

## **SOME REMARKS ABOUT MIGRATION OF PEOPLE, TOOLS, WEAPONS, MOTIVES OF ART AND EVEN SHAMANISM**

by

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### **Summary**

**The spearthrower is certainly not an Australian invention. The harpoon where ever it was invented also came from outside to Australia and reached only the north eastern coast at Cape York. Also the X-ray motive certainly a shamanistic motive reached Australia only in a very limited district in Arnhem-Land in the north. So we can assume that shamanism in a certain variation reached Australia from Asia via Siberia.**

**We have to reckon with different waves of immigrants in different times – out of these groups emerged a very homogenous culture which lived apart from the later Melanesian and Polynesian groups. Those may have touched the shores of the fifth continent Australia but the Aborigines never accepted specific traits of these cultures: agriculture, pottery, houses ...**

**They remained what they were and kept alive a very old way of living up to our days, intact as we are inclined to think but fossilised and degenerated – incapable to change and adapt.**

ALL THE immigrants to Australia must have come from somewhere, from Asia, of course.

You don't find a trace of their wanderings in the mythology of the Aborigines. In their mythology people came out from the earth – the Australian earth, the migration period is obviously beyond the mythological grasp.

Only in the far north for instance at the Warramirri tribe you find a hint some god or ancestor came out of the sea. (figure 1)

We have of course no idea about the dynamics of those immigrations and their mythological relation.

Regarding the immigration to Australia by sea: Nobody knows which sort of watercraft they had. But we of course underestimate the energy drive and enterprise of the so-called primitive peoples and we cannot imagine how they crossed the sea.

BUT FOR instance Theodor Strenlow sites a song from the Aranda, a tribe of central Australia, which is not supposed to have ever seen the sea. But the song goes like this:

The narrowing sea embraces it forever, -  
It's 'swelling' waves embrace it forever.  
(‘changed from ‘welling’)

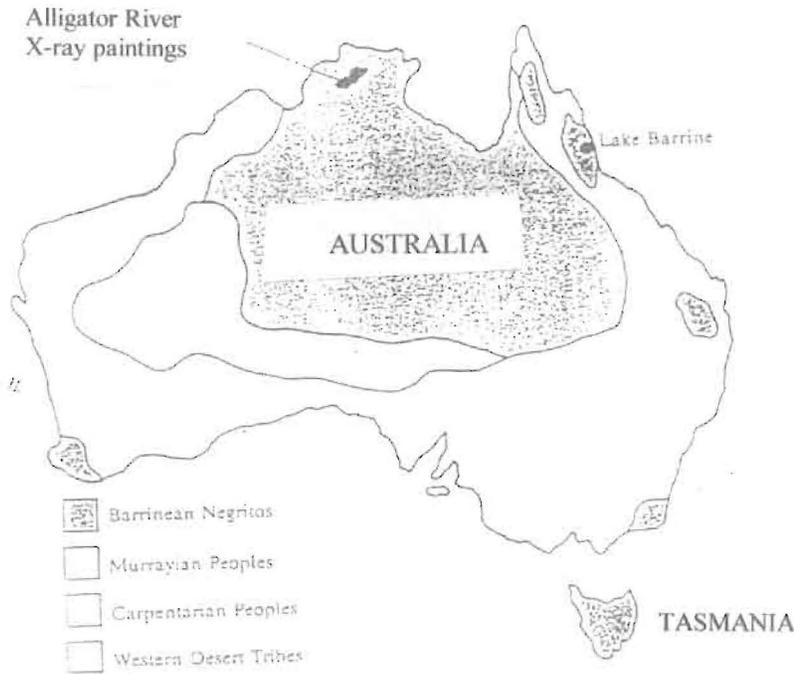


Figure 1: Map, showing the distribution of the "main types" of the Australian people who immigrated in prehistoric times (after Birdsell and Tindale).

The sea, ever narrowing, forever embraces it,  
The great beam of the Milky Way.  
Its embracing arms forever tremble about it, -  
The great beam of the Milky Way.  
Set in the bosom of the sea it stands,  
Reverberating loudly without a pause.  
Set in the bosom of the sea it stands,  
Sea-flecked with drifts of foam.  
The 'tnatantja' pole, flecked with drifts of  
foam, - ('explanation')  
The great beam of the Milky Way  
Quivers with deep passion forever.  
The great beam of the Milky Way,  
Trembles with unquenchable desire.  
The great beam of the Milky Way  
Draws all men to itself by their forelocks.  
The great beam of the Milky Way  
Unceasingly draws all men, wherever they  
may be.

(T.G.H.Strehlow, Aboriginal Australian Literature and Language, in Hemisphere, an Asian-Australian Magazine, August 1962).

IS THIS SONG a memory of the long past times, or is it meant as an encouragement to cross the sea at the Spencer Gulf southwards? The song may be of the past and the journey from the shore into the sea was never realized, so it is a fantasy or a memory – we don't know.

The first immigrants entered Australia about 40,000 years ago – or even 60,000 years. Certainly the Tasmanians were amongst them and also the Negritos. They seem to be one of the oldest Australians and have been pushed aside by the later ones into the marginal corners of the continent.

After them came the Murrayans, a sturdy race who is said to have brought the boomerang and the spearthrower to Australia.

**The boomerang**

They brought the spearthrower certainly, but not the boomerang. They may have invented the boomerang in Australia – it's such a special Australian invention. Nowhere in the world you find a returning boomerang. You find throwing clubs, even curved ones, but never a boomerang. The boomerang is a special technically brilliant invention and certainly a work of art. I was informed that the boomerang represents the moon. Some spirit threw his rib onto the sky which became the moon. The moon disappears and returns after a while just as a boomerang. A wonderful representation.

**Now the spearthrower**

The oldest spearthrower we know is made from bone and has been found in Pech Merle in southern France and is dated about 20.000 years B.C. (Leroi-Gourhan: *Prähistorische Kunst*; Herder; Freiburg, Basel, Wien; 19/1975).

I AM a convinced diffusionist and cannot imagine that the spearthrower has been invented twice in different localities. The spearthrower has been invented in southern France.

It then wandered eastward and is still used by the Inuits and was largely distributed in the northern and southern America. (Bodo Spranz: *Die Speerschleuder in Amerika; Veröffentlichungen aus dem Übersee-Museum in Bremen, Reihe B, Band I, Heft 2, 1956*).

BODO SPRANZ shows on a map the circumpacific distribution of the spearthrower. We even can assume at what time the spearthrower reached Australia: it never reached the Tasmanians. The land-bridge which united Australia with Tasmania broke down about 13.000 B.C. So the spearthrower probably reached Australia after this date. (figure 2)

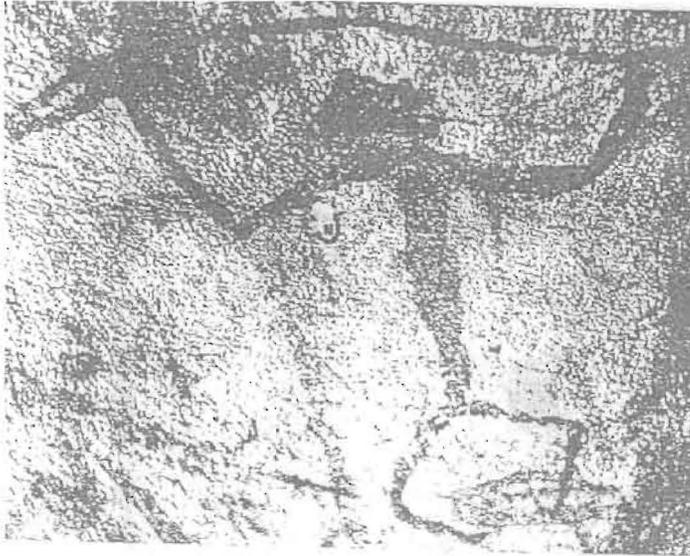
**Figure 2**



Map which shows the distribution of the spearthrower after Bodo Spranz. The dot shows where the spearthrower is represented on a rock painting site.

HERE A man is shown using a spearthrower. In the art of northern Australia in pictographs and paintings men with spearthrowers are very often shown. But never in action. (figure3)

**Figure 3**



Rock painting, Oenpelli; Arnhem Land; North Australia;  
Man using a spearthrower; Foto: C.P. Mountford 1948.

### The harpoon

Bengt Anel terminated his study about the fishing utensils and methods of the Australian Aborigines with a stupendously remark: he noted Siberian traits there which he could not explain ... (Bengt Anel: Contribution on the Fishing in the South Seas; Uppsala, 1955).

The same question already arises regarding the harpoon. This fishing utensil was also invented about 15.000 B.C. in southern France. (Leroi-Gourhan: Prähistorische Kunst; Herder; Freiburg, Basel, Wien; 19/1975).

But Robert C. Bednarik, chairman and editor of AURA (Australian Rock Art Association)

informed me in a personal letter (August 1999):

“Carved bone harpoons were used extensively in Zaire in the Middle Stone Age, where at Katanda they are dated between 150 and 50 ka. We have them in the Ngadong deposits of Java at probably around the same time, although undated. There is a beautifully carved bone harpoon in India at Lohanda Nala, safely dated to the beginning of the Upper Palaeolithic well before 17 ka”.

IN AUSTRALIA the harpoon was used only in a very limited area well defined by Aldo Massola. (Massola Aldo: Queensland Harpoons and their distribution; Memoirs of the National Museum; Melbourne No.26; May 1974).

This distribution points to an influence from the north and makes in accord with Anel Bengt a Siberian connection. Not one with Java or India rather acceptable. (Figure 4)

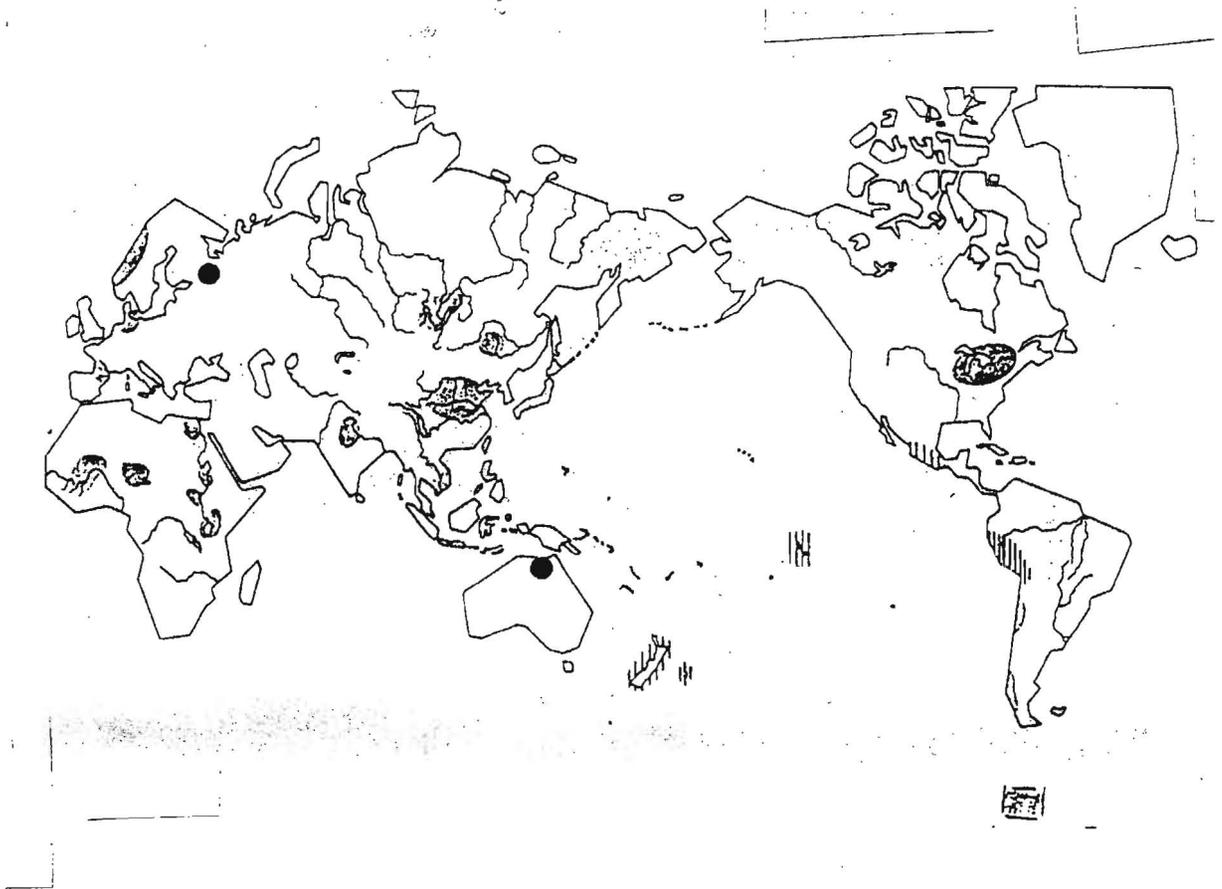
Two pictures showing fishing with harpoons. One is a pictograph from western Russia (after Ksica), the other one shows fishing with harpoons is a rock painting from Chasm Island North Australia after McCarthy. (figures 5 and 6)

IT IS TO be found on rock paintings in rock art and also in the mobile art of Northern Siberia, but also in the mobile art of the Inuits and in some rock paintings or rock art sites in Southern North America. Map which shows of this distribution by Andreas Lommel in “L’arte dei primitivi dell’Australia e dei Mare del Sud”; Firenze, 1987.

### Shamanism in Australia?

Is there a Siberian connection? During my long and intensive discussions with the

**Figure 4**



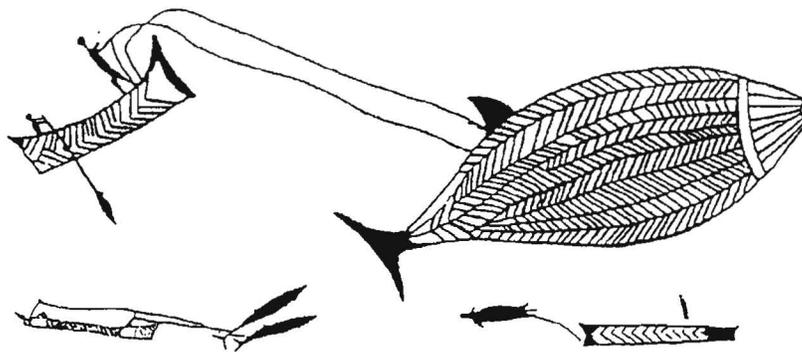
**Distribution of the harpoon in prehistoric and modern times.  
Dots: where harpoon hunting is depicted on rock paintings.  
Map after Andreas Lommel.**

**Figure 5**



**Pictograph: Hunting with harpoon on the delta of the River Wig shore of the White Sea.  
After Miroslav Ksica and Olga Ksiclova: "Felsbilder zwischen Schwarzem Meer und Beringstraße";  
Exhibition catalogue Brno; p.24; 1994.**

**Figure 6**



**Fishing with harpoon; Rock painting of Chasm Island; North Australia;  
After: F.D.McCarthy: "The Cave Paintings of Groote Eylandt and Chasm Island"; in: Records  
of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land; vol.2; 1960.**

ABORIGINAL poet Allan Balbunga in 1938 I had not only a deep insight in the creative process of this man, I also had the impression that there were some traits of shamanism in the conception of the world of this tribe. I described this discussions in my book "The Unambal - a tribe in North-West Australia", Takkarakka Publikations, Queensland, Australia, 1997. The German publication "Unambal - ein Stamm in Nordwest-Australien", Hamburg 1952 is since long time out of print.

There were some traits of shamanism but also differences. For instance, the "calling" which in Siberian shamanism is done by spirits - in Australia the person who becomes a shaman tries by an individual initiative to become one. He or she - mostly he - addresses himself to a spirit seen as a snake deep down in the waters.

BUT THE FINAL "click", the sudden transformation of the personality which makes a shaman to a shaman and gives him this power over the spirits of his contemporaries seems to be the same. It is here in Australia not a spirit which takes possession of him but the great spirit down in the waters gives him a sign and gives him the power which makes him to a shaman.

This Allan Balbunga was such a convincing personality that I believed what I was told later, that he succeeded to heal himself from leprosy - I was ill informed because Allan Balbunga died years later after our meeting in a leprosy asylum. But I was told that another "big shaman" succeeded really in healing himself from leprosy. (Andreas Lommel und David Mowaljarlai: Shamanism in Northwest Australia"; in Oceania, Vol.64, No.4, June 1994).

This David Mowaljarlai, I met him with Allan Balbunga in 1938. He became later a famous called writer artist and politician who tried to defend his Aboriginal traditions. I kept contact with him all the time. He died as a famous man in 1997.

SO IF WE can find traits of shamanism in the world conception of this tribe - Allan Balbunga was a worora man - the worora will be a coastal stripe living in Northwest Australia in the Kimberley region. We should expect that also in the visualisation that means the art of this group traits of shamanism could be found.

I think that is so.

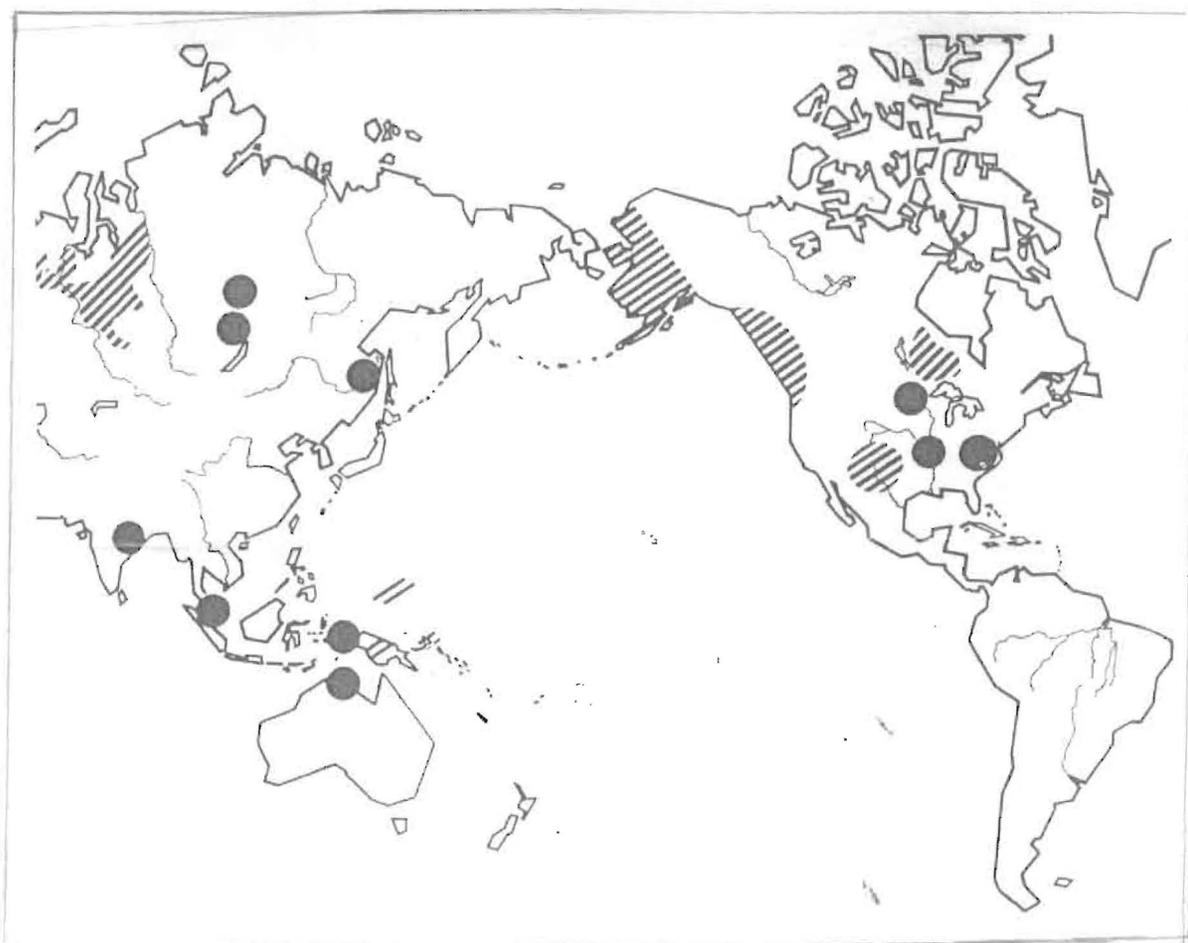
In the Northern part of Arnhem land in Australia there is a region with a special art style, the so-called X-ray style, which is in reality not a style but a motive. This motive shows the inner organs of animals, somewhere elaborately drawn, somewhere reduced to a so-called lifeline is concentrated on a very restricted area. Described by Robert Edwards, "The Alligator River Region", Canberra, 1974.

Graham L. Walsh, the famous archaeological researcher, his research intends to throw light to the so-called Wondschina pictures in the Kimberley Region and above the so-called Bradshaw pictures in the same region, informs me in a personal letter from 15.2.1999 that there were also some traits of X-ray style in the Laura Region of Cape York and some even in the Kimberley. (figure7)

NOW IF WE look at the distribution of this spectacular motive X-ray we find it distributed or even concentrated in Siberia and there is a possible migration of this motive to Eastern Siberia to Indonesia and finally Australia.(figure 8)

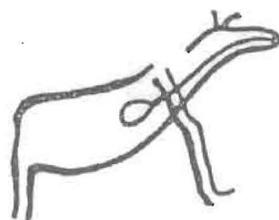


**Figure 8**



Map showing the X-ray motive on rock art sites;  
The motive in mobile art.

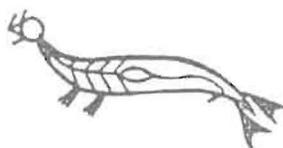
**Figures 9,10,11**



Animal with lifeline, X-ray motive, edging on rock in Norway;  
Bandi-Maringer: *Kunst der Eiszeit*; Basel; 1952.

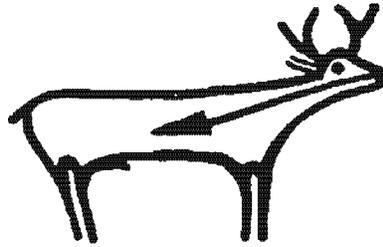


Edging on rock; Siberis Amur „Ussuri Region“;  
P. Snoy: *Asiatische Felsbilder*; Umschau; 1961.



Animal with X-ray design; Inuit art; Alaska;  
M. Covarrubias: *The Eagle, the Jaguar, and the Serpent*; New York; S 155; 1954.

Figure 12, 13



Animal with lifeline, X-ray motive; painting on vessel; Pueblo Indians;  
F.H. Douglas and R. d'Harmoncourt: *Indian Art of the United States*; New York; p.107; 1941.



Modern bark painting; Animal with X-ray motive; Goulburn Island.

Barbara Glowczewski thinks that the X-ray motive is a typical motive of art of the philosophy of the Australian shaman, he can penetrate in his vision the body of a sick person to find the roots of the illness in the body (Barbara Glowczewski: "Du reve a la loi chez les Aborigines"; Presses Universitaires de France, 1991).

Studying the philosophy of Siberian shamans for instance in the writings of G.V. Ksenofontov we find that depicting inner organs of animals in paintings, foremost rock paintings, means more: it gives the artist, the shaman, power over the "souls" of the animals, makes them an easy prey and he can with such pictures stimulate their fertility ... (G.V. Ksenofontov: "Legendy o Bar samanach"; Legends of Shamans, Irkutsk, 1928).

Barbara Glowszcwsky believes that the same is the meaning of the X-ray paintings on bark in Northwest Australia.

SO WE FIND parallels in the personality, the functions and the abilities between the Australian shaman or medicine man and the Siberian shaman. So we have certainly here a Siberian connection not only in a common motive of art, we find here some treats of the personality of the shaman on both sides of the Pacific. We certainly must assume a migration of shamanism, shamanistic concepts of the world and shamanistic art from Siberia to Australia. I am sure, we could enhance this possibility if we study shamanism on both sides more intensively.

#### Zusammenfassung

Bei vorliegender Arbeit handelt es sich um den Versuch mit Hilfe von Felsbildern, wie z.B. dem Speerwerfer, der Harpune, des sogenannten Röntgenstils (X-ray-motiv), wie auch den schamanistischen Zügen in der Weltkonzeption der nordaustralischen Stämme nachzuweisen, dass ein Einfluß Sibiriens im äußersten Norden Australiens möglich erscheint.

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