

in different contexts. In one version she is the first Creator, who made all living things.

In the central and desert areas of Australia most ancestral beings have mixed human and non-human identities. On the northern coast they are more often in purely human form, although they are directly and indirectly associated with a large variety of totems.

In western Arnhem Land, among the Gunwinggu, one of the major myths tells of an ancestral woman who is known by a variety of names, most commonly Waramurungundju. She is said to have come over the sea from the north-west, in the direction of Indonesia, at the very beginning of the world. When she landed on the Australian coast she made children, telling them where they were to live and what language they were to speak. She also created much of the countryside and left various natural species or natural features: for example, bees and wild honey in one place, a banyan tree in another. In one version she tried to circumcise the children she had made. At first she was unsuccessful and the children died: in those areas people do not practise circumcision today. But at last she succeeded, and the children survived: in those places, therefore, people continue to circumcise. Because of her creative powers, she is sometimes called 'the Mother'. In some versions she travelled from west to east, finally disappearing in the direction of Yirrkalla. In others she is associated with a man named Wuragag, who came with her from the direction of 'Macassar'. He left her at Melville Island and went on alone to western Arnhem Land, where he eventually met another woman. He had many adventures, and many wives: but finally he turned into a high rocky hill, a landmark which dominates the plains north of Oenpelli. This bears his name, Wuragag, because his spirit remains there; in English it is called Tor Rock.

Much of this inland area, stretching eastward from the East Alligator River, is made up of rocky hills and sandstone ridges, interspersed with river gorges and creeks. These formations are often quite striking. Many of them relate to beings of one kind or another who lived in the mythological era. Ngaljod, the Rainbow, often helped directly in their transformation. After swallowing them she finally vomited their bones, which turned into rocks where their spirits still remain. In translation, 'they came into dreaming'. There is a special term, *djang* in Gunwinggu, for this kind of representation. A *djang* is an object or creature or spirit which contains some power or essence derived directly from the mythological era. Some *djang* sites are hedged with tabus, or said to be dangerous to certain classes of people, such as women, or children, or everyone but the very old. A few are dangerous to everyone, and travellers go out of their way to avoid them. The Gunwinggu word here is *-djamun*, meaning set apart, hedged with prohibitions, not for everyday use; it is applied also to the men's sacred dancing ground, to sacred rites and objects, and to food which has been put aside for ritual consumption. The *djang* are mostly of minor importance, in comparison with beings such

as Ngaljod. They are bound to specific localities, and the range of their influence is limited. Some are more widely known than others. Wuragag, for instance, Tor Rock, is a prominent landmark. But even when people know the name of some territory not directly connected with themselves, or their husbands or wives, this need not signify that they are acquainted with the relevant myths, even in outline.

In western Arnhem Land, too, there is the myth of the *ubar*. The *ubar*, a long wooden gong in the shape of a hollow log, is one of the most sacred objects. Among the Gunwinggu it is the uterus of the Mother, sometimes identified with Ngaljod, the Rainbow.

Jurawadbad, a python (sometimes a male Rainbow Snake), is betrothed to a girl named Gulanundoidj, or Minaliwu, but she refuses to sleep with him because she has a young lover, Bulugu, Water Snake. Jurawadbad is angry. He makes an *ubar*, a hollow log, which he leaves lying across a bush track. Then, turning himself into a snake, he enters it. In the meantime Gulanundoidj and her mother are out hunting. They come upon the *ubar*. Thinking there may be a small animal inside, the girl kneels down and peers into the aperture but can see nothing there. She calls to her mother, who also tries, but in this case Jurawadbad opens his eyes and she looks right through them to the other side. Gulanundoidj puts in her hand and Jurawadbad 'bites' her. Then the mother puts in her hand, and is 'bitten' too. As they lie beside the *ubar* dying, Jurawadbad emerges, turns himself into a man again, and departs to another place where ceremonies are in progress (and the myth continues).

Among the Maung at Goulburn Island the mythology is a little different. The *ubar* is still the uterus of the Mother, but there is more emphasis on its phallic aspect: the *ubar* is also the penis of the male Rainbow Snake.

In north-eastern Arnhem Land there are two principal Fertility Mothers, usually in conjunction with a brother. These are the Djanggawul, or Djanggau, Sisters: Bildjiwuraroju, the elder, and Miralaidj the younger.

The myth tells how they and their Brother, named Djanggawul, and in some versions a companion called Bralbral, came across the sea from the north-east. They paused for a while at the island of Bralgu, somewhere in the Gulf of Carpentaria, now the main home of *dua* moiety dead. Then they came on in their bark canoe to the east coast of the mainland, on the path of the rising sun.

The two Sisters, especially, are associated with the sun, which is female in this area although in other regions it is male. In fact in some versions, as at Milingimbi, they are called 'Daughters of the Sun'. They symbolize the sun, with its life-giving properties, essential to the growth of human beings, plants, animals, and so on. This concept is not found to the same degree in other parts of the Continent, such as the central deserts, where the sun's heat