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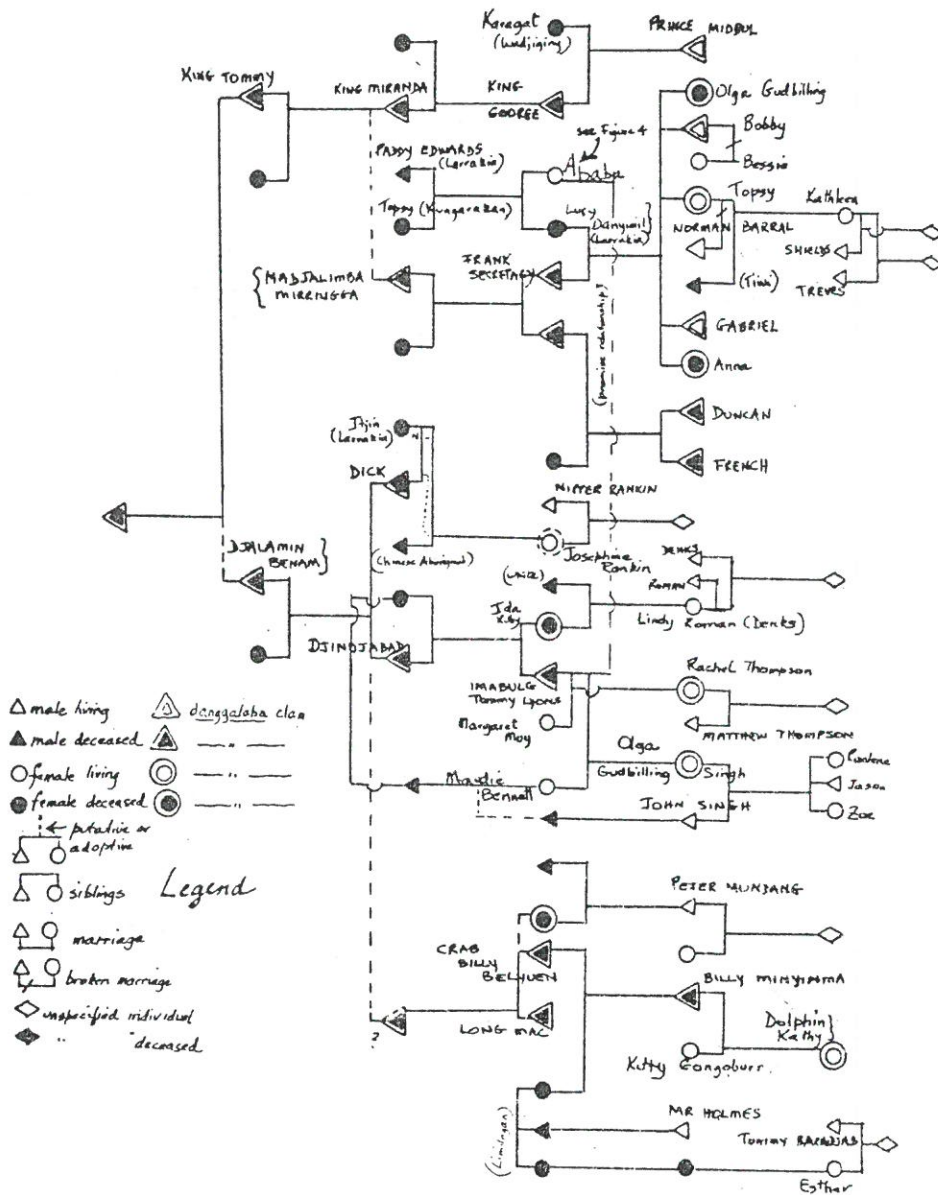
2. THE CLAIMANTSTraditional owners

The Aboriginal Land Rights Act requires owners of Aboriginal land to be members of a local descent group associated with a site on the land claimed. There is such a group for the claim area, which is acknowledged by all Aborigines in and near the claim area. We have also been able to establish a certain historical depth to this group both from genealogies and from European documents. Precise genealogical links between the members are not known (see Figure 1), so we will refer to this group as a clan rather than a lineage.

The members of this clan, whose principal "dreaming" or durlg is the crocodile (danggalaba) are:

Bobby Secretary
Topsy Secretary
Gabriel Secretary
Prince of Wales
Olga Singh
Rachel (or Paula) Thompson
Kathleen or Dolphin Minyinma

The Secretary brothers and their sister acknowledge and accept their ownership of the claim area, as do their classificatory siblings, Prince and Olga. Bobby Secretary was born at Belyuen, or Delissaville as it is sometimes called, and the name of that place is, in fact, also one of his personal names (as it has been for other leaders of his clan in the past). The Secretary family is recorded as living at Delissaville during the early years of the Second World War and, later, at Katherine and other camps. They have seen their main responsibility to traditional land as being the Darwin area. Certainly alienation of Larrakia land has been almost total in the town area, and it is only through the efforts of the Secretaries and their kin and supporters that a portion of



The danggalaba clan.

Kalalak* is now held by them on lease.

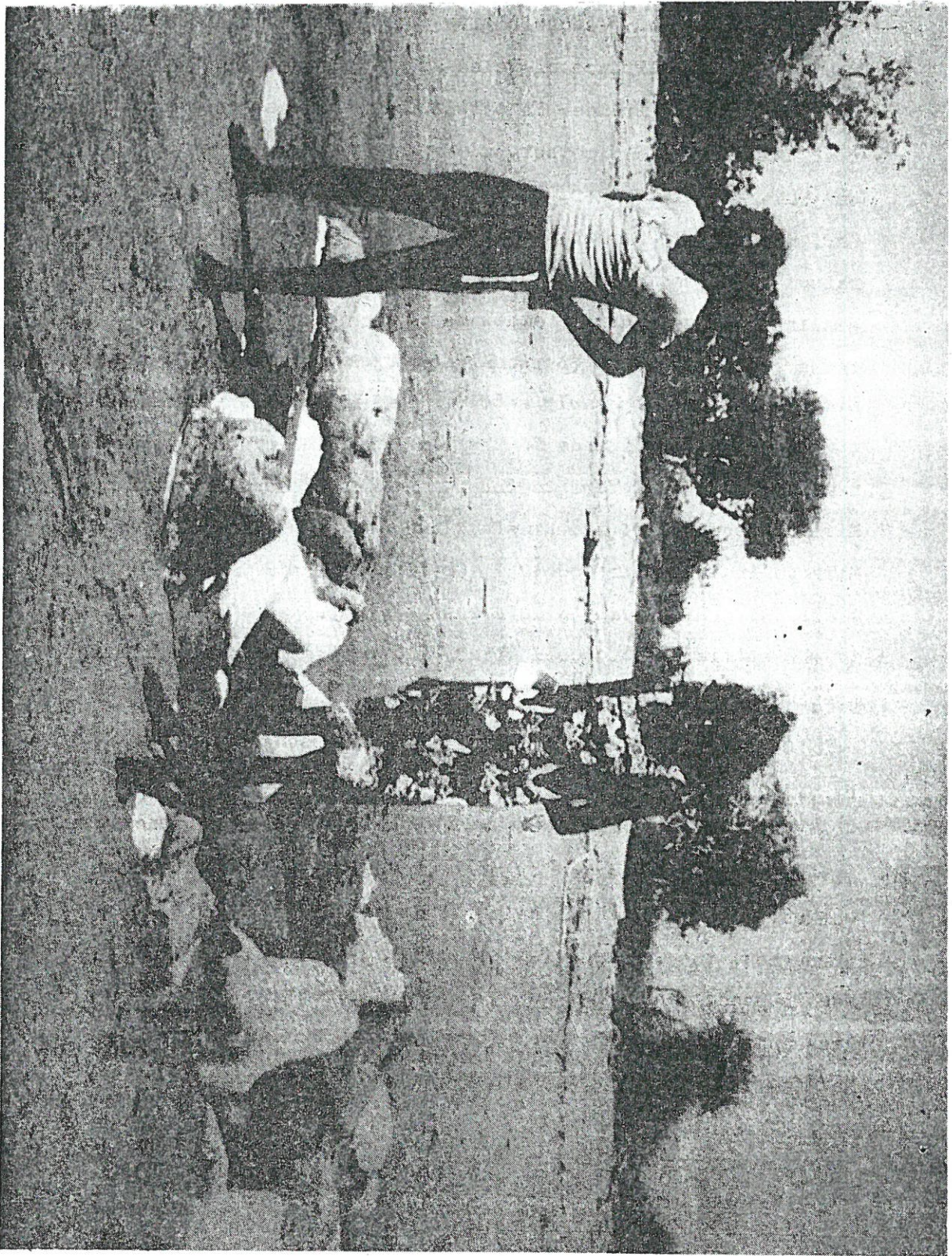
The principal responsibility for land in the claim area is seen to lie with Prince of Wales and Olga Singh, who live mostly at Belyuen. For Prince, in particular, this has been a hard responsibility. His mother, a Wadjiginy woman, died soon after he was born and his father, King George, died at Katherine during the war, when Prince was about three years of age. He was subsequently raised by his mother's kin, because his father had no surviving siblings. His father's father was King Miranda and that man's father was King Tommy (personal communication** from R.M. Berndt). Miranda is named by early settlers in Darwin. For example Wildey (1875:119) says "Miranda is the king or chief of the Port Darwin natives", and he refers to the strict moral code of behaviour Miranda required of his kinsfolk and others. Others who name Miranda include Curr 1886:252, Crauford 1895:180 and Foelsche 1885b:191. King Tommy's life must have spanned a period prior to the settlement of 1869, which gives Prince's family a long presence in the area.

Olga Singh and Rachel (or Paula) Thompson are the daughters, by different mothers, of Tommy Lyons or Imabulg, now dead. Olga has grown up in the claim area with both her parents, who in turn lived in the claim area for most of their lives (Tommy Lyons worked, too, for periods as a police tracker and travelled widely throughout the Top End of the Northern Territory). Olga's mother, Maudie, accompanied her husband in his movements around the claim area and learned much about it from him. She sees herself as holding this knowledge in trust for her daughter, Olga.

Rachel (or Paula) Thompson, on the other hand, grew up away

* A coastal area within the Darwin town area. The spelling is that recommended by Banji, the newsheet of the Gwalwa Daraniki organisation.

** To M. Brandl and M. Walsh.



Traditional owners Prince of Wales (Mibui) and Olga Singh at the site of Nguranyini durlg, on the north coast of the Cox Peninsula.

from the claim area and has stayed with her ailing mother, an Oenpelli woman. Rachel states that she has no interest in the claim.

Kathleen or Dolphin Minyinma is the daughter of the late Billy Minyinma and the youngest of the traditional owners. She is growing up away from the claim area with a Darwin family who care for her with the approval of her mother.

Another person who is often said to be a danggalaba clan member is Josephine Rankin, an Aboriginal woman whose father was Chinese Aboriginal, and who now lives at Bagot with her children and husband, a man of the Kiuk language group, related to Maudie, widow of Tommy Lyons. She states that she has no interest in the claim and the Secretary family accept that as her wish.

One reason for the ambiguity of Josephine's status as a traditional owner relates to the principle by which members of the danggalaba clan are spelled out. The people on the above list are there because they are descended through men from a putative ancestor.

This principle poses questions as to the future of the clan since none of the men on it have issue. When we asked the Belyuen community to specify how people could be "bosses" for country, they agreed that inheritance through one's father is important, but that next in importance is a link through one's mother. We list therefore the following people whose mothers are or were members of the danggalaba clan (see Figure 1):

Linda Roman or Denks
Kathleen Secretary
Raelene Singh
Jason Singh
Zoe Singh
Peter Mandang

Linda Denks has children and grandchildren, and Kathleen Secretary has five children. Peter Mandang has children too. How the pattern of land ownership is delineated in the claim area is



Traditional owner Bobby Secretary.

examined in chapter six. Also considered there is how land ownership in the claim area relates to that elsewhere in Aboriginal Australia.

Others with an interest in the claim area

These are not the only people with an interest in the claim area. At a meeting at Belyuen it was said that singling people out according to their father or mother divides people. Where land is concerned they would prefer as a community to state, with evidence, their relationships to the claim area and their interests in it.

Time and time again people in the claim area have referred to the "mixing" of Aboriginal people that has taken place there. This refers not only to people but to their actions and beliefs and attitudes - social and cultural features - including those relevant to the requirements of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act.

"Mixing"

"Mixing" does not mean "mixed-up" or confused. Rather it describes the intricate interconnections of all the activities of people in the area claimed. It was not the case that specific Aboriginal groups, here or anywhere else in Australia, lived in isolated socio-cultural capsules with language or ceremonies, for example, that were peculiarly or pristinely their own. No Aboriginal group, even an island community like the Tiwi* (who inter-married with mainland groups), can be considered a "unified whole" (Stanner 1966:36). "Tribe", however, is a concept implying this. Its use has frequently been questioned but, nonetheless, it continues for its analytic ability in some matters. We do not intend to use it for people in the claim area.

Ways of identifying claimants

We do, however, need to identify the claimants and we will discuss some of the ways they themselves use to identify to one

* and the Groote Eylandt community (Turner 1974:197).

another, both as groups and as individuals. Von Sturmer (1973) has pointed out at least five basic factors here (and we will add more): kinship and marriage, territory, totemism, language and ritual. In brief, no one principle, even language (Sutton 1978:28), orders the totality of interaction (Stanner 1966:36)*. In the claim area is a "mixing" of principles, plainly manifested in the activities of the claimants. Stanner tells (1966:37) how the Murinbata use sticks and stones to describe the articulation of groups. Their constructions emerge looking a little like a branching tree or a flung fishing net.

In the physical and social environments which provide the opportunity, the mesh becomes tighter. The interconnections increase in range, frequency and degree of strength. (Mission, government and pastoral property settlements intensify these even more, as a simple result of even closer proximity.) What we are looking at, then, is a social field (Sutton 1978:116 uses this term for coastal groups on Cape York Peninsula). The claim area, and its periphery bound the social field we are documenting in this claim book.

The range of activities in which are demonstrated the complex socio-cultural links between people in the claim area includes the following:

- . marriage and kinship
- . attendance at and participation in ceremonies - death and initiation, for example
- . access to religious knowledge and inheritance of this
- . territorial affiliations
- . hunting and gathering
- . name exchange
- . shared experiences such as re-settlement, the war, surviving cyclones, building a settlement, drinking** and land rights movements

* Language, however, has often been invoked as an especially apt criterion for group membership (see Tindale 1974 for instance), but it raises problems when used to label social groups (von Sturmer 1978:13).

** Sansom (1977) gives some indications of how the social field is expanded through people drinking together near the claim area.

- . multilingualism
- . life crisis situations, birth and death of kin
- . socialisation

We will be looking at those activities among the above, which bear upon the land claim, as the book proceeds. In each discussion the concept of "mixing" will be manifest. Where we use references to documents we will use the linguistic - or quasi-linguistic labels of Wagaidj and Larrakia, to enable the reader to check our sources. Where the claimants themselves have used such labels, we too, will use these.

Identity

Let us briefly elaborate the concept of "mixing". We will take as an illustration the idea of personal identity. Any one individual's identity is composed of experiences, both personal and shared, some labelled (such as initiation) and others not. When a person's identity is being asked for, the response - the co-responding experience called up - will depend on who is doing the questioning, where and why and when. For individuals in the claim area we might visualise a personal identity as a multi-faceted cut stone, with each facet representing an experience, personal or shared (for which there may or may not be a cultural label). The responses will result from one or other facet being illuminated by a question.

Example 1: George Munggalu

When a claimant, say George Munggalu, is asked how he identifies himself, he will look first at the questioner and attribute motives, and then at the circumstances of the question. He then seeks to select those facets of his identity that co-respond to these factors. Some of the facets of George's identity are that he was born in Darwin, that his father's "country" is Banagaya, on the southern side of the mouth of the Daly River and that his



Ceremonial leader George Munggalu.

durlg is sea-monster (whale), or rainbow. His mother's language was Djeridj. He was initiated at Bilurrgwa at Shoal Bay east of Darwin by men of the danggalaba clan of the Larrakia linguistic grouping. He advanced through their ceremonies until he reached dariba status and took over the responsibility for holding ceremonies. He has lived for many years with his friend, Roy Edwards, a pastoralist at Newcastle Waters.

Example 2: Andrew Henda

Andrew Henda (in Bunji of January 1973) says, "My father was Wadjigan Larrakia and my mother she's a Gurindji", meaning that his father had a Wadjiginy-speaking father and a Larrakia-speaking mother. This is borne out by Johnny Fejo's statement in the same article. "Andrew is part of my father, Nipper Rankin, because his father is my full uncle. My father, Wadjigan, was married to my mother, full-blood Larrakia. I refer to me as full-blood Larrakia, that's our way If one girl marries to a white bloke and has a baby, it is 'half-caste', but we call it full-blood Larrakia. . . . Little boy of mine, Barradimi, he is a Larrakia". Johnny, now dead, was married to Dolly, a traditionally -oriented woman of the Warai linguistic group. Identification is bilateral then and "full-blood" is taking on a sense equivalent to "authentic". Topsy Secretary says of the part-European daughters of her mother's sisters: "We say Larrakia full-blood".

Example 3: Maudie Bennett

Another example of the "mixing" of social components in an identity is provided by the claimant, Maudie Bennett. She is the daughter of a man of the Ragbadjala territory, on North Peron Island, inherited from clans of the Kiuk language group. Her mother spoke Kiuk. She was born at Kahlin Compound in Darwin and she has a conception totem at Talc Head in the claim area. Maudie identifies sometimes as Wagaidj, sometimes as Wadjiginy, or Kiuk

or Ragbadjala. She grew up on the Cox Peninsula and is recorded as being a school girl at Delissaville in 1941 (see E.J. Murray 1942), where she went through her woman's ceremony. She has been married to men of both Tiwi and Larrakia language groups. Her Larrakia-speaking husband, the now dead Tommy Lyons, or Imabulg, a senior man of the danggalaba clan, imparted to her safe-keeping knowledge of sites in the Cox Peninsula and the islands. A lot of their married life was spent together on Indian Island and the Cox Peninsula, which she probably knows better than any other living person. George Munggalu has also passed on his knowledge of the area to her, to be handed on as Tommy Lyons also wished, to his daughter, Olga. Maudie, too, has attended danggalaba, and other so-called "Larrakia" - style, initiation ceremonies and shares knowledge of these with others such as George Munggalu and her uncle, Norman Harris, or Barral, another man of senior ritual status, but not in the danggalaba clan.

Cutting across the labels we have used here are her durlg and ngirawad identities. Durlg is her "dreaming" or local descent group label and ngirawad refers to her namesakes.

How she selects an identity and appropriate behaviour for that identity was shown to us one day at Bagamanadjing, near the site of Wudud, or Dagwud, the Frog, on Cox Peninsula. A myth from this area told to Bill Harney by a Wadjiginy (we presume - for he says Wagaidj) speaker tells how the dugong was once driven into the sea here by her one-time friend, the scrub-wallaby (Harney 1959:121). Maudie was prompted by her knowledge of this myth to tell us another about a dugong, but a so-called Larrakia myth. In her understanding at that initial time of our mapping, we were recording "Larrakia" information only, and so that is what she gave us.