

1. INTRODUCTION

History of the claim

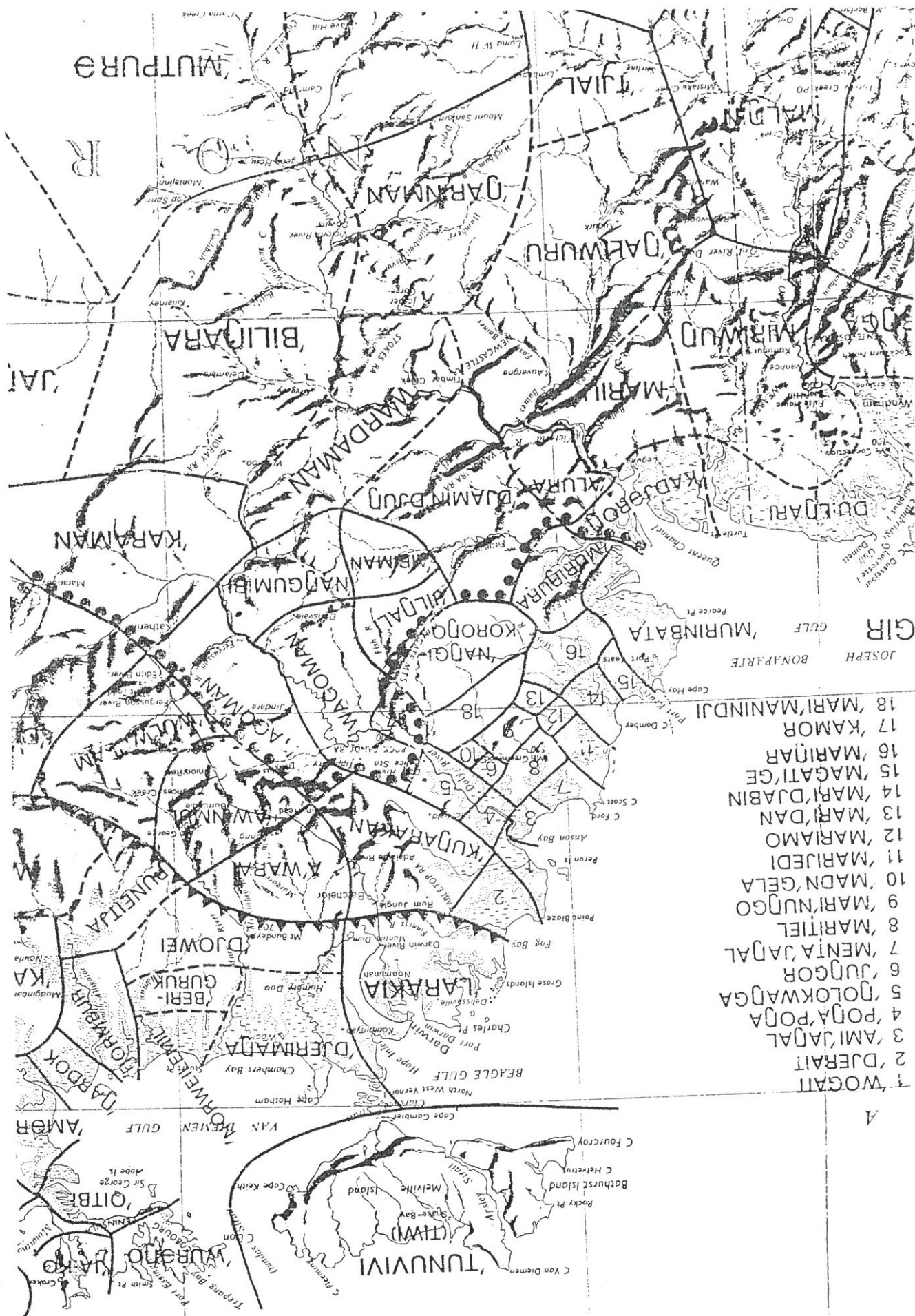
The need for land for Aboriginal residents of the claim area and nearby is documented from the time of the first government residents in the Northern Territory. The late Professor Elkin in 1936 proposed a need for a reserve on the Cox Peninsula, which was acted upon in 1941 when negotiations began to set aside land around Delissaville as an Aboriginal reserve. On 10 May 1977 a reserve of sixteen square miles was gazetted, nearly one hundred years from the time the matter of reserves was first raised (see chapter five). Aboriginal recognition of a need to claim land in this area, on the other hand, is an oral tradition and therefore not recorded in documents. Certainly the bombing of Duwun (or Quail Island) since 1942 caused the traditional owners and their relatives to demand land rights, in ways that became recorded in the media and government files, earlier than Aboriginal people elsewhere in the Northern Territory.

Areas in and nearer Darwin, too, owned by the same people, have been claimed by them in constant lobbying since at least 1971. Names like Bobby and Topsy Secretary, and Margaret Rivers (acting on their behalf) are well-known to government departments in Canberra and Darwin, and to the media for their continual assertion of concern for Aboriginal land in the Darwin area.

In 1973 people in the claim area were requesting justice Woodward for rights to land over the whole of the Cox Peninsula and as far down the coast as the Daly River.

In October 1974 (R. Huey to the Secretary, Department of the Northern Territory, memo dated 25 October 1974) it is said:

There are now indications that the Delissaville community considers that the sixteen square mile area [the Aboriginal



- 1 WOGAI
- 2 DJERAIT
- 3 AMIJAAL
- 4 POGA'POGA
- 5 GLOKWAAGA
- 6 JUNGOR
- 7 MENIAJAAL
- 8 MARITIEL
- 9 MARI'NUGO
- 10 MADN'GELA
- 11 MARIJEDI
- 12 MARIAMO
- 13 MARI'DAN
- 14 MARI'DJABIN
- 15 MAGATI'GE
- 16 MARIJAB
- 17 KAMOR
- 18 MARI'MANINDJI

Larrakia language is one means of identification for that group. The matters of who identifies and can be identified as Larrakia, and how they relate to others with an interest in the claim area are therefore germane to the present case and are dealt with in the chapter called "The claimants".

The claim area is described in chapter three and maps of the area are presented there.

Since their first intensive contacts with Europeans in 1869 the number of Larrakia speakers has diminished. The factors causing this are detailed in the section of this book called "The past". Chapter five examines the history of reserving land in and near the claim area.

The pattern of land ownership in the claim area and the continuing exercise of spiritual responsibility for that land despite the events of the past are examined in chapters six and seven. Chapter eight demonstrates the ways in which land in the claim area was, and continues to be, used.

The desire to live in the claim area has never diminished and present opinions and intentions are examined in chapter nine. Throughout this report strength of attachment to the claim area is referred to, both explicitly and implicitly, but is recorded in most detail in chapter seven.

The present claim is to an area attractive to both Aborigines and non-Aborigines, situated as it is so close to Darwin. How objections to the claim may not indicate real differences and how the traditional owners and others with an interest might be advantaged by a successful claim is documented in chapter ten.

Language Groups in the claim area

Linguistically the Larrakia are described as one of the two member Larrakian Family, the other member being the Wulna, their easterly neighbours (Wurm 1972:120). The Larrakia name themselves Gulumbirigin or Gulumerigin; the term Larrakia is said to be derived from Malay.

To the south of the Larrakia lies the territory of the Wagaidj. This term, Wagaidj, requires some explanation since it can be used in different senses:

Wagaidj means "sand" and according to Tryon is not a tribal but a geographical name. It refers to any coastal dweller from the Moyle River to Darwin regardless of language or tribe (Oates and Oates 1970:20).

In Wurm's classification of Australian languages (ibid.:121) the term Wagaty is used for a subgroup of languages consisting of Wadjiginy, Pungupungu, Maranunggu, Ami and Manda, this subgroup being part of a Brinken-Wagaty Group (Wurm ibid.:120). As well as referring to a collection of distinct languages, the term is often used to refer just to Wadjiginy:

Wogait is in fact a misnomer for Wadjiginy. Wogait designates a beach dweller anywhere from the mouth of the Daly River to Delissaville, near Darwin. At the present nearly all Wogait people live at and around Delissaville. The name of the language spoken by them is Wadjiginy, which has another sub-dialect called Batyama! (Tryon 1974:206).

The term, wagaidj, is used in four senses:

- (a) a word in Wadjiginy meaning "sand", "beach"
- (b) a linguistic classificatory term (Tryon 1974)
- (c) a local Aboriginal name covering people from a number of distinct language communities
- (d) a name for one of these distinct language communities, usually Wadjiginy.

The last two senses will be the most used in this claim book so the distinction should be borne in mind.

The Larrakia language is quite distinct from Wagaidj, as for instance English is quite distinct from Italian. However,

Linguistic differences do not preclude cultural continuity and certainly do not in the claim area (chapter two and the section

"Relations with neighbours" in chapter four). The same

phenomenon can be observed in other parts of Aboriginal Australia,

for instance at Port Keats where three distinct language families

intermingle culturally, and in other parts of the world, for example

in Finland where the Finnish language is in a quite different linguistic tradition from its Scandinavian neighbours.

Location of the Iarrakia and associated peoples

Historical: that the Iarrakia have long occupied the Port

Darwin area is well-documented (Herbert 1873:23; Sturt 1879:92;

Masson 1915:47-8, among numerous other early references). Goyder's

surveys in 1869 (Kerr 1971:173) comprised portions of what he called

"four native districts": the "woolner", "woolner-Iarakeyah",

"Iarakeyah" and "warrunger". In the early days of the survey he

noted some 600 to 700 natives on one occasion near the surveyors'

camp. Herbert (1873:50) journeying south from Palmerston speaks of

being in Wagaidj land when past Rum Jungle. Willey (1875:115) says

the Iarrakia numbered about 300 and were "located about Palmerston

and Southport, as far as the Adelaide River and Escape Cliffs

eastward The Woolnabs reside up and down the Adelaide River",

and were more numerous than the Iarrakia. The Wagaidj "are located

to the westward about Anson's Bay".

Foelsche (1881b:15) mentions a Southport branch of the

Iarrakia, and (in Curr 1886:251) gives the numbers of the tribe

as approximately "100 men, 120 women, 150 youths of both sexes

and 130 children, in all 500 persons". Further, he says "the

Wagaites live to the westward of Palmerston, across the harbour

and extend to the Daly River, and perhaps beyond. . . .". The Wulna

lived to the eastward, on the Adelaide River and Cobourgs Peninsula,

the Iarrakia midway between, and the Wulwongga to the south.

The country of the Iarrakia extended along the coast from the mouth

of the Adelaide River, west to Port Patterson and stretched about

25 miles inland. He also states that Iarrakia marry both

*Goyder (1869a) gives what appears to be the only references in the literature to "warrunger". Early Government Residents' Reports also

name the Iarrakia in the Palmerston area (see for example, N.W.1870:3-4).

in and out of the tribe (ibid.:252).

Parkhouse (1895a:1) says the Larrakia "inhabit a tract of land, embracing the seaboard from Shoal Bay to Southport, together with some portion of the country west of that port". Their southern border was at the 46 Mile on the railway (ibid.:2) and he names the Wulna as an allied tribe with whom intermarriages were frequent. Parkhouse (1895b:638) remarks that between the Larrakia and the neighbouring tribes a neutral zone of some eight to ten miles is reserved, which is used by other tribes when travelling.

Foelsche (1885b:195) says of the Darwin Aborigines that "each tribe has a recognised land boundary which is always sacredly respected and each family or clan in the tribe have their particular portion of land within this boundary. I have never heard of any quarrelling or dispute over boundaries".

Masson (1915:156) - in many ways not a sensitive observer of the Larrakia - said, "The Australian Aborigine has always been a nomad but the boundaries of his 'country', the district within which he wanders, are very sharply defined...".

Brown (South Australia 1906:20) says the Wagaidj extend from near Point Charles to the Daly River, and mentions (ibid.:38) encountering Wagaidj people on or near the Daly River.

Basedow (1906:1) says the Larrakia are the best-known of coastal tribes, on account of Port Darwin being within their "domain". Their territory extended south between the Howard and Finniss rivers, with a sub-division or clan, the "Marrti" near the mouth of the Blackmore River. (This name was also given to us by Mr. Holmes, a Limlingan man, during our research.) "The Larrakia further separate themselves into coastal and inland groups, Binimiginda and Gunmajerumbba." The Wagaidj adjoin the Larrakia in the west, he says, and they have country across the Daly River to about Cape Ford. The Wulna were to the east. He mentions a

tribe closely related to the Larrakia, the "Sherait" or Paperbark natives, whose country lies between the Wagaidj and Larrakia. To the east of this was "Gunerakan" country. South of the Wagaidj lived the "Ponga Ponga". He also notes (Ibid.:3) that while the languages of the Larrakia, Wagaidj and Djeraidj were distinct, the members of each tribe were familiar with the languages of the other two. The Wagaidj also knew Brinken, the language of the people south and east of Cape Ford. He also mentions (Ibid.:4) the inter-marriage of Larrakia with Wagaidj.

Breinl (1915:7) met Wagaidj people in the neighbourhood of Anson Bay.

Riklin (1950b:67) says the Wagaidj formerly met the Larrakia at the Finnis River, and now inhabit the peninsula opposite Darwin "which was formerly the country of the Larrakia tribe". This group has moved to the Cox Peninsula "partly because of the Government Aboriginal Settlement established on it and also because they are attracted to Darwin" (Riklin 1955:146 [153]). He speaks of a "coalescence" of the Larrakia with one of the Wagaidj groups, the Wadjiginy, which is definitely borne out by the genealogies we recorded.

Bill Gray a D.A.A. officer (1972) gives Wagaidj territory as the coastal region between the Finnis and Daly rivers.

Osborne a linguist (1972) gives the location of the Larrakia as from the Finnis River north-east to the mouth of the Adelaide River.

McHenry (1973) says "there are a group of Aborigines living at Delissaville who are the direct descendants of tribes which had lived on the peninsula for centuries prior to 1770....".

John Singh of Delissaville, a Kruk man married to a Larrakia (in Ivory 1976) said that the Larrakia are still considered by other Aboriginal groups as the land-owning tribe around

Cox Peninsula, although they have intermarried with others who have long been there and who now have fishing, hunting and food gathering rights over the country.

Ivory and Tapsell (1977:4) say that Larrakia land was north of the Finnis River.

It is clear then both from present-day accounts and from historical sources that the claim area has been long occupied by Larrakia and Wagaidj people, and the weight of evidence supports the present-day people's statement that the claim area is Larrakia land.

History of the claim area

The most sizeable chapter in this claim book is that which we have called "The past". It addresses the "traditional" aspect of the key concept "traditional Aboriginal ownership" in the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976.

The length of this chapter in no way indicates that we are unaware of the Act's overriding interest in the contemporary

situation of the claimants. But it is not possible to see their present circumstances without an explanation of why they are so. Tradition is a process. The evidence we present in the claim book for traditional ownership is not merely from statements made by people today and examples of present-day activities relevant to ownership. It looks behind them at the processes and events which have shaped the present. In describing these we have been attempting to answer four questions:

- Who were the Aboriginal people in the claim area at the time of contact with non-Aboriginals?
- Are their descendants still there now? If not, why not?
- Is there a continuity of traditions and indications of spiritual responsibility and attachment to the area through time?
- What is the role and the effects of the presence and activities of non-Aboriginals on these matters?

We believe the evidence suggests that despite the significant and far-reaching effects of non-Aboriginal activities on the indigenous population and their lives, there is a continuity of traditions from the time of earliest contact which supports the claim of the present traditional owners and demonstrates both the strength of their attachment and seriousness of their spiritual responsibility to the land that has always been regarded as theirs. In presenting the events described in chapter four we have unfortunately not been able to use very many Aboriginal oral

We feel, however, that the events selected here are not exceptional. We have not aimed at nor achieved a history that is complete.

there, their experiences in Darwin would be their impressions. Many commentators on the Territory have spent more time in Darwin than anywhere else, so that when they generalise about conditions all the seat of government and the largest town in the Territory. any other area in the Northern Territory. Darwin has been after exists for Darwin and nearby areas than one is likely to find for available are more scanty than one would like, far more material found in its proximity to Darwin. Although the historical records

The key to understanding the history of the claim area is their culture. the most serious and lasting effects on the survival of a people and highlight those events which, from an Aboriginal point of view, had Then we have chosen to look more closely at this material and presence largely from non-Aboriginal sources.

Therefore we have documented details of non-Aboriginal is being discussed. which would enable us or our informants or both to be sure of who rarely do they provide details of Aboriginal identification labels Aboriginal people are rarely given and when they are, even more the Aboriginal point of view until fairly recently. Names of documents in archives have few mentions of historical events from All histories of the Northern Territory and most government (see Read 1978 and Read & Read 1979 and also Read & Japaljarri 1978). Territory collecting Aboriginal accounts of known historical events Peter and Jay Read have worked more recently in the Northern some early work in the Oenpelli area (see R.M. & C.H. Berndt 1951); in or near the claim area. For example, R.M. and C.H. Berndt did seriously by historians. Little of this, however, has been done traditions. These are just beginning to be recorded and taken

but part of a continuous process and representative of it.

In collecting it we have used the following sources:

- published books and articles
- archival material in Canberra at the Australian Archives, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies and National Library
- archival material in Adelaide at Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (South Australian Branch), South Australian Archives and the South Australian Museum
- archival material in Sydney at the Mitchell Library
- archival material in Perth at the State Archives, Batty Library
- archival material in Melbourne at the archives of the Society of Jesus, Hawthorn
- archival material in Darwin at the Australian Archives, Department of Aboriginal Affairs Library the Darwin Community College Library and the Darwin Historical Society
- interviews with and communications from knowledgeable living people such as Professor R.M. Berndt and the late Professor A.P. Elkin, Dr. Xavier Herbert, Mr. Joe McGinness, Dr. C.E. Cook, Mr. Delfin Gubillo, Mrs. Margaret Rivers and Mrs. Kitty Moffat among others who gave us so much of their time.

While it would have been desirable to research all these

sources (and others) thoroughly, it was not practical nor, perhaps, necessary for the purposes of the land claim. The material on Aborigines in archives is only now being systematically indexed and when this is done, extracting material will no doubt be easier and faster than it was in our case.

Other factors which prevented our access to material include the gaps made by disasters from natural and human causes in the area - cyclones, the bombing of Darwin and the effects of shifting material around in the war period - and the thirty-year-before-the-present "closed period" applying to certain government documents.

Far more people than those we were able to contact have knowledge about the history of the area. To them we tender our

apologies for not interviewing them and we hope that should they know of any significant omissions in our material, they will draw them to our attention for the purposes of the claim.

Professional historians, too, will find fault with aspects of our presentation and methodology. We use bibliographic conventions from the discipline of Anthropology throughout and this method has its drawbacks when dealing with references of a historical kind.

Our aim has been to enable readers to trace a document that interests them with a minimum of difficulty while at the same time keeping our style and presentation consistent. In this, a multi-disciplinary exercise, some compromises have had to be made.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL NOTES

By way of explanation

NLC, Darwin

Brandt, M., Walsh, M. & Harris, A.

Kenbi Land Claim 1979

A claim book is not an ethnography. The focus of study, for us, has been the area of the land claim and the traditional owners of it, together with others who have an interest in it. The material we present has therefore been shaped by the requirements of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. However, for those interested, we present here a few comments on other aspects of the social life of the claimants and their ancestors.

Social organisation: remarks

No ethnography of the Larrakia and Wagaidj people has been published. We summarise here some brief remarks made over the years.

Spencer (1912:6) places the Larrakia in a socio-cultural area with the Wagaidj, Tiwi, Iwaidja and Kakadu, as did Elkin (1950a:2), Berndt (1951b:13) and McCarthy (1957:118). The evidence of social interaction between these groups which we present in chapters six and seven supports these observations. They lack the section and subsection systems ("skins") which are found among people to the south and east of them. There are no named moiety. In no way do these findings mean that their social organisation is un-Aboriginal. In fact the potential for introducing the section and moiety systems is in the existing kinship system but, for whatever reasons, has never been exploited.

Early observers confirm local descent groups for the Larrakia which have "totems" or "dreamings" and were called "ungas" in Spencer's time (1914:204). A man of one totem cannot marry a woman of the same totem.

Warner (1933) says the Larrakia have patrilineal groupings and inherit a totem from their father. Thus a man of the Frog totem is what is strong, not skin".

* Informant John Singh said "we have durlg [patrilineal totem], and durlg is what is strong, not skin".

* see Berndt The World of the First Australians page 55

group might marry a woman of the Crocodile* group and their

children would be Frog, after their father.

Berndt (personal communication) who worked among Iarrakia

speakers in war camps at Katherine and nearby in 1945 recorded 99 pairs of intermarrying "totemic" groups. The danggalaba or

crocodile group still intermarry with the sea-turtle group, just as they did then. Today, however, the sea-turtle group in the

claim area belongs to the Kulk-Wadjinginy language group. Berndt

** (personal communication) also recorded the "dirila" (or whale)

group, which still functions today but also as a Wadjinginy form,

durlg.

More will be said about the correspondences between Iarrakia

and Wagaiaj durlg groups in chapter six. Warner (1933:13) suggests

a mother's brother's daughter type of marriage preference. From

our preliminary observations through genealogies we would agree.

The kinship systems appears to be of the Kariara type, where one

type of cross-cousin is not differentiated from the other. But this

needs more study and does not bear directly on land claim matters.

Customs

We want to make a few remarks which record the continuity of

traditions among people in the claim area.

A lot of information concerning what anthropologists call

"customs" is in the literature for Iarrakia and Wagaiaj (Sturt 1879:

92; Foeische 1881b:6 and 1885b; Parkhouse 1895b:643-6; Kerr 1971:109

from Hoare's 1869 diary). These concern physical descriptions of

people, drawings and details of weapons, ceremonial paraphernalia

and so on. Two only are relevant to the present claim.

The first concerns the removal of the terminal and sometimes

* Note here that the traditional owners are members of the local

descent group called "crocodile", so Warner's statements demonstrate a historical depth for this group, as do our genealogies.

** To M. Brandl and M. Walsh.

the second joint of the index finger on a woman's right or left hand (Wildey 1875:115; Curr 1886:252; Foelsche 1881b:7; Spencer 1914:10). The joints were either bitten off by the mother or a cobweb tied so tightly about them that the joints rotted and fell off. It apparently had nothing to do with initiation. Foelsche (1881b:6) says the Iarrakia explain the custom as an aid for women in later life as food-gatherers.

Basedow (1906:8) records this custom for the Wagaidj. Two present-day sisters belonging to the Wadjiginy language group, Margaret Rivers and Kitty Moffat, have two joints removed from their index fingers. Both women have a long association with the claim area. They were, for example, encountered as children in the Channel Point area by Daly Young, Mirringga, a Kik speaker still living in Darwin (Beckett 1916 and a family tradition bears out the Beckett account).

Another custom of relevance is that of the ngirawad or name exchange (Herbert 1873:27 and Daly 1887:66), and this is dealt with in chapter two on the claimants.

Society not static

This claim highlights aspects of Aboriginal traditions which in earlier land claims were lesser themes. We refer particularly to the continuity of traditions and the matter of social and cultural change. These will be discussed both as factors operating within the society of one particular Aboriginal group and - what is crucial in their case - as factors impinging from without.

A danger ever-present in ethnographic work is to see a society as static, because the researcher views it during a limited period of time. Intentionally or unintentionally "blueprints" (von Sturmer 1978:559) may be established. These mirror the "ideal" models of a society that its members have in their minds at the time of the ethnography. The "ideals", the "blueprints" of social

action in people's heads provide the stability and continuity that seem necessary (but not sufficient) conditions for a human group to be called a society (see Williams 1978:3-23 for a discussion of this with regard to Aboriginal land ownership in north-east Arnhem Land). Blueprints also facilitate the maintenance of a society while change occurs. But they do not account for change. Alternatives are built in

Such "ideal" models for action always have alternatives built in, which one or any or all individuals make use of. All field workers in Aboriginal Australia have felt non-plussed when watching, eventually, a ceremony they have been hearing about from people for some time. Much does not occur as it "ought" to do, according to the predictions they have been told. The "is" rarely, if ever, conforms to the "ought". This does not mean that the participants are wrong, or ignorant, or forgetful. It does mean, however, that a blueprint does not always delineate the range of alternatives and choices permitted to the actors. Its purpose is to provide the model for reality, not the blueprint.

These comments on alternatives and choices apply particularly to societies experiencing suddenly - and then persistently - many foreign elements. The Larrakia and Wadjiginy are such societies. The rubric "social disintegration" often applied to them is a misnomer, because it refers to models from one (or other) point in historical time, often ignoring the contemporary models and certainly the contemporary reality. Further, it denies the members of those groups, as human beings, the ability to adapt and to think their way through the possibilities offered by their culture. It also denies the quite clear assertions by living Aborigines that Larrakia people still live in the Darwin area and are traditional owners of the claim area.

Human groups are not social isolates

Neither the Larrakia language group nor any other Aboriginal group was ever a social isolate (see section on "Relations with neighbours" in chapter four). Mulvaney (1976) points out how trade routes spanned a continent. Berndt (1970:212) speaks of the western Arnhem Land group, the Gunwinygu, as migrants who: did not go into unfamiliar country - both people and country were already to some extent familiar through their mytho - ritual constellations. The tradition of inter-Aboriginal contact was already firmly established ... and enshrined in the movements of ancestral and spirit beings. Chapters six and seven of this claim book examine the "traditions of inter-Aboriginal contact" in and near the claim area.

The living traditions in the claim area

With regard to land in the claim area, what we have documented are the living, continuing traditions as they were at the time of our research.

No human tradition is fixed and unchanging. Traditions are part of social processes which are always undergoing adjustments, manipulations and re-appraisal.

Continuity of christian tradition: example

When a particular tradition, or set of beliefs, attitudes and behaviours, is viewed at different points on a time scale, one observes what can be called transformations in that tradition. These transformations in no way impinge on the central themes or imperatives of that tradition. For instance a Christian church service in Darwin today bears few observable resemblances to one of the first century in, say, Rome, but any Christian would aver that the religious purposes were the same and the sacred themes identical - despite the differences in language and style, despite the differently built environments, despite electric lighting and seating, clothing style of the congregation, time of day of the service and so on. The Christian tradition is a continuing one.

In an Aboriginal context Tlwi mortuary and Kulama rituals

today provide a similar example (see Brandl 1971), where numerous

differences are observable in the manner of performing them, their duration, the age of participants and so on, when compared to

Spencer's observations in 1912. Their purpose remains however the

same.

Aboriginal identity

The tradition of Aboriginality itself is another example within the wider Australian setting. A sense of identity coupled with

distinctive behaviours and attitudes mark out many thousands in this

country. This distinctiveness is part of a continuing tradition,

unbroken by some 200 years of contact with people who identify

quite differently.

Adjustments to traditions

Adjustments within a human tradition are on-going and ever-

present, but certainly can be accelerated. A major impetus is a

fluctuation in population from whatever cause (for example,

massacres as in the case of the Warlpiri; disease and displacement

as in the Larrakia case). But, where people identify as a

distinctive Aboriginal group still live, to that extent so does

their distinctive heritage of traditions, albeit transformed from

what they must have looked like 100 years ago*. An

Aboriginal tradition may only begin to be considered extinct when

the last person identifying with that tradition has died. Neigh-

bours and friends incorporate elements from a nearby group into

their own traditions, so that it is questionable whether a tradition

is indeed ever extinct. People in and adjacent to the claim area

provide examples of this. Some hundreds of people in Darwin.

identify as Larrakia and Wagaidj, even though events (as documented in chapter four) have worked steadily against the continuity

* See also Turner 1974:193-5.



owner Olga Singh who prepared a statement on place names in the area (see Appendix 2). She is here recording some oral traditions (see also the cover design by her.)

of their traditions.

Transmission of traditions: oral

Traditions are transmitted in a variety of ways. Socialisation - just growing up in a particular human social setting and learning appropriate behaviours - is one way. Socialisation patterns among people in the claim area are distinctively their own and differ in substantial ways from those of other Australians.

Another way of handing on a tradition is via ceremonies

and ritual. This means assumes particular emphasis in

non-literate societies with a non-complex technology. The symbols

and procedures and accompanying language of a ritual act as keys

or prompts to knowledge in human minds. Rituals in such societies

often perform functions of a library in literate societies.

Hunting, foraging and moving through a landscape also provide

opportunities to transmit information about a heritage. The natural

features and species act as cues to knowledge in the minds of

people who know the country, live on it and belong to it.

Literacy and technical

When literacy is adopted and where technical aids are available,

other additional means are used to house and pass on knowledge.

People in the claim area, for example, have and frequently use tape

recorders and cameras for storing and transmitting their heritage.

They have also written down information (see appendices by Olga

Singh and the children's stories from 1960).

Transformations

Given the unceasing pressures on people in the claim area

(as documented in chapter four) it is not surprising that

viewed from 1979, profound and far-reaching transformations have

occurred in both the content of their heritage and the ways in which

it is transmitted. Walking through the land is not so common today

when people have to make the best use of available time away from

employment and education commitments at Beluen. Consequently fewer opportunities exist to acquire at leisure and in detail information keyed in the landscape.

Leaders of the gula, beliya and malinya ceremonies

endeavoured to secure their continuity and the heritage of knowledge within them by recruiting successors. Thus Billy Beluen, father's father to traditional owner Kathy Minyima, gave to

George Munggalu the right and the responsibility to pass on knowledge to young men of the daggalaba clan. Given that no males

with issue in the direct patrilineal line remain, men like Munggalu face critical decisions where secret-sacred information (a small

percentage of the total heritage) is concerned. Men from other

clans (of the Wadjiginy, Ami and Kik language groups in particular) have been given this information to transmit and it has inevitably

become interwoven with the rituals of their groups, where it has amplified and transformed the traditions of those people in its

turn. There is nothing un-Aboriginal nor un-precedented in this.

The Warlpiri and Kartanngarru-Kurnitji land claim 1978 documented a similar process (Peterson et al. 1978:97), as did the Borroloola

claim (Avery & McLaughlin 1977:43). Migrating Aboriginal groups in

Arnhem Land too (Berndt & Berndt 1970:212; Hiatt 1965:20), use these and other alternatives to safe-guard the sacred heritage keyed in

the landscape*.

Core of tradition continues

The purposes, the themes, the imperatives continue as the core

of these traditions: mortuary rituals are still held to ensure the

safe passage of the deceased from life to death; they are still

believed to protect the bereaved from any malign influences of an

unappeased spirit, and they provide opportunities to affirm the

status of the survivors. Initiation rituals for both girls and boys

are still called to mark the entry of the young into the serious

*

Falkenberg (1962:34) for the Port Keats area gives examples of men from one clan being taken into another through initiation processes.

business of adult life and responsibility and to ensure the welfare of all.

These ceremonies serve to link people into networks which ensure the continuity of the traditions. They mark indelibly moments in the lives of those who participate in and share them. Where more public knowledge is concerned, it is being handed on in ways such as that employed by the late Tommy Lyons, via his wife to his daughter, traditional owner, Olga. Men like Tommy Barradjab (or Burrinjuck) and Bobby Lane exercise the right to compose songs about places in the claim area. Traditional owner Bobby Secretary has permitted others - who live within the claim area - to exercise his and his siblings' spiritual responsibility in these matters. This does not mean in any way that he has ceded that responsibility, nor is he seen to have done so. Knowledge is transmitted today, as in past years both within and outside ceremonies in the claim area. The imperative to transmit the heritage is still strong; the means of transmission and the content of the heritage are undergoing changes, but without sacrificing its central themes and intentions. The process of transmission has been a continuous and unbroken one, impelled throughout the years by the sense of spiritual responsibility of the danggalaba clan and their kin to the land which is theirs.