GIFTS FOR THE DEAD

A stylistic analysis of Tiwi graveposts illuminated by a case study of their manufacture

by

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I certify that all parts of this thesis describe my own original work.

Jennifer Hoff
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ABSTRACT

Introduction - an outline of deficiencies in previous research, scholarly and popular interest in the Tiwi people and their funeral ceremonies; my reasons for attempting the project. The theoretical context for this research and methodologies for the stylistic analysis and fieldwork project are outlined. Difficulties in completing the project are reviewed together with a summary of the major fieldwork commission which narrowed the focus of research.

The setting - an historical survey of Bathurst and Melville Islands comprising the formation of landforms, the arrival of the first people and their relations with indigenous species. The death of the ancestral leader Purukupali is recounted and his instructions which have formed the basis for Tiwi funeral ceremonies. The influence of contact with outsiders - Portugese, Dutch, Indonesians, etc. - is recorded as well as British contact beginning with the settlement of Ford Dundas. Changes brought about by occupation of the islands by buffalo shooters and the establishment of the Bathurst Island Mission are outlined. Hostility between the Tiwi and adjacent mainland Aborigines is described also.

Graveposts as ceremonial markers - descriptions by the first field researchers - Klaatsch, Basedow, Spencer - are compared with findings by Mountford and Goodale of the National Geographic Expedition in 1954. This chapter concludes with descriptions of earlier ceremonies given to me by contemporary carvers and of events at a pukumani (funeral) ceremony for Nelson Mungatopi's uncle in 1986.

Classification of sculptural elements - major and minor features from a core sample of fifty eight graveposts plus additional examples are identified and classified with a summary of significant findings.

Classification of painted motifs - a systemic grouping of painted elements comprising the use of materials, distribution of design elements, technical processes and the skills of Tiwi artists, together with a summary of their incidence and temporal distribution.

Conception and design - differing levels of ability among artists, how they acquire their skills and forms of training. Sources for ideas are surveyed along with motivating factors, value judgments and the rights of commissioning families, conceptual preparation and the stages of manufacture for tutinis (graveposts).
Generative processes - Purukupali's instructions to tutini carvers are reviewed along with seasonal influences, the selection of materials, acceptable work methods and conventional stages for a ritual commission (scorching techniques, obtaining pigments, the use of fixatives, etc.). This chapter concludes with a detailed comparison of preparations for a pukumani ceremony by the carvers Paddy Freddy and Holder Adams.

Aesthetic criteria and assessment - artists' responses to the requirements of a commission are described as well as the resulting evaluation of graveposts by bereaved relatives or patrons. The significance of the contract for all parties including the 'bosses' and 'workers' is reviewed. Criteria for acceptability and criteria for excellence are factors regarded by artists as indicators of the level of positive response and payment for commissioned graveposts. Included in this classification is a discussion of the limits of acceptable innovation in tutini carving.

Meanings and symbolism - graveposts as symbolic human images and examples of innovation including small carved human figures. Meanings for carved motifs and the symbolism of painted patterns are outlined, and comparisons made between scarification designs and painted elements. Categories of painted patterns, including pukumani designs, are assessed in terms of their context and symbolism.

Conclusion - a review of stylistic evolution in graveposts, major determining factors of style, and the role of artists as innovators and exponents of traditional ideas. Evidence of stylistic variation during successive historic periods is summarised and important traits compared with painting styles of the Yolngu (Aborigines) in Arnhem Land. The study ends with comments by Tiwi artists on the future of tutini carving.
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Map 1

BATHURST AND MELVILLE ISLANDS - HISTORIC AND TOTEMIC PLACE NAMES

(ref. C.P. Mountford, National Geographic Expedition, 1954)
Map 2

GRAVE MONUMENTS
(ref. H. Klaatsch, W. B. Spencer, J. A. Hoff)

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Map 3
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BATHURST and MELVILLE ISLANDS

LOCATION OF BANDS

REGIONAL GROUPS
CHAPTER ONE - Introduction

Preamble

This research project emerged from my interest in groups of monumental carved and decorated Aboriginal graveposts which were a prominent feature of museum exhibitions in the 1970s. Labelled simply 'Tiwi graveposts' or more evocatively 'Pukamani poles' these sculptures were sometimes accompanied by brief captions which described their use in the pukumani (mortuary) ceremonies of the Tiwi people。(Part of a pukumani ceremony is shown in Plate 1.) Museum staff and visitors appeared content to accept that such artefacts, as expressions of the so-called 'primitive' and 'timeless' character of Aboriginal culture, although worthy of display, did not merit intensive research.

To the writer, an art historian and artist by training, the appearance of most graveposts indicated they were the creations of accomplished artists who selected intractable materials, combined visual effects with great finesse and adapted curious processes (such as applying white clay over charred surfaces) to achieve characteristic effects. Although Tiwi graveposts were very distinctive in appearance, their form and patterning echoed features from north-eastern Arnhem Land sculpture, namely, their carved crests, projections or human heads and their surface patterning of geometric motifs (see Figure 3). Yet anthropologists Ronald and Catherine Berndt, who had extensive fieldwork experience with
Aborigines in both geographic regions, believed that contact between the Tiwi and mainland people was minimal. 'Traditionally, north-eastern Arnhem Land contact with Bathurst and Melville Islands was very slight indeed' (Berndt, 1973, page 187). Without doubt, Tiwi graveposts were among the largest and most complex sculptures of Aboriginal Australia and appeared a challenging subject for a major research project. At that early stage, the naive and enthusiastic prospective researcher had little idea of the extent of collections stored in basements and repositories - over 300 graveposts in various Australian museums and galleries as well as smaller holdings in museums overseas.

From the turn of this century, several field workers including Baldwin Spencer, Hart, Pilling, Goodale and Mountford have compiled detailed studies of the Tiwi. Distinctive aspects of their material culture, social organisation and ceremonial life have been very well documented. In addition, general writings including those by Patrick Ritchie and Brother Pye contain recollections of life on Melville and Bathurst Islands after intensive European contact. Through a combination of scholarly publications and popular journalism, the Tiwi were stereotyped as resourceful by nature, ferocious and treacherous to intruders and having a unique cultural tradition.

... when in grief, or intending mischief, or open hostilities, they paint their bodies, faces, and limbs with white or red pigments, so as to give themselves a most fantastic and even hideous appearance. (Campbell, 1834, page 625)

While a great deal of information exists in the form of published texts, field notes, photographs and film and sound
recordings, successive researchers had focused on similar aspects of Tiwi culture, especially their elaborate pukumani rituals for the dead, while other avenues of investigation were largely overlooked.

The major ceremony, that of burial, is by far the more elaborate. It extends over several months, involves the co-operation of many people, and provides the tribe with a complete outlet for their grief, their music, their dancing and their art. This ceremony is without parallel in Australia, and, so far as we know, elsewhere in the world. (Mountford, 1958, page 178)

From published sources, it was evident to me that graveposts formed an important part of these mortuary ceremonies and that their significance in Tiwi artistic and ceremonial life had not been fully researched previously.

Theoretical context and methodology

Part of the difficulty in attempting such a study of Tiwi graveposts was the breadth of focus required, spanning not only the disciplines of anthropology and art history but aesthetics, art theory and history as well. Previous field workers attempted to address these difficulties - the anthropologist Jane Goodale collaborated with Joan Koss to describe modes of creativity among Tiwi carvers through a series of 'conditions of creativity' which sought to isolate discrete stages in gravepost production. Charles Mountford, who worked with Goodale at Snake Bay, Melville Island in 1954 compiled meanings for carved and painted forms of graveposts created at that time; - his unpublished fieldnotes containing detailed notes on meanings and symbolism together with sketches and the recollections of experienced Tiwi carvers became a major source of information for this study.
Because of its interdisciplinary character, this stylistic analysis of Tiwi graveposts is set in a context of major studies of indigenous art which combine the methodologies of anthropology, art history, art theory and philosophy. The classic theoretical work by Boas is the earliest relevant study. His model for the interpretation of 'primitive' art combined two aspects - technology-based analysis and 'sense impression' with analysis through formal elements including virtuosity, regularity of form, etc. Although Boas' approach in identifying those 'standards developed by expert technicians' is limited, its emphasis on classifying criteria for artistic process and outcome had relevance for many subsequent analyses (Boas, 1955, page 13).

The noted scholar Paul Wingert drew from art history and archaeology to determine universal characteristics for art objects. He defined two aspects in any art work - 1) objective or morphological (shapes, lines, surfaces) and 2) subjective or cultural (motivation, function, etc.).

There are no special principles of aesthetic judgment applicable solely to primitive art, no separate standards setting it apart from any other time or place. (Wingert, 1962, page 76)

While Wingert supported the importance of systematic examination of the 'morphological characteristics of a form or design' to determine stylistic traditions, he was equally concerned with defining those artistic aspirations which transcended technical proficiency (Wingert, 1962, page 76).

Rarely was the mask or figure for a given ceremony or rite required to contain any artistic quality for the successful fulfillment of its purpose; yet artists were commissioned to shape these objects, and in very few cases did they fail to give the forms an objective or external aesthetic expression and appearance beyond the
demands of their subjective or internal content. (Wingert, 1962, page 31)

His examination of the physical, psychological and sociological contexts for art as well as formal analysis of the objects themselves initiated new approaches to the investigation of style in so-called 'primitive' art.

Other researchers, especially social and cultural anthropologists (such as Munn, 1971 and Morphy, 1977) used scientific methods or those of studies including linguistics to determine cognitive systems and formal organisation in the visual arts of particular societies. Nancy Munn's useful study of Walbiri totemic designs grouped images into two categories which she labelled 'continuous' and 'discontinuous'. Although Munn observed Aboriginal artists working, her analysis of representational systems was not based on their interpretations of such a system,

Walbiri themselves, when making these designs, generally draw the core elements first and then add the surrounding elements, but the core-adjunct analysis and description derives from my examination of semantic and structural features of the designs rather than from any explicit Walbiri analysis. (Munn, 1971, page 348)

Munn's use of linguistic terms which she considered analogous to categories in visual systems drew criticism from other researchers who were grappling with the difficulties of developing appropriate models for formal analysis of the visual arts.

... more might have been achieved by a closer examination of the formal elements, their distribution and inter-relationships, which constitute the visual 'mechanics' of the art and which must be the starting-point for any 'search for the system'. (Korn, 1978, page 166)
In her study of 'organizing principles' in the art and architecture of the Northwest Coast Indians, Vastokas offered another avenue of inquiry,

... to 'get at' the tacit rules that govern visual art, we should not make the mistake of applying analytical methods of linguistics. We must recognize that concrete works of art produced within a given society constitute a cognitive sub-system parallel to, rather than shaped by, the cognitive sub-system of language. (Vastokas, 1978, page 244)

Studies by art historians, art theorists and artists often employ different methodology and a different approach to the 'ethnoscientific' taxonomic and objective orientation of most anthropologists. Their interest is in quantifying subjective qualities of beauty, formal expression, invention, feeling or 'sentience' (Langer, 1977, page 159). Wingert recognised that certain African sculptures were '... intentionally created with aesthetic quality ...' (Wingert, 1962, page 43) and other writers including the art theorist Langer explored this aesthetic dimension more fully.

... even the forms are not phenomena in the order of actual things, as spots on a tablecloth are; the forms in a design - no matter how abstract - have a life that does not belong to mere spots. Something arises from the process of arranging colors on a surface, something that is created, not just gathered and set in a new order: that is the image. (Langer, 1977, page 161)

Practising artists such as Swinton were highly critical of scholarly emphasis on 'magical' and 'functional' hypotheses for art making. He felt that many studies, particularly those of the contemporary visual arts of Inuit people, reflected an anti-humanistic and paternalistic bias.

... I wish to emphasise the experience and the sense components of aesthetics which far surpass all others in importance and accent and which give aesthetics its humanistic content. This content, since it is simultaneously universal yet highly individualistic, is capable of transcending most
cultural or ethnic boundaries. (Swinton, 1978, page 77)

Existing studies of Aboriginal art forms reflect a different bias as most identify meanings and symbolism or stylistic variations within a specific cultural or regional context. As systematic investigation of aesthetic qualities in art styles and parameters for expression and invention within cognitive systems is almost non-existent, it forms an important part of this study of Tiwi graveposts.

Because Tiwi art had proved resistant to analysis and interpretation by comparison with regional traditions of mainland Australia, a formal analysis was combined with a fieldwork component which included documenting every stage of a commission for twelve large graveposts. While certain aspects of this study including the influence of Christian beliefs and recent pressures of the commercial arts market invited further investigation, a decision was taken to limit research to Tiwi gravepost production and use although some comparisons are made with other art forms and regional styles. A structure for the formal analysis was developed from Wollheim's model of the 'generative view of style' (in contrast to a 'taxonomic view') which he sees as having two essential requirements,

. it picks out those elements of the artist's work which are dependent upon certain processes or operations characteristic of the artist's activity; and

. it groups these elements into stylistic features accordingly, i.e. according to the processes on which they are dependent. (Wollheim, 1978, page 9)

I elected to use terminology drawn from art theory and practice, namely, elements and principles of design, as the
basis for constructing two sets of characteristics for carved and painted forms. (A glossary of terms is included on page 279.) These characteristics were recorded for almost 200 graveposts and detailed findings from a core sampling of 58 posts are evaluated in Chapters Four and Five. As a basic definition of style, I have taken Wingert's description of its broader dimension - 'those distinctive properties of shapes and forms' which characterise uniqueness in any object (Wingert, 1963, page 76).

Certain Tiwi graveposts show a peculiar lack of technical excellence or aesthetic interest which invited investigation. While Boas identified the absence of features or qualities such as 'virtuosity' and 'artistic form', relatively few researchers of indigenous art forms and styles have placed emphasis on such factors. Arguably, the absence or lack of specific features or qualities can provide insights into preferred generative modes and conceptual systems. Where the '... setting forth of pure quality' is not realised in a particular work, mediocre and poor results require assessment, especially when they appear acceptable to the artist (Langer, 1977, page 163). The dimensions that extend beyond technical failure are considerable as the philosopher Sparshott describes,

Failure is failure in working out the idea: either intellectual failure to achieve clarity, or failure to persevere in the attempt to reach precision and a consequent relapse into prefabricated rhetoric and trickery; or, of course, technical failure at the level of "externalization" as of a sculptor who splits the stone. Some failures that might have been thought thus technical, however, are rather intellectual. (Sparshott, 1963, page 420)
Background to the fieldwork project

Initially, this research was planned as a collection-oriented study comprising a stylistic analysis of most Tiwi graveposts located in public collections in Australia. By late 1985, three factors had emerged which resulted in the whole project being modified substantially. Firstly, a number of graveposts acquired for museums had not been used in pukumani ceremonies and some had their decorations erased and repainted prior to sale. Many of these examples were different in form from tutinis\(^1\) created for ritual purposes. Secondly, the majority of posts had little provenance — usually the collector's name and date of acquisition by the institution. When documentation from graveposts was compared with descriptions by field researchers, major discrepancies indicated that systematic recording of gravepost carving and painting processes and related meanings had never been obtained. Thirdly, a lack of recorded descriptions by Tiwi artists left substantial gaps in contextual information on gravepost production. Without such descriptions, a formal analysis provides specific but somewhat irrelevant findings. As Korn noted of her own work which produced precise comparative results,

> The findings of a purely formal study such as this can only be formal findings and as such, they are not intrinsically interesting. (Korn, 1978, page 171)

Gaps in existing information were filled by documenting the work of living tutini carvers and recording not only

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\(^1\) Throughout this study, the Tiwi word tutini will be used to describe posts prepared for a pukumani ceremony, to distinguish them from graveposts carved for museums, art dealers and tourists.
their modes of work but their ideas, feelings and aspirations. As Chipp observed,

Artists are considered to be legitimate commentators upon their own art, immersed as they are in the ideas and attitudes of their environment and being the sole participants in and witnesses to the act by which the work is created. (Chipp, 1970, page 1)

Very little information had been obtained previously from Aboriginal informants on value judgments of form and design, artistic invention, aesthetic preferences and categorisation of ideas. So by observation and discussion, I hoped to obtain significant original findings which would complement previous studies.

Fieldwork - the Tiwi gravepost commission

Early in 1986, I visited Bathurst and Melville Islands to discuss a proposal for the completion of twelve large graveposts by Tiwi carvers in circumstances that approximated a ceremonial commission. All aspects of the project were recorded and the completed graveposts, together with the tools and materials used in their construction, acquired for the National Museum of Australia in Canberra. After the first visit of two weeks to gain approval from Tiwi councils, two longer periods of fieldwork later in 1986 were necessary to document the project and to ensure the safe transportation of the completed graveposts to Sydney for fumigation. As I was in full-time employment, periods of leave to monitor the commission were sandwiched between work commitments in Canberra. The Tiwi artists completed the first six posts at different rates so I returned to Canberra and arranged for the finished graveposts to be condition checked and stored at
the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory. These plans did not allow for the artists' enthusiasm - as soon as they had finished their first graveposts they began to work on a group of much larger posts. (Some of these larger examples are shown in Plates 43, 58 and 71.) I returned quickly to continue recording their work and several weeks later, the decorated graveposts in crates built by the local people were transported from Melville Island (see Plate 126).

Tiwi artists who contributed to this commission displayed a high degree of interest and commitment including concern that full descriptions should be recorded accurately. With the assistance of local people, diagrams and photographs of over one hundred early graveposts were obtained together with detailed information on gravesites and major pukumani ceremonies. The commission itself imposed great demands - the physical demands of felling, transporting and carving large posts, difficulties caused by changing weather conditions and the requirements of describing and recording every aspect of the work including processes and meanings which had not been used for many years.

As the fieldwork continued, certain contradictory features emerged in the evidence that had accumulated. Firstly, a disparity in the historical information revealed contact with alien groups by the Tiwi over a long period although accepted findings indicated that they had remained hostile, insular and culturally distinctive. Secondly, power and influence in Tiwi society were wielded by middle-aged men of great prestige - 'big men' and although Tiwi women
achieved considerable status compared with Aboriginal women on the mainland, from my observations this did not extend to detailed knowledge of graveposts (see Plate 20). Protracted funeral ceremonies, the most significant ritual of the Tiwi were not secret events and were attended by women, children and outsiders as well as the older men who took leading roles (see Plate 16, 27 and 28). However, the recorded meanings for decorated graveposts which formed a central tableau at these ceremonies, were incomplete or inaccurate.

The major argument of this study emerged. The carving and painting of graveposts has been a central feature of Tiwi ceremonial life throughout their recorded history. As the most spiritually significant objects created by the Tiwi, graveposts are markers of stylistic and cultural continuity and change. This study explores the extent to which they embody Tiwi artistic traditions, illustrate personal identity, describe regional history and exist as a lasting record of the dynamic processes of conformity, invention and adaptation in Tiwi society.

The appropriate place to begin an intensive study of these graveposts is with oral histories by the Tiwi people describing their home lands of Melville and Bathurst Island and the origin of their pukumani ceremonies.
CHAPTER TWO - The setting

From Palaneri Times

When old men on Bathurst Island described themselves to white researchers in the 1920s, they used the word 'Tiwi', a plural form of the words for 'man' and 'woman' (Hart & Pilling, 1960, page 170). The word 'Tiwi' roughly translates as 'we people' and even today they rarely use the term, preferring to refer to themselves as 'people' or 'Aborigines'. Their territory comprises two islands located approximately 100 km north of Darwin at 11-12° latitude and 131-130° longitude (see map, page vii). The larger of the two, Melville Island is separated from the smaller Bathurst Island by the narrow Apsley Strait which is approximately 64 km long. Other small islands lying close to Melville and Bathurst Islands include Buchanan Island south-west of Apsley Strait, Harris Island at the strait's north-eastern end and the Vernon Islands which extend further to the east into Clarence Strait. Both Melville and Bathurst Islands are comparatively flat and crossed by a series of low hills and several large creeks which drain into extensive swampy areas. On the northern side of Melville Island thick forests grow in an area of heavy rainfall and further inland there are large areas of poorer country with thin soil and sparser vegetation.

The appearance of these islands changes each year with the onset of the 'wet' season. At this time monsoonal rainstorms increase plant and animal life and make both
islands lush with thick vegetation. This period of high humidity and changeable climatic conditions is followed by the 'dry' season beginning in March or April and bringing cool, drier weather which dries vegetation and diminishes fresh water sources (see Plates 21 and 22). Although the coastline of the mainland is vaguely discernible from the southern extremities of both Melville and Bathurst Islands the open sea between is subject to strong currents and changeable conditions and is therefore considered dangerous by the Tiwi.

The low hills, sandy beaches, wide creeks and mangrove swamps of the two islands are rich in plant and animal life. Natural vegetation includes trees such as stringy bark, bloodwood, ironwood, and woollybutt and zamia palms, vines and many smaller flowering plants. Animal species include kangaroos, possums, snakes, goannas and many types of birds and insects. In tracts of fresh and salt water the most common species include turtles, sharks, crocodiles, prawns, mangrove worms and fish such as barramundi.

The Tiwi maintained a close relationship with all of the natural features and resources of their islands. Not only did they utilise most animal species for food, they maintained a symbolic relationship with them believing that in palaneri (Dreaming) times all animals had been human beings who had subsequently changed their form and adopted the characteristics by which they are recognised today. Tiwi stories of the palaneri era and the creation of the first human beings vary considerably but the following account by Michael Tipungwuti contains most important elements,
All was darkness and the earth was flat. Then in Palaneri time (DREAMING), Mudungkala, an old blind woman, arose miraculously out of the ground at Murup-ianga, S.E. of Melville Island at Cape Keith carrying in her arms three infants. 'Murupiangkala'. It is not known from where she came or where she went after creating Melville and Bathurst Island[s]. Clasping her children to her breast and crawling on her knees, Mudungkala travelled slowly North. The fresh water that bubbled up in the track she made became the tide way of Dundas Strait. Mudungkala then went West, forming the North Shores of Melville Island as far as Cape Van Dieman, Johnson and Lethbridge Bays, Curtis Haven, Tyipripu River, Shark Bay and the North end of Apsley Strait. Still carrying the children Mudungkala crawled along the West Coast of Bathurst Island to Cape Fourcroy, making Port Hurd on the way. It was on Turit-urina in Port Hurd, that the Mythical Birdmen and Birdwomen and later the Ningaui spirit people performed the first Kulama (or Yam) ceremonies, in the Fourcroy area at Mudungkala. One side of the wide channel she created became the southern Shore of Bathurst Island where Maundu, the dreaded Maratjis made their home. When Mudungkala reached Buchanan Island (Jurubulinai) she thought she was making the Island (that is, Melville Island) too large, so remembering the deep inlet near Cape Van Dieman, she crawled North making Apsley Strait and separating Bathurst Island from Melville Island; then she turned back and felt her way to Jurubulinai. Then East to Murpianga. Thus Clarence Strait was created by Mudungkala. She then decreed that the bare Islands be clothed with vegetation and inhabited with animals so that her three children left behind would have food; crawling South she then vanished from Tiwi knowledge. (Pye, 1967, page 25)

After Mudungkala's departure her descendants roamed across Bathurst and Melville Islands, camping at favoured locations, utilising the plentiful natural resources and living in harmony with each other. Details of this period are sketchy although old men who recounted stories from Tiwi history to Mountford and Harney in 1954, vaguely remembered names of some 'pukwi people' (Mountford, Fieldnotes, 1954, page 691), men and women who had lived at that time. The palaneri or creation era reached its dramatic end with the death of the celebrated leader Purukupali, the scattering of pukwi people to different regions of the islands, and their transformation into the animals, birds, and natural features.
known to the Tiwi today. The story of Purukupali's death which brought death to the world and established the model for Tiwi funeral ceremonies is known to older people although many of its details are being forgotten. They still refer to Purukupali's commands to the pukwi people as guidelines for correct procedures in ritual matters.

The most complete version of the story of Purukupali's death was obtained from Mickey Geranium Warlapini, George Norm Pangarimini, Doria Wonaemiri, and Anita Pangarimini by Grau at Pularumpi between 1980 and 1982.

Long ago when all the animals lived on earth as human beings, the people were happy and they never died. They never died until that day when Purukupali found his son Tjinani dead. Purukupali had gone hunting. Waijai, his wife, left her baby son in the camp alone and went food gathering. When she was in the bush, her lover, Tapara, her husband's younger brother, joined her. They stayed a long time. During that time, the sun moved higher and higher and Tjinani was no longer in the shade where she had left him. Tjinani was sick and with the heat of the sun he died. When Purukupali returned he found his son dead, and by the time Waijai and Tapara returned he was in a rage. In his wrath he beat his wife with a stick and she was transformed into a curlew...

Tapara asked Purukupali to give him the dead child, "in three days I will return with him alive," he said, but Purukupali refused, he would not listen. He fought with Tapara all across Melville Island. They fought with forked fighting sticks. They fought and fought... until Purukupali hit Tapara in the eye and killed him. Tapara went up into the sky to become the moon who 'dies each month and returns in three days.' Purukupali grabbed his son and called out 'go, all of you! You must make cemetery poles, and then you will have to dance. First there will be preliminary ceremonies and then a big dance,' then he walked backward into the sea saying 'we will follow my son. No one will ever come back. Everyone will die. The water rose and the sea took them.'

(Grau, 1983, page 78)

All of the pukwi people gathered at Murupianga where Purukupali had drowned himself and made arrangements to perform the first funeral ceremony or pukumani, each person
assuming certain tasks and responsibilities as Tiwi mourners do now.

The boss, Alouwia, of Purukupali's pukamani was Talinini, the head man of the honey people. Tukimbini called Talinini to be Alouwia then called up all the other pukwi people...The working men of Purukupali's pukamani were Tukimbini, Wuriubili, Andjalui, and Panindu. This is because they were local. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, 1954, page 671)

At this first funeral ceremony, men and women painted their bodies with ochre patterns, decorated themselves with ornaments and constructed bark baskets which they placed over the graveposts at the end of the ceremony.

The honey man Putuki, his brother, Kalju-pini, and a honey woman, Latun-kala, were present at the Pukamuni of Purukupali and his son...The woman Latun-kala made the Pukamuni baskets and the two brothers painted them. The woman also made the feathered arm and chest ornaments... (Mountford, Fieldnotes, 1954, page 397)

Those pukwi people who were nearby, 'at Murupianga, Wanupi, Panindu and Wailu' (Mountford, Fieldnotes, 1954, page 693) became 'workers' who felled trees with mungwani stone axes and carved and painted graveposts for Purukupali. Not all of the participants completed their assigned tasks properly. Pipinari who became the queen fish, injured himself in a spear throwing contest and neglected his duties.

It was the first Pipinarai's duty to pay the men for cutting and decorating the poles, but he did not fulfil his obligations so the men chased him...to transfix him with a spear. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, 1954, page 107)

Since that time the Tiwi have hunted queen fish by spearing them and fights have taken place on the ceremonial ground over payment for graveposts.

Two funeral ceremonies were performed to commemorate Purukupali and his son, but my Tiwi informants in 1986 said
that the father's ceremony was much larger and more important because he was their leader and a man of great authority.

According to Tjamalampua in 1954,

When Purukupali's son died, the turtle woman who was alumbrinua (mother-in-law) to Purukupali, performed in the company of the alligator woman, and the sugarbag... woman, a Pukamuni over the dead son. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, 1954, page 159)

Older Tiwi can still locate the marks of Purukupali's fight with his brother Tapara on the rocks and ground at several locations across Melville Island. They also say that natural features now mark the site of his death,

The pukwi place of Purukupali a whirlpool off Tapar-armina, which is so strong that no boat or canoe will venture near it. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, 1954, page 669)

Near the water's edge at that place, the carved and painted graveposts erected as Purukupali's memorial are said to be visible as 'large trees' (Mountford, Fieldnotes, 1954, page 363). Opinions differed among the Tiwi on the form and placement of the graveposts as one of Mountford's informants said that they were '... now rocks in the water near whirlpool' (Mountford, Fieldnotes, 1954, page 669).

After Purukupali's death the Tiwi people were given not only the directions for an elaborate funeral ceremony and commemorative face and body patterns and ornaments, they were assigned the territories on Melville and Bathurst Islands which would belong to them and their descendants. According to old men in 1954, Tokumbini the honeyeater, who organised the first funeral rituals also ensured the equal allocation of territories (see maps, page ix).

At the time of Purukupali's Pukamuni, the various men and women were out hunting in what is now their totemic area, and, at the call of Tokumbini travelled to
When Tiwi participants in later funeral ceremonies painted their faces and bodies with the intricate patterns that they said had been handed down from that first pukumani ceremony for Purukupali, they illustrated not only their own territorial affiliations but their totemic relationship with the bird or animal who had once used the same motifs. Malumerinita (Big Tom) painted himself with the facial design of Tunamuni, the salmon (of the bloodwood pukwi) for a funeral ceremony at Snake Bay in 1954.

These designs along with songs and dances are still re-created to commemorate the pukwi people, and major events including funeral ceremonies are performed according to their instructions.

Contact with other people

Melville and Bathurst Islands lie south of an extensive network of trade routes linking the islands of Indonesia with Papua New Guinea and northern Australia. Over several centuries, the Tiwi had intermittent contact with explorers and castaways and the effects of those incidents greatly influenced their history. The earliest contacts between Tiwi and alien visitors were probably with traders from regions of
Indonesia and possibly with Chinese explorers (Berndt, 1954, page 69). Evidence of Indonesian influence remains along the coastlines of northern Australia and in the mortuary ceremonies of Arnhem Land Aborigines and will be described more fully in later chapters.

Portuguese explorers may have had periodic contact with the Tiwi but evidence of their visits is circumstantial as many journals and maps were lost and early Portuguese visits were veiled in secrecy. In 1494, Portugal and Spain had devised a Line of Demarcation at The Great Meridian (129° east of Greenwich) which divided their spheres of influence and lay west of Bathurst Island. Several factors strongly indicate that Portuguese from a very early date landed on Melville or Bathurst Islands which were within the Spanish zone.

Portuguese seamen often followed the Line of Demarcation south on their voyages then changed course westwards or eastwards into unknown waters. Portuguese exploration was made more likely by prevailing weather conditions as ships were often swept off course to the south-east, so the first contact with these islands may have been accidental. Jesuit Maffei recorded how easily such an event might occur.

Some Portuguese of the Moluccas, having gone to the islands of the Celebes to seek for gold, but not having been able to land, were driven by a fearful tempest upon an island, which is distant therefrom three hundred leagues, when they went ashore. The inhabitants, who were simple people, received them very well... (Major, 1859, page xxvii)

In this instance, the Portuguese probably had landed on Prince of Wales Island but an accidental landfall at Melville
or Bathurst Island was equally possible. After examining surviving maps, letters and journals, Major suggested a likely time for these discoveries,

Our surmises...lead us to regard it as highly probable that Australia was discovered by Portuguese between the years 1511 and 1529, and, almost a demonstrable certainty, that it was discovered before the year 1542. (Major 1859, page xl)

The half-Portuguese, half-Macassarese scholar Manoel Godhinho de Eredia whose maps and writings Major publicised then dismissed as false had documented a voyage from Timor to the Brunswick Bay area of Western Australia in 1599 or 1600.

Bathurst and Melville Islands are within easy sailing distance of Timor and many later explorers such as Matthew Flinders called in to its ports to replenish their supplies. (So close is Timor to these islands that Captain King left the coast of Bathurst Island on 31 May 1818, and after three days of easy sailing, arrived at Kupang on 4 June.) The close proximity of Timor to the northern Australian coast and Portugal's lengthy occupation of the island meant that Portuguese explorers saw Australia (and may have visited Melville and Bathurst Islands) at an early date because of the closeness of these coastlines to the Line of Demarcation. As McIntyre, in his general publication on early European contact concluded,

They had the ships, the navigators and the expertise that enabled them to sail twenty thousand miles from Lisbon to Timor and back again, and therefore they were quite capable of sailing the extra 285 miles to the Australian coast. (McIntyre, 1977, page 53)

Abel Jansz Tasman during his second voyage in 1644, sailed along the north coast of Melville Island and down the east coast of Bathurst Island, and named important landmarks
including Cape Van Diemen on the northern tip of Melville Island, although he probably did not land there (see map, page vii). By this time, Aborigines in coastal areas regarded European explorers as invaders and attempted to kill them although earlier meetings had been cordial. The reason for this dramatic change is not hard to find as Torres, the last Portuguese explorer in this region, refers to the common practice of kidnapping local people.

Here were very large islands, and there appeared more to the southward. They were inhabited by black people, very corpulent and naked ... We caught in all this land twenty persons of different nations, that with them we might be able to give a better account to Your Majesty. Torres, August 1606.²

Contact between Portuguese expeditions and the Tiwi in particular, was possibly equally sinister as Tiwi were captured as slaves. From early accounts the Tiwi were handsome, athletic people by comparison with mainland Aborigines and, to the Portuguese, the country's only resource. While no descriptions of this slave taking exist, documentation from indirect sources and descriptions of later incidents provide very strong evidence for its occurrence (Hart & Pilling, 1960, page 97). Captain King described a curious incident which occurred in 1818 on Melville Island when an old woman enticed his crew to land as they approached the coast in a small boat,

On pulling towards the woman, who, by the way, could not have been selected by them either for her youth or beauty, she frequently repeated the words 'Ven aca, Ven aca,' accompanied with an invitation to land ... (King, 1829, page 113)

King believed that the woman was imitating the Portuguese

²Relation of Luis Vaez de Torres, IN Major, 1859, page 28.
words 'come here' which earlier Melville Islanders had heard used by slave raiders, and he assumed rightly that she was acting as a decoy for Tiwi men attempting to surprise King's party and seize metal tools.

Major Campbell, a commandant of the blighted settlement Fort Dundas which was abandoned in 18293 described a very different response when he offered a medal strung on tape to a young Tiwi.

This young man remained at a short distance (two or three paces) took hold of his wrists, and appeared as if struggling to escape from the grasp of an enemy; he then pointed his hand towards his neck, looked upwards to the branches of a tree, shook his head significantly (evidently in allusion to being hung) and avoided coming nigh enough to receive the proffered gift. (Campbell, 1834, page 135)

Campbell's observations led him to believe that this slave-taking on Melville Island had continued over many years,

... the Malay fishermen, from Macassar, are forbidden to go near Melville Island (which they call Amba, signifying a slave), alleging that it is infested by pirates - probably slavers. (Campbell, in Russell, 1888, page 627)

Information obtained by George Windsor Earl supported this view. During a visit to Timor in 1838 he was told that in earlier times the Portuguese had transported captured Tiwi to Timor as slaves.

... According to ... the older inhabitants of Timor, Melville Island was only less a source of slavery than New Guinea, in proportion to its smaller extent of surface, at the period in which the slave-trade was encouraged or connived at by the European authorities... (Earl, 1853, page 210)

3Major John Campbell was appointed by Governor Darling in August, 1826 to take command of Fort Dundas and transport additional troops, convicts and stores to the settlement.
Hart and Pilling concluded that this slave taking had ceased more than thirty years before Earl's visit. 'From what little is known we may conclude that the Portugese stopped capturing Tiwi as slaves about 1800' (Hart & Pilling 1960, page 98). Aside from voyages by Portuguese owned ships acquiring slaves, intermittent landings on Melville and Bathurst Islands may have resulted in outsiders being abandoned in Tiwi home lands. Another tragic legacy of sporadic contact may have been the introduction of new diseases and Tiwi who suffered an outbreak of serious disease brought by outsiders would have had ample reason for wishing to murder later visitors.

Speculation on the nature of contact between the Tiwi and European voyagers ends with records and reports of several Dutch expeditions to the region. By a combination of determination and accident, the ships 'Pera' and 'Arnhem' commanded by Jan Carstenz charted the coast of Arnhem Land in 1623 and prepared maps for later expeditions,

...The journal of this voyage is not now to be found; but the discovered countries may be seen in the maps which were made of them.\textsuperscript{4}

Thirteen years later another Dutch expedition of three ships commanded by Pieterz Pietersen discovered the coast of Arnhem or Van Diemen's Land at 11° south latitude and followed the shoreline for a hundred and twenty miles, '... without seeing any people, but many signs of smoke.'\textsuperscript{5} According to Heeres,

\textsuperscript{4}Extract from the book of despatches from Batavia IN Major, 1859, page 32.

\textsuperscript{5}Extract from the book of despatches from Batavia IN Major, 1859, page 33.
There can be no doubt that Pieterszoon must have sailed far enough to westward to have passed Dundas Strait, and to have reached the western extremity of Melville Island. (Heeres, 1899, page viii)

In 1705, three ships under the command of Martin Van Delft spent two weeks carefully charting the coastlines of Melville and Bathurst Islands and compiled detailed records of the voyage. Despatches contain the first description of Tiwi men and women who were observed at close quarters by Van Delft and his crew. They noted the stature and agility of the men and their body decorations of scars and yellow ochre. The distinctive Tiwi stone axe was in evidence but bark houses and graveposts were not recorded. Van Delft's good fortune in surviving this meeting with the Tiwi is remarkable considering their degree of access to his ship and their attack on two sailors. The wounded man who tore off his bandages achieves distinction as the first recorded Tiwi 'big man' who, no doubt, enlivened many subsequent ceremonies with his portrayal of being shot then showing his contempt for the white men's remedies. Because of its importance, the full text describing the Tiwi is quoted here.

Between these two islands or headlands, some natives were met by the men on the 31st April who did not retire, but ran hastily towards an eminence, or small hill, and with obvious, signs and gestures attempted to drive them away. No one was able to understand their language, which, according to the skipper Martin Van Delft, seems to resemble in some respects that of Malabar; but even this is by no means clear. The colour and stature of these men appears from the description given to resemble most that of the Indians of the east; but they go stark naked without any regard to age or sex, as was constantly observed by our sailors from the above-mentioned date, until their departure. The only exception to this rule were the women who had children with them, these alone wearing a light covering of leaves or such-like over their middle. The whole number of these islanders did not exceed fourteen or fifteen men; seeing that our people could not be induced by their grimaces, violent gestures, yelling and florishing of assegais, and all kinds of weapons, to retreat from the shore, they were imprudent enough to throw some of
their assegais, or rather sharpened sticks at our men, with the intention of wounding and intimidating them; but their chief, or one who at least appeared to be so, being hit by a ball from the single musket that was fired at them in return, the rest began to run quickly away, being very agile and well made.

The women are tall and slim, with very large mouth and small eyes; the head of both sexes is curly, like that of the Papuan islanders, and a yellow or red ointment, prepared from turtle fat, seems to be used as an ornament. The nature of these tribes is foul and treacherous, as was apparent at the last moment, when our people were on the point of departing. Eight islanders attacked and wounded two sailors, with the hope of seizing upon their clothes, and that after having conversed with these men for weeks, eaten and drunk with them, visited them on board and being allowed to examine everything to their great admiration, after having received presents, and also on their part regaled our people with fish and crabs. Besides this, their bad disposition came to light in the case of the man who had been previously wounded by our party as before mentioned; when he afterwards was assisted and bandaged, and had every possible attention shown him by our men, he tore the linen to pieces and threw it away into a corner; notwithstanding that at other times these natives appeared particularly greedy after linen, knives, beads, and such toys.

They however possess nothing which is of value themselves, and have neither iron nor anything like mineral ore or metal, but only a stone which is ground and made to serve as a hatchet. They have no habitations either houses or huts; and feed on fish, which they catch with harpoons of wood, and also by means on nets, putting out to sea in small canoes, made of the bark of trees, which are in themselves so fragile, that it is necessary to strengthen them with cross-beams.

Some of them had marks on their bodies, apparently cut or carved, which, as it seemed to our people, were looked upon by them as a kind of ornament. They eat sparingly and moderately, whereby they grow up always active and nimble; their diet seemed to consist of fish, and a few roots and vegetables, but no birds or wild animals of any kind are used as food, for though animal food exists and was found by our men in abundance, the natives appear to be indifferent to it. (Major, 1859, pages 126-127)

The well deserved Tiwi reputation for ferocity had curtailed nearly all outside contact by the nineteenth century except for those incidents when vessels were blown off course and wrecked on the islands (Hart & Pilling, 1960, page 98). This hostility to outsiders is not surprising as the Dutch like
the Portuguese before them, often had instructions to capture local people. Formal instructions for the yachts 'Haringh' and 'Hasewint' in 1622 stated,

In places where you meet with natives, you will either by adroit management or by other means endeavour to get hold of a number of full-grown persons, or better still, of boys and girls, to the end that the latter may be brought up here... (Heeres, 1899, page 21)

Macassan trepangers⁶ in particular, gave the islands a wide berth although their praus had visited Melville and Bathurst Islands in earlier times. The part-Macassarese chronicler, Manoel Godinho de Eredia, had recorded that the trepang-fishing in Australian waters had extended over six hundred years, with a lengthy break in the middle. An extensive period of Macassan contact to about 1810 and a second phase to 1907 is supported by Berndt's fieldwork studies. (Berndt & Berndt, 1954, page 73)

Macassans were not the only Asians who fished for trepang in these coastal waters. Berndt obtained very detailed observations by Aborigines in eastern Arnhem Land of a mysterious Asian people who settled in their clan territories.

These 'Baijini men and women built stone houses, as distinct from the stilted coconut-palm-leaf roofed huts of the Macassans, and came to these coasts in sailing ships. Primarily they collected trepang and fished with harpoons: and they cooked their trepang and dried the fish. Their womenfolk were noted as planters of rice and weavers of cloth. They attempted to grow rice in the ('jiritja) 'Gumaitj, Dalwonu, and Waramari' mata country, while cloth was woven on a primitive loom and dyed with basic colours in large pots. The design of the cloth was similar to the triangular patterns painted and incised on the illustrated figures...

⁶These fishing fleets originated in the south-west Celebes where their main trading centre was Macassar. By the 18th century most of the crewmen on these praus were Bugis, not Macassans. (Mulvaney, 1966, page 450)
In the song-cycle relating to the 'Baijini, there is some confusion between them and the Macassans ... The songs suggest that the Macassan songs were superimposed on the original 'Baijini series. (Berndt, 1954, page 120)

Major Campbell recorded clear evidence of so-called Malay contact with the Tiwi in a young boy who was taken from his tribe on Melville Island in 1825.

This lad was the colour of a Malay, and possessed their features: whence it is probable that he was taken when a child from some Malay slave-ship or fishing proa, and reared amongst the Melville Islanders. (Campbell, 1834, page 71)

By 1803, Macassan captains had clear instructions to avoid Melville Island as the elderly Pobassoo indicated to Matthew Flinders when they met at Malay Roads - 'They cautioned us much to beware of the natives' (Searcy, 1909, page 17). Although in Pobassoo's time the only praus to arrive at Melville Island were wrecked there, it had been a destination for earlier fleets. According to Pye's informants, they are said to have anchored their praus at a place called 'Pillar-umpey' at Port Cockburn in Apsley Strait. After his visit to Melville Island in 1895, the Customs Official, Searcy, reported 'That the Malays at some time had started work on the north side of the island was evident, for the remains of old fireplaces and smoke-houses have been found there.' (Searcy, 1909, page 46) At that time, some Macassan sites along the coast were marked by exotic trees. (Gee, 1907, page 2) After travelling across Melville Island accompanied and protected by Joe Cooper, Searcy observed, 'Apparently, the Malays never succeeded in making friends with the natives on the island.' (Searcy, 1909, page 46). The historian, Macknight agreed with Searcy's view, considering it likely that although Macassan fleets had
visited the islands, their contact with the Tiwi was
generally hostile (Macknight, 1976, page 61). Ritchie
described curious stone arrangements which may have been the
work of Macassans or other early visitors,

> We came to some peculiar markings on the ground: oblong, round, square, and other shapes, made with ironstone boulders the size of a man's head. The markings ranged from five to twenty yards in width. The oldest native could not tell what they represented. (Ritchie, 1934, page 167)

Considerable evidence exists for the preferred route for
Macassan fleets to the trepang grounds along the Arnhem Land
coast. The crossing from Timor to Melville Island, just over
300 miles across the open sea, took four days,

> ... the most frequent landfall was somewhere along the north coast of Melville Island or the Cobourg Peninsula. (Macknight, 1976, page 34)

Djaladjari, an Aborigine from Arnhem Land who travelled on
Macassan praus, described the return journey,

> We spread our sails and went north-westwards, going outside and above Djowadjara, Melville Island ... (Berndt & Berndt, 1954, page 53)

The danger of being blown off course and wrecked on the
northern coasts of Bathurst or Melville Islands was a risk
whenever Macassan vessels approached the Australian coast.
For example,

> Two of the praus had been wrecked in rough weather, in December 1886, on the north side of Melville Island, and their crews attacked by natives. The 'Lasalasaya', with a crew of twenty-seven, had been able to retrieve only two of their canoes ... (Berndt & Berndt, 1954, page 83)

In addition to the wreck of the 'Lasalasaya', Searcy
described another incident when Macassans narrowly escaped
being killed by the Tiwi, 'On another occasion the crew of a
wrecked proa had to defend themselves for several days.'
(Searcy, 1909, page 47).
Macknight also noted that many praus foundered along the coast in bad weather, '... many of them being driven on to Melville Island' (Macknight, 1976, page 34). Brother Pye of the Bathurst Island Mission reckoned that an average of one prau each 'wet' season had arrived between the years 1941 to 1976 (Pye, 1977, page 7). In 1986 Nelson Mungatopi and I watched an Indonesian fishing boat being towed to Darwin by an Australian Navy patrol vessel after running aground near Karslake on Melville Island. (According to Kerry Sharp of The Northern Territory News, Friday 14 March, 1986, '... the four men and two women were ... from ... the east Indonesian island of Tanimbar'.)

Contact with Macassans was an important element of the Aboriginal history of this region because of the large size of the fishing fleets and the seasonal regularity of their visits. This contact spanned several centuries and it appeared that Macassans maintained a strong proprietary interest in the Australian trepang grounds.

The Macassans looked on the north coast as their own, a place that they themselves had discovered and pioneered, and where eventually they had established trading basis. They resented the intrusion of Europeans, who came so much later, and set up in opposition to them. (Berndt & Berndt, 1954, page 90)

The colonisation of eastern Australia by the British and the emergence of France as a major naval power led to more intensive exploration of the northern coasts as the British sought to assert their sovereignty. Baudin, the French explorer, had charted part of Bathurst Island in 1802 and named Cape Helvetius, followed by King who made a more detailed survey of both islands, and, by resisting the
invitation of the old Tiwi woman, lived to record his experiences. To encourage '... trade with eastern Indonesia, particularly through the Macassans ...' (Macknight, 1969, page 12) and later, to forestall their enemies the French, the British established a military settlement on Melville Island on 26 September 1824 led by Captain Maurice Barlow, which they named Fort Dundas (Macknight, 1969, page 12). They had no idea that a more resourceful and implacable enemy confronted them in the forests of Melville Island. Unlike the British who relied on supplies from Timor and New South Wales, the Tiwi fully utilised local food resources and were perfectly comfortable in the tropical conditions. Tiwi men (probably of the Munupula, Malauila and Ulurangkuwila - traditional owners of the area) who were powerful in physique and accomplished fighters, staged ambushes and speared soldiers and buffalo to create havoc in the settlement (Hart & Pilling, 1969, page 98). Major Campbell, a later commander of Fort Dundas, recorded his impressions of these adversaries,

.. they are revengeful, prone to stealing, and in their attempts to commit depredations show excessive cunning, dexterity, arrangement, enterprise and courage. (Campbell, 1834, page 153)

Campbell, a model of humane restraint for that time, attempted to capture a Tiwi to communicate to others that they would be shot if they persisted in their warlike activities. Firstly, the British captured the boy with Malay features previously mentioned on page 28, who soon escaped. Nearly two years later, they caught and held an old man (named Tambu according to Thomas Woody) at the Fort before he
escaped at night. This incident is recounted by older Tiwi as part of their history of that period.

An old man was paddling a bark canoe and soldiers in a boat chased him until they caught him. They knocked him out with an oar and took him back to Fort Dundas. There they tied him so he couldn't escape and treated him kindly to show that they were friendly. They locked him up overnight but he soon escaped and met some people in the bush. The old man said, 'Big mob of mummaroo (white people) have made a camp there,' and described soldiers and convicts at Fort Dundas. (see Appendix, page 76)

This version of the story was told by Thomas Woody whose keen interest in history included committing the opening and closing dates of Fort Dundas to memory. Mountford in 1954 noted the detail with which the Tiwi could recall events of one hundred and thirty years earlier.

Yet so vivid an impression did that garrison make on the minds of the aborigines that 125 years later they were able to tell us about men who wore red clothes and large shiny buttons and who made loud noises (cannon). They knew that men in dark clothes (the convicts) did all the work. (Mountford, 1956a, page 419)

In 1986, details were hazier but Thomas recounted how his 'father' and George Darcy's 'grandfather' saw soldiers cutting trees in the bush with metal axes. The persistence of this recollection is significant as the sight of these superior tools would have generated excitement among the Tiwi. Such was the value of metal tools in 1827 that a group of Tiwi stole a metal axe and crosscut saw from Fort Dundas then returned and attacked the British the next day, provocatively carrying the stolen tools on their shoulders. By March 1829, tropical conditions, isolation, disease and Tiwi spears had taken their toll and the settlement at Fort

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7 Probably a man of Thomas Woody's father's matrilineage (Goodale, pers. comm.). In 1986 the artists of Milikapiti had no oral histories earlier than Fort Dundas, and the era of Joe Cooper was the limit of personal recollection for very old people.
Dundas was abandoned (Hart & Pilling, 1960, page 98). Contact with Europeans did not cease as passing ships occasionally ran aground on the islands and were plundered by the Tiwi for metal tools, cloth and other useful items (Hart & Pilling, 1960, page 99). Several government expeditions visited the islands from the late 1830s and explored coastal areas but encountered hostility from the Tiwi so no attempt at permanent settlement was made. When Alfred Searcy travelled on one of five luggers which sailed up Apsley Straits in July 1895, he reported, 'The blacks were hostile then, [1824-9] as they are now.' (Searcy, 1909, page 227). On that occasion, the Melville Islanders attempted to entice Searcy's party ashore as they had done to the explorer, King, many years before.

From the signs made by the niggers, it was judged they had something awfully good in the bush to show the strangers ... and being suspicious of our Melville Island friends ... the overtures were declined. (Searcy, 1909, page 232)

Hostility by the Tiwi also prevented a later government geological expedition in 1905 from venturing inland from the coast,

It was impossible to make long journeys inland from the various landing-places on account of the smallness of the party ... the thickly wooded country being infested with treacherous and bloodthirsty savages. (Brown, 1906, page 23)

[The expedition consisted of Brown, Gee, three mainland Aborigines and three 'Manilamen'.]

Buffalo brought from Timor in 1824 had escaped and flourished on Melville Island by 1895, providing a potential source of income for buffalo shooters at the turn of the century (Macknight, 1969, page 14). A young buffalo shooter
and adventurer, Robert Joel Cooper, was to change Tiwi history by becoming the first European to live permanently on Melville Island. On his first expedition in 1895, Joe Cooper was speared in the shoulder and left for dead. According to Cooper, his life was saved by two Tiwi women,

The lubras did not seem to be terrified and just watched their countrymen shaking their spears at Cooper. The white man kept these strangers for six months and they taught him to speak their language fluently; then he returned to their home. (Sunter, 1937, page 154)

Cooper had made elaborate preparations to placate the Tiwi when he returned to Melville Island and stayed for about nine years. A physically powerful man of six feet two inches, he made a great impression on Tiwi people and influenced their cultural values, firstly by introducing a wide range of trade goods including metal tools, calico, flour and 'smokes', and secondly, using mainland Aboriginal helpers who took Tiwi wives. After establishing camps at various locations on Melville Island, Cooper moved to Paru in about 1912 (see map, page vii). His efforts in establishing long term relationships with the Tiwi provided an opportunity for Bishop Gsell, who established the mission at Nguiu on Bathurst Island in 1911. Although camps had been made on both islands and several Europeans compiled studies on the inhabitants, relations between the Tiwi and outsiders were difficult, especially on Melville Island. Buffalo shooters had mistreated the islanders, parties of outsiders including government officials had stolen graveposts and robbed graves.

Identified as Yuwatja (Iwaidja) people by Hart (Hart & Pilling, 1960, page 101) Jiwadja (Osborne, 1970, page 117) and said to have come from Taroola by Pye's informants. (Pye, 1977, page 31)
and Cooper himself never went unarmed. As Joe Cooper later recounted to Sunter in an interview,

I found Melville Island natives very aggressive when I went there first. Several parties of whites had gone over there at various times and simply shot them down like dogs, sparing neither men, women nor children. Who can blame the natives for returning the compliment when the chance came? (Sunter, 1937, page 138)

(Government expeditions to Bathurst and Melville Islands were now required to monitor living conditions for the Tiwi.

In the beginning of 1911, Captain Barclay, the leader of an expedition to the Northern Territory, was also instructed by the Federal Government authorities to investigate the treatment of Aborigines. (Leske, 1977, page 30)

The first photograph of a pukumani ceremony with painted tutinis in place around the grave was obtained by this expedition - see Plate 1.)

Bishop Gsell, who was given credit for 'pacifying' the Tiwi claimed few real converts to Christianity and accepted the durability of indigenous cultural traditions. In an interview dating from the 1950s he said of the Tiwi,

.. the adult aboriginal is a complete enigma to me. After all these years I must admit that I do not understand them. It is absolutely impossible to convert these people to Christianity. Their own beliefs are etched indelibly on their minds. (Lockwood, 1959, page 195)

Although Bathurst Islanders were reputedly less warlike than groups on the opposite side of Apsley Strait, Bishop Gsell '... never tried to cover up the fact that he lived with some tension in the early days, especially at night.' (Pye, 1977, page 33).

Until recent times, the people on Melville and Bathurst Islands described the distant mainland as 'Tibambinumi, the
home of the dead' - a destination for spirits after death
(Hart & Pilling, 1960, page 9). Although Tiwi canoes were
frail structures of bark, Tiwi men occasionally mounted
raiding expeditions to the mainland using bark canoes or
stolen dugout canoes. According to Foelsche, Inspector of
Police for the Northern Territory,

Before the arrival of the Hon. B.T. Finniss at Escape
Cliffs, in 1864, the Melville Island natives
occasionally visited the mainland for the purpose of
stealing lubras, in which they invariably succeeded ...
(Foelsche, 1882, page 17)

Alfred Searcy recorded how Tiwi managed to cross the
dangerous waters from Melville Island to the mainland coast.

Between Melville Island and the mainland are several
islands known as the Vernons, the passage through them
called Clarence Strait. Before the whites settled in
Darwin the Melville Islanders were in the habit of
working their way across the narrow waters and making
raids on the mainland blacks, carrying off their women.
According to the statements of old blackmen in Darwin,
they encroached as far as where the township now is.
Hence the dread those on the mainland had of the
islanders. (Searcy, 1909, page 236)

Tiwi informants told Morris that men had dug a well on one of
the Vernon Islands in earlier times which the Tiwi used '...
when going in stringybark canoes to fight Larrakia people
...' (Morris, typescript, page 1) an event commemorated in a
pukumani dance by Tuki in 1954.9 Father Cosgrove of the
Bathurst Island Mission compiled detailed genealogies of the
Tiwi on both islands, and in 1953 recorded at least six
descendants of three mainland women captured in raids by
Melville Islanders. A colourful story recounted by Pye's
informants and dating from about 1869 recounts the exploits
of Tuningalumi, the grandfather of Matthias Ulungura, who

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9'Tuki dances in imitation of a wiewinga (bark canoe) that
gone across the Vernon straits to attack the people of the
mainland.' (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 697c)
organised an expedition to the mainland to avenge earlier insults and soundly defeated the mainland Aborigines. Prior to that date, adventurous Tiwi had paddled their bark canoes to the mainland coast to hunt turtle and dugong as well as capture women. As one senior man of the Mandiimbula recounted, 'Old people used to go all around and fight; canoe, not same canoe, bark one, fight Larrakia. Everyone fight there' (Pye, 1977, page 15). Knowledge of the physical features of the coast around Darwin remains a part of Tiwi oral history and pictorial symbolism (probably dating from the early twentieth century). Traditional painted designs and related stories describe this coastal region in addition to territories on Melville and Bathurst Islands.

Because of their exploitative and warlike exchanges, the Tiwi and mainland Aborigines became traditional adversaries and Tiwi distrust of outsiders continued well into this century. The Yuwatja who lived with Joe Cooper on Melville Island hunted buffalo, acted as bodyguards for Cooper and obtained local wives by negotiating with young Tiwi men. (Obtaining wives in this way was contrary to customary Tiwi practice.) Searcy experienced, at first hand, the atmosphere of fear and distrust between these mainland Aborigines and the Tiwi when he travelled across the island with the hunters, Cooper and Flynn.

The hunters had a number of mainland boys with them, who were in mortal dread of the island blacks. Several accompanied us during our walk, and it was easy to see that they took no risks ...' (Searcy, 1909, page 235)

In fact, these Aborigines were also using the rifles supplied by Cooper to shoot Tiwi men who would not give up their female relatives. As Foxy (Christopher) Tipungwuti told Pye,
he '... saw his own father shot through the shoulder because he would not hand over Foxy's mother.' (Pye, 1977, page 31). Sporadic fighting which followed the later shooting of another Tiwi by one of Cooper's mainland supporters eventually prompted him to leave the island.

In spite of distrust and outbreaks of violence between the two groups, the presence of Joe Cooper's buffalo shooting camps and nine years of close proximity to mainland Aborigines considerably influenced Tiwi material culture, oral traditions and painting styles. On Melville Island, younger Tiwi adopted mainland scarification patterns, and learned Yuwatja songs, dances and religious beliefs. Evidence of significant changes appears from an early date, for instance, Macknight describes a painting on bark,

... by Jerry Kerinaiua from Melville Island ... represents the wreck of a Macassan prau during a ceremony on the island and the escape of the crew in canoes to the Cobourg Peninsula. (Macknight, 1972, page 310)

Bathurst Islanders absorbed the teachings of Christianity at the Mission and acquired a working knowledge of mainland Aboriginal beliefs as well.

After the turn of this century, Tiwi men had paid work on trading or fishing boats and in the town of Darwin and their extensive contact with mainland groups resulted in broader cultural changes,

Europeans visiting this eastern side [mainland] to work for trepang, or to gather pearl-shell or other products, made little use of local labour ... they preferred to obtain native laborers or crews from Darwin, Port Essington, Melville and Bathurst Islands or from Goulburn Island. (Berndt & Berndt, 1954, page 123)
Although the Tiwi performed pukumani ceremonies in Darwin and took paid employment with mainland Aborigines, hostility often flared as Healy recorded when he found himself in the middle of a sudden fight during Marrakai's funeral in the 1930s.

Some Melville Island boys had broken away from the dancers. They seized thick waddies and leaping into the air, hurled them with tremendous force and unerring aim at some members of another tribe. (Healy, 1936, page 182)

The effects of mainland values and ceremonies on Tiwi art forms and cultural traditions will be discussed in more detail in later chapters.

The history of the Bathurst Island Mission is available from several published sources and will not be covered in detail (Gsell, 1956). However, the pervasive influence of Catholic missionaries over several decades meant that by 1986, cultural traditions on Melville and Bathurst Islands were noticeably different. Although few Tiwi were converted to Christianity in its early years, the Mission provided a source of European material goods and ideas for the Tiwi, protection from exploitation from buffalo shooters and European and Japanese traders, and authority to check the power of traditional 'big men'. Bishop Gsell's determined policy of stopping polygamy and educating children in Mission schools led to greater independence for young women, an increase in status for young men at the expense of the few old men who controlled Tiwi society, and diminishing interest in traditional ceremonies, art forms and oral traditions. Yet Mission influence depended on maintaining trade relationships, that is, exchanging power or status for goods
and services; the most distinctive and well-known example being the exchange of 150 young girls for flour, knives, tobacco and other trade goods to become the 'wives' of Bishop Gsell (Hart, Pilling, 1960, page 102). According to Hart, the missionaries in 1928-30 devoted their energies to stamping out plural marriages.

Failure to bow to Mission pressure resulting in the recalcitrant's being cut off from the European food, tobacco, clothes, etc. which could only be obtained through the Mission (Hart, 1954, page 245).

Bishop Gsell himself was pragmatic in acknowledging the importance of this exchange.

Bishop Gsell won most respect among the Tiwi for establishing that half a dozen aspirins cured a headache quicker than biting through a vein on the forehead so that the ache could escape... He believes that aspirins spread his fame more than any other factor. (Interview with Bishop Gsell 1956-8, IN Lockwood, 1959, page 200)

When the fathers and brothers of young women traded them to Japanese pearlers for trade goods rather than to the mission as 'wives' they were asserting their traditional rights. Because of the degree of safe access provided to outsiders at the Mission, the Tiwi were soon trading objects of traditional importance - arm bands, bark baskets, spears etc. - to visitors. Major ceremonies such as the pukumani rituals for the dead were discouraged at the Mission so local Tiwi modified the form of objects associated with those ceremonies and sold them to tourists or stopped their production altogether. On Melville Island, the important ceremonies continued¹⁰, so unconverted Tiwi living at the

¹⁰Mountford's informants explained what happened to Tiwi who were given a Christian burial, '... as pukumani ceremonies were prohibited on Bathurst Island, the spirit of Makapini was doomed to wander, lonely and unhappy, forever.' (Mountford, 1958, page 79)
Mission crossed Apsley Strait to participate in those events, as Mountford recorded,

Recently, an old aboriginal, who had always refused to be a Christian, was baptised, just as he was dying by Father Cosgrove, and buried in the Mission cemetery. This did not prevent the aborigines from having a large Pukamuni, which was held on Melville Island, even though the body was not there. When Father Cosgrove heard about it, he was not pleased. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 365)

Over successive generations, the Bathurst Island Mission affected the lives of Tiwi everywhere. Janet Mungatopi, a gravepost carver in 1986, said that she was taken to the convent when she was five years old as her grandmother had been many years before. Janet said of her grandmother 'She was one of the 150 'wives' of Bishop Gsell and remembered singing in Latin at his funeral in Darwin'(see Appendix, page 87).

Because of their geographic remoteness and hostile treatment of strangers the Tiwi were able to preserve a measure of isolation over a long period. Yet when contact with outsiders did occur, the Tiwi were very responsive to external influences. The most rapid and profound changes in Tiwi values and patterns of living occurred after the turn of the century when they came into regular contact with Europeans. During his period of fieldwork in 1928-29 Hart conducted a census of the Tiwi (population 1062) and noted the considerable changes that had occurred in twenty years,

... no tribe in the Northern Territory has so assimilated white ideas or is so familiar with white men ... members of this tribe are more in demand in Darwin as houseboys than members of any other tribe, simply because, as it is generally expressed, they have more 'savvy', that is they are more intelligent and more adaptable to white conditions. (Hart, 1930, page 168)
In 1954, Jane Goodale participated in hunting trips and recorded major ceremonial events as a member of the National Geographic expedition which established a camp near Banjo Beach on Melville Island. When she returned for two weeks in 1962, Goodale expressed surprise at the major changes apparent in the local community,

.. all the Tiwi children go to school, and some who have finished the six-year program in the government school have received subsequent training as teaching or nursing assistants. Some others have had 'on-the-job' training in various activities connected with a large-scale forestry project .. all the able-bodied Tiwi men and women are currently employed, and their tasks bear little or no relation to their old life in the bush. (Goodale, 1963b, page 16)

In 1986, when I visited Melville and Bathurst Islands, approximately 1,640 Tiwi lived there with several hundred more temporarily or permanently residing on the mainland, usually for medical treatment, education or employment. At that time, the population was concentrated in three settlements - Nguiu on Bathurst Island and Pularumpi (Garden Point) and Milikapiti (Snake Bay) on Melville Island - although many Tiwi travelled to other parts of the islands especially at 'bush holiday' times. These three settlements were linked with each other and Darwin by several air services each day, and a monthly barge service provided transportation for heavier supplies and equipment. (This barge also provided the only means for transporting large Tiwi graveposts to the mainland.)

Nguiu, as the site of the Bathurst Island Mission, was the largest settlement and included several craft workshops and an art store. Nguiu was also a popular destination for
organised tours from Darwin during the 'dry' season.
Pularumpi near the site of Fort Dundas had been established as a regional centre of the Mission and a school for part-Aboriginal children in the 1930s. By 1986 (according to Tiwi informants) it was regarded as a focus for traditional cultural events especially pukumani ceremonies.

The smaller settlement at Milikapiti had developed during World War II as a supply base and government settlement. Although alcohol abuse had been reported as a problem in earlier years, Milikapiti by 1986 was a growing community with a primary school, clinic, community club and sports ground, and a large general store. (The store included an extremely popular video rental outlet.) Several leading gravepost carvers lived and worked at Milikapiti which was located near large cemeteries. Because of the close proximity of major gravesites, resident artists of high reputation and support from the Milikapiti Council, this settlement was chosen as the site for a commission of twelve carved and painted graveposts that became a major part of this research project.
CHAPTER THREE - Early graveposts as memorials and ceremonial objects

Tiwi people believe that carved and painted graveposts were created for their leader, Purukupali a long time ago. Burial posts still play a central role in Tiwi funeral ceremonies and have unique significance as historical markers and as vehicles for controlling spiritual forces which they believe are especially dangerous at times of death and burial. In 1954, Mountford recorded a Tiwi view of gravepost carving during the period before European settlement,

An old aboriginal, Tjamalampua, told me that in palaneri times i.e. a long while ago ... although there were just as many poles around the grave as there are today, they were neither as elaborately shaped nor decorated, often being covered with no more than a series of dots. (Mountford, 1958, page 109)

The first documented sighting of Tiwi graveposts occurred after the ill-fated settlement at Fort Dundas was established in Apsley Strait on 30 September 1824.

During his period of duty at Fort Dundas in that same year, Sir Gordon Bremer came across a series of graveposts newly erected around a grave. He was sufficiently impressed by this experience to record a lengthy description of the large carved graveposts and their accoutrements.

The situation was one of such perfect retirement and repose that it displayed considerable feeling in the survivors who placed it there and the simple order which pervaded the spot would not have disgraced a civilized people. It was an oblong square open at the foot, the remaining end and sides being railed around with trees, 7 feet to 8 feet high, some of which were carved with stone or shell and further ornamented by rings of wood. On the tops of these were placed the waddies (throwing sticks) of the deceased. The grave was raised above the level of the earth, but the raised part was not more than 3 feet long. At the head was placed a piece of a
canoe and a spear and round the grave were several little baskets made of the fan-palm leaf, which, from their small size, we thought had been placed there by the children of the departed. Nothing could exceed the neatness of the whole; the sand and earth were cleared away from the sides and not a shrub or weed was suffered to grow within the area. (Mountford, 1954, page 107)

Major Campbell, the commandant from August 1826 to late 1827, recorded a lengthy description of life on Melville Island including his impressions of a gravesite in the bush.

The burial-place is circular, probably ten or twelve feet in diameter; it is surrounded by upright poles, many of which are formed at the top like lances and halberts, fourteen or fifteen feet high; and between these the spears and waddies (probably of the deceased) are stuck upright in the ground. (Campbell, 1834, page 158)

As far as is known, no graveposts were removed from Melville Island during the five years of British occupation and no sketches of grave sites are known. More than seventy years later, the expeditions which traversed Melville and Bathurst Islands recorded their impressions of these distinctive gravesites and acquired the first graveposts for museum collections (see Plate 1).

Although Joe Cooper lived on Melville Island for many years, he spoke the Tiwi language and must have seen major funeral ceremonies, he left no published descriptions of these events. However he acted as a guide and protector for several researchers whose writings survive. With Cooper's assistance, Alfred Searcy travelled across Bathurst and

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11According to Sunter, Cooper '... was put through all their ceremonies. Of these he would not speak, for he said that it was forbidden to discuss such things ...' (Sunter, 1937, page 133).
Melville Islands where he was able to inspect several graves which were surrounded by carved wooden posts.

Their burial-places were at a retired spot near their most frequented camping-ground. They were circular, and from ten to twelve feet in diameter, surrounded by upright poles. Some of the posts were twelve inches thick, and were nearly all hardwood. The tops were decorated, some squared, some rounded, others pointed, and some again mortised right through. The ornaments belonging to the deceased were hung on the posts, the spears being placed between them. (Searcy, 1909, page 238)

Brown and Gee, during the government geological expedition in 1905 came across a new grave near Clarence Strait.

Close to where we landed, on the top of the sandy rise, we found a circular space about 10ft. in radius, carefully cleared of all grass, and a small mound piled up in the middle; our boys pronounced it to be a native grave. (Gee, 1907, page 1)

However, as they progressed along the coast of Melville Island the party located a second site marked by a group of weathered posts, which ringed a much earlier grave,

... enclosed by wooden slabs, a portion of which has been burnt. Aboriginal markings were faintly discernible in places on the wood, and some of the posts had the wood cut away at the top, leaving two spike-like horns at the sides; others had the wood cut away from the outside towards the centre, leaving a short spike standing up in the middle of the post. (Basedow, 1913, page 314)

(These examples were probably similar in form to No. X19499 collected by Baldwin Spencer in 1912 and now in the Museum of Victoria, see Figure 10A.)

When the German researcher Klaatsch visited Melville Island for two weeks in September 1906 he was taken to the ruins of Fort Dundas where he came upon a large gravesite.

... a few hundred paces from the shore, I hit upon a group of nine wooden pillars which surrounded an oval, slightly raised area of earth. They were of differing height, the tallest reaching a height of about three metres. Not one pillar equalled the other in shape. One had an upper addition, shaped more or less like a
mushroom, another one ended in two points. Another showed a tangential cut-out in the form of a niche; another one was cut open in its centre, so that only two thin poles were left as a connection between the lower part and the upper one, which also ended in a high pointed tip. (Klaatsch, 1907a, [trans. B. Stehlik], page 5)

Klaatsch's meticulous description illustrates several gravepost types seen later by Baldwin Spencer and recorded by subsequent fieldworkers (see Figure I and Plate 3). This arrangement of graveposts was recent as all of the posts were decorated with painted motifs and some were covered with bark containers.

... each was variously painted in yellows and reds. Some of the pillars were capped with water vessels made of bark and perforated by two openings, the borders of which were carefully fixed with stringwork. (Klaatsch, 1907b, page 586)

Joe Cooper, the buffalo shooter, had left Klaatsch at this site accompanied by young Tiwi men. Cooper had also kept his earlier injury at the hands of the Tiwi a secret from Klaatsch which may account for the researcher's unfortunate behaviour. He cut off the top of one gravepost then asked a young Tiwi to dig through the grave to expose the skull of a young girl. That night, Cooper's party was followed by a group of Tiwi and did not risk going ashore to obtain water. During his visit, Klaatsch saw two more graves - a site with nine posts on the island of Karslake on the north coast and a smaller site at Radford Point (see map, page viii). When Klaatsch discovered the site at Radford Point he was doubtful that it was a grave because his digging did not locate human remains and the ground between the posts had not been disturbed (Figure I)

The taller one of the pillars was nearly six feet high. It was of the type with a hole in the middle and an
upper addition, which is connected with the lower main part by two thin poles only. I cut off the upper part and took it with me. The pillar was daintily painted with red and yellow colour. The lower main part showed five levels, separated from one another by red rings. In between there was a series of little red rings, circling the pillar, all of it applied on a yellow foundation. The upper part has intermittent red and yellow areas. The second monument is of the type of the mushroom-shape, the stem of the mushroom, however, being furthermore surrounded by a protruding ring. Only on this part and also on the upper circumference of the mushroom-hat red colour has been used, the lower part shows yellow figures of extremely great diversity - circles, half circles, lines, round areas, horseshoe-shaped patterns, etc. - painted on the natural grey of the wood. (Klaatsch, 1907a [trans. B. Stehlik], page 7)

Because of this grave's location near water, its relatively fresh painted designs and the two waddys placed upright between the graveposts it was probably erected as a memorial for a man whose body was lost.

The third gravesite at Karslake was that of a mature man (as Klaatsch found when he had the grave excavated) who had died some years previously according to the decayed state of the surrounding graveposts.

.. not far from it [the shore] appeared a grave-site, again with nine pillars, which, however, had been partly destroyed by fire and fallen down. The same variation of shapes, like in the previous case, was still recognizable ...(Klaatsch, 1907a [trans. B. Stehlik], page 7)

Klaatsch spent several days in the security of the Cooper brothers' large camp in the centre of Melville Island where he commissioned fan-palm baskets for his collection, recorded details of body decoration by men and women and observed Tiwi dance performances. He quickly recognised their mimicry of life at Fort Dundas in the climatic dance sequences,

One of the two dancers represented a soldier from a ship by continuously kicking backwards and moving his arms as if he were pulling down ropes, whereas the other dancer, in a posture of arrogance, imitated an officer who was
As the last grave that Klaatsch had opened at Karslake contained the remains of a middle aged man surrounded by a memorial of nine weathered graveposts, the individual buried there would have been a man of high status. When Klaatsch left the island for Port Darwin a week later with his collection including the tops of several graveposts he was aware of the unrest he had caused in spite of his affection for the Tiwi. He later wrote,

I have recently received news that one of the brothers Cooper, the one who accompanied me to the island, died suddenly, a few months after my journey ... it is to be feared that Cooper became a victim of the vengeance of the damage done to the graves. (Klaatsch, 1907a [trans. B. Stehlik], page 16)

In spite of his predilection for grave robbing, Klaatsch combined meticulously detailed recording techniques with a lively interest in the islanders and their natural environment. Unfortunately, his positive regard for the Tiwi was not matched by that of government officials, buffalo shooters and researchers whose ignorance or ruthlessness led to renewed outbreaks of hostilities.

Klaatsch was not the only early field worker with a passion for collecting artefacts. During the first ten years of this century, graveposts originating on Melville and Bathurst Islands began appearing in public collections either as individual examples or in groups. Although some were accompanied by sketches showing their original positions around graves, none had any provenance and it appears that a small but thriving trade in stolen graveposts was taking
place (For example, Figures 2 and 3 show sketches of grave monuments on Melville and Bathurst Islands drawn by D.M. Sayers who acquired graveposts for the South Australian Museum in 1911.). In a letter to the Director of the South Australian Museum, Dr E. Stirling, written immediately before he left for Darwin, Sayers reported,

...I will write and try and obtain two native tombstones ... but the game is very risky and my man don't like the job. (corresp. August 1908, South Australian Museum)

The Tiwi themselves had very strong feelings about the unauthorised removal of graveposts erected at graves and many years later, Mountford described the results of one such event.

Two heavy wind-storms, which occurred while the expedition was at Melville Island, were supposed to have been caused by angry Maratjis. [lizard-like rainbow spirits]. The second happened when a pukamuni pole, taken from a grave by one of the senior officers of the Native Affairs Branch, was being loaded on a boat for transport to Darwin. The aborigines explained that as these poles are a gift from the living to the dead, they should never be taken from him. Maratji was so angry over this white man's act of sacrilege that he created a heavy storm to sink the boat and so prevent the theft. (Mountford, 1958, page 157)

Although numerous graveposts were removed in the years after World War II, many Tiwi families maintained old cemeteries and resisted offers to sell or re-locate graveposts (see Plates 5 and 6). In 1986, Nelson Mungatopi recounted how old Tiwi gravesites were bulldozed to clear an area for the town of Milikapiti. Although this action was fiercely resisted by old people, community attitudes had changed since their deaths (see Appendix, page 2).

According to Herbert Basedow who made a short visit to both islands in August 1911, the Tiwi preferred certain locations for grave sites, "... where a jungle or
mangrove-thicket breaks to the ordinary eucalypt-woodland, usually near to the sea-coast or to a native water.' (Basedow, 1913, page 311). When Basedow and his Tiwi companions came upon the grave of a child in the south-eastern corner of Bathurst Island, he meticulously recorded the site including the north-west to south-east axis of the grave mound (Figure 8B). This grave was part of a cleared site that functioned as a cemetery for an old grave nearby was surrounded by the remains of nine posts. According to Basedow's informants the site was a memorial for a male child buried some years earlier and this information was confirmed when they recovered a child's remains.

Five ornamented posts surrounded the small mound in an irregular way; four skirting the north-eastern edge and only one standing on the opposite side, near to the south-eastern end... The ornamental posts ... are all of wood, namely the trunks of the heavy iron wood and of a lighter timber (perhaps that of the corkscrew palm or Pandanus) They are circular in section and various diameters and heights... The four posts along the north-eastern edge of the mound stood practically in a straight line, while the remaining one was at the head end of the opposite side. No two of them are alike either in size, method of carving, or colour ornamentation. It is safe to assume that each post has its significance, since the natives could decide the age and sex ... of the interred...(Basedow, 1913, pages 315-6 and Plate 91)

Basedow carefully recorded the single post which stood at the south-western corner - a modest example in its total length of 136 centimetres and its absence of carved embellishment, 'The post shows no sign of any carving. Its surface is, however, charred, and two simple, but effective, if not grotesque, designs in white pipeclay have been drawn upon it ...'(Basedow, 1913, page 317).

At the head of the grave at the south-east corner stood an elaborately carved hardwood post painted with a series of
vertical bands in red and yellow ochres. Although Basedow was extravagant in his reading of the symbolism of some of the painted designs he recognised that the orientation of the graveposts as well as the choice of design motifs appeared to have meaning.

The one [band] that faced the grave is waved: it is drawn in yellow ochre bordered with red. Upon the side diametrically opposite (i.e. the side seen on approaching the grave) are two vertical bands of yellow, about 15 centimetres apart. (Basedow, 1913, page 317)

The most unusual example was the smallest gravepost carved of softwood, which Basedow had difficulty in measuring because its base had rotted away. At 120 cm in height it remains one of the smallest posts known from any gravesite.

The larger graveposts were faded by the elements and as Basedow could see traces of decorative patterning on them he asked his Tiwi informants to repaint these designs. They dug up all five posts and leaned them against trees while they worked in groups of two to four to meticulously retrace the painted motifs. Basedow expressed surprise at their enthusiasm for this work and their skill in recreating the original patterns.

... I had them freshened up by the natives, who willingly consented to do so and exercised the greatest care to apply the colours in precisely the same positions as they originally occupied. (Basedow, 1913, page 315)

The repainted posts were not returned to their original locations and are now part of the collections of the South Australian Museum (see Plate 91). Basedow was inaccurate in claiming that the posts were completely repainted. Fortunately, some remain unfinished and their perfectly
matched linework and faded original motifs indicate very clearly how skilled these Tiwi painters were.

This child's grave and its five graveposts were part of a cleared area that formed a cemetery as the remains of nine posts marked an older grave nearby. From Basedow's description, it appears that these nine graveposts were simple in carved form but severely damaged by the elements. Bush fires had seriously damaged them. One, however, was cut through at a distance of 15 centimetres from the top, leaving only two narrow strips of timber on either side to support the headpiece thus formed. (Basedow, 1913, page 318) In spite of his interference with the child's grave Basedow was treated cordially by the Bathurst Islanders. 12

When Baldwin Spencer arrived on Melville Island in 1912 his close acquaintance with the Tiwi and access to their ceremonies was due largely to the influence of Joe Cooper who escorted and advised him. Spencer saw two mortuary ceremonies including the erection of painted graveposts - the first for a dead woman held in March, 1912 on Melville Island and the second for a man on Bathurst Island in December of that year (see Plate 2). Spencer had the opportunity to examine weathered graveposts at older graves on both islands (see Plate 3). He noted, 'As you travel across the Islands you come, every now and then, across these strange graves, right out in the lonely scrub, far away from any camp.' (Spencer, 1914a, page 231). Spencer was impressed not only by the size of the graveposts - the tallest example he measured was

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12 The south-east extremity of Bathurst Island was declared a native reserve in 1910 so missionaries were the only official non-Tiwi residents.
almost fourteen feet - but by their numerous and orderly arrangement around each grave.

The finest graves that I saw were two, placed side by side, in a small opening amongst the trees close to some swamp land in the southern centre of Melville Island. They were evidently old, because there were only traces of the original colour left on the posts. One had eleven and the other had thirteen posts round it and the space enclosed by each series measured eight feet in length by four in width. (Spencer, 1914a, page 232)

Not only did Spencer obtain the first black and white photographs and 16 mm footage of Tiwi graveposts, he prepared detailed notes on certain characteristic types that he identified and described their placement and association with ceremonial events (see Figures 9, 10 and 11).

At every grave there are one or more posts through which a rectangular space has been hollowed out, leaving, on each side, a thin slab which supports the upper part. The latter is often surmounted with a knob, standing on the end of a narrow column, or with a curious double-pronged structure, which may possibly represent a head or two jaws. Almost every grave has one of these pronged posts. (Spencer, 1914a, page 231)

Spencer also recorded the placing of bark baskets inverted over graveposts at a woman's funeral and the use of very tall slender grave markers. (These will be discussed in Chapter Four.)

On every grave also there are, normally, one or two posts, notably taller than the rest, and on these are placed, in the case of women, bark baskets, that they have used for carrying food and water. (Spencer, 1914a, page 231) (see Plate 3 and Figure 10B)

Although many of the graveposts Spencer saw stood at old graves and retained traces of their original decorations, he was able to record freshly painted examples being prepared for mortuary ceremonies (see Plate 2).

Black, yellow, white and red were the colours used and the decorations consisted of bands, running in wavy or spiral lines down the posts, or of longitudinal bands between which there were oval designs, arranged in rows, down the length of the post. (Spencer, 1914a, page 232)
Not only was Spencer able to record the colours and motifs used, his interest in the Tiwi and their distinctive ceremonies led him to question them (no doubt using the skills of Joe Cooper and his Yuwatja supporters) and document their perceptions of colour and form (discussed in more detail in Chapter Five).

Spencer acquired several graveposts from Bathurst and Melville Islands - some being weathered examples with evidence of bushfire damage, and others, newly painted posts with ochred decorations. (These graveposts are now in the collection of the Museum of Victoria - see Plates 89 and 90.) Unlike earlier collectors, Spencer apparently acquired these graveposts by legitimate means. From his writings, Spencer also resorted to another device which, from a very early date was acceptable to the Tiwi owners of old cemeteries - payment for repainting weathered posts from selected graves. Spencer noted the repainting of motifs on certain posts from the smaller grave of eleven graveposts, one of two graves which had impressed him when he first saw it (see Plate 3).

The decorations of the posts could be distinguished in the case of the more recent [grave] of the two, and three of them are drawn in Plate X... just as they were renewed by the natives. (Spencer, 1914a, page 425)

At Spencer's direction, the Tiwi had removed old graveposts to the buffalo shooters' camp by transporting them on Joe Cooper's lugger, and had completely repainted the designs on one groups of posts. He noted that while the Tiwi expressed interest in recent graves by painstakingly clearing the area around them, they appeared unconcerned by the removal of old graveposts when suitable payment was made.
With the full consent of the old men, who seemed nothing loath to part with them in return for a goodly supply of tobacco, knives and tomahawks, I secured them. (Spencer, 1928, page 680)

Although several researchers lived and worked on Bathurst and Melville Islands during the years after Baldwin Spencer's visit, none compiled detailed descriptions of carved and painted graveposts. However, in 1954 an expedition funded by the National Geographic Society arrived at Banjo Beach on Melville Island to conduct intensive studies of the local people and their environment. Two of the researchers, Charles Mountford and Jane Goodale, completed comprehensive field studies of Tiwi ceremonies including the preparation of graveposts during mortuary rituals\textsuperscript{13} (see Plates 5 to 16). After the expedition departed, Jane Goodale remained on Melville Island to record information on Tiwi women and to commission eight graveposts for the University of Pennsylvania collection (see Plate 18). The findings of Mountford and Goodale represented the most substantial studies of Tiwi art and ceremonial life during the past half century. As they formed a basis for my fieldwork in 1986, these studies will be surveyed in greater detail in later chapters.

Tiwi graveposts in cultural context

Carved and painted graveposts played an important part in what Pye's Tiwi informants referred to as 'old' ceremonies

\textsuperscript{13}Extracts from Mountford's original fieldnotes in which he recorded observations by Goodale and Harney as well as his own discussions with Tiwi informants form an important part of this study. Exact copies of Mountford's drawings with their meanings from these fieldnotes are included in Volume II.
- '... the old Corroboree, is a sign of sorrow and remembrance and a farewell dance for the dead' (Pye, 1977, page 21). The term 'old' appears to distinguish pukumani rituals from secular songs and dances and other ceremonies including kulama initiation. As these distinctive funeral ceremonies comprised several major events, the form and decoration of graveposts was affected by such events and conversely, the technical requirements of gravepost preparation influenced mortuary ceremonies. Death and burial were occasions of great moment to the Tiwi especially if the death was of a mature man of high status - a 'big man'. 'A really big man's funeral was likely to draw over three hundred people ...' (Hart & Pilling, 1960, page 40). The Tiwi referred to the distinctive and lengthy funeral ceremonies as illaninga while the possessions of the deceased, the burial site and the close relatives became pukumani (taboo). In general usage, the word pukumani came to refer to the dramatic final mortuary ceremony as well.

Immediately after a person's death, local elders chose a burial site, supervised the burial and defined the pukumani ground around the gravesite. This area became the exclusive hunting ground of the new spirit and access was forbidden to the surviving relatives (Goodale & Koss, 1971, page 188). Christopher Tipungwuti and Esther Babui described the effects of pukumani status on people and certain locations,

Here the Leaders of the Tribe would first perform their own sorrowful acts ... the father and mother are 'Pukumani' (or taboo). They are well painted and remain that way until after the ceremony is over. They were both forbidden to touch food or even feed themselves. Other relatives fed them and gave them drinks of water. The camp where the dead person lived, also becomes 'Pukumani' ... No one is allowed to go near the camp
declared 'Pukumani', to do so could mean severe punishment from the elders and possibly the spirits. (Pye, 1977, page 21)

According to the Tiwi, dancing and singing by relatives of the dead person during the funeral ceremonies were to ensure protection from spirits of the dead and safe conduct of the new spirit to its final abode. Graveposts were carved and painted as gifts for the dead to please the spirit and encourage its departure, to '... facilitate the transition of the ghost from a status among the living group to a similar status among the once-living' (Goodale & Koss, 1971, page 190). When erected around the burial site, tutinis acquired spiritual qualities in their own right - '... graveposts were pukimani once erected on the grave ...' (Hart & Pilling, 1960, page 89).

Although several researchers recorded their impressions of what must be the most dramatic and moving funeral ceremonies of Aboriginal Australia, those of Baldwin Spencer and Jane Goodale provide explicit descriptions from different periods. On Melville Island in 1912, Spencer was able to observe the final ceremony held for a woman who had died some time previously. He found that the burial place was located more than half a mile from the nearest camp. Sheets of bark covered the grave and the surrounding area was completely cleared for some distance (see map, page viii). Not knowing what to expect, Spencer waited at this burial ground for the ceremonial events to begin.

The posts had all been newly decorated, and we stood to one side waiting for the natives to come. After a time we heard a loud shouting far away. Then there came a pause, and through the scrub we could see the smoke of a fire, with the men running round and round it ... they
were actually running into it so as to singe the hairs on their legs. (Spencer, 1928, page 648)

Although Spencer carefully noted the vigorous gestures of the male dancers, he was startled by a dramatic feature of the ceremony which occurred soon after, '... with a loud yell, they rushed up to the grave, hurling their great spears ahead of them.' (Spencer, 1928, page 648). According to Spencer this action was to drive the 'Mopuditti', the dead person's spirit, into the grave. The next important feature of this ceremony was the erection of the painted posts, one by one, around the grave. 'The posts, which had meanwhile been placed leaning against the trees on the fire ground, were brought up, holes were dug in the ground round the grave into which they were fixed.' (Spencer, 1928, page 648).

This aspect of the ceremony varied in Spencer's time as he noted that the posts might be erected temporarily on the decoration ground where they had been painted then transferred to their final location, or brought directly to the grave and erected as a group. He also noted a simple capped type of gravepost that he saw erected on Melville Island, '... it is customary to add one post each year for perhaps ten or twelve years.' (Spencer, 1912, page 48). After the erection of the graveposts, men and women decorated in ochres and wearing pukumani ornaments performed a series of dances around the posts, led by close relatives of the dead woman.

The men were decorated in various ways. Some had their bodies covered with red, others with yellow ochre, some with charcoal, others with lines of red and black or

14Spencer thus described what the writer believes is an important regional carving style.
black and yellow. The women had the upper halves of their bodies painted red and the lower yellow. (Spencer, 1928, page 649)

Spencer identified certain dances such as the strenuous crocodile dance that have been performed at Tiwi funeral ceremonies until the present time,

... the father came on again ... now representing a crocodile. He crouched down, low on the ground, walking on hands and toes with his body fully extended. Every now and then he lifted his head, peering about from side to side as if he were looking for his prey. (Spencer, 1928, page 650)

While vigorous dancing continued during this stage of the ceremony, the participants remained aware of the presence of the dead women's spirit, "... they stopped dancing and bent down, pointing at the grave in which the spirit was supposed to be watching them."(Spencer, 1928, page 650). As the sequences of dances continued certain older dancers collapsed with exhaustion and other participants took their places. Finally, men and women in two groups danced around the posts then the male dancers bent down and yelled loudly at the grave. At this point the dancing stopped and the men leaned against graveposts expressing their grief for the first time (Plate 2). After a few minutes of silence, Spencer watched the participants walk away in single file through the bush.

Near Cooper's camp, Spencer later witnessed events in a second funeral ceremony. On this occasion the dancing took place in the area where decorated posts had been placed prior to their removal to the burial site. Spencer noted that the participants were painted with striking motifs,

The men were mostly daubed over with bright red ochre, with a white circle round each eye ... The women had their foreheads black, a broad yellow band across the bridge of the nose and cheeks; the face below this and
the body extending often down to the waist was bright red. (Spencer, 1928, page 650)

On this occasion the ceremony included a short ritual event held to commemorate the man who had died, "... an interesting variant in the proceedings consisted in throwing the three marukumana\textsuperscript{15} boys up into the air." It turned out that this was done because the man for whom the posts were being erected was very tall and throwing the youths up into the air would 'conduce to their growing tall.' (Spencer, 1928, page 687). The next day, Spencer travelled to the grave site where he set up his cinematographic equipment and recorded part of the ceremony. The sequence of events at that time was very similar to that held previously for the woman,

.. [Spencer] saw a very picturesque procession winding its way through the scrub. Everyone came, men, women and children. At first, the post-bearers stood a little way off, while holes were dug to receive the posts. Then, one by one, they were placed in position. Then they began their dances round the post - buffalo, shark, crocodile, kangaroo, etc. Finally, they gathered round, leaning on the posts, howling and wailing though not a tear was shed. (Spencer, 1928, page 688)

Unlike Spencer, Jane Goodale had the opportunity to live on Melville Island for eight months, attending Tiwi ceremonies and recording events of daily life (see Plate 18). Not only did she record those distinctive facets of mortuary ceremonies identified by Spencer forty years earlier - clearing the burial site, carving and painting posts, singing and dancing by the surviving relatives, passing through a smoking fire, and gathering around the newly erected posts at the gravesite - she described preliminary ceremonies and the symbolism contained in those characteristic events. Final rites commenced after the painted graveposts were set up in

\textsuperscript{15}A grade of initiation.
rows at a distance from the grave, the surrounding area was completely cleared of all debris and the employers (i.e. close relatives) informed that these tasks had been completed. Early in the morning, participants arrived at a spot out of sight of the grave to enact the ceremony which according to Goodale's informants, would protect them from broken bones and increase their strength.

When the chorus of men are chanting strongly, the singer and perhaps his brother or wife dance around and through the smoke of the fire while the remaining women shuffle into the dance in opposition to the singing male chorus. (Goodale, 1959a, page 9)

All of the participants eventually passed through the smoke. The equipment and materials necessary for the final ceremony - food, blankets, ochres, bark baskets and barbed spears - had been brought to this site and after the smoking ritual, the participants joined family groups to complete the elaborate body painting which would disguise them from the spirit (Plate 17). All mourners, including small children, were decorated with motifs calculated to obscure their physical features rather than enhance them. Goodale's informants described how spirits could injure their close relatives,

Ghosts have been known to kidnap the living, carrying them off into the densest part of the bush and making them insensible and eventually killing them if they are not rescued in time. (Goodale, 1959a, page 9)

To avoid the unwelcome attention of spirits, the Tiwi in 1954 observed certain prohibitions as part of their pukumani status - they retained and renewed their body paintings without washing, they wore distinctive armbands, they did not touch food or water with their hands, they did not use the dead person's name and they avoided the burial place. This
site was now the spirit's hunting territory and the
graveposts which confined the restless spirit during the
final ceremony later remained as a memorial,

.. the land about the grave belongs to the ghost, but it
may be hunted upon by his descendants for as long as his
grave posts stand to mark his grave and his ownership.
(Goodale, 1959a, page 9)

By late afternoon, the suitably decorated participants
approached the grave with the men giving the distinctive
'mosquito' call one by one. As a group they pushed between
the graveposts and rushed upon the burial mound, beating
themselves and cutting themselves with knives in
demonstrations of grief. One man then initiated a choice of
song and other men took up the chorus.

To the chorus of clapping and chanting men, the singer
steps into the circle and dances to his song, helped by
his brothers, wives and sisters. The dancing chorus of
women forms the counterpart of the men's singing chorus
as they dance in unison their simple shuffling step ...
(Goodale, 1959a, page 10)

As in Spencer's time, close relatives of the dead person
assumed a major role in performing these songs and dances.
Certain old dances illustrated their role as father, spouse
or sister of the dead person, while other songs and dances
imitated natural species - crocodile, shark, buffalo - or
were created especially for the event. At night only the
widows or widowers remained awake walking among the
graveposts and singing while they kept a vigil. Goodale's
informants said that the spirit and its companion ghosts
became more active at this time, dancing and singing around
the burial site in imitation of the performers they had
watched earlier. During the next morning the sequence of
events known as 'payday' was enacted under the supervision of
the alouwia or ceremonial leader. Payment for the 'workers'
tobacco, were prepared and the leader danced then presented each gravepost carver with a gift.\textsuperscript{16} By Goodale's time, this 'payoff' was a critical phase of the funeral ceremony as the close relatives indicated the worth of each gravepost, and the 'workers' responded. 'The worker must now dance with his payment in his hands to signify that he is satisfied with the amount and will allow his pole to be moved to the grave' (Goodale, 1959a, page 13). In cases of dispute, the gravepost was left to rot in its original location (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 439).

After all the posts were moved into their final position encircling the grave, the mourners rushed at the grave again, beating and cutting themselves, and the final dances commenced. At that time the pukumani bans were lifted as close relatives were washed and shaved and their armbands placed on the grave. Bark baskets which had held the workers' gifts were up-ended over graveposts or multi-barbed spears set up between the posts. In a moving climax to the ceremony all the relatives surged toward the graveposts to say farewell to the dead person.

For the last time the mourners wail over the grave, hiding their heads among the poles before they drift off, turning back only to call out nimbangi, goodbye, to the ghost of their kin. (Goodale, 1959a, page 13)

As Spencer had recorded many years earlier, no further interest was taken in the graveposts or burial site which was left to become overgrown (see Plate 19). The site was no

\textsuperscript{16}Mountford recorded an interesting use of graveposts to display prospective gifts during the ceremony. 'There was much good-natured discussion about their equitable distribution before the presents were finally separated into lots and placed one on the top of each pole' (Mountford, 1958, page 86).
longer restricted, but the Tiwi told Goodale that as the spirit was still present in that territory, care was taken by visitors to say 'nimbangi' so that it did not follow them.

Information on funeral ceremonies obtained by me in 1986 comprised recording preparations for rituals held for Nelson Mungatopi's uncle at Pularumpi, and obtaining descriptions of earlier ceremonies and their meanings. On Sunday 29 June, a row of graveposts for Nelson's uncle was set up in Pularumpi, beginning a series of events which Baldwin Spencer would have recognised immediately as a Tiwi mortuary ceremony. (Plates 26 and 27). Two graveposts for this ceremony had been carved by the artists Holder Adams and Paddy Freddy (although Paddy's wife was technically the commissioned carver). Holder said that the row of graveposts would remain in place during the final ceremony and be removed later as this was the first of two ceremonies for brothers who had died. (Janet Mungatopi provided another reason - she said that for people of the dead man's totem, a boat, graveposts were not moved into a circular arrangement.)

On the morning of the final ceremony, large cloths were suspended between the posts which stood in the centre of a cleared area in the settlement. Preliminary activities included 'painting up' the mourners usually with a layer of white clay and sometimes with simple motifs added in ochres; however, many participants were not decorated in any way (see Plate 25). On one side of the dancing ground sat a group of about twenty men whom the ceremonial leader, Justin, periodically consulted before initiating new sequences of
songs and dances. (Plate 27) A middle aged man sang of an old woman who had died in Darwin the previous night and his song was followed by groups of men singing together, with the onlookers responding in chorus. After the men performed a series of vigorous dances the women danced sedately in lines or groups on the opposite side of the graveposts (see Plate 29).

While certain dances performed by widows, brothers and sisters illustrated their relationship to the dead man, other types describing animals including the shark, snake and scrub turkey were similar to those seen by Spencer in 1912. Most of the older men sitting as a group on the ceremonial ground took an active interest in events (shown in Plates 27 and 28) and danced several times although their dance sequences were brief because of their advanced age. Although the women's dances were less dramatic than those of the men, they played an important role in all phases of the ceremony.

The widows came on and danced with no paint and short black skirts. They danced very close around the thin pole marking the grave performing a distinctive dance routine holding their arms up and hands tilted backwards. They were joined by Hilda Mungatopi, the dead man's sister, who leaned on the graveposts at the opposite side from the widows. (see Appendix, page 80 and Plate 29)

An older man announced 'payday' and a blanket was spread for the relatives to sit between the graveposts and the grave marker. These relatives including Hilda Henry (Mungatopi) and Polly Miller17 prepared batches of banknotes as payment. Male relatives collected the money and approached the 'workers' who stood in a line. After performing a short dance, the

17Gravepost carvers from Milikapiti.
'paymaster' placed a bundle of banknotes in each worker's hands and the recipient responded with a few dance steps. While dance routines were far less athletic than those recorded by Spencer in 1912, the climax of this ceremony was dramatic and memorable. All of the mourners converged on the graveposts, dancing and calling. (Plate 30) Close relatives appeared distraught and the prevailing mood at the burial site deepened to one of sorrowful final parting.

The singing went on as widows and close relatives cried against the posts. Other relatives ... restrained them from hurting themselves. One man threw himself down on the ground at the foot of a post while the widows hit themselves. Everyone milled around, crying and leaning on the posts. (see Appendix, page 81)

Buckets full of water were brought to the gravesite and the two widows removed their skirts and were washed to signify the ending of their pukumani status. All of the mourners slowly and quietly moved away from the graveposts and left the ceremonial ground in family groups.

Men and women who carved graveposts in 1986 related anecdotes of important funeral ceremonies they had seen many years earlier or of events which were part of their family histories. Janet Mungatopi's grandfather had been a 'big man' with almost a dozen wives, and she recalled events of his death and subsequent pukumani ceremonies.

At his funeral ceremony there were three groups - flying fox people, mullet people and another group. They danced at the same time - all three groups - and the posts were put up in three groups of two, four and three posts. They started the ceremony at 8.00 at night, lit fires and danced till midnight, went to sleep then got up at 4.00 a.m. and danced, went to sleep then got up at sunrise and danced. The ceremony finished at midday. A lot of people were there, perhaps fifty from each group.18

18See Appendix, page 91.
During a visit to the 'swamp' near the water pump at Milikapiti in 1986, Thomas Woody pointed out an old gravesite marked by a very large post and recalled that he had watched the funeral ceremony as a boy. (Plate 22) Thomas described how the posts were erected in different groups then moved together around the grave for the final ceremony.

Sticks or pieces of timber were put under large posts to carry them into position. The people danced as they carried the post then did a proper dance afterwards. (see Appendix, page 27)

Thomas Woody's father had been a 'big man' whose ceremony was held in 1944 at a location near the old road to Paru. According to Thomas,

There were thirteen or fourteen posts originally but only four still stand as some were burned in a bushfire. There were five groups of posts erected for that ceremony. (see Appendix, page 27)

One event in the pukumani rituals that Tiwi informants indicated had changed over time was payment of the 'workers'. While 'payday' was not an important feature of rituals held in 1912, both Mountford and Goodale described it as a major component of ceremonies they observed in 1954. At that time, payment with introduced articles including shirts, razors and tobacco was usual. Although payment in 1986 was with banknotes, the informants described a much earlier period when the 'payday' event was similar but the commodities very different. As Janet Mungatopi said,

... the payments were different, they were palm nuts in baskets or other foods. Wives (widows) were sometimes given in payment ... Axes and colours were not given at pukumani ceremonies in the old days, they were given for fights. (see Appendix, page 92)

The occasion of a final ceremony was regarded as an opportunity for settling old scores and increasing family
prestige as well as farewelling the dead. Thomas Woody recalled a ceremony attended by his relative, Summit, a man of great repute who died in 1961. Thomas recounted how,

They went to a ceremony for a woman who died in that family. When the posts were put up around the grave one was far too small. Summit had expected a big one to be put in that position. He went into a rage and shouted at everyone - there was going to be a big fight and a spearing. The people at the ceremony argued and said to wait until Summit calmed down. In the old days, there were often big fights when the posts were put up - people were very critical if the stories weren't right ... (see Appendix, page 58)

Holder Adams agreed with this observation and said that his father had looked at posts very carefully when they were set up on the burial ground. If the post was rejected (and Holder had seen his father reject a gravepost) the carver was paid half of the rightful payment, and his post erected at a distance from the posts encircling the grave. According to Holder, artists\(^\text{19}\) were sometimes speared in the old days if their graveposts were considered unsuitable.

Occasionally such dramatic and significant incidents occurred at a final ceremony that they were re-enacted at many later ceremonies and achieved a prominent place in local history. A well-known story at Milikapiti concerned Nelson Mungatopi's grandfather [and Thomas Woody's 'father'] who was the victim of a plot by an elderly 'big man' to kill his five sons. This jealous old man believed that his sons had paid too much attention to his young wives and exacted a promise from senior men that all of his sons would be speared after his death. At that time, suspicion and revenge were strong

\(^{19}\)Holder Adams, who had a thorough understanding of Western ideas, used the descriptive term 'artists' rather than 'workers'.
traits in Tiwi life as many young women were married to a few powerful elderly 'big men'. Imagined or real seduction of young wives prompted frequent outbreaks of hostility'... the general hostility of all old men to all young unmarried men that ran through all aspects of Tiwi culture' (Hart & Pilling, 1960, page 36). This murder was to be committed when the sons were dancing for their dead father during his pukumani ceremony. As Thomas described the event

... at the ceremony ... his 'father' heard someone shout 'look out' and he turned quickly ... taking the spear in his side, not in the centre of his back. All of the other brothers had no warning and were killed outright on the ceremonial ground. (see Appendix, page 28)

Nelson Mungatopi and older men recounted this dramatic story to me several times as a previous generation of residents of Mungatopi territory had done with slightly greater detail to Goodale and Mountford thirty years before, illustrating the persistence of certain historic themes and the accuracy of Tiwi oral traditions.
As the literature review found that the Tiwi had been affected by ideas and material goods obtained from outsiders, it appeared likely that the appearance of painted graveposts would reflect those influences. Tiwi artists produce graveposts from a complex mix of aesthetic and cultural values, and the decorated posts play a major part in their most significant ceremonies. It appeared important to investigate how their appearance was affected by their symbolism and ritual use and to determine which formal characteristics of Tiwi graveposts were indicators of stylistic change. (Style - those distinctive properties of shapes and forms which characterise uniqueness in an artwork. Wingert, 1962, page 76.)

Many graveposts acquired for museum collections appeared very different from those remaining at gravesites. Firstly, a significant number retained those painted designs which would be lost in the normal course of events - in fact, some retained their appearance as grave markers with soil attached to their supports and ephemeral pukumani decorations in place. Secondly, a few museums retained Tiwi graveposts of great age, dating from the early years of this century. To my knowledge, no graveposts from this period remain on Bathurst or Melville Islands as termites and bushfires have taken their toll.
To achieve an accurate stylistic analysis, it was necessary to devise a classification system which recorded characteristic features of Tiwi graveposts by using elements and principles of design. Details from nearly one hundred examples were noted on record sheets, and a list of criteria was used to record painted designs over a core sampling of fifty eight posts (see Appendix, sample sheets). Each of these sculptural and design elements is described separately along with their incidence among graveposts. As Tiwi gravepost production was subject to restrictions earlier this century, only experienced men could apply painted designs. Since paint was an aspect of ritual, its use, even the renewal of old paint, was senior men's prerogative; women were not supposed to touch it. (Hart & Pilling, 1960, page 49)

Consequently, the findings of incidence and stylistic change among two and three dimensional elements have been prepared separately.

At least one cylindrical section as a field for decoration

In its basic form, the single cylindrical section comprises little more than a smoothed length of tree trunk cut to fashion a gravepost, such as Figure 1.1 and Figure 11A. Often the only evidence of manufacture is at the upper and lower extremities where the tree trunk has been cut through.

However, most examples of this simple cylindrical type have additional tool marks at their low extremity which has been reduced to form a cylindrical support which is buried in the ground when the gravepost is in use. This cylindrical
type is known from many old gravesites and museum collections, and most examples are much smaller than formally elaborate types, rarely exceeding two metres.

*Fig. 1.1*

While the cylindrical surface of many examples is not reduced or incised, a variant of this single cylinder type has a carved horizontal band or a roughly fashioned rounded projection at its upper extremity (Figure 11B and Plate 89). Numbers of these graveposts are known from cemeteries around Milikapiti on Melville Island (see Figure 34B). Cylindrical sections usually support painted design fields, and it is noteworthy that many single cylinder graveposts have painted motifs applied as one large design unit (Figure 9A and Plate 90). As almost all graveposts remaining *in situ* have had their painted designs washed off, the number of decorated examples is relatively small.

A cylindrical support below ground level

The presence of a cylindrical support at the base of a gravepost as in Figure 1.2 is the most common feature after one or more cylindrical sections. Although the support was designed to be hidden from view while the gravepost was in use, it should not be discounted as an important element. Firstly, the presence of a support distinguishes a displaced or fallen gravepost from tree trunks used for other purposes and secondly, it indicates how the gravepost was intended to stand at a grave. When the gravepost was erected during a funeral ceremony, a hole was dug and the post buried for the
length of its wooden support; some graveposts were carved with longer supports for stability during ceremonies held in the 'wet' season when the ground was soft (see Figure 7).

Usually cylindrical in shape, a gravepost support can range between 10 cm and 40 cm in length and vary considerably in thickness. Its surface shows evidence of tool marks and is often left in a rough and unfinished condition; the support may contain rot or termite damage which was present in the original tree. (For example, the gravepost carved by Thomas Daniels for Fig. 1.2 the National Museum project.)

Most graveposts of less than three metres have been carved with a cylindrical support. Very few examples have no carved support and these rare posts show evidence of damage which indicates that their supports were removed or shortened. Others have weathered supports resulting from rot and termite attack during their use as grave markers (for example, Figures 11A and 12). In some museums, which will remain nameless, graveposts placed on display have had their supports neatly cut off.

Some of the largest graveposts in existence also lack a functional support as they were carved to be displayed in a horizontal position - they are too large to be placed upright at a grave site. A fine example of this type is the largest gravepost shown in Plate 82, collected by Frank Norton for the Art Gallery of Western Australia.
A top or 'head' section

Large numbers of known graveposts have a clearly defined crest or carved motif at the extremity opposite their support. When this is a stylised 'cap' or 'head' it is always defined by carved banding or a sculptural element, as in Figures 9A, 15A and 15B, the distinction is not merely that of separate painted motifs. Tremendous variety exists in the sculptural treatment of this top section ranging from a stylised cylindrical form defined by a carved line to semi-representational features including human or buffalo heads and birds. An unusual example is the gravepost surmounted by a representational buffalo head now located in the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (see Figure 16).

Certain motifs recur constantly, namely, one to four projecting billets (known as 'horns' or 'arms') disc-like shapes (sometimes known as 'caps' or 'hats') and a range of broad club-like forms (see Figure 12). Almost all Tiwi graveposts have their top or 'head' at the thicker end of the post and, on many examples, this area receives the most complex sculptural treatment (Figure 15B). When very simple forms such as the disc-like shape are used, these often become the basis for painted decoration.
Additional cylindrical sections as areas for decoration

As a variant of the single cylindrical section (as a field for decoration) these additional elements may take two forms,

- the elaboration of the 'body' of the post, that is, the single cylindrical section, into several short cylinders instead of the longer single type, for example, in Figure 1.4 and Figure 14 or,

- the inclusion of two or more long cylindrical sections in a very tall, slender gravepost. A fine example of this unusual type is No.1, University of Pennsylvania Museum collection in Plate 100, see also Figure 10B.

Like the single cylinder, these sections comprise the full circumference of the post with a surface smoothed to receive painted designs or carved with small motifs. The formal characteristics of these cylindrical sections vary widely. Sections almost identical in size may be repeated on one post, or several shallow cylinders may be combined with one or more longer ones on a large gravepost. Such cylindrical sections are vehicles for painted designs and their placement corresponds to 'head, chest, hips' and 'legs' on a standing post - that is, they approximate the proportions of a human figure, as Paddy Henry illustrated in his gravepost in Figure 19A.

Fig.1.4
Reduced sections as supports or sculptural features between design areas

On certain parts of many graveposts, significant amounts of wood have been removed to leave one or more cylindrical or billet-shaped supports. If the cylindrical sections described previously act as 'positive' ground areas for painted designs then these reduced sections are the 'negative' areas separating design fields (see Figure 1.5). Although these sections vary greatly in appearance, they are characterised by their reduced circumference in relation to the dimensions of the tree trunk comprising the gravepost. They range in length from a few centimetres to more than a metre and their form may be embellished by horizontal banding or motifs (such as bosses) carved in relief.

(For a very elaborately carved example see No.6, University of Pennsylvania collection in Plates 104 and 105.)

Like the cylindrical support, these reduced sections often show evidence of tool use and, to a lesser extent, superficial abrasions. During funeral ceremonies, the participants transport decorated graveposts by passing tree branches under these sections and lift them into place by holding them at these points (see Plates 13 and 14). Superficial damage may be due to the posts being handled during stages of the pukumani ceremony.
Many graveposts show evidence of adzing, filing or sandpaperyng over these reduced sections to provide a smooth surface for the application of paint - often several layers of black, white or red ochre.

Elaboration of reduced sections by the addition of carved motifs (i.e. 'negative' forms plus carving)

On many posts, some reduced sections are carved in intaglio to produce striking sculptural features that may be symbolic or representational in appearance. (An unusual example can be seen on No.7, University of Pennsylvania collection Plates 107 and 108.) The underlying support or core area remains cylindrical or may be integrated into the more decorative aspect of the sculpture to become lozenge-shaped, cruciform, spherical, etc. illustrated in Figure 1.6. The addition of these features is usually calculated to display the artist's considerable carving skills. Painted patterns are closely integrated with the carved form and when they extend over the relief elements and ground area, the result is a dense and eye-catching combination of carved and painted motifs. (See A47149 from the South Australian Museum collection in Plates 95 and 96.)

Embellishment of design carrying ground sections by carving

This is a very infrequent feature as the preservation of smoothed areas of the original tree trunk as a ground for
patterning has remained a major characteristic of Tiwi gravepost form. On a few posts, the drum-shaped sections carrying painted motifs have been modified by carving projections or recessed sections prior to adding colours, as in Figure 1.7. Painted patterns often follow the form of these carved devices, as on No.1, University of Pennsylvania collection in Plate 101.

Fig.1.7

Several large graveposts found lying at old grave locations in 1986 showed remnants of carved motifs on cylindrical design-carrying surfaces. However, the advanced state of decay of these posts meant that the original form of these carvings was almost impossible to identify.

Evidence of shaping with fire

A few very early graveposts show by their absence of tool marks and heavy charring around sculptural elements that they may have been constructed using fire. Further comparison of isolated graveposts from the Museum of Victoria and South Australian Museum collections is necessary to establish whether fire was used to shape certain simple gravepost types, as in Figure 1.8. Three factors make such recognition problematic,

- many posts were removed from grave sites and show evidence of damage by bushfires;
- the practice of scorching or 'cooking' the post surface to dry the timber was widespread;
certain artists preferred to char their posts heavily and destroyed traces of tool use.

Evidence of shaping with tools

Nearly all graveposts bear evidence of tool use which provides useful information on their approximate date of production, aspects of technical innovation and artists' carving styles. Evidence of tool use is most readily found on those areas of the post not usually visible, such as its cylindrical support, and features requiring considerable technical skill to carve. For example, the sloping plane surfaces of the gravepost (No. M146) collected by Mountford in Plate 94.

Three phases of tool use can be identified in a comparative survey, namely, the use of stone axes, the use of a variety of metal hand tools, and the use of power tools. The carving of graveposts by stone axes is the most difficult process to identify because of the weathered condition of many old posts. However, a few early examples exhibit regular tool marks and bruising rather than cutting of wood fibres in sections where the timber has been reduced. The evidence for metal tool use varies greatly and characteristic tool marks indicate construction using axes, adzes, files and rasps. For instance, Janet Mungatopi demonstrates a method of finishing a post's surface using a variety of steel tools in Plate 38.

A distinctive feature of Tiwi graveposts is the great variety evident in surface treatment ranging from
meticulously fine edging to randomly cut marks and splintered, unfinished details consistent with the vigorous use of an axe. When chainsaws were introduced to define major features in the initial stages of carving, their use produced significant differences in form and surface finish. Contemporary artists make a series of parallel cuts with the chainsaw to define major features where material is to be reduced (illustrated in Figure 1.9) then split or chip out this wood with axes.

Parallel grooves apparent on a finished post indicate the use of a chainsaw and incomplete finishing of the wood surface. Nelson Mungatopi shows how the first cuts are made with a chainsaw in Plate 34.

Rounded treatment of sculptural motifs

From almost every period of gravepost carving since last century, numerous posts are characterised by smoothly rounded sculptural elements including gently rounded contours on major cylindrical sections. (Figure 1.10) While some posts are roughly carved (for example, Plate 88) many examples combine these rounded contours with patterned tool marks consistent with systematic axing or adzing. While this rounded style may be used on the whole post, on many graveposts it is combined with certain roughly-hewn elements or the angular treatment of particular
features. A good example of the combination of roughly carved elements and rounded forms is the small gravepost shown in Plate 88.

Regular plane surfaces and right-angled junctions

In contrast to the rounded hand-hewn elements of the technique described previously, a second widespread style consists of smoothly finished flat plane surfaces linking sculptural components. Such posts have a pronounced angularity of form and numerous right angles joining design-carrying sections to reduced areas of the gravepost, as in Figure 1.11. This feature can be seen in the photograph of Paddy Freddy working on his 'crocodile' gravepost in Plate 52. Again, posts in this angular style exhibit great variation in surface finish from a series of roughly worked sections to regular smoothing which forms a nearly perfect ground for painted decoration.

Interlocking sculptural elements

A very small number of graveposts from museum collections (notably that of Baldwin Spencer in the Museum of Victoria) and possibly, gravesites on Melville Island, are composed of separate elements which join together (see Figure 1.12). Such posts are composed of two or more interlocking sections - usually a large sculptural unit fitting over the cylindrical shaft of a basal section of smaller diameter. When combined, these composite graveposts are
indistinguishable from certain carved types and illustrate the ingenuity of early Tiwi artists (see Figure 14A).

Careful inspection of some posts from 1940s gravesites near Milikapiti indicated they might be constructed in a similar fashion although no attempt was made to dismantle them. (Figure 1.12) The remains of composite posts which have fallen to the ground are impossible to distinguish from those of carved graveposts among the jumble of wood fragments scattered over old gravesites. (Figure 4)

The addition of sculptural elements by nailing or gluing

In spite of their formal variety, the vast majority of graveposts were constructed by reducing a single section of the trunk of an ironwood or bloodwood tree. Carved elements, however innovative or technically difficult, are created within the dimensions of the post, often by the removal of a great deal of material. However, amongst hundreds of examples a handful of posts contain sculptural details which appear to have been carved separately and added by nailing or gluing (see Figure 1.13). These few examples include simple cylindrical posts in the South Australian Museum which have small billets attached with tiny nails. Occasionally, a post has bosses or other relief elements carved separately and nailed or glued into place prior to painting with ochres.
The incidence of this technique should be assessed with caution as it may not be of Tiwi origin. Certain graveposts may have been broken in transit, then repaired and repainted by collectors and dealers rather than the artists themselves. For example No. 14 (Norton) Art Gallery of Western Australia is repaired with metal bands (see Plate 83).

The quality of surface finish

Considerable variation exists in the surface treatment applied to those areas of graveposts worked by tools. Many examples are extremely simple in form with a smooth surface finish apparently unmodified by tool use. Artists may have selected tree trunks free from damage and knotholes to provide a smooth surface for painted decoration without the labour-intensive task of sanding the wood surface. A notable example of this approach is A47148 in the South Australian Museum, Plate 92. Certain posts are very crudely carved with finishing restricted to those surfaces which would carry painted designs. Others show an interesting variation in technique as some sections are carefully smoothed while other elements are left in a raw, coarsely worked state.

As mentioned previously, the use of tools in different ways results in characteristic surface markings which can be decorative as well as functional (for example, Figure 1.14). The most usual areas on graveposts for this decorative treatment are elements carved in intaglio and cylinders painted in a single colour.
There is no apparent correlation between the degree of surface finish and the quality or regularity of painted motifs on Tiwi graveposts. In fact, uniform excellence of carved and painted motifs may be the exception rather than the rule. Certain crudely fashioned graveposts carry beautifully drawn designs and the reverse applies also - well finished, sculpturally complex posts are decorated with roughly painted patterning. For instance, examples in the National Gallery of Victoria and Australian National Gallery collections are old, well carved graveposts coarsely repainted with simple designs. (Some of these posts are shown in Plates 86 left, and 118.)

Evidence of scorching or 'cooking'

The great majority of Tiwi graveposts exhibits some degree of scorching (drying) or charring (blackening) of their surface prior to the application of ochre colours. The posts shown in Plates 86 and 104 show evidence of charring beneath their painted designs. Identification of this feature on fully decorated posts is often difficult; confirmation of scorching would require removal of a section of paint surface and damage to the post. However, many posts are not painted uniformly so areas near the basal projection or along monochromed cylindrical sections (illustrated in Figure 1.15) often provide clear evidence of charring. (For example, on No.2, University of Pennsylvania collection in Plate 102.)
The identification of evidence of 'cooking' or drying, on early examples erected at gravesites is complicated by damage caused by bushfires. Sites photographed by Spencer in 1912 and myself in 1986 (Plates 3 and 21) show graveposts damaged by fires. On weathered posts with considerable paint loss, the effects of 'cooking' during preparation and later fire damage are difficult to separate. Some large graveposts have been charred or 'cooked' all over to provide a black ground colour as the basis for ochre designs - for example, a group obtained by Frank Norton for the Art Gallery of Western Australia.

Evidence of corrections or faulty technical skills

Although many early graveposts are now in poor condition, ample evidence illustrates the technical skills of Tiwi artists (see Plate 18). As bloodwood and ironwood are intractable carving materials, pre-existing features including hollowing by fire or termites were utilised to achieve certain sculptural effects. Faults or corrections are of two types - incomplete design features and mistakes or breakages. A few graveposts have missing components or incomplete details, suggesting that they were not completed in time for a particular ceremony. Others were repaired after splitting or breaking in the course of construction, as in Figure 1.16. Gluing, filling or nailing were used to correct such problems. (Not all repairs were done by the artists; collectors and museum staff may have repaired some graveposts
including the bosses on A47151 in Plate 97.) Blocking out the major components of graveposts with chainsaws has resulted in new types of mistakes resulting from the ease of carving. The lozenge-shaped motif on Janet and Hilda Mungatopi's gravepost for the National Museum was cut unevenly by Ronald Adams who did not see faint charcoal markings and was not stopped in time (see Appendix, page 25).

Heights for graveposts

Tiwi graveposts were the largest freestanding works of sculpture in Aboriginal Australia and considerable evidence indicates that the largest examples have rotted away on the ceremonial grounds of Melville and Bathurst Island. As Goodale reported in 1954,

Some of the poles seen in the graves around Snake Bay measured approximately twenty feet tall and/or a good three feet in diameter. Indeed some were so big they could not be raised into position around the grave, but were left lying on the ground close by. (Goodale, 1959, page 301)

Posts well over three metres in height still stand on Melville Island and a few very large specimens are known from museum collections including the Northern Territory Museum and the Art Gallery of Western Australia in Plate 82 and Figure 4.

Graveposts remaining in museum collections vary from about four metres in height to tiny examples measuring less than one metre. The latter were model graveposts produced in sets for sale to non-Tiwi visitors and not used in Tiwi funeral ceremonies. The most extensive collection of these model graveposts was obtained over a twelve year period by
Frank Norton for the Art Gallery of Western Australia (for example, Plate 83). A very tall, slender type known from sketches and photographs of early graves is also seen occasionally at graves on Melville Island. Such posts are often over three metres in height with painted designs but little carved decoration (see Figure 1.17). According to Nelson Mungatopi, they are erected as a special mark of respect for the dead person - examples can be seen at the Mungatopi cemetery (Plate 23) and the site photographed by Baldwin Spencer on Fig. 1.17 Melville Island (Plate 3).

Maximum circumference of graveposts

As the height and thickness of tutinis were indicators of the status of the Tiwi buried beneath them, circumference measurements have several levels of significance. Graveposts were created as ritual commissions and a large well-carved post attracted approval (and a larger payment) from the commissioning family. For example, the large posts still standing near Milikapiti (shown in Plate 22 and Figure 4) were regarded by living artists as worthy of high payment.

Graveposts of more than forty centimetres in diameter are less numerous from ceremonies held after the 1950s possibly because transportation of the posts over greater distances was necessary by that time. For recent ceremonies on Melville Island, (Plates 23 and 24) graveposts measured less than thirty centimetres and the reason given for their
small diameter was that very few large, straight ironwood trees now grow near settlements such as Milikapiti.

Many graveposts of more than forty centimetres show some damage or rotting to the core wood which must have been evident after the tree was felled. Such damage imposed considerable restrictions on possible choices of carved motifs - certain ubiquitous forms such as reduced central cylinders (illustrated in Figure 1.18) could not be fashioned from hollow posts. Plate 80 illustrates a large hollow post with two projections obtained by Baldwin Spencer.

Very thick tutinis are also extremely heavy and required several men to lift them into place on the ceremonial ground (shown in Plate 14). Such thick graveposts are reduced in form to two or three major sculptural sections, with careful placement of load-bearing components because of the great weight of the upper part of these posts. Often three or four supporting billets are carved on these thick posts instead of one or two supports usual for smaller examples (see Figure 4).

A very high proportion of known graveposts have their widest diameter at the upper extremity, that is, the 'head' or 'chest' area (see Figures 9A, B and 34A). The prevalence of this feature is significant because most posts vary in circumference by several centimetres along their length and placement of the heavier end uppermost renders a gravepost unstable unless it is positioned firmly. (This is a
particular difficulty when graveposts are erected in soft ground during the 'wet' season.)

Selected examples of certain types including single cylinder posts and those without projecting basal supports, are wider at ground level. Most carved human figures also have their greatest circumference around their base (see Figure 17). In sculptural form, symbolic meaning and ceremonial usage, human figures are fundamentally different from graveposts - these differences will be analysed in Chapters Nine and Ten.

The selection of timber for graveposts

The choice of timber for specific commissions is a significant aspect of Tiwi gravepost production. Although many species are available on Melville and Bathurst Islands including '... splendid patches of Cypress pine' (Searcy, 1909, page 239) graveposts carved from softwood are extremely rare. In 1905, a government expedition recorded species probably introduced by Macassans, '... very large trees were seen, probably banyan trees and tamarinds.' (Gee, 1907, page 2). There is no evidence that these species were used for tutinis. Many graveposts still in existence were formed from dense, straight grained hardwoods, and artists working on recent commissions select ironwood or bloodwood posts exclusively.

Ironwood is the most difficult of all timbers to carve, so if a commission is arranged during the 'dry' season many
artists select bloodwood instead. (During the 'dry' season, hardwoods become more difficult to work.) According to experienced artists, when timber is new, hardwoods lose a large amount of sap which seeps through painted designs if the gravepost is not dried properly. Bloodwood in particular, is prone to this problem. Sets of graveposts collected for museums show conspicuous evidence of this damage as the resin discolours natural pigments; such damage is clearly evident on graveposts acquired for the Art Gallery of Western Australia.

The choice of ironwood or bloodwood can lead to subtle stylistic differences as ironwood graveposts are sometimes simpler in form, comprising 'classic' elements rather than innovative or complex sculptural motifs. (For example, Paddy Henry's post in Plate 35 and Figure 19A.) Bloodwood posts in collections often contain multiple billet-shaped supports, carved bosses, cruciform shapes, etc. (illustrated in Figure 1.19) as well as evidence of termite damage if they have been used as grave markers. A47151 in Plate 97 is carved with a particularly elaborate series of bosses. (See also Figure 26 with bosses described as 'rocks Fig. 1.19 on beach'.)

While ironwood and bloodwood are used exclusively for full-sized graveposts, a wider range of timbers is found in model graveposts which can be carved from softwood. A similar range of materials is used for human figures; although many of these are created from ironwood, other examples are carved
from softer timbers. Practical reasons as well as religious tenets may determine these choices. Ironwood is extremely difficult to work and is not a cost-efficient medium for sculptures destined for southern and overseas art markets because its great weight increases handling and transport costs. (Yet increasing numbers of carvings including human figures are fashioned from ironwood - Tiwi carvers may be 'showing off' their abilities and distinctive use of materials to tourist buyers.)

Damage to the timber in graveposts takes several forms:
- damage caused by rotting or surface weathering prior to construction of the gravepost;
- superficial damage to the outer layer resulting from rapid heating prior to the application of paints;
- deep splitting due to drying after completion of the gravepost;
- scorching, termite and weather damage occurring after exposure of the finished post at a gravesite.

Damage occurring to the timber in graveposts is derived from a few basic causes - exposure of the material to the elements, the effects of certain methods of construction, and inadequate preparation of the post for ceremonial use. In a few instances, substantial damage has resulted from inadequate handling and storage in museums. Whether a post has sustained a good deal of weathering prior to its completion for a funeral commission can be assessed from the relation of paintwork to the underlying wood surface. Artists applied ground colours over damaged sections including rotted
areas and, in several instances, plugged and repainted the section carefully.

Thomas Daniels' post is formed from a thick tree and has a slightly hollow centre so Thomas has made a plug of wood for the top. (see Appendix, page 46)

The 'cooking' process often caused damage through charring the wood surface, or producing minor cracks. Where heating of an area was too rapid, small cracks appeared in the surface layer of timber. Tiwi artists turn their posts often during the 'cooking' process to distribute heat evenly, as is occurring in Plate 49. Several posts with minor cracking caused by scorching have been thickly painted with a ground colour or multiple layers of patterning to disguise affected areas.

Isolated examples dating from every decade during this century show deep longitudinal cracking subsequent to the application of painted designs (for example, A-RP 144, Plate 79). These cracks sometimes extend for more than thirty centimetres and penetrate to the core wood of the post. In very rare instances, they must have occurred while the artist was completing the commission as attempts have been made to fill the cracks and repaint surface designs.

The appearance of the raw wood surface inside certain cracks provides useful information on when and why they took place. In some situations the cracks may be large and recent, brought about by dramatic environmental changes such as their removal from Melville Island to a southern city, or transfer from storage to an exhibition space. Severe cracking has affected substantial sets of graveposts created for museums.
and indicates that they may have been constructed hurriedly or removed prematurely to a drier environment.

Findings

The most rudimentary form of gravepost - a cylindrical section with a surface smoothed to receive painted decoration - is known from many sources and has wide temporal distribution. Examples date from the earliest recorded grave sites to graveposts collected during the 1940s. Not only are these posts simple in form, they remain modest in size rarely reaching more than two metres in height. From drawings and photographs of old graves where posts remain upright, the single cylinder type appears comparatively common. However, inspection of gravesites indicates that many standing posts are the remains of taller posts which have broken to leave their lower cylindrical section remaining upright. Some badly weathered examples now located in museum collections may be remnants of large posts. In spite of the difficulties of determining the incidence of certain post types at old sites, a feature of grave sites recorded in 1986 was that many burials dating from the 1960s contained single cylinder grave markers apparently carved of ironwood.

While the existence of a wooden support is irrelevant to the post's appearance during a pukumani ceremony, its size or absence can be a determinant of age. (The identification of a basal cylinder can correct those unfortunate situations where graveposts are displayed upside down in museums.) The degraded condition of a gravepost's support can establish
whether it was erected during a ceremony and for approximately how long it stood in position. Many older graveposts in museum collections show considerable evidence of water damage and termite attack. In a few instances, the almost complete erosion of its support indicates that a particular post served as a grave marker for many years (for example, badly weathered examples obtained by Baldwin Spencer, Museum of Victoria Collection Figures 11A and 12). Graveposts having unusually large or long supports were created for ceremonies held during the 'wet' season when the pukumani ground was soft. These are of relatively recent manufacture. (For example, No. 11, National Gallery of Victoria.) Some extremely large posts carved without a support and intended for display in a horizontal position were created for important ceremonies. These posts and the associated funeral ceremonies are remembered by older living artists.

Since Tiwi graveposts were first described by observers last century, many examples have been characterised by a sculptured top or 'hat'. Notable examples described by Mountford can be seen in Plate 4. Certain recognisable forms such as projecting billets, disc-like shapes and club-like forms are known from the earliest recorded examples to recently carved graveposts (for example, the National Museum commission, 1986 - see Plate 41 and Figure 2). Apart from the application of different painted designs, these sculptured forms have varied little over the years, for several important reasons which will be discussed in Chapter Ten.
Since the end of World War II a range of 'innovative' or representational types including crosses, barbed spearheads, playing cards and buffalo heads has achieved popularity and occasional examples continue to appear - often at art and craft outlets. Among the old graves still in existence on Melville Island, very few posts are surmounted by these so-called 'innovative' features, as can be seen in posts standing at gravesites shown in Figures 34A and B.

While the earliest graveposts described by Europeans on Melville and Bathurst Islands are relatively simple in form, the presence of several cylindrical sections on one post is known from early examples, as illustrated in Plate 1. In fact, the elaboration of graveposts into several short cylindrical sections is a recognisable characteristic of posts at most graves and in most collections. Nearly all graveposts created today are divided into several sections. Two or more long cylindrical sections on a tall slender gravepost is a less common feature that recurs periodically. This type, less well known from museum collections, is illustrated in Plate 3 and Figure 10C. Because of the fragile and cumbersome form of these graveposts, the incidence of this type is very difficult to establish.

Where graveposts are divided into several cylindrical sections, these are often separated by reduced cylindrical areas (A47149, Plates 95 and 96), sometimes embellished by motifs carved in relief. While the basic form and number of these elements has remained unchanged, noticeable variation occurs from the 1930s when very thick posts were selected for
carving (Ritchie & Raine, 1934, opp. page 68). This meant that large amounts of material were removed, and greater variety of form in cylindrical supports resulted. Many large graveposts carved during the 1950s and 1960s have a strongly sculptural quality and formal variety - illustrated in Plates 4 and 14. Some posts carved during the same period incorporated representational elements such as crosses, hearts, diamonds etc. carved in relief. Such examples of Tiwi artists' technical prowess continued to be produced occasionally over the following decade. By the mid 1980s, graveposts used for ceremonies had decreased greatly in size and their sculptural form was much simpler. This can be seen in photographs of the Mungatopi and Tipakalippa cemeteries, Milikapiti - Plates 23 and 24. (These stylistic developments will be analysed fully in later chapters.) The incising of design-bearing surfaces on formally complex graveposts is an unusual feature known from a few early examples but more popular during the 1960s. Where intaglio carving of this type occurs it usually remains subservient to the motifs in overlaid painted designs.

Evidence of shaping using fire is problematic because those old graveposts which may have been constructed in this way were often associated with sites affected by bushfires. Only posts created before the 1920s could have been shaped with fire as later examples show clear evidence of tool use on worked surfaces. Posts from a later period which were 'cooked' heavily bear traces of tool marks on their charred surfaces. Marks left by the artist's tools indicate not only what carving methods were used but the approximate date of
construction. Detailed comparison of tool marks may also suggest which graveposts were made by artists working on a single commission. Tool use can be divided into three historical phases - the use of stone axes, the use of iron and steel hand tools, and more recently, the use of power tools including chainsaws.

Varying surface treatments on particular posts suggest that stone and iron tools may have been used concurrently. The appearance of surviving tutinis is supported by evidence of tool use recorded at a work site on Melville Island by Searcy in 1895.

In an adjacent jungle the niggers had very recently been expending a lot of surplus energy, judging from the number of trees that had been cut down, evidently with stone axes, as far as the large trees were concerned. One of the trees was six inches in diameter. The smaller trees had cleaner cuts, as if hewn with a sharp instrument. (Searcy, 1909, page 239)

In more recent times, shaping with a chainsaw supplemented work with steel hand tools. Metal tools were in widespread use at a very early date although artists including Holder Adams retain stone axes as collector's items. The widespread use of chainsaws and horizontal positioning, probably accelerated stylistic change as rounded cylindrical sections characteristic of earlier periods were replaced by regular plane surfaces and horizontal 'shelves' defining formal elements. Goodale noted that in 1954 this angular style was popular - 'Peter's pole fashioned without chainsaw was said (by his fellow artists) to be superior just because of the sharp edges.' (Goodale, pers. comm.) - it is now the dominant carving style for graveposts on Melville and Bathurst.
Islands, illustrated in Plate 41. Holder Adams described the association of new carving techniques and the angular style,

...the style of earlier posts was different (i.e. rounded) because they were shaped with metal adzes then smoothed with stones. The first post in the new sharp-edged style was finished with a rasp in about 1918. (see Appendix, page 6)

Graveposts created during the 1980s express a newer highly finished style which is achieved by laborious smoothing of the timber surface with rasps and emery paper. Holder Adams' gravepost in Plate 73 is an excellent example of the type. According to Goodale, this technique was not evident thirty years earlier, 'I never saw this being done in 1954 (and I watched many poles being painted).’ (Goodale, pers. comm.)

Where tools have been used to carve sculptural devices or incise details into gravepost surfaces, great variation exists in the quality of finish of posts created for the same ceremony. Occasionally, considerable variation exists in the surface finish on one post. Such differences indicate that two or more artists worked on a single post or that technique deteriorated in the rush to complete a commissioned post on time. Surveys of large numbers of posts suggest that, before the 1930s, many artists carefully selected smooth tree trunks without damage or knotholes (A19514 in Plate 90), while post-war artists were content to carve complex elements from a flawed log and re-finish its surface. (A47151 in Plate 97 is carved around a rotted hollow section at its upper end.) By the 1960s, carvers attempted to repair damaged graveposts rather than abandon them. Polly Miller recounted an incident that occurred some years ago when carvings were being prepared too quickly,
...they saw that some of the green ironwood had split so they tried to fill the crack with sawdust and glue but that didn't work. (see Appendix, page 26)

As no tutinis with repaired damage were seen by me at gravesites on Melville or Bathurst Island, it appears legitimate for minor repairs to be effected on graveposts destined for display elsewhere - hence the modest number of patched and mended examples in collections - but not on tutinis.

Scorching or 'cooking' a newly carved post prior to completing its painted decoration is an integral feature of gravepost production among living Tiwi artists and can be seen in Plates 48 and 49. However, many posts collected prior to the 1930s show no evidence of scorching and may have been steamed lightly or not burned at all. Some early posts appear to be carved from seasoned timber with no evidence of scorching - additional drying of the wood surface prior to painting would not have been necessary. A noteworthy example of this type which incidentally sustained later blackening from bushfires is shown in Plate 80. A large number of posts created before the 1970s have very uneven scorch marks, and part of the post is blackened while other areas show no evidence of burning. During the 1960s it became usual for artists to heavily char their posts then cover the blackened surface with a thick layer of pigment, usually white. Posts treated in this manner can still be seen around recent graves on Melville Island - as illustrated in Plate 23.

As described previously, Tiwi graveposts well over three metres in height still stand on Melville Island (Plate 22)
and Tiwi artists confirm Goodale's findings that larger posts were created but could not be lifted into an upright position. Tutinis remaining in museum collections vary from about four metres in height to small examples of less than two metres which were also used as grave markers. (Plate 81 and Figure 8A) Although very large graveposts of more than three metres in height were often carved for ceremonies during the 1950s and 1960s, changing requirements which will be described later meant that the average height and weight of posts created for more recent ceremonies is considerably less. (The modest height of posts in Plate 24 can be gauged from the turtle shell on the grave.)

Gravepost types were characterised by their diameter as well as height. Very thick posts were carved for men of high status and conferred great prestige on their carvers. Others including the very tall, slender type described on page 54 are known from early graves and seen occasionally on gravesites today. Carved as a special mark of respect for the dead person, these distinctive tutinis often exceed three metres in height. They are comparatively rare at older gravesites - perhaps their great height and narrow diameter mean that they weathered and fell more quickly than more robust types. Their extreme height and simple form and decoration appeared less attractive to collectors of Tiwi graveposts as they are not well represented in museum collections.

Other graveposts acquired for museums had maximum dimensions specified at the outset of their commission.
Goodale's collection for the University of Pennsylvania represents one example,

All of the ... poles were limited in size and weight by Leo Hickey (captain of the only seagoing vessel afloat in 1954 which served Melville and Bathurst Islands) 'No taller than will fit in my hold, and no heavier than two men can carry ... (Goodale, pers. comm.)
CHAPTER FIVE - Painted motifs: a formal analysis

Preamble

The meanings of the painted designs have no relationship to the meanings of the sculptural forms upon which they are painted, and each repeated single form may be assigned different meanings on other poles and even on the same pole. (House, 1959, page 15)

In his description of painted designs on tutinis, House echoes the opinions of other writers, that meanings for two dimensional designs are separate from those of carved motifs, that painted motifs are almost limitless in their variety and that no systematic attribution of meanings appears to exist. This apparent complexity and variety of painted designs led observers such as Mountford to surmise that their selection and application were the result of momentary whim or invention and a source of immediate aesthetic gratification,

As I watched these primitive artists at work, I was impressed with the care they took in the arranging of their simple patterns, and with the obvious pleasure they experienced in their work. (Mountford, 1958, page 110 and Plate 11)

Although existing documentation did not support this view, I felt that design motifs, like the carved elements and ceremonial attributes of tutinis, were neither 'primitive' nor 'simple' and required investigation in a systematic fashion. A classification system which included the selection and use of materials, the distribution of design elements - line, direction, shape, size, colour, texture, value - and technical skills and processes was likely to identify those characteristics which were of major importance to painters, and which illustrated categories for the recognition and selection of two dimensional motifs.
In the supplementary classification sheet which was developed to record this information, the range of motifs was categorised as well as the groupings of motifs into design fields and the disposition of those fields over the whole gravepost. While technical proficiency was recorded, equal emphasis was given to evidence of faulty technique, errors and repairs - the latter often revealing more of the painter's capacity and intentions than examples of fluent application and faultless design exposition (see Appendix, page 9).

Classification of painted design motifs

A predominant ground colour on the post

Very rarely is paint applied to the whole post surface as the cylindrical support almost always remains unpainted (see Figure 2.1). However, the gravepost surface above ground is painted and graveposts of various types often have a dominant base colour. On many graveposts this dominant colour is black; this heavily charred surface results from being rolled through a fire. Other more recent examples have been painted for their whole length with black pigment produced by mixing charcoal with polyvinyl acetate glue, or from other sources such as battery carbon. Holder Adams preferred to cover his graveposts with a mixture of carbon paint (shown in Plate 76). His work often shows a clear distinction between the painted ground and the 'cooked' wood surface which provides a stable surface for pigments without evident discolouration. Many early tutinis have a thick ground colour
of red ochre applied over wood that shows no evidence of charring. This preference for a red ochred surface rather than a charred ground colour was described by Paddy Freddy who recalled that when he was a boy all posts were not black and expressed his intention to paint a red ochred ground and different colours in the designs on his gravepost (see Appendix, page 32).

A large number of graveposts of varying types and sizes have a distinctive surface treatment comprising a ground colour of thick, white pigment applied over a heavily charred surface. This surface treatment so characteristic of Tiwi graveposts results in a ground colour that is extremely unstable, with a surface appearance of mottled areas of white and grey (see Plates 85 and 104).

A ground colour over more than half of the post's surface

Although many graveposts are fully painted with one ground colour during their preparation, this is not necessarily apparent from their finished appearance. The presence of an identifiable ground colour over more than half of the post's surface results from two general approaches:

- the post is divided into two sections, each being painted with a different ground colour (configurations include upper and lower panels or a broad central band of contrasting colour as in Figure 2.2); and
overpainting of several small areas especially on reduced cylindrical sections, to reduce the area of a previously applied ground colour.
(See Plates 24, 84 and 85 for examples of both approaches).

The number of colours used

Four distinct colours obtained from naturally occurring ochres and clays on Bathurst and Melville Islands are used to provide hues and tones of red, yellow and white for the painting of graveposts. Black is derived from other sources including charcoal. The choice of pigment for colours has not varied greatly during this century as Spencer recorded, 'So far as colours are concerned, they only recognize four, white is tuteinguni; red is yaringa; yellow is arigeninga, black is tuniwinni' (Spencer, 1914, page 466). Variations in colours found on graveposts derive from three factors:
- different outcrops of natural pigments produce characteristic colour ranges,
- certain colours are mixed from two or more pigments, and
- new colours are obtained from introduced oil or water-based paints.

Colours obtained from different locations across Melville and Bathurst Islands range through deep crimson to orange-red and light grey to brilliant white. Pigments vary greatly in quality from smooth, creamy clays and ochres which form a uniform and durable paint layer to coarse, crumbly colours.

20Forty years later, Goodale recorded similar names for clays and ochres '... white paint made into bricks (tudiungini); red paint (yeringa); yellow paint (ariganunga).’ Goodale, 1959b, page 297).
that detach easily. Occasionally, a very poor quality paint may be used to add linework to an otherwise well-crafted gravepost.

Differences in pigment quality and variations in colour mean that Tiwi artists work with an extensive palette mixed from red and yellow, white and black as is evident in Plates 66 and 86. Where commercial paints are used, the colours selected - especially red and black - are very different in appearance from naturally occurring pigments because of their brilliance and uniformity. Many graveposts are painted with blended colours which have been mixed in advance by the artists or achieved by painting over wet paint areas on the post's surface. Blended colours - usually pinks, oranges and greys - result from careful mixing to achieve new colours or accidental effects of overpainting. While traces of blues and greens are known these are extremely rare.

The use of geometric motifs in design fields

An analysis of painted motifs on graveposts requires defining the terms motifs and design fields and plotting the incidence of key elements in a representative sampling of graveposts from different sources and periods. A design field is an area of distinctive patterning bordered by major sculptural features, such as the carved edges of a cylindrical section. (Figure 2.2) Geometric motifs comprise design elements - lines, dots, circles, etc.- integrated into a composition,
excluding peripheral elements such as banding. (Where bands appear to be added to graveposts as incidental embellishment dividing design fields, they are not categorised as motifs.)

An unexpected difficulty in finding samples for study was in obtaining accurate information on fully decorated graveposts from different locations and historical periods. A large number of tutinis have lost their painted designs through weathering and on many other examples, the deterioration of painted designs has substantially changed their appearance (see Plate 3 and Plate 80, second from left).

From a total of 58 graveposts painted between 1912 and 1985, a number of key factors were recorded (see sample sheets in vol. II). Of these, 39 examples were divided into two or three clearly separate design fields. A smaller group was more elaborate in form with seven posts having four design fields and six examples having five. Three graveposts contained six design fields and one had nine, but on each the design areas included 'negative' areas not usually used as zones for patterning. (Figure 2.3) Among the very simple posts only two had a single cylindrical design field.

As only three of the fifty-eight examples were without geometric elements in all of their design fields, the use of geometric units - lines, triangles, crosses, etc. - is almost universal in painted decoration on graveposts.
geometric units - lines, triangles, crosses, etc. - is almost universal in painted decoration on graveposts.

A relatively high number of posts (32) included curvilinear elements such as circles and arcs within design fields. (Figure 2.4) These ranged from circles integrated with other geometric elements into larger complex patterns to elegant motifs combining arcs and meander elements. Two examples which illustrate different stylistic approaches are shown Fig.2.4 in Plates 90 and 108.

The use of freeform elements with curvilinear motifs

Although thirty two posts included curvilinear elements such as circles, semicircles and arcs along with geometric elements in design fields, in very few instances were these developed into freeform compositions. A few noticeable exceptions had distinctive curvilinear elements built up into a repeating pattern over one or more design fields (see Plates 111 and 125). A second small group of posts (including Plate 91) illustrates freeform designs of a different type which are very similar to certain compositions painted on bark. Traces of similar freeform decorations are known from graveposts outside the sample but were too indistinct to be included.

The use of crosshatching, parallels or dotted elements in design fields

Characteristic elements of complex patterning comprised crosshatching, fine parallel linework and dotted motifs. Only
two posts were without either crosshatched or parallel linework while 27 examples had both. Twenty four graveposts combined dotted and crosshatched designs and a considerable number of these had some parallel motifs as well. (Figure 2.6)

The greatest incidence of any design element was the use of parallels (either linework or dots) which occurred on 50 posts, followed by areas of dotted patterning which were found on 48 examples. The latter were almost always applied individually, a different technique from the distinctive Tiwi technique using a 'comb' which usually results in parallel rows of dots and will be described later in this chapter. Only 28 posts were decorated with areas of crosshatching. However, the incidence of this element may be under-recorded as crosshatched motifs seem to fade more quickly than painted parallels or dots. While the crosshatching is similar to the characteristic infilling in Arnhem Land regional styles, the linework on Tiwi posts is often thicker and the design components much larger than is usual for the mainland. (Plate 125)

Horizontal divisions between design fields

Painted horizontal banding that separates pattern areas within one design field is a feature of many graveposts. In some instances, this element is elaborated into several pattern areas separated by rows of banding (for example, Plate 125). At issue in identifying design components is the
difficulty in establishing those criteria used by Tiwi artists to distinguish major differences in form and meaning. Horizontal banding appears an important element as such bands are often included in substantial design fields. They appear to separate related motifs - perhaps establishing a ‘theme’ and ‘variation’ or a series of ‘variations’ on a ritually significant design. (Figure 2.7) Of the graveposts in this sample, 37 contain at least one painted division and 32 of these have identical or similar patterns arranged on either side of these bands.

Painted vertical divisions within design fields

The great majority of graveposts recorded, have design fields divided vertically by a series of painted elements ranging from lines a few millimetres in width to broad stripes. (Plate 92) Often these divisions define the perimeters of complex patterns including crosshatching or parallel rows of dotting. (Figure 2.8) When the striped divisions are very wide, they may serve as the ground for decorative linework such as crosses, chevrons or zigzag elements, (illustrated in Plate 120). They may be painted alternately in red ochre, yellow ochre and white to provide a contrast to the patterned areas between.

Of the 58 graveposts in this sample, only six were without vertical divisions within at least one design field. This high incidence is significant as such divisions provide
the framework on which design components are developed and strongly affect the post's finished appearance. On many examples, they run for the full length of each design field providing a division of sculptural components to facilitate the application of complex painted patterns, and changing the overall formal emphasis from horizontal to vertical. These vertical divisions replicate the divisions once characteristic of Tiwi body scarification designs which were cut into the skin in fine parallels extending vertically along the chest, back and arms. Vertical strips of unmarked skin remained between these scars. The relationship between body scarification and painted designs on graveposts is discussed more Fig. 2.9 fully in Chapter Nine.

Repetition of elements across the design field

Forty-three examples contain pattern motifs that repeat across the design field. While variations of colour, size and infilling are often evident in these motifs, they clearly repeat around the circumference of the post. (Figure 2.10) Where these repetitions occur, they are often restricted to one design field or are added as a border to larger compositions. (For examples of both approaches see Plate 73 and Figure 28 no. 7.) Horizontally repeating motifs are usually found on shallow cylindrical sections where they are visually separate from more extensive design fields. (The most simple repeating motif is that of narrow bands or lines - seen in Plates 101Fig.2.10 and 119.)
Repetition of design elements vertically

Forty-three graveposts contain design motifs that extend vertically (compared with forty examples containing motifs that run horizontally) and the significance of this feature can be gauged by checking this characteristic against the incidence of vertical divisions. Forty-two examples combine vertical patterning indicating the dominance of such features in a substantial number of the painted compositions on these posts. (Figure 2.11) The only graveposts which have vertical divisions without vertical progression of any design motifs are Plates 113 and 125 which were not created as tutinis for funeral ceremonies but were carved and painted for sale to museums.

Fig.2.11

Repetition of design elements diagonally

At least twenty posts have design elements extending across a large area of patterning on a whole design field. Several examples have compositions developed from broad bands of colour covering a design field as parallels or intersecting lines to form a series of lozenge-shaped motifs (see Figure 2.12). The latter configuration forms a characteristic lattice pattern which is a traditional design often painted on the lower cylindrical sections of posts erected at gravesites - illustrated in Plates 93 and 111.

Fig.2.12
A second type of diagonal repetition is of much finer linework including chevrons, parallels and zigzag motifs of more than 3 cm in width which give a marked diagonal effect to the overall composition of a design field. (Figure 2.13) Several additional examples contained diagonal motifs in their finely detailed secondary patterning but as this could not be seen at any distance from the post these examples were excluded from this survey. (Exclusion was on the basis of scale as Tiwi painters ensure that their motifs are of a generous size. If major design elements cannot be seen clearly at a distance of more than three metres when posts are erected on the ceremonial ground then those elements are not acceptable.) Diagonal designs on Plates 119 and 123 were classified as details only for this reason.

Areas of solid colour in all design fields

Although Tiwi graveposts are noted for their complex and distinctive linear designs, a feature of this sample was that seventeen graveposts showed areas of solid colour within all design fields. (Figure 2.14) In some instances, these were areas of ground colour remaining as features within surrounding linear compositions; more usual was the repainting of small areas to provide distinctive patches of colour contrasting with the ground colour (see Plates 99 and 119). On many graveposts, these areas of solid colour provided unifying elements in compositions developed across the whole design field.
Areas of solid colour in one or more design fields

Twenty-four graveposts have more than one design fields which contain identifiable areas of solid colour. (For example, Plates 108 and 124.) Included in this number are several examples with conspicuous differences in compositions within their several design fields. As the total number of posts containing at least some design motifs featuring areas of solid colour is very high (43 examples) the presence of solid colour in painted compositions should be regarded as a characteristic feature.

The presence or absence of a dominant colour in several design fields

At issue is whether the compositions in design fields incorporated a single dominant colour or whether the artist had attempted a balanced effect using two or more colours. The presence or absence of a dominant colour was difficult to establish in many instances (a) because the original appearance of patterning had been substantially altered by paint loss, for example, in Plate 107, and (b) photographs in colour of some graveposts were not possible to obtain.

Assuming an accurate sampling of 57 graveposts, only seven examples contained a dominant colour over at least 75% of the area of their design fields. At least 40 posts showed a balanced effect in the arrangement of colours within their design fields and no dominant colour. (Plate 122 shows typical examples.) The intention on most examples appears to
contrast a series of colours in painted motifs against an underlying ground colour or to achieve balance and rhythm across design fields by the alternation of a limited range of colours. This preoccupation with the contrast and juxtaposition of tones as well as colours means that most design fields are dramatic and easily 'read' at a distance. Subtle effects such as grading of colour, superimposition of related colours or successively tinting and greying of colours are not part of the Tiwi painter's vocabulary. This does not mean that subtle effects are non-existent - many posts illustrate inventive use of colours in underpainting and linear designs to achieve sophisticated results. However, most graveposts have been painted using colour combinations which make strong visual statements, which express traditional motifs very clearly and which draw attention to the major design fields.

Evidence of fixative in paints

Although Tiwi artists have used many different substances including eggs, beeswax and juice from leaves, plant stems and tubers to bond pigments, these cannot be conclusively identified from the appearance of paintwork on graveposts. As obtaining paint samples from posts would cause damage, scientific analysis of pigments and fixatives has not been carried out.

The identification of types of fixatives by inspection of paint surfaces is little more than calculated guesswork but certain broad distinctions can be made and specific uses
confirmed. Careful observation can show whether little or no bonding agents have been added to natural pigments, whether organic fixatives have been mixed with ochres and clays, and the presence of polyvinyl acetate glue in paints. When naturally occurring colours are mixed with organic fixatives such as juice, the ochres retain a powdery finish but bond firmly to the wood surface; in contrast, unfixed ochres have a loose powdery quality. White clay is less easily fixed with organic substances and many posts, including recent examples, show extensive flaking of white paint while red, yellow and black adhere firmly.

Polyvinyl acetate glue mixed in varying proportions with water has almost completely replaced organic materials as a fixing agent on graveposts used in ceremonies as well as those created for sale. When mixed with pigments in its undiluted form, P.V.A. glue produces a dense shiny painted surface which is very distinctive. However, most Tiwi artists prepare it as a mixture with at least fifty per cent water, so evidence of P.V.A. glue appears only in re-touched details or areas of black. (while certain graveposts in museum collections have a similar appearance, their pigments have been consolidated by Conservation staff.)

The use of commercial oil or water-based paints

Commercial paints became readily accessible to Tiwi artists during World War II when several men saw active service with the Defence forces. After the War, graveposts for particular ceremonies were decorated with commercial
paints. Although photographs and documentation illustrate the popularity of this new medium, only one arrangement of five posts decorated with enamel paints remains at Milikapiti on Melville Island. None of the old or recent tutinis seen by me in their original locations on either island in 1986 showed traces of oil-based or acrylic commercial paints. Among graveposts now located in museum collections, a very small number retain areas painted with commercial paints in association with ochres and clays.

The use of a wooden 'comb' to apply painted designs

Several fieldworkers noted the use of a 'comb' by Tiwi painters - Mountford using the word porta or pouta to describe it,

The colour is crushed to a thin paste, spread on a flat rock, and the porta rocked backward and forward in the paint to load the porta. The porta is then rocked on the body printing a line of dots. (Mountford, 1958, page 98)

According to his informants, these 'combs' were restricted to painting pukumani designs on graveposts and human bodies. During my fieldwork in 1986, Paddy Freddy carved several toothed and straight-sided 'combs' to use on his graveposts for the National Museum project. Carved of hardwood or softwood, these 'combs' comprise the two types known to Paddy Freddy - one having a smooth narrow edge for applying lines and the second with a series of evenly spaced teeth for painting rows of dots. Graveposts obtained by Mountford, Goodale, Tuckson and myself have dotted decorations applied with 'combs' as recorded in the fieldnotes of the collectors.
The toothed 'comb' is an effective tool for applying rows of dots characteristic of several Tiwi designs. Many graveposts in collections have areas of dotted patterning executed with a 'comb', and many more may have been painted with this technique which is easier to recognise when the workmanship is faulty. The difficulties of identifying evidence of this technique are outlined elsewhere.

Lines applied with a smooth edged 'comb' have a distinctive appearance resulting from the technical difficulty of applying linework to a curved surface. At Milikapiti, most grave markers retaining painted decorations show evidence of design elements painted using this tool. Many recent graveposts acquired for museum collections also show the characteristic ragged lines produced with a smooth edged 'comb'.

Apparent differences in painting techniques

Marked differences often occur in the spatial organisation and technical fluency evident in related design areas on a single gravepost. For example, a broadly defined uniformly executed pattern may be located near several poorly organised and tentatively painted motifs. Where fields of design meet, there may be faulty integration of major pattern units or linear infilling between mis-matched edges of pattern areas. This is an important feature as experienced painters stressed the importance of working slowly and carefully with a mental image of the major compositional elements.
Inconsistencies in technique indicate that more than one painter worked on certain graveposts – in some instances, it appears that a painter with poor co-ordination worked beside another who was far more accomplished. Some posts appear to have been completed by assistants to the commissioned worker who painted dots and fine linework, perhaps the younger wives of old men. In particular cases, the painter who planned the design and painted major features had a more skilled, fluent technique than artists who completed dotted infilling. On a few examples, broad horizontal bands or vertical stripes of colour were applied with a conspicuously uniform application of paint. As such even application is often achieved when painters used commercial paint brushes, these posts may illustrate the use of artists and house painters brushes in association with indigenous stick and fibre brushes.

Evidence of corrections, re-painting or faulty technical skills

In spite of the poor surface condition of many graveposts, their variety of painterly effects and technical assurance are remarkable. Tiwi painters seemed able to create an extensive range of motifs, textures and subtle innovations using a very limited variety of tools and materials. Forethought and careful execution were necessary to produce the complex decorations evident on most graveposts. As errors lessened the artist's standing in the local community (and could result in non-payment and a fight on the pukumani)

21 Although Paddy Henry in 1986 was a tired old man with poor vision, he was a remarkably accomplished painter. His painting technique is described in the Appendix on page 59.
ground), instances of overpainting or correction are especially noteworthy.

Many posts show evidence of overpainting usually of complete sculptural features or design fields. Reduced cylinders covered by a single colour were often overpainted two or three times before the post was completed. This overpainting was usually to build up layers of ground colour to ensure a durable surface, or occasionally, to paint out unsatisfactory designs using a single ground colour. Although minor corrections can be seen on a few examples, fieldworkers recorded that most artists preferred to erase or wash off a whole section and repaint unsatisfactory designs. The most notable instance of this approach is seen in certain graveposts from the National Gallery of Victoria where intricate pukumani designs have been completely repainted with simple motifs in crudely applied white clay, ochres and black pigment. (A technique used on the example in Plate 118.) While such large-scale revisions are often difficult to detect in finished graveposts, differences in artists' painting skills can be seen in particular design motifs where lines and motifs may be irregular or badly drawn. Such deficiencies were technically inferior or imprecise but they were not necessarily regarded as errors by the Tiwi who set great store by ritual correctness also (see Chapter Eight).

As mentioned on page 93, certain posts have small areas of their surface repainted where damage or wear has occurred. Particular areas such as reduced cylindrical sections and the post's support were often subjected to minor damage during
the final stages of the funeral ceremony as the *tutini* was carried on branches to the grave and lifted into position. Minor repainting may have occurred before the post was assessed by the commissioning family. Before graveposts were packed for transportation to museums or galleries, Tiwi painters or the local art adviser often added minor re-touching to disguise abrasions, flaking or discolouration from resin seepage.

Findings

Many *tutinis* created prior to World War II have much of their surface painted with a single ground colour, and significant numbers of very early graveposts are covered with a thick layer of powdery red ochre often without evidence of a charred surface underneath. (Plate 90) Other posts retain a blackened surface as the ground for patterning in ochres. By the 1950s many artists had developed a preference for applying white pigment over a heavily charred wood surface to produce a distinctive greyed ground colour, most easily seen in Plates 93 and 102. As this surface is extremely unstable, most examples in museums have darkened considerably over time so the dramatic tonal contrasts of their original appearance can only be imagined. For the past twenty years, certain artists have prepared a paint by mixing P.V.A. glue with charcoal or other materials such as battery carbon. This smooth black ground surface provides a durable support for painted designs with little subsequent paint loss.
Although most graveposts are covered with a ground colour during the initial stages of painting, their finished appearance includes a division into broad bands of colour or small areas of different colours. Very large, formally complex posts often contain two predominant ground colours interspersed with sections of painted patterning. (Plate 61) Division of the gravepost's surface into small areas of different colours has become a widespread feature over the past twenty years and many recent graveposts rely on varied ground colours alternating with 'busy' painted motifs for their visual impact - an important stylistic development which will be described later. (Shown in the photograph of commissioned graveposts on display in the Australian Museum, Plate 122.)

The ochres and clays which produce red, yellow, black and white have always formed the basic colours used by Tiwi painters. Yet this supposedly limited choice included great differences of pigment texture, hue and quality and was expanded to create a far larger palette of colours. Deposits of superior quality ochres and clays across Melville and Bathurst Island were highly regarded and such sites were mined at different times to provide materials for important ceremonies. For instance, Mountford noted obvious differences in the quality of local ochres, 'We brought back about 20lbs of yellow ochre from Cape Van Diemen (Ilimu) [sic] ... up to date, we have had poor colours ...' (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 235) From colour combinations used on particular examples it is sometimes possible to identify graveposts created at a certain time and place as a particular
commission, materials from well-known sites including Imilu and the colour preferences of individual artists e.g. a distinctive red ochre used on posts in 1978 for the Australian Museum, or 77199 by Tommy Mungatopi in Plate 125.

Variety in the selection and mixing of colours appears an important ingredient in the work of Tiwi painters over the past eighty years. From the four basic colours available locally, artists demonstrated great resourcefulness in mixing tints and shades - usually of pinks, oranges and greys. Several hues of red, yellow and white (possibly from different locations) are often painted in different design fields on a single gravepost. Colour preferences appeared to change rapidly so certain mixtures and combinations became 'fashionable'. An excellent instance is the use of a bright pink derived from blending red ochre and white, which occurs on several posts collected early this century and yet a decade later, this colour was rarely used. Stronger red and yellow ochre colours were prevalent by that time.

The great variety of fixatives used by Tiwi artists has been described previously. Many posts created in the first thirty years of this century contained little or no binder in their paints and occasional posts carved recently have been painted with paints lacking in fixative. In Plate 71, Thomas Daniel repaints designs using organic fixative after washing off unfixed colours, as older men suggested that he use 'correct' materials. Certain graveposts collected by Baldwin Spencer in 1912 (e.g. No. 19514 Museum of Victoria collection) are painted with loose powdery ochres and show a
heavy loss of white clay indicating a lack of fixative. Extensive smudging of ochred patterns on early examples suggests that their paints lacked a fixing medium, or that a fixative was applied to the wood surface and not mixed with the pigments. Substances used as fixatives on certain graveposts acquired for collectors were regarded as 'old-fashioned' by Tiwi artists of the period. For example, turtle eggs were mixed with clay and ochres for posts acquired by Goodale for the University of Pennsylvania as the 'proper old way' while orchid juice was used on tutinis by the same painters. In 1986, older painters rubbed fixative mixtures on their posts and mixed them with clays and ochres. They could recall a wide variety of materials used as fixative including turtle eggs, honeycomb, and juice from leaves, palm fibre and tubers. Juices from yancomani (wild plum) and tjarparteenga (tree orchid) were mixed with paints used on tutinis at that time but their use was not well known. (Paddy Freddy prepares yancomani in Plate 52.)

During the 1960s artists began using P.V.A. glue and water to fix the pigments on graveposts painted for funeral ceremonies. (Its use was encouraged by craft advisers and school teachers and it was easily obtained in community stores.) While a few examples dating from this period show heavy use of this glue, artists soon learned to thin the mixture to avoid a gloss finish to their paints. Most contemporary graveposts have a small amount of P.V.A. glue added to the colours to provide a uniform matt appearance to painted design work. Living artists who create tutinis for
important commissions favour the durable paint surface provided by this fixative to withstand several 'wet' seasons. As Paddy Freddy said, '...this lasts better in the rain but is not the old way' (see Appendix, page 47).

Considering the ready availability of commercial paints since 1941-2 and their durability, it remains surprising that more Tiwi artists have not used them for commissioned graveposts. Only one group of five graveposts painted with traces of red and white enamel paint remains at Milikapiti and dates from a funeral ceremony held about twenty years ago. A few graveposts scattered through major collections have traces of commercial paint in addition to natural pigments but graveposts painted solely with introduced paints are extremely rare. Photographs of ceremonies held between 1960 and 1970 include graveposts apparently decorated with commercial paints but those examples have not survived. Although Tiwi painters wanted tutinis to last for as long as possible, factors in addition to durability affected the choice of materials and will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

Although the incidence of dotted designs applied with 'combs' appears low on very early posts, this may be misleading because of skilled application techniques. The difficulty of identifying nearly perfect registration by a toothed 'comb' in the hands of an accomplished artist has been discussed previously. By contrast, linework applied with a smooth-edged 'comb' has characteristic uneven edges. Over the past ten years, the use of smooth-edged 'combs' for applying lines and design elements has achieved greater
popularity —most graveposts erected at recent graves and many on display at Aboriginal art outlets (Plate 77) during the past two years have some motifs executed using this technique. Not all Tiwi artists use 'combs'; many prefer to paint all dotted elements using an assortment of brushes including small stick brushes like those recorded by Mountford, 'For making the dots ... artists used a short, cylindrical stick, about three-sixteenths of an inch in diameter' (Mountford, 1958, page 21).

A high number of graveposts in major collections have had their painted decorations damaged by weather or handling. As Goodale noted, graveposts at the University of Pennsylvania Museum were '... displayed and moved many times' (Goodale, pers. comm.). Early examples are often severely affected because of the powdery consistency of their paintwork and because of poor storage conditions over many years. Yet enough graveposts with painted designs in good condition remain to illustrate vagaries in technique, corrections and overpainting. Some posts were especially difficult to paint because of the wavy grain of their timber or knotholes which intrude into the design fields. Poorly executed tutinis or those with minor corrections occur from every decade of this century, and technical facility is not restricted to recent examples — some of the most accomplished paintings are found on very early graveposts. Those examples dating from the 1920s or earlier generally illustrate greater uniformity in painting technique and design composition. The reasons for this finding are discussed in a later chapter. Overpainting of design areas by the application of successive
layers of paint is a very common feature of Tiwi graveposts, and Holder Adams explained why this technique is so prevalent (see Chapter Six, page 49). By comparison, corrections or modifications to design motifs are rare. As overpainting was not only a usual technical process but a desirable one, it will be discussed more fully elsewhere.

Corrections or modifications in design features are rare and design carrying areas, that is, cylindrical sections, have a much lower incidence of corrections or faulty paint application than other areas of graveposts. By the 1950s prevailing techniques and styles were substantially modified and design arrangements were complex and grouped in isolated units. (These differences are best illustrated in two graveposts collected by Mountford, Plates 93 and 94.) In many instances, discrepancies in technique suggested that more than one artist had painted a particular post. A decade later, graveposts showed even greater variations in their ground colours, fluency of painted details, and consistency and texture of their colours. On a number of particularly large posts created over fifteen years from about 1960, areas of solid colour are overpainted unevenly, and streaking or mis-matched edges have resulted from the incomplete mixing of colours. Similar technical faults and corrections have been noted in the painted designs on comparatively recent graveposts which were created for sale rather than use at funeral rites. Posts obtained for the National Gallery of Victoria, which are weathered graveposts repainted with simple patterns (including the gravepost shown in Plate 118) are noteworthy examples of this process.
CHAPTER SIX - Conception and design

After the death of a Tiwi, experienced artists know whether they are likely to be commissioned, firstly because of their relationship to the dead person's family, '... pole cutters are ritually commissioned by members of the patrilineal kinsmen of the deceased.' (Goodale and Koss, 1971, page 188) - and secondly, because of their reputation as accomplished carvers of graveposts. As several months pass between the burial and final pukumani ritual, especially if the deceased is a person of importance, a commissioned artist has time to contemplate the task and consider potential themes and ideas. A distinctive feature of these preparations is that the finished post must appear clearly in the artist's mind. Several contemporary carvers referred to the desirability of acquiring inspiration in this way. According to Thomas Woody '... the artist must have the complete idea for painting and carving before he starts the post' (see Appendix, page 76). Mountford noted in 1954 when he observed artists carving graveposts, '... Pulanimbuwi showed me the rough draft of the designs of his pole ... scratched on the back of a cigarette tin, days before he had even felled the tree' (Mountford, 1958, page 110).

In 1914, Spencer recorded the different roles taken by men and women as men and boys painted graveposts,

Men and boys of all ages were busy at work ... The only restriction that I noticed was that no women were painting, though they were watching and wandering freely in and out amongst the posts. (Spencer, 1928, page 680)
During 1928-9 Hart observed that only senior men with large households had sufficient leisure, ritual knowledge and technical experience to make tutonis,

... the carving and painting of these graveposts ... were skills possessed only by the senior men. (Hart & Pilling, 1960, page 47)

Goodale explained this distinction between the sexes in practical terms,

Women can theoretically also cut the poles, but rarely do so because of the physical strength needed in handling the huge logs. (Goodale, 1959b, page 303)

Although observers of carving for later pukumani ceremonies have described the supposedly democratic allocation of tasks among a group of male and female 'workers' (distant relatives) and contributions by children to the painting process, the selection and supervision of artists that occurred for the National Museum project was carefully managed by 'senior' men. From my observations, older male artists with carving expertise and extensive ritual knowledge controlled the project and directed junior artists including the younger men and women. Their authority was rarely overt - a relaxed, egalitarian atmosphere prevailed at the work site - but they quietly and firmly directed decision-making processes (see Plate 57). Such older men were involved in preparations for future funeral ceremonies in other communities such as Pularumpi as well as their local region.

The production of a highly valued gravepost demands technical skill and considerable historical and ritual knowledge so it is appears that younger artists worked in subordinate roles or carved and painted correct motifs
without fully understanding their meanings. Older men who headed large households had distinct advantages in completing a tutini commission '...the bigger the household, the more leisure time was provided for its head to engage in manufacturing and artistic production' (Hart and Piling, 1960, page 47). As the status of artists working at Milikapiti in 1986 varied greatly, a brief survey of differences in age, gender and family structure provides useful insights into how each artist approached the task. Nelson Mungatopi, the son and grandson of famous leaders (including Wurarbuti, shown in Plate 17), stressed the importance of patrilineal connections to Tiwi artists.

Gravepost carving is passed down from father to son - only one man in each family is a carver ... Similarly, only one man in each family is a leader and rates very large posts when he dies. (see Appendix, page 5)

This situation was even more pronounced in the old days according to Nelson, 'Only the most important men, the Tiwi equivalent of kings, had a big ceremony with many posts.' (see Appendix, page 2). At that time, '... the funerals of most women and of younger and therefore less important men drew together at most ten or twelve households and a few other individuals... not above one hundred people...' (Hart and Pilling, 1960, page 41). Now, important men or women can have up to twenty posts. (Plates 23 and 24)

Among the carvers who worked together on the project in 1986, Paddy Henry and Paddy Freddy, the oldest and most experienced artists, appeared to act as advisers on traditional techniques and meanings. Both of these men liked to spend time thinking about their work, often sitting quietly and smoking, or singing and recounting stories from
earlier times. The older artists said that many of the designs are passed down from father to son and the rights to them are retained by individuals. Mountford's informants described how men used such designs in funeral ceremonies,

- A man, on the first night of the Ilania, will paint the pukwi design of his father, and on the next night that of his paternal grandfather. These alternate on each particular ceremony. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 863)

In 1986 Thomas Woody said that,

... the painted design at the top of his post is for a boy or a girl, and the next lower down is for a man or woman ... Thomas' father and grandfather also had these designs; (see Appendix, page 89 and Chapter Nine)

Earlier Tiwi artists claimed ownership of particular designs. Malumerinita told Mountford in 1954 that the design of Kudjalumpi (March Fly) which he had painted on his face belonged to him (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 869).

Goodale mentioned 'workers' wives helping with the painting of tutinis in 1954 (Goodale, 1971, page 315). By 1986, the practice appeared well established and several women assumed the role of 'junior' partner on tutini commissions - Polly Miller had assisted her late husband, Thomas Daniel's wife painted part of his gravepost and Nancy Henry worked with her husband Paddy on three posts for the project. She also painted his body designs for the final pukumani ceremony for Nelson Mungatopi's uncle at Pularumpi (see Plate 25). This subservient role of women artists to their husbands was described by Nelson when he commented that Paddy Henry had given all of his ideas to Nancy so she knew how to do them, but he retained the planning. In spite of his poor eyesight, Paddy's supervision of Nancy's work was constant and his instruction specific.
Paddy instructs Nancy in the right way to paint the design. He says that he has painted two broad white bands and a black one in between. He then shows Nancy where to paint alternate white and black coloured bands around the post. He [says that he] will instruct her where to paint smaller lines in between and on those bands. (see Appendix, page 87 and Plate 66)

As Nancy was an extremely skilled painter and several years younger than Paddy, her diligent assistance enabled them to produce extremely fine graveposts. Assistance by one or more talented younger wives during major commissions may have come about in recent times because of their usefulness in maintaining the prestige of elderly artists with vast conceptual and ritual knowledge but failing technical skills.

All four women carvers involved with the project - Nancy, Polly, Hilda and Janet - had illustrious husbands, fathers or grandfathers (see Plate 39). According to Nelson,

... Janet and Hilda are working on a post because their father was an important post carver. It doesn't matter if a son or daughter does the work as long as that person has sufficient knowledge and skill. (see Appendix, page 20)

It became evident during my fieldwork that these women did not have the same level of understanding of the symbolism of the carving and painting as the male artists did. Polly Miller, a veteran carver of many graveposts and a noted painter of pukumani baskets explained that the three cylindrical sections on her post are always carved and have no meaning (see Plate 37). Another carved motif, she said, was a pukumani design from a special ceremony and could be used for any other funeral ceremony. At this point, Paddy Freddy entered the discussion and said that the particular

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22One of the designs taught by Polly's late husband (Ali) Harry Miller Uruputaray was 'roads at Garden Point' (Records Museum and Art Gallery of the N.T. August, 1978)
motifs carved by Polly were not cut deeply enough (see Appendix, page 38). Polly could not or would not provide meanings for other carved elements of her post and was assisted with her comments by Janet Mungatopi. (This important difference between men and women tutini carvers will be explored in later chapters.)

A distinctive feature of the 1986 project was that the artists worked together as a group. They had been commissioned as a group (unusual by that time) and probably found it easier to work together because of the exceptionally large size of the required posts and the large amount of money involved (see Plates 32, 40 and 41). From my observations, many graveposts produced for ceremonies on Melville Island in 1985-86 were small enough to be carried by one or two people and several trucks were available to transport decorated posts to ceremonies. Descriptions by several observers indicate that the situation was very different prior to the 1960s. Artists were required to assemble at the ceremonial grounds because human labour was necessary to transport graveposts and the demands of bereaved families were for larger posts. (Plates 13 and 14) Mountford described how such posts were moved into position,

Some of the poles were both large and heavy; in particular that illustrated...which was eighteen feet long, and so heavy that it took seven 'workers' to carry it from the milimika and up-end it in the hole prepared for it at the grave. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 87 and Plates 15 and 16)

Trees were felled and carved near the grave site so the completed graveposts could be lifted into position.

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23 Paddy Freddy was Polly's brother and Nancy Henry was Holder Adams' sister so they avoided direct conversation.
Individual commissions were much less usual than they are today. Only if a carver had a reputation as 'The maker of big poles' would the relatives single him out for a guaranteed payment (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 439). Goodale commented on the commissioning process, 'This group of workers had been commissioned as 'a company' and were being collectively paid by the employers.' (Goodale, 1971, page 310). As commissioned artists remained in the camp for several weeks assisting each other with major tasks and watching each other's work in progress, significant opportunities existed for discussion and influence (see Plates 8 and 11). By the 1980s most gravepost carvers were working near their homes in isolation from other artists taking part in the same commission. Their completed posts were wrapped and transported to the ceremonial ground in time for the final rites. The effects of this change from collective to individual work will be examined later in the chapter.

The relative ages of gravepost carvers have become an important factor because of the tremendous changes that have occurred on Melville and Bathurst Islands over the past half century. Artists over fifty years of age remember earlier generations of artists and a world in which large ceremonies and magnificently carved posts were commonplace (see Plates 4 and 5). Younger artists may not speak the Tiwi language and certainly have not learned the extensive repertoire of forms, motifs and meanings known to the old men. Thomas Daniels, the youngest carver for the National Museum project said that he was not given the idea for his carving by older carvers but took it from the designs on old posts. According to Thomas
Daniels, a lot of the stories for carvings have been forgotten but many older people know the stories for painted designs. Thomas and three other artists carved works for an art show in Darwin while they were serving sentences at the prison farm (see Appendix, page 89).

How gravepost carvers acquire their skills

Among artists who carved graveposts in 1986, their approach to the task and depth of relevant knowledge appeared directly related to how they were trained or acquired their skills in carving and painting. Old men had served as 'apprentices' with experienced artists as Hart observed, 'During his initiation period a youth spent long intervals isolated in the bush with a couple of older teachers from whom he received training in religious and ritual matters ...' (Hart & Pilling, 1960, page 49). Not only did they have an extensive understanding of correct forms and motifs, colours and processes, but also an extensive knowledge of the history of funeral ceremonies spanning their lifetimes. Artists with the greatest command of ritual knowledge and correct technical procedures were often the older men who had been instructed by their male relatives. Holder's father was a man of high status - 'a boss' according to Holder - who taught Holder the correct forms for ceremonies and carvings. Holder said that his father knew the rules for all ceremonies (see Appendix, page 14). Previous generations of carvers had also received instruction from their fathers as Pulanimbuwi (Jimmy) told Mountford in 1954 when he identified two graveposts which he had executed `after a pattern shown him
by his father.' (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 269). Other young men progressed without formal apprenticeship and acquired their knowledge from many sources including attendance at pukumani ceremonies. Paddy Henry said that he learned carving by observing other artists not through being taught by a particular person (see Appendix, page 8). As Paddy remembered carving a large post for a ceremony when he was about eighteen years old, he had acquired a vast store of knowledge through working on commissioned tutinis for more than half a century.

Women were not formally prepared as tutini carvers -

'There was no corresponding initiation period for girls.' (Hart & Pilling, 1960, page 49)

However, while women artists in 1986 had not been instructed by male relatives they were able to observe their work and retained clear memories of preparations for early pukumani ceremonies. When Polly Miller was very small (three or four years old) she saw her father carve a tutini with a stone axe and made her first gravepost when she was between thirty and forty years old. She said at that time she worked with the same tools that are used now (see Appendix, page 25). Janet Mungatopi, a considerably younger woman than Polly, learned much of her technique and repertoire of painted motifs from her grandfather (Plates 63 and 65). Janet said that she painted the designs she saw her grandfather painting when she was a girl, until she was about fourteen years old. (He died when he fell from a tree while hunting possum - see Appendix, page 62.)
During the past five years a resurgence of interest in major ceremonies has occurred in Tiwi communities as older artists attempt to pass on traditional skills and knowledge to local children, and some younger people develop a strong interest in maintaining ceremonies, language skills and artistic processes. At Milikapiti, the older men including Paddy Freddy visited the primary school to teach dancing and ceremonial procedure to the students. Thomas Woody said that on Bathurst Island, Wilfred Pilakui taught carving and designs to young people at Nguiu (see Appendix, page 65). Nelson Mungatopi, the consultant to the 1986 project, represents a younger age group who have an interest in fostering traditional ceremonies and values (see Plates 34 and 53). As the male descendant of a line of illustrious leaders whose traditional lands include Milikapiti, Nelson is accorded status as a future leader. Nelson's level of interest in traditional ideas and procedures is atypical for younger people living in Milikapiti. Nelson said that

... when he was a small boy he went to all the ceremonies - pukumani, kulama, etc - and watched his father. He danced at every ceremony, day or night, and really loved them. His family took him to the Darwin Eisteddford and he won the Under 13 dance section. (see Appendix, page 77)

Thomas Daniels, who was about 15 years older than Nelson and the youngest artist working on the National Museum project, was a product of the recent changes on Melville Island. Goodale notes that his father was originally from Croker Island, '... but even in 1954 was considered a 'permanent' resident of Snake Bay and was married to a Tiwi woman.'

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24Nelson was in his thirties at the time.
Thomas described how he came to work as a carver,

... the designs he paints are his own idea, they are not from his father or grandfather. He says that no one in his family carved or painted posts. When Thomas was a boy living at Garden Point he saw one old man painting a post for a ceremony. He watched that man carving and painting - that was where he learnt how to do it ... (see Appendix, page 84)

Thomas did not indicate whether older Tiwi artists had supervised his first graveposts which he carved at the prison farm a few years earlier.

The gestation period - sources for ideas

In the old days a stone axe was included in the gifts to workers, but today steel axes are loaned to them, and the leader calls for axes to be donated for loan. One of these axes is selected and the handle painted white. It is then set up in the centre of the dance ground. The commissioned workers form a circle around the ax and give the 'honey' call, followed by a round of songs and dances. (Goodale, 1971, page 271)

So begins the ritual commissioning which culminates in the erection of a circle of carved and brightly painted hardwood posts around the grave. Although many changes have occurred in pukumani ceremonies since Jane Goodale first saw them in 1954 she would easily recognise Tiwi graveposts and the final ceremonies today. Prior to the formal commissioning ceremony, 'workers' have several months to prepare physically and emotionally for the laborious task of creating a post that will merit generous payment. Experienced artists in 1986 estimated their future commitments, planned accordingly and appeared to enjoy monitoring the correct execution of all ceremonial observances. Material reward and enhanced reputation were motivating factors as artists speculated on
how many posts would be required for particular ceremonies
and what their payments might be. Thomas Woody said,

Garden Point has had a number of recent burials, and will
have nine ceremonies next year. People will have to save
their money to pay for graveposts. (see Appendix, page
28)

[Paddy Freddy] ... says that the burial ground is now
pukumani to everyone until the last ceremony. Paddy will
carve two posts for that ceremony .. [he] now has orders
for five posts at different ceremonies at Milikapiti and
Pularumpi. (see Appendix, page 47 and Plate 23)

Not only does the artist have considerable time to
determine potential choices of form, motif and `story' but he
or she can estimate what materials will be required. As the
production of a group of tutinis is a complex and
time-consuming process, it is regulated by ceremony and
artists know that each stage is determined by the amount of
time they need to complete their work. Thomas Woody described
the usual sequence of events,

... during the ilanea the family [of the deceased] line
up the workers and present them with painted axes, sing a
song for the axes, then send them away to carve. The
workers send word that they have finished carving so the
family gives them fire and colour with songs and dances,
then sends them away again. When the workers are finished
the posts they come back and tell the family. The family
then sends word to all the people that the ceremony will
take place. (see Appendix, page 65)

Over the past forty years at least, commissioned carvers
have worked within narrow parameters to produce acceptable
graveposts for ceremonial use. Not only are the materials
intractable, changes in weather conditions can damage nearly
completed tutinis and specific requirements of the
commissioning family must be met. Jane Goodale described the
rights of the patrons,

Both men and women can nominate workers, and both men and
women enter the preliminary discussion of how many poles
should be cut and how big they should be ... these
preliminary discussions are necessary as a guide to the close kin group's desires regarding the size of the final ceremony, reflecting both their sentiment and their ability to pay, as well as the status of their deceased kinsman. (Goodale, 1971, page 271)

According to Nelson Mungatopi in 1986, patrons could dictate content as well as the size and number of posts. Commissions by bereaved families for graveposts could be very specific, firstly, by the number of posts and secondly, by the designs to be included. For example, if the dead person supported his family and had a reputation as a good hunter and fighter, those aspects of his life would be illustrated in the choice of designs (see Appendix, page 5).

The conceptual preparations for gravepost carving are lengthy as each artist selects historic and personal information to incorporate and chooses from an inventory of carved elements and painted motifs. He or she might wander through the bush near the carving site to find straight grained hardwood trees suitable for cutting. If the artists are working as a group, they should complete each major phase of the commission - the felling of trees, carving, 'cooking' and painting - as a group to avoid unnecessary delays before the final ceremony. Once the bark is peeled from the log, technical requirements dictate that each artist works quickly and steadily to achieve a flawless, fully carved and painted gravepost. (Plate 32) From discussions among carvers who worked in 1986, contemporary artists work more slowly than those of many years earlier, as Hart recorded that '... a gravepost ... required about a week's full-time work.' (Hart & Pilling, 1960, page 47). Thomas Woody and Nelson said that
it is much harder to think of ideas for posts than it was in
the old days,

...you have to relax and think, let the design come into
your mind. You have to picture that part of the post you
want to paint then let the right design come into your
mind. (see Appendix, page 86)

This gestation phase or conceptual period when artists
generated their ideas may not have been evident to Mountford
and Goodale who recorded successive ceremonies, because it
was less protracted in 1954 than it became thirty years
later. In 1954 Goodale noted that artists were developing
their ideas while they cut and de-barked the tree and cut a
cylindrical support - 'By this time each man has fixed well
in his mind the form which the pole will subsequently take
...' (Goodale, 1959a, page 6). Not only were the artists in
1986 faced with a larger and more complex commission than
they had known in recent years, they had evidently lost their
facility for recalling images and ideas. Holder Adams, whose
command of English was excellent, often discussed his sources
for inspiration and conceptual approach to his work and said
that his ideas for carving developed slowly. His method was
to think about his work first then start the carving and
sometimes as he worked he innovated further or changed his
ideas (see Appendix, page 22 and Plates 42 and 45). Thomas
Woody said that his idea for the rocket engine design came in
a dream while he was sleeping (see Appendix, page 76).

Given the technical and mythological constraints on the
artist's potential choice of ideas, the conceptual phase is
of critical importance in ensuring a successful outcome to
the contract. Early research contains a substantial gap as no
observer recorded how artists acquired and received their ideas although several writers noted their assured approach to carving and their apparent ease in creating varied painted designs. 'In the two series that I saw painted, the designs varied very much and anyone who desired to do so was allowed to assist in the painting, even small boys took a hand in it.' (Spencer, 1914a, page 232). In 1986, artists derived their inspiration from several sources - by discussion, by contemplative thought, through dreaming, by examining older posts at gravesites, and by studying the tree they had chosen to carve. Yet the approach taken by Paddy Henry, perhaps the most 'traditional' carver, was regarded by other Tiwi as a model for conceptual preparation.

In the old days, artists got ideas quickly - the complete concept came into their minds. Now it is harder for ideas to originate through thinking. Thomas says that he now dreams more ideas. Nelson says that he dreams more as conscious ideas are harder to form. They say an old man like Paddy Henry carries the ideas and knowledge in the head (the front of his head) so he has many more stories to draw on. They pointed out the old man sitting quietly while Nancy painted and said he was thinking about the post. (see Appendix, page 76 and Plate 35)

Ronald Adams, a younger and less experienced carver, took much longer than Paddy Henry to develop his ideas. Ronald said that his idea for the top of his post came to him after he saw the tree. He had chosen this idea himself and had not done the carved design before.

Below the zigzag section is a small square block - he says it would be wrong not to include this ... another panel of zig zag - again the idea just came to him and he had to modify it by drawing in charcoal and re-drawing it. He knows the painted design now, before he finishes carving - he says the carving and painting are decided at the same time. (see Appendix, page 18)

While none of the men working on the National Museum project identified associated meanings between carved and
painted motifs and felt free to introduce modifications, all appeared concerned to achieve a complete mental image of the painted tutini as the resolution of this conceptual phase before they began carving. The two women carvers, Hilda and Janet Mungatopi, who completed a gravepost together looked to older models for their ideas (see Plate 38). Several old and extensive cemeteries containing many weathered graveposts are located within easy walking distance of Milikapiti. Janet said that they chose their designs from old posts and talked about the carving first then the painting. At an early stage of carving, they said that they knew the motifs they would use for carving and painting already, and Janet also remarked that `... men's and women's carvings are the same.' (see Appendix, page 23).

Not only did the older men have a clear mental image of their post prior to marking out its carved form, they were able to describe detailed meanings and an underlying dimension of symbolism for their work. Thomas Woody was an older carver who had contributed to important commissions during the 1970s including two sites at Karslake when leading artists drew on an extensive repertoire of carved and painted motifs and ritual meanings. He said that he had the idea for his designs before he saw the post.

The top section illustrates tribal law, the black section with four sides is Thomas' own idea. Thomas says that the whole top of the post is the old style (like the Old Testament) and the lower part of the post is 'New Testament' designs - the son of the family, mother and father of the person who died, all Tiwi. (see Appendix, page 57)

That is, the motifs at the top are old pukumani patterns while motifs on the lower section are more recent innovations
(see Plates 58 and 59). Significant distinctions in meaning between pukumani designs and other patterns will be examined in Chapter Nine.

During late June, Paddy Freddy and Holder Adams began carving graveposts for the final ceremony of Nelson Mungatopi's uncle to be held at Pularumpi. As these artists were already carving large posts for the National Museum project, this second contract provided an excellent opportunity for me to monitor the preparation of graveposts for ceremonial use (see Plates 72 to 75). Holder appeared to shift his attention to considering ideas for his tutini while carving his large post for the National Museum project. His ceremonial gravepost was more complex in appearance than Paddy's and Holder expressed his concern that the post should illustrate several levels of meaning. His preoccupation with creating themes and ideas was not confined to the carved motifs and painted designs on the gravepost as I learned from Thomas Woody. Thomas said that Holder had a song ready to present with his gravepost and the song was about the owl, Mookmook (see Appendix, page 66). On the following Sunday at Pularumpi, Holder danced in front of his completed tutini erected on the ceremonial ground, and sang his new song for the crowd of participants and onlookers. (Plate 26) (Because of its significance in illustrating the mechanisms for tutini carving, Holder's work on this commission will be discussed in the next chapter.)

Not only were Holder's carving and painting techniques different from those of his peers, his conceptual approach
and attitudes were unique. Holder had lived for many years in Darwin, was fluent in the Tiwi language and English, and provided overviews of his philosophy and sources of inspiration rather than descriptions of specific elements. Holder brought a complex intellectual dimension to his carvings which was well-regarded but perhaps not fully understood by other Tiwi. When he talked about the tutini he was making for the ceremony he explained that it had a different 'story' from the National Museum post. Holder said that

.. this is his first gravepost [tutini] and will have three stories on it. He has decided to include the image of a female owl - he knows one with a nest north-west of the town - and he says that he will paint an image of the same bird on the other side of the post. He wants to include as much story as possible to make the post better appreciated. (see Appendix, page 70 and Plate 75)

His use of the owl image is not merely descriptive but relates to a much older theme illustrated in a body painting by Malumerinita in 1954 and partly forgotten at that time.

He does not know the significance, except the lines for the breast indicates milk running down. He said these designs were laid down by Purikingini (Boobook Owl).

(Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 843)

Holder described symbolism associated with his homeland on the northern coast of Melville Island.

The story is from the Dreaming and is from a country near Soldier Point where there is an ancient cemetery. [Holder said that this is where his ancestor...is buried] ... There are a lots of fish at that place especially barramundi and a big crocodile who lives there (that place is his territory). (see Appendix, page 59)

In these descriptions, Holder provides an insight into the complex processes used by Tiwi artists to achieve a satisfactory mental image for their commissioned tutini. His ideas for a single gravepost serve as a passing reference to
the systems of meaning and symbolism which will be explored in Chapter Nine.
CHAPTER SEVEN - Generative processes

According to Holder Adams, bloodwood posts were specified by Purukupali for the pukumani. The old man Paddy Henry, who had the greatest store of ritual knowledge in 1986, expanded on Purukupali's instructions by explaining why living hardwood trees were cut and carved as tutinis. 'Purukupali had said that posts should be images of the dead draining their blood into the ground.' (see Appendix, page 17 and Figure 19). The choice of timber for graveposts is affected not only by Purukupali's direction to the first 'workers' that it be a living bloodwood tree, but by the season of the year when the final ceremony is to take place and, to a lesser extent, the financial status of the bereaved family. (The relative importance of Purukupali's instructions, seasonal variations and financial constraints in determining the choice of carving medium are discussed more fully in a later chapter.) For earlier ceremonies, the time of beginning carving graveposts and associated rituals was carefully regulated,

During the dry season (April to November) when travel was easy, the only collective ceremonials sufficiently important to draw together a large number of households were those held for the funerals of big men. (Hart & Pilling, 1960, page 38)

Bill Harney's informants\(^\text{25}\) identified a slightly later season. 'After a man is buried, everyone must wait until after the rains have finished and the grass bends over, ready for burning.' (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 673). Both

\(^{25}\)Bill Harney worked with the National Geographic expedition at Snake Bay in 1954 and was well known to the Tiwi.
bloodwood and ironwood are selected for graveposts - the latter being harder to carve and more resistant to termites. Apparently carvers have always chosen the most durable timbers accessible to them even when their usual tools were stone axes and clam shells (see Plate 89). As early as 1895, Searcy, who travelled on Melville Island and saw several graves surrounded by tutinis noted that, 'Some of the posts were twelve inches thick, and were nearly all hardwood.' (Searcy, 1909, page 238). During her fieldwork in 1954, Goodale observed,

Each man selected his own bloodwood tree, the species most frequently used for a funeral pole because it is an extremely hard wood and best withstands the ravages of weather, insects and time. (Goodale, 1959a, page 6)

By cutting a bloodwood log for his post for Nelson Mungatopi's uncle, Holder Adams followed Purukupali's instructions and Paddy Henry's technical preferences as that particular funeral was held at the beginning of the 'dry' season in 1986 (see Plate 46). However he adopted a different approach for his first gravepost for the National Museum project by retrieving a previously cut ironwood log. Although Holder may have cut this log for another commission (perhaps for Polly Miller's family as she supervised its removal) this was the only instance that I found of a carver using a previously cut log which had been stored in the undergrowth (illustrated in Plate 42). Trees are not cut until the artists are commissioned and both Ronald Adams and Paddy Henry said that there is no 'stockpiling' of timber. This practice of selecting living trees for tutinis may have been usual for previous generations of 'workers' as no attempt was made to retrieve sawn timber from the abandoned settlement at
Fort Dundas. During their expedition in 1905, Brown and Gee found that, 'Perfectly sawn logs were piled on the bank close by: they were about 80 years old and had resisted decay and white ants.' (Gee, 1907, page 7).

Seasonal variations achieve great importance when large tutinis are being carved for ceremonies as the posts must be kept from drying out during the carving process. In earlier times preparations for pukumani ceremonies were held during the 'wet' season as ironwood logs could be cut and carved in the humid conditions. (Baldwin Spencer recorded two pukumani ceremonies in 1912 - the first held in March at the close of the 'wet' season and the second in December as another 'wet' was setting in.) Even now, very little carving of large objects including graveposts is carried out in the 'dry' season because drying ironwood resists chainsaws and steel axes. According to Ronald and Paddy Henry, the 'wet' season is the best time for cutting ironwood trees because the wood contains more sap and bloodwood is chosen for funerals held during the 'dry' season (see Appendix, page 7). In 1986 those artists who were carving the second group of graveposts encountered increasing difficulties as the 'wet' season passed. Janet said that the posts were much harder to carve because the weather was growing drier. The artists started working with the chainsaw but it kept breaking down so they used axes and chisels (see Appendix, page 45). Climatic conditions determine the availability of other materials used in pukumani ceremonies including bark for baskets. As Mountford discovered when he tried to strip lengths of bark from trees at the beginning of the 'dry' season, 'As the
season advances, the bark 'sticks' and is difficult to remove' (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 675).

Contemporary artists have personal preferences in their choice of materials and each person I spoke to gave different reasons for justifying his or her choices. Women such as Janet Mungatopi began their carving careers by working on weathered logs and finishing them with carbon mixed with water as tourist items, or by carving small model graveposts or birds for sale. These women expressed agreement with traditional practices and identified ritual, climatic and economic factors in their choice of materials. However, all of the carvers agreed that ironwood is chosen for *tutinis* because it lasts longer (although some preferred to use bloodwood) and that the price for an ironwood post is higher than for a bloodwood post commissioned for a funeral ceremony (see Appendix, page 10).

A luxury that early artists on Melville Island did not enjoy was that of having large trucks and a front end loader from the Forestry Commission to transport their ironwood logs to the work site (see Plate 31). Artists working in 1986 travelled considerable distances to locate suitable trees, as ironwoods more than 30 cm in diameter were extremely rare at Milikapiti. Several large gravesites were located in the bush around Milikapiti and at the time that Mountford and Goodale described gravepost preparation, large trees were growing near these sites. 'Pole cutters must be members of the local group who are owners of the land in which the deceased died, for they alone have the rights to the natural resources of
the area, including the trees ...' (Goodale & Koss, 1971, page 188). An earlier observer, Ritchie suggested that spiritual influences affected the selection of trees, 'It was necessary that these posts should be cut near the grave from timber grown on pookaminnie country.' (Ritchie & Raine, 1934, page 113) The practice of carving graveposts on or near the pukumani ground might have continued if sufficient large trees had been available. When the artists in 1986 were able to have large logs transported for them, they located their worksites fairly close to two existing cemeteries.

Although Ronald and the female artists would have been satisfied with more malleable timber, the older men stipulated that ironwood must be used and took great care to select the trees. Nelson and I as the 'commissioning family' travelled with the artists to check the size, straightness, and absence of knotholes and rot in each tree. Paddy Freddy in particular, was most discriminating and spent hours walking in the bush, locating and marking trees that fitted our requirements. Six large trees were felled with a chainsaw by Nelson and Ronald then cut into logs measuring from over 2.0 metres to 3.05 metres in length. A second group of six posts was cut some weeks later but most of these ultimately became supporting logs under later graveposts when the women shortened them to make the project easier. The larger posts in particular were extremely heavy and required the combined efforts of several people to lift or turn them.

As each artist in the group had different preferences for materials and different explanations for their choices, each
also had different methods of working. The only task that they completed with almost identical tools and techniques was the first stage of carving, de-barking the ironwood logs. ('Taking off skin' according to the artists, see Appendix, page 9 and Plate 32.) From that time, the work continued quickly as the wood began to dry. The bark was split using the backs of steel axes and tomahawks and peeled off in sections. While the artists worked they avoided using their hands to peel off chunks of bark and continued a lengthy and spirited description of the lethal properties of ironwood bark. Apparently, the sap from ironwood bark is poisonous and in the old days was used for several sinister purposes.

Sap when wet was put into a drink, or wet bark was wrapped around wallaby meat then given to the victim to eat. This poison was usually for a man who was meeting a woman in a wrong relationship to him. (see Appendix, page 9)

While I was impressed with the potency of ironwood sap as it was explained, and the imaginative ways in which victims were despatched I could not find a way to test its effectiveness without shortening my future contribution to the research project. Ironwood sap may be a strong poison or an equally effective agent for social conformity.

After the ends of each log were squared off by cutting with the chainsaw, each artist except Holder began carving by shaping the cylindrical support. Once the initial trimming and preparation was finished several artists lifted their posts into position by placing the 'head' on a large log, but others chose different methods. Holder's post was set up on three branches but Thomas Woody preferred an older method of erecting a sapling frame and placing the top of this post
against it (see Plates 58 and 59). Holder and Paddy Freddy's much smaller posts carved for the ceremony at Pularumpi were simply laid on the ground or supported by branches under a reduced cylindrical ('rib') section to lift their painted design clear of the leaf and grass litter. These graveposts were much lighter and more regularly shaped than the larger ones, so were considerably easier for the artists to handle (illustrated in Plates 72, 73 and 74). The three metre posts were awkward to work with as they required several people to lift them and because of their uneven surfaces, had to be wedged into position against their supports. The artists moved these posts carefully as a crushed hand or foot was likely if the logs slipped out of position.

Each artist working on the project in 1986 marked out the major features on the log in charcoal or chalk - the horizontal divisions and the shape of projections or sculptural elements at the top. Both Paddy Freddy and Paddy Henry used charcoal to mark their posts; Paddy Henry to mark transverse cuts of the chainsaw at the base and Paddy Freddy to mark two cuts across the top of his post. Ronald also used charcoal to plan cuts in his work and drew a charcoal line across the top of the post to mark the extent of material to be cut away (see Appendix, page 12). From the outset, Holder Adams' methods of working were very different; he made less use of the chainsaw and preferred a carving technique using a tomahawk and chisel. Because his first post was smaller he did not face the difficulty of removing large amounts of material to define the basic form of his gravepost. He first marked out the upper end of the post with chalk lines,
probably to estimate correct proportions. According to Holder, '... the artist is permitted to vary the carved elements, he may lengthen or shorten an area by about 10cm to allow for the carved lower edge to sit just below ground level.' (see Appendix, page 10). The ironwood was so hard that after removing the outer bark Holder's technique was to chop into the surface with a tomahawk to break the wood fibres then adze out the chopped surface with a chisel to reduce it (see Appendix, page 6).

Other artists used a modified version of Holder's technique to remove material by making a series of transverse cuts with the chainsaw then cutting out the pieces of wood in between with a tomahawk or axe (see Plates 33 and 34). This was done with a slicing motion, using the grain of the wood to separate thin pieces. In nearly every case, the chainsaw was used to fashion the sculptural elements of the gravepost. First cuts for each carved motif were series of parallels made with a chainsaw because of the hardness of the wood. These cuts were shallow and often repeated two or three times until enough wood was removed (see Appendix, page 10). The zigzag motif at the top of Ronald's post required several successive cuts and after each, Ronald laboriously removed the remaining timber with a tomahawk (see Plate 40). Both Ronald and Holder\textsuperscript{26} left sections on their posts encased in bark while they completed the carving of other areas to minimise the post's rate of drying and hardening (shown in Plate 46). Holder had attempted more complex sculptures than Holder delayed this for as long as possible unlike the other experienced carvers Paddy Henry and Paddy Freddy who quickly exposed the whole log.
other artists because he had achieved a greater degree of control over his medium, and took great care to safeguard his partly completed work. He described how he prepared his wood after learning from his father who was a famous spearmaker. He said that his father used to work all day carving a barbed ceremonial spear then dug a trench about 30 cm deep, filled it with water, put the spear in it and covered it with earth. The wood took up the water and remained fresh. By using his father's technique Holder could carve ironwood right through the 'dry' season, wetting his carving every night and covering it over (see Appendix, page 50). Holder kept his first gravepost from drying quickly by working under a tarpaulin-covered shelter and wrapping the post after work finished each afternoon (see Plate 42). However, when he began an ambitious three metre carving representing Purukupali and Jinaini, he developed a more innovative method of keeping the wood fresh. On this carving, Holder made a hole at one end near the feet and when he finished work in the evening poured water into this hole. He filled the hollow in the sculpture and covered it over so that the water soaked through the grain for the length of the post (shown in Plates 43 and 44). Without this technique he said the post would have been too difficult to carve within a week (see Appendix, page 51).

To a certain degree, Holder achieved by inventiveness what more 'traditional' artists accomplished with efficiency and stamina. Paddy Henry and his wife Nancy had more conservative carving methods. They worked in rotation by using an axe or tomahawk to reduce material or refine
elements after they had made parallel cuts with the chainsaw. (Plate 35) As the final stage of carving, the whole surface of their post was smoothed with a wood rasp; the 'ribs' or cylindrical sections were tedious to finish as the dark-coloured core wood was extremely dense (illustrated in Plate 36).

As well as being more formally complex than posts by Paddy Henry and Paddy Freddy, Holder's graveposts were more smoothly finished. He appeared to be the chief exponent of this regular, highly finished style (described in Chapter Four). Holder was also a skilled mechanic with a keen interest in machine parts which he appeared to transpose into his carvings in wood. Watching him at work on a major carving left no doubt that Holder was accomplished at all aspects of working in the intransigent medium of ironwood. In June 1986, when I arrived at the worksite at Milikapiti, he had already roughed out the forms of Purukupali and Jinaini on his post, leaving one end encased in bark (see Plate 43). Holder focused on carving the torsos of the two figures at this early stage and the following journal entry describes his assured and meticulous carving technique.

Holder is carving out the back of Purukupali and Jinaini using parallel cuts to reduce the timber. He works with a large adze for some areas (cutting towards himself) then with a tomahawk. Holder is shaping the arms using the lower corner of a tomahawk to make fine parallel cuts - the light pressure of this work results in bruising rather than cutting. The excess material is cut away with a wide, curved chisel-like tool. The technique is light with little material being removed so a smooth surface results. Previously, this area had been roughed out with parallel horizontal cuts of the chainsaw, and cutting with an axe. At shoulder level on Purukupali, more material is being removed so a tomahawk is used to peel off the wood with successive cuts working from right to left. Holder's whole attention is directed to a section about 40cm long, i.e. the length of one of Purukupali's
arms.... The whole process is extremely slow and tiring. (see Appendix, page 50 and Plate 44)

Not all of the artists working in 1986 had Holder's technical accomplishments, and judging from the appearance of many older posts remaining in collections, artists of every generation varied considerably in their talents. Two women artists, Janet and Hilda Mungatopi, were totally unlike Holder in almost every respect of their work (Plate 38). Holder preferred to work without consulting others and by physically distancing himself while the two women maintained a close partnership. They were physically weaker than the male carvers and had considerably less experience. Their completion of a first gravepost for the project appeared an exercise in patient determination rather than technical accomplishment as I watched them at work. Yet their finished post was moderately well carved and decoratively painted. Initially, Janet and Hilda's post was marked out in charcoal and the sections cut by Ronald with the chainsaw. The two women worked in unison, not carving in rotation as Paddy Henry and Nancy did and their technique was identical to that of the men - they cut sections with the chainsaw (parallel cuts) then trimmed these with a tomahawk. The grain of the wood was cut into first, then chipped off with a flaking action (see Appendix, page 24). Of the two women, Hilda showed less capacity to cope with the work although she always did her share. She showed inexperience as a carver because she cut deeply into the wood with a tomahawk and this was a more tiring way to work. Nelson [her son] told her that she should slice a thin piece of wood each time and demonstrated the technique. She forgot his advice
occasionally and cut chunks which were hard to separate from the log's surface (see Appendix, page 26).

The significance of scorching graveposts

The 'cooking' or scorching process which dried the newly cut log was an important stage of preparation. Mountford described this procedure in 1954,

The 'cooking' was simple. The pole was laid on the ground one end resting on a dry log, and a quick fire of leaves and grass lit around it. The fire blackened the wood, and thus provided a black ground on which to paint the designs. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 377)

'Cooking' or drying the graveposts by rolling them through a fire has been a necessary part of their preparation over at least several decades, judging from the appearance of graveposts remaining in major collections (for example, Plate 85, ANG). However, it is important to note that there are two aspects to the process,

a) scorching the post to dry the timber prior to applying colours, and

b) charring the wood to produce a blackened surface.

Most observers assumed that a blackened ground for painted designs necessarily resulted from the 'cooking' process but this is not so. Heat from a slow fire reduces moisture in the post and artists can dry their graveposts successfully without changing the surface colour. A heavily charred appearance was achieved by choice, not as an integral part of the scorching process (see Plates 8 and 11). Writers such as Goodale who noted, '... the pole is carved and 'cooked' over a smoking fire to dry the surface and blacken the background ...' (Goodale, 1971, page 316) were observing both the drying
process and the application of a preferred black ground colour.

By 1986, carvers had very different preferences. They scorched their graveposts slowly and carefully to dry the timber without splitting it, and without heavily charring (blackening) the wood surface. According to Holder, a thickly charred surface represents an old-fashioned style and Ronald said that in the old days before he was born, posts were blackened then painted, the same as body designs (see Appendix, page 32). Paddy Henry disagreed with the comments of these carvers and said, 'No, everyone has different ideas,' (see Appendix, page 38) and said that he would paint his gravepost with a red ochre ground and different colours in the pattern. His opinion is supported by the evidence from graveposts known from earlier periods - many are without a black ground colour and several early examples have a base colour of red ochre (see Chapter Five).

The heavily burnt surface of a gravepost provides an unstable ground for the application of ochre designs. Many of the graveposts observed by Mountford and Goodale, including those collected for the University of Pennsylvania, later suffered considerable paint loss especially of white linework painted over charred areas. Carvers who achieved a blackened appearance on their posts also created a technical difficulty for themselves in bonding paintwork to this surface. Artists working in 1986 were acutely conscious of this problem and controlled the whole 'cooking' process carefully. Janet and Hilda burned their post darker than the other posts and they
subsequently worked carefully to brush loose dust and charcoal off before painting the surface (see Appendix, page 35). Nancy Henry sandpapered the blackened areas on her newly scorched post before brushing its surface.

Before the 'cooking' process began on the first posts for this project, considerable discussion took place among the artists as to whether their posts should be scorched. These exchanges were lively on occasion as the old men explained that skill and accurate timing were critical to avoid splitting the timber, and younger artists grew increasingly nervous of ruining their carvings. Polly Miller wanted to cover her post with carbon paint (that is, charcoal and fixative mixed with water) to avoid scorching it, but Paddy Henry told her that technique was not right. Paddy Henry and Paddy Freddy, the most experienced carvers, were the first to begin scorching their graveposts. Paddy Henry started with a fire of cardboard and bark under the 'head' of his post and rotated the post periodically. He set the post up with logs under its 'ribs' so that it rolled easily and maintained a constant small fire under the post for no more than thirty minutes (see Appendix, page 30). The fires used for the 'cooking' process were small, clean burning and fueled by readily combustible materials including bark and dry grass, so artists could scorch their posts slowly and limit the heat that was generated. While most artists preferred to use cardboard, dry grass and leaves as fuel for their fires, the choice of materials was unimportant according to Holder.
If the fires became too hot the fresh outer timber cracked and fine longitudinal cracks developed as Ronald and Paddy Henry found. The artists agreed that tutinis must be 'cooked' slowly. During the early stages of 'cooking', posts hardly changed colour then darkened with successive scorchings although none of them was burnt black. Paddy Freddy packed dry grass around his post, set fire to it, and inspected the surface of his post carefully after burning it (see Appendix, page 30 and Plate 48). Being an efficient craftsman, he took the opportunity to place lumps of yellow ochre in the fire to turn them red for later use as paint. Ronald, a younger carver, was reluctant to begin scorching his post until the firing of other artists' posts was well advanced (shown in Plate 49). He may have been unsure of the procedure for 'cooking' large posts or reluctant to begin the process prematurely because the timber in his posts was too fresh. He built up a layer of cardboard and dead leaves under his post and 'cooked' it in sections by turning it over the fire which was too hot and caused noticeable splitting (see Appendix, page 30).

Very few of the graveposts erected during the past two years at sites around Milikapiti show evidence of a black ground prepared by charring although many have been covered with carbon paint. (Plate 24) Although Holder prepared his commissioned tutini using the 'correct' scorching process, he abraded the post's surface so thoroughly that no evidence of scorching remained (illustrated in Plate 47). This tutini was scorched all over, that is, 'cooked' but not blackened, except for the basal support which was not fired at all.
Holder's method of working was to use a 25-30 mm rasp to smooth back the fired surface, working across the grain of the timber (see Appendix, page 63). Holder's approach typified a contemporary local style which avoided uneven design application over a carbon-encrusted surface in favour of smooth, bright paintwork with no evidence of charring.

Although Paddy Henry instructed Polly that graveposts should be 'cooked', some graveposts in the past were made from seasoned timber. As the old man Tjamalampua told Mountford, graveposts created for ceremonies when he was a boy, '... were made from hollow logs, and were not shaped in any way.' (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 773). Artists who cover their graveposts with carbon paint may be conforming to a much earlier practice. In 1986 Holder Adams, a very knowledgeable carver, ignored the 'cooking' procedure and applied a thick layer of carbon paint to his gravepost. This ground colour of charcoal mixed with water was applied to a dried post which had been cut and stored in the bush well before the other logs were cut.27 There were no comments from the other artists about Holder's non-traditional approach; as I had seen an unfinished gravepost covered with carbon paint in his studio several months before I assumed that other Tiwi painters had seen it also. (This post is shown in Plate 76.) Either Holder was following a second accepted method of preparation, or the other artists at the worksite thought it wiser to avoid a sharp response from him and withheld their

27 In another departure from convention, Holder applied the paint with a domestic dustpan brush.
Both Holder and Thomas Woody applied several coats of carbon paint to their posts to achieve a dense, black colour, and Thomas supported Holder's comment that the use of black was an earlier style,

.. the coating with black was the old-fashioned way that everyone painted posts. The black has to be applied thickly to stop the colour of the wood coming through. (see Appendix, page 57)

Thomas' attempts were not entirely successful as, with repeated handling, his post developed patches where the carbon ground colour became lighter. Holder Adams suffered a different problem - a thick application of carbon paint caused pigment loss. Like the charred surface produced by heavy 'cooking', a thick layer of carbon paint provided an unstable support for painted designs so the carbon ground was scraped back to remedy this problem, or the painted designs re-applied. While working on his first gravepost in 1986 Holder said that his design of white had not come up strongly as the black ground was too thick. He decided to scrape back some of it to thin the layer of black paint. After he removed the loose pigment, Holder repainted the design with white clay and tested its dried surface for durability by rubbing it gently (see Appendix, page 41).

Factors influencing the selection of pigments

Holder said that,

.. a reddish colour associated with the sky and the ancestor in the sky is traditional for him. A large
caterpillar ... with beautiful bright colours is Holder's
totem so he paints those colours. (see Appendix, page 12)

Holder described the symbolic meaning of colours from his
Dreaming and why he used those colours to illustrate
particular events on his graveposts. Certain colours were
associated with traditional designs also. Paddy Freddy was
insistent that he was able to choose all colours and vary his
colour combinations (see Appendix, page 39). The use of
certain colours in particular contexts was regarded by Tiwi
painters as 'correct' procedure. For instance, several
artists nominated the use of black through painting or
'cooking' as acceptable procedure although old-fashioned.
Thomas Woody identified another old-fashioned preference when
I asked him to explain the symbolism of his use of white
pigment. He explained that he painted white over black on
'legs' because that is the proper way and supports should
always be white (see Appendix, page 92). Thirty years
earlier, old men specified that the chief mourner who danced
around the graveposts at a pukumani ceremony must also be
covered with white paint.

The [husband's] whole pubic area ... and the rest of the
body has to be painted with white paint so that his
wife's mopaditi [spirit] does not smell him. (Mountford,
Fieldnotes, page 831)

Tiwi artists often expressed preferences for bright
colours and strong tonal contrasts achieved through the use
of high quality ochres and clays from well-known locations.
The most prized pigment, a bright yellow ochre which changes
to a clear red, was used for most of this century by Tiwi
painters and described by Mountford in 1954.

The source of the best ochres is a pit at Imilu, on Cape
Van Diemen .. This ochre, called imilu, is a bright
yellow when collected, but, when heated in the fire, it changes to a clear red. (Mountford, 1958, page 20)

Apparently, this pigment was discovered earlier this century when a tree blew over exposing deposits of yellow ochre under more than a metre of overburden. Until the 1940s, great care was required in obtaining this ochre without disturbing a powerful spirit being which lived at the site. 'The Maradji (rainbow) who lives at Imilu is dangerous, especially if the men are noisy when collecting the ochres.' (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 87). This danger had passed by the 1950s although permission had to be obtained from the men who were traditional owners of the site.

Imilu, when prepared as a light red paint is known from graveposts collected by Baldwin Spencer in 1912 and was used by later artists including Deaf Tommy Mungatopi and Wilfred Pilakui in 1978 (for example, Plates 121 and 125). Ochres from other sites had characteristics known to Tiwi artists and supplies of superior pigments were obtained from locations across Bathurst and Melville Islands including Numindu near Karslake.

This pukwi place is exposed at low tide, when the [aborigines] go out to collect red ochre. This ochre is better when mixed with water, than the Imilu ochres, which are best when used dry. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, Figure M7a)

Contemporary artists selected superior ochres and clays whenever possible; Janet Mungatopi used a high quality red ochre extensively on her second gravepost for the National Museum project (shown in Plate 65).

Tiwi artists over several generations collected and traded pigments from superior ochre deposits across Melville
and Bathurst Islands. Goodale recorded the arrangements for gaining access to important deposits in 1954,

The yellow ochre that comes from Imilu is of unique quality. The strength and purity of this ochre is far superior to that found in any other locality. As far as I could determine, although the deposit belongs to the owners of Imilu country and permission for mining is required, no charge is made. (Goodale, 1971, page 307)

However, some deposits of superior quality were difficult to obtain because of extremely limited access to the site. As Mountford's informants recounted in 1954,

At Moantu [south-west coast of Bathurst Island] there is much ochre, all colours, like eggs. There is only one man, Malaki-tjana, who has the right and is safe in going to Moantu ... (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 87)

By contrast in 1986, good quality ochres appeared readily available to those artists who could travel to the sites to collect them. The experienced painter Paddy Freddy co-ordinated arrangements to obtain sufficient yellow ochre for seven artists to decorate large graveposts. Using a Council truck, a group of us drove to Mindilu, a site about four kilometres from the road to Taracumbi Falls, where a large outcrop of yellow ochre extended across the road.

... the whole ridge was of yellow rock. Some small deposits were red and Nelson tried to prise these up with a tomahawk but they were embedded in the road. Paddy Freddy said that all of it becomes the same colour when wet and it turns red when burnt. The men filled half of a 10 gallon oil drum with pieces of rock. (see Appendix, page 20)

Although gravepost carvers usually knew the carved motifs and painted designs before they began their work, the discovery of a superior pigment could alter their ideas. When Paddy Freddy found a deposit of white clay in April, 1986 he became excited and altered his proposed designs. (Paddy plays at 'painting up' in Plate 50.) He said that he had decided colours AFTER finding white clay, and said his choice was
influenced by the material. Paddy's enthusiasm for the new clay was infectious and he led a small expedition to recover enough for everyone.

He took us to the beach at Rory and Gabrielle's house and walked along the beach near the well. Led by Paddy Freddy, the artists dug down into the sand and found a deposit of pure white clay, washed it in the ocean and collected half a bucket full. (see Appendix, page 36 and Plate 51)

Thirty years earlier, Tiwi painters had collected high quality clays from the same location as Mountford observed, "A soft white stone is common along the beaches." (Mountford, 1958, page 20)

More than twenty years ago, this preference for bright colours probably led several artists to experiment with enamel and acrylic paints on their graveposts. Mountford saw commercial paints being used for graveposts in ceremonies held during 1954,

Today's Tiwi occasionally use oil paints, which produce more garish hues than the earth colors traditionally favored.'(Mountford,1956b, page 427)

Remaining examples include a small group erected near the Milikapiti Council offices, which retain traces of white and crimson commercial paint. No recently erected graveposts in the area showed evidence of commercial paints and none of the local artists appeared to use anything but ochres. When I asked Holder why such durable paint was not used he explained that he doesn't use housepaint because he can use his own colours (ochres) then spray the surface with synthetic fixative. He said that this combination will last up to twenty years even out in the weather (see Appendix, page 75).
Standing graveposts painted with natural pigments undergo a transformation from bright to dull at the onset of the 'wet' season when water action damages their colours. Graveposts erected for Tommy Mungatopi and his wife had noticeably darkened when I visited the site with Nelson Mungatopi in March, 1986 (shown in Plate 23). At that time, Tommy's graveposts had been standing for two months and his wife's for eight months. White is the colour most quickly affected by water, and yellow ochre also fades quickly. Many graveposts retain traces of red ochre and black over longer periods. Present evidence indicates that Tiwi painters active during the past fifty years at least, have ensured that painted designs on graveposts remained perfectly intact for pukumani ceremonies and for as long as possible afterwards by selecting fine quality pigments and perfecting their application techniques. (The significance of this 'ageing' will be described in Chapter Nine.)

As the presence of fires for cooking food, preparing red ochre and scorching graveposts must have been a feature of gravepost carvers' workplaces, black was the colour most easily obtained. In 1954, Goodale and Mountford described the use of charcoal mixed with water as paint, and thirty-two years later, painters were using the same materials. While carbon from other sources may have been used, especially immediately after World War II when military supplies were available, most existing graveposts appear to be painted with charcoal. Although most painters working in 1986 simply collected pieces of charcoal from the remains of cooking fires or near scorched graveposts, Paddy Freddy and Janet
Mungatopi made special fires to create charcoal and took care to produce a good quality painting material (see Appendix, page 49).

The origins and uses of fixatives or glues

Mountford's inventory of pigments and fixatives used for gravepost commissions in 1954 provides useful comparisons with artists' preferences thirty-two years later. According to Mountford,

The materials used for decoration were: red and yellow ochres from Imilu, Cape Van Diemen, a white ochre from a beach nearby, crushed charcoal for black, one of three types of fixatives, i.e. the white of turtle eggs, wild honey and beeswax mixed together, and the particularly gelatinous sap of one of the tree orchids. (Mountford, 1958, page 110)

While contemporary artists were in agreement on their selection and use of colours (the first group of six graveposts for the National Museum was painted with ochres and clay from the same deposits) the selection of suitable fixatives created a great deal of discussion.

While the artists were marking out and carving their hardwood logs their conversations centred on which substances were most effective and which were 'proper' or traditional binders. Some younger artists had used nothing but polyvinyl acetate glue on graveposts and at first were reluctant to try natural fixatives on a major project. Around Milikapiti at that time, graveposts for ceremonies were prepared using either milkwood from a tree or P.V.A. glue as fixatives, but never both. A few older men such as Paddy Henry remembered the way to mix turtle egg as a fixative (see Appendix, page
The National Museum project presented these artists with the dilemma of using traditional fixatives from local sources or an introduced glue to ensure that future generations would see bright colours remaining on their posts.

All of the artists had a discussion about which fixative was going to be used. Ronald wanted to use P.V.A. glue and water as that was what he always used (he had never used traditional glues). Paddy Freddy said that the old glues (tree orchid juice or sap) would wash off very quickly and would only last a few months. Holder said that the posts would be in air-conditioning so natural materials should be used to make the posts correct. The artists decided that they would collect two bags of tree orchids from trees growing nearby (see Appendix, page 20 and Plate 53).

The often lively discussions produced two noteworthy outcomes - individual artist's comments on the efficacy of particular glues, and the extent of experimentation in the latter stages of the project. Paddy Freddy described two fixatives that had been in use over many years,

The juice of leaves from a tree [yancomani] is a traditional fixative, its berries are not ripe now. [he] says that another method is to collect sugarbag/bees' eggs - to mix with the fixative. (see Appendix, page 31).

Holder made his contribution to the debate by describing glues used by an earlier generation of painters, '... his father and mother both used yancomani leaves (approximately forty years ago). The leaves were widely used as a fixative on baskets.' (see Appendix, page 40). Holder said that tree orchid juice was the best fixative either alone or mixed with bees' eggs. In his estimation this was a stronger fixative than leaves although he had not used yancomani leaves himself. (Plate 54) Holder's views on the superiority of tjarparteenga (tree orchid juice) over yancomani were supported by Paddy Freddy who had painted a large number of graveposts for funerals in the local area. He said that one
of his posts at the Mungatopi cemetery was done with orchid juice fixative which worked very well (see Appendix, page 48). (Recipes for fixatives given to Mountford in 1954 support these artists' comments. Earlier painters squeezed orchid juice with pigments in their hands and rubbed it on graveposts. Wax and honey were also mixed with ochres. Whites of turtle eggs were mixed with ochres at a rate of two eggs per gravepost.) (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 61) The relative merits of yancomani and tjarparteenga were debated over several weeks with most artists choosing to use yancomani on their first post for the National Museum project and tree orchid juice on the second (shown in Plate 52). Thomas Woody's gravepost appears to have P.V.A. glue mixed with its charcoal ground colour, and Holder's and Paddy's posts for the pukumani ceremony were painted using this commercial glue.

Nancy Henry was the first artist to collect yancomani leaves from small trees growing within easy walking distance of the first worksite and described its origins,

.. the yancomani tree (wild plum) ... grows all over both islands and has edible fruit. The leaves can still be used in the 'dry' as a fixative. The Tiwi eat the fruit and use the leaves as a glue. (see Appendix, page 32)

She demonstrated by collecting leaves from a tree across the road and squashing them with water. Tjarparteenga, the sap of the wild orchid, may have been a stronger fixative but it was more difficult to obtain as it grew high on trees in the swampy areas of the islands. Old men who painted patterns on commissioned graveposts in earlier periods probably secured the services of young relatives to collect these orchid plants. In 1986, I learned why elderly artists preferred to
buy bottles of P.V.A. glue at the community store when we set off into the bush to collect plants (shown in Plate 53).

Nelson arrived in Robert Tipungwuti's Toyota so Thomas Woody, Janet, Nelson and I went to the swamp near the water pump to get tjarparteenga and yancomani. Nelson climbed trees for these orchid plants - only the young plants are thick and juicy, older ones are thin and dry, and not suitable for painting (see Appendix, page 55 and Plate 54)

To Nelson's consternation, all of the young juicy plants grew in the highest parts of the trees.

Several artists experimented with the freshness and efficacy of their raw materials and to find suitable consistencies of fixative and water mixtures for rubbing on their posts or mixing with pigments. Holder was strongly affected by this spirit of innovation and selected two unusual sources for glues. He cut a zamia palm for use as a fixative and said that the fibre inside would be suitable to use even though the outside had dried (see Appendix, page 60). Although Holder kept the drying zamia palm near his work place for some weeks, I did not see him use its sap as a fixative (see Plate 44). When he prepared his gravepost for the ceremony at Pularumpi, I watched him try a different technique. He had obtained a plastic container which he filled with mashed up bark which he used as a fixative. He said that this was a new idea that he was trying out and demonstrated by showing me a peeled section on a nearby woollybutt tree and hitting the inner bark with the back of a tomahawk to show the sap rising through the fibre (see Appendix, page 70). From Holder's comments, his idea had not

28 'Thomas Woody says that tjarparteenga is best when cut up and soaked with water for three or four days to make it stick' (Appendix, page 86)
derived from his father's teachings or techniques used by earlier painters - this was his own idea and he wanted to try it on his tutini so he was not going to show it to the other artists.

Although P.V.A. glue was not being used as a fixative for paints in Mountford's time, its use on graveposts during the 1970s is well documented. This may have been encouraged by craft advisers and dealers in small carvings of human figures and birds supplied to tourist outlets. Tiwi painters would have recognised its advantages in providing a 'bright' paint surface resistant to water damage. When Paddy Freddy brought a bottle of P.V.A. glue to the worksite to use on the posts he was making for a ceremony at Pularumpi, he commented that it resisted rain but is not the old way and Thomas Daniels said that, '...at the prison farm they carved totem poles and used P.V.A. glue on them - he hasn't used older fixatives.' (see Appendix, page 47).

Painters' equipment and technical processes

Observers who have recorded Tiwi painters at work over the past sixty years noted their use of characteristic implements including bark and twig brushes, wooden 'combs', stone or metal axes, and stone palettes. While many of these are used by contemporary painters, they have been supplemented by a varied, and sometimes unusual, range of introduced objects. During the recorded history of the Tiwi three major events provided them with greatly increased access to introduced tools and equipment. The first was
contact with outsiders and their material wealth from a very early date. Along the northern coast of Melville Island in particular, the Tiwi stole metal tools or plundered shipwrecks to acquire metal (Berndt & Berndt, 1954, page 83). On other occasions they were given tools as gifts, sometimes in novel ways such as King described in his response to Tiwi who gestured for axes, '... they ... slowly walked towards our wooding place, where they, of course, found a chisel that had purposely been left for them upon the stump of a tree ...' (King, 1827, page 121). The second was the arrival of Joe Cooper - still a key event in Tiwi oral history, 'The artists said that Joe Cooper when he arrived, brought metal tools and gave them to the Tiwi. He also introduced calico, flour, sugar and 'smokes' (see Appendix, page 22). (Not only were the introduced metal tools used to carve graveposts, other alien objects including discarded tin cans became useful paint containers and palettes.) The third significant event was the outbreak of World War II in the Pacific and increased military presence on and around Melville and Bathurst Islands. A military airstrip was constructed near Milikapiti and a large supply depot established there. Tiwi people absorbed alien cultural elements into their dances and ceremonies including the re-enactment of crashes of Japanese aircraft, and bombing and sinking of local boats. In 1954, Mountford watched Wurarbuti [Ali] perform a popular song and dance at a pukumani ceremony at Snake Bay, 'Ali sings of the bombs and the big smoke around the vessel Don Isadore.' (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 697a and Plate 17). The influence of World War II had directly affected the lives of several older artists working in 1986, and their knowledge of
new equipment and materials. Holder Adams had worked as a Transport Driver and he and Paddy Freddy had served with the Australian Navy while Thomas Woody had worked at the supply depot near Milikapiti. The influence of their wartime experiences on their carving styles is described more fully in later chapters.

Preferences in painting instruments had changed markedly over the past forty years because of the addition of commercial brushes to Tiwi painters' equipment. These brushes were used to apply layers of fixative, ground colours and to block in basic design units, and their use had largely replaced that of bark brushes seen by Mountford (shown in Plates 9, 10 and 12) - 'Simple brushes, made of strips of bark of varying widths, square across the bottom, chewed at one end, ... used for the bulk of the work.' (Mountford, 1958, page 21). In 1986, painters used commercial artists' bristle and hair brushes of varying sizes, and some implements that were not originally designed for applying paint. For example, Holder applied ground colour with a short-handled household floor brush, and used a split pandanus leaf brush to apply fine linework. Although most artists working on the National Museum project used commercial brushes from time to time - especially in the early stages of painting - the most enthusiastic exponent was Paddy Freddy. He kept a series of quality artists bristle brushes (Nos 4 and 12) and used modified brushes from other sources.

Paddy Freddy has a large paste or signwriters brush with short rounded bristles (much used) and a No. 8 hair brush with the hair bristles shortened (see Appendix, page 48 and Plate 61).
Painters often drastically modified their brushes and seemed to prefer shorter bristles and a stiffer painting action. Paddy Freddy in particular, was never reluctant to 'customise' his brushes, 'shortening his thick brush with a chisel.' (see Appendix, page 42). Thomas Woody completed most of the painted designs on his gravepost with an artist's brush that had seen better days, '... a hog hair brush with bristles shortened to one centimetre.' (see Appendix, page 63). He is shown painting with this brush in Plate 58.

Only Paddy and Nancy Henry used large locally made stick brushes for their preparatory painting and these may be similar in size and form to the brushes described by Mountford. 'Nancy has a variety used for a previous job, made from carefully frayed sticks of different sizes.' (The largest was equivalent to a No. 10 commercial bristle and the smallest to a No. 2 - see Appendix, page 33 and Plate 66.) Polly Miller, an elderly painter of many years' experience, used a variety of commercial brushes and demonstrated how larger indigenous brushes were made. 'She cuts back into the fibre with a chisel and peels the fibre into a 'ruff' or collar then bends it back to the original shape and cuts the end with a chisel.' (see Appendix, page 37).

Mountford identified a second type of stick or twig brush in 1954 which was extremely popular with all artists that I observed and was used for painting fine linework as well as dots. 'For making the dots, however, the artists used a short, cylindrical stick, about three-sixteenths of an inch in diameter.' (Mountford, 1958, page 21). Holder simply used
a short round stick to paint fine linework with great dexterity (shown in Plates 74 and 75). Other painters frayed one or both ends of short twigs. Nancy Henry used a long, fine brush which she cleaned and kept with a bundle of favourite brushes. All of the women artists appeared interested in making and using twig brushes but Nancy Henry was especially knowledgeable and demonstrated how easily a skilled artist obtained new brushes.

Nancy says that many bushes give green twigs for small brushes - they must have fine fibres. The twig is beaten with a hammer or chisel handle and teased out. (see Appendix, page 37)

She broke a small branch from the eucalypt which grew where she and Paddy were sitting and fashioned it into a twig brush. This small example had a frayed end of less than half a centimetre and was used like a wand rather than a brush (see Plate 68).

These stick brushes were not the rudimentary implements their form suggests but efficient and convenient devices which carried generous amounts of the thick ochre and fixative mixture and produced uniform linework on uneven surfaces. Their size and shape varied according to the artist's preferences. 'Nancy] now works with a very fine stick brush ... The end of her brush is shaped slightly, that is, reduced and frayed less than a half centimetre.' (see Appendix, page 94). They were convenient to make and use and appeared better suited to the thick ochre paints and uneven, porous wood surface than more flexible commercial artist's hair brushes of the same diameter. Painters adjusted their method of paint application to the characteristic requirements of stick brushes - such as their need for
frequent recharging - and developed economical, rhythmic techniques.

Janet is using only twig brushes ... The twig brush has a relatively thick head but becomes scratchy as the paint is used. Twig brushes have to be loaded frequently to work well ... (see Appendix, page 64)

She is shown demonstrating her painting technique to me in Plate 64.

Artists worked more quickly by using several brushes of slightly different sizes (some frayed at both ends), one for each colour in the painting. For example, Janet had two palettes and two stick brushes so she was able to work with colours alternately (see Appendix, page 72). This meant that brushes left in paint on palettes or stored on pieces of bark, dried out in the heat of the day. If left overnight, they dried completely but were seldom thrown away as artists preferred to clean and soften old brushes rather than make new ones. According to Thomas Woody, '... stick brushes become stiff when they dry after being left in the sun, but soaking them in water makes them 'fresh'' (see Appendix, page 64). Certain artists became emotionally attached to their brushes and used them for successive commissions. Ronald Adams, Nancy Henry and Paddy Freddy painted their posts for the National Museum with brushes they had retained from earlier projects. Paddy Freddy, in particular, was very protective of his brushes. When two of his three commercial brushes went missing for two days, Paddy searched the whole work site to find them.

Older painters working on the National Museum project used distinctive wooden 'combs' to apply rows of dotted
patterning. The use of toothed or smooth-edged 'combs', described in Chapter Five, captured the attention of several observers including Scougall, Tuckson and Mountford who watched preparations for a series of funeral ceremonies in 1954, "... the porta, the comb-like implement for making dots, is used only in Pukamuni decorations." (Mountford, Fieldnotes, Page 629).

Paddy Freddy, the chief exponent of 'comb' use in 1986, used toothed or straight-edged 'combs' on each of his graveposts for the National Museum and his post for the ceremony at Pularumpi (see Plates 60 and 62). When other artists were beginning to carve their graveposts for the National Museum, Paddy Freddy sat on his log and spent his time carving wooden 'combs'. 'Paddy Freddy made a fine wooden 'comb' to paint dots on his post. He said that this was the old way and he made the 'comb' for this post.' (see Appendix, page 13). Paddy's interest in 'comb' making developed into a minor industry, and ten days later he was still making 'combs' after carving several for the other artists. Because Paddy brought an older 'comb' to the work site, and from the appearance of recently erected graveposts at the Mungatopi and Tippakalippa cemeteries, I learned that painters were using toothed and straight-edged 'combs' for ceremonial graveposts including some shown in Plate 24. Considerable practice was required to apply paintwork evenly with a 'comb'. Ronald Adams used one of Paddy's 'combs' with a light, tentative technique indicating his lack of familiarity with its use,

He is now painting the centre panel with a 'comb'... and works away from himself loading the comb each time and
steadying his right wrist with his left hand. (see Appendix, page 42)

The 'comb' technique offered Tiwi painters a quick and efficient mechanism for applying dotted patterns, lines and crosshatching and would have saved considerable effort in painting large posts, but in careless or inexperienced hands, the 'comb' produced inferior results. Many graveposts near Milikapiti and several posts in the Tiwi-Pima art store on Bathurst Island showed poor registration of dotted motifs and smudged, uneven linework. Plate 77 shows the interior of the art store where some of the graveposts for sale were decorated with 'comb'-applied elements which were smudged.

It was not until I watched Paddy Freddy working with smooth-edged and toothed 'combs' that I realised that a very skilled artist could produce patterns of such perfect registration that it was impossible to tell that a 'comb' had been used. Many more graveposts than previously estimated may have been decorated using the 'comb' technique and its use may extend over many decades. Paddy demonstrated what a useful instrument the 'comb' was in the hands of an accomplished artist,

Paddy Freddy paints rows of dots between the white parallels on yellow ochre using a large wooden 'comb' and working away from himself. His action in applying paint is a slow rocking movement starting with the near edge of the 'comb' - final dots in each row are corrected using the far corner of the 'comb' which is loaded approximately every second stroke. (see Appendix, page 73)

Paddy was so skilled that he produced almost perfect registration every time with this method, especially when he quickly touched up small dots at the ends of rows. Part of his success lay in the precise way he loaded colour on the
'comb', 'Using black, he loads the 'comb' from a large tin dish with about 1 cm of paint and flicks excess pigment back into the dish before painting.' (see Appendix, page 73).

Palettes and paint containers for early Tiwi artists were flat slabs of stone and clam shells although tin cans were available from an early date. 'Their palettes consisted of folded leaves, or paper bark, or tin cans...' according to Goodale who watched painters working in 1954 (Goodale, 1959a, page 9). By 1986, painters used a wide variety of indigenous and introduced implements. On Saturday 5 April I recorded the assortment of utensils used by the artists as they painted their posts. Holder's supply of white clay was kept as a lump inside a half coconut and his other palettes were curved pieces of ironwood bark. Ronald used large china dinner dishes as palettes, a plastic margarine container and a tin can while Paddy Freddy used an old saucepan for white clay, and a tin dish and a Swan Lager can for mixing paint (see Appendix, page 41). One of the most versatile additions to the artists' range of equipment was the styrofoam meat tray which served as a palette and paint container. Artists often arrived at the worksite after purchasing supplies from the Milikapiti store and the styrofoam containers of the pre-packaged steaks they bought for lunch were re-cycled during the afternoon as palettes (Plates 68 and 73). Plastic icecream containers were used to hold mixed paints and were useful in storing fixative and water mixtures. Thomas Daniels kept litre-sized soft drink bottles filled with water for washing his brushes (shown in Plate 71).
In their preparation of pigments, painters demonstrated innovative uses for their array of tools and utensils. Paddy Freddy ground lumps of red ochre on a rasp then mixed the pigment with water and fixative in tin cans. Later, he collected sheets of cardboard and ground his dry colours of red and yellow ochre on these. His supply of white clay was kept in an old saucepan. Nancy adopted a slightly different method of preparation by using a rasp to grind red ochre from a lump of ochre on to newspaper, then placing the powder on a styrofoam tray and adding water (shown in Plate 56). As the painters worked, they increased their stock of equipment by mixing new colours in dishes and saucepans. Thomas Woody and Janet kept batches of chopped tjarpachteenga and water in small tins around their workplaces and checked the mixture until it was ready for use (see Plate 63).

When Baldwin Spencer described Tiwi painters at work in 1912, he noted not only the labour required to decorate posts but the atmosphere at the worksite,

Each man decorating a post, chose his own design, and while the work was in progress - and it occupied many hours - the men were continually laughing and talking and everyone in the camp, men, women and children, were gathered around watching the progress of the work. (Spencer, 1914a, page 232)

More than forty years later, Goodale identified different habits of working as well as the intense concentration and motivation required.

The pole cutters worked slowly and carefully but without hesitation, knowing exactly what each blow of the axe would contribute to the form. Some worked with little relief; others paused to stretch their muscles, have a smoke and chat, quite often voicing their next planned act of creation... (Goodale, 1959a, page 6)
In 1986, the group of artists preferred a secluded place to work and in the initial stages, discouraged transistor radios because artists including Holder complained that their noise was intrusive. Although several artists said that they had a mental image of their chosen designs (and sketched these in Figures 18, 20A, 21A and 22), transferring those images to the wood surface was not always an easy task. Younger artists appeared to find this process demanding, [Ronald Adams] `...is working very carefully on these new designs and seems thoughtful and pressured. He appears to work from a mental image only, as no preliminary drawing or sketch is evident.' (see Appendix, page 34). (Ronald's ideas had already substantially changed from the gravepost he sketched before beginning the carving process - Figure 22.) Not only did artists in 1986 work with varying degrees of ease, they planned their work in different ways and had very different application techniques. If such differences were evident in the painting techniques of Tiwi artists seen by earlier fieldworkers, they are not well documented in published sources and form a serious gap in any comparative analysis.

In 1986, artists used two different methods to develop their design fields - either by completing single fields with areas of solid colour and fine linework as Janet and Hilda Mungatopi did, or by building up the design with a grid of broad lines and adding to this with narrow edging or overlaid parallel linework or hatching. Thirty years earlier, Goodale recorded both methods being used.

Some men finished one section of their pole completely before moving on to another, while others worked on their
poles as a single unit, making the outline of the design and then filling in with dots. (Goodale, 1959a, page 9)

The significance of these differences will be outlined in Chapter Nine (see Plates 11 and 12). Some artists including Holder preferred to paint a ground colour before applying their decorative patterning while others applied fine linework directly to the wood surface. Artists settled into a routine of painting and often continued working for several hours. Each day before they began painting, they mixed paint colours, stocks of fixatives and prepared a selection of clean brushes (see Plates 66 and 68).

Nancy has re-mixed the paints and is starting work at the top end of the post. She pre-mixes extra ochres in a series of cans, topping up the paint mixture with previously mixed yancomani and water. Nancy settles down to paint the top section - her fixative is yancomani which she has rubbed into the surface of the wood before applying paint. (see Appendix, page 52)

All of the artists painting graveposts in 1986 started the ground colour or linework at the top of the post first (shown in Plate 73). Holder was the only artist who deviated from this method and yet when preparing his tutini for the ceremony at Pularumpi, he began the painting process by applying designs to the post's upper section.

Planning, testing and minor modification appeared part of the Tiwi artists' usual methods of work especially when contracts for tutinis allowed a reasonable amount of time for completion. Even the most experienced painters tested and modified their materials and processes to achieve a desired effect. For example, Holder painted most of his post with black and said that it was a test. If the black stayed on overnight, then he would paint the rest of his post in the same way (see Appendix, page 34). Occasionally, considerable
effort was required to modify the painting surface so that a visually appealing design was technically correct. Paddy Freddy cut back rectangular sections into the black surround around the 'head' of his post with a chisel before painting stripes of different colours. (He explained that a thick black ground under this work would result in the colours coming off - see Appendix, page 41.) Holder's preparation of his gravepost for Nelson's uncle demonstrated a high level of planning and technical knowledge. According to Holder,

... he is using thin paint first like the undercoat in painting a house. He marks out the design in colours then repaints those colours to make the paint last a long time and to give a smooth finish. He says that every method is used to make the paint on a gravepost stay on for as long as possible. (see Appendix, page 74 and Plate 75)

The preliminary outlines for each design field are estimated by sight, measured with the hand, or lined in with a twig or brush. As Nancy and Paddy Henry were working together, their discussions provided useful information on how designs were prepared.

He says that he has painted two broad white bands and a black one in between. He then shows Nancy where to paint alternate white and black coloured bands around the post. He says that he will instruct her where to paint smaller lines in between and on those bands. (see Appendix, page 87)

Janet appeared to be working from a mental picture of the motifs she intended to paint, measured the cylindrical sections of her post several times to estimate the width of her designs and began to paint hesitantly.

Janet ...has planned the designs by marking off the proportions with a dry twig and drawing the first diagonal line in red ochre. She has abandoned that part of the post and is coating the wood surface with plant juice as a fixative. She comes back to the original design and lines in fine crosses very carefully. (see Appendix, page 62)
Paddy Freddy's method of painting in broad areas of colour then adding decorative patterning to each section was repeated in each of the three posts that I saw him paint. His painting technique was deft and rapid but he paid considerable attention to the evenness of his linework and durability of the pigments. Like Paddy and Nancy Henry he began work at the top, painting the projections and top section of his post with delicate motifs. His patterning was precisely drawn and like Janet's, consisted of very fine linework applied over a carefully painted plain ground. Artists were critical of proportion and spacing in their designs as well as regular linework and they checked their work to make sure that painted motifs matched around the circumference of the post. For example, 'Paddy Freddy is now counting out the widths of his oval motifs and says he is going to paint white on this area.' (see Appendix, page 86) - he then used handspans to check the circumference of his post. While Janet painted a wavy motif she looked at a similar band painted on the opposite side of her post and also measured the post with her hand to get an accurate match (illustrated in Plate 63).

Painters in earlier times had erected their carved posts near the gravesite, as Mountford recorded in 1954, 'Then setting up the poles in a double row near the grave ... the men began their task of decoration.' (Mountford, 1958, page 110 and Plate 8). However, Goodale found that very tall posts were treated differently - '... in 1954, very tall posts were always painted in a horizontal position or propped up on a support at a 45 degrees angle and later erected in the dance
ground.' (Goodale, pers. comm.). In 1986, most artists merely propped their posts in almost horizontal positions on logs and turned them as they worked (see Plates 62 and 63). Nancy Henry painted a large gravepost, working on the most accessible section and completing all details before rotating the post. Paddy Henry had said before starting work that they would paint all the cylinders in order down the post, then the top (see Appendix, page 74). Holder Adams followed a similar procedure in preparing his post for the ceremony at Pularumpi, completing linework in black, yellow ochre, and red ochre down the full length of the post on one side only before turning his work (see Appendix, page 74). As these often large posts were difficult to turn, completing the designs down one side saved the artist a great deal of effort.

Unlike the other painters, Thomas Woody leaned his gravepost against a frame of saplings while he painted the designs (see Plates 58 and 59). He and Paddy Freddy had developed painting techniques which they apparently found comfortable even though they appeared to require considerable physical effort. Unlike the other artists who completed the accessible half of the post then turned it, Paddy worked right around his post (see Appendix, page 78). He was extremely agile for his age and coped with the exertion of turning his heavy three metre log at regular intervals. The head of his gravepost was supported on a sapling frame and although this gave better access to the painting surfaces, it required him to work in cramped poses, bending to the right or left and kneeling under the post working upwards. Thomas
Woody was the only left-handed Tiwi painter that I saw working at Milikapiti. His painting method was also quite different from that of other artists and unlike some of them he was a gravepost painter with many years experience.

Thomas ...is using the red ochred banding to 'finish' and neaten the whole design. He has a very short, definite painting style unlike the lighter style of other artists. He said that he used a stick to paint crosshatched designs and another stick for dots (not a 'comb'). Thomas says that he always paints left-handed. (see Appendix, page 54)

Both Thomas and Paddy Henry, as older men with considerable painting experience, had continued to work but modified their methods to accommodate their increasing physical infirmity. Thomas, in particular, maintained a firm pressure on his brush when painting and repeated each stroke because his hand had lost its steadiness. Paddy Henry found painting even more difficult because his sight was failing.

Nancy and Paddy are painting; Paddy with a short stick about .5 cm wide is painting zigzags on a yellow panel. He works slowly from left to right using two strokes to complete each short line. Although his hand is shaky, his technique is slow and firm. (see Appendix, page 53)

Although Paddy Henry relied on Nancy to complete the bulk of the design work, he chose to add certain details to the design motifs himself. (Plate 69) When Nancy painted motifs closely supervised and instructed by Paddy, he used a fine twig brush to paint dots inside the circles. He had to look closely because of his poor eyesight but his technique was very steady.

Polly Miller, once noted for her beautiful paintings on bark baskets, produced crude, uneven linework on her gravepost. Not only was Polly elderly, she insisted on painting very quickly and produced inferior results. While
painting diagonals on her first gravepost, she worked back over her previous motifs overlapping two design areas. On a different design field she first drew a red ochred 'frame' then added rows of dots with a comb. Her technique was poor and the dots extended onto existing paintwork (see Appendix, page 33). Although Polly had poor eyesight, her difficulties were attitudinal and other artists were critical of the quality of her painted designs. After lengthy discussions, they resolved these difficulties by terminating her employment. These problems will be discussed further in Chapter Eight.

Considerable differences in painting methods ranged from Hilda Henry's short repetitive brushstrokes to Nancy Henry's extremely light and fluid technique. These differences were determined by several factors including the artist's choice of materials, motivation, level of concentration, age and technical experience. Some painters including Ronald and Thomas Daniels displayed a painting technique that was very tentative in the initial stages, because they had little experience in painting large commissioned graveposts. After he painted a ground colour over the top of his post, Thomas Daniels began painting designs with some supervision and guidance by the older painters Paddy Henry and Paddy Freddy.

... His painting technique is light and tentative and he uses three or four strokes for each line of about 4 or 5 cm. Thomas completes only the top section of the cylinder, holding his hand high off the paintwork and supporting his right hand with his left (he is working from left to right). (see Appendix, page 68 and Plate 58)

Although Thomas had a steady hand, his painting technique was laboured and slow.
Of the women, Nancy Henry was the most accomplished painter and the most skilled and knowledgeable user of indigenous brushes. She used all of them with a full load of paint, re-charged after the application of one or two lines. These were stiffer in use than a commercial hair brush but carried a full load of paint and gave an even line if used lightly. As the painting surface was always slightly uneven, painters needed considerable skill to keep linework fine and even.

Nancy is painting parallel lines with a very light touch. She applies paint for half of the line length then lifts the brush and finishes each line with one or two strokes. (see Appendix, page 33)

This light technique prevented the line from becoming too broad due to irregularities in the wood surface. From her knowledge of technical processes and assured painting technique, Nancy had been painting designs with Paddy's supervision for a considerable time. She was able to work for long periods without tiring and quickly settled into a relaxed rhythmic painting routine using a variety of techniques,

She uses a combination of dots in some sections and parallel white lines on red ochre, all done with a long medium-width stick. She is now crossing over the white linework the opposite way with parallels of yellow ochre. She works toward herself facing the painting surface or away from herself if the design area is on the top or far side of the post.

Nancy's painting technique was economical in completing linework quickly and allowing for minimum drying time before working over newly completed areas.

... Because her painting technique is extremely light and accurate, Nancy is able to make longer strokes with a single load of paint. She switches from one colour to another after about ten minutes' work. She now works on white over yellow ochre and is painting up to a red ochre area that she painted five minutes ago. (see Appendix, page 74)
After watching Nancy at work over a period of several weeks, I learned that while other artists varied their rate of painting fine linework slightly, Nancy could occasionally work at a very fast rate without the quality of her work being affected. One day, Paddy told me that they would finish a section on their post that afternoon and start the next section the following day. He then lay down on a sheet of iron in the sun and went to sleep as he was not feeling well. Nancy continued to work in the quiet of the afternoon but with a deft, quicker painting action. She worked rapidly applying two or three dots after loading the brush then painting sections of white parallels about two centimetres long and much faster than her normal speed - three or four strokes before re-charging the brush. At this faster rate of painting she completed half of the circumference of the post then moved her paint tins to the other side of the post and sat down to begin again (see Appendix, page 83).

When Holder and Paddy Freddy began painting their **tutinis** for the ceremony at Pularumpi, I observed minor but significant differences in their approach to the task. Both artists chose a worksite about fifty metres from their partly completed posts for the National Museum project yet slightly removed from each other and the other artists. Their tools and even some of the paints were obtained from the earlier project. Both artists painted quickly, testing their work as they went, with great singularity of purpose often from dawn until dark. Paddy Freddy established his basic design fields with broad areas of colour then began the more detailed
motifs with a quick and methodical technique. (Plates 72 and 73)

With the wide brush he has added black down the outside billets, down the top cylinder, and around the top and middle cylinders as broad bands top and bottom. He says he will be finished painting by 10.00 or 11.00a.m. tomorrow. Using the smaller bristle brush he paints red ochre and yellow ochre rectangles in the top section (painting red ochre over yellow ochre). His order of work is from the top of the post downwards ... (see Appendix, page 71)

Paddy's painting technique was very light and assured although he applied firm, steady pressure and worked quickly.

Holder's gravepost was more complex in form and larger than Paddy's so required more work to complete. In addition, Holder was planning a new song (and dance) associated with Mookmook the owl so he spent long hours working on this commission (see Plates 74 and 75). While Holder was keen to experiment, he was a meticulous painter and planned and tested his work to avoid mistakes. As he laid down the major components of his design then added fine linework he demonstrated almost flawless precision in his control of brushes and pigments.

Holder is painting black parallel linework on the white billet supports with a commercial brush - he works very lightly and uses several strokes to complete each line. He changes colour to red ochre using the same brush, keeping it fully loaded and making several strokes for each line. Holder's painting technique is steady and very exact. He completes part of the line with a series of one centimetre strokes to get the edges very even, then tapers off the work by extending the brush by three to four centimetres. He now works on a series of broad wavy red ochre horizontals in between narrower yellow ochre lines. He draws a fine black line with a much smaller brush and very quickly paints designs on the whole top part of the post before turning it over. (see Appendix, page 71)
Holder was identified by Tiwi people on Melville and Bathurst Islands and in Darwin as a gravepost painter of great repute.

Holder and Paddy's work as commissioned tutini carvers produced important comparative material as this contract coincided with the National Museum project. Until that time, their techniques had reflected the variety of methods apparent among all of the artists but apart from the minor differences of approach just mentioned, once they started to carve tutinis their techniques and attitudes became very similar. Both men turned their full attention to the requirements of the contract, knowing that the ceremony was to take place during the following weekend. They greatly extended their work hours often from after dawn to dusk, and during that time they discouraged interruption by working at a distance from the artists' camp. Like artists everywhere, they underestimated the amount of effort and time their planned designs would take to complete, and appeared to work with increasing intensity as the day of the funeral approached. (This modest estimate of the time required may have been a rationalisation to illustrate their exceptional talents or to reassure the commissioning family.)

In their preparations, Paddy and Holder were concerned with carving a post of simple form and smoothly finished surfaces - primarily a vehicle for intricate painted designs. This approach differed from their planned work for the National Museum project where more complex carved motifs and symbolism were chosen and a greater proportion of time was spent in creating carved elements. The time allowed to carve
and paint these *tutinis*, about one week, was much less than the three to six weeks estimated for each post for the National Museum commission.

Throughout the contract these two artists worked with great precision and speed. Like Nancy Henry, they were capable of increasing their work rate without noticeably diminishing the quality of their carving and painting. From the time that the trees were cut their work rate slowly increased - while carving was punctuated by periods of contemplation, painting was almost continuous. As both men began to apply broad areas of colour to the newly carved *tutinis* they appeared to consider their work carefully; later infilling and decorative linework was applied more quickly. For example, Paddy Freddy painted bands of black with a firm, methodical technique but worked very quickly on fine white linework. Holder applied painted parallel lines with remarkable speed and precision, demonstrating total control over his materials. Although Paddy and Holder worked to the peak of their abilities and concentrated their carving and painting into a very short period of time, their *tutinis* suffered no loss of quality in comparison with their commissioned graveposts.

Conceptual and technical requirements were not their only considerations. At every stage of cutting, smoothing, grinding pigments and painting they were mentally preparing for the coming ceremony and assessing their own *tutinis*. Symbolism or 'story' appeared an important ingredient and the role to be played by each gravepost in the *pukumani* as critical as its appearance. How 'beautiful' these *tutinis*
were to the mourners and whether they met requirements for
generous payment on the ceremonial ground will be assessed in
the next chapter.
CHAPTER EIGHT - Aesthetic criteria and assessment

All Tiwi gravepost carvers operated within an elaborate system of constraints, conventions and aesthetic preferences to produce posts worthy of acknowledgement and payment. In attempting to identify those criteria which were central to the evaluation process, certain differences should be considered as they affected Tiwi artists' use and understanding of this cognitive system. Goodale recorded in 1954 that,

Most of the Tiwi artists appear never satisfied with a previous creation but feel that there is always room for improvement and innovation as they become increasingly skilled. (Goodale, 1959a, page 6)

Paddy Freddy's comments supported this view. He said that each time he received a commission (and he had completed more than twelve by then) '... he thought the next post would be better, he always tried to do better' (see Appendix, page 23). Firstly, changes have occurred over time so certain elements that were significant earlier this century are no longer important and other criteria have achieved pre-eminence. (See Chapters Four and Five.) Secondly, the status and gender of the artist play an important part as a carver with limited understanding is considered less likely by the Tiwi to produce a spiritually and aesthetically powerful gravepost.\textsuperscript{29} As Hart observed of tutini and ceremonial spear carving,

... their construction required time, and only the older men had the time and the skill based on experience to make the more important of them. (Hart & Pilling, 1960, page 46)

\textsuperscript{29}The inexperienced carver Thomas Daniels was discreetly supervised by experienced older men in 1986 - Chapter 5.
Thirdly, artists are influenced by factors of temperament, ambition, personal ability and physical capacity which in turn shape the finished form of their work. A major influence on each carver's work was the requirements and expectations of the commissioning family. By the 1980s, patrons could still provide detailed requirements for artists. As Nelson Mungatopi explained,

Commissions by bereaved families for graveposts can be very specific, firstly by the number of posts, secondly, for the designs to be included. (see Appendix, page 4)

Artists were required to be shrewd judges of the family's capacity to pay, as filial sentiment and the desire for status often prevailed over commercial factors as Mountford learned.

... the chief woman mourner, Prupadau, whose privilege it was to decide on the size of the burial poles, marked with her toe, in the dust of the milimika, the length and thickness of a series of oversized poles. This led to a great deal of discussion between the leader, Wurarbuti, and the woman, Prupadau, before he finally persuaded her to reduce the dimensions of the poles to a reasonable size. (Mountford, 1958, page 71)

Occasionally, the chief mourner defied convention by insisting on inappropriate graveposts and, as Mountford noted, the carvers complied with the request.

One of the graves .... belonged to a small boy, about six years old. There were some elaborate spears and large poles at the grave. According to our informant the father demanded that the workers should carve large poles, otherwise he would not pay them. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 273)

Size was an important consideration because large graveposts took much longer to carve and paint and consequently, required higher payment. Until the 1970s, a few exceptionally large posts were carved which proved too large to be erected at the gravesite - these are described in
Chapter Four. According to the artists in 1986 these posts were carved for the most influential and wealthy families.

... sometimes a post was too large to stand upright. Holder said that one of these was lying in the bush very near Milikapiti. (see Appendix, page 7)

Occasionally, small posts were produced in memory of a dead person but not necessarily erected at the burial site.

In front of one of the new houses, three small painted posts had been erected. Nelson said that they were for a man's memory. (see Appendix, page 17)

Recently, posts of this size are created for the tourist trade as single graveposts or are arranged in groups to represent the final pukumani ceremony. (Several examples of this type were collected for the Art Gallery of Western Australia - see Plate 83.)

The commissioning family might also specify the choice of material although the artist usually selected a suitable tree. One instruction which is understood but never stated is that poles must be cut from either the Ironwood or Bloodwood tree... If the workers were to cut a pole from a more easily carved wood, the employers would 'growl'. (Goodale, 1959b, page 300)

Holder said that bloodwood posts were specified by Purukupali for the pukumani (see Appendix, page 15), but he had more practical considerations in mind when cutting a tree for his commissioned tutini and selected bloodwood because the post had to be finished quickly. Most graveposts were thicker at their top than around the base and had to be set in position carefully so there was no possibility that they would fall while displayed on the ceremonial ground (see Plates 14 and 15). According to Thomas Woody, great care is taken to set tutinis firmly in place at the grave,

... when posts are set up the hole is dug and then water is poured into it. Earth is sprinkled in the hole around
Nelson Mungatopi explained how large old posts had the heavier part at the top to balance them as they were lifted and moved into position. Apparently, this made the difficult process of centring them without major damage to painted decorations much easier (see Appendix, page 58). Not only were graveposts required to be firmly fixed in the ground, some were required to have a broad, durable upper section to support the weight of a participant while they were used as props during events in the final pukumani ceremony.

Ali [Wurarbuti] climbs a pole and receives the money at the office. Ali becomes a government servant as he sits on the pole to supervise the payment. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 527)

Commissioning families inspected finished graveposts very carefully before proceeding with the final stage of the pukumani ceremony because an inferior post lessened the prestige of their departed relative and diminished their own status. Not only was payment withheld, but according to Holder, 'In the old days, artists could be speared if their posts weren't right' (see Appendix, page 60). Rejection of any gravepost was usually a response to poor quality carving and painting and lack of 'story' (that is, a visual statement of the dead person's history - described at length in Chapter Nine). Opinion varied as to the relative importance of quality and historical content. For example, while describing graveposts in the Mungatopi cemetery, Nelson remarked that '... a post may be rejected less for aesthetic reasons than its lack of 'story' - the designs don't illustrate the history of that individual' (see Appendix, page 5). Yet when the older male artists were inspecting an inferior post,
Nelson indicated that the quality of carving and painting could be the sole reason for rejection.

... in the old days Polly Miller would have been in trouble if she had brought her ... post to a ceremony. The designs are right but the carving and painting are too rough and she might have been speared. (see Appendix, page 58)

Conversely, each artist prepares a reckoning of the value of his post and those of other leading carvers. In 1986, Paddy Freddy anticipated a generous payment for his own post and a more substantial sum for Holder who had a bigger reputation as an artist. 'Holder will get perhaps $300 for his post - the widows will give a lot of money' (see Appendix, page 78).

The estimated value set by the artist does not always tally with the amount paid by the commissioning family, with serious consequences on some occasions, as Mountford noted.

Should a man cut his pole and not be satisfied with the payment, then he will be angry and let his pole rot where it stands as a gesture that his pole was not paid for. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 439)

Not all inferior graveposts were rejected outright - in some instances the patrons and carver reached a compromise solution as Holder described,

The artist was paid half of the commission but the post was put to one side, ... set up on the ceremonial ground but not as part of the circle of posts around the grave. (see Appendix, page 60)

When surviving relatives commissioned graveposts they entered a complex and binding contract with the 'workers' to produce a fitting memorial for the deceased, to confirm the family's prestige and authority in Tiwi society, and to acknowledge each artist's superior talents. The significance of this contract for all participants has been described, but
the criteria used to evaluate graveposts require further discussion.

Criteria for acceptability

Generally those elements which Tiwi families (and the commissioned artists) considered important in estimating the value of a gravepost consisted of two classes,
- criteria which ensured acceptability, and
- criteria which identified excellent or exemplary graveposts.

To gain acceptance, a post was erected on the ceremonial ground, inspected by family leaders, then paid for with a sum acceptable to the artist and retained as part of the permanent memorial. However, while most families proceeded with this sequence of events in accordance with tradition, their expectation was that at least one artist would produce an especially beautiful post which would achieve additional reward and admiration, and be remembered for many years afterward. While factors in gaining acceptability included stability, approved processes, complete 'story', the use of conventional elements and the introduction of new elements, the factors required to achieve excellence included technical skill, symbolic content and aesthetic considerations of a higher order. Nelson outlined the expectations of the patrons,

... when the posts at a ceremony are set up for payment by the commissioning family those people confer among themselves then choose the most beautiful post. If payment for the other posts were $300 each then this post's carver would receive $600. The selection is made on the appearance and quality of carving, not on the meaning or relevance of the designs. (see Appendix, page 5)
Each part of the carving and painting process and preparations for mortuary ceremonies, proceeded according to certain guidelines and artists were expected to know these. For ceremonial leaders and their sons, these instructions were specific and worthy of thorough understanding, as they might be required to commission graveposts and supervise the enactment of *pukumani* ceremonies after a death in their own family, then act as 'workers' in later funeral ceremonies. For example, Holder acquired his ritual and technical knowledge from his father (who taught Holder the correct procedure for ceremonies and carvings) and the requirements for *tutini* carving in particular, were passed from father to son (see Appendix, page 14). Although the Tiwi say that proper procedures for carving graveposts were laid down by Purukupali, each artist is given considerable discretion in creating a post to suit particular circumstances.

'... he is largely competing with himself in the effort to best his earlier efforts at pole-making.' (Goodale & Koss, 1971, page 197)

Like the bereaved family members, the carvers have their aspirations set on an exceptional rather than acceptable post as the outcome of their work.

As well as being durable *tutinis* must be stable, so the carved form can be modified to achieve a sturdy post. In former times, most graveposts for important ceremonies were erected after the 'wet' when the ground was hardening. More recently, *pukumani* ceremonies can be held during the 'wet' season and according to Holder Adams,

... when posts are erected during the 'wet' their proportions are adjusted during carving to allow for soft ground - it is most important that the post does not fall. (see Appendix, page 10)
Graveposts appeared more sturdy and imposing when their greatest diameter was at the upper end - many tutinis retain a large cylindrical section near the top for this reason. Apparent instability in a gravepost's appearance could result in criticism as Thomas Woody found when he cut away part of a cylindrical support to represent "... a man with one leg cut off". Paddy Freddy was openly critical of this innovative feature and "...pointed out the single support and said that it would break and that the shortened base was too short in his estimation." (see Appendix, page 49).

The artist must include certain conventional elements in his carving including a crest or projection on top, identifiable motifs such as 'bosses' on the body of the post, and certain uncarved portions as areas for symbolic patterns and a cylindrical support which is hidden in the ground (see Figure 7). Ronald indicated where specific carved motifs must be placed to achieve acceptance. "Below the zigzag section is a small square block - he says it would be wrong not to include this, it could also be put at the top." (see Appendix, page 18). Ronald later identified an important cylindrical section which almost always carries pukumani designs - "He makes an imaginary division on the post, the lowest extremity of carving. He says that the lowest must be left plain to take the design, it would be wrong to carve that section" (see Appendix, page 18). Holder reinforced this view when he described the relationship between conventional and innovative elements on an acceptable post and suggested that placement of motifs is as significant as their formal characteristics.
in a commissioned post for a ceremony, innovation is acceptable but certain traditional features should be included (i.e. in the lower base and top section). Painted designs can vary also but traditional elements must be present. (see Appendix, page 11 and Figures 7 and 20)

Certain conventional motifs were not only meaningful but useful during the final stages of the funeral ceremony. Posts with 'arms' have remained commonplace at recent burials and, in earlier times, such uprights acted as supports when a 'paymaster' climbed a post to pay the 'workers', described earlier in this chapter,

Paddy can also carve a post with a 'head' on top, that would be a woman; a post with 'arms' is a man. In old ceremonies, a man stood on top of a post and paid the workers - he always stood on a post with arms. (see Appendix, page 18)

While certain carvers innovated, others chose their motifs from the great variety of graveposts accessible in nearby cemeteries. This practice of copying old posts appears acceptable to contemporary society, possibly because it ensures that 'correct' forms are maintained. Janet and Hilda explained, 'This post is an old design for all Tiwi, not just Janet and Hilda's family ... Janet said that they chose their designs from old posts' (see Appendix, page 31). Even when carved forms were copied in this way, carvers made mistakes possibly because of their limited knowledge. (When Polly Miller carved a rectangular intaglio section in her gravepost she was criticised by Paddy Freddy who said it was not deep enough.) Each stage of the carving and painting process was governed by requirements for 'correct' procedures. Paddy Freddy indicated that posts should be 'cooked' with fires on either side and not underneath (see Plate 48). A thickly charred surface was acceptable but regarded as old-fashioned.
Innovation could occur in the selection of materials as long as these produced a durable gravepost which was approved by the commissioning family. In a discussion of fixatives, Holder said that tjarparteenga juice was most effective alone or mixed with bees' eggs. This was the prevailing choice of painters in 1954, but at that time, they identified turtle egg as the 'proper old way' (Goodale, 1959a, page 6). Most of the newly painted graves at cemeteries in 1986 showed evidence of polyvinyl acetate glue used as a fixative, (Plate 23)

Paddy Freddy has a bottle of polyvinyl acetate glue to use on a post he is making for a ceremony at the weekend. (see Appendix, page 46)

Although commercial glues could be used to create a durable tutini the use of enamel or acrylic paints was not an acceptable feature of ceremonial commissions at that time. Reasons for discontinuing the use of such durable paints will be outlined in Chapter Ten.

Certain painted motifs were identified by the Tiwi as pukumani designs - old patterns reserved for events and objects associated with the extended funeral ceremonies. These patterns (which will be analysed in Chapter Nine) were usually placed on the lowest cylindrical section of a gravepost, or a smaller cylindrical section near the top (that is, the 'head', 'neck' or 'chest' illustrated in Figure 21B). Certain pukumani designs had significance for particular families who expected to see them painted correctly.

Thomas [Woody] says that on his post the painted designs are a son and his father and mother. These are very old designs done by all Tiwi and are not related to a
particular country but are restricted to the pukumani ceremony. (see Appendix, page 65 and Plates 58 and 59)

Criteria for excellence

According to Tiwi artists working in 1986, the challenge in responding to an important commission was in the satisfaction of producing a visually and symbolically exemplary gravepost, and in receiving widespread recognition. Although the factors that motivated artists in earlier times are not known from published sources, Baldwin Spencer in 1912 recorded the high degree of interest taken by artists in creating painted designs and the atmosphere of excitement generated by preparations for an important ceremony. 'Men and boys of all ages were busy at work, each one apparently drawing any designs that occurred to him ...' (Spencer, 1928, page 680). Hart and Pilling observed this sense of occasion at funerals for 'big men',

The excitement was the psychological result of so many people being together at the same time, a rare experience in the life of any Tiwi (Hart & Pilling, 1960, page 40).

So at a large funeral, the skilled tutini carver had a large audience charged with a sense of occasion to respond favourably (or otherwise) to his finished work.

Requirements for acceptability in tutinis centred on technical conventions and the inclusion of identifiable symbolism and historic information. Criteria for excellence appeared to comprise skills and sensibilities of a higher order including superior or unique technical skills and a sophisticated use of aesthetic elements, as well as a capacity for genuine originality. While criteria for
excellence were stringent, praise for outstanding graveposts was lavish as Hart saw in 1928-9 when mourners appraised a post carved and painted by Timalarua.

When one of his posts appeared at a funeral, people would point it out admiringly saying, 'Timalarua made that one' and the speaker would trace the lines and designs on it with his finger, using much the same gestures as an art critic in a modern gallery. (Hart & Pilling, 1960, page 48)

A limited number of technical factors predisposed the commissioning family to provide a generous response. One such factor was the choice of ironwood as a material for carving. In spite of Purukupali's directive to use bloodwood trees, the artist who cut a solid ironwood log was likely to receive higher payment for the commission. By 1986, Purukupali's instructions were quoted by older carvers who gave token respect to them but appeared more affected by considerations of weather and financial reward. As Holder Adams explained, the quality of carving and the degree of effort required to work in this difficult medium influenced the patrons' assessment. Commissioning families were also very critical of each carver's technical expertise - a well carved post might elicit their admiration while a carefully designed and flawlessly executed gravepost prompted excitement and generous payment. As the sculptor, House recorded of one impressive example,

When I expressed a wood-sculptor's delight in this pole, Jane Goodale told me that her native informants rated its maker as their best local carver, and added that his are the most precisely executed poles she saw. (House, 1959, page 15)

Experienced carvers were motivated to develop superior technical skills and an extensive repertoire of carved motifs. As Goodale observed of the carver's work described previously,
It is very distinctive in its carving - a sculpture 'form' which this carver was 'working on' throughout at least four poles carved during 1954. (Goodale, pers. comm.)

Evidence of these exceptional talents remained on view for many years and not only enhanced artists' personal prestige but maintained their patron's historical connections and territorial rights. 'Workers' who demonstrated exceptional skills in creating large flawless carvings or fine durable patterning, or invented new processes (like Holder's father who made ceremonial spears) achieved great reputations which were remembered for several generations. Other artists commented on Holder's father's technique for making good spears - he invented it' (see Appendix, page 50). Holder also had achieved great prestige through his understanding of media and innovative use of technology (see Plates 43 and 44). This often required laborious extra work to achieve an excellent rather than acceptable result, especially in his application of painted designs.

He marks out the designs in colours then repaints those colours to make the paint last a long time and to give a smooth finish. (see Appendix, page 74)

Most experienced Tiwi artists displayed a strong concern for balance and symmetry in the carving and painting of graveposts. Early this century, Spencer recorded a preference for regular, stylised designs, (Figure 15B)

.. the decorations consisted of bands, running in wavy or spiral lines down the posts, or of longitudinal bands between which there were oval designs, arranged in rows, down the length of the post. (Spencer, 1914a, page 232)

Artists took great care to estimate the correct placement of carved and painted motifs to ensure uniformity and correctness of their designs. For instance, Paddy Freddy measured the circumference of his gravepost in handspans to
calculate the required dimensions of his 'bone' design (see Appendix, page 86). Paddy's comments and scrutiny of his post indicate that these measurements were a device which assisted artists in applying a conceptual system which determined optimum relationships of size and symmetry in carved and painted elements and desirable proportions for a finished gravepost in situ. Such finely shaded distinctions were required, not only to satisfy the highly developed critical faculties of 'big men' from leading Tiwi families, but to win their enthusiastic responses.

Tiwi aesthetic criteria dictated that the spatial arrangement of elements - the size of carved motifs in relation to the post, and the size and arrangement of painted elements - were of great importance. As early as 1912, Spencer suggested aesthetic preferences among Tiwi artists including a need for space filling and textural effects,

On both the white and yellow bands a succession of fine lines, running in a slanting direction, have been scratched out. The natives are very fond of this, the idea evidently being to make the band look less solid and heavy.' (Spencer, 1914b, page 422)

Although artists working in 1986 rarely described correctness of scale and spatial relationships, they assessed these factors very carefully.

Hilda and Janet have washed out the designs on their central panel - they said that the design was too small. (see Appendix, page 44)

Corrections were often made, as largeness and accurate placement apparently constituted unique characteristics of certain Tiwi motifs by 1986. The most experienced painters including Thomas Woody occasionally modified their designs after careful consideration, as I observed, 'Thomas ... has
re-painted white rectangles to nearly twice their original size and arranges them more uniformly on the post' (see Appendix, page 69). Paddy Henry's instructions to his wife Nancy always included information on how large design units must be, and where bands and areas of patterning should be placed (see Plate 66). The spacing and size of these units appeared as important to Paddy as the choice of colour or shape. When artists criticised each other's work, smallness of scale rivalled technical mediocrity as a focus for their comments.

Polly's designs were considered too small, possibly the wrong colour (the meaning of this seemed to be that the dotted designs were too small) and done too quickly. (see Appendix, page 35)

Painted designs on tutinis were required to be brightly painted and contrasting in tone. As Spencer observed in 1912 when he recorded bold contrasts in direction and colour in Tiwi designs, '... the most effective one having a series of alternating black and white bands running in a spiral direction, and crossed by five yellow bands running spirally ...' (Spencer, 1912, page 47). Paddy Freddy described the distinguishing qualities of pukumani motifs '... pukumani are bright designs, other designs are in white clay only. In the old days miinga designs and body scars were done together i.e. painted designs over scars' (see Appendix, page 39). Artists put considerable effort into achieving brightly painted patterns by placing contrasting ochre colours together, by choosing different tones and by applying several layers of paint. 'The most difficult colour to apply is white clay so Holder says he will repaint the white designs to get a brighter colour' (see Appendix, page 41). When the old-
fashioned method of heavily charring the post was used, artists encountered extreme difficulty in achieving a smooth bright effect. According to Thomas Woody, "... the right effect is to achieve a bright white over the black." (see Appendix, page 41). Many *pukumani* designs consist of bands of contrasting colours or motifs painted on a light or dark ground colour (for example, Janet Mungatopi's designs shown in Plate 65) - "Janet's colours are chosen to give maximum contrast between the motif and its ground" (see Appendix, page 72). Paddy Freddy also said that he chose black and white for certain designs because those colours look good together. Contrasts occurred in texture as well as tone and some painters including Holder Adams and Janet Mungatopi favoured an intricately worked design surface. This preference for detail is not a recent development as Spencer recorded in 1912 (Spencer, 1914b, page 422).

Innovation in both carved and painted design was highly regarded by the Tiwi, yet radical departures from convention had to be combined with traditional elements to win respect at a *pukumani* ceremony. Holder Adams outlined a prudent approach for innovative and ambitious gravepost carvers, "The totemic symbols in an innovative work make it acceptable..." (see Appendix, page 11), and illustrated this dictum by combining flamboyant innovations such as the representational image of an owl (which he later painted out) with multiple levels of symbolism in his own carvings. While it is impossible to quantify the significance that innovation played in achieving large payments for an exemplary gravepost, it remains a fundamental component of Tiwi
creativity. Experienced artists sought to express new and dramatic themes and ideas, and patrons and participants at funeral ceremonies anticipated the display of substantial, distinctive graveposts. The ideas of two carvers, Thomas Woody and Paddy Freddy, illustrate to a limited extent how the Tiwi valued originality and what parameters constrained their inspiration. Thomas said that he had the idea for his painted designs before he saw the post. He reversed the usual placement by painting innovative motifs on the lower cylindrical section but retained old pukumani patterns on the other areas.

The top section illustrates tribal law, the black section with four sides is Thomas' own idea. Thomas says that the whole top of the post is the old style... and the lower part of the post is 'New Testament' designs... (see Appendix, page 57)

After painting the old designs on the upper part of his gravepost, Thomas spent considerable time painting and repainting his newly invented designs.

... the vents of a rocket with the engines and exhaust gases - that is the base of the post where it rests on the ground. (see Appendix, page 77)

Thomas' pride in creating new motifs for his gravepost was tempered by concern that their size and brightness were 'correct' and the balance of old and new elements acceptable.

Occasionally, innovation involved not only the insertion of new themes and motifs among conventional elements but the metamorphosis of a whole post into a new representation. Paddy Freddy gave a singular demonstration of this approach when he described his first gravepost for the National Museum project - a traditional type with two projections on top, and a 'chest', 'ribs' and 'hips' whose form he had roughed out
with an axe. He had been scrutinizing his post carefully and pausing to think as he worked, and when Nelson Mungatopi and I began to talk to him, he said, '...these shapes can be arms and the chest or arms and a head, the pose is a figure with raised arms' (see Appendix, page 18). When I inquired about the diamond motifs carved on the post he then changed his mind and said in Tiwi that the post was a crocodile. 'The arms are a crocodile's jaws, then its head, and the narrow section is the crocodile's stomach with spines (diamonds) on its back...' (see Appendix, page 18). Our subsequent discussion confirmed that this carved form could represent a person, but Paddy had decided that it was to be a crocodile, and this was the first time he had carved one. (See Appendix, page 19 - Paddy's crocodile gravepost can be compared with a much earlier example carved by Clarumirimai shown in Figure 28.)

Conspicuous originality was a feature of graveposts from several earlier periods (for example, South Australian Museum No.A47149 with its vertical supports wrapped in plant fibre to simulate bird feathers - Plate 96). Highly regarded examples received large payments and probably initiated stylistic trends (Goodale & Koss, 1971, page 199). Significantly, in 1986 only experienced older men devoted considerable time and energy to creating new motifs and ideas for their graveposts. Paddy Freddy expressed their pride in achieving original statements and keen interest in the financial outcome of the commission.

The star design at the top in rectangular sections and the moon design of yellow dots on a black ground are new designs for Paddy Freddy...Paddy is working quickly on horizontals in the lower section and says that his wife
will get plenty of money for this post. (see Appendix, page 78)

While innovation in tutini carving was desirable and keenly anticipated by mourners, the introduction of new elements was carefully regulated and sanctioned in certain situations. Firstly, final ceremonies were organised so that the dramatic arrival of a series of brightly decorated graveposts created surprise and excitement among onlookers, especially the bereaved family,

... the place where the poles are cut is taboo to the relatives and the first time they see the poles is when, at the final day of the ceremony, they are placed near the grave. (Mountford, 1958, page 251)

Secondly, 'workers' for a pukumani ceremony ensured that any new features were associated with known elements or 'cues' for the participants to understand what the innovations meant. For example, when four senior men re-enacted a well-known spear fight during a pukumani ceremony in 1954, one of them, Big Jack, surprised everyone by presenting an unknown song, 'This is a new song of Big Jack and they all listen intently and finally pick it up.' (Mountford, Fieldnotes page 525). But not every innovator received a patient hearing and enthusiastic acceptance, and this often depended on the authority and status of the individual. At another funeral, 'A young man started to sing about a pearling lugger, but was told by old Tjamatlampua to stop and use only palaneri songs.' (Mountford, 1958, page 80). The limits for innovation were known to experienced tutini carvers including Holder Adams, who replaced an innovative representational owl image on his gravepost with geometric designs before the final ceremony and combined
these with well-known themes in the song of Mookmook the owl (already described in Chapter Six). Requirements for socially sanctioned innovation will be summarised in Chapter Ten.
In the previous chapters, fieldworkers from different periods have provided confusing and often contradictory attributions of meaning to both the carved and painted motifs of tutinis. Much of this confusion appears to stem from their need to identify an ordered, static system of signs and images among Tiwi gravepost carvers. As Mountford remarked,

A puzzling aspect of the pukamuni poles is the wide variety of the painted designs used, and the almost total absence in those designs of any reference to the myths and totemic localities. (Mountford, 1954, page 110 and Figure 26)

In fact, Tiwi symbolism and imagery were strongly influenced by external factors and innovation, as well as a hierarchical structure of ritual knowledge and experience.

Information sharing depended very much on the depth of an artist's understanding of traditional symbolism, and how much of that knowledge an individual chose to divulge on a particular occasion. For example, Paddy Henry agreed with an Anglo-Australian tour guide that the projections on his gravepost were buffalo 'horns', when he previously stated among older Tiwi that they were 'raised arms' (see Appendix, page 21). While the women carvers in 1986 said that their carvings were the same as those of the male carvers, older men disagreed and would not freely discuss certain meanings in front of the women. (In fact, before the second group of posts was carved for the National Museum project, the senior men said that they preferred to work away from the women.)
A distinctive feature of Mountford's fieldnotes is how often his informants had difficulty in remembering particular techniques, stories and meanings, for example, 'Marawani was unable to give me the meanings of the designs.' (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 871). The symbolism in painted motifs had been forgotten in many instances, although the designs continued to be painted for ceremonies. As Wurarbuti, who wore the Linarina (mullet) facial pattern of his father's totem, told Mountford, it was a 'Pukamuni design called Munumini, which was worn by a small saltwater fish Linarina at Purukapali's Pukamani' but he did not know its full meaning. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 875) Many years later, artists including Paddy Henry and Paddy Freddy took time to contemplate and discuss meanings for tutinis and appeared reluctant to admit that they could not remember certain stories or meanings. Younger men including Thomas Daniels, openly acknowledged their ignorance of the symbolism contained in their graveposts and referred questions to the older carvers of established reputation.

Among the residents of both islands, knowledge of certain meanings and of graveposts created by 'workers' of previous generations was widely available through documentation compiled by early fieldworkers. Not only are many Tiwi men and women graduates of a Western-style education system, they are keen students of their own history with access to a wide range of books, films and videotapes. From an early date, researchers have made findings from previous studies available to residents on Bathurst and Melville Islands. As Mountford recorded in 1954,
Today, I showed Spencer's 'Wanderings in Wild Australia', the section dealing with Melville Island to the aborigines. Although these photographs were taken many years ago, the older men recognized many of their old companions. Everyone was quite excited, and turned the book over and over, examining the illustrations of the ceremonial objects, belonging to the Kulama ... ceremony and the Pukumani poles. (Mountford, 1958, page 45).

In 1986, I received a similarly enthusiastic reaction when I showed photographs and articles dating from the National Geographic Expedition to people living at Milikapiti (see Plate 18). Over more than thirty years, this access to written records in addition to oral sources has probably led to the retention of certain forms and symbolism including those of distinctive carved motifs because of their durability, but a proportionally greater loss of others especially ephemeral painted motifs. By 1986, the full range of meanings for both pukumani designs and family motifs were known only to a few older people. Thirty years earlier, old men indicated that certain events and meanings had already disappeared from the pukumani rituals,

... in the olden days before white men had upset the culture, it was the custom for the chief mourner ... sent out a specially carved message stick to each of the pukwi centres ... every pukwi group would receive a stick, painted, or engraved with a specific design which refers to their pukwi. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 985)

Accurate findings on the symbolism and relative importance of imagery associated with pukumani ceremonies have been difficult to achieve because of curious discrepancies in information provided by Tiwi informants. Although many older Tiwi express concern that meanings and beliefs associated with major ceremonial events be recorded for future generations, the gaps in existing findings are not only of information that has been forgotten although that is an increasing problem. It appears that certain fundamental
meanings and values are not easily expressed to outsiders because the themes and ideas of the pukumani ceremony are central to Tiwi identity and consciousness. During my fieldwork, I found that discussions of 'variations' in traditional motifs, symbolism and ideas were often more productive than probing of implicit or briefly stated 'themes' which my informants held as self evident.

In completing a commissioned tutini, each artist's emphasis is on expressing excellence and innovating within accepted conventions. For a gravepost to be accepted by the bereaved family (as described in Chapter Eight) it must contain several levels of symbolism and meaning. Such meanings are not the product of random selection; the artist's task is to illustrate aspects of a complex system of specific historical and mythological elements. In following this formula, artists accept certain technical restraints and ensure that painted motifs remain separate and distinctive from sculptural forms in conveying meaning. Although the extent of ritual knowledge and the variety of meanings appears to have lessened over the years, the symbolism associated with tutinis remains remarkably complex. (Figure 27) Most graveposts are an amalgam of inter-related ideas and symbolism drawn from several sources. During this century the physical forms and stylistic details have undergone many variations but their underlying symbolism has remained unchanged. Stylistic changes from different periods are seldom random but conform to prevailing trends and values. (These will be discussed at length in Chapter Ten.)
Graveposts are created to represent human beings; according to Holder Adams, they,

...should be cut and placed around the grave so that they would 'bleed' and the 'blood'...would seep down into the ground. (see Appendix, page 15)

Other contemporary artists including Paddy Henry, who retain extensive knowledge of ceremonial procedures, stress the importance of this symbolism and take care to illustrate appropriate details in every facet of their commissions. In essence, the materials, sculptural elements, proportions and painted designs symbolise the newly-dead body. Within a recently erected gravepost, the wood sap 'bleeds' down into the ground, and its cylindrical sections represent flesh peeling from the bones while certain painted designs signify body scarification and the accoutrements of the funeral ceremony. While superficially unrelated, the meanings of carved forms and painted motifs combine in a logical and unified fashion as components of this symbolic human body. (Figure 19)

This formula for Tiwi graveposts as symbols of human bodies is by no means a simple one. The possible variations of elements and themes available to experienced artists result in the remarkable formal differences characteristic of graveposts. Individual grave markers may be stylised or semi-representational portraits of a recently dead man or woman, or carvings commemorating an illustrious predecessor (usually a man of considerable reputation). Alternatively, graveposts can become a synthesis of meanings illustrating a

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30 Meanings have changed over time and the preferred 'skin' colour of red ochre on early tutinis may have symbolised high status or spiritual power.
particular territory, totemic animal, natural features and historical events (see Figures 28 and 29). 'Story' elements can be derived from the dead person's Dreaming or the ceremonial affiliations of predecessors. Interwoven with these major themes are references to the personal history of the deceased including personal habits, family events and incidents such as spear fights. The artist is free to include elements of his or her own Dreaming or identity as a minor theme; these components can function as a signature. Consequently, the tutini carver selects from a large repertoire of motifs to form a cohesive statement of form and meaning within an individual post. For instance, Holder Adams incorporated at least three levels of symbolism into his tutini for the funeral ceremony at Pularumpi - events associated with the first pukumani, his own family history and reference to his ancestor at Soldier Point. (See Appendix, page 83 - Holder is shown painting this post in Plate 74.)

The top part ... is a possum fur headband (worn by Puruk) - only initiated men wear them. The cylinders represent ceremonial armbands and are worn by men for funeral ceremonies. The top and bottom narrow ridges are armbands, and the thin sections underneath are the arms of a man. The two projections are claws or feet and the flat section is the hollow log or tree where the Mookmook lives.' (see Appendix, page 75)

Inexperienced artists who choose carefully can produce acceptable graveposts for pukumani ceremonies without knowing their deeper significance. For example, Thomas Daniels' finished gravepost received generally favourable comments from experienced painters - 'Thomas Woody says that every part of Thomas Daniels' upper cylinder is correct except the section with yellow ochre dots and diagonals ...' (see Appendix page 84 - This is the post shown in Plate 71.)
Specific requirements by commissioning families, supervision by experienced carvers and appraisal before payment ensured that traditional guidelines were followed.

Graveposts occupy a unique place in the corpus of Tiwi art because they are intrinsically powerful. Unlike weapons, bark baskets, ceremonial ornaments and small carvings of human forms and birds which are classed as lifeless objects, graveposts used in ceremonies are said to contain spiritual energy. When erected on the ceremonial ground during the last stage of the pukumani ceremony they contain life essence (imunka, according to Mountford's informant Tjamalampua) which they share with all living things. Not only do they please and pacify the mopaditi as gifts from surviving relatives, at the climax of the ceremony they embody the spirit for the last time and regulate the powerful and malignant energies generated by the death and burial. Their power can protect the husband or wife during acts that are offensive and dangerous,

... the spouse of the deceased uses the poles to hid his (or her) movements as he crouches or walks on the grave in a parting gesture of extreme grief. (Goodale & Koss, 1971, page 191)

This presence of life energy in the graveposts before the mopaditi's departure to the next world and their placement around the grave to control the potentially dangerous spirit illustrate why the largest, most elaborate graveposts are reserved for 'big men'. As Tjamalampua explained,

... a middle-aged powerful man has a large imuna, consequently is more powerful in life, than an old man or young child. Similarly, in death, still having a large imuna, he is more feared. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 325)
Human-headed graveposts form a small proportion of known examples and appear to derive from external sources of inspiration. Pilling recorded that Short Katu had carved his first human-headed post in about 1945 and had offered the following explanation, 'Me see 'm along Darwin. Me savvy.' (Hart & Pilling, 1960, page 113). However, Mountford observed that Harney had found a similar post on a grave at Punata in 1941 and ascribed the carving of a human-headed gravepost to Kado during the 1920s (Mountford, 1958, page 199). Existing examples appear to contain specific meanings as Pulanimbuwi, the carver of such a post, told Mountford in 1954, 'The whole decorative scheme is symbolic of a man ready to take part in a pukumani ceremony.' (Mountford, Fieldnotes, 1954, page 843 and Figure 30). During his fieldwork at Snake Bay, Mountford obtained two human-headed graveposts and six smaller carved wooden figures. These should not be confused in form or meaning with tutinis - according to Mountford's informants, when small representational, human images without imunka are carved of softwood and placed at the grave to provide company for the mopaditi they are created to appease an exceptionally powerful spirit (Plate 115 and 'the child that died, Tinani', Plate 116).

They are only used at the death of an old or middle-aged man, not used on graves of women, children or men without sons. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 903)

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Mountford indicated that such posts first appeared in the 1920s '... thirty years ago, when Dolly's step-mother died, an aborigine called Kado, put a tutini on the grave with a human head carved on the top. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 901).
These small representational figures were usually images of Purukupali or Bima carved in kapok (softwood) and set at the head of the grave -

... placed there so that the spirit (mopaditi) of the dead man will be able to talk to it, and not be lonely. Otherwise, the mopaditi might go to the camp, and take one of his old friends away. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 903)

By 1954, several carvers including Karad, Old Brook, Jerry and Tjamalampua were creating these small human figures (such as those in Plates 115 and 116) as commissions from chief mourners and for sale to tourists.

Carved forms of graveposts conveyed meaning through their position on the post, their relationship to other carved motifs on the same tutini and relationships among the forms of posts around a single grave. Certain features were identified by the Tiwi as being of critical importance in conveying meaning, namely, the height and circumference of the tutini, the shape of carved sections and the form of its uppermost extremity. On early graves many posts were carved without projections and meanings were illustrated by the cylindrical form which carried painted designs. Spencer described five examples of this type erected at a new grave on Bathurst Island,

Three of them had upper ends simply smoothed off, but the other two were roughly finished much like the upper part of an ordinary gate post. (Spencer, 1912, page 47)

At that time, observers recorded that the orientation of the body in the grave and the positioning of the graveposts conveyed information about the deceased person to other Tiwi. Spencer recorded that the woman interred in the grave with
five posts was placed with her head facing east and Basedow noted a similar practice,

Five ornamented posts surrounded the small mound in an irregular way; four skirting the north-eastern edge and only one standing on the opposite side, near to the south-eastern end ... the natives informed me that a male infant had been buried there. I am inclined to believe that this information was gathered from the arrangement of the posts and their markings, rather than that they recollected the identity of the child. (Basedow, 1913, page 315)

More than seventy years later, Tiwi informants confirmed that orientation of the body was still an important consideration.

The body in a grave has to face towards that person's country to let the spirit go back to that place easily. Holder said that if he were buried his head would be toward the sun and his body pointed toward his country. (see Appendix, page 14)

Informants including Nelson Mungatopi said that large *tutinis* or especially tall examples (described previously) should be positioned at the head of the grave, and that when the expectations of the patrons were not met in this matter, fights often broke out.

According to Goodale, 'The Tiwi themselves can identify the locality of a particular pole from the form and design alone and can sometimes even identify the individual artist.' (Goodale, 1959a, page 6). By the 1950s two types of meaning were expressed through carved motifs - symbolism drawn from the carved elements of a group of *tutinis* and meanings in individual motifs which combined to become the 'story' of that gravepost. Mountford recorded the attribution of symbolism to graveposts as a group,
The ten tudinis which the 'workers' cut and painted for Waniamperti's pukamuni were looked upon as a family, a man, his two wives, and their children. (Mountford, 1958, page 111)

Tiwi carvers identified a similar relationship among tutinis prepared for another ceremony - '... the poles of Makapini were looked upon as a family, ... the mother ... an adolescent daughter ... and a small son.' (Mountford, 1958, page 116). 'Workers' often allowed the appearance of the selected tree to influence the symbolism of their planned tutini as Mountford recounted, 'One man cut a big pole and will say he is making a pole like an old woman. Another with a slim pole is like a pretty boy or girl.' (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 439 and Plate 29). However, circumstances had changed sufficiently by 1986 for Paddy Freddy to say '... posts are just presents, like spears or baskets - they are not thought of as a family'. (see Appendix, page 39). Two factors may have influenced Paddy's comments, firstly, he may not have wished to discuss such meanings in front of women working nearby and secondly, tutini carvers by that time worked separately and did not necessarily see other graveposts until they were displayed for the final ceremony.

As well as symbolism ascribed to the carved forms of graveposts as a group by their makers, arrangements of tutinis at old sites were read as a group on later occasions. For example, when Nelson Mungatopi described tutinis in a Mungatopi family cemetery, he identified not only crests and carved motifs on individual posts but relationships between them. While paired billets surmounting certain examples signified the high status of Tommy Mungatopi's wife, when arranged around a grave they assumed another meaning,
[paired billets] ... indicate man/wife or male/female combinations - they refer to spouses or relationships. (see Appendix, page 4)

On the grave of an illustrious man whose pukumani ceremony was held after the War, Nelson described how, 'From the billets on top of the posts this man had nine or ten wives ...' (see Appendix, page 5). Wives and lovers were not the only ones commemorated by these groupings of projections. Curved or pointed paired billets signified buffalo horns around the graves of noted hunters. As Nelson recounted, 'The grave of the grandfather (and father-in-law) includes two graveposts topped with ... buffalo horns. This man killed a number of buffalo.' (see Appendix, page 4).

Important meanings of individual tutinis were conveyed through two types of carved motifs, crests or projections and elements inscribed into the trunk of the post. In 1986, Tiwi carvers maintained a clear distinction between the two by identifying a tutini's crest then reading other carved features usually from ground level upwards. Multiple levels of meaning were often expressed in one motif as in Paddy Freddy's gravepost which signified 'raised arms' and 'crocodile jaws' (see Figure 21A and Plate 52). Where projections symbolised incidents from a person's life, specific references in the painted motifs on cylindrical sections often supplemented the generalised information conveyed through the carved devices.

On Tommy's wife's mother's grave a broad post has four billet projections at the top. Nelson said that this woman had a former lover/husband whom she left. She later married again so the double billet indicates two marriages. (see Appendix, page 4)
Other ubiquitous devices illustrate features of the pukumani ceremony or totemic objects - for example, 'caps' or 'heads',...symbolise parcels or gifts. In the old days, parcels were placed on the tops of posts so this carved shape replaces them. (see Appendix, page 4)

Such parcels were not only payment for the 'workers' but, in some circumstances, had totemic significance as Mountford learned,

When a child dies in a distant place, the people ... cut two poles and place them near the camp. Sometimes the father puts the bones of his grandfather's totem (i.e. alligator) on the top of the pole. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 167)

Although meanings in songs, dances and carved motifs referred to the patrilineage of the dead person, that individual's own totemic devices could not be shown on his or her graveposts. As Mountford found at the pukumani ceremony for Waniamperi, great care was taken to observe such restrictions,

... The aborigines did not stage the totemic dances or chant the songs belonging to the fire totem of Wuriupi (Waniamperi's own totem) because, to have done so, would have especially attracted the attention of his mopaditi. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 64)

Aspects of the pukumani ceremony relate to patrilineal connections of the dead person, for instance, selection of the 'workers' who are commissioned to carve tutinis. In addition, symbolism in forms and designs on these graveposts referred to territories, natural species and incidents which identified the deceased through his patrilineal associations.

As Hart and Pilling found,

... the majority of the males were regarded all their lives as members of the band to which their father belonged ... the major unit of the old Tiwi social structure was patrilineal in emphasis. (Hart & Pilling, 1960, page 111)
Although *tutini* carvers were particular in confining their carved and painted designs to images and forms that would not cause the *mopaditi* to rejoin its surviving relatives, they could create specific human images so long as their symbolism was clearly understood by all participants in *pukumani* ceremonies (that is, human beings and the watching spirits). A gravepost created to represent a performer at a *pukumani* ceremony could be carved in great detail and decorated with appropriate painted motifs and ornaments as Holder Adams illustrated with his *tutini* commissioned for Nelson's uncle.

Where *tutinis* are created as images of human beings or animals their carved form rarely corresponds to a photographic likeness. For instance, Holder described his gravepost for the National Museum,

> The top section ... is a head, the next panels are parts of ... the neck and the two curved sections on either side are raised hands with fingers pointing upwards.... The three columns are ribs on either side and the central column is the backbone. (see Appendix, page 22 and Figure 20)

As Holder indicated, body parts are often assigned unusual locations on a post - the head may be set below the shoulders or the legs inserted above the pelvis. As Mountford recorded in describing Pulanimbui's (Jimmy) gravepost carved after his father's pattern,

> One represented a woman, the discs being her breasts, her head was below her arms, and the other parts entirely out of position. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 269)

As most Tiwi knew the visual language of traditional carved motifs, *tutini* carvers may not have concerned themselves with the relative placement of these body parts except for important design-bearing zones below the crest and near ground level. However, two factors suggest that carvers
precisely determined the placement of such carved motifs according to known conventions. Firstly, as all other aspects of tutini carving and painting are constrained by established conventions and complex symbolism, the relationship of forms representing body parts is unlikely to result from chance and invention. Secondly, because great emphasis is placed on controlling and confusing the mopaditi it appears likely that carved elements - 'head, chest, arms, hips, legs', etc. - are grouped in certain sequences on tutinis for exactly the same reason.

Although recent graveposts, including those carved for the National Museum project, generally show greater regularity of carved motifs (for example, a preference for repetition of cylindrical sections shown in Figure 19A) artists often reserved the right to transpose meanings or to indicate that carved forms corresponded to sanctioned models by their placement of pukumani designs. The existence of formal conventions for limiting the mopaditi's influence may provide a logical reason why very experienced carvers including Thomas Woody, as well as younger artists, carefully selected motifs from tutinis in old cemeteries or copied earlier carved forms,

Thomas says that his post would be used for a pukumani ceremony, it is a copy of posts he did at two ceremonies at Karslake. (see Appendix, page 77)

Certain graveposts clearly express through the meanings of their carved features, the multiple levels of symbolism available to knowledgeable gravepost carvers. Paddy Henry's description of his second gravepost for the National Museum project illustrates detailed topographic and geographic
imagery, its associations with his wife Nancy's country and his motivation in selecting such motifs,

The buffalo horns carved on top are symbols from Nancy's country, at Cape Keyes, over Cape Don where the sun rises. The carving is all the same - a creek and a small island in the mangroves near the beach in Nancy's country ... Two supports are a channel looking across to the island (the lowest cylinder) all in Nancy's country. Crocodiles and goannas were plentiful here in the Dreaming and there are still lots of them in this country ... When people from Milikapiti see this post they know the place at Darwin and remember when they went across in canoes and camped there when Darwin was a small settlement. (see Appendix, page 61 and Figure 23B)

Painted patterns are 'wrapped' around the carved form providing a surface embellishment rather than defining its structure. Over the years, this symbolism of the painted designs as 'skin' for the body has remained a major feature transcending stylistic change. The meaning takes several forms - during carving, the 'skin' or bark of the tree is carefully removed to be replaced by the decorated surface of the completed gravepost. For the Tiwi over several centuries, the decorated human body - the vehicle for illustrating beauty and high status - has been embellished with scarification, painted designs, patterned textiles and European clothes. Each of these elements has been incorporated into the symbolism for 'skin' on graveposts. While close relationships exist between painted designs on graveposts and those on other objects - bark baskets, paintings, ornaments, ceremonial spears - the greatest affinity of form and meaning is between designs on graveposts and body decoration. Here a distinction must be made between paintings on the human body and scarification, as the motifs can be very different and the relationship between the two
The importance of distinctive scarification designs has been underestimated by earlier researchers primarily because their use diminished after European contact. However, living artists such as Paddy Freddy insist that certain painted motifs reserved for pukumani ceremonies are copies of body scars, and in the 1980s these motifs remain some of the most prevalent on grave markers.

...pukumani designs are to make the posts like people. Body designs came first. (see Appendix, page 39)

Decorative scarification patterns worn by adult Tiwi until the early part of this century appear to have a long history and may be the "... marks on their bodies, apparently cut or carved, which, ... were looked upon by them as a kind of ornament" (Major, 1859, page 127) described by Dutch officers in 1705. Campbell, in his dealings with the Melville Islanders, recorded the aesthetic appeal and distinctive arrangement of these scars,

the skin is not tattooed, as with the New Zealander, but is scarified, and raised in a very tasteful manner...The breast of one taken prisoner was scarified, and formed into ridges, much resembling the lace-work on a hussar's jacket. (Campbell, 1834, page 153)

Certainly, scarified designs were regarded by the Tiwi as symbols of physical attractiveness and high status. They represented the leaves of zamia palms '... the characteristic pattern ... is one made in direct imitation of an object of nature, namely, the frond of the zamia palm (cycas media).' (Basedow, 1913, page 294) and the carved heads of ceremonial spears once carried by 'big men' on ritual occasions. Basedow
recorded how the Tiwi in 1911 made 'an elevated cicatrix' on the skin, 'This is done by cutting the skin and artificially inducing a prolific granulation by keeping the edges of the wound apart with foreign matter such as ochre and ashes.' (Basedow, 1913, page 294). Spencer saw decorated Tiwi on Melville Island and, like Campbell, was impressed by the delicacy and regularity of these scars, (shown in Figures 35 and 36B).

...both on the men and women, they are wonderfully well developed, forming very definite lines of V-shaped marks (supposed to represent spear heads and called miunga by the natives) on the chest, back, abdomen and arms... (Spencer, 1912, page 54)

Because of their complexity these patterns were acquired over many years so only mature individuals displayed full designs and, when these were overlaid by painted motifs, the most detailed body decorations for major ceremonies.

When painted designs were applied over these body scars during pukumani ceremonies two effects probably resulted. Firstly, stripes and dotted textures were produced over closely spaced parallel scars on the skin. Secondly, certain compositions including vertical stripes and broad meander patterns would have accentuated the scarified motifs on chest, buttocks, back and shoulders rather than obscuring them. Unfortunately, no photographs of these Tiwi body decorations exist although early photographs of men's body designs from Western Australia illustrate the transformation effected by applying painted motifs over body scarification.33 While painted designs among the Tiwi could have regional associations and be re-created precisely,
elaborate body scarring could not be duplicated and became a 'signature' of the individual. The incorporation of an important man's body scars into pukumani designs would have provided a record of his power during life and a lasting memorial.

This discussion of the relationship of scarification patterns to gravepost motifs is supported by considerable evidence as many early graveposts have rows of parallel lines scratched into their painted surfaces, often over vertical bands of colour. The post shown in Plate 91 is an example of this technique which required the gravepost painter to reverse the technical processes of body painting over scarification to achieve similar designs. By 1954, some ceremonial graveposts retained vestiges of incised parallel lines although on the few examples known (including Plate 97) they were largely obscured by painted lines of similar size. As these parallel scratches cannot be seen in published photographs their existence had not been noted previously. Consequently, their significance in providing a model for painted parallel motifs was not understood.

Many Tiwi men and women showed a keen interest in innovation by adopting the mainland style of horizontal body scars from the time that Joe Cooper brought his Yuwatja supporters to Melville Island. Basedow noted that some mainland-style scars were evident on Bathurst Island in 1911, and Baldwin Spencer obtained a remarkable photograph of a Melville Island man displaying rows of horizontal scars on his left side along with Tiwi patterns of fine parallel
designs. (This man's traditional scarification is illustrated in Figure 35.) With the introduction of European clothing, the incidence of older-style patterns decreased, probably because these painfully acquired marks of status could no longer be seen and because unusual garments were more 'fashionable' to younger Tiwi. European clothes were highly sought after from an early date as Dutch officers noted in 1705. Searcy recorded a similar eagerness by the Tiwi for exotic garments in 1895, 'The niggers seemed to be very much taken by the head-dress of their visitors. Several of the Malays parted with theirs; some, in fact, gave away most of their clothes as well.' (Searcy, 1909, page 232). Arguably, the widespread use of clothing resulted in stylistic changes to Tiwi art forms as great as those initiated by the introduction of metal tools. (These changes will be discussed at length in Chapter Ten.)

In 1818, King recorded body painting among the Tiwi '... they were daubed over with a yellow pigment ... their hair ... appeared to be clotted with a whitish paint.' (King, 1827, page 114) and nearly a century later, Spencer saw striking geometric designs including squares and broad stripes in red, yellow and black applied over the body scars of mourners. When Mountford and Goodale recorded funeral ceremonies in 1954, the Tiwi were creating very complex body paintings which were probably copies of earlier combinations of painted motifs and scarification designs (see Plate 17).

34These complex body paintings were not created solely as an expression of respect for the departed relative. Mountford's information described how '... when their face and body decorations were good, the women were attracted to them.' (Mountford, 1958, page 92)
The preparation of these intricate designs required a great deal of patience and effort as all participants had to be disguised from the mopaditi,

From 10 a.m. till 5 p.m. both the [Melville Island] and [Bathurst Island] groups painted. The workers generally painted the leading pukamani, some husbands painted their wives and some painted themselves. Some children were also painted. At 5 p.m. they massed and marched down the road singing the mosquito call ... (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 517)

The full pukumani decorations were being worn by leading participants in the ceremonies allowing greater freedom of imagery on the graveposts. At that time, pukumani designs with regional and historical significance were combined with innovative, anecdotal motifs on large sculpturally complex graveposts. Thirty years later, that situation was almost completely reversed. Body scar designs of zamia palms and spear barbs were nearly obsolete although elderly artists knew they had been worn by earlier generations. Detailed designs were not usually painted on mourners' bodies during funeral ceremonies; body designs appeared to be perfunctory applications of simple ochred motifs over a white clay ground colour. (Nancy Henry's painting on Paddy Henry is a rudimentary version of this type, shown in Plate 25.) However, a significant proportion of graveposts contained traditional body scar designs comprising rows of diagonal parallel lines painted inside banded grids or large geometric outlines. Older gravepost painters identified these designs as representations of the distinctive body scars worn in earlier times, and occasionally described decorated posts as 'portraits' of individuals or representations of decorated participants in funeral ceremonies (shown in Figure 30 and Plate 101).
Throughout this study, painted designs have been considered separately from sculptural motifs, yet each completed tutini is an amalgam of formal elements conveying significant information to participants in pukumani ceremonies. As Goodale observed, mourners recognised the work of particular carvers and the geographic origins of tutinis by their carved form and painted motifs at ceremonies held in 1954. (Goodale, 1959a, page 6) Tiwi recognition of a gravepost's symbolism, origins, maker and 'story' are primarily derived from the form and placement of its painted decorations. A survey of meanings of all painted patterns indicates why certain motifs are reserved for pukumani rituals and graveposts, and how their compositions are modified for such use. This is no more than a superficial analysis - a more detailed study comprises a major research project in its own right.

Painted patterns among the Tiwi are characterised by three factors - the choice of ceremonial objects as locations for these patterns, the position of the pattern on the object, and information conveyed through the particular combination of lines, shapes, tones, colours and textures within a composition. To take the choice of a suitable ceremonial object first, patterns are created on sheets of bark, on bark baskets (tunga), on human bodies and on tutinis. Sketches in ochres on bark are an enduring feature of Tiwi art as Campbell recorded when he visited a camp of about thirty bark huts on Melville Island.

Several of them were ornamented inside by figures drawn with white clay: one in particular was neatly and regularly done all over, representing the cross-bars of a prison window. (Campbell, 1834, page 157)
Now created primarily for sale, contemporary paintings on bark probably derived from those formalised drawings once inscribed on Tiwi shelters.

Most images painted for general use refer to geographic localities on both islands. In many instances, these describe physical features - rocks, trees, beaches - but some compositions contain ritual or mythological symbolism as well (Figures 39 and 45). To the Tiwi, physical and spiritual meanings are not exclusive for at certain sites the natural features represent the body parts of a pukwi ancestor. Where motifs are painted on the face and body, these become statements of personal identity or of relationships to living kin or illustrious predecessors. (Figure 36C) A limited number of highly valued compositions have been passed down from spiritual ancestors (pukwi people) or important deceased relatives, notably 'big men'. Other distinctive motifs painted on the face and body at important ceremonies including funerals, signify an individual's social relationships (i.e. chief mourner or brother of the deceased) or they may illustrate a grade of initiation. In 1954, Mountford recorded a series of these designs including, 'The design of the immediate male relative of the dead man at a Pukumani.' (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 871).

Not only is information conveyed through arrangements of lines, shapes, tones, and colours within a design field, but

35These designs may contain attributes of certain animals and birds as some pukwi people changed from human form. Paddy Henry said of his gravepost designs '... this is the Dreaming place for those animals ... At that time, animals looked like people.' (see Appendix, page 61)
their configuration within a compositional structure such as a grid or frame is meaningful also. Certain motifs re-created over many years are immediately recognisable to most Tiwi. These include stylised images of pukwi ancestors including Purukupilai and Tapara (their physical form or actions at a particular site), geographic locations such as Snake Bay or Cape Don, and totemic species including turtles, birds and woollybutt trees. Imagery may also extend to individuals of high status and major events such as kulama (yam ceremony) or pukumani rituals (see Figures 25 and 40A and Plate 114).

While relationships between different traditional motifs and the extent of their symbolism are not clear, certain compositions are reserved exclusively for the pukumani ceremony - 'When it comes to the actual pukamuni rituals, the Pukamuni men paint only Maratji, the rainbow Malu-dainini, Milky Way, or the carpet snake, Jilina.' (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 863). Experienced painters say that these motifs can be painted on tutinis, the bodies of mourners, and bark baskets used during the rituals and inverted on graveposts after the final ceremony (see Figure 45). When Malumerinita showed a pukumani basket to Mountford, he explained the significance of its designs, 'During Purukapali's Pukamuni, and up until say 50 years ago, the bodies of the Pukamuni men, and those of the baskets were decorated in this manner.' (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 759 and Figure 42). From my findings, the structure of these pukumani designs can be slightly modified according to their location. For example, the facial design worn to represent tudawali (shark) is augmented by dramatic circles around the
eyes, but this design's usual structure is a geometric arrangement of lines and circles.

The shark has painted his face to make himself as ferocious as possible. A man dancing shark uses the same design in the Pukamuni. The striped design around, not on the eye, is to add to the fearsome appearance. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 871)

Some patterns used exclusively during pukumani ceremonies are identified by elderly painters as 'family' designs. These are copies of old designs created for mourners or graveposts at large ceremonies in the distant past. As Thomas Woody explained, his '... father and grandfather also had these designs; the families decide who is allowed to use these designs and no one else has them' (see Appendix, page 89). Other pukumani motifs (like designs painted on sheets of bark) may illustrate localities with varying degrees of spiritual importance. (Figure 44) Although it is difficult to generalise, many of these pukumani designs appear to contain multiple levels of symbolism. For example, some highly regarded patterns represent sites once frequented by Purukupali or the pukwi people who conducted his funeral ceremony (see Figure 40B). In these patterns, particular elements illustrate physical attributes of these ancestral people which were transformed into natural features remaining on both islands. These meanings may be blended with references to more recent events at the same site such as fights or pukumani ceremonies. Other patterns commemorate distinguished ancestors or incidents from the deceased individual's personal history.

The most formally complex version of a traditional design was reserved for tutinis and on a particular gravepost the
fullest exposition of this pattern appeared on key sculptural features, notably cylindrical sections (see Figures 28 and 29). According to painters working in 1986, a full statement of the chosen pukumani design should appear on the lowest cylindrical section which was often the most extensive uncarved surface on the post (see Figure 27). That is, the 'theme' motif must be painted on this lower section while 'variations' could occur on other design-carrying sections. On the vast majority of graveposts, symbolically important patterns are restricted to those areas identified as 'head, chest' and 'hips' by Tiwi painters (see Figure 19A). Where patterns are placed on reduced cylindrical sections or carved motifs including 'horns' or 'crests' they almost always supplement pukumani designs on cylindrical sections. Such motifs elaborate conventional features by serving as decorative 'fillers', and express superficial or personalised meanings very different from the several levels of symbolism contained in pukumani patterns.

According to the Tiwi, pukumani designs (especially when used on graveposts) are visually distinctive because of their formal complexity and 'brightness' (previously described in Chapter Eight). Not only must they be complex in structure and sufficiently detailed to convey the maximum extent of their symbolism to mourners on the ceremonial ground, they appear to have spiritual significance also. Pukumani motifs were re-created with great care on graveposts to be meaningful and pleasing to the mopaditi and living mourners, as the watching spirit later re-enacted acceptance of these gifts,
... when the preliminary rituals are being performed and, on the next morning, when the poles are being paid for and placed around the grave, the Mopaditis perform the same rituals on the following night. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 563)

When applied to tutinis during preparations for funeral ceremonies, these pukumani patterns have a depth of symbolism and ritual importance totally at variance with their ephemeral character. In spite of their transient role as components of graveposts, pukumani designs contain the most complex and varying dimensions of meaning and play a central part in the whole cycle of mourning. When their painted decorations are applied, tutinis achieve the fullest expression of their symbolism during the climactic final ceremony when the actions of participants further interpret their 'story'. (Plate 26) After the pukumani ceremonies, meanings associated with the images and their interpretation are retained in the memories of family members and artists who will use them again in future ceremonies, although the painted designs36 are already beginning to fade (as shown in Plate 24). As graveposts decay, the progressive loss of meaning extends from specific themes contained in painted motifs and decoration to more general associations conveyed by the carved forms, and the tutini's size and placement. Decades later, the decayed monuments illustrate little more than the family connections and 'country' of the important man or woman buried beneath them (Plates 21 and 22)

It takes many years for all traces of a grave to be obliterated, and once this has happened it is likely that the memory of the one whose grave it is has also been

36Contemporary painters' exclusive use of natural ochres means that this power is dissipated as the designs fade - acrylic paint is perhaps too permanent for their purpose.
obliterated or diminished in the minds of the living. (Goodale, 1959b, page 301)

Like painters elsewhere, Tiwi artists created diagrams and sketches of traditional designs to convey meanings in situations where fully developed compositions were not required. These sketches often conveyed precise meanings as Mountford learned, (Plate 43A)

... each totemic place had its own particular design, for when I showed the purunkita [message stick] ... to old Tjamalampua and Malumerinita, neither of whom had seen it previously, they recognized it immediately as a message stick which would have been sent to the Mudungkala totemic group of Buchanan Island ... (Mountford, 1958, page 100)

Elaborate compositions combining major elements of grids, rectangles or circles with infilling of parallel lines, crosshatching and dots were necessary for important events including pukumani ceremonies, but for other purposes such as sending messages or painting practice abbreviated versions were drawn. Painters usually illustrated key features of these well-known designs such as their formal structure or significant elements representing sites and tracks, without descriptive infilling or minor pattern elements. (Figures 40A and 41) Other sketches comprise semi-representational drawings expressing narrative rather than symbolic ingredients of a particular theme (see Figures 46A and B). As these drawing often contain highly descriptive images of creatures such as birds, fish and turtles, they illustrate external stylistic influences on Tiwi forms. Such sketches are often produced for situations where Tiwi designs should be attractive and accessible to a non-Tiwi audience (see Figures 46A, B). Drawings on bark in a representational style are not a recent phenomenon on Melville Island as Basedow
recorded images including stencilled hands and boats on bark shelters, for example,

...a single-masted sailing craft, intended to represent a small European pearling or fishing-boat ... Below it is the picture of a frog' (Basedow, 1913, page 321)

Significantly, these shelters were located near Cooper's buffalo shooters camp near the southern entrance to Apsley Strait and their paintings may have been by Yuwatja artists. However, Tiwi painters remained receptive to stylistic influences from mainland and European sources, as Macknight noted in his description of the much more recent painting on page 38. An innovation in Tiwi painting which is much less usual is the introduction of images in this representational style into painted designs on tutinis, first recorded in certain graveposts obtained by Mountford and now evident in paintings by Holder Adams. (Such representational images had been painted then erased from the gravepost being produced by Holder Adams in Plates 74 and 75.)
CHAPTER TEN - CONCLUSION

As tutini carvers, the Tiwi not only accommodated change in their cultural and artistic traditions, they were initiators of change. The name used to identify them, 'Tiwi' is more an expression of their distinctive identity (the 'only people') than their geographic isolation. Cultural traits of assertiveness and self-sufficiency aided Tiwi artists in recognising and acquiring useful new ideas and material goods then modifying them to fit established local conventions. A receptivity to novelty and change were fundamental to the Tiwi world view and found its strongest expression in their ceremonies including mortuary rituals.

Three issues relating to gravepost carving are reviewed here - stylistic evolution in graveposts throughout recorded history, major factors in determining stylistic continuity and change, and the role of Tiwi artists as innovators and exponents of traditional values.

At the time of first recorded contact between the Tiwi and outsiders in 1705, certain elements of their culture appeared well established - they used body painting over scarified designs, possessed stone axes, and were led by a few individuals of acknowledged high status recognisable as 'big men'. Distinctive Tiwi ceremonies and the use of decorated posts as grave markers were not recorded by the Dutch on that occasion, but it appears highly likely that they existed because of their close association with the three elements mentioned. By 1827, groups of weathered graveposts of substantial size were seen at several sites on
Melville Island so it appears very likely that the practice of carving monumental graveposts became an established feature of Tiwi culture well before that date. Several stylistic changes can be plotted for known graveposts and earlier types may have disappeared completely.

Tutinis described by the old man Tjamalampua which were hollow and extremely simple in carved form probably represent the earliest known style (see Chapter Three, page 40). At the time when he was a boy, graveposts,

... were cut with the stone axes. But they were made from hollow logs, and were not shaped in any way. There were, however, just as many poles around the grave as today. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 773)

These hollow graveposts were followed by a sculpturally distinctive style of solid posts surmounted by rounded tops or 'caps', which extended across Bathurst and Melville Islands (see Figures 3 and 11B). While Major Campbell may have seen graves surrounded by such posts on Melville Island, the large examples with 'lances and halberts', that he recorded were those of a more complex style which appears to have originated along the north-west coast of that island (see Figure 2). At that time, grave markers appeared to be much larger than they were a century later as Basedow remarked,

This description [by Campbell] applies equally well to those seen by us, with the exception that the cleared circular space was considerably larger in our case, while the height of the posts, above the ground, was less. (Basedow, 1913, page 312)

A comparison of descriptions and locations of all recorded graves indicates to me that this formally complex style existed along north-west Melville Island before it appeared elsewhere.
Hollow graveposts described by Tjamalampua were constructed using stone axes, but metal tools were obtained by the Tiwi in coastal regions from a very early date as King recorded in 1818 on Bathurst Island,

... they expected to get some axes from us, for they made the same signs as the Luxmore Head natives had done by repeatedly imitating the action of chopping. (King, 1827, page 121)

Although these tools were highly valued for cutting trees during the nineteenth century, Tiwi carvers appeared capable of creating formally complex graveposts with stone tools and considerable ingenuity. Some elaborate tutinis were constructed by fitting together sections of wood varying in diameter (see Figure 14A).

Stylistic analysis prior to the twentieth century is based on slight evidence but from 1905, a series of expeditions and the first known collections of grave markers provide detailed information. By about 1912, the stylistic developments already described had occurred (as shown in Figure 1 and Plate 1) but the complex geometric style had not spread across both islands. This led to mistaken assumptions by early fieldworkers that simple round-topped forms were the 'Bathurst Island style' while the Melville Islanders created tutinis in the geometric style.

Of graveposts documented during the period to the 1920s many comprised the 'gatepost' type having a cylindrical section surmounted by a carved motif - often a 'hat' or 'horns' (described at length in Chapter Four). However, an increasing variety of crests including cylinders, slabs and discs achieved popularity along with supporting billets later
known as 'windows' (see Figures 1 and 12). In spite of the fact that most gravesites contained small undecorated posts, many graveposts with crests or projections were very large as photographs show.

By the 1950s when several pukumani ceremonies were recorded and important collections of tutinis acquired, graveposts had become very complex in form. This formal elaboration comprised a 'rounded' style with roughly formed projections and an angular smoothly finished style probably deriving from the practice of working horizontally to the post and an interest in European equipment including car engines. Many examples carved for pukumani ceremonies had 'bodies' divided into sections, and crests or projections of elaborate appearance. Smaller carved motifs including knobs ('breasts') and crosspieces appeared on cylindrical sections, supporting billets and projections (shown in Figures 26 and 27). Yet the most extreme innovation was not in these highly embellished tutinis but in commissioned posts created for sale to outsiders including Mountford and Goodale. (Two distinctive examples are shown in Plates 98 and 109.

Pulan-imbuwi completed his second Pukamuni pole today. It is pole 15 ... He is now starting on another for me. Mine will go to the South Australian Museum and Jane's to the Pennsylvania University Museum. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 863)

Here the carvers introduced new forms, expressed the full range of their carving abilities and added decorative patterns between pukumani designs so that graveposts were covered with painted motifs (see Plates 97 and 107). This distinction between tutinis carved and painted for funeral
ceremonies and graveposts created for museum displays or sale to private collectors was to be maintained from that time.

Tiwi artists working in 1986 showed no hesitation in offering critical assessment of earlier tutorinis and discussing the merits of other carvers' work. When Thomas Woody examined the photograph of carvers with their completed posts shown in Plate 18 he said that, "... he thinks the designs are not well painted." (see Appendix, page 93). Other artists indicated their reservations about some of the innovative carved motifs. These responses suggested a growing conservatism among artists at Milikapiti or the partial loss of memories of extensive design repertoires of the 1950s. When these artists completed their graveposts for the National Museum project, most of them selected established designs as being 'proper' for such posts - unlike the response of Tiwi from the same community thirty years earlier.

This highly decorative appearance of tutorinis during the 1950s was due in part to increased emphasis placed on conveying 'story' through complex pukumani designs once reserved for human bodies (described fully in Chapter Nine). The increased death rate resulting from privation and trauma during World War II, greater access to introduced goods and equipment, and the emergence of a cash economy may have been incidental factors in promoting larger and more frequent pukumani ceremonies and formally complex tutorinis. Pilling recorded that, 'Genealogies show that an unusual number of deaths occurred among Tiwi between 1942 and 1946.' (Hart &
Pilling, 1960, page 107) and Nelson Mungatopi recalled, 'In Wurarbuti's time ... a big ceremony was held every month.' (see Appendix, page 3).

Major stylistic features noted by Mountford and Goodale in the 1950s continued through the following decade when numbers of very large graveposts (often with inadequate supports) were created for funeral ceremonies or for sale along with examples of modest size (see Figures 24A, B and C). As well as traditional carved features including 'horns', knobs and slabs, highly representational images such as barbed spears and animal heads now made an appearance. Increased numbers of posts in the angular sculptural style which featured cylindrical sections with well defined ledges are known, although occasional examples date from much earlier periods. During the 1960s, sets of model graveposts began appearing in museum collections and craft outlets. These ranged from crudely executed examples finished with simple painted motifs, to well crafted replicas of tutinis covered with carefully applied pukumani designs.

During the 1970s many graveposts had become less monumental in appearance although some very large examples are known. Representational features including spear heads and birds were now occasionally used as crests or projections and large graveposts often comprised a series of three or four regularly spaced cylindrical sections (see Plate 84 and Figures 16 and 49A). During this period, most graveposts showed a greater intensity of colour and evenness in texture because the pigments used for their designs were mixed with
P.V.A. glue. There was greater uniformity in design motifs and many Tiwi painters confined their selection to a narrower range of patterns including notable pukumani designs such as miinga (body scars). At the same time many graveposts contained larger areas of simple infilling of dots, parallels and crosshatching. A few prolific artists including Deaf Tommy Mungatopi grouped certain motifs into 'signature' designs which made their work readily identifiable to non-Tiwi purchasers, while others confined their selection to conventional patterns such as stars or spider's web. (Patterns shown in Plate 125 are illustrative of Deaf Tommy's work.)

During the 1980s most graveposts illustrated greater regularity of carved form and a limited repertoire of crests and innovative elements. Apart from a few very large examples, posts carved at this time were modest in size, possibly because large hardwood logs suitable for tutinis were more difficult to obtain (see Plate 24). A distinctive feature of this period is the uniform smoothness of many graveposts and the regular placement of their painted decorations. Although Holder Adams was the leading exponent of this highly finished style at Milikapiti, other artists on Bathurst and Melville Islands worked in a similar manner and tutinis in the same style can still be seen at several graves. While some variation in patterning occurred - usually combining several different motifs within design fields to produce a 'busy' visual effect - most painters favoured simplified and broadly spaced pukumani or 'family' designs.
Several very large graveposts with multiple cylindrical sections and dense patterning were created during the 1980s but by then they were unusual. The twelve large graveposts carved for the National Museum project were atypical in their large dimensions and use of 'old-fashioned' materials and techniques. (During the early stage of work, some artists had difficulty in developing mental images for such large graveposts and as the project progressed artists including Holder Adams and Paddy Freddy generated enthusiasm for creating even bigger graveposts.) Some including Ronald Adams chose to innovate, but others selected traditional forms including pukumani designs of great detail and motifs which by then had passed from general use.

As painted motifs have been described separately from carved forms in this study, a review of major factors influencing their composition and placement is restricted to two ubiquitous elements - fine parallels and arrangements of dots and small circles. Both elements were used in scarification patterns on Tiwi men and women, although Basedow recorded that circular scars were less usual,

In a few instances, a horizontal row of small circular scars was noticed beneath the cicatrices of the chest, extending from the axillar to the sternal-line, on one half of the body only. They appeared to have been burned into the skin by the heated end of a fire-stick. (Basedow, 1913, page 296)

Both elements are known from the earliest recorded tutinis either as painted motifs or incised designs on painted ground colours. Tjamalampua observed to Mountford, such motifs were used on graveposts when he was a boy, 'Nor were they decorated as elaborately as today, but were covered with dots, as on the basket...' (Figure 42) (Mountford,
Fieldnotes, page 775). The earliest known patterns on graveposts were simple and economical, possibly because they echoed images traditionally illustrated on human bodies as Campbell observed,

I never saw a Melville Islander with an ornament beyond a feather in the hair, scarifying the body, and bedaubing the head, face and every part of the skin with yellow, white, or red pigments. (Campbell, 1834, page 170)

On tutinis of the complex, geometric style recorded from pukumani ceremonies after the turn of this century, the most distinctive arrangement of fine parallel lines was as infilling in repetitive patterns of geometric motifs probably derived from textile patterns. Berndt's Aboriginal informants in Arnhem Land recalled how such textiles were produced by visiting Baijini people,

The cloth made by the Baijini women was woven on an elementary loom, with a shuttle, and was dyed with basic colours in large pots. The old Baijini name for this cloth was jalajal ... The peculiar design that they used extensively is known as darabu, and comprised a pattern of coloured triangles... (Berndt, 1954, page 36)

While a comparative analysis of Asian influences indirectly affecting Tiwi patterns is beyond the scope of this study, it is noteworthy that fine painted or incised parallels were used as infilling within larger geometric motifs on Melville Island graveposts from an early date. Arnhem Land Aborigines associated fine incised or painted parallels within triangular units with the Baijini people in particular. Crosshatched infilling of triangular units - which was a more usual feature of Aboriginal images representing Macassans in north-eastern Arnhem Land38 - is a feature of Tiwi designs after the 1950s (see Plate 84). Forty years earlier, the use

38Berndt, 1949, Plate II, Figs. 2, 3, 4.
of crosshatched infilling on Tiwi gravepost designs was far less commonplace.

Although dots and parallel lines have been painted on tutinis from all periods to the present, their symbolism and use has changed significantly. What were meaningful personalised motifs, albeit simple in form, on very early tutinis slowly altered to become elements of generalised meaning often used as decorative infilling on contemporary graveposts and grouped more tightly to convey a richer textural effect.

The change that occurred when meaningful imagery including fine parallel lines and dotted elements shifted from scarified and painted body designs to painted designs on graveposts was a fundamentally important development that influenced Tiwi aesthetic values. Simplicity of imagery was imposed by the medium of body scarring. Elements of symbolism that accrued over years and disappeared with the individual who wore them were reproduced again and again on graveposts as fully developed expositions. Spencer observed how concerned Tiwi painters were to add all elements of a particular design without leaving blank spaces and the Tiwi 'horror vacui' so evident in painted graveposts by the 1950s probably dates from around this period (see Chapter Nine).

The origins of Tiwi graveposts and external factors affecting these distinctive stylistic developments invite further discussion. Although wooden grave markers are used in
north-eastern Arnhem Land\textsuperscript{39}, the erection of large decorated hardwood posts in a regular sequence around a grave during lavish funeral rites has no parallel elsewhere in Australia. Because of their striking similarity to funeral monuments found in countries to the north, it appears probable that Tiwi graveposts are associated with an archaic sculptural tradition that extended from south-east Asia through areas of Indonesia to coastal north-eastern Arnhem Land. At a much later date, a second period of influence from external sources coincided with development of the more complex carved forms and geometric painted designs contained in the distinctive style first recorded by Campbell (see Plate 1). Although a detailed comparative analysis is not possible here, support for two periods of Asian presence in the region is available from several sources. Mulvaney suggests quite different time periods for Asian influence in the area north of Melville Island, firstly by the Chinese and later by Macassan fishing fleets. While his reference to early influence is unspecific, Mulvaney's information on the second period of contact is precise in both origin and date,

Flinders was told that the Australian industry began 20 years before 1803, after praus were blown to Australia from the Rottee trepang field. (Mulvaney, 1966, page 453)

Macknight proposes an earlier starting date for the trepang industry and describes its large extent, 'It began in about A.D. 1700 and continued until the early years of this century. For most of the nineteenth century, and probably the hundred years before that as well, at least a thousand men

\textsuperscript{39}Carved wooden graveposts, called wuramo, are said by the natives to have been placed by the Macassar seafarers on the graves of men who died when the fleet was on the coast.' (Thomson, 1948, page 37).
made the voyage each year.' (Macknight, 1976, page 1).

Reference has been made already to Berndt's informants who described early Asian visitors named Baijini and later Macassan trepangers, and confirmed their different cultural traditions,

'Native informants emphatically state that these 'Baijini were not Macassan' as they had lighter skin ... Although Macassan contact with the Aborigines was early, the 'Baijini came at a still earlier time ...' (Berndt, 1949, page 219)

Mountford recorded how later contact influenced mainland Aboriginal artists in specific ways,

Mauwulan, an aboriginal about fifty years of age, remembers, when he was a small boy, seeing an old Macassan trepanger, Bopalindi, show his father, Duankin, how to carve a human head on the top of a burial post. This post Bopalindi later placed as a memorial on the grave of a dead Macassan. (Mountford, 1956a, page 416)

While both phases of stylistic development may have originated in periodic contact with alien visitors including Asians to the shores of Melville and Bathurst Islands, a second hypothesis should be considered. Either or both developments may derive from Tiwi individuals or groups implementing ideas resulting from their experiences in mainland Australia or elsewhere. Most discussions of contact between Aborigines and outsiders are founded on the premise that the former were the passive recipients of introduced ideas and material goods. There is little support for this view in the case of the Tiwi. In character they were generally assertive, resourceful and innovative to the extent that some fieldworkers, including Hart, disliked their boastful and opportunistic traits.40 From existing

40These qualities were very much in evidence during my fieldwork in 1986 along with a pronounced sense of humour including a preference for tall stories and practical jokes
evidence the Tiwi invited changes in aspects of their material culture which were frequent, often extensive, and an accepted feature of their lives. Their assertiveness in acquiring alien material goods is evident in very early records, as Lieutenant Roe from Fort Dundas noted,

These Indians made repeated signs for hatchets, and although they had stolen two or three, it was considered desirable to gain their goodwill by giving them more.' (Searcy, 1909, page 223)

Pilling later recorded how the Tiwi encouraged a permanent European settlement on their islands to promote greater access to supplies of iron, '... during the 1890's the Tiwi began to feel that opportunity was passing them by as they noted ship after ship sail in and out of Darwin.' (Hart & Pilling, 1960, page 100). From the sixteenth century, when outsiders landed on the shores of their islands, the Tiwi used their assertiveness and cunning to turn many situations to their own advantage. (Several instances are described in Chapter Two.)

Tiwi men who boasted of their strength and courage, raided the mainland in flimsy bark canoes and regularly travelled across both islands on hunting expeditions would not have missed opportunities to travel further afield with ships' crews. Aborigines from other coastal regions travelled to Indonesia with fishing fleets and returned to pass stories of these experiences to their children as Mountford learned in north-eastern Arnhem Land, when he obtained a carved figure.

which, to my mind, made most Tiwi very likeable. (See Plate 50.)
... a wooden figure of a woman, Jubara, who, many years ago, befriended an old Aboriginal, Amalatja, when he was taken by trepangers to a Macassan village called Jumaina. This figure is the work of Mungeraui, the son of Amalatja. (Mountford, 1956a, page 434)

Before the twentieth century, many young Tiwi probably left the islands against their will, unlike Aborigines from Arnhem Land who worked as crew members. However, because of their physical stamina and ingenuity, a few of these Tiwi who were captured as slaves may have found a way to return. In 1986, several Tiwi artists commented on the degree of homesickness they felt during active service in World War II and how some men took great risks to go home. According to Paddy Henry,

... when he was in the Navy on a ship ... they were cruising around the islands. One Tiwi dived overboard and swam back to Holder's country. The captain said, 'Where is that man?' The crew said, 'Swam back to his own country'. (see Appendix, page 85)

With their knowledge of different customs and values, such men would have achieved high status in Tiwi society and the power and influence necessary to introduce major innovations.

To the Tiwi, success in life derives from achieving the status of a 'big man' and meriting large, protracted pukumani ceremonies. This route to influence and prestige is as true for tutini carvers as it is for other men, so they must use each completed commission to publicise their talents and increase their social standing. While most experienced carvers, from time to time, create graveposts for sale, prestige within the Tiwi community comes from

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41'Nearly every prahu on leaving the coast takes two or three natives to Macassan and brings them back next season.' (Earl, 1841, page 116)
preparing tutinis as ritual commissions and participating in pukumani ceremonies. As Nelson Mungatopi explained, only one older man from each family was permitted to achieve recognition as a tutini carver and that man often played an important role in community decision-making (see Chapter Six).

Tiwi artists were required to master difficult technical processes in the production of tutinis and were expected to commit to memory and reproduce a large repertoire of carved and painted motifs as well as songs and dances. The rewards for accomplished tutini carvers are listed elsewhere, but for the few individuals who achieved pre-eminence the benefits were great indeed, because they were freed from constraints that bound artists of lesser reputation. While the latter followed directives and convention, those few individuals of superior experience and seniority as tutini carvers had acknowledged rights to innovate and modify to a much greater degree.

Among the Tiwi, the emphasis on mastering an existing repertoire of techniques, forms and meanings and expressing additional innovative themes led to a rapid absorption of

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42 Enhanced prestige derives from acting generously, as Tuluntalumi did when he gave an additional gravepost to the bereaved family, '... only a man with as large a household as his could afford the gesture of giving away, in a situation where kinship obligations did not demand it, a gravepost that required about a week's full-time work.' (Hart & Pilling, 1960, page 47)

43 These constraints were described by Goodale who became a 'worker' herself, 'The working men 'decided' that Dolly and I should make a very small pole, and that it should be very simple in carved design.' (Goodale, 1959b, page 303)
new imagery and ideas into conventional schemes. Yet, the inclusion of alien elements was selective - artists discriminated in their initial choices, and subjected new materials, processes and ideas to review, trial and modification to transpose or fit them to Tiwi conventions. Mountford commented on the expression of innovative features in pukumani rituals held in 1954,

> It seems so incongruous to hear songs relating to the radio and telephone, danced with the traditional steps and gestures of past generations, except perhaps, toward the end, a man might gesture 'ringing up' with one hand, and holding a telephone to his ear with the other, with his feet and body posturing, perhaps as in the crocodile dance. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 307)

Mountford's disquiet at these alien ingredients dissipating the 'Tiwiness' of traditional ceremonies was not shared by the Tiwi themselves who tested, assessed and modified such themes in their quest for 'story' and through their interest in creating dramatic interpretations of the world around them.

Certain instances of this adaptation of alien images and ideas have been described previously but two sources deserve further mention - influences derived from other Aboriginal cultures and changes brought about by Christianity. Tiwi artists had close associations with mainland Aborigines from an early date and incorporated certain introduced elements into their own art forms. The most notable instance of this adaptation of forms and meanings is in the use of carved wooden figures. When they began carving small human images to place on recent graves, Tiwi artists retained their original symbolism and use. Initially, they continued to create certain stylistic features typical of north-eastern
Arnhem Land including rounded carved forms, rudimentary facial features and small, regular design motifs. These later evolved to Tiwi elements such as dramatic sculptural treatment, large well defined facial forms, strong tonal contrasts, and decorations of pukumani designs. Mainland Aborigines who settled among the Tiwi became gravepost carvers and the alien themes and motifs they illustrated may have influenced local artists (see Figure 48).

Although Christianity had a longstanding influence on the Tiwi, its direct effects on tutini carving could be regarded as slight except for the lesser extent of cemeteries containing tutinis on Bathurst Island. (The grave of Edward and William Portomirri's father who had received a large pukumani and later memorial ceremony at some distance from the Mission was an exception - see Plate 20.) In the early days of the Mission, Bishop Gsell had imposed strict conditions on Tiwi who lived at Nguiu, but the unconverted Tiwi imposed equally onerous restrictions, as he described,

The males have the right to choose between tribal and Christian practices ... If they choose to come to us the other natives bar them from all tribal ceremonies, will not let them participate. Sometimes the young boys are excited by the sight of tribal ceremonies and want to join in, but the tribal natives will not allow them. (Healy, 1936, page 223)

While Christian symbols such as crosses were occasionally used as crests or painted motifs on tutinis, primarily as a form of 'insurance' for the bereaved family, underlying meanings for graveposts remained constant with artists in 1986 accommodating knowledge of gravepost symbolism with Catholic religious teachings.

Harry Carpenter's unique geometric style is included.
Tiwi success in maintaining distinctive artistic traditions derived from the power conferred on 'carvers of big poles' to regulate a complex system of symbols and ritual observance, and to select and transpose innovative elements. Components of the closed, established system for tutini carvers which were not subject to variation included,

- relationship of forms and meanings to the pukwi people and territories of spiritual significance
- integration of images and processes with accepted practice for pukumani ceremonies
- maintenance of power through exclusive knowledge
- acknowledgement of criteria for establishing a high degree of acceptance and recompense for tutinis.

Tiwi links with mainland Aborigines have been explored at length in Chapter Nine. Stylistically, similarities appear strongest with artists of coastal north-eastern Arnhem Land. A clearer understanding of the cognitive system underlying Tiwi gravepost carving can be gained by a brief comparison with another complex organisation - systems used by the Yolngu people of north-eastern Arnhem Land to regulate the creation and ritual use of significant images. Like the Tiwi pukumani designs, certain of their restricted designs express fundamental and unvarying themes of the Dreaming,

The elaborated clan designs in combination with other elements of a painting refer to particular relationships between clans, ancestral events and specific localities... (Morphy, 1977, page 226)

Similarly, tutini carvers place great emphasis on 'correct' processes and regulation of carving and painting as pukumani activities, as well as the gravepost's finished appearance. This emphasis on process is also true of Yolngu paintings as a criterion that illustrates their relative degree of
restriction to general audiences, 'The most exclusive aspect of the closed art (apart from the meaning of the design) is the process of painting.' (Morphy, 1977, page 221).

Within both the Tiwi and Yolngu systems, power is maintained by a specific group - notably, experienced male artists - through their retention of exclusive knowledge. Although Tiwi women could carve graveposts in place of a male relative, they did not have power in their own right as Ali (Allie) Miller indicated to Osborne,

They [men] make the grave posts. Five men go to make them. No woman can come there. No, it's much too sacred. There would be a lot of trouble. (Osborne, 1974, page 110)

However, unlike Tiwi graveposts which were displayed by their artists to a mixed audience, access as well as knowledge was confined to a select group of Yolngu. Morphy observed that creating and viewing spiritually significant restricted paintings was the prerogative of older men,

'...As a general rule such paintings are restricted from women and young men.' (Morphy, 1977, page 220).

In previous chapters, Tiwi criteria for assessing acceptable and exemplary *tutinis* have been described in detail. Certain aesthetic as well as technical criteria common to both categories of acceptance inform the deliberations of patrons at *pukumani* ceremonies, especially the degree of 'brightness' in the painted designs. Yolngu painters also strive for a 'clearly defined' and 'bright' appearance to sacred images which they describe in specific terms,
The bir'yun of a painting is the visual effect of the fine crosshatched lines that cover the surface of a sacred painting, 'it is the sensation of light, the uplift of looking at this carefully carried out work...
(Morphy, 1977, page 229)

While Tiwi observers of finely crafted graveposts become inspired and 'excited' by qualities of 'brightness', their aesthetic parameters are comparatively broad. Excellence is achieved through contrasts of scale and texture and through tonal variation, rather than technical effects (described in Chapter Eight). Strong contrasts of tone are fundamental to Tiwi concepts of beauty as Osborne noted,

...there are no general colour words other than two which can be loosely translated 'black' and 'white', but these refer to the dark-light dimension of contrast, not to the colour spectrum. (Osborne, 1974, page 117)

It is this breadth of categorisation within the Tiwi system that distinguishes it from more restrictive Yolngu criteria and allows for considerable innovation within accepted conventions. As ambitious Tiwi artists must produce new and startling variations on accepted themes they learn to work within a two-tiered system - the first, a closed system of conventional images and symbolism already described, and beyond that, a system for selecting and redefining new elements within their changing world. Unlike the Yolngu system which is specific, hierarchical and inherently static by comparison, the Tiwi system is ordered but unspecific, and steadily evolving because of the cumulative effects of innovation.

The role of Tiwi artists as innovators is a complex one firstly because of their long history of contact with alien influences and secondly, because of the intricate and varying conventions informing their work. The second tier of
the system outlined previously derives from the exaggerated status that the Tiwi reserved for 'big men'; it was restricted to a few carvers of exceptional reputation, and was less structured than the system of established conventions.

As introduced items of great rarity including steel tools and European clothes conveyed high status, leading artists would have been quick to utilise references to these in major pukumani commissions. For example, Malumerinita's body patterns for a funeral ceremony illustrated the transposition of textile designs,

The face represents a Mopaditi and the body design, that of painted cotton cloth. (Mountford, Fieldnotes, page 713)

Patrons who stipulated commissions incorporating alien themes and images placed leading artists under pressure to achieve increasingly complex images with meagre technical resources. Two inventive processes used by tutini carvers - interlocking sections of graveposts and 'combs' for quickly applying dotted patterns - may represent specific responses by artists to such demands. Other responses to external pressures resulted in a stylistic divergence between Bathurst and Melville Islands as the Bathurst Islanders modified their production of art works associated with banned pukumani ceremonies and created new images and designs for the tourist market. As Paddy Freddy explained,

... in the old days, both islands had the same designs but on Bathurst Island they made a lot of tourist art. (see Appendix, page 90)

More recently, workshops have been developed on Melville and Bathurst Islands to reproduce Tiwi imagery in a variety of
media - screen printing, ceramics, mural painting, graphic design, etc.

It can be argued that prolific innovation in tutinis parallels phases of cultural modification in recorded Tiwi history. Two periods of great stylistic elaboration coincide with the spread of the distinctive geometric style from northern Melville Island and, many years later, the inclusion of alien elements into tutinis after World War II. While the prevailing Tiwi art style has always remained readily distinguishable from those of mainland Aborigines it has not progressed from a limited inventory of simple forms through greater degrees of complexity. Rather, it is a dynamic, changing tradition which has evolved through sub-styles ranging from austere to florid, with minor variations according to geographic origins and personal modes of expression.

Older Tiwi artists now express concern that the increasing rate of change on Melville and Bathurst Islands is threatening their cultural heritage,

Children now are interested in radios, videos, cars, etc. and say that Europeans are taking over so they are not interested in their own culture. (see Appendix, page 77)

Because most Tiwi children at Milikapiti under ten years of age do not speak their own language, they lack insights into traditional stories, ceremonies and related art forms in spite of formal teaching by older men and women. As a result of the increasing emphasis on introduced material goods, paid employment and Western cultural values, indigenous cultural traditions are losing their importance in the eyes
of younger people. Some elderly Tiwi including Thomas Woody believe that they are the last generation of tutini carvers with the full extent of knowledge, and that when they die pukumani rituals and their associated graveposts will disappear `...pukumani ceremonies will be finished in ten years, as his generation dies and the young ones forget' (see Appendix, page 28).

This study confirms that the carving and painting of Tiwi graveposts (like Aboriginal art of other regions) does not derive from a narrow range of fundamental and simple impulses and probably has never done so. Osborne's summary of language on Bathurst and Melville Islands applies equally to Tiwi sculptural traditions,

The subtlety and precision of their thought, as exhibited in their use of this very complex system of rules, is equal to anything found in European languages. (Osborne, 1974, page 118)

Graveposts displayed at pukumani ceremonies functioned as regulators of supernatural forces, historic inventories and memorials symbolising family obligations and achievements. Not only were they the products of lengthy artistic traditions, these tutinis represented a distillation of religious beliefs, aesthetic judgments and striving for personal artistic and social achievement.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BILLET</td>
<td>thick piece of wood, cylindrical form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOSS</td>
<td>a small projecting block.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CYLINDRICAL SECTION</td>
<td>drum-shaped unit of large circumference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DESIGN FIELD</td>
<td>large expanse or surface of a single pattern.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEMENT</td>
<td>component part.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUE</td>
<td>specific colour, identified by name.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTAGLIO</td>
<td>inverted relief; lines and forms are cut into the surface of a plane.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTIF</td>
<td>a visual theme; constituent feature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIGMENT</td>
<td>colouring matter used as paint.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROJECTION</td>
<td>protruding element or device.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REDUCED SECTION</td>
<td>cylindrical unit of small diameter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELIEF</td>
<td>carving of forms which stand out from the background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPPORT</td>
<td>canvas, panel or other material on which the ground or paint is laid; also a basal section.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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