

## Changing Perspectives in Australian Archaeology, Part VI

# Point Production at Jimede 2, Western Arnhem Land

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**ABSTRACT.** Inferred production patterns and morphological variation in bifacial points have been central to models of prehistoric settlement, territoriality, and economy. In this paper a re-analysis of the Jimede 2 assemblage excavated by Carmel Schrire in Kakadu provides the basis for re-describing the nature of point production in Western Arnhem Land.

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For more than a decade the reanalysis of artefact assemblages has been a key strategy in efforts to recast our understanding of Australian prehistory. Such reanalyses have repeatedly shown that earlier typological studies of lithic artefacts provided few technological insights while simultaneously allowing new and sophisticated models of artefact manufacture and land use to be tested. Well known examples of the redescription of assemblages from famous sites include Burkes Cave (Shiner *et al.*, 2007), Ingaladdi and nearby sites (Cundy, 1990; Clarkson, 2002a, 2006, 2007), Puritjarra (Law, 2005, 2009), Puntutjarpa (Hiscock & Veth, 1991), Lake Mungo (Hiscock & Allen, 2000; Allen & Holdaway, 2009), Mussel Shelter (Hiscock & Attenbrow, 1998), and Capertee 3 (Hiscock & Attenbrow, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005). Because the original interpretations of these assemblages were important in developing explanatory models of the variability and nature of prehistoric technologies in this continent, the technological re-examinations of them have been fundamental in improving our comprehension of ancient tool manufacture.

A series of assemblages from Western Arnhem Land excavated in the 1960s and 1970s formed the basis for extensive debates about the nature, timing and causes of technological change in the region, and the formulation of influential models of spatial and chronological technological change in Australia (Hiscock, 1999, 2009). One of the key

sites in the production of archaeological interpretations about human occupation of Western Arnhem Land was Jimede 2 (also written as Jimeri II and Tymede II), a cave excavated by Schrire in 1964–1965 (Fig. 1). The deposit spanned much of the Holocene, with occupation beginning before 7,000 BP. Schrire (1982: 245) characterized the later assemblage as point dominated, and her typological classifications identified 38% of the flaked implement as points and a further 34% as fragments, some of which potentially came from broken points (N = 502). Schrire (1982: 246) argued that there were two different types of points, each with a different manufacturing process, and that the abundance of points in any particular landscape setting indicated either a distinctive seasonal site function or a distinctive identity for the occupants (White, 1967a, 1967b, 1971; White & Peterson, 1969; Schrire, 1972).

A number of possible explanations for variations in point abundance has been offered. Initially White (1967b) hypothesized that assemblage differences between lowlands and the escarpment/uplands were a consequence of the long-term co-existence of two cultural groups, each occupying a different part of the landscape. She subsequently offered the alternative interpretation that a single group of people moved seasonally between lowlands and uplands and employed points more frequently in their wet season occupation of the uplands, creating sites like Jimede 2.