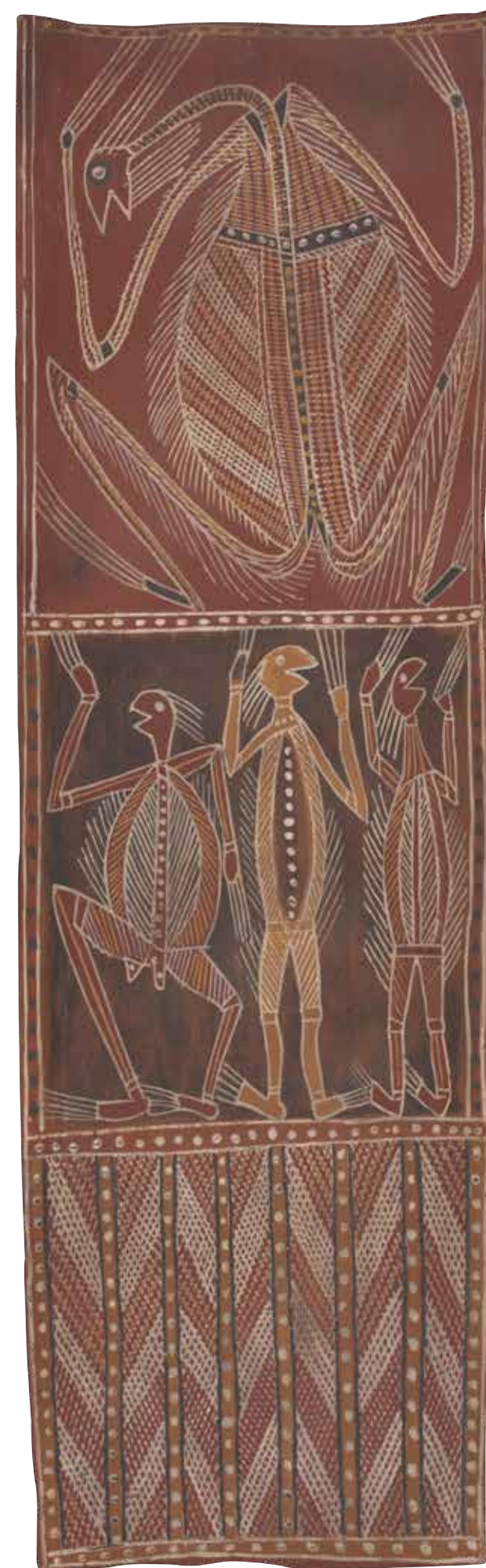


YIRAWALA

Yirawala is one of the major artists in Australian art history. He played a leading role in promoting the acceptance of Aboriginal art as 'art' rather than simply 'ethnographic material'. Yirawala's impetus to paint for the public stemmed from a need to reveal his culture to non-Indigenous Australians so that it could be understood and respected. He was a gifted painter of high ritual authority, which allowed him to innovate on the art traditions of the Kuninjku people. Among his main innovations are his exquisitely rendered variations on conventional *rarrk* (crosshatched) clan patterns.

Although Yirawala had an extensive repertoire of subjects at his command, the majority of his work is associated with the major regional ceremonies, especially the Mardayin, which involves both Duwa and Yirridjdja moities. Themes represented in the paintings here include: Ngalyod the Rainbow Serpent, wearing a feather headdress to indicate its connection to ceremony; Lumaluma the Giant Ogre, whose limbs were cut off and transformed into ritual objects; Kandakidj the Antilopine Kangaroo associated with the Wubarr and Lorrkkon ceremonies; Namanjwarre the Estuarine Crocodile; and images of sorcery.



YIRAWALA

Born clan,
Kuninjku language
about 1897-1976

Spirit People, 1965

collected by JA Davidson at
Minjilang (Croker Island)
74 x 22.3 cm