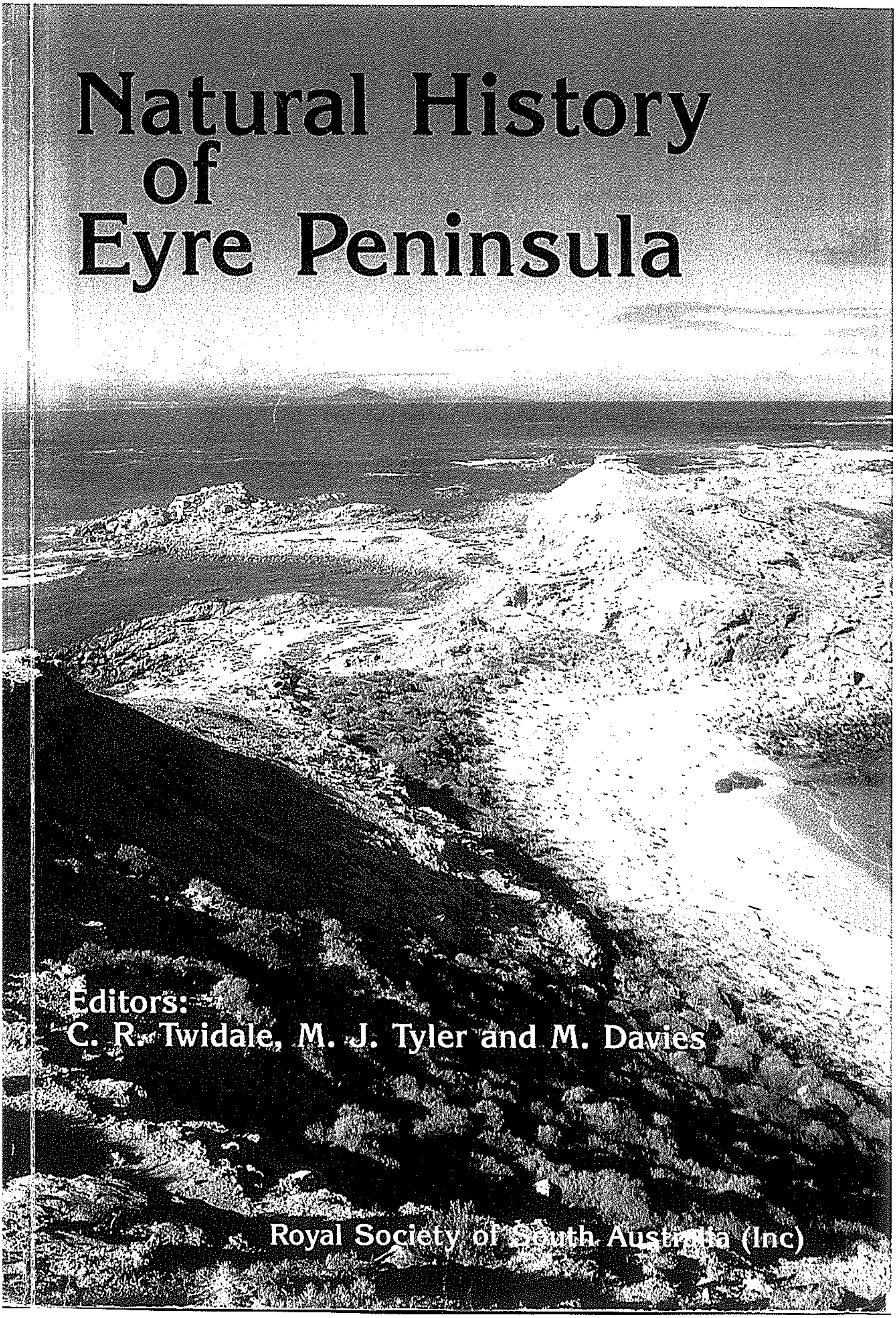

Natural History of Eyre Peninsula

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10: Traditional Aborigines

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INTRODUCTION

Most of the information about the traditional culture of the people who originally occupied the Eyre Peninsula has disappeared entirely. Some people of Aboriginal descent still living identify themselves as belonging to at least two of the groups to which I shall refer—Gugada (Kukata), and Banggala (Pangkala). However, to learn something about the earlier socio-cultural life of the Eyre Peninsula people it is necessary to seek early sources. The most useful of these are the works of C. W. Schürmann, who first published on the Port Lincoln people in 1844, and of G. F. Angas (1847), who relied heavily on Schürmann The information is sparse; it is not based on systematic anthropological enquiry, and is often misleading. In the circumstances, it has to be interpreted in the light of more recent research in other parts of Aboriginal Australia. Fortunately, the historical accounts contain enough clues to make reasonably satisfactory interpretations possible.

The area demonstrates graphically the movement of members of various language units as 'cultural carriers'. The evidence points to a situation of territorial flexibility, especially apparent in regard to the Gugada, as contrasted with Tindale's (1974) insistence that there were normally clear-cut 'tribal' boundaries. This flexibility was certainly encouraged through early European settlement, which succeeded in dispersing local groups, but also provoked the movement of others who were not at that time so directly affected. It would seem, too, that speakers of Western Desert languages were entering this area well before European settlement.

My own interest in this region stems from having worked in 1939, 1940 and 1942 with Ngadjuri and Dieri men who had some knowledge of Banggala culture. In 1941 I obtained information on the Wirangu, and met some Gugada men, during field research at Ooldea.

THE LANGUAGE GROUP

Morehouse (in Taplin 1879) estimated the Aboriginal population of Port Lincoln at 400 in 1852; Taplin, however, questioned that figure, believing it to be higher; so did Eyre (1845). Poonindie mission station was established, and when the Adelaide Aboriginal school closed down in 1852 some of the children there, as well as young men and women, were transferred to the peninsula. By 1853 three 'grown-up' girls had 'married' local Aborigines, and the remaining boys and girls had 'fled to their bush relatives' (Hitchen 1859, Berndt & Berndt 1951). During this period, many Aborigines were still following a semi-nomadic life-style. On the basis of what we know of Aborigines in other areas during initial contact, it seems that the overall Aboriginal population of Eyre Peninsula did not exceed 2,000 persons.

Schürmann concentrated on the Banggala (Parnkalla); so did Wilhelmi (1861). According to Tindale (1974), Banggala country extended as far south as Franklin Harbour, then to Tumby Bay and into Port Lincoln with the establishment of European settlement; he mentions two divisions of this group. On their south he identified the Nauo as a separate group, but claimed that Banggala pressures had caused the Nauo to contract to the southwest. Schürmann (1879) seems to suggest that the Nauo were closely linked linguistically to the Banggala: for instance, that 'the Parnkalla dialect' resembled 'the Nauo language' although many words differed. One is reminded of the dialectal variations in north-eastern Arnhem Land, or the 'language' entities that traditionally made up the so-called 'Narrinyeri' constellation of the lower River Murray. Information on cultural differences between Nauo and Banggala is, unfortunately, lacking, except that according to Angas (1847) the Nauo land of the dead was on islands in Spencer Gulf, while the Banggala located theirs on islands to the west, probably out from Coffin Bay Peninsula. But just what particular islands is not clear. If that information is correct, it could imply considerable movement and displacement of local groups prior to European contact. Howitt (1904) wrote of the Nauo or Willuro 'tribe'. This last word probably indicates direction (*wilurara*, a Western Desert word, or *wilyura* meaning west). Tindale (1974) says *wiljaru* is a Banggala word meaning 'westerners'. On the other hand, whether or not the Nauo originally occupied the western area of the Peninsula or were forced in that direction by the Banggala, the word *wilyura* or *willuro* could well have referred to the *wilyaru* ritual (see hereunder), which was central to Banggala and presumably to Nauo religious life. Interestingly, Bryant (1879) noted that the 'tribe' inhabiting the Gawler Ranges was called 'Willeuroo' and its ritual as '*willieroo*'.

On the northwestern side of the Peninsula were the Wirangu, on the coast south of the transcontinental railroad, roughly south of Ooldea and eastward to a little south of Streaky Bay (see Tindale 1974). They had experienced pressures from Western Desert people moving southward. Howitt (1904) had placed them wrongly, and used the names Tidni and Hilleri in the area where they had traditionally been located. Richards (1879) said the Tidni were at Fowlers Bay; but Tindale (1974) points out that both of these are Banggala and Gwiani (Kuyani) names for the Wirangu.

The Gugada (Kokata, Kukatha; *guga*, or *kuka*, variously spelt, means 'meat') were called Kukata by Schürmann (1879), who said they came from the north-west of the Peninsula and had a reputation for ferocity and for using sorcery. People at Ooldea in 1941 (Berndt & Berndt 1942) spoke of them as cannibals, whose white (grey) hair was a result of having intercourse with menstruating women. Provis (1879) reported similarly about the Gugada: the 'prevailing opinion' when he wrote was that they were cannibals before European settlement—but he had the grace to say that he doubted whether they actually engaged in this practice. However, he reported that menstruating women were segregated, and that if they were to remain in the same hut as a man, or men, the men would become grey-headed. Prior to 1878 (Provis 1879), Gugada were occupying country between Venus Bay and Point Brown, along the coast and inland to the Gawler Ranges; but he also said they were not restricted to that area and frequently came into Port Lincoln and Fowlers Bay. Tindale (1974), for example, writes of the Gugada (Kokata in his spelling) as occupying the Gawler Ranges, and claims that the term Ngannityiddi (Nganidjidi) mentioned by Schürmann (1879) was used by Nauo and Banggala speakers to indicate the Gugada propensity for sorcery.

According to the available information, then, while the Gugada traditionally came as far south as the north-western end of the Gawler Ranges and to at least part of Lake Gairdner, they were also spreading from the north-west into Eyre Peninsula prior to 1850 (Fig. 1). The evidence dealt with in this paper suggests that culturally, if not socially, they virtually overwhelmed, especially, the Wirangu, and were certainly making inroads into both Banggala and Nauo territories. On the northeastern side of the Peninsula, the Banggala were being forced southward to take over Nauo land. The Wirangu, essentially not a Western Desert population, had been forced southward by expanding Desert groups. While the Nauo were obviously influenced by (if not culturally akin to) the Banggala, it is tempting to speculate that the Wirangu and Nauo were protohistorically the original inhabitants of a large part of the Peninsula. The Banggala belonged culturally to the lakes Eyre and Torrens groups (that is, middle north and northeast Lakes people of South Australia). They traditionally occupied the northeastern sector of the Peninsula. Information on, and from, the Wirangu and Nauo is very sparse indeed. That in itself is not a criterion of importance, of course: for a non-literate people in a colonial situation, the chances of having anything of their culture 'preserved' in writing were mixed, and quite variable. Nevertheless, on the face of the evidence available to us today, we must conclude that at the time of early European settlement on the Eyre Peninsula the two dominant Aboriginal socio-cultural systems were Banggala and Gugada.

SOCIAL RELATIONS

Surviving members of the once spatially extensive Wirangu language group, some of whom I met at Ooldea in 1941, were far too heavily influenced by Western Desert culture to be able to separate out their basic social categories and kinship terms. They did, however, make it clear that they regarded themselves as being different from the Western Desert people. Howitt (1904) is of no help to us in this direction. Daisy Bates (1918) supplied a Wirangu (Wirongu) vocabulary which includes a number of Western Desert words, although there are just as many that I am unable to identify, even allowing for dialectal variation. Her kin term listing conforms closely with Elkin's (1939) for the Gugada, while his comparative table (1940) demonstrates a number of differences which, again, are not of Western Desert derivation. According to Elkin (1939), the Wirangu (who in 1930 were said by him to number about 40) had alternate-generation, Desert-type categories named *kudarataga* (covering persons of one's own generation level, and those of one's grandparents and grandchildren) and *tarbuda* (covering

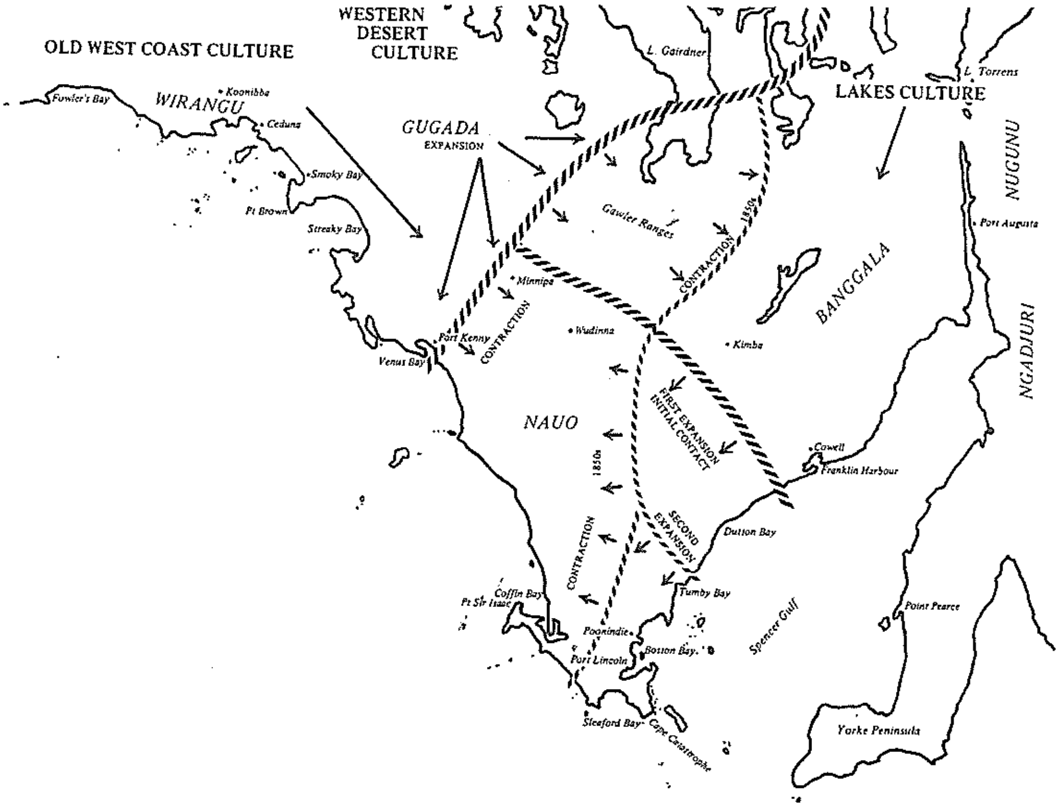
OLD WEST COAST CULTURE
WESTERN DESERT CULTURE
LAKES CULTURE
L. Gairdner
L. Torrens
WIRANGU
Koonibba
Fowler's Bay
Ceduna
Smoky Bay
Pt Brown
Streaky Bay
GUGADA
EXPANSION
Gawler Ranges
1850s
CONTRACTION
Minnipa
Port Kenny
Venus Bay
CONTRACTION
Wudinna
Kimba
BANGGALA
NUGUNU
Port Augusta
NGADJURI
NAUO
FIRST EXPANSION
INITIAL CONTACT
1850s
Cowell
Franklin Harbour
SECOND EXPANSION
Dutton Bay
CONTRACTION
Tumby Bay
Coffin Bay
Pt Sir Isaac
Poonindie
Port Lincoln
Boston Bay
Spencer Gulf
Point Pearce
Sleaford Bay
Cape Catastrophe
Yorke Peninsula

Fig. 1. Expansion and contraction of Aboriginal groups on Eyre Peninsula at the time of early European settlement.

persons of one's parents, great-grandparents, and children's generation levels); each category was endogamous; that is, the rule was marriage within categories, not between people in different categories. The kinship system was also of Desert type (Elkin 1939). So are the Gugada alternate-generation levels and kinship system, discussed by Elkin (1939). At the time he wrote, the Gugada (Kukata) had been considerably depleted and numbered about 40 adults. However, from the perspective of Ooldea in 1941 that figure was much higher. The system was similar to that of the Andingari (Antakarinya) at Ooldea (Berndt & Berndt 1981), with only some slight terminological variations. Provis (1879) provided a short list of kin terms. While this bears some resemblance to Elkin's and the Berndts' material, there are major differences, which could perhaps indicate misunderstandings on Provis's part.

Essentially, the Gugada system utilizes a minimal number of terms to classify consanguineal and affinal kin; two in the grandparents and grandchildren's generation levels; and two in the parents' and children's generation levels, expanded to four where an avoidance relationship is implied. Ideally, a man was expected to marry a daughter of one of his mother's cross-cousins (her mother's brother's sons) and/or a daughter of one of his father's cross-cousins (his mother's brother's daughters); he would call such a prospective spouse *guri* (at Ooldea) or *waia*. From a female's perspective, she married a man who was ideally a son of one of her father's cross-cousins (his father's sister's daughters) and/or a son of one of her mother's cross-cousins (her father's sister's sons). A man or woman's cross-cousins, respectively, were regarded as being equivalent to siblings (Elkin 1939).

In the Banggala pattern, two exogamous ('marrying out') matrilineal moieties, *materi* and *gararu*, were important in all social contexts. Schürmann (1879) called them *mattiri* and *karraru*; Bryant (1879), *mathery* and *cariero*, regarding them as 'clans'; while Howitt (1904) called them *matthurie* and *kirarawa*. We can assume that each moiety was associated with several matrilineal 'totemic clans'. For instance, the

Ngadjuri (north of Adelaide), to the east of the Banggala, traditionally had matrilineal social groups, each associated with a natural species.

The Banggala system of kin terminology resembled that of the Wailpi (east of Lake Torrens), with some variations in local usage. According to Elkin (1938a), matri- and/or patri-cross-cousin marriage was traditionally the norm. It is obvious that the Banggala belonged to mainstream middle-northern social organizational patterning. While undoubtedly they were under direct pressure from Gugada intrusion, there is little evidence of this in their structural alignments. The case was very different, as we have seen, in regard to the Wirangu, where a process of incorporation had taken place.

The historical material provides little or no information about the territorial organization of the large-scale language units. Traditionally, the Gugada conformed more or less to the Western Desert pattern, which focused on small patrilineal local territorial descent groups having mythic associations with particular sites. On the other hand, the Banggala were solidly of 'Lake Eyre Basin' type: 'social' clans were matrilineal and 'ritual' clans were patrilineal, and the latter were directly linked to territory. It is not my intention here to go into any detail in regard to social organization. Nevertheless, according to my information, while a distinction was drawn between 'social' and 'ritual' clans, both were in fact social and both were ritual: the demarcation that has been made in the literature seems to have been based on a matter of emphasis. Two different terms were used (for example, as among the Dieri: see Berndt 1953): a man or woman possessed 'cult' (or ritual) mythic-natural species ('totemic') designations from father *and* mother; and that from a father was patrilineally inherited, but that from a person's mother was not passed on to his or her children. It would be more correct to speak of the former as social and the latter as personal. A man shared in the ritual manifestations of his mother's 'clan', but his primary religious commitment was to his father's 'clan'—and it was predominantly through this that the linkage with land was established.

ECONOMIC ADAPTATION

Except perhaps for the Gugada, the people of the region wore cloaks of kangaroo, possum and/or wallaby skin, especially in cold weather, turned fur-side outward during rain. Such cloaks were smaller than those worn originally by the Adelaide people, and the best of them were used by women in order to protect their small children (Schürmann 1879). Head- and waist-bands were commonly worn by men, who often placed a dingo's tail around the forehead or attached the tip of an animal's tail to their beards. In hot weather, men and women smeared their bodies with fat and ochres, or with soot from burnt grass-trees.

Weapons differed from those commonly used by Western Desert Aborigines. Hooked spears were for hunting land animals, short ones for fishing, and women had multi-purpose digging sticks. Various hunting and food-collecting techniques are mentioned in the early literature. For instance, men would surround shoals of fish in shallow waters and go spear-fishing by torchlight; they also used long thin boomerangs (*wadna*), which were not carried around but left at particular fishing places and used only for that purpose. Mountford (1939) described stone fish traps at Dutton Bay.

Men and women carried about with them what Schürmann (1879) called a *nurti* (or 'knapsack'), the larger ones belonging to women. They were made of skin or of net when they were lined with dry grass. Men carried theirs under the left arm with cords slung across the shoulder; women suspended theirs at their backs, secured by a band across the breasts. Schürmann provides a catalogue of what a man's *nurti* usually contained. Apart from weapons, there were a shell drinking-vessel, a wooden scoop (for roasting roots), a round stone (for breaking animal bones), quartz knives with handles, ochres, sinew, bone needles, sharpened bones (for peeling roots), tufts of feathers (for decoration), beard tips, string fibre, spear-barbs, and so forth, along with food.

Food was divided into two categories: *mai* (vegetables and plants) and *baru* (all other foods, including meat). Not all varieties of fish were eaten, and not oysters, shell-fish or mushrooms. The only roots not cooked were those of the grass-tree. These, as well as pig's-face (*karkalla*) in season, were collected in large quantities. Termite-mound grubs were scooped up in handfuls and the 'rubbish' mixed up with them winnowed through a rounded bark receptacle (called *yuta*, and described by Schürmann, 1879). One vegetable, the *nondo* bean, which grew prolifically on the sandhills, was highly prized by people living at Coffin and Sleaford Bays. Large numbers of them would assemble in early summer to collect and eat *nondo*. Gugada people were reported to have threatened to burn or otherwise destroy this resource 'to aggravate their adversaries'. This statement is revealing, because it means that Gugada not only came down to the farthest part of the Peninsula but were regarded as intruders. Moreover, the threat suggests that they themselves were not attracted to this particular food resource.

Generally, a fairly wide range of *mai* and *baru* was available, too many to discuss in detail. The local Aborigines seem to have been reasonably well adapted to their environment, and were selective in their choice of foods. The relatively harsh winter period was offset by their constructing more substantial living quarters and protecting themselves from the cold and wet through the plentiful use of furs. Moreover, what they carried round in the *nurti* gave them ready access to essential equipment for everyday purposes.

Associated with food resources and their use—apart from questions as to when and where they were collected, by whom and how they were prepared, and the particular regulations and obligations which prevailed—there were what Schürmann (1879) called charms or 'imprecations'. These were used to 'remove the game from common use'—bringing it into a ritual context, or making it sacred. Moreover, there were age and sex-linked restrictions on the eating of particular foods. For instance, bandicoots should not be eaten by young men and women, on the grounds that doing so would discolour the beards of youths, or induce premature menstruation for girls. On the other hand, goanna and lizard meat was said to accelerate maturity, while snake meat would ensure that females were fertile.

MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

I have already mentioned the dominant ideal marriage types which probably applied in this area. However, with Gugada intrusion on one hand and the expansion of alien settlement on the other, together with the introduction of non-local Aborigines at Poonindie, adherence to a distinctive traditional custom would have become increasingly difficult. Nevertheless, it should have been possible to maintain the rules of marriage within one's own generation level (as with the Gugada and the Western Desert people) and moiety exogamy (as with the Banggala), long after actual contact with Europeans.

Schürmann's material, as noted, mainly referred to the Banggala. Both he and Provis mentioned polygyny (three wives being usual, rarely more), and pre-puberty betrothal for girls. It was usual, too, for a first wife to resist her husband's acquisition of a second or a third. Schürmann (1879) also mentioned 'wife-lending'. A distinction was drawn between 'own' wife or wives (*yungara*, Banggala: *yunga* Elkin 1938) and *karteti*, this last term referring to women over whom a man had a 'secondary claim, by right of brotherhood'. Provis, however, spelt *karteti* as *kurdet-thi* and said it meant a 'future wife'—that is, one who actually was or would be betrothed. Howitt (1904) took up this point and (quoting Schürmann) identified this marital arrangement as a manifestation of the Dieri *pirrauru* (*pirauru*), which he saw as a form of 'group marriage'. I do not intend to expand on this aspect here, since it has been the subject of much discussion and controversy over the years, especially during the early period of Anthropology. Elkin (1938b) referred to this custom as being relevant to the Wirangu. However, looking at the available information on the Wirangu, it does not seem to me that this identification can be made. That aside, the Banggala example conforms with the Lake Eyre Basin language groups—but, in this case, *not* as 'group marriage'. Rather, this is a straightforward case of institutionalized wife-husband exchange, on a temporary basis, between 'brothers' who are categorized as such in actual or classificatory terms.

There is little detailed information on relations between husbands and wives. Husbands were said to be jealous when their wives engaged in extra-marital affairs without first seeking their approval. Most quarrels were said to have arisen from 'women not conducting themselves as they should do, or are often unreasonably required to do' (Schürmann 1879); from children quarrelling or hurting each other, which could cause conflict between their respective parents; and when food had not been equitably distributed according to kin obligations.

The number of children reared by a woman would not have exceeded four; and it was essential that their births be adequately spaced to ensure that no more than one child was suckled at the same time. This was taken (by Schürmann and others) to mean that some children were killed at birth, but the frequency and range of this practice were not discussed. Children were named according to whether they were first or second born, and so on, a custom that was common among the Ngadjuri and other groups in the vicinity of Spencer Gulf and northward. Provis, however (1879), said they were also named after the place at which they were born. Since he is referring to the Gugada, this implies a child's association with a particular site (within a specific stretch of country) with mythic and ritual implications. On the other hand, the Banggala, apart from naming a child according to birth-order, had a personal naming procedure which took place during the initiation period (see below). Generally, at birth, a necklet consisting of a long tassel of possum fur twine was fastened round a child's neck and not removed until he or she could walk. This had its parallel in the Western Desert, where a similar ornament contained a child's umbilical cord.

RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION

Surprisingly, although the early literature is deficient in so many respects, in the sphere of religion it is quite detailed and, what is more, conforms with information from later field research. For convenience, I refer to two aspects: mythology and initiation.

Mythology:

The Marrlye, called by Schürmann (1879) a 'fiendish monster', was manifested in bird form and was responsible for eating the hearts of people at night or doing them some serious injury. No mark was left on its victim to show what had been done, and the suggestion was that this was really sorcery performed by Gugada. On the other hand, Howitt (1904), referring to the Yerkla-mining (that is, the Mirning of Tindale), said that a great bird devoured all the people excepting three men and one woman, and that this was apparently a myth connected with circumcision. He also noted that the 'tribe at Fowlers Bay adjoins the Mirning, and at certain times of the year the two tribes have a ceremonial meeting'. This would probably refer to the Wirangu, and during such a meeting initiation rituals would be held. Under these circumstances, it is likely that the story of the Marrlye could be transmitted to groups farther south. But the Ngadjuri, too, told of a huge mythic spirit-creature which they called *mirlgi*. In this case, its bird-like qualities were not emphasized.

Another such being said to be found in great numbers was Purkabidni, a giant who killed human beings with his club.

The myths were of a different order. Schürmann recorded five of them (1879), and two of these (3 and 4) were also mentioned by Angas (1847). I summarize these in my own words.

1. Pulyallana named many localities in the southern and western parts of the Peninsula. His two wives left him, taking their children. In a rage he followed them, and eventually found them at Cape Catastrophe (on the southern point of what is now the Lincoln National Park), and killed them. Their bodies were metamorphosed there as rocks and islands: their breathing and groaning can still be heard, in a cave into which the sea rushes underground. Pulyallana himself went into the sky at or near Puyundu (Cape Sir Isaac) at Coffin Bay, where he became Lightning and Thunder man because of his anger. From the sky, he throws his clubs earthward, causing lightning strikes. When he first did this, he always struck down circumcision novices. But the ancestors persuaded him instead to hit sheoak trees. The lightning results from Pulyallana jerking open his legs in his spasms of anger.

2. Kupirri, a large red kangaroo (such kangaroos not being found in the Port Lincoln district at that time), was so large that no one could catch him. Instead, Kupirri ate all the persons who attempted to spear him. Eventually two renowned hunters, Pilla and Indya, found his tracks on the range stretching to the north, near Port Lincoln. They followed these and came upon him asleep at Mt Nilarro. They threw one spear after another, hitting Kupirri until their spears were blunt; but he remained alive. In frustration, the two men quarrelled and fought. Pilla hit his companion all over his body with the blunted spears, while Indya hit the other's nose with his spearthrower. Eventually, resolving their argument, they turned their attention again to Kupirri and this time killed him dead. When they cut him open, they found within him all the people he had swallowed. The two men revived them, cut up the kangaroo, cooked it and feasted on its flesh. Then they went in search of their wives and relatives, who were mourning their death. Later the two men turned into possum and native cat, each bearing the marks that were inflicted on them during their fight.

3. A large fire emerged from the western ocean and spread along the coast between Coffin and Sleaford Bays. The fire was so severe that it threatened to extend inland across the country. Two men, Marnpi and Tatta, decided that the only way to extinguish it was to 'bury it'. They set to work and covered the fire with a long line of white sandhills (which Flinders mistakenly identified as white cliffs) between the two bays.

4. A great fighter named Curlew (Welu) sought Nauo women by trickery. However, he was foiled in this, and in revenge he speared all Nauo men except for two young men, Karatantya and Yangkunu (two different kinds of hawk; but probably the latter is *junguna*, or *yunguna*, a white cockatoo: see Bates 1918). In fear, these two men climbed up into the higher branches of a tree. When Welu came after them and stood on a bough, stretching out to reach them, the two men broke it so that Curlew fell to the ground injured. A camp dog found and killed him, whereupon he 'turned into' a curlew bird. The other two remained in the tree where they became birds.

5. Two mythic lizards, Ibirri a male and Waka a female, were credited with demarcating

between the sexes in physical terms. In a traditional, non-mythic context, Aboriginal men killed *waka* lizards, and women killed *ibirri* lizards. Schürmann saw this as representing a symbolic expression of antagonism between men and women.

These myths provide an example of local mythology which purports to explain particular natural phenomena and why things are as they appear to be, but the sample is too small to go further than this. They seem to be distinctively Banggala and/or Nauo. In the second and fourth, parallels could be drawn with Western Desert mythology; but, except perhaps for the first, there is no indication of any linkage with substantiating ritual; nor, as far as I can see, are there any references to, for example, cave paintings (as described by Mountford 1957, at Cowell).

Ritual:

The most detailed aspect of Schürmann's account (1879) has to do with three ritual 'levels' through which a male novice had to pass; there is no comparable reference to female initiation.

The first, the *warrara* (a term which was used to indicate the novice at this stage), focused on the shedding of blood. Schürmann reported that he did not witness this ritual, but was told that men 'were very jealous of strangers being present, from fear that through them the women and children might become acquainted with the mysteries'. Provis (1879) made the same point: he was told what he recorded by a man named Shangilti. The second sequence, *pardnapa* (also indicating the novice), related to circumcision. Schürmann held that subincision took place during this second period or as an adjunct to it. The third stage was regarded by him as the most important: this was the *wilyaru*, which involved cicatrization, and the young men going through this ritual were called *wilyalkinyi*. Schürmann had seen this twice. Provis, however, placed the initiatory sequences differently: cicatrization, he said, came first, followed by circumcision and then subincision. Provis's information, it will be recalled, related to the Gugada, and his sequence of events correlates more or less with Western Desert procedure. Schürmann's sequence was more directly Banggala. Both accounts are, therefore, reasonably correct. The Wirangu (see Berndt & Berndt 1943), too, considered cicatrization to be paramount, as did several language groups within mainstream 'Lakes culture'. Interestingly, in recent (1983) claims made by Gugada-identifying Aborigines for protection of particular traditional sites in the Roxby Downs dam area, the *wilyaru* was also emphasized. In passing, it can be mentioned that western cultural pressures toward the east in relation to subincision did not proceed beyond the top of the eastern shores of Spencer Gulf, and included the Banggala as well as their neighbours, the Nugunu. Howitt (1904) gave a description of the Dieri *wilyaru*, and outlined the Yuri-ulu myth of the Urabunna (Arabana) and Kuyani (Gwiani) which spread southward toward (and into?) Banggala territory. A fragmentary version of that myth was also told to me in 1940. Incidentally, Howitt (1904) reproduced Schürmann's description of the three rituals. For our purpose here, a summarized outline only will be given of each of these rituals.

The three (actually four, if we regard subincision as ritually separate) initiation sequences vary structurally, although some of the dancing or ritual posturing is, or appears to be, similar. On the basis of what we know of such rituals in contiguous areas, they were organized according to restrictions on the bases of age and sex, and emphasized the acquisition of religious knowledge. They concerned the gradual revelation of such information and its meaning over a period of several years, each grade being punctuated by physical actions, not only *vis-à-vis* the novices but also (in regard to blood-letting) on the part of postulants. Novices were secluded once they were taken from the main camp (from the influence of women), and their faces and shoulders painted with black 'ochre'; they had to observe particular tabus and not speak loudly, only in whispers. On the conclusion of each stage, some outward manifestation indicated the ritual status they had attained. Such signs had to do with the way their hair was worn (for instance, drawn up into a bun, the hair being piled up on an emu feather pad coagulated with various substances, and surmounted with a net cap).

There was no ritual tooth-evulsion in the Spencer Gulf area, although Provis reported that it was common among people living north of the Gawler Ranges: that is, among Gugada. The outward marks of ritual status, as far as youths were concerned, also included their being given (at final initiation, the *wilyaru*) a girdle or waistband, arm bands, and a necklet of possum fur string, a length of which hung down behind a youth's back to be fastened to the waistband. The breaking of this string did not take place until the final seclusion period had been completed and the youths anointed with blood. They were then regarded as social adults—*junior* adults. The actions of participants, in the rituals that were held on such occasions, indicate that these had mythological significance: but no early reference considers this point. One feature which is mentioned on several occasions by Schürmann, and which took place in ritual procedure as well as in ordinary fighting, was of participants biting their beards in order to simulate anger. (This was also a characteristic of northern coastal Arnhem Land people.)

In the *warrara*, apart from anointing a novice's body with blood, a rite which also involved him sipping some, a 'whip' bullroarer was used. This secret-sacred object (a *pullakalli*) had attached to it a length of cord, which, in turn, was fastened to one end of a stick. The stick would be held by the other end, the cord twisted around it, and then released like a whip. In contrast, during the *wilyaru*, ordinary bullroarers (*witarna*; Ngadjuri, *wetana*) were swung, and one of these was placed by its cord round the neck of each postulant on the conclusion of this sequence. In both the *warrara* (preliminary) and the *pardnapa* (circumcision) rituals, one implication was that women played an important part during the proceedings. For instance, men returning to the main camp with *warrara* novices carried live coals on pads of grass, and on arrival threw these into a heap before the women. Also, one of the women rubbed the partly congealed blood from the back of a youth with her cloak before he ran between a double line of men. With reference to blood, Schürmann (1879) claimed that women must not see a man bleeding, even in ordinary circumstances, and were themselves 'not allowed' to bleed ritually. Blood was apparently considered to be a life-essence; when releasing blood to relieve a severe headache, a man should not let it fall to the ground but should ensure that it ran over the body of another male person.

In the *pardnapa*, during the commencement of events leading up to the main ritual, men would follow certain women for some distance before they went their separate ways to hunt and collect food, to come together later in the initiation camp, from which they would subsequently withdraw. These women were of the same moiety as the novices, and before leaving the camp they would touch the shoulders and necks of men of their own moiety. On the initiation ground, men formed a human 'table' at the base of a tree where one of their number was perched in a forked branch. Novices were placed on the 'table', held down and, one by one, circumcised. The Ngadjuri *vadnaba* (that is, *pardnapa*) differed somewhat from Schürmann's description.

In the *wilyaru*, a youth knelt on his hands and knees and in that position was anointed with arm blood which, when partially congealed, was used as a guide to mark out where the cicatrizes would be cut: the design was followed in cutting with quartz flakes. One important feature of the *wilyaru* was what Schürmann called the 'inventing' of personal names by which initiates would be known on completion of these rites. According to Provis, during the actual cicatrization a further incision was made at the back of the neck and a leaf inserted within it: this signified, he said, that the new name had been placed within the youth. The Ngadjuri man with whom I worked in 1939-42 also told me that this 'name-giving' was an essential feature, not of the *wilyaru* but of the *vadnaba*. He was Barney Waria (*waria* meaning 'two'; that is, 'second born'). His ritual, 'given name' was Ngadlibuna.

TOWARD DEATH AND TRANSITION

Under this heading I bring together five aspects—medical attention, fighting, sorcery, death and the 'afterlife'—not only because the available information is slight, but because they belong to facets which concern the opposite side of ordinary everyday living, although an essential part of it. For instance, while quarrels—due to a range of circumstances—were common, serious fighting presumably led to injury and possible death, or at least required medical attention. On the other hand, while Schürmann made the point that not all deaths involved accusations of supposed sorcery, many would seem to have done so. Death, from the evidence available, suggested some form of transition, having to do with the deceased's soul.

Schürmann and Provis referred to various forms of treatment by Aboriginal doctors. Schürmann called them *mintapa*. Provis, however, used the word *mundabi* to refer to an 'evil spirit' believed to inflict illness—a word also used for the 'evil spirit' of a deceased person; this resembles the Western Desert concept of *mamu*. Whether or not *mintapa* or *mundabi* also meant a doctor is open to question, although Schürmann explained that *mintapa* were rare at Port Lincoln during his period there but were common among the Gugada. However, the Ngadjuri used the term *mindabu* or *mindaba* to refer to a 'spirit man', that is, an Aboriginal doctor.

In the matter of fighting, because of its serious nature, arrangements were made between the respective parties 'a long time' before the actual event took place. The main causes were said to be abduction of females, murder, physical injury and sorcery accusations. Examples supplied by Schürmann consist of confrontation, when members of both parties and their adherents exchanged abuse and, biting their beards or spears in anger, attacked each other by hurling spears. Severe injury or death from such fighting was rare. In fact, Schürmann emphasized that there was no urge to shed blood. Gugada were mostly blamed and feared for their sorcery and their belligerence, but Schürmann noted that their reputation rested on sorcery rather than on fighting prowess. However, information on sorcery is meagre. One supposedly effective procedure was poking one's fingers (through a 'peculiar manipulation') into the side of an intended victim while simultaneously making an accusation. In one 'sorcery' example reported by Schürmann, the victim was a woman who had been bitten by a black snake. Her companion, another woman who was present at her death, insisted that she had revealed, just before she died, the name of her 'murderer'.

At Port Lincoln, burials were said to be accompanied by ceremonies. However, none of these were recorded, and Schürmann remarked (1879) that in the cases he witnessed they were 'dispensed with'. In one (presumably of Banggala type) the corpse, with legs flexed, was wrapped in a kangaroo skin and placed within a pit, its face toward the east in order to facilitate the soul's departure to the land of the dead. The pit was then covered with logs placed lengthwise over the aperture, with a mound of earth covering it. In another case (Provis 1879) probably of Gugada type, the hips of the corpse were broken and tied up in a sitting posture. It was then placed in a pit so that it, too, faced east. On this occasion all the deceased's possessions were buried with him, covered with grass and boughs and finally filled in. A semi-circular mound of earth with stones on top was assembled at the back of a swept area and extended over the grave, on which a large fire was kindled and kept burning for two or three nights in order 'to destroy the *mundabi* (spirit) which would otherwise injure living people'. While this varied from traditional Western Desert procedure, the two may be at least partly identified. For instance, in Western Desert explanations a fire at the grave was usually said to keep the deceased's spirit warm until it actually left its human vehicle; and the mound, in its conical form, symbolized the mythic Moon man who was killed by the Two Men (the Wadi Gudjara) in the creative era of the Dreaming. (See Berndt & Johnston, 1942 for examples, including a Wirangu burial). Moreover, the Gugada description suggests the possibility of later exhumation in order to divine, ritually, the person or persons responsible (through sorcery) for the death. However, the placing of the dead person's possessions in the pit suggests a Wirangu rather than a Desert traditional custom.

Schürmann's example of a burial, although said to be Banggala, could well have been Nauo, since the corpse was arranged in the pit facing east. The Banggala land of the dead was said to have been located in the west (see above). However, not too much attention should be paid to that point, since Western Desert corpses were, from all accounts, usually arranged in their graves to face east. Schürmann emphasized that there was 'more than one receptacle for departed souls'. On its journey to the land of the dead, the spirit was said to have been accompanied by a species of red-bill (apparently a sea bird); but Schürmann also suggested that the land of the dead was a temporary abode where the spirits awaited their eventual rebirth—that is, their return to the living. Both Schürmann and Angas gave examples where ancestors of local Aborigines were said to have returned in the guise of Europeans. For instance, several Europeans at Boston Bay (Port Lincoln) were believed by Aborigines to be spirits of their deceased relatives, and called by the personal names of these 'previously dead' kin. In another case, an Aboriginal named Ngarbi of Port Lincoln, who was 'executed' in Adelaide, said before he died that he would return as 'a white man'. Schürmann suggested that this belief was 'modern', not traditional. There are, however, plenty of such examples from other parts of Aboriginal Australia. They may perhaps be interpreted as devices to account for the presence of strangers, underlining their ambivalent attitude toward Europeans: afraid of them as spirits, dangerous, powerful and strange, but attempting to bring them within the range of human familiarity as 'relatives'.

CONCLUSION

As I have shown, there is enough material available to enable us to obtain a glimpse of the traditional Aboriginal scene on the Peninsula in the early part of the nineteenth century. Two primary cultural orientations are evident, one of which (Gugada) was intrusive prior to European settlement. While identification of one culture (Gugada) in contrast to the other (Banggala, either separately or in conjunction with Nauo) cannot always be made, it is reasonably clear in so far as social organization, initiation ritual and burial customs are concerned. Myths (or, rather, those few that have been recorded) appear to be distinctively of Eyre Peninsula origin, except for one; but the number available is far too small to be at all definite. However, there were actually *three* and not only two cultural streams: the Banggala, linking up with the northeastern Lakes constellation; the Western Desert, represented by the Gugada; and the Wirangu, which belonged to the 'old' West coast culture. The Bates material (1918) could repay more consideration from a linguistic viewpoint (in relation to Wirangu), while space does not permit detailed treatment of Wirangu myths which I obtained at Ooldea in 1941.

What has been presented here is a reconstruction of some features of the traditional life of the Eyre Peninsula people, without much consideration of the tremendous changes that were taking place in all aspects of their living. In fact, the period when Schürmann and others were observing, and writing, there, marked the beginning of rapid disintegration and dispersement of the full-Aboriginal population and, gradually, the disappearance of the greater part of their culture.

In 1860, excluding Poonindie, there were three ration depots: at Port Lincoln (643 persons); Franklin Harbour (118) and Venus Bay (510). These were police depots, and the number of persons noted refers only to those who received rations. In the South Australian Aborigines' Department Return for 1866, similar depots are mentioned for Fowlers Bay, Streaky Bay and Poonindie, but without population figures. The disastrous history of the Poonindie mission is to be found in the South Australian Parliamentary papers for 1857-60. One of these (1859) states that the report it contained presented 'to the world . . . the only successful experiment of civilizing and Christianizing the Aborigines of Australia . . . It is a happy and well-conducted moral and religious community'. At that time there were 60 'inmates', and a number of people living in the bush were also said to be supported by the mission.

For the other side of that story and of the general conditions of Aborigines within the Port Lincoln and adjacent areas, we must turn to the Aborigines Select Committee's report for 1860. Poonindie was partially 'colonized' by children and young people from Adelaide and adjacent areas. That mission, as I have said, was short-lived; many of its 'inmates' returned to their home territories, and some eventually made their 'home' at Point Pearce, which was established in 1868 (known earlier as the Yorke Peninsula mission; Point Pearce is also spelt 'Pierce'). See, for example, the Protector of Aborigines report for 1907 where a photograph depicts 'three generations of Pt Pierce Aborigines'. The two men shown in this are Tom Power and Phil Welch, who originally came from Poonindie. This particular photograph was the subject of an enquiry made by Doreen Kartinyeri (1983), who identifies the man standing on the left as Robert Wanganeen; Barney Waria, however, in 1939, identified him immediately as Tom Power, but did not know the names of the two women and child, although there is common agreement on the name of the other man. The photograph to which I refer was entitled 'three generations . . .'; Mrs Kartinyeri, however, refers to 'five generations . . .' (For further references to Point Pearce (or Pierce), see Gale (1972).)

By the 1860-70s, most of the local Eyre Peninsula Aborigines who remained in this area were established in fringe camps and/or working for European settlers. Just when the Gugada visitors ceased coming southward is not clear. Certainly, the South Australian government reports from the turn of the century do not specifically note by name, as far as I can see, ration depots within the main area of the peninsula. However, the reports and returns for 1899-1900 (with reference to Aborigines in settled districts of South Australia, 1900) mention that 250 Aborigines arrived at Fowlers Bay from Wilgena (near Tarcoola) and the Gawler Ranges: these people were most likely Gugada, but there are no references to their having gone southward. No doubt, a number of Aborigines (either of local origin, or having come in from elsewhere) remained in the district.

By 1946 (according to a report of the South Australian Aborigines' Protection Board) rations continued to be distributed in the 'western division', 'to old and infirm Aborigines as and when required', while 'a considerable number of men' were employed at Port Lincoln (Product Department) and at Wudinna on the Eyre Highway (Engineering and Water Supply Department). A map produced by the Division of National Mapping (1982) continues to designate Poonindie as Aboriginal leasehold land. There are also three other similarly held properties at Streaky Bay and Ceduna (Duckponds and Poverty Flat). The Aboriginal population at Port Lincoln is given as not being under 80, but not exceeding 300 persons. On the northeast of the Peninsula are the Aboriginal settlements at Port Augusta and Bungala; on the north-west at Koonibba and Yalata.

Probably the best overall compilation of ethnographic resource materials (but not specifically concerning the Eyre Peninsula region) is the anthropological baseline studies literature review (Sutton Partners 1981), which was prepared in relation to the Olympic Dam project, north of Woomera (see also Berndt 1983). While it is not possible to be categorical regarding the traditional southern boundary of the Gugada, it would seem reasonable, on the basis of early accounts, to suggest that it was on the northern reaches of the Gawler Ranges, which indent the north-western boundary of the Banggala (see Tindale 1974, who notes that the Kokada or Gugada were 'the so-called Gawler Range tribe').

The material in this paper, apart from surveying, redigesting and interpreting historical information in the light of anthropological understanding of Aboriginal traditional life, offers a brief glimpse of what the Aboriginal scene was like in the early days of European settlement in that area. There are undoubtedly, and unavoidably, considerable gaps. However, for Aborigines of today who may claim descent from the people who originally occupied this region, I hope that it will prove a contribution to their own heritage. In a sense, what we have here is a statement about the destruction of a people and their culture—people who, under happier and more enlightened conditions, could have coped quite well with the changes which came upon them, but who did not have any real opportunity to do so.

POSTSCRIPT

I wish to thank Dr Louise Hercus of the Faculty of Asian Studies, Australian National University, for her kindness in reading through and commenting on the manuscript of this Chapter. Dr Hercus has carried out research for a considerable period on the languages of the Lake Eyre Basin; and she agrees with me that a great deal more work is needed in so far as the 'Lakes area' is concerned, and that includes Banggala. She informs me that Mrs Phyllis Croft (of Iron Knob) has knowledge of Banggala stories and traditional sites; her husband Harry, now deceased, was a Banggala speaker. Information of this nature is disappearing very rapidly indeed and needs to be recorded. Ms Rosemary Buchan of the Heritage Unit, Department of Environment and Planning, has expressed interest in doing this and should be encouraged. Dr Hercus notes that Myth 2, concerning Possum and Native Cat is widespread and was known also to Arabana people; and that in Myth 3, Marnpi is the name of the bronze-winged pigeon, known by that name throughout the Lake Eyre Basin. (Murnpeowie, for instance, gets its name from this bird, meaning pigeon/water; *murnpie* in Gason, in Woods ed. 1879, and *mernpe* in Wyatt, in Woods 1879).

Dr Hercus also referred to the subdivision of Banggala that was noted by Tindale (1974). He said that two such divisions were recognized: one, the Wartabanggala, originally occupied country north of Port Augusta and extending to Ogden Hill and almost to Quorn and Beltana; the other, the Malkaripangala, was located along the western side of Spencer Gulf. The existence of such a division, says Dr Hercus, was confirmed by one of the last knowledgeable Banggala men, Moonie Davis. I should explain that I did not include this information in my Chapter for a couple of reasons. I was not clear whether these two terms, each with its language name prefixed, constituted a territorial positioning or a language/dialect division. In other words, their social connotation was obscure and will probably not be elucidated until we know the meaning of each prefix.

Although my contribution does not discuss, to any extent, relations between Eyre Peninsula Aborigines and European settlers, I should add one reference to this. J. W. Bull (in his volume, *Early Experiences of Life in South Australia and an extended colonial history*, Wigg, Adelaide 1884, Book III, Chapters IV and V: 289-303, 307-10) outlines the history of hostilities between Port Lincoln and other Aborigines and settlers prior to 1843, which included military expeditions being sent from Adelaide. Such actions on the part of both peoples set the pattern for the rapid disintegration of Eyre Peninsula Aboriginal society and culture.

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