies remained of the utmost significance for different people in different ways, they were no longer appropriate given the way people were or should be living. But it is never straightforward. As Burrumarra said,

"We all have doubts. Aborigines are no different. We don't know the truth. We keep reaching for it. When we do the *bunggul*, we ask ourselves, why are we doing this, who are we doing it for? Leaders guide our thinking in such matters."

As a nominal leader of both the Warramiri *Mala* and the Wangurri *Mala* (in the absence of old men from that group in the 1970s), Burrumarra's direction in terms of whether or not the *Ngaarra* ceremony could be held, was law. He personally doubted that there would be support for it, as it was an 'all or nothing' situation. Within each group there was much diversity of opinion on the subject of Christianity. The senior Wangurri leader, Dayngumbu, for instance, was a 'born again' Christian, desiring a clean break from the past. Buthimang however believed *Lany'tjun* to have been an emissary of Jesus, and when he delivers Christian sermons, he adorns the sacred *rangga* associated with this law. Still other Wangurri leaders had different ideas. One was a Member of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly and was not directly involved in the Church or local ceremonial life. Others lived on remote outstations, maintaining the country and the 'old' law. Warramiri leaders, likewise, were largely scattered in terms of residence and belief. Liwukang and Wulanybuma of the Warramiri *Mala*, for instance, saw the *rangga* as the *Yolngu* 'Bible' whereas Burrumarra saw a place for both beliefs in the *Yolngu* way of life. Burrumarra's sons are variously a Christian lay preacher, an artist of international repute, and a public servant. His daughters all identify themselves as Christian. Wulanybuma's son is a lay preacher, while Wulanybuma's daughters are also Christians. Liwukang's children are more 'traditionally' minded, and on the whole, are not involved in the Church.

Burrumarra felt it would be pointless to hold a *Ngaarra* ceremony if the real 'power' in people's lives ie. the Government and Christianity, were not represented. It would be nothing more than a mockery of the sacred traditions, he believed (McIntosh 1994b:xvii). Just as the *rangga* revealed in the Adjustment Movement were never to be made again, so too the ceremonies would not be performed. "It would be like a football match...It would be meaningless," (Burrumarra in McIntosh 1994b:111). Younger leaders however were starting to complain that they did not know what to tell the young about the past and that no policy had been agreed to by all on the reconciliation of the old and the new (McIntosh 1992:74).

In late 1993 a compromise was reached and the ceremony commenced. A policy was made clear to all. At the commencement of the *Ngaarra* ceremony, a Cross was positioned on the sacred *Ngaarra* ground, just as a cross had been placed on *Lany'tjun's rangga* in the Adjustment Movement. At the end of *Lany'tjun's* dances each day, the men would bow their heads in

prayer. While the *Ngaarra* is said to be about *Lany'tjun* 'holding the country', the new addition was *Lany'tjun* 'praying to God for the people' (Dayngumbu pers. comm. 1993). As in the Adjustment Movement, the message was that for Warramiri and Wangurri *Mala* members, there could be no longer be any mention of the heritage of *Lany'tjun* without reference to Christianity (although not vice versa).

The purpose of the *Ngaarra* revival was at least threefold. It was to teach the young about their sacred heritage. It was to show that the *Yolngu* world was now a part of a larger cosmos, for Christian and Government visitors had been invited from many parts of Australia for the performance. Thirdly, it was to commemorate Burrumarra's life (pers. comm. Buthimang; Dayngumbu; Dhokong; Liwukang 1993). He was being used as a symbol of the way things had changed, and to promote the message that a majority of people of Elcho Island now appeared to accept ie. that the *Yolngu* were first and foremost Christians, but their identity as *Yolngu* was inextricably linked to their moiety, *Mala* and family history.

8.3 *Birrinydji* in Mission and Post-Mission Times

As I indicated in Chapter Six, some aspects of belief in *Birrinydji* are anachronistic, and incompatible with Christianity in Burrumarra's view. Yet even before the advent of missions, it is reasonable to suspect that belief in *Birrinydji* was not static. There is evidence, for instance, in terminology relating to sea craft, of the ways in which this belief has kept up with changing trends. No information is available on the nature of the first ship to visit Arnhem Land, the *Yinderama*, but another of *Birrinydji's* boats is the *Matjala*, which as I mentioned in Chapter Six, is a 'Macassan' craft displaying little if any European influence. Still another of *Birrinydji's* boats is the *Gappala* (a 'Macassan' loan word) which Zorc (1986) says is a large boat or warship, or steamship. *Birrinydji* is also associated with aeroplanes and space travel (Burrumarra pers. comm. 1992). The DC3 for instance is referred to as *Wurrapa*, (a female *Bayini*) with 'people and *girri* inside'.³ Warner (1969) indeed notes how ideas relating to 'Macassans' had been transferred to Europeans in mission times. Keen (1994:164-165) referred to the way in which 'magpie-geese' people had rights in the 'Macassan' song-series, "...which described the 'Macassan' *Wangarr* [*Birrinydji*] and the resources

³ The expression *Wurrapa* is also a general term for female members of either the Warramiri, Gumatj or Gupapuyngu-Birrkili *Mala*, or the '*Bayini*'mob', as Burrumarra referred to them.

which [he] brought to Arnhem Land, such as tobacco, knives, alcohol, and rice." He adds however that 'inside' interpretations of the words were associated with both the 'beginning of time' and also with "...missionaries doing such things as unloading sacks of flour at the wharf." Burrumarra, as I mentioned in Chapter One, also linked *Birrinydji* with the King of England, explaining his interest in the Union Jack, and its position on the Flag Treaty design (ie. emerging from *Birrinydji's* head).

It is thus apparent that interpretations of the *Birrinydji* narrative have been continually adjusted in the light of a changing world. Relevant questions then are: what was the place of contact beliefs in mission times, and in what ways were reflections upon this legacy relevant in the major religious/reconciliation events at Elcho Island over the past forty years?

Speaking in an anthropological frame of mind, Burrumarra said that *Birrinydji* and *Walitha'walitha* represented the 'first wave' of missionary influence in Arnhem Land. While *Walitha'walitha* is said by him to be one and the same as the Christian God, he added that when the two are placed side by side, *Walitha'walitha* was seen to be of lesser significance, and was referred to as an 'angel of God'. Yet at funerals when the *Wurramu* ceremony is being performed, a Warramiri leader will usually make a public statement about the presence of God and the need for everyone to observe the sanctity of the moment. A distinction between the 'Islamic' and Christian God is not made however. *Walitha'walitha* is God in such instances.

As for *Birrinydji*, a commonly held though not openly expressed view of the Warramiri leaders was that the establishment of the mission was his wish for the people, as I mentioned in Chapter One. Dayngumbu said that his father, Badanga, a leader of the Adjustment Movement, and Makarrwola, his older brother, had travelled throughout the region at the request of missionaries, telling everyone to come to the new settlement at Milingimbi. Badanga told the people that they were not to be afraid of the 'whiteman' any more. It was not like the old times. There was plenty of tobacco and cloth. There was to be no more killing (Dayngumbu pers. comm. 1990). The mission was to be the fulfilment of *Birrinydji's* promise, Burrumarra said. There would be unity in the land between 'black' and 'white' and both would share equally in the wealth of the country.

Whether Christianity was to replace *Birrinydji's* law must have been on the minds of many Arnhem Land thinkers in mission times. People would soon have realised that they could acquire material wealth without adhering to once obligatory ritual processes, and it probably became an unspoken truth that *Birrinydji* had nothing to do with the power of the 'whitemen', and that Dholtji was of importance only to the Warramiri and related *Mala*. As I mentioned in the last Chapter, Burrumarra claimed that the performance of *Birrinydji's* ceremony took on an 'ugly' aspect in mission times. It was out of place.

Burrumarra said that it was the legacy of *Birrinydji* and *Walitha'walitha* that was his inspiration for the Adjustment Movement, and why he held so much sway over the other leaders. Yet apart from an 'anchor' motif on the central *rangga* of the Adjustment Movement (representing the spout of the whale),⁴ there were no obvious references to these ancestral beings in the collected posts. While other laws were being brought out into the open and demystified, contact narratives and associated *rangga* remained hidden from public view. Berndt (1962:63) did however suggest that the seven posts surrounding the monument represented the Wangurri and Warramiri *Mala* 'holding all the other clans', and that they were 'company' and that they 'ruled the people'. Burrumarra said that the meaning of these posts was 'half on *Lany'tjun* and half on *Birrinydji*.' On the one hand they represented a manifestation of *Garrawarrk*, but they were also a reference to Dholtji 'holding' the *Mala* just as *Birrinydji's* 'anchor' binds people to the land at times when various forces are seeking to drive them away.

The use of an expression like 'Memorial' which Berndt (1962) said was what the collected *rangga* of the Adjustment Movement were termed, supports the view that we are looking at a paradigmatic shift in attitudes in mission times (see Kuhn 1970). The Adjustment Movement Memorial was commemorating the way people had once lived, but it was also signalling the beginning of a new way of life. All moiety and *Mala* beliefs were now seen to be 'under Christianity'. As Burrridge (1971:5) said on the subject of religion and change,

"Religions...are concerned with the systematic ordering of different kinds of power...This entails a specific framework of

⁴ This is an 'outside' reference to *Birrinydji*. The spout of the whale is said to represent the steam coming from *Birrinydji's* furnace inside the whale.

rules. But because a religion is concerned with the truth of things, and reaches out to discover and identify those sorts of power which, though sensed and affective, are currently not wholly comprehended, its rules about the use and control of different kinds of powers are grounded in an interplay between experience, working assumptions, and those more rooted assumptions we call faith. As experience widens and deepens, some of the rules and assumptions will be qualified, and others abandoned altogether - a developmental process in which received truths or assumptions give way to new truths, and in which the new truths become in their turn the received assumptions of future generations," (1971:5).

Both Burrumarra and Badanga desired to see a transformation of the Aboriginal 'Genesis' in the Adjustment Movement, as I mentioned earlier (see also Berndt 1962 and Keen 1994:279), so that the best of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal worlds would become the basis of a new way of life for the people. They believed also that they had a mandate to do what was necessary to achieve this. They believed that if *Yolngu* had access to training and resources in the mission, they could enter the modern world on their own terms. As Burrumarra said (in Berndt 1962:79),

"The *Balanda* ...think for us...we can manage all the available jobs...The people just open their brains in order to see how the *Balanda* are living...we can teach the children this..."

Burrumarra said however that both he and Badanga had often experienced persecution because of such interpretations (see McIntosh 1994b). Other leaders could or would not follow their line of thought, perhaps being suspicious that the promised returns would not eventuate. The challenge was to acknowledge that while there was no place for beliefs such as *Birrinydji* in the mainstream or public arena, they still had an important place in the *Yolngu* world in terms of identity. Consequently, *Birrinydji* and *Walitha'walitha* went 'inside'. Information was restricted as part of a plan by Warramiri and Wangurri leaders for their children to grow up as Christians. *Birrinydji* was 'too far, too sad, and too hard to understand', Burrumarra said. Followers of *Birrinydji* should be Christians, he added, a point affirmed by many, but not all *yirritja* leaders.

Burrumarra said the persecution of Warramiri and Wangurri *Mala* leaders, which had its origins in the Adjustment Movement, lasted until the late 1980s when Prime Minister Bob Hawke spoke openly about the prospect of a treaty of reconciliation in Australia. It was then that it ceased,

Burrumarra said, and it was as if the people at last understood what his generation had been trying to do. Flag Treaty designs were constructed by a number of *Mala* groups, as mentioned in Chapter One, and others utilised the Warramiri version for their own *Mala* celebrations, (ie. university graduations, see illustration 8e). The Gumatj-Burarrwanga variation had images of the Bible, *Birrinydji*'s swords crossed, and the names of the two *Birrinydji* sites relevant to their *Mala* history, ie. Garrkarrngur and Gampodjeki (Kampong Djeki or Dholtji). In 1988 the Elcho Island Council commissioned an artist to construct a bark painting featuring both *dhuwa* and *yirritja* symbols, as well as the Aboriginal flag and the Union Jack as a gift for the visiting Governor General, Sir Ninian Stephen. The theme was reconciliation, and clearly built on the Warramiri idea (see illustration 8f), and reflected Keen's (1994) point about trends towards universalistic religious practice.

While belief in *Birrinydji* was deemed to be anachronistic when placed side by side with Christianity, its relevance has been continuing at 'inside' levels, in line with the changing nature of relations between Aborigines and non-Aborigines. In the last year of his life, Burrumarra said that only when reconciliation between Aborigines and non-Aborigines was achieved, that *Birrinydji* would have fulfilled his promise. If there was equality and respect for Aboriginal law by 'whites', then *Birrinydji* could 'put down his swords' and the 'golden age' could return to Arnhem Land. He said,

"When 'white' and 'black' work together under one law in this land, side by side under God, then *Birrinydji* can put down his swords, bury them in the sand."

"We would still use them in initiations...but we do not live by this law any longer. We follow 'mission' standards".

8.4 Processes of Change

All the encounters that have been discussed so far in this thesis, have been adjudicated by people such as Burrumarra, in relation to a 'timeless' ideal of reciprocity between collectives. This was also an ideal that some *Yolngu* saw as being achievable in the mission period. It is an idea which appears to be best developed in the moiety narratives of *Lany'tjun* and *Djang'kawu*, but Warramiri totemism also paints a picture of a 'timeless' unity between *Mala*. As Warner (1969) documented however, warfare continually plagued relations.

Illustration 8e. The Warramiri flag is used in community celebrations at Elcho Island commemorating the award of Doctor of Theology to Djiniyini Gondarra in 1991. He is from the *dhuwa* moiety Golumala Mala, and his mother's Mala is the Lamamirri. The ceremony performed was one associated with *Badu*, and the people symbolically paddled their canoe, with Djiniyini in tow, towards the official area.



Illustration 8f. The presentation of a bark painting to the Governor General Ninian Stephen at Elcho Island in 1988. This is a further example of the community building on Warramiri actions. The bark painting featured both *dhuwa* and *yirritja* symbols, the crab and the crayfish, as well as the Aboriginal flag and the Union Jack. It was thus a symbol of the unity of *Yolngu*, and also Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Australia, and a statement of a desire for reconciliation.



In the contact narratives, we have the full range of responses in terms of inter-cultural relations. 'Totem hunters' were perceived as Yolngu and treated in narrative in the same way, as sharing 'inside' knowledge of the sea. The *Bayini* are associated with the foundation of law, and were sole beneficiaries of the wealth of *Birrinydji*. There was an ambiguous relationship with 'Macassans', with them being viewed as either partners in law, or there being no relationship whatsoever between them and Aborigines. One's rights, in such 'memories' measured in terms of the relationship, and the degree to which others acknowledged one's own. This ideal was firmly understood as being unity in diversity, according to Burrumarra. In the same way, the Treaty Proposal likewise attempted to affirm what was seen as the rightful place of *Yolngu* in terms of the 'Other'.

The complex ways in which such 'inside' and 'outside' interpretations of law are manipulated to both incorporate the new and restrict access to outdated aspects, has been described by Rudder (1993) as 'changelessness in change'. Yet can such a view throw light on the reasons why Burrumarra claimed a mandate for changing 'Genesis', or historically speaking, how Bukulatjpi was inspired to 'pick up *Birrinydji's* swords and do the *bunggul*'? Burrumarra was not seeking 'changelessness in change'. Yet of course the ideal to which he aspired was a 'timeless' one, ie. that of unity, reciprocity and harmony between peoples. His methods of reaching this goal were relevant to the social conditions of the present, just as the Adjustment Movement was in the 1950s, and 'encounter' narratives presumably were prior to that, in their different contexts.

Paradigmatic shifts in thought appear to be associated with dramatic upheavals in social life. The emergence of *Lany'tjun* from the 'sea'; the arrival for the first time of outsiders on Aboriginal land; the 'fall'; the Adjustment Movement or the Revival; all heralded major innovations in thinking about the nature and meaning of the world. Burrumarra for instance said that the *Yolngu* did not know the meaning of symbols before *Lany'tjun*, and that the advent of moiety law brought an end to chaos by uniting *Mala* and bringing peace to Arnhem Land. With *Birrinydji*, Aborigines could stand up for their rights in the face of the threat to the 'status quo' posed by the 'Other' in the belief that the wealth of the land rightfully belonged to them. Similarly with Christianity, the reality of early mission times was that all Aboriginal groups were living as a single community and yet they all held different views on right and wrong

(McIntosh 1994b), so a paradigmatic shift in beliefs at a moiety level was necessary if people were to move forward as a unit.

Douglas' (1978:81) 'grid' and 'group' theory of social change is relevant here. 'Grid' was linked to world view and 'Group' referred to the way people interact and are constrained by others. Douglas (1978:91) suggested that there were four major types of social environment and each generated distinctive cosmologies and made their own typical demands on the media of expression. The process of transition from one level of thinking about the world to another is a one-way progression, she suggested, in which the new transcended the old.

In a commentary on 'grid' and 'group' in an Australian context, Turner (1989:222) argued that despite major changes in the way of life of the people at nearby Groote Eylandt over the past forty years, 'culture' had not changed. His explanation was in terms of the fundamental relationship between the people and the land, and how 'group' overwhelmed 'grid'. In his view, kinship relations did not exist, for cosmology is kinship (Turner 1989:223). Thus while there might be substantial changes in social organisation, production, and consumption, and so on, 'grid' would ensure that change would not be viewed as such. In Turner's view, there is a real world which is constantly in flux, and simultaneously, a Platonic vision of it, the ultimately 'real', which is unchanging, along the lines suggested by Rudder (1993).

Rudder's (1993:337) view is that any important event is seen in relation to space and an 'inner reality', and that with the passage of time, it loses all temporality. So while cosmology is in flux, it is not necessarily desirable for it to be seen in this way, and following on from Turner's view that cosmology is kinship, in the next section I try to define the way various *Yolngu* leaders refer to this process of on-going change (and changelessness). I also present the view that the Warramiri Treaty proposal, as with belief in Christianity, revolves around the question of the need for one law that will unite all peoples equally, but which will also affirm the various other ways which define those groups.

8.5 'Membership' and 'Remembership'

One often hears in discussions with Warramiri informants a request for clarification as to what level one is speaking on. For instance it might be

on the 'government line', the 'mission line', or the '*Yolngu* line', and if it is the latter, there are numerous other levels to choose from, depending on whether one wishes to discuss matters of a public or 'outside' nature, or if 'inside' themes are to be discussed, at what level of 'membership' in the network, ie. *Mala*, sub-moiety, moiety, pan-Aboriginal. In most cases in 'inside' discussions, people will speak only of their own *Mala* interests unless prior arrangements have been made with other groups. For the Warramiri this is not always possible for Burrumarra often spoke of how he was concerned about speaking too openly about the whale and octopus for fear of upsetting the people of the north, ie. the whale hunters of *Badu*.

Within the *Yolngu* domain, the moieties are entirely discrete, and there is little overlap in sites or totems with most inconsistencies having been ironed out over millennia.⁵ Within the moiety, *Mala* are related through shared totemic and ancestral beliefs, but are also distinguished through laws specific to each (see Keen 1994). Within the *Mala*, people are related by the subsection system (*Maalk*) and by family kinship ties (*Gurrutu*). One may define oneself then in terms of any of these layers of what is referred to in English as 'membership' 'familyship' or 'company'. A person may say he or she is a *Yolngu*, but also an Australian, and a member of a world community. Simultaneously, a person is a member of a moiety, and there are specific terms for one's connection with the *Mala*, country and cultural heritage through the father (*Dhilinginy*), mother (*Ngandipulu*), mother's mother (*Maaripulu*), mother's mother's mother (*Wakupulu*), and mother's mother's mother's mother (*Yapapulu*).

In some ways echoing the early theoretical perspectives of Durkheim (1954) and Radcliffe-Brown (1971) on totemism, some Warramiri and Wangurri leaders contend that to hold beliefs of varying levels of significance concurrently is possible because they are recognised as being at different levels of 'membership', even though in Chapter Two I highlighted the dual nature of many totems as being of both *Mala* and moiety significance. The *Ratjuk* (Barramundi) for instance features in all *Lany'tjun* stories, but the Wangurri alone have rights in the manufacture of *rangga*

⁵ Some totems are claimed by both *dhuwa* and *yirritja* groups however, and they have different names and separate *rangga*. For example, a small clam like shell is known as *Gulthawala* by the Marranagu people, and *Rawada* by the Wolkara *Mala*. Similarly, a small white bird resembling the *Nyirrk* (white cockatoo) is claimed by the Rirratjingu as well as a number of *yirritja Mala*, according to Burrumarra.

associated with it, Buthimang says. Various bodies of law assume differing degrees of significance at different levels of social organisation, although as stated, there is considerable ambiguity here.

The subject of Christianity provides a good example of this. Through it both *Yolngu* and *Balanda* are united in a larger system of belief which sees all Australians as members of a single family. Symbols and sites referred to in sacred *Yolngu* paintings relating to Christianity do not impinge on the established system of ownership by *Mala*. For instance of the three 'outside' paintings created for the 1993 *Ngaarra* at Elcho Island, one was based on the Christian story and included an image of God on the throne, and the remaining two showed the association of Christianity with *Mala* beliefs. The Warramiri design had an anchor with a Christian slogan adorning it, while the Wangurri painting had a rock symbolic of *Lany'tjun* surrounded by barramundi, and also a Christian message.⁶

In the Adjustment Movement, Burrumarra wished to see the new beliefs held side by side with the old. While they were interpreted in relation to one another, their significance for the *Yolngu* was to be seen separately, at different levels of 'membership'. (ie. Christianity is a universal belief. *Lany'tjun* is for the moiety, etc).

Attempts to breach domains in recent times have been largely unsuccessful. For instance in 1990, Wangurri leaders Rrurambu and Lanhapuy (both now deceased) created a flag and depicted the flying fox, a totem primarily associated with the Warramiri and Golpa *Mala*. While both of the Wangurri men have links to land associated with this totem, in a public meeting at Elcho Island, other Wangurri and Warramiri leaders criticised the designers, and there were threats of sorcery, and the flag was withdrawn as a *Mala* symbol. It could only be used as a personal flag by those connected to the sites referred to.

Another example of attempts at breaking down the divisions between levels of 'membership' occurred in 1991, when a young Golumala man at Elcho Island created a new Christian song and dance utilising the dance and regalia of the *Djang'kawu* and Morning Star rituals (see Rudder 1993). The

⁶ Such a separation in domains contrasts with the situation described in other parts of Australia, i.e. with Noah's Ark being identified with a rock formation in the Kimberley (Kolig 1980).

reaction was mixed. Golumala members supported the young man, but other *dhuwa* leaders rejected the action as a breach of law and the dance has not been performed since.

Burrumarra's negotiations for the Treaty did not attempt to breach such domains, yet there was concern shown by Dhalwangu *Mala* leaders about his lack of consultation with them over his display of *Birrinydji* in illustration 1b, as I mentioned previously. Burrumarra's response to the criticism was to ignore it, but in the second Warramiri flag that was constructed (illustration 1c), the whale took the place of *Birrinydji* as an 'outside' reference to this same law. Following Burrumarra's lead however, and with his permission, the Dhalwangu leaders created the Gurrumurru school flag using the image of *Birrinydji*.

Also, no argument appeared to greet the stationing of a Christian Cross in the middle of a *yirritja* ceremonial *Ngaarra* area in 1993, for while two separate laws were brought into play in this action, the domains were still able to be seen as separate though interconnected. Its presence was said to relate to Aboriginal 'membership' of a world community based on the teachings of Jesus, but it also represented 'remembership' of the way of life and heritage of the people (Buthimang and Dhokong pers. comm. 1993). Thus *Yolngu* may be Christians, and Christianity maybe considered to be all-embracing, but the people do not forget who they are in terms of the land, or each other, a major point in the Elcho Island text, "My Mother the Land" (Yule 1980).

In a similar way to this, *Birrinydji's* mast positioned in the centre of a community is also said to be about 'remembership' of long ago, of the perceived partnership between Aborigines and the 'Other', and also about Aboriginal 'membership' in terms of a belief in *Birrinydji*. All the various contact beliefs, as I showed in earlier Chapters, are interpreted by the Warramiri leaders in relation to it. Yet now, as stated, Christianity is the new 'blanket over the land'. *Birrinydji* is incompatible with Christian values, and *Walitha'walitha* is seen as an 'angel of God'. In the 1990 Christian Revival commemoration, Warramiri men performed *Birrinydji's* 'anchor' dance and attached an imaginary anchor to the Cross in the general meeting area. This again was a statement that Warramiri people, identifying themselves through the legacy of *Birrinydji*, were also followers of Christianity.

There are many other examples of the way categories of 'membership' have been used to accommodate the new, so as to achieve a sense of 'remembership'. Bununggu (in Elkin, Berndt and Berndt 1950:67), spoke of this in relation to a sacred painting he had produced relating to his Gumatj crocodile Dreaming. The painting was in all respects 'traditional', but within the crocodile's jaws there was a large buffalo, and a new narrative emerged linking these totems. In this story, the buffalo got lost in swamp country around the sacred crocodile totemic centre of the Gumatj. It tried to cross, but the crocodile grabbed it, and took it to a nearby sandbank. Such new stories, Bununggu suggested, arise through dreams or actual incidents, but the framework of the law is not affected in the process. As Bununggu said,

"When we make a new drawing, it is from working our mind. We work it all out in our mind first, putting it on top of the old original design; we never lose our old one, but just fix the new design on to it," (Elkin, Berndt and Berndt 1950:67).

Burrumarra expressed a similar sentiment when he referred to his homeland of Dholtji as being like a mountain 'with the names of *Yolngu* on it' (McIntosh 1994b:76). He said that in one's lifetime, one had no option but to climb, and when one reached the top, one could see far in all directions. In each generation one builds on the contributions of all who have gone before, providing in part, an explanation for the denial of creativity on the part of individuals (Keen 1994:230). At the same time Burrumarra acknowledged the fact that contact with others led to major revisions of 'Genesis'. Referring to the Warramiri inheritance, he said,

"We have many islands, more than thirty, and some are far out to sea. They are quiet places to sit and think about the organisation of the world...Then along came the organisers of the world [i.e. the *Bayini*, whale hunters, missionaries]."

Birrinydji was like a 'blanket over the land', Burrumarra said, as I mentioned earlier. Everything came under it. Everything had to be interpreted in relation to it.

Totemic sites in the landscape and the variety of meanings attached to them, also show this process of 'membership and remembership'. Those areas associated with the law of *Birrinydji*, have, in most cases, replaced or overlaid what had gone before.⁷ The 'anchor' at Dholtji is a good example of

⁷ See Kolig 1980 for examples of this process from Western Australia.

this, as is a large flat rock in the sea at Muthumul which is symbolic of the stone that *Birrinydji* used to sharpen his knives. Yet there are examples of contact sites in which meanings overlap. At Matamata, a yam digging stick site is also *Birrinydji's* walking stick, Burrumarra said. Yumaynga, an island off Cape Wilberforce (see illustration 2f) is both a cuttlefish rising above the water and symbolic of a boat that the *Bayini* pulled up on the shore. Cuttlefish beliefs are fundamental to Warramiri identity, but *Birrinydji* is seen as the creator of Cape Wilberforce, and so the cuttlefish is within *Birrinydji's* domain. The two layers of belief do not compete, but interpretations link the narratives in complex ways. For instance in the Treaty proposal design, the tentacles of the cuttlefish surround and envelop *Birrinydji* and appear to come from out of his head, signifying the fact that the two ideas are inseparable.

The rationale for any innovations in narrative, Buthimang argues, is the need to maintain separate beliefs and categories of 'membership'. There are profound restrictions in the way symbols may be depicted or referred to, not only because of their importance in terms of *Mala* identity, but also in relation to places in a landscape which are owned by various groups of peoples. Swain's (1993) argument that the significance of place has been undermined as a result of contact, is thus brought into question in this instance. According to the findings of this Chapter, even the fundamentalist Christian movement has not diminished the view of *Yolngu* that 'place' is an essential component of personal and group identity. If anything, Christianity has strengthened this.

8.6 Conclusion

In the beginning of this Chapter, I looked at the attempts by the people of Elcho Island to make a place for Christianity in the *Yolngu* world view. As Keen (1994) says, *Yolngu* have in recent times tended to favour universalistic religious forms that transcend moieties and which break down divisions between peoples. The complex re-working of existing beliefs in this process was referred to by some *Yolngu* at Elcho Island as 'membership and remembrance'. Just as *Walitha'walitha* is said to have come to *Yolngu* in their time of need and provided a vision of a united world, the adoption of Christianity by Aborigines has been seen as both a statement of local identity and aspirations, and an attempt at achieving reconciliation with non-Aborigines in Australia. Yet this latter trend is not viewed as being at the expense of the old. Christ has always been 'in the land', and belief in

Christianity is a 'timeless' reflection of a desire for unity between peoples, some *Yolngu* say (see Keen 1994).

The place of *Birrinydji* in today's world is a complex and ambiguous one, and is also an example of the tension that exists between 'timeless' ideals and changing social realities. While it appears that its pan-Aboriginal relevance has been in steady decline since the commencement of the mission, it remains of fundamental significance at a *Mala* and moiety level of 'membership'. Belief in *Birrinydji* and Christianity can be held alongside each other only if they are seen to have separate domains, even though one is interpreted in relation to the other.

The Warramiri Treaty proposal, a further statement of this universalistic trend, reflects current concerns and ways of doing things, but the aim is rather a desire for unity both within Aboriginal circles and with the 'Other'. Burrumarra's desire was to achieve an Australia-wide level of recognition of Aboriginal rights, but at the same time he demonstrated his need to continue to abide by moiety and *Mala* totemic laws. All are represented in the flag design. The cross predominates across the flag and is symbolic of the overarching significance of this law. *Birrinydji*, a moiety law, occupies one panel and is surrounded by *Mala* symbols. The remaining panels feature the octopus, and define the painting as being a product of the Warramiri. So on the one hand Burrumarra was pursuing a new level of unity between peoples, and on the other he 'remembered' the past in the various levels of 'company' or 'membership' depicted, which were of fundamental significance in terms of identity.

CHAPTER NINE

9: Conclusion

It was evident from an early point in my discussions with *Yolngu* leaders that while nearly one hundred years had elapsed since the departure of 'Macassans' from northern Australian shores, events and perceptions from that period had remained, to a significant degree, relevant in the way they understood and attempted to direct their relationships with *Balanda*.

It was Burrumarra's contention, for instance, that if one was to fully understand the need for reconciliation in Australia, and by this he also meant the need for the recognition of Aboriginal rights to land and sea, then one had to study Aboriginal law and look deeply into the Aboriginal past. The Warramiri Flag Treaty proposal drew on the 'memory' of relations between Aborigines and what were perceived by Burrumarra to have been three 'waves' of contact prior to the early 1900s, as well as 'timeless' laws associated with the *Yolngu* domain.

The flag design brought together in a single composition, references to the overarching significance of Christianity; the relationship of the creational being *Birrinydji* and the power of government, symbolised by the Union Jack; and the relationship between *Birrinydji* and sea and land totems such as the whale, octopus and the dog. At its broadest level the flag was a statement of a desire for a partnership between Aborigines and non-Aborigines in law, but the connections referred to above also hinted at the ways in which the Warramiri were trying to reconcile this view from within.

The broader topic of this thesis was therefore to examine the ways in which 'memory' is relevant in the on-going struggle by *Yolngu* for the recognition of their rights in a changing world. With the treaty proposal as the organisational framework of the thesis, I looked at how the Warramiri leaders have been involved in a call for the recognition of sea rights in the Arafura Sea, drawing on the idea of reciprocity in dealings with 'totem hunters' (Chapter Five); in efforts to re-establish contacts with 'Macassans' through a celebration of their shared history, via belief in *Walitha'walitha* (Chapter Seven), and in landmark Christian movements in which the desire was to build relationships of mutual respect and understanding between Aborigines and non-Aborigines and in which interpretations of *Birrinydji* and *Walitha'walitha* played an important part (Chapter Eight).

In Chapter One, I outlined a number of questions in the area of theory that this thesis has attempted to address. They were as follows:

1. Warramiri understandings of the significance of the flag were complex and not directly linked to the current call to change the Australian flag. One might say that the flag is an aspect of *Yolngu* material culture drawn from the days of 'Macassan' contact, but what is the meaning of the treaty flag for the Warramiri? What is the significance of the *Yolngu* leaders' decision to release 'inside' information about flags into the public domain?
2. What standing do Warramiri interpretations have in the *Yolngu* domain as a whole and in the wider community?
3. Discussions on the significance of the bodies of *Rom* depicted on the treaty flag (ie. *Birrinydji*, octopus, cuttle fish, dog etc) were framed in terms of the need for reconciliation in Australia as though there were some intrinsic connection between the subject matter and 'white'/'black' relations. Were these interpretations revealed from the 'inside' as Burrumarra suggested or were they created in their present form in response to current social conditions and the desire for reconciliation? How have the Warramiri leaders come to understand the way they see relationships with the 'Other'? What is the nature of the mandate the Warramiri say they have for mediating relations with outsiders?
4. Burrumarra's views on the past were in conflict with those of historians and archaeologists. Burrumarra saw his actions as the logical outcome of his reading of the past. How does this relate to the current debate on myth versus history? How does one represent the process of the engagement of Aboriginal and other societies without doing significant disservice to Aboriginal interpretations?
5. The treaty flag had a Christian cross in the centre, suggesting the overriding place of Christian values as a force for reconciliation in Australia. This leads to questions of the relationship between *Yolngu* totemic law and Christianity. For instance how did Burrumarra reconcile what he was learning from contact with non-Aborigines with the 'timeless' laws of Warramiri cosmology evoked in the Treaty Proposal? This connects in with

the current anthropological debate on the immutability of the Dreaming versus the constancy of change.

9.1 The Warramiri and the Flag Treaty Proposal

While discussion about a need to change the national flag to reflect new ways of looking at the past has been on-going in Australia for the past twenty years, for the Warramiri, the Flag Treaty proposal was seen as the logical outcome of their reading of Aboriginal history.

Flags are a common sight in north-east Arnhem Land. Bamboo posts with pieces of calico attached are commonly associated with grave sites, or where a mortuary ceremony has been performed. They also fly at places associated with *Birrinydji* and *Bayini* or at sites where a whale has beached itself. For the outside observer, the link between such rituals, sites and bodies of *Rom* are obscure. As I showed in Chapter Seven, for the Warramiri the flag is symbolic of *Walitha'walitha* and it is a legacy of *Birrinydji*. *Yolngu* do the flag dance in the *Wurramu* ceremony, which is associated with the departure of the spirit to the paradise above. The whale is an 'outside' symbol for *Birrinydji*, and aspects of the whale dance and that of *Walitha'walitha* are said to be one and the same.

With the Flag Treaty proposal, the Warramiri leaders were inspired by the idea that the flag refers to a belief in a universal/heavenly being and signifies the unity of all peoples under one law. In the Treaty proposal, such a view has been elaborated upon and transformed. The Warramiri flag was a vehicle for contemplating the unity of all Australians under a single law, that of the land and sea, via a treaty between 'black' and 'white' Australians.

The Warramiri flag design was like the modern-day equivalent of myth, couched as it was in secrecy and ambiguity. Other *Mala* responded to the Warramiri call and produced their own variations, following a pattern which Morphy (1983;1990) and Keen (1994) suggest is a feature of the *Yolngu* mythological/religious system. Within a framework of mutual agreement, collectives split up along various lines promoting the concept of unity in diversity.

Yet there was some concern locally about the direction being taken by the Warramiri leaders. While there were no outright objections to the Warramiri treaty plan, it is fair to say that some community members did not

understand Burrumarra's motives nor the flag's deeper significance. The flag is a *rangga* emblem, and as such, knowledge of its layers of meaning are restricted. But there was also symbolic value in the way Burrumarra concealed details about *Birrinydji* in his press releases to the nation. He was, I think, implying the need for a relationship, on an Australia-wide scale, where non-Aboriginal newcomers must consult with the Aboriginal land owners in order to find the truth, just as in Aboriginal society one must follow the law of elders to gain knowledge about the land and its meaning.

With the Warramiri Treaty proposal, Burrumarra saw a chance to enshrine the rights of Aborigines in Australian law, rather than in narrative. For his generation, the primary task at hand was to seek an answer to the question, what is to be the place of Aborigines in contemporary social and political life? Both the Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land and the Treaty proposal were the product of such labours, and for Burrumarra, *Birrinydji* was an inspiration in both cases. Changes in Government legislation to clearly outline respective rights within a framework of mutual co-operation would bring about a unity between peoples which once is said to have existed in *Yolngu* lands at the 'beginning of time'.

While Burrumarra was locally described as a master 'politician', he had limited knowledge of the processes of law and the constitutional reform necessary to bring about the changes he desired. The Warramiri Treaty proposal was seen by him as either a means of initiating or inspiring discussion on the need for a treaty between Aborigines and non-Aborigines in Australia, or in place of one. Naively perhaps, he tended to over-estimate the position of the Warramiri as spokespersons for all Aborigines, and his belief that other Aborigines would follow suit and design their own reconciliation flags was probably misguided.

Yet following on from Coombs (1994), the efforts of the Warramiri leaders need to be seen as an expression of a desire for a 'deeper act of recognition' dealing with questions of Aboriginal self-government between all Aborigines across Australia. As Coombs (*N.T. News*, September 5, 1994:2) says, such an act would seek 'the resolution of the conflict created by white occupation in 1788 and the continuing dispossession and destruction of Aborigines and their society'. For the Warramiri, this conflict began perhaps a hundred years earlier, with the arrival of 'Macassans' on Arnhem

Land shores. But the process of dealing with others in ways that reinforce and reflect unity and diversity is well established in *Yolngu* cosmology. For Burrumarra, the desire was for non-Aborigines to understand this process and work hand in hand with *Yolngu* to achieve this goal.

9.2 Warramiri Cosmology

A study of Warramiri cosmology threw light on the ways one might approach statements which come from relatively narrow *Mala* perspectives, and yet purport to be of relevance not only for *Yolngu*, but all Aboriginal people.

'Clans' or *Mala*, as Morphy (1988b:265) says, are central to the way *Yolngu* talk about and act in the world. People calling themselves Warramiri exercise collective rights of ownership in a set of designs and a set of countries associated with those designs (Morphy 1984:266). Yet there are considerable difficulties in pin-pointing the identity of any collective, as Keen's (1994) work highlights. In living memory for instance, the various sub-groups which make up the Warramiri have been re-ordered.

The Warramiri domain is on the sea-land boundary, but their totemic identity is tied to the coral reef and open sea. Major bodies of Warramiri *Rom* are all associated with salt water. For instance the whale is a product of the saltwater itself, the sea floor is associated with *Ngulwardo* and the coral reef with *Marryalyan*. *Birrinydji* has a cave on the sea floor which is exposed during king times.

Burrumarra saw the Warramiri world as encompassing all those lands where the totemic whale travelled at the 'beginning of time'. Likewise, *Birrinydji's* influence extended to all peoples known or dreamed about by the *Yolngu*, and this has allowed Burrumarra the opening he needed in claiming the authority to speak for all Aborigines in his call for a treaty.

For Burrumarra, *Birrinydji* was not a pivotal character in a 'cargo cult' and this belief did not emerge as a result of contact with 'Macassans'. *Birrinydji* has always been in the land. Contact narratives deal with a wide range of issues, and not merely the presence of outsiders. *Birrinydji* beliefs are relevant at personal, *Mala*, and moiety levels of 'membership', and are concerned with origins, history, the after-life, and *Mala* alliances, amongst other things. Just as the *dhuwa* moiety has *Djang'kawu* and *Waawilag*

(*Gunapipi*) as the most significant ancestral beings, the *yirritja* moiety has *Lany'tjun* (and his emissaries) and *Birrinydji*.

Birrinydji defines the *yirritja* moiety in relation to the *dhuwa* moiety, and strengthens the separation that exists between the two. Its significance therefore is as much about 'Macassans' and others, as it is about *Yolngu*, and who they are in terms of each other. For instance, the 'real owners' of the whale are said to be the 'totem hunters', yet these stories are the basis of *Mala* creational laws and of alliances between the Warramiri, Munyuku, Yalukal, Gumatj and Lamamirri *Mala*. The *Wurramu* is a legacy of *Birrinydji*, and this law is shared by various *yirritja Mala*, but is also the basis of a vision of 'company' between *Murrnginy Yolngu* and 'Macassans', being based on the 'memory' of performance of a ceremony by 'early Macassans' at Dholtji in the distant past.

The strategy of *Yolngu* political action, that of unity in diversity within and between *Mala* in the moiety, was evident in the way Aborigines approached the subject of Christianity, as it was in Burrumarra's treaty plan. As Morphy (1990) said, it is about increasing the number of people one is related to either through exchange or marriage or alliance, while ensuring one's autonomy is maintained. There are a number bodies of *Rom* in north-east Arnhem Land which refer to such a process. In the *Ngaarra* ceremony for the Wangurri and Warramiri *Mala*, people split up on the basis of whether they are sea or land people (Warner 1969), and Coombs (1994) speaks of how the mixing of fresh and saltwater is a metaphor for the unity of *Yolngu* within the moiety.

In the treaty proposal Burrumarra developed this idea further. He saw the flag as a vehicle for symbolising the unity of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians, and this reflecting actual laws to be put in place to ensure the recognition of *Yolngu* rights.

9.3 The Warramiri and the 'Other'

Mythologies of contact, Beckett (1993) says, embody a paradox. In a narrative 'dialogue' with the 'Other', Aborigines seek to define the relationship between parties in ways which suggest simultaneously an association with, and a separation from the 'Other'. The way Christianity has been handled by *Yolngu* reflects this, and it provided a perspective from which to view bodies of law such as *Birrinydji* and *Walitha'walitha* and their

significance in Warramiri social action. In the Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land in 1957, for instance, there had been a reinterpretation of the past to allow a place for Christian beliefs in the Aboriginal world view. Simultaneously however, it was an attempt to achieve 'membership' for *Yolngu* in the wider community, but it was also a claim for recognition of *Yolngu* ownership of their cultural heritage. As Lattas (1992b:30) says, belief in Christianity is an attempt at reclaiming one's existence, and of owning the truths responsible for who one is. Through appropriations, there is an attempt to find out what empowers the 'Other' so as to alleviate inequality (Lattas 1992b:36).

This same duality appeared to be reflected in the ways that Aborigines perceived of their dealings with all 'waves' of contact with the 'Other', and I initially approached the subject of *Birrinydji* by looking at the recorded view in the literature that the *yirritja* moiety was innovative and the *dhuwa* moiety conservative, to see how this placed the Warramiri in relation to outsiders.

It was firmly stated to me by the Warramiri leaders that the *yirritja* association with the new and innovative and *Murrnginy* 'ownership' of laws pertaining to the existence of 'Macassans' and others, has seen some coastal *yirritja* leaders playing an important mediating role in dealings with non-Aborigines over such things as the establishment of mission settlements and in Church affairs generally (Burrumarra, Mungurrawuy, Makarrwola, Badanga, Djawa, Birrinydjawuy etc). Burrumarra referred to this association with the new, and the desire to incorporate outsiders within the framework of *Yolngu* law, as the legacy of *Birrinydji*. He said, "The policy we have in relation to *Balanda* is the same now as it was in the beginning. This is the policy of *Birrinydji*."

As the senior Warramiri elder, Burrumarra believed that *Birrinydji* spoke through him, as it had through his father, and his father before him, He was in the image of *Birrinydji*, and in living and acting in a particular way, he affirmed this identity. Through this law both Burrumarra and Liwukang saw themselves as having a mandate for the participation in negotiations with the Government over such things as land and sea rights, and it was not unexpected that they should be involved in treaty deliberations. Indeed, many people at Elcho island, from both the *dhuwa* and

the *yirritja* moieties said that it was right that the Warramiri should lead the way.

Burrumarra saw himself as following a tradition instituted by Bukulatjpi, the historical leader of the Warramiri from whom all Warramiri *Mala* members are descended. In each generation, one *Yolngu* acts as spokesperson for *Birrinydji's* law, in Burrumarra's view. Following Burrumarra's death late in 1994, Liwukang has taken on this role.

The mediating role of the Warramiri, and their complex views on the contact, sees them sometimes being referred to as *Ngapagi* by other *Yolngu*, a reference to their 'white' past. Yet the Dhalwangu also share the 'inside' law of *Birrinydji* with the Warramiri and both the Gumatj and Gupapuyngu *Mala* have '*Birrinydji* information'. So while Burrumarra tended to emphasise the exclusive place of the Warramiri in terms of *Birrinydji*, it is not as clear cut as this. The fact that Burrumarra's knowledge in this area came from men and women of both *dhuwa* and *yirritja Mala*, highlights this fact (see McIntosh 1994).

The *Yolngu* have not resisted bringing narratives of the 'Other' into the Dreaming, as appears to have been the case in other parts of the country (see Beckett 1993). Whale hunters are the 'Other' and yet Warramiri Aborigines are the whale hunter in death, and the performance of ceremonies associated with their activities is a means of affirming Aboriginal rights to land. In one view, the *Bayini* are transformations of totemic beings, and they brought Aborigines 'up to date' on *Birrinydji's* command, yet they also represent the way Aborigines were once in other perspectives, and highlight the fact that the 'Other' possesses those things which should belong to Aborigines. It was this view that Warramiri leaders were confronting in the Treaty Proposal.

So the Warramiri flag Treaty proposal was an act of both political and cosmological reconciliation. It was an attempt to re-assert Warramiri cultural legitimacy and identity, and in the process, affirm what was seen to be the rightful place of the *Yolngu* in terms of the 'Other'.

9.4 Myth versus History in a *Yolngu* Context

Lévi-Staussian structuralism pre-supposes that Aborigines are caught in a 'timeless' order and unable to see beyond it. Yet as Keen (1993:98) says,

"Does not a sequence from Abiding events to the present, such as the tracing of an extended lineage to the Beings who performed Abiding events, suggest temporality?" Rudder (1993) referred to the *Yolngu* placing events in a framework leading back to the *Wangarr* period, and how events from an 'actual' past and the ancestral past, may overlap and merge or may be considered separately from one another. Burrumarra for instance made reference to a time before Christianity, before the 'fall', before *Birrinydji* and before *Lany'tjun* and *Djang'kawu*, right back to the coming of the totemic whale. He was quite explicit in some cases. He said, "the whale came first and then *Birrinydji*," or, in referring to another aspect of Warramiri history, "*Birrinydji* was first, and the *Wurramu* later".

Burrumarra's actions in creating the Flag Treaty proposal relate to the 'memory' of the complex ways in which the Warramiri came to terms with the experience of others in history. In a literature review in Chapter Three, I showed that Burrumarra was not alone in suggesting that past contacts between the *Yolngu* and the 'Other' were divided into various 'waves', even though such divisions are rarely referred to today. 'Totem hunters' were 'brothers' for the *Yolngu* and 'owners' of the whale and octopus. The *Bayini* were bringers of law, but again associated with 'timeless' traditions of the land. 'Macassans', on the other hand, were a potential threat to Aboriginal law, and their actions, and also those of Japanese and Europeans, were interpreted in relation to the view that what they possessed, once belonged to Aborigines.

Yolngu accounts of the past are therefore a complex mix of both references to the 'unchanging eternal' and also constantly changing 'outside' interpretations relevant to a particular time and place. For instance *Birrinydji* was said to have been in Warramiri territory before he emerged at Gurrumurru or elsewhere. Bukulatjpi, the charismatic Warramiri leader was the first to pick up *Birrinydji's* swords and 'do *Birrinydji's* dance'. As Keen (1993:99) says, "We are dealing here with conceptualisation's that are comparable with, but different from, 'Western' concepts."

A tension exists between Burrumarra's highly perspectival and contextualised representations of encounters with the 'Other' and northern Australian historiography in which Aborigines are the 'Other'. In this thesis the most important question has been to ask why Aborigines represent the

past as they have done, and why certain categories have been used at different times.

I showed that *Birrinydji* is constituted in the ever-changing nature of relations with the 'Other'. This body of 'inside' and 'timeless' law, in contemporary Warramiri interpretations, provides a reference point for coming to terms with the meaning of the 'Macassan' era and all other contacts down to the present, explaining the presence of the 'man of iron' in the treaty flag proposal.

A major hurdle in reviewing *Yolngu* statements about the past was also coming to terms with highly ambiguous expressions such as 'Macassan'. Warramiri definitions tend to associate the term with trepangers and the last 'wave' of contact, but for other *Yolngu* in recent times, this word is applied to all 'waves' of pre-European or pre-Japanese contact, including the *Bayini*. Burrumarra's version tells us that trepangers were distinguished as being exploitative, and that groups perceived to have come to Arnhem Land prior to this were marked by different factors, eg. being seen as co-owners or 'bringers' of law.

At times, it was Burrumarra's intention to attempt to create an impression of a seamless whole in his presentation of the past - a consistent, unambiguous picture, but this was an illusion, and he admitted to not fully knowing the complex ways in which the various 'waves' of visitors were inter-related. He added however that this was not important. At other times he acknowledged that while certain perspectives on totemic law were fundamental in terms of Warramiri identity, he admitted to not believing in them. For instance he doubted that the Warramiri dead travelled on the back of a whale to the islands of the north, or that the shooting star signifies that someone is about to die and their spirit to going up to *Walitha'walitha's* paradise, and 'evil' is coming down.

In seeking an explanation for the separation of 'Macassans' and the *Bayini* in accounts of the past, I looked at the various ways in which outsiders have been portrayed in the literature since the 1920s. The existence of the *Bayini* was raised in the 1940s but not in the 1960s, and in the 1990s, the old narratives reappeared in a new guise. A common argument of western academics, as stated, is that the rich and varied stories associated with this 'wave' of contact are the result of observations by Aborigines in

Macassar. This view, while undoubtedly plausible, is overly simplistic. I was able to show that the use of a term such as *Bayini* was a means of not referring to the sacred laws of *Birrinydji*. As stated earlier, this body of *Rom* is constituted in the everchanging relationships between Aborigines and the 'Other', and consequently, informants' comments on the past have been constantly changing over time. Unless this fact is recognised, a significant amount of the recorded data on the 'memory' of 'pre-Macassans' and 'Macassans' is almost unfathomable, as the historian Macknight found.

Historians and anthropologists were not told of *Birrinydji* in the past, and an emerging view in the literature is that the *Bayini* are an entirely fictitious creation associated with the memory of the 'Macassans'. Following this line of thought, we see taken as truth the view that the whole of the northern Australian coast has been thoroughly examined and there are no other sites which may cause one to re-think Aboriginal-'Macassan' relations (see the *Bulletin* June 28 1994). This overlooks the fact that it is Aborigines that guide researchers in their treks across Arnhem Land. To a large extent they determine what will or will not be seen or recorded. We do not know, and cannot expect ever to know all that happened in the past. How, for instance are we to deal with visitors who had a level of technology similar to Aborigines of the time, and whose presence has not been 'discovered' yet? Knowledge appears to be revealed only as the need arises, and then, as the 'invention of tradition' school, suggests, it is subjected to selective use and interpretation for specific reasons.

One cannot separate myth and history in a search for meaning. With the *Bayini* for example, we are dealing with what is deemed to be the 'pre-Macassan' era, and yet the subject is the basis of a law which is part of the 'unchanging' *Yolngu* cosmos, and relevant in negotiations for a treaty in Australia today. Can we concentrate only on the printed records pertaining to the activities of 'Macassan' fisherman and ignore as fictitious, the power figures represented by the *bunggawa Luki*, the 'King' of Dholtji; or *Djamanggi*, the Captain of *Birrinydji's* boat? The 'fall' is a significant case in point. It appears to be an accepted truth that people died in considerable numbers at Dholtji at some distant point in the past. Yet in discussing this burial site, *Yolngu* say that the people buried below were followers of *Birrinydji's* law, and it is believed that they enjoyed a lifestyle which people today only dream of. Each aspect therefore confirms the 'truth' of the other. The site is seen to be proof of *Birrinydji's* presence, and *Birrinydji* is why

visitors were in Arnhem Land in the first place. One could say also that the very existence of *Birrinydji* relies on the separation of 'Macassans' and the *Bayini* in time. How could one explain the 'white' Warramiri past without such a story? Historical events have been transformed into 'timeless' narratives associated with the *Wangarr* period, and this allows the narrator to make broad generalisations about his understandings of the past, whether or not they are considered accurate in a western academic sense.

9.5 Changelessness in Change and 'Membership and Remembrance'

Flux is the norm in Aboriginal life, but some *Yolngu* stress that there has been 'changelessness in change' and that Aboriginal law does not change like non-Aboriginal law (Rudder 1993). There is thus a tension between this perceived 'timelessness' and the continuing efforts of the *Yolngu* to reconcile cosmology and experience. Warner (1932:481) for instance says that *Yolngu* resisted outside influences, and yet he also says that there had been a tendency to substitute 'whites' for 'Macassans' in the totemic system (Warner 1932:493). Such incorporation in the first instance suggests not resistance, but an attempt to control and contain the new. Thomson (1949a:60) similarly stresses the conservatism of *Yolngu* but shows how they have elevated certain items of foreign origin to the level of totemic emblem. Even in recent accounts (eg. Rudder 1993; Keen 1994), the influence of 'Macassans' has been downplayed as being limited to ceremonial complexes of a few *Mala* groups, and while I agree that contact did not alter the fundamental basis of Aboriginal society, this does not mean its effect can be casually dismissed.

Both Bos (1988a; 1988b) and Rudder (1993) share the view that what is 'outside' is necessarily a manifestation of the 'inside' and what is new is perceived as always having been. Bos (1988b) rightly rejects the view of Aborigines being caught in a 'timeless' and unchanging cosmos, and he dismisses as deficient, the 'change through incorporation' view in which minor changes make take place in an otherwise stable and unchanging structure, even though this appears to be the way some *Yolngu* themselves refer to the process (see Marika-Munungurritj 1991).

'Timelessness' was suggested by Burrumarra for instance when he said, "The policy we have towards the *Balanda* is the same now as in the beginning", or that the Flag Treaty proposal was '*Birrinydji*'s plan for

Australia'. Such quotes embody a contradiction however. On the one hand Burrumarra was stating that there has been no change over time. On the other he acknowledged a complex past which can be viewed both diachronically or synchronically, but which was re-ordered and evaluated in the light of contemporary realities.

For reasons such as this, the catch phrase, 'changelessness in change' is accurate but fails to highlight the ways in which people actively attempt to direct the thoughts and actions of the people along specific desired paths, as was the case in the Adjustment Movement and the Elcho Island Christian Revival.

A study of Warramiri cosmology in Chapter Two showed indeed that the Warramiri cultural repertoire is something that is open to change. While *Mala* and moiety narratives posit a 'timeless' ideal in terms of relationships between collectives, this is far from the truth. By following *Lany'tjun* there should be equality, unity and reciprocity between *yirritja* groups, but as Warner (1969) documented, warfare was continual in pre-mission times. Peace and harmony is something to be strived for, and *Mala* alliance narratives 'map' the ways in which this has been on-going.

Change is not limited to what can fit in with established forms either, although there were hints of how new formulations extended or pushed the boundaries of these forms, ie in the links between *Marryalyan* and *Birrinydji* both working in their 'factories' under the sea, and between *Lany'tjun* and *Birrinydji* in the idea of the law spreading out from one area to all other *Mala*. As my data have shown, unique experiences such as the arrival of outsiders on the coast or the 'fall' have led to the emergence of new myth, ritual and forms of social organisation, and people have worked at achieving an impression of continuity in terms of the Dreaming. Thus for everything that one might consider to be acknowledged as the legacy of foreign contacts, eg. the dug-out canoe, axe or tamarind tree, there are alternative interpretations which link their origin to Arnhem Land creational beings. Even *Walitha'walitha* and the *Wurramu* have their equivalents in both *dhuwa* and other *yirritja* mythologies, Burrumarra said. No body of contact-related *Rom* is considered as being foreign, even though it may have been borrowed from the 'Other' or contain references to their historical presence on Aboriginal land.

My interest however was in the ways the people themselves talk about the process of incorporation and change. Morphy's (1990) division between myths of creation, which involve the actions of mythical beings and the transformation of the landscape, and myths of inheritance, involving the institutions of humans and the transfer of rights in *maḍayin* from the founding ancestors to present populations, allowed a deeper view of the ways in which *Yolngu* conceptually deal with the new. The interplay of such categories showed how myth is adjusted to accord with political process. As Morphy (1990:326) said, myths of inheritance, lying as they do between the human world and the world of ancestral beings, allow the ancestral domain to remain independent of the exigencies of everyday life. *Yolngu*, however, do not use such terms to describe this process. Rather, people such as Buthimang Dayngumbu and Burrumarra used the English words 'membership and remembrance' to convey the view that social or political re-orderings in the *Yolngu* world do not necessarily result in cosmological change.

Burrumarra's account of the changing nature of *Birrinydji* since mission times was an example. In the Adjustment Movement, Burrumarra spoke of how there was to be a 'changing of Genesis' in order to bring together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal *Rom*. *Birrinydji* had become largely outdated at a pan-*Yolngu* level of significance yet it still formed part of the socially constituted nature of the Warramiri elders, being relevant to their own historical experience in 'post-Macassan' and pre-settlement days. In a mission environment, with Aborigines and non-Aborigines living together in a single community, the relevance of these traditions came into question. Drawing on the views of Rasnake (1988), people approached the problem of living with the 'Other' with a view of transformation, but also with a view to the past. This is 'membership' and 'remembrance'. New social arrangements and interpretations of law selectively 'remember' what has gone before as a means of achieving a sense of outward changelessness, though simultaneously promoting one's own interests in relation to the 'Other'. Thus Burrumarra said that followers of *Birrinydji* should be Christians, and beliefs such as *Walitha'walitha* are interpreted in relation to Christianity.

This ordering of beliefs in terms of the social categories they primarily relate to was evident in the flag design itself, as mentioned earlier. 'Membership' and 'remembrance' thus allows one to understated how

Christianity has come to be seen as the foundation of the *Yolngu* cosmos for some Elcho Islanders, as discussed by Keen (1994).

Other examples of this process were evident in discussions on the significance of certain contact narratives. Warramiri informants spoke of the various 'waves' of external influence either as discrete bodies of law, or in relation to more all-embracing 'envelopes'. Making reference to the way the Berndts (1954) placed contact into a number of separate categories, Burrumarra said 'They all come under *Birrinydji*.' The whale has *Birrinydji's* iron furnace within it, and the 'totem hunter's' technology was the legacy of *Birrinydji*, but each remained of relevance to discrete forums and has separate though overlapping sets of meanings, as Keen (1994) discusses in relation to major *Yolngu* ceremonials. *Mala*, likewise, have varying interests in these laws and rituals, and Burrumarra used the expressions 'licence', 'policy', and '*bunggul*' to differentiate levels of interest.

With the Warramiri Treaty proposal, leaders were looking at all Aboriginal groups Australia-wide constructing flags relevant to their own traditions, within a framework of agreement on a desired or ideal relationship between Aborigines and non-Aborigines and the land and sea. Burrumarra, in his talks with the *Yolngu*, emphasised that shared belief in Christianity alone was not enough to protect Aboriginal rights, and he was looking for change at a far more comprehensive level, ie. in Australian law. In creating their own flags, each Aboriginal group would be united in the view that there was a need for reconciliation, but their respective histories and interests would be acknowledged.

Such a finding allows comment to be passed on Swain's (1993) view on the nature of change brought about by external contacts. He suggests that there has been a major ontological shift in time away from site-based beliefs, to a focus on All-Beings removed from specific locations. As I showed in Chapter Eight, and building on the findings of Keen (1994), even the adoption of Christianity in north-east Arnhem Land has not resulted in changes in views on the sanctity of place. It has, like the emergence of *Birrinydji*, been a response to the challenge of domination by the 'Other', ie. the paradoxical search for autonomy through incorporation in the wider society. Links to place remain essential in affirming identity in any new social configuration that eventuates.

9.6 Conclusion

The *Birrinydji* legacy is directly related to the 'memory' of contacts with 'Macassans'. While this body of law is constantly being re-interpreted in the light of changing political and social realities, it reflects 'timeless' principles of unity and reciprocity. This is a fundamental aspect of the *Yolngu* mytho-religious system.

Aspects of the 'unchanging eternal' of *Yolngu* law have been made public by the Warramiri leaders in order to try and bring about change in the status of *Yolngu* in relation to *Balanda*. The Warramiri have drawn inspiration from *Birrinydji* and *Walitha'walitha* with their idea of reconciliation via a flag proposal and in their call for the recognition of *Yolngu* rights in the Arafura Sea. The move towards universalistic forms of religious expression such as Christianity, and the interest in re-newing links with 'Macassans' via a contemporary ritual exchange, are also, for the Warramiri, intimately linked to their understanding of contact-related bodies of *Rom*.

As Burrumarra suggested, when there is a treaty between Aborigines and non-Aborigines and when Aboriginal rights are acknowledged and respected, *Birrinydji's* purpose will have been fulfilled. He could 'put down his swords.'

"We want the *Balanda* to realise that the law of old, this has to go. We want *Balanda* to talk about what they were doing in the past and to say to themselves, this was wrong. We cannot do it any more...It's like this. If the Governor-General Bill Hayden reaches out to us, then we will do the *bunggul* and bring him in. We can share the country between us."

DHAWAL'YURRA YUWALKKU

The Search for Truth

A proposal for a new Australian flag by the Warramirri Aboriginal People of Dhultji in North East Arnhem Land.

The Warramirri of Dhultji see a need for a new flag for Australia, a flag for the future, one that recognises that Australia has a long history and one that points to a time when white and black Australians will live alongside each other, working hand in hand for a common goal.

The present flag does not give any recognition to the place of Aborigines in the past or present.

This proposal represents a wish for the future of the nation, an end to disunity; an end to race hatred and a beginning of a new way of looking at what lies ahead for our country.

We see this proposal as being in place of a treaty, or if you use Warramirri language, a makarata. It would no longer be appropriate.

A national flag which incorporates the traditional designs of the original inhabitants of Australia is a recognition of the place of Aborigines in the hearts and minds of the population.

We seek an end to divisions and ask for your assistance to make this dream a reality.

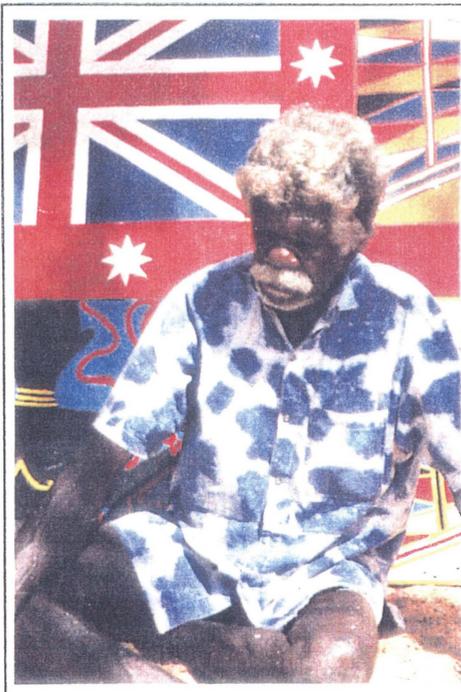


Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people across Australia are invited to put forward suggestions concerning the design of this flag. If you have a painting or design, please write to David Burrumarra, CI- Post Office, Elcho Island, N.T. 0822.

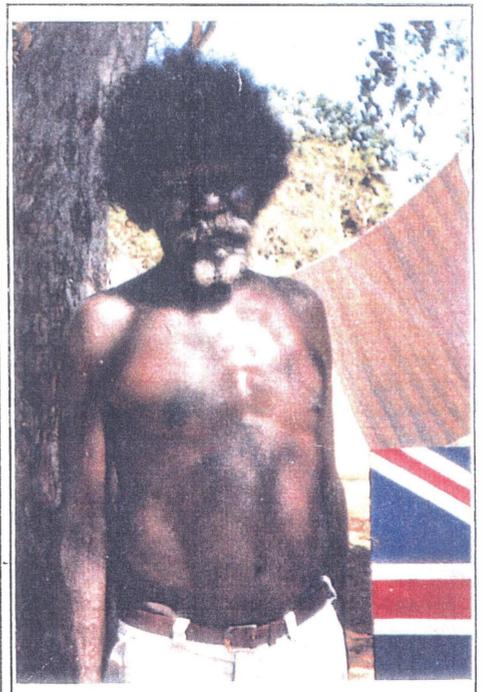
*David Burrumarra Bukulatjpi, MBE
George Liwukang Bukulatjpi
George Berripang Bukulatjpi
(Directors, Dhultji Warramirri Corporation)
Ian McIntosh (Secretary)*



George Berripang Bukulatjpi



David Burrumarra Bukulatjpi, MBE



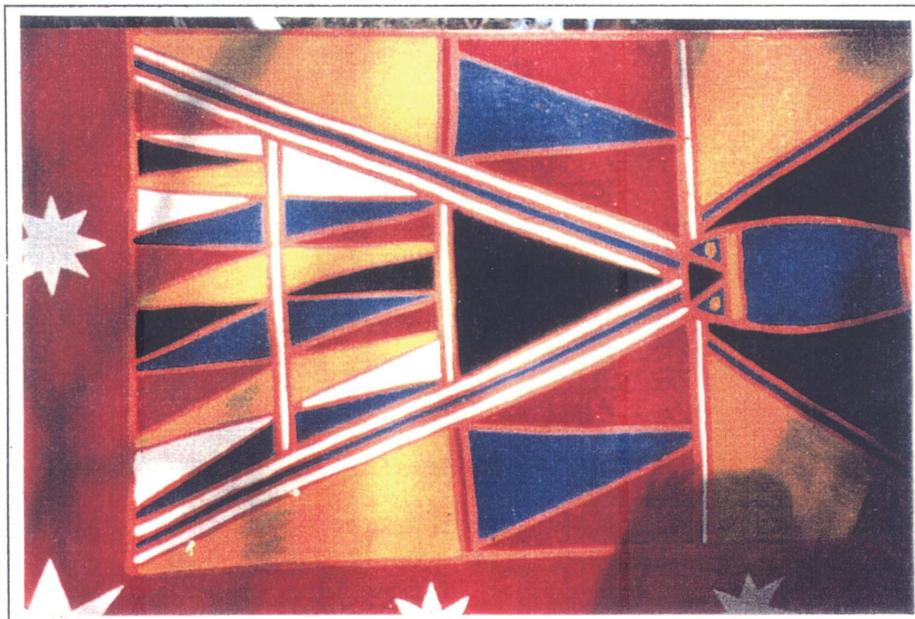
George Liwukang Bukulatjpi



Proposed Flag



Unity



Law - Octopus Motif

Union Jack

The Union Jack has been retained in the corner of the flag as it represents the spirit of the settlement and development of the country. Putting aside the 'ugly' history of colonialism, the Union Jack remains a symbol of the supreme nature of the holy spirit, and the coming of Christianity to Australia.

Unity

The Warramirri of Dhultji have sacred cultural traditions which link them with all peoples of the earth. This tradition, based on ancient contacts across the seas, represents a hope for the future, a hope for unity between all. This belief is now presented to the multicultural nation of Australia by the Warramirri in the form of a very special image. Its message is: 'Strength lies in honour, harmony and love.'

Law

The reason why the octopus is included here is twofold. First, along with the whale, the octopus is of the highest significance to the Warramirri clan who have many stories concerning its power and purpose. As guardian of the sea, its arms reach out to the four corners of the world, bringing relief to those in distress.

Secondly, the octopus will remind Australians that they should be sensitive to the natural environment. People will continue to shoot kangaroo, eat crayfish, kill sharks and chop down trees, etc. but it is important to remember that living things, large and small, have a place in Aboriginal mythology. Each and every one is in some way associated with laws which belong to this country and this country alone. The message of this panel is: 'Remember the law and the law makers.'

Eureka

Holding the four panels together as a single unit is the 'Eureka' symbol. It is often seen as being incompatible with the Union Jack, yet English, Irish and other European descendents are living side by side today in Australia under one law. So it must be with white and black Australians. We are one people despite our diverse cultural beliefs and traditions. This is the message of this part of the design: 'We can and must live together under one law under one flag.'

APPENDICES

Appendix 2: Orthography Used for Spelling *Yolngu* Words

The orthography used throughout this thesis is that developed by Lowe (1975) and which is now used as the basis for spelling in all *Yolngu* communities in north-east Arnhem Land. The work of Zorc (1986) has also been a major resource, and in the many cases where words were not recorded, I have used the tables of Rudder (1993) which appear below, as a means of representing the words in a way that enables them to be pronounced with as much accuracy as possible.

Consonants

	bilabial	alveo -dental	inter -dental	alveolar	retroflex	velar	glottal
nasal	m	ny	nh	n	ɳ	ng	
voiced	b	dj	dh	d	ɖ	g	
voiceless	p	tj	th	t	ʈ	k	

Vowels

Short	Long
a - as in 'ado'	aa - as in 'father'
i - as in 'sit'	e - as in 'see'
u - as in 'put'	o - as in 'poor'

Liquids

alveolar -	l	
retroflex -	ɭ	r
trill -		rr
continuants -	w	y

Appendix 3: Totemic Affiliations of *Murrnginy Mala*

Warner (1958) specifies high, low and *garma* (public) totems for a number of *YoIngu* collectives. These have been organised into what Berndt and Berndt (1954) referred to as the *Matha/Mala* (language/clan) system. Of note is the fact that the Warramiri-Budalpudal is not represented.

Warramiri/Mandjikay

High Totems

black duck egg; large basket, *workaitja*

Low Totems

crayfish; barramundi; whale; whale rib; dugong rib

Garma Totems

canoe, mast, red cloud, bamboo, *wurramu*, evening star, paperbark tree, mangrove flower, heron.

Wangurri/Mandjikay

High Totems

Stone creature, from son of barramundi; mangrove log; cough; white trunked tree; black duck egg

Low Totems

barramundi; mangrove fish

Garma Totems

canoe, mast, red cloud, bamboo, *wurramu*, evening star, paperbark tree, mangrove flower, heron.

Lamamirri/ Malardudu (Malawur)

High Totems

black duck egg; large basket, *workaitja*

Low Totems

whale rib; whale fin; *Banatja*, *Garrawarrk*

Garma Totems

Canoe, mast, red cloud, bamboo, *wurramu*, evening star, paperbark tree, mangrove flower, heron.

Gumatj/Ganyawu

High Totems

root of paperbark tree

Low Totems

bee; honey stick; orchid; fresh water turtle; lily; anchor; kangaroo tail

Garma Totems

canoe, mast, red cloud, bamboo, *wurramu*, evening star, paperbark tree, mangrove flower, heron.

Dhalwangu/Narkala

High Totems

root of paperbark tree

Low Totems

bee; honey stick; orchid; fresh water turtle; lily; anchor

Guyamilili/Gupupuyngu (Mandjikay)

High Totems

crayfish; fresh water turtle; mangrove log

Low Totems

barramundi; mangrove fish; black duck egg; black duck

Garma Totems

canoe, mast, red cloud, bamboo, *wurramu*, evening star, paperbark tree, mangrove flower, heron.

Gupapuyngu/Daygurrurr

High Totems

wild Bee; cough; banyan tree

Low Totems

orchid; paperbark tree; bee hive in tree roots; tree whose trunk is used for making canoes; stick inside bee's nest

Garma Totems

emu; root of vine; bush vine; opossum fur string; small stringybark tree

Golpa/Yaernungo (Mandjikay)

High Totems

stone creature, from son of barramundi; mangrove log; cough; white trunked tree; black duck egg

Low Totems

barramundi; mangrove fish

Garma Totems

canoe, mast, red cloud, bamboo, *wurramu*, evening star, paperbark tree, mangrove flower, heron.

Yalukal/Yaernungo (Mardagarrk)

High Totems

black duck egg; large basket, *workaitja*

Low Totems

crayfish; barramundi; whale; whale rib; dugong rib

Garma Totems

canoe, mast, red cloud, bamboo, *wurramu*, evening star, paperbark tree, mangrove flower, heron.

Appendix 4: Songs Displaying External Influences or Referred to in the Text

POTTERY - From the *Bayini/Macassar Song Cycle*. Berndt and Berndt (1947:135).

Cooking rice on the fire; pouring it into a pot from a bag.
 Pouring rice from a bag: rice, rice, for food...
 Rice with its husk, pouring it there into earthen pots:
 Into pots of ant-hill earth...
 White, clean food, clean rice...
 Removing its husk and pouring it into pots: making it clean.
 Rice from that bag: food from those rice-filled bags...
 Rice sticking in lumps, white scum on the boiling water.
 Rice with its stems and husks...
 Food poured from the bag into the termite-mound pot...
 Pouring water, washing, cleaning the rice, removing the stems.

MACASSAR SONG CYCLE Song No. 90. Prau's rigging. Berndt, R.M. (1965:7)

...It hangs down, that rigging, like falling rain.
 (They were) looking at the rigging,
 hanging down from the cross-bar,
 from the top of the mast...
 (They) looked at the rigging, ropes dangling downward...

Looked at it, hanging down from the cross-bar, from the mast,
 like falling rain...
 On top of the cross-bar, hanging down to the deck,
 the sail at the mast...

Song 100 Travelling to South-east Asia. (R.M.Berndt, 1965:8)

(They) saw as they went the island of Leti, the land coming closer,
 Bamboos reaching out, clumps of bamboo...,
 Coconut 'hands' (branches) reaching out, coconut palms...,

Our own houses we see as we go, on the island of Leti.

Yes, slacken the ropes, altogether, let them hang like that turtle rope, limply.
 (We) saw coming closer, Jumanga, Gwalinga, Dangarbarang, Birindjarang (at Macassar).

Song 21 A House is Built (R.M.Berndt, 1965:6)

...The roof lies finished; it rises high, with sloping sides.
 Triangular in front view, the roof of the house is finished.
 It is good, our house, our camp...

They lie within, the (Macassan) leaders; Wonadjewa, Gurumulnga'wa, Daiungba,
 Gaiilnga'wa.

It rises high, that roof, always there at Gambuduwa, Gambumalugu, Gambudjiki.
 It is finished, with its door of coconut leaves and bamboo...

RAISING THE FLAG A version of the same song from Spillett (field notes 1990) and the Rirratingu leader of the 1970s, Wandjuk Marika (from Moyle 1974).

Spillett's recording 1991.

Wathi katika, Wathi katika.
Watha bilipata.
Tharri Tharrisami.
Gapuwala Nuka Nunu Kukasa.
Balipali nana nana.
Widirri Tuku barrana piya.
Djililili djililili etc.

Moyle's Recording of the Macassan Mast Song, 1974.

Wati katika wata bili bata:wu
wata wa:lisa kwata wa:la
Taritari sa:m misa kapalonggu
kwatajlo ki matanuna sita:la ki
mai so:lor ke ta:wula palo e ka:
pulu e ma: paripari kanana
bandaya nurumbarumba
ana'bi:lja ka'lo d boradini
sowul de duku masala bada pi:ya

Yirritja Flag Song (from Spillett, field notes, 1991).

Bandjarrngu, Yamaliny, Mattjuwi,
Datarrwanga Nirrupu, Marayarr,
Wulunkupa, Gandjarr Watamirri,
Dharwulula Gumatjanga Bandawee.

WARRAMIRI- BIRRINYDJI KNIFE SONG translated by J. Cawte (1993:44).

Ngayam djangu Latimi (I am the blade)
Ngayam djangu Djidami (I am the handle)
Ngayam djangu Wambalmi (I am the long knife)
Ngayam djangu Butumi (I am the wood for the handle)
Ngayam djangu Rrawarra (I am the steel template)

WARRAMIRI WHALE SONG translated by J. Cawte (1993:33).

Ngayam djangu Wuymirri (I am the whale)
Ngayam djangu Bilawuymirri (The giant whale)
Ngayam djangu Bilantji (With the mighty tail)
Ngayam djangu Nalantji (My bones of coral)
Ngayam djangu Nalawanga (My mind like a man's)
Ngayam djangu Marrbulali (Clever, talented)
Ngayam djangu Marrbuyngu (Cleverest of all)

WARRAMIRI - BIRRINYDJI BOAT SONGJ. Cawte (1993:44).

Nyakung Yinderama (I established the large boat)
Nyakung Bakuulurrjtja (I established the bow)
Nyakung Djurrimba (I established the keel)
Nyakung Lulatja (I established the rudder)

WARRAMIRI - BIRRINYDJI FLAG SONG, from Cawte (1993:44).

Nyakung Bandirra
 Nyakung Banayitja
 Nyakung Djalangibu
 Nyakung Mutjungbulu
 Nyakung Garrutji

WARRAMIRI - BIRRINYDJI MAST SONG, from Cawte (1993:44).

Nyakung Banuntji
 Nyakung Bantjarrnu
 Nyakung Dadawanga
 Nyakung Yamaliny
 Nyakung Yamayarri

EASTERN YIRRIITJA SEA TIDE CYCLE OF SONGS AND DANCES. Warner (1969:409).

- (1) An island far out in the sea. [*Badu*]
- (2) Lightning that strikes out in the middle of the ocean and in the east.
- (3) Black cloud (mo-dais).
- (4) A wind coming from the sea. [north wind]
- (5) Calm sea water (ran-gu-ra).
- (6) Heavy waves on the surface of the sea (man-bui-na).
- (7) A small bird...that dives into the sea for fish (ba-lin-ta-pi).
- (8) Kingfish (guin-go-lo). [Dhinimbu]
- (9) A flat white fish (yar-war-i).
- (10) Whale. "That one who throws water like rain." (wi-ma-ri, nal-lan-gi, mar-ping-o).
- (11) Diamond fish (ring-ga). [Malara].
- (12) Crocodile. "The crocodile sings lightning when it comes in the east and that's when the crocodile lays his eggs and that's when the stingray gets fat and good to eat. When that lightning comes and the rain comes that makes the sting ray fat, that makes the crocodile lay his eggs. Before that time the sting ray has no fat and he is not worth eating."
- (13) A plank floating on the tide and coming toward the shore (pa-pung, probably a Malay word).
- (14) A hollow log floating on the incoming tide (u-lo-ba-ri).
- (15) A small oyster found on the plank (rar-it-tji).
- (16) Coconuts floating on an incoming tide (ta-on-gil).
- (17) The country where the coconut, hollow log, and plank come from. "We don't know what that country is. No people are there. We only sing it because the old, old people sang it back of a turtle (near land) (go-ar-tji).
- (19) The head of a tortoise-shell turtle (wil-ar-a).
- (20) People where the coconuts come from - the east (ki-lur-o).
- (21) Paddle (mar-ra-la).
- (22) Canoe (li-pal-pa).
- (23) Noise the paddle makes on the gunwale (ma-la-o-ma).
- (24) A small bird crying out on the beach when it sees the people coming in from the canoe (go-lo-wit-pit).
- (25) Paddle (mar-ra-la).
- (26) The paddles being thrown on the beach.
- (27) Canoe rolling about on the beach with the sea hitting against it.
- (28) Men walking along the beach.
- (29) Men looking for turtle eggs in the sand beach.

- (30) Men following the tracks of turtles going toward the nest.
- (31) The turtle nest (ka-tji-ng).
- (32) Turtle eggs. the men are drinking the white of the turtle egg (i-di-ka).
- (33) Basket (kan-nan-gir). The men are putting the eggs in the basket.
- (34) Putting the basket on the shoulder and carrying it down to the shade.
- (35) Putting the eggs down in the shade.
- (36) Walking fast down the large path to the well.
- (37) Cleaning the dirt and refuse out of the well.
- (38) Washing oneself with the water because of the dirt on the body from cleaning out the well.
- (39) Taking off ornaments and drying them on the well.
- (40) Going back to the turtle beach, cleaning off dirt under the big trees.
- (41) Gathering wood for a fire.
- (42) Fire burning.
- (43) Coals of a fire smoking.
- (44) People are sleepy and they sleep.
- (45) Waking up.
- (46) Smoking a cigarette. "That smoke goes up from the tobacco (na-rai-li)."
- (47) Red cloud (ri-pa). That smoke went up into the sky and made a red cloud. The red cloud song indicates the singing is completed.

Appendix 5: Dog/Macassan 'Encounter' Narratives

Story 1

Umbulka, Matingarr and Djarrk - "The Dogs of the Warumeri (Warramiri), Wangurri (Wangurri) and Darlwongo (Dhalwango)" (from Warner 1958:35).

Three dogs, [Umbulka], [Matingarr] the bitch, and [Djarrk], sat down on the beach and cried. They were *Wanggar* dogs. All three cried and cried because there was no wind. They got up and walked along the beach. As they walked they met another dog, [Bulunha], who was coming from Cape Wilberforce [Djalatjirri]. He was a Warramiri dog, while the first three were Wangurri. He spoke Warramiri.

He said to the other dogs, "You come on up to my peninsula. There is a good wind there that comes from the Golpa clan [Wessel Island]."

They went up to that point and turned their bellies to the wind. The Warramiri dog stopped there for he liked the wind so much. He then turned to stone. He can be seen there today and is a *garma* emblem rather than a *rangga*. Those Wangurri dogs went on to their home. They started for their country to find some rats. When they arrived they killed a lot of rats and ate them. When their stomachs were filled out they growled and growled.

A Wangurri man and woman came along and heard them growling. He said, "Why are you Wangurri's growling? I think maybe you come from Cape Wilberforce."

This man was a Wangurri clansman. He tried to call the dogs to him. All three dogs stood up, growled, and urinated on his feet. The dogs' tails stood up straight and their hair bristled. The dogs jumped on the two and bit their legs. They continued biting them until they killed them. They then went to the humans and smelled them. They knew that they were dead. They scratched dirt on them and buried them. They made them lie down like two *ranggas* where they are today on the other side of Arnhem Bay. The *ranggas* now are not men emblems but dog *rangga* emblems. The dogs who had killed the humans ran away into the bush. They went on to the country back of Caledon Bay. They found another dog there called Lu-pan-a. That dog was a Dhalwangu clansman. All of them heard a man cutting down timber. They were frightened and all ran away into the bush. They went in the bush and stayed. They became wild dogs. "We will be dingoes now," they said.

The country they stayed in is Dhalwangu country now. It is the Mar-da bush country.

Additional Information

Burrumarra says that this story represents a 'starter' in the series of stories of dogs and their relationship with foreigners. The man cutting down trees was perhaps a *Balanda* or Macassan. Warner says the dogs are Wangurri. Burrumarra says they are both Wangurri and Warramiri.

Story 2

Djuranydjura of Howard Island - "Dog and the Macassans" (from R.M. & C. H. Berndt 1989:418)

He set off from Djiliwiri, that dog called [Djuranydjura]. He went on, and he made a stringy bark canoe. He made it, lifted it upon his shoulder and went on farther. He went on, and when he was half way there he put it down and rested. He carried it, he rested. He said, "This canoe, it's my spirit, and it's like a tree standing in the bush with two legs." [I'll leave it there.] He stood the canoe up, and left it. "I heard movement,

noise. Macassans, working on posts for a house. Who is doing it? Macassans, *Balanda!* He trotted along on his paws, and stood up. "Who are you?" asked the two *Balanda*. He said, that dog, "I'm Djuranydjura!" "What place are you from?" "I'm from Djiliwiri!" The *Balanda* went on making the house. Dog said, "I want to come close to you, I want to see what kind of flesh you have" [what you look like from close up]. He was carrying on his head a lot of fire-sticks, and little pegs or nails for joining bark canoes. The *Balanda* asked, "What do you want? Do you want some of this cloth, or other things?" "I don't want any of that!" said Dog. "Do you want matches?" "No! I've got fire-sticks!" "How do you work them?" "I do it like this." [He showed them] "And what about your fire, how do you make it?" "Like this." "Oh, that's good, your fire! My fire-sticks take longer," said Dog. Then the *Balanda* said, "I'm going away now." "Yes? Where is your country? He looked at the fire burning; he called the names of various 'Macassan' places [as in songs that tell of Macassan visitors to the coast]. Those *Balanda* were getting ready to depart. They were pulling up the house posts, taking them away. Dog asked again, "Where is your country?" They called the names of other places, places on the Australian mainland and then their home places away to the north-west : "the fires are burning there for my [our] grandparents, sons, elder brothers, mothers, at that place." Then the *Balanda* asked, "And you, where do you sleep?" "I?" said Dog. "Yes, over that way! I sleep in the grass. I'm going away now, back to my two elder brothers, Gwaidman and Bawal." The *Balanda* put a mark on the rock, a footprint. [This was at Bam-balngur, on a great flat expanse of rock.] "I put my foot here, like an anchor, the mark of an anchor. You'll be going trotting along on your paws? Look at my footmark, look at me. But I'm going away to Yumai-ngai, Naani-ngai, Dangaraburai, Nalgoi-ngai! He went away then, Djuranydjura, and the *Balanda* went away. They went back, each of them, to their own countries.

R.M. & C. H. Berndt (1989:419), add, "Djuranydjura was sitting down. He asked, that *Balanda*," "Do you want food? Rice?" "No! No, I don't want that! I eat wallabies and goannas!" [naming various kinds] "Yes, all right. But here's this different kind of food for you. I'll put it down here for you." "No! I don't want your food. I'm going away. I have plenty of meat foods. And in the waters and along the river banks there are plenty of geese and other birds for me to eat." "All right, you go. But you'll be sleeping without fire." "My fire, my light is good!" "That's what he said, her brother Bawal. He started off, going away. The spirit of that boat was moving, out on the sea, and from there the *Balanda* threw the anchor rope and was tying it up. Maybe it was trying to get away, pulling at the rope. But Djuranydjura was running off, into the bush, home to Djiliwiri."

Additional Information

R. M. Berndt (1976) refers to *Balwal* as being the husband of *Djuranydjura*.

Story 3

Djuranydjura at Howard Island (from 'Macassan and Dog Give Each Other Fire' told by Rraying n.d.)

This story I am going to tell is about a Macassan. A long time ago, a man came to the mainland to us and he was a Macassan man. He came quickly in his prau to the place called Bambal; he landed. He went ashore and he made a house for himself. The uprights which he drove into the ground were bamboo and he planted food; he planted rice. He poured it out all over the ground into holes which he had dug. He worked and finished everything, the home and the garden, and he sat down.

Well he sat there and a dog came to him, and they were talking together. This is what the whiteman (Macassan) said to him: 'There I've given you some matches.' And the Dog turned around and the man said again, 'Here, these matches are for you.' And the Dog replied, 'Those are yours! I call my fire sticks *duttji*. He (the Macassan) sat there and he saw smoke in the sky, above his home which was called Naninynga. At his own

place there was fire burning. And he cried, 'Oh...h! My place, Murrundyjura, Guwaliinga, Dhangarrpura, is there fire there? I'm going back to the sea, to return to my own home.' And he pulled out all the uprights of his home; he pulled them out, threw them down and that was it. And he went off. He returned to his own place. So he pulled out the post of his house, and the holes are still there and the rice turned into shell middens. Those shell middens which are quite high.' M. Christie copyright. Milingimbi Literature Centre.

Additional Information

I visited this site in 1990 and 1991 and there are no shell mounds in the vicinity.

Story 4

The Dog Djuranydjura at Gambungura (from Keen 1977:165)

Long ago the Dog Djuranydjura and his wife prepared to cross the creek from Gambungura to Elcho Island in a bark canoe. They loaded it up and Djuranydjura tried to push it out. He pushed and he pulled but it would not budge. After the third attempt he succeeded, but the canoe and the dogs sank to the bottom. You can see them now, for the dogs and the stone anchor are rocks which stand there today.

Additional Information

Residents at Gambung Nikawu, where this mythical incident occurred, say the dog now sits in the water looking to the north, to where its spiritual counterpart met and accepted gifts from the Macassans.

Story 5

The Dog Djuranydjura at Gambungura (from 'Djuranydjura and Bawal' by Djalparrmiwuy, Milingimbi Literature Centre. Translated by Ian McIntosh.)

Two dogs, Djuranydjura and Bawal, set off from Djiliwirri. They said to each other 'Lets go see the country.' The first thing they did was to make a canoe, a *barrwan*, from the stringy bark tree and smoked it on the fire so that it would be strong and the water would not get in. When it was finished they picked it up and carried it.

They went past the lands of many clans, both *dhuwa* and *yirritja*. At Yawurryawurr they heard the Gurrkayirkalarama [*dhuwa* totem] and changed direction. At Gandjalamirringura they crossed the river and then kept on walking, carrying the canoe.

When they were half way to their destination they stopped for a short time. They rested their shoulders from carrying the canoe. This place is known as Wambalngura or Djuranydjurangura. A big forest is there. The spirit of those dogs is in that forest. After resting they moved on carrying the canoe. They went on to Gambungura (Nikawu) and put the canoe on the ground. They looked around the area and then sat down on their own. They saw fire coming from the north, at Yirringa, and were worried. They pulled the canoe to the water and hopped in and started paddling across the channel to Elcho Island. About half way the canoe sank and the dogs swam to the other side. They walked all the way to Yirringa, but their spirit is at Gambungura, on Howard Island.

Story 6

Barwal and Djuranydjura reject the Macassans (Robinson 1956:53-54).

Barwal asked: 'Why do you make beds?' 'Why,' said [Yotjing], 'you two are my friends. I would like you to sit down here.' Yotjing called Barwal 'Grandfather'. He wanted to give Barwal the blankets. He asked Barwal if he wanted a pillow; Barwal answered 'No'. 'Well then', said Yotjing, 'what about this meat? Do you want meat?' 'Is it

cooked?' said Barwal. 'Yes,' said Yotjing. 'Then I don't want it,' Barwal said. 'You want raw meat?' Yotjing asked. 'Yes, raw meat,' Barwal said. Yotjing gave Barwal and his wife [Djuranydjura] raw meat and Barwal and his wife sat down on the beach and ate the meat raw.

Then Yotjing asked: 'Do you want to come inside my house?' 'No,' answered Barwal. 'We are going to sleep in the grass.' 'But there is a big rain coming on,' said Yotjing. 'No matter,' said Barwal. 'You see that rock and that ant-bed? That is where I and my wife will sleep. This is my country. It is better that you go back to your country. You see that fire a long way off in the country [Yumaynga]? That is your country. It is better that you load up your [Mitjiang], your boat, with all your things. Pull down this house and take everything back along your country.'

Yotjing talked: 'you are angry with me, Barwal. I will give you blankets and tucker. Are you still angry?' 'Yes, I am still angry,' said Barwal. Then Yotjing said: 'Look, Barwal, you and I can sit down as one company. We can be one company.' 'No', answered Barwal, 'this is my country. It is better that you go back to your own country. You and I are different colours.'

Yotjing, the Macassan, loaded up his boat. Barwal the dingo-man sat down and watched the Macassars. 'Pull up everything you have made,' said Barwal. 'Pull up the bamboo you have planted. Pull up your garden. Take everything. Take your iron, your nails with you. You see that smoke. You go there. You stop in that country always. This is my country.'

Barwal and his wife sat down on the beach and watched the Macassans loading the boat. They saw and heard them pulling on the ropes to haul up the sails. The Macassars took their wives and children onto the boat. Yotjing had told all the other Macassar boats and as the Macassars pulled up the anchors and the wind filled the sails and the fleet sailed away, Barwal called: 'Go back to your own country, and stay there. This is my country. I sit down here.'

Story 7

Djuranydjura at Nangingburra, Elcho Island (told by David Burrumarra, 1991)

"Djuranydjura, a white female dog, could smell the rotting whale meat at Nangingbura on the northern tip of Elcho Island. She set off from Djiliwirri at her masters command. At this time she spoke the Gupapuyngu language, but half way, after passing Walwal [a sacred whale place] her language changed. She was now speaking Warramiri just like those Gupapuyngu people of Nangingburra do today."

"When she reached Nangingburra, she saw the whale in the shallow waters. It had been cut up by Macassan men using their long knives. She tasted some of the rotting meat. Djuranydjura was offered some things by the Macassans and she accepted as gifts, necklaces, armbands, fishing hooks and a basket, but said to the Macassan man, "I'll take these but only because you want me to. They still belong to you. That Macassan boat sailed away, but the spirit of the boat is still there."

"Djuranydjura recognized that the land had been transformed. It now had like a coat of arms on it. It came under Warramiri control. The dog obeyed the law of *Bayini* in that area."

"The meeting of the Dog and the Macassans formed the basis of a lasting friendship. It was a law for the intermarriage of Aborigines and Macassans. That's the way they made it. That is why Djuranydjura was a white female dog. The friendship between the parties was like the attraction of a man to a woman. It had to be a woman because a man travelling to his brothers country, as Djuranydjura was doing, would be carrying *madayin* (sacred objects) with him. Djuranydjura was not."

"The male Macassan leader was turned to stone and the women into trees and you can see them there. Djuranydjura turned to stone also. She sits on the beach with her brother Bawal. The whale lives there too. You can see the line in the water where Djuranydjura came upon it."

Story 8

"Proof of the Indonesian Influence on the Aborigines of North Australia : the remarkable dog Ngarra of the Mildjingi clan" (from Thomson 1939:277)

In the days of the mythical ancestors, two great dogs set out on an odyssey from the interior of the country. The dogs were male and female and their names were Kurrumul and Kuleri'kuleri. As they came towards the coast they raised their heads and cried, after the manner of the dingo, "Nyor! Nyo-o-o-or!" On the shore near the Glyde River the wind was blowing from the north-east, and it brought a strange new smell. The two dogs raised their heads and sniffed, and they smelled the whale. They went on a little farther and began to walk out on the sandbanks. Far out on a bank in middle water, an old man named Mardakark was cooking whale meat. He saw the dogs and threw some of the meat to them. The dogs ate the meat, and tried to go right out to the sandbank. But the ground was soft, and as they walked they sank deep into the mud. They began to flounder and to struggle, and the more they struggled the deeper they sank. At length they were overwhelmed by the sea. Lest they should attack canoes that passed, the old man secured each dog by a hind-leg with a rope called *majyal*. The road on the ceremonial ground today, along which the dog totem is carried, is said to represent this rope by which the dog was tethered and to symbolise the track taken by the dogs across the mud banks.

Finally the dogs were turned to stone, and there they stand to this day in the form of a great rock. Though the 'dog rock' is covered completely at high water, at low tide it emerges, and native tradition has it that when canoes passed close, the dogs would sometimes pursue them- as they could see by the white water that boiled and foamed when they looked fearfully back. And even to this day, when a canoe passes this totem centre it does so well out to sea. The women and the young men never look at the dog rock, but avert their eyes, or cover up their heads, lest a ritual visitation befall. For the Mildjingi clan, this dog rock is the most important of all its totemic centres- the place from which emerge many of the baby spirits of members of the clan, to enter their mother at pregnancy.

Story 9

Bulunha of Cape Wilberforce (told by David Burrumarra, 1991. See also Warner 1958:535).

"Bulunha, the iron dog, *bunggawa* for the land, came from Matamata on the Gove peninsula, attracted by the cool breezes coming down from the Wessel Islands. Bulunha was both male and female, black and white and a leader for the country. When he reached Dholtji, he saw lots of people, both black and white. He also saw the *yindi bungawa* (great leader) and the many houses the Warramirri people had built. The dog joined in the dance honouring the land. He was a dog but he could easily lift up his legs and do the *bunggul* because he was a leader too. He saw that all people were equal and followed the one law."

"You can see Bulunha today at Cape Wilberforce. He has carried with him a large turtle egg. Who is this food for? Bulunha is a friend of the whale and of all sea creatures. His message to us is that if the black man is hungry, how can we say no to him? We will share the turtle egg and the produce of the sea. What is there is company for all. This food is for everyone, black and white, and for speakers of all languages. They can all share the riches of the sea if they follow *Birrinydji*. The sea serves the needs of the people. Bulunha is the invitation for all, the agreement, the law. If we obey

the law of the land and sea, all things will come to us. In this way, Bulunha made us strong. He is a symbol of strength. We had many things in those days. We were rich and strong. We spoke many languages, practiced iron-making, made pottery, grew rice, travelled the seas, all at *Birrinydji's* command. Bulunha brought the people together. He made a road from Dholtji linking the Warramiri and Wanguri peoples."

"It's all the same as saying that we are Aborigines but at the same time we call ourselves Australian. Why is this? It makes us strong. This is also the story of Dholtji. Black and white people are one. We can all eat the *miyapunu* (turtle). The Warramirri always leave scraps of food each night for the wild dogs when they travel to Cape Wilberforce, remembering Bulunha and what he did for us."

Story 10

Djirrwadjirra of the Warramiri clan on the Gove Peninsula (told by David Burrumarra, 1991)

"The dog Djirrwadjirra lived in the hilly country at Mata mata. He was both male and female and white, though sometimes black in colour. He would travel between Mata mata and Dholtji and back again. He was a real bush dog, a traditional one, the worst one. He would hide in the bushes and watch everything. He used to hunt the big red kangaroo, the *gartjambal*, using his spears. The area he liked best was clear of trees and good for hunting. Here he had a clear run in which to catch that kangaroo."

"Djirrwadjirra was the leader for the country. He is the land itself. All the other dogs, Umbulka, Matingarr and Djarrk, (#1) followed him. He would spend his time planning how to handle the *Balanda* (Macassans) and thinking how he could keep them in his country. His last public act was to make a road between Matamata and Dholtji that was for all people, black and white to travel on."

Story 11

Namalia and Gaidjingani of Cape Arnhem (from R. M. Berndt, 1964:75)

Many places were named after the dogs Namalia (male) and Gaidjingani (female) or by them. Where they swam to cool off; where they copulated; where they felt the north wind blowing; where they left part of their spirit; where they walked or saw the tracks of birds etc, are such places.

They travelled from the hinterland of Dalywoi Bay and by the time they reached the coast they were hot and bathed in the cool sea. Gururu, two *yirritja* islands, are the solidified 'spirit' impressions of the two dogs; Baralawi is a long beach where the dogs walked; they named the island Brandjanbi as they passed; at Balbuwoi they barked at the *Mureiana* spirits wailing as for a death; at Guldarawoi they walked slowly along; at Lugoiguluwoidjbi they saw the tracks of the *Guluwoidjbi* bird; and at Dalaruna on the southern point on Cape Arnhem they saw a *Wongar* whale in the water who said to them, "I go past you and I leave you there" - at the top of the point; the place Malaruru refers to the dogs going along; Gwilbara refers to the north wind blowing and the dog feeling it as he goes by; Wutjungduru (Ujung Duru) island is the whale spraying water and splashing it with his tail; Rulmi are the rocks and reef representing in spirit all the *Wangarr* dogs that came together and played. Further along the cape, the dogs came down from the cliff and swam in the sea but returned because of the lightning snake in the water.

Story 12

Djalatung, Bambawutu and Yandja of Cape Wilberforce (told by David Burrumarra and George Liwukang, 1991)

These dogs are the land owners of Dholtji, Cape Wilberforce. Djalatung means 'anchor'. Bambawutu means whale. These dogs have the same policy as Bol'lili and reject

Macassan presence, Liwukang says. They are followers of the whale and are leaders of the people and the land.

Burrumarra says, "Dogs cannot talk. They have a tongue and mouth and want to speak to us but they cannot. They are close to humans. Something in their mind is the same as in a humans. When trouble came to the Warramiri peoples and Dholtji, the people did not run away. They remembered their traditions and put the anchor down. It held them in place. Djalatung and Bambawutu remind us of this."

Story 13

Mildjingi Dog-Man and Dog-woman (Groger-Wurm 1973:98, as told by Magani of the Mildjingi clan)

Guragarinja, a Dog-man, and Gurarinja, a dog-woman, lived near a big rock in Djarlgoimiri. One day they went hunting and chased two big *yirritja* kangaroos towards the seawhere they turned into rocks and their tails, legs and backs became *rangga* emblems. The dog Guragarinja went to Malwunadjara where his nose caught smell of fish being cooked coming from Warramiri country. He followed the smell and came to the beach where he made a sacred well and sand which he scratched out and heaped up turned into rocks. He then walked into the sea, stood up and spat out sea water, and clouds were shaped from the vapour. The dog himself became a *rangga* emblem.

Story 14

Wananda and Ulumbina of the Mandjikay clan. (Berndt 1976:154, and D. Burrumarra 1991).

On the eastern coast of Elcho Island are sacred sites representing the dugong and the *Wangarr* dogs Wananda and Ulumbina. These dogs and others, as well as the duck *Muthali*, were sent from Djiliwiri, from the Guyamilili peoples that lived there. When the dogs reached Gulumari, in Mandjikay land, they saw the *Yolngu* cutting up the dugong. The dog ate the meat and this story links the country's and peoples involved. The place is called Waduulumbingu, commemorating the dog's actions.

Appendix 6: The Spread of Islam in Indonesia

In Indonesia, the spread of Islam followed the seafaring routes taken by Moslem traders from Arabia, Persia and India. As Tjandrasasmita (1978:149) notes, while their main objective was trade, their next was religious conversion. They would acquire power in an area, recruit religious preachers from amongst local populations, build mosques, and encourage immigration of other Muslims (Meilink-Roelofz 1970:154).

Though Islam had been in the East Indies since perhaps as early as the seventh century, it only expanded rapidly in the sixteenth century. As Schrieke (1957:233) says, "It is...impossible to understand [this rapid expansion]...unless one takes into account the antagonism between the Moslem traders and the Portuguese." Not only was it a means of providing a united front against the colonisers, the new religion sought to embrace converts into the faith by synthesising the Islamic creed with existing beliefs. There was no compulsion to abandon older beliefs (Turnbull 1989:22).¹

From as early as 1511, wealthy Moslem traders were being expelled from Portuguese held territories, and were forced to settle in other centres of the faith such as Aceh, Johor, Banten, Ternate, and Macassar, which all became great religious centres and trading ports (McKay 1976:108).

Reid (1983:117) says the rise of Macassar, in particular, was a phenomenon unequalled in Indonesian history. From uncertain origins around 1500, in a little over 100 years, the kingdom had risen to a position of political and economic dominance. Andaya (1981:1) says that the adoption of Islam by Gowa (Macassar) in 1603-1605 was instrumental in effecting this. By 1700, according to Gervaise (in Swain 1993:102), very little of the 'original' 'Macassan' origin beliefs were known or followed. Islam had become the religion of the people. As Swain (1993:182) says,

"...very little is published on pre-Islamic Macassan beliefs. According to an eyewitness account...the Macassans, who had then belonged to an Islamic 'Kingdom' for 120 years, had 'defaced all the footsteps of the ancient religion, for fear the people should again return to idolatry'. The author could learn little of the old ceremonies and beliefs save vague notions of

¹ Du Bois (1960) in her work in the Alor Islands in central Indonesia, makes reference to a crocodile being, *Lahatala*, which may be an example of such syncretism.

the complimentary duality of heaven and earth giving rise to life."

Reid (1983:117) says that Gowa leaders saw it as their religious duty to bring this new religion to their neighbours, by conquest if need be, leading to the subjugation of all southern Sulawesi and the islands east of Lombok, as far as the Aru and Kei, (Andaya 1981:1). It is also plausible that such missions extended as far as north-east Arnhem Land but there is no evidence for pre-1700 settlements. One needs to treat with caution the view of Dalrymple in the 1760s, for example (in Macknight 1972:293), that Aborigines of New Holland were 'Mohammedans'. Macknight thinks is merely a reference to the fact the Aborigines in some areas were circumcised.

Appendix 7: 'Totem Hunters' as Sama-Bajau

One fact that hints at the origin of the 'totem' hunter stories is that *Dhurritjini* (Turijene) and *Djamulapu* (*Djamamapun*) are known groups of Sama-Bajau or sea gypsies. Macknight (1976:18, 50) and Fox (1977; 1993:4) indeed suggest that the *Dhurritjini* may have been the first to exploit the resources of northern Australia.

The *Dhurritjini* lived in the vicinity of Macassar in the seventeenth century, and were associated with 'Macassan' trepang expeditions to Australia (Sopher 1965:145; Pelras 1993:3).¹ The *Djamamapun*, on the other hand, are a Bajau group now dwelling in the Sulu Sea, between Sulawesi, Borneo and the Philippines (Warren 1981:136-137). There are no records of their involvement with the Australian trepanging industry however.

The relationship between the 'Macassans' and Bajau was one of mutual benefit. According to Pelras (1993:3), a treaty or alliance through the marriage of a Gowa ('Macassan') king and a Bajau princess, confirmed Bajau status as a vassal state in the 1600s. Accordingly, they had to present items of maritime produce and other wealth each year, but their representatives would be seated on the same royal mats as the 'Macassan' nobility. As the name Bajau was considered pejorative, they were called by the 'Macassans', Tu-rije-ne (*Dhurritjini*) or the people of the water. On their long voyages together, the specialist skills of the *Dhurritjini* were utilised by 'Macassans' (Sopher 1965:145). From the Bajau side, in return for fishing and other rights, they had a powerful ally in times of need.

The largely undocumented history and migrations of the *Dhurritjini* and the confusion over their ethnic identity today, makes speculation about possible 'pre-Macassan' links to Australia a difficult matter. The association of the name *Dhurritjini* with the whale hunters of *Yolngu* mythology does not prove that these were the groups that inspired these beliefs. Indeed, *Dhurritjini* do not feature in Warramiri 'clan' creation narratives, nor in 'encounter' stories. It is only in *Baḍu* mythology that *Dhurritjini* appear, and then they are in league with other hunters. Also, the *Djamulapu* are whale

¹ Fox (1993:3) says their presence in southern Sulawesi dates from the end of the fifteenth or the beginning of the sixteenth century. Reid (1983:125) suggests an initial relationship with Luwu (central Sulawesi) whereas Sopher (1965:198) links their origins with Johore and Ujung Tanah, the southern coast of Singapore. While a common Malay term, Dholtji's 'inside' name through *Birinydji* is also Ujung Tanah. See Chapter Six.

meat 'eaters' and there is no immediate suggestion that they were in Arnhem Land. The fact that they were not noted for their whale hunting, for example, supports this.

The only known localities to the north of Australia where traditional whale hunting is performed is in the seas to the east of Flores, in the Solor Islands, and records from the seventeenth century suggest that even then, they were the only systematic hunters of the whale known to Dutch authorities (Weber 1902:89-93). These coastal peoples claim descent from South Sulawesi, and Sopher (1965:147) says that these Orang Baju or Orang Pantei (coastal peoples) are still distinguished from the inland or mountain people. They may be related to *Badu* populations, but there does not appear to be any immediate links either in place names or in hunting terminology with the visitors that came to Australia. It may be that Aborigines witnessed whale hunting on their journey to Macassar aboard the praus, but again, this can neither be proved nor disproved.

Bibliography

- Abdurachman, P.R. 1978. Moluccan Responses to the First Intrusians of the West. In H. Soebadio and C.A. du Marchie Sarvaas (eds), *Dynamics of Indonesian History*, 161-188. North-Holland Publishing Company, Amsterdam.
- Acciaoli, G. 1990. How to Win Followers and Influence Spirits: Propitiation and Participation in a Multi-Ethnic Community of Central Suluwesi, Indonesia. *Anthropological Forum* 6(2):207-235.
- Allen, L. 1975. *Time Before Morning - Art and Myth of the Australian Aborigines*. Rigby, Adelaide.
- Andaya, L.Y. 1975. The Nature of Kingship in Bone. In A. Reid and L. Castles (eds), *Pre-Colonial State Systems in Southeast Asia. Monographs of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 6:115-125.
- Andaya, L.Y. 1981. *The Heritage of Arung Palakka. A History of South Suluwesi (Celebes) in the Seventeenth Century*. Verhandelingen Van Het Koninklijk Instituut Vor Taal- Land-en Volkenkunde, The Hague.
- Bakhtin, M.M. 1981. Forms of Time and of the Chronotype in the Novel. Notes toward a Historical Poetics. In M. Holquist (ed.) *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, 84-258. University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Bayly, C. (ed) 1989. *Atlas of the British Empire. A New Perspective on the British Empire from 1500 to the Present*. The Hamlyn Publishing Group. London.
- Beckett, J. 1993. Walter Newton's History of the World - or Australia. *American Ethnologist* 20(4):675-695.
- Berndt, R.M. 1948. Badu, Islands of the Spirits. *Oceania*, 19(2):94-103.
- Berndt, R.M. 1962. *An Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land*. Cahiers de L'Homme, Mouton, Paris and The Hague.
- Berndt, R.M. 1964. The Gove Dispute: The Question of Australian Aboriginal Land and the Preservation of Sacred Sites. *Anthropological Forum* 1(2):258-295.
- Berndt, R.M. 1965. External Influences on the Aboriginal. *Hemisphere* 9(3):2-9.
- Berndt, R.M. 1976. Territoriality and the problem of demarcating sociocultural space. In N. Peterson (ed.) *Tribes and Boundaries in Australia*, 133-161. A.I.A.T.S.I.S. Press, Canberra.
- Berndt, R.M. 1978/79. Looking Back Into the Present: A Changing Panorama in Eastern Arnhem Land. *Anthropological Forum* 4(1), 281-296.
- Berndt, R.M. & Berndt, C.H. 1947a. Card Games Among Aborigines of the Northern Territory. *Oceania* 17:248-269.
- Berndt, R.M. & Berndt, C.H. 1947b. Discovery of Pottery in North-eastern Arnhem Land. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 77:133-140.
- Berndt, R.M. & Berndt, C.H. 1948. Sacred Figures of Ancestral Beings of Arnhem Land. *Oceania* 18(4):309-328.

- Berndt, R.M. & Berndt, C.H. 1949. Secular Figures of Northeastern Arnhem Land. *American Anthropologist* 51(2):213-222.
- Berndt, R.M. & Berndt, C.H. 1954. *Arnhem Land. Its History and Its People*. F.W. Cheshire. Melbourne.
- Berndt, R.M. and Berndt, C.H. 1975. *The World of the First Australians*. Ure Smith, Sydney.
- Berndt, R.M. and Berndt C.H. 1989. *The Speaking Land: myth and story in Aboriginal Australia*. Penguin, Melbourne.
- Biernoff, D. 1975. Land and Law in Eastern Arnhem Land: Traditional Models for Social and Political Organization. *Occasional Papers in Anthropology* 4:5-85.
- Blackburn, J. 1979. *The White Men. The first response of aboriginal peoples to the white man*. Times Books, London.
- Bloch, M. 1977. The Past and the Present in the Present. *Man* 12:278-292.
- Borsboom, A.P. 1992. Millenarianism, Australian Aborigines and the European myth of primitives. *Canberra Anthropology* 15(2):11-26.
- Bos, R. 1988a. Jesus and the Dreaming. Religion and Social Change in Arnhem Land. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Queensland.
- Bos, R. 1988b. The Dreaming and social change in Arnhem Land. In T. Swain and D. Rose (eds), *Aboriginal Australians and Christian missions: ethnographic and historical studies (Special Studies in Religion No.6)*, 442-437. Australian Association for the Study of Religions, Bedford Park.
- Bourdieu, P. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Translated by R. Nice. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Bourdieu, P. 1993. *Sociology in Question*. Translated by R. Nice. Sage Publications, London.
- Breckwolfdt, R. 1988. *A Very Elegant Animal. The Dingo*. Angus and Robertson, Melbourne.
- Brown, C.C. 1953. Sejarah Melayu or 'Malay Annals': A Translation of Raffles MS 18, *JMBRAS* 25 Parts 2,3.
- Burrumarra D. 1980. Burrumarra MBE. In Yule IR (ed) *My Mother the Land*, 15-16. Elcho Island NT Christian Action Group, Galiwinku Parish, Uniting Church of Australia in association with Action for World Development, Darwin.
- Burrumarra D, n.d. Dhawal'yuwa Yuwalku. The Search for Truth. Elcho Island.
- Burridge, K. 1971. *New Heaven New Earth. A Study of Millenarian Activities*. Basil Blackwell, Oxford.
- Campbell, W.S. 1917. The Oldest Industry in Australia. Trempang. *Royal Australian Historical Society Journal* 3(9):429-437.
- Capell, A. 1965. Early Indonesian Contacts with North Australia. *Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia* 3:67-75.

- Carrier, J.G. 1992. Introduction. In J.G. Carrier (ed.), *History and Tradition in Melanesian Anthropology*, 1-37. University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Cawte, J. 1993. *The Universe of the Warramirri. Art, Medicine and Religion in Arnhem Land*. University of New South Wales Press, Sydney.
- Clarke, S. 1981. *The Foundation of Structuralism. A Critique of Lévi-Strauss and the Structuralist Movement*. The Harvester Press, Sussex.
- Clifford, J. 1986a. Introduction: Partial Truths. In J. Clifford and G.E. Marcus (eds.), *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, 1-26. University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Clifford, J. 1986b. On Ethnographic Allegory. In J. Clifford and G.E. Marcus (eds.), *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, 98-121. University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Clifford, J. 1990. *The Predicament of Culture. Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge.
- Cole, K. 1980. *Seafarers of the Groote Archipelago: Aborigines and Mariners of the Islands off Eastern Arnhem Land*. Keith Cole Publications, Bendigo.
- Cooke M, 1987. *Makassar & Northeast Arnhem Land. Missing Links and Living Bridges*, Educational Media Unit, Batchelor College.
- Coombs, H.C. 1994. *Aboriginal Autonomy. Issues and Strategies*. Cambridge University Press, Melbourne.
- Djalparmiwuy n.d. *Djuranydjura ga Bawal*. Milingimbi Literature Production Centre, Milingimbi.
- Douglas, M. 1970. *Purity and Danger. An analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.
- Douglas, M. 1978 (1973). *Natural Symbols. Explorations in Cosmology*. Penguin, Harmondsworth.
- Downing, J. 1993. Television program. 'Different lives below the wind.' Australian Broadcasting Commission, *Big Picture* Series, 13 January.
- Dubois, C. 1960. *The People of Alor: A Social - Psychological Study of an East Indian Island*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge.
- Durkheim, E. 1954. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Allen and Unwin, London.
- Elkin, A.P. and Berndt, R.M. & Berndt, C.H. 1950. *Art in Arnhem Land*. Cheshire, Melbourne.
- Elkin, A.P. 1953. Arnhem Land Music. *Oceania* 24(2):83-109.
- Fabian, J. 1983. *Time and the Other. How Anthropology Makes its Object*. Columbia University Press, New York.
- Feinberg, R. 1994. Contested Worlds: The Politics of Culture and the Politics of Anthropology. *Anthropology and Humanism* 19(1):20-35.

- Flinders, M. 1814. *A Voyage to Terra Australis*. G. and W. Nichol, London.
- Fox, J.J. 1977. Korte Mededelingen. Notes on the Southern Voyages and Settlements of the Sama-Bajau. *Bijdragen tot de Taal-Land-en Volkenkunde* 133:459-465.
- Fox, J.J. 1993. Bajau Voyages to the Timor Area, the Ashmore Reef and Australia. Unpublished notes from the International Seminar on Bajau Communities, Indonesian Institute of Sciences (Lipi), Jakarta, 22-25 November.
- Garrawurra, J.R. 1982. Untitled article in *Crucible* (Uniting Church in Australia, Northern Synod), May.
- Giddens, A. 1979. *Central Problems in Social Theory. Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis*. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles.
- Gondarra, D. 1988. *Father you gave us the Dreaming*. Uniting Church of Australia, Darwin.
- Groger-Wurm, H.M. 1973. *Australian Aboriginal Bark Paintings and their Mythological Interpretation. Volume 1. Eastern Arnhem Land*. A.I.A.T.S.I.S., Canberra.
- Guss, D.M. 1986. Keeping it Oral: a Yekuana Ethnology. *American Ethnologist* 13(3): 413-429.
- Halls, C. 1965. The Mystery of the Bayini. *North Australian Monthly*, October:4-5.
- Handler, R. and Linnekin, J. 1984. Tradition, Genuine or Spurious? *Journal of American Folklore* 97:273-290.
- Harris, J. 1990. *One Blood. 200 Years of Aboriginal Encounter with Christianity: a Story of Hope*. Albatross, Sutherland.
- Herbert, X. 1981. *Capricornia*. Angus and Robertson, Sydney.
- Hermann, E. 1992. The Yali Movement in Retrospect: Rewriting History, Redefining 'Cargo Cult'. *Oceania* 63(1):55-71.
- Hill, J.D. 1988. Introduction. Myth and History. In J.D. Hill (ed) *Rethinking History and Myth. Indigenous South American Perspectives on the Past*, 1-18. University of Illinois Press, Chicago.
- Hoff, J.A. 1977. Aboriginal Carved and Painted Human Figures in North-east Arnhem Land. In P. Ucko (ed.), *Form in Indigenous Art*, 156-164. A.I.A.T.S.I.S., Canberra.
- Hoover, J.J. 1980. Message and Medium: Some Recent Developments in Oral Tradition. *Social Analysis. Journal of cultural and social practice* 4 (September):13-27.
- Isaacs, J. 1980. *Australian Dreaming. 40,000 years of Aboriginal History*. Lansdowne Press, Sydney.
- Jarrat, P. 1992. Australia's Forgotten Islands. The English Company's Group. *The Bulletin*, January 28-February 4, 126-133.
- Jennison, J.C. 1927. Notes on the Language of the Elcho Island Aborigines. *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia* 51:177-192.

- Keen, I. 1977. Yolngu Sand Sculptures in Context. In P.J. Ucko (ed) *Form in Indigenous Art: Schematisation in the art of Aboriginal Australia and Prehistoric Europe*, 165-183. A.I.A.S. Canberra.
- Keen, I. 1978. One Ceremony, One Song: An Economy of Religious Knowledge among the Yolngu of North-East Arnhem Land. Unpublished PhD thesis, Australian National University.
- Keen, I. 1993. Review Article. Ubiquitous Ubiety of Dubious Uniformity. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 4(2):96-110.
- Keen, I. 1994. *Knowledge and Secrecy in an Aboriginal Religion. Yolngu of North-East Arnhem Land*. Oxford Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology. Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- Keesing, R. 1989. Creating the Past: Custom and Identity in the Pacific. *The Contemporary Pacific* 1/2:19-42.
- Keesing, R. & Jolly, M. 1992. Epilogue. In J.G. Carrier (ed.), *History and Tradition in Melanesian Anthropology*, 224-247. University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Kempf, W. 1992. 'The Second Coming of the Lord.' Early Christianization, Episodic Time, and the Cultural Construction of Continuity in Sibog. *Oceania* 63(1):72-87.
- Koepping, K.P. 1988. Nativistic Movements in Aboriginal Australia. Creative Adjustment, Protest or Regeneration of Tradition. In T. Swain and D. Rose (eds), *Aboriginal Australians and Christian missions: ethnographic and historical studies (Special Studies in Religion No.6)*, 397-411. Australian Association for the Study of Religions, Bedford Park.
- Kolig, E. 1978. Aboriginal Dogmatics: Canines in Theory, Myth and Dogma. *Bijdragen tot de Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde* 34(1) 84-115.
- Kolig, E. 1979. Captain Cook in the Western Kimberleys. In R.M. & C.H. Berndt (eds.), *Aborigines of the West*, 274-282. University of Western Australia Press, Perth.
- Kolig, E. 1980. Noah's Arc revisited: On the myth-land connection in traditional Aboriginal thought. *Oceania* 51(2):118-132.
- Kolig, E. 1981. *The Silent Revolution. The Effects of Modernization on Australian Aboriginal Religion*. Institute for the Study of Human Issues, Philadelphia.
- Kolig, E. 1987. Post-Contact Religious Movements in Australian Aboriginal Society. *Anthropos* 82:251-259.
- Kolig, E. 1988. Mission Not Accomplished. Christianity in the Kimberleys. In T. Swain and D. Rose (eds), *Aboriginal Australians and Christian missions: ethnographic and historical studies (Special Studies in Religion No.6)*, 376-390. Australian Association for the Study of Religions, Bedford Park.
- Kolig, E. 1992. Religious Power and the All-Father in the Sky. Monotheism in Australian Aboriginal Culture Reconsidered. *Anthropos* 87:9-31.
- Kuhn, T.S. 1970. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

- Lattas, A. 1992a. Hysteria, Anthropological Discourse and the Concept of the Unconscious: Cargo Cults and the Scientisation of Race and Colonial Power. *Oceania* 63(1):1-14.
- Lattas, A. 1992b. Skin, Personhood, and Redemption: The Doubled Self in West New Britain Cargo Cults. *Oceania* 63(1):27-54.
- Lehrman, J. 1980. *Earthly Paradise. Garden and Courtyard in Islam*. University of California Press, Los Angeles.
- Levathes, L. 1994. *When China Ruled the Seas: the Treasure Fleet of the Dragon Throne 1405-1433*. Simon and Schuster, Los Angeles.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. 1966. *The Savage Mind*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. 1969a. *Totemism*. Penguin, Middlesex.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. 1969b. *The Raw and the Cooked*. Harper and Row, New York.
- Lowe, B.M. 1975. *Gupapuyngu Alphabet and Pronunciation*. Galiwin'ku Adult Education Centre, Galiwin'ku.
- Mackinolty, C. and Wainburranga, P. 1988. Too Many Captain Cooks. In T. Swain and D. Rose (eds), *Aboriginal Australians and Christian missions: ethnographic and historical studies (Special Studies in Religion No.6)*, 355-360. Australian Association for the Study of Religions, Bedford Park.
- Macknight, C.C. 1969a. The Macassans: A study of the early trepang industry along the Northern Territory coast. Ph.D. thesis, Australian National University, Canberra.
- Macknight, C.C. 1969b. The Sea Voyagers of Eastern Indonesia. *Hemisphere* 13(4):7-14.
- Macknight, C.C. 1972. Macassans and Aborigines. *Oceania* 42(4):283-321.
- Macknight, C.C. 1976. *The Voyage to Marege. Macassan Trepangers in Northern Australia*. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.
- Macknight, C.C. 1986. Macassans and the Aboriginal Past. *Archaeology in Oceania* 21:69-75.
- Maddock, K. 1972. *The Australian Aborigines. A Portrait of their Society*. Penguin, Melbourne.
- Maddock, K. 1988. Myth, history and a sense of oneself. In J. Beckett (ed.), *Past and Present. Construction of Aboriginality*, 11-30. Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- Malinowski, B. 1967. *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*. Harcourt, Brae and World, New York.
- Marcus, G.E. & Fischer, M.M.J. 1986. *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: an Experimental Movement in the Human Sciences*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

- Marika-Mununggiritj, R. 1991. How Can Balanda (White Australians) Learn About The Aboriginal World? *Ngoonjook. Batchelor Journal of Aboriginal Education* 5 (July):17-25.
- McIntosh, I. 1989. A Memorable Trip to Macassar. *Aboriginal Health Worker* 13(2):15-17.
- McIntosh, I. 1992. The Bricoleur at Work: Warang (Dingo) Mythology in the Yirritja Moiety of North-east Arnhem Land. M.Litt. thesis, University of New England, Armidale.
- McIntosh, I.S. 1994a. The Dog and the Myth Maker: Macassans and Aborigines in North-East Arnhem Land. *Australian Folklore* 9:77-81.
- McIntosh, I.S. 1994b. *The Whale and the Cross. Conversations with David Burrumarra, M.B.E.* Historical Society of the Northern Territory, Darwin.
- McIntosh, I.S. 1995. Yolngu Sea Rights in Manbuynga ga Rulyapa (Arafura Sea) and the Indonesian Connection. In J. Finlayson and D.E. Smith (eds) *Native Title: Emerging Issues for Research, Policy and Practice*. Research Monograph No.10:9-22. Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University, Canberra.
- McKay, E. 1976. Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries: The Significance of the Coming of the Europeans. In E. McKay (ed.), *Studies in Indonesian History*, 98-123. Pitman Australia, Melbourne.
- Meilink-Roelofs, M.A.P. 1970. Trade and Islam in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago Prior to the Arrival of the Europeans. In D.S. Richards (ed.). *Islam and the Trade of Asia. A Colloquium*. Papers on Islamic History 2, 137-157. Bruno Cassirer Oxford and University of Pennsylvania Press, Pennsylvania.
- Mitchell, S. 1994. Foreign Contact and Indigenous Economies on the Cobourg Peninsula. Unpublished PhD thesis, Northern Territory University.
- Mol, H. 1976. *Identity and the Sacred*. Blackwell, Oxford.
- Morphy, H. 1983. 'Now You Understand.' An Analysis of the Way Yolngu Have Used Sacred Knowledge To Retain Their Identity. In N. Peterson and M. Langton, (eds), *Aborigines, Land and Land Rights*, 110-133. Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- Morphy, H. 1984. *Journey to the Crocodile's Nest: an accompanying monograph for the film Maḍarrpa Funeral at Gurka'wuy*. A.I.A.S. Canberra.
- Morphy, H. 1988a. The Resurrection of the Hydra: 25 Years of Research on Aboriginal Religion. In R.M. Berndt and R. Tonkinson (eds.), *Social Anthropology and Australian Aboriginal Studies*, 241-266. Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- Morphy, H. 1988b. Maintaining Cosmic Unity: ideology and the reproduction of Yolngu clans. In T. Ingold, D. Riches and J. Woodburn (eds) *Hunters and Gatherers, Vol 2, Property, Power and Ideology*, 249-271. Berg, Oxford.
- Morphy, H. 1990. Myth, Totemism and the Creation of Clans. *Oceania* 60(4):312-328.
- Morphy, H. 1991. *Ancestral Connections. Art and an Aboriginal System of Knowledge*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London.

- Morphy, H. 1994. The Interpretation of Ritual: Reflections From Film on Anthropological Practice. *Man N.S.* 29:117-146.
- Morphy, H. & Layton, R. 1981. Choosing Among Alternatives: Cultural Transformations & Social Change in Aboriginal Australia and French Jura. *Mankind* 13(1):56-73.
- Morphy H. and Morphy, F. 1984. The 'myths' of Ngalakan history: ideology and images of the past in northern Australia. *Man* 19(3):459-478.
- Mountford, C.P. 1956-64. *Records of the American Australian Scientific Expedition Arnhem Land. Volume One. Art, Myth, and Symbolism.* Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.
- Mountford, C.P. 1973. *The Dreamtime Book.* Australian Aboriginal Myths in Paintings by Ainslie Roberts and text by Charles Percy Mountford. Readers Digest/Rigby, Sydney.
- Moynihan, E.B. 1979. *Paradise as a Garden.* George Braziller, New York.
- Obeyesekere, G. 1992. *The apotheosis of captain Cook: European mythmaking in the Pacific.* Princeton University Press, Honolulu.
- Pelras, C. 1993. A few Complementary Notes on Aquatic Populations in South Sulawesi and South Malaya. Unpublished notes from the International Seminar on Bajau Communities, Indonesian Institute of Sciences (Lipi), Jakarta, 22-25 November.
- Petri, H. and Petri-Odermann, G. 1988. A nativistic and millenarian movement in north west Australia. In T. Swain and D. Rose (eds), *Aboriginal Australians and Christian missions: ethnographic and historical studies (Special Studies in Religions No. 6)*, 391-396. Australian Association for the Study of Religion, Bedford Park.
- Pye, J. 1977. *The Tiwi Islands.* Bathurst Island Mission.
- Radcliffe-Brown, A.R. 1971. *Structure and Function in Primitive Society. Essays and Addresses.* Cohen and West, London.
- Rasnake, R. 1988. Images of Resistance to Colonial Domination. In J.D. Hill (ed) *Rethinking History and Myth. Indigenous South American Perspectives on the Past*, 136-156. University of Illinois Press, Chicago.
- Read, P. and Read, J. 1991. *Long Time, Olden Time. Aboriginal Accounts of Northern Territory History.* Institute for Aboriginal Development Publications, Alice Springs.
- Reid, A. 1983. The Rise of Macassar. *Rima* 17:117-160.
- Reid, A. and Reid, H. 1988. *South Sulawesi.* Periplus Press, Berkeley.
- Reynolds, H. 1981. *The Other Side of the Frontier.* Penguin, Ringwood.
- Robinson, R. 1956. *The Feathered Serpent.* Edwards and Shaw. Sydney.
- Rosaldo, R. 1980. Doing Oral History. *Social Analysis. Journal of cultural and social practice* 4 (September):89-99.

- Rose, D.B. 1984. The Saga of Captain Cook : Morality in Aboriginal and European Law. *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 2:24-39.
- Rose, F. 1947. Malay Influence on Aboriginal Totemism in Northern Australia. *Man* 47:142-159.
- Raying, n.d. *Macassan and Dingo Give Each Other Fire*. Translated by M. Christie. Milingimbi Literature Centre, Milingimbi, Northern Territory.
- Rudder, J. 1977. *An Introduction to Yolngu Science*. Shepherdson College, Elcho Island.
- Rudder, J. 1993. Yolngu Cosmology. An Unchanging Cosmos Incorporating a Rapidly Changing World? Unpublished PhD Thesis, Australian National University, Canberra.
- Sahlins, M. 1981. *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities: Structure in the early history of the Sandwich Islands Kingdoms*. Association for the Study of Anthropology in Oceania, Special Publication No.1, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Michigan.
- Sahlins, M. 1985. *Islands of History*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Schrieke, B.J.O. 1957. *Indonesian Sociological Studies. Selected Writings of B. Schrieke. Part Two. Ruler and Realm in Early Java*. W. van Hoeve Ltd. The Hague and Bandung.
- Searcy, A. 1909. *In Australian Tropics*. Second Edition. George Robinson and Co., London.
- Searcy, A. 1911. *By Flood and Field. Adventures Ashore and Afloat in North Australia*. G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., London.
- Shepherdson, E. 1981. *Half a Century in Arnhem Land*, E & H Shepherdson, One Tree Hill, S.A.
- Sopher, D. E. 1965. *The Sea Nomads. A Study Based on the Literature of the Maritime Boat People of South East Asia*. Memiors of the National Museum, No. 5. Government Printer, Singapore.
- Spencer, B. and Gillen, F.J. 1927. *The Arunta: a Study of a Stone Age People*. Macmillan, London.
- Spillett, P.G. 1987. Gotong Royang: Hubungan Makassar - Marege. Paper presented to the Second International Convention of the Indonesian Educational Educational and Cultural Institute. Northern Territory University and Northern Territory Museum of Arts and Sciences, Darwin.
- Spillett, P.G. 1992. Notes on the Sama Bajo people of S.E. Asia. Northern Territory Museum of Arts and Sciences, Darwin.
- Stoller, P. 1994. Ethnographies as Texts/ Ethnographers as Griots. *American Ethnologist* 21(2):153-366.
- Stone, T. 1988. Unpublished sacred site survey for the Warramiri clan of Cape Wilberforce and the English Company Islands. Areas Protection Authority, Darwin.

- Supreme Court of Northern Territory, 1971. *Milirrpum and Others versus Nabalco and the Commonwealth of Australia*, Darwin.
- Sutton, P. 1988. Myth as history, history as myth. In I. Keen (ed), *Being Black. Aboriginal Cultures in Settled Australia*, 251-268. Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- Swain, T. 1990. A New Sky Hero from a Conquered Land. *History of Religions* 29:195-232.
- Swain, T. 1993. *A Place for Strangers. Towards a history of Australian Aboriginal being*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Thomson, D.F. 1939. Proof Of Indonesian Influence Upon The Aborigines Of North Australia : The Remarkable Dog Ngarra Of The Mildjingi Clan. *The Illustrated London News* August 12:277-279.
- Thomson, D.F. 1949a. *Economic Structure and the Ceremonial Exchange Cycle in Arnhem Land*. Macmillan, Melbourne.
- Thomson, D.F. 1949b. Arnhem Land : Explorations Among an Unknown People. Part 3. On Foot Across Arnhem Land. *The Geographical Journal* 114:53-67.
- Thomson, D.F. 1957. Early Macassar Visitors to Arnhem Land and their Influence on its People. *Walkabout* 23(7):29-31.
- Thornell H, 1986. *A Bridge Over Time. Living in Arnhemland with the Aborigines 1938-1944*, JM Dent Pty Ltd, Melbourne.
- Tjandrasasmita, U. 1978. The Introduction of Islam and the Growth of Moslem Coastal Cities in the Indonesian Archipelago. In H. Soebadio and C.A. du Marchie Sarvaas (eds), *Dynamics of Indonesian History*, 141-160. North-Holland Publishing Company, Amsterdam.
- Traube, E.G. 1986. *Cosmology and Social Life: Ritual Exchange Among the Mambai of East Timor*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Turnbull, C. 1989. *A Brief History of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei*. Allen and Unwin, Sydney.
- Turner, D. H. 1982. Caste Logic in a Clan Society: An Aboriginal Response to Domination. In M. Howard (ed.), *Aboriginal Power in Australian Society*, 32-54. University of Queensland Press, Brisbane.
- Turner, D. H. 1989. Cosmology is "Kinship": The Aboriginal Transcendence of Material Determination. *Mankind* 19(3):215-226.
- Turner, T. 1988. Ethno-Ethnohistory: Myth and History in Native South American Representations of Contact with Western Society. In J.D. Hill (ed) *Rethinking History and Myth. Indigenous South American Perspectives on the Past*, 235-281. University of Illinois Press, Chicago.
- Urry, J. and Walsh, M. 1982. The Lost 'Macassar Language' of Northern Australia. *Aboriginal History* 5(2):91-112.
- Vansina, J. 1985. *Oral Tradition as History*. University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.

- Velthoen, E. and Acciaioli, G.L. 1993. Fluctuating States, Mobile Populations: Shifting Relations of Bajo to Local Rulers and Bugis Traders in Colonial Eastern Sulawesi. Unpublished notes from the International Seminar on Bajau Communities, Indonesian Institute of Sciences (Lipi), Jakarta, 22-25 November.
- Walker, A. and Zorc, D. 1981. Austronesian Loanwords in Yolngu-Matha of Northeast Arnhem Land. *Aboriginal History* 5(June):109-134.
- Walker, A. 1988. Macassan Influences on the Aboriginal Language and Culture of Northern Australia. *Indonesian Studies. Bulletin of the Indonesian Cultural and Educational Institute* 5(1): 28-37.
- Warner, W.L. 1930. Murngin Warfare, *Oceania* 1:457-494.
- Warner, W.L. 1932. Malay Influence on the Aboriginal Cultures of North Australia, *Oceania* 2(4):476-495.
- Warner, W.L. 1958/69. *A Black Civilization. A Social Study of an Australian Tribe.* Harper & Roe, Chicago.
- Warren, J.F. 1981. *The Sulu Zone 1768-1898. The Dynamics of External Trade, Slavery, and Ethnicity in the Transformation of a Southeast Asian Maritime State.* Singapore University Press, Singapore.
- Webb, T.T. 1952. The passing of Magarwala, *The Missionary Review* (Jan):6-7.
- Weber, M. 1902. *Iets Over Walvischuangst in den Indischen Archipel. In Rumphius Gedenkbuek 1702-1902.* Vitgegeven Door Het Kolonial Museum Te Haarlem.
- Wells, A.E. 1964. *Skies of Arnhem Land.* Angus and Robertson, Sydney.
- White, H. 1978. *Tropics of Discourse. Essays in Cultural Criticism.* Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- Williams, D. 1982. *The Aboriginal Australian in North Eastern Arnhem Land. Discussing Aboriginal Culture.* Curriculum Development Centre, Canberra.
- Williams, N.M. 1986. *The Yolngu and their Land: A System of Land Tenure and the Fight for its Recognition.* A.I.A.T.S.I.S., Canberra.
- Williams, N.M. 1987. *Two Laws: managing disputes in a contemporary Aboriginal community.* Australian Institute for Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- Willis, R. 1980. The Literalist Fallacy and the Problem of Oral Tradition. *Social Analysis. Journal of cultural and social practice* 4(September):28-37.
- Worsley, P.M. 1955. Early Asian Contacts with Australia. *Past and Present* 7:1-11.
- Yule, I.R. (ed), 1980. *My Mother the Land,* Elcho Island NT Christian Action Group, Galiwinku Parish, Uniting Church of Australia in association with Action for World Development, Darwin.
- Zorc, D. 1986. *Yolngu-Matha Dictionary.* School of Australian Linguistics, Batchelor College.