

3. NATURE OF THE LAND CLAIMEDThe shape of the land \*

The claim area lies between latitude  $12^{\circ} 24'$  S and  $12^{\circ} 45'$  S, and between longitude  $130^{\circ} 50'$  E and  $130^{\circ} 22'$  E.

The largest area of land, some 800 square kilometres is on the Cox Peninsula, which lies about five kilometres across the harbour from the Darwin peninsula at their nearest points.

Off the south western coast of the Cox Peninsula lies Indian Island, a long narrow area of 29 square kilometres, which is also claimed.

Indian Island is separated from the Cox Peninsula by the Bynoe Harbour, in which the following islands and reefs are situated:

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Turtle Island                   | ( $\frac{2}{3}$ square kilometre)          |
| Knife Island<br>and Dawson Rock | ( $\frac{1}{4}$ " " )                      |
| Crocodile Island                | ( $\frac{1}{2}$ " " )                      |
| Guilfoyle Reef                  | ( $\frac{1}{3}$ " " )                      |
| Kiara Rock<br>and Pittard Spit  | (less than $\frac{1}{3}$ square kilometre) |

To the west and north west of Indian Island lies Port Patterson. This is flanked by a chain of islands running in a north-easterly direction from the mainland to the south of them.

These islands are:

|                      |                        |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| Dum-in-mirrie Island | (7 square kilometres)  |
| Beer Eatar Island    | ( $2\frac{1}{2}$ " " ) |
| Grose Island         | (6 " " )               |
| un-named island      | (4 " " )               |
| Bare Sand Island     | ( $\frac{1}{3}$ " " )  |
| un-named island      | ( $\frac{1}{4}$ " " )  |
| Quail Island         | (1 " " )               |

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\* The map used for names here is from the Australian Department of National Mapping, 1:100,000 series R621, Edition 1.



Many rocky and coral reefs edge this chain of islands and occur in isolated outcrops out to sea. We have mentioned some of these in Bynoe Harbour. Others, in Port Patterson, are:

Simms Reef (1/5 square kilometre)  
Moirra Reef (1/3 " " )

In Thrings Channel at the entrance to Port Patterson are:

Kellaway Reef (1/4 square kilometre)  
Middle Reef (3 " " )

West of the chain of islands lies the extensive Roche Reef (9 square kilometres).

The total claim area then is well under 900 square kilometres.

#### Topography

The whole area is essentially low-lying and very influenced by its marine environment. The highest elevation is a ridge about seventy metres high in the vicinity of Bulldog Pass, to the south of Kings Table in the Middle and West arms of Darwin Harbour. Other elevated areas occur on the peninsula between Belyuen and West Arm on the eastern side, and on the west to the south of Shoal and Turnbull bays. None exceeds 60 metres in height. Indian Island has a few elevated areas and there is a small knoll on Quail Island.

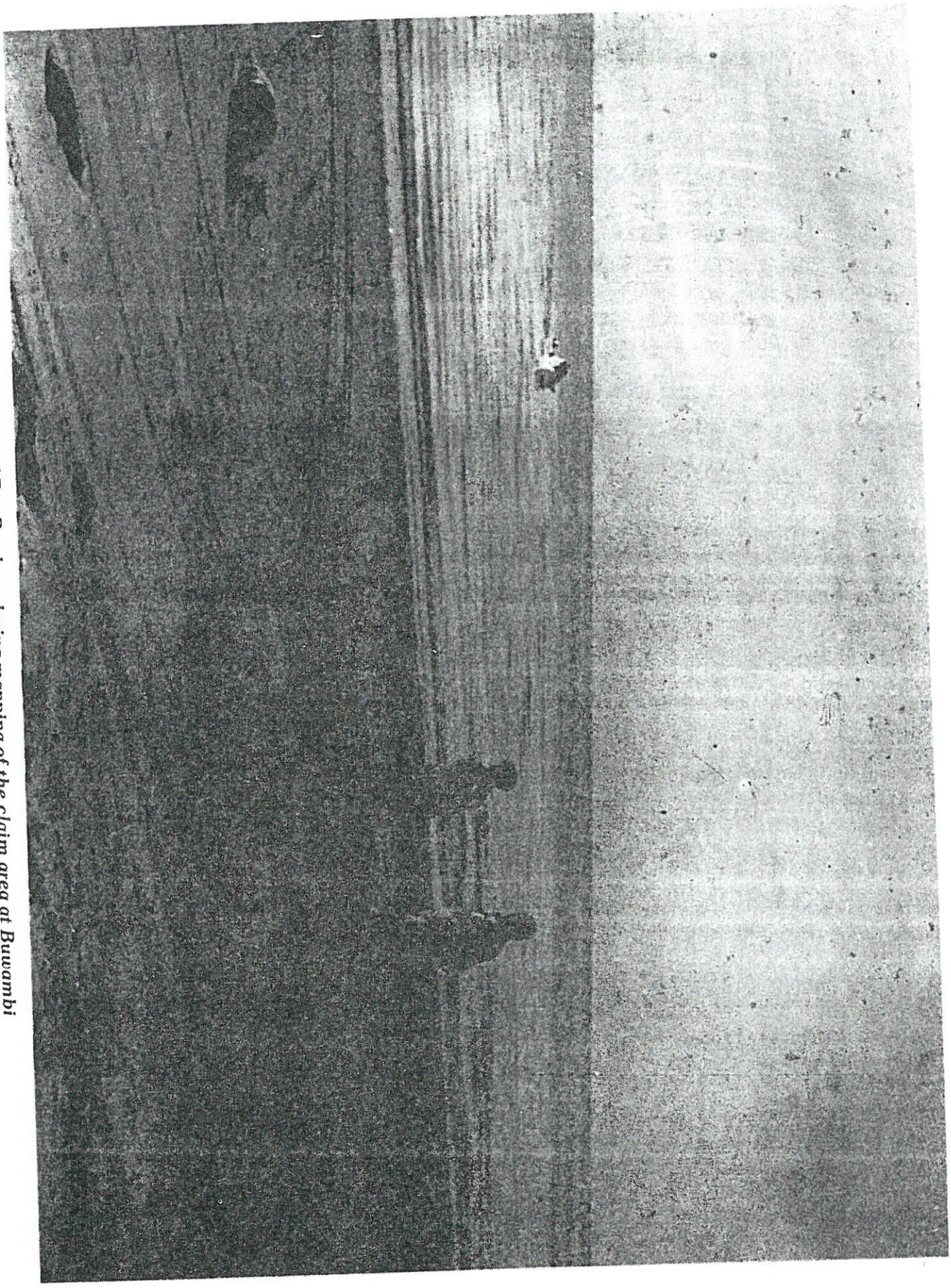
The tidal drop in the area is considerable, exposing huge mud flats for some distance around the claim area at low tide. In the case of the chain of islands this drop makes it possible to walk from the southern mainland along the islands. This tidal area is vital for foraging and is therefore included in the claim.

#### Vegetation

As to vegetation, the claim area is varied. Most coastal areas are mangrove. The Cox Peninsula and Indian Island inland are forest and scrub areas of medium density. The Peninsula is sprinkled with black soil plains and somewhat bisected by



*George Munggalu and Roy Burtbur during mapping of the claim area at Buwambi on the west coast of the Cox Peninsula.*





Corrawara Creek which runs from Tapa Bay in a more or less southerly direction towards Bynoe Harbour. Fresh water is available either on the surface or from wells throughout the claim area, even on the chain of islands to the west of Port Patterson.

#### Access to places within the claim area

Although distance does not pose a major problem in the claim area some places are relatively difficult of access. In some cases this is because the areas are closed e.g. Quail Island, a R.A.A.F. bombing range (see also chapter five) or the booster station for Radio Australia in the Charles Point area (see also chapter nine). In other cases it is the nature of the land itself. One local Aboriginal resident, Lennie Singh (personal communication to M. Walsh) had wanted to travel to Kings Table but found the road (so far as it went) difficult to traverse and the country too boggy even for a four wheel drive vehicle. It should be noted that for many years local Aborigines have been building roads themselves to improve access to their country (see chapters seven and eight).

#### Historical depth of Aboriginal place names

Larrakia language names for the area are documented since at least 1905 (see Basedow 1905). In 1915 T.J. Worgan (Acting Director, Land and Survey Department, to the Administrator, Northern Territory Administration, memo dated 2 November 1915) used the names 'Demmenmurra' island, and 'Minnawalk' for the permanent fresh water spring there. He also gave the Aboriginal name for the area around a distinctive banyan tree on that island as 'Nebouck'.

#### Aboriginal names on contemporary maps

Australian Government maps of the islands and the Peninsula give some Aboriginal place names as alternatives to English names or as the only name for a particular place. Thus the creek referred to above, Corrawara Creek on the maps, is undoubtedly

from the Larrakia word for fresh water gorrawarra\*. The Northern Territory Surveyor-General (personal communication to M. Brandl) says that the first Aboriginal names appear on maps of the area in his department in 1944. These are military maps compiled by the 6th Australian Army Topographical Survey Company, A.I.F. and surveyed by the 7th Australian Field Survey Section of the A.I.F. The Army employed local Aborigines during the war years as guides and pilots (see chapter four) and Aboriginal place names undoubtedly provided unbreakable code names in Army manoeuvres.

The place names on our maps are drawn from information provided by claimants for the present investigation.

#### Area available for claim

We have described here the whole of the Cox Peninsula and islands area. But over twenty per cent of this is occupied by reserved areas and leases, freehold and mining.

We do not intend to describe these here since the details are quite complex. However the following maps indicate these interests:

The Public Plan, Hundred of Bray, County of Palmerston, and the Mandorah Special enlargement from that map, and The Darwin 500 Plan.

Both these maps are available at the Department of Lands and Housing of the Northern Territory government in Darwin.

Mining leases are shown on the following maps available from the Northern Territory Department of Mines and Energy:

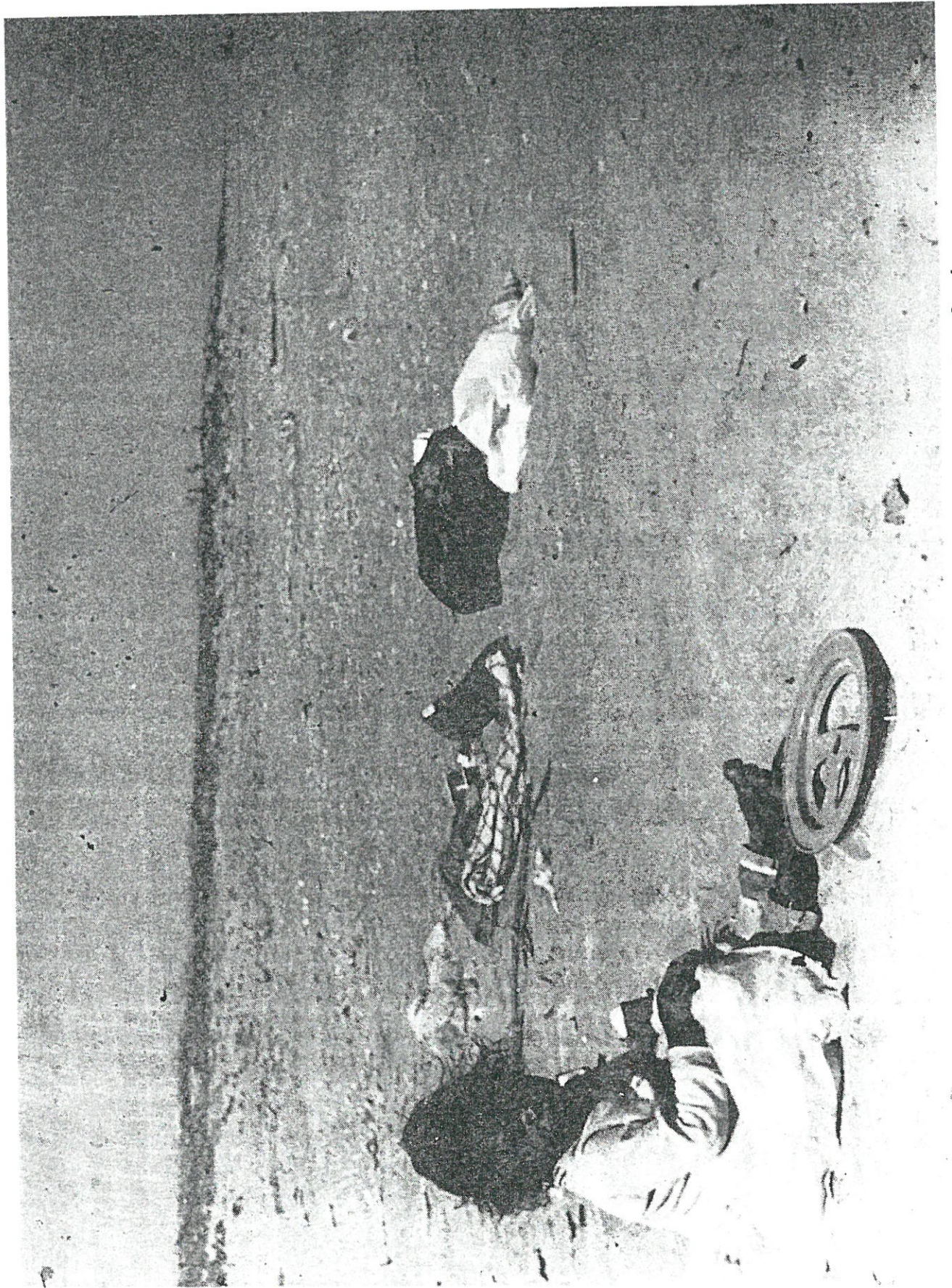
|                |             |
|----------------|-------------|
| Mining Tenures | 8/1 and 8/4 |
| Grose Island   | 7/18        |

Reserves in and near the claim area are discussed in some detail in chapter five.

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\* As recorded in some of the early vocabularies. The present day Larrakia word for "fresh water" is garawa.





Zoe Singh, daughter of traditional owner, Olga Singh, on Ngulbedjig or Bare Sandy Island.



ABORIGINAL PLACE NAMES AND SITES OF SIGNIFICANCE  
IN THE CLAIM AREA

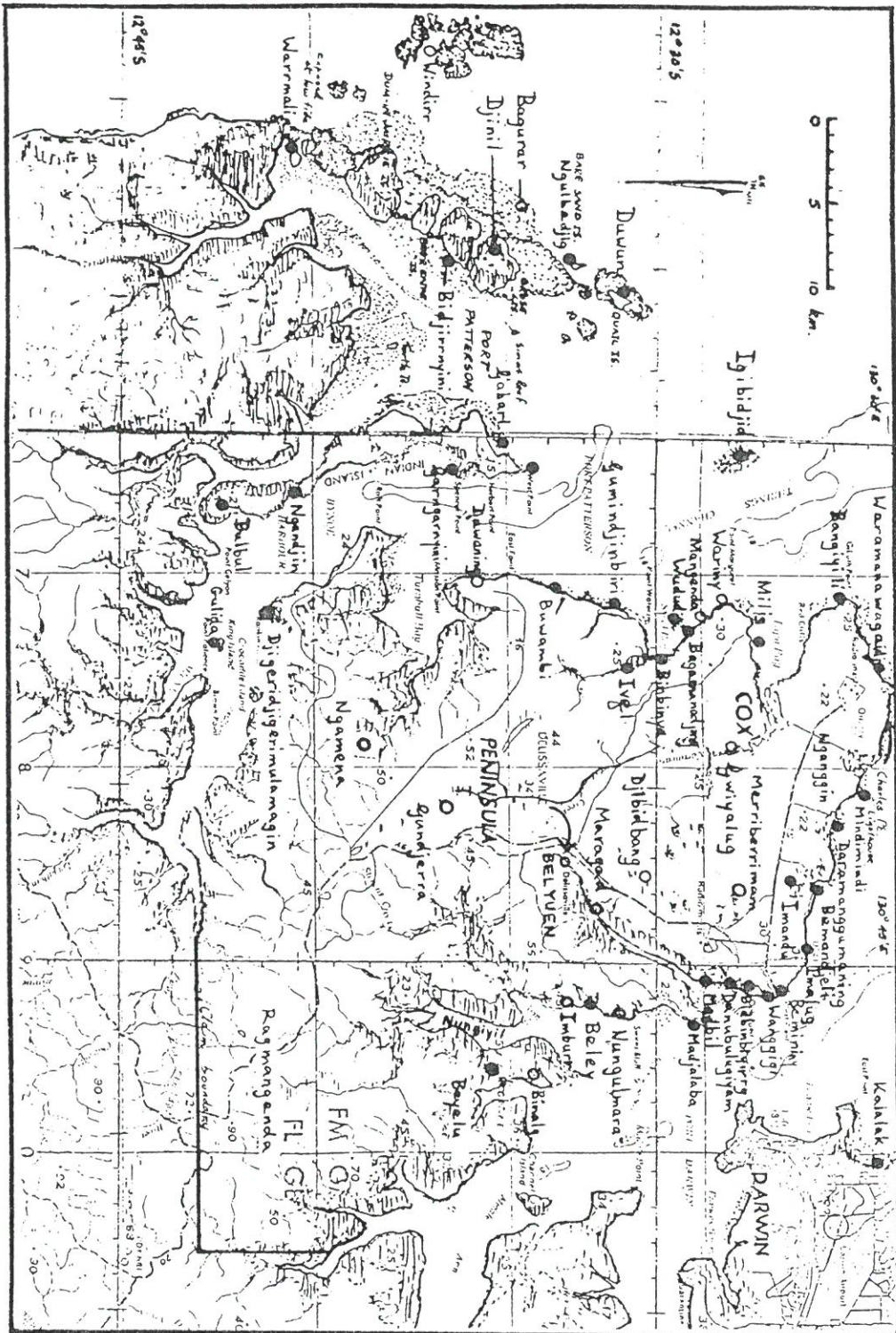
Maps indicating the position of these have been prepared and will be available as evidence.

It is worth noting here the close correspondence between the names we were given in 1979 and those collected by Basedow about 1905 (Basedow 1905) presumably on his trip down the coast reported in Basedow (1906). He lists the following:

Cox Peninsula

Bangambillily  
 Dannyarrimuk  
 Mandal'abba  
 Balurrié  
 Bamminjelli  
 Damulma  
 Barramongl Point  
 Milik  
 Pongelli  
 Marmurre  
 D'abbell'uppa  
 Bagamangajing  
 Minjilet  
 Kommangamurrek  
 Bommijinbirri Point  
 B'ormbi  
 Ngallm'orrem'orre  
 Dawaning  
 Kumbumbu  
 Bangalb'onji  
 Burrilk  
Indian Island  
 M'eló Beach  
 Gundeyn Point  
 Babelb'uk Billabong  
 Koborl  
 Tapulpullu Point  
 Ngumbarrengēt Point





Location of some named sites around the claim area.  
• location definite  
● location approximate