

Memoirs of the Queensland Museum | **culture**

Volume 8  
Part 2

# Goemulgaw Lagal: Cultural and Natural Histories of the Island of Mabuyag, Torres Strait

Edited by Ian J. McNiven and Garrick Hitchcock

**Minister:** Anastacia Palaszczuk MP, Premier and Minister for the Arts

**CEO:** Suzanne Miller, BSc(Hons), PhD, FGS, FMinSoc, FAIMM, FGSA, FRSSA

**Editor in Chief:** J.N.A. Hooper, PhD

**Editors:** Ian J. McNiven, PhD FSA FAHA and Garrick Hitchcock, PhD FLS FRGS

**Issue Editor:** Geraldine Mate, PhD

© Queensland Museum  
PO Box 3300, South Brisbane 4101, Australia  
Phone: +61 (0) 7 3840 7555  
Fax: +61 (0) 7 3846 1226  
Web: [qm.qld.gov.au](http://qm.qld.gov.au)

National Library of Australia card number  
ISSN 1440-4788

## VOLUME 8 IS COMPLETE IN 2 PARTS

### COVER

Image on book cover: Pearlshelling station at Panay, Mabuyag, 1890s. Photographer unknown  
(Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology: N23274.ACH2).

### NOTE

Papers published in this volume and in all previous volumes of the *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum* may be reproduced for scientific research, individual study or other educational purposes. Properly acknowledged quotations may be made but queries regarding the republication of any papers should be addressed to the CEO. Copies of the journal can be purchased from the Queensland Museum Shop.

A Guide to Authors is displayed on the Queensland Museum website [qm.qld.gov.au](http://qm.qld.gov.au)

**A Queensland Government Project**  
Design and Layout: Tanya Edbrooke, Queensland Museum  
Printed by Watson, Ferguson & Company

# Rock-art from the Mabuyag Islands, Zenadh Kes (Torres Strait)

Liam M. BRADY

Brady, L.M. 2015: Rock-art from the Mabuyag Islands, Zenadh Kes (Torres Strait). *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum – Culture* 8(2):497-530. Brisbane. ISSN 1440-4788.

Since 1898 a total of 17 rock-art sites comprising 125 determinate images have been recorded from the Mabuyag Islands (Pulu and Mabuyag) by several groups of researchers, including anthropologist A.C. Haddon, and more recently, archaeologists working in collaboration with the Goemulgal Kod. This paper provides an overview of the sites and motifs recorded and examines their role in understanding aspects of Goemulgaw social expression. Using a combination of formal and informed methods, this paper reveals how specific motifs display links to Islander mythology and ceremonial activity, while also acting as markers of interregional interaction across Torres Strait, southwestern Papua New Guinea, and Cape York. This analysis also reveals that much like rock-art from Western and Central Torres Strait, motifs from the Mabuyag Islands cross from fixed to portable mediums – an important observation used to better understand the nature of the Torres Strait graphic system.

□ *rock-art, archaeology, interregional interaction, material culture, design patterning, Torres Strait*

Liam M. Brady  
Monash Indigenous Centre, Monash University, Clayton, VIC, 3800, Australia  
Liam.Brady@monash.edu

Rock-art recording in the Mabuyag Islands began in 1898 when Alfred Haddon visited Pulu islet to record the *kod* – a large ceremonial site complex and one of Torres Strait’s best-known ritual sites<sup>1</sup>. During this visit he documented and subsequently published images from three sites along with important (and rare) ethnographic data concerning several motifs (Haddon, 1904). However, it is not until the 1970s and 1980s when a new phase of archaeological and anthropological research began that rock-art from the Mabuyag Islands is again documented. Sporadic and opportunistic recording of rock-art began in 1972 when Ron Vanderwal (archaeologist) visited the Pulu *kod* and noted ‘many of the rock surfaces show painted red figures in the typical male dancing positions as I saw in performances during my stay in the Torres Strait’ (Vanderwal, 1973: 180). He also remarked that images recorded as ‘nearly effaced when Haddon was there’ were now ‘nearly indistinguishable’ as a result of weathering (Vanderwal, 1973: 180). In November 1976 Judith Fitzpatrick (anthropologist), Bernard Nietschmann (cultural geographer), and Repu Sakaowai (Mabuyag Elder) visited Pulu and photographed the three rock-art sites visited by Haddon (McNiven *et al.*, 2002). In addition, Travis Teske’s (1986) book on Mabuyag and its surrounding islets referred to one of the sites on Pulu visited by Haddon and he provides a photograph of the site and sketches of several motifs. The only mention of rock-art from an island other than Pulu is from the north coast of Mabuyag opposite Maitan (Barham and Harris, 1987).

The first major in-depth study of rock-art from the Mabuyag Islands began in 2000 when the ‘Pulu Culture Site Mapping Project’ (involving Ian McNiven, Judith Fitzpatrick, Bruno David, and the Goemulgal *Kod*) was initiated (see McNiven *et al.*, 2002). Along with mapping and recording the wide range of cultural sites from across the islet, rock-art sites from the *kod*

were targeted for systematic documentation. This project was followed by recordings of other rock-art sites from elsewhere on Pulu and Mabuyag carried out over several years by archaeologists based at Monash University and working on collaborative cultural heritage projects with the Goemulgal (Traditional Owners of the Mabuyag Islands). Using the data obtained from the studies outlined above, this paper provides an overview of the known rock-art record from the Mabuyag Islands and examines the nature of this distinctive assemblage in the context of interregional interaction, Islander mythology and social expression, and the broader Torres Strait graphic system. By analysing the rock-art assemblage at various levels (e.g. intra-island, regional), this paper highlights the range of information contained in the art and the role it plays in learning more about Goemulgal and Torres Strait Islander cultural history.

## METHODOLOGY

A total of 16 rock-art sites (two from Mabuyag and 14 from Pulu) comprising 125 determinate pictures were included for analysis in this paper (Table 1). Maitan and Wagadagam on Mabuyag were excluded because of a lack of available data while Pulu 11, a newly created rock art site by Goemulgal at Pulu’s *kod* in 2001, was also excluded along with other recently created motifs by Goemulgal from three additional *kod* sites (see McNiven *et al.* 2009b).

## RECORDING

Systematic on-site recording methods were developed and utilized by Bruno David, Ian McNiven and myself at all rock-art sites recorded on Pulu. Few details are available about how the Mabuyag rock-art site was recorded apart from the brief description provided by Wright (2010: 199) where he notes he made ‘[a] sketch map and detailed

photographic record (using an eight mega-pixel camera)...for this rock-art site'. Recordings from Pulu involved documenting 1) site context; and 2) the motifs. The former consisted of locating the site using GPS, determining site aspect, measuring and mapping the site, descriptions of the site environs including the presence of other cultural materials, previous recordings of the site, damage to the site and motifs, and any details offered by Goemulgal about the site (e.g. site name or oral histories associated with the site). Motifs were recorded in two stages: 1) sketches of all evidence of motifs; and 2) digital photography. The entire decorated rock surface was systematically photographed at the individual motif and panel levels. Each site was also inspected to record any trace of pigment to ensure that all images had been recorded, even those that were no longer visible to the naked eye. Given the harsh coastal climate of the Torres Strait region many motifs have suffered considerable deterioration through water and salt damage making them difficult to discern. As a result, computer enhancement software (Adobe Photoshop) was employed as a means to recovering those images (e.g. Brady, 2006, 2007; David *et al.*, 2001; McNiven *et al.*, 2000, 2004). The value of this methodological tool is clear when looking at the results from the Torres Strait Rock-Art Project where 113 out of 983 (11.5%) images could be determined *only after* being subjected to computer enhancement (Brady, 2005, 2010).

#### CLASSIFICATION

Motifs considered for the Torres Strait Rock-Art Project (including those images recorded from Pulu) were classified using a 4-level hierarchical scheme (see Brady, 2005, 2010):

*Level 1:* Determinate/Indeterminate

*Level 2:* Figurative/Non-Figurative

*Level 3:* Group Motif Forms. Figurative Group Motif Forms consist of Anthropomorphs, Faces/Masks, Zoomorphs and Material Culture objects. Non-Figurative Group Motif Forms are comprised of Enclosed Geometrics, Open Geometrics, Linear Non-Figurative, Dots and Dot Variations, and Infilled Non-Geometrics.

*Level 4:* Specific Motif Forms. These consist of a specific identification for individual motifs (e.g. Zoomorphs can consist of Dugongs, Turtles, Stingrays etc.).

#### PULU ROCK-ART

Of the 15 sites recorded on Pulu, 11 are located at the *kod* while the remainder (n=4) are located elsewhere around the small c. 500 m x 300 m islet (Figures 1-3). The rock-art of Pulu is unique in that five sites feature modern rock-art; that is, images created by the Goemulgal community in 2001 and 2002 (see below). Pulu's rock-paintings are found either on isolated granite boulders or on the walls or roofs of rockshelters (Figures 4-5)<sup>2</sup>. Cultural materials were found at nine of the 15 sites, with stone artefacts and bone and shell fragments the most commonly encountered, while one stone arrangement was documented at Pulu 2 and two rare pre-European contact ceramic fragments were recovered from the surface of Mask Cave (McNiven *et al.*, 2002; McNiven *et al.*, 2006). Some post-European contact materials were located, including fragments of glassware, metal and ceramics (McNiven *et al.*, 2002). Information pertaining to oral histories or names associated with individual sites is limited. At Pulu 1 (also known as Mangayzi Kula<sup>3</sup>, or 'the stone that fell from the sky'), Haddon (1904: 4) recorded 'some nearly effaced paintings in red of various animals and other objects, such as a cassowary, spoon-bill (*tapur*), curlew (*karuri*), crayfish (*kaiar*) canoe and dugong platform (*nath*)<sup>4</sup>'

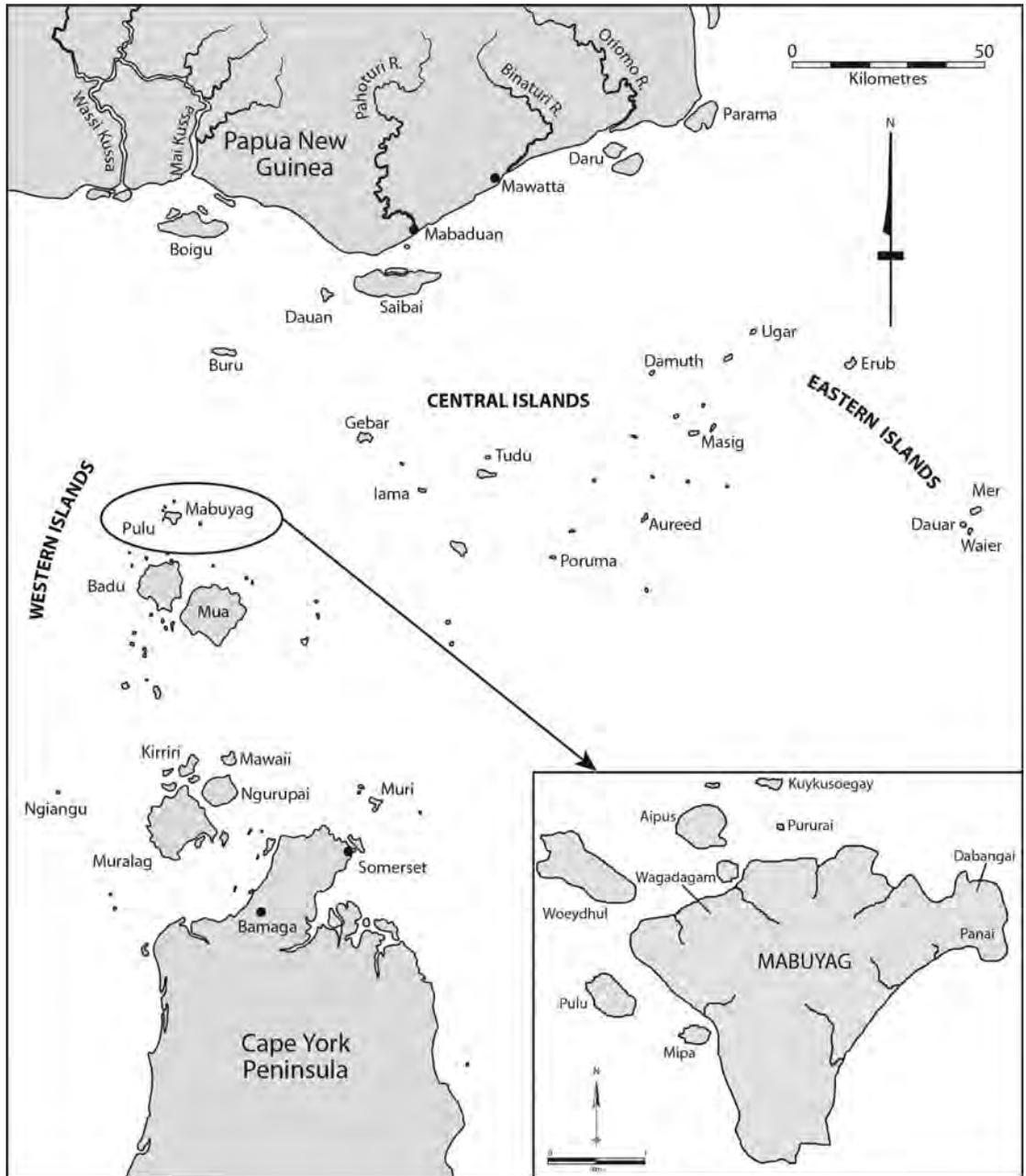


FIG. 1. Map of Zenadh Kes (Torres Strait); inset: the Mabuyag Islands.

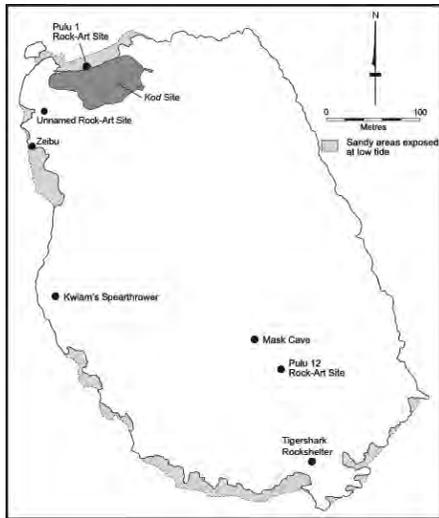


FIG. 2. Map of Pulu showing location of rock-art sites apart from the kod.

along with a series of black hand stencils made from powdered charcoal, which are no longer visible today. However, of the two oral histories recorded from Waria (Mabuyag Islander) associated with the site, neither is able to shed any light on the meaning or production of the paintings. The only other site from the islet with associated information is provided by Teske for Pulu 3 which he referred to as 'Maril Kula'. He noted that '[i]t has a secret power and only puripuri (harmful magic) men could visit it. On the rock there are some drawings done in red...legend has it that these drawings were done in blood – the blood of men and crocodiles' (Teske, 1986: 46-47). Unfortunately it is unknown from whom, or how, Teske obtained this information.

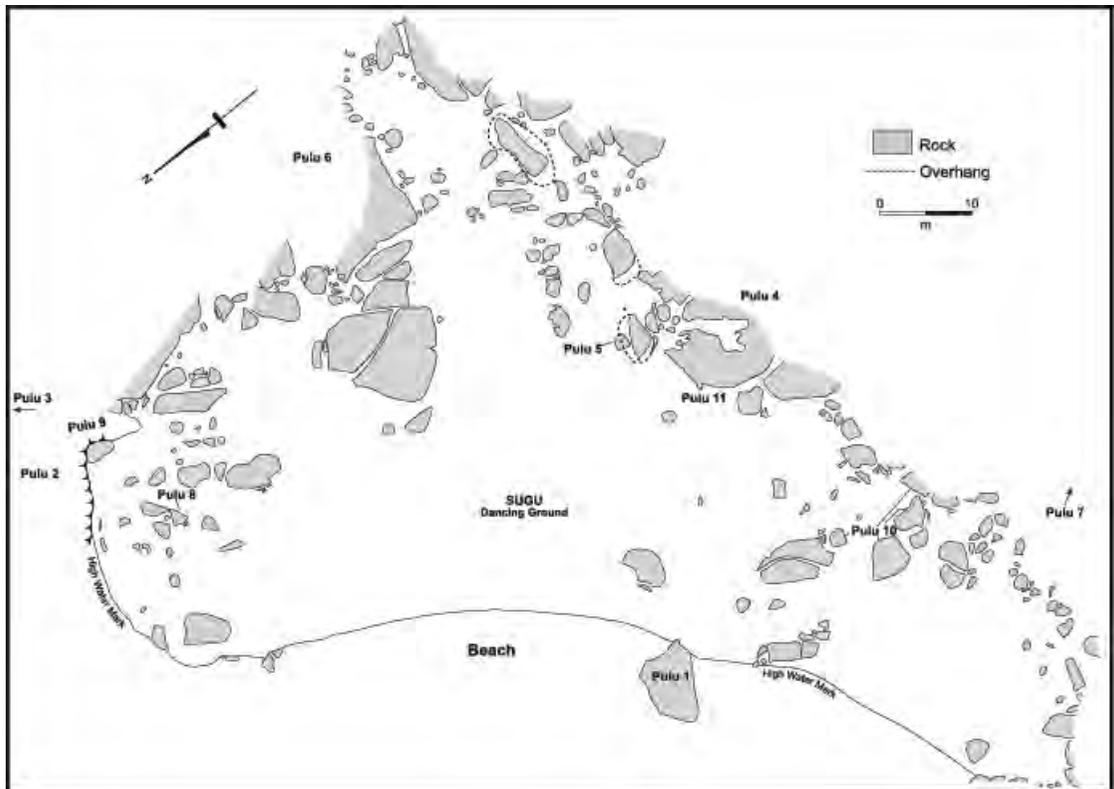


FIG. 3. Plan of Pulu kod showing location of rock-art sites (based on McNiven *et al.*, 2002: Fig. 2.3 and McNiven *et al.*, 2009b: Fig. 4).



FIG. 4. Pulu 2 rock-art site (photo: Bruno David).



FIG. 5. Pulu 3 rock-art site (photo: Bruno David).

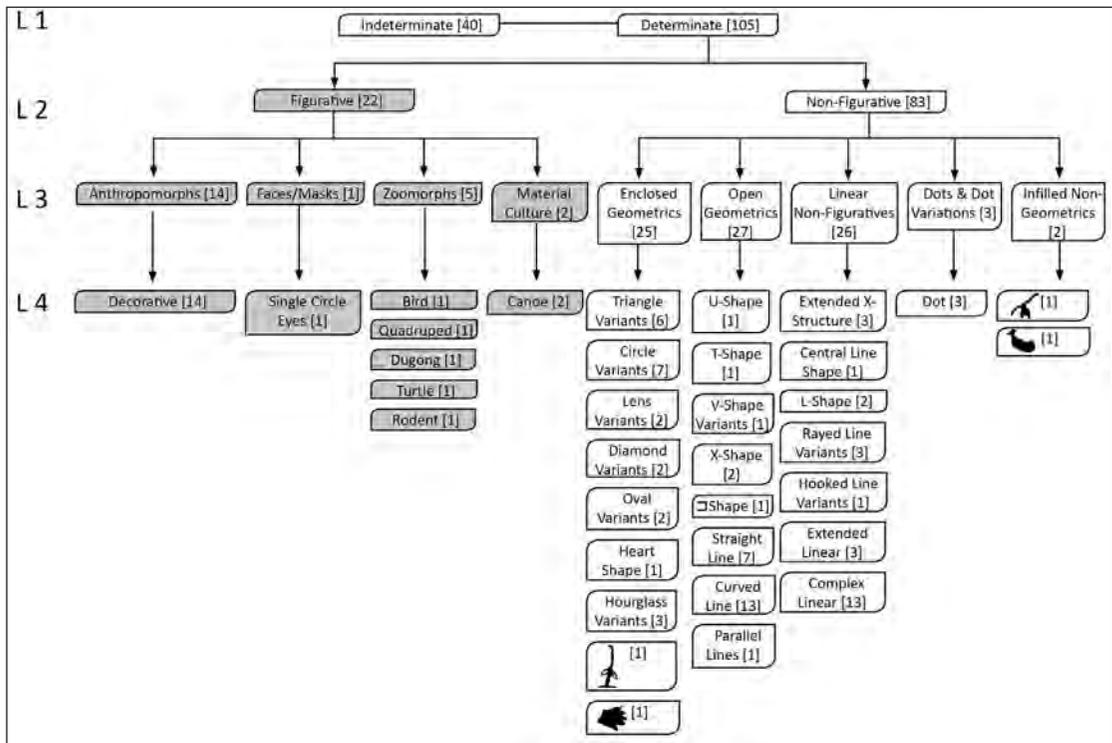


FIG. 6. Pulu, motif classification and frequency.

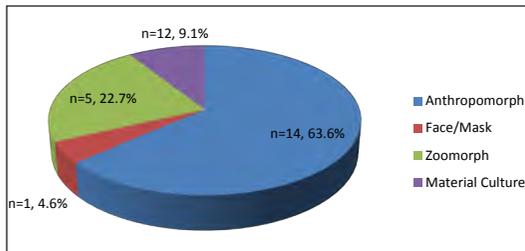


FIG. 7. Figurative Group Motif Forms by relative number of pictures for Pulu.

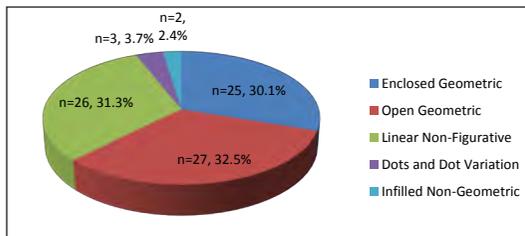


FIG. 8. Non-Figurative Group Motif Forms by relative number of pictures, Pulu.

Of the 105 determinate motifs identified from Pulu a clear tendency towards the depiction of abstract imagery can be observed with Non-Figurative motifs accounting for 79.0% (n=83) of the assemblage. Level 3 (Group Motif) analysis reveals that Anthropomorphs dominate the Figurative motifs (n=14, 63.6%) while Enclosed Geometrics, Open Geometrics, and Linear Non-Figurative motifs together account for 93.9% (n=78) of the Non-Figurative Motifs (Figures 6-8).

Apart from the collection of charcoal hand stencils recorded by Haddon, all of Pulu’s non-modern rock-art is painted monochrome red (n=101, 96.2%) or bichrome yellow and red (n=4, 3.8%). Computer enhancement was a useful tool in elucidating a number of determinate paintings as well as some of the more obscure design elements in Pulu’s rock-art (Table 2). A total of 16 pictures

(15.2% of Pulu's rock-art) were identified using this technique indicating that some of Pulu's rock-art had deteriorated to a point where a substantial number of pictures would probably have gone unnoticed using conventional recording techniques.

No direct dates are available for Pulu's rock-art and neither are there any superimpositions visible to create chronological sequences based on styles or subject matter. However, some inferences into the antiquity of the imagery can be made using Haddon's observations and recent archaeological investigations from the islet. Based on the 2001 re-recording of motifs documented originally by Haddon in 1898 (Pulu 1, Pulu 2, and Pulu 3), a minimum age of 103 years was identified for the images that could still be discerned from Haddon's visit (McNiven *et al.*, 2002; see also Brady, 2005, 2007, 2010).

#### RECENTLY-CREATED ROCK-ART

In 2001 and 2002, Ian McNiven, Bruno David and myself observed first-hand the production of rock paintings at Pulu by Mabuyag Islanders – the first such documented occurrence for over 100 years (McNiven *et al.*, 2002) (Figure 9). A total of 37 determinate images were recorded from five sites: four from the *kod* in 2001 and at Mask Cave in 2002 (see McNiven *et al.*, 2002; McNiven *et al.*, 2009b; see also Brady, 2005) (Table 3). At four sites (three at the *kod*, and Mask Cave) modern paintings were added to sites with existing paintings while one site at the *kod* (Pulu 11) features only modern images. Five artists (Thomas Mene, Cygnet Repu, Patrina Repu, Tony Yellub, and Aaron Whap) executed the monochrome and bichrome paintings using ground-up red ochre mixed with water, and dry white and black pigments. Among the images produced were zoomorphs, *dari* (feathered headdresses), anthropomorphs, *muri* (spirit beings), hand paintings, and modern watercraft.



FIG. 9. Examples of Pulu's modern rock-art from 2001 (left: Thomas Mene and his hand painting; right: Tony Yellub and his painting of a *muri* (photos: Ian J. McNiven).

## MABUYAG ROCK-ART

The first rock-art site to be recorded on Mabuyag was by Barham and Harris (1987: 6, 32) but little is known about it. The image was identified as a 'white painting of a crescent moon' (Barham and Harris, 1987: 6, 32) and located on the north coast of Mabuyag opposite Maitan. The site has yet to be re-visited or re-recorded.

The second site was located and recorded by Duncan Wright (2010) during his archaeological research at the Goemulgaw village site at Wagadagam on the northwestern side of the island. The rock-art site is located at the village *kod* and is surrounded by several other cultural sites including a dugong bone mound, stone arrangements and a series of raised platforms (Wright, 2010: 199-202). Wright (2010: 199) describes the site as being 'situated 5 to 11 m inland from the eastern margin of the bone mound ... [t]wo large boulders contained two panels of red ochre motifs'. Wright (2010: 199) also 'tentatively identified' some of the motifs as

a bird, a cross, and based on a similar example of painting on Pulu a water spout (see Brady 2006). There were also a number of non-figurative motifs and many which were too faint to identify. A number of other indiscernible, red motifs were observed on a second boulder...[c]omputer enhancement was unable to pick up any additional features.

The sketch map produced by Wright indicates that 19 motifs were recorded; however, details of the individual classification of the images are not provided nor are details regarding technique of production. No information is available regarding the antiquity of the art as no direct dating was undertaken and no superimpositions were identified. Several forms of damage (water runoff, wasp nests,

lichen, and vines and bushes) were noted at the site by Wright (2010: 201) but the extent to which they were impacting the art is unknown. This site is being targeted for future recording and analysis by Wright.

## INDIVIDUAL MOTIF ANALYSIS

To explore the role of Goemulgaw rock-art in the context of interregional interaction and its place in the broader Torres Strait graphic system, I turn to a sample of distinctive individual motifs<sup>5</sup>. By focusing on motifs with stylistic links with other decorative media (e.g. rock-art, material culture objects, scarification designs) from across the Torres Strait region<sup>6</sup>, I highlight how rock-art from the Mabuyag Islands can inform us of interactive relationships across space.

## ANTHROPOMORPHS

A total of 14 red painted Anthropomorphs was recorded from the Pulu *kod* (none from Mabuyag). Two design embellishments – headdresses and body decorations – found on four of these figures can be used to illustrate the presence of a distinctive shared design form in Torres Strait.

**Headdresses** At Pulu 3, two small Anthropomorphs are depicted in profile and displaying headdresses and body decorations (Figure 10). The first Anthropomorph has a single wavy line extending upwards from the head (headdress) and to the right while another wavy line with short downward-angled lines is shown extending from the waist. The second Anthropomorph is depicted with a single curved line extending from the head with six lines drawn at a c. 45° angle along its entire length. A second curved line extends to the right from the waist which forks near where the line terminates. Another small Anthropomorph from Pulu 6 also features the single curved line headdress with shorter angled lines. This

distinctive headdress is stylistically similar to one depicted in Gizu's (Mabuyag Islander) drawings of two *danilkau* – a dancer involved in funeral ceremonies whose role was to provide entertainment to spectators (Haddon, 1904: 255). Haddon (1904: 254) describes the *danilkau*'s headdress as consisting of a 'single stick beset with white feathers'. Interestingly, this design convention is also found on an Anthropomorph

from Mua (Brady, 2008), indicating that its appearance was not restricted to Pulu.

The second style of headdress is found on one Anthropomorph from Pulu 6. This headdress features three near-vertical lines drawn with shorter perpendicular lines extending to the left and right. A similar style of headdress has been documented in Haddon's commissioned collection of pencil drawings by Torres Strait Islanders depicting individuals engaged in dances and ceremonies. For example, Gizu and Waria's illustrations of the various types of turtleshell masks used in the *kap* (dance) to celebrate the first appearance of the star, *kek*, over the island of Mua show the distinctive linear design of headdress in profile (Haddon, 1904: 339-340). Another drawing by Gizu shows dancers involved in a 'dugong-ceremony' at Dabangay on Mabuyag with similar headdresses depicted in profile (Haddon, 1904: 341). The second occurrence of this headdress is found in two drawings – both by Gizu – of participants in the death dances which took place on Pulu (see Haddon, 1904: 255). His drawings of a *markai* (male dancers representing the ghosts of recently deceased men) and *ipikamarkai* (male dancers representing the ghosts of recently deceased women) both feature the distinctive linear headdress found on the Pulu 6 anthropomorph (Figure 11).

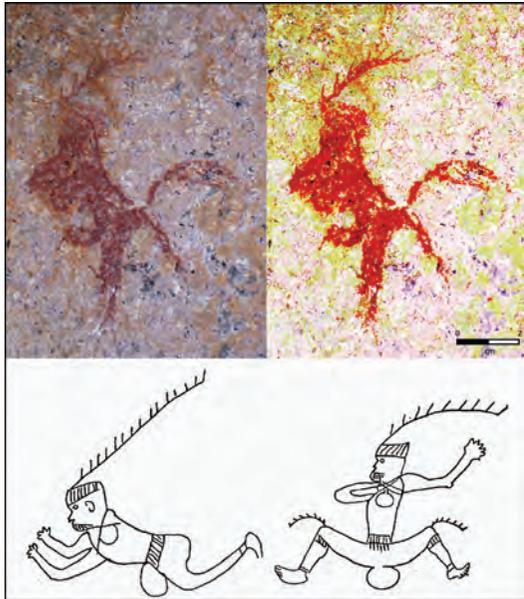


FIG. 10. Top: Pulu 3, computer enhancement of an Anthropomorph (photo: Bruno David). Bottom: *danilkau* drawing by Gizu of Mabuyag (from Haddon, 1904: 256).

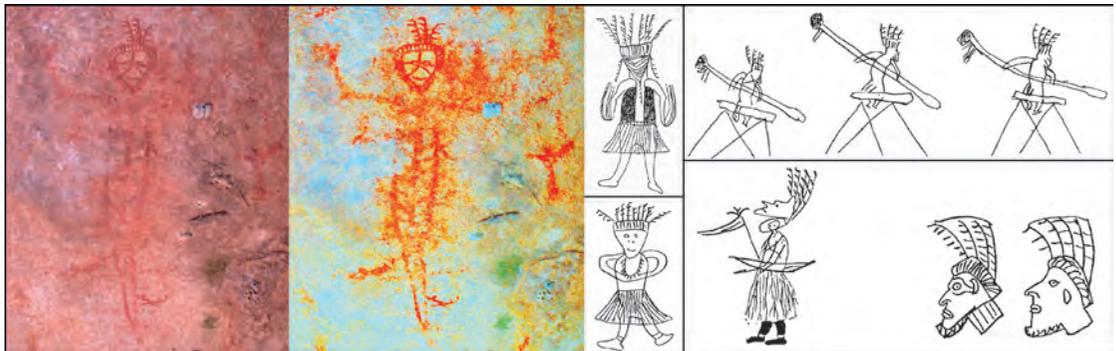


FIG. 11. Clockwise from left: Pulu 6, computer enhancement of an Anthropomorph (photo: Bruno David); *markai* drawing by Gizu of Mabuyag (from Haddon, 1904: 255); Gizu's drawing of a dugong ceremony at Dabangay (from Haddon, 1904: 341); Gizu's drawing of the *dibuag* and *wamedebu* masks (from Haddon, 1904: 340); Waria's drawing of a man dressed for the *mu du kap* dance (from Haddon, 1904: 340); Gizu's drawing of an *ipikamarkai* (from Haddon, 1904: 255).

Haddon (1904: 253) described the headdresses as ‘seven or eight slender wands painted red to which white feathers were fastened a short distance from each other, four of these pointed upwards and three downwards’.

**Body Decorations** Body decorations consist of linear designs extending from the waist on the two small Anthropomorphs from Pulu 3. Both designs feature a downwards-curved forked line. Body decorations are common design elements found on pencil drawings created by Western and Eastern Islanders. For example, Sunday’s (Mabuyag Islander) sketch of dancers involved in the *ubar* (wild plum) dance ceremony at Panay are drawn with a central downwards-curved line with short perpendicular lines attached to the central line (Herle and Philp, 1998: 44; see also McNiven *et al.*, 2004: 239). Likewise, Gizu’s drawing of *mūri* climbing a waterspout, and of *Zarar markai* (additional dancers involved in the funeral ceremony) display similar decorations (Haddon, 1904: 253, 360). Drawings by Eastern Islanders feature single lines, rayed lines extending from a central point on the waist, and a similar downwards-curved line with short perpendicular lines attached to the central line (Haddon, 1908).

Haddon (1893: 154) described this particular decoration as a ‘long tuft made of black cassowary feathers’ (*samēral*) or a grass tail (*nadu*) which was inserted into the waistband of the dancer. Haddon (1904: 359) also noted that ‘a plume of cassowary feathers that hung down behind their backs’ was the only decoration worn by *mūri* (Figure 12).

## FACES/MASKS

Despite only one Face/Mask being documented from the Mabuyag Islands, it represents one of the clearest graphic linkages with Papua New Guinea. Located on the roof of Mask Cave is a red infilled Face/Mask consisting of an outlined oblong-shaped face with a central line extending from top to bottom which bisects an outlined crescent-shaped mouth and two infilled circles (eyes) and a series of triangles and semi-oval shapes situated around the perimeter of the image. As noted by McNiven *et al.* (2006), the motif’s characteristics match those of the distinctive carved wooden *gope* boards found in southwestern Papua New Guinea (e.g. Fly River estuary) and the Papuan Gulf (see e.g. Lewis, 1973; Newton, 1961; Serra and Folch, 1976; Welsch *et al.*, 2006) (Figure 13). Whilst

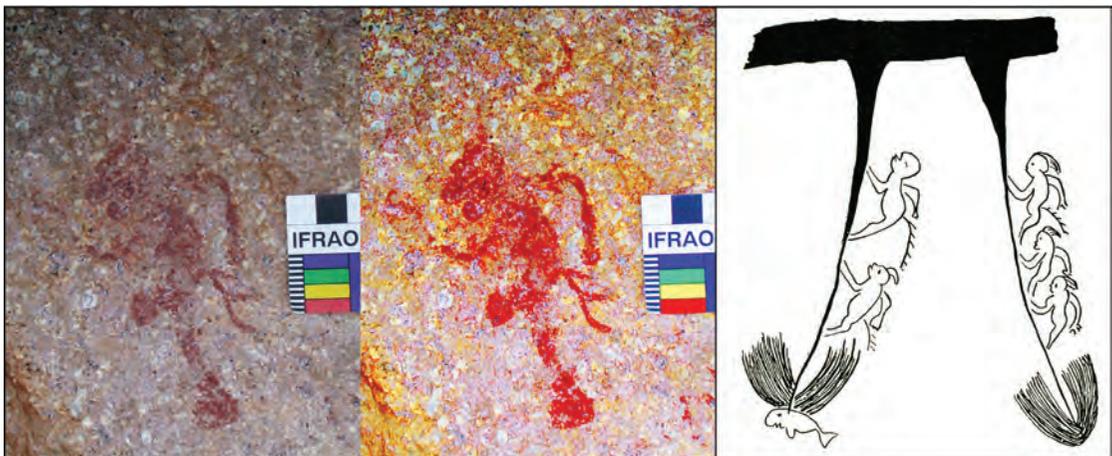


FIG. 12. Left and middle: Pulu 3, computer enhancement of an Anthropomorph identified as a *mūri* (photo: Bruno David). Right: Gizu’s drawing of *mūri* climbing a waterspout (from Haddon, 1904: 360).



FIG. 13. Top row, left to right: Mask Cave, Pulu, computer enhancement of a Face/Mask; bark cloth mask (*eharo*), Orokolo village, Papuan Gulf, collected by F.E. Williams, 1930s (the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1972 [1978.412.725]). Bottom row, left to right: man in a canoe with painted and decorated board from the Lower Fly River (Kiwai Island, Western Province; photograph by Paul Wirz), the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Funds from various donors, 1992, copyright Dadi Wirz and the Museum der Kulturen Basel (1992.417.649); canoe board (*gope*), Fly River region, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Gift of Allan Frumkin, 1961 (1978.412.768).

many variations in design elements are known to exist (e.g. eyes depicted as concentric circles or single circles, vertical lines drawn through the mouth, and carved animals or linear shapes on the boards), the basic structural features of an oblong face, central line, the position of the eyes and mouth in relation to the central line, and perimeter decoration are clearly shared between the rock-painting and portable object. The Mask Cave Face/Mask currently represents the southern-most known example of this otherwise distinctive Papua New Guinea design form.

### MATERIAL CULTURE

Two red painted Canoes were documented from Pulu: one from Pulu 1 at the *kod* and the other from an unnamed site recorded north of Zeibu in 2009 by Ian McNiven and Garrick Hitchcock. The former is most likely the Canoe noted by Haddon (1904) in 1898 as no others were found at the site. When recorded in 2001, the image was obscured by thick black lichen and only visible through computer enhancement (McNiven *et al.*, 2002).

Depictions of Torres Strait region Canoes comprise of a range of stylistic traits such as sails, central columns, decorative flags, grass fringes, and booms/paddles (see Brady,

2005, 2010 for further details). The Pulu 1 Canoe consists of a curved rectangular hull, five vertical lines (flags) projecting from a central column, and a hooked stern. The Zeibu example is slightly more elaborate with a hooked bow, curved rectangular hull, rear column and central column, a boom/paddle, and a row of seven vertical lines bisected by a single line in the front part of the hull (Figure 14). Apart from the absence of sails, the two examples described here can be considered largely consistent in terms of style with most other painted Canoes from the Torres Strait region.

### ENCLOSED GEOMETRIC

At Mask Cave, two distinctive forms of Enclosed Geometrics were documented on the roof of the rockshelter: a red Triangle Variant (Laterally-Linked Triangles) and a red Lens Variant. The former consists of two rows of Laterally-Linked Triangles, one situated above the other. The upper row features six outlined triangles while the bottom row has three (Figure 15). Both sets of triangles are situated in a section of the roof that has experienced heavy mineral staining and were therefore difficult to view. Only Mua and Badu feature similar motifs with two rows of four red infilled triangles spread over two separate panels from



FIG. 14. Computer enhancement of a Canoe from the unnamed rock-art site north of Zeibu (photo: Ian J. McNiven).

the same site (Brady, 2005, 2008) and a single row of five, clear red triangles positioned directly below a Face/Mask at Badu.

The Lens Variant consists of an outlined concentric semi-lens shape. Stylistic variations involving this design are found in rock-art from Dauan (two concentric ellipses contained within a circle) and in scarification designs from men in the Western and Eastern Islands, Cape York, as well as villages from coastal

southwestern Papua New Guinea (Mawatta, Kiwai Island). In their discussion of the Dauan example, McNiven *et al.* (2004: 247) were the first to note that this distinctive design form resembled shoulder cicatrices (*koima* or *koimai*) that could be drawn singly or in pairs (Haddon, 1912) (Figure 16). In the Western Islands, Haddon (1912: 23) was informed that the *koimai* design ‘had no special significance’ but was used if a man ‘wanted to look “flash”’. In the

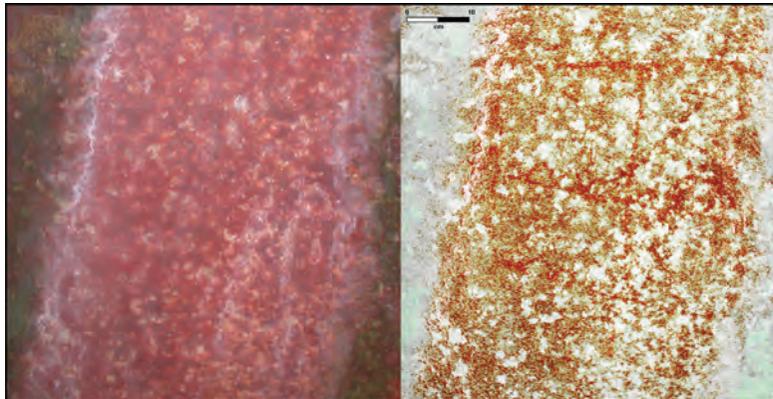


FIG. 15. Mask Cave, Pulu, computer enhancement of Triangle Variants (Laterally-linked Triangles).

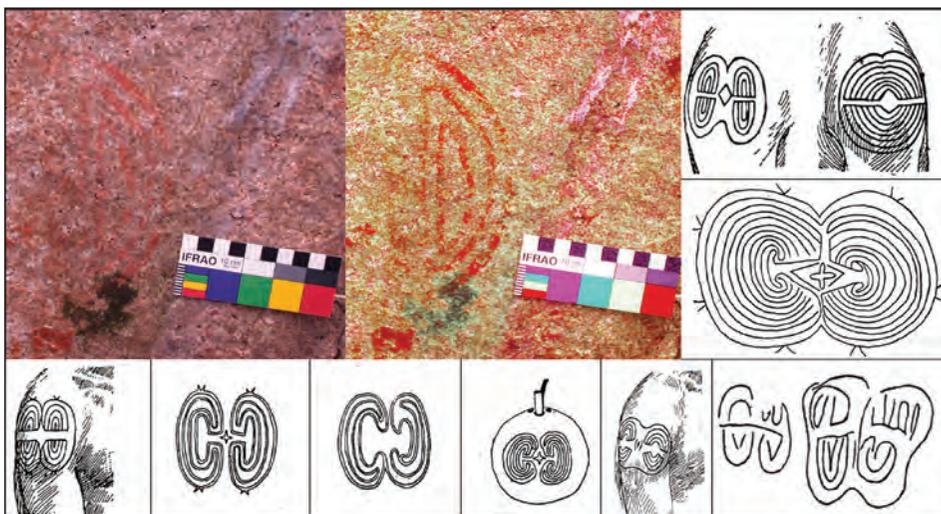


FIG. 16. Clockwise from top left: computer enhancement of a Lens Variant; shoulder scarification, Kiwai Island (from Haddon, 1912: 25); drawing of a *kab koima teir* by Wanu of Mer (from Haddon, 1912: 24); shoulder scarification, Cape York (from Haddon, 1912: 25); shoulder scarification, Parama (from Haddon, 1912: 25); *koima* engraved on a water vessel from Mer (from Haddon, 1912: 24); *koima*, Mer (from Haddon, 1912: 24); *koima*, Mer (from Haddon, 1912: 24).

Eastern Islands, this same scarred design was painted red and white during festive occasions (Haddon, 1912: 23). Additionally, Haddon (1912: 23) noted that the paired ellipse design form had spread to Somerset in Cape York, where he recorded a much simpler form of the cicatrice. Although the Mask Cave example only features one independently drawn concentric lens-shape its distinctive style clearly indicates much broader links across the region.

#### LINEAR NON-FIGURATIVE

This category of motifs is represented by Central Line Shapes and an Extended X-Structure.

#### Central Line Shape

Two distinctive Central Line Shapes were identified, one from Pulu (Pulu 3) and one from Wagadagam on Mabuyag. The former was documented by Haddon (1904: 5) with Gizu identifying it as ‘a waterspout (*baiu*), which is the harpoon of the *mŭri*’, while another informant ‘who probably did not know, called it a centipede’. The picture consists of a red central, slightly curving line approximately 1.2 m in height, with a series of V-shapes positioned on either side extending the length of the central line. A horizontal line extending to the left is located at the mid-point of the central line (Figure 17). An indeterminate design is depicted directly

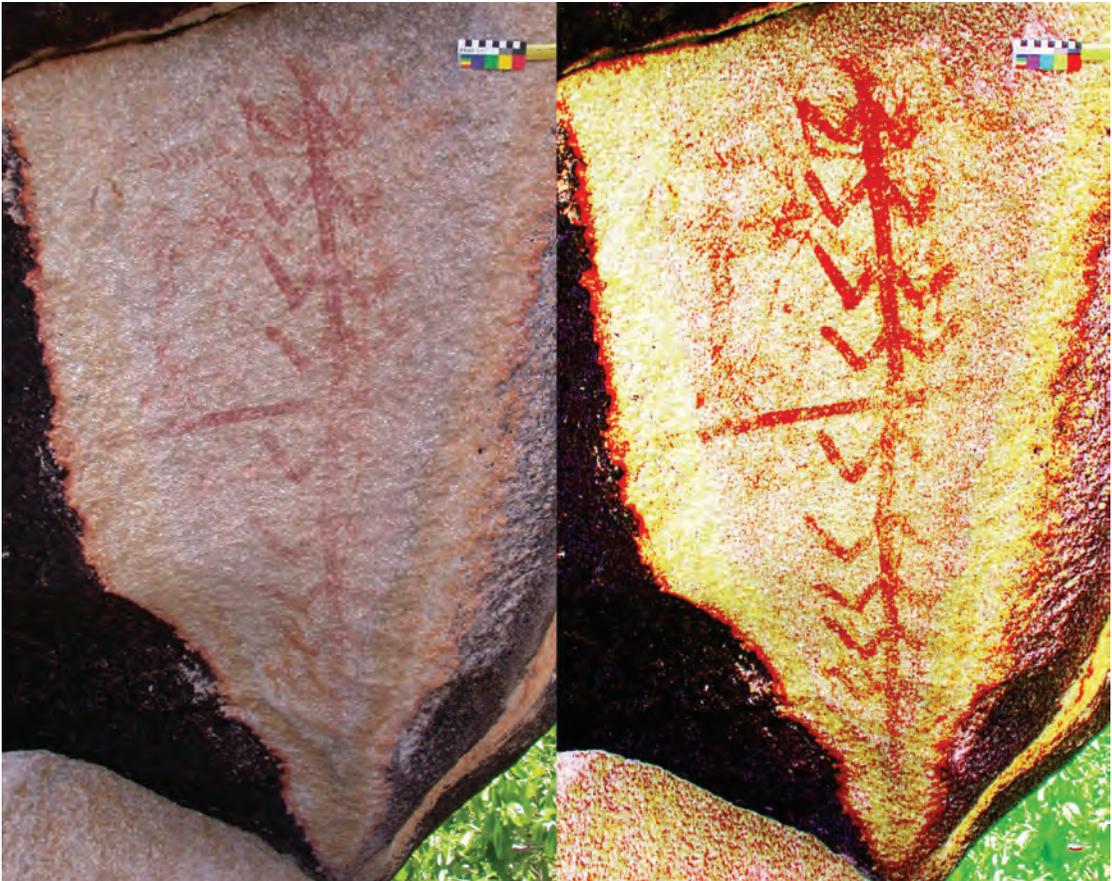


FIG. 17. Pulu 3, computer enhancement of a Central Line shape identified as a waterspout (photo: Bruno David).

above the horizontal line. Several other design elements are found here including three thin parallel lines extending from the top of the picture bisecting the V-shapes and terminating near the bottom of the picture. Curved lines with short diagonal lines extending upwards are positioned at the top of the central line and on the upper right side of the indeterminate design. At Wagadagam, Wright's (2010: 199) tentative identification of a red 'water spout' based on stylistic similarity with the Pulu 3 example is plausible with his sketch indicating a central line featuring a bulbous section at the base and five curved lines positioned on either side extending the length of the central line.

Only one comparable motif has been found elsewhere in Torres Strait. At Fern Cave on Ngiangu is a black Central Line Shape depicted with V-shapes positioned extending down the left side of the central line, and with a striped oval and indeterminate design located at the apex of the image (see Brady, 2010; Brady *et al.*, 2013). Interestingly, in the two drawings of waterspouts produced by Gizu (see Haddon, 1904: 357, 360), neither are illustrated with V-shapes nor curved lines extending along the length of central line. Only Gizu's drawing of *mūri* climbing a waterspout shows any curved lines – a series of curved lines are illustrated extending to the left and right from the base of the central line and described as 'the spray below, *sap*' (Haddon, 1904: 360). This suggests that some variation exists in the depiction of waterspouts although the general structure remains consistent.

#### Extended X-Structure

Three Extended X-Structure motifs have been documented from Pulu but only two<sup>7</sup> (Pulu 5, Mask Cave) feature a link with the distinctive dugong hunting platform (*nath* or *neēt*) which hunters stand on at night

in anticipation of harpooning a passing dugong. At Mask Cave, the design consists of an X-shape enclosed by an outlined rectangle with a curved line connecting the upper corners of the rectangle. The Pulu 5 example is comprised of an X-shape bordered on the right and left side by a vertical line and the top by a horizontal line situated on the left side of the panel; an infilled circle surmounts the midpoint of the horizontal line. Only one other rock-painting featuring a similar Extended X-Structure has been documented from the islands: at Muralag 2 where an X-shape has been drawn in the upper half of an outlined rectangle and the lower half contains a series of diagonal lines (see Brady, 2005, 2010).

Drawings of *nath* produced by Mabuyag Islanders such as Waria and Gizu are remarkably similar in style to the Extended X-Structure rock-paintings (e.g. Haddon, 1912: 168) (Figure 18). The Mabuyag Islander drawings depict a simple linear *nath*, with an X-shape bordered on the left and right by vertical or near-vertical lines and a horizontal line at the top of the X-shape. In some instances, a small coil of rope is positioned on the horizontal line – a similar feature found in the Extended X-Structure painting at Pulu 5. What is most significant in the rock paintings is the incorporation of an X-shape into a larger design form whose depiction is consistent with a material culture object used in dugong hunting, which suggests an association between the two design forms.

#### PAINTED ROOF

Mask Cave also displays evidence of a unique painting event whereby the majority of the roof of the rockshelter is painted in red – an occurrence unknown anywhere in Torres Strait or Cape York Peninsula. Although individual rock paintings are interspersed along much of the roof, it is the red roof dry

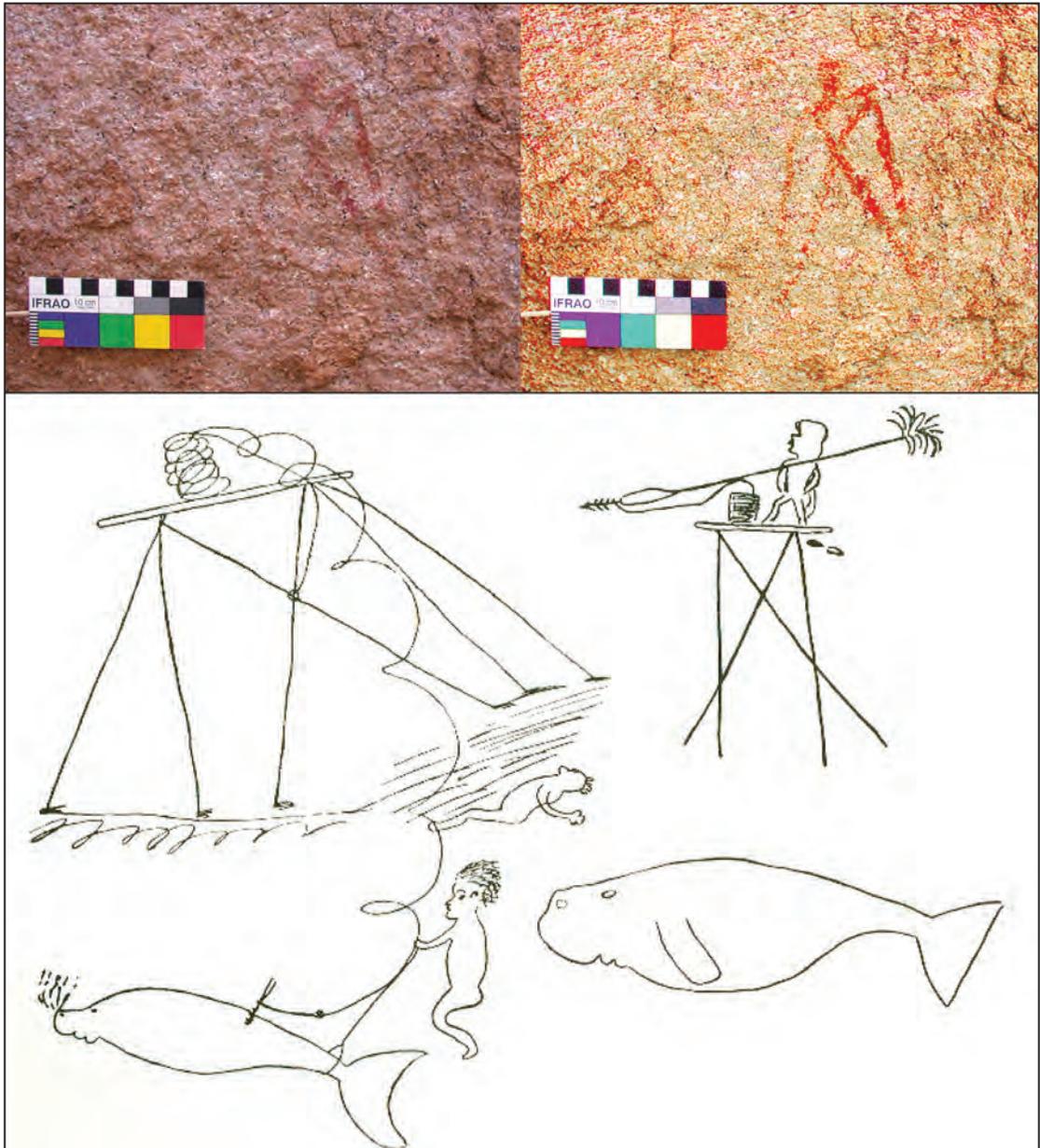


FIG. 18. Top: Pulu 5, computer enhancement of an Extended X-Structure (photo: Bruno David). Bottom: drawing by anonymous Mabuyag Islanders illustrating a dugong hunt (from Haddon, 1912: 168).

'wash' that is the visually dominant feature at the site. In some cases, individual red paintings (of a slightly different red hue) are located amongst sections of the dry-washed roof, making identification of those individual designs difficult (Figure 19). It is tempting to hypothesise that whoever dry-washed the roof red may have attempted to 'cover' the red designs given that executing a red painting on a section of roof that is already covered in red would make it difficult to discern. Large chunks of red ochre with striations have also recently been located in archaeological excavations at the site (one test pit directly underneath a thick patch of red dry-washed roof yielded numerous such pieces) (McNiven *et al.*, 2006). This occurrence of red roof washing is particularly interesting as it has the potential to shed light on the possibility of the extension of the Austronesian Painting Tradition into Torres Strait (see below).

### **SOCIAL ASPECTS OF GOEMULGAW ROCK-ART**

Although Haddon did not focus a great deal on rock-art, his statements regarding some of Pulu's sites and motifs, along with his extensive ethnographic work, has allowed us to gain some insight into additional social

dimensions associated with Goemulgal rock paintings. The following section uses Goemulgal rock-art to explore its role in the totemic system, followed by some comments on the relationship between Pulu's rock-art with ceremonial activity and links to Islander mythology.

### **TOTEMIC LINKS**

The role of individual totems in the social structure and organization of the Torres Strait islands represents a widespread referential system used to help socially link people across the Western and Central Islands (Cape York and Eastern Islanders were excluded from the totemic system recorded by Haddon and Rivers) (Haddon and Rivers, 1904; see also Brady, 2005, 2010). Haddon and Rivers (1904: 158-159) have previously remarked that the representation of totems on different media was known to occur with material culture objects decorated with their owner's totem as well as some totems represented as scarred designs on individuals. However, they also expressed caution in trying to identify the place of origin of a depicted animal on a material culture object, since there is rarely any recorded information on individual objects as to where the design was originally produced. In addition, Haddon stated that



FIG. 19. Mask Cave, Pulu, painted roof.

among the rock-art images he recorded from Kirriri were depictions of animals (a hammerhead shark, a dugong, and a turtle) which represented totems (Haddon, 1904: 358). Furthermore, in 1963, Beckett (1963: 54) used Haddon to suggest that we regard 'all the animal figures as totemic species' in Torres Strait rock paintings and engravings. Additional statements regarding the meanings and role of animals in Torres Strait rock-art are plausible hypotheses based on local ethnography (e.g. Singe, n.d.; *cf.* Barham, 2000: 279; McNiven and David, 2004). Using this knowledge of totemic representation, I examine the graphic linkages between 1) known totemic species from the Mabuyag Islands and corresponding totemic species from other Torres Strait islands; and 2) the distribution of material culture objects with totemic species from the Mabuyag Islands.

In 1898, Haddon and Rivers (1904) recorded a total of 14 totemic species from Mabuyag: dugong, suckerfish, shovel-nosed shark, crocodile, cassowary, flying fox, green turtle, snake, dog, blue-spotted fish, frigate bird, shark, hammerhead shark, and various kinds of rays. Despite the large number of recorded totemic species, only six zoomorphs have been documented in the rock-art from the Mabuyag Islands: two Birds, a Turtle, Dugong, Rodent, and Quadruped (of the six zoomorphs only the Rodent does not appear as a totemic taxon). Whilst small in quantity, the zoomorphs from here conform to other patterns observed in the comparison between zoomorphs and totemic species from other islands across Western and Central Torres Strait (see Brady, 2005, 2010). As a result, I suggest that the depiction of totemic animals was an important dimension of artistic activity in the Mabuyag Islands. Why only six totemic taxa are found could be related to a number of factors including taphonomy, and selectivity in the depiction of totemic species.

## Dugong

One red infilled Dugong painting was recorded from Pulu 6 and oriented horizontally (Figure 20). Dugong paintings also occur on Ngiangu (outlined, vertical) and Kirriri (outlined, horizontal) where they are also identified as totemic species (see Brady, 2005, 2010).

Dugongs are similarly documented on material culture objects. For example, individual dugongs have been recorded incised on objects such as a drum from Saibai (Haddon and Rivers, 1904: 163), as a pair on a piece of pearlshell from an unnamed island in Torres Strait (Haddon and Rivers, 1904: 169), and as a carved wooden sculpture from Mabuyag held at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge University (pers. obs., Accession#: Z7917). The dugong has also been documented by Haddon (1904: Plate 9, Figures 3, 4) as a scarred design on two women: one from Mabuyag (Wagud) and one from Badu (Ado). Each had their dugong totem scarred onto their back. Wagud had two outlined dugongs with fins portrayed facing away from each other and in profile while Ado's two dugongs were outlined with fins, drawn facing each other and in profile. Additionally, Ado's dugong totemic scars featured distinctive striped sections on the back of each animal, a characteristic absent from the rock paintings.

## Bird

Two Birds were identified: one from Pulu 1 (red, infilled, depicted in profile and facing left) (Figure 21), the other from Wagadagam on Mabuyag (red, infilled, toes visible, frontal pose with wings spread and head pointing right) (see Wright, 2010). A third painting of a Bird was recorded at Badu (Brady, 2005) and is similar in style to Pulu 1 (red, infilled, depicted in profile and facing left) although a foot with three toes was also illustrated. Haddon and Rivers (1904) documented two birds as totemic

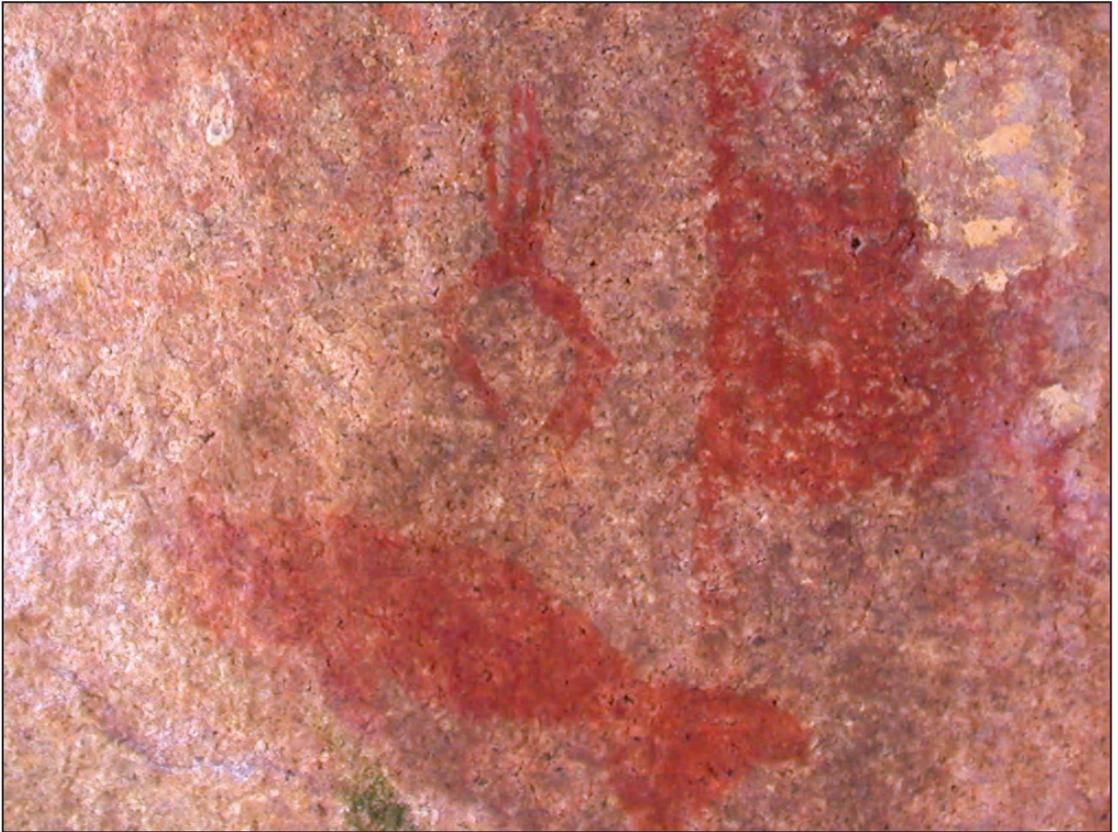


FIG. 20. Pulu 6, Dugong painting (photo: Bruno David).

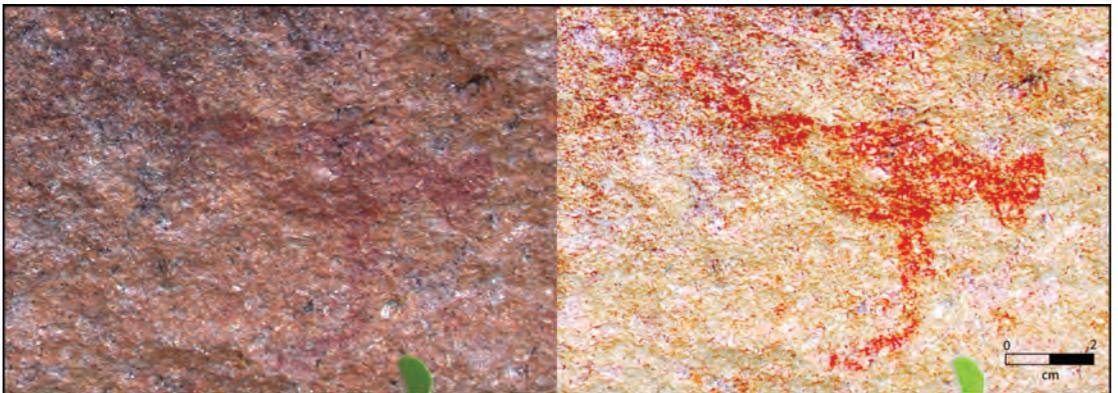


FIG. 21. Pulu 1, computer enhancement of a Bird (photo: Bruno David).

species on Mabuyag: *sam* (cassowary) and *womer* (frigate bird). Both occur as totems on more than one island, and both are totemic animals on Mabuyag and Badu. However, it is highly unlikely that these painted Birds represent a *sam*, given the absence of the distinctive cassowary head-shape. The generalized form and lack of any distinctive features makes it difficult to ascertain if they represent any other bird species.

Depictions of birds, especially the *sam*, are a common decoration on material culture objects such as *warup* drums collected from an unnamed locale in Torres Strait (e.g. Haddon and Rivers, 1904: 167). However, without any distinguishing features on other images of birds found in material culture it is difficult to make any definite correlations with portable media.

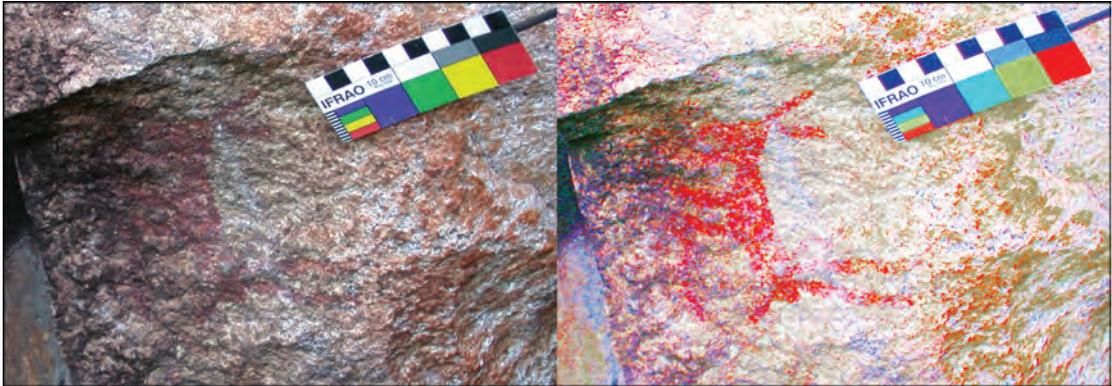


FIG. 22. Pulu 4, computer enhancement of a Quadruped (photo: Bruno David).



FIG. 23. Pulu 6, Turtle painting (photo: Bruno David).

### Quadruped

At Pulu 4, a small red infilled, left-facing Quadruped is drawn standing on a curved line near the base of a boulder (Figure 22). Only one other Quadruped has been documented, at Ngiangu (red, outlined, left-facing and open-mouthed) in south-Western Torres Strait where it is also identified as a totem (see Brady, 2005).

Depictions of quadrupeds on material culture are rarely featured with only one example known. A wooden tobacco pipe from an unnamed island in Torres Strait features two dogs facing away from each other (Brady, 2010: 393).

### Turtle

One red infilled Turtle painting drawn with flippers and a tail was recorded from Pulu 6 (Figure 23). Two other Turtle paintings are known from two other islands: two from Mua (one outlined, one infilled) and three from Kirriri (two outlined, one infilled) (see Brady, 2005). Interestingly, turtles were not recorded by Haddon and Rivers (1904) as a totemic species on Mua. Thus, a totemic relationship with turtles is restricted to Pulu and Kirriri (based on available ethnographic literature).

Material culture correlates have been documented from only a few objects: two incised on drums collected from Saibai (Haddon, 1904a: Plate 7, Figure 1) and Muralag (Brady, 2010: 366), and a sketch by Haddon (1912: 194) of a wooden club from Mer featuring a turtle with a patterned design on its carapace.

### Discussion

The data discussed above demonstrates that a social relationship based on the appearance of depictions of the same totemic animal from two other social groups – the Badulgal from Badu, and the Kaurareg from the south-

Western islands which incorporates the islands of Ngiangu and Kirriri – did exist<sup>8</sup> (see e.g. Haddon, 1904, 1935 for further details on social alliances and divisions in the region). The restriction of the Bird motif to Badu and the Mabuyag Islands is seen to reflect the ethnographically-observed social alliance between the Badulgal and Goemulgal. The links between the Goemulgal and the Kaurareg are intriguing given the state of enmity that existed between the two groups as noted by Haddon (1935). However, by looking at Haddon and Rivers' comments about the social role totems played in Torres Strait society we can see how totemic affiliations took precedence over feelings of animosity.

The solidarity of the totem-clan was a marked feature in the social life of the people and it took precedence of all other considerations, not only so, but there was an intimate relationship between all members of the same totem irrespective of the island or locality to which they might belong and even warfare did not affect the friendship of totem-brethren. Any man who visited another island would be looked after and entertained as a matter of course by the residents who belonged to the same totem as himself...if a man visited an island where there were no individuals who had the same totem as himself he would stay with a clan which was recognised as being in some way associated with his own (Haddon and Rivers, 1904: 161).

While zoomorphic rock paintings from the Mabuyag Islands do not display many totemic links with other Western and Central Islands, they do represent fixed markers of totemic affiliation and most likely would have been recognized between members in the common system of social organization that was recorded across

Western and Central Torres Strait. However, *portable* material culture objects, and people decorated with images of totemic animals, had an even more widespread visibility. In the context of Mabuyag, Haddon and Rivers (1904: 162-169) noted that for some of the extant clans from the island, items of material culture would be decorated by clan members with their clan *augud* (totems). In particular, they noted that the *kaigas* (shovel-nosed shark) clan would inscribe their totem on tobacco pipes, drums, and on people (e.g. scarred right shoulder [men] and both legs [women]), while the *thaabu* (snake) clan decorated tobacco pipes with images of snakes, and scarred a coiled snake on the calf of each leg on men and placed two scarred coiled snakes on the lower back of women. It is interesting to note that this process of totemic inscription persists into

the present with the production of modern rock-art at the *kod* where totemic species such as the *kaigas* and *dhangal* (dugong) continue to be depicted by present-day Goemulgal (Figure 24).

#### ISLANDER MYTHOLOGY & CEREMONIAL ACTIVITY

Pulu's rock-art is highly significant in the context of representation and meaning given that it is one of only two islands in Torres Strait where ethnographic information has been recorded for particular paintings (the other island is Kirriiri; see Haddon, 1904: 358). This information is instrumental in helping to explain the reasons for production of paintings on Pulu.

Islander mythology was clearly an interest at the *kod* site with five *mūri* spirits and

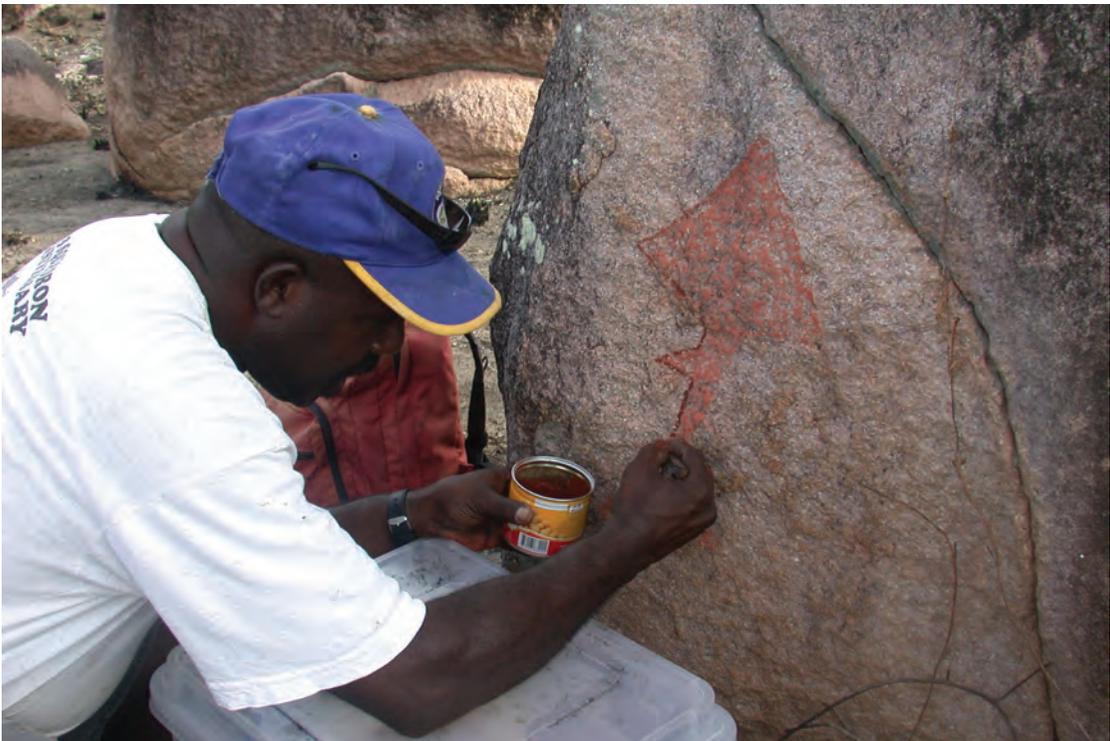


FIG. 24. Cygnet Repu and his painting of a *kaigas* (Shovel-nosed shark) (photo: Ian J. McNiven).

a waterspout depicted at two sites. The waterspout was closely associated with the *mūri* figures since Haddon (1904: 359) noted:

[t]he *mūri* ascend and descend waterspouts in the same way as sailors do on ropes. The waterspouts are their spears by means of which they catch dugong and turtle and other large marine animals; the *mūri* pass dugongs, turtles, sting-rays and other creatures up the waterspout.

In addition, Haddon's (1904: 359) statement about decorations worn by *mūri* ('a plume of cassowary feathers that hang down behind their backs') corresponds with some of the design elements noted at Pulu 3 (see above). Furthermore, Haddon's (1904: 359) observation that '[o]ne pictograph represents a *mūri* wearing a turtleshell mask in the form of an animal's head, *urui krar*' suggests that *mūri* may also have been related to ceremonial activity given they are depicted wearing ceremonial paraphernalia.

Paintings depicting various items of ceremonial paraphernalia (headdresses) along with their placement at the *kod* provide further insight into the nature of some imagery. Haddon (1904: 5) remarked that the *kod* was the location where 'the most important ceremonies were performed, the *kwod* [*kod*] being the place where the *markai* or death-dance was held, and subsequently the initiation of the lads'. The details he collected regarding the decoration of the dancers involved in the death dance at the Pulu *kod* and other dance ceremonies (e.g. dugong ceremony) from *kod* sites on Mabuyag (e.g. at Dabangay) illustrate that some of the distinctive decorations worn by dancers are found in rock paintings. As such, images containing the two styles of headdresses noted above from Pulu 3 and Pulu 6 can be considered reflective of activities which took place at *kod* sites.

Looking more closely at the association between paintings depicting ceremonial paraphernalia, their location at the *kod*, and recent developments in understanding chronological changes that took place at the *kod*, allows us to hypothesize about when artistic activity focusing on ceremonial aspects may have emerged. McNiven *et al.*'s (2009b: 311) archaeological research has revealed that prior to the establishment of the *kod* the area was once 'an old village site in the form of an extensive and dense midden deposit underlying and predating the *kod*'. Around 400 years ago a reorganization of the area began to occur with the 'establishment of ritual installations in the form of clan fireplaces and shrines of dugong bone mounds and *bu* shell arrangements as structural properties of a new integrated totemic clan and moiety system' (McNiven *et al.*, 2009b: 313; see also McNiven and Feldman, 2003). McNiven *et al.* (2009b) suggest that '[t]hese structural properties enabled and legitimated the centralized performance of a range of communally integrative practices focused on mortuary, initiation, hunting magic and warfare/head-hunting ceremonies'. If these new ritual features and ceremonies began to be constructed and performed around 400 years ago it seems likely that paintings illustrating decorations or designs (headdresses and totemic animals) associated with these ceremonial activities would similarly date from around this time. This hypothesis can be tested through direct dating of select motifs.

However, Haddon's ethnography reveals that not all aspects of *kod*-based rock-art on Pulu reflected ceremonial activity. Haddon was informed that the charcoal hand stencils he recorded from Pulu 1 were not ascribed any significance by their creators. He stated: 'I was informed the men used to sit on a mat under the shelter of a stone as a protection

from the sun, and then might make the pictographs, which I understand had no serious meaning' (Haddon, 1904: 4). This observation suggests that production of rock-art at the *kod* was not entirely associated with ceremonial activity. Although given what we know about the nature of hand stencils through ethnography (as having secular and religious links, see e.g. Gunn, 1993; Layton, 1992; Moore, 1979; Roberts and Parker, 2003; Trezise, 1971), the possibility exists there may have been other dimensions to their production and symbolism that Haddon was unable to access without speaking directly to the creators of the images.

### REGIONAL PATTERNS

The relatively large number of rock-art sites documented on Pulu provides an opportunity to examine the spatial distribution and patterning of sites and motifs across the landscape at a variety of levels. Unfortunately, the lack of information about the Mabuyag sites does not allow for much comparison apart from the similarity of the Central Line shape from Wagadagam (see above) and a Zoomorph (Bird) described below.

#### VARIATION ON PULU

Variation in Pulu's rock-art can be observed in a number of cases. After excluding the recently-created images, analysis of Pulu's rock-art reveals that paintings are predominantly located around the *kod* (n=10) with only four located in other areas of the islet. This suggests the *kod* was the geographical focus for painting activity in the past. Despite the trend for more sites to be located at the *kod*, the number of images is slightly more balanced with a total of 64 images located at the *kod* and 41 from elsewhere on Pulu. Proportionally, Figurative pictures are uncommon at rock-art sites situated away from the *kod* (n=2,

4.9%), but more common at sites at the *kod* (n=20, 31.3%) (Table 4). This pattern is perhaps best evidenced through the appearance of Anthropomorphs (n=14) and Zoomorphs (n=5) at the *kod* while none have been recorded elsewhere on the islet. Some differences in colour and technique can also be noted. The *kod* features the only recorded use of a colour other than red – four instances of yellow were documented at Pulu 7 as part of bichrome (red + yellow) images, while Haddon also documented black charcoal handstencils from Pulu 1 in 1898 (see above). Overall, these patterns reveal there was indeed variation in the way the Goemulgal decorated the Pulu landscape with the *kod* acting as a focus area of painting activity, a locale for naturalistic imagery, and colour and technique variation.

#### VARIATION BETWEEN ISLANDS & MAINLANDS

The examples discussed above clearly indicate that design forms not only crossed from fixed to portable media (e.g. wooden material culture objects, scarred designs on people, drawings produced by Islanders) but were also being shared extensively across space. For example, the depiction of Canoes, Central Line shapes, and Extended X-Structures all possess a range of stylistic traits that are used or found in similar examples from elsewhere in the region. This similarity suggests a basic underlying structure of the motif was known/recognized and variations could occur in different parts of the region.

In terms of understanding the spatial extent of some of Pulu's shared designs, the Lens Variant and Face/Mask are particularly useful. The distinctive Lens Variant is similar in style to a motif from Dauan and as a scarred design extending from Cape York in the south to the southwestern Papua New Guinea coast in the north and east to the

island of Mer. In addition, the Face/Mask's links to the distinctive *gope* boards from as far northeast as the Papuan Gulf (over 200 km) indicate that distance was not an inhibiting factor in artistic relationships. Furthermore, these examples clearly demonstrate that some motifs were crossing known social (e.g. totemic) boundaries and linguistic divisions (e.g. a Papuan language spoken in the Eastern Islands, and an Australian language in the Western and Central Islands (see e.g. Brady, 2005, 2010).

Geographically-circumscribed links are also evident through the Laterally-Linked Triangles as they are restricted to the mid-Western Islands (Pulu, Mua, Badu). However, some variation in this pattern is apparent with those from Mua and Badu being infilled, bright, and fresh in appearance while those recorded from Mask Cave are outlined and heavily deteriorated. This pattern may be suggestive of design and temporal variation in the execution of these pictures. From the examples discussed above, little evidence exists to suggest that Pulu's motifs were linked to social alliances observed by Haddon (1935) in the late 1800s. Using Haddon's comment that the Goemulgal were allied to the Badulgal would seem to suggest the possibility that considerable overlap in terms of similar motifs may exist. However, this is not the case. If rock-art was being produced during ethnographic times it is apparent that these alliances were not a strong influence in the production of art in the Mabuyag Islands.

#### LINKS TO THE AUSTRONESIAN PAINTING TRADITION

Mask Cave's rock-art is crucial to assessing the possibility of influences/links from outside the Torres Strait region. The potential for Austronesian cultural influences into Torres Strait has been an area of interest for researchers since Haddon (1935: 278)

first recognized this possibility. Recent examination into Austronesian influences into the region began with a focus on canoe technology by exploring the distribution of Austronesian canoe traits into Torres Strait and mainland Australia (Doran, 1981; Golson, 1972). Other lines of evidence indicating possible Austronesian influence into Torres Strait involve linguistic similarities between Austronesian and Western-Central language for canoe/seacraft terminology (David *et al.*, 2004a), Austronesian influences on horticulture (Harris, 1995), and the 'ships of the dead complex' (Brady, 2005, 2010; Haddon, 1904; see also Ballard *et al.*, 2003). The most significant development into the question of Austronesian influence in the region is from McNiven *et al.* (2006: 73) who use several lines of evidence (including the discovery of locally manufactured red-slipped pottery, linguistics, and an increase in midden sites) to argue that Torres Strait 'was a western extension of demographic expansions along the southern Papuan coast initiated by Austronesian migrations to the Papuan tip region around 2600 years ago'.

Until recently, the role of rock-art in the context of Austronesian influences in the Torres Strait region had not been addressed. Few attempts have been made to identify patterns in western Pacific rock-art that could be linked to Austronesian-speaking regions (e.g. Ballard, 1992; Specht, 1979). However, it is the work of Chris Ballard (1992) and Meredith Wilson (2002) in defining and re-defining the Austronesian Painting Tradition (APT) that is of particular importance here. While Wilson identified four non-mutually exclusive APT sub-styles (Red1/Red2, Curvilinear Red, Rectilinear Red, Rectilinear; see Wilson, 2002: 216-222), three key elements of the APT were also identified: an overwhelming dominance of red rock paintings, sites located in inaccessible areas (e.g. cliffs), and site locations associated with funerary remains.

Since statistical analysis involving Torres Strait and APT rock-art motifs has yet to be undertaken, it is difficult to accurately assess where or whether rock-art from the Mabuyag Islands and more generally Torres Strait fits into one of Wilson's APT sub-styles. It is worthwhile to note that Torres Strait sites also do not fit the inaccessibility requirement as outlined by Wilson and Ballard, although this criterion is a product of a very different topography seen in the Western Pacific. However, the prevalence of red rock-paintings has been clearly identified in the Torres Strait region with the colour red being used in 94.2% (n=926) of rock-paintings documented during the Torres Strait Rock-Art Project (Brady, 2005, 2010: 381). This pattern is magnified at Mask Cave with the occurrence of the red painted roof which visibly dominates the site. In addition to the widespread use of red ochre at the site, two red-slipped pottery sherds – an element considered by Wilson to be a part of the cultural 'baggage' associated with the producers of the APT – were located 'amongst a lag deposit of stone artefacts within a shallow erosion channel running through the middle of the site' in 2001 (McNiven *et al.*, 2006: 63; see also David and McNiven, 2004). Subsequent excavations carried out in 2002 and 2003 yielded a further 14 locally manufactured, red-slipped sherds dating to two major periods: 1500-1700 and 2400-2600 years ago. In their detailed discussion of settlement and expansion patterns in Torres Strait, McNiven *et al.* (2006: 75) link the arrival of pottery-producing Papuans into the Torres Strait region 2600 years ago with the 'historical extension of the greatest migration events in the ancient world – the Austronesian settlement of Island SE Asia, the Pacific and the Indian Ocean'. Furthermore, they argue that 'Post-Lapita demographic expansions of the western

Pacific 2800-2500 years ago reached out to the southern Papua New Guinea coast with follow-on effects to Zenadh Kes [Torres Strait] of northeastern Australia' (McNiven *et al.*, 2006: 75). These findings highlight Mask Cave's unique position to shed light on Austronesian influence in the Torres Strait region, while also demonstrating a distinctive link between the site's rock-art and associated cultural material.

## CONCLUSION

Rock-art from the Mabuyag Islands is stylistically varied with recorded motifs having the potential to suggest insights into various aspects of Goemulgaw cultural history. Motifs and their individual designs elements reflect a variety of social processes such as interregional interaction with close neighbours, and others further afield as the Papuan Gulf and the tip of Cape York. Ethnographic information collected about specific motifs illustrates links to Islander mythology while ceremonial and totemic affiliations can be identified using additional material collected by Haddon during the late 1800s. What becomes apparent through this overview of Goemulgaw rock-art is how rock-paintings here can be considered a dimension of Goemulgaw social expression – an observation that sheds light on how images were meaningful in the context of Goemulgaw life. While future investigations into the antiquity of Goemulgaw rock-art would be useful in better understanding topics such as rock-art's role in the development of the Pulu *kod* site complex, Pulu's (and to a lesser extent Mabuyag's) rock-art assemblage has been an important means by which to address key questions concerning the nature of Goemulgaw artistic traditions and their place in the broader Torres Strait regional landscape.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are extended to the Goemulgau *Kod* and the Goemulgal community for their continued support of rock-art research in the Mabuyag Islands. I am particularly indebted to Cygnet Repu, Terrence Whap, Sophie Luffman, Aaron Whap, and John Bani for discussions about rock-art and assistance with recording at several sites on Pulu. Thanks also go to Gary Swinton for drafting figures and to Bruno David and Ian McNiven for permission to use their photographs of rock-art from the *kod* and the site at Zeibu. Funding for this project was generously provided through grants to Ian McNiven and Bruno David from Environment Australia (Grant CHPP 293), Coastcare (Project 717629) and ARC Discovery Grant DP0344070.

## LITERATURE CITED

- BALLARD, C. 1992. Painted rock art sites in western Melanesia: locational evidence for an Austronesian tradition. Pp 94-106. In McDonald, J. & Haskovec, I.P (eds) *State of the Art: Regional rock art studies in Australia and Melanesia*. Occasional AURA Publication No.6 (Australian Rock Art Research Association: Melbourne).
- BALLARD, C., BRADLEY, R., NORDENBORG MYHRE, L. & WILSON, M. 2003. The ship as symbol in the prehistory of Scandinavia and Southeast Asia. *World Archaeology* 35(3): 385-403.
- BARHAM, A.J. 2000. Late Holocene Maritime Societies in the Torres Strait Islands, Northern Australia-Cultural Arrival or Cultural Emergence? *Modern Quaternary Research Southeast Asia* 16: 223-314.
- BARHAM, A.J. & HARRIS, D.R. (eds) 1987. Archaeological and Palaeoenvironmental investigations in Western Torres Strait, northern Australia. Final report to the Research and Exploration Committee of the National Geographic Society on the Torres Strait Research Project Part IIB: July-October 1985. (unpubl.).
- BECKETT, J. 1963. Rock art in the Torres Strait islands. *Mankind* 6(2): 52-54.
- BRADY, L.M. 2005. Painting patterns: Torres Strait region rock-art. PhD thesis, Monash University, Australia.
- BRADY, L.M. 2006. Documenting and analyzing rock paintings from Torres Strait, NE Australia, with digital photography and computer image enhancement. *Journal of Field Archaeology* 31(4): 363-379.
- BRADY, L.M. 2007. A different look: comparative rock-art recording from the Torres Strait using computer enhancement techniques. *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 1(2007): 98-115
- BRADY, L.M. 2008. Mua's rock-art: design patterning and interregional interaction. Pp. 503-524. In David, B., Manas, L. & Quinnell, M. (eds) *Gelam's Homeland: Cultural and Natural History on the Island of Mua, Torres Strait*. *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum, Cultural Heritage Series* 4(2). (Queensland Museum: South Brisbane).
- BRADY, L.M. 2010. *Pictures, patterns and objects: rock-art of the Torres Strait islands, northeastern Australia*. (Australian Scholarly Publishing: North Melbourne).
- BRADY, L.M., DELANEY, W., & ROBINS, R. 2013. The Queensland Museum Expedition to Ngiangu (Booby Island): rock-art, archaeology and inter-regional interaction in south-Western Torres Strait. *Queensland Archaeological Research* 16:93-120.

- DAVID, B. & MCNIVEN, I.J. 2004. Western Torres Strait Cultural History Project: research design and initial results. Pp. 199-208. In McNiven, I.J. & Quinnell, M. (eds) *Torres Strait Archaeology & Material Culture. Memoirs of the Queensland Museum, Cultural Heritage Series 3*(1). (Queensland Museum: South Brisbane).
- DAVID, B., BRAYER, J., MCNIVEN, I.J. & WATCHMAN, A. 2001. Why digital enhancement of rock paintings works: rescaling and saturating colours. *Antiquity* 75: 781-792.
- DAVID, B., MCNIVEN, I.J., MITCHELL, R., ORR, M., HABERLE, S., BRADY, L. & CROUCH, J. 2004a. Badu 15 and the Papuan-Austronesian settlement of Torres Strait. *Archaeology in Oceania* 39(2): 65-78.
- DAVID, B., MCNIVEN, I.J., MANAS, L., MANAS, J., SAVAGE, S., CROUCH, J., NELLEMAN, G. & BRADY, L. 2004b. Goba of Mua: archaeology working with oral tradition. *Antiquity* 78(299): 158-172.
- DORAN, E. 1981. *Wangka: Austronesian canoe origins*. (Texas A & M University Press: College Station).
- GOLSON, J. 1972. Land connections, sea barriers and the relationship of Australian and New Guinea prehistory. Pp. 375-397. In Walker, D. (ed) *Bridge or Barrier: The Natural and Cultural History of Torres Strait*. (Australian National University: Canberra).
- GUNN, R.G. 1993. Dulcie Range rock art survey III. Report to the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority, Alice Springs, and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra. (unpubl.)
- HADDON, A. C. 1893. The secular and ceremonial dances of Torres Strait. *Internationale Archiv Für Ethnologie* 6: 131-162.
- HADDON, A. C. (ed). 1904. *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits. Vol 5. sociology, magic and religion of the Western Islanders*. (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge).
- HADDON, A. C. (ed). 1908. *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits. Vol 6. sociology, magic and religion of the Eastern Islanders*. (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge)
- HADDON, A. C. (ed). 1912. *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits. Vol 4. arts and crafts*. (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge)
- HADDON, A. C. 1935. *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits. Vol 1. general ethnography*. (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge)
- HADDON, A. C. & RIVERS, W.H.R. 1904. Totemism. Pp 153-193. In Haddon, A.C. (ed) *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits. Vol 5. sociology, magic and religion of the Western Islanders*. (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge).
- HARRIS, D. R. 1995. Early agriculture in New Guinea and the Torres Strait divide. *Antiquity* 69: 848-854.
- HERLE, A. & PHILP, J. 1998. *Torres Strait Islanders: an exhibition marking the centenary of the 1898 Cambridge Anthropological Expedition*. (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge).
- LAYTON, R. 1992. *Australian Rock Art: a new synthesis*. (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge).
- LEWIS, A.B. 1973. *Decorative art of New Guinea: consisting of two complete publications: 'Decorative Art of New Guinea: Incised Designs' and 'Carved and Painted Designs from New Guinea'*. (Dover Publications Inc.: New York)
- MCNIVEN, I.J. & DAVID, B. 2004. Torres Strait rock-art and ochre sources: an overview. Pp. 199-208. In McNiven, I.J. & Quinnell, M. (eds) *Torres Strait Archaeology & Material Culture. Memoirs of the Queensland, Cultural Heritage Series 3*(1). (Queensland Museum: South Brisbane).
- MCNIVEN, I.J. & FELDMAN, R. 2003. Ritual orchestration of seascapes: hunting magic and dugong bone mounds in Torres Strait, NE Australia. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 13(2): 169-194.
- MCNIVEN, I.J., BRADY, L.M. & BARHAM, A. 2009a. Kabadul Kula and the antiquity of Torres Strait rock-art. *Australian Archaeology* 69:29-40.
- MCNIVEN, I.J., DAVID, B. & BRAYER, J. 2000. Digital enhancement of Torres Strait rock art. *Antiquity* 74: 759-760.
- MCNIVEN, I.J., DAVID, B., GOEMULGAU KOD & FITZPATRICK, J. 2009b. The great kod of Pulu: mutual historical emergence of ceremonial sites and social groups in Torres Strait, northeast Australia. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 19(3): 291-317.
- MCNIVEN, I.J., DAVID, B., BRADY, L. & BRAYER, J. 2004. Kabadul Kula rock-art site, Dauan Island, Torres Strait. Pp. 227-256. In McNiven, I.J. & Quinnell, M. (eds) *Torres Strait Archaeology & Material Culture. Memoirs of the Queensland Museum, Cultural Heritage Series 3*(1). (Queensland Museum: South Brisbane).
- MCNIVEN, I.J., FITZPATRICK, J., DAVID, B. & GOEMULGAU KOD. 2002. Pulu Culture Site Mapping Project (Torres Strait). Final Report to Environment Australia (Canberra) (unpubl.).
- MCNIVEN, I.J., DICKINSON, W.R., DAVID, B., WIESLER, M., VON GNIELINSKI, F., CARTER, M. & ZOPPI, U. 2006. Mask Cave: red-slipped

- pottery and the Australian-Papuan settlement of Torres Strait. *Archaeology in Oceania* 41: 49-81.
- MOORE, D. 1979. The handstencil as symbol. Pp. 318-324. In Ucko, P.J. (ed) *Form in Indigenous Art*. (Australian Institute for Aboriginal Studies: Canberra).
- NEWTON, D. 1961. *Art styles of the Papuan Gulf*. (University Publishers: New York).
- ROBERTS, D.A. & PARKER, A. 2003. *Ancient ochres: the Aboriginal paintings of Mount Borradaile*. (JB Books: Marlston).
- SERRA, E. & FOLCH, A. 1976. *The art of Papua and New Guinea*. (Rizzoli International: New York).
- SINGE, J. nd. Aspects of rock painting in the Torres Strait with an emphasis on Muralug Island Group. (to which is attached copies of drawing of rock paintings from various sites). Ms. Thursday Island High School (unpubl.).
- SPECHT, J. 1979. Rock art in the Western Pacific. Pp. 58-82. In Mead, S.M. (ed) *Exploring the visual art of Oceania: Australia, Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia*. (The University Press of Hawaii: Honolulu).
- TESKE, T. 1986. *Mabuiag Island of Torres Strait*. (Far Northern Schools Development Unit: Cairns).
- TRESIZE, P. 1971. *Rock art of south-east Cape York*. (Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies: Canberra).
- VANDERWAL, R.L. 1973. The Torres Strait: protohistory and beyond. *The University of Queensland, Anthropology Museum, Occasional Papers in Anthropology* 2: 157-194.
- WELSCH, R.L., WEBB, V-L. & HARAHA, S. (eds). 2006. *Coaxing the spirits to dance: art and society in the Papuan Gulf of New Guinea*. (Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College: Hanover).
- WILSON, M. 2002. Picturing Pacific prehistory: the rock-art of Vanuatu in a western Pacific context. PhD thesis, The Australian National University, Australia.
- WRIGHT, D. 2010. The archaeology of community emergence and development on Mabuyag in the western Torres Strait. PhD thesis, Monash University, Australia.

**TABLE 1:** List of rock-art sites and number of Determinate motifs recorded from Pulu and Mabuyag.

Site	# of Determinate Motifs	Recorder	Year Recorded
<b>PULU</b>			
Pulu 1	7	Bruno David, Ian McNiven	2001
Pulu 2	4	Bruno David, Ian McNiven	2001
Pulu 3	7	Bruno David, Ian McNiven	2001
Pulu 4	4	Bruno David, Ian McNiven	2001
Pulu 5	2	Bruno David, Ian McNiven	2001
Pulu 6	29	Bruno David, Ian McNiven	2001
Pulu 7	4	Bruno David, Ian McNiven	2001
Pulu 8	1	Bruno David, Ian McNiven	2001
Pulu 9	3	Bruno David, Ian McNiven	2001
Pulu 10	3	Bruno David, Ian McNiven	2001
Pulu 12	2	Liam Brady	2002
Mask Cave	25	Liam Brady	2002, 2003
Tigershark Rockshelter	12	Liam Brady	2003
Unnamed site north of Zeibu	2	Ian McNiven, Garrick Hitchcock	2009
<b>MABUYAG</b>			
Wagadagam	19	Duncan Wright	2006
North coast of Mabuyag	1	Anthony Barham, David Harris	mid 1980s
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>125</b>		

**TABLE 2:** Pulu, pictures determined using computer enhancement.

Site	# of Pictures Determined by Computer Enhancement	Total # of Pictures	% of Pictures Determined by Computer Enhancement
Pulu 1	3	7	42.9
Pulu 2	0	4	0
Pulu 3	1	7	14.3
Pulu 4	0	4	0
Pulu 5	0	2	0
Pulu 6	0	29	0
Pulu 7	0	4	0
Pulu 8	0	1	0
Pulu 9	2	3	66.7
Pulu 10	1	3	33.3
Pulu 12	0	2	0
Mask Cave	6	25	24
Tigershark Rockshelter	3	12	25
Unnamed Site North of Zeibu	0	2	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>15.2</b>

**TABLE 4:** List of recently-created rock-art sites, motifs, and artists from Pulu.

Site	Year Created	# of Determinate Motifs	Artists	Motif Identification by Artist	Non-Identified Motifs
Pulu 1	2001	8	Tony Yellub, Cygnet Repu, Thomas Mene	Sun, Boat, <i>Nath</i> Dugong	2 Linked Anthropomorphs, Hand Stencils, Circle Variant, Oval Variant
Pulu 8	2001	3	Cygnet Repu	Dugong, Shovel-Nosed Shark, <i>dari</i>	
Pulu 10	2001	18	Cygnet Repu, Tony Yellub, Aaron Whap, Patrina Repu	<i>Mūri</i> , dinghy with outboard motor	Dari, Crab, Snake, Anthropomorphs, Octopus, Star-shapes, Face/Mask, Wavy Line, Crescent-shape, Dugong, Shovel-Nosed Shark, Dot Series
Pulu 11	2001	3	Aaron Whap	<i>Nath</i> , Turtle	Dugong
Mask Cave	2002	5	Cygnet Repu, Aaron Whap	<i>dari</i>	Anthropomorph, Rayed Line Variant, Dugong, Turtle
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>37</b>			

**TABLE 4:** Comparison of Level 2 pictures from the *kod* and the rest of Pulu.

Level 2 Motif	<i>Kod</i>	% of Total	Rest of Pulu	% of Total
Figurative	20	31.3	2	4.9
Non-Figurative	44	68.7	39	95.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100</b>

## □ ENDNOTES

1. See McNiven and David (2004) for an overview of rock-art sites recorded prior to 2000 and the establishment of the Torres Strait Rock-Art Recording Project.
2. See Brady (2005, 2010) for a full description of each site recorded during the Pulu phase of the Torres Strait Rock-Art Recording Project.
3. Also spelled 'Menguzi kula', or 'Mangizi kula'.
4. A dugong platform is used by hunters to stand on at night while waiting for a dugong to harpoon (see below).
5. The relatively small number of determinate motifs from the Mabuyag Islands does not allow for a meaningful statistical analysis to be undertaken.
6. The Torres Strait region is defined here as the area 'extending northwards from Cape York at the tip of Cape York Peninsula to the southwestern coast of Papua New Guinea and eastwards as far as the eastern bank of the Fly River estuary' (Brady, 2010: 5). This area is based on the extensive ethnography demonstrating widespread historical connections between groups of people from the region.
7. Haddon's (1904: 4) reference to the Extended X-Structure from Pulu 1 as a *nath* is not used here since it is not structurally akin to the drawings produced by Islanders, nor would it function in the same sense as a *nath* since these structures require a flat top or platform for the hunter to stand on; this particular picture features two diagonal lines terminating in a point above the X-shape and therefore does not resemble a drawing of a *nath*.
8. It is acknowledged that the lack of a detailed chronology for the zoomorphs discussed above does create some uncertainty with regard to the antiquity of the images and the ethnographic data collected by Haddon. However, the relatively recent dates thus far obtained for Torres Strait rock-art (e.g. David *et al.*, 2004b; McNiven *et al.*, 2009a) as well as the rapid rate of deterioration of images given the harsh coastal climate of the region does indicate that most of the art is likely to be only hundreds of years old rather than thousands, making comparisons between ethnographic data and images more valid.