



Lightning Man Namarrgon is a fascinating, lanky, horseshoe-shaped character painted on the rock. His colors are fairly simple; he was probably painted with some sort of makeshift paintbrush, possibly a crushed stick dipped in some iron-based paint most likely made from the crushed ochre rock. He is mostly white with the exception of some reds on the right side of his thunder. We could not tell, however, if the red coloration was rock bleed or intentional coloring. This piece of rock art was painted by Nayombolmi (Barramundi Charlie).

LIGHTNING DREAMING:

Namarrgon, commonly known as the "lightning man," is responsible for the violent electrical storms which occur on the Arnhem plateau. According to Aboriginal Dreamtime explanation of this work, Namarrgon and his family came from the sea and traveled Australia for many years. He uses the stone axes that are mounted on his head, elbows and knees to split the dark clouds and strike the ground, creating lightning and thunder. In addition to his axes, he also has a band wrapped around his body. This band belongs to thunder and works side by side with the axes to shake the earth and the heaven

NAMARRGON'S FAMILY:

Barrinj, his wife, is also mother to the grasshoppers.

His children are the bright orange and blue grasshoppers, *Petasida Ephihipigera*. They come out early in the storm or wet season to look for their father.

DREAMTIME:

The Dreamtime

is the period of creation in Aboriginal culture. It is the beginning of knowledge and it is when the laws which guide Aboriginal life today were created. The natural elements, the landscape, the plants, and the animals were also created by the first ancestors. It is the basis of Aboriginal religion and culture.

Dreaming

is the term used for an Aboriginal group's beliefs. Different groups have different animals that figure prominently in the stories and serve to explain their beliefs. One area of land might have "Long Necked Turtle Dreaming" while another section belongs to "Caterpillar Dreaming." The area around Nourlangie Rock is "Lightning Dreaming."

Mabuyu is located at Ubirr Rock. A trail winds up, around, and through giant boulders that are decorated with Aboriginal rock art. Some of the paintings at Ubirr are believed to have been painted by the first people of the Dreamtime or creation era and the Mimis, Others, such as Mabuyu, are more recent. The red spindly figure juggles his possessions: spears, a fan, and a dilly bag. Next to him are the Long Necked Turtles, the Dreamtime

symbol of the local Aboriginal people. **THE STORY:**

According to local lore, Mabuyu was a fisherman. One day, he caught a lot of fish, but some other Aborigines cut his line and stole the fish from Mabuyu. Mabuyu found out who the thieves were and went to their cave. He rolled a rock in front of the opening, trapping them in the cave. The men who stole the fish and their wives died because they could not escape from the cave. This story is used in Aboriginal lore to demonstrate morality and the consequences of stealing

SYMBOLS:

spear in his right hand

dillybag for collecting food (over right shoulder)

Two barbed spears in his left hand.

goosewing fan for fanning a fire (in left hand).

pubic tassel signifies that he is a male.

MIMI PAINTINGS IN AREA:

A Mimi painting is above Mabuyu. Mimis are shy spirits who live in caves and paint pictures where no Aborigine could reach. They pull the rocks down to paint on them and then lift them back up when they are finished. The Mimis were the ones who taught the other Aborigines how to paint, and even though they no longer exist as a people, they remain as spirits

The rock, named Dove Rock, or Feather Rock, represents the story of a man named Namanjolg

THE STORY:

The story of Namanjolg is one of incest. It is said that Namanjolg and his sister had sex and later eloped. Ashamed of what they did, Namanjolg's sister told their family. Upon hearing of their sin, Namanjolg's family sought him out to punish him. When they found him, he was on top of what is now known as Feather Rock, dancing around a fire. A member of his family then pushed him into the fire. Namanjolg, covered in ash, dove into a nearby billabong and became a crocodile. Namanjolg's sister took a feather from his headdress and placed it at the site to remind others of the Aboriginal laws regarding incest which she had broken with her brother. Namanjolg's sister later becomes the Rainbow Serpent, Ngalyod, the subject of many Aboriginal stories from the Dreaming lore.

That rock now contains her eternal spirit which is why the native aborigines come here to tune into these sacred powers.

COMMUNICATION:

As with many other Aboriginal stories or rock art sites, the site of Feather Rock serves to educate and remind people of Aboriginal laws:

Namanjolg teaches that incest is wrong

The Corroborree teaches the importance of ceremonial law

Mabuya teaches not to steal

Namanjolg is a perfect example of how Aboriginal people use rock art to inform and instruct. When laws are broken, there are always consequences. The Aboriginal people never developed a written language and spoken languages between different Aboriginal clans vary greatly. They see the rock art as the most effective and universal form of communication between groups. It is also the most effective way to instruct successive generations on their law, culture, and history.

