

THE NEW ABORIGINES:

THE POLITICS OF TRADITION IN THE GROOTE EYLANDT

AREA OF ARNHEM LAND.

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Except where otherwise acknowledged, this  
thesis is my own work.

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## SUMMARY

The new Aborigines: the politics of tradition in the Groote Eylandt area of Arnhem land.

Chapter 1: The problems investigated and the literature reviewed.

The main problem is to establish the nature and direction of an "Aboriginal" identity emerging in the context of changed economic and political circumstances in the Groote Eylandt area of Arnhem land. The first chapter reviews the theoretical perspectives and assumptions of the anthropological literature on Groote Eylandt, particularly as they relate to social and cultural change. The hypothesis that the assimilation of Aborigines into European patterns of behaviour and conceptualization is inevitable is rejected as too broad to be of use.

Chapter 2: Paradise lost? - the transition from a hunter-gatherer to capitalist economy.

A transformation of the economic livelihood of Aborigines provides the context for the emerging "Aboriginal" identity. Aboriginal patterns of work and exploitation of resources before and after European settlement are discussed. The hunter-gatherer work pattern of small or family units undertaking a variety of self-directed activities is contrasted with the division of economic

roles at the settlements between European "managers" and the "managed" Aboriginal labourers. Aborigines however have continued to hunt and fish and recently to establish out-stations. Aboriginal sources of employment and income are surveyed. The relationship between social and economic circumstances and the emergence of a new "Aboriginal" identity is explored.

### Chapter 3: The Groote Eylandt clan communities.

The clans are identified as major cultural units of the Aboriginal population. Their functions and distribution in space and time are described in order to show why the clans are still important. Clan organization has been institutionalized by Aborigines in allocating mining royalties. Implications of the clan's new functions are discussed.

### Chapter 4: Reclassification of kin

This chapter develops a model of alliance between clan groups to explain the system of kin classification and modifications to it over time. It analyses the degree of regularity between the classificatory system and social relations, and the changes that have occurred over time. It compares kinship and marriage data from other Australian societies to develop an alternative hypothesis of the relationship between ideology and behaviour.

## Chapter 5: Religion

This chapter reviews the sources of available information on Groote Eylandt religion and discusses its personal and political implications, with reference to other Australian literature. The importance of innovation and regional dialectics is considered. Through totemism the vocabularies of the ceremonies affirm attachments to particular localities and the land. The chapter establishes that a renaissance of religious ceremonies has occurred since Turner worked in the area in 1969, despite the pessimistic prognoses made in the past.

## Chapter 6: Conclusions

This thesis has asked two questions: What are the main elements of an emerging "Aboriginal" identity on Groote Eylandt? Can social and cultural elements of a traditional hunter-gatherer formation continue indefinitely in a different economy? The usefulness of the notion "dialectic" is contrasted with the notion of "determination". The elements of the new identity are reconsidered. The increasing distinctiveness of Groote Eylandt thought and behaviour is explained in terms of forces shaping an emerging Aboriginal identity. It is concluded that the new

identity is formed in particular from the institutions of kinship, clan allegiance and religion as they comprise representations and social practices associated customarily with claims of clans to particular "countries". It is also concluded that in the contemporary economic situation of mineral exploitation by the capitalist sector and concessionary incomes for Aborigines, these traditional institutions are developing dynamically and have acquired the new cultural and political function of articulating rights to land of "Aborigines".

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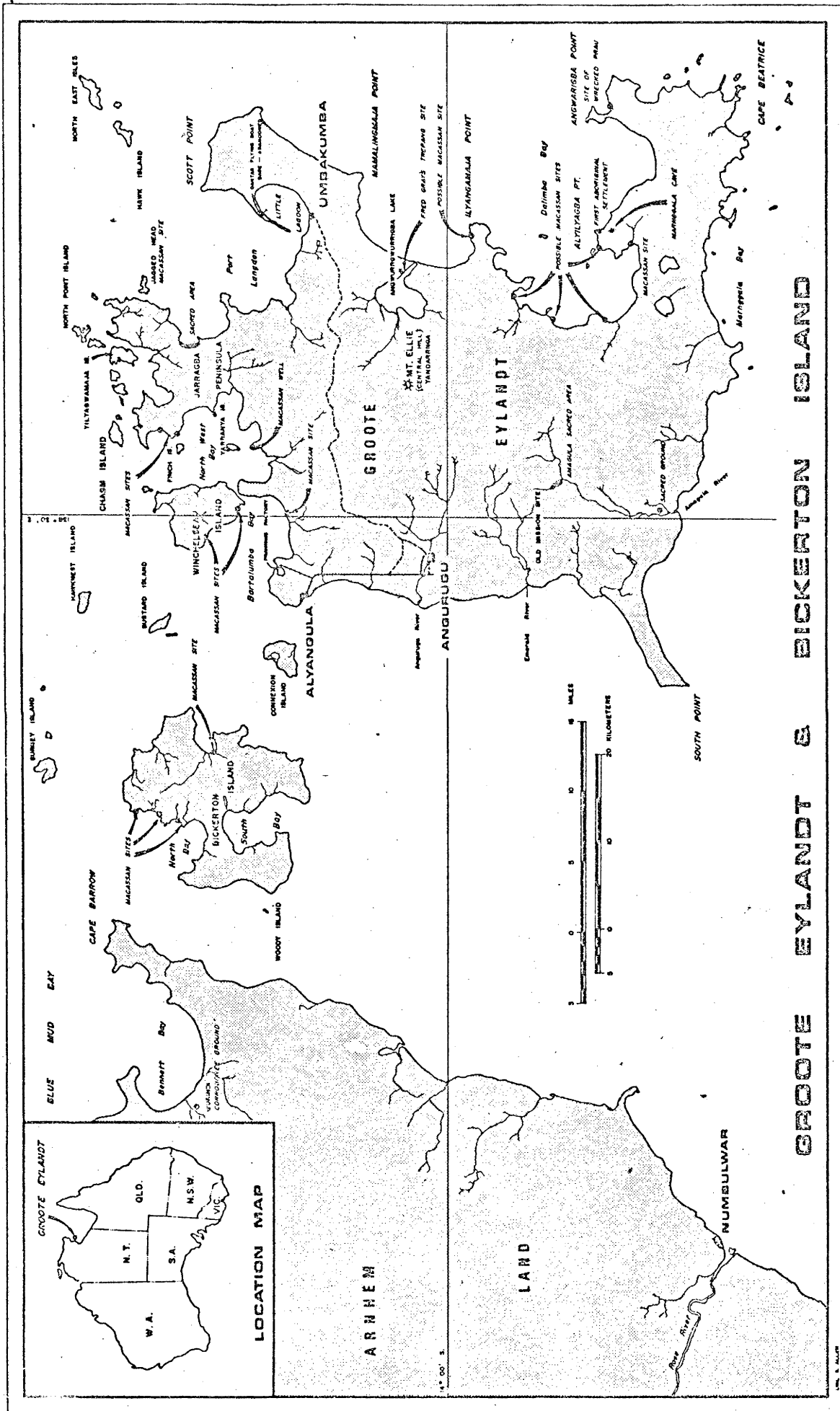
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GROOTE EYLANDT & BICKERTON ISLAND

Source: Cole 1975

CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEMS INVESTIGATED, AND THE LITERATURE REVIEWED

"soon, alas, they are all destined for extinction under the impact of illnesses and - for them even more horrible - modes of life with which we have plagued them"

Levi Strauss 1974

"He (Vincent Lingiari) will never abandon the losing battle to help his people retain their identity"

Frank Hardy 1968

The purpose of this thesis is to establish the nature and direction of an "Aboriginal" identity emerging in the context of changed economic and political circumstances in the Groote Eylandt area of Arnhem land. The method undertaken is to review the perspectives of ethnographers who worked on Groote Eylandt between 1921 and 1969, and to provide additional information from fieldwork and written sources.

At the conclusion of his study of Groote Eylandt Aborigines which was undertaken in 1969, Turner stated "The question is not really whether many of these Aborigines' shared conceptions and actions will soon become indistinguishable from those held by certain segments of the White Australian population, but when will they". Information

on developments since then suggest Turner may be proved wrong on this point. If one adopts the radical corollary of Turner's prediction, one could argue that as Europeans have been established on Groote Eylandt since 1921, through a mission, and later through Government and industries, therefore "Aborigines" should be behaving just like other people there and in the rest of Australia, or soon will be. The economic transformation has meant that now more Europeans live in the mining town of Alyangula, than Aborigines live at the Angurugu settlement only ten miles away. If Turner's prediction were correct, Aborigines should be merging with the European population. Since 1969 however the opposite has occurred as people have adopted a more self-conscious and public "Aboriginality" than before.

Groote Eylandt is a "hot society" in Levi-Strauss's terms (1974:47). Locally it is a crucible of different forces acting on Australian Aborigines. Since about 1940 Aborigines have resided at two settlements established by Europeans. Umbakumba was established by a private entrepreneur and trepanger, and later managed successively by a mission and the Government. Angurugu was established as a mission. After 1972 Aboriginal Councils assumed legal responsibility for Angurugu and Umbakumba. The former superintendents were renamed community advisors. In 1964 a company obtained mining leases for manganese and built Alyangula, a town north of Angurugu, where most Europeans now live. Because

the mission had obtained mining permits in 1961 they were able to secure a small percentage in mining royalties (paid into a Trust Account) for Aborigines. In 1969/70 royalties surpassed \$0.1m for the first time. In 1976/77 the royalty of one and one half per cent, and interest on accumulated capital, surpassed \$0.85m. In August 1977 Aborigines attempted to confine Europeans to the mining leases in order to obtain a renegotiation of the royalty agreement. There is also an extensive anthropological literature on Groote Eylandt, which facilitates testing hypotheses on social and cultural change.

A general anthropological assumption in the literature is well expressed by Turner (1974:1). "First, discover what the ideal patterns were in the context of the present; second, hypothesise that they were actually practised at some point in the past". The corollary is that change is unidirectional. An alternative interpretation is that the ideal is just that, a cultural pattern that has at most a dialectical relationship to behaviour, and never a deterministic one. A consequent problem is why some traditional elements became part of a new formation, and others did not. A case study in this respect, the Groote Eylandt clans, is undertaken in Chapter 3.

Much of the literature fails to distinguish between the ideal and the real, between mechanical and statistical models in Levi-Strauss's terms (1977:284), between social structure and social organization (Firth 1964:45). In all societies, what people say about themselves

\* 'traditional' is used to refer to Aboriginal life before European settlement. It does not assume that this life was static or unchanging.



their rules of marriage, the permanency of their political institutions and the antiquity of their traditions, may be different from what actually happens. The ideal and real interact, but do not determine each other. It will be argued that Grooté Eylandt ethnographers have ignored this point for e.g. kinship. There is considerable evidence to suggest that emic cultural models on Grooté Eylandt never determined all marriages. One implication is that cultural models may not describe a state of affairs that existed in the past, but only what people in the past thought should have existed. On Grooté Eylandt the ideal no longer corresponds to reality, but it is likely it never did. It is the lack of correspondence since European intrusion, and the new functions of old institutions, that are of particular relevance here.

To some extent the literature reflects the particular interests and analytical assumptions of the investigators. Tindale's wide geographical ambit provides data on regional dialectics in 1921, which have become an important consideration for Aborigines fifty years later, when deciding the allocation of mining royalties. The structure and function of traditional marriage relationships are of major concern to Rose, Worsley and Turner.

PAST APPROACHES

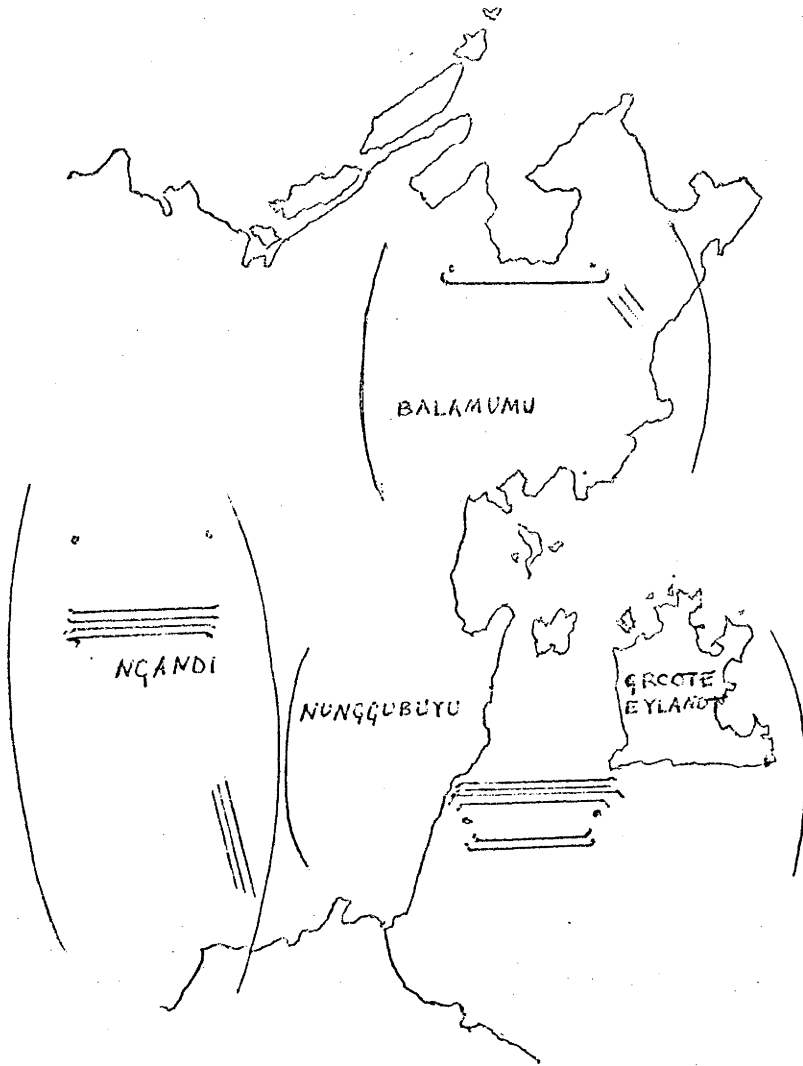
Because of the number of anthropologists who have undertaken research on Groote Eylandt, albeit for short periods, there is a better chance of painting a diachronic picture of cultural processes there than in many other parts of Australia. Subsequent chapters will consider the practices and concepts by which people establish their identity as Groote Eylandt Aborigines. Recapitulating the literature here serves two purposes. It sketches the epistemological context of later discussion and to that extent provides a vignette of the intellectual history of Australian anthropology. Only Worsley and Turner are specifically concerned with social and cultural change, which they both assume is unidirectional. But the literature not only defines facts, it also reflects them. The social fact of changed political relationships between Aborigines and other Australians since 1969 questions theoretical assumptions made by researchers working in earlier situations.

Tindale worked prior to European settlement as he came with the first missionaries. At the time he was spending some fifteen months in the Roper River district, paying special attention to entomology. Tindale's articles (1925, 1926) provide the only substantial record of the area prior to European Settlement and continuous residence of local Aborigines at either the mission or the private settlement. Then a young man with no anthropological

or linguistic training, he spent six months on the island (November 1921 - April 1922) and some time sailing around the archipelago with the members of the Church Missionary Society who were surveying the area for a mission site.

The main value of Tindale's account is that, although a preliminary survey, he collected his ethnographic material within a regional context and prior to European settlement. His boundaries are different to those of later anthropologists who, despite their aspirations, were forced to study the life at one or other of the settlements. Tindale identified an "Ingura" tribe bounded by the Groote archipelago. The people lived in nomadic bands ("local groups"), with "headquarters" (1925:64) at one locality. The north-west band spoke both Ingura and Nunggubuyu, a language of the mainland. One custom distinguishing them from mainland Aborigines is the seclusion of women in separate camps (71). Tindale thought this a response to Malay intrusions (67). Major ceremonies were not exclusive to the "tribe". Ceremonies held at Amalyigba near Bartalumba Bay on north west Groote were attended only by "Ingura". When held at Bickerton, Nunggubuyu Aborigines from the mainland opposite attended, and when held at Cape Barrow, the band with country on the south-east of Groote Eylandt were generally absent. When held at Numbulwar the Ingura did not attend (86).

FIGURE 1: Geographical location of patterns of chest and limb incision in eastern Arnhem Land.



Tindale also noted obvious similarities between the Ingura and Nunggubuyu, which distinguished both of them from their neighbours. Men from both tribes usually have six cicatrices above and below their nipples, and some short raised marks on the left arm. The Balamumu to the north make one chest cicatrix and three longitudinal cuts on the left arm. The Ngandi to the west place four cuts low down on the chest and three slanting cuts on the left thigh (see Figure 1).

It therefore appears that the key sociological unit Tindale observed was the band or local group, and that the "tribes" he identifies are principally cultural units which provide commentaries on the adjacent units, and together constitute a regional system.

Rose's doctorate was based on five months (May-September 1941) field work living mainly at Umbakumba. Rose spent some time camping with Aborigines in the bush (1960b:80-81), and he has published most of his field notes. His major study (1960b) contains forms listing the kinship terms used by each of the 221 Aborigines that he questioned, to refer to other Aborigines. His major argument is that "marriage gerontocracy" the term he uses (Rose 1973:204) for the practice of old men marrying young girls, leads to abandonment of bilateral cross-cousin marriage and adoption of matrilineal cross cousin marriage. This would seem to ignore both remarriage and the role of classificatory relationships in marriage. Rose's material is discussed in greater detail below.

The study was rigorously sociological. Emic classifications were avoided on purpose, to Rose's loss. He notes that instead of obtaining information on each individual's totem and locality it would have been far easier "to treat the clan as an abstraction, obtain its name, locality and the totems associated with it."(35) Needham (1961:6-7) also notes that despite the extensive and detailed sociological information, no sense can be made out of it without an analysis of the indigenous ideology and a structural investigation.

The work of Mountford, who visited Groote in 1948, exemplifies the other extreme. Mountford reproduces paintings, provides versions of myths and describes ceremonies, but ignores the sociology altogether. Worsley described the result as "an old fashioned ethnological collection of facts" (1957:24). "Unless they are set in their social context... we cannot understand them" (1958:93). The expedition Mountford organized involved seventeen people from many different disciplines, social anthropology not included. They spent a total of nine months, based in camps at Umbakumba, at Yirrkalla on the north-east coast of Arnhem land, and at Oenpelli, in western Arnhem land.

By visiting three settlements, the expedition was able to gather different samples of such things as the time taken by hunter-gatherers to support themselves for short periods in the bush (McCarthy and McArthur 1960), which formed an important basis for Sahlin's influential article on "The Original Affluent Society" (1968). It also provided an overview of the conditions at different

settlements (McArthur 1960). Unfortunately, although three locations were chosen instead of one, Aboriginal division of relevant cultural areas is ignored. Worsley exclaimed "One trained fieldworker stationed at one spot for nine months would have produced incomparably more valuable work" (1957:24).

In 1953 Worsley had done just that. Living at Umbakumba with his wife he attempted "to give a rounded picture of the whole society .. by paying particular attention to institutions of central importance" (1954b:ii). He provided more information on Black-white relations than anywhere else in the literature, and described the Wanindilyaugwa "as they really exist, i.e., living on settlements under white control and administration" (iii). As a result Worsley (1954:vi) observed that behaviour does not follow the ideal pattern in institutions such as kinship, but attributed this, wrongly, as argued below, to historical change.

Worsley (1954b:ix) was aware of the difficulties of equating the concept "social structure" to the ideal, to the behavioural norm, or, as Rose did, to the statistical average. Worsley's solution was an empirical response and the collection of statistical material to analyse information on the economy, totemism, the life stages and kinship, and to paint a pessimistic picture of life for Aborigines at the settlement. His working assumption was that the Wanindilyaugwa formed a discrete society (xiv), which he attempted to analyse with reference to history and other ethnographic sources,

such as Warner's on the Murngin. Unfortunately his field of observation was bounded by the Umbakumba settlement.

Turner spent ten months at Angurugu in 1969, and was more aware than Worsley and Rose of the need to relate his information to neighbouring areas. He also visited, for a few days, according to Government records, Umbakumba and at some stage he travelled to Numbulwar. Most of his material concerns clans from Bickerton Island living at Angurugu. He demonstrates in detail the usefulness of Levi-Strauss's alliance theory of kinship. Like Worsley, Turner assumes that present ideal patterns were actually practised at some point in the past (1974:1). An alternative explanation is that the ideal has always had a dialectical relationship to praxis, never a deterministic one. This alternative is investigated below particularly with reference to kinship, a focus of Rose, Worsley and Turner's study.

Turner's field boundaries were first the mission and secondly the Bickerton clans living there. As with the other male investigators before him, women were scarcely mentioned. A second assumption was to take "Aborigine" to mean a person of full Aboriginal descent, but in this, anthropologists were merely following Government and mission policy of segregating those of part Aboriginal descent into separate institutions.



Turner and Worsley, who wrote the two most extensive studies, and the only ones concerned specifically with social and cultural change, both assume change is unidirectional, that is Aborigines will progressively become more like Europeans. A reassessment of the literature in the light of developments during the 1970s, however, suggests such an assumption is too broad to be useful. It may be that while the total formation has changed it is traditional elements, such as clans on Groote Eylandt, that articulate the various levels of a new formation.

Since Turner wrote, van der Leeden, who worked at Numbulwar in 1964-65 and in 1972-73, has published some material on the Nunggubuyu of the mainland opposite Groote (1975,76). Biernoff, who worked in the same area between 1971-72, has made extensive reports available. He has also reported (1974) on the movement of many Aboriginal groups since 1973 away from the established settlements to recreate their own communities on land to which they have traditional claims. Biernoff reports a change of context for the anthropologist working in 1972. He says:

"The old men ... are anxious that Europeans, particularly those in positions of authority and those in close contact with the tribal groups, learn about those things which are of importance to tribal people."

"Many of the ceremonial leaders in Eastern Arnhem Land believe that if the "law" can once more become strong, at least in their countries, their people will regain their lost strength, security and tranquility".

These library sources were also supplemented by information the writer obtained between July and December 1977 during a series of visits to Umbakumba, Angurugu, Alyangula, Numbulwar and outstations north of Numbulwar, by complete access to all Government files, from 1938 to the present, and by various written reports.

Although my period in the field was much briefer than Worsley's, Rose's or Turner's stay at Umbakumba or Angurugu, I did have the benefit of their work, and also a more extensive geographic frame of reference than any one of them, as I moved around more than they did. Tindale's information suggests Aborigines were highly mobile before Europeans settled in the area. High Aboriginal mobility is also apparent in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1977, with the assistance of Toyota trucks, boats, and charter planes, Aboriginal mobility was even more pronounced.

Other field workers did not have access to the extensive government records from 1938 onwards. These tell us something about Aborigines but much more about the assumptions made in administering them. Tatz, who in the 1960s was able to write an excellent Ph.D. thesis on the administration of Aboriginal affairs in the Northern Territory without consulting any Aborigines, has recently made the following comment about the Northern Territory:

"Social history demonstrates one feature common to both the eras of neglect and concern: that white society unilaterally defines the problems, prescribes the policy dicta, enacts the legislation, creates the administrative machinery, and determines the nature, content, personnel and flavour of remedial programs." (1977:384)

This is also suggested by the terminology and methodology of data collected by Government during the history of institutionalization. Information collected and reports made were settlement based.

From 1956 until 1972 each settlement superintendent completed monthly returns which listed age and sex specific populations of children, grouped with pensioners and other "non-workers", and sex-specific numbers of working adults. Non-Aborigines are only identified when they appear as "staff", in contrast to the Aborigines, listed as "inmates" in the early returns.

There is little or no record of Aboriginal attitudes or preferences. The first item written by an Aboriginal describes his visit to New South Wales in 1969. These are very much managed communities. A major and reciprocally-perpetuating delusion of both anthropologists and government has been the use of the settlement as an object of analysis. There is insufficient acknowledgement in the literature of Aboriginal methods of classification.

Tindale, although unconcerned with theoretical problems, travelled extensively in the area, and worked prior to European settlement. His account however does suggest that the band is the key sociological unit, that Nunggubuyu and "Ingura" for some purposes formed a cultural unit whose art reflected a systematic commentary on their northern and western neighbours, but that the "larger super-band" units were of a higher order, labile and negotiable - they comprised different constellations for different purposes.

For later ethnographers, the geographical object of analysis, to a greater or lesser degree, was the settlement. Traditional elements were situated in this new context of European penetration, sometimes only casually acknowledged by the investigators. The discreteness of their object of investigation - "the Aborigines" followed Government institutionalization of the discreteness of this group.

#### A DIFFERENT APPROACH

Particularly important for the problem of Aboriginal identity is the influence of other "Aboriginal" groups in the region. Tindale, because he travelled widely in the area in 1921, presents the Groote Eylandt clans in a regional context and Turner makes occasional references to other Aboriginal groups. In general, however, the traditional method of social anthropology has often prescribed about one year's fieldwork in one location. One outcome of this method is that geographical and chronological boundaries imposed on the investigator have decreasing analytical relevance as the society ceases to be "outside history", and becomes more securely stuck in a web of tangled and intricate relationships with a nation state. It is possible for instance that European incursions may have stimulated some of the swapping of ideas and institutions by Aborigines, that has been documented in historical times elsewhere in Australia.

A careful reading of Australian ethnography suggests that phenomena which look "traditionally Aboriginal" and most certainly are not European, were also often foreign to an area prior to European incursion. Spencer and Gillen (1899:90) in 1896 reported the presence among the northern and south-eastern Walbiri, of subsections that were still in the process of acceptance by the southern Aranda. Stanner documents how the Nangiomeri were currently adopting a sub-section system associated with matrilineal totemism and a new type of marriage from people of the Victoria and Fitzmaurice rivers (1933:384). Meggitt cites other examples of adoption of such systems in historical times (1962:168). Similarly information collected by Pilling (1957:122,197) and Goodale (1971:234) indicates recent adoption of sorcery beliefs and practices by the Tiwi. Goodale states that sorcery on Bathurst and Melville Islands is "in the main an introduced cultural belief" whose promotion is indirectly caused by settlement life.

Already in the literature there are the footnotes of a new history of Australian anthropology with far broader parameters. Biernoff identifies a Murngin confederation (1974:62), Tod Woene (1977:67) the spatial extension of previous Aboriginal conceptualizations of country, and Tonkinson (1974) eloquently describes unintended stimulus given to Aboriginal religious life at Jigalong by an evangelical Christian mission. Kolig (1977:46,51) identifies Wolmadjeri as an innovatory label for a larger grouping in discussing "controlled identity".

The theoretical perspectives of anthropologists who have worked in Australia is often oriented to self-sufficient "traditional" societies, even though self-sufficiency has long since ceased to determine the society and culture of Australian groups. In fact Aborigines are now situated ambivalently in a national context whose cultural ethos comprises among other things a chauvinistic egalitarianism. For instance in a nice illustration of all three of Leach's (1972:208) categories of obscenity - sex, blasphemy (against the Australian ethos) and animal abuse, a Queensland Government Minister related to the annual dinner of the mining industry, that had been lobbying strongly against the attempted renegotiation of Groote Eylandt mining royalties, that a Queenslander "screwed a gorilla on a bar room floor" because he thought "that the beast was an aborigine in a fur coat" (Financial Review, 7 April 1978, Nation Review 13 April 1978). Not long afterwards a Government Senator from Queensland crossed the floor and voted against Commonwealth legislation for Aboriginal self-management on the pretext that Aborigines are the same as every one else and should be treated equally! All this is by way of prelude to make the point that good anthropology on Groote Eylandt is no longer possible without reference to wider social and cultural patterns. Because of the anomalous situation of Aborigines in the Australian context, the outcome of the forces acting on them is different from for instance hunter-gatherers in the Indian subcontinent where there is an operative ethos of hierarchy (Dumont 1970). The ambivalent situation of Aborigines on Groote Eylandt arises from an economic transformation in which mining has played an important part. The economic life of Aborigines before and after European settlement is therefore examined below.

CHAPTER 2

PARADISE LOST? THE TRANSITION FROM A HUNTER-GATHERER TO  
CAPITALIST ECONOMY

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"A strange delusion possesses the working  
classes of the nations where capitalist  
civilisation holds its sway ...  
This delusion is the love of work."

Lafargue 1909

THE HUNTER-GATHERER ECONOMY

This chapter identifies important features of the economic life of Aborigines before and after European settlement, in order to explore the relationships between economic changes and an emerging Aboriginal identity.

Various writers have argued that Aborigines had a viable and efficient economy before European incursion (Penny and Moriarty 1977; Altman 1978). Worsley (1961) and Turner (1974) have published information on foods collected and hunted on Groote Eylandt. This chapter therefore presents the available information on the size of the food production unit and the distribution of what was produced, and refers to other Australian sources to identify a general pattern of work activity and work effort. The reactions of Aborigines to the economy established by European settlement and the mining industry are considered. Aboriginal perceptions of their economic and political situation are also quoted as they suggest the directions Aborigines are taking to develop a new identity in the context of the transformation of the economy.

Work in Groote Eylandt and Australia

The work effort of hunter-gatherers forms an important bench-mark for understanding Aborigines' participation in the modern Australian economy. It is also central to Sahlins' (1974) influential essay "The Original Affluent Society". The most detailed information, however, is the data collected by McCarthy and McArthur in 1948 during the American-Australian scientific expedition to Arnhem land, ten years after Aborigines began to reside permanently at Umbakumba and Angurugu. Sahlins' thesis is that in relation to their wants, most hunters and gatherers enjoy plenty with no great effort. If one accepts Sahlins' romantic picture of Aborigines living off the land and sea of Groote Eylandt and elsewhere in Arnhem land, the problem then becomes not only the general one of why hunters and gatherers ever chose the apparently much more rigorous life at the first settlements established by Europeans, but specifically why Aborigines on Groote Eylandt, who only resided for short periods at the Angurugu mission until 1938, ever bothered to move to Angurugu and Umbakumba at all.

Sahlins refers to the limited wants of hunter-gatherers, but does not compare the workload of their "affluent" life style with other economies. He merely implies that the work time identified as typical for hunter-gatherers is less than in other modes of production. The cognitive and hermeneutical aspects of self-directed activities



outside a settlement, compared to management directed activities inside one, are also of obvious major importance in considering the life at settlements, and the continuing inclination of Aborigines to spend time hunting and fishing.

There is little information about the economic life of Aborigines on Groote Eylandt before European settlement. The most detailed time and motion study which was also used by Sahlins, refers to Aborigines who lived at least some of the time on Arnhem land settlements. The different policies of the settlements are outlined below. The word "policy" is apposite, because the economies and hence work effort of settlement residents has always been ultimately regulated by Government.

McCarthy and McArthur's time and motion study was undertaken with groups who (with the exception of one adolescent girl and an infant), had all lived at settlements. Generalisations about hunter-gatherer work levels from this data must be made cautiously, and with major reservations.

The survey period is weighted by several factors in favour of a lighter workload than for life before European settlements. The factors include the shortness of the fieldwork and the surveys (one-two weeks), the seasonal factor of working in October, the richness of Arnhem land compared to other Australian eco-systems,

the absence of children and old people in the groups studied, the diminished pressure on the land because of residence by Aborigines at settlements established by Europeans, and the use of some modern implements (91).

Time for making producer goods such as weapons and consumer goods such as housing (used in the wet season), and, at one of the camps, time for cooking and obtaining firewood and water, are not included. All these factors were noted by McCarthy and McArthur but not by Sahlins.

It is perhaps decisive to Sahlins' attempts to identify an original affluent society, to note that in contrast to the Fish Creek Camp near Oenpelli, which supported no children or aged people and had the lower work time, at the Groote Eylandt camp, there were five children with the eight adults. It is likely their 36 hour week is therefore more indicative of the mean time hunter-gatherers spent gathering food each week.

Because of the paucity of time and motion studies for hunter-gatherers, Sahlins had to refer to more general information. He quotes the recollections of three nineteenth century writers, Grey, Eyre and Curr. Grey wrote the following about Aboriginal work efforts: "In all ordinary seasons they can obtain, in two or three hours a sufficient supply of food for the day, but their usual custom is to roam indolently from spot to spot lazily collecting it as they wander along". (1841:263).

In the same period Eyre created a similar impression. He wrote "In almost every part of the continent which I have visited, where the presence of Europeans, or their stock, has not limited or destroyed their original means of subsistence, I have found that the native could usually in three or four hours procure as much food as would last for the day (1845:254-255). In the Port Phillip District in Southern Australia in the 1840s: Curr found the men and women were hunting and gathering about six hours a day, "half of that time being loitered away in the shade or by the fire". (1965:118)

The hypothetical 14 to 28 hour week as the minimum necessary to obtain food is not based on actual measurements of work time. In a hot climate a hypothetical minimum time may be inadequate over an extended period. These generalisations can be supplemented by observations made by anthropologists who have lived with Aborigines over an extended period. They suggest regular effort and much time was spent procuring food. The general picture they provide is relevant to a hunter-gatherer economy on Groote Eylandt before European settlement.

Hart lived in the bush with the Tiwi on Bathurst and Melville Islands from 1928 to 1929. "By shortly after dawn each day, the household was up, and after a light breakfast, usually of leftovers from the previous night, everybody left camp to go to work". (1966:33).

"During the day only the babies and one or maybe two old wives to look after them would be left in the camp, the rest would be scattered through the bush, the women and children gathering wild fruits, vegetables and nuts, the men hunting. Only at sundown would they all come in". (1969:155)

In 1934 and 1935 Kaberry worked in the Kimberleys. Although Aborigines had lived on cattle stations for forty years, from September to March when work at the stations slackened off, Aborigines were sent "walk about" and lived off the bush. By 8.30 am the camp would be deserted with the men hunting and women gathering food. "It is not the steady strenuous labour of the German peasant woman bending from dawn to dusk over her fields, hoeing, weeding, sowing and reaping. The Aboriginal woman has greater freedom of movement and more variety" (1948:19-20). Most would come straggling in during the afternoon. Women searched for food every day (23), and despite drought never returned empty-handed (20).

Peterson spent a total of eight months between 1966 and 1970, with Aborigines living off the bush in Arnhem land. Although he does not provide a time and motion study, he mentions that some old Aboriginal men spend at least 15 hours a day resting or sleeping (1971:37) and most men and women return to camp in the afternoon (109). Thomson, writing of Arnhem Land in 1935-1937, says "About sunrise the camp is in full activity and the people now begin to move off ... (1949:29). For a couple of hours during the heat of the day the natives rest. But they are rarely idle; even during these halts the men may often be seen squatting before little fires, making or repairing spears or other weapons. The women also take advantage of such respites to work on mesh baskets which they carry rolled up in a half finished state (32). Late in the afternoon, generally about sundown, the people will be seen returning to camp from the

day's foraging. The first impression ... is of industry. He cannot fail to see that everybody, man or woman, works hard" (33).

The limited information available therefore, would suggest that it is unlikely hunter-gatherer bands in Australia usually worked less than the 36 hour week at Hempel Bay on Groote Eylandt. Lack of children or aged people probably accounts for the shorter work hours at Fish Creek Camp, which are therefore atypical.

As hunter-gatherers, the Australians therefore seem to have a considerably tougher time than the !Kung bushmen, judged only on Lee's three week study. Lee reports they devoted only twelve to nineteen hours a week to getting food. Sahlins notes the !Kung bushmen at Dobe had metal since 1880 (1974:21) but if one accepts the !Kung week they stand at one extreme, and Netsilik Eskimos who considered life "short and harsh", the other extreme, (Balikci 1973) of hunter gatherer work efforts. Information on the work levels of hunter-gatherers is presented in Table 1. Reference to the literature available on work levels in other economies, unsystematic as it is,<sup>1</sup> suggests that Australian hunter-gatherers did not spend less time working than many agriculturalists.

One of the difficulties with the unquantified early Australian sources is that the writers' different interests influenced their representations. The vested interest of nineteenth century white

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Footnote 1. Blackwood 1935:27-29; Nadel 1942:222-224;  
Provinse 1937:96-97; Richards 1962:112

Australian settlers in arguing that Aborigines under utilised resources may explain Grey's references to laziness and indolence. Thomson was committed to a policy of protectionism for Aborigines in Arnhem Land. His frequent references (1949) to Aborigines "working hard" as hunter gatherers was written shortly before Government in the Northern Territory proposed assimilation of Aborigines and issued policy statements which began "Aborigines must be taught to work". (Government records)

Sahlins also appears to have used too little selective information on Australian Aborigines to argue too much, although the general point that they were living below their productive maximum at any one time is valid. Also valid is his elegant restatement of Morgan's scheme of primitive communism. Hunter-gatherers were affluent in the sense that they were not poor.

TABLE 1 - Work time of hunter-gatherers.

		Hours each week	Days each year during which any work was undertaken	Length of observation (in days)
<u>Hunters and gatherers</u>				
Australian Aborigines -				
Oenpelli	males	27	247	14
	females	26	313	14
Groote Eylandt	males	36	252	14
	females	36	287	14
!Kung Bushmen		+ 16	130	28
<u>Industrial Society</u>				
Australia		40	219	365

Sources: McCarthy and McArthur (1960), Lee (1968)  
 Australian Bureau of Statistics (1977)

Production and Distribution

The work effort of Australian hunter-gatherers is important in understanding responses by Aborigines when resident at settlements, and for constructing a generative model of their traditional livelihood, in Barth's (1966) sense, - that is one where an aggregate of people exercise choice while influenced by certain constraints and incentives. The information available on other elements of a sociology of Aboriginal work suggests Groote Eylandt Aborigines shared a pattern similar to other coastal Aborigines.

By calling the pursuit of sea-mammals "Hunting" Lee (1969:30-48) classifies the Murngin, Tiwi and Wikmunkan as 60% dependant on gathering, 30% on hunting and 10% on fishing. The literature suggests Aborigines on Groote Eylandt were similarly dependant. Tindale says the chief vegetable food is the cycad or burrawang which is gathered by women under the charge of an old man (1925:33). Dugong on the north and west coasts, and turtles and turtles' eggs on the eastern and southern sides were the principal animal foods. Dugong were hunted from canoes which generally had a crew of five or more men.

Usually old men did not go out for food, most of their time was spent making spears (82). The "definite food-sharing custom" Tindale describes was not observed by later ethnographers. Perhaps it was practised by youths undergoing initiation. A young Aboriginal male who obtained food would not receive any of it. Instead, a full share was taken by the old man present, and the remainder divided among the younger men.

All food not eaten on the spot was considered to belong to the camping group as a whole. When two groups of Aborigines formed adjacent camps food was usually shared but eaten separately in the two camps (83-4).

Tindale (1925:71) notes seclusion of women in separate camps.

In 1921 women were reportedly monopolised by the older men, who each had two, or in some cases, more. The rest of the men lived together in open camps with some of the old men, and collected the greater part of their own food themselves. The older men frequently received yams and burrawang cakes from women. The special separate status of Aboriginal women has continued to be important since Aborigines have resided at settlements (particularly at Umbakumba). Later ethnographers, however, noted that the physical separation of men and women that Tindale observed, had gone.

In 1948 the Arnhem Land expedition worked with four camps of 9 - 23 people (95,128). At Groote Eylandt, men and women usually gathered food separately. There were some exceptions, and sometimes families spent the day as separate units. Women sometimes fished while the men gathered food.

What was the usual size of the band or food production unit?

Rose's (1960b:80) observations were made after 1938 and mainly confined to the northern and eastern parts of the island. He notes that camp membership in the bush never comprised more than



six men and their families, that is a group of forty men, women and children. "Usually the group the writer camped with would not be greater than two or three married men and their families, and in a number of instances single families lived independently, and in virtual isolation for weeks at a time away from other groups of the population". The specific examples described - a man, four wives, his mother and seven children; a man, his two wives and his brother; occasionally joined by a man, his six wives, his mother, and twelve children; a man, his wife and child and two young wives; are reminiscent of what Hart calls "the food production units" among the Tiwi (Kauffman 1976:14-16).

In 1969 Turner spent a total of one month in the bush with various groups of men. This included two weeks on Bickerton and surrounding islands (1974:162). He presents no quantitative data but mentions that a constant effort was required to secure sustenance. The usual pattern was to awaken at sunrise, have some refreshment, then fish, hunt or gather until midday. They would sleep until mid-afternoon, return to camp in the early evening and then eat the day's catch together. Lack of women modified food collecting activities (men gathered) and may have decreased efficiency of producing food (165).

There are therefore several major elements in a generative model of the Groote Eylandt hunter-gatherer economy that are relevant to later dissatisfactions with life on the settlements. They are

flexibility and variety within the constraint of a six hour day or forty hour week, the degree of self-direction and independence in the activity, the small size of living and work units (four to twenty people, and an average of ten being usual except on the occasion of ceremonies) and the midday sleep period.

The division of labour between the sexes when both men and women were present, and the fairly constant though broken work periods of restricted co-operation in Meillassoux's (1964:172) sense of dovetailed and inter-woven work teams, are also characteristic of this generative model.

The information available suggests that a revision of Sahlins' generalizations of Australian hunter-gatherer work efforts is necessary. The move to the settlements established by Europeans on Groote Eylandt no longer presents an impenetrable conundrum of choosing almost a factory regime in place of original affluence. Hunter-gatherers were also consistently active. For Aborigines "paradise lost" refers to the cognitive aspects and relative capacity for choice that must be considered in any assessment of comparative copiousness. The regime of work at the settlements did not allow self-direction, or small work units. Despite residence at settlements, Aborigines retained their hunting skills, partly by choice and partly by necessity. More recently the generative model of work in a hunter-gatherer economy has again become important on outstations. Here people rely much more on "bush" food, and hunt in small units that are managed by themselves.

THE MODERN ECONOMY

Life at Settlements

McArthur observed that by 1948 most Aborigines in Arnhem Land were living at settlements which were all, except for Umbakumba, run by missions. "In return for their food and tobacco ration, and sometimes a cash payment of several shillings a week, the adults work at the stations ... Their lives are ordered by Europeans."

She identifies four reasons Aborigines may have had for relinquishing independence - "security", tobacco, desire to become like white men, and inertia (1960:5). In 1977 Aborigines who had moved out from Numbulwar to their country at Waldarr/Harris Creek, on the mainland opposite Bickerton, said that it was the tobacco above all which forced them into the settlements. At Umbakumba other Aborigines recounted how they were rounded up at gunpoint to work on the flying boat base in 1938.

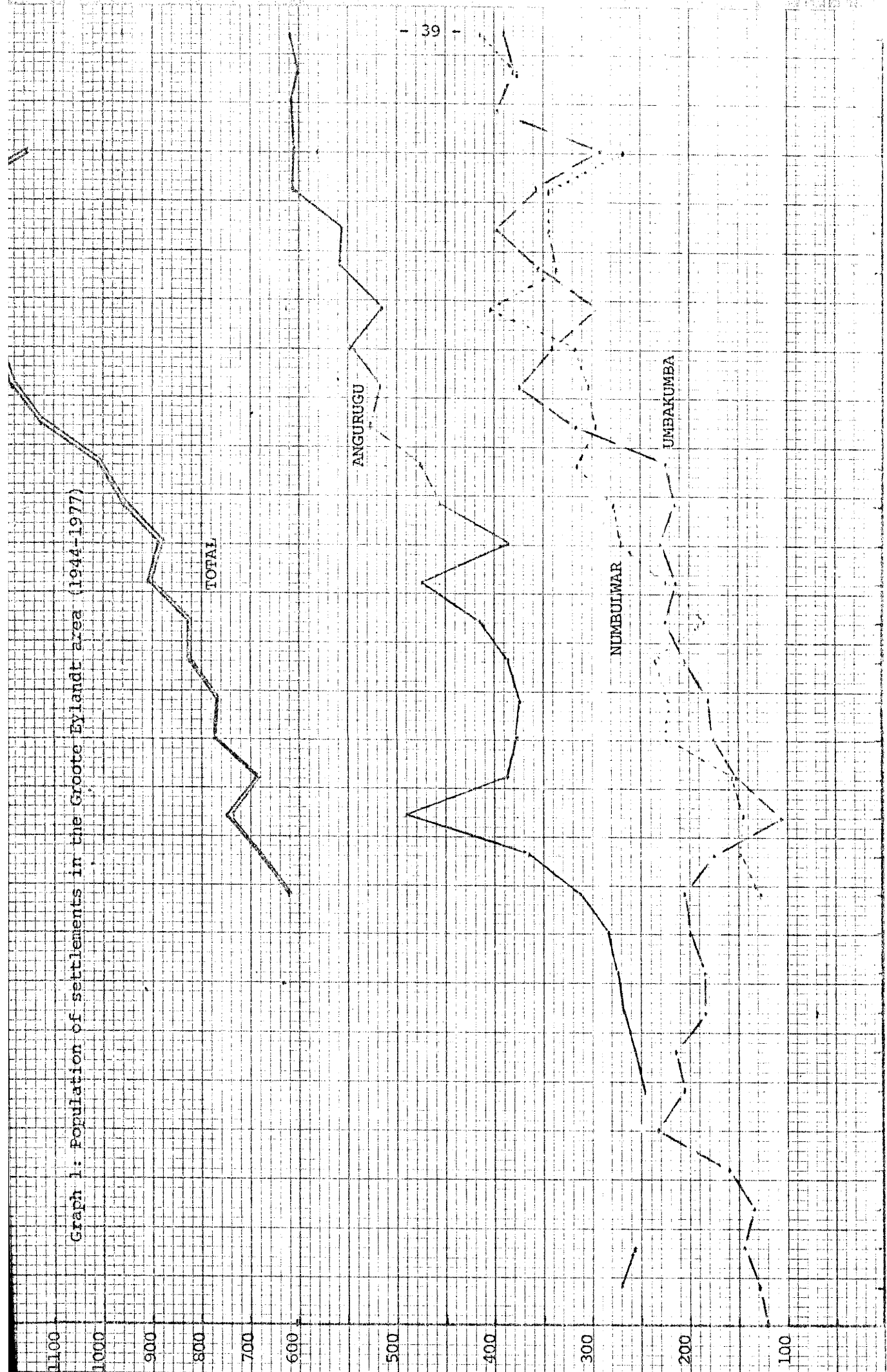
In 1948 at Umbakumba there were 160 Aborigines and a staff of five - "Mr and Mrs Gray, a married half-caste couple and a male half-caste" (9). The main form of daily activity was the production of food. "Most of the labour involved men working for 5-6 hours a day in the vegetable garden under the supervision of a person of part-Aboriginal descent. The women are a reserve labour force". At Angurugu the production of food was also the most important activity. Men cleared, burned off and prepared the ground, and women worked in the garden for 5-6 hours every day. From Worsley's account of Umbakumba in 1952-53 it is likely that McArthur's working hours are based on a five day week.

Table 2: Population of settlements in the Groote Eylandt area

Year ending 30 June	Angurugu	Umbakumba	Numbalwar	Total
1944		122		
1945	270	132		
1946	253	144		
1947	n.a.	135		
1948	n.a.	160		
1949	n.a.	232		
1950	248	205		
1951	253	213		
1952	268	185	70	523
1953	271	185	n.a.	-
1954	281	200	n.a.	-
1955	307	205	129	641
1956	363	174	149	686
1957	495	108	146	749
1958	388	151	155	694
1959	378	175	224	777
1960	372	180	222	774
1961	383	205	236	824
1962	407	224	184	815
1963	472	215	223	910
1964	386	230	270	886
1965	467	214	278	959
1966	476	222	315	1013
1967	528	308	296	1132
1968	508	375	301	1184
1969	549	340	317	1206
1970	515	297	402	1214
1971	557	353	336	1246
1972	554	399	345	1298
1973	604	366	345	1315
1974	602	291	269	1162
1975	606	397	n.a.	-
1976	650	380	378	1408
1977	609	440	413	1462

Sources: Government Records 1944-49, 1974-77; REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY ANNUAL REPORTS 1949-1958; NORTHERN TERRITORY ADMINISTRATION WELFARE BRANCH ANNUAL REPORTS 1958-73.

Graph 1: Population of settlements in the Grootte Eylandt area (1944-1977)



Several shillings a week was paid to workers at Yirrkala; apparently there was no cash paid to Aborigines on Groote Eylandt in 1948 (9-12). The policy of the Methodist Missionary Society at Yirrkala also differed in that they employed Fijians, and organised Aborigines to work less, that is every second day, as well as receive payment for it.

At all the Arnhem Land settlements, economic roles were divided between the "management" who were all white, and the "managed", the Aboriginal labourers. The division was made more acute by white-black relations in general. In 1953 Aborigines described their fights against whitemen with great enthusiasm, particularly those in which they had come out victorious. One shipwrecked whiteman unsuccessfully fought an Aborigine soon after the founding of the mission in 1921. Their stories reflect mistrust and dislike of white men, and desire to glorify themselves. The Woodah Island killings, and the police punitive expedition of 1933, together with the memory of assaults on their women, and the shooting of their menfolk and Balamumu relatives made a deep impression.

How successful were the settlements in terminating the Aborigines practice of hunting and gathering? The population data summarized in Table 2, and the notes made on the quarterly population returns, suggest high mobility. Between December 1945 and September 1947, when Gray moved to the abandoned airbase, Aborigines fell back on hunting and gathering because of the poor soil there. In 1953 some

Aborigines preferred to go bush for lengthy periods. Contact between the two settlements was frequent, particularly at weekends, when men came from the mission to buy tobacco and occasionally to participate in circumcision ceremonies (Worsley 1954b:273).

Tobacco was a major luxury and was sold cheaply. Wages comprised a tobacco ration and two shillings per week. In contrast to the traditional situation where women supplied most of the food bulk, at Umbakumba, there were no women employed apart from three who worked in the kitchen. Gardening was the one activity carried on consistently (285). If supplies were unavailable Aborigines were sent into the bush. "Only by constant harassing and incessant supervision can the Aborigines be induced to put any effort into gardening ... As soon as the white overseer disappears out of sight, hoes are dropped, and everyone sits down... The Aborigines are quite capable of sitting for a whole day in the gardens, once the white overseer is out of sight, and spending their time complaining to each other about such matters as the work they are forced to do, the low wages they receive, the small quantity of food they are given, the general unpleasantness of white officials, and the desirability of getting away to Darwin" (287).

The possibility of gardening being organized on a clan or band basis, instead of a labour pool arrangement, was not realized.

The sociology of work at the settlement was therefore the antithesis of hunting and gathering, with its flexibility and variety, its self direction and independence and consequent small scale living and working units. However, Aborigines were sent out at weekends to obtain their own food from the bush. There was also pressure from the Superintendent to collect shells during the weekend for sale. There was no apparent decrease in Aborigines' hunting skills (289). Aborigines objected to hoeing and weeding as dull and arduous, with none of the attractions of bush life (289). Worsley thought that withholding "responsibility" aroused resentment and increased the inefficiency of horticulture and settlement labour (292).

What Worsley observed can be characterised as "a first stage" of the situation of settlements on Groote Eylandt, and also of many other Aboriginal settlements in remote Australia. Autocratic control of Aborigines, called 'inmates' by the settlement superintendents in the census returns, communal feeding and dormitories for children were the feature. The superintendents even assumed a major role in the bestowal of women. At Angurugu and Umbakumba, for instance they attempted to end polygamy, and regulated the stage when women entered marriage. The result was a further loss of the power of Aboriginal men to the superintendent. Settlements received some funding from government or mission sources, but were forced to



produce much of their own food from agricultural projects and in other ways become self-sufficient. Umbakumba was to some extent exceptional in that the founder of the settlement, a private trepanger, did not have access to any mission subsidies and attempted to make the settlement completely self-sufficient.

The irony of the self-sufficiency philosophy was that the settlements arose as a result of dispossession of Aborigines, and their consequent loss of an adequate asset base in the colonial capitalist economy. The policy in practice meant resources were controlled by whites, and only limited resources were available to Aborigines. Long hours of work in market gardening, under unfavourable agricultural conditions at Umbakumba, were to a lesser or greater degree mitigated by the contributions by congregations in the mission run settlements. Some revenue was also obtained through the sale of artifacts, shells, and photographs of Aborigines. Funds obtained from Government sources, such as child endowment, were appropriated by the management for the running of the settlement.

A "second stage" began in late 1960s. Aborigines in Arnhemland and Groote Eylandt have recently obtained freehold title to their land. On Groote Eylandt, Aborigines said this achievement came from the Gurindji strike in 1966 and occupation of their country, which had been acquired by an English pastoral company. Following political activity by Aborigines and supporters in southern Australia, a referendum was passed in 1967 giving the Commonwealth Government

responsibility for passing laws relating to Aborigines. This period also coincided with the development of mining operations on Aboriginal reserves in the Northern Territory, at Gove and Groote Eylandt. Government spending on Aboriginal settlements also increased. The second stage is characterised by escalated Government funding to settlements. Grants are still made, however, to a centralized settlement authority, now an incorporated Aboriginal Council, or to European managed services such as education and health, rather than to clans or individuals.

A subjective account of the second stage is suggested by the report of a Government officer living at Umbakumba in 1975. In it he says:

"The new tractor that the Council received is used as a picnic tractor and fun vehicle, and is on the go seven days a week. I have tried to explain to them that if the Government tractor breaks down, they may have to use their own for the garbage collection. They have been telling me that they can get a new one when the Government one breaks down. I find I am having more and more trouble controlling the men and getting them to do what has to be done. They spend as much time as possible chasing around helping the Council (vehicles) out of bogs, pulling clan vehicles to start and sneaking off into the bush to hunt".

One characteristic marker of the second stage is the movement of groups of Aboriginal people away from the centres of population established by Government or church missions, to live in country with which they claim traditional affiliation. "This has occurred

throughout Australia and particularly in Arnhem Land (Gray 1977). The mobility of people in the Groote Eylandt area affects the employment patterns discussed below, and also the identification of separate permanent settlements of decentralized groups. Around Umbakumba in 1977 there were five groups of four to thirty people living up to ten miles from the settlement, some on their traditional land. From Angurugu the Lalaras established an outstation at Amaya on the mainland in 1974, and Amagulas established a camp on their traditional land about the same time. In 1978 the Wuramaras moved out to Bickerton Island. Most groups spend some of their time hunting and fishing, even when living at the settlements, and when camping in the bush this becomes a major source of food.

#### Employment and Mining

The employment levels of Angurugu Aborigines since 1966 is identified in Table 3. It demonstrates that in European terms there is under-employment of the total Aboriginal population, and that employment levels have not increased over recent years. It also establishes the importance of Government policy decisions for employment at the settlements. In August 1969 a training scheme for missions was introduced, but was terminated in December 1973 and this affected employment levels at Angurugu.

In 1977 local government activities, maintenance, road construction, gardening, mining and fishing were listed in the Government profile as the main industries. Most Aborigines were employed through Commonwealth Government grants or Departments, rather than from internally generated revenue. There were 650 Aborigines and 60 Europeans living there. All but two of the Europeans lived in distinctive housing separate from the "Aboriginal" village.

Aboriginal women have comprised about half the labour force in prawn processing. As this enterprise has had a sporadic history and involves only small numbers of employees, the participation of Aborigines in the mining industry is a better indicator of their response to a modern industrial enterprise.

Turner analysed Aboriginal participation in the mining industry between 1968 and 1969. He compared the work record of the forty nine Aborigines and two hundred and twenty nine whites employed by Gem. Co. in 1969. In addition he included seven part Aborigines with the whites because of their level of education, religion, style of life and language (1974:169). Turner noted that Aborigines employed by Gem Co. were required to perform as competently, and keep the same hours, as whites. He found Aborigines were absent without leave in significantly higher proportions than whites. About the same proportion of each group were reassigned to higher-skilled occupations.

Table 3: Employment of Angurugu Aborigines (1966-1977)

	Settlement		Gemco (M)	Prawn Processing (F)	Total
	M	F			
December 66	n.a.	n.a.	46	-	135
June 67	32	39	40	-	111
December 67	n.a.	n.a.	39	-	-
June 68	20	32	32	-	84
December 68	28	25	34	-	87
June 69	30	22	24	10	86
December 69	34	24	35	6	99
June 70	54	49	35	33	171
December 70	n.a.	n.a.	30	16	-
June 71	47	31	42	12	132
December 71	n.a.	n.a.	35	-	-
June 72	55	21	37	20	133
June 73	37	33	45	30	145
June 74	40	20	n.a.	-	-
June 77	n.a.	n.a.	54	-	-
December 77	44	17	37	10	112

Source: Government records

Aborigines averaged slightly longer consecutive periods of employment than whites (6.3 months compared to 5.9 months). About 11% of each group worked for a year or more. About half the Aboriginal employees had previous periods of work with Gem Co. but only 11% of whites did. The obvious reason was that Aborigines were available locally.

Turner suggested that men with a greater desire for consumer goods worked for Gem Co. and that persistence of a traditional attitude to work - a basically opportunistic one - resulted in higher absenteeism. "Generally speaking the Aborigine's need for money, hence his willingness to work consistently, is far less than that of the average white employee" (1974:175). Turner also notes that Aborigines found work at the settlement involved constant association with other Aborigines working under conditions more compatible with their general outlook. The Council President at Angurugu in 1977 said that he had worked with Gem Co. in the past "to find out what the mining Company was doing".

Between October 1969 and October 1973 a total of 151 Aborigines were employed with Gem Co. Of these, 32 had non-Anindilyaugwa, non-Nunggubuyu names. Given that some of the Aborigines employed by Gem Co. between 1966 and 1977 are not permanent Groote Eylandt residents, one conclusion to be drawn is that only small numbers of Aborigines have worked in the mining industry at any one time, and most of them do so for limited periods.

At Umbakumba there were about fifty Aborigines (35 men) employed each week in 1977 by Commonwealth Government grants or Departments, in municipal activities, construction of houses, or work for the Education and Health Departments. Total population fluctuated around a mean of 400 Aborigines and 33 Europeans, including transient construction workers.

Estimates of annual cash income of Aborigines at Angurugu and Umbakumba are listed in Tables 4 and 5, but mining royalties are excluded. Table 6 summarizes the financial history of the Groote Eylandt Aboriginal Trust. A firm of consultants advises the Trust members on investment. Distribution of royalty monies, however is controlled by the Aborigines and will be discussed in Chapter 3.

The main object of interest in Table 6 is the column on total income from the Groote Eylandt Aboriginal Trust. Per capita annual income from royalty payments to Groote Eylandt Aborigines amounted to only \$710 in 1976/77. However this comprised a major component of the total average per capita income of \$1,900 (total population 1,050).

Table 4: Estimates of Annual Cash Income of Aborigines at Angurugu 1976/77

<u>Wages</u>	<u>\$</u>	<u>% of total</u>
Angurugu (44 males, 17 females)	209,000	29
Prawn factory (7-15 Aborigines work each week)	75,500	11
Mining (Average of 35 men each week)	210,000	29
Total (est)	494,500	69
<u>Pensions and Benefits</u>		
Unemployment (none paid)	-	-
Child Endowment (110)	88,100	12
Aged and Invalid (28)	63,750	9
Widows (13)	40,800	6
Single/supporting mothers (10)	31,950	4
Total	224,600	31
Total Income (est) (Population 650:) Per capita Income	719,100 1,100 per annum	100

Sources: Administration at Angurugu; Department of Social Security Survey, October 1976.

Table 5: Estimates of Annual Cash Income of Aborigines at Umbakumba 1976/77

<u>Wages</u>	<u>\$</u>	<u>% of total</u>
Council Employment (12 males)	55,000	13
Education and Health Departments (6 males, 9 females)	92,000	22
Industrial and other Employment (29)	130,000	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>277,000</b>	<b>66</b>
<u>Pensions and Benefits</u>		
Unemployment (0)	-	-
Child Endowment (57)	44,200	11
Aged and Invalid (26)	59,800	14
Widows (8)	26,000	6
Single supporting mothers (3)	10,400	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>140,400</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>417,400</b>	<b>100</b>
(Population 400:) Per capita Income	1,040 per annum	

Table 6: Groote Eylandt Aboriginal Trust Fund:  
Summary of Financial History

Year ending June 30	Income			Expenditure	Surplus (Deficit)	Net Worth
	Royalty	Interest	Total			
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
1965	10,000	-	10,000	-	10,000	10,000
1966	10,000	534	10,534	-	10,534	20,534
1967	28,947	376	29,325	15,098	14,225	34,759
1968	55,170	850	56,020	664	55,356	90,115
1969	91,223	2,670	93,893	1,436	92,457	182,572
1970	112,221	2,458	114,669	87,074	27,595	210,167
1971	94,268	3,880	98,148	97,193	955	211,122
1972	127,707	4,071	131,778	168,019	(36,241)	174,881
1973	238,311	7,898	246,209	10,242	235,967	467,650
1974	214,872	26,250	241,122	59,486	181,636	649,286
1975	520,522	36,921	567,443	155,861	411,582	1,062,668
1976	790,301	62,431	852,732	140,860	771,872	1,774,540
1977	744,052	111,351	855,403	66,020	789,383	2,563,923

Source: Turnbull 1977



Table 6a: Groote Eylandt Aboriginal Trust Fund: Expenditure

Year ending 30 June	Expenditure (\$)	Summary noting major items of expenditure (\$)
1967	15,098	Umbakumba - fishing boat (8,000) Angurugu - two boats and motor (2,000)
1968	664	--
1969	1,436	Community furniture, tape recorders, playground
1970	87,074	Community hall
1971	97,193	--
1972	168,019	Angurugu grants (148,000) Umbakumba grants (20,000)
1973	10,242	Angurugu grants (7,000); accounting fees (2,000)
1974	59,486	Angurugu clan boat (5,000); library (3,500); ceremonies (4,300); outstation utility (2,000); outstation boat (1,800) Umbakumba - business manager (19,000); truck (8,200); outstation (5,000); community (4,500)
1975	155,861	Angurugu - trailer house (12,000); library (4,000) Umbakumba - shop (41,000); housing (6,700) Other - clan toyotas (51,000); Singapore trip (20,000); study grants (3,300)
1976	140,860	Angurugu - trailer house (1,500) Umbakumba - supermarket (39,000) Other - Dance festival (29,000); clan toyotas (24,000); clan buildings 29,300); clan boat (12,000)
1977	66,020	Ceremonies; clan grants
1978	100,000	Equally distributed among eleven clans

The annual per capita cash income without royalty payments was \$1,000 in 1976/77. This was about average for five remote settlements surveyed in the same year by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs where annual per capita income of Aborigines ranged from \$800 to \$1,400. The cash income of Aborigines living in remote settlements, including the comparatively wealthy Groote Eylandt Aborigines, falls well below the average Australian per capita income of \$4,300 in the same year. Of course no cash value is put on the subsistence activities - hunting and fishing - of the Aborigines.

Two conclusions that arise from the data are that Groote Eylandt Aborigines have more cash income than other Aborigines living in remote settlements, but still live at a different economic level to most other Australians, and this difference is made all the more apparent to Aborigines by the proximity of the large numbers of Europeans on Groote Eylandt.

Aboriginal Identity Makers.

On 8 and 9 August 1977, Mr N. Amagula, President of the Groote Eylandt Aboriginal Trust convened a special public meeting at Angurugu of the Northern Land Council. This is a statutory body, comprising only Northern Territory Aborigines, established to negotiate royalty payments. Mr Amagula also invited the Groote Eylandt Mining Company (Gemco), Kailis Prawning Industries, and Government officials to attend the meeting.

In his speech Mr Amagula identified social and economic inequalities between Aborigines and Europeans on Groote Eylandt and announced that all Europeans would be confined to the mining leases until the royalty agreement with Gemco, established in 1963, was renegotiated.

He stated

"The white man has been trying to push the Aborigines around for a long time and the Aborigines now want to take their own affairs in hand. Everything on the land is run by Europeans and nothing has happened to improve the lot of the tribal Aborigine.

The village is still looking the same as always. The white man expects the children to go to school but does nothing to build new and proper homes to house the children. People are still living in some cases with one tap to wash children and clothes - cold water only - and no proper toilet facilities for the many people there. The people go back to the same place with its rubbish, and mud and filth day after day, year after year. All the people are sick and tired of it, but we are not blaming any one group. We need more and better facilities. The tribal Aborigines are treated badly. This is our home. All others are just visitors. We are the bosses of the land."

After replies by other speakers he continued:

"I have been struggling now for many years and I am now fighting for my colour and culture. In the South, colour, culture and customs have been destroyed by the white man and this should not be allowed to happen here".

The following day the meeting reconvened and Mr Amagula spoke again and his remarks indicate concern for far more than an increase in mining royalties. It may be appropriate to digress here by

quoting his remarks, as they are relevant to the following chapters on social organization and kinship, and also the principal focus of the thesis, the question of identity.

"The land is the land of my spirit, given to me in the dream time. The close relationship with other clans on the island entitles me to speak on their behalf too...

In order to gain a better understanding of each other there must be more contact between the groups concerned. I want everyone to find out more about the sacred areas, dreamtime stories and other matters of Aboriginal culture and interest and not just to come on the island and do as they please on the land. The white people think that a more formal education makes them superior and they can do what they want. The way the white man treats the Aborigines, I feel they are trying to destroy Aboriginal culture. I have seen Aboriginal culture destroyed in the South, where people have lost their tribal identity. This is on no account to happen in the Northern Territory, especially not on Groote Eylandt.

Other Aborigines also spoke. Mr Amagula continued:

"I am fighting to get the two races onto the same level on the island to give both a "fair go".

The remarks about sexual relationships between Europeans and Aborigines made over the two days also indicate a principal concern for social relationships between two identified groups. In fact the real concern is presented as moral equality between Aborigines and Europeans. On the first day of the meeting Mr Amagula stated:

"I want any person giving liquor to Aborigines or taking advantage of an Aboriginal girl to be made to leave the island".

In fact this has been the policy since Gemco was established. Mining employees who are caught out have been required to leave Groote Eylandt through revocation of their permit to remain on an Aboriginal reserve.

On the second day Mr Amagula said:

"If no steps are taken to stop white men mistreating the Aboriginal girls, action will have to be taken to ensure it is stopped ...

It is very hard to prevent people from different races from becoming attached to one another, but we do not want to lose our race through inter marriage or the issue of other relationships".

Later in the meeting Mr Amgula asked what the policy of the Europeans was with regard to white women going out with Aboriginal men. A mining company official stated that the situation had not occurred on Groote, but there was no law against this and it had occurred in other places, and was up to the individuals concerned. Mr Amagula replied that the Headmaster of the Angurugu school had mentioned a problem at the Alyangula Recreation Club on this very matter where female teaching staff had been criticised by other club members for their friendship with Aboriginal men, and this was confirmed by the Headmaster.

Anthropologists have long known the importance of the exchange of women in small scale societies. It is also of potential importance to the problem of Aboriginal identity on Groote Eylandt. One issue is the genetic discreteness of people identifying as Aborigines. Relevant to this is whether sexual relations between Europeans and Aborigines result in marriage or at least procreation. As Mr Amagula told the meeting, it is very difficult to prevent people of different races becoming attached to one another. On the other hand, in the Groote Eylandt area, interracial births form only a small percentage of total births. At Umbakumba the local folklore among European men, including visiting contractors, is that anyone who touched an Aboriginal woman would have a spear put through him. The Umbakumba Council, incidentally, has banned Aboriginal

women from drinking at their canteen. In 1977 one European female teacher at Umbakumba did form a relationship with a young Aboriginal man, but terminated it, when his tribal brothers also began pressing their claims on her. At Numbulwar, on the mainland opposite Groote Eylandt, there has been one interracial marriage since 1974. The result was that the Aboriginal girl involved migrated out of the community to live with her husband who was a teacher. There is a tendency for some European teachers, male or female, to form relationships with their Aboriginal teaching "assistant". However this only affects a small percentage of the total Numbulwar population and seldom results in marriage or offspring. One major consideration is that the European population in the Northern Territory is transient. Most Europeans now do not live at an Aboriginal settlement for more than one or two years. On the other hand, almost all Aborigines prefer to stay near their home. At Angurugu, in close proximity to the mining town of Alyangula, there are more sexual relationships between Aborigines and Europeans. Children of mixed parentage are generally raised by their Aboriginal relations in the village. At Angurugu some Aborigines obviously have Macassan ancestry. The Macassans came, established ties with Northern Australia for over two hundred years, and left (McKnight 1976) without "breeding out" the Aboriginal population.

It would also appear likely that a distinctive "Aboriginal" genotype will continue into the foreseeable future, particularly as Aboriginal men on Groote Eylandt have status and some income and hence are desirable marriage partners. The following chapters suggest the wider Australian society will continue to be influential but the effects will not be homogeneous and may not lead to a simplistic cultural assimilation, any more than they will lead to racial assimilation.

The advantages and management of the capital of Aboriginal identity are discussed there. It is most likely Europeans and "Aborigines" on Groote Eylandt for the most part will continue to choose to use different languages, practice different lifestyles and hence obtain different levels and sources of income, and have different permanent places of residence. The social organization, kinship and marriage arrangements of the Groote Eylandt Aborigines therefore will continue to be important, in themselves, and as markers of a new "Aboriginality".

### Conclusions

This chapter has identified several elements of a hunter-gatherer economy on Groote Eylandt, that are important for choices Aborigines have since made within the parameters of constraints, and incentives introduced by European settlers. The elements include the self-direction, flexibility and variety of what may have fluctuated around a thirty six hour working week. The work pattern of hunter-gatherers appeared to be a constant if leisurely activity undertaken in small family units.

An increase in political activity by Northern Territory Aborigines and their supporters in southern States after 1966 resulted in an end to overt outocratic control of Aborigines, and escalation of Government funding to remote settlements - on services such as health and education, managed by white professionals, and on grants to incorporated Aboriginal Councils. Despite the changes in Government policies Aborigines have continued to behave in ways distinctively different from Europeans.

For instance there is a noticeable rate of underemployment of Aborigines in "European" economic activities, which in any case have limited labour requirements in most remote areas, and even on Groote Eylandt. Available information indicates that the level of Aboriginal participation in the mining industry, has involved no more than fifty four men in any one month.

A survey of income of Aborigines on Groote Eylandt indicates that mining royalties, even though totalling only \$710 for each Aborigine in 1976/77, comprised about 40% of estimated total income of Groote Eylandt Aborigines. The method of distributing royalties is discussed in Chapter 3. The survey also indicates that even with mining royalties and available employment opportunities, Aborigines' income on Groote Eylandt falls well below the Australian average.



The resulting differences in social and economic circumstances are presented by Aboriginal leaders as indicating a moral inequality between Aborigines and Europeans. Two responses articulated by Aboriginal leaders are to protect their women (their "colour") and their "culture" from the white "visitors".

In the present situation there are at least two obvious forces acting for Aborigines continuing to behave in distinctively different patterns from Europeans. Firstly their access to European economic resources is much more limited than other Australians (in part because of choices they have made for different lifestyles). Secondly a substantial proportion of their income is now derived from mining royalties which in part compensate for disruption caused to their traditional lifestyle. Cynics might say the Aborigines therefore have a vested interest in public adherence to traditions in order to maximise their claims for compensation, but the present situation is also the result of determined efforts by Aborigines to resist assimilation to European patterns in the past.

In the foreseeable future distinct differences of language, lifestyle and cultural patterns would appear likely to continue. The least robust subsystem appears to have been the economic system. On the surface it has changed the most. Aborigines in various ways participate in a capitalist economy and exploit a variety of goods produced by it. They have also, however,

continued to hunt and fish, and by recently moving to outstations, they have increased these activities. To this extent the present formation incorporates elements of both hunter-gatherer and capitalist economies. In economics there has been some give and take. The main focus of this study is the manufacture of identity. The bricolage of cultural artifacts that comprise the new "Aboriginal" identity, now self-consciously asserted before a wider Australian audience, is therefore analysed below.

CHAPTER 3

THE GROOTE EYLANDT CLAN COMMUNITIES

This chapter identifies the clans as major cultural units of the Aboriginal population, describes some of their functions and their distribution in space and time, and attempts to show why they are still important.

The theoretical literature particularly Stanner (1965b) Hiatt (1962) and Peterson (1971, 1972, 1975) suggests that before European settlement two institutions were important for Aboriginal territorial organization.

The band, occupying a territorial unit called a range, could vary from 5-100 people depending on the time of year and ecological conditions, but often averaged a population of about 30 (Peterson 1971:332; Kauffman 1976:14). As well as this sociological unit there was also the clan, i.e. a patrilineal descent group that in essence was a cultural category formed with reference to religious interests, and focused on an estate or cult centre. Sacred sites and associated theology form the title deeds of the clan's inheritance. At the ideological level the exogamous clans were the core or nucleus of the territorial group. The average size of clans reported in the literature is similar to the average size of bands. This suggests that both clan and bands,

connected by a relationship essentially dialectical, were important in dispersing a population in relation to resources.

The literature on the Groote area makes best sense if read in this context. Tindale, presumably confusing clan and band, (cf. Table 8) reported that there were six local groups of 25-100 people in 1921. Later writers report the population of Groote Eylandt and nearby islands were divided into 11 to 13 clans, depending on the source.

Table 7 uses spelling current on Groote Eylandt and lists 20 clans which own land in the Groote Eylandt area. As can be seen from Map 2, the clan estates cover some of the adjacent mainland as well as Groote Eylandt and its associated islands.

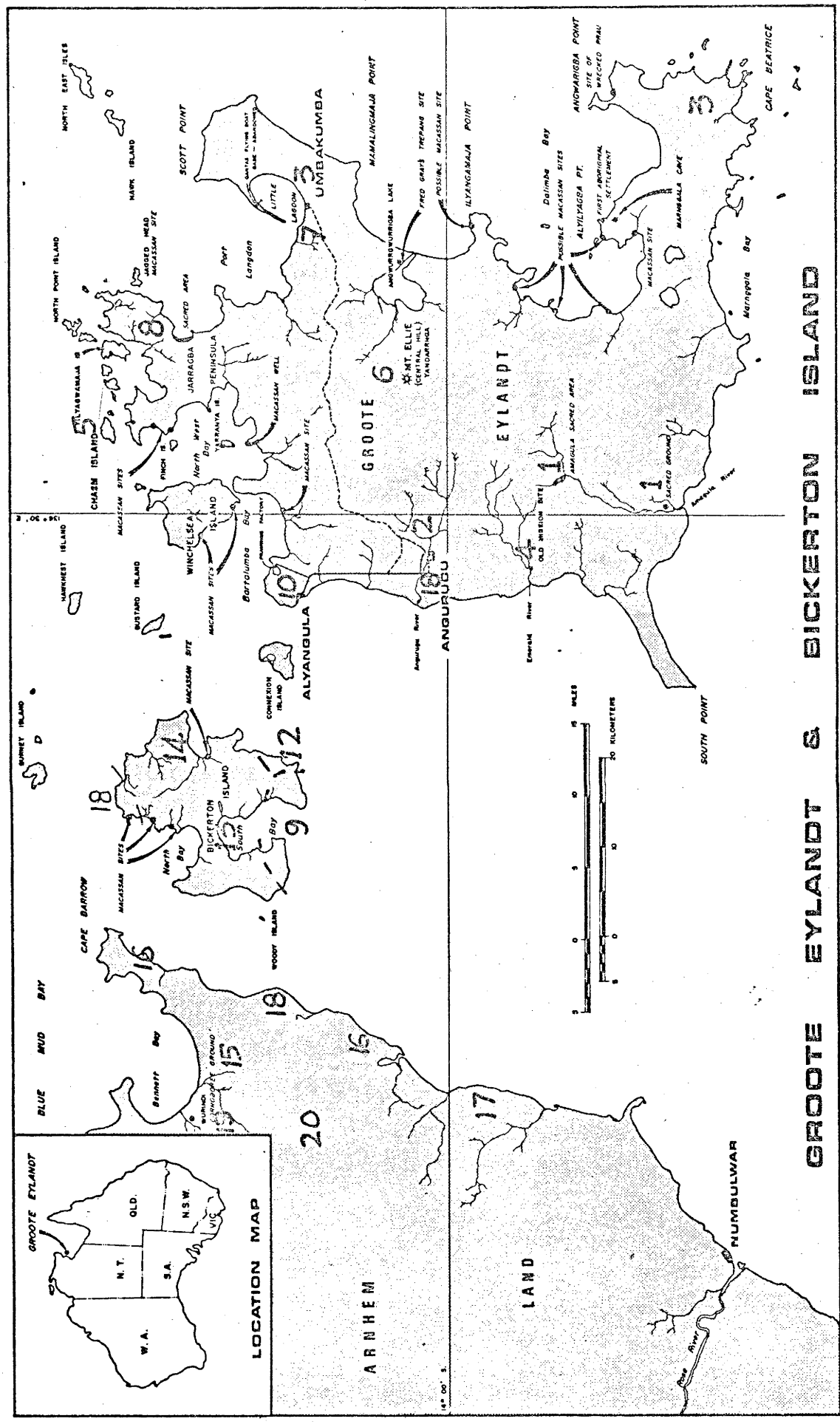
Over the last forty years most of the population have lived in the three settlements of Angurugu, Umbakumba, and since 1953, Numbulwar, though some people have moved to outstations since 1972. The mission station on Groote Eylandt cared for part Aboriginal children brought there from the mainland since 1921. It is possible it may have influenced shifts of residence of local Aborigines, even before they began to live permanently at the mission after 1938.

Clans with estates on Bickerton and the west of Groote Eylandt tended to move to Angurugu. Clans with estates on the eastern side tended to settle in Umbakumba. The high mobility of Aborigines however, makes such generalizations difficult. One point seems clear. The continuing religious life of the Aborigines and their recent financial decisions suggest they see clan loyalty of greater significance than settlement allegiance.

Table 7: Clans in the Groote Eylandt Area

(Mandaritja ( <i>Yirritja</i> ) moiety on mainland)	(Mandayung ( <i>Dhuwa</i> ) moiety on mainland)
1. Amagula	2. Maminyamanja
3. Mamarika	4. Wurrawilya
5. Bara Bara	6. Yantarrnga
7. Wunungamagajeragba	8. Jaragba
9. Wurramarrba	10. Bara
11. Durrilla	12. Wurrabadalamba
13. Wurramara	14. Wuragwagwa
15. Nundirribala	16. Murungun
17. Nunggumadbarr	18. Lalara
19. Mirniyowan/Nunggarrgalu	20. Ngalmi

\* Modified clan names have been used as surnames and it is in this form they are listed here. Other versions of clan names appear in Table 8. The most common form is for the name of a place to be prefixed by *wur(a)-*, *wanung* - meaning "(people) of that (place)".



**GROOTE EYLANDT & BICKERTON ISLAND**

Major clan estates in the Groote Eylandt area (cf. Table 7)

The questions asked here are; To what extent are individual clans and the clan structure today consistent with traditional clan organisation? What are the relevant parameters and bases for classification of clans? and Why should clans continue to be of importance in an environment whose economics, politics, and even ecology have been changed by European settlement?

A detailed analysis of the written sources on Groote Eylandt land ownership, suggests much consistency since the first white observers documented their findings in 1921 (Kauffman 1977). Clans identified in the ethnography since 1921 and by the Groote Eylandt Aboriginal Trust in 1977, are listed in Table 8.

The structure of the clan organisation appears constant over time, even though clans are now an element in a very different social and economic formation. As Tindale did not visit all of the island, and may have combined two clans in some of the larger of his "at least six sub-tribes", it is possible that his information is incomplete. There does however, seem to have been a movement of people to Groote Eylandt since 1921. The location and number of clans has been modified consistent with traditional Aboriginal procedures, and mainland clans have gained estates on Bickerton and Woodah Islands. Stanner, commenting on Australia as a whole, refers to "Long-term shifts of estate or range, which may have been more common than supposed". (1965:12)

Clans funded by GEAT in 1977	Pop 1969 (Moore)	Clans identified by Worsley in 1953	Clan Territory of Rose's local totemic group in 1941 (pop. incomplete)	Pop 1929 (Perriman)	Tindale's local group in 1921
Amagula	(176)	Wanung Amagula as part of Wanidiljaugwa (104)	(5) Dalimbo (49)	(45)	Talakurupa (100)
Mamarika		Wura Murugwilija	(1)		
Bara Bara (includ. Wunambi)	( 11)	Wanung Amalangwa (9)	Amulangwa (3)	( 6)	Pbarapbara ( 25-)
Wurramarba	( 51)	Wuramarba (27)	Bickerton 4 (11)	(10)	
(includ. Durrilla	( 29)	Wanung Anwuringba (Durili)	Bickerton/Woodah (5)	( 8)	
Wanungamagajiragba)	( 8)	Wanung Amagadjiragba (4)	Umbakumba (2)	( 3)	
Wurramara	( 77)	Wuramura (70)	Bickerton 4 (21)	(37)	
(includ.					
Nundirribala)	( 8)				
Nunggunadbarr	( 14)				
(includ. Mirniyowan/ Nunggarralu)	( 28)				
Maminjamanja	( 29)	Wanung Amaminjamadja (at Angurgwa)	Magaberamura totem (2)	( 8)	Angoroka (25+)
(includ. Wurrawilya)	( 31)	Wanung Awerigba (19)	Jadigba (15)	(13)	Yetiba (25-)
Yantarrnga	( 53)	Wanung Angwurugurigba (41)	Angwurugurigba (22)	(25)	Amakurupa (25+)
(includ. Wuragwagwa - Wurringilyangba)	( 10)	Wur Engiljanba (9)	Bickerton 2&3	( 3)	
Bara					
(includ. Jaragba)	( 17)	Wanunga Djaragba (22)	Djaragba (12)	( 9)	-
Murrabadalamba	(119)	Wanunga Darbalangwa (63)	Badalumba (33)	(30)	Bartalumba (100)
(includ. Murungun)	( 24)				
Lalara	(113)	Wanung Amadada (61)	Bickerton 2&3 (24)	(23)	-
(includ. Ngalmi)					

Table 8: Groote Eylandt Clans and their populations



What changes have taken place over time in the relationship between groups and the land, and how can they be explained?

Before European settlement the dominant causes for modifications to clan organization in the Groote area were demographic and ecological. Because of a famine the Wurrabadalamba migrated from Bickerton to Groote prior to European settlement and were allowed to live there by the prior owners of the country, the Jaragba, who are linked to them by mythology (Turner 1974:8). In 1977, these historical links, and joint residence at Umbakumba may have influenced the combination of the two groups into one clan for Groote Eylandt Aboriginal Trust purposes. The inhabitants of Woodah Island (Anwurerigba) were decimated by disease at some point in the past beyond genealogical memory (Turner 1974:10). Chaseling (1957:126) notes that when he visited the island in the 1940's it was deserted. Balamumu people came across from the coast and occupied the northern and eastern part of Woodah, and after intermarriage with Bickerton people, were known as Durrilla (Turner 1974:10)

Two other clans, Wurringilyangba and Lalara, probably migrated to Bickerton from the mainland after 1921 (Worsley 1967:148) at least partly because of the interest and food supplied by the mission. The Lalaras relate how their grandfather was given land on Groote Eylandt after establishing claims to it by marriage and religion. In 1977 the Lalaras at Angurugu and the Mamarikas at Umbakumba were

owners of the respective settlement sites. Merging clans were linked by mythical tracks, sang the same song and called each other "brother". Migration to a country involved either sharing or inheriting that country's totems, as well as introducing new ones.

What is the reason for fission and fusion of clan segments illustrated in Table 8? There are apparently several factors. The 1969 clan census collected by Moore (in Cole 1975:23) reveals that the clan groups identified by the Groote Eylandt Aboriginal Trust in 1977 varied from 40 - 120 with eight of the eleven groups between 60-85 in size. Eight years later the numbers are obviously different, but the proportions are most likely of the same order.

The settlements may have stimulated to some degree the quicker formation of separate clans when parts of a clan grew rapidly and also resided in different areas.

This was the case for Amagula at Angurugu and Mamarika at Umbakumba, formerly two parts of what was still the one clan of 180 people in 1969, and for Bara at Umbakumba and Wurrabadalamba at Angurugu, formerly two parts of Wanunga Darbalangwa numbering 120 in 1969. The converse was also true, when small clans were merged with larger ones.

The main difference between post and pre-settlement clan structure is one of size. The same classificatory system now accommodates eleven clan groups with an average population of ninety. In 1941 there were still eleven clan groups, but their average population was probably thirty-five.

What then are the parameters of the clans? The paths across the boundaries are just as significant as the boundaries themselves. The last six clans in Table 7 could be considered mainland based clans. The first language of all but Lalara is Nunggubuyu. However, many of their members live on Groote Eylandt and by Trust decision are recognised as belonging to Groote Eylandt clans. But there are other Nunggubuyu clans which are not. The Manggura at Walker River are not separately identified by the Trust even though small numbers reside at Angurugu.

There are other residents of the area who have remained more ethnically distinct. Gray's quarterly reports show at least from the 1940's Balamumu people, from north of the Walker River, have travelled to Groote Eylandt and stayed at Umbakumba for extensive lengths of time. Since 1953 most of the Balamumu in the area have lived in a separate camp at Numbulwar. In 1974 after Government began to provide some support for outstations, Balamumu people moved to Blue Mud Bay, but in 1977 many were still resident

at Numbulwar, and some at Angurugu and Umbakumba. As suggested in a later chapter, the religious and marriage ties between Nunggubuyu and Groote Eylandt clans may be important in their merging.

One group of Balamumu however were incorporated into the local organisation of the Groote area as a clan identified as Durilla and belonging to the Yirritja moiety. Turner's information (1974:73) suggests they were assigned to this moiety because they inherited country on Woodah Island of members of a "Yirritja" clan. Mainlanders however still considered the Durilla as Dhuwa. Morphy's (1977:31) information leads one to consider that just this sort of switch in moiety allegiance may serve as a major stimulus in drawing boundaries around cultural blocks, such as the Groote and Nunggubuyu clans. He reports

"I was told that today people could not marry Groote Eylandters as they had mixed up their moieties and did not know if they were marrying Dhuwa or Yirritja women. In a similar case with reference to the Nunggubuyu I was told that they married just like animals as their moieties were the wrong way round."

There are also difficulties using language or geography to define parameters of clans or larger groupings. There is much bilingualism, particularly among members of mainland clans residing on Groote Eylandt. The literature contains references to "mainland", "Bickerton" and "Groote" clans. But Turner's

map of Bickerton and Woodah islands (1974:4,12) and Van der Leeden's map of the Nunggubuyu region (1975:48) illustrate how territories extend across geographical boundaries such as rivers and even islands.

Table 8 however, does suggest that residence at the one settlement and variation in population have been important factors among others, in combining some clans and dividing others. Together they form a matrix that prescribes the following equations of clan affiliation

Population decrease and different settlements: No change

Population decrease and same settlement: Clan fusion

Population increase and same settlement: No change

Population increase and different settlements: Clan fission

The equations are not absolute determinants of any situation. For instance, residence of a clan at one settlement is itself an effect rather than a cause, as it results from a collective choice made by clan members. Together with changes in population it is affected by marriage alliances.

Before European settlement changes in demography and ecology changed the clan organisation. After European settlement the residence of Aborigines at the settlements may have caused the bifurcation of two clans and the merging of three other clans (Table 8). Religious ceremonies provided the idiom for the

changes. In practice language, geography, settlement-residence and alliance by marriage and even the ownership of sacred sites, are all negotiable. It would seem that the negotiations, and the moves of the men involved in them, are just as important for the outcome as the premises of the negotiations, the ideological idiom in which they operate.

#### New Functions of Clans

The preceding discussion has identified some of the characteristics of clans as elements in a traditional Aboriginal formation and as elements in a situation of Aboriginal residence at settlements.

The question that remains is why clans continue to be of importance at all?

The contemporary importance of clans is illustrated in alignments during disputes and in more formal structures. For instance, the Government's policy is now to provide grants to Aborigines through incorporated Aboriginal organisations, most often a Council or Housing association established for each settlement. Aborigines on Groote Eylandt have complained about this arrangement. The Angurugu Council in a September 1976 letter to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, protested against elected Councillors or limitations on the number of Councillors. They wanted the Council made up of two people from each clan and three people from the two major clans. The result of the contradiction between Government policy and Aboriginal preferences and organisation, is that the clans which own the settlement site by

Aboriginal religious law - the Lalaras at Angurugu and Mamarikas at Umbakumba, monopolize the positions of Council President and the more significant Council appointments.

The intention however of the Government in establishing the relevant legislation is that the Councils be democratically elected.

When Aborigines have greater discretion in their affairs, traditional values have exerted an even more decisive influence. Because the Church Missionary Society in 1961 obtained a mining permit on behalf of Aborigines, Aborigines on Groote Eylandt have received mining royalties of 1½% for manganese mined by the Groote Eylandt Mining Company (Gemco) a subsidiary of Broken Hill Proprietary Limited. (The total royalties paid by Gemco is three and three quarter per cent. Until 1978 when Ranger negotiated a 4½% royalty, this was the most generous settlement made with Aborigines in Australia.)

The Groote Eylandt Aboriginal Trust (GEAT) has received small amounts of money since 1965, and was incorporated in 1969 when it received its first annual royalty payment which was more than \$100,000. GEAT's first expenditure occurred in 1966/67 (\$15,000 for three fishing boats - since destroyed). During 1969/70 \$87,000 was spent on a community hall (cf. Table 6).

The largest expenditure occurred in 1971/72 when GEAT spent \$168,000. This expenditure represented 128% of income for that year and 80% of accumulated capital (Details in Turnbull 1977).

The location of GEAT management committees also changed at the same time. Until 1972 meetings had been held where the European administration held meetings. Since then GEAT and the Angurugu Council have held their meetings in an area under the gum trees used for Aboriginal forums. As a consequence women are excluded from the discussions. A further consequence is that more monies have been spent on Aboriginal purposes, such as paying for charter flights to bring Aborigines from Queensland and Arnhem Land to Groote Eylandt and Numbulwar for ceremonies. For instance in 1973/74 there were grants for Maḍayin and other ceremonies, in 1975/76 the largest grant, of \$29,000 was for a dance festival.

The GEAT general meeting elects a management committee of seven Aboriginal members. There are also four white members who do not have voting powers, two nominated by the Church Missionary Society and two by Government. About eighty Aboriginal men attended the 1977 annual meeting of GEAT, held at Angurugu on September 17, even though a ceremony was in progress because of a death the previous week. The men sat in clan groups located around the chairman which indicated the direction of their clan estates.

The meeting discussed a number of policy issues concerning expenditure of GEAT fund income. After the 1971/72 deficit it had been agreed that no more than 50% of royalties received each



year should be spent. Since 1972 annual royalties increased rapidly and as annual expenditure was kept to no more than 30% of royalties, accumulated capital increased to \$2.5m at June 1977. In September 1977 the projected royalty was \$1m with a total annual interest of \$200,000. Although the meeting considered a proposal, put very strongly, that all funds and future royalties should be distributed directly to clans, in the end it decided that no royalties be spent and all grants and loans be limited to annual interest on capital.

The general meeting also elected the President and the six other members of the new management committee, who were each from a different clan. Three of the members lived at Umbakumba. The President of GEAT had worked as a tradesman on the mission and as an Aboriginal patrol officer for the Government in the 1960s. He is one of four Aboriginal Justices of the Peace in the Northern Territory. Like his father before him, he is also a leader in matters of tradition and Aboriginal religion and is typical of an emerging group of Aborigines in the Northern Territory who at the same time are competent in both traditional and European matters.

The first meeting of the new management committee, held on 11 October 1977 decided:

- . Grant money would be distributed to clans in equal shares, even though clan sizes vary. In 1977/78 grant money was 50% or \$100,000 of the annual interest estimated at \$200,000. Thus all grants were under the control of the clan leaders.

- . In future all moneys to individuals would be on a loan basis.

The meeting then formally identified the Groote Eylandt clan groups, by writing the names of all clans on a blackboard. They are listed in the GEAT column in Table 8, to which is added, for historical purposes, three additional clans (marked \*) as they were understood to be included in the clan listed above them. These eighteen clans were fused into eleven clan-groups. Notably the four clan-groups without members on the management committee are nevertheless represented in the allocations and are among the smallest of the groups. A man of part Aboriginal descent, having very long association with Groote Eylandt but with kin ties with Boorooloola Aborigines, claimed to form a clan on his own. This man is one of the three representatives from Groote Eylandt on the Northern Land Council.

This body is vested with freehold title and control of land by Commonwealth legislation. It comprises only Aborigines. The Boorooloola man, who has lived on Groote since shortly after the mission was first established in 1921, is Vice-President of the Council and possesses many political skills. However, he lives in the mining town of Alyangula and his claim to form a separate clan was rejected. It would be a mistake to assume his claim was rejected on the basis of race. In 1973/74 GEAT had in fact

granted him \$5000 for a "clan boat". Also, there are Aborigines of obvious part-Macassan descent on Groote, and one family of part Chinese descent is incorporated into the Mamarika clan and lives with other Aborigines at Umbakumba. One of their members was elected to the GEAT management committee. In the Northern Territory, in particular, differences between people of part and full Aboriginal descent have historically been institutionalized by Government intervention. In this case it seems likely that the Groote Aborigines made a distinction on the basis of ethnicity, or choice and degree of adopted cultural lifestyle, rather than on the basis of race.

The importance GEAT has placed on clans, is consistent with the conceptual framework of Aborigines on Groote Eylandt. The President of GEAT was asked, at a subsequent meeting in Canberra with Government officials, how many communities there are on Groote Eylandt. Present Government practice is to entitle the Government and mission settlements "communities". They are often funded through an incorporated Aboriginal Community Council, of which there are two on Groote Eylandt. In addition three local Aboriginal families live in the mining town of Alyangula. The President of GEAT, however, answered that there are eleven communities on the island. It is not known what changes may occur to these groupings in the future, and whether new factors such as the impact of writing may tend to rigidify political processes.

### Clan Implications

Why do Groote Eylandt Aborigines prefer for some purposes to consider themselves as clan groups? No doubt several factors are important and this conceptualization may well serve diverse functions.

Anthropologists have known for some time that laws and ceremonies of land ownership are intricately connected with the ideology of Aboriginal society. This is also true of modern capitalist Australian society. The clan's importance in managing GEAT, marks not only a change of context for what was previously an institution found only in an Aboriginal formation, but also a change in the situation of Aborigines in the national formation and accordingly, Government policy towards them.

The anomaly of Groote Aborigines continuing to promote clans articulates several contradictions. Historically, British colonial government in Australia designated Aborigines as British subjects. Unlike New Zealand Maoris, who organised a better military resistance and forced a treaty that acknowledged prior Maori land ownership, ownership of the land by Aborigines was not recognised by the English intruders.

The contradiction most apparent to the Aborigines, was that the newly acquired wealth of the English intruders depended on their own dispossession. The contradiction in official policy was that

Aborigines became simultaneously British subjects, but unlike those other British subjects who now owned the land. Much of the literature on social and cultural change assumes a third contradiction, on the one hand, between the many forces, which Turner in 1969 thought dominant ones, which encourage Aborigines on Groote Eylandt to behave like Europeans, and on the other, Aboriginal values evident in their religion, their kinship and the special situation of women. Clan structure is an integral part of the Aborigines' special relationship to "country" (Stanner, 1965) and hence the ownership of land. By clan allegiance they reaffirm their distinctiveness and their entitlement to some concessions for this under Commonwealth law, such as royalty payments. To some extent identification with clans mediates the three contradictions outlined above. A clan structure, inherited from tradition, therefore operates in a transformed context.

Balandier (1966:100) thought that "The colonial situation produces races and racial thinking, just as capitalism produced classes and class perspective". Changes in the situation of Aborigines, however, have resulted in Government relating to them not as a race but as an ethnic group. In contrast to the 1966 Commonwealth Government Census, which requested information by degree of race,

the 1971 and subsequent Censuses have used descent and ethnic identification to define Aboriginal status. One consequence is a slightly greater degree of freedom in moving in and out of the boundary of ethnic identity.

The outcome is much more the result of the total situation than conscious Government intention, and the change has international references. Sprague (1972) notes that formerly Anglo-Saxon countries tended to give blacks in the U.S.A. caste status whereas Latin countries who also had imported Africans as slaves, were much more inclined to intermarriage and ethnic pluralism. The reason for the difference is not well explained. In New Zealand, Maoris suspect "Maoritanga" (Maoriness) is "a term coined by the Pakeha (white man) to bring the tribes together. Because if you cannot divide and rule, then for tribal people all you can do is unite them and rule. Because then they lose everything by losing their own tribal histories and traditions that give them identity". (Rangihau 1975:233).

In Australia, the change from racial to ethnic categorization of Aborigines is probably connected with a major cultural ethos of Australian society, mateship and an ideology of egalitarianism, perhaps made all the more necessary because of historical origins (that is a group of convicts and their keepers) and continuing differences of wealth between groups. The ethos has prescribed

obfuscation of any great differences of class, power, wealth, kind, or even ability, with a more chauvinistic vigour than other modern democracies. With regard to Aborigines, the ethos has prescribed either collective amnesia, or treatment as amusing or grotesque caricatures well illustrated by the cartoons in Dutton's (1974) collection of artistic portrayals of Australian Aborigines.

The advantage for Government in the shift from race to ethnic management of Aborigines, is that by acknowledging a group's "different but equal" status, they open the way to dialogue with it and then either its integration into the wider society, or at least a means of relating to it. The behaviour is similar to the tribes-people who first call themselves by a name meaning "men" before acknowledging their neighbour's claims to membership of the same species (Levi-Strauss 1977:329). A second advantage is that by acknowledging these ethnic differences, other differences such as class are to some degree obfuscated. The gain for the ethnic minority is a potential shift of power, through the initiation of intense political negotiation as the two groups redefine the status of the new ethnic group.

Although race and ethnicity can be considered different management strategies of the State for an identified target population, it does not necessarily mean they are formulated by conscious decisions of officials. Government statements, on Aboriginal affairs stress the importance of the 1967 referenda, which allowed

the Commonwealth to make special laws for Aborigines. The Council President at Angurugu, however, said that political struggle, beginning with the Gurindji reoccupation of their country at Wattie Creek in 1966, initiated any changes that may have occurred in their status in the majority society.

#### Conclusions.

This chapter has identified local clans and their traditional formation in an area system. Before European settlement their location and number changed over time because of demographic and ecological variation. After European settlement more people moved to Groote Eylandt but the migrations were structured by Aboriginal emmigration procedures. Clans linked by mythology, resident at the same settlement and short in numbers have merged. Conversely, two parts of a clan that have increased and resided at different settlements, have become distinct clan groups.

Clans continue to be of major ideological importance, and have been institutionalized in new financial arrangements brought about by access to mining royalties. Clan allegiance articulates several contradictions in the Aborigines' situation. Instead of becoming more like Europeans and thereby foregoing any special consideration to rights in land, Aborigines affirm their distinctiveness from Europeans by clan allegiance, which forms a basis of their religion and ownership of countries or



estates (Stanner 1965). Economic studies indicate that it is from rights in land and consequent access to mining royalties, rather than as wage labourers or social service recipients, that Aborigines will derive their discretionary wealth.

Increased wealth also provides opportunity to spend this on traditional religious ceremonies or on movements back to traditional countries. The new political context therefore feeds back on a stimulus system for developing a new Aboriginal identity.

CHAPTER 4

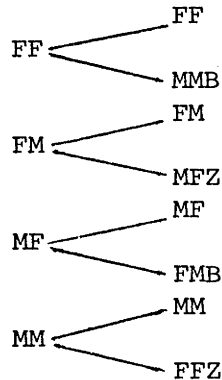
RECLASSIFICATION OF KIN

This chapter analyses the system of kin classification and argues that the terminological classification of kin is not "the basis on which the behaviour of one person to another in Australian society is regulated", contra Radcliffe-Brown (1931:45). Rose, Worsley and Turner's interpretations of their data were frustrated by assumptions or hypotheses not dissimilar to Radcliffe-Brown's proposition, which contradicts their own ethnography.

Data available suggests the degree of regularity between the classificatory system and social relations changed over time. The decline of Aboriginal religious and cultural practices, as well as a decline in the prevalence of prescribed marriages, coincided with assimilationist policies of Government and settlement managers. Their revival coincided with less assimilationist policies in the late 1960's, and in the 1970's, availability of substantial funds from mining royalties to spend on such things as chartering planes for religious ceremonies.

The Classificatory System

The earliest information on kinship terminology, although not used by Rose, Worsley or Turner, was collected from Groote Eylandt informants between 1927-1929, and published by Warner in 1933. It allows the construction of a model of the system of kin classification that Warner identifies as the Aranda type. Prescribed marriage is with a MMBDD, instead of MBD as in a Kariera system, and there are two lines of descent in each moiety instead of one in each moiety, as in a Kariera system. Radcliffe-Brown (1931:50-52) provides a more detailed account of the same distinctions. At the second ascending generation level Aranda has two terms for each of Kariera's one:



and a man marries his second cousin, specified as his MMBDD, FMBSD, FFZSD, MFZDD. Both of these criteria fit all descriptions of the Groote Eylandt terminological system perfectly.

Kin terms and the conventional glosses provided by all four anthropologists are listed together in Table 9. Warner's terms are listed separately in Table 10 with his glosses, and located on an ideal model illustrated in Figure 2. The model however, describes the system of classification that results from all people marrying only their second cousins, or only the descent line one's father's father married into, and does not correspond to actual social relations, but has a dialectical relationship to them.

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Footnote on Table 9: Kin classification

A major difference between anthropologists' glosses for the kin terms is Rose's gloss for denda (MBD) and dabura (FZD). Rose alone gives dabura the glosses of both ZD and FZD, thus distinguishing matrilateral and patrilateral cross-cousins. On this basis he shows (Table 40, 1960a:125) that for 29 cases identified in his data there is an average age difference of 15 years (reduced to 11.4 years when he expands his table in the second printing, as de Jong (1962:44) notes) between actual MB child and FZ child, the patrilateral being older. From this observation Rose develops his major argument that gerontocracy leads to the abandonment of bilateral cross-cousin marriage and adoption of matrilateral cross-cousin marriage. All other ethnographers disagree with Rose's glosses for n/dabura and neba/denda and his identification of a Murngin type feature of distinguishing matrilateral from patrilateral cross-cousin, thus invalidating the premise of his argument. Age differences apparent on a woman's first marriage may work towards conceptually distinguishing matrilateral and patrilateral cross-cousins, but on Groote Eylandt it appears that this influence was not effective in achieving a distinction in the terminology.

As all kin terms are also categories it is dangerous to deduce generalizations about genealogical relationships from them, as Rose does. Needham and de Jong assume that Rose's glosses are correct and show that there is little or no difference between the average ages of all of the MBDs and FZDs for each of four randomly selected males in Rose's data (Needham 1961:6-7; de Jong 1962:54). If one accepts an extensionist interpretation of kin terms and assumes a prime significance for a woman's first marriage the statistical probability of an age difference between a young girl and her first husband would be one factor among several other possibly contradictory forces, for matrilateral cross-cousin marriage.

Table 9 Kin classification:			Denotata:			
No.	Rose's no.	Term	(Warner 1933:68)	(Rose 1960:18)	(Worsley 1954:17)	(Turner 1974:34-37)
8a	I I	denda	M, MBSD	M, MBD	M	M, MBD=FZD, MBSD
2A	II J	nungwa	F	F	F	F
9	III=XIX B	numera	FF, SS	FF, SS(m.s.) BSS(w.s.)	FF, SS	FF, SS
12a	IV M	dumindja	FMBSSSD, FM	FM	FM	FM
10	V K	nangadjamindja	MF, DS	MF	MF	MF
11a	VI L	dungwa	MMBSSSD, MM	MM	MM	MM
8	VII I	neba	MB, MBSS	MB, MBS	MB	MB, MBS=FZS, MBSS
2Aa	VIII J	dungwija	FZ	FZ	FZ	FZ
9a	IX-XX B	dumera	FFZSD	FFZ, SD(m.s.) BSD(w.s.)	FFZ, SD	FFZ, SD
12	X M	numindja	FMBSSSS FMB	FMB	FMB	FMB
10a	XI K	dangadjamindja	MFZ, DD	MFZ	MFZ	MFZ
11	XII L	nunggwa	MMBSSSS, MMB	MMB	MMB	MMB
1A	XIII H	nawa	eB	eB	eB	eB
1Aa	XIV H	dijaba	eZ	eZ	eZ	eZ
1B	XV G	nenigumandja	yB	yB	yB	yB
1Ba	XVI G	dadiamandja	yZ	yZ	yZ	yZ
2B	XVII E	nenugwa	S	S(m.s.), BS(w.s.)	S	S
2Ba	XVIII E	dadiawa	D	D(m.s.), BD(w.s.)	D	D
13	XXI A	nijarungwa	-	DS(m.s.), BDS(w.s.)	DS	MBSSS
13a	XXII A	dijarungwa	-	DD(m.s.), BDD(w.s.)	DD	MBSSD
6	XXIII F	nabura	FMBSSS, FMBS	ZS(m.s.), S(w.s.) FZS	ZS	ZS, FMBS
6a	XXIV F	dabura	FMBSSD, FMBD	ZD(m.s.), D(w.s.) FZD	ZD	ZD, FMBD
15	XXV C	nenigabidja	-	ZSS(m.s.), SS(w.s.)	-	ZSS
15a	XXVI C	dadiabidja	-	ZSD(m.s.), SD(w.s.)	ZS	ZSD
14	XXVII D	neniganggwa	-	ZDS(m.s.) DS(w.s.)	ZDS	MMBSS, MMBSSSS, MMBSSS
14a	XXVIII D	dadianggwa	-	ZDD(m.s.), DD(w.s.)	ZDD	MMBSD, MMBSSSD, MMBSSD
4a	XXIX N	dadidja	MMBSSD, MMBD	MMBD	MMBD	MMBSD, MMBD
4	XXX N	nadidja	MMBSSS, MMBS	MMBS	MMBS	MMBSS, MMBS
7a	XXXI O	dadingja	MMBDD, FMBS	W(m.s.), HZ(w.s.)	W(MMBDD)	MMBDD(W)
7	XXXII O	neningja	FMBSS	WB(n.f.), H(w.s.)	WB(MMBDS)	MMBDS
16	-	narnggia	-	-	WF(FFZS)	FMBS
16a	-	darnggija	-	-	-	FMBD
17	-	naijuwa	-	-	Ego	-
3	-	djanangindjerdjer	MBS	-	-	-
3a	-	danginnangindjerdjer	MBD	-	-	-

Table 10 : Kin classification of Warner (Worsley's orthography used except for the unique forms 7,7a).

	(male)	a.(female)
1A	nawa (eB) 1B nenigumandja(yB)	dijaba (eZ) dadiamandja (yZ)
2A	nungwa (F) 2B nenugwa (S)	dungwija (FZ) dadiawa (D)
3	djanangindjerdjer (my MBS)	danginnangindjerdjer (my MBD)
4	neba (MB)	denda (M)
5	-	-
6	nadidja (MMBSSS)	dadidja (MMBSSD)
7	neningja (FMBSS)	dadingja (FMBSD)
8	nabura (FMBS,FMBSSS)	dabura (FMBD,FMBSSD)
9	numera (FF,SS)	dumera (FFZ,SD)
10	nangadjamindja (MF,DS)	dangadjamindja (MFZ,DD)
11	nunggwa (MMB,MMBSSSS)	dunggwa (MM,MMBSSD)
12	numindja (FMB,FMBSSSS)	dumindja (FM,FMBSSD)

Figure 2: Ideal model of kin and marriage relationships  
 (cf. Table 10 (Warner's glosses for the terms)  
 and Fox 1974:246)

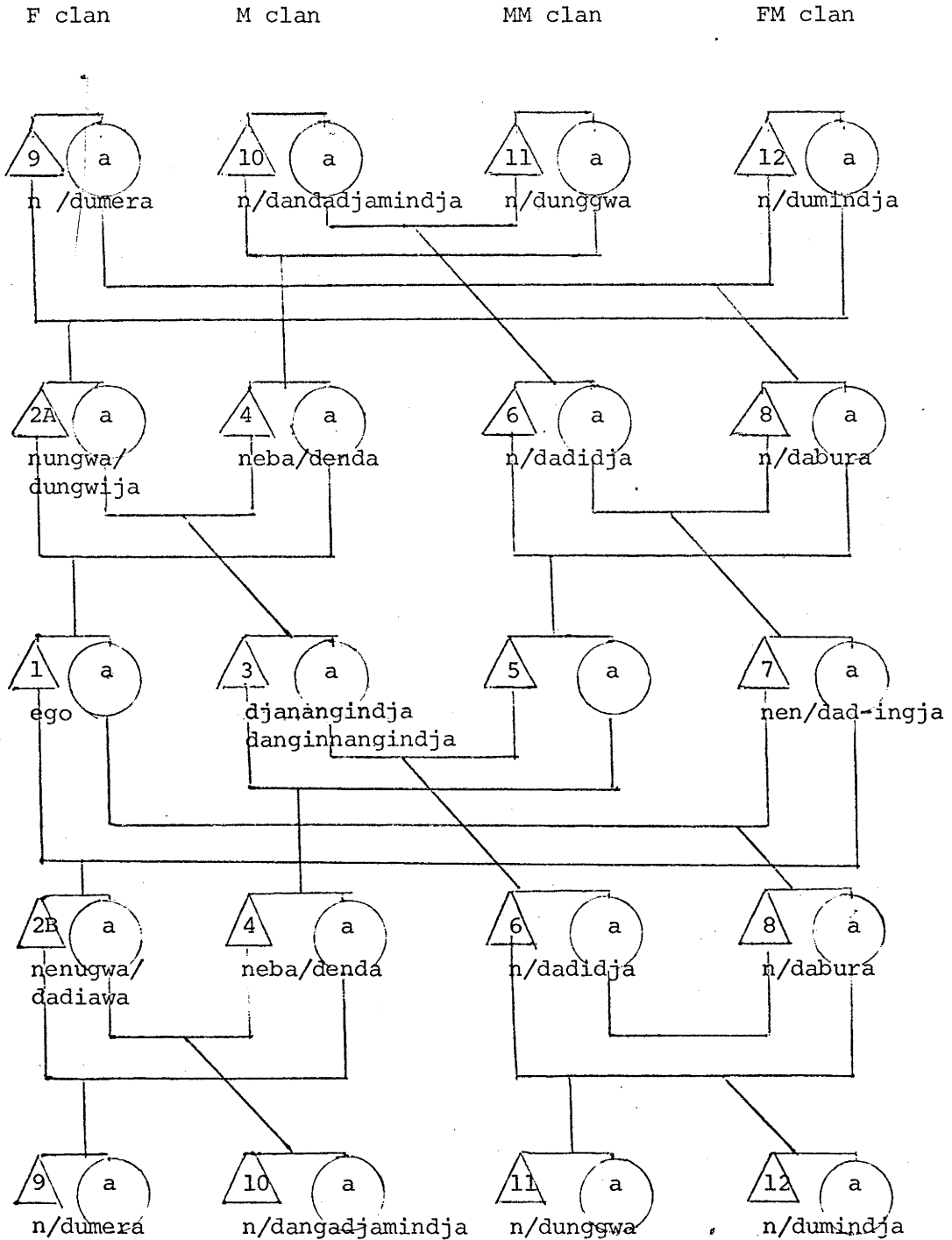


Figure 3: Elementary distinctions of the classificatory system

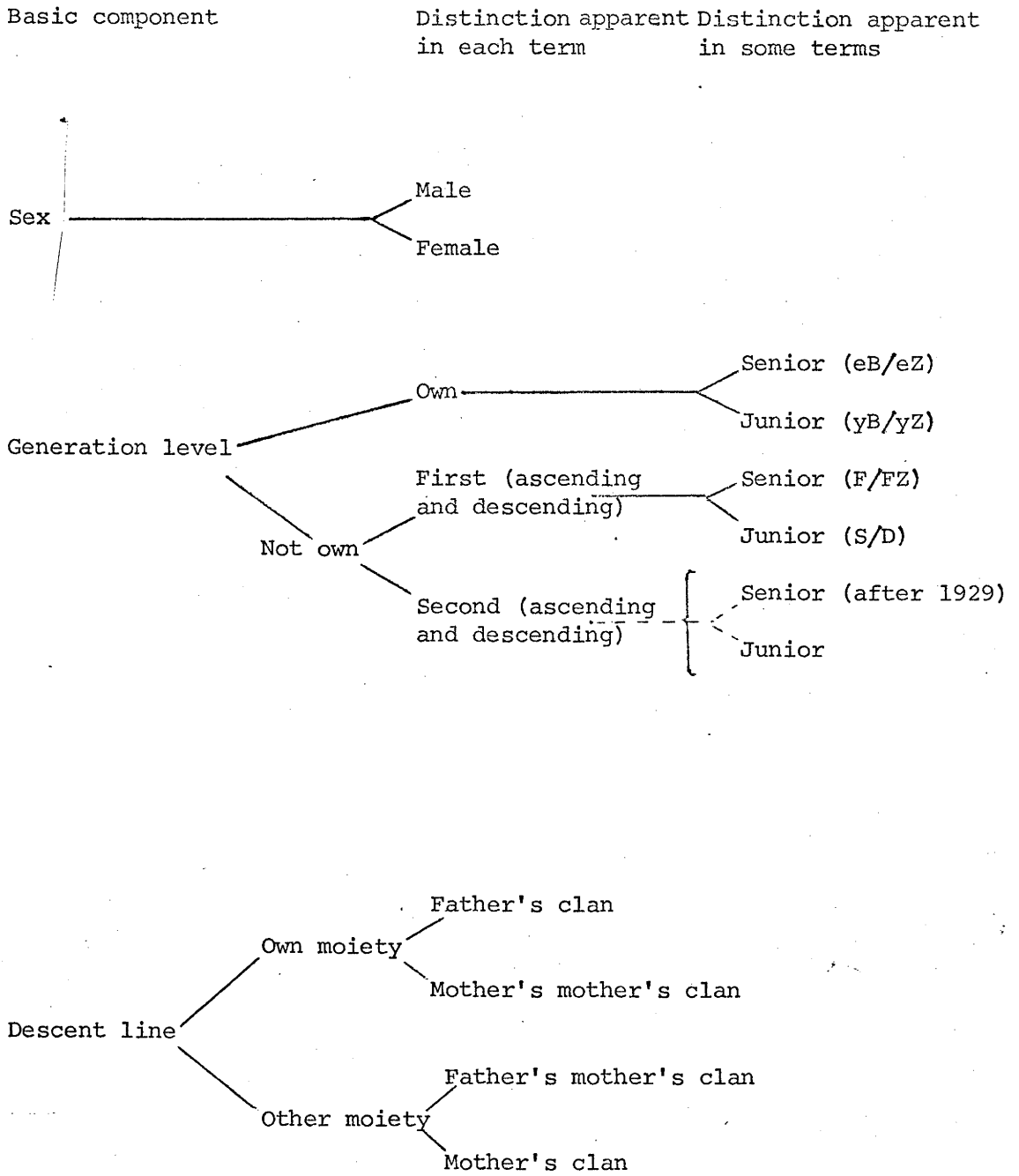




Figure 4: Kin classification of Warner located on a matrix of descent line and generation level

Generation level

2(A/D)	9 numera	10 nangadjamindja	11 nunggwa	12 numindja
1(A/D)	2A nungwa (A) nenugwa (D) 2B	4 neba	6 nadidja	8 nabura
0	1A nawa (A) nenigumandja (D) 1B	3 djanangindja	5 neningja	-
	F	M	MM	FM line of descent

own moiety

other moiety

Warner provides the earliest information and identifies twenty-six terms. Two of them are not found in later accounts:

7 djanangindjerdjer (my MBS) 7a danginnangindjerdjer (my MBD)

After 1929 there is instead a Crow-type feature (Fox 1974:224-225) of adjacent terms in the same descent line (neba MB, denda M) being glossed as both MB, MBS and M,MBD respectively.

The simplest explanation for what the terms mean that is not based on genealogical referents is outlined in Levi-Strauss (1969:162-167) and Fox (1974:245-246). Figure 2 demonstrates how Warner's kin terms locate symmetrically either side of ego's generation level. A paradigm of the three basic components of the system is outlined in Figure 3. Each term delimits a unique reference to three basic elements of gender, generation level and descent line, which can all be subsumed as markers of marriageability. Except for the terms for F/FZ and S/D the 1929 terminology makes no distinction between ascending and descending generation levels. A matrix of three generation levels and four lines of descent or clan affiliation locates all kin terms, and is illustrated in Figure 4. At the empirical level, in contrast to the level of the model, there may be more than four descent lines or clans involved and the occurrence of five generation levels will be rare. A distinction of gender between siblings is indicated by alternating the masculine signifier n with the feminine signifier d. As Fox suggests, the kin terms, despite

their conventional genealogical glosses, can be more simply explained as signifying ideal distinctions between generation level and descent line as stated in Table 11. In this sense the kin terminology is generated by statements of marriageability articulated in the distinctions of sex, generation level and descent line, or in the words of Levi-Strauss, "the function of a kinship system is to generate marriage possibilities or impossibilities" (1965:14). This interpretation and translation of the kin terms outlined in Figure 4 does not assume a determining role for the classificatory system that generates statements of marriageability. The Aborigines have individually often chosen not to follow the prescriptions of the model and collectively they have also modified the model itself.

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Table 11: Translations of kin classifications based on generation levels and clan affiliation

1. Own generation own clan (F clan)
2. Adjacent generation own clan (F clan)
3. Own generation in another clan of own moiety (MM clan)
4. Adjacent generation in another clan of own moiety (MM clan)
5. Own generation in first group of affinal clans (FM clan)
6. Adjacent generation of first group of affinal clans (FM clan)
7. Own generation of second group of affinal clans (M clan)
8. Adjacent generation of second group of affinal clans (M clan)
9. Second generation of own clan (F clan)
10. Second generation another clan of own moiety (MM clan)
11. Second generation in first group of affinal clans (FM clan)
12. Second generation in second group of affinal clans (M clan)

Warner does not record six additional terms (i.e. three with their sex signifiers) at the second descending generation level recorded by all three of the other anthropologists.

The terms and glosses are:

- |                             |                           |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 13.nijarungwa (DS=MBSSS)    | a.dijarungwa (DD=MBSSD)   |
| 14.nenigangwa (ZDS=MMBSSSS) | a.dadiangwa (ZDD=MMBSSSD) |
| 15.nenigabidja (ZSS)        | a.dadiabidja (ZSD)        |

An additional term nangia appears first in Worsley as indicating WF. Turner recorded in 1969 at Angurugu

- |                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 16.narnggia (FMBS) | a.darnggija (FMBD) |
|--------------------|--------------------|

but notes nabera/dabera (cf. Warner's nabura/dabura) is also used (1974:34 ft.16). In 1977 at Umbakumba I recorded 14a dangjamja (MBSSD) for Turner's 13a dijarungwa (MBSSD).

It seems likely these terms may have been borrowed from the mainland, because of their similarity to Nunggubuyu equivalents recorded by Turner (1974:37) and the dissimilarity of other Anindilyaugwa kin terms to their Nunggubuyu equivalents. The Nunggubuyu equivalents are:

- |                      |              |
|----------------------|--------------|
| 13.nijarungwa (DS)   | nājarngwiji  |
| 14.nenigangwa (ZDS)  | nanigunggura |
| 15.nenigabidja (ZSS) | nangabudji   |
| 16.narnggija (FMBS)  | narnggi      |

Terms 13-15 make further distinctions of direction between ascending and descending generation levels. The distinctions only complete a set of distinctions between senior and junior (F:S; eB:yB)

present in the 1929 terminology for the other two generation levels and illustrated in Figure 3. Innovations borrowed from elsewhere, such as these Nunggubuyu terms, are introduced to fit into distinctions latent in the classificatory system and presumably in some sense the mental structures of Groote Eylandt Aborigines. The introduction of these terms in the second generation level completes a set of distinctions apparent in some kinship terms in the first and 0 generation levels in Figures 3 and 4.

Sign language provides some corroboration for the elementary distinctions identified in Figure 3, as distinctions present in the kin terminology are collapsed when these terms are identified with parts of the body. One of the additional distinctions of direction between ascending and descending generation levels introduced by the Nunggubuyu terms disappears in the sign language, since 11.numindja (FMB) and 15.nenigabidja (ZSS) both translate as "chin" (Turner 1974:36). Terms for all older and younger siblings refer to "calf of the leg". In both these cases distinctions within own and second generation levels indicated in Figure 3 have shifted to the left.

As well as decreasing distinctions between senior and junior in generation levels, and hence moving to a less elaborate point along the line of that elementary distinction, the sign language also merges separate descent lines into categories which only

recognize moiety distinctions. At the second generation level, for instance, there are potentially eight terms (ascending and descending x four lines of descent) but the seven which are found after 1929 are referred to by only three parts of the body. All people of second generation level, both ascending and descending of one's own moiety refer to "back". At the first ascending generation level, both 16.n/darnggija (FMBS/FMBD), the terms for wife's father and wife's father's sister, and 4.neba/denda (M/MB), the equivalent term in the other line of descent in the same moiety, refer to "elbow". Thus moieties, though unnamed, are conceptualized and categorized by the metaphorical use of parts of the body, which isolates distinctions present but unnamed in the kin terminology.

None of the signs distinguish gender. Distinctions for each of the three elementary components identified in Figure 3 have in the sign language retreated away from the elaborations of everyday speech. These examples suggest the terminology is not so much describing kin as referring to a few basic ideas of sex, generation level and descent line which together articulate marriage possibilities and impossibilities. The sign language demonstrates that the kinship terms are polysemic (Scheffler 1972:37), but this can be explained by assuming kinship systems are symbolic (Levi-Strauss 1977:51). The fact that none of the Groote sign language distinguishes gender would seem to argue against Scheffler's superclass hypotheses of kin classification.

Model and Reality

Despite the difficulties three ethnographers, Rose, Worsley and Turner, and later Needham and Josselin de Jong, have had with the Groote Eylandt classificatory system the model itself seems quite clear. Difficulties mainly arise on assuming that the model not only regulates marriage but also determines it. The information available, however, from Rose's mammoth collection of kin classifications of Aborigines (many of whom were living a traditional life in the bush in 1941, the others having only begun in 1938 to settle permanently at the mission or Gray's settlement at Umbakumba) to Worsley's and Turner's additional information, suggests that marriage and social relations only sometimes corresponded to the ideal. Rose's data suggest that Turner's hypothesis that the ideal patterns "were actually practised at some point in the past" (1974:1) is not correct.

Despite the large amount of data collected by the three anthropologists, the only information on kin classification that is directly comparable in all three cases is the relationship of a person to his dadingja (MMBDD/W). In only 36% of the 175 correlations Rose collected was the mother of the person one calls dadingja (MMBDD), dadidja (MMBD). She was dunwija (FZ) 39% of the time. The remaining cases included women from every other generation level and descent line in ego's own moiety. Worsley (1954b:304) notes that polygyny was an early object of attack both at the mission and at Umbakumba. Gray at Umbakumba

distributed wives of polygamists to single men but attempted to reassign women in the correct kin category (personal communication). Nevertheless it is possible some of Gray's reassignments between 1938 and 1941 may have increased the number of irregular marriages. Apart from this factor, one may assume Rose's data otherwise fairly accurately reflect a pre-settlement distribution of classificatory kin.

Worsley's data on mothers of dadingja (MMBDD) were arrived at in a slightly different way, since he excluded reduplication of any of ego's full siblings and any full siblings of ego's dadingja in his sample of 100 cases. He found only 29% of mothers of dadingja (MMBDD) were dadidja (MMBD), and deduced from this evidence that ideal marriage was becoming less frequent. (1954b:254).

Turner provides information on 55 married men collected in 1969. He found 38% (21/55) had spouses whom they called dadingja before marriage. The other 34 men were married to women classified into three different generation levels and both patriline of the correct moiety. As in 1941 and 1953 more men (23/55) were married to women in their M's patriline than in their FM's patriline, with no cases of moiety endogamy indicated in data on this relationship (1974:47). The results are listed in Table 12 and



indicate more regular marriages in 1969 than in 1953, and even more than in 1941, although the regularity of marriage in 1941 and 1969 is approximately the same.

---

Table 12: Comparative statistics on the classification of wives before marriage, as identified by the wife's mother.

	(%MMBDD)	(%FZD)
1941	36	39
1953	29	37
1969	38	42

---

Worsley provides some information that helps explain the lack of correspondence between prescribed and actual marriage, and analyses Rose's data for the correspondence that does occur. In 1952 10 boys each called an average of 10 out of 260 people *dadingja* (MMBDD), however the numbers of those called *dadingja* by each boy varied between 23 and 1. If one excluded married *dadingja*, there were 2 of the 10 boys with no available *dadingja* at all. Worsley states that what happens in such cases is the fathers of such boys make arrangements to marry their sons to daughters of other men (often consulting the boys *neningja* (FMBSS=WB) in the past) and then proceed to rearrange the kinship terms in use (1954b:255-256). "An apparently chaotic picture results if one attempts to relate the kinship terms used by one individual to those used by another individual", (253). Despite

the chaos there was continuity. Worsley examined the terms applied by 27 individuals to 207 other individuals in 1939-40, and compared them with the terms used by the same individuals in 1952-53, and found only 540 or 11% of identifications had changed in roughly 14 years (254).

Because of the disparities between the ideal model and actual relationships it is worth investigating those cases where prescribed categories always correspond to actual ones. Rose presents 90 series of correlations between genealogical relation and actual kin term in fifteen tables. In only four cases do actual relations always correspond to those prescribed by the glosses on the terminology. Table 13 lists the cases where there is greater than 86% agreement. These high correlations only occur for generation levels below ego, never above ego. The unity of ideal and actual comes about when "the younger children have not yet had time to create further readjustments by marrying people whom they call by terms other than *dadingja* (MMBDD)" (Worsley 1954b:247).

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Table 13: Correspondence of greater than 86% between prescribed categories and actual kin terms in Rose's data (1960b:55-60)

Relation	Percentage of designations	Number of cases
Mother of DD/SS	100 D	56
Father of SS/SD	100 S	21
Child(m) of yB/yZ	100 S	13
Father of DS	100 ZS	3
Father of ZSS	97 ZS	40
Mother of ZDS	96 ZD	73
Child(m) of WB	92 ZS	60
Child(f) of yZ	90 ZD	57
Child(f) of eZ	90 ZD	58
Child(m) of eB	88 S	58

---

Turner never provides a complete correlation between the actual and the ideal but the mechanics of his defining kin terms by generation level and local group affiliation work to blur the distinctions between the two domains. For instance Turner defines nabera/dabera (ZS/ZD) as follows:

"people in my FM's local group in the 1D level whose Ms are in my local group; whose MMs are in my M's local group and whose FM's are in my MM's local group."

(1974:34)

Turner then correlates the local groups of an informant with those of 74 people identified in Rose's data, and is satisfied that in 50/74, or 68% of cases, the actual kin term the informant applied to them could have been predicted by the definitions. Siblings reduce the percentage of successful identifications slightly unless one duplicates them in the data as Turner does. The local groups of his first two positive identifications are set out below the local groups of Turner's informant. They are then matched according to his definition of kin terms n/dabera (ZS/ZD), quoted above.

Turner recounts six myths of ancestral beings who travel across the estates of different clans and thereby create links between them. Even though no.7's local groups are completely different from those of Turner's informants, mythical linkages provide the required connections in three of four cases. With no.57, two local groups correlate directly with Turner's definition and a third is linked by the myths (1974:89-90). Rose (1960b:216-128) however summarizes 19 myths, 16 of which are not referred to by

Turner. Using Turner's criteria that two different patrilineal clans can each separately be linked to a third by two separate myths, all of the clans in Moiety A are linked to each other exclusively, and likewise for Moiety B clans. Through myths men sing the moiety exogamy which is distinguished at an elementary level in the kin classification and sign language. The only myth which transgresses the boundary of the moiety is significantly about a Macassan and a European ship, and is related by Worsley (1954b:98). Certain kinship links can therefore be established by some mythical linkages, and alternative links within the correct moiety could be established by other mythical linkages. Myths do not make men but are created by men. Any attempt to predict all actual kin classifications is bound to be frustrated because it assumes a sociological determinism. The system is viable because it is manipulable, not predictable. The reality is best reflected not in Turner's models written out as thirty-four rules (17-18) for assigning kin terms to persons, but in observations made almost as an aside in an appendix:

An informant attempted to persuade two men to allow his son to call their daughters dadidja (MMBD) because at that point he seemed to have the possibility of a dadingja (MMBDD) relationship with their daughter's children (204).

Another informant stated:

"If I start fooling around with a girl from (whose mother is) a far away dungwija (FZ), they may twist it (what the speaker calls the girl) to dadingja (MMBDD)." (206)

The rules of the model exist because they may potentially be broken and in fact often are. In Levi-Strauss's (1965) words, marriage is prescriptive at the level of the model, but preferential at the level of the reality. Because model and behaviour have a dialectical relationship to one another, they are rarely identical. Before considering further the meaning of this interpretation of the relationship between model and marriage patterns, it may be useful to recall some tentative conclusions. The different accounts of the system of kin classification suggest some modification over time, four Nunggubuyu terms were probably introduced after 1929, but the ethnography suggests on the whole a consistent model of kin classification over the last fifty years. Innovations were introduced in accordance with distinctions present or latent in the earliest account of the terminological system. Each kin term is generated by a matrix of elementary distinctions of gender, generation level and descent line which articulates statements of marriage possibilities and impossibilities. Sign language confirms the validity of isolating these three elementary components of the classificatory system.

A difficulty with Turner's interpretation is that he assumes a determinist relationship between model and empirical reality, whereas the data suggest the relationship is dialectical. Because

of demographic variability, men's desires to gain wives, and because even the earliest information suggests only 36% of marriages corresponded to the ideal, it is unlikely that marriages prescribed in the model were ever more than preferences at the level of social facts. The regularity dropped to 29% in 1952 and rose to 38% in 1969, although moiety exogamy was consistently adhered to. Kin relations only correlate completely to the classificatory system in descending generations from ego, before young children necessitate readjustments by marrying wrongly.

Rose noted that because 39% of wives' mothers were FZ and only 36% were MMBD one could argue that the kinship system was apparently equally Kariera as Aranda (1976:197). The sign language merges the four descent lines at the second ascending generation level, thus satisfying one of Radcliffe-Brown's two criteria for a Kariera system. One could even assume determinism of the classificatory system by the social facts! It is obvious that the inverse does not apply and Radcliffe-Brown's conclusion that "the classification of kin by means of the terminology is the basis on which the behaviour of one person to another in Australian society is regulated" (1931:45) is not so for Groote Eylandt, but what degree of regularity is there elsewhere in Australia between kinship relations and kin classification?

Meggitt's data on the Walbiri purport to show 92% of 617 men have "preferred union" with MMBDD. It is unclear what this statistic means. His Table 12 (1974:86) lists a total of 617 preferred unions, possibly realizable over time, as there are only 175 men married to 265 women (Table 9, 78). Furthermore jabala is glossed as MMBDD, FM and ZSD i.e. any women in ego's FM descent line at ego's own or second generation level. In contrast to Groote Eylandt there are 11/617 cases of "prohibited union" within one's own moiety. Meggitt's figure of 92% may refer to future marriages, or it may reflect reclassification of wrong or irregular marriages. His statistics on the kinship category wife's father therefore provides a more accurate indication of marriage regularity and is comparable to Groote Eylandt statistics. Only 29/100 wife's fathers are FFZS (Table 18, 199). There are 57% of wife's fathers ZS, their daughters jabala (ZSD) are presumably identified with jabala (MMBDD), hence together aligning 88% of marriages with the correct descent line. Although using the criterion of wife's parent the incidence of marriage in the correct descent line (FM, MMBDD, ZSD) is high, there are also 11% of marriages to MBD.

Hiatt (1962,1973) provides information on only a small number of Gidjingali marriages. Only 6/35 (17%) wives married to 23 Anbara men were MMBDD whose mothers belonged to the patrilineal group of the wife's husband's mother's mother. Correct marriage thus

defined was demographically possible for only 21/48 Anbara men. An additional seven wives were classificatory MMBDD (1962:97). Nine of the other wives were classified as FZD. This indicates that for the three systems, MMBDD marriage, though prescribed by the model, only occurs in 29-38% of marriages, or, by mean, one third (34%). One marries a MBD in 11-42% of cases with a mean of one quarter (26%). The variation is as important as the mean. The combined total of MMBDD and MBD marriages in the Aranda systems is less than the 82% of 190 marriages to the daughter of gawel (MB,MBSS) among the Miwuyt, who have the Murngin feature of prescribed marriage with the MBD/FZD. (Shapiro 1969:99)

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Table 14: Degree of marriage regularity of Aranda-type systems, as indicated by the classification of the wife's parent.

no. of cases	MMBDD (%)	MBD/FZD (%)	source
Gidjingali ( 35)	37	- /26	(Hiatt 1962:95-97)
Walbiri (100)	29	11/ -	(Meggitt 1974:199)
Groote ( 60)	38	42/39	(Rose 1960:60)

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Despite the wide diversity between ideal model of kin classification and social relations the two are not disconnected. A correlation of no MMBDD marriages in a society which conceptualizes marriage in this way is as unlikely as complete correlation, which has a very tenuous potentiality even before European incursion because of demographic limitations and the capacity of individuals to innovate and manipulate as described above.



Turner, who refers to Fox and Levi-Strauss, correctly identifies the importance of descent line or clan allegiance to the kinship system. De Jong in 1962, using only Rose's ethnography and a structuralist method, also demonstrates the importance of the clans to the Groote system of kinship and marriage.

### Conclusion

Scheler (Berger and Luckmann 1976:20) argued that the real factors regulate the conditions under which certain ideal factors can appear in history, but cannot affect the content of the latter. Historically, however, Groote Eylandt kinship is best understood in the context of constant interaction between model and behaviour, and is dialectical in Berger and Luckmann's sense that man and his product, the social world, interact with each other and the product acts back on the producer (1976:78).

At Groote Eylandt the model and the social relations are part of a larger whole but not in the sense understood by functionalists. About half of the marriages contradict the regularity of the other half prescribed in the model. The taboo on association with the mother-in-law is a statement of the more constant prescription of moiety exogamy, as she belongs to clans aligned with one's own moiety. Prescribed marriages are mutually agreed points in an ongoing discussion between the model and patterns of behaviour that are constantly being renegotiated, as in the two cases described by Turner. Nunggubuyu kin classifications

serve as commentaries which may be introduced into the text of the Groote Eylandt model when logically consistent with it.

Demography and history are constantly interacting with individual behaviour and its collective representation. Reclassifications, and the bargained irregularities of marriages, affect empirical kin classifications.

Bloch (1971) has outlined the moral and tactical dimension of Merina kinship terms and Tyler (1969) has identified fundamental features of the Koya kinship system through analysis of synchronic variation. The Groote Eylandt case suggests rich fruits from noting and reflecting on diachronic variation.

This chapter has analysed the system of kin classification, its basic components, and modifications to it over time. It is suggested a model of alliance between clan groups best explains the system and its modifications. Nunggubuyu kin terms were borrowed but only incorporated when consistent with the system of kin classification. The basic components of the elementary structure seem to be corroborated by the sign language.

Other analyses in the literature were frustrated by the assumption that there must be a deterministic relationship between the reality and some yet to be discovered model. A far simpler assumption, supported by statistics available for other Australian societies, is that social relations are not described any more

mechanically by Groote Eylandt ideology than by modern ideologies. The literature suggests regularity of marriage to the ideal decreased in 1953 (29%) but was about the same in 1969 (38%) as in 1941 (36%). Ideal and actual only corresponded in descending male lines. There was almost complete regularity, however, for the principal of moiety exogamy, and this principal is elaborated upon in myth and reinforced in ceremony. The model suggested by the kin terminology and anthropological analysis otherwise has a dialectical relationship to behaviour, not a deterministic one.

CHAPTER 5

RELIGION

\* "Another story belonging to the same clan concerns Jajabun, who once lived in the sea off the south-east coast of Groote. Jajabun was important because he was the ancestor of all the clans of the second moiety, not only of the Amagula and Wantiliakwa (Mamarika).

Jajabun collected his nulla-nulla and clap-sticks and said he must go and show himself to the people on the island and teach them the sacred corroboree songs and dances. First he went to a sandy island called Aberrungwanda. Here he made a corroboree and so the island is now sacred. Men today must get permission to go there, while women must never go there.

Jajabun then went on to Groote Eylandt. As he travelled inland he planted a burrawong which still stands today. As he went he sang, calling out the names of all the sacred places ... He left Dengaluwa (the turtle) and went on to Bickerton. He sat down on top of the rocks at Adangmaja on Malerrba. You can still see the mark where he sat ... He decided to keep going and went on to the mainland ... he went on to Wurindi where he chose a good corroboree place. He stayed there for four or five months, holding a corroboree before going further north to Waldarr. He stopped at Waldarr, and chose another sacred corroboree area. He made all the necessary preparations there and held another corroboree.

Whilst he had been on Groote Jajabun sang in Endhilhjaugwa, but when he left Groote, he sang in Nunggubuyu on Bickerton and on the mainland.

Since Jajabun's time a sacred corroboree has been held every year. It used to start in the sea east of Groote where Jajabun came from and continue right across the south of Groote to Rose River and back again, finishing where it started. Nowadays the corroboree is held at Rose River for one or two months. Although all clans join in, the men of the Mirniyowan clan, some of whom live at Angurugu and some at Rose River, are responsible for it. This is because Jajabun held the corroboree at Wurindi, which is Mirniyowan territory.

This corroboree is known on Groote as Amunduraria, but at Rose River as Madayin. It is a teaching corroboree, concerning Aboriginal laws, and marriage, originated by Jajabun. He travelled to teach the songs connected with it, and it is re-enacted today as taught by him."

\* \* \* \* \*

This myth is one of a series dictated by the current President of the Groote Eylandt Aboriginal Trust to the Government patrol officer, some time before 22 September 1971, for the purpose of identifying sacred sites to be prohibited to Europeans on the island.

The registration of one's sacred sites and myths with a Government bureaucracy is an innovation on Groote Eylandt. One obvious statement in the myth is the connection of Groote Eylandt clans with clans on the mainland. But a question that must be asked is why people on Groote Eylandt still bother with such myths at all. Aboriginal religion might appear the most irrational and primitive aspect of their culture, and therefore the practice

most likely to disappear in a modern capitalist society. Rose, Worsley and Mountford in fact assumed such a decline was inevitable, and their assumptions were confirmed by their ethnographic notes. Turner's approach was more sophisticated, but he also suggested that the deculturation of the last fifty years would continue, partly because of the information he was able to gather about religious ceremonies on Groote Eylandt up to 1969, partly because of general assumptions about culture and society. Since 1969 the predictions of earlier researchers have not been fulfilled, and ceremonial activity has increased dramatically.

Preceding chapters argued that generalizations about social change on Groote Eylandt were incorrect in part because they were based on inadequate analyses of the nature of Aboriginal society before European incursion. The argument so far has been supported by studies of the clans and kinship. It has been shown that clan allegiance and the kinship model that it generates continue to have practical applications and have also acquired new functions. Religion and ceremonies do not appear to be useful in the same sense. Maintaining and in fact expanding their practice is therefore one of the strongest statements by Groote Eylandt people that the predictions of previous students of their culture are inadequate.

There are at least three approaches to understanding the persistence of Aboriginal religious practices in the Groote Eylandt area. First, they may be considered as a case study of cultural conservatism and resistance to development, whether caused by a preference for unity over change, a respect for nature or a rejection of history (Levi-Strauss 1977:319). Second, an existential inquiry might explore religious practices and beliefs as a centre and source of stress derived from a discontinuity between the social-structural and cultural dimensions (Geertz 1975:164). Third, Aboriginal religion may be considered a continuing or even reinvigorated element in a different social and cultural formation, as suggested in Levi-Strauss's concept of cultural diversification. He argues that it is cultural diversification, constantly renewing itself at another level, that makes possible a state of disequilibrium on which the biological and cultural survival of mankind depend. (1977:360)

#### The Major Ceremony

The sources available suggest this third approach is most useful in understanding aspects of Groote Eylandt religion.

The major ceremony is called (commemoration)/ babara/ amunduraria/madayin. Although regional variations are significant, Keen's (1977:35) identification of the madayin ceremony in

Milingimbi in north-east Arnhem Land is also valid for the Groote Eylandt madayin: "In the Madayin ceremony older men reveal dances and sacred objects to young adult men of several related clans of the same moiety in order to pass on the sacred knowledge... Another (purpose) is to say 'goodbye' to a clan elder, or to remember one recently deceased." In the Groote Eylandt area, as well as honouring the deceased, the ceremony also commemorates the journey of the culture hero Blaur and the dreamtime beings he saw on his journey. As with the mainland madayin it takes place just before the onset of the wet season, in September-November. Despite Worsley's pessimistic prognosis in 1952, the ceremony has grown in strength over recent years. Tindale was told that ceremonies totemic in character "take place about once a year at one of at least three places". When held on Groote Eylandt "the Ingura only attend", when held on Bickerton "parties of natives of the Nunggubuyu tribe are frequently present also, and when held on the peninsula opposite Bickerton the Talakurupa who "have their home" on the south-western portion of Groote and are one of the two larger subtribes numbering about 100 (65-66) "are generally absent" (86). "Similar ceremonies are also held by the Nunggubuyu at Numburuwa (Rose River)" on the mainland south of Cape Barrow Peninsula, "where the Ingura do not attend". At the ceremonies dances are performed illustrating the habits, attitudes and other peculiarities of certain animals and birds (Tindale 1925:86).



Though Mountford's interpretation and exegesis of the ceremony have been criticized by Worsley (1954:129: 1958:93) and Turner (1974:157), Mountford remains the only person to have seen and described the Groote Eylandt ceremony even though what he observed was a specially performed and abridged version. It is usually held at the end of the dry season (September-October) when the cycad nuts are in full fruit. Mountford however, organized a special staging of the "arawaltja" (probably - auwurawalja, the huts constructed for the ceremony) about June 1948.

Mountford provides more details on the separate but complementary relationship between the two moieties than any other writer. Actors belonging to different moieties were distinguished by distinctive body paintings. One group had water-goanna painted on their abdomens, the other an inverted yellow U-shaped pattern cross hatched in red. Dances of the serpent, fresh-water tortoise, crab, bandicoot and jungle fowl of one moiety, and dances of stingray and goose in the other moiety were performed over a week (25). Most were held on a ceremonial ground from which women and children were excluded. Mountford was told the ground symbolized Waldarr, which is a river on the mainland running through Nunggargalu territory (1956:27).

At the end of the week, however, some dances were performed on the beach, in either a simplified or quite different form from the secret dances celebrated during the previous few days.

Two days later, after further secret dances, all of the camp, including women and children, formed separate moieties and ritually washed off the ceremonial paint. The men then returned to the ceremonial ground for final dances. Mountford notes similarities between this ceremony and the narra Warner describes. He recounts the myths of the travels of mythical beings over Groote Eylant, Bickerton and the adjacent mainland celebrated in the dances. A summary of the ceremony Mountford observed illustrates the moieties are exclusive but complementary. As well there is a play between participation, hence knowledge, of insiders and outsiders .

\* \* \* \* \*

Summary of amunduraria observed by Mountford in 1948 (1956:46-60)

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#### SECRET RITUALS ON THE CEREMONIAL GROUND

Following preparation of the ceremonial ground and huts that house the sacred boards there are six days of dancing. There are dances of serpent, fresh water tortoise, stingray, young stingrays, crab and bandicoot. The thematic direction of the dances is east and west along the ceremonial ground. Body paintings are distinct to each moiety.

#### NON SECRET RITUALS ON THE BEACH

Men filed to the beach with one moiety leading. After simplified dances of the serpent and tortoise, the men performed a non- secret dance of the stingray that involved circumambulating two tree trunks erected on the beach.

#### SECRET RITUALS ON THE CEREMONIAL GROUND

The following day dances of the serpent, tortoise, crab, bandicoot and stingray were performed.

NON SECRET RITUALS ON THE BEACH

Men danced the non-secret versions of the serpent, tortoise and stingray and, in separate moieties, ate ceremonial cakes.

The following day one moiety danced serpent and tortoise, and the picking of rakia bulbs by geese. Women and children then joined the men, formed into separate moieties aligned east and west, immersed themselves in a creek and gathered as separate moieties around the two tree trunks.

SECRET RITUALS ON THE CEREMONIAL GROUND

Men danced jungle fowl around small fires lit inside one hut, then danced goose around another. Then "the sacred poles of both moieties were buried in their respective houses, the participants left and the area was forbidden to all but the fully initiated."

\* \* \* \* \*

No amunduraria was held during Worsley's fieldwork period in 1953, but he identifies the ceremony as a mainland importation, also called madayin, and notes its similarities to narra ceremonies. Leaders of the ceremony at Groote Eylandt were Nunggubuyu and some even Balamumu. There are Nunggubuyu songs and invocations. Women, however, were far more rigidly excluded in these ceremonies at Groote Eylandt than on the mainland (134). Worsley thought Umbakumba Aborigines were comparatively ignorant about amunduraria, which was mainly in the hands of Bickerton islanders (1954b:125).

Van der Leeden, who worked among the Nunggubuyu, identified their ru:l cult (owned by Yirittja and managed by Dhuwa), with madayin, amunduraria and narra, described as the basic cult of Arnhem land. By contrast the Gunabibi, introduced to Groote Eylandt in 1963, is owned by Dhuwa and managed by Yirittja (1965:49,61).

Turner heard a preliminary song cycle of the babara (commemoration)/amunduraria sung over a two-month period for about two nights a week at Angurugu, prior to the conclusion of the ceremony at Numbulwar in 1969, which Turner was not allowed to witness. He did attempt to describe the ritual, however, through Aboriginal recollections of the last one that had been held on Groote Eylandt in 1966 (1974:153-158).

The dance area is prohibited to women at all times. One shelter was built by each of the local groups or clans visited by the culture hero Blaur on his journey. Old men then began to carve boards representing the recently deceased in their supernatural form. Additional boards representing more distant ancestors and associated mythical beings were dug out of the ground where they had been left after the previous amunduraria, and retouched and remade, as with the narra. Dances by one moiety represented the animals Blaur saw when he was travelling from Groote Eylandt to the mainland. The other moiety dance Dreamtime beings associated with local groups in that moiety. Most of Turner's informants agreed that Blaur's journey "tells us which side is which" or "which clans belong to one moiety" (97). As in the narra, dances followed by songs were performed about three or four days a week for two months (156). Toward the end young men were instructed in the meanings of the boards and other objects and instructed in right moral behaviour.

Mountford's list of animals celebrated in dance does not totally agree with Tindale's, but this variation is consistent with variations documented as characteristic of Aboriginal ceremonies. Turner was told amunduraria activities and their meaning had not changed significantly in living memory. A leader of the ceremony in Mountford's time told Turner that in 1948, as in 1969, Blaur was the central figure in the performance (157). Because of the incomplete information, it is not possible to attempt an analysis of the ceremony. The ceremony works because it can be considered a unique bricolage of themes, motifs and emotions, above all a bringer-into-meaning. Reference can be made to cognate ritual and mythical systems of Arnhem Land, and to wider discussion of Aboriginal religion.

Just as the continuities and discontinuities of limb and chest incision form part of a regional system so do the myth and ritual of the narra and amunduraria. If considered as part of a set with the narra, the Groote madayin forms complementary oppositions that provide a commentary on the north-east Arnhem Land ceremony, from which it is thought to derive.

Both ceremonies are held when the cycad nuts are ripe at the end of the dry season. Murngin, however, call the rainy season Barra, north/north-west wind, using the same word as on Groote Eylandt, and say it is Dhuwa. They say it is Yirittja time when the south wind blows (371). Narra and amunduraria,

therefore, encompass the seasons of both moieties. There are other similarities noted in the literature but it is also worth while to note some of the differences. The narra is associated with the myth of two Djunkao sisters who travelled from south to north creating totemic wells and naming the clan countries and the animals they found there. The younger sister was incestuously raped by an ancestor man of her own moiety. Men then stole their sacred boards. The ritual of the narra reveals points of difference from the amundararia. Women paint up and men simulate rape with them. Men paint up with clan, instead of moiety, insignia, and at the conclusion all bathe in the ocean instead of the river. The binary oppositions of the two traditions can be represented as follows:

myth	incestuous	sexuality	exclusivity	creativity
	copulation			

Murngin

narra: two sisters	+	+	clan	+
(South to North)				

Groote

amunduraria	-	-	moiety	-
Blaur				
(East to West)				

The differences between the Murngin narra and the Groote Eylandt amunduraria distinguish one cultural area from another. They also illustrate special characteristics of the Wanindilyaugwa, such as greater restrictions on women. The myth and ritual of

this area may therefore be seen as a commentary on not just the ritual but also the social and cultural life of another area. Further insights can be gained by consideration of this regional context.

It would be dangerous to make too much of the limited information available. On the face of it the thirty or so myth summaries in the literature (1), most relating the travels of ancestral beings, appear to be a play between creatures of the land and creatures of the sea, with creatures of the air occupying an ambivalent position between the two. Many of the creatures and their places are linked by myth, but all linkages retain a moiety exclusivity.

Morphy's recent study on the iconography of the Mangalili clan at Djarrakpi, Cape Shield, just north of Groote Eylandt, documents various levels of meanings in artistic creation. With bark paintings, for instance, there may be a shift from interpretations associated with journeys to interpretations associated with a place, and its sacred objects. It is likely too that the madayin has several levels of meanings. Stanner's generalizations about Aboriginal religious practices among the Murinbata provide some distant insights into the fragmentary information on Groote Eylandt religion. "Each ritual occasion vivified in the minds of celebrants the first instituting of the culture, deepened the sense of continuity with men's beginnings and reaffirmed the structures of existence" (1960:255)

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(1) Rose 1960b:216-218, Mountford 1956:25-37; Worsley 1954b:104-5; 129  
Turner 1974:75,77,79,87,96.

Despite the apparent consistency over sixty years, all the evidence points to amundararia as an innovation in the Groote Eylandt area. Stanner also gives an elaborate account of innovation in religious cults. Wilili was a political extension of the bullroarer cult imposed by younger men also introducing subsections to the Murinbata. Mass sexual abuse and private killings showed plainly the interplay between religion, politics and private motive. Some of the most important of Stanner's conclusions are phrased negatively: Murinbata did not live in a stationary state of society with a static culture, it is a mistake to identify their religion with totemic phenomena, and society was not the real source and object of the religion.

Myths were cognitive essays to justify high concerns of life and to guide conduct towards them. The ultimate cognitive concern is immortality, its means symbolisms couched in familiar images. At Groote Eylandt, these were myths expressing relationships between components of the environment, at Daly River they were myths of sexuality, amity and conflict between kin, all concentrated in a rite that was a work of art, and in a context of high excitement, secrecy and beauty.

Amundararia was also specifically concerned with cognition of mortality. "After an important man dies we put it up to remember him and all our ancestors. Last time we had one here, old Sam and old Bill and Banjo cried when they saw those things inside the shade. They were thinking back to their fathers and way back." (Turner 1974:158). Stanner's note that some clans



seemed to consider that the spirits of apical ancestors stayed on or near the main totam-centres suggests an explanation for amundararia as "remembrance activities performed only on the death of important men." (Turner 219). Stanner's quotation on the emic conceptualization of Murinbata totemism is suggestive for other parts of the amundararia ritual. "The big thing is ngakumal (totem); it is like you yourself; you yourself are there; something is pushing you ... they know the sweat from ngakumal". Turner notes that "only after sweat from under the armpits of the old men in his local group had been rubbed over his eyes and mouth was he allowed to open them. He was then instructed in the meanings of the sacred objects" (156).

Like Groote Eylandt religion, Murinbata religion had the civil and political function, however transiently, of muting the tension between opposed groups and individuals. People of different moieties cannot cohere or lose identity. They depend on each other for many things and must therefore associate. In their rites they have some objects beyond themselves, beyond egotism and beyond social gain. The essential problem for Stanner of stability and constancy was answered by values, discrete from a unified society and autonomous individual. His classical study of Aboriginal religion found that despite an ideal of religious conservatism not even sacred values stay stable. The "tradition" was constantly adapted, and political institutions had not separated from the society.

Religion and Country

The discussion so far has suggested the importance of regional dialectics for understanding elements of the narra/amunduraria. It is likely that successive transformations of myths and rituals could be shown to extend across the continent, but they obviously comprise more than commentaries on regional systems. Stanner presents the paradox of the ascendancy of old symbolic forms over change, the contradiction of a religion justifying high concerns of life and sanctified by ancient traditions but plainly lending itself as easily to private as to political use. Although Stanner thought it a mistake to identify Murinbata religion with totemic phenomena, totems are clearly an important system of reference in Groote Eylandt religion. It is possible these referents may explain the increased contemporary significance of the amunduraria. Worsley considered that its basic content is totemic (1954:132), and its decline was speeded by the hostility of whites and the diminished significance of totemic rites under the present conditions of life (138).

Worsley's ethnographic information documents how new historical elements have been incorporated into Groote Eylandt totemism. He recounts the history of European contact with Groote Eylandt and comments "It is not surprising, therefore, that in a short time, processes of disintegration of the indigenous culture are

already well advanced" (1955:14). His article however illustrates "how totemism, usually conceived of in terms of a fixed order of the universe laid down in the Creation Period, in fact changes as society changes" (851). There are three major myth complexes. The first relates how Central Hill came from the mainland, stopped at various locations, then reached his present location. Connected with this myth are others, such as the story of sawfish who opened up Angurugu River and Lake Hubert on the east coast. The wind totems comprise the second group, and possibly derive their names from Malay words for the winds (855). The totems of the northwest and north wind belong to the same moiety and are connected with sites on the mainland. The totems of the southeast wind belong to the other moiety and ceremonies for the manufacture of it were held on small islands off the south east coast. Worsley thinks the wind totems are connected with the annual visits of the Macassans and cites the apparent borrowing of their names from Malay as evidence for this. The ship totem is owned by four clans in the one moiety and comprised the third myth complex. There is no ceremonial activity connected with it but it is associated with a site on Bickerton Island. A myth explains how Macassans made ships there, and divided humans into black and white. The myths therefore demonstrate that items of sensory experience transmitted over several generations may be

identified with particular places and incorporated into the totemic system. The Macassan ship and wind totems suggest historical depth, however one man from a clan with the ship totem composed songs about Catalina flying boats landing on his clan territory, and there are also songs about ships with European names composed by the same man and therefore added to the same totemic complex.

Most totems however relate to the natural order. The totems travel from the mainland to Groote Eylandt. The myths therefore constantly recall experiences of local places. Worsley identifies totemism on Groote Eylandt as having two major aspects - expressing relations between Man and Nature, and between man and man. He quotes Durkheim's observation that totemism is a concrete representation or emblem of a social group, and Radcliffe-Brown's observation that totemism is connected to the special relationship of Aborigines with their environment, conditioned by dependence on hunting and gathering (858-859).

The series of totems possessed by each Aborigine from both clan totemism and conception totemism means that as well as functioning as emblems of social groups totemism can also identify individuality. The particular vividness with which Groote Eylandt Aborigines associate their myths of totemic beings with specific sites adds a different emphasis to Levi-Strauss's mentalist approach to totemism and Radcliffe-Brown's association of it with a generalized relationship between Man and Nature.

Peterson (1972) argues that sentiment is an integral part of totemism and that it helped maintain Aborigines in their environment through attachment to locality and consequent territorial spacing. Numerous references to the strong emotional attachment of Aborigines to their estates are listed (1972:24). Stanner also notes that the sacred sites, the groove cut in the rock, the place of fresh water were the unquestioned means by which Murinbata assured themselves of their human continuity (1963:259-261). The complexes of ship and wind totems on Groote Eylandt argue against Radcliffe-Brown's direct association of totemism with hunting and gathering. The association of these totems with particular sites, even when no ritual is associated with them, supports Peterson's hypothesis that attachment of totems to locality is fundamental to Australian totemism, and therefore has indirect ecological and economic benefits. The vocabulary of Groote Eylandt religion - the myths and totems, therefore constantly recall individual ownership of particular sites. Religion has specific allusions to land, just as clan organisation and the model of kinship organization do. The land connection therefore suggests some of the significance of the reemergence of amunduraria/madayin ceremonies.

The amunduraria may be performed much as it was sixty years ago, but the political context of European-Aboriginal relations in respect of the ceremony has revolved in a complete circle. Tindale visited the Amalyigba ceremonial site on the north-east of Groote Eylandt "against the protests of the natives, who, however, followed us" (84) and removed some of the sacred objects buried in the earthen floor of the huts. Wilkins an explorer and popular writer who made a short visit to the area in 1925 also removed some of the sacred objects (Wilkins 1928:288). Worsley notes that Aborigines viewed the intentions of white men with great suspicion after the removal of their sacred ritual objects (125). They must have been somewhat surprised therefore at the behaviour of Mountford. In 1948 he organized a special performance, lasting over a week, of part of the ceremony, although mid year. There was local opposition to amunduraria being held. Missionaries considered the ceremony evil, and the Umbakumba superintendent resented interference with his garden planting (39). Mountford noted that the ceremony had been held in 1945 on Bickerton and in 1947 near the estuary of the Angurugu river. Worsley, in 1954, speaks of "the decline of the Amunduraria" and "the decline of the indigenous culture". He attributes this to the hostility of whites towards indigenous religion and the diminished significance of totemic rites to present conditions of life (1954b:138). Turner's information however suggests at the least a conservative and sustained adherence to amunduwuraria traditions. Turner was

told the ceremony had been held only four times on Groote Eylandt. Tindale, however, notes that Groote Eylandt men always had access to the ceremonies when held on Bickerton, which were presumably additional to the four held on Groote. The ceremony did take place in 1966 at Angurugu and 1969 at Numbulwar, but Turner was not allowed to attend.

Since the 1969 ceremony, attendance of Groote Aborigines at other madayin has been assisted by charter planes hired with mining royalties. In 1971, a 24 January note on Government files complains about work absenteeism and states "once a fishing boat is taken off its functions it becomes a corroborree charter". A 12 September note, in the same year, from the Angurugu Mission to the local Government officer states a "large number of ceremonies at Roper River, Numbulwar and later at Umbakumba and Angurugu" have taken place. It continues "Some concern is felt here at the increase in these ceremonies and the resulting increased expenditure on charters and fares." GEAT provided funds for a madayin in 1973/74 and in September-October 1977 the madayin took precedence over all else. Aborigines also said it now formed part of a regional program - by mutual agreement yabuduruwa would be performed at Roper River in Year 1, gunabibi in Year 2 somewhere else, and madayin at Numbulwar in Year 3.

Turner quotes an Aborigine at Angurugu in 1969: "This madajin business - government law says no; Europeans says its wrong. But the law was given to old intelligent people. In the old days the people had real intelligence. They are the ones who had the law ... Europeans just can't stop us and put us down. Got to be neck and neck (158)." On my first visit to Groote Eylandt in July 1977 I was told that no women and no white people were allowed to attend the amunduraria. The sequence of the contextual transformation is as follows:

Tindale had no knowledge of the language or Aboriginal religion but was able to rebut Aboriginal protests against his right of entry to the ceremonial ground. In the following years Aborigines were confronted by whites possessing extraordinarily diverse attitudes towards their most sacred religious ceremony. One group considered it evil, another considered it interfered with his garden planting, while on one occasion a visiting member of a large expedition from down south extracted a special performance of the ceremony in the mid-year. Worsley's pessimistic prognosis in 1952 of the religious life has been proved wrong. It is now flourishing. Turner was better equipped than his anthropological predecessors in terms of language competency, length of residence and access to literature on Aboriginal religion to undertake a complete study of the ritual and its myths. But in 1969 the balance of power had changed slightly, and the Aborigines were able to rebuke him.



Other Ceremonies

The Groote Eyland amunduraria/madayin has been discussed in detail because it is argued that its revitalization since 1969 is an important and understandable part of developing Aboriginal identity. The other less important ceremonies however also indicate that unidirectional change is not taking place.

At Angurugu traditional forms of burial have not been practised since the establishment of the mission, except for a few early isolated cases where people had died in the bush (Turner 1974:106). The four people who died at Angurugu in 1969 received a Christian burial. There were restrictions on the deceased's name and property. Their house was marked by a flag, which is probably an Arnhem Land innovation borrowed ultimately from the Macassans (Warner 1969:458), although Turner was told the flags were a Balamumu innovation, and Berndt (1965:286) notes their use at Yirrkala. Two of the Angurugu deaths were attributed to supernatural intervention. Three mission Aborigines were believed to have been ensorcelled in 1968 <sup>(Turner</sup> /1974:106). Death without obvious natural causes was generally attributed to sorcery or poisoning. Sorcery was believed to have contributed to a death from measles. Pointing the bone, magic powder and magical operations were also practised at the mission, similar to Murngin beliefs and practices (1974:108).

Despite the long years of missionization there is little evidence of any syncretism between Christian theology and Aboriginal religious beliefs. Turner notes that Wanaija, in 1952 the first Aborigine to be confirmed, added heaven to his cosmology, and the cross replaced trees in a myth, but this syncretism was unique to Aborigines at Angurugu from Bickerton clans. Church attendance was usually limited to a few Aboriginal women and white staff in 1977.

Tindale was not able to gather many details of a ceremony at which the person responsible for a death is named and someone, usually a son or other close relation accompanied by allies, is deputed to wreak vengeance. Should the named one be discovered unawares he is killed. If prepared and guarded there is a trial by spears, one of which Tindale photographed (75-76, Fig 33-34). Government records for 6 July 1975 note that a man was charged with manslaughter and flown out, and his cousin underwent a trial by ordeal. In December 1977, after a manslaughter at Umbakumba, involving two men from the one clan, the accused was taken into custody but a relation underwent a trial by blunted spears hurled at him by men from the mother's clan of the deceased, suggesting the importance of the cultural category of clan alignment.

Little information is available on other religious ceremonies. Tindale says boys from 10-13 attend their first circumcision

and initiation ceremony, and at 16-17 receive their first cicatrix. Like the amunduraria the cicatrices form part of a regional system. Both the Wanindilyaugwa and the Nunggubuyu make six cuts across the chest. The Balamumu of the mainland make one chest cut and three longitudinal cuts on the left arm. The Ngandi, west of the Nunggubuyu, make four chest cuts and three slanting cuts on the left thigh. The cicatrices therefore combine two language groups in the first instance and distinguish this combined group from two others. The patterns make sense as commentaries on the patterns of neighbours from a different area. Cicatrization was ended by whites after settlement. (Worsley 1954b:160).

Worsley mentions a circumcision ceremony witnessed by McCarthy in 1948 lasted for one month, and in December 1952 he witnessed one that lasted for one night. Almost the whole of the ceremony was seen by women and children, although they were kept away from the scene of the actual operation. (157). "It will clearly not be too long before the ceremony disappears altogether" (152). In 1977, despite Worsley's predictions, circumcisions were held regularly at both Umbakumba and Angurugu. As in 1952, they could be attended by Aboriginal men and women, and in 1977 white women were also invited to a circumcision ceremony at Umbakumba.

Worsley identified malevolent spirits of mainland origin but noted "the relatively minor role played by sorcery in this society" (1954b:181). In 1969 this was not obviously the case. Turner witnessed a grave-side ritual designed to kill sorcerers responsible for a death (106-108). A Roper River ritual leader sang a special song at a fireside grave to cause the killer's shadow to come to the grave. An informant explained "Without his shadow he starts to get hot and sick and has to go down to the river all the time - every fifteen minutes - to wash and cool himself. If he is working and he hits himself or scratches himself, his arm or leg or part of his body will become sore and stiff. Then he begins to go mad. People watch for anyone who acts like this. When someone does, they accuse him. At first he will deny it but they have a big meeting to decide. If they decide he is guilty no one is allowed to talk to him". Since then sorcery appears to have become even more important. A February 1975 letter on Government files from Angurugu Aborigines complains that "people are putting a hex or spell on the shops, vehicles and anything ... People are putting a curse on sacred corroboree madayin." In 1977, hexes or curses were made by people when drunk calling out the name of a dead man, and were placed on the shop or on the water supply. "Nearly every week or month" they disrupted life at Angurugu and, less frequently, Umbakumba.

This chapter has discussed the reinvigoration of major religious ceremonies in the Groote Eylandt area since 1969, and through totemism traced how the vocabularies of the ceremonies affirm attachments to particular localities and the land.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This thesis has been principally concerned with two questions: What are the main elements of an emerging "Aboriginal" identity on Groote Eylandt? Can social and cultural elements of a traditional hunter-gatherer formation continue indefinitely in a different economy? Ethnographic sources on Groote Eylandt between 1921 and 1969 were used, and supplemented by Government records, other information of recent developments, and by field visits undertaken in 1977.

Predictions and hypotheses in the literature about social change are generated from broad assumptions about the nature of society. One explicit assumption is that the ideal patterns of the present were actually practised at some point in the past. Field workers observed that ideal and actual diverged, and attributed this, often incorrectly, to historical degradation. Their explanation is consistent with a functionalist approach which assumes that a system of social reproduction - or the remnants of it - is determined by ideology, or economy, or social relations. The Australian anthropologists who have operated within such a

paradigm followed similar emphases in British anthropology. The stress British social anthropology placed on solidarity rather than conflict as a primary field of study was consistent with a Durkheimian tradition filtered by Radcliffe-Brown (cf. Firth 1975:33). In Australia, the hunter-gatherer economy was in conflict with the intruder society and its industries. The logic of the first society appeared to contradict the logic of the second. Instead, however, of studying these contradictions and their effects, the anthropological literature on Aborigines, with some notable exceptions (Barwick, Beckett, Reay, Sansom) has avoided studying not only the contradictory forces but also those people of Aboriginal descent most affected by them. That a distinctive culture and society of a group who identify as "tribal Aborigines" continue to exist and thrive on Groote Eylandt suggests the need for a method that acknowledges contradictions and confronts notions of economic determinism.

#### The Dialectic

Althusser (1977) attempts to resolve the problem of determinism by his notion of "overdetermination", which proposes that contradictions at economic, political and ideological levels constitute the dominant structure of any given social and economic formation. Firth (1975:50) recognises two different orders of

contradiction of primary interest to anthropologists. "One is the assumption of a principle of intrinsic contradiction in the nature of phenomena, leading to inevitable change; the other is an assumption of the possibility of contradiction in the set of ideas by which the phenomena are envisaged."

The notion of dialectic has been associated with both types of contradiction. Hegelian dialectics adopted a metaphor from a method of Greek philosophical practice for the resolution of contradictions between thesis and antithesis by the movement of an Absolute Spirit, that had historical manifestations. In Marx's thought however the dialectic is a method of analysing the relations within a social and economic formation, and specifically the contradictions between the productive forces and the relations of production (cf. Althusser and Balibar 1972:203) which through class struggle result in revolution.

There are other traditions that use the term dialectic. Berger and Luckman (1976:78), influenced by Weber, use the term in the sense of reciprocal causation between entities they identify as the individual, society and culture. If one leaves aside the proposition that contradictions are resolved through revolution and class struggle, as is done here, the first aspect of dialectic that Firth identifies (intrinsic contradiction in the nature of phenomena) implies the second (contradiction in the



set of ideas by which the phenomena are envisaged). Given that the present society and culture of Aborigines on Groote Eylandt may contradict, may be "saying the opposite" of the economy in which they are situated, there follows a conflict between thought and actions. But there is no need to assume that traditional Aboriginal life was also free of contradictions. For Levi-Strauss the meaning people attach to their acts is never the right one; superstructures are faulty acts which have been "successful" (1955:44; 1966:254). The adoption of this use of the term dialectic, with its dual reference to the individual and society, suggests a method of analysing chestnut-problems on the literature, such as those to do with kinship. It also assists reflection on the contemporary role of elements identified as "traditionally" Aboriginal.

In popular and even academic literature there have been confident assumptions and even predictions made about the future of Australian Aborigines. A less certain approach towards their future, or even their present situation, acknowledges the dialectical nature of reality, and the importance of history and human choices. The present circumstances of the people who now identify as "Groote Eylandt Aborigines" is a conjuncture of the regional influences of other Aboriginal groups as well as the influences of Europeans and European institutions, locally when promoting mission, government and mining interests, and

nationally through the special place of Aborigines in a national Australian ideology. The results of these influences are by no means homogeneous. Their importance can be documented for Groote Eylandt, and it is suspected that other areas of Australian anthropology could benefit from reanalysis in a wider frame of reference that takes account of direct and indirect effects of European society. For instance the effects of seasonal participation in the pastoral industry could be explored for the Aborigines studied by Kaberry (1948) and Meggitt (1962).

#### Elements of the New Identity

The contemporary identity Aborigines are fabricating in this context draws on the use of their traditional languages, and also three particular historical inheritances - the institutions of clans, kinship and religion. The new "Aboriginal" identity is self-consciously asserted before a wider Australian audience and repudiates the assumption that social and cultural change is unidirectional and will inevitably involve Aborigines' conceptions and actions becoming indistinguishable from the white population. An analysis of the elements of the new Aboriginality suggests the criteria for their selection, made consciously or unconsciously, into the contemporary formation.

For instance, it appears that the structure of Groote Eylandt clans has been consistent despite other significant changes over time. Before European settlement the dominant causes for modifications to clan organization appear to have been demographic and ecological. The mission settlement may have indirectly encouraged the movement of Bickerton Island and mainland clans to Groote Eylandt even before Aborigines lived permanently at the mission. After Aborigines began living at the settlements clans linked by mythology and resident at the same settlement have merged after decreasing in numbers, and parts of the one clan residing at different settlements and increasing in size have separated. More recently Aborigines have allocated the expenditure of mining royalties on a clan basis. The importance Groote Eylandt Aborigines continue to place on clans simultaneously provides a method of arranging their affairs and of affirming traditional allegiances that are intricately woven into claims of land ownership. Clan alignment is basic to the system of kin classification. Clan allegiance simultaneously affirms Aboriginal traditions and rights in land and provides a method of distributing capital from foreign and non-traditional operations on the land. Instead of becoming more like Europeans and thereby foregoing claims to compensation, Aborigines to this extent affirm their distinctiveness and commitment to their religion and land

ownership. The idiom of traditionality, used in the political argument for Aboriginal land rights, feeds back on a stimulus system for manifestations of a new Aboriginality.

Similarly kinship does not reveal a pristine regularity which has become successively contaminated by the dominant new society. Comparison of Warner's kin terms collected in 1929, with later collections, suggests some new terms were introduced by 1952, 1969 and 1977. Four terms were introduced from the mainland between 1929 and 1940, perhaps by the migrating clans. Componential analysis seems to suggest, however, a regularity of basic distinctions over a fifty year period, and to that extent a consistent model of kin classification which articulates marriage possibilities and impossibilities between the different clans.

Of particular interest to anthropologists has been the degree of regularity between marriages and those prescribed in the model they identified. To some extent this depends on one's concept of model. Analysis of later marriage regularity, measured against Rose's extensive information on kin classifications collected in 1941, when many Aborigines were still living in the bush, makes unlikely Turner's hypothesis that ideal patterns "were actually practised at some point in the past". On the basis of the available information, frequency of marriage with

MMBDD/second cousin changed from 36% in 1941, to 29% in 1953, to 38% in 1969. (See chapter 4). Notes in the literature suggest an alternative explanation to Turner's. The model always has a dialectical relationship to reality, never a deterministic one. With the exception of the principle of moiety exogamy, kinship classifications were constantly manipulated to take account of demographic variability and men's desire to gain wives. Data available elsewhere in Australia confirms the alternative hypothesis. Information on three examples of Aranda systems suggests that marriage prescribed by the model (MMBDD/second cousin) occurs in 29-38% of marriages, with the alternative of MBD/first cousin marriage occurring in 11-42% of cases in the same three examples. A complete lack of correlation would seem as unlikely as complete regularity. The model has some relationship to reality, but to expect complete correlation ignores the footnotes of the Groote Eylandt ethnography which describes how well individuals innovate and manipulate. On Groote Eylandt over a thirty year period, there appears to have been the same order of consistency as other Aranda systems.

Religious life perhaps is the strongest instance of the Groote Eylandt Aborigines "rejection of history" (Levi-Strauss 1977:319). Like kinship and clan allegiance, aspects of Groote religion make better sense when considered as part of a regional system. The

major ceremony of Groote Eylandt was evident in 1921, but like some of the clans, and kin terms, may also have been introduced from the mainland. A continuing, and perhaps strengthened exclusiveness has meant that reflection on the cognitive and existential aspects of the religion is tentative. On the other hand the sources document that participation in ceremonies was frustrated by European settlement but continued, at least sporadically, until 1969. Since then access to mineral royalties has meant income to spend towards ceremonies on Groote Eylandt and the adjacent mainland, and to fly in Aborigines from the region to participate in them. Despite mission concern expressed in 1971 about increases in ceremonies and the resulting increases in expenditure on charters and fares, ceremonial life has expanded. Like clan allegiance, the ceremonies have new implications. Affirmation of ties to land and distinctiveness as Aborigines in a negotiable national context.

#### Relations between the Economy and Social and Ideological Structures

Despite a transformation of the economic sub-system the effects on the culture and society of "the Aborigines" have not been as predicted. Is there any simple relationship between the economy and social and ideological structures? Changes resulting from European incursion have been of peripheral interest to much of Australian anthropology. When the contemporary

situation of Aborigines is not ignored altogether, there often seems to be the assumption that Aboriginal culture and society contradict the logic of the new order and are thereby destined for extinction, just as thirty years ago it was popularly believed that the Aboriginal genotype was doomed. Conversely some of the literature on Aborigines would seem to assume that an Aboriginal culture may operate with no connections at all to changed economic circumstances and therefore may continue indefinitely.

An historical model of Aboriginal participation in the economy of the European intruders would identify diverse situations. Different industries offered Aborigines different parameters of participation. In the pastoral industry, the labour of Aborigines and their local knowledge was useful. In small scale intensive farming the conflict of interest was absolute. No accommodation was possible, unless Aborigines were provided with capital and expertise, as were the New Zealand Maoris through Government schemes developed after the 1930s. The mining industry has used Aboriginal labour in the initial prospecting stages, but because modern mining operations are capital intensive, labour needs are limited. The Aborigines' key to wealth is the terms made for dispossession of their traditional territories rather than the wages from labouring on the mining operations.

Different popular theodicies and Government policies have evolved to justify historical situations or attempt to change them. Social Darwinism was invoked after the genocide of Tasmanian Aborigines last century, assimilationist policies when there seemed scope for involving Aborigines in an urban wage-labour economy. Paternalist policies of gathering or relocating Aborigines on settlements, presented as "training institutions" in official rhetoric, and paid for by a church or public welfare vote, often followed private appropriation of Aboriginal lands by pastoralists and farmers. Absence of viable modern industry in a given area, as was the case for much of Groote Eylandt's history, has coincided with protectionist policies which combine humanitarian principles of protecting Aborigines from abuse by Europeans, with the benefit to the European society of protecting itself from demands made upon it, such as access to national social service payments or demands for land. There are obviously several possible interactions between ideological and economic levels. For instance missions often attempted agricultural and other enterprises, though established under a protectionist charter, in an attempt to make their institutions self-supporting. Two points seem clear. There may be some connection between an economic structure and social and ideological structures but there is no obvious relationship between the culture and society of many Aborigines, that remains distinctive and a valid object of study, and the different economic circumstances they have passed through.



In contemporary Australia there are probably no Aborigines living exclusively as hunters and gatherers and unaffected by the majority society. Many Aborigines live at settlements and are hunters and gatherers principally during the weekends. However the extent to which their traditions remain alive varies, from Aborigines in Arnhem Land using some modern technology to derive most of their food resources from the bush, to people of part Aboriginal descent in settlements in southern Australia who nevertheless have a greater affinity and skill than white Australians for hunting what may be native fauna and introduced species. For instance, even Sydney Aborigines may spend four weeks each year collecting oysters on the south coast. Possibly when Aborigines terminate all of their hunting and gathering connections they may cease to exist but this is unlikely in the foreseeable future.

#### Ethnicity and Change

Cohen's (1969) material on the Hausa traders of Western Nigeria is instructive. There are obvious differences between the contemporary political processes through which Aborigines and Hausa assert their separate identities. The Hausa have protected their own ecological niche of franchised trading operations; Groote Eylandt Aborigines are exploiting not only a separate ecological niche of subsistence hunting and fishing but have also negotiated a new status within the majority society

and obtain some royalties from mining operations. Nevertheless Cohen points to two processes that are relevant in Australia: increasing separatism and increasing homogenization.

"Contemporary ethnicity is the result of intensive interaction between ethnic groupings and not the result of complete separatism ... tribalism involves a dynamic rearrangement of relations and customs, and is not the outcome of cultural conservatism or continuity" (1969:198-199). Secondly, "interaction within the group will therefore lead to the maintenance or revival of group customs ... An ethnic grouping which is engaged in a struggle with another ethnic grouping will, in the course of the struggle, go through a process of social and cultural homogenization among its members" (203-204).

In the Australian context "Aborigines" occupy an ambivalent position in national ideology. Although all people of Aboriginal descent comprise less than two per cent of the total Australian population, Aboriginal issues continue to make newspaper headlines, almost daily. Previous chapters have noted that increased Government funding of Aboriginal Affairs in the late 1960s coincided with the development of mining operations on Aboriginal reserves in north Australia. Possible ideological benefits to the Government or State apparatus from subsidising the development of an Aboriginal identity were

mentioned. The obvious benefits appeared to be few. It is possible recognizing ethnic differences may obfuscate class differences. A much stronger impetus comes from the anomalous position of Aborigines in the context of Australian cultural values. It is not proposed to give a total account of these but to indicated one tendency that bears on the argument here. Critics of Australian society would say that conformism and mediocrity are important cultural forces. Egalitarianism is certainly consistently propounded and perhaps made all the more necessary because there are great differences of wealth and power within Australian society, differences that have been apparent since England established a colony of convicts here in the eighteenth century. "Mateship", "cutting down tall poppies" or anyone who "steps out of line" are values widely held to in white Australian society. One possible motive for the "special treatment" of "Aborigines" is that they so obviously do not conform to white Australian patterns of behaviour and conceptualization, and the universalism and naturalness of these patterns are held to very dearly indeed by the Australian electorate.

In this context Groote Eylandt Aborigines have displayed both innovation and conservatism. Consumer goods, sporadic participation in wage labour, and a cash economy have been eagerly adopted, but each of these items does not challenge traditional

ties to land. The major economic enterprise they confront is the mining industry, which is capital intensive and therefore has limited labour requirements. Most discretionary wealth for Aborigines is from the financial returns from dispossession of traditional lands. Current debate on compensation is argued with reference to the degree of dependence on hunting and gathering and traditional livelihoods (Comalco 1978). Because of the idiom of the argument for Aboriginal land rights, the degree of integration with a wage labour economy and white Australian culture is inversely proportional to the strength of claims for compensation based on dispossession of traditional livelihood. Land as the emotional and spiritual cynosure for Aborigines is now invested with the possibility of financial returns that gather the new fruits of company dividends.

The impetus to identification as Groote Eylandt Aborigines does not therefore represent a return to the past. Consciously selected or not, the identity seems to consist principally of those elements of their traditional culture that reinforce orientations to land - clan allegiance; an elementary system of kin classification generated from a model of alliance between clan groups; and religious ceremonies that are resonant with the celebration of rights in countries and recount the creation of countries by the travels of dreamtime ancestors. The institutions of kinship, clan allegiance and religion

separately comprise statements of the rights of particular clans to particular "countries" or estates (Stanner 1965b). Together these traditional representations and social practices comprise a Groote Eylandt Aboriginal identity that articulates the rights to land of "tribal Aborigines".

The move back to the land has continued for some years in Arnhem Land, and has begun at Groote Eylandt with assistance from mining royalties. Concessional income from mineral exploitation by the capitalist sector allows Aborigines to practice subsistence hunting and fishing. The modern social and economic formation in fact has provided a stimulus to traditional hunter-gatherer elements. The moves in any chess game are not predictable, but the rules are known. Two rules in this game can be established. There is no logical or empirical reason preventing "hunter-gatherer" elements continuing to develop dynamically in the present formation. Finally there are active forces supporting Aborigines who continue to maintain and develop patterns of thought and behaviour distinctive from other Australians, because a new Aboriginal identity articulates traditional representations and social practices to successfully argue rights to land. The retention and new expression of these rights are an impressive new "triumph of the nomads."

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