

Kinship and Conflict



A Study of an Aboriginal Community
in Northern Arnhem Land

L. R. HIATT

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This is a study of kinship and conflict among a group of Aborigines who only recently abandoned their nomadic existence to live on a government settlement. Given the current rate of change in Australia, it will be among the last first-hand accounts of traditional Aboriginal social life.

The book has two main aims. The first is to correct the impression that Aborigines are automata mechanically following tribal law in everything they do, or, as it has been put recently, 'algebraic electronic computers ticking away with no problem to solve'. The second is to present for the first time a systematic analysis of disputes in an Aboriginal community, most of them over women. Far more is known, and written, about Australian social organizations than about clashes of interest within them. The author demonstrates clearly that a better knowledge of the second subject might have prevented misunderstandings about the first.

(Continued on back flap)

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KINSHIP AND CONFLICT

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A Study of an Aboriginal Community
in Northern Arnhem Land

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THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
CANBERRA

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To
Angabarabara
and
Guramanamana

Foreword

Scholars have been writing about Australian Aborigines for over a hundred years. During this time their nomadic way of life has almost everywhere been abandoned. In recent years there has been a flood of popular and scholarly accounts of Aboriginal life, of their art, ceremonial, music, religion and many other topics. During the same period increasing efforts have been made by governments, Christian missions and welfare societies to assimilate Aborigines into the wider Australian society. Can anything new be said about their traditional customs and values?

The Aboriginal people studied by Dr Hiatt and described in this book belong to one of the better studied ethnographic areas in Australia and when he worked among them they had already been gathered together on a government settlement, playing football and cards and working for wages. Yet despite these seemingly unpropitious circumstances he has succeeded in saying a great deal that is new, interesting, and relevant beyond the local Aboriginal scene. His account of marriage arrangements at Maningrida is clear, precise and specific, qualities long overdue in the analysis of Aboriginal marriage systems. His discussion of disputes enables us to see in action social institutions that hitherto have usually been presented as lifeless sets of rules. He shows that Aborigines, though they have ceased to be nomadic hunters, still bring distinctive cultural values to the solution of problems of social life.

From the earliest days of European settlement in Australia, the Aborigines have occupied a special place in social theory. Here were people who appeared to lack almost all of the attributes of humanity; without clothes or crops or chieftains, they might legitimately be regarded as living relics from some earlier epoch, survivors left haphazardly behind on the bottom rung of the ladder of social evolution. This view died slowly. As knowledge accumulated of the richness and complexity of

Aboriginal ritual and ceremonial, the logic of totemic beliefs, the subtle notion of the Dreaming, and the grandeur of Aboriginal visual art, so a new view took its place. The typical and prototypical primitive peoples of the world were now to be sought in Africa, Melanesia and north America, while Australia came to be regarded as an aberrant continent, where early man had made an unusual though remarkably successful adaptation to an unusually deficient natural environment. The study of Australian Aboriginal culture, intricate and atypical, came inevitably to be the preserve of a body of specialists whose findings appeared to students of other cultures as hard to comprehend and not very relevant.

This shift in anthropological attitudes is seen most clearly in the field of kinship. At first Aborigines were said to have no family life as known to the rest of humanity; men and women mated in groups, paternity was intrinsically unknowable and unknown, and brute force served in place of a moral code. Later, as scholarly inquiry gradually revealed the true complexity and unparalleled logical development of Aboriginal kinship systems, a special technique of analysis was developed for describing the variations on a common theme reported from different parts of the continent. This technique, based on a semi-formal treatment of kinship terminology, and of the rules of recruitment to sections and the like, and on a summary statement of marriage prescriptions, appeared to have little utility for the simpler kinship systems found elsewhere outside Australia, and its practitioners were left alone to develop their own intellectual shorthand and to pursue their own controversies. It is significant that in the most widely-read of general accounts of Aboriginal life, Elkin's *Australian Aborigines*, the reader is advised that most 'will do well to pass lightly over' the discussion of kinship systems.

The real weakness of almost all studies of Aboriginal social life until about five years ago is not that they were difficult to follow but that they failed to answer those questions which were increasingly being posed and at least partly answered in the analysis of kinship systems outside Australia. How are the precision, uniformity, and lack of ambiguity of the system of kinship terminology reconciled with the everyday demands for gradations of amity and hostility, and for shifts from

involvement to indifference and back again, and with the perennial tactical need for ambiguity and imprecision in the give-and-take of social life? How does a man realize in practice the rights and claims over and on his kinsmen that he has in theory, and what happens when his recognized rights conflict with rights asserted by others? How can the values of solidarity and support typical of kinship operate in a social environment where there are no strangers and each person is kin to everyone else? In particular, if people are poor in material wealth, and women therefore are the principal objects of value, how does a man dispose of or invest his wealth, what policy or strategy does he follow, and what return does he get from wise investment? The pursuit of answers to these questions in other parts of the world has taken social analysis significantly further forward; these are some of the questions that, building on the work of earlier generations of ethnographers, Dr Hiatt discusses for Maningrida.

Most descriptions of Aboriginal marriage arrangements, and of involvement in quarrels and fights, are in terms of ties of 'close' or 'distant' kinship of one kind or another. The reader is usually left in the dark about the exact meaning of 'close' and 'distant', if one exists. Almost invariably there is no discussion of the mandatory qualities of kinship; in any incident there is always an unknown array of relatives, close and distant, who remain offstage, as it were, and for reasons unstated do not appear. For example, we may be told that A wants to marry B, apparently because she is a relative of the right category; but what about C, D and E, of the same category, who seem not to enter into A's plan of campaign? X supports Y in a fight because they are brothers-in-law; but in this crisis, where is Z, the brother of X whom we heard about earlier? Dr Hiatt's most striking achievement lies, I think, in largely overcoming these stubborn analytical and descriptive difficulties. He gives precise meaning to 'close' and 'distant', and he is as much concerned with when and why kinsmen are indifferent or hostile to each other's interests as with when they co-operate. He has been particularly successful in applying this method to the discussion of marriage claims. He shows how, at least in Maningrida, the prescriptive rule of marriage choice entails that each man has a claim not on all

the women in a particular subsection or category of 'close' or 'distant' kinship, but only on a specifically delimited set, containing certain women belonging to certain patrilineal groups. For some of these potential brides a man has to compete with one set of his kinsmen, while for other brides he is in competition with other sets of kinsmen. Hence the whole community is interlaced by a series of partially overlapping potential marriage claims. The marriage market is thus seen neither as a machine for smoothly circulating brides and generating social solidarity, nor as a social field divided tidily into two opposed moieties or into eight, sixteen or some other number of kin categories. Rather it is an arena in which every man has limited assets (principally nieces) with which to satisfy diverse claims on him for wives and to achieve certain objectives for himself (brides and allies). Every man has to balance present against future demands, and to make his own decisions in the light of the probable decisions of his fellows. At the same time women are not chattels in the market but have substantial autonomy as well as interests shared with brothers, uncles, husbands and sons.

A crucial fact emerging from Dr Hiatt's analysis of marriage at Maningrida is that although there is virtually complete consensus about the form of marriage prescribed, and although almost all disputes over women are argued in terms of these prescriptions, nevertheless the proportion of men, at any time, who are married in conformity with the rule is quite low. It is often assumed that a system of prescriptive marriage, when its rules are accepted wholeheartedly by those who have to operate it, automatically means that all or nearly all marriages will be in conformity with the rule. Dr Hiatt shows that the simple statement, common enough in Australian ethnography, that a man should marry his 'mother's mother's brother's daughter's daughter' is quite inadequate as a description of the system found at Maningrida. In fact there is not a single prescriptive rule but a hierarchy of rules. Inexorable demographic and temporal factors continually upset the allocation of brides, and despite agreement on the rules there is ample room for conflict. His analysis suggests that for a proper understanding of any prescriptive system more is needed than a mere census of marriages.

The conflicts, mainly about women, that Dr Hiatt discusses in support of his argument are real conflicts, sometimes leading to violence and bloodshed, and not symbolic conflicts expressed in ritual and ceremonial. Conflict may well be a source of increased social cohesion, but for Dr Hiatt it is more important that in situations of conflict latent antagonism is made manifest, equivocation gives way to commitment, and social machinery for limiting or settling disputes comes into action. The structure of relationships that normally lies hidden, but which sustains the activities of everyday life, comes to the surface and can be studied by the observer.

In this book Dr Hiatt demonstrates clearly that there is still much that can and should be discovered about Aboriginal life. He describes quite a small group of people and most of his analysis begins with a detailed examination of what particular people did at particular times. Wisely, he is not here primarily concerned with generalizing for Aboriginal Australia as a whole or even for the whole of Arnhem Land. There has never been a shortage of generalizations about Aborigines but studies in depth have been far too few. Whether we believe that the aim of social science is to establish broad generalizations or, as I hold, to deepen our understanding of historic events, Dr Hiatt's methods and findings have a significance that goes far beyond the coastal flats of Maningrida. His book brings Australian ethnography firmly back into the main stream of contemporary social inquiry.

J. A. Barnes

The Australian National University
Canberra

March 1965

Preface

This book about the Gidjingali and neighbouring peoples of northern Arnhem Land has two main aims. The first is to correct the impression that Aborigines are automata mechanically following tribal law in everything they do, or, as it has been put recently, 'algebraic electronic computers ticking away with no problem to solve' (Leach 1962: 133). I am not concerned with the question how the false impression arose (see Farnill 1963), but I shall try to show that the Gidjingali bear out Leach's point that 'in all viable systems there must be an area where the individual is free to make choices so as to manipulate the system to his own advantage' (*loc. cit.*).

The second aim is to present for the first time a systematic analysis of disputes in an Aboriginal community. The subject has been badly neglected. Elkin's main contribution to Australian ethnography was in the field of kinship and totemism, and he said little more than that headmen settled quarrels. Warner, Kaberry, Berndt, and Worsley gave some information but only incidental to investigations of such matters as magic and religion, the status of women, sexual behaviour, and social change. More recently Meggitt presented details of a variety of disputes in his account of Walbiri social organization, and Hart and Pilling described competition for wives among the Tiwi. But it is safe to say that far more is known about the social organization of Aboriginal society than about clashes of interest within it. A better knowledge of the second subject might have prevented misunderstandings about the first.

Chapter 1 outlines the demographic, ecological, and historical background, and I follow this with a brief account of the conditions under which I carried out fieldwork. Chapters 2 and 3 present the main features of Gidjingali social organization: land-owning units and residential associations are dealt with in Chapter 2, the system of kinship and marriage in

Chapter 3. Chapters 4 and 5 give a classification and analysis of conflict—in the former those relating to the acquisition of wives; in the latter those over property, adultery, insult, and injury. Chapter 6 is an analysis of social control among the Gidjingali considered in the light of statements that have been made about Aboriginal government and political organization.

Particular points I hope to establish are the following. First, Radcliffe-Brown's generalizations about Aboriginal local organization did not apply to the Gidjingali. These people lived not in separate patrilineal patrilocal hordes but in communities whose male members belonged to from four to eleven patrilineal descent groups. Second, there was a chronic disproportion between the demand for wives and the supply of suitable women as defined by the marriage rule; in consequence, disputes were frequent and often serious. Third, patrilineal groups were not units in wife-exchange systems of the kind implied by Lévi-Strauss's theory on kinship and marriage. Fourth, despite Radcliffe-Brown's statement that the patrilineal group was throughout Australia the political unit, among the Gidjingali this was not so. Inter-community fights often aroused some degree of community solidarity, and men of different patrilineal groups in the same community often acted together in them. Within the community, patrilineal groups never opposed each other as corporate units. Men had obligations to support close uterine and affinal relatives as well as close agnates, and there was always the possibility that members of the same patrilineal group would behave differently from one conflict situation to another, depending on their relationships to those concerned. Fifth, the Gidjingali had no formal apparatus of government or recognized political leaders of the kind described by Elkin and others among Aboriginal groups elsewhere in Australia. Finally, Warner's structural explanation of the custom in which a man attacked his sister when he heard someone swear at her is unsatisfactory. The answer is more likely to be found by examining the stringent sexual prohibitions that govern the brother-sister relationship.

Acknowledgments

This book is based on fieldwork carried out in Arnhem Land between 1958 and 1960 while I was a Research Scholar at the Australian National University. I wish to thank the Council of the University for their support. I have also to express my gratitude to officers of the Northern Territory Administration for their ready co-operation; the natives at Maningrida who befriended and taught me; and my wife who assisted me in ways too numerous to mention.

My chief debt is to J. A. Barnes, who (to change the last sentence of his foreword slightly but appropriately) has brought Australian anthropology firmly back into the main stream of contemporary social inquiry. He was a constant source of inspiration and guidance. Discussions with W. E. H. Stanner, J. D. Freeman, A. L. Epstein, and S. A. Wurm of the Australian National University were also of great value.

The book took its final shape at the University of Sydney, where M. J. Meggitt offered advice on a work already in debt to his own path-finding research. I. Hogbin spent countless hours teaching me to write simply and concisely.

L.H.

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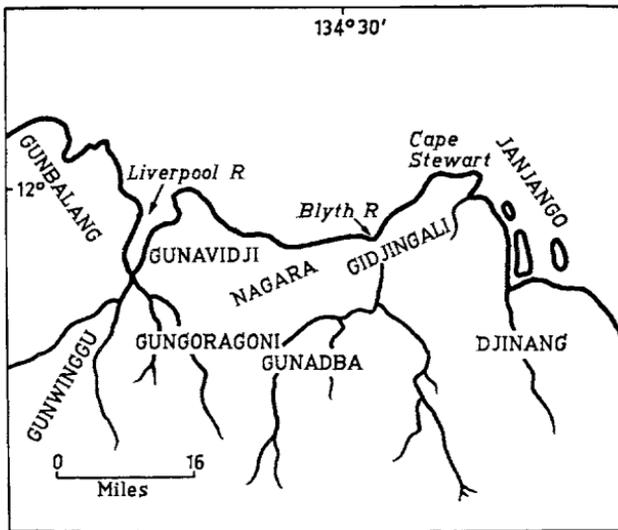
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1

Introduction

THE GIDJINGALI AND THEIR NEIGHBOURS

Gidjingali is the term for the language spoken by people who, before the time of my fieldwork, lived south of Cape Stewart and around the mouth of the Blyth River (Map 1). They



Map 1 *The Gidjingali and their neighbours*

referred to themselves collectively as 'we' and never by any name. I shall call them the Gidjingali for the sake of convenience.

Neighbouring groups were the Janjango and Djinang to the east; the Gunadba to the south; the Nagara and Gungoragoni to the west; and the Gunwinggu, Gunauidji, and

Gunbalang further west around the Liverpool River.¹ (Strictly speaking these also are the names of languages.) The Gidjingali speech is similar to Gunadba, and eastern neighbours referred to them both as Burera (a term used by Warner 1937; Capell 1942²). The other languages were markedly different from these two and from each other (Capell 1942), but many natives were bilingual and some trilingual.

In 1960 the Gidjingali numbered 294, the Nagara 71, and the Gunavidji 102. There were fewer Gunadba and Gungorogoni, but I did not make accurate counts of them or the remaining groups.

Warner (1937: 15, 36) included the Burera as one of the eight tribes of north-eastern Arnhem Land that he referred to collectively as the Murngin, though he admitted that they had the most divergent tongue and were affiliated linguistically with tribes further to the west (p. 37). In this book I do not intend to discuss structural and cultural differences between the Gidjingali and the other so-called Murngin tribes or, on a wider scale, between eastern and western Arnhem Land (see Elkin 1950). But it is necessary to state that the Gidjingali had an Aranda-type kinship system based on marriage between certain kinds of second cousin (MFZ DS-MMBDD,³ etc.) and not a system based on matrilateral

¹ Unless stated otherwise, the letters *ng* in native words are pronounced as in the English word 'sing'; *j* is equivalent to the English *y*.

² Capell (p. 374) listed Gudjalavia and Gunaidba as close dialects of Burera. This, as I have said, is an eastern term for both Gidjingali (a name he did not record) and Gunadba (cf. Gunaidba). Gudjalavia is a western term for Gidjingali.

The Gunangarawuraba language was also similar to Gidjingali and Gunadba. But by 1960 it was extinct as a language of everyday discourse, and only a few old people remembered its dialectical peculiarities. The Gunangarawuraba people lived between the Gidjingali and Gunadba.

³ I shall use the following abbreviations when more than one kinship term is required to state a relationship: B = brother (EB = elder brother, YB = younger brother); D = daughter; F = father; H = husband; M = mother; S = son; W = wife; Z = sister. Therefore MFZDS = mother's father's sister's daughter's son.

cross-cousin marriage of the kind described by Warner (pp. 56 ff.). The Gidjingali themselves recognized this difference, as did their neighbours to the east.

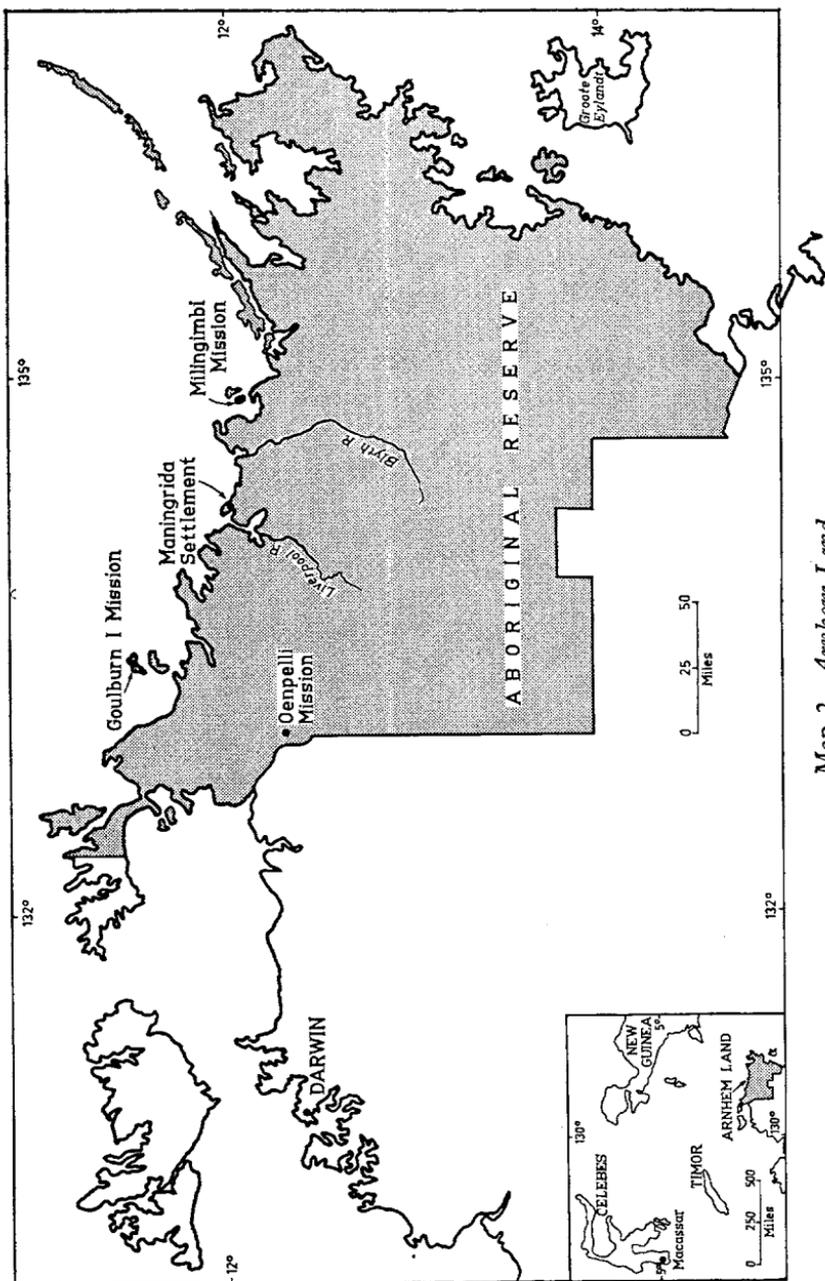
ECOLOGY

The climate of Arnhem Land is part of the Asiatic monsoonal system. The north-west monsoon, arriving about October, introduces a period of rising temperature and humidity, with occasional thunderstorms. Torrential downpours and high winds occur frequently from December to March. During April and May the rains ease, the humidity falls, and the wind changes to the south-east. From June to September little or no rain falls, the humidity is low, and the temperature mild. The wind becomes stronger and cooler during July and August, but the temperature never drops to freezing point. The Gidjingali had terms for the wet and dry seasons and for the two transitional periods.

The average annual rainfall for the years 1958-59-60 at Milingimbi mission, about twenty miles from the Blyth River, was 3,423 points. The highest monthly average was for January (850 points), the lowest July (0 points). Over the same period the average daily temperature at 3 p.m. for December (the hottest month) was 91.4°F, for July (the coolest) 80.5°F.

Long beaches stretch between the Liverpool River and Cape Stewart. Dense stands of mangrove trees line the Blyth River estuary and its tributaries, and sand dunes run inland for various distances, enclosing mud flats and swamps that are regularly flooded by high tides and heavy rain. Eucalyptus forests and sporadic stands of monsoonal bushland occupy the higher ground.

Before Europeans arrived the natives obtained their food from the land, sea, creeks, and swamps. Men speared and trapped fish and harpooned turtle and dugong from dug-out canoes. They knocked geese and flying foxes out of trees with long sticks; caught goannas, lizards, and bush rats; and speared wallabies, jungle fowl, and bush turkeys. Women gathered shell fish, small reptiles, and many different kinds of plant food. Fresh water came from springs, lagoons, and

Map 2 *Arnhem Land*

swamps. Particular sources failed late in the dry season or became brackish after tidal inundations, but alternative supplies were always adequate.⁴

ALIEN INFLUENCES

Indonesian and Japanese sailors

Probably Indonesians visited the Arnhem Land coast from the sixteenth century onwards. They sailed down with the north-west monsoons in October and returned about six months later with the south-east trade winds. Their objective was trepang for the Chinese merchants at Macassar (Map 2). They employed Aborigines to help with the work of collection and preservation, and they also bought local food, turtle shell, and pearls. They paid in rice, tobacco, alcohol, cloth, and knives.

In the second half of the nineteenth century Australian trepang fishermen entered the area but had difficulty in procuring cheap labour as the Aborigines preferred to work for the Indonesians. In 1882 the Inspector of Police in the Northern Territory reported that the Indonesians

demoralise the natives and make them untractable by the amount of drink and disease they distribute, and so effectively crush out the white man who may be trepanging or employing native labour in any other way. The European trepanger on this coast may do fairly well for about four months, but as soon as he gets into full swing, down come the praus and away go all your men and the Europeans must shut up till the Malays go away again (quoted in R. and C. Berndt 1954: 77).

In the previous year the Administration had appointed an official to collect customs duties and licence fees from the captain of each visiting boat. Finally, in 1907, the Commonwealth government passed legislation to prohibit Indonesian voyagers entering Australian waters.

The Indonesians worked mainly in eastern Arnhem Land,

⁴ For more detailed accounts of ecology in coastal parts of Arnhem Land see Tindale (1925-6: 76-84); Warner (1937: 140-5); Thomson (1948-9: 55-8); Worsley (1954: 29-59; 1961); Specht (1958: chs. 13, 15); McCarthy and McArthur (1960); and Bauer (1961).

probably because the trepang beds were richer there than further west. Old Gidjingali men remember them, but I gather from the accounts that the fishermen did not come regularly to the Blyth River. There is no obvious evidence of Indonesian ancestry among present-day Gidjingali or of changes in social life attributable to Indonesian influences. Yet at some stage several cultural changes occurred. Gidjingali now make canoes from tree trunks instead of from bark and smoke tobacco in long Indonesian-style pipes; they use a representation of an Indonesian mast in one of their ceremonies and refer to the visitors in songs; and the vocabulary includes perhaps a dozen words of Indonesian origin. As these innovations are widespread in eastern Arnhem Land, it is possible that the Gidjingali adopted them from neighbours who had closer contacts with the voyagers.⁵

Japanese pearl fishing in the Arafura Sea began not long after Indonesian trepang fishing ceased. The luggers frequently came to shore for water or safe anchorage in rough weather, and on these occasions crew members sought native women. Although the Australian government in 1931 declared Arnhem Land an Aboriginal Reserve and made it an offence to enter the area without a permit the law was not strictly enforced and seamen continued to have access to the women. Japanese pearling in Australian waters stopped during World War II but began again in 1953. Nowadays naval vessels police the coast, and most of the natives live under supervision on missions or government settlements. Contact between Japanese and Aborigines is therefore negligible.

The people dislike the Japanese and compare them unfavourably with the Indonesians. As the latter were primarily interested in acquiring labour, they took pains to maintain harmonious relationships; the old men said they paid generously and did not molest the women. By contrast, the Japanese were primarily interested in sexual gratification. They regarded the Aborigines as an inferior species, and, although they usually paid the women, were unconcerned about the goodwill of the men.

⁵ For detailed accounts of Indonesian influences in Arnhem Land see Warner (1937: 453-68); R. and C. Berndt (1954: chs. 3-10, 12); Worsley (1954: 9-19, 74-81).

Several Gunavidji men worked on luggers, and two Gidjingali have Japanese genitors. Contact with Japanese caused no noticeable social or cultural changes.⁶

Europeans before 1940

Little exploration had been done before Sweeney's survey in 1939. King discovered the Liverpool River in 1819, Cadell the Blyth in 1867. (He later recommended the estuary of the Liverpool as the site for the capital of the Northern Territory.) Robinson reported that Aborigines at Cape Stewart frightened his prospecting party on its way to the Gulf of Carpentaria in 1875, Lindsay crossed both rivers during his explorations in 1883, Carrington sailed up them in 1884, Cuthbertson explored the upper reaches of the Liverpool towards the end of the century, Searcy camped on an island near its mouth in 1907, and Strangman entered the estuary in 1908 but saw no natives.⁷ In later years crocodile hunters and pearl fishermen visited the area.

The Methodist Overseas Mission established stations at Goulburn Island and Milingimbi in 1916 and 1925, and the Church Missionary Society a station at Oenpelli in 1925. Each mission concentrated its meagre resources on local natives but bought turtle and baler shells from others and occasionally gave them food and clothing. Liverpool River natives made periodic visits to Oenpelli and Goulburn Island, and some became regular members of the mission communities. Blyth River people visited Milingimbi but, as they were not on good terms with the local natives, usually left as soon as they had completed their transactions at the trade store.

In 1936-7 Thomson visited Cape Stewart during his investigations carried out at the request of the Australian government into conditions on the Reserve (Thomson 1939), and in 1939 Sweeney, an employee of the Methodist Mission, made a survey of the coastal area between the Blyth River

⁶ Thomson (1939) and R. and C. Berndt (1954: chs. 3, 4, 15) have described relationships between Japanese and Aborigines in Arnhem Land at length.

⁷ Sources are given in R. and C. Berndt (1954) and Bauer (1961).

and slightly west of the Liverpool. He reported (1939) that the ceremonial life and tribal authorities of groups between the two rivers were still intact, the food resources adequate, and the health good, but that groups to the west were in various stages of detribalization, with much disease and a declining birthrate. Sweeney attributed the changes to associations with Europeans in buffalo and timber camps further west and on pearling luggers.

In concluding his report Sweeney recommended that missionaries from Goulburn Island should make regular patrols and, if possible, establish bases where medical and evangelical work could be carried out. World War II broke out shortly afterwards, and the Mission was forced to abandon any plans that might have been prepared.

Establishment of Maningrida Government Settlement

Just before the war some of the young bachelors (mostly Gidjingali) set out for Darwin by canoe or on foot.⁸ The leaders appear to have been two men who had been there while working on a pearling lugger. A demand for native labour in military and naval establishments increased the rate of migration shortly afterwards, but it was not until hostilities ceased that married men began taking their families.

Between 1946 and 1949 Patrol Officer Kyle-Little of the Native Affairs Branch led three expeditions to investigate alleged tribal murders in the area. He said in his report of the last patrol:

The war has brought about big changes in the native economic life and has tended to accelerate contact with our culture. Natives throughout the Arnhem Land reserve—many of whom worked with the services during the war—now desire to participate in our economic and social life, and unless the latter activities are advanced and some attractions made in the reserve, the Native Affairs Branch will be unable to cope with the already ever-increasing drift of natives from the reserve to Dar-

⁸ I am indebted to E. C. Evans and J. Long of the Northern Territory Administration for some of the data in this section.

win and other settlements along the north-south highway (1957: 156-7).

He also mentioned that missionaries felt the only suitable place for a government settlement was near the Liverpool River, as the natives there did not come directly under mission influence. Finally he recommended that the Branch establish a trading post where European commodities could be acquired in exchange for crocodile skins, shells, and woven mats and baskets (*loc. cit.*).

In 1949 the Director of Native Affairs instructed Kyle-Little to arrange the repatriation of about sixty immigrants and to set up the trading post. Kyle-Little left Darwin by boat in June with a junior officer named Doolan, the sixty natives, and supplies for a year. On arrival at the Liverpool River the two men built a rough shelter near a spring called Maningrida (pronounced Manin-grida). Over the next few months they announced their intention of developing a trading post and medical centre and encouraged the people to bring in goods for eventual sale in Darwin. There was an enthusiastic response, and by September Kyle-Little and Doolan sent the first shipment on a vessel owned by the Methodist Mission. The Native Affairs Branch sold the goods for £110 and later sent back European commodities worth this amount to be distributed among the native producers. Further shipments realized a total of £118.

In November the Branch decided to close the post for the wet season and instructed Kyle-Little and Doolan to return. Partly because of a shortage in staff and funds, it was not reopened in 1950. In January of that year the Acting-Director recommended that the government take over the administration of Oenpelli Mission, which had made little material progress over the previous twenty-five years, and that Maningrida be developed as an outpost. This proposal was rejected, but in 1951 the branch helped the Methodist Mission to purchase a small vessel on the understanding that missionaries at Goulburn Island would use it to make regular contact with the Liverpool-Blyth River people and later establish a trading post or mission. Lack of staff prevented the Mission from meeting the obligation, and the future of Maningrida remained an unsolved problem.

The migration to Darwin continued, and in 1955 a census revealed that there were about 155 Liverpool-Blyth River natives there and in neighbouring centres. Many worked for wages or received government rations, and none seemed anxious to go home. The Native Affairs Branch on several occasions sent boatloads back to the Liverpool River, but many of the passengers set out on the 200-mile return journey as soon as they had visited their aged relatives.

When my fieldwork was carried out it was still illegal for Aborigines in the Northern Territory to drink alcohol. The Darwin crime registers record a steady increase in the number of Liverpool-Blyth River men charged with offences of this kind from 1948 until 1955. In that year forty-eight appeared in court.

In 1955 the Welfare Branch (previously Native Affairs Branch) sent Sweeney, who had transferred to the government some years earlier, to carry out a census in the Liverpool area and report on the causes of migration. His findings and recommendations were similar to those of Kyle-Little. In 1956 he returned to tell the people that the government intended to reopen the trading post at Maningrida the following year. On 5 May 1957 three Welfare Branch officers set out for the Liverpool River with thirty tons of building equipment and stores, a motor-driven dinghy, and a radio transceiver.

Development of Maningrida Settlement from 1957 to 1960

About fifteen Gunavidji were living near Maningrida when the boat arrived. A week later, Patrol Officer Egan set out to locate people in other parts of the region and explain to them the function of the new settlement. An official document describing Egan's patrol stated the aim of the Welfare Branch in this way:

The concept of the settlement was not that of a compound into which all the natives of the area would move. On the contrary, the natives were to be left in their tribal areas with a minimum disruption, initially, of their tribal patterns. The function of the settlement at this early stage was primarily to provide trading and medical services for the area as a whole.

The concept was never realized. From the beginning the settlement staff employed members of outlying groups as well as local people in developmental and other work. When I arrived in May 1958 there were 57 natives on the payroll (53 men, 4 women), comprising 29 Gidjingali and Gunadba, 18 Gunavidji, 7 Nagara, 1 Gungoragoni, 1 Gunwinggu, and 1 Djinang. Each male employee received £1 per week and three ample meals a day for himself and his family, a female 10s. per week and meals. Other men living on the settlement sold crocodile skins and native artifacts at the trade store, and women sold woven mats and baskets. In addition, all aged and infirm were entitled to regular food rations. By September 1958 there were about 330 natives in permanent residence, all obtaining sufficient European commodities for their needs.

The staff changed the work force regularly to provide as many as possible with the opportunity to earn wages. They also tried to persuade men to leave the settlement temporarily when unemployed, but with little success; natives on the payroll supported idle kinsfolk and expected to be supported when out of work themselves. During a journey on foot to the Blyth River in June 1958 I met only a few people still living in the bush. They said everyone else was living at Maningrida, on a mission, or in Darwin.

In the first year of the settlement whites and natives almost finished clearing an airstrip from upland forest, erected four corrugated iron buildings (staff residence, storeroom, trade store, native kitchen), reticulated water from the spring, established an orchard and vegetable garden, and provided medical services. The 57 natives employed in May 1958 comprised 39 men on the airstrip, 5 gardeners, 2 wood-cutters, 2 cooks, 1 medical assistant, 1 mechanic, 1 baker, 1 storeman, 1 builder's labourer, and 4 female domestic servants. In the same year (May 1957-May 1958) native producers sold over £1,000 worth of goods at the trade store. These included crocodile skins worth £400, woven mats and baskets that women had learnt to make during visits to neighbouring missions, weapons and ritual objects, and food for the kitchen such as fish, turtle, dugong, and crab.

In the next two and a half years the airstrip was extended,

more buildings erected, the garden enlarged, and medical services improved. In November 1960 a private contractor began work on an administration building, staff residences, native bathrooms, a hospital, and a school. He brought white workers from Darwin but employed local natives as well.

The original staff consisted of a manager, an assistant manager, and a patrol officer. Later the manager's wife was appointed as a part-time matron. At the end of 1960 the staff comprised an acting-superintendent, an assistant manager, a carpenter, ganger, clerk, and two nursing sisters.

The establishment of the settlement reduced the migration to Darwin, and some of those living away from the area began to return. Increased allocations of money for native labour enabled the staff to employ more workers and increase the wages of those in occupations requiring special skills. In May 1960 there were some 480 natives at Maningrida. About 46 per cent were Gidjingali, 15 per cent Gunavidji, 13 per cent Nagara, 8 per cent Gunadba, 6 per cent Djinang, 4 per cent Gungoragoni, 3 per cent Gunwinggu, 3 per cent Janjango, and 2 per cent Gunbalang. The Djinang and Janjango came from Milingimbi Mission. They began to arrive in increasing numbers towards the end of 1959, offering as an explanation that conditions at Maningrida were better.

In the first year the staff gave corrugated iron to a few native employees and helped them build small huts with timber frames, bark walls, and iron roofs. Others copied the buildings on their own initiative, using bark instead of iron for roofing. Within a few years most people in the native village were living in dwellings of this kind. The rest were content with traditional wet season shelters fashioned from a few sheets of bark.

In 1958 the Methodist Mission sought permission from the Welfare Branch to post a native preacher at Maningrida. This was refused. Between 1958 and 1960 a Salvation Army officer made several brief visits. His film evenings were well attended, though most members of the audience were indifferent to the accompanying services. A few individuals

reared on missions were nominal Christians, and many others had some knowledge of Christian principles.⁹

CONDITIONS OF FIELDWORK

I obtained my data during twenty months between 1958 and 1960. I lived for most of that time at Maningrida but twice accompanied natives leaving the settlement to carry out ceremonies near the Blyth River, and, on a third occasion, I spent a month mapping totemic sites in the same area.

I chose the Gidjingali because they constituted the largest group. The main aim was to investigate certain aspects of their traditional life. I obtained my information by observing day-to-day events and by questioning people about events that occurred in the past. During the first few months I became friendly with a number of men who taught me the language, helped me obtain genealogies, and later explained many aspects of social organization and individual motivation. As I lived right in the village, I was able to observe what went on as a matter of course, and I tried to extend my personal contacts as far and as profitably as possible.

Officials had not interfered with marriage arrangements or religious practices; but they objected to spear fights and on several occasions expelled men from the settlement for taking part. One individual served a short gaol sentence in Darwin for assaulting his wife. Quarrels occurred frequently, and I questioned as many people as possible. But to obtain the kind of information I wanted about the past, I had to rely heavily on two men with whom I developed a close friendship. I have no reason for doubting the honesty of their testimony but, beyond pointing out that gossiping was a favourite pastime and that everyone appeared to know everyone else's business, I cannot vouch for its reliability.

⁹ More details of relations between Liverpool-Blyth River natives and Europeans are given in the Appendix.

2

Local Organization

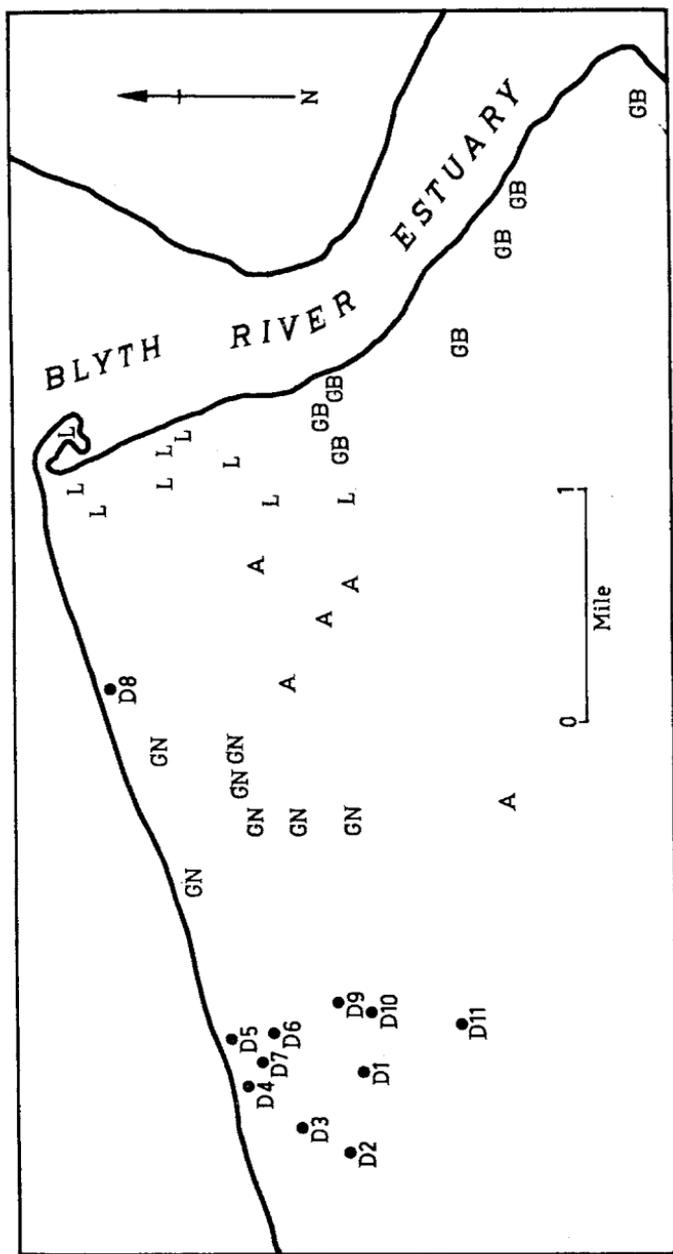
OWNERSHIP

In 1960 the Gidjingali were divided into nineteen groups, each owning a cluster of named sites and the surrounding countryside. I shall call these groups 'land-owning units' and their territorial possessions 'estates'. Most sites were distinct natural features, such as a spring, a small beach, or the mouth of a creek. Many were totemic (Frog-is-here, Yam-lives-here), but some were not (Where-the-rain-water-collects, Where-the-shady-plum-tree-stands).

The people indicated a unit's estate by the name of one of the sites, though they could not explain why this name rather than another was customarily used. They referred to the unit as 'the people from X', where X was the representative site, and employed possessive pronouns to indicate ownership ('Y is ours', 'Z is theirs', where Y and Z were sites, representative or otherwise). Folk always said they had been born at their representative sites, though further questioning often indicated that they were not certain; and they showed marked affection for their countries.

Every unit had more than one totem. Some totems were exclusive to a particular unit, others were shared. Frog created a single site owned by one unit, but Barramundi made several, each owned by a different unit. All units had exclusive associations with particular totems and exercised rights over the symbols representing them. Some but not all shared totems, and people said that in such cases the members should help each other in fights. In fact they did not seem to do so very often.

The various totems of the same unit all belonged to either one or the other of two patri-moieties called Dua and



Map 3 Named sites of five Gidjingali land-owning units

Jiridja. In theory, the moiety of the land and its owners accorded with that of the totem creators, though irregular marriages had led to several units containing members of both moieties. The moiety associations of the land in these cases had not changed.

The clusters of sites were not circumscribed by boundaries. Disputes over land did not arise, and it was therefore difficult to discover the attitudes of owners towards their estates. I judged that they had an intimate knowledge of their sites and the country included by them but that proprietorial interest outside this central core progressively weakened. My travelling companions announced the transition from one estate to another when we had reached the first new site.

Map 3 shows the sites of five land-owning units near the Blyth River. I visited each of these and was able to plot them fairly accurately with the aid of an aerial photograph. I shall describe only the sites of the Djunawunja unit.

1. *Djunawunja* (the representative site). A line of springs created by Water Goanna on his way to Site 2.

2. *Djindjinganda*. A spring created by Water Goanna, who lives beneath it.

3. *Meilaba*. A lagoon created by small human-like creatures known as the Marawal men.

4. *Djanbi-madjiraba*. A clump of trees where the Marawal men live. *Djanbi* is the term for an unidentified species of tree, and *Djanbi-madjiraba* means Where-the-*djanbi*-trees-stand. (I should point out that the people did not know the meanings of many names.) Marawal are troublesome creatures who enjoy sneaking up behind and knocking people down with a stick.

5. *Bulgabulga*. A sand ridge formed by Fishnet, who lives under the sea nearby. Natives described the site as a boundary between Dua and Jiridja moieties and related how Fishnet (Dua) said to Dog (Jiridja), who lives on an adjacent estate: 'This side is mine, the other yours.' It was the only boundary I recorded in the course of plotting some fifty sites in the Blyth River area.

6. *Mumodongidj*. A mud flat created by Fishnet.

7. *Djunawinba*. A tidal channel also made by Fishnet.

8. *Mananamira-adjiraba*. A sand dune created by Mananamira, an unidentified fish. Men of the Djunawunja unit thought the site may once have belonged to a now-extinct unit of the same moiety. It is separated from the other Djunawunja sites by those of a contemporary Jiridja unit.

9. *Gawarawuda*. A narrow tidal creek in which Water Snake lives.

10. *Djon-djindjiraba*. Springs created by Kookaburra, who lives beneath them. The name means Kookaburra-is-here.

11. *Gagalbur*. A small fresh-water swamp created by Kookaburra.

The Djunawunja unit had exclusive affiliations with Fishnet, Water Snake, Mananamira, and the Marawal men but shared Water Goanna and Kookaburra with others.

The Djunawunja and one other western unit contained a few people who named Nagara as their primary language. I have not counted these individuals as Gidjingali, though I have counted a few Gidjingali-speakers who belonged to a predominantly Djinang unit. (I shall discuss later the transmission of language from one generation to the next.) In 1960 the mean membership of the nineteen Gidjingali units, including the two with Nagara-speakers, was 15.6 (range 2 to 61, median 10). The total area of the nineteen estates was about 150 square miles, giving a population density of approximately two to the square mile.¹

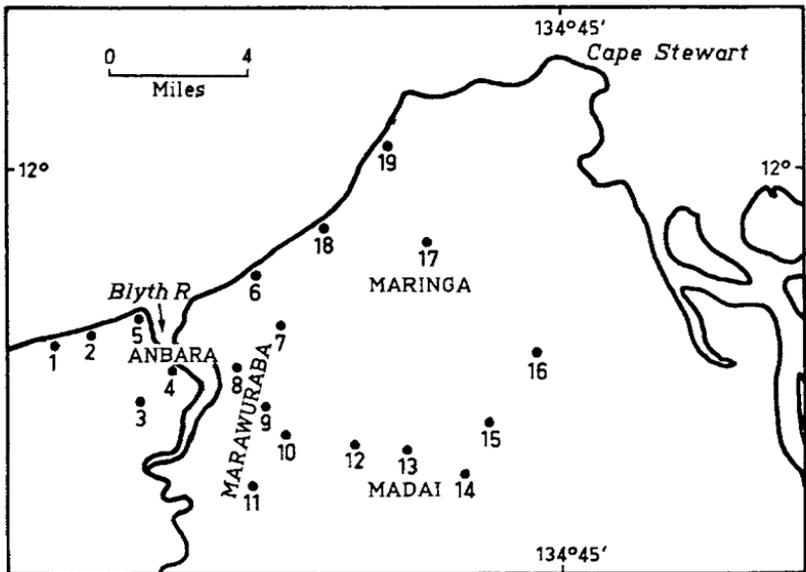
Several units recently became extinct. People of the same moiety who owned neighbouring estates spoke of themselves as caretakers and in time may come to regard the sites as theirs. It is significant that old men told me Lala-gadjiraba unit now looks after sites of the Waigubuda unit, which in 1960 comprised one old woman. A young man of the former showed me certain sites that he said belonged to his unit, but I later discovered they belonged to the old woman's. (See also Djunawunja site 8 mentioned above.)

¹ Specht (1958: 482) stated that the population of Arnhem Land was concentrated in the coastal areas because food supplies in the interior were poor. For population densities in other parts of Australia see Meggitt (1964); Hiatt (1962: 286). I have revised my figure for the Gidjingali since writing that article.

STRUCTURE

Each unit consisted of one or more named patrilineal descent groups with genealogical structures three to five generations in depth. Thirteen units each comprised one, three each comprised two, and three each comprised three patrilineal groups. The mean membership of the 28 groups was 10.6 (range 2 to 29, median 8).

Although people were usually unable to explain why certain units comprised more than one descent group, I established that several within living memory had abandoned their estates and each become permanently associated with a unit in another locality. The descendants retained their group identity but displayed little interest in the land of their migrant forbears. They regarded themselves as joint owners of sites in the area where they now lived and were regarded as such by descendants of the original owners. Similar events may have led to other instances where the



Map 4 *Representative sites of all Gidjingali land-owning units, with community names*

(I am indebted to Patrol Officer Peter Mackay for information about some sites east of the Blyth River)

TABLE 1 Gidjingali land-owning units, patrilineal groups, and communities

Representative site	Membership	Patrilineal group	Patri-moiety	Community
1. Djunawunja	35	a. Galamagondija b. Garabam c. Milingawa	Dua	Anbara
2. Gunadjangga	25	Mararagidj	Jiridja	„
3. Anmalamda-ajura	9	Angawa-anabama	Jiridja	„
4. Gubanga	61	a. Anagolgaba b. Anawuldja c. Waladja	Dua	„
5. Lala-gadjiraba	12	Manamalandara	Jiridja	„
6. Madang-adjira	7	a. Gawowura b. Geibanija	Dua	„
7. Diradira-adjiraba	3	Mainguba	Dua	Mara-wuraba
8. Managudog-adjira	8	Djeragala	Dua	„
9. Mbudja	4	Anmadjolgawa	Dua	„
10. Djamalnga	12	a. Bulgaranga b. Midalanga	Jiridja	„
11. Ariguda-burindja	6	Liralira	Dua	„
12. Gununa	13	Ngoridjongga	Dua	Madai
13. Djigubija	9	Ganawulanija	Jiridja	„
14. Malagara	8	Balgaranga	Jiridja	„
15. Gawula-gajura	2	Djanjara	Dua	„
16. Gamara-gajura	25	a. Muleimulei b. Warawara	Jiridja	Maringa
17. Guridjara-adjira	19	a. Jimara b. Laninga c. Maldjigara	Dua	„
18. Bunbuwa	29	Gamal	Jiridja	„
19. Mananguramba	10	Bindarara	Jiridja	„
Total membership			297	
Mean membership of land-owning units			15.6	
Mean membership of patrilineal groups			10.6	
Ratio of moiety affiliations			10 Dua : 9 Jiridja	

circumstances of migration and amalgamation have been forgotten. The people have adopted the English word 'company' as a translation of their concept of joint ownership; they made no distinction in rights or prestige among patrilineal groups forming a unit even if they knew that one was the original owner and the rest migrants.

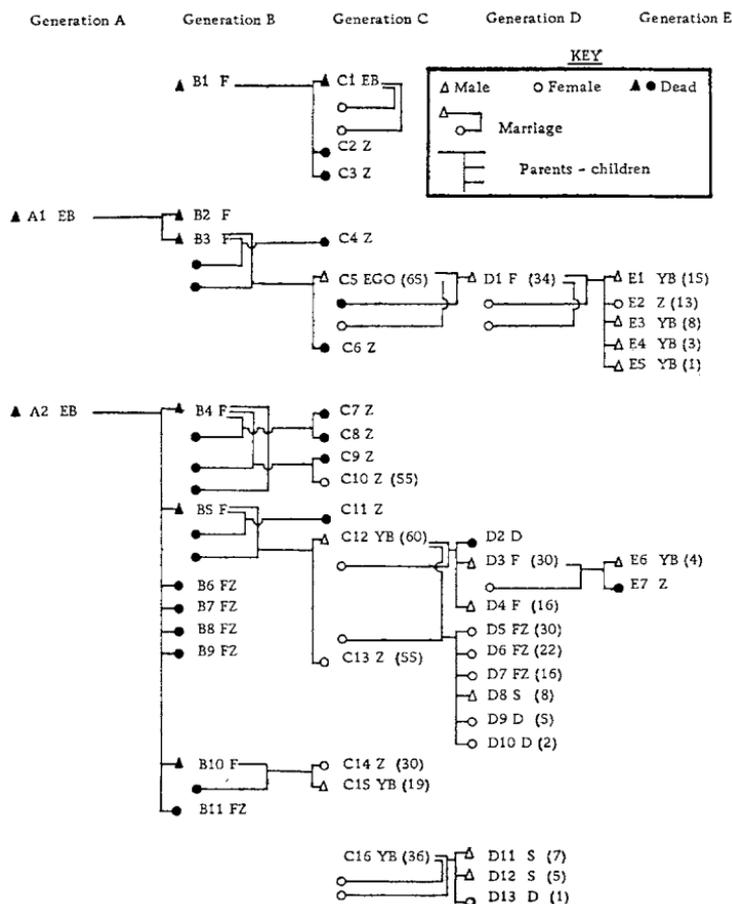
The name of each patrilineal group was an untranslatable proper noun. For example, the Djunawunja unit comprised Galamagondija, Garabam, and Milingawa. The names were employed in special ritual contexts and in discussing rights to women (see Chapters 3 and 4).

Table 1 lists the representative sites of the Gidjingali land-owning units, their membership in 1960, the patrilineal groups that composed them, and the moiety. I shall explain the significance of the last column in the next section. Map 4 shows the location of each site.

Babaru was the general term for patrilineal group.² '*Gunnga babaru ngula?*' meant 'What patrilineal group do you belong to?', whereas '*Gunnga rawa ngula?*' meant 'What is your representative site?' Members of different groups in one land-owning unit thus gave different answers to the first question but the same answer to the second. One native compared *babaru* with football teams in Darwin (Wanderers, Waratahs, St Mary's). Figure 1 is the genealogy of a typical patrilineal group (Galamagondija, Table 1, No. 1a). It gives the ages of individuals in 1960 and the kinship terms applied by a man C5 to living and deceased members.

Within the land-owning unit, whether of one or several patrilineal groups, an individual referred to all males older than himself who were of his genealogical generation and generations alternating with it as 'elder brother'; and all males younger than himself of these generations as 'younger brother'. Thus, in theory, he called a man of his FF's genealogical generation younger than himself 'younger brother' and a man of his SS's genealogical generation older than himself 'elder brother'. Such cases were rare, but note that C15 in Figure 1 is only four years older than his 'SS' E1; and fifteen years older than his FFSSSS E6. I should point out

² People in north-east Arnhem Land used the same term (Berndt 1955: 85).



A1, etc. are for identification purposes only; EB, etc. indicate kinship terms applied by Ego (C5); numbers in brackets are approximate ages in 1960. Husbands of female members are not shown.

Figure 1 *Genealogy of Galamagondija patrilineal group*

here that, in constructing pedigree charts, my decision to correlate certain generations between segments in patrilineal groups without apical ancestors was arbitrary. For example, C5 called A2 'elder brother' and C12 'younger brother', so that a decision to assign A2 to generation C and his sons' children to generation E would have still been in accordance with existing terminological relationships. My preference

was determined solely by the fact that A2 had been dead for many years and C5 and C12 were roughly contemporary.

A man referred to adult members of the unit who were of his father's genealogical generation and generations alternating with it as 'father' or 'father's sister', and to children in these generations as 'son' or 'daughter'. Thus he applied the terms 'son' (*nanja*) and 'daughter' (*bababa*) to his offspring until they reached adulthood; from that time he called them 'father' (*anja*) and 'father's sister' (*baba*). Again, a man applied the term 'son' to a younger actual or classificatory brother of his father if this person was still a child.

An individual referred to all female members of the unit who were of his own genealogical generation and generations alternating with it as 'sister', regardless of their ages. A woman employed the same kinship terms as her approximately contemporary brother.

Genealogical memory was short. The natives had difficulty in recalling the name of anyone they had not seen, and few could go back further than members of the grandparental generation. I collected no genealogy in which all living members were descended from a man in the great-grandparental generation of the oldest living member.³ In some genealogies there were several men in the grandparental generation of the oldest living member, in others only one. Some of these latter were the only genealogies with an apical structure. Female ancestors were forgotten more quickly than male ancestors; the highest ascending generation in most genealogies did not include women.

Fathers usually named their children after deceased agnates in the offspring's FF's or own genealogical generation. Occasionally folk gave names of deceased agnates to members of other units in the same moiety as a friendly gesture.

The Gidjingali believed that conception occurred when a spirit entered a woman's womb. This happened usually, but not necessarily, near the sites of the husband's unit. They did not believe that the spirits of members of a patrilineal

³ Cf. Berndt (1955: 88), who stated that in north-east Arnhem Land the 'line of patrilineal descent consists of all males and all females descended from a common forefather of the third ascending generation'.

group come from dead members (cf. Warner 1937: 21). Spirit children existed in the form of fish; they lived in the sea or in estuaries but were not confined to specific localities. Ideally, the father dreamt of his wife's conception before it occurred. Some married men said they had in fact had such dreams, others admitted they had not. Thus sometimes a baby is born without its mother's husband, or indeed anyone else, seeing its conception in a dream.

No one suggested that sexual intercourse established necessary conditions for the spirit's entry into the womb (by saying, for example, that the semen formed an egg which was later animated by a spirit; see R. and C. Berndt 1951: 81) and my impression was that they had no explicit views about a possible connection between them. Nevertheless they recognized a connection between copulation and gestation, although they seemed unaware of the physiological function of semen (one man said it gave women pleasure during copulation). Before a foetus can grow in the womb, there must be both the entry of a spirit and copulation; and it is only one man whose copulation with the mother is significant for this. Folk gossiping about an unmarried girl who became pregnant wondered who her lover was, or they speculated about the physical paternity of children whose mothers had been committing adultery.⁴

Uncertainty about a child's patrilineal group arose only when the mother was a widow at the time of birth or living apart from her husband. I recorded a case in which a woman gave birth to a boy about six months after her first husband had died and a month or so after she had married a long-standing lover. This man told me that, even though he was the genitor, he would bring the boy up as a member of the group of the mother's previous husband, which was different from his own. In another case, a woman deserted her husband in favour of a lover and took her infant son with her. The new husband informed me that he was the genitor and that the boy belonged to his group regardless of its not being the same as that of the mother's previous husband.

Personality seems to have been the determining factor in

⁴For references to other discussions about procreation see R. and C. Berndt (1951: 80).

these two cases. The man who married the widow had a quiet friendly disposition, and, in assigning the child to the group of its mother's former husband, he acted generously and properly. The other man was often surly and aggressive. People shrugged their shoulders when I questioned them about his action, but I gathered that they regarded it as selfish and discourteous.

RESIDENTIAL ASSOCIATIONS

Before the establishment of Maningrida

I use the term 'community' for the group of people who customarily moved about together. The Gidjingali were divided into four loosely-knit communities called the Anbara, Marawuraba, Madai, and Maringa. The regular members were (a) men of four or more land-owning units whose estates formed a continuous area, (b) their wives, and (c) their unmarried children. A community camp consisted of a number of hearth groups, each with its own fire and, at certain times of the year, its own shelter. Ordinarily it included a man, his wife or wives, and their young children.⁵

Although only one of the community names is translatable (Anbara means river mouth), they seem comparable with regional expressions like 'the Lake District' or 'the North Coast' and provide a convenient if loose way of referring collectively to the people of a broad locality. Thus the Anbara were from around the mouth of the Blyth River, the Maringa from Cape Stewart, and the Marawuraba and Madai inlanders from the south-west and south of Cape Stewart. I have indicated the four localities in Map 4 and the land-owning units forming the basis of the communities in Table 1.

The Nagara, Gunavidji, Gunadba, and Gungoragoni, being fewer than the Gidjingali, were not divided into regional subgroups. Each formed the basis of a single community.

⁵ Hart and Pilling (1960: 13) referred to similar units among the Tiwi as 'households', although they admitted that the 'houses' were nothing more than a few piled-up tree branches used as a shelter for several nights and then abandoned. I prefer the term 'hearth group' for that reason.

Marriages within and between communities were equally acceptable, and both types occurred. Most inter-community marriages were between neighbouring peoples, and residence was patri-virilocal. Table 2 gives the number of women who, in marrying the men who were the husbands in May 1960, had married within, out of, or into the Anbara and Nagara communities. I have included the Nagara figures to stress that difference in language was no barrier to marriage.

TABLE 2 Intra- and inter-community marriages

Community	Women married within	Women married outside	Women married into
Anbara	19	13*	7†
Nagara	8	16‡	12§

Notes: * 5 to Maringa, 4 to Nagara, 2 to Djinang, 1 to Madai, and 1 to Gungoragoni.

† 4 Nagara, 2 Gunadba, 1 Maringa.

‡ 8 to Gunavidji, 4 to Anbara, 2 to Marawuraba, 1 to Gungoragoni, and 1 to Gunbalang.

§ 4 Anbara, 3 Gunavidji, 2 Rembaranga (south of Gungoragoni), 1 Gunadba, 1 Gunwinggu, 1 Gunbalang.

After mapping totemic sites in the Blyth River region, I questioned Anbara men in an attempt to discover the typical movements of their community (about 135 regular members) over the course of a year during the period before the group settled at Maningrida. From January to April the community camped at Lala-gadjiraba (Table 1, No. 5), a spring near a barren sandy point at the river mouth. The point was frequently swept by high winds that kept the mosquitoes away, and at this time of the year the Anbara often acted as hosts to people from the mosquito-infested interior.

The men fished with spears along the coast and tidal creeks and occasionally hunted wallaby and other land creatures. Women gathered various plant foods and shell fish. Neither sex was restricted by territorial boundaries, and the camp seems to have been a base from which they ranged over the whole Anbara region (approximately twenty square

miles). It was taken for granted that men built fish traps (brush weirs) across creeks running through their own estates; but they left the camp to visit them and brought back part of the catch.

The main rituals were held during the dry season. From time to time the people acted as hosts to members of neighbouring communities and on other occasions were guests at ceremonies held elsewhere. Between ceremonies, small groups of close kinsmen and their families often retired to their own estates or elsewhere and enjoyed a short isolation from the main community. (Maningrida was sometimes criticized because it was too crowded.)

In August or thereabouts the Anbara crossed the river and joined the Marawuraba. With these folk they picked the cycad nut, which grew only on the east side. A few months later, accompanied by their hosts, they re-crossed and made their way to a large inland swamp where the spike rush grew in abundance. Here also great flocks of geese gathered as the smaller waterholes dried up. Ownership of the swamp was divided among units of three different communities—Nagara, Gunadba, and Gungoragoni. During October and November five or six communities gathered around the edges. By December the mosquitoes had become intolerable, and people began moving back to the coast.

As I mentioned earlier, hardly anyone was living in the bush when I arrived. But in 1960 about fifty Anbara voluntarily left the settlement and spent a month at the Blyth River. They camped along a beach in eight hearth groups whose male heads were members of four different land-owning units. One of the units owned the beach, and two were of one moiety, the other two of the opposite.

A community's home locality comprised the totemic sites of its constituent units. There were zones between these localities, but no boundaries. If I asked somebody to indicate the end of Anbara country and the beginning of Nagara, he named the last Anbara site and the first Nagara site. People did not seek formal permission before entering the locality of a neighbouring community; rather, they expected to be made welcome. They normally sought out the residents who greeted them warmly and invited them to join their camp.

Men sometimes entered the area of another community furtively to attack some of its members but never to raid its food resources.

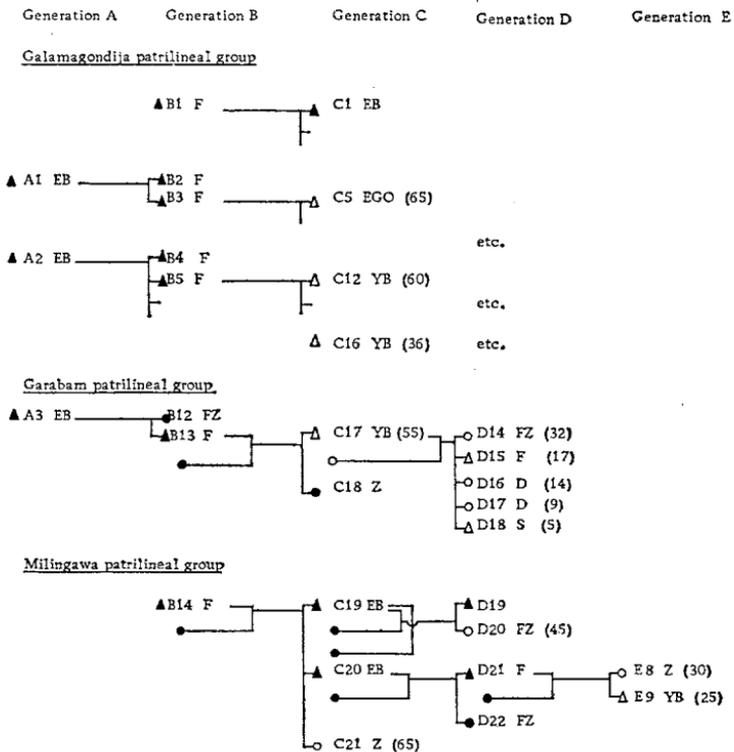
If every land-owning unit had had to depend solely upon the resources of its own estate, some would certainly have perished. (During the major tidal inundations salt water alone was available on the estate of one unit and on that of another there was never fresh water at any time.) The diets of many others would have been monotonous and, at times, meagre. But the inhabitants did not suffer such hardships because they took open access to food and water for granted. People maintained a roughly uniform standard of living by moving over one another's estates and freely exploiting the resources. The region was rich in natural products. When a community exhausted the food supply in one place, it moved to another. On occasions the members visited neighbouring communities, and at other times acted as their hosts. Sharing deprived no one of basic requirements, and land owners from time to time had the satisfaction of fulfilling expectations of generosity.⁶

Radcliffe-Brown (1930) called the residential unit among Aborigines 'the horde', which he described as a small group of people owning a defined stretch of land upon which they were dependent for survival. A child belonged to the horde of its father and could not be naturalized elsewhere. Generally husband and wife came from different hordes, and residence was patri-virilocal. Thus at any given time the horde consisted of the males and unmarried females who were members by birth, together with the wives of the male members. Each horde territory contained one or more totemic sites.

Such a unit was unknown among the Gidjingali. First, the people who commonly lived together were members of

⁶ Cf. Meggitt (1962: 52). Communities of the desert Walbiri, although similar in structure to Gidjingali communities, were larger and also lived in territories limited by mythologically-defined boundaries. In bad seasons members of one community occasionally sought permission from those of another to live with them until conditions improved. The visitors were usually made welcome, even though the hosts suffered hardship as a result of their presence.

from four to eleven patrilineal groups of both moieties. Second, although the members of each land-owning unit had certain totemic sites, they did not depend for survival on the land round about. There were no territorial boundaries, and individuals moved freely over the various estates forming the locality occupied by their community. The only exclusive relationship between a unit and its estate was in the ritual sphere (cf. Meggitt 1962: 64). From time to time each community journeyed further afield and enjoyed the hospitality of others.⁷



Key As for Fig. 1, the full skeleton genealogy of Galamagondija group.

Figure 2 *Skeleton genealogy of Djunawunja land-owning unit*

⁷ Elsewhere I have presented evidence suggesting that Radcliffe-Brown's account did not apply to Aborigines in other parts of Australia as well (1962).

Amalgamation of patrilineal groups

I referred earlier (p. 18) to members of several patrilineal groups who abandoned their estates and joined groups in other localities. I shall now describe two of these cases in detail.

Figure 2 includes an abbreviated genealogy of Galamagondija patrilineal group (the full genealogy is in Figure 1) and full genealogies of Garabam and Milingawa patrilineal groups. The three together constituted the Djunawunja land-owning unit (Dua moiety, Table 1, No. 1).

The original sites of Garabam group (Dua) were in the northern part of the area occupied by the Gunadba community (Map 1). A3 married a Nagara woman who returned to her own community after he died. Her children (B12, B13) grew up as members of the Djunawunja land-owning unit⁸ and, although present-day members thought the genitor may have been a Djunawunja man, no one was sure whether the mother had re-married or whether they had been born before or after A3's death. No one could remember the mother's name.

Thus it seems likely that some member of the original Djunawunja unit (Galamagondija patrilineal group) married A3's widow and brought up her two boys as members of the previous husband's patrilineal group. It so happened that the only recent members of the group were the agnatic descendants of one of them. It is of interest that C17 married a Gunadba woman and often visited her community, which was once his FF's.

The original totemic sites of Milingawa group (Dua) were near Cape Stewart. B14 of the Maringa community married a Nagara woman who, like the wife of A3 in the previous case, returned to her own community after her husband died. Her two sons (C19, C20) married Anbara women, lived with the Anbara community, and became members of the Djunawunja unit. Although descendants of B14 (who were the only known members of Milingawa) did not live in the Cape Stewart region, they retained rights over designs associ-

⁸ Djunawunja unit included both Anbara and Nagara (see next section).

ated with the totemic sites of their agnatic forbears and shared them with the other two patrilineal groups in the Djunawunja unit. (I assume the same applied to designs associated with the original Garabam sites, but I did not see them and neglected to enquire about them.)

It is relevant to consider here the case of C16 (Galama-gondija). His father and the father of C12 belonged to different communities (Gunadba and Nagara respectively), but their mothers were sisters of the Anbara community. The two families often visited each other, and C12 became C16's guardian after his father and FB died. C16 lived from that time with the Anbara; and later he occupied a hut next to C12's at Maningrida.

For many years C16 has regarded himself, and has been regarded by others, as a member of Galamagondija group. In 1960 there were four living members of his father's patrilineal group, but he took no special interest in them and, on occasions, spoke disparagingly of his father's community. At the same time, he continued to exercise ritual rights as though still a member of his father's group, as well as exercising rights as a member of his adopted group. This did not appear to arouse ill-feeling, although it should be noted that the remaining members of his father's group were women and children only.

Changes in patrilineal group membership, as distinct from group amalgamation, were rare. I recorded only one other case.

Transmission of language

Although many individuals spoke two or three tongues fluently and understood several others, they named one as really their language when asked 'What do you speak?' I shall refer to this as a primary language.

Offspring of intra-community marriages named as their primary language the speech of their parents. But, although residence was normally patri-virilocal, not all children of parents whose primary languages were different named that of the father. Often this was because the mother had remarried within her own community after the death of her first husband, taking his children with her; or because

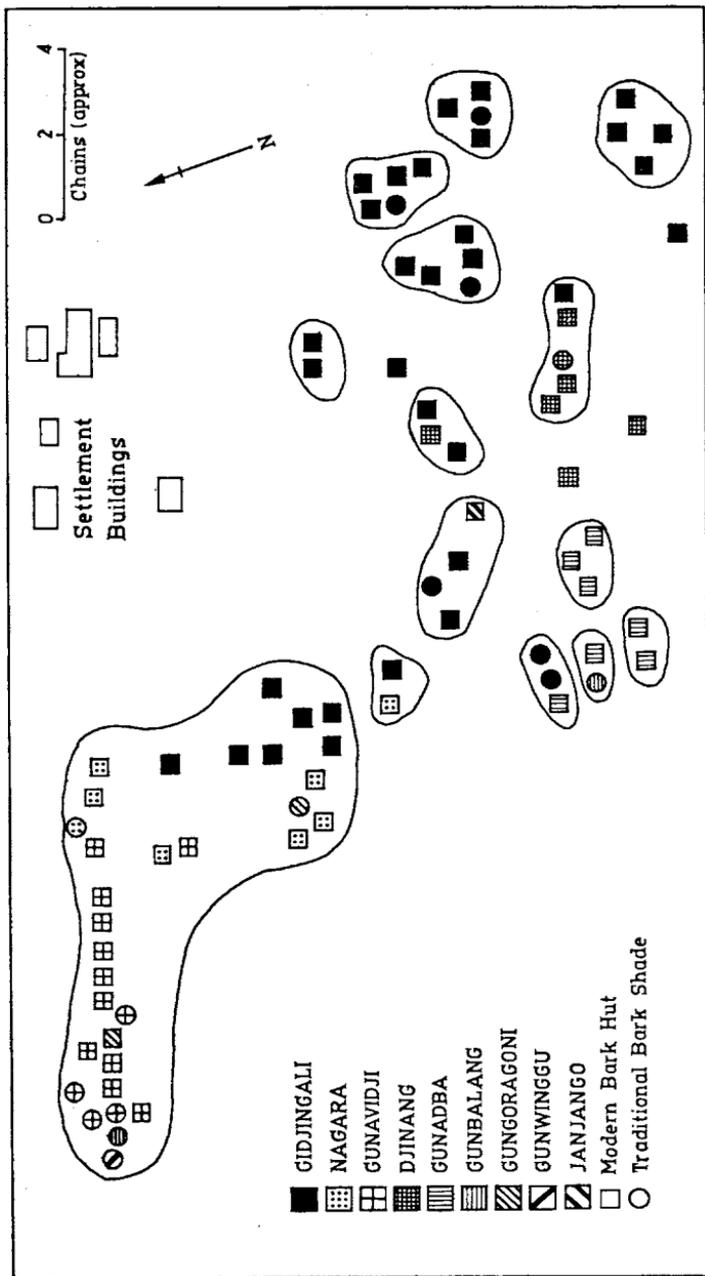
children of a marriage within the community had accompanied their mother when she re-married out of it. In a sample of twenty-six marriages in which husband and wife spoke different languages, offspring of seventeen regarded the father's tongue as theirs, the offspring of nine the mother's.

In 1960 twenty-two members of Djunawunja unit (see previous section) named Gidjingali as their primary language and regarded themselves as belonging to the Anbara community; the remaining thirteen named Nagara and regarded themselves as belonging to the Nagara community. Galamagondija, the original patrilineal group, once consisted exclusively of Nagara. By 1960 it comprised eighteen whose primary tongue was Gidjingali, seven whose primary tongue was Nagara. Gidjingali had been the language of mothers of all who had not followed their fathers. The six members of Garabam group spoke Nagara, the four members of Milingawa group Gidjingali.⁹

Primary residential groupings at Maningrida

Map 5 shows Maningrida native village and settlement buildings at the end of the wet season in 1960. The people were all living in bark dwellings (modern or traditional), and head-high spear grass divided the village into clusters of buildings in separate clearings. I have assigned dwellings to linguistic groups (Gidjingali, Nagara, etc.) according to the primary language of the owner. Ordinarily he was a man occupying the dwelling with his wife or wives and their unmarried children. It should be mentioned that officials

⁹ R. and C. Berndt (1951: 33) stated: 'The Liverpool groups too have been gradually displaced, within recent years, by westward pressure of people from Cape Stewart and south of Milingimbi, and many of them forced to fluctuate between Goulburn Island, Oenpelli, and the Buffalo camps.' The small westward extension of the Gidjingali language area I have just described occurred when people whose forbears were Nagara accepted a few Gidjingali as joint owners of their totemic sites, and when some of them chose to live with the Anbara. I found no evidence whatsoever of territorial displacement and suggest that people who fluctuated between white centres did so voluntarily.



Enclosing lines indicate clearings surrounded by tall grass.

□ modern bark hut ○ traditional bark shade

Map 5 *Maningrida native village and settlement buildings, 1960*

allowed people to build where they liked provided there was no encroachment on the European section.

The earliest arrivals built along the beach head (the large clearing in the north-west corner of Map 5). Western Gidjingali, mostly Anbara, occupied the eastern section, Gunavidji the western, and Nagara the middle. Later some of the Gidjingali moved elsewhere. Gunadba, eastern Gidjingali, Djinang, and Janjango arrived in that order and settled to the south-east of those already in residence. A Gungoragoni settled in the middle of the Gunavidji section, and a Gunwinggu and Gunbalang at the western end.

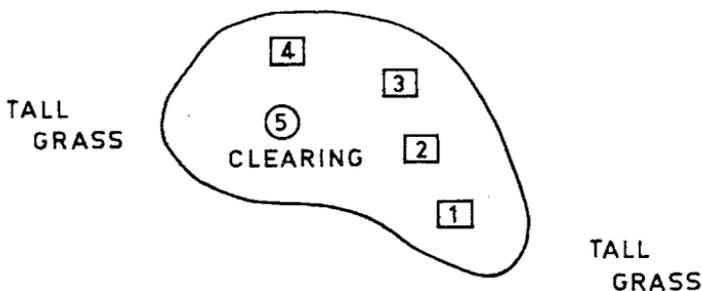
New arrivals settled near their traditional neighbours with the result that, on a reduced scale, the residential pattern roughly corresponded with spatial relationships among language areas in the Liverpool-Blyth River region (cf. Maps 1 and 5). The Gunavidji, Nagara, Gunadba, Djinang, and Gidjingali lived in five distinguishable neighbourhoods, though the last were considerably dispersed.

The four traditional Gidjingali communities did not form separate neighbourhoods, though many clusters of dwellings included more individuals of one than of any other. But as membership had always been flexible, intermingling on the settlement required no special explanation. Even when speaking of the past, people rarely listed members of a community consistently and often referred to certain land-owning units as 'half-Marawuraba, half-Madai' or 'Anbara, Marawuraba mixed'. The assignment of a few units to particular communities in Table 1 was therefore arbitrary.

Composition of residential clusters at Maningrida

By residential cluster I mean a number of dwellings in a clearing separated from others by tall grass. In none were all the owners members of the same land-owning unit, and they were as often related through women as through men. Thus men lived near patrilineal relatives, matrilineal relatives, or affines. I shall illustrate this by describing the formation and composition of one cluster in detail.

In 1958 Shorty¹⁰ owned a hut in the large north-west clearing. The following year, after his son died from a jelly-fish sting, he built a new hut on unoccupied ground in the eastern section and moved there with his two wives and remaining child (dwelling no. 1).



Barney, who with his three wives and numerous children had been living with Shorty, accompanied him to the new area, where he built his own hut (no. 3). Two of his wives were mothers of Shorty's two wives, and Shorty (a steady worker on the settlement) regularly gave them food. Barney was Shorty's MB, and Shorty's wives were related to him both as MBD and MMBDD (see Case 2, p. 86).

Frank, who had previously lived near Shorty and Barney, followed them to the new site and built dwelling no. 4. Barney was the MB of his two wives and Shorty their brother.

Shorty, Barney, and Frank were Anbara. Michael, of the Maringa community and an unmarried son of Frank's senior wife by a previous husband, built dwelling no. 2. He was subsequently joined by a younger paternal half-brother, also unmarried.

The next arrival was an old man named Ted, of the Marawuraba community. He left his own folk after a quarrel over the marriage of his eldest daughter and established himself and his family at no. 5. He had no close genealogical connection with the others but was on friendly terms with them.

¹⁰ I have given many individuals fictitious first names, partly to conceal their identities, partly to avoid native names unfamiliar to the reader.

He went back to his previous dwelling about six months later when the trouble was over.

During Ted's residence at no. 5, three unmarried members of his patrilineal group (his son, 'son', and 'brother') joined Michael and his half-brother at no. 2. Early in 1960 Michael and one of the newcomers went to Darwin, and the others gradually drifted to other parts of the village. Jacob, an elder paternal half-brother of Michael, moved into the vacant building with his wife and infant daughter.

Frank was often visited by Les, a patrilineal group 'elder brother' and a MZS. (The two men were C16 and C12, whose association I referred to in the section on amalgamation of patrilineal groups.) Les moved into no. 5 with his family shortly after Ted left. A person had no proprietary interest in a hut once he abandoned it.

Table 3 lists the owners of dwellings in the new area, their affiliations, and their relationships. All residents were Gidjingali, and owners are listed in order of arrival over a period of about eighteen months. I judged that changes in residential association were less frequent at Maningrida than in the past because of the labour people invested in the construction of modern bark huts.

TABLE 3 Owners of dwellings in a single clearing

Dwelling	Owner	Land-owning unit	Community	Connection with established residents
No. 1	Shorty	Madang-adjira	Anbara	First builder
No. 3	Barney	Gunadjangga	Anbara	WF (also MB) of Shorty
No. 4	Frank	Djunawunja	Anbara	ZDH of Barney; ZH of Shorty
No. 2	Michael	Bunbuwa	Maringa	Step-son of Frank
No. 5	Ted	Managudog-adjira	Marawuraba	A friend
No. 2	Jacob	Bunbuwa	Maringa	Paternal half-brother of Michael
No. 5	Les	Djunawunja	Anbara	'Brother' (MZS) of Frank

Composition of households at Maningrida

By a household I mean people who lived in the same dwelling. The most common was a single elementary or polygynous family. A few comprised two families, and many included additional relatives. Others consisted exclusively of bachelors or widows. Table 4 classifies Gidjingali households and indicates the frequency and mean membership of each type.

TABLE 4 Gidjingali households at Maningrida

Household type	Frequency	Mean membership
One elementary family	9	3.7 (range 2 to 6)
One elementary family plus relatives	5	5.0 (range 4 to 8)
One polygynous family	7	6.4 (range 4 to 9)
One polygynous family plus relatives	2	10.0 (range 8 to 12)
Two families (elementary or polygynous)	3	9.0 (range 7 to 10)
Two families (elementary or polygynous) plus relatives	2	14.0 (range 8 to 20)
Bachelors	6	5.5 (range 3 to 8)
Widows	2	2.0
Total number of households		36
Mean membership		6.0 (range 2 to 20)
Mean wives per husband		1.5 (range 1 to 3)

The relationships between the male heads in four of the five households comprising or including two families were father-son, elder brother-younger brother, sister's co-wife's son ('ZS')-mother's co-wife's brother ('MB'), and maternal half-sister's husband ('ZH')-wife's maternal half-brother ('WB'). The male heads in the fifth one were trading partners of different communities (see Chapter 3). Links between families and twenty relatives included in the household comprised eight patrilineal relationships (widower father, widow FZ, unmarried brother, etc.), eight matrilineal relationships (widower MB, widow mother, unmarried ZD, etc.), and

four affinal relationships (widow WM, unmarried WB, etc.). Relationships in four cases were distant.

Four of the six bachelor households each included Marawuraba and Madai men, one consisted exclusively of Anbara, and one of Maringa. Most widows were living with agnatic, uterine, or affinal relatives, but four occupied two separate dwellings.

3

Kinship and Marriage

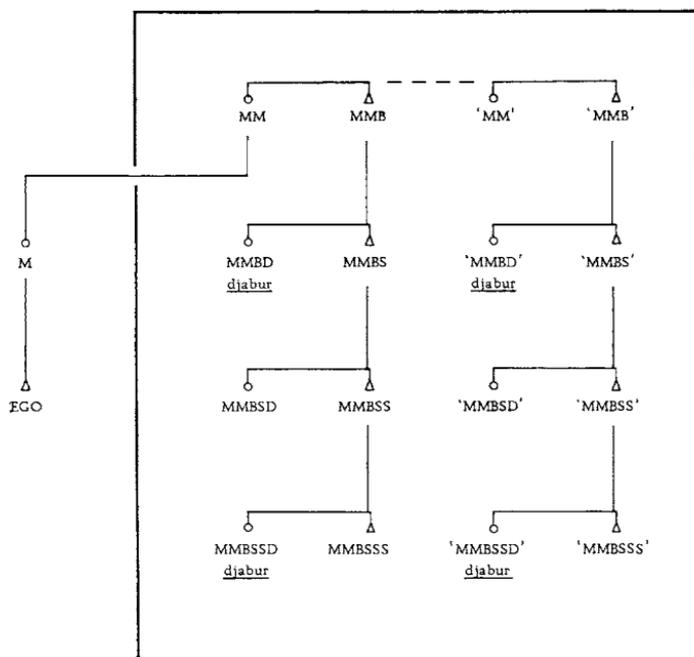
In Chapter 2 I said that the Gidjingali were divided into nineteen land-owning units, each consisting of one or more patrilineal descent groups, and that an individual had a relationship stated in the idiom of kinship with each member of his unit. He applied the same term to all men of his father's and son's genealogical generations, another term to all women of his FZ's and daughter's genealogical generations, and so on. I want to show now that these relationships were merely parts of a wider system in which each individual applied a kinship term to every person he met. To understand the form and distribution of the relationships it is necessary to know how the Gidjingali defined marriage rights.

MARRIAGE RIGHTS

A man's right to marry certain women was defined by specifying the kinship category and patrilineal groups of their mothers. The patrilineal group affiliations of the potential brides were irrelevant.

Potential brides' mothers were of two kinds. One comprised all women who (a) belonged to the same patrilineal group as the groom's MM and who (b) were in the genealogical generation of his MMBD or a generation alternating with it. Figure 3 shows a hypothetical relationship between a man Ego and the patrilineal group of his MM. All female members of the group in MMBD's and MMBSSD's genealogical generations are actual or classificatory sisters and address one another as *djala*. Ego applies the term *djabur* to these women and has rights to their daughters.

The other kind comprised all women whose MMs (a) belonged to the groom's patrilineal group and (b) were in



Key (a) Enclosing line indicates patrilineal group of Ego's MM.

(b) Ego's potential brides' mothers are MMBD, 'MMBD', MMBSB, and 'MMBSB' to each of whom he applies the kinship term *djabur*.

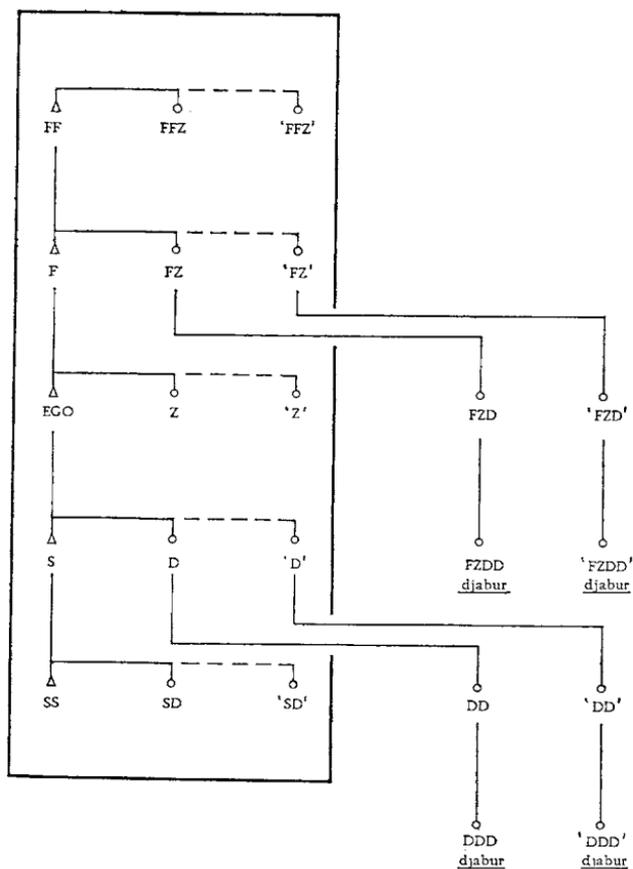
(c) Men not shown in diagram who also have rights to the daughters of women listed in (b) are other DSs of Ego's MM and DSs of his 'MM', MMBSB, and 'MMBSB'.

Figure 3 Potential brides' mothers in patrilineal group of Ego's MM

the genealogical generation of his FZ or a generation alternating with it. Figure 4 shows hypothetical relationships between potential brides' mothers of this kind and Ego's own patrilineal group. Ego applies the term *djabur* to FZDD, 'FZDD', DDD, and 'DDD', and has rights to their daughters (although I recorded no case in which a man had an available DDDD or 'DDDD').

In Figures 3 and 4 I have indicated only the rights of one man in each case. I should now add that, in Figure 3, all DSs of Ego's MM, 'MM', MMBSB, and 'MMBSB' have

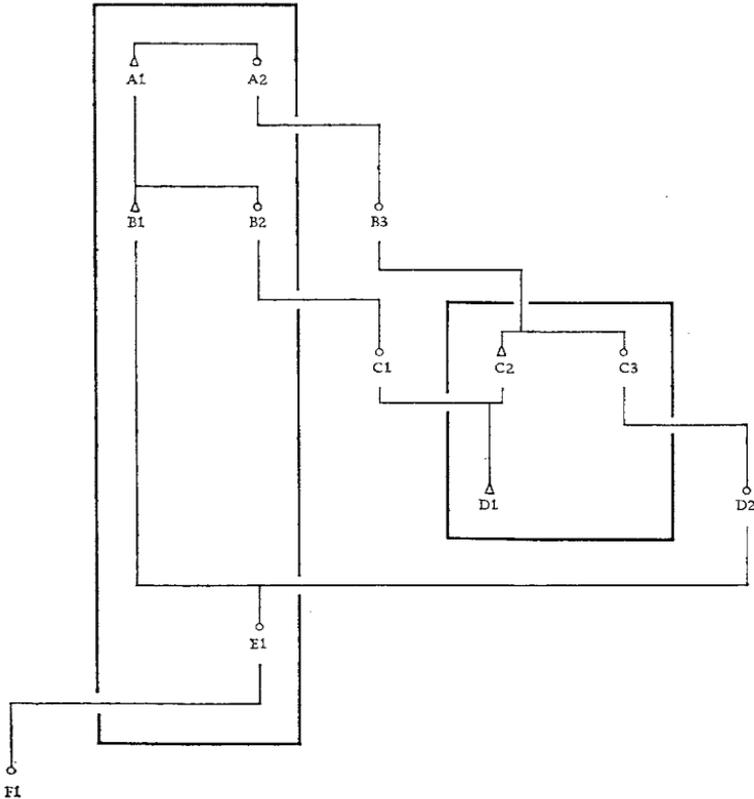
rights to the daughters of Ego's MMBD, 'MMBD', MMB SSD, and 'MMBSSD'; and that, in Figure 4, all men in Ego's patrilineal group whom he calls brother have rights to the daughters of FZDD, 'FZDD', DDD, and 'DDD'. I shall discuss priorities later.



- Key (a) Enclosing lines indicate Ego's patrilineal group.
 (b) Ego's potential brides' mothers are FZDD, 'FZDD', DDD, and 'DDD', to each of whom he applies the kinship term *djabur*.
 (c) Other men who also have rights to the daughters of women listed in (b) are those in Ego's group whom he calls brother.

Figure 4 Potential brides' mothers whose MMs are in Ego's own patrilineal group

A woman and her brothers had a joint right to bestow her daughters in marriage. A man who had given a wife to another man could expect him to offer a girl in return. I shall refer to a pair of bestowals of this kind as niece exchange, but it is to be understood that mothers shared equal rights of bestowal with uncles.



- Key (a) Enclosing lines indicate patrilines.
 (b) B1 and C2 have exchanged their respective nieces C1 and D2.
 (c) C2 has married his MMBDD, B1 his FZDDD.
 (d) D1 has a right to F1, who is MMBDD and FZDDD.

Figure 5 Niece exchange

If the first bestowal in an exchange of nieces resulted in the marriage of a man to his MMBDD, the second resulted in the marriage of a man to his FZDDD. In Figure 5 B1 and B2

have given C1 to C2; C2 and C3 have given D2 to B1. Thus C2 has married his MMBDD, B1 his FZDDD. I should also point out that, as a result of this exchange, D1 (the son of the first recipient) has a right to F1 (the grand-daughter of the second), and that this woman is both his MMBDD and FZDDD. Sequences of this kind were rare and did not persist.

An- and *djin-* were male and female prefixes. A man's potential brides' mothers were indicated, first, by saying that he was *anmari* to a particular patrilineal group; second, by referring to particular women as *djinmari* to his own patrilineal group. To say that a man Ego of group p was *anmari* to q meant that q was his MM's patrilineal group and that he had rights to daughters of those women of the group to whom he applied the term *djabur*. To say that a woman of any group was *djinmari* to p meant that p was her MM's patrilineal group and that men of this group who called her *djabur* had rights to her daughters. A woman could be both *djinmari* to p and a member of q, the group to which Ego was *anmari*, but this did not often happen.

In Gidjingali terms an orthodox bestowal was one in which a woman gave her daughter to a man who called the bestower *djabur* and was *anmari* to her patrilineal group; or to a man who called the bestower *djabur* and was a member of the patrilineal group to which she was *djinmari*; or to a man related to the bestower in both these ways. The three relationships are indicated in Figure 6. C1 is D1's MMBD, E2 his FZDD, and E1 both his MMBD and FZDD.

For brevity of exposition I shall use (a) the abbreviation MMBD to mean male Ego's true MMBD or any member of her patrilineal group classified as her sister; (b) the abbreviation FZDD to mean male Ego's true FZDD or any other female classified as her sister whose MM belonged to his patrilineal group; and (c) the abbreviation MMBD/FZDD to mean any woman related to male Ego both as indicated in (a) and in (b). I shall refer to the daughters of these women as MMBDD, FZDDD, and MMBDD/FZDDD respectively. The abbreviations may include true relatives and, within the specified limits, classificatory relatives of Ego.

A woman could bestow her daughter as early as the crawling stage. If she had brothers, the future husband was chosen

Key (a) Enclosing lines indicate patrilineal groups P, q, r, and s.

(b) D1 has rights to the daughters of C1 (his MMBD), E2 (his FZDD), and E1 (his MMBD/FZDD).

(c) D1 is *ammari* to C1's patrilineal group, but she is not *djimmari* to his. E2 is *djimmari* to D1's patrilineal group, but he is not *ammari* to hers. D1 is *ammari* to E1's patrilineal group, and she is *djimmari* to his (B3 and C3 have exchanged nieces).

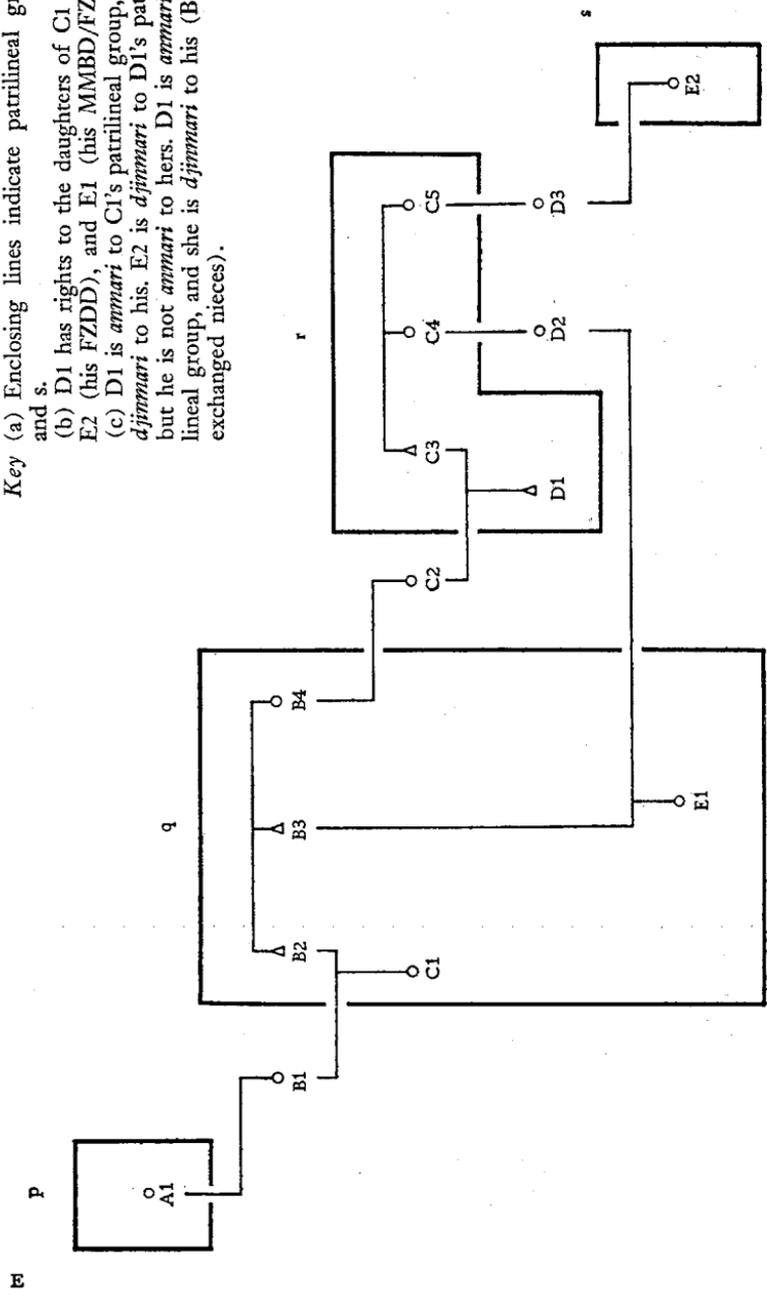


Figure 6 Potential brides' mothers related to the same groom (D1) as MMBD, FZDD, and MMBD/FZDD

in consultation with them and perhaps also with the sisters. They usually reached a decision harmoniously. People seemed to feel that the wishes of the mother and the senior MB were to be accorded equal respect and that both took precedence over the wishes of other brothers and sisters of the mother. They also maintained that a woman should co-operate in meeting her brother's obligations or in advancing his interests, as, for instance, by agreeing to give her daughter to someone from whom he had received or hoped to receive a spouse. I recorded an example in which a woman successfully opposed her brother's wish and another in which a man successfully opposed his sister's wish. Probably because some women had no brothers, people discussing rules of bestowal often referred only to the girl's mother. I am following this practice.

A father did not share the right to give his daughter. He often tried to influence his wife, but she was not obliged to heed him. The Gidjingali said that on this occasion 'the father is nothing'.

If there was no adult male with a right to a girl when she was old enough to be bestowed, her mother could promise her to someone else. There was no bestowal or wedding ceremony. When a girl was about fourteen years of age her mother told her it was time to go to her husband. The young wife often divided her time between his camp and her mother's until accustomed to the new status.

Polygyny was approved. One man had four wives, but few had more than two.

KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY

The kinship system was of the Aranda type (Elkin 1938: 67), with separate terms for four male and four female relatives in Ego's grandparental generation and a total of twenty-three categories. I shall present the terms by considering a hypothetical closed system of relationships among four patrilineal groups p, q, r, and s, but from the outset I stress that no system of this kind was proposed by the people as an ideal, nor did it occur in practice.

Let us suppose that men of p marry only daughters of

women of q, and men of q marry only daughters of women of s, and men of r marry only daughters of s, and men of s marry only daughters of women of r; and that women of p, q, r, and s do not marry outside these four

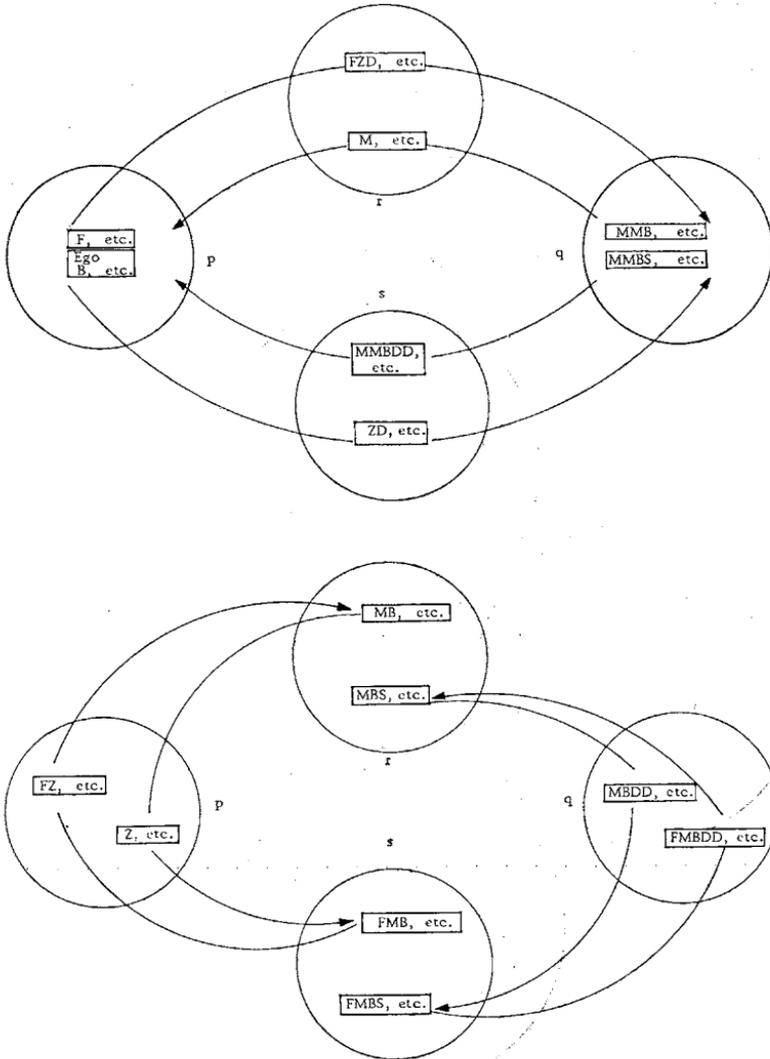


Figure 7 Hypothetical closed system of relationships among four patrilineal groups. (The system has been represented in two parts for the sake of clarity.)

groups or within their own groups. Figure 7 shows the disposition of wives in accordance with the marriage rules just stated. Circles enclose patrilineal groups, and rectangles the male or female members of alternating generations within patrilineal groups. The arrows proceeding from one rectangle to another through an intermediate rectangle indicate bestowal of ZDs. Thus men of Ego's group and his genealogical generation or generations alternating with it give women of Ego's ZD's group and her genealogical generation or generations alternating with it to men of Ego's MMBS's group and his generation or generations alternating with it.

Figure 8 shows sixteen terms of address that, leaving aside age differences, Ego would apply to members of the sixteen

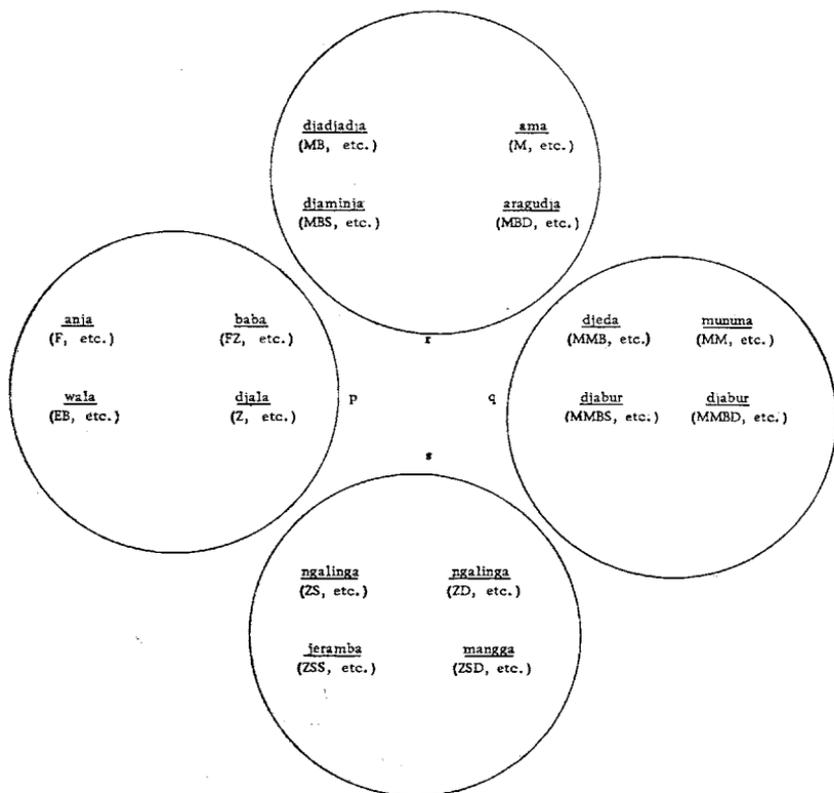


Figure 8 Sixteen kinship terms applied within a hypothetical closed system of four patrilineal groups

categories indicated in Figure 7. Terms of reference were formed by adding male or female prefixes. I have already discussed three of the seven additional terms based on age differences between the speaker and the person addressed. (Ego applied the term *gurora* to his actual and classificatory younger brothers and the terms *nanja* and *bababa* to children classified as brothers and sisters of his son.) As well, he employed male or female prefixes with the term *gangguda* when referring to children classified as brothers or sisters of his MM. Occasionally people applied the term *marmunga* to old or deceased classificatory brothers, especially FF, and the term *maga* to old or deceased classificatory sisters of their MMBDD, especially FM.

By comparing Figure 8 with Figure 7 we can see the distribution of Ego's relatives among the four patrilineal groups and the kinship terms he would apply to members of sixteen of the categories into which they fall. The conventional kinship diagram (Figure 9) is a convenient way of summarizing the results of such an inquiry. Columns 1 and 4 correspond to patrilineal group p and columns 5 and 8 to patrilineal group q. Patrilineal groups r and s zig-zag through columns 2 and 3, 6 and 7. It is to be understood that the diagram is merely a guide to ideal terminological usage and has nothing to do with residence (Leach 1961: 56 ff.). Moreover, it is not a genealogy giving all marriage relationships that accord with the rules already stated. As I explained, a man has rights to various female relatives besides the one shown as his wife in Figure 9 (MMBDD).

SUBSECTIONS

Disregarding terminological distinctions based on age differences, we may regard Ego's relatives as members of one or other of sixteen kinship categories (younger brother belongs to the same category as older brother, immature son to the same category as adult father, and so on). In the hypothetical system considered in the previous section, each category comprises the male or female members of alternate generations within a patrilineal group. In relation to any member of the four groups, a man belongs to the same category as his

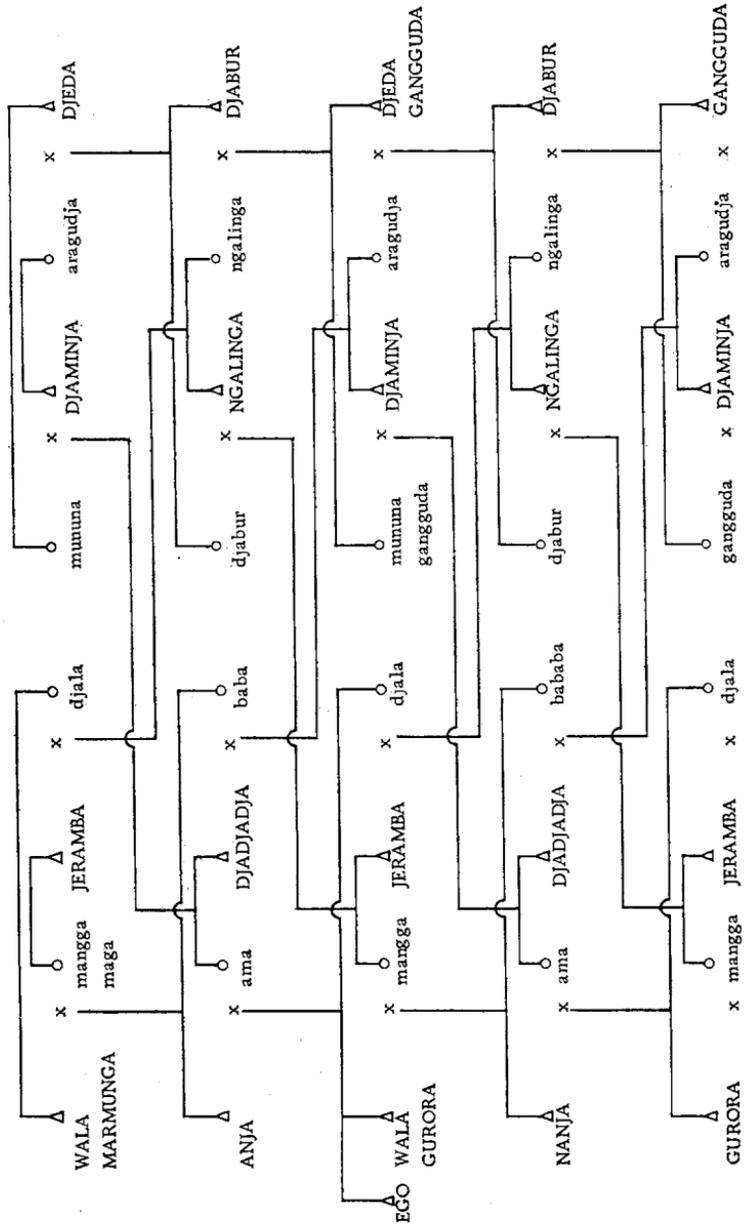
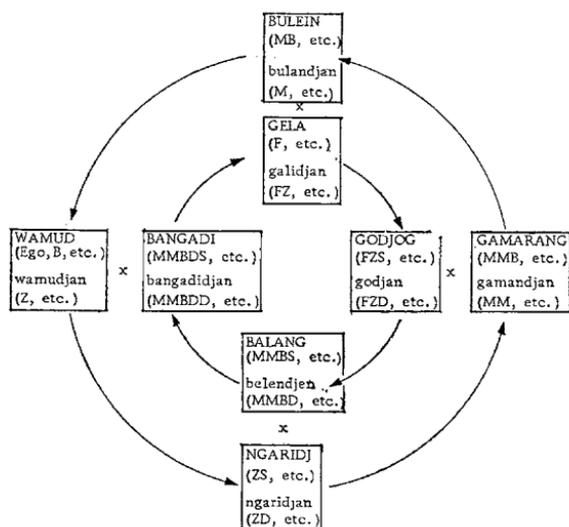


Figure 9 *Gidjingali kinship terms*

FF, B, and SS, and a woman to the same category as her FFZ, Z, and BSD.

In the wider system now to be discussed, the natives accorded independent status to these sixteen relational categories by giving them invariable names and recognizing objective principles of recruitment. Anthropologists refer to such categories as subsections. The Gidjingali system could be presented by substituting subsection names for the sixteen kinship categories in Figure 7. Figure 10 is a rearrangement of the same facts in accordance with conventional presentations. Male and female subsection names are in capital and



Dua moiety: Wamud, Gamarang, Gela, Balang
 Jiridja moiety: Bangadi, Godjog, Bulein, Ngaridj
 Figure 10 *Gidjingali subsections*

small letters respectively, and rectangles enclose the names of brother-sister subsections. Crosses indicate marriage between members of subsections, and arrows show the affiliations of a woman's children. Thus the male and female offspring of Wamudjan women are **NGARIDJ** and Ngaridjan respectively.

Although the Gidjingali said they had always had subsections, evidence from elsewhere suggests that the concept spread fairly recently into Arnhem Land (Elkin 1950).

Probably it is significant that some men attributed the creation of the system to Gunabibi, a supernatural being whose ritual they admitted to be new to them (see p. 63). Dua subsections were associated with particular *gunabibi* symbols, and at certain stages of the ceremony individuals acted in accordance with their subsection affiliations.

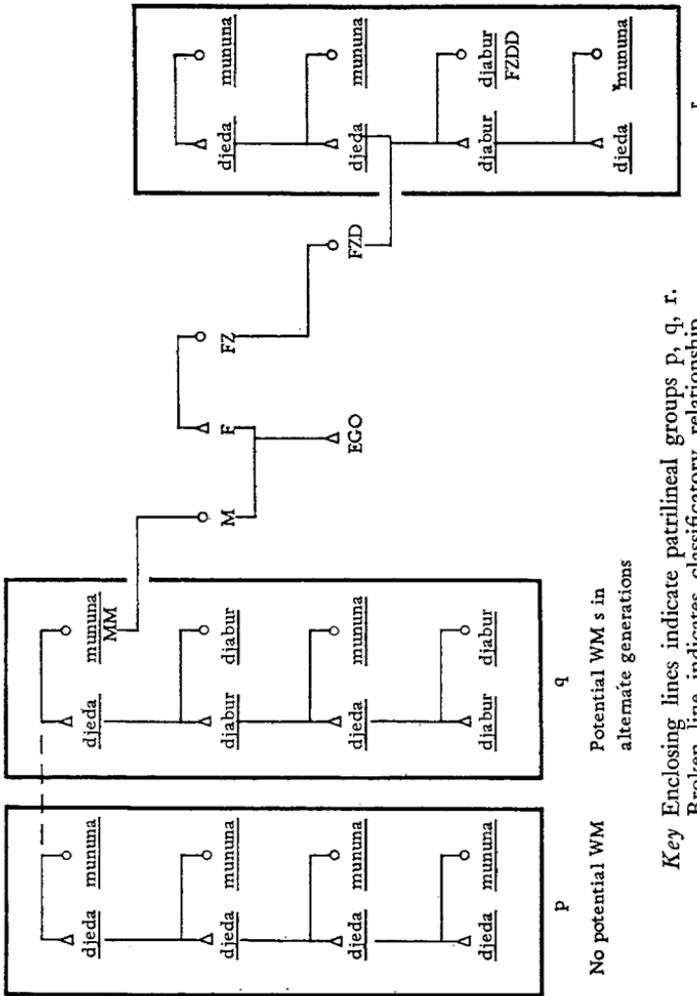
Subsections had no corporate functions in secular life. People sometimes used the names as terms of address and occasionally mentioned subsection affiliations when discussing the propriety or impropriety of marriages (see p. 71). More often, however, they used kinship terms for these purposes and recognized that, as an index to social relationships, the subsection system duplicated many of the functions of the terminology and served no additional uses.¹

TERMINOLOGY AND TERRITORIAL GROUPS

I have expounded the terminological and subsection systems by considering a hypothetical system confined to four patrilineal groups. Although such systems did not occur in practice, many individuals distinguished terminologically between four male relatives in their grandparents' genealogical generation belonging to different patrilineal groups. They applied the four basic sets of terms shown in Figure 8 to members of these four groups.

A man addressed a woman as *djabur* (MMBD, etc.) only if he had a right to her daughter and a man as *djabur* (MMBS, etc.) only if the speaker had a right to this individual's ZD. He addressed other women classified as sisters of his potential brides' mothers as *mununa*, the term for MM, and other men classified as brothers of his potential brides' MBs as *djeda*, the term for MMB. Thus in Figure 11 Ego makes a terminological distinction between adjacent genealogical generations in patrilineal group q; he makes no such distinction in group p; and he makes the distinction for some members of group r but not others. A man who had not received a wife from a woman he called *djabur* might begin to address

¹ I have dealt briefly with this subject as my findings are in accordance with those recently reported by Meggitt in his detailed account of the Walbiri subsection system (1962: ch. X).



Key
 Enclosing lines indicate patrilineal groups p, q, r.
 Broken line indicates classificatory relationship.

Figure 11 Terminological distinction between potential wife-givers and others classified as their brothers and sisters

her as *mununa* when she passed child-bearing age; or he might change terms earlier to indicate resentment if he felt she had evaded her obligations.

Ideally, each individual applied to members of every patrilineal group he encountered one or other of the sets of terms for F-B-FZ-Z, ZS-WB-ZD-W, MB-MBS-M-MBD, and

with exceptions of the kind just indicated, MMB-MM. The following case illustrates the extent and distribution of relationships in Liverpool-Blyth River society. In the course of my fieldwork Les, a man of about sixty belonging to the Djunawunja unit (Table 1, No. 1), gave me the terms he used for about 950 living and dead Gidjingali, Nagara, and Gunavidji. Because of irregularities it is not possible to summarize these accurately as sets of terminological relationships between this man and the thirty-three Gidjingali, Nagara, and Gunavidji land-owning units. But it will serve as an approximation to say that he applied the F-B-FZ-Z set of terms to ten units, the ZS-WB-ZD-W set to eight, the MB-MBS-M-MBD set to six, and the MMB-MM or MMB-MMBS-MM-MMBD set to nine. He was also related to people in other communities and gave me altogether the terms he used for about 1,200 living and dead. I judged that, although he had a wider genealogical knowledge than most, he was not unique among his contemporaries.

Each set of four terms, as I have indicated, was correlated with two male and two female subsections. Thus, ideally, the male members of a land-owning unit belonged to one or other of four father-son subsection pairs WAMUD-GELA, GAMARANG-BALANG, BANGADI-NGARIDJ, and GODJOG-BULEIN, and the female members to one or other of the four corresponding FZ-FD pairs. Table 5 shows

TABLE 5 Subsections and land-owning units

	Dua moiety		Jiridja moiety	
	WAMUD-GELA	GAMARANG-BALANG	BANGADI-NGARIDJ	GODJOG-BULEIN
Serial number of unit in Table 1	1, 7, 12, 15, 17	6, 8, 9, 11	2, 3, 4, 14, 19	5, 10, 13, 16, 18
Total	5	4	5	5

the two male subsections that predominated in each of the nineteen Gidjingali land-owning units. Because of irregular marriages, many units included members belonging to different father-son or FZ-FD subsection pairs (Gubanga included men of GAMARANG-BALANG, BANGADI-NGARIDJ, and GODJOG-BULEIN).

ROLES

Although an individual applied a kinship term to everyone in his social universe, he was not expected to behave in the same way towards all members of the one category. In practice, his affective and jural relationships differed considerably. In certain situations terminology was a sufficient guide to conduct, and often people acted in accordance with, or appealed to, an embracing kinship ethic ('A man should not utter the name of anyone he calls sister', 'A man should not marry anyone he calls mother'). But for the main part an individual's roles and expectations were more narrowly defined. I shall discuss these under five headings: ritual, economic, sexual, educational, and sustaining.

Ritual roles

The four main ceremonies were mortuary, circumcision, *gunabibi* and *maraian*. The first two were public transition rites, the last two secret rites performed by men only. I shall concentrate on organization rather than content and produce evidence supporting my earlier assertion that the relationship between a land-owning unit and its estate was primarily religious.

(i) Mortuary rites

The Gidjingali practised a double disposal of the dead. First they buried the corpse in a shallow grave or exposed it on a tree platform. A few hours later men brushed with leaves those who had been near the body, a ceremony called *mandjar*. Then after a week or so members of the deceased's community burned some of his possessions and poured water over his close relatives. This ceremony was known as *dada*.

Months later folk recovered the desiccated bones and brought them back into the community in the *bogabod* ceremony. A close relative, such as the widow or widower, retained the bones for several years. Finally, during the *laragan* ceremony, they were placed in a hollow-log coffin, which was buried or left standing upright in the ground.

As I stated earlier, each land-owning unit had its own totemic designs, but the members were not allowed to draw them and for this service had to depend upon the adult sons of female members, known collectively as *ngamonbeninga*. Men whose MMs belonged to the unit could assist, but their special role was to inspect the work on its completion. They were referred to as *aburamari*.² To avoid using the vernacular, I shall translate *ngamonbeninga* as the 'ZS group' and *aburamari* as the 'ZDS group'. Strictly speaking, females (ZD and ZDD) and male children belonged to these groups, but only the adult males exercised ritual prerogatives.

At particular points in mortuary rites, close agnates of the deceased formally asked the ZS group to draw one or other of the designs of his unit; and from time to time members of one unit requested the drawing of their designs as a mark of respect for deceased members of others of the same moiety. Each unit had the sole right to decide when its designs could be employed. Men spoke with relish of the serious action they would take against anyone who acted without permission but could not cite instances of such infringements.

Designs represented totemic sites and were of two kinds—those drawn on the ground and those painted on persons and coffins. The people painted designs of the second type on the chests of youths about to be circumcised but not on corpses (cf. Warner 1937: 415-16). Ground designs, which were

² The term *aburamari* consisted of the 3rd person plural prefix *abura*—and the stem—*mari*. For the purpose of defining ritual prerogatives, the relationship was stated as between the ZDSs and the land-owning unit of their MMs. For the purpose of defining marriage rights, the *an-mari* and *djin-mari* relationships (see p. 42) were stated as between individuals and the patrilineal groups of their MMs. A man did not have rights to the daughters of those women who belonged to his MM's land-owning unit but not to her patrilineal group. Moreover, there appeared to be no socially significant connection between ritual prerogatives and marriage rights.

used only in mortuary rites, formed enclosures in which people carried out such activities as burning the deceased's possessions and washing the bereaved. The decision of men on a given occasion to use a design representing one rather than another of their various sites seemed arbitrary.

It was believed that some of each unit's totems were harmful. These might attack anyone coming within reach except members of the ZS and ZDS groups, who were not merely safe themselves but could protect others in their company by telling the dangerous totem to go away or by appealing to deceased members of the totemic group to restrain it. Thus the dead of Djunawunja lived under the sea near the unit's estate with Fishnet, a monster that trapped passing canoes and dragged them down to its den. But if the crew included a member of the ZS group he appealed to his dead 'mothers' and 'MBs' to save him and his companions. The dead people heard his cries and forcibly restrained Fishnet from attacking. If Djunawunja men happened to be travelling alone, the ancestors would not intervene because they welcomed new arrivals.

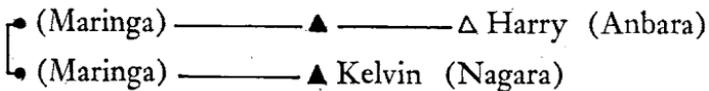
Late one afternoon I was crossing the Blyth River by canoe when one of the five natives with me uttered a cry of alarm. The paddlers increased their speed and told me to hang on as Bubuga the giant Yam (a Gubanga totem) was about to attack us. While I looked in vain for a sign of the monster, the man who gave the alarm stood up and spat in the water. He said loudly that he was a son of a woman of the Gubanga unit and ordered Bubuga to leave us alone. A few minutes later my companions assured me that we were out of danger.

It is worth noting that the man who saved his friends was the man who sounded the alarm. I have already said that men of a unit liked to proclaim their ownership of totemic designs. The present incident suggests that the ZSs of such men enjoyed demonstrating their ability to constrain their uncles' dangerous totems.

Less was made of the power of the ZDS group to control these malicious creatures. The people regularly referred to the ZS group when discussing the topic but included the ZDS group when I asked whether their statements applied

to both. As they believed that constraint could be achieved indirectly through appeals to deceased relatives, the difference may reflect the expectation of more effective aid from a MB than from an older MMB in the natural world (see p. 74).

A land-owning unit's totemic designs were always used for dead members, but, as I mentioned, the owners sometimes asked the ZS group to draw one after the death of an individual of another unit. In 1960 an aged Nagara named Kelvin died. About a week later members of the ZS group drew a design of his unit for the burning and cleansing rite. Simultaneously men of another ZS group drew a design of a different unit at the request of one of its members, a man called Harry. Those present performed the rite first in the design of Kelvin's unit and then in the design of Harry's.

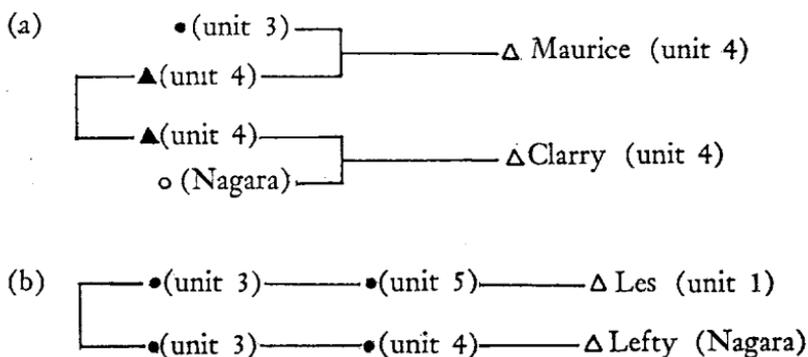


Harry's FM and Kelvin's mother were sisters of the Maringa community, and Harry had regarded Kelvin as an especially close classificatory father ever since his true father died. A few days later members of a third ZS group drew a design belonging to a Djinang unit at the request of one of its members. The man who asked them was a trading partner (see p. 20) and distant classificatory son of Kelvin.

Certain close cognates and affines of the deceased, such as the father, mother, or spouse, made gifts of food at the end of a rite to members of the ZS and ZDS groups who had drawn or inspected the design. But they did not offer anything to the owners. Men of a land-owning unit seemed to feel that, in requesting the drawing of a design, they had fulfilled a responsibility to a deceased member or had paid respect to a deceased member of another. ZSs and ZDSs, on the other hand, considered that they had provided an essential service and expected compensation. People said that fights occurred in the past because the gifts were inadequate or had been handed to the wrong men; but they could not remember any details. Although normally prepared to describe

disputes at length, they seemed less concerned here with particular incidents (that probably were trivial and infrequent) than with drawing my attention to jealously-guarded ritual prerogatives. On several occasions I heard men complain bitterly about alleged infringements that seemed either imaginary or unintentional, and my impression was that they were simply making a public affirmation of their rights (cf. Meggitt 1962: 118-19, 230).

Guarding ritual prerogatives against abuse was not incompatible with extending them occasionally as privileges. Members of a ZS group sometimes invited close patrilineal and matrilineal relatives to assist in the drawing of designs and afterwards shared the food payments with them. Thus (a) Maurice and Clarry extended privileges to each other, as did (b) Les and Lefty (unit numbers as in Table 1).



If a unit had no ZSs or ZDSs, its designs could be drawn by men whose wives or ZHs belonged to it. Members of an existing ZS group sometimes extended their prerogative to such men as an act of goodwill.

Each ZS and ZDS group commonly comprised people of several land-owning units. Table 6 gives the adult male membership in 1960 of the six Anbara units and the adult membership and number of units represented in their ZS and ZDS groups. The last set of figures reflects the extent to which female members were dispersed in marriage among other units (see Chapter 4).

People of the Liverpool-Blyth River region knew seven song cycles (*manigai*) that they believed ghosts of the dead

TABLE 6 ZS and ZDS groups of six land-owning units

Unit	Adult male membership	Adult membership of ZS group	Number of units in ZS group	Adult membership of ZDS group	Number of units in ZDS group
Djunawunja	11	16	4	3	2
Gunadjangga	10	4	3	6	2
Anmalamda-ajura	2	7	2	5	3
Gubanga	21	10	7	11	6
Lala-gadjiraba	3	7	3	4	2
Madang-adjira	2	4	1	0	—
Mean	8.2	8.0	3.3	4.8	3.0

had composed for performance at mortuary rites. Each cycle had a different name, set of verses, and melodic structure. The words did not occur in everyday discourse and were referred to as language of the dead. It was thought that the songs had been learnt during dreams in which the sleeper's spirit visited his deceased relatives, but nobody was able to say whereabouts this had happened.

Every Gidjingali land-owning unit shared, with certain others, one and one only of the seven cycles. The joint owners belonged to the same moiety and in every case included people other than Gidjingali. Thus four Gidjingali units of Dua moiety shared the Djambidj song cycle with certain Gunbalang, Gunavidji, Nagara, and Janjango units, and possibly others further east. The joint owners saw themselves as having a common bond (*manngadaba manigai arabirawo* meant 'we have the one mortuary song'), and were often trading partners (see p. 70). Table 7 gives the name and moiety of each song, the Gidjingali joint owners, and the languages of other joint owners. The evidence indicates that the songs spread westward from north-eastern Arnhem Land.³

³ *Manigai* appears to be a species of the north-east Arnhem Land *bunggal*. See Elkin 1953-6 (1953: 97; 1955: 134).

TABLE 7 Mortuary songs

Song	Moiety	Serial number of Gidjingali joint owners (Table 1)	Languages of other joint owners
Djambidj	Dua	1, 7, 8, 12	Janjango, Nagara Gunavidji, Gunbalang
Gojulan	„	4, 6	Janjango
Gada	„	9, 15, 17	Djinang
Djobog	„	11	Djinang
Bugula	Jiridja	2, 3, 5, 14, 16	Janjango, Nagara Gunavidji
Gabangora	„	10, 13	Djinang, Gunadba
Wulumunga	„	18, 19	Janjango

Each song had twenty to forty verses about different totems. A few were totems that had created sites on estates of some of the joint owners (White Cockatoo, Crocodile, etc.), but most were not associated with any locality (North-west Monsoon, Evening Star, etc.). Some verses in different songs of the same moiety referred to the same totems but in different words.

The performers necessarily comprised a singer accompanied by a didjeridu player but normally included several men singing in unison with a leader. The people acknowledged one individual as the foremost exponent of each cycle and sought his services even if he belonged to a distant community. But there were others who could take his place, and most men knew their own songs well enough to give support. A few, considering themselves to have little musical talent, preferred to beat time or simply listen.

The seven outstanding song leaders were old men with good voices who had applied themselves to the task of learning perfectly the words, melodies, and rhythms. Several were Gidjingali, the rest men from further east. When they visited other communities, younger local leaders deferred to them. The position of song leader was not hereditary, and consecutive occupants did not necessarily belong to the same land-owning units.

Throughout mortuary rites people sang the deceased's song cycle, and at the end of each phase the leader (who in many cases did not belong to the deceased's land-owning unit) intoned the names of all the owning patrilineal groups. The supporting singers were mostly owners but often included others of the same moiety who knew the song almost as well as their own and wished to pay their respects. Men were far less possessive about songs than about designs and made concessions to non-owners on the basis of common moiety associations with the totems, most of which, as I mentioned, were not connected with territorial sites. Songs of one moiety were never sung by men of the other, nor performed during their mortuary rites.

Women danced but did not sing. They tended to be best acquainted with movements appropriate to the song of their own unit but were familiar with others and were allowed to dance to songs of either moiety.

(ii) Circumcision rites

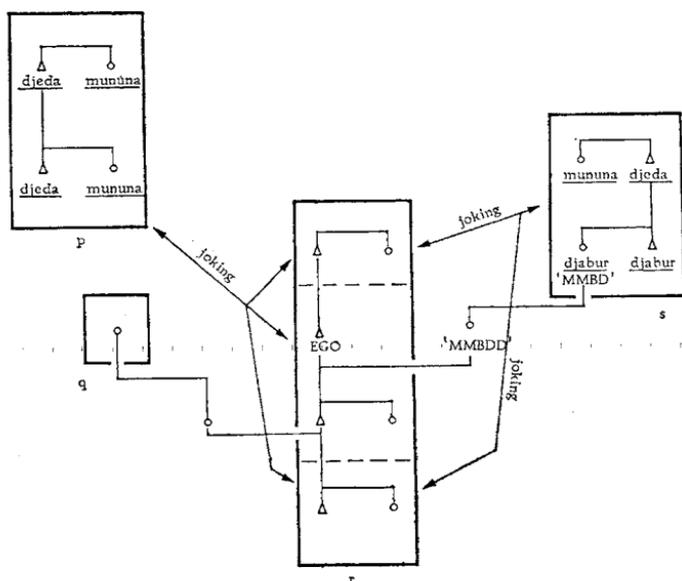
Every patrilineal group had a relationship called *djarawara* with at least one other. When a boy reached the age of about fifteen his father notified one of the *djarawara* relatives that it was time the youth was circumcised. At a ceremony soon afterwards this man seized the youth by the arm and took him from his parents. The next day the novice and the *djarawara* set out on a tour to invite guests to the circumcision ceremony (unless, as often happened, several communities were already camped together). The operation took place about a fortnight later.

I shall now describe details of the *djarawara* relationship. Two patrilineal groups related in this way belonged to the same moiety. Members of each addressed members of the other as 'MMB', 'ZDS', 'MM', or 'ZDD', but were not close relatives. Adult members of each made stereotyped jokes with adult members of the other, seized each other's youths to mark the beginning of their circumcision rites, and, in the past, carried out autopsies on each other's dead. Although different individuals performed these services from one occasion to another, the relationship was defined as corporate. Thus people said that patrilineal group p had a *djarawara* relation-

ship with patrilineal group q. Patrilineal groups of the same land-owning unit did not necessarily have the same *djarawara* relationships.

As a man was expected to act with reserve towards his WM and potential WMs, he could not have joking relationships with these women or other members of their patrilineal groups. Such relationships existed only between people who called each other *djeda* (MMB, etc.), *mununa* (MM, etc.), or *gangguda* (ZDS, etc., ZDD, etc.). Thus in Figure 11 Ego might have a joking relationship with male and female members of group p, but not with those of groups q or r (p. 51).

Many marriages did not result from orthodox bestowals, as I will show later on (Ch. 4). If, as sometimes happened, a man married a woman whose mother belonged to a group that had a joking relationship with his own, he immediately stopped participating and began to call his WM *djabur*. Joking between her group and the other members of his own continued as before, though offspring of the marriage were not allowed to take part because their FWM's group included their own MMBDs.



Enclosing lines indicate patrilineal groups p, q, r, s.

Figure 12 *Joking relationships*

Most patrilineal groups had joking relationships with several others, usually in different communities. People spoke of these as traditional and did not know how they had begun. In Figure 12 group r has joking relationships with both p and s. Because Ego's WM belongs to s, he and his children must not joke with members of that group but may with members of p. Ego's SS and SD may joke with group s because their MM is not a member.

If a man had already seized a youth for circumcision, he usually invited a close agnate of that person to seize his own son. Otherwise he might ask anyone from groups with which he joked. Once I observed a woman seize a boy, but probably this did not often happen.

Men often seemed reluctant to suggest to their wives that their sons were old enough to be circumcised. In several cases women quarrelled bitterly with their husbands for several days before consenting. The novice's close female cognates (mother, sister, FZ, MM) made a mock attack on the *djarawara* as he seized the lad, and they wept as the boy was led away. The novice's male agnates, especially his father and elder brother, regretted the women's distress but saw themselves as discharging a responsibility and looked forward to the time after the rite when the son or younger brother would take his place in the secret religious life of the men. Given this opposition of the sexes (cf. Elkin 1938: 171), I suggest that in symbolically separating the lad from his family the *djarawara* acted as a scapegoat for the male agnates.

Joking between *djarawara* relatives consisted of allegations of abnormally large sexual organs or appetites and occurred both in ritual contexts and everyday encounters. It was always good-natured and appeared to be a recognized way of demonstrating friendly relations between two groups whose members performed unpleasant duties for each other.

There was a small number of professional circumcisers among the Gidjingali (two in 1960) who had learned the art by watching and assisting an experienced operator closely related to them. A father asked a circumciser to operate on his son and later paid him for his services.

Frank, a man of about thirty-six, was one of the best-known circumcisers in the Liverpool-Blyth River region. He

learnt from a classificatory father of his own unit who, after an operation, used to rub fragments of foreskin into Frank's hair when he was a child. Later Frank became his assistant and began making incisions while still a young man. He believed that his young son would follow in his footsteps. This boy recently woke from a dream crying: 'I'm cutting him, I'm cutting him. . . .' Frank had similar dreams when he was a lad.

Frank complained to me several times that people were not paying him as much as they should. He derived great satisfaction from his reputation as a skilful operator and had circumcised so many men he could not remember all their names.

Among Aborigines elsewhere the role was defined genealogically, hence the circumciser was a different man from one occasion to the next (Róheim 1945: ch. 3). Possibly professional circumcision among the Gidjngali was connected with the apparently recent adoption of the practice: Guna-vidji and other people to the west did not have the custom (cf. Berndt 1952).

(iii) *Gunabibi*

The Gidjngali admitted that this ceremony was new to them. Special head-dresses from southern Arnhem Land were necessary for a performance, and only a few men in the area had acquired them, either through trading partners or in Darwin. Several old men had never bothered to seek admission and stayed away when a ceremony was in progress.

Gunabibi is the name of a mythological female creator. I shall describe the organization of the last of four *gunabibi* ceremonies performed at Maningrida between 1958 and 1960. It began in April 1960 and finished five months later. As the first occurred shortly after my arrival, I did not make satisfactory observations, and unfortunately the following two occurred between field trips. Warner (1937: 290-311) and Berndt (1951a) have described many aspects of the ceremony as it occurred further east.

The outstanding organizational feature was a division of specialized functions between the two moieties. The Dua men were the actors, the Jiridja men technicians and stage-

hands. The Jiridja decorated the Dua performers, tied leafy sprays to their arms, transferred accessories from one performer to another between acts, and manufactured all the ritual objects. Preparations took place during the day. At dusk the Dua performers enacted the ritual, which consisted mainly of miming various Dua totems. Afterwards Dua and Jiridja men sang together till late in the night.

During the 1960 ritual eleven young unmarried men, referred to as *wori*, lived in seclusion at the ceremonial ground. Occasionally they went on hunting trips, when people said 'Gunabibi has gone hunting', but they always took care never to be seen by women and children. They included members of both moieties and constituted an active core for the duration of the ceremony. Some had not participated in a *gunabibi* before and passed through a brief initiation rite. The others volunteered for service because it was an experience they enjoyed.

The owner of the head-dress was the man C16 (Figures 1 and 2) who, as I mentioned earlier, had transferred his primary allegiance from his dead father's land-owning unit to that of his guardian and MZS (C12). His father's estate included portion of a large swamp that, according to natives further south, Gunabibi had once visited. C16 had received the head-dress from a trading partner.

The outstanding figure was a close classificatory younger brother of C16 (their MMs had been sisters). This man, to whom I shall refer as the head organizer, asked C16's permission to use the head-dress and subsequently took the leading part in arranging and directing the ceremony. He consulted C16 and C12 before announcing decisions, and the three men, all of Dua moiety, referred to the ceremony as 'ours'. The head organizer was a Nagara aged about thirty-five; the head-dress owner, about a year older, a Gidjingali (though his father had been Gunadba); and the owner's ex-guardian a Gidjingali of about sixty.

Although the head organizer acted in a general co-ordinating capacity, in certain matters he could not over-ride decisions reached by men of the opposite moiety. The person with the final say was the oldest member of the ZS group connected with the estate of the head-dress owner's original

unit. As there was no known association between Gunabibi and the estate of the owner's adopted unit, on this occasion the ZS group connected with it had no special prerogatives.

Members of the ZDS group (Dua) of the head-dress owner's original unit had no special role in the affairs of either moiety. But an old man whose wife belonged to this unit acted as a spokesman for the Jiridja leader. The most active Jiridja man was a young ZS of the oldest of the three Dua organizers. He spent much time acquiring materials for ritual objects, organizing food supplies to the bachelors in seclusion, and in general acting as an intermediary between Dua and Jiridja.

Several Gunadba acted as song leaders during the preliminary stages but deferred to a visitor from eastern Arnhem

TABLE 8 Organization of a *gunabibi* ceremony

Role	Moiety	Language	Significant relationship
1. Owner of head-dress and Dua assistant organizer	Dua	Gidjingali	
2. Dua head organizer	Dua	Nagara	MMZDS ('YB') of No. 1
3. Dua assistant organizer	Dua	Gidjingali	MZS ('EB') of No. 1
4. Jiridja leader	Jiridja	Gidjingali	Oldest member of ZS group connected with estate of No. 1's original unit
5. Spokesman for Jiridja leader	Jiridja	Gunadba	Husband of female member of No. 1's original unit
6. Intermediary between Dua and Jiridja	Jiridja	Gidjingali	ZS of No. 3
7. Song leaders	Jiridja and Dua	Gunadba and Djambarabwingo (N.E. Arnhem Land)	—
8. Bachelors in seclusion	Jiridja and Dua	Gidjingali (4), Nagara (3), Gunadba (3), Gunavidji (1),	—

Land at the climax. The Gidjingali regarded them all as experts and admitted they had no one to match them. One of the Gunadba song leaders was responsible for the boomerangs that came from the south and were used in the ceremony as rhythm instruments. In Table 8 I have set out the main roles and the affiliations and relationships of the occupants.

The preliminary rituals were held at Maningrida over a period of four and a half months. The regular participants were Gidjingali, Nagara, and Gunadba, but others attended, and on occasions over a hundred men were present.

The organizers planned to hold the climax on the estate of the head-dress owner's original unit, about twenty miles from Maningrida. Just before the agreed date a party of Europeans arrived at the settlement to collect bark paintings and asked if they could go along. As they had to leave within a week, it was necessary to know the date of the final night. I established this as best I could with the Dua head organizer and the Jiridja intermediary, and the visitors decided to set out with us.

On the morning of the appointed day the head organizer told me the Jiridja men had not finished their preparations and had postponed the climax until the following night. I explained to the men in the Dua camp that the delay meant the Europeans would have to return to the settlement without seeing anything. The reply was that they themselves would be happy to finish the ceremony as planned but had no say in the matter; the decision lay entirely with the Jiridja.

An old Jiridja man happened to be present during this conversation. After a long discussion with the Dua, he expressed the opinion that there was an obligation to the white people to finish the ceremony quickly and that this should be met. He returned to the Jiridja camp about a quarter of a mile away to discuss the matter further.

About an hour later the young intermediary invited me to the Jiridja camp, and I explained the position again. One man said it was all very well for the whites to hurry things up, but hasty and incomplete preparations meant supernatural reprisals for the blacks. Many others appeared to be in sympathy with this view. I replied that the decision was of no consequence to me and that this was their affair and they

must decide as they saw fit. At that point all eyes turned to the old man whose wife came from the estate on which the ceremony was being held. He said simply: 'We shall finish tonight.' There was no further discussion and the ceremony did finish that night. Men told me later that the Jiridja leader had made the decision and that the old man who spoke for him was like a lawyer.

During the final rite the head organizer led the Dua men through a trench dug by the Jiridja. This act, as he told me later, ratified the status of himself and his two classificatory brothers as the initiators and organizers of the ceremony. He alone wept when the representation of Gunabibi was allowed to fall across the trench, signifying that the rite had ended. He had saved most of his wages for several months before the *gunabibi* started and invested more money in it than anyone else. He told me that for his efforts his name would be known far and wide.

Throughout the ceremony Dua men had supplied Jiridja participants with food and tobacco. About a week after the concluding rite Jiridja men made a token payment to the Dua. The natives spoke of a ceremony in which Dua and Jiridja reversed roles but said they had never performed it. Probably this is the southern Arnhem Land *yabuduruwa* described by Elkin (1961a).

(iv) *Maraian*

The *maraian* was the main secret ritual among the Gidjinalgali until the *gunabibi* displaced it in popularity. The only *maraian* performed at Maningrida between 1958 and 1960 began shortly after my arrival and ended a few months later when an independently-organized *gunabibi* commenced. Older men occasionally expressed concern over current neglect of the *maraian*, but younger men said the music of the *gunabibi* was too sweet to be resisted.

Men translated *maraian* as 'secret' or 'Sunday business'. The moiety division was the central feature of the organization, but the ritual was not connected with a single creator comparable with Gunabibi. The ceremonial ground was divided into two halves, one Dua, the other Jiridja, and men performed dances associated with totems of their own moiety.

Carved and painted wooden objects representing the totems were kept in two bough shades, one for each moiety.

Although *maraian* mythology recorded the journeys of totems in the area, land-owning units did not have exclusive rights over any of the representations, and there did not appear to be a clearly-defined connection between particular totems and territorial sites. The representations were common property of the moiety, and any member might make them once he had been initiated into the ceremony and taught how. In practice, men specialized in a few ritual objects only. Mostly they had learnt about these from their fathers, especially if the totem had passed through his estate, and often from trading partners in other communities. Anyone could, on his own initiative, organize a *maraian* ceremony. On such an occasion the men of his community and visitors from others participated, and some of both moieties prepared their totemic specialities. I have no information about the roles, if any, of the ZS and ZDS groups in the *maraian*.

Warner (1937: 340-70), Worsley (1954: 122-39), and Elkin (1961b) have described *maraian* or similar rituals in other parts of Arnhem Land. It is apparent that, among the Gidjingali, the dominant feature of both the *gunabibi* and *maraian* ceremonies was a common relationship between the totems celebrated and the men of their respective moieties. In contrast, the emphasis in mortuary and circumcision rites was on the exclusive religious link between an individual's descent group and its estate.

Economic roles

A man had responsibilities to provide for his wife and young children and to make gifts of food regularly to the mother and MBs of his wife or betrothed. From time to time he distributed goods informally among close uterine and other agnatic and affinal relatives, and on the occasion of a circumcision or mortuary rite for a close agnate he helped compensate particular individuals for their services. A woman shared with her husband the task of obtaining daily nourishment for the hearth group and of meeting his obligations to others.

A hunter sometimes named spears after totems associated

with sites of his land-owning unit in the belief that he would thereby be more successful. He felt obliged to share game or fish killed by such a spear with at least some members of the ZS group. But if one of the ZSs borrowed the spear, he was not obliged to share anything it killed with the owner.

Certain durable objects passed from hand to hand over long distances. The Gidjingali manufactured dilly bags, spear-shafts, and some of the ritual objects used in *maraian* ceremonies; to them from the west and south came bamboo spear-shafts, hair belts, dilly bags, red ochre, other *maraian* objects, and head-dresses and boomerangs for the *gunabibi* ceremony; and from the east stone spear- and axe-heads, food-grinding stones, dilly bags, and still more *maraian* objects.⁴

These goods passed between individuals connected primarily by kinship, special trading partnerships, or common ritual affiliations. I recorded portions of chains composed of the first kind of link by asking individuals to name those who often transmitted trade goods to each other or to tell me where particular objects had come from. In the following examples the first person is named, the arrows indicate transmission of goods, and the abbreviations stand for the relationship of each individual to the one previous. Goods also travelled in the reverse direction.

(a) Malgoda → close 'ZD' → H → other W → MB → S → EB → close 'F' → WB. (The seven men in this portion of the chain belonged to three different land-owning units, one Nagara, two Anbara.)

(b) Bongowoi → BW → MB → close 'ZS' → MB → ZD → H. (The five men belonged to five different land-owning units, one of a community east of the Janjango, one Maringa, three Anbara.)

(c) Guramanamana → MMB → MBS → S → close 'MB'. (The five men belonged to four land-owning units, three Anbara, one Nagara.)

Chains of this kind were flexible and numerous. They were composed of patrilineal, matrilineal, and affinal links in many different combinations (cf. Falkenberg 1962: 152-

⁴ For a more detailed inventory see Thomson (1949: ch. 5).

7). Those who formed them were close kin who gave perishable commodities to each other as well as trade goods.

Many individuals had formal trading relationships with men of other communities. A person could initiate such a partnership by giving someone a *maraiian* object or his son's umbilical cord; and he might collaborate in and eventually take over his father's partnerships. The partners, usually related as distant classificatory brothers or father and son, traded when together for ceremonies, sent goods through a third person, or made special visits to each other. Chains formed by associations of this kind, for which I shall reserve the term 'trading partnership', consisted of fewer links than those of the previous type but extended over long distances.

The third kind of trading chain comprised men who owned the same mortuary song. From time to time some of the owners travelled from one community to another, performing in each a ceremony called *maradjura* or *rom*. Although not connected with anyone's death, the ritual was based on the song and helped to maintain links between owners in different communities. The hosts and visitors traded goods on such occasions but not, in my experience, as part of the ceremony (cf. Berndt 1951b).

Trade goods received through one kind of link (kinship, trading, or ritual) were sometimes passed on through another; so, for example, a man receiving something from a trading partner might give it to a close kinsman who in turn might give it to a co-owner of his mortuary song. Individuals passed on some objects within a short time but retained others for longer periods or until they became unserviceable. Sometimes only a few people handled the goods, which travelled quickly from one community to another; but it often happened that objects passed through many hands and diffused slowly. Some traders were more enterprising than others and participated keenly in existing relationships and made efforts to form new ones. At Maningrida most trade goods, nowadays including articles such as iron spear-heads and cloth, passed along links between close kin.

Sexual roles

Many men married women to whom they did not have

marriage rights, as will be shown in Chapter 4. Table 9 indicates that such marriages were not necessarily improper. Men had rights to a small percentage only of the women they called *mangga* (MMBDD, etc.); yet marriages between men and any women to whom they applied this term were respectable. Marriages between men and women they called *aragudja* (FZD, etc.) were equally respectable. But the people regarded marriages, or the idea of marriages, between men and women of other kinship categories with varying degrees of disapproval.

TABLE 9 Moral attitude to marriages between men and eight categories of female kin

Classificatory kinship term applied by Ego	Moiety	Conventional attitude to marriage
<i>mangga</i> (MMBDD, etc.)	Opposite	Approval
<i>aragudja</i> (FZD, etc.)	„	Approval
<i>ama</i> (M, etc.)	„	Mild disapproval increasing with closeness of relationship; marriage with actual mother unthinkable
<i>ngalinga</i> (ZD, etc.)	„	Mild disapproval increasing with closeness of relationship
<i>mununa</i> (MM, etc.)	Same	Disapproval increasing with closeness of relationship
<i>baba</i> (FZ, etc.)	„	Disapproval increasing with closeness of relationship
<i>djabur</i> (MMBD, etc.)	„	Disapproval increasing with closeness of relationship
<i>djala</i> (Z, etc.)	„	Strong disapproval increasing with closeness of relationship; marriage with actual sister unthinkable

A man's FZ or any other woman of her patrilineal group and genealogical generation might give her daughter to him if he had no prospects of receiving a wife through orthodox bestowal. People said she did so out of pity for her BS, and they insisted that men did not have formal rights to their cross-cousins. I shall use the abbreviation FZD to mean the daughter of a woman classified as Ego's FZ and of his patrilineal group.

I mentioned that there were special restrictions on social intercourse between a man and his WM or potential WMs. The one exception was when a person married his FZD. The relationship between a man and his FZ was familiar and affectionate, and it did not change if he married her daughter. He continued to address his WM as *baba*.

An individual was not supposed to utter the name of any woman he called *djabur* (MMBD, etc.). He might speak to her from a distance with eyes averted; but he did not joke or swear in her presence and was embarrassed if he heard others do so. A woman did not tell a man that she and her brother had decided to give her daughter to him but asked her husband to convey the information. The groom made gifts to the bestowers through a third person.

The strongest restrictions on social and sexual intercourse were those affecting the relationships of men with their actual and classificatory sisters.

Educational roles

Both parents taught the children to walk, talk, and behave in appropriate ways, but fathers were the chief technical educators of their sons, mothers of their daughters. A father taught his son to hunt, fish, and make weapons and instructed him in local topography and mythology. If the man were an outstanding singer or a professional circumciser, he encouraged the boy to acquire the same specialist skill. A mother taught her daughter where to find food, how to collect and prepare it, and how to make dilly bags from tree fibre. Fathers tended to teach sexual morality to their sons, mothers to their daughters.

Many others participated in a child's training. Boys learnt from close male agnatic and uterine relatives, girls from close female agnatic and uterine relatives. Senior male agnates were prominent among those who contributed to a man's religious education. But individuals who had a superior knowledge of particular secret rites or who were merely more voluble than others lectured novices irrespective of their relationship.

Fathers did not beat a child and took to task mothers who occasionally lost patience. Children ridiculed nonconformity

TABLE 10 Kinship roles

Role	Relative
<i>Ritual</i>	
a. A man was responsible for the circumcision of his	Son
b. A man was responsible for mortuary rites of his	Close agnates
c. A man had a right to draw totemic designs of his	Mother's land-owning unit
d. A man had a right to supervise the drawing of totemic designs of	MM's land-owning unit
e. A man might be invited to seize for circumcision his	Joking relatives
<i>Economic</i>	
a. A man gave food mainly to his	Wife and children; WM, WMB; WF, WB; close patrilineal and matrilineal kin
b. A man gave trade goods mainly to his	Above relatives, trading partners, and joint owners of his mortuary song
<i>Sexual</i>	
a. A man had marriage rights to...	The daughters of all women who belonged to the same patrilineal group as his MM and who were in the genealogical generation of his MMBD or a generation alternating with it; and to the daughters of all women whose MMs belonged to his own patrilineal group and were in the genealogical generation of his FZ or a generation alternating with it
b. A man might marry with propriety any woman to whom he applied the kinship terms	<i>Mangga</i> (MMBDD and all classified with her) and <i>aragudja</i> (FZD and all classified with her)
c. A man observed special restrictions on social intercourse with his	Actual and classificatory sisters; WM unless also FZ; potential WMs

(continued next page)

Role	Relative
<i>Educational</i>	
a. A child received general education from its	Parents; close patrilineal and matrilineal kin
b. A boy received technical education mainly from his	Father
<i>Sustaining</i>	
a. A man had obligations to support in quarrels his	MB, ZS; close agnates, WMB, WB, MMB, joking relatives, trading partners, close matrilineal kinsmen; members of his own community
b. A man felt some responsibility towards his	Daughter, ZD, WM

among themselves, and older boys and girls occasionally hit their younger siblings.

Sustaining roles

By this expression I mean obligations to defend, support, or avenge certain relatives. The Gidjingali regarded mutual aid as the dominant aspect of the MB-ZS relationship. A man told me: 'If a man's sister gives birth to a girl, she provides him with a niece to bestow in marriage; if she gives birth to a boy, well never mind, she provides him with a nephew to fight for him'. The role was taken seriously, and I recorded many instances in which it was carried out.

An individual also had loyalties to men of his land-owning unit, his WMB, WB, MMB, joking relatives, and trading partners; and to his MBS, FZS, and matrilineal classificatory brothers (MZS) not in his own unit. Indeed, my evidence suggests that active antagonists in fights within the community were regularly outnumbered by people with divided loyalties who tried to bring the conflict under control. Men often supported members of their own community regardless of relationship in fights with members of others. They felt some responsibility for their daughters, ZDs, and WMs, but were reluctant to intervene in quarrels between such women and their husbands.

4

Disputes over the Acquisition of Wives

Only a small percentage of marriages resulted from orthodox bestowal, as defined in the previous chapter. To understand the context in which disputes occurred, it is necessary to know why this was so and how else men acquired wives. I shall limit my analysis to the six Anbara land-owning units (Table 1, Nos 1-6), which in 1960 had combined totals of 48 adult males and 47 adult females (by 'adult' I mean over the age of about fourteen).

DISTRIBUTION OF RIGHTS

Five men were married to at least one MMBDD or FZDDD. Nineteen did not have a MMBDD or FZDDD of marriageable age. Twenty-nine had a total of twenty-seven mature MMBDDs or FZDDDs, but the distribution of relationships was such that only twenty-one male-female pairs could be formed. (For example, as four men had only two MMBDDs and no FZDDD, two of them could not be matched.) Thus an absence or shortage of women of the appropriate relationships was sufficient to account for the fact that over half the men were not married to women acquired through orthodox bestowal.

I examined the histories of the twenty-seven women to discover why only five of the twenty-nine men with rights succeeded in acquiring such a small percentage of them as wives (six altogether). This is a brief summary of the results: (a) The women related as MMBDD or FZDDD to sixteen individuals were all married to older men, some of whom did not have rights to them. Many of the sixteen would not

have been born or would still have been children when their MMBDDs or FZDDD were old enough to be promised. (b) Three men shared a single FZDDD who, because of marriage irregularities in previous generations, belonged to their moiety. She was married to a man from the opposite moiety who did not have a right to her. (c) Three men had MMBDDs or FZDDD but, by the time these were old enough to be bestowed, had married other women. It appears either that the bestowers did not offer the girls, giving as a reason that the men were already married, or that the men waived their rights. (d) Two men had MMBDDs who were given to individuals without rights to them. Although the men with rights were about the same age as the husbands, they did not oppose the marriages. I was unable to discover the reason.

Of the five men married to a MMBDD or FZDDD, two had married each other's ZD, two had promised young ZDs to their respective WMB, and one had married the ZD of a dead man who had been the husband of the first man's ZD.

ORTHODOX AND NON-ORTHODOX MARRIAGES

By an 'orthodox' marriage I mean one in which the husband had a right to the wife. As I explained earlier, certain kinds of non-orthodox marriage were quite proper.

Tables 11 and 12 relate the incidence of orthodox marriage, non-orthodox marriage, and unmarried status to the posses-

TABLE 11 Men: marriages and rights

Marital status	Men with at least one mature MMBDD or FZDDD	Men without any mature MMBDD or FZDDD	Totals
Married to at least one MMBDD or FZDDD	5	—	5
Married but not to any MMBDD or FZDDD	9	9	18
Not married	15	10	25
Totals	29	19	48

TABLE 12 Women: marriages and men's rights

Marital status	Women related to at least one man as MMBDD or FZDDD	Women not related to any man as MMBDD or FZDDD	Totals
Married and related to husband as MMBDD or FZDDD	10	—	10
Married but not related to husband as MMBDD or FZDDD	12	17	29
Spinster or widow	1	7	8
Totals	23	24	47

sion of rights. Of the eight unmarried women in Table 12, four were widows, three young girls whose marriages had been delayed by arguments, and one a woman whose future husband had not returned from Darwin. Their inclusion makes up the totals but is of no significance for the analysis.

Table 13 indicates the number of men in each of five roughly-determined age groups who had 0, 1, 2, or 3 wives in 1960. It does not include previous wives who had died or left their husbands.

TABLE 13 Distribution of wives among men of five age groups

Age of husband	0 wife	1 wife	2 wives	3 wives	Total
15 — 24 years	14	1	0	0	15
25 — 34 years	7	4	1	0	12
35 — 44 years	0	2	3	1	6
45 — 54 years	0	2	0	2	4
Over 55 years	4	5	2	0	11
Totals	25	14	6	3	48

Twenty-five men were unmarried, and the other twenty-three had a total of thirty-five wives. Table 14 classifies the thirty-five marriages according to the relationship of wife

to husband. The only men with rights to their wives were those married to the six women in class A (one of the five men mentioned earlier had two MMBDDs as wives). I have distinguished class B from the others because giving a man his FZD was a recognized subsidiary to orthodox bestowal (Chapter 3). In distinguishing close from distant relationships I have assigned marriages to classes C or D if, as well as having the appropriate classificatory relationship, the partners were linked as cognates (MFZDD, MBD, etc.). This corresponds roughly with a distinction made by the natives themselves, who spoke of 'close' and 'distant' connections but did not apply any strict criterion.

TABLE 14 Classification of thirty-five marriages

Relationship of wife to husband	Kinship term applied by husband	Right or no right to wife	Proper or improper marriage	Frequency
A. MMBDD or FZDDD (actual or classificatory as defined in Chapter 3)	<i>mangga</i>	right	proper	6
B. FZD (actual or classificatory as defined in Chapter 3)	<i>aragudja</i>	no right	proper	3
C. Other close classificatory MMBDD, FZDDD	<i>mangga</i>	no right	proper	7
D. Other close classificatory FZD	<i>aragudja</i>	no right	proper	9
E. Distant classificatory MMBDD or FZD	<i>mangga</i> or <i>aragudja</i>	no right	proper	6
F. Relationships other than classes A, B, C, D, or E	neither <i>mangga</i> nor <i>aragudja</i>	no right	improper	2
G. Relationship not determined	?	no right	?	2
Total				35

The husband in one of the two improper marriages (class F) was married to a classificatory mother, the other to a classificatory ZD. Several other unions were irregular if the

relationship between the partners is traced in one way but not if traced in another. As little, if any, opprobrium attached to these, I have assigned them to one or other of the first four classes.

The two women in class G came from outside the Liverpool-Blyth River region and were wed in Darwin. If we omit them from the analysis, it is apparent that husbands had rights to six wives but not to the remaining twenty-seven. Examination of genealogical and age data disclosed that there were no mature males with rights to eighteen of the twenty-seven women at the time of marriage. That is, in order to marry upon reaching an appropriate age, these eighteen women had to wed men without rights to them. The remaining nine married men who did not have rights to them, even though others did. I shall discuss this point later. The figures indicate that a small percentage of men married women to whom they had rights, more married women to whom not they but other men had rights, and an even larger number married women to whom neither they nor others had rights.

To demonstrate how this kind of distribution came about, I shall first examine the initial bestowals of fifteen Anbara women in the original sample to whom no mature males had rights at the time. I revert to the original sample because I investigated the marriages of the women in it. Some of the twenty-seven wives just considered were non-Anbara whose marital histories I did not record.

Table 15 classifies the relationship of each of the fifteen women to the man upon whom she was first bestowed. He was not necessarily her husband in 1960: in some cases he had died after the bestowal or she had deserted him.

TABLE 15 First bestowals of fifteen women to whom no men had rights at the time

Relationship, as classified in Table 14, of woman to man upon whom initially bestowed	Frequency
B. FZD	1
C. Close classificatory MMBDD	6
D. Close classificatory FZD	7
E. Distant classificatory MMBDD or FZD	1

The fifteen women were promised to thirteen men (two men were each promised two women). At the time of bestowal roughly half the men had acquired at least one wife, though not through orthodox bestowal (in which, as distinct from the kind now being considered, a girl was given to a man with a right to her). Some unmarried men had at least one unmarried MMBDD or FZDDD, the others had not. The analysis indicates that bestowers of girls to whom no men had rights promised them to married or unmarried men, and to men with or without the prospects of obtaining wives through orthodox bestowal. Examination of a wider range of cases supports these inferences.

I shall now examine the initial bestowals of nineteen Anbara women in the original sample to whom men did have rights at the time. Table 16 classifies the relationship between each woman and the man to whom she was first promised (not necessarily her present husband).

TABLE 16 First bestowals of nineteen women to whom men had rights at the time

Relationship, as classified in Table 14, of woman to man upon whom initially bestowed	Frequency
A. MMBDD or FZDDD	11 (7 MMBDD, 4 FZDDD)
B. FZD	1
C. Close classificatory MMBDD	1
D. Close classificatory FZD	4
E. Distant classificatory MMBDD or FZD	2

The nineteen women were promised to sixteen men—eleven to ten men who had rights to them, eight to eight men who had not (two men were promised several women and belonged to both categories). Five of the men with rights were already married, and seven of those without rights had acquired at least one wife, though not through orthodox bestowal. The analysis indicates that bestowers of girls to whom men had rights promised them to these individuals or to others, and to married men or bachelors. Examination of a wider range of cases supports these inferences.

So far I have demonstrated that the distribution of genealogical connections among males and females was such that, at any given time, many men were without rights to any woman of marriageable age. Likewise, many women were without men who had rights to them. Men without rights married women to whom no one else had rights; but they also married women to whom others actually had rights. Men with rights to women married only some of them. They also married women to whom no one had rights and women to whom not they but others had rights.

POLITICS OF BESTOWAL

I want now to consider how bestowers and seekers advanced their interests in a context in which there was a chronic disproportion between the demand for wives and the supply of female relatives of the kind specified by the rule. Those with rights to give a girl in marriage (her mother and MB) stood to gain in three ways: (a) the recipient began making gifts to them from the time of bestowal and continued as long as the woman remained his betrothed or wife; (b) he had an obligation to support them in quarrels; (c) he was expected to give a niece to his WMB.

Because a single bestowal was sufficient to entail all these obligations, bestowers tried to maximize their gains by promising girls at an early age to different men. But they did not have complete freedom of choice. First, in some instances they had obligations to men to whom they were related as MMBD and MMBS or FZDD and FZDS. The oldest of a number of individuals who shared several MMBDDs or FZDDDs had a prior right to all of them, but he was expected to act generously towards the younger men. Having received one woman, he allowed his unmarried brother or 'brothers' to wed others. In practice, married men, even if they had not acquired their wives through orthodox bestowal, waived rights to women in favour of individuals both with and without rights to them. Although most adult males desired at least one spouse, many seemed more anxious to display their generosity than to acquire a second or third. This attitude enabled bestowers to distribute girls widely and was a

significant factor in many of the cases mentioned earlier in which women married men who did not have rights to them even though there were others who did.

Second, if there were no mature males to whom the bestowers had genealogically-defined obligations, they sought others. They did not have to withhold the girls until someone with a right grew up. Here the range of choice was limited by rules stating the kinship relations and moiety affiliations appropriate to marriage.

Third, men sometimes pressed their claims on grounds other than the possession of an orthodox right. Thus an individual might demand a wife in return for a niece previously bestowed, or he might see himself as the rightful husband of a woman because she was his brother's widow or the younger sister of a wife prematurely deceased. Again, if the bestowers revoked their promise to him in favour of someone with a prior right, he might assert that the prestations he had made since the bestowal gave him precedence over everyone else. Such arguments might be advanced alone or in conjunction with claims based on orthodox rights. I could well be criticized for restricting the term 'right' to cases where the woman was related to the man as MMBDD or FZDDD, but I have done so in the interests of clarity.

Fourth, there was the question of the relative ages of potential husbands. Bestowers preferred mature men and tended to ignore youths, even those with rights to the girls. At the same time they accorded no special privileges to men of advanced age and occasionally dismissed a demand with the remark that it was ludicrous for such an old man to be seeking a new wife.

I want now to consider the disposal of women from the point of view of those seeking wives. An individual promised a young MMBDD or FZDDD soon after his initiation would have been roughly twenty-five to thirty years old when he married her. Few men acquired their first wives like this. Of the many who did not, some, as youths, had had MMBDDs or FZDDD's but these were already promised or married to older men; and others had not had such relatives.

Most men's prospects of acquiring wives through orthodox bestowal improved as they grew older, but from early adult-

hood they paid attention to other opportunities. They might inherit widows; or they might acquire girls to whom no one had rights or when those who did had acted generously and waived them. They might even try to get women already promised or married to other men. The demographic facts were such that all aims could not be achieved by a rigid adherence to the rules, which, accordingly, were often ignored. This in turn reduced the number of orthodox marriages.¹

The question why the rules persisted in these circumstances is not easy to answer. Obviously scale was an important factor: if the patrilineal groups were larger, the percentage of marriages in which men acquired wives to whom they had rights might have been greater. Lack of information about marriage in the period before living memory and of comparable data from communities elsewhere makes it impossible to decide whether the existing state of affairs among the Gidjingali was abnormal. But an important point is that, as I have indicated, rules affecting marriage were of two different types, one defining rights to bestow or marry particular women, the other stating broad categories of kin into which an individual might or might not marry with propriety. No formal judicial agency existed to enforce such rules (see Chapter 6), but public opinion operated as a controlling factor in relation to the second type and helped to secure a high degree of conformity. On the other hand folk not directly concerned in issues concerning the exercise or evasion of individual rights were usually reluctant to interfere in matters they felt were not their business. Thus, although marriage rights were publicly recognized, they operated characteristically in private affairs and constituted merely one type of advantage that might or might not (for reasons I have given above) over-ride others. The Gidjingali did not appear to be concerned about the discrepancy between rules

¹ I have followed Hart and Pilling (1960) in heading this section 'Politics of bestowal'. By 'politics' I mean the way in which individuals attempted to further their interests within a jural and moral system. There are some interesting similarities and differences between Gidjingali marriage arrangements and those of the Tiwi as described by Hart and Pilling (*ibid.*), but I do not intend to discuss them here.

defining marriage rights and the manner in which wives were often obtained, and they certainly gave no sign of feeling a need for stricter regulation. Neither was there any evidence suggesting that the situation was the result of European influences.

CASE HISTORIES

I want now to describe the occurrence of thirty-three marriages classified in Table 14, omitting class G. I shall do this under three headings: (a) between a man and a woman to whom he had a right; (b) between a man and a woman to whom not he but at least one other had a right at the time; and (c) between a man and a woman to whom neither he nor anyone else had a right at the time. Disputes arose in connection with eleven of these marriages.

Marriages between a man and a woman to whom he had a right

Three of the six marriages in this class took place peacefully. In one, the husband, previously unmarried, was the oldest of several men with rights. In the second, the husband, already married, was the oldest of those with rights and had previously given a niece to the woman's MB. In the third, the husband was the second oldest of several men with rights; the oldest, who was already married, sanctioned the union and later received a younger sister of the woman as a second wife.

Disputes arose in the other three. Above the following accounts I have indicated the names and approximate ages (1960) of the central figures.

Case 1: Dispute over a woman involving two men with rights to her (Nancy, 20; Harry, 38; Tommy, 26) (Figure 13).

Isobel (C1) gave her daughter Margaret to Harry (D4). Neither he nor anyone else had a right to her, but Isobel was a close classificatory sister of Harry's MMDD, Sybil (C3).

Later Sybil promised her daughter Nancy to Tommy (D6). Nancy was Tommy's MMBDD, but Harry was the oldest

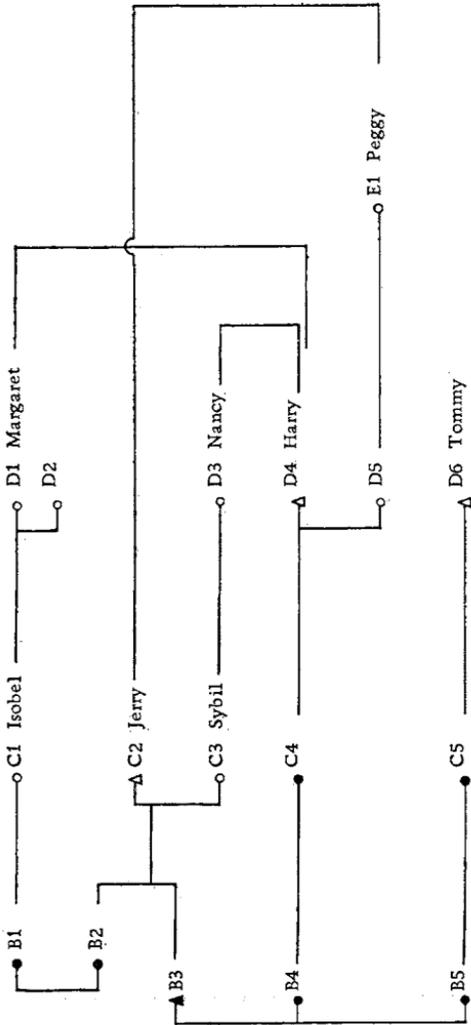


Figure 13 Case 1: Dispute over a woman involving two men with rights to her

of those with rights to her. Tommy was the second oldest, and Sybil bestowed her daughter on him presumably because her 'sister' had already promised Margaret to Harry. Both men were unmarried.

Tommy went to Darwin before Nancy was old enough to marry and stayed there a long time. Harry married Margaret and when Tommy still did not return took Nancy as his second wife. Neither her mother nor MB objected.

They were tired of waiting for Tommy and glad to have a son-in-law regularly making gifts. People gossiping about the marriage at the time remarked that even though Nancy had not been bestowed on Harry he had a right to her. He was, they said, *ammari* to her mother's patrilineal group.

Tommy returned several years later. He was angry and threatened to cut off all social relationships with Nancy's bestowers. Later he apologized, and subsequently Isobel promised him Margaret's younger sister (D2).

Harry promised his ZD, Peggy (E1), to Nancy's MB, Jerry (C2). Peggy became Jerry's wife in 1960.

Case 2: Dispute over a woman involving two men, one with and the other without a right to her (Mary, 25; Shorty, 35; Clarry, 33) (Figure 14).

Sebastian (C3) was the oldest of men with rights to Judy

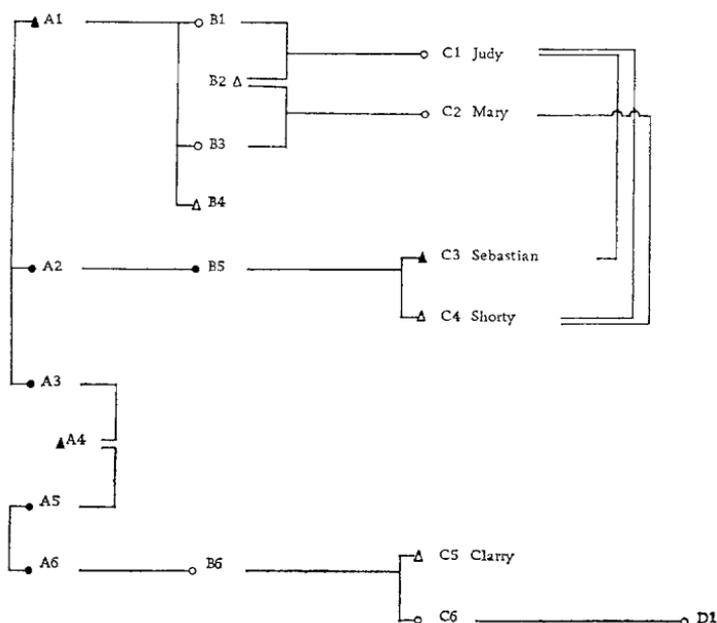


Figure 14 Case 2: Dispute over a woman involving two men, one with and the other without a right to her

(C1) and Mary (C2), Shorty (C4) the second oldest. Both women were their MMBDDs. (They were also their MBDs, as B2 and B5 were brother and sister. B2 had married two of his MBDs, although he did not have rights to them.)

B1 gave Judy to Sebastian, and later B3 gave Mary, a younger 'sister' of Judy, to Shorty. Sebastian died just after marrying Judy, and at the end of the mourning period she married Shorty.

Mary reached marriageable age soon after. Instead of joining Judy as the second wife of Shorty, she began living with Clarry (C5), with whom she had been having an affair. Clarry had no right to her, but she was his close 'MMBDD' (his MMZ and Mary's MFZ were married to the same man).

One night Shorty and two relatives went to Clarry's camp and took Mary. Although Clarry offered no resistance and allowed her to stay with Shorty, his desire for revenge became the main factor in an extended dispute that had not been resolved by the end of 1960. It concerned one of Clarry's ZDs (D1), whom he and his sister had promised to Mary's MB (B4). Clarry revoked the bestowal after he lost Mary.

Shorty had a right to Mary but in Clarry's view was unreasonable in pressing it. First, after Mary had been promised to Shorty, Shorty had acquired a wife through the death of his older brother; Clarry was unmarried and had not been promised a wife. Although Clarry had no right to Mary, he was a close classificatory younger brother of Shorty (their respective MMZs had been married to the same man) and in the circumstances expected Shorty to act generously. Second, Clarry and his sister had previously promised her daughter to Mary's MB. (He had no right to her, but neither did anyone else.) Clarry expected him to give a niece in return.

Case 3: Dispute over a woman involving three men, one with a right and two without rights to her (Barbara, 17; Johnny, 27; Charlie, 50; Roland, 50) (Figure 15).

Johnny (B2) was the oldest of several men with rights to Barbara (D4), his FZDDD (A1 was a member of his own patrilineal group). He was about ten years her senior and thus still a boy when she had reached the age for bestowal. Barbara had spent most of her childhood in Darwin

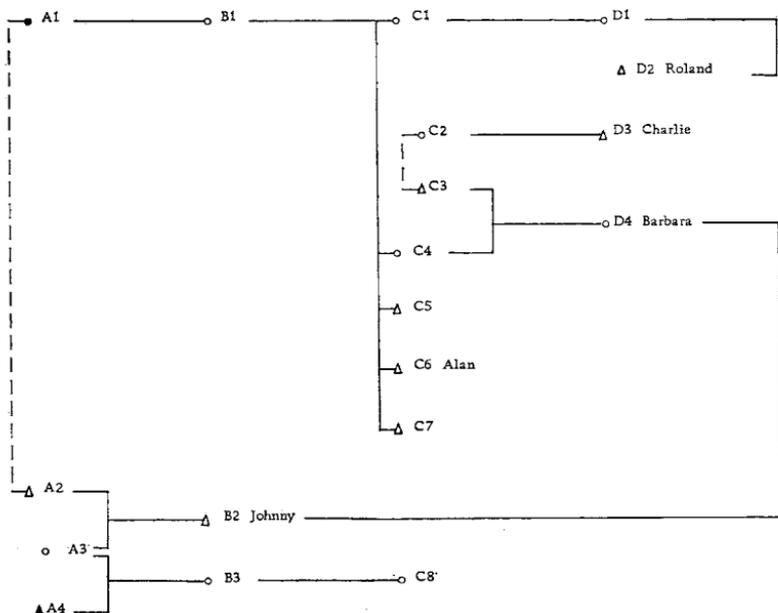


Figure 15 *Case 3: Dispute over a woman involving three men, one with a right and two without rights to her*

with her parents and returned with her father to Maningrida in 1960. Her mother, who had earlier deserted her father and married another man, stayed in Darwin.

After Barbara's arrival Charlie (D3) demanded that her father's promise of her to him, made some years before, be honoured. Barbara was a close 'MBD' of Charlie (her father and Charlie's mother belonged to the same patrilineal group). He did not have a right to her and was already married.

I do not know why Barbara's father promised her to Charlie. Fathers sometimes promised their daughters to men who did not have rights to them and then tried to persuade the bestowers, especially the mother, to agree to the arrangement. They did so out of friendship (as when, for example, a man promised his daughter to his ZS) or for political and economic advantage.

A second man, Roland (D2), now said that Barbara's mother (C4) had promised her to him. He was not closely related to Barbara (she was a classificatory MBD) but had

married her older close classificatory sister (D1) and for some time in Darwin provided food and lodging for Barbara's mother (his WMZ). It was during this period that the bestowal occurred.

Barbara's three MBs (C5, C6, C7) ignored Charlie's and Roland's claims. About a year earlier Johnny's half-sister (B3) had promised her daughter to Alan (C6), one of Barbara's MBs and an age mate of Johnny. Alan wished to give Barbara to Johnny in return. Her mother was still in Darwin, and her father remained non-committal throughout the dispute.

Johnny, still a bachelor, was in a stronger position than either Charlie or Roland. Although these two were about fifty years of age and thus considerably older than Johnny, they were married and did not have rights to the girl. Johnny was the oldest of those who did, and his half-sister had promised her daughter to Barbara's MB. To offset his disadvantage Charlie tried to persuade his sister to give her daughter to another of Barbara's MBs, but she had already bestowed her upon another man and refused to revoke her promise. Roland did not have an available ZD.

Barbara's mother sent word from Darwin confirming that she wished her daughter to marry Roland, but her brothers took no notice and said the bestowal should never have been made. Barbara, who probably favoured the youngest of the three contenders, moved into Johnny's camp one day and became his acknowledged wife. Neither Charlie nor Roland challenged the union, but Roland declared he had been cheated and later made a determined bid to acquire another daughter of C1. He fought with several of her close relatives (see Chapter 6).

Marriages between a man and a woman to whom not he but at least one other at the time had a right

Four of the six marriages in this class were unopposed. In two, the wives were previously widows, and men with rights to them were either married or had been promised a wife. In the third, the only man with a right already had two wives. In the fourth, the wife was related to several men as

FZDDD, but because of a marriage irregularity in a previous generation they addressed her as 'mother'. Quarrels occurred over the other two, but not between the husband and a man with a right.

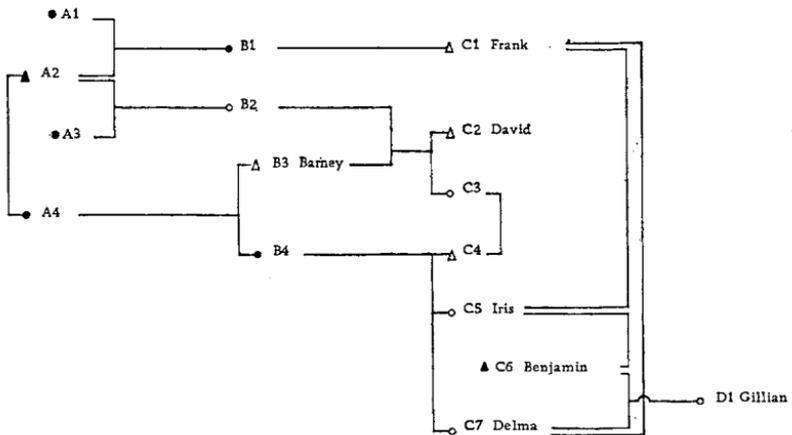


Figure 16 *Case 4: Dispute over a woman involving two men without rights to her*

Case 4: Dispute over a woman involving two men without rights to her (Delma, 32; Frank, 36; David, 26) (Figure 16).

Benjamin's marriages to the two sisters Iris and Delma (C5, C7) were irregular. The only persons with rights to them were his sons by a previous marriage. These treated the two women as 'mothers' and did not press claims to them after their father's death. The older sister, Iris, was the wife in the fourth union just discussed.

Barney (B3), the MB of Iris and Delma, sanctioned their marriages to Frank (C1), previously a bachelor, who had no right to them, though they were his close 'MMBDD' (actual MFZDD).

Not long after the marriages, David (C2) complained that Delma should have been given to him. He was a bachelor, about ten years younger than Frank and six years younger than Delma. His father was Barney, Delma's MB, and Delma was both his MFZDD and FZD. He had no right to her but felt he was as entitled as Frank, especially as Frank had

acquired both sisters. Also, his own sister (C3) was married to Delma's brother (C4).

Frank asked Barney how he regarded David's complaint. Barney replied: 'You are the older "brother". She is yours. When the time comes, your "daughter" will give my son a wife.' He was referring to Gillian (D1), the daughter of Delma and her previous husband. Gillian, aged about twelve, was *djimmari* to David's patrilineal group; her daughter would be his FZDDD, and he would have a right to her. Barney's suggestion that she be given to David appeased him, and he made no further complaint.

Case 5: Dispute over a woman involving her father and a man without a right to her (Mamie, 23; Jackie, 34) (Figure 17).

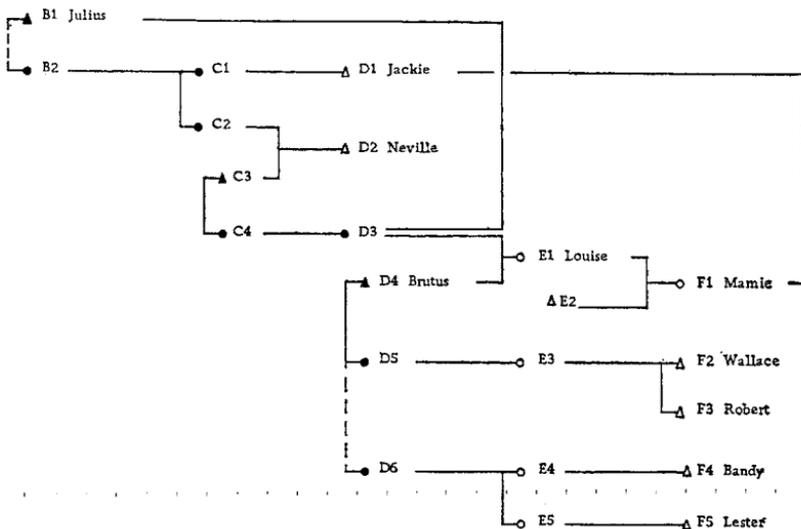


Figure 17 Case 5: Dispute over a woman involving her father and a man without a right to her

Mamie (F1) was the FZDDD of Neville (D2), aged about sixty and the oldest of those with rights to her. Many years before he had murdered his brother and eloped with the wife, whom an avenger subsequently killed. Neville was crippled from an old spear wound and had never married.

When Louise (E1) offered Mamie to Neville, he declined, saying he was too old to assume the responsibility of a wife and make adequate gifts to a mother-in-law. He suggested to Louise that she give the girl to Jackie (D1). Although of a different land-owning unit, Jackie was Neville's MZS and closest 'brother'.

Strictly speaking, Jackie had no right to Mamie. Louise's father Brutus (D4) died soon after Louise was born, and her mother (D3) married Julius (B1). Brutus was a Gunadba, Julius a Nagara. Louise was reared in her step-father's community, and people associated her with it rather than with her father's. She regarded herself as a member of her step-father's patrilineal group.

Jackie's MM belonged to this group. As he had neither a MMBDD nor a FZDDD, he wished to regard Louise as a *de facto* member and thus as a woman to whose daughter he had a right. Considered as the DD of Julius instead of Brutus, Mamie was his MMBDD.

Several men (F2 to F5) were *ammari* to Brutus's patrilineal group, and Mamie was their MMBDD. Probably because of the ambiguity of her affiliation, Louise did not promise Mamie to anyone after Neville refused. It should be noted that this man had a right to the girl irrespective of which group her mother was a member (in one case she was his FZDDD, in the other both FZDDD and MMBDD). Wallace had a right to her only in so far as her mother belonged to Brutus's group, Jackie only in so far as her mother belonged to Julius's. Louise's aim in not bestowing her daughter might have been to postpone or avoid bringing the conflicting interests to a head. Men who considered themselves cheated of a bestowal sometimes attacked the bestowers.

Although Jackie had acquired a wife in the meantime, he asked for Mamie when she became old enough to marry. The mother refused, and the father told him that until his wife decided who Mamie's husband was to be, the girl would stay in his household. Wallace and his brothers were either in Darwin or took no part in the argument.

Jackie persisted in his attempts and at last fought her father, who split his head open. To compensate for the injury, the father said that Jackie could marry Mamie. Louise agreed,

and Jackie took the girl as his second wife. Wallace had not returned from Darwin by the end of 1960, and none of his brothers made trouble.

Marriages between a man and a woman to whom neither he nor anyone else at the time had a right

Fifteen of the twenty-one marriages in this class occurred peacefully. Eleven followed bestowals, three took place when men married an elder actual or classificatory brother's widow, and one when a man whose wife deserted him for another said he was too old to worry about it. Disputes arose in connection with the other six.

Case 6: Dispute over a woman involving three men without rights to her (Alison, 32; Malcolm, 55; Jackie, 34; Bob, 30) (Figure 18).

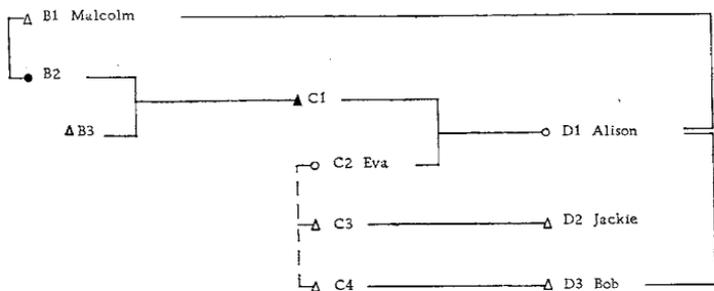


Figure 18 *Case 6: Dispute over a woman involving three men without rights to her*

Eva (C2) had promised her daughter Alison to a man with a right to her who died before the girl reached puberty. The only other person with a right was already married, and, in addition, Eva had promised him Alison's younger sister. He raised no objection when Eva bestowed Alison on Malcolm (B1) and died not long afterwards.

Alison was Malcolm's ZSD, and his sister (B2) had been the wife of Alison's 'elder brother' (FF). Some time after Alison married Malcolm, a man some twenty-five years her senior, she eloped with her contemporary 'MBS' Jackie (her mother and his father belonged to the same patrilineal group). For a time they lived with the Gunavidji. When they re-

turned to the Blyth River, Malcolm took up his spears and swore at them ('You pair of adulterers, you are wet from sexual intercourse'). Eva quickly escorted her daughter to where she and the father were living and stood ready to protect her. Malcolm approached, brandishing his spears and still swearing, but he did not attack anyone and eventually went away.

Afterwards Jackie said: 'It was her idea to elope, not mine. If I had really wanted her, I would have taken her for good.' He discontinued the relationship.

Eva told Alison to return to Malcolm, but she would not do so and proceeded to have several other affairs. Her mother rebuked her many times for her immorality. At length she began to live openly with one of her lovers, a man named Bob (D3). Eva opposed the union, but Malcolm, who had another wife, merely told Bob that he expected compensation. He informed Eva that he would rather not have a woman who was so interested in other men.

Alison was a FZD of Bob, who was unmarried and had neither MMBDD nor FZDDD. People came to accept them as man and wife, and from time to time Bob gave presents to Malcolm.

Case 7: Dispute over a woman involving her bestower and a man who had no right to her (Joyce, 21; Jerry, 55; Alfred, 65) (Figure 19).

Beth's mother (B3) promised her daughter to Jerry (C1),

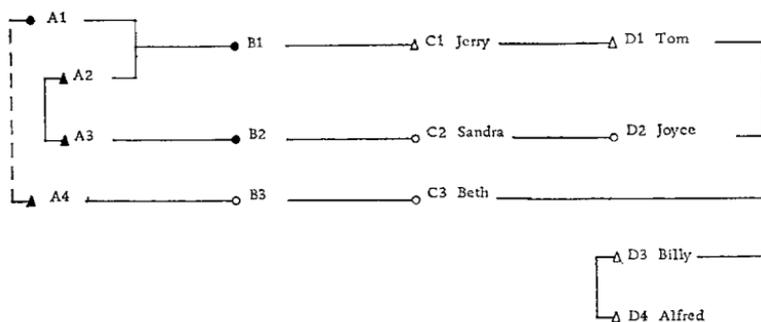


Figure 19 *Case 7: Dispute over a woman involving her bestower and a man who had no right to her*

who had a right to her (A1 and A4 belonged to the same patrilineal group). Not long after becoming Jerry's wife, Beth eloped with a much younger man Billy (D3), to whom she was related as a distant classificatory mother. Beth and Billy were Gunadba, Jerry Anbara.

Jerry pursued the elopers but could not find them. Several months later he met Billy's older brother Alfred (D4) at a *gunabibi* ceremony. Jerry's close classificatory sister Sandra (C2) had bestowed her daughter Joyce on this man, but neither he nor anyone else had a right to her. Jerry made a show of attacking him but then said: 'Your brother has wronged me. But I shall not hurt you, for you are an old man.' He hinted that if Beth remained with Billy, Alfred would not get Joyce.

Alfred was indignant. He said that he had been giving presents to Joyce's mother for years. Jerry replied: 'That's all very well, but what about me? Your brother has stolen my wife. If he does not return her, I shall see that you do not marry my niece.' Sandra did not have a true brother, and Jerry was her closest relative of this kind.

Maningrida was established about a year later. There Jerry and men of his community tried to take Beth by force. Billy, with the aid of Gunadba relatives, successfully resisted the attempt, and Beth stayed with him.

In 1958 Joyce began living with Tom (D1), the son of her 'MB' Jerry. Alfred, who was already married, did not oppose the match. He lived in the bush and rarely visited the settlement.

Joyce had been having sexual relations with Tom before living openly with him. She did not wish to marry Alfred, a much older man, and knew that her 'MB' was against the arrangement. Although Sandra had not openly revoked her promise to Alfred, she did not raise any objection when Joyce married Tom. To do so would have meant quarrelling with her 'brother'; in addition, she had acquired a young son-in-law regularly employed on the settlement.

Case 8: Dispute over a woman involving three men without rights to her (Nora, 42; Cassius, deceased; Douglas, 60; Cecil, 46) (Figure 20).

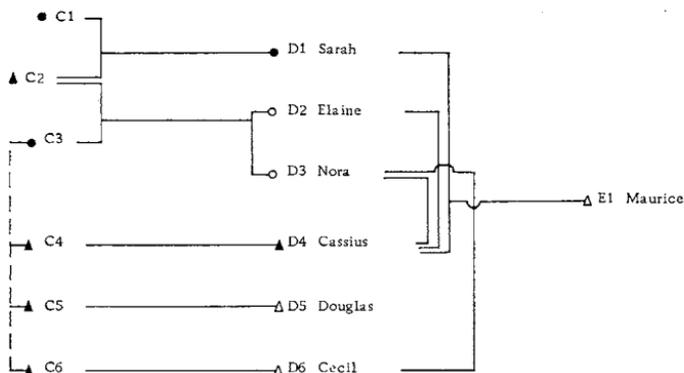


Figure 20 *Case 8: Dispute over a woman involving three men without rights to her*

The mothers of Sarah (D1) and Elaine (D2) gave their daughters to Cassius (D4). Sarah and Elaine were his classificatory FZDs.

Elaine's mother promised her second daughter Nora (D3) to Douglas (D5), a classificatory younger brother of Cassius. The two men belonged to different patrilineal groups of the same land-owning unit. By this time Sarah had died, and Cassius, who had one wife remaining, said Nora should be given to him. He had an aggressive personality and at last fought Douglas, who injured him badly. Afterwards Douglas said: 'I have given you a beating. Take the woman and let us live in peace.' Cassius went ahead and married her.

Some time later Nora eloped with Cecil (D6), a younger classificatory brother of Cassius and of the same land-owning unit. Cassius and his son Maurice pursued the elopers, who had joined the Nagara. They seized Nora and took her back to the Blyth River. Cecil did not try to stop them but later fought Cassius with spears and clubs. Neither injured the other seriously, but afterwards Nora said she wanted to be Cecil's wife and moved into his camp. Maurice announced that if his two 'fathers' continued to fight, he would kill Nora.

Cassius and Cecil did not clash again, but Cassius assaulted his wife Elaine because her sister had deserted him. One of Elaine's close classificatory brothers (MZS) intervened and

told Cassius he would kill him if he did that again.

Cecil was unmarried when he eloped with Nora and had no MMBDD or FZDDD of marriageable age. Nora remained his wife.

Case 9: Dispute over a woman involving her bestower and two men without rights to her (Daphne, 28; Cecil, 46; Kelvin, 60; Willie, 30) (Figure 21).

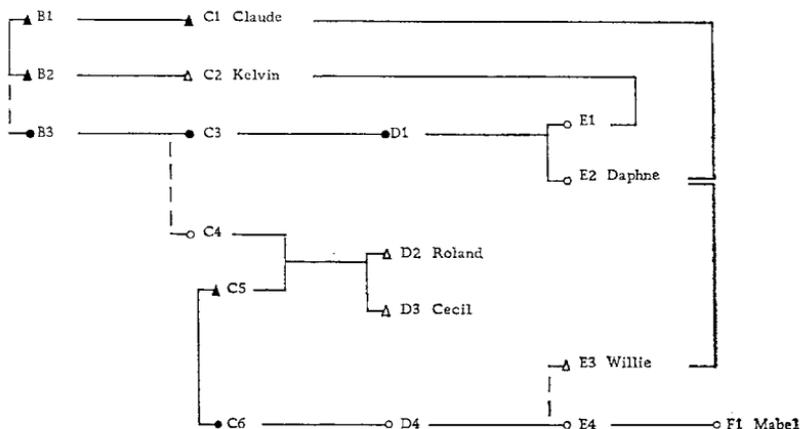


Figure 21 Case 9: Dispute over a woman involving her bestower and two men without rights to her

Daphne (E2) was married first to an old man named Claude (C1), who died in 1958. By that time her mother and MB were already dead, and the only remaining member of their patrilineal group was a decrepit half-sister. She played no apparent part in Daphne's re-marriage. The acknowledged bestowers were two brothers, Roland (D2) and Cecil (D3), whose mother belonged to the same land-owning unit as Daphne's MM. They were the oldest classificatory MBs of Daphne who belonged to the ZS group of her mother's unit. Roland, the older of the two, was in Darwin when Claude died and did not return to Maningrida until after Daphne re-married.

Three days after Claude's death his close classificatory brother Kelvin (C2) tried to extract a guarantee from Cecil that Daphne would be given to him. Cecil said that it was too

soon after the death to discuss the matter. A week later Kelvin spoke again, and this time a fight broke out. Settlement officers intervened as people prepared to throw spears.

Kelvin, a man of about sixty, was married to Daphne's older sister (E1) but had no right to her or Daphne, both classificatory FZDDD's. Several times over the next few months he claimed the widow publicly, but the declamations evoked no response. Early in 1959, five months after the death, Daphne married Willie (E3).

Daphne was Willie's classificatory MMBDD, but he had no right to her. He had been having sexual relations with her for about a year and told me that he was the father of a child born to Daphne just after he married her.

Not long before the marriage took place, Willie's close classificatory sister (MMZDD) had promised her small daughter Mabel (F1) to Cecil. He had a right to her (she was his FZDDD), but so had two older men. Although Willie did not share rights of disposal over Mabel, her mother and MBs agreed, for complicated reasons I shall not describe here, to bestow her in Willie's interest. People said that Mabel had been given to Cecil because he had given Daphne to Willie.

When Daphne married Willie, Kelvin warned her publicly that she would die from sorcery if she persisted in the relationship. Daphne replied that she was not afraid and invited him to come up and kill her immediately if that was his wish, but if he did, someone else would kill him. She added that she had no intention of marrying him: he was too old and, in any case, was married to her sister. He should be satisfied with that. Kelvin made further threats over the next few months but eventually became reconciled.

Although Kelvin did not have a right to Daphne, no one else did, and his claim to her on the ground that she was his classificatory brother's widow was reasonable. Willie likewise did not have a right, but he possessed several advantages. First, he had managed to arrange the bestowal of his classificatory ZD on the bestower of Daphne, whereas Kelvin had no niece available. Second, he was a young man in steady employment at the settlement, whereas Kelvin received only a pensioner's rations. Third, he was a bachelor, and, fourth,

Daphne wished to marry him. Probably Kelvin raised the question of the widow's re-marriage so soon after the death because he was already aware of Willie's interest in her and of her bestower's intentions. The impropriety of his action weakened his claim even further.

Case 10: Dispute over a woman involving her bestowers and a man with no right to her (Mary, 20; Toby, 23).

Mary was about seventeen years old when she and Toby began to have a sexual relationship. Toby, to whom she was related as distant classificatory MMBDD, had no right to her, but neither had anyone else. Some time later she moved into Toby's camp. Her bestowers opposed the union until Toby promised one of his ZDs to Mary's MB.

Case 11: Dispute over a woman involving two men without rights to her (Marion, 55; Ivan, 55; Jerry, 55) (Figure 22).

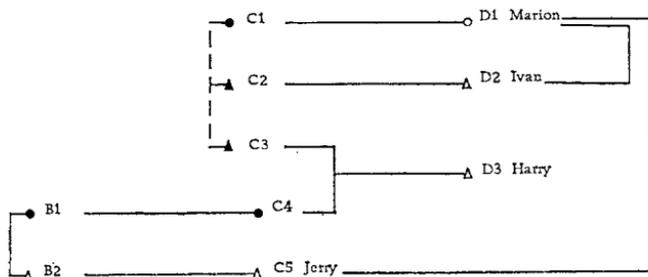


Figure 22 *Case 11: Dispute over a woman involving two men without rights to her*

Marion's first husband Ivan (D2) was a bad-tempered man who often beat her. She complained of his cruelty and after several years of marriage eloped with Jerry, a bachelor contemporary of her husband. He addressed her as 'ZD' but was not a close relative.

Ivan pursued the elopers, who had joined the Gunadba, and, when he found them, speared Marion through the thigh. She refused when he insisted that she return and stayed with Jerry among the Gunadba (his mother's people).

Ivan went back to the Anbara and said to several members of his patrilineal group: 'We brothers should bring that woman back.' He pointed out that she had done wrong not only by deserting him but by living with a 'MB'. Soon afterwards he set out with a party of warriors and, when they found the couple, attacked Jerry. The two fought with spears and gradually moved closer together. Instead of taking sides, Gunadba men and members of Ivan's party (some closely related to his opponent) urged the antagonists to stand further apart. When it became evident that the struggle was in deadly earnest, an Anbara named Harry (D3) ran to where Marion was lying weeping and plunged a spear into her buttock. Ivan and Jerry immediately stopped fighting.

Harry was a member of Ivan's patrilineal group and also a potential ZDH of Jerry (who was his MMBS). He joined the warriors out of obligation to his 'brother' but knew that supporting this man meant opposing an individual from whom he hoped to receive a wife. Therefore when the fight became serious he resolved his conflicting interests by attacking the woman and bringing the combat to an end. Some years later he married Jerry's niece.

Relatives of Marion looked after her until the wound healed. She still refused to return to Ivan and insisted on staying with Jerry whatever the consequences. When she began living with him again, Harry persuaded all concerned to come together for a discussion. At the meeting, which took place among the Anbara, Jerry asserted that Ivan's continual mistreatment of Marion was sufficient ground for her desertion. Ivan replied that he was no longer interested in the woman and that Jerry could keep her.

CONFLICT

The cases indicate that, although disputes over the acquisition of wives occurred in a context of scarce resources, the precipitating causes differed widely. A man who was promised a woman to whom he had a right resented losing her to an older man who also had a right (Case 1). An unmarried man who had no right to a woman felt injured when she was taken from him by a married man who had (Case 2). In

several instances men became angry when women to whom they had no rights were promised to, or acquired by, others who also did not have rights. The aggrieved individual challenged the arrangement on grounds such as that the woman was the widow of his elder brother (Case 9), her brother was married to his sister (Case 4), or she was a sister of his deceased wife (Case 8). Men protested when promises of wives were not fulfilled (Cases 3, 7) and attacked, or attempted to recover, spouses who deserted (Cases 8, 11). Bestowers or someone acting for them attempted to prevent marriages they had not sanctioned (Cases 5, 6, 10).

Not all women accepted the passive role imposed on them by the method of bestowal (Cases 2, 6, 8, 9, 11). Occasionally disputes arose because a woman refused to marry a man to whom she had been promised, especially if he was many years her senior, or when she had deserted her husband for someone else. Most women accepted plural marriage, but some objected to the husband taking an extra wife or resisted marrying a man who already had a wife. Husbands remarked that a second wife brings trouble and, as mentioned earlier, often displayed their generosity by waiving rights or not pressing other claims. But there were exceptions (Cases 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9).

As well as variation in the factors initiating or contributing to disputes there were differences in the relationships between antagonists. Quarrels occurred between the bestowers of a woman and the man seeking to marry her (Cases 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10), between two men seeking to marry the same woman (Cases 2, 8, 11), between a woman and her bestowers (Case 6), and between a man and the woman he sought to acquire or retain as his wife (Cases 6, 9, 11).

Antagonists regularly appealed to different rules or norms, or their behaviour and the comments of others indicated that each believed himself to have justice on his side (cf. Meggitt 1962: 178-9). A bachelor with no right to a woman felt that a man with a right acted selfishly when he took her as his second wife (Case 2). A MB, after revoking the promise of his niece to a man without a right, argued that his sister should never have made the bestowal and that the girl must go to a man with a right who was now old enough to be

her husband (Case 3). Another individual influenced his close classificatory sister against a contracted union between her daughter and the brother of a man who had stolen his wife (Case 7). In each case the recipient of the bestowal protested that he had been making gifts for some time and demanded that the promise be honoured. A man felt justified in trying to regain his wife who had deserted him for another, but she accused him of cruelty (Case 11). The usual defence of the wife-stealer was to represent himself as a victim of the woman's desire (Case 6).

Men often withdrew their grievances when offered some form of compensation. Individuals ceased to oppose marriages when promised someone else (cf. Cases 1, 4), and a MB sanctioned a union when the husband offered him a niece in return (Case 10). A man whose wife deserted him demanded compensation in goods from the new husband (Case 6). Sometimes a person dropped his opposition after injuring his opponent or a close relative (Cases 5, 7, 8), or he withdrew from the dispute when resistance was too strong or his own case too weak to arouse much sympathy (Cases 3, 9, 11). The quarrel that began after Shorty dispossessed Clarry (Case 2) was not settled only because Clarry stubbornly refused to accept compensation. I shall discuss the resolution of disputes further in Chapter 6.

5

Disputes over Property, Adultery, Insult, and Injury

PROPERTY

Disputes over property were rare and usually trivial. Yet it is important in the analysis of conflict to know why.

The word translated by natives as 'good' was in one of its senses synonymous with 'generous'. It was never used to qualify sexual or religious conduct. Expressions such as 'he has a soft heart' or simply 'he is soft' also denoted a generous nature. A selfish person was described as 'worthless', 'deaf' (meaning that he ignored requests), or 'one whose mouth is hard and dry' (meaning that he never offered to share).

Although an individual was expected to give willingly, he distributed goods within formal or informal systems of reciprocity and normally did not regard the obligation as a hardship. Gaining at the expense of others was not approved, but making gifts provided insurance against times of need and was a necessary condition of obtaining a wife by bestowal.

The region was rich in natural products, and, as stated earlier, land-owning units freely exploited the resources of one another's estates. People offered hospitality as a matter of course and never quarrelled over land. Often an individual, with moderate industry, skill, and luck, could produce more than he and his family needed. As most foodstuffs could not be kept for longer than a few days, he readily distributed the surplus among others.

In the dry season of 1960 I spent a month at the Blyth River. For a few hours each day about six fishermen used

spears from canoes or in the shallows and usually produced enough fish for the whole camp of about fifty people. Normally the catch was distributed from person to person, but on one occasion, after an especially successful morning, the fishermen laid the haul out on the beach, and people helped themselves at leisure. Different men fished each day, but there was no formal organization. Those who were not working spent the time sleeping, chatting, or participating in ritual (cf. McCarthy and McArthur 1960).

Individuals did not always act generously when commodities were scarce, and settlement workers sometimes remarked privately to me that their relatives continually pestered them for food and tobacco. The same men, when unemployed, complained of the selfishness of those they had previously supported. Occasionally an individual falsely stated that he did not have something in order to avoid sharing, though he never refused a request for an article known to be in his possession.

Once, when the settlement's tobacco supply was failing, numerous men wished to buy from me. At first I said I had none but relented when the shortage became acute. To distribute the few tins as widely as possible, I called up representatives from various parts of the village and divided the tobacco among them. Afterwards one of the men who had come earlier accused me of deception. He said I should have secretly sold everything to him.

The term *golg* meant trade goods, and *angolg balawa*, which natives translated as 'rich man', indicated a successful trader (literally, 'he-trade-goods much'). *Magolg aradja* (literally, 'for-trade-goods he-speared-him') was a phrase sometimes used to explain death by sorcery. The people believed that the possession of dried human blood brought success in trading, and that, to obtain it, a sorcerer selected a victim, drained blood from his heart, and left him, apparently in good health, only to die a few days later. It followed that, if an individual drew attention to the success of his trading by retaining large quantities, he might be suspected as the sorcerer responsible for some previous death.

Prudent men accordingly passed on most of the objects they handled.¹

Tension developed in exchange relationships when one partner failed to meet his obligations. Although people said that often disputes between trading associates arose in the past, they could not remember the details. I infer that the squabbles were not serious.

The word *amngumuda* meant thief. Folk sometimes complained that some article had been stolen when it had merely been borrowed without the owner's permission. The outbursts were short-lived and inconsequential. I did not record any real theft.

ADULTERY

Sexual relations were private acts, and outside marriage they were furtive as well. For these reasons it is impossible to make reliable statements about the frequency of adultery. The most that can be said is that from time to time supposed instances were topics of gossip or grounds for disputes and that there was often reason for believing the suppositions might be true.

Children knew the main facts of sex from an early age and probably began experimenting as they approached puberty. A man named Frank recounted the following experience:

One night I saw Edgar and Wallace take Dora and Charlotte into the bush. There was a bright moon shining. I followed and watched them playing. The boys used saliva to lubricate the girls' vaginas. They couldn't get the penis in. Edgar called Dora 'mother', and Wallace called Charlotte 'ZD', but we were too young to care much about the wrong kinship categories. We just copulated with anyone. But I thought to myself, 'The

¹ Cf. Róheim (1933: 208): 'It is well known that there is no society which carries altruism so far as that of the Australian native. He will literally give the last bit . . . of meat to his neighbour. . . . But this does not prove that he really wants to do so. The mere fact that there are expressions in the language for selfishness and for liberality shows that there is such a thing as greed amongst them, but social pressure is very strong on this point. . . .'

mothers of those girls will be very angry when they find out what they've been up to.'

The account suggests that adolescents frequently engaged in unregulated sexual play, although recognizing it as improper, and that their elders were likely to chastise them if they found out. When Frank was about eight years old his mother told him not to play with girls but with boys of his own age. His father told him to follow the 'old straight way' in sex and religion.

The same man told how he forcibly rejected the advances of a slightly older girl:

When I was about thirteen, a girl grabbed my arm and tried to force me to copulate. I picked up a stick and hit her. She cried and ran back to the camp. My father asked me what was the trouble, and I told him. Later my friend Wallace said, 'Why did you hit her? You should have copulated with her. It's a very sweet sensation'. I replied, 'I'm too young for that sort of thing. When I'm bigger, all right.'

On another occasion Frank went hunting with a distant classificatory father:

My 'father' Lex threw spears at several wallabies but missed. Then he called out to Cecily, the wife of his 'brother', who joined us in eating some fish we'd found in a trap nearby. When we'd finished, Lex told me he was going to copulate with Cecily and would ask her about me. I sneaked up to watch them. When Lex asked, she replied, 'Goodness no, he's too young. If I let him try, I'd probably swallow him up.' I ran away to where my mother was gathering lily bulbs. Later I told my friends, and we had a big laugh.

The three incidents demonstrate conflicting pressures that formed the mature approach to adultery. On the one hand, parents told a lad that sexual relations outside marriage were improper; and, on the other, slightly older children and distant senior relatives encouraged him to have them and if he refused even tried to make him feel naïve. Consequently, in later years he both accepted the moral view that

adultery was wrong and also followed the practice of forming adulterous relationships.

In every case of alleged adultery recorded the man was a bachelor. This does not mean that married men never offended, but it is consistent with the view that young single men were the main culprits. I assume that the desire among bachelors to avoid or terminate a period of sexual deprivation was stronger than the wish among husbands for sexual variety (partly satisfied by polygyny). A married man also had to contend with a watchful and potentially jealous wife.

Considerations of kinship and moiety affiliations to some extent regulated extra-marital intercourse among adults, married or not. Men tended to have liaisons with women they addressed as *mangga* (MMBDD, etc.) or *aragudja* (FZD, etc.). Affairs with other females of the opposite moiety seemed less common, though they had an added piquancy. Initiated men revealing representations to novices in the *maraian* ceremony told the lads that these supernatural beings would punish them for sexual misconduct, particularly with women of the same moiety.

Reactions to infidelity differed. The aggrieved husband or wife might revile or attack the lover, and the husband might also abuse or beat his erring wife. A wife, too, might berate an unfaithful husband, though, as she was at a physical and social disadvantage, she seldom hit him. The following case indicates the reaction she could expect.

At Darwin in 1960 a Daly River native, Moses, was found guilty of a criminal offence, but the court, instead of giving him a gaol sentence, sent him for six months to Maningrida. Some months after his arrival his wife attacked one of the local girls, whom she thought was having an affair with Moses. The girl's father, Jerry, came to his daughter's aid but was quickly put out of action when Moses's wife hit him on the head with a piece of angle iron. For this she paid dearly. Within five minutes seven close male relatives of Jerry had struck her, and two hours later a medical service plane took her to Darwin suffering from injuries and shock.

Jerry, in his late fifties, was reputed to have been a great fighter and had killed several men. His relatives were appalled by the woman's attacking him, and one of them said to me,

accounting for their violence, 'This is the first time in his life that old man has been hit by a woman.'

I have already explained how the ethic of generosity modified behaviour in the distribution of wives and natural resources. It was also a factor in determining attitudes to adultery. The text below, given to me by a native as part of a general exposition of bestowal and marriage, describes a struggle between jealousy and magnanimity. The actors and events were imaginary and the account unsolicited.

The actors: A married man (EB); his wife (W); his younger unmarried brother (YB).

Dialogue 1 The wife and her husband's younger brother, with whom she is having an affair.

W: Your brother is very jealous of you. Soon you will be fighting.

YB: Yes, I've been watching him.

W: There's going to be trouble for you.

YB: I agree. I think I'll talk it over with him.

Dialogue 2 The husband and wife.

EB: You two are always laughing together.

W: You're very jealous, aren't you?

EB: Look, just say the word and I'll let him have you. You're both causing me a lot of trouble.

Dialogue 3 The husband and his younger brother.

EB: You know this woman wasn't given to you.

YB: I thought you were a reasonable man.

EB: If you'd like to spear me, say so.

YB: You know I wouldn't do that. She said she wanted me. It was not my wish to hurt you.

EB: You two have deceived me. But I am your elder brother, and I must not spear you. It would cause me too much grief.

Dialogue 4 The husband and wife.

EB: I can no longer sleep at night.

W: I thought you were a tolerant man and would sleep while I was away with him.

Dialogue 5 The husband, who has overcome his jealousy, to the wife and younger brother.

EB (to W): I'm all right now. Sleep with him today.

EB (later, to YB): You and I must not quarrel. Whenever I go away, it is you who should sleep with her. She is ours, given to us both by her mother. Her father will be angry if we fight over her.

The text describes a man torn between a desire to insist on his exclusive sexual right and a wish to be unselfish. Each attitude accorded was a different part of the same value system in which there was both disapproval of adultery and approval of generosity. In this instance the conflict was resolved in a display of generosity, but a study of actual cases revealed that the resolution might be made in either way. A further point of interest is that, although the lover charged his elder brother with behaviour that fell short of the ideal, he felt guilty about his own conduct and blamed the woman. He seemed to feel more concern over his brother's distress than contrition at a breach of the moral code.

Some individuals said they were not in favour of adultery with the wife of a true brother or MMB and addressed such women as 'mother' or 'ZD' to demonstrate an absence of sexual interest. At the same time they admitted that there was no objection if the husband consented. They admired a close relative who was not jealous but thought it wrong to upset one who was.

Men expected sexual privileges from those joking relatives whose wives they addressed as 'FZD' or 'MMBDD'. I assume this was part of the formal demonstration of friendly relations, though the following case suggested that it might also increase latent hostility.

Case 12: Dispute over attempted adultery (Figure 23).

One Sunday morning in 1960 seven young women set out from the settlement to gather food at a fresh-water swamp several miles away. Later two bachelors, Clarry (E1) and George (D4), left in the same direction, ostensibly to hunt but actually, as it emerged later, bent upon sexual adventure. On arriving at the swamp, Clarry invited Peggy (C4) to have intercourse, and George asked Teresa (D2). The men became aggressive when they found their offers rejected, and in an ensuing scuffle they tore some of the women's clothing. Other members of the foraging party arrived on the scene, and at

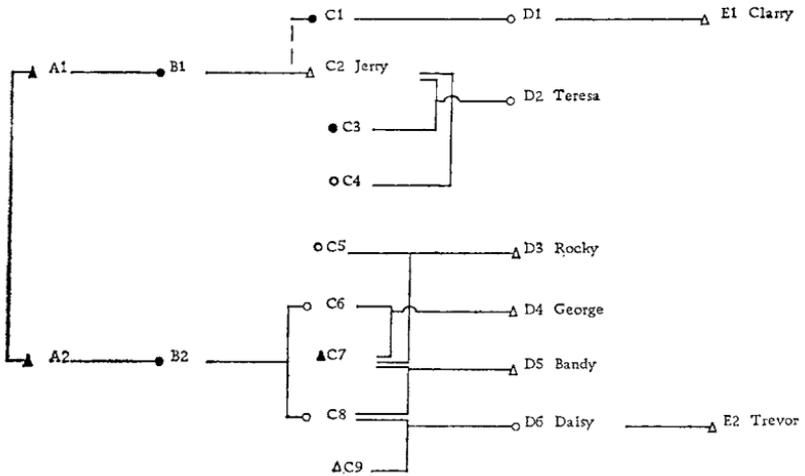


Figure 23 Case 12: *Dispute over attempted adultery*

some point Clarry, frustrated and angry, threw a spear. Although this did not hit anyone (and probably was not meant to), it passed close to Trevor (E2), the infant son of Daisy.

Late in the afternoon of the same day, after all concerned had returned to the settlement, Bandy (D5) threw spears at Clarry and George. His complaint was that their action had endangered his 'ZS', Trevor. George threw in reply, but Clarry quickly left and took no part in subsequent developments. At this point Jerry (C2) ran in to throw at George, ostensibly because a spear had landed in his camp. Rocky (D3) joined George against Bandy and Jerry, but numerous others effectively hampered the antagonists. Nobody was injured, and, by the time settlement officers arrived about ten minutes later, the fight was under control.

The incident had several puzzling features. First, although people regarded the behaviour of the two adventurers as deplorable, no one took them to task. The MBs of both girls were present during the fight at the settlement, but neither played any part. Afterwards they and several others abused George for throwing spears at his 'MB' Jerry, not for his attempted seduction of Teresa. Second, the clash apparently had nothing to do with the attempt at seduction (it started

when Bandy attacked Clarry and George for endangering his nephew), and Jerry joined Bandy when a spear fell in his camp.

Jerry might have been angered by the attempted seductions for two reasons: George had approached his daughter, Clarry his wife. As he had not clashed with Clarry, I suggested to several people that he had really wanted to attack George. Their reply was, 'Perhaps. We don't know.' Considering that it was proper for a man to defend his daughters, the response indicated another motive. Several men admitted that Jerry was probably upset by Clarry's approaching his wife but were reluctant to give this as a reason for his aggressive action. (Again the response was, 'Perhaps. We don't know.')

Jerry, as one of Clarry's joking relatives, had seized him for circumcision and lain beneath him during the operation. The best explanation I can offer is that the attempted seduction of his wife aroused strong feelings of jealousy that he wished to conceal. The accidental landing of the spear in the camp gave him a pretext for releasing his aggression in a roughly appropriate direction.

It is perhaps significant that Clarry withdrew from the fight when Jerry entered. It also seems important that folk were reluctant to agree with my suggestion that Jerry acted on behalf of his daughter. Probably they knew his real motive but preferred not to discuss it because they felt sympathetic to a man who had tried unsuccessfully to cope with his jealousy. In any case they clearly thought that it was his private affair and not a suitable topic for gossip. (In general, I found that people readily discussed most sexual behaviour but were reticent about motives.)

In another dispute a woman accused her husband of adultery. A few days later their small child burnt itself while the father was somewhere else playing cards. When he returned, his wife abused him for being away from home so much and neglecting the infant. A heated argument followed, and eventually the wife hit the husband with a stick. He retired briefly and returned with two older brothers, all of them carrying weapons. Their first spear, though aimed at the wife, fell near her paternal grandmother. The old woman's son immediately

attacked his daughter's assailants and within minutes had the support of several close relatives. From that point the quarrel was about the misdirected spear, and no one mentioned the domestic squabble again.

I observed only seven disputes, none serious, in which adultery was actually alleged. One was between husband and lover, two between husband and unfaithful wife, one between father and erring daughter, one between wife and unfaithful husband, and two between wife and lover. Considering the frequent rumours of liaisons, this small number indicates that many married people either ignored the affairs of their partners or did not discover them.

INSULT

Insult was usually a feature of conflict rather than a cause. But there was one exception: a man might attack his true or classificatory sister if he heard someone swear at her. Unless he inflicted serious injury, no one regarded the reaction as erratic or unreasonable. A father might say to his jealous son-in-law: 'Stop swearing at your wife. Sooner or later her brother will hear you. Then he will spear her because you have speared him through the ear with your words. I ask you not to swear at her in his presence.'

Warner (1937) observed a similar practice in eastern Arnhem Land and gave an explanation based on the assumption that the person most likely to swear at a woman was her husband. The brother's procedure, according to Warner, was a way of 'saving the structure from destruction because of asocial actions' (p. 109). A man had an emotional attachment to his sister as a member of his immediate family and a sense of responsibility towards her as a member of his patrilineal clan. When he heard her husband swear at her, he became angry and wished to avenge the insult. But he wanted neither to precipitate a serious rift between the sister and her husband, nor to start a fight between the two clans that might lead to a general re-exchange of women. To give vent to his anger without endangering the 'whole lateral structure of his clan's kinship with the rest of the tribe' (p. 112), he treated the sister as though she were the culprit. The adoption of

this alternative as a safety-valve indicated great brilliance in social engineering (p. 93).

Warner's hypothesis failed to explain several important facts. First, he stated that a brother threw spears at his sister if he heard her husband or anyone else swear at her (p. 110). Therefore, in order to account for all possibilities, it would be necessary to give special reasons for instances in which the swearer was not the husband; or, to assert that an individual placed less importance on avenging an insult to his sister than on preserving friendly relations between his own and any clan.

Second, Warner did not explain why the behaviour was peculiar to a brother. He made it clear that a father's emotional attachment and sense of responsibility to his daughter were just as strong as those of a brother to his sister, and that both men were equally concerned to maintain good relations with her husband and his clansmen (pp. 110-11). As the alleged crucial factors were common to father and son, the implication was that a father attacked his daughter if he heard someone swear at her. This did not happen (p. 67 n.).

A similar objection can be made to a subsidiary hypothesis. A brother spoke of his sister as 'worthless' or 'rubbish' because, according to Warner, women at marriage were lost to the clans of their husbands (p. 111). Yet a man never referred in this way to his FZ or daughter.

Third, Warner stated in a different context that a brother would attack his sister if he happened to see her copulating with her husband (p. 65). Apparently Warner did not think this raised a difficulty for his view that a man threw spears at his sister to avoid disrupting her relationship with the husband.

Finally, a person's desire to preserve friendly relations between his own clan and another seems rational and respectable. It is therefore odd that Warner's informants did not give it as the explanation. Instead, when questioned on the subject, they replied: 'It is silly, but when I hear those words at my sister I must do something. I throw spears at her' (p. 111); or, 'It is just the same as if I had been hit on the head with a club when I hear that' (p. 66); or again, 'My heart jumps and stops, jumps and stops . . .' (p. 66). Warner said

he made his discovery alone, while seeking the real meaning of customs that appeared inexplicable (p. 109).

I studied the ordinary relationship between brother and sister in an attempt to find a better explanation. No special restraints were placed on the behaviour of a male infant towards his sister. When he reached the age of six or seven, his father told him that he must no longer sleep next to her; bathe, urinate, or defecate in her presence; or utter her name. The following case is of interest.

Sam and Albert were brothers, aged about seven and five. They had an older half-sister Gillian, about twelve, and a baby sister. In 1960 Sam's father told him he must stop sleeping near the two girls. 'You rest on my arm,' he said, 'and leave your sisters to sleep with their mother.' The boy began to urinate and defecate in private, ceased bathing with Gillian, and would not drink from her cup. Once he told his brother to stop kissing the baby sister—a reprimand that amused the adults, for Albert was still at an age of innocence. Nevertheless, the father told both boys that they must never swear in front of their sisters.

A man did not discuss anything connected with his sister's sexual functions, and people never mentioned such matters in his presence. One evening I asked a man to describe events leading to the marriage of one of his classificatory sisters. He became unusually reticent and changed the subject to tell me how, a few weeks earlier, I had unwittingly embarrassed another individual by asking whether his sister had given birth to her child. I recalled that he had mumbled an unintelligible response and that others present immediately began to talk about something else. Apparently my question upset him so much that he was unable to finish his meal.

A youth for a short period after circumcision was not allowed to speak in the presence of his brother-in-law, though the brother-in-law could speak to, or near, him. The older man ended the formal prohibition by stroking the lad's jaws with sweat or by touching his tongue with a burning stick, but the two of them never acted together with complete freedom. No doubt this reserve was part of the general avoidance of things connected with the sister's sexual behaviour. But I cannot explain the specific practice of enforcing a period

of silence on an unmarried man in the presence of his ZH, beyond suggesting that it impressed on him the requirement of constraint. People said simply that the older man would be embarrassed if he heard the lad speak.

The relationship between a man and his sister was not one of total avoidance. At Maningrida individuals married to each other's sisters sometimes built huts side by side. Brothers were not supposed to look at their sisters but spoke to them from a distance with eyes averted. When I showed one native a photograph of patients in the Darwin leprosarium, he quickly looked away and thrust it back at me. Others present explained that a girl in the photograph was his classificatory sister.

When I asked men why they behaved in these special ways, they always answered that their sisters aroused feelings of shame. (They used the term *ngguragadja*, which denoted either shame or fear, or possibly both; cf. Meggitt 1962: 190.) Women did not say this about their brothers, although they co-operated in the prohibitions. They uttered and heard their brothers' names without embarrassment.

Some restrictions were relaxed when the brother was old and the sister very young. A man of about fifty told me that he occasionally mentioned by name his five-year-old classificatory sister and did not feel embarrassed if she urinated or defecated in his presence. He admitted that he would become more circumspect as she grew older but, unlike his younger brothers, would never feel obliged to throw spears on hearing someone swear at her.

I did not ask individuals why their sisters aroused feelings of shame because such a question would have been too disconcerting. Men disliked discussing the relationship even in general terms. I had difficulty in obtaining statements about incest, though the following data are of interest.

(a) When asked if irresponsible persons ever had sexual intercourse with their sisters, a man exclaimed: 'It goes on all the time!' He added that the practice did not occur in his own community but was rife in others.

(b) On his way through the bush one day a man, Cyril, saw a woman being offered food by her brother. As she accepted, he took her in his arms. She cried: 'Let me go,

brother, let me go.' He then heard Cyril approaching and ran away. When Cyril asked the woman why she had cried out, she said she had seen a snake.

(c) At Maningrida in 1958 there was a quarrel over a girl's refusal to marry the man to whom she had been promised. Rumour had it that she was copulating with a slightly older classificatory brother. In 1960 a girl of about twelve bled from the vagina. When asked about it, she said her brother had tried to have intercourse. Neither incident was discussed in public.

(d) Two brothers, aged about eight and three, were frequent visitors to my tent. When I asked the elder boy who was his brother's girl friend, he named their two-year-old sister.

After the age of about six, males stopped addressing their sisters by the kinship term *djala* (though they continued to employ it as a term of reference) and instead used a word meaning a disfiguring disease or someone suffering from it (*ririgmin*). As most women were not deformed, apparently the expression in this context was metaphorical—'I wish to communicate with you but find you repulsive.' Possibly the term Warner translated as 'rubbish' was applied to sisters in a similar sense (p. 66).

Although most boys first modified their behaviour towards true sisters, they soon learnt that the prohibitions applied to classificatory sisters as well. I recorded six cases of a man attacking a woman, classified as sister, on hearing insults directed at her. In two, she was a true sister, in three a close classificatory sister, and in one a distant classificatory sister. One true sister was about eight years younger than the brother, the other about ten years older; two classificatory sisters were between twenty and thirty years younger, another a contemporary, and in a case that occurred many years ago I did not determine the ages. Four women belonged to different land-owning units from the brothers (a further difficulty for Warner's structural hypothesis), and, as infants, five men had never had an intimate family association with the sisters.

It was evident that most men abhorred the thought of sexual intercourse between people classified as brother and

sister. Their fathers and others had impressed on them from an early age that such an act was contemptible, the behaviour of dogs, and encouraged them to think of their sisters as sexless and unattractive. Yet folk believed that there were some who committed the deed. One native told me there were clean men and dirty men. A clean man felt shame towards his sister, a dirty man felt none, had intercourse with her, and did not throw spears when someone swore at her.

Swearing at a woman meant making insulting remarks about her sexual organs and appetite. Such words caused the brother immediate anguish, and he groaned, 'I have been speared through the ear.' It is my belief that he attacked the sister to show his revulsion. It was as though he thought, 'People assume that because I have heard those words I am now thinking about my sister's genital organs. To prove I have no interest in her, I shall kill her.' Given this motive, his relationship to the person who uttered the words was irrelevant.

On this view the important aspect of the brother's behaviour was his public demonstration. Usually he merely threw spears in his sister's direction, and, on one occasion when an individual speared the woman through the leg, a relative told him he had gone too far. Some men might have been more prone than others to react. Considering the small number of instances recorded, it is possible that brothers sometimes failed to respond, though no doubt in many cases they had taken the precaution of leaving the camp when they realized a quarrel was brewing.

I had no way of telling whether the belief about dirty men who copulated with sisters was well-founded. Psychoanalytic inquiry might have shown that many who held the view had repressed incestuous wishes themselves. But the important point is that the prohibition was against an active sexual relationship that might be formed in childhood. A man did not feel shame towards his mother, and, although he would be revolted by the thought of intercourse, never threw spears when he heard someone swear at her. He did not feel impelled to demonstrate his innocence publicly because no one believed that incest between true mother and son ever occurred.

The only other female relatives towards whom a man felt shame were his actual and potential mothers-in-law, but he

did not attack them on hearing insults. A significant fact was that the prohibitions were less stringent and came into operation later in his life. As stated earlier, individuals occasionally renounced the formalities when their hopes were not fulfilled, or they began to act with reserve towards a WM with whom they had previously joked. Also, a person might be especially reluctant to attack a woman from whom he hoped to receive a wife or to whom he was already under an obligation.

The people deplored incest between father and daughter but seemed to find it less offensive. I recorded two cases of fathers allegedly copulating with true daughters and two of men married to step-daughters. The active opposition came from individuals seeking the women as wives.

Sisters did not feel shame towards their brothers and did not attack them on hearing insults. My impression was that, in general, fathers imposed a more rigid sexual morality on their sons than did mothers on their daughters.²

I have named two conditions in attempting to explain why a man threw spears at women classified as his sister: that his training instilled a feeling of revulsion from sexual relations with them and that people believed some individuals had incestuous inclinations. But they are not necessary and sufficient; it is likely that the conditions, though not the phenomenon, occurred with the same or other categories of kin elsewhere. I do not know why men of eastern Arnhem Land seized on this particular way of behaving when others subject to the same stimuli did not.³

² Róheim (1933: 209), speaking of food distribution in Central Australia, stated that 'the stronger development of the super-ego is always on the side of the male, but in the female the distributive attitude is in closer touch with Id-strivings, as it develops on the basis of maternal love'.

³ Since writing this section I have become dissatisfied with my explanation. I hope to carry on the investigation in the field before undertaking any major revision, but I might briefly indicate the direction of my thought. First, in the chaos of a quarrel I suspect that people were often unaware that a brother had heard the swearing until he attacked. In that case my hypothesis that a man threw spears at his sister to demonstrate publicly the purity of his thoughts is unconvincing. A similar point could be made in relation to Warner's statement that a man would attack his sister if he saw her

INJURY

The Gidjingali blamed sorcery for all serious illnesses and for all deaths that were not the result of physical violence. They even believed that sorcerers made people susceptible to wounds received in fights and murderous attacks by night. Sickness, injury, and death often provoked retaliation from the sufferer or someone acting on his behalf.

I have already described the belief concerning a sorcerer's supposedly piercing his victim's heart (p. 104). Another method depended on burning something the victim owned or had used. Anyone could practise sorcery, though it was believed that women used only the second type.

Sickness and non-violent death

When a person fell seriously ill, his close kin appealed publicly to the sorcerer, without naming him or pretending to know who he was, and asked him to stop working his harmful magic. If the condition persisted, they accused someone directly, but allegations rarely led to fights unless the patient succumbed, and not always then.

When an old woman died in 1960, people said she had weakened her resistance to sorcery by smoking a pipe that had lain near a *gunabibi* head-dress. The pipe belonged to Jerry, but no one blamed him. An unknown stranger was held responsible.

A few months later Jerry's wife fell ill. He believed that someone was retaliating for the old woman's death and, in a public outburst, made insinuations about some of her close relatives. One, Joe, immediately challenged him to a fight. Jerry replied that he did not want violence but wished the magician, whoever he might be, to stop. Joe, who was married to Jerry's ZD, proclaimed his innocence. Jerry then abused him for having failed to offer a niece in return (Joe, in fact,

copulating with her husband. Second, men commonly resolved conflicting loyalties during disputes over women by attacking the woman herself (see p. 100), justifying the action by saying, 'she is really the cause of all the trouble'. Third, and here I am foreshadowing my new hypothesis, the real cause of the brother's injury when he is 'speared through the ear' is not the insulting words but his sister's sexuality. He attacks her because she is responsible for his distress, not because he wishes to prove to everyone that he is clean.

had no sister). Jerry's wife recovered, and the matter was dropped.

When someone died, his age and possible motives for killing him were important in determining what action was taken and who was blamed. The following cases illustrate the variety of events.

(a) Jirangga was a very old man when he died. No one made an accusation of sorcery, but his son told me he supposed somebody was responsible, possibly a stranger.

(b) An old man, Oscar of the Marawuraba community, died several years before Maningrida was established. His wife later married a Maringa called Archie. A member of the dead man's land-owning unit told me that Archie had used sorcery against Oscar in order to acquire his wife. Nobody, he said, had made an open accusation, but people knew all about it, and sooner or later someone would use sorcery against Archie to even up the score.

(c) A Janjango man and his wife, aged about twenty, arrived at Maningrida in 1960. The wife died after a short illness. Several hours after the death ten eastern Gidjingali attacked the husband, who stood near the body and made no attempt to retaliate. Many others hindered the attackers, who were mostly classificatory MBs of the dead woman, and none of the spears found its mark. Settlement officers stopped the fight. Later one of the avengers told me the husband had used sorcery because he was jealous.

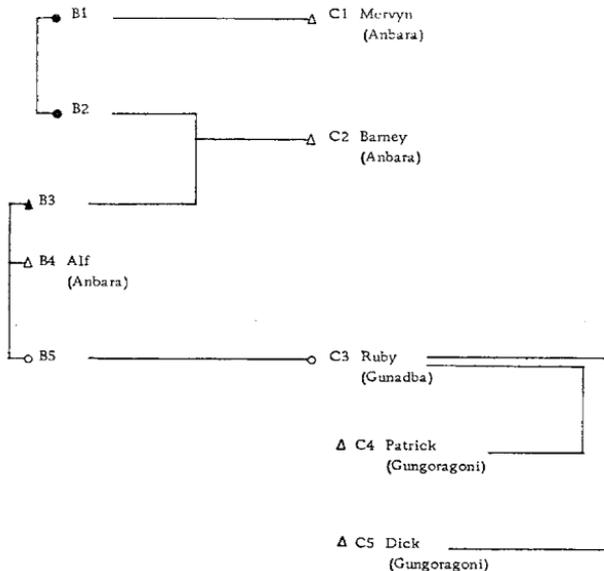
(d) In 1946 a Janjango native at Milingimbi showed signs of insanity and eventually died. His brother, Jim, accused a man of sorcery and sent word to a young Gidjingali named Sebastian. Jim was the outstanding leader of Sebastian's mortuary song and had had a long association with his land-owning unit in that capacity and as a trading partner. Sebastian arrived at the mission with a party of warriors and, in an ensuing battle, wounded the accused. The next day a countryman of the wounded man killed Sebastian, and a few days later a native from eastern Arnhem Land murdered a 'brother' of the native who had killed Sebastian. At this point the Native Affairs Branch intervened (Kyle-Little 1957:ch. 1). Sebastian's avenger had no close kinship ties with the Gidjingali, and I did not discover his motive.

Joking relatives opened up the body to allow recognized inquest specialists to inspect the heart. Other techniques were also used, such as releasing twisted hair and observing the direction in which it pointed, although none was regarded as infallible. Settlement officers did not allow autopsies, but relatives continued to make accusations, often with bewildering rapidity as one person after another protested innocence.

Violent death

Between 1940 and 1960 only three Anbara men died as a result of physical injuries. Two were murdered by members of other communities; one death (that of Sebastian) was avenged by a further killing, the other was a retaliation for a previous killing. The third, who died fighting a member of his own community over a woman, was avenged when a relative murdered the woman. (I shall describe this case presently.) During the same period Anbara killed several men of other communities whose deaths, like that of the individual in the following case, were not avenged.

Case 13: An inter-community murder (Figure 24).



Name in brackets indicates community

Figure 24 Case 13: An inter-community murder

Patrick (C4) married Ruby (C3), the ZD of Alf (B4). He was Gungoragoni, his wife Gunadba, and his WMB Anbara. He and Ruby periodically lived with the Anbara, and he supplied his wife's matri-kin with trade goods from the south. Anbara spoke of him as a good friend of the community. Several years after marrying Patrick, Ruby eloped with Dick (C5), another Gungoragoni. Her husband tried to recover her, but she refused to return.

Some time later Alf died. Before the death there had been some trouble over a totemic design. A man had asked his ZS, Barney (C2), to draw a design on one of his hunting spears. Barney did so and later borrowed the weapon. Alf, his 'father', borrowed it from him and subsequently gave it to several Gunadba. When the owner discovered what had happened, he demanded the spear back. Barney retrieved it and broke the shaft so there would be no more trouble.

Patrick was living with the Anbara at the time of Alf's death and, having the reputation of an inquest specialist, examined his heart. He later told Barney that his 'father' had been killed by Dick. He said the Gunadba to whom Alf had given the spear had been annoyed when it was taken back and had asked Dick to perform sorcery.

Shortly afterwards Barney visited the Gunadba community, in which Dick and Ruby had been living since the elopement. He told Dick he did not know who had killed Alf, but he secretly sent a message to his matrilateral 'brother', Mervyn (C1), informing him of Dick's whereabouts. Mervyn formed a revenge party of eight Anbara warriors and set out with them for the place indicated. After several days they found Dick hunting alone, killed him, and returned to the coast.

The murderers expected a counter-revenge expedition, but none came. Possibly this was because the Anbara was a much bigger community than the Gungoragoni and, also, because of the part Patrick had played. By that time it was widely rumoured that he had performed sorcery against Dick, who was thus as good as dead by the time the warriors reached him.

After it became evident that there was not going to be an attack, those who had taken part in the murder submitted themselves to a formal punishment (*magarada*) in which other

members of their community threw spears at them (see Warner 1937: 174-6). When Dick's relatives heard about it, they said they would let the matter finish there. Ruby did not return to Patrick, who was killed a few years later for reasons apparently not connected with the events just described.

Several Anbara, including one of the avengers, told me that Barney had organized the attack because Dick had 'killed' his FB, Alf. Yet Patrick's desire to injure his dispossessor was obviously the crucial factor, and it is interesting that when I asked Patrick's son why the Anbara warriors had murdered Dick, he replied: 'They were helping my father.'

Disputes over the acquisition of wives, adultery, insult, and injury occurred within communities and between members of neighbouring communities, but alleged sorcery appears to have been the main cause of fights between widely separated peoples. (Blyth River natives rarely fought groups not shown on Map 1.) Abduction of wives by men of different communities did not happen in the recent past. People said they had heard their elders speak about woman-stealing expeditions but had not witnessed them.

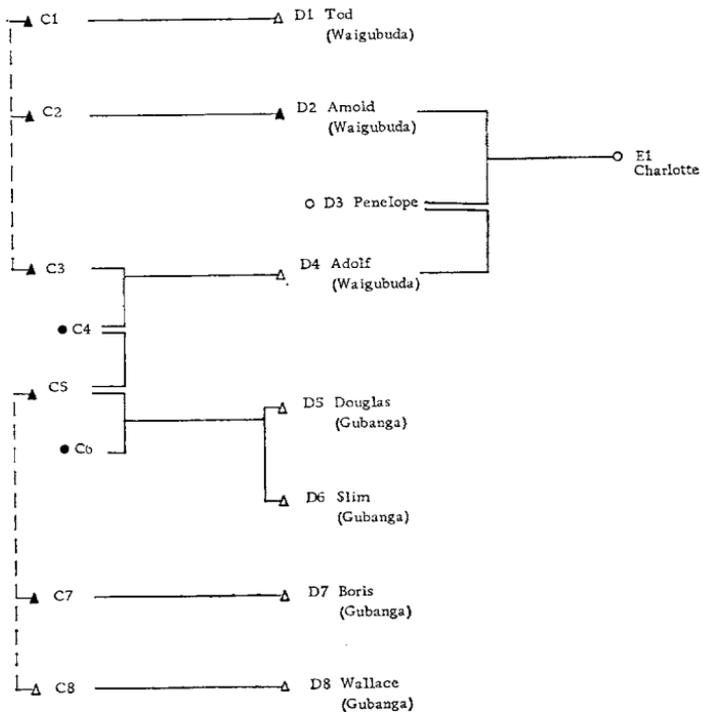
The inter-community killings I recorded had three kinds of outcome. (a) Several murderers submitted to the punishment in which members of the victim's community threw spears at them. Mostly this brought the affair to a close, but in one case the throwers tried to inflict serious injury, and the occasion developed into a fight between them and the murderer's community. No one was hurt, but the murderer did not volunteer for a second punishment, and the death was not avenged. (b) In one instance (the murder of Dick) no one sought revenge, but members of the murderers' own community put them through the spear-throwing punishment. In another the murderer stood while members of his own community threw at him and, on a second occasion, while those of the victim's community threw. (c) In two instances someone killed the murderer. One avenger was a trading partner of the original victim and belonged neither to his community nor to that of the murderer. The other was the native of eastern Arnhem Land mentioned earlier, whose connections and motive I did not determine. Counter-revenge was not

attempted in either case, and my impression was that, in the Blyth River regions at least, feuds leading to more than two deaths were rare (cf. Warner 1937: ch. 6). Relatives of an unavenged victim generally attributed the death of the murderer, or some other member of his community, to an anonymous sorcerer working on their behalf.

I recorded two cases in which a man murdered another of his own community. Both killings were over women. Those wishing to avenge the deaths were as closely related to the murderer as to his victim, and in both instances they killed the woman instead. The following is a description of one of these cases.

Case 14: An intra-community murder (Figure 25).

Adolf (D4) was born into a Nagara land-owning unit called Waigubuda. After the father's death in Adolf's child-



Name in brackets indicates land-owning unit
 Figure 25 Case 14: An intra-community murder

hood, his mother subsequently married an Anbara of the Gubanga unit. Strictly speaking, the boy was still a member of Waigubuda, but he grew up with the Anbara, and people generally associated him with his step-father's unit. The diagram includes two of his Waigubuda classificatory brothers and four of his Gubanga classificatory brothers.

Adolf married Penelope (D3) after the death of his 'brother' Arnold (D2). She had already promised her daughter, Charlotte (E1), to a Nagara named Arthur (not in the diagram), but, when the time came, the girl rejected the match. She remained with her parents, and before long it was rumoured that Adolf was having intercourse with her. Arthur challenged him to a fight, and each injured the other. But Charlotte still refused to marry and some time later gave birth to a child, of which her step-father was assumed to be the genitor.

A few years afterwards Wallace (D8) and Charlotte eloped. They had been lovers from childhood (see section on Adultery, p. 105). Wallace was a classificatory brother of her step-father but, because of marriage irregularities in an earlier generation, addressed her as 'ZD'.

Adolf overtook the pair and fought with Wallace, who fatally wounded him. As usual, people maintained that a sorcerer had 'killed' the murdered man before he set out, but no one made a specific accusation. When the elopers returned, two 'brothers' of the victim, Douglas (D5) and Slim (D6), attacked Charlotte. Slim's spear went through both her thighs. She had barely recovered when Tod (D1) speared her in the buttock. Finally, a few months later, Boris (D7) speared her through the back, and she died.

Earlier Wallace had submitted to the formal punishment, when members of his own community threw spears at him. At no time did anyone try to kill him. Charlotte's closest matri-kinsman, a Nagara, said he would take no action over her death; he admitted that Boris had acted justifiably in avenging his 'brother'. It was supposed that a sorcerer had 'killed' Charlotte, but no one was accused.

Non-fatal injury

Men injured in inter-community fights often sought revenge, but when the quarrel occurred within the community they

normally accepted compensation. (a) In one instance a Maringa wounded an Anbara, who later killed him as he slept. In another an Anbara injured a Gunwinggu, and several years later warriors of the two communities fought a battle lasting most of one morning. It ended when an Anbara received a minor head wound. (b) I have already described occasions when an individual accepted compensation from a member of his own community (Cases 5 and 8).

People were reluctant to interfere in quarrels between a man and his wife. If a man injured his wife in the course of a squabble over adultery or failure to provide food, no one was likely to retaliate on her behalf unless the husband had been frequently maltreating her. Then her father or MB might remonstrate with him and possibly attack him if he persisted. No one ever avenged a woman whose brother had inflicted a wound after hearing a person swear at her. In general, injuries to women were less likely to be avenged or compensated than injuries to men.

I observed only three fights between women. In one, a woman attacked her husband's paramour, but men standing close by separated them before either had inflicted serious injury. In another, an old woman fought her daughter, whom she accused of mistreating the grandchild. Neither damaged the other, and bystanders watched with amusement. In the third, the elder of two co-wives hit the younger in a domestic quarrel. The husband threatened to spear her but never did so.

6

Social Control

Having classified disputes according to their causes, I now propose to explain why clashes of interest did not lead to permanent breaches between individuals and groups. The main point I wish to establish is that, although opportunism over women gave rise to conflicts, it also limited them by creating cross-cutting genealogical ties. Discussion of this question requires a consideration of the dispersal of female agnates by marriage. Some reference to Lévi-Strauss's view that patrilineal groups functioned as units of wife exchange is relevant here.

But the subject is of wider significance in that the facts throw light on methods of social control in Aboriginal society. In these final sections therefore I intend to place my data in a broader perspective and relate them to such statements as those of Radcliffe-Brown that throughout Australia the political unit was the horde and of Elkin that the Aborigines had political leaders. It is my conviction, as I hope to demonstrate, that these writers were incorrect: at least, the Gidjinalgali lacked any formal system of government and their patrilineal groups were not political units.

TERRITORIAL GROUPS AND MARRIAGE

In his interpretation of Lévi-Strauss's work *Les Structures Élémentaires de la Parenté* (1949), de Jong¹ distinguished four kinds of local group in an Aranda-type kinship system—one

¹ J. P. B. de Josselin de Jong, *Lévi-Strauss's Theory on Kinship and Marriage* (1952). My aim is to highlight certain facts of Gidjinalgali kinship and marriage by contrasting them with a theoretical model that seems to have at least some features in common with the one proposed by Lévi-Strauss. I am giving de Jong's statements about Aranda kinship systems because they seem more explicit than those of Lévi-Strauss himself.

comprising those whose members belonged to a particular couple of 'father-son' subsections, another those whose members belonged to a different pair, and so on (pp. 42-3). He spoke of direct and indirect exchanges of women between men representing local patrilineal groups (p. 46) and, in discussing a variant of Aranda kinship, of marriage regulations fully concordant with a system of four patrilineal groups (p. 43). The Aranda system, he went on, combined direct exchange in the same generation with two long cycles in opposite directions from generation to generation (p. 46). By this I understand him to mean that men of the same generation in intermarrying subsections exchanged sisters and that men four generations apart in them exchanged ZDDDD for FFFFZ. Thus the wives of WAMUD in the Gidjingali system (Figure 10) would be sisters of BANGADI but also ZDDDD of BANGADI men who married sisters of WAMUD's FFFF.

I have represented in Figure 26 a system of wife exchange

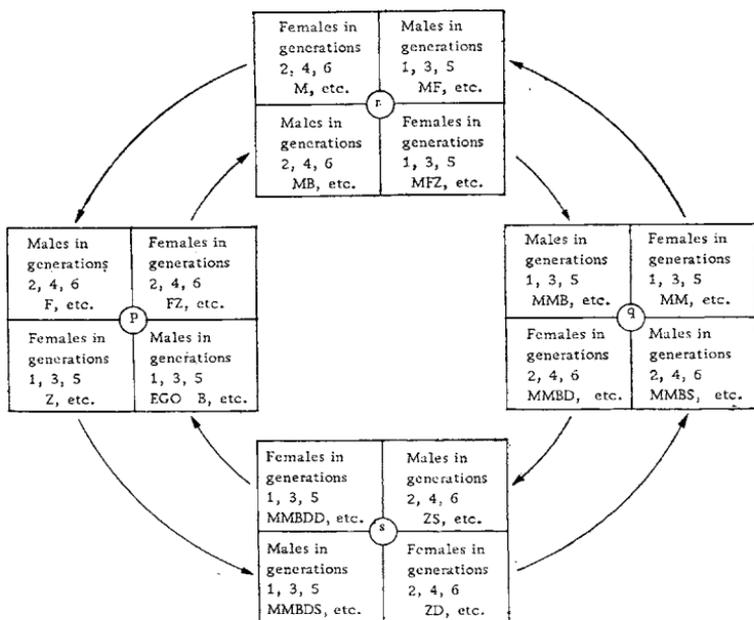


Figure 26 *Hypothetical system of wife exchange among four patrilineal groups*

that seems to be implied by such statements. p, q, r, and s are patrilineal groups, and arrows indicate direct exchange of sisters between men of the same generations and, also, two exchange cycles over four generations. Men of generations 1, 3, 5 in p and s marry each other's sisters. Also, Ego's sister in p may marry a man of s, whose ZDDDD in s may marry Ego's SSSS in p. Viewed in this way, Ego's SSSS would receive a wife in return for his FFFFZ.

Firth (1954: 12) made a statement that has a crucial bearing on this view. He drew attention to evidence indicating that often in Aranda kinship systems men did not have female relatives of the kind they were expected to marry. He then made the point that, although observers had described in theory how the varieties of Australian kinship system worked and the kinds of adjustment required to meet shortages of appropriate marriage partners, no one had presented quantitative information about the practical details.

In Chapter 4 I gave figures indicating that in the Anbara community there was a chronic disproportion between the demand for wives and the supply of female relatives of the kind specified by the rule. I described how men often obtained, or tried to obtain, women to whom they did not have rights, and how their efforts sometimes gave rise to disputes. Neither Lévi-Strauss nor de Jong appears to have been concerned with demographic factors of this magnitude, and they took no note of the opportunism connected with them. I shall now present more data demonstrating that, for this reason, the model represented in Figure 26 has no bearing on the realities of kinship and marriage among the Gidjingali.

When de Jong spoke of 'sister exchange', it is not clear whether he meant that men of two groups merely married each other's sisters or actually gave them to each other. As the latter view would be incompatible with Gidjingali rules of bestowal, I shall modify the interpretation of Figure 26 to relate it to a system in which men had rights of disposal over their ZDs. The arrows are to be understood as indicating sister exchange in the first of the senses mentioned above and, also, niece exchange. Thus, on this view, men of generations 2, 4, 6 in p and r married each other's sisters, but received them from bestowers in generations 1, 3, 5 in q and s respec-

tively. Interpreted in this way, the diagram represents a system in which the men of any one of the four patrilineal groups exchanged nieces with the men of one other only (p and q; r and s), and in which the men and women of alternate generations in any one group married the men and women of the same generations in one other group only (generations 2, 4, 6 in p and r, etc.).

I shall now compare this model with the marriages of men in four actual patrilineal groups—Galamagondija, Angawa-anabama, Mararagidj, and Anawuldja, abbreviated to Galam, Anga, Mara, and Ana, and compared with p, q, r, and s respectively in Figure 26. The data are contained in Tables 17 and 18.

TABLE 17 Affiliations of mothers-in-law of men in four patrilineal groups

Patrilineal group of DSs	Total number of WM-DS relationships	Patrilineal group of WM specified by Figure 26	Number of WMs in the specified patrilineal group	Number of WMs in other patrilineal groups
Galam (p)	16	Anga (q)	5	11 (in 5 groups)
Anga (q)	5	Galam (p)	4	1
Mara (r)	10	Ana (s)	1	9 (in 4 groups)
Ana (s)	18	Mara (r)	3	15 (in 11 groups)
Totals	49	—	13 (27%)	36 (73%)

I selected my four patrilineal groups in this way: Taking Galam (Table 1, No. 1a) as a starting point, I discovered that Anga (Table 1, No. 3) contained more WMs of Galam men than any other patrilineal group. Treating Galam as p and Anga as q and assuming niece exchange between men of generations 1, 3, 5 and 2, 4, 6 respectively, I established that Ana (Table 1, No. 4b) contained more of their ZDs than any other patrilineal group. Treating Ana accordingly as s, I found that Mara (Table 1, No. 2) contained more WMs of Ana men than any other patrilineal group. In arriving at the figures in Tables 17 and 18 I counted all the known WMs and wives of dead members as well as living. Mothers of dead

wives in sixteen cases had been forgotten, which accounts for the discrepancy between totals in the two tables.

TABLE 18 Affiliations of wives of men in four patrilineal groups

Patrilineal group and generation of husbands	Total number of W-H relationships	Patrilineal group of wife specified by Figure 26	Number of wives in the specified patrilineal group	Number of wives in other patrilineal groups
Galam (p)				
gens. 2, 4, 6	11	Mara (r)	1	10 (in 4 groups)
gens. 1, 3, 5	8	Ana (s)	2	6 (in 4 groups)
Anga (q)				
gens. 2, 4, 6	3	Ana (s)	1	2 (in 2 groups)
gens. 1, 3, 5	3	Mara (r)	2	1
Mara (r)				
gens. 2, 4, 6	12	Galam (p)	5	7 (in 5 groups)
gens. 1, 3, 5	7	Anga (q)	0	7 (in 2 groups)
Ana (s)				
gens. 2, 4, 6	10	Anga (q)	2	8 (in 7 groups)
gens. 1, 3, 5	11	Galam (p)	1	10 (in 6 groups)
Totals	65	—	14 (22%)	51 (78%)

The totems of Galam and Ana were Dua, those of Anga and Mara were Jiridja. Regarded as groups exchanging nieces in marriage, Galam and Anga should have been of the same moiety, and Ana and Mara of the same moiety. The observed irregularities were the results of improper marriages in previous generations. In 1960 most of the men of Ana regarded themselves as Jiridja, but affiliations of the few surviving Anga men remained unchanged. I shall not describe the improper marriages or the complications and attempts at adjustment that followed them. The significant point is that, despite the irregularity in moiety affiliations, these four groups in relation to each other came closer to the hypothetical system than any other four for which I have the relevant data.

Although in practice niece exchanges occurred between particular men, Gidjingali sometimes spoke of an exchange

relationship of this kind between two patrilineal groups. When I asked a Galam man whether certain deceased men of his group had exchanged nieces with certain deceased Anga, he replied that he did not know the exact circumstances but the two groups had always exchanged nieces. Again, an Ana man, wishing to justify a disputed exchange between a member of his own group and a Mara, told me that the two groups had a tradition of exchange. Table 17 indicates that, if there had ever been such a practice in the past, it had by then broken down. Because people knew that wives were widely dispersed among patrilineal groups, they did not take seriously statements about traditional exchange relationships.

But they took seriously genealogically-defined marriage rights. In Figure 27 I have constructed a hypothetical situation

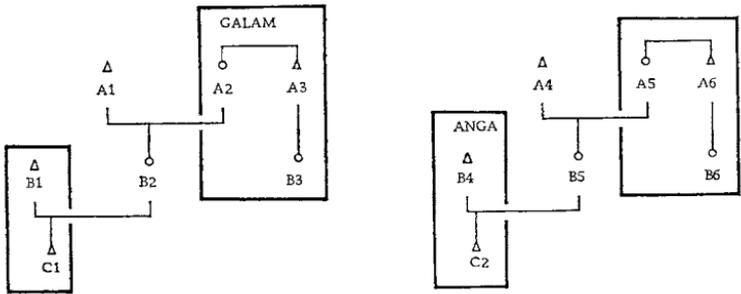


Figure 27 *Precedence of genealogically-defined marriage right over claim based on alleged tradition of niece exchange*

in order to discuss two rival claims to a woman. Suppose a man B4 of Anga married a woman whose mother was not of Galam, and that a man B1 not of Anga married a woman whose mother was of Galam. C1 would have a right to the daughter of B3, and C2 to the daughter of B6. An alleged tradition of niece exchange between Galam and Anga would not give C2 any right to the daughter of B3, and no one would pay any attention to him if he claimed her against C1 on this ground. I did not hear of anyone ever making such a claim.

When I questioned people about traditions of niece exchange between patrilineal groups, it became apparent that, in answering, they were thinking about existing rather than ideal relationships. In a few cases, when asked with whom did

group x exchange nieces, they named group y. Subsequent investigation revealed that, in fact, there had been a few exchanges between members of the groups named, or that exchanges were expected to occur in the near future. But in most cases people replied that members of group x married all over the place. No one ever spoke of an exchange of sisters between two patrilineal groups.²

It might be suggested that, although there were no closed systems comprising only four patrilineal groups, possibly there were systems including a large number. The system of niece exchange, $p \longleftrightarrow q, r \longleftrightarrow s$ might be elaborated to include sequences such as $p \rightarrow t \rightarrow u \rightarrow q$. But an examination of the data discloses that the known married ZDs of Galam (p) wedded men of five patrilineal groups ($t_1 - t_5$) besides Anga (q), the known married ZDs of these five groups wedded men of at least seventeen groups ($u_1 - u_{17}$), and the known married ZDs of these seventeen groups wedded men of at least twenty-seven groups, including Anga (q).

It is true that the people said men of Dua moiety should marry women of Jiridja, and men of Jiridja women of Dua. They also said that men of WAMUD subsection should marry women of Bangadidjan, men of BANGADI women of Wamudjan, and so on for the other intermarrying pairs (Figure 10). But moieties and subsections classified people primarily for ritual purposes and included most of the natives in eastern Arnhem Land. Any notion of wife exchange connected with these categories had no bearing at all on the distribution of wives among local descent groups.

If a Gidjingali g married the ZDDDD of a man who had once been married to g's FFFFZ, I doubt that he would have known it. I did not obtain any genealogy that contained both

²Rose (1960: ch. 14) argued that, because of age inequalities, Aranda-type kinship systems based on bilateral second cousin marriage (sister exchange) never existed and that expositions of them are false theoretical constructs. It is outside the scope of this work to consider Rose's arguments, but I should point out that, although the Gidjingali system had formal features in common with the Aranda system, it was not based on an exchange of sisters and that the conventional Aranda kinship diagram, as I have interpreted it, was consistent with Gidjingali marriage rules.

a male and his FFFFZ or a woman of her generation and patrilineal group. The people did not have a notion of delayed exchange over four generations, and it is impossible to know whether marriages of the kind implied by de Jong's statement ever took place.

To sum up, patrilineal groups were not units in systems of wife exchange of the type represented in Figure 26, nor did the people have a conception of such systems as an ideal. Alleged traditions of niece exchange between particular patrilineal groups were not taken seriously, and demographic inequalities helped to prevent them from ever becoming realities. Niece exchange between particular men was the only kind that was significant in practice, and even this was infrequent.

The following hypothetical case illustrates the processes that caused the actual distribution of wives among patrilineal groups. Three brothers, B1, B2, and B3, each had a wife. B1 had married a woman to whom he had a right, whose mother belonged to group x; B2 a classificatory MMBDD, whose mother belonged to y; and B3 a classificatory FZD, whose mother belong to z. B1's son accordingly had rights to the daughters of certain women of x, B2's son to those of certain women of y, and B3's son to those of certain women of z. The sons might or might not succeed in marrying some of these. Examination of genealogies disclosed many cases of true and classificatory brothers in the same patrilineal group with rights to women whose mothers were distributed among different patrilineal groups; and of true and classificatory sisters in the same patrilineal group with obligations to give their daughters to men distributed among different patrilineal groups.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND SOCIAL CONTROL

Radcliffe-Brown (1930: 37) asserted that throughout Australia the political unit was the patrilineal patrilocal horde.³ Warner (1937: 17) stated that in north-east Arnhem Land the

³ Later, in a letter defending his account of Australian local organization against Elkin, Radcliffe-Brown wrote: 'In the normal social structure the group that engages in armed conflict with another is the patrilineal local clan. How are armed conflicts organized in Western Arnhem Land?' (1954: 105).

patrilineal clan was the warmaking group and that fighting within it never occurred and would be considered an unnatural act. Berndt (1955: 101) referred to the patrilineal descent group in this same region as the body politic. Its male members hunted together and shared the catch; and they also acted as a unit in rituals and feuds. Each group had a headman who made decisions and maintained order.

Among the Gidjingali the political unit (if it can be so called) was also the community of people who regularly lived together. But this comprised the male members of not one, but from four to six land-owning units (four to eleven patrilineal groups).⁴ People spoke of opposition between two communities in pitched battles and on occasions organized for the formal punishment of murderers, and not merely of disputes between particular individuals of different communities. Revenge expeditions included men of different land-owning units within the community. Thus the eight members of the party that avenged the death of Alf (Case 13) belonged to three Anbara units of both moieties. Barney, who sent the message about Dick's whereabouts, was Alf's BS, but none of the warriors was a member of the dead man's unit. The leader was Barney's MZS, two others were classificatory sons of Alf, three were his classificatory ZSs, one his DS, and one his ZSS.

Close agnates often helped each other in disputes within the community, but neither patrilineal groups nor land-owning units ever opposed each other as corporate groups. When Jerry eloped with Ivan's wife (Case 11), the aggrieved husband said to several members of his unit: 'We brothers should bring that woman back.' Jerry and Ivan belonged to different units, and all directly concerned were Anbara. The party that set out to find the elopers included Ivan and four members of his unit but, also, the son of a female member and a classificatory MB of a different unit. In addition, Ivan's

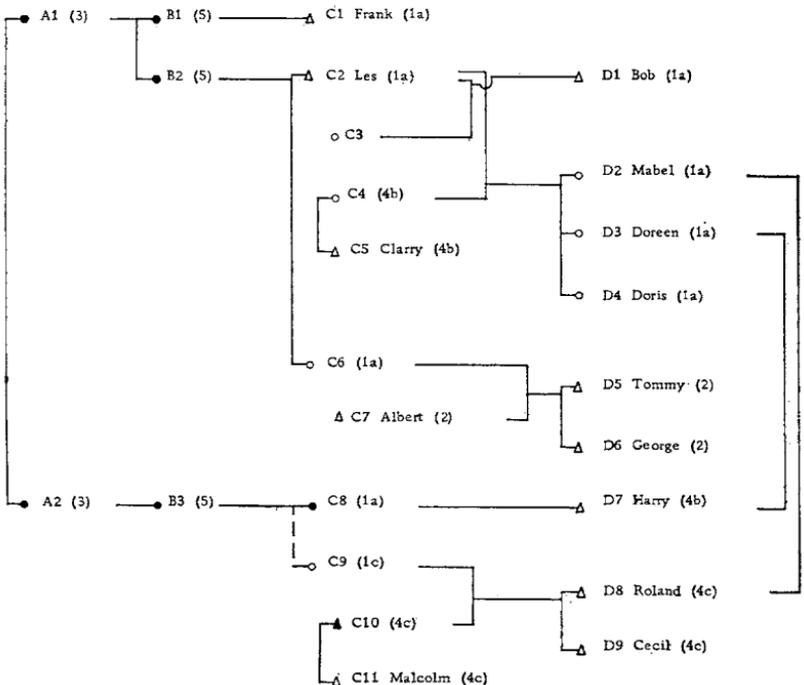
⁴ Cf. Meggitt (1962: 243), who stated that: 'The four localised communities that made up the tribe were the largest groups with political and administrative functions. Although they were linked together by ties of friendship, marriage and ritual obligation and possessed the same laws and customs, each was nevertheless autonomous in its everyday affairs.'

companions did not actively support him in his subsequent clash with Jerry. Instead, they tried to persuade the two to stand further apart, and the fight ended when a member of the party with loyalties to both speared the woman.

Another dispute illustrating that descent groups were not political units occurred at Maningrida. It is also a good example of how people in this leaderless society prevented antagonists in intra-community fights from inflicting serious injury.

Case 15: Dispute showing that descent groups were not political units (Figure 28).

Towards the end of 1960 Roland (D8) told a woman that he wanted to marry her daughter Doris (D4). He had no right to her (she was his 'MBD'), but her mother had pre-



Number in brackets indicates patrilineal group in Table 1

Figure 28 *Case 15: Dispute showing that descent groups were not political units*

viously given him an older sister Mabel (D2), and Roland felt she should now give him a second wife. He was a man about fifty years old, whereas Doris was about fifteen. The mother refused the request because she had already promised the girl to another man.

About a fortnight later Roland told Mabel (who had borne him three children) to go back to her parents. He said he wanted a young wife and, if he could not have Doris, he did not want Mabel. She moved to her parents' dwelling in anger but, after a few days, returned to her husband.

A week later Roland hit Mabel and again told her he did not want her. Her parents and MB realized that he was behaving badly out of spite and perhaps hoping his attitude would force the bestowers to change their minds. They were very angry but, on this occasion, took no action. But Roland's younger classificatory brother Harry (D7), who was married to another of Mabel's sisters (D3), warned him that, if he persisted, he would find himself in serious trouble.

A fortnight later Roland hit Mabel again. A quarrel started, and, when I arrived, Roland and Mabel's MB Clarry (C5) were standing about twenty yards apart, flourishing spears and uttering abuse. Others joined the argument, and at one point Harry said to Roland: 'Mabel's mother originally promised her to my dead older brother. She would have given her to me when he died, but I let you have her while I remained single. You make me feel ashamed when you demand another wife. Clarry has given me one, and I don't keep asking him for a second. Let us stop this continual arguing.' Eventually tempers cooled, and the crowd dispersed.

The next morning George (D6) tried to hit Doris with a stick because she was the cause of all the trouble. Six women prevented the attack by holding his arms or standing between him and the girl. The defenders included agnates, uterines, and affines: her mother, mother's co-wife, sister, sister's co-wife, FZ, and paternal half-brother's wife.

Immediately afterwards Mabel's father, unable to contain himself any longer, set out for Roland's camp with three nephews, Harry, George, and Tommy (D5), and challenged him to a fight at a place away from the settlement. The four men headed for the spot, but Roland did not follow. When

the challengers saw he had no intention of coming, they made back towards his dwelling. On the way Tommy tried to spear Doris, but was restrained by a man who happened to be near at hand.

In the ensuing conflict three active groups were discernible—two sets of men opposing each other and a number of men and women successfully preventing them from throwing their spears. The antagonists, all Anbara, were as follows:

Les (C2)		Roland (D8)
Harry (D7)	versus	Cecil (D9)
Tommy (D5)		Malcolm (C11)
George (D6)		
Frank (C1)		
Bob (D1)		
Albert (C7)		

The action was so rapid that I was unable to note all those who kept the men in check, but it was evident that most were Anbara. Prominent among those hampering Les's side were his sister, two wives, 'ZH', and two 'WBs'; and Cecil's wife was among those obstructing Roland's side.

The struggle was over within a few minutes without one spear being cleanly thrown, and then there began a violent exchange of abuse. Harry acted like a man in a terrible rage. Gesturing wildly and contorting his face, he made his way closer and closer to Roland, until finally they stood a few yards apart with spears at each other's throats. They eventually parted, and, as no one had intervened, I assumed people sensed that by this time neither intended to inflict any injury.

On the night after the fight Mabel went into an apparent coma and for the next few days resisted all attempts her relatives made to force food and water upon her. The trained nurse decided that she was not organically ill and, with patient effort, finally persuaded her to eat a large meal. During the next few weeks Mabel was in a state of acute depression. She stayed with her parents, but Roland visited her regularly and treated her with kindness. At length she went back to live with him. Doris was still unmarried when my fieldwork ended.

It is true that several members of one patrilineal group

were united here against several of another (Les, Frank, and Bob versus Roland, Cecil, and Malcolm). But other men of both groups took no part in the fight. Of greater significance are the facts that Harry supported his classificatory MB Les (the closest relative of this kind he had) against a classificatory brother of his own land-owning unit, and that Les's supporters comprised agnates, uterines, and affines from three different units. Roland might have received more support had his case been stronger.

There was probably less likelihood of fighting within the patrilineal group, because of closer kinship links, than between patrilineal groups of the same land-owning unit. But the difference was not sufficiently important to justify distinguishing single patrilineal groups as political units and amalgamated patrilineal groups as land-owning and ritual units. I recorded a case in which a man murdered his paternal half-brother and several in which men of the same patrilineal group fought or took opposing sides in serious quarrels. All were fights over women. Also, one of the men who helped take the woman from Clarry (Case 2) was a member of his patrilineal group (he was a potential niece's husband of the man he aided); and Bandy clashed with his paternal half-brothers George and Rocky (Case 12). Men rebuked George for fighting his 'MB' Jerry, but no one expressed dismay because members of the same patrilineal group had quarrelled. I assume the precedence given to the uterine link for defensive purposes was a result of the competition for wives among certain agnates.⁵

Several of the disputes described clearly demonstrate that, although women were in short supply as wives, their jural status was inferior to that of men. In fights within the community, often men whose loyalties were divided, instead of taking sides, attacked the woman about whom the antagonists were quarrelling. In this way they not only showed publicly how angry they were at being placed in an invidious position but threatened to bring the conflict to an end by removing its object. Harry speared Marion during the fight between

⁵ A settlement officer heard a radio message reporting a murder in another part of Arnhem Land. When I told one of the local natives, he replied: 'I suppose someone has killed his brother over a woman.'

Ivan and Jerry (Case 11); Tommy and George tried to assault Doris just before her father led an attack on the man who wanted to marry her (Case 15); and Maurice said he would spear Nora if Douglas and Cecil would not stop quarrelling over her (Case 8). When Wallace fatally wounded his 'brother' Adolf over Charlotte, other 'brothers' avenged the death by attacking and finally killing the woman (Case 14). Another intra-community murder had a similar outcome. The inference is that male opinion regarded it as better to attack a woman, and perhaps cause her death, than allow men to fight over her. In general, men were reluctant to support female interests against male interests. But there were limits. Cassius assaulted his wife because her sister had deserted him, but her 'brother' intervened and warned him never to do it again (Case 8); Les was so incensed by Roland's repeated attacks on his daughter that he challenged him to a fight (Case 15); and, in another case, a man attacked his ZDH for continually mistreating her.⁶

Although I have distinguished between inter- and intra-community conflict, I should point out that some fights between members of neighbouring communities were similar in form to those within the community. This was particularly noticeable where the totemic sites of the antagonists were close together and where considerable intermarriage had taken place. Also, as communities were only loose residential associations that often included affines and matrilateral relatives of male members, outsiders sometimes became involved in what I have classified as intra-community disputes.

In this and the preceding section I have argued that the patrilineal group among the Gidjingali was neither a political unit nor a unit in a system of wife exchange. Because of the dispersal of female agnates in marriage, members of the same patrilineal group, or of alternate generations in the same

⁶ R. and C. Berndt (1951: 52-7) stated that in each of the many Aboriginal communities they had visited, women maintained themselves in equality with men. Describing attitudes to punishment, they wrote: 'But however many beatings she may endure, she does not on this account restrict or cut short her sexual activities . . .' (p. 53); and, 'she may in rare cases be subject to the penalty of death, but not to social degradation' (p. 55).

group, did not have all their actual non-agnatic relatives of any one kind in one other patrilineal group. For example, the WMs of men in p were not all in q, the MBs of people in generations 2, 4, 6 of p were not all in r, and so on. As the affiliations of such relatives were various, and the rights and obligations were defined genealogically, there was a widespread possibility that men of the same patrilineal group would behave differently towards each other from one conflict situation to another, depending on their relationships to the people directly concerned.⁷ There were no rules that prescribed certain kinds of behaviour between descent groups as a whole, or between portions of them, except in ritual activities (and it is worth noting that the ZS and ZDS groups regularly included men of various land-owning units). Finally, the dispersal of wives between communities as well as within them caused some fights between members of different communities to proceed like intra-community conflicts, and it probably limited the magnitude of others.

GOVERNMENT

Broadly speaking, opinions on Aboriginal government have turned a full circle in the course of a little over a century. Eyre (1845) asserted that the natives recognized no authority and had no form of government; Dawson (1881) said that every tribe had its chief, whose power was supreme; Elkin (1938) attributed governmental functions to informal councils of elders whose influence depended on knowledge, ritual status, and personal respect; and Meggitt (1964) stated that the tribes had no formal apparatus of government, no enduring hierarchy of authority, and no recognized political leaders. Each of the first three views was compatible with others stated in the same period, the fourth has only recently been published. I shall try to demonstrate that there is good evidence to support it.

Eyre (1845: 315) wrote: 'Among none of the tribes yet known have chiefs ever been found to be acknowledged,

⁷ Harry opposed Roland and Cecil in the dispute over Doris (Case 15), but some years earlier the three men, all the same land-owning unit, supported Harry's older brother in a fight over a different woman.

though in all there are always some men who take the lead, and whose opinions and wishes have great weight with the others.' He thought that, although a man's authority and influence increased with age, they depended mainly on his personal strength, courage, energy, prudence, and skill, and perhaps upon his family connections (p. 317). Flanagan (1853-4) was more extreme. He said that 'among the aborigines authority of a fixed and definite character, whether centred in individuals of the body or contained in some well-known and well-established laws, is altogether wanting. The mere suggestion of instinct and the most palpable laws of nature alone seem to have weight with them' (p. 17).

Smyth, Taplin, Howitt, and Dawson were among the first to present a different view. Smyth (1878: 129) mentioned headmen in Victoria who investigated disputes, decided who was at fault, and punished them. Taplin (1879: 12-14) said each tribe of the Narrinyeri in South Australia had an elected chief who led his warriors and acted as a spokesman and negotiator in inter-tribal disputes. Each clan within the tribe had a tribunal, presided over by a local chieftain, that passed judgment on offenders. Howitt (1880: 211-12) emphasized the gerontocratic aspect of government. The heads of clans among the Kurnai of Victoria were the old men, although younger men with exceptional qualifications such as intelligence, cunning, and bravery, sometimes had considerable influence. Authority attached to age, a principle Howitt believed 'to be not peculiar to the Kurnai, but to be general to the whole Australian race' (p. 212). Dawson (1881) asserted that every tribe had its chief (p. 5), who judged disputes and gave or refused permission for betrothals and marriages (p. 28). A chief consulted the best men of his tribe, but when he announced his decision no one dared disobey (p. 5).

By the end of the century observers were attributing less power to Aboriginal leaders. Spencer and Gillen (1899: 10-15) stated that there was no chief of the Aranda tribe of Central Australia, nor any individual within it to whom the term could be applied. Each local group had a headman who called together the elders to discuss arrangements for sacred ceremonies or breaches of tribal custom, but his authority was 'of a somewhat vague nature' (p. 10). He was not neces-

sarily the most important member of the council and had no definite power over the members of his group, though he might be a man of considerable influence if old, distinguished, and able. Public opinion helped to maintain law and order, but, if someone broke a marriage rule, the headmen of the groups concerned consulted together with the elders to decide on a penalty. If the sentence was death, they appointed men to carry it out.

In the same year Mathew (1899: 93-4) wrote that there were no recognized heads or definite ruling bodies among the Aborigines and that the cohesion of a community depended entirely upon consanguinity. But he also said that the elders, in conjunction with men distinguished for courage, strength, and force of character, gave advice in matters of public importance, settled internal disputes, and enforced obedience to traditional law.

Books about Aborigines written in the nineteenth century usually devoted a chapter, or at least a special section, to government. Elkin (1938) in his general study dealt with the subject in two paragraphs. He stated that each local group had a headman who unofficially presided at meetings, settled quarrels, and made decisions on economic, social, and ceremonial matters (p. 82). He was usually the oldest man in the group, and his influence depended on knowledge, ritual status, and personal respect. Other elders also expressed opinions. The headmen of the local groups making up a tribe constituted an informal council that discussed matters of common interest whenever the groups were together (p. 45).

Warner (1937) described government in north-east Arnhem Land as gerontocratic and said that the elders controlled younger men by prohibiting, or threatening to prohibit, their initiation into certain ceremonies (p. 131). He stated that each clan had a ceremonial leader (p. 17), who was considered headman and who, if physically able and of sufficient talent, was also a war leader. But his secular power was slight, and it was in the field of ritual rather than government that he exercised his leadership (p. 389).

Warner described six types of conflict (ch. 6). First, there were camp fights, which occurred frequently and were usually over adultery. The antagonists fought with spears

and were often supported by male relatives. Women held their husbands and brothers by the arms to prevent the fight becoming too serious, but sometimes aided them with digging sticks or clubs. In none of the actual disputes of this kind that Warner described did a headman or council of elders intervene or attempt to effect a settlement.

The second and third types were surprise attacks made at night. In one kind, an individual or several close relatives set out to kill someone of another clan. They were normally young warriors acting on their own initiative or carrying out the wish of an older man. In neither case were they obliged to seek permission from the elders beforehand. In the other kind, a large party of warriors set out to avenge the death of a clansman. These expeditions required the sanction of the elders and were led by the oldest relatives of the deceased. But in the one actual case that Warner described the younger members of the party disobeyed the leader's explicit instruction not to attack certain people. He made no attempt to punish them (pp. 183-4).

The fourth and fifth types were pitched battles between clans. Warner did not make any statement about elders, headmen, or any other kind of leader in his description of them. The sixth type was an organized punishment (*magarada*) in which a murderer allowed his victim's relatives to throw spears at him, on the understanding that they would try to wound but not kill. His own clansmen stood close by to see fair play, and old men of both sides did their best to restrain hot-heads. When the elders of the injured clan decided that the punishment had gone on long enough, they told their warriors to stop.

Warner's data indicate that male elders had no collective or defined role in disputes that occurred between members of the same community. In conflict between clans, they offered advice and sometimes led revenge expeditions. Sometimes they incited younger men to commit acts of violence and sometimes tried to restrain them, but even here their directions were often unacceptable. They appear to have been more like diplomats than gerontocrats.

Kaberry (1939: 178-9) stated that authority in the Kimberley region was vested in the headman and elders of each

local group, who had the right to assemble people for initiation and mourning ceremonies, to conduct the proceedings, and to deal with cases of death by sorcery. Although intelligence and high ritual status were important qualifications for headmanship, the office tended to pass from father to son. Kaberry described the political organization as 'an aristocracy, a government by the best, by those who are fitted for the task by their knowledge, experience, and personality' (p. 178).

In discussing disputes over women, Kaberry said: 'If the headman intervenes at all, it is not in his official capacity, but as a blood or affinal relative. Authority, when wielded, is in the hands of those who are closely connected with the individuals, and who have a more comprehensive knowledge of the facts of the situation' (p. 149). When someone died, the elders decided by divination who was responsible and appointed an avenger. But as the elders concerned were relatives of the victim (p. 179), it appears that in the only secular sphere in which old men exercised authority they did so as kinsmen and not as members of a governmental body.

R. and C. Berndt (1952: 115) said that Aboriginal Australia had, as a rule, no formal gatherings comparable to our courts of law. Trivial offences committed by adults or children were handled by the immediate family or kin. Ceremonial leaders decided on punishment for serious ritual offences and carried it out without consulting anyone else.

Worsley (1954: 314-22) mentioned that legal institutions were lacking among the people of Groote Eylandt. He added that there was not even a formal council of elders in which disputes could be raised. When serious fights broke out between members of different groups, old men tried to restrain quick-tempered warriors and to bring about a settlement.

Finally, Meggitt (1962: 242-51) insisted that, among the Walbiri of Central Australia, government was not gerontocratic. Old men had considerable prestige, especially in matters of religion, but they did not stand out as general leaders, nor did they constitute a formal body exercising power over others. Particular men organized circumcision ceremonies and revenge expeditions, but their special roles depended on genealogical connections with the key indi-

viduals on each occasion, such as the novice or the victim, and not on age. Different persons therefore acted as organizers at different times, and there was nobody with permanent authority. Men of high ritual status played no special part in settling disputes; they were not even exempt from attacks by a person who felt he had a legitimate grievance.

I came to similar conclusions about the Gidjingali. In the quest for food, men and women usually worked as individuals; when they co-operated in making a fish trap across a creek or in setting fire to grass to drive game into the open, they did so by mutual consent. Members of a community decided to move to a new area by common agreement, though each one was free to come and go as he pleased. In ritual affairs individuals fulfilled obligations by organizing and performing initiation and mortuary rites. As among the Walbiri, a person's role at such times depended on his relationship to the novice or the deceased and changed from one occasion to another. Secret ceremonies allowed more scope for individual enterprise; some men, not necessarily those advanced in age, achieved recognition for their ability to direct certain rituals and their expert knowledge of the associated mythology.

Although the ethic of generosity was important in regulating access to both food and women, conflicts over women frequently occurred.⁸ As I have demonstrated, many Gidjingali men did not have female relatives of the kind defined by the marriage rule; and, although the sex ratio was roughly equal, many men wanted more than one wife. In these conditions, where demand commonly exceeded supply, quarrels occurred over the acquisition of unmarried girls, adultery, and wife-stealing. There was no institution with authority to deal with such disputes; but there was a community of people with a set of common values and a system of formally-defined rights and obligations. On rare occasions, individuals achieved their ends in defiance of the code of good conduct and without regard for the legitimate interests of others. But usually they attempted to justify their actions or demands by appealing to an acknowledged right or value. As both antagonists

⁸ R. and C. Berndt (1951: 22) stated that the majority of arguments in Aboriginal society were directly or indirectly brought about through trouble over women.

could often produce acceptable but opposed arguments (for example, insistence on a right, accusation of meanness), a quarrel was seldom an obvious clash between right and wrong. Nevertheless, public opinion about the merits of the cases clearly influenced the behaviour of people concerned—disputes as well as those with obligations to support them—and was a factor in determining its outcome.

There would be little point in putting forward Meggitt's and my account of government in two localized groups as a generalization for Aboriginal Australia. It is probably too late to test this by further investigation elsewhere, and there is certainly no way of telling whether observers like Taplin were mistaken or whether there were in fact regional differences of Aboriginal social organization. The available data may be summarized by saying that observers in the middle of the last century denied that Aborigines had governmental institutions but did not indicate satisfactorily how affairs were conducted despite the lack. Observers later in the century asserted that Aborigines had governmental institutions but did not explain in any detail how these functioned. Observers in the first half of the present century described Aboriginal government as gerontocratic, but the evidence they themselves supplied indicates that the old men had little authority outside the sphere of ritual. Finally, in recent years Meggitt and I found no governmental institutions in two different areas and have described how, nevertheless, the people organized and controlled their activities.

Appendix

ABORIGINES AND WHITE OFFICIALS

NATIVE LEADERS AT MANINGRIDA

As most of the women and children and many of the men did not understand English, settlement officers needed interpreters. They relied mainly on six men (three Gidjingali, two Guna-vidji, one Nagara) who had been in contact with whites since about 1940, spoke fairly good broken English, and were aged between thirty-five and forty. One of them, Harry,¹ a Gidjingali, arrived in Darwin just before the war as a youth of about eighteen. His first job was storeman in the native compound. In about 1940, when working in a Chinese laundry, he heard that his mother had died. He returned to the Blyth River but, after a brief stay, went back to Darwin with a large party of young bachelors, of whom only he and another had been there before.

During the war Harry worked in the laundry at the naval base, at Vestey's meatworks, and as an employee of the Army. He said the sergeant-major put him in charge of all natives in the unit because he spoke good English. After 1945 he joined a white buffalo hunter near Oenpelli but returned to Darwin where the Native Affairs Branch appointed him a patrol assistant. He told me his duty was 'to look after all native people'. Later still the Police Department employed him as a tracker.

A white official on board a boat repatriating Blyth River natives saw some of them smoking in the engine room. He ordered them to come out and then, as they did so, hit them on the head with a spanner. Harry, who had not been among the offenders, abused the official for assaulting his countrymen

¹ My account of his life before the establishment of the settlement is based entirely on what he and other natives told me.

and was about to throw him overboard when white crew members intervened. Later he threatened the official in the following words: 'Some day I'll kill you, even though you are a white man. I've been a police boy myself.'

Some time after Harry went back to Darwin. Probably in the early fifties the Native Affairs Branch instructed him to assemble his countrymen for repatriation. He informed them: 'I am taking you all back home. If I leave you here in Darwin, you might be killed.' After the boat arrived at the Liverpool River, he told Gunavidji people that he represented the government and that his job was to look after everyone in the area. Subsequently he went on to the Blyth River and stayed with his own people until Maningrida settlement was established. He told me that he visited Milingimbi several times during the intervening period and that the mission superintendent had given him the title 'King of the Blyth River'.

When I arrived, Harry was in charge of one of the gangs working on the airstrip. His career was temporarily halted when he stole methylated spirits and was found drunk with several friends in the native village. The manager expelled him from the settlement for three months but subsequently took him back into favour.

Late in 1959 two staff members started a recreation club for the natives. One of the founders became the president, the other secretary-treasurer, and seven natives, including Harry and his younger 'brother' Boris, formed the rest of the committee. The manager approved of the organization but did not wish to be an office-bearer. The club built a sports oval and arranged football matches.

On several occasions Harry advised people to settle their differences peacefully, and once he and Boris harangued their own folk about several adolescent girls who, for various reasons, were still living with their parents. They said there would be trouble if husbands were not found for the girls soon. Although Boris expected to receive one of them, he and his 'brother' spoke less as interested parties than as 'committee men' concerned with keeping the peace. Another time Boris, who once told me he knew all about trade unions, informed the assistant manager that the aged and infirm were starving and ought to receive better rations. The assistant manager

warned him not to be insolent and threatened to take him to the manager. Boris then apologized and explained that he was only doing his duty as a committee man. The assistant manager pointed out to him that his obligations in this capacity were confined to the sphere of sport.

Eventually some of the Gidjingali began to complain among themselves. One of them remarked to me, 'We're sick and tired of those two committee men. Every day they want to have a meeting about something.' But another defended them, saying they were saving lives by telling people not to fight. He thought they were doing a good job.

Harry, on hearing about the complaints, made several emotional speeches in different parts of the village. He described himself as a committee man working for the Welfare Branch and told his audience that, if they wanted to behave like bush blackfellows, they had better go back to the bush. He went on to describe his long association with the government and mentioned the missionary who had called him 'King of the Blyth River'.

News of all these activities eventually reached the manager, who called a meeting of the Gidjingali. He announced to the gathering that Harry and Boris were helping him to keep peace in the settlement and acquaint those in residence with the white man's law. He asked the people not to be critical when incidents were reported to him but added that he would listen to complaints about the two men if they abused their authority.

Although Harry and Boris had assumed the role largely on their own initiative, the manager was pleased to encourage them once the matter was brought to his notice. But despite his backing the two men became less assertive. Probably the antagonism towards them had left its mark. It should also be mentioned that the officers who had founded the recreation club were less sympathetic than the manager. Although eager to be kept in touch with happenings in the village, they were uneasy about encouraging natives to carry tales; and they also felt that the two men had become self-important.

Harry and Boris had more forceful personalities than the other leaders. The two Gunavidji had been patrol assistants and personal friends of Kyle-Little. The Nagara was a voluble

man who led one of the early gangs on the airstrip and was known among the natives (though not among the whites) as Ganger. The third Gidjingali was the leader of a small team of crocodile hunters.

Apart from their special relationships with settlement officers, the six men were neither more nor less outstanding than others of their own age and held no indigenous titles or badges of office. But as a result of their experiences in Darwin, they realized that social status among whites is connected with occupation and that bureaucracy is a system of specialized named functions in a hierarchy of power and prestige. They knew, for example, that the manager was in charge of the staff at Maningrida, the Director in Darwin was superior to the manager, and the Minister in Canberra superior to the Director. (Once, after the Honourable Paul Hasluck had visited the settlement, I heard Boris address the manager as 'Minister' when seeking some favour from him.) They prided themselves on their knowledge of English and of European ways and liked white people to think well of them. They were obviously pleased at being given special responsibility, even though not all of them were as ambitious as Harry and Boris.

BELIEFS ABOUT THE OWNERSHIP OF MANINGRIDA

The settlement was built at Maningrida because this site was most suitable. The land belonged to Gunavidji, but, despite the avowed policy of encouraging outlying groups to visit the post for trading purposes only, Gidjingali in residence outnumbered all others from the beginning. Some of them seem to have been under the impression that the government had established the settlement primarily for their benefit. In discussing the origin of the belief I shall refer to Gidjingali and Gunadba as Burera, as officials were unaware of the distinction and applied this term to both.

Early in 1958 the Wanderers Australian Rules Football Club won the Darwin A Grade premiership for the first time. The team was composed mainly of Aborigines, several of whom were Burera. A month or so later a group of young Blyth River natives left Darwin by boat for Maningrida, which had then been established for about ten months. Soon

after arriving one man, Robert, aged about twenty-six, announced that the Director of Welfare had presented the settlement to the Burera because the Wanderers had won the football premiership. He said he had written authority (which he referred to as a permit) to act as head native. From now on those in residence were to take orders from him instead of the local white officials.

He went on to say that a second member of the group had been appointed patrol officer for the district. Later this man, whom the Welfare Branch had once employed as a patrol assistant, would be taken to all capital cities in Australia and eventually presented to the Queen. Six others were to take command of the *Temora*, a privately-owned vessel then under contract to carry supplies to Maningrida.

Robert made these announcements one night at a public meeting attended by most natives in residence. He implied that the Gunavidji (who had not been represented in the Wanderers football team) would have no positions of importance on the settlement. The Gunavidji told him to take his permit to the Blyth River. About a fortnight later Robert walked back to Darwin. He said he was worried about his mother, who was still living there. Before leaving he told people he had left his permit with the manager to hold until his return.

The incident occurred shortly before I arrived. About three months later a Gunavidji man told the story to the assistant manager, who then told me. Until this time the Europeans had been unaware of what had happened. The assistant manager told the Gunavidji that Robert's assertions were nonsense.

Gunavidji men spoke readily about the incident when I questioned them; but because Burera understandably refused, I am unable to explain satisfactorily how the scheme to take control came into being. The following facts seem worth mentioning.

Darwin townfolk referred to all immigrants from the Liverpool-Blyth River region as Liverpool River natives, probably because the Liverpool River is bigger and better known than the Blyth. When Burera men appeared in court, played football, or sought employment, people referred to

them as Liverpool River natives. One even went by the name of Joe Liverpool.

When I arrived in Darwin in April 1958 many Burera were still living there, but I did not encounter any Gunavidji. Welfare Branch officers agree that officials addressing groups composed exclusively of Burera may have made such statements as, 'You people must return to your own country at the Liverpool River' or, 'Why don't you people go back to the Liverpool River? You've got your own settlement there now.' If so, those addressed may have inferred that the settlement had been established for them and their tribesmen.

The fact that Welfare Branch officers took about a dozen Burera natives from Darwin to help found the settlement probably confirmed this belief. Some of these were assigned to occupations requiring special skills (tractor driver, baker, medical orderly), and for perhaps the first six months of the settlement the Burera occupied an ascendant position in the general work force. But as other people moved into the village and, in particular, as Gunavidji and western Nagara returned from Goulburn Island, officers distributed jobs more widely.

If the Burera at Maningrida initially thought that the settlement had been established for them, they must have been well on the way to disillusionment by the time Robert arrived early in 1958.

The belief persisted much longer in Darwin. During a short stay there about six months after Robert visited Maningrida, I asked a Burera man I had not seen before what was the name of his country. He replied: 'Liverpool'. When I pointed out that this was Gunavidji territory, he said: 'Not any longer. The Gunavidji are finished. The Burera own that country now.'

I have suggested that this belief may have arisen as a mistaken inference from statements made by officials who failed to distinguish Blyth River from Liverpool River natives.² I assume that the belief was Robert's starting-point, but I do

² I am grateful to Mr E. C. Evans, Chief Welfare Officer of the N.T.A., who first proposed this hypothesis. I am not implying that officials in Darwin should have exercised more care. The distinction would not have seemed important at that distance, and they could hardly have foreseen the consequences of failing to make it.

not know the additional factors responsible for his imaginative take-over bid. Although he was not a member of the winning football team, the idea may have come to him after the final match. Australian Rules has a big following in Darwin, and white people interested in native progress hailed the victory of the only predominantly Aboriginal team in the competition as a significant step forward.

I met Robert in Darwin in August 1958 and found him surly and uncommunicative. He returned to Maningrida in 1960 but did nothing remarkable until he hit an official who tried to take him into custody for throwing a spear during a fight. It was the only time I saw a native hit a European.

Although the Gidjingali accepted official classification with the Gunadba and even used the term *Burera* themselves when speaking to whites, they admitted that in the past they were on worse terms with this group than with the Gunavidji. I recorded several serious fights between Gidjingali and Gunadba natives but none between Gidjingali and Gunavidji. At the same time, Gidjingali men who had been to Darwin derided the Gunavidji behind their backs for lack of sophistication and made jokes about their solecisms. I myself could see little difference between the two peoples; indeed, several mission-trained Gunavidji spoke better English than any other native on the settlement.

In football matches Gidjingali and Gunadba usually combined against Gunavidji and Nagara. Supporters stood on opposite sides of the ground, and the games were not always played in the spirit of 'let the best team win'. Nevertheless, by 1960 people understood that they were expected to live together in harmony and that the settlement was for the benefit of all.

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The fact that this is a work of scholarship does not prevent the essential drama of these complex situations from showing through. The author's use of diagram to illuminate the different relationships is particularly useful.

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