

Preface

Rock Painting Sites in the Kimberley Region

This book contains copies of all the paintings that Katharina Lommel did in the environments of Gibb River Station in Northwest Australia in the year 1955.

There were two German expeditions to Northwest Australia. The first one was sent out by Leo Frobenius in the year 1937/38. The expedition was led by Dr. Petri, who worked in the Glenelg River region between the long since abandoned Government Station Munya and the long since abandoned Mission Station Kunmunya.

Our second expedition had the same aim as the first one: copying Aboriginal rock paintings. We worked in the surroundings of the Gibb River Station for six months in the year 1955 and copied rock paintings and brought a large collection back to the Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde in Munich.

Leo Frobenius (1873 - 1938) had an institute in Frankfurt on Main and sent out from there expeditions in all regions of the world to copy and photograph rock paintings. He was one of the main researchers of prehistorical rock paintings. The last expedition he organised was the one in 1938 to Australia. Here he hoped to still find Aborigines, who had lived and worked with the paintings and could tell us what the paintings meant to them.

This first expedition had two painters: Agnes Susanne Schulz and Gerda Beck-Kleist. Agnes Susanne Schulz wrote a short report about her work in Northwest Australia: Agnes Susanne Schulz: Northwest Australian Rock Paintings: *Memoirs of the National Museum of Victoria, Melbourne, January 1956*.

I was a member of this expedition and my report could only be published after the war in 1952. *Andreas Lommel, "The Unambal" was published in English in 1997 by Takarakka Nowan Kas Publications.*

The second German expedition was made in 1955 by me and my wife Katharina. It was financed by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. We are both disciples of Leo Frobenius. I studied ethnology with him, my wife Katharina worked for years with him, copying rock paintings in the Middle East, North Africa and finally in Spain in the Altamira cave. Our aim was to copy rock paintings in Australia and bring the copies to the Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde in Munich. There were two German publications: *"Die Kunst des fünften Erdteils", 1959, and "Die Kunst des alten Australian", 1988, Prestel-Verlag in München.* There is so far no translation for English readers.

We stayed for six months of the dry season at the Gibb River station. We were invited to stay there because Mrs Russ, the wife of the farmer, a half-caste, remembered me from 1938. She was educated at Lombadina Mission and I spent a night there. The other one who remembered me vividly was Joe, the head stock boy. Joe, a half-caste, was a wonderful person. [p13]

I travelled with him widely between Kunmunya and Wandja Station in the Seder and Glenelg river regions. As a half-caste he was completely integrated in the Aboriginal culture, had two wonderful wives and was everywhere regarded as a very trustful and reliable man.

Mrs Russ had been married to Fred Russ, the station owner for many years. We paid for food and shelter, horses and donkeys and an Aboriginal guide who led us to the rock painting sites. Katharina writes of how we worked and lived there in her article: 'Studying and copying rock paintings'.