

1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family: Dhuwal, Australian language family.

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): DUJ

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): Northeastern part of Arnhem Land in Australia located between 11° and 15° S and 134° and 137° E.

1.4 Brief history: Yolngu (the name of the larger Australian group to which the Dhuwal belong) had sporadic contacts with non-Aboriginal people until European occupation of the Northern Territory was under way in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Before then they only had visits by Macassans (traders from the Celebes) who gathered bêche-de-mer annually from the late seventeenth century until 1907. Yolngu assisted the Macassans in gathering and processing the bêche-de-mer, and they obtained from them iron tools, cloth, tobacco, and the techniques of dugout-canoe construction. In the nineteenth century, explorers and prospectors began to make their way overland. The Arnhem Land Aboriginal Reserve, created in 1931, includes the Yolngu area. Hostilities involving Japanese bêche-de-mer collectors and a police expedition in 1932 led to the establishment of a mission station on the Gove Peninsula to serve as a buffer between the Yolngu and the increasingly frequent incursions of non-Aborigines into the area. These and other missions became centers of gradually increasing Yolngu population. During WWII some Yolngu were killed in Japanese air attacks, some served in a unit in Dutch New Guinea, and many become acquainted with Europeans. After the war, increasing numbers of missionaries and government personnel were based in the Yolngu settlements, and efforts to implement the federal policy of assimilation were intensified. Although gradually accepting Christianity, Yolngu resisted complete assimilation into the dominant British-derived society. Federal governments espousing multiculturalism and favorably disposed to some degree of Aboriginal self-determination enacted land-rights legislation in 1976 and began to support a widespread decentralization movement as Yolngu started to move back to their traditional lands. Settlements established there, although increasing in number and intended to be permanent, remain attached to the larger towns (formerly missions) and are serviced by them.

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: Mission stations were formed to serve as a buffer between the Dhuwal (and other Yolngu peoples in the area) and non-Aborigines. After the WWII, increasing numbers of missionaries and government personnel were based in the Yolngu settlements, and efforts to implement the federal policy of assimilation were intensified. Although gradually accepting Christianity, Yolngu resisted complete assimilation into the dominant British-derived society.

1.6 Ecology (natural environment): Northeastern Arnhem Land is monsoonal, with northwest winds bringing rain from about December until April or May.

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: 500 fluent first language speakers, including 200 Djapu and 160 Liyagalawumirr (clan names).

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): Roots, seeds, fruits, and vegetables.

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: Shellfish, animal meat.

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Spears and spear throwers.

2.4 Food storage:

2.5 Sexual division of production: Women forage together and men (usually brothers) hunt together. In the past, women regularly gathered and processed vegetable foods as well as provided substantial amounts of protein (shellfish at coastal sites, small animals such as goannas and snakes at inland sites), while men provided less regularly taken but highly prized large animals (turtles, dugongs, and fish at coastal sites, and kangaroos, wallabies, emus, opossums, bandicoots, and echidnas at inland sites). This division of labor still exists, although women as well as men now line fish and men continue to use the spear and spear thrower for fishing. The division of labor in wage and salary jobs tends to follow the Euro-Australian pattern.

2.6 Land tenure: Land is owned by language-named clans; the parcels comprising a clan's estate may not all be contiguous, and ideally they include both coastal and inland areas. Individuals inherit ownership rights in the clan estate from their father and responsibilities for and use rights in their mother's estate.

2.7 Ceramics:

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos:

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? Yes they had canoes, which they learned to construct from the Macassans.

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): F-24.6 M-years 27.7

4.3 Completed family size (m and f): Mean of 2.57 children per woman.

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: Divorce was not formerly institutionalized, but Permanent separation of spouses was not uncommon.

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: Polygynous marriages, formerly regarded as most desirable, are increasingly rare.

- 4.8** Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: A young man performs bride service.
- 4.9** Inheritance patterns: Joint rights in land inhere in the patrilineal group into which each person is born; in the same way, ownership of a language is inherited. A lineage is a potential inheritor of land belonging to the patrilineal group of a real or classificatory mother's mother, should there be no males remaining in that group. Formerly a deceased person's personal property was destroyed, but now if such property is valuable it is ritually purified and distributed to relatives on the basis of their attachment to the deceased.
- 4.10** Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: Infants are almost always in physical contact with caretakers, children are not physically punished or threatened by adults, and infants and very young children are never overtly denied whatever they wish.
- 4.11** Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:
- 4.12** Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): Moiety and clan exogamy are observed, and within these parameters, families arrange marriages. Ideally a young man is assigned a mother-in-law who is his mother's mother's brother's daughter (most likely and most desirably a classificatory relative in this category).
- 4.13** What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized? Belief that father finds the spirit of the child before it enters the mother.
- 4.14** What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows") Believe that father finds the child's spirit and then it enters the mother to grow.
- 4.15** Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)? No.
- 4.16** Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape: Could not find evidence for this.
- 4.17** Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin): A person of the Dhuwa moiety must marry a person of the Yirritja moiety.
- 4.18** Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?
- 4.19** Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring
- 4.20** If mother dies, whose raises children? Father
- 4.21** Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females
- 4.22** Evidence for couvades: No.
- 4.23** Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older): N/a
- 4.24** Kin avoidance and respect? There are two main avoidance relationships—brother-sister (*mirrirri*) and son in law-mother in law. In avoidance relationships, people don't speak directly or look at one another, and try to avoid being in too close proximity with each other. People are avoided, but respected.
- 4.24** Joking relationships? Yes, there were joking relationships with kin.
- 4.25** Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations: Dhuwal society is based on principles of descent and the categories and groups within it are related through the idiom of kinship. In addition, the factors of age (both absolute and relative), birth order, and gender all influence the organization of social groups. Thus, through the operation of pervasive dualism, the universe is divided into two mutually exclusive but complementary name moieties, Dhuwa and Yirritja, and each individual is by birth a member of the moiety of his or her father. The main corporate kin groups are patrilineal clans that own land and the ritual objects and ceremonies that validate their title. Matrilineally defined relationships establish rights and duties complementary to those of patrilineal descent but not corporate landowning groups.
- 4.26** Incest avoidance rules: A custom referred to as *mirrirri* relates to special kinds of avoidance behavior expected between brothers and sisters regarding a reference to a woman's sexuality—a reference which, if made in the hearing of her brother, causes him to attack that sister or any other woman he calls sister. Nowadays, while a man might not attack his sister or "sisters" with a spear, people are still very circumspect about any reference to a woman's sexuality in the presence of her brother.
- 4.27** Is there a formal marriage ceremony? Yes.
- 4.28** In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?
- 4.29** Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?) Usually within the community, and were supposed to maintain or extend alliances between lineages.
- 4.30** Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? Yes. Ideally a young man is assigned a mother-in-law who is his mother's mother's brother's daughter (most likely and most desirably a classificatory relative in this category). Marriages in the past and to a large extent today maintain or extend alliances between lineages. Men have the largest say in who their daughters, daughter's daughters, and sister's daughters marry, but women do have a say as well.
- 4.31** Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: N/a

Warfare/homicide

- 4.14** Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:
- 4.15** Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: Serious disputes concern interests in land.
- 4.16** Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: In the past, blood revenge (payback) prevailed; it was incumbent on certain kinsmen of a deceased person to avenge his or her death. Since deaths were rarely attributed to a "natural" cause, at almost any time people were planning a revenge expedition or were fearful of being subjected to one. Serious disputes concern interests in land.
- 4.17** Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):
- 4.18** Cannibalism? Could not find evidence of this.

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

- 5.1** Mean local residential (village) group size:
- 5.2** Mobility pattern: (seasonality): Size and structure of three major settlements (Malingimbi, Yirkala, and Elcho Island) varied seasonally.

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): Leadership roles are defined by seniority, which is determined by birth order. The oldest man in a sibling set exercises (or should exercise) primary authority over his brothers and sisters and their Families. The oldest man in a clan should be its head, with his next-younger brother "second" to him. The rule of seniority operates with respect to both men and women; except that in public men usually exercise authority, birth order is more salient than gender in the political process. Leaders should be skilled orators, and have the obligation to "look after" all the people who acknowledge their position as leader. To be implemented, a decision must represent a consensus; until a consensus is reached, no decision has been made.

5.4 Post marital residence: A man and his wife or wives, who are often sisters, and their children live, eat, and sleep together, whether living in houses in towns, or in houses or shelters at homeland centers. Brothers with their wives and children frequently live in close proximity.

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): Territoriality often caused conflicts or warfare.

5.6 Social interaction divisions? (age and sex):

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: Joking relationships existed with kin.

5.8 Village and house organization: Subdivisions of clans live together.

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): There are houses in towns as well as houses or shelters at homeland centers where families live.

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: Each individual is by birth a member of the moiety of his or her father. Each language-named clan is either of the Dhuwa or the Yirritja moiety; clans of the same moiety are linked through a shared myth while clans of the opposite moiety, through lineages within them, are linked by marriage alliances.

5.12 Trade: They traditionally had trading partners who exchanged scarce commodities such as highly prized stone, ochres, and other objects of ritual value; trading relationships were important both socially and economically, and the network of trade, although attenuated, remains.

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR: A lot of time.

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): Healers (*marrnggitj*) have spirit familiars, often referred to as their "spirit children," who assist them in their curing practices.

Western medicine and also call on the services of a *marrnggitj* for diagnosis and/or treatment, especially if the cause of illness is suspected to be sorcery or inadvertent entry into a spiritually dangerous place. Dhuwal have in addition a large pharmacopoeia based mainly on indigenous plants.

6.2 Stimulants: N/a

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): The major ceremonies focus on death; their mortuary rituals are an elaborate and important part of their culture. At the time of death, the soul, or its malign aspect, remains about the place of death and is a threat to close family members. One objective of the purificatory rites performed to "free" both survivors and material objects associated with the deceased, including houses, is protection from the malignity of the soul. During the extended course of the mortuary ritual, the soul is guided to some particular area or site on its own clan land, usually a place where, along with other souls of its clan, it awaits reincarnation.

6.4 Other rituals: Induction into adult manhood, marriage arrangements, trade, and other negotiations were conducted during the time of ceremonies, which was at the end of the dry season.

6.5 Myths (Creation): There are two ancestral spiritual beings (that of the Dhuwa moiety and that of the Yirritja moiety). They met at least once and created everything. The spirit beings named plants and animals in the language of the people, and they transformed much of the landscape. Then they performed ceremonies that present-day owners of the land should perform. At what would be a clan's most important sacred site, they left a part of themselves; in some cases they stayed and are thought to always be there. These beings continue to exist and manifest themselves in both the seen and the unseen world.

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): Rituals at which the clans' most sacred ritual objects are freshly decorated, displayed, and their meanings explained are the most restricted of all: these ceremonies are directed by the oldest men; only mature men who have demonstrated their worthiness are admitted; and the meanings are imparted incrementally. These objects are of the greatest importance, their significance indicated by their having been called "title deeds" to land.

For a few men and women in each town or outstation the production of arts and crafts—cross-hatching bark paintings, carvings (chiefly but not exclusively made by men), woven net bags and baskets (exclusively produced by women)—is a significant source of income.

The didgeridoo was a musical instrument that also had a spiritual purpose.

The Dhuwal also weave and make necklaces out of beads, seeds, fish vertebrae, or shells.

6.7 Sex differences in RCR: All of the people are expected to participate in religious rituals, so all men and women are considered practitioners. All men sing the ritual songs and at some time do the appropriate dances; all women perform the women's dances that are required for the enactment of some phases of Ceremony. Traditional ritual specialists are men who commit to memory a large corpus of sacred names (sometimes called "power names")—names of clan lands, sites, spirit beings, and their appurtenances—and who intone them in the manner of invocations at certain junctures in ritual performance.

6.8 Missionary effect: Christianity was introduced.

6.9 RCR revival: Some Dhuwal men have been ordained as ministers in the Uniting Church (the successor of the original mission Methodist church); for most it is important that their Christianity has been Aboriginalized. Some of the ritual of their ceremony and its sacred objects have been incorporated in the iconography of the Yolngu Christian churches.

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: At the time of death, the soul, or its malign aspect, remains about the place of death and is a threat to close family members. One objective of the purificatory rites performed to "free" both survivors and material objects associated with the deceased, including houses, is protection from the malignity of the soul. The soul is guided to a site on its own clan land where it await reincarnation with other souls.

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? No, but when a person dies they avoid saying their name or words that sound like their name.

6.12 Is there teknonymy? Could not find evidence for this.

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.): Religious beliefs center on the myths that tell the travels and activities of spirit beings "in the Beginning." The earth was much as it is now, but the acts of the spirit beings at that distant time in the past set the patterns of proper behavior for the people who would follow, and left signs of their presence in the land.

"Wangarr" refers both to spirit being and distant time past; it is comparable to what has been called "the Dreaming" or "the Dreamtime" in other accounts of Aboriginal religion. The spirit beings named plants and animals in the language of the people on whom they bestowed the land and performed ceremonies that Present-day owners of the land should perform. They transformed parts of the landscape during their journey. At what would be a clan's most important sacred site, they left a part of themselves; in some cases they stayed and "are always there." Wangarr continue to exist and to manifest themselves in both the seen and the unseen world. For individuals, the most important ones are those of their father's and their mother's clans.

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint: Body painting ranges from simply smearing clay or natural ochres from the earth onto the skin to detailed geometric paintings on the torso, face and limbs. Communities decorate the bodies of young boys before initiation. Their chests, and sometimes upper arms and thighs, are painted in clan patterns and totemic subjects. These designs are the same as those used in the bark paintings.

7.2 Piercings: No piercings.

7.3 Haircut: Could not find specific information about haircuts.

7.4 Scarification: Scars were made on the body for many reasons, but mainly during ceremonies to mark age, initiation or to raise a person's status. Scarification usually involved cutting the skin with a sharp shell or rock, then rubbing irritating substances like ash into the cuts so that prominent keloid scars resulted. This process created raised, pigmented patterns on the chest, back, arms or legs of the initiate.

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): Their bodies can be highly decorated with feathers, leaves, plant substances, and colored arm and leg ornaments.

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: Their bodies were decorated for many ceremonies, especially initiation and funeral ceremonies. Their chests and sometimes upper arms and thighs were painted in clan patterns and totemic subjects. Ceremonial objects, burial poles, and coffins are also painted.

During large gatherings closed to women, particularly those enacting the journeys of the Tingari men throughout the desert, ceremonies consisted of making elaborate ground constructions (also called sand paintings) and decorating the bodies of the many male dancers in linear symbolic patterns which related specifically to various sections of the song cycle being conducted.

The lengthy communal painting and decorating process before the dance and main singing commences is part of the entire ritual, and at the close of each performance the body ornamentation is smeared and disguised or obliterated, just as the stamping feet of performers eventually destroy the design on the ground.

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: Young boys' bodies are decorated with body paint before initiation. Women paint their upper chest, shoulders and breasts for communal women's ceremonies. The colors are paired - yellow and white is for one moiety, red and white for another. The right to paint another woman's upper body is given to a specified relative. It is not appropriate for women to paint themselves for ceremony.

7.8 Missionary effect: N/a

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: Body painting continues as a strong and live part of contemporary Aboriginal culture, not only in traditional ceremonies but also as part of art and practices by urban people.

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system: Kinship provides the primary medium of social identity in the Dhuwal social domain; each person is reckoned as kin to every other person, and kin links may thus be traced through several different relatives. The analysis of their system of kin classification continues to provide fertile ground for anthropological debate.

8.2 Sororate, levirate: Could not find evidence of this.

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.): Dhuwal use some twenty-four kin terms (as well as some optional extras) to distinguish lineal and collateral, marriageable and nonmarriageable relatives.

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

1. The *makarrata*, which has been described as a "peace-making" ceremony, or as a "trial by ordeal," is ritualized revenge. A successful outcome is signaled by blood flowing from a wound inflicted in the thigh of a principal offender and is accepted as balancing accounts, at least during the time required for the performance of the Ceremony.

Numbered references

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