

INTRODUCTION

The question that initiated this study was:

Are the tribal boundaries reported in the ethnography reflected in the archaeology of the Mangrove Creek and MacDonald River areas?

This study will look at the prehistoric pictures - drawings, paintings and engravings - of the Mangrove Creek and MacDonald River area. Pictures will be used rather than lithic technology, or other artifacts, as it is generally thought that art is the entity in which cultural or ethnic differences are most easily recognised as style. The spatial distribution of pictures will be studied in an area, including Mangrove Creek and the MacDonald River, and within which the ethnography claims lie two tribal groups.

The basic aim of this study is to see if the form and techniques of production in pictures is different on either side of a tribal boundary. To see if ethnic differences can be defined in material culture.

Ethnicity is a term a bit more specific than 'culture', and a bit more general than 'tribe'; it refers basically to the concept of 'identity groups' (see Hodder 1978:248-9). Ethnicity is a term that does not imply a definitive structure as does tribe. It refers to differences that can be related to a person's conception of or expression of how they see their social identity with respect to another person. When the ethnography was being collected, these fine distinctions had not been drawn. My work on ethnicity refers to and depends on the ethnographically reported "tribal boundary".