1. **Thesis Topic**

This thesis is an archaeological study focused on identifying the gender of the anthropomorphic motifs depicted in the rock art assemblage of the northwest Kimberley region of Australia.

1.1 *Introduction – What is sex? What is gender?*

The terms ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ are often thought to be of the same essence. The purpose of this chapter is to make the difference between the two terms clear and to explain their respective significance to the study of rock art. In brief, ‘sex’ refers to the biological differences: physicality – hormonal profiles, chromosomes and their consequence for the human body i.e. internal and external sex organs and development of hair and muscle. In contrast, ‘gender’ describes the characteristics that a particular society or culture allocates as masculine or feminine, so while in every culture your sex as male or female is a biological fact, what your sex means in terms of your gender role as a ‘man’ or a ‘woman’ in society can be quite different cross culturally (Gross 1992:334-5).

A ‘real man’ or ‘real woman’, therefore, requires male or female sex *plus* characteristics and behaviours ascribed by a particular culture as appropriate to those sexes. The resultant ‘gender roles’ have an effect on the individual’s societal position, their access to resources, their power of production and on their health (Hays-Gilpin 2009:336).

Still, there is debate as to the worth of the term ‘gender’ when it is so closely related to the sex of an individual (Laqueur 1992). Nonetheless, it is clear that characteristics and behaviours of gender are ascribed dissimilarly across cultures to individuals physically marked as male, female and, more rarely to the intersexed. These issues are expanded and the benefits to this study of adopting the terms ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ are discussed in the following section.

1.2 *Sex*

*The ‘one sex model’ described woman as a lesser version of man, in whom a lack of ‘vital heat’ caused her to retain inside her body structures that in men would have been on the outside: women are but men turned outside in. Sex is a motivated invention, born, if you like, of gender (Laquerur1990:243).*
Laqueur reminds us that ‘sex’ is a concept that did not exist in pre-Enlightenment Europe, before about 1800. Male and female bodies were thought to contain the very same organs but in different locations. Bodies were able to change ‘sex’ in extraordinary ways through organ mutability attributed to ‘a hierarchy of heat and perfection’. For example, men associating too much with women ‘lost the more perfect hardness of their bodies and regressed towards effeminacy’ and girls might become boys if their organs came to be external (Laqueur 1992). What emerged, after Enlightenment, is the notion of a fundamental polarity between the sexes based upon discoverable biological differences, and this is familiar to us today.

Biological differences are made up of primary and secondary sexual features. The sex of a person is generally determined by the physicality of that individual: their anatomy and physiology. The ‘differential distribution of sexual indicates such as penises, vaginas, uteruses, lactation, semen, menstruation, pregnancy, upper body strength, and the ability to sexually penetrate or be penetrated’ are recognised by most cultures ((Hays-Gilpin 2009:336). The sexual organs are distinctive in human males and females and it follows that their corresponding roles in biological reproduction are also specific. Of course this dichotomy of biological attributes is not as clearly defined in some individuals as the definitive model of each sex would demand. Nature is diverse and variation in physicality is to be expected. An extreme variant is observed in the occurrence of intersexed individuals (hermaphrodites and variants of the condition), who display both male and female sexual characteristics. It is, however, a rare occurrence in humans and is usually associated with infertility (Mealey 2000:167).

Secondary sexual characteristics, determined by the differing levels of oestrogen and testosterone produced by female and male bodies, include the distribution of fatty tissue, musculature and hair (Tanner 1992:98-105). These characteristics develop and are more noticeable at puberty and beyond. For example, ‘gynoid’ or ‘pear shape’ is the term used for fat distribution occurring mainly in the belly, hip and thigh area and is usually associated with the shape of women’s bodies, while men are linked with upper body strength and slim hips or ‘android’ shape. In reality though, the body shape of individuals is varied with a great deal of overlap between the sexes (Gross 1992:202-207).

Furthermore, there is variation in expression of primary and secondary sexual features. An anomalous condition in Aboriginal women, after childbearing and at the cessation of
the monthly menstrual cycle, is their tendency to develop facial hair or whiskers, while Aboriginal men lose body hair, experience retraction of testicles and enlargement of breasts. Both sexes change in body shape, becoming more androgynous physically (Bell 1998:100-1). This change is paralleled by a change in their social position with women being respected in positions of ‘Law’ alongside men.

Not only is the shape of the body considered of importance between the sexes, but so is the height and body mass. Sexual dimorphism, although moderate in Homo sapiens, is a feature of sexual difference, with males being generally larger by approximately 8% than females (Byers 2005:182).

1.3 Gender

Work is gender coded, and men who do women’s work, or women who do men’s, may find themselves ridiculed. A Mehinaku man who must fetch water (a woman’s job) may do so after nightfall so he will not be seen. (Gregor, T. cited in Gross 1992:349)

Unlike the biological concept of sex, gender is a social construct that is fluid and based in culture. Increasingly the term ‘gender’ has been used to distinguish the socially constructed roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours, values, relative power and influence that society ascribes to the two sexes on a differential basis – it is an acquired identity that is learned and changes over time (Glossary of Gender-related Terms 2002).

Theoretical approaches to gender archaeology have developed in line with our understanding of the social constructs placed on the biological body. Initially it was thought that there was a strict division between male and female sex/gender roles, which was closely related to the biological being, but this dichotomous outlook has shifted as the plasticity of the roles negotiated by human individuals has been recognised (Gero and Conkey 1991, Balme and Beck 1995, Moi 2005, Harrison 2006).

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the much quoted Austrian psychiatrist and founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud (cited in Harris 1987:330), advocated that the anatomical characteristics and reproductive roles of males and females predestine men and women to have fundamentally different personalities and therefore different social roles: men to be more “masculine” (active, aggressive, and violent) and women to be more “feminine” (passive, meek, and peaceful). From this he promoted a view that
the roles performed by the two sexes in society would suite these personalities i.e. man the aggressor/hunter/protector and woman the passive/gatherer/nurturer. Essentially the premise was that the roles performed by either sex were biologically determined. Subsequently, this view was challenged by cultural anthropologists, for instance, Margaret Mead (1935) who reported on her findings from the study of three culturally distinct but neighbouring groups in New Guinea.

Mead recounted that among the Tchambuli ‘we found a genuine reversal of the sex attitudes of our own culture, with the woman the dominant, impersonal, managing partner, the man the less responsible and the emotionally dependent person’ (Mead 1935:259). She deduced that personalities of the two sexes are socially produced and that this is a ‘two edged sword that can be used to hew a more flexible, more varied society … or merely to cut a narrow path down which one sex or both sexes will be forced to march, regimented, looking neither to the right nor to the left’ (Mead 1935:281).

This concept of sex roles not being biologically anchored was adopted by feminists to argue against the ‘biology is destiny’ track and the new term ‘gender’ was applied as a way of referring to the social organisation of the relationship between the sexes (Wylie 1993). Later, Mead was accused of being too subjective in her reporting, by Errington & Gewertz (1975) who suggested that she misinterpreted the Chambri (Tchambuli) situation: the women neither dominate Chambri men, nor vice versa. The relevant points learned here, though, are that male dominance is not inevitable or always biologically grounded and that environment and social variance may also play a part in the roles ascribed to a sex.

To what extent certain recurrent personality traits express human nature, or the effects of cultural conditioning are still debated. Marvin Harris (1987:126) observed that ‘in most hunting and simple agricultural economies, men hunt large animals, fish, collect honey, burn and clear forest, and craft wood, stone and metals’ while ‘women and children collect shellfish, plants, small animals; they weed, harvest, and process grains and tubers, spin and weave and make pottery and baskets’. The new feminist reporting disagrees with this view and has undertaken an extensive reworking of the data to redress some of the perceived androcentric conclusions inherent in previous male dominated investigations (Wylie 1991 & 1993). This allows the concept of ‘gender’ as a means to address the potential discrepancy between an individual’s anatomy and attribution of identity. Despite the ability to find data of diverse and fluid gender roles for the sexes,
the notion that ‘gender in some sense elaborates on, or builds on, sex, and that sex is a given, seems to obey a compelling logic’ (Harrison 2006). The idea that sex is a given and more real than gender, though, is debatable. Harrison plainly sees ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ as entities in their own right.

Hays-Gilpin (2009:336) expands the meaning of gender beyond the general description of ‘social values inscribed on sex’. She describes gender as a ‘universal structuring process, but with no gender universals’. The content, expressions and functions of gender can vary and change slowly or rapidly within cultures. The varying sexual actors – male, female, neuter and variations of these – negotiate the control of resources, production and reproduction. The amount of control negotiated between the categories invariably depends on other social structures such as age and knowledge. Gender is described by Hays-Gilpin as relational, ‘everyone is gendered for someone’, perhaps not to the same extent or in the same way, but nevertheless cultural actors may be socially obligated to another in some way – unless of course they are outside society as in the case of children until they are gendered by society.

Similarly, Sorensen (2000:53) views gender as ‘not being exclusively about women and men, but it is about their relationships in terms of dynamic and negotiable difference’. It is a basic aspect of the way in which societies organise themselves and of how individuals understand themselves. Neither is the sex/gender system in any given culture necessarily the single most significant determinant of status or power: ‘one community may think about all its members on the bases of their contribution to production, while another may evaluate women through notions of reproduction but divide men according to their political power’ (Sorensen 2000:141).

A rejection of the biological determinism that is implicit in many models of sex role differentiation is advocated by Gero and Conkey (1991:8-23). They maintain that by creating a division between men and women we set up a situation where we ‘measure endless variations’ on the ‘unchanging theme of fixed gender inequality’. Instead, they suggest that gender should be viewed as a ‘constitutive element of human social relations, based on culturally preserved and culturally inscribed differences and similarities between and among males and females’ (Gero & Conkey 1991:8). As a structuring principle, gender has the power to institute, establish and enact social relations and beliefs within a society and over time. By removing the biological determinism, Gero and Conkey (1991) appear to be clearing the way for an unbiased view of gender.
relations, conflicts, statuses, and roles in history and pre-history; to frame an ‘archaeology of gender’, to reclaim women and men in a non-sexist way.

Rosemary Joyce (1996:167-298) suggests ‘gender complementarity’, as an alternative to gender opposition, and proposes ‘sexual interdependence between male and female actors in the social scene and between principles of maleness and femaleness in ideology’. For example, rather than ‘negotiation’, this view promotes the ‘cooperation’ of male and female as a unity producing culture, counter-posed to an unmarried person as non-cultural. Therefore, culture is based on duality of the sexes, and contrasted with what has remained single when it should be paired (Wright 1996:180-1). It is a gender dichotomy subsumed in a single encompassing being rather than the assumption of the individual as a natural analytic unit. In this view gender is a culturally constructed set of categories which have some connection to sex differences (Joyce 1996:168).

1.4 Discussion

Over time the terms ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ have taken on diverse meanings ranging from being one and the same entity in the dichotomous male/female structure, through being of diverse variance of physical state and social negotiation, to the duality of the sexes to form a unified being, inclusive and complementary in nature. This evolving deliberation has resulted in varied interpretations of the two terms being advanced and it would appear that much of the debate is socially or politically motivated. In early studies, Freud (cited in Harris 1987) understood that sex was the determinant of feminine or masculine psychological traits. Later, Mead’s (1935) studies in New Guinea suggested that women were psychologically capable of the dominant role in their society. Development from these beginnings promoted the understanding that the biological and social aspects of a person were both diverse and complex cross-culturally. Gendered states were seen to be constructed, by society and the individual, on the basis of a physical sexual being. For example, Joyce’s (1996) mindfulness of the ‘sexual interdependence’ in ideology and social expression, the complementary relationship of cooperation between maleness and femaleness, is very much a part of the ethnographical data of the area under study (Bell 1998, Kaberry 1939). This is reflected in the belief of the Ngarinyin from the northwest Kimberley, that the primary unit of life and existence is relationship; it is the complementary and cooperative input of two separate but joined parts – male and female (Bell 1998:21-2).
It would follow then, that both the actual human body and human representations in rock art, are ideologically coded. Although she accepts that ‘sexed’ figures can be identified by culturally specific gendered attributes such as ‘hairstyles or body shape’, Hays-Gilpin (2004:62) does not maintain that prehistoric rock art encodes various ‘fundamental, original, essential, or primitive notions about sex and gender, (ranging) from eroticism to a primordial Great Goddess’. Her advice is to take a multi-faceted approach to defining gender by considering the rock art in conjunction with stone and other artefacts, ethnography and mythology to arrive at a well-informed interpretation. It is the viewing of ‘the social construction of human bodies as a process over time and in different contexts’ that can deliver information of ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ changes through time and space. For the purpose of this thesis there is an acceptance of both, the body as a biological reality (sexual) and as a social (gendered) construction (Hays-Gilpin 2004:41). Hence, gender is viewed as an abstract concept, not as biological duality of male/female but as a term used to encompass features which are cultural keys for gendered states such as masculine, feminine or other (Gross 1992:344-7). It is this approach that will be adopted in my analysis of the human-like (anthropomorphic) motifs in the Kimberley rock art.

1.5 Aims and Objectives

My aim firstly is to familiarise the reader with the complex and highly developed Aboriginal culture of the Kimberley and with the changing attitudes of Western scholarship associated with the gendered roles of its individuals. Secondly, I describe the nature of art within the social and environmental context – its spatial distribution in the environment, its changing focus and style suggesting its shifting social significance as a vibrant cultural change through time. Attention will be concentrated on isolating iconographic keys to sex anthropomorphic motifs without primary sexing features of genitalia and mammae. Such iconographic keys include body shape and dimorphism, headdress status, material accoutrements and weapon association. By sexing the unsexed/neutral anthropomorphic motifs and examining their gendered relational aspects, it is anticipated that an understanding of the rock art as a system of meaning will be achieved.
1.6 Thesis Questions

The questions addressed by this thesis are:

Can sex and gender be determined for anthropomorphic figures in the absence of sexual characteristics?

If so, what are the iconographic keys that determine the sex and the gender of an anthropomorphic motif?

Does differing sexual emphasis in different stylistic phases of rock art provide a means to identify changing social foci within a culture over time?
2. Gender as an Enlightening Entity

2.1 Introduction – Women Missing or Marginalised in the Literature

The study of gender has been taken on a new trajectory over the last few decades since feminists became interested in the way in which anthropology and archaeology were conducted and reported and they started to look for the ‘women’ in the literature of prehistory. Many felt that women were missing or marginalised in the recorded data and they began to rework the established findings (Drew 2006, Gero & Conkey 1991, Hays-Gilpin & Whitley 1998). What they found was endemic stereotyping resulting in gender-exclusive (usually male only) rather than gender-inclusive (male, female and other) reporting of prehistoric human behaviour. The prevailing focus was on the male of the species with all other actors being invisible or marginal to his roles and activities, which were considered essential to the survival of the society. This sprang from the common belief that there was a rigid sexual division of labour with gender roles aligned to the biological aspect of an individual, men being physically stronger and of greater intellect and skill (Malinowski 1913, Levi-Strauss 1936). There are numerous examples of bias with the universal acceptance of men being hunters and fighters and women being gatherers and nurturers. Additionally, food production was thought to be significantly male provisioned and this is expressed in the reporting of the general literature and in the analysis of gender relations. Elkin (1938) was one of the first to recognise the societal constraints for men associated with the collection of data concerning Aboriginal women’s ‘business’. Advances in theory have occurred with enlightened recognition of the diverse gendered roles evident in many pre-historic societies.

2.2 Traditional Archaeological Theory – Androcentrism and Eurocentrism

Androcentrism and Eurocentrism lurk behind a great deal of archaeological theory, and this means that the social life of prehistoric people is either reconstructed along the trajectory of our own culturally derived, implicit notions about gender, or reconstruction of the societal aspects of the culture under the microscope is not attempted. Essentially, there is a lack of archaeological theory for elucidating past human social life – including,
but not limited to, gender structures – which has persisted into the recent past. An assumption that pregnancy, lactation and childbirth inhibited women and that child care was an exclusively feminine occupation has persisted for some time.

Malinowski (1913:287-8), for example, on observing a man carrying only a spear and spear thrower accompanied by a wife or two, toiling along behind him carrying a baby and a large wooden dish of belongings, concluded that ‘woman is a drudge’ doing all of the work. Now, consideration is given to the practicality of such a tableau: a man must be unimpeded to be a successful hunter; he is under pressure to be successful or the whole family suffers. Women should not be considered to be submissive in this instance. Malinowski also considered that the gathering work of women was dull and repetitive while men’s work was exhilarating. The value of a woman’s contribution to the production of food was a long time in coming (Berndt & Berndt 1964:104). Even when gathering was acknowledged as providing the greater part of the food supply other areas of women’s lives, such as their spiritual connection and religious ceremonies, went unacknowledged (Kaberry 1939:187-268).

As a result there has been a plethora of persuasive divergence between those who promote strict adherence to ‘scientific’ canons of interpretation of collected data and those who are sceptical of such methods being free of prejudices, self-interest and the stereotypical biases of old (Trigger 1989:777). This has led to a re-examination of the way in which the data is treated and the advancement of new methods allowing more flexibility of interpretation to arrive at pragmatic realities. It has also stimulated investigation into the evolution of the brain and the suggestion that the lateralised brains of males evolved for visuospatial tasks while processing of vocal communications was selected for differentially in females (Falk 1998:115-36). This biological aspect does not mean that either sex contributed more to their development as human beings, but it may help in recognising how gender roles might have developed within hunter-gatherer groups, with females evolving strongly for mothering and teaching communication, while males favoured skills in perception and manipulation of spatial relationships. Of course overlapping of biological traits is also expected.

This phase of reviewing and reworking the largely androcentric data was essential for highlighting the fact that aspects of gender were not being taken into account and that they are essential to the structuring of past cultures. Still, we must take care not to let the pendulum swing too far the other way but let its momentum bring us back to a middle
ground. That is, it behoves us to recognise the value of previous observations made by many archaeologists and anthropologists in their attempts to structure the past, while adding a more balanced understanding of it. Hence, our focus should not be in castigating androcentrism, nor only attempting to ‘find’ the women, but to be ‘searching’ for the men, women and other in their societal roles within a given culture.

2.3 Reviewing Gender Roles in Material Remains

International research into gender roles has revealed thought-provoking data on cultural differences. The emphasis on male activities in human adaptation studies has often neglected to recognise the female’s role in prehistory. For example, Kenneth Sassaman (1998:161-171), during a re-examination of historical and archaeological data of the Hidatsa Indians of the Great Plains, found that males and females contributed very differently to the maintenance of their culture. Their tasks were diverse and often unrelated and were performed in dissimilar locations, producing different materials in varied tempo. With the change to a mainly sedentary lifestyle there was an increase in stone flakes being manufactured from convenient close-by cores and this was attributed to the women rather than to the men as had been initially expected, though the finely worked bi-faces remained an important stone tool technology for men in their hunting forays. Many if not most, of the changes associated with the trend toward increased residential stability are implicitly attributed to women. Their work load was much greater, routine and fast paced, and this was seen to initiate the need for technology which took the form of flaking stone readily available to them into implements. The men, on the other hand used a higher percentage of imported and finer grained stone for their declining bi-face technology. By re-examining archaeological debris deposited by the Hidatsa, new insights into gender roles were revealed.

Similarly, Steven Brandt (1996:733-8) found that in Ethiopia, the hide manufacturers presented varied gender ideology and roles. Each hide worker was responsible for the procurement, manufacture and discard of the flaked and hafted scrapers they used in the production of the hides. Of the three societies studied, the gender of the workers was different. In the Gamo society only the men were involved in hide manufacture, while the Konso hide workers were nearly exclusively women (32 female to 1 male) and the Wolayta sanctioned men, women and children in this role. Therefore, the gendered roles were diversely, socially influenced in each group. Women were considered to be capable
of flaking technology and it was accepted as women’s work in the Konso society, while the Gamo considered it a man’s job as women were not strong enough to scrape hides and the Wolayta accepted the work as ungendered.

Although hide working was considered a low-status occupation in southern Ethiopia, this was not so for the work of Aztec women in Mexico. Weaving and cooking in Mesoamerica were considered noble occupations and, if competent, women could advance their men’s claims to positions of status and power thus improving their own status. Elizabeth Brumfield (1991:224-51) uncovered a broader understanding of the demographic, economic and political structures by way of mythology, symbolism and artefacts. In prehistory and in state development the complicated, enculturated “Mother Goddess” belief system allowed Mexican women to respond to the constraints and opportunities of economic, social and political challenges with new strategies. They gained prestige by supporting men to achieve positions of higher rank; they incorporated symbolic gender iconography into pottery and weaving to uphold their social standing as producers and reproducers and they were flexible, adaptive and dynamic contributors in technology, society and politics.

Similarly, Agta women in the Philippines are not excluded from hunting wild pig, deer and monkey using bows and arrows as men do, and they utilise dogs to a greater extent than men. Women also make their own arrows, while the actual blacksmithing of the metal projectile points is performed by males (Estioko-Griffin & Griffin 1981). The tasks of the Agta men and women are not identical but there is only a modest sexual division of labour.

Australian research has also identified patterns in material remains that suggest gendered roles at varied sites. At Anbangbang 1, an outlier shelter in northwest Arnhem Land, there is a significant cache of well-preserved artefacts. It is suggested by Jones and Johnston (1985) that the large quartzite leilira blades recovered from the site were used by local women as knives as they were in the Central Desert. In the Central Desert region they differ from men’s knives with considerable modification on the margins and distal end (Mulvaney 1969:69-70). Axes at Anbangbang 1 are similarly assigned as women’s tools for the purpose of food preparation and in the creation of secondary tools such as digging sticks. The woven dilly bag remains are ethnographically known to have been created by women. Although it is difficult to state categorically who made and used the tools, woven string, goose spears, grinding slabs and so forth, the frequency of plant and
animal (turtles, crocodile eggs, goannas and freshwater mussels) remains deposited in conjunction with these items indicate that women’s activities were significant at this site (Jones and Johnston 1985:39-76).

2.4 Reviewing Sex and Gender in Rock Art

No such caches have yet been analysed in the northwest Kimberley, but gender studies in general demonstrate that we should rethink what has been widely accepted as the norm for the groups who peopled this area. To its advantage, the area affords a great resource in the prolific and varied rock art images available for investigation. There is evidence of technological and social change recorded in the art assemblage, through time and across space (Morwood 2002, Walsh 2000). A review of rock art from other areas, both national and international, has revealed different levels of focus on anthropomorphic figures and varied style and context for the individual motifs. Schematic and thematic similarities and differences in inter- and intra-regional situations suggest that varied motives directed the production of rock art.

Patricia Vinnicombe (1976) in her description of the art of the Drakensberg Bushmen from South Africa reported that amongst sexually distinct human figures 9% are male and 2% are female from a total of 4,500 anthropomorphic motifs examined. The secondary features of steatopygia, steatomeria and lumbar lordosis added 8% to the female count, bringing it into line with the male percentage. Yet if culturally accepted artefacts such as male hunting gear (bow 494, arrows 1414, quiver 340, assegai 142, shield 27) and relatively rare, by comparison, weighted digging sticks (47) are added to the mix, the data reflects a distinctly male bias. Children are sometimes shown with their mothers but not to the extent that would be expected in real terms. Vinnicombe saw this as evidence that men, presumed to be the predominant painters, valued women for their roles in providing food and music more than for mothering. To her, this indicated that cultural activities were more important than reproduction (Vinnicombe 1976:250).

The bar and double bar across the penis is thought to be symbolic of hunting practice taboos of San Bushman culture rather than decorative, and males displaying this device also carry hunting equipment. The passing of urine and the practice of intercourse by the hunter was said to weaken the strength of the poison he had shot into an animal and it would not die (Vinnicombe 1976:259). Many of the accoutrements associated with the figures can be explained ethnographically, but there is symbolic representation to some
degree and a literal depiction should not be presumed. Vinnicombe found that only 1% of the artefacts depicted are weighted digging sticks and this may indicate that hunting and meat enjoyed greater esteem. The detail with which these implements are painted replicates the real tool in that they often show the bored stone being supported by a wedge to stop it from slipping along the shaft. Men are reported to have helped digging when hunting was poor, but did not use the stones (Vinnicombe 1976:277). The detailed examination of the data and the reference to known customs and gender roles of this group of people highlight the fact that ‘art does not imitate life’ in all instances such as the ratio of men, women and children. Yet there is significant precision in body type, dress and artefacts to enable conclusions to be advanced for gender roles and status. The qualitative and quantitative analysis employed by Vinnicombe is highly relevant to the methods selected for my study.

There appears to be an African, if not a worldwide trend, for a large proportion of anthropomorphs depicted in rock art assemblages not to be marked biologically by sex or implements to reveal gender. Tilman Lenssen-Erz (1998) questions the male/female dichotomy insisted on by so many researchers. His study focuses on the gender-related patterns of activity depicted in the rock paintings of the Brandberg in Namibia. Of nearly 9,000 figures, he found 7,268 ungendered humans, 1,044 men and 655 women. He proposes a third entity of ‘adult’ for the ungendered or ‘zero-marked humans’. He equates the latter group to the ‘Nlao people’ of San ethnography who are the ‘strong generation’ capable of intervening when things go wrong to keep society running smoothly. Analysis of the three domains (humans, men and women) revealed patterns of activity, group size, context of action and sphere of the concept (position in the culture) that defined each one. By this means he proposed that the human image was an ‘emblem for community, equality and mobility’ and not the average of men and women, nor the mollification of the conflicting male and female, but a thing of its own.

Lenssen-Erz’s argument that the anthropomorphic motifs are, in the main intended to be neutral differs significantly to that of Vinnicombe, but his analytical framework differs only in that he observes body motion and motif relationship as additional keys. His hypotheses and conclusions contrast to those of Vinnicombe but his method is similarly qualitative and quantitative and this is relevant for my study.

Gender studies in Australia are uncommon and gender studies in rock art are rare. Still, Julie Drew reviewed data from five regions in Australia to redress the perceived
imbalance in reporting of ‘female’ motifs. Drew’s sample was taken from the published recordings of rock art of the Victoria River (Wardaman), Kakadu, Cobar, Sydney and Cape York regions. Drew stated that these earlier studies claimed, quite unjustifiably, that ungendered figures were male (Drew 2006:105). Additionally, she noted that some motifs were labeled ‘dancers’ or ‘human births’ when they should have been categorised as ‘female’ (Drew 2006:110). Her research demonstrated that there is a balance of men and women depicted in the rock art of the three northern regions. This was not the case for the mid-western part of New South Wales that shows a predominance of neutral human depictions, suggesting to Drew that sexual identification was not always an important aspect for each region. She observed in the Cape York region that female figures are often ‘present as larger decorated figures in the center of the composition’ while Sydney sandstone rock art motifs displayed female motifs beneath the arm of a male in a protective manner (Drew 2006:111-2). Drew concludes the rock art was variously motivated by mythology, sexual education, male dominance and social status. Results of her study reveal that Wardaman, Kakadu and Cape York figures are near equally divided into male, female and neutral with Cobar returning significantly more neutral anthropomorphs, and Sydney/Hawkesbury biased to males (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Percentage ratios of Male/Female/Neutral/Incomplete human motif depictions within five regional areas of Australia derived from graphs by Drew (2006:106)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Males %</th>
<th>Females %</th>
<th>Neutral %</th>
<th>Incomplete %</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wardaman, West N.T.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kakadu, Central N.T.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobar, West N.S.W.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney/Hawkesbury, N.S.W.</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape York, North Qld.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In drawing her sample from the studies of previous researchers, Drew’s study is vulnerable to recording bias. Nevertheless, her observation of obvious discrepancies in reporting of sexed figures is constructive. The regional differences portrayed by the artists suggest that there was considerable variation in the expression of sex and gender in rock art assemblages across Australia. Yet, she fails to consider chronological structure in this study, thus neglecting essential information concerning temporal variability for each of the regions. Still, Drew’s comparison across Australia demonstrates the variability in sexing characteristics specific to one or other sex and illustrates the breadth of features that need to be adopted in this thesis.
Similarly McDonald (2012) explored different gender dynamics of the anthropomorphic motifs of two environmentally disparate regions of Australia. The fertile coastal region of Sydney in New South Wales supported a high population density, while the Dampier Archipelago in the Pilbara region of Western Australia was heavily populated only on a seasonal basis when resources were plentiful and aggregation sites were visited.

McDonald believes:

...that varying levels of stylistic heterogeneity can provide social information at different scales (family, local, and regional). By making assumptions about the type of site in which rock art is produced (i.e. in an open or closed social context) we can infer the gender-mix of rock art audiences. Style is seen as defining and reinforcing social constructs, while information exchange seeks to explain the behavior underlying stylistic patterning. Gender is relevant if we can assume that some social contexts will be defined by the presence or absence of one or other gender. (McDonald 2012:225)

The art of the two regions was shown to differ in schematic design and thematic purpose and McDonald (2012) states that this reflects the disparate nature of the social networks and the social contexts of production. She proposed that both the painted and engraved art assemblages of Sydney region reflected a social purpose of cohesion at inter-group and intra-group levels. The Pilbara, on the other hand, sponsored a rock art engraving system developed from an aggregation context where large groups gathered when a favorable season permitted. The ratio of sexed anthropomorphic motifs is heavily skewed to males especially in the engraved art. Male:female ratio for the Pilbara is 8:1 and for Sydney 5:1. The pigment art of the Sydney region is a little less slanted with about one in three anthropomorphic figures being marked as female.

McDonald (2012) reported that in Sydney engraved art most male/female couples are depicted with gender specific material culture – women with dilly bags and men with boomerangs. Additionally, these couples show female motifs are consistently dimorphically shorter than male motifs. Bisexuality is portrayed in only one engraved culture hero motif. She argued that, by combining ethnographic information from the time of European contact with data from archaeological remains and analysis of the styles of the engraved and pigment depictions from the Sydney region, a clear indication of the bounding intent of the dual system of art is evident.

In the Pilbara more than half of the total assemblage depicts anthropomorphic motifs but there is significant regional difference with percentages in the four regions investigated
ranging from 83% to 1% (Table 2.1). Unfortunately, McDonald (2012:214-36) does not give a breakdown of the numbers of sexed figures for each of these areas. However, some of the data concerning the general area is relevant.

- Females in coitus with males is relatively common
- Pregnant women and women with genital discharge occur
- 63% of males, 20% of lizard men and only 2 females are associated with material items
- Grouped figures show personal intimacy and formulated, structured, group activities such as dance, corroboree, organised hunting activities and games

McDonald states that the different styles of rock art in the eastern and western regions of Australia demonstrate the ‘nature of social networks and the social contexts of production’. In the west there was an ‘aggregation’ or ‘bringing together’ stimulus for the production of the rock art, while in the east, the intention was ‘cohesion’ or ‘large-scale and localised group identifying behaviour’ (McDonald 2012:223). While the rock art context and motif association are taken into account by McDonald, lack of available chronological data means that changing gender roles are not considered. Nevertheless, her assessment of the social purpose of the rock art and her detailed observations of the sexed motifs make this research pertinent to the current thesis.

### 2.5 Artist’s Perception

When viewing anthropomorphic motifs, consideration must be given to what the artist perceived as the ‘ideal’ of a male, female or other. What a culture perceives as ideal, the status it bestows on the individual and records in the rock art is arbitrary and may differ greatly from the identities and the gender roles that are experienced in the everyday lives of the people. Walsh (2000:229), for example, believed that ‘Bradshaw figures were intended to represent mortals. Their partially stylised form presents an idealised image of adult males, not intended as a true physical appearance, but representing the image that males would have liked to present’. This is also reflected in Vinnicombe’s (1976:277) comments on the improbable ratio of men, women and children depicted in the Drakensberg rock art.
2.6 Discussion

The preceding review of research on different continents shows that there is a good deal of variation in gender roles and in the value put on the modes of production for both food and material items. It is evident that the Great Plains Indians altered their gendered roles when the economic base changed (Sassaman 1998), the gender of Ethiopian hide manufacturers varied between groups (Brandt 1996), and in the Philippines Agta women were not only active in hunting the types of animals their men pursued but also used the same equipment (Estioko-Griffin & Griffin 1981). Therefore, it is suggested that the human figures recorded in the rock art of the northwest Kimberley that form the basis of this study should not automatically be presumed to be male, if for example they are carrying weapons, as suggested by Walsh (2000:231). Other diagnostic features should also be taken into account. Additionally, it is argued that the figures in rock art are not necessarily a true representation of what was happening at any one time in a culture (Vinnicombe 1976, Walsh 2000). It could be that the modes of production performed by men or women, or indeed men or women themselves, were not held in high regard. The paucity of women and children in rock art assemblages is considered by both Vinnicombe and Walsh to be culturally influenced.

Alternatively, Tilman Lenssen-Erz (1998) suggests that the majority of the human figures are depictions of adults that are meant to be ungendered. It would appear that this may be the case for some forms of art, for example, the groups of stick figures (Figs 2.1-2) that are evident in northwest Kimberley rock art but this is not necessarily so for the majority of ungendered figures.

It would seem therefore, that attributing social and economic value to the figures in the rock art of the northwest Kimberley requires a close examination of each figure both in isolation and in relation to those around it. Patricia Vinnicombe’s (1976) work was conducted in this way and she suggests that body shape and the tool/weapon association are important in sexing figures. Grahame Walsh (2000:230) agrees with this but also argues that ‘artists developed a range of iconographic elements which singularly or in various combinations unequivocally convey gender identification’. Engendering motifs allows observation of anthropomorphic figure association within group scenes and of the circumstance intended, for example, mythology, sexual education, male dominance and social stature.
In general, gender studies have revealed great variation in the roles negotiated by people in different hunter-gatherer and early sedentary cultures. The roles of age, reproductive status, task distribution, hierarchy, and other factors in the creation of gender categories are considered. Increasingly it appears that women were innovators, playing a significant part in food procurement and the development of technology. Even if in some cases women did not make and use stone tools, it is unrealistic to assume they were not active participants in the decisions to manufacture, use and discard men’s technology.

2.7 Thesis Layout

Chapter 2 discusses the evolution of archaeological theory and reporting in literature on gender studies. Reviewing this literature provides new insights into gender roles and how
they are negotiated. Additionally, studies of international and Australian rock art are appraised to identify features and keys that may indicate depictions of ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ in anthropomorphic motifs. While being aware that an artist’s perception of their world and what is important in it vary, consideration is given to ways in which these keys and features may be applied.

Chapter 3 introduces the concepts of ethnology, ethnoarchaeology and analogy in relation to data collected in the Kimberley region since contact times. Discussion of how these data can be used to enhance interpretation of the rock art from this region is given.

Chapter 4 analyses the research area and places the rock art in an environmental context. Further, the influences of Macassan trade and the impact of European contact on Aboriginal culture are touched on.

Chapter 5 presents a précis of previous studies of Kimberley rock art. Although there have not been any studies focused on sexing the anthropomorphic motifs, some assumptions have been advanced by previous rock art researchers. Additionally, the changing styles of northwest Kimberley art are described and placed in relative stylistic order.

Chapter 6 analyses the methods of investigation used by other archaeologists and enthusiasts in their endeavour to give meaning to the anthropomorphic motifs in the rock art assemblage. The rationale for selecting methods adopted in this thesis is discussed and a description of the features selected for analyses is given.

Chapter 7 presents the results of the analyses. Comprehensive results from a percentile and averaging analysis of the key characteristics and features of sexed anthropomorphic motifs are presented and the complexity of interrelationships between these is established. Results of a comparison between the key characteristics of both sexes in each of the three stylistic phases, and the unsexed figures, are presented. The chapter concludes with a summary of the relevant results.

Chapter 8 discusses the results of the analysis in each of the three stylistic groups and compares these with hypotheses developed from ethnographic data. The value of northwest Kimberley rock art as a dataset to illuminate changing gender roles in the region is considered. Results are placed in the current framework of Australian rock art research and gender studies worldwide. Issues that remain unresolved within this research are outlined and directions for future research are suggested.
3. The Research Area

3.1 Introduction

My initial interest in the rock art of the northwest Kimberley was aroused while living on a cattle station in the region from 1990 to 1995. A regular annual visitor to the station was Grahame Walsh who invited me to participate in recording the assemblages on a regular basis during these visits and on later trips with his team in 2006-8. The cattle station was situated to the southeast and adjoined the study area on two boundaries.

The Change and Continuity: archaeology, chronology and art in the Northwest Kimberley, Australia is a three year Australian Research Council (ARC) archaeological project undertaken in partnership with the Kandiwal Aboriginal Corporation, the Kimberley Foundation Australia, the Western Australian Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC), facilitated by the late Professor Mike Morwood (University of Wollongong), Dr June Ross (University of New England), and Dr Kira Westerway (Macquarie University). Access to the study area during the field trips was achieved by a two hour, light aircraft, flight from Kununurra in the east Kimberley to the Mitchell Plateau. From this base, helicopters were used to transport team members, food and basic needs to various base camps during the field trips of 2010, 2012 and 2013. Rock art recording was a significant part of the multi-disciplinary field work undertaken. Excavation, sampling required for various dating techniques, the study of streams in ecological relevance to human populations and core sampling of swamps were also carried out. The participation of Traditional Owners from the Wunggurr-Ngauwudu people based at Kandiwal and the Wunambal-Gaambera from Kalumburu was invaluable in sharing of knowledge and providing assistance during field work.

3.2 General Description of Location

Western Australia, covering approximately one third of Australia’s land mass, is divided into regions of which the most northern is the Kimberley. The geographic remoteness of the region, bordered by the Indian Ocean in the north and west and the Great Sandy and Tanami deserts to the south and east, meant that European settlement was slow in coming to the area, yet its first inhabitants have occupied this region for millennia (O’Connor & Fankhauser 2001).
The research area is highlighted in yellow and situated between the King Edward and Mitchell Rivers (Dick Smith, 1990, courtesy of Australian Geographic)

The research was undertaken in a portion of the northwestern Kimberley, a sparsely settled area bounded by the Carson Escarpment to the east, the Indian Ocean to the west, the Timor Sea to the north and the King Leopold Ranges to the south (Fig 3.1). The research area extends from the Mitchell plateau to the Timor Sea and between the King Edward and Mitchell Rivers. The Mitchell plateau airstrip has become a service depot for tourists, conservationists, Traditional Owners and other interested groups such as bushwalkers and rock art enthusiasts. Dominating the area at an elevation of 850 metres, the plateau is composed of laterites, containing bauxite, formed by the weathering and leaching of decomposed basalt (Tyler 1996). It supports a forest of Mitchell Palms (Livistona eastonii) interspersed with large eucalyptus trees and an understory of shrubs like the Kimberley Christmas Tree (Grevillea Pteridifolia) and spear grasses (Heteropogon contortus) (Petheram & Kok 1986). From the plateau, access to the Lawley
and Mitchell Rivers drainage basins is achieved by helicopter or bush walking as there are no serviced roads and few navigable tracks.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 3-2** Crystal clear water flows from the plateau complex to form rock holes as oases of beauty and tranquility, on its journey to the sea through the harsh and rugged country

Flying north from the plateau, the forest of Mitchell Palms thins along the rough volcanic plateau and the country falls away in a jumble of rugged outcrops and tumbled sandstone gorges interspersed with small patches of rainforest. The lower flats of decomposed sandstone, regularly intermixed with stony ridges and outliers, are generally lightly covered in spinifex or annual grasses, scattered eucalyptus and shrubs. Water, generated by the seasonal tropical monsoonal rains, flows from the plateau in streams, cascades and falls. Crystal clear rocks holes (Fig 3.2), shaded by paperbarks (Melaleuca) and Pandanus, create oases along these waterways, before meeting the deep green of tidal salt water among the mangrove-lined reaches of the river mouth.
The irregular coastline is made up of many and varied inlets and bays with pristine sandy beaches between the mud flats of the river deltas. The rise and fall of the tides is extreme and can reach eight metres between high and low marks when the magnetic pull of the moon and sun combine (Robert Vaughan 2011, pers. comm.). The waves are gentle here because of the dampening influence of the coastline’s convoluted shape and the presence of a plethora of varied islands (Fig3.3).

### 3.2.1 Rainfall

Watercourses, including King Edward, Lawley and Mitchell Rivers, flow from the plateau. These rivers and many smaller-order creeks continue to run, long into the ‘dry’, from seepage flats and Banksia-and Pandanus-peppered swamps that become saturated by the heavy rains during the ‘wet’. The regular daily tropical downpours bring the country to life with the settling of dust, the springing forth of grasses and the blossoming of shrubs and trees all to the chorus of frogs and birds. This seasonal deluge of thunderstorms and cyclones occurs between November and April with rainfall averages
of 950mls a year and temperature norms of 36˚ maximum and 18˚ minimum recorded at Kalumburu (BOM 2/5/2012). Even in a prolonged ‘dry’ there is always abundant water in the large rock holes and lagoons that have formed along the rivers and creek lines. It is a rare occurrence that rain falls during the lengthy ‘dry’ winter months which can extend for eight months, and the annual grasses quickly wither and die, with daytime temperatures still reaching 33 degrees and night temperatures falling to 12 degrees (BOM 2/5/2012 Kalumburu).

3.2.2 Geology

The geological formation of the Kimberley began, with large river systems depositing sand grains as a basis for sandstone and quartzite, about 1800 million years ago. Basalt lava flows (Fig 3.4) were also frequent in this ancient time. From about 250 million years ago, periods of uplift caused a flattening of the land surface but also a rendering of deeply incised rivers (Tyler 2000). In places, laterites have formed by the weathering and leaching effects of tropical conditions, on both these basalt and sandstone rocks. Lateritic basalt and red soils formed from Proterozoic volcanic flows is a feature of the Mitchell Plateau. In other areas sandstone strata, usually friable but at times silicified and hard, form the basis of the rocky ridges, large outliers and light grey or red sandy soils (Fig 3.5). This silicified sandstone or quartzite otherwise known as the King Leopold Sandstone (Wilson 1981:4) provides panels for the rock art.
3.2.3 Flora

Throughout the study area, the flora is varied and dependent on the soil types, elevation and association with riverine, marine or plateau areas (Figs 3.6-7). The river flats support larger varieties of *Eucalyptus* (Fig 3.8). The ‘buck’ or ‘old man spinifex’, with its spreading habit and sticky resin, is fairly rare but grows extensively amongst the large boulders strewn on the tops and sides of the broken ridges, making survey very difficult (Fig 3.9). Rock art occurs in these areas and a scramble is often worth the effort. It is likely that Aboriginal people in the past made good use of fire to clear their way.
Edible plants include many fruiting trees, notably the boab (*Adansonia gregorii*), wild peach (*Terminalia carpentariae*) and many varieties of fig (*Ficus racemosa, F. platypoda*). Tubers, rhizomes and corms of various plants were eaten. Additionally, *Owenia vernicosa* and Quinine (*Petalostigma pubescens*), medium sized trees often found near art shelters utilised as living spaces, have been used by Traditional Owners for medicinal purposes in the past (Karadada et al. 2011:41). The area contains numerous species of flora that have been well documented by botanists including Wilson (1981), Peterman and Kok (1986) and the Traditional Owners of the Wunambal Gaambera lands (Karadada et al. 2011).

### 3.2.4 Fauna

Many of the animals are nocturnal and are not easily seen. The mineral deficiency of the leached soil does not support great numbers of larger marsupials or emus. Reptiles (lizards, monitors, snakes and crocodiles) and birds are more prevalent around the watered areas, and small macropods and mammals, although nocturnal, are seen in the late afternoon (Fig 3.10). Frogs are abundant and set up a deafening chorus in the Wet. The tracks and scats of dingo and echidna are often visible but the animals themselves are rarely encountered. The howl of the dingo can be heard at night and the screech of cockatoo and the trumpet of the brolga punctuate the quiet of the bush during the day.

Fresh water fowl, fish (sooty grunter, cat fish) and turtles are abundant, as are the salt water resources. Oysters, shell fish and fish of many sizes (Fig 3.11) and varieties abound in the sea and were traditionally used as a food resource by Aboriginal peoples as is evidenced by the shell middens (Western Australian Museum Survey 1981).

![Figure 3-10 Agile wallaby (*Macropus agilis*)](image1)

![Figure 3-11 Tawny sharks (*Nebrius ferrugineus*)](image2)
3.3 People of the Northwest Kimberley

3.3.1 Aboriginal People

The archaeology of the Kimberley records a great depth in time for human occupation, social and economic strategies as well as changing environmental and resource availability (Balme 2000, O’Connor 1999, O’Connor & Fankhauser 2001, Ross, Morwood & Moore 2011). For over 40,000 years Aboriginal societies have developed a system of exogamous, totemic, patrilineal clan association between defined estate territories (Stanner 1965); though, at the time of contact clan members were not strictly bound to their own territories in settlement or foraging range. However, each clan area was distinct and contained galleries of cave paintings depicting its own particular founding ancestor hero and associated totemic depictions of plant and animal (Crawford 1968). These galleries served as congregation centres for ceremonies that both reinforced clan unity and validated the interdependence of the area’s exogamous marriage practices and the sharing of seasonal resources (Blundell 1975:67, Blundell & Layton 1978).

Figure 3-12 Language group areas in the northwest Kimberley study area (Tindale 1974, AA 338/19/45 Tribal Boundaries in Aboriginal Australia (cropped), courtesy of the South Australian Museum)
Importantly, languages were defined and customarily restricted by clan boundaries and are depicted in Tindale’s (1974) map (Fig 3.12). There are five language groups in the immediate vicinity - Wunambal, Wilawila, Gambere (Kambure), Worora and Ngarinjin (Capell and Coate 1984:xiii). These Kimberley languages are very different in structure to the Pama-Nyungan family of languages in the Pilbara and other areas of Western Australia. The meanings are placed on the beginning of words rather than the end, and the resultant sound systems differ greatly.

The descendants of speakers of these language groups are now generally concentrated in the Kalumburu and Mowanjum Community centres and a few more recently established homelands such as Kandiwal on the Mitchell Plateau and Marunbabidid on the Kalumburu Road. Kriol developed with this centralising of several language groups into a common area, and at the urging of missionaries for people to use English exclusively. Although there has been a concerted effort to preserve traditional Kimberley languages in recent times, it is a difficult task because of the lack of a written form and the need to participate in the dominant European culture. The spoken word is now the preserve of a few elderly people.

3.3.2 Macassan/Indonesian Contact

Contact with the outside world has inevitably occurred, to some degree, since people first occupied Australia. Prior to European settlement in the proto-historic past, it seems that people came as visitors and traders rather than permanent residents. Morwood and Hobbs (1997:197-206) excavated sites on the Kimberley coast and used ethnographic and historical evidence to assemble data on the Macassan trepang industry. They report a large scale commercial trade between the parties continuing well into European contact times. After World War II, Indonesians were seeking clam meat, fish and trochus rather than trepang, but when the Fishing Act (1952) was enacted it excluded them from the Australian Fishing Zone. By 1975, Navy patrol and aerial surveillance of the Kimberley coast was greatly increased and the industry dwindled (Morwood and Hobbs 1997:199). The Indonesian trepangers influenced the Aboriginal culture in many ways: in language, use of metal tools, adoption of the dug-out canoe, in ceremony and this is reflected in the art (Crawford 1968, Ross and Travers 2013). Little is known of human movement into, and trade with, Australia before this time (but see Ross and Travers 2013).


### 3.3.3 European Settlement

Until the early 1900s, the Aboriginal peoples of this remote area were largely left in peace by Europeans. The missions of Pago/Kalumburu, Port George/Kunmunya and Munja were all established in the early 1900s (McKenzie 1969). Although there was a short-lived settlement at Camden Harbour in 1864-65 (Richard 1990) and a grazing lease applied for on the Drysdale River by Captain Joe Bradshaw in 1891 (which was not taken up) the cattle industry was not established in the region until the 1950s when the Kalumburu Road was surveyed. John Morgan’s report (1955:18-49) on the surveying and construction of the road includes information about the sighting of ‘…’smokes”, which generally represent hunting fires or encampments’, of ‘wet’ shelters particularly along the Drysdale River and of occupation of rock shelters in sandstone areas evidenced by ‘…ashes from old camp fires and remains of former repasts of animals and fish’. This report would suggest that Aboriginal groups were still living traditionally at this time. Today a great part of the region, once full of continual and vibrant occupation, is now bereft of humans and feels empty and silent.

### 3.4 Context of the Rock Art

The art itself is most frequently found in rock shelters, shallow overhangs and caverns formed by the natural weathering of rain and wind, which undercut and eroded the harder quartzitic sandstone. Temperature variation that causes roof fall and the splitting of the rocks also plays a role. More rarely, motifs are depicted on the face of large boulders or cliff faces without a protective overhang. There is a great deal of variation in the type of formation producing suitable surfaces for rock art including shallow overhangs, pillared caverns (Fig 3.13), mushroom shaped outliers, large overhangs, at times extending over watercourses and the sheer sides of cliffs. The rock substrate used for the production of art ranges from perfectly smooth and lightly coloured grey to cream quartzite to mineral stained red sandstone with rough and uneven surfaces. There are expanses of basalt in the area but none of this type of rock appears to have been used to produce rock art. Many of the painted panels are at a height which is now well out of human reach, suggesting that the floor level has lowered, trees now absent were utilised, or some type of trestle scaffolding was employed in their production.
The Research Area

Chapter Three

Figure 3-13 A typical pillared outlier situated amongst the sparse eucalyptus, spinifex and scattered stones that litter the leached sandy soil. BSC10

The shelters and caves contain ample evidence of Aboriginal occupation but few of the custodians now have the luxury of direct contact with their rock art heritage due to movement away from their traditional sites, over many decades, by influences and pressures of European settlement. As the images in the rock shelters span a significant depth in time and across space, there is strong evidence to show art has metamorphosed from one style to another.

The research area covers a large expanse of diverse ecosystems including riverine, coastal, rich deep basalt soiled plains, bauxite plateau and leached sandy soils in association with rough sandstone ridges. Flora and faunal resources are therefore diverse and the groups of people who populated the area utilised them as they became seasonally available. From the beginning of the Aboriginal occupation adaption to the changing resource availability, climate and population growth occurred. These changes are evident in the rock art assemblages that are a rich record through time, allowing a view of past lifeways of the first inhabitants of the area and the gendered roles adopted by the ensuing cultures until the recent past.
4. Ethno-history, Ethnography & Analogy

4.1 Introduction

Archaeology uses the material remains of a culture to investigate its behavioural systems; however, the methods adopted in these studies have developed and changed markedly over time. The earlier approach was to reconstruct the past by piecing together the material remains as if they were a part of a jigsaw puzzle. Today, a closer inquiry is made into the cultural processes of change in economic and social systems, formulating hypotheses, constructing models, and deducing their consequences (Renfrew & Bahn 1993:17-36). This type of hypothetical-deductive or processual analysis comes under various names and incorporates many different spheres of archaeology in several combinations, and it means that a hypothesis can be tested with empiricism. This type of approach is well suited to the analysis of the wider Kimberley rock art assemblage.

Analogy and ethnology are categories of inquiry that are adopted within this theoretical framework; though Davidson (1988) and Hiscock (2008:268-86), question whether a ‘similarity of origin’ can be inferred, through the production of art that may have spanned some thousands of years, and occurred widely throughout the world. This caution is relevant as no culture is static and the production of rock art in the northwest Kimberley spans many millennia.

Tacon & Chippindale (1998:6-8) suggest the use of informed methods, i.e. ethnography, ethno-history, historical record or modern understanding; permit the images to be explored from the ‘inside’. Without ethnographic insight into iconographic meanings that are never standardised and accessible by some generalizing rules, one is not able to know the embedded meaning or power of an image. Therefore they suggest that formal methods, be used. These include analysis of the image itself – its form and style, its relationships to other motifs and their environmental archaeological context – in multivariate analysis.

4.2 Ethno-history and Ethnography

Ethno-history is the study of the cultural past of a social group through reminiscences and historical records found in libraries and archives, while ethnography is a method of qualitative research used to understand the cultural circumstances that reflect the
knowledge and systems of meaning guiding the life of a living cultural group. The data may be collected by *emic* means, from a cultural insider, or from the scrutiny of an outside observer which is called the *etic* approach (Gross 1992:15-45).

An *emic* perspective less so than an *etic* view, defines the intrinsic cultural distinctions that are understood as meaningful to the members of a given society. The sole judges of the validity of an *emic* description are the traditional participants of a culture. The Aboriginal *emic* perspective recognises the importance attached to the dream life, the clan mentality expressed by it and the practices of taboos and initiations established around it. The Aboriginal people who live the culture are the only ones able to truly understand and express its meaning fully.

Regrettably, few members of the *Worora, Ngarinyin, Wunambal* or *Gwini* groups living within their ancestral lands today recall the myths and legends associated with the many rock art galleries or practise the art in its traditional form. While traditional knowledge of practices such as food gathering techniques are still known and practiced in some areas, a greater portion of ethnographic data was recorded during the early twentieth century. For example, linguistics was studied by Capell and Coate (1984), archaeology by Crawford (1968), Elkin (1938, 1977), Kaberry (1939), Love (1936), Mowaljarlai and Malnic (1993), Petri (1954), and art by Lommel (1955, 1989) and Walsh (1994, 2000). These studies form an *etic* perspective of the culture of the Aboriginal peoples of the whole Kimberley area.

The *etic* perspective is gained by gathering data for the study of observable concepts and categories that are meaningful to scientist or ethnographer. Therefore the validity of an *etic* concept is judged by an outsider of the culture under observation, as in the following example. Father Worms, a missionary of German descent who had studied ethnology and linguistics, came to Broome as parish priest in 1931 (Durack 1969:235). He was the first to undertake an ethnographical study of the Aboriginal people who came under his protection. Worms (1954) recognised that the worldview was different between the Aboriginal and European cultures and that this variance must be recognised and respected.

... As a rule dreams project previous patterns of myths, songs and ceremonies and are not revolutionary. They remain within the limits of tradition and sometimes revive rites and beliefs gone out of custom. As dreamed phantasms are not produced by rational recognition, the Aborigines are not disturbed by logical
contradictions which are allowed to co-exist with other ‘truths’ serenely and undisturbed. In this way it is possible for the supernatural being to have sons without a mother, to be revered and yet be killed without loss of respect, to withdraw to the stars and yet remain in its previously earthly abode by its presence with its tjuringa wherever these may be carried. A young man may well be conscious of his personal power of procreation and, though still unmarried, see his future children without recognising any problems in the mysterious functions of the spirit child which exists before it is born. (Worms, cited in Durack 1969:238-9)

There is obvious value in the use of ethnographic studies that document the functional affiliation between the differing spheres of art, social, economic and conceptual systems and the ‘transforming processes’ by which the physical evidence is merged into the material record (Morwood 1988:1-6). Still, it has to be acknowledged that the way in which the data was collected and recorded may reflect an unwitting superimposition of European values – what seems innate or ‘normal’ in one’s own culture – onto a non-European society. Ascribed gender roles, in particular, is a highly variable social construct. Gender roles were generally viewed from a Western perspective by both men and by the few women in the field (Wylie 1991:34-7).

Kent (1998:29), for example, points out that a lot of the initial work was conducted by men exclusively or primarily talking to male informants and that a re-examination of the data may very well produce considerably different outcomes. This situation was not entirely the fault of men; rather it was a result of the Aboriginal tradition of men’s and women’s business being separate spheres (Bell 1998, Elkin 1938, Kaberry 1939). Still, an androcentric and Eurocentric focus permeates much of the research, by viewing women at best as non-instrumental in and their work as insignificant to production, trade, and social life and at worst as invisible (Gifford-Gonzalez 1998:118). It is the way in which we apply these data to future studies that is challenging. The value of a review of the ethnography and ethno history with relation to the social sphere of sex/gender roles can be appreciated in reviewing the three following examples. Firstly, the German anthropologist Helmut Petri states:

*The Ungarinyin are, however, a nation that likes granting special privileges to older women who are different from the average. Such women, who are regarded as djóingari, i.e. boss or chieftain, receive the privilege of conducting the kangaroo hunt jointly with the men. Mind you, we had no opportunity of seeing*
that for ourselves, but the Aborigines told us of it often enough.
(Petri 1954:16-7)

Secondly, Daisy Bates an English governess who later became a strong advocate for Aboriginal people and anthropologist, proclaimed that women in the southwest Kimberley at Beagle Bay ‘are viewed’ as nothing more than an ‘economic asset’ and an ‘economic slave’ to the men, and she states that ‘the secrets of life, the laws of life, are in the hands of men’ (1940:28 & 74-5). Contrary to this, Kaberry (1939:228) records that women in the central Kimberley area with ‘flour bag’ (grey) hair perform the increase ceremonies, eat some of the food at male rituals and may see a selection of the sacred artefacts because they are considered – when old – to be less in danger from the supernatural. Kaberry’s observations, unlike Bates’s impressions, suggest that older Aboriginal women at least were valued members of their society, both economically and socially and that they practised their own sacred beliefs independent of the men.

4.3 The Value of Ethnography

From these examples we develop an appreciation of the complexity of the ethnographic data concerning Aboriginal culture as recorded through a Western understanding of it. The culturally inscribed and socially perceived negotiation of differences and similarities between and among males and females is a structuring component of human social relations. Similarly, the forming and reforming of ascribed gender roles are influenced by many things such as biological difference, age, status, race, modes of production within a culture and environmental pressures, to name but a few (Gero & Conkey 1991:8-10). Additionally, the various language groups discussed in the Kimberley ethnography may well have negotiated their sex/gender roles differently from each other through time.

Therefore, it would seem that there is a potential need to test the data by investigation of the rock art assemblage, artefacts and resource use patterning laid down in the archaeological record. Data from the entire Kimberley area is relevant for this reappraisal because current-day boundaries may not have been the same in the past. The importance of Aboriginal art to the social and economic milieu of its culture in other areas of Australia has already been demonstrated by Spencer & Gillen (1899), Layton (1992), Morphy (2005) and Mountford (1976). Recognition of the complexity of Aboriginal social and belief systems indicated that art, in its many shapes and forms (body, mobile, rock, sand), was an integral part of the interactions within and between these systems.
Symbols also varied in meaning depending on their social or environmental context (Spencer and Gillen 1899:618). Accordingly, it cannot be implied that these functions remained constant through time or that they could be ‘lifted’ from Central Australia, for example, and used to explain Pleistocene art in other parts of Australia such as the northwest Kimberley (Morwood 1988). Human agency involves the negotiation and manipulation of artistic systems to encode social and economic information and therefore is always in flux. This is reinforced by the following passage:

_In the archaeological study of art, specific information about ‘what a pattern indicates’ is beyond recall, but the functional relationships between art, ideology, social structure, resource use, and so on, and their material manifestations, are basic to the use of art in writing prehistory._ (Morwood 1988:3).

### 4.4 Ethno-history and Archaeology

Identifying the male and female tasks and activity patterns of a cultural group is important to achieve a clear understanding of the gender ideology, identity and roles practised by its participant. Following European contact, extensive information was recorded by anthropologists, missionaries and pastoralists about subsistence strategies and ideologies of the Aboriginal groups in the northwest Kimberley, giving an insight into the complex social organisation and range of subsistence strategies adopted by past populations. Questions of particular relevance to this thesis include:

What tasks were associated with varied processes?

- The procurement and processing of food
- The making of material goods
- Maintenance of the secular and sacred concerns
  - Education of children
  - Initiation of youths

Further analyses of the ethnography were explored to establish:

- Who undertook these tasks?
  - What roles were performed by men and women?
  - How was the division of labour achieved?
  - Was there sharing of tasks?
  - Was age a factor?
Other considerations are temporal and spatial. How much time was dedicated to resource procurement and the maintenance of the social and religious domains and where were these responsibilities carried out? What tools and weapons were used, are they recorded in the rock art and do they occur as archaeological material remains in the strata over time? These data will help to develop an understanding of the gender roles practised by the northwest Kimberley Traditional Owners.

4.4.1 The Procurement and Processing of Food

Women in foraging societies, !Kung San of Botswana or the Aboriginal people of Australia, are chiefly associated with gathering. It is also accepted that they were involved in hunting small game and at times actively involved in individual and communal hunting of larger game (Gross 1992:258-9, Kaberry 1939:13-14, Petri 1954:16-7). Kaberry (1939:20) attests that a Kimberley Aboriginal woman had more freedom of movement than ‘the German peasant woman’; her work was varied and less strenuous. Even though kangaroo hunting was ‘the prerogative of the mature man’ women ‘regarded as djingari, i.e. boss or chieftain, receive the privilege of conducting the kangaroo hunt jointly with the men’ (Petri 1954:16-7). Uninitiated boys were not involved in the hunt for kangaroo; that was a privilege given after much training. The significance of the role of kangaroo hunting is demonstrated as, on killing his first kangaroo, a boy passed into adulthood and could then take a wife (Love 1936:75).

In 1934 and 1935-6 Phyllis Kaberry lived near, and at times with, various groups of Aboriginal people in the Kimberley with the express purpose of ascertaining the participation of Aboriginal women in the ‘sacred and secular’ realms of their culture. She found that contrary to popular belief, the Aboriginal woman was of

‘complex social personality, having her own prerogatives, duties, problems, beliefs, rituals, and point of view; making the adjustments that the social, local and totemic organisation require of her, and at the same time exercising a certain freedom of choice in matters affecting her own interests and desires’, (Kaberry 1939:ix).

This contrasted with the earlier view that a husband/wife relationship was that of ‘master to his slave’:

‘The woman’s work is on the whole much heavier than that done by the man; her work is much more regular; it is compulsory, and it forms the chief support of the household. ... Heavier work ought
naturally to be performed by men; here the contrary obtains...
woman’s work appears to be much more exacting, inasmuch as it
requires a steady strain, patience and regularity. Such work is the
most repulsive...’ (Malinowski 1913:287-8).

Kaberry acknowledged that women provided the bulk of the food, but that the pressure
on men to provide the highly favoured meat was no less exacting. There was a division of
labour but the reasons for it and the attitude to it, by the participants, was cooperative
rather than combative or coercive. There appears to have been a practical purpose behind
the division of tasks allotted to each sex, and conflict seems to have been the exception
rather than the rule.

Figure 4-1 Man and boy preparing a kangaroo for
cooking (Lommel 1938)

Figure 4-2 Dugong catch (Durack 1969:49)

Meat was craved and highly prized as a food source, and if a man was consistently
unsuccessful in hunting of large game such as dugong or kangaroo, he was berated,
physically attacked or belittled by his wife. The hunters of kangaroo sometimes smeared
themselves with yellow ochre to lessen their scent but did not seem to associate this
action with magic (Kaberry 1939:16, Love 1936:80-5). While solo hunts were conducted
by a yellow painted stalking hunter, the group hunts required white body paint and the
placing, for example, of good spearmen at strategic points on a hill, while others with
burning fire sticks lit up the grass around the base of it. The kangaroo meat obtained in
this way was generally only shared by the men, and hunting in this manner only took
place in the early dry between May and July (Love 1936:85-8).

If successful in the hunt a man, as a rule, would prepare the kangaroo and after cooking
distributed it to those he was obligated to under strict protocol before sharing with his
wife and children. There were different rules for sharing of the game he brought in. Birds for example were simply shared with his wife (Kaberry 1939). Men were therefore responsible to the wider group in providing the much desired meat (Figs 4.1-2).

Women gathered fruit, seeds and all vegetable food, as well as any small game they might be able to catch. At times their dogs would bring down a wallaby or kangaroo, which would be singed and disembowelled before being taken back to camp. Women often ate the liver and heart, which were considered delicacies, before returning to camp (Kaberry 1939:22). The food a woman collected was shared with her husband and children, and any leftovers were given to those she chose herself (Figs 4.3-4).

4.4.2 Making of Material Goods

Ethnographic and historic data informs that although there was a gendered division in the manufacture of material goods, this was not always the circumstance. Men and women also cooperated in the manufacture of some of the implements and shared in their use.

Generally, men made all of the tools they needed for everyday life. The only exception appears to be the ‘hair belt’ although at times they manufactured this as well. The making of stone spear heads evident in the Wanjina period rock art required great skill and the production of these occupied a large part of a man’s day. The stone points were made in great number as, although they were sharp, they were also brittle and generally broke at the first throw (Moore 2013). Uninitiated boys and youths were not allowed to try making these beautifully worked stone spearheads (Love 1936:75). This suggests that these points were status items.
King (1825:68 Vol. 2) recorded the following weapons confiscated from the ‘Natives of Hanover Bay’ in the western Kimberley:

- stone spear head
- hatchet (stone headed axe)
- spear armed with the stone head
- throwing stick (boomerang)
- fire making sticks

Love (1936) lists the tools used by Kimberley men as

- fish spear (tjaulia) – a hardwood stick, straightened over coals and sharpened to a point and is thrown by hand
- fish weirs – were visible on parts of the coast but had been out of use for years
- paperbark wallet (Bururu) – used to store prepared spear heads and raw flint
- spear thrower (Janggaltja) – this implement fits by way of a hook into the end of the spear
- spear - a three part composite with spearhead, hardwood leader and bamboo shaft
- tools for making a stone spearhead
  - stone hammer – small rounded stone for flaking of the raw stone
  - blunt-pointed wooden tool – for the first stage of pressure-flaking
  - kangaroo-bone tool – for the second stage of pressure-flaking
  - fine kangaroo-bone tool – for making fine serrations in the edges

Grey (1841:252) adds to this list:

- hair belt – a cord spun from opossum fur and wound many times around the waist
- boomerang – used mainly for throwing into flights of birds
- club – heavy stick to throw at the smaller animals

Elkin (1938:17) observed that very few of the implements were decorated and mentions

- softwood shield
- spear thrower and hitting stick which doubled as chisels by ‘fastening a piece of sharp stone on the one end with gum’

Contrary to both Grey and King’s reports of boomerangs, Love (1936) mentions that they were not made or used by the Worora. The returning boomerang was used on Sunday Island and the non-returning, broader type was traded in but only used in intertribal
ceremonial gatherings (Love 2009:99). However, fishing boomerangs are reported to have been in use on the Kimberley coast and in the tidal rivers when fish became stranded in pools created by the high tidal variations (Tindale 1974:108). Moreover, anthropologist Stanley Porteus (cited in Jones 1996:53) reported that these heavy, broad boomerangs were thrown with great force to kill fish in inland creeks in the southern coastal area of Beagle Bay (Stanley Porteus cited in Jones 1996:53).

Like men, women too made the items they needed for everyday use – fighting and digging sticks, dilly bags, string, bark buckets, baskets, paperbark ‘swags’ and ornaments. Kaberry (1939:5) describes a woman using a hatchet to fashion a smooth, round fighting stick four feet long and slightly sharpened at both ends. These were used to settle disputes between women, with one woman holding one above the head in a defensive manner against a blow, while her attacker wielded another as a weapon.

Figure 4-5 Kimberley man with hunting equipment and his two wives carrying bark ‘swags’ (Elkin 1938:48, courtesy the publishers Harper Collins)

In 1837 George Grey (1841) voyaged to the west Kimberley coast and landed at Hanover Bay where during his time there he meticulously documented the items and their uses of items contained in a ‘swag’ of one of the women:

‘A flat stone to pound roots with; earth to mix with the pounded roots; quartz, for the purpose of making spears and knives; stones for hatchets; prepared cakes of gum, to make and mend weapons and implements; kangaroo sinews to make spears and to sew with; needles made of the shin bones of kangaroos, with which they sew their cloaks, bags, &c.; opossum hair to be spun into
waist belts; shavings of kangaroo skins to polish spears, &c.; the shell of a species of mussel to cut hair, &c.; with; native knives; a native hatchet; pipe clay; red ochre, or burnt clay; yellow ochre; a piece of paper bark to carry water in; waistbands, and spare ornaments; pieces of quartz, which the native doctors have extracted from their patients, and thus cured them from diseases; these they preserve as carefully as Europeans do relics. Banksia cones (9 small ones), or pieces of dry white species of fungus, to kindle fire with rapidly, and to convey it from place to place; grease, three spare weapons of their husbands, or the pieces of wood from which these are to be manufactured; the roots, &c. which they have collected during the day. Skins not yet prepared for cloaks are generally carried between the bag and the back, so as to form a sort of cushion for the bag to rest on’ (Grey 1841:266).

Essentially they carry all domestic utensils as they travel from place to place (Fig 4.5). Additionally, a lighted fire stick is carried in one hand, a digging stick in the other and often there is a child across the shoulders or on the hip (Grey 1841:267).

Author, Ion Idriess, spent several seasons in the Kimberley accompanying police patrols and prospecting for copper, gold and other minerals. He reported that Aboriginal women are deft hands at spinning and weaving (Idriess 1964:91). He describes how they could twist a string as fine as a cotton thread. Tiny tufts of fur or vegetable material were teased out, sometimes with a small hooked stick; they continually regulated the thickness of the cord with the left hand and fingers while rubbing it along the thigh. For thicker cords they used a stick method; twisting the stick with the right hand to receive the cord until it could contain no more. Greater strength was achieved by twisting doubled lengths together.

Figure 4-6 Left to right, long muller, round muller, coarse grained quartzite axe and a fine grained basalt axe

42
Love (1936:66-71) describes the implements used by Worora women as follows:

- baler shell – used to carry water, drink from and in some ceremonies (Fig 4.8)
- bark container (Anggam) - ‘neatly made vessel, but has no pretensions to ornament, the only decoration it may receive being a coat of red ochre rubbed on the outside’ (Fig 4.7)
- digging or yam stick (Wondoon) - ‘merely a short stick, about eighteen inches in length, of hard wood, with one end ground to a point on a stone, and hardened in the ashes of the fire’
- dingo – wild dog mostly owned and utilised by women, caught small game such as bandicoot, goanna and at times will bring down a large kangaroo
- fire drill (Liruku) – consists of two round sticks, each about two feet long, used for making fire by friction
- tomahawk (Lembalja) –

   ‘small and very crude, and would seem useless for chopping out wild honey or edible grubs from the boughs of trees; but the Worora women have a skill in making it serve where a white man would only be able to make bruises on the bough’.

While Aboriginal men knapped the raw stone into the rough shape, it was the women who edge ground (Fig 4.9), hafted and used axes widely for chopping out honey and small game from trees (Love 1936:85, Elkin 1938:80; McKell 1998:110). Men also carried axes but it appears that the women utilised them more often and more broadly.
The use of archaeologically more fragile bone, wood and bark fibre artefacts such as needles, awls and fish hooks were always attributed to women. It is clear that women played an active part in stone tool technology. These activities contributed to the material evidence associated with site formation and artefact distribution, and such by-products can aid in the conformation of what we know of the participants of a particular group and their roles in everyday life.

Kaberry (1939:162-3) reveals that both men and women spun human hair and kangaroo and opossum fur into thread and twisted this into belts, tassels and headbands (4.10-1). However they were not equally proficient and roles were decided on the basis of skill rather than gender. Men who brought in a female kangaroo gave it to the women so they could pluck the fur from it before it was cooked. The fur of the male kangaroo is coarser
and was not used (Love 1936:83). The women generally provided the string and rope from the fibre of various kinds of gum trees and the boab.

Hair belts were given to a boy on circumcision and arm bands, pubic pearl-shell and a ‘bull roarer’ (*biliana*) were received at sub-incision (Kaberry 1939:112 & 225). Generally it is recorded that very little clothing was worn, and the wearing of a ‘belt’ was not exclusively a male privilege. Cicatrices, neck decoration, arm and head bands are mentioned in ethnography and observed in early photographs of men, women and children, while nose bones are exclusively associated with males.

Traditionally women and men used different techniques for fishing. Group fishing was sometimes conducted by stupefying fish with a handful of a certain crushed plant in a pool that contained them. Women did not use nets or hooked line to catch fish, nor did they use spears, as men did (Love 1836:77).

There were different types of water craft (Figs 4.12-3) observed in the northwest Kimberley in contact times; end-to-end mangrove log and single raft (King 1825:43-4 & 69), double raft (Love 1936:6, Durack 1969) and teak canoe (King 1825:89-9, Crawford 2001:87). Although there is no written evidence that women made the watercraft they certainly used them and in other parts of Australia they were known to be the foremost operators (Tench 1793).

Women were reported to have built the small shelters for protection against the sun and wind (Malinowski (1913 Vol 1:282), while men constructed the large log framed structures (Elkin 1938:18). The larger beehive huts were rare and built mainly to escape mosquitoes during the wet season (Fig 4.14).
Everyday hairdressing for males (Figs 4.15-6) changed because it is thought that missionaries encouraged short hair for hygiene reasons (Love 1996:108):

‘Kimberley Aborigines have described to me an old way that the males kept their hair. This was to heavily grease their hair and then separate it into folds like pages of a book. Within each fold some small treasured item was kept and then the hair was bound with human hair string’
4.4.3 Sacred and Secular

Ceremony played a large part in the lives of the Aboriginal people. The way in which they decorated their bodies and the accoutrements they wore are of particular interest because these items are depicted in the rock art. Kaberry (1939) reiterates ‘meat’ was of great importance: when plentiful they celebrated with ‘corroboree’ but when not procured there would be a great deal of grumbling and lethargy and no dancing would occur. Many of the dances were solely for the entertainment of the group and would simulate the day’s hunt or some event worth mimicking. Others were concerned with mythological ancestor veneration and preservation of ‘Law’; men to teach the youth their degrees for manhood and women to teach the girls their law which included love magic. Participants therefore were dependent on the particular ceremony. The headdresses, hair and styles of body paint, historically recorded, were tremendously varied (Figs 4.17-9).

The women’s increase and love ceremonies were carried out in secrecy and were respected as very important and powerful by the men. Women were at times required to play a part in the male ceremonies, and in such situations they were expected to perform dances to a high standard because this had a bearing on the ‘potency’ of the outcome (Fig 4.20). Furthermore they were required to provide special foods for ceremonies such
as the age grade initiations and burials (Elkin 1938, Kaberry 1939, Lommel 1952, Petri 1957).

The *tjuruna* (sacred boards) played a significant part in every aspect of culture by creating confidence, security and a sense of well-being to counteract the vulnerability associated with hunting, sex, warfare etc. pervading a man’s life (Kaberry 1939:227-32, Lommel 1952, Petri 1954, Love 1936). They were a symbol and an expression of communication between man and the mythological time called *Lalai* – between man and the great mystic beings and between the material aspects of ordinary living and the spiritual heritage of man. In the adjoining Ngarinyin lands mythology informs that women of ‘long, long ago … made the law and kept the power of the sacred stone’ until the men stole it away from them because of jealousy (Godden & Malnic 1997:27). This is similar to the mythology of the desert country of the southeastern Kimberley. The women’s *tarruku* or sacred objects of the Wirrimanu (Balgo) community are similar to those of the men, made of wood or stone and decorated, but they are smaller in size (see Dé Ishtart 2005). Similarly, Kaberry (1939) recorded that, in the central Kimberley, women’s rituals incorporated smaller objects, than those of men imbued with sacred power (Kaberry 1939, see also Smith 1988).
The Kurangara philosophies, which Lommel (1952) witnessed spreading to the area from the south-east have been cited as a system of beliefs that were superimposed over those of the preceding Majangari philosophies. Some of the ancestor myths were shared by both philosophies (Kurangara and Majangari) but the Kurangara was considered to be more powerful. In a time when the impact of white settlement intruded, imposing extraordinary trauma on the people with its exploitation of Aboriginal women and disregard for traditional law, the more powerful creed was embraced. Curiously, the Kurangara incorporated details of white culture i.e. food, colour of skin and housing (Lommel 1952:70-79). Lommel reports on the belief in the tjuruna or sacred boards of the Kurangara creed:

‘...there are male and female boards. But so far only the male boards have come to the people. In the myth the female boards have a special significance... Nevertheless the female Kurangara boards will one day come to the people. Then a new ‘law’ will hold forth among the people. Once the female Kurangara boards will be despatched by the Dschanba, this will be a sign that the end of the world is not far off any more... The women will then obtain power and the men must do all the work of the women...’

The women had greater involvement in educating the children until initiation. Not only did they teach children cultural etiquette and the rules of society, but they inculcated the skills that were needed to find food, track animals and to manufacture tools (Kaberry 1939).

A boy began his initiation into ritual life at the age of seven or thereabouts when he was circumcised, graduating through sub-incision (a form of ritual body modification involving the lengthways incising of the underside of the penis) at around fourteen years. These initiations were associated with totemic food restrictions, survival training and separation from females in an atmosphere of supernatural danger (Kaberry 1939:222). Girls underwent breaking of the hymen when young and introcision (laceration of the vaginal orifice) (Kaberry 1939:236) at a later date in preparation for marriage. As with the youth, sanctions of avoidance, food taboos and certain protocols were observed. Kaberry avowed the initiations were not designed to cause hurt to the youth or girl but were considered vital to their development and worthiness as individuals in society.

A baby girl was betrothed at birth, or even before birth, to a friend of her father, provided that the friend was in the proper relationship for marriage. Wives were also inherited by a man when his brother died (Grey 1841:231, Love 1936).
Polygyny was practised by Australian Aboriginal peoples, though Malinowski (1913:307) concluded that ‘polygyny seems to be restricted to the older and more influential men, and to be rather an exception’ and Kaberry (1939:114) reported an approximate 10% occurrence in central Kimberley where her study was based (Fig 4.21). Love (1936:94-5) believed that although polygyny and inheritance was degrading for the women, it also benefited them in several ways. Women were protected by being married. Girls went to their husband’s country and older wives helped them to integrate into the country which could be quite foreign to them with regard to foods and navigation. Younger wives took on the tasks that required agility and strength and sons were expected to care for their aged mothers.

Both Love (1936) and Kaberry (1939) detailed the everyday lives of the women and described their general disposition as cheerful and contented. Although an Aboriginal woman was ‘possessed’ by her husband she was not without a certain level of independence and opinion. Kaberry (1939:19) relates ‘there was nothing submissive in her attitude towards her husband. She was confident in her ability to be able to secure the food needed for herself and her family’. The atmosphere within the camp was mostly harmonious and filled with merriment as it broke up for the day’s hunting and foraging. They foraged out for seven kilometres or so and might reach a billabong where they...
swam, gossiped and ate part of what they had collected. Some would fish or collect lily roots and fresh water mussels, again consuming some of these before heading back to camp with enough food remaining for those they provided for (Kaberry 1939:22).

The previous sections provide evidence that women were indispensable to the economy of the group and their implements, like those of the men, were largely for utilitarian purposes effective in food procurement. Additionally, Kaberry (1939:166-7) outlines a special system of economic exchange which existed across the Kimberley. This system involved a chain of partners, both men and women in the exchange from the west coast of the Kimberley, east into Arnhem Land. These partners, usually blood relatives, were called ‘wunan’ which translated as ‘friend’, although he or she could become a potential sorcerer if obligations went unfulfilled. Oval pearl-shell, pearl-shell ornaments, bamboo necklaces and two types of boomerang passed from west to east, while ‘shovel nosed’ spears with shafts of bamboo, hooked spears, boomerangs, kulamons, dilly-bags, and red ochre were handed on from east to west.

As a commodity, women were very valuable to men and not only for their gathering abilities. Under the heading ‘Uses of wives – objectionable to us’, Elkin (1938:121) lists customs that detailed the practice of women being used in sexual barter for the purpose of avoiding or to resolve disputes and in communal bonding rites. Another practice, also noted by Love (1936:53) and Bates (1938:12), was the lending of a wife to a visitor as a mark of friendship or hospitality. These customs may not align with our sensitivity but they were institutionalised and formed a part of the economy and social structure.

At each initiation into different levels of responsibility certain rights were granted for each of the sexes along with restrictions. Essentially children were ungendered before these initiations began and similarly they reached an ungendered state on attaining great age when women were accepted as equal in ‘law’. Kaberry (1939:228) relates:

Only in extreme old age were the Nyigina women permitted to eat some of the dara:gu (sacred) food’, though the ... women might see the gunari (type of tjurunga [tjuruna]). The men said jokingly in explanation: ”Him close-up dead, might be him die anyway.” There was probably recognition of the danger of the tjurunga (sacred board) present to the uninitiated; but it would be unfair to attribute to the men a desire to hasten the departure of the aged from the world. Moreover, the old women perform the increase ceremonies, and like the old men have actually less to fear from the supernatural than the younger generation. They have almost reached a stage of invulnerability, for they are unlikely to
to provoke sorcery, or to commit those actions which might result in
the infliction of penalties. There may even be some idea of
confering strength upon them, though unfortunately I did not ask
for information on this point.

Therefore, negotiated gender roles were dependent on sex, age, knowledge and relational
standing of one individual to another. Gender roles changed throughout an individual’s
life depending on knowledge and ability and how that individual stood in relationship to
other members of the group.

4.5 Application of Analogy and Ethnography

The combination of the ethnographic actualities from the living system of Aboriginal
hunter-gatherer society with historical archival records and archaeological material
evidence encourages a belief that those patterns of activity of prehistoric states may well
be recorded in the rock art. Only by being aware of the traditions and practices can the art
be viewed in relation to its purpose. This is not to say that an interpretation can be
transferred from one situation to another far back in time; rather it is to gain an awareness
of the breadth of Aboriginal lifeways in the immediate environment.

An example of this collating and combining of evidence follows:

- grindstones and mullers are found in the environment and are recorded in early
  historical data
- ethnographic data tells us that seeds were not ground for flour or meal by the
  Aboriginal people of this area
- early photographic material shows women grinding waterlily roots
- imprints of the seed heads of grasses are present in rock art galleries

Many questions can be asked of such data and propositions formulated. Photographic
evidence and ethnography informs that seed grinding was not practised in the study area
in Aboriginal memory but the imprints of seed heads suggests that grass seeds played a
significant role in prehistory. Are the seed head imprints found in rock art shelters in the
Kimberley region found elsewhere in Australia? Are they associated with increase
ceremonies? Does this evidence suggest that seed grinding may have been a practice in
the prehistoric past?

An analysis of these questions is beyond the scope of this thesis but they serve as an
example of how hypotheses can be formulated and tested. An ‘analogue model’ requires
a ‘collective’ process of input to achieve a proportional output. ‘Input’ includes ethnography, historical data, material remains, dating techniques and superimposition analysis; all remains, both verbal and physical that may indicate how a group of people lived in the present. The ‘output’ is the knowledge and insight gained by analysing the ‘input’ that may be applied in an analogical sense to the past living system of a culture (Murray & Walker 1988).

Cases of ethnology being analogous with the archaeological footprint have been reported by Hiscock (2008:272-5). Hiscock’s studies centered firstly, on the abandonment of Ngarrabullgan Mountain and secondly, the prehistoric building of the ‘Anadara (shell) mounds’ along the north coast of Australia. In both instances it was found that the ethnographic mythology gathered from Traditional Owners is only analogous until approximately 600-800 BP. Hence a focus on discards and site formation processes in a hierarchical structure to view the different levels of production is integral to this type of research (Davidson 1988:17-30). This type of combined study permits an understanding of the actual, rather than the assumed, variations of sex and gender roles in existing hunter-gatherer societies.

While acknowledging the concerns above, it is suggested ethnology can be used to formulate questions for testing against the archaeological record. For example, as it has been recorded that women were at times included in the hunt for kangaroo (Petri 1954), one could look for motifs of women present in hunting scenes within rock art story panels and if they are present, it could be argued that gender roles were egalitarian or complementary in nature. Similarly, if the photographs/records show that the body shape of female and male bodies differ, dimorphic variance is evident, the wearing of headdresses is confined to one sex and so forth, a hypothesis can be formulated to test against the motifs in the rock art. Ethnology can stimulate a proposal for testing and analogy can be used in the same way but they do not in themselves ‘confirm’ a truth.

Analogy is the process of transferring information or meaning from an actual subject (the source) to another particular subject (the target). As with ethnology, the theoretical and methodological process of constructing new data points from analogy, for analyses of prehistoric motifs, is a risky task (Jackson 1991:301), as are attempts to attribute gender to the motifs lacking specific sexual features. Therefore analogy is variously seen as useful for the producing of hypotheses, as risky and harmful to empirical science and as beneficial to comparing ethnology and archaeological remains.
4.6 Summary

The ethno-history and ethnography for the greater Kimberley area confirms that gendered roles existed but that men and women were not bound strictly to them. Just as there was pressure on the women to provide the bulk of the food there was pressure on the men to deliver the much desired meat.

Men and women generally made and used tools essential for their own food procurement requirements; though, the skill involved in such processes was taken into account and manufacture was sometimes allocated to those of another gender showing proficiency. The shared task of axe manufacture illustrates that skill sharing and cooperation between the sexes existed. Both sexes used the edge ground axes but the women utilised them to a greater extent.

Women had the greater responsibility to educate children in cultural etiquette, rules of society and food gathering. However, boys were taken into the male domain at around ten years of age and were educated into survival and hunting skills and the knowledge of law and mythology considered essential for their becoming a man. Men’s ceremonies and law was considered very powerful, but women also had their ceremonies and law which was respected and in some cases feared by the men. Both boys and girls endured initiations considered essential to their growth and to their participation in the enduring survival of the society.
5. Previous Studies in Kimberley Rock Art

5.1 Introduction

Ethnographic material that focused on the art and its significance to Aboriginal culture was initially documented in 1938/39 by a German team of archaeologists, including Helmut Petri and Andreas Lommel. In 1955, Lommel returned with his wife Katharine (Lommel & Lommel, 1989), who reproduced the images in the shelters by the tracing technique, while he continued to record ethnographic mythology. The tracings are now held in the Staatliche Museum für Völkerkunde in Munich, where Lommel was Director from 1957 to 1977.

After the initial study in 1955 by Andreas Lommel and his wife, Katharine, (Lommel and Lommel 1989), only occasional recording and reporting of the rock art of the Kimberley was undertaken. The resulting literature was largely focused on the art of the Wanjina and its mythology (Crawford 1968) or on its aesthetic value as promotional literature for the tourism and art industries (Godden & Malnic 1997, Ryan 1992). Subsequently, it started to attract a great deal of attention and debate in the late 1980s and early 1990s when David Welch and the late Grahame Walsh published their initial findings. Both were amateur enthusiasts with a keen interest in Aboriginal art developed in the Northern Territory and Central Queensland respectively. Momentum quickly gained pace with intellectual and obtuse views variously being advanced.

Although a significant body of data has been recorded over time, in-depth gendering analyses have not been undertaken for either anthropomorphic motifs or animalia. While assigning gender to various animal depictions is feasible with sex and gender features depicted in some motifs, it is the anthropomorphic figures considered to be humans that have excited wide-ranging interest. The focus of this thesis will therefore be on humans in their entirety and on the animals in close association with them. An awareness of the data collected in the past and the contrasting conclusions they generated is relevant, and a review of contributions advanced by various champions of Kimberley rock art follows.

5.1.1 Walsh

Grahame Walsh spent some 30 years in the study of Kimberley rock art and published two volumes on the Bradshaw (Gwion) art (Walsh 1994, 2000). He briefly addressed the
question of sexual iconography and gender keys associated with this earlier period of art. It is Walsh’s (2000:229-30) opinion that too much emphasis is placed on the depiction of genitalia for identification purposes. He points out that in our own culture’s ‘public convenience’ iconology, it is not deemed necessary to include genitalia, and indeed it would appear offensive if it were included. This observation is highly relevant to discovering symbols and features signifying the sex of an anthropomorphic motif.

Additionally, Walsh argues the suggestion by others Wilson (2006), that the Gwion figures represent females, based on their stylistic beauty, is ‘unfounded, subjective and highly sexist’. Walsh maintains that the figures symbolised mortals, representative of ‘idealised image(s) of adult males’ or ‘special people’ (Walsh 2000:229). Walsh also states that within this period, these ‘special’ mortals were associated with a ‘secondary’ group of ‘common’ mortals or ‘ordinary people’ of a cruder representation, displaying diagnostic elements such as genitalia and breasts. This view advocates a hierarchical precept to the culture, a proposal not yet investigated.

Generally though, in all periods, Walsh believed that in the absence of breasts or genitalia, artists developed a range of iconographic elements that singularly or in varied combinations, unequivocally expressed gender (Table 5.1). He advocates for close investigation of ‘discrete scenes’ of male/female association for establishing such iconographic elements.

Table 5-1 Walsh’s features for the identification of sex/gender in human figures without genitalia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absence of headdress, squat conical hair arrangement or simple form of headdress</td>
<td>Prominent headdress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obese or steatopygous body</td>
<td>Elaborate accoutrements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upraised arms (submission, veneration, supplication)</td>
<td>Dimorphism (dominance, protection)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association with digging stick or dilly bag</td>
<td>Associated with weapons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dimorphism, the difference in height and shape of adult male and female of a species, is also considered by Walsh, but he urges caution in its use for sex allocation; large/small association could just as easily convey status rather than true physical proportion or gender. He argues that, without specific sexual features on a figure, the lack of a headdress and accoutrements may just as well represent a child or male youth as that of a female figure, especially if it is relatively smaller. Walsh reported a female/male ratio for the Irregular Infill Animal Period (IIAP) art of 1:75 and for the Erudite Epoch (Gwion period) figures of 1:7500, concluding that ‘the Bradshaw culture may have been history’s
greatest narcissistic society’ (Walsh 2000:231). Comparatively, what he termed the Aboriginal Epoch (Wanjina period) art was held in little awe by Walsh. He considered that although females became more common in the art of this period, there was a change in focus:-

*No indication is shown in the Erudite Epoch art of the sexual themes so evident in historic times, with artistic evidence suggesting that these developed in the late Aborigine Epoch. Increasing numbers of female images accompany these later thematic changes, suggesting a ‘sex object’ role as the subject of grossly exaggerated sexual activities (Walsh 2000:231)._*

This view, expressed by Walsh before he made an extensive study of the mythology attached to the ancestral Wanjina and of the ‘Kurangara Cult’ discussed below, may well have changed. Unfortunately he did not live to complete his project and, to date, his book concerning the Wanjina has not been published. Nevertheless, it should be noted, that since this view was expressed, new evidence of sexed figures and copulation scenes have been found in Gwion period art, and the ratio of sexed figures in the Wanjina period has yet to be tested.

**5.1.2 Welch**

Welch’s (1993, 1996, 2007) relative stylistic sequence and sexual iconography hypotheses, is in general agreement with that of Walsh, although he proposed a continuum of cultural practices; comparing the headdresses of Gwion figures and those used by Aboriginal men during ceremony in contact times (Welch 2007). Still, the more recent Wanjina motifs are not depicted with these types of headdresses. Even so, Welch makes a strong case for the enduring cultural practice of male headdress association with historical photography showing men, not women, wearing them. Just how enduring the practice was is worth examining, and may be influenced by the transitional age of Gwion to Wanjina artistic tradition.

**5.1.3 Wilson**

Recently the Gwion period figures have received the greater focus because of their beautifully graceful form, and one speculative interpretation is that they portray females. Wilson (2006) believes that because the artists of this period had not included details of sexual anatomy or facial features, it was presumptuous to insist that the overwhelming majority were male. He lists ‘splaying out of the legs’ and ‘long flowing-back hair’ as
feminine. Wilson also used analogy to suggest a resemblance between Gwion figures and the ‘Great Earth Mother’ mythology found in other parts of the world (Table 5.2).

**Table 5-2 Female sexing features (Wilson 2006)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49 &amp; 85</td>
<td>Splaying out of the legs below the knees</td>
<td>Feminine stance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>Right arm raised and bent over the forehead</td>
<td>Denotes worship of deity especially in Minoan Crete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>Hairstyles of ‘long flowing-back hair variety’</td>
<td>Equivalent to women’s hairstyles of today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>Style of art</td>
<td>Feminine grace and bearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72-3</td>
<td>Arms in shape of an ‘A’ or ‘W’</td>
<td>Great Earth Mother mythological stance of protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72-3</td>
<td>Association with animals</td>
<td>Mistress of the Animals mythology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>229-31</td>
<td>Association with boomerangs</td>
<td>Boomerangs are used as a musical adjunct to dance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These features are observed in the ‘A’ shaped arms of the figure with three animals (two animals are out of frame). Labelled the ‘Great Mother’ by Wilson (2006:72), the position of the arms and association with animals suggests a female fertility deity to him (Fig 5.1). Additionally, Wilson (2006:230) argued that the ‘W’ position of the arms is comparable to the Arnhem Land ‘Earth Mother’ viewed by him and to Syrian and Egyptian goddesses (Fig 5.2). It would seem to be ambitious to use analogy to import a ‘Great Earth Mother’ or goddess mythology to explain these scenes.

Figure 5-1 ‘A’ shaped arms (Wilson 2006:72, courtesy of publishers Allen and Unwin, 2015)

Figure 5-2 ‘W’ shaped arms (Wilson 2006:230 courtesy of publishers Allen and Unwin, 2015)

Analogy is used extensively by Wilson. His observations regarding the ‘nine dancing figures’ (Fig 5.3) are that they mimic the portrayal of the ancient Javanese dance of nine maidens in veneration of the ‘Goddess of the South Seas’ (Wilson 2006:86-7). The
graceful posture, legs splayed below the knees, the ‘long falling-back hair’, the ‘nets’ from beneath the armpits and the fact that there are nine dancers are all indicators to Wilson that this is so. Nevertheless such musings are entirely speculative and unsubstantiated to date.

Wilson does not discuss the Wanjina art except to say of a rock art shelter he visited:

‘...at Enby Rock (on the Gibb River Road) ... there were no Bradshaw paintings ... it had an almost palpable sinister feel to it, exacerbated by several ‘Ulu’ sorcery figures painted as guardians of an area Aboriginal men reserved for male Aboriginal initiates’ (Wilson 2006:146).

5.2 Early Impressions

It is a curious fact that only in recent times has intellectual impetus centered on the ‘Gwion’ motifs, possibly because of their representational nature which encourages speculation in determining reasons for their creation and purpose. Additionally, many of the earlier recorders, including Petri (1954:36-45), Lommel (1952) and Crawford (1968) found that their informants revealed little information about these figures. Crawford (1968:86) quoted his informants, ‘a man would gain no prestige for wasting his time painting in this way’. Similarly, Lommel (1952:16) reported that he was informed ‘nobody has ever seen Kujon (Gwion), but they know he has done the paintings’. Therefore, they were not discussed in any depth by the earlier ethnographers.
5.2.1 Doring

More recently, accounts of Aboriginal mythology regarding the Gwion figures have surfaced. Doring (2000), artist, documentary filmmaker and director of the Ngarinyin Pathways Project in the southwest Kimberley region, has collated information from four lawmen (munnumburra) of the Ngarinyin Aboriginal Corporation and their purported relationship to the Gwion images. The munnumburra maintain that they have only recently released their Gwion knowledge, that is considered ‘a secret to protect’ and highly sacred, because of the Native Title claim forcing their hand into showing their connection to the land (Doring 2000:18). They explain that there is a ‘compromise between the pragmatic need to educate outsiders, and the necessity to protect secret sacred meaning’ (Doring 2000:188).

One of Doring’s Aboriginal informants, Banggal, demonstrated his knowledge of Gwion by painting its image (Fig 5.5). Banggal is said to have collected the rough bark of a mulberry like tree, the Mamandu, and ground it until it released a deep mulberry hued sap, which contains both fixative and dye, before he painted the figure onto the rock face (Doring 2000:120).

Additionally, the munnumburra informed Doring that there was a ‘Sacred Great Mother’ (Fig 5.6) who is known by either of two names Jillinya and Mumua (Doring 2000:56).
Yet, the features of rayed headdress, long ears, obese body, the breasts to either side and static stance of this female anthromorph fit more comfortably into Grahame Walsh’s description of motifs from the later *Wanjina* period rather than that of the *Gwion* period. Walsh (2000) and Welch (pers. comm. 2012) questioned the validity of this recent ethnographic information that has surfaced amidst intense political upheaval regarding land rights.

Of the older *Gwion* images, Doring recorded that the *munnumburra* stated there was a relational difference in the shape of the bodies and in the ‘bags’ and accoutrements associated with the individual figures. ‘Females may be portrayed with fuller shape of thigh, stomach and hip, but are best distinguished through differences in clothing’ (Doring 2000:66). The *munnumburra* named and described the difference between accoutrements worn by men and women. These differences include the *mambi* (Fig 5.8), a triangular waist girdle traditionally made of possum or kangaroo hide that is worn by women. They can also be shown wearing short aprons called *wuduwan* and string or hide skirts with tassels called *wa.ngara*. Only males should wear *jangun* that is made of rope and wrapped around the waist and the *wulbud* (girdle) that is made of possum-hide. The *wulbud* is painted as a bulbous shape with three distinct peaks (Fig 5.8). Observing the two figures (Fig 5.7) Doring discusses, permits analysis of some of the above mentioned features – (a) relative size, (b) elaborate headdress, (c) long falling-back hair, (d) body shape, (e) held objects and (f) accoutrements.

The angle of the headdress line to the body line of the figure may also prove to be significant in sexing figures in this type of comparative analysis. For example, the figure
on the left in Fig 5.7 wears a headdress at an angle slightly above 90° to the body and the figure on the right sports a headdress or ‘long falling back hair’ at a 35° angle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mambi – triangular waist girdle</td>
<td>Jangun – belt made of rope and wrapped around the waist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wuduwan and wa.ngara – shorter aprons of string or hide skirt with tassels</td>
<td>Wulbud – girdle of bulbous shape with three distinct points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuller shape of thigh, stomach and hip</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**5.2.2 Elkin**

The *Wanjina* are heroic ancestors who moved through this landscape along Dreaming tracks until they reached their resting place in a particular clan estate, where they left their images in the caves and shelters and so defined the estate areas. As with the *Gwion* origin mythology we are again informed by Elkin:

*I can throw no light on the origin of these paintings. The natives say that they do not make the wondjina figures, but only repaint them. ... wondjina, “lalan wondiauina” that is made itself* (Elkin 1930:273).

This confused Elkin as the Aboriginal informants obviously regarded these images as integral to their lives. Elkin, who visited the northwest Kimberley in 1930, made some valuable observations that may aid in the difficult task of analysing *Wanjina* images for sexual features. He reported that perspective is mostly absent and, in general, the feet are depicted with the soles in the same plane as the legs, the number of fingers and toes vary from three to seven on hands and feet, and there is a nose and eyes, with lashes, but no mouth. The ‘halo’ is said to be the representation of the red ochre that the natives traditionally paint in a band high on the forehead and down the sides of the face but, when depicted in rock art, it has a flattened appearance (Fig 5.9-11). The elongated shapes from the top of the ‘halo’ are variously said to represent the tail feather of black cockatoo, lightning (Elkin 1930) and the inside of the *Wanjina’s* sub-incised penis (Walsh pers. comm. 2006) or a combination of the three (Fig 5.11). Similarly, Elkin informs us that the decorative dots that are sometimes applied to this ‘halo’ are similar to those applied in real life. The ‘rays’ are simply the hairs projecting at the back of this band (Elkin 1930:273). The belts worn by men on some figures are often spotted because this indicates that they are made of human hair (Elkin 1930:270). No mention is made of women wearing belts.
The figures also display what Elkin’s informants told him is a beard; starting at the level of the armpits and in the shape of an oval it is generally black (Figs 5.9-11). Yet Elkin notes that he was inclined to regard the ‘beard’ as a pearl-shell chest ornament, called *pindjauanja*, that was worn all over the Kimberley district by men, women and children (Elkin 1930:274). This suggestion would seem to be justified as the figure with upraised arms (Fig 5.10), which is clearly a female with breasts and vulva, displays the same mark in the chest area.

An additional feature, on this figure, is the navelwort or ‘belly button’ which is enhanced and highlighted in some of the female *Wanjina*. Furthermore, traditional retouching of
paintings of female *Wanjina* was said to cause an increase in human babies (Blundell 1975:73). Elkin’s observations of features that may indicate male or female sex are summarised in Table 5.4.

**Table 5-4 Elkin’s (1930) summary of the features noted for *Wanjina***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General features</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Halo – ochred band over the front part of the top of the head and down the sides of the face</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elongated shapes from the top of the ‘halo’ – tail feather of the cockatoo or lightning</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rays - hair</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belts – sometimes spotted to indicate that they are made of hair</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oval in chest area – beard or pearl-shell chest decoration</td>
<td>Male/Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Elkin (1930:260) also states that some of the heads, reported by Aborigines to represent ‘*wondjina*’ women, were kept ‘bright’ by retouching with ochre, charcoal or pipe-clay for the purpose of fertility and baby increase, though he appears not to have come to any conclusion with regard to the gender of the wider *Wanjina* assemblage:

*I am not sure whether wondjina is really thought of in terms of sex. Some of the paintings are said to be women while other references to wondjina seem to make him male. Then again, he is also the rainbow-serpent, and one of his functions as such is to “make” spirit-children. He is apparently a generalised power who can be thought of in different ways according to his different functions* (Elkin 1930:279).

This observation is supported by Andreas Lommel (1952) who reported:

*‘The sky being, Wallanganda, and the earth being, Ungud, perform their creative deeds at night in the dream state. In this state ‘Ungud transforms himself – or herself because Ungud is by choice of the one sex or the other or also bisexual’* (Lommel 1952:16).

In this state ‘*Ungud*’ is said to have ‘found the first *Wonschina* in a creative dream’. The images of these ‘*Wonschina*’ are therefore created by the *Ungud*. This may explain in part the occurrences of bisexual anthropomorphic beings in the rock art. *Wanjina*, therefore, may be of any gender. Where there are no genitalia or mammae, the smaller figures and heads are often described as the wives, children or the followers of the main figure within group scenes (Mowaljarlai & Malnic 1993). It is therefore critical to access the mythology associated with the compilation of figures depicted.
5.2.3 Petri and Lommel

Helmut Petri, a German anthropologist, led the first Australian Frobenius Expedition in the Kimberley in 1938 and continued to visit Western Australia until the 1980s. Andreas Lommel was a part of Petri’s first expedition and both men recorded extensive data on the culture and mythology of the Kimberley. Although many of the myths are in fragmented form, others have been recorded in relation to particular images.

For example, Lommel (1952:18) recorded that the Janmaramara country Wondschina had a mouth ‘… and should be represented with one. His country is so dry that he needs a mouth in order to procure enough rain’ (Fig 5.12). The mouth, in this case, is seen to control the amount of precipitation. The Janmaramara Wanjina are also said to be the creators of the bark water ‘bucket’. Lommel (1952:10) remarks that these containers are made and carried by the women in their gathering forays and photographs suggest men carried them also (Petri 1954: Plate vii[a]).

![Figure 5-12 Wanjina depicted with a mouth](image)

Indigenous informant Terry Marnga (pers. comm. 8/8/11) informed that the ‘bucket’ is associated with the Jillinya, a promiscuously themed female figure, who is avoided by the men as she will grab, cook and eat them. The myth associated with this malevolent Jillinya is recorded in Love (1936:ChXII) and it explains how she was a praying mantis who changed into a human who captured a man and carrying him in her bucket she prepared to cook him. Her image is left in rock shelters and must be avoided by men. Here, Jillinya appears to have a different inference to that of Doring’s ‘Earth Mother’. It may be that they are a warning to young men as an educational tool against ‘wrong way’ marriage, or the manifestation of a desired liaison or a fertility device (Fig. 5.13-4).
Similarly, the ancestor, *Kuranguli*, is said to have introduced the marriage laws and with them the custom of defloration of marriageable daughters (Lommel 1952:23-4). In this myth it is considered attractive for a girl to have an enlarged vagina and labia and this is evidenced in the recent art (5.15). Similarly, circumcision was performed on youths, and young men whose beards had begun to grow underwent sub-incision (Figs 5.16-7). The inventor of sub-incision is said to be the *Wanjina, Kalaru*, who when he threw the first lightning it split open his penis and in this way released fire and lightning. *Kalaru* liberated fire by turning the red of his penis out. He can guide the lightning by taking his penis in his hand and indicating, with his club, the direction in which the lightning should go. Accordingly all initiated men, particularly medicine men, had ‘fire in their penises’ and were able to use lightning in this way to kill their enemies and also smash parts of trees for firewood.
The ritual and philosophies attached to these cultural activities were intense and considered essential for the infusing of skills, fertility, power and so forth into the initiate (Lommel 1952:34-5). Red ochre is often used in the area of the crutch or at the end of the penis in more recent images and is described as a ‘blotch of power’ by Walsh (2000).

While Lommel (1952) wrote about the practices of the Unambal situated in my study area, it is their neighbours the Ungarinyin (Ngarinyin) that are discussed by Petri (1954). Here it is said that Ungud filled the Wanjina with blood (a mix of red ochre and water) in only half of the body and with water in the other half. This blood makes the people and animals strong and the water is what the Wanjina use to generate rain. Petri says this has great significance for the increase and fertility ideas central to the spiritual life and that this can be observed in the Wanjina images. The arc (halo) is mostly painted in red ochre signifying blood and the face is white and denotes the water of the rain. The Ngarinyin frequently explained the white spots painted into the arc (halo) as rain cloud (Petri 1954:110). This explanation differs from that of Elkin (1930) above, but variation is to be expected between language groups and the interpretations expressed by each.

Petri (1954) also considers the meaning of the oval, black spot in the chest area and reported that it was described as a sternum, heart, and ‘also as “medicine” in the Wóndjina’s body’. If depicted in the region of the genitals (more rarely and on older images) it was not clear if it were meant to be a penis or vulva.

We can therefore hardly deduce the sex of a local Wóndjina from its bandja-ódin (shadow/rock picture). Only its orally transmitted history gives any clue to it. (Petri 1954:162)

(but see Petri 1954 for a selection of myths.)

5.2.4 Crawford

The Western Australian museum archaeologist, Ian Crawford, visited Wanjina sites in the northwest Kimberley, collecting information with the help of Aboriginal informants. He recounts that the physical features of the Wanjina (as ‘the spirit of the cloud’) have two meanings. For example, the elaborate headdress is the hair of a human and a representation of cloud; the cumulonimbus clouds of the ‘wet’ are said to be Wanjina themselves (Crawford 1968:28). In addition, he was informed that the mark on the chest is a representation of the breast-bone (Table 5.5) and the line, which sometimes extends from the ‘halo’ into the nose bar is said to be ‘lightning’ or power (Crawford 1968:45).
Table 5-5 Ethnographic explanations given to various researchers by Traditional Owners to explain the oval shape depicted in the chest area of the *Wanjina*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beard</td>
<td>Elkin 1930:274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sternum, heart, &quot;medicine&quot;</td>
<td>Petri 1954:162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breast bone</td>
<td>Crawford 1968:45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>Mowaljarlai 1993:200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearl shell decoration</td>
<td>Elkin 1930:274</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In many cases an iconographic key represents more than one concept.

Crawford revisited the sites seen by explorer George Grey in 1837 and although the images were very faded they were still recognisable as those that Grey had described and
drawn. In this case, there seems to be clear differences in the headdresses of the related female and male mythological subjects (Figs 5.18-21). The headdresses are much larger on the females and were supposedly bright blue when recorded by Grey in 1837. However, to apply these differences to unrelated examples spread across the many clan estates is problematic. Crawford’s informant, Sam Woolagoodjah, told the story of a male Wanjina, Mulu mulu (Figs 5.18-19), who was pursued by a group of four females (Figs 5.20-1) as the mythological basis of this group of images (Crawford 1968:65). It would seem, therefore, that analysis of discrete panels of related images, their place in the environment and ethnographic information needs to be considered collectively for this period of rock art.

![Figure 5-22](image)

**Figure 5-22** A rare Wanjina displaying genitalia and superimposing earlier classic styles (Crawford 1968:59)

Like Walsh (2000), Crawford (1968) noted the changing nature of the images. When discussing the image of a Wanjina with male genitalia (Fig 5.22) at the Langgi site he notes ‘my guide did not recall seeing this other figure on his previous visit to the site some fifteen years earlier’ (Crawford 1968:57). Similarly, a comparison of Figs 5.23 and 5.24 shows the addition of an ‘evil spirit’ between the Lommel photograph of 1955 and Malnic’s image of 1982 (Godden & Malnic 1997 Plate 9). More recent images seem to follow this thematic change.
5.3 Discussion

The culture of the Aboriginal people was not static (Elkin 1930, Petri 1954): the ancient sacred traditions were always subject to change. The introduction of new doctrines may explain the change from the classic *Wanjina* to a thematically more sexually graphic rendition of the human form. Thought to have come from the desert in the south, *Kurangara* is associated with the *djanba* beings (dust spirits), who inspire ‘death-bringing black magic’ (Petri 1954:130). The Aborigines describe *Kurangara* as the same as ‘poison’; as a magically destructive force proceeding from the *djanba* spirits belonging to aridity and desert. These spirit beings are connected to a whole complex of cryptic doctrines, clandestine cult acts, mantras, dances, incantations and cult objects (Petri 1954:179). It is possible that this new doctrine accounts for the thematic changes to sexualisation of anthropomorphic motifs. They are graphically distinguished with diagnostic elements including genitalia, prominent ears, ‘arms up’, promiscuous positioning of the legs and a central forehead line. When discussing the southern and eastern parts of the Kimberley, Crawford (1968:91) describes different grades of malevolent beings: *Argula* (devils who will take bad children), *Djimi* (spirits are less harmful and could even be helpful) and *Djuari* (ghosts of dead people). Some of these in turn have individual names. For example, *Wurulu Wurulu* (yam spirit *argula*) was often depicted with small yam motifs and an exaggerated penis, caused by *Djimi* grabbing it (the penis) to stop him from getting away with stolen yams’ (Appendix 3, Grahame Walsh 1993 pers. comm.). Vinnicombe (1976:245-60) notes Australian Aboriginals used ‘male figures with large penis’ as ‘warnings against the infringement of sexual laws’ though no confirmation of this was obtained from Traditional Owners.
The changing status of women is embedded in the mythology associated with the rock art and is often illustrated by features in the landscape. Godden & Malnic (1997:27) recorded an understanding of the legends as told by their informant Jagamurro:

...long ago, women made the law and kept the power of the sacred stone. Gorrai was jealous of their power and called Memej the great whirlwind to destroy them. Memej was a man but he was a whirl-wind too, and he came with awful force while Gorrai cursed the women who gave a great cry and turned themselves into stone in a circle around their sacred monument. ...ever since the women had their power stolen they have been under the control of their husbands.

Additionally they were informed by Moweljarlai that there is no burial ceremony for women as they go back to their own womb as they are the mother – the earth (Godden & Malnic 1997:28). It would appear to be remiss then to entirely dismiss the notion of there being an important mythological female figure included in the rock art. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that it is only in recent reports that we hear of her (Doring 2000, Moweljarlie & Malnic 1993, Godden & Malnic 1997). The earlier records are mostly concentrated on the Wanjina period and some confidence can be taken in the data because the informants were actively engaged in Wanjina culture. Yet, much of the data is conflicting: iconographic features and emic ethnographic explanations do not merge precisely and consistently. Jillinya appears to have become a generic term for the female form rather than a ‘malevolent female spirit’ as reported in the myth by Love (1936). The art spans many centuries and the assignment of male and female girdles to the Gwion figures as proposed by Doring (2000) would seem to stretch the bounds of credibility.

The Wanjina Period poses difficulties for sexual appropriation because it seems that the features such as ‘chest decoration’, body shape and headdress are not confined to one sex. The difficulty with ethnography and ethno-history has been discussed above, but there is one further consideration I would like to emphasise. English is the second language of all of the Aboriginal informants and their understanding of the nuances of the English language is limited in most cases. Aboriginal people are superb mimics and very quick to learn, yet the following example demonstrates the difficulty even children of today have with a comprehensive understanding of individual words not commonly used by them.

A group of children from the Kalumburu Community were sponsored to attend boarding school in Melbourne for secondary education. This little group sought sanctuary away from the mainstream in the library at every opportunity. It was decided
that this was not allowed and they were told not to go there ‘until’ after school. However they appeared to ignore this direction and continued hiding away in the library at each break. When their sponsor questioned them about this, one of the girls asked ‘What this ‘til’ word?’ They obviously had no use for such a word as ‘until’ at Kalumburu and so had no understanding of it (Celia Myers 2008 pers. comm.).

It is imperative that we keep in mind that English is a second (third or fourth) language to all of the Kriol Aboriginal people in the communities and homelands of the Kimberley and that their own languages differ greatly throughout the area. Capell & Coate (1984) argued that there were few cognates existing between Kimberley languages and that the rate of vocabulary replacement is high compared to other languages. McGregor (2004:37:46) did not believe that this was the case after adopting a different method of study, but he found that there was significant linguistic diversity. He argued that only the immediate family was subject to the taboo in a rigid fashion and that the taboo would be relaxed after a few years. Yet this would appear to have had some disruptive influence on the descriptive words used for other objects to which ethnologists were trying to put a name.

Additionally the practices of a culture are often judged by the standards of the observing or etic viewer. The practice of sub-incision and vaginal and labia enlargement was considered attractive to the opposite sex and integral to the cultural beliefs of the Aboriginal culture, and their significance is evidenced in the artistic themes of the Wandjina period anthropomorphic motifs. In contrast, increasingly our own culture favours labia reduction (Miklos and Moore 2008).

Similarly the Gwion figures present gendering challenges. When considering the unsexed Gwion, Walsh (2000) and Welch (2012 pers. comm.) both consider that they are depictions of males because of their association with weapons, headdress and accoutrements, and Wilson regards them as female because of their stance, grace and equivalence to ‘Earth Mother’ figures from other cultures. Interestingly Love (1936:80) observes of the Worora; ‘All the men are graceful in their walk’ and ‘His lithe and active movements, upright carriage, and attractive manner … makes him a handsome picture…’. Doring (2000) claims his informants the munnumburra or lawmen, identify the sex of a figure by the type of clothing worn, while earlier recording of ethnographical data connected with this period, was not able to be secured. The Wanjina period is thought to supersede the Gwion period but how long ago the transition of these artistic
conventions took place is not yet known. Walsh stated that there was a hiatus between the two periods, and Welch uses analogy to connect historical evidence of headdress association with the *Gwion* figures. Many researchers advocate that while there was change there was also continuity of art style across time (see Crawford 1977, Ross 2013, Travers 2013).

Nevertheless, by collating the preceding data a greater knowledge of features associated with the figures is gained and this allows a keener reflection of what may be relevant to the iconology indicating gender. The most effective method involves the analyses of the figures unequivocally male and those that are unequivocally female for features common to their gender. To aid in this analysis a general framework and chronology is discussed and developed.

### 5.4 General Framework and Chronology

Walsh assembled the many styles into a relative stylistic sequence by an analysis of superimposition, relative states of weathering and placement within the site. He used ‘Epochs’ of Archaic, Erudite and Aboriginal to define the ages of art that he considered to be separated by a hiatus or ‘apparent discontinuity’ (Walsh 2000:viii). These ‘Epochs’ were divided into ‘Periods’ and they in turn divided into ‘Groups’. Further splitting into sub-group, phase and feature makes his classification comprehensive but challenging.

David Welch has also devoted a great deal of time to the study of the art and has developed his own relative sequence. He simplifies his classification to encompass just eight periods (Welch 1993). Additionally, Welch proposes that there were no ‘periods of discontinuity’ in the art and although he presents no formal analysis, this argument may well prove to be valid.

Principally, Walsh has presented a set of worthy guidelines and for the purpose of this study his relative sequence is used to provide form and clarity (Walsh 2000:viii). Name changes have been requested by the Aboriginal people of the area and these are presented under the category ‘New Nomenclature’ (Table 5.6). The changes are concerned with the use of the local language – replacement of the descriptive names created for the motifs by Walsh and Welch, with the traditional names. The use of Epochs is discontinued in line with Welch. Additional changes are anticipated in the future as Aboriginal consultants are able to bring more clarity to the research.
Table 5.6 Relative sequences proposed by Walsh and Welch and the sequence to be used in this thesis developed with the assistance of the Traditional Owners of the area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grahame Walsh</th>
<th>David Welch</th>
<th>New Nomenclature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Epoch Period</td>
<td>Period Archaic</td>
<td>Pecked Cupule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Period Archaic</td>
<td>Irregular Infill Animal Figures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archaic</td>
<td>Pecked Cupule</td>
<td>Pecked Cupule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Irregular Infill Animal Figures</td>
<td>Irregular Infill Animal Figures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erudite</td>
<td>Bradshaw Tassel</td>
<td>Tasselled Figures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sash Bent Knee Figures</td>
<td>Gwion Classic Mambi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elegant Action Figures</td>
<td>Dynamic Gwion Yowna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clothes Peg Figure</td>
<td>Straight Part Figures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aborigine</td>
<td>Clawed Hand Painted Hands</td>
<td>Wanjina Painted Hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wandjina</td>
<td>Wanjina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>Argula and Jillinya</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While superimposition is an ideal tool in determining relative chronological order, it does not provide an indisputable means for the establishment of temporal definition. There are many images whose style appears to straddle the time between superimposed painting events and this does not allow for clear partitions. Yet there are ‘classic’ features pertaining to the three main groups and these bring an order and structure to the reporting.

Table 5.7 has been developed to assist in understanding the relative sequence of each period and the styles within the periods. A depiction of typical motifs and a description of general features are given for each style. This structure is used to order the results reported in Chapter 7. However, there are many figures that are not easily assigned to one classification or another, so designation is at times arbitrary.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERIOD</th>
<th>STYLE OF HUMAN</th>
<th>ILLUSTRATION</th>
<th>Features in general terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARCHAIC</td>
<td>Irregular Infill Animal</td>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Static in stance&lt;br&gt;Monochrome, dark red outline &amp; irregular dashes infill&lt;br&gt;Detailed feet and hands&lt;br&gt;Associated with animals with similar infill&lt;br&gt;Not associated with weapons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GWION</td>
<td>Classic Gwion</td>
<td>Mambi</td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yowna</td>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Bent knees indicating movement&lt;br&gt;Monochrome mulberry or dark red&lt;br&gt;Highly decorated, with sash and headdress&lt;br&gt;Often in group or frieze&lt;br&gt;Associated with boomerang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamic</td>
<td></td>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Highly dynamic&lt;br&gt;Monochrome red to dark red&lt;br&gt;Headdress on some figures and rarely with accoutrements&lt;br&gt;Often in group scenes – hunting, camp, ceremony&lt;br&gt;Associated with boomerangs, spears, clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wararrjai</td>
<td></td>
<td><img src="image5.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Static in stance&lt;br&gt;Monochrome, bichrome or polychrome - missing parts caused by varied permanence of paint medium used&lt;br&gt;Headdress and minimal accoutrements&lt;br&gt;Often in group or frieze&lt;br&gt;Associated with multi barb spear, hooked stick, boomerang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WANJINA</td>
<td>Painted Hand</td>
<td><img src="image6.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Static in stance&lt;br&gt;Roughly executed, outlined with varied infill&lt;br&gt;Body design with accoutrements&lt;br&gt;Single, pairs or small group&lt;br&gt;Not generally associated with weapons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanjina</td>
<td></td>
<td><img src="image7.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Static in stance&lt;br&gt;Polychrome – white, tan, black, red&lt;br&gt;Halo headdress and on body decoration&lt;br&gt;Often in cluster and with head or head and shoulders only&lt;br&gt;Not associated with weapons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argula and Jillinya</td>
<td><img src="image8.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Static&lt;br&gt;Bichrome – commonly red outline/white infill&lt;br&gt;May have been associated with a new short-lived cult of powerful malevolent beings – sexually detailed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td></td>
<td><img src="image9.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Images of boats &amp; firearms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Breaking the Code

6.1 Introduction

While many people have undertaken rock art studies, their method of investigation varies greatly. However, some studies pertinent to sex and gender that stand out as solid analytical examples can be modified for this thesis. These studies have been discussed in previous chapters and an outline is given of the aspects adopted, modified or extended for this research. For example, Patricia Vinnicombe’s (1976) South African rock art analysis, the Kimberley research of Grahame Walsh (1994, 2000) and the Australian multi-regional study by Julie Drew (2006) present detailed analyses for sex/gender differentiation and their methods are considered below.

6.2 Methods used

In his study of the Kimberley rock art assemblages, Walsh (2000) developed similar quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques to those advanced by Vinnicombe (1976) in her study of the rock art in the Drakensburg in southeastern Africa. Both Vinnicombe and Walsh identified extensive categories of iconographic keys to analyse anthropomorphic and zoological motifs. The method adopted by these researchers in the analysis of anthropomorphic figures was to use genitalia and mammae to firstly discover sexed figures, and then to isolate different features culturally accepted as gender specific to determine if the unsexed (neutral/intermediate) figures could be gendered.

For example, Vinnicombe’s (1976) results showed that sexed figures were biased towards male figures by 7% but when steatopygia, steatomeria and lumbar lordosis (secondary sexing key) were added as probable female characteristics the percentages for both males and females was even. This type of analysis of firstly selecting primary sex features for examination to reveal a ratio of male/female and then selecting motifs with secondary sexing keys as male or female often alters the outcome (Table 6.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>405</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When motifs displaying steatopygia, steatomeria, lumbar lordosis are added the female % rises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>405</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Similarly, Walsh (2000) believed that iconographic elements were used singularly or in various combinations to unequivocally convey sexual identification of all motifs. Although Walsh was pedantic in recording intricate form and style of iconographic keys and giving reasons for their selection, he does not give the statistical results of his analysis except to say that female to male ratios favour males at approximately 1:5000 for Sash Bradshaw (Yowna) and 1:10,000 for Clothes Peg (Wararrajai) figures. His categories to determine female sex/gender are listed in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2 Walsh’s list of primary and secondary sex features for female motifs (Walsh 2000:177, 203 & 230)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary sexing features</th>
<th>Secondary sexing features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• breasts to either side or stacked</td>
<td>• absence of headdress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• some form of schematised vulva</td>
<td>• arms upraised, but not necessarily holding objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• almost invariably obese or gynoid (pear-shaped) body form</td>
<td>• legs depicted in promiscuous ‘squatting’ or more elevated alignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• close association to larger figure with head dressed holding weapons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• digging stick, dilly bags and bags carried by way of headbands</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While Vinnicombe used ethnography to enhance her understanding of the art, Walsh could only do so for the Wanjina period figures when the mythology was able to be conveyed by Traditional Owners. His firm belief that the preceding Gwion period was effectively disassociated by a hiatus from the Wanjina precluded him from projecting its mythology into what he considered to be distant prehistory.

Vinnicombe and Walsh both listed weapons as the preserve of males and Walsh included elaborate headdress and accoutrements as masculine specific, though Walsh does not give statistical results to support this. Vinnicombe’s results (Table 6.3) show that 2417 weapons were observed, yet it is not reported if these weapons were held singularly or in number. Additionally, neither the number of figures sexed with primary keys nor the number assigned a sex through secondary features is reported. Such reporting omissions are unfortunate but draw one’s attention to the need for specific detail in gendering data.

Table 6.3 Weapons and tools associated with figures taken from tables by Vinnicombe (1976:363)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weapon Or Tool</th>
<th>Male weapons or hunting gear</th>
<th>Total Male</th>
<th>Female tool</th>
<th>Indeterminate accoutrements</th>
<th>Total Intermediate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>1414</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While Walsh argues that elaborate accoutrements (dress and body decoration) is a marker for male sex and higher status, clothing is not used extensively in sexual division by Vinnicombe (1969:245-50). In this case, she states that ethnographic practices are not reflected in the paintings, nor does ‘clothing type’ assist in gendering the neutral figures. Rather, she proposes that there were different societal levels between the naked and scantily clad figures and the kaross-clad individuals who appear to be of ‘above average significance’ (Fig 6.1). Of 4,530 figures 2,665 (58%) were naked and 840 (18%) wore some sort of traditional dress such as an apron, cloak or kaross (Table 6.4). Similarly, ethnographic evidence shows that body paint and decoration is undertaken by both men and women and occurs on 9% of the figures.

Table 6-4 Male and female clothing from Vinnicombe (1976)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breech-cloths (nappy)</td>
<td>Small apron in front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long rear apron hanging to the back of the knees</td>
<td>Larger apron behind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two strands or projections hanging from between the legs thongs suspended from the waist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Karosses – animal skin capes
everyday figures as a protection against cold (rare)
elite figures depicted as larger than those which are naked or scantily clad (common)

Figure 6-1 An example of categories used by Vinnicombe (1976)
Both Vinnicombe (1976) and Walsh (1994, 2000) developed a systematic study of rock art by counting, classifying, and mapping depictions. They employed quantitative methods to search for patterns, and they applied a structuralist interpretation of the data. While these aspects of their work are highly relevant for sexing the anthropomorphic motifs, further strategies are required for assigning gender roles to the figures.

Gender roles are reliant on group structure and relational aspects of the motifs to one another and therefore ‘association’, ‘relationship’ and ‘attitude’ need to be analysed. Julie Drew’s (2006:105-13) comparative study of five disparate regions in Australia highlighted this aspect (see Chapter 2). Basing her study on classification and terminology established by Maynard (1977:387-402) and Cole (1998), she used 70 independent attributes: 40 variables related to form, technique and character, and 30 variables pertinent to spatial and relationship aspects. It is the spatial and relationship structures that are of particular relevance to my study.

Table 6.5 Features used by Drew considered relevant to this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Association with accessory, animal or plant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female under arm of male</td>
<td>Carrying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female under arm of human</td>
<td>Next to body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close proximity to male of same style</td>
<td>Touching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close proximity to female of same style</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close proximity to child/human</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While Walsh (2000:178 & 203) also discusses relationship and uses terms such as ‘supplicant’ and ‘dominant’ throughout his publications, I considered his ‘arrangements’ feature list incomplete; conversely his ‘headdress’ classification was considered excessive for analysis of sex and gender (see Appendix 5). Therefore, adjustments to his categories and methods were considered and instigated where pertinent. Walsh’s intent was firstly to place the rock art in a relative sequence and this is a critical aspect of his work. Once achieved, it permits observation of changing cultural patterns through time. For example, changing weapons use, variation in sexing iconology, and shifting gendered roles are observed. This deductive method beginning with a relative sequence is unique to Walsh and is critical to analysing the anthropomorphic motifs and their changing gendered roles through time. While aspects of other researcher’s (Vinnicombe, Drew and others) methods have been considered and adopted, my methods are largely based on Walsh’s research strategies.
6.3 Method Developed for this Thesis

The *Microsoft Access* relational database designed by June Ross and Meg Travers and constructed by Brent James (*handmade computing*) is based on the many features pertaining to figures, formulated by Grahame Walsh (Appendix 1), and is a significant analytical tool for the purpose of this study. The survey strategy, data collection method and a general outline of the collation of information to form the data base follows.

6.3.1 Survey Strategy

In 2008, Mike Morwood (University of Wollongong) and June Ross (University of New England) undertook a survey of selected rock art sites and complexes in the northwest Kimberley. Major site complexes were selected for rock art survey and excavation potential. Using each of these complexes as a central point, the team of which I was a member surveyed and recorded sites within a radius of approximately one kilometre. Other sites were recorded opportunistically. Over the three years, 209 sites and 7,579 motifs were recorded. The assemblages varied in size for each site, from a single figure to over 450 motifs.

6.3.2 How the Data was Collected

Photography was an important component of each stage of the recording process beginning with the ‘In View’ and ‘Out View’ of the site to be recorded. The general overview of the site was then photographed and if large a series of photos from left to right were taken. The panels were selected and photographed individually as were each of the motifs. This allowed each motif to be observed in relational and spatial association.

*Site*

Site description includes the date of recording, recorder name, GPS readings, detailed environmental data, material archaeology and conservation issues. A scaled site plan and cross section were drawn, features of interest were noted on it and portions were sectioned off for manageable recording purposes.

*Panel*

Panels within each site were numbered from left to right and natural topography was noted. Each panel was then described by orientation and visibility and notes were added of any other features including grouping of figures.
Motif

Each motif within an art site was photographed, drawn, measured and described in detail. When the information was entered into the database a ‘sub heading’ allowed the isolation of anthropomorphs into a group for further description. Drawing necessitates intense observation, allowing precise analysis of each motif.

Anthropomorphs

Anthropomorphs were recorded in minute detail, general condition, composition, orientation and superimposition. Period and style classification was made to divide the motifs into the six groups of IIAP, Mambi & Yowna, Dynamic Figures, Wararraja, Painted Hand Period (PHP) and Wanjina before quantitative and qualitative analyses were initiated. Analyses were conducted on categories, listed below, aimed at assigning sex.

6.3.3 Reasons for Isolating the Motifs for Examination

The reasons for isolating each motif for comprehensive classification were to identify features and iconographic keys that, in isolation or combination could potentially be used by artists for gendering purposes, to place figures in relational association to other motifs, and to explore their spatial relationship within the assemblage of each panel.

Remembering that the body is a biological (sexual) reality and a social (gendered) construct directs us to view the anthropomorphic motifs as biologically sexed (male/female/other) and also as gendered beings with cultural identification keys for gendered states such as masculine, feminine and other (bisexual, homosexual). It follows that the primary keys for sexing are biological and the secondary keys such as types of apparel and weapons are gendering keys. These terms will be used throughout the analyses.

Much of the rock art is now in poor condition and some motifs have deteriorated badly. Unless motifs were reasonably clear and complete, they were excluded to ensure results were as accurate as possible.
6.3.4 Description of the Categories used for Analysis

Gender Categories

Female and male motifs are evident in the northwest Kimberley rock art assemblage, but unexpectedly gender is not limited to the dichotomy of male and female. Documentation of the art assemblage showed that rock art is not limited to two mutually opposed sexes but rather, a continuum of more varied states was depicted. The categories selected for analysis include

- Male – show primary sexual features of penis and/or testicles
- Female – show primary sexual features of mammae and/or vulvae
- Bisexual – combined male & female genitalia or male genitalia & breasts
- Homosexual – display erect side penis in sexual activity with same sex figures
- Ambiguous – such as, lizard-men; human-like with a penis/tail longer than leg length
- Ungendered – no primary sexual features

Sexual Features

Although it would seem that defining sexual indicators is a straightforward exercise, challenges exist. Many female motifs do not have breasts, but display schematised vulvae, and male penises must not be confused with the tails of lizards!

Figure 6-2 ‘Menstruation’ – red in the pelvic area
Figure 6-3 Left hand white figure has a small circle in the pelvic area and the male has a sub-incised penis hanging below the foot area
Sexual detail includes

- Breasts
  - Breasts to either side (Fig 6.4 & 5)
  - Stacked breasts – (Fig 6.6)
  - Single breast - in profile view sometimes only one breast is depicted
  - On body breasts

- Pubic hair

- Vulva
  - Menstruation (Fig 6.2)
  - On body vulva (Fig 6.5)
  - Suspended vulva (Fig 6.4)

- Penis
  - Erect
  - Sub-incised (Fig 6.3)
  - Meandering
  - Long penis or lizard tail – penis longer than leg (Fig 6.3)

- Testicles

- Anus
  - Decorated anus
  - Protruding anus

- Blotch of power – solid red or lined circle at the end of a penis

Figure 6-4 Breasts to either side.
Photographed by Di England

Figure 6-5 On body vulva.
Photographed by Di England

Figure 6-6 Stacked breasts.
Photographed by Di England
**Headdress (Elaborate, Small, Missing, Absent) and Hair**

The presence or absence of headdress is considered a potentially significant key to determining the sex of an ambiguous figure. There are many types of headdresses and for ease of comparison they have been classified into four categories:

1. **None** – the figure is clear enough to show that there is no evidence of a headdress being present.
2. **Missing** – the area of the head and headdress is exfoliated to such an extent that a judgment cannot be made that the motif at some time did or did not include a headdress.
3. **Elaborate** – this category encompasses over a hundred variations of headdress which are diverse in style but are all significantly elaborate.
4. **Small** – because there are some sexed female figures with small headdresses it was felt that a category for this feature should be included.

Two more categories were added for the *Wanjina* period figures.

5. **Halo** – describes the circular band enfolding the head area.
6. **Rayed** – lines extending out from the top and sides of the head.

Hair is categorised as ‘shocked’, ‘mop hair’ or ‘cap hair’.

**Weapons/Tools**

The *Dynamic Gwion* discrete rock art panel (Fig 6.7) below records some of the many weapons documented in the assemblages of the northwest Kimberley. Weaponry is generally presumed to be exclusively associated with male figures and this assumption is tested against those figures with marked sexual features.

![Figure 6-7 Multi-barbed spears, boomerang and clubs are all part of this discrete Dynamic Gwion scene](image-url)
Many figures were associated with more than one weapon and it was thought prudent to report the statistics for this. Weapons analysed are boomerang, club, digging stick, hooked stick, shield, spear and tools are bag on back, dilly bag, firewood and swag.

Types of tools, such as digging sticks, axes and bark buckets, in close association with or carried by sexed figures were also carefully recorded to determine if they were gender specific. The form of association i.e. action/placement is recorded as being

- held – carried or held aloft
- near – e.g. placed beside seated figures & depicted lying parallel to but not touching arm
- piercing body – figure with spear protruding from it

**Body Shape**

There are many variations in body shape. Five main categories have been selected. ‘Gynoid’ classification, for example, defines a pear shape usually associated with the female form and ‘elliptical’ describes a rounded body. The ‘narrow chest & paunch detail’ shape is typically associated with the *Gwion* figures and ‘barrel’ is common to *Wanjina* figures (Fig 6.8).

![Figure 6-8 Body shape](image)

**Figure 6-8** Body shape – 1. barrel, 2. elliptical, 3. gynoid, 4. narrow chest & paunch detail (NC&PD) & 5. stick

**Action**

- Bending – body bent over from the waist
- Bent Knee – appears to indicate dancing or ceremony
- Kneeling – rare figures
- Running in profile view
- Sitting in both profile and plan views
- Standing is the most common position
- Squatting often to facilitate genitalia in both sexes
Orientation

The orientation of the body was recorded as ‘profile’ or ‘plan’ view. ‘Asymmetrical’ view was used for bodies oriented in ‘plan’ view in the lower portion and twisted into ‘profile’ in the upper body area.

Limb Detail

The arms and legs of the motifs were observed for details such as limb thickness and positioning, to determine if this had any bearing on the sex of a figure. Comparisons were made between motifs sexually marked and unsexed figures.

Relationship

Relational categories closely follow those developed by Drew (2006) and are used in conjunction with the ‘scene’ and ‘attitude’ categories.

- Close proximity to child/human
- Close proximity to female of same style
- Close proximity to male of same style
- Female under arm of male
- Female under arm of human
- Male/female association
- Male/male association
- Dominant in group
- Supplicant in group

Attitude

When discussing the Gwion period, Walsh (2000) and Wilson (2006) suggested there was evidence of supplication and reverence conveyed in the images, and that ‘attitude’ may be related to gender in an androcentric culture. Still, it is difficult to discern the relational sense intended by the artist. There is a significant difference between ‘supplication’ and ‘reverance’ or ‘dominance’ and ‘protection’. Paired or grouped figures of the same style and technique are therefore examined for features that are pertinent to the search for iconographic keys pertaining to the sex of a motif through the socially accepted gendering features of stance, posture, or bearing.
Accoutrements

Many anthropomorphs display elaborate ‘dress decoration’ and this may have a bearing on the importance of the individual, their involvement in ceremony or level of secular prowess. Every accoutrement, for example, arm plume bands, sashes, tassels, armpit decorations and handheld whisks, was recorded for each individual motif. While some figures wore only one accoutrement, others were highly decorated. The level of accoutrements was categorised in an arbitrary manner as ‘elaborate’ or ‘simple’ depending on its visual impact and numerical level. For example, a figure with a large ‘dancing balloon’ and ‘armpit decoration’ would be classed as elaborate while a figure with six ‘bangles’ and a single ‘sash’ would be described as ‘simple’. Additionally, if one of the 52 accoutrements recorded for each anthropomorph was found to be associated with a sexed figure and in combination with additional features could assist in sexing a figure, it was analysed and compared across the assemblage.

Twenty three ‘body decoration’ features including waistbands, yoke addition and center body line were also recorded. For the purposes of reporting, categories are limited to ‘none’, ‘elaborate’, ‘simple’ unless a particular body decoration, such as the ‘breast cross straps’, shows value as a potential gendering tool.

Size

Dimorphism is identified and analysed between all of the paired and grouped figures. Each anthropomorph was measured for height and width.

Technique

The technique used for the images mostly involves the application of paint in various ways. The ochres and charcoal are applied by ‘brush’, finger or crayon or by blowing as a liquid from the mouth for background and stencils. Positive prints are created by pressing objects into wet pigment and then pressing or throwing them onto rock surfaces to produce motifs including hand, grass and string prints. The mouldings of beeswax into anthropomorphic figures are rarely encountered nor are abraded or pecked designs. Technique was examined for trends that may be gender specific.
Colour

Colour was recorded for each figure. The colours were black, brown, dark red, light red, mauve, mulberry hue, orange, pink, red, white and yellow. Additional information recorded was:

- chrome – mono, bi, poly (Figs 6.9-11)
- design elements and textures (Fig 6.11)
- missing parts owing to instability of some pigments (Fig 6.10)
- subtle variations in monochrome pigment colour between sexed figures (Fig 6.9)
- colour combinations in bi and polychrome depictions (Fig 6.10-11)

Figure Groupings

The placement or arrangement of visual elements determines if the motifs are single, paired or grouped. The design, form, colour, visual ordering or formal structure indicates if the motifs are related. Their relationship allows assessment of features such as dimorphism and limb orientation to be analysed, and for these features to be tested for gender significance.

The three categories for figure grouping are ‘single’, ‘paired’ and ‘grouped’. There are many more classifications that could be added to this list but, for the purpose of analysis it was considered adequate to limit the groupings.
- Single – a figure that does not correspond to colour, form or visual connection with another
- Pair – face to face pair, same sex pair, male/female pair
- Group – clustered, figures in horizontal row, group scene, erect penis horizontal group scene, sex scene story panel

**Scene**

At times discrete ‘scenes’ are suggested by the inclusion of visual elements, such as weapons, actions of the figures, composition. ‘Scenes’ encountered may indicate ‘conflict’, ‘hunting’, ‘camping’, ‘copulation’ (Fig 6.12), ‘birthing’ or ‘breast feeding’.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 6-12** A copulation scene shows the female with breasts and a small rounded head while the ‘male’ displays a larger head area or headdress (Donaldson 2012:302)

**Superimposition**

Many figures are superimposed and this takes several forms

- an apparent disregard for a previous phase of art
- modification of a previous style of art by adding limbs and other features
- the tradition of ‘freshening up’ figures in the *Wanjina* period art

Categories recorded were ‘none’, ‘over motif’, ‘over & under’, ‘under motif’ and unclear. For example, ‘over motif” indicated that the motif being described was situated under an overlaying motif. It proved to be a substantial aid for establishing a relative sequence for the art assemblage.
6.3.5 Animals

Figure 6-13 Sexed male macropod and female with two joeys suckling from the pouch

Figure 6-14 Male dingo clearly marked with genitalia

Figure 6-15 Suckling young

Figure 6-16 Two birds with eggs between them

Figure 6-17 X-ray eggs along spine
This thesis is only concerned with depictions of zoomorphs directly associated with anthropomorphic figures. Many animal images show sexual features and data was recorded to discover if these features were related to the sex/gender of associated anthropomorphic figures. Categories included species, sex, sexing keys, nature of association with human/s and number and type of associated animal/s (Table 6.6).

Table 6.6 Sexing features for animals exampled in Figs 6.13 to 6.17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Ambiguous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>penis</td>
<td>pouch</td>
<td>absence of genitalia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>testicles</td>
<td>mammae – suckling young</td>
<td>absence of mammae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x-ray eggs</td>
<td>eggs outside the body</td>
<td>(may be associated with both male &amp; female e.g. male emu care for eggs)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The type of association animals had with anthropomorphic figures was also recorded:

- depicted in same pigment and style as associated anthropomorphic figure/s
- in alignment with upper body of an anthropomorphic figure
- above, beneath, beside, near to an anthropomorphic figure
- dead
- hunted
- single, pair, group
- size
- speared
- animal headed human figure

### 6.4 Discussion

The recording categories provide a framework for the way in which the data was collated and for the observations considered relevant for sexing the figures and identifying their gender roles. Although all of the categories were recorded in detail, some were reduced into manageable groups for analyses. While features on single figures are valuable, pairs or groups containing one or more sexed figures within discrete scenes are invaluable in gender analysis. The elements of discrete scenes form an artistic system of association that provides a structure for analyses of potential gendered relationships. Association of motifs with each other and with tools, weapons or animals, for example, is determined by their colour, style and spatial elements such as repetition, action, placement within the scene and superimposition.
Although it has been necessary for analysis to ‘lump’ features into categories, initial testing revealed some features that suggested their isolation and inclusion was valuable. For example, a certain ‘accoutrements’ of the 62 recorded is likely to prove a significant sex indicator. Similarly, some features proved to be extraneous for a particular stylistic period, for example, IIA\(^{P}\) figures have ‘hair’ rather than ‘headdresses’. For a complete list of features documented in the database see Appendix 5. Initially each motif was analysed using the listed categories and feature frequencies by stylistic period were totalled (Appendix 5). Features depicted on sexed figures were examined and categories deemed important for gendering purposes were noted.

Table 6-7 Summary of categories used for analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>ambiguous, bisexual, female, homosexual, ungendered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Features</td>
<td>anus, breasts, blotch of ‘power’, penis, pubic hair, testicles, vulva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headdress Hair</td>
<td>none, missing, elaborate, small, halo, rayed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>none, cap hair, mop hair, shocked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapons/tools</td>
<td>boomerang, club, digging stick, hooked stick, shield, spear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bag on back, dilly bag, firewood, swag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>held, near, piercing body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Shape</td>
<td>barrel, elliptical, gynoid, narrow chest &amp; paunch detail (NC&amp;PD), stick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Action &amp; Orientation</td>
<td>bending, kneeling, prone, running, sitting, standing, squatting plan &amp; profile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limb Detail</td>
<td>thickness, positioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship &amp; Attitude</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Close proximity to child/human</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Close proximity to female of same style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Close proximity to male of same style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female under arm of male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female under arm of human</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male/female association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male/male association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attitude - dominant, protective, reverent, supplicant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accoutrements</td>
<td>Dress decoration – none, elaborate, simple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>On body decoration – none, elaborate, simple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>dimorphically large, dimorphically small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technique</td>
<td>abraded, beeswax, drawn, painted, pecked, printed, scratched, stenciled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour</td>
<td>monochrome, bichrome, polychrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>black, brown, red, mulberry, orange, white, yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>infill design – lined, cross-hatched, spotted, solid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>outline only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure Groupings</td>
<td>Grouping – single, pair, group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scene – birthing, breastfeeding, camp, fighting, hunting, sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superimposition</td>
<td>no, over motif, over and under, under motif, unclear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At this stage, a rationalisation of the categories was made by condensing several features into one category (Table 6.7), for example, 87 headdress styles were classified ‘elaborate’, three were classified ‘small’ and the categories of ‘none’ and ‘missing’ were retained. The next step was to analyse multiple combinations of the features attached to each motif. This included a summary of the sexed motifs from each period being examined to identify features of significance as potential sex-defining keys. These features are then compared with the unsexed figures singularly or in combination to assess potential numbers for each sex. The results for each period are presented separately and outcomes from a comparison between these results are tallied relevant to the quest of sexing the anthropomorphic motifs of the assemblage. A summary of the relevant findings is presented in Chapter 7.

Chi-squared testing was undertaken to establish if there was a statistically significant relationship between two phenomena, to determine if a particular feature has measurable sexing value, but testing requires all expected samples to be numbers greater than five. Sample numbers in this thesis do not always satisfy this requirement, so Fisher’s exact test was utilised (Fisher 1961). However, it was decided that percentages, ratios and display graphs were more pertinent to analysis in most circumstances (see results Chapter 7).

The relationship between animals and humans was analysed where they are closely associated to determine if a particular species or the sex of the animal is significant to the gendering of figures. Spatial analysis was not attempted due to the limited area under study.