



KEYWORDS: *Ethnography – Patterning – Gulf of Carpentaria – Interpretation – Yanyuwa*

IMAGES OF RELATEDNESS: PATTERNING AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS IN YANYUWA ROCK ART, SIR EDWARD PELLEW ISLANDS, SW GULF OF CARPENTARIA, NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

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Abstract. In 2010 the first collaborative rock art recording project was initiated in the Sir Edward Pellew Islands in northern Australia's Gulf Country. A total of twenty-two sites containing 408 images were recorded from three islands (South West, Black Craggy and Watson) and analysed using formal and informed methods. Preliminary analyses reveal some geographical patterning occurring at the site level and at the individual motif level. Whilst these archaeologically-observed patterns highlight the distribution of rock art across Yanyuwa island country, Yanyuwa interpretations and statements concerning one distinctive motif and two small-scale patterns provide crucial insights into how they understand the place of rock art on their country. By focusing on motifs as 'images of relatedness' that are embedded in a network of relationships that are the basis of Yanyuwa Law and kinship, this paper examines the complexities associated with how archaeologists might interpret patterning in the rock art record. We argue that rock art motifs are not a static representation of something but instead are important images that continue to express and generate concepts of relatedness and which ultimately lead to discussions of a non-human-centred landscape that is premised on attributions of intentionality, obligation, responsibility and reciprocity.

Introduction

Northern Australia is home to some of the most well-known and recognised rock art regions in the world (e.g. the Kimberley, Kakadu National Park/western Arnhem Land, southeast Cape York Peninsula, and the Torres Strait islands). Over the last several decades this area has produced a wealth of archaeological and ethnographic information about rock art including the establishment of regional chronological frameworks (e.g. Chaloupka 1993; Cole et al. 1995; Chippindale and Taçon 1998; David and Chant 1995), rock art regionalisation (e.g. David and Lourandos 1998; Taçon 1993), identification and symbolism of specific motifs (e.g. Arndt 1962; Crawford 1968; Mulvaney 1992; Taçon 1989), links between myths, motifs and landscape (Capell 1972; Elkin 1952: 249; Flood 2004: 189–191), and more recently the discovery of the oldest dated pigment art on the continent (David et al. 2013). However, there are many other rock art regions across northern Australia that have yet to form the focus of in-depth investigation. One of these is the southwest Gulf of Carpentaria region located on the vast low-lying Carpentaria plain stretching from the Northern Territory/Queensland border in the east to the Roper River in the west (Fig. 1). As the first major paper to focus on the rich rock art record from this area, we present the preliminary results from the systematic recording and analysis of

motifs and sites from a collaborative project involving the Yanyuwa Aboriginal community.

The Yanyuwa Rock Art Project (YRAP) had its origins in a 2005 conversation involving anthropologists John Bradley and Amanda Kearney, Yanyuwa *ngimirringki* (the 'owners' of specific areas of land and sea and their associated Dreamings¹) and *jungkayi* (the 'guardians' or 'bosses' for country and associated Dreamings; responsible for looking after the country and its sacred places)², and the *li-Anthawirriyarra* Sea Rangers — an organisation responsible for natural and cultural resource management in Yanyuwa country. The conversation concerned the Yanyuwa's desire to have the rock art sites from their traditional sea

1 The 'Dreaming' or 'Dreamtime' is a time of world creation, before humans existed on earth where Ancestral Beings or Spirit Beings shaped and named the land, sea and waterways as well as transformed parts of their bodies and knowledge into landscape features, natural phenomena etc. Ancestral/Spirit Beings (also known colloquially as Dreamings) could take many forms (e.g. animals, natural phenomena, plants) and instituted a body of moral, jural and social laws by which humans were to live by. For a critique of the term 'Dreaming' see Wolfe (1991).

2 People can be *ngimirringki* for one area of country and *jungkayi* for another (see Bradley 1997, 2010; Bradley and Yanyuwa Families 2007 for further details).

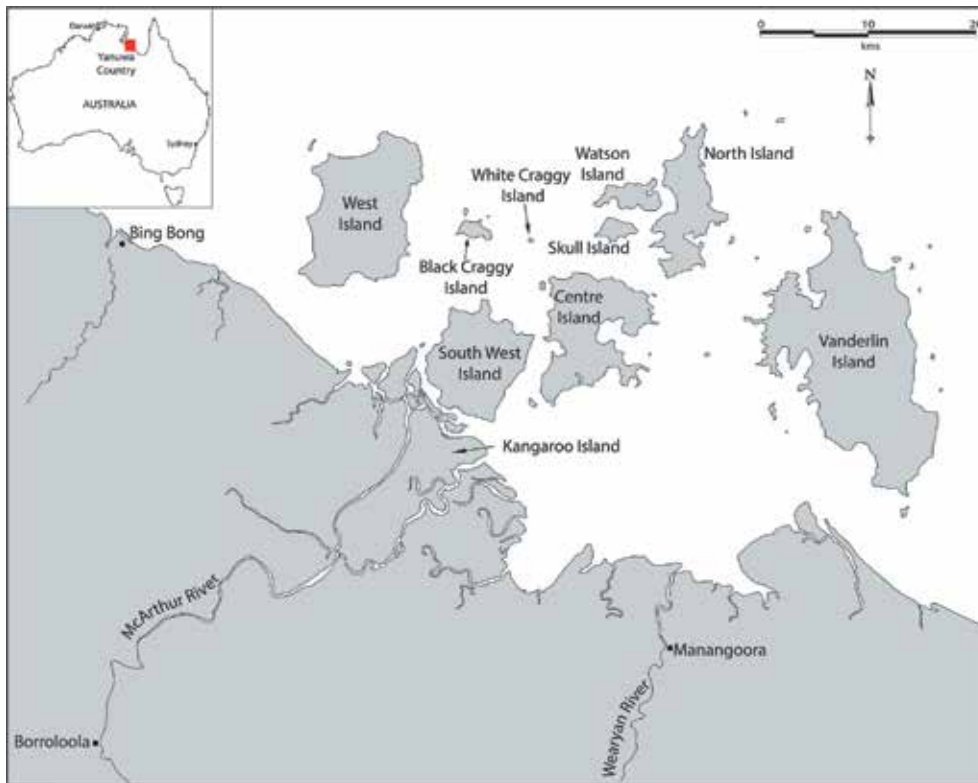


Figure 1. Map of the Sir Edward Pellew Islands, southwest Gulf of Carpentaria, northern Australia.

country — the Sir Edward Pellew Islands — properly recorded and to have that knowledge (archaeological and ethnographic) available to the broader Yanyuwa community. In addition, concerns regarding the deterioration of known rock art sites on several islands and the Yanyuwa's desire to learn more about the nature of these places using archaeological techniques (e.g. antiquity of the art and occupation of the rockshelters where the art is found) resulted in the need for a comprehensive, community-driven partnership recording project to be developed (see e.g. Brady 2009; David et al. 2004 for similar examples of collaborative rock art recording projects). In this paper the results from the first recording season (2010) of the YRAP (at South West Island, Black Craggy Island, Watson Island) are presented and analysed using a combination of formal and informed methods (Taçon and Chippindale 1998). First, a stylistic analysis is undertaken to search for motif variability and landscape patterning in the three islands surveyed; and secondly, the cultural contexts of Yanyuwa interpretations and statements concerning one distinctive motif and two small-scale patterns observed are examined to better understand how Yanyuwa people understand the place of rock art on their country (see e.g. Layton 1985; Merlan 1989 for similar approaches) (we use the words 'cultural' and 'cultural context' in their broadest possible sense as people's activities in their environment and the way they interpret their place in that environment; for Yanyuwa people rock art is seen as Law embedded in complex social relationships). By focusing on motifs as 'images

of relatedness' (Bradley and Yanyuwa Families 2007) that are embedded in epistemological understandings of rock art, this paper contributes valuable insights in the complexities associated with how archaeologists might interpret patterning in the rock art record.

The Southwest Gulf of Carpentaria region

At the time of first contact with Europeans there were six language groups in the SW Gulf of Carpentaria region (Yanyuwa, Garrwa, Gudanji, Marra, Binbingka and Wilangarra) (Bradley 1997). However, frontier violence severely disrupted settlement patterns and led to the massacre and extinction

of the Binbingka and Wilangarra by the early 1900s (Roberts 2005). For the most part, Yanyuwa escaped the brutal frontier violence occurring in the region and remained in the Pellew Islands until the 1950s when government welfare policies forced people to settle permanently in the remote township of Borroloola, located approximately 60 km inland from the islands on the McArthur River (Baker 1999). Despite these disruptions, detailed genealogical research carried out as part of land claims (e.g. Avery and McLaughlin 1977; Bradley 1992; Kumarage and Stead 1997; Trigger 1982) has demonstrated that there have been intimate, long-term kinship (see below for details of the semi-moiety or clan system that is found among the different language groups), ceremonial and trade relationships between each of these groups. In addition many Ancestral Dreaming paths travelling from Garrwa and Marra country into Yanyuwa country and beyond further emphasise connectedness between groups (see Yanyuwa Families et al. 2003 for further details of the extensive connections between language groups in the study region).

Yanyuwa Country and identity

Yanyuwa traditional territory is defined as consisting of the delta region of the McArthur River and the saltwater limits of the McArthur and Wearyan rivers along with the Sir Edward Pellew Islands (Fig. 1). Following the massacre of the Binbingka and Wilangarra people a territorial realignment occurred whereby the Yanyuwa and Garrwa took responsibility for the land

once occupied by these people; such processes would already have been partly established through marriage and past ceremonial alliances with these groups (Bradley 1997).

Archaeological research in Yanyuwa country is limited to the work of Richard Baker (1984) in the early 1980s which focused on identifying Macassan sites on the islands and more recently the work of Robin Sim (1999, 2002; Sim and Wallis 2008) and her extensive excavation program on Vanderlin Island and Centre Island. Sim and Wallis' (2008) work provides the most detailed information

about occupation patterns through identification of several phases of occupation and abandonment on Vanderlin Island beginning pre-6700 BP up to modern times (see Sim and Wallis 2008: 102–103).

The Yanyuwa have been the focus of anthropological study for several decades. Beginning with Spencer and Gillen's (1904, 1912) brief visit to Borroloola in 1901 researchers have focused on a range of topics including kinship (e.g. Avery 1985; Reay 1962; Kirton and Timothy 1977; Bradley 1997), linguistics (e.g. Bradley 1988b; Kirton 1971, 1988; Kirton and Timothy 1982), music (Bradley 2010; Bradley and Mackinlay 2000, 2007; Mackinlay and Bradley 2003) and people's relationships to country (e.g. Bradley 2001, 1998; Bradley and Kearney 2009; Kearney 2009). Despite this in-depth anthropological research into Yanyuwa lifeways, knowledge about their artistic traditions (including rock art, see below) is, comparatively speaking, fairly limited.

Yanyuwa identity is intricately bound to their relationship with the sea; they describe themselves as *li-Anthawirrayarra* which means 'those people whose spiritual and cultural origins are from the sea' and abbreviated to 'people of the sea' (Bradley 1997, 1998). Their maritime identity is reflected in many ways including subsistence practices (expert dugong and turtle hunters), cosmology and technology (see e.g. Bradley 1997, 1998). The Yanyuwa are based around two unnamed patri-moieties which are then sub-divided into a semi-moiety (clan) system which organises people, plants, animals and various phenomena (e.g. rain, lightning, wind, fire) into four named clan groups:

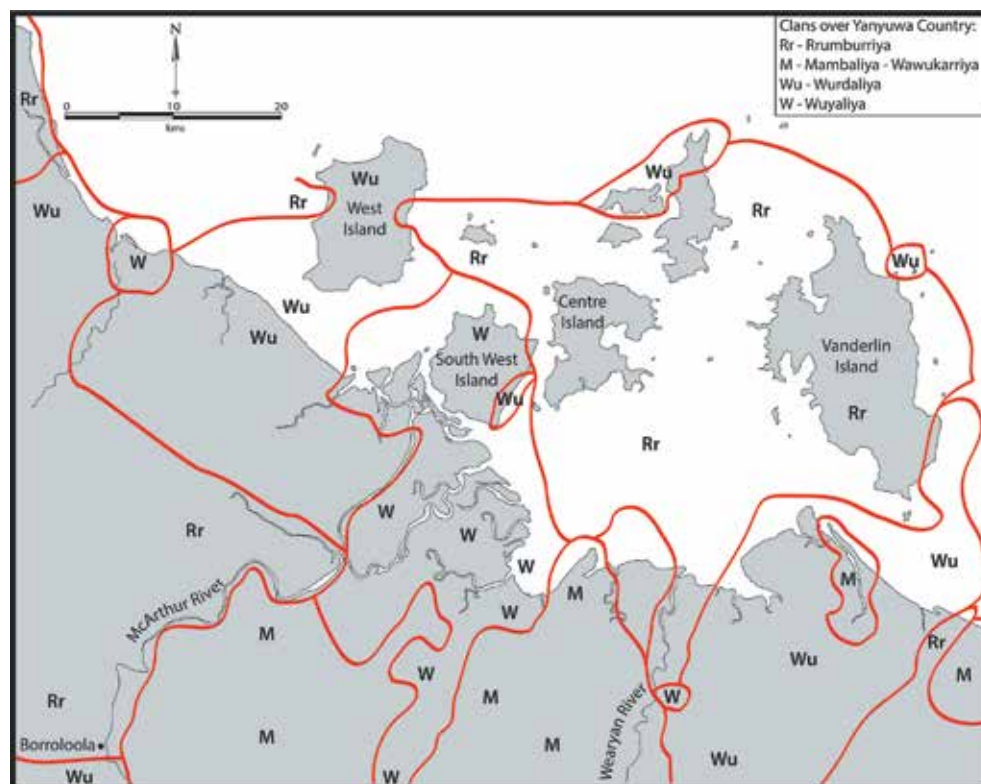


Figure 2. Map showing the distribution of the four clans over Yanyuwa country (re-drawn from Yanyuwa Families et al. 2003, original by Nona Cameron).

Mambaliya-Wawukarriya, Rrumburriya, Wurdaliya and Wuyaliya (Bradley 1997) (Fig. 2).

Previous rock art research in Yanyuwa Country

Accounts of Yanyuwa rock art first appeared in the mid-1960s when anthropologist Marie Reay (1965: 223), writing about rock art from the Finke Caves in Gudanji country, noted '[p]erhaps the most distinctive rock art of the area surrounding Borroloola is that of Vanderlin Island ... I have recorded and photographed what I believe to be most but not all of the rock art on Vanderlin Island and shall be reporting these, with interpretations, as soon as time permits'. Unfortunately no publications eventuated from her work³.

In the mid-1970s, geologist Dehne McLaughlin undertook site recording on the Pellets and the mainland around Borroloola in advance of the 1976 *Land Rights Act (NT)*. He visited a number of sites including some from South West Island and Black Craggy Island identifying individual sites and locales containing rock art (McLaughlin 1975). In some instances he obtained interpretations of specific motifs from Traditional Owners (see below) while his correspondence with anthropologists reveals rock art was still being produced near Borroloola in 1975 (see Layton 1992: 25) and some imagery near Borroloola was known to have a 'sorcery attachment' (Mulvaney 1992: 216; see

³ It is interesting to note that a search conducted by the authors of her archived fieldnotes and journals in June 2013 at the Australian National University failed to reveal any information about Vanderlin Island's rock art.

also below).

By far the most detailed ethnographic data available on Yanyuwa rock art comes from John Bradley's three decades of anthropological research in the region. Over this time he has visited many previously undocumented inland and island rock art sites with *ngimirringki* and *jungkayi* and recorded, among other things, Yanyuwa identification and symbolism of specific motifs (e.g. bark canoes, marine zoomorphs, plant motifs), and the relationship between sites, motifs and Yanyuwa cosmology (1988a, 1991, 1997). Perhaps most significant (and crucial for this paper) is Bradley's recording of Yanyuwa perceptions of their rock art (see below for further details).

In addition to Sim's survey and excavation program rock art sites were recorded by Ken Mulvaney and Chris Crassweller on Vanderlin and Centre Islands (Sim and Wallis 2008: 96). Whilst the results of these have not yet been reported, some details of the rock art sites are available through Sim's published and unpublished papers. Based on Sim's (1999, 2002) reports outlining her survey and excavation results from 1999 and 2000, a total of eighteen rock art sites were recorded. She identified a range of production techniques (paintings, prints, stencils; petroglyphs appear to be absent) and colours (red, yellow, white) as well as cursory descriptions of motifs (e.g. 'hands, tally marks, boomerangs, grill type patterns, bird tracks, anthropomorphs, headdresses, birds, turtles, dugongs, non-figurative and abstract' designs). Some speculation about possible Macassan motifs was also made (e.g. a possible Indonesian 'prau' and 'sword') although Bradley's ethnographic data is particularly useful here in providing Yanyuwa insights into one of these so-called Macassan motifs. At Barbara Cove on the west coast of Vanderlin Island Sim and her team (2002: 6) recorded a motif they interpreted as 'a sailing boat with strong similarities to a Macassan prau'. This same shelter, called Yungkurriji in Yanyuwa, was visited in 1984 by Bradley along with two senior Yanyuwa men, Johnson Timothy and Steve Johnston, who informed Bradley these motifs represented bark canoes (see also Bradley 1991: 86, 95, 1997: 287-8). Bark canoes were the main source of transport for the Yanyuwa prior to the introduction of dugout canoes by Macassan trepangers (Bradley 1997: 286). Of the 12 sites Sim excavated, six contained rock art; no ochre appears to have been recovered in the deposits from any of the art sites. However, Sim does reveal one obvious pattern in the art from Vanderlin. She notes that rock art sites are confined primarily to the island's west coast where there is a predominance of rockshelters (Sim 2002: 13).

These studies reveal that, with the exception of Mulvaney and Crassweller's recordings, rock art from the islands has been yet to form the focus of any major systematic recording and research projects. Bradley's work reveals that there is significant ethnographic data available about motifs and sites, while the data collected from Sim's team suggests that a large number of rock

art sites exist on the islands. Although there is currently a lack of information about the antiquity of the art, its setting in a harsh coastal climate would suggest a relatively recent age⁴.

Yanyuwa perceptions of rock art

Contemporary Yanyuwa perceptions of their rock art are multivocal. Bradley's work reveals that Yanyuwa locate most, if not all, rock art in the spiritual realm. Images are considered the work of human and non-human ancestors; in a Yanyuwa context this means human ancestors, spiritual entities that inhabit the landscape and Ancestral Beings (or Dreamings) (see e.g. Bradley 1988a: 51; 1991; 1997:180, 185; Yanyuwa Families et al. 2003: 121). Yanyuwa considerations of rock art also go beyond identification of specific motifs. In some cases the state or preservation of motifs forms part of the broader relationship between the spirits and well-ness of country. For example Bradley (1997: 180-1) has noted that:

People have told me that this art work will change, and that images will be touched up by these spirits of deceased kin. When art work is seen to be fading, or the stone is flaking away with an image on it, it is said that this loss is due to the spirits being sad. They are sad that nobody is using the country or that all the senior people associated with the country have died and the subsequent generations of people have not bothered to visit the country.

Recording Yanyuwa rock art

Outcrops of Lower Proterozoic sandstone are scattered across the Pellew Islands (Smith 1963) and it is here that rock art sites are located. A total of twenty-two sites were recorded from the sandstone shelters from the three islands surveyed: twelve from South West Island, eight from Black Craggy Island, and two from Watson Island⁵. Research began by targeting specific islands and locales where rock art sites were known by the community; these site visits were followed by surveys of the surrounding areas. The researchers travelled to the sites with the appropriate *jungkayi* and *ngimirringki* to ensure all cultural protocols were followed when visiting. Recording and classifying motifs was undertaken at two levels: in the first instance information about specific motif identifications was collected from *ngimirringki* or *jungkayi* present and supplemented by information collected by Bradley from senior Yanyuwa men or women during his extensive fieldwork (e.g. species or Ancestral Being depicted). Where images remained unidentified by

4 A rock art dating program using direct dating and excavations is targeted for 2014.

5 On a day-to-day basis locations on islands are known by site name localities. Whilst there are names that encompass a whole island (e.g. Warnarrwarnarr = South West Island) or a group of islands (e.g. Barranyi = Black Craggy Island, White Craggy Island, Skull Island, Watson Island, North Island, Centre Island) these are rarely used by Yanyuwa.

Yanyuwa they were given a classification by the authors based on their formal attributes. These etic designations are referred to in-text using inverted commas (e.g. 'straight line') while Yanyuwa identifications do not feature inverted commas (e.g. hands, stingray). Following classification, all recorded motifs were integrated into a four-level hierarchical classification scheme (Table 1) as a means to investigating stylistic variability in the assemblages. The hierarchical structure is archaeological in nature and integrates both Yanyuwa and formal archaeological motif classifications. During recording, each site was inspected to record any trace of pigment to ensure all images were recorded, even those that were too deteriorated and indistinct to be seen by the naked eye. All images were then subjected to computer enhancement using Adobe Photoshop (see e.g. Brady 2006, 2010; David et al. 2001) to search for 'hidden' images or clarify some of the more intricate design elements.

Black Craggy Island

Black Craggy Island is a small island (4 km × 2 km) featuring tall sandstone rock stacks on the elevated eastern end of the island, and smaller low sandstone shelters extending in an east-west direction on the southern coast (Fig. 3). A relatively flat plain runs through the middle of the island. The island is Rrumburriya clan country and is also associated with a number of important Dreaming stories including the Dugong Hunters (*li-Maramaranja*) and Island Fly (*a-Miyimiyi*) (see Yanyuwa Families et al. 2003 for further details). Yanyuwa elders have noted that the rock art on the eastern end of the island is associated with the activities of the Dugong Hunter Dreaming (see below). The only known references to rock art from the island comes from McLaughlin (1975) who noted several 'minor' rock art sites at 'Djimimila (I) (Jimiyimiyila)' and stated that 'faded red ochre motifs are present on the roof and walls of the rock shelters'. While not having time to carry out a full survey of the area he identified some motifs as 'jabiru tracks, plus other faded motifs' and suggested that other sites would most likely be found in the area. The 2010 survey located rock art sites from two locales on the island: Limiyimiyila (McLaughlin's 'Djimimila' or 'Jimiyimiyila') and Rramiyimiyi.

Level	Classification
1	'Determinate' (where an image could be classified according to its formal attributes) or 'indeterminate' (an image that could not be formally identified because of damage, deterioration or fading)
2	'Figurative' (motifs with formal resemblance to objects, beings, and ceremonial designs) or 'non-figurative' ('abstract' figures) or 'tracks' ('zoomorphs' or 'anthropomorphs', including hands and feet)
3	'Group motif forms': 'figurative' – 'zoomorphs', 'material culture', 'anthropomorphs', plants, ceremonial designs, 'faces' 'non-figurative' – 'closed geometrics', 'open geometrics', 'linear non-figuratives', 'dot compilations', 'irregular shapes' 'tracks' – hands, bird, foot/feet, kangaroo
4	'Specific motif forms' 62 different forms – Yanyuwa identifications e.g. stingray, hammerhead shark, <i>yalkawarru</i> ; classification of all other motifs e.g. 'straight line', 'rectangle variant', 'V-shape variant'

Table 1. Yanyuwa rock art 4-level hierarchical classification scheme.

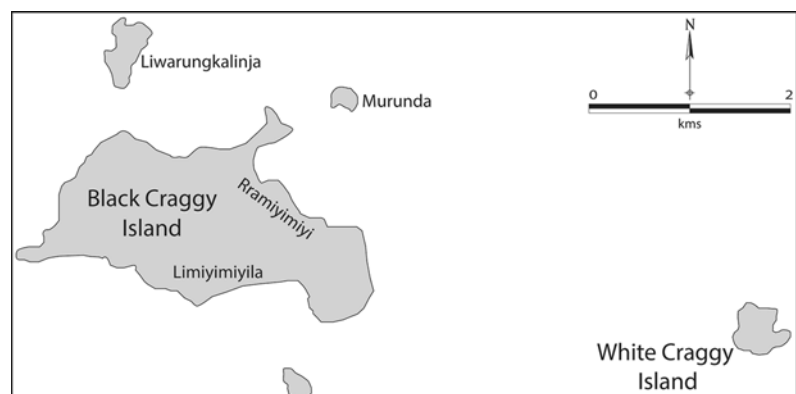


Figure 3. Map of Black Craggy Island showing named locations containing rock art sites (re-drawn from Yanyuwa Families et al. 2003, original by Nona Cameron).



Figure 4. Black Craggy Island: A – elevated eastern end of Limiyimiyila; B – view from eastern end of Limiyimiyila looking west.

Limiyimiyila

Five sites have been recorded at Limiyimiyila: four (Limiyimiyila 1 – Limiyimiyila 4) in the small shallow shelters located at the base of the tall sandstone rock stacks at the elevated eastern end of the island,

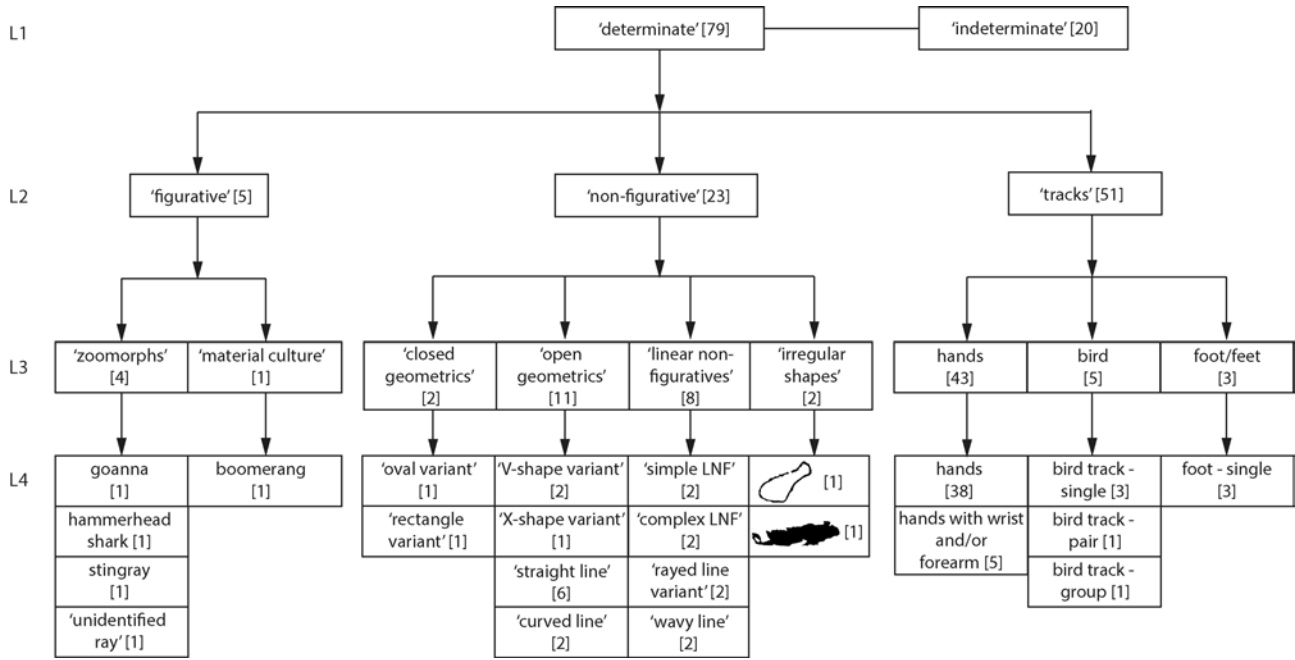


Figure 5. Black Craggy Island motif classificatory scheme.

Site	Painting	Print	Stencil	Total
Limiyimiyila 1	8		10	18
Limiyimiyila 2	4	6	9	19
Limiyimiyila 3			5	5
Limiyimiyila 4		2	4	6
Limiyimiyila 5	7			7
Rramiyimiyi 1	1		1	2
Rramiyimiyi 2			3	3
Rramiyimiyi 3	16		3	19
Total # of pictures	36	8	35	79
% of total	45.6%	10.1%	44.3%	100%

Table 2. Frequencies of rock art production techniques at Black Craggy Island.

and the fifth (Limiyimiyila 5) situated at the western end (Fig. 4).

Some significant differences in terms of site type and cultural materials are clearly evident between the eastern and western Limiyimiyila sites. Evidence of occupation is restricted to Limiyimiyila 5 where an extensive shell midden (*Saccostrea* sp., *Nerita* sp., *Anadara* sp., *Polymesoda* sp.), cooking stones, grinding stones, and a 1.2-m-long cypress pine log displaying cut marks from a stone axe was recorded. Furthermore, Limiyimiyila 5 is the largest and deepest of the five sites; by comparison, the sites from the eastern end of the island are very small and shallow, lack cultural materials (apart from the art), display considerable evidence of rock fall and do not appear suitable for habitation.

Rramiyimiyi

Three sites within a 50 m radius were recorded at

Site	Red	Yellow	White	Red + white	Total
Limiyimiyila 1	15	3			18
Limiyimiyila 2	16		3		19
Limiyimiyila 3	5				5
Limiyimiyila 4	6				6
Limiyimiyila 5	4	1		2	7
Rramiyimiyi 1	2				2
Rramiyimiyi 2	3				3
Rramiyimiyi 3	19				19
Total # of pictures	70	4	3	2	79
% of total	88.6%	5.1%	3.8%	2.5%	100%

Table 3. Colour frequencies of rock art at Black Craggy Island.

Rramiyimiyi — two located in large deep shelters at the base of tall sandstone rock stacks, and one in a tall, highly eroded and shallow sandstone stack. The two deep-shelter-based sites feature occupation debris consisting of shell material (*Anadara* sp., *Polymesoda* sp., *Nerita* sp., *Terebralia* sp., and other unidentified gastropods), cooking stones, burnt turtle bone, grindstones, and in one instance a paperbark bone bundle burial partially covered in sandstone dust on a small ledge at the back of the shelter.

Rock art

A total of 99 pictures (20 'indeterminate', 79 'determinate') were recorded from the eight sites (Fig. 5). The majority of images have either been painted (45.6%) or stencilled (44.3%) with only a small number printed (10.1%) (Table 2). Apart from two bichrome images (red infill with white border) all others have been depicted

using one of three colours: red, yellow or white (Table 3). Only one site displays superimpositions. At Limiyimiyila 1, clear, bright red bird tracks have been painted over a deteriorated yellow outlined 'irregular shape' (Fig. 6), while in a second instance a clearly visible red hand stencil has been superimposed over a deteriorated yellow hand stencil. The pattern observed here reveals pictures created using yellow pigment were produced first, followed by those with red ochre and secondly, some time lapse most likely occurred between the two painting episodes, given the differential weathering observed between red and yellow motifs.

Three level 2 categories were identified ('figurative', 'non-figurative', 'tracks') with 'track' motifs clearly dominating. Only two 'figurative' group motif forms were identified, 'zoomorphs' ($n=4$) and 'material culture' ($n=1$). Of the four 'zoomorphs', three come from Limiyimiyila 5, and the other from Rramiyimiyi 3. The Limiyimiyila 5 'zoomorphs' are all marine-based species (hammerhead shark [Fig. 7], stingray, 'unidentified ray') while the goanna from Rramiyimiyi 3 is terrestrial. In addition to being the only marine species, two of the Limiyimiyila 5 'zoomorphs' (hammerhead shark, 'unidentified ray') represent the lone bichrome images from the island. Four 'non-figurative' group motifs forms consisting of twenty-three images were identified. 'Open geometrics' and 'linear non-figuratives' are numerically dominant with 'straight lines' being the most frequently occurring level 4 motif. Rramiyimiyi 3 features one of the largest images from the island, a red outlined rectangle-shape with pinched ends and two crescent-shapes in the middle (Fig. 8). 'Track' motif forms are restricted to hands, bird tracks and foot/feet. One clear pattern to emerge from this island is the overwhelming dominance of hand stencils and prints at the elevated eastern end of Limiyimiyila (sites 1-4; 36 of 48 motifs [75%] are hands) (Fig. 9).

South West Island

South West Island is located approximately 10 km south of Black Craggy Island. Measuring 11 km × 12 km the island features a hilly interior with rocky sandstone outcrops scattered throughout (Fig. 10). The majority of the island is owned by the Wuyaliya clan, save a small section on the southeast side which is Wurdaliya country (this area was not surveyed as part of this project). Several important Dreaming stories

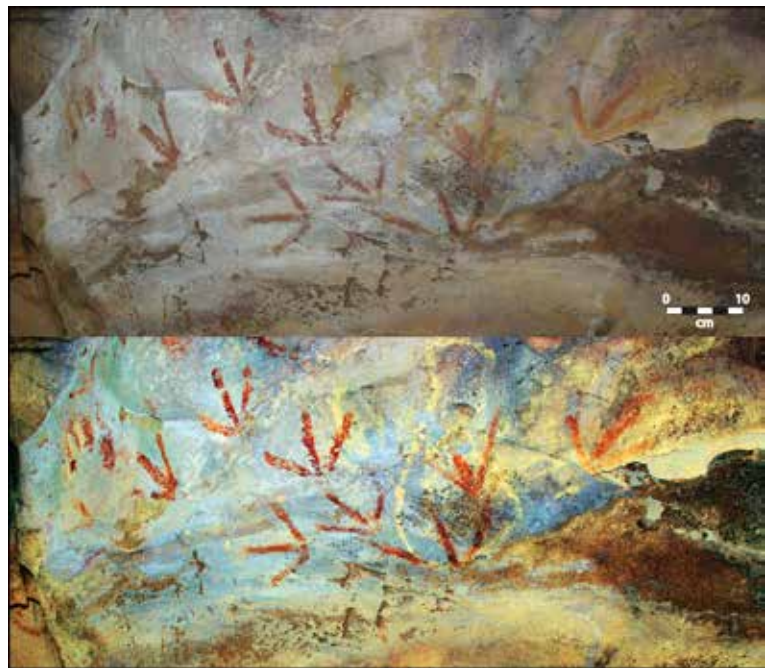


Figure 6. Limiyimiyila 1: computer enhancement of superimposed motifs.



Figure 7. Limiyimiyila 5: hammerhead shark.



Figure 8. Rramiyimiyi 3: 'rectangle variant'.

are associated with the island including the Groper (*a-Kuridi*), Black Bream (*a-Marrinda*), Beach Stone Curlew (*a-Wurrwin*), Mosquito (*a-Wurrkany*), Fiddler Crab (*a-Mulkangka*) and Jabiru (*Wurrulibinka*)



Figure 9. Hands at Limiyimiyila: A – hand stencils, Limiyimiyila 3; B – hand prints, Limiyimiyila 2.

(see Yanyuwa Families et al. 2003: 118 for details of others). Only two rock art sites recorded as part of this research are directly associated with Dreaming stories: Mandarrila and the Groper; Minyadawiji and the Jabiru (see below). Three sites are located inland (two at Wirdijila, one at Minyadawiji) while the remaining sites are located along the northern coast (at Lilardungka and Mandarrila).

The only information available about rock art from the island comes from the work of McLaughlin and

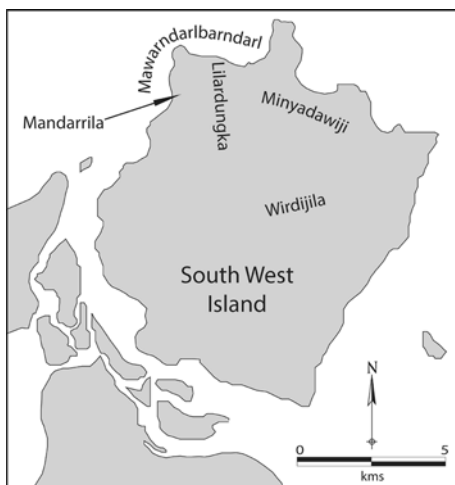


Figure 10. Map of South West Island showing named locations containing rock art sites (re-drawn from Yanyuwa Families et al. 2003, original by Nona Cameron).

Bradley. McLaughlin documented one site from 'Lilardungga' (Lilardungka) where he identified red and orange painted and stencilled motifs that 'depict a land and marine assemblage — jellyfish, stingray ... yalgawara motif, barracuda or fish, jabiru tracks and lily' (McLaughlin 1975). A second site was recorded at Mandarrila where he noted that it contained 'recent art motifs' although artists could 'not be named by informants'. He states that '30 motifs [are] present' and identified several images including a 'runggal or a totemic mark' painted on dancers for ceremonies, marine and terrestrial animals such as jellyfish, goannas, and wallaby tracks, as well as human foot-

prints, hand stencils and other 'unidentified motifs' (McLaughlin 1975). Bradley visited the same 'Lilardungga' site in 1981, 1984 and 1986 and photographed several images while recording Yanyuwa identifications of many motifs. In the early 1980s he also visited the Mandarrila site where he documented identifications of specific motifs (e.g. kangaroo footprints, jabiru tracks, jellyfish, Mangrove Dreaming symbol, *a-Kuwaykuwayk* Stone Bird Dreaming) and a story regarding the depiction of one motif from Yanyuwa Elders including Old Tim Timothy, Jerry Brown Ngarnawakajarra and Mussolini Harvey (see McNiven and Brady 2012: 77). He notes that '[t]he old people did not consider these paintings to be the work of human beings, rather they were seen to be the work of spirit beings' (Yanyuwa Families et al. 2003: 121). In 1982 Bradley also recorded information from two senior Yanyuwa men (Old Tim Rakuwurlma and Jerry Brown Ngarnawakajarra) about the possible authorship of paintings at Wirdijila. Bradley was told these paintings may have been the work of the *a-Kunibibi* initiates (*wanjilirra*) who were secluded in this area which was set aside for them during their isolation in the late 1800s.

Minyadawiji

The lone site at Minyadawiji consists of a small (10 m deep × 5 m wide × 1 m high) elevated sandstone shelter situated at the top of a steep slope inland on the southern side of the island. The north-facing shelter is supported by four large pillars and extends along a north-south axis, although the shelter can only be accessed from the south side due to a steep 3-m face on the north side. This site is associated with the Jabiru Dreaming (*Wurrulibinka*) and represents the nest and eggs of the Jabiru. Apart from the pigment art no other cultural materials were observed at the site.

Lilardungka

Located approximately 50 m behind the beach on the north coast of the island is a relatively flat, bushy area known as Lilardungka (the area identified by McLaughlin as 'Lilardungga'). A total of eight sites from a 100m × 100m (approx.) area were recorded from among the medium and large-sized individual sandstone rock stacks. Rock art

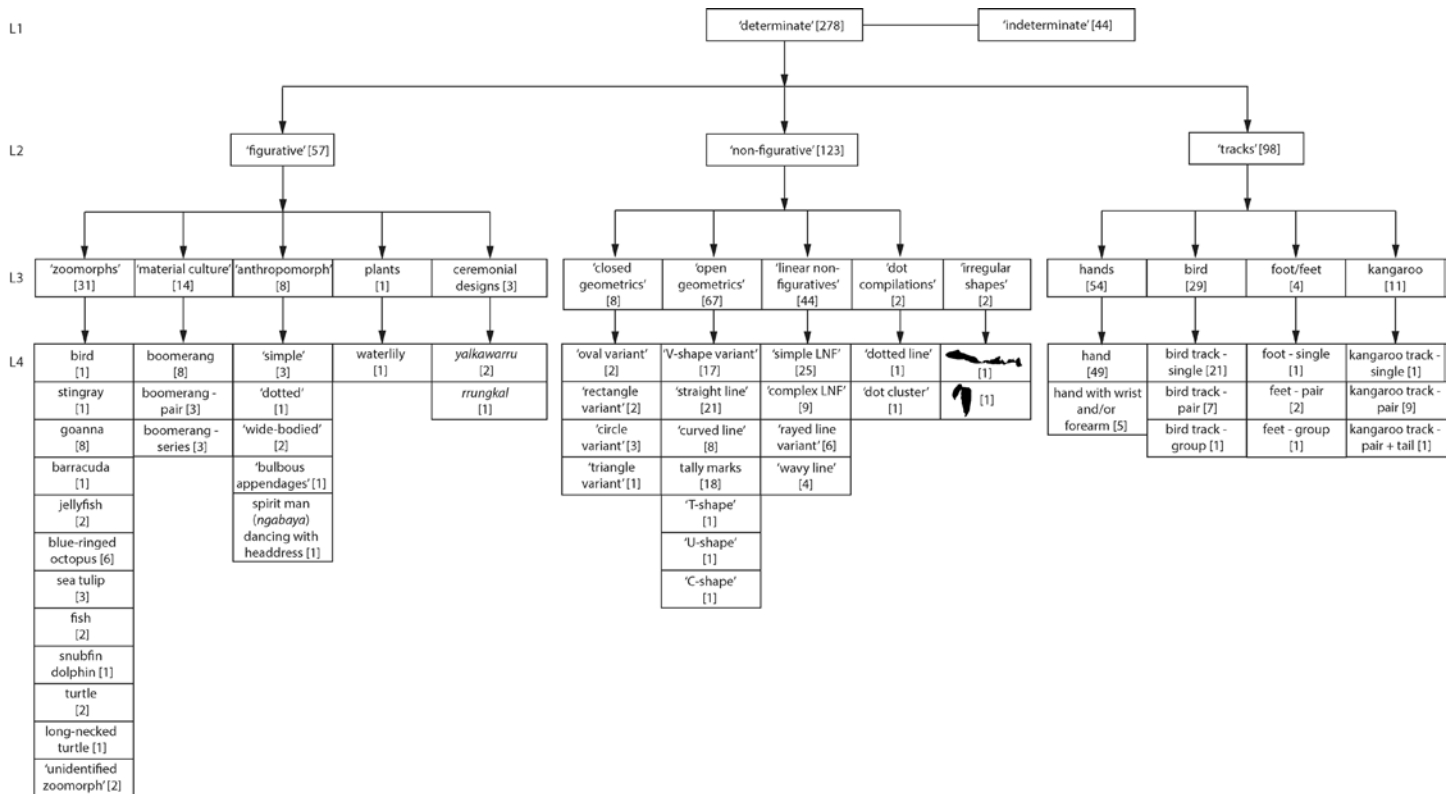


Figure 11. South West Island motif classificatory scheme.

is located in several different site contexts: on near-vertical walls on the outside perimeter of the rock stacks; on the roof and rear wall of deep shelters; on the roof and/or rear wall of small cavities protected by shallow overhangs. Only three sites feature any cultural materials. Lillardungka 1 and Lillardungka 5 each contain a single paperbark bundle burial cached in a small cavity within a rockshelter. Lillardungka 2 is the lone site in the area displaying evidence of human occupation with an extensive shell midden consisting of *Anadara* sp., *Nerita* sp., *Polymesoda* sp. and *Terebralia* sp. Several small crevices with large stones inside them are scattered across the rear wall; Yanyuwa men and women stated that these crevices were for storing objects or even food and the rocks were to weigh down the paperbark that was sometimes used as a covering. The site was used in the recent past as senior Yanyuwa woman Dinah Norman a-Marrngawi stated in 2010 that she remembers visiting and camping at the site when she was young girl (pers. comm. 2010).

Wirdijila

Two sites located within 15 m of each other were recorded at Wirdijila. Wirdijila 1 consists of a low shelter at the base of a relatively isolated medium-sized sandstone rock stack. A small passageway extending north-south and c. 1 m above the ground surface is supported by three large pillars. A series of paintings and stencils are located on the roof of the passageway and the outside wall on the southern side. Wirdijila 2 is a north-facing medium-sized shelter at the base of a wide elevated rock stack; the shelter containing the rock

art is relatively shallow (1.5 m high x 4 m wide x 1 m deep). Neither site features any other cultural materials apart from rock art.

Mandarrila

The lone site on the flat plain at Mandarrila on the island's north coast consists of a large sandstone, mushroom-shaped rock (max. dimensions 3.65 m wide x 0.7 m high x 4 m deep). The site features a large quantity of cultural materials: a canoe paddle (*a-rimi*) on the east side of the shelter that was originally placed there by Whylo Mackinnon and his father Banjo Dindalhi in the 1940s; grinding stones and base; a small hearth; dugong and turtle bone fragments; two small groups of *na-manda* (ritual cooking stones); and an extensive shell material consisting of *Anadara* sp., *Nerita* sp., *Terebralia* sp., *Saccostrea* sp., *Polymesoda* sp.). The rockshelter is part of a much larger area featuring evidence of cultural activity including: a known turtle/dugong/canoe haulage beach; *na-manda* (ritual cooking stones); and a dugong harpoon grinding patch. Approximately 50 m southwest is a fresh water spring and *ma-murdarrarra* (Kurrajong increase stone). The site is also associated with the Groper Dreaming as it is one of the places where the Groper stopped to sing during her travels (see below for further details) (Bradley 2010; Yanyuwa Families et al. 2003).

Rock art

A total of 322 motifs (44 'indeterminate', 278 'determinate') were identified from twelve sites (Figs 11 and 12). Of the 278 'determinate' images, 132 (47.5%)



Figure 12. South West Island: A – Mandarrilla rock art site; B – blue-ringed octopus); C – ngabaya (spirit) footprints; D – jellyfish and kangaroo tracks); E – barracuda); F – waterlily.

come from Mandarrilla. Four rock art production techniques were noted on the island with painted images the most common, followed by stencils, prints and charcoal-drawn motifs (Table 4). The production technique data reveals that stencils occur at most sites alongside paintings, however, their frequency alongside paintings is highest at Lillardungka. Motifs are produced using a wide range of colours and colour combinations (bichrome, polychrome) (Table

Site	Painting	Print	Stencil	Drawn (dry)	Total
Minyadawiji 1	2		3		5
Lillardungka 1	2		1		3
Lillardungka 2	26	2	7		35
Lillardungka 3	1				1
Lillardungka 4	1	2	8		11
Lillardungka 5	11				11
Lillardungka 6	14		13		27
Lillardungka 7	6		5		11
Lillardungka 8	1		2		3
Wirdijila 1	21		7		28
Wirdijila 2	8		3		11
Mandarrila	126		4	2	132
Total # of pictures	219	4	53	2	278
% of total	78.8%	1.4%	19.1%	0.7%	100

Table 4. Frequencies of rock art production techniques at South West Island.

5). Red motifs clearly dominate, accounting for 86.7% of all motifs while yellow, white, mulberry and black motifs are comparatively fewer in number. Red and white bichrome images only occur at Mandarrilla as do yellow and white, and the lone polychrome image from the island (red + yellow + white). The colour distribution clearly indicates Mandarrilla was a site of considerably more diversity in terms of colour usage. Superimpositions are limited to only ten occurrences with only one clear pattern involving the boomerang series motifs being detected. At Minyadawiji 1 a boomerang series motif was recorded underlying hand stencils while at Wirdijila 1 one boomerang series was found underlying another boomerang series.

Unlike Black Craggy Island, all three level 2 motifs are well accounted for with 'non-figurative' motifs most common, followed by 'tracks' and 'figurative' motifs. Five 'figurative' group motif forms were identified with 'zoomorphs' appearing most frequently. Two ethnographically-documented group motif categories were also recorded: plants (waterlily), and two ceremonial designs (*yalkawarru*; see below). Among the 'non-figurative' motifs 'open geometrics' and 'linear non-figuratives' clearly dominate while hands and bird tracks are the most common form of 'track' motifs.

Watson Island

This medium-sized island, measuring 7 km × 3 km, is situated directly north of Skull Island and west of North Island (Fig. 13). The island is owned by the Wurdaliya clan and is associated with the Osprey (*Jujuju*), Sea Turtle (*Wundamyuka*) and Giant Barracuda (*a-Murrurrungku*) Dreamings (Yanyuwa Families et al. 2003). Due to time constraints the island was not comprehensively surveyed but given the numerous sandstone shelters on the southwestern side of the island it is likely more sites will be discovered through our future surveys. No mention of previous rock art recording from this island could be located.

Liwayidbulungu

One site was recorded from Liwayidbulungu: a large sandstone rockshelter located approximately 50 m from the high tide mark and 40 m east of the Sea Turtle Dreaming. The shelter, with north and south entrances and supported by pillars of rock, is

Site	Red	Yellow	White	Mul- berry	Black	Red + white	Yellow + white	Red + yellow + white	Total
Minyadawiji 1	5								5
Lilardungka 1	3								3
Lilardungka 2	33	1		1					35
Lilardungka 3	1								1
Lilardungka 4	11								11
Lilardungka 5	11								11
Lilardungka 6	27								27
Lilardungka 7	10			1					11
Lilardungka 8	3								3
Wirdijila 1	28								28
Wirdijila 2	11								11
Mandarrila	98	1	6	2	2	21	1	1	132
Total # of pictures	241	2	6	4	2	21	1	1	278
% of total	86.7%	0.7%	2.1%	1.4%	0.7%	7.6%	0.4%	0.4%	100%

Table 5. Colour frequencies and combinations of monochrome and bichrome images at South West Island.

approached by walking up a very slight, rocky slope. The site is surrounded by many large, flat rocks and scrubby vegetation. The northern end of the shelter (where the rock art is located) measures 1.5 m high, 4 m wide and 5.6 m (from north to south). The shelter surface alternates between sand and rocky with shell midden material (predominately *Anadara* sp., *Saccostrea* sp. and *Terebralia* sp.) located outside the dripline at the northern end. Damage is in the form of a heavily exfoliated roof and granular disintegration. The documented paintings are positioned on panels that are surrounded by exfoliated rock suggesting a deliberate targeting of specific areas in the shelter.

Linguwarangala-Wungkurr

The second site is located inland at Linguwarangala-Wungkurr and consists of a single medium-sized sandstone boulder with a low, northeast-facing rockshelter measuring 8 m wide × 1.25 m high × 2.5 m deep. The shelter is situated in close proximity to a series of wet season creeks and is approached by walking up a gentle slope; some roof fall is evident at the entrance to the shelter. The surface consists of slightly compacted sand and is relatively flat. An abundance of cultural material, mostly shell midden, is located at the front of the shelter near the dripline and spilling down the front slope. The shells are primarily bivalves (e.g. *Anadara* sp.) with very few gastropods (e.g. *Terebralia* sp.) by comparison. In addition to the shell material are several large fragments of charcoal and cooking stones located at the front and middle of the shelter.

Rock art

A total of 58 pictures (51 'determinate', seven 'indeterminate') were recorded from the island, although the majority ($n = 46$) come from Linguwarangala-Wungkurr 1 (Figs 14 and 15). 'Non-figurative' images

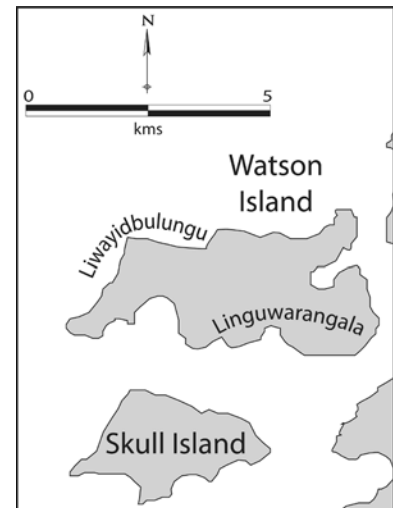


Figure 13. Map of Watson Island showing named locations containing rock art sites (re-drawn from Yanyuwa Families et al. 2003, original by Nona Cameron).

($n = 30$) dominate the island's assemblage with 'open geometrics' the most common motifs. Ceremonial designs (*yalkawarru*), painted in red or white, account for the highest number of 'figurative' motifs; 'zoomorphs' ($n = 6$) follow closely behind. The island features the only instance of a 'face' from the three islands surveyed. 'Track' motif categories are restricted to animals: bird and kangaroo. Three colours have been recorded in the island's rock art (red, white and yellow) with red images appearing most frequently (Table 6). Superimpositions (six panels) occur only at Linguwarangala-Wungkurr 1 with five panels featuring two phases of painting, and the sixth panel displaying three phases. Two of the six panels depict white tally marks as the underlying motif. Apart from this occurrence, no other consistent patterns could be detected in underlying or overlying images.

Preliminary comparisons between island assemblages

In order to search for patterning in the recorded assemblage, analyses were conducted at the site and motif levels using a combination of formal comparisons and ethnographic data.

Geographical distribution and patterning

Two distinct geographical discontinuities within the three islands become apparent when analysing

Site	Red	Yellow	White	Total
Liwayidbulungu 1	5			5
Linguwarangala-Wungkurr 1	26	1	19	46
Total # of pictures	31	1	19	51
% of total	60.8%	2.0%	37.2%	100%

Table 6. Colour frequencies of rock art at Watson Island.

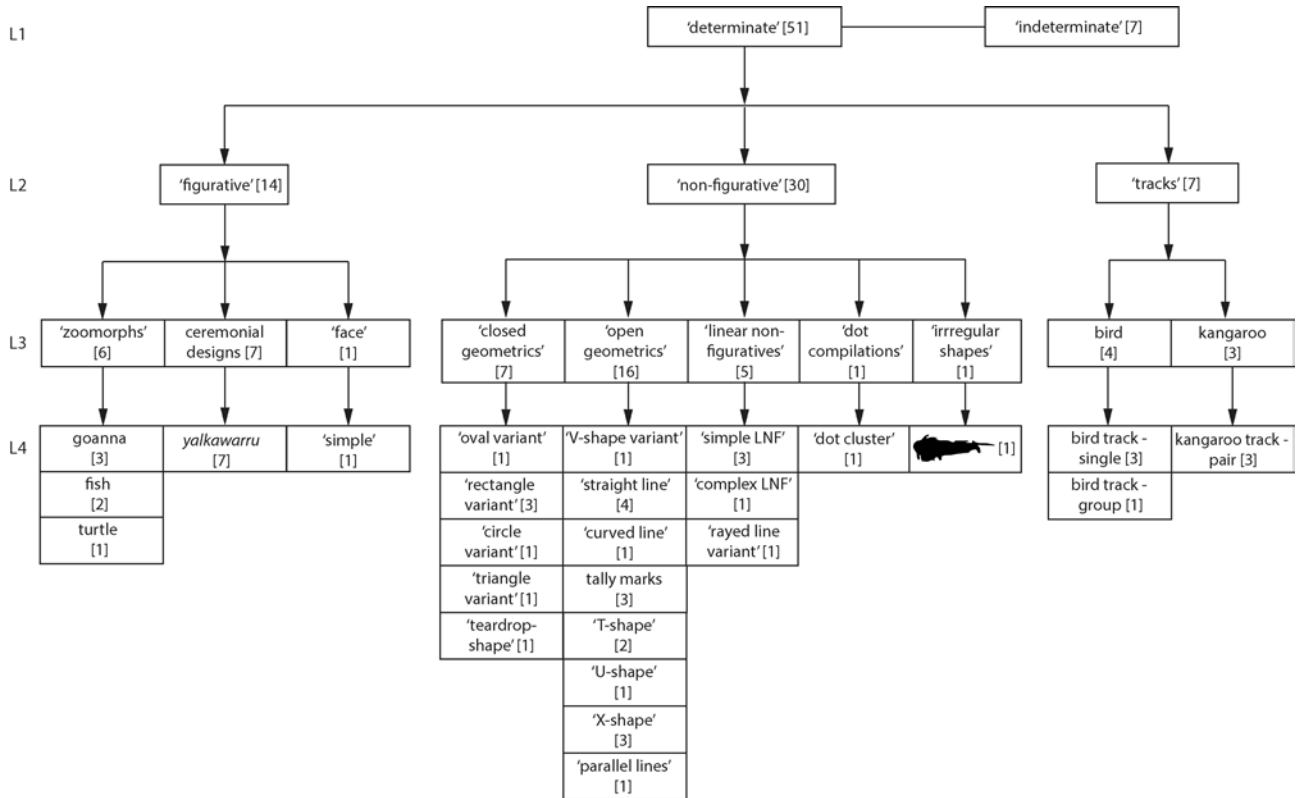


Figure 14. Watson Island motif classificatory scheme.



Figure 15. Watson Island: A – Linguwarangala-Wungkurr site; B – yalkawarru design; C – computer enhancement showing bird tracks, kangaroo tracks and a V-shape variant; D – fish and turtle overlying a grid motif; E – goanna.

level 2 motifs: Black Craggy Island features the highest proportion of 'track' motifs while 'non-figurative' motifs dominate the Watson Island assemblage (Fig. 16). In comparison, South West Island's level 2 motifs are more evenly distributed with 'non-figurative' motifs only marginally eclipsing 'track' motifs. 'Figurative' motifs on each island are, comparatively speaking, much smaller in number than other categories.

At level 3, some further patterns become evident in the distribution and frequency of group motifs (Fig. 17). Taken together, five group motif categories ('zoomorphs', 'open geometrics', 'linear non-figuratives', hands, bird tracks) account for 327 pictures or 80.1% of the entire assemblage. With the exception of Watson Island where no hands have been recorded thus far (this island has not yet been comprehensively surveyed), these group motif categories are spread across all three islands and reveal a relatively widespread homogeneity between islands. Therefore these pictures represent most of the rock art from Pellews recorded thus far in this project. These common motifs have shown themselves to be widely distributed, and as such point to a general spread of design conventions across the three islands surveyed, at the expense of identifying specific, heightened inter-island links/differences.

Clustering is also clearly evident at the site level. Lilardungka (South West Island) and Limiyimiyila (Black Craggy Island) appear as popular locales for rock art with eight sites and five sites respectively. However, despite the cluster of sites at Lilardungka ($n = 8$), Mandarrila features the largest number of images ($n = 132$, 47.5%) on the island, revealing it was a site of intense rock art production as well as other activity as evidenced by multiple types of cultural materials (see above) (Table 7). In comparison, Lilardungka lacked the intensity and range of cultural materials from Mandarrila (see below).

Further geographical patterning can be found at Black Craggy Island in the distribution of hand motifs.

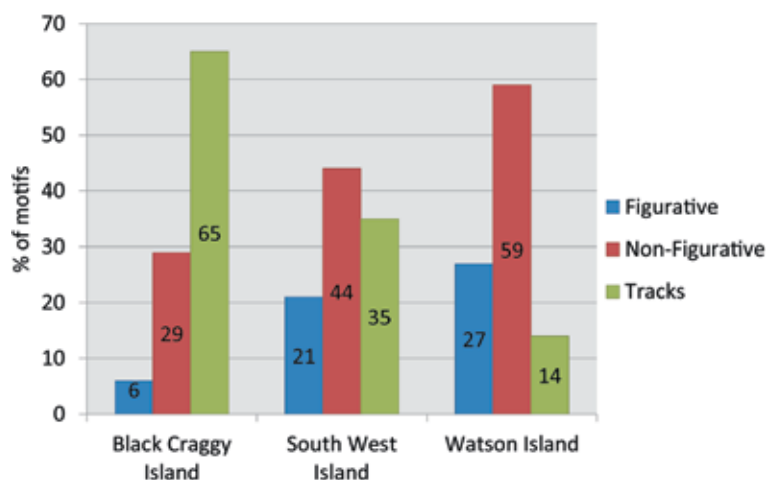


Figure 16. Graph showing proportion of level 2 motifs.

As noted above hand stencils and prints dominate the elevated eastern end of Limiyimiyila (sites 1-4; 36 of 48 motifs [75%] are hands) where they are found in shallow shelters at the base of the tall sandstone rock stacks. However, the western end of Limiyimiyila does not feature any hands ('zoomorphs', 'linear non-figuratives', 'open geometrics' and an 'irregular

Location	Site	# of motifs	% of total
Minyadawiji	Minyadawiji 1	5	1.8%
Lilardungka	Lilardungka 1	3	36.7%
	Lilardungka 2	35	
	Lilardungka 3	1	
	Lilardungka 4	11	
	Lilardungka 5	11	
	Lilardungka 6	27	
	Lilardungka 7	11	
	Lilardungka 8	3	
Wirdijila	Wirdijila 1	28	14.0%
	Wirdijila 2	11	
Mandarrila	Mandarrila	132	47.5%
Total		278	100%

Table 7. Frequency and distribution of motifs from rock art locales on South West Island.

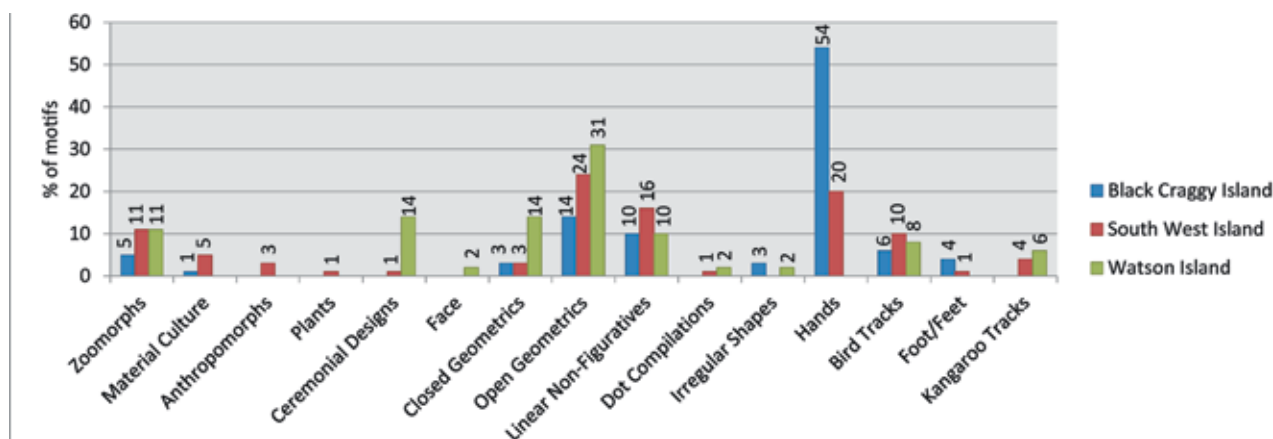


Figure 17. Graph showing proportion of level 3 motifs.



Figure 18. Mandarrila: *rrungkal* design (stitched from individual photographs); (inset: angled photograph of the *rrungkal*).

shape') while at Rramiyimi only seven of 24 motifs are hands. When reporting these findings to the Yanyuwa community, Dinah Norman a-Marrngawi, a senior Yanyuwa woman and *jungkayi* for the island, explained that the overwhelming dominance of hand stencils and prints recorded from the eastern of Limiyimiyila were the result of the Dugong Hunters (*li-Maramaranja*) from the Dugong Hunter Dreaming who travelled from White Craggy Island and landed at Limiyimiyila where they placed their hands on the rocks before moving on to Murunda (pers. comm. 2010). Thus ethnography is used here to gain valuable insight into the social context of an archaeologically-observed pattern (see below).

Several individual motif patterns were also identified from the three-island assemblage. These include the overwhelming dominance of boomerangs and anthropomorphs from South West Island, the lack of zoomorphic (kangaroo and bird) 'tracks' at Watson Island, the lack of tally marks at Black Craggy Island, and the wide range of distinctive 'zoomorph' imagery at South West Island. Unfortunately without having conducted systematic surveys of the remaining Pellew Islands it is premature at this stage to state that the patterns observed or endemic images noted here hold true for all of the islands in the Pellews. For example, boomerangs and anthropomorphs are both known from Vanderlin Island rock art through the work of Sim (1999, 2002) and Bradley (1997) indicating these motifs are, in fact, not geographically restricted to South West Island.

Clan-based distribution and patterning

In spite of the difficulty in identifying extensive formal patterning based on distinctive motifs, ethno-

graphy can be used to provide insight into the distribution and meaning of clan-based symbols and patterns using ceremonial design motifs. At Mandarrila on South West Island is a red and white abstract design identified by senior Yanyuwa men as a *rrungkal* – a powerful ceremonial design derived from the cosmological actions of the Groper Spirit Ancestor^{6,7}. The design, along with the story of the Groper, belongs specifically to the Wuyaliya clan and is connected to the important Mangrove Dreaming, and is intimately associated with the island (Fig. 18). In 1984

Bradley visited Mandarrila with three senior Yanyuwa men. One of them, Jerry Brown Ngarnawakajaya, the most senior *ngimirringki* for the island, told Bradley (in press):

Nya-karra! Marnaji rrunskal ki-janykaa wirrimalaru jinangu ma-ja ma-warnjarrngu kurdukurdu, kurda li-wankala kalu-balirra marnaji nalu-yuyu barra.

Look! Here is a powerful design on the rock, it is spiritually powerful, this is the Mangrove Dreaming, it is sacred, oh the poor old people they painted this here, it is their mark.

Johnson Timothy, a senior Rrumburriya man also noted:

My mother's father used to live around here, his name was Jurli, he could carve a fine hook spear that old man, but he showed me something here, a mark, it is a big thing, see this one here that's what we call *rrungkal*, it is a powerful mark from the Dreaming, we can use it in ceremony if we like, this mark is mangrove, Mangrove Dreaming, it belongs to this country, in the south there at that place called Mangurrunguru, Groper put it here I reckon, in the song for this country she sings this place, she sings the rock art (Bradley 1984).

Both men's statements clearly demonstrate the cultural significance attached to this distinctive design. For Jerry Brown Ngarnawakajaya, his concern is with articulating the spiritual power of the image – it is the highest in the hierarchy of symbols used in Wuyaliya ceremonial life – while also attributing it specifically to the 'poor old people'. Crediting the image to the

6 Cultural protocols restrict any further description or explanation of the nature of the *rrungkal* apart from what is described here.

7 Giant Groper (*Promicrops lanceolatus*).

'poor old people' is best understood as an emotional statement concerning the authority and memory of particular persons who held knowledge associated with such imagery. On the other hand, Johnson Timothy discusses the function and symbolism of the *rrungkal*, why it belongs where it is found, and the link between the Groper, the image and the site. Both men's approaches to interpreting the *rrungkal* demonstrate the complexity of Indigenous interpretations of rock art. Taken alone, Johnson Timothy's statement assigns authorship to the Ancestral Being associated with the site. Yet when Jerry Brown Ngarnawakajaya's statement is taken into account the problem of authorship becomes more complex especially given that he, as the most senior *ngimirringki* for the island and the site, credits the image to the 'poor old people'. So who is right? For the Yanyuwa men and women who are responsible for such sites the question is really a non-question, one that would only be asked by 'whitefellas' or those who do not understand the ways in which Yanyuwa people understand the presence of both Ancestral Beings on their country and the spirits of their deceased kin. Both responses are legitimate and can be better understood in the context of how particular people negotiate and apprehend the images as they appear on the rock face.

The most appropriate way to understand Jerry Brown Ngarnawakajaya and Johnson Timothy's comments regarding the *rrungkal*, or Mangrove Dreaming symbol, is to view it as an image of relatedness; that is, the image is embedded in a complex network of relationships that are the basis of Yanyuwa Law. The *rrungkal*, and for that matter, the hands at Black Craggy Island, are crucial to the activation, transferral and negotiation of knowledge associated with Yanyuwa Law. They are symbolic representations of a body of moral, jural and social rules and correct practices which are derived from the cosmogonic actions of Ancestral Beings. It is these Ancestral Beings who shaped and named the land, sea and waterways as well as transformed parts of their bodies and knowledge into landscape features, natural phenomena and plants.

In the case of the *rrungkal* the knowledge associated with the particular species of mangrove known as *ma-warnjarrngu* (Grey/White mangrove, *Acicennia marina*) was left on South West Island by the Groper Ancestral Being. The Groper, like other Ancestral Beings is described as having given life to people at particular places, giving these places to the Yanyuwa and teaching people the correct way to behave on country (the land and sea) (e.g. through hunting and foraging practices, processing of food, making of tools, and the performance of paintings, songs and dances). These actions thus constitute the knowledge associated with a place and such knowledge is respected and observed by being followed in everyday practices, conversations and in more formal times of ritual performance.

Although the *rrungkal* is an image present at Mandarrila it is also preserved in specific songs once

sung by senior Yanyuwa men such as Johnson Timothy and Jerry Brown Ngarnawakajaya that record the journey of the Groper (see Bradley 2010). These songs are described as 'putting down the Law into the land and sea'; at the rockshelter under consideration here the Groper sang:

Wuyukirrini

Dalarra dalarra

Kamundu darralayi

Paintings in the rockshelter

At Mandarrila,

The ochres glow

Wanjarrngurrurula

Jamamirri

The Grey mangrove,

Thickets of Grey mangroves

Belong to this country.

These two verses celebrate the Groper at Mandarrila and by extension her creative acts in first placing the rock art on the walls and establishing the Grey mangrove as an important Ancestral Being in the country she is travelling over⁸.

The actions of the Groper in 'putting down the Law' is a process by which everything and everybody acquires a specific position, and rights and duties in the complex network of relationships to one's own and other people's countries and to everything in and on them. According to Yanyuwa epistemology this also includes specific designs painted on rock walls. In such cosmogonic actions involving the singing of place and placing of knowledge in country, a consubstantial relationship between an Ancestral Being, a place and a group of people who identify with the land (and own or guard it) is established. It is the image(s) left behind that are held to be the mechanism which orders, distributes and differentiates groups' rights to and ownership of particular knowledge of tracts of land or countries.

Thus for Jerry Brown Ngarnawakajaya and Johnson Timothy (senior *ngimirringki* and *jungkayi* respectively for the island) the Groper's actions provide pervasive imagery which conveys levels of relatedness to country and in this particular instance to one specific rock painting. Furthermore it is not really important, in the context of this conversation, who it was that put the painting on the rock. Here the 'old people' could be recently deceased (e.g. a few generations past) or those present when the Groper placed knowledge in the country. Both are considered to be one with the Groper and the country.

However, not all ceremonial designs belonging to a specific clan are restricted to their country. *Yalkawarru* is a post-funeral ceremony for recently deceased Wuyaliya and Wurdaliya clan members. During the *yalkawarru* ceremony distinctive grid-like motifs belonging to these two clans are painted on ceremonial wooden posts; the designs are stylistically similar to

⁸ Yanyuwa is a heavily gendered language with seven main categories in which all living and non-living things are attributed (see Bradley et al. 2006 for further details).



Figure 19. Watson Island (Linguwarangala-Wungkurr): *yalkawarru* design.

those found in shelters from South West Island ($n = 2$) and Watson Island ($n = 7$), Wuyaliya and Wurdaliya clan country respectively (Fig. 19) (Yanyuwa Families et al. 2003: 259, 376–7). In each instance where these designs were recorded they were identified by Yanyuwa men and women as *yalkawarru*. Yet these distinctive designs are also found on other islands not associated with the Wuyaliya and Wurdaliya clan. Sim's (1999) photographs and descriptions of 'geometric grid type motifs' and 'geometric grill type patterns' at Victoria Bay rock art sites on Vanderlin Island are stylistically similar to *yalkawarru* motifs revealing the likelihood for further examples of *yalkawarru* motifs elsewhere in the Pellews. Furthermore during a 1984 visit to rock art sites containing *yalkawarru* motifs on Vanderlin Island (Rumburriya clan country) Bradley recorded Johnson Timothy's explanation as to why these motifs occurred outside Wuyaliya and Wurdaliya clan country:

This mark here is *yalkawarru*, that ceremony to send the spirits of dead people back to country, you can see it all over the islands, on Wuyaliya country, Wurdaliya country and like here Rumburriya country. I know it is a *yalkawarru* mark because I know that ceremony and old people have told me. When someone died, maybe they were a Wuyaliya person old people would go to that dead persons country and put that Yalkawarru there, to show the country that person was dead, now when they put that mark on Rumburriya country they are telling the country, all the dead people you know that a *jungkayi* for that ceremony has died (Bradley 1984).

Thus, Johnson Timothy's quote again demonstrates the social embeddedness of the imagery and how it reflects notions of relatedness at a number of levels. The true meaning of these designs can only be understood through a detailed reckoning of the social and ritual history of Yanyuwa people. Johnson Timothy's explanation of why the *yalkawarru* motifs appear on Rumburriya country reveals there is a constant negotiation between people, the art, kin and non-human kin to understand the power and agency

of the image.

In addition to ceremonial designs, motifs depicting major Dreamings can be used to further understand the distribution of clan-based symbols. In some instances these motifs are located on country where the Dreaming belongs, while in other instances motifs belonging to Dreamings *not* from that country have been recorded. For example, the hammerhead shark at Black Craggy Island belongs to the Rumburriya clan and is found on Rumburriya country, while the blue-ringed octopus and barracuda at South West Island belong to the Wuyaliya clan and are found on Wuyaliya country.

When Yanyuwa men and women view designs such as the ones noted above they see them as right and proper and a true relationship of the Law. Such perceptions can also be less obvious as is the case with Dinah Norman a-Marrngawi's immediate response to the presence of hands at Limiyimiyila at Black Craggy Island where she stated '*Kaji yamulhu! li-Maramaranja kalu-wingkayaninya bajiwuthu, nalu-maliji barra nalu-yuyu; Hey what did you expect! The Dugong Hunter Dreaming, they travelled in that direction, the hands are theirs, their prints*'. Dinah's response reveals that even the by-products of major Dreamings belonging to country can also be deemed right and proper and reflective of Yanyuwa Law when placed into their proper cultural contexts.

In contrast the distinctive and powerful Sorcery Stone Bird Dreaming (*a-Kuwaykuwayk*) belongs to the Rumburriya clan yet its painted form has only been found on Wuyaliya country at Mandarrila (Fig. 20). Much like the example above involving the *yalkawarru* designs, other reasons are given as to why such an image might appear on another clan's country and again, a deeper understanding of the role of kinship in negotiating meaning is required. In this instance, Johnson Timothy told Bradley (1984) that it was most likely a *jungkayi* for the Sorcery Stone Bird Dreaming who painted the image while telling a story about it and showing people what it looked like. *Jungkayi* were the

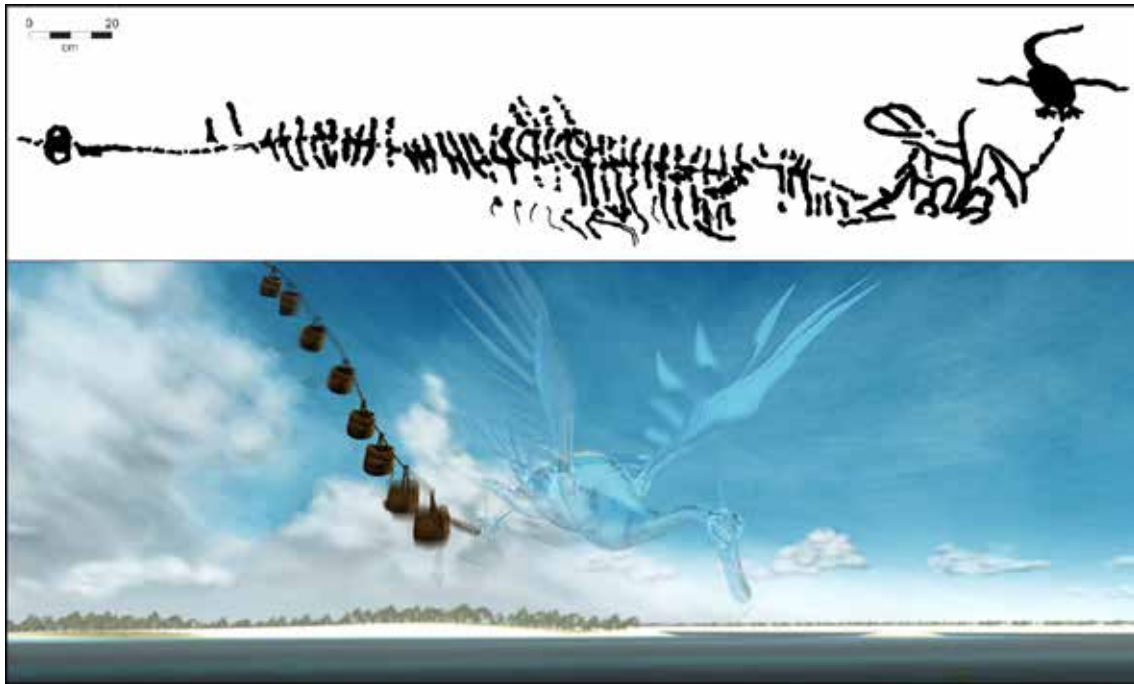


Figure 20. Top – Mandarrila: black and white tracing of a bird representing the Sorcery Stone Bird Dreaming; bottom – screen shot of the Sorcery Stone Bird Dreaming from the a-Kuridi (Groper) digital animation (designed by Brent McKee; image courtesy of the Monash Country Lines Archive).

only ones who could paint that Dreaming and because of its power it could not be depicted on Rumburriya country (see Yanyuwa Families et al. 2003: 68, 100 for further details of the Dreaming). Consequently, Johnson Timothy's explanation or negotiation of this powerful image was connected to relationships — who had the authority to paint it — and this in turn informed discussion about why the image was located where it was. In addition the Sorcery Stone Bird Dreaming is associated, by its journey, with the Garrwa people to the east. However, the knowledge that the Yanyuwa and Garrwa people have concerning the Sorcery Stone Bird Dreaming is quite different. For example the mainland Garrwa people hold the songs to kill and perform sorcery on people using the power of this Dreaming, while the saltwater or island-based Yanyuwa people hold the songs to heal afflictions caused by this Ancestral Being. Thus on the islands its depiction can be carried out by a *jungkayi*, a person standing in a mother's relationship to the Ancestral Being, safely because its power is no longer to harm but to heal.

Discussion

Applying ethnographic information to decode archaeologically-observed patterns in rock art is not uncommon (see e.g. David 1992; Taçon 1993). However, to understand the complex and multilayered Indigenous interpretations of rock art, a person outside the culture requires certain types of knowledge, including recognising the important role of relationships between images, people, religion, kin (human and non-human) and landscape. To better understand the relational contexts of Yanyuwa rock art we turn to the work

of Robert Layton and David Turner who have both considered the social and cultural contexts of rock art in Australia's Gulf Country (see also e.g. David et al. 1990a; David et al. 1990b; David et al. 1994; Flood et al. 1992; Frost et al. 1992; Lewis and Rose 1995; Merlan 1989 for examples in the Victoria River district and Wardaman country in the Northern Territory where this point of relationship between rock art, country and social groups has also been made).

In Layton's research among the Alawa (western Gulf Country) he uses rock art and body designs to explore notions of relationships between people and images. He notes that '[t]he placing of clan designs in rock shelters is an assertion of rights over the site' (Layton 1992: 59). However, the rights and responsibilities to paint these distinctive designs, either on rock walls or on bodies, lie with people's relationships to myths associated with the designs and the site. In his example from Dandandi cave, Layton refers to the two artists who produced the distinctive totemic designs here and noted that their relationship to the site was that of *djunggaiyi* (*jungkayi*) and therefore they had the rights to depict the distinctive totemic motifs at the cave with which they were associated and on people's bodies during ceremonies (Layton 1992: 59). Layton also makes reference to a conversation he had with Dehne McLaughlin who observed 'an Aboriginal man' painting ritual designs in a cave near Borroloola (see above) at his request⁹. Here, Layton (1992: 25) noted

⁹ Fieldwork by Bradley has revealed that McLaughlin actually witnessed the painting of sorcery designs at a site well known in the region for its association with a powerful form of sorcery, and the individual observed by

that '[t]he motifs were appropriate to his position in relation to the land in which the shelter was situated'. Similarly David Turner's (1973) work at Bickerton Island in the Groote Eylandt area in the Gulf of Carpentaria sought to explore the social context for the production of imagery he recorded on the island. He noted that his informants were vague concerning rules of access for where people could paint largely as a result of the complexities of the *djunggaiyi-miniringgi* (bosses-owners/workers) relationship since 'everyone in [the] Bickerton groups is related to everyone else in 'boss-worker' terms, basically because the notion of mythically linked groups is involved' (Turner 1973: 294). However, Turner (1973: 295) did note that there were specific relationships concerning who could depict 'mythical beings of the Dreamtime'. He noted that only 'the initiated men in the local groups to which the beings were principally associated and, occasionally, with the permission of the latter, by men in mythically linked groups' could paint these distinctive images on rock walls and bodies (Turner 1973: 295). Layton and Turner's work demonstrates the importance of understanding the relational contexts associated with the depiction of certain designs. The role of *jungkayi*, *ngimiringki* and their relationships to Ancestral Beings and place are therefore considered extremely important in people's negotiation of some rock art motifs.

In the case of Yanyuwa interpretations regarding the observed patterns of distinctive motifs (*rrungkal*, *yalkawarru*, major Dreamings) and the hands at Black Craggy Island they too are concerned with relationships, namely between people, kin (human and non-human) and country. Dinah Norman a-Marrngawi interpreted the presence of hands at Black Craggy Island based on the relationship between the Dugong Hunter Ancestral Beings and their travels to Limiyimiyila; at South West Island Johnson Timothy situated the *rrungkal* in relationship to the Groper Ancestral Being while at Vanderlin Island the role of the *jungkayi* in depicting the *yalkawarru* was crucial to his interpretation; and at South West Island Jerry Brown Ngarnawakajarra identified a relationship between non-human ancestors (spirits) and the *rrungkal*. Thus the ethnographic data contributes another layer of knowledge concerning the relationships between painted symbols, parts of the landscape and explanations about the who, where and why of rock art. These images do not stand alone; they are storied images, a part of Yanyuwa Law and have a place in the continuing dialogue between past and present behaviours on the islands. In many instances, the rock art is not a static representation of something but instead are vital images, at times super-vital (see Tamisari and Bradley 2005), that continue to express and generate concepts of relatedness and which ultimately leads to discussions of a non-human-centred landscape that is premised on attributions of intentionality, obligation, responsibility and reciprocity.

McLaughlin was the last man known to use it.

Conclusion

Approaching Yanyuwa rock art using formal and informed methods has yielded a significant amount of knowledge concerning how rock art has been used to inscribe the landscape as well as the complexities associated with how people interpret the images they encounter in the context of relationships. Although rock art from only three islands has been presented here, the results reflect the considerable amount of knowledge about rock art and its broader associations, which remain embedded in Indigenous communities. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of recognising the value of ethnography and cultural contexts in interpreting archaeologically-observed patterns. Future research is aimed at building a larger dataset to undertake in-depth stylistic analyses across the broader region (islands and mainland) and by extension working with Yanyuwa and other neighbouring groups (e.g. Garrwa and Gudanji) to better understand the proper cultural context(s) of northern Australia's Gulf Country rock art.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks go to the Yanyuwa community for their support, hospitality and generosity during our visits to Borroloola and the Pellew Islands. In particular we would like to thank Dinah Norman a-Marrngawi, Roddy Harvey Bayuma-Birribalanja, Jemima Miller, Mavis Timothy, Graham Friday, Gloria Friday, Leonard Norman, Samuel Evans, David Barret, Nicholas Fitzpatrick, Shaun Fitzpatrick, Trey Friday and the *li-Anthawirrayarra* Sea Rangers for all their assistance and insights associated with this project. Funding was generously provided by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (G2009-7490) and the Australian Research Council (Discovery Grant DP1093341). RAR referees Bruno David, Paul Faulstich and two anonymous reviewers are thanked for their insightful comments and constructive feedback.

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Final MS received 5 August 2013.

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