Contact, Conflict and Regeneration:

Aboriginal Cultural Geography of the

Lower Murray, South Australia

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Abstract

Geographers and anthropologists in Australia have generally not recognised that Aboriginal groups in

southern Australia have retained and developed a distinctive view of the landscape they occupy. This is

because of a reluctance to consider that modern cultural forms have 'traditions'. This large region has

experienced the most intense pressures of European settlement. The interaction between the Aboriginal

population and the dominant non-Aboriginal powers has been long and its impact far-reaching.

Increasingly, Aboriginal people are living in landscapes modified by rural and urban development. In spite

of this, there is a lack of literature concerning the relationships these people have with the land and places

of significance within it. This thesis, as an exercise in cultural geography, aims to fill this gap. It is my

broad aim to develop an understanding of how a contemporary Aboriginal group, living in close proximity

to non-Aboriginal people, can maintain and develop a distinct pattern of occupancy and use of space. I

explore *place* as a phenomenon of everyday experiences which Aboriginal people have with the geography

of the lived-world. To achieve this, I develop a view of culture that portrays contemporary Aboriginal

groups as a modern product of continuous re-construction rather than as a pre-European relic. I argue that

culture is continuously reinvented. The link between changes in the landscape and that of the culture of its

inhabitants are investigated.

My study group is the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal community of the Lower Murray region of South Australia

(Fig.i.1). I provide an empirical record of the process of transformation of this group and its cultural

landscape from the immediate pre-colonial period to the present. Ngarrindjeri perceptions of the land and

particular places within it are accounted for with respect to change in the landscape and within their

culture. I demonstrate that the interaction of contemporary Aboriginal people with the land cannot be

understood without reference to their past and present relationships to the hegemony of the dominant

Australian culture. The concept of cultural landscape is used in conjunction with notions of *place*, with the

inclusion of models of culture derived from anthropology and sociology. Using perceptual insights derived

from the culture group itself, I seek to extend the concept of cultural landscape to incorporate not only the

objective results of human transformation, but the unique subjective meanings attached to it. I explore the

role of *place* in shaping identity, and provide a critique of classical anthropological definitions of cultural

groups such as 'tribes' within the landscape.

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Introduction

Aims

The broad aim of this thesis is to add to the understanding of how minority indigenous cultures define and interact with space. To achieve this objective, an outline is given of changing Aboriginal notions concerning the physical and cultural environment from the pre-European period to the present. I investigate whether the Lower Murray region is a valid cultural region. I then consider whether or not Australian landscapes can be treated as human creations. I trace through time the integral development of social change and landscape change, as a way of explaining the marginal position of the contemporary Aboriginal community. Approaches borrowed from anthropology and sociology are used to improve the understanding of how repressed minority groups, such as the contemporary Aboriginal people of the Lower Murray, relate to a landscape that was totally transformed by Europeans. A part of my broad aim is to determine whether present day Aboriginal society is best described as being in the process of assimilation into the predominantly European culture of Australia. I consider the links between cultural identity and place identity, demonstrating the distinctive relationship that Aboriginal people have with land. I consider the future for Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray in relation to land management. Finally, the role of cultural geography in the study of the relationship that a plural society has with land is evaluated.

Approach

Due to the early importance of the Lower Murray cultural region in the anthropological and geographical literature, it is an important case study with which to reassess some of the fundamental concepts of cultural geography, from the view point of an ethnic minority, including the term 'culture' itself. In this thesis it is recognised that cultural geography can only provide a workable view of contemporary Aboriginal people by incorporating appropriate models of culture. Following the lead of other human geographical studies, concepts of culture are imported from social anthropology and sociology. I argue that Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray possess a cultural notion of *place* that is unique. Both the sociological and the cultural aspects of contemporary Aboriginal existence are shaped by outside agencies, but this thesis rejects "culture of poverty" models that attempt to totally integrate cultural forms with socio-economic characteristics. A

major strategy adopted in this work is to account for Aboriginal interactions with space from the cultural perspective of both the insider and outsider. This humanistic approach recognises that local studies in cultural geography to some extent reflect the personal relationship that the writer has with the landscape and its occupants.

I start the thesis with a literature survey of the various ways scholars have treated the link between change in culture and landscape (Chapter 1). Next, an overview of Aboriginal culture in the Lower Murray region is provided, with a brief historical background to Aboriginal identity (Chapter 2). In order to trace the course of cultural change in the Aboriginal population of the Lower Murray, I then investigate the early Aboriginal incorporation of mythology into the natural world, to reconstruct their perceived cultural landscape (Chapter 3). Following this, I consider the economic aspects of early Aboriginal hunting and gathering practices (Chapter 4). The European transformation of the landscape, and the subsequent effects upon the Aboriginal population are then given (Chapter 5 & 6). The contemporary ethnographic situation comes next (Chapter 7 & 8). Lastly, I summarise my empirical findings with respect to the literature of human and landscape interaction (Chapter 9).

Sources

Because of the aim of investigating changes in the landscape and culture of the Lower Murray, much of the material presented in this thesis is historical. The chief sources of information on the physical landscape are published sources from the geographic, regional historical and ecological literature. The early sources of ethnographic material have included the publications of missionaries such as H.A.E. Meyer and G. Taplin, and of R. Penney, a newspaper correspondent. One of the richest sources of historical and ethnographic information is the Taplin Journals, which have hitherto been little used by scholars. My heavy use of the Journals in Chapter 6 is justified on the basis of the poor record of early mission events found elsewhere. Early newspaper articles have helped to provide some balance to the missionary sources. I have utilised the standard scientific approach of organising the data in a logical sequence with respect to time and subject. In order to focus on particular aspects of human economic interaction with the environment, in some sections the physical realm of behaviour has been artificially separated from that of the social. I cite a considerable amount of anthropological and human geographical literature relevant to

the cultural aspects of the Lower Murray region. In the second half of the thesis, I present my ethnographic data, generated from personal research in the region from 1982 onwards.

Terminology

Humanistic and cultural geography are burdened with the need to make use of a series of terms that lack a precise and universally accepted meaning, and some of which in addition are used in everyday non-technical speech. Examples are "culture", "landscape", "cultural landscape", "place" and "community". These concepts are dealt with at length later, but working definitions need to be provided at the outset. "Culture" is defined as the ways of living and ways of being of a human group, including their associated cognitive and behavioural patterns. "Community" is used in the context of a functionally cohesive group, with a sense of belonging and common cultural identity usually based on close linkage with a particular place or territory. I refer to Aboriginal groups that trace descent to particular regions as communities. "Landscape" is here used to denote the objective physical environment and its characteristics, such as climate, soils, mineral, plant and animal resources. Landscape is regarded objectively as observable, but not "natural", in that all physical landscapes have to some extent been modified. The concept of "cultural landscape" used here treats the cultural landscape as the product of a complex interplay between human groups and the physical environment. It is considered to embody both the material and non-material aspects of this relationship. The cultural landscape is the result of the combined practices and perceptions of the landscape of those that interact with it. The term "place" refers to a concept within a humanistic perception of the culturally determined values of particular parts of the landscape. Places are fusions of human and natural order and are the significant centres of our immediate experiences of the world. They can evoke a sense of belonging to a social group and provide a sense of group identity. Whenever the word "place" is used to conform with this definition, rather than its ordinary everyday usage, it is italicised.

This thesis uses a number of regional terms that require explanation (see Fig.i.1 & 2.1). Southern South Australia covers the entire coastal belt and inland "settled areas" of the state, including the peninsulas. The Lower Murray region is defined physically as that part of the Murray River Basin from just below Murray Bridge, where the river bends towards the Lower Lakes, down to the Murray Mouth. The areas on either side of the river that naturally drain into the Murray River, such as the Coorong, also form part of the
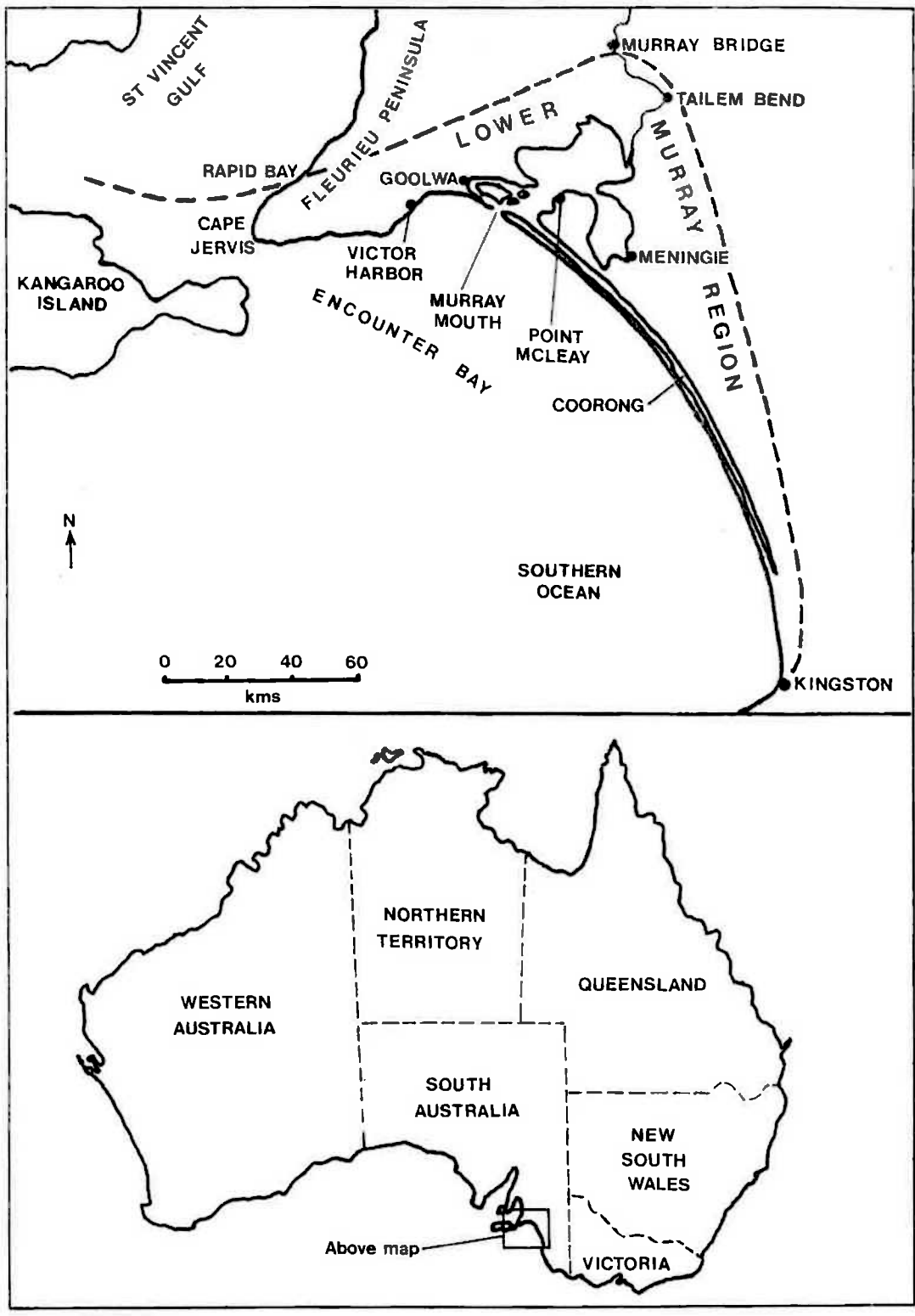
Fig.i.1 The Lower Murray cultural region

region. The Murray River exits into Encounter Bay, the coast of which is included as part of the Lower

Murray. This extension is justified by the cultural characteristics of the pre-European Aboriginal

population. Similarly, Rapid Bay is the northern limit for the coastal boundary of the Lower Murray.

Kingston, at the termination of the Coorong, is the southern end of the region. I have extended the Lower

Murray region to encompass Kangaroo Island, although it was unoccupied by humans prior to the 19th

century. This is because of the strong historical connection between the Lower Murray region and the

island during the early years of European expansion. Also, the main myth epic recorded in the Lower

Murray terminates west of Kangaroo island. Due to the restrictions placed upon Aboriginal movements

since the beginning of the 20th century, the more contemporary aspects of the thesis in the main deal with

the southern end of the Lower Lakes and the Coorong. Similarly, these spatial restrictions on movement

are reflected in a change of emphasis in the second half of the thesis from concepts relating to the entire

cultural landscape, to those relating to *place*.

The adjacent regions are also defined in terms of their Aboriginal occupancy during the period of early

European entry (Fig.2.1). The Mid Murray extends from Murray Bridge, north to Morgan near the river

bend at Overland Corner. The eastern escarpment of the Mount Lofty Ranges also falls into this region.

The Upper Murray extends north east from Morgan to the site at which the river crosses the New South

Wales and Victorian borders, near Lake Victoria and Rufus River. The South East is the region in the

southernmost corner of South Australia, hemmed in by the western part of Victoria. The Adelaide Plains is

the region north of Rapid Bay, including the adjacent western slopes of the Mount Lofty Ranges. The Mid

North takes in the northern Mount Lofty Ranges and the southern part of the Flinders Ranges.

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1 Cultural Geography and Aboriginal Landscapes

This chapter provides a background to the investigation of cultural landscapes. The treatment in the literature of the human and landscape dialectic is discussed in relation to changes in emphasis, from scientific to more humanistic approaches. Notions of culture and cultural change in these studies are evaluated. The value for cultural geography of the inclusion of ethnicity and subculture studies is assessed. On the basis on these insights on culture, I propose a broader definition of cultural landscapes.

1.1 The Culture and Landscape Dialectic

The study of the influence of geographical conditions on sociocultural life has ancient origins: for instance, Hippocrates's treatise <u>Airs, Waters, Places</u> was written sometime between 430 and 330 BC (1978). This is a very early example of geographical determinism. Harris (1969, pp.41-42) cites the early work of Roman and Arab scholars, such as Marcus Vitruvius Pollio and al Idrisi, for their acknowledgment of the role of the environment in producing characteristics in resident human populations. Another Arab, Ibn Khaldun, writing in 1381 AD, credited the harshness of the landscape with producing the Bedouin tribesmen of northern Africa. In the 16th century, French political philosopher, Jean Bodin attributed the main differences between people to their distribution within three climatic belts (Broek & Webb, 1973, p.27). Similar environmental notions are reflected in the work of 18th century scholars, such as Montesquieu in <u>The Spirit of Laws</u> (1748), Buffon in <u>Natural History of Man</u> (1749), and Voltaire in <u>Essay on the Customs and the Spirit of Nations</u> (1756) (cited in Broek & Webb, 1973, p.27). This was followed in the 19th century by Henry Buckle (1857) in 'History of Civilization', who outlined the ecological differences in the cultures of Europe, Asia and the New World. These works provide crude notions of how the physical environment moulded culture. Better scholarship followed when ethnographic data of greater depth and quality began to flow back from the European colonies.

The interest in the 'primitive' by European scholars of the late 19th century created the impetus for the study of hunting and gathering societies throughout the world (Section 2.2.2). Australia, as the home of 'stone age' people and a unique flora and fauna, emerged as an important region in the literature. At this time, the 'Narrinyeri' (= Ngarrindjeri) formed one of the few Aboriginal groups in south eastern Australia

for which detailed sociological data were readily available. The 'Narrinyeri' was the term for a 'nation' of

Aboriginal people living in the Lower Murray of South Australia (Section 2.3.1.4-5 & 2.4.4). Scholarly

works on the origins and diversity of the human species quoted extensively from the ethnographic accounts

from the Lower Murray, provided by Meyer and Taplin. It is therefore appropriate for this thesis to use the

Lower Murray as a study area in focussing upon the culture and landscape dialectic.

1.1.1 Environmental Determinism and Social Darwinism in the 19th Century

The 19th century was a period characterised by an explosion of new ideas about the environment and

human interaction with it. The highly influential publication of Charles Darwin's The Origin of Species

(1859), followed by his Descent of Man (1871 [1888]) (Fig.1.1), directed attention towards human

subjugation to the laws of nature. For instance, Darwin states:

> If a naturalist, who had never before seen a Negro, Hottentot, Australian, or Mongolian,
> were to compare them ... he would find that they were adapted to live under widely
> different climates, and that they differed somewhat in bodily constitution and mental
> disposition (1871 [1888, p.168]).

From the 1860s, humans became regarded as legitimate subjects for scholarly classification into taxonomic

groupings. The appetite of European specialists for ethnographic data from the distant colonies was

immense (Section 2.2.2).

The colonial interaction of peoples, formerly separated both culturally and geographically, provided a

human laboratory in which to observe the 'struggle for existence' progressing at a fast rate. To Darwin,

extinction of hunting and gathering 'tribes' was inevitable upon competition with more advanced 'races.'

Evidence provided by Darwin included the rapid decline of the Tasmanian Aboriginal population (Darwin,

1860, p.439; 1871 [1888, pp.183-184]).[1] Darwin ranked human races on an evolutionary scale,

culminating in 'civilised' cultures. Following from this, Lubbock (1865) studied 'primitive' people to

discover the development pattern of apparently superior groups in the world. Australian Aboriginal groups,

with their comparatively simple tool kits and the lack of a recognised political hierarchy, did not fare well

in this model. For instance, Darwin (1860, p.427) claimed 'On the whole they appear to me to stand some

few degrees higher in the scale of civilisation than the Fuegians.' Following from Darwin, L.H. Morgan

(prefatory note in Fison & Howitt, 1880, p.2) stated that the Australian Aborigines were fading away more

(Carl Ritter: 1779 - 1859)

(Charles Darwin: 1809 - 1882)

(Herbert Spencer: 1820 - 1903)

(George Taplin: 1832 - 1879)

(Friedrich Ratzel: 1844 - 1904)

(Paul Vidal De La Blache: 1845 - 1918)

(Ellen C. Semple: 1863 - 1932)

(Alfred L. Kroeber: 1876 - 1960)

(Alfred R. Radcliffe Brown: 1881 - 1955)

(Bronislaw Malinowski: 1884 - 1942)

(Carl O. Sauer: 1889 - 1975)

(Norman B. Tindale: 1900 - 1993)

1760   1780   1800   1820   1840   1860   1880   1900   1920   1940   1960   1980   2000

Fig.1.1 Life spans of major scholars and ethnographers mentioned in the text

rapidly than the American Indians, as they were of a lower ethnic status and therefore displayed less power of resistance.

In the last half of the 19th century, social scientists looked for 'discoverable lawful principles' in culture. With this aim, Herbert Spencer and his followers established what eventually became the school of social Darwinism (Johnston et al, 1986, p.434; Harris, 1987, pp.417-418). This approach integrated biological models of humanity with the social sciences. For instance, Tylor (1891, vol.1, p.27) advocated the 'science of culture', based upon the study of material culture, moral principles, and social and political organisation. His scale of civilisation was ordered upwards from the Australian, through the Tahitian, Aztec, and Chinese to the Italian. Aboriginal people of Australia were essentially a base line in the evolutionary study of human origins.

To some extent, social Darwinism served as a justification of the northern hemisphere-controlled colonialism over the rest of the world. Nevertheless, the founders of communism, Marx and Engels, saw the 'struggle for life' in Darwin's evolution model as a further indictment of capitalism (Harris, 1969, pp.222-224). To them, Darwin's Origin of Species was a natural history analogue to their own materialist explanations of nature. The biological analogy implicit in much of the Australian ethnographic work late last century is evident. The ethnography by Fison and Howitt (1880) of a Victorian Aboriginal group, 'Kamilaroi and Kurnai' for instance, was an example of an exercise in social Darwinism. This work was aimed at describing human social structure at its 'earliest stages of development', exemplified by an Australian Aboriginal people (Fison & Howitt, 1880, p.24).

1.1.2 Ratzel and Anthropogeography

The contribution of German scholars to the foundations of geography is immense. In particular, Ratzel's studies in the 1880s and 1890s of the interaction between humans and the landscape were a major influence upon the development of cultural geography in the 20th century. Ratzel treated the 'races of man' as organic expressions of the physical qualities of the landscape. Carl Ritter, a German scholar who was both historian and geographer, influenced Ratzel. To quote Ritter:

> the Earth and its inhabitants stand in the closest reciprocal relations, and one cannot be truly presented in all its relationships without the other. Hence history and geography

must always remain inseparable. Land affects the inhabitants and the inhabitants the land (cited in Tatham, 1951, p.44).

Ratzel considered that human groups, like other organisms, engaged in an inherent conflict for space. In The History of Mankind (1896), he plotted the geographical distribution of peoples. Ratzel was the founder of a German school of human geography, known as anthropogeography after his influential publication of Anthropogeographie (1882, 1891).

Environmental determinism was a strong theme in many of Ratzel's writings. For instance, in the case of Australia, Ratzel equated the nomadic life style of the Aboriginal inhabitants with the general lack of fresh surface water. He says 'how closely the life of the natives is bound up with these transitory watercourses and springs, and how insecure, owing to this dependence, is their entire life' (Ratzel, 1896, vol.1, p.334). Ratzel blamed the lack of indigenous human food production in Australia upon 'the pressure of a climate particularly untrustworthy in respect to moisture' (Ratzel, 1896, vol.1, p.342). He also blamed the 'poor' natural resources of Australia for preventing the development of any form of agriculture among the Aboriginal people (Ratzel, 1896, vol.1, pp.24,337,361). He argued, particularly in the first volume of Anthropogeographie, that in this way the landscape, and its associated properties such as climate, flora and fauna, dictated the cultural characteristics of its inhabitants.

Ratzel recognised the ability of the human species to manipulate the physical environment into cultural forms. However, 'primitive' groups were not credited with an active role in developing the landscape. Ratzel considered the 'cultured' or 'civilised races', unlike 'natural races' such as Australian Aboriginal people, were neither in bondage to, nor dependent upon nature. He stated that 'culture is freedom from Nature, not in the sense of entire emancipation, but in that of a more manifold and wider connection' (Ratzel, 1896, vol.1, p.1). By creating more points of contact with nature, 'civilised people' in this model were reducing the effects upon them of individual accidents in nature. I will argue later against the European perception of hunters and gatherers as being wholly passive with respect to the environment (Section 4.1).

There are essentially two aspects of Ratzel's thesis, one showing how the physical environment modified human activity, and the other how the landscape promoted diffusion of culture. In Ratzel's attempt to explain the differences in the backgrounds of the 'civilised' and 'uncivilised' races, he states:

> We shall ... bestow a thorough consideration upon the external surroundings of the
> various races, and endeavor pari passu to trace the historical development of the
> circumstances in which we find them to-day. The geographical inception of their
> surroundings, and the historical consideration of their development, will thus go hand in
> hand. It is only from the combination of the two that a just estimate can be formed
> (Ratzel, 1896, vol.1, p.3).

In Ratzel, we see the early stages in the development of the concept of cultural landscape.

Although Ratzel treated the environment as having direct influence in determining the way of life of the humans who lived within it, he also emphasised the degree to which the topography of landscape directly affected the diffusion of cultural traits from outside regions. In relation to Australia, Ratzel stated:

> Those sides of the divisions of the earth which look out into vacancy were historically
> dead until a few centuries ago [when] oceanic navigation brought them trade and
> colonisation from afar. Australia, the most insular of all the quarters of the globe, has
> received a larger share than all the others of the *culture-stunting* gift - vacant coasts
> [emphasis mine] (Ratzel, 1896, vol.1, p.333).

To Ratzel, the existence of the unique flora and fauna in Australia was proof of the continent's 'isolated character' before the arrival of Europeans (Ratzel, 1896, vol.1, p.333). Ratzel held that the topography of the landscape suppressed the development of 'civilised' groups in the southern hemisphere (Ratzel, 1896, vol.1, pp.5-14).

As with many scholars of his time, Ratzel's holistic approach to explaining the development of culture necessitated the accumulation and processing of ethnographic data from across the globe. However, due to this wide scope, he overlooked what I will later argue are some important internal cultural differences (Section 2.3). For instance, of Australia, he says:

> The prominent characteristic of this continent is the agreement in degree of culture, in
> manner of life, in customs, to a certain extent even in language, and that a greater
> agreement than we find anywhere else in an equally limited area (Ratzel, 1896, vol.1,
> p.337).

The isolated position of Australia, according to Ratzel (1896, vol.1, p.7), enabled the Aboriginal people to become well defined socially and culturally with respect to neighbouring groups.

No matter how well integrated 'primitive' groups were in relation to the landscape upon which they dwelt, Ratzel considered them doomed (1896, vol.1, pp.11-13). To him, the natural biological weakness of groups such as the Australians, Polynesians and Americans meant that it was only a question of time before the territories of these groups became 'Europeanised'. To Ratzel, Europeans were superior because nature no longer controlled them. The invention of long distance sea travel in the northern hemisphere was part of

his proof. In terms of the ability to populate the landscape, Ratzel considered what he described as European 'half-breeds' to be superior to indigenous groups.

Ratzel supported Darwin's view of humans being subject to the action of natural laws. Nevertheless, by recognising the major role of 'nature' in determining the characteristics of 'primitive' human groups, Ratzel departed from the Darwinists (1896, vol.1, p.15). He was critical of the way in which evolutionary models simply placed people on a scale of human races ranging from 'primitive' forms to the highly civilised societies. Ratzel considered that the progress of human 'races' related more to the physical environment within which they dwelt, rather than to the degree to which they had evolved socially. In this major way, Ratzel's model of how the environment determined culture differed from that proposed by human evolutionists.

Ratzel's Anthropogeographie (1882, 1891) demonstrated the possibility of a scientific investigation of the relationship between culture and nature. The 'Narrinyeri' was one of the main groups he discussed in The History of Mankind (1896). Following from this, Jung's study of Australia (1882-1883), in which he focussed on Aboriginal people of the Lower Murray, was also described as an exercise in 'anthropogeographie'. Ratzel provided models of society that explained the struggle for existence between the European colonial powers of his time. In Politische Geographie (1897, cited in Johnston et al, 1986, p.16), Ratzel developed a model in which each political state was 'a living body which has extended itself over a part of the earth and has differentiated itself from other bodies similarly expanded.' The ground breaking work of Ratzel eventually led to the development of several subdisciplines within human geography.

1.1.3 Environmental Determinism in the 20th Century

The environmental determinism in Ratzel's model of culture initially had a great impact upon human geography. Ellen Semple was regarded as one of the staunchest environmental determinists to follow Ratzel. She portrayed humans largely as passive entities who developed according to features of their natural environment. Her thesis is set out in the opening sentence of her book, Influences of Geographic Environment,: 'Man is a product of the earth's surface' (Semple, 1911, p.1). Semple established a

geographical school of environmental determinism at Chicago largely based on the first volume of Ratzel's Anthropogeographie. To varying degrees, others, such as Huntington (1915), Febvre (1925), and Forde (1934) followed her model. Huntington (1915), for example, also influenced by the early work of Jean Bodin, claimed that hot climates did not favour the development of civilisation, as the high temperature dulled the mind and was not conducive to hard work. The lasting effect of environmental determinism is well illustrated in much of the literature on hunters and gatherers of Australia (Section 4.1). However, the impact of Semple's work was not restricted to the academic arena. Environmental determinism had a major effect on the policy of some western governments in the early 20th century.[2]

Semple remarked of Australia that it was 'the classic ground of retardation, where only shades of savagery can be distinguished' (1911, p.144). She reiterated Ratzel's view of Aboriginal Australia, by claiming that it possessed a 'monotony of culture, mode of life, customs, languages, and a uniform race type from the Murray River to York peninsula [sic.]' (1911, p.382). Like Ratzel, Semple utilised a circular argument that considered the Australian landscape poor in European terms precisely because of the 'primitive' people found to occupy it. So closely integrated were concepts of the land and its occupants, that it was impossible to think of a rich landscape inhabited by 'poorly' developed 'races'.

The strong influence of biological taxonomy in the study of humanity persisted through the early 20th century. This is a fact well illustrated in Haddon's The Races of Man and Their Distribution (1924). Nevertheless, the social Darwinists were fiercely attacked by Boas in America, and those like him who followed historical particularism (Harris, 1987, pp.418-419). They contended that each culture possessed a unique and long history. Their belief in cultural relativism held that the 'primitive' was a European construction, and that there were no higher or lower forms of culture. Boas acknowledged environmental influence upon cultural forms, as shown by his early studies of the geographic influences upon Eskimo culture (cited in Harris, 1969, pp.264-266). Nevertheless, he ultimately rejected geographical determinism as a major factor. The complexities in non-Western cultural groups were fully recognised through the work of Boas and his students.

In the 20th century, approaches involving environmental determinism have sometimes drawn the disciplines of anthropology and human geography close to biology. Particularly during the 1960s and

1970s, the study of human interaction with the physical environment cut across many disciplines. Cultural or human ecology, as a shared field of anthropology and geography, studied the position of humans in the 'web of life' and the 'economy of nature' (Clarke, 1971, p.ix; Broek & Webb, 1973, p.27; Johnston et al, 1986, pp.86,204-205; Norwine & Anderson, 1980). For example, cultural anthropologists Roger and Felix Keesing claimed 'When we look at man in ecological terms we see him as one component in complex webs of interrelationship with his physical environment and other organisms' (1971, p.131). To them, culture mediated human relationships with the environment. In the early 1970s, Rapoport stated that the 'Man-environment interaction is a growing field of study in the design disciplines [e.g. architecture], geography, the social sciences, medicine and biology' (1972, pp.3-4). Humans in the cultural ecology literature were not just components of an ecological system, but represented its highest level. For instance, Clarke confined his ecological study of a New Guinean community to the 'human inhabitants and only by extension on the other living and non-living components that appeared to me to be directly effective parts of the human population's habitat' (1971, p.18).

Vayda and Rappaport (1968, p.477) have claimed that the aims of the ecological perspective in social anthropology were to determine why some communities adopt particular subsistence strategies and to find how certain cultural traits function to maintain the balance between humans and the environment. To the anthropologist, Julian Steward (1955), cultural ecology was a valid reaction against overemphasising the importance of history in determining the relationship between humans to the environment. Steward set out three fundamental procedures of cultural ecology. Briefly, these were: first, the analysis of the relation between environment and the productive technology; second, the behaviour patterns involved in exploitation of a particular area; third, the extent to which this behaviour affected other aspects of the culture. Humans were treated by Steward in terms of populations of organisms, not as diverse cultural beings.

Steward's methodology attracted some criticism. Vayda and Rappaport (1968, pp.485-486) state that he did not provide adequate cross-cultural examples to test the inevitability of certain human and environment relationships suggested by his correlations. They also state that 'any demonstration of their [cultural traits] functional relationship to ecological adaptations is by itself insufficient to make them inevitable' (Vayda & Rappaport, 1968, p.468). For instance, Steward (1955, p.135) equates the hunting of scattered migratory

game with the distribution of patrilineal and patrilocal landowning bands, due chiefly to low population density. Vayda and Rappaport (1968, p.486) regard the proof of such conclusions as virtually impossible, due to the diversity of factors involved.

In spite of the influence of biological schools of ecology upon Steward, he gave little consideration to the genetic potential of humans societies towards adaptation, accommodation and survival (Steward, 1955, p.32). This is consistent with his general denial of the importance of the specific history of a culture. Biological approaches to the study of culture were fundamental to the development of sociobiology in the 1970s (e.g. Wilson, 1975). Some critics saw this development as merely another incarnation of social Darwinism (Sahlins, 1977). While ecological studies in biology continued to investigate the interactions between populations of organisms and the environment, the anthropological focus upon the ecological relationship between culture and the environment appeared more problematic. According to Vayda and Rappaport (1968, p.479), the cultural orientation of anthropology forced this discipline away from ecological studies. Due to the biological emphasis in cultural ecology upon populations, mainstream anthropology and geography eventually rejected ecological studies of humans. This was a reaction against approaches which attempted to restate the basics of cultural activity in biological terms.

Today, archaeology also provides a framework for studies of human interaction with the ecosystem.[3] Physical anthropology also deals with environmental influences on humans, but focusses upon the biological diversity of human populations. For social anthropology, the biological origins of the discipline appear remote. Vayda and Rappaport blame the rift between biology and anthropology upon the shift in biology from behaviour to genetics. They suggest:

> This development doubtless contributed to the alienation of cultural anthropology from
> biology, for what could be the relevance of the work in genetics to anthropologists if the
> distinctiveness of cultural phenomena lay in their transmission by non-genetic means?
> (1968, p.493).

Attempts at integrating the human biology component of this discipline with cultural studies have occurred, but these have generally been methodologically faulty.[4] Archaeology and physical anthropology focus mainly on the material aspects of human relationships to the landscape. The detailed treatment of the linkage between cultural perceptions of space and the economic relationships that people have with the landscape are largely omitted from these approaches for methodological reasons.

1.1.4 The Development of Sauerian Cultural Geography

Cultural geography developed in America from the 1930s, particularly under the leadership of the German

born Carl Sauer at Berkeley. While the first volume of Ratzel's Anthropogeographie heavily influenced

Semple's environmental determinism, cultural geography developed from Sauer's interpretation of the

second volume. In spite of the shared origins of environmental determinism and cultural geography, the

latter was essentially a reaction against the former.

Carl Sauer clearly saw himself as carrying on from the work of Ratzel, and before him, Ritter. The

'landschaft' studies of German geographers particularly influenced him. Sauer studied the human role in

the changing face of the earth. Change was acknowledged as taking place both through intentional and

unintentional modifications, in a manner determined by immediate needs. Sauer considered that these

landscape changes are most conspicuous when cultural groups colonised new territories. One scholar

remarked:

> The words "pioneer" and "frontier" are among the ones that recur most frequently in
> Sauer's writings ... The shaping of the cultural landscape is a cumulative process, each
> stage of which conditions the next one; the first stage is therefore the most critical one
> (Leighly, 1963, p.4).

Understandably, Sauer sometimes labelled his approach as historical geography (Sauer, 1941).

Nevertheless, although the subdisciplines of cultural and historical geography have essentially equivalent

methodology, it is only the former that embraces cultural landscapes as more or less distinct entities.[5]

Sauer's focus upon the physical changes caused by the colonisation of the landscapes he studied is in

evidence in much of his work.[6] He summarised his views in a frequently quoted passage:

> The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a culture group. Culture
> is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape the result. Under the
> influence of a given culture, itself changing through time, the landscape undergoes
> development, passing through phases, and probably reaching ultimately the end of its
> cycle of development (1925 [1963, p.343]).

Therefore, the cultural landscape expresses the 'works of man'. Sauer considered that with a succession of

cultures there would be a related change in cultural landscapes.

Thus, the subdiscipline of cultural geography, as developed by Sauer, is undoubtedly historical in its

methodology. He claimed (1925 [1963, p.342]) that we 'are not concerned in geography with the energy,

customs, or beliefs of man but with man's record upon the landscape.' Sauer contrasted "functional geography", influenced by the discipline of anthropology, with his cultural or historical geography. He claimed (1963, pp.2,65) that functional geography focuses on how something works, not its origins. Not interested in the mechanics of a culture, Sauer concentrated on its record upon the landscape, and looked on cultural geography as a tool to uncover the origins of cultural behaviour. He stated (1963, p.1) that by 'common acceptance this is historical. The investigator tries to explain the present out of the past. The present is only a momentary point.' Cultural geography to Sauer incorporated a blend of archaeology and history, supplemented by intensive field observation of evidence in the landscape itself.[7]

Sauer demonstrated that both natural and human agencies created landscapes. He regarded the landscape as 'a land shape, in which the process of shaping is by no means thought of as simply physical. It may be defined, therefore, as an area made up of a distinct association of forms, both physical and cultural (Sauer, 1925 [1963, p.321])'. Indeed, Sauer clearly points out that the primary consideration of geographers is the way the landscape is humanised. He gave the scope of geography as:

> distinctly anthropocentric, in the sense of value or use of the earth to man. We are
> interested in that part of the areal scene that concerns us as human beings because we are
> part of it, live with it, are limited by it, and modify it (Sauer, 1925 [1963, p.325]).

Although not entirely ruling out the role of the landscape in producing cultural forms, he balanced this by having culture and nature engaged in a two way relationship.

Thus, Sauer considered that landscape and its inhabitants developed together. Cultural geography treated the cultural and genetic variations in humans as adaptations to the discontinuity of the earth's surface. However, Sauer, like Ratzel, was very cautious about applying evolutionary models of humankind to the study of landscape succession. He considered evolutionary approaches to be methodologically flawed as they ignored the diversity of past cultures by making them conform to a priori assumptions about contemporary cultural progress (Solot, 1986, pp.508-510,518). Sauer's focus on material aspects of culture was allied to his anti-evolutionism and to his general distrust of theories in the social sciences.

Sauer favoured the superorganic model of culture in his studies. Culture, in this model, interacted with a natural environment to form an ecosystem. Each culture was reified as an entity that competed with others for space and resources. This resonated with Ratzel's notion of political states in Politische Geographie. In

America both anthropologists and geographers used this model of culture in studies of human ecosystems, within the field of cultural ecology as already discussed (Duncan, 1980; Johnston et al, 1986, p.86; Ellen, 1988, pp.240-241). Some influence from biology was apparent, with cultural adaptations treated in the same way as animal and plants having evolved to fill ecological niches. For instance, Carter (1964, p.5) suggested that 'Man's relation to his environment changes continuously as his knowledge (culture) grows and his outlook changes.' This was a distinctly Lamarckian approach to the human relationship with the landscape.

The possibilist reaction to the excessive claims of the environmental determinists by no means excludes the role of landscape in influencing culture, treating humans as being choosers of the possibilities presented by the natural landscape. For instance, Vidal de la Blache in France supported Sauer's claim of the active role of the landscape in cultural development. The French human geographer (1926, p.6) stated his opposition to the notion of 'the earth as "the stage upon which man's activities take place", without reflecting that this stage itself is alive.' The physical landscape was considered to possess qualities to constrain the range of human responses upon it. Although limited by landscape, cultural groups were thought to have considerable discretion in selecting their course.[8] Rapoport (1972, p.4) considered that a 'system of choices' has a major impact in how groups of people interact and structure space, giving shape to a vision of an ideal environment. However, 'Once the human setting is shaped and organized it has some influence on how people behave' (Rapoport, 1972, p.3). Vayda and Rappaport (1968, p.479) suggest that possibilism acknowledges the limiting, rather than determining, effect of the environment upon cultural forms. Therefore only the lack of traits can be predicted, as in the absence of pineapple cultivation in Greenland. To some extent, this is essentially a qualification of environmental determinism. Possibilism was reportedly a convenient excuse for many anthropologists to largely ignore subsistence and environmental variables in their work (Ellen, 1988, p.240). To some scholars, it is simply a way of stating that causation is complex (Vayda & Rappaport, 1968, p.483).

1.2 Cultural Geography and the Problem of 'Culture'

So far, I have chiefly considered landscape qualities as the active part of human relationships with the environment. I now discuss the active role of cultural aspects in more detail. Notions of culture vary greatly

in the literature of the social sciences, definitions ranging from rigid social structures built around institutions, to more flexible views allowing for much internal variation. Nevertheless, for human geographers there is a practical need for a concept of culture that will allow direct observation and description of human relationships to the landscape. In practice, the term "culture" has been either taken for granted or used in a very loose manner by most human geographers, in spite of their central focus upon culture.

To trace the use of culture as a geographical concept, we must investigate the epistemology of anthropology and human geography. In the 19th century there was a strong connection between the disciplines, particularly in Germany (Ellen, 1988, pp.232-233). Both were treated as kinds of natural history. In Europe, geographers and anthropologists were hard to separate, as many had joint membership in societies of both. Anthropology and human geography began to split when the disciplines became more theoretical, and as they became institutionalised into professional bodies and university departments. Due to the extremes of diffusionism, mainstream anthropology eventually lost interest in the historical aspects of the cultural phenomena it investigated. Meanwhile, geography inherited restricted notions of culture. There has been little methodological crossing over between these two disciplines in the last half of the 20th century (Ellen, 1988, pp.234-235). This is remarkable considering their common origins, and the importance of fieldwork for both.

For human geographers, one concern in studying the interaction between culture and landscape is how to qualify and quantify the territoriality of human communities. Many geographers, particularly Sauer, favoured the superorganic model of culture developed by Kroeber (1917). In this view, individual cultures could be seen as having a defined existence, as if they were living organisms. Kroeber's interest in historical or cultural influences as determinants of cultural phenomena gave his approach a diffusionist flavour. The adoption of the superorganic model of culture offered the possibility of mapping sharp lines around human groups. Once cultural geography incorporated this model, Sauer and his followers tended to study cultural relationships to the landscape without ever questioning the internal dynamics of culture. The superorganic model of culture gave it a mystical quality. It was as if it existed with a will of its own, independent from the society of its carriers (Harris, 1969, pp.330-331). The influence of this model is very apparent in the treatise on Australian Aboriginal 'tribes' by Tindale (1974) (Section 2.2.3). Wagner and

Mikesell, in their introduction to Readings in Cultural Geography (1962, p.5), explicitly claimed that the inner workings of culture were not the concern of cultural geographers.

The superorganic model was heavily attacked by anthropologists, such as Sapir and Boas (Harris, 1969, p.327). The complete subordination of individuals to their cultural milieu in the superorganic model was one strong ground for attack. The notion of the 'organic' culture became outdated, and was eventually abandoned by European anthropology, although the influence is still discernible in America (Section 2.2.3). However, rather than follow developments in the cultural studies of related disciplines, for a long time cultural geography retained outdated concepts to its detriment. Some human geographers held onto a rather physical definition of culture. For instance, Brock and Webb claimed 'a specific culture is the total way of life of a people ... a people's design for living' (1973, p.28). Material possessions and technological achievements feature prominently in their classifications of culture. With both rather narrow concepts in culture, and an approach focussing on its physical expressions in the landscape, cultural geography drifted away from mainstream anthropology. Cultural geographers tended to keep rather static notions of culture (Anderson & Gale, 1992, pp.1-3).

Humanistic approaches developing following Sauer's time led to a more descriptive and less scientific approach to the study of human spatial behaviour and patterns. The study of the mechanism of cultural interaction with landscape declined (Grossman, 1977, pp.130-132). Rowntree (1988, p.576) claims that the increasingly pluralistic and atheoretical tendencies in Sauerian cultural geography led to the take over of the cultural ecology field by anthropology. Anthropologists tended to emphasise cultural adaptations to 'inert' landscapes, in order to focus upon the dynamics within culture. Conversely, geographers looked at changes caused by cultural activity to land, based on a poor understanding of social forms. Norton (1987, p.21) suggests that the general lack of a clear definition of culture for a long time prevented the further development of cultural geography. A gradual improvement to the limitations of Sauer's cultural landscape model commenced in the 1980s (Anderson & Gale, 1992, pp.4-6,10-11). For instance, Baker (1989, pp.141-144), puts forth an interactive model of changing cultural landscapes. He stresses that the cultural landscape is not only the outcome of economic activity, material culture and settlement patterns, but is additionally the product of the sum of attitudes and perception of the landscape of those living in it. Young (1993, pp.255-256) also argues for the value of including human perception in landscape studies.

1.2.1 The Study of Cultural Change and Continuity

I have so far dealt with notions of change wrought by humans upon the physical landscape, and vice-versa. The temporal aspects of culture and cultural change now require treatment. Historically, the disciplines of history, archaeology, anthropology and geography have maintained special interests in the transformations of cultures. Nevertheless, differences are evident in the manner each tackles the mechanism of cultural modification. I will now discuss the literature in order to place cultural change and landscape transformation into the same historical framework.

The discipline of **history** attempts to arrange events in a logical unilineal sequence. On the basis that it focuses upon change through time, it should cope well with notions of cultural transformation. Nonetheless, western-style history generally provides a blinkered view of cultural change. It has striven to create historical narratives that are 'absolute' (Said, 1978). For instance, Baker (1989, pp.93-96) demonstrates that many historians suffer from an inability to recognise that pre-European inhabitants of colonised lands possessed an oral historical record. This is partly because conventional history tends to focus on written accounts, rather than spoken words or other non-literal sources. The paucity of texts in Australian history sensitive to Aboriginal perspectives is being redressed by Reynolds (1982a, 1982b, 1990) and others. However, many such historical studies on early Aboriginal-European interaction try to solve the lack of written records by overgeneralising across space and time. For example, the models of contact developed by Reynolds attempt to explain Australia-wide events, therefore obliterating most regional variations. For a cultural geographical study, which looks at the distinctiveness of cultural regions, this approach is faulty.

The work of most historians specialising in Aboriginal Australia lacks a theoretical framework to explain indigenous reactions to European colonisation. For example, Prentis (1988, p.25) adopts a frontier model from North America, which led him to try to find the heroes of Aboriginal resistance movements similar to American Indians, such as Geronimo, Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. Although this may fill the gap left by historical texts which treat Aboriginal inhabitants as faceless individuals, I will argue that it does not accurately portray the early European colonial period in South Australia (Chapter 5 & Section 6.2). Foster (1983) provides a rare example of a historical text that considers the cultural and environmental

background of 'contact' events between Aboriginal and European people. In general, historians rarely try to explain the complexities of the cultural behaviour behind the events they describe.

The dynamic of 'contact' between cultures is little understood by most historians. Contact between Aboriginal people and Europeans is better defined as an ongoing relationship between cultural groups (C. Anderson, 1988, p.14; Baker, 1989, pp.194-267). By focusing upon the European interpretation and ordering of actual events, the discipline of history has largely ignored the internal dynamics of cultural change. Another problem is the issue of Aboriginal cultural diversity. As discussed already, scholars such as Ratzel and Semple regarded the Australian inhabitants as uniform in most respects. Modern historical texts have tended to follow this assumption. For instance, attention has been drawn to the way that Reynolds, in particular, ignored the diversity of Aboriginal groups in the pre-European period, treating them as more or less homogenous (C. Anderson, 1984, pp.40-42). How can cultural change be recorded, when the original cultural conditions are poorly understood?

Ethnohistory has filled some of the gap left by conventional historical texts. An example of such a study is McBryde's historical and spatial analysis of pre-European trade routes in south eastern Australia (1986). This is essentially history with an interest in archaeology. Modern archaeological concerns with palaeo-landscapes show strong influences from both physical and human geography. For Australia, this is evident in the archaeological publication, Aboriginal Man and Environment in Australia (Mulvaney & Golson, 1971). Models explaining the succession of past human populations were of keen interest to Sauer. Aspects of cultural geography will continue to be highly relevant to archaeologists. However, the primary focus of archaeology upon the material aspects of culture does not enable it to treat the broader aspects of cultural change adequately.

The intellectual concerns of mainstream **social anthropology** have not always embraced theories of change in cultures. Anthropologically oriented studies of hunters and gatherers during Sauer's period, in contrast to cultural geography, tended to concentrate on the static nature of culture. Anthropology has suffered from being a discipline that grew during the colonial period of Europe: as a consequence, most cases of change in indigenous cultures were attributed by anthropologists to cultural contact with Europeans . For instance, Pitt-Rivers' (1927) anthropological study of the 'clash of cultures' essentially provides a crude model for

colonial administration of the 'native problem' across the world. Similarly, the study of the changing Maori population in New Zealand by Keesing (1928) essentially aimed to provide a management plan for the future. Across the world it was believed that many indigenous cultures were facing extinction in the face of European expansion. The starting point for many of these ethnographies was that change only commenced with European intrusion into a stable, albeit 'primitive', cultural situation.

For a long time, the interests of **main stream anthropology** turned towards the study of the unique and non-repetitive aspects of history. Anthropologists did not consider the study of indigenous groups that had sustained interactions with Europeans to be legitimate (Anderson, 1984, p.33). The disinterest of anthropologists in historical change, apart from cultural disintegration as described above, was partly due to methodological problems. It was thought impossible to construct detailed 'histories' for preliterate societies. Through the influence of Malinowski (1922) and Radcliffe-Brown (1958), anthropology developed dominantly synchronic fieldwork techniques. Massive amounts of ethnographic data were collected relating to relatively narrow time spans. Radcliffe-Brown (1958, p.11) supported his approach by stating that the 'evolutionists' in anthropology had become lost in the search for origins when they should have been looking for social laws.

Anthropologists did not consider the indigenous people to be authentic oral sources of their own past. For example, in Warner's study of the Murngin of northern Australia, he summed up his feelings towards indigenous versions of history by quoting Lowie who said '*a priori* claims to greater respect [for indigenous history] on our part are nil' (Lowie, 1916, cited in Warner, 1958, p.443). Adding to the neglect by anthropology of historical sources, was the notion that hunters and gatherers had arrived at cultural stability. An implication of this erroneous assumption was that any changes before Europeans arrived were perceived as negligible. The fear of incorporating change into their ethnographies, led many anthropologists to ignore the possibility of outside agencies influencing their study group. They frequently did not consider the possibility of acculturation having taken place, involving the direct and often prolonged contact between cultural groups that had resulted in a cumulative process of cultural exchange and reformulation. For instance, in northern Queensland, Chase (1980, pp.2-4) was critical of early ethnographers who presented a picture of a traditional past in their work, despite extensive European contact. To many ethnographers, change was acknowledged as occurring in the present or future, but not so

readily in the past. Some anthropologists in the early 20th century realised that the lack of a historical perspective was damaging to their discipline. For instance, Malinowski eventually conceded that theories of culture change were poorly developed in his work (Kuper, 1983, p.34).

Not all anthropologists in the early 20th century avoided incorporating historical change into their models of culture, however. Some followed Boas and particularism. For instance, Forde stated the:

> culture of every single human community has had a specific history. How far that history is known will make all the difference to the degree of our understanding; but unless there is realization of the existence of that specific history, both internal change and external contact in one or several specific environments, understanding cannot begin (1934, p.466).

Also, Evans-Pritchard freely used history in one of his ethnographic studies of northern Africa where historical records were more abundant.[9] He rejected the objective of finding the laws of cultural behaviour. Evans-Pritchard, in a later view (1951, p.85), claimed that 'Social anthropology is best regarded as an art and not as a social science.'

The recognition of the need in social anthropology for models of change grew. Firth (1951, p.488) called for a more systemic study of cultural variation over time. Leach (1954) studied the evolving political modes in relation to ecological determinants for the highlands of Burma. He stated that 'few if any societies which a modern field worker can study show any marked tendency towards stability' (1954, p.285). Rather than envisaging a one way relationship between the environment and culture, Leach considered the dynamics of environment and culture as inextricably linked. In Northern Rhodesia, Victor Turner (1957) studied the inherently unstable cultural conditions of village life. Roger and Felix Keesing investigated the dynamics of change within a cultural group. They stated 'not every individual has the same mental mapping of the group and its culture; so that change does not simply mean a changing of people's minds collectively, but rather a shift in the distribution of ideas within a population' (1971, p.346). Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) and Clifford (1988) have investigated the role of 'home-grown' history within a cultural group, demonstrating that it is the nature of tradition to be continually re-cast or reinvented by both insiders and outsiders. Therefore, change is not necessarily brought on or initiated by extraneous factors.

In Australia, anthropological studies of transformation and adaptation in Aboriginal culture are well developed. Stanner (1958) developed a model of cultural change which drew a distinction between

modifications of 'implicit' and 'explicit' traditions. In the case of the 'implicit' tradition, he considered this more resistant to alteration. Conversely, 'explicit' traditions are readily modified. The 'implicit' traditions, that are symbolic and unconscious, are important as the basis for the maintenance of group identity. A number of Australian anthropological studies, following from Stanner, concentrate on the internal dynamics of cultural change. For instance, David Turner looked at change in cultural tradition on Groote Eylandt in northern Australia. He concluded that 'much has persisted from the past, or has changed within the bounds of tradition' (Turner, 1974, p.194). As Chase (1980, pp.377,381) illustrates for an Aboriginal community in northern Queensland, present day practices and events will become the traditions of tomorrow. Change within the structure of society does not necessarily challenge its identity, but may even initially reinforce it.

In mainstream social anthropology, the role of change in culture has become more prominent. For instance, Friedman (1979, 1983) has vigorously attacked the assumptions of conventional functionalists. He accused them of possessing a 'powerfully entrenched empiricist ideology which has largely prevented, if not buried, all attempts at higher level theorizing' (Friedman, 1979, p.21). Sahlins (1981) considered the processes of how culture embraces change. He studied the role of history from within a culture, investigating the manner in which the reproductions of a structure become its transformation. Nevertheless, C. Anderson (1984, p.29) claims that much of this literature on culture change suffers from emphasising the internal institutional effects of change, rather than the actual interaction that produced it.

I argue that **human geography** is an appropriate discipline to analyse cultural change, due to a central concern with mapping the continuity and discontinuity of human behaviour through time and space. To some extent, human geography can fill the gap between history and anthropology. For this reason, Buttimer (1978, p.73) echoed Ritter by suggesting that historical and geographical studies belong together. Within human geography, cultural and historical geographies are subdisciplines that have keenly developed notions of change. This entails an acknowledgment of the transformation of culture through interaction with other cultural entities, as well as reactions to change in the landscape. Geographical analysis of human/land interaction and techniques of mapping can study these patterns. Sauer's interest in the layering of cultural landscapes is proof of this. Human geography, since Sauer, has maintained its disciplinary concern with the dynamic qualities of human use and perception of land.

As an eclectic discipline, human geography can best study the wide ranging effects of cultural change upon the landscape. Cultural change in an indigenous culture, brought on by colonisation by a foreign group, is essentially a transformation with social, political, ecological, economic and spatial dimensions. Theories of change and continuity are important outside of the academic arena. This is the case for their role in formulation of government policy. Trigger's (1992) investigations of social and spatial aspects of colonialism in the Gulf of Carpentaria region show the implications of the past for both the present and the future. In spite of the general alienation of the Aboriginal population from mainstream Australian culture, Aboriginal communities that have changed from a hunting and gathering existence have generally been treated as wholly or partially 'assimilated', to their detriment (Section 2.2.4).

1.2.2 Aboriginal Cultural Change Since the Pre-European Period

The question of exactly what has changed since the pre-European period in Australia is not easily answered from early ethnographic accounts. This is because records usually commenced at least several years after the first waves of European intrusion. It is not possible to generalise about the 'contact' situation of European colonisation without sacrificing regional variations across Australia. Turner provides evidence that Aboriginal groups along the northern coast were more culturally equipped to deal with the arrival of aliens, than were many inland people. This, he claims, was because the northern regions of Australia had a long history of periodic visits from Melanesian and Asian people (Turner, 1974, p.197). Here, it is methodologically very difficult to distinguish 'traditional' (pre-European) elements of Aboriginal culture from recently achieved syntheses with alien elements. Because of the early unofficial settlement of southern South Australia by European sealers, I will argue that this is essentially the nature of the Lower Murray ethnographic situation (Section 2.1.1).

Hunters and gatherers are not passive actors in the transformation of their culture. This is shown in a study by Tonkinson (1974) of Aboriginal reactions to Europeans in a community located in north Western Australia. This work looks at the adaptive strategies and cultural rationale behind change. Similarly, Myers (1986) demonstrates the role of cultural forces in structuring Aboriginal views towards Europeans in the Western Desert. Chase (1980) considers how Aboriginal people have survived the impact of European contact and the resulting processes from a continual European presence. He suggests (1980, p.381) that

new traditions must appear intellectually plausible when tested against the ideological base of group identification. In the area of economy, Anderson (1984) investigates the relationship between Aboriginal social formation and the intervention of expanding European capitalism in a community situated in northern Queensland. He found that the dissolution of indigenous systems was not the automatic product of the onset of capitalism. At least initially, some pre-capitalist modes of production could exist as part of a broader capitalist system. Culture therefore provides the framework for its own modification. Nevertheless, Roger and Felix Keesing (1971, pp.366-367) warn that communication between cultural groups is not just 'two cultures interacting'. Cultures do not interact, but living people with all their individual personalities do. The socio-political dimension, involving individuals, should never be ignored in favour of what an anthropologist may consider to be the formal rules of a culture.

To varying degrees, European settlement has affected every Aboriginal community in Australia. Change and continuity due to Europeans are social and cultural factors that most Aboriginal groups have grappled with for at least a hundred years. The continuing presence of non-Aboriginal people maintains a social background for Aboriginal people outside direct Aboriginal control. Although Aboriginal people have adapted to this situation in numerous ways, it nevertheless alters the dynamics of cultural life. Chase states:

> Norms and beliefs need application to life situations to survive. New experiences bring
> expansion of old systems, and the removal of experiences through changing life situations
> brings diminution and subsequent reformulation to others (Chase, 1980, p.374).

In this thesis I expand on Chase's point, arguing that cultural transformation, even when the result of outside forces, does not directly translate into a situation of assimilation into other cultures.

We must acknowledge that a vast amount of cultural change has taken place within virtually all Aboriginal communities in Australia. Anderson (1984) demonstrates that in most cases Aboriginal societies have existed to a large extent as a function of their linkages and connections with European culture for the past hundred years. What varies across Australia is the extent to which Aboriginal people have been able to have input into this relationship. In view of this, there are many problems with determining what 'survival', in the contexts of present Aboriginal populations, actually means. Scholars could just as easily study the 'extinction' of culture, and yet still focus on the same processes, albeit with different emphasis. The wide range of opinion on what defines a group as Aboriginal is another problem in determining what is 'survival'. Whether a specific 'Aboriginal' culture is extinct depends on the perception of whether

Aboriginality hinges upon the possession of largely Aboriginal ancestry, and the knowledge of pre-European languages and customs. Some anthropologists have looked within the community for an adequate definition of identity. For instance, Kolig (1977, p.52) described the importance in Aboriginal communities of 'home-made' models of continuity to balance profound change in other areas of their society. Chase (1980, p.379) supports this, stating that Aboriginal identities survive if the self-identifying group believes that continuity has taken place. This is a view that I follow throughout this thesis.

1.2.3 Cultural and Natural Areas

Many scholars have remarked upon the correspondence between maps of ecological and cultural regions (Section 2.3.1.4).[10] Spatial patterns of human dispersal reflect characteristics of the physical environment, as well as that of the underlying socio-cultural structures. Nevertheless, as shown above, social anthropologists largely ignored the interaction between the physical environment and culture. This was in effect a rejection of their former natural science mandate. Social anthropologists 'denied historical determinism in general, and above all, they denied the determinism of the material conditions of life' (Harris, 1969, p.2). In geography, by contrast, a school of regional studies flourished in the 1920s to 1940s, studying the areal differentiation of the earth's surface (Hartshorne, 1939). However, during the 1950s and 1960s there were conflicting views about its validity, with spirited defence of its theory and practice mounted in the face of growing criticism (e.g. Minshull, 1967). One argument against regional geography was that it essentially studies only part of the landscape, and does not provide a synthesis of the whole (Johnston et al, 1986, pp.52-53,396-398). Forde (1934, pp.463-464) rejected the large-scale regional approach on the basis that the broad generalisations it produced were inadequate for the analysis of cultural possibilities. This criticism is particularly relevant to the system of cultural realms proposed by geographers Brock and Webb (1973, pp.197-221) to explain the diffusion of civilisation and religion across the globe. They placed the whole of Australia and New Zealand into one realm. Forde nevertheless recognised that between the physical and social environments, there was a cultural pattern that existed as a collection of specific objectives and values in a body of knowledge and belief.

During the 1970s, regional geography experienced a partial revival after a swing away from approaches which tended to abstract people away from the landscape they moulded (see Farmer, 1973). Once again, it

was a legitimate aim of geographers to gain a thorough understanding of a particular landscape. Rather than entering the debate on the validity of regional geography, I accept the view that some parts of the landscape can possess a high level of distinctiveness from surrounding areas. In my study region, the natural features of the Lower Murray landscape, such as the drainage and topographical characteristics, to some extent correlate with past and present Aboriginal perceptions of the land. I plot a course following Murphy (1991, p.32) who called upon geographers to treat regions not as backdrops for their case studies, but as themselves part of a social dynamic. As long as the links between areas are analysed along with their distinctions, the regions identified will not be too artificial, though they can never be construed as objective realities. The appropriateness of regional boundaries depends on the cultural perspectives and intentions of the boundary-maker.

In distinction from the holistic concept of a cultural region whose perceived integrity is based on a wide range of criteria, 'cultural areas' may be recognised based on the spatial distinction of particular cultural features. Cultural areas may to some extent only exist as hidden geographical features of the landscape. For instance, maps of cultural areas can reflect cultural blocs that are not openly articulated as a distinct unit by the people they represent. This is evident in a study of the modern cultural geography of the United States of America (Zelinsky, 1973). The areas that exist on the basis of the distribution of particular human characteristics, such as material cultural traits, religious practices, and language, may not openly present themselves as having a strong identity. Nevertheless, a geographer may obtain data that suggest the existence of such units. The pattern may be based upon the historical diffusion of traits from other regions, or from autochthonous developments. Museum displays of artefacts lend themselves to this style of cultural interpretation. However, Vayda and Rappaport (1968, pp.481-482) stated that bundles of what often are disparate traits cannot be regarded as necessarily constituting a unit of interaction. The limits of culturally defined areas may not closely correspond to socially and demographically formed units. Nevertheless, Vayda and Rappaport assert that cultural area classifications may lead to useful examinations of the relationship between particular cultural and environmental variables.

Social anthropology and linguistics have come together in the study of the symbolic relationships of culture to the physical environment. Such studies, under the influence of the French structural anthropologist, Levi-Strauss, concentrate on the dialectic variously classified as 'man' or culture on one side, with 'nature',

climate or environment on the other.[11] These are essentially treatments of the culture and landscape dialectic upon which this thesis is focussed. In the context of my study, their chief contribution is demonstration of the symbolic role of the physical environment in cultural construction of the world. For instance, Levi-Strauss (1966) demonstrated that human relationships in some cultures, particularly hunters and gatherers, are modelled on systems observed in 'nature'. The structure of economic activities depends very much upon totemic beliefs (Section 4.3.2). The perception of the physical and social environments clearly affects cultural use of the landscape. In essence, early Aboriginal people perceive that the total environment, rather than people, defines cultural space. Studies of the relationship between people and landscape must allow for the integration of cultural and economic aspects.

1.2.4 Ethnic and Subculture Studies

In this section I outline aspects of studies in contemporary culture that provide more informed models for cultural geography. Although the ideas I discuss are predominantly sociological, both anthropologists and human geographers have borrowed heavily from this literature. This has come about to some extent through increasing awareness by scholars that modern societies are complex. The twin critiques of post-modernism and feminism have forced a renouncement of the totalising explanatory models of culture, and have argued for recognition of the relativity of all forms of knowledge, both popular and scholarly (see Anderson & Gale, 1992, pp.1-11; Goss, 1992; Monk, 1992; Winchester, 1992). Without a thorough knowledge of the internal dynamics of a culture and its position with respect to the rest of the world, the human and land relationships are not fully understood.

As a starting point, I argue that the literature on ethnicity and subcultures helps improve the notions of culture in cultural geography. An *ethnic group* is a distinct category of people who perceive themselves as distinct from parts of the broader society in terms of their culture and their biological origins, and whose members functionally interact with each other on a day to day basis (Johnston et al, 1986, pp.139-140). *Subculture* is a cultural form where participation is to a large degree optional, and relates more to the relationship of the individual to the class structures of the broader society rather than to a distinct historically-based ethnic group (Hebdige, 1979). In this thesis, these notions of ethnic group and subculture are both important. I demonstrate how within the Aboriginal ethnic group, some members participate in a

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subcultural manner, although Aboriginal ancestry is still mandatory (Section 2.4 & 7.4). The relations the Aboriginal population has with the dominant European-Australian culture have made Aboriginal people a marginal group, in spite of their primary occupation of the landscape.

In the 20th century, the decrease in geographical limitations to the diffusion of people across the world landscape continued. Ratzel noted this spatial trend earlier. The centres of powerful 19th century empires were invaded by immigrants from the colonies. Also, former British territories in the southern hemisphere, such as South Australia, experienced a massive influx of people from northern hemisphere populations based in northern Europe, the Mediterranean, and Indo-China (Griffin & McCaskill, 1986, pp.16,90-91; Dawkins et al, 1991, pp.4-10). Immigrants, who to varying degrees tended to retain some of their cultural distinctiveness, became part of the national cultures of their host country. Clearly, these 'ethnic' groups function on one level as discrete cultural units, but on another they are participants in a broader culture. These cultural pockets each negotiate their own spatial relationship with the rest of society. The landscape reflects the marginal status of many ethnic and subculture units with the broader culture.

Memmott (1979, p.3) claims that space occupation by cultural groups serves as indicators of class, power, and identity. Structuration theory, as described by Giddens (1984), would acknowledge Aboriginal people as human agents in reproducing and producing the social systems and social structures of which they are a part. However, this approach tends to understate the role of the unique elements of the minority's history. Jackson (1987) argues that the study of the politics of *place* provides a useful approach for studying complex geopolitical debates. Agnew (1987, pp.x) strives to 'keep a focus on the individuality of places while acknowledging the real *interdependence* of places to which social-categorical analysis has attempted to respond.' This involves the study of the mediation between state and society. Agnew (1992) investigates the links between local identity and politics, while viewing the former as socially constructed and changing although ever present. Harper (1989) argues for treatment of the social significance of space in both the rural and urban contexts. Reynolds (1993, p401) states that the issues of gender, racism and social movements among indigenous people in the capitalist centres of the world are not yet attracting the attention they warrant in political geography.

Dominant Western cultures have harboured minority cultural enclaves, sometimes for centuries, and frequently impose their own construction of cultural identity upon the subgroup. For Chinese minorities, K. Anderson (1987, 1988, 1990) demonstrated the dynamic between *place*, racial discourse, power distribution and institutionalised practice in her analysis of 'Chinatown'. The cultural hegemony of the dominant culture linked race and *place* in order to define spaces as for 'whites' and for 'foreigners.' Chinese people in Vancouver, Canada were considered by Europeans to be unsanitary and morally aberrant (Anderson, 1987, p.586). Assimilation in the context of 'Chinatown' was never the objective in the construction of this largely non-Chinese concept. Although Chinese people did participate in the building of their ethnic identity outside their original homeland, this was nonetheless subordinate to the relations imposed upon them by the dominant European culture. In the analysis of *place*, there are some close comparisons between Anderson's Chinese and the Australian Aboriginal people. Until relatively recent times, the former were placed in ghettos and the latter left in missions and fringecamps.

In Australia, Attwood (1989) has explored the European construction of Aboriginal identity. This was 'a process which was determined more by Europeans than by Aborigines, because they had the power to shape the indigenous peoples as 'Aboriginal' (Attwood, 1989, p.x). In a sense, studies of ethnic groups are really investigations of how the broader society helps to maintain such identities. In an urban geographical study of an American city, Godfrey states:

> Ethnicity should be viewed not merely in terms of cultural *content*, the specific traits that characterize a group, but also within a more general cultural *context*. The sense of being separate in a plural society, detached as a distinct minority, is essential to the maintenance of an ethnic identity.' [my italics] (1988, p.31).

Godfrey draws heavily upon models from sociology to explain the importance of a sense of *place* in a culturally complex and heterogenous society. The focus on *places* allows greater attention to be given to investigating the cultural importance of particular sites, rather than upon whole cultural landscapes.

The literature on subcultures is based largely on sociological research from Birmingham in England. This contains useful models to assist in relating cultural activity of minority groups, such as Aboriginal people, to the larger national culture. The 'organic' view of culture, espoused by cultural geographers such as Sauer, described it as a more or less homogenous structure. The value of the subcultural studies from the Birmingham school is that cultures of complex societies are shown as layered, reflecting the different

interests within the major classes of the dominant group (Clarke et al, 1976, p.12). I argue that the cultural behaviour of many Aboriginal people living in the urban environment is best explained as being part of a subculture. This is so even though their relatives in the countryside are analytically better treated as an ethnic group.

The subculture literature focuses on the internal dynamics of very large national cultures. Here, the major structures and meanings of the powerful classes stand as the dominant social-cultural order in relation to all other classes. However, the minority classes or cultures may not be in direct competition with the dominant class. For instance, 'Subordinate cultures will not always be in open conflict with it [the dominant class]. They may, for long periods, coexist with it, negotiate the spaces and gaps in it, make inroads into it. (Clarke et al, 1976, p.12)'. Cultural groups stand in relations of domination and subordination to one another in the manner of a cultural dialectic. They sometimes maintain symbiotic relations of mutual dependency.

Subcultures form around the activities and concerns of their groups. Some have relatively tight boundaries and take on distinctive shapes, gather around certain activities, develop interests that are central to them, and define territorial spaces (Clarke et al, 1976, p.14). Their cultural styles are essentially symbolic forms of resistance, and represent a 'solution' to a specific set of social circumstances (Hebdige, 1979, pp.80-81). Godfrey defines subcultures as 'specialised social worlds involving distinctive ways of life, with discernible morphological expressions, within a larger pluralistic society' (1988, p.206). The role of outside agencies, such as the popular media, in the construction of subculture identity is crucial to explain their existence (Hebdige, 1979, pp.85,92-94).

1.2.5 Humanistic Geography and Culture

Humanistic trends in geography, together with more insightful models of culture, have provided a chance for a new life for cultural geography. Humanistic methods enrich the investigation of the integration of cultural identities and space. These approaches, directed away from the positivism of early geographers, provide the chance for a new life for cultural geography. Humanism was rediscovered as a central concern for human geography during the late 1970s and through the 1980s (Ley & Samuels, 1978, p.1). A

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fundamental feature of humanistic approaches is the focus upon human awareness. This is in contrast to the

dehumanised and mechanical responses to the environment that is characteristic of positivist and

structuralist approaches to the social sciences. Humanistic geography studies the world that individual

humans create as thinking beings. Such approaches in geography can provide important insights above the

level of the individual (Baker, 1989, p.19). The aim is to improve understanding of culture, not necessarily

to be able to assess it. In this sense, humanistic work is not progressively cumulative. Unique *places* are

studied to determine the manner of their cultural formation.[12]

In the studies on the construction of cultural identity, more complex notions of culture refocus attention on

the human/land relationship. The landscape has an active role in the building of cultural identities, though

not in the manner suggested by environmental determinists. Cosgrove states:

> Landscape ... is an ideological concept. It represents a way in which certain classes of
> people have signified themselves and their world through their imagined relationship
> with nature and through which they have underlined and communicated their own social
> role and that of others with respect to external nature (1984, p.15).

Cosgrove (1992, p.278) is critical of English-speaking cultural geographers who, he claims, are still

markedly parochial in the manner they deal with plural societies. He argues for more attention to the

complex ways of how nationalism and territory are interwoven in the processes of people gaining cultural

and political autonomy through different modes of their representation. Political geography may provide

useful insights into complex modern societies.

Cosgrove (1984, p.38) remarked that earlier geographical studies of landscape had emphasised the

outsider's view, concentrating on the morphology of external forms. He contrasted this with geographical

humanism that seeks to reverse this situation by investigating the identity and experience of the insider.

The study of the spirit or sense of *place* is concerned with relations between *place* and people, with a focus

upon the distinctiveness of specific localities. This is a broad concept which incorporates imageability,

topophilia, attachment and symbolic meaning of places (Pocock & Hudson, 1978, p.80). Places have

existential significance (Relph, 1976; Godkin, 1980; Ragaz, 1988). Relph states that:

> Places are fusions of human and natural order and are the significant centres of our
> immediate experiences of the world. They are defined less by unique locations, landscape,
> and communities than by the focusing of experiences and intentions onto particular
> settings (1976, p.141).

Some places can evoke a sense of belonging to a social group and provide a sense of group identity. Others become national symbols of common experience that foster a sense of national unity and pride: examples of the latter in Australia are the Sydney Opera House and Ayers Rock. To understand the importance of such places, the consideration must go beyond simple functional explanations from outside perspectives.

Some *places*, real or imagined, may never have been visited, and yet are culturally important. Memmott states 'many places arise through the association of a piece of environment with a special piece of knowledge rather than with a characteristic sequence of human behaviour' (1979, p.3) (for example the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben in London). I will argue that the Skyworld and Underworld are early Aboriginal examples of such places (Section 3.2.3). Today, an example is the cultural importance given to certain old mission sites. These are places that need to exist to enable Aboriginal people to form into distinct units, even though most Aboriginal people live away from them. The cultural significance of cemeteries demonstrates that territories do not just belong to the living (Malmberg, 1980, p.198). The concept of place can not be entirely explored by formal scientific methods of geography. An approach that gives emphasis to the experiences of an insider is required.

Relph (1976, p.6) states that the study of landscape must be open to the full range of experience through which places are made and perceived. Further, he asks us 'to accept places, buildings, people and objects for what they are and as they are, not merely because of their resource potential or research significance' (Relph, 1981, p.20). Rather than term this approach as humanist, which he claims to be a 'tarnished' position, he describes this as environmental humility, and suggests (1981, p.19) that it is 'a concern for the individuality of places, and this requires a careful and compassionate way of seeing that can grasp landscapes as subtle and changing, and as the expression of the efforts and hopes of the people who made them.' He uses this concept to solve the paradox of the 20th century built landscapes being seen by historians and architects as 'ugly' and not functional, and yet the experience of many residents being the opposite.

By studying cultural perceptions of space, the phenomenological studies of Yi-Fu Tuan (1974) have also demonstrated the importance of the insider's cultural experience. Yi-Fu Tuan provided an overview of the scale of interaction between people and landscapes. In particular, he illustrated how different groups can

interpret the same landscape. Ragaz (1988) considers the importance of *place* to a historic group of Aboriginal people in the North East of South Australia. Variations in landscape perception exist according to gender groups, 'visitors' versus 'natives', and according to actual experience of the individual. Memmott (1979) demonstrates the importance of cultural differences in the nature and properties of place. In order to increase sensitivity towards insider views, Rose suggests that human geographers be 'both actors in and spectators of the social world into which they inquire' (1980, p.124). Buttimer (1978, p.73) supports this view and stresses the need to understand each region and its inhabitants from the 'inside' or local perspective, and not entirely from that of 'outside' researchers. For instance, both Relph (1976, 1981) and Buttimer (1980a & b) are critical of many city planners who, as outsiders, have designed living areas without an insider's appreciation of the environment. For the insider they show the importance of stability, continuity, and a sense of belonging in relation to one's environment.

The ethno-ecological approach to human relationships to space is defined by Frake (1962) as having the aim of presenting a people's view of the environmental setting itself and their view of behaviour appropriate to that setting. More recently, Huber (1979) discussed the role of culture in determining the nature of the 'hidden topography' people carry with them. Meinig (1979, p.3) stated that the landscape is 'defined by our vision and interpreted by our minds'. It must be considered that place is an image of culture in space. Anderson and Gale claim 'While it is true that people live with and through 'realities' they inherit, it is also the case that people re-present those realities according to their own motivations and always possess the capacity to question and criticise, and so create fresh hypotheses about existence (1992, p.4).' Malmberg (1980, p.5) described human space perception as being biologically rooted, but operating on levels dependent upon the experiential components introduced by socialisation, in particular by the cultural milieu in which the individual is reared. Although these studies reflect culturally induced values, they have also entered the psychological realm of behavioural geography (see Aitken, 1991). Young (1992, p.270) claims that 'Different cultural groups do indeed see and interpret landscape in different ways - physically, in the case of boundaries or in the use of contrasting environments, and culturally, in their constructs of the values of land and resources.'

Behavioural geographers have studied how mental maps affect everyday decision making processes (Gould and White, 1974; Golledge et al, 1982; Jackson, 1989). Mental maps are defined as spatially organised

biases, or distorted egocentric images of *place*. Studies of mental maps give insight into how people make decisions, what opportunities they perceive, how they determine their goals, and whether these goals are reached. This can be considered as an extension to the ethno-ecological approach. The literature on mental maps further demonstrates the existence of a complex range of landscape perceptions within society. However, this school adopts a very positivistic approach.

With some studies of *place* being at the level of shared cultural group perceptions, it is easy to neglect the importance of place in the sociological make up of individuals. Godkin (1980) looks at the mechanisms and processes by which images of place become integrally woven into an individual's sense of self. He (1980, pp.77,79) uses a concept of 'rootedness' to define a sense of belonging to safe places. Positive images of place can provide a concrete focus for the attachment, retention and development of an individual's self-identity. Buttimer (1980a, p.25) stated that there was a lack of research determining the link between cognitive structuring of space with actual ecological characteristics of the environment.

1.3 Conclusion

The Sauerian concept of cultural landscape is a powerful analytical tool in interpreting the physical marks created in the landscape by humans. Cultural geography acknowledges the agency of human processes that transform the landscape. In this sense, the subdiscipline is a bridge between physical and human geography. Nevertheless, culture exists in far more complex forms than envisaged by early cultural geographers. This is apparent in modern concepts of ethnic groups and subcultures. The processes of cultural change are also complex. The question of how culture influences the perception of the landscape, embedding in it varying cultural meanings, is best studied by more phenomenological and humanistic methods than those used by Sauer. I define the cultural landscape as an amalgam of the physical environment, as modified by human works, but also as perceived and experienced by the human participants. With the aim of building a historical framework within which the development of a cultural subgroup in a plural society can be traced, I will next describe the Aboriginal population of the Lower Murray, in both a demographic and a cultural sense.

End Notes

1   In other regions of the world, the extinction of culture was recognised as proceeding at an alarming rate. For instance, Darwin (1871 [1888, p.181]) cited Humboldt's example from 'South America [of] a parrot which was the sole living creature that could speak a word of the language of a lost tribe.'

2   Frenkel (1992) suggests that the United States approach to the development of the Panama Canal Zone illustrates environmental determinism.

3   Examples of archaeological studies looking at human interaction with natural systems based in Australia are Hallam (1975), Flood (1980), Meehan (1982), Meehan & Jones (1988), Beck et al (1989), & Meehan (1989).

4   In Australia, the studies of Birdsell (1953, 1958, 1968, 1972), using the 'tribe' data of Tindale (1974), unsuccessfully attempted to link socio-linguistic groups with distinct genetic populations (Section 2.3.1). Serious criticism of this approach exists (Peterson, 1976a).

5   Williams defines historical geography by stating:
> Every landscape settled by man becomes a blend of the natural and the human and
> it is the historical geographer's special task to elucidate the changes and
> understand the new arrangement (1974, p.473).

6   Sauer studied a number of American landscapes (1916a & b; 1966; 1968; 1971).

7   The archaeological nature of some cultural geography is apparent in a study by Darby (1972) of change in the English landscape.

8   Bauer (1969) provides a view between environmental determinism and possibilism, which explains human spatial behaviour in the tropical north of Queensland.

9   Evans-Pritchard ethnography, The Sanusi of Cyrenaica (1949), contains a detailed history of the development the cultural and political aspects of the region.

10 Mason (1896, 1905 [cited Vayda & Rappaport, 1968, p.480]) noted how the boundaries on climatic maps corresponded to those of linguistic areas. Wissler (1926) provides maps of the ecological and cultural regions of North America. Peterson (1976b) investigates the relevance of cultural and ecological maps in Aboriginal Australia.

11 In Australia, linguistic studies investigating Aboriginal symbolic expression include Heath (1978), Schebeck (1978), & Sutton (1978). For New Guinea, Bulmer (1978) is an example.

12 A number of studies investigate the cultural perception of particular landscapes. For instance, views of the landscape are provided for England by Lowenthal & Prince (1972), for North America by Jackson (1984), & South Australia by Moon (1969).

2 The Lower Murray Aboriginal Population in Time and Space

Concepts of time and space are important elements in the formation of modern Australian perceptions of what is 'Aboriginal'. Today, Aboriginal communities are frequently classified according to the strength of their links to the pre-European past, often termed the 'Dreamtime'. Essentially this is a measure of the time elapsed since the transformation of the Aboriginal landscape into European forms by colonists. Direct contact between Europeans and Aboriginal groups, resulting in domination by a European-based culture, did not occur everywhere simultaneously. This unevenness has, in effect, produced a gradient of Aboriginal views of the landscape between southern and northern Australia. Explored here is the relationship of time and space, in the context of providing a cultural overview of the Lower Murray region.

2.1 Historical Background

In this section, I trace the broad historic developments within the southern South Australian Aboriginal population from the end of the pre-European period until the present. An outline of the events is provided elsewhere (Timeline, Appendix 10.1). For convenience I refer to Europeans, although the first such visitors would have considered themselves to be Dutch, French, English, American or German. Most official settlers were from southern England (Griffin & McCaskill, 1986, p.11). Today, Aboriginal people who acknowledge a close relationship to the Lower Murray region, whether living there or not, generally call themselves 'Ngarrindjeri'. The investigation in this thesis of links Aboriginal people have with the Lower Murray landscape will help illuminate aspects of Ngarrindjeri identity. I justify my general discussion of the whole of southern South Australia on the basis that the post-colonisation histories of the Aboriginal groups here are much interwoven.

2.1.1 Pre-colonial Contact Between Europeans and Aboriginal People

Aboriginal groups in South Australia were influenced by Europeans long before official settlement in 1836. The first significant effect of European settlers on South Australian Aboriginal populations was probably the introduction and spread of small pox from eastern Australia, reaching the Lower Murray along the river system in two waves sometime between 1814 and 1820, and between 1829 and 1831 (Stirling, 1911;

Berndt, 1989, p.64; Berndt et al, 1993, p.292). From early Aboriginal accounts, reproduced in many of the southern ethnographies, this disease decimated southern Aboriginal populations.[1] The effect of such a sudden decrease in local populations may have modified some social practices, for example marriages and funerals, and possibly led to much movement among surviving groups. It is therefore not possible to accurately map Aboriginal cultural distribution in south eastern Australia before European contact.

The activities of whalers and sealers, operating chiefly out of Bass Strait, and their effect on the southern Aboriginal populations warrant a mention here. These men, some of whom were dwelling on Kangaroo Island as early as 1819, lived outside colonial control, which was then based in Tasmania. They periodically raided the mainland for Aboriginal women to serve as labourers and wives (Section 3.3.2 & 5.1). There is evidence to suggest that some of these Kangaroo Island men had trading relationships with mainland Aboriginal groups. It is also likely that news of the European arrival, and perhaps even European goods, travelled towards South Australia from the east along Aboriginal trade routes soon after the settlement of New South Wales in 1788 (McBryde, 1986). These trade routes would have been important channels for conveying information, which could have served to modify Aboriginal cosmology. Therefore it is likely that most southern South Australian Aboriginal people would have had some knowledge of Europeans before official settlement in 1836, even if only indirectly and understood within the confines of their own world views. With the range of contacts discussed above, both indirect and direct, we must acknowledge that the early southern South Australian ethnographies, however skilfully obtained, do not provide strictly 'pre-European'-type accounts of Aboriginal society.

2.1.2 European Control of Aboriginal Populations

From my analysis of the historical relationship between Aboriginal people and the various non-Aboriginal administrations in South Australia, I have identified three distinct phases of Aboriginal affairs (Appendix 10.1). First, the exploration phase (1627 - 1839), when the contact between Aboriginal people and Europeans was tentative and small scale (Section 2.1.1 & 5.1). The second phase (1839 - 1911), colonial incorporation, is when Aboriginal people where being dispossessed and missionised (Section 5.1.5, 5.2, 6.2 & 6.3.1-6). In this period, the welfare of the Aboriginal inhabitants was largely left in the hands of private organisations, such as the Aborigines' Friends' Association in the Lower Murray. The third phase (1911 -

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present), called government welfare, is when Aboriginal people came under the full control of the government, backed by restrictive legislation (Section 6.3.7, 6.4.2-6 & 7.1). Today, the burden of financial support and management largely remains the concern of government.

Before the Colony of South Australia was founded, it was the intention of the Australian Colonisation Commission in Britain that a number of Aboriginal 'asylums' in districts inhabited by them be set up to provide shelter, and to be a location where food and clothing could be distributed in exchange for labour (Foster, 1989, p.63). The first such 'asylum', called the 'Aborigines Location', was placed on the banks of the Torrens River at North Adelaide in 1839, under the supervision of a 'Protector of Aborigines' (Foster, 1989; 1990). The establishment of this institution marks the beginning of the colonial incorporation phase of Aboriginal and European interaction. Initially, adults as well as children were intended to be taught here. However, it was soon apparent that the adults were generally not suitable for such conversion. The focus therefore turned to the children, who were taken away from their parents and placed in a school at nearby Walkerville. These first attempts in Adelaide were directed at bringing the South Australian Aboriginal population as quickly as possible into 'civilisation' and 'God'.

During the first few years of European colonisation of South Australia, the city was increasingly attracting Aboriginal people in from surrounding areas, in some cases from beyond the frontier of settlement (Clarke, 1991a). These people were essentially explorers, being motivated by opportunism. Aboriginal people from regions such as Encounter Bay, Mount Barker, Mid North and the Moorundie Station were frequent visitors to early Adelaide (Fig.2.1). These incoming groups caused problems for the European colonists, not only being a drain on the welfare system, but also through occasional fighting with the original Aboriginal groups of the area (Section 3.3.1 & 7.4.1).

As elsewhere in Australia, the Government's response to the Aboriginal migration into the city, was to attempt to manage movements through the setting up of remote ration depots at the frontier, to cut off the drift of people (R.M. & C.H. Berndt, 1951, pp.12-13,63-64,70-71; Foster, 1989). With the threat of violence in the 1840s, Governor Grey ordered a system of ration distribution to be established at localities, such as Moorundie and Port Lincoln, in order to curb possible Aboriginal aggression towards European settlers. The number of ration distribution points had greatly expanded by the late 1840s, with depots
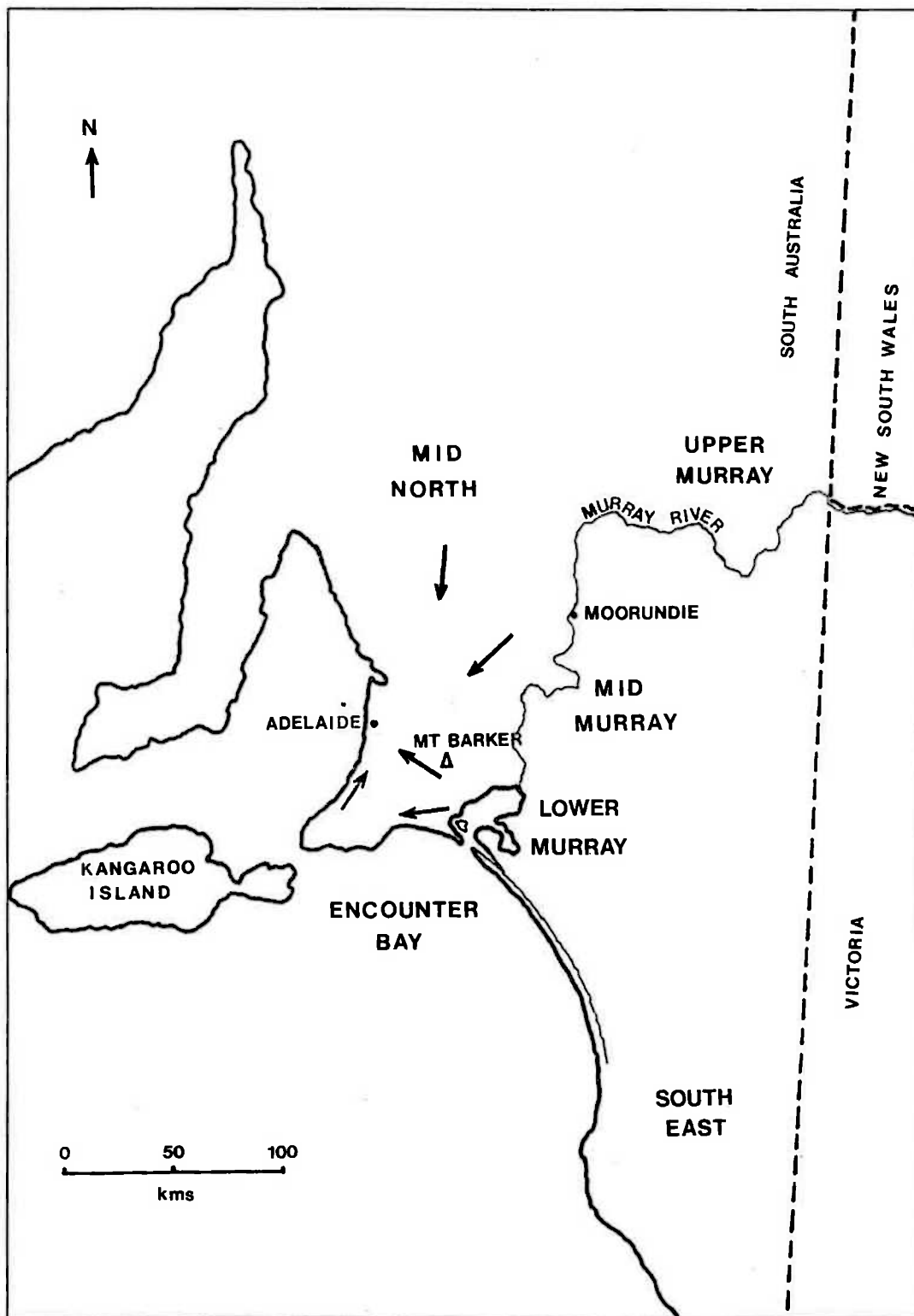
Fig.2.1 Aboriginal movement patterns in the 1840s resulting from settlement
  in Adelaide

established in the Lower Murray region at Encounter Bay and Wellington (see map in Griffin &

McCaskill, 1986, p.31). However, the Victorian gold rush from 1853 to 1859 effectively put a stop to this

(Foster, 1989, pp.64,71). At this time, some South Australian land owners had convinced the Government

that ration distribution inhibited Aboriginal people from working, and labour was in short supply. Rations

were gradually restricted to only the sick and infirm. The use of the ration system was essentially as an

indirect form of European control over Aboriginal movement and labour patterns.

After the winding down of the ration system, the Aboriginal population was mainly left to be managed by

missionaries. The first South Australian mission to be established outside Adelaide was at Poonindie on

Eyre Peninsula, set up by the Church of England in 1850 (R.M. & C.H. Berndt, 1951, pp.90-91,283; Gale,

1966, p.22; Brock & Kartinyeri, 1989). The strategy here was to isolate a community of Aboriginal people

from the 'immoral' influence of the settlers, and teach them the approved European way of life. By 1882,

there were 61 Aboriginal people living at Poonindie, many having been shifted there from Adelaide and

the Lower Murray districts. In 1859, a group of Adelaide European residents, who together formed the

Aborigines' Friends' Association, appointed George Taplin to form a mission settlement near the Murray

Mouth (Section 6.3). Similarly, in 1867, Aboriginal people who had drifted into the northern towns of

Yorke Peninsula were gathered and placed on the Point Pearce Reserve, on the shore of Spencer Gulf near

Port Victoria on Yorke Peninsula (Gale, 1966, p.23). Point Pearce was established through the efforts of a

group of philanthropists at the Yorke Peninsula mines. This eventually took over from Poonindie, which

closed down in 1894 (Brock & Kartinyeri, 1989). In 1898, a mission settlement, called Koonibba, was

formed on the far western side of Eyre Peninsula by the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Gale, 1966, p.23).

Not only were Eyre Peninsula people placed here, but also groups from the Nullarbor Plains and northern

desert regions. Towards the end of the 19th century, mission settlements were also being established in the

northern regions of South Australia. Missions were a more direct method of controlling Aboriginal

movement patterns than the ration distribution system, although with less direct input from the

Government.

In summary, throughout the 19th century, the management of the Aboriginal population had largely been

left in the hands of missionary and philanthropic organisations, with little interest from the South

Australian Government. This was partly due to a popular perception in Australia that the Aboriginal

population was dying out (Section 2.1.3). After the passing of the <u>Aborigines Act</u> in 1911, followed shortly by the <u>Royal Commission on Aborigines</u> in 1913-15, it was officially recognised that the people of Aboriginal descent were a growing problem (Section 6.4.3). This signals the start of what I term the government welfare phase. As a result, the Aborigines Department of the South Australian Government significantly enlarged its function in the early 20th century by taking over the operation of both the Point McLeay and Point Pearce settlements (Gale, 1966, p.24). Nevertheless, some missionary organisations were still active. In 1924, the United Aborigines Mission, based in New South Wales, established a mission at Oodnadatta in the north (Gale, 1966, p.23). When this closed, the children's home moved first to Quorn, where it was called Colebrook Home, and then finally relocated to Eden Hills, a suburb of Adelaide. Many of the Aboriginal children removed from families in the Lower Murray region during the 1940s and 1950s were sent to this institution. In 1925, the United Aborigines Mission gathered Aboriginal people from the Murray River region at a mission at Swan Reach. In 1945, this closed, and many of the former inhabitants were moved to a new station opened by the United Aborigines Mission at Gerard, near Berri along the River Murray. Some West Coast and Lower Murray people were also eventually relocated here. Aboriginal people who were originally from disparate and distant cultures were forced to coexist on such settlements.

In 1961, the South Australian Department of Aboriginal Affairs, formerly called the Aborigines Department, gained control of the Gerard Mission. In 1963 they established the Davenport Reserve station adjacent to the Umeewarra Mission at Port Augusta. In 1964 the Department also took over Koonibba on the West Coast. During the late 1950s and the early 1960s, when assimilation policies were in operation, there were attempts by the Government to remove Aboriginal people from the old reserves, such as Point Pearce and Point McLeay, in the hope of closing them down. This was possibly a response to the sudden movement of many Aboriginal people into areas surrounding the city, which made the aim of assimilation seem achievable. For instance, in the 1960s it was estimated that of the South Australian Aboriginal population of approximately 6,000 individuals, nearly 2,000, or one third, were living in Adelaide (Gale, 1966, p.28). Former residents of Point Pearce and Point McLeay made up the bulk of the emerging urban-based Aboriginal ethnic group. This trend was also felt in the build up of Aboriginal populations in rural towns. In the Lower Murray area, the Aboriginal population swelled in towns such as Meningie, Tailem Bend, and Murray Bridge. In the 1970s, with the increasing demand by Aboriginal people for rights as

Australian citizens, the daily control of most former mission settlements was handed over to Aboriginal run councils (Section 6.4.5, 6.4.6 & 8.6.4; Appendix 10.1).

In the above discussion I have indicated how Governments of different periods have altered their policies with respect to their understanding of the needs of both the Aboriginal population, and the wider Australian society. There was a progression from the Aboriginal 'asylums' being set up with a large degree of freedom, to indirect management of Aboriginal population movement and behaviour through ration distribution, to more direct and intense control at the hands of missionaries and then government departments. However, not all Aboriginal people in South Australia since 1836 were caught up in government control to the same extent. Some managed to live away from mission settlements and institutions on geographically remote pastoral stations and in socially distant fringecamps (Chapter 6). Others were absorbed into the urban population, a trend that started after World War I. Nevertheless, all people who were defined as 'Aboriginal' have to some extent been subjected to government Aboriginal affairs policy.

2.1.3 Demography of the Aboriginal Population in the Lower Murray Region

The Murray River Basin in South Australia was perhaps one of the most densely populated parts of the pre-European Australian landscape (Brown, 1918, pp.230-231; Mulvaney, 1969, p.40). Nevertheless, as elsewhere in southern Australia, the Aboriginal population has suffered a massive decline which became apparent during the early stages of European colonisation (Smith, 1980). However, this decline was not entirely blamed by Europeans upon their own expansion. For instance, Taplin considered that even without the invasion of the Europeans the extinction of the Aboriginal population was inevitable (Journals, 1 October 1861). Taplin supported his argument by claiming that it was an Aboriginal belief that had the Europeans arrived much later, then they would have found the country totally depopulated. In keeping with this perception, Taplin's objectives were in line with what would be later referred to as 'smoothing the dying pillow'. For instance, he says:

> It is strange but true that all those natives who have exhibited the most hopeful signs of piety have died. And yet is it not wonderful that in a dying race like this, many should be found who in the general sinking into death, should grasp the cross of Jesus when offered to them (Journals, 1 August 1865).

The afterlife of the Aboriginal people was a major concern of missionaries such as Taplin. It seems that the foundation of an Aboriginal place in a modern society was not.

It was clear to Aboriginal people of the Lower Murray that their own numbers were dwindling (Fig.2.2). However, like the Europeans, Aboriginal people did not initially perceive this to be due directly to European colonisation. For instance, in 1859 the Port Elliot Aboriginal people attributed their rapidly decreasing numbers to the sorcery of neighbouring groups (Taplin Journals, 17-18 August 1859). They would not believe otherwise when spoken to by Taplin. Similarly, when an influenza epidemic spread through the Aboriginal population of the Lower Murray in 1860, the local Aboriginal people claimed that its occurrence was due to the strong 'enchantments' of Aboriginal people from further up the river (Taplin Journals, 6-9 August 1860). In 1863, the threat of sorcery by Kapunda people caused the return by Lower Murray people of two Kapunda women to the Mid North (Taplin Journals, 23 April 1863). It was feared that the Kapunda people would poison Lake Alexandrina with blood, starting another smallpox epidemic. In spite of the close proximity of Europeans, Aboriginal people of the Lower Murray in the 1860s still tended to interpret the world according to predominantly pre-European models.

I argue that changes in the size and distribution of the Aboriginal population of the Lower Murray are to some extent a gauge of the effect of European colonisation. This relationship is soundly demonstrated in the Timeline (Appendix 10.1). As stated elsewhere (Section 2.1.1), small pox introduced from other parts of Australia decimated the Aboriginal population of southern Australia before official settlement in 1836. For this reason, I am restricted here to estimating the population trends after 1836. However, with the irregular movement of the frontier, even this is not a straightforward exercise. Aboriginal people in the Encounter Bay region were the first to have sustained contact with the European administration, and therefore appear statistically before the Coorong groups. For example, in 1843 Moorhouse estimated that there were 230 Aboriginal people in regular contact with Europeans at Encounter Bay (Moorhouse, 1843 [1990, pp.59-60]). A further 100 were in irregular contact there. For the rest of the Lower Murray, population figures were not known. Therefore, we can only estimate the size of the Aboriginal population prior to and immediately after European colonisation in 1836.

Fig.2.2 Aboriginal population trends in the Lower Murray region (1834 - 1994)
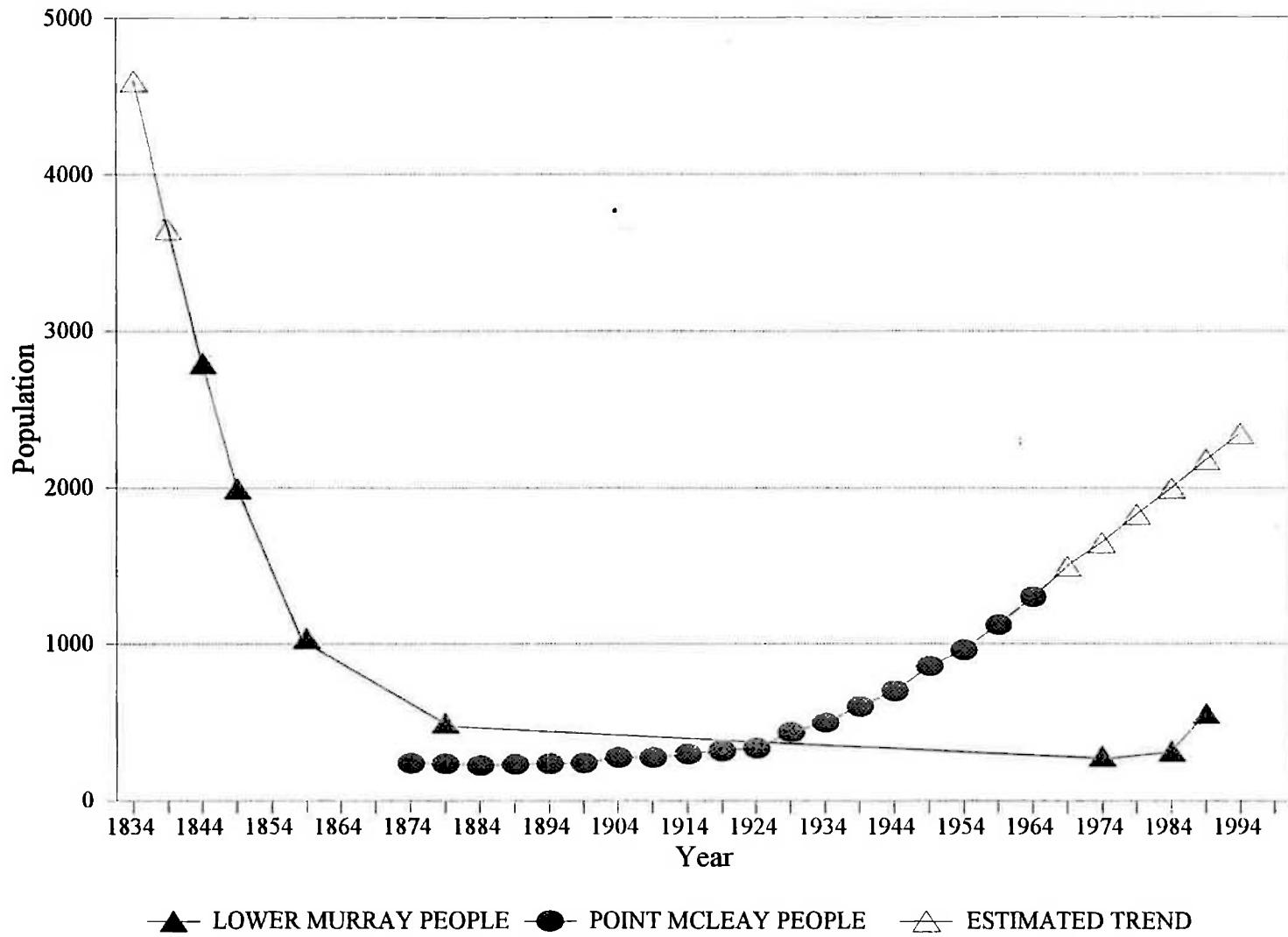
Estimates made by various officials in the 1840s still exist and can be used for an approximate figure of the total Aboriginal population of the Lower Murray. A former government officer told Taplin (1879, p.43) that he saw 800 fighting men in 1842. Taplin himself claimed to have seen 500 warriors in the Lower Murray in 1849. On the basis that the proportion of fighters would be one fourth of the total population, Taplin calculated that in 1842 there were 3,200 individuals in the Lower Murray, and by 1849 this had been reduced to 2,000. Presumably these figures included both 'full-bloods' and 'half-castes'. On 24 February 1848, Mason reported that 103 men, 84 women and 31 children received rations at Wellington (Linn, 1988, p.39). A further 180 came soon after. Mason claimed that on this occasion, very few of the Coorong and Encounter Bay people were there due to an ongoing fight. With almost 400 Aboriginal people using his depot, it is likely that the total Lower Murray population in 1848 comprised at least 1,000 individuals. Brown (1918, p.230), using Taplin's estimates, considered that prior to the smallpox epidemics the Aboriginal population in the Lower Murray was between 1,800 and 6,000 people, at a density of between 1 and 3.2 individuals per square kilometre.

Whatever the Aboriginal population in the 1840s, by the late 1860s it had fallen drastically (Fig.2.2: 'Lower Murray' curve). Taplin estimated that in 1860 there were only 1,000 Aboriginal people remaining in the area from Encounter Bay, Wellington and the Coorong.[2] Nevertheless, the population figure stated by Taplin is also only an estimate. This is because while George Taplin was at Point McLeay, only a small number of the Aboriginal population of the Lower Murray actually stayed there (Section 6.3.2). This number was dependent upon season and local Aboriginal politics. Due to the pattern of European settlement, the Point McLeay figures do not include a large proportion of the total Aboriginal population until just after the turn of the century. At this stage, the landscape had effectively been taken over by European settlers, with Aboriginal people largely confined to reserves and fringecamps under the gaze of government officials, station owners, and missionaries.

Gale (1969, p.86) considered both disease and change of life style the main causes of the decline in the Aboriginal population of the Lower Murray. In 1879, Taplin performed a census on the Lower Murray population, recording a total of 511 (Fig. 2.3). At this stage, the Aboriginal population was still evenly spread throughout the Lower Murray region. However, Taplin reported that the mortality rate of infants among the Aboriginal people was considerable (1879, p.44). The diseases that the Lower Murray

59
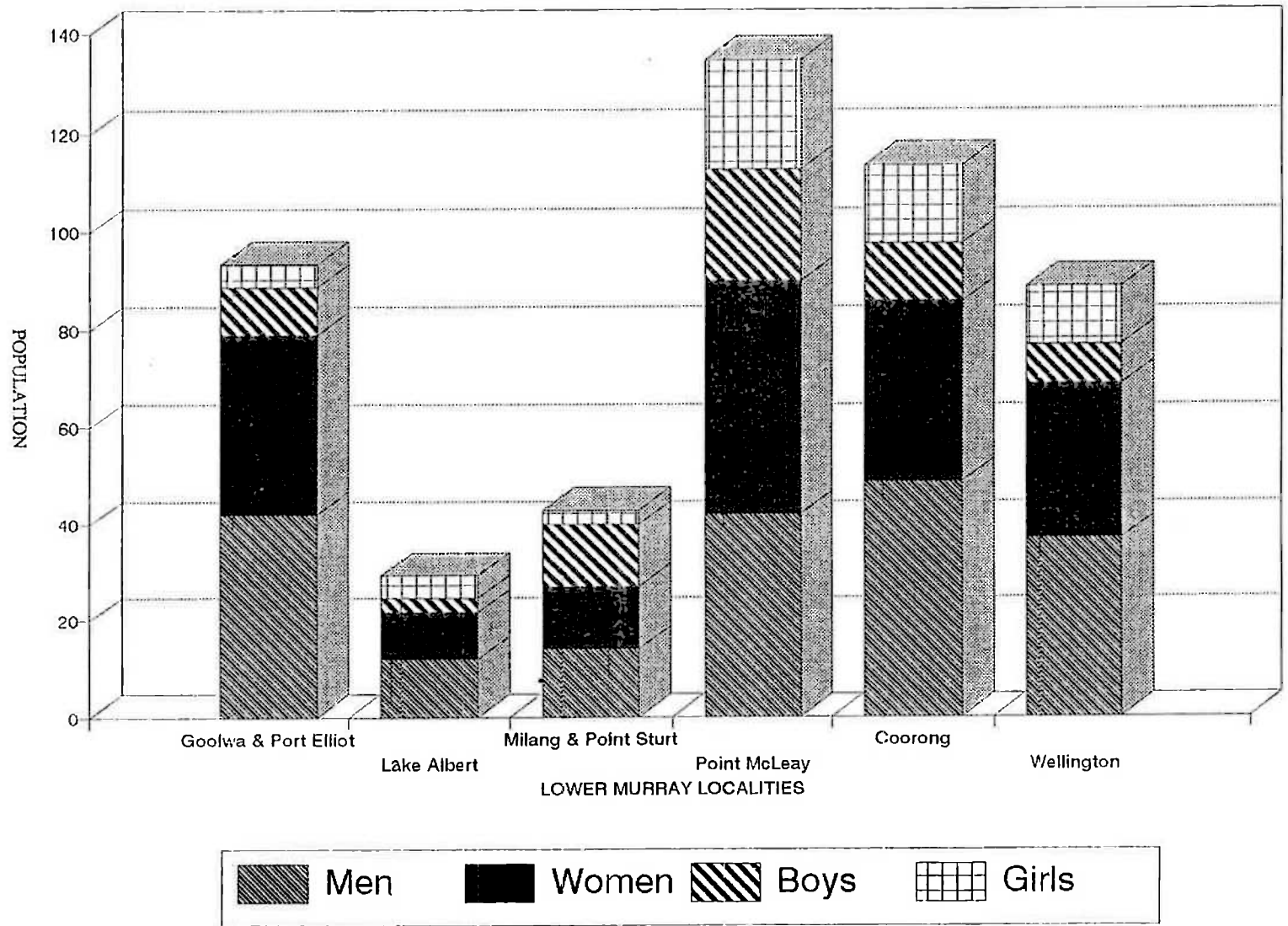
population suffered included influenza, tuberculosis and syphilis (Taplin, 1879, p.44). By the 1870s, the

excessive use of tobacco and alcohol had become another common problem (Taplin, 1879, pp.47-48; Linn,

1988, pp.61-62). Taplin noted that 'half-castes' were generally more healthy than 'full-bloods' and had

larger families (1879, p.49). The demographics of the Aboriginal people living in the Lower Murray was

therefore rapidly moving towards becoming a population of mixed ancestry.

In 1899, it was stated by the secretary of the <u>Aborigines' Friends' Association</u>, Mr W.E. Dalton, that the

Aboriginal population at Point McLeay was between 200 and 250.[3] He claimed that 'full-bloods' were

decreasing, but 'half-castes' were steadily increasing. At this stage, the total Aboriginal population was

considered to be coming progressively more European-like with each generation. Across southern

Australia, the Aboriginal population was considered to be nearing extinction. It is interesting to note that

in 1910, twelve Aboriginal people from Point McLeay were taken by the Protector to Tasmania in order to

take part in a pageant which included the re-enactment of the settlement of Tasmania.[4] Reportedly, on this

occasion 'Particular interest surrounded the South Australian natives, because the aborigines of Tasmania

have become extinct.' Aboriginal people were thus to be treated by Europeans as relics.

For the 20th century, the data available for the analysis of Aboriginal population changes contain major

flaws. The Commonwealth Census from Federation in 1901 until 1971 did not officially include Aboriginal

people (Gale, 1969, p.65). However, there were exceptions. For example, South Australia had an erratic

history of including Aboriginal people in the census data for some regions (Smith, 1980, p.143).

Nevertheless, the variations over time within all states of who were 'really' or 'legally' Aboriginal are

immense. Thus, the absence of hard data required to produce an Aboriginal demography across Australia is

due as much to social and ideological problems as to practical ones (Smith, 1980, pp.2-9).

The lack of attention by the census authorities towards Aboriginal population figures was possibly a

product of the official opinion that the indigenous inhabitants were dying out. This view was also supported

by the fact that during the 1905 to 1909 period at Point McLeay, the death rate exceeded the birth rate

(Gale, 1969, p.72). Epidemics of bronchitis, pneumonia and influenza accounted for more than half of the

deaths. Nevertheless, in the census the exclusion of Aboriginal people was inconsistent. In some areas, no

Aboriginal people were counted. In other regions, both 'full-blood' and 'half-castes' were included in the

data gathering exercises for particular censuses. Most scholars agree that because of the lack of reliable census data, the determination of Aboriginal population changes is difficult (Gale, 1969, pp.65-66; Smith, 1980, p.2). In the 1971 Census, the constitutional changes of the 1967 referendum allowed all Aboriginal people to be included. Nevertheless, after this time the 'Aboriginal' statistic produced at each census effectively only counts those who acknowledge their Aboriginality, rather than everyone who has an Aboriginal ancestor. It is therefore difficult to remove the cultural element in order to accurately examine the dynamics of the Aboriginal population.

In spite of the problems with defining a closed Aboriginal population through time, Gale (1969) partially achieved this by compiling extensive genealogies of 'Point McLeay' people. Her study period, from 1870 to 1964, contained 2,625 Aboriginal people of Point McLeay origin. At the time her study concluded, she claimed that there were 1,328 people still alive who had either lived on Point McLeay or were descended from people who had (Gale, 1969, p.70). All but three people alive in 1964 had some European ancestry. By focussing upon the population of a mission settlement, Gale attempted to avoid the problems of the censuses mentioned above.

The approach of Gale is not entirely without problems. For instance, the Point McLeay population defined by her does not completely constitute the population of Aboriginal people residing in the Lower Murray region. Before 1900, there were some Aboriginal groups who had not yet become part of the Point McLeay net of administration. It was not until the early 1900s that the last of the Aboriginal people living year round at the Coorong and Hindmarsh Island moved permanently to Point McLeay (Jenkin, 1979, p.224; McCourt & Mincham, 1987, p.148). During the period from the turn of the century until World War Two, it is clear that the category Gale had defined as 'Point McLeay' people were generally the same group that could be said to be living in the Lower Murray region. However, during the Second World War there was a steady outward migration of Aboriginal people from the missions (Section 6.4.5). Some of those that left Point McLeay stayed in the Lower Murray in the fringecamps, while others left the region altogether.

Through my analysis of the Aboriginal population figures for the Lower Murray, I have drawn a distinction between cultural groups and residency groups. In order to show the rising importance of Point McLeay as a social category in the face of out-migration from the Lower Murray region, I have separated the 'Point

McLeay people' from figures indicating the population of 'Lower Murray people' living in the region (Fig.2.2). I define the former in cultural terms as all Aboriginal people who trace a family link to the Point McLeay Mission, regardless of whether they are currently living there, or ever have lived there. This definition includes Aboriginal people who have been brought up in Adelaide, but still trace descent to the Lower Murray region. My use of the 'Lower Murray people' category is for Aboriginal people who actually dwell in the region. Because of the central importance of Point McLeay in post 1900 Aboriginal affairs (Section 7.3), through my treatment the 'Lower Murray people' group is presently a subset of the larger 'Point McLeay people' group. To define the Point McLeay cultural group statistically, I rely on data from Gale. In the case of Lower Murray residents, this was largely done from Taplin's data and Protector's reports. Although lacking Lower Murray residency data for much of this century, my findings nonetheless indicate that the number of the Aboriginal population actually living in the Lower Murray region had stabilised under a level of 500 from 1870s to the 1980s. During this time, particularly from the 1920s, the growth in the total Aboriginal population was taken up by out-migration, to other mission settlements, Adelaide and the Riverland (Section 7.4).

Gale (1969) described three phases for the Point McLeay population. First, a stable population in pre-European times that rapidly declined upon contact with Europeans. Second, a period in which the population was predominantly of mixed Aboriginal/European ancestry. During this phase the population eventually attained a rate of growth much greater than the Europeans. This growth was later to be termed the 'half-caste problem' (Section 6.4). Restrictive government policies and wide spread racism in the wider society effectively maintained an endogamous gene pool of Aboriginal ancestry. Welfare practices with the Aboriginal population, which encourage dependency on government resources (Section 7.1), have helped maintain a large growth. In the third and final phase, Gale states that from the 1960s it appeared that the Aboriginal population was showing the same trends as the white population. This is being brought on by Aboriginal people who, through forced outward migration from the Lower Murray, are living with reduced welfare assistance in the wider Australian society. This is helping to decrease the birth rate among Aboriginal people living away from Aboriginal settlements. Nevertheless, my data on Aboriginal family structure in the Lower Murray suggest that the higher than average population growth is still favoured by the dominant welfare economy.

Many of the southern Aboriginal populations in Australia are showing the same demographic trends as I have described for the Lower Murray group (Gale, 1969, p.87; Smith, 1980).[5] There are no 'full-blood' Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray community today. Nevertheless, there remain in the Lower Murray many Aboriginal people whose only 'white' ancestor occurred four or five generations ago. In the north west of South Australia, where the effects of European intrusion have not been evident for as long, the phases are similar. However, here they are modified through the population of 'full-blood' Aboriginal people appearing to stabilise. Based on the rate of population growth (Fig.2.2), I estimate that there are between 2,000 and 3,000 people alive today who could define themselves as being 'Ngarrindjeri', by virtue of birth in or direct descent from the Lower Murray. In many parts of Australia, restrictive marriage practices are maintaining a distinctive Aboriginal population (Moodie, 1973, p.284). Today, many of the people who formerly lived at Point McLeay, still retain a link to that community. Virtually all Aboriginal people I have met, who claim a kinship link with Point McLeay, define themselves as 'Ngarrindjeri'.

2.2 Ethnographic Sources in Southern South Australia

Interaction between Aboriginal and European cultures was more ordered after colonisation, producing more written sources for an historical analysis of events than are available for the pre-1836 whaling and sealing phase. However, the major publications on Aboriginal culture did not occur randomly after the commencement of colonisation, but rather periodically. I maintain that there are three phases in this ethnographic literature, illustrating different relationships between the observer and the subject. The earliest, during the 1830s and 1840s, documents the first attempts of Europeans systematically to record an aspect of Aboriginal culture in South Australia. During the next period, from the 1870s to about 1915, a large number of ethnographic reconstructions were done. In the next phase, starting at the turn of the century and lasting to the present, there is far more attention to science in the ethnographic works. Studies that focus on the sociological problems of the mixed descent Aboriginal population are also in this period.

2.2.1 The Early Ethnographers (1830s to 1840s)

Detailed studies of the inhabitants of South Australia were required very early in the colonial process. Examples of early ethnographic monographs on southern South Australian Aboriginal groups are chiefly

the work of missionaries and government officers.[6] The publications were not restricted to books read by

scholars, but included newspaper articles which informed the wider colonial public.[7] Early colonial artists,

such as Cawthorne (1844) and Angas (1844; 1847a,b) also contributed written ethnographic accounts,

although their chief contributions are the visual images they produced in a period long before the age of

photography (Fig.2.4, 2.5). The emphasis of most of the early studies on Aboriginal language and religion,

was so structured as to assist with the colonial incorporation of the Aboriginal population. These accounts

were produced by missionaries and colonists some 20 years after the first experiences that southern South

Australian Aboriginal people had with Europeans. In spite of their biases, I argue that these records as

accounts of pre-European Aboriginal culture, are more reliable than most of the survey and reconstructive-

type ethnographies compiled in later periods. This is not only due to the relatively short span of time since

European settlement commenced, but because these recorders were not using their ethnographic data to

help engage in theoretical debates of a particular academic discipline.

2.2.2 Ethnographic Accounts in Reflection (1870s to 1900s)

After the early phase of ethnographic work on the southern Aboriginal populations, very little appeared

through the 1850s and 1860s. By the 1870s, when scholarly interest from Europe in 'primitive' cultures

was mounting, there was a realisation that the chances to collect scientific information on the Australian

Aborigines were rapidly dwindling. For instance, Ratzel states:

> Although good relations with the government were early established in South Australia,
> the tribes had in 1878 so dwindled since the appointment of the first governor in 1836,
> that it was found difficult to get together a small collection of their weapons (1896, vol.1,
> p.349).

Following this there was a flurry of publications concerning the Australian Aborigines.[8] The ethnographic

accounts published from the 1870s onwards, were very much seen then as last attempts to record a culture.

This is made evident by Scott who declared:

> The opportunities to rescue such information [on Aboriginal people] grow daily less.
> Only three representatives of the once numerous and intelligent Adelaide tribe remain.
> The Encounter Bay and lower Murray River (Narinyerrie) tribes, too, have well nigh
> passed away (1888, p.79).

Some records took the form of surveys, but most were written from the author's memories and early notes.
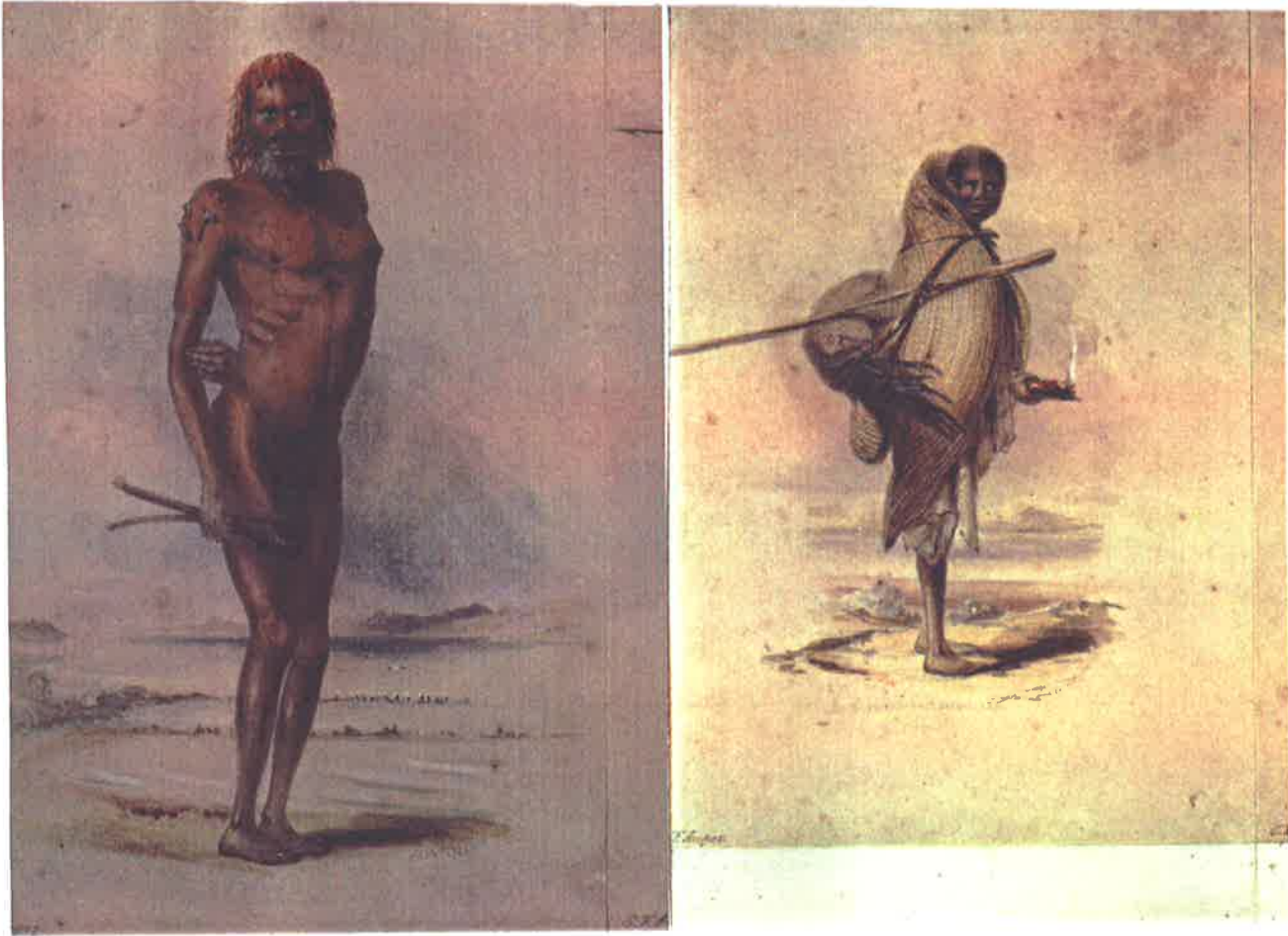
Fig.2.4 Lower Murray people as painted by George French Angas in 1840
(Angas Collection, Anthropology Archives, S.A. Museum)

Fig.2.5 Lower Murray warrior as painted by William A. Cawthorne,
c.1844 (Cawthorne Collection, Mitchell Library, Sydney)

In Europe, the intellectual debates on human evolution, and the emergence of anthropology as a scientific discipline, created a generation of 'armchair' scholars craving for information concerning 'primitive' peoples (Section 1.2.1). For instance, Taplin's Lower Murray material formed part of the raw data utilised in various ways to support the human biology theories being developed by people such as Darwin (1890) and Ratzel (1896). Meyer (1843) and Taplin (1874) were often quoted in Durkheim's book The Elementary Forms of Religious Life (1915), which was highly influential in the social sciences. Australia, like many other colonies, was exporting ethnographic data to leading academic figures based in European universities where disciplines such as anthropology, history and geography were at that time located (Finney, 1984; Moyal, 1986; Morphy & Edwards, 1988).

After the end of the 19th century, there seems to have been a general loss of interest in primary ethnographic data from the southern Australian regions. This was probably the result of a view that the pre-European Aboriginal culture had been altered to such a degree that there were no 'traditional' Aboriginal people remaining, at least any who were living in a such a manner. Woods (1879a, p.81) was typical of many who had earlier remarked that the Aboriginal inhabitants of South Australia had 'in a great measure passed out of existence, and their history can only be traced with difficulty through the scattered and imperfect records which private persons have left behind them'. On the 'Adelaide tribe', in Taplin's survey of South Australian 'tribes', he concluded that 'there will be seen to exist a deficiency of information ... Every effort was made to obtain a knowledge of the manners and customs of this people, but without success' (1879, p.vii). It is clear that Taplin was typical of the time in his definition of 'Aboriginal' as being both 'full-blooded' and 'traditional'. With the anthropological focus still predominantly on the 'primitive', it is not surprising to find that there was little interest by scholars in the study of the southern Aboriginal populations of their particular time.

2.2.3 Scientific Studies (Late 19th Century to Present)

As a result of the late 19th and early 20th century perception that there were no longer any 'traditional' populations in southern South Australia, the ethnographic literature written on southern South Australian Aboriginal groups is sparse between the early 1900s and the 1930s. Eylmann (1902, 1908) had some interest in the Lower Murray region, publishing in German. However, during this period the scientific

studies of Spencer and Gillen (1899, 1904) in the recently opened up region of Central Australia had much more impact both abroad and in Australia. Among the few works published for southern South Australia, Black (1917, 1920) and Bates (1918) compiled remnant vocabularies of various groups. Also, Brown (1918), in the emerging field of social anthropology, used Lower Murray data on pre-European culture for the development of an Aboriginal social structure model. Although both scholars had gathered their data from their own fieldwork, they were commenting on aspects of a lifestyle now just a distant memory of their informants. However, it was Tindale, beginning in the 1930s, who specialised most in reconstructive ethnographic research of the Lower Murray, using the few southern Aboriginal informants he judged to have detailed 'traditional' knowledge.[9] By doing this, Tindale appears to have followed the goal of the ethnographer, Curtis, whose photographic work recorded the pre-European life of the 'real' Native Americans (Jackson, 1992).

Tindale recorded and published a large quantity of Lower Murray ethnographic material. Due to his influence on others, his theoretical framework and methodology demand detailed treatment here. It is not clear in what discipline Tindale considered himself to stand, being described by some as an anthropological maverick (C. Anderson, 1988). However, his central focus on Aboriginal relationships with the landscape and the environment would have had him well marked as a cultural geographer. Indeed, the highly influential geographer, Carl Sauer, was a major force in steering Tindale towards an ecological orientation (C. Anderson, 1988, p.141). Sauer used an 'organic' model of culture, developed by the American anthropologist Alfred Kroeber, that considered cultural groups to have corporate identities which behaved like organisms in opposition to other such entities (Section 1.2). Elements of this model appeared to have shaped Tindale's concept of the 'tribe'.

The American geneticist and human biologist, Joseph Birdsell, was another influence on Tindale. Birdsell was primarily interested in human adaptations, both biological and cultural, to the environment. Since hunters and gatherers were considered to be more subject to environmental changes than were agricultural-based groups, the data on Australian Aboriginal people provided by Tindale were seen as important for his developing models. Birdsell (1953, p.172) wrote 'In terms of genetic space and genetic distance ... the nature of population structuring is such that tribal boundaries operate as the essential barriers to gene flow, and probably act in most regions as barriers to cultural diffusion'. Birdsell (1953, 1968, 1972) described a

model of a system that integrated both genetic and cultural variations among human populations. His rigid model of Aboriginal socio-political structure appears to have been much influenced by Kroeber's theory of the 'super-organic culture' (Section 1.2). The academic relationship between Australia and Europe during the 1870s to the 1915 phase of ethnographic study, became paralleled from the 1930s to the 1960s by the relationship between Tindale in Australia, and Birdsell in America.

The strength of the scientific phase of reconstructive ethnographic work in southern South Australia was that it produced much information that had been overlooked by earlier studies. Its weakness was that these 'new' data were often based on poor assumptions about the social context which produced them. For example, although Tindale concentrated on oral Aboriginal sources of his time, he appears to have generally ignored the contemporary cultural situation in which the data were obtained. His informants, who were knowledgeable about the pre-European period, were nonetheless embedded in a newer and broader southern Aboriginal culture that had developed from the earliest phases of contact with Europeans. The process of the informants reflecting on their own past, and in some cases the memories of their parents, is always open to continual cultural reinterpretation (Section 3.3). Tindale's narrow interest in the 'traditional' Aboriginal lifestyle undoubtedly contributed to his lack of consideration for post-colonial influences on his informants.

The nature of Tindale's reconstructive work was in contrast to the social anthropological work being done by Ronald and Catherine Berndt in northern South Australia during the 1940s (Berndt, 1941, 1953, 1989; R.M. & C.H. Berndt, 1942-44; Berndt & Johnston, 1942). Although the Berndts also engaged in reconstructive ethnography in the Lower Murray (Berndt, 1940a, 1989; Berndt et al, 1993), they were much more flexible with the way they categorised the cultural backgrounds of their informants. They were keenly interested in the processes of social change within the Aboriginal population. For the literature on the southern groups, the impact of Tindale's publications is immense. It continues today, generating many studies by others using his preferred 'tribal' names and structures. Such cultural groupings are the units to which all geographical information is generally related. Nevertheless, I argue below that his notion of 'tribe' is generally not supported by the early ethnographic literature for this region.

2.2.4 Urban and Rural Aboriginal Studies (1900s to Present)

After the Aborigines Act of 1911 and the 1913-1915 Royal Commission into the treatment of Aboriginal people, it was generally realised by the broader Australian society that there was a 'half-caste problem'. From the beginning of what I term the government welfare phase, the literature reflects this perception, with studies describing sociological and medical aspects of the Aboriginal population (e.g. Tindale, 1941a; Cleland, 1966). However, until the 1980s regrettably there was no notion that contemporary Aboriginal populations possessed a culture (Langton, 1981, 1988; Sansom, 1982; Schwab, 1988; Toussaint, 1992). This was due to them being regarded as mostly 'assimilated' into a broader European-type culture (Rowley, 1972; Gale, 1964a&b). The exception was Ronald and Catherine Berndt (1951) who recognised the existence of a contemporary southern Aboriginal culture, and its associated dynamics in their book , titled (misleadingly) From Black to White in South Australia.[10]

The emerging academic focus in Aboriginal studies across Australia towards 20th century mixed descent populations with needs peculiar to themselves, led to research into the welfare of urban and rural Aboriginal populations in Australia (Elkin, 1964, pp.362-381; Gale, 1972; Hutchison, 1969; Reay, 1964; Rowley, 1972; Sharp & Tatz, 1966). This trend has continued with specialised studies into Aboriginal health (Cawte, 1974; Thomson & Merrifield, 1988), the involvement of Aboriginal people in the Australian economy (Fisk, 1985; Altman, 1987), and legal systems (McCorquodale, 1987). However, since the Berndts' 1940s study, the Aboriginal literature has been in need of detailed ethnographic studies of contemporary southern South Australian Aboriginal culture as a whole. My thesis in part attempts to fill the gap.

2.3 Pre-European Aboriginal Social Structure

Today, both among Aboriginal populations and the broader Australian society, notions concerning pre-European social structure are widely used in defining modern Aboriginal communities by way of a re-creation of the Aboriginal past. In this section, I provide an outline of the social structure of Aboriginal groups at the time of colonisation, although this is neither 'traditional' nor 'timeless'. This will essentially

be an investigation to determine the social unity upon which shared patterns of pre-European Aboriginal spatial behaviour can readily be identified.

2.3.1 Languages, 'Tribes' and Cultural Blocs

The literature on Aboriginal cultural diversity contains various trends in differentiating between groups of Aboriginal people. The entities used to serve as discrete units of Aboriginal culture vary from family units to large cultural blocs. Perhaps in no other topic are the ethnographies for this region so generally confused, as in Aboriginal social structure. Here, I attempt to unravel the apparent contradictions in the literature, proposing a model that best suits the available ethnographic data.

2.3.1.1 Pre-European Aboriginal Languages

Much of the early ethnographic interest in the Aboriginal inhabitants of South Australia concerned language. Of the dialects first encountered, some were considered to be closely allied, others not so. For instance, Teichelmann and Schurmann found considerable similarity between the languages of the Adelaide and Eyre Peninsula people (Teichelmann & Schurmann, 1840; Schurmann, 1844, 1846). Schurmann reported 'On comparing this Vocabulary [Eyre Peninsula] with the one published at Adelaide in 1840, a great resemblance will be found to exist between the two, many words used by both tribes are identical (1846, pp.iii-iv)'. The dialects from Port Lincoln to Adelaide were clearly considered to be related.

However, ethnographers discovered a very different language group in the Encounter Bay region, south of Adelaide (Fig.2.6). A report in 1841 from Penney, who was a colonial surgeon in the Encounter Bay region, stated that Aboriginal groups from Cape Jervis to Morphett's Station (at Wellington) and onto Cape Jaffa spoke the same language, although with some dialectal differences.[11] Meyer (1843, 1846) supported this assertion, claiming from his experience that the range of this language group as being from the vicinity of Encounter Bay, with slight variation, extending along the coast eastward around Lake Alexandrina and for some distance up the Murray River (1843, title page). Therefore, the region where the Lower Murray language was first documented takes in the lower part of the Murray River Basin, with extensions along the adjacent coastline.

NOT KNOWN

Parnkalla
Language
(Schurmann, 1844)

Eyre
Peninsula

?

Murray River
Language
(Moorhouse, 1846)

South Australia

New South Wales

Yorke Peninsula

Murray R.

Adelaide
Language
(Teichelmann &
Schurmann, 1840)

NOT KNOWN

Lower Murray
Language
(Meyer, 1843)

Victoria

N

0   100   200

kms
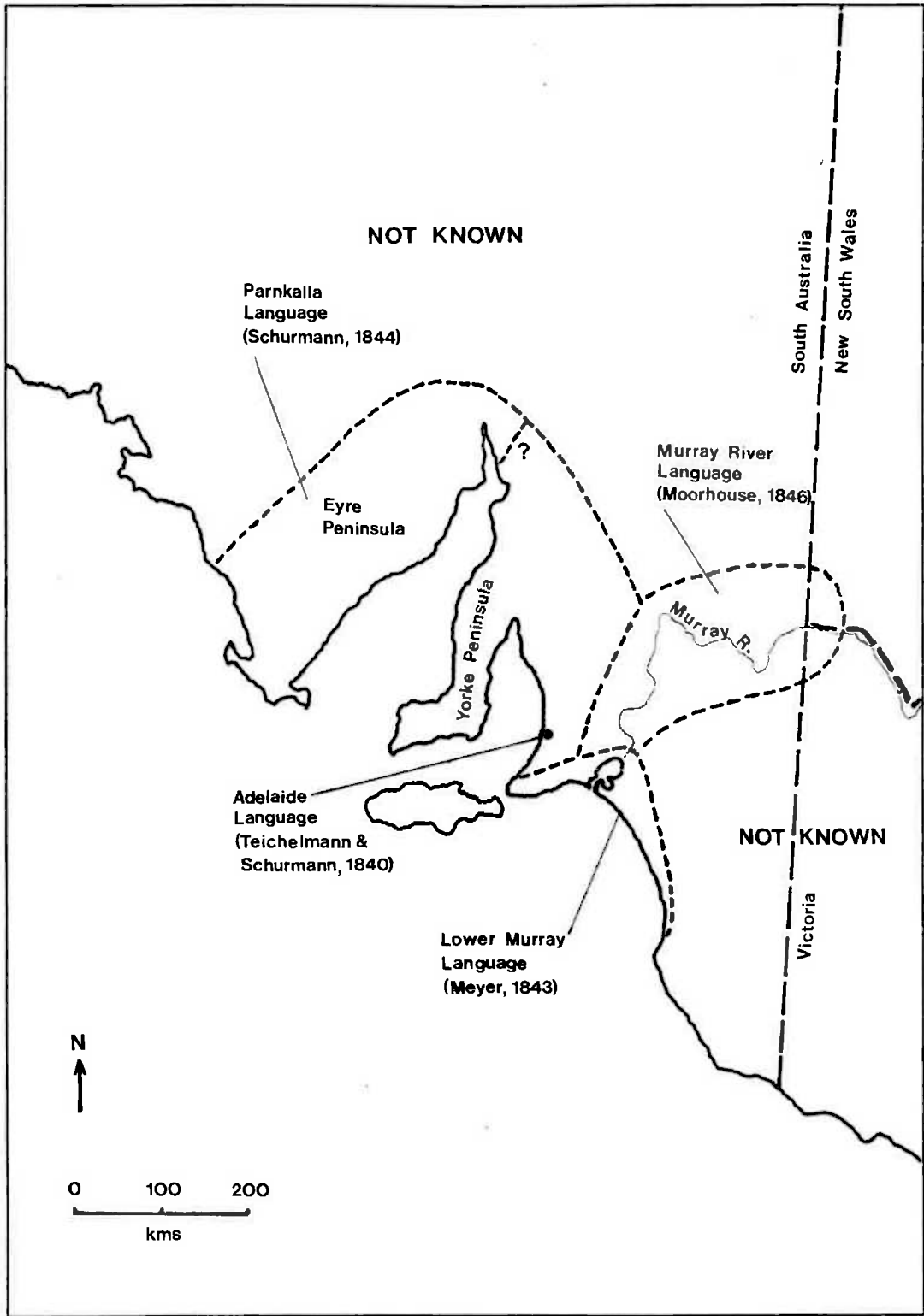
Fig.2.6 Aboriginal languages of South Australia recorded in the 1840s

The Aboriginal linguistic literature was soon added to with the publication of another major language group by Moorhouse (1846), the Meru or Ngaiawung (also Aiawung & Niawoo) from the upper reaches of the Murray River. This was reportedly spoken from Wellington on the Murray, up river as far as the Rufus River (Moorhouse, 1846 [1935, title page]; Ewens, 1879, p.30; Taplin, 1879, p.169). A minor dialect variation was recorded at Rapid Bay, in between the languages of the Adelaide Plains and the Lower Murray (Wyatt, 1879). From the population surveys recorded in the Statistical Society Reports of 1842 and 1843[12], it is clear that there were considered to be four main language groups in the settled districts of South Australia at this time.

The discovery across Australia of the existence of many different Aboriginal languages was in contrast to the view derived from the earliest accounts of Australian Aboriginal people heard in Europe, which treated them as a homogeneous group (I & T. Donaldson, 1985, p.17). Moorhouse recognised this diversity when he stated:

> The term dialect is scarcely applicable to the languages of New Holland; they differ in
> root more than the English, French, and German languages differ from each other, and if
> natives of one language happen to meet those of another they are obliged to converse in
> English to make themselves understood (1846 [1935, p.3]).

It was important for the colonial authorities to have knowledge of all the Aboriginal languages of the people under their control in order to manage their welfare.

2.3.1.2 Pre-European Social Units in Southern South Australia

The early ethnographics, as a body of literature, consistently express a notion that small descent groups formerly constituted the largest politically functional level of pre-European-type Aboriginal social organisation. In spite of this, they are inconsistent and liberal with their use of terms such as 'tribe', 'family' and 'language'. These terms were generally used to refer to groups of varying size, membership and autonomy. There nevertheless appears to have been an early understanding that the political unit with most daily relevance was found on levels that were smaller in membership than entire language groups. For instance, Teichelmann says of the South Australian Aboriginal people:

> They are rather to be considered as large families, or bodies of relatives which might be
> called a republican tribe, where each father protects his children and wives, and thus the
> whole tribe against a hostile one. Several such families or tribes speak one language...
> (1841, p.6).

This supported an early claim by Hahn that the Aboriginal people of the Hahndorf area of the Mount Lofty Ranges 'have split up into small clans (or tribes, as the English say), with maybe 50 or 60 heads in each company' (1838-1839 [1964, p.129]).

I suggest that the 'republican' tribe or family mentioned by Teichelmann is part of a descent group. Each descent group would have had links to a particular piece of land. In the Adelaide region, prominent men were given a name derived from their descent group estate, although its use may have depended on context (Teichelmann & Schurmann, 1840, pt 2, pp.4,36). These descent groups do not appear to have existed in a hierarchical system. For instance, Eyre claims that among Aboriginal people:

> There can hardly be said to be any form of government existing among a people who recognise no authority, and where every member of the community is at liberty to act as he likes, except, in so far as he may be influenced by the general opinions or wishes of the tribe ... Among none of the tribes yet known have chiefs ever been found to be acknowledged, though in all there are always some men who take the lead, and whose opinions and wishes have great weight with the others (1845, vol.2, p.315).

Since each descent group would have had particular relationships with others, such as those for ceremonial, marriage and trade reasons, it is difficult to see how large groups of Aboriginal people, with many descent groups, would have had political unity.

Although ethnographers generally recognised and agreed on the flexible nature of local socio-political units, such as descent groups, it was the larger groupings that caused the most confusion. For example, Eyre (1845, vol.2, p.330) states that the 'divisions, numbers, and names of the various tribes are ... subjects of difficulty and uncertainty'. He identified two levels on which Aboriginal people defined their group structure. First, there were group names based on people belonging to a particular place, the names generally meaning 'people of ...'. Second, that several of these local groups were known to form a larger group that possessed a recognised language or dialect, which Eyre (1845, vol.2, pp.330-331) termed a 'tribe'. Meyer (1846) supports Eyre's overview, although with major differences in term usage. He said of the people living in Encounter Bay and on the lower banks of the Murray:

> These people, who speak one language with slight variation of dialect, are divided into different tribes, as Raminjerar, Lampinjerar, Karkarinjerar, Pankinjerar, &c., and these tribes consider themselves as large families, and are more or less connected with each other by marriage. Each tribe derives its name from the district to which it belongs, and which they claim as their own property, as Ramong, the district belonging to the Raminjerar ... (1846 [1879, p.185]).

We therefore have Eyre's use of 'tribe' to mean a language group, and Meyer's use of it to mean a local group, which was a mere component of a language group. Nevertheless, both accounts by Eyre and Meyer stress that the local group was the main land owning unit. This supports the finding of Stanner (1965, p.1) who claimed that 'Territoriality and sociality lie in different systems of relations.' All evidence cited here suggests that the territories of the broader language groups were not socio-politically autonomous regions.

2.3.1.3 'Tribes' in Southern South Australia

To add to the tenuous status of the 'tribe' in southern South Australia, based upon language boundaries, there were many cases when a language term was not available for a cluster of Aboriginal groups whom recorders found spoke the same dialect. For instance, Meyer (1843, 1846) used a 'place' term, Raminjerar, derived from Aboriginal sources to define the Encounter Bay people, but did not list a broad language name for these people along with the other groups who spoke the same dialect. This was also the strategy of Newland (1921, p.89; 1922, p.3), with his 'Ramingeries'. The problem with using linguistic units to formulate 'tribes' is also apparent for the Adelaide area. Here, in spite of considerable linguistic similarity between neighbouring groups, early ethnographers could only refer to this collection of common language speakers as the 'Adelaide tribe' (Teichelmann & Schurmann, 1840). As several neighbouring descent groups often spoke the same language, it was often easier to classify the linguisitic unit according to its distribution, particularly since there was not an indigenous term in existence. Another strategy adopted by some ethnographers, as well as by Aboriginal people in the post-European situation, was to chose a local term for 'man' or 'humankind' to designate groups that considered themselves closely related (Clarke, 1991b, pp.94-100).

The practice of ethnographers to somewhat artificially lump together several Aboriginal local groups into clusters appears to have reflected their view of the existence of cultural areas. I argue that they were not assuming that there was a high level of internal socio-political cohesion within these larger units, and that they were seen as quite distinct from local land owning groups. The larger model of southern Aboriginal culture would have developed after the ethnographers had gained comparative knowledge of neighbouring Aboriginal groups. If Teichelmann, Schurmann and others had used Meyer's approach of restricting their

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study to smaller 'tribal' units, then the number of such groups warranting separate treatment would have been much larger than those eventually reflected in the early literature.

The large number of 'tribes' were simplified by most ethnographers who adopted the larger linguistic unit as the most convenient base upon which to delineate their ethnographic subjects. Even if this generalisation of a 'tribe' was initially one of convenience, it was later given added meaning by anthropologists who attempted to define Australian social structure. For instance, although Brown (1918, p.222) recognised that most Australian ethnographers had used the 'tribe' concept 'very loosely', he considered it to mean 'a collection of persons who speak what the natives themselves regard as one language, the name of the language and the name of the tribe being generally one and the same'. The concept of tribe used by Tindale and Birdsell (Section 2.2.3 & 2.3.1.3) was further modified by them so that a 'tribe' embraced a common language, territory, identity, culture, and sphere of social interaction. In their work, 'tribe' was considered to have both biological and cultural significance for Australian hunter/gatherers. Although the 'tribe' became a fundamental element of such land-culture models, it has gradually been rejected in the light of more detailed ethnographic research, producing less rigid models of social structure, which advocate more flexible human relationships with the environment.[13]

In the literature critical of the 'tribe' concept, it is clear that the language-based tribe model does not fit the situation for Australian Aboriginal cultural groups. For instance, Berndt (1959) has demonstrated that with the Western Desert people, there are so many multilingual speakers of Aboriginal languages, due to factors such as movement of women, that it would be difficult to map out discrete language boundaries without considerable overlap. It is likely that Lower Murray dialects also formerly overlapped with each other in the pre-European period, making the task of mapping their distribution difficult. For the Western Desert, Berndt (1976, p.160) considered that territorial ownership is based on connections people have to mythically-based sites, not by membership to a language group. In spite of the problems of defining language areas, Clark (1990) mapped the territories of pre-European Aboriginal groups in western Victoria according to languages and clans. However, I suggest that attempts to link land-owning groups with language units are at best problematic.

Stanner (1965) shed light on the 'tribe' problem by proposing the separate treatment of economic and ritual relationships with the land, in contrast to Birdsell and Tindale's views. The 'band' was a land-using group that occupied what Stanner termed the 'range'. However, the land-owning group, the 'clan', had rights in an area Stanner called the 'estate'. Thus we have two contexts in which a territory may be defined - one based on natural resource use, the other on social life and cultural institutions. In 'good' habitats, such as the Lower Murray, the range and estate of a group were considered by Stanner to be nearly the same.

Detailed investigations of Aboriginal relationships to northern Queensland and other landscapes have refuted the harsh separation by Stanner of the secular-mundane from the sacred-totemic aspects of Aboriginal territoriality. In northern Queensland, a relatively homogeneous cultural unit shows extremes of territorial systems due chiefly to geographic distinctions. Hiatt claims:

> This is not to argue for environmental determinism, but rather to accept that human
> systems have the capacity to adapt and mould their forms so that no contradictions prevail
> to obstruct orderly continuity between relatively permanent social groupings and what
> they perceive as their territorial base (1984).

Hiatt stated that certain landscape features, such as topography and biological resources, favoured certain social forms at the expense of others. In this sense, Hiatt appears to be supporting Ratzel's view on the diffusion of culture (Section 1.1.2).

Although Aboriginal people often define themselves according to their major language groupings, it is important to recognise that Aboriginal group classifications are highly contextual. In southern South Australia, the disruption of Aboriginal cultural distribution patterns over the landscape, caused by the arrival and settlement of Europeans, forced Aboriginal people to modify their definitions of themselves and their neighbours. They became defined in opposition to white people, and there was an extension of the range of contacts that particular Aboriginal groups had with formerly distant Aboriginal cultures. In response to this, Aboriginal people created a new set of descriptive terms to define themselves.

2.3.1.4 Cultural Blocs in South Australia

The existence of the dialect 'tribe' has now been rejected by most researchers. Nevertheless, there are levels upon which many widely dispersed Aboriginal groups can be observed to have some level of unity,

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even if not recognised by the people themselves in most contexts. The practical problem in mapping degrees of relatedness between Aboriginal groups, is to determine what characteristics to use in order to organise the Australian Aboriginal people into an analytically useful number of groups, without reproducing the complexity of the descent group system, or reducing them to the singularity of one unit.

The broader cultural area or bloc, although not a new concept, is one that I favour as a convenient way of classifying large Aboriginal cultural units, in view of the demise of the 'tribe'. For instance, Howitt (1889) and Mathews (1898, 1900) mapped broad south eastern Australian groups according to types of social organisation. In this century, Berndt (1959, 1976) argued for a rejection of 'tribes' in favour of cultural blocs, the latter being considered a more useful way of partitioning the Aboriginal population. For instance, he considered the whole of the Western Desert to be a complex of local groups and languages with such a high level of social integration that it was appropriate to treat it as a 'cultural bloc'.

Peterson (1976b) stated that the analysis of adaptation to the environment can only be achieved in terms of populations, as they are the only ecological units. He claims that since the discontinuity in the physical environment has produced regional clustering of animal and plant species, then so too should hunter/gatherers be grouped according to landscape variations. He takes a deterministic approach, suggesting that for some inland areas, natural river drainage basins help form culture areas, and where this system reaches the sea, then usually the boundaries extend along the coast (Peterson, 1976b, pp.60-67).[14] This model appears to fit for the Lower Murray cultural region. This territory effectively takes in the entire resource rich zone of the river and coast. More arid areas away from the riverine belt, with a smaller population density of Aboriginal inhabitants, were left for other groups. The build-up of the Aboriginal population in the Lower Murray, in contrast to neighbouring regions that were generally poorer in resources, enabled people here to become more culturally distinctive. Aboriginal movement patterns, influenced through marriage arrangements, would have resulted in more interaction between Lower Murray descent groups, than between Lower Murray people and alien Aboriginal groups (Section 2.3.1.2 & 4.3.1). This bias in spouse selection would not only have been for cultural reasons, but because statistically there were a greater number of spouses to be found in the high density population areas within the Lower Murray region. Aboriginal descent group territories in this resource rich riverine - coastal zone, being relatively small, reflected a more sedentary life style. Therefore, gene-flow in and out of the Lower Murray

region was restricted. In this manner the biological relationship that the Aboriginal population had with the land imparted a regional pattern onto the broader culture. The physical landscape, albeit with cultural modification, does appear to have imposed a social order on its pre-European inhabitants.

Ample evidence for the close link between the landscape and culture exists. Many scholars have used language maps to plot the distribution and movement of human populations. As a cultural geographer, Sauer (1963, p.14), considered that 'language is a particularly useful type of cultural tracer, for it is carried by people.' Modern linguistics studies have had much effect on mapping of cultural blocs. The linguistic map of Wurm (1972) indicates that South Australia was previously represented by six major language groups, which in total were comprised of eleven subgroups. The regional subdivisions adopted by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies closely coincide with Wurm's map, although greatly simplified. The Institute system was primarily designed to help organise large amounts of literature sources and cultural data, such as for bibliographic purposes (W.J & L.F. Oates, 1970; Craig, 1969). Three major regions are listed for South Australia: the Western Desert area, from the Gibson Desert to the Great Australian Bight; the Lakes area - embracing the inland salt lakes and the Eyre, Yorke and Fleurieu Peninsulas, ranging into south western Queensland; and the South Eastern area which includes the South East of South Australia, all of Victoria, and some of coastal New South Wales (Fig.2.7). In this system the South Australian Aboriginal populations in the pre-European period, were grouped into three major cultural blocs. The differences between Aboriginal groups across these boundaries would have been greater than those between groups from within.

The early ethnographic data on southern South Australian Aboriginal language and religion suggests that the Lower Murray Basin, with coastal extensions, was an area with a large degree of uniformity. The early recognition of a large number of different language groups led to the discovery that other cultural practices also varied. For instance, Meyer (1843, p.vi; 1846 [1879, p.185]) and Cawthorne (1844 [1926, p.1]) clearly considered that, in contrast to other regions, it was people from Encounter Bay and the 'lower banks of the Murray' who had some degree of cultural cohesion, on the basis of shared customs and language. It was on the basis of the distribution of initiation ceremonies and language that Mathews (1898, pp.336-343) produced a map of 'Narrinyeri' (= Ngarrindjeri) related cultures (Fig.2.8). He claimed that the 'Narrinyeri nation' had boundaries at Willunga, along the spine of the Mount Lofty Ranges, inland across to the
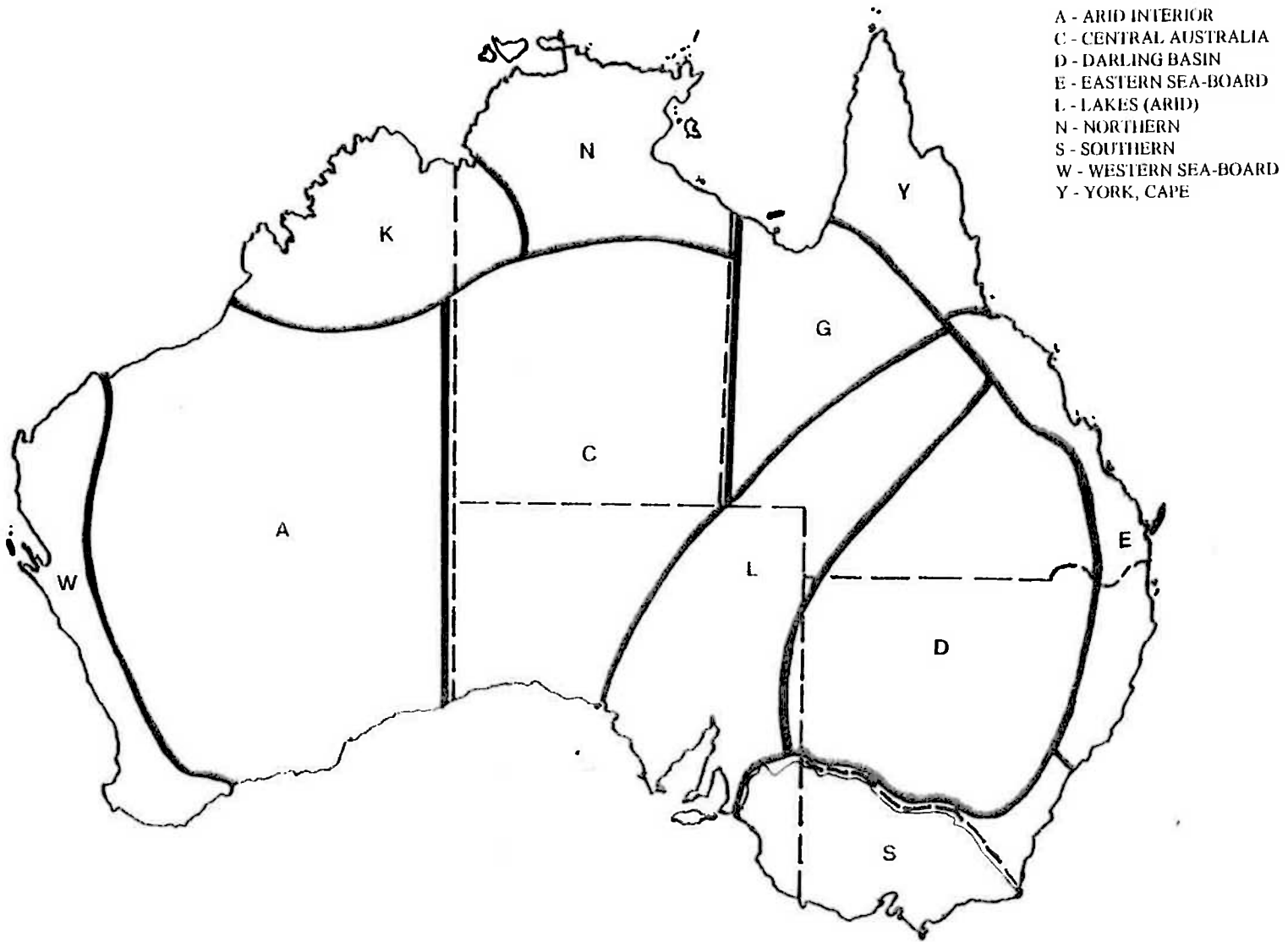
Fig.2.7 Cultural regions used by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander Studies (after Craig, 1969)

A - ARID INTERIOR
C - CENTRAL AUSTRALIA
D - DARLING BASIN
E - EASTERN SEA-BOARD
L - LAKES (ARID)
N - NORTHERN
S - SOUTHERN
W - WESTERN SEA-BOARD
Y - YORK, CAPE
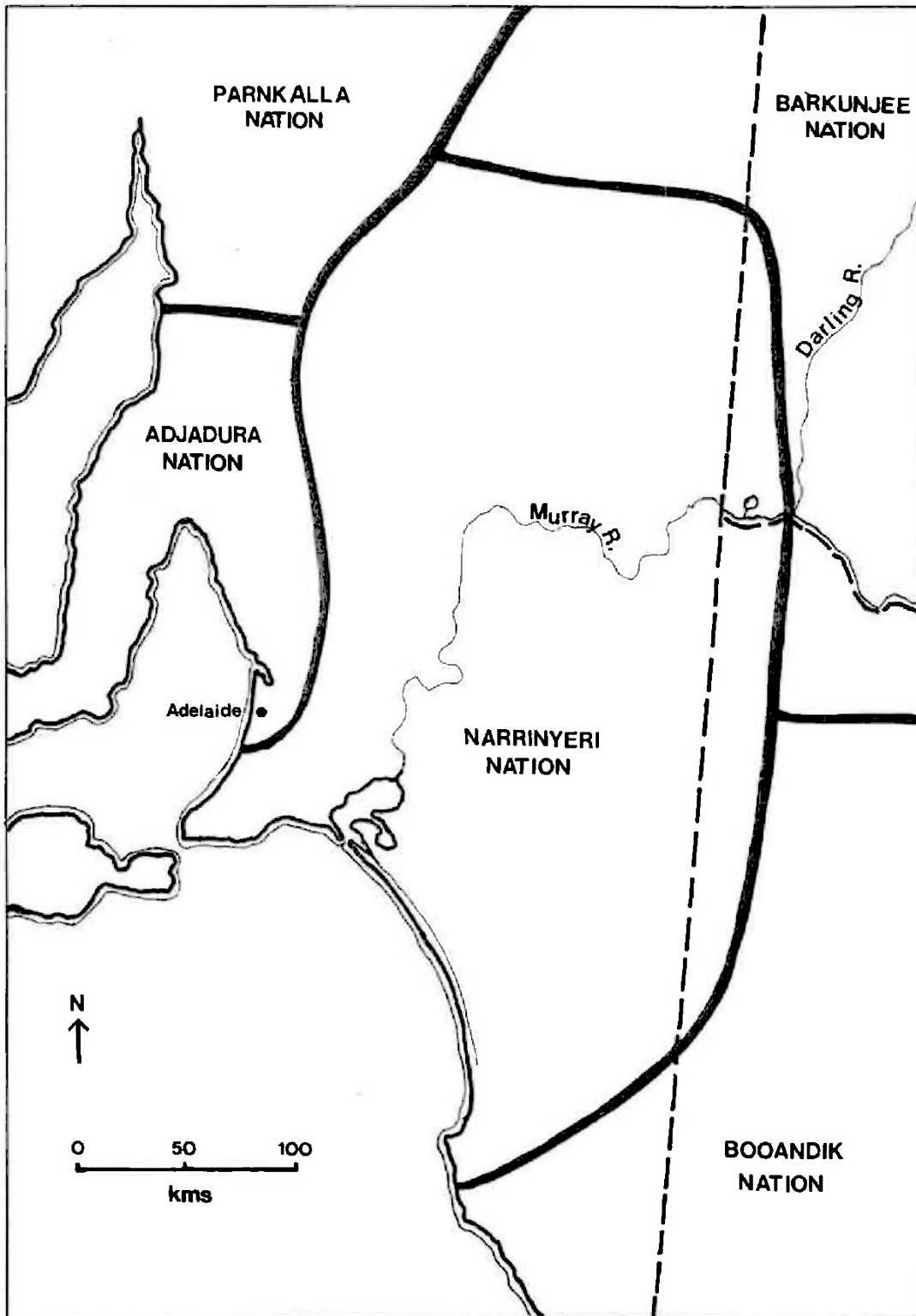
Fig.2.8 'Narrinyeri' nation according to Mathews (1898, 1900)

Murray River near Wentworth, and in a southerly direction down to Kingston. The linguistic map of Schmidt (1919, pp.58-63; end map) approximated Mathew's boundaries for the 'Narrinyeri' group, but placed the western boundary through Encounter Bay.

It is clear that Mathews divided Aboriginal groups into nations merely as a device to show degrees of relatedness, rather than to suggested a high level of socio-political cohesiveness. Accordingly, Mathews (1898, p.336) stated that the 'Narrinyeri nation' consisted of the 'Narrinyeri, Moorundie, Narwijjerook, Arkatko, and Marowera' tribes. This region, which includes parts of New South Wales and Victoria, is by far the largest area that has yet been defined in the literature as being associated with Ngarrindjeri territory. Ronald and Catherine Berndt (1951, p.33) claimed that the Lower Murray people were formerly a confederacy of non-circumcising clans. Although the 'Narrinyeri nation' as described above is larger than the area I focus on in this thesis, particularly on the eastern and north eastern sides, it does support the view that the Lower Murray Basin in pre-European period formed, as it does now, a distinct cultural bloc.

If we accept that in the pre-European period, the Lower Murray cultural area is a valid unit for ethnographic analysis, then we must address the problem of boundaries. From the language work of Meyer (1843, 1846), it is clear that Encounter Bay people were part of the Lower Murray cultural group. Some authors have placed the north western extremity at the tip of Cape Jervis (Tindale, 1940, 1974), whereas others include most of the southern Fleurieu Peninsula, with the boundary located near Willunga (Mathews, 1898; Berndt, 1940a). I follow the latter approach, chiefly because of the early historical relationship that Encounter Bay people had with Rapid Bay (Section 5.1.5; see Fig.2.1). However, much of the rugged terrain between Victor Harbor and Cape Jervis was probably little used by Aboriginal groups. The main areas inhabited on Fleurieu Peninsula would probably have been thin coastal strips and broad valleys, such those formed by the Inman and Hindmarsh Rivers (Section 4.2 & 5.3; see Fig.5.3).

From Willunga, the east-west boundary of the Lower Murray probably went south of Mount Barker, then through the Murray Mallee to a point between Wellington and Murray Bridge. The survey regions chosen by Moorhouse and Teichelmann, particularly in the Statistical Society Reports, support this. They indicate that the Mount Barker Aboriginal people, termed by Tindale (1940, 1974) as Peramangk, were more closely affiliated with Aboriginal groups to the north of Murray Bridge than with the Lower Murray

people, particularly in regards to their language (Moorhouse, 1843; 1846). Willunga, Mount Barker and Murray Bridge are therefore northern markers of the cultural area of the pre-European Lower Murray people. The southern end and north-south boundaries of the Lower Murray region are less clearly identified from the available sources, although Taplin (1874, 1879) included the coastal Coorong region, which can still be regarded as part of the Lower Murray drainage basin as it also terminates at the Murray Mouth. The Lower Murray extension into the Coorong is also supported by Mathews (1898, pp.336-343) on the basis of ceremonial and language data.

Early this century, geographers recognised the link between Aboriginal territorial boundaries and the naturally occurring boundaries imposed by the landscape. Fenner (1931, p.90) named the Lower Murray Basin the Narinyeri section, after the Aboriginal group that lived there. He considered this region to start where the cliffs along the river end near Wellington, taking in the Lower Lakes and stopping at the Mouth. He called two other regions of the river basin in South Australia after other Aboriginal groups, the Murundi (from Wellington to Overland Corner) and Nawait (Overland Corner to the border of New South Wales and Victoria) sections. Fenner based this regional division upon the degree of fit between cultural and geographical boundaries. In this thesis I have used the same regions, but refer to them as the Lower, Mid and Upper Murray. Later, I will demonstrate the distinctiveness of the Lower Murray in terms of Aboriginal hunting and gathering strategies (Section 4.2). My inclusion of Kangaroo Island as part of the Lower Murray region is based upon the early mythological and historical connections that Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray had with this part of the landscape (Section 2.1.1, 3.2.1.2, 3.3.2 & 5.1).

2.3.1.5 Pre-European Descent Groups in the Lower Murray

Some scholars have given the Lower Murray cultural complex the label of 'Narrinyeri' or 'Ngarrindjeri' (Taplin, 1874, 1879; Jenkin, 1979), although 'Kukabrak' is the preferred name of others (Berndt, 1989, p.64; Berndt et al, 1993).[15] Nevertheless, Meyer (1843, p.84) provides the earliest recording of the term 'Narr-inyeri', which he defines as 'Australian native; mankind'. It is clear from Meyer that this word, obtained from the Encounter Bay 'tribe', was not considered to refer only to Lower Murray people. Some of the older informants I interviewed supported this, claiming that 'Ngarrindjeri' meant 'all blackfellas'. We must accept that some cultural labels have had their meaning altered since European colonisation.

It was thirty one years after the publication of Meyer's vocabulary that Taplin (1874 [1879, p.1]; 1879, p.34) took the 'Narrinyeri' concept to refer to the 'nation' that occupied the country from Cape Jervis to a point about 48 kilometres above where the Murray River discharges into Lake Alexandrina, and from here across country to Lacepede Bay. He claims that 'Narrinyeri':

> is evidently an abbreviation of Kornarrinyeri (from kornar, men, and inyeri, belonging to), and means "belonging to men." They take great pride in this designation, and call other nations of Aborigines wild blackfellows, while they say, "we are men" (Taplin, 1874 [1879, p.1]).

However, Taplin arrived at Point McLeay in 1859, by which stage the Lower Murray Aboriginal people had already had much experience of colonisation. This was sixteen years after the publication of Meyer's first ethnography (1843, 1846). Since Taplin failed to acknowledge the possibility of recent modification in his study group, I will generally assume Meyer's data to a more accurate account of pre-European-type practices among the Lower Murray people.

Although the Point McLeay Mission influence on the creation of 'Ngarrindjeri' consciousness is immense (Section 2.4.4 & 6.3; Chapter 7), most of the reconstructive ethnographers rejected its pre-European validity. For instance, Brown (1918, pp.227-228) states that all Aboriginal people were considered to be 'Ngarinderi' (= Ngarrindjeri) by his Lower Murray informants, who were predominantly Yaraldi speakers. Tindale (1940, 1974) denies the existence of 'Ngarrindjeri' on the basis that dialect groups, such as the Jaraldekald [= Yaraldi] and Tanganekald [= Tangani] were the 'tribal' units. However, he adds that much of Taplin's ethnographic material appeared to be from Jaraldekald people (1974, p.212). It is clear that Taplin narrowed the meaning of 'Ngarrindjeri' to mean only Lower Murray people, although his reasoning is not apparent. His assumption may have well resulted from an opinion expressed by Lower Murray people that only members of their cultural area were 'human', in the sense that only these people shared a common language and religious system. Taplin possibly did not understand the power of Aboriginal ethno-centricity. Nevertheless, even if the use of this label is not strictly correct according to pre-European practices, it is nonetheless a convenient term, particularly with its current cultural validity among southern Aboriginal populations.

Taplin (1874 [1879, p.2]; 1879, p.34) lists 18 'tribes' that made up the Ngarrindjeri Nation. He claims that each 'tribe' or 'lakalinjeri' (which I define as a descent group) was presided over by a Tendi council headed by a 'rupulli' or 'land holder'. Each descent group was associated with one or more 'nga:tji' or

totems, which were generally animals or natural phenomena (Taplin, 1879, p.35). An Aboriginal man, Jacob Harris, writing at Point McLeay in 1894, described these 'smaller tribes' as each having a 'coat-of-arms' which was an animal etc. that could also be used as a name for its group.[16] Taplin records only some of the descent groups mentioned by Meyer (1846), Brown (1918), Berndt (1940a) and Tindale (1935, 1938, 1974). On the Lower Murray descent group map I have drawn from the above sources (Fig.2.9), it appears that there were at least 42 descent groups in the Ngarrindjeri cultural complex. Clusters of descent groups also formed overlapping dialectal units that some, such as Brown (1918) and Tindale (1940, 1974) have treated as 'tribes'.

In the pre-European period, it is likely that most descent groups would never have met as a single unit. The main functional group was probably what the literature defines as a band, that is a senior man who through political prowess, surrounds himself with an extended family group. In support of this is Peterson (1972) who demonstrated that old men were nodal points about which bands formed. Therefore, where groups dwelt depended largely upon where the old men wanted to live, as well as political and economic exigencies. Due to the highly differentiated environment of the Lower Murray region (Section 4.2.1), it seems likely that in comparison to surrounding areas the territories of descent groups here were smaller.

The main 'Narrinyeri' (= Ngarrindjeri) language and political units recognised by Brown (1918), Berndt (1940a) and Tindale (1940, 1974) are the Koraulun who lived along the north banks of Lake Alexandrina, the Yaraldi around Lake Albert and the southern banks of Lake Alexandrina, the Tanganalun along the Coorong, the Portaulun[17] around Wellington on the Murray River, and Ngaraltu on the eastern banks of the Murray River near Murray Bridge (Fig.2.10). Although Berndt and Tindale recognise the 'Ramindjeri' as a distinct political and linguistic group, it was clearly a descent group for Meyer (1843, 1846), although it is possible that this descent group had its own distinct dialect. Some internal divisions of the Lower Murray cultural region reflect the topography of the landscape. For instance, Penney divided the Aboriginal people of the Lower Murray into the 'Big Murray tribe' (or 'Milmenyra') and the 'Picaninni Murray' ('Lower Murray' or 'Lesser Murray tribe') (cited in Clarke, 1991b, p.94). His description of their location is vague, but suggests a coast versus inland division of culture. An early pastoralist commented upon the contrast between the 'Lakes tribes' (from Wellington to about midway between Meningie and Magrath Flat) and the 'Saltwater natives' (Hackett, 1915 [1989, pp.27-29]). Reportedly, the coastal people

Strathalbyn

Aldinga

Murray River

36 37 38

N
↑

Wellington

Point McLeay

Goolwa

Encounter
Bay

Meningie

Salt Creek

Kingston

```
0      10      20      30
kms
```

1 LUNGUNDINDERAR	22 PILTINDERAR
2 KANGALINDERAR	23 TIMPURUMINDERAR
3 KANDUKARI	24 KARGARINDERAR
4 RETIRINDERAR	25 KAIKALABINDERAR
5 MANANGKAR	26 KANMERINDERAR
6 LIWURINDERAR	27 MANTANDAR
7 MILINDERAR	28 NGAIYINDERAR
8 TURARORN	29 PURUWINDERAR
9 YEDAWULINDERAR	30 MOMAKENDERAR
(PANKINYERAR?)	31 NENGKANDULAR
10 TUMBALINDERAR	32 MILMINDERAR
11 WURALTINDERAR	33 ?
12 KINARINDERAR	34 PUNGURATPULAR
13 KRAPINDERAR	35 TALDERAR
14 PARAIGELINDERAR	36 WELINYERAR
15 YUKINDERAR	37 LATHINYERAR
16 LIMPINDERAR	38 WUNYAKULDE
17 WUTSAUTINDERAR	39 NGRANGATARI
18 RANGURINDERAR	40 KONDOLINYERAR
19 MULBERAPERAR	41 TANGANARIN
20 YANKINDERAR	42 RAMINYERAR
21 KARATINDERAR	

Fig.2.9 'Ngarrindjeri' descent groups of the pre-European period (after
Taplin, 1874, 1879; Brown, 1917; Berndt, 1940; Tindale, 1938, 1974)
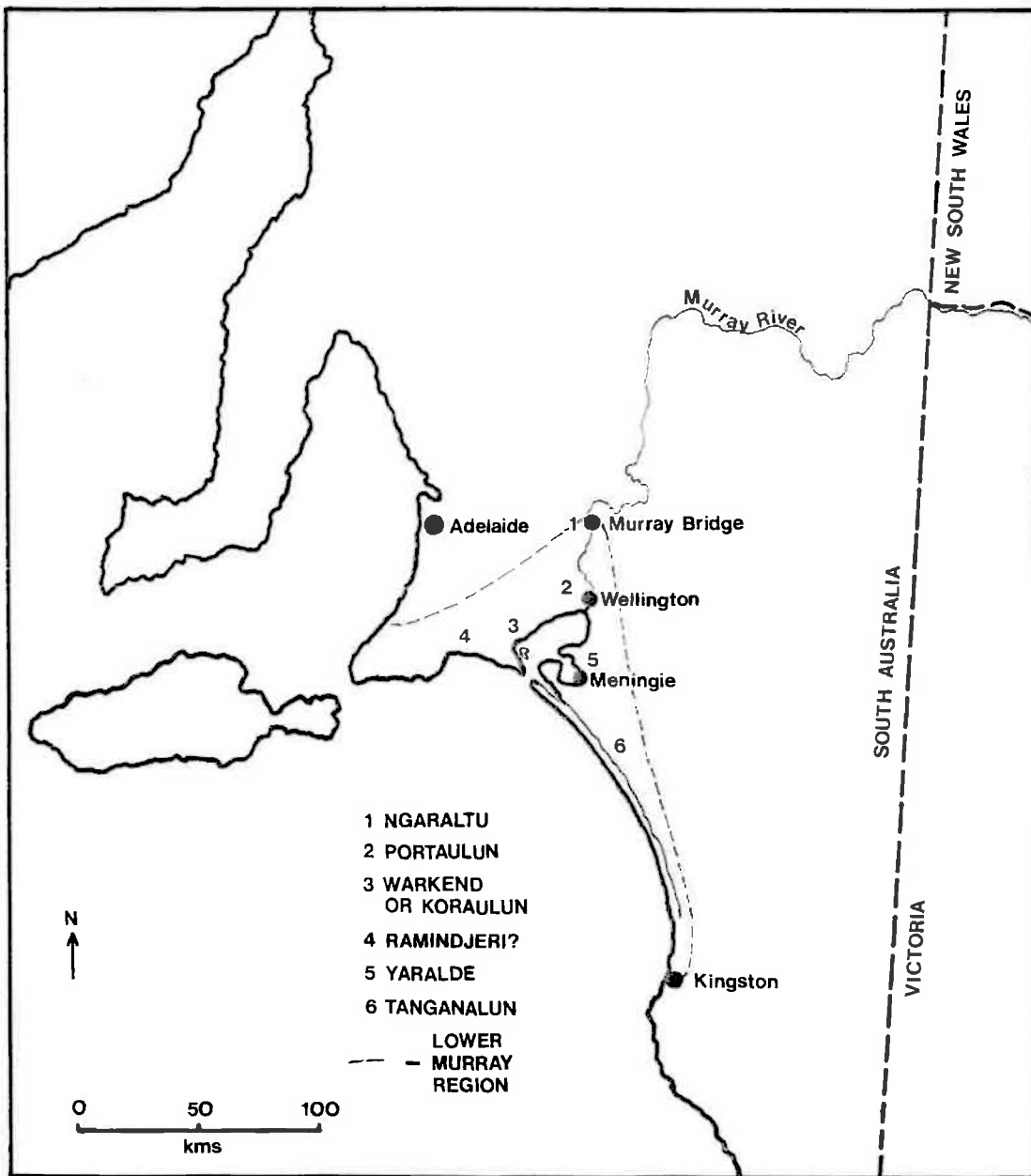
Fig.2.10 Lower Murray dialect groups (after Brown, 1917; Berndt, 1940)

were considered cannibals by inland groups. Snell (1849-1859 [1988, p.187]) records that a messenger

from one of the 'Murray tribes' arrived at the Goolwa camp with the announcement that they would soon

have a 'great annual fight' there with the local group. This antagonism still had much bearing on events

during George Taplin's period at Point McLeay (from 1859 to 1879). For instance, most of the conflict

between Aboriginal groups in the region was between the Mundoo Island people in the west with the

Murray and Lake Albert people in the east.[18] Mundoo Island, at the mouth of the Murray River on the lake

side, would have largely been an estuarine environment, being a short distance from the sea. A high level

of political cohesion within the Lower Murray has never been a characteristic of the region.[19]

2.4 Contemporary Elements of Aboriginal Identity in Southern South Australia

In this section, I describe the varied cultural notions from which contemporary Aboriginal identity in

southern South Australia is chiefly derived. As for the pre-European situation with group identity, the ways

in which contemporary Aboriginal people perceive themselves changes with context. It is the interplay of

context and identity that I will investigate here. The significance of *place* with respect to identity is

discussed more fully later (Chapter 7).

2.4.1 Historical Background to Pan-Aboriginal Identity

Contrary to popular opinion in Australia today, Aboriginal people in pre-European times did not have a

collective consciousness of being 'Aboriginal', or even a term covering this notion. Instead, there were

numerous descent groups and language clusters that in certain situations, may have been defined in

opposition to similar type cultural units. Upon European invasion, the nature of group identity was

radically altered. For instance, in the pre-European period, it is likely that Aboriginal groups, such as the

Adelaide people, would have been too culturally divergent from the Lower Murray people to be considered

as having a level of joint identity with them. However, after colonisation, many Aboriginal groups that

were formerly distant, both socially and geographically, were placed in contexts whereby joint identity

became possible or was even enforced.

As we have seen, since the colonisation of South Australia by sealers and then by official settlers, the history of European relationships with Aboriginal people has provided a framework of bringing together culturally diverse Aboriginal communities. As the Australian Aboriginal landscape was transformed so that agriculture was possible, Aboriginal people were largely removed to missions and pastoral properties and government stations (Section 6.3). In the case of the Point McLeay Mission, Aboriginal people from northern South Australia, West Coast, Adelaide, Upper Murray, Lower South East, and possibly even Tasmania, were placed among the Lower Murray people.[20] People from these formerly localised identities eventually intermarried with Lower Murray families. At Point McLeay, Taplin found that Aboriginal groups whose first languages were different, had to communicate in English (Journals, 22 September 1860). He averred that in pre-European times there was not the need for many southern communities to speak to each other at all.

In the 20th century, economic and social conditions continued to force the mixing of Aboriginal people with different cultural backgrounds, even in areas escaping strict government control, such as the West End of inner Adelaide during the 1940s (Berndt, 1989, pp.64-65; Grzybowicz, 1989, pp.1-19), and in rural fringecamps (Section 6.3.7). In this manner, the personal life histories of most southern Aboriginal people became related through the manner of their incorporation into the state. Attwood claims that being an Aboriginal person is 'a consciousness shaped by both the colonisers and colonised, and in this sense the experience of being Aboriginal is both determined and determining' (1989, p.150). I argue that the Australian pan-Aboriginal identity has only really existed in the context of 'White' and 'Black' relations.

2.4.2 Who is Aboriginal?

I will now consider some Aboriginal conceptions of Aboriginality. The 'black' and 'white' opposition has developed as a level upon which all Aboriginal people define themselves in certain situations. It is the ultimate level upon which a wide range of Aboriginal people, for example a Pitjatjantjara 'tribal elder' in the North West of South Australia and an Aboriginal 'street kid' in Adelaide, will express their opposition to the predominantly white Australian culture. Nevertheless, in other contexts, particularly those produced from within the Aboriginal population, there is considerable variation in the way people define their Aboriginality.

It is probably the analysis of the narrowest view, in evidence among Aboriginal people from the remote

northern South Australian region, that provides the deepest insight into the core of Aboriginality. For

instance, I have been told by Pitjantjatjara Aboriginal people, who have visited the southern areas, that

there are no longer any 'real' Aboriginal people for this region. When questioned they tend to use such

evidence as 'no ceremonies', 'no language', 'act like white-fellas', and 'no full bloods'. Although the term,

'Ngarrindjeri', is recognised by such northern people to mean a modern ethnic group of people of

Aboriginal descent, the present day Ngarrindjeri are generally considered by them to be 'half-castes' or

'yellow-fellas'. It is clear that people, such as the Pitjantjatjara, regard themselves as having a stronger

relationship to their landscape, through their detailed knowledge of a culture, largely separate from

Europeans.

For northern Aboriginal people, the post-European contact period is still relatively short. The southern

people, including the Ngarrindjeri, often regard the northern communities with a mixture of respect and

fear. This is due to perceptions that initiation and sorcery are still practised by the Pitjantjatjara. Northern

groups are usually referred to as 'tribal' by southern Aboriginal people. There are examples of people of

mixed Aboriginal and European descent, raised in urban and rural areas, who have actively sought out and

established personal relationships with northern communities, even to the extent of being ceremonially

'initiated'. Aboriginal people across Australia, even those with strong regional identities, tend to

conceptualise the areas where 'tribal' or 'traditionally-orientated' people live to be close to the heart of

their Aboriginality.

In spite of the restrictive definition prevalent among many of the northern groups, it is a fact that the

majority of South Australian Aboriginal people who acknowledge their 'Aboriginality' are not 'full

bloods', nor even heavily involved in a predominantly pre-European style of culture. As a senior

Ngarrindjeri man recently stated to a group of non-Aboriginal Australians visiting Point McLeay, 'You

have to go a long, long way to find a full blood today. Up to Port Augusta and beyond. Most of us have

white blood now. But we still have our custom.' Not only do most people in South Australia who consider

themselves to be 'Aboriginal' live in the southern regions, many of these are urban or rural-based, as

opposed to those living in the remote northern areas. In 1991, the total Aboriginal population of South

Australia was recorded to be 16,020 individuals.[21] Over a third of that population resided in Adelaide, less

than a third in the northern region, and the remainder in towns and small town communities scattered across the rest of southern South Australia, predominantly in the southern regions. Adherence to the extreme definition of Aboriginality would deny the existence of a functionally cohesive Aboriginal population in southern South Australia.

Aboriginal people in southern South Australia generally use a broad definition of Aboriginality. When questioned who is or is not Aboriginal, the typical response is that all individuals of Aboriginal descent are 'Aboriginal'. According to this view, all such people, no matter how genetically diluted by non-Aboriginal ancestors, or whether or not these links are known to them, are considered to be 'Aboriginal'. This means that the Aboriginal concept of their extended identity embraces everyone from the 'kringkari-looking' (= 'white-looking') person living in Adelaide to the Point McLeay dweller who is predominantly of Aboriginal descent and who speaks Aboriginal-English. In practice, however, those individuals who desire to place themselves into a broad Aboriginal ethnic context, must not only have some Aboriginal ancestry, but have some knowledge of their links through family history, and possess a number of Aboriginal lifestyle characteristics. These last mentioned cultural attributes may include the use of an 'Aboriginal lingo' (Section 2.4.4.3), having an appreciation of Aboriginal issues, and becoming involved in the affairs of Aboriginal settlements and families (Chapter 7). To people raised in this environment and who dwell in the Lower Murray, their Aboriginality is seldom questioned. They are firmly placed in an ethnic-type category by both local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. However, some people living in Adelaide, who have the appearance of being non-Aboriginal, try very hard to be accepted as Aboriginal by the broader Australian society. Such individuals have frequently adopted subcultural-type activities to reinforce their Aboriginality (Section 7.4.1). Not only is it difficult to restrict the concept of being 'Aboriginal' simply to 'tribal' people, physical features alone may also not indicate whether a person is considered by other Aboriginal people to be functionally 'Aboriginal'.

It is in the eastern states of Australia where the broadening of Aboriginal identity is perhaps the most advanced. This is apparent in the social construction of a pan-Aboriginal identity based on usage of the term 'Koori' (or 'Koorie') to mean all people of Aboriginal descent, in opposition to 'Gubba', a name used in some parts of Australia for all non-Aboriginal people with predominantly European ancestry. Miller (1985), a Victorian Aboriginal writer, argues for the Australia-wide adoption of 'Koori'. Although he

acknowledges that its usage is not compatible with the former existence of a large number of Australian languages, he claims that it is needed to replace what he considers to be the 'derogatory connotations' of the term 'Aboriginal'. He also suggests that the use of 'Koori' would honour the Eora people of Sydney, whose language was the source of this word, for they were the first Aboriginal people to feel the full impact of European settlement (Miller, 1985, p.vii). Elsewhere, this pan-Aboriginal term is showing few signs of being adopted, possibly because the term was for a long time, and to some extent still is, associated with a state regional identity. For instance, in South Australia, 'Koori' is simply recognised as meaning a Victorian or southern New South Wales Aboriginal person. Here, 'Koori' is treated in opposition to terms such as 'Nunga' for southern South Australia, 'Nyungar' for southern Western Australia, and 'Murri' for Queensland and northern New South Wales. The pan-Aboriginal context exists for all Aboriginal people, by the fact of their opposition against white people. Nevertheless, in areas located outside the eastern states and which have strong regional Aboriginal identities, adoption of 'Koori' to mean all Aboriginal people appears unsuccessful.

Interactions between contemporary Aboriginal people and Australian society generally help to modify cultural perceptions. Although full treatment of this aspect is beyond the scope of this thesis, I will provide an ethnographic example to demonstrate its polarising role for identity construction in a Lower Murray context. Several years ago, an Aboriginal man living in Meningie voiced his confusion to me over local white Australian concepts of Aboriginality. He said that when he was younger, his family were forced to live in fringecamps. This was in part due to their choice of living away from the control of the Point McLeay Mission Station, and also caused by the refusal of authorities to allow Aboriginal people to stay in the towns. At 6 o'clock each night, an Aboriginal curfew was imposed on Meningie, the nearest town to his particular camp, and the 'camp people' had to be gone by this time. During the 1950s and early 1960s, his family was subjected to camp raids by welfare officers and police, resulting in some family members being taken away. This man's younger brother has only recently been found again by the family, after twenty five years of separation. In recent years, this man has gained a prominent voice in town regarding affairs affecting the local Aboriginal group. Nevertheless, he has on occasion been asked by white Australian residents of Meningie, why he still defines himself as an Aboriginal person. They have pointed out that he has light skin and is now able to live in an Aboriginal Housing Trust home in Meningie, thus

having a white Australian mode of living. Apparently the Aboriginal man responded that he chose not to forget. Those Aboriginal people who share these experiences and memories of being part of a despised minority, feel a common bond. There exists an Aboriginal world view or commonality that is based upon common experience (Barwick, 1981, p.75; Sansom, 1982, pp.117-118). *Places*, such as former mission settlements and fringe-camp sites, bond people together (Section 6.3.7 & 7.3).

In the past, many Aboriginal people have opted for absorption into the wider Australian population, recognising the restricted opportunities for those who remain categorised as 'Aboriginal' persons. Particularly when Aboriginal people suffered greater official discrimination, many passed themselves off as either European Australians, or as Indians or American Negroes. These individuals have been defined as 'passive social migrants' (Smith, 1980, p.8). By cutting off their kinship links, and by actively avoiding situations when their Aboriginality would become obvious, many people who were formerly considered to be Aboriginal, were functionally removed from this ethnic group. This was probably easier for southern Aboriginal people, who, even for those of predominantly Aboriginal ancestry, tended not to have the distinct 'Aboriginal' look of northern Aboriginal groups.

The experience that many Aboriginal people who had 'gone white' gained from their participation in wider Australian society, through being accepted as non-Aboriginal, gave them skills and aims that others, still categorised as Aboriginal, generally did not acquire (Section 7.4.1). For this reason, some of those that actively denied their Aboriginality when it was unfavourable, were able to resume their Aboriginal identity and obtain prominent positions as Aboriginal employees in the Public Services when the control of Aboriginal affairs was largely handed back over the last twenty years. Some very European-looking middle-class people have obtained employment positions on the basis of their Aboriginality. This is often achieved by asserting their genealogical link to an Aboriginal mission or settlement, becoming involved in Aboriginal committees and organisations, and by adopting a style of speaking a few 'Aboriginal' words mixed with broken English. By exercising their mobility in and out the Aboriginal ethnic category, such members are essentially subcultural Aboriginal people. Nevertheless, some people never had the choice of leaving their Aboriginality behind, perhaps in part due to their dependence on an Aboriginal lifestyle. This is particularly so for Aboriginal people who remain in the Lower Murray. From many Aboriginal people

there is some antagonism felt towards those who left behind their 'lations' (= relations), who for a long time did not 'own' (= acknowledge) them.

Non-Aboriginal people, defined as those who are unable to demonstrate their direct descent from a recognised Aboriginal person, can never become 'Aboriginal' in the eyes of the Aboriginal ethnic group, in spite of anything they might do. A non-Aboriginal person can become attached to a particular Aboriginal family through a relationship with a family member, and even play some role in the politics of the extended family as an insider. Nevertheless, for such a non-Aboriginal person to become involved in wider Aboriginal political affairs, this can only be with the status of an outsider with a legitimate outside interest, otherwise they are invariably excluded due to their non-Aboriginality. A non-Aboriginal person cannot occupy a recognised position in the wider southern Aboriginal kinship system, regardless of their life history and life style. The centrality of biology and descent in the Aboriginal theory of ethnicity prevents it. This exclusion has often been misinterpreted as a general Aboriginal dislike for non-Aboriginal people. Rather, it is part of a widespread belief by Aboriginal people that they should run their own affairs as much as possible (Chapter 7). This feeling is the product of Aboriginal experiences as a minority since European colonisation, and due to the racism they have suffered at the hands of the broader Australian society, and because they are a socially cohesive integrated ethnic group.[22]

Modern perceptions of a particular Aboriginal community's links to the 'tribal' or pre-European past have set up a gradient of views. For instance, during my fieldwork in western Victoria, some Aboriginal people with Lake Condah and Framlingham Mission connections, expressed views of respect and fear about Ngarrindjeri people they had met. These views appeared to be due to a perception that the Ngarrindjeri have maintained stronger links to their pre-European past than they, although this is not because the Victorians considered themselves less 'Aboriginal'. Their conclusions were primarily based on the stronger Ngarrindjeri accents, and the greater use of an Aboriginal vocabulary than by Aboriginal people in the western districts of Victoria. Interestingly, the Lower Murray people also have similar views of the Pitjatjantjara people of the north western part of South Australia. This is sometimes expressed in a general fear among southern people about 'featherfoots', 'red-bands', and 'wild black-fellas', meaning people with 'tribal powers'.[23] South eastern Aboriginal groups generally came under the direct influence of European colonisers at an earlier time than northern communities, such as the Western Desert and Arnhem Land

people. This has produced an historical landscape, which is reflected in South Australia by the widespread fear of northern neighbours.

The historical Aboriginal landscape restricts the movements of most Aboriginal people. There is a strong feeling of 'safe' and 'dangerous' areas. For instance, an elderly Aboriginal lady living in Portland, Victoria, has, for most of her life, greatly feared crossing the nearby South Australian border. This was because of a dispute, some thirty years ago, with the relatives of her husband. Her spouse was an Aboriginal man with a Port Augusta background, who had kinship obligations to marry another. Because she broke 'traditional rules', she believed that physical violence or sorcery would be used to punish her. Similarly, in South Australia, particularly in areas, such as the West Coast and at Port Augusta, with some contact with desert Aboriginal groups, young Aboriginal men still occasionally express a fear of being forcibly grabbed by 'tribal elders' (Killington, 1971, pp.37-38). Informants I interviewed stated they believe that there is a real threat of their removal to a remote northern area to be 'put through the rules' (= 'initiated'). This concern is despite the fact that they may not have direct family links to the 'tribal' culture they fear. People from southern Aboriginal populations generally respect and fear those who are perceived as nearer to the 'Aboriginal' core than they. Today, in this sense, the historical landscape created by European colonisation defines its Aboriginal population.

The formation of the Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander Commission in 1989, to replace the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs, is contributing to the formation of a nation-wide Australian indigenous consciousness. For instance, 'Atsi', from ATSIC, is used by many Aboriginal public servants to mean an Aboriginal or Torres Straits Islander person. Nevertheless, Torres Straits Islanders (or 'T.I.s') and Aboriginal people generally want to maintain their individual cultural integrity. For instance, one senior Torres Strait Islander, a public servant, told me that in contrast to Aboriginal people their own use of the land before European settlement was agricultural. He maintained that Islanders therefore had 'real' ownership of the landscape. In 1992, the High Court of Australia decision on Mabo has reinforced the view of superiority held by some Islanders. From the Aboriginal perpective, the 'T.I.s' are often seen as interlopers attracting government money meant for them.

With such a variety of opinion as to who is 'Aboriginal', there are problems for the researcher who strictly adheres to any particular view. For example, at one extreme there are people who interact on a daily basis as part of a functioning Aboriginal community. Such people are ethnically Aboriginal, and may live at old mission sites such as Point McLeay, other rural towns, or in the outer suburbs of Adelaide (Section 7.3 & 7.4). At the other extreme, an 'Aboriginal' person may simply be someone who has little direct contact with a functional community, but indulges in their Aboriginality as a subcultural style. Such individuals usually exist solely in the urban context. The definition of an Aboriginal person I use in this thesis is simply that of a person who recognises their Aboriginality, and in addition is widely known to be an Aboriginal person by other members of the Aboriginal population. Aboriginal affairs government departments tend to follow this definition.[24] This definition overcomes some of the inherent cultural contradictions, both from within and outside the Aboriginal ethnic group, about membership.

2.4.3 Nunga Identity

Aboriginal people of South Australia tend to define themselves as Nungas [pronounced 'Narn-gars'] in certain situations, particularly in opposition to non-Aboriginal citizens and Aboriginal people from other states. This is particularly true of people from southern Aboriginal communities. The use of 'Nunga' is restricted to the 20th century period. It is likely that it is a word adapted for use in the urban context, derived from a West Coast Aboriginal language.[25] Indeed, elderly Aboriginal people from the Lower Murray have on several occasions stressed that the Nunga concept is an urban phenomenon. Nunga also probably has similar linguistic origins to 'Nyungar', the south western Australian name for Aboriginal people (Ramson, 1988, p.441). Regardless of origin, this term has much cultural value to the contemporary Aboriginal population of South Australia.

I argue that Nunga membership is drawn from a number of Aboriginal communities in southern South Australia having sections that interact in the urban context. Nonetheless, there remains a tendency for Nungas to differentiate between people of various regional identities with the use of various slang or 'lingo' terms, many relating to the landscape. For example, West Coast people are spoken of as being 'wombat eaters', because wombats (Vombatus ursinus) are still a readily obtained and favoured food there. However, they are also described as being 'long-footers', due to their generally large physical build.

Flinders Ranges people are 'rock-apes', a play on the English translation of their cultural group and language name 'Adnyamathanha' (= 'rock-people'). People further north are 'sandhill-savages', because of the nature of their country. Those with recognised links to Point Pearce are 'danimudlas', which are ugly puffer fish (Atopomycterus nicthemerus), or they are called 'Chinese', due to the existence of Chinese ancestry in several of the main mission families (see Power, cited Gilbert, 1978, pp.28-29). The 'River people', comprising those from Point McLeay and Gerard, are termed 'mud-monkeys' due to the type of landscape they dwell in. However, not all the symbolism is expressed negatively. For instance, Point Pearce people prefer to be called 'butterfish' (Argyrosomus hololepidotus), and 'River people' like to be known as 'Pondes' (= 'Murray cod', Maccullochella peeli).[26] To some extent, these terms take on some of the functions described in the early ethnographic literature as totemism.

The social categorisation is not just restricted to name calling, as in certain all-Aboriginal situations there is much reflection on the differences between the regional Aboriginal landscapes. For example, I once heard a Point Pearce man, a qualified diver, visiting Point McLeay remark that he didn't like the river and lake country because it was too muddy, and he couldn't see the bottom of the water. He contrasted this with Point Pearce, where the water was clear. This was a clear expression that he did not belong to the Lower Murray landscape (Chapter 7 & 8). Such discussion between Aboriginal people of various backgrounds helps to reinforce regional identities. These aspects of differentiation tend only to be observed in an all-Aboriginal context, such as at Aboriginal sports carnivals. Killington (1971, pp.14-20) demonstrates that the strong attachment Aboriginal people feel towards their particular 'reserve' has existed for a long time. Southern Aboriginal people still differentiate themselves according to place-linked names, even though these locations reflect a mixture of the historical and pre-European landscapes.

I will provide the following brief ethnography in order to demonstrate that various contemporary southern South Australian populations, although having distinct regional identities, are also in other contexts integrated into a single regional Aboriginal ethnic group. This will serve to demonstrate that there is a contemporary Aboriginal culture, not just an assimilated European form. It will also illuminate the relative impermeability of the membership of this cultural group to outsiders, whether Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal.

The restrictions as to who is functionally a 'Nunga' became obvious to me at an Aboriginal-run ball that I attended in Adelaide several years ago. This event is organised annually by NAIDOC (National Aborigines and Islander Day Observance Committee) as a climax to a week of Aboriginal functions in the state. These balls are very popular with members of the entire Aboriginal population, not only those based in Adelaide, but also country people from areas such as Koonibba, Port Lincoln, Point Pearce, Point McLeay, Murray Bridge and the Riverland. I did not see many northern South Australian people in attendance. On the night, music was provided exclusively by South Australian Aboriginal bands. Although a wide range of Aboriginal people were present, the seating arrangements indicated that the majority of people preferred to socialise with people of similar backgrounds. There were obvious Point McLeay, Point Pearce and West Coast cliques, but still with much interaction between them. People from other Aboriginal communities were also there. This included a few individuals who had come recently from Victoria, Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia. Particularly conspicuous among the crowd of mainly southern South Australian Aboriginal people, were six young Melville Island men who were in Adelaide attending trade school. In general, these groups of Aboriginal outsiders appeared largely not to socialise with the Nungas, and vice versa, as I observed during the activities of the night.

During the formal session of speeches at the NAIDOC Ball, the southern South Australian speakers received most attention from the crowd. Topics included local cases of the 'Black Deaths in Custody' issue, including the emotional mention of a recent 'Nunga' suicide. Such speakers generally had the audience's attention. One Aboriginal speaker was not well received. He was originally from Queensland, and since coming to Adelaide had been active in local government political circles. When he tried to give a talk that contained a history of Aboriginal land rights, he was completely ignored.

The social networks that were developed by Aboriginal communities who have had a strong presence in Adelaide since early this century, provide a considerable degree of overlap between people from all the southern Aboriginal populations. Inglis (1961, p.204) claimed that 'from the North' was always used by Adelaide-based Aboriginal people as a term of dismissal. She reports that people who were not from Point Pearce, Point McLeay and to some extent Koonibba, were defined as 'outsiders'. Representatives from interstate Aboriginal communities have generally not lived in Adelaide sufficiently long to have a high level of integration with the Nunga group. This exclusion is felt on political grounds too, reflected in

employment and welfare opportunities (Section 7.1 & 7.3). Nunga identity is therefore largely related to the length of the contact situation in Adelaide between the southern Aboriginal populations.

As with many of the pre-European social structure terms reported in the early ethnographies (Section 2.3), use of the Nunga category is determined by context. For instance, a Lower Murray Aboriginal person wishing to stress his or her Lower Murray regional identity will generally refer to themselves as 'Ngarrindjeri'. Nevertheless, in Adelaide, the same person may feel more empathy with urban-based Aboriginal people by referring to themselves as 'Nunga'. The use of 'Nunga' is frequent among Aboriginal children who have grown up in Adelaide, even those with parents who were born at Point McLeay in the Lower Murray region. This is particularly common, in my experience, with Aboriginal street kids who rove around Adelaide streets at night. Their Aboriginal peers also include children of parents from Point Pearce and Koonibba backgrounds. The term, 'Nunga', can therefore act as part of the 'in' vocabulary of Aboriginal people who, although recognising their Aboriginal ancestry, do not have need in that context to express a smaller regional affiliation. I argue that the use of 'Nunga' is primarily in urban situations, although it may be applied to people who would call themselves 'Ngarrindjeri' in a Lower Murray context. Nungas therefore have an identity largely composed of the southern regional identities, expressed in an urban social environment.

2.4.4 Ngarrindjeri Identity

Apart from a few elderly Aboriginal people who still identify with particular descent groups in the Lower Murray, such as the Milmendjeri and Temporamindjeri, most people with strong ties to the region call themselves Ngarrindjeri. Researchers working with southern Aboriginal populations have been struck by the resistance of the Ngarrindjeri people to absorption into broader cultural groupings. For instance, concerning modern Ngarrindjeri identity, Berndt says:

> While this does not mean detailed knowledge of dialectal and clan territories, along with the relevance of mythic sites and so forth, it does involve knowing where they belong, and something of the available resources within their land. This is, in fact, a remarkable achievement on their part, in the face of heavy pressures toward absolute assimilation into the wider system (1989, p.64).

As discussed above (Section 2.3), it is very unlikely that Ngarrindjeri identity existed in pre-European times in its present day form. Nonetheless, this bears little significance to the validity of the contemporary

Ngarrindjeri concept. Lower Murray people form a distinct unit which, although part of a wider Nunga

identity, in some contexts is able to exhibit the characteristics of a distinct ethnic group (Section 7.3).

Over the last ten years, there has been an increasing tendency for Aboriginal people to actively acquire a

feeling of belonging to their landscape with the use of 'tribal' group names to define themselves (Section

8.6.3). For example, a response to Tindale's widely publicised map (1974), from both the broader

Australian society and the Aboriginal population, is that there are now 'Peramangk', Kaurna' and

'Narranga' groups to acknowledge in southern South Australia.[27] However, these particular people are

essentially sub-groupings of migrants from long established Aboriginal settlements. Against this

background, Ngarrindjeri identity is unique in southern regions because of its long historical association

with the Lower Murray landscape. It is also a term not recognised as a 'tribe' by Tindale (1974,

pp.212,294). The strength of Ngarrindjeri identity is in part due to the predominance of the 'Narrinyeri' in

the ethnographic literature provided by Taplin (1874, 1879), and the widespread use of this term by

Aboriginal people since colonisation. Non-Aboriginal agencies support the use of this term, as shown by

the Education Department's teaching kit publication, The Ngarrindjeri People (Education Department of

South Australia, 1990) and other material. The strong regional affiliation of the Ngarrindjeri is similar to

the cultural and social position of the Adnjamathanha people of the Flinders Ranges in the north of South

Australia. Jacobs (1983, pp.259-263) claims that for the Adnjamathanha this results from four factors:

cultural links, kin links, organisation links, and local community links.

2.4.4.1 Families as Regional Identifiers

Here, I will consider the rules southern Aboriginal people use to determine who is Ngarrindjeri. At first

glance, membership of the Ngarrindjeri community appears highly restrictive, with virtually all families

regarded as Ngarrindjeri having a long historical link with Point McLeay, called Raukkan by the Lower

Murray people (Section 7.3). Nevertheless, a detailed analysis of the genealogies of Ngarrindjeri people

living in the area today indicates that it is a cultural identity with some permeability. For instance, some

Aboriginal families based on Point McLeay for several generations, have much early Aboriginal ancestry

from other parts of the state, such as the West Coast, Point Pearce, Adelaide, and even from northern areas.

From a Ngarrindjeri perspective there is no contradiction in this. As one Aboriginal informant said, 'An

Aboriginal person who marries a Ngarrindjeri person may eventually become Ngarrindjeri. A white person can never become Ngarrindjeri no matter what they do'. The acceptance of an Aboriginal person marrying into a Lower Murray family, as being Ngarrindjeri, is particularly rapid if they gain a Ngarrindjeri surname. If the person retains a last name associated with another area, then their acceptance as being Ngarrindjeri will be slow. Therefore, entry into the Ngarrindjeri community requires that a person have both Aboriginal ancestry and a strong link to a family with a long association with the Lower Murray.

Aboriginal surnames are fairly accurate indicators of regional identities. In the Lower Murray area, there are examples of Aboriginal surnames with links to the pre-European Aboriginal period, some of the names originally derived from descent group names - for example Karloan, Karpany, Kartinyeri, Koolmatrie, Kropinyeri, Unaipon and Wassa. Other names recognised today as being Ngarrindjeri, but which were obtained directly or indirectly from early European settlers - include Brown, Campbell, Carter, Dodd, Giles, Gollan, Long, Love, Lovegrove, Mack, MacHughes, Rankine, Rigney, Rollison, Sumner, Tripp, Walker, Webster and Wilson. Most of these European-derived names have been used for over a hundred years. In this regard, the Lower Murray families are not unique among the southern Aboriginal population. For instance, Riverland families are typified by Abdulla, Cook, Fletcher, James, Lindsay, Mason, Natoon, Roberts, Singh and Taylor. Examples of Point Pearce Aboriginal names include Agius, Angie, Buckskin, Graham, Goldsmith, Hughes, Milera, Newchurch, Sansbury, Wanganeen, Warrior, Weetra and Williams. Further afield, Coulthard, Johnson, McKenzie, Ryan and Wilton are Nepabunna, while the names Bilney, Boxer, Carbine, Colman, Lawrie, Miller, Saunders, Scott, Ware and Wombat are generally considered as Koonibba. South East families include A'Hang, Bonney, Gibson, Hartman, Lampard, Pinkey, Trevorrow, Watson and Whympie. In some cases, there has been some crossing over due to intermarriage, particularly between Point McLeay families and those from the South East and the Riverland. Nevertheless, Aboriginal settlements do eventually take on the identity of the families that live there (Chapter 7). Indeed, a knowledgeable person only has to hear a person's surname, accent, and the 'Aboriginal lingo' chosen, in order to fairly accurately guess something of the individual's regional background.

The collection of family names associated with the Lower Murray region forms the basis of a Ngarrindjeri descent network. These operate as exogamous patrilineal clans. This kinship system not only serves to keep people who are 'too close' from having sexual relationships, but dictates relations between certain families.

For example, members of the Rankine and Carter families call each other 'Grans', due to the close descent group relationship between them. This is probably based on pre-European-type marriage rules. Similarly, the Rankines and Karpanys consider that they are 'mandamang', another term denoting closeness.[28] Also, the Rankine and Unaipon families are considered to be 'countrymen', due to the closeness of their descent group territories on the northern side of Lake Alexandrina.[29] Knowledge that southern Aboriginal people have of their family histories is considered to not only have importance for cultural heritage reasons, but to be useful in maintaining a degree of social order within the community, even though the pre-European kinship system is largely forgotten, at least as a conscious set of rules.

I will now discuss the mechanism by which southern Aboriginal people have retained their affinity to the broad cultural areas of their ancestors, long after their families have moved into different regions. The informal social restrictions that have been imposed by the broader Australian society have largely prevented Aboriginal marriages to non-Aboriginal people, although it has not stopped sexual relations (Section 6.4.4). As a result, there has been a tendency among southern Aboriginal people to obtain marriage partners from within their own particular community. For this reason, and because of earlier government regulations restricting Aboriginal movements, the marriage relations on Aboriginal settlements have been considerably endogamous. Even illegitimate births have tended to help reproduce the kinship system by not allowing in new surnames. Aboriginal people have also been extremely conservative with their choice of Christian names. The first names of favourite senior people in the local community are used over and over again. Indeed, in regions such as the Lower Murray, there are often so many people with the same Christian name and surname, nickname alternatives are used in order to avoid confusion.

2.4.4.2 Political Aspects of Being Ngarrindjeri

The definitions of being Aboriginal and Ngarrindjeri, as outlined above, are widely recognised by Aboriginal people to be fairly broad, although the degree to which they remain open is very much dependent on context. For example, an adolescent member of the 'street kid' subculture in Adelaide, who has Aboriginal descent from a Lower Murray family, will be recognised as being Ngarrindjeri by Aboriginal people living at Point McLeay. Nevertheless, culturally speaking, this person will have far more in common with non-Aboriginal street kids, and probably knows little of Ngarrindjeri affairs in the Lower

Murray. However, if this same person wanted later to become politically active in the Lower Murray through membership of Aboriginal councils and participation at local settlement meetings, they would meet some opposition due to their lack of a life history associated with the region. As described for the pre-European situation, political power today rests with senior people who, through their family and life history connections, are able to influence others in most matters. The degree to which a person has grown up with a Ngarrindjeri lifestyle, centred around Point McLeay and nearby Lower Murray towns, is an important factor in determining the strength of a person's voice in Ngarrindjeri politics. Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray therefore recognise the difference between subcultural and ethnic Aboriginality.

With Ngarrindjeri politics, the power of making crucial decisions, particularly with regard to cultural matters, is often said by the chief parties involved to be in the hands of the 'old people'. The 'old people' are, in this context, elderly Ngarrindjeri who, due to their age, are considered to know most about Ngarrindjeri custom. Thus, the definition of who the 'old people' are changes with the passing of each generation. Although this social category is said to have decision-making power, in general, most 'old people' are reluctant to express an opinion in political debates, often being put under considerable pressure by the politically minded middle aged people of their community. In other contexts, the 'old people' refer to 'tribal people' or 'finished (dead) people'. In the case of Lower Murray people, it may refer to individuals of an earlier period who had direct experiences with the pre-European past.

The use of the prestige term, 'elder', appears to be recent in southern South Australia, having spread from the eastern states where it is widely used by individual Aboriginal people attempting to build a political following. In general, southern Aboriginal people still perceive that their old generations have the final say in local Aboriginal affairs, even if in practice this is greatly modified. Today, this aspect of the past ideology is useful to Aboriginal people who engage in political activity.

There are also spatial variations as to who is considered to be Ngarrindjeri. These impinge upon the political arena (Section 7.3). For example, one middle-aged Aboriginal man claimed several years ago that only the Lakes people were truly Ngarrindjeri. He argued that one particularly active Aboriginal family, with a southern Coorong background, was not Ngarrindjeri and should not have any role in Ngarrindjeri cultural and political affairs. He argued that this family, which included members that were actually born

at Point McLeay (although they had not lived there for long), should really be considered as part of another Aboriginal group. Interestingly, on separate occasions, I have heard senior members of this Meningie family justify not only their Ngarrindjeri identity, but the inclusion of many other Aboriginal groups from outside the Lower Murray. They claim that the Ngarrindjeri territory extends from the Lower South East of South Australia, up to the Darling Junction and through Mount Barker across to Cape Jervis. The extent of Ngarrindjeri territory is often engaged in discussion with regard to political implications for certain families and individuals.

2.4.4.3 Contemporary Aboriginal Language in the Lower Murray Region

As a part of intensive European colonisation, Aboriginal people across Australia were forced to adopt English as a first language. Nonetheless, this process was gradual. Aboriginal terminology was initially extended to incorporate the introduced European foods. For instance, Aboriginal people used 'pinyatowe', listed as 'honey', for European sugar in the Lower Murray (Taplin, 1879, p.132). The use of this term ('pinyatowi') has survived to the present. Many of the English terms eventually adopted by Lower Murray people were 'Aboriginalised', forming the basis of the modern Aboriginal English spoken in the Lower Murray today (Appendix 10.2). For example, the altered term for horse became 'po:thi' (derived from 'horsey'). This distinctive speech pattern forms what is today called 'Ngarrindjeri lingo' by Aboriginal people in the southern South Australia.

The unique cultural position of Aboriginal people of the Lower Murray is illustrated by their retention of part of the pre-European language, to a far greater degree than for Aboriginal people from other southern South Australian regions. The extensive vocabulary includes many biotic terms, kinship words and verbs. In addition, there are Aboriginal English words that are commonly used in the pan-Aboriginal situation, such as the 'Nunga' (Aboriginal) and 'Gunya' (white) paired opposites. There is also some retention of a pre-European-type of Aboriginal grammar. Commonly spoken examples are 'What that is' and 'Where you going'. There are still, today, a handful of knowledgeable informants on the pre-European languages of the Lower Murray, although none are fluent, due to the early decline of Aboriginal dialects as first languages. However, many middle aged people living today were part of families where their parents did speak 'Ngarrindjeri' fluently. Therefore, much residual knowledge still exists. Even when a few words from other

southern Aboriginal languages are used, their origin is usually known by the speakers. Language and *place* are closely interwoven (Section 7.3). Aboriginal 'lingo' is an important aspect of the make up of southern regional identities.

Aboriginal language is much more important today as an indicator of cultural affiliation than as a primary means of communication. Ngarrindjeri people can understand standard Australian-English perfectly well, although at the same time many have the linguistic means to obscure their communication in order to exclude the participation of outsiders. This is made clear in the contexts in which Aboriginal words are often used. For example, one middle aged Ngarrindjeri woman said that 'lingo' was useful in hotel bars. She said that it could be used to draw the attention of fellow Aboriginal drinkers to the behaviour of a 'white-fella'. In her example she said 'Nakan krinkari korni' (literally 'see the white man'), the direction of the subject given by protruding her lips. In such situations, 'Ngarrindjeri lingo' contains many terms and the use of non-verbal gestures to disguise meaning to outsiders.

The recognition of the survival of a few elements of the Aboriginal language is given by Tindale (1941a, p.141). He contrasted Point McLeay, where there was 'Native vocabulary of limited character', with Point Pearce, Lake Tyers and Cummergunja, which reportedly had none. In spite of Tindale's strict interpretation of a surviving language, it is apparent that some Aboriginal vocabulary would have survived until his early fieldwork in all of the places Tindale mentioned.[30] The reasons for the survival of these elements of the pre-European language in the Lower Murray are difficult to determine. It is likely that Point McLeay had initially a greater core of speakers from one language than did other southern mission stations established in the same period, meaning that the language was functionally useful.

Australian pidgin English has been described as generally substandard English rather than a regular language in its own right (Turner, 1972, p.205). This is certainly true in many parts of southern Australia, where the 'Aboriginal lingo' is essentially broken English. Even well educated Aboriginal public servants will start breaking up their grammar and including phrases such as 'yous mob' (= you fellows) to enhance their Aboriginality. However, Lower Murray people have often been deeply offended by other Aboriginal people speaking to them in this manner. They consider that with the distinctive Aboriginal vocabulary and grammatical structure they have retained, to converse only in broken English is somewhat insulting.

Language is therefore to some extent a function of community history. Like many forms of pidgin English, including some outside of Australia, the development of Aboriginal English signifies the participation of local people in the world culture. Nevertheless, it has retained some elements that make it regionally appropriate. There have been a number of projects initiated by Aboriginal people in southern South Australia attempting to regain the use of local languages.[31]

2.4.5 Towards a Pan-indigenous Consciousness

The process of 'civilising' indigenous populations was repeated in many parts of the world during the colonial period. Indeed, similarity in the present day situations and experiences of other colonised indigenous people with that of the Australian Aboriginal people is striking.[32] For example, the post European contact history of the American 'Native' population in the United States of America, where culturally diverse 'Indian' groups have been defined and treated as a single unit by colonisers, has led to the development of a pan-Indian consciousness (Hertzberg, 1971; Clifford, 1988). This movement is remarkable considering the enormous diversity of Indian cultures described in the literature. However, this broader culture does not impede the expression of local identities. Closer to the Australian Aboriginal situation, Beckett (1987) has traced the development of Torres Strait Islander identity, even though present day Islanders are composed of several different cultures, some of whom were not originally Melanesian. In his study, the influential role of government institutions in the formation of this broad Torres Strait Islander identity has been demonstrated (Beckett, 1987). The descendants of South Sea Islanders (sometimes called the Kanaka), who were originally brought to Australia in the late 19th century to work on plantations in Queensland, are also treated by government bodies as another indigenous black minority in Australia (Fatnowna, 1989). From my experience, many of these people are now becoming involved in Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander cultural events. It is clear that the processes whereby single groupings are created from originally heterogeneous people, are not restricted to the Australian Aboriginal arena.

The feeling of being a minority group suffering from placelessness, creates a common ground for diverse groups of people across the world. Amerindians, Maoris and Africans share the same aspirations as Australian Aboriginal people towards greater control of their future (Baker, 1983, p.193). In recent years,

the establishment of the worldwide 'Indigenous People Conferences' has demonstrated that there is growing appreciation for their common minority situation among colonised indigenous cultures (the 'Fourth World'). In 1989, an 'Indigenous Women's Conference' in Adelaide was attended by women from a wide range of people, including Norwegian Samis (Lapps), Pacific Islanders and Aboriginal people. I understand that there was some discussion among the participants about whether the Samis were 'indigenous', as they were European-looking. Apparently they were able to effectively demonstrate that they suffered a related range of indigenous minority-type problems in their own countries. I was later present at Point McLeay when a group of Sami women from this conference visited. They were keen to establish informal links with other indigenous people, giving gifts of 'traditional' reindeer hide ornaments to some Aboriginal women there, and followed this up by later sending postcards from Samiland. The Aboriginal people at Point McLeay at first regarded the women with disbelief, as 'they looked like Krinks' (white Australians). However, they eventually seemed to accept that the Sami people had underprivileged status, and felt some comradeship with them. The indications are that on one level, indigenous minorities will continue to develop a joint identity in the international arena.

2.5 Conclusion

The Lower Murray region during the pre-European period was one of the most densely populated parts of Aboriginal Australia. Upon European colonisation in the early 1800s, the Lower Murray population declined rapidly, reaching a point late in that century when authorities believed they would vanish. The main Aboriginal mission in the Lower Murray, Point McLeay, was established in 1859. By the beginning of the 20th century, the majority of Aboriginal people in the region were essentially refugees living at the mission. Although the 'full blood' Aboriginal population dwindled and eventually disappeared, the numbers of 'mixed descent' Aboriginal people increased steadily. The endogamous tendency of the Aboriginal population, caused through their separatedness from the rest of Australian society, has helped maintain their biological and cultural distinctiveness. The Aboriginal cultural group of the Lower Murray, the Ngarrindjeri, is rapidly attaining the pre-European levels of the population living there. The strong presence of this community based in the Lower Murray itself since European settlement has ensured its survival in the face of increasing urbanisation of the Aboriginal population.
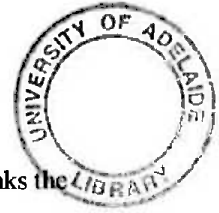
Much of the literature on the Aboriginal people of the Lower Murray has either focused on links the

modern day 'Ngarrindjeri' has with the pre-European culture, or on their 'assimilation' into European

Australia. The ethnographic problems with the 'tribe' definition, which led to its rejection by mainstream

anthropology, resulted in an exaggeration of the cultural gap between past and present Aboriginal

populations, due to a false contrast between the somewhat loose contemporary situation and a highly

ordered theoretical past. Although modern Aboriginal identity and its regional forms were produced in the

context of reactions to the post-colonial situation, the very nature of its broadly perceived opposition to

European society means that it can not be considered 'assimilated'. I consider modern Aboriginal culture

in the Lower Murray has elements that are unique, not simply derived from predictable movement along a

standard path from 'primitive' to 'civilised'. As an indigenous culture, it has more 'roots' with the

Australian landscape than exists with cultural groups derived more directly from the European colonisers.

This is reflected in their retention of some descent group identification, and through their concept of being

Ngarrindjeri. The contexts in which Aboriginal people recognise their role as part of a plural society is

reflected in their use of the categories Nunga, Koori, Black and Indigenous. The contemporary Aboriginal

population of the Lower Murray functions as a community, and has a distinct territorial base and a strong

link to the landscape and to key *places* within it.

End Notes

1 Small pox was introduced into Australia on several occasions, probably initially in the north by Malays (Cleland, 1966, pp.155-156). One outbreak reached Port Jackson in 1789. The occurrence of the disease in the Lower Murray in the 1830s was part of a later wave. See accounts provided by Teichelmann & Schurmann (1840, pt 2, p.34) & Gell (1842 [1904, p.99]) for the Adelaide region, and by Hahn (1838-1839 [1964, p.129) for Hahndorf, Mount Lofty Ranges area. In the Lower Murray and the South East regions, the disease is documented by Angas (1847b, p.123), Taplin (1879, p.45), Taplin (Journals, 25 June 1861), McCourt & Mincham (1977, pp.68-69; 1987, p.148) & Jenkin (1979, pp.28-30). Similar records exist for the Darling area (Newland, 1889, p.1) and for Victoria (Dawson, 1881, p.60; Bulmer, 1887, p.31).

2 1860 Select Committee Report, pp.52,67.

3 1899 Select Committee Report, Minutes, p.46.

4 Register, 14 March 1910.

5 For the location of contemporary Aboriginal settlements in South Australia, see maps provided by Griffin & McCaskill (1986, pp.32-33).

6 Eyre (1845), Meyer (1843, 1846), Moorhouse (1843), Schurmann (1840, 1846) & Teichelmann (1841).

7 The following examples of Adelaide newspaper articles on Aboriginal culture appeared in the 1840s - C. Schurmann, 'The Aborigines of South Australia'. (The South Australian Colonist, 10 March 1840); 'The Transactions of the Statistical Society - Report on the Aborigines of South Australia' (The Southern Australian, 11 January 1842); L. Piesse, 'The language of the natives of South Australia' (The South Australian Colonist, 14 July 1840).

8 Beveridge (1889), Bonwick (1870), Curr (1886-1887), Dawson (1881), Fison & Howitt (1880), Howitt (1904), Smyth (1878), Taplin (1874, 1879), Woods (1879b) & Worsnop (1898).

9 The bulk of Tindale's research in the Lower Murray region is yet to be published. Nevertheless, some of it appears in various papers by Tindale (1935, 1936, 1937a, 1938, 1940, 1941b, 1974, 1987). Clarke (1991a) critically reviews the organisation of this material.

10 The publisher insisted on the title of this book (R.M. Berndt, pers. com.).

11 Report from Dr R. Penney to the Australian Commissioner, Inward Correspondence, South Australian State Records, Public Record Office (GRG 35/5/1841/336).

12 In December 1841, a 'Report on the Aborigines of South Australia' was delivered at the Statistical Society in Adelaide by C. Teichelmann & M. Moorhouse. It was printed in the Register, 8 Jan. 1842. The second report, 'Annual Report of the Aborigines Department for the year ending 30 September 1843' was by Moorhouse. This not published until it appeared, with the previously mentioned report, in the J. Anth. Soc. S. Aust., 1990, vol.28, part 1, pp.38-63. Elsewhere in this chapter, the latter paper is referred to as by Moorhouse (1843).

13 See Peterson (1976a). Compare Tindale (1974, 1976) & Birdsell (1953, 1976) with Berndt (1959) & Peterson (1976b). Powell (1975, p.18) suggests flexible Aboriginal relationships with the environment.

14 This is essentially the model proposed by Mason (1905 [cited Vayda & Rappaport, 1968, pp.480-481]) for North America.

15 Kukabrak (also spelled as Kukabrag) is possibly a term from further upriver from the Lower Murray, as a similar term, Kubkubaru, was recorded as the local group name for Aboriginal people of the Cobdogla region of the Mid Murray (Fenner, 1931, p.90). Kukabrak appears to be a much larger cultural bloc term than that of the Ngarrindjeri, perhaps explained by the joint participation of Lower Murray and Mid Murray people in cultural events, such as initiations, late last century (see Berndt et al, 1993).

16 J. Harris letters, D6510(L)14,15, Mortlock Library, Adelaide.

17 This rendering probably relates to the 'Patowalun' Taplin recorded as spoken up river (Journals, 14 May 1860).

18 For records of fights of Mundoo Island people against their eastern neighbours see Taplin (Journals, 15 March 1860, 18 November 1860, 8 May 1861, 16 May 1861, 20 August 1861, 29 October 1861, 9 November 1861, 8 November 1862, 12-14 November 1862).

19 The division of Aboriginal people according to the type of water environment has been noted for elsewhere in Australia. For instance, Von Sturmer (1978) records a coastal - inland separation of Wik people of western Cape York, Queensland.

20 I discovered these regional links from the Taplin Journals (1859-79), Tindale Genealogies (Anthropology Archives, S.A. Museum) and via personal fieldwork with Lower Murray people. See also Brock & Kartinyeri (1989) & Clarke (1990 MS).

21 '1991 Census of Population and Housing. Preliminary Data Information Paper. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Persons in South Australia.' Australian Bureau of Statistics, Adelaide.

22 Barwick (1971, pp.15-17) noted this aspect of Aboriginal community bonding in Victoria.

23 During the late 1950s, Inglis (1961, p.203) described fear and distrust of Aboriginal people in Adelaide for people from the Koonibba Mission on the West Coast. This was partly because groups of 'wandering or primitive aborigines' who visited Koonibba were perceived as threatening through their knowledge of sorcery.

24 See 'ATSIC Murrundi Annual Report, 1990/91', p.3. I have heard of a few examples of non-Aboriginal people, who have superficial resemblance to Aboriginal people, obtaining written statements from recognised Aboriginal members in order to gain the financial advantages of being considered 'Aboriginal'.

25 In evidence, I cite the Wirangu word, 'Nangka' or 'Nangga', meaning 'man' or 'blackfellow' (Black, 1917, p.5). The fact that I have found no Ngarrindjeri term of similar meaning or sound, indicates that Nunga does not have a Point McLeay origin, in spite of the suggestion to the contrary by one researcher (Forby, 1970, p.12).

26 A young Aboriginal man, whose mother grew up at Point Pearce and his father at Point McLeay, recently had tattooed on his shoulder 'half Mud Monkey, half Butterfish'.

27 A few years ago, some mixed descendants of these groups living in the southern suburbs of Adelaide proposed calling themselves 'Narra-kaurna'.

28 This term is possibly related to 'munmunde' - 'barter' or 'exchange' (see Taplin, 1879, pp.126,130; Meyer, 1843, pp.82).

29 This closeness has implications in who is consulted over matters concerning David Unaipon, the famous Aboriginal scholar and inventor. Unaipon left no legitimate heirs, so family social links are important.

30 For a survey of language survival in Victorian Aboriginal groups, see Hercus (1986).

31 During 1991 and 1992, the State Department of Aboriginal Affairs organised a number of Aboriginal conferences concerning the establishment of Aboriginal-run language centres.

32 The ethnography by Clifford (1988, pp.277-346) of the Mashpee Indians of the Cape Cod region of the United States shows striking similarities to the Ngarrindjeri of the Lower Murray: in the manner of how the Mashpee were marginalised by European settlement; embedded in early government welfare; given an institutionalised identity; and finally existing as a dispersed group of mixed ancestry which has many 'modern' traditions that have taken the place of earlier ones.

3 The Role of Myth in the Creation of Lower Murray Cultural Landscapes

In pre-European Australia, Aboriginal people perceived the social and physical aspects of their world to be closely interwoven. They believed that their spirit ancestors had imbued the landscape with social relevance, and had thereby humanised it. This was perceived to have occurred during a creative period, generally described in the literature as the 'Dreamtime'. In this chapter, I investigate how Aboriginal myth reflects the dialectic connection between culture and the physical world, creating a perceived cultural landscape fusing the land, sea and sky with their human and spirit inhabitants. This will involve a critique of the portrayal of myth by ethnographers working in southern South Australia. Although modern uses of mythology by Lower Murray Aboriginal people have some continuity with the past, here I focus on periods of Aboriginal culture from the pre-European to the early years of European settlement (c.1800 - 1860). An ethnographic listing, derived from personal fieldwork in the Lower Murray, of spirit beings reported by contemporary Aboriginal people will be provided.

3.1 What is the Dreaming?

Myth, as a number of researchers have pointed out, is defined by Western tradition in two main contradictory ways.[1] Firstly, we have myth that is construed as an invented or fictitious story. In this sense, myth is a false and trivial belief. This definition is often used by those, possessing the ideology of a dominant culture, who seek to define what they consider to be the 'superstitions' of an historically subordinate culture. The second concept of myth describes it as a 'traditional' belief or a reflection of a culture, and places less emphasis on evaluating its true/false aspects. It is the cultural importance of this second definition of myth that I will explore here.

3.1.1 Dreaming as Reality

Myth, as an expression of a culture, has been well explored by social science. Durkheim (1915) considered myth as one of the essential elements of religious life, representing the way in which society portrays humanity and the world. Malinowski (1948) developed this further, seeing the prime function of myth to be the recording and validating of cultural institutions. However, Kirk (1973, pp.11-12) has pointed out that a

problem with these interpretations is that not all myths are closely associated with ritual or religious practices. Some myths appear quite secular although they still reflect deeply rooted cultural values. In Australia, the ethnographic literature generally distinguishes between myths that focused on events said to have occurred during the Dreamtime, when the main 'creation' took place, with those that concern the period afterwards. The 'Dreamtime' represents an Aboriginal English gloss of a range of meanings. However, the 'Dreaming' can loosely be defined as the whole body of mythology in Aboriginal Australia that provides some insight into significant cultural events. Aboriginal mythology therefore puts forth a model of the past. However, as I demonstrate below, both 'time' and 'history' as generally understood by Europeans are not involved with this definition.

Although myth provides the listener with explanations of the past and present, the analogy of Aboriginal myth with a European notion of history is misleading. Myth can, in some contexts, be an Aboriginal version of history, but it is much more. Levi-Strauss considered all myths, when correctly understood, to be speculative, or problem reflecting (1966, 1977, 1978). He recognised that myth provided a view of the world that can be constantly explored and modified by culture. It follows that a particular myth can mean different things to different people, with many equally valid versions. Many myths have varying layers of meaning (R.M. & C.H. Berndt, 1989, p.3). They are not static constructs, but, as I will later demonstrate, are able to incorporate new elements. Baker (1989, p.110) stated that the Dreaming 'straddles European distinctions between politics and religion.' These views are in contrast to the rigid notions of myth used by Tindale, who recorded much of the published mythological material available for southern South Australia.[2] To researchers, such as Tindale, mythology was simply another determinant of the 'tribe', with particular myths being owned by certain 'tribal' groups.[3] History, as it is perceived by Western Europeans, and mythology, as perceived by Australian Aboriginal people, may have similar functions in their respective cultures, but are nevertheless not synonymous.

Through the expression of myth, beliefs about the organisation of the world are able to be conceptualised and explored by a culture. Stanner (1953 [1979, p.29]) described the Dreaming, not as a definition of Aboriginal life, but as 'the poetic key to Reality'. He claimed that the Dreaming determined not only what life is, but also what it could be. In keeping with Stanner, Ronald and Catherine Berndt have defined Aboriginal mythology as:

> Stories of the kind [which] ... provide insights into Aboriginal thinking and doing things, in relation to other human beings (kin, friends and strangers), various creatures, species and elements in the environment and, in particular, to the ultimate arbiters of the destinies of men and women, the deities of the Dreaming (1989, p.xxvi).

The Dreaming is an important set of beliefs that enabled Aboriginal people to unravel the blueprint of life. This broad meaning of Dreaming meant that it could be used in several different contexts, such as when referring to the totem, the site where the spirit originated, or custom itself (Stanner, 1953 [1979, p.23]). Stanner claimed that logic, system and rationality are not actually located in the events portrayed in Aboriginal myth, but instead are to be found in the scheme of life it describes (1953 [1979, p.30]). He says the 'shape of reality is always distorted in the shadows it throws'. The power of the Dreaming is in its sacred authority.

3.1.2 Time in the Dreaming

In order to discuss geographical aspects of Aboriginal mythology, it is necessary to first discuss pre-European Aboriginal beliefs of time. Stanner (1953 [1979, p.23]) claims that he was not aware of the existence of any Aboriginal words for time as an abstract concept. This is illustrated in an Aboriginal point of view that their mythology was valid for all time (R.M. & C.H. Berndt, 1989, p.5). Although the Dreaming was a notion of a sacred and heroic period of a remote past, it was still based on a concept of time which made it part of the present. Stanner (1953 [1979, p.30]) suggests that Aboriginal 'interest lies in the cycles rather than the continuum [of time]'. He claims that this is shown by the widespread use in Aboriginal kinship of recurring generation-classes. He describes this perception as 'social time'. Lauer (1981, p.21) states that this experience of time refers to the 'patterns and orientations that relate to social processes and to the conceptualization of the ordering of social life'. In the context of Australian Aboriginal views of the universe, this was manifest as short kinship lineages, combined with a perception of the Dreamtime as being part of a recent past.

Although Aboriginal people's experience of time may have differed from that of Europeans, in the short term they still required a way to measure it. For the Mid Murray region, Eyre says a:

> practice of the natives, when travelling from one place to another, is to put stones up in the trees they pass, at different heights from the ground, to indicate the height of the sun when they passed. Other natives following, are thus made aware of the hour of the day when their friends passed particular points (1845, vol.2, p.365).

Eyre uses this custom to explain a similar occurrence of stones in trees noted by Grey (1839, p.113) in Western Australia. In the Hahndorf area of the Adelaide Hills, Hahn (1838-1839 [1964, pp.130-131]) records that local Aboriginal people made notches in their digging-sticks upon the appearance of each new moon to mark their own age. Aboriginal people did therefore measure time and it was used as a social referent. Nevertheless, it was a part of a longer cyclical system, rather than a linear one.

Aboriginal people considered that they had the ability, through spirit mediums, to manipulate the time and space relationship. For instance, one early Murray River resident recalls seeing small flattened out piles of stone, resembling road metal, at intervals along routes used by Aboriginal people.[4] He was told by an Aboriginal person, 'Well, you know, fellow sit down under those stones who has control of the earth, and when blackfellow very tired him give presents to that fellow.' The first offering made would be a bough removed from a nearby tree. If the traveller was a man, this would be cast on, the thrower saying 'That is your spear.' A second bough would follow, 'That is your waddy, make ground come shorter.' Similarly, women would offer the underground spirits two boughs, the first representing a possum rug, the second a net. In this way, Aboriginal people along the river made the ground shrink, and the length of their trip shorten. Another example of the manipulation of space, on this occasion through sorcery, features in the Ngurunderi epic (Section 3.2.1.2) when the spirit creator tried, at first unsuccessfully, to walk away from an evil sorcerer, Parampari (Berndt, 1940a, p.175). Clearly, Aboriginal people perceived time and space differently from Europeans.

3.2 The Making of Landscape and Society in Myth

The Lower Murray topography is dominated by several major topographic features: the Murray River and Lower Lakes, the Mount Lofty Ranges, and the sea. The recorded mythology of the region is rich in detailed accounts of the creation of these major elements of the landscape. At lesser levels too, hills, creeks, individual rocks, growths of vegetation, the generation of animal species and atmospheric phenomena, and the formation of human society were explained by Dreamtime events. In Aboriginal Australia, song cycles provided 'mental maps' of the landscape (Baker, 1989, p.82). The Dreamtime was known by the Yaraldi of the southern shores of Lake Alexandrina as the Gulal.[5] Stories told in song form about this 'creative' or 'ancestral' period were called 'pekere' by the Lower Murray people.[6] However, the literature strongly

shows that within the Lower Murray region, there was no single Aboriginal view of how, or in what order, these creations took place. In the discussion that follows, I will attempt to account for this aspect of the Aboriginal relationship to the landscape.

3.2.1 The Formation of the Murray River Landscape

The southern Aboriginal ethnographies show considerable variation in mythology, even from within linguistically and culturally similar areas. In the South Australian region of the Murray Basin, there are creation accounts for the river that variously involve the different mythic heroes Noreele, Ngurunderi, Corna and Thukabi. I argue that the existence of the diversity of these beliefs can be explained in terms of the dynamic relationship people had with the landscape. Rather than variation being used as evidence of a post-European corruption of a standard 'traditional' mythology, here it will be treated as a pre-European characteristic of the body of knowledge that 'explained' the world. Nevertheless, in spite of the apparently confusing number of creation accounts, there are some common elements within the Lower Murray region that distinguish it culturally from surrounding regions.

3.2.1.1 Noreele the Spirit Ancestor

Areas where versions of Noreele were recorded are confined to the Murray region to the north of that which I have previously defined as the Lower Murray. For instance, from the Mid Murray region, Eyre (1845, vol.2, p.356) gives an outline of a myth whereby there were once four individuals living among the clouds, a man named Noreele and his three male children who had no mother. This all-powerful benevolent character was considered to have created the landscape and virtually everything in it, giving names and languages to various Aboriginal groups. Eyre (1845, vol.2, p.357) was told that Noreele brought Aboriginal people originally from 'some place over the waters to the eastward'. There are also related accounts of this male Dreamtime ancestor from further up the Murray River into Victoria and New South Wales.[7]

Noreele's gender as male in Eyre's account differs in another version obtained early this century from Natone, an Aboriginal man from the Moorunde area of the Mid Murray (Bellchambers, 1931, p.125). Natone claimed that the Murray River was created by a blind woman, Noreela, who had two young children

to guide her. Starting from Lake Victoria, Noreela created the river by driving back the sea. She travelled

like a 'drunken bee', her meandering course meant that the river was very long. This lengthening of her

journey was considered greatly desirable, as it increased the number of hunting and fishing grounds, with a

lagoon at each elbow. The existence of fossils jutting out of cliffs along the Murray River were considered

by Aboriginal people to be the remains of fish killed and eaten by Noreela and her children (Bellchambers,

1931, p.112).

An interesting aspect of Natone's account of the mythology from the Mid Murray is that he included

another ancestor, Wurranderra - an 'Aboriginal Moses', who reportedly came later to lead forth many

northern tribes to the rich waters of the Murray, in the process giving them law and customs.[8] It is likely

that Wurranderra is a poor European rendering of the word Ngurunderi. Due to the similarity of this

description with that of the Lower Murray ancestor, Ngurunderi, and the likely linguistic similarity, it

seems probable that this was an aspect of Mid Murray mythology given greater prominence by the Lower

Murray people. Whether knowledge of the Ngurunderi mythology was widespread in Mid Murray regions

before European colonisation is not known. It is possible that Natone incorporated this Ngurunderi-type

account on the basis of having heard it from Lower Murray people he had met.

3.2.1.2 Ngurunderi the Spirit Ancestor

For the Aboriginal groups of the Lower Murray, the main creator of the landscape is generally recorded in

the ethnographic literature as Ngurunderi, or one of the linguistic variations of the term.[9] There are many

different versions of the Ngurunderi mythology, even varying in elements of the main story line. They

generally fall into two categories - those that have a coastal bias, and those that emphasise the inland role

of the Murray River (Fig.3.1).[10] The former versions were chiefly recorded from coastal groups away from

the river in the western end of the Lower Murray, the latter from Lower Lakes people on the eastern side

near the entrance of the Murray River into Lake Alexandrina. I will now describe this variation.

Among the earliest recorded myths of the Lower Murray was a Ngurunderi account recorded in 1844 from

the Encounter Bay people, concerning the formation of the landscape.[11] In this version, Ooroondooil (=

Ngurunderi) was the first great spirit to wake. Three or four other beings later woke, some then
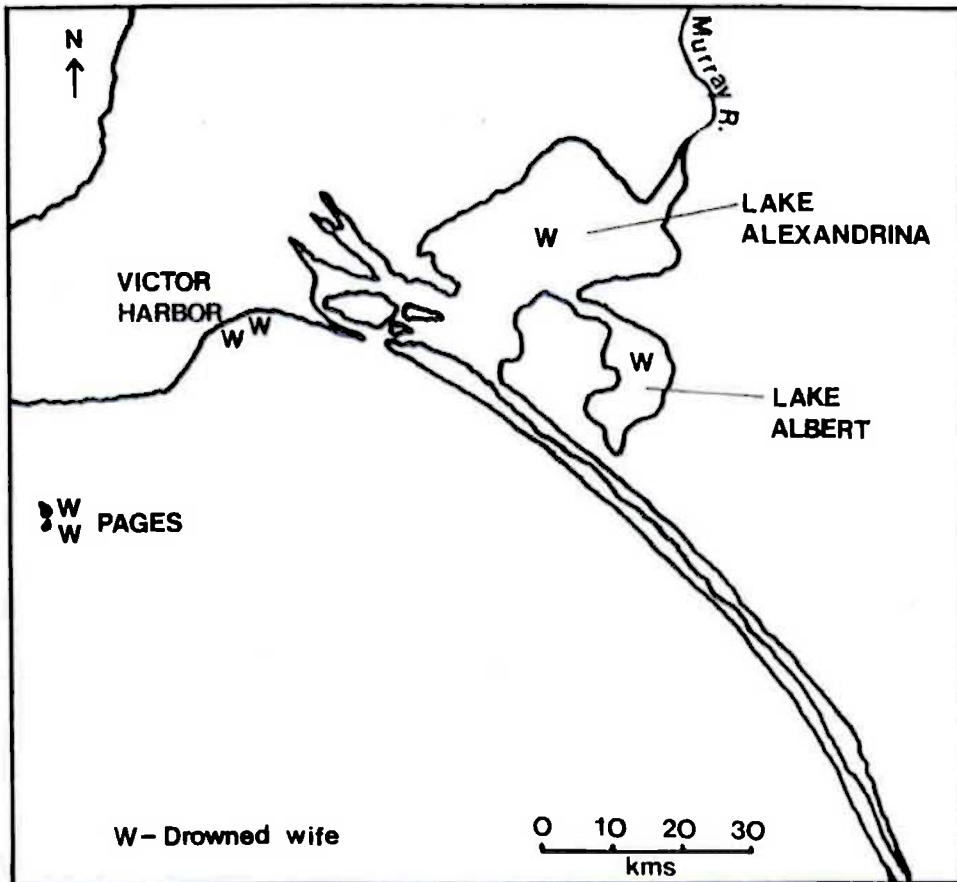
Fig.3.1 The wife-drowning sites of the Ngurunderi myth, showing inland and coastal variation
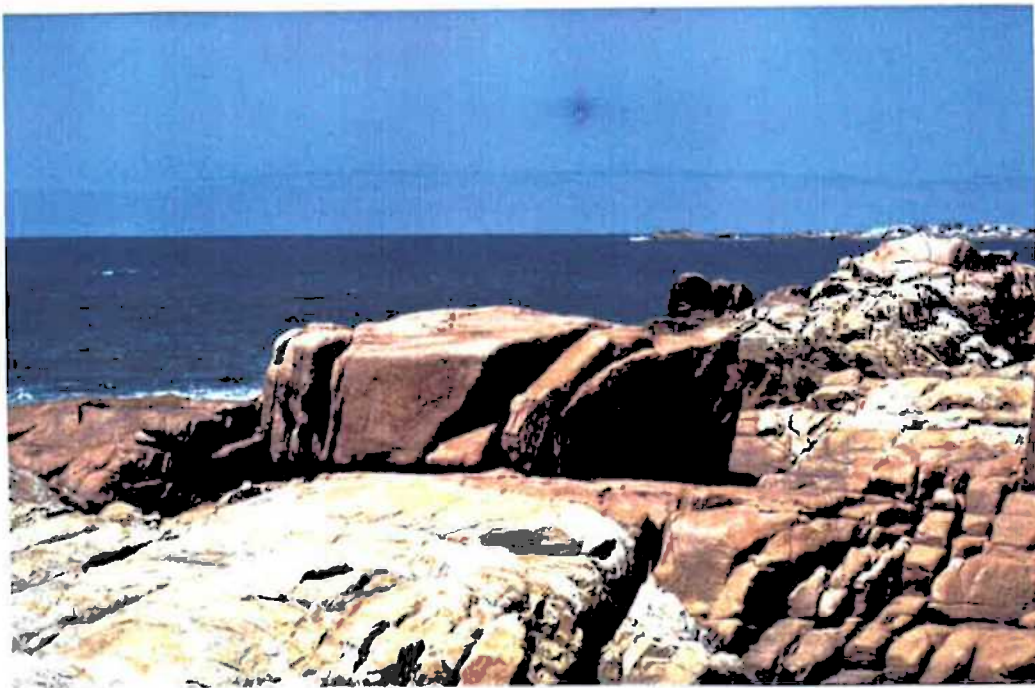
Fig.3.2 Rock (centre) near Middleton said to have been used by Ngurunderi to kill a seal, 1989 (Photo: P.A. Clarke)

complaining that they were hungry and cold. Ooroondooil told one spirit to make a fish, and he taught

them how to cook it. He made the lesser spirits go off to collect firewood, water, and other necessary items.

Ooroondooil then sent the spirits away to lands he was creating. Ooroondooil himself went westwards

where he first made the Big Murray people (Coorong groups), and then the groups further west. After

teaching the Lower Murray people their customs, he left, swimming to other lands in the west. Two of his

wives drowned while trying to follow him, becoming the Pages Islands of the Backstairs Passage.

Ooroondooil created Kangaroo Island, and then went further west where he was believed to have still lived.

In a variation of this account, Ooroondooil had three wives who drowned when, due to their curiosity, they

tried to reached Kangaroo Island from the mainland.[12]

In another Encounter Bay version of the Ngurunderi mythology, several important mythological events had

already taken place before his arrival.[13] Ngurunderi, in this rendering, was a large and powerful man with

two wives and several children. On one occasion his wives fled from him. He chased them along the

southern Fleurieu Peninsula coastline, and while doing so created many of the geographic features there.

Ngurunderi finally caught the women and beat them. But they escaped again. This time he was tired of

chasing them, so he ordered the sea to flow and drown them. They became rocks that can be seen at low

tide.[14] After he had transformed the landscape, Ngurunderi was said to have gone west. One of

Ngurunderi's sons, who was accidentally left behind, found his way to the land 'towards the west' by

catching hold of a line thrown by Ngurunderi, which was attached to his 'maralengk' (testicles).[15] It was

stated in this account, that after he left the Lower Murray, the creation of new rivers, hills and other

features ceased.

The versions of Ngurunderi recorded from the Lake Alexandrina area vary in much of the detail from those

of Encounter Bay. In one account from the lake area obtained by George Taplin, there were once three

great hunters, Ngurunderi, Nepele and Wyungare (Taplin, 1874 [1879, pp.55-62]). As evidence for their

hunting prowess, numerous salt lagoons around Lake Alexandrina were considered to have been created by

Nepele and Wyungare while pegging out fresh kangaroo skins, thus denuding the grass. On one occasion,

Ngurunderi and his sons drove an enormous Murray cod, Pondi, down the Darling and Murray Rivers to

Piltangk, on the southern shore of Lake Alexandrina. Here they obtained the assistance of Nepele. They

eventually caught Pondi near Raukkan. Ngurunderi tore it into pieces, throwing each fragment back into

the water, and thus creating different species of fish. The fish-making episode differs from the Encounter Bay mythology, where this is performed by another spirit named Pungngane (Meyer, 1846 [1879, p.202]). Ngurunderi had four children by two wives. Once, while camping at Tulurrug (Pelican Point) two of his children strayed into the eastern scrub and were lost. Ngurunderi's two wives later fled. Ngurunderi followed them to Encounter Bay where, seeing them in the distance, he drowned them by making the waters rise. Ngurunderi then searched up the Coorong for his two lost children. He came across them after he fought and killed a sorcerer at Salt Creek. Ngurunderi later left the lower landscape for Wyirrewarre, the Skyworld, taking his children with him.

In the Lower Lakes district, away from the sea, the creation of the lakes was given greater emphasis. Angas provides a version in which the two wives of Oorundoo (= Ngurunderi) 'proved untractable, and ran away from their lord; and to punish this unwarrantable behaviour on their part, Oorundoo very properly made two lakes to drown them, which correspond with the lakes Alexandrina and Albert (1847b, pp.96-97)'. Thus there is an account of the creation of Lake Albert and Lake Alexandrina that contains elements similar to those of the Ngurunderi mythology as recorded at Encounter Bay. However, this version makes it more relevant to groups living in the Lower Lakes and river region by possessing different elements in the mythic landscape.

The most detailed description of the Ngurunderi myth is provided by Berndt (1940a; Berndt et al, 1993, pp.223-227,433-441). In this version, Ngurunderi pursued the giant Murray cod, Pondi, down the previously small course of the Murray River. As the cod was chased, it widened the river to its present width. With each sweep of the tail, Pondi created a swamp. When Pondi escaped into Lake Alexandrina, Ngurunderi called out to his brother in-law, Nepele, to spear the cod. Nepele speared Pondi near Raukkan (Point McLeay), dragging the fish to a submerged sandbank to wait for Ngurunderi. Ngurunderi, upon reaching Nepele, cut up the fish into many small pieces. Each portion became a different species of fish as it was thrown back into the water. In a later episode of this long account, Ngurunderi's two wives broke a food taboo and fled across the Lake Albert country, heading down the Coorong. Ngurunderi followed and near Blackford, which is inland from Kingston, he came across a sorcerer with whom he quarrelled. Ngurunderi killed him and burnt his body which formed the Granites near Kingston. Ngurunderi went back along the Coorong, eventually crossing the Murray Mouth, and moving along the southern Fleurieu

Peninsula coast. He created many of the landscape features along the way (Fig.3.2, 3.3). Ngurunderi finally found his wives crossing to Kangaroo Island. He drowned them by making the seas rise. The bodies of the wives became The Pages Islands. Ngurunderi then went to the Skyworld, Waieruwar, via Kangaroo Island.

Tindale provides yet another account of the Ngurunderi mythology.[16] His version was distilled from recordings obtained from many Aboriginal people with varying backgrounds, including the Ngaralta and Nanguruku of the Mid Murray and the Maraura of the Upper Murray cultural region, and down river to the Lower Murray groups such as the Portaulun, Yaraldi, Ramindjeri and the Tanganekald (= Tangani). It is interesting to view Tindale's version of this mythology from this century, in the light of the considerable variation in the earlier recorded Ngurunderi-type mythology that I have already described. Not only did Tindale standardise the name of Ngurunderi, he appears to have chosen particular accounts of episodes over others with which they would have conflicted. Although very similar in its general outline to Berndt's recorded version, Tindale's explanation of some events, such as what happened to Ngurunderi's canoes, does not fit Berndt's account. However, both Berndt and Tindale shared the same Yaraldi informant, Albert Karloan. Tindale thus appears to have applied himself to finding a 'correct version' of an 'original' or 'true' myth of Ngurunderi. This may have been because of his scientific aim to discover the 'truth'. Tindale apparently ignored the variation he would almost certainly have found with such a wide range of informants from varied cultural backgrounds. He probably considered most variations he encountered to have reflected 'tribal' collapse since European colonisation. In my view, such as approach is clearly mistaken.

The Ngurunderi myth complex contains references to areas outside of the Lower Murray. George Taplin says that it was tradition that two warriors from Ngurunderi's group returned to the Upper Murray, but were never heard of again (1874 [1879, p.61]). Furthermore, in the Ngaiawang mythology of the Upper Murray, the two wives of Ngurunderi were said to be the two Bakindji sisters involved in the eagle and crow myth epic of the Upper Murray/Darling district (Tindale, 1939, p.259). There is also a record that two other young men from Ngurunderi's group were said to have led a party south along the Coorong, establishing themselves near Mount Gambier (Taplin, 1874 [1879, p.62]). Therefore, although particular episodes of the Ngurunderi myth, as told by the Lower Murray people, were chiefly confined to their own territories, this mythology did provide links to other cultural regions.

Fig.3.3 Pullen Island at Port Elliot, showing the rocks (far right) said to be Ngurunderi's fishing net, 1989 (Photo: P.A. Clarke)

Fig.3.4 A Point McLeay resident, Susan Rankine, at Pulluwewal, Wyungare's Hill, 1990 (Photo: P.A. Clarke)

The discussion above indicates that within the Lower Murray, local descent groups appear to have had their own version of the Dreamtime events creating their landscape. The Dreaming therefore reflected socio-political aspects of Aboriginal life. This is consistent with the Dreaming epics recorded from other parts of Australia.[17] Although on one level this appears to contradict the cultural homogeneity of the region, I have argued that the proliferation of versions of the 'creation' are not simply due to error of the recorder or informant, but indicate the existence of different perceived versions of the 'cultural landscape' itself.

3.2.1.3 Wyungare and the Two Wives

The mythology of Wyungare explains the frequency of fires in the Lower Murray region.[18] In Tindale's version of this myth, Wyungare was the brother of Nepele, the brother in-law to Ngurunderi. One day Nepele's two wives went to the camp of Wyungare at Pullawewal near Point McLeay and seduced him (Fig.3.4). Nepele, upon discovering this, seized a fire-stick and some grass, and hid this above the camp. He told the fire to burst into flame when Wyungare and the two wives snored. When this happened, they fled through the scrub towards the Lake Albert Passage, with the fire following them. The kangaroo skins, which dropped as they fled, became a line of salt pans which remain today as a marker of their flight. At the Passage, they were forced into the mud and for a time were safe there. Wyungare and the two wives later escaped up into the Heavens.

Some other accounts of this story vary in the identity of the angry man who made the fires. In one version, it is a man named Pungngane (Meyer, 1846 [1879, pp.201-202]), and in another, it is Ngurunderi (Laurie, 1917). However, the adulterous behaviour of the wives and the force of the fire are common elements with all recorded versions. Tindale's account, which is the most detailed, explains the Aboriginal perception of the origin of fires in the Point McLeay region. In this way, landscape transforming-events, such as bushfires, were given a human dimension. In determining the cultural relevance of the Wyungare story, Tindale considers that its geographical context in his Yaraldi version is important. For instance, due to the configuration of the Narrung Peninsula, bushfires in this region formerly had a tendency to sweep down the path along which Wyungare fled, particularly in the face of summer north westerly winds. Through myths, such as that of Wyungare, not only the origin of the landscape is 'explained', but so too are such physical phenomena as bushfires. The importance of the myth to Yaraldi tradition was that youths in the initiation

cycle were symbolically the personification of Wyungare (Berndt et al, 1993, p.163). Myths concerning

Wyungare are heavily interwoven with those of both Ngurunderi and Nepele. They are best treated together

as a myth complex, rather than as individual accounts of the landscape.

3.2.1.4 Corna the Creator

By one account, Corna was believed to be an ancestral spirit who was driven into the Lower Murray region

from the north north east by a fire created by sorcerers in the land of Toolcoon.[19] Corna was also said to

mean 'black man ... the name of the native race'. In the myth, he and his family were eventually saved by

the formation of the Murray River that burst from the ground, extinguishing the flames. The river flowed

on into the sea. This differs significantly from the accounts of the creation of the river already described.

The name Corna is interesting, as it is possibly from this that Tindale mistakenly derived his 'tribe' term

for the Adelaide area, spelled by him, as 'Kaurna'.[20]

3.2.1.5 Thukabi the Creator

There is yet another version of the creation of the Murray River, this one involving a large river turtle.[21]

As Henry Rankine, a prominent member of the contemporary Ngarrindjeri community, is the main source

of this myth, I provide the following account as told to me by him:

> Thukabi [a large river turtle] came down [from the Darling district] through the desert
> looking for a place to lay its eggs. As she went, the drag of its tail made the river, its
> flipper carved out the lagoons and banks. You can see where it went. When it got to the
> lake, it pushed itself into the sea.

It is worth noting the similarity with the version of the Ngurunderi myth where Pondi, a Murray cod, forced

the enlargement of a stream into the river. Henry Rankine knows the Ngurunderi mythology in some detail,

but nevertheless puts forth the Thukabi story as another possibility.

3.2.1.6 Land as Body

In addition to Aboriginal myths where the Murray landscape was created by deeds of various ancestors,

there are examples of the domination of the landscape in the form of the bodies of large ancestral beings.

For instance it was believed that Ngurunderi, in the beginning, stretched out his body along the Lower

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Murray, with one leg extending along Encounter Bay, and the other along the Coorong (Berndt et al, 1993, p.13). There are other Lower Murray examples of body parts as landscape features, some of which may also refer to the Ngurunderi myth. For instance, Ku:lwa (Goolwa) and the Kurangk (Coorong), are derived from Aboriginal place names which refer to 'the elbow' and 'the neck' respectively (Taplin, 1874 [1879, p.130]).[22] Other place names linked to the human body include Tipping (the end of Point Sturt) meaning 'the lips', and Ngiakkung (Loveday Bay) meaning 'arm pit' (Taplin, 1874 [1879, p.130]). The existence of these landscape body parts, at the western end of Lake Alexandrina, was pointed out by Ronald Berndt (pers com.). He suggested that they were formerly perceived as linked together as parts of one ancestral being. In this way, the physical landscape was humanised.

The Aboriginal cultural landscape of southern South Australia has other similar examples of place names relating to body parts of large ancestral beings. For example, the Mount Lofty Ranges when seen from the Adelaide side was considered to be the body of a fallen giant, the twin peaks of Mount Lofty and Mount Bonython being the ears (Clarke, 1991a, p.63). My fieldwork with older Ngarrindjeri people formerly living at Point McLeay, has produced similar examples not recorded elsewhere. These informants can remember that of Mount Barker, clearly visible from Point McLeay, it was formerly said 'Nakan korni le:win, tharakis up, been put through the rules' [see the man lying down with his knees up being initiated]. Young girls, playing along the lake shore, were on occasion scolded by 'old people' for looking at the mountain. Another body in the landscape is represented by hills between Mason's Lookout and Ashville. These are considered to be a woman lying on her side, facing the lake.

Some marks considered left by the ancestors are much smaller than hills. For instance, Aboriginal informants from the Coorong and South East have told me of several sites where impressions in the limestone were believed to represent parts of Ngurunderi. These smaller topographic features include an imprint of his body, arms and legs where he lay in the lake at Chinamen Well, and a footprint on the mainland side of the Coorong Lake at Teeluk near Kingston. Ngurunderi was considered to have left his footprints at Pamundang (near Ashfield) on the south eastern shore of Lake Alexandrina (Berndt, 1940a, p.172; Berndt et al, 1993, p.224). Geographic monuments of Dreamtime beings not only humanised the landscape, but provided the Aboriginal occupants with 'tangible' proof of the validity of their particular versions of their own past.

3.2.2 Lower Murray Identity in Myth

To some degree, the possession of detailed knowledge of the Ngurunderi complex of mythology, as described above, appears to have distinguished the Lower Murray people from their neighbours. In order to further demonstrate the connectedness in myth between *place* and people, I will provide some Aboriginal accounts of their own origins. This will illustrate the cultural biases of the Lower Murray descent groups. For instance, Meyer says that the Ramindjeri group believed that:

> Languages originated from an ill-tempered old woman. In remote time an old woman, named Wurruri, lived towards the east, and generally walked with a large stick in her hand, to scatter the fires round which others were sleeping. Wurruri at length died. Greatly delighted at this circumstance, they sent messengers in all directions to give notice of her death; men, women, and children came, not to lament, but to show their joy. The Raminjerar were the first who fell upon the corpse and began eating the flesh, and immediately began to speak intelligibly. The other tribes to the eastward arriving later, ate the contents of the intestines, which caused them to speak a language slightly different. The northern tribes came last, and devoured the intestines and all that remained, and immediately spoke a language differing still more from that of the Raminjerar (1846 [1879, pp.204-205]).

This belief provided the group with a model of the cultural difference between themselves and their neighbours. It also illustrates the tendency of individuals to describe their own language in terms of it as the symbol of their existence at the pinnacle of their broader culture.[23] Another Lower Murray example is in a Ramindjeri account of the spatial arrangements of dwellings in the Land of the Dead, which has a bias towards Ramindjeri people. They believed that Encounter Bay and Goolwa men, upon death, would go to live in the hut of Ngurunderi, whereas those from other regions would live some distance away (Meyer, 1846 [1879, p.206]). From the above examples, it is clear that the geographical context of myth varied according to the socio-political structure of the group.

In myths, such as the Ngurunderi complex described above, there are strong indications that Lower Murray people perceived their own origins as having been from up the river. This is illustrated by Brown in his recording of a Yaraldi 'legend' of the origin of themselves, and their neighbours, the Tanganalun. He says:

> The ancestors of the two tribes are believed to have come down the Murray River. When the Yaralde (= Yaraldi) reached the present country of the tribe they came upon the sea, and they said, in their dialect, Yarawalangan?, "Where shall we go now?". They stayed where they were and their descendants have ever since been known as Yaralde. The ancestors of the Tanganalun similarly came upon the sea farther to the south-east, and they said Tangawalangan? "Where shall we go?". Their descendants have been known ever since as Tanganalun (1918, p.226).

It is possible that this account was tied into one of the myth epics, involving Ngurunderi or Nepele, although this connection is not given.

Another account of the origin of the Lower Murray people, reportedly given by the Ngarrindjeri themselves, is provided by George Taplin. He says:

> The Narrinyeri have a tradition that they came down the Darling, and then across the desert from the junction to the head of Lake Albert. They say they brought a language of their own with them, but that they became mixed with clans already dwelling on the lakes, and their language merged in theirs, and their customs became mixed (1879, p.168).

The context in which George Taplin elicited this account is unknown, although it is possible that he merely interpreted the Ngurunderi myth as an historical record of a migration down the river. However, it is significant that the cultural connections of the Lower Murray people with other communities is generally said to be from the east or north east, not the north, south or west. This supports the model of Aboriginal cultural blocs already presented (Section 2.3.1.4).

After European colonisation, Aboriginal mythology was modified as people embraced Christianity. For instance, Ngurunderi was taken by the Lower Murray people as a suitable interpretation of the concept of 'God' being taught to them by early missionaries (Taplin Journals, 25 June 1859; 22 September 1859). It has been my experience that for many Ngarrindjeri people, this linkage is still perceived. One young adult told me in 1988 'Ngurunderi is like Jesus. God gave Ngurunderi to the people. God spoke to the people through Ngurunderi.' Several informants claim that the reason that the graves in the Point McLeay cemetery are arranged with head end towards the west is so the dead person's spirit can go in the direction of Ngurunderi. The 'hybridisation' of tradition is illustrated in an account of Aboriginal people on the Point McLeay Mission in the 1880s who laid bodies on a cross for a short time before a pre-European-type burial platform.[24] Another example was provided to me by a Lower Murray Aboriginal person, with family connections to western Victoria, who gave a variation of the Ngurunderi epic that appears to have been borrowed from the New Testament. In this version, Ngurunderi travelled to a camp in Victoria, and found that people there were starving. He left, returning half a day later with fish and bread for the camp. The fish were of a type not found there. From here, Ngurunderi then went back into South Australia. The Christianisation of Aboriginal myth is very apparent in the Ramsay Smith accounts of Lower Murray mythology (1930). Although I will consider the contemporary significance of spirit beliefs later (Section

7.3.2.2), it is important to state here that the example of Ngurunderi illustrates an initial meshing of ideas, not a straight replacement of the weaker by the stronger.

3.2.3 Psychic Landscapes of the Lower Murray

From the southern Australian ethnographies, it is clear that Aboriginal people considered that there were other realms within the perceived cultural landscape in addition to their own terrestrial regions, to which they could travel in spirit form (Clarke, 1990; 1991a, pp.63-66). Such regions include the Skyworld and the Underworld. The latter is also sometimes recorded as the 'Land to the West' (Clarke, 1991a, pp.64-65). These are common concepts throughout the Oceanic region (Luquet, 1968, pp.451-452). I define these *places* as psychic landscapes because they are not tangible according to Western models of space. They are, as I will demonstrate, nevertheless important inclusions to the mapping of the total cultural landscape of the Aboriginal people.

3.2.3.1 The Skyworld

The perceived existence of the Heavens as an image of the terrestrial landscape is common across Australia. This Skyworld was perceived as a region which, to some extent, obeyed the same laws as those on the terrestrial landscape. In an account of Mid Murray cosmology, Eyre notes:

> One old native informed me, that all blacks, when dead, go up to the clouds, where they have plenty to eat and drink; fish, birds, and game of all kinds, with weapons and implements to take them. He then told me, that occasionally individuals had been up to the clouds, and had come back, but that such instances were very rare; his own mother, he said, had been one of the favoured few. Some one from above had let down a rope, and hauled her up by it; she remained one night, and on her return, gave a description of what she had seen in a chant, or song, which she sung for me, but of the meaning of which I could make out nothing (1845, vol.2, p.367).

In the Lower Murray, Taplin records 'Talkothere says that a little while ago he dreamed that he was sick and a line came down from heaven and fastened on his foot to pull him up there and he took out his knife and cut it and so escaped (Journals, 22 April 1863)'. Pinkie Mack, a Yaraldi woman, claimed that 'children are said to be little, flying about in the air, dropped out of a bag and they could be caught' (Harvey, 1939).

In the Adelaide area, initiates were ritually taken to the celestial region in order to gain sacred knowledge.[25] In the Lower South East, a healer reportedly gained knowledge through crossing into the Heavens by climbing a tree (Smith, 1880, p.30). In western Victoria, Aboriginal 'doctors' and 'sorcerers' frequently claimed to have visited the Skyworld (Dawson, 1881, pp.57-58). The perceived existence of this landscape therefore had a significant role in the cultural organisation of people and space.

The Heavens were known to Lower Murray people variously as Wyirrewarre (= Waieruwar), Wyirri (= Waiyirri) and Wairalt, depending on linguistic context, such as 'Heaven', 'to Heaven', 'in Heaven'.[26] The term 'warre' meant 'high up' (Taplin, 1879, p.132), therefore the region name Wyirrewarre stresses its higher relationship to lower landscapes. The Lower Murray people believed that they would all go to Wyirrewarre after death (Taplin, 1874 [1879, pp.18-19]). From the above examples of the movement of living people between the land and the sky, it appears that 'high' may have only been considered to be the height of a tree or at most a hill. It is interesting to note that one ethnographer claimed that the 'Lower Murray tribe do not climb trees'.[27] I suggest that this was possibly through a general fear of entering the Skyworld. If so, then presumably this only applied to upper sections of the tree, as Aboriginal people still climbed trees to catch possums, collect honey, and cut bark for canoes. In the Wyungare myth (Section 3.2.1.3), the Skyworld was reached by the throw of a spear. Therefore, it is likely that the Skyworld was perceived by Lower Murray people as a part of the landscape that was not beyond their physical reach.

The cosmic bodies were rich with meaning (Fig.3.5). This is illustrated in an account by Giles, recorded from an Aboriginal man named Billy Poole from the Lake Albert area. On one occasion:

> When around the camp fire at night he [Billy Poole] told me the names of stars, and, more over, of constellations. He pointed out one group as an old man kangaroo with his arm broken; another group was a turkey sitting on her eggs, the eggs being our constellation Pleiades, another a Toolicher, a small and very prettily marked kangaroo peculiar to the district; another an emu and so on.[28]

Another record lists celestial bodies such as Nunganari (stingray), Pindjali (emu), Prolggi (brolga) (Berndt et al, 1993, p.164, fig.25). The cosmos was therefore, to Aboriginal people, a reflection of the Lower Murray terrestrial landscape. The Lower Murray people formerly believed that some of the stars were deceased warriors, such as Ngurunderi, Wyungare, Nepele, Manchingga, and their families, who were now living in Wyirrewarre.[29] Meyer (1846 [1879, p.201]) records that the Ramindjeri believed that 'The stars

Fig. 3.5 The cosmology of the Lower Murray people

TOOLACHE
WALLABY

MARKERI

WARTE
(VENUS -
FIRE-STICK)

PINDJALI
(EMU)

PROLGGI
(MAGELLANIC
CLOUDS - CRANE)

NANGGE
(SUN)

NEPELE'S CANOE

HOME OF KULDA

YUKI,
TJIRILENGI
(SOUTHERN
CROSS)

HOME OF
PUCKOWE

COALSACK

NGURUNDERI YUKI
(NGURUNDERI'S CANOE -
MILKY WAY)

WYUNGARE
(MARS?)

TURKEY

TURKEY EGGS
(PELAIDES -
6 SISTERS & 1 BOY)

COMET
(IS EVIL)

MARANGANI
(AUTUMN STAR -
CROW)

NUNGANARI
(STINGRAY)

NGALWARA
(6 YOUNG MEN)

WYUNGARE & THE
2 WIVES OF NEPELE
(ORION'S BELT)

OLD MAN
KANGAROO WITH
BROKEN ARM

KANGAROO ISLAND

SEA

LAKES

WEST

EAST

NANGGE
(SUN)

MARKERI
(MOON)

were formerly men, and leave their huts in the evening, to go through the same employments which they did while on earth'. The Skyworld landscape was therefore humanised, to a similar extent to the lower landscape.

The influence of the stars was not always considered benign. For example, Eyre (1845, vol.2, p.361) stated that Aboriginal people considered 'Malformations of the body are attributed to the influence of the stars ... in consequence of forbidden food being eaten.' Teichelmann (1841, p.9) records a similar belief from the Adelaide people. The Lower Murray people believed that a being named Karungpe, who lived in Wyirrewarre, would come down to the campfires at night, scattering the embers and causing death (Taplin Journals, 27 June 1861). It appears that southern Aboriginal people generally considered that the beings who had become stars still had some influence over earthly events.

I will now provide an outline of the Lower Murray cosmology. The lack of similarity of this belief system with that of the Adelaide people (Clarke, 1990), is a further indication of the cultural shift between the northern Lakes and South Eastern cultural blocs.

3.2.3.1.1 The Sun

The Ramindjeri believed that the Sun was female. Meyer records:

> The sun they consider to be female, who, when she sets, passes the dwelling-places of the dead. As she approaches, the men assemble, and divide into two bodies, leaving a road for her to pass between them; they invite her to stay with them, which she can only do for a short time, as she must be ready for her journey for the next day. For favours granted to some one among them she receives a present of a red kangaroo skin; and, therefore, in the morning, when she rises, appears in a red dress (1846 [1879, p.200]).

For the Yaraldi of the Lower Lakes, there is a similar tradition recorded (Berndt et al, 1993, pp.232-233,444). The sun's heat, 'watalti', was the nga:tji (spirit familiar) of the Wutaltinyeri descent group north of Meningie on the shore of Lake Albert, whereas the sun's disc, 'nangge', was that of another unrecorded group (Berndt et al, 1993, p.215). In southern South Australia, in general the Sun was considered a female character (Clarke, 1990, p.4). In the Lower Murray area, Aboriginal people called the Sun 'Nangge'.[30] At Currency Creek, an early colonist records that a local European woman, with the name 'Mrs Sunman', was invariably called 'Mrs Nange' by the local Aboriginal people.[31]

3.2.3.1.2 The Moon

The Moon was called Markeri.[32] Meyer states that the Ramindjeri believed that, like the Sun, the Moon spends its time away from the terrestrial landscape with men of the 'dwelling-places of the dead'. He records:

> The moon is also a woman, and not particularly chaste. She stays a long time with the men, and from the effects of her intercourse with them, she becomes very thin, and wastes away to a mere skeleton. When in this state, Nurrunduri [Ngurunderi] orders her to be driven away. She flies, and is secreted for sometime, but is employed all the time in seeking roots which are so nourishing that in a short time she appears again, and fills out and becomes fat rapidly (1846 [1879, pp.200-201]).

This belief explains how the Moon's appearance is not timed to the Sun, and also accounts for the phases of the lunar month. The Yaraldi people had a similar tradition concerning the moon (Berndt et al, 1993, p131,232-233,445). They also believed that the lunar cycle had an effect upon female menstruation (Berndt et al, 1993, p.156). In the Hahndorf area of the Mount Lofty Ranges, Hahn reports that 'at every new moon they [Aboriginal people] also light fires in the hills. From this fact, people conclude that they adore and worship the moon' (1838-1839 [1964, p.133]). The link between the moon and the marking of time is mentioned elsewhere (Section 3.1.2). It is interesting to note that in surrounding areas, the Moon is considered to be masculine, not feminine as is the case in the Lower Murray.[33]

3.2.3.1.3 The Planets

A version of the Wyungare myth provided a Yaraldi account of the origin of the planet Mars (Section 3.2.1.3). Tindale had several Aboriginal sources which confirmed that Wyungare became Mars after he, and the two wives of Nepele fled into the sky.[34] The Ramindjeri considered that Wyungare became a 'star' (Meyer, 1843, p.105). Wyungare was said to actually mean 'he who returns to the stars' (Smith, 1930, p.250). However, there is no ethnographic record of the celestial identity of the two women. A past Government Astronomer, G.F. Dodwell, suggested that they might have been perceived as Jupiter and Venus, as both of these planets move over the Heavens, coming into conjunction with Mars (cited in Tindale, 1935, pp.270-274). However, other versions of the Wyungare myth state that his home was in the Milky Way (Section 3.2.3.1.4). According to Ramsay Smith, Aboriginal people pointed out three stars in the eastern sky that represented Wyungare and his two wives (1930, p.251). Other accounts of Mars,

perhap due to the Wyungare mythology, state that when the 'red star' is shining at its 'hottest' and 'brightest', it is blamed for increasing sexual desire (R.M. & C.H. Berndt, 1951, p.223; Berndt et al, 1993, p.164).

3.2.3.1.4 The Milky Way

According to Meyer (1846 [1879, p.202]), the Milky Way was considered by the Ramindjeri to be a row of huts, among which were heaps of ashes and ascending smoke. Another account of the Milky Way, given by George Taplin, concerns the Ngurunderi myth (1874 [1879, p.57]). When Ngurunderi caused the drowning of his fleeing wives, a flood occurred at Point McLeay (Rauwoke). Nepele, who was living here, was forced to pull up his canoe to the top of Big Hill. From here, the canoe was transported to Wyirrewarre, and thereafter the dense part of the Milky Way was said to be the canoe of Nepele floating in the Heavens. According to Berndt's informant, Karloan, Ngurunderi made the Milky Way while at Mt Misery by placing his canoe in the sky (Berndt, 1940a, p.173; Berndt et al, 1993, pp.224). He explains that the Milky Way was called Ngurunderi'yuki, said to mean Ngurunderi's canoe. Both Nepele and Wyungare were considered to live in the Milky Way (Smith, 1930, p.183). A version recorded by Harvey (1939) from Aboriginal informants, Jacob Harris and Creighton Unaipon, suggests that Nepele threw his spear into the sky and this became the Milky Way. Stars as a class of celestial bodies were termed 'tuldar'.[35]

3.2.3.1.5 The Coal-sack

A 'Grandmother Spirit', known as Puckowe, was considered to inhabit the dark spot in the Milky Way, known as the Coal-sack (Smith, 1930, pp.184-185,199). Aboriginal healers in the Lower Murray could reportedly appeal to her for help.

3.2.3.1.6 The Southern Cross

The Tangani people of the Coorong had a death fear song concerning the arrival of a small pox epidemic.[36] As part of the story of this song, a 'dream man', Kulda, came down to the lower landscape from the Southern Cross, called Yu:ki. He foretold the coming of death, taking the spirits of the dead with

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him to Kangaroo Island. It is possible that there were several constellations termed Yuki by the Lower Murray people, as this term is applied to canoes (cf. Milky Way). In the Yaraldi dialect, the Southern Cross constellation was termed Tjirilengi (McDonald, 1977).

3.2.3.1.7 The Pleiades

In the account of the cosmology recorded from Billy Poole by Giles (full quote in Section 3.2.3.1), the Pleiades represent the eggs that another constellation, a Turkey, was sitting upon. Today, the Pleiades are generally known by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians as the Seven Sisters, from the widely known Western Desert account of this myth.[37] An account of Lower Murray Aboriginal beliefs in the 1960s, recorded from a Ngarrindjeri woman, Annie Rankine, indicates that there was a perceived association between the dandelion flowering season and the celestial movements of the Seven Sisters. Annie Rankine, whose father was a prominent Tangani man from the Coorong named Milerum, said:

> My father used to tell us children of a special group of stars which is called the Seven Sisters, and before they were moving we weren't allowed to swim because the dandelions were in bloom then, and it was said that when the dandelions are out the water is still chill, and this is why our people are very strict and don't allow us to swim. When the flowers all died off and the stars moved over a bit further, this is when we were allowed to swim because in that time the dandelion flower which would cause a fever to anyone would not be out to make us sick.[38]

Some celestial bodies could therefore act as indicators for seasonal activity. The Seven Sisters are probably the identity of the Yatuka constellation that Yaraldi people believed were comprised of six girls and one boy (Berndt et al, 1993, pp.163,164). A Lower Murray informant told me that all Aboriginal people were believed to have originated from the Seven Sisters.

3.2.3.1.8 Orion's Belt

A version of the Wyungare story recorded from an early Narrung resident, has this spirit ancestor and the two escaping wives becoming the three great stars of Orion's belt.[39] As reported above, Tindale's version has Wyungare becoming the planet Mars. The Ngalwara constellation recorded in Yaraldi cosmology, which was perceived as six young men (Berndt et al, 1993, p.164), is possibly the Orion.

3.2.3.1.9 Magellanic Clouds

The Magellanic Clouds were known in the Lower Murray as Prolggi, which was said to literally mean 'cranes' (Taplin, 1879, p.133).[40] The Yaraldi considered that there were two Prolggi in the sky, having got there after fighting with the emu spirit, Pindjali, who also became a heavenly body (Berndt et al, 1993, pp.15,164,456-458).

3.2.3.1.10 Evening Star

According to George Taplin (1879, pp.135,140), Venus was termed Warte by the Ngarrindjeri. This term has also been recorded to mean 'firestick' (Meyer, 1843, p.106). Contemporary Aboriginal informants have said that it is a Ngarrindjeri belief that this celestial body, known to them as the 'evening star', was considered to be an indicator of 'war'. They believed that if war approaches, this star, more precisely termed the planet Venus, will glow red when it appears shortly after sunset.[41]

3.2.3.1.11 Autumn Stars

The Ngarrindjeri called autumn Marangani, which is a time when stars of this name appear (Taplin, 1879, p.126). Marangani was a crow (= raven?) in the creative period of the Yaraldi Dreamtime (Berndt et al, 1993, pp.163,240-242). According to Yaraldi tradition, the autumn stars are low in the south eastern sky because it was to the south east of the Lower Murray that the crow spirit entered the Skyworld. The Yaraldi called autumn Marangalkadi, reportedly meaning 'pertaining to the crow' (Berndt et al, 1993, pp.21,76,240). The linking of seasons with the movements of celestial bodies is common across Australia (Clarke, 1990, p.6; 1991a, p.59).

3.2.3.1.12 Comets

Eyre (1845, vol.2, pp.358-359) records that in March 1843, a comet visible to Aboriginal people along the Murray River was taken as a 'harbinger of all kinds of calamities, and more especially to the white people'. It was considered that the comet would overthrow Adelaide, destroying all Europeans and their houses, and then to take a course up the Murray and past the Rufus River causing havoc in its path. It was believed to

have been created by northern Aboriginal people who were powerful sorcerers. Eyre was told by the river people to go to Adelaide and procure the release of a man from the north gaoled for assaulting a shepherd. If this was done, he was told that disaster would be averted. The disquiet caused by unusual cosmic phenomena appears to have been widespread. In the Port Lincoln area, the same comet described above caused Aboriginal people to hide in caves (Schurmann, 1846, p.238).

3.2.3.1.13 Aurora Australis and Lunar Eclipse

George Taplin (Journals, 4-7 June 1859, 2 September 1859) records that Aboriginal people at Point McLeay were very fearful of the aurora australis and the eclipse of the Moon. Both were said to have been created by 'wild blackfellows'. In the case of the aurora australis, it foretold the latter coming.

3.2.3.2 The Underworld and Death

The accounts of the Sun and the Moon (Section 3.2.3.1.1 & 3.2.3.1.2), mention that after setting, they passed through the 'dwelling-places of the dead'. Taplin (Journals, 12 April 1862) records that Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray had a belief that the spirits of the dead descended into the ocean at a place beyond Kangaroo Island. Nevertheless, the Skyworld was also a destination for the souls of dead people. It is therefore likely that the Lower Murray people believed in the fragmentation of the soul in the afterlife, which conforms to the beliefs of other southern Aboriginal groups.[42] The movements of the Dreamtime ancestors in the Lower Murray also shows this division. For instance, Ngurunderi was perceived as going to live in the west after creating the Lower Murray (Section 3.2.1.2). The west here was equated with the Underworld as this is where the Sun passes through after setting. However, Ngurunderi was also stated as being present in the Skyworld. From here he directed the movement of souls, which were termed 'pangari' by Lower Murray people (Meyer, 1843, p.90; Taplin, 1879, p.138). Angas (1847b, p.97) records that 'after death the spirit wanders in the dark for some time, until it finds a string when ... Oorundoo [Ngurunderi] pulls it up from the earth.' Other Dreamtime ancestors became divided in a different way. For instance, the body of Tjilbruki became a stone, his spirit was transformed into a blue crane (Smith, 1930, pp.340-341). Some of the beliefs held by contemporary Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray relate to the above

afterlife descriptions (Section 7.3.2). With Aboriginal beliefs in the spirit, it is clear that the total landscape defined both the living and the dead.

3.2.3.3 Lower Murray Spirit Beings

Before the arrival of Europeans in Australia, Aboriginal people considered that they were co-residents of the landscape, sharing it with many spirit beings. Many of these possessed some human-like physical characteristics, and like people, they were not randomly distributed, but according to attributes of the cultural landscape. Most spirit beings were either greatly feared, or at least regarded as a nuisance. Angas says:

> They are in perpetual fear of malignant spirits, or bad men, who, they say, go abroad at night; and they seldom venture from the encampment after dusk, even to fetch water, without carrying a firestick in their hands, which they consider has the property of repelling these evil spirits (1847b, p.88).

The term, 'mooldtharp', has been applied by Angas as a general term for an 'evil spirit' (1847b, p.138). He used it to mean an 'evil' species of flycatcher, an earthquake or a whirlpool (1847b, p.96). Ramsay Smith (1930, p.349) said it was 'a spirit which assumes many shapes. It may come as a kangaroo, or a wombat, or a lizard'. To the Yaraldi of Lake Alexandrina, a 'melapi' or 'mulapi' was considered to be a shape changer that killed people (Berndt et al, 1993, pp.205-206). I have found that this term, which I write as Mu:ldapi, is used by contemporary Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray as a term for a generalised 'bad' spirit (Appendix 10.2). However, it is important to draw a distinction of the Muldapi from Prupi and Gupa. To Lower Murray people of the present day, Prupi is a bad entity that is considered to be the evil part of a living person's spirit.[43] This is consistent with early Yaraldi beliefs of Prupi being a malignant spirit, although the Tangani of the Coorong apparently considered Prupi to be a Dreaming ancestor (Berndt et al, 1993, p.204-205). Gupa is essentially a ghost of a person now deceased. Both Prupi and Gupa are therefore treated as distinct from the Muldapi, which has a separate identity from humans. In the discussion that follows, Prupi and Gupa are omitted as they are not generally perceived by Aboriginal people as necessarily being connected with an 'ancient' past (Section 7.3.2.2). To Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray, spirit beings and places associated with them form parts of the perceived cultural landscape. This section provides much data from contemporary sources. However, I recognise that traditions do change through time. I primarily include this information to indicate the complexity of the Aboriginal cultural landscape.

3.2.3.3.1 Spirit Men

Today, the oral tradition in the local Aboriginal community is rich in stories concerning humanoid creatures that, due to their overall similarity, I have described as spirit men. The shared characteristics are that they are generally described as 'coloured' (not black), often little, usually mischievous, and generally associated with a particular type of landscape. The exact relationship of this category of spirits to the pre-European system of beliefs is difficult to determine, as the ethnography has tended to steer away from myths that were not concerned with the Dreamtime creative period.[44] In one of the rare accounts, beings called 'raitchari' were described as 'pygmy men who sometimes act as guides to hot men, sometimes lead them astray. They used to live in the scrub' (Harvey, 1939). The 'hot men' are presumably people with some form of ceremonial status. It is likely that these spirit men were considered by ethnographers to have more of a fairy-tale status, than with deep social or religious significance. Therefore, the majority of information on these beings discussed here has been gathered from contemporary sources. I suggest that the treatment of spirit men is an important part of demonstrating the degree to which the pre-European landscape was humanised.

Although the spirit men were humanoid, they are always described by Aboriginal people in terms that highlight their distinctiveness from the Aboriginal population. The non-Aboriginality of the spirit men is confirmed by their strange colouring and generally small size. They are most commonly reported as being red all over, but there are many other accounts of beings in different colours. For instance, one informant claims to have seen 'little yellow men' amongst the reeds growing along the mainland side of the Coorong. Another said that 'green men' lived at Poltaloch on the southern shore of Lake Alexandrina. Another variation are 'little white men' who had spiky ears, reportedly existing somewhere in the Meningie area. A similarity with many of the other spirit beings is that the existence of such creatures is often used to frighten children into doing what they are told.

The 'little red men' were said by my informants to have been seen at Pelican Point, Teringie and Poltaloch. Some informants call these particular beings, 'kintji men'. A small point on the mainland side of the Coorong, just south of Noonamena, is known by local Aboriginal people today as the Kintji Cliffs. The literature records Kindjunga Hill as the home of 'Kindja' spirits, who lived in its caves and amongst its

rocky outcrops (Berndt et al, 1993, p.208). These particular spirits were associated with the land of the Talkundjeri descent group south of Pelican Point along the mainland side of the Coorong lagoon. A sighting of a little red man reportedly occurred in the 1950s alongside a swamp near the One Mile Camp situated on the outskirts of Meningie. The spirit surprised a father and his young son walking along a path. The man was paralysed, but the boy escaped to raise the alarm. Several men from the camp came to the aid of the father, who was still on his back. As with the other spirit men, proximity to water is a factor in the tradition of the red men (Fig.3.6).

Some informants disagree on the colour of the 'kintji men'. Another Lower Murray informant stated they were small white men with dark beards. Interestingly, this person knew a story which linked these spirits with the southern Eyre Peninsula landscape. They said that once the 'kintji men' told an Aboriginal man at Port Lincoln that they were intending to leave the area on the first calm day. When such a day came along, they all walked in single file into a cloud of mist. It is possible that the belief in 'kintji men' originates from outside of the Lower Murray region. For instance, very similiar spirit beings, the 'Taikuni', were said to live in little knobbed hills around the Lower Lakes, Adelaide Hills and north as far as Gawler (Berndt et al, 1993, pp.207-208).

The body of mythology on these spirits is still increasing. For instance, an alleged sighting of two 'kintji men' occurred several years ago while a Lower Murray man was 'swan egging' at Waltawa Swamp, about nine kilometres north of Meningie. They were apparently seen standing amongst reeds. They were described to me by this person as small, light grey all over, with shoulder length hair, and a long neck. Of the face, only the two eyes were noticed. These were shiny black, and just under five centimetres in diameter. These spirits reportedly disappeared when the informant's gaze shifted for an instant. He was later told by another Aboriginal man that he was lucky: it was said that when the eyes are red, not black as the case in the above beings, they intend to do mischief.

There is some similarity between the 'red men' and the 'natja men' from the Tatiara district of the South East of South Australia. The 'natja men' were described to me by an Aboriginal informant as 'red hairy men', also said to look 'like monkeys or orang-utans'. Ramsay Smith (1930, pp.342-345) records a story about a 'queer little red man', that was reportedly told to children as a threat against misbehaving. One

LAKE ALEXANDRINA

PULLAWEWAL

POINT MCLEAY

POLTOLOCH

POINT
STURT

BIG HILL

TERINGI

NARRUNG

GUM
PARK

BLOCK
K

LOVEDAY BAY

NARRUNG
PENINSULA

LAKE
ALBERT

WALTAWA
SWAMP

PELICAN
POINT

YOUNGHUSBAND PENINSULA

N

MENINGIE
ONE—MILE

NOONAMENA

WIRACUM

South east corner of Coorong

KINTJI
CLIFFS

COORONG

▲ — Spirit men
■ — Witch
✕ — Devil

O   2·5   5

kms

▲ TEELUK

O   40   80

kms

KINGSTON
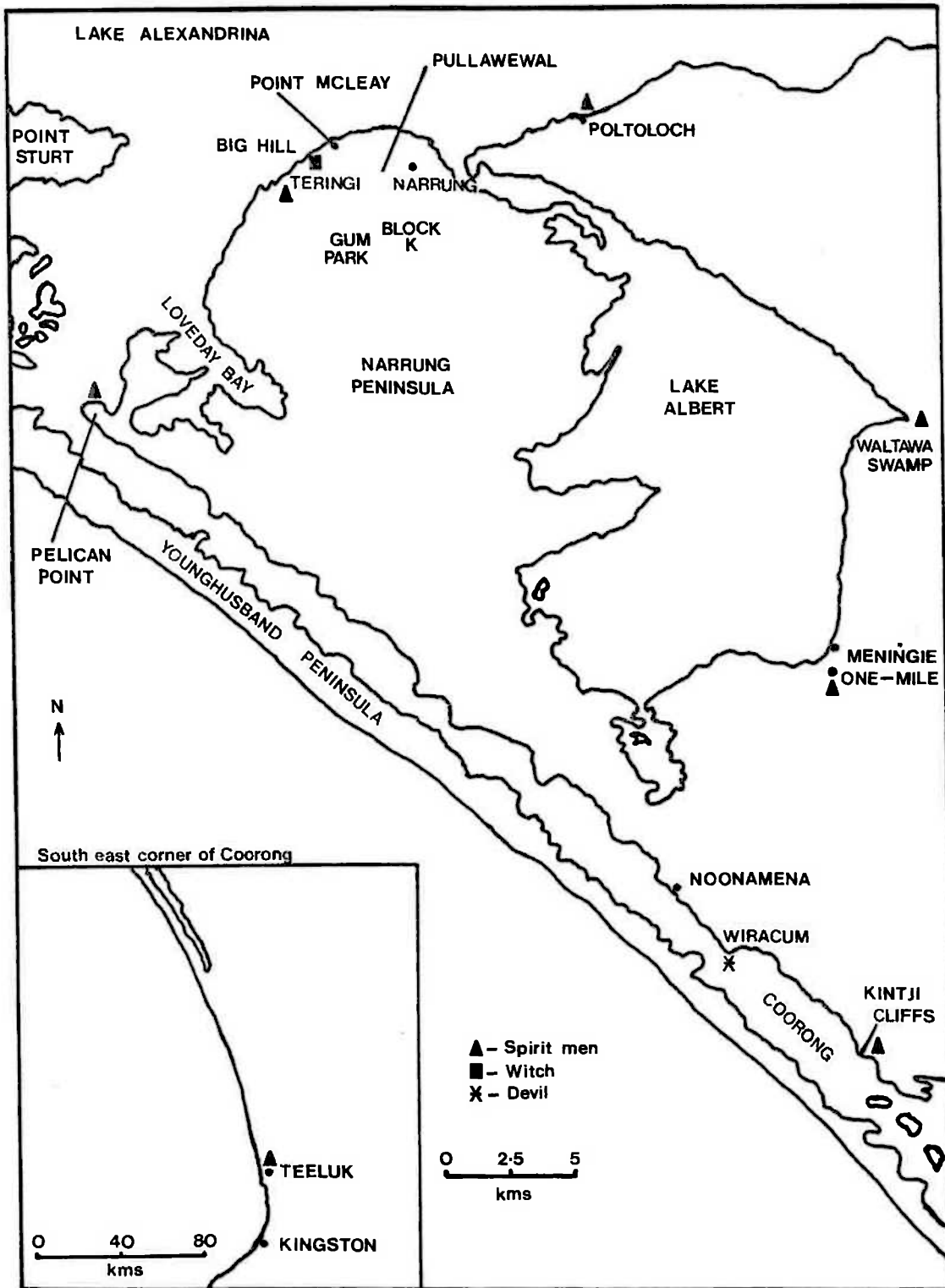
Fig.3.6 Spirit men, witch and devil sites in the Lower Murray

informant claimed that many years ago 'silver men' were seen on a hill near Teeluk. These spirits were described as having an 'arrow-like covering'. Their reported presence was blamed for upsetting local cattle. The silver men reportedly kept eluding attempts made by an Aboriginal man to capture them.

A common element to many of the accounts of spirit men is hunting, and the fact that there are only one or two of them seen together. This is possibly a product of the association of these spirits with swamps and lagoons where duck hunting and swan egging activities occurred. A Ngarrindjeri man gave a report of how 'red men' were seen at Pelican Point. An Aboriginal duck hunter who had disregarded warnings about these spirit men being there, shot down some ducks, and started to search for them in the spot where they had fallen. He then noticed a 'red man' picking up the ducks. He grabbed his gun and fled. Another story given to me by another Aboriginal informant involved a Kingston man, Alf Watson. Apparently he was out duck hunting with his rifle when he saw a 'kintji man' among the 'winggi' (sagent sedge). This spirit caused him to freeze, and he fell on his back. The 'kintji man' came up to Alf and sat on him, feeling his face with interest. This was because this type of spirit man was bearded, whereas Alf Watson was clean shaven. Alf claimed afterwards that he could feel the 'kintji man's' cold bottom on his chest through his flannel shirt. According to several informants, in the past Aboriginal people who hunted in areas that were recognised as being inhabited by 'red men', were in the practice of leaving one or two ducks behind for them.

3.2.3.3.2 Healers, Sorcerers and Wild People

Knowledgeable people, who possessed skills in both healing and sorcery, had an important sociological role in Aboriginal society of pre-European Australia.[45] From the ethnographic accounts, it appears that a powerful person was often both a healer and a sorcerer, depending on context. It is likely that as people grew older, their perceived skills in healing and sorcery balanced the decline in their physical power. The possession of this knowledge resulted in a mixture of fear and respect from other members of the community. Aboriginal people from outside groups were often suspected as being sorcerers, sometimes being called 'wild blackfellows'. In the pre-European period, the fear of such beings was probably associated with possible attacks from foreign Aboriginal groups. European colonisation probably increased the fear of 'wild blackfellows', by creating categories of 'civilised' and 'uncivilised' ('wild') Aboriginal

people. Wilkinson (1848, p.330) reports that during the early years of European settlement in the southern districts, Aboriginal people feared 'wild blackfellows' creeping up to kill or practice sorcery upon them. In the Lower Murray, Taplin (Journals, 4-7 June 1859) recorded that Aboriginal people believed that certain celestial events foretold the coming of 'wild blackfellows'.

In earlier times, these 'doctors' or 'sorcerers' were often living people who were perceived as having command over life forces and the elements of the landscape. For instance, Angas claims 'They [Lower Murray people] place great faith in sorcerers; who pretend, by charms and magic ceremonies, to counteract the influence of the spirits, to cure sickness; to cause rain and thunder, and perform other supernatural actions (1847b, p.89)'. Sickness was generally conceived as being caused by the evil spirit of some person who had a grudge against them (Angas, 1847b, p.96). A knowledgeable person would therefore be consulted to diagnose and correct the problem. There is a wealth of recorded material concerning the body of knowledge generally referred to in the literature as sorcery.[46] It is generally difficult to separate the concepts of the healer, sorcerer and spirit being. I argue that to exclusively use any of these terms to define such people, understates their role in their own culture. However, there appears to be no equivalent English term for them. For this reason, Elkin (1977) called this class of people 'Aboriginal men of high degree'.

Sorcerers today are generally perceived by Aboriginal people to exist only as spirit beings. They are generally termed in Aboriginal communities of southern South Australia as 'kuratjis' or 'feather-foots', although they are also known in the Lower Murray by their original local language name, 'thampamalthi' (Appendix 10.2). A surprising amount of sorcery knowledge still exists in the contemporary Aboriginal community of the Lower Murray. For instance, people here are generally very careful about the disposal of their hair once it is cut, to ensure that it can't be used to 'sing' them.[47] Reports of 'kuratji' visitations still occur today. For instance, according to Aboriginal people living in the South East, a 'kuratji' was at Woods Well on the Coorong several years ago. It was reportedly apparent from the 'squashed cockroach' and 'human dung smell'. Other accounts from contemporary Aboriginal people say the smell is 'ngruwe' (= 'dead body fat'). Kuratji spirits are usually considered to be periodic visitors. When in the Point McLeay area, they are believed to stay out at quiet scrubby places, such as sections of the Block K and Gum Park farms run by the Point McLeay Aboriginal Council (Section 7.2.3). For this reason, Aboriginal working-men here are said to be 'very careful to cover their kantji [urine] and mranthun [faeces] when out in the

paddocks'. Sometimes, clearings in the bush are attributed to activities of the kuratji. Today, reported kuratji incidents are generally attributed to spirit beings that have 'come down from the north', possibly to punish someone (Section 2.4.2). Whether sorcerers, healers and 'wild people' are living or dead, in the Lower Murray the body of knowledge they possess is generally linked to their pre-European past.

3.2.3.3.3 Witj-witj, Witches and Devils

In the Lower Murray, Aboriginal people believe that there are some spirits that were once human, but are now spirit creatures. Witj-witj is a female spirit that frightens animals away from Aboriginal hunters.[48] She was human once, sent away from her people for 'breaking the rules'. This story is generally told in the Riverland district. However a related story is associated with Point McLeay. Here, there is a place Aboriginal people call the Witches Cave in the cliffs of Big Hill facing Lake Alexandrina (Fig.3.10). Sometimes parents at Point McLeay quieten their children with threats that 'the Witches will come down from Big Hill and take you away' if they misbehave. The area of the Witches Cave is very dangerous, due to the steepness of the cliff face and the friable nature of the rock there. There are also other sites associated with 'bad spirits'. According to one informant, the name of Wiracum Point at Noonamena refers to a 'Bogey Man or Devil' (Fig.3.6).

3.2.3.3.4 The But-but Spirit

According to contemporary informants, the 'but-but' is a dangerous but stupid spirit creature. It has only one arm and one leg. The 'old people' apparently use to carry around with them bags of maggots in case the but-but approached. If this happened, the people would lie down, putting the maggots on their eyes and mouth. This fooled the but-but into thinking that they were dead, and it would pass by. Aboriginal informants have not associated this spirit with any particular part of the landscape, although the belief may have had a South East origin. The lack of sites connected with this spirit may be related to its perceived stupidity.

3.2.3.3.5 Water Spirits

Throughout south eastern Australia, there are Aboriginal accounts of water spirits, that are generally called 'bunyips' in the popular literature.[49] Some have been described as being mainly animal-like, and others as predominantly humanoid creatures. For instance, an example of the former is given by Angas who states that Aboriginal people at Moorunde near Swan Reach:

> believed in the existence of a water spirit, which is much dreaded by them. They say it inhabits the Murray; but although they affirm that its appearance is of frequent occurrence, they have some difficulty in describing it. Its most usual form, however, is said to be that of an enormous star-fish (1847b, pp.97-98).

However, all reports by contemporary Aboriginal people I have interviewed in the Lower Murray, feature a more humanoid-type of spirit than that recorded above (Fig. 3.7).[50] They call the 'bunyip' of the Lower Murray, the 'mulgyewonk'. The mulgyewonk was greatly feared. The booming noises it made were thought to cause rheumatism (Taplin, 1874 [1879, p.62]). George Taplin records:

> The blacks say that the Moolgewanke [Mulgyewonk] has power to bewitch men and women and that he causes disease by the booming noise which he makes. I am now convinced that the noise does come from the lake. They say that Mr Mason shot at one over on Pomont [Pomanda] and it made him ill afterwards by its power. They say he is very much like a pungari (seal) but has a face with a menake (beard) like a man (Taplin Journals, 2-3 July 1860).

The consistent theme of most descriptions of its behaviour is the threat of capturing children who strayed too close to the edge of the lake.[51] A Yaraldi informant, Mark Wilson, for instance said that the mulgyewonk would lie submerged in the shallow waters near the edge of the lake waiting for human victims.[52] He said that its long trailing hair in the water looked like water weed. The smell of fish and duck grease, especially when children are washing their hands in the lake after a meal, is said to attract the mulgyewonk (Berndt et al, 1993, p.203). Even Ngurunderi, the main Dreamtime creator of the region, was not immune to the nuisance caused by this water spirit. At the Murray entrance to Lake Alexandrina, the mulgyewonk tore holes in his nets, which prevented him fishing for his family (Tindale & Pretty, 1980, p.50). All reports of the mulgyewonk reinforce it as a symbol of the dangerous nature of the waters in the Lower Lakes and Murray River region.

One European resident who lived near Narrung told me of an incident in the 1950s or 1960s when some Aboriginal children ran to her saying there was a mulgyewonk in the lake. She later heard that it turned out

Fig.3.7 A Mulgyewonk as drawn by Max McKenzie, an Aboriginal
student at Raukkan Primary School, 1989 (Raukkan Primary School
Collection, Anthropology Archives, S.A. Museum)

Fig.3.8 Maragon near Wellington, a major Mulgyewonk site, 1987
(Photo: P.A. Clarke)

to be a floating tree trunk with its trailing roots partially out of the water. Apparently the children had

remembered their parents warnings about the lake and the water spirit. Children are associated with both

the general story and many of the sightings. For example, in 1870, George Taplin's own son claimed to

have seen the mulgyewonk in the lake (Linn, 1988, p.52).

It is likely that mounds of vegetation and earth trapped in the lake have resulted in some mulgyewonk

'sightings'. Before the building of the barrages, when seasonal fluctuations in the flow of the river into the

lakes were much greater, large amounts of material were to be found floating there.[53] For instance, Angas

says:

> Floating islands, covered with reeds, are frequently to be seen on this [Murray] river.
> These masses of earth, originally detached from the banks by floods or otherwise, are
> frequently drifted from side to side, and not a few find their way to the lake (1847b, p.54).

It is interesting to note that Aboriginal people at Point McLeay during George Taplin's time attributed the

booming sound of the lake to the mulgyewonk breaking up gumtrees, which eventually floated down the

Murray (Taplin Journals, 20 June 1860). I suggest that some of these 'mulgyewonk' noises were probably

caused by the sudden expulsion of mud under shifting sand in the Coorong.[54] Rather than claiming that

the cultural experience of the mulgyewonk resulted from a misinterpretation of the environment, I argue

that earlier flow conditions in the Lower Lakes and Murray River would probably have promoted more

'sightings' than now possible.

My fieldwork has shown that there are certain sites generally connected by contemporary Aboriginal people

with the mulgyewonk. Both the river and lakes sections of the Lower Murray had places associated with

this dangerous water spirit. Perhaps the most widely known in the Aboriginal community today is the site

of George Mason's former depot on the eastern banks of the Murray, near the opening of the river into

Lake Alexandrina. This place, called Maragon, is the site of many of the oral history accounts of

mulgyewonk encounters during the last hundred years (Fig.3.8). Bubbles seen in the water here were

considered to be proof of their existence. Several Aboriginal informants state that there are rock holes

under the cliffs at Maragon beneath the water level where these spirits live. Understandably, for Aboriginal

people swimming was not allowed at this spot. Mark Wilson's account cited above lists both Maragon and

the cliffs of Pomond (= Pomanda), about 8 kilometres to the south, as underwater homes for colonies of the

mulgyewonk. Local Aboriginal people passing in canoes at night, avoided the latter place, said to be their

'headquarters'. Another possible mulgyewonk site is Mypolonga, about 15 kilometres up river from Murray Bridge. Albert Karloan considered that this place name was possibly derived from the term mulgyewonk (Berndt, 1940a, p.166).

The mulgyewonk was also considered to have existed in Lake Albert and Lake Alexandrina waters. According to oral history among local European families, another site associated with this water spirit is the arm of Lake Albert. I have heard a member of a local white family claim that this region was avoided by Aboriginal groups for this reason. At Point McLeay, people today can remember earlier times when the mulgyewonk was reportedly encountered in Lake Alexandrina. One informant told me that sometime during the 1940s, several elderly women who had been fishing at the base of Big Hill, came running back to the settlement saying they had heard a mulgyewonk splashing a short distance into the lake. This spirit appears to have been perceived as having potentially been located in all the permanent waterways of the Lower Murray (Fig.3.9). Aboriginal people in the Riverland consider that a hole in the cliff face near the site of a former mission station at Swan Reach is also the home of the mulgyewonk. This is a Lower Murray connection to the Riverland landscape (Section 7.4.2).

Contemporary Aboriginal people who claim to have seen or heard the mulgyewonk are almost all people who have lived at Maragon. One such man states that he and his family observed a mulgyewonk in the river while they were driving across the Swanport Bridge near Murray Bridge several years ago. This same person claims to have found a deep hole along the edge of the Lake Alexandrina when he was younger. A foul stench and a whooshing noise came from it. After describing it to his father, he was told to keep away from this area as it was the home of the mulgyewonk. Another Aboriginal informant claimed 'Old fellas say that whirl pools are made by mulgyewonks cleaning their houses.' Although the mulgyewonk is sometimes reportedly seen in the Lower Murray, most Aboriginal sources of this century have said it is either extinct or at least very scarce. Mark Wilson (cited above) thought that the arrival of paddlesteamers and other boats on the river caused their destruction. This opinion is reinforced by Henry Rankine (1991, p.122) who gives an account of a violent encounter between a river boat captain and a mulgyewonk. Some contemporary Aboriginal people have expressed to me an opinion that the mulgyewonk is a 'prehistoric remnant', 'like the Loch Ness monster!' It has been my experience that this water spirit still remains a talking point in many Lower Murray families.
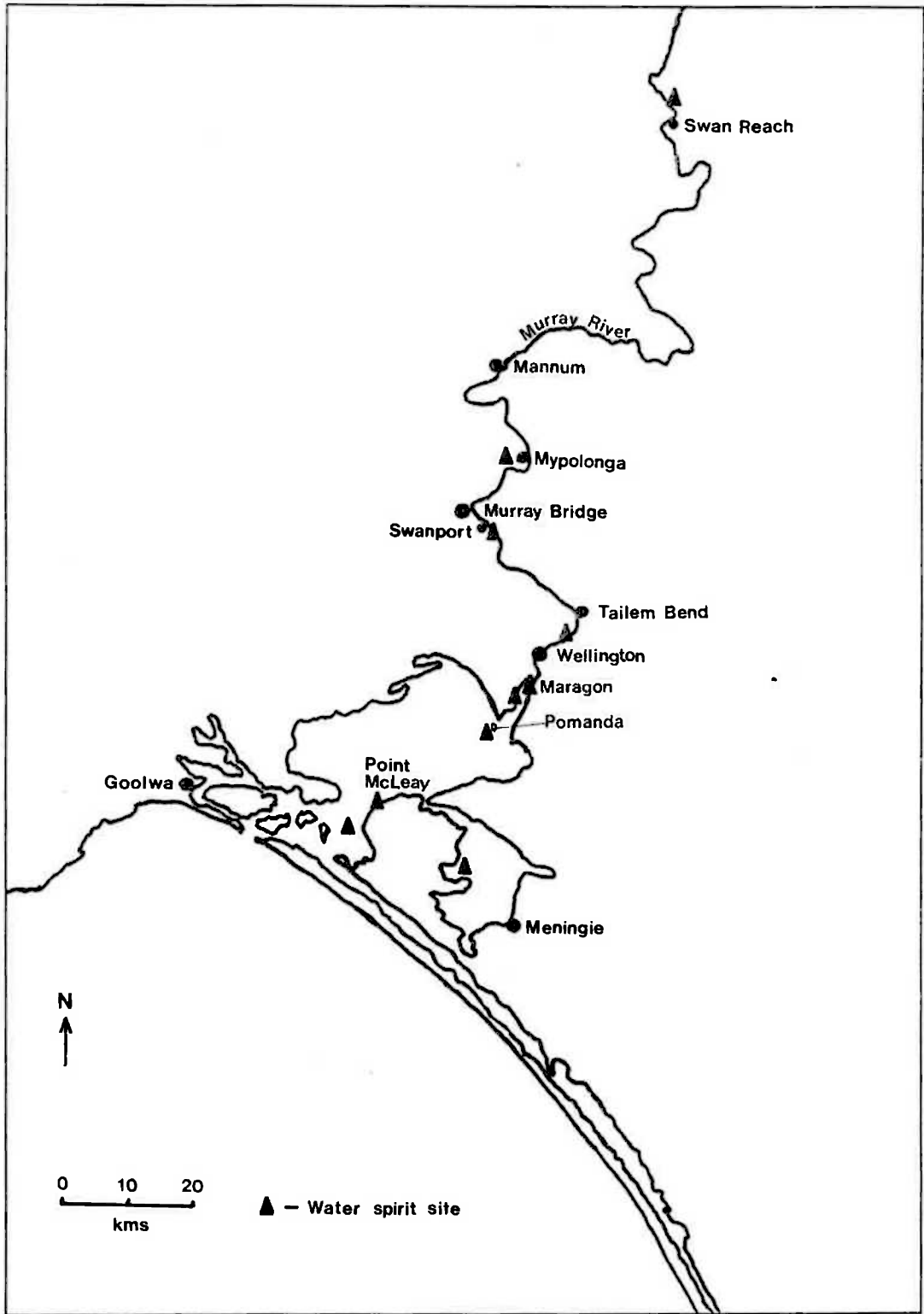
Fig.3.9 Water spirit sites in the Lower Murray

Although the mulgyewonk was the main water spirit in the Lower Murray, there were also some lesser

known beings. From an Aboriginal source I gathered the following account:

> Three sisters live in the lake [Lake Alexandrina] just out from Loveday Bay. They are
> bad. When you are in a boat there, the first wave pushing the boat so it points the wrong
> way. The second makes the edge dip. The third wave fills the bottom and turns it upside
> down.

This story was told to me as proof about the dangerous waters of the lake, particularly near the islands at

the Murray Mouth. Several examples of white fisherman and canoeists drowning in the region were given

to me as additional evidence. All of the information on Lower Murray water spirits reinforces the danger

element of human activity on or near the waterways. This expresses the Aboriginal perception that some

areas of their landscape are not safe.

3.2.3.3.6 Half-human, Half-bird Creatures

Birds of one kind or another feature prominently in much of the Lower Murray mythology. In the pre-

European world view of the Aboriginal people, many bird species were probably perceived as travellers

between the psychic and terrestrial landscape, due to their ability to fly. In an early description of a spirit

bird, Penney uses the term, 'muldaubie', which is a generic term for bad spirit (Section 3.2.3.3). Penney

says:

> They believe that he appears at night when the moon is up, in the evening or just before
> the dawn of day, in the form of the screech-owl, although he assumes occasionally other
> appearances. Those to whom he appears in dreams or who see his form almost infallibly
> die.[55]

The screeching of the 'night-owl' was considered by Lower Murray people to be a sign that something was

wrong (Smith, 1930, p.322). This is consistent with early Aboriginal beliefs in western Victoria where owls

were considered to be used by an evil spirit to watch over people who had strayed from the camp during the

night (Dawson, 1881, pp.49,52-53). The southern stone-curlew (Burhinus grallarius) too, appears to have

been an omen for death across southern Australia (Berndt, 1940b). To Yaraldi people, hearing the call of

this bird foretold death of a close relative (Berndt, 1940b, pp.460-461). Although this bird is no longer

heard in the Lower Murray region, Aboriginal informants I have interviewed can remember hearing the

southern stone-curlew's call along the Coorong in the 1950s, and being told that it was an ill omen.

The bird spirit most commonly spoken about today in the Lower Murray is the 'mingka-bird'. With Aboriginal people I have interviewed over the last ten years, I have recorded a rich folklore concerning this spirit, some of which will be given here. The mingka is essentially a night time spirit. From one report, there are two forms of mingka-bird, a northern and a southern-type. The northern one lives in a cave at Mount Barker. Although it ranges far, including into the south, it returns there each night. It has been described as a 'sphinx-like bird' which has a human head. It comes around houses at night, making a noise like a baby crying. However, some sources say it can also sound like a fox. One informant described the call as a 'shrill whistle'. Like many of the spirits already mentioned, it is a commonly used threat to make children behave.

It is claimed that some old men could turn into a mingka at will. In the South East, an Aboriginal 'doctor' named Old Jumbuck, fought with a mingka-bird at Bordertown. During the fight the spirit-bird repeatedly changed form, from a bird to a human, until it eventually escaped. It is said that only 'doctors' can do this. One young adult explained to me, 'If you kill a mingka-bird, you must burn all of its feathers. As each feather can grow into another mingka-bird. It is like a phoenix in this way.' The mingka-bird was said to punish people who had done something wrong. One man, it was stated, lost all but two of his children to a mingka-bird as punishment. As with the mulgyewonk, children appear to be perceived as most at risk to this spirit. Children doing forbidden things at night such as crying, whistling, or even putting such things as hats or toys on their head, may cause a visit by a mingka-bird. The spirit bird is also an omen creature. There are several contemporary accounts of people hearing the mingka during the night, and then being told of the death of a close friend or relative the next day. On one occasion in the 1950s, the mingka was heard calling in the scrub adjacent to a Coorong fringecamp. It thrashed about in the dark, while everybody kept inside. The next day, the children found several tops of trees, measuring over 5 cms in diameter, that had been snapped off during the night. One informant claimed being told that her grandmother had once talked to a mingka-bird which had the head of her husband's recently dead grandfather. In most accounts of this spirit it is thoroughly evil. It 'will steal a baby's breath if it hears one crying'. The 'breath' here is understood by contemporary people to be the infant's spirit. The association of this bird with death is strong in all accounts.

Although the mingka-bird is most linked to Mount Barker, it is seen or heard at settlements throughout the Lower Murray. Furthermore, the spirit is said to be potentially encountered anywhere that Lower Murray people live. At Point McLeay, it is sometimes heard in trees on the settlement. Here, particular clumps have been pointed out to me as favourite roosts, such as those near the cemetery. I have received reports of this spirit being heard in the Riverland of South Australia, and one having been seen by a Ngarrindjeri person living in Victoria. The association of the mingka-bird with Lower Murray people is strong, so much so that it is virtually never mentioned in any context other than its unwanted attraction towards these people.

During my fieldwork, the name, 'mingka', was said by the most knowledgable informants to be a South East name for this spirit. The Lower Murray name was stated to be 'kowuk', and it was described as a tawny frogmouth (Podargus strigoides). Berndt (1940b, p.461) suggested that the mingka was an owl. An unnamed Lower Murray informant recorded by Killington (1971, pp.49-50,88) stated that this spirit was the 'frogmouth owl'. It is also possible that 'mingka' is a term derived from an Adelaide language group, where it meant a bad 'wound' (Appendix 10.2). In the Mount Remarkable area, the small pox disease was called 'mingi' (Valentine in Curr, 1886, vol.2, p.136). However, the South East origin of the term as suggested by several informants may still be correct. Tindale (cited in Condon, 1955, p.84) says that 'minkar' was name for both the wedge-tailed eagle (Aquila audax) and the white-breasted sea-eagle (Haliaeetus leucogaster) in the Potaruwutj language of the Tatiara region. The association of large birds of prey with carrying the spirits of the dead is a common belief across Australia (Clarke, 1991a, p.65). Whatever the origin of the term, the Lower Murray experience of birds of prey as omens dates back to at least the early years of European colonisation, as shown by Penney's account above.

The association of birds of prey with the power of foresight is not always expressed negatively. For instance, an informant told me that in the past, an Aboriginal man living at the Blackford Aboriginal Reserve in the South East, named Joe Lock, was able to turn his 'spirit' into an eagle. One day, reportedly after he had flown about as an eagle, he was able to accurately describe a group of people travelling to Blackford in a horse and buggy, long before they arrived. While his spirit was reportedly an eagle, his living body, which was left lying on a blanket, was not allowed to be moved. In another version, it was an eaglehawk that Lock turned into while his human body was under a blanket (Berndt et al, 1993, pp.249-

250). These accounts, and that of the mingka-bird above, indicate that Aboriginal people perceived some birds as being carriers of the human soul.

Ngout-ngout is another spirit associated with birds.[56] She was reportedly once a woman who was expelled from her local group for breaking custom. For revenge, Ngout-ngout tricks children into becoming lost. This she performs by using a trail of flowers to distract them. Ngout-ngout can turn into a bird. This story is told to children with the warning that they never wander off.

3.2.3.3.7 Daytime Bird Omens

Some commonly seen bird species have a similar role to the Mingka as omens. In the Lower Murray today, my fieldwork has indicated that the most commonly held belief in omens concerns the willie wagtail (Rhipidura leucophrys), 'ritjaruki'. When this bird is observed persistently making strange erratic movements near a person's house, it is perceived a message that someone has died. Tapping on a window is taken as a particularly bad sign. A variation of this belief is that when a ritjaruki is observed with a rusty colour on its beak, this means someone will die. One elderly Ngarrindjeri woman living at Point McLeay said to me 'Ritjaruki. Him good telephone at Raukkan that fella!' There are many contemporary examples of observations of the ritjaruki being used to forecast human death. However, since its omens are invariably considered to be bad, the ritjaruki is sometimes chased away. This was a pre-European practice. For instance, Angas says:

> An elegant species of flycatcher, of a black colour, which continually hovers about in
> search of insects, performing all manner of graceful manoeuvres in the air, is regarded by
> them as an evil spirit, and is called mooldtharp, or devil. Whenever they see it, they pelt
> it with sticks and stones, though they are afraid to touch or destroy it (1847b, p.96).

The omen characteristic of this bird appears to have been widespread elsewhere in southern Australia.[57] It is likely that the highly erratic movement of the willie wagtail on low and open areas, such as around houses and cars, adds to the likelihood of this species being used as an omen.

There are a few other examples of birds being used to predict death. For instance, one informant said to me that her mother's nga:tji (totem), a swallow (probably Hirundo neoxena), would fly up close to them and 'sob like a child' if someone close was dying.[58] It is likely that in earlier times, totemic species and objects

would have been considered to have the power to warn people of danger or death. Another account sometimes told at Point McLeay involves a pelican, 'nguri' (Pelecanus conspicillatus). When Point McLeay was the Government Mission Station, an Aboriginal man was out hunting near Narrung. He observed a pelican flying overhead, and he raised his gun to shoot it. Pelican flesh is considered bad eating, but the feathers were used in ornament making. However, the bird was acting strangely, so it was not shot. The pelican flew several times over the man's head, and then out over Point McLeay and across the lake towards Adelaide. This was interpreted as a message that the man's brother, who was known to be in an Adelaide hospital, had just died. The story concludes with the later surprise of the Mission superintendent, who had come down with the message of the death, at being told the family already knew. The flight ability of birds gives them characteristics that appear to make them more acceptable to act as omens than other land-based animals. The specific behaviour of certain species, such as the willie wagtail, appears to be a major factor in their designation as message carriers. For other birds, peculiar behaviour on single occasions may be interpreted as a sign. Although much of the mythology formerly known by Aboriginal people is now lost, the Aboriginal practice of seeking information from signs in the environment that surrounds them still exists.

3.2.3.3.8 The Early Post-European Introduction of Spirits

In common with many other hunting and gathering societies around the world that suddenly came into contact with colonising Europeans, the Lower Murray people at first thought that the white people were their own dead relatives returned from the spirit world.[59] Meyer (1843, p.60) and George Taplin (1879, p.37) provide a Lower Murray account of Europeans as 'returning' relatives who had died. Initially then, white people were perceived as part of the psychic landscape. The cattle stock that came to the Lower Murray were also initially considered from a pre-European perspective. For example, George Taplin (1874 [1879, p.3]) records that in the Lake Albert region, two stray bullocks from runs in New South Wales were considered by local Aboriginal people to be 'demons'. They were called 'wunda-wityeri', which apparently described them as spirit beings with spears on their heads.

3.3 The Dynamic Relationship Between Myth and Landscape

The Aboriginal Dreaming has generally been portrayed as a set of traditions, formed over thousands of years, and being more or less fixed in structure and content. For instance, Strehlow (1947, p.5) said that in Central Australia 'Myth, chant, and ceremony are firmly fettered by rigid bonds of tradition'. Furthermore, he claimed that since Aboriginal people relied so much on the traditions of their forefathers, they were not 'primitive' but 'decadent' (1947, p.6). The belief in the immutability of Aboriginal mythology is well illustrated in the title of Isaacs popular book, 'Australian Dreaming: 40,000 Years of Aboriginal History' (1980). An opposing view is put by Stanner (1966, p.140) who claims that Aboriginal tradition is the continuous art of making the past consistent with an idealised present. Myers (1986) supports this, claiming that changes had always taken place. The Dreaming serving to organise experience so that it was perceived as continuous and permanent. Myers (1986, p.53) says 'the dynamic, processual aspect of [Aboriginal] history seems to exist as one of discovering, uncovering, or even re-enacting elements of The Dreaming.' Sahlins (1981, p.8) claimed that history is organised by structures of significance. Culture orders the perception of events, and through this process transforms itself. Finally, in this chapter I demonstrate the place of Aboriginal mythology within the dialectic between the past and the present. I explore how Aboriginal myths from the Lower Murray were interpreted and in which new information about the landscape was then incorporated.

3.3.1 Adelaide - a Lower Murray Landscape

Although the Adelaide region is outside what I have already defined as the Lower Murray cultural region (Section 2.3 & 2.4), the relationship between the two since European colonisation has allowed a Lower Murray impression of Adelaide to slip largely unnoticed into the ethnographic literature of this area. A more detailed discussion of Adelaide as a Lower Murray landscape is given elsewhere (Clarke, 1991a, pp.66-69). Here, I am concerned with demonstrating the interpretative relationship myth has with Aboriginal occupancy of the landscape.

The early Adelaide people were culturally different from the Lower Murray groups (Section 2.3.1.4). Because of intense colonial pressure, Aboriginal groups formerly based in the Adelaide region were

dispersed by the 1860s.[60] Some of these people ended up at Point McLeay, while others went west, eventually living on Yorke Peninsula. In the 1920s, Tindale located an elderly woman named Ivaritji, whom he claimed was the last of the Aboriginal people who had pre-European knowledge of the Adelaide landscape. Tindale reconstructed, with Ivaritji and other Aboriginal people from neighbouring areas, an account of pre-European life in the Adelaide region (Tindale, 1974). However, as I have demonstrated elsewhere (Clarke, 1991a, 1991b), his account is largely inconsistent with the material gathered by missionaries in the 1830s. Indeed, his cultural data appear to have more in common with Lower Murray ethnographic accounts. I have argued that the approach Tindale takes with 'tribes' must be considered when interpreting any of his ethnographic material (Section 2.2.3 & 2.3.1.3).

Immediately after European colonisation, Aboriginal groups from far afield were drawn into the Adelaide area. For instance, by the 1840s, nearly all of the Mount Barker 'tribe', previously situated 35 kilometres away, was camped in Adelaide, and claimed to be 'Adelaide' people.[61] Some Aboriginal people from Encounter Bay also moved to Adelaide (Museum Board, 1887, p.34; Clarke, 1991a, p66). At the approach of winter, many Aboriginal people drifted towards Adelaide where food could be obtained from European colonists (Reimer, 1851 [1988, p.48]). The early ethnographers generally appeared to be very aware of the problems in defining group territories. For instance, Moorhouse states:

> In many instances I have noticed that Blacks exaggerate the extent of their territory, and also the area over which their languages extend, especially after tribes become fused under the pressure of our occupation. Now-a-days, were an old man ... asked the extent of frontage his tribe occupied when he was young, he would probably in making his statement add to the possessions of his own tribe those of one or two neighbouring ones, whose few survivors had in the break-down of aboriginal polity cast in their lot with his people (in Curr, 1887, vol.2, p.274).

Moorhouse goes on to say that this was the reason he frequently found descriptions of the boundaries of 'tribal lands' that overlapped (ibid.). In the Lower Murray region, Rapid Bay and Encounter Bay people joined together in the 1840s after their numbers had dwindled (Wilkinson, 1848, p.322). The fusion of small bands and the splitting of larger ones would have occurred in the pre-European period as well. In this way, Aboriginal 'tribal' structure was quickly altered after European colonisation.

The myth of Tjilbruki provides the most detailed available account of the Dreamtime creation of the Adelaide landscape (Fig.3.11).[62] Its track runs along the Saint Vincent Gulf side of Fleurieu Peninsula from the vicinity of Adelaide, along the coast to Cape Jervis and inland to Brukunga near Mount Barker.

Fig.3.10 The 'Witches Caves' at Big Hill, Point McLeay, 1988 (Photo: P.A. Clarke)

Fig.3.11 Red Ochre Cove near Aldinga, where it was believed that Tjilbruki's tears became a fresh water spring, 1985 (Photo: P.A. Clarke)

After creating many topographical features, Tjilbruki finally turned into a bird, some versions say this was a blue crane (Ardea novaehollandiae), others state this was a glossy ibis (Plegadis falcinellus). However, this myth presents two problems: all known versions of it date from the early 20th century, and were obtained from Lower Murray people. Although Tindale (1987) provides the most detailed report of Tjilbruki, he fails to account for this. There are also other 'Adelaide' myths showing strong Lower Murray elements (Clarke, 1991a).

It is my argument that some time after settlement, Encounter Bay/Lower Murray groups moved into coastal regions of the lower Fleurieu Peninsula to fill a vacuum left by the pre-European Aboriginal population moving north into settled areas about Adelaide. The modified and extended Tjilbruki mythology would have justified not only their occupancy of this new extension of their territory, but would have provided Aboriginal travellers with a valuable record of suitable camping spots, and of locations of freshwater springs during the summer along a fairly arid coastline. The incorporation of new sites into an old mythology is validated by the 'rediscovery' of previously unknown facts concerning the Dreamtime creation. The taking over of unoccupied regions, or at least of sparsely inhabited landscape, was basically a pre-European response to a post-European situation, essentially a reinvention of tradition. Some Aboriginal groups therefore became colonists themselves.

3.3.2 The Making of Myth - Kangaroo Island in Lower Murray Mythology

In this section, I discuss the role of Aboriginal myth in providing a view of events in the post-European period, and how Europeans readily accepted these traditions as history. This will help demonstrate that Aboriginal myths stress the integration of people and nature in the cultural landscape. The factual relevance of myths is often not essential to their understanding by members of the culture that holds them. It is the form of the myth, rather than the content, where the meaning is found.

Kangaroo Island is a piece of the landscape that was unoccupied by Aboriginal people upon the arrival of the Europeans (Flinders, 1814; Peron, 1816 [1979]). Its importance in this thesis is primarily due to its role mythology, and to the strong historical influence of European dwellers on Kangaroo Island in the early Aboriginal affairs of the Lower Murray (Section 2.1.1 & 5.1). The island was first unofficially settled by

European and American whalers and sealers, called Islanders, from about 1802. Some Aboriginal women

from Tasmania and the mainland of southern South Australia were forced to live on Kangaroo Island with

these white men. The name given to this land by the Ramong people of Encounter Bay was Kukakungar,

which had the literal meaning of 'female (genitalia of) to' (Tindale & Maegraith, 1931, p.286). This

reportedly referred to the fact that sealers took their women there. The Lower Murray called the earliest

settlers, 'kringali kop', meaning 'white people whose noses come first' (R.M & C.H. Berndt, 1951, p.84;

Berndt et al, 1993, p.292).This was a reference to sealers who used to come 'nosing' about the Aboriginal

camps for women.

The early contact between the sealers of Kangaroo Island and the Lower Murray region, has left its mark

on contemporary communities . Today, many hundreds of Ngarrindjeri people are descended from an

Islander and his Aboriginal wife (Kartinyeri, 1990; Clarke, 1990 MS). In 1836, the colonists of the South

Australia Company landed on Kangaroo Island on their way to eventually settling the Adelaide Plains

(Section 5.1.5). In spite of the fact that Kangaroo Island did not have a pre-European population

immediately prior to European colonisation (Chapter 5, end note 6), it was still a landscape with cultural

significance to Aboriginal people.

The recording of post-European events that happened as the result of Islander/Mainlander interaction has

mythic elements generated from both sides of the cultural fence. The early recorded oral history of the

Lower Murray region provides various accounts of the brutality of the Islanders and the plight of their

female captives who attempted to escape (Clarke, 1990 MS). For instance, George Taplin records that in

the early 1800s, some white sealers on Kangaroo Island abducted three Aboriginal women from the

mainland near Cape Jervis. George Taplin says:

> When the prisoners had stayed with their captors a few weeks they began to cast about for
> means to get back to their husbands and friends. At last they found a small dingey [sic.]
> belonging to the sealers. It would only hold two. Now, two of the women had no children,
> but the third had an infant at the breast; so the two childless lubras took the dingey [sic.]
> and started for the mainland, and reached it in safety. The poor mother left behind with
> her babe must have pined sadly for her country and friends; but nothing was heard of her
> for some time. One day the natives found her body on the beach just above high-water
> mark, with her baby tied to her back. She had swum Backstairs Passage, and then, in a
> state of utter exhaustion, crawled up the shore and died! (1874 [1879, p.8]).

Bull provides another version of this story. Of the captured mainland Aboriginal women, he says:

> One of these women, not satisfied with her promotion from the position of slave to one of her own race to that of help to a white man, took to the water and swam across the straits, nine miles [14.5 kilometres] wide at the narrowest part. Despite the dangers of the powerful currents, and the multitudes of sharks, for which this passage (now called Backstairs Passage) is notorious, she landed safely in her own country. Some four or five years after this extraordinary swim was accomplished, this woman was pointed out to the writer, and she was then a fine specimen of her race (1884, p.5).

Unfortunately, both Taplin and Bull neglect to name the people involved in the event, or state the sources of their information.

From Albert Karloan, a Yaraldi man, we have another related account (Berndt 1940a, p.185; Berndt et al, 1993, p.292). Karloan said that the Kangaroo Island whalers and sealers used to journey to the mainland to obtain women. Reportedly:

> On the occasion related, they were only successful in catching one woman and her child near the mouth of the River Inman. She was a Ramindjeri native of the shag totem, from Jaltu (Bald Hills, Inman River). They took the woman back to Kingscote but left the child. After she had been passed around the camp of whalers, she crawled away thoroughly exhausted. Reviving somewhat she hid herself and was able to recover. Late the next day she swam the strait (eight to nine miles [13 to 14.5 kilometres]) and, reaching the mainland, recovered her child (Berndt, 1940a, p.185).

Berndt uses this oral history to demonstrate the possibility that Aboriginal people could swim to and from Kangaroo Island if necessary.

In contrast to the extraordinary reports above, the Islanders appear to have had other ideas about the swimming incident. In 1886, a newspaper interview with George Bates, a Kangaroo Island whaler, provides what appears to be a more factual account of the swimming episode.[63] The interviewer asked Bates about the popular accounts. He claimed that once a girl named Bett, who had been only recently captured from the mainland, escaped from the island camp with another girl who had been caught in the same raid. They were found starving a fortnight later about sixteen kilometres away along a beach. On the first opportunity after their recapture, Bett rushed into the sea to swim to Cape Jervis. Although the more romantic versions of this story have her rejoining her 'tribe', according to Bates she either drowned or was eaten by sharks. Given that Bates had strong social connections with both sides of the Passage (Section 5.1.4) and that he is to some extent condemned by his own account, we must assume he spoke truthfully. Another account provided by an Island resident, Reeves, says that the woman who did try to swim the Backstairs Passage after being brought over from Encounter bay was unsuccessful, being soundly thrashed for her troubles when later recaptured.[64]

There is a story of how one group of Aboriginal people left Kangaroo Island that appears to have been influenced by the biblical story of Moses. Concerning one family on Kangaroo Island, Kartinyeri records:

> Oral tradition states that when she [Nellie Raminyemmermin] died, her six children were put into two dinghies and they drifted back to the mainland, one dinghy drifting to Port Adelaide and the other to Victor Harbour. The children were rescued and sent to the Point McLeay Mission at Raukkan, at that time in the care of Reverend George Taplin (1990, vol.1, p.12).

The constant themes in all accounts of the woman crossing are her Encounter Bay identity, the brutality of the Islanders, and that she escaped by swimming from the Island. The success of her attempt, and the presence of the child, appear to have been embellishments. The time element in each example also varies greatly. All reports, other than from Island residents, appear to have been gathered from Aboriginal people. There may have been several similar incidents that are formed into a composite episode. Regardless of whether the swimming episode actually occurred, the myth, as I treat it, nevertheless vividly conveys the Aboriginal perception of the Kangaroo Island landscape. The acceptance of the 'swimming' story as 'fact' by ethnographers shows a reluctance, on the part of Europeans, to recognise that post-European events and situations could have gained the status of myth for the Lower Murray community.

3.4 Conclusion

The dialectic between culture and landscape is reflected in the Dreaming: people and land were considered to have been subjected to the same creative forces. To the pre-European Aboriginal people, there was no 'wilderness' in a cultural sense. Aboriginal mythology, as a form of expression for culturally determined views of the universe, reflects the lack of distinction between people and the natural resources. The landscape was to a large degree humanised through the construction of the cultural landscape. Physical aspects of this relationship will be taken up in the next chapter. The existence of psychic regions, the Skyworld and Underworld, demonstrates the extent to which culture defines the space in which it exists. These perceptual realms, with the terrestrial world, combine to form the basis of the Aboriginal cultural landscape. In the case of spirit beings, and the sites they occupied, these must also be treated as part of the cultural landscape. Aboriginal people actively manipulated the perceived relationship between land and time, both through psychic distortion as a means of shortening or prolonging the experience of travel, and through 'rediscovering' aspects of the Dreaming which in turn modified myth. In the case of the latter,

many differing versions of major myth epics existed to reflect local socio-political situations. Nevertheless, the pattern of myth diffusion through southern South Australia appears to be heavily influenced by the distribution of the cultural blocs discussed earlier (Section 2.3.1.4). Myth should be treated by ethnographers as a flexible system of beliefs, rather than as a rigid religious code. Later (Section 7.3.2.2), this thesis discusses aspects of contemporary Aboriginal spirit beliefs, demonstrating a change in form rather than content. A demonstration of the spiritual factors of human interaction with the Lower Murray environment in the pre-European period has been provided. Next, the economic aspects of early Aboriginal use of the landscape will be considered.

End Notes

1 Kirk (1973, p.8) & R.M. & C.H. Berndt (1989, p.1).

2 Tindale (1935, 1936, 1937a, 1938, 1939, 1941b, 1974, 1987) & Tindale & Mountford (1936).

3 Tindale (1940, 1974). See Section 2.3.1.3 for a discussion of the 'tribe'.

4 W.K. Mallyon in the Observer, Adelaide, 31 December 1910.

5 Berndt (1940a, p.170) termed the Yaraldi Dreamtime as 'Kulhal'. R.M. & C.H. Berndt (1981, p.229) named it 'Gulal'. Berndt et al (1993, pp.75,242) termed it the 'Kalalwu' or 'Kalalal' ('long ago').

6 Meyer (1843, p.91) & Taplin (1879, p.129) define 'pekeri' as a 'dream'. Tindale (1937a, p.108) describes 'pekere' as 'dream songs'. Berndt et al (1993, pp.75,213-215) term 'pekari' or 'pekeri' as 'Dreaming'.

7 See Smyth (1878, vol.1, p.423) for an account from the Murray River in northern Victoria of Nooralie (= Noreele) as a class of 'supreme beings'. Smyth also cites from 'Aboriginal Natives of New South Wales' (by a Colonial Magistrate, 1846) where Nourelle was a being that Aboriginal people along the Murray River believed created a giant serpent that was given power over all things.

8 Wirranderra & Wunderra are spelling variations of Wurranderra given by Bellchambers (1931, pp.105-106,134,152.).

9 Many recorders of the name, Ngurunderi, did not hear the initial 'Ng'. For example, he is recorded as Runderudie in the Register, 1 June 1885. It is possible that the 'Ng' is a relatively recent introduction. In 1894, an Aboriginal man, Jacob Harris, spelled Ngurunderi as 'Noorondourrie' (J. Harris letters, D6510(L)13, Mortlock Library, Adelaide). Similarly, Parker (1936) recorded this as 'Nar-oong-owie'. Nevertheless, Ngurunderi is the standard orthography now in general use (Hemming 1988; Hemming et al 1989). Unless the rendering of Ngurunderi is greatly altered by the sources cited, I will use Ngurunderi as the standard term.

10 See Meyer (1846 [1879, pp.205-206]) for an Encounter Bay interpretation of the Ngurunderi mythology. Accounts by G. Taplin (Register, 30 January 1862; 1874 [1879, pp.55-62]; 1879, pp.38-39), F. Taplin (Register, 24 April 1889), Ramsay Smith (1930, pp.17,173,182-184,216,250,317-331) & Berndt (1940a) are concerned more with the inland areas of the Lower Murray. An unlocalised version appeared in the Register, 2 December 1893. Generalised treatments of this myth are given by Tindale & Pretty (1980, pp.48-50), Hemming (1988) & Hemming et al (1989).

11 This version is given by R. Penney (as 'Cuique') in the S. Aust. Mag., November 1843, vol.2, pp.331-336. Cawthorne (1844 [1926, pp.25-26]) cites this without reference.

12 Account from the 'Herald of Kapunda', in the Register, 4 September 1872.

13 This account is given by Meyer (1846 [1879, pp.205-206]). This version appeared, without acknowledgment, in the Register, 31 August 1921.

14 In a photograph taken by Ramsay Smith (c.1920), these rocks are shown to be the two largest boulders in the shallow water near the site of the Bluff Whaling Station (AA263, Acc.no. 2126, AP2971, Anthropology Archives, S.A. Museum).

15 See Meyer (1843, p.78) for the meaning of 'maralengk' (= 'marral-engk').

16 Tindale & Pretty (1980, pp.48-50) give an outline of the longer account Tindale obtained.

17 Myers (1986, p.60), & R.M. & C.H. Berndt (1989, p.xxvi).

18 Yaraldi versions of the Wyungare story are given by G. Taplin (Register, 30 January 1862; 1879, p.56), F. Taplin (Register, 24 April 1889), Tindale (1935) & Berndt et al (1993, pp.228-230).

19 Penney ('Cuique') in S. Aust. Mag., September 1842.

20 See Hemming (1990) & Clarke (1991a, 1991b) for critiques of Tindale's (1940, 1974) use of 'Kaurna' as a 'tribe' name for the Adelaide people. Berndt et al (1993, footnote p.2) state that they standardised 'Korna' in their original manuscript as 'Kaurna'.

21 An animated documentary of this myth, narrated by Henry Rankine, is presently part of a permanent display on the Murray River at the Signal Point Museum near the wharf at Goolwa.

22 David Mack (cited in McCourt & Mincham (1987, p.18) suggests that 'Kurangh' was originally a locality on Younghusband Peninsula near the Murray Mouth.

23 A similar example is provided by Strehlow for northern Aranda views of the related, but 'debased', language spoken by western and southern Aranda groups (1947, pp.51-52).

24 Register, 1 June 1885.

25 Clarke (1991a) provides a general description of the relationship between Adelaide cosmology and geography.

26 These linguistic variations are illustrated by G. Taplin (1874 [1879, p.131]; 1879, pp.38,132,142) & Tindale (1935, pp.270-274).

27 Penney (as 'Cuique'), S. Aust. Mag., September 1842, vol.1, no.xii, pp.467-472.

28 Register, 5 October 1887.

29 For a destination of the spirit of these warriors see Taplin (1874 [1879, p.18] & Meyer, (1846 [1879, p.201]).

30 The Sun has been recorded as Nangge in the Ramindjeri dialect (Meyer, 1843, p.84), & Nungge by G. Taplin (1874 [1879, p.131]; 1879, pp.139,142). One record states that at Encounter Bay the Sun was Thulderni, and yet at Currency Creek, was termed Nange (Observer, 10 May 1851).

31 Observer, 10 May 1851.

32 To the Ramindjeri, 'markeri' was also the name of a large shell which resembled a full Moon (Meyer, 1843, p.78). The Encounter Bay people called the Moon, Mukkeri, & pronounced it very much like the English rendering of 'mercury' (Observer, 10 May 1851). G. Taplin also listed the Moon as Markeri in his Ngarrindjeri vocabularies (1874 [1879, p.131]; 1879, pp.134,142).

33 For accounts of the male gender of the Moon, see Clarke (1990, p.4) for the Adelaide region, & Dawson (1881, p.99) for western Victoria. Further up the Murray River, into northern Victoria, the Moon was considered to be female, as it was in the Lower Murray (Smyth, 1878, vol.1, p.431). This supports my model of the distinctiveness of the Lower Murray (Section 2.3.1).

34 Renderings of the spelling of Wyungare include Waijungari (Tindale, 1935, pp.270-274).

35 The following Lower Murray names have been recorded for stars as a class of objects or beings - 'tulde', 'tuwulda', 'tu:lda', 'tuldar' and 'terldar' (Meyer, 1843, p.101; Taplin, 1874 [1879, pp.131,138]; Taplin, 1879, p.142; Tindale, 1935, p.270).

36 Tindale (1937a, pp.111-112; 1941b, pp.233-234). See Section 2.1.1.

37 Tindale (1959), Isaacs (1980, pp.152-153) & Tunbridge, (1988, p.16).

38 A. Rankine papers (recorder unknown), dated 11 March 1969, AIATSIS library, ms no.1439. Note that what South Australians call 'dandelion' is generally called 'capeweed' by others (Appendix 10.2). This plant (Arctotheca calendula) was introduced by Europeans from South Africa.

39 Wyangaure is a spelling version of Wyungare used by Hackett (Narrung Alpha, August 1915, pp.10-12) & (Hackett, cited in Laurie, 1917, pp.660-662).

40 The term 'prolggi', appears to be related to the Australian-English term, brolga. This is a borrowing by Europeans from the Kamilaroi language in eastern New South Wales, where it was 'burralga' (Dixon et al, 1992, pp.31,87-88,218). However, other Aboriginal languages from eastern Australia to the Lake Eyre region have similar terms for this bird. The 'native companion' is a early European term for the brolga.

41 It is interesting to note that one family on Point McLeay, who were affected by the media coverage of the Middle East Gulf War in early 1991, scrutinised the 'evening star' as it appeared each night for signs of redness. After several nights of looking for a change in the colour of this white 'star', which was not forthcoming, they concluded that even if a war did break out, it would probably not seriously involve Australian people, and certainly not Point McLeay residents. Events were to 'prove' their beliefs.

42 Clarke (1990; 1991a, pp.65-66) outlines early Adelaide Aboriginal beliefs in the afterlife.

43 The Lower Murray people are not unique in their belief that everyone is capable of doing bad things through the evil part of their soul. In the southern Sudan of Africa, the Azande believed in the 'soul of witchcraft', which was able to fly out during the night and injure people (Evans-Pritchard, 1937, pp.33-34).

44 One of the few records of spirit people of the type I have described is provided by Tindale (1936, pp.60-61). He mentioned 'little people' who were said, by his informants, to have lived near Marion Bay on Yorke Peninsula. Another record is provided from Victoria by Cameron-Bonney (1990, p.19).

45 For a description of 'clever men', see Cawte (1974) & Elkin (1977).

46 Most ethnographies of the Lower Murray people have some mention of sorcery practices and beliefs. For detailed accounts see Meyer (1846 [1879, pp.195-200]), Taplin (1874 [1879, pp.19,23-31]) & Berndt et al (1993, pp.252-266).

47 Killington (1971, pp.48,87) recorded from a Lower Murray person that hair was the 'trigger' on a pointing-bone, and as such was considered to have the property of being able to work into your skin, carrying with it poison.

48 An account is provided by Barney Lindsay in Education Department of South Australia (1991, pp.34-35).

49 A general description of 'bunyip'-type water spirits is given in the Observer, 2 December 1893. See also Hemming (1985a), Ramson (1988, p.109) & Cameron-Bonney (1990, pp.16-17).

50 The wormlike models of 'bunyips' that presently makeup a coin-operated tourist attraction in Sturt Reserve at Murray Bridge are looked upon with disgust by many local Ngarrindjeri residents, mainly because they do not look correct according to their own descriptions.

51 An early version of this story is recorded by George Taplin (Journals, 16-17 September 1862). Another report is given in 'The Moolgewauk' by Mark Wilson, Fry Papers, Anthropology Archives, S.A. Museum (Published in the J. Anth. Soc. S. Aust., March 1985, vol.23, no.1, pp.11-16). Mark Wilson was a Yaraldi man. See also Berndt (1940a, p.168), Rankine (in Isaacs, 1980, p.114; 1991, pp.121-123) & Berndt et al (1993, pp.203-204). These accounts are all similar: they record that a boy is taken by mulgyewonks to live underwater. In a version published in a teaching manual (Education Department of South Australia, 1991, pp.24-25), a man fishing is attacked by a mulgyewonk.

52 Wilson (cited above).

53 Aboriginal informants have pointed out to me several large & weathered tree trunks of dead red gums lying along the shores of Lake Alexandrina. These tree sections, of a tree species not found in this part of the Lower Murray shore, were left behind after the 1956 flood. See Hemming et al (1989, p.1) for a photograph of one such tree trunk at 'The Bulrushes'.

54 The water origin of the booming noise appears certain. George Taplin records in his Journals (26 June 1860) that he is convinced that the booming sound originates from in the lake. He heard it 12 times in 10 minutes one evening (Journals, 20 June 1860). See other accounts by George Taplin (Register, 30 January 1862; 1874 [1879, pp.62-63]). Tindale puts forth a physical explanation of the origin of the booming sound (Advertiser, 12 May 1936). It is possible that the advent of frequent mechanical noises in the Lower Murray, such as gun blasts, quarry activity etc., has hidden this phenomenon. Also, it is possible that the barrages have destroyed the conditions that produced the booming effect.

55 Penney (as 'Cuique') in S. Aust. Mag., June-July 1842, pp.389-394.

56 An account by Barney Lindsay is given in Education Department of South Australia (1991, pp.18-19).

57 For instance, on Yorke Peninsula, the willie wagtail was also considered to be a 'message-carrier' (Smith, 1930, p.342). A Western Victorian Aboriginal person said to me that they also considered the willie wagtail to be a bad omen there. She knew of two occasions where people had reportedly died soon after seeing this bird tapping on their window, A Lower Murray informant claimed that the willie wagtail, called 'tjiri tjiri', as an omen, was a belief from the Portland district of Western Victoria (Killington, 1971, pp.49-50,82).

58 For an outline of 'nga:tji', see Section 2.3.1.5 & 4.3.2.

59 Blackburn (1979) has a general account across the world.

60 Brock & Kartinyeri (1989) & Kartinyeri (1989a, 1989b, 1990) provide models of Aboriginal movement patterns away from Adelaide.

61 Cawthorne Diaries, 27 January 1843 (CY reel 214, A103 items 1-8, frame no. 209), Mortlock Library, Adelaide.

62 For accounts of Tjilbruki (or Chirr-bookie, Tjilbuki, Tjirbruki) see Ramsay Smith (1930, pp.331-341), Tindale & Mountford (1936), Harvey (1939) & Tindale (1987). There is some similarity in the events attributed to Tjilbruki and Nganno. The latter is an Adelaide spirit creator recorded by ethnographers in the 1840s (Clarke, 1991a, p.62).

63 Advertiser, 27 December 1886.

64 Augustus Reeves in Observer, 1 April 1905. This account cited without acknowledgment by Kingscote C.W.A. (nd., pp.6,23).

4 Early Aboriginal Use of the Lower Murray Environment

Here, I discuss physical aspects of the Aboriginal occupancy of the Lower Murray landscape, from the pre-European period to the early years of European settlement. The chief concern here is with a description of hunting and gathering techniques, and their significance to pre-European Aboriginal society. I will demonstrate that resource usage by early Aboriginal people was a function of the broader environmental and regional patterning of the Lower Murray landscape, and that this itself was partly a cultural artefact. A major aim is to describe how hunting and gathering techniques used by Lower Murray people made their region culturally distinctive. An objective is to show how the culture of the Lower Murray distinguishes it as a real and meaningful culture region, separate from those around it. Modern practices, since the 1940s, are discussed later (Section 8.2 - 8.5).

4.1 Sources of Aboriginal Environment Use Data

The development in knowledge of Aboriginal use of the physical environment in the Australian literature has been based on four main sources of data - the archaeological record, historical record, contemporary research with Aboriginal people, and scientific analysis of the properties of naturally occurring substances. In this chapter, I deal mainly with historical and contemporary Aboriginal sources of information, as I consider these to provide more data for cultural investigation. In order to make best use of these source categories, the focus will be on the early years of European settlement. This is necessary because there are difficulties in putting forth a pre-European model of Aboriginal society due to inherent problems with ethnographic sources (Section 2.2).

It is assumed that archaeological investigations indicate former hunting and gathering strategies used in the region, particularly the presence of certain animal species.[1] Developing palaeobotanical techniques may eventually identify plant remains which are generally poorly preserved archaeologically (Beck, 1989). Future biological analysis of human bone may also help determine pre-European diet (Pate, 1991). However, archaeologists have tended to ignore contemporary sources of cultural and historical information, relying heavily on their own empirical data. I argue that these shortcomings of scientific analysis have produced an imbalance in the archaeological literature.

Scientific methods of analysis, for example those determining the pharmacological and nutritional properties of plant and animal materials, can illustrate the potential human use of such resources.[2] Nevertheless, potential use is influenced by cultural aspects, and not all resources available were fully utilised. To understand how Aboriginal people used their environment, and thereby moulded their cultural landscape, we must at present rely primarily on records made by early European observers, supplementing this with information from contemporary Aboriginal sources where possible. The weaknesses of this type of data are discussed below.

4.1.1 Stereotypes of 'Primitive' Hunters in the Early Ethnographies

The social background of the observer is often apparent in the early published accounts of Aboriginal hunting/gathering activities. The English upper and middle class backgrounds of many recorders were reflected in their descriptions of Aboriginal hunters (Urry, 1985). These descriptions tended to be as 'savage sportsmen' due to the association of hunting in Europe with the noble sports of aristocrats. In contrast, early working class views of the Aboriginal people were initially not as favourable (Ibid.). The legendary Australian 'bushman' was not a European person who became 'Aboriginal', but an individual who transformed the Australian wilderness into a model of Europe by clearing scrub, making dams, and building fences. There is little 'Aboriginal' lore in the legend of the Australian 'bushman' (Section 5.6). Ethnographers tended to reflect educated upper class or middle class notions of Aboriginality, precisely because working class people did not generally keep such records.

Most early ethnographic accounts of Aboriginal use of the environment in southern Australia depicted Aboriginal practices as passive: that is, generally opportunistic and without modification of the environment. This was in keeping with European notions of the 'primitive' and 'noble savage' (Moorehead, 1968, pp.62-75; Mulvaney, 1985). British colonisation may not have taken place in the manner it did if there had been a recognition that Aboriginal people actively managed the resources of the landscape. Colonists believed that since Aboriginal inhabitants did not practice agriculture, they could not be considered to use or own land.[3]

Another bias of early ethnographers is that they primarily focussed on hunting activities, to the neglect of gathering practices. This is partly because events, such as occasional emu and kangaroo drives, left a more enduring impression on the memories of the recorder than those of the daily gathering of food, such as 'bulrush' roots, chiefly by the women and children. Therefore, descriptions of Aboriginal economic life compiled as reminiscences, were often restricted to animal foods and to men. For example, Worsnop (1897) published detailed accounts of fishing and snaring for southern South Australia, but barely mentioned plant foods. Early sources, for example Taplin (1874, 1879), are also heavily weighted towards describing hunting aspects of economic life. Some researchers this century perpetuated this imbalance. Cleland (1966) for instance considered Australian plant foods to be so poor that they were generally not much used (Clarke, 1988). Many ethnographers have clearly not appreciated the seasonal fluctuation of meat species that would have formerly enforced a greater reliance on vegetable foods during 'hard times'. Although the early ethnographies contain much useful data for re-analysis, they need to be considered in the light of the periods in which they were produced. Aboriginal views of their diet are also meat-biased however.

4.1.2 Recent Treatments of Early Aboriginal Use of the Environment

Direct observation of predominantly pre-European-type Aboriginal practices in hunting and gathering has not been possible for most of Australia in the latter half of this century. Nevertheless, there have still been some significant developments in the recent literature. From the point of view of considering Aboriginal occupation of the landscape as passive or active, Hallam's (1975) study of early Aboriginal resource management in the South West of Western Australia has been a significant influence on modern European perceptions. Considerable research over the last ten years has been based on recognition of hunter/gatherers as active resource managers, rejecting passive models used by researchers such as Cleland.[4] These studies have generally involved a critical and detailed analysis of historical records, and the careful drawing of conclusions from fieldwork with contemporary Aboriginal informants. Nevertheless, Aboriginal occupation of the landscape is still occasionally referred to in harmonious and passive terms (see Davis & Moore, 1985, p.1,11).

Although useful data on pre-European plant use, such as species identification, method of use, and seasonality, can be obtained from contemporary fieldwork, there must be recognition of modifications that

have occurred. For instance, information given to me by Lower Murray Aboriginal people in recent times on bush foods used during the last 50 to 60 years, indicates far less use of roots than before (Clarke, 1988). In contrast, other indigenous foods such as fish, water fowl, kangaroos, emus and berries have been much used. The availability of European-type foods, especially flour and potatoes, obtained from missions, farm stations and towns led to a significant decrease in the use of less favoured vegetable foods. The decrease in 'bush foods' was particularly marked for those species requiring significant labour expenditure. The bulrush root, for example, contains a great deal of fibre which makes eating difficult. Most indigenous roots were replaced at an early period by foods such as European potatoes, turnips, flour and rice. Contemporary Aboriginal knowledge in the Lower Murray of 'bush foods' relates to use of such resources during recent times, not for the pre-European period, even though there is some continuity of practice (Section 8.2 - 8.5). To a lesser degree, this is also true for northern regions of Australia (Rose, 1987, p.viii). For areas such as the Lower Murray, where European contact goes back before official colonisation, contemporary environmental knowledge is heavily influenced by post-European history of change in the landscape and social structure.

4.2 Details of Early Aboriginal Hunting & Gathering Practices in the Lower Murray

I will now outline the strategies and techniques of early Aboriginal hunters and gatherers in the Lower Murray. The material culture and natural resource use by Aboriginal people here is similar to aspects of groups described from elsewhere in Australia for riverine (Lawrence, 1968; 1971) and coastal communities (Lampert, 1971). In this section, I will describe the Aboriginal use of the essentially riparian/coastal habitat that was predominantly used by the Lower Murray people. Due to the ad hoc manner in which Aboriginal use of the physical environment was recorded by early ethnographic sources (Section 4.1 & 4.3), information given in this section can not be considered to be as a complete listing of all resources and associated practices used in the pre-European period. It is also unlikely that I have located records for all the species formerly used.[5] I have selectively used some recorded information from geographically and culturally related riverine and coastal areas, such as the Mid Murray and South East regions of South Australia, to help interpret the Lower Murray material. I therefore contend, that in spite of the limitations

inherent in the available sources as discussed above, I am able to put forth here a reliable summary of general Aboriginal environment use for my study region.

4.2.1 A Broad Description of the Lower Murray Physical Environment

In the pre-European period, the high population levels along the river frontage and the coastal zone, were in sharp contrast to the interior which was sparsely populated. It has already been demonstrated that the physical environment of the Lower Murray formed both a natural and cultural region (Section 2.3.1.4). Early Aboriginal views of the Lower Murray landscape, as depicted through mythology, were described in Chapter 3. In this section I provide a Western European view of the landscape. Later, I provide a contemporary description of the fauna and flora of the Lower Murray, and its use by Aboriginal people (Chapter 8).

The European perception of the physical environment differed greatly from early Aboriginal views. Geographers have classified the Lower Murray and adjacent Adelaide region as 'Mediterranean lands' due to climatic similarity with coastal north Africa and southern Europe (Fenner, 1931, pp.126-127; Carter, 1964, pp.232-236). In the 1830s, the southern regions of South Australia promised much for agriculture, with the close proximity of the Murray River offering trade contacts with the eastern colonies of Australia (Section 5.2). John Morphett, a pioneer of South Australia, considered that the southern regions of the colony 'in many places reminded me strongly of the Delta of the Nile, and other rich plains in Egypt' (Morphett, 1836, p.6). It was suggested that all that was required was irrigation to get through the four or five hottest months of the year. The concluding remarks of Morphett expressed his optimism that 'the colonization of South Australia will furnish to civilization another resting place, whence she may spread her magic influence over a large and hitherto untrodden portion of the Globe (Morphett, 1836, p.14)'. In spite of the favourable position of South Australia, it is clear in reports sent back to Britain by early English colonists that most were initially dismayed at the South Australian climate. For instance, in 1838 Mary Thomas (1925, p.108) claimed that in Adelaide the 'heat, which was said [before they left] to be seldom greater than it is in England, is sometimes so intense as to be scarcely endurable.' The weather was also considered by Thomas to be capable of being very cold, accompanied by whirlwinds of dust and torrents of rain. The characteristic of the climate she most despised was the 'great and sudden changes from heat to

cold, cold to heat, much more than is the case with the climate of England, so long proverbial for its changeableness' (Thomas, 1925, p.108). After a few years, Thomas came to like the fine autumn days. Nevertheless, she still claimed that 'This is a strange country, and the soil and climate seem to be as variable as the wind' (Thomas, 1925, p.162). Thomas thought that, like the vegetables they brought out from England, with time the colonists would be acclimatised.

4.2.1.1 The Geomorphology of the Lower Murray

The basin of the Murray River has a drainage pattern that starts in the mountainous regions of eastern Australia, and flows through to the ocean at its termination in the Lower Murray region (Fig.4.1). It is overwhelmingly the largest river system in Australia. The Murray River is about 2,500 kilometres from source to sea, and drains an area of about 650,000 square kilometres (Twidale, 1968, p.148). The Murray River system takes in water from the Darling, Lachlan and Murrumbidgee Rivers. The drainage basin therefore covers a diverse range of habitats, from the Snowy Mountains on the eastern border of New South Wales and Victoria, to the semi-arid areas of the outback in southern Queensland and northern New South Wales. In many areas through which the river flows, the annual evaporation rate far exceeds the local rainfall level (Fenner, 1931, p.65). In South Australia, the Murray River flows for many miles without tributaries to feed it.

In the Lower Murray region the river flows from Murray Bridge to Lake Alexandrina through an open valley cut across a very low and flat limestone karst plain, which is less than thirty metres above sea level (Fenner, 1931, pp.81-83; Twidale, 1968, pp.148-149,383-384). Below Wellington, the river becomes two large lakes (Alexandrina and Albert) and a series of channels in the form of a delta, eventually exiting behind scattered islands at the Murray Mouth (Fig.4.2, 4.3). Here, the river meets the Coorong (Fig.4.4), which drained the South East region of South Australia before European intervention.[6] The sea, winds and tides combine to drive the river back with heavy sand dune systems, called Sir Richard and Younghusband Peninsulas (north west and south east parts respectively).[7] From the point of view of the early Aboriginal inhabitants, the delta of the Lower Murray provided the region with many miles of shoreline for hunting and gathering activities.
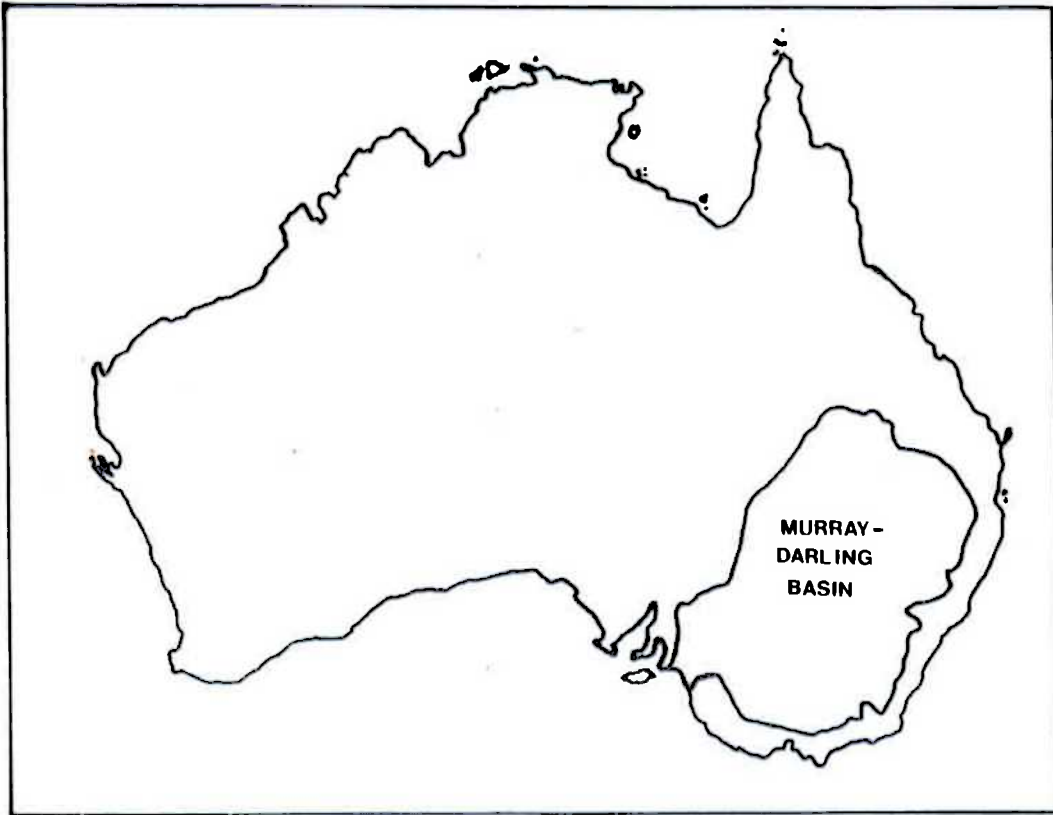
Fig.4.1 The Murray - Darling Basin

Fig.4.2 Reeds at Lake Albert Passage, 1986 (Photo: P.A. Clarke)

Fig.4.3 The 'Bulrushes' near Point McLeay, on the shore of Lake Alexandrina, 1987 (Photo: P.A. Clarke)

Fig.4.4 Point McLeay as seen across the Coorong from Younghusband Peninsula, 1990 (Photo: P.A. Clarke)

4.2.1.2 The Lower Murray Climate

The climate of the Lower Murray region is influenced by the powerful 'controls' of its temperate latitude, the proximity of the sea, and the relief of the land (Howchin, 1909, p.142; Fenner, 1931, p.125; Schwerdtfeger; 1976, pp.75-86; Penney, 1983, pp.85-93). Long sections of both the Murray River, and its main tributary the Darling River, flow through semi-arid regions. Nevertheless, the Lower Murray region is entirely contained within the high rainfall area of South Australia, receiving from 350 to 750 mms per year (Fig.4.5). It comes under the rainfall shadow of the Mount Lofty Ranges to the west, with precipitation also increasing near the coast and towards the south eastern parts of South Australia. Annual average temperature throughout the region is less than 18 Celsius, with the greatest range of temperatures being during the summer months (Fenner, 1931, pp.65,126).

Australian climates often posed problems to early geographers who tried to make a European model fit here. For example, Howchin (1909, pp.142-143) claimed that the South Australian year could not be clearly divided into four seasons. This is because in comparison to colder temperate latitudes it has no winter, and autumn is simply marked by a fruiting season. Howchin separated the year practically into two seasons, spring and summer. Spring exists from about April to October, and summer from November to March. Howchin's periods approach the Bureau of Meteorology's description of the 'winter half' and 'summer half' seasons of southern Australia (Department of Science & Technology, 1983, p.5). The typical climate pattern is a long dry summer followed by a wet season, when rain is produced from the cyclones and anti-cyclones under the influence of a belt of low pressure over the Southern Ocean (Howchin, 1909, pp.143-147; Fenner, 1931, pp.128-129; Penney, 1983, pp.85-88). The most important rains fall from April to November, although sometimes the summer drought does not break until after May. June is typically the wettest month.

4.2.1.3 The Lower Murray Vegetation

The vegetation of the Lower Murray was dominated by coastal succession and woodland formations (Fig. 4.6). Along the sea front, the dunes are generally covered with low ground covering plants, such as the coastal spinifex (Spinifex hirsutus) and pigfaces or native figs (Carpobrotus species). Further inland, mixed

South Australia

New South Wales

250

350

350

Port
Augusta

Murray R.

250

Port Lincoln

Adelaide

Murray
Bridge

450

550

550   750   750

350

550

450

N

Kingston

550

0   50   100

kms

Victoria

750

Mount Gambier

Rainfall in millimetres
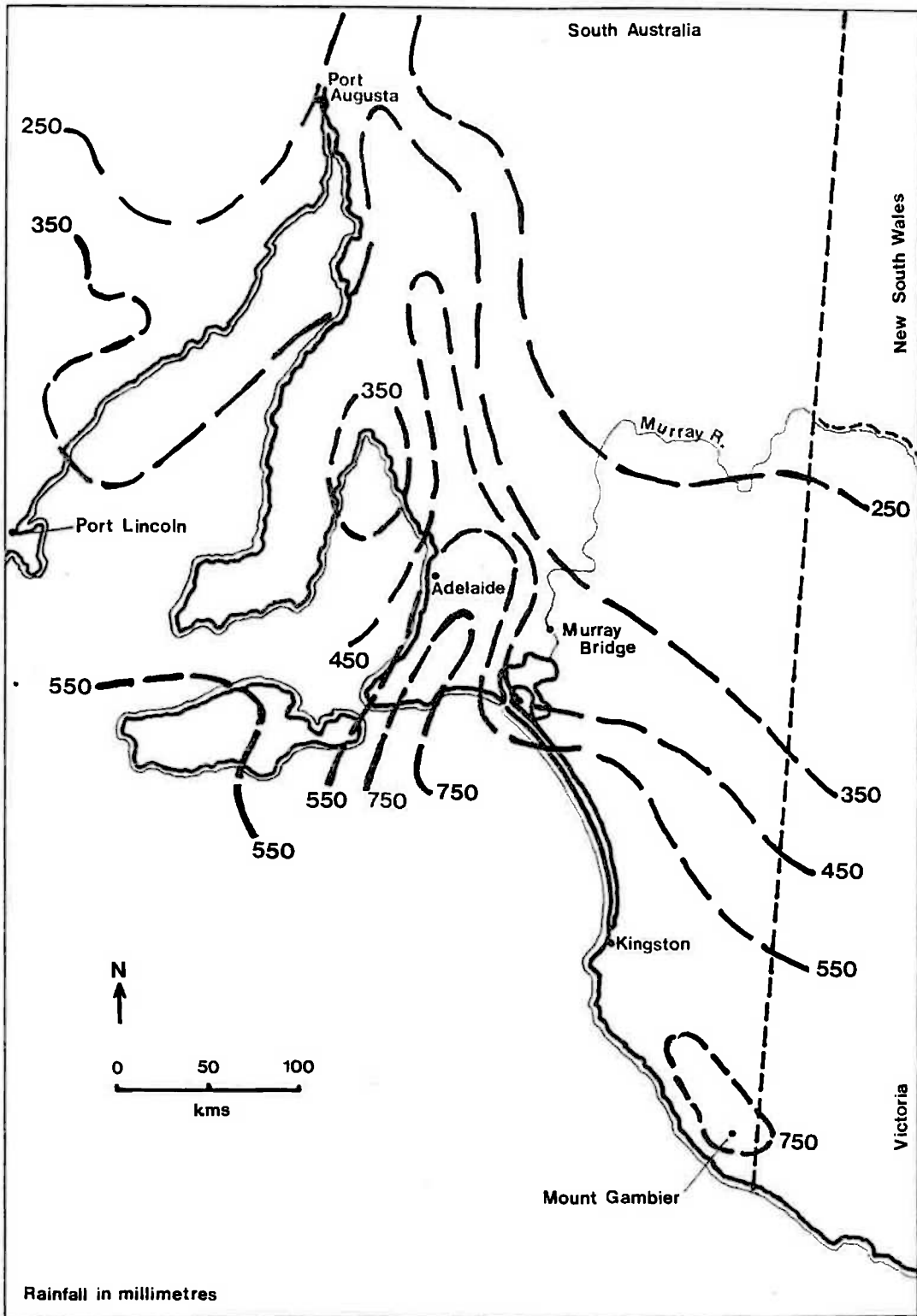
Fig.4.5 Rainfall of south eastern South Australia showing annual isohyets
(after Specht, 1972, p.43)

N

Adelaide
Mt Lofty
Murray Bridge
Point McLeay
Meningie
Coorong

```
0    20   40
        kms
```

- FOREST
- WOODLAND
- OPEN SCRUB
- SHRUBLAND
- GRASSLAND
- COASTAL SUCCESSION

Kingston

Coastal Groups | Inland Groups

Hunting area

Winter camps

Summer camps

Winter camps

Summer camps

COASTAL SUCCESSION
WOODLAND
OPEN SCRUB

SOUTHERN OCEAN
COORONG
LAKE ALBERT
MENINGIE
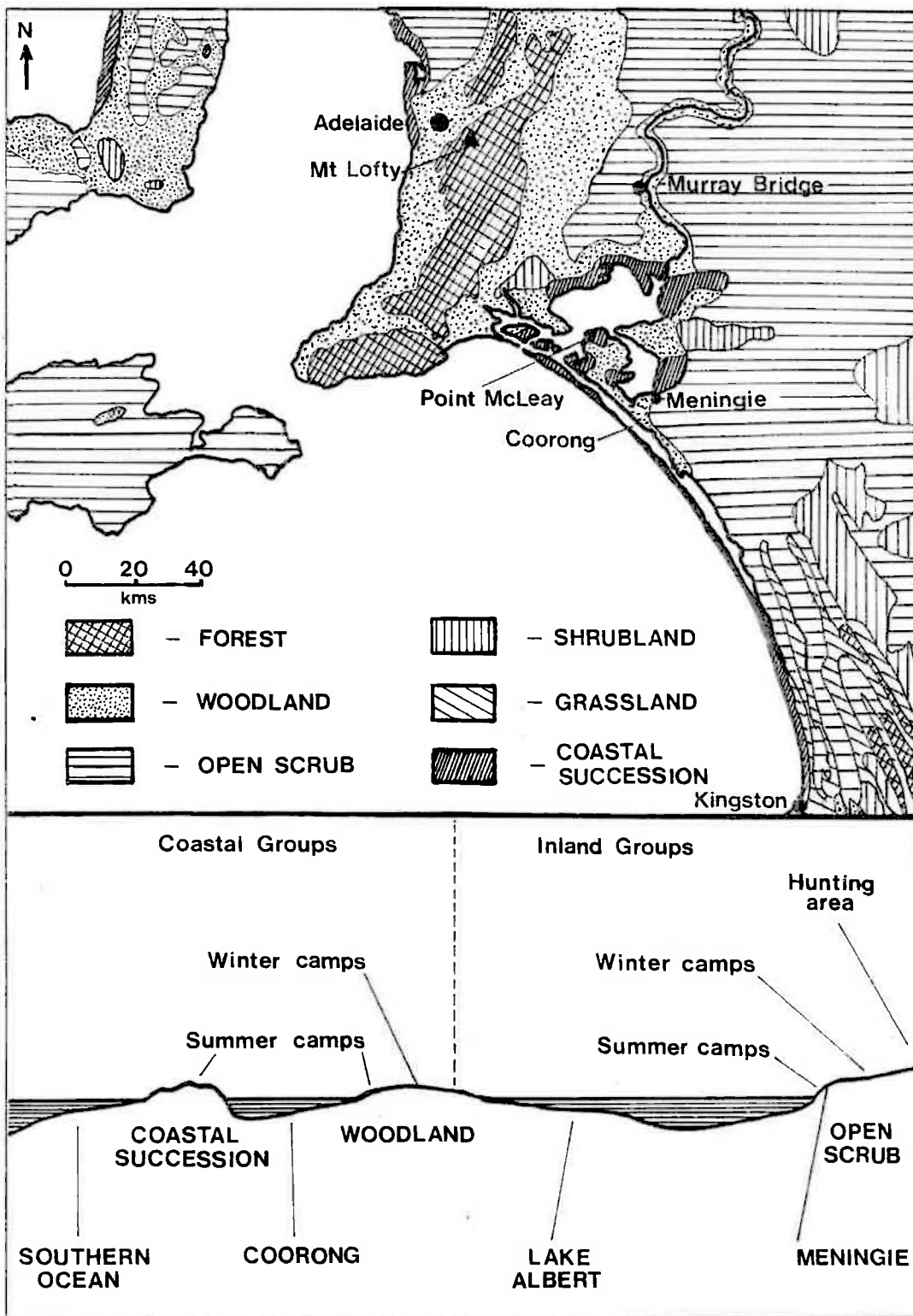
Fig.4.6 Pre-European vegetation of southern South Australia (after Boomsma & Lewis, 1980, map), and Aboriginal camping zones in the Lower Murray

forest of sclerophyllous plants, dominated by dwarfed eucalypts (Eucalyptus species) and native oaks

(Allocasuarina and Casuarina species) occur (Fig.4.7). Conspicuous plants, such as the grasstree

(Xanthorrhoca species), wattle (Acacia species) and the native honeysuckle (Banksia ornata) are also

present. Along the edges of the freshwater lakes and channels, bulrushes (Typha species) and common

reeds (Phragmites australis) dominated in the water, with the banks covered by lignum (Muchlenbeckia

cunninghamii). In the low areas, which are dry for some months of the year, species of sedge (Cyperaceae)

and rushes (Juncaceae) predominated, intermingled with nitre bushes (Nitraria billardierei) and often

fringed by ti-trees (Melaleuca lanceolata).

In the Lower Murray region, large trees, like the red gum (Eucalyptus camaldulensis) generally only

occurred in the forests of the southern Mount Lofty Ranges and along waterways away from the influence

of the influx of sea water. Along the cliffs abutting the river and lake, and on the tops of some sand ridges,

forests of the southern cypress pine (Callitris preissii) were found (Fig.4.8). The regional pattern of plants

in the Lower Murray had a major effect on the distribution of animal species. A description of the fauna of

the region is taken up in the discussion of Aboriginal hunting techniques below.

The vegetation structure of the Lower Murray region differed significantly from that of its neighbours. For

instance, the forest area in the higher altitude zone of the Mount Lofty Ranges was the territory of the

Peramangk, although it was very thinly populated.[8] Here, most people lived on the eastern slopes on the

Mount Barker side. To the north of the Lower Murray, the land of the Meru-speaking people along the

Murray River was dominated by open scrub (or mallee) with a narrow woodland zone near the river. To the

east of the Lower Murray lay the territory of the Ngarkat in the open scrub or mallee vegetation zone.[9] In

the south east, a complex of grassland, forest and shrub land communities existed among a large series of

seasonal swamps. This area was occupied by groups such as the Potaruwutj and Meintangk.[10]

4.2.2 Capturing Marine Mammals

Whale and dolphin strandings, involving several species, occasionally occur along the coastal zone.

Encounter Bay was part of the migration route of the black right whale (Eubalaena australis) (Fig.5.1). In

early times, these events attracted many Aboriginal people for feasting. A painting by Angas shows whale

Fig.4.7 Susan and Jamie Rankine in the sheoak and gum forest at 'Block K', near Point McLeay, 1989 (Photo: P.A. Clarke)
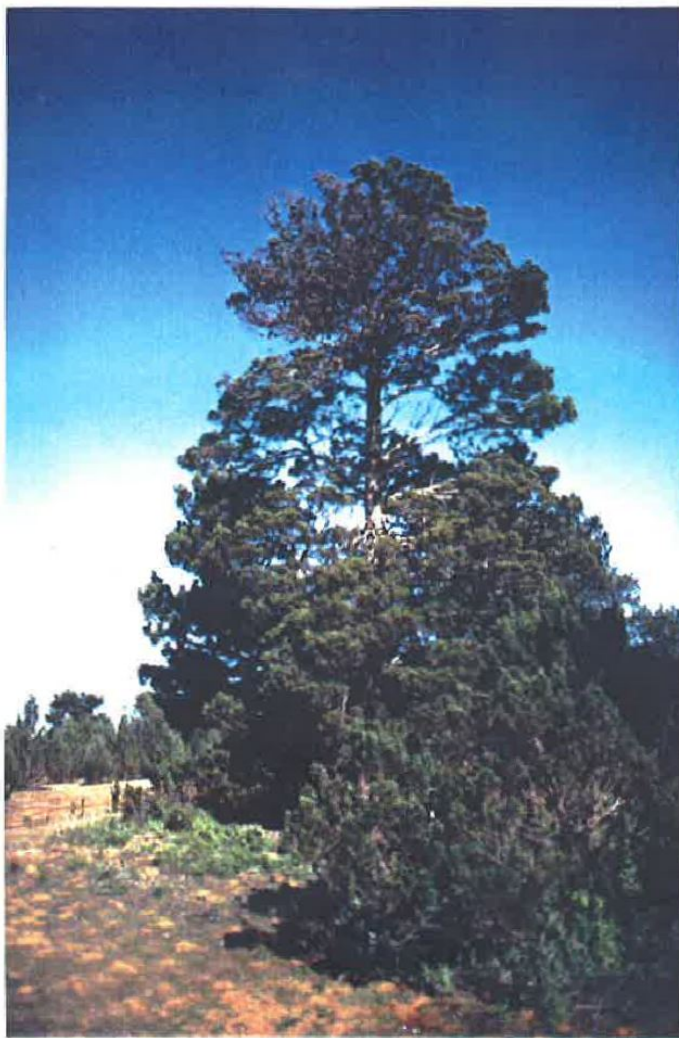
Fig.4.8 Pine forest (of <u>Callitris preissii</u>) near Wellington, 1988 (Photo: P.A. Clarke)

bones being used as the framework of an Aboriginal hut at Encounter Bay (Angas, 1844, plate LVI). Whales were not restricted entirely to the marine zone: they were also sometimes caught in the Coorong system. Early this century, Lower Murray people killed a beached 5.6 metre female whale near Rabbit Island. They dragged parts of it into their boat, and later cut it up and distributed the meat among their neighbours (Ely, 1980).

Aboriginal people perceived that they had a more active role in some strandings. Songs were used by 'strong men' of the coastal Lower Murray groups to 'cause' strandings (Tindale, 1974, pp.18,23,80). Contemporary Aboriginal people have informed me that one elderly Ngarrindjeri person living at Point McLeay, who died during the last ten years, was able to sing a song 'to bring in whales'. For the Lower South East of South Australia, there is a transcription of a whale song in the 'Booandik' language (Smith, 1880, p.139). This was translated as 'The whale is come, And thrown up on land.' These lines were repeated over and over, perceived as inducing a stranding. Tindale also records a whale song, with a difference, in the Ramindjeri dialect of Encounter Bay (1937a, pp.107,112). Unlike those described above, this was sung by a man of the 'kondoli nga:tji', or whale totem, in order to assist a female whale and calf escape the shallow waters of Encounter Bay. In this account, other people who were 'evil-minded', desired the whales to be stranded so that oil could be collected for sorcery.

Seals, such as the New Zealand fur seal (Arctocephalus fosteri) and the Australian sea lion (Neophoca cinerea) were also eaten by Lower Murray people. Ramindjeri people travelled to West Island, which is less than a kilometre off the coast south west of Victor Harbor, on rafts to kill seals (Tindale, 1941b, p.241). In order to do this, they reportedly needed the permission of the people whose totem it was. However, probably due to Aboriginal hunting activities in the pre-European period, the main breeding grounds of seals were on offshore islands, such as Kangaroo Island (Glover & Ling, 1976, p.187; Inns et al, 1979, pp.95-99), places beyond the range of Aboriginal hunters immediately prior to European settlement (Section 5.1.2).

4.2.3 Kangaroo and Wallaby Hunting Techniques

The western grey kangaroo (Macropus fuliginosus) and the toolache wallaby (Macropus greyi) were species formerly hunted in the Lower Murray region. These macropods were generally stalked just prior to dusk

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when feeding (Smith, 1930, p.225). A shield of branches was used to hide the hunter, allowing him to move within spear-throwing distance of the animal (Fig.4.10). A good hunter could strike the kangaroo or wallaby when its head was down feeding. In this way, there was a chance that the dying beast would not frighten away other animals.

The large scale hunting of big animals, such as kangaroos and emus, sometimes involved the cooperative efforts of groups of people. A large party of men would go out early in the morning, armed with barbed spears, and position themselves in a large semicircle (Hahn, 1838-1839 [1964, p.133]; Eyre, 1845, vol.2, p.277,280). Women, children and other men started driving game in the direction of people lying in wait. Often this involved firing the countryside and using the topography of the landscape to the hunter's advantage (Section 4.2.14.1). Gradually the space between driving party members was reduced, the game cornered and killed with clubs. If fewer people were available, then large nets could be placed across a well worn animal pad, and game driven into it by hunters (Eyre, 1845, vol.2, p.277). Sometimes concealed pits were used (Smith, 1930, p.227). For smaller animals, such as wallabies, brush fences were also used to drive them towards a point where they could be easily killed (Eyre, 1845, vol.2, p.283). According to contemporary Ngarrindjeri informants, land points jutting into the Coorong, such as Mark Point and Long Point, were once used to corner kangaroos and wallabies at the termination of an animal drive. On some occasions, animals would be driven into pits (Smith, 1930, p.226). Kangaroo hunts, 'con conbah', were frequently practised during the early years of the Point McLeay mission when the land was still largely unsettled by Europeans. [11]

Kangaroos not only provided meat, their skins were made into clothing, pegged out on salt pans to cure (Smith, 1930, p.333; Tindale, 1935, p.269). The entrails were made into carrying bags in the Hahndorf area of the Mount Lofty Ranges (Hahn, 1838-1839 [1964, p.131]). Kangaroo bones also formed the central prong of three pronged fishing spears used on the Murray River (Worsnop, 1897, p.93). The spears had the double purpose of spearing fish and being used as a punting pole for canoes. Archaeological evidence suggests that animal bones were widely used across Australia as replacements for stone in the last few hundred years prior to European settlement (Hemming et al, 1989, p.6).

4.2.4 Capturing Marsupials in Trees

The species of possum found in the Lower Murray are the common ringtail (Pseudocheirus peregrinus) and the common brush tail possum (Trichosurus vulpecula). Due to the preferred habitat of mature forest, they were chiefly found in the wooded areas of Fleurieu Peninsula (Tyler, Gross, Rix & Inns, 1976, pp.125-126; Aitken, 1983, p.129). Koalas (Phascolarctos cinereus) and gliders (Acrobates and Petaurus species) inhabit a similar area.

Aboriginal people located hollow trees where these animals lived by examining tree trunks for fresh scratch marks and small pieces of fur (Eyre, 1845, vol.2, pp.280-281; Meyer, 1846 [1879, pp.194-195]; Smith, 1930, pp.226-227). When such a tree was located, it was quickly climbed, often with the aid of a pointed stick to chop toeholds into smooth and branchless trunks. To determine whether a possum was in a particular hollow, a stone was thrown in causing the animal to make rustling noises as it shifted (Eyre, 1845, vol.2, pp.280-281). Also, a stick with a roughened end was inserted into the hollow and twisted. When this was withdrawn, the end was examined for fur. If within easy reach, the possum was pulled out of the hollow, its head smashed on the tree (Meyer, 1846 [1879, pp.194-195]). When the animal retreated deeply into the tree, it was either chopped out or forced from the hollow with smoke (Hahn, 1838-1839 [1964, p.133]).

The skins of possums were used in the making of winter clothing (Eyre, 1845, vol.2, pp.280-281). Hahn (1838-1839 [1964, p.131]) records that in the Hahndorf area, kangaroo skins were still the preferred material for clothing made by Aboriginal people some years after European colonisation. He saw a jacket that had been made by an Aboriginal woman from the skins of small possums, using a small bone awl and kangaroo gut to stitch it together. It is interesting to note that in the Encounter Bay area, it was recorded that only people of the Ramindjeri descent group were allowed to hunt possum (Meyer, 1846 [1879, pp.194-195]). Possum skin cloaks would have been traded into areas where possums were not commonly found (such as the Coorong - due to lack of tall trees). The ethnographic record is lacking in details concerning the use of the koala and gliders.

4.2.5 Hunting Burrowing Mammals

In the Lower Murray, burrowing mammals, particularly bandicoots and rats, were either dug up or smoked out of their holes (Angas, 1847b, pp.68,84,132). In the Mid Murray region, Eyre (1845, vol.2, p.268) says:

> Rats are also dug out of the ground, but they are procured in the greatest numbers and with the utmost facility when the approach of the floods in the river flats compels them to evacuate their domiciles. A variety is procured among the scrubs under a singular pile or nest which they make of sticks, in the shape of a hay-cock, three or four feet [.9 to 1.2 metres] high and many feet in circumference. A great many occupy the same pile and are killed with sticks as they run out.

The above quote clearly refers to a species of stick-nest rat (Leporillus species), and indicates the seasonal nature of some hunting practices.

Wombats (Vombatus ursinus)could also be dug up or smoked out of their burrows (Angas, 1847b, pp.68,84,132). Another method of capturing wombats involved the hunter, during the late afternoon, hiding in bushes where he could observe from which hole a wombat emerged (Smith, 1930, p.227). When the animal moved on, the hole would be blocked about a metre in. The hunter would then frighten the wombat back to his hole, trapping him between the exit and the block. According to contemporary Aboriginal informants, the echidna (Tachyglossus aculeatus) is easily caught by flipping it up with a stick once the secretive animal is located.

4.2.6 Bird Catching and Egg Collecting

The Lower Murray was an area formerly rich in a variety of wild fowl, particularly water birds.[12] The large expanse of lakes and lagoons would have enabled a greater dependence by Aboriginal people upon birds as food than would have been possible in any of the surrounding regions. Aboriginal hunters had many methods for capturing such a diverse range of species.

In the Lower Murray, snares were formerly used for catching a wide range of birds (Hemming et al, 1989, p.13). Snares were used in conjunction with a framework of sticks, often placed next to a hide made from branches and reeds. One method used by hunters to attract birds to land on the framework and become entangled was to produce noises (Worsnop, 1897, pp.114-115). Another practice was to situate the snare between two sticks driven into mud on either side of a narrow swimming channel (Smith, 1930, pp.224-

225). Black swans (Cygnus atratus) in particular make these paths amongst reeds. Precise knowledge of the habits of hunted species was particularly important for techniques such as snaring, as often the hunter was not around to observe whether the snare was in the correct position.

The use of snaring-rods, long poles with a noose attached to the end, was a variation of the snare technique described above. In mallee country away from the river, snaring-rods were used to catch nectar feeding birds (Worsnop, 1879, p.116). In this case, the hide was constructed next to a flowering bush, and the first captive tied to the frame as a live decoy. Snaring-rods were also used to catch water birds such as swans, Cape Barren geese (Cereopsis novaehollandiae) and ducks (Meyer, 1846 [1879, p.193]; Angas, 1847b, pp.90-91). A method of catching swans involved the hunter, armed with a swan wing decoy and snaring-rod, hiding amongst water-flags and reeds by the margin of a lagoon (Smith, 1930, pp.223-224). The splashing of the wing, imitating a bird in distress, attracted distant swans. The loop of the snaring-rod was quickly extended over the bird's head, the rod pulled in and the bird killed. Another strategy was to place upright sticks a short distance into the lake in areas where shags (Leucocarbo fuscescens) and cormorants (Phalacrocorax species) were known to frequent (Angas, 1847b, p.91). The hunters would swim out with weed covered heads, snaring them with rods.

Nets were also used to catch birds, particularly flocks of water species. The nets were strung between two trees in the flight path of the birds (Eyre, 1845, vol.2, pp.286-287; Smith, 1930, p.223). Birds, such as ducks, were flushed and made to fly low with shrill whistles from hunters imitating hawks or falcons. Many birds could be caught in this manner. Swans are flightless while moulting from mid-July to January, and are easily caught at this stage.[13] At other times, large birds could be taken by spear (Eyre, 1845, vol.2, p.283). Catching birds settled on an open section of water involved swimming. A hunter, wearing a hat made of rushes, reeds or water-flags, would swim out to the waterfowl and pull them under (Smith, 1930, pp.220-221). This method has been described by several contemporary Aboriginal informants from the Lower Murray.

Another method was to entice teal ducks (Anas gibberifrons) towards the bank by waving the flower tops of several reeds tied together, with the hunter hidden from view (Museum Board, 1887, p.33; Smith, 1930, pp.221-222). The reeds apparently looked like the tail of a wild dog. When close, the hunter stands up and

throws clubs and spears at the birds as they take flight. Sometimes a boomerang is thrown, the noise as it cuts through the air resembling a hawk, forcing birds back onto the water. The hunter then throws another boomerang lower, severing the head off any bird it hits. A variation of this practice was used to entice ducks in with a basketry duck decoy.[14]

Contemporary Ngarrindjeri people claim that the 'lawri' (Cape Barren goose, Cereopsis novaehollandiae) was a highly desired food. These large birds are only seen in the Lower Murray region from October to February, when young birds arrive to feed on herbage growing on the flats surrounding the lakes. One widely known account of the 'old' method of stalking the 'lawri' is told by contemporary Ngarrindjeri people with much humour. Upon sighting a flock, the hunter takes off his clothes, and walks backwards towards a group of birds, which are at first inquisitive and do not fly away. When he is close, he turns around and shoots one or more of the birds. In pre-European times, a club was used instead of the shot gun.

Emus (Dromaius novaehollandiae), being large flightless animals, were generally caught in the same ways described above for kangaroos, by stalking with bough shields, or by trapping in concealed pits (Smith, 1930, p.227). An alternative method was to lie in wait next to an emu pad leading to water. When the emu approached in late afternoon, the hunter would thrust out his hand, catching the bird by one of its legs while he clubbed it to death. One Aboriginal informant claimed that emus, now scarce in the Lower Murray, formerly moved in large numbers towards the coast during the summer fruiting season of the 'ngu:li' or 'wild currant' (Leucopogon parviflorus). Knowledge of the seasonal movements and preferred habitats of such hunted species was important for hunters and gatherers in earlier times.

Bird eggs, or 'ngatjeri', were formerly much sought after (Section 8.4.3). Ngarrindjeri informants recall collecting the eggs of swans during August and September in the reeds and rushes growing at Nine Mile Reach near Wellington on the River, and in the lagoons around Lake Alexandrina, and along the Lake Albert passage. Although fresh eggs were eaten, for taste it was preferred that they contained a developing embryo about the size of a thumbnail. Eggs of seagulls, 'thrukeri' (Larus novaehollandiae), were also collected. The main spot remembered for gathering was 'Thrukeri' or Seagull Island, near Policeman Point on the Coorong. Another species whose eggs were eaten was the spur-winged plover, 'ratha-rathi' (Vanellus miles). These birds nest on open ground on the edges of lagoons. One informant stated that

Aboriginal people along the Coorong and in the South East formerly stored swan and emu eggs for months by burying them in damp soil. The season of use of such foods was in this way greatly extended. Nevertheless, only eggs from certain bird species could be treated in this manner. Apparently eggs of the mallee fowl (Leipoa ocellata) were not able to be kept as the shell was too thin.

4.2.7 Aboriginal Use of Reptiles and Amphibians

Contemporary Ngarrindjeri people say that various reptiles were formerly eaten, in particular 'kre:i' (snake) and 'munari' (blue-tongue lizard, Tiliqua scincoides). One elderly Ngarrindjeri informant claimed she had eaten the red-bellied black snake (Pseudechis porphyriacus) and brown snake (Pseudonaja textilis), but would not eat the very dangerous tiger snake (Notechis scutatus), even when available. Snakes were particularly hazardous during bulrush root collecting expeditions in the swamps (Angas, 1847b, p.55).

Around the Lower Lakes and Murray River, Aboriginal people tracked freshwater tortoises (Chelodina longicollis) as they moved inland to lay their eggs (Angas, 1847b, p.91). Eggs would be covered, fried in hot ashes and then eaten. Along the river, turtles were generally caught by men who dived for them (Eyre, 1845, vol.2, pp.267). An elderly Ngarrindjeri man told me that they had formerly eaten the 'river turtle', 'thukabi', which was easily caught when found walking on land. The 'thukabi' was cooked on the fire after the 'stink', or scent glands, had been removed. These scent glands were stored in a tin, to be eventually placed around the camp to stop 'kre:i', snakes, from entering. Live 'thukabi' were also sometimes kept as pets around the houses for this purpose. This enabled people to 'sleep with door open'. It is possible that this belief was formerly associated with a mythical antagonism between turtles and snakes, as recorded between blue-tongue lizards and snakes (Taplin Journals, 21 December 1859; Smith, 1930, p.146). The shells of large tortoises were sometimes used by Lower Murray people as containers instead of baskets made of sedge.[15]

Frogs were formerly either dug out of the ground, or caught in the swamps (Eyre, 1845, vol.2, p.268). They were generally obtained by women, and every stage from a tadpole upwards was eaten. Women in the Encounter Bay area caught tadpoles from claypans with fine nets, cooking them in large 'mutton-fish' shells (Worsnop, 1897, p.83).

4.2.8 Aboriginal Fishing Technology

From the daily account available in Taplin's Journals, it is clear that fish, termed 'mame' in general, were a favourite food item in the Lower Murray region. People here gave cultural significance to the fact that when their babies tried to speak, their first words were 'mam'. This was interpreted by adults as the infant's desire to eat fish (Taplin Journals, 10 October 1861). Fishing techniques used in the Lower Murray region ranged from netting, spear fishing, and trapping, to opportunistic harvesting and storage. Before the arrival of Europeans, Aboriginal people in southern Australia did not use the fish-hook and line (Eyre, 1845, vol.2, pp.266-267; Meyer, 1846 [1879, p.192]; Davies, 1881, p.129; Massola, 1956). The fishing opportunities that the Lower Murray landscape offered Aboriginal people living there would undoubtedly have made fish a more significant food source in comparison to Aboriginal groups living in adjacent regions.

Marine net fishing often involved the coordination of a large number of people. Worsnop provides a vivid account of Aboriginal people sea fishing last century. He records:

> In Encounter Bay I have seen the natives fishing almost daily. Two parties of them, each provided with a large net, square in form, with a stick at either end, and rolled up, swam out a certain distance from the shore, and then spread themselves out into a semicircle. Every man would then give one of the sticks round which his piece of net was rolled to his right hand man, receiving another from his left hand neighbour, bringing the two nets together, thus making a great seine. They now swam in towards the shore, followed by others of their number, who were engaged in splashing the water and throwing stones, frightened the fish and prevented their escape from the nets (1897, pp.90-91).

If nets were not available, then branches could be used to drive the fish upon the beach (Angas, 1847b, p.112).

Net fishing in freshwater required less people than sea fishing. An elderly Ngarrindjeri man gave me an account of Aboriginal people of the Mid Murray region using nets to catch fish. These nets were made from split rushes, scalded before knotting to strengthen them. The fish would be driven up creeks leading into the river, and the net placed across the entrance. Fish were then forced back into the net. 'Pila:lki' (callop, Plectroplites ambiguus) and 'tjeri' (silver perch, Bidyanus bidyanus) were often caught in this manner. According to the same informant, the Mannum to Renmark area of the Murray River had many such creeks good for this purpose. Nets were generally made from sedge (Cyperus species) or water-flag (Typha species) fibre.[16] A similar technique was used in the lagoons of the Lower Lakes and in the creeks running

into Encounter Bay (Fig.4.9). Here, a small mesh net was used for 'kanmuri' (mullet, Aldrichetta forsteri), a large mesh net for 'tukkeri' (bony bream, Fluvialosa richardsoni), and a large drum net for 'pondi' (Murray cod, Maccullochella peeli) (Harvey, 1943, p.111). From available accounts, sinkers and floats were never used in association with any type of net fishing.

During the day, fish such as 'malawe' (commonly called in Australian English 'mullaway', Argyrosomus holepidotus), were caught by men who stood motionless in the river, attracting the fish by their shadows, and stabbing them with large double-pronged spears (Meyer, 1846 [1879, pp.192-193]; Smith, 1930, pp.230-231; Hemming et al, 1989, p.9). There is an account of spear-fishing competitions among Piltinyeri people of southern Lake Alexandrina, held from November to April, the fish caught being presented to senior people in the community (Smith, 1930, pp.231-236). In this instance, skills in fish tracking, involving the detection of movements in pond weed, reeds and water ripples, were an important part of the game.

At night time a fire was used to attract fish to be struck by spear or club (Angas, 1847b, p.112). Sometimes a bark canoe was used to fish from, a fire contained by a clay hearth in the middle which also served to cook the catch (Meyer, 1846 [1879, p.193]; Angas, 1847b, pp.54,101,107). Mobility across water was important for the fisherman in order to reach areas favoured by particular species of fish. Therefore, rafts made from reed stems (Phragmites australis) would also have been important items of fishing material culture.[17] However, there is no evidence that any form of watercraft was ever used for sea fishing, although short trips were made on reed rafts to nearby rocky islands (Section 4.2.2).

There are documented cases of Aboriginal use of fish poisons in the upstream reaches of the Murray River bordering northern Victoria (Curr, 1883, p.110). However, Taplin doubts that the Ngarrindjeri ever had knowledge of the use of poisonous plants in this way (Taplin, 1879, p.47). Nevertheless, when large numbers of fish died for natural reasons in the river or lake, these were quickly gathered (Eyre, 1845, vol.2, p.266). Before the construction of the barrages across the Murray Mouth separating the Coorong from Lake Alexandrina, Aboriginal informants claim there were sometimes rapid changes in the water from fresh to saline. This sometimes killed a large number of fish, providing an abundant source of food (Section 8.3).
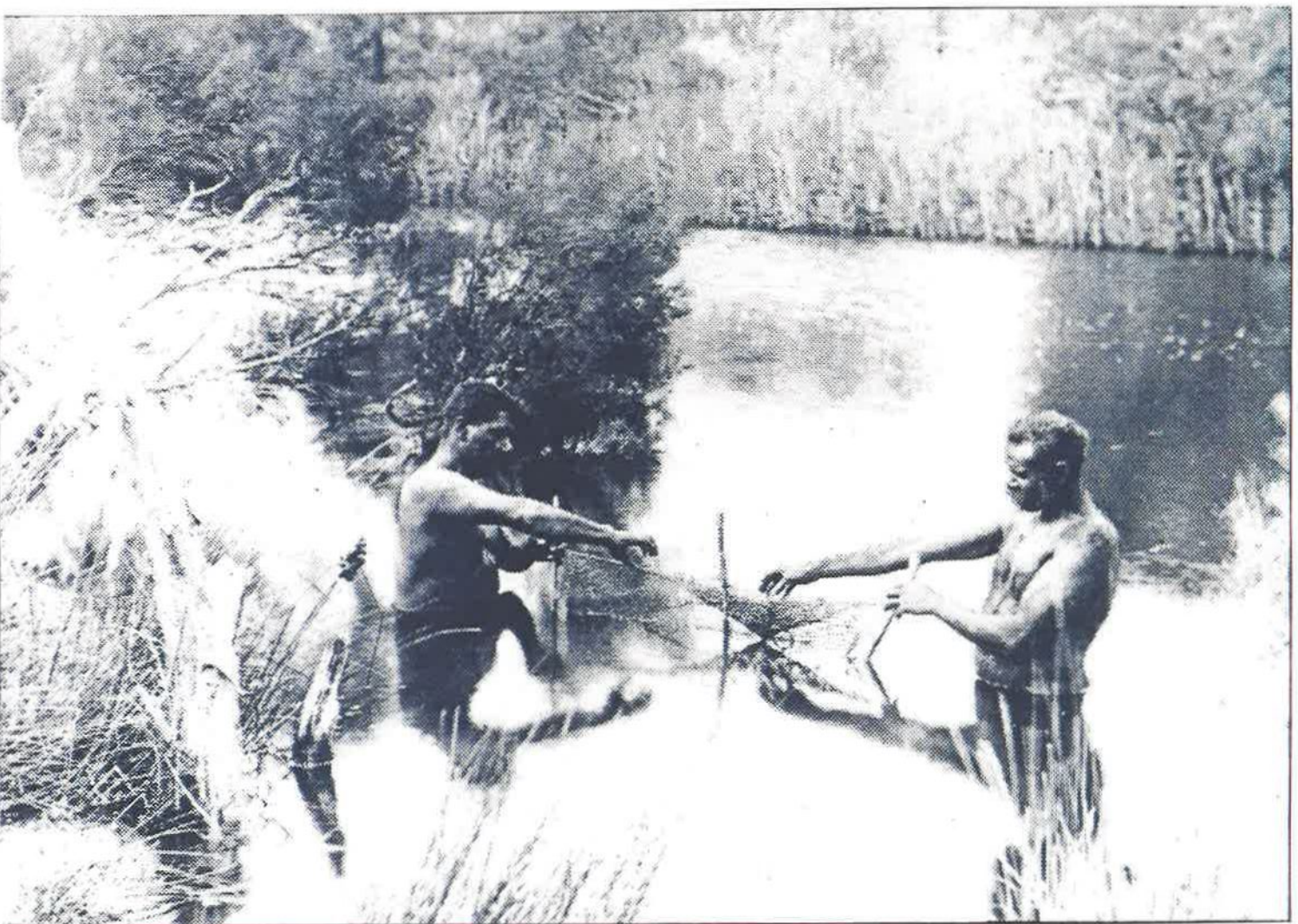
Fig. 4.9 Harry Hewitt and Leonard Lovegrove net-fishing in the Inman River, c.1880 (McGann Collection, Anthropology Archives, S.A. Museum)

At other times, the incoming salt water drove certain species, such as 'pondi' (Murray cod, Maccullochella peeli) upstream, suspending fishing in the lakes until it receded (Taplin Journals, 19 May 1860).

The construction of long trenches by Aboriginal people to concentrate fish saved them much labour expenditure. These channels were often large modifications of the landscape. For instance, Smith records that in the Murray region:

> In the low-lying country, alongside of the river, trenches are dug two or three hundred yards [180 or 270 metres] long and from four to five feet [1.2 to 1.6 metres] deep. When the Murray becomes flooded it overflows its banks to the extent of a mile or more [1.6 kilometres or more] on each side, and frequently the Murray cod, the bream, the butterfish, and other fish are living in this water. When the waters become low through evaporation and soakage the fish are easily caught... They wade into the shallow water and scoop the fish into baskets made especially for this purpose (1930, p.229).

Another modification of the landscape for fishing was the building of stone and wood fish-traps. At Noonamena, on the mainland side of the Coorong near Meningie, the tops of silted over fish-trap formations can still be seen (Fig.4.11). These are naturally occurring stone structures that present day Lower Murray Aboriginal people have said were previously modified with stones and pieces of wood. According to an elderly Aboriginal man, mullet travel northwards up the Coorong during the day (Ely, 1980). Upon reaching the trap, fish would swim into the wide mouth of a horseshoe shaped line of rocks. The foundation of this was a natural outcrop of exposed rock with all gaps except one narrow exit shored up with logs and boulders. The mullet were forced to travel through this narrow exit where they could be easily caught by a net or basketry container put in their path. The Tangani (= Tanganekald) people of the Coorong generally placed their fish-traps made from limestone blocks along the landward shore of the Coorong (Tindale, 1974, pp.61-62). This was presumably because the water is shallower here than on the seaward side of the Coorong lagoon.

Some of the fish-traps have been described as weirs in the literature. According to Eyre, Aboriginal people seasonally gathered at the channels in the Mid Murray connecting the river flats with the main river:

> making a weir across them with stakes and grass interwoven, [would] leave only one or two small openings for the stream to pass through. To these they attach bag nets, which receive all the fish that attempt to re-enter the river. The number procured in this way in a few hours is incredible. Large bodies of natives depend upon these weirs for their sole subsistence, for some time after the waters have commenced to recede (1845, vol.2, p.253).
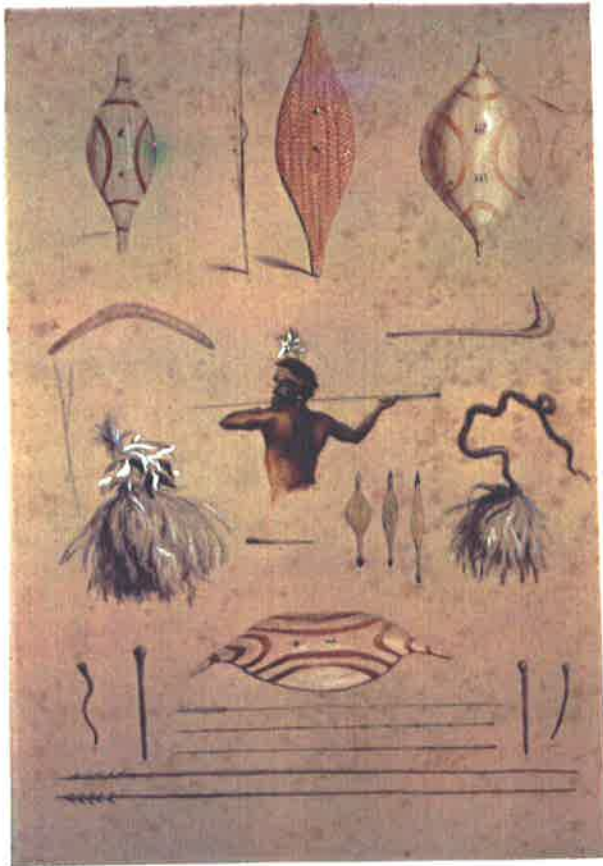
Fig.4.10 Painting by George French Angas demonstrating spear-throwing, 1840 (Angas Collection, Anthropology Archives, S.A. Museum)

Fig.4.11 Fish-traps of Noonamena, Coorong, 1985 (Photo: P.A. Clarke)

This practice occurred during early December when the Murray River floods had reached their highest, and were beginning to recede. Further south, in the shallow waters and swamps of Lake Frome near Burr Range, small fish were caught in weirs (Angas, 1847b, p.174). Also in the South East, near Rivoli Bay, Angas records 'On some of the swamps the natives had built weirs of mud, like a dam wall, extending across from side to side, for the purpose of taking the very small mucilaginous fishes that abound in the water when these swamps are flooded' (1847b, p.155).

Aboriginal modification of the riverine landscape for fishing must have been considerable (Fig.4.12). It is contemporary oral history among old river boat captains that before the lock system was introduced, remains of Aboriginal built fish-traps were known hazards to paddlesteamers when water level was low (T. Sim, pers.com.). Stone fish traps can still be seen around the lakes when the water is low (H.R. Jones, 1985, p.45). Hahn records that in the Hahndorf area of the Mount Lofty Ranges, the Aboriginal people 'build a dam into the river, high enough to let about a foot [31 cms] of water stream over it. Because of this dam, the fish in their run must come close to the surface of the water, where the savages stand in readiness to spear them (1838-1839 [1964, p.133])'. In coastal zones, weirs of brushwood constructed at mouths of creeks caught fish left by receding tides (Angas, 1847b, p.112). According to one source, fish-traps were known by the Ngarrindjeri name 'ku:yitaypari'.[18] Some of the trenches, traps and weirs were designed to catch bait for much larger fish. For example, near Martin's Well on the Coorong, drains a hundred metres in length were constructed by Aboriginal people to catch small fish, called 'lap-lap'[19], for bait (Worsnop, 1897, p.106). These were netted in fine close mesh nets. These accounts of weir and trench constructions appear similar in design to the much larger earthworks at Lake Condah in western Victoria.[20]

Small dams or pounds were often not simply structures for catching fish, but were used to keep part of the catch alive for future use. For instance, Sturt states that on his 1830 expedition down the Murray River he:

> observed some cradles, or wicker frames, placed below high water-mark, that were each
> guarded by two natives, who threatened us violently as we approached. In running along
> the land, the stench from them plainly indicated what they were which these poor
> creatures were so anxiously watching (1833, vol.2, p.165).

At Point McLeay, fish pounds made of stakes were in common use by Aboriginal people during George Taplin's period there (1859-79).[21]
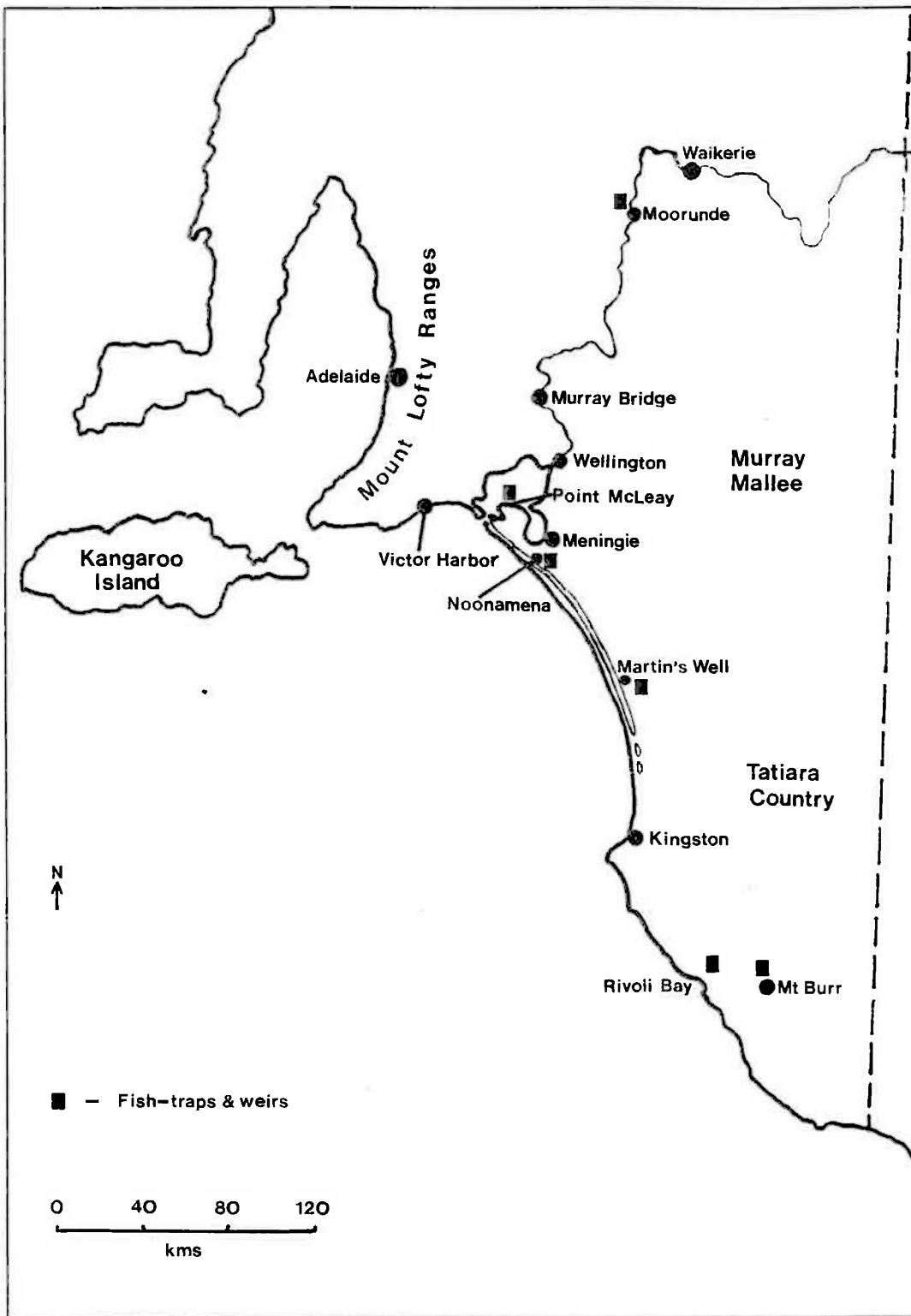
Fig.4.12 Major fish-traps and weirs recorded in the ethnographies of the south east of South Australia

The practice of fish storage continued until the 1930s according to contemporary Aboriginal informants. In recent times, a Lower Murray person gave an account of how Aboriginal people stored surpluses of fish during the 1950s. A Ngarrindjeri man and his family went to the Riverland to find seasonal work such as fruit picking. Fish from the river, caught by the father, were a major source of food. The man was eventually offered a shearing job away from camp for a few days. However, he did not want to leave his family without a means of getting food. Therefore, before leaving he fished, catching enough food for a meal plus an additional seven or eight fish. The surplus was kept in a nearby mud patch. The fish remained alive there for several days, pulled out by his family as required. This man apparently often placed fish into the same mud patch. This preservation of food is similar to that for the fish pounds described by Taplin. I suggest that it is likely that this was a pre-European custom.

Tethering was another method of keeping a surplus of caught fish fresh for later use. Ngarrindjeri informants claim that along the Murray River, fish, particularly 'pondi', the large Murray cod, were sometimes tethered by Aboriginal anglers. A fishing line was forced through the gristle of the head, usually the lower lip. The other end of the line was tied to something below the level of the water. Hiding the tether in this way hindered someone else finding the fish. Several metres of line allowed captives to feed freely. Many fish could be kept this way, and reportedly, indefinitely. When needed, they would simply be pulled in. Since the early ethnographies do not mention the use of fishing line, I suggest that tethering was an early post-European adaptation by Aboriginal people of the fish-pound idea. Local non-Aboriginal fishermen in the Murray basin have also used the same technique.

The wide distribution of recorded modifications to the landscape for fish stock management in the Murray River system and the South East suggests that their use was, in pre-European times, a major subsistence strategy. The material culture and diet of Aboriginal people living in these regions would therefore have significantly differed from groups situated away from major bodies of water. I argue that fish storage in pounds and mud pools was a pre-European Aboriginal practice for 'levelling out the bumps' in the windfall/drought situation of food gathering. Another technique in the Lower Murray of pre-European times was to dry fish on racks in order to prolong their usefulness as food (R.M. & C.H. Berndt, 1951, p.29). With the highly seasonal nature of fishing, it is likely that some of the stone and wood structures

found in south eastern Australia, identified by archaeologists as fish or eel-traps (Flood, 1983, pp.204-208), would be better described as fish pounds, being for storage rather than capture.

Ceremonies were sometimes performed in order to increase fish supply. For instance, Howitt relates:

> There is a spot at Lake Victoria [= Lake Alexandrina], in the Narrinyeri country, where when the water is, at long intervals, exceptionally low, it causes a tree-stump to become visible. This is in charge of a family, and it is the duty of one of the men to anoint it with grease and red ochre. the reason for this is that they believe that if it is not done the lake would dry up and the supply of fish be lessened. This duty is hereditary from father to son (1904, pp.399-400).

This record, and the fish management practices described above, demonstrate that Aboriginal people considered themselves as having a role in the continuation of the environmental resources.

4.2.9 Collecting Insects for Food

Across Australia, insects were a common Aboriginal food source (Tindale, 1966). One contemporary Ngarrindjeri informant described a type of grub, 'waldaruk', that was formerly procured from mallee roots. It was smaller than a witchetty grub, used either for eating or as cod fishing bait. In the Mid Murray area, there is an account describing how grubs were obtained from the ground with the aid of a thin narrow hook of hardwood inserted into a long wiry shoot of lignum (Eyre, 1845, vol.2, p.268). This was pushed down the hole until the grub was hooked, then withdrawn. Grubs to the depth of two metres could be procured in this way. The Mid Murray town of Waikerie derives its name from former feasts upon grubs of the moth, Trictena argentata (Tindale, 1966, p.182). White ants were a favourite food in the spring time (Eyre, 1845, vol.2, p.274). Egg laying females were separated from the dirt by winnowing in a bark trough. It is likely that in pre-European times, many other insect foods were utilised.

4.2.10 Gathering Manna and Lerp

The leaves and stems of some gums (Eucalyptus species) were sources of edible manna. Although this appears to be a plant food source, it is actually an exudate produced by insect attack. Manna from the peppermint gum, Eucalyptus odorata, was infused in water by Ngarrindjeri people, the resulting solution used as a drink (Taplin, 1874 [1879, p.31]). Another account states that the manna gum, E. viminalis, growing in the Bungala Valley area of southern Fleurieu Peninsula, provided manna that Encounter Bay

and Cape Jervis Aboriginal people came to feast upon (Williams, 1986, p.19). A similar insect food

appearing on plant leaves is created by the sugar lerp bugs (Psyllidae family). These minute sapsuckers

produce a sweet white flaky substance as a small protective shelter. These can be scraped off simply by

running the leaf through the teeth, and then eating it. Lerps mainly occur on species of Eucalyptus.[22]

4.2.11 Indigenous Sources of Honey

The introduced honey bee, Apis mellifera, has now largely displaced Australian bee species, such as

Trigona, from the southern regions of Australia (Matthews, 1976, p.88). Eyre provides a detailed account

of the gathering of honey for the Mid Murray region. He reports:

> It is procured pure from the hives of the native bees, found in cavities of rocks and the
> hollow branches of trees. The method of discovering the hive is ingenious. Having caught
> one of the honey bees, which in size exceeds very little the common house fly, the native
> sticks a piece of feather or white down to it with gum, and then letting it go, sets off after
> it as fast as he can: keeping his eye steadily fixed upon the insect, he rushes along like a
> mad-man, tumbling over trees and bushes that lie in his way, but rarely losing sight of his
> object, until conducted to its well-filled store, he is amply paid for all his trouble. The
> honey is not so firm as that of the English bee, but is of very fine flavour and quality
> (1845, vol.2, pp.273-274).

Honey was termed 'parayi' by the Ngarrindjeri (Yallop & Grimwade, 1975, p.96), and would have been a

highly desired food.

4.2.12 Crustaceans as Food

Crustaceans were another abundant food source available to Aboriginal people living in the marine,

estuarine and riverine environments. Angas records that the 'spotted dog crab'[23] was much eaten by

Aboriginal people of the Coorong, and he observed heaps of their shells (1847b, p.134). Along the river,

women obtained freshwater crayfish amongst underwater debris (Eyre, 1845, vol.2, p.267). The species

collected were probably yabbies (Cherax destructor), and the large freshwater lobster (Euastacus armatus).

Aboriginal men gathered crayfish using a large bow-net, 'wharro', which was dragged close to the bottom

of the shallows by two or three people (Eyre, 1845, vol.2, pp.267-268). According to Lower Murray people

I have interviewed, yabbies, or 'crawfish', were formerly caught in large numbers, not only in the river, but

in the lakes of the Lower Murray (Section 8.3).

4.2.13 The Significance of Mollusc Food

In the Lower Murray region, the practice of Aboriginal women collecting molluscs has left the most enduring pre-European human relic in evidence upon the landscape today. During George Taplin's time at Point McLeay, Aboriginal people were well aware that middens along the lake shore were formed by people camping there for a long time (Taplin Journals, 13 January 1860). Large middens are commonly found on the undisturbed shores of the Lower Lakes, Coorong and South East of South Australia (Luebbers, 1978; Cann et al, 1991) (Fig.4.13). Along the ocean, the middens are chiefly composed of the shells of the Goolwa cockle (Plebidonax deltoides) (Fig.4.14). In the historic period, cockles were a major food source for Aboriginal families from Point McLeay who camped during the summer months along the northern Younghusband Peninsula. Contemporary Ngarrindjeri informants have demonstrated to me the 'old' style of cooking, putting them in coals until the shell valve opens and they are ready for eating. This species was gathered between the low and high water marks on the sea side of the Peninsula. Other species, such as Turbo species, were probably eaten along rocky coastal areas on the Fleurieu Peninsula side of the Lower Murray region.

In freshwater areas, the river mussels (Alathyria jacksoni and Velesunio ambiguus) were obtained, as indicated from the shells I have observed in the middens around Lake Alexandrina and the Murray River.[24] Reed rafts were used on Lake Alexandrina for travelling to mussel beds, where the women dived with net bags to gather the molluscs (Angas, 1847b, p.90). For the Mid Murray region, Eyre writes:

> The women whose duty it is to collect these [mussels], go into the water with small nets (lenko) hung around their necks, and diving to the bottom pick up as many as they can, put them into their bags, and rise to the surface for fresh air, repeating the operation until their bags have been filled. They have the power of remaining for a long time under the water, and when they rise to the surface for air, the head and sometimes the mouth only is exposed (1845, vol.2, p.267).

Aboriginal women kept mussel shells for use as spoons and cutting implements (Angas, 1847b, pp.55,92,96,98).

4.2.14 An Overview of Aboriginal Vegetation Use

Aboriginal people formerly had a wide range of uses for plants. Use categories for the Lower Murray groups included food, medicine, narcotics, shelter, watercraft, decoration, tool and weapon making. The

Fig.4.13 Mussel midden exposed at the surface, near Point McLeay, 1988 (Photo: P.A. Clarke)

Fig.4.14 Ash and cockle midden exposed by erosion near Commodore Point, Encounter Bay, 1987 (Photo: P.A. Clarke)

types of plant used by Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray would have made themselves regionally

distinct. For instance, unlike their northern neighbours, the Lower Murray people would not have utilised

grass seed as a major food source (Tindale, 1977, p.347; 1981, p.1859; Clarke, 1985b, pp.16-17).

Similarly, the eastern neighbours in the Murray Mallee, such as the Ngarkat, differed from the Lower

Murray Aboriginal group in their manner of obtaining water. These people, who normally had no access to

the water ways, obtained much of their water from tree roots during dry seasons (Tindale, 1974, pp.40,65).

The bulk of the Lower Murray Aboriginal plant use data I have compiled since the early 1980s has already

been published.[25] I have summarised these data in table form.

Major plant species used by Aboriginal people for food, water sources, narcotics, medicines, poisons and
artefact manufacture in the Lower Murray.

Species	Common Name	Use Category	Major References
Acacia pycnantha	Golden Wattle	Edible gum, gum as medicine	Tindale (1974, p.60), Clarke (1986a, p.3), Clarke (1987, p.4)
Acacia species	Wattles	Edible seed, gum & bark used as medicine	MacPherson (1925, pp.593-594), Clarke (1985b, pp.10-11), Clarke (1986a, p.3), Clarke (1987, p.4)
Astroloma humifusum	Wild Cranberry	Edible fruit	Tindale (1974, p.23), Clarke (1985b, p.11)
Banksia species	Honeysuckle	Source of nectar	Angas (1847b, p.150), Clarke (1986a, p.5)
Billardiera sericophora	Wild Date	Edible fruit	Clarke (1985b, pp.11-12)
Bolboschoenus species	Club Rush	Edible tuber	Eyre (1845, vol.2, p.269), Clarke (1985a, p.3), Clarke (1988, pp.66-67)
Callitris preissii	Native Pine	Gum used as teething stick & as artefact cement, wood as wurley-sticks	Berndt (1940a, p.167), Clarke (1986a, p.4), Clarke (1987, p.5), Clarke (1989 MS)
Carpobrotus species (= Mesembryanthemum)	Wild Fig, Pigface	Edible fruit, leaf used as savoury for meat	Eyre (1845, vol.2, pp.269-270), Clarke (1985b, p.12), Clarke (1986a, pp.8-9)
Casuarina species (including Allocasuarina sp.)	Sheoak	Edible seed capsule, medicine, wood for artefacts	Moriarty (1879, p.52), Clarke (1985b, p.12), Clarke (1987, p.5), Clarke (1989 MS)
Clematis microphylla	Old Man's Beard	Medicine	Clarke (1987, p.6)
Cyperus gymnocaulos	Spiny Sedge	Basket & mat making	Clarke (1989 MS), Hemming (1989a, p.49)
Cyperus vaginatus	Spiny Sedge	Basket & mat making	Clarke (1989 MS)

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Table continued

Species	Common Name	Use Category	Major References
Dianella laevis	Flax Lily	Leaf boiled as tea	Clarke (1987, p.6), Clarke (1988, p.67)
Drosera whittakeri	Sun-dew	Red pigment from root	Worsnop (1897, p.15), Clarke (1988, p.67)
Enchylaena tomentosa	Ruby Saltbush	Edible fruit, fruit juice as paint	Clarke (1985b, p.12), Clarke (1989 MS)
Eucalyptus camaldulensis	Red Gum	Source of sugar lerp, canoe bark, wood for artefacts	Edwards (1972), Clarke (1986a, p.7), Clarke (1989 MS)
Eucalyptus dumosa	White Mallee	Water from root, source of sugar lerp	Magarey (1895, pp.4-5), Tindale (1974, p.62), Clarke (1986a, pp.6-8), Clarke (1988, pp.67-68)
Eucalyptus gracilis	Yorrell	Water from root	Magarey (1895, pp.4-5), Tindale (1974, p.62), Clarke (1986a, pp.7-8), Clarke (1988, pp.67-68)
Eucalyptus odorata	Peppermint Gum	Source of sugar lerp	Taplin (1874 [1879, p.31]), Clarke (1986a, p.6)
Eucalyptus oleosa	Red Mallee	Water from root, source of sugar lerp	Magarey (1895, pp.4-5), Tindale (1974, p.62), Clarke (1986a, pp.6-8), Clarke (1988, pp.67-68)
Eucalyptus species	Mallee, Gums	Medicine, poison, wood for artefacts	Lawson (1879, p.59), Clarke (1987, pp.6-7), Clarke (1989 MS)
Eucalyptus viminalis	Manna Gum	Source of sugar lerp	Clarke (1986a, p.6)
Exocarpos species	Wild Cherry	Edible fruit	Clarke (1985b, p.13)
Kunzea pomifera	Muntry	Edible fruit	Smith (1880, p.130), Clarke (1985b, p.13)
Lavatera plebeia	Australian Hollyhock	Edible tuber	Maiden (1889, p.37), Clarke (1985a, p.4), Clarke (1988, p.68)
Lepidium species	Native Cress	Edible foliage	Tindale (1981, p.1879), Clarke (1986a, p.9)
Lepidosperma canescens	Rapier Sedge	Basket & mat making	Clarke (1989 MS), Hemming (1989, p.49)
Lepidosperma gladiatum	Sagent	Edible leaf base	Clarke (1985a, p.4), Clarke (1989 MS)
Lepidosperma viscidum	Sticky Sword Sedge	Basket & mat making	Clarke (1989 MS), Hemming (1989, p.49)
Leucopogon parviflorus	Wild Currant	Edible fruit	Clarke (1985b, p.14)
Lycoperdon species	Puffball	Edible fungus	Meyer (1843, p.90), Clarke (1986a, p.12)

Table continued

Species	Common Name	Use Category	Major References
Microseris lanceolata	Yam Daisy	Edible tuber	Wyatt (1879, p.176), Clarke (1985a, pp.4-5), Clarke (1988, p.68)
Muehlenbeckia adpressa	Inland Sarsaprilla	Medicine	Clarke (1987, p.8)
Muehlenbeckia gunnii	Coastal Sarsaprilla	Medicine	Clarke (1987, p.8)
Myoporum insulare	Juniper Tree	Edible fruit, medicine	Angas (1847b, p.110), Clarke (1987, p.8), Clarke (1989 MS.)
Nitraria billardierei	Nitre Bush	Edible fruit	Clarke (1985b, p.14)
Oxalis species	Native Carrot	Edible tuber	Angas (1847b, p.84), Clarke (1988, pp.68-69)
Phragmites australis	Common Reed	Medicine, spear shaft	Clarke (1987, p.9), Clarke (1989 MS)
Pittosporum phylliraeoides	Native Willow, Apricot Tree	Edible seed, gum?	Black (1953, p.393), Clarke (1986a, p.4)
Polyporus mylittae	Wild Truffle	Edible fungus	Clarke (1985a, p.5), Clarke (1988, p.69)
Santalum acuminatum	Quandong	Edible fruit & kernel	Eyre (1845, vol.2, p.270), Clarke (1985b, p.1)
Santalum murrayanum	Bitter Quandong	Edible fruit & root-bark, root as narcotic	Eyre (1845, vol.2, pp.270-271), Maiden (1889, p.32), Clarke (1988, p.71)
Schoenus racemosus	Bog Rush	Edible root stem, medicine	Clarke (1985a, p.4), Clarke (1989 MS)
Sonchus species	Sow Thistle	Edible foliage, medicine	Clarke (1986a, p.10), Clarke (1987, p.9)
Tetragonia tetragonoides	Wild Spinach	Edible foliage	Clarke (1986a, p.10)
Triglochin procerum	Water Ribbons	Edible tuber	Clarke (1985a, p.5), Clarke (1988, p.69)
Typha species	Bulrush, Reedmace	Edible tuber, fibre for string	Eyre (1845, vol.2, p.269), Angas (1847b, p.55), Clarke (1988, pp.69-70)
Urtica incisa	Scrub Nettle	Edible foliage, medicine	Angas (1847b, pp.54-55), Clarke (1987, p.9)
Xanthorrhoea species	Grasstree, Blackboy, Yacca	Edible tuber, source of nectar, flower stem as fire-stick, resin as artefact cement	Angas (1847b, p.84), Clarke (1986a, p.11), Clarke (1988, p.70), Clarke (1989 MS)

4.2.14.1 Aboriginal Vegetation Burning Practices

Across Australia, including the Lower Murray, Aboriginal people actively manipulated the environment

through vegetation firing practices (Ellis, 1976, pp.113-114; Clarke, 1988, pp.73-74; 1991a, pp.59).[26]

Firing the landscape had several functions. It was used for opening up the landscape, particularly where

thick mallee growth made travel difficult. Another use was driving game into more open country where it

could be easily hunted. Firing produced nutrient-rich ashes, as well as opening up the canopy. These were

both favourable conditions for the growth of grasses, eaten by hunted species. Various herbaceous foods

eaten by Aboriginal people also benefited. Aboriginal people clearly had detailed knowledge of the regional

ecology, as shown through the portrayal of fire in Lower Murray mythology (Section 3.2.1.3). Important

features of fires caused by hunters and gatherers were that they differed significantly from naturally

occuring fires in terms of their seasonality, selectivity, frequency, and intensity (Lewis, 1986, pp.45-67).

4.2.15 Use of Minerals

In spite of the early interest of European scholars in Aboriginal culture because it was seen as 'Stone Age',

minerals were not major resources in Lower Murray material culture just prior to 1836. Across Australia,

there was a trend over the last few hundred years before European colonisation for tools to be made chiefly

from wood and bone (Mulvaney, 1969, p.98). Stone craftsmanship was the exception rather then the rule.

There was a small variety of uses for stone material as tools. For instance, Worsnop (1897, p.81) claimed

that he had a millstone in his possession which had been in use on the Lower Murray. However, from his

own account, the use of grindstones seems to have been greater towards the northern reaches of the Murray

(Worsnop, 1897, p.98). This is supported by the existence of a grass seed grinding subsistence culture in

the Darling District (Newland, 1889, p.22). Tindale suggests that the smaller Murray Valley grindstones

were more likely to have been used for the dry pounding and crushing of Acacia and other shrub seed

(1977, p.347). As elsewhere across Australia, stones were used in the Murray River basin as hearth stones

for cooking ovens (Eyre, 1845, vol.2, pp.289-292; Angas, 1847b, pp.58,89-90; Worsnop, 1897, pp.82-83).

Fire was made by striking flint against a piece of iron pyrites, the spark caught on a dry bracket fungus

(Tindale, 1974, p.73). Axe heads were made of stone, hafted with pine (Callitris) resin (Hemming et al,

1989, p.8). Some types of spears were fitted with sharp quartz fragments on their heads (Hemming et al, 1989, p.22).

Soon after European intrusion into southern South Australia, glass points were used to barb spears.[27] The first use of glass by Aboriginal people in some parts of southern South Australia reportedly predated European colonisation. Kuhn and Fowler (1886, p.143) state that Yorke Peninsula Aboriginal people related that they used glass to make knives from bottles they had found on the beach many years before Europeans came to live in South Australia. Hahn (1838-1839 [1964, p.129]) records another innovation from the Hahndorf region of the Mount Lofty Ranges, where Aboriginal people sometimes dyed their hair with the dampened dust created by rubbing two red bricks together.

Minerals were also perceived as having 'magic' properties. For instance, although in other parts of Australia hatchets were used in food production and artefact manufacture, the use of hatchets, 'mokani', in the Lower Murray appears to have been mainly limited to sorcery (Meyer, 1846 [1879, p.196]). Further upstream, quartz crystal was considered a tool enabling a sorcerer to produce rain, cause blindness, or poison water (Eyre, 1845, vol.2, p.316). It was used in this manner in regions throughout southern South Australia and western Victoria (Teichelmann & Schurmann, 1840, pt 2, p.61; Bulmer, 1887, p.18; Stewart, cited McCourt & Mincham, 1977, p.96; Elkin, 1977, pp.76-77).

Although pigment could be gained from tubers (Table 2.1), mineral ochres appear to have been used more often for this purpose in the Lower Murray. For instance, red ochre was in demand by the Lower Murray people for their initiation ceremonies.[28] In 1860, Taplin records that Aboriginal people from the Point McLeay Mission travelled to Noarlunga to obtain initiation ochre (Taplin Journals, 12 September 1860). A local source of red ochre appears to have been Towitchere Island in Lake Alexandrina near the Murray Mouth. This place, which Taplin termed Tauadjeri, meant 'place of red ochre' (Taplin, 1874 [1879, p.130]). Red ochre was not restricted to male initiation ceremonies. For instance, Angas records meeting Aboriginal girls in the Lower Murray with their cheeks painted bright red with ochre, termed by him 'karkoo' (1847b, p.130). Furthermore, in southern South Australia, red ochre was used generally for medicinal purposes (Clarke, 1989a, pp.1-2). It is likely that ochre was graded in use according to its physical and cultural properties.

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4.3 Cultural Aspects of Early Aboriginal Environment Use

In this section, I outline cultural aspects of Aboriginal models of their landscape and its resources. I discuss gender roles in food production, and investigate the symbolic use of plants and animals. This is followed by a description of Aboriginal trade, described in terms of their perception of the nature and distribution of resources in the Lower Murray landscape.

4.3.1 Gender Division of Labour

Studies of food production of Kalahari Bushmen and African Pygmies have demonstrated how important the 'undramatic' collecting of vegetable foods by women were to the whole family group (R. & F. Keesing, 1971, pp.134-142; Silberbauer, 1981, pp.198-203). This is also true of Australian hunters and gatherers. In the Lower Murray, as in other Australian regions, food production was divided along gender lines.[29] Aboriginal men hunted larger game, such as emu and kangaroo, and women collected tubers, small burrowing animals, molluscs and freshwater crayfish. The women set off daily with their children to gather food separately from the men. Men foraged less frequently than women, but would often be away several days while seeking wide ranging species. Men also fished and hunted wildfowl seasonally available in great abundance along the lagoons and mudflats of the Lower Murray system (Taplin, 1874 [1879, p.140]; Eyre, 1845, vol.2, p.253). Men and women therefore had separate but complementary economic roles. With the bulk of the food gathered by women, wife-obtaining practices, both through 'sister' exchange and 'stealing' (Meyer, 1846 [1879, p.190]), would have had an important economic function in terms of labour.

The early ethnographies have generally taken gender division much further than I have here, suggesting that with all aspects of Aboriginal culture women were dominated by men. For example, Teichelmann states that when the Adelaide people are travelling 'the men start first, carrying nothing but a small net bag and hunting implements, - the women, burdened like camels, follow, gather & prepare on the road vegetable food for the night, whilst the men are looking out for meat ... (1841, p.7)'. Similar accounts are available from other parts of South Australia.[30] The early ethnographies have therefore generally separated the cultural and economic roles of Aboriginal women.

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Some scholars have questioned the early assumption that Aboriginal women were total 'slaves' to the men. Catherine Berndt (1981, pp.174-177; 1982, pp.42-51) warns that it is wrong to assume that the labour of women was completely subordinate to that of the men. She considers that hunting and gathering was a cooperative enterprise. In spite of the gender division of food production, most categories of food could be procured by either sex if an opportunity presented itself. It is possible that early ethnographers, who were generally male, were influenced by the views of Aboriginal informants, who were also probably, in general, male. It is likely that Aboriginal men would have over-stated the importance of their own contribution to the community's food requirements in cultural terms, involving the symbolism of large animal meat, rather than along strictly dietary lines. Furthermore, Hamilton (1975) suggests that the portrayal of Aboriginal men as 'violent brutes' and women as abject 'pawns' or 'slaves' was a major humanitarian argument used by missionaries who wanted to modify or reject pre-European Aboriginal society. Whether or not Aboriginal women were ill treated in the pre-European period, it is clear that they were skillful hunters and gatherers: as shown in southern South Australia by the reliance that the earliest European settlers had upon a female Aboriginal work force (Section 5.1.3).

4.3.2 Totemic 'Use' of the Environment

I will now consider how the perceived natural order of the landscape was symbolically used as a model for defining and regulating the internal social divisions of the Lower Murray Aboriginal community. I have already concluded that in the determination of an individual's links to particular areas, it was descent group membership, including non-patrilineal traced affiliations, that were of major importance, not the 'dialectal tribe' (Section 2.3). The links between descent groups and totemic symbols provides another level of cultural perception of the Aboriginal landscape.

My analysis of descent group territories portrayed in the ethnographies, indicates at least 42 such units in the Lower Murray, and probably many more (Section 2.3.1.5, Figure 2.9). Each descent group, sometimes termed 'clan' or 'tribe' in the literature, was associated with one or more totemic symbols or 'nga:tji' (Taplin, 1874 [1879, pp.63-64]; 1879, pp.15-16,34-35). Descent groups that had the same 'nga:tji' were considered to be like brothers and could not exchange wives (Brown, 1931, pp.228,232). Examples of 'nga:tji' include the whale, wild dog, pelican, black duck, whip snake, mullet, bull ant and wattle gum

(Taplin, 1874 [1879, p.2]; 1879, pp.34-35). Rather than being an object of worship, the 'nga:tji' were described as a 'friend' (Taplin, 1879, p.35), 'countryman, protector' (Meyer 1843, p.86; 1846 [1879, pp.186-187,198]), or a 'good genius' (Taplin, 1874 [1879, pp.63-64]). The 'nga:tji' was a sort of spirit familiar, as described for other regions in Australia, that took an interest in the welfare of its descent group (R.M. & C.H. Berndt, 1981, pp.232-235).

From early accounts, it is clear that economically important species, that also happened to be a 'nga:tji', could generally be killed by non-members. However, for species not used for food or artefact manufacture, the killing by anyone of a 'nga:tji' was not tolerated. For instance, Taplin reports that he was once reproached after shooting a troublesome wild dog at Point McLeay, the 'nga:tji' of several Aboriginal residents on the Mission (1874 [1879, p.64]). Other people, whose spirit familiar was a species of snake, kept their 'nga:tji' in baskets hanging in their wurleys, the reptiles rendered safe by having their fangs pulled out, or their mouths sewn up. In the case of the latter, the snakes were probably not kept for very long. An individual's 'nga:tji' was a source of personal strength, but could also be a potential weakness. For instance, Taplin observed a man swallow the remains of his spirit familiar through fear of sorcery that could be performed on him should any of it be obtained by an enemy (1874 [1879, p.63]; 1879, pp.15-16,35). The 'nga:tji' was perceived as a direct link to a past when differences between humans and natural objects were either nonexistent or not stressed.

4.3.3 Aboriginal Prohibition Beliefs

Prohibitions or 'taboos' are beliefs about avoidance of the use of particular substances considered harmful in certain situations. Some animal and plant species were considered to have properties easily transferred to particular human categories, if contact was made. Transferable qualities considered undesirable formed the basis of a prohibition. For example, the roes of fish in the Lower Murray were only eaten by old men as Aboriginal people believed that if women or young men or children ate them, they would become prematurely old (Meyer, 1846 [1879, p.187]). There are many other examples of food prohibitions in the southern South Australian ethnographies. An analysis of such practices helps illustrate cultural perceptions of the world.

In the Murray River region, more restrictions were placed upon females until past the age of child-bearing, than upon males of the same age (Eyre, 1845, vol.2, p.293). Teichelmann (1841, p.7) stated that in southern South Australia, food prohibitions were such that women with children were prohibited from eating certain food, and they generally lived upon vegetables . The categories of people with least amount of food prohibitions appear to have been very young children and the very old. Eyre says that in the Murray River area 'No restrictions are placed upon very small children of either sex, a portion being given to them of whatever food their parents may have. About nine or ten years appears to be the age at which limitations commence (1845, vol.2, p.293)'. He also states that old men and women were able to eat most things (Eyre, 1845, vol.2, p.295).

Prohibitions did not only involve food species. For example, in the Murray River area, menstruating women were not only forbidden to eat fish, but were not allowed to go near the water at all, as it was considered that the success of men fishing would be spoiled (Eyre 1845, vol.2, p.295). Also, young male initiates avoided contact with all adult females, as well as with any food handled by women (Meyer, 1846 [1879, p.188). All prohibitions would have been based on cultural logic, even if the reasons were obscured from those practising the ritual. People generally excluded from prohibitions were those not sexually or economically active. It was the power to produce (either physically or spiritually) at particular life stages that was perceived as making people sensitive to influences potentially harmful to group harmony. In a sense, an individual's position in the society could be defined by what the person could eat, and what economic activities they could engage in. The major categories determining prohibitions appear to have been age, gender and initiation status.

In the pre-European Aboriginal culture of the Lower Murray, periodic restrictions were put on the use of certain object names, due to name avoidance practices.[31] In this Australia-wide custom, the name of a dead person, often named after a bird, mammal or natural object, would be completely avoided until a lengthy period after their death. Angas states 'When an individual dies, they carefully avoid mentioning his name; but if compelled to do so, they pronounce it in a very low whisper, so faint that they imagine the spirit cannot hear their voice (1847b, p.94).' As shown by this account, Aboriginal people in a sense treated the name of a dead person as sacred. The practice of this custom would have led to some plant and animal names being periodically avoided for some time in the Lower Murray.

4.3.4 Aboriginal Perception of the Physical Environment

The Lower Murray area was rich in having a wide range of potentially used food. However, historical records and contemporary fieldwork indicate that not all food sources available in the Lower Murray were utilised under normal circumstances. The minimal use of some categories is not explained by the existence of prohibitions. For instance, although there are records suggesting that some seed was formerly used as food in the Lower Murray, Aboriginal people in southern South Australia generally under-utilised this resource (Tindale, 1977; 1981, p.1859; Clarke, 1985b, pp.16-17). In temperate regions, seeds were not relied upon for subsistence to the same extent as did northern Aboriginal communities in more arid areas. This lack of use is not explained by the scarcity of seed foods, as many of the species used by desert Aboriginal groups are also present in southern regions. I argue that regional adoption of particular food producing technology has influenced Aboriginal perceptions of what constituted desired tastes and texture in food, producing in effect a ranking of all food sources. Those that were 'hard time' foods would only be resorted to when more favoured sources were not easily obtained.

Thus, Aboriginal people could, at certain times, exercise a degree of choice in the food they lived on. For instance, some animal foods, such as fish, emu and kangaroo meat, were highly favoured foods when available. Yet vegetable food, such as roots, were probably the mainstay when meat was not easily obtainable (Clarke, 1988). A report from the Adelaide-based Statistical Society in 1842 illustrates the seasonality of Aboriginal food in the southern areas.[32] The report notes that in spring, vegetables and grubs were mainly eaten. With the commencement of summer, the eggs and young of birds were obtained as were kangaroos, emus, fish and lizards. During the hottest part of the year, possums and Acacia gum were procured, while in autumn, berries and nectar were available. In the winter, a variety of roots were consumed, as were possums and other animals. The report illustrates that plant foods, such as roots, were used at a time of the year when other food sources, perhaps more highly favoured, were not easily gathered. I suggest that seasonality of food in the Lower Murray would have reflected similar major divisions, although the precise types of food consumed would have varied .

The coastal zones of southern South Australia were rich in natural resources. In particular, as shown above, food such as fish, molluscs, and coastal berries were abundant here. Meat from occasional whale strandings

was also an attractive coastal food source. Although many of these foods were available for the greater part of the year, the onset of winter made the coast a harsh zone in which to live. Partly for this reason, 'salt water' Aboriginal groups in southern South Australia, whose territory included coastal areas, would have moved according to season between inland and coast (Fig.4.6). For 'fresh water' people living along the edge of Lake Albert and Lake Alexandrina, the yearly movement was probably from the lake shore to the inland dunes. The pattern in the Adelaide region was a general movement away from the coast in late autumn, so that more substantial shelters could be built in the protected Mount Lofty Ranges foothills (Ellis, 1976, pp.116-117; Tindale, 1974, pp.60-61; Ross, 1984, p.5; Clarke, 1991a, pp.58-59). The historical record shows similar early patterns for the Lower South East (Foster, 1983). Seasonal movements, although a physical aspect of the Aboriginal relationship to their environment, is essentially dictated by the 'cultural landscape'.

A seasonal population movement occurred among at least some Lower Murray Aboriginal groups. In winter, the Tangani people camped along the mainland side of the Coorong where firewood was plentiful, and shelter from weather available (Tindale, 1938, p.21; 1974, pp.61-62). There were also political reasons for the movements. One of the disadvantages of camping on the mainland side of the Coorong was that here the Tangani were open to attack from the Ngarkat people, who normally ranged in mallee areas away from the river. Nevertheless, the Tangani considered that they were not likely to be attacked during the winter, as most Ngarkat incursions were during drier times of the year when water shortages forced inland people towards the Lakes district. During summer, the Tangani camped on the Younghusband Peninsula, between the Coorong and the Southern Ocean, giving them easy access to coastal foods. For most Lower Murray groups, the location of their seasonal camps are not known, although more archaeological research may improve our present knowledge. Nevertheless, I argue that for non-coastal Aboriginal groups in the Lower Murray system, seasonal movements were probably similar to the Tangani, being relatively short and taking place between the lakes and nearby sheltered inland areas in order to maximise food supplies and comfort. The prominence of aquatic technology used by the Lower Murray people would have given them little interest in the remote and harsh inland regions.

Aboriginal people possessed intricate ecological knowledge of their environment. Place names sometimes reflected the vegetation of the area. For example, 'Muwuntjangali', situated near Wellington on the east

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side of the Murray River, reportedly meant 'clump of trees'[33] (Berndt, 1940a, p.168). In addition to place names for discrete areas, Aboriginal people had landscape terms for ecological zones in the environment. For instance, the Tangani had a different word for each recognised environment zone or regional landscape they utilised. These regional landscape terms were 'lerami' (inland scrub and swamp), 'tenggi' (landward Coorong shore), 'pandalapi' (Coorong lagoon), 'paringari' (seaward Coorong shore), 'natunijuru' (coastal sandhills) and 'jurli' (ocean beach) (Tindale, 1938, p.21; 1974, pp.61-62). In the Encounter Bay area, the Ramindjeri called the heath vegetation 'willyauwar' (Meyer, 1843, p.107). For low thick woody vegetation (= 'scrub'), the Ramindjeri used the term 'karte', which also meant 'everything useless' (Meyer, 1843, p.70). This possibly reflects a cultural dislike by Lower Murray people for mallee formations.[34]

Each recognised landscape form was associated by Aboriginal people with a set of potential resources and uses. Landscape topography and terminology was also used to define and label Aboriginal communities in the region. For instance, the Yaraldi called the Mount Barker people 'Ngurlinjeri', which reportedly meant 'hill, belonging to' (Tindale, 1974, p.217). I suggest that the Tangani descent group name is based on the term 'tenggi', mentioned above, referring to the landward Coorong shore (Section 2.3.1.5 & 3.2.2).

4.3.5 Aboriginal Trade Networks in the Lower Murray

Aboriginal trade systems facilitated the exchange of materials and cultural ideas. For the Aboriginal economy, it helped even out shortages resulting from inconsistencies in the natural resource distribution of the landscape.[35] In the Lower Murray, trade linked together Aboriginal groups who were widely dispersed, including people living far beyond the boundaries of the region. For example, Lower Murray people bartered with the 'Tatiaras' of the South East of South Australia (Angas, 1847b, p.72). In George Taplin's period, these two groups would meet at Magrath Flat (Taplin Journals, 16-19 February 1863). Reportedly, the northern Coorong and Tatiara people were close. Within the Lower Murray, the Coorong Aboriginal people exchanged goods with those of Encounter Bay (Angas, 1847b, p.67). The Darling and Adelaide regions were also linked to the Lower Murray through trade (Berndt et al, 1993, pp.116-118). The social contact necessary to enable bartering helped maintain good relations between local descent groups.

Some trade practices were associated with quite elaborate rituals. For instance, Lower Murray people had the 'ngia ngiampe' custom of exchanging ornaments, called 'kalduke', which were made from human navel strings (Taplin, 1874 [1879, pp.32-33]; Smith, 1930, pp.216-218; Berndt et al, 1993, pp.118-121). This was a mechanism to allow potentially hostile groups to be allies. This practice also produced agents through which trade in materials could occur. Taplin records that an Aboriginal man, Jack Hamilton, who lived a short distance up the river from Lake Alexandrina:

> once had a ngia-ngiampe in the Mundoo tribe. While he lived on the Murray he sent spears and plongges, i.e., clubs, down to his agent of the Mundoo blacks, who was supplied with mats and nets and rugs to send up to him, for the purpose of giving them in exchange to the tribe to which he belonged (1874 [1879, p.33]).

Taplin (1874 [1879, pp.32-33]) reports that trade, through 'ngia-ngiampe', linked the 'tribes' along the Murray River with those near the sea. Exchange of wives, through their brothers,[36] would also have had an influence on the distribution of and access to resources throughout the Lower Murray region.

Sometimes trade relations were expressed in terms of access to rare resources in another group's territory. For instance, trees from which canoe bark could be obtained were scarce for much of the Lower Murray. For this reason, southern Lower Murray groups sought access to red gums (Eucalyptus camaldulensis) in the Strathalbyn to Goolwa area (Tindale, 1974, p.60).[37] Whip-stick mallee spear shafts were given to people on the north side of Lake Alexandrina in exchange. During the 1860s, Aboriginal people from Point McLeay were still making bark canoes in the Langhorne Creek area, as this was where suitable trees grew (Taplin Journals, 20 March 1860; 27 March 1860). Another trade item were cakes made of dried 'mantri' (Kunzea pomifera) fruits collected from the Coorong, which were exchanged for types of stone material for artefact manufacture (Tindale, 1981, p.1879). Trading practices redistributed materials and ideas across the landscape, and provided the mechanism for Aboriginal communities to maintain relationships with their neighbours.

4.4 Conclusion

Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray were not randomly dispersed over the landscape. They were, among other things, regionally organised according to their perception and use of the natural resources. The Lower Murray people considered their relationship with the environment to be an active one. Not only

did they physically manipulate their resources, they also considered themselves to be influenced and organised by the environment. I have demonstrated here that the material culture of the Lower Murray people, although having some aspects in common with water-based subsistence cultures in the South East and the Mid Murray, was distinctive. They were largely a cultural group confined to the riparian/coastal habitats of the southern coastal region of South Australia. To some extent their hunting and gathering practices help defined this cultural region. Approaches in cultural geography, focussing on the cultural construction and perception of the landscape, are well suited to the study of Aboriginal environmental knowledge. Later, I deal with early European uses of Aboriginal geographic knowledge (Chapter 5). Following this, I provide a contemporary account of Aboriginal management of the physical environment of the Lower Murray (Chapter 8).

End Notes

1 For an archaeological overview of the Lower Murray/South East districts see Campbell (1934, 1939, 1943), Campbell et al (1946) & Luebbers (1978).

2 The literature investigating the usefulness of the Australian flora and fauna includes Maiden (1889), Cribb & Cribb (1975, 1981, 1982), Lassak & McCarthy (1983), Cherikoff & Isaacs (1987), Isaacs (1987), Barr et al (1988) & Low (1988).

3 C. Mann (Southern Australian, 10 May 1839) presented a justification of the law of property being applied to deny prior Aboriginal ownership of land on the basis of no agriculture being practised before European settlement.

4 Gott (1982, 1983, 1989), Williams & Huhn (1982) & Clarke (1985a, 1986a, 1988) dispel the 'passive' Aboriginal hunter/gatherer model.

5 Clarke (1985a, 1985b, 1986a, 1986b, 1987, 1988, 1989a, 1989b).

6 The Coorong was formerly known as the 'South East Branch' in reference to Lake Alexandrina which it joined at Pelican Point (Cuique [R. Penney] in S.Aust. Mag., September 1842, vol.2, pp.18-23).

7 Due to the action of the ocean currents, the location of the river exit into the sea is constantly moving, at present it is migrating northwards towards Goolwa at the rate of several metres per year (F. Tuckwell, pers com). The complete disappearance of Barker's Knoll at the Mouth by 1859 (Linn, 1988, p.78), indicates that this movement is a natural feature.

8 Most early sources, such as Cawthorne (1844), simply refer to the 'Mount Barker tribe'. Tindale (1974, pp.60,214,216-217,Map) termed them the Peramangk. This convention has been followed by Coles & Draper (1988) and by Chilman (1990).

9 The Aboriginal people living in the mallee on the eastern side of the Murray River were called Arkatko by Eyre (1845, vol.2, p.331) and Ngarkat by Tindale (1974, pp.60,134,215-216,Map).

10 These Aboriginal groups are discussed by Tindale (1974, pp.213-214,218,Map). Contemporary informants termed the pre-European Aboriginal people of the Kingston end of this range the Moandik.

11 Accounts of kangaroo hunts are found in the Taplin Journals (23 September 1859; 29 October 1859; 25 June 1860; 30 October 1860; 7-9 November 1860; 21 April 1861; 4 November 1861; 1 December 1861; 24 May 1862).

12 An early recognition of the abundant bird life in the Lower Murray is given Cuique (R. Penney) in S.Aust. Mag., March 1842, vol.1, no.12, pp.467-472.

13 Cuique (R. Penney) in S.Aust. Mag., March 1842, vol.1, no.12, pp.467-472.

14 South Australian Museum specimen (A23410) made by a Tanganekald man in 1936.

15 South Australian Museum specimen (A15605) made at Wellington in 1922.

16 In 1894, an Aboriginal man from Point McLeay, Jacob Harris, provided a good written account of net making from 'rushes' (J. Harris letters, D6510(l)14,15, Mortlock Library, Adelaide). Examples of River Murray fishing nets made from sedges (Cyperus species) in the South Australian Museum include specimens A17529, A21338, A26250, A45090. An example of a net made from Typha fibre is A2000, collected from the Lakes district.

17 Jacob Harris, an Aboriginal man at Point McLeay writing in 1894, claimed that the use of the 'rude kind of raft' made from reeds predated the use of bark canoes in the Lower Murray (J. Harris letters, D6510(L) 14,15, Mortlock Library, Adelaide). The South Australian Museum holds raft specimens (A14632-3) made by a Yaraldi woman, Amy Johnson, in 1930.

18 Yallop & Grimwade (1975, p.55) list 'ku:yiti' as 'rushes, sticks', and 'ku:yitaypari' as 'fish trap, barrier of sticks'.

19 The name of this fish, 'lap-lap', was possibly a general term for small fish. 'Lapps Lapps' is recorded to mean 'small fish' in the 'Booandik' language (C. Smith, 1880, p.3).

20 For a description of the Lake Condah fish-traps, see Worsnop (1897, pp.104-106), Coutts et al (1978), Flood (1983, pp.205-208) & Hemming (1985b).

21 The 'fish pounds' are recorded by Taplin on the shore of Lake Alexandrina (Journals, 11-12 October 1859; 8 November 1859; 11 November 1859; 28 November 1859; 10 January 1860; 21 November 1861; 20 March 1862).

22 The term 'lerp' is an Australian English term derived from an Aboriginal dialect in western Victoria (Dixon et al, 1992, pp.107-108). For an account of the species upon which lerps occur, see Woodward et al (1970, p.418) & Clarke (1986b, pp.6-7).

23 This species referred to here is probably <u>Leptograpsodes octodentatus</u> (formerly <u>Brachynotus octodentatus</u>), commonly called the 'burrowing shore-crab' (see Hale, 1976, pp.182-184; Zeidler, 1983, p.203)

24 Hahn (1838-1839 [1964, p.133]) & Angas (1847b, pp.61,74,90) also record seeing mussel middens on the banks of Murray River.

25 Clarke (1985a, 1985b, 1986a, 1986b, 1987, 1988).

26 Sauer (1916b, p.22-31) described a similar situation in the construction of the Kentuckian prairies in America through the burning practices of the American Indians. Sauer describes this as a symbiosis between humans and plants.

27 Glass use as spear points is recorded in the Lower Murray by Cuique (R. Penney) in <u>S. Aust. Mag.</u>, March 1842, vol.1, no.8, pp.292-298. Hahn (1838-1839 [1964, p.131]) states that in the Hahndorf area of the mount Lofty Ranges, Aboriginal people used broken bits of glass to replace pieces of flint on the point and two sides of spearheads. Resin held the points in place.

28 For accounts of Lower Murray initiations, see Meyer, (1846 [1879, pp.188-189]) & Shaw (cited in Taplin, 1879, p.28). In 1894, an Aboriginal man, named Jacob Harris, provided a good written account of Lower Murray initiations (J. Harris letters, D6510 (L),13,14,15, Mortlock Library, Adelaide).

29 For other accounts of gender division in Aboriginal economy see R.M. & C.H. Berndt (1981, p.119) & Rose (1987, p.89).

30 Other accounts that described Aboriginal women as the 'slaves' to men include Meyer (1846 [1879, pp.190-191]) for Encounter Bay, Angas (1847a, introduction; 1847b, pp.82-83) for the Lower Murray & South East, & Bates (1947, pp.28,74-75) for the West Coast of South Australia.

31 Name avoidance is described for the Ramindjeri by Meyer (1846 [1879, p.199]). Jacob Harris, an Aboriginal man from Point McLeay writing in 1894, claimed that fights among groups often resulted from mentioning the name of a recently dead person (J. Harris letters, D6510(L)14,15, Mortlock Library, Adelaide). A further account of such practices, in the Mid Murray, is given in the 'Journals of an expedition to the River Murray, against the natives... 1841-1845' by J.C. Hawker. Mortlock Library, Adelaide.

32 'Transactions of the Statistical Society. Report on the Aborigines of South Australia.' <u>Register</u>, 8 January 1842. Thomson (1939) considers the seasonal aspects of Aboriginal culture.

33 The species of tree is probably <u>Callitris preissii</u> (southern or black cypress pine). Compare 'Muwuntjangali' with 'mowantye', meaning 'pine-wood' (Meyer, 1843, p.82). A stand of these long living plants still exists on the spot.

34 Tindale's (1937c) use of 'Kartan' for the pre-European culture of Kangaroo Island is possibly from a misunderstanding by him of the use of 'karte'. Since Kangaroo Island was out of the reach of mainland hunters and gatherers, and a dense brushwood dominates over the land here, this application of the term by Lower Murray people makes sense.

35 McCarthy (1938-39, 1939-40) provides an overview of Aboriginal trade networks across Australia and the Torres Straits Islands. Accounts of Aboriginal exchange systems in northern Australia are given by Stanner (1933-34) & Thomson (1949). McBryde (1986) describes trade relationships for south eastern Australia.

36 An account of Lower Murray marriage customs is provided by Meyer (1846 [1879, pp.190-191]). Men exchanged their sisters or daughters to obtain wives.

37 In 1894, an Aboriginal man, Jacob Harris, claimed that the practice of using bark canoes in the Lower Murray had been introduced from 'our neighbour who lived among the hill and those on the River Murray' (J. Harris letters, D6510(L)14,15, Mortlock Library, Adelaide).

5 Early European Use of Hunter/Gatherer Geographic Knowledge in the Lower Murray

The earlier written history of European settlement in Australia generally portrays the Aboriginal inhabitants as being at best inconsequential or at worst a hindrance to the development of a Western nation. For instance, Blacket (1911, p.163) gave his impression of the role of Aboriginal people in the early years of European settlement in South Australia by saying 'These children of the bush ... gave the early settlers much trouble.' Similar opinions of South Australian history are provided by Price (1924) and Gibbs (1969). However, Baker (1989) and Reynolds (1990) put forward views that Aboriginal people had important roles in the setting up of the British colonies across Australia. They demonstrate that the contribution of Aboriginal people to the colonising process has been an underestimated aspect of Australian history. Following this argument, I am concerned here with assessing the importance of Aboriginal hunter/gatherer knowledge and technology to the early European settlement of Australia. Thus, this chapter is primarily a discussion of how and what European settlers absorbed from Aboriginal people and their landscape. Kangaroo Island historical material is included here due to the close early connection this area had with the Encounter Bay region, and because of the demographic links of first Europeans living on the island to the contemporary Ngarrindjeri population. An account of the British colonial incorporation of Aboriginal people of the Lower Murray appears later (Chapter 6).

5.1 European Expansion into Southern Australian Waters

In 1791, vessels returning to England from New South Wales took word of schools of whales in Australian waters. This set in train a rush by British and American whalers.[1] The colonies in Australia offered whalers a chance to make a profit that they would not otherwise make if simply whaling, by taking cargo on the outward journey. For this reason, five out of six ships in the convict fleet that reached Sydney in 1791 were whalers (Blainey, 1977, p.101). By 1799, there were nine whaling vessels operating along the New South Wales coast (Finney, 1984, p.82). Sealing was another industry that attracted merchants to the Australian colonies. For instance, in 1798 Captain Charles Bishop in the 'Nautilus' was searching for seal colonies while accompanying the explorers Matthew Flinders and George Bass in the 'Norfolk' on the first part of their circumnavigation of Tasmania (Finney, 1984, pp.76,78; Plomley & Henley, 1990, p.3). Bishop

was looking for hunting grounds after Bass had noticed a large number of seals on a previous expedition along the coast south of Sydney.

By the early 1800s, the worldwide marine industry was booming. Whales were a major source of oil used for candle wax, lamp fuel, lubricant and soap (Newland, 1921, pp.16-17; Hosking, 1973, intro., p.3; Blainey, 1977, p.99). The bone was also used as umbrella frames, hoops beneath dresses, stiffening corsets and for firing in potteries. Seal skins were required by merchants for trade in China, and for the fur-hat factories in England.[2] Shoes in the Australian colonies were also sewn from seal skins (Blainey, 1977, p.106). Whaling and sealing were such important parts of the early economy of New South Wales that Governor King attempted to restrict the operations of hunting crews in eastern Australia to those operating from his colony, in particular excluding those run by non-British interests (Moore, 1924, pp.83-86; Nunn, 1989, p.19). Because of this, foreign vessels were forced into concentrating on regions, such as southern Australia, that were at that time beyond colonial authority. European exploration, both official and unofficial, went hand in hand with economics. I term this period the exploration phase of Aboriginal and European interaction (Appendix 10.1).

With the importance of the marine industries to the Australian economy, it is thus not surprising that the first European settlers in South Australia were sealers and whalers. A small mixed population of European and Aboriginal people had grown in the region several decades prior to the formation of the Colony of South Australia in 1836.[3] These were European men and their Aboriginal labour force, initially working out of Bass Strait and Van Diemen's Land (now called Tasmania).[4] Known generally as Straitsmen, they represented a wide range of national and racial backgrounds, being castaways from whaling and sealing boats that were owned by American, British and French companies. Some of these vessels were possibly in southern Australian waters searching for seal colonies and whales at the same time as the first recorded European visit to South Australia by Matthew Flinders in 1802.[5] Unoccupied islands, such as Kangaroo Island and those of Bass Strait, provided a safe haven to establish depots (Fig.5.1).[6] Sealing was an activity that suited the small scale operations of European people living in fairly isolated conditions, as only the cured skin was required and these could be easily stored. The Straitsmen who eventually settled on Kangaroo Island became known simply as Islanders. These lawless people, living beyond colonial authority, have been described as the 'banditti of Bass Strait' (Barwick, 1985, p.185).

WEST
COAST

St Peter
Island
(1830s?)

EYRE PENINSULA

Flinders Island
(1820s)

Coffin
Bay
(1820s?)

Spalding Cove
(1829–32?)

YORKE PENINSULA

Hog
Bay
(1832–33)

FLEURIEU PENINSULA

MURRAY R.

LOWER
LAKES

Thistle
Island
(1831, 1838–39)

Cape Dutton (1832)

KANGAROO
ISLAND

Harvey's
Return
(1806–9)

American
River
(1804)

Baudin
Rocks
(1832–34)

SOUTH
EAST

N

SOUTHERN OCEAN

0   50   100   150

KMS

■ — Sealing

▲ — Whaling

⟍ — Winter migration route
of the black whale

Fig.5.1 Whale movements and the distribution of whaling stations in
southern South Australia prior to 1836

With the growing scarcity of seals in Tasmanian waters during the second decade of the 19th century, sealers in the eastern colonies increasingly focused their attention on what were then outlying regions, such as southern South Australia (Nunn, 1989, p.22). From about 1811, some Sydney-based sealers even went as far as Macquarie Island between Tasmania and the Antarctic Circle during the sealing season (Blaincy, 1977, p.106). In 1820, there were an estimated fifty sealers, with about a hundred Aboriginal wives and children, living in the Bass Straits to Kangaroo Island region (Ryan, 1981, p.69). At the South Australian end, colonies of the New Zealand fur seal (Arctocephalus fosteri) and the Australian sea lion (Neophoca cinerea) had been largely missed by the early wave of sealers. In 1830, sealers were reported to be based on Thistle Island and other islands in Spencer Gulf.[7] About this time, a sealer and his two Aboriginal wives and family lived on Saint Peter Island off Denial Bay on the western coast of Eyre Peninsula.[8] Across the border of South Australia into Victoria, sealing stations were operating from 1828 at Portland Bay, also before the official settlement of that colony.[9] In the early 1830s, permanent whaling establishments were based on Kangaroo Island (Nunn, 1989, p.45). In 1835, there were at least seventy six Australian ships engaged in deep-sea whaling from the eastern colonies (Blaincy, 1977, p.107). In South Australia, Europeans had ranged along much of the coastline before the official settlement of 1836. These people were the first Europeans with whom Aboriginal groups in southern South Australia had direct contact.

To the colonial authorities in Britain, Australia as a land for colonising had many attractions. It was the highly influential view of Sir Joseph Banks, an acknowledged expert on the Pacific region, that Australia should be settled (Finney, 1984, p.41). Australia's major attraction for the establishment of colonies was as a ground to off load convicts from Britain. Settlement was also encouraged by the perceived lack of antagonism from the indigenous population in Australia, in comparison with groups such as the Maoris in New Zealand (Finney, 1984, p.41). After settlement in eastern Australia, Kangaroo Island came under the scrutiny of the colonial authorities in Britain as an area to found another colony. Two early visitors to Kangaroo Island, Matthew Flinders and George Sutherland, both gave flattering accounts of its resources back in England.[10] Flinders had been appointed by the British Government to chart the southern coast. He is credited with the discovery by Europeans of Kangaroo Island on 21 March 1802. Sutherland was employed by Sydney-based merchants to collect salt and seal skins. He went to Kangaroo Island in 1819 in the company of two sealers who had been there before. With these glowing reports, this large island became

one of the favoured sites for starting the proposed colony of South Australia, with the intention that whaling would help make the colony economically independent. Australian-based whalers would have an advantage over foreigners, being closer to the whaling grounds.

Charles Sturt also supported settlement in South Australia. Sturt travelled down the Murray River to the Mouth in 1830. He had gained additional information from sealers on the fertility of land around Spencer Gulf which he had not actually visited.[11] Since the known coastline of mainland South Australia was lacking in a good harbour for all seasons of the year, Sturt favoured the wide and deep channel of American River on Kangaroo Island as a harbour.[12] The recognised strategic and economic potential of Kangaroo Island was such that there was an early suggestion by Governor Arthur in Van Diemen's Land that a penal colony be established there (Nunn, 1989, p.32). Amid fears of a French colony being established in Australia, British settlement of the southern region became inevitable.

5.1.1 Early European Settlement on Kangaroo Island

The first physical contact that Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray had with Europeans occurred with whalers and sealers based on Kangaroo Island (see Appendix 10.1). Here, European settlement began with a number of extended visits. Captain Isaac Pendleton, a New York whaler on the 'Union', wintered at American River on Kangaroo Island with his crew in 1803 while building another vessel, the 'Independence' (Cumpston, 1970, pp.27,50,85). Some months earlier he had been told about the advantages of the island during a chance meeting with the French explorer Nicholas Baudin of 'Le Geographe' at King George Sound in Western Australia (Plomley & Henley, 1990, pp.6-7). The first long term stay on Kangaroo Island by Europeans was possibly by Joseph Murrell, put in charge of a gang of six sealers at Harvey's Return in 1806 (Finnis, nd; Kostoglou & McCarthy, 1991, p.58). Their time there was longer than they had anticipated; they had to exist almost entirely on wild animal meat until the men were found three years later. The value of previously uninhabited islands, such as Kangaroo Island, is shown by the fact that Murrell and his crew are believed to have been later killed by Aboriginal people when their boat was wrecked on the coast of New South Wales in 1816 (Nunn, 1989, p.23). Another early resident of Kangaroo Island was Robert Newman, who arrived there about 1814 (Plomley & Henley, 1990, p.13). A visitor to Kangaroo Island was Peter Dillon, who collected salt from December 1815 to March 1816

(Cumpston, 1970, pp.39-40). One of his crew was Thompson, reportedly a Portuguese man who had previously been on Kangaroo Island and nearby islands for seven years. In 1817, Hammond reported that thirteen Europeans had been living on Kangaroo Island, subsisting on wild birds.[13] George Fifer was another European reportedly living on the island in 1817 (Plomley & Henley, 1990, p.13). However, the details of how and where on Kangaroo Island these early settlers lived are generally poorly known.

Kangaroo Island's first permanent European residents arrived in 1819, among them George Bates and the self-styled 'Governor' Henry Wallen.[14] The Islanders lived chiefly in the north eastern part of Kangaroo Island (Fig.5.2). This section of coastline provided a refuge from the fierce southern seas that lashed the south coast of the island.[15] From their bases on Kangaroo Island, the men in their whale boats were able to visit scaling colonies that were located at places such as Thistle Island in Saint Vincent Gulf.[16] The Islander community that developed was comprised of men who had shunned mainstream society, particularly sailors who had 'jumped ship'.

As the whaling and sealing industry in the southern seas grew, Kangaroo Island became a major stopping point for all vessels in the area. The island was useful to passing ships for replenishing supplies of fish and kangaroo meat, fresh water for drinking, and wood for burning.[17] For those who became established on Kangaroo Island, trade from passing ships was based on island products such as animal oil, whale bone, animal skins and fresh vegetables. Skins in particular, were a major product of the island. For instance, a Captain Hart, who frequently traded with the Islanders, took away 7,000 skins in 1832.[18] Salt was another early export from Kangaroo Island.[19] From ships passing through, the Islanders obtained a variety of consumer articles, such as alcohol and tobacco. Some runaway convicts found their way to the southern scaler settlements where they sought a passage from passing boats (Plomley & Henley, 1990, p.20). Kangaroo Island was effectively an unofficial outstation of Van Diemen's Land (settled in 1803). Many of the vessels stopping at Kangaroo Island were on the way to or from Launceston or Hobart.

Fig.5.2 Islander bases on Kangaroo Island prior to 1836

SPENCER GULF

YORKE PENINSULA

SAINT VINCENT GULF

N

Wedge Island

Troubridge
Point

Cape
Spencer

Althorpe Island

INVESTIGATOR STRAIT

Rapid
Bay

CAPE
JERVIS

Emu
Bay

Point
Marsden

Cape
Dutton

Bay of Shoals

BACKSTAIRS PASSAGE

Harvey's
Return

Western
River

Cygnet R.

Nepean
Bay

Eastern
Cove

Hog
Bay

Cape Borda

Antechamber
Bay

KANGAROO ISLAND

Cape
Willoughby

West Bay

D'Estrees
Bay

Pelican
Lagoon

Mauperituis
Bay

Vivonne
Bay

Cape
Linois

American
River

Hanson
Bay

Cape du Couedic

Cape
Gantheaume

0   10   20

▲ — Islander base

SOUTHERN OCEAN

kms

5.1.2 Aboriginal Occupation of Kangaroo Island

Although Australia's second largest offshore island, and a mere fourteen kilometres by sea from the mainland, Kangaroo Island does not appear to have been occupied by Aboriginal people for some time prior to European settlement. In 1802, when English explorer Matthew Flinders visited Kangaroo Island, it was surmised that the place was uninhabited due to the absence of smoke and the tameness of seals and kangaroos (Flinders, 1814). In the following year, French explorer, Nicholas Baudin, visited the island, which he called Ile Decres. Baudin was accompanied by a team of zoologists, among them Francois Peron. In the account provided by Peron, he supports Flinders' assertion by saying 'No trace of man's stay here can be discerned on the shores ... ' (1816 [1979, p.181]). We must therefore assume that Kangaroo Island was uninhabited by Aboriginal groups at the time of the first recorded visits by Europeans. In contrast, the mainland opposite the island was perhaps one of the most heavily populated regions of Australia (Section 2.1.3).

Due to the geographical and social isolation of living on remote islands, there were no European women in the early settlements of sealers. This created a high demand amongst the Islanders for Aboriginal women (Section 3.3.2). Some of the captains of trading vessels, knowing this, brought with them captured Aboriginal women to be traded for goods with the Islanders. One report says 'the traders, who visited the island occasionally, brought them a Tasmanian lubra for a consideration'.[20] Some of these women had evidently been obtained from their Aboriginal husbands in Tasmania, exchanged for the skinned carcases of seals (Cumpston, 1970, p.56; Ryan, 1981, pp.67-69). It is likely that the first women on Kangaroo Island in the historic period were Tasmanians, reflecting the early historical connection between southern South Australia and Tasmania.

In spite of some movement of Tasmanian women to Kangaroo Island, the Islander's desire for wives eventually led to excursions across to adjacent mainland regions. In 1819, it was reported by a passing ship captain that there were several Europeans living on the island who:

> have carried their daring acts to an extreme, venturing on the mainland in their boats and
> seizing on the natives, particularly the women, and keeping them in a state of slavery,
> cruelly treating them on every trifling occasion (Sutherland, cited in Moore, 1924, p.121).

On one expedition to obtain wives, a party of five Islanders crossed to the mainland, leaving two Aboriginal women who they had already caught hunting and fishing on the island.[21] Landing at Cape Jervis, probably on the northern side which is protected from both the prevailing winds and the heavy swell, they walked across country to Lake Alexandrina. Their method of capture was to wait until morning, when the Aboriginal men had gone hunting, and then rush in, grabbing the women and tying their hands behind their backs. Back at Hog Bay on Kangaroo Island, the women would be released. As the marauding trips grew in frequency, the mainland Aboriginal populations became more wary, and the risk to the Islanders increased. On one trip to Cape Jervis, Aboriginal people waited until the Islanders were about five kilometres inland and attacked.[22] One Islander was speared in the foot, but escaped with a slight wound. The stories of Islander raids on the mainland populations have been enshrined in Lower Murray mythology (Section 2.3.2).[23]

Although the earliest known woman on Kangaroo Island appears to have been Tasmanian, the number of women there from coastal South Australian regions grew steadily with additions from the Lower Murray. The core Aboriginal population on Kangaroo Island also included at least one woman from Eyre Peninsula[24], and another from the Adelaide Plains.[25] The population may also have occasionally included people from Yorke Peninsula.[26] Although the women were reportedly badly treated by the sealers, the mode of their capture and subsequent treatment, appears to have much in common with Aboriginal practices in the pre-European period (Wilkinson, 1848, pp.329-330; Thomas, 1925, pp.72,118).

On Kangaroo Island, the Tasmanian women and their children appear not to have mixed well with Aboriginal people from the South Australian mainland. For instance, the Tasmanians on Kangaroo Island apparently considered that their own hunting and gathering skills were superior to that of all others (Basedow, 1914, p.161). For this reason, these women and their children generally went on expeditions alone. The Tasmanians apparently retained the use of their language, some words of which were still known by their descendants during Tindale's fieldwork there in the 1930s (Tindale, 1937b, p.36). The total population of Kangaroo Island was estimated at about two hundred people in 1826, although this figure probably includes all the men working on boats in the southern coastal region of South Australia.[27] The Aboriginal women had important roles on the island, acting as labourers, hunters, wives, trackers, garment makers and food gatherers.

5.1.3 Use of Hunting & Gathering Technology on Kangaroo Island

Reports on Islander lifestyle from passing ship captains and early colonists, indicate that it was considered to have had much in common with that of the Aboriginal people. For instance, in 1819 it was reported by Sutherland that there were several Europeans living on Kangaroo Island who were like:

> complete savages, living in bark huts like the natives, not cultivating anything, but living entirely on kangaroos, emus and small porcupines, and getting spirits and tobacco in barter for the skins which they lay up during the sealing season. They dress in kangaroo skins without linen, and wear sandals made from sealskins. They smell like foxes (Sutherland, cited in Moore, 1924, p.121).

The boots of these Islanders were also sometimes made from wallaby skins (Nunn, 1989, p.83). Their cloaks consisted of a number of skins stitched together in Aboriginal fashion.[28] One report from a colonist arriving at Kangaroo Island and meeting Islanders for the first time said 'The two islanders - clothed in opossum skin shirts, and with coats, trousers, and boots made of the skin of the red kangaroo - were mistaken for savage inhabitants of the new country.'[29] The practice of the sealers having several Aboriginal wives would have strengthened the first assumptions of official colonists that the Islanders were all Aboriginal people.

Islander subsistence relied heavily on the hunting and gathering skills of their Aboriginal work force, as agriculture was not extensively practised until after later official settlement. In 1819, after Bates and Wallen had occupied Kangaroo Island, a Tasmanian woman named Dinah proved of 'greatest value to them in their hunting expeditions through the scrub'.[30] Sealing was also an activity with which the Tasmanian women were able to use skills from their homeland.[31] The skins of kangaroos, wallabies and seals were important commodities for island trade. In 1831, it was recorded that the sixteen to eighteen men living on Kangaroo Island were in the practice of gathering on a certain day once a year at Nepean Bay to barter their skins to traders.[32] The reliance that some Islanders had upon the hunting efforts of the Aboriginal women continued long after official settlement in 1836.[33]

The Kangaroo Island flora and fauna had much in common with coastal southern Australia and Tasmania.[34] This would have enabled the Aboriginal women brought there to transfer easily their previously acquired hunting and gathering skills. During the early years of European occupation of Kangaroo Island and other nearby islands, the familiarity with the Australian landscape possessed by the

women gave them greater access than Europeans to the natural resources of the island. To capture

wallabies, the Aboriginal women on Kangaroo Island made hunting nooses (Leigh, 1839, p.104;

Cumpston, 1970, p.172; Nunn, 1989, p.84). These were necessary, as it was difficult to use firearms for the

capture of animals, such as marsupials, hiding in the dense thickets of Kangaroo Island. The nooses were

about 46 cms long, with the string woven from canvas thread. Each noose was stretched onto two small

forked sticks put across wallaby pads to catch the head of an animal, choking it to death. The women

checked these traps at sunrise, usually returning with the carcases around nine or ten o'clock in the

morning. The wallabies were skinned, the pelts stretched on wire or stick hoops, then bundled into lots of

fifty. The tails were boiled, the skin scraped off, and then cooked in ashes before being eaten. The sinews

drawn from the tails were used to sew wallaby skins into rugs and coats.

Trips in whale boats were made by Islanders to collect eggs of the 'mutton bird'[35] on Althorpe Island, and

to kill seals in the caverns along the Kangaroo Island coast (Reudiger, 1980, p.53). Mutton-birding was

apparently a practice that sealers in Bass Strait had gained from Aboriginal women when seals became

scarce (Ryan, 1981, p.70). In 1838, when some whalers were stranded in the Rivoli Bay district of the

South East of South Australia, they invited 'pretty girls' from the local Aboriginal community to row with

them in a boat to Penguin Rock to catch fat birds that frequented that spot (Stewart, cited in McCourt &

Mincham, 1977, pp.78-79). Wild pigs were another source of food. It seems likely that pigs existed on

Kangaroo Island as early as 1803, after the introduction of a boar and sow by Baudin.[36] A passenger of the

'Cygnet', which arrived at Kangaroo Island with settlers in 1836, remarked that the sealers used ti-tree

leaves as a tea supplement (Anonymous, cited in Gill, 1909, p.117). A 'bush tea tree' was also used as a

medicine to 'purify' the blood.[37] Indigenous fruits were made by Islanders into puddings and jam.[38] One

of Wallen's wives reportedly used medicinal and sorcery objects such as stone charms (Leigh, 1839,

pp.160-161). With the aid of the Aboriginal people, the natural environment provided the Islanders with

most of their basic needs.

The Aboriginal women on Kangaroo Island retained some of their preferences for certain types of food,

some of which Europeans would probably not have utilised. For instance, one early visitor to the island,

who was taken on a duck hunting expedition near Cygnet River, reported:

They had come to a clearing in the scrub where they saw some large ant-hills which were broken into pieces. The newcomer soon learnt the reason for this, as he watched the lubras in the party make quickly for other termite nests from which they broke off large lumps, then shake out the teeming ants into each other's hands cupped together. They squeezed the crawling insects into a ball, and with much laughter and evident enjoyment, conveyed them to their mouths and munched them up (Wells, 1978, p.27).

The women, who in Aboriginal fashion generally went on expeditions without the men, were not restricted to the sheltered northern parts where the Islanders in the main based themselves. The Aboriginal women often went on long expeditions along the southern coast where kangaroos, wallabies, possums, fish and shellfish were found in abundance (Basedow, 1914, p.161). In 1869, there were still three Tasmanian women on Kangaroo Island who lived 'by their wits and their waddies', preferring to hunt for themselves rather than to accept government rations.[39] The use of Aboriginal stone technology by the Islander population is well illustrated by the existence of archaeological remains of Tasmanian-type stone artefacts at the former campsites around the island.[40]

The dominance of the Aboriginal mode of subsistence is evident in the seasonal patterns of early life on Kangaroo Island. In 1826, a report on the Islanders said that 'When the fishing season for seals is over, these men, with the native women and their offspring, amounting in all to about 40, retire into a valley in the interior of the island, where they have a garden and huts.'[41] The movement of the Islanders away from the coast during autumn was to avoid the fierce winter weather along the coast. Their summertime activities included hunting seal pups and mutton bird egging. Both types of animal breed in summer months.[42] This summer/coast - winter/inland movement of people was similar to the pre-European movements of coastal Aboriginal people of Tasmania and southern South Australia.[43]

The reliance upon Aboriginal hunters increased with time, due to the scarcity of game which had resulted from over exploitation. The last Kangaroo Island emu (Dromaius minor), which differed physically from the mainland species, was reportedly killed by the Aboriginal wife of an Islander several years before official settlement.[44] The kangaroos and wallabies eventually retreated back into the thick scrub, making hunting by shooting difficult (Nunn, 1989, p.55). The settlers arriving on Kangaroo Island in 1836 noted the apparent absence of the animal after which the place was named (Dutton, 1960, p.172). The Kangaroo Island kangaroo (Macropus fuliginosus fulinginosus) had been hunted down to numbers so low that it was still considered extinct earlier this century.[45] Although the density of people actually living on Kangaroo Island was low, the pre-1836 inhabitants nevertheless made their mark upon the landscape. When the

official settlers arrived in the newly proclaimed colony of South Australia, the region had already suffered

an ecological disaster due to European and Aboriginal activity on Kangaroo Island.

The important economic role of Aboriginal people on Kangaroo Island in the pre-colonial years is noted by

many sources commenting on Islander life.[46] Although the Aboriginal captives, whether from Tasmania or

the mainland, were just as new to Kangaroo Island as the whalers and sealers, they quickly developed a

close relationship with the island's landscape. In the 1870s, there was evidently a site on the island that

local inhabitants still referred to as 'the old black woman's potato-ground'.[47] Whether this refers to a spot

where yams were collected, or a place where potatoes were grown is not known. In all food-gathering

activities, the labour and skills provided by Aboriginal women were significant.

5.1.4 The Relationship Between Islanders and Mainland Aboriginal People

Some of the early encounters between the sealers and mainland Aboriginal groups were violent, and yet

there is evidence that the relationship between them was complex. The violent clashes described above

during the Islander expeditions to obtain wives, were balanced by the amicable relations that allowed the

early employment of Aboriginal people in sealing activities. For instance, in June 1833 the sealer John

Jones sailed from Launceston in the 'Henry', reaching Kangaroo Island in July:

> He met a tribe of natives on Cape Jervis, consisting of ten families. Five of the men
> worked for him occasionally, and two were with him constantly for near five months.
> They were very useful, and willing to work for a trifling remuneration. To the two who
> remained with him long he gave pistols, powder, and shot; to the others slop-clothing. He
> saw their women and children only at a distance, and saw no other natives on the rest of
> the coast along Gulf St. Vincent; but their fires were very numerous (Jones, 1835 [1921,
> pp.74]).

Even at this early time, Aboriginal people were being incorporated into the world economy through their

participation in the marine industries controlled from the northern hemisphere. Aboriginal people in the

Lower Murray, through their interaction with the Islanders, were the first Aboriginal groups in South

Australia to gain experience of Europeans.

Another European who worked north along the Fleurieu Peninsula coastline before official settlement was

Meredith, a Kangaroo Island-based sealer. He arrived at Kangaroo Island with another sealer, Jacobs, about

1827.[48] In 1835, despite advice from other Islanders, he moved to the Yankalilla district along St Vincent

Gulf. He had with him an Aboriginal team, consisting of a Tasmanian woman named Sal and two male Aboriginal youths from the mainland. Sal was his wife and the youths were being trained to assist in the sealing activities of the Islanders. However, they eventually killed Meredith, using his boat for their own hunting and gathering expeditions along the coast. The Islanders then feared being attacked by Aboriginal people from the mainland, due to a threat by an Aboriginal man named 'Encounter Bay Bob' that he was going to cross to the island in the boat and kill all the white people. Eventually the boat concerned came adrift and was destroyed. The killing of Meredith was further proof that the prudence of the sealers in basing their activities on previously uninhabited parts of the landscape, such as Kangaroo Island, was well founded.

Some encounters between Islanders and Aboriginal groups from the mainland indicate the partial integration of the sealers into Aboriginal society. For instance, on one visit to the mainland, the Islander Bates assisted an Aboriginal man with a spear protruding from his stomach (E.L. Bates, [cited in Kingscote Country Women's Association, nd., p.23]). He cut out the spearhead, sewing up the wound. The victim apparently recovered soon afterwards. On a longer stay on the mainland, Bates was 'made a member of the tribe by being thrown on his back, and having all the males jump on his body in succession'.[49] This appears to be a form of initiation ritual. Another Islander, Wallen, participated in the mourning ceremonies of Aboriginal people on one visit to the Lower Murray (Leigh, 1839, p.160). Through their possession of Aboriginal wives from the local groups and their involvement in ceremonial life, these Islanders were therefore to some extent incorporated into the Aboriginal kinship of the Lower Murray.

In the period before 1836, some Aboriginal people from the Lower Murray travelled widely. For example, an old Aboriginal man from the Cape Jervis 'tribe' was taken over to Kangaroo Island with his son, and later returned to the mainland.[50] Other Aboriginal people, such as Condoy and his niece Sally from Cape Jervis, also made early trips to the island (Thomas, 1925, p.46). The latter was part of a crew on a sealing vessel in 1825 at King George Sound in Western Australia, along with another Lower Murray person, Harry, and two Tasmanians, Dinah and Mooney (Cumpston, 1970, p.87). In 1831, Robinson (cited in Plomley, 1966, pp.338-339) noted there were Aboriginal women from Kangaroo Island in the sealing stations of the Kent Group in the eastern end of Bass Strait. Similarly, two Port Lincoln women were reportedly on Gun Carriage Island, a small island between Flinders and Cape Barren Islands in the

Furneaux Group (Barwick, 1985, pp.211-212). This early movement of Aboriginal people would have broadened their experience with other Aboriginal cultures and given them greater knowledge of the geography beyond their own cultural boundaries. The likelihood of this new information being incorporated, in the form of myth, by the larger Aboriginal group has already been discussed (Section 2.3.2)

The sealers living on Kangaroo Island appear to have had the best relations with the people from the Cape Jervis region. This was probably because this area was their chief landing spot on the mainland. Due to the treacherous nature of the seas off the southern coast of Fleurieu Peninsula, only the coastline sheltered by Kangaroo Island itself was safe for crossing in small boats. When the Islanders travelled to the Lower Lakes, this was primarily done across country from here, along the Inman Valley. Sturt's published map of the region in 1833, highlights the openness of this valley in contrast to the rugged southern coastline of Fleurieu Peninsula (Fig.5.3). Some of the Aboriginal men from the Cape Jervis district eventually became whalers who worked in the Encounter Bay area after official settlement.[51] In general, the Aboriginal people in this part of the Lower Murray had more favourable experiences with the early Europeans than those elsewhere, such as the Coorong (Section 6.2.4).

The links that the Islanders had with mainland populations occasionally proved very useful to the colonial powers in eastern Australia. For instance, in 1831 after Captain Collet Barker failed to return from swimming across the Murray Mouth, his companions located the previously mentioned Aboriginal woman, Sally, at this time living among Aboriginal people at Cape Jervis.[52] She had been recognised by one of the ship's crew as having been on a sealing vessel at King George Sound in Western Australia three years earlier. Sally could speak English 'tolerably well', and suggested to them that the Kangaroo Island sealers could help.[53] Eventually, a party which included two seamen, Barker's servant, Sally and her 'uncle' Condoy, and the sealers Bates and Wallen, crossed to Cape Jervis in the sealers' whale boat. From here, they travelled over land to Lake Alexandrina, which Bates had already crossed on an earlier trip before Sturt had discovered it.[54] They then constructed reed rafts in an Aboriginal manner, and travelled to the inside of the Murray Mouth where Barker had disappeared.

Fig.5.3 Fleurieu Peninsula and the Murray Mouth as shown by Sturt (1833)

Yorke's Peninsula

138°

35°

GULF OF St VINCENT

Troubridge Pt & Shoals

Longitude East from Greenwich

Inlet 16 miles

Stour R.

Undulating grassy forest

Hill with abundant soil to the Summit

Mt Barker

139°

36°

Country low & wooded

R. Murray

Ponkepuringa Cr.

Wacoondilla Cr.

Rich fertile soil

lightly wooded

Gawlers Hills

Hay's Range

Extensive valleys

A beautiful country as seen from the Lake

LAKE ALEXANDRINA

Rich black soil

Fine Valley

Rich & Fertile soil

Anchorage 10°

Flat & beautiful Valleys

Flat & wooded

Sandy

Rugged grassy hills intersected by gullies

Rocky Pt

Granite I. & Reef

Seal Rock

Anchorage

Breakers

Marsh

ENCOUNTER BAY

C. Jervis

Backstairs Passage

Pt Marsden

Sutherland Shoal

Chart of
CAPE JERVIS

Western Cove

Shoal B.

Nepean Bay

Kangaroo Hd

Bishop B.

Seal B.

The Pages

C. Verdune

KANGAROO ISLAND

Pelican Lagoon

Antechamber

Prospect Hill

N. part of C. Willoughby

At the Murray Mouth, the cunning and experience of the Islanders was put to use. It is recorded that:

> Here Bates formed a daring plan for obtaining some information on this subject [Barker's disappearance]. In the darkness of night he and his mates surprised a camp of natives. Bates acted the part of the orthodox ghost, dressed in a white sheet, and his costume and dismal groans so frightened the blackfellows that as soon as awake they fled in all directions. A young girl of about 16 bolted straight in Warley's [= Wallen's] arms, and he at once secured and gagged her. From her they learnt that Captain Barker had been speared by the natives and his body hidden in the scrub. ... The black girl was claimed by Warley as his property and lived with him at Hog Bay, assisting him to hunt.[55]

The fate of Barker was in this way discovered. Apparently after swimming the River Mouth, he had been tracked by three Aboriginal men. The latter had waited until they were certain Barker was unarmed, then killed him.

Although the reasons for the attack are not clear, it is possible that Barker was mistaken for a sealer from Kangaroo Island, and killed in reprisal for earlier overland raids by Islanders. The Aboriginal people in this part of the Lower Murray by this time clearly knew about Europeans. For instance, when Sturt travelled along the elbow of the River Murray towards the Mouth in 1830, he remarked that the local Aboriginal people were 'perfectly aware of the weapon [gun] I carried, for the moment they saw it, they dashed out of their hiding place' (Sturt, 1833, vol.2, p.166). It is possible that the Islanders were in dispute with the Aboriginal people living near the Murray Mouth due to wife stealing.[56] Nevertheless, without the assistance of the Islanders and their Aboriginal companions, it is doubtful whether the circumstances of Barker's disappearance would ever have become known.[57] Bates and Wallen received payment for their services in obtaining information.[58]

In spite of the dangerous exploits of the Islanders, their life on Kangaroo Island was generally 'luxurious and lazy' with Aboriginal people doing the bulk of the work.[59] A large dwelling built at Antechamber Bay was the Islander's main depot. A considerable fluctuation in Kangaroo Island population levels is evident in the scant records of the pre-colonial period. In 1831, Robinson listed the names of thirteen Aboriginal women he knew to be living with sealers on the island (Robinson, cited in Cumpston, 1970, p.171). In 1833, Captain Jones claimed that there were seven Englishmen living on the island, with five Aboriginal women.[60] In 1836, when the colonists reached Kangaroo Island, a settler thought there were six sealers on the island with a number of wives (Morphett, cited in Cumpston, 1970, p.126). In apparent conflict with this, another report claimed that there were eight European men and sixteen Aboriginal women living on

Kangaroo Island.[61] Another settler from 1836 said that the average number of wives each sealer had was three.[62] Here, one man reportedly had three wives and no children, another had the same number of wives and twenty children. An exact account of all the Aboriginal people taken to Kangaroo Island will never be known, as there are no detailed records of arrivals, departures, births or deaths before 1836.

5.1.5 The Use of Aboriginal Skills by Official Colonists

The first of the five ships bringing British colonists to South Australia arrived at Kangaroo Island on 27 July 1836 (Appendix 10.1). The colonists were surprised at the harshness of the new landscape (Section 4.2.1). Upon landing, the Islanders helped the settlers locate drinking water to replenish their supplies.[63] Islanders sold or bartered to the colonists wallaby skins and meat that had been caught by their women.[64] On 21 August 1836, Colonel Light arrived at Kangaroo Island from England on the 'Rapid'. Light gained geographic information concerning the location of bays on the mainland from the Islanders.[65] The Islanders also described to the settlers the climate of the region (Morphett, 1836, p.13). They informed Light of the mistake in attempting to settle on Kangaroo Island, suggesting that land to the north of Cape Jervis would be more suitable than either the island or Encounter Bay.

The relatively open grasslands on the eastern side of Saint Vincent Gulf, north from Cape Jervis, impressed many of the colonists, particularly when it was compared with the dense brush of Kangaroo Island (Gouger, 1838, pp.22-29; Morphett, cited in Scott, 1839, pp.11-12; Mitchell, cited in Scott, 1839, p.15; Dutton, 1960, pp.170,172-175). For instance, it was said that at this time the Rapid Bay district on the mainland 'everywhere resembled a gentleman's park - grass growing in the greatest luxuriance, the most beautiful flowers in abundance, ...' (Thomas, 1925, p.47). It is ironic that the distinction between the two landscapes was largely due to firing practices of the Aboriginal inhabitants. The mainland was well populated and the island beyond the reach of Aboriginal hunters and gatherers (Section 3.3.2 & 5.1.2; Chapter 4, end note 31). Therefore, the landscape created by Aboriginal people in the pre-European period had an unintended effect of directing settlement towards the eastern Saint Vincent Gulf region.

The settlers who arrived on Kangaroo Island in 1836 employed the Islander Bates to do some hut building in their holdings there.[66] Light hired other Islanders, William Cooper and his two wives - Doughboy and

Sall, to go with his surveying party to Rapid Bay.[67] Aboriginal people travelled overland from Encounter

Bay with Cooper to meet Light's party. The Island women, who had 'kangaroo dogs' from the island, were

able to supply Light's men with fresh meat which they cooked for them. Light reportedly had good

relations with the Aboriginal people of the Rapid Bay 'band' (Gouger, 1838, pp.46-47). They carried wood

for him, brought reeds for thatching and otherwise rendered Light such help as they could. The Aboriginal

people slept around his hut at night. When Light in the 'Rapid' was trying to find a good harbour, for

which he had an account from the sealer John Jones (see Jones, 1835 [1921]), an Aboriginal woman from

Kangaroo Island on board showed him the mouth of the Onkaparinga River (Dutton, 1960, pp.175-180).

Light's men added to their provisions by buying potatoes from a sealing vessel that was passing through

(Price, 1924, p.56). The established network that the Islanders had with the mainland Aboriginal groups

and passing merchant vessels proved useful to the official colonists of 1836 who had arrived needing

directions, fresh food, drinking water, and physical assistance.

During the establishment phase of the Colony of South Australia, authorities took advantage of the

knowledge Kangaroo Islanders had of the southern Aboriginal inhabitants. Cooper and his wives were

moved to Encounter Bay in the Lower Murray to develop relations between the new colonists and the

Aboriginal people.[68] They were also engaged in the creation of a garden there.[69] Light employed Cooper

and his wives as interpreters and as 'go-betweens' for the colonists and the Aboriginal groups.[70] In early

1837, Nat Thomas, a sealer from Kangaroo Island, helped colonists track two missing horses south from

Adelaide (Bull, 1884, pp.32-36). Thomas already knew the area through his sealing activities and was able

to point out 'native wells' under the sandhills near the mouth of the Onkaparinga River. On one occasion,

the party was surrounded by Aboriginal people whom Thomas recognised as Onkaparinga and Encounter

Bay people. Although Thomas knew a few of their words, he kept out of sight. The woman he had on

Kangaroo Island was from their community and they were reportedly not pleased at her absence. In the

colonists' camp at Glenelg near Adelaide, an Aboriginal woman regularly supplied the newcomers with a

type of water cress for food (Thomas, 1925, p.69). The Europeans reportedly had no knowledge of where it

was obtained. Some of the Aboriginal helpers later moved from Glenelg to Adelaide, where they were

employed in jobs such as fetching water from the river (Thomas, 1925, p.71). The Islanders and local

Aboriginal people were valuable as guides and labourers for the coastal regions around Adelaide and the Lower Murray.

At the time of colonisation, the need for interpreters in the Lower Murray and Adelaide region was lessened because many of the Aboriginal people there already spoke English, having learnt it from the Islanders.[71] The area covered by Encounter Bay and the Adelaide Plains was considered by the official colonists to have an Aboriginal population more amenable to European settlement than both Eyre and Yorke Peninsulas.[72] Therefore, not only did Aboriginal people assist the European colonists, but the nature of European relations with the various Aboriginal groups was one of several factors influencing the placing of the site of the capital.

The early recognition by Europeans of the relationship that Aboriginal people had developed with Kangaroo Island is evident in their use of Aboriginal trackers. For instance, in 1836 when the colonist Joseph Finch disappeared in the Rapid Bay district, the Islander Cooper and some Aboriginal people searched for him.[73] In the same year, the Islander Wallen and his two wives, Puss and Polecat, set out with a party on Kangaroo Island to find two missing passengers of the 'Africaine' who had attempted to cross on foot from the western side.[74] Here the role of the Aboriginal women was described as being 'trackers'. Aboriginal trackers were routinely employed to search for lost stock in southern South Australia (Wilkinson, 1848, pp.319-320).

The role of tracker and Aboriginal interpreter often merged. In 1840, Aboriginal guides from the Encounter Bay region were used by colonial authorities in their expeditions to discover the whereabouts of the survivors of the 'Maria' wreck (Section 6.2.4). In the investigation of the subsequent massacre of the Maria shipwreck survivors on the Coorong, three Aboriginal men - 'Encounter Bay Bob', 'One-arm Charley' and 'Peter', were part of the investigating crew.[75] It is interesting to note that all three appear to have had experience in whaling and sealing.[76] During the early days of European settlement at Encounter Bay, 'native guides' were routinely used by the police (Bull, 1884, pp.58-59).

In 1844, Inspector Alexander Tolmer was sent to Kangaroo Island to arrest escaped bushrangers who were living in the bush on the island. These outlaws were living there with the assistance of two Aboriginal women, Sal and Suke.[77] Tolmer was well aware that those he was to pursue had a geographical edge over

him. For this reason, Tolmer hired two other Aboriginal women on the island, Bet and Old Waub, as trackers. In addition, one of the men accompanying Tolmer was a policeman stationed at Willunga, who was known to have formerly served as a whaler with Captain Hart before official settlement. Tolmer considered that the knowledge of the Kangaroo Island area this man possessed would be particularly useful. Tolmer's party successfully tracked the escapees, and he claimed that he would have failed to find them without the help of the Aboriginal women. As with the earlier search for Barker, the Islanders here received payment for the tracking services of their wives (Cumpston, 1970, p.176).

Knowledge of Kangaroo Island gained by Aboriginal women's hunting and gathering expeditions proved useful on many occasions. In November 1853, the steamer, 'Osmanli', struck a reef near Cape Linois in D'Estree Bay (Nunn, 1989, pp.95-97). A rescue party that included the Islander Nat Thomas and an Aboriginal woman, reached the stranded passengers by travelling overland. The location of a soak to provide drinking water was shown by the Aboriginal woman, probably the wife or daughter of Nat Thomas. In December 1855, the Islander Buik and an Aboriginal woman searched for a missing man named Pennington who had disappeared in thick scrub on Kangaroo Island near Osmanli Beach (Cockburn, 1908 [1984, p.172]). Troopers from Adelaide, Coward and Dundas, were dispatched in January 1856 to help find Pennington, but even with Aboriginal guides, were unsuccessful. The Aboriginal residents of the island would have had extensive geographic knowledge of the barren south coast of the island, through the hunting and gathering expeditions of the women.

The exploitation of Kangaroo Island's mineral resources was on occasion facilitated by the earlier Aboriginal residents. For instance, during Tolmer's raid on the island, Old Bet (or Betsey) had told him about the abundance of pitch there (Tolmer, 1882, vol.1, pp.320-321). This led to an attempt by Tolmer, Nat Thomas and Mrs Seymour (daughter of Thomas and Old Bet) to lodge a claim on Kangaroo Island for natural pitch. In 1856, Old Bet lodged a gold claim for the Cape Willoughby Ranges with the Gold Research Committee.[78] She stated that after some Islanders had returned from the mainland gold fields, she had been shown gold nuggets they had. She had exclaimed 'Me see him plenty like it that yellowfellow tone.' She explained that when her son, Nat, was very young, she and another Aboriginal woman had collected a number of nuggets and had beaten them out or 'made them long' as she had put it. However, Aboriginal knowledge of the island was not always taken without question. William A. Cawthorne, the son

of the first lighthouse keeper at Cape Willoughby, claimed that Old Bet was not to be taken seriously.[79] He considered that island rumours of gold were based on Tolmer's accidental discovery of it while capturing bushrangers in 1844. Cawthorne considered that Tolmer's find was in a different area from where Betsey had lodged her claim. Cawthorne had already lodged a claim to the Gold Research Committee for his suggested area of the island.

Although life on Kangaroo Island became more orderly after official colonisation, it still remained a source of concern for authorities. Not only was the island sometimes a hiding place for bushrangers, as described above, it was the focus of early black market activities in South Australia. Tolmer (1882, vol.1, pp.287-290) records that in 1844 American whalers landing on Kangaroo Island were unloading goods that had not been cleared by customs. These goods, in particular tobacco, were then being taken by whaleboat and off-loaded in some of the small bays on the mainland between the Onkaparinga River and Glenelg. The central geographical position of Kangaroo Island at the head of the two gulfs, and the small size of the settlement there, made it an ideal location for smuggling. Tolmer attempted to break up these operations, and eventually apprehended the Islander Charles Thompson in connection with them. This man, who had resided on Kangaroo Island for about seven years, was believed to be a runaway convict from Macquarie Harbour and Sydney. The charge of smuggling was dropped, although his whaleboat and three others from the island were confiscated due to being not lawfully marked. According to Tolmer, this effectively stopped the smuggling from Kangaroo Island.

Some of the Aboriginal inhabitants on Kangaroo Island were returned to their place of origin after 1836. Although a few Tasmanian women were eventually taken back to Tasmania, several of them chose not to return to their previous homeland.[80] This was perhaps because of their knowledge of events in Tasmania. For instance, by 1830 only three hundred fully descended Tasmanians of an original population of several thousand remained, due to their contact with Europeans (Jones, 1974, p.319). It is possible that some Tasmanians were absorbed into the Lower Murray Aboriginal population, while others remained on Kangaroo Island.[81] In 1844, there were twelve Aboriginal women living on Kangaroo Island, several of whom were originally from Tasmania.[82] They were judged to be between forty and fifty years of age, having been on the island upwards of seventeen years. In the 1860s, one Aboriginal family of mainland ancestry was moved from the island to the Point McLeay Mission in the Lower Murray.[83] By the 1870s, it

seems that most of the Aboriginal people who had originally been taken to Kangaroo Island, had either died or were removed. The exceptions were three Tasmanian women, all of whom outlived the so-called 'last of the Tasmanians', Truganina.[84] The last of these island women died sometime around 1888 (Tindale, 1937b, p.32).

The early Islanders did leave descendants among later Kangaroo Island populations. With the anthropological interest in the 'extinct races', one woman, who had been the child of a white sealer and a Tasmanian woman, was the subject of special anatomical studies (Basedow, 1914; Berry, 1907). However, the Aboriginal people on Kangaroo Island became socially cut off from other former sealing stations in the Bass Strait after official settlement (Ryan, 1981, p.222). With the large influx of farmers on Kangaroo Island (Nunn, 1989), its distinctive Aboriginality has largely remained in the past. In contrast, the descendants of the sealers and their Aboriginal wives in the Furneaux Group of Tasmania have formed a culturally distinctive population that persists today (Malcolm, 1920; Tindale, 1953; Mollison, 1974 & 1976; Mollison & Everitt, 1976). Nevertheless, there are still people living on Kangaroo Island who can trace descent to a Tasmanian woman brought there sometime before 1836.[85]

5.2 Settlement at Encounter Bay

In the first few months of British settlement in 1836, Encounter Bay came under the scrutiny of the colonists as a possible site for the capital of South Australia. The large harbour and the proximity of a supposed entrance to the Murray River were major factors in its favour. However, it was Encounter Bay's suitability for whaling activities that started settlement there. Captain John Hart, who was familiar with the South Australian coast through his whaling and sealing activities there during the early 1830s, was consulted by the South Australian Colonisation Commissioners in London (Blacket, 1911, p.431).[86] Whaling was the first official industry in the Colony of South Australia. Two 'shore' whaling stations were set up in Encounter Bay in 1837; a group from Sydney headed by Captain Blenkinsopp, and the other controlled by the South Australia Company.[87] The former was situated at Police Point (now Victor Harbor), and the latter at the foot of the ridge connecting Rosetta Head (now The Bluff) with the hills. Other stations were later set up at The Nob (now Port Elliot) and on Granite Island. In the case of the whaling establishments at Police Point and Granite Island, these were considered to be of 'lesser

importance' and soon abandoned (Newland, 1921, p.16). By 1841, large whaling stations were situated at Encounter Bay and nearby bays at Kangaroo Island (Angas, 1847a, text for plate XVI). There were also smaller whaling stations at the mouth of the Onkaparinga River (from 1841 to about 1843) and at Fishery Cove near Cape Jervis (from 1843 to the early 1850s) (Hosking, 1973, legend, p.2). Settlement had now reached the Lower Murray region.

Two species of whale were hunted in southern South Australia, the sperm or cachalot whale (Physeter macrocephalus) and the black or southern right whale (Eubalaena australis).[88] There were two distinct seasons for whaling: the 'in-shore season' during winter to catch the black whales as they travelled along the coast of south eastern Australia from Tasmania (Fig.5.1), and the 'off-shore season' to catch whales as they were returning to the south east about 320 kilometres from the coast.[89] Sperm whales were generally caught off-shore. Whitelock (1985, p.63) states that from 1836 to the end of 1840, 536 barrels of black right whale oil, 158 barrels of sperm oil, and 655 bundles of whale bone had been exported to London via Hobart.

From the outset, the whaling station at Encounter Bay attracted large numbers of Aboriginal people. Gouger (1838, p.53) claims that the establishment of the whale fishery at Encounter Bay had made this area a favourite residence of the Aboriginal people during the whaling season. Leigh (1839, pp.163-164) describes how here, upon the capture of a whale, Aboriginal people came to the stations for feasts. Cameron (1979, p.4) suggests that the whalers encouraged local Aboriginal people to camp around the whaling station, by distributing whale-meat and rum, so that the white men had access to Aboriginal women. In the 1840s, Richard Penney and David Wark treated Aboriginal people suffering from small pox at Encounter Bay (Jenkin, 1879, pp.46-49). Penney was concerned about the ill treatment of Aboriginal people by whalers.[90] The German missionary, H.A.E. Meyer, also operated a school for Aboriginal people near the whaling station.[91] The Lower Murray people living here were amongst the colony's first Aboriginal 'fringe dwellers', although at this stage they were essentially opportunistic rather than dispossessed (Chapter 6).

At Encounter Bay, Aboriginal men were employed to cart blubber to pots where Aboriginal women boiled it up in vats (Cameron, 1979, p.39). Payment was made in gin and tobacco. At least one Aboriginal man was employed as a 'spotter' for the whalers (Kartinyeri, 1990, vol.1, p.15). Some Aboriginal men were

engaged as whalers (Taplin Journals, 5 May & 22 July 1861). Penney claimed that Aboriginal people at Encounter Bay had provided valuable assistance, 'they are all of them very useful in tracking cattle and horses - they are very good hands in a boat, and in diving - and they have rendered great services to owners of the wrecks at Encounter Bay.'[92] During the operation of the whale fishery on Granite Island, Aboriginal people were employed to take wood and fresh water out to the island along a connecting reef during low tide (Hodge, 1932, p.124). With all these cases, we see that Aboriginal people were used by European colonists as a cheap labour force.

Transactions between Europeans and Aboriginal people did not always occur freely. During the 1837 season, a European named Driscoll was travelling on a 'native pad' overland from Encounter Bay to Adelaide when he was murdered by 'waddy' (club) near Hindmarsh Valley by his Aboriginal guide, Reppindjeri known as 'Elic' (Cameron, 1979, pp.4,28,39-42; Jenkin, 1979, pp.52-55). This had resulted from a quarrel over Driscoll's apparent refusal to pay for sex with one of Elic's two Aboriginal women. The slain man was one of Captain Blenkinsopp's whalers. Although the circumstances were kept quiet by the Aboriginal people involved, the facts were leaked by a local Aboriginal woman, Kalinga, who was called 'Sarah'. She was the wife of a Kangaroo Island sealer and whaler, Walker. Reppindjeri was arrested by Walker, and imprisoned for some months on the 'South Australian' moored near the Bluff, before he escaped.

In 1837, a man named Walker from Kangaroo Island claimed to have walked in the company of another man along the coast, and to have found a harbour with a navigable entrance to a river that led directly to Lake Alexandrina.[93] It was said to be forty kilometres to the south east of the river found by Sturt. This was fuel for the debate among the settlers concerning the location of the capital of the colony. In response to this statement, Light sent a letter to the Colonisation Commissioners saying that this was possibly the mouth of the river that had earlier been reported by Aboriginal women, who, while travelling along the coast, had come across a channel that was too deep to wade into, and was thought to be large enough for a boat to pass through.[94] Nevertheless, Light obviously did not trust Walker, as he was often drunk and had reportedly declined initially to speak more fully unless paid five hundred pounds.

Eventually support amongst the settlers for the transfer of the capital from Adelaide to Encounter Bay dwindled, influenced by a number of tragedies. On 12 December 1837, Captain Blenkinsopp attempted to return from a week's exploration of the Lower Murray by exiting through the Murray Mouth in a whale boat.[95] It was overturned by ocean rollers, drowning the Captain, Sir John Jeffcott and two crew. Aboriginal people, who had rushed down from nearby sandhills, dragged the two surviving members of the party out of the water. The deaths of Jeffcott and Blenkinsopp coincided with a fortnight of shipping disasters, with three ships being wrecked in Encounter Bay (Gouger, 1838, pp.34-45; Cameron, 1979, p.29). In spite of these fatalities, J.M. Gill, who had crossed in and out of the Murray Mouth several times in June 1838 while ferrying survivors of the wrecked 'Fanny', claimed it to be 'an easy and perfectly safe entrance'.[96] In this incident, Aboriginal people from east of the Murray Mouth had helped the wreck victims. The conflicting reports of the passage from the ocean to the lake led to Sturt's examination of the topography of the Mouth, which confirmed that there was no practicable or navigable communication by outlet from Lake Alexandrina to the ocean.[97]

Later in 1838, news reached Encounter Bay that two men had successfully crossed overland to Adelaide from Port Fairy in western Victoria, which opened up a stock route.[98] They were helped by local Aboriginal people when crossing the Murray River. This overland route was important as it provided South Australia with another option for contact with the eastern colonies. Future trade from the east no longer had to rely on an exit from Lake Alexandrina into the sea. As time went on, it became clear that the colonists would simply not have the resources to relocate from Adelaide to Encounter Bay.

Whaling declined in the early 1840s as gaslight in the northern hemisphere challenged the use of candles and oil lamps (Blainey, 1977, p.115). The use of whale oil declined further when kerosene from American oil wells became available (Hosking, 1973, chap.2, pp.9,32-35; Whitelock, 1985, p.66). The decreasing value of whale products led to the South Australia Company pulling out in 1842 (Cameron, 1979, p.23). By this time, European activities had already denuded much of the hills behind the whaling stations at Encounter Bay ('Baleineau', cited in Whitelock, 1985, p.65). Seasons of whaling continued sporadically up to the 1870s. However, in 1871, only one whale was killed and towed to the Bluff Station (Whitelock, 1985, p.66). Whaling at Encounter Bay was insignificant on a world scale, but very important to the European colonisation of South Australia.

5.3 European Use of Aboriginal Tracks

In the pre-European period, Aboriginal people travelled to other regions for economic reasons, such as trade, and for ceremonial occasions, such as for initiation rituals. There is strong evidence for the existence of well-defined tracks across much of southern South Australia. Particularly in areas of rough terrain, Europeans appear to have initially used Aboriginal tracks rather than make new ones.

A major track found by early European settlers ran between the Adelaide Plains and Bremer River, continuing to the Murray River (Fig.5.4). It was observed in frequent use by Aboriginal people in the early days of the colony (Stephens, 1889, p.477). Another pathway, recorded in 1849 by McLaren as a 'native trackway', went from Coromandel Valley as far south as McLaren Vale (Ross, 1984, p.21). A further track, or possibly a continuation of the latter, was reportedly made by Encounter Bay Aboriginal people, and linked Hindmarsh Valley to Willunga (Sweetman, 1928 [1988, p.4]). Meyer (1843, p.52) refers to an Aboriginal song about 'a fine road ... winding between the hills' between Encounter Bay and Willunga. This was possibly the trail that Watts Newland and his party were taken on when they were guided by two Aboriginal people from Adelaide to Encounter Bay in 1839 (Robinson, 1975, p.21). In the Lacepede Bay area of the South East, Angas records during his 1844 expedition with Governor Grey that they came across many Aboriginal tracks (1847b, p.158). The existence of defined pathways is strong evidence that Aboriginal movement patterns were not random, but occurred within the framework of the topographical and cultural features of the landscape.

Upon European colonisation, Aboriginal tracks were frequently used by the early settlers. For instance, in 1846 a sick European was found lost in the Lower South East by a local Aboriginal man, who fed him and then reportedly took him 'to the native's track, which was easier walking than through the scrub' (Smith, 1880, p.43). Because of the ease of use, Bull (1884, p.94) used a 'native track' through high grass from west of Mount Barker to west of Mount Torrens. Aboriginal pathways would have provided a useful network, already existent, for use by Europeans settlers who were establishing their own order upon the landscape. Fenner (1931, pp.169-170) acknowledges that the 'geographical controls' of setting up of European communication routes were often through the medium of the Aboriginal inhabitants of the landscape. He cites R.A. Gibbins of the State Highways Department, who said:

Fig.5.4 Aboriginal tracks recorded by early settlers, and the paths of Sturt and Barker

Legend:
- – – – Approximate course of Aboriginal tracks
- ······· Barker's route
- ▲ Barker's murder site
- –·–·– Sturt's route
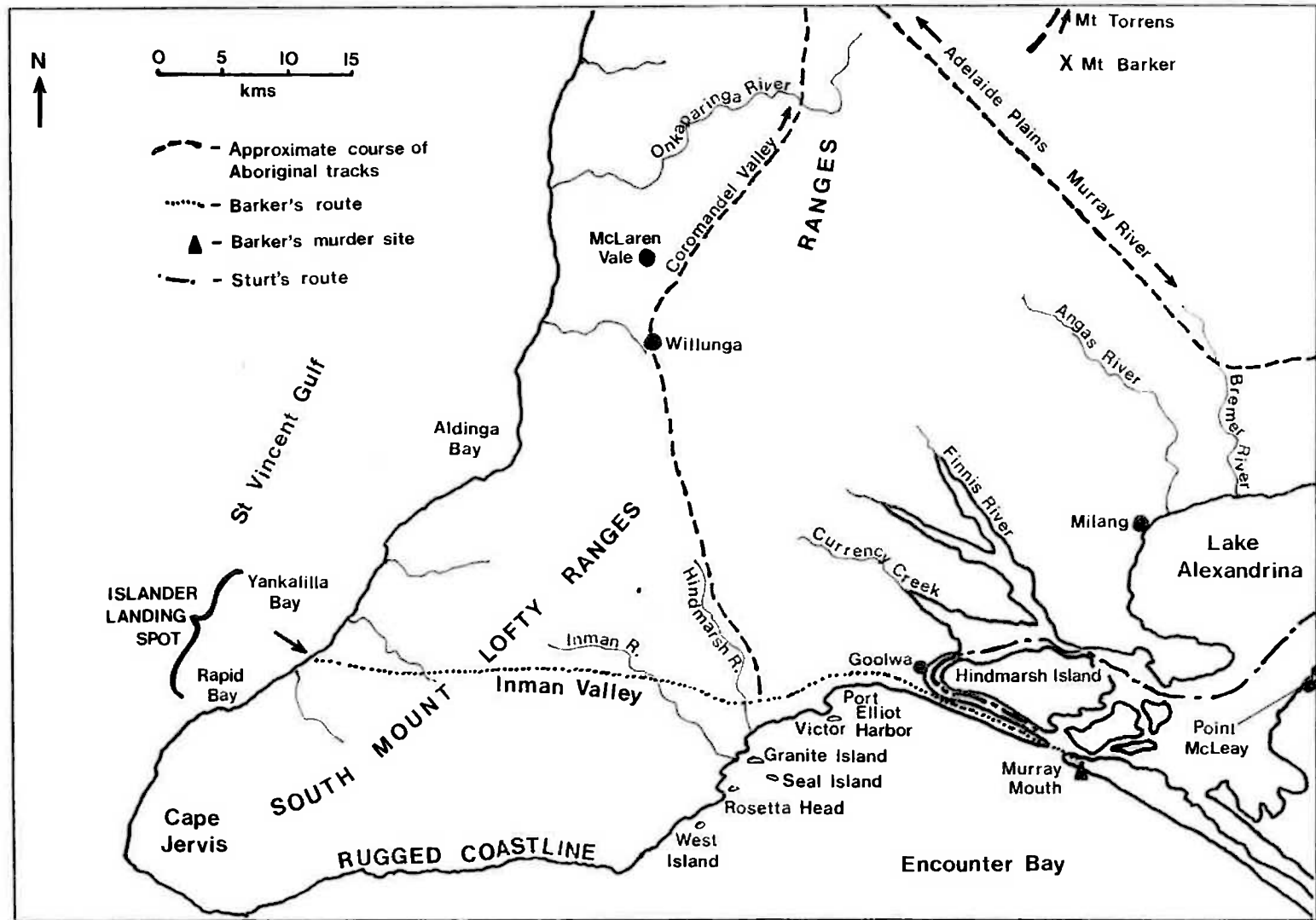
The aborigines showed a considerable amount of cleverness in selecting the best country to travel over in central Australia, and in that locality many of the roads and cattle tracks used today were at one time native pads. The Great Northern Railway, in many places, follows parallel with an old red ochre track used by the aborigines for unknown years. When Europeans made their way into the interior, they soon realized the advantage of utilizing the aborigines' knowledge of bushcraft. River crossings, bogs, quicksands, and flooded plains were found to offer no great difficulty to the white man when he called in the aid of the aborigines, who had made pads through these swamps and morasses for ages before Europeans came. From each waterhole to the next the blackfellows had their pad, and this was invariably found to be the easiest way.[99]

The existence of Aboriginal tracks undoubtedly hastened European expansion into the interior of Australia.

The use of Aboriginal routes by Europeans was not restricted to the northern areas. For instance, in 1838, Aboriginal pathways helped Charles Bonney open up an overland stock route from New South Wales to South Australia. Bonney claims that the Aboriginal people, particularly along the Murray River, were very helpful to him, 'the paths which they had made in travelling up and down the river afforded an unfailing guide as to the direction we ought to take in order to cross the great bends it frequently makes (Bonney, cited in Bull, 1884, p.78)'. In the case of the Encounter Bay track mentioned above, this was originally just over half a metre wide, and so its use by Europeans was initially confined to foot and horse traffic (Sweetman, 1928 [1988, p.4]). Eventually, however, it was widened for use by coaches. The incorporation of Aboriginal tracks into a modern European-type road system has been recorded elsewhere.[100] However, in general the details of the course of most Aboriginal tracks, both major or minor, are poorly known. Many of the former Aboriginal tracks in the Lower Murray region are almost certainly preserved today as bitumen roads.

5.4 Aboriginal Place Names

The use of Aboriginal tracks meant that sites in the landscape frequented by Aboriginal people were more likely to be absorbed by colonising Europeans. Due to the manner in which Europeans gained knowledge about the landscape, through sealers and Aboriginal people, it is not surprising that Aboriginal place names were sometimes used. Inevitably, some of the focal points in the landscape for Aboriginal people became those of the colonising Europeans.[101] This provided the potential for conflict (Section 6.2.4). The records of the European colonists of 1836 contain many examples of such terms gained from the previous inhabitants. For example, John Morphett's account in 1836 of the Colony of South Australia uses names gained from sealers and Aboriginal people, such as 'Pat Bungar' for a small valley just north of Cape

Jervis, 'Yanky Lilly' (= Yankalilla) and 'Aldinghi Plains' (= Aldinga) (1836, pp.6-9). Here, the role of the sealers in naming parts of the landscape was acknowledged by Morphett. The sealers had gained these place names from their Aboriginal contacts.

The place names used by Sturt also appear to have been influenced by the sealers. In Sturt's map of the Fleurieu Peninsula and the Lower Murray, there are place names, some of them Aboriginal, for localities he did not visit. It has been suggested that some of these topographical features, such as Granite Island and Seal Rock, were given their names by sealers sometime before 1830 (Cameron, 1979, p.2). Some names were used for a relatively short period, such as Mootaparinga, used by colonists in the 1830s as the name for the mouth of Hindmarsh River at Encounter Bay.[102] Others, such as Yankalilla and Aldinga described above, and the names of Lower Murray towns, Meningie and Narrung, have lasted in a modified form until the present.[103] Nevertheless, as with most names derived from European and other sources, the etymological sense of the Aboriginal place names are generally not known by the broader public. Linguistic studies in many cases have established their original meanings.[104]

Contemporary place names in the Lower Murray region, such as Lake Alexandrina, Lake Albert, Point Sturt, and Point McLeay, were derived from members of the English monarchy and from official British explorers. Such names help create what Cosgrove and Daniels (1988) describe as a 'new iconography of landscape'. In the case of the place names of Kangaroo Island, today there are a number of names in official use that were named by the French explorer Baudin, such as D'Estrees Bay and Cape du Couedic, (Cockburn, 1908 [1984, pp.52,60). The present use is presumably the result of the publication of Baudin's expedition. The American whalers have also left their mark on Kangaroo Island, as the term Pelican Lagoon given by Flinders was replaced by the name of American River, because of Pendleton's activities there as described above.[105] There have been, and are presently, many examples of place names on the island put into use by the pre-1836 sealers, such as Hog Bay, Harvey's Return and Murrell's Landing. Interestingly, there are no Aboriginal place names on Kangaroo Island recorded from the early period of sealing and whaling, in spite of the Tasmanian and mainland populations of Aboriginal people living there.

5.5 European Use of Aboriginal Biotic Taxonomy

The majority of plants and animals that early European colonists encountered in Australia were totally unknown to science. In the first instance, the European colonists interpreted the new elements they encountered according to their own pre-1836 models of the world. However, since then Europeans have tended to keep their own taxonomies. This behaviour has been described as the 'law of inertia' (Turner, 1972, pp.51-52). Folk terms from the settler's country of origin were often imposed upon new plants and animals, to which they often bore only superficial resemblance. This fact is remarkable, considering the role of Aboriginal people as collectors of many of the plant and animal specimens during early exploration expeditions by Europeans, such as Sturt's 1839 trip from Adelaide to the North West Bend (Davies, 1881, p.145). In spite of the cultural diversity in the origins of the present day population of Australia, there is little incorporation from other linguistic groups into the English spoken here (Turner, 1972, p.12). The process of labelling the landscape with English derived names and terms, was the first stage in the formation of a Euro-centric cultural landscape in Australia.

Many of the indigenous Australian animals which were given names derived from analogous species in the northern hemisphere can be readily identified in the early literature due to the comparatively small number of taxa involved. Nevertheless, for plants the proliferation of European derived names makes the modern identification of many taxa difficult (Clarke, 1988). For example, the early ethnographics of southern South Australia contain descriptions of plants used by Aboriginal people. These are often given names such as 'native potato', 'native radish', 'onion-grass', 'native currant', and 'native truffle'. In many instances when colloquial names have been used without adequate description, it is impossible to identify accurately the actual plant species mentioned.

In Australia, some European folk terms for plants have been used independently in different accounts of taxonomically unrelated species. Certain names in the early ethnographics also appear to have had the status of commonly used names, whereas others have been used only once by a recorder attempting to describe a species with no known name. The European taxonomic system for plants was simply not able to cover adequately the large number of new taxa encountered in Australia. Nevertheless, very few Aboriginal

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language terms for plants were adopted by the early European colonists, and even fewer have survived for present day use.

In view of the large number of biota terms recorded for over three hundred distinct Aboriginal languages across Australia, it is surprising that relatively few indigenous words have entered, and stayed, in the Australian English vocabulary.[106] One of the comparatively rare instances of the adoption of Aboriginal words by Europeans is 'manterri', a term occurring in many southern South Australian Aboriginal languages for the fruit of Kunzea pomifera (Appendix 10.2). An Anglicised version of this word, 'muntries', is the commonly used name used by local non-Aboriginal people, such as southern South Australian farmers (Black, 1953, p.604; Jessop & Toelken, 1986, part 2, p.932). Another example is the commonly used fish name mulloway, from the Ngarrindjeri 'malawi' (Scott, Glover & Southcott, 1980, pp.213-214). Today, some of the older fishermen of the Lower Lakes and Coorong still know and use Aboriginal terms for the indigenous fish (Section 8.3 & Appendix 10.2). Nevertheless, there appears to have been a general reluctance among European colonists to adopt other Aboriginal biotic terms for general use. Such 'Aboriginal' terms, as 'koala', 'kangaroo' and 'woomera', have generally come from eastern Australia, their inclusion dating from a very early period of European colonial contact (Urry, 1985, p.63).

In the case of the Lower Murray, this bias in contemporary Australian English is remarkable in view of the coexistence in the region of a large Aboriginal vocabulary (Appendix 10.2) with Australian English for over a hundred and fifty years. Curr (1886, vol.1, p.26) remarks that Aboriginal people generally quickly acquired basic English upon European settlement. The rate of English acquisition by Aboriginal people impressed some early colonists (Thomas, 1925, pp.53,119). Aboriginal people were often already multi-lingual. This was in contrast to British people who rarely learnt the local Aboriginal languages in the land they settled. Formerly dispersed Aboriginal groups, who came into more frequent contact with each other after European colonisation (Section 2.4.1), adopted English as the lingua franca. The paucity of published linguistic and ethnographic work with Aboriginal inhabitants of Australia between the 1840s and 1870s also reflects the lack of European interest in Aboriginal culture (Section 2.2). The importance of Aboriginal people in the European settlement of South Australia is not reflected in present day Australian English.

5.6 Post 1836 European Use of Aboriginal Hunter and Gatherer Knowledge

In the colonial period, settlers were often forced to supplement their food supplies with naturally occurring resources. For instance, Taplin states that the Aboriginal people of the Lower Murray were often paid by settlers to collect large amounts of the edible bulrush root, 'moomoorooke' (Typha species) (Taplin Journals, 21 April 1862). He states that George Mason, Aboriginal Protector on the Lower Murray in the 1850s, lent a boat to some Aboriginal people from the Point McLeay Mission so that they could collect this root for a storekeeper at Wellington on the Murray. On at least one occasion, Taplin accompanied the Aboriginal women to collect bulrush roots in the Point McLeay Mission whale boat (Taplin Journals, 27 January 1860). Taplin possibly used the food himself, as he notes that he gave them a good price for the roots. There is another record of Europeans in the Lower Murray using this root: Mr G.W. Batty, a long time European resident of the Victor Harbor area, remembered the bulrush being eaten by local settlers up until the 1920s.[107] Aboriginal informants have said that in the Lower Murray they were also still using this food during the early part of this century.

Roots and tubers in particular appeared to be a category that Europeans were more willing to utilise, possibly due to their resemblance to cultivated food species. Some South Australian colonists ate the roots of the yam-daisy, Microseris lanceolata, following the Aboriginal practice.[108] The explorer Edward Eyre also relied heavily on indigenous food and water supplies from plant roots during his crossing of the continent from Adelaide to south western Australia (Eyre, 1845, vol.1, pp.370-371; vol.2, pp.56-57,62-64,72, 248-249). However, in spite of the fact that the Australian landscape in the pre-European period was rich in plant and animal foods (Chapter 4), very few food sources have entered and remained in the European dominated cuisine of the broader Australian culture. The exceptions are the small scale use of kangaroo meat and the marketing of quandong fruit and macadamia nuts.[109]

The acknowledgment and incorporation of Aboriginal uses of the environment by Europeans after the first stages of settlement has generally been very poor and limited. Finney states:

> While a formidable reservoir of knowledge about the plants and animals of the land existed in the minds and lore of the Aborigines, with the exception of a few individuals who sought to tap this knowledge, the development of Australian natural history for the Europeans and their descendants began anew (1984, p.1).

For example, early European scientists disbelieved Aboriginal claims that the platypus actually laid eggs, although this was eventually proven (Finney, 1984, p.173). In general, European Australians have not recognised Aboriginal perceptions of the landscape as existing beyond the realm of myth.

5.7 Conclusion

From the evidence put forth here, it is clear that both the early sealer/whalers and their Aboriginal contacts did have special roles in the initial formation of the Colony of South Australia. One of the main problems that official colonists faced upon their arrival in 1836 was essentially lack of geographical knowledge. Initially through the medium of the sealers, Aboriginal people helped the colonists in a variety of ways that drew upon their pre-European knowledge of the landscape. The historical reconstruction of the interaction between sealers, Aboriginal people and the official colonists, is therefore not simply of antiquarian interest, but provides deeper understanding of European and Aboriginal settlement patterns since 1800.

Published accounts of the formation of the Colony of South Australia have tended to focus on official events and people. The merchants and sealers operating in southern Australian waters during the early period are barely mentioned in most Australian history texts. The general histories of South Australia, such as that provided by Blacket (1911), Price (1924) and Dutton (1960), note the existence of the early sealers solely because they were the first Europeans there. British history has given prominence to explorers and founders of colonies, rather than to sealers and whalers who were not part of government-run expeditions. The treatment of the Aboriginal inhabitants has also largely been confined to contextual material, to reinforce the 'wilderness' and 'primitiveness' of the Australian landscape. The pre-1836 populations of both European and Aboriginal people have generally not been considered significant in the development of the Colony of South Australia.

During the exploration phase of Aboriginal and European relations in southern South Australia, there was an equal relationship between the colonists and the indigenous populations, albeit sometimes brutal. However, gradually their relations became more asymmetrical as the technology and culture gap between them grew. As land was developed for agriculture and the social structure of the official colony was established, the reliance by Europeans upon Aboriginal knowledge of the environment became less and

less. In contrast to the early sealers, the official settlers of South Australia quickly become independent of the Aboriginal source of landscape knowledge. This is not to say that Europeans did not use Aboriginal labour in agriculturally-based industries, simply that the hunter-gatherer knowledge described above was no longer being utilised (Section 6.2.2 & 6.2.3). Although Aboriginal geography influenced the pattern of settlement in South Australia, the degree to which other aspects of Aboriginal culture have been incorporated into the emerging South Australian culture has been slight. It is my argument that the absorption of Aboriginal cultural practices by the European invaders, was greater in what I define as the exploration phase of European contact with southern South Australian Aboriginal groups, than at any time since. We can not understand European colonisation of southern South Australia without fully considering the relationship of early Europeans and the Aboriginal inhabitants.

End Notes

1   See Finney (1984, p.58). Starbuck (1878 [1964]) provides tables showing returns of whaling vessels sailing from American ports. From this it is clear that in the 1790s, the Pacific Ocean emerged as a major whaling area.

2   The American merchant, Pendleton, was in southern Australian waters in 1803 seeking seal skins to sell in China (Cooper, 1952, p.173). Cumpston (1970, pp.3,29,104) has records of Australian seals being hunted for the Chinese market. See also Blainey (1977, p.99).

3   Blacket (1911, p.52) & Clarke (1990 MS). See Appendix 10.1.

4   Detailed accounts are provided by Finnis (nd), Nunn (1989), Plomley & Henley (1990). Cawthorne (1926) provides a fictional account of the whalers and sealers on Kangaroo Island. Cumpston (1970) has records for over 500 people who had visited Kangaroo Island before official settlement in 1836.

5   For accounts of the earliest European visitors to South Australia, see Flinders (cited in Gill, 1909, pp.110-112), Moore (1924, pp.83-87), Blacket (1911, pp.11-12) & Nunn (1989, p.11). R. Langdon (Advertiser, 29 December 1956), considered that American whalers may have been in South Australian waters in 1800. Flinders (cited in Cumpston, 1970, pp.6-14) thought the marks of a fire on Boston, Thistle and Kangaroo Islands may have been caused by an early visit by the French explorer La Perouse.

6   The pre-European occupation of Kangaroo Island is discussed by Tindale (1937b,c), Lampert (1979) & Draper (1988). The occupation of the islands in Bass Strait is discussed by Jones (1974). Also see Tindale (1974, Tribal Map). Refer to Section 2.1.1 & 3.3.2.

7   Lieutenant Sleeman on the 'Dart' met a party of sealers on Thistle Island on the 8 or 9 April 1830 (cited in Gill, 1906, p.52). See other reports by J. Hart (cited in Moore, 1924, p.107), Sutherland (cited in Moore, 1924, p.121) & Cumpston (1970, p.172). There was a whaling station still operating at Thistle Island in 1839 ('Report on Whaling in South Australia', Statistical Society of South Australia, 29 December 1841 [reprinted in the Proc. R. Geogr. Soc. Aust. S. Aust. Br., 1921, pp.25-26]).

8   The Australasian, 8 November 1902.

9   MacKenzie (1976), Blainey (1977, p.112), Barwick (1985, pp.189-190,207-208) & Plomley & Henley (1990, p.9).

10   The Observer (20 May 1899) discusses the reports of Flinders & Sutherland. Also included here are quotes from Sutherland in the pamphlet titled 'South Australia. Outline of the Plan of a Proposed Colony to be Founded on the South Coast of Australia, with an account of The Soil, Climate, Rivers, &c. With Maps, 1834.' See Bull (1884, p.3) & Cumpston (1970, pp.48-52,58) for accounts of Sutherland's visit to Kangaroo Island.

11   Sturt supported settlement in South Australia (Price, 1924, p.17). He (1833, vol.2, pp.245-246) obtained information from sealers about the infertility of Cape Jervis and the southern regions of Eyre and Yorke Peninsula. This information could have been relayed to Sturt through Barker's crew. Also, the crew of the 'Dart', the boat sent from Sydney to pick up Sturt if he had succeeded passing through the Murray Mouth, met with the Islander George Bates in Saint Vincent Gulf (Advertiser, 27 December 1886). Note that Bates erroneously refers to the 'Dart' as the 'Mary' (Cumpston, 1970, p.116). See also Gill (1906, pp.50-53).

12   Partly on the basis of information received from sealers, Sturt (1833, vol.2, p.172) stated that Encounter Bay was not safe to enter during the seasons when the prevailing winds were south westerly due to the resultant heavy swell. Sturt (1833, vol.2, pp.245,247) claimed that American River on Kangaroo Island was a safe harbour.

13   Sydney Gazette, 15 April 1817.

14   Accounts of Bates and Wallen (variously known as Walley, Waller, Warlans, Warland & Wharley) are given by Leigh (1839, pp.123-126), Bull (1884, p.5), Tolmer (1882, vol.1, p.318; vol.2, p.7), Finnis (nd) & Cumpston (1970). Bull's dates of arrival differ from other sources, suggesting that Bates came to Kangaroo Island much later than Wallen, in 1824 not 1819.

15   See an accounts of the climate of Kangaroo Island given by Burrows (1979). Cumpston (1970, pp.40,50,52,70,165-166) provides early accounts.

16   Advertiser, 27 December 1886.

17   Early resources of Kangaroo Island are discussed by E.L. Bates (cited in Kingscote Country Women's Association, nd, p.23) & Osterstock (1975, p.36).

18   G. Bates in Observer, 14 September 1895.

19 Observer, 15 January 1898 & 20 May 1899. This trade in salt was still going on in 1844 (Southern Australian, 24 September 1844).

20 Advertiser, 20 March 1880.

21 Advertiser, 27 December 1886.

22 Ibid.

23 Basedow (1914, p.161) has an account of another Cape Jervis expedition from Kangaroo Island to capture women which involves the 'runaway whalers', George Horman and Pirkey.

24 Tindale (1937b, p.32) suggests that long time island resident, Little Sal, was originally from the Port Lincoln area. Emma, the wife of John Anderson, was said to be from Port Lincoln (Plomley & Henley, 1990, pp.34,76-77). Also, Kal.loon.goo (Sarah, Charlotte) was reportedly from this location (Plomley & Henley, 1990, pp.43,77). The Perth Gazette (3 October 1835) has an account of Port Lincoln women being abducted by whalers. One report (Advertiser, 27 December 1886) mentions that Islanders regarded the Port Lincoln women they stole as 'having fiery and determined tempers.'

25 One report (Advertiser, 27 December 1886) states that most of the women on Kangaroo Island came from the Onkaparinga district. The Islander Nat Thomas had a wife from the Onkaparinga district (Bull, 1884, pp.32-36). Kartinyeri (1990, pp.13-14) provides an outline of the family of a Kangaroo Island sealer named Wilkins and his Aboriginal wife who was reputed to have originally been from the Adelaide area.

26 Kuhn & Fowler (1886, p.143) claim that 'the Blacks relate that it [Yorke Peninsula] had occasionally been visited by sealers' prior to the first settlement there in 1847.

27 Australian (9 March 1826).

28 Hobart Town Gazette, 12 June 1826. This description compares well with a Yorke Peninsula wallaby skin cloak (A6409) in the South Australian Museum.

29 Advertiser, 27 December 1886. The Hobart Town Gazette, 12 June 1826, has another account of 'savages' on Kangaroo Island.

30 Advertiser, 27 December 1886.

31 Plomley & Henley (1990, p.19) provide an account of the seal hunting techniques used by Tasmanian Aboriginal women along the eastern coast of Tasmania.

32 Griffiths (cited in Cumpston, 1970, p.104).

33 A. Tolmer in the Southern Australian, 24 September 1844 (reprinted Observer, 28 September 1844).

34 Compare Tyler et al (1979) for Kangaroo Island with Hiatt (1967-68), Jones (1974, pp.319-354) & Ryan (1981) for Tasmania.

35 The 'mutton bird' referred to here is probably the short-tailed shearwater (Puffinus tenuirostris) or a related species.

36 Bull (1884, p.10) records that the pigs found by sealers at Hog Bay had been left by the French. Cooper (1954) put forth the theory that Kangaroo Island pigs were introduced by Baudin. Nevertheless, Bates (cited Observer, 14 September 1895) claimed that the first pig was put on the island in 1832.

37 Observer, 28 September 1844.

38 Observer, 28 September 1844.

39 Register, 6 April 1896.

40 Tindale (1937b, pp.32-36, plate 3). Some of these artefacts are housed in the Archaeology Collection of the South Australian Museum. Harvey (1941, p.367) refers to the implements made by the Tasmanian women brought to Kangaroo Island by sealers as part of the 'Newer Tasmanian Industries', with strong similarities to relatively recent material from north western Tasmania.

41 Hobart Town Gazette (cited in Finnis, nd).

42 Plomley & Henley (1990) discuss the seasonal aspects of sealing. Ryan (1981, p.70) says that mutton bird egging was a late summer activity in the Bass Straits.

43 Clarke (1991a) & Ellis (1976) provide accounts of Aboriginal movements in the Adelaide area; Foster (1983) for the Lower South East; and Hiatt (1967-68) for Tasmania. See Section 4.3.5.

44 R. Mongomery Martin (cited in Moore, 1924, p.114). Blakers et al (1984, p.2) provides a historical account of the emu. The South Australian Museum has on display a reconstruction of what the Kangaroo Island emu looked like. Slater (1978, p.14) claims that the last Kangaroo Island emu probably died in the possession of Empress Josephine of France in 1822, having being given two of the three live emus that were brought back by Peron. However, the record of R. Mongomery Martin would put the extinction of this species closer to the early 1830s.

45 G. Bates (cited Observer, 14 September 1895) blames bushfires and hunting for the depletion of marsupial numbers. Wood Jones (1923-1925, pp.257-261) reports on the 'extinct' status of the

Kangaroo Island kangaroo. However, this species survived and is once again common (Strahan, 1983, pp.248-249).

46 One report (Advertiser, 27 December 1886) claims that Aboriginal women did much of the manual work on Kangaroo Island.

47 Observer, 13 April 1870.

48 Meredith was based at Western River on Kangaroo Island (Cumpston, 1970, p.119). An account of Meredith and Big Sal is given by Leigh (1839, pp.155-157) & Thomas Willson (Observer, 7 October 1871). Barwick (1985, p.231) incorrectly assumes that Meredith was murdered near Port Lincoln. See also Bull (1884, p.6), Tolmer (1882, vol.2, pp.6-8) & Plomley & Henley (1990, p.54).

49 Advertiser, 27 December 1886.

50 Advertiser, 27 December 1886.

51 See end note 89.

52 Report by Dr Davis to the Colonial Secretary, 19th May 1831 [published 1921 in Proc. Roy. Geogr. Soc. Aust. S. Aust. Br., vol.22, pp.19-29]. Report cited by Moore (1924, pp.100-101).

53 Report by Dr Davis (1831 [1921, p.24]).

54 Gill (1906) claims that the sealer Bates had discovered Lake Alexandrina before Sturt. See Mayo (1937, p.76).

55 Advertiser, 27 December 1886.

56 There was clearly tension between the Islanders and particular Aboriginal groups due to wife stealing. For instance, the Kangaroo Island sealer, Nat Thomas, had expressed fear in meeting the mainland relatives of one of his wives (Bull, 1884, p.32).

57 Hahn (1838-1839 [1964, p.132]) provides a different account, claiming that Aboriginal people killed Barker for the shining compass which he had tied to his head. He states that had Barker given the Aboriginal people the compass, he would not have been killed.

58 Advertiser, 27 December 1886.

59 Ibid.

60 J. Jones (1835 [1921, p.75]). The names of the white men he listed were Walley [= Wallen], Nathanial Thomas, James Allen, William Day & William Walker. There were two men he did not name.

61 Hart (cited in Cumpston, 1970, p.127). Hart lists the Europeans as Nathanial Thomas & George Bates living at Antechamber Bay; William Day, James, Henry Walley (Wallen) and a young Englishman at Pelican Lagoon; and William Cooper and Peter Johnson at Nepean Bay.

62 Observer, 15 January 1898.

63 Advertiser, 27 December 1886. Morphett (1836, p.7) states that the sealers and some Aboriginal people had shown the colonists of 1836 a reliable supply of drinking water at Pat Bungar, a small valley a few kilometres north of Cape Jervis.

64 Southern Australian, 27 September 1844. Also see Nunn (1989, p.58).

65 Advertiser, 27 December 1886.

66. Observer, 15 January 1898.

67 Dutton (1960, p.172). The identity of his two wives at this time is given elsewhere (Advertiser, 27 December 1886).

68 Light (1839, p.5). See other accounts by Dutton (1960, p.174) & Cumpston (1970, p.146). On the point of the identity of the sealer actually employed by Light, Cumpston has confused George Bates for William Cooper.

69 The Aboriginal wives of the Islanders were probably some of several Tasmanian people reported to be living among settlers at Encounter Bay by the early 1840s (Penney [as 'Cuique'] in S. Aust. Mag., September 1842, vol.2, pp.18-23).

70 Advertiser, 27 December 1886. Cooper's wife, Sall, is known to have been Tasmanian.

71 Penney in Register, 21 November 1840.

72 Light (1839, p.21) stated that the Adelaide Plains site was good for settlement as the 'natives more friendly than at Port Lincoln and Yorke Peninsula'. This was also supported by the views of the Islanders (see end note 30).

73 Advertiser, 27 December 1886.

74 Observer, 20 May 1899. See also Thomas (1925, pp.43-46).

75 There were three expeditions with which these three Aboriginal men, trained in whaling and sealing, were a part. For an account of Pullen's expedition, see Register, 15 August 1840. For Penney's expedition, see Register, 24 April 1841. Also see Lendon (1930, p.23). Bull (1884, pp.116-129) gives an account of O'Halloran's expedition.

76 In the case of Encounter Bay Bob, see Section 5.1.4. He had also served as a guide and tracker on Sturt's expedition from Adelaide to the North West Bend of the Murray River in 1839 (Davies, 1881, pp.121-168).

77 Tolmer (1882, vol.1, pp.306-323; vol.2, pp.1-11). Bet and Wauber (= Old Waub) were Tasmanian (Clarke, 1990 MS).

78 Register, 13 September 1856 (reprinted Observer, Supplement, 13 October 1906).

79 Register, 15 September 1856 (reprinted Observer, 20 October 1906). W.A. Cawthorne was an early Adelaide painter and ethnographer (Section 2.2.1)

80 Thomas Willson, Observer, 7 October 1871.

81 Wood Jones (1934) suggests that some Tasmanians may have drifted into mainland populations after European colonisation. Mollison (1976, Appendix) suggests that at least one present day Aboriginal family in the Lower Murray has Tasmanian descent. My fieldwork has shown that for the family mentioned by Mollison, this is very likely. Furthermore, among contemporary Aboriginal people, there is knowledge of additional genealogical links between Ngarrindjeri and Tasmanian groups.

82 Tolmer in the Observer, 28 September 1844.

83 In 1860, Taplin records that an Aboriginal woman and her children were sent by the Government from Kangaroo Island to the Point McLeay Mission (Journals, 22 December 1860). The woman's name was Nellie Raminyemmermin, the widow of John Wilkins, who was a Russian Finnish whaler living on Kangaroo Island (Kartinyeri, 1990, vol.1, p.13).

84 Kangaroo Island resident, Thomas Willson, claimed in 1871 that there were three Tasmanian women left there, the rest having been taken back to Tasmania many years earlier by Captain Duff and others (Observer, 7 October 1871). Duff was captain of the Africaine in 1836-1837 (Dutton, 1960, pp.183,186-187,211). Note that Truganina (= Trugananna, Truganini) was also known as Lalla Roohk.

85 Tindale (1937b, p.32), Mollison (1976, Appendix) & Clarke (1990 MS) provide genealogical data of families with Tasmanian descent living on Kangaroo Island.

86 Captain Hart became a successful merchant and politician in South Australia. He was premier of the colony on three occasions (Blacket, 1911, pp.431-432).

87 'Report on Whaling in South Australia' (1841 [reprinted in Proc. Roy. Geogr. Soc. Aust. S. Aust. Br., 1921, pp.15-20]) & Cameron (1979, p.23). Newland (1936) gives a fictional account of whaling in the region in 'Paving the Way.'

88 'Report on Whaling in South Australia' (1841 [1921]), Glover & Ling (1976), & Judd et al (1992, pp.13-14).

89 'Report on Whaling in South Australia' (1841 [1921, pp.21,32]). The 'in-shore' activities were also referred to as 'bay whaling' (Hosking, 1973, explanatory note, p.1; Whitelock, 1985, pp.61,64).

90 Penney, Register, 21 November 1840.

91 Penney mentions a 'Rev. Mr Myers of Encounter Bay' [= Meyer] who was 'improving the natives' and studying their language (Register, 26 June 1841). See also Section 2.2.1 & 5.2; end notes 89 in Chapter 5 & 6 in Chapter 6.

92 Register, 21 November 1840.

93 Register, 11 November 1837.

94 Letter cited Mayo (1937, pp.220-221). See Light (1839, pp.36-37) for his views on the dangerous coastline of Encounter Bay.

95 Register, 20 January 1838. See also Gouger (1838, pp.42-45), Hosking (1973, chap.1, pp.21-22), & Fell (cited in Cameron, 1979, pp.4,28). Blenkinsopp's sextant was washed ashore after his boat capsized at the Murray Mouth (Hahn, 1838-1839 [1964, p.130]). It was picked up by Aboriginal people who smashed it into small pieces which were worn as ornaments.

96 Register, 25 August & 8 September 1838.

97 Register, 29 September 1838.

98 Register, 1 September 1838.

99 Public Service Review, S. Aust., May 1929.

100 Some modern roads in Tasmania are based on pre-European tracks (Jones, 1974, p.321). Baker (1989, pp.268-323,401-402) has demonstrate the European absorption of Aboriginal sites and tracks in the Borroloola area of northern Queensland. Similarly, in America, European explorers were taken over Indian roads that eventually became incorporated into the modern transport system (Sauer, 1932 [1963]).

101 Ironically, Aboriginal place names for parts of the landscape that were not greatly used by European colonists have generally not been retained by the Aboriginal inhabitants (Section 6.3.7).

102 Wade cited Gouger (1838, p.25) & Mann cited Gouger (1838, pp.39,42). Mootaparinga reportedly means 'brackish water' (Robinson, 1975, p.44). If so, then it appears to be a term from a northern language. Adelaide terms, such as 'murta' ['excrements of animals'], 'parri' ['river'] & '-ngga' [grammatical 'in'] (Teichelmann & Schurmann, 1840, pt 1, p.22; pt 2, pp.25,38,76) appear relevant, possibly forming to 'animal manure water'.

103 Meningie is recorded to mean 'mud' (Taplin, 1874 [1879, p.130]). Narrung is derived from the Aboriginal place name, Ngarrarrar. This is reported to mean 'place of large sheoaks' (Taplin, 1874 [1879, p.130]).

104 A linguistic study is the 'Aboriginal Place Name Index' complied by N.B. Tindale, Anthropology Archives, S.A. Museum.

105 The American style spelling of Victor Harbor is possibly another early American influence (Sutton, 1989).

106 This is evident in studies of Australian English by Ramson (1988) & Dixon (1992).

107 Taped interview by S.J. Hemming & P.A. Clarke (6/11/1986). Copy lodged in the Anthropology Archives, S.A. Museum. See Clarke (1988, p.70).

108 Gott (1983, p.8) quoting a note by Bailey on a South Australian plant specimen in the Queensland Herbarium.

109 Kangaroo meat is now available in some Adelaide butcher shops and restaurants. Quandongs are being sold as novelty items at venues such as the Tandanya Aboriginal Cultural Institute. They are being extensively grown in semi-arid environments. However, the macadamia nut is the only other endemic Australian plant food presently being grown on a commercial scale. Even here, the majority of nuts are produced by plantations in Hawaii (Cribb & Cribb, 1982, pp.87-89).

6 The Alienation of Aboriginal People from the Lower Murray Landscape

In the previous chapter, Aboriginal knowledge and use of the landscape was shown to have influenced the pattern of European settlement. During the era of whaler and sealer expansion into the southern South Australian region, Europeans chiefly occupied what were previously uninhabited parts of the landscape. The process of dispossessing Aboriginal people of their landscape commenced when the official colonists arrived in 1836, during what I have termed the colonial incorporation phase (Timeline, Appendix 10.1). Agricultural activities transformed the pre-European landscape in such a way that the Aboriginal inhabitants quickly became destitute in their own lands. European-enforced movements of Aboriginal people into previously foreign or marginal regions created a new Aboriginal relationship to the land. After European colonisation in 1836, Aboriginal people in southern South Australia began to experience the landscape in a vastly different manner. I now provide the historical framework for discussing these changes in the Lower Murray region. The impact of European developments upon the Aboriginal population is summarised in a time line (Appendix 10.1).

6.1 The European Vision of South Australia

In terms of social upheaval, the early 19th century was a turbulent era for Great Britain. Not only was it in the grip of the Industrial Revolution and the social and economic discontent associated with it, but it had lost a large proportion of its American territory. Australia was settled when urbanisation in Europe was well advanced. Although the British Empire needed to find new colonies, the indifferent success of settlements in the Cape Colony, New South Wales, Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) and Western Australia caused the colonising power to rethink its previous policies. This was also a period in which slavery had been abolished (Hassell, 1966, pp.1-2). The act which abolished the British slave trade in Africa received royal assent in 1807 (Shyllon, 1977, pp.55,160). Slave Emancipation occurred in 1834. In Britain, humanitarian movements were growing in strength.

From the outset, the establishment of the Colony of South Australia was intended to be different in major ways. It was to be peopled by free workers, not convicts. South Australia was to be an experiment in the formation of a sober and industrious middle class society of agriculturalists (South Australian Association,

1834, pp.3-5). The sale of land for farming was to generate money needed to bring out labourers. This was distinct from the previous establishment of other Australian colonies that had allowed initially free use of the land by squatters and pastoralists. Colonisation in South Australia was late by British standards. The official South Australian colonists arrived here during the beginning of the modern industrialised era. They came from a Europe caught in the flow of the industrial revolution, with what were then new ideas and technologies.

In South Australia, a utopian settlement was planned, where the treatment of the indigenous inhabitants was to be a major difference from the establishment of many other European colonies (Hutchings & Bunker, 1986). The authorities were drawing from experiences in colonies elsewhere in Australia and other parts of the world. When South Australia was settled in 1836, there were approximately 77,000 European colonists in New South Wales, 38,000 in Van Diemen's Land, and 2,000 in Western Australia (Griffin & McCaskill, 1986, p.5). At that stage, the effect of British colonisation on some indigenous populations was already known to have been catastrophic. The Aboriginal people of Van Diemen's Land were then considered to be virtually extinct (Jones, R., 1974, p.319). As a result, there was a humanitarian movement in England lobbying for the welfare of the indigenous inhabitants to be made a consideration in all future colonisation attempts. With these aims in mind, the Aborigines Protection Society was formed in London in 1836 (Griffin & McCaskill, 1986, p.1). Included in its membership were many members of the British Parliament. Acting as the conscience of the home government, it served as an encouragement for the colonial officials to provide for the physical and spiritual welfare of the Aboriginal people. In theory then, South Australia was to have a greater regard for the indigenous inhabitants than had been the case in New South Wales and Tasmania.

The passing of the Foundation Act of 1834 in the British House of Commons and House of Lords declared the lands of South Australia to be 'waste and unoccupied'. Once colonisation of South Australia had been approved by the government, three organisations were set up to form the colony. These were the Colonial Office, the Board of Commissioners, and the South Australia Company (Blacket, 1911, pp.27-40; Pike, 1967, pp.52-73; Bunker, 1986a, pp.8-9). The Colonial Office was controlled by the Governor of South Australia, who administered the official functions of the colony, although notably not emigration or land allocation. The Board of Commissioners, based in London, controlled emigration and land sales which

financed the colony. The third organisation, the South Australia Company, was a commercial venture. This company included wealthy Londoners such as George Fife Angas, whose son George French Angas became one of the colony's earliest ethnographers and artists (Section 2.2.1). With the authority over the Colony of South Australia divided in this way, it was inevitable that the operations of these three groups would sometimes clash.

From the beginning of colonisation, it was intended that the Aboriginal inhabitants were to be invested with the rights of British subjects. The Colonisation Commissioners proposed that one fifth of every eighty acre section of land ceded should be resumed as a resource for the use of the Aboriginal inhabitants (Griffin & McCaskill, 1986, p.30). This was intended to provide Aboriginal people a refuge (Section 2.1.2 & 8.6.2). The remaining four fifths were to be the freehold property of the owner. By 1860, over forty reserves had been declared (Gale, 1972, pp.42-43; Jenkin, 1979, p.40). Of the three thousand, nine hundred and twenty two hectares put aside for Aboriginal reserves, over half was at Poonindie near Port Lincoln, and the rest of it on small blocks on short term lease to Europeans.[1] The reserves were generally small and inappropriate for hunting and gathering. Much of this reserve land in the Lower Murray was sold in the mid-1860s due to lack of use by Aboriginal people, and the pressure from local European landowners.[2] The establishment of Aboriginal reserves was found to be inconsistent with the Colonisation Act of 1834 which regulated the sale of land in the new colony. Although the original plan was to leave parts of the landscape open to use by the Aboriginal inhabitants, this was not upheld.

6.1.1 The Pattern of European Expansion

The process of settlement in South Australia entailed the creation of what Michael Williams (1974) referred to as a 'neo-European world'. This was achieved through the clearing of the indigenous vegetation, the introduction of plant and animal species from Europe, and the subsequent ordering of the land into agricultural areas subdivided into fields by fences and roads. The process of transforming the landscape occurred at a rate dependent upon the technological developments of the European colonists. Settlement was comparatively slow in Australia due to the distance from the parent populations in Europe (Woolmington, 1972, p.26). At this stage, Aboriginal welfare was given little consideration in the settlement process, beyond the distribution of rations.

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European agricultural expansion did not occur evenly across South Australia. Some parts of the landscape were more quickly transformed than others. This was not only due to political determinants, but according to characteristics of the topography, indigenous vegetation, soil and water. For instance, the gently rolling plains of savannah woodland found immediately south of Adelaide with its herbaceous and grassy ground cover, provided excellent grazing for sheep (Williams, 1974, p.10). It had the recognised advantage of being relatively easy to clear when cultivation was attempted. These open forests were the focus of some of the earliest efforts by colonists. British colonial attempts to farm wheat and graze sheep in Australia were cultural and economic responses to the physical environment. Nevertheless, it was the British perception that this type of agricultural activity would be well suited to South Australia. James (cited in Scott, 1839, p.16) suggested that, like in New South Wales, sheep should be favoured over all other rural industries due to the dry climate in South Australia.

In the early 1840s, European farmers in Adelaide thrust southwards to Noarlunga and Willunga, and eastwards over the Mount Lofty Ranges and south again towards the Murray Mouth (Fig.6.1). The colonists found the fertile plains of the Bremer and Angas Rivers a stark contrast to the surrounding scrub lands (Faull, 1981, p.2). The dense stringybark forests of the central part of the Mount Lofty Ranges and the mallee to the east were avoided (Fenner, 1931, pp.184-185; Williams, 1974, pp.25-26). The north was considered too dry for farming at this early stage. The lure of river trade also drove settlement south. Due to the focus for settlement on the southern regions near Adelaide and, to a lesser extent, Encounter Bay, European expansion into the Lower Murray was from the north west.

To the Europeans, rural areas were not simply important as a source of food and materials, but were where a substantial proportion of the population dwelt. The first official census in South Australia in 1840 recorded 14,160 Europeans (Griffin & McCaskill, 1986, p.11). Of these, 6,557 lived in the City of Adelaide, 1,600 at the Port and villages elsewhere on the Adelaide Plains, and 5,414 lived in rural areas including Port Lincoln. The early goal of many of the colonists was to attain land allotments for farming. As a result, the local Aboriginal population in the newly created 'rural areas' about Adelaide were quickly swamped by development. After the initial expansion of Europeans into the land around Adelaide, northern parts of the Lower Murray were absorbed by the advance of the agricultural frontier.
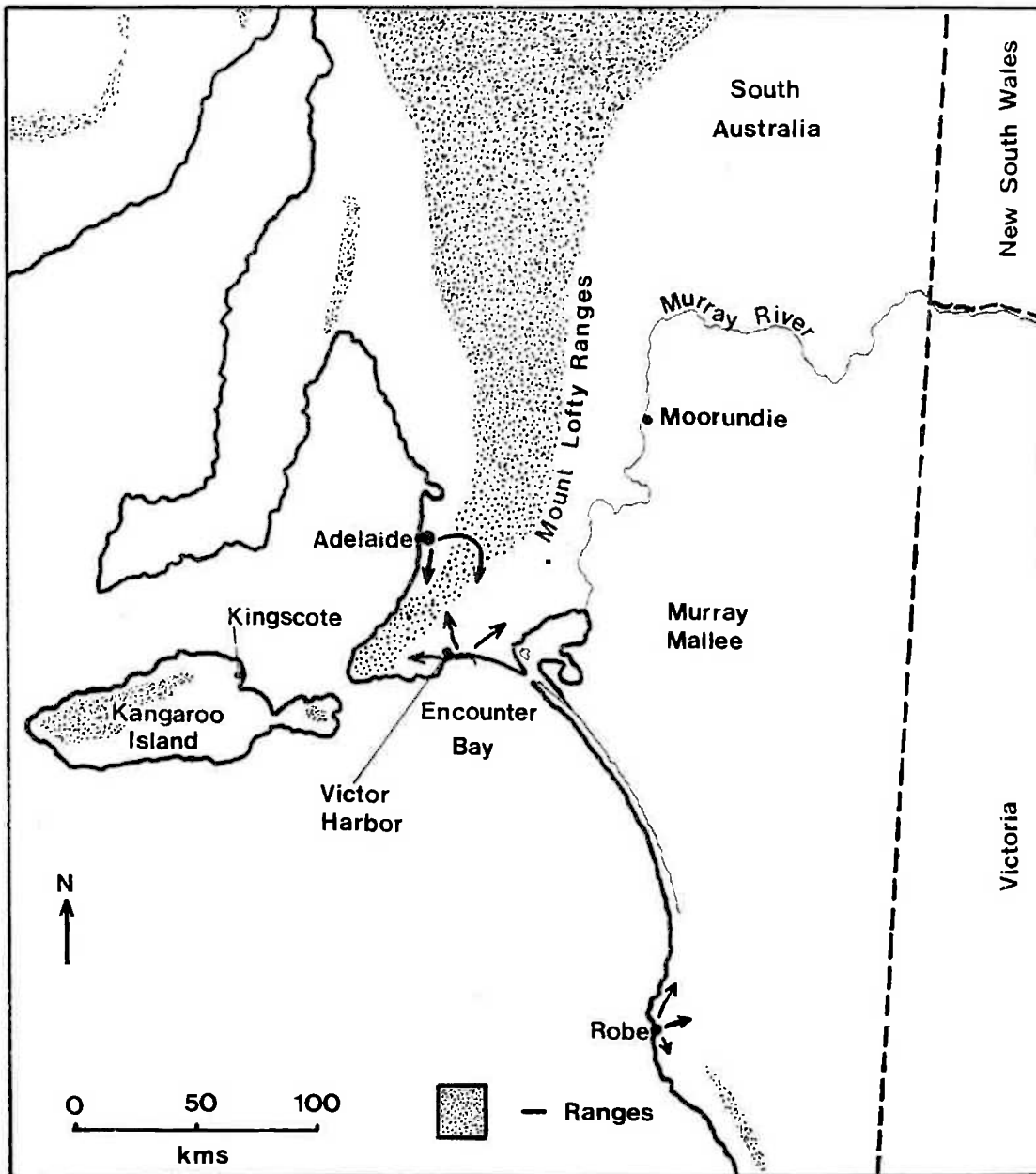
Fig.6.1 European expansion in the 1840s (after Williams, 1974)

As in many other regions of Australia, grazing preceded farming during European expansion into the

outlying regions of much of South Australia. The pastoralists had an important role in the settlement of the

rural areas. Williams (1974, p.23) termed them the 'empirical tester of the environment'. They were people

who found the outer climatically defined limits of settlement and the inner variations of vegetation, soil and

water resources. Pastoral activity often began with the moving of cattle through little known areas. By

1838, droves of cattle and sheep from New South Wales along the Murray River had been run by Joseph

Hawdon, Charles Bonney, Edward Eyre and Charles Sturt (Griffin & McCaskill, 1986, p.8; McCourt &

Mincham, 1987, p.3; Section 5.2). In 1839, Charles Bonney led a team of ten drovers and three hundred

cattle overland from the Port Phillip district in Victoria by way of Mount Gambier, the Coorong, Lake

Albert and Lake Alexandrina (Griffin & McCaskill, 1986, p.8; McCourt & Mincham, 1987, p.4). This

created a faster and safer stock route than along the upper reaches of the Murray River. It also opened up

the South East region of South Australia for grazing.

Surveying was a crucial step that enabled development, due to the importance of land in the raising of

revenue for the colony. This task was performed by the Surveyor General, who in the first instance was

Colonel Light (Blacket, 1911, p.64). In some regions, settlement followed soon after the initial land survey.

For instance, much of the Lower Lakes and the Coorong as far as Salt Creek were surveyed as early as

1840 (McCourt & Mincham, 1987, pp.4-5). In the following year, Wellington was established to provide a

ferry service for cattle at the entrance of the river into Lake Alexandrina (McCourt & Mincham, 1987,

p.5). A police force, under George Mason, was placed there (Linn, 1988, p.44). The impetus for

agricultural development in the Lower Murray and South East regions was reinforced by the trips of

Governor Grey; in 1842 with Deputy Surveyor Thomas Burr, and in 1844 with the ethnographer George

French Angas (Angas, 1844, 1847a, 1847b; McCourt & Mincham, 1987, pp.5,23-41; Linn, 1988, p.38).

The cooler and higher rainfall areas were attractive for settlement, as they have a climate more like that of

Britain.

In 1843, two large pastoral stations were established on the southern shores of Lake Alexandrina and

around Lake Albert (Fig. 6.2). One was controlled by the South Australia Company, and the other by a

Scotsman, Duncan McFarlane (McCourt & Mincham, 1987, pp.5-7). The South Australia Company had its

headquarters at Bonney Wells just north of Waltawa Swamp, with outstations for shepherds and sheep at

Fig. 6.2 Major pastoral stations of the 1850s in the Lower Murray

LAKE ALEXANDRINA

Wellington

← CROSSING PLACE

MASON'S STATION

JOHNSON'S SHEEP STATION

WELLINGTON LODGE
(A. MCFARLANE)

STIRLING'S
STATION

Hindmarsh
Island
(DR RANKINE)

Point Sturt

Mundoo
Island

Point McLeay

POLTALOCH
(MALCOLM'S STATION)

WILSON'S SHEEP STATION

NARRUNG STATION

CAMPBELL HOUSE
(D. MCFARLANE)

LAKE ALBERT STATION
(SOUTH AUSTRALIA COMPANY)

NARRUNG
PENINSULA

Bonney's Wells

LAKE ALBERT

N

YOUNGHUSBAND PENINSULA

COORONG

SOUTHERN
OCEAN

Warrengie
Point

Meningie

0   5   10
kms

the site of Meningie and at Warrengie Point. The Company also leased Narrung Station. The competitive

McFarlane set up Campbell House Station on the western shore of Lake Albert. The establishment of other

pastoral properties followed. By 1853, Dr John Rankine was running cattle on Hindmarsh Island (McCourt

& Mincham, 1987, pp.51-52). Farming along the Younghusband Peninsula was attempted at various times,

but failed largely due to 'coast' disease in stock and much later from rabbit plagues (McCourt & Mincham,

1987, pp.20-21). A thin veneer of pastoral settlement was present over much of the landscape before the

official proclamation of the hundreds and the subsequent land alienation had occurred (Williams, 1974,

p.23).

The advance of settlement followed closely behind the pastoralists. To the south of the Coorong, Robe was

established in 1846 to meet the needs of settlers opening runs in the South East (McCourt & Mincham,

1987, p.7). In 1846, copper mining at Kanmantoo commenced (Williams, 1974, p.27). In 1847, Alexander

Tolmer established a Coorong route for the mail, and a store and hotel, 'The Overlander', opened up at

Salt Creek (Tolmer, 1882, vol.2, pp.60-64; Hastings, 1944 [1987, p.98]; McCourt & Mincham, 1987, p.7).

In 1851, traffic along the Coorong increased with the advent of the Victorian Gold Rush (McCourt &

Mincham, 1987, p.7). In 1856, a large number of Chinese were landed at Port Adelaide, making their way

to Victorian gold fields on foot along a path through the Adelaide Hills, Wellington and down the

Coorong. However, from 1857 they were landed at Robe, thereby bypassing the Adelaide and Lower

Murray districts (Rendell, 1953; McCourt & Mincham, 1987, p.7). A large number of non-Aboriginal

people had already passed through the Lower Murray region by 1859 when the Aboriginal mission at Point

McLeay was founded.

In the Lower Murray, more intensive forms of agriculture gradually replaced pastoral operations. The

stations, outstations, tracks and wells laid down by pastoral activity were generally quickly incorporated

into the newly surveyed landscape or replaced by the new wave of agriculturalists. European miners

returning between 1853 and 1854 from the gold fields bought up land for farming (Griffin & McCaskill,

1986, p.12). In 1858, the construction of a telegraph line between Adelaide and Melbourne was completed.

It went from Adelaide to Willunga, Port Elliot, Goolwa, crossing to Hindmarsh, Mundoo, Ewe and

Tauwichere Islands, and then underwater to Pelican Point (McCourt & Mincham, 1987, p.106). From here

it continued along the edge of the Coorong through Magrath Flat to Robe, Mount Gambier and on to the

Victorian border. In 1858, the township of Kingston was established along the Coorong section of the coast road (McCourt & Mincham, 1987, p.8). A hotel at Magrath Flat, the Tam O'Shanter, was also opened along this route in the same year. The Coorong Hotel followed in 1861 at Woods Well. The surveying of the Narrung Peninsula, where the Point McLeay Mission was situated, commenced in 1864 (Taplin Journals, 17 November 1864).

In the 1890s, the expansion of European settlement in South Australia was stalled by the uncertain rainfall in the north, seasonal flooding in the South East, and by mallee vegetation on Eyre Peninsula and to the east of the Murray River (Griffin & McCaskill, 1986, p.22). Mallee is not only a growth characteristic of poor soils, but is also difficult to clear (Fenner, 1931, p.153; Williams, 1974, pp.11-12). The dislike of mallee and mallee-heath areas led to the naming of part of the South East as the Ninety Mile Desert, in spite of its relatively high rainfall. However, from 1890 to 1920, dry cropping techniques made these formerly marginal areas more useable.[3] South Australian farmers had adapted their farming methods to the Australian landscape. They had displayed innovation by producing new strains of wheat that were resistant to drought and disease. Farmers developed methods and machinery for scrub clearing, and improved yields through the use of superphosphate and fallowing techniques. This enabled farming in areas formerly considered marginal - though temporarily, for damage caused to the environment by the raising the saline ground water level did not appear for some decades after the clearing of natural vegetation began.

6.1.2 Murray River Traffic

The potential of the Murray River for trade from the eastern colonies was recognised well before the official settlement of South Australia (Section 5.2). In 1853, Captain William Randell put the first steamer on the River Murray, for trade from Goolwa (Howchin, 1909, p.240). He was shortly followed by Captain Francis Cadell. In 1854, another town on Lake Alexandrina, Milang, was established for the river traffic (Faull, 1981, p.44; McCourt & Mincham, 1987, p.8). Milang was required to service pastoral stations, such as Poltaloch, on the other side of Lake Alexandrina. In 1854, a railway line for horse drawn trucks was built to facilitate commerce between the river port of Goolwa and the ocean port of Port Elliot (Griffin & McCaskill, 1986, p.16). This linked the trade from the Murray River to Adelaide. The poor water volume

and constantly moving nature of the Murray Mouth made it a serious problem for navigation (Linn, 1988, p.78; Section 5.2).

In 1866, the township of Meningie was set up on the south eastern shore of Lake Albert to improve the overland passenger and mail service between Adelaide and Victoria, which was via the South East (McCourt & Mincham, 1987, p.8; Linn, 1988, pp.91-93). By January 1867 there was a steamer service that travelled three times a week between Milang and Meningie. The river trade grew. In the 1860s, large boats sailed back and forth between Goolwa and Salt Creek along the Coorong with supplies for the settlers in the South East (Hastings, 1944 [1987, p.98]). In 1883, ninety two steamers were recorded as trading on the Murray River (Scott, 1888, p.72). The impact of these upon local wood supplies along the river was immense. Forty four of these steamers were registered in South Australia, the rest in Melbourne and Sydney.

6.1.3 Railway Expansion in Southern South Australia

In 1878, river trade at the Goolwa end of the Murray suffered a set back when the Adelaide to Morgan railway line was opened, paralysing most traffic below it (William, 1974, p.51). The establishment by the South Australian Government of the railway network had a large impact on settlement patterns. The rail transport system not only helped existing industries, but made possible the opening up of new areas to be cleared for farming. The railway line was extended to Milang in 1883 to help transport the fish and fowls from the Lower Lakes to the Adelaide markets (McCourt & Mincham, 1987, p.11). In 1887, the railway system brought an end to the coach services down the Coorong (McCourt & Mincham, 1987, p.9). The railways also cut off traffic through Wellington, due to the river crossing being situated at Murray Bridge (Williams, 1969, p.60; Linn, 1988, pp.83-84). Murray Bridge was favoured as the point at which the railway line crossed the river, due to the better grazing lands available along the route from there to Adelaide. In 1906, the Tailem Bend to Pinnaroo railway line opened, spurring on the inland settlement of wheat farmers (Williams, 1974, p.51; Bunker, 1986b, pp.32-33). Forest and scrub clearing followed. In 1913, a similar effect resulted from the opening of the Tailem Bend to Renmark railway line (Williams, 1974, p.54). The railway network brought farmers into closer contact with their markets, not just for grown produce but for mallee roots as firewood in Adelaide. During the last forty five years, as road transport

improved, the national railway system has progressively been scaled down (Williams, 1974, p.53). Nonetheless, the railway system had an important role in European development of the Lower Murray.

6.1.4 Management of Water Resources in the Murray Basin

In the discussion of the hunting and gathering practices of the Aboriginal people, it was demonstrated that the Murray River was a focus in the landscape (Chapter 4). Around the world, Europeans have over exploited the resources of rivers and associated wetlands (Williams, 1991). This has been chiefly by reducing output of rivers into the sea through irrigation schemes, and by draining and filling swamps to create pasture. South Australia is such a dry state that today 90% of its water supply is piped from the Murray River (Davis & Moore, 1985, pp.1-2). In terms of the River's significance as a resource, the withdrawal of water has now come to dominate over the use of the river for transport. To maximise its reservoir qualities, the Lower Murray system has had its normal flow conditions significantly altered since last century. The water exiting from the Murray Mouth has significantly decreased due to irrigation and lock schemes along its length, and because of the building of the barrages. The drainage of the South East Basin, previously feeding into the southern end of the Coorong, has also decreased water flow through the Murray Mouth. In this altered regime, the exit of the river into the sea has on occasion completely silted up (Williams, 1969, p.30; McCourt & Mincham, 1987, pp.11,156). The mighty Murray, created in Aboriginal myth by a great ancestral spirit being (Section 3.2.1), has become a series of ponds and dams in the post-European period.

6.1.4.1 Murray River Irrigation and Lock Schemes

Irrigation systems along the Murray River in South Australia commenced in 1881 on the property of Sir W.F.D. Jervois at Wellington where he irrigated the flood plains adjacent to the river (Griffin & McCaskill, 1986, p.22). In 1888, the Chaffey brothers from California established the irrigation scheme at Renmark, with the help of government funds (Williams, 1974, pp.49,235-236,240). Between 1905 and 1910, irrigated dairy farm developments were set up at Mobilong, Montieth and Mypolonga Flats.[4] The region of the Murray River below Mannum was particularly suitable for irrigation due to the broadening out of the flood plain. There were several proposals to drain Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert to reclaim

the land for irrigation (Sturt, cited Davies, 1881, p.130; Williams, 1974, pp.246,259). A barrage was to be built across the river at Wellington, thus preventing the large amount of water loss due to evaporation that occurs in the lakes. Irrigation made farming possible in areas otherwise fit only for pastoral activity, particularly the semi-arid regions bordering the Murray River north of Murray Bridge.

In the past, the Murray River was subject to enormous variation in its water level. Upon the establishment of irrigation schemes, this natural variation threatened various agricultural projects along the River. For instance, in April 1915, following the 1914 drought, the Murray River ceased to flow (McCourt & Mincham, 1987, p.11). The heavy use of the Murray River resources by the irrigation developments in other states also put at risk South Australian projects (Williams, 1974, p.241). In 1914, the River Murray Waters Agreement between the Commonwealth and the states of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, initiated a scheme of river control through lock building (Howchin, 1909, pp.242-243; Ritchie, 1921, pp.65-72; Williams, 1974, pp.241-243). This helped ease the political tension between the former colonies over the management of the Murray River. It also allowed the South Australian Government to become more committed to funding new irrigation schemes along the river. Six weirs and locks between Blanchetown and the Victorian border were completed between 1922 and 1930 to maintain a high level of water for such developments along the South Australian section of the River (Griffin & McCaskill, 1986, p.24). The first lock on the entire length of the Murray River was opened at Blanchetown in 1922. With the lock system in place, the flow of the Murray River in normal periods could be effectively controlled.

The low river levels, resulting from activity upstream, allowed sea water to enter the lakes during periods when low river levels coincided with high tides. To combat this, the Hume Reservoir above Albury in south eastern New South Wales was constructed in 1936 to help maintain flow in the Murray River (McCourt & Mincham, 1987, p.11). The construction of the Murray Mouth Barrages, completed in 1940, kept out the sea (Fig.6.3) (McCourt & Mincham, 1987, p.11). Although the Narrung Peninsula today is a relatively quiet area populated chiefly by farmers and the residents of Point McLeay, during the construction of the barrages, there was a dramatic increase in traffic along its roadways (Linn, 1988, p.181).

The effects of the barrages have been considerable, not only upon local wildlife, but on the nature of the regional topography. Consistently higher water levels have resulted in erosion in many areas in the Lower

Fig.6.3 The barrages at Tauwitchere Island, 1993 (Photo: P.A. Clarke)

Fig.6.4 Point McLeay in the 1890s (Photo: Angas Collection, Anthropology
Archives, S.A. Museum)

Murray. At Lake Albert, Aboriginal informants have pointed out to me sections along the Meningie foreshore where much land has been washed away (Dick Koolmatrie & Steve Lampard, pers com.). Another informant has described areas of massive erosion along the southern shore of Lake Alexandrina (Henry Rankine, pers com.). Aboriginal people at Point McLeay, who are old enough to remember the period before the barrages, lament the loss of clear water in the Coorong. Once, fish and shellfish could be seen here from a boat (Marj Koolmatrie & Margaret Jacobs, pers com.). Today the Coorong is murky and extremely saline. Although the barrage system keeps out sea water from the Lower Lakes, the build up of water between the locks has caused serious salinity problems, resulting from pressure upon the subterranean water table (Griffin & McCaskill, 1986, pp.56-57). The overuse of water in the river for the irrigation schemes has also contributed to the salinity problem.

6.1.4.2 Draining the South East

Although outside the Lower Murray cultural region, development in the South East region of South Australia had a major impact upon the Coorong environment. In contrast to other regions of South Australia, the South East suffered not from too little water but from too much. Between 1864 and 1880, networks of drains were dug into the coastal flats around Millicent (Griffin & McCaskill, 1986, p.22; Aslin 1991, pp.213-214). These drained seasonal swamps into Lake Bonney and Lake Frome. The South-East Drainage Act of 1900 enabled government funds to be used to begin draining swamps further inland. Extensive drainage systems feeding directly into the coast, rather than the longer north west route to the Coorong, were established between 1910 and 1920. Land was opened up for grazing, after local drains were made from the main branches. The cutting off of water from the South East has contributed to the southern end of the Coorong becoming extremely saline (Section 8.6.5).

6.1.5 The Effect of European Expansion on the Physical Environment

European settlement not only removed from Aboriginal use certain parts of the landscape, but caused the depletion of many food species. For instance, the activities of the pastoralists caused the local extinction of wombats in the Lower Lakes district by the late 19th century (McCourt & Mincham, 1987, p.10). On the topic of land clearance in the Narrung Peninsula area, George Hackett claimed in 1915 that:

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Those who are here today can never realise the condition of this country in the early days. Kangaroos abounded in thousands on the two stations. Some 25,000 were destroyed under the Vermin Act. In the mallee parts there was the Native Pheasants [sic.] whose nest and habits of incubation are a wonder to naturalists. Alas Kangaroo and Pheasants have vanished and as years go on their habits and appearance will be as legends. The Wombat and Emu were also plentiful but they have disappeared before civilization methods (1915 [1989, p.32]).

The populations of wildfowl, fish and crayfish found in the Lower Murray have also suffered from over exploitation and the drastic change in flow conditions.[5] Introduced species of plants, fish and animals have also changed the biological make-up of the region.

6.2 The Early 'Assimilation' of Aboriginal People in the Lower Murray

As already demonstrated (Chapter 5), the relations between the early Aboriginal people and the European colonisers were complex. Although violent encounters between Europeans and Aboriginal people did occur, conflict in the Adelaide and Lower Murray regions was generally limited to clashes of land use. Nevertheless, there are many instances of Aboriginal people actually taking advantage of the colonial situation. For example, as discussed elsewhere (Section 5.2), Aboriginal people went and camped at Encounter Bay to take advantage of the whale meat available, and to gain European articles through working at the whaling station. Although Meyer ran an Aboriginal School at Victor Harbor (from 1840 to about 1846), Aboriginal people were relatively free to engage themselves in local employment with European colonists.[6] Encounter Bay people were frequent visitors to the Adelaide region in the 1840s.[7] Even with the establishment of the Point McLeay Aboriginal Mission in 1859, the Aboriginal community in the Lower Murray region initially retained some degree of control over their own movements.

In spite of the evidence of widespread participation by Aboriginal people in their own incorporation into colonial society, this fact is largely ignored. Concerning the writing of Aboriginal history, Attwood points out 'In my opinion too many historians have swung from emphasising oppression to stressing autonomy, or, alternatively, they go backwards and forwards between these in a contradictory manner (1989, p.147)'. For South Australia, there has been a trend during the last ten years by scholars, such as Mattingley & Hampton (1988) and Pope (1989), to couch all early Aboriginal responses to European colonisation in terms of a 'war of resistance' or as a 'glorious defeat'.[8] In this section, I will take up a less ideological view, illustrating the complexity of Aboriginal relations with European colonists.

6.2.1 The Naming of Aboriginal People

One result of the attempts by colonists to 'civilise' the Aboriginal people was to give them European names. During the early years of colonisation in the districts south of Adelaide, Wilkinson claimed:

> The blacks living among civilised people very readily adopt any European Christian name, or in fact any word that they may be called by a white man requested to name them. Thus I remember women named Monkey, Cockeye, Pretty Sally, Grumble, Long Mary, &c.; and men named Jim Crow, Paddy, Long Jack, Jumbo, Encounter Bay Bob, Rapid Bay Jack, &c (1848, p.336).

English names were easier to pronounce and remember for English colonists than the Aboriginal given names. Although English names were chosen, these nevertheless conformed to the pre-existing Aboriginal practice of having several names, the use of which varying with context. This continuity is evident in the fact that the above examples reflect an individual's body style and place of origin. From the perspective of the colonists, the adoption of these names made the local Aboriginal population more familiar to them. They may not even have been aware that Aboriginal people had their own complex system of personal naming.

It is clear that Aboriginal people were often willing participants in receiving a European name. For instance, a long-time resident of the southern Fleurieu Peninsula stated that when she was a child, she and her playmates often came across Aboriginal people who had come into the townships around Myponga and Yankalilla:

> The piccaninnies were pretty and plump, and were carried in a blanket-sling on the mother's back. If we patted the babies and gave them sweets or fruit, the gins would show their pleasure in broad grins. They would enquire our names and on being informed, would adopt them for their children, much to our annoyance (Welden, 1936, p.51).

In this manner, Aboriginal people linked themselves to Europeans with whom they had had relationships. Other Aboriginal people were given the names of Europeans that had fathered children with Aboriginal women, often illegitimately (Section 2.4.4.1). Aboriginal people, as well as Europeans, recognised advantages in their adoption of a European naming system.

6.2.2 Early Use of Aboriginal Labour

Some Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray area apparently considered that there was an advantage in working with European colonists. At Encounter Bay in the 1840s, Penney stated that:

> The Encounter Bay natives have been properly brought up, they have never been accustomed to get anything, without working for it, and this has not only made them more industrious, but also made them pay that attention to the instruments and proceedings of Europeans, that renders them almost equal to them as general labourers.[9]

This may well have in part been due to the disruption of pre-European hunting and gathering practices through the commencement of European occupation of the local land. Nevertheless, it suggests that Aboriginal people were adaptable to the new situation.

Aboriginal people quickly gained skills in a wide range of European practices. Penney claimed:

> that many of them can use the axe and the saw, and have been employed in cutting posts and rails for fencing, and two or three can drive bullock-drays; they are all of them very useful in tracking cattle and horses - they are very good hands in a boat, and in diving - and they have rendered great services to owners of the wrecks at Encounter Bay.[10]

When a drowning occurred in the Lower Murray, Aboriginal people invariably assisted in the recovery of the bodies (Linn, 1988, p.60). However, not all Aboriginal groups were reportedly as easily incorporated into the labour force. For instance, Penney contrasted the Aboriginal people of Encounter Bay with the 'difficult' and 'inferior' Aboriginal people of Adelaide.[11] It is possible that the Lower Murray people were more accustomed to European work practices because of their longer period of contact with Europeans through the early operations of the sealers based on Kangaroo Island (Section 5.1).

The pastoralists in the Lower Murray region were quick to utilise Aboriginal labour. Nevertheless, it was noted that most Aboriginal people would work only for immediate needs. For instance, the pastoralist Samuel Davenport claimed that the Aboriginal people were 'Perfectly manageable - best when kept from being too familiar - very lazy, but when hungry can be made to work till you have satisfied their hunger.'[12] At this early period, before the establishment of government institutions such as missions, many Aboriginal people were choosing to involve themselves in the affairs of Europeans in the Lower Murray.

Since European settlement in 1836, Aboriginal people have often served to make up the short fall in labour required by white Australians in their economic pursuits. For instance, in a handbook for colonisers, Wilkinson (1848, pp.317-320) states that Aboriginal people were used by the Europeans to fetch water, carry and chop wood, to do domestic work, tend sheep, deliver messages and packages, and to bring in the harvest. In the 1840s, Aboriginal people from the Blanchetown and Wellington districts were used to collect wood for the Kapunda smelters (Williams, 1974, pp.134-135). At Wellington, George Mason had Aboriginal people chopping wood for the paddlesteamers (Linn, 1988, p.43). Aboriginal teams were used

at Lallawa Station on the Narrung Peninsula to clear the paddocks of yacca bushes (Linn, 1988, p.188).[13]

The employment of Aboriginal trackers has been mentioned elsewhere (Section 5.1.5). The payment for

services was initially minimal; often food, 'slop clothing' (= old clothes) and a little tobacco. Some

Aboriginal people, operating largely on their own, were involved in ventures such as shooting birds for the

Adelaide food market.[14] The Aboriginal contribution to the labour force in the early colonial period must

be considered significant, if very lowly paid and poorly acknowledged.

Aboriginal people were particularly used to advantage by colonists as collectors. Wilkinson describes

Aboriginal participation in the summer activity of Acacia gum collecting around Adelaide for the overseas

market. He claimed:

> Some of the white people bargain with the natives to pick for them, and pay them so
> much for their labour... in food, meat, flour, tea and sugar, and tobacco, and give them a
> bag to fill. These bags, when full, weigh about 200 lbs.[91 kilograms], for which the
> black receives a flannel shirt, a pair of trousers, or, what he is most fond of, a blanket.
> When paid in this manner, the blacks work well and willingly; often, when the gum is
> plentiful, picking from 45 to 50 lbs [20.5 to 23 kilograms] a day, and sometimes more. In
> addition to picking it from trees, they clear all the little bits of wood or bark from it, and
> make it fit for the market (1848, pp.210,352).

James (cited in Wilkinson, 1848, pp.352-255) paid his gum collectors, who were mainly women, with

flour. Aboriginal people assisted European colonists in catching leeches for medicinal use (Reimer, 1851

[1988, p.48]). In the Adelaide Plains, Aboriginal people received a few copper coins for wood chopped

from exposed trunks in the Torrens River when the water level was low (Listemann, 1851 [1964, p.52]).

This type of labour served to satisfy the instant demands of Aboriginal people.

A bizarre example of collecting was the selling of Aboriginal skulls to the Europeans by local Aboriginal

people.[15] The latter presumably knew where the chief burial grounds were located. In the Encounter Bay

district, some of the skulls obtained were still covered with flesh when offered for sale by local Aboriginal

people (Newland, E., 1936, p.92). As in the case of gathering gum, leeches and wood, the knowledge that

Aboriginal people possessed of the landscape made them valuable employees in industries that required

collectors.

In spring 1851, news reached Adelaide of the discoveries of gold in Victoria (Griffin & McCaskill, 1986,

p.12). The diggings could be reached in less than three weeks, leading to an exodus of many European

workers from South Australia. During the Victorian gold rush, Aboriginal labour on farms became far

more significant than it had previously been (Hassell, 1966, p.135; McCourt & Mincham, 1987, p.7; Linn, 1988, pp.65-66). On the north western shore of Lake Alexandrina during the 1850s, Aboriginal people from the opposite side of Lake Alexandrina were living at Milang because of their involvement in the fish trade (Taplin Journals, 12 April 1859). From here, Aboriginal people were also hired by farmers (Taplin Journals, 15-16 December 1863; Yarwood, cited in Faull, 1981, p.19). In about 1870, whaling recommenced at Encounter Bay, after stopping in the 1860s (Hodge, 1932, p.127). For two seasons there was an Aboriginal crew on the whaling boats. Aboriginal labour became crucial to the colony at times when European labour was too expensive and scarce. Aboriginal people were considered suitable for employment that demanded heavy use of the body.

Aboriginal labour always cost less than European labour. As was the case elsewhere in Australia, the low cost of Aboriginal labour was an important part of the pastoral economy.[16] In the early years of European colonisation, Aboriginal people were sometimes paid in the form of rights to land resources then controlled by Europeans. For instance, Aboriginal labourers were given access to trees for canoe bark in the inland areas on the north side of Lake Alexandrina (Yarwood, cited in Faull, 1981, p.19). The cut bark was loaded on to drays and transported back to Milang while the Aboriginal people walked. They would not be made into canoes until the lake had been reached. With the importance that Aboriginal labour sometimes assumed, it is not surprising that many of the early pastoral pioneers in the Lower Murray encouraged Aboriginal people to dwell on their stations. Due to the Aboriginal practice of not accumulating wealth, and the biased recording of early European settlement in Australia, the existence and role of Aboriginal labour has effectively been hidden.

6.2.3 Agriculture Displaces Hunting and Gathering

Early Aboriginal notions of access to the resources of the land were incompatible with those of non-Aboriginal Australians. The approach of European colonists was one of surveying, dividing, fencing and stocking virtually the entire landscape within their reach.

This conflict is apparent in the statements that a number of Aboriginal people gave concerning their hunting rights. James records:

A native was brought to gaol for stealing a settler's sheep, and being asked by the
policeman why he had done so, replied - 'What for? - why, long time no white fellow,
plenty kangaroo; now white fellow, no kangaroo!' (James, cited in Wilkinson, 1848,
p.348).

Another example is provided by E.K. Thomas who claimed in 1839 that the Aboriginal people in the

settled districts around Adelaide had 'hitherto been peaceable and orderly, and they very logically

exculpate their own misdemeanours by saying, "White man come kill black man kangaroo. Black man kill

white man sheep. Very good." (1925, p.123)'. Although the Aboriginal landscape was divided into descent

group territories (Section 2.3.1.5), it is clear that rights to land resources recognised by Aboriginal people

in the pre-European period were more flexible than those held by Europeans.

A further area of conflict was over the subsistence strategy of vegetation firing used by Aboriginal people in

the pre-European period. This was an Aboriginal tool used to actively manipulate the landscape (Section

4.2.14.1). However, to the Europeans wildfires threatened buildings, fences and livestock. In 1839, an

Aboriginal man, Williamy, was charged with firing the grass in the Adelaide park-lands. He was released

due to lack of proof of malicious intent. His release was argued on the basis that it was considered by the

Aboriginal people 'a necessary and laudable practice annually to burn off withered grass on their hunting-

grounds to facilitate and hasten the growth of the young grass of which the native animals are so fond....'[17]

In the Lower Murray region, the regular firing of the Lower Lakes area by Aboriginal people was

apparently a sufficient threat to the local farmers for it to be reported in the Aboriginal Protector's Report

of 1850. Here it was noted some land owners were offering incentives, in the form of goods, to Aboriginal

people if they could get through the dry season without causing a serious bushfire.[18]

As crown land became alienated for sale, the Aboriginal inhabitants became trespassers in the territories of

their own descent groups. In the Lower Murray region, this process was first felt by Aboriginal people in

the farming areas of the lower Fleurieu Peninsula. For instance, in 1840 Penney claimed that:

The Lesser Murray, Currency Creek, and Encounter and Rapid Bay tribes are, for the
most part, residing upon land that is actually sold, although not settled. The favorite
resorts of the tribe for a series of generations will, in the course of time, be enclosed, and
themselves excluded from all right to resort there.[19]

Penney adds:

all places are not the same to them; and though individuals are constantly moving from
one station to another, yet there are particular locations always inhabited by some of the
tribe.

Due to the heavy reliance that Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray had upon riverine resources (Section 4.2), and the central role of River in their mythology (Section 3.2.1), their use of the landscape made some places far more important to them, both in terms of their subsistence and culturally.

The intensive agricultural operations of Europeans, such as cropping, and the extensive hunting and gathering activities of the Aboriginal people, such as the hunting of large mammals, were not compatible on the same landscape. When Aboriginal groups were in the early phases of the dispossession of their territories, they frequently became troublesome to local European settlers. For instance, a local militia formed in 1840 at Strathalbyn in response to problems landowners were experiencing with the local Aboriginal community (Yarwood in Faull, 1981, p.18). One of the functions of this body was to maintain the peace between settlers and the Aboriginal population. The militia on several occasions forced Aboriginal groups away from water holes along the Angas River. During the opening up of the Lower Murray, conflicts between the Europeans and the Aboriginal population over land use were in most cases settled in favour of the former (Section 6.2.4). In this way, Aboriginal people were denied access to sites that were previously integral to their local economy and territorial identity.

6.2.4 Violent Encounters in the Lower Murray

Outbreaks of violence in South Australia between European colonists and the Aboriginal inhabitants tended to occur in the frontier areas shortly after the initial European intrusion into the area. This period of colonialism is sometimes referred to by Aboriginal people and scholars as the 'killing times' (Attwood, 1989, p.x). As we have seen, the activities of sealers on Kangaroo Island and whalers at Encounter Bay had led to several murders of both Europeans and Aboriginal people (Section 5.1.4 & 5.2). Occasional outstations in the Lower Murray, when left unattended, were robbed in the 1840s (Linn, 1988, p.35). Aboriginal people would sometimes light grass fires to harass the European colonists (Davies, 1881, p.143). However, it was the early large scale 'massacres' of both European and Aboriginal people in the region that appears to have most promoted the notoriety of the Lower Murray.

A massacre of Europeans on the Coorong in 1840, was one of the most significant events last century in the development of European and Aboriginal relations.[20] The victims, numbering around twenty eight, were

shipwreck survivors of the 'Maria' which ran aground near Kingston. They were escorted by Aboriginal people towards Encounter Bay when they met their death at Nookamung along the Coorong near the south end of Lake Albert. The Aboriginal group implicated in the published reports were the Milmenroora or the 'Big Murray tribe'. They were also blamed for the killing of a European named Roach who had earlier disappeared after travelling down the Coorong.

During a punitive expedition led by Major T.S. O'Halloran, two Aboriginal men were hanged on the Coorong, without trial. The illegality of O'Halloran's actions, which were condoned by Governor Gawler, caused an outrage in Adelaide (Jenkin, 1979, pp.58-59). The summary punishment was justified on the basis that the Milmenroora were not British subjects but a hostile nation (Hassell, 1966, p.58). The 'Maria massacre' had therefore succeeded in giving an official identity to a particular Aboriginal group. From my personal experience, there is still some discussion in the Aboriginal community of the Lower Murray about why the tragedy occurred. One Aboriginal version claims that the killings were brought on by sailors who had interfered with Aboriginal women. The killings caused the colonists to fear the Aboriginal population beyond the frontier. The Lower Murray people in particular were considered treacherous and without law. Outbreaks of Aboriginal aggression upon Europeans at this time had an impact upon the Government's Aboriginal affairs policy.

The next Aboriginal murder of a European in the Lower Murray occurred on the mainland side of the Coorong on 2 June 1842. George Magrath was murdered by Aboriginal people as he and two companions, William Chase and William Pew, were making their way from Adelaide to Sydney.[21] They were reportedly attacked after an argument about payment for the three Aboriginal guides they employed. Chase and Pew fled back to the police hut at Wellington to raise the alarm. Nevertheless, it was four years later before the chief culprit was caught. In the Mount Barker district, the ringleader, Wira Maldira, had become overconfident. He had openly boasted of his major role in the crime. Wira Maldira was publicly executed in Adelaide. It is possible that other Aboriginal people were unofficially punished for this murder. Sam Mincham (cited McCourt & Mincham, 1987, p.168) once spoke to a European who had seen 14 Aboriginal people shot one morning on the road in front of McGrath's Flat Hotel. Other murders of Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray would probably have occurred during the European colonising period, but if so they are not recorded.

In the same year as the Magrath murder, Europeans dealt a savage blow to Aboriginal groups who were interfering with overlanders coming from New South Wales along the Murray River. On 25 August 1842, an armed party of troopers on a punitive expedition confronted and fired upon an Aboriginal group at Rufus River, on an offshoot of the Murray River near Lake Victoria in what is now New South Wales.[22] The casualties on the latter occasion were entirely Aboriginal, with nearly thirty killed, about ten wounded and four taken prisoner. Although this occurred outside the Lower Murray region, its impact was nevertheless felt by Aboriginal groups here and elsewhere. Some survivors of the Rufus River massacre reportedly moved south and joined with Aboriginal communities in the Mid and Lower Murray (Bellchambers, 1931, p.20). At this time, before the boundaries between the colonies had been properly surveyed, Lake Victoria was considered to be part of South Australia. As with the 'Maria' incident, the punishment dealt to Aboriginal groups by the authorities was severe.

After the initial violence on the frontier, Aboriginal people and Europeans often worked together to solve serious crimes. For instance, in June 1856 Aboriginal trackers helped in the search for William Robinson, an Irish immigrant who lived with his wife at Salt Creek (Hastings, 1944 [1987, pp.94-97,104-105]; Linn, 1988, pp.60-61,109-112). He was found dead at a lagoon near Robinson Hill. He was face down, with a knife in his right hand, and a cut throat. Although this suggested suicide, the Aboriginal people pointed out that Robinson was left-handed. There were also tracks showing that he had been chased, first on horseback, and later on foot. Furthermore, they showed footprints where the killer had washed his hands. Malachi Martin, who had taken up land to the south of Salt Creek at Bul Bul on the Hummocks, was arrested and an inquest held at Magrath Flat. Martin was reportedly a bully, disliked by Europeans and detested by Aboriginal people. The circumstantial evidence against him was considerable. Nevertheless, he was let go, partly because the Aboriginal testimony against him could not legally be considered. Martin left the district.

Two years after the Robinson inquest, Martin returned to the Coorong (Hastings, 1944 [1987, pp.97-105]; McCourt & Mincham, 1987, p.7; Linn, 1988, pp.109-112). He had left Sydney with a 'black boy' to accompany him, but the latter mysteriously disappeared on the way and was never accounted for. Martin then married the widow of the man, Robinson, whom he had allegedly killed. Together they ran the Salt Creek Hotel. An Irish servant at Salt Creek, Jane Macmenimen, became a problem to Martin, presumably

because she knew something of Martin's role in the death of Robinson. Martin raped and murdered the girl in February 1862. His accomplice was a German immigrant, William Wilsen. Her disappearance at first did not cause alarm, as Martin had claimed she had left Salt Creek with a party of overlanders.

In May 1863, her body was found by an Aboriginal man from Kingston, Major McKenzie, who was hunting kangaroos to the north of Salt Creek. He had followed a dog pad to a wombat hole where her remains were hidden. McKenzie returned to the nearby Aboriginal camp, before he and an Aboriginal man, George Phillips, went back to the body. Another Aboriginal man, Walter Hunter ('Jockey'), who was employed at Woods Well to the north of Salt Creek, was sent to the telegraph station at Magrath Flat to inform the Wellington police. As a result, Martin was arrested, convicted and executed. Wilsen served a sentence of four years hard labour. From my experience, the Aboriginal role in the solving of these crimes is told as folklore in the present day local Aboriginal community.

The British system of justice did not always coincide with Aboriginal customs. For instance, when two Aboriginal men in a neighbouring colony were hanged in the late 1830s for murdering a European, Aboriginal people in South Australia reportedly could not comprehend why two men, even though both were implicated, should be punished for a crime against only one man (Thomas, E.K., 1925, p.126). This did not seem logical according to Aboriginal principles of settling disputes. Even in the 1860s, the cultural differences between Aboriginal and European moral systems were apparent in the Lower Murray. For example, Taplin pondered whether in general Aboriginal people could be justly made to follow European law. He says 'I feel it would not be right to judge the culprits as we judge ourselves. We have always been brought up to obey the law and have acquired a habit of doing so, but these [Aboriginal people] have not (Taplin Journals, 24 April 1860).' Aboriginal concepts of retribution and the European legal system did not seem compatible.

There was also the issue of whether Aboriginal testimony was valid in European courts of law. In 1838 the Aboriginal Protector, Dr Wyatt, was instructed to investigate whether Aboriginal people had a concept of a future reward in the afterlife.[23] This was important in order for magistrates to determine whether an oath could be sworn by Aboriginal people giving testimony in court. Even in the 1860s, the testimony of Aboriginal people caused problems in the legal system, as shown in the inquest of Robinson's death

discussed above. Studies of Aboriginal law and religion therefore served a practical need. The teaching of

European laws to the Aboriginal people was a goal of missionaries.

In the early years of European settlement, Aboriginal people instructed in 'civilised' ways, learnt for

themselves that not all Europeans lived by the same set of morals. James says:

> A European treating a native capriciously, and breaking faith with him, is immediately
> taunted with - 'You no good; you no gentleman; you plenty working-man.' The coarse
> and inferior classes of our countrymen, in roughly showing their contempt for the native,
> are frequently met with the rebuke, 'What for? what for? me no working-man, me plenty
> gentleman'; at the same time suiting the action to the word, in assuming a really
> dignified attitude. How very marked is the independence of this native savage, and how
> superior to the broken-spirited negro slave? (James, cited in Wilkinson, 1848, p.348).

In this account, we have an impression that Aboriginal people were gaining a view of the internal

differentiation of the white newcomers. They became able to discriminate between the middle and working

classes of European society.

6.3 The Missionisation of Aboriginal People in the Lower Murray

European expansion into southern South Australia altered the Aboriginal relationship to the landscape. As

the land was transformed by the Europeans, firstly by pastoralists and later by intensive farmers, the

Aboriginal people were forced into progressively smaller areas. Within the first thirty years of settlement,

the territories of many descent groups, particularly those in the northern parts of the Lower Murray, were

virtually taken over in their entirety by Europeans. By the late 19th century, the Point McLeay Aboriginal

Mission had become the focus of the Aboriginal population as the landscape closed up around them

through European expansion. A small number of people lived in small fringecamps on marginal land

around major towns. Through both direct and indirect means, Aboriginal people were gradually alienated

from the landscape. This coincides with the increasing rates of mortality in the Aboriginal population

(Section 2.1.3). In this section I look at the transformation process from the point of view of European

management of Aboriginal affairs in the Lower Murray region.

6.3.1 A Mission at Point McLeay

George Taplin, an English immigrant, was a school teacher at Port Elliot in the Encounter Bay region from 1854 to 1859. It was here as a young man that he was struck by the plight of the Aboriginal inhabitants. For instance, in 1859 Taplin records his disgust at the prostitution of 'half caste' Aboriginal girls in the Aboriginal camps at Goolwa (Taplin Journals, 8 April 1859). Through the support of the newly formed Aborigines' Friends' Association in Adelaide, Taplin began plans for a mission to be established among the Lower Murray people (Jenkin, 1979, p.78). The Association at this early time was dominated by Protestant clergymen (Jenkin, 1979, p.74). From this point, until the handing over of the Point McLeay Aboriginal Mission to the South Australian Government in 1914, the Aborigines' Friends' Association based in Adelaide essentially made the Lower Murray people their sole concern. The denomination of the church in the early years was Congregational.

News about Taplin's hopes for a mission spread among the Aboriginal population on Fleurieu Peninsula. An Aboriginal man, Larry, walked from Yankalilla to Port Elliot to enquire about enrolling in Taplin's proposed school (Taplin Journals, 5-6 April 1859). To some extent, Taplin's work was to carry on from the Aboriginal school at Encounter Bay in the 1840s run by the German missionary, H.A.E. Meyer (Section 2.2). Some of the people Taplin took in had had previous involvement with Meyer.[24] Taplin used Meyer's published vocabularies to generate his own 'Narrinyeri' vocabulary (Taplin Journals, 10 April 1859). Nevertheless, Aboriginal people had lived in the region for many years after initial European settlement without a strong missionary influence. About fifteen years had elapsed from the closure of Meyer's school at Encounter Bay to the commencement of Taplin's plans to establish a mission somewhere in the Lower Murray.

Taplin spent some time touring around the Lower Lakes and Murray River looking for a suitable site for a mission station. The Assistant Surveyor General, George Goyder, showed Taplin some sites.[25] One location inspected by Taplin was land alongside the house of the Sub-Protector of Aborigines, George Mason, near the Wellington ferry at the exit of the Murray River into Lake Alexandrina (Taplin Journals, 14 April 1859). Taplin was told that this site was to be eventually made into a town, East Wellington. Although Taplin thought the area might be suitable for a school, he was concerned that the independent

life style of the Aboriginal people living there would not allow for good attendance at his mission. Taplin

explains that some local Aboriginal people were then already employed by Europeans in fishing and bird

catching. After being shown more land near Mason, Taplin decided to look elsewhere. He stated that he

thought the Sub-Protector's influence would be bad as 'he has no faith in any effort for the religious

welfare of the natives'. Goyder also took Taplin round the bight of the lake, but Taplin considered it too

sterile for his use. Both Goyder and Mason declared that they were sceptical of the possibility of

successfully instructing the Lower Murray people in the Christian religion.

In spite of Taplin's annoyance at Mason's lack of religious faith, it was the latter who eventually suggested

to Taplin that the Point McLeay district would be suitable. Taplin records:

> Mr. Mason recommends Point McLeay at the entrance of Lake Albert, as the locality of
> the institution, as that is a central position, is good land, is a great fishing place of the
> natives. He thinks much good might be done by protecting and fostering the fish trade.
> He thinks a supply of hooks and lines and nets would do them great good, cost £16. I
> obtained much information from Mr. Mason (Taplin Journals, 14 April 1859).

A local land owner near Wellington, McFarlane, also advised that Point McLeay would be a reasonable site

(Taplin Journals, 15 April 1859). Like Mason, McFarlane employed Aboriginal people on his property and

paid them in rations and money (Taplin Journals, 18 April 1859). Upon investigation, Taplin found the

general area near the entrance of Lake Albert from Lake Alexandrina very appealing. The geographic

position of Point McLeay meant that a mission here would be a central location for the 'lower blacks'. If it

was nearer to the Coorong, it would be out of reach of the people living at Mason's station. Taplin also

stated that the location was favoured by being near a boundary of the 'tribes' that was much visited. No

doubt this location was also favoured, in Taplin's eyes, by the isolation caused by the lakes, discouraging

too much European traffic. The configuration of the lakes and Coorong made the Narrung Peninsula upon

which Point McLeay was situated virtually an island, being connected by a low area of land that was

inundated during floods. By geographically isolating the Aboriginal population, Taplin hoped to insulate

them socially from the 'corruption' of the outside world.

Before the final decision was made, Taplin visited another site, Lowangeri, on the western side of the

southern end of the Lake Albert Passage (Taplin Journals, 27-28 April 1859, 23 June 1859). Lowangeri

was also a significant area for Aboriginal people, as it was a trade centre where people from the Murray

River and Coorong met. Nevertheless, on 24 June 1859, Taplin remarks that the site at Point McLeay was

chosen for the mission (Taplin Journals, 24 June 1859). In spite of some local resistance from European

landowners, on 6 August 1859, Taplin received an official letter from the Government stating that the site

of Point McLeay had been approved (Taplin Journals, 6 August 1859). On 4 October 1859, Taplin and his

family settled there (Fig.6.4, 6.5) (Taplin Journals, 4 October 1859).

6.3.2 Growth of a Mission-based Population

The Aboriginal population at Point McLeay varied considerably in the early years of the mission. For

instance, on 31 October 1859, there was a total of one hundred and five Aboriginal people at the Point

McLeay Mission (Taplin Journals, 31 October 1859). In August 1860, there were only forty Aboriginal

people at Point McLeay (Taplin Journals, 30 August 1860). On 29 October 1860 there were an estimated

one hundred and fifty Aboriginal people at Point McLeay (Taplin Journals, 29 October 1860). The

variability in the population size was clearly the result of the periodic movement of Lower Murray descent

groups. For example, at Point McLeay on 19 April 1861, the number of Aboriginal people swelled to one

hundred and fifty again when the Milang, Mundoo Island and Encounter Bay people arrived there (Taplin

Journals, 19 April 1861, 3-4 May 1861). The total Aboriginal population of the Lower Murray for this time

was estimated by Taplin to be about a thousand (Section 2.1.3). On 21 August 1861, most of these people

appear to have been at Point McLeay, as an estimated two hundred and fifty Aboriginal people reportedly

arrived at the Mission (Taplin Journals, 21 August 1861). During George Taplin's period at Point McLeay,

there were many small groups of Aboriginal people living throughout the Lower Murray. Some of these

quasi-sedentary groups lived on pastoral stations around the Lower Lakes, such as Poltaloch and in

fringecamps around towns, such as Goolwa (Taplin Journals, 12 June 1861 & 8 April 1859).

It is apparent from George Taplin's journals that he had little direct control over the Aboriginal community

in the region. Government rations, such as blankets, were used by him to entice Aboriginal people onto the

Mission (Taplin Journals, 28 April 1863). Although Aboriginal people were initially opportunistic about

receiving rations, Taplin hoped to establish their dependence upon the Mission. This was a strategy of

Taplin's towards their ultimate Christianisation. A ration depot at Pelican Point was used to help Coorong

Aboriginal people in the 1860s.[26] In 1876, the Needles Station on the Coorong (Fig.6.6) was granted to

the Aborigines' Friends' Association, and was used as an outstation of Point McLeay (Jenkin, 1979,

Fig.6.5 'Wurley' shelters around Point McLeay, c. 1880 (Photo: Aborigines' Friends' Association Collection, Anthropology Archives, S.A. Museum)
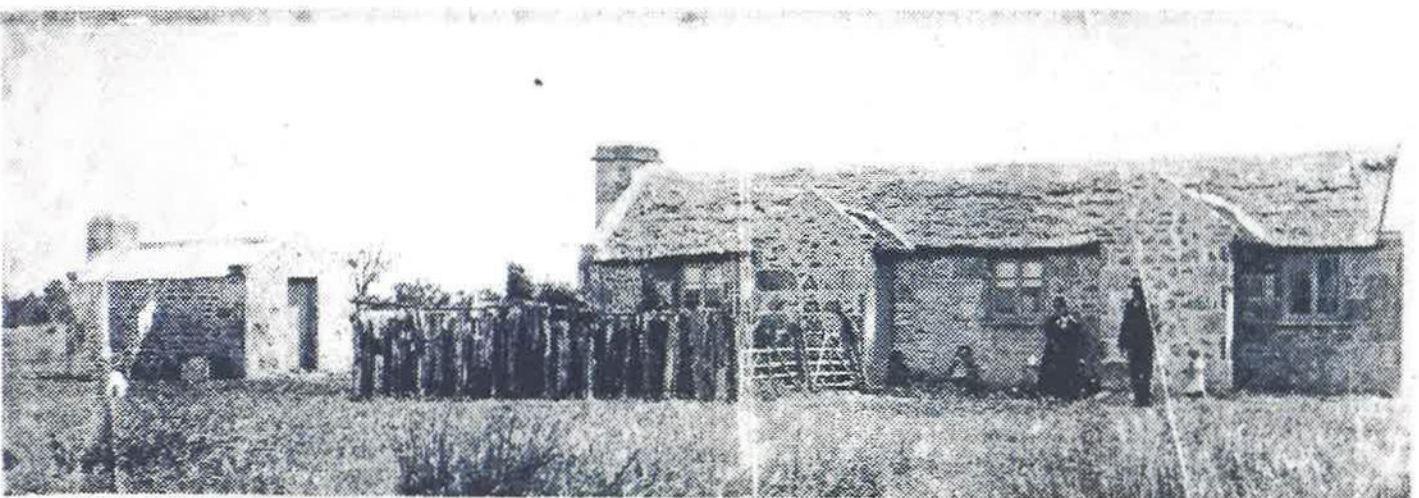
Fig.6.6 The Needles Outstation, c.1900 (Photo: Angas Collection, Anthropology Archives, S.A. Museum)

pp.131-133). The Needles was then used by Aboriginal groups from Point McLeay on their summer trips to the Coorong (Taplin Journals, 21-24 January 1879). It is implicit in Taplin's journals that he personally had no direct official authority over the local Aboriginal people, having to rely much on his own ration resources and persuasive abilities. Many people therefore came and went according to their own seasonal patterns and that of the European farmers for whom they worked.[27] In the case of the Aboriginal people dwelling along the Coorong, the landscape still offered some protection from European settlement. This was because these areas were not intensively settled until the 20th century. Apart from the Encounter Bay region, many Aboriginal groups living in the Lower Murray during George Taplin's time were able to move freely about the landscape, choosing the extent to which they became involved with Europeans.

Missionaries around the world have attempted to mould men and women according to their ideals. Taplin, too, strove hard to create a Christian following among the local Aboriginal people. His arguments with the men of the Lower Murray Aboriginal community sometimes became heated. For instance, Taplin writes in his journal:

> I had an argument with Johnny Bulpuminni about their customs this evening. He said,
> "Oh these customs all right for blackfellow, yours all right for whitefellow." But I said
> "No, there is only one God and you must obey him. If you do what the devil tells you it
> shows that you are not Jehovah's people but the devil's people" (Taplin Journals, 17
> October 1859).

Taplin considered that Aboriginal practices, such as sorcery, were 'invented by some emissaries of Satan'.[28]

Taplin was frequently dismayed at the response the Aboriginal people gave him on matters of religion. For instance, he says 'When I go to the wurleys and talk to them about religion it is astonishing what a dullness of perception and lack of interest is manifested (Taplin Journals, 19 May 1859).' Some people, initially open to aspects of the Christian religion, closed their minds when they realised that their own beliefs were threatened. Long Billy was one such Lower Murray person who resisted. Taplin records:

> Long Billy is dead. Thus passed away one of the most bitter opponents of the Gospel and
> civilisation. He was at one time rather inclined to Christianity, but as soon as he found it
> would destroy native customs, he set himself against it, and has been ever since the
> promoter of all indifference and wickedness. Alas for him (Taplin, cited in R.M. & C.H.
> Berndt, 1951, p.81).

It is clear from Taplin's journals that during the establishment of Point McLeay most Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray were diffident in their acceptance of Christianity.

Aboriginal groups were forced to come to terms with the demands of Europeans who settled in the Lower Murray region. For instance, although Taplin was horrified at the number of Aboriginal women who were having children by white men, there is some indication that this had some advantage from the Aboriginal point of view (Taplin Journals, 18 May 1860 & 20 August 1860). For instance, Taplin states that his wife was told by Aboriginal women that 'they like to have white children, both men and women, because they excite more compassion among the white women and can obtain larger gifts of food and clothes (Taplin Journals, 12 September 1860).' Up until this time, European men were in the practice of going to the 'worleys' (= camps) at the pastoral stations for 'a spree among the lubras' (Snell, 1849-1859 [1988, p.182]). The attraction of these men to Aboriginal women would have in part been due to the remoteness of some stations in the early years, and because of the proximity of Aboriginal camps situated there. From the Aboriginal perspective, the resources of the Europeans were more easily accessed once a family connection had been established. The genealogies of Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray include several links to the pastoralists and government officials who lived in the region.[29]

The Christian followers among the Aboriginal people at Point McLeay grew. Their interpretations of the Christian religion were at first in accordance with their own beliefs (Section 3.2.2). For example, Taplin records that all the Aboriginal people on the Murray were expecting a great 'whitefellow' to appear in the sky some day (Taplin Journals, 3 November 1861). Similarly, Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray believed that there was a great fire at the bottom of the sea and that people were in danger of going there after they died (Taplin Journals, 30 April 1862). Taplin considered that the chances of success at his mission were increased upon the arrival of an Aboriginal helper, James Ngnuiponi (Unaipon) (Taplin Journals, 3 September 1864). This man came from Wellington, and had already been baptised. He and other Aboriginal preachers, such as Wonganeen and Kropinyeri, were sent out from Point McLeay to the rest of the Lower Murray to do 'mission work'.[30]

One of the strategies of the missionaries was essentially to try to change Aboriginal notions of time and space to those of Europeans. To some extent, the teaching to Aboriginal people of the concepts of the investment and future reward associated with farming on a fixed portion of land was an attempt to do this. In 1868, an Aboriginal man, John Sumner, took up a farming block at Teringie on the southern boundary of Point McLeay (Taplin Journals, 2 September 1868). However, a succession of bad luck with seasons

eventually forced Sumner out (Jenkin, 1979, pp.129-130). Sumner's attempt was followed in 1870 by William MacHughes and Pompey Jackson, in 1871 by Napoleon Bonney and in 1872 by Henry Lambert (= Lampard) (Taplin Journals, 10 October 1870 & 23 July 1872; Jenkin, 1979, p.130). The eventual failure of many farming attempts by these and other Aboriginal people was due to the poor soil and water conditions of the reserves.

6.3.3 The Mission and the Wider Economy

By the time the Point McLeay Mission had been established, Aboriginal people in the Lower Lakes district were heavily involved in the European economy. For instance, some were paid by local Europeans to collect salt (Taplin Journals, 10 December 1859). Aboriginal people from the Port McLeay district also went across to the other side of Lake Alexandrina to be engaged in reaping and wool washing (Taplin Journals, 21 January 1861, 19 August 1862, 15-16 December 1863). Whole extended family groups were sometimes involved in moving to an area for seasonal employment. For instance, Taplin records that most of the 'Lake Albert tribe' had gone away for the barley harvest (Taplin Journals, 12 November 1861). On another occasion, Aboriginal people from the Point McLeay area went to the Murray to shear sheep (Taplin Journals, 18 September 1861). At some times of the year, the mission was almost deserted, with Aboriginal residents involved in the harvest throughout the Lower Murray (Taplin Journals, 11-12,28 September 1863).

In spite of Taplin's attempts to find employment for Aboriginal people at Point McLeay, the station was far too small for the population. In 1872, the mission was only six hundred and eighty eight hectares (Jenkin, 1979, p.128). In 1876, ten square kilometres of Coorong land was added, but this was to prove to be generally poor quality for farming (Jenkin, 1979, pp.128,231). Taplin attempted to establish a fishing industry at Point McLeay.[31] This appears to have primarily been to make the local Aboriginal community more sedentary. However, local hunting and gathering activities also probably served to supplement the Mission's poor supplies of food, brought on by a shortage of capital.

Before the advent of the Point McLeay Aboriginal Mission, Aboriginal people from the Lower Murray were already accustomed to going to Adelaide after the end of their seasonal employment with local Europeans

(Taplin Journals, 5 August 1861). Rations appear to have been a major attraction of Adelaide (Clarke, 1991a, pp.66-69). Trips to the capital city were sometimes planned after large organised events such as fighting competitions (Taplin Journals, 8 & 13 May 1861, 3 June 1861). This was possibly a mechanism to allow disputes time to settle. Throughout most of the 19th century, the hunting and gathering life style of the Aboriginal people was blended with seasonal employment as labourers with Europeans.

6.3.4 Conflict Between the Mission and the Local Aboriginal Population

It is clear from Taplin's journals that he was constantly in conflict with the Aboriginal people of the Lower Murray, particularly those who were against his core of Christian followers. Taplin's deliberate attempts to halt Aboriginal practices, which he found either immoral or disgusting, often led to violence within the Aboriginal community. For instance, a fight once broke out among the Aboriginal people when, with Taplin's support, uninitiated young men at Point McLeay obtained wives (Taplin Journals, 13 August 1861). On another occasion, when relatives wanted several of the young Aboriginal girls for wife exchange with other Aboriginal groups, Taplin sheltered the girls in his house (Taplin Journals, 5-6 November 1859). Taplin was also horrified at infanticide and funeral practices among the Lower Murray people. It was upon these customs he blamed the decrease in the Aboriginal population in the region (Taplin Journals, 26 June 1861 & 30 November 1864). Taplin may have considered them to be of recent origin.

Taplin deliberately undermined the authority of the old people and their customs in the Lower Murray. His pupils were encouraged to eat prohibited food, such as wallaby meat, in defiance of the local belief that only older men could do this (Taplin Journals, 4 December 1864). He also attempted to alter their marriage customs by stopping the practice of polygyny. Taplin forced one Aboriginal man, who had become a Christian, to give up the younger of his two wives (Taplin Journals, 31 January & 12 February 1865). In retribution, relatives of the rejected wife seriously clubbed the father of this man (Taplin Journals, 28 February 1865 & 22 April 1865). Clearly, Taplin and what he stood for were perceived as a threat to the culture of many Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal people responded in a number of ways to Taplin's attempts to destroy the basis of their pre-European culture. For instance, on one occasion the senior Aboriginal men in the district tried to rush

through the initiation of several of the young men that Taplin wanted in his school (Taplin Journals, 2 November 1859). At another time, senior Aboriginal men at Point McLeay assaulted some young men who were working for Taplin on the mission (Taplin Journals, 9 June 1862). Taplin did not himself escape violence; once a spear was thrown at him when he attempted to break up a fight in an Aboriginal camp (Taplin Journals, 7 November 1859). Taplin records that most Aboriginal people did not like Europeans interfering in their disputes (Taplin Journals, 16 March 1860 &, 25 November 1864).

In spite of resistance from Taplin, the ceremonial life of the Aboriginal people of the Lower Murray persisted throughout his time at Point McLeay. For example, Taplin was informed by Aboriginal people late in 1859 that there was to be a 'Grand Corroborey' at a place about a hundred kilometres away at Toomboolun (Taplin Journals, 24 November 1859). Expected here were Aboriginal people from Encounter Bay, Goolwa, Mundoo Island, Milang, Point Malcolm, Lake Albert, Murray River, Rufus River, Moorundee and the Darling district. On another occasion, Lower Murray people met Moorundee and Rufus River Aboriginal people for a ceremony at Randall's station (Taplin Journals, 18 March 1862).[32] Taplin was very much against these large Aboriginal gatherings. He described them as 'filthy' and 'wicked' (Taplin Journals, 7 March 1861 & 23 January 1865).

6.3.5 The Relationship of the Mission With Local Europeans

From the beginning, Taplin encountered resistance from many of the local pastoralists who were against the establishment of the mission in the Point McLeay area. A significant opponent was John Baker. He sent a complaint about the location of the mission to the Government.[33] Nevertheless, Baker must have had some tolerance for Aboriginal people, as they were working and living on his property at Narrung station (Taplin Journals, 11 December 1861 & 1 January 1862). Mayson from Lake Albert Station was also against the mission located at Point McLeay (Taplin Journals, 23-25 July 1859). He claimed that it would be a disturbance to stock watering there. Taplin later also fell into dispute with Allan McFarlane and the Bowman brothers, who ran large pastoral properties in the Lower Murray (Linn, 1988, p.54). The pastoralists clearly resented the status quo being upset by missionary activity.

Taplin's role in Aboriginal affairs in the Lower Murray was therefore considered an intrusion by many of the local Europeans already established there. For instance, in the first few months, Taplin was forced to go out hunting for his food. This was because neighbouring stations refused to sell Taplin their meat (Taplin Journals, 6 December 1859). Taplin discovered that there were many European men who were trying to attract the young Aboriginal men away from Point McLeay to work for them (Taplin Journals, 21 April 1862). Some reportedly even offered to outside Aboriginal people money to be used to get their friends, particularly the young men, away from the mission. European settlers wanted to retain Aboriginal people as suitable objects for economic exploitation.

In spite of the fact that Taplin had earlier acknowledged the help of George Mason at Wellington, he later suspected that the Sub-Protector's wife was discouraging Aboriginal people from sending their children to the Point McLeay school. Taplin stated 'I say with confidence, and God knows it is true, that these natives are perishing through the evil influence of wicked white people standing in the way of their salvation (Taplin Journals, 2 June 1864).' Taplin accused the fishermen at Baker's Bluff of deliberately making Sunday their trading day with the local Aboriginal people in order to interfere with his mission work (Taplin Journals, 16 October 1864). Taplin was disconcerted at the effect that activities away from Point McLeay, such as shearing along the Murray River, had on his Sabbath meetings (Taplin Journals, 9 October 1864). Taplin also accused other local white people of spreading rumours about the harmful aspects of the Point McLeay area (Taplin Journals, 20 April 1865). In spite of the fact that some local Europeans attended the church at Point McLeay, many settlers considered that the mission was unnecessary.

Taplin's relationship with the police was not always amicable. He blamed the police at Goolwa and Wellington for sending Aboriginal people from their areas to Point McLeay to fight (Taplin Journals, 20 August 1861). George Mason was made Inspector in 1854, and was placed in charge of a 'native police' force at Wellington (Linn, 1988, p.44). Mason had under him one corporal and twelve Aboriginal constables, six of whom were mounted. Concerning the 'native police', Taplin considered these Aboriginal men to be the worst to deal with on the mission (Taplin Journals, 30 April 1860). Taplin later accused a local policeman, probably Mason, of illegally supplying liquor to the Aboriginal people (Taplin Journals, 21 April 1866).

6.3.6 Aboriginal-run Farms in the Lower Murray

In the last decade of the 19th century another group of Aboriginal men attempted to leave mission life for farming. From 1892, several Aboriginal families, headed by George Muckray, William MacHughes, George Karpany and Matthew Kropinyeri, left Point McLeay and struck out on their own at East Wellington (Jenkin, 1979, pp.229-230). At about this time, several Aboriginal families moved to reserves along the Coorong (Jenkin, 1979, p.231). The men had been trained as farmers on the mission, and included John Laelinyeri, Pompey Jackson, Peter Campbell, Peter Gollan, Henry Lampard and Alfred Cameron. This movement was in keeping with the colonial incorporation phase of Aboriginal administration, which attempted to make Aboriginal people into a rural-based working class (Appendix 10.1). However, for the same reasons experienced by earlier Aboriginal farmers from Point McLeay, most failed. The majority of Aboriginal reserves in the Lower Murray that remained were on poor sections of land, often with little or no fresh water. At best, the land could only be used for grazing, and as a base for fishing and hunting activities. During the 1912 drought, several of these Aboriginal farmers were allowed to run their horses on Point McLeay (Jenkin, 1979, p.257).

The majority of the properties that Aboriginal people farmed were leased from the Government. These included the Three Mile Camp near Tailem Bend, the Needles on the Coorong near Meningie, and Rabbit Island in the Coorong opposite Magrath Flat (Fig.8.1). Some of these properties were reserves earlier controlled by Point McLeay Mission. The holders of the Government leases were generally Aboriginal people who were considered by the Aboriginal welfare authorities to be well on the way to living like Europeans. An Aboriginal person, who was a long time resident of Point McLeay, told me that the Mission authorities favoured particular 'light skin' families in farm training. Reportedly, this was precisely because they were perceived as being more easily 'assimilated' into the general population. One early holder of a Government lease was Alfred Cameron (Jenkin, 1979, p.231). This Aboriginal man ran the Needles property on the Coorong so well that he made enough of a profit to eventually acquire a neighbouring freehold property called Trunkena.[34] In the Lower Murray genealogies compiled by Norman B. Tindale during fieldwork from 1938 to 1939, this man and his descendants were described as having 'gone white'.[35] This is possibly a quote from a Mission superintendent from whom Tindale obtained data.

Although agriculture was a tool of missionaries to 'civilise' the Aboriginal people, many of those who have lived on Aboriginal-run farms retained a distinctly Aboriginal view of the environment (Section 8.2). Such people were put on farms in the mission period prior to government control. They included the Cameron, Lampard, Rankine, Watson and Bonney families. Some of the members of these families were eventually absorbed back into the broader Aboriginal population based on missions and government stations. A few have been able to incorporate themselves into the rural landowning class, and yet have still maintained strong links to their Aboriginal relatives. Cameron and his family were considered to be successfully 'assimilated' into the broader landowning rural society. This is ironic as my fieldwork has shown that their descendants have proven to be among the most knowledgeable informants on pre-European-type Aboriginal culture of the Lower Murray and South East regions. This illustrates the fallibility of the 'assimilation' concept, and the independence of history and culture.

Some of the Aboriginal people placed on farms lived in areas which had retained many of their pre-European natural resources. One Aboriginal person I have interviewed contrasted the situation of Aboriginal people living on an Aboriginal leased property at Blackford in the South East, with those living at Point McLeay. He claimed that there were more natural resources at Blackford to utilise, because the Point McLeay area was cleared much earlier. The informant suggested that most people living at Blackford had been able to maintain much more of the hunting and gathering skills used by the 'old people' than at Point McLeay. Some Aboriginal people with farming backgrounds have developed deep interests in the resources of the local environment, due to their interests in the productivity of the land. Partly for this reason, such people were valuable informants for my published ethnobotanical studies (Section 4.2.14 & 8.2)

6.3.7 Lower Murray Fringecamps

For most of the colonial incorporation phase, the Point McLeay Mission has been the centre of Ngarrindjeri cultural affairs. Nevertheless, a few Aboriginal families in the region have lived away from direct Mission Station influence. Some of these people were able to run farms operating chiefly on Aboriginal leases, whereas others lived in fringecamps (Section 2.4.2 & 8.2). From the beginning of the government welfare phase, Aboriginal people who did not live on mission stations, were forced into marginal areas, often

surrounding towns. Here, those known to have Aboriginal ancestry were subjected to the 'colour bar' until the 1960s (R.M. & C.H. Berndt, 1951, pp.98-99; Linn, 1988, pp.187-188). This prevented them from entering local cafes, boarding-houses, hotels and even certain shops and hospitals. This was generally the case no matter whether the Aboriginal people had money or not. A curfew operated in most Lower Murray towns, requiring Aboriginal people to leave after certain hours. According to Aboriginal informants, now living in the Meningie township, the site of the One Mile Camp was as close to the town as they were allowed to live before the 1960s. In Adelaide at this time, skin colour was important in determining avenues of employment (R.M. & C.H. Berndt, 1951, p.239). The history of the fringecamps is a study of European racism.

Up until the 1960s, many of the Murray Basin and South East towns, including Victor Harbor, Swan Reach, Berri, Mannum, Murray Bridge, Tailem Bend, Wellington, Meningie, Kingston, and Bordertown, had satellite fringecamps made up of tin and bag huts (Fig.6.7). There were also a few families living in camps on Aboriginal reserves along the Coorong. Many of these camps were situated on unused crown land regarded as marginal to European use. Such sites included the steep banks of the Murray River, around the edges of swamps, and along roadways. Most camps were on the outskirts of towns within walking distance for obtaining food and for the schooling of children. Due to the predominance of European factors in the choice of fringecamps location, most were not located at places of earlier Aboriginal significance. They were therefore situated at points of the landscape generally devoid of Aboriginal place names. As a result, Aboriginal people referred to them with European derived terms associated with distance, such as the 'One Mile', 'Two Mile', 'Three Mile', and 'Murray Bridge Camp'. The rich body of pre-European place names became disused as Aboriginal modes of travel approached that of that local non-Aboriginal population, predominantly by horse and cart, and then finally by motor vehicle.[36] Although fringecamps existed in opposition to the welfare system, they were nonetheless European entities.

Fringecamps took the overflow of people from the mission stations, and Aboriginal run farms. For example, my fieldwork has established that one of the earliest inhabitants of the One Mile Camp was a woman who left Point McLeay in the 1930s (Fig.6.8). This person told me that she went away on foot across the paddocks from Point McLeay towards Meningie to avoid a 'fire-stick marriage' to an 'old camp
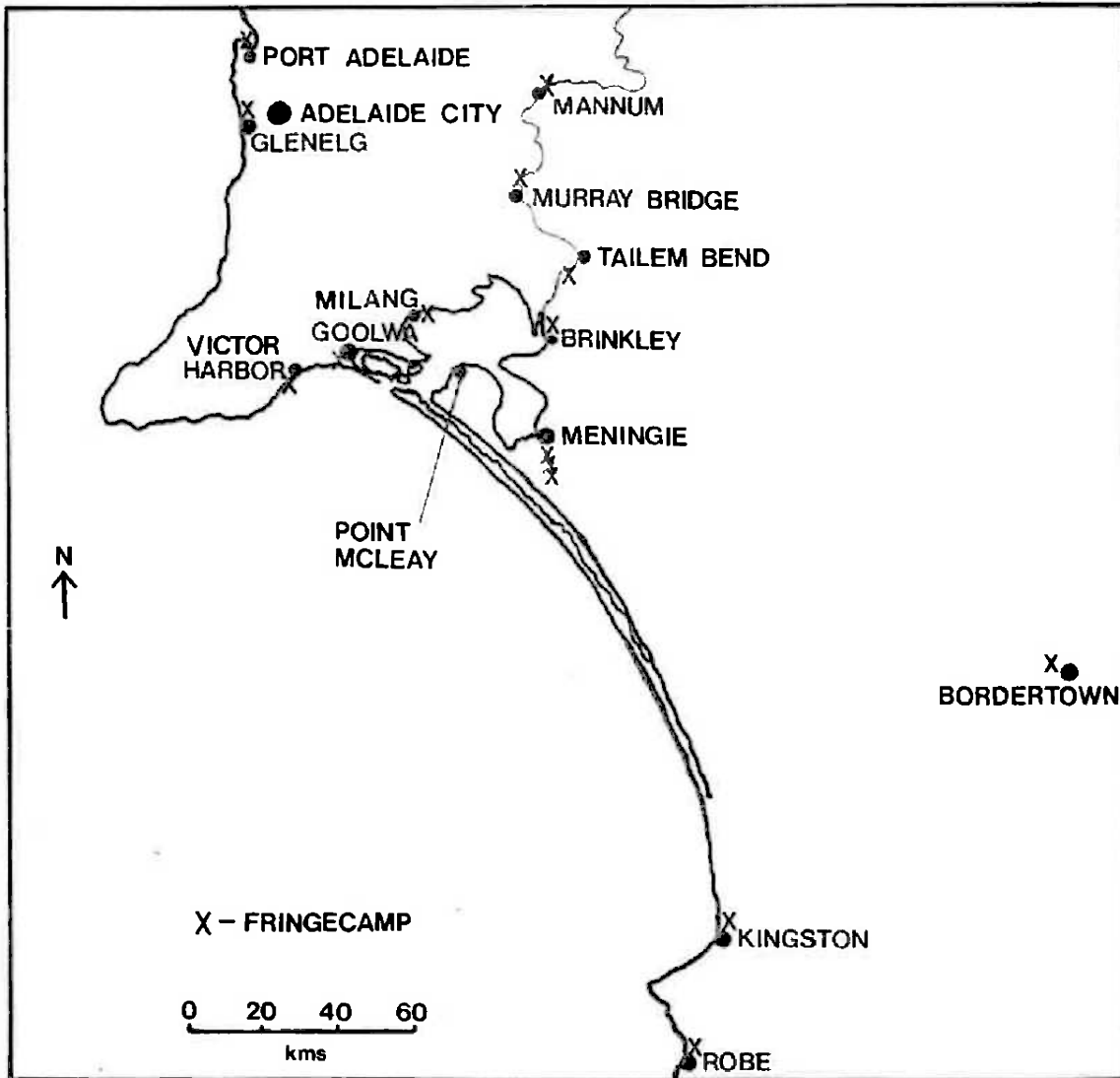
Fig.6.7 20th century fringecamps sites in the Lower Murray

Fig.6.8 Steve Hemming of the South Australian Museum recording site details of the One-Mile Camp from Marj Koolmatrie, one of its earliest inhabitants, 1989 (Photo: P.A. Clarke)

Fig.6.9 Steve Hemming (right) of the South Australian Museum and Robert Day (left) of the Meningie Aboriginal community recording the use of a freshwater soak on the edge of the Coorong near Bonney Reserve, 1989 (Photo: P.A. Clarke)

black' living in a wurley on the fringe of Point McLeay. Others who lived in the fringecamps had links to distant Aboriginal reserves, either in the South East or up the Murray River. From the 1930s, the pressure upon the resources of Point McLeay increased as the Aboriginal population in the Lower Murray region expanded (Section 2.1.3). As a place to take the overflow, fringecamps were a necessary part of the Aboriginal landscape. Most of these camps either started in the 1930s, or if already in existence, became enlarged at that time.

The fringecamps formed a network of places used by travelling groups. Aboriginal movements in the 1940s provided a more or less constant stream of visitors passing between Point McLeay, Murray Bridge and Adelaide (R.M. & C.H. Berndt, 1951, p.204). These camps were important stopover points, due to restrictions as to where Aboriginal people could stay. Some people, including a few itinerant Europeans, stayed overnight, while others remained for years. The location of the camps upon marginal crown land meant that local landowners generally did not antagonise the Aboriginal people living here. In fringecamps, Aboriginal people actively monitored direct contact with non-Aboriginal people.

In spite of the fringecamp people being geographically close to white Australians, they were still socially just as distant from them as the Aboriginal people living on more remote government reserves (Section 2.4.2). Fringe dwellers were therefore not considered by authorities as being far on the way to assimilation into the broader Australian society. Nevertheless, although physical conditions in the camps were poor, these places appear to have been favoured with a relatively high level of physical mobility.[37] Compared to Point McLeay people, camp dwellers had greater opportunity to take up seasonal work, such as harvesting and shearing, or to gain employment in the railways and on road and drain construction projects. Here too, the independence from mission superintendents was another attraction. In comparison to the mission people, fringe dwellers had contact with a greater number of non-Aboriginal groups, but were structurally less involved with any particular agency.

The location of the fringecamps provided a context in which Aboriginal people from many diverse backgrounds were able to interact. For instance, in the Lower Murray, Aboriginal people from the South East of South Australia and from Victoria and New South Wales would often stay overnight at these camps on the way to Adelaide or other large regional centres. Even among permanent camp occupants, their

location, and even the actual site of their bag and tin huts, would vary according to inter-family politics. With the material investment in the settlement being low, Aboriginal mobility was not threatened. The fringecamps had significance beyond the sub-grouping of Ngarrindjeri people, and functioned as part of an extended Aboriginal network in southern Australia.

Away from Point McLeay, fringe dwellers had perhaps more need of bush resources, due to their desired or forced independence. Bush foods greatly added to the diet of the camp people, and they often travelled far to obtain it. The men in the fringecamps periodically brought home from the scrub kangaroos, emu, rabbits, wild fowl, shellfish and fish for their families to eat. Children returning from schools in the town, would gather foods such as fruits and wattle gum for eating while walking and for back at the camp. Fresh water soaks and wells were dug for their water supplies (Fig.6.9). Away from the Point McLeay Mission, alcohol was often easily obtained (R.M. & C.H. Berndt, 1951, p.218). Money could be obtained by collecting 'dead wool' (stray loose fragments), bottles, and by selling water rat skins and rabbits (Abdulla, 1993; Grace, 1990, p.158).

Although part of the Ngarrindjeri community, the day to day life of a fringe dweller was significantly different from that of the mission-based people. According to Aboriginal informants, these camps closed down in the mid-1960s when government funded housing became available to them in the local towns. Nevertheless, those Aboriginal people who were more firmly locked into the welfare system, that is the 'mission people', were the first to receive houses in the towns of the Lower Murray. In spite of the closeness of the fringe dwellers to the homes of the non-Aboriginal inhabitants, the Point McLeay residents were considered more easily assimilated. Although the mission and fringecamp contexts differed both structurally and spatially, they nevertheless were essentially the product of the same system that marginalised the Aboriginal population. The combination of unregulated occupation of land in fringecamps and the controlled environment to which Aboriginal people were increasingly regulated on mission settlements, constituted a 'deviant' landscape, as described by Sibley (1992, p.120). This served to confirmed the outside status of Aboriginal people and to reinforce the boundary between the dominant society and minority groups.

6.3.8 The Decline of Point McLeay

After George Taplin died in 1879, his son Fred Taplin became superintendent. He appears never to have gained the confidence of the majority of Aboriginal people on the mission. He was on several occasions officially charged for sexual misconduct against Aboriginal girls at Point McLeay (Jenkin, 1979, pp.174-175). These allegations were made by local white people and senior Aboriginal church people at Point McLeay. Fred Taplin died in mysterious circumstances in a hotel fire in Adelaide in 1889. David Blackwell, formerly the farm overseer at Point McLeay and a son-in-law of George Taplin, then took over as superintendent (Jenkin, 1979, p.190). The extent to which the activities of the church now dominated affairs at Point McLeay is illustrated by the senior Aboriginal people complaining that they would have preferred the superintendent to be a religious man. From 1893, T.M. Sutton, who had been superintendent at the Point Pearce Aboriginal Mission on Yorke Peninsula for thirteen years, was appointed in charge at Point McLeay (Jenkin, 1979, p.192). In 1898, Sutton was succeeded by a clergymen, Frederick Leak, who lasted for only a year. F.W. Garnett followed from 1900 to 1905, and Ambrose Redman from 1906 to 1912.

In the 1890s, boat building at Point McLeay had some success (Jenkin, 1979, pp.206-210,229). However, it eventually faded due to competition from local towns. In 1895, forty Aboriginal shearers and six youths from Point McLeay were sent to a station at Hill River near Clare in the Mid North (Jenkin, 1979, p.210). This practice continued until 1904. Around the turn of the century, the amount of available work in the Lower Murray was low, due to a statewide drought (Jenkin, 1979, pp.210-211). Many Aboriginal people were forced onto the mission due to lack of employment. This also included some of the Aboriginal farmers who were experiencing hardship. So many people were requiring housing and assistance at Point McLeay, that in 1905 fourteen 'part-Europeans' were sent away as they were thought to have the best chance to find work (Jenkin, 1979, p.212). The clearing of Narrung Station and the building of smaller farms gave some employment to Point McLeay people, as did road-making (Jenkin, 1979, pp.212-214). Nevertheless, Aboriginal unemployment in the region remained high, consistently above 50% (Jenkin, 1979, p.215). The peak employment season was summertime, when local farmers were harvesting. In the summer of 1908, Aboriginal workers from Point McLeay made their first trip to Renmark in the Riverland. This was to work in the newly established fruit industry, a practice that eventually led to a sizeable Aboriginal population from the Lower Murray becoming permanently based there (Section 7.4.2).

By the turn of the century, the deterioration of the physical environment of the Lower Murray began to have an impact upon the local Aboriginal community. For instance, the salt water entering Lake Alexandrina in 1901 destroyed the lucrative wool washing industry that had been established at Point McLeay in the early 1880s (Jenkin, 1979, pp.177-178,206). In 1905, the Aboriginal fishing industry, started by George Taplin, ended due to competition with white fishermen who had the funds to obtain better technology (Jenkin, 1979, p.211). The saltiness of the lake, exacerbated by irrigation schemes up river, had also decreased natural fish stocks. The acquisition by the government of Narrung Station, under the Closer Settlement Act, for subdividing into farming allotments occurred in 1907 (Holtham, cited in Padman, 1987, p.10). The loss of this station as a whole was sorely felt by the Point McLeay people, who were previously allowed by the manager, George Hackett, free range over it for hunting (McCourt & Mincham, 1987, p.11). The Aborigines' Friends' Association responded to the planned subdivision by stating that 'it would be advisable to make the boundary between them [farmers] and the blacks as wide as possible'.[38]

By the turn of the century, the Aborigines' Friends' Association was experiencing financial problems in the running of Point McLeay (Jenkin, 1979, pp.113-115). Unlike the Point Pearce Mission on Yorke Peninsula, Point McLeay did not have enough arable land to work. In reaction to the 'experimental value' of some missions, C. Eaton Taplin stated 'I claim then, our right policy would be to form colonies of natives on some of the better tracts of country, place officers over them who would teach them the arts of rearing cattle and sheep and cultivating the soil....'[39] The Aborigines' Friends' Association made attempts to gain more land from the Government.[40] The dividing up of the Narrung estate was an opportunity for the mission to enlarge its holdings. However, the Government 'could not give the Association any of the Narrung land, because it was too expensive and many settlers wanted it.'[41] From the outset of colonisation, the needs of European settlers consistently came before those of the local Aboriginal population.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Point McLeay became run down. For instance, in 1909 the jetty at Point McLeay had fallen into disrepair and was no longer useable.[42] The Point Malcolm jetty was used from then onwards. The stress the Association was suffering led it to move in 1907 for the state government to take over the operation of Point McLeay.[43] In the past, the South Australian Government had more or less taken an ad hoc approach to the running of Aboriginal affairs in the state, virtually

leaving the whole of the Lower Murray region in the control of the <u>Aborigines' Friends' Association</u>. It now became apparent that a more active role was required of the state. This need contributed to the passing of the <u>Aborigines Act</u>, 1911.

6.4 Government Control Over Aboriginal Affairs

I will now provide a brief overview of government legislation affecting Aboriginal affairs of the Lower Murray. From the outset of colonisation, the Government of South Australia chiefly controlled the Aboriginal population through the office of Aboriginal Protectors and Sub-Protectors. Rations were periodically given out by these officers in order to maintain good relations between the settlers and the local Aboriginal community. This form of management was questioned in the 1860s by a Parliamentary Select Comittee with no real response. By the turn of the century, it was time to reconsider government policy with respect to 'native affairs'. This section discusses the main bodies of legislation that governed the management of Aboriginal affairs in South Australia. An outline is provided elsewhere of other government acts that had impact upon the Aboriginal population (Appendix 10.1).

6.4.1 The Significance of the <u>1860</u> & <u>1899 Select Committee Reports</u>

In 1857, South Australia became a self-governing colony. This meant it was able to develop its own policies in Aboriginal affairs. In the previous year, the Aboriginal Protectorate had been abolished (Jenkin, 1979, p.74). The responsibility was largely transferred to the Minister for Crown Lands. The <u>Aborigines' Friends' Association</u>, formed in 1859, also took over some of the previous functions of the Protectorate, particularly in relation to the Lower Murray region. In 1860, the complaints to the government, by pastoralists such as John Baker (Section 6.3.5), led to the setting up of a <u>Select Committee</u> to investigate the status of Aboriginal affairs in South Australia (Jenkin, 1979, pp.84-85). In September 1860, Taplin received orders to give evidence at the <u>Select Committee</u> of the Legislative Council (Taplin Journals, 13 & 20 September 1860). Between 26 and 27 September 1860, Taplin was before the <u>Select Committee</u> for a total of five hours (Taplin Journals, 26-27 September 1860). Much of the questioning, even when people other than Taplin were examined, concerned the issue of whether Point McLeay was successful as an Aboriginal mission.

The Report clearly indicated a belief that the problem of the Aboriginal population would solve itself. It states that the Aboriginal 'race is doomed to extinction, and it would only be a question of time when the reserves would again revert to the Crown (1860 Select Committee Report, p.60).' It concluded that the Aboriginal population was generally dying out. The Aboriginal Protectorate was re-established to help ease their passing. Ronald and Catherine Berndt stated that the report, 'like other official documents of this period, reveals with disturbing clarity the perplexity and ignorance that clouded contemporary approach to aboriginal affairs (1951, p.54)'. In the 1860s, the 'half caste' Aboriginal population was not considered to pose a threat in itself. It was seen to be in effect a transitory stage towards the eventual extinction of the Aboriginal population.

With the approach of the 20th century, the South Australian Government considered Aboriginal legislation. The 1899 Select Committee Report investigated the implications of bringing in a proposed bill.[44] However, given both the line of questioning and the backgrounds of the people examined, it is clear that the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory were the main concern of the Committee. From 1863 to 1911, the Northern Territory was administered by South Australia and its legislation. The 1860 Select Committee Report was dominated by discussion about Point McLeay. However, in the 1899 Report, this group received little mention.

The Aborigines Bill in South Australia was not passed until 1911. The 1899 Select Committee Report can be seen as the first move by the Government to take over the management of Aboriginal affairs. The main finding of the 1899 Select Committee was that the 'Bill in its present form would be inoperative for any beneficial purpose' (1899 Select Committee, Minutes). Mr T.R. Bowman, a pastoralist from Lake Albert, said to the Committee that the Act should only apply to northern South Australia and the Northern Territory (1899 Select Committee, Evidence, p.102). He claimed Aboriginal people from the southern regions were 'within civilisation now'. Bowman thought that the proposed bill was too restrictive, and would probably stop local Europeans from employing Aboriginal people. Bowman said that he was a major employer of Aboriginal people from Point McLeay. He considered the work he gave them to be a form of compensation for taking their land.

The 1899 Select Committee came up with a number of recommendations. The most notable was the complete transference of the responsibility for Aboriginal welfare to the government. This meant increasing the authority of the Aborigines Protector. The Committee was concerned that Aboriginal people were being made to leave their districts. It was also considered that Europeans and Chinese people (in the Northern Territory) were exploiting them. Abuse of alcohol and opium was put high on the list of problems faced by Aboriginal people. The bartering of government goods received by Aboriginal people was also a cause of concern. The issue of certificates to employers of Aboriginal people to prevent 'illicit intercourse' of such people with Aboriginal women was one recommendation of the Committee. Although the 1899 Select Committee Report advocated more government control over the lives of Aboriginal people, it suggested that certain Aboriginal people be exempted from the legislation.

6.4.2 The Aborigines Act, 1911

The Aborigines Act of 1911 was significant as the first piece of legislation to be passed in South Australia specifically aimed at Aboriginal people. From its structure, it apparently drew upon the findings of the 1899 Select Committee Report. For instance, the Act was aimed at preventing the 'slavery' of Aboriginal women and the abuse of Aboriginal people by the Chinese and Malays.[45] However, it is ironic that the findings of the Select Committee (1899) were specifically directed at Aboriginal people residing in the Northern Territory, but by the time the Act became law, this region was no longer under the jurisdiction of South Australia, having been handed over to the Federal Government earlier in the same year. Nevertheless, the Act was a policy for the segregation of Aboriginal people into institutions to enable their supervision and tutoring (Summers, 1986a). This was the beginning of what I have termed the government welfare phase.

The Aborigines Act gave extraordinary powers to the Chief Protector and the newly created Aborigines Department. Superintendents of Aboriginal institutions were also given greater discretionary power. Under this Act, Aboriginal people had virtually no powers and no rights of redress. The regulations under the Act specified the authority of the white administration over them.[46] It also stated the working hours of Aboriginal people, and outlined a strict code of behaviour. Those guilty under the Act, 'shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding ten pounds, or to imprisonment, with or without hard labour, for any term not

exceeding two months'. Towns and municipalities could be declared prohibited areas for Aboriginal people. The Protector was the legal guardian of every Aboriginal person, until they were twenty one. Aboriginal affairs in South Australia were run by this Act for the next twenty three years. It was essentially a policy of protection and segregation.

6.4.3 The 1913 Royal Commission

The Aborigines Act of 1911 failed to silence public debate on Aboriginal welfare which generally called on the Government to take more responsibility (Summers, 1986a, p.491). For this reason, a Royal Commission was set up, which gave special attention to missions. Both European and Aboriginal witnesses were called. The two pastoralists from the Lower Murray region who gave evidence, Mr A.P. Bowman and Mr G. Hackett, spoke highly of the skills of Aboriginal people in working the land.[47] The Commission concluded that contrary to public opinion, the Aboriginal people were not dying out. Although 'full blood' Aboriginal people were rapidly declining, the 'half caste' population was growing. A major concern to the Commission was the increasing number of people who were coming within the scope of the Aborigines Act.

The Royal Commission recommended that greater government control be exercised over Aboriginal welfare, and in particular, they recommended that missions in the southern regions be taken out of private hands. The Commission also stated that more efforts must be made to assimilate 'part Aborigines' into the wider economy. In 1915, the Aboriginal mission at Point Pearce became a government station (R.M. & C.H. Berndt, 1951, pp.93-94). Point McLeay followed suit in 1916.

6.4.4 The Aborigines Act, 1934 - 1939

Prior to the Aborigines Act, 1934 - 1939, authority in Aboriginal Affairs was vested in a Chief Protector (R.M. & C.H. Berndt, 1951, p.106). After this time, the Aborigines Protection Board took over. The new act introduced a number of new regulations. For example, it became an offence for a non-Aboriginal male to consort with an Aboriginal female unless they were legally married. The Protection Board had the power to send Aboriginal people out of Adelaide back to the missions (R.M. & C.H. Berndt, 1951, p.250). The

definition of an Aboriginal was expanded from 'full blood' and 'half caste' people to all those who had Aboriginal ancestry. This was because even some 'near white' Aboriginal people were deemed unfit to be responsible for themselves (Summers, 1986a, p.493). A system of exemptions from the Act gave some freedom to 'assimilated' Aboriginal people. However, exemptions caused some bitterness and division within the Aboriginal population. According to Aboriginal informants, the accompanying exemption cards were referred to as 'dog licences'. In spite of the exemptions, the 'colour bar' existing in the broader Australian society tended to exclude all Aboriginal people regardless of skin colour (Summers, 1986a, p.493).

The network of officers working under the Board included many local police who operated as protectors or sub-protectors. They issued weekly rations to old and sick Aboriginal people, and reported to the Aborigines Protection Board in Adelaide. Each Aboriginal camp was the responsibility of a particular police station (R.M. & C.H. Berndt, 1951, p.204). For example, the 'uncontrolled camp' at Brinkley (Maragon) was under the jurisdiction of the Tailem Bend police. Point McLeay was within the area covered by the Meningie police. Many Aboriginal people were confused as to whether police officers were acting in their capacity as policemen or as protectors (Section 7.1.5).

In 1936, the Aborigines' Friends' Association recommended that a Commonwealth solution to the 'half caste problem' be sought.[48] The Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Authorities in 1937 pushed for more national policy and the adoption of a new assimilation policy (Summers, 1986a, p.493). According to Ronald and Catherine Berndt (1951, p.56), the Commonwealth Conferences on Aborigines were far more tolerant and realistic than previous state Select Committees. The public talks given by David Unaipon, an Aboriginal man from Point McLeay, on such subjects as Aboriginal intelligence and the benefits of assimilation, were much recorded by the media.[49] Nevertheless, the assimilation policy was essentially still aimed at cultural change forced by a majority upon a minority. Public debate over Aboriginal welfare did not cease with the Aborigines Act, 1934 - 1939.

6.4.5 The Postwar Years

A brief description of Aboriginal affairs since the Second World War is now provided. As the events during this period are well known by many of my informants, this section serves as a background to the accounts of contemporary Aboriginal life in the Lower Murray described in more detail later (Chapter 7 & 8).

In many ways, the Second World War was a turning point in Aboriginal relations with other Australians. During the war, thirty men from Point McLeay enlisted (Linn, 1988, p.189). A further fifteen men from Point McLeay were used in the war industries. In the civilian sector, Aboriginal labourers were in great demand (R.M. & C.H. Berndt, 1951, pp.234,238). Their labour was used in factories, on the wharves and in the railways. Employment attracted many people to Adelaide. In the last four years of the war, the Aboriginal population in South Australia increased dramatically. (R.M. & C.H. Berndt, 1951, pp.234-235). This was in part due to a large number of Aboriginal people from the Northern Territory being evacuated to Adelaide. Many Aboriginal people who migrated to Adelaide lived in 'near-slum conditions' in the West End.[50] The increasing movement of indigenous rural groups into urban areas after the Second World War also occurred in other parts of the world. [51]

The experiences in the armed forces made many Aboriginal service men dissatisfied about their social position back home. In particular, ex-army men were very critical of the drinking laws. Ronald and Catherine Berndt (1951, p.245) recorded one Aboriginal person who said 'It's all right for them to make use of us in war-time. They don't mind us working for them.' As demonstrated by Beckett (1987) for the Torres Straits Islanders, the involvement of returned indigenous soldiers in agitating for equal rights was significant. Industrialisation since World War Two has led to a population drain of the rural areas in favour of Adelaide (Williams, 1974, p.63). Aboriginal people have also been subjected to these forces (Gale, 1972; Section 2.1.3). The 'urban' voice of the Aboriginal inhabitants started to be heard in Adelaide.

In the 1950s, the Protection Board began taking advantage of the movement of Aboriginal people into the city. Aboriginal 'half castes' were placed into housing trust homes in suburban areas.[52] Although Aboriginal people did not possess Australian citizenship, the welfare policy was one of assimilation. The

government tried to encourage Aboriginal people away from reserves, particularly those who were thought to be easily assimilated (Jenkin, 1979, p.274). In my experience, some Aboriginal informants sadly reflect upon this period when many of the historic buildings at Point McLeay were demolished by the authorities as they became vacant. This practice was undertaken to prevent the houses on the reserves from being re-occupied.

The Aborigines Act of 1962 removed many of the previous restrictions upon the lives of the Aboriginal people. Nevertheless, government policy was still essentially one of assimilation. In 1966, three bills passed by the South Australian Parliament had a significant effect upon Aboriginal affairs. These were the Aboriginal Lands Trust Bill, 1966; the Prohibition of Discrimination Bill, 1966; and the Aboriginal Affairs Act Amendment Bill, 1966 - 1967. The Aboriginal Lands Trust Bill vested all Aboriginal reserves of the settled areas in the Aboriginal Lands Trust, which was Aboriginal-run (Section 8.6.2). The Prohibition of Discrimination Bill made it an offence to discriminate publicly against Aboriginal people, therefore ending the 'colour-bar' - at least in theory. The Aboriginal Affairs Act Amendment removed the requirement for the Register of Aborigines and allowed for the establishment of Aboriginal Reserve Councils. These changes constituted a policy shift away from assimilation towards self-determination.

6.4.6 Commonwealth Management of Aboriginal Affairs

Prior to the 1967 referendum, each state in Australia was autonomous with respect to its Aboriginal affairs policy.[53] Ronald and Catherine Berndt (1951, pp.100-104) outline the differences and similarities between the Aboriginal affairs policies of the various states. After Federation, there were a number of conferences where Aboriginal issues were discussed. For instance, in 1937, the South Australian representative at such a conference, Professor J.B. Cleland, stated that 'there was no valid reason why the Commonwealth should not contribute towards the support of natives in all parts of Australia'.[54] Certainly all Aboriginal people were in a similar predicament. In 1961, a Commonwealth-state Conference on Aboriginal welfare held in Canberra, concluded that Aboriginal people 'should eventually live in the same way as other Australians'.[55]

The 1967 Commonwealth Referendum changed the constitution so that the Federal Government was allowed to enter the realm of Aboriginal welfare. However, it was not until 1971 that a Federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs was formed. When this occurred, much of the policy planning and co-ordinating functions related to Aboriginal welfare were transferred from the states to the Federal Government. The referendum not only forced states, such as Queensland, into reforming its Aboriginal welfare policies, but gave Aboriginal people Australian citizenship. The passing of the Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander Commission Act 1989, enabled the restructuring of the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs. The department, now called the Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander Commission (ATSIC), is progressively being handed over to management by Aboriginal people (Section 8.6.4). This transfer is in keeping with the current policy of one of increasing self-determination for Aboriginal people in a multicultural society. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people consider that the handing down of the Mabo decision by the High Court of Australia in 1992[56], which recognised indigenous rights to certain categories of land, will ultimately give them more control over their destiny.

6.5 Conclusion

Aboriginal people throughout South Australia have greatly suffered through the processes of the dispossession of their land, and their progressive social and cultural marginalisation by the European colonists. Although the use of Aboriginal labour by colonists was significant in the earlier stages of settlement, this declined once Europeans had completely transformed the region economically. Some early European activities, such as fishing and pastoralism, had a relatively minor impact upon Aboriginal movement patterns, as they still allowed access to the bulk of the landscape. In contrast, more intensive settlement, particularly farming, imposed severe restrictions upon the Aboriginal lifestyle. By the turn of the century, Aboriginal people had a greatly reduced role in the economy of South Australia. They were not only becoming increasingly geographically isolated on mission reserves, but were socially removed from Europeans. By 1911, when the Aborigines Act was passed, Aboriginal people were firmly categorised according to race, and were effectively institutionalised. Protectionist and segregationist policies helped maintain the endogamy of the Aboriginal population. Although formerly dispersed widely throughout the Lower Murray, Aboriginal people were gradually restricted to the southern parts of the Lower Lakes and

the Coorong area. Their territoriality was imposed upon them. These spatial limitations have had a major impact upon contemporary aspects of Aboriginal relationships to the landscape (Chapter 7 & 8). In the 20th century, a major trend has been the increasing involvement of the Commonwealth Government in Aboriginal issues. With their movements becoming increasingly restricted, they could no longer retain the type of cultural landscape they possessed before European settlement. During the last twenty years, the Aboriginal welfare policy has moved towards self-determination. The process of placing Aboriginal affairs into the hands of Aboriginal people continues.

End Notes

1 Encounter Bay Bob received his land grant through the Aboriginal Protector, Matthew Moorhouse (Protectors Report, 27 July 1840).

2 See the notice for the sale of leases of Aboriginal reserves in the Southern Argus (Strathalbyn), 5 & 12 May 1866; 6,13 & 20 April 1867; 27 July 1867.

3 Williams (1974, pp.49-50,62) & Griffin & McCaskill (1986, p.22). Fenner (1931, p.152) maps the spread of wheat farming into the mallee belt of South Australia.

4 Griffin & McCaskill (1986, p.22). Fenner (1931, p.84) and Williams (1969, pp.84,243-244) provide a description of the European use of the Lower Murray swamps.

5 The present state of the river system in the Lower Murray is described by H.R. Jones (1985, pp.48,53), Walker (1985, pp.83-84) & McCourt & Mincham (1987, p.156). Refer to Chapter 8 for a fuller account of the contemporary physical environment.

6 Meyer left the Encounter Bay district in 1848 and settled at Bethany in the Barossa Valley (Cameron, 1979, p.48). See Section 2.2.1 & 5.2; end note 89 in Chapter 5.

7 Observer, 27 April 1844.

8 A popularised use of this concept is evident in 'The White Invasion Diary 1986'. This publication was financed by the Black Resistance Fund, c/- the Campaign Against Nuclear Energy.

9 Examiner, 28 January 1843.

10 South Australian, 21 November 1840.

11 Examiner, 28 January 1843.

12 Observer, 23 September 1843.

13 'Yacca' is possibly derived from the Adelaide Aboriginal term for resin, which was 'yakko' (Teichelmann & Schurmann, 1840, pt 2, p.59; Dixon et al, 1992, p.148). The yacca or grasstree (Xanthorrhoea species) was a major source of resin which was used by Aboriginal people as artefact cement (Section 4.2.14).

14 Advertiser, 15 May 1866 & 4 February 1868.

15 An Aboriginal informant claimed to me that David Unaipon used to collect skulls for sale to Europeans.

16 Sharp & Tatz (1966) contains a number of papers on the low wage situation of Aboriginal people working in the pastoral industry. Also see R.M. & C.H. Berndt (1951, pp.145,157-166).

17 Adelaide Chronicle and S.Aust. Literary Record, 22 December 1841.

18 South Australian Gazette and Colonial Record, 9 March 1839.

19 Register, 21 November 1840.

20 An account of the 'Maria' massacre is given by Penney in Register, 24 April 1841 & 26 June 1841 & by Pullen in Register, 15 August 1840. Also see Taplin (Journals, 1 December 1862), Davies, 1881, pp.134-135; Bull (1884, pp.116-129), Hastings (1944 [1987, pp.84-90]), & McCourt & Mincham (1987, p.136).

21 Taplin (1879, p.124), C.F. Folland (Register, 8 February 1906), Hastings (1944 [1987, pp.90-91]) & Linn (1988, pp.31-32).

22 Moorhouse correspondence to the Colonial Secretary (Taplin, 1879, pp.115-123). Also see Taplin Journals (1 December 1862) & Summers (1986b, pp.291-294). An account is provided in the Advertiser, 6 February 1907.

23 Quarterly Report by Wyatt dated 1st January 1838, from him to the Colonial Secretary, 3/1838, Public Records Office, Adelaide.

24 An account of Taplin's conversation with an Aboriginal whaler, Solomon, is in the Taplin Journals (5 May 1861). Meyer apparently had great hopes for Solomon.

25 Goyder's influence on the European settlement of South Australia was immense (Williams, 1978).

26 Register, 20 November 1863.

27 This early Aboriginal behaviour has been noted elsewhere, such as at Ramahyuck in eastern Victoria (Attwood, 1989, p.6).

28 Taplin Journals, 11 July 1864. Also see the entry for the 11 February 1860 concerning 'Satanic' practices.

29 Personal field notes. Also see the Tindale Genealogies, Anthropology Archives, S.A. Museum.

30 Taplin Journals, 6,11,27 March 1865. Today, Wonganeen is spelled by descendants as Wanganeen (Kartinyeri, 1985).

31 There are many entries in Taplin's Journals concerning the establishment of the fishing industry. The important references are 21 September 1859, 18 October 1859, 25 November 1859, 22 December 1859, 11 January 1860, 7 February 1860, 15 February, 1 March 1860. Also see Jenkin (1979, pp.97-98,110-111).

32 The 'Randall's station' referred to is possibly that of William Richard Randell, who was a miller with his brothers at Gumeracha. Randell was the first to attempt steam navigation of the Murray River (Section 6.1.2).

33 Taplin Journals, 21 July 1859. Taplin (Journals, 22 July 1859) described Baker as a 'rich' and 'wicked' man.

34 Trunkena near Noonamena. Presently owned and run by descendent Peter Mansfield.

35 Harvard - Adelaide University Expedition papers, Anthropology Archives, S.A. Museum.

36 The Aboriginal place names of the Lower Murray were recorded by Tindale in the 1930s, predominantly from fieldwork with Clarence Long, Reuben Walker, Mary Unaipon, and Albert Karloan (Tindale, 1938, 1974; Tindale & Pretty, 1980). The original maps are housed in the Anthropology Archives, S.A Museum. See Section 5.4.

37 Collman (1979, p.44) states that the fringecamps of Alice Springs offer the inhabitants more control of their own mobility than is available on remote Aboriginal reserves. Sansom (1980, p.7) makes a similar observation for the Darwin region.

38 Register, 7 December 1906.

39 Register, 29 July 1905.

40 Register, 7 December 1906, 23 June 1909.

41 Advertiser, 17 April 1907.

42 Advertiser, 14 December 1909. The Aborigines' Friends' Association was having such severe financial problems, that the jetty was never repaired or replaced. Remains of the jetty's wooden piles can still be seen sticking above the lake surface.

43 Advertiser, 17 April 1907.

44 Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines Bill Together with Minutes of Proceedings (no.77a). Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines Bill 1899 Minutes of Evidence and Appendices (no.77). Government Printer, Adelaide.

45 Register, 19 August 1910 & Advertiser, 22 August 1910.

46 Regulations Under the Aborigines Act, 1911. Government Printer, Adelaide.

47 Report of the Royal Commission on the Aborigines, no.21, Minutes of Evidence, questions 513, 584 & 591.

48 Advertiser, 5 March 1936.

49 For example Advertiser, 13 December 1909, 20 July 1914 & 6 August 1931. Refer to Jenkin (1979, pp.234-236,249-253). Some of Unaipon's work on Lower Murray myths was published by W. Ramsay Smith without acknowledgment (Davis et al, 1990, pp.4,19-52).

50 Accounts of Aboriginal life in Adelaide during the 1940s and 1950s is provide by R.M. & C.H. Berndt (1951, p.236), Inglis (1961) & Grzybowicz [Wilson] (1989). See Section 7.4.1.

51 For example, in New Zealand the movement of the Maori population from rural areas into cities increased markedly during the 1950s (Pawson, 1992, p.25).

52 Advertiser, 18 August 1955.

53 R.M. & C.H. Berndt (1951, pp.100-104) outline the differences and similarities between the Aboriginal affairs policies of the various states.

54 Canberra Times, 24 April 1937.

55 Advertiser, 27 January 1961.

56 High Court of Australia. Chief Judge Mason, Judge Brennan, Judge Deane, Judge Dawson, Judge Toohey, Judge Gaudron. & Judge McHugh. Plantiffs - Eddie Mabo and Ors. Defendant - the State of Queensland. 3 June 1992.

7 Point McLeay - Home, Prison and Cemetery

Previously, I considered how the Aboriginal community in the Lower Murray was gradually forced to live in marginal areas set apart from Europeans. This occurred as the landscape was explored, occupied and then altered by the invaders. In this chapter and the next, the focus is upon contemporary Aboriginal relationships to the landscape of the Lower Murray. Due to the spatial restrictions imposed on the Aboriginal population, this is primarily a treatment of the southern areas, in the vicinity of Point McLeay and the Coorong reserves. The contemporary Aboriginal population has yet to move back into the north western parts of the Lower Murray region (Victor Harbor to Milang) which were earlier depopulated of Aboriginal residents as the result of what I term missionisation (Section 6.4). For this reason, the significance of *places* is given more emphasis in the treatment of the contemporary material, than the whole landscape which has been the focus until now. The cultural analysis of place reveals aspects of contemporary Aboriginal society that help to define 'Ngarrindjeri' people. An investigation of the politics of place will demonstrate that many characteristics of this modern cultural group are the product of Aboriginal relationships to the broader Australian society. Unless referenced, all the material discussed in this chapter is the result of my own fieldwork. Some historical material, from the period after World War Two, is provided as a background. I initially discuss how Aboriginal people, as a population, continue to adapt economically and socially to the spatial and social marginalisation imposed by government policy.

7.1 Point McLeay: A Welfare Town

Point McLeay was established as a mission and a refuge for Aboriginal people against the tide of European settlement. Today, the growth of rural development in the Lower Murray has long since ceased; nevertheless the tourist onslaught continues with lake cruisers and pleasure craft. The Aboriginal population is still experiencing the effects of what I have termed the government welfare phase of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal interaction (Appendix 10.1). Today, Point McLeay still functions as a shield, partially insulating Aboriginal people from the outside world. It shares this function with many other government-supported Aboriginal settlements around the country. About a hundred and thirty people currently live at Point McLeay in houses rented from the Point McLeay Community Council.[1] The population fluctuates with the movement of Aboriginal families to and from Point McLeay, neighbouring

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towns and the low income suburbs of Adelaide. During 1991, there were six hundred and twenty six

Aboriginal people living in the whole Lower Murray region. The total area of the Point McLeay reserve,

including farms, is 3,650 hectares.[2] Due to the historical importance of the former mission at Point

McLeay, this settlement today remains the symbolic, cultural and administrative focus of Aboriginal affairs

in the Lower Murray. This view is shared by government, and local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Older generations of Aboriginal people living today in the Lower Murray, as elsewhere, have experienced a

number of major policy changes in Aboriginal affairs during their lifetime (Section 6.4). As noted above, in

the early part of this century, the Point McLeay Mission Station was primarily maintained as an asylum for

Aboriginal people.[3] Then, during the attempts of the 1960s to 'assimilate' Aboriginal people into the wider

Australian society, houses of those who left Point McLeay to live in rural towns and the suburbs of

Adelaide were demolished. The ultimate transfer of all Aboriginal reserves to general use would have

eventuated from this approach. However, since then, the policy of depopulating the Aboriginal reserves has

been reversed, and Aboriginal people now have substantial government assistance in maintaining the

growth of their settlements. Due to the comparatively large amount of funding presently available for

Aboriginal projects, many new brick homes have recently been built at Point McLeay, some to replace those

made chiefly from weatherboard or iron. There are other ways, discussed below, in which the government

actively funds the Aboriginal population. The involvement of both state and federal governments in the

daily life of most Aboriginal people living in the Lower Murray region is so great that the Aboriginal

community here maintains its cultural identity at the cost of almost total economic dependency on

government funding. I will now focus on the order imposed by outside agencies upon Aboriginal people,

particularly in relation to Point McLeay.

7.1.1 The Management of Point McLeay

Point McLeay is run by a council elected by the Aboriginal residents. The Point McLeay Community

Council makes decisions on such matters as housing at the settlement, and deliberates on issues presented

by various government departments. The Council is comprised solely of adult Aboriginal people residing

on the settlement. There are nine members, including a chairperson and a deputy chairperson. Council

membership is for two years. Elections are held once a year, when four or five of the Council members are

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elected. Changes also occur because of internal population movements within the Aboriginal community of the Lower Murray. Aboriginality is an important attribute of all members, although not all past councillors could strictly be defined as Ngarrindjeri. Within the last five years, a Deputy Chairperson was elected who was originally from Victoria. However, this person's acceptance was based on his marriage into a Lower Murray family. He was therefore given Ngarrindjeri status because of acquired kinship, his Aboriginality, and his residency at Point McLeay. The office of Chairperson, since the establishment of the Council in the 1960s, has been dominated by members of the Rankine family.[4] The position of Chairperson is generally held by a person with a strong personality and powerful persuasive ability. The ordinary Council representatives range from young adults to active elderly members of the Point McLeay community. Council meetings are held once a month. All positions are unpaid. However, on occasion, accusations have circulated in the town that particular decisions made by the Council have favoured the families of certain Council members.

The daily management of Point McLeay is in the control of an all-Aboriginal staff, who are theoretically employees of the Council. On the payroll are a works supervisor, community coordinator, farm manager, office workers, child care centre coordinator and several labourers ('working-men'). In practice, members of the staff dominate Council membership. From time to time, funding is available to employ a health worker, child care staff, youth workers and book keeper trainees. During the late 1980s, the Point McLeay Council ran a mechanic's workshop, Raukkan Engineering, at Narrung. Here, a non-Aboriginal trainer and an Aboriginal apprentice worked. However, a shortage of funds over the last few years has seen this enterprise suspended. Federal Government funding, through the Technical and Further Education Department (TAFE), is occasionally available for craft courses and various trade apprenticeships at Point McLeay. Nevertheless, many residents complain that the training programs are sporadic, due to yearly changes in budget emphases in government departments. Internal employment is high on the list of things that the Point McLeay residents want to see improved (Raukkan Community Council, 1992). With a large number of Aboriginal people trying to move into Point McLeay, the need for employment programs will probably increase over the next few years.[5]

The employment of staff is generally confined to Aboriginal people living at Point McLeay or one of the nearby farms managed by the Point McLeay Community Council. The one or two local non-Aboriginal

people with Aboriginal spouses, who live at or near Point McLeay, generally cannot be employed on the Council or directly receive any of the benefits available to Aboriginal residents. Such outsiders can only be employed for small jobs, such as driving the community bus on a shopping excursion to Murray Bridge or to a sports carnival. Their employment is only on condition that there is not an Aboriginal person available. Although this appears racist, this selectivity is implicit in the operation of the Point McLeay settlement at every level.

If non-Aboriginal people were to gain directly from being defined as a resident, then there would be a fear that some of the funding sources for Point McLeay would start to dry up. For this reason, very few non-Aboriginal people have been allowed to live at Point McLeay in recent years. By concentrating their activities, Aboriginal people are able to highlight their status as a group to be targeted for funding. Within the last two years, the distinctiveness of Point McLeay as Aboriginal space has been deliberately enhanced through the gradual phasing in of a name change to Raukkan (Appendix 10.2).[6]

The town's services are entirely government funded, predominantly through federal sources such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC).[7] There are no council fees, water or land rates levied upon the inhabitants of Point McLeay, although subsidised rent is collected. Point McLeay is situated in the Meningie District Council area of local government. Nevertheless, the Meningie Council contributes little by way of guidance or funding to the operation of Point McLeay, which collects its own rubbish, cleans its own streets and maintains it own dump. The Meningie Council's responsibilities in the Point McLeay area are chiefly the main roads of the Narrung Peninsula. Point McLeay residents do not vote at Meningie local government elections or pay rates. The development of the Aboriginal settlement is chiefly left to state and federal governments. In spite of the dependence upon government funding, with little revenue raised directly from the residents, it is a stated aim of the Aboriginal people at Point McLeay that they work towards becoming self-sufficient (Raukkan Community Council, 1992, p.10).

7.1.2 Aboriginal Employment and Welfare

Employment for Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray has been a major concern since the last century (Section 6.3.8). Part of this problem is a product of the regional geography. Point McLeay is in a rural area

geographically cut off from major industries that are based in the city or major country centres. Although the northern bank of the Murray Mouth region during the last twenty years has seen substantial urban development, particularly in the vicinity of Goolwa and Hindmarsh Island, the Point McLeay side has experienced none of this.[8] As a stopping place, Point McLeay is rarely visited, existing as it does on the end of an isolated peninsula that juts into the southern end of Lake Alexandrina. It is about a half hour drive from the Princes Highway, which comes from Tailem Bend, through Meningie, and south down the Coorong. People who visit Point McLeay are not simply passing through.

Point McLeay is embedded in a rural landscape, and possesses all of the associated economic problems. There is very little employment in the area. As a part of a general trend in the agricultural sector, farms in the Lower Murray region operate with few labourers. Commercial fishing is restricted to the handful of white fishermen who have licences (Section 8.6). Nevertheless, it is hoped that in the future tourism will generate some employment for Aboriginal people in the area (Raukkan Community Council, 1992, pp.10,24). Although Point McLeay exists within three hours comfortable drive from the centre of Adelaide, it is at present an economically remote settlement.

Apart from the council workers and Aboriginal education workers ('A.E.W.s'), none of the inhabitants of Point McLeay have permanent jobs (Fig.7.1, 7.2). Very few of the young men living there now have ever worked on any of the nearby farms. Some have had short term employment in neighbouring towns and in Adelaide. The welfare money received by those living at Point McLeay includes sole parent supporting benefits, sickness pensions, education allowances and unemployment benefits. Today, Aboriginal people in southern South Australia are the most readily identified group that seeks welfare assistance (Gale, 1972, pp.175-190; Gale & Wundersitz, 1982, p.180; Fisk, 1985, pp.33-51).

The poverty-stricken lifestyle of Aboriginal people, is not solely due to poor education. The reasons for the lack of employment are far more complex than simply the lack of skills. The low employment rate of Aboriginal people is in spite of the training schemes that are periodically held at places such as Point McLeay and Murray Bridge. A considerable number of young people have participated in these, and some young adults have successfully completed apprenticeships and management courses. Nevertheless, at Point McLeay, the majority of people of working age prefer to be unemployed. These people consistently express

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Unknown

Employed

Supporting Parents

Benefits

Aged/Invalid

Benefits

Unemployment

Benefits

(0)

(6)

(10)

(7)

(16)

(28)

Fig.7.1 Aboriginal employment at Point McLeay, 1991 (after Raukkan Community Council, 1992)
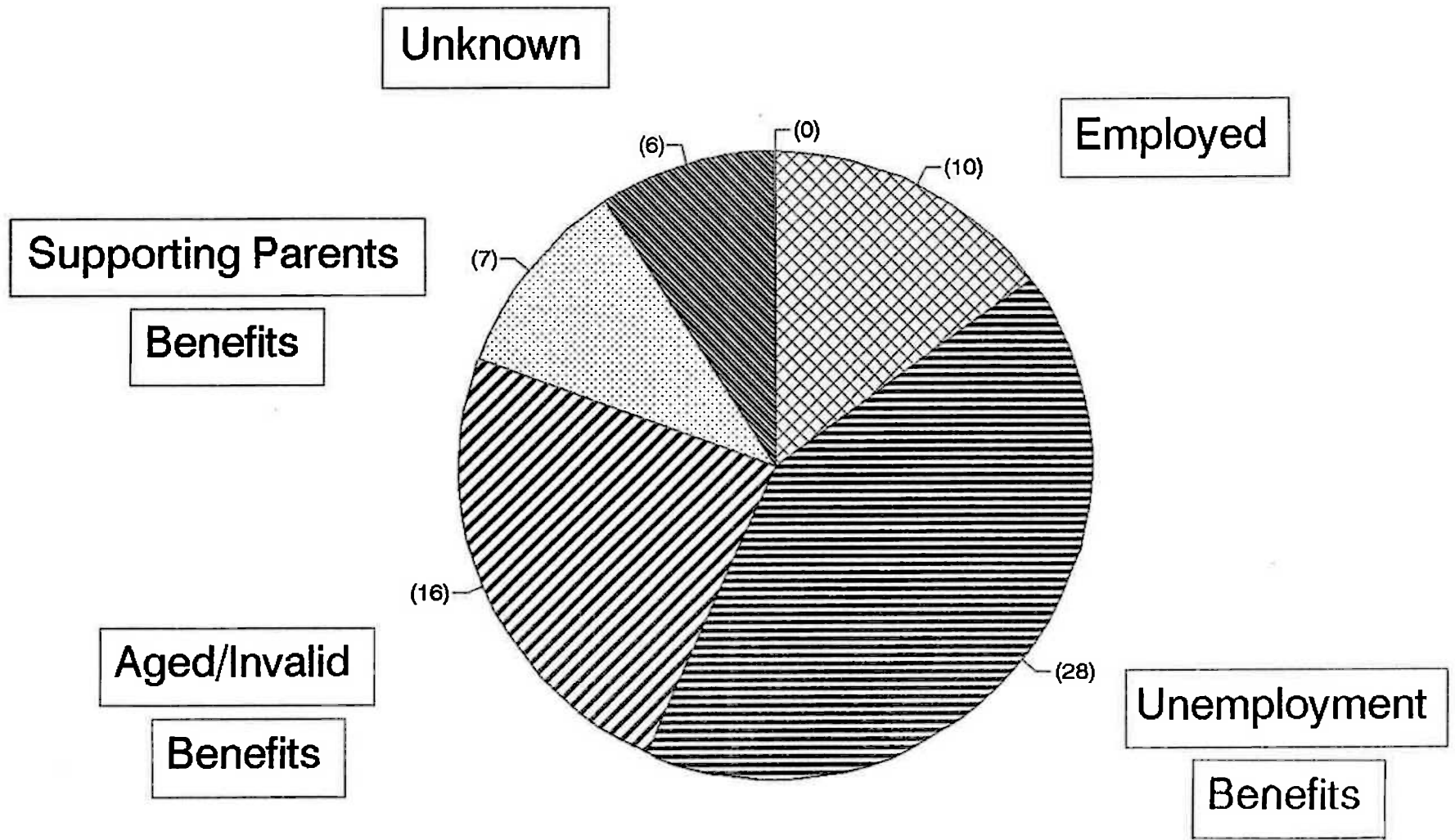
The total working population of Point McLeay is 67
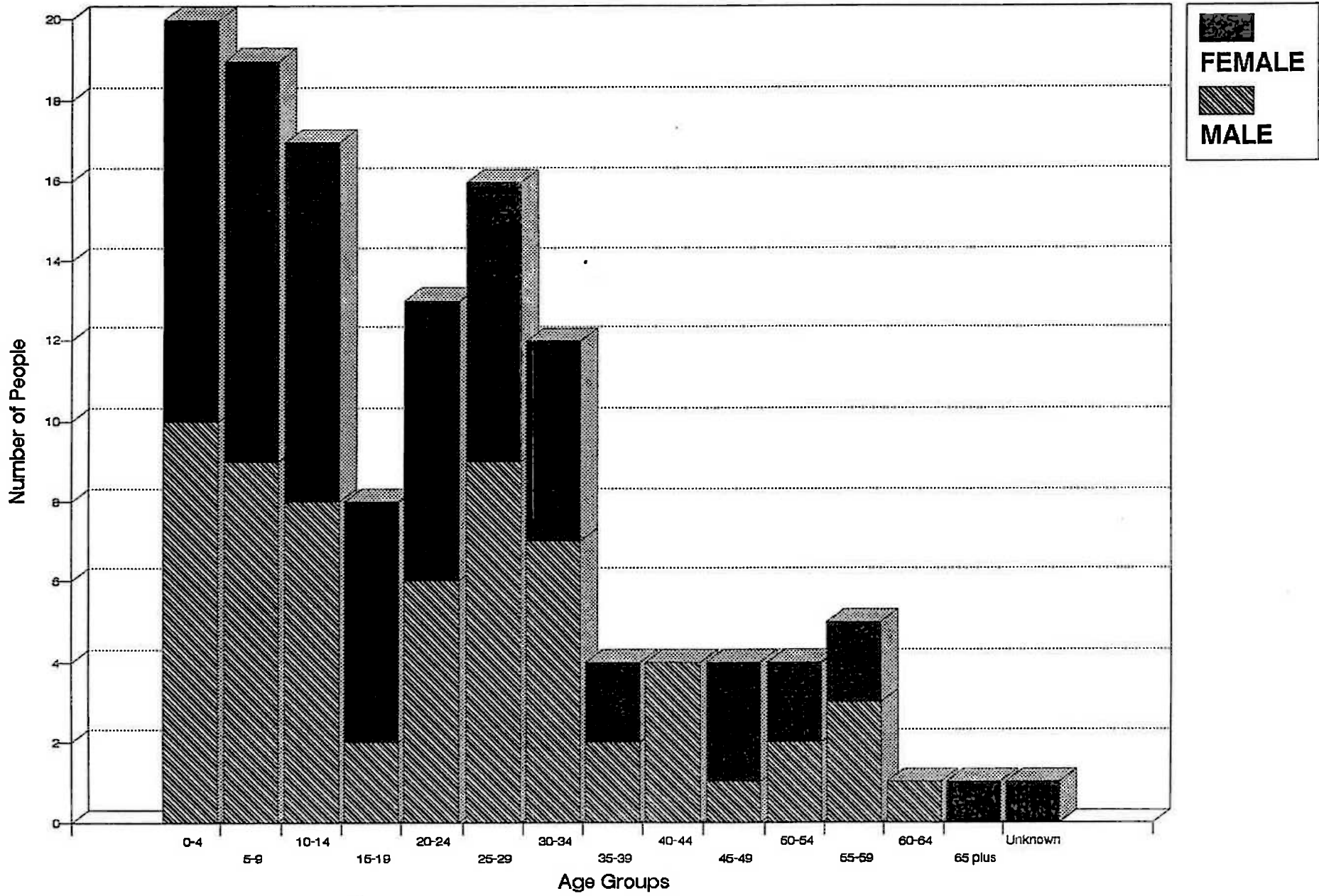
Fig.7.2 Age structure of Aboriginal residents at Point McLeay, 1991
(after Raukkan Community Council, 1992)

a general disinterest in things that are not concerned with their immediate needs, and wealth is perceived as something to be consumed, not accumulated. The preoccupation of Aboriginal people with the present and the disinterest in permanent employment, is often justified by them simply as 'blackfella way.' It is a standard defence of Aboriginal people who are late for appointments that they are on 'Nunga time'. Aboriginal life expectations are not built upon the type of long term goals of amassing wealth, as held by most non-Aboriginal Australians.

Some researchers looking at poor minorities, have used 'culture of poverty' models to explain persistent unemployment characteristics (Redfield, 1956; Lewis, 1959; Schapper, 1970). These studies have tended to treat the group as independent of interactions with other economically better off units of the broader society. It is as if the victims are responsible for their predicament. Killington (1971, pp.9-13; 1973, pp.157-164) provides an opposing view, treating Aboriginal practices in Adelaide of house sharing, high consumption of goods, and 'irresponsible' child rearing as 'traditional' carryovers (Section 2.4 & 7.2). I suggest that although these cultural traits have strong continuity with the pre-European past, they are nonetheless reinforced through the manner in which Aboriginal people interact with Australian society. The widespread adoption by Aboriginal people of welfare as a legitimate means to support themselves adds to their image as a distinctive ethnic group.

The role of external cultural processes in the development of some minority cultures is recognised in urban anthropological studies of minority city-based groups. For instance, as Maxwell (1988) has demonstrated in his study of black poverty in the northern United States of America, it is external processes, such as policy support of governments for corporate profits and city gentrification, that lead to particular adaptive behavioural patterns from the black urban poor. Following from this, I argue that external forces largely maintain their geographical and social isolation of the Aboriginal population from the wider Australian society. However, I do not altogether exclude cultural factors, unique to Aboriginal people.

The reliance upon welfare has a political dimension for many Aboriginal people. For instance, some have told me that pensions and government aid are necessary and justifiable forms of compensation for being 'a blackfella in a whitefella country'. Ronald and Catherine Berndt record 'And even where they can be economically and financially independent, they still cling to the hope of receiving Government aid on

principle, "because they took our land." (1951, p.267).' There is little, if any, shame felt by Aboriginal people who receive unemployment pensions. For instance, I have often heard Aboriginal women refer to pensions as their 'pay'. The knowledge which many Aboriginal people possess of how they can maximise the money they receive from the welfare system is extensive. The history of Aboriginal relations with European administrations (Chapter 6), particularly through the social alienation of the welfare system, has culturally marginalised the Aboriginal population. It is therefore not surprising that contemporary Aboriginal people often feel little need to support the broader society by working.

The poor employment prospects at Point McLeay have meant that virtually all men of working age, who do not work for the Council, are unemployed. In addition to their welfare cheques, a large number of Aboriginal men must rely on their families for support. The low value of their physical labour has effectively made the male role a minor economic one in many Aboriginal households. To exacerbate this situation, some Aboriginal homes are forced to eject their adult males in order to improve their potential for pension income (Gale & Binnion, 1975, p.50). From my field experience, alcoholism is prevalent among Aboriginal men of all age groups in the Lower Murray. Aboriginal-run centres to rehabilitate alcoholics operate at Murray Bridge and Adelaide. Aboriginal imprisonment rates, particularly amongst men and juveniles, are also much higher than the level in the general population (Gale, 1972, pp.222-242; Gale et al, 1990). Life expectancy for Aboriginal males is considerably less than for non-Aboriginal men (Gale, 1972, pp.133-149). The high suicide rate among Aboriginal men was highlighted by the <u>Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Commission</u> during 1989-1991.[9]

For women of working age at Point McLeay, there is a similar situation of poor employment. Nevertheless, for women, child rearing is a major occupation. With child endowment payments being given direct to mothers or female guardians, many young women choose to start large families. Women sometimes take one or two children to raise as their own from close relatives, creating an extended Aboriginal family unit. In order to gain more welfare money, some women feel the economic pressure to have more children (Gale & Binnion, 1975, pp.50-51). This is particularly so for Aboriginal people living in the welfare environment of Point McLeay, but less so for those who have migrated to the urban areas. Across Australia, Aboriginal women have fared better than men in gaining pensions and access to urban-based welfare sources (Collman, 1979, p.53). The welfare system, which favours single mothers, has been largely imposed by

government bodies outside the direct control of the Aboriginal population. This bias discourages Aboriginal people from having the same marriage and family life expectations as the rest of the Australian society.

In some Aboriginal families in southern South Australia, the pressure from kin on the individuals who receive money regularly, either a wage or a pension, is enormous. This is particularly felt by women, who often must support their own children as well as their adult male relatives. It is common for Aboriginal men to spend most of their own wage or unemployment benefit on drinking and gambling activities. This is largely the product of the redundancy that many Aboriginal men feel due to the state welfare system dominating the household economy.[10] When, for whatever reason, a large amount of money is obtained, there is instantly the threat of the rest of the extended family making claims upon it that cannot be refused. This generally leads to any money being spent quickly and surreptitiously. Indeed, much of the windfall cash an individual may gain, obtained through such things as a win at the races or receiving travelling allowance ('t.a.') for meeting participation, is quickly gambled away, used to buy expensive personal items such as clothing, or lavished on children. A person who tries to save money will run the real risk of being defined as 'white', as they will be ignoring kin obligations. Affluent Aboriginal people who have well paid jobs as public servants and who deflect the demands of kin for money and lodging are called 'coconuts', meaning 'white on the inside and brown on the outside'.

A typical Aboriginal family in the Lower Murray will consist of a senior Aboriginal woman, possibly a male spouse or companion, several children of varying ages, and a few itinerant adults. The children in the family may be natural children of at least one of the parents, or adopted from a close kin group or from official adoption schemes. It is now government policy that all Aboriginal children up for adoption are placed with Aboriginal families.[11] These children are generally from domestic units where the parents cannot look after them. Sometimes, this is because a sole parent has been arrested. In recent years, welfare agencies have enlisted southern Aboriginal families, deemed to be stable, to look after children sent from the North West of South Australia.[12] These adoptees tend to be male youths who are separated from their home environment in order to control their dependency upon petrol-sniffing. Often, these children have been expelled their own communities. Many such children have had some previous involvement in criminal activity, stemming from their addiction. The foster families are paid an allowance to look after them. Often, the decision of whether to take a foster child is chiefly an economic one.

The core families living at Point McLeay are those who have one or more members working for the Council or the school. Employment has given these families greater stability. The family life of Aboriginal people based in Murray Bridge, Meningie and Tailem Bend, shares many characteristics with that of Point McLeay residents. The location of many government agencies in Murray Bridge provides greater avenues for employment there for those who want it. Within the five year study period of my field research, several Aboriginal families moved between Point McLeay and Murray Bridge. Other movements between Meningie, Tailem Bend, Adelaide and Point McLeay were also observed, but to a lesser extent. Although full data for Aboriginal movements are very difficult to obtain, it appears that family disputes often play a major role in determining where Aboriginal people dwell.

The number of regular visits to Point McLeay by welfare and government agencies is considerable. Many of the government departments that service Point McLeay have regional offices at Murray Bridge. Prominent among these are Social Security, Aboriginal Legal Rights, Correctional Services, Law Courts, Police, Technical and Further Education Department (TAFE) and the South Australian Education Department. Most of these have Aboriginal staff members to facilitate relations between departments and the Aboriginal population. In many cases, Aboriginal involvement in service delivery has improved Aboriginal access to departments, particularly for welfare (Gale & Wundersitz, 1982, p.182). Transport is a major concern because of the isolation of Point McLeay. Funds are provided by the government for a 'health car', used to drive elderly, pregnant or sick people to the hospitals at Murray Bridge or Meningie. Although there was once a hospital at Point McLeay, today the residents go either to Meningie in the health car, or wait for the weekly visits to the Point McLeay clinic by doctors. There are also monthly visits to Point McLeay by dentists, and periodic trips by medical specialists. Without the support of these services, Point McLeay could not exist. In effect, the government is continually compensating the Aboriginal community at Point McLeay for their geographic and social isolation. To some extent, the government promotes it.

The dependence of the Aboriginal people of Australia upon government authorities has been termed European welfare colonialism: the colonisers in this context are the government. A government dominated by white Australians makes major decisions on behalf of the colonised minority, the Aboriginal population. Even an apparently 'favourable' and 'correct' decision, as in the above example of pension distribution, can at once be both generous and a disadvantage to Aboriginal people. To quote

Beckett (1987, p.17) 'Welfare colonialism, then, is the state's attempt to manage the political problem posed by the presence of a depressed and disenfranchised indigenous population in an affluent, liberal democratic society.' Throughout Australia, the Aboriginal population is economically dependent upon the various levels of Australian governments. The nature of this dependence is a serious threat to the cultural basis of Aboriginal 'self determination' (Rowse, 1992).

7.1.3 Aboriginal Housing

Aboriginal housing is heavily subsidised in line with both the state and federal government's commitment to financial support as a way of dealing with Aboriginal social issues. Through the operation of the Aboriginal Housing Trust, funded through the state, Aboriginal people can rent houses throughout South Australia at a lower level than general rates. The rent is particularly low at Point McLeay, where housing is managed by the Point McLeay Community Council.[13] In the 1950s, rent was not charged to many Lower Murray people at all. For instance, Ronald and Catherine Berndt stated:

> Those living outside Point McLeay are usually camped on some other Reserve, or have built their own homes; and only when they are living among or near the white community, in similar housing circumstances, are they obliged to pay rent, rates, or land tax (1951, pp.210-211).

Today, some residents at Point McLeay still refuse to pay rent. Some people are several years in arrears. Nevertheless, the Point McLeay Community Council refuses to evict these people. This is primarily because rent is seen as money going to the government, not to their own community.

Aboriginal people at Point McLeay generally feel the lack of recognised individual ownership of their land and houses. This partly explains the tolerance by some adults towards the extensive vandalism of buildings by their children. Residents have on occasion expressed to me their desire to add on rooms to their Point McLeay house. Nonetheless, they claim that they are reluctant to do so as they could theoretically be evicted at any time. This is not a new problem. Late last century, an Aboriginal man, John Laelinyeri, built a stone cottage to live in at Point McLeay (Jenkin, 1979, p.222). In spite of his personal investment, he failed to get any remuneration when he eventually left, due to his lack of ownership. However, the land ownership problem is complex (Section 8.6). There are very few contemporary examples where Aboriginal people living in the region have been able to gain freehold ownership of land.

7.1.4 The Raukkan Aboriginal School

The only non-Aboriginal people who work on a permanent basis at Point McLeay are four school and kindergarten teachers. The non-Aboriginal staff live at Narrung or on nearby properties. The Aboriginal people employed at the school during my fieldwork included the clerical officer, a grounds person and two or three Aboriginal education workers. The Aboriginal primary school presently has about fifty children of varying grades enrolled. Another state primary school, for the children of local white farmers, exists less than three kilometres away. Some of the children of local non-Aboriginal people attend kindergarten at Point McLeay. However, from primary school onwards, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people are effectively in different educational streams. Point McLeay inhabitants from time to time question the separation of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal primary school children. However, most appear to support it. The Aboriginal primary school exists as a symbol of Aboriginal independence from the local white population. For secondary education, Aboriginal children attend the Meningie Area School. Transport is by a school bus that comes from Meningie, about forty kilometres away by road. In towns elsewhere in the Lower Murray, Aboriginal children of all grades go to mixed schools.

7.1.5 Aboriginal Relationships With the Law

The police are generally referred to by Lower Murray Aboriginal people as 'kiengiepirri' (or 'kiengiep'), meaning 'keeper of the law' (Appendix 10.2). The police as a group are almost universally despised by Aboriginal people. This was demonstrated in the media coverage of the recent Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Commission.[14] To help facilitate better relations, the Police Department has periodically organised recruitment drives to get Aboriginal people to become members of the force. However, until lately, the police have had very little success in this regard in the Lower Murray. In recent years, at Murray Bridge in particular, the relationship between the police and the Aboriginal community has been tense and often violent. Early in 1993, two Aboriginal men were employed as police aides based at Murray Bridge.

The contemporary situation regarding Aboriginal people and the law has much to do with the past. The historical relationship between police and Aboriginal people in Australia is one of antagonism and bitterness.[15] Before the mid-1960s, Aboriginal people in South Australia were not permitted to drink

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alcohol. The only exceptions were Aboriginal people who, for the purpose of the Aborigines Act, 1934-1939, were officially exempted (Section 6.4.4). During the 1940s, the majority of police charges against Aboriginal people were related to alcohol infringements (R.M. & C.H. Berndt, 1951, p.246). Stories from Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray about the police checks for 'muthin' (alcohol) are part of their modern folklore. I have heard numerous exploits of 'sly-grogging' and of forbidden drinking parties on the Point McLeay Mission Station.[16] Often, key white men in local towns, such as those living with Aboriginal women, would obtain liquor for Aboriginal friends. Sometimes 'exempted Aborigines' would also act as agents. From contemporary accounts, it is clear that a certain amount of prostitution among Aboriginal women for alcohol and other goods also occurred. The police would set traps at the Narrung punt to catch Aboriginal men returning to their families from shearing. On such occasions it was considered likely that they would be carrying contraband.

During the 1940s, the local policeman, in his joint role as officer of the law and Aboriginal Protector, would often be called into Point McLeay by the mission staff (R.M. & C.H. Berndt, 1951, p.215). Police had far more power over Aboriginal people than they had with any other section of the broader society. It is clear from accounts I have heard, that Aboriginal residents were rarely able to distinguish in what capacity an officer was acting. However, according to informants, the police did not always have everything their way. On several occasions, Aboriginal people got alcohol into the mission station unobserved from across the lake. A small dinghy was used, the alcohol concealed in a tub tied to the stern and dragged along underwater. As I further demonstrate in Chapter 8, it was, and still is, 'second nature' for Aboriginal people to conceal their activities from the authorities.

In the contemporary Aboriginal community of the Lower Murray, there is still little regard for 'whitefella' laws that are considered by them to be mainly directed at Aboriginal people. This is a carry-over from the exemption period. From my experience, offences caused by drinking are still the highest category of criminal charges against Aboriginal people. Nevertheless, the accumulation of drinking and assault offences for an individual does not constitute a loss of prestige within the group. For instance, some Aboriginal people openly joke about having to 'continue their family name in the University of Yatala [Adelaide's main labour prison]', meaning to keep their surnames present in that institution. In recent times, the relationship between police and the Aboriginal population has come under the scrutiny of the

<u>Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody</u>. In South Australia, the deaths of several Aboriginal people from the Lower Murray were investigated.[17] Aboriginal people clearly consider that the police are agents working to their detriment. This is brought out in the 1970s Australian film, 'Wrong side of the Road', which featured Adelaide-based Aboriginal bands, 'No Fixed Address' and 'Us Mob'. The cast includes Ngarrindjeri people, and involves police brutality on the road to Tailem Bend. The fear of the police by Aboriginal people is part of their modern culture.

7.1.6 The Relationship Between Narrung and Point McLeay

Narrung is a small town about two kilometres away from Point McLeay on the main road leading into the Aboriginal settlement. It is primarily comprised of the Narrung Store, a hall, a primary school, a police station, Raukkan Engineering, and about thirty residential homes. The population is a mixture of farmers with properties further out, public servants and a few small-business people. On the outskirts of town, on the Point McLeay side, is the home of an Aboriginal family.[18] The town services the farms on the top end of the Narrung Peninsula area. With this small market, the geographical isolation of Narrung works against its possible future growth. Meningie and Murray Bridge are major foci of the local farm-related businesses.

The proximity of Point McLeay has a large impact upon Narrung. For instance, a considerable amount of trade in the local store comes from Point McLeay people. This fact is recognised in the 'Raukkan Community Plan' which lists an aim for Point McLeay to purchase and operate the Narrung Store (1992, pp.24,93). From this outlet, items such as petrol, supermarket goods, and alcohol are sold. The store also serves as a local post office and agent for the Commonwealth Bank. The present owner concedes that without the business generated from Point McLeay, this important function of Narrung would undoubtedly cease. In spite of the close economic and spatial relationship between Point McLeay and Narrung, there is a clear social division between people of the two settlements.

The Narrung Police Station is situated two kilometres along the road from Point McLeay on the only direct route to the Aboriginal settlement. It operates as an offshoot of its parent station at Meningie. The existence of the police station at Narrung seems at odds with the sparsely populated landscape. A call by local landowners upon the Meningie Council in 1950 for a policeman to be stationed here was based upon

perceived law and order problems with Point McLeay residents (Linn, 1988, pp.204-206). The policeman's stated task was to be 'keeping the Point McLeay people out of the whites' hair.' In October 1953, the Narrung Police Station was established. With the extremely low numbers of farmers living in the Narrung Peninsula area, it is apparent that this station is present solely because of the existence of the Aboriginal settlement at Point McLeay. Only one officer is posted at the Narrung Police Station. Reinforcements can be called in from Meningie when required. Offenders in the region are summoned to the Murray Bridge Court House. Although placed at Narrung, the police station is essentially a service set up for Point McLeay.

In spite of the Narrung Police Station being such an obvious control measure upon the Point McLeay inhabitants, its presence today is generally considered desirable by the majority of local Aboriginal people. There are several reasons for this: first, the low profile that all the recent officers posted at Narrung have kept; second, the periodic involvement of senior members in the local Aboriginal community with discussions concerning law enforcement issues; third, the advantages that many residents recognise in having outside agencies help control dangerous elements within the group. This last point in particular was raised in 1991 during a public meeting at Narrung with the South Australian Police Department when there was an attempt to close the station as a cost saving measure. There was a suggestion by the Police Department of employing Aboriginal police aides to help fill some of the gap in services to Point McLeay should the Narrung Station close. Although the station was eventually retained, there was no unified opinion on the matter at Point McLeay. Most of the older residents demanded the retention of the station, while many of the younger people thought their life would be better without it.

The operation of the Narrung ferry reduces the trip from Point McLeay to Murray Bridge by about an hour. If it was not possible to cross the Lake Albert Passage at Narrung, then the alternative route would be all the way around the southern shore of Lake Albert through Meningie before heading north to Murray Bridge. In 1991, there was a threat to close the punt between the hours of midnight and six o'clock in the morning. This was aimed at reducing the operating cost. After heavy lobbying from local farmers and the Point McLeay Community Council, it was decided to keep it open twenty four hours a day. From the reports I received from Aboriginal informants, the concentration of many sick and elderly people at Point

McLeay was a significant factor in this decision. The township of Point McLeay is the largest concentration of people on the Narrung Peninsula. It therefore has a significant impact on the development of the region.

7.2 Aboriginal Spatial Behaviour at Point McLeay

As discussed previously (Section 6.3.2), Europeans have attempted to modify Aboriginal behaviour through changing their perceptions of time and space. It is clear that permanent houses and settlements, in which Aboriginal people were forced to live, were intended to reinforce the values and behaviours upon which such structures were built. Authorities planned to facilitate activities that would supposedly lead to investment of labour in property. This would also suppress Aboriginal movement patterns that involved extended Aboriginal families. Compared with the shanty dwellings that typified the fringecamps, mission housing was considered by authorities to provide a better model for preparing Aboriginal people for assimilation into the broader Australian society (Section 6.3.7). The attempt to modify Aboriginal perceptions of time and space by government authorities is continuing. A recent example is the insistence by ATSIC that every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community prepares its own development plan.

7.2.1 The Structural Layout of Point McLeay

The physical structure of Point McLeay has been influenced by the natural topography of the local area (Fig.7.3). The settlement is situated in a natural basin next to the lake. This provides most houses with some shelter from the sometimes fierce winds that come across Lake Alexandrina. The site also retains close access to the lake, upon which virtually all transport in the region was based last century. The majority of houses overlook the central park of the settlement, called by contemporary Aboriginal residents simply as the 'Big Lawn'. The main road passes around this triangular piece of turf. Successive mission authorities have taken advantage of the natural features of the landscape, placing key buildings in positions that overlook the settlement.

Amongst the best of the older buildings standing at Point McLeay today is a bungalow style house, formerly the home of the station superintendent. This is situated on a ridge that overlooks the entire settlement. It has commanding views of both the lake and the cliffs of the place known locally as 'Big Hill'. From here

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Fig. 7.3 Street plan of Point McLeay, 1991

RESIDENTIAL

UNAIPON STREET

LAKE

GOLLAN STREET

WANGARAWAR

LAKE

RESIDENTIAL

COUNCIL SHEDS

OVERNIGHT/
WOMEN'S CENTRE

HEALTH CLINIC

RESIDENTIAL

NARRUNG

LEALINYERI STREET

1

SEYMOUR STREET

BIG LAWN

2

3

RESIDENTIAL

RAUKKAN ABORIGINAL
PRIMARY SCHOOL

4

TAPLIN STREET

KARRANY STREET

RESIDENTIAL

RESIDENTIAL

CEMETERY & BIG HILL

RESIDENTIAL

N

1 Administration Building
2 Taplin's House (ruin)
3 Hall
4 Church

(not to scale)

the hillside can be seen, where according to Aboriginal informants, 'camp blacks' lived in bag shelters up until the 1930s. The house of a former school teacher is located on the edge of the centrally located Big Lawn.[19] This building is presently used as an overnight spot for visiting groups. The house built by George Taplin, a ruin for much of the last fifteen years, also fronts onto the park, as does the main hall and church.[20] These particular structures were in the past clearly intended to be focal points for the running of the Aboriginal population. The main administration building, where council meetings are held, is next to one corner of the park. The new brick houses erected during the last seven years have tended to either replace older dilapidated structures, or to be placed on the outer fringes of the settlement. The orientation of the houses towards the centre and the main arterial road is a persistent feature of the Point McLeay township.

7.2.2 Aboriginal Use of House and Settlement Space

Ross (1987, p.3) remarks that Western European culture, in comparison with most other groups, has a high degree of specialisation in houses. In contrast, Aboriginal use of space inside and outside the home requires far less dedicated use. This is especially so in the Lower Murray where Aboriginal people are keenly aware of how their houses differ from non-Aboriginal Australians. In my experience, Aboriginal households across Australia generally use space in a distinct fashion. This is not only evident at Point McLeay, but in the majority of Aboriginal Housing Trust homes across South Australia.

The needs of the extended family in the Aboriginal group do not match the room specialisation of Western European style houses. In the majority of Point McLeay homes, all major rooms tend to be used in a combined way for activities that Europeans would tend to separate out: e.g. cooking, dining, washing, and relaxation areas. For example, in one well-maintained home of a prominent member of the Point McLeay community, there were three major rooms where people combined eating, entertaining, and sleeping. Each of these spaces had a stereo and television set. The largest space in which people spent their time was designed by the builder as a lounge room which opened out onto a dining area and kitchen. In spite of the high level of noisy activity at this end of the house, from one to three young single adults of the family slept on the sofas here every night. Young children tended to sleep either with the older members of the family, or with young women.

Privacy in Aboriginal homes is greatly reduced compared with that of typical middle-class Australians. In houses that Aboriginal people occupy, furniture is also subjected to more generalised use. As one young Point McLeay woman said to me - 'Eh! My family don't care what they sleep on.' One young adult living at Point McLeay, who had just returned from visiting 'cousins' in the Riverland, remarked 'You can tell the blackfellas houses up there. They're the ones with blankets in the windows.' This comment referred to woollen blankets being used as curtains, in order to avoid the cost of buying new ones each time they moved home. In spite of the large number of people in some houses, the homes at Point McLeay are generally kept clean and tidy. Aboriginal households have adapted to extended families. The frequent movement of individuals between homes is considered by Aboriginal people to be normal. Young adults, particularly men, typically move between the houses of close friends and kin. In many ways, the Aboriginal use of space described here has strong similarities to that described for the more distant Aboriginal communities in northern Australia.[21] I suggest that living arrangements in the Lower Murray today do bear some relationship to pre-European practices.

Aboriginal people tend to decorate the insides of houses in a distinctive way. Many homes of Aboriginal people I have visited feature large displays of family photographs on walls and in china cabinets. Often, objects such as clubs, boomerangs, sedge mats and baskets, feather flowers, painted stones, trophies, and certificates are also used to decorate the rooms. The economics of decorating the home mean that generally the objects must either be cheap or have been made by the owner or a relative. None of the Aboriginal people I have worked with in southern South Australia have ever purchased Aboriginal artworks such as Western Desert dot paintings and Arnhem Land bark paintings. This Aboriginal art is chiefly produced for non-Aboriginal consumption (Anderson & Dussart, 1988, pp.132-140). Objects prominently displayed are those that show the 'Aboriginal flag', such as stickers and banners with colours red, yellow and black. In a house of one young Aboriginal man I regularly visited at Point McLeay, a didgeridoo made at Yalata in the West Coast region of South Australia and painted by him in the 'Aboriginal colours' was displayed as a showpiece of his culture.[22] Aboriginal families take considerable pride in exhibiting a selection of objects that proclaim either their Aboriginality, or the achievement of family members. Trophies and certificates are treated as proof that their particular family is 'as good as whitefellas'.

Items associated with the pre-European material culture of the Lower Murray are considered to represent their links to the past Ngarrindjeri culture. For instance, Aboriginal visitors to houses of other group members may remark, when inspecting a sedge mat hanging on the wall or a bunch of feather-flowers[23] in a vase, that a particular ancestor of the maker was also a good basket-maker or feather-flower maker. Continuity with the past is stressed by Aboriginal people through knowledge of their kinship. In many Aboriginal homes, the decoration openly reflects how Aboriginal people perceive their Aboriginality, in both the national and local arenas.

Outside their homes, very few residents of Point McLeay maintain a garden. The majority of households have corrugated iron fences at the rear of the house to enclose utilities such as a clothesline, firewood heap, piles of bottles for return, children's play equipment, and car parks. This is family space. Most keep the front yards clear, often marked simply with permapine posts or with no fencing at all. Children are generally allowed to play in the front area of any home. This is because front yards are treated to some extent as public space. A clear yard also has the advantage of not impeding the vision of the centre of the settlement. At Point McLeay, they tend to be devoid of large bushes and trees. Houses of Aboriginal people in the suburban areas of Adelaide tend to follow the same pattern. The main gardening chore is mowing and watering the turf. At Point McLeay, the threat of encouraging tiger snakes to live around the homes tends to make the residents keep fairly tidy yards. People also like to be able to see what is happening in the public areas, particularly who is approaching their house.

The 'Big Lawn' of Point McLeay is an area where children regularly play during the day. Often, a group of youths can be seen kicking a football or playing cricket there. It is in full view of many homes in the settlement. Surrounding the park is a road upon which all visitors to the primary school and administration building must travel. Strange cars entering Point McLeay generate much interest and comment from residents. People use a variety of hand signals to communicate from across large spaces, such as the lawn or along the roads. The central location of the Big Lawn is a major public area, sometimes used by visiting groups as a camping spot.

Infamous episodes have also occurred at the Big Lawn. For instance, several years ago a series of events, starting with the vicious rape of an Aboriginal woman in a nearby town, led to a shooting incident at Point

McLeay in which several people were injured, one seriously. One afternoon, the raped woman's husband, an Aboriginal man from Murray Bridge, visited relatives at Point McLeay. An argument erupted, resulting in the man stealing his 'uncle's' rifle, positioning himself at the upper end of the Big Lawn. He started shooting, both at people and at houses whose occupants he bore a grudge against. Those people at whom the shots were primarily directed were associated with the rapist, who was not present. The incident ended with the man fleeing the scene with a relative.

Through this violent display, the shooter conveyed his anger with certain members of the local Aboriginal community. In spite of the serious bodily injury caused, some local Aboriginal people considered his actions to be partly justified. By making his anger public at Point McLeay, he was effectively airing his grievances within his extended community. Point McLeay is community space. Subtle pressure from some residents at Point McLeay was directed towards those observing the incident not to give information to police during the investigation that followed. The gunman was nevertheless gaoled.

Arguments between Aboriginal people often occur out in the open, in full view of other residents. Information about conflict is rarely suppressed from public debate within the closed community. Nevertheless, outsiders, defined as non-Aboriginal, do not easily obtain this community information. Conflict between Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray region usually has the characteristics of a family dispute. This is because virtually all Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray are related, either genealogically or through shared life experience. Violence is generally considered to be a justified mechanism to settle disputes. This is perhaps a product of the lack of internal control within their community, and in some sense a denial of official avenues for resolving conflict controlled by non-Aboriginal people.

The Aboriginal residents at Point McLeay are essentially living in an isolated 'urban' environment. The houses on the settlement are fairly close together, with privacy that much lower than is experienced by Narrung residents, who generally have larger blocks with much more tree and shrub coverage. Very few Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray region will live in isolated areas away from their family. Reasons for this include their recognition of kin obligations, the need for welfare support, and the perception that they will suffer more from racism if they are alone. For many Aboriginal people, the move from Point

McLeay to towns such as Murray Bridge, or to a northern Adelaide suburb such as Salisbury where many family members already live, does not dramatically change their life style. These factors contribute to the urbanisation of Lower Murray people.

7.2.3 The Point McLeay Farm

Training in agriculture was a strategy of mission authorities towards modifying the Aboriginal relationship to the land and their general attitudes to work. Aboriginal people at the Point McLeay farm were taught agricultural skills, such as cropping, milking, animal husbandry and shearing. According to contemporary informants, light skinned people were particularly favoured in training schemes as assimilation was considered more achievable for them. A large number of the sites perceived to have close cultural ties to contemporary Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray are associated with farming properties.

The farming properties operated by Point McLeay were initially confined to land abutting the mission settlement. Early this century, two sections termed Block K (formerly Primrose Farm) and Gum Park were added to this land. In 1975, with the assistance of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the Ralkon Agricultural Co. Pty was established.[24] This company was comprised solely of forty five Aboriginal share holders and five Aboriginal directors.[25] A non-Aboriginal man, with former experience in South Africa and with the World Bank in Tanzania, was appointed as the farm supervisor. Five Aboriginal men worked the property. An additional property, known as Bartlett's Farm, was put under its management on lease after it had been purchased for them by the federal Aboriginal Land Funds Commission. Cattle and sheep were run on this land. The farm was purchased as an enterprise to help Point McLeay become self-sufficient.

In contrast to the highly productive lands run by the Point Pearce Aboriginal settlement at Yorke Peninsula, much of the Point McLeay property is unsuitable for cropping. Jenkin (1979, p.232) states that Point Pearce has always been better off than Point McLeay, having a smaller population with a larger amount of land (almost seven thousand hectares).[26] At Point McLeay, the inland properties particularly lack water for irrigation. They are also on shallow soil with frequent outcrops of limestone. For this reason,

part of Block K has never been cleared. In recent times, grazing has been the only agricultural activity on the farm. Some agistment from neighbouring farmers has taken place here.

For ten years, a dispute raged between the Ralkon Pastoral Company and the Point McLeay Community Council over Bartlett's Farm property. Although this property had originally been placed in the control of Ralkon, in 1981 the Aboriginal Development Commission (the successor of the Aboriginal Land Funds Commission) passed over control to the Point McLeay Community Council (McCorquodale, 1987, pp.449-451). The Council then tried, unsuccessfully at first, to evict Ralkon. Many of the original share holders and directors of the company lived at Point McLeay. However, by the time of the dispute, most of the Aboriginal farmers were living outside Point McLeay on the farm. An expensive legal battle followed, funded by the government on both sides. The farm is now in control of the Point McLeay Community Council. However, the conflict had effectively allowed the farm properties to run down. At Block K and Gum Park, many of the internal paddock fences have fallen due to neglect. The farm machinery and buildings are in disrepair, and noxious weeds are rampant. The farm in parts has now largely reverted to scrub land (Section 8.4). The perceived risk of Aboriginal families leaving the main settlement and becoming competitors has created a reluctance in the Council for families to be based out on the farm homesteads.

It is recognised by Point McLeay that the farm properties could be improved (Raukkan Community Council, 1992, pp.91-93). Nevertheless, even if they were to be operated at maximum efficiency, with their present size they are unlikely to ever employ more than a handful of the two hundred Point McLeay residents. This was essentially the same problem that the Aborigines' Friends' Association brought to the notice of the South Australian Government just prior to World War One (Section 6.3.8). In recent years, I have heard senior members of the Aboriginal settlement of Point McLeay state that the government should give them the whole of Narrung Peninsula to run farming properties upon. This includes some very productive land that is irrigated from Lake Albert. However, Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray, as elsewhere in Australia (Young, 1983, pp.224-247), place the commercial interests of land as secondary to more culturally orientated activities taking place on it (Section 8.3, 8.4, 8.5).

7.3 Point McLeay: Centre of a Ngarrindjeri Universe

To Ngarrindjeri people, Point McLeay is the *place* that they all have in common (Section 2.4.4.1-3). It is their place. Aboriginal people who call themselves 'lations' (= 'relations') and 'cousins' are generally expressing the link they share with a former mission settlement. To determine the importance of such sites we must go beyond a simple economic analysis, used already to describe the relationship the Aboriginal population has with the welfare environment. Point McLeay, generally referred to among Lower Murray people as Raukkan, is not simply a place name. It is a collection of sentiments, expressed in a variety of ways according to the context. To some Ngarrindjeri people, particularly those who left Point McLeay to take up careers and lifestyles outside the settlement, it is 'prison'. While living there, their Aboriginality and their 'Point McLeay-ness' were inescapable, and their life options were restricted accordingly.

However, not all concepts of Point McLeay are expressed negatively. In some situations it is described in more favourable terms. It is a place where pressures from the outside world are reduced, and people can live comfortably with kin on welfare benefits. Although Point McLeay has long since ceased to be officially a mission or a government station, the welfare nature of its existence still leads it to be occasionally referred to among Aboriginal people and local non-Aboriginal residents as 'the Mission'. Here, life is thought to be easier in comparison to the outside. Aboriginal people often feel like outsiders when living in suburbs or towns which do not have a modern Aboriginal identity. For example, a young Aboriginal woman claimed she felt 'like a stranger in her own country' when she was once staying in a high income suburb of Adelaide. People do not live randomly across the residential landscape. The social and cultural relationships of people have a major impact on where particular groups of people live. Certain *places,* as cultural hubs, have relevance to those who live beyond their physical or economic spheres. For example, even for those Lower Murray people who have largely lived away from Point McLeay, such as fringecamp people, Aboriginal farmers, and the city dwellers, most still consider Point McLeay to be 'home'.[27] In this context, 'home' means a place that to a large extent defines a Ngarrindjeri person. In this section I will explore the various ways in which contemporary Lower Murray people relate to Point McLeay. The ethnicity of the contemporary Aboriginal community in the Lower Murray can not be understood without understanding their relationship to the landscape.

7.3.1 Ngarrindjeri Business at Raukkan

As stated elsewhere (Section 2.1.3), the majority of Lower Murray people live outside Point McLeay. Nevertheless, Point McLeay is seen as being close to the heart of Ngarrindjeri culture. For this reason, the term 'Raukkan' is sometimes used by Aboriginal people to define themselves culturally. Some Lower Murray people, such as those that operate organisations like Kalparin Farm near Murray Bridge and Camp Coorong south of Meningie, are actively building a cultural base away from Point McLeay. However, even these groups agree that Point McLeay has a major say in all events that effect the Ngarrindjeri people as a community. In many contexts, categories such as 'Raukkan' or 'Ngarrindjeri' are essentially imparted with the same meaning. *Place* and people are interchangeable in this way. In spite of outside influences on the construction of modern pan-Aboriginality, sites such as Point McLeay generally emerge as culturally significant in situations where only Aboriginal people interact.

Point McLeay is the focus for virtually all activities labelled as 'Ngarrindjeri'. For instance, when the Education Department of South Australia launched the Ngarrindjeri teaching kit in 1990, this was held at Point McLeay in the community hall. The event attracted public servants and officials from throughout Adelaide and the Lower Murray. An Aboriginal band, 'Rough Image', which included members from the Point McLeay settlement, provided the entertainment.[28] The lyrics of the main song they played clearly expressed sentiments of Point McLeay being the centre of Aboriginal life in the Lower Murray, with lines such as 'My home is Raukkan.' The official speeches delivered during the launch recognised the importance of this Ngarrindjeri event being at Raukkan. Other events considered to be important to contemporary Ngarrindjeri culture have also been held at Point McLeay. If it is not possible to hold the event at Point McLeay, then the chairperson of the Council is at least invited to participate. This was the case in 1992 when Margaret Brusnahan launched her book of poetry in Adelaide, which was titled Raukkan.[29]

However, when Aboriginal activities are organised for Point McLeay, the residents do not always play an integral role. For instance, several years ago I attended an Aboriginal language conference that was held in the hall at Point McLeay. I noted that many of the local residents, who would be useful informants, were not interested in attending. The conference participants on this occasion were predominantly Aboriginal

people from Adelaide and Murray Bridge who wanted to strengthen their contacts with Ngarrindjeri culture. There were many people attending who had grown up primarily in Adelaide. Nevertheless, in this instance the place provided the context for the conference.

Politically, Point McLeay has the appearance of having a greater voice in Aboriginal affairs of the Lower Murray than other Aboriginal settlement groups in the region, in spite of the fact that some of the latter have equivalent or larger populations. In the past, I have heard Point McLeay Community Council members publicly state that Raukkan should have the main say in negotiations that involve Ngarrindjeri people, such as heritage issues and museum displays. Part of the reason for the bias is the personal political strength of the long-term chairperson of Point McLeay, Henry Rankine OAM.[30] However, I suggest that the main cause of this prominence is the sense of continuity that the Ngarrindjeri people feel exists at Point McLeay with past generations of Aboriginal people who have lived there. In Aboriginal terms, Point McLeay is steeped in their own history - not a history of buildings, but of the 'old people'. Raukkan is a *place* that has somehow touched the life of every Ngarrindjeri person.

7.3.2 Point McLeay as Church and Cemetery

The Point McLeay Church, built in 1868 by Aboriginal labour, is located next to Big Lawn in the centre of the settlement (Fig.7.4, 7.5). The Church was previously Congregational, but is presently run with the help of the Salvation Army. Hymn books of both denominations are found inside the church. Visiting preachers, as well as local Aboriginal people trained as pastors, give sermons. A wide cross section of people in the Point McLeay settlement attend Sunday services. However, the majority of inhabitants do not take part in regular church activities. The importance of the Point McLeay church for funerals transcends its Christian religious function, as almost all adult residents participate in the burial ceremony.

The Point McLeay cemetery is located on a hill about half way between the township and Big Hill (Fig.7.6). The commanding view from the cemetery, overlooking the settlement and the lake, hints at its importance.[31] The graveyard is about a ten minute walk from the Point McLeay Church, and has a graded track leading to its gate. During summer, the car parking area is re-created before each funeral by mowing the turf. The cemetery has three distinct sections which are fenced off. The main area, the active part of the

Fig.7.4 The Big Lawn, Point McLeay, 1988 (Photo: P.A. Clarke)

Fig.7.5 Point McLeay church (left) and community hall (right), 1984
(Photo: P.A. Clarke)

Fig.7.6 The Point McLeay cemetery, with Big Hill in the background, 1989 (Photo: P.A. Clarke)
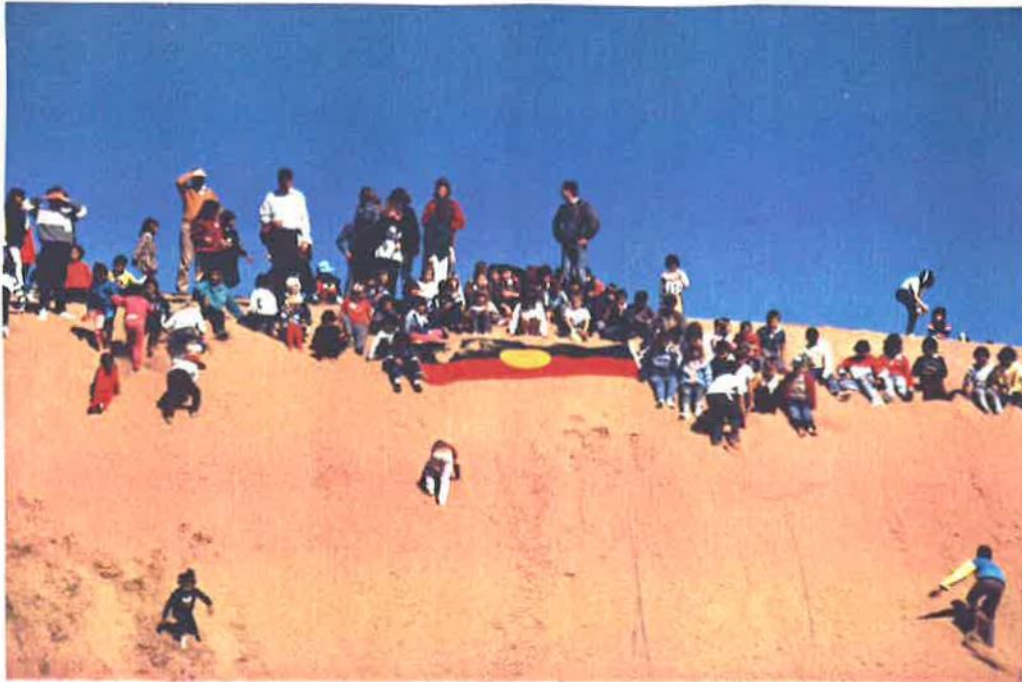
Fig.7.7 School children from Point McLeay and Narrung at Big Hill, NAIDOC Day, 1989 (Photo: P.A. Clarke)

cemetery, is towards the top of the slope, adjacent to what is now the parking area and main gate. This is the only graveyard section which is kept in order. The older parts, being down the hill, have high grass, bushes and various wild flowering bulbs growing over the graves. In spite of the fact that prominent Aboriginal people are buried here, only the area where the more recent dead are buried is maintained. As I will demonstrate, the importance of Point McLeay as a site to bury the Ngarrindjeri dead illustrates both its 'home' aspect and its role in reinforcing Lower Murray identity.

In the past, when the government paid for the burial of Aboriginal people, the dead tended to be placed in cemeteries near where they died. In practice, this meant that Point McLeay was where a large proportion of the Lower Murray people were buried. In my experience, the Point McLeay cemetery is still the preferred burial site for Ngarrindjeri people. Nevertheless, some Lower Murray people want to be buried elsewhere. For example, those who have grown up on farms and fringecamps along the Coorong have tended to be buried at Meningie. Others, with connections to the South East, have preferred Kingston. While the Aboriginal farm settlement at Maragon near Wellington was occupied by several Aboriginal families earlier this century, a small cemetery was kept there.[32] Therefore, the place of the funeral ceremony and burial reflects the life history of the deceased. During my fieldwork at Point McLeay, there have been several heated disputes among relatives over where a person should be buried.

Point McLeay funerals provide a context in which Lower Murray people, both local and dispersed, meet as the Ngarrindjeri community. Ngarrindjeri people living in Adelaide and elsewhere regularly travel a considerable distance for funerals. To explain the importance of Ngarrindjeri funerals, which attract more attention and attendance than do Aboriginal weddings, I will now provide an account of one ceremony at which I was present. In order to respect the privacy of the individuals concerned, I have used fictitious names for the Aboriginal people involved.[33]

7.3.2.1 A Description of a Ngarrindjeri Burial

The activities of a Ngarrindjeri funeral begin with notification of community members that someone has died. Within hours of the person's death, word spreads by phone throughout the Ngarrindjeri network of relatives and friends. Aboriginal people working in the public service sector play a crucial role in this

process, having access to phones and vehicles. Once the time and place of the funeral is set, people wishing to attend arrange a means of travel. Transport is either a lift in the car of a friend or relative, or a seat on an Aboriginal community bus, such as those based at Point McLeay, Glossop, Murray Bridge and Meningie.

On the morning of the funeral of a Point McLeay resident, Jean Maratinyeri, I left Adelaide with a car-load of people who were visiting Point McLeay for the ceremony. Along the road out of Adelaide via Murray Bridge we noticed other vehicles, containing Aboriginal people, heading in the same direction. At Point McLeay, the visitors called on relatives and friends 'on Raukkan'. As with most funeral days, there was no official business to be done anywhere in Point McLeay, and the main office area was closed. About a dozen Aboriginal people arrived at the house of some Aboriginal friends I was visiting. Some of these people I had never seen by chance at Point McLeay. At this time, no mention was made of the deceased, the conversation mainly restricted to catching up on other family events.

By mid-morning, the church had been set up by Jean Maratinyeri's female relatives and the funeral directors. The church windows were decorated with a mixture of real flowers and ones made from plastic and feathers. Other residents, who are always young men, had by now dug the grave at the cemetery. Visitors were allowed to enter the church, the casket being open for viewing. The oldest inhabitant of Point McLeay, Mary Kontinyeri, chose this time of the day to visit the church. Not long afterwards, she returned to her house, having no further visible role in the funeral. Mat Blackmoor, a politically active man of middle-age who lived at Point McLeay, also took time to briefly visit the church. Although considering himself a Christian, Mat very seldom visited the Point McLeay church, criticising the settlement's Christians by saying 'they never turn the other cheek'. Although this was his stated reason for avoiding church, it is also apparent that he does not like being dictated to by members of the community whom he considers politically inferior.

About half an hour before the ceremony, which was held at 2 o'clock, people started slowly making their way to the church. The socialising had largely been suspended, and the atmosphere become very mournful. By this time the roadways around the Big Lawn and next to the church were lined with parked cars. A crowd of 300 people formed. A few, notably several Ngarrindjeri people who are senior public servants in

Adelaide, remained next to their cars, quietly talking amongst themselves throughout the ceremony. It was as if being seen at the funeral was the extent of their participation.[34]

People who wished to take part in the church service, entered the church via the eastern transept. Although I knew Jean Maratinyeri and her husband personally, on this occasion I judged that I didn't know the person well enough to displace someone else from the already crowded interior. I stayed outside, as did several Raukkan Primary School teachers, some local white farmers, and about fifty Aboriginal people. The father and uncle of the deceased were amongst the Aboriginal people who had chosen to remain outside. They were in dispute with other members of their family who were at this time inside. The two leant upon the stone wall leading to the front entrance. The front door was ajar, although very few people entered from here. The activity in the church could plainly be heard from outside. The preferred entrance was through the side door, enabling people to walk past the coffin. Throughout the funeral, the children, some of whom had come from other towns, quietly played on the Big Lawn next to the church. Here, they were still under the supervision of adults standing outside the church.

The actual ceremony appeared to run along similar lines to that provided for white Australians: the funeral was organised by Blackwells (a well known South Australian firm), a European minister delivered a sermon, an Aboriginal pastor addressed the congregation, eulogies were given, and hymns were sung.[35] After the service, which occupied about an hour, the church emptied of people. As the coffin slid into the rear of the hearse, the tension increased markedly with loud lamenting from relatives and friends. A motorcade of perhaps a hundred vehicles followed the hearse to the cemetery. Children and their teachers lined the track along the section which ran past the school. Although only a few minutes walk, everyone who was going to the cemetery went in a vehicle. Out of the motorcade, only the hearse went beyond the parking area into the cemetery.

At the grave site, over two hundred people assembled. Apart from myself and three or four others, everyone was Ngarrindjeri. Prison officers who accompanied Aboriginal inmates kept within view of proceedings, but outside the graveyard fence. As with the church, people spatially arranged themselves informally according to their relationships to the deceased. Even people with a former history of publicly stated grievances against the deceased were in attendance. Jean's spouse, Robert Maratinyeri, and family were

seated nearest to the grave. The mound of soil next to the grave was covered with wreaths of flowers. The coffin was carried from the hearse by young men closely related to Jean. After several minutes of silence, verses from the bible were read, and the coffin lowered into the ground. This was another moment of angst, with many loud cries. Starting with the widower and close relatives, people approached the grave and threw sand from a nearby urn onto the coffin. Sam Pullum staggered to the grave, obviously affected by both grief and alcohol. Several men, including the funeral director, moved quickly to support him while he threw sand onto the coffin.

While the last respects were being delivered, Mary Laelinyeri, a middle aged Aboriginal woman I knew well approached me to put her family wreath on the mound next to the grave. Mary said that she was too upset to come under the attention of the crowd. Here, as in other parts of the funeral, people spatially organised themselves according to the community's perception of their relationship to Jean.[36] A close friend of Jean's stood for several minutes at the edge of the grave, as she stared down at the coffin. She said afterwards that she was saying a personal farewell to her friend's spirit. Slowly the crowd left the grave site. Several elderly Ngarrindjeri women and their families took the opportunity to go to other parts of the cemetery to quickly tidy up the graves of dead husbands and other close relatives buried there.

Once people reached the car park area, the relief was apparent that the burial phase of the funeral was over. The atmosphere became more festive. Large groups of people again formed to talk around the cemetery gates and amongst the parked vehicles. Some left for the long drive back to Adelaide, while others took time to socialise. At the settlement hall, next to the church, afternoon tea was provided by the women of Point McLeay. Some residents preferred to go to their own homes to entertain visitors. At this stage, I did not hear any direct mention of Jean, although I was not with the immediate family of the widower. Her name appeared to be actively avoided, the mood remaining joyful, certainly not reflective. Eventually the activity subsided, and most visitors left Point McLeay. The next day at the Point McLeay settlement was just a normal day for the majority of its inhabitants. With the large number of funerals held there every year, life at Point McLeay goes on.

7.3.2.2 Analysis of the Funeral

It can be argued, from the description of the funeral ritual above, that Ngarrindjeri funerals are essentially organised along European lines, even to the extent of using non-Aboriginal funeral companies to make the arrangements. However, I know from my fieldwork that Point McLeay burials are considered by Ngarrindjeri people to be major cultural events which define them as a distinct community. Senior members of the Lower Murray community regard funeral attendance as important. The collective presence of Ngarrindjeri people at Point McLeay, from towns as far apart as Adelaide, Murray Bridge, Tailem Bend, Meningie and Kingston, is strong proof of the common ground most Ngarrindjeri people have. Indeed, since I have become involved in Aboriginal affairs of the Lower Murray in a variety of contexts, I too have felt community pressure to attend funerals. This has even been so for those held for people I did not know well. Funeral ceremonies provide a context for continual reassessment of who is a member of the community, albeit a spatially diffused one. At funerals, the Aboriginal people of the Lower Murray present themselves as an ethnic population.

The association between *place* and the local community is demonstrated by who is buried in the Point McLeay cemetery. The gravestones, in association with the 'Birth, Marriage, and Death Register' held at Point McLeay, demonstrate that hundreds of people have spent the majority of their life connected in some way to Point McLeay. The graveyard contains perhaps eight hundred or more grave sites of Lower Murray Aboriginal people. The bodies of non-Aboriginal people are generally excluded from burial here. The exceptions, early missionaries, mission station workers and a local Maori preacher recently buried there, are all people who had very strong ties to the Point McLeay community. It is my argument that at funerals, the local Aboriginal identity is actively reinforced by the joint participation of a wide range of Lower Murray people. Rather than being a rare occurrence, it is likely that most 'Point McLeay people', particularly those living in the Lower Murray, will attend in excess of a hundred funerals during their life time.

Although Aboriginal people often make vague commitments to time, for funerals everything is generally arranged with precision. The time of the day for all Ngarrindjeri funerals is crucial, to allow for greater community participation. This is precisely because despite where it is held, people will have to travel from

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widely dispersed places. For instance, relatives may need to travel from other Aboriginal settlements, such as Point Pearce on Yorke Peninsula and Koonibba on the West Coast of South Australia. Funerals, therefore, always tend to be in the early afternoon to allow for people to make day trips to attend. It is my experience that Aboriginal people generally arrive at the place of the funeral at least an hour before the service. In the case of funerals held in Meningie, the whole town may be inundated with Aboriginal people. Since many Ngarrindjeri people only meet during funerals, the hours preceding the ceremony initially have a carnival atmosphere, which belies the sombre occasion.

With such a wide assemblage of people, many of whom are in long-standing dispute, the enforced good humour, and the sharp focus of grief during the actual service, function to dampen the potential for arguments. Despite the fact that many people attend up to ten funerals each year, the outbreaks of conflict are rare. Aboriginal people slip into a passive mood for the duration of the funeral. On one occasion during my fieldwork, a person who attended a funeral service was blamed by a section of the community for the death of the deceased. Although the accused, and their immediate family, were shunned during the proceedings, no violence resulted. Prior to funerals, I have heard Ngarrindjeri people remark on the importance of suspension of bad feelings between kin during the funeral. Only one case of violence occurred at events associated with a Point McLeay funeral, to my knowledge. This was directed at non-participants who were not Aboriginal people. The prohibition against violence is in sharp contrast to most other Aboriginal events, such as Aboriginal-run sports carnivals and cabarets, when violence frequently breaks out between disputing Aboriginal factions. Funerals are events at which Ngarrindjeri people actively socialise as a community, with internal divisions largely ignored.

To some extent, the Aboriginal concept of time appears to be spaced by events such as funerals. They occur throughout the year, with the remembrance of other events often being associated with particular funerals. For many people, the only time they visit relatives living at isolated locations such as Point McLeay is for a funeral. Lower Murray people consider funeral visits to have the explicit advantage of being at times when many 'lations' (= 'relations') will be about. With the social and cultural importance of funerals, in addition to the disposal of the body, it is clear that they have a dual function for the community.

Contemporary Aboriginal people living in southern South Australia, particularly those people living at Point McLeay, believe in spirits. This is very apparent in present day funeral beliefs. For instance, as a general rule, none of the deceased's personal belongings, particularly clothing, will be disposed of until at least a year after the person's burial. The reason given is to avoid offending the person's spirit (or 'gupa') which may still linger. In the case of one middle aged woman who died suddenly at Point McLeay, a piece of furniture upon which her body was initially laid was given the status of an icon by members of her family. This fact caused some hardship for the woman's children when, due to lagging loan repayments, the lounge was under threat of repossession within weeks of her death. Part of the spirit is considered to be particularly active for sometime after death. Aboriginal people claim that by filing past the coffin when it is in the ground for interment they have their last direct contact with the dead person's spirit. This is also the case for bodies that are about to be cremated. In this way, a cross section of the whole Aboriginal community in the Lower Murray helps bury the deceased. The grave diggers consider that their job is an honourable one, as they will be the very last people in the community to say 'goodbye' (see Appendix 10.2) to the spirit.

Most Aboriginal people in southern South Australia no longer possess detailed information of the body of knowledge the literature has described as the 'Dreaming'.[37] Nevertheless, southern Aboriginal people generally strongly believe in various spirit beings (Section 3.2.3.3). Aboriginal spirit beliefs in the Lower Murray, like funerals, reflect the connection between group identity and *place*. When a spirit is reportedly seen, the location of the sighting and the relationship of the observers with the dead person are considered crucial aspects in explaining the sighting. On occasions, particularly when the means of death was violent, it will be claimed that the dead was seen walking along roadways at night. Furthermore, along some sections of roadway, Aboriginal people say they sometimes hear a hand knocking on a car window when they drive along particular sections of road at night. It is said that eventually 'the spirit of the dead rests with the old people.' Close dead relatives who appear in dreams are sometimes described as 'protectors' of their kin.[38]

The discussion within the community that follows a reported encounter with a ghost generally involves linking the sighting to all manner of contemporary conflict in local Aboriginal affairs. For instance, lights seen by one elderly resident of Point McLeay during the night on the outskirts of Point McLeay were

equated with other events that had occurred there; the recent death by hanging of a young man and illicit drug-taking by youths. It is thought that the dead will often appear to close family and friends in dreams to console them. Although there is widespread belief among Lower Murray people that ghosts exist, there is generally no one explanation of a particular alleged sighting that is favoured by all members of the community.

The fear of spirits is the basis of a settlement prohibition on visits to the cemetery area from dusk to dawn. Lower Murray people believe that spirits in the graveyard at night will follow a visitor back to the settlement below and cause problems there. It is also believed that the spirits need a carrier as they have a confused existence. Even the spirits of people who were well liked when alive, are thought to be potentially dangerous. This prohibition is also connected to a group of Casuarina trees on Big Hill above the cemetery, which are said to be possessed by spirits (Fig.7.6). Sand removed from Big Hill is considered to be dangerous, because of these spirit connections. One man reportedly died suddenly many years ago, as a direct result of placing sand from Big Hill in his yard. Dogs are thought to be able to sense spirits and ghosts about the home.

The spirits or ghosts that are claimed to be seen around Point McLeay are not always linked to Aboriginal people. A few are linked to local non-Aboriginal people who died mysteriously in the area. One such spirit, of a white nurse who suicided on the mission station, is reportedly seen in the area of the old hospital building where she worked in the 1920s.[39] Another, a 'Chinaman', is reportedly seen walking near his grave at Maragon.[40] I suggest that contemporary Aboriginal perception of the spirit's survival after death has a major role in shaping the way Aboriginal people interact with the world. Such linking of the psychic and concrete aspects of the perceived landscape maybe seen as a partial survival of the much more all-embracing pre-European perceived cultural landscape.

The degree to which Ngarrindjeri people consider themselves Christians appears not to dampen the strength of their beliefs in spirits. For instance, as noted by Killington (1971, p.38) for southern Aboriginal people in general, young adult men at Point McLeay tend to greatly fear the dark. Spirits and ghosts of the dead are talked about as everyday occurrences, and are not considered to be at all extraordinary. The avoidance of mentioning the name of the deceased prior to and immediately after the church service on the

day of the funeral may in part be explained in terms of Aboriginal beliefs in spirits and ghosts. These spirit beliefs, together with funeral practices in general, provide a context in which contemporary Aboriginal people of the Lower Murray reinforce both their group identity and sense of *place*, while investing the place itself with ever more significance and meaning.

7.4 Ngarrindjeri People Living Outside the Lower Murray

The adherence of Aboriginal people, even after they are widely dislocated over the landscape, to their own local patterns of social organisation has been noted in a number of areas around Australia. For instance, Sansom (1980) studied how in the Northern Territory city of Darwin, Aboriginal groups that had migrated there maintained their regional kin ties. This was largely done through Aboriginal movement patterns between Darwin and northern cattle stations. Sansom (1980, p.6) states that such Aboriginal adaptations to the urban context, have made a different social reality. Here, I similarly describe how Aboriginal descent patterns still define people who have moved away from the kinship hub in the Lower Murray region.

Many Ngarrindjeri people today live permanently outside the Lower Murray, as a result of both of natural and forced migrations (Section 2.1.3). In some cases, satellite Ngarrindjeri settlements have grown to a size where they are reproducing themselves through time. The populations of these outlying groups retain some of their previous regional affiliations. For the individual, the maintenance of their Ngarrindjeri membership is linked to the knowledge they possess of their personal links to Point McLeay. Aboriginal people sometimes choose to stress their Ngarrindjeri affiliations by saying that their ancestors lived in the Point McLeay Mission. On several occasions I have heard Aboriginal people, who were born in Adelaide but whose parents came from the Lower Murray, say to other Ngarrindjeri people they meet 'Hey. I'm Raukkan too'. In other contexts, people with a mixture of settlement links may say they are 'Point Pearce' or 'Koonibba'. Aboriginal people often recognise others with whom they are affiliated by calling them 'cousins'. In the present, the links that Aboriginal people in southern South Australia have with former mission settlements, such as Point McLeay, are far more tangible to them than affiliations based on descent group territories or language groups of the pre-European period.

7.4.1 The Ngarrindjeri in Adelaide

By the early 20th century, the remnants of the original Aboriginal population of the Adelaide area had already merged with the mission cultures of Point McLeay and Point Pearce (Clarke, 1991a). Nevertheless, throughout its history, Adelaide, the capital city of South Australia, has attracted a large number of Aboriginal people from surrounding regions.[41] Early this century, there was an explosive rise in the number of Aboriginal people that the administration defined as 'half castes'. The city became an area which absorbed the excess from the mission and rural-based populations (Section 2.1.3).

The trend towards Aboriginal people moving into the city has been particularly strong after the Second World War. In this respect, Aboriginal people have followed the pattern of the general population in Australia. The history of urban dominance in Australian settlement patterns has meant that there are not yet sufficient forces to prevent the 'flow back from the frontier' (Woolmington, 1972, p.27). Today, people from the Lower Murray form the largest identifiable Aboriginal group living in Adelaide.[42] In Aboriginal affairs, the urban context is important, as it is from here that Aboriginal people have had more of an initiating role in forcing changes in Aboriginal policy (Gale, 1972, p.2).

A number of studies have looked at the ways in which Aboriginal people have adapted to living in the urban social environment in South Australia. For instance, Ronald and Catherine Berndt (1951) studied the Aboriginal population living in the West End of Adelaide during the 1940s, when this was a poor economic area. They noted that Aboriginal people tended to associate with former residents of the same 'home' mission settlement, thereby retaining something of their identity. This created an ethnic subset of Aboriginal people from the Lower Murray, living in close proximity with other Aboriginal groups, and with the non-Aboriginal poor of Adelaide.[43] Inglis (1961), during the late 1950s and early 1960s, added to the study of the Berndts. She states that since the early fieldwork:

> the west end of the city has been emptied of dark people, and of the thirteen families that used to live there, only three of the original couples are still alive and together. Of the fifty offspring of these families, seventeen are married and living in the suburbs, ten are married and living in the country and five have returned to bring up their families on the government reserve from which their parents originally came (Inglis, 1961, p.200).

The move of the poor out of the city centre is largely due to the processes of gentrification and urban development in general.

During her fieldwork in Adelaide, Inglis perceived that Point Pearce people considered themselves much superior to the Aboriginal people at Point McLeay. She (1961, p.202) says that this sense was based upon the capacity of Point Pearce people to speak for themselves in the white world.[44] The early success of the farm at Point Pearce was also reportedly cited by Aboriginal people as a badge of their success. According to Inglis, many Point Pearce people considered that since their mission station returned a profit each year, it was actually subsidising the operation of Point McLeay. Point McLeay at this time was thought, even by Aboriginal people who had come from there, to be a backward and isolated place (Inglis, 1961, p.203). Some Point McLeay people had married Point Pearce people and had settled at Point Pearce.[45] Nevertheless, very few Point Pearce people had ever moved to Point McLeay. This trend, favouring outward over inward migration, would have helped Point McLeay retain its distinctive culture.

Aboriginal people were forced out of the inner city area during the 1960s due to urban gentrification. Many of these families moved into the suburbs. Nevertheless, the presence of Aboriginal people in the city area of Adelaide is still strong. This is due to their need for access to centralised community services such as the Wakefield Street Aboriginal Community Centre, Aboriginal Legal Aid, and various law enforcement agencies. Aboriginal people have moved from the rural regions into Adelaide for a variety of reasons. These include employment, to be near sick or aged relatives in the hospital system, or simply to actively change their lifestyle. Gale (1972, pp.165-167), who from the 1960s has studied the impact of urbanisation upon Aboriginal people who had moved into Adelaide from remote settlements, placed kinship high among the reasons why Aboriginal people migrated.

The potential anonymity for those living in Adelaide has perceived advantages to some Aboriginal people (Section 2.4.2). There is also a perception in the Aboriginal population that racism is far less in the urban environment. For instance, Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray with whom I have worked have told stories about 'Klu Klux Klan'-style groups operating in rural centres such as Murray Bridge. Virtually every adult in the Aboriginal population has personal accounts of racist attacks upon Aboriginal people in Lower Murray towns. Certainly, it has been demonstrated that local European populations living in close proximity to Aboriginal resident groups develop more extreme racial views than Europeans living away.[46] Although the 'colour bar' no longer exists openly, in many country towns there still exists a set of rigid social barriers between rural Europeans and Aboriginal people that keeps them apart. Wundersitz

states 'The socio-cultural environment has tended to select and retain only those individuals who are most willing to accept or adhere to the prevailing [racist] value systems, while non-prejudiced people tended to leave the district (1979b, p.76).' From my own observations, there is undoubtedly some pressure from both sides to maintain the status quo of the distinction between the Aboriginal and European populations. This is in spite of the fact that in the act of doing this both sides are essentially functioning on one level as a single community.

There is a clear social division between Aboriginal people who permanently live in Adelaide, and those who reside at Point McLeay. To some extent, this also exists between people living in country towns and those living at Point McLeay. The separation of kin often involves much bitterness. Some Aboriginal people, who have moved into the city, feel snubbed when they return to Point McLeay for a visit. Also, some of those who have lived away from the Lower Murray for a long time, clearly regard themselves as superior to those who have remained on the 'missions'. It is common for former residents of Point McLeay to call it a 'prison', a place where mainly those people with no future live. Some of the older Ngarrindjeri people living elsewhere often complain about the moral standards of the Point McLeay residents. However, from my observations, Aboriginal crime tends to occur in highly urbanised places, such as the northern suburbs of Adelaide. Here, robberies performed by Aboriginal people on non-Aboriginal people have the perceived advantage of there being less likelihood of retribution from the family or friends of the victim.

Aboriginal people from rural areas, such as the Lower Murray, are periodically forced to go into Adelaide on family business. This includes attendances at the Children's or Supreme Court, Aboriginal legal rights offices, welfare agencies, and visits to see relatives in the high security men's prison at Yatala or the women's prison at Northfield. Other Aboriginal people visit Adelaide as regional representatives in any one of a large number of meetings organised for or by the Aboriginal bureaucracy in Adelaide. Rather than booking into hotels, Aboriginal people frequently stay with relatives. Many Aboriginal people based in Adelaide have a never ending stream of visitors from the area with which they have kin ties. This maintains a network within the Aboriginal population whereby a person living in Adelaide can be kept closely informed about events in their particular ethnic group.

The coherence within extended communities, such as the Ngarrindjeri, benefits from the high degree of mobility between Aboriginal households and settlements.[47] The dependence that Aboriginal people have upon family units functions to prevent the community from being overwhelmed by cultural absorption into the general population. Since the end of high employment in Adelaide, many Aboriginal people in the city are poverty stricken (Gale & Wundersitz, 1982, pp.180-181). The resurgence of Aboriginal identity in Adelaide is possibly a response to economic pressures. Government aid targeted for Aboriginal people is generally only available to those living with some aspects of an Aboriginal lifestyle.[48] External forces have brought on internal reactions from the Aboriginal population.

Visitors, particularly those who arrive frequently, are often not particularly welcome in the homes of their kin. However, kinship ties make it very hard for the reluctant hosts of these people to turn them away. Aboriginal people living in Adelaide and trying to gain a reasonable level of affluence, cannot easily convince relatives that they do not have money to give them. This is particularly so when the Aboriginal person is living with a non-Aboriginal person. Aboriginal people who repeatedly block the moves of relatives to stay at their houses, risk being labelled by their community as having 'gone white'. In the case of the Ngarrindjeri, the definition of who is a relative, or 'cousin', virtually embraces every person who has a connection to an Aboriginal family in the Lower Murray. Those Aboriginal people who, in order to gain acceptance from European neighbours, consistently refuse to allow relatives to stay at their house or to supply them with money or organise transport for them, gradually become outsiders. Aboriginal people keenly resent their relatives who have been absorbed into the wider Australian society. The structure of contemporary Aboriginal families in southern South Australia balances autonomy with restrictive kin obligations. The group concerns of the family are important, even though this may be articulated as the needs of the 'old people'.

Many of the younger generations of Aboriginal families that have moved into Adelaide, still feel the regional connections of their parents, although differently. Aboriginal people brought up in Adelaide, particularly those of mixed parentage, have often been able to choose the degree of their participation in 'Aboriginal' cultural events. To some, their Aboriginality is expressed as a subcultural-type choice of speaking broken English and wearing the Nunga colours (black, red and yellow) when it suits the occasion. I know of individuals of Aboriginal descent in Adelaide who have at various times been members of a

number of urban subcultures, including the 'bikies' (motor-cycle clubs). Their expression of Aboriginality is very much subcultural in style. As the number of Aboriginal people raised in Adelaide grows, the city-based Aboriginal population will have a growing element with a more diffuse connection to the old reserves, and the nature of their identity will become more of an indigenous subculture.

The rural-based Aboriginal communities in southern South Australia actively try to 'own' their kin who have grown up outside their particular region. This is apparent at the annual Aboriginal football and netball carnivals, which are held in a different country centre each year, teams representing all the major settlements compete for trophies. In the case of the Raukkan team, it is my experience that this is generally comprised of people who live in Adelaide and Murray Bridge, but who have parents who once lived at Point McLeay. In this context, the recognition of the surname as being from 'Raukkan' is very important. From the Aboriginal point of view, there is nothing logically wrong with this if the participants are all Ngarrindjeri. With the comparatively few people living at Point McLeay, and their general poor economic and physical health, it would not be possible for Raukkan to field a team if it was solely resident-based. This flexibility in team membership also takes into consideration the movement of families into and out of Point McLeay. The definition of 'Raukkan' in this case is therefore wider than Point McLeay the town.

7.4.2 The Ngarrindjeri in the Riverland

The Aboriginal population in the Riverland can be described as an ethnic mix. Aboriginal people who live in the region today are descended from ancestors originally from the Mount Barker, Lower Murray, Mid Murray, Upper Murray, Darling River, North East and North West of South Australia, and southern Western Australia.[48] Aboriginal people had either moved into the area on their own for economic reasons, or were forcibly taken there by authorities when the Gerard Mission was established (Section 6.3.8). An Aboriginal resident at the Gerard Aboriginal settlement near Winkie told me 'Everyone here is from somewhere else.' As a result, there is not one unique term used by Aboriginal people in this region today that describes them. Where Aboriginal communities were created from diverse Aboriginal cultural groups, knowledge of the pre-European social structure is lost when it is no longer socially relevant.

During the last few years, the Aboriginal identity of the Riverland has started to consolidate, primarily with the growth in cultural activity at the Jerry Mason Senior Memorial Centre at Glossop (Section 8.5).[50] A TAFE course in the Ngarrindjeri language was also run here. The prominence of Ngarrindjeri people and their descendants in the area has allowed the concept of the Ngarrindjeri ethnic group to be stretched as far as the Mid Murray, although not without some debate within the Aboriginal community. Here, cross-linking of Lower Murray families with other groups has helped hone the perception that Aboriginal people in the Riverland should be called Ngarrindjeri.[51] Sometimes this has been refined as 'Riverland Ngarrindjeri'.[52] This sub grouping undoubtedly owes its growth to the strength of the cultural characteristics of the Ngarrindjeri of the Lower Murray, who are historically related to the Riverland people. It is becoming more acceptable to label as Ngarrindjeri the growing population of around 450 Aboriginal people who currently live in the Riverland.[53]

7.4.3 Aboriginal Family History

As stated earlier (Section 2.4.4), Ngarrindjeri identity is constructed on cultural attributes such as language, shared life history, and family connections. Due to persistent factors of social and geographic isolation in contemporary Aboriginal life, knowledge of family history is not as readily lost with the passing of each generation, but has been reinforced through Lower Murray endogamy. Certain surnames, albeit derived from non-Aboriginal sources, have the status of representing large descent groups (Section 2.4.4). The name of an Aboriginal person, can often say much about the individual's regional and cultural affiliations.

I assert that Aboriginal knowledge of family connections is far greater than that which exists for most of the Australian population. Nevertheless, in recent years there has been growth in the number of Aboriginal street kids in Adelaide who know little of their parents' 'mission' culture. Many adult Aboriginal people have expressed dismay at these young offenders who do not know whether they are 'Raukkan', 'Point Pearce' or 'Koonibba'. The 'street lingo' typically uses a selection of a few words from all three southern communities in a mixed fashion. Programmes have been set up in institutions, such as prisons and reformatories, that teach young Aboriginal people their culture. A method used is for an older Aboriginal person to tell them their family origins, and who their 'lations' are. Aboriginal people feel pride in maintaining their regional distinctiveness.

At the South Australian Museum, staff have noted a steadily increasing desire within the Aboriginal population for access to family history resources. In many cases, this has far outweighed the interest that Aboriginal communities have had with early artefacts from their region held in state collections. Publications by the Aboriginal historian at the Museum, Doreen Kartinyeri, help service the need of the Aboriginal populations of southern South Australia 'to know who they are.'[54] On many occasions, I have heard senior members of Aboriginal communities in southern South Australia state that the young people need to know who they are related to in order to prevent unions between close relatives. A large number of Aboriginal people recognise the biological and social problems caused by their own endogamy.[55] The Aboriginal population is responding to some of its problems by giving younger people a better understanding of how Aboriginal people are related.

To contemporary Aboriginal people, kinship knowledge along with *place* identity is considered to be the core of their culture. For instance, at a conference I attended a few years ago, which had representatives from most Aboriginal resident groups in southern South Australia, a senior Ngarrindjeri man claimed 'We still have our culture at Raukkan. We still know how we are all related.' This statement was made in response to a person from another community claiming that they had lost their culture and needed grant money to research their family histories. The building of their identity is expressed through a tendency for Aboriginal people to concentrate on their genealogical relationships with other Aboriginal families, rather than with non-Aboriginal people outside their immediate group.[56] In southern South Australia, contemporary cultural identity is more easily constructed by Aboriginal people upon the relationships between families and former mission settlements, than by using anthropological models of pre-European life that are described in the early ethnographic literature.

7.5 Conclusion

At Point McLeay, Aboriginal people have a complex series of relationships with various white agencies, in particular those of the government. Rather than the actions of these outside bodies being hidden or disguised, as they generally are in the broader society, they are a conspicuous part of daily life for many Aboriginal people. Past governments have defined Point McLeay and its surrounding farms and reserves as the Aboriginal part of the Lower Murray landscape. Point McLeay, as *place*, is a home, prison and

cemetery for many Aboriginal people in southern South Australia. Point McLeay epitomises the protective layering, through its government assistance and its geography, that Aboriginal people have had placed around them. Point McLeay is a buffer to shield its residents from the rest of the world. Although the Point McLeay settlement has been run by an Aboriginal council since 1974, it is still effectively operating as a mission in the sense that Aboriginal people there are targeted for substantial welfare and financial assistance. Contemporary Aboriginal culture can be interpreted as a complex of Aboriginal responses and adaptations to an externally controlled system of social management, flavoured with Aboriginal identities from local, state and national arenas.

The politics of *place* are such that happenings at Point McLeay are almost always considered to be 'Ngarrindjeri' events. This settlement serves as a focal cultural reference point for the extended Lower Murray community. Although this ethnic group is defined from within as all the people who call themselves 'cousins' or 'lations', it is the strength of links to a common place together with kinship knowledge that binds people together. The high participation rate of Aboriginal people of the Lower Murray region in cultural events at Point McLeay, such as funerals and official openings of buildings, demonstrates the importance of this settlement as the hub of Ngarrindjeri society. I argue that without the central role of places such as Point McLeay, Aboriginal cohesiveness at the level that exists today in southern South Australia would not be possible.

End Notes

1 Raukkan Community Council (1992, pp.1,30,90) states 130 people live at Point McLeay. Figures provided in 'The Murrundi Regional Council, ATSIC Annual Report for 1990 - 1991', Appendix C, indicates that there were 112 residents at Point McLeay, and 626 Aboriginal people living in the whole Lower Murray region.

2 Figure from the Raukkan Community Council (1992, p.6). During the last century, the area of the Point McLeay Mission was much smaller (Section 6.3.8).

3 Ironically, exempted Aboriginal people, such as David Unaipon, were prohibited from entering Point McLeay without permission from the authorities. Unaipon was described in his life time as 'one of the last full bloods'. According to informants, on at least one occasion he was prosecuted for entering the mission and 'consorting with Aborigines', who were in fact his relatives of mixed ancestry.

4 First, by Annie ('Fof Fon') Rankine, followed by her son, Henry Rankine OAM (Rankine, 1991) from the 1970s. Henry Rankine's son, Henry ('Chic') Rankine, was briefly the chairperson during the mid-1980s.

5 Early in 1992, there were eighteen families listed as wanting to move to Point McLeay (Raukkan Community Council, 1992, p.58).

6 The school is now called the Raukkan Aboriginal Primary School. Since 1991, the settlement has been signposted on major roads as Raukkan. However, in 1993, the Council at the settlement still used Point McLeay Aboriginal Council as letterhead on official documents. To local non-Aboriginal people, it is still Point McLeay. As the use of Raukkan by Aboriginal people embodies some key Aboriginal concepts of *place* that extend beyond the boundaries of Point McLeay the settlement, I have retained the use of the place name throughout this thesis.

7 This body was created through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Act in 1989 to replace the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs (Section 6.4.6).

8 The prospects for opening up Hindmarsh Island for more intensive settlement were boosted in 1993 by a state government decision to build a bridge across the Goolwa Channel to service a large land development proposed there.

9 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Interim Report. Commonwealth, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania and Northern Territory. Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

10 This has been noted for Aboriginal populations in Adelaide (Gale & Binnion, 1975, p.50) & in Alice Springs (Collman, 1979, p.53).

11 To some extent, this appears to be an official recognition of the hardship caused by previous welfare administrations that had removed Aboriginal children from their families to be become wards of the state, under the Aborigines Act, 1934-1939. An emotional song, 'Brown Skin Baby' by an Aboriginal writer Bob Randall, is about the removal of Aboriginal children by the state (Breen, 1989, p.53; Davis et al, 1990, pp.297-298). Aboriginal people, such as Val Power, have sung this at many official public events around Adelaide during the last two years (see Breen, 1989, p.69).

12 These children from the North West of South Australia have had an influence upon Point McLeay life. This is particularly so for Aboriginal English spoken, beliefs in certain spirits such as 'mamu' and the through the introduction of toys, for example tin/wire rollers and shanghais.

13 Currently $30 per week, although there are plans to allow this to rise according to a means test of house occupants (Raukkan Community Council, 1992, pp.62,67).

14 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Interim Report. Commonwealth, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania and Northern Territory. Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

15 Ironically, my personal fieldwork combined with genealogical information gathered by N.B. Tindale (S.A. Museum Anthropology Archives) shows that two large Aboriginal families in the Lower Murray are descended from 19th century policemen.

16 R.M. & C.H. Berndt (1951, pp.216-219) provide an account of Aboriginal drinking practices in the Lower Murray. White (1988, p.50) considers the effect of drinking in the conflict within an Aboriginal settlement of the North West of South Australia.

17 A report on the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody is in the Advertiser, 9 May 1991.

18 The father of this domestic unit is a northern European. The 'white' people who live in Point McLeay are generally the wives or girl friends of Aboriginal men. Non-Aboriginal men living with Aboriginal

women tend to live at some distance from the main settlement, but close enough for their partners to participate in Point McLeay life.

19 This was occupied earlier this century by Mr Lawrie, whose memory is still held in great respect by older members of the Point McLeay community.

20 According to Aboriginal informants, Taplin's house was used as a morgue and as a workshop to build coffins until about twenty years ago. For this reason, it is unlikely that it will ever again be used as living quarters. For a time during the 1970s, it was used as an 'activities room'. In the late 1980s, vandalism had destroyed much of it. In early 1993, the Community Council rebuilt the cottage, with plans for it to be used as a craft workshop and display area.

21 Domestic arrangements in Aboriginal homes are described for the Pintupi of the Western Desert by Myers (1986, pp.42-43) and in the North West of Australia by Ross (1987, pp.110-114).

22 In pre-European times, the didgeridoo was restricted to the Northern Territory region (Appendix 10.2). Today, it is an object of pan-Aboriginal significance (Section 2.4.1).

23 Making feather-flowers for sale from pelican feathers was introduced from Victoria (Inglis, 1961). Annie ('Fof-fon') Rankine is reputed to have been the first maker of feather flowers in the Lower Murray (J. Chilman, pers. com.). She experimented with feather from a number of species before concentrating on pelicans.

24 Ralkon is the former spelling of Raukkan (Point McLeay). Some elderly residents at Point McLeay would have preferred this spelling to have remained, instead of the present 'Raukkan'. The latter rendering they think is being mispronounced by younger generations.

25 Murray Valley Standard, June 1979 & June 1980. Also see McCorquodale (1987, pp.449-451).

26 A glowing report of the agricultural and social success of Point Pearce is found in the Advertiser, 11 February 1961.

27 This sentiment towards 'home' settlements is illustrated by several Aboriginal authors, such as Brusnahan (1992) for Point McLeay and Edwards et al (1986) for Point Pearce. The more popular work by Morgan (1987), 'My Place', is also in this vein.

28 Contemporary Aboriginal music, for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal audiences, is thriving (see Breen, 1989). At the time of the book launch, the Ngarrindjeri band members living at Point McLeay were Philip Kartinyeri and the band leader Jimmy Rankine. Later members, Mat Love and Lynette Kartinyeri, have been residents of Point McLeay at various times.

29 Margaret Brusnahan considers herself to be Ngarrindjeri through the genealogical connections of her mother, Iris Rankine. Her father, Arthur Woods, is described in the preface of her book as a 'white man of Irish descent, from Kapunda.' Margaret grew up in Adelaide.

30 In the early 1990s, Jimmy Jackson was elected Chairperson of Point McLeay Council. In 1991, Henry Rankine OAM became chairperson of the Murrundi Region of ATSIC, a position he still holds in 1993.

31 In Lower Murray mythology Nepele reached the Skyworld from Big Hill. Informants say that graves in the cemetery face west in order to follow Ngurunderi (Section 3.2.1.2 & 3.2.3.1.4). This orientation is still retained with new graves in the cemetery, although the reason for this is rarely commented upon by the community.

32 This property, which includes the ruins of George Mason's station (Section 6.1.1 & 6.3), is now leased by a Lower Murray person, Val Power (formerly Karpany).

33 I have chosen for the people mentioned here old Lower Murray names that are no longer in use in order to preserve the local flavour of the culture in the account.

34 Aboriginal public servants generally obtain considerable concessions from their department in using government resources to meet their individual obligations to their respective Aboriginal community.

35 The singing of 'The Old Rugged Cross' and 'Shall We Gather at the River' are favourite hymns for Ngarrindjeri funerals. According to informants, this has been the case for many years, with a Ngarrindjeri version of the former written with the same tune.

36 Mary had a long standing practice of avoiding Jean Maratinyeri. This was due to Jean having killed one of Mary's favourite relatives many years ago during a domestic dispute. Although this killing was judged by law to be in self defence, it had ever since set the two people in an antagonistic relationship.

37 Killington (1971, p.6) reported that Aboriginal people in southern districts of South Australia had poor knowledge of what the 'Dreamtime' meant.

38 Henry Rankine OAM (1991, p.114) provides an account of how his deceased mother, Annie Rankine, protects him and his family.

39 Aboriginal informants have said that this woman, known as 'Sister Flower', committed suicide as the result of an unhappy love affair with another white mission worker. She is alleged to have buried

jewellery somewhere at Big Hill. She was buried at the Point McLeay cemetery (Advertiser, 25 December 1926).

40 A former resident of Maragon near Wellington claimed that a Chinese man was buried in a small gully leading towards the water reserve on the river. Reports of this ghost being seen are recorded by Killington (1971, pp.42,83).

41 For Lower Murray movements, see Section 2.1.3, 3.3.1, 6.4.5 & Clarke (1991a).

42 Gale (1972, pp.80-81,166-167,256). The present regional chairperson for the ATSIC region of Adelaide is Mat Rigney, who grew up at Point McLeay.

43 Grzybowicz (1989) provides a West Coast Aboriginal view of inner city dwelling.

44 This Point Pearce political prominence in Adelaide is still noticeable. For instance, the 'Nunga of the Year Awards' have predominantly gone to people with a Point Pearce background, since the award's inception in 1983. Also, Aboriginal people from Point Pearce have largely appropriated the heritage of the Adelaide landscape (Section 8.6.3).

45 Kartinyeri provides an example with her own life history (1985, p.7). Hemming (1989b) gives an overview of the Aboriginal Family History Project in the South Australian Museum.

46 Wundersitz (1979a&b) deals with racism on Yorke Peninsula. The main settlements chosen for her study groups were Point Pearce and Maitland.

47 Young & Doohan (1989) discuss the cultural and social importance of Aboriginal mobility within Central Australia.

48 For example, the housing and welfare benefits available to Aboriginal women living with non-Aboriginal men are significantly reduced. However, the reverse situation still provides full benefits to the Aboriginal male.

49 These localities are derived from the genealogies compiled by Tindale (S.A. Museum Anthropology Archives) and from my research with the contemporary Aboriginal community.

50 The South Australian Museum has a growing collection of artworks and craft works from this centre. A print, 'Pilarki' (callop fish), by Aboriginal artist, Rajah Singh, is used on the cover of a publication by Hemming & Clarke (1991). The work of Aboriginal artist, Ian Abdulla, has gained national recognition. Abdulla (1993) paints in the naive style.

51 Attempts by a non-Aboriginal scholar (Pretty, 1976, 1986) to label the Riverland people as Meru or Ngaiawung, based on early ethnographic data, has not had any impact on the contemporary community. Although Pretty (pers. com.) reports that he informed the Aboriginal people living at Gerard of their 'real' tribal name, they prefer to be 'Riverland Ngarrindjeri'. The adoption of new identities by Aboriginal people can only occur when culturally appropriate to contemporary perceptions of links to the past.

52 I have seen T-shirts and posters made at the Jerry Mason Senior Memorial Centre with 'Riverland Ngarrindjeri' written on them.

53 Murrundi Regional Council ATSIC Annual Report for 1990 -1991. Appendix C.

54 Doreen Kartinyeri has manuscripts for over thirty Point McLeay and Point Pearce families. Only a few are so far published (1983, 1985, 1989a, 1989b, 1989c, 1990).

55 A genetically carried disease, Huntington's Chorea, is a serious health problem for the Lower Murray community. It was introduced in 1867 and has been maintained through in-breeding (Gale & Bennett, 1969; Killington, 1973, pp.24-25).

56 The perceived endogamy has led to some serious misconceptions in the Aboriginal community about their sexual practices. For instance, during a recent discussion on sexually transmitted diseases at the Meningie Area School, an Aboriginal student reportedly claimed that 'Nungas are not at risk from AIDS as Nungas only go with Nungas.'

8 Aboriginal Land Management in the Lower Murray Since the 1940s

After European settlement in 1836, the Aboriginal population in the Lower Murray gradually moved into pastoral stations, the Point McLeay mission, and fringecamps. Hunting and gathering activities declined as agricultural practices took over and Aboriginal people were restricted to small parts of the landscape. By the time Point McLeay came under direct government control in 1916, most parts of the Lower Murray could no longer support Aboriginal people in a totally pre-European fashion. This region became part of 'rural South Australia'. Nevertheless, Aboriginal people here retained a distinctly Aboriginal view and use of the physical environment. Some early hunting and gathering practices continued, particularly in the fringecamps which existed until the mid-1960s. Nevertheless, when Aboriginal people became more town-based, their relationship to the landscape changed again. Here, contemporary Aboriginal use and perception of the 'natural' environment is considered with respect to the development of modern practices in Aboriginal land management in the Lower Murray.

8.1 The Modern Landscape

The Lower Murray has seen much economic development since European settlement (Section 6.1). This is due to factors such as the favourable climate of the region, the potential of the river for transport and irrigation, and the closeness to Adelaide, and the sea. Today, major highways and railway lines pass through the Lower Murray. Crops and pasture have largely replaced the indigenous vegetation. Irrigation directly from the lake and river system occurs in many areas. It is difficult for the modern observer to imagine how the region appeared before European settlement (Section 4.2.1). Only in locations marginal to agricultural use, such as the Younghusband Peninsula, do remnant pockets of land remain with components of the indigenous flora and fauna. For this reason, Aboriginal reserves and National Parks contain much of what remains of the pre-European landscape (Fig.8.1).

8.1.1 The Present Day Biota

Many of the pre-European plants and animals formerly found in the Lower Murray are now either scarce or locally extinct (Section 4.2.1.3). Those organisms that formerly occurred in open woodlands, grasslands
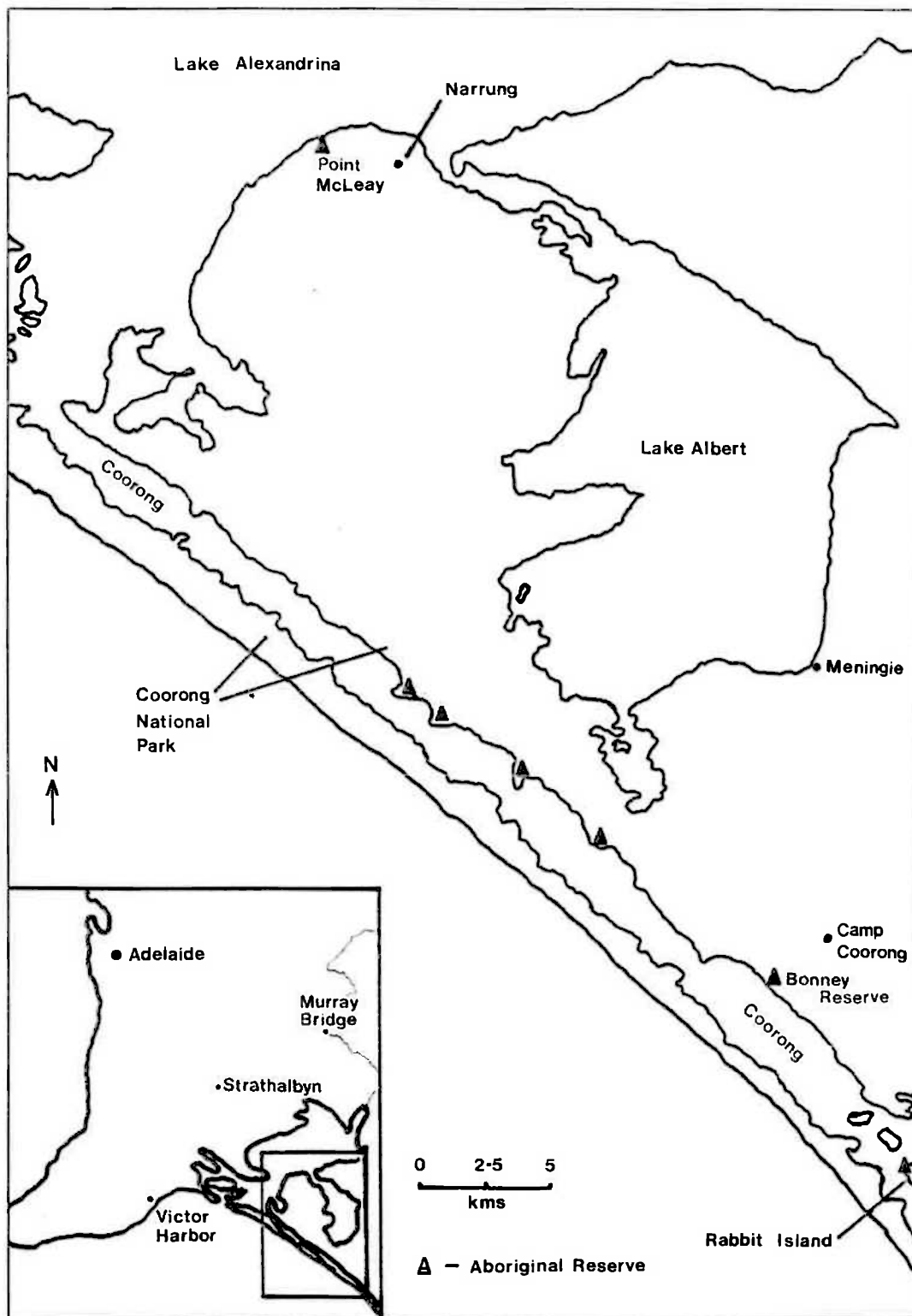
Fig.8.1 Aboriginal reserves in the Lower Murray

and the river have suffered most. Such habitats were not only the first ecological zones exploited by

European settlers, but are the areas most intensively transformed by agriculture (Section 6.1). In contrast,

plants and animals found in the mallee or heavily wooded areas have generally fared much better.

Europeans have introduced many foreign plant and animal species into the Lower Murray. Not all of these

were essential for farming. To create a neo-European landscape, colonists also introduced organisms as

pets and garden plants.[1] Other species came accidentally as weeds and pests. European-style agriculture

favours the economic exploitation of a few species. Therefore, the biological diversity of farming regions is

generally far less than for uncultivated land in the same area. European colonisation has irreversibly

changed the ecosystem of the Lower Murray.

8.1.1.1 Contemporary Fauna in the Lower Murray

European intrusion into the Lower Murray has affected the distribution and abundance of most indigenous

animal species. This is primarily due to the reduction of pre-European vegetation and the alteration of the

water flow conditions in the basin. For instance, I have heard many Aboriginal people lament the loss of

favoured species of eating fish, such as 'pilalki' (callop, Plectrophilus ambiguus) and 'pondi' (Murray cod,

Maccullochella peeli). The Murray lobster (Euastacus armatus) is also very scarce in South Australia

(Reschke, 1985, pp.173-174). Reported to be locally extinct are water birds, such as the magpie goose

(Anseranas semipalmata), little bittern (Ixobrychus minutus), and ground birds such as the spotted quail-

thrush (Cinclosoma punctatum), red-capped robin (Petroica goodenovii), and ground parrot (Pezoporus

wallicus) (Parker & Reid, 1983).

Mammals, in particular, have suffered immensely from European colonisation. Thirty-four terrestrial

mammals are listed by Strahan (1983) as existing in the Lower Murray just prior to European settlement.

Possibly only twenty-two of these exist somewhere in this region today. Nine mammals are locally extinct,

but can be found outside the Lower Murray. These are the platypus (Ornithorhynchus anatinus), three

quolls (Dasyurus species), western barred bandicoot (Perameles bouginville), bilby (Macrotis lagotis), two

bettongs (Bettongia species), and the dingo (Canis familiaris dingo) (Strahan, 1983 & Aitken, 1983).

Three mammal species are believed to be entirely extinct. The toolache wallaby (Macropus greyii), which

featured in Lower Murray cosmology (Section 3.2.3.1), was last seen in the 1920s.[2] Similarly, the white-

footed rabbit-rat (Conilurus albipes) and the eastern hare-wallaby (Lagorchestes leporide) disappeared last century, only existing today as museum skins.

The rural landscape of the Lower Murray created by Europeans provides refuge for many introduced species. A number of invertebrate pests have proliferated in the Lower Murray. These include several species of land snail and earth worms, the former fouling crops (Gross, 1983 & Zeidler, 1983). The Portuguese black millipede (Ommatoiulus moreletii) and lucerne flea (Sminthurus viridis) are also species that hinder agricultural production in the Lower Murray. Several species of butterfly have advanced into the region through the spread of introduced weeds and the growing of fruit trees (Fisher, 1983). Commonly encountered in the Lower Murray in all types of vegetation is the introduced honey bee (Apis mellifera). This has largely displaced indigenous bees, such as Trigona species (Matthews, 1976, p.88). Several foreign species of fish are established in the river and lake systems. In particular, the European carp (Cyprinus carpio), goldfish (Carassius auratus), and redfin perch (Perca fluviatilis) are replacing the pre-European fish fauna (Glover, 1983). Introduced birds which I have often seen in the Lower Murray are the house sparrow (Passer domesticus), feral pigeon (Columba livia), and starling (Sturnus vulgaris). Foreign mammals living wild in the Lower Murray include the house mouse (Mus musculus), black rat (Rattus rattus), rabbit (Oryctolagus cuniculus), brown hare (Lepus capensis), feral cat (Felis catus), and fox (Vulpes vulpes). Domestic stock in the paddocks are predominantly breeds of cattle and sheep.

Some species of pre-European fauna have flourished under the altered ecological regime, whereas others persist in the reduced niches available to them. For instance, the stumpy-tailed lizard (Trachydosaurus rugosus) and the brown snake (Pseudonaja textilis) are favoured by the transformation of indigenous vegetation into pasture (Thompson & Tyler, 1983, p.156). A number of mammals from the pre-European fauna are still present in the Lower Murray, although most are scarce. According to Strahan (1983), the indigenous species of marsupials that occur here today are the grey kangaroo (Macropus fuliginosus), brusher wallaby (Macropus rufogriseus), brush-tailed phasogale (Phascogale tapoatafa), two species of dunnart (Sminthopsis species), common wombat (Vombatus ursinus), ringtail possum (Pseudocheirus peregrinus), brush tail possum (Trichosurus vulpecula), and western pygmy-possum (Cercartetus concinns). One species of monotreme is present, the echidna (Tachyglosus aculeatus). Representing the indigenous placentals are the water rat (Hydromys chrysogastor), swamp rat (Rattus lutreolus), Mitchell's

hopping mouse (Notomys mitchelli), nine species of bat, and possibly the southern brown bandicoot (Isodon obesulus).

From my own fieldwork, some animal species that became locally extinct in the Lower Lakes area, exist still in the southern region of the Lower Murray, such as on the Younghusband Peninsula and in the Coorong national parks.[3] These include the grey kangaroo (Macropus fuliginosus), brusher wallaby (Macropus rufogriseus), emu (Dromaius novaehollandiae), wombat (Vombatus ursinus), and the mallee fowl (native pheasant, Leipoa ocellata). The survival of these animals is the result of the good coverage of pre-European vegetation that remains here in contrast to the Lower Lakes. The National Parks in the Deep Creek area near Cape Jervis also provides a refuge for some forest species. In recent years, some animals are spreading back into the Lower Lakes region. For instance, grey kangaroos and emus have reappeared on the Narrung Peninsula. Aiding this recovery is the existence of patches of indigenous mallee and sheoak scrub that have largely survived only on Aboriginal-leased land. Major causes in the original depletion of the populations of indigenous mammals are over shooting and habitat destruction. Revegetation projects in the future, particularly in areas such as around Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert, may help to protect some indigenous organisms. Nevertheless, some animal species will never return to the Lower Murray. This is due to extinction and changes in the balance of the ecosystem. Present conditions tend to favour introduced fauna and flora.

8.1.1.2 Contemporary Flora in the Lower Murray

The plant species introduced by Europeans have also had an irreversible effect on Lower Murray landscape. In many areas of the Lower Murray, weeds have reached an equilibrium with the local vegetation. For example, the open areas on the sandhills of the Younghusband Peninsula are today covered with the sea spurge (Euphorbia paralias) from the Mediterranean, and marram grass (Ammophila arenaria), a dune-binding species from Europe.[4] The bridle creeper (Myrsiphyllum asparagoides) is increasingly taking over pockets of remnant scrub in the inland regions of limestone karst. This species is a garden plant originally from South Africa. Weeds dominate the farmed areas, particularly around Point McLeay. Nuisance species include the boxthorn (Lycium ferocissimum) from South Africa and the horehound (Marrubium vulgare) from Europe, and many introduced grasses. In the case of the boxthorn,

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called 'katheri-bush' (= 'prickle-bush') by local Aboriginal people, the early photographs of Point McLeay suggest its introduction as a species for hedges.[5]

Perhaps the greatest impact of an introduced species upon the southern South Australian vegetation was created by the rabbit, introduced in the 1870s (Rolls, 1984, pp.3-265).[6] Rabbits have changed the structure of local flora throughout southern Australia (Walker, 1985, pp.84-85). This has undoubtedly made some plant species, formerly used by Aboriginal people as food and medicine, locally extinct or rare. Rabbits have caused the displacement of many small species of mammal. A demonstration of the environmental impact of rabbits occurred in the 1950s when, due to a crash in the rabbit population through myxomatosis, there was significant regrowth on the sand dunes of Younghusband Peninsula for a short period (McCourt & Mincham, 1987, p.19). This illustrates the dominance of rabbits over the Lower Murray environment. The whole of Lower Murray is, to a degree, modified into a neo-European landscape.

8.2 Contemporary Aboriginal Knowledge of Hunting and Gathering Practices

Although European settlement in the Lower Murray region occurred early by South Australian standards, much pre-European knowledge concerning the environment has survived to the present in the Aboriginal community. Such information includes the identity and method of use of particular species of plants and animals, and their Aboriginal names. As I have stated elsewhere, contemporary fieldwork with the Aboriginal population has produced information on the pre-European mode of subsistence not recorded elsewhere (Clarke, 1986b). Nevertheless, post-European uses of plants and animals have flavoured this information.

During my fieldwork, I found that Aboriginal people usually brought forth information about plant and animal uses within the context of narratives of their own life history. For instance, many of the Aboriginal people I interviewed about bush resources recalled what they, as children, had observed being collected and used by older kinsmen many years ago. Some remembered the types of foods they gathered and ate on the way to and from school. Similarly, summer holidays down along the Coorong were a rich source of memories about plant and animal use. I have received detailed accounts of the environment from Aboriginal people who had formerly relied on natural resources to supplement their meagre family income.

Such people trapped water rats, fished, and caught rabbits. A variety of methods were employed. In the cases of water rats and rabbits, Aboriginal hunters often used steel traps and snares. In spite of the non-Aboriginal technology used, there was some continuity between these practices and that of the pre-European period.

At Point McLeay, agricultural activities predominated. Nevertheless, Aboriginal lifestyles reinforced pre-European knowledge of certain environmental resources. For instance, from the time of the establishment of Point McLeay Mission, Aboriginal family groups there followed the practice of camping along the Coorong in summer.[7] This served as a break from Mission life. Due to such movements, the Aboriginal population at Point McLeay during this time frequently consisted of only the old and sick. According to Lower Murray people I have interviewed, these annual trips continued until the 1960s. The supplies taken included 'wurley-sticks' (= 'shelter-poles') and hessian sacks to make shelters, sugar and flour for damper, jam, and blankets. Horse and buggy carried these goods. However, wild food, such as berries, cockles, fish, emus, 'porcupines' (echidna), rabbits and kangaroos greatly supplemented their provisions once they had arrived. Extended family groups would stay away for several weeks from the mission station.

The Coorong as a destination was attractive for a number of reasons. Up until the Second World War, non-Aboriginal farmers had largely ignored the Coorong, unlike the Lake Alexandrina region. The Coorong has several declared Aboriginal reserves along its shore. Contact with non-Aboriginal people was therefore minimal. According to one informant, an elderly Aboriginal man with ties to the Coorong and South East of South Australia, Jacob Harris, had taken him and other youths from Point McLeay to the Coorong in the 1930s.[8] They took off all their clothes and lived by hunting and gathering. This was to 'introduce us to our country'. Other family groups went to the Goolwa area. The summer trips by families reportedly had the official blessing of the Point McLeay authorities. The school did not require the children during that time. The coastal environment was pleasant during the summer (Section 4.3.4).

Ironically, the heavily regulated lifestyle of Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray had helped to maintain a close relationship to certain sites away from the Mission. However, by the 1960s, when the legislation restricting Aboriginal movements ended, large scale visits to the Coorong involving family groups declined in frequency. People now had other places they could go for recreation. The European landscape partially

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opened up for Aboriginal people, resulting in more movement into towns and Adelaide. The summer trips, although recreational, had been important events that gave participants a sense of belonging to the Lower Murray landscape.

During the period discussed earlier (Section 6.4), while the 'colour bar' operated in rural towns in the Lower Murray, exclusion from many of the benefits gained through access to towns, helped to maintain a high level of interaction between Aboriginal people and the physical environment. In particular, I discovered that former dwellers of fringecamps have extensive knowledge of the medicines and edible plants that were 'used by the old people'. This was simply because they needed these indigenous resources to survive: the proximity of their dwellings to main roads and settlements did not lessen their connection with the broader environment. When the 'colour bar' formally ceased to operate, allowing Aboriginal people much greater access to towns, the use of wild foods and building materials decreased markedly, since the wild resources of the landscape were no longer needed as a buffer between rations and wages. This has had a serious impact upon Aboriginal knowledge of uses of naturally occurring plants and animals.

Older members of families that had farmed, generally also possess much information about pre-European uses of plants and animals, despite their partial incorporation into the farming classes of the region. The existence of this knowledge is chiefly due to their reliance on some naturally occurring resources to supplement supplies gained from local towns, and an occupation which revolved around the land. Fringecamp dwellers and Aboriginal farmers were marginal people in the sense that their greater remoteness from direct white control meant that they were unable to rely on outsiders for all their material requirements. These people therefore needed to be more opportunistic than those supported by the state, who lived 'on the mission'. Naturally, some Aboriginal people moved between the Aboriginal farms, the fringecamps, and the mission.

8.3 Aboriginal Fishing Today

Fishing was a major activity of Aboriginal people in the pre-European period (Section 4.2.8). Last century, the European fishing industry engaged many Aboriginal people (Section 6.2.2 & 6.3.3). Because of their

involvement, South Australian fishermen started using many of the local Aboriginal fish names (Turner, 1972, p.123). In the 1860s, involvement in the fish trade centred at Milang was a major part of the Point McLeay economy. The creation of the Murray River Barrages destroyed this mission enterprise (Section 6.1.4 & 6.1.5). As a result, there are very few people at Point McLeay today with experience in commercial fishing. Whereas many older Aboriginal people can remember a time when favourite indigenous fish were abundant, today mainly European carp is caught. The few local non-Aboriginal people who have fishing licences, predominantly catch mullet (Aldrichetta forsteri) in the Coorong, and bony bream (Fluvialosa richardsoni) and European carp (Cyprinus carpio) in the Lower Lakes. It is my experience that older non-Aboriginal fishermen in the region know the local Aboriginal names for most of the indigenous fish. This knowledge echoes the early substantial involvement and interaction that Aboriginal people had with the Lower Murray fishing industry.

Today, the recreational fishing at Point McLeay is usually done by people who are middle aged or older, particularly women. It is my observation that several elderly women at Point McLeay enjoy fishing for 'tjeri' (silver perch, Bidyanus bidyanus) and 'pilalki' (callop, Plectroplites ambiguus). A favourite location for them is at 'The Bulrushes'. Groups of old women, no longer burdened by child rearing, are in the habit of going fishing for long hours on the lake shore. Carp are the main fish caught, generally left to die on the bank. Only a few of the Point McLeay residents will eat such coarse meat. Parents and grandparents will sometimes take their younger children fishing along the lake or river. Youths sometimes go spear fishing in the lagoons for large species of fish, such as carp (Fig.8.2, 8.3). For recreation, the young men on Point McLeay generally prefer to go shooting rabbits or ducks, or 'charging up' (drinking alcohol). Rather than this being explained simply in terms of changing practices through time, Aboriginal people themselves suggests that it is a reflection of the influence of the age structure of the community upon recreational activities. The anglers in the Aboriginal community of tomorrow, will be the young adults of today who rarely fish.

Aboriginal people are opportunistic in some of their economic activities. For instance, from August to September, a large number of 'thukeri' (bony bream, Fluvialosa richardsoni) die of natural causes in Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert, floating to the surface (Section 4.2.8). Older Aboriginal people go to the lake shore or head out in small boats to collect them. According to informants, up until the 1930s and

Fig.8.2 Bernard Williams (left) & Henry Rankine (right) of the Point
McLeay Aboriginal community spear-fishing in a lagoon near Teringie,
1991 (Photo: P.A. Clarke)

Fig.8.3 European carp (Cyprinus carpio) caught in the lagoons near
Teringie, 1991 (Photo: P.A. Clarke)

1940s, old women would organise children into groups with hessian bags to collect the 'thukeri' from the lake shore. The only fish taken had red gills, as this is a sign of their freshness. This species of fish has very sweet flesh. Nevertheless, as its European name suggests, it is very bony.[9] Many younger people refuse to eat 'thukeri', precisely because it is so bony. A few of the older Lower Murray people are able to cook the fish in such a way that the bones come away in one piece.

Most of the fishing by contemporary Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray is with hand lines. Throughout southern South Australia, Aboriginal people appear reluctant to fish with rods. This is probably, in part, due to the inconvenience of carrying so much tackle.[10] The hand-line tradition of fishing is an expression of the southern Aboriginal identity. So strong is this practice, that Aboriginal people consciously draw this distinction between themselves and white fishermen. A young Aboriginal man explained to me that 'Only whitefellas use rods. We do it blackfella way.' Some Aboriginal people have even said that it would be a 'Shame job - fish with rod.'

The following incident reinforced for me the cultural significance that Aboriginal people give to fishing. In October 1992 at Fred's Landing along the Murray River south of Tailem Bend, I observed an encounter between an Aboriginal man and a non-Aboriginal visitor. This locality is an area where a wide range of people occasionally fish. A non-Aboriginal man was walking along the edge of the river when he struck up a conversation with a middle-aged Aboriginal man sitting down fishing with his young son. The Aboriginal man was using two simple hand-lines, each wound around a plastic hand-ring. The son had a small rod that he was using in the manner of a toy, seeing how far he could flick the hook on the line. The non-Aboriginal man jokingly noted the tackle difference, suggesting that the young boy was 'more professional'. The Aboriginal man humoured the visitor by agreeing with him and laughing. To the Aboriginal man, there was more 'shame' with fishing by rod than without it.

Shellfish were formerly collected in great numbers by the Lower Murray people (Section 4.2.12 & 4.2.13). The middens of molluscs frequently found along undisturbed sections of banks of the river and lakes, and on the shores of the Coorong and sea, provide evidence of this. Today, mussels are largely ignored by Aboriginal people as a food source. Up until the 1960s, when Aboriginal families visited the Younghusband Peninsula during the summer, cockles were extensively eaten. However, very few Lower

Murray people go there today. Informants have told me how they caught 'crawfish' (yabbies, <u>Cherax</u> <u>destructor</u>) in the 1930s and 1940s. The main location for this was a small bay near Wangarawar at Point McLeay. When one of the 'crawfish' holes is pumped with a human foot, the occupant comes out of a connecting tunnel. Today, Lower Murray people catch yabbies chiefly during visits to the Riverland. Nets and wire traps are the principal methods employed.

8.4 Aboriginal Hunting Today

The hunting and gathering lifestyle of Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray progressively changed as sedentary farming by European agriculturalists took over the land. By 1910, most elements of the hunting component of southern South Australian material culture were redundant (Bellchambers, 1931, pp.21-22; Hemming, 1990, p.134). Duck nets and spears had previously typified hunting in this region (Section 4.2). In the case of clubs, some types persisted. Men kept the fighting stick, or 'kanarki', as a weapon of defence in their wurleys and houses. This occurred as late as the 1940s, according to contemporary Aboriginal sources. Also, until the 1960s, youths used a short club with a single or double bulbous head to throw at rabbits. However, today, with the demise of wurleys and firearm restrictions, the 'old' style weapons have become souvenirs or museum pieces (Section 8.5).

In the present, hunting rabbits and birds is by shot gun or .22 rifle. It is chiefly a recreational activity for the warmer months of the year (Fig.8.4). Lower Murray people can remember eating other animals such as 'waldaruk' (wood grubs), 'krayi' (snakes), 'porcupine' (echidna), and a variety of lizards. However, few would eat them now. Kangaroos are rarely eaten, mainly due to their scarcity. Until recently, kangaroo meat came from the South East region, such as at Coonalpyn or Kingston, where they were still relatively common. In recent times at Point McLeay, some people, originally from the West Coast, have caught, cooked and eaten blue-tongue lizards (<u>Tiliqua sincoides</u>).[11]

Although most contemporary hunting practices in the Lower Murray involve European technology, I argue that they remain distinctly Aboriginal in their expression. To demonstrate how hunting is used by Aboriginal people to express their own relationship to the environment, I will now provide a brief

Fig. 8.4 Some hunting and fishing areas surrounding Point McLeay

THE BULRUSHES

WANGARAWAR

Fish

Birds

POINT MCLEAY

NARRUNG ⇒

LAKE ALEXANDRINA

road

ROAD

0   ·5   1

kms

BIG HILL

Rabbits

RALKON FARM HOMES

Fish

N

Birds

Lagoons

TERINGIE

Rabbits

WOMMERAN

GUM PARK   BLOCK K
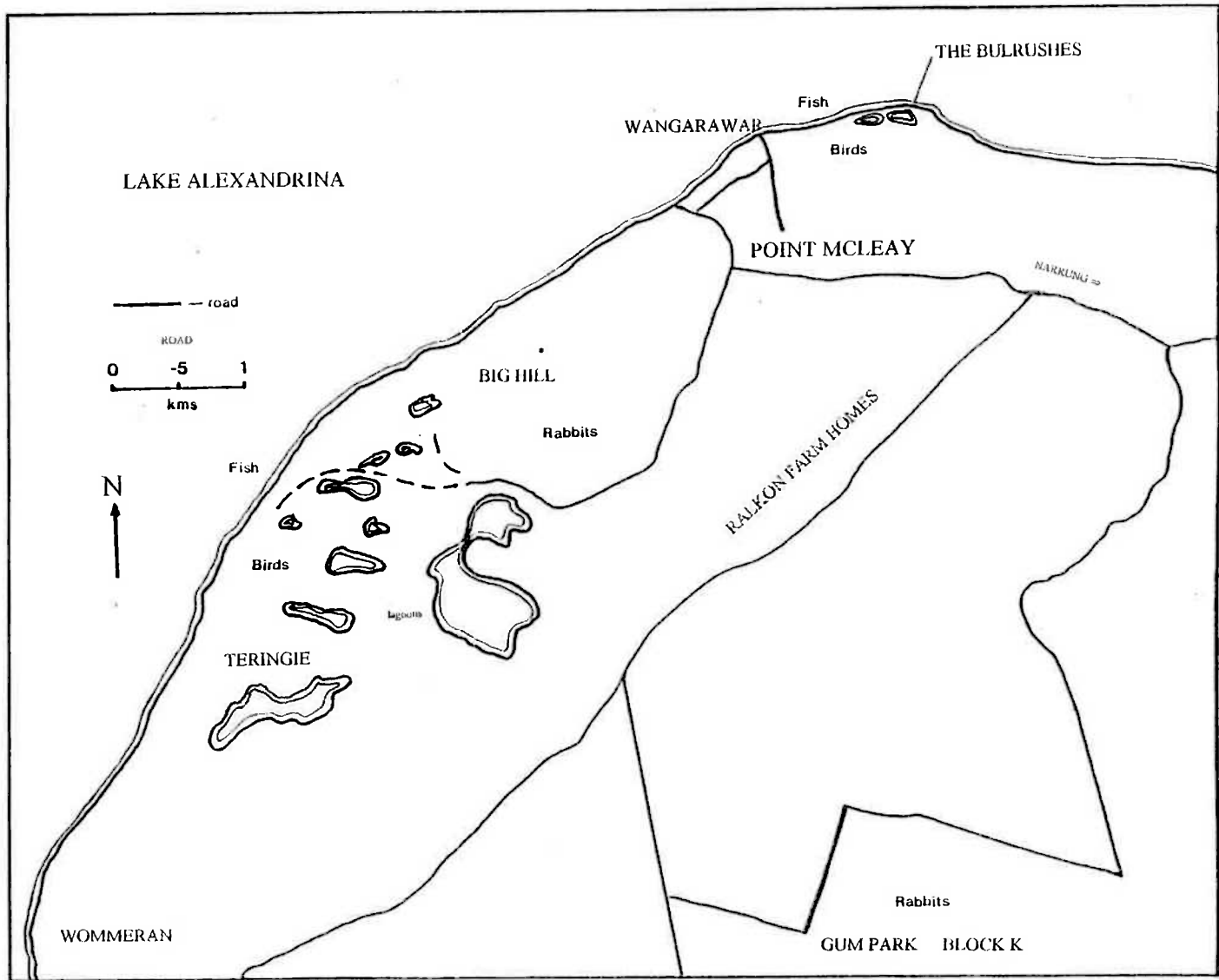
ethnography of hunting practices at Point McLeay. My account can be compared with that of Morton (1990), who investigates the cultural role of non-Aboriginal hunting in contemporary Australia.

8.4.1 Rabbit Shooting

Today, rabbits are the most readily obtained wild mammal in the Point McLeay region. Although Aboriginal people know that the rabbit is an introduced species, this does not appear to diminish the importance of rabbit shooting. On many occasions, hunting parties are organised spontaneously, rather than in advance. A visitor who is unfamiliar with the region will sometimes have one of these events arranged for his benefit. This allows the Lower Murray people to 'show our land' to the newcomer. Even when a hunting party is primarily a response to a desire for rabbit or duck meat, the cultural significance remains. A senior person makes arrangements for obtaining guns and a car. The type of car preferred is a large sedan with high clearance from the ground. Generally, the time chosen to start is the early evening when it is becoming dark. In contrast, early morning trips are usually to shoot ducks. Hunting excursions are usually to nearby Aboriginal-run land reserves, such as Block K, Gum Park, or at the back of Big Hill.

Local hunting trips are almost entirely male events. Women are generally only present when the shooting is secondary to another activity, such as getting firewood. On most of the trips I have attended, a particular old 'uncle' was consulted. This was to see if he would come along, or whether he could lend some of his guns, or simply to tell him people are 'going bush'. Younger men may join the party. The driver is usually the organiser, because he must take control of where the party goes. The favoured areas for shooting have night time driving hazards. Obstacles to avoid include fallen trees, tree stumps, low patches of scrub, sand drifts, rabbit warrens, piles of limestone, soakages, rusting farm machinery, barbed wire tangles, and general rubbish. Much of this is difficult to see at night. It is therefore necessary for the driver to have a high degree of localised geographic knowledge. Men who have worked on the Point McLeay properties take pride in identifying the landscape during the night's activities. These men are delighted when outsiders lose their sense of direction. Although the driver usually does little shooting, the structure of the event means that this role is one of high prestige. Youths who take part generally either spot with the search light, or act as runners to collect and finish off the shot rabbit.

With the Lower Murray men I have accompanied, there has been much resistance to shooting at animals other than rabbits. For example, hares, foxes, a small number of kangaroos, and deer are frequently seen at both Block K and Gum Park.[12] There is active resistance in the party to shooting at these animals. The stated reason is usually that they are not common, or simply that they weren't 'doing the hunters any harm'. In this context, Aboriginal people articulate that feral animals are to some extent like them, that is outside white law. The shooting parties of local white farmers do not possess this sentiment. Although the latter engage in rabbit shooting for recreation, the structure of their events generally reflects their personal economic interests in getting rid of pests.

The aim is to shoot rabbits through the head, as this is a discarded part of the carcass. A plastic garbage bag in the boot of the car holds the shot rabbits until the conclusion of the shooting. The gutting takes place in the field in front of the car's headlights. This is a messy job. The removal of the entrails makes this operation too dirty for home. On a good night, there may be as many as fifty rabbits to skin and gut. Back at Point McLeay, the rabbits have their heads and lower legs chopped off, by hatchet or machete used on a block of wood. If there are many rabbits, a clothes line holds the carcasses by the hide of their legs. This prevents dogs from running off with them before the end of the job. Hungry dogs at the settlement quickly remove the refuse produced. The rabbit meat is ready for cooking after it has soaked over night in water. This removes some of the strong odour of the flesh, peculiar to rabbits.

Various senior people at Point McLeay receive the carcasses, wrapped in layers of newspaper and plastic. Often, the biggest share goes to the provider of the guns, ammunition, or to the owner of the vehicle. Although people in the Point McLeay settlement will often hear about a hunting trip the next day, there is a certain level of secrecy about their activities, that is maintained with respect to local non-Aboriginal farmers. This is to avoid interference from outside the local Aboriginal group. According to some Point McLeay people, local non-Aboriginal people get nervous when they see Aboriginal people with guns. For this reason, Aboriginal hunters would rather have non-Aboriginal people think that little or no hunting by Aboriginal people occurs around Point McLeay. Hunting on Aboriginal land occurs in an Aboriginal realm of activity that Point McLeay people prefer to keep to themselves.

8.4.2 Bird Shooting

The main species of duck hunted by Point McLeay people today are the grey teal (Anas gibberifrons) and the 'mounty' (mountain duck, Tadorna tadornoides). According to Aboriginal informants, the 'punkeri' (hardhead duck, Aythya australis) was formerly common in the Lower Lakes, but now seldom seen. Other species formerly hunted for food include 'nilkani' (banded stilt, Cladorhynchus leucocephalus), 'kungari' (black swan, Cygnus atratus) and 'lawri' (Cape Barren goose, Cereopsis novaehollandiae). In particular, cooked 'kungari waltjeri' (swan intestines) was once a great delicacy. The 'lawri' was greatly desired for Christmas roast. The 'nuri' (pelican, Pelecanus conspicillatus) was often hunted for its feathers (Section 8.5). The flesh of the 'nuri' is like 'yoldi' (shag, Leucocarbo fuscescens), 'too fishy to eat' for most Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray. Nevertheless, one informant claimed that the breast of the 'nuri' was like steak if properly prepared. However, the carcass needed hanging for a few days 'to get rid of the wild taste'. Bait for fishing sometimes came from the flesh of the 'thrukeri' (silver gull, Larus novaehollandiae). The bird is caught by baited hook on fishing line tied to a log or branch.

Shooting ducks at night involves more stealth than for rabbits, the shooters often crawl for some distance and then hide. For this reason, bird shooting groups are generally smaller. After travelling to the general area in the car, the hunters walk to the lagoon. Talking outside the vehicle is minimal and in whispers. Messages are by hand signals and two or three word length sentences in Ngarrindjeri-style Aboriginal English. As with rabbit shooting, landscape knowledge in duck shooting is crucial, not just to avoid obstacles, but also to gain a suitable shooting point.

The main duck hunting sites near Point McLeay are the lagoons at 'The Bulrushes' and on the flats behind 'Big Hill' near Teringie. At the latter site, the lagoons are periodically flooded. Point McLeay workers deliberately open up the entrance to the lake with a tractor. The result is a habitat to attract water birds. Bunkers are sometimes dug out of the mud, with the walls covered with 'paraguni' (samphires, Halosarcia species). These serve as shooting points next to lagoons, particularly necessary near Teringie where the landscape is open. Another spot to shoot from near the Teringie lagoons, is next to some large 'katheri-bushes' (boxthorn, Lycium ferocissimum). This area is 'prildi place' to some - a reference to the numerous ants found there at night time. By crouching in front of the bushes, a shooter who is wearing suitably dark

clothing remains hidden from the birds. At 'The Bulrushes' there is good plant coverage with 'wa:tji-bush' (lignum, <u>Muehlenbeckia cunninghamii</u>) and 'marakeri' (flag or reedmace, <u>Typha</u> species). I have also found the remains of an old limestone bunker here. From a good early morning hunt, a dozen ducks might be shot. Birds are plucked on site before returning. This is in order to avoid making a mess in the township. Also, feathers lying about a person's yard may lead to unwanted questions from visitors, such as police. Back at Point McLeay, as with rabbits, senior people may receive ducks.

8.4.3 Collecting Bird Eggs

The practice of collecting swan eggs, or 'swan-egging', was a major activity for Aboriginal people in the Lower Lakes district in the past (Abdulla, 1993). The large white egg of the swan, called 'kungari ngatjeri', is equivalent to five average fowl eggs. Although the taste is much the same, swan eggs are very rich. Diarrhoea results from an individual eating a whole egg. The collecting of bird eggs was a seasonal activity that had continuity with pre-European hunting and gathering practices (Section 4.2.6). Today, Aboriginal people are legally able to remove the eggs, as long as it is not part of a commercial venture (Wilson et al, 1992, pp.91-92). Nevertheless, as with rabbit and duck hunting, they tend to keep secret the details of these activities.

Each August, Aboriginal men eagerly seek swan eggs. Aboriginal informants have described to me how they would carefully observe the movement of swans in late winter. They try to determine the general area where a floating nest of reeds is built. To find the exact location, the collectors search for swan tracks pushed through the reedmace beds. Collectors generally obtain the eggs by wading out into the lagoons, although occasionally small boats are used. A few older Lower Murray people prefer to cook and eat eggs that have chicks in them about to hatch. Swan-egging occurs seasonally before tiger snakes (<u>Notechis ater</u>) become a major hazard.

In the past, Aboriginal people travelled long distances to obtain swan eggs. Reportedly, as late as the 1950s, two women from Point McLeay rowed across Lake Alexandrina to Mulgundawa to obtain swan eggs in early spring (Padman, 1987, p.24). They returned with their dinghy so heavily laden with swan

eggs that only about seventy five millimetres of the boat was above water. Certain local Europeans in the

Narrung area reportedly received some of the booty as a gift.

European naturalists did not look favourably upon the taking of swan eggs. Inspector McIntosh of the

Fisheries Department, before World War I, recorded that at Tanunda Bay along the Coorong 'two half-

castes had arrived with a boatload of swans' eggs, which system of wholesale robbery in the closed season

the inspector understands is a common practice around the lakes.[13]' The ornithologist, Captain S.A.

White, recorded his views in his account of a bird watching party he led to Dodd Creek on the western side

of Lake Albert. He reports:

> We intended to continue our observations among the water birds here, but to our disgust, we found a
> party of natives encamped. They trade under the name of aborigine, but most of them have very fair
> skins - in fact, quite white, as I remarked before. These men destroy a fearful number of swans, by
> rifling the nests. This outrageous slaughter should be stopped (1913, p.57).

Swan-egging practices of the local Aboriginal people were by stealth, after the prohibiting of the removal

of wild fowl eggs in law. Padman provides one account of a swan expedition from Point McLeay. She says:

> Only a few years ago, the alarm was sounded all along the lake edge that four "boys" from Point
> McLeay were missing. They had gambled that they could get some swan eggs although they knew
> that it was illegal. Those of us who lived along the waterway switched on lights in case the missing
> boys needed land marks. Some of the men were in the act of rigging up spotlights on 4 wheel drive
> vehicles when the call came that they were safe. Actually they'd been sitting behind some reeds for
> some considerable time, afraid to land, as they could see a police patrol vehicle at the ferry.
> Eventually they threw their forty odd eggs overboard, wrongly thinking that the officer was waiting
> to catch them (1987, p.25).

Today, Lower Murray people generally ignore eggs of birds other than swan. Nevertheless, informants say

that in the 1940s and 1950s, 'thrukeri ngatjeri' (eggs of the silver gull, Larus novaehollandiae) were

obtained for eating. Collecting took place from islands in the Coorong. In particular, people living on

nearby Aboriginal reserves had access to these resources. Aboriginal people in South Australia had the

right to take wildfowl eggs until the National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1972. Under the Fauna Conservation

Act, 1964, that it replaced, Aboriginal people had the right to hunt out of season, on crown land and

private property. In the latter case, hunting was allowed only if the landowner gave permission. With the

1972 Act, no consideration was given to Aboriginal land use. Most Ngarrindjeri people I have spoken to

clearly consider that they have the right to take a few swan eggs, as long as at least one egg per nest is left

untouched. Aboriginal people say that swans will generally only rear one chick. They therefore think it is

reasonable to leave only a single egg to become an adult. In the Lower Murray region, informants state that there are generally four eggs in each clutch.[14]

8.4.4 The Contemporary Importance of Hunting

The hunting of rabbits and ducks, and the collecting of swan eggs, seasonally adds to the food supply of many Aboriginal households in the Lower Murray. Nevertheless, in determining the importance of foraging activities to the contemporary community, it is wrong to assume that it is simply a food producing activity in response to economic needs. Although foraging is recreational, it is also, to many Aboriginal people, an expression of their local identity. Hunting and gathering practices have important cultural values, not only 'proving' Aboriginal abilities in obtaining a living from the land, but demonstrating that people have an affinity with and knowledge of the Lower Murray landscape, however altered it may be by non-Aboriginal activities.

The cultural importance of hunting is particularly evident in the case of rabbit shooting. One of the advantages of this particular type of hunting is that it is a group activity. The use of a vehicle enables free discussion amongst the hunting party. Discussions begin concerning the location of particular geographical features, such as water tanks, ruins, old wells, trees, tracks and fences. The narrative put forth often touches upon past events associated with the scrub and the connecting farmland. Stories feature past residents of Point McLeay, as well as drawing upon the psychic realm of ghosts and sorcerers.[15] Although to a lesser extent this occurs during duck shooting and swan egging, the high level of interaction among the hunters is not possible when stalking or ambushing. Sometimes the most in-depth look at the land comes when the group, or a part of it, later reflects upon the hunting trip. Contemporary hunting reinforces an Aboriginal view of the landscape. The hunting areas that Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray use today are topographically and culturally important sites in their view of the landscape. Aboriginal participants in shooting parties and swan egging expeditions not only forage for food, they also interpret and experience their landscape. However, as I discuss later (Section 8.6.5), Aboriginal land use is often in conflict with local non-Aboriginal use of the landscape.

8.5 Artefact Manufacture and Art in the Lower Murray Today

Contemporary Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray consider that the knowledge of how to make 'old time' artefacts, and of where in the landscape to obtain the necessary raw materials, help to reinforce their Ngarrindjeri identity. After a long period, when Aboriginal wood carving and art practices had largely vanished from the Lower Murray, these traditions are now being revitalised. Some 'old time' artefacts are made for Aboriginal use as home decorations (Section 7.2.2). More 'authentic' looking pieces are often sold to non-Aboriginal people and museums. In both cases, the objects are essentially statements of the artist's connections with the pre-European past. Artefacts, such as baskets and mats, were utility articles in the pre-European period. Nevertheless, in the present they have the added status of icons, particularly for Aboriginal people. The interest in and consumption of Aboriginal culture by such non-Aboriginal agencies as contemporary art and artefact collectors, museums, and education departments, help to increase the significance of these hunting and gathering symbols.

Lower Murray artists and crafts people have had a monopoly on the local Aboriginal market of Adelaide for many years (Hemming & Clarke, 1991, pp.12-14). Aboriginal people, such as Paul Kropinyeri and Bluey Roberts, have specialised in carving. Paul Kropinyeri has made a number of bark spear-deflecting shields, and the South Australian Museum has acquired several of these[16]. He has also made a bark canoe.[17] Bluey Roberts carves emu eggs and boomerangs. He has developed a unique style, often incorporating elements from both the West Coast side of his family, such as emus or goannas, and the Lower Murray side, usually a 'pondi' (Murray cod).[18] In terms of accurately reproducing the old style weapons from the Lower Murray, Lindsay Wilson has had the most success (Fig.8.5, 8.6). As with Paul Kropinyeri, Lindsay Wilson uses museum collections as a source of information. Nevertheless, he is able to draw upon his own memories of early boomerang and club-types.[19] In the 1930s, Lindsay Wilson assisted Clarence Long in making clubs. There is a small market in making realistic representations of pre-European-type hunting and fighting implements.

Some artists gain a close relationship to the landscape, not through making pre-European style objects, but by producing images in Western style art media. For example, Harvey Karpany produces water colour paintings and ink drawings that focus on various spirits and their associated environments.[20] Many

Fig.8.5 A group of Lower Murray men making clubs at Camp
Coorong, 1989 (Photo: P.A. Clarke)

Fig.8.6 Lindsay Wilson finishing a 'plonggi' (club with bulbous head)
using a broken plate, 1989 (Photo: P.A. Clarke)

Aboriginal people find that his work has a supernatural quality, being 'like gupas' (or ghosts). Jack Stengle concentrates on acrylic paintings on board. He has tended to use Lower Murray mythology as a source of subjects (Fig.8.7).[21] Prints and acrylic paintings by Ian Abdulla feature uniquely Aboriginal experiences from the Riverland during the 1950s and 1960s (Section 7.4.2).[22] Senior Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray community have played a major role as sources of the cultural and social data depicted in the work of these artists. Another painter, Donny Smith, uses a more pan-Australian-type landscape style for his work, tending to put Central Australian scenes on objects such as boomerangs and tobacco tins.[23]

Although Bluey Roberts started as a carver, during the last five years he has also produced some significant two dimensional imagery. Some of these are in northern Australian x-ray style. One such example is a kangaroo Bluey Roberts painted in the Adelaide Zoo, on the wall of an enclosure in the children's section. Bluey Roberts claims that its spirit will prevent another slaughter of the animals there, as happened in the mid-1980s when youths rampaged through the zoo one night. The snake, emu and human spirit figures on the pavement in front of the Tandanya National Aboriginal Culture Institute, are perhaps his best known art pieces. He has also successfully tried dot paintings on canvas and board, featuring a variety of subjects.[24] Although he borrows art styles from Arnhem Land and Central Australia, he is using them in his own unique way. Kerry Giles is another artist who experiments with different types of art media, such as ceramics, silk screen printing, and canvas painting.[25] She generally uses contemporary themes, such as 'Aboriginal Deaths in Custody' issues, to inspire her artwork (Fig.8.8).

The distinctive Lower Murray practice of making baskets and mats from the spiny sedge (Cyperus gymnocaulos), using a coiled bundle technique, has persisted until the present. This is primarily due to the household use of these items by non-Aboriginal people. The local market for these artefacts was strong early this century when similar Third World goods from India and Indonesia were not widely available.[26] The Point McLeay Mission supported the basket-making tradition, by placing it on the school curriculum in 1904 (Jenkin, 1979, p.227). Up until 1951, tourists on paddle steamers came across the lake to visit the Mission. Here they bought souvenirs, such as baskets and mats.[27] Basket and mat makers also sold their product to local non-Aboriginal people. Due to the small but steady craft market, this aspect of the pre-European-type material culture has survived intact to the present. Today, the main Aboriginal people making mats and baskets are Ellen Trevorrow, Yvonne Koolmatrie, Glenda Rigney, Rosiland Karpany and

Fig.8.7 The 'Creation of the Coorong' by Jacob (Jack) Stengle, 1986
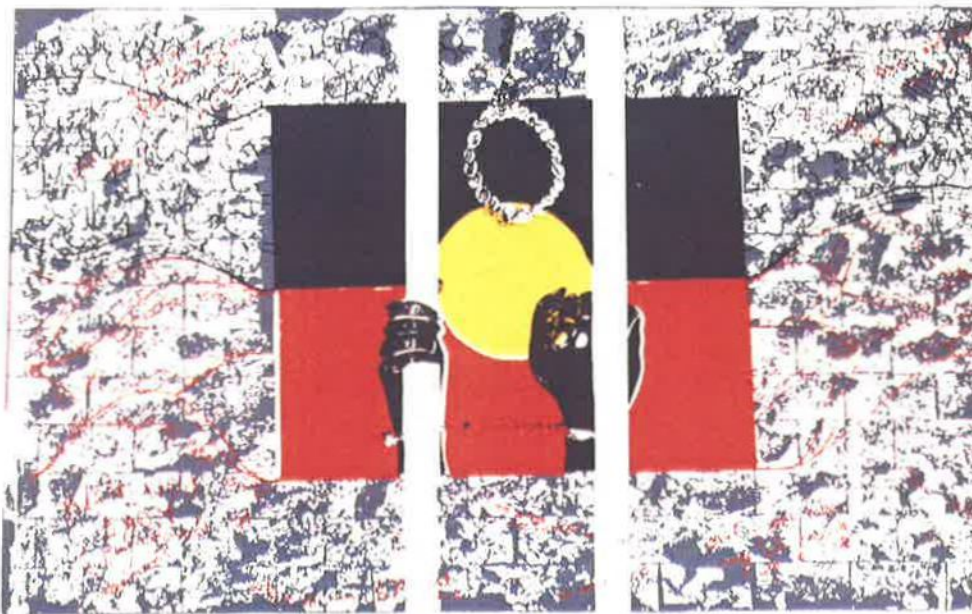
Fig.8.8 'Black Deaths in Custody' by Kerry Giles, 1986

Millie Rankine (Fig.8.9).[28] They favour particular areas for collecting the sedges. At Point McLeay, the flats around the sandhills of Teringie are major sites.

The making of flower ornaments from feathers of the 'nuri' (pelican) is another distinctive Lower Murray craft, although derived from Victoria (Section 7.2.2). Women chiefly make these, for selling to local farmers and town dwellers. Today, the National Parks and Wildlife Service will give permission to kill a pelican for its feathers. Nevertheless, this is only in order to keep the tradition going. Legally, the finished artefacts can not be sold (Wilson et al, 1992, pp.91-92). Aboriginal people occasionally use feathers from a ·pelican found dead, perhaps killed by the power lines. Alternatively, some people make their flowers from the feathers of bantams and other birds. Birds have featured much in Lower Murray, both in mythology (Section 3.2. & 3.3.1) and as source of food (Section 4.2.6), and the black swan emblem has been adopted by Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray as the Ngarrindjeri emblem (Fig.8.10, 8.11).

As with other regions of Australia, the sale of artefacts greatly supplements the income of many extended Aboriginal families. Aboriginal people often earn money by simply demonstrating their unique craft and art styles to school children and special interest groups (Fig.8.12). Most of the southern Aboriginal artefact-makers and artists have at one time or another been associated with exhibitions and workshops organised by the South Australian Museum and Tandanya. In the case of the craft people, the knowledge of where to find the raw material in the landscape and the possession of the appropriate 'traditional' artefact making skills, is an integral part of their Lower Murray culture.

8.6 Aboriginal Involvement in Land Management

Aboriginal people increasingly find opportunities to have an impact in the management of Crown land throughout the state. Most Aboriginal people consider this justified as a form of compensation for 'having our lands taken away by White people'. Senior Aboriginal public servants refer to Aboriginal land rights issues and the recognition of the value of Aboriginal culture as 'the cause'. With the Commonwealth Government's growing interest in Aboriginal 'reconciliation' with European colonisation, Aboriginal voices will be increasingly heard in most levels of land and marine resource management. The Mabo decision handed down by the High Court of Australia is consistent with this, even though at present most
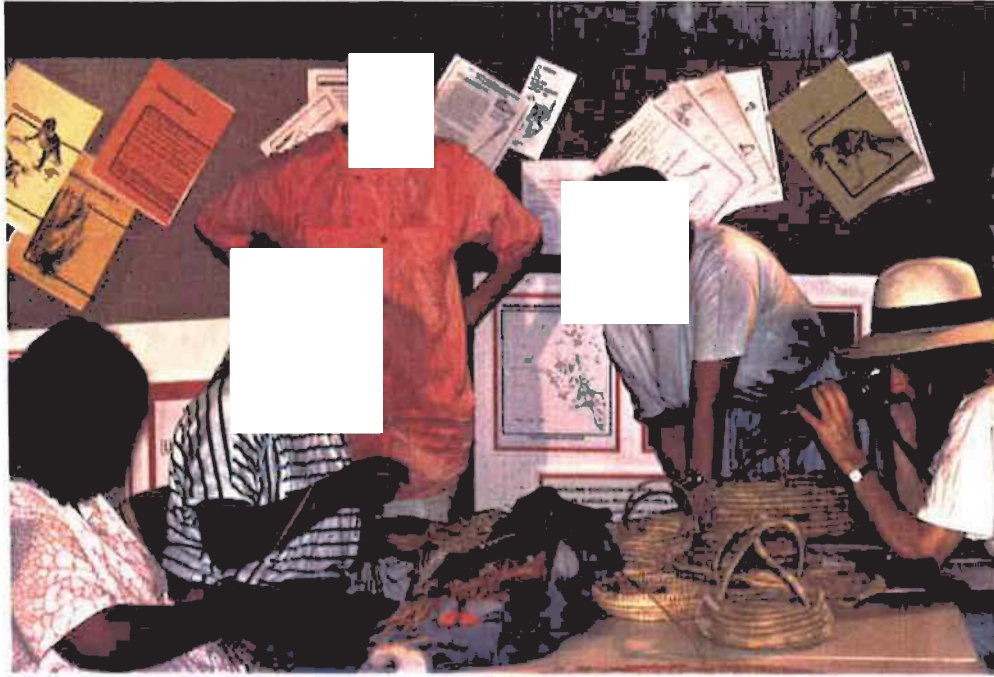
Fig.8.9 Rosiland Karpany (far left) and Ellen Trevorrow (at her near left) demonstrating basket and mat-making in Adelaide, 1988 (Photo: P.A. Clarke)

Fig.8.10 Susan Rankine wearing a pullover bearing the swan insignia over 'Aboriginal colours', 1988. The duck hunting lagoons between Big Hill and Teringie are in the background (Photo: P.A. Clarke)

Fig.8.11 The official Raukkan Primary School jumper, showing the swan and artefacts insignia, 1992 (Photo: P.A. Clarke)

Fig.8.12 Harriet Rankine demonstrating feather flower-making at Point McLeay, 1989 (Photo: P.A. Clarke)

Aboriginal political leaders in the Lower Murray are sceptical about the chances that their community will benefit from this at all.[29] The recent Coastal Zone Enquiry recommended that Australian governments give more formal recognition to indigenous hunting, fishing and gathering rights (Resource Assessment Commission, 1993, pp.166-189; Smyth, 1993, pp.211-225).

8.6.1 Wildlife Protection Acts and National Parks

Legislation restricting the killing of indigenous birds and prohibiting the taking of their eggs, has severely affected Aboriginal bird hunting and gathering practices in the Lower Murray. Although most Aboriginal people I have interviewed have stated that hunters must leave certain species alone due to their scarcity, they perceive the Wildlife Protection Acts as yet another encumbrance placed upon them by white authorities. Most Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray I have spoken to about land use stress that they must have the rights to continue pre-European-style hunting and gathering practices.

In order to improve the relationship between the environmental authorities and Aboriginal people, the National Parks and Wildlife Service are training and employing Aboriginal people as park rangers. This practice not only provides local employment for Aboriginal people, but enables the Aboriginal community to have a greater say in Aboriginal heritage and land matters.[30] There are presently two Aboriginal rangers based at Meningie and Salt Creek. They have helped to arrange permission for Aboriginal people to collect sedges for basket and mat making in defined areas within the National Parks. There is also agreement now between the authorities and local Aboriginal people over open rights for hunting in restricted areas of Crown land (Wilson et al, 1992, pp.15-17,90-92). Many Aboriginal communities have recognised the employment potential of their involvement in National Park management, commercial hunting, landcare projects and tourism ventures.[31]

8.6.2 Aboriginal Reserve Leases

In South Australia, the Aboriginal Lands Trust Act, 1966 established a board controlled by Aboriginal people to manage the Aboriginal reserve lands held in trust for 'the benefit of Aborigines' (Section 6.4.5). The lands under their concern include unoccupied reserve lands, occupied reserves such as Point Pearce

and Point McLeay, and new areas offered by governments. The twelve members of the board are all of Aboriginal descent. The Aboriginal Lands Trust is able to recommend to Ministers the lease, disposal or acquisition of land under the Act. Although technically under Aboriginal control, the board has attracted some unfavourable criticism from disgruntled members of the Aboriginal population of South Australia. There have been numerous allegations of favouritism towards families and friends of board members. This criticism has existed since the inception of the board (Pierson, 1972, p.92).

The locations of Aboriginal reserves in the Lower Murray region are restricted to the mainland side of the Coorong (Fig.8.1). In most cases, Aboriginal farmers trained at Point McLeay occupied these sections late last century (Section 6.3.6). Today, these reserves offer much potential for Aboriginal enterprises in tourism. For instance, Camp Coorong, an Aboriginal-run organisation, extensively uses Bonney Reserve near Noonamena (Hemming, 1993). Here, Aboriginal people conduct tours for schools and special interest groups to discuss Aboriginal uses of the environment. Bonney Reserve has the largest area of indigenous scrub on the mainland side of the northern Coorong.

Apart from Bonney Reserve, elsewhere on the Coorong these reserves are generally under-utilised and overrun with rabbits and weeds. Aboriginal people of Lower Murray ancestry and with senior public service positions in Adelaide, have leased some of these. In one case during the past ten years, an Aboriginal person based in Adelaide sublet a lease to an Aboriginal family living in Meningie. In another example, an Aboriginal man based in Adelaide claimed that he was able to discover his past by possessing a lease on some Coorong land. Brought up in the city as a foster child in a middle-class non-Aboriginal family, he was discovering his Ngarrindjeri culture. The strong contacts that some Aboriginal people based in Adelaide have with the authorities favours them in such situations over most local Aboriginal people living in the Lower Murray.

8.6.3 Aboriginal Heritage

The Aboriginal Heritage Act, 1988, sets up a bureaucratic structure that requiries the consultation of Aboriginal people on issues of Aboriginal heritage. Through the Act, there are heavy penalties if an Aboriginal site is in any way damaged. The administration of this legislation is through the Aboriginal

Heritage Branch of the Department of State Aboriginal Affairs.[32] In theory, regional meetings of the Aboriginal Heritage Committees discuss sites proposed for a listing in the Aboriginal Sites Register. In practice, sites are often placed on the Register without direct Aboriginal input. The sites are investigated by Branch officers, consultants and Museum officers. A site is defined as a location important to Aboriginal history or archaeology. Even sites of contemporary significance to Aboriginal people have some degree of protection. Significant Aboriginal objects are also protected by the Aboriginal Heritage Act.

The administration of the Aboriginal heritage legislation provides an interesting case study of deliberate efforts to rebuild (and reshape) cultural roots. For instance, the Aboriginal people who have gained recognition as the 'elders' with rights over Aboriginal heritage matters in the Adelaide region have done so by describing themselves as Kaurna ('Adelaide tribe'). These people are almost exclusively of a Point Pearce background. However, through my family history research it is clear that many Lower Murray people would have equal, if not greater, claim to be descendants of the original inhabitants of Adelaide.[33] To some extent, this situation is explained by the recent predominance of people from Point Pearce in the urban situation (Section 7.4.1). About fifteen years ago, when the general public started to become more aware of the Aboriginal origins of the state capital, certain individuals already firmly entrenched in Aboriginal organisations based in Adelaide, put themselves forth as 'Kaurna' people. This takeover of identity and the landscape may be compared with the early movement of Aboriginal people from the Lower Murray into Adelaide soon after European settlement (Section 3.3.1). In both cases, a reinvention of tradition has taken place. In the latter, Tindale's tribal maps were a key factor in the building of the new identity (Section 2.3). The Aboriginal people with control over the heritage of the Adelaide region are widely consulted when new developments are proposed, and are occasionally employed as consultants for particular projects. The Tjilbruki sites are important as evidence that there are 'Dreaming' sites in the region (Section 3.3.1). Aboriginal heritage issues will grow as tourism increases, thus providing local Aboriginal people with more of a say in the state's development, albeit with increased tension within the Aboriginal population over rights.

In the Lower Murray region, the local Aboriginal Heritage Committee, as defined under the Act, is also playing an active role in various developments proposed in its northern areas, around Granite Island and Hindmarsh Island. The Committee is also actively negotiating with the South Australian Museum on the

return of human remains. This involves securing land from the District Council of Murray Bridge for building a 'keeping place' at Swanport. From 1990 to 1991, this committee handled consultations on the construction of the highway between Tailem Bend and Ashfield. The new road was built on top of a number of archaeological sites. The Committee requested use of land in Murray Bridge for basket ball courts. This was apparently to cover what they perceived to be their loss. In most situations, these committees interpret contemporary heritage issues in terms of compensation for European dispossession. The Aboriginal Heritage Committees are using the <u>Aboriginal Heritage Act</u> as an additional source of funding for cultural projects in their areas. Aboriginal people throughout southern South Australia have become adept at entering new arenas where they can gain added control.

8.6.4 Contemporary Regional Politics in the Lower Murray

The passing of the <u>Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander Commission Act</u>, 1989 enabled the formation of the Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander Commission (ATSIC). This new body took over from the former Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs. The new structure called for ATSIC councillors elected by the Aboriginal public. ATSIC regional councils were to direct the large amount of federal funding available to Aboriginal groups. The Lower Murray region came under the jurisdiction of the Murray Bridge Regional Council. Point Pearce settlement on Yorke Peninsula and the South East Nungas Club in Mount Gambier were part of this region (Fig.8.13).

On 3 November 1990, the first ATSIC elections were held. The polling turn out was very poor. Only 4.5 % of eligible voters in the Murray Bridge Regional Council area cast a vote (Murrundi Regional Council Annual Report, 1990/91, p.3). Fourteen councillors were elected. At the inaugural meeting of the Murray Bridge Regional Council on 16 January 1991, Henry Rankine from Point McLeay became Chairperson. The first Executive Committee of the Murray Bridge Regional Council was composed of Agnes Rigney (from the Riverland), Neil Milera (from Point Pearce), Victor Wilson (from Murray Bridge), and Francis Lovegrove (from Murray Bridge). On 20 February 1991, Charlie Jackson became the Commissioner for the South Australian Zone. He was also Chairperson for the Port Augusta Regional Council. In April 1991, the name of the Lower Murray group was changed to the Murrundi Regional Council (Fig.8.13). This occurred
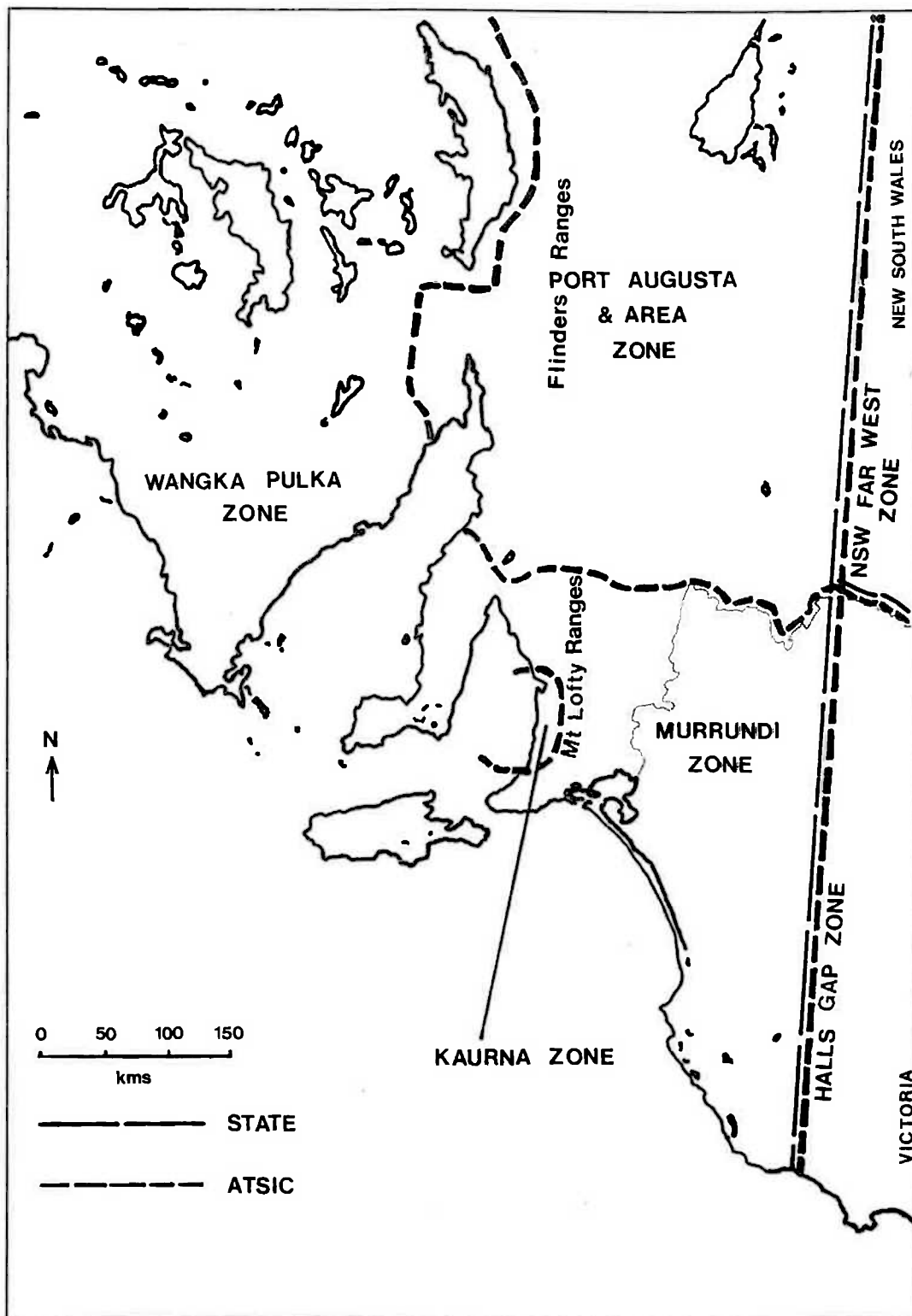
Fig.8.13 ATSIC regions in southern South Australia (after ATSIC Annual Report, Murrundi region, 1990-91)

reportedly because ATSIC members wanted an Aboriginal name for their region.[34] Councillors are elected for a period of three years.

It is still too early to assess the likely success of ATSIC in administering Aboriginal affairs. Many of the councillors have only now received appropriate management training. The structure of the organisation is still in the establishment phase. There is some conflict between state and federal agencies, for example on issues such as heritage. Nevertheless, in practice this seems unimportant with the same senior Aboriginal people tending to be active on all committees, regardless of the arena. ATSIC has instructed Aboriginal settlements under their administrative umbrella to draw up community plans. Future funding is dependent upon this. In the case of Point McLeay, in this process the Community Management Training Unit of the South Australian TAFE, assisted them. Under the Act, ATSIC is setting up a 'land fund' for Aboriginal groups.

8.6.5 Aboriginal People as Conservationists

Mulvaney (1991, p.1) claims that Western European concerns for economic, aesthetic, natural or historic environmental needs of future generations is a remarkably recent phenomenon. In keeping with this heightened sensitivity, hunters and gatherers around the world have often been portrayed by scholars and the media as having been 'in harmony with nature' (Section 4.1.2). Popular geography texts have added to this illusion.[35] The incorporation of excessively romantic notions of Aboriginal spiritual connectedness to the landscape have been observed in Australian middle class 'countercultures' (Newton, 1988). Furthermore, as Anderson (1989) reports, the environmental lobby in Australia has often sought out Aboriginal people as allies, with mixed success.

I have demonstrated that Aboriginal people in the pre-European period actively managed the land and its resources (Chapter 4). Contemporary people in the Aboriginal community of the Lower Murray today retain a functional view of the landscape. For instance, discussions between environmentalists and the major lease holder of Bonney Reserve have occurred over the possibility of making a large part of its scrub area into a fauna and flora sanctuary. Although there was interest from Aboriginal people in returning the land to a pre-European condition, the sanctuary idea was not palatable due to their desire to continue

hunting there occasionally. Another example was provided with public debate whether to allow off-road vehicles access to the Younghusband Peninsula. The environmentalists were set hard against vehicular use of the area due to the fragile nature of the sand dunes. Nevertheless, a senior Aboriginal person, whose 'tribal land' (descent group territory) was the peninsula, entered the argument on behalf of the fishermen and cockle-collectors who needed full access to the foreshore. The Aboriginal person claimed that the Coorong was open to use for anyone.

In the Lower Murray today, many older Aboriginal people recognise that in spite of poor social conditions, some aspects of their own early restricted lifestyle were, in hindsight, desirable. The eating of wild foods, in particular, was considered by them to have made their people 'feel stronger' than they do now. Indeed, many elderly Aboriginal people have expressed great sorrow that the land they knew in their youth no longer exists. These people talk of the modern landscape as being 'sick'. Many of the Aboriginal medicine and food plants and animals are no longer found, primarily due to European agricultural activity. In 1992 and 1993, senior Aboriginal representatives of the Lower Murray region were involved in talks with authorities over redirecting some of the South East drainage scheme water to help flush out the Coorong (Section 6.1.4.2). In general, Aboriginal people are keen to return the fish and mussels to this waterway, not just to 'bring it back to life', but also to help stimulate a local fishing industry in which they might participate.

Contemporary Aboriginal people have a view of the 'wild' parts of the landscape as having important functional and potential economic uses to them. They see no problem with National Parks as long as they have access to their resources. In recent years, some degree of use of the parks and the shooting of protected species has been allowed by local park and wildlife protection authorities. Nevertheless, the constant monitoring demanded by these activities, such as the individual permits required to shoot a certain number of animals, means that much will still occur outside the law. Aboriginal people prefer to keep their activities in a sphere out of direct non-Aboriginal interference. For this reason, Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray often appear to outsiders unnecessarily secretive about their expeditions, particularly towards local non-Aboriginal people. The use of the landscape by non-Aboriginal people is generally not complementary to contemporary Aboriginal hunting and gathering practices.[36]

8.7 Conclusion

The knowledge informants possess of the physical environment is heavily influenced by past regulation by authorities of the movement patterns of Aboriginal people. Although the number of reserves where hunting and gathering can take place is small, and generally restricted to the Point McLeay to Coorong area, some Lower Murray people are maintaining links with their hunting and gathering past. Many such people from various backgrounds have stressed the importance of their knowledge and use of local foods for the maintenance of their regional Aboriginal identity. Artefact making, in the style of the 'old people', is important in a similar way. The landscape and its physical environment are considered as part of the psyche of many contemporary Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray. Nevertheless, knowledge of the hunting and gathering practices possessed by older members of the present-day Lower Murray community will eventually be largely lost to them. Increased dependency upon welfare has for ever changed the Aboriginal community from a hunting and gathering society. Therefore, this thesis (Chapter 4 & 8) provides an important empirical record of past and contemporary Aboriginal subsistence practices in the Lower Murray.

Gaining control of land is politically important to many Aboriginal people. In view of historical trends outlined in this thesis which have alienated Aboriginal people from much of their former territory, this present relationship is complex. Through the government's application of the consultative process, as demanded by the <u>Aboriginal Heritage Act</u>, Aboriginal people are sometimes asked for cultural input into areas for which they have no or little direct experience. In these cases, models of Aboriginal culture put forth by Tindale, typified by the 'tribe', are often used by Aboriginal people as the basis for labelling their groups. Outside the context of government consultations, the natural environment is socially important to Aboriginal people for other reasons. Land today also represents the basis of a source of funds from various government bodies. Aboriginal people are progressively gaining more opportunity in the management of Crown land and a voice in heritage matters. A distinct Aboriginal perception of the physical landscape in the Lower Murray has been shown to exist, though radically different from the pre-European era. The future survival of a strong Aboriginal identity in the Lower Murray region will likely depend less on inherited material culture, and more on culturally contrived symbolic identity.

End Notes

1 Rix (1978, pp.1-7) discusses attempts by European settlers to introduce northern hemisphere animal species into South Australia.

2 For an account of the toolache wallaby see Robinson & Young (1983), Strahan (1983, p.234) & Aitken (1983, p.127). This term, variously recorded as toolach, toolicher, toolatchee & dulachie, possibly originated from the Yaraldi language (Dixon et al, 1992, pp.48,79).

3 Wombats (<u>Vombatus ursinus</u>) became locally extinct in the Lake Albert to Lake Alexandrina area by the late 19th century (McCourt & Mincham, 1987, p.10). Aboriginal informants suspect that the mallee fowl (native pheasant, <u>Leipoa ocellata</u>) disappeared here when Narrung Station was divided during the early years of this century.

4 Alcock & Symon (1977) give lists of Coorong plant species. Plant origins given by Jessop & Toelken (1986).

5 Photographs in the Ramsay-Smith collection, AA6, Anthropology Archives, S.A. Museum.

6 In at least some parts of the Lower Murray region, the effect of rabbits browsing upon the vegetation was felt much earlier than the 1870s. By 1841, Richard Penney had already stocked rabbits on some of the islands in Encounter Bay (Whitelock, 1985, p.65).

7 There are many references to Coorong summer trips in Taplin's Journals (15 & 29 January 1862, 16 February 1862, 15 January 1863, 28 December 1864 - 3 January 1865). A more recent account is provided by Killington (1973, Appendix 4.1-2). Other families camped at a spot along the Goolwa Channel during the summer vacation up until the 1950s (F. Tuckwell, pers com.).

8 According to Aboriginal informants, Jacob Harris had territorial links to the southern Coorong and the South East of South Australia. This is supported by the Aboriginal Genealogies done by N.B. Tindale (Anthropology Archives, S.A. Museum), which gives his father's 'tribal' group as Potaruwutji from the Bordertown region of the South East, and his mother's as Tanganekald from the Coorong.

9 The Aboriginal names 'pyberry' and 'tukari' are commonly used by non-Aboriginal fishermen (Scott et al, 1980, p.71). The latter is derived from the Lower Murray term, 'thukeri'. A version of the Ngurunderi story, told in schools, explains how this fish became bony. In the main body of the Ngurunderi mythology, 'thukeri' is the fish that young women are forbidden to eat (Berndt, 1940a, p.173).

10 Aboriginal people in southern Australia, before the arrival of Europeans, probably did not use the fish-hook and line (Section 4.2.8).

11 Blue-tongue lizards are 'kalta' in 'West Coast lingo'. The Lower Murray term for them is 'manthari' (Appendix 10.2).

12 The deer originally escaped several years ago from a stud near Narrung. The stud has recently been closed, and the remaining stock removed.

13 <u>Register</u>, 2 November [year not recorded] (Cutting Book, Anthropology Archives, S.A. Museum).

14 Beruldsen (1980, p.161) claims that the general number of eggs in one clutch is between four and seven, although over ten has been recorded. He says that breeding time is dependant upon water level.

15 For an explanation of 'gupa' and 'kuratji yarns', see Section 3.2.3.3.2 & 7.3.2.2). Such pre-European-type spirits, as distinct from the ghosts of known people, are often associated with old areas of vegetation, such as Block K.

16 S.A. Museum bark shields - A65243-5, A69031-2, A69399.

17 A small bark canoe, made by Paul Kropinyeri, was on display in Tandanya, Adelaide, during 1992. According to the maker, it was originally intended to be a larger canoe, but the bark split during manufacture. The canoe was acquired by the National Maritime Museum (<u>Signals</u>, no.22, Autumn 1993, p.12).

18 Hemming & Clarke (1991, p.14) includes a photograph of an emu egg carved by Roberts.

19 S.A. Museum boomerangs - A69555-6, A69568-9, A69606-8; clubs - A69299, A69554, A69557-8, A69570. The Education Department has acquired examples of Wilson's work to use for teaching demonstrations.

20 S.A. Museum ink drawings - A65247-9. An ink drawing, 'The Fisherman', is published by Hemming & Clarke (1991, p.14).

21 S.A. Museum acrylic paintings - A65393-6. Stengle has a painting, 'Ancestral Beings at Big Hill', in the <u>Tandanya Calendar</u> (August 1990). Another painting, 'The Fisherman', also appeared in the <u>Tandanya Calendar</u> (January 1991).

22 S.A. Museum silk screen prints - A69128-37; acrylic paintings - A69497-8, A69500-14. Abdulla's artwork appears in the <u>Tandanya Calendar</u> (March, 1990; February 1991) & in Abdulla (1993). A print, 'Rat Catching', is published by Hemming & Clarke (1991, p.14).

23 Four of Smith's painted tobacco tins are featured in the <u>Tandanya Calendar</u> (May, 1990).

24 S.A. Museum decorated boomerangs - A65089, A65409-13; decorated clubs - A65090, A65239; acrylic painting - A69213; walking-stick - A65088. A decorated boomerang by Roberts appears in the <u>Tandanya Calendar</u> (September 1990). A canvas painting, 'Large River Spirit Dreaming', also appears in the <u>Tandanya Calendar</u> (April 1991).

25 S.A. Museum silk screen prints - A69116-124, A69492-6; printed clothing - A69113-4, A69216; ceramic pot - A69115. Kerry signed her early work as 'Kurwingie'. Examples of her artwork appear in Hemming & Clarke (1991, p.11) and the <u>Tandanya Calendar</u> (October 1990).

26 In 1909, the Royal Institute for the Blind attempted to get Aboriginal people at Point McLeay to make particular styles of basket to replace the rattan imports from Asia (Jenkin, 1979, p.214). The reluctance of Aboriginal people to change craft styles led to its failure.

27 Aboriginal informants can remember, as children, jumping into the lake for coins thrown from the paddle steamers. There is a large number of photographs, in the Anthropology Archives of the S.A. Museum, that were taken at Point McLeay. These indicate the high popularity of the Mission as a tourist destination in the past. Trips from Goolwa ended in 1951 when the local steamer was destroyed in a fire (F. Tuckwell, pers com.).

28 The status of artwork is given to some of this basketry. See the <u>Tandanya Calendar</u> (November 1990) for a photograph of a basketry mat made by Ellen Trevorrow. Also see the <u>Tandanya Calendar</u> (March, 1991) for a photograph of a basketry eel trap made by Yvonne Koolmatrie.

29 During 1993, there were several meetings called by Aboriginal organisations for Ngarrindjeri people to meet and discuss Mabo. See endnote 55, Chapter 6.

30 Kean et al (1988) reports on Aboriginal concerns over management of the natural environment.

31 For a discussion of the potential for Aboriginal land management across Australia, see Young et al (1991). Wilson et al (1992) investigates the use of wild animal resources by contemporary Aboriginal groups.

32 This branch was in the Department of Environment and Planning until a reshuffle of the Public Service in 1992.

33 The Tindale Lower Murray genealogies (Anthropology Archives, S.A. Museum) & Kartinyeri (1989a & b) support this conclusion.

34 Murrundi reportedly means 'Murray River' (Appendix 10.1).

35 Linklater (1993) is very critical of the portrayal of 'primitive' cultures around the world. The desire to document cultures, with no obvious influence from Western civilisation, is strong in publications of the style produced by Timelife. Linklater also refers to National Geographic as the 'very founder of illustrated anthropology' (1993, p.47).

36 Many indigenous minority groups around the world have difficulty in getting wide recognition for their needs for land to hunt on. Brody (1983) gives a detailed description of the plight of Indian hunters in Northwest Canada.

9 The Cultural Geography of the Lower Murray

In this thesis, I have adopted a combination of scientific and humanistic approaches to the study of the relationships between a cultural group and the landscape. As with Sauer's studies of Central American and northern Atlantic landscapes, I have relied upon the development of historical understanding. This helps explain the interaction of a fast changing human population with an equally rapidly transforming landscape. In the contemporary ethnographic sections of this thesis (Section 2.4, Chapter 7 & 8) an insider's impression of cultural interaction with the landscape is provided. I depart from the Sauerian model by not treating the present landscape, and its occupants' relationship with it, as resulting from a simple succession of cultural landscapes, with each stage linked to a particular culture. Rather, by using techniques borrowed from anthropology and sociology, I demonstrate that the Aboriginal relationship to land is the product of a more complex interaction between several co-existing cultural groups. I will now briefly outline my findings.

9.1 The Lower Murray as a Valid Cultural Region

In the pre-European period, the basin of the Murray River was one of the most densely populated regions in Australia (Section 2.1.3). The material culture formerly possessed by the inhabitants of the riverine and contiguous coastal areas indicates a high level of cultural adaptation towards aquatic environments (Chapter 4). The Lower Murray landscape in pre-European Australia was actively modified by Aboriginal hunters and gatherers through their manipulation of the local vegetation by burning practices (Section 4.2.14.1). Here too, constructions of earth, stone and wood could help manage water flow and fish stock (Section 4.2.8). The degree to which people of the Lower Murray cultural region specialised in hunting and gathering in this local environment helped restrict their distribution to the river and adjacent coastline. The diffusion of language (Section 2.3.1.1), customs and mythological beliefs (Section 3.2) gives further evidence of the distinctiveness of the Lower Murray as a cultural region. Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray region apparently feared their neighbours as different and looked upon them as being not human (Section 2.3.1.5 & 3.2.3.3.2). The distribution across the landscape of the Aboriginal population was not random. Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray, probably in common with most groups living in

temperate Australia, had relatively restricted hunting and gathering territories (Section 2.3.1.5). To some extent, cultural and ecological boundaries coincided in the Lower Murray.

I have strongly argued against the 'tribe' model of Tindale and Birdsell (Section 2.3.1.3), which claimed that 'tribal' groups were the basic population unit that interacted with the physical environment. Social anthropologists have seriously questioned the 'tribal' maps of pre-1836 Aboriginal society drawn by Tindale (1974). The problem with many of the constructed 'tribes' he mapped is that close inspection of the earliest ethnographic sources reveals that these theoretical groups were not recognised then by the Aboriginal people themselves (Section 2.3.1.3). I have demonstrated that this is also true of the Lower Murray region. Here, some of the 'tribes' described by Tindale, such as the Yaraldi and Tanganekald, were really only language groups with little territorial relevance. Other Lower Murray 'tribes', such as the Ramindjeri, were small local descent groups. In my thesis, I have dealt with territorial behaviour in the context of local descent groups and cultural blocs. I do not consider that the 'tribe', as Tindale conceptualised it, adequately describes Aboriginal territorial behaviour when applied to the Lower Murray situation. Given that Tindale's model was largely based upon his field work in the Lower Murray, I feel that my findings should encourage a complete re-examination of Tindale's 'tribe' notion across Australia.

The evidence cited throughout this thesis overwhelmingly suggests that, at least since just prior to European settlement, the Lower Murray people have maintained a high level of cultural distinctiveness from neighbouring groups. Although the Aboriginal community living in the Lower Murray before European settlement was characterised by a lack of socio-political cohesion beyond the local descent group (Section 2.3.1), I have been able to determine that a common broad culture existed. This finding supports Peterson's model of the importance of river basins in determining Aboriginal cultural boundaries (Section 2.3.1.4). I consider that cultural regions are defined as areas occupied by communities that are influenced by the pattern of the landscape and its resources.

I have demonstrated that after European settlement in the region, a shared history has enabled the Aboriginal community in the Lower Murray to more sharply define themselves with respect to outsiders (Section 2.4.4). The origins of 'Ngarrindjeri' identity are found in the investigation of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal interaction. I argue that this new identity, based on the former cohesiveness of the broad

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cultural bloc, was created as a response to a new set of oppositions formed, not only with Europeans, but also with Aboriginal groups that were previously distant. A new landscape, developed through European settlement, has created a different context for the formation of Aboriginal identities. The 'mission' history of southern South Australia has helped form levels of local integration that formerly could not exist. The Lower Murray cultural region, irrespective of its previous internal 'tribal' organisation, is an area which has maintained and developed a level of cultural homogeneity that is distinct from other cultural units in Australia.

9.2 A Humanised Landscape

In the pre-European period, Aboriginal people perceived the social and physical aspects of the world as closely linked. Culture and landscape existed in a dialectical relationship, with no true separation in Aboriginal thought. This contrasts with the situation of European thought, where the perception is that the whole physical world is subordinate to human purpose (Thomas, 1983, pp.17-25). Therefore, my separate treatment in this thesis of the cultural and physical aspects of pre-European relationships between Aboriginal people and the land (Chapter 3 versus 4), is to some extent artificial. However, the Aboriginal relationship to the physical or economic side of the environment was more easily investigated in the context of populations rather than as cultural groups.

Culture defines the space and time it occupies. For instance, Aboriginal people were and are continually 'rediscovering' aspects of their own origin in myth. This incorporates a continual series of modifications portraying the shift of socio-political structures in the community (Section 3.3). I have argued that most ethnographers who recorded myths in the Lower Murray were ignorant of the dynamic nature of cultural perceptions of the past and present. The cultural ordering of space is evident with the existence of psychic regions, such as the Skyworld and Underworld (Section 3.2.3). These *places* Aboriginal people perceived as part of the total landscape. Aboriginal people considered that they could travel to regions which positivist geographers would generally not define as 'real'. They believed that they could actively manipulate both land and time to make their journeys shorter (Section 3.1.2). I treat the cultural landscape as simultaneously both the perceived and the physical aspects of the land and its resources as altered by

human agency. In the early literature of cultural geography, the cultural landscape was simply treated as the physical manifestation of cultural occupation (Section 1.1.4).

The integration of earlier cultural landscapes into modern formations was one of Sauer's major concerns. I have also kept this focus throughout my thesis. Although Darwin, Ratzel, Semple and others, considered that Aboriginal inhabitants of Australia had little effect upon the environment, I have demonstrated that there was an Aboriginal cultural landscape which had been modified and then maintained as distinct from a theoretical 'natural' (pre-human) system. This Aboriginal landscape, essentially a cultural artefact, in turn was absorbed and radically changed, but not completely obliterated by waves of European colonisation. During what I have defined as the exploration phase of South Australian history (1627 - 1839), Aboriginal hunter and gatherer knowledge was crucial to the early unofficial settlements by Europeans on off-shore islands in South Australia (Section 5.1). During the colonial incorporation phase (1839 - 1911), European agriculturists in the Lower Murray region gradually brought the land under their control. The early Aboriginal inhabitants of the pre-European period left behind a legacy for the development of rural and urban landscapes. For instance, the Aboriginal mode of subsistence was previously a major factor in the balance of the Australian ecosystem (Section 4.2.14.1). The distribution of open woodlands affected British attempts at colonising South Australia. Aboriginal burning practices maintained this pattern of vegetation in the pre-European period. Furthermore, the take-over by Europeans of Aboriginal tracks and waterholes had a major role in early settlement patterns of the British in the Lower Murray (Section 5.1.5 & 5.3).

Britain declared Australia as 'terra nullius', an uninhabited landscape (Section 6.1). It was reportedly devoid of legitimate owners, seen as an untilled and unkempt 'wild' land. Wilderness is classically defined as an area of free-ranging beasts, beyond a frontier of civilised development (Johnston et al, 1986, pp.164,527). However, I argue that apart from a few isolated islands off the Australian coast, 'wilderness' as a natural system did not exist when Europeans settled here. The mainland of southern South Australia was a cultural artefact. The land was humanised in both a cultural and physical manner, even if that was not at all obvious to the newcomers.[1] Aboriginal 'Dreaming' stories generally account for both the formation of the landscape and the creation of Aboriginal custom (Section 3.2). Today, we have direct evidence of early Aboriginal occupation in the Lower Murray in the form of place names derived from Aboriginal languages (Section 5.4). Archaeological remains exist, such as middens, burial grounds, scarred

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trees, rock art, and artefact assemblages. In both cultural and physical contexts, Aboriginal people left their mark upon the landscape. Preliterate cultures consider that they have a role in creating their physical environment.

In spite of evidence for the active management of resources by Aboriginal people in the pre-European period, there was little recognition of this by European colonisers (Section 4.1.1). Historical sources generally ignore the contribution of Aboriginal geographic knowledge during the establishment phase of European occupation (Chapter 5). The European history of Australia in general writes off the positive roles of Aboriginal people. The processes of European colonisation in Australia gave primacy in its official records to its own conquering and modification of the environment. In most historical texts, even the sealers, who were among the colony's first European explorers, are hardly mentioned. Explorers were generally considered to be men on government funded expeditions, not people who acted largely on their own. Until very recently, many scholars have assumed that Europeans in Australia occupied a 'wild' landscape (Section 4.1.1). I argue that the processes of European colonisation in southern South Australia can not be understood solely from an examination of the non-Aboriginal forces involved. However, most historians have attempted to do just this. The role of Aboriginal culture was significant in shaping European responses to the environment. This is a poorly acknowledged fact in Australian history.

9.2.1 Social Change and the Landscape

Scholars working in the field of Aboriginal studies in southern South Australia have not succeeded well in linking the past with the present (Section 3.3). For example, Tindale used 20th century informants in reconstructing the pre-European world, and yet failed to consider that the social milieu of the contemporary Aboriginal community flavoured their knowledge of the past. Due to the lack of an anthropological and historical model to interpret cultural change, Tindale's work in my view overstresses the dichotomy of traditional versus non-traditional cultural activity. Effectively, this approach distorts the past, making the present Aboriginal communities seem more separated from their pre-European origins than they actually are. My examination of the changing nature of myth (Section 3.3), continuously moulded by experience and socio-political situations, demonstrates that early ethnographers were unable to collect single 'real' or

'correct' versions of any of the main Dreaming stories, such as Ngurunderi, because no single correct version existed.

9.3 Aboriginal People on the Periphery

During the initial phases of European colonisation, Aboriginal familiarity with local resources and their use was crucial to the establishment of European settlements. Nevertheless, the history of Aboriginal relations with the European invaders is essentially one of conflicting demand for and attitudes to land and water. The Aboriginal population was gradually marginalised with respect to the landscape and the nation-building activities taking place upon it (Chapter 6). At certain times, such as during the Victorian gold rushes of the 1850s, Aboriginal labour propped up the ailing farm and pastoral industries. Nevertheless, the welfare of the Aboriginal population sank more and more into the background of colonial development. European transformation of the Lower Murray landscape, through land clearance, fencing, river irrigation, road building and the establishment of towns, removed forever the possibility of a society of hunters and gatherers existing in even remote areas of the region. Aboriginal missions, and particular places around them, became more significant in southern South Australia as the physical landscape, and European perceptions of it, were no longer able to support a widely dispersed Aboriginal population.

Through the 19th century, the processes that transformed the local Aboriginal community in the Lower Murray into a missionised cultural group were gradual (Section 6.3). However, in the 20th century, particularly after the Aborigines Act of 1911, virtually all Aboriginal people were incorporated into a system of government control (Section 6.4). This is the start of what I have termed the government welfare phase of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal interaction (1911 - present). Aboriginal people were progressively forced into areas marginal to European land use. This changed the relationship that the population had with the landscape. The mission and the fringecamp became the partly sheltered, increasingly mixed areas of Aboriginal genetic and cultural survival and change. These arenas became the interface between the broader Australian society and the descendants of the indigenous inhabitants through which Aboriginal identity was structured (Section 6.3).

The establishment of the Point McLeay Aboriginal Mission near the Murray Mouth was the beginning of a dependence, initially encouraged and then enforced, that Aboriginal inhabitants had upon a welfare system progressively set up by Europeans. As Baker (1989, p.112) has described for an Aboriginal community in the Gulf of Carpentaria, 'Once these dependent situations are created a chain reaction of increasing dependency occurs.' There were no sustained attempts by authorities, from the early years of European colonisation until well into the present century, to make the Aboriginal population relatively independent. Instead, Aboriginal people were isolated from the rest of the Australian population. The resulting social and geographical isolation has produced a high level of endogamy within the Aboriginal population (Section 2.1.3 & 6.3.2). This continues to contribute to its resilience as a distinct cultural group in the rural and urban areas of southern Australia.

Scholars professing rigid notions of superorganic culture, such as Kroeber, Sauer and Tindale (Section 1.2), would probably not regard contemporary Aboriginal people as culturally separate enough from mainstream society to be treated as a distinct unit. A main problem with this is the lack of recognition for connections between and within cultural groups over space and time. Another approach, put forth by Lewis and others, would regard Aboriginal people as one among many examples of a culture of poverty (Section 7.1.2). Although recognising the role of other cultural units in the constructing of cultural identity, this view ignores the unique elements of the histories that individual minorities have with respect to their domination by a particular hegemonic culture. In the Aboriginal situation of the Lower Murray, the pre-European elements of their culture would be regarded by this school of thought as insignificant. Structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) appears better suited to considering cultural change from structure/agency interaction, than residual cultural persistence.

Landscape (incorporating resources for survival), as a territorial element of culture, is significant in many studies of hunter and gatherer societies across the world (Section 1.1). However, for modern subordinate cultural groups who co-inhabit a landscape controlled by a dominant cultural class, the landscape often appears to researchers as less important. Thus the environmental relationships for the Aboriginal people of southern South Australia have generally been assumed to approximate those of non-Aboriginal people. I have demonstrated the fallacy of this assumption, showing a unique relationship that only the Aboriginal people of the Lower Murray could have with 'their' land. Through my humanistic interpretation of cultural

geography, I treat contemporary Aboriginal culture as a unit with strong though partial continuity to a pre-European past, but one which has also largely developed in response to its marginalisation, in both a spatial and a cultural sense (Section 6.3 & 7.1.5). To conclude, I will now discuss this aspect more fully with respect to the Aboriginal people of the Lower Murray.

9.3.1 Contemporary Lower Murray and 'Nunga' Identity

Throughout the thesis, I have used a combination of historical, regional and cultural approaches to understanding territorial identity among the contemporary community of Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray region. Anthropological and sociological approaches to ethnic and subcultural groups have added to the understanding of how different views of the landscape are maintained in the face of the broader hegemony of European-dominated culture. Humanistic treatments of *place* indicate the link between landscape and cultural identity. I have deliberately adopted an eclectic approach in order to explain a broad range of cultural behaviour towards space.

In the Lower Murray, the number of people who define themselves as part of the Aboriginal ethnic group is large and growing in size (Section 2.1.3). Government policy and pressure from the wider Australian society are forces outside the Aboriginal population influencing where and how these people live. Since European settlement, Aboriginal relationships to the landscape have changed radically. Nonetheless, there remains in the Lower Murray a distinct merging of *place* identity and group identity. This compares closely with that described for more 'traditional-oriented' Aboriginal people (Memmott, 1979). Point McLeay, established in 1859, remains the focus of those Aboriginal activities defined as Lower Murray, or in their terms, as 'being Ngarrindjeri' (Section 7.3). This is in spite of the fact that most Aboriginal people associated with the Lower Murray today live in the larger rural towns or in Adelaide. Although the impact of non-Aboriginal administration upon all Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray is great, the contemporary community is neither accurately described as a relic of a pre-European derived culture nor as a predominantly assimilated European form. Aboriginal people have adapted in their own unique way to the spatial and social marginalisation imposed upon them (Chapter 7). The relationship between Aboriginal identity and the broader Australian culture is complex.

Particularly in an urban setting, Aboriginal ethnicity can to some degree be a matter of choice. However, here the spatial positioning of the individual within the landscape is important. This is apparent in the issue of who is Aboriginal (Section 2.4.2). For instance, Aboriginal people who dwell in Adelaide have a chance to pass either as a 'white Australian', if light skinned, or if not then as a member of another non-Aboriginal group. On the other hand, some people of Aboriginal descent living in Adelaide choose to highlight their indigenous ancestry. This can be by becoming involved in 'Aboriginal' events, visiting places like Point McLeay, speaking broken English with some Aboriginal 'lingo', mixing with 'lations' [= 'relatives'], and wearing black clothing with 'Nunga colours' emblazoned upon it (Section 2.4 & 7.4). However, by their own admission, Aboriginal people actually living in the Lower Murray generally cannot escape their Aboriginality.

In the city, where there is much cultural diversity, there is some choice in the degree of participation in subcultural activities labelled as 'Aboriginal' (Section 2.4). In Adelaide, some individuals have been able to drift in and out of the Aboriginal ethnic group. The children of some people who deny their Aboriginality are now increasingly rediscovering their indigenous background. This contrasts with the rural region, where the white and black social categories have been regarded as less permeable. Here, the local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups have a stronger role in determining whether an individual is Aboriginal (Section 2.4.2). Therefore, I argue that in the country regions, Aboriginal people are better described as an ethnic group. In the city, the Aboriginal population is still able to function as an ethnic group, although here its social boundaries are much more diffuse, with some participants being essentially members of a subculture.

The city is a context where cultural identity is more easily negotiated. For instance, Godfrey (1988, pp.34-36) notes that subcultures proliferate in the urban environment, such as American cities. This is borne out by my fieldwork with Aboriginal people in Adelaide and the Lower Murray (Section 2.4 & 7.4). There exists a fear among many Aboriginal people that when they have moved into the city they will be treated as 'having gone white' by their relatives (Section 7.4.1). Nonetheless, some Aboriginal people who move into Adelaide wish to lose their Aboriginality. Others, who could quite easily hide their Aboriginal origins, keenly embrace it. The city is culturally a far more pluralistic entity than the rural regions that surround it. As demonstrated by Wundersitz (1979a&b), non-Aboriginal people who live in areas away from large

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resident Aboriginal populations tend to be less overtly racist. The models of ethnicity and subculture help explain the diverging views of a landscape that can occur within a single national culture, such as Australia. They provide a theoretical position contrary to notions of total cultural assimilation.

The contemporary Aboriginal population in southern South Australia is primarily a construct of pre-European culture, including a strong residual distinctiveness in its relationship with *place* and landscape (Section 7.2, 7.3, 8.2, & 8.4), but heavily modified through Aboriginal interaction with a variety of non-Aboriginal hegemonic forces. The ongoing spatial association of Aboriginal people with old mission settlements and town fringecamps is compelling evidence of this (Section 7.3 & 7.4). Through their perceptions of their own cultural landscape and place-identity, Aboriginal people can reflect upon their status in Australian culture. The sense of the impropriety of European colonisation in Australia is keenly felt by the majority of them, although most Aboriginal people know little of the historical details. As shown by Killington (1971, p.62), to many Aboriginal people, Captain Cook, the discoverer of Australia, was a criminal. Their existence on the fringe of mainstream Australian society is to them a constant reminder that the making of the Australian nation largely destroyed their original culture.

Although the Aboriginal population of southern South Australia, the 'Nungas', essentially exists today as a subunit of broader Australia, it has retained and developed many characteristics that make it stand apart from non-Aboriginal cultural forms. For instance, among the traits of the contemporary southern Aboriginal population, there is a distinctive Aboriginal lifestyle, a language of mixed Aboriginal and English vocabulary and grammatical structure, beliefs in spirits and sorcerers, a continuation of certain forms of pre-European Aboriginal kinship, pre-European Aboriginal beliefs and practices, and some knowledge of early hunting and gathering practices. In the Lower Murray, all these characteristics help mould a distinct perception of the cultural landscape which is reflected in the Aboriginal concept of 'being Ngarrindjeri'. The sense of belonging that Aboriginal people feel with the past is constantly being explored through their participation in various cultural activities, such as art, literature, family history research, and museum displays (Section 8.5). Contemporary Aboriginal people possess a distinct culture, albeit a changing one.

Modern Aboriginal communities in southern South Australia possess aspects of internal differentiation that developed from a blend of pre-European and post-European elements. For instance, modern 'lingos' derived from Aboriginal languages spoken before European settlement, are consciously used by Aboriginal people today as important regional identifiers (Section 2.4.4.3). There are presently several Aboriginal community initiatives to 'save' these languages through Aboriginal-controlled recording and teaching programmes. Settlements established by missionary organisations also function in the construction of modern regional identities. In spite of the poor social conditions at Point McLeay, particularly in the past, most Aboriginal people connected to the Lower Murray region consider the former mission station to be 'home'. Because of this, Point McLeay as a symbolic *place* for all Ngarrindjeri people transcends its economic importance for the Aboriginal families who still prefer to live there (Chapter 7).

A false impression that the Aboriginal population is losing its identity results from considering Aboriginal communities across Australia only in terms of their degree of assimilation to European-type culture. Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray today, to varying degrees, typically define themselves as 'Aboriginal' or 'Nungas' in opposition to the broader Australian culture (Section 2.4), and as 'Ngarrindjeri' within the broader 'Nunga' category. Nevertheless, economically the Aboriginal population is very much dependent upon state and federal governments, although this is masked in various ways (Section 7.1). This is a situation which could be termed welfare colonialism, following Beckett (1987). I have argued that the broader Australian society continues to perceive the place of Aboriginal people in the landscape as being marginal, and therefore as needing assistance.[2] To some extent, the actions of Aboriginal people reinforce this in order to retain welfare funding. In many contexts, contemporary Aboriginal people in southern South Australia experience themselves in terms prescribed by the dominant Australian culture. Negative views of Aboriginality absorbed by Aboriginal people result in what they define as 'shame' (Appendix 10.2). In Australia, the Aboriginal population is simultaneously trying to achieve self-determination status as an ethnic group, while maintaining the welfare safety net.

Past and present distributions of Aboriginal people reflect their status as requiring high levels of welfare. The dominance over the physical and economic landscape achieved by non-Aboriginal Australians essentially encapsulates the Aboriginal population. While offering some protection to Aboriginal people, it is at the same time making the continual dependency of the Aboriginal population upon welfare a certainty.

The importance of Point McLeay and the associated Aboriginal reserves at the core of modern Ngarrindjeri society are only fully appreciated with a consideration of the historical development of Aboriginal affairs in the extended region.

9.3.2 The Future in the Lower Murray

The Aboriginal community of the Lower Murray has experienced much cultural change since European arrival at the turn of the 18th century. Today, this community wants more change. Aboriginal people express their future goals as being the attainment of full employment, and the possession of total control over their destiny. This desire is presently widely felt by other indigenous groups in the world, such as Amerindians, Maoris and Africans (Section 2.4.5). In the Lower Murray, there is a strong desire by Aboriginal people to redefine their landscape in order to remove their marginality. Aboriginal people say they need more land and a restructured funding program. Land today represents the basis of funding from various government bodies. At present, there is not enough farming land of good quality available in the Lower Murray to employ more than a few workers in Aboriginal-run agricultural projects (Section 7.2.3). Point McLeay is based in an agricultural area not favoured for intensive farming.

Although the Point McLeay area is not agriculturally rich, the land does have other values to the Aboriginal inhabitants. The Aboriginal style of land management enables recreational activities, such as camping and hunting, to take place without the possibility of interference from non-Aboriginal people (Section 8.4.4). The landscape, to present day Aboriginal people, is a source of inspiration and raw materials for various cultural activities, such as artefact manufacture, painting and sculpture (Section 8.5). There is strong interest among Aboriginal residents in the Lower Murray, as elsewhere in Australia, in tourism. The Lakes district of the Lower Murray is presently on the frontier of tourist development, spreading from the Adelaide side through towns such as Victor Harbor and Goolwa. There is a growing appreciation among Aboriginal people of the value, in economic and cultural terms, of their own heritage. A group of Lower Murray people already operates a cultural museum and conference complex in the region (Section 8.6). The success of this venture has stimulated Aboriginal interest in developing similar projects elsewhere in the Lower Murray.

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Land has other values to Aboriginal people too. For instance, Aboriginal families have strong emotional attachments to land they are associated with. This includes the places of former farming settlements, fringecamps and house sites throughout the Lower Murray. The past life experience of the Aboriginal people makes parts of the landscape emotionally very important to them. Without Point McLeay - which they call Raukkan - the Aboriginal community of the Lower Murray would suffer from placelessness (Section 7.3). The *place* and its cultural landscape is considered by many as central to future maintenance and construction of Aboriginal identity. The concept of 'Ngarrindjeri' could not have developed without the close historical association of *place* with the Aboriginal community of the Lower Murray. The land is humanised by the people that live upon it.

9.4 Role of Cultural Geography

After Sauer's domination of cultural geography from the 1920s to the 1960s, there was a long quiet period for the subdiscipline. This ended with the new cultural geography of the 1980s, described by Rowntree (1988) and Anderson and Gale (1992, pp.1-12). Cultural geography became more theory-oriented than formerly, although it still adhered to its inherent eclecticism. The understanding of spatial relationships and human/environment interaction unite geography, and are its very reason for being. Nevertheless, I argue that geography has greatly benefited from its overlap with other disciplines.

There is still a large gulf between human geography and mainstream anthropology. Human geography is a discipline concerned with spatial distribution of human entities; while anthropology studies culture and society. Ellen (1988, p.230) remarks that human geography in a sense has the narrower focus as it is restricted to one aspect of human behaviour, while anthropology has an aim of the total and integrating study of humankind. Perhaps because of this difference, anthropology seems to be more theory driven, whereas human cultural geography has taken a more empirical approach to defining its subject matter. Both anthropology and human geography have gone through periods of having their legitimacy challenged (Ellen, 1988, p.231). For anthropology, this was on the basis that its study of the 'primitive' builds upon outdated colonial precepts (Clifford, 1988). In the case of human geography, this was because its subject matter had diversified so much that it was in danger of collapsing from the weight of its eclectic methodology. Nevertheless, both disciplines have survived well into the present. To a similar extent,

sociology is also separated from human geography. This thesis aims to fill some of the gaps in the way geographers have looked at suppressed social groups.

Geography is seen by many to be a 'science of synthesis' (Holt-Jensen, 1980, p.4). For some geographers, the inherent eclecticism is a point in favour of the discipline. For instance, Murphey claims 'We must not merely gather and arrange data or write description; we must continually ask why? In this endeavor, multiple methods and multiple ideas are relevant and necessary for fruitful results (1982, p.7).' As Baker (1989, pp.98,397) suggests, human geography is well placed to cover a number of intellectual gaps left by the rigid demarcation of some other disciplines in the humanities. It can only do this by maintaining a readiness to import ideas from other disciplines.

With the aim of synthesis, clearly there will always be diversity in approaches used in human geography. I argue that rather than making the discipline 'illegitimate', the open mindedness of geographers for the importation of new approaches is a clear advantage. The more recent phenomenological and humanistic trends in human geography are allowing the insights of individuals from the very cultural groups being studied to be taken more into consideration. In taking a position between an insider and an outsider, I have produced an account of Aboriginal relationships to the landscape that would not have resulted from either approach alone. My views therefore differ somewhat from both other scholars and the Aboriginal people themselves. By doing this, I have demonstrated that the subdiscipline of cultural geography lends itself well to importation of new ideas and models. As long as it retains the themes of cultural landscape, region, ecology, diffusion, and sense of *place*, cultural geography will continue to provide a useful theoretical framework in studying relationships between culture and landscape.

End Notes

1 The concept of 'wilderness' is heavily influenced by culture. Jones (1985, pp.204-207) documents an Aboriginal point of view of the world from an Arnhem Land perspective. When an Anbarra man, Frank Gurrmanamana, visited Canberra he found the 'disorder' there alarming. To him, the capital city of Australia was a 'wilderness'.

2 This phenomenon is not unique. It is a characteristic of governments world-wide to structure their budgets around concepts of national identities. For instance, the English persistently regard themselves as a rural-based society, despite all evidence to the contrary (Youngs, 1985, pp.145,163). This is largely supported through the British media. The results are rather generous government subsidies to the farming sector.

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11 Appendices

11.1 A Chronology of Events Affecting Aboriginal People in the Lower Murray Region Since Contact with Europeans (1627 - 1993)

DATE	EUROPEAN EVENT	ABORIGINAL EFFECT

EXPLORATION PHASE

1627

	Dutchman, Captain Pieter Nuyts on the 'Gulde Zeepaert', discovers the south coast of Australia. Travelling east across the Great Australian Bight, he reaches Fowler Bay & Nuyts Archipelago.	Possible first sighting of Europeans by Aboriginal people in what is now South Australia.

1699

	1 August - English mariner, William Dampier on the 'Roebuck', discovers the western coast of Australia.	The building of detailed knowledge by Europeans of the Australian land and its people begins.

1770

	19 April - Englishman, Captain James Cook on the 'Endeavour', reaches the east coast of Australia.	British economic interest in the Pacific grows, with little regard for the indigenous people.

1788

	Sydney established in New South Wales.	Non-Aboriginal people permanently settle in Australia.

1789

	Small pox epidemic in Sydney, introduced by ship.	Aboriginal people in eastern Australia exposed to small pox for the first time. This possibly reaches the Lower Murray region.

1792

	French officer, D'Entrecasteaux, travels along the Great Australian Bight looking for missing explorer, La Perouse.	Aboriginal people in South Australia possibly see European explorers.

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1800

3 December - Englishman, Lieutenant James Grant on the 'Lady Nelson', sights the south east coast of South Australia.	As above.

1802

21 March - English explorer, Captain Matthew Flinders on the 'Investigator', discovers Nepean Bay, Kangaroo Island.	European interest in the southern coast of Australia intensifies.
8 April - Flinders meets the French explorer, Nicholas Baudin on 'Le Geographe'.	As above.

1803

Tasmania (Van Diemen's Land) settled by Europeans.	Tasmanian Aboriginal people exposed to European settlement.
Winter - Captain Pendleton, a whaler from New York on the 'Union', wintered at American River on Kangaroo Island. He built the 'Independence' there.	Unofficial European explorers active in South Australian waters.

1806

Murrell & a gang of six sealers remain on Kangaroo Island for three years.	Southern South Australian coast visited more frequently by Europeans.

1807

In Britain, slave trade in Africans is abolished.	Indigenous inhabitants supposed to be better treated by British colonists in the future.

1815

Peter Dillion commences collecting salt on Kangaroo Island.	Southern South Australian coast visited more frequently by Europeans.

1819

Kangaroo Island is permanently occupied, with the arrival of bands of European sealers.	Raids upon mainland Aboriginal groups commence. Tasmanian people brought into the South Australian region.

1828

Sealers settle in the Portland area (western Victoria).

Southern coastline increasingly inhabited by non-Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal people from the Lower Murray observed on a sealing vessel at King George Sound, Western Australia.

Lower Murray people begin to gain geographic knowledge from far outside their cultural region.

1830

9 February- explorer, Charles Sturt, reaches Lake Alexandrina after travelling down the Murray River from the eastern colonies.

Geographic investigation of South Australia leads to interaction between Europeans & Aboriginal people in the Murray River Basin.

December - the Wakefield Plan formed in Britain: the first paper concerning the formation of a colony on Gulf St Vincent or in its vicinity.

Planned Aboriginal dispossession of their land now gains official status.

Permanent whaling stations set up on Kangaroo Island. Thistle Island & others in Spencer Gulf settled by sealers.

Possible year of a second small pox epidemic to reach the Aboriginal population in the Lower Murray region - many die!

1831

Captain Collet Barker murdered by Lower Murray Aboriginal people at the Murray Mouth.

Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray display aggression to Europeans.

1833

December - the South Australian Association, a philanthropic society, founded by the efforts of Wakefield, Gouger and others in Britain.

Planned Aboriginal welfare begins.

John Jones, a sealer, works for five months in southern South Australia.

Aboriginal people employed in sealing activities. Some become very familiar with Europeans.

1834

15 August - in Britain, the Foundation Act for the establishment of the province of South Australia is passed.

The Colony of South Australia is approved - Aboriginal land dispossession is assured.

Slave Emancipation in Britain.

Humanitarian movement in Europe gains power.

1835

September - the South Australian
Company formed in Britain, floated
by Angas, Smith & Kingscote.

Colonisation processes gain
momentum.

Meredith, a sealer from Kangaroo
Island, murdered by Lower Murray
people on the mainland.

Aboriginal people steal a seagoing
boat. They threaten to murder
other sealers.

1836

27 July - `Duke of York', with
colonists from England, arrives at
Kangaroo Island.

The first official colonists
arrive in South Australia to
create a new British colony.

21 August - `Rapid', with Colonel
Light and colonists from England,
arrives at Kangaroo Island.

As above.

24 December - `Buffalo' arrives
at Holdfast Bay.

As above.

31 December - Colonel Light chooses
the final sight of Adelaide -
Encounter Bay is disregarded.

The Aboriginal people of the
Adelaide Plains are the first
group to feel the full impact of
European settlement in South
Australia.

1837

Whaling stations set up at Encounter
Bay.

Aboriginal employment in the
whaling industry created.

Dr Wyatt appointed Protector of
Aborigines - his tasks included the
handing out of rations and encouraging
amicable relations between settlers &
Aboriginal people.

Dr Wyatt was active in the areas
of Encounter Bay & Adelaide. He
had early contact with Lower
Murray groups.

1838

Overlanders from New South Wales come
down the Murray River with cattle.

Conflicting land use between
Aboriginal people and Europeans.

June - `Fanny' wrecked on the Coorong
- Aboriginal people help take the
crew & passengers to Victor Harbor
across the Murray Mouth.

The Aboriginal population in the
Lower Murray was still high enough
for them to have a large impact
upon most significant events in the
region.

1839

Overlanders find route to Adelaide
from the South East.

Aboriginal people in the Lower
Murray have more direct contact
with Europeans.

COLONIAL INCORPORATION PHASE

1839

Establishment of the `Native
Location' in the Adelaide
Parklands.

First Aboriginal mission in South
Australia set up.

Land sales to Europeans in the
Encounter Bay region increase.

The local territories of many
Aboriginal groups in the Encounter
Bay area were now on private land.

The river port of Goolwa, near the
Murray Mouth, was surveyed.

European settlement encroaches
upon the Lower Murray region from
the west.

The sale of alcohol to Aboriginal
people is prohibited.

Aboriginal people more actively
discriminated against.

1840

Maria massacre - European shipwreck
survivors slaughtered by Aboriginal
people along the Coorong.

Reprisal raids by troopers.
Killings had a major effect on
government policy towards the
Aboriginal inhabitants.

Penney and Wark treat Aboriginal
people for smallpox & venereal disease
at Encounter Bay.

Aboriginal population in decline.

Surveying of the Lower Murray starts,
but the southern areas were not done
until much later.

Although Aboriginal reserves were
initially set aside, these were
soon sold off to settlers. Aboriginal
land use was not fully recognised.

Encounter Bay Bob receives a land
grant in the Onkaparinga River region,
but this was taken away due to counter
claims by European settlers.

Land grants to Aboriginal people
not successful under the Colony's
land policies.

1841

An Aboriginal school was set up at
Victor Harbor by the German
missionary, H.A.E. Meyer, which
lasted until about 1846.

Some Aboriginal people in the Lower
Murray taught to read and write.

1841

Edward John Eyre appointed Resident
Magistrate & Protector of Aborigines
for the Murray, based at Moorundie.

Eyre's position anticipated
conflict between overlanders &
Aboriginal people.

1842

Rufus River massacre of Aboriginal
people - brought on by attacks upon
overlanders.

Show of force by Europeans -
Upper Murray people disperse.

A European named Magrath murdered by
Aboriginal people along the Coorong.

One of the murderers eventually
caught and hanged.

Waste Lands Act proclaimed - it could
reserve land for public use, such as
for Aboriginal farming projects.

For Aboriginal people, this
practice was a failure.

1843

Publication of the 'Vocabulary of
the Language ...' by Meyer.

The Aboriginal language in the
Lower Murray is documented.

Aboriginal 'tribal' structure in the
districts around Adelaide noted as
collapsing.

Rapid Bay and Encounter Bay
groups merge.

Colonists note that Aboriginal groups
from areas such as Mt Barker,
Encounter Bay, Mid Murray, & Mid
North converge upon the city.

Resources of Adelaide are claimed
by foreign Aboriginal groups -
spear fights & sorcery killings
flare up.

Large pastoral stations set up in the
northern end of the Lower Murray.

Although Aboriginal people were
competing with some of the
resources used by pastoralists,
the stations were a source of
employment for Aboriginal people.

1844

A mission school for Aboriginal
children established at Walkerville
on the Adelaide Plains.

Commencement of the practice of
children being separated from their
parents to 'civilise' them.

George French Angas and Governor Grey
tour the Lower Murray & South East of
South Australia.

Australian landscape and people
painted and written about by Angas.

1846

Publication of the 'Manners and
Customs ...' by Meyer.

Aboriginal customs in the Lower
Murray are documented.

1846

Township of Robe in the South East of South Australia laid out.	Agricultural activity increases to the south east of the Lower Murray.

1847

Vagrant Act, 1847 enacted to stop Aboriginal people wandering and begging in Adelaide.	Aboriginal population in Adelaide is cleared out.
Coorong road to Victoria built.	Traffic through Lower Murray increases.

1849

A ferry service established at Wellington.	As above.

1850

Land purchased at Poonindie near Port Lincoln for an agrarian Aboriginal community.	Another missionary experiment - some Adelaide & Lower Murray Aboriginal people sent there.

1851

News of Victorian gold rush reaches Adelaide in spring.	Aboriginal labour in high demand, particularly for harvest & shepherd work.

1853

First steamer on the Murray River - connects eastern colonies to South Australia.	Aboriginal people in competition with Europeans for River's resources.

1854

George Taplin opens a school at Port Elliot in the Lower Murray.	Taplin becomes aware of the plight of Aboriginal people.
Township of Milang laid out.	Fishing industry at Milang becomes a major source of employment for Aboriginal people.
Australia's first public iron-tracked railway built to connect the sea port of Port Elliot with the river port of Goolwa.	River becomes increasingly important to Europeans - to the detriment of Aboriginal hunters & gatherers.

1857

South Australia gains self government.	Colonial Office in London no longer has input into Aboriginal affairs in the colony.

1857

The Aboriginal Friends Association founded in Adelaide.	The Lower Murray receives special attention from a missionary society.
Aboriginal Protectorate abolished - powers given to the Minister of Crown Lands.	A decrease in the public's perception of Aboriginal welfare problems.

1858

Telegraph line connects Adelaide to Melbourne.	European penetration of the Lower Murray continues.
Township of Kingston in the South East laid out.	European development reaches the Coorong from the south.

1859

The Point McLeay Aboriginal Mission established near the Murray Mouth through the newly formed Aborigines' Friends' Association based in Adelaide.	The start of a long missionary presence in the Lower Murray. However, initially only a few Aboriginal people actually live on the mission.

1860

Influenza epidemic in South Australia.	Many Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray die of influenza - 'extinction' of Aboriginal people seems inevitable.
Select Committee on Aborigines.	Welfare needs of Aboriginal people is questioned, particularly whether missions such as Point McLeay are necessary.
Position of Aboriginal Protector was re-established from the pressure of Aboriginal Friends Association.	Although Protector's position was regained, his powers were diminished.

1864

Draining of the South East of South Australia commenced to allow for greater use of land as pasture.	Environment of the Coorong altered through the natural drainage in the South East being diverted to the sea.

1866

Township of Meningie laid out to service overland travellers from the South East.	Southern Lake Albert area developed by Europeans.

1868

The Point Pearce Mission on Yorke Peninsula established.	Another focus for missionaries in southern South Australia. Some Lower Murray people go there.
Commissioner of Crown Lands takes on the role of Aboriginal Protector.	Aboriginal problem considered to be insignificant due to the probable eventual 'extinction' of all Aboriginal people.

1874

Publication of the 'Narrinyeri' by Taplin.	Start of a new wave of scholarly attention upon Lower Murray people.

1879

Publication of 'Folklore, Manners, Customs ...' by Taplin.	Aboriginal people of this period seen as cultural relics.
Death of Taplin.	Administration of Point McLeay taken over by Fred Taplin.

1881

First irrigation scheme on the Lower Murray commenced near Wellington.	Fertile flood plains denied to Aboriginal use.

1886

Opening of the river bridge at Murray Bridge for rail traffic.	Increasing stock movement between Adelaide & the South East through the Murray Bridge area - north end of the Lower Murray dominated by agriculture.

1892

Aboriginal affairs placed in control of the Minister of Education and Agriculture.	Aboriginal issues still not considered very important.

1898

Koonibba Mission founded on the West Coast of South Australia.	Another Aboriginal mission in southern South Australia.

1899

Select Committee on Aborigines	Welfare needs of Aboriginal people questioned again, particularly in relation to the Northern Territory.

1901

Foundation of the Australian Commonwealth.	States retain administrative control over Aboriginal people.
Manunka Mission opened near Mannum in the Mid Murray region.	Mid Murray Aboriginal people get more attention from Aboriginal welfare agencies.

1905

Large irrigation schemes commence in the Lower Murray.	Aboriginal people in competition with Europeans for the River's resources.

1907

Closer Settlement Act splits up Narrung Station.	Aboriginal hunters and gatherers no longer able to roam freely on the Narrung Peninsula.

GOVERNMENT WELFARE PHASE

1911

Passing of Aborigines Act, 1911 - the first act specifically directed at Aboriginal people.	Segregation of Aboriginal people from mainstream Australian society - Chief Protector had supreme power over all Aboriginal people; police could arrest an Aboriginal person without warrants.

1913

Start of the Royal Commission on Aborigines, 1913-1915.	Official recognition of the Aboriginal 'half-caste' problem - suggestion of the separation of Aboriginal policy between 'full-bloods' & 'half-castes'.

1915

Point McLeay taken over by the state government.	Government bodies begin to take a much more active role in Aboriginal affairs.

1916

South Australian Licensing Act proclaimed.	The sale and consumption of alcohol to Aboriginal people is prohibited (until 1967).

1922

First lock on the Murray River opened
at Blanchetown.

The Murray River environment is
severely altered.

1923

Aborigines (Training for Children)
Act proclaimed.

Aboriginal children can be removed
to an institution for training
purposes by the Protector against
the will of their family.

1925

Swan Reach Mission established by
the United Aborigines Mission.

Aboriginal people from the River
moved from the Mannum camps to
Swan Reach.

1934

The Aborigines Act. 1934 assented. It
repealed the Aborigines (Training of
Children) Act, 1923. The definition of
who is 'Aboriginal' was widened.

More Aboriginal people were now
essentially wards of the state.
Beginning of exemption system.

1936

Police Act proclaimed - people who are
non-Aboriginal & found consorting
with Aboriginal people can be
arrested & charged.

Aboriginal people 'insulated' from
uncontrolled contact with non-
Aboriginal people.

1937

Conference between state and federal
authorities pushes for uniform
Aboriginal policies across country.

Aboriginal issues recognised as a
Commonwealth problem.

1939

Aborigines Act Amendment Act of
South Australia proclaimed - Chief
Protector position replaced by the
Protection Board.

State gains greater control over
Aboriginal people.

1941

Commonwealth child endowment payments
made available to Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal reliance upon mission
resources was lessened.

1942

General welfare benefits extended to
'exempted' Aboriginal people who were
in need of old age, invalid or
maternity pensions.

As above.

1943

Colebrook Home moved from Quorn to
Eden Hills in Adelaide.

This was an Aboriginal training
institution for 'assimilating'
children - many Lower Murray
people ended up here.

1944

Unemployment & sickness welfare
benefits extended to 'exempted'
Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal ties to mission
settlements were lessened.

1945

Swan Reach Mission closed down -
Gerard established by the United
Aborigines Mission.

Movement of Aboriginal people to
Gerard from all over South
Australia.

1948

Another conference between state &
federal authorities highlights the
differences between Aboriginal
policies in the various states.

A renewed push for standard laws
to govern all Aboriginal people.

1951

A further conference between state &
federal authorities discusses a policy
for the assimilation of all Aboriginal
people.

A push for Aboriginal citizenship.

1952

Ooldea Mission in the North West of
South Australia closes down due to
Atom Bomb tests.

A group of Western Desert
Aboriginal people move to Gerard
Mission on the Murray River.

1959

Commonwealth Social Services
Consolidation Act proclaimed.

Social services extended to all
Aboriginal people, except those
living 'traditionally'.

1961

Aborigines Department gains control
of Gerard.

Increasing government control of
Aboriginal missions.

A Commonwealth conference of 'Native
Welfare' discusses 'assimilation'.

A common definition of
'assimilation' is worked out.

1962

The Aboriginal Affairs Act assented.
It repealed the Aborigines Act, 1934-39.

Unfavourable aspects of the 1934-
1939 Act softened.

1963

Davenport Reserve established by
Aborigines Department at Port Augusta.

Northern South Australian groups
given better facilities.

1964

Koonibba Mission taken over by
Aborigines Department.

Government takes control of the
mission.

South Australia's Welfare Act
proclaimed.

Aboriginal Affairs Board takes
over management.

1965

Aborigines and Historic Relics
Preservation Act proclaimed.

Aboriginal sites given some
official protection by the state.

1966

Aboriginal Lands Trust Act
proclaimed.

Aboriginal reserves in southern
South Australia come under one
land management body.

Prohibition of Discrimination Act
proclaimed.

Discrimination towards Aboriginal
people made an offence.

Fringe-camps, such as those at
Meningie, close down.

The 'colour bar' no longer keeps
Aboriginal people out of rural
towns & away from town facilities.

1967

National Referendum gave Aboriginal
people citizenship.

Aboriginal equality with non-
Aboriginal Australians becomes
possible in theory.

1968

Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal
Affairs established.

Commonwealth increasingly becomes
involved in Aboriginal Affairs.

1973

Aboriginal Hostels Limited formed in Adelaide.

Aboriginal movement into Adelaide facilitated.

Aboriginal Task Force established to help Aboriginal people gain entry into tertiary institutions.

The Task Force becomes the training field for several generations of Aboriginal administrators.

1974

The administration of Point McLeay delegated to Aboriginal residents as Aboriginal lands are transferred to the Aboriginal Lands Trust.

Administrations, such as the State Department of Aboriginal Affairs, commence to be Aboriginalised.

Lower Murray Nungas Club at Murray Bridge established with Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs funds.

Aboriginal people in the Lower Murray gain a regional centre to assist in health, housing, welfare, education & legal aid.

1976

Racial Discrimination Act in South Australia proclaimed.

Aboriginal people have more rights of redress should they be discriminated against.

1984

Jerry Mason Senior Memorial Centre opens at Glossop in the Riverland.

Various welfare & education functions for the local Aboriginal population made available here.

Equal Opportunity Act in South Australia proclaimed.

Aboriginal people have more rights of redress should they be discriminated against.

1988

Aboriginal Heritage Act proclaimed - administered by the Aboriginal Heritage Branch of the Department of Environment & Planning.

Aboriginal people given more management powers over Aboriginal heritage.

1989

Formation of the Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander Commission (ATSIC).

The Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs is replaced by a body headed by Aboriginal people elected by their communities.

1991

The official changes of name from
Point McLeay to Raukkan commence.

Aboriginal identity in the Lower
Murray strengthens.

1992

High Court of Australia hands down a
decision on the land ownership case
of Mabo versus the Queensland
Government.

Greater recognition in Australia of
the rights of the indigenous peoples.

1993

Aboriginal Heritage Branch moved to
State Aboriginal Affairs Department.

Consolidation of Aboriginal sections
in the public service into a single
department, headed by an Aboriginal
staff.

11.2 Glossary of Terms as Used by Contemporary Aboriginal People in the Lower Murray Region

- written in commonly accepted form

WORD	MEANING	PROBABLE SOURCE LANGUAGE
-MALTHI	SUFFIX MEANING PERSON WHO DOES TOO MUCH OF SOMETHING	NGARRINDJERI
-ON	SUFFIX MEANING 'MEN OF'	NGARRINDJERI
ADNYAMATHANHA	PEOPLE TERM, FLINDERS RANGES	FLINDERS RANGES REGION
ANNA	THATS SO; GO ON; I HEAR YOU; ETC.	GENERAL ABORIGINAL
AUNTY #	SENIOR ABORIGINAL WOMAN	ENGLISH
BABY-WAY #	IMPROPER; CUTE	ENGLISH
BAIYA	GOOD	WESTERN DESERT
BANDA	MONEY	WEST COAST TO ADELAIDE
BANDABRI	GUN	ADELAIDE
BANDAD-AP	IN POSSESSION OF MUCH MONEY	WEST COAST TO ADELAIDE
BAP-PA	RABBIT (ORYCTOLAGUS CUNICULUS)	?
BIG HILL #	PROMINENT LANDMARK AT POINT MCLEAY	ENGLISH
BIG LAWN #	CENTRAL LAWN AREA AT POINT MCLEAY	ENGLISH
BLOCK K #	PROPERTY RUN BY POINT MCLEAY	ENGLISH
BONNEY RESERVE #	ABORIGINAL RESERVE ALONG THE COORONG	ENGLISH
BO:YA	TOBACCO	ADELAIDE/YORKE PENINSULA
BONED #	AFFECTED BY SORCERY	ENGLISH
BOOKAYANA #	POINT PEARCE, THE PLACE	NARANGGA
BU:BIELA, BU:ELA	LARGE LEAVED BUSHES	TASMANIAN (VIA AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH?)
BU:NTHA	STUPID; MAD	ABORIGINAL ENGLISH? (FROM POINT PEARCE)
BUDLI	RANDY; DESIRING SEX	WEST COAST TO ADELAIDE?
BUGADI	SHOE	WEST COAST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA (BUT ORIGINALLY FROM ENGLISH)
BULDANG	FALL	ENGLISH?
BUS #	CAR, LARGE	ENGLISH
BUT	SEXUAL INTERCOURSE	EASTERN STATES
BUT-BUT	SPIRIT BEING, ONE-LEGGED	NGARRINDJERI?
BUTHERA ROCK #	SITE NEAR POINT PEARCE	NARANGGA
BUTTERFISH #	POINT PEARCE PEOPLE	ENGLISH
CALLOP #	GOLDEN PERCH (MACQUARIA AMBIGUA)	MERU (BUT VIA ENGLISH?)
CAMP #	SHELTER, OTHER THAN A BUILDING	ENGLISH
CAMP-BLACK #	ABORIGINAL PERSON LIVING IN A CAMP	ENGLISH
CHIP #	TELL OFF; REPRIMAND	ENGLISH
COCONUT #	ABORIGINAL PERSON WHO ACTS LIKE A EUROPEAN	ENGLISH
COUNTRYMEN #	FAMILIES THAT HAD A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP IN PRE-EUROPEAN TIMES	ENGLISH
CRACK #	WOMAN [DEROGATORY TERM FOR]	ENGLISH

CUT #	LEAVE; WENT	ENGLISH
DANDELION-FEVER #	FEVER DUE TO SWIMMING	ENGLISH
DANMUDLA	SPINY PUFFERFISH (ATOPOMYCTERUS NICTHEMERUS)	NARANGGA?
DANMUDLA	POINT PEARCE PERSON	NARANGGA?
DEAD-BODY FAT #	SORCERY MATERIAL	ENGLISH
DEADLY #	REALLY GOOD	ENGLISH
DEM-BIN	SILLY; STUPID	EASTERN STATES
DESERT-RATS #	CENTRAL AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL PEOPLE	ENGLISH
DIDGERIDOO #	WIND INSTRUMENT	YOLNGU
DIRECTLY #	SOON	ENGLISH
DOLL'S EYES #	COASTAL BALLART (EXOCARPOS SYRTICOLUS)	ENGLISH
DOUBLE-BANKED #	HIT BY TWO PEOPLE AT ONCE	ENGLISH
DOUBLE-EM-UP #	HIT; RAPE	ENGLISH
DOUBLE-OVER #	HIT HARD AT SOMEONE SO THAT THEY BEND OVER	ENGLISH
DURI	SEXUAL INTERCOURSE	EASTERN STATES
EH!	ATTENTION!	NGARRINDJERI
ELDER #	LEADER; SENIOR	ENGLISH
ERTI	YOUR JOKING	GENERAL ABORIGINAL?
FEATHER-FOOT #	SORCERER	ENGLISH
FINGER-POST #	LANDMARK ON ROAD BETWEEN MENINGIE AND POINT MCLEAY	ENGLISH
FINISHED #	DEAD	ENGLISH
FLASH #	BRAZEN	ENGLISH
FLOG #	BEAT UP A PERSON	ENGLISH
FOUND #	BIRTH, TO GIVE ASSISTANCE IN	ENGLISH
GABA	WHITE AUSTRALIAN	EASTERN STATES
GABI	WATER, ALCOHOL	WEST COAST OF S.AUST.
GANDIS	UNDERWEAR, WOMAN'S	ENGLISH
GANYA	MONEY	NARANGGA
GE:MIN	FALSE	ENGLISH
GERMAN #	NORTHERN EUROPEANS	ENGLISH
GI-IN	GOING	ENGLISH
GOODBYE #	FAREWELL (INSULTING IF DIRECTED AT PERSON STILL ALIVE)	ENGLISH
GRAN #	FAMILY TERM RELATIVE TO PARTICULAR FAMILIES	ENGLISH
GRAN #	GRANDMOTHER OR GRANDFATHER; GRANDCHILD	ENGLISH
GROWL #	TELL OFF; REPRIMAND	ENGLISH
GU:M	METHYLATED SPIRITS	ADELAIDE TO EYRE PENINSULA ?
GUM PARK #	FARM PROPERTY RUN BY POINT MCLEAY	ENGLISH
GU:PA	GHOST; SPIRIT	ADELAIDE/YORKE PENINSULA
GUDLI	LICE OF THE HEAD	ADELAIDE/YORKE PENINSULA
GUMI	ALCOHOLIC; METHYLATED SPIRIT DRINKER	JAGARA? (VIA ABORIGINAL ENGLISH?)
GUNA (OR KUNA)	EXCREMENT	ADELAIDE/YORKE PENINSULA
GUNA-WADLI	TOILET	ADELAIDE/YORKE PENINSULA

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GUNTHI	CHINAMAN OR ANY ASIAN	NGARRINDJERI?
GUNYA	WHITE AUSTRALIAN PERSON	ADELAIDE/YORKE PENINSULA
GURI	VAGINA	?
GURNAWALPA	LIE, TO TELL	NARANGGA?
GUTI	QUANDONG (SANTALUM ACUMINATUM)	WEST COAST OF S AUST.
HAIRY-ARSE #	ADULT	ENGLISH
HALF-CASTE #	LIGHT SKINNED PERSON	ENGLISH
INMA	'TRADITIONAL' CEREMONY	WESTERN DESERT & GENERAL ABORIGINAL ENGLISH
KA-KA	TROUBLE; SHIT	NGARRINDJERI
KA:TA	EXCREMENT; RUBBISH	NGARRINDJERI
KADAITJA(-MAN)	SORCERER OR SPIRIT	CENTRAL AUSTRALIA & GENERAL ABORIGINAL
KALARI	COASTAL WATTLE (ACACIA LONGIFOLIA SOPHORAE)	NGARRINDJERI
KALATHAMI	NATIVE CURRANT (LEUCOPOGON PARVIFLORUS)	NGARRINDJERI
KALPARIN FARM #	ABORIGINAL-RUN FARM, WHICH IS ALSO A REST HOME	NGARRINDJERI
KALTA	BLUE-TONGUE LIZARD (TILIQUA SCINCOIDES)	WEST COAST OF S.AUST.
KALTHANGGI	VENEREAL DISEASE	NGARRINDJERI?
KANAKI	CLUB, SWORD-TYPE OF	NGARRINDJERI
KANATJI	FOX (VULPES VULPES)	NGARRINDJERI
KANGKEN	LAUGHING	NGARRINDJERI
KANMERI	MULLET, YELLOW-EYE (ALDRICHETTA FORSTERI)	NGARRINDJERI
KANTJI	URINE	NGARRINDJERI
KARABARI	CEREMONY, DANCE	EAST COAST OF NEW SOUTH WALES
KATHERI	PRICKLE	NGARRINDJERI
KATHERI(-BUSH)	BOXTHORN (LYCIUM FEROCISSIMUM)	NGARRINDJERI
KATJERI	BEAUTIFUL	NGARRINDJERI
KAURNA #	PEOPLE TERM, ADELAIDE	NGARRINDJERI
KAURNA #	POLITICAL GROUP (ATSIC REGION)	NGARRINDJERI
KE:KE:	WOOPS; LOOKOUT	NGARRINDJERI
KE:LI	DOG (CANIS FAMILIARIS)	NGARRINDJERI
KERI	PROMISCOUS WOMAN	NGARRINDJERI
KERIN	ACTING IN A LOOSE MANNER	NGARRINDJERI
KIENGIEPIRRI	POLICEMAN	NGARRINDJERI?
KILAWI	BROTHER	NGARRINDJERI
KINDI	SKINK, DROP-TAIL (SCINCIDAE)	NGARRINDJERI
KINJERI	GRASSTREE (XANTHORRHOEA SPECIES)	NGARRINDJERI
KINTJI(-MAN)	LITTLE GREEN MEN	?
KINTJI(-CLIFFS)	PLACE ALONG COORONG NEAR BONNEY RESERVE	ENGLISH
KIRRAKI	HAWK, LITTLE BROWN (ACCIPITER FASCIATUS?)	NGARRINDJERI
KNOCK-IT-OFF #	STOP	ENGLISH
KO:PI	NOSE	NGARRINDJERI

KOOKATHA #	PEOPLE TERM, WEST COAST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA	WEST COAST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA
KOORI, KOORIE #	PEOPLE TERM, VICTORIA & NEW SOUTH WALES	EASTERN STATES
KORKA	VERY GOOD	ENGLISH
KORNI	MAN	NGARRINDJERI
KRA:WI	BIG	NGARRINDJERI
KRAILEN	JEALOUS	NGARRINDJERI
KRAWL	BURY	NGARRINDJERI
KRAWLI	BLUE CRANE, WHITE FACED HERON (ARDEA NOVAEHOLLANDIAE)	NGARRINDJERI
KRAYI	SNAKE (ALL SPECIES)	NGARRINDJERI
KRINKERI	WHITE AUSTRALIAN PERSON	NGARRINDJERI
KRIPARI	SNIPE, LITTLE GREY (SPECIES?)	NGARRINDJERI
KU:LI	HEAD	NGARRINDJERI
KU:LINDJERI	HAT	NGARRINDJERI
KU:MBA	URINE	ADELAIDE/YORKE PENINSULA?
KU:PADANG	EXCREMENT	?
KU:RATJI	KUDAITCHA MAN	ARANDA
KUKANDU	STICKY SWORD-SEDGE (LEPIDOSPERMA VISCIDUM)	MOANDIK
KUMMARI	PREGNANT	NGARRINDJERI
KUNDAWI	WILD DATE (BILLARDIERA SCANDENS)	NGARRINDJERI
KUNGALI	CONGOLLI FISH (PSEUDAPHRITIS URVILLI)	NGARRINDJERI
KUNGARI	SWAN (CYGNUS ATRATUS)	NGARRINDJERI
KUNGEN	LISTEN	NGARRINDJERI
KUNGKA	WIFE	WESTERN DESERT
KUNI	EXCREMENT	EASTERN STATES
KURANTHANTHA	PLANT SPECIES - THE ROOT IS A MEDICINE	NGARRINDJERI
KURONGK	COORONG	NGARRINDJERI
LA:WRI	CAPE BARREN GOOSE (CEREOPSIS NOVAEHOLLANDIAE)	NGARRINDJERI
LAKINDJERI	CLAN; DESCENT GROUP	NGARRINDJERI
LAMMIN	CARRYING ON BACK	NGARRINDJERI
LATION #	RELATION	ENGLISH
LEGS-UP #	FALLEN OVER	ENGLISH
LEWIN	SITTING	NGARRINDJERI
LINGALI	TEA	NGARRINDJERI
LITTLE RED MEN #	SPIRIT MEN	ENGLISH
LONG-FOOTERS #	WEST COAST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA PEOPLE	ENGLISH
MA:MI	FISH GENERALLY	NGARRINDJERI
MA:MU	GHOST	WEST COAST & NORTH WEST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA
MADJI	MAN	WEST COAST OF S AUST.
MADLI	PENIS	NGARRINDJERI
MAH!	YES; SO!	NGARRINDJERI
MAINGI	CLOTHES	NGARRINDJERI
MALLAWAY	MULLOWAY (ARGYROSOMUS HOLOLEPIDOTUS)	NGARRINDJERI

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MALU	KANGAROO (MACROPUS SPECIES)	WEST COAST & NORTH WEST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA
MANANGKERI, MANAKERI	BULRUSH; REED MACE (TYPHA SPECIES)	NGARRINDJERI
MANDAMANG	FAMILIES THAT HAD A PARTICULAR CLOSE RELATIONSHIP IN PRE-EUROPEAN TIMES	NGARRINDJERI
MANGATU	SPINY-HEADED SEDGE (CYPERUS GYMNCAULOS)	MOANDIK
MANKARI	STOMACH	NGARRINDJERI
MANMIN	HITTING	NGARRINDJERI
MANTHARI	BLUE-TONGUE LIZARD (TILIQUA SCINCOIDES)	NGARRINDJERI
MANTRI	NATIVE APPLES (KUNZEA POMIFERA)	NGARRINDJERI
MARA	HAND	ADELAIDE/YORKE PENINSULA
MARAGON	WELLINGTON, PROPERTY NEAR	NGARRINDJERI
MAROWANDI	MEAT	NGARRINDJERI
MATHAWI	LEADER	NGARRINDJERI
ME:THEN	FIGHTING	NGARRINDJERI
MENANI	PENIS	NGARRINDJERI
MERALDI	DANGEROUS MATERIAL	NGARRINDJERI
METHA-MALTHI	BRAWLER	NGARRINDJERI
MI:MINI	WOMAN	NGARRINDJERI
MILBACO:THI	GROUND BERRY (ASTROLOMA HUMIFUSUM)	NGARRINDJERI
MILERUM #	LEADER	NGARRINDJERI
MILLIN	SORCERY	NGARRINDJERI
MINGKA(-BIRD)	SPIRIT BIRD	ADELAIDE/YORKE PENINSULA
MINYUWAN	SMALL	WEST COAST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA?
MISSION, THE #	POINT MCLEAY	ENGLISH
MITJI	YOUR NAME	NGARRINDJERI
MOANDIK	KINGSTON PEOPLE	SOUTH EAST
MOTOR CAR #	CAR; MOTOR VEHICLE	ENGLISH
MOUNTIES #	MOUNTAIN DUCK (TADORNA TADORNOIDES)	ENGLISH
MRA:WI	SISTER	NGARRINDJERI
MRAINTH	LAY-BACK; EASY GOING	NGARRINDJERI?
MRAN-THIN	EXCREMENT	NGARRINDJERI?
MRANGGANYI	ROOT, SPECIES OF	SOUTH EAST?
MRATH	NAKED	NGARRINDJERI
MU:KARI	BLACK DUCK (ANAS SUPERCILIOSA)	NGARRINDJERI
MU:LDAPI	SPIRIT; SORCEROR	NGARRINDJERI
MU:M	POSTERIOR, HUMAN	EASTERN STATES
MU:RUNDI	MISSION SITE ON THE MURRAY	MERU
MU:THA	GRANDMOTHER	NGARRINDJERI
MU:THEN	DRINK	NGARRINDJERI
MUD-MONKEYS #	MURRAY RIVER & LOWER LAKES PEOPLE IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA	ENGLISH
MULINYERI	MOUSTACHE	NGARRINDJERI
MULTHARI	MAGPIE (GYMNORHINA HYPOLEUCA)	NGARRINDJERI
MULYAWO:NK	RIVER SPIRIT OR BUNYIP	NGARRINDJERI

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MUNDI	CHEST	NGARRINDJERI
MUNTA	POSTERIOR	ADELAIDE?
MUNTHANA	PREGNANT	?
MURRI #	PEOPLE TERM, QUEENSLAND & NORTHERN NEW SOUTH WALES	KAMILAROI & MANY QUEENSLAND LANGUAGES
MURRUNDI #	POLITICAL GROUP (ATSIC REGION)	MERU
MUTHA-MALTHI	DRUNK PERSON; ONE WHO IS CONSISTENTLY DRUNK	NGARRINDJERI
MUTHARUK	LICE OF THE PUBIC REGION	NGARRINDJERI
NAKAN	SEE OR LOOK	NGARRINDJERI
NAKEN	TEASING	ENGLISH (ALTHOUGH ORIGINALLY GYPSY)
NAKI	IRRITABLE	ENGLISH
NAMA-MALTHI	COOK, SOMEONE WHO IS ALWAYS COOKING	NGARRINDJERI
NANGHAI	FATHER	NGARRINDJERI
NANTHA	MARIJUANA (CANNABIS SATIVA)	WEST COAST OF S.AUST.
NARAGI	GOOD FOR; KNOWN FOR; FAMOUS FOR	?
NARANGGA #	PEOPLE TERM, YORKE PENINSULA	NARANGGA
NATA	VAGINA	ADELAIDE TO EYRE PENINSULA
NE:RUGI	NOSE-STUFF	NGARRINDJERI
NGA:NIRI	MONEY	?
NGA:TJI	TOTEM	NGARRINDJERI
NGALANG	GNURLING POINT, A PLACE	NGARRINDJERI
NGALTJU	TESTICLE	?
NGANINGI	PIGFACE (CARPOBROTUS ROSSI)	NGARRINDJERI
NGANTHAIPERI	PERSON WITH LOTS OF MONEY	?
NGARANG	NARRUNG (TOWN)	NGARRINDJERI
NGARLU	YOU!	WEST COAST & NORTH WEST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA
NGARRINDJERI #	PEOPLE TERM, LOWER MURRAY	NGARRINDJERI
NGATJERI	EGG	NGARRINDJERI
NGAUWANTHI	SHELTER MADE FROM BAGS	NGARRINDJERI
NGE:RIN	CRYING	NGARRINDJERI
NGELYERI	SORCERY, TYPE OF	NGARRINDJERI
NGLEYI	GRASSTREE FLOWER STEM WHEN DRIED (XANTHORRHOEA SPECIES)	NGARRINDJERI
NGOPIN	WALKING	NGARRINDJERI
NGRAKANI	COASTAL SWORD-SEDGE (LEPIDOSPERMA GLADIATUM)	NGARRINDJERI
NGRALTHI	ANGER; WILD TEMPER	NGARRINDJERI
NGRIKALIN	DANCE	NGARRINDJERI
NGRUWI	SORCERY MATERIAL	NGARRINDJERI
NGU:LI	NATIVE CURRANT (LEUCOPOGON PARVIFLORUS)	SOUTH EAST
NGUL'THEN	HIT OR STRIKE	NGARRINDJERI
NGURUNDERI #	GOD; CREATOR OF EVERYTHING	NGARRINDJERI
NILKANI	BANDED STILT (CLADORHYNCHUS LEUCOCEPHALUS)	NGARRINDJERI
NINKAWI	MOTHER	NGARRINDJERI

NU:RI	PELICAN (PELECANUS CONSPICILLATUS)	NGARRINDJERI
NUMPERRI	BREAST	NGARRINDJERI
NUNGA #	PEOPLE TERM, SOUTHERN SOUTH AUSTRALIA	ADELAIDE/YORKE PENINSULA
NUNYGAR #	PEOPLE TERM, SOUTH WEST OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA	SOUTH WEST OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
NYANYI	CRUTCH, HUMAN	NGARRINDJERI
NYIKUNTHI	TADPOLE	NGARRINDJERI
OLD-PEOPLE #	SENIOR PEOPLE	ENGLISH
OWN #	ACKNOWLEDGE	ENGLISH
PA:KANU	GRANDFATHER	NGARRINDJERI
PA:KANU(-POTATO)	ROOT, EDIBLE SPECIES OF	NGARRINDJERI
PALBERI	NATIVE JUNIPER (MYOPORUM SPECIES)	NGARRINDJERI
PALTJI	WHITE-BOX (BURSARIA SPINOSA)	NGARRINDJERI
PAMPI	BREAD	NGARRINDJERI
PANGITJI	BOOMERANG	NGARRINDJERI
PANNGIN	PAY OFF, BRIBE	ENGLISH?
PARAGONI	SAMPHIRE (CHENOPODIACEAE)	NGARRINDJERI
PEMPIN	GIVING	NGARRINDJERI
PENINGI	POSTERIOR	NGARRINDJERI
PETHA-MALTHI	THIEF	NGARRINDJERI
PETHEN	STEAL	NGARRINDJERI
PI:LI	EYE	NGARRINDJERI
PI:NTUK	PALE FLAX-LILY (DIANELLA LONGIFOLIA)	NGARRINDJERI
PILA:LKI	CALLOP, GOLDEN PERCH, YELLOW-BELLY (PLECTROPLITES AMBIGUUS)	NGARRINDJERI
PIN	THROW AT SOMETHING	ENGLISH
PINKI MORANYI	HOARY RAPIER SEDGE (LEPIDOSPERMA CANESCENS)	MOANDIK
PINKY #	WINE, CHEAP RED VARIETY OF	ENGLISH
PINYATAWI	SUGAR	NGARRINDJERI
PITJANTJATJARA	PEOPLE TERM, WEST COAST & FAR NORTH WEST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA	WESTERN DESERT
PLE:PIN	TOUCHING	NGARRINDJERI
PLOMBI	EAR	NGARRINDJERI
PLOMBITJI	DEAF	NGARRINDJERI
PLONGGI OR PLONGJI	CLUB	NGARRINDJERI
PLUKKIN	AFRAID	NGARRINDJERI
PO:LI	BABY	NGARRINDJERI
PO:RI	ANUS	NGARRINDJERI
PO:TALAK	POLTALLOCH (NAMED AFTER ARGLLSHIRE ESTATE IN SCOTLAND)	ENGLISH ?
PO:THI	HORSE (EQUUS CABALLUS)	ENGLISH?
PONDI	MURRAY COD (MACCULLOCHELLA PEELI)	NGARRINDJERI
PONDI	NGARRINDJERI PEOPLE	NGARRINDJERI
POTI	LICE OF THE HEAD	?
PRILDI	ANT [ALL SPECIES]	NGARRINDJERI
PRUPI	SPIRIT OR GHOST	NGARRINDJERI
PUKLI	SICK	NGARRINDJERI

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PULANGI	NAVEL	NGARRINDJERI
PULGI	HOUSE	NGARRINDJERI
PULYERI	BIRD, GENERAL TERM OF A	NGARRINDJERI
PUNAWI	BAG	NGARRINDJERI
PUNGKARI	HARDHEAD OR WHITE EYED DUCK (AYTHYA AUSTRALIS)	NGARRINDJERI
PUNIN	DEAD OR DYING	NGARRINDJERI
PUNMATHI	POSSUM (TRICHOSURUS VULPECULA OR PSEUDOCHEIRUS PEREGRINUS ?)	?
PUNTHI	MOUSE, HOUSE (MUS MUSCULUS)	NGARRINDJERI
PYIN	SWEARING	?
RA:WLKANDI	WATER RAT (HYDROMYS CHRYSOGASTER)	NGARRINDJERI
RALKON #	POINT MCLEAY SETTLEMENT, FORMER ACCEPTED SPELLING	NGARRINDJERI
RATHA-RATHI	PLOVER, SPUR-WINGED (VANELLUS MILES)	NGARRINDJERI
RAUKKAN #	POINT MCLEAY SETTLEMENT, PRESENT ACCEPTED SPELLING	NGARRINDJERI
RED-BAND #	TRIBAL MEN	ENGLISH
RIKIN	MENINGIE PERSON	ENGLISH?
RIPPED #	TIRED	ENGLISH
RITJIRUKI	WILLIE WAGTAIL (RHIPIDURA LEUCOPHRYS)	NGARRINDJERI
ROCK-APES #	FLINDERS RANGES PEOPLE	ENGLISH
RONGGI	BROTHER-IN-LAW	NGARRINDJERI
ROW-BREEDER #	FIGHT-STARTER	ENGLISH
RUNGKAN	WATTLEBIRD, RED (ANTHOCHAERA CARUNCULATA)	NGARRINDJERI
SANDHILL-SAVAGES #	PORT AUGUSTA ABORIGINAL PEOPLE	ENGLISH
SCRAPE #	SEXUAL INTERCOURSE	ENGLISH
SEE-YA #	FAREWELL	ENGLISH
SHAME #	EMBARRASSMENT	ENGLISH
SING #	ENCHANT	ENGLISH
SLY-GROGGING #	DEALING IN LIQUOR [WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLE]	ENGLISH
STATION, THE #	POINT PEARCE, THE PLACE	ENGLISH
STIFF #	ADOLESCENT MALE	ENGLISH
STIFFIN #	KILL, TO	ENGLISH
TA:W	STOP; NO	NGARRINDJERI
TAKKIN	EAT	NGARRINDJERI
TALUN	CROUCH	NGARRINDJERI
TANGALI	TONGUE	NGARRINDJERI
TANGALIN	STANDING; LOITERING	NGARRINDJERI
TANGARI	GUM OF WATTLE (ACACIA PYCNANTHA)	NGARRINDJERI
TEELUK OR TEELUC #	PROPERTY APPROX. 30 KMS NORTH OF KINGSTON, SOUTH EAST	MOANDIK
TENDI	COUNCIL OF ELDERS	NGARRINDJERI
TENETJERI	CASPIAN TERN (HYDROPROGNE CASPIA)	NGARRINDJERI
TERINGI	SAND DUNES ON POINT MCLEAY LAND	NGARRINDJERI
THALGI	SOW THISTLE (SONCHUS SPECIES)	NGARRINDJERI

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THALTHITHON	PERSON OF TOLDEROL	NGARRINDJERI
THAMPA-MALTHI	SORCEROR	NGARRINDJERI
THAMPIN	SNEAKING AROUND	NGARRINDJERI
THIL-THIL	MURRAY MAGPIE (GRALLINA CYANOLEUCA)	NGARRINDJERI
THILBADI	SKYLARK (ALAUDA ARVENSIS)	NGARRINDJERI
THILTHEN	FARTING	NGARRINDJERI
THITHA	SISTER	ENGLISH
THRE:MIN	SPREAD	NGARRINDJERI?
THRUKERI	SEAGULL (LARUS NOVAEHOLLANDIAE)	NGARRINDJERI
THRUPPUN	SPLASH; GET WET	NGARRINDJERI
THUKABI	TURTLE; TORTOISE (ALL SPECIES)	?
THUKERI	BONY BREAM, PYBERRY, TUKARI (FLUVIALOSA RICHARDSONI)	NGARRINDJERI
THULINYERI	SHOE	NGARRINDJERI
THULYA	POLICEMAN	ENGLISH? (FROM POINT PEARCE)
THUN-THIN	SLEEPING	NGARRINDJERI
THUNGKA	SMELL	NARRANGA
THURI	COOT, A LAKE BIRD [SPECIES?]	NGARRINDJERI
THURNI	FINGER	NGARRINDJERI
THUWI	HAIR OF HEAD	NGARRINDJERI?
TITJERI	CAR	NGARRINDJERI
TITJERI	FLEA	NGARRINDJERI
TJAMBAKI	SHEEP (OVIS SPECIES)	ENGLISH
TJAMU	ELDER	WESTERN DESERT
TJERA	SEXUAL INTERCOURSE	NGARRINDJERI
TJERA-MALTHI	OVER-SEXED	NGARRINDJERI
TJERI	SILVER PERCH, TCHERI, BREAM (BIDYANUS BIDYANUS)	NGARRINDJERI
TJERI-TJERI	WILLIE WAGTAIL (RHIPIDURA LEUCOPHRYS)	NGARRINDJERI
TJILBI	MAN, OLD	WEST COAST OF S AUST.
TJILBRUKI	DREAMING SPIRIT OF THE ADELAIDE REGION	NGARRINDJERI
TJINA	LEG	WEST COAST OF S AUST.
TJITTIN	STAYING	ENGLISH
TJOKELI	VAGINA	NGARRINDJERI?
TJUBADI	STUPID; MAD	WEST COAST & NORTH WEST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA
TJUNG	TESTICLE	?
TJUNGGA	POLICEMAN	EASTERN STATES
TOOLACHE #	TOOLACHE WALLABY (MACROPUS GREYI)	NGARRINDJERI
TRIBAL #	SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN BROUGHT UP IN A TRADITIONAL WAY	ENGLISH
TU:RI	MOUTH	NGARRINDJERI
U:A	YES	WEST COAST & NORTH WEST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA
U:LA	BOY, SMALL	WEST COAST OF S AUST.
UNCLE #	UNCLE OR NEPHEW	ENGLISH
WADDY #	CLUB, SMALL-TYPE OF	ADELAIDE/YORKE PENINSULA
WAH	WHAT?	ENGLISH

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WAKAWANTHI	WIND, NORTHEAST	NGARRINDJERI
WALDARUK	GRUBS, WOOD	NGARRINDJERI
WALTJARI	INTESTINES	NGARRINDJERI
WALTJARI-BAMPARI	INTESTINES, SHEEP	NGARRINDJERI
WALTJERI	WILD CHERRY (EXOCARPOS SPECIES)	ENGLISH
WANGAMI	KANGAROO (MACROPUS SPECIES)	NGARRINDJERI
WANGARAWA	WANGARAWAR (A PLACE)	NGARRINDJERI
WARDANG(-ISLAND) #	ISLAND NEAR POINT PEARCE	NARUNGGA
WARRENGI(-HILL)	LANDMARK NEAR MENINGIE ALONG THE ROAD TO POINT MCLEAY	NGARRINDJERI
WATJI(-BIRD)	WREN, SUPERB BLUE (MALURUS CYANEUS)	NGARRINDJERI
WATJI(-BUSH)	LIGNUM BUSH (MUEHLENBECKIA CUNNINGHAMII)	NGARRINDJERI
WAYERI	HEAVEN	NGARRINDJERI
WE:ER	NO	WEST COAST & NORTH WEST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA
WEAK #	AMUSED	ENGLISH
WHATSOMEYACALLIT #	THING	ENGLISH
WHITEFELLA #	WHITE AUSTRALIAN PERSON	ENGLISH
WI:NA	WOMAN	WEST COAST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA
WILDBLACKFELLA #	TRIBAL PERSON; SPIRIT	ENGLISH
WINGGI	COASTAL SWORD-SEDGE (LEPIDOSPERMA GLADIATUM)	NGARRINDJERI
WINTHARI	SKINNY; THIN	?
WIRACUM	POINT AT NOONAMENA	NGARRINDJERI
WIRANGU	PEOPLE TERM, WEST COAST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA	WEST COAST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA
WIRILDA	WATTLE SPECIES (ACACIA RETINODES)	NGARRINDJERI
WIRRACOTHI	BEARDED DRAGON LIZARD (AMPHIBOLURUS BARBATUS)	NGARRINDJERI?
WIRRANGI	STUPID; MAD	NGARRINDJERI
WITJ-WITJ	SPIRIT BEING, FEMALE	NGARRINDJERI?
WODLI	HOUSE	ADELAIDE/YORKE PENINSULA
WOMA	SNAKE	FLINDERS RANGES
WURLEY #	HUT; DWELLING	ADELAIDE/EYRE PENINSULA/MID NORTH
WURLEY-STICKS #	SHELTER POLES	ADELAIDE/EYRE PENINSULA/MID NORTH
WURRA WARRIN #	CHURCH, NAME OF MENINGIE INSTITUTION	NGARRINDJERI
YA:KAI	TO CRY OUT	NGARRINDJERI
YA:NDI	MARIJUANA (CANNABIS SATIVA)	NGARRINDJERI
YA:NDIO.N	MAN, RESPECTED	NGARRINDJERI
YA:NIN	TALKING	NGARRINDJERI
YA:YIN	FOOD	NGARRINDJERI
YA:YIN	EATING	NGARRINDJERI
YACKA #	GRASSTREE (XANTHORRHOEA SPECIES)	ADELAIDE
YALKERI	BASKET MAKING GRASS, SPECIES OF	NGARRINDJERI
YALKURI	OLD MAN'S BEARD (CLEMATIS SPECIES)	NGARRINDJERI
YAMU	VAGINA	WEST COAST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA?
YANVA-MALTHI	CHATTERBOX; PERSON WHO SPEAKS ALL	NGARRINDJERI

	THE TIME	
YARAMIN	URINATE	NGARRINDJERI
YARAMIN-PULGi	TOILET	NGARRINDJERI
YELACUT	HONEYSUCKLE (BANKSIA ORNATA)	SOUTH EAST
YERT!	I AM JOKING	GENERAL ABORIGINAL?
YOLDI	SHAG; CORMORANT (VARIOUS SPECIES)	NGARRINDJERI
YULINTHUN	PULL DUCKS UNDER WATER	NGARRINDJERI
YUNGI	PUBIC HAIR	NGARRINDJERI
YUNTHIN	WADING IN WATER	NGARRINDJERI
YUPIN	SEXUAL INTERCOURSE	NGARRINDJERI?

11.3 The Sources of Ethnographic Data Used in this Thesis

This thesis utilises a wide range of information sources. The overview of landscape and culture change since European settlement relies on examination of published works such as regional histories, geographical and ecological surveys, journals and reminiscences of explorers and colonists, and some few specifically ethnographic reports. The unpublished sources used include archival materials such as missionary journals and anthropologists' notebooks. Other rich areas of information are reports in local newspapers, particularly for the 19th century, as well as the publications of Aboriginal people, which are chiefly limited to the 20th century. The use of such diverse sources, each with their own biases, poses a problem in dealing with their unequal reliability. The methodology was developed through a review of the landscape and culture literature in professional texts from the social and biological sciences. Notions of culture were derived from several disciplines, but predominantly from anthropology, geography, history, and sociology. An important part of a geographical study is a detailed description of the landscape. In the process of imposing order upon the geographic data obtained, a taxonomic approach was adopted. The following analysis evaluates the sources of ethnographic data as used in this thesis.

Evaluation of Quality and Completeness of Sources

In terms of Aboriginal ethnographic records, the Lower Murray region of South Australia is one of the most heavily studied geographic areas of Australia (Section 1.1, 1.2.3). At certain places for particular periods there are sufficient records to indicate changes in the physical environment and in the human population. Even so, for most localities for much of the time there remain vast gaps in the information available from written records (Fig.11.1). I assert that since the ethnographic data available are derived from a late stage in the interaction of Europeans and Aboriginal people (see Appendix 11.1), it is not possible to accurately and fully describe a pre-European cultural phase in southern South Australia. This thesis therefore starts with reconstructions of Aboriginal life in the early years of European settlement. The content and nature of the available literature is itself a cultural indicator of what was considered important to the European colonisers. For example, the official colonising attempts by Europeans in the 1830s and 1840s, and their perceived effects upon Aboriginal culture, are comparatively well recorded in the newspapers of the day and in the publications (in English) of German missionaries, such as C.G.
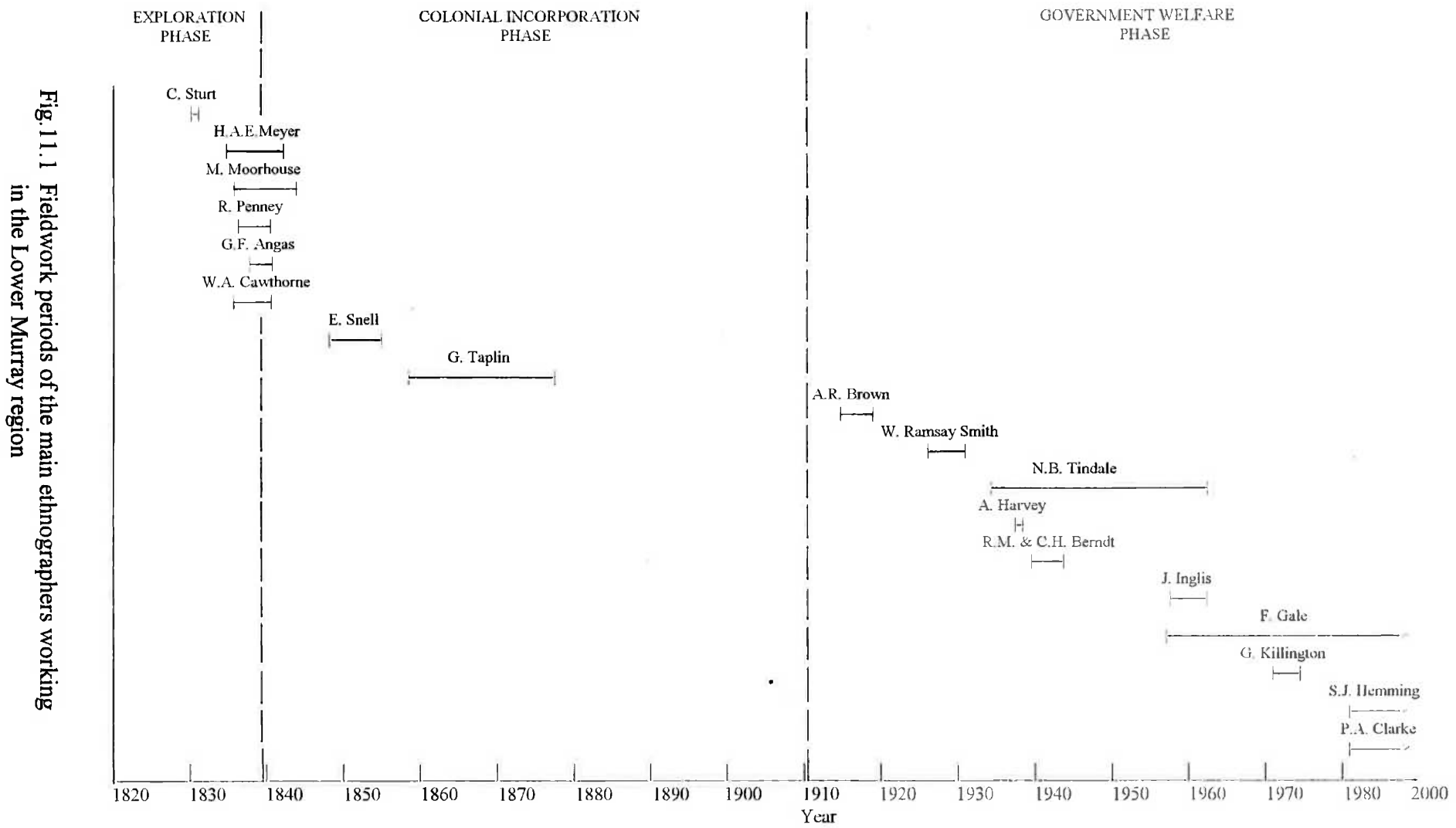
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Fig. 11.1 Fieldwork periods of the main ethnographers working in the Lower Murray region

Teichelmann, C.W. Schurmann and H.A.E. Meyer (Section 2.2.1). These studies demonstrated that the Aboriginal people of South Australia were not culturally monolithic. For the later establishment of the Point McLeay Mission on the shore of Lake Alexandrina there exist rich sources of information in the form of the Taplin journals (1859-1879), the Aborigines' Friends' Association records (from 1859 - see Jenkin, 1979), and archival photographs (from the 1860s - see Section 6.3). Nevertheless, the histories of Aboriginal and European interaction during the 19th century in the northern parts of the Lower Murray, at places such as Goolwa, Milang, Strathalbyn, Wellington and Murray Bridge, are relatively poorly known. There are also some significant gaps in the 20th century records, particularly concerning mission life between the proclamation of the Aborigines Act of 1911 and the National Referendum on Aboriginal citizenship in 1967. This thesis has been able to draw on recent oral accounts from local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to fill some of these later gaps. There are, however, limits in the use of all sources of data. Here I discuss these limitations, and the methods used to counter them in this study.

Missionary Views of Indigenous Cultures

The early German missionaries, as a group, were generally well trained in linguistics. Their records, for areas such as Eyre Peninsula, the Adelaide Plains, and the Lower Murray, are detailed studies of the local dialects from a time when these were spoken as first languages (Section 2.2.1, 2.4.4.3). The command of indigenous languages by the missionaries was deemed necessary to help in the Christian conversion of the 'heathens'. A high level of language comprehension, and considerable depth of vocabulary, was necessary for them in order to help communicate complex cultural ideas to the Aboriginal people. Their linguistic skills would therefore have been greater than those of most other settlers. The published works of missionaries are more than just vocabularies, with some general accounts of local manners and customs. Nevertheless, they are restricted to the function of understanding Aboriginal culture only in so far as it affected their practical work, rather than being an attempt at dissecting it in a scholarly fashion. These publications are the most detailed records of the early Aboriginal population available.

In a later period (1859 to 1879), the missionary G. Taplin also exhibited an interest in the Aboriginal language of the Lower Murray for the purposes of Christian teaching (Section 2.2.2). His linguistic work was built upon the records of Meyer, which he incorporated. Taplin's biblical translations illustrate the

spiritual imperative.[1] The daily entries in the Taplin journals show his struggle with the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal inhabitants of the region (Section 6.3.1-4). Taplin believed that there were Satanic forces at work within Aboriginal culture. In accordance with his Christian beliefs, he interpreted customs such as initiations, betrothals, mourning rituals, as practices that were firmly against the welfare of the Aboriginal population. He would not concede that these traits had any functional role in a broader culture. To describe the people who were considered to 'need' their spiritual and practical guidance as anything but in 'amoral' and 'primitive' terms was opposed to the missionary's interests.

Taplin also had a different role, as ethnographer, working as a collector of data for Northern Hemisphere scholars (Section 2.2.2). His publications were used simply as comparative studies which reflected the similarities and differences between various Aboriginal 'tribes' in South Australia.[2] However, I found his linguistic work to be generally inferior to that of Meyer, whose publications he heavily used to develop his own word lists (Section 6.3.1). Nevertheless, Taplin's religious biases are clearly indicated in his journals, and even given the fact that his published accounts were chiefly devoid of scholarly interpretation, his material is nevertheless a rich source of data. Although organised as daily entries, within the journal he records the movement of Aboriginal groups, mythology, religious beliefs and customs, and the occurrence of important cultural events in the region. This is particularly so for the early sections of his journal when much of what he observed of the Aboriginal inhabitants was new to him. Some of the Aboriginal people in the southern areas of the Lower Murray were still maintaining a hunting and gathering existence in his time (Section 6.3.3, 6.3.4, 6.3.8). He therefore provides a valuable and unique record of Aboriginal culture in the region during the second half of the 19th century.

Early Non-missionary Sources

Although missionaries dominated the 1830s and 1840s ethnographic period, there are some sources of information that can be used to cross check at least some of their data. In this context, G.F. Angas and W.A. Cawthorne are worthy of mention, particularly for their combined illustrated and written descriptions of early Aboriginal life in southern South Australia (Section 2.2.1; Figs 2.4, 2.5). Cawthorne's published accounts are particularly relevant to the Adelaide region. In the case of Angas, who was only a visitor to the colony, it is likely that much of his published information came from Cawthorne and G. Mason. For

instance, Cawthorne arranged painting sessions for Angas, and was his go-between with the Aboriginal

people about Adelaide.[3] In the case of Mason, he guided Angas in 1844 from his police station at

Wellington to the Lake Albert and Coorong region.[4] The smaller published records of R. Penney, an early

newspaper editor, and M. Moorhouse, Aboriginal Protector, provide additional contemporary material.[5]

From them we gain important insights into Aboriginal social structure as it began to be affected by

European settlement, as well as early numerical data on the distribution of the Aboriginal population. The

early published reports by R. Gouger (1838), T. Scott (1839) and G.B. Wilkinson (1848), which were

designed to encourage British immigration to South Australia, are significant for the same reason. They

provide some positive views about the role of Aboriginal people in the new colony. Although all these

sources are comparatively minor in volume, taken together they nevertheless provide the researcher with

the means to gain some balance against the missionary biases of Meyer and Taplin.

Regional Histories

The published histories fall into three general categories: first, those published by scholars as standard

records of the past; second, reminiscences written up to forty years after the events they describe; and third,

accounts written by local non-academic people that seek to record the distinctiveness of their area. The

main scholarly reference works of South Australian history, such as J. Blacket (1911), A.G. Price (1924),

and R.M. Gibbs (1969) provide a history of official colonial processes, such as the passing of significant

colonising acts in Great Britain, the exploration by government-sponsored expeditions, the surveying and

development of the land, and the legislative origins of government in the Colony of South Australia. As

shown in this thesis, they generally undervalue the contribution of Aboriginal people to this process during

what I term the Exploration Phase (1627-1839; see Chapter 5). As a record of the Colonial Incorporation

Phase (1839-1911; see Chapter 6), they are much more reliable. In relation to the Government Welfare

Phase (1911-present; see Chapter 6, 7), most historical sources ignore this later period. A few modern

historical studies, such as by R. Linn (1988) and J.M. Nunn (1989), tend to be more balanced with respect

to the treatment of class and race. Nevertheless, they are generally the exceptions, with most historical texts

concentrating on charting the progress of the dominant culture.

The reminiscences of A. Tolmer (1882), J.W. Bull (1884), S. Newland (1889, 1921, 1922), R.T. Sweetman (1928), and G.G. Hackett (1915), provide records of the past by those with first hand experience. However, the reader must always allow for the fact that these are essentially memories of what was perceived as important in retrospect, rather than relatively non-reflective contemporary reports. For this reason, the published journals of, for example, C. Sturt (1833), D.M. Hahn (1838 - 1839), E. Snell (1849 - 1859), and E. Davies (1881), are more reliable for accounts of relatively mundane things, such as where people camped, what plant and animal foods were gathered, how they were dressed, and some Aboriginal language terms. This is because they were compiled from diaries written at the time of the events. Nevertheless, writers invariably bring their own personalities into their accounts. For instance, Sturt was concerned with topographic factors influencing the establishment of a colony, whereas from Hahn, Snell and Davies we get more of an impression of the nature of colonial life for Aboriginal people from the cultural perspective of each author.

Accounts supplied by non-academic historians tend to be more local in scope. Although many of these are poorly written and lack any central focus beyond loosely recording the character of their region, they are often rich sources of incidental information. Many are basically the product of oral history, with the author interviewing the oldest members of the community. This thesis has made use of data from a number of local histories of this type, such as J.P. Bellchambers (1931), A. Ostercock (1975), J. Cameron (1979), W. Reschke (1985), T. McCourt and H. Mincham (1987), and E.L. Padman (1987). Although I do not necessarily support the conclusions about Aboriginal culture that some of these authors have produced, I nevertheless utilise their raw data wherever appropriate.

Newspaper Articles

During the 19th century, many of the writings by ethnographers such as Teichelmann, Schurmann, Meyer, Taplin and E.J. Eyre, were published in condensed or serial form in the popular newspapers of the day. During the early 20th century, Tindale and Mountford also published material in newspapers. These I have found to be important overviews of their published and unpublished research. The Aboriginal Newspaper Indexes housed in the Aboriginal Heritage Branch of the Department of Environment and Planning[6] were a valuable aid in locating relevant articles in the main Adelaide-based papers of last century, such as the

<u>Register</u> and <u>Observer</u>. The Newspaper Cutting Books in the Anthropology Archives of the South Australian Museum provided additional material from magazines and interstate papers. Since most of these newspapers existed before modern media or photocopying, they were in their time major literary sources that informed the public about Aboriginal culture. Therefore, their content and possible effects upon the attitudes and knowledge of the wider society must be considered significant. For instance, a scan of newspaper accounts of Aboriginal life on mission settlements during the 1960s and 1970s reveals a public view that the Point Pearce community was achieving a higher level of 'assimilation' than were the Point McLeay people. To this perception I attribute the more favourable treatment that welfare authorities in that period gave Point Pearce people with respect to re-settlement in Adelaide (Section 6.3.8, 7.2.3, 7.4.1, 8.6.3). Some of the reminiscences of early colonists that are recorded in the papers exist in no other form. Although such accounts from lay people are often filled with anthropological errors, they remain a good indicator of public opinion on Aboriginal issues. More recent articles in regional papers, such as the <u>Lakelander</u>, were obtained through scanning microfilm copies in the library. Local issues, which concerned Aboriginal people, were often reported in the major newspapers of the city.

Anthropological Accounts

In the Lower Murray region, Aboriginal marginalisation from the early 20th century was partly brought about by the break-up of the pastoral stations in favour of closer settlement (Section 6.2.3, 6.3.8; see Appendix 11.1). In addition to the effect of this, the <u>Aborigines Act</u> of 1911 further segregated Aboriginal people from the rest of community (Section 6.4.2). As Aboriginal people in this region were as a consequence firmly within the grip of the welfare state, no longer free to move about in their previous patterns, it is not surprising that the study of their culture was neglected for many years. An exception was the kinship study of A.R. Brown (1918). During the 1930s, N.B. Tindale, A. Harvey, and R.M. and C.H. Berndt took this further, recording the mythology and social structure of the pre-European past (Section 2.2.3).[7] Female anthropologists, Alison Harvey and Catherine Berndt, were able to focus upon the role of gender in perceptions of the landscape and culture.[8] During the 1940s and 1950s, Tindale and the Berndts published studies of the processes of Aboriginal assimilation into the European population.[9] Tindale's approach was essentially biological while the Berndts looked at more culturally determined processes of

change. Although their methodologies differed, these researchers all failed to fully account for the elements of pan-Aboriginality in their works. Tindale too readily treated groups of mixed descent people as culturally 'assimilated' to the European way of life, whereas the Berndts unquestioningly accepted the world view of their most knowledgeable informants as being culturally pre-European. After these writers, more sociological-orientated studies by J. Inglis, F. Gale and G.M. Killington followed (Section 2.2.4). However, these were more concerned with modern situations of Aboriginal people as victims, rather than being overly concerned with the possibility of new cultural forms derived from 'indigenous' cultures. I assert that there are no 'higher' categories of ethnographic data commanding automatic priority of credibility, such as that collected by social anthropologists in relation to historical sources, as all information has its own biases. Furthermore, I demonstrate that even within the Aboriginal cultural bloc of the Lower Murray, there has always been considerable variation in cultural beliefs (see Chapter 3).

Aboriginal Sources

There is a wealth of material published by Aboriginal people from the Lower Murray region about their own culture and history. This is due in part to the prominence of these people in Adelaide-based Aboriginal affairs (Section 7.4). The artwork published by I. Abdulla (1993) provides a view of Aboriginal life along the Murray River (Section 8.5). The poetry of M. Brusnahan (1992) illustrates the importance of places, such as Raukkan, to every Lower Murray person regardless of where they live. Life stories of significant Aboriginal people also appear in the literature.[10] The genealogical works of D. Kartinyeri also provide insights into Aboriginal views of their own identity.[11] The publication by L. Cameron-Bonney (1990) focuses on her Coorong and western Victorian background, and relates historic and pre-European aspects of the greater region. These people 'read their country' in terms of their own 'mission' history, with less stress placed upon 'Dreaming' tracks in the region.

In order to study the unique elements of Aboriginal culture in southern South Australia, in relation to other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups, this thesis relies to a large extent on my own field work. Throughout this thesis, I refer to information I myself have gathered from Aboriginal people as being derived from 'informants'. In the early part of my fieldwork, a museum co-worker, Steve Hemming, and I made sound tapes of interviews with particular, elderly, Aboriginal people considered to be knowledgeable

informants by the community and/or us. This was similar in approach to R. Baker's research in northern Australia (Baker, 1989). However, I found that tapes as a field technique and as a source of information concerning aspects of contemporary culture, such as links to land, identity, and world view, are generally very poor. This is largely because of the formality that such interview sessions bring about. Often, such tapes record highly idealised views of the past, with exaggerations of both the good and bad elements for an outside audience. Also, due to factors of 'shame' and disempowerment, the information gathered from these interviews is often largely framed by the presence of the interviewers. Although this method has some advantage when visits, due to field work time restrictions, are necessarily brief, after trying it out I largely rejected this particular method of obtaining information. I preferred to gain data as a relatively passive participant, in less structured situations when the relaying of 'information' just happens, rather than being related to me in circumstances constructed by myself as an outsider. I have been able to adopt this strategy because of a number of factors. First, the relative proximity of the Lower Murray community to Adelaide enabled frequent field work. Second, there are now a large number of Ngarrindjeri people who live in the city whom I could contact. And thirdly, I have close personal and work-related links to this extended community. Wherever practical, I use perceptual insights gained from the culture itself.

When writing this thesis, I decided that, except in some rare cases where individuals were widely known within the Lower Murray community for their 'ownership' of certain accounts, all oral sources of ethnographic data should remain anonymous. Although this appears to be an intellectual appropriation on my part, it was clear that this was necessary for several reasons. Much of the information I have used, such as in the discussion of welfare (Chapter 7) and contemporary use of the physical environment (Chapter 8), was gathered informally as a consequence of my participation and observation. To acknowledge particular persons in the reconstruction of this narrative would, I believe, involve an infringement of individual privacy. This would not only cause what Aboriginal people would describe as 'shame', but could draw unwanted outside attention to particular Aboriginal people. Another serious consequence of linking certain names to particular data would be the possibility of subjecting those concerned to community strictures. Often, there is a perception that only certain people in the community have the rights to speak on certain matters. Also, for topics, such as family history and the interpretation of the past, there are many equally valid versions which people on occasion argue about. Much of the knowledge I gained was on the

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assumption held by the informants that I would not acknowledge the extent and nature of their exact

contribution. The giving and receiving of information occurs only in certain situations. I was taught by

members of the Aboriginal community to learn by listening, not asking too many questions, respecting the

'old people', and through participation as an insider. I have acknowledged my debt to people who had a

significant impact upon my fieldwork in the Acknowledgment section of this thesis. Because of the breadth

and long period of time of my fieldwork, it is not possible to fully and personally acknowledge everyone.

[1]   Taplin, G. 1864. 'Lessons, Hymns and Prayers for the Native School at Point McLeay in the Language of the Lakes Tribes of Aborigines, called the Narrinyeri.' Aborigines' Friends' Association, Adelaide. Taplin, G. 1874. 'Native Book of Worship.' Strathalbyn, South Australia.

[2]   This is evident in Taplin's 'Comparative table of words selected from 43 Aboriginal languages' (1879, pp.142-159), as well as in his questionnaire approach of obtaining data from other parts of South Australia (1879).

[3]   For a discussion of the relationship between Cawthorne and Angas, see Djuwita, R. 1991. 'W.A. Cawthorne and Early Adelaide: an Artist's Impressions.' BA Honours thesis, Department of Prehistory and Anthropology, Australian National University, Canberra, pp.35-37.

[4]   A summary of the various expeditions in South Australia by Angas is provided by Tregenza, J. 1982. 'George French Angas. Artist, Traveller and Naturalist 1822 - 1886.' Art Gallery Board of South Australia, Adelaide, pp.8-10.

[5]   Penney's newspaper writings in the South Australian Magazine from 1842-1843, that concern the Lower Murray landscape, have been republished (J. Anth. Soc. S. Aust., 1991, vol.29, pt 1, pp.27-88). Clarke (1991b) reviews the anthropological significance of this account. Moorhouse's 'Annual Report of the Aborigines Department for the Year Ending 30th September 1843' was republished recently (J. Anth. Soc. S. Aust., 1990, vol.28, pt 1, pp.54-62).

[6]   In 1993 this unit was transferred to the Department of State Aboriginal Affairs. Early in 1994, as a part of public service restructuring, the unit lost much of its corporate identity as most of its staff left and the rest being absorbed into the mainstream of the Department.

[7]   Tindale's publications concerning the Lower Murray region are numerous (1935, 1937a, 1938, 1940, 1941b, 1974, 1981, 1987; Tindale & Pretty, 1980), and are associated with a large archive of notebooks and manuscripts in the South Australian Museum. Harvey (1939, 1943) was particularly interested in the mythology of the Lower Murray. Although the Berndts' fieldwork in the Lower Murray region took place during the 1940s, the main ethnography was not published until relatively recently (Berndt, R.M. & C.H., with Stanton, J., 1993).

[8]   For a female perspective upon Lower Murray culture, see Harvey (1939) and C. Berndt (1981, 1982).

[9]   Tindale's (1941a) human biological work on 'half castes' can be seen as a plea to the government for a slackening of the laws which inhibited Aboriginal and European socialisation. The Berndts' (1951) book, 'From Black to White in South Australia', the title of which hints at its subject matter, is essentially concerned with 'detribalisation'.

[10]   Gilbert (1978), Ely (1980), Mattingley & Hampton (1988), Grace (1990), & Rankine (1991).

[11]   Kartinyeri (1983, 1985, 1989a, 1989b, 1989c, 1990). Also see Section 7.4.3.