

# 10 • Aboriginal Maps and Plans

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In chapter 9 I explored classical modes of topographic representation in Aboriginal Australia. There I drew a heuristic distinction between “icons of country” and “maps.” Icons belong to Aboriginal classical traditions and are images that arise principally from a context of ritual display. These are by and large distinct from what I refer to here as “Aboriginal maps and plans.” Maps and plans are depictions of political, residential, and religious geographies created largely in response to a need to communicate practical knowledge to others.<sup>1</sup>

My focus will be works drawn on paper, since many have been collected and documented by anthropologists, but I also discuss “mud maps” and sand drawings, which are images scored into the ground to accompany narratives or the giving of directions, as well as certain stone arrangements that depict in plan view the layout of boats and dwellings.

## MAJOR COLLECTIONS OF ABORIGINAL MAPS

### THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM

From 1930 to 1954 Norman B. Tindale, curator of ethnology at the South Australian Museum in Adelaide, together with various other colleagues who accompanied him on regular field expeditions in outback Australia, systematically collected Aboriginal crayon drawings in Central Australia and Western Australia. This collection was not part of the principal research of these expeditions, which largely focused on biological anthropology, collecting indigenous artifacts, and some sociological work on social and local organization, but along with eliciting vocabularies and myths, issuing paper and crayons to local informants and subjects became one of the expeditions' less arduous routines (fig. 10.1). Over time the importance of these documents, most depicting specific landscapes and their classical Aboriginal mythologies, has begun to rise dramatically.

These crayon drawings were bound in ten volumes and are held at the South Australian Museum (appendix 10.1). I shall refer to them in this text by the codes SAM 1 through SAM 10. The terms “collected,” “gathered,” and “obtained” that Tindale used in titling these bound

volumes are potentially misleading. All these works were clearly commissioned by the ethnologists, and all the materials used, basically brown paper and a modest color range in crayons, had been provided by members of the research expeditions. With the exception of SAM 10 it appears that the ethnologists refrained from directing the artists to any particular content or approach. Charles Percy Mountford, writing about the 1935 collection from the Warburton Range (SAM 5–SAM 7), said: “Special care was taken to avoid influencing the choice of either subject or colour. Until the aborigines became conversant with the author's wishes, the only direction given them was to make *walka* (marks) on the paper. In a few days, however, such a request was not necessary; the natives became so eager to ‘make marks’ that the author was unable to gather all the relevant information. The supply of paper and crayons had then to be curtailed accordingly.”<sup>2</sup>

An instruction in such circumstances to “make marks” is not, in Aboriginal tradition, likely to be interpreted as an invitation to carry out meaningless doodling. The term *walka* in this Western Desert language means “1. design, drawing, any meaningful marks 2. pattern e.g. on bird or animal,”<sup>3</sup> and its semantic range specifically includes ancestral totemic designs.<sup>4</sup> The equivalent term in Aborigi-

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For their helpful assistance with sources I thank John Stanton, Kate Alport, Carol Cooper, David Trigger, David Nash, and Philip Jones.

1. Here I do not broach the more complex subject of the semantics and grammar of Aboriginal spatial geography, the system that underlies the manifestations observed here and in chapter 9 above. For a detailed account of such a system, see David Nash “Notes towards a Draft Ethnographic Primer (for Central Australia)” (in preparation).

2. Charles Percy Mountford, “Aboriginal Crayon Drawings III: The Legend of Wati Jula and the Kunkarunkara Women,” *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia* 62 (1938): 241–54 and pls. XIII, XIV, esp. 241.

3. Cliff Goddard, *A Basic Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara to English Dictionary* (Alice Springs: Institute for Aboriginal Development, 1987), 168.

4. Nancy D. Munn, “The Transformation of Subjects into Objects in Walbiri and Pitjantjatjara Myth,” in *Australian Aboriginal Anthropology: Modern Studies in the Social Anthropology of the Australian Aborigines*, ed. Ronald Murray Berndt (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1970), 141–63, esp. 142.



FIG. 10.1. ABORIGINES MAKING CRAYON DRAWINGS. This photograph was taken during the Board for Anthropological Research expedition to Mount Liebig, Central Australia, ca. 1932. Photograph courtesy of the South Australian Museum Archives, Adelaide.

nal languages generally refers both to any patterns or marks and to sacred designs and thus typically carries overtones of religious significance.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the major visual art traditions of traditionally oriented Aboriginal people are religious rather than secular, especially in the desert hinterland.<sup>6</sup> Apart, perhaps, from the children's drawings, most of the designs of the South Australian Museum crayon drawings are oriented toward sacred meanings as well as toward a schematic imaging of geography.

A significant, perhaps very large, proportion of the men's drawings in this collection are in fact secret-sacred.<sup>7</sup> For this reason I cannot reproduce those that may fall into that class. Among the Tindale-Mountford collections of drawings, however, are some with notes attached making it clear that the images are not restricted to initiated men. It is from these and other secular drawings that I have selected examples to illustrate this chapter.

Volumes SAM 5–SAM 7 of 1935 contain 277 drawings in the style that remains typical of the Western Desert region (fig. 10.2), a style that has become internationally recognizable through the exhibition and sale of acrylic paintings made by Western Desert people since the early 1970s.<sup>8</sup> The different volumes show some evidence of either specific requests for subject matter made by the ethnologists or perhaps different waves of subject preferences among the artists. SAM 8, for example, consists largely of depictions of ceremonial paraphernalia, sacred boards, and sacred designs in the abstract, as well as some images of secular artifacts and animals. Although these designs undoubtedly refer to Dreamings<sup>9</sup> and their specific spatial associations, overt references to sites or to-

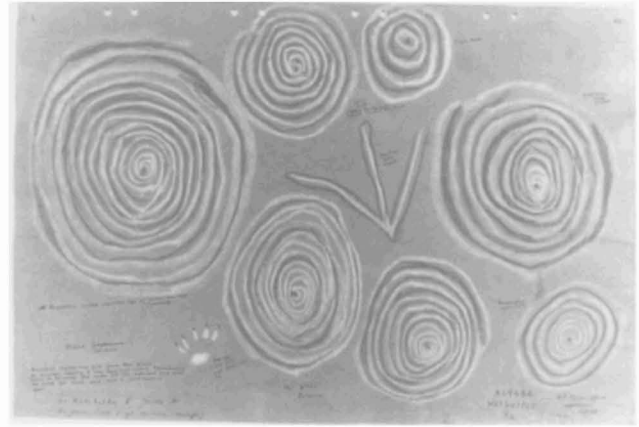


FIG. 10.2. JALIARNA AREA, CENTRAL AUSTRALIA. Crayon on paper, Warburton Range, 1935, by Katbulka. Collector's note reads: "No song for here and not a ceremonial spot."

Size of the original: 35.9 × 54.2 cm. Photograph courtesy of the South Australian Museum Archives, Adelaide (SAM 5, A49482).

pography are rare in SAM 8. Nevertheless, some designs are described as "drawings of country" (e.g., sheet 118), and a drawing on sheet 116 by Jerry, of the Walmadjari language group, is described as "waters in his country," even though the image consists entirely of linked circles.

SAM 4, to give another example, contains about thirty drawings from the southern fringe of the Western Desert region, collected at Ooldea in 1934, which include many images of ritual celebrants wearing sacred body decorations and headdresses. Again, while these designs refer to localized mythic beings and events, the places concerned are not usually documented by the collector. In the notes written on one drawing in SAM 4, however, we can sense Tindale's early grapplings with the often severely abstracted conventions of representation employed in the Western Desert tradition. Sheet 27 by the man Jалану

5. See, for example, Howard Morphy, *Ancestral Connections: Art and an Aboriginal System of Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 102; R. David Zorc, *Yolngu-Matha Dictionary* (Darwin: School of Australian Linguistics, 1986), 189; and Peter Sutton, "Dreamings," in *Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia*, ed. Peter Sutton (New York: George Braziller in association with the Asia Society Galleries, 1988), 13–32, esp. 19.

6. See chapter 9 above.

7. See Eric Michaels, "Constraints on Knowledge in an Economy of Oral Information," *Current Anthropology* 26 (1985): 505–10; Morphy, *Ancestral Connections*, 75–99 (note 5); Ian Keen, *Knowledge and Secrecy in an Aboriginal Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 169–254; and Christopher Anderson, ed., *Politics of the Secret* (Sydney: University of Sydney, 1995), for some of the most helpful literature on the important role of secrecy in Aboriginal society.

8. For examples of acrylic paintings see fig. 9.25 and pl. 16.

9. Ancestral beings; see pp. 360–61 above.

(about forty-five years old) contains many circles joined by tracks. Tindale annotated it thus:

keinika walka  
 tracks of native cat  
 each concentric circle  
 represents a water + the  
 lines of the track between  
 them, conventionalized.  
 the whole does not form  
 apparently a geographical plan;  
 rather a generalized one.

The generalized plan Tindale was contemplating has been described more recently as a transformation of geographical knowledge into a design using the techniques of reduction, rectification (making geometric), and the imposition of symmetry.<sup>10</sup> Although these means are used widely across Aboriginal Australia, they appear to have reached their most extreme form in the Western Desert region.

Most of the SAM drawings are by men, but in SAM 7 there are a number of drawings by women and children. Unlike those of the men, these consist almost entirely of concentric circles, unconnected visibly with each other or anything else. There are almost no annotations on them revealing their significance, but the few exceptions to this indicate that the circles represent specific hills, caves, and water holes. On one, possibly that of a child (A49763), the ethnologist wrote: "These are idle drawings no meaning attached."

The earliest volume of these drawings (SAM 1) contains items with minimal documentation, regardless of the sex or age of the artists. From 1935 onward, however, Tindale and his colleagues, especially Mountford, increasingly wrote directly on the relevant designs of each drawing the names of places and mythological beings and the physical category of many of the geographical features depicted there. Each sheet may contain many words, usually in the local language but also sometimes in English, scattered over the marks made by the artist. Thus one frequently finds concentric circles next to which is the word *jabu* (i.e., *yapu*, "hill"), *kabi*, or *kapi* ("water"). At the edge of the sheets the ethnologists also recorded information about the person who made the drawing (the "artist"), such as name, sex, estimated age, and tribal affiliation. They also noted the date of collection and the name of the collector. The collectors did not print their names or use just their surnames but placed their formal signatures on each work, creating a kind of authorial voucher for a work that was clearly seen as a joint production. And yet it remained something whose dominant content—a representation of places—was squarely that of the Aboriginal artist-cartographer and, in most cases, used only the artist's visual conventions.

Each artist was assigned a code number preceded by a letter representing the expedition's place in the annual sequence of surveys mounted by Adelaide's Board for Anthropological Research (e.g., the young man Ka:kelbi in SAM 5 became "K33," since the 1935 Warburton Range survey was expedition K). The same individuals were usually measured in detail and photographed, their genealogies elicited, and their blood and hair sampled. On occasion plaster casts were taken of parts of their bodies or even, in a few cases, their whole bodies.

These expeditions typically lasted two or three months, were carried out by several men working as a multidisciplinary team, and involved rapid surveys of large numbers of individuals rather than in-depth learning of a particular culture.<sup>11</sup> This is perhaps the chief shortfall of the work, apart from the political and ethical criticisms that can easily be made of it with hindsight, but it was done systematically and with care, and the results continue to be useful, particularly to Aboriginal people seeking to find out more about their family histories, their ancestry, and their land-based affiliations.

SAM 10 is distinctive. It contains maps obtained in the northwest of Western Australia, most of them by Tindale and some by his collaborator Joseph B. Birdsell. It is notable that only the title of this last volume refers to "Native Maps," whereas all the others refer to "Aboriginal (Crayon) Drawings." The distinction is perhaps appropriate in the sense that this is the volume with the greatest range of approaches to depicting geography and, in contrast with the other volumes, contains explicit attempts to approximate a European style of mapmaking. There is evidence that the "artists" in this case generally had more exposure to European culture, including schooling, than most of the others. The earlier volumes consist mainly of images drawn by desert people who had little or no experience of Western culture. Few are recorded as having yet acquired English names. SAM 10, by contrast, contains work by many more people who had English names and who had been settled for some time either on cattle stations or on missions.

SAM 10 also contains works by people from both the desert hinterland and the coast. In terms of graphic conventions, the desert styles for representing geography in this case either are very similar to the highly conceptual styles of the earlier volumes, emphasizing mythological landscapes rather than physiography or territorial zones as such, or make an attempt to indicate major physio-

10. See p. 381 above.

11. The expeditions began in 1925 and continued to occur in most years until 1954, with a gap from 1941 to 1950. In 1938–39 Tindale was engaged in the major Harvard–Adelaide Universities expedition with Joseph B. Birdsell, and he worked with Birdsell again for the first two years of the UCLA expedition of 1952–54. Information courtesy of Philip Jones, South Australian Museum.

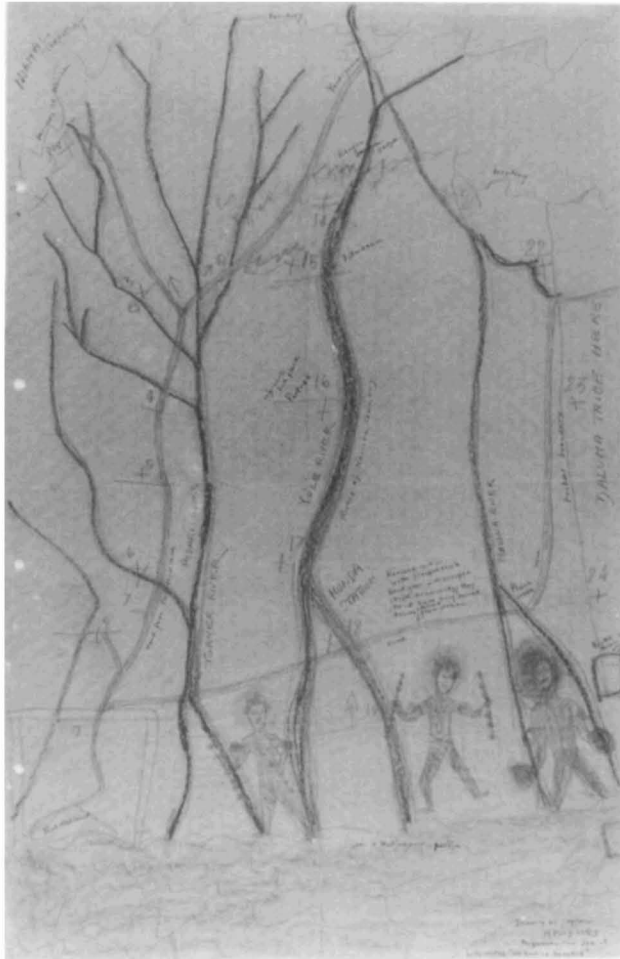


FIG. 10.3. RIVERS OF KARIARA COUNTRY. Crayon on paper, by Captain. Collector's note reads: "Any woman can see it." The mapmaker has shown his own region near Port Hedland (the area associated with owners of the Kariara [Kariyarra] language) as central and neighboring languages (Njamal [Nyamal] and Ngaluma [Ngarluma]) on the periphery. The sea is shown, but it is not the primary focus. Size of the original: 54.1 × 35 cm. Photograph courtesy of the South Australian Museum Archives, Adelaide (SAM 9, sheet 203).

graphic features such as ranges of hills and creeks and to superimpose on them (in the handwriting of the ethnologists) the names of language groups or the limits of land tenure interests.

Works in SAM 10 that were drawn by coastal people are far closer to a Western figurative style. Figure 10.5 shows rivers, including the Fitzroy, as well as hinterland country, in northern Western Australia. Here it is notable that the rivers are represented effectively as a series of parallel straight lines. This convention closely resembles that used in some of the western Arnhem Land drawings collected by Ronald Murray Berndt and in Bob Holroyd's maps of western Cape York Peninsula.<sup>12</sup> All of these relate to coastal and pericoastal areas.

Examples like the 1953 map of rivers entering the sea near Port Hedland, Western Australia, by a man called Captain are perhaps the nearest these works come to being "tribal maps" pure and simple (fig. 10.3). Here and elsewhere there is a strong tendency for the cartographer to show his own country or language area at the center of the image, with its neighbors rather incompletely represented around the periphery.

The maps in SAM 10 point to this general difference between images by inland desert peoples, which are not very figurative and tend toward geometric reductions, and images by coastal peoples, which are more figurative and less reductive (and thus more like those of the European tradition). The latter resemble maps collected by Ronald Berndt for the coastal areas of Arnhem Land.

Many of the drawings in SAM 8, also from the northwest of Western Australia, are of single humanlike figures known as Wandjina, and these come from the coastal region of the Kimberleys.<sup>13</sup> Although mythological details are noted on many of these figures, none of the myths are located geographically. What the Wandjina figures have in common with the coastal maps from the same region, and also with the coastal maps from Arnhem Land, is a sureness of line, a boldness in the use of color, and the use of more than just the basic Australian colors (red, white, black, yellow), features generally absent in the works from the desert hinterland, apart from a number of the images depicting designs on sacred objects. The desert icons and maps, those that were collected in the form of crayon drawings, are often executed with a spidery, indefinite use of line and with only light pressure applied to the paper. Infilling is often irregularly executed, and there is little use of internal borders. Compare this with the definiteness of the map by a Kitja man from south of Kununurra in Western Australia in figure 10.4 and the complete use of infill in the highly abstracted map of the Fitzroy River region in figure 10.5.

This spidery quality in the desert maps may arise from the fact that classical desert graphic techniques are dominated by dots rather than by linear forms, and dotting in acrylics has become their international artistic hallmark; but the use of lines was by no means absent from the Western Desert visual arts even before the advent of in-

12. Examples collected by Berndt include those illustrated in Ronald Murray Berndt, *The Sacred Site: The Western Arnhem Land Example* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1970), 40 and 41, and see below, p. 397. The maps drawn by Bob Holroyd in 1992, during a time of local political upheaval over land in his homeland area in western Cape York Peninsula, are discussed in detail in my forthcoming article in *Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture*.

13. See Peter Sutton, "Responding to Aboriginal Art," in *Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia*, ed. Peter Sutton (New York: George Braziller in association with the Asia Society Galleries, 1988), 33–58, esp. 48, fig. 76, for an example of a Wandjina figure.

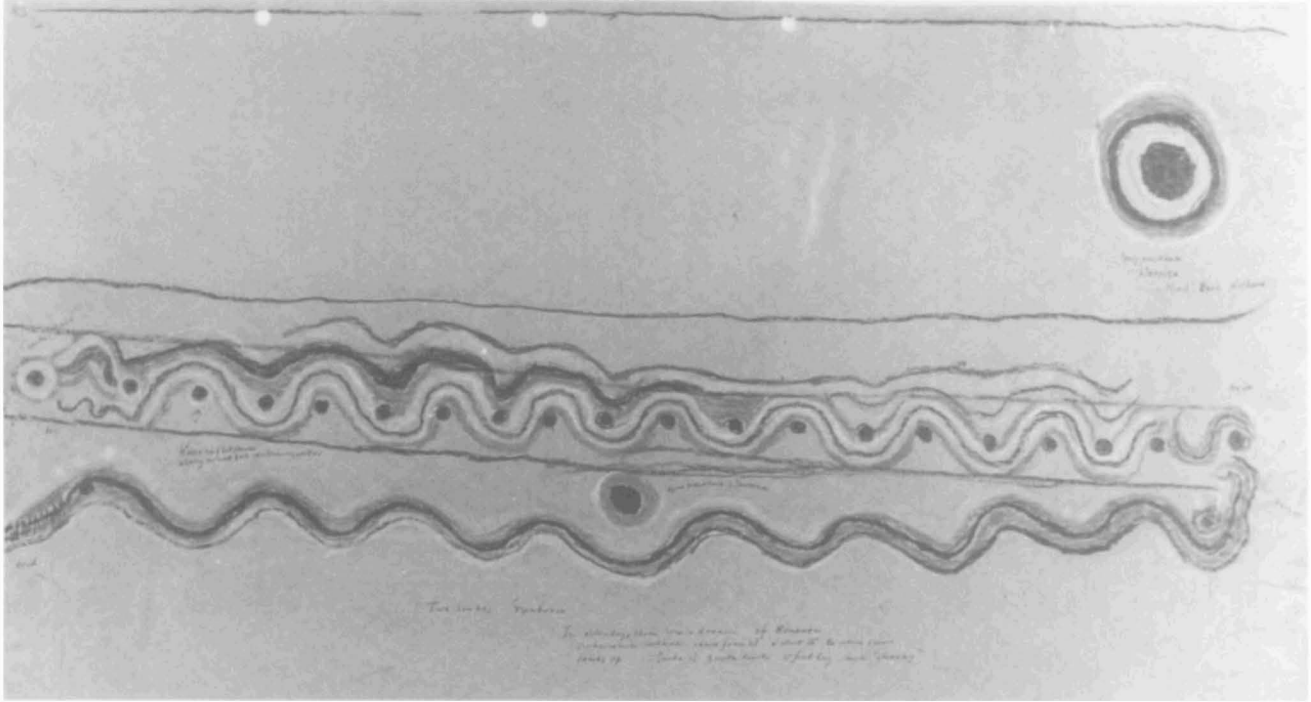


FIG. 10.4. MY ROCKHOLE WOROLEA = NIMDJI BORE N. OF HERE. Crayon on paper, 1953, by a Kitja man. Size of the original: 35.5 × 54 cm. Photograph courtesy of the

South Australian Museum Archives, Adelaide (SAM 9, sheet 163).

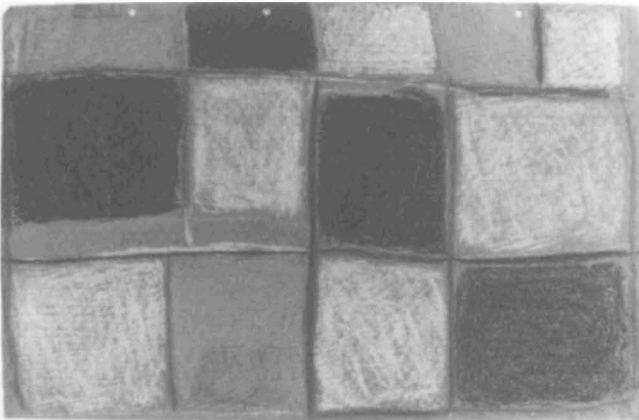


FIG. 10.5. THE FITZROY RIVER, IN NORTHERN WESTERN AUSTRALIA. Crayon on paper, 1953. Size of the original: 35.2 × 54.6 cm. Photograph courtesy of the South Australian Museum Archives, Adelaide (SAM 8, part 2, sheet 166).

dustrial paints. Ground paintings carried out on crushed termite mounds, body painting, and even casual illustrations made in the sand during conversation or narrative involve lines, not simply series of dots or tracklike forms, for example. Whereas physiographic landscape features in these images are shown in plan view, animals, human beings, and trees are usually shown in section view even in the desert or semidesert, as with the trees in figure 10.6.

Mountford also deposited Aboriginal crayon drawings

and finger paintings in the State Library of South Australia as part of what is called the Mountford-Sheard Collection. These include over three hundred collected in Central Australia in 1940. Most of these, as well as the South Australian Museum series of drawings, remain unpublished. Mountford was the most prolific publisher of their designs, most of them redrawn as silhouettes and line drawings for the sake of clarity.<sup>14</sup> His major work, *Nomads of the Australian Desert*, contains several of these reproductions and has a section called “Art of the Crayon Drawings.”<sup>15</sup> Several of the images in that book, particularly sacred objects photographed by Mountford, were meant for the eyes of initiated men only. The book’s release led to legal action by Aboriginal people from Cen-

14. See Charles Percy Mountford, “Aboriginal Crayon Drawings from the Warburton Ranges in Western Australia relating to the Wanderings of Two Ancestral Beings the Wati Kutjara,” *Records of the South Australian Museum* 6 (1937–41): 5–28; idem, “Aboriginal Crayon Drawings [I]: Relating to Totemic Places Belonging to the Northern Aranda Tribe of Central Australia,” *Transactions and Proceedings of the Royal Society of South Australia* 61 (1937): 84–95; idem, “Aboriginal Crayon Drawings II: Relating to Totemic Places in South-western Central Australia,” *Transactions and Proceedings of the Royal Society of South Australia* 61 (1937): 226–40; idem, “Aboriginal Crayon Drawings III” (note 2); idem, “Contrast in Drawings Made by an Australian Aborigine before and after Initiation,” *Records of the South Australian Museum* 6 (1937–41): 111–14; and idem, *Nomads of the Australian Desert* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1976), 94–97.

15. Mountford, *Nomads*, 94–114.

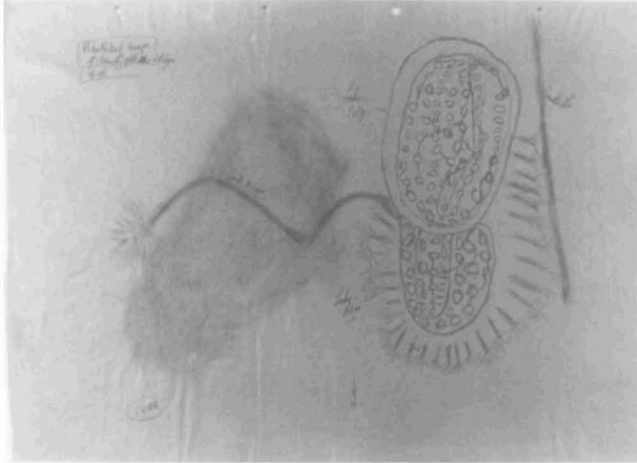


FIG. 10.6. LAKE POLGU AND MILGARI CREEK. Crayon on paper, by Poko Poko (?). The swampy areas, lake, and creek are shown in plan view, with the trees shown in section view.

Size of the original: 36 × 49.9 cm. Photograph courtesy of the South Australian Museum Archives, Adelaide (SAM 10, sheet 22).

tral Australia, and it was withdrawn from sale soon after publication. In a penetrating comparison between the designs on sacred objects relating to some of the same places depicted in crayon drawings published in the book by Mountford, Luke Taylor was able to show that, although the drawings were more figurative in their approach, they shared the same core visual structures as the sacred object designs that were far more geometrical and simple in overt form.<sup>16</sup> For reasons of Aboriginal law, these comparisons cannot be illustrated here.

We are on safe ground, however, in reproducing a woman's drawing on a secular theme published by Mountford (fig. 10.7).<sup>17</sup> It was made at Ernabella (Pukatja) in Central Australia in 1940. Mountford had been working with the men there, whose drawings, with a handful of exceptions, were concerned with sacred mythology. To prevent any suspicion that he might transmit their secrets to local women, Mountford did not work with women himself but had his young companion L. E. Sheard and an Aboriginal woman who was the wife of the camelier on their expedition obtain a series of women's drawings like the one illustrated here.<sup>18</sup>

#### THE BERNDT COLLECTION

Ronald Murray Berndt, one of the more eminent anthropologists in the history of Aboriginal studies, carried out fieldwork at many locations in Australia from 1939 to the early 1980s. At virtually every field location he encouraged knowledgeable informants to draw maps of the country in Aboriginal terms and to depict religious themes, including ceremonial dress designs, ritual perfor-

mance patterns, and images of Dreaming figures. His wife Catherine Helen Berndt, who joined him in fieldwork from the mid-1940s onward, collected similar drawings among the Aboriginal women at most locations. Her sheets of paper tend to be smaller than the ones her husband handed out, and her documentation of the drawings made by women, including the provenance of each sheet by date and place, is less consistently detailed. The drawings they collected are now housed in the Berndt Museum of Anthropology, University of Western Australia.<sup>19</sup>

These drawings, mostly in crayon on paper, number approximately two thousand. If we exclude the children's drawings in the South Australian collections discussed above, the Berndt Collection is by far the most substantial of its kind. The depth of its documentation is also, by and large, far greater than that of the South Australian collections. This is in part because of the greater training of the Berndts, who were professional anthropologists with Ph.D.'s from the University of London, but also because they usually remained for many months at each field location, gaining an understanding of local culture on a broad front by studying at least one local language, collecting texts in it, eliciting genealogies, studying local and social organization and kinship, local history, mythology, and religious and ceremonial life. Their annotations of Aboriginal drawings are voluminous compared with most of those by Tindale and Mountford.

Over some thirty-five years the Berndts published, singly or together, a large number of books, many of which are fine-grained ethnographies of particular groups or of selected aspects of a group's culture. Tindale, on the other hand, was largely self-taught in ethnology, although he practiced as a professional museum curator, and Mountford was a postal worker and enthusiastic amateur. Neither ever published a major ethnography of a single Aboriginal group. The Berndts' collecting of drawings, however, was built on the earlier practice systematically and regularly engaged in by Tindale and Mountford and others who were members of expeditions organized by Adelaide's Board for Anthropological Research. Ronald Berndt was also from Adelaide, and as a young man he took part in one of the board's expeditions (Ooldea, western South Australia, 1939). In their rather massive "preliminary report" on their fieldwork at Ooldea, the Berndts wrote:

Drawings, an excellent medium for recording details of physiographic import, were obtained. [Berndts']

16. Luke Taylor, "Ancestors into Art: An Analysis of Pitjantjatjara Kulpidji Designs and Crayon Drawings" (B.A. honors thesis, Department of Prehistory and Anthropology, Australian National University, 1979).

17. Mountford, *Nomads*, 112, pl. 51 (note 14).

18. Mountford, *Nomads*, 109.

19. Two works from this collection are also discussed below, pp. 412–13.

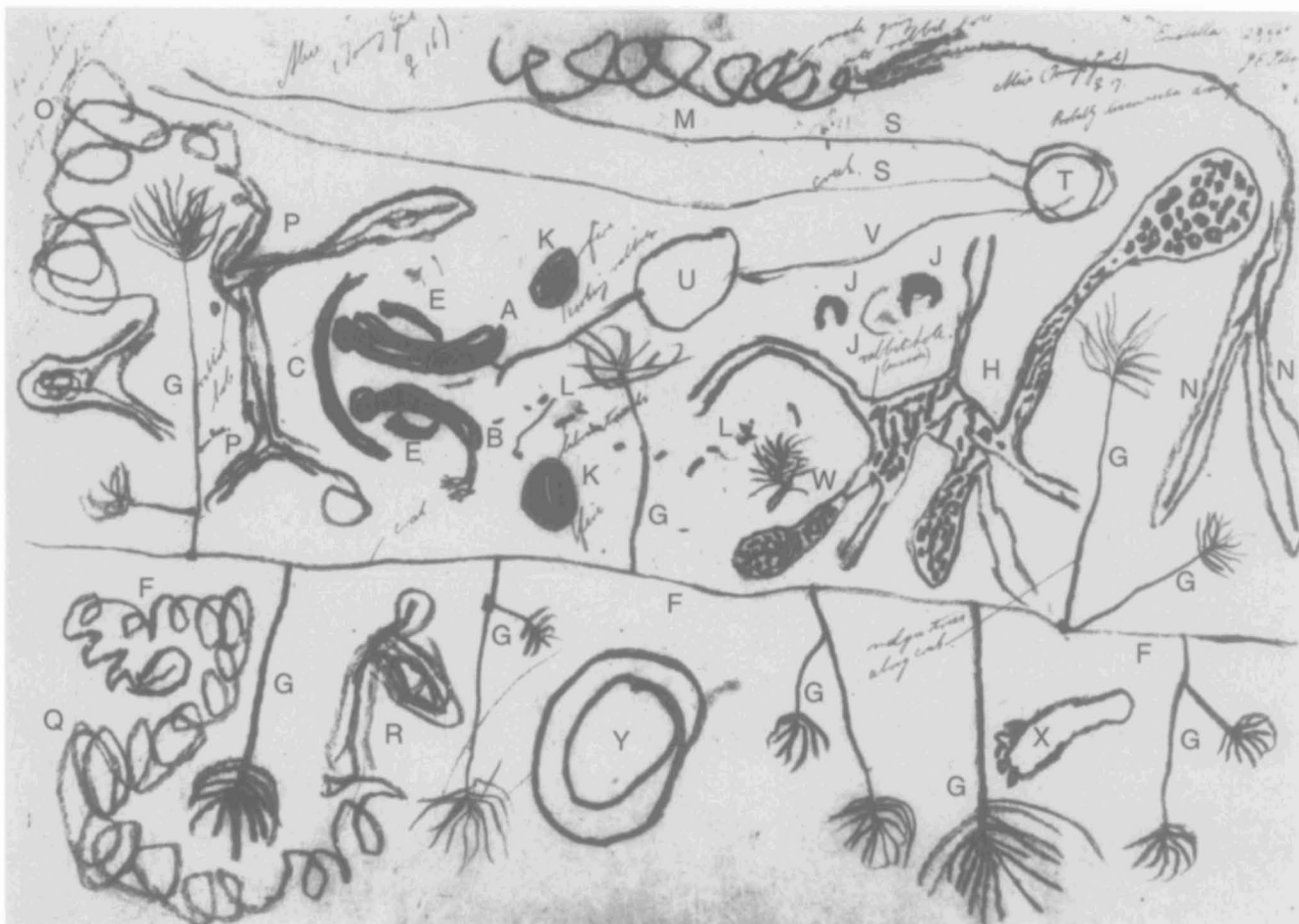


FIG. 10.7. A DAY'S HUNT. Crayon drawing by Alice ("Tommy's girl"), Ernabella, Central Australia, 1940: A and B, two women asleep in their camp (left center); C, their wind-break; E, their two campfires; F, a watercourse; G, mulga trees growing on the banks of the watercourse; H, ground plan of a rabbit warren dug out by the women—the black dots are the rabbits inside; J, the two women, who dug the warren with wooden dishes; K, the two fires where the rabbits were cooked; L, tracks of the women returning to their camp at C; M and O, meandering tracks of snakes; N and P, sections of the rab-

bit warren entered by the snakes; Q, another snake track; R, rabbit burrow where this snake shelters; S, two creeks flowing into a single water hole; T, the water hole; U, another water catchment; V, creek joining water hole T to U; X, human footprint; Y, unidentified.

Size of the original: 37 × 52.5 cm. Photograph courtesy of the Mountford-Sheard Collection, Special Collections, State Library of South Australia, Adelaide. By permission of Sammy Dodd. Key after Charles Percy Mountford, *Nomads of the Australian Desert* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1976), 111–12 and pl. 51.

footnote: The pioneer in this field is Mr C. P. Mountford, who has made a large collection of aboriginal drawings. His use of strong brown paper approximately 2½ × 1½ feet and lumber crayons of several colours was also adopted.] These mostly consist of plans of water-holes and country associated with the wanderings of ancestral beings drawn by adults, children's drawings, and odd ones of special interest.<sup>20</sup>

Mountford, however, began the practice of collecting crayon drawings some years after Tindale had already made it a regular part of his field practice. But it was certainly Mountford who most encouraged the young Ronald Berndt to follow suit, as he did also with Robert

Tonkinson, who began work in the Western Desert in the 1960s.<sup>21</sup>

Berndt once described his method as follows: "My

20. Ronald Murray Berndt and Catherine Helen Berndt, "A Preliminary Report of Field Work in the Ooldea Region, Western South Australia," *Oceania* 12 (1941–42): 305–30; 13 (1942–43): 51–70, 143–69, 243–80, 362–75; 14 (1943–44): 30–66, 124–58, 220–49, 338–58; 15 (1944–45): 49–80, 154–65, 239–75, esp. 12:313. Three of the 1941 Ooldea drawings were published in Ronald Murray Berndt and Catherine Helen Berndt with John E. Stanton, *Aboriginal Australian Art: A Visual Perspective* (Sydney: Methuen, 1982), 73 (pls. 60–62).

21. Robert Tonkinson, personal communication, November 1994. See Tonkinson's *The Mardu Aborigines: Living the Dream in Australia's Desert*, 2d ed. (Fort Worth, Tex.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1991),

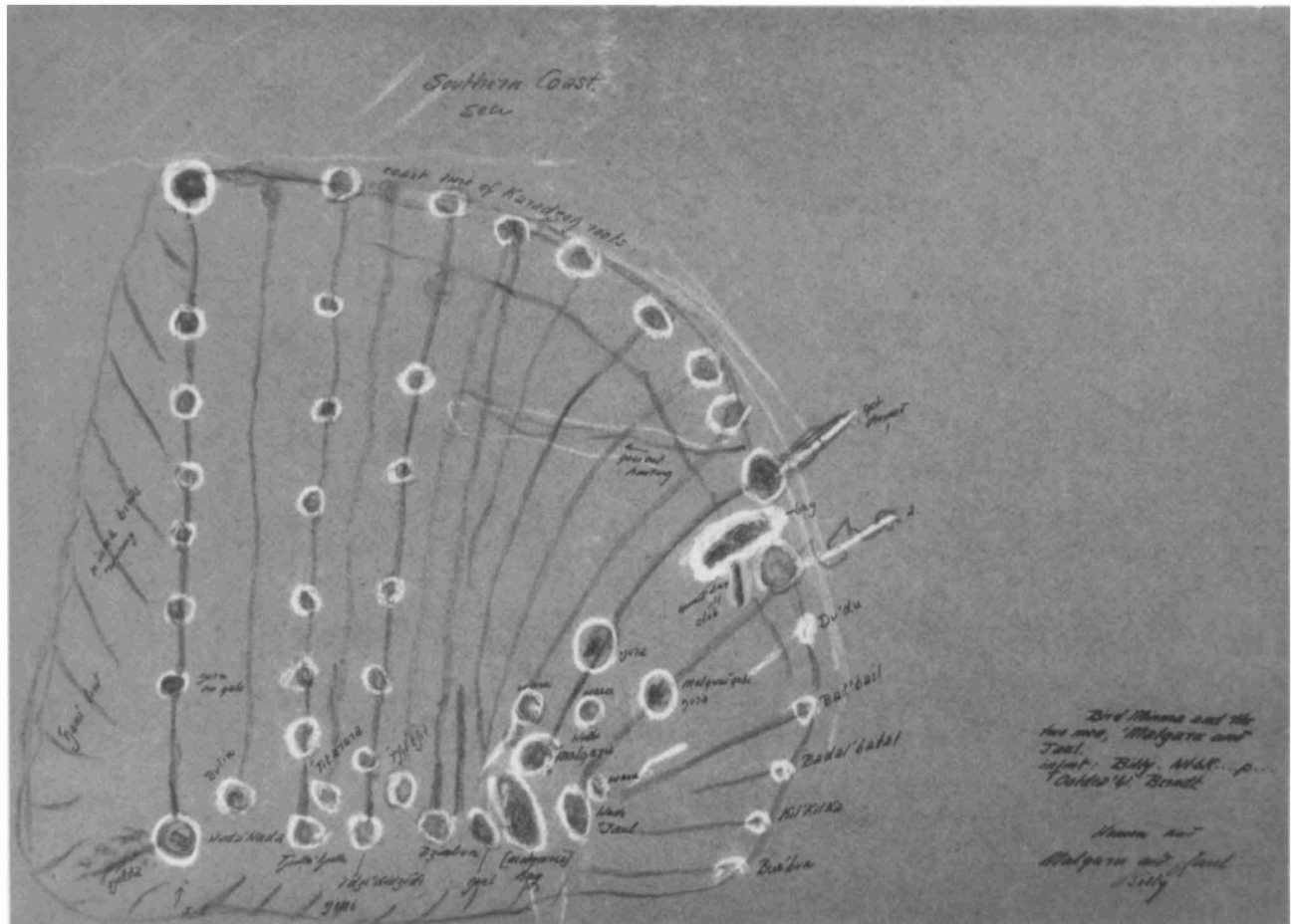


FIG. 10.8. BIRD MINMA [WOMAN] AND THE TWO MEN MALGARU AND JAUL, BY BILLY. Ooldea, South Australia, 1941. Crayon on paper. Represented are their Dreaming tracks from out of the desert to the coast, with two tracks extending into the sea.

Photograph by J. E. Stanton, courtesy of the Berndt Museum of Anthropology, Perth (P22142).

procedure has been to get local informants to draw their country in outline without reference to European maps. Any correlation with the latter is attempted only afterward. There are certain inherent difficulties in such an approach, although in my opinion the benefits outweigh these. . . . Additionally, the Aboriginal maps are not to scale and are not in any sense topographically accurate.”<sup>22</sup>

Some fifty-nine of the Ooldea drawings are specifically topographic depictions rather than mythic figures or children’s drawings. Two drawings of cosmological topics appear elsewhere in this book (figs. 9.9 and 9.10), and a plan of the Ooldea camp is reproduced below, figure 10.28. A somewhat typical drawing is Billy’s illustration of the Dreaming tracks of the Bird Woman and Two Men descending out of the desert interior to the coast and thence, in two cases, into the sea itself (fig. 10.8).

One of the most spectacular objects in the Berndt Collection is a series of map sections consisting of six sheets

(in seven parts) (fig. 10.9) and another large sheet made up of four sheets joined together (fig. 10.10), covering a single region from Mount Margaret in the west, north to the Warburton Range, east to Ernabella and Oodnadatta, and south to the east-west railway line that runs through the Nullarbor Plain (fig. 10.11). There are literally hundreds of place-names on this map, placed there by Ronald Berndt in the course of collection but on instructions from the men who were teaching him aspects of their knowledge of this vast area. By contrast with so many crayon drawing maps, this one is a collective product by several men. It illustrates how the fine details of a truly vast area of land may be part of “group knowledge” at a

112 and 114–15, for reproductions of two of the drawings he collected there. Unfortunately, most of Tonkinson’s collection of Western Desert drawings has been lost.

22. Berndt, *Sacred Site*, 14 (note 12). Here he was perhaps referring specifically to his western Arnhem Land work, but I think the statement probably applies to all his map elicitation work.





FIG. 10.9. ONE SHEET OF LARGE MULTISECTION MAP, DRAWN BY VARIOUS MEN. One sheet of six that cover south-central Australia from Oodnadatta to Ernabella, Warburton Range, Mount Margaret, and along the east-west railway line. Collected at Ooldea, 1941, by Ronald Berndt. Crayon on paper. Photograph by J. E. Stanton, courtesy of the Berndt Museum of Anthropology, Perth (P22145–P22150; P22146 shown here).

single place and time without necessarily being held by any of the group's members individually.<sup>23</sup>

In 1958, at Balgo in the northern desert region of Western Australia, Ronald Berndt asked adult men of "mixed dialectal origin" to draw maps showing both mythological tracks and "tracks along which they moved from one point to the next," and Berndt combined some of this information into a sketch map.<sup>24</sup> This map covers most of the same area as a similar map of mythic tracks Berndt published in 1972.<sup>25</sup> A third map covering the same area was drawn for Tindale, presumably in 1953, and published in 1974 (figs. 10.12 and 10.13). Central on all three images is the area associated with the language group Kukatja.<sup>26</sup> In all three maps we see the areas of adjacent groupings mostly shown only in part and on the edges of the image. Typical of desert depictions of coun-

try, all three maps focus on sites linked in strings representing either mythic or human travels, with minimal or no attention to topographic features as such.<sup>27</sup> This is in high contrast with Aboriginal maps from northern Australia.<sup>28</sup>

A number of north Australian Aboriginal maps showing topographic features have been published. Ronald and Catherine Berndt collected a major series of Aboriginal maps in western Arnhem Land during fieldwork there carried out on several occasions during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Three of the maps were published in 1970 as part of a major ethnography.<sup>29</sup> Two are reproduced here with interpretations based on Berndt (figs. 10.14–10.17).

The emphasis in figure 10.14, a map of a clan estate, is on two main structural features of the landscape: water-courses and hills. The estate is typical of those found in watershed areas in that it consists of the heads of several streams. Aboriginal estates farther down drainage systems tend to consist of single drainage subbasins. Here again we strike an example of the common tendency for Aboriginal cartographers to depict their own land at the center of the image, with some neighboring countries shown around its periphery.

Figure 10.16, by contrast, shows six clan estates on the Liverpool River in the region of Maningrida, but the centrality of the cartographer's land is maintained. Most of the map, as in the previous example, consists of only two

23. See the section titled "Crayon and Other Drawings" in Ronald Murray Berndt and Catherine Helen Berndt, *The World of the First Australians*, 4th rev. ed. (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1988), 425–26. Ronald Berndt considered the most striking of his crayon drawing collections to be the one created for him at Birrindudu, in the Northern Territory, in 1945. Few of these drawings, however, would come under the rubric of maps that I am using in this case. Examples of the Birrindudu drawings have been published in Ronald Murray Berndt and Catherine Helen Berndt, "Aboriginal Art in Central-Western Northern Territory," *Meanjin* 9 (1950): 183–88 and figs. 1–10, and Berndt, Berndt, and Stanton, *Aboriginal Australian Art*, 74–76, pls. 63–68 (note 20).

24. See Ronald Murray Berndt, "Territoriality and the Problem of Demarcating Sociocultural Space," in *Tribes and Boundaries in Australia*, ed. Nicolas Peterson (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1976), 133–61, esp. 136–39.

25. See Ronald Murray Berndt, "The Walmadjeri and Gugadja," in *Hunters and Gatherers Today: A Socioeconomic Study of Eleven Such Cultures in the Twentieth Century*, ed. M. G. Bicchieri (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 177–216, esp. 184–86.

26. Kukatja is spelled Gugadja by Berndt and Kokatja by Tindale.

27. See further above, pp. 379–83.

28. One exception to this may be the map of a Plains Kangaroo mythic track of the middle Roper River published as part of a land claim book in 1981; see Howard Morphy and Frances Morphy, *Yutpundji-Djindjirritj Land Claim* (Darwin: Northern Land Council, 1981), 62. The authors do not state that the image was drawn for them by claimants, only that they had "produced" it.

29. Ronald Murray Berndt and Catherine Helen Berndt, *Man, Land and Myth in North Australia: The Gunwinggu People* (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1970), figs. 2–4.

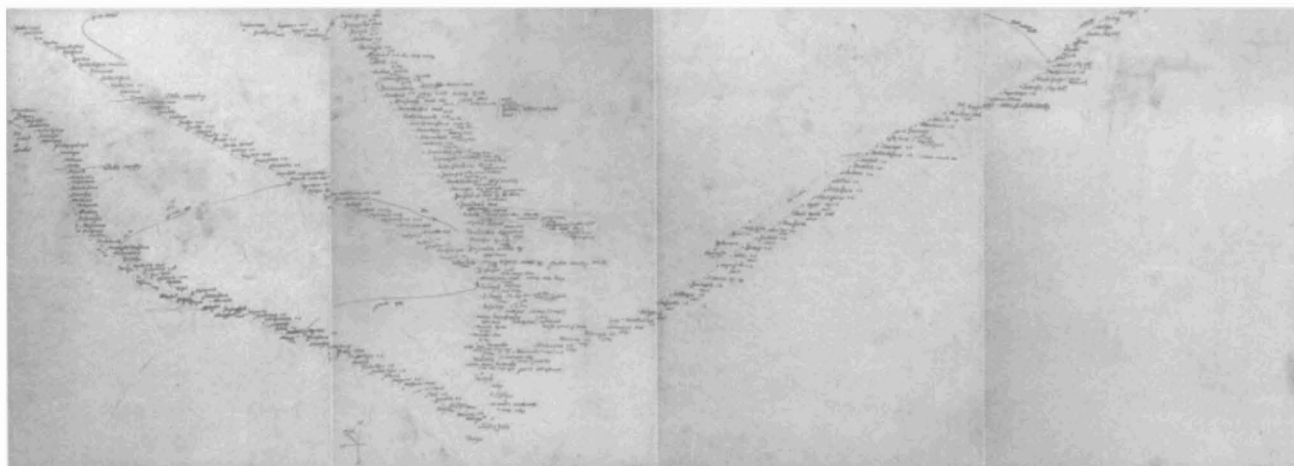


FIG. 10.10. COMPOSITE MAP OF A REGION IN SOUTH-CENTRAL AUSTRALIA. This map of four connecting sheets was drawn by various men, Ooldea, South Australia, 1941. Collected by Ronald Murray Berndt. Crayon on paper. Ooldea is near the bottom of the second sheet.

Photographs by J. E. Stanton, courtesy of the Berndt Museum of Anthropology, Perth (P22152-22155).

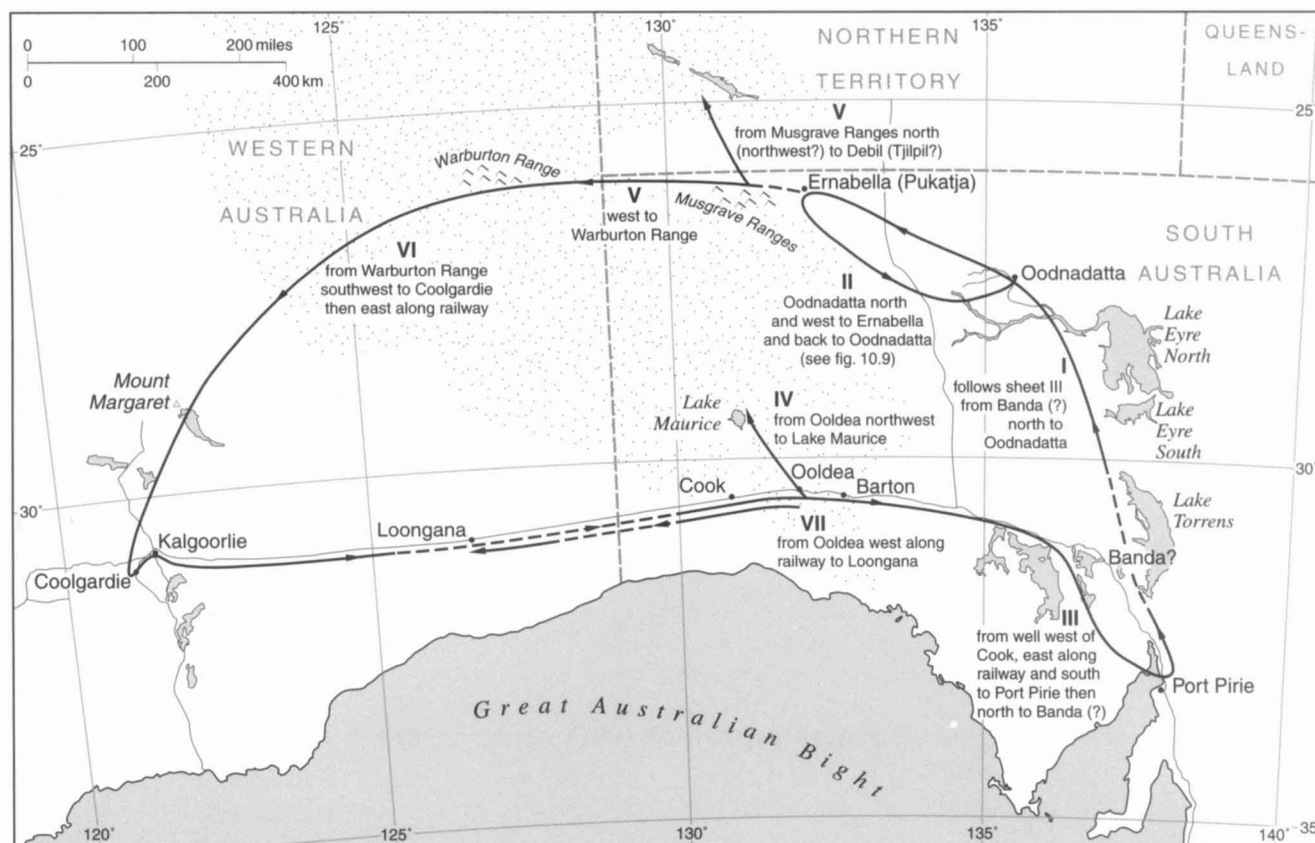


FIG. 10.11. REFERENCE MAP FOR FIGURES 10.9 AND 10.10. This is the region covered by the map sheets prepared by various men and collected at Ooldea in 1941 by Berndt. I-VII show the seven parts of the six-sheet map (II is illus-

trated in fig. 10.9). Figure 10.10 covers the same region with Juldin'gabi (marked with a small x at the bottom of the composite map) being Ooldea.

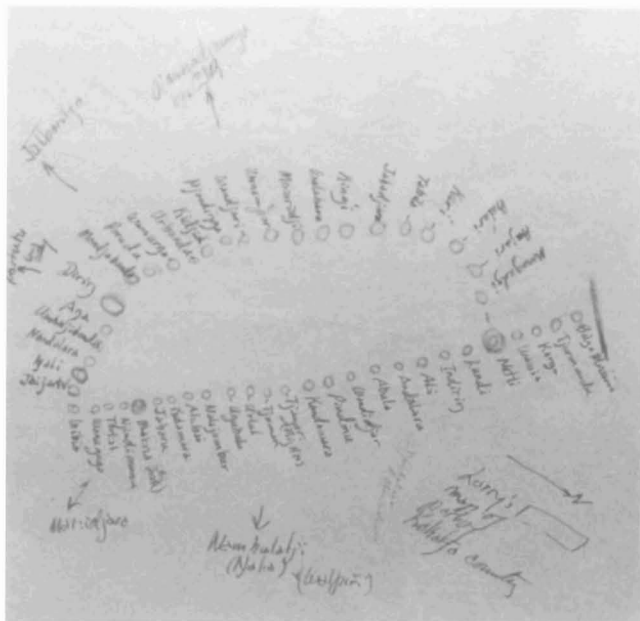


FIG. 10.12. KOKATJA MAN'S DRAWING OF THE COUNTRY SOUTH OF BALGO IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA, CA. 1953. The place-names, the Kokatja man's names for distant tribespeople, and a compass direction marker were added by the observer. See figure 10.13. Photograph courtesy of the South Australian Museum Archives, Adelaide (SAM 10, sheet 34).

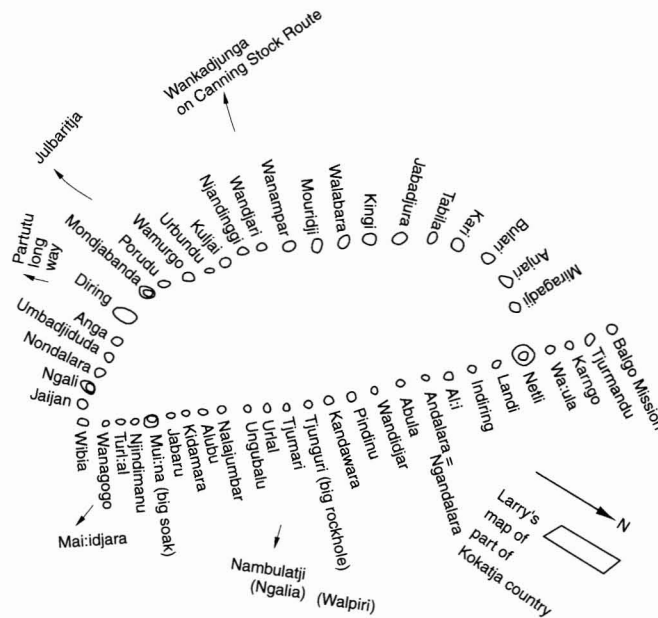


FIG. 10.13. TINDALE'S INTERPRETATION OF KOKATJA MAN'S DRAWING (FIG. 10.12). After Norman B. Tindale, *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia: Their Terrain, Environmental Controls, Distribution, Limits, and Proper Names* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 39.

kinds of features, but here they are watercourses and water holes.

In 1968 Berndt obtained a detailed map of Elcho Island, northeast Arnhem Land, in five large brown paper sections, and a redrawing of it was published in 1976. The composite map shows 164 sites numbered by Berndt.<sup>30</sup> These sites fall into fourteen clan estates, almost all of them discontinuous. Marine sites such as smaller islands, reefs, and rocks are included, as well as features as precise as a single named tree. The shoreline itself is the dominant topographic feature, and most sites cluster along it. Inland swamps, as in western Arnhem Land, are shown as circles. A shaded and unshaded contrast, added by Berndt, indicates which of the two patrimoieties the estates belong to.

In a work on sacred sites, published in 1970, Ronald Berndt illustrated his subject with a series of redrawn Aboriginal maps forming a mosaic covering part of western Arnhem Land from Croker Island south to near Oenpelli.<sup>31</sup> Although a number of these map sections deal with the coast and islands, which they represent in a highly figurative way (from a perpendicular perspective), a few show inland areas. Two of these focus on the Murganella (Marganala) floodplain and its various watercourses, and they indicate only small sections of coastline along their margins.<sup>32</sup> The watercourses are shown as straight lines on the Aboriginal maps, but they are by no means

straight on the ground. Furthermore, on the Aboriginal maps the lower reaches of river that lack significant tributaries appear to have been stretched out to form most of the river's length. This may reflect a cultural emphasis on the relatively resource-rich lower riverine areas as opposed to the ecologically thinner country upstream. The graphic straightening of the rivers, however, occurs in a number of Aboriginal works. Indicating a floodplain by an enclosing line, on the other hand, is most unusual.

In 1964 Ronald Berndt traveled to Yirrkala in northeast Arnhem Land, another field area in which he had carried out major ethnographic work with Catherine Berndt since the late 1940s. On previous visits there he had obtained many crayon drawings, mostly showing mythological and ceremonial themes and employing classical visual conventions to indicate topographic features. On this occasion, however, the wider political context was different: a major dispute had erupted over the establishment of bauxite mining on the Gove Peninsula.<sup>33</sup> Berndt needed to obtain information on the distribution of sacred sites in the affected area. Detailed on-the-

30. Berndt, "Territoriality," 148–54 (note 24). Berndt had also elicited similar, but much more detailed, maps in his 1946–47 fieldwork in the same region (154–55).

31. Berndt, *Sacred Site* (note 12).

32. Berndt, *Sacred Site*, 40 and 41.

33. Ronald Murray Berndt, "The Gove Dispute: The Question of

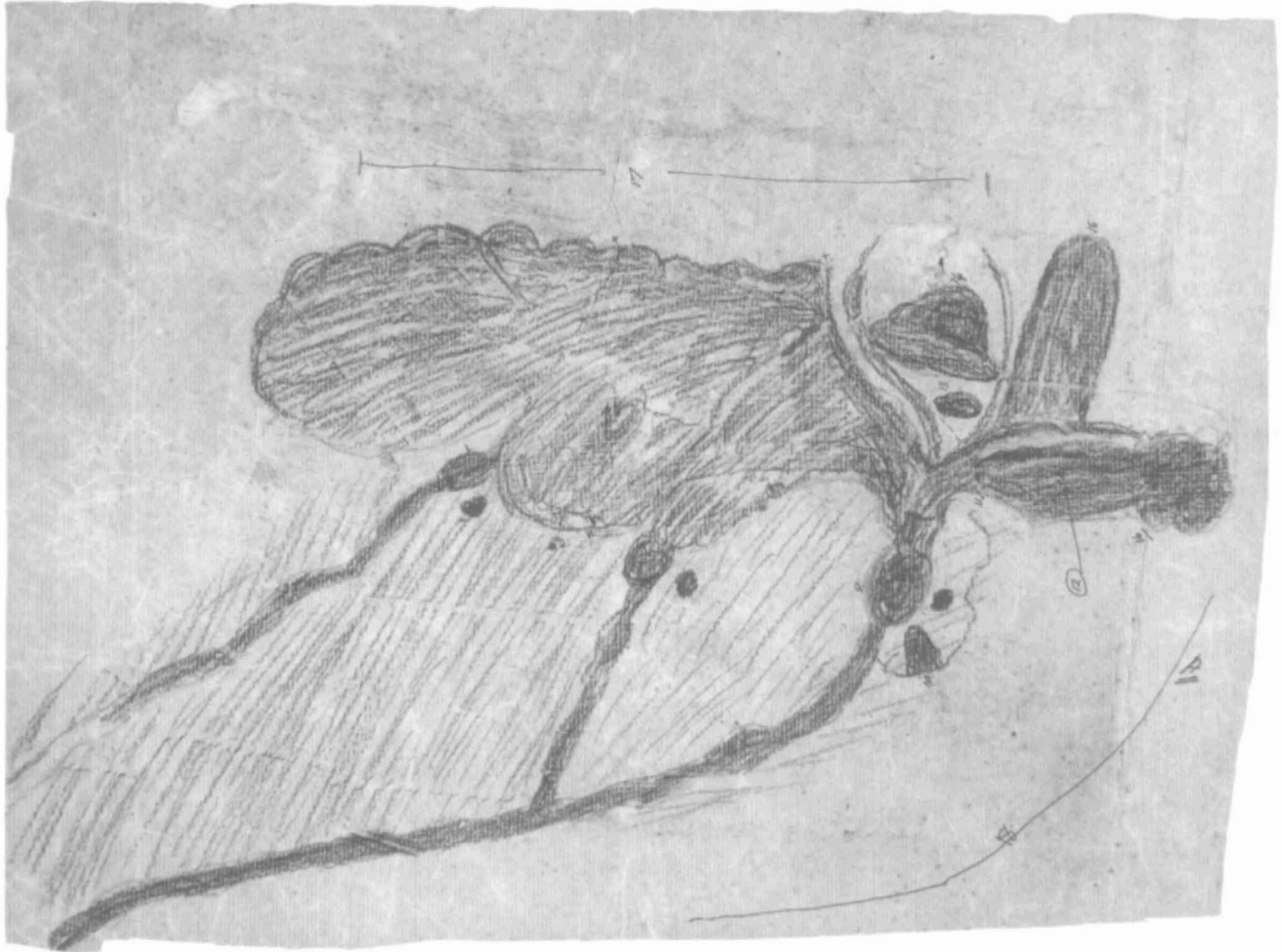


FIG. 10.14. ABORIGINAL MAP OF GUMADIR (GOOMADEER) RIVER AREA BY MANGGUDJA. Crayon on paper, western Arnhem Land, ca. 1950. The map shows the Maiirgulidj clan estate near the Goomadeer River east of Oenpelli. Compare figure 10.15.

ground field mapping had not yet taken place in the region to any significant degree. Berndt organized the drawing of a map of the Gove Peninsula, issuing brown paper sheets and red lumber crayons to Wandjuk Marika, who executed the work. At least eight senior local Aboriginal men took part in the creation of this map, however.<sup>34</sup> It was so detailed it had to be done in six sections, and yet these charts were “not as detailed as they could be.” They pinpointed, according to Berndt,

those sacred and traditional sites and areas which should not, except in extreme circumstances (such as a national emergency), be ceded to any authority other than one controlled by the local people or to the Administration which, ideally speaking, is established to safeguard their interests. In making these claims the men concerned, as spokesmen . . . showed thoughtfulness and responsibility in assessing the position. They have indicated a fair expanse which is available

for economic exploitation, covering a large bush area with egress to the sea at various points.<sup>35</sup>

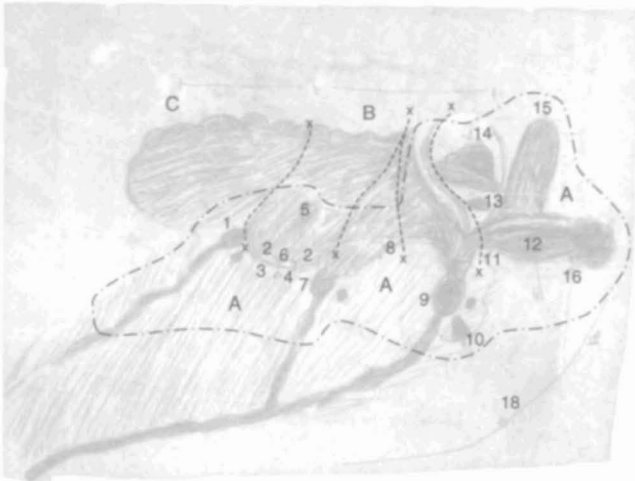
The Gove map is therefore not merely a map of Aboriginal places, but also a map of such places drawn up in response to the threat of a destructive form of development.

This illustrates a basic principle of such artifacts: that their content is always generated within a particular context, one that is reflected in the work itself. There is no “Aboriginal map of country” for all purposes. No such

Australian Aboriginal Land and the Preservation of Sacred Sites,” *Anthropological Forum* 1 (1964): 258–95, esp. 258–64.

34. They included Wandjuk’s father Mawalan, Mathaman, Milirrup, Munggurrawuy, Bununggu, Narritjin, Nanyin, and “Gongujuma or Gunggoilma” (Berndt, “Gove Dispute,” 269–70); I have transcribed these names in current orthography except for the last one, a name not familiar to me.

35. Berndt, “Gove Dispute,” 288 and 291.



x-----x Aboriginal tracks

A, B, C, Clan estates

----- Estate boundaries

1. Gubudji waterhole. An old Fish-poison *djang* man lived here.
2. Edge or fringe of hill.
3. Marelyi.
4. Djalargaiwa – Centipede place.
5. Guguraidja caves.
6. Also Centipede *djang*.
7. Manyalg-gabodju?mi – Bee and Honey name.
8. Nabulg-gabandaid.
9. Djurlga.
10. Nabalagaid, a *jarijaning* (yariyaning) *djang* man, now rock.  
(In a different version he was an orphan, a younger brother, and Djelama *gunmugugur*; his elder brother's name was Nagundjagu.)
11. Mibanar, river and short track.
12. Gundinug hole – water running down.
13. Gwingura hill.
14. Big hill with metamorphosed *ubar* at top (Wurubig).
15. Long hill, Demid. A group of mythical people drowned here; hill 14 sank down and they went to 15, but were drowned.
16. Galardjang. According to Manggudja, who drew this, his paternal grandparents and patrilineal ancestors lived here; during the wet season they made bark houses.
17. Deleted from map.
18. Gumadir River.

FIG. 10.15. INTERPRETATION OF ABORIGINAL MAP OF GUMADIR RIVER AREA (FIG. 10.14). Maiirgulidj clan estate is surrounded by a dot-and-dash line and is identified as A. Neighboring clan estates are shown as B (Barbin estate) and C (Ngalngbali estate). People of the three estates were identified as “one family,” that is, as closely related. The Maiirgulidj estate contains a number of sites, sixteen of which are shown by numbers superimposed on the map. It is crossed by several Aboriginal walking tracks, shown as x-----x. Watercourses are indicated by roughly parallel heavy lines and in-filled. Water holes are elliptical bulbs as at 1 and 12. (The circle at 16 is probably a swamp or water hole also.) The line marked 2 is the edge of a line of hills, and the forms numbered 13, 14, and 15 are particular hills. The smaller form at 10 is a particular rock.

After Ronald Murray Berndt and Catherine Helen Berndt, *Man, Land and Myth in North Australia: The Gunwinggu People* (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1970), fig. 3.

map, I venture to say, would ever be exactly replicated even by the same cartographer on the same day. They are unique performances, like most ceremonial enactments in classical Aboriginal practice. While elements of both maps and ceremonies may remain constants, their selection and combination in each case is always likely to be event specific.<sup>36</sup>

### SMALLER SCHOLARLY COLLECTIONS

Many small collections of Aboriginal maps are in private hands, usually gathered by an anthropologist or similar scholar in the course of fieldwork. Occasionally some of these maps find their way into print. One of the earliest examples is Papi's map of coral reefs near Mabuiag in the Torres Strait published early this century, showing Mabuiag Island in section and the reefs in plan view.<sup>37</sup>

Similar collections include that of Robert Tonkinson and that of Michael Robinson, another anthropologist from Western Australia.<sup>38</sup> A number of the drawings, however, are isolated, one-time efforts, such as the one by Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri of 1988 (fig. 10.18). This map is titled, presumably by Vivien Johnson, “Map of Anmatyerre Country” and is a pencil drawing on paper. It was drawn by Tjapaltjarri, a renowned artist in acrylics, “during a late night conversation with Chris Hodges in New York November 1988. . . . The map began in the dense lower middle section with the artist's principal sites around Mt Wedge, Napperby, Mt Allan and Yuendumu, then spread out to the north, south and east as these Dreaming trails were traced back to their points of origin beyond the artist's family estate.”<sup>39</sup> This act of commencing with the cartographer's own core country and moving outward nicely parallels the tendency of maps in the South Australian Museum collection, already discussed, which usually show the cartographer's “tribal” or Dreaming country at the center, often with neighboring groups' countries shown only in part and tangentially. Under Aboriginal tradition, this would normally be the proper way to proceed. Creating a “map” is an act of asserting one's associations with land. Since one can speak only for one's own area, such maps must normally be expected to be geographically egocentric and thus highly partial representations of a person's actual knowledge.

36. See Keen, *Knowledge and Secrecy*, 132–68 (note 7), on improvisation and innovation in ceremonial performances in northeast Arnhem Land.

37. Alfred C. Haddon, ed., *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits*, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904), 60.

38. See Tonkinson, *Mardu Aborigines*, 112–15 (note 21). Michael V. Robinson, personal communication.

39. Vivien Johnson, *The Art of Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri* (Basel: Gordon and Breach Arts International, 1994), 12 (pl. 1), quotation on 153.

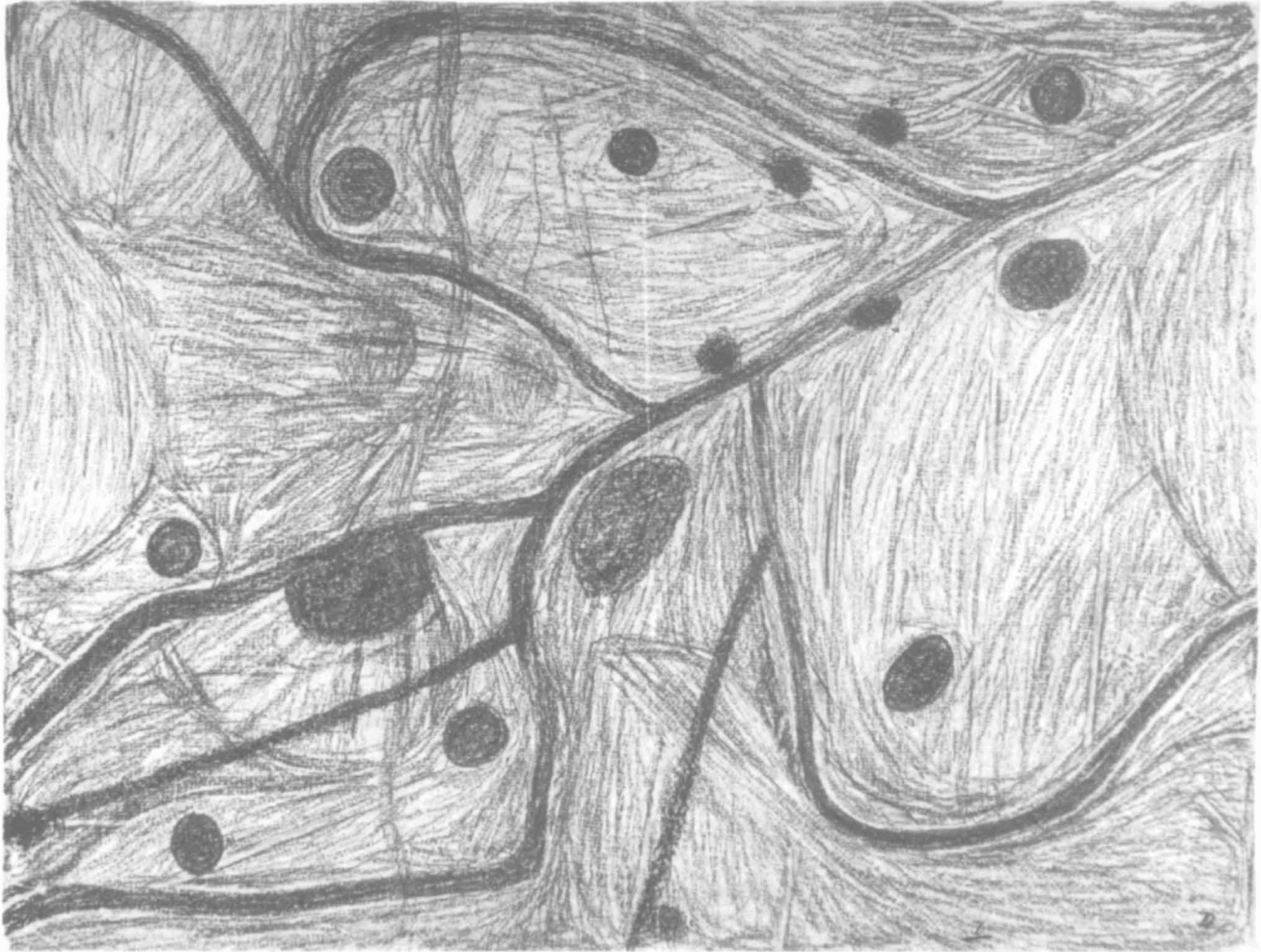


FIG. 10.16. ABORIGINAL MAP OF MARGULIDJBAN AND ENVIRONS: SOME OF THE MAIN SITES, BY DUBUNGU. Crayon on paper. Western Arnhem Land, ca. 1950. Compare figure 10.17.

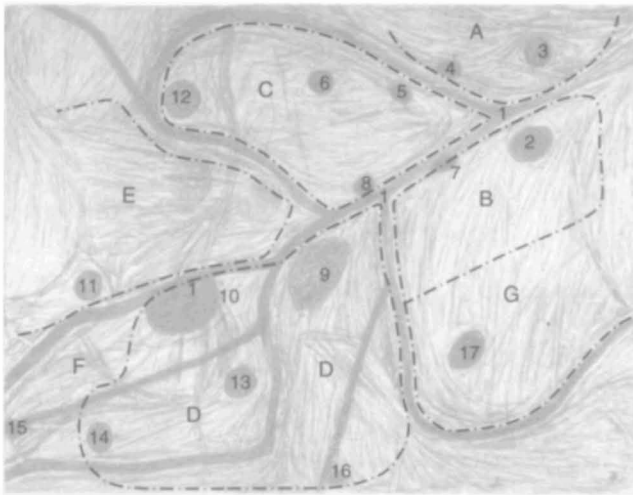
Photograph by J. E. Stanton, courtesy of the Berndt Museum of Anthropology, Perth (P22156).

The map looks nothing like Tjapaltjarri's paintings but is very like the "mud maps," which have a basic framework of important places and the roads connecting them (this one is bisected by the Stuart Highway).<sup>40</sup> East is at the top if one takes the writing on the map as an indication of orientation, but since Tjapaltjarri did not put the writing there it is likely it was simply aligned with the cardinal directions, in a horizontal position, during his part of its production. The instructional purpose of this drawing, as well as its visual conventions, places it squarely within the category of "map" that I am using here.

Johnson's book on Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri has a chapter titled "Cartographer of the Dreaming" in which she says that Tjapaltjarri and his late brother Tim Leura Tjapaltjarri shared the innovative idea of combining many Dreamings on a single large canvas and promoted a view of this particular painting process as making

"maps of country" rather than just showing particular Dreamings and their sites. Tim Leura used to refer to his paintings as "topographical." Johnson believes an influence here may have been that the father of the two painters had worked as a guide to anthropologists who were making site maps of the country. She also asserts: "Like western topographic maps, these paintings are large-scale maps of land areas, based on ground surveys, with great attention to accuracy in terms of the positional relationships among the items mapped. They can be used

40. For examples of his paintings, see Johnson, *Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri*; Christopher Anderson and Françoise Dussart, "Dreamings in Acrylic: Western Desert Art," in *Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia*, ed. Peter Sutton (New York: George Braziller in association with the Asia Society Galleries, 1980), 89–142 (esp. figs. 149, 152, 163, 172, and 173) and 224–25; and Wally Caruana, *Aboriginal Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 119, fig. 101, and 120–21, fig. 102.



## A - G Clan estates

- - - Estate boundaries

1. Liverpool River, Margulidjban.
2. Manawugan (and Manidjanggarira, now called Maningrida).
3. Nirgala waterhole.
4. Nabiwo-gadjangdi waterhole – Wild Bee *djang*.
5. Gabulrudmi waterhole.
6. Monggari waterhole.
7. Gulbalyara – Emu *djang*.
8. Guridja waterhole.
9. Bulgul-Namargun, Thunder and Lightning *djang*.
10. Gunra<sup>o</sup>gani waterhole.
11. Mandaidgaidjan waterhole – Long-necked Tortoise *djang*; also Echidna and Carpet Snake.
12. Mumenger waterhole.
13. Gagobeboldi waterhole – Paperbark Tree name. Aidjilad was killed here by a giant Dog.
14. Mugamuga waterhole.
15. Yirolg – Worm or Maggot *djang*.
16. Magarabulu waterhole.
17. Mamaidba waterhole.

FIG. 10.17. INTERPRETATION OF ABORIGINAL MAP OF MARGULIDJBAN AND ENVIRONS (FIG. 10.16). The cartographer, Dubungu, belonged to estate C (Born clan), which lies in the upper center part of the image. Estates A, E, and F, on the periphery of the map, are shown only in part. Watercourses are shown by infilled parallel lines and water holes by circles. Dashed lines indicate estate boundaries. Most of the estates are shown as bounded by watercourses, but estate D is a “watershed” estate in the sense that it consists of several upper sections of streams.

After Ronald Murray Berndt and Catherine Helen Berndt, *Man, Land and Myth in North Australia: The Gunwinggu People* (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1970), fig. 4.

for site location, and because of their precision have the validity of legal documents—they are Western Desert graphic equivalents of European deeds of title.”<sup>41</sup>

I do not accept the statement that such paintings “can be used for site location” in the sense that someone unfamiliar with the country could find their way around

with a painting by one of these artists. Although they contain certain parallels with Western topographic maps, their paintings are in general highly formalized, abstracted, and frequently very symmetrical representations that do not rest on a topographic base indicating major natural features in a figurative way. Confirming this contrast between acrylic paintings and sketch maps drawn in something like the European manner is a “Dreaming map” of the Napperby Station area in Central Australia made by Tim Leura Tjapaltjarri with art teacher Geoff Bardon in 1971.<sup>42</sup> It is similar in style to the Clifford Possum sketch map (fig. 10.18).

In a different but adjacent region of Central Australia during the 1950s and 1960s, anthropologist Nancy D. Munn collected a substantial number of Aboriginal crayon drawings in the course of her work.<sup>43</sup> Her discussion of these works reveals a profound grasp of what they might reliably tell us about Aboriginal understandings of the spatial order, cosmology, and iconographic traditions. Some of the drawings she collected show an early form of European influence on landscape perspective.<sup>44</sup>

The scholarly value of collections such as those of Munn, where the collector has attained a relatively deep understanding of the cultural context in which they were produced, is in general far greater than that of the type represented in the Tindale and Mountford collections in the South Australian Museum and State Library. I shall briefly discuss two more such small collections by scholars whose documentation of the maps collected is similar in depth to that of Berndt and Munn: those of Nancy M. Williams and of the late W. E. H. Stanner.

Anthropologist Nancy M. Williams has carried out an in-depth study of land relationships with the Yolngu people in northeast Arnhem Land since 1969.<sup>45</sup> In 1995 she

41. Johnson, *Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri*, 47. Tim Leura’s use of the English word “topographical” is highly unusual, since it is the sort of technical term one would never expect men of his generation, and from this area, to know.

42. Geoffrey Bardon, *Papunya Tula: Art of the Western Desert* (Ringwood, Victoria: McPhee Gribble, 1991), 4–5.

43. Munn published three Warlpiri examples in Nancy D. Munn, “Totemic Designs and Group Continuity in Walbiri Cosmology,” in *Aborigines Now: New Perspective in the Study of Aboriginal Communities*, ed. Marie Reay (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1964), 83–100, figs. 1–3; a further three in “The Spatial Presentation of Cosmic Order in Walbiri Iconography,” in *Primitive Art and Society*, ed. Anthony Forge (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 193–220, pls. 2–4; and two in *Walbiri Iconography: Graphic Representation and Cultural Symbolism in a Central Australian Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973; reprinted with new afterword, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pls. 7 and 9. See p. 365 above for a more detailed discussion of Munn’s work.

44. For example, Munn, “Totemic Designs,” fig. 1.

45. See, for example, Nancy M. Williams, *The Yolngu and Their Land: A System of Land Tenure and the Fight for Its Recognition* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1986). The following

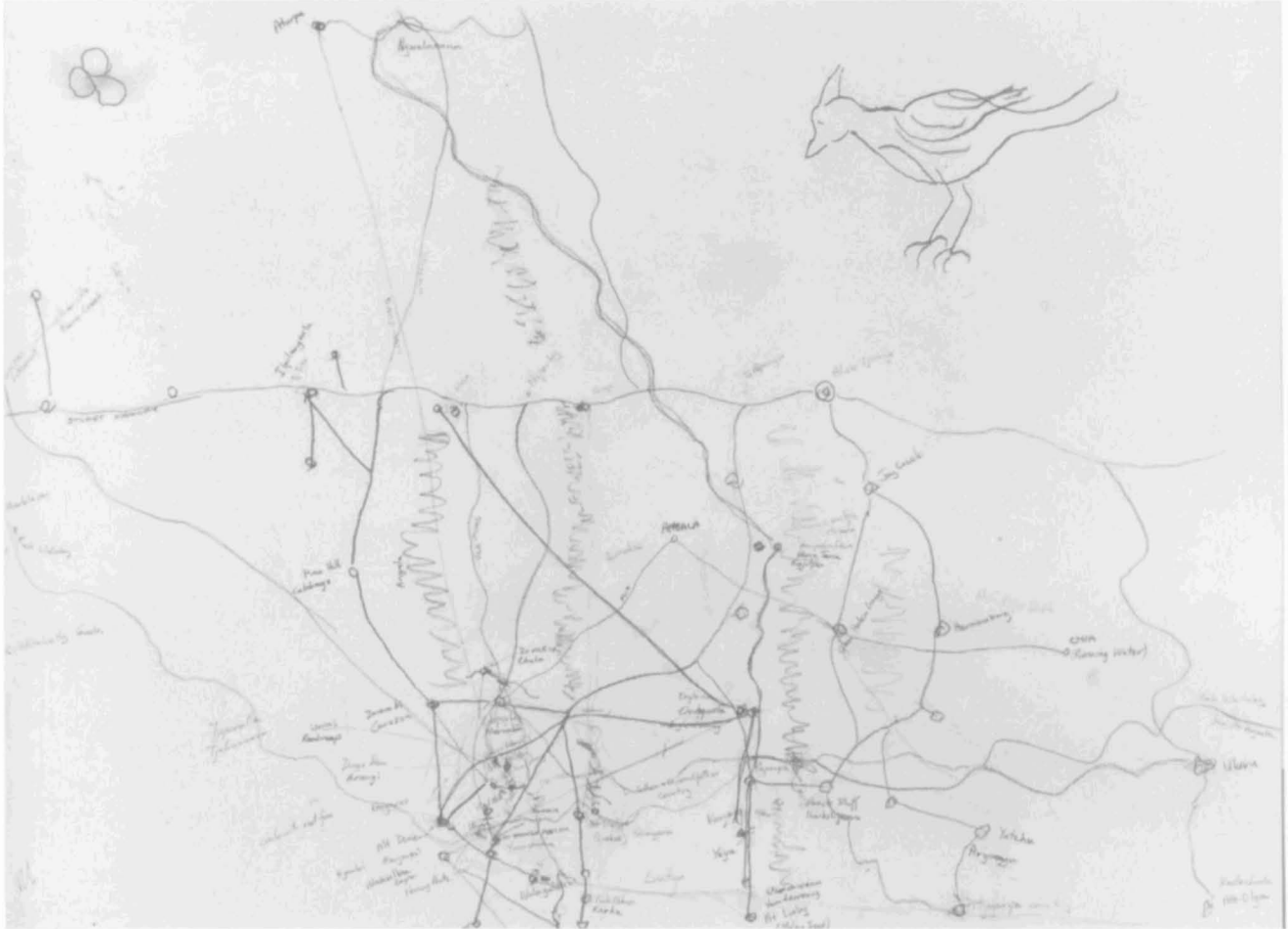


FIG. 10.18. MAP OF ANMATYERRE COUNTRY, 1988. Pencil on paper by Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri. The map was made during a conversation with a non-Aboriginal man and was intended to explain the broad layout of the country and its Dreamings.

Size of the original: 56 × 76 cm. Photograph courtesy of Vivien Johnson. © Copyright courtesy Anthony Wallis, Aboriginal Artists Agency, Sydney.

held approximately thirty maps mostly drawn between the end of 1969 and the end of 1970 by Aboriginal people at Yirrkala, northeast Arnhem Land. The maps are of various sizes and contain a variable number of detailed features, including physiographic and “totemic” representations. They were drawn on several kinds of paper, generally with colored pencils and occasionally with colored felt-tip pens. Many also bear notes made in pencil by Williams while the maps were being drawn and their features explained to her. These notes refer to such things as the features shown, mythic and historical themes, and living people associated with them; they were answers to questions Williams put to the mapmakers. She also wrote on the maps the Yolngu names of sites, places, areas, and features, sometimes with English translations.

The maps were drawn to represent lands and seas known to and traditionally held by landowning groups (which Williams has called clans) in northeast Arnhem

Land. They were mostly drawn by the heads and other senior members, almost exclusively men, of these landowning groups.

The people who drew them were representing areas to which they had inherited interests through patrilineation, areas to which they had succeeded (or were claiming succession) through matrilineation, or areas for which they had custodial-managerial responsibilities through uterine links. In all cases the base map of geographic features was drawn by the people who—usually at the same time—drew the physiographic and cultural features as they explained them.

The map shown in plate 21, collected by Williams, was drawn principally by Djimbun and Mattjudi. Djimbun was a senior man of the Gurrumuru Dhalwangu, the Gur-

account is drawn from Nancy M. Williams, “Yolngu Geography: A Preliminary Review of Yolngu Map-Making” (work in progress).



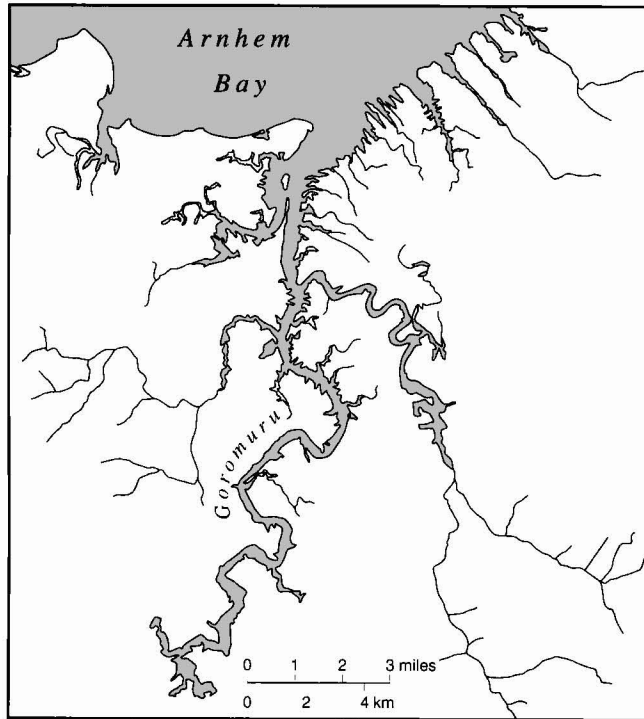


FIG. 10.19. REFERENCE MAP OF THE GOROMURU RIVER AREA. North is at the top. Compare plate 21.

rumuru subclan of Dhalwangu clan, whose principal estate has its focus on the Gurrumuru (Goromuru) River flowing into Arnhem Bay. It is clear that, although stylized and simplified, the image drawn by Djimbun and Mattjudi has a recognizably iconic relationship with the drainage system of the Goromuru River (compare fig. 10.19). Mattjudi was then head of the Marrakulu clan, which had long-standing alliance relations with Gurrumuru Dhalwangu.

Larrtjanga Ganambarr's production of the map shown here as figure 10.20 (and compare fig. 10.21) came about in the following way: Williams asked Larrtjanga, senior Ngaymil man, if he would accept a commission to produce a map on a sheet of bark—a bark painting—that would show some part of his clan estate so it would be acknowledged or recognizable as a “map” by both Yolngu and European people. Williams said she would like to use such a map on the cover of the book she was writing about Yolngu land tenure, and Larrtjanga accepted the commission.<sup>46</sup>

In terms of visual technique, this work is very unlike most bark paintings produced in the region, which are typically rather formal constructions, often with internal straight-line borders, showing a high degree of symmetry, and characterized by crosshatched infill. They usually depict places, but not in a very figurative way. This one is different in that it is fundamentally asymmetrical and figurative and has no cross-hatching—with one small ex-

ception. Inside this painting there is what looks very much like a small bark painting of the more usual kind.

Wandjuk Marika's map of beach camps at Yirrkala, perhaps better described as a plan, was also drawn at Williams's request (fig. 10.22). She had asked Wandjuk to show each of the residential houses and relevant features and explain to her the relationship of the people who lived there. Wandjuk also drew a second map that portrayed the relationships of the same residential groups to each other in terms of historical and then current alliance and totemic affiliations, affiliations symbolized by the flow of freshwater and saltwater currents (fig. 10.23). Although called an “overlay,” the second map is not isomorphic with the map showing residential features, and it is illustrated separately here.

The late W. E. H. Stanner was one of the most eminent scholars working with Aboriginal culture. While doing fieldwork at Port Keats (Northern Territory) in 1959, he provided sheets of Masonite to Nym Pandak (Bunduk) of the Diminin clan (Murrinh-patha language group), who proceeded to paint on them a remarkable series of images of his own traditional homeland area (fig. 10.24). In his notes, Stanner sketched the paintings and placed numbers on elements identified by Pandak, mostly sacred places and topographic features.

Part of Stanner's notes were typed up as a document called “Key to Pandak's painting of a totemic landscape at Port Keats.” It begins by identifying forty-four such numbered places, most of them named. Then follow some “general notes” that read:

This “map” was painted at the Port Keats Mission by Pandak (known to the Mission as Nym Bunduck) in February–March 1959. I had been working with a group, of whom he was one, on genealogical inquiries and mapping of clan territories, based on a large-scale map drawn for me by the Dept of Geography at the ANU [Australian National University] from aerial photographs. All the Aborigines were fascinated by the filling in of the map, which they all quickly appreciated because of (i) the large scale (ii) the clear delineation of creeks and rivers and especially by the fact that they could recognise that (iii) I had had it drawn so as to express what I already knew to be Aboriginal topographic etc. categories. . . . Pandak, entirely unsolicited, asked me one day if I “liked maps.” I said that I did; that they helped me to see and understand “country.” He then asked me if he could make a map for me. I asked: “What sort of map?” I seem to remember him saying “ngakumal map” (i.e. a map of totems or “dreamings.” I said: “Yes, I would like that.”) He painted every day for about 4–5 weeks on

46. Williams, *Yolngu and Their Land*, cover illustration and fig. 15 (note 45). For a description of bark paintings and their manufacture, see pp. 366–67 above.

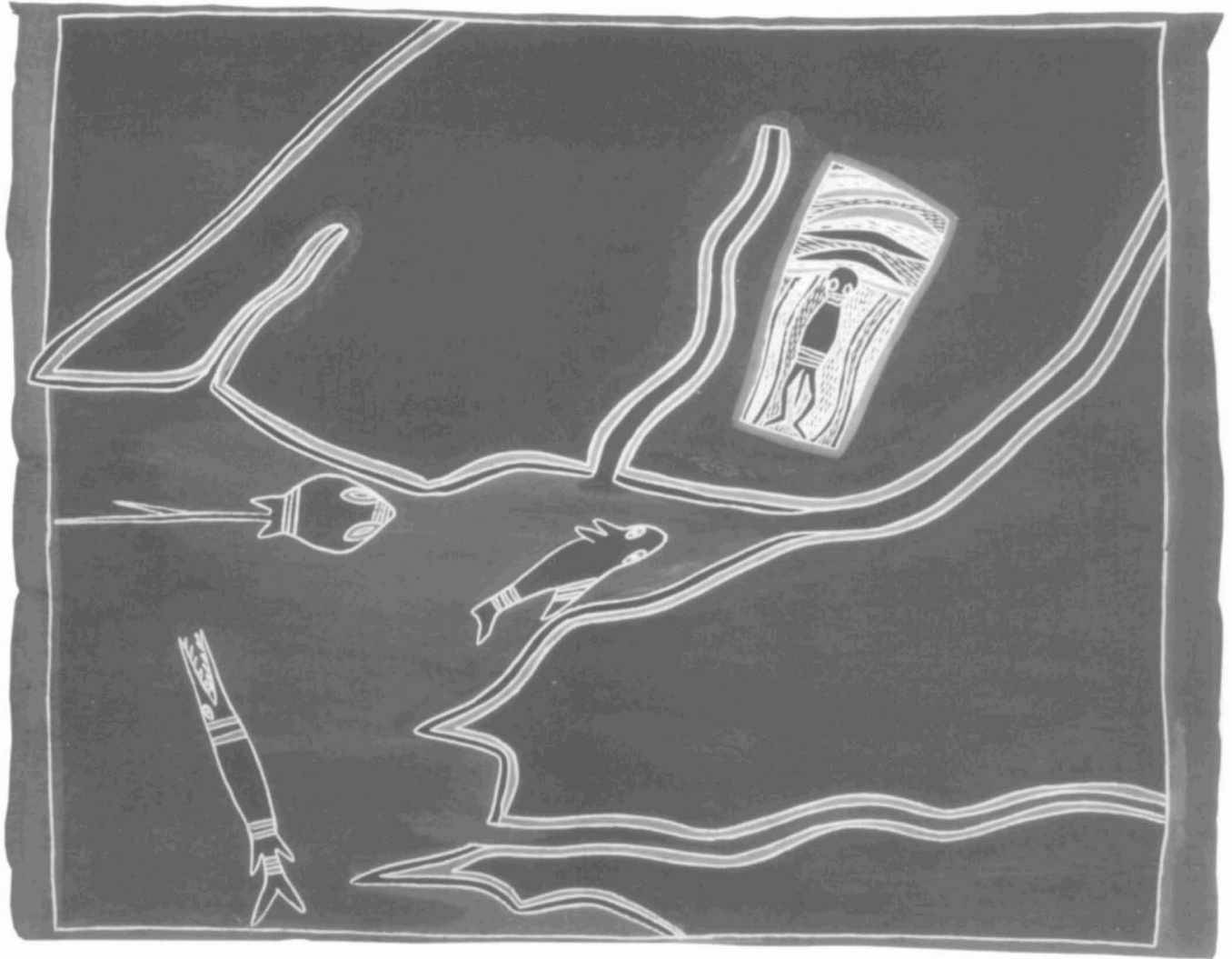


FIG. 10.20. MAP OF ARNHEM BAY. Northeast Arnhem Land, by Larrtjannga Ganambarr. Ochres, manganese oxide, and pipe clay on inner surface of bark of eucalyptus tree. What appears to be a small, more typical bark painting is in the upper right. It represents the site where Bul'ngu ("Thunderman") wrought his transforming marvels on Ngaymil clan land,

Bul'ngu being shown in the small "quotation" of a bark painting. The spirit beings Shark, Stingray, and Barracuda are shown in the offshore waters.

Size of the original: 74 × 85 cm. Private collection. © Copyright courtesy Anthony Wallis, Aboriginal Artists Agency, Sydney.

a piece of masonite that I obtained at the mission. I copied his painting on 20 March 1959 . . . and noted at the time that he had made two changes during the course of the work. He finished one third of the painting in the first week; then he began to feel that it was becoming too crowded, and rubbed part of it out. In the third week he again rubbed out part for the same reason. Then he completed it without further change.

The "map" should be regarded, I suggest, as an artist's attempt to bring a landscape into purview through visual symbols which point beyond themselves to religious entities.

The planning, design and execution of the painting were Pandak's in their entirety. The "crowding" referred to meant that he had to select with severity

what places and totems to represent. It appears from the key that I obtained from him at the time (by questions after the painting had been completed) that he had to omit a large number of places, some of them *ngakumal* [Dreaming sites], some not. So he did not purport to be giving a complete representation of the *whole* of the Murinbata countryside.

The colors he used were entirely made by him of natural earth pigments, except for a very few small patches where he used some flake-white colour that I had with me.<sup>47</sup>

47. W. E. H. Stanner (1958–59), hitherto unpublished (original in the library of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Studies, Canberra). This image has also been reproduced, with

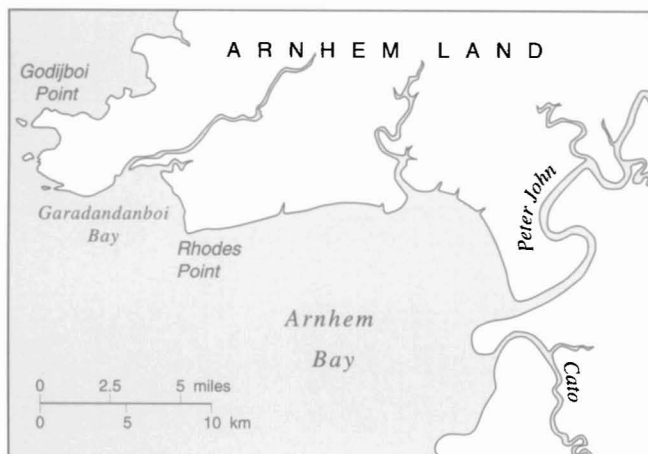


FIG. 10.21. REFERENCE MAP OF NORTHEAST ARNHEM BAY, BASED ON AUSTRALIAN TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY MAPS. North is at the top. Compare figure 10.20.

This small collection of well-documented “maps” by Pandak stands in contrast to the other works being painted for sale and for collectors at Port Keats at the same period.<sup>48</sup> Pandak’s work is less geometric, shows greater variety of visual forms, and sets out topographic features in far greater detail. Had Pandak’s paintings, created as “maps” to instruct Stanner, been painted instead for the bark painting market of the day, they would have rivaled, as art market productions, the great acrylic paintings of the 1980s and 1990s. Yet it may have been precisely their explanatory purpose in detailing country, land affiliations, and the locations of sacred sites that set them apart visually from the other works of the same time and place.

The pedagogical role, as I argued earlier in this chapter, suggests a useful distinction between “maps”—topographically based images that are meant to guide or teach, or both—and “icons,” which are images of Dreamings and mythic events at specific places that find their central roles in display and performance.<sup>49</sup>

#### ABORIGINAL MAPS IN THE LAND CLAIMS ERA: NICHOLSON RIVER LAND CLAIM

Although the need to teach and explain about country has for decades been a primary motivation for Aboriginal people to engage in mapmaking, since the 1970s a new context for such works has arisen: that of legal claims to unalienated land. During 1980–82, when an Aboriginal land claim was being researched and processed in the region of the Nicholson River, Northern Territory, the principal anthropologist on the case, David S. Trigger, was given at least three sketches of the country of the father of one of the claimants.<sup>50</sup> This claimant had drawn the sketches to show the location of several important sites.

One of these maps had attached to the back a written version of the key myth associated with the totemic significance of the man’s country (fig. 10.25). Since he could not write, this story had been dictated to a younger member of his family. The map and narrative dealt with part of the track of Red Kangaroo Dreaming. Two similar sketch maps given to Trigger by the same man showed the same area, depicting physical features of the landscape and a few names of sites.

These maps were produced while the mapmaker was attempting to have his claims over his father’s country recognized and accepted, initially by Trigger as the researcher preparing documents for the land claim, and ultimately by the Aboriginal Land Commissioner in a tribunal hearing. This was not a straightforward case because the mapmaker’s assertions about the area and about his rights to it according to Aboriginal customary law were not accepted by the claimants as a whole. By his own admission, the mapmaker had visited the area only as a young man, with his father, some thirty to forty years earlier, and some other Aboriginal people said his knowledge of the land was far from comprehensive. Trigger notes that “his strategy may have been prompted by witnessing me carrying and working with maps and (no doubt accurately) taking the view that these were important documents in the context of the research leading up to the land claim.”<sup>51</sup>

#### MUD MAPS AND SAND DRAWINGS

At the other end of the scale of political temperature, perhaps, are Aboriginal mud maps and sand drawings. When giving someone directions, or laying out landscape features and places for any reason, it is common in Aus-

some commentary, in Caruana, *Aboriginal Art*, 96, fig. 82 (note 40). Another of this set of paintings, Pandak’s “Sites in Murinbata Country,” is reproduced in Peter Sutton, “The Morphology of Feeling,” in *Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia*, ed. Peter Sutton (New York: George Braziller in association with the Asia Society Galleries, 1988), 59–88, esp. 60, fig. 87.

48. Compare the Port Keats works illustrated in Caruana, *Aboriginal Art*, 93–95 and figs. 79–81; Michael A. O’Ferrall, *Keepers of the Secrets: Aboriginal Art from Arnhemland in the Collection of the Art Gallery of Western Australia* (Perth: Art Gallery of Western Australia, 1990), 18–25 and figs. 1–10; and Sutton, “Morphology of Feeling,” 61, fig. 88.

49. This is not to say that acrylics and bark paintings produced for the market have no educational intent behind them—certainly they do. There is even a genre of bark paintings produced in Arnhem Land known in English as “teaching barks.”

50. On the Nicholson River Land Claim, see David S. Trigger, *Nicholson River (Waanyi/Garawa) Land Claim* (Darwin: Northern Land Council, 1982), and Aboriginal Land Commissioner, *Nicholson River (Waanyi/Garawa) Land Claim* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1984).

51. David S. Trigger, personal communication, 24 March 1995.

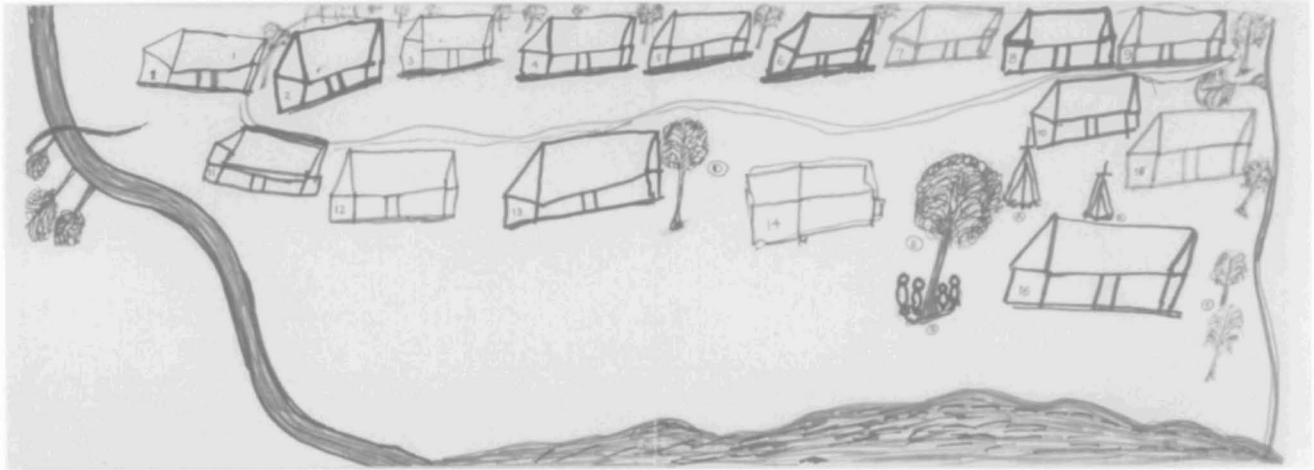


FIG. 10.22. MAP OF BEACH CAMPS AT YIRRKALA BY WANDJUK MARIKA, 1970. Felt-tip pen on paper, made for anthropologist Nancy M. Williams. The numbers on the

houses refer to the numbered notes Williams made. Private collection. © Copyright courtesy Anthony Wallis, Aboriginal Artists Agency, Sydney.

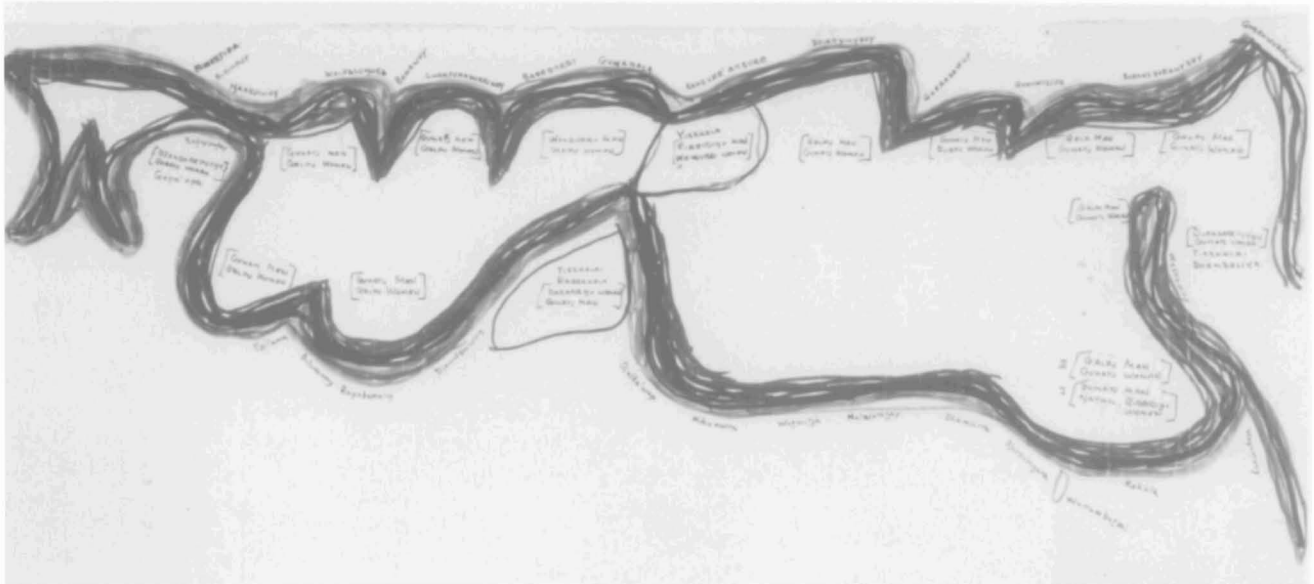


FIG. 10.23. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN RESIDENTIAL GROUPS OF BEACH CAMPS SHOWN IN FIGURE 10.22 BY WANDJUK MARIKA, 1970. Felt-tip pen on paper, drawn for anthropologist Nancy M. Williams, showing the same residential groups as in figure 10.22. The relationships between

members of households are shown, with clan names of spouses in square brackets and names of sites and localities. Private collection. © Copyright courtesy Anthony Wallis, Aboriginal Artists Agency, Sydney.

tralia for people, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, to make a quick, rough sketch in the dirt or sand, often using a stick but just as commonly a finger or foot. These are somewhat anomalously (given the dryness of most of Australia most of the time) referred to in English as “mud maps.”

There is a tendency for Aboriginal mud maps to be oriented the same way as the country (if one is facing west and describing country to the west, west would be shown at the top of the representation). Those of non-

Aboriginals are more likely to be arbitrarily oriented with north at the top (as in a modern atlas). An Aboriginal mud map often also includes parallel lines, each one laid down in accompaniment to a verbal sequence of place-names or as an enumeration of days of travel.

In 1909, near the lower Hanson River in Central Australia, Charles Chewings recorded his experience of an Aboriginal man’s practice of drawing in this way:

Paddy was rather good at making “mud maps.” These



FIG. 10.24. MAP OF THE MURRINH-PATHA COUNTRY-SIDE BY NYM PANDAK (BUNDUK), 1959. Natural pigments on composition board. Size of the original: 89 × 156 cm. Private collection.

Photograph courtesy of the South Australia Museum, Adelaide. © Copyright courtesy Anthony Wallis, Aboriginal Artists Agency, Sydney.

are drawn on the ground with a stick, and are the black fellow's way of showing where and how physical features of interest to him are situated in relation to one another. When requested to show what lay beyond, Paddy drew a map showing the course of the Hanson Creek (the native name is Ahgwaanga), also of the large Lander Creek (native name Allallinga) a good many miles to the west. He indicated certain conspicuous hills near the Lander and the sites of certain springs and soakages on the routes he had travelled, and, by marking his various camps, the time it took to travel from water to water. The production of this map of course took much prompting and questioning. I made a sketch of it which I found useful later on.<sup>52</sup>

Tindale noted a similar general tendency for Aboriginal mud maps to concentrate on linear representations of sites separated by recognized walking stages of varying difficulty:

Often it is difficult for a Western European to enter their world. We are trained on cartographic plans with a compass as aid and relatively accurate determina-

tions as to angle and distance, and by writing in place names and using symbols we share and use a relatively uniform series of conventions. An Aboriginal of the southern part of the Western Desert employs different aids. He has the ground to draw on and may use two basic symbols, the hole and the line. A circular mark or a hole marked on the smoothed sand indicates the place or the water under consideration, and, depending on the circumstances, it may be also the place of origin of a totemic being, a man's own birthplace, or merely the place where the discussion commences. In any case it incorporates the general idea of home or place of residence. The name of the place is announced and thus becomes a point from which narration or delineation starts. A line is drawn from this point by finger or with a stick. In general it is made along a line of movement in the correct compass direction toward an adjoining place. The line usually is kept short; it is

52. Charles Chewings, "A Journey from Barrow Creek to Victoria River," *Geographical Journal* 76 (1930): 316–38, esp. 319–20. I am indebted to David Nash for this quotation. Unhappily, the sketch Chewings refers to appears not to be extant.

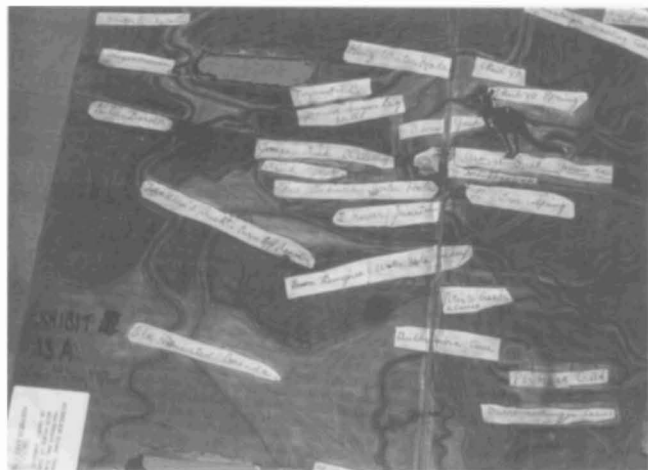


FIG. 10.25. MAP OF RED KANGAROO DREAMING COUNTRY, NICHOLSON RIVER AREA, NORTHERN TERRITORY. Drawn in 1982 by Archie Rockland, an Aboriginal land claimant. Ballpoint pen and pencil on cardboard, with place-names on paper glued on.

Photograph courtesy of the Northern Land Council, Darwin. By permission of the family of Archie Rockland, Queensland.

a unit distance. It denotes a variable distance measured in our system: one day's travel, the necessary travel distance to the next watering place. A second circular mark or hole is made and its name announced. In native terms this often is a walk; its distance can be defined in terms of one or more "sleeps" or "sit downs"; adjectival descriptions of the journey may define it as close by (e:la), not far, a long way ('parari), or a tiresomely long way away, and so on. Mileages for these categories are from 3 to 5 miles (5 to 8 km.) for close by or 'ela; 10 miles (16 km.) a normal day's walk, usually this would require no comment; parari might indicate about 20 miles (over 30 km.); anything above that is apt to be a "tiresome distance" ('parari'pakoreŋo). . . . The delineation of a man's tribal or hordal territory by a ground drawing such as this may commence at his birthplace. He marks each place between this and his place of initiation, proceeding along a line touching at each significant water in turn until the all-important site is reached about which there is to be major discussion or to where the talk is taking place. It generally will be found that the main waters appear serially on such a map, little ones may be ignored. In such a map the attentions of the commentator and the audience are focused on the ground, with heads down, slight changes of compass direction may be ignored, and the route often is delineated in one general direction.<sup>53</sup>

Tindale was, as usual, writing essentially about the culture of the classical period. Aboriginal people brought up on pastoral holdings, however, tend to draw mud maps that emphasize the key points in the pastoral landscape—bores, fences, homesteads—as much as they do ei-

ther natural features or sites of spiritual significance.

One man of Aboriginal and Scottish ancestry, Arthur Liddle, provided anthropologist Frederick Rose with a sketch map on paper showing the layout of his cattle station, Angas Downs, in 1962.<sup>54</sup> Although it does show a couple of "native soaks" (water sources) it is primarily concerned with fences, bores, buildings, and major topographic features such as ranges. It has the same north orientation and basically the same visual conventions as the official pastoral map Rose reproduced in the same volume.<sup>55</sup> A paper sketch of this kind may also be referred to in Australian English as a mud map, regardless of its medium. This example reminds us that it is not so much merely the ancestry of the cartographer as the cultural conventions of Aboriginal practice that makes a map, plan, or icon "Aboriginal" in this context.

Superficially rather similar to mud maps are Aboriginal sand drawings. Particularly in desert Australia, it is commonplace for people telling stories, or even simply conversing, to illustrate the events they are discussing by drawing in the sand or dust where they are sitting. The most detailed account of this practice is Munn's examination of the Warlpiri people's "sand stories," a genre most distinctively and richly engaged in by women.<sup>56</sup> Here, as in their paintings, Warlpiri frequently illustrate on a flat plane spatial relationships between mythic, human, or animal actors and particular places in the course of their narratives. In this sense such sand drawings are maplike. They are distinct from the ground paintings of the same region and the sand sculptures of northeast Arnhem Land, particularly in that they are less elaborate and are not typically constructed as an integral part of ceremonies.<sup>57</sup> They are also distinct from mud maps and crayon drawing maps because they focus more on events and their players and on localized topographies than on a broad-based topography and its features and sites. They are also more explicitly episodic, being erased by a sweep of the hand in preparation for subsequent images. They thus have a syntagmatic character that is lacking in other Aboriginal visual representations apart from the sequences of tableaux presented in rituals.

## PLANS

### Desert sand drawings frequently illustrate secular themes

53. Norman B. Tindale, *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia: Their Terrain, Environmental Controls, Distribution, Limits, and Proper Names* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974 [revised from 1940]), 38–39.

54. Frederick G. G. Rose, *The Wind of Change in Central Australia: The Aborigines at Angas Downs, 1962* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1965), 130.

55. Rose, *Wind of Change*, facing 14.

56. Munn, *Walbiri Iconography*, 58–88 (note 43).

57. On sand sculptures see pp. 357 n.17 and 411–12.

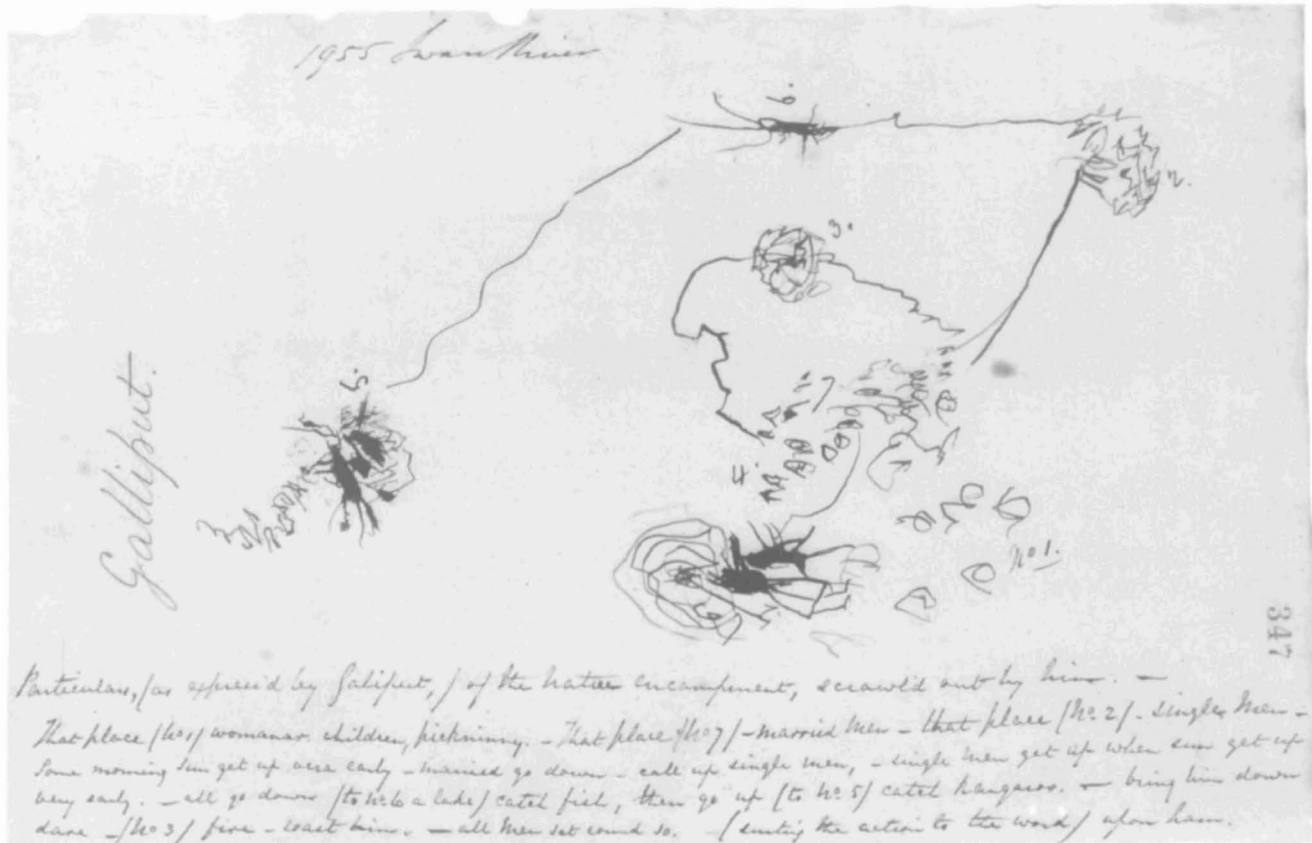


FIG. 10.26. PLAN OF NATIVE ENCAMPMENT. Drawn in quill and ink by Galliput (Galiput, Gyalipert) of King George Sound, dated 28 January/3 February 1833, and attached to a letter from John Morgan to A. W. Hay, Colonial Office, London. Legend (as recorded by J. Morgan of Perth): "Particulars, (as expressed by Galiput) of the Native encampment, scrawld out by him. That place (No. 1) womanar [women], children, pickninny [babies]. That place (No. 7)—married men—that place (No. 2)—single men—Some morning sun get up vera early—married go down—call up single men,—single men get up when sun get up very early.—all go down [to hole a lake] catch fish, then go up [to No 5] catch kangaroo.—bring him down dare—[No 3] fire—roast him.—all men set round so.—[suiting the action to the word] upon ham."

place (No. 2) single Men—Some morning sun get up vera [very] early—married go down—call up single men,—single men get up when sun get up very early—all go down (to No. 6 a lake) catch fish, then go up (to No. 5) catch Kangaroo—bring him down dare [there]—(No. 3) fire—roast him—all Men set around so—(suiting the action to the word) upon ham." Size of the original: 18.5 × 30 cm. Photograph courtesy of the Public Record Office, London (CO 18/13/347).

such as camp layouts during travel stories and the arrangement of people and fires within individual shelters in camps. In that sense they also encompass what I shall call plans. While maps usually have an areal or regional topography as their base, the base of an Aboriginal plan is usually a bush encampment or modern settlement, an individual dwelling, or a vehicle such as a boat.

The oldest surviving Aboriginal plan drawn on paper, in this case with quill and ink, is Galliput's "Map of Native Encampment" from southwest Western Australia, drawn in 1833 (fig. 10.26). Tilbrook tells us that "the artist [of this sketch] Galliput was brought to Perth from King George Sound with another Aboriginal, Manyet, in the *Thistle* in 1833 to promote good relations between the Aborigines of the two places. He had never used a quill and ink before, but sat experimenting as J. Morgan, with whom he was staying, was writing a letter home to England. Morgan was astonished by Gal-

liput's drawing, and praised him and Manyet for their conduct during their visit."<sup>58</sup>

Galliput's is not so much a map of country as a plan of a camp and a couple of nearby resource centers. It is also something like a permanently recorded mud map, a quick sketch rather than a heavily worked, decorated, or infilled formal design, so we can see that a neat distinction between a mud map, a plan, and a map is not always easy.

Another early plan is William Barak's 1898 watercolor painting of Samuel de Pury's vineyard in Victoria, which lies in temperate southeast Australia (fig. 10.27). Here we see a somewhat familiar combination of perspectives: ground features (such as the vineyard) are shown in plan view, while a house, trees, and fences are shown in sec-

58. Lois Tilbrook, *Nyungar Tradition: Glimpses of Aborigines of South-western Australia, 1829–1914* (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1983), 11.

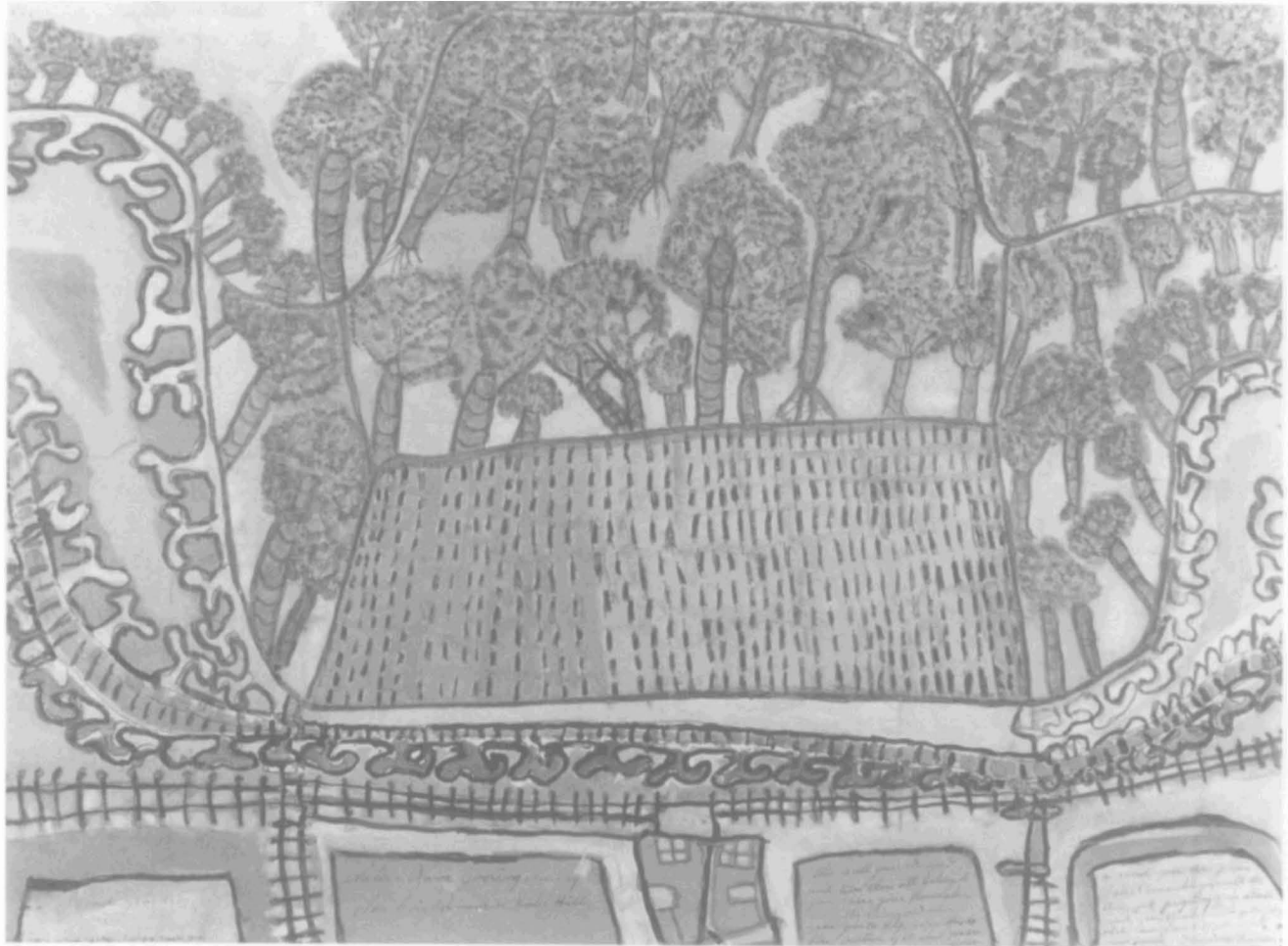


FIG. 10.27. SAMUEL DE PURY'S VINEYARD. Watercolor on paper by William Barak, 1898. Size of the original: 56 × 75 cm. Photograph courtesy of

the Musée d'Ethnographie, Neuchâtel, Switzerland (acc. no. V.1238). Photograph by Alain Germond, Neuchâtel, Switzerland.

tion view. But this is more than just a picture of a vineyard. The Aboriginal geography is also there, as Barak's inscription on the painting indicates. It says in part:

I send you two picture  
Native Name Gooring Nuring  
The English name is Bald Hill  
this is all your Vineyard<sup>59</sup>

Njien's "Plan of Camp," collected by Ronald Berndt at Ooldea in the desert of southern Central Australia in 1941 (fig. 10.28), sets out in simple fashion some seventy-four shelters or domestic units in the Ooldea camp of the day. In a rather abstracted technique, the plan requires Berndt's notes in order to be unfolded as an account of who was living where in that particular informal settlement.<sup>60</sup>

Wandjuk Marika's layout of Yirrkala Aboriginal village in northeast Arnhem Land (fig. 10.22, above) is a far more formal plan view of a rather different kind of residential community, one with modern institutional hous-

ing. Some twenty-three years before he made that plan, Wandjuk, as a young man, together with his father Mawalan, had made many crayon drawings for anthropologist Ronald Berndt, several including plans of residential arrangements such as perpendicular views of stilted house structures, their inhabitants, and their hearths.<sup>61</sup>

Men of this tropical region also provided Berndt with many crayon drawings of ceremonial performances. These show in a stylized way the proxemics of postulants, earth structures, shade huts, pathways, poles, and other features of different ritual events. Berndt published many

59. Andrew Sayers, *Aboriginal Artists of the Nineteenth Century* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press in association with the National Gallery of Australia, 1994), 120.

60. In the Berndt Museum of Anthropology, University of Western Australia, Perth.

61. Illustrated in Ronald Murray Berndt, *Three Faces of Love: Traditional Aboriginal Song-Poetry* (Melbourne: Nelson, 1976), e.g., pls. 2 and 5.



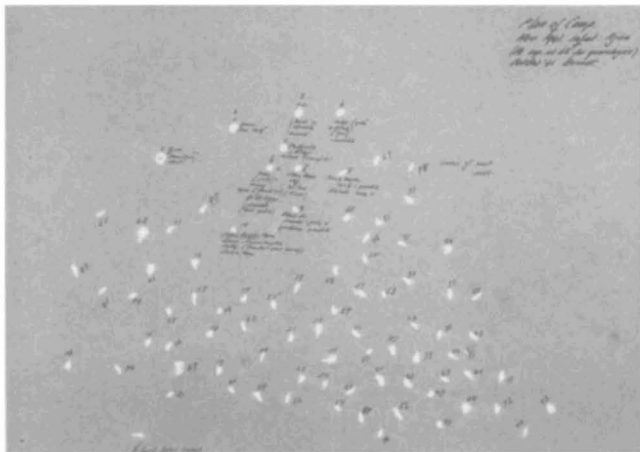


FIG. 10.28. PLAN OF CAMP. Crayon drawing by Njien, Ooldea (southern Central Australia), 1941. Photograph by J. E. Stanton, courtesy of the Berndt Museum of Anthropology, Perth (P22151).

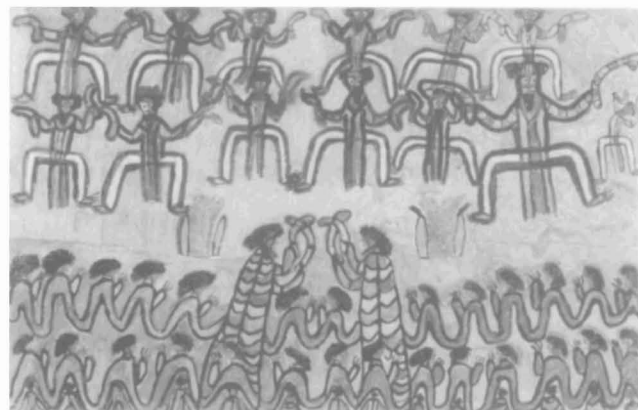


FIG. 10.29. CORROBOREE (CEREMONY). Pencil traces, wash, earth pigments on paper by William Barak, ca. 1898. Dancers are shown in a row across the top. Size of the original: 56.8 × 80.9 cm. Photograph courtesy of the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (acc. no. 1215B/5).

of them in an era when it was still common practice to place secret-sacred images in print.<sup>62</sup> These kinds of image are not reproduced here, but they fall under the general rubric of plans, not merely of ceremonial grounds but often simultaneously of events as well. In this respect they might be regarded as a type of choreography. A number of nineteenth-century Aboriginal artists who drew and painted on paper, such as William Barak, Tommy McRae, and Mickey of Ulladulla, produced memorable images of ceremonial performances. With few exceptions they show the dancers in a row, in a single plane, across the long axis of the paper (fig. 10.29). These choreographic images share much with plans.

Stone arrangements may also sometimes be classed as plans. The narrative significance of Australia's many Aboriginal stone arrangements is frequently lost in the distant past. Where this significance has been recorded, it generally affirms that the stone arrangements are very like most other Aboriginal traditions of representation: they mark out beings and events in sacred myths that are localized at particular places in the mythic episodes illustrated by the stones.<sup>63</sup> In this sense there is an iconic relation between the stone arrangement and the mythic structure of the "real" landscape. Yet the stone arrangement is itself part of a landscape, and like mythically significant landscape features that non-Aborigines would regard as "natural features," stone arrangements in Aboriginal tradition are most commonly held to have been created not by human beings, but by ancestral Dreaming figures.<sup>64</sup>

By contrast, C. C. Macknight and W. J. Gray have recorded certain stone arrangements at sites in northeast Arnhem Land that were attributed to remembered human ancestors who lived at least a century before their inves-

tigation in the late 1960s.<sup>65</sup> Whether these particular stone arrangements originally had religious and performance-oriented purposes, as against primarily secular and explanatory ones, is a matter for speculation. My own guess is that they played a role in ceremonies, like the sand sculptures of Macassan boats that are still constructed in the region.

Aboriginal informants explained to Macknight and Gray that a number of the stone arrangements are the floor plans of Macassan houses, nearby cooking areas, trepang (sea cucumber) processing areas (smokehouses), and so on (fig. 10.30).<sup>66</sup> Others show Macassan praus (trepanging boats), including their sails and rigging and features such as rudders as well as their various internal compartments such as captains' quarters and cabins for the crew, galleys, fireplaces, food stores, and tanks (figs. 10.31 and 10.32). Such images of praus also occur in the

62. See figures in Ronald Murray Berndt, *Kunapipi: A Study of an Australian Aboriginal Religious Cult* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1951); idem, *Djanggalawul: An Aboriginal Religious Cult of North-eastern Arnhem Land* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1952); and idem, *Australian Aboriginal Religion*, 4 fascs. (Leiden: Brill, 1974).

63. For several examples, see Mountford, *Nomads*, 90–94 (note 14).

64. See, for example, T. D. Campbell and Charles Percy Mountford, "Aboriginal Arrangements of Stones in Central Australia," *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia* 63 (1939): 17–21.

65. See C. C. Macknight and W. J. Gray, *Aboriginal Stone Pictures in Eastern Arnhem Land* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1970).

66. For some centuries before 1907, men from the region of Macassar in the Celebes made annual visits to north Australian shores in their praus to collect, cure, and take home for trade the trepang or sea slug, which is common in tropical Australian shallow waters; see C. C. Macknight, *The Voyage to Marege': Macassan Trepangers in Northern Australia* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1976).



FIG. 10.30. STONE ARRANGEMENT REPRESENTING A MACASSAN HOUSE WITH EIGHT ROOMS AT WURRAWURRAWOI.

Size of the original: ca. 200 × 115 cm. Photograph courtesy of C. C. Macknight.



FIG. 10.31. STONE ARRANGEMENT REPRESENTING A MACASSAN PRAU AT WURRAWURRAWOI.

Size of the original: ca. 800 × 200 cm. Photograph courtesy of C. C. Macknight.

region's traditions of sand sculptures<sup>67</sup> and bark paintings. Typically they show the outer form of the prau in horizontal section and the internal compartments more or less in plan view.<sup>68</sup> The northeast Arnhem Land stone arrangements also include representations of fish traps, which similarly have a parallel in sand sculpture depictions of fish traps in the same region. These are in plan view as well.<sup>69</sup>

It may, of course, be simplistic and ethnocentric of me to use a rather weighted term such as “plan view” or “perpendicular perspective,” both here and in my earlier chapter that discusses “icons of country.” My intention is to suggest etically a basic visual orientation rather than produce an emic reading of the conventions employed by the makers. I am reminded here of Nancy Munn's discussion of a Warlpiri representation of both the top-branches-outside of a tree and its bottom-roots-inside as two concentrically arranged sets of concentric circles, the former surrounding the latter: “I avoid here such descriptions as ‘bird’s-eye view,’ which imply that the solution is derived from a particular way of looking at the object, or that it shows us the object from a particular perspective. My implication is rather, that the solution de-

rives from the *internal structure* of the representational system, and that we cannot automatically ‘read off’ from the structure a perspective from which the object is being viewed.”<sup>70</sup>

One of the most elaborate Aboriginal plans in existence is a crayon drawing of the port of Macassar, on the island of Celebes in Indonesia, by Munggerau (Munggurawuy), collected by Ronald Berndt at Yirrkala in 1947 (plate 22). The artist in this case had never visited Macassar but drew the image from knowledge gained from his

67. Macknight and Gray, *Aboriginal Stone Pictures*, 35 (note 65).

68. See, for example, Mawalan Marika's crayon drawing of a Macassan prau made about 1947, published in Ronald Murray Berndt and Catherine Helen Berndt, *Arnhem Land: Its History and Its People* (Melbourne: F. W. Cheshire, 1954), pl. 12a, and his very similar bark painting of a Macassan prau from 1964, published in Judith Ryan, *Spirit in Land: Bark Paintings from Arnhem Land in the National Gallery of Victoria* (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, [1990]), 6.

69. See Margaret Clunies Ross and L. R. Hiatt, “Sand Sculptures at a Gidjngali Burial Rite,” in *Form in Indigenous Art: Schematisation in the Art of Aboriginal Australia and Prehistoric Europe*, ed. Peter J. Ucko (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1977), 131–46, esp. 136.

70. Munn, “Spatial Presentation,” 219 n. 24 (note 43).

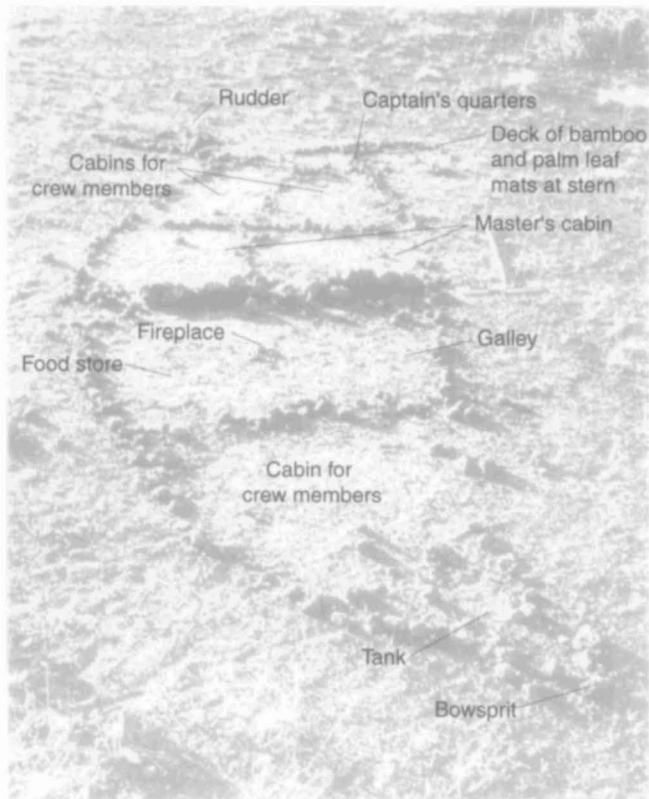


FIG. 10.32. IDENTIFICATION OF PARTS OF MACASSAN PRAU (FIG. 10.31).

After C. C. Macknight and W. J. Gray, *Aboriginal Stone Pictures in Eastern Arnhem Land* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1970), fig. 5.

father. It depicts the waterways, jetties, houses, and factory of the port. One house contains Aboriginal men brought back to Celebes after Macassan trepanging visits to Australia.<sup>71</sup> Another house contains what Munggerau referred to as “white crookmen,” European thieves who “steal from Macassans, [and] later sneak to shoot them.” Many of the houses bear the personal names of Macassan boat captains added after inquiries by Berndt.<sup>72</sup>

A related image is a 1947 crayon drawing by Mawalan Marika (Mauwalan), also in the Berndt Collection and from the same place and time, which shows the former Macassan settlement at Port Bradshaw in northeast Arnhem Land, with bays and promontories, many praus lying at anchor, and seasonal settlement features on the land (fig. 10.33).<sup>73</sup> What these two drawings illustrate is that, although elements of the regional bark painting style are present in both, such images are set apart from typical clan paintings by the distinctive recombinant templates and cross-hatching styles of the latter.<sup>74</sup> For this reason I regard them not as icons but, broadly speaking, as secular localized maps or plans. The Port Bradshaw image might be regarded equally as a map and as a plan,

since it uses a topographic base of a very focused kind and adds to it a number of settlement features.

The Port Bradshaw image is complex. On the island in the center (Wapilina) are shown a Macassan house, Macassan pots, Bayini paddles, a trepang design in ashes, and several tamarind trees, all elements associated with non-Aboriginal influences and importations. Many other features in the image refer to autochthonous mythic themes, but largely without employing the classical iconography of the area. The many bays and promontories marked by Berndt’s numbers include many Dreaming-related sites but are shown almost entirely simply as topographic features. This is a radical departure from classical practice.

### ABORIGINAL MAPS: POLITICS AND THE LAW

It is not only sacred designs of the kind discussed in chapter 9 above that evoke Aboriginal passions about images of country. In the 1990s, when the land rights struggle has for two decades been at the center of Aboriginal national and regional politics, Aboriginal maps of a mainly secular kind may be highly charged with feeling. Maps such as those of the Nicholson River Land Claim arise in a complex political environment where contested claims to land exist not only between Aboriginal groups but between them and the state, private industry, and other interests.<sup>75</sup> Documents of all kinds suddenly have a credibility and value not previously imputed to them in Aboriginal discourses. From being merely “white man’s way,” they have become potentially powerful Aboriginal tokens in transactions involving their own land interests. It is true that this necessity has essentially been imposed from outside. That is, until the arrival of the state, Aborigines had no use for “maps” of the kind I have been describing in this chapter.

Neither did they have a geographical knowledge of the Australian continent as a whole or an explicit continent-wide political identity as a people. Both situations have changed. David Mowaljarlai, an elder of the Kimberley District of Western Australia, has recently produced a map titled “The Body of Australia” (fig. 10.34).<sup>76</sup>

71. These visits were carried out over several centuries until the Australian government brought them to an end in 1907 (Macknight, *Voyage to Marege* [note 66]).

72. Documentation by Ronald Murray Berndt. A detail of this large and crowded image was reproduced in Berndt and Berndt, *Arnhem Land*, pl. 7 (note 68).

73. Reproduced in Berndt and Berndt, *Arnhem Land*, pl. 2.

74. See Morphy, *Ancestral Connections* (note 5).

75. See also Sutton, forthcoming in the *Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture*, on the maps by Bob Holroyd (note 12).

76. David Mowaljarlai and Jutta Malnic, *Yorro Yorro: Everything Standing up Alive: Spirit of the Kimberley* (Broome, Western Australia: Magabala Books, 1993), 205.



FIG. 10.33. MAP OF YALANGBARA BY MAWALAN MARIKA [MAUWALAN]. Northeast Arnhem Land, 1947, crayon drawing. On this complex image, the erstwhile Macassan settlement of Port Bradshaw, Ronald Berndt annotated ninety-four features of the plan. (The details are contained in his field notebook at the Berndt Museum of Anthropology, University of Western Australia.) The image combines a static topographic matrix with indications of movement, both through space and through time. For example, the tracks of those who once moved through the area after arriving from across the sea are shown, as is Fred Gray, a European

trepanger who worked in the area in the 1930s. Also depicted are the mythological Djan'kawu Sisters, whose travels occurred in the foundational era or *wangarr* times, the track of the Bayini, light-skinned visitors said to have traveled here before the Macassans started to come to north Australia, and the Macassans themselves.

Size of the original: 61 × 153.5 cm. Photograph by J. E. Stanton, courtesy of the Berndt Museum of Anthropology, Perth (WU7153). © Copyright courtesy Anthony Wallis, Aboriginal Artists Agency, Sydney.

Mowaljarlai's map is highly idiosyncratic and probably unique to his own perception of things. It is highly innovative, yet it is more than a simple case of absorption of non-Aboriginal knowledge. It offers a cartographic statement of the spiritual and kin-based foundations of a pan-Aboriginality that has emerged as a serious political force in Australia, in spite of the smallness of the Aboriginal population. This development is a direct response to the relative powerlessness of Aboriginal people when coming from a stateless traditional background to meet and deal with a highly organized wider society based on the nation-state.

This is not, however, to argue that such a response to an imbalance of power is entirely new. Within the classical Aboriginal religious systems, the creation of religious icons of landscape itself was also characterized by asymmetries of power. Europeans are not alone in characterizing annexations as "redrawing the map." The political control of land and religious control of sacred designs or other symbols were, as far as we can tell, typically inseparable in indigenous Australia so long as ancient traditions persisted.

So acts both of representation and of control are intimately related cartographically, both in the classical Aboriginal systems and in those of the people who colonized

and continue to dominate most of their lands. It is clear, however, that these deep resemblances pale in significance when placed next to the major contemporary imbalances within the Australian polity. Aborigines can be required, by courts, to present evidence about their country via an anthropologist's maps. The court, by contrast, cannot be required to treat a ceremony and its sand painting as a "better" account of the landscape and thus choose "icons" over "maps." Or can it?

New native title laws,<sup>77</sup> still largely untested, could be interpreted as requiring that Aboriginal customary rules of evidence be given precedence over those derived from the European tradition. If such is found in a test case, this would be the first official act turning back the tide that has been flowing against classical Aboriginal icons of country, denying their validity and power and ultimately eliciting in their stead the Aboriginal maps typified by those discussed in this chapter, in a struggle over a represented landscape that began with the first Dutch charts of 1606, when Willem Jansz sailed the *Duifken* down the coast of western Cape York Peninsula.

77. Native Title Act of the Commonwealth Parliament of Australia, 1993.

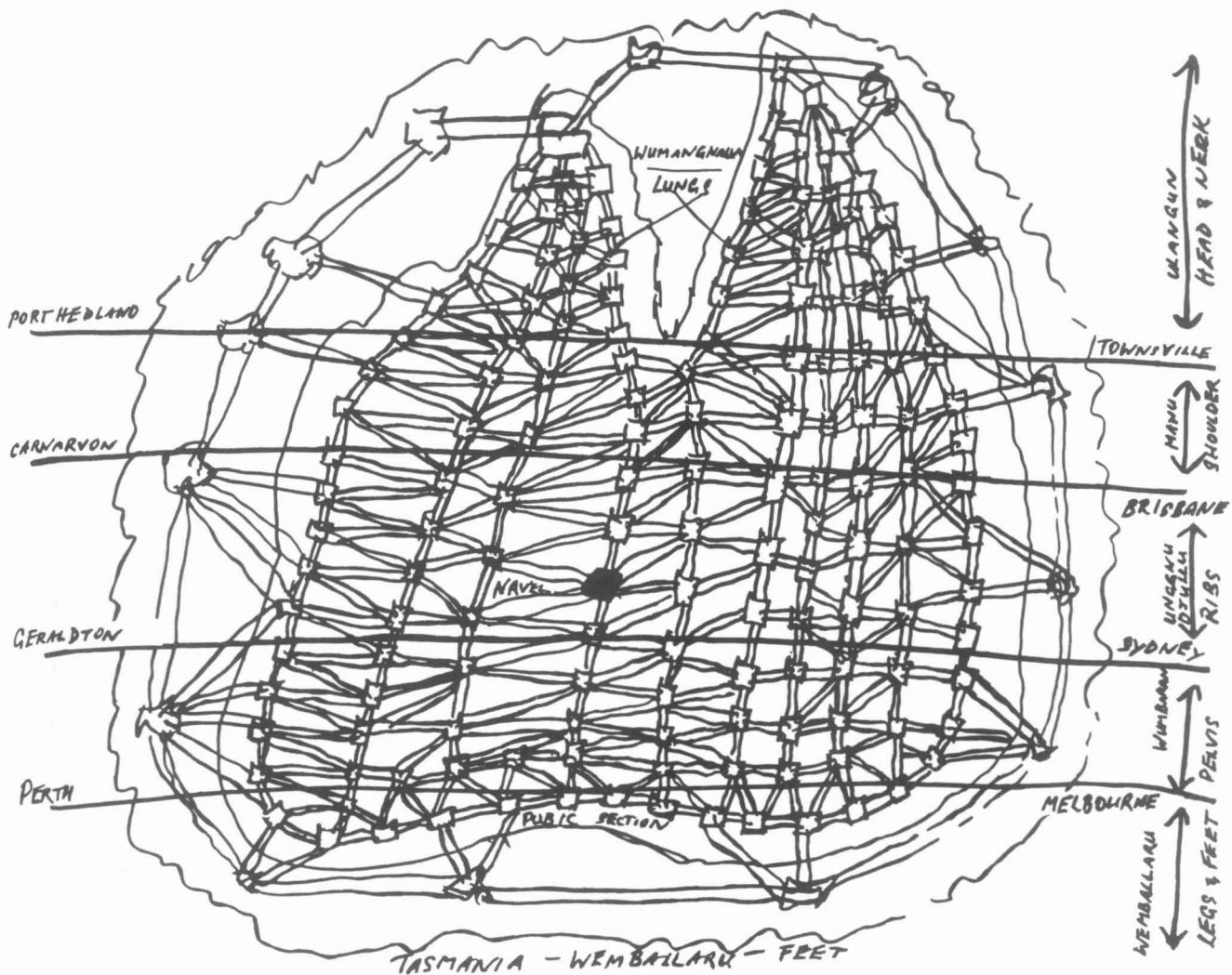


FIG. 10.34. BANDAIYAN: THE BODY OF AUSTRALIA, CORPUS AUSTRALIS. Drawing for a biographer by David Mowaljarlai. The squares are communities of Aborigines. The lines connecting them are the ancient trade routes, which are also the lines of "history stories," presumably the mythic travels of Dreamings. These interconnections are all part of a Sharing system. The continent as a whole is envisioned as a human body. The navel appears to be about the location of Uluru, Ayers Rock. The vast Gulf of Carpentaria, in the north, constitutes the lungs. The southern offshore islands are the feet.

The whole continent and its islands are joined in a single grid system of social and spiritual connections. Even in urbanized regions where Aboriginal people no longer know their "symbols," these spiritual symbols remain in the land and will survive even if the land sinks into the sea. (Description and photograph from David Mowaljarlai and Jutta Malnic, *Yorro Yorro: Everything Standing up Alive: Spirit of the Kimberley* [Broome, Western Australia: Magabala Books, 1993], 190.) By permission of David Mowaljarlai, Derby, Western Australia.

APPENDIX 10.1  
SOUTH AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM  
CRAYON DRAWINGS COLLECTION

I have assigned numbers to these bound volumes to make it easy to refer to particular items. Within each volume, individual drawings are on sheets of paper, usually brown paper, and bear a number that is part of a running series for a particular expedition only. Some sheets also have a unique South Australian Museum accession number commencing A-.

Titles assigned to these volumes by museum staff are reproduced here; my additions are in square brackets.

SAM 1: Aboriginal Drawings Gathered in Central, Southern, and Western Australia by Norman B. Tindale, Vol 1 1930-1933.

SAM 2: Aboriginal Drawings Gathered in Central, South,

and Western Australia by Norman B. Tindale, Vol 2 1934–1939. [Also contains drawings collected at Macdonald Downs 1930 (some of these collected by Dr. R. Pulleine as well); at Cockatoo Creek in 1931; at Mount Liebig in 1932; and at Ooldea in 1934.]

SAM 3: Aboriginal Drawings from the Pitjandjara People of the Mann and Musgrave Ranges, NW of S.A. [Gathered] by Norman B. Tindale, Vol 1 May–August 1933.

SAM 4: Aboriginal Drawings from the Pitjandjara People of the Mann and Musgrave Ranges, NW of S.A. [Gathered] by Norman B. Tindale, Vol 2 May–August 1933 (also the same from Ooldea 1934).

SAM 5–7: Aboriginal Crayon Drawings of the Ngadjajara and Kindred Tribes. Collected by Norman B. Tindale and C. P. Mountford during the Board for Anthropological Research Expedition to Warupuju, Warburton Range, Western Australia, 26th July–6th September 1935, Expedition K. 3 Volumes.

SAM 8–9: Aboriginal Drawings from North-western Australia Obtained during the U.C.L.A. Anthropological Expedition by Norman B. Tindale 1953. 2 Parts.

SAM 10: Native Maps from North Western Australia Obtained during the U.C.L.A. Anthropological Expedition by Norman B. Tindale 1953–1954. [Includes maps collected and annotated by Dr. J. B. Birdsell.]