

THE BUNGANDITJ
European Invasion and the Economic Basis
of Social Collapse

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THE SIS SUMMARY

This thesis is a contact history of the Bunganditj, a tribe located in the Lower South East of South Australia. From 1841 the Bunganditj faced pastoral settlement by Europeans and as a consequence the tribe was destroyed. The study focuses on the first three decades of European settlement and examines the causes of the tribe's social collapse and population decline. The principal theme is the economic basis of social collapse, while a secondary theme is the impact of Government policy.

The thesis is divided into two parts; the first describes Bunganditj society at the time of contact, and the second is an analysis of contact. Given the stress placed on the influence of traditional society on the process of contact, the description of Bunganditj society is relatively detailed.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university and, to the best of my knowledge, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except when due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

SIGNED

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ABBREVIATIONS

SAA	South Australian Archives
ML	Mitchell Library
PROVic	Public Records Office Victoria
CSO	Colonial Secretary's Office (Sth Aust)
CLIO	Crown Lands and Immigration Office (Sth Aust)
SAGG	South Australian Government Gazette
SAPP	South Australian Parliamentary Papers

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Introduction

i. Aims and Objectives

This thesis is a contact history of the Bunganditj,¹ a coastal tribe occupying the Lower South-East of South Australia. The Bunganditj had their first contact with Europeans in the 1820's,² when whalers and sealers occasionally landed along the coast, and from 1841 faced pastoral settlement.³ As a consequence of contact the tribe was destroyed. The thesis focuses on the first three decades of European settlement and examines the causes of the tribe's social collapse and population decline, laying particular stress on the way in which the society responded to contact.

The principal theme is the economic basis of social collapse. Firstly, the economic system of the Bunganditj, and the system of social organization conditioned by it, limited the nature and extent of resistance. Secondly, the incompatibility of the hunter-gatherer economy with the pastoral economy of the Europeans resulted in the former being rendered unworkable once the settlers established their dominance. An examination of traditional Bunganditj life shows the intricate relationship that existed between their economy and other facets of their social life - residence pattern, social relations, the structure of authority and belief system. The breakdown of the economic system, their unifying social force,

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1. For convenience I have used Tindale's preferred version of the tribe's name, N.B. Tindale, Aboriginal Tribes of Australia (Canberra 1974), p.33.
 2. C. Smith, The Booandik Tribe of South Australian Aborigines (Adelaide 1880), p.25.
 3. E.M. Yelland, The Baron of the Frontier (Melbourne 1973) p.35.

and a consequent dependence on the Europeans for their livelihood resulted in the rapid physical and social decline of the tribe.

The causes of social collapse cannot be entirely ascribed to the breakdown of the traditional economic system; direct interference by Government and settlers played a crucial role. The impact of Government policy towards the Aborigines on the process of social collapse is a secondary theme. It was policy to break down the traditional lifestyle of the people as part of the process of 'civilization and Christianization.' It was also intended that the Government would protect and compensate the Aborigines, but their efforts in this direction will be shown to have been counter-productive - they actively contributed to the decline of the tribe.

The first part of the thesis describes Bunganditj society at the time of contact. Beginning with a definition of the tribe I go on to describe its economy, social and political organization and belief-system, giving particular attention to those aspects that figure prominently in the history of contact. In the second part of the thesis the process of contact is analyzed. This begins with a description of how the races perceived one another, how those images

changed, and how they influenced behaviour. The failure of resistance and the associated collapse of the Bunganditj economic system is dealt with in the following chapter. The breakdown of social and political organization is then examined, emphasising the impact of the economic collapse on this process but also pointing out the direct interference of Government and settlers. The last chapter investigates the causes of depopulation.

ii. Historical Overview

The Henty brothers were among the first settlers in the western districts of Port Phillip, establishing their runs near the junction of the Wannon and Glenelg Rivers in 1836. Anxious for new land, Stephen and Edward Henty set out to explore the country to the west of the Glenelg and after two days' travel arrived at Mount Gambier. They were impressed with the region and within two years had established an outstation at the Mount.⁴ In August 1842 an item in the Southern Australian made news of their discovery public -

The whole of this splendid tract of country is said to resemble a nobleman's park on a large scale...Already parties from Port Phillip are thinking of establishing themselves in this new territory, and a further exploration of it, we presume, will be immediately ordered.⁵

The first to follow Henty in the area was Edward Arthur, who established himself at Mount Schank in 1843. Notable among the settlers to follow

4. E.M. Yelland, The Baron of the Frontier (Melbourne 1973), p.35.

5. *ibid*, pp.33-34.

in the next two years were Robert and Edward Leake who started the Glencoe and Lake Leake runs; Evelyn Sturt, a magistrate and brother of the explorer, who set up Compton station near Mount Gambier; and the South Australia Company which established the Benara run at the Southern end of Lake Bonney (Figs. 14 & 15).⁶ Arthur, the Leake brothers, Sturt, and Samuel Davenport, who started his run near Rivoli Bay in 1846, provide the bulk of the information on early Aboriginal/settler relations.

Governor Grey, with a party which included the Deputy Surveyor-General Thomas Burr, and the artist-adventurer, George French Angas, visited the Lower South-East in the spring of 1844.⁷ At this time the population of the Rivoli Bay District was about 50, most of whom were employed tending an estimated 15,000 sheep and 100 cattle.⁸ Reports of Governor Grey's expedition, such as Burr's account in the Southern Australian, excited further interest in the region.⁹ In March 1845, Robert Leake wrote that the neighbourhood was being rapidly taken up by squatters from both Port Phillip and South Australia.¹⁰ By 1846 over a dozen new stations had been established and the population, South of Rivoli Bay, was 263.¹¹

European settlement was met with immediate resistance. Violence between Aborigines and settlers continued, following the expansion of the frontier, till about 1848 when European dominance was established. Over the next few years the nature of frontier

6. E.M. Yelland, The Baron of the Frontier (Melbourne 1973), see Chapter IV.

7. G.F. Angas, Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand (London 1847), Vol. I, p.149 onwards.

8. H.C. Talbot 'Early History of the South-East' in Royal Geographical Society Proceedings, Vol. 21, p.114.

9. The Southern Australian, 18 June 1844.

10. Leake Papers, Letters of Robert Rowland Leake (1811-1860) "Glencoe", Mount Gambier, PRG 183 (SAA), 9 March 1846.

11. South Australia, Census Office, Census 1846-76, Compilation (Barr Smith Library).

relations altered as the Aborigines began to accept employment on stations. This process was accelerated by the gold-rush in Victoria, beginning with the Mount Alexander discoveries in 1851.¹² The settlers, who only a few years before were driving the Aborigines from their land, now courted them hoping that they would fill the void created by the labourers leaving for the gold-fields. In a large measure the gap was filled; in 1853 the Government Resident at Guichen Bay reported that most of the Aborigines in the district were employed by the settlers.¹³

In the mid to late 1850's, as the surface gold began to peter out in the gold-fields, the European labour shortage began to ease.¹⁴ The Aboriginal component in the labour force began to shrink, employment becoming more seasonal in character. In 1861 over 50% of the Aboriginal men in the County of Grey worked for the settlers, five years later this percentage had fallen dramatically, along with the overall population, to less than 25%.¹⁵ The history of the Bunganditj in the 1860's is one of disease and destitution. The Aboriginal population of the Lower South-East, which had been estimated at over 2,000 when European settlement began, had fallen to less than 50 in 1871.

Matthew Moorhouse was the Protector of Aborigines when the settlement of the Lower South-East began. His general duties included moving among the Aborigines and 'learning their language' (sic) and customs, promoting the civilization and Christianization of the people and overseeing relations between the races.¹⁶ His involvement

12. M. Kiddle, Men of Yesterday (Melbourne 1961), p.184.

13. South Australian Government Gazette, 28 July 1853, p.499.

14. Kiddle, pp.201-2.

15. South Australia, Census Office, Census 1846-76.

16. South Australian Parliamentary Papers, Appendix to the Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines, No. 165, 1860.

with the Lower South-East was limited - he visited the area on three occasions, each time to investigate conflicts between Aborigines and settlers. While in the district he attempted to speak to the Aborigines and explain to them their rights and obligations but his cause was frustrated by the lack of an efficient interpreter. The most visible indication of Government involvement was the establishment of ration distributions - flour and blankets were distributed monthly by the police at Robe and Mount Gambier. Until Crown Lands Rangers took over the responsibility of distributing rations late in the 1850's the police were the only effective mediators between Aborigines and settlers.

In 1856 the Protector's Office was abolished and for the next five years its functions were taken over by the Crown Lands and Immigration Office.¹⁷ The 1860 Select Committee on Aborigines recommended the re-establishment of the Protector's Office and in 1861 Dr John Walker was appointed Protector.¹⁸ Unlike Moorhouse's term in office when the main problem in the Lower South-East was violence, Walker mainly faced the problems of disease and alcoholism. One of Walker's major reforms was to expand the ration system; he established a number of new depots in the district and increased the frequency of distribution.

The only serious attempt at implementing the Government policy of 'civilization and Christianization' in the Lower South-East was undertaken by Christina Smith. With the financial support of Dr Short, Lord Bishop of Adelaide, Smith set up an Aborigines' Home at Mount Gambier in 1865.¹⁹ The Home was both a residence and a school

17. Department of Aboriginal Affairs, 'A Brief Outline of Aboriginal Affairs in South Australia since Colonization', Pamphlet, Adelaide 1963, p.6.

18. *ibid.*

19. Smith, p.46.

and, at its peak, accommodated about 16 Aboriginal children from the district. Smith also provided food and medical assistance for a number of adults who camped in the grounds. After an epidemic in 1867, which caused the death of many of the children at the Home, Smith closed it down.²⁰ The closure of the Aborigines' Home effectively marks the end of the contact period examined in this thesis.

iii. Notes on the Sources

The evidence upon which this thesis is based comes almost exclusively from European sources: Government records, settlers' reminiscences and correspondence, explorers' journals, newspapers and books. There is little oral history from the area - the few occasions on which the Aborigines speak to us directly come from reported conversations and the evidence presented at criminal trials. However, these facts do not exclude us from knowledge of Aboriginal society or beliefs, thanks mainly to the interest shown in the people by Christina Smith and her son, Duncan Stewart. Smith's book, The Booandik Tribe of South Australian Aborigines, along with the published and unpublished notes of Stewart, provide the basis for a description of Bunganditj society. In assessing the value of their observations it is necessary to consider the extent of their involvement with the tribe and some of the factors conditioning what they wrote.

In June 1839, Christina Stewart, a widow, accompanied by her two brothers and her young son, Duncan, left her home in Perth, Scotland, and set out for Australia. In December she arrived

20. Smith, p.46.

at Port Phillip where she worked as a maid for a couple of years before marrying a teacher, James Smith. In 1846 the family moved to Rivoli Bay where James took up the position of storekeeper at the newly established settlement.²¹ Christina Smith soon became known as a friend by the Aborigines and in her writings she often describes Aboriginal groups camping next to her house. Her interest in the people was lifelong and culminated in the establishment of the Aborigines' Home.

Both Christina Smith and her husband were deeply religious; Protestants, they saw their work among the Aborigines as a 'calling'. Two-thirds of Smith's book about the Bunganditj is taken up with 'memoirs' describing the conversion of 'heathen souls'. Referring to a report on the operations of the Aborigines' Home for the last six months of 1867, Smith claimed that death and sickness were rife, but added -

while details of the report were in one respect gloomy, in another they are encouraging; as, since the opening of the Home, eight black people had passed away, whom I had reasonable hope God accepted into his happiness as believers on His Son Jesus Christ.²²

Motivated by the Protestant notion of 'good works', every conversion was another merit point beside her name in the Book of Judgement. What Smith wrote was influenced by her religious beliefs and her sex. The main topics of her work are Bunganditj beliefs, stories of the

21. Smith Family, Papers of the Smith Family of Rivoli Bay and Mount Gambier, c.1838-1950, PRG 144 (SAA). Among the papers is a diary in which Christina Smith details her background and early years in the South-East.

22. Smith, The Boogandik Tribe..., p.46

spirit-world, legends, magic and sorcery; and women, particularly descriptions of marriage, childbirth and the treatment of widows. Scant attention is paid to the social or political organization of the tribe.

Duncan Stewart's involvement with the Bunganditj began early in his life and grew out of his parents' interest. His father encouraged him to learn the Bunganditj language and in 1848, as a fourteen year old, he was employed by the Government as an interpreter.²³ In this capacity he was in a good position to learn about the tribe. In later years he corresponded with Lorimer Fison and William Howitt who used him as an informant on the Aborigines of the area. The subjects he deals with often echo his mother's interest, though in one area, social relations, he provides information his mother failed to discuss in her own work.

Smith and Stewart were in contact with the Bunganditj before the tribe were forced to give up their traditional lifestyle, they were well acquainted with the language, and they gathered evidence from individuals who had lived traditionally prior to contact. These facts give one some confidence in the quality of their information, the main drawback being the limited volume of their work. In one important area, economic life, the historical record is augmented by a significant amount of archeological research.

The Bunganditj did not exist in isolation, they were part of a broader cultural community among which certain social customs and institutions were shared. For this reason it is possible, with knowledge from modern anthropological work, to find clues about aspects

23. Smith, The Booandik Tribe..... p.46.

of Bunganditj social life in contemporary descriptions of neighbouring tribes. Taplin's study of the Ngarrindjeri, Dawson's study of the Gunditjmara and Howitt's work on the Wotjobaluk are particularly useful in this area.²⁴ While acknowledging limitations in the description of Bunganditj society it is, nonetheless, sufficiently detailed to provide important insights into the nature of the Aboriginal response to contact.

Although the record of events, upon which the analysis of contact is based, is almost entirely European the multiplicity of sources and the variety of motives behind its composition ensures that it provides more than a simple apologia of European actions. The Smith family, other settlers sympathetic to the Aborigines, and Government officers, such as Protectors and sub-Protectors, provide the main source for the Aboriginal version of events during the history of contact. The main problem remains the depth of evidence. Though the focus of the study is the Bunganditj, I have sometimes drawn upon evidence of the contact experience in neighbouring areas to back up some points. Other questions about the sources, such as the motivations behind certain descriptions of the Aborigines and the accuracy of evidence concerning frontier violence, are discussed in the thesis itself.

24. G. Taplin, The Narrinyeri (Adelaide 1879), J. Dawson, Australian Aborigines (Melbourne 1880), and A.W. Howitt, The Native Tribes of South-East Australia (London 1904), particularly pp.120-152.

PART ONE

ONE



The Bunganditj

Norman Tindale, recognizing the tribe as the highest level of political organization among Australian Aborigines, defines it as a usually endogamous unit -

generally known to occupy a given territory, speaking mutually intelligible dialects, having a common kinship system, and sharing the performance of ceremonial rites of interest to them all.¹

Tindale makes two other points in defining a tribe: that its members acknowledge their common identity, and that tribal boundaries often correspond to natural geographic regions. Bearing these factors in mind, he considered that the Bunganditj occupied the territory between Guichen Bay and Discovery Bay, extending north-east in a wedge-shape toward the Grampians (Fig.1).² Tindale claimed that the boundary was being altered at the time of first European contact by a southward move of the Jaadwa tribe toward Casterton.³ How far south they managed to push is difficult to say, but an examination of language samples from the area indicates that the Grampians and the upper reaches of the Glenelg River, at least, were occupied by a tribe other than the Bunganditj in the years following contact (Fig.3).⁴

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1. N.B. Tindale, Aboriginal Tribes of Australia (Canberra 1974) p.33.
 2. *ibid.*, p. 211
 3. *ibid.*
 4. See Appendix I, a comparison of word lists from the Lower South-East of South Australia and Western Victoria, showing the percentage of words shared.

A similar contraction appears to have occurred on the South Australian side of the border. Both Smith and Stewart record that the groups occupying territory around Robe and Penola belonged to another tribe, or tribes. Stewart wrote that the Pinejunga, Mootatunga and 'Buandik' "each considered themselves a separate people, each generally restricted to their one 'Mrade' (country)".⁵ The Pinejunga, occupying land near Penola, and the Mootatunga, in the vicinity of Robe, were groups classified by Tindale as Meintangk, despite the fact that their locations are shown on his map to be within Bunganditj territory.⁶ Tindale, evidently, did not consider these areas Bunganditj after contact.⁷

Based on contemporary knowledge of the people Smith and Stewart agreed that the Bunganditj "occupied that tract of country extending from the mouth of the Glenelg River to Rivoli Bay North (Beachport), for about thirty miles inland" (Fig. 2).⁸ This is at odds with Tindale's boundary even when the post-contact shifts he acknowledged are taken into account. Evidence suggests that the disputed area, south of the Wannon River and east of the Glenelg River, was occupied by an association of bands that constituted a tribe distinct from both the Bunganditj and Gunditjmarra. The Protector of Aborigines for Port Phillip, G.A. Robinson, referred to them as the Woolowero. In 1841, when he visited the Glenelg River,

5. T. MacCourt and H. Mincham, 'Duncan Stewart 1834-1913', in Two Notable South Australians (Beachport 1971), p.68.
 6. Tindale, p.213.
 7. Three Bunganditj songs, sung by Milerum, a Tanganekald man from the Coorong, refer to locations near Robe. The Bunganditj were definitely associated with this area, even though it was occupied by the Meintangk during the contact period. See N.B. Tindale, 'Native Songs of the South-East of South Australia', in Trans. Roy. Soc. Sth. Aust., Vol I LXV, 2 (1941), pp.236-38.
 8. C. Smith, The Booandik Tribe of South Australian Aborigines (Adelaide 1880), p.ix. See also T. MacCourt et al, p.62 and D. Stewart Notebook 1853, D.2609(L) G.67, p.1 (SAA).

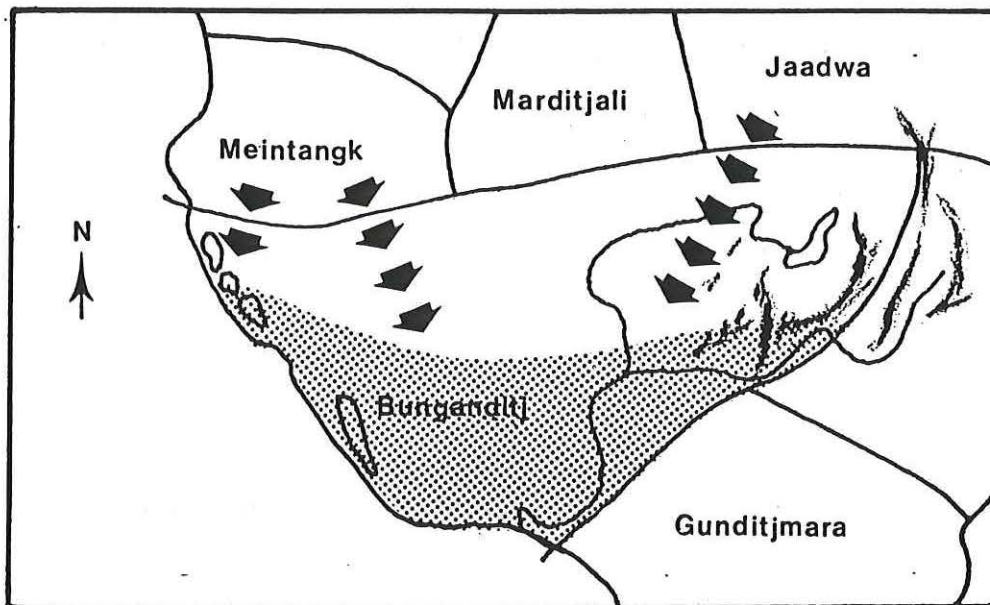


Fig.1 Tindale's pre-contact Bunganditj boundary, indicating shifts occurring at the time of contact.



Fig.2 The 'Booandik' as defined by Smith and Stewart.

an informant gave him detailed census information about six sections of the tribe.⁹ The Police Magistrate at Portland defined the territory through which one of these sections travelled -

It is the Emu Creek Tribe and wanders from the Wannon by Emu Creek, the Smokey River, along the Glenelg to the sea.¹⁰

Though Tindale defined this area as Bunganditj, it would seem that the people considered themselves to be quite separate from that tribe. A comparison of wordlists collected from the Lower South-East and Western Victoria indicates that a distinct dialect was spoken in the area occupied by the Woolowero.¹¹ The Bunganditj and Gunditjmara show a word correspondence of no more than 50%, while language samples from the Woolowero region show a correspondence of over 50% with both of these groups.¹²

One of the many functions of myth is to act as an oral charter, recording a people's perceived rights over a specific portion of land. Most of the locations mentioned in Bunganditj mythology were within the territory of the tribe as Smith defined it. The locations cited were Rivoli Bay, Mount Gambier, Mount Schank, Mount Muirhead and Port MacDonnell.¹³ The only

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9. G.A. Robinson, Letterbooks 1841-45, Vol. 26, MS A.7047, 29 July 1845 (ML). See Appendix II.
10. Police Magistrate, Portland, Inward Correspondence, Series 4, 23 May 1845 (PROVic).
11. See Appendix I and M.P. Wilkinson, A Language of South-West Victoria (North Ryde, N.S.W.) 1978 (iv). Typescript B.A. Hons. Thesis, A.N.U., Map 1.
12. See Appendix I.
13. Smith, pp.14-27.

LINGUISTIC AFFINITIES



- 1. Mt. Gambier
- 2. Dartmoor
- 3. Woodford on the Glenelg
- 4. Penola
- 5. Guichen Bay
- 6. Crawford, Stokes, Lower Wannon and Glenelg
- 7. Sandford
- 8. Portland
- 9. Balmoral

→ → 54 → → indicates percentage of shared words.

0 ————— 30km

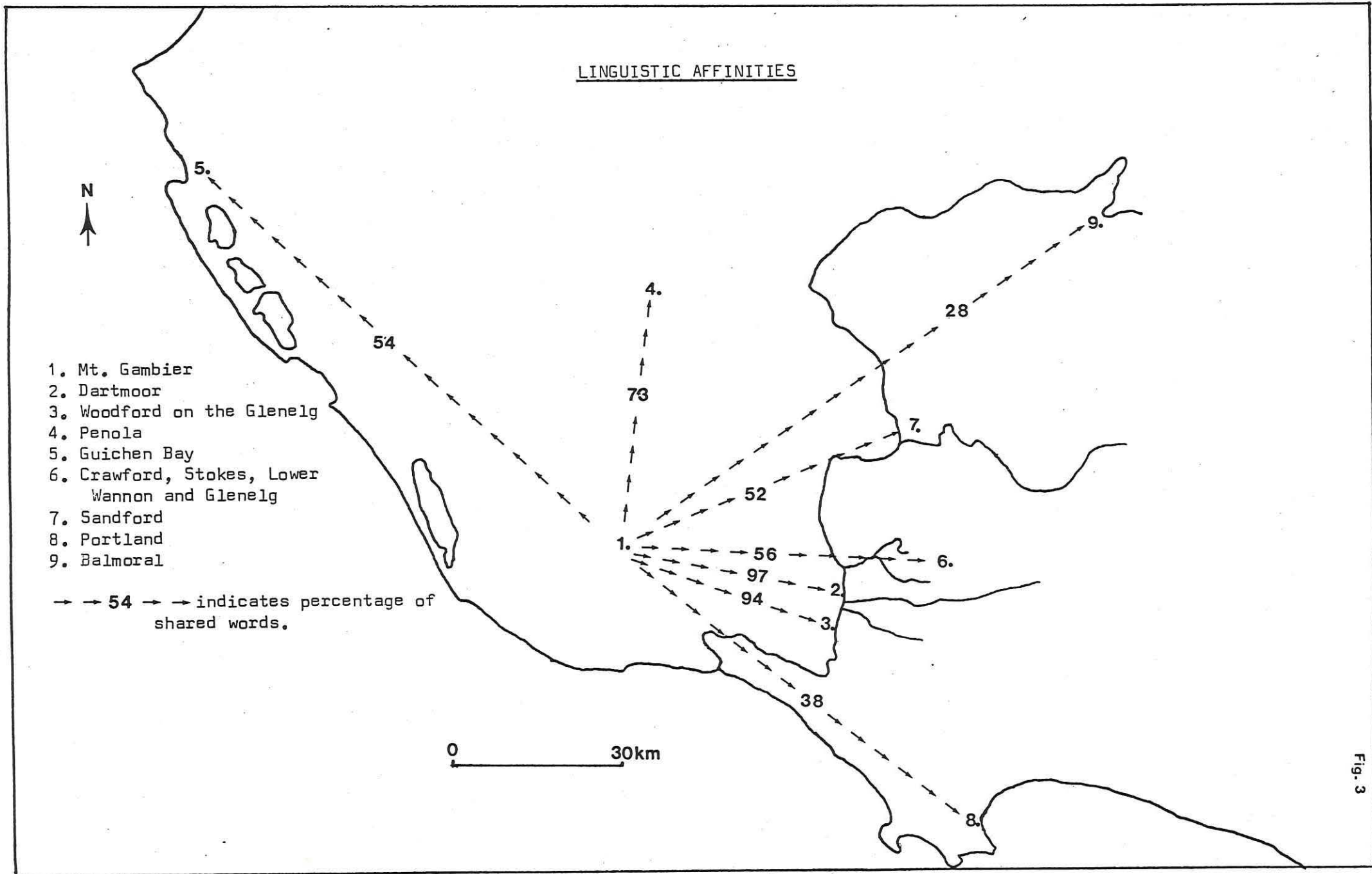


Fig. 3

reference to a place outside the defined area is an exception that proves the rule; it occurs in a myth dealing with the origins of the people in the area. Shortly after Craitbul, the ancestral hero of the Bunganditj, arrived from 'Wenger' (the west) and established his family at Mount Gambier, his sons stole all the kangaroos. Taking advantage of a dark and stormy day, the boys herded them across the Glenelg River to a cave on the coast "forty miles from their father's land." Here they remained, feeling desolate and growing more repentant, until their mother found them and brought them home.¹⁴ Both the specific reference to the Glenelg River and the imagery used to evoke a feeling of desolation indicates that the Glenelg River was thought of as their eastern boundary.

A story told by the Gunditjmarra refers to the territory with which the Bunganditj were associated, and the image they had, in the eyes of a neighbouring tribe -

Long ago the Bung'andaetch natives who inhabited the Mount Gambier district, were looked upon as wild blacks and very malevolent, for they sent lightning and rain to injure the associated tribes. In retaliation the latter challenged the Bung'andaetch natives to a fight at Coleraine; but, as they never could get them to stand and give battle, they chased them into their own country.¹⁵

14. Smith, pp.15-16.

15. J. Dawson, Australian Aborigines (Melbourne 1881), pp.76-7

Bunganditj territory, as a whole, was made up of a number of clan territories with which specific groups were associated. Smith wrote of the people's ownership of, and relationship to, the land -

It appears from the statements of the blacks themselves that the land belonging to the Booandik tribe was handed down from father to son, and its boundaries properly marked out. They were wont to speak very proudly of their land, and of their forefathers, remarking what splendid hunters they were, and how they taught their children to love the land.¹⁶

Smith was aware of at least three clan territories; one based around Mount Schank, another taking in Lake George and Rivoli Bay, and a third which included Glencoe and Mount Burr.

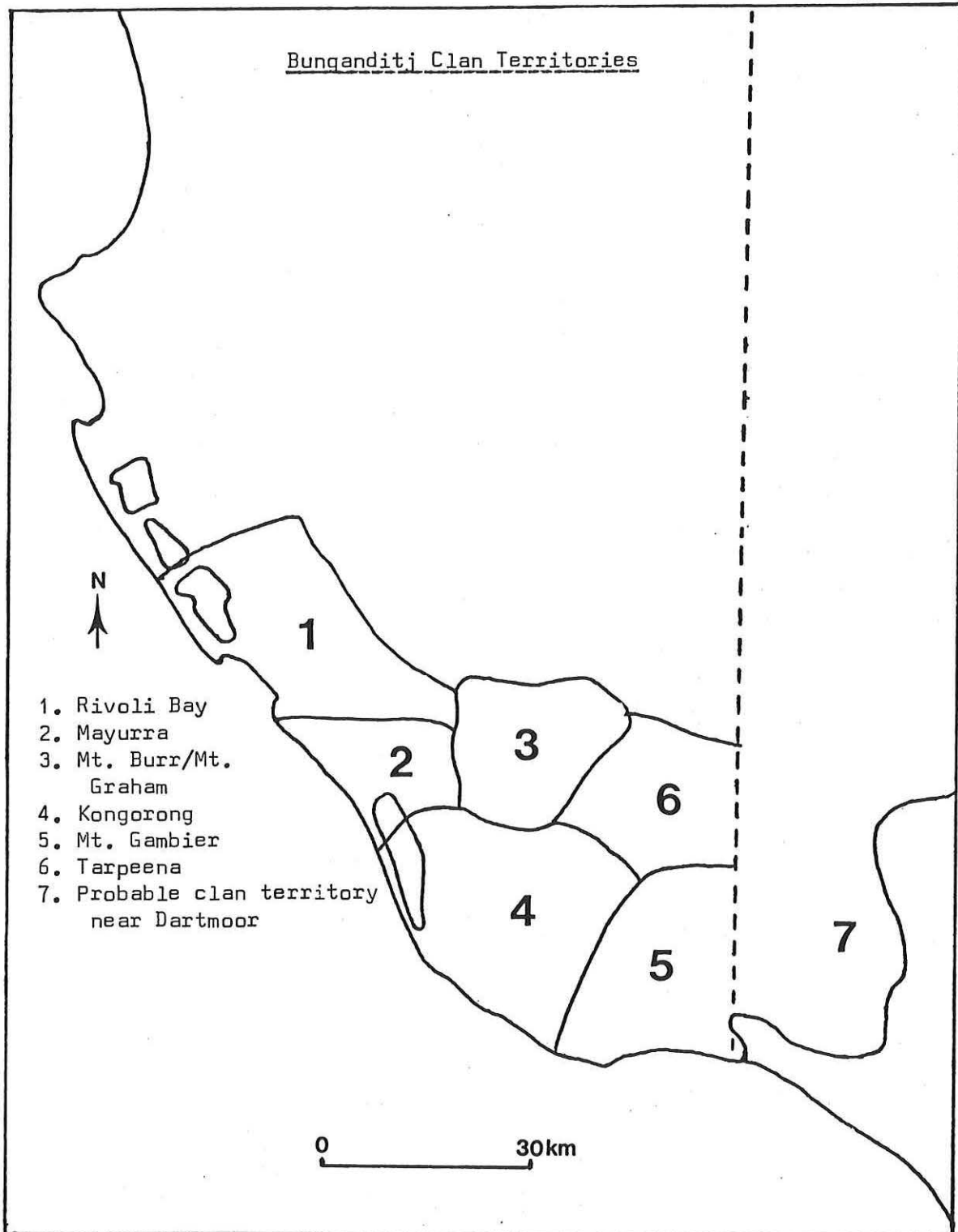
Of Mount Schank Smith made specific reference -

I have often heard my faithful Jemmy MacIntyre (now deceased) say with great affection, "The Schanck was my father's land, which he seldom left... My uncles and my father and mother lie buried there. I buried my wife and child there. My heart was sorry when I left my land - I love it dearly."¹⁷

16. Smith, p.xi.

17. *ibid.*

Fig. 4



(After T.D. Campbell 1939, and R. Luebbers 1975)

There is another reference to ownership of land in the Lake George/Rivoli Bay area; while Smith was travelling in that region an old Aboriginal companion asked her what she thought of "her m'rado (land)". She pointed out a number of landmarks and spoke proudly of her husband who she said was "Lord of Lake George (Narhter)."¹⁸ T.D. Campbell claimed that there were clan territories associated with the Mayurra and Kongorong areas (Fig. 4). He based his assessment on the information of an informant who grew up in the district while there were still a number of small groups associated with traditional territories.¹⁹

There appears to have been a Bunganditj group that occupied territory near Tarpeena, and perhaps one or two other groups located on the Victorian side of the border. The band at Tarpeena spoke a dialect similar to that spoken at Mount Gambier and they periodically exchanged friendly visits.²⁰ The only doubt about the association arises over the unwillingness of the people at Mount Burr to travel to Tarpeena during the contact period. Tarpeena was the site of the ration depot and on two occasions the Protector could not convince them to travel there for food and medical attention, both of which they needed.²¹

18. Smith, p.3.

19. T.D. Campbell, 'Notes on the Aborigines of the South-East of South Australia, Pt. I, in Trans. Roy. Soc. Sth Aust. Vol 58, 1934, pp.25-28.

20. G. Taplin Folklore, Manners, Customs and Languages of the Aborigines of Australia (Adelaide 1879) contains a small wordlist from Tarpeena, p.142 et al. For contact with Mount Gambier people see South Australian Government Gazette, July 11, 1867, p.664.

21. Reports of the Protector in Crown Lands and Immigration Office, Inward Correspondence, GRG 35/1, No. 342 (18 July 1862) and No. 2212 (August 1866) (SAA).

The implication is that there was a fear of trespass.²²

In The Australian Race, Edward Curr published two vocabularies from Western Victoria, one from Dartmoor and the other from the Glenelg River near Woodford, which are almost identical to the dialect spoken at Mount Gambier.²³ This indicates that the Bunganditj bands occupied the area, but it is not clear whether they were associated with a clan territory, or territories, independent of those on the South Australian side of the border.

There are two other groups in the Lower South-East whose locations are known but whose affiliation with the Bunganditj is questionable: the Mootatunga at Robe and the Pinejunga at Penola. While it has already been pointed out that the Mootatunga, Pinejunga and Bunganditj considered themselves a separate people, they are known to have met on occasions in corroboree. In the late 1850's the people of Mount Gambier are recorded to have regularly travelled to Guichen Bay during the winter.²⁴ In the early 1850's a group of the Pinejunga, along with parties from Guichen Bay and Glencoe, attended a corroboree at Rivoli Bay. They were invited to share in a feast of offal, the by-product of a tallow works then in operation.²⁵ The groups from Rivoli Bay and Penola were engaged in an on-going feud during the contact period, involving both open battles and a series of pay-back killings.²⁶

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22. T.D. Campbell 'Notes on the Aborigines of the South-East of South Australia', Pt II, in Trans. Roy. Soc. Sth. Aust., Vol. 63(1), 1939, pp.30-31.
23. E.M. Curr, The Australian Race (Melbourne 1886-7) pp.482-85. Note. In this edition the vocabulary headed 'The Glenelg above Woodford' should read 'Woodford' and vice versa. This is a printing error.
24. CLIO 83/60.
25. MacCourt et al, p.64.
26. Mac Court et al, p.64, Smith, p.xi, D. Stewart, Notebook 1853, D.2609(L) G.67, pp.29-31 (SAA) and various references in C. Smith, Diary, among the Smith Family Papers, PRG.144 (SAA).

The Bunganditj also enjoyed periodic contact with the groups on the Glenelg River and to the east of it. In 1844, while sheltering from the police on the Glenelg River, Koort Kirrup, leader of the Palapnul section of the Woollowero, attended a corroboree that seems to have involved his own tribe as well as the Bunganditj. Prior to the gathering, sheep had been stolen from Henty's station at Mount Gambier by the local band. The sheep were herded to the Glenelg River where as many as four hundred people had gathered to share in the feast of mutton.²⁷ On another occasion Sturt, a settler and Magistrate at Mount Gambier, observed that the Bunganditj were "united with many of the Glenelg tribe", at that time in the Mount Gambier region.²⁸ Such gatherings were common in the summer months when bands from Western Victoria, notably from Gunditjmara territory, travelled to the mouth of the Glenelg River to take advantage of the coastal fruit then in season.²⁹ A corroboree, held on Leake's Glencoe station in 1856, gives another indication of the broader contacts of the Bunganditj. The gathering was organized to coincide with a visit by the South Australian Governor and Aboriginal messengers gathered representatives from neighbouring tribes as far apart as "Guichen Bay, the Wannon, Harrow, Mosquito Plains, Hamilton, and other places."³⁰

27. The Portland Guardian, 9 March 1844.

28. Colonial Secretary's Office, Inward Correspondence, GRG 24/6, 30 April 1846, No. 681 (SAA).

29. Dawson, p.22.

30. H. Hickmer, 'The Early Recollections of Glencoe, Lake Leake, and the South-East', in The Border Watch, 22 July 1903.

Campbell, on what he conceded was a poor statistical base, calculated that the total Aboriginal population of the Lower South-East was 2,000-2,500 people.³¹ The Bunganditj occupied about half of this district, which would suggest an original population of about 1,000-1,500 people. Perhaps the most reliable contemporary observer to have recorded his impressions of the Bunganditj was Duncan Stewart. Through his mother's philanthropic interest in the tribe he learnt their language and in the late 1840's, still in his teens, was employed as an interpreter by the Government.³² In this capacity he had frequent contact with the Bunganditj and would have been able to discriminate between the various tribal groups in the area. In a letter to Lorimer Fison, Stewart wrote -

The tribe with which I identified myself was 900 strong twenty-eight years ago, when I first started to study their habits. Now they number only 17!³³

Assuming that he "started to study their habits" in the late 1840's, when he was appointed interpreter, his estimate refers to a time 6-7 years after contact. In this period frontier violence and disease could have reduced the population by several hundred. On this evidence an original Bunganditj population of 1,000-1,500 people might be reasonably accurate.

31. Campbell, Pt. 2, p.34.

32. C.S.O., 20 March 1848, No. 375 and 375 $\frac{1}{2}$, and 1852, No. 976.

33. L. Fison and A.W. Howitt, Kamilaroi and Kurnai (Melbourne 1860), p.30.

TWO

Environment and Economic Life

i. Environment

The Bunganditj occupied the coastal margin of the Lower South-East between Lake George and the Glenelg River. The main topographical features of this region are a series of ridges - consolidated sand dunes, interspersed with broad, flat valleys, a chain of salt and fresh water lakes on the coast, and a volcanic range system. The territory occupied by most bands in the area included a portion of coastline; the few bands that were landlocked having access to the coast.

Prior to the commencement of an extensive drainage scheme in the 1860's much of the country, besides the uplands around Mount Gambier, was annually flooded -

With the setting in of another winter... we shall soon have before our eyes the picturesque but not very pleasant prospect of a vast district extending from Lacepede Bay to Port MacDonnell and nearly as large as Denmark, converted into a great lake, with only Mt. Gambier and the minor ridges looking up as oases amid the watery waste...¹

A number of factors accounted for the existence of this 'watery waste'. Firstly, the natural drainage was impeded by the ridges and flats which ran parallel to the coast. Secondly, the ridges and flats were made up of soils with poor drainage qualities. Thirdly, the water-table lay only 5-6 feet below the surface and with the winter rainfall it rose to a peak in about September

1. The Border Watch, 3 June 1864.

causing widespread flooding. Fourthly, the region has a fairly high annual rainfall of about 30", two-thirds of which falls between May and September.² In terms of Bunganditj economy and migration, this effectively meant that there were two seasons a year: the wet and the dry. The wet season lasted about seven months, from April to October, while the summer was quite short and mild.

The local vegetation systems essentially followed the contours of the land. The coastal dune vegetation consisted of low shrubs and spinifex, with some areas of tea-tree and sheoak. The Woakwine Range, running parallel to the sea, was covered by low woodlands of tea-tree, sheoak and banksia, with an understorey of herbaceous plants. The uplands of the border region, on the richer volcanic soil, were characterized by a variety of stringy bark forests. The word for land among the people of Mount Gambier and those west of the Glenelg was 'M'raad', from the root 'M'raa', or stringy bark.³ The inter-ridge valleys, or 'flats', were typically covered by tussock grasslands with small honeysuckle trees locally abundant.⁴

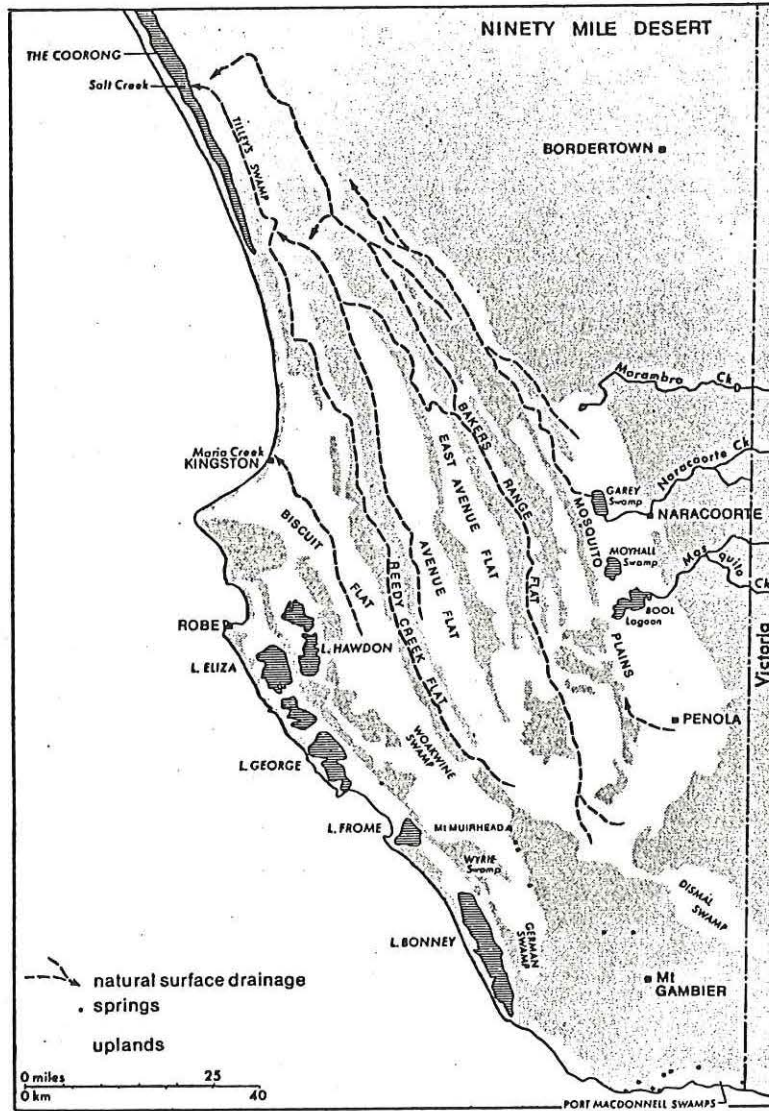
Travelling through the South-East in the autumn of 1844 Angas described the vegetation he saw as his party set out for the shores of Rivoli Bay -

We found an extensive swamp intervening between us and the shores of the bay and as we progressed it became more difficult to cross, being covered with sharp dense reeds and tea-tree bushes...After a tedious

-
2. M. Williams, The Making of the South Australian Landscape (London 1974), p.187.
 3. C. Smith, The Booandik Tribe of South Australian Aborigines (Adelaide 1880), p.129.
 4. A summary of the vegetation of this region is provided by R.L. Specht, The Vegetation of South Australia (Adelaide 1972).

Fig. 5

Natural Drainage in the Lower South East



(Reproduced from Williams, 1974)

Fig.6 Average Annual Rainfall in the Lower South-East.

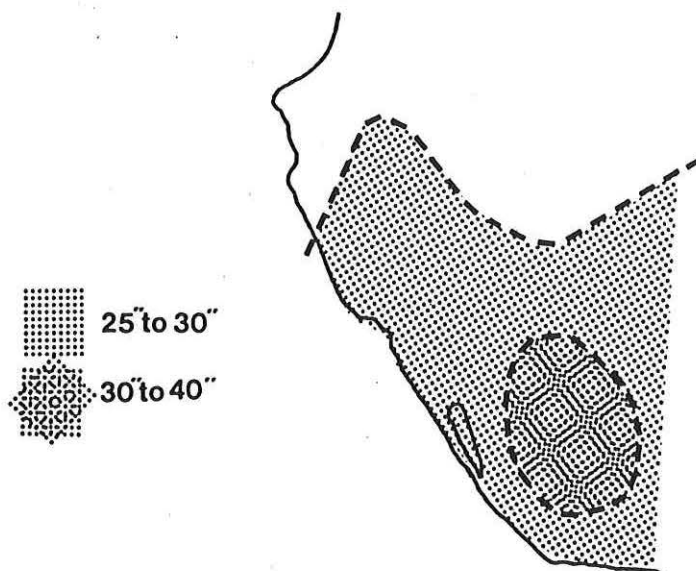


Fig.7 Average Monthly Rainfall, Mt. Gambier (Average Rain-days enclosed)

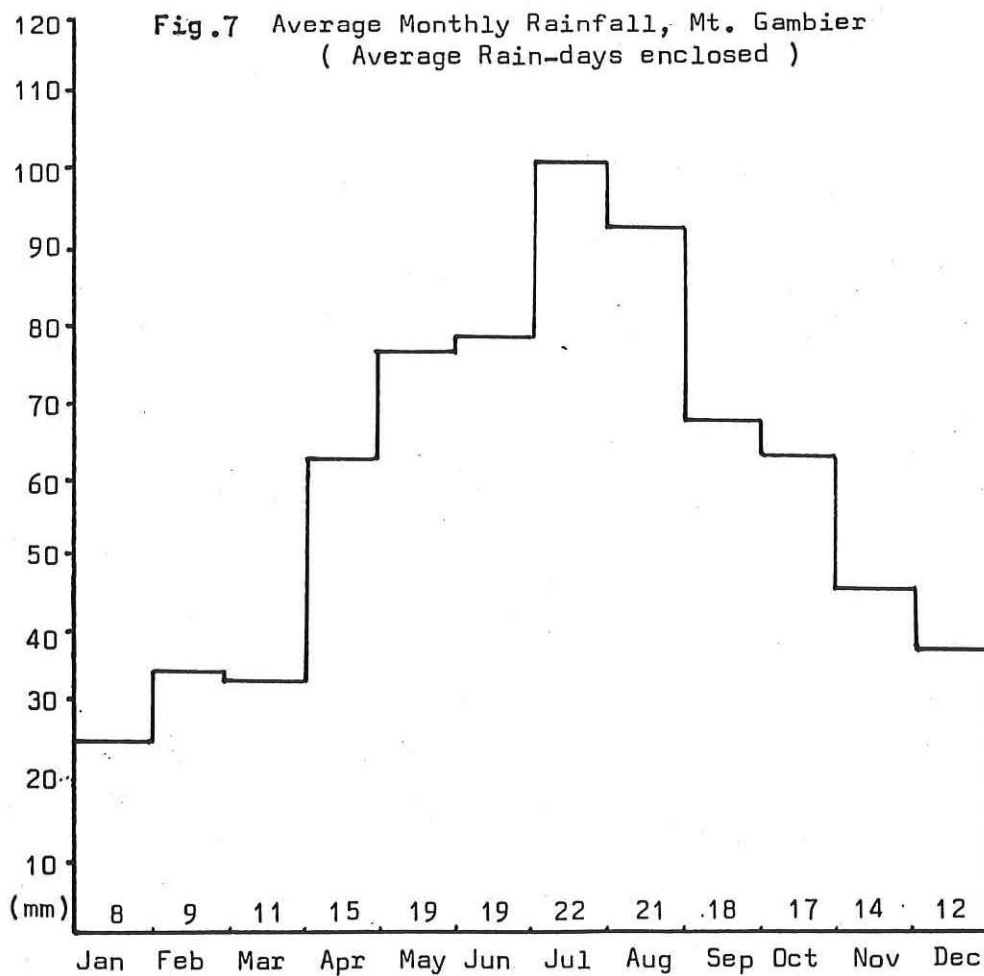
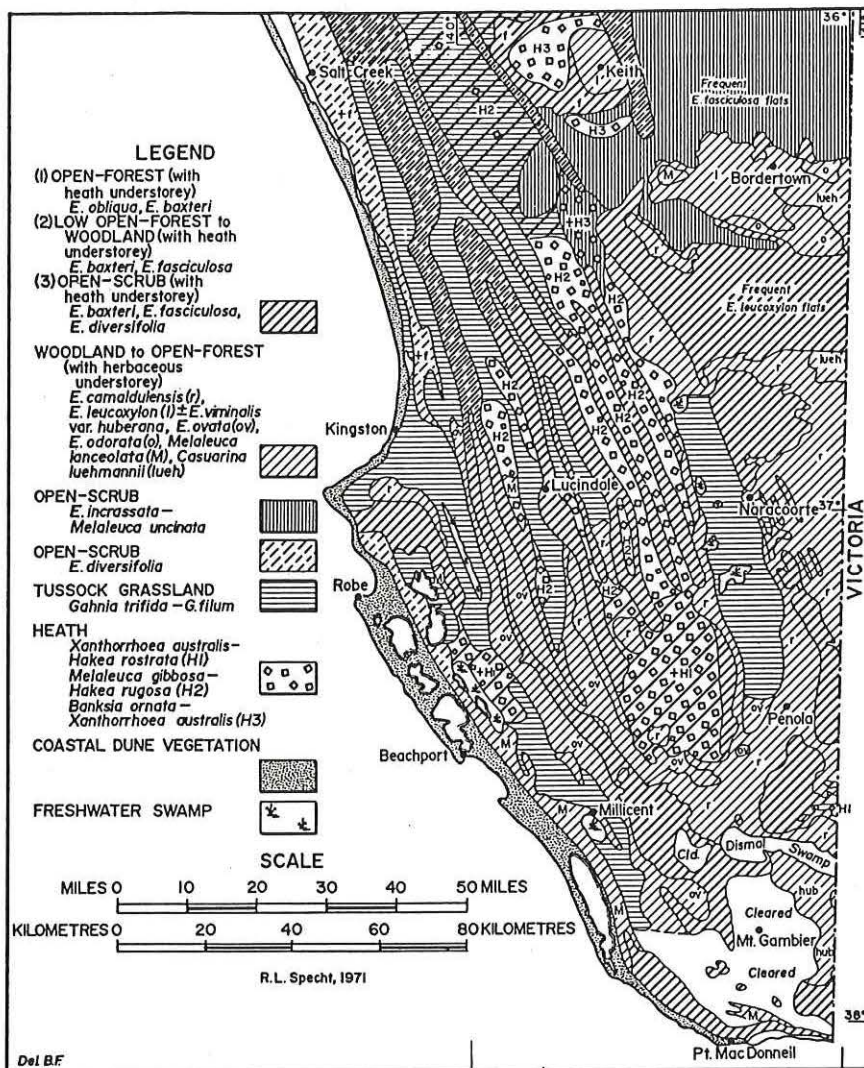


Fig. 8 The Vegetation of the South East



(Reproduced from Specht, 1972)

march of six to seven miles through swamps and forests of sheoaks, we gained the sandhills of the sea shore.⁵

Such a landscape was typical of the flats in winter. The meaning of the two most frequently used versions of the tribal name both refer to country of this kind. Booandik, the name most commonly used by the people themselves, probably derives from the word 'Boo-in', or reeds.⁶ Bunganditj, a name used by western Victorian tribes to describe these people, has its root in 'Pung', meaning rushes.⁷ The Bunganditj were the 'people of the reeds' (or rushes).

The two most dominant features of the local environment were clearly the coast and the swamps. The swamps in particular placed strict limitations on movement and imparted a distinct seasonality to the economic strategies adopted by the people.

ii. Economic Life

Some contemporary observations of Bunganditj life convey the impression that the people were forever on the verge of starvation. Duncan Stewart described their economic life in the following terms -

The men eked out a precarious living by hunting; the women dug roots and gathered small fruit in season. A dead

5. G.A. Angas, Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand (London 1847), pp.156-7.

6. Smith, p.128.

7. J. Dawson, Australian Aborigines (Melbourne 1881), p.xxxiv of the vocabulary.

whale cast ashore occasionally provided them with a feast they delighted to recall to mind in later years.⁸

The idea that the people 'eked out a precarious living' was based more on appearances than reality. Failure to recognise what was generally a rich economic life resulted from a false equation of material poverty with actual poverty. It was a simple logic: the people looked poor, therefore they must have been poor. Another reason for this belief was the fact that once their land had been taken from them they inherited European poverty - being forced to live on the outskirts of towns and accept meagre handouts from Government ration stations. This was often the element of their 'economic life' most visible to white society.

Smith described their diet as consisting of "kangaroo, fish, emu, opossum, fine roots, candart seeds, 'meenatt', and honeysuckle".⁹ There are two important components of their diet she did not list, though she was aware of them: the abundant and varied birdlife attracted to the vast areas of water, as well as the fruits and berries that grew along the coast. Such a diet was indeed rich compared to the standard settlers' fare of meat, damper and black tea.¹⁰ An early settler described the menu at a corroboree he witnessed at Leake's station, probably in the winter of 1851 -

During a cooeong the blacks had plenty of their own food - koora (kangaroo), kuroomoo (opossum), perter (white ants)

8. T. MacCourt and H. Mincham, 'Duncan Stewart 1834-1913', in Two Notable South Australians (Beachport 1977), p.62.

9. Smith, p.xi.

10. M. Cannon, Life in the Country (Melbourne 1978), p.44

cow (grubs), and boo, porteg,
 lepardy, moorah, bom, moeeyup,
 and marp (edible roots).¹¹

Perhaps it was the nature of the food, rather than the question of its abundance, that conditioned European attitudes toward Aboriginal economic life.

As hunters and gatherers who rarely stored food, the Bunganditj were forced to exploit the economic resources as they came into season. Given the region's environment, the exploitation of the food resources can be said to fall into two distinct phases, that of the summer and the winter. I will describe their economic life in terms of a summer and winter subsistence strategy. Some food resources were clearly seasonal, being available only at certain times of the year. Other foods, even though they may have been available at most times, are classified as seasonal for a number of reasons: abundance, environmental factors conditioning the relative ease, or difficulty, of capture or collection, and preference.

Winter Subsistence Strategy

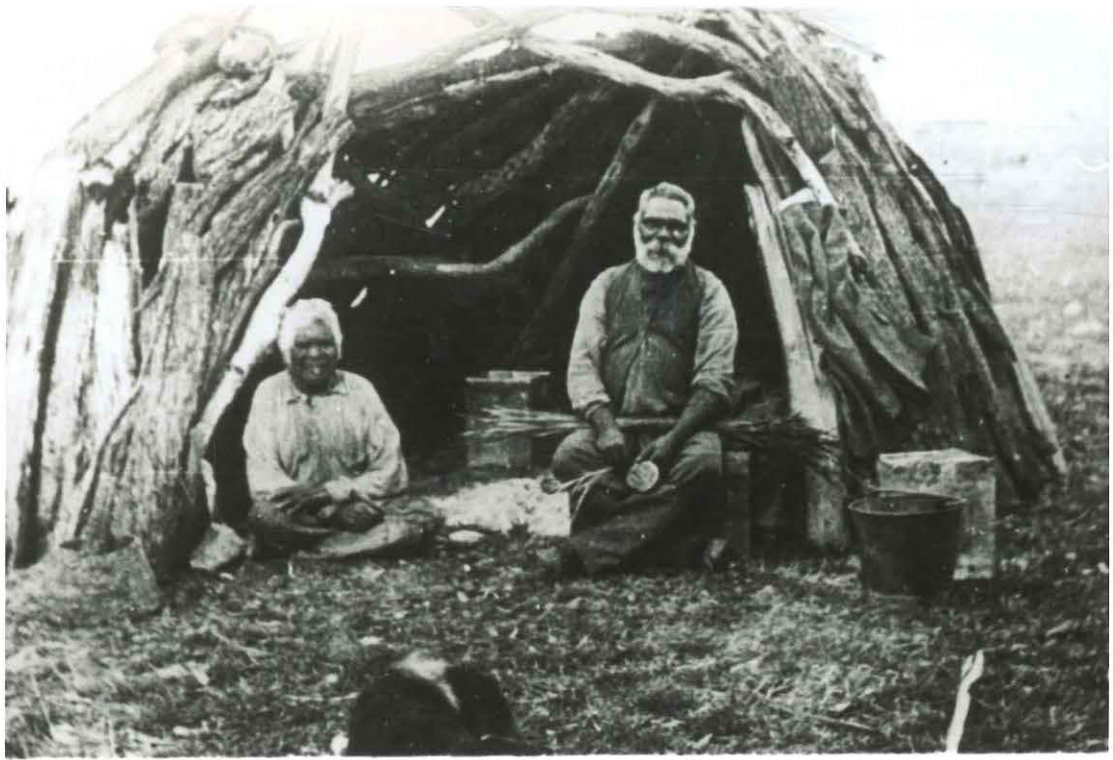
For the Bunganditj, winter was the harshest and longest season of the year; the heavy rainfall months were April through to October. During this time the swamps gradually expanded forcing people to seek dry ground on the uplands of the Woakwine Range, Mount Burr and Mount Gambier. Strong, relatively waterproof huts were built during this season, particularly in positions along

11. H. Hickmer (Panangharry) 'The Early Recollections of Glencoe, Lake Leake and the South-East' in The Border Watch, 30 May 1903 (No. 1).

PLATE 1.

a. Aborigines camped east of Frew Park, Mt Gambier, 1899.

b. South Eastern Aborigines, Yallum, about 1890.



the range, that provided protection from the prevailing winds.¹² Travelling through the South-East in May 1845 Robinson described these huts as "strongly built with logs in the form of half a beehive and turfed over."¹³ In some cases they might have been covered with skins and later, during the contact period, blankets were used. Each hut could accommodate at least six adults.

Luebbers, basing his information on archeological investigations, claims that groups of 10 or more huts were common on the Woakwine.¹⁴ Robinson, arriving at Lake Mundy late in May 1845, discovered a camp consisting of 11 huts.¹⁵ It seems that for at least part of the winter quite large groups assembled in temporary villages. In 1847 the Mount Gambier police observed "a great meeting of natives in a stringy bark range" near Tarpeena - it lasted from early June until at least August.¹⁶ Such gatherings were associated with specific economic activities, such as animal drives.

For much of the winter mammals were a favoured and relatively abundant food source. As the swamps gradually spread out across the flats these animals - kangaroos, wallabies, wombats and possums, among others - were forced to seek higher,

12. T.D. Campbell, J.B. Cleland and P.S. Hossfeld, 'The Aborigines of the Lower South-East of South Australia', in Rec. of Sth. Aust. Mus. Vol 8(3), 1946, p.468.

13. G.A. Robinson 'Report of a Journey 1100 miles to the Tribes of the North-West and Western Interior during the months of March, April, and May of the Current Year' (1845), in New South Wales' Governor's Despatches, Vol. 51, 1846, MS A.1240 (ML).

14. R. Luebbers, Meals and Menus : A study of change in Prehistoric Coastal Settlements in South Australia. Ph.D. Thesis, A.N.U. 1978, p.71.

15. Robinson, 'Report of a Journey...', May 1845 (ML).

16. Mt. Gambier Police, Journal, GRG 5, 151/1, June 1847 (SAA).

more resource-rich ground. In this way environmental restrictions created a situation of abundance. These animals were generally hunted by small parties of men, sometimes with the assistance of a dingo pack, however, the same environmental factors which created their abundance favoured a more intensive form of exploitation - the drive.¹⁷ This involved the herding of animals into or through restricted areas where they could be more easily killed. One place where this particular hunting technique was practised was the Narrow Neck, a natural gap in the Woakwine Range at the southern end of Rivoli Bay.¹⁸ Women and children would spread out across the range and drive the larger animals, especially kangaroos and wallabies, toward this gap where the men would be waiting to slaughter them. As previously mentioned, such techniques might have been favoured to support the large camps known to have formed on the range in winter.

Besides their obvious value as a food source, these animals provided by-products of both practical and ceremonial importance. Kangaroos, for example, provided skins for cloaks and covering of huts, particularly important in winter, as well as muscle sinews for binding, bones that were sharpened into knives, and teeth for the pegs of spear-throwers. Possum skins

17. D. Stewart, Notebook 1853, D.2609(L), G.67, p.5 (SAA).

18. Campbell et al, p.455.

besides being made into cloaks, were used as a ceremonial girdle by dancers during a corroboree, and the feathers of the emu and other birds were likewise used as decorations on these occasions.¹⁹

Much of the economic focus during winter was on the swamps surrounding the uplands where the Bunganditj were camped. Small swamp fish were one aspect of the diet and a technique developed to collect them was the construction of weirs. Angas observed such a construction at Rivoli Bay -

The natives had built weirs of mud, like a dam wall, extending from side to side, for the purpose of taking very small mucilaginous fishes that abound in the water when the swamps are flooded.²⁰

Angas saw other weirs in the shallow waters of Lake Frome in the vicinity of which he came across a camp where these fish were being fried on a fire. The fish were probably scooped out of the water with large, cone-shaped baskets. They might also have been collected from baskets positioned behind narrow openings in the

Border Watch,

19. Hickmer, 22 July 1903 (No. 4).

20. Angas, p.155.

dam walls, the natural, if sluggish, flow of water carrying them into these traps. Tadpoles and aquatic beetles were also collected from the swamps. At the same camp where Angas found fish being fried in the fire, a pile of beetles ^{was} ~~were~~ being roasted. Information about the types of roots collected in winter is scarce but the roots of the bulrushes certainly formed part of the diet. Robinson considered them a staple among the people who inhabited the 'lagoons and morasses' in the area of Lake Mundy.²¹

Waterfowl and other birdlife existed in great abundance and variety among the swamps during winter. In his reminiscences, Panangharry, a station hand at Glencoe, described the method employed by an Aboriginal to catch ducks on Lake Leake, the same method would have been used among the swamps -

It was a wet, stormy day. He had just brought two black ducks (perner) he had snared the day before, and noticing the ducks swimming about, started off, having his perner prahm with him, making a long detour, so as to get the ducks windward, and a favourable place for sneaking on them. It was some time before we noticed him in pretty deep water, with a shield of rushes in front of him, quite close to the ducks. He very soon had four, pulling them in and breaking their necks under water.²²

The 'prahm' was a snaring rod, a long tea-tree stick with a noose of woven reeds attached to one end. The shield, more

21. Robinson 'Report of a Journey...', May 1845. (ML)

22. Hickmer, 30 May 1903 (No. 1).

accurately a hide, was made from vegetation typical of the birds' habitat, for example: "cherry tree, or wattle mixture for pigeons, and rushes for ducks."²³

In winter the Bunganditj camped on the high ground, notably along the Woakwine Range, and hunted the animals driven from the flats as the swamps expanded. The surrounding swamps not only provided a source of fish, tadpoles and aquatic beetles but also birdlife, particularly waterfowl. Late in the winter, however, life became harsher, some food sources perhaps being over-exploited, while others entered a dormant stage. At this time, conditions were at their most uncomfortable with the swamps at their peak and rainfall almost incessant.

Summer Subsistence Strategy

Summer in this region is quite short and mild, the low rainfall months being November through to March. During this time most of the swamps drained, opening up the countryside, however the focus of economic activity was the coast. In the drier, warmer conditions bands would have generally left the huts on the uplands for temporary camps on the coast. Windbreaks, rather than huts, were the usual form of habitation.

Seafood was a prime economic resource of this season. Fishing was a prominent activity and though there are no contemporary descriptions, two types of fishing were undoubtedly practised: spearing and netting.²⁴ Of the fish named in Bunganditj

23. Hickmer, 30 May 1903 (No. 1).

24. Campbell et al, p.485.

vocabularies the shark (noon-kolar), sting-ray (marma) and eel (guia) would usually have been speared from reefs while mullet (kok-ber) and trout (durkurt) were caught with nets. No doubt more species than this were caught but the only others named were the octopus (kol-ong-ke1), seal (moo-a) and whale (kunt-er-bool). Whales provided an occasional feast when they beached, but this usually happened in winter.²⁵

Crustaceans and shellfish were also available at this time of the year. One writer observed of the Aborigines on the station where he worked, "they would often be away over a month, and would visit the sea coast and bring back crayfish packed in seaweed, quite alive."²⁶ These salt water crayfish were collected from the reefs and rocky ledges on the shore. Freshwater crayfish were gathered from the coastal lakes. Between November and February, when the tides were at their lowest, shellfish were also gathered.²⁷

Fruits and berries growing along the coastal dunes ripened between February and March. These included the muntrie (munter), kangaroo apple (me-a-kee), pig-face (keenga), native 'currants' (ngoor-le), native cherry (tar-ang), and a native apple (ngurp). Panangharry described two of the fruits collected by the Aborigines while they were on the coast seeking crayfish -

Muntries (small berries, in shape, appearance, and flavour, very much like an apple - reenyah), and pigface. They used to relish the latter very much; it was the only saline thing they had to

25. MacCourt, p.62.

26. Hickmer, 1 Aug 1903 (No. 5).

27. C. Smith, Diary, in Papers of the Smith Family, PRG 144, p.23 (SAA).

eat, but grew, like the muntries,
near the coast. Some of them would
make special visits to the nearest
parts where they grew, and bring
supplies to the others.²⁸

Ngurps were described by Smith as "native apples, that grew
plentifully on the creeping shrub on the sandhills near the
coast."²⁹ This particular fruit attracted bands from
neighbouring tribes in Western Victoria, according to Dawson,
who refers to the 'nurt' growing abundantly on creepers among
the dunes at the mouth of the Glenelg River -

It was very much sort after, and when
ripe, is gathered in great quantities by
the natives who come from long distances
to feast on it, and reside in the locality
while it lasts. In collecting the berries
they pull up the plants, which run along
the surface of the sand in great lengths,
and carry them on their backs to their
camps to pick off the fruit at their
leisure.³⁰

The attraction of this fruit made the mouth of the Glenelg River
an annual meeting place for the Bunganditj and tribes from
Western Victoria.³¹ The regularity of these meetings made
them a focus for trade: greenstone axes, quarried at Mount

28. Hickmer, 1 Aug. 1903 (No. 5).

29. Smith, Diary, p.26. (SAA)

30. Dawson p. 22.

31. R.H. Laurantos 'Aboriginal Spatial Organization and Population:
South Western Victoria Reconsidered', in Arch. and Phys. Anthropol.
in Oceania, Vol. XII, No. 3, pp.15-16.

William in Central Victoria, and found in the South-East, might well have been traded on these occasions.³²

Roots and tubers also constituted part of the diet in summer. They might have been particularly favoured at this time as rhizome growth was at its peak. The menu at a corroboree, previously described, included seven varieties of roots. Smith specifically named four edible roots of which only the bulrush (mir-nat) and fern root (maa-aa) can easily be identified.

During the summer and autumn the local birdlife dispersed among the coastal lakes and nearby rivers, being joined by vast flocks of migratory birds. These birds were particularly vulnerable while nesting in spring - their eggs were also sought. One of the hunting techniques employed was to disturb the birds that had settled in trees and as they flew off bring them down with throwing sticks.³³ Others were caught with snaring rods, used in combination with bush hides, on the ground as well as in the lakes and swamps. Angas described a particular form of snaring practised by the people of Lacepede Bay using what he called "wickerwork snares" -

Near these snares were formed small covered places, just large enough for a person to squat in; the native, concealing himself in his ambush, with his snaring rod protruding from a small aperture in the side, imitates the voice of the birds,

32. I. McBryde and A. Watchman, 'The Distribution of Greenstone Axes in Southern Australia : A Preliminary Report', in Mankind Vol. 10, No. 3, 1976, p.170.

33. Smith, The Booandik, p.40-41.

and, as they alight upon the wickerwork,
dexterously slips the noose around their
necks, and snares them into his retreat.³⁴

While the various methods used to kill birds might not have been strongly seasonal, in summer the focus of activity shifted to the coastal lakes where the birdlife existed in abundance and where the Bunganditj were based exploiting other food sources.

With the emphasis on fishing and the collection of fruits, the hunting of animals such as kangaroos and wallabies was relatively neglected. There are two locations, however, where drives are reported to have occurred. In the gully of the Woakwine Range, near Rivoli Bay, a large pit was dug and covered with brushwood; animals were driven off the surrounding flats into this pit where they were killed.³⁵ The narrow strip of land between the shore of Rivoli Bay and Lake George provided another strategic location into which game was driven and speared.³⁶ Both of these locations might have been unsuitable for hunting during winter, due to flooding.

In the summer months the focus of economic activity was the coast where bands gathered in open camps particularly to fish and collect fruit then in season. The migratory birds, attracted to the coastal lakes, provided variety in the diet and were particularly vulnerable when nesting. With the emphasis on these food sources the larger game would not have been hunted to the same extent as in winter. The draining of the swamps opened up the countryside in summer and this, along with the attraction of local fruit, resulted in a greater number of inter-tribal meetings.

34. Angas, p.149.

35. Campbell et al, p.479.

36. *ibid.*

iii. Economic Ethos

The Bunganditj, like all Aboriginal societies, had an ethos governing their economic life, specifically cautioning against greed and promoting an equitable distribution of resources. One myth, in the cycle concerning Craitbul, illustrates this ethos: it records that when he created the kangaroos they were tame and easily killed but that an act of greed caused him to change his mind and make them wild -

One day the eldest of the boys saw a "brutput" (parrot) perched on the side of Mount Gambier on a stump, making a great noise - "ca-ca-ca". He climbed up to see what all the noise was about, and found a fine fat leg of a kangaroo, which had evidently been "planted" by his brother. He was naturally enraged by the deceit of his brother; and told Craitbul about it; and Craitbul breathed a high and stormy wind into the kangaroos' noses, which made them wild and take flight at the sight of man.³⁷

The story teller related that from this time on "Berrin" (Mount Gambier) was no longer a paradise for Craitbul and his family. In this and other stories greed is portrayed as a socially disruptive force.

A practical manifestation of the sharing ethos was the existence of food-sharing partnerships -

The natives of the south-east corner of South Australia have a kind of partnership, formed in boyhood and

37. Smith, The Booandik, p.15.

continued through life, in the division of kangaroo meat. When a kangaroo is killed, each partner takes a specified portion. As each man has some eight to ten partners, the whole tribe is mixed up in it.³⁸

Such an agreement was particularly wise because it meant that even in the worst of times most people would be assured of food. What sensible hunter would refuse to share his game with a less successful comrade knowing that on occasions he too might be unsuccessful? These partnerships, given such a broad base, made all hunted game the common resource of the group. A partnership system of sorts might have been involved in the feasting that occurred when whales were stranded. A European contemporary of the Bunganditj at Rivoli Bay said that when a whale was beached the local group sent up smoke signals to inform neighbouring bands of the event. Rules of trespass were temporarily waived, allowing them to attend the feast.³⁹ The local group might have been obliged to invite these bands because of existing partnership agreements.

One feature of Bunganditj totemism is that it appears to have been a method of dividing up the available economic resources -

A man does not kill, or use as food, any animal of the same subdivision with himself, excepting when they express sorrow for having to eat their wingong (friends) or tumanang (flesh).⁴⁰

38. A.W. Howitt, The Native Tribes of South-East Australia (London 1904), p.68.

39. Campbell, et al, p.480.

40. L. Fison and A.W. Howitt, Kamilaroi and Kurnai (Melbourne 1880), Stewart, quoted on p.169.

It was believed that those who broke this law would die. The practical impact of these restrictions in hunting and gathering is impossible to judge, but it certainly illustrates a principle of conservation operating in the economic activities of the people.

A final point to be made about this method is that the behaviour it required in the conduct of Bunganditj life was also exhibited towards the Europeans. Smith reports on several occasions that the Aborigines freely gave her some of the fruit and crayfish they had collected.⁴¹ Once, while travelling through the bush, some Aboriginal men presented her with a gift of birds that they killed on the spot.⁴² Men on Glencoe station made similar offerings to Robert Leake.⁴³ While the Bunganditj soon became acquainted with the moneyed economy of the Europeans much confusion and conflict resulted, on both sides of the frontier, from ignorance of the other's economic ethos.

41. Smith, *Diary*, p.26.

42. *ibid*, The Booandik, p.40-41.

43. Hickmer, 1 Aug. 1903 (No. 5).

THREE

Social and Political Organization

i. Social Structure, Kinship and Marriage

The basic social division of the Bunganditj, moieties, divided the tribe into two halves, known as 'Kumite' and 'Krokee'. Membership was determined by descent, in this case matrilineal, and the moieties were exogamous; a Kumite man, for example, was obliged to marry a Krokee woman and the children of that couple, being Krokee, had to marry Kumites.¹ The moieties in turn were divided into totems; the Bunganditj referred to their totems as 'tumanung', meaning 'their own flesh'.² There were five Kumite and four Krokee 'tumanung' (Fig. 9). Elkin described these groups as social totemic clans which he defined as a group of people related in one line only, who professed a relationship to a common natural species, were exogamous, and claimed descent from a common ancestress.³ Smith and Stewart claimed that the totem did not affect the selection of marriage partners, provided that one married into a clan of the opposite moiety.⁴

The local group, or territorial clan, was the basic population unit of the tribe, usually consisting of several families who lived and hunted together on land that was handed down from father to son.⁵ The men of the territorial clan were associated with their land spiritually; the land was the location of their spirit-homes and the focus of their cult-life - membership of

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1. C. Smith, The Booandik Tribe of South Australian Aborigines (Adelaide 1880), p.ix.
 2. T. MacCourt and H. Mincham, 'Duncan Stewart 1884-1913', in Two Notable South Australians (Beachport 1971), p.62.
 3. A.P. Elkin, The Australian Aborigines (Sydney 1974), p.117.
 4. Smith, p.x and Stewart in MacCourt, p.62.
 5. Regarding the handing down of land from father to son, see Smith p.xi. An alternate name for the local group was 'band'. H. Laurandos discusses the nature of this social unit in 'Aboriginal Spatial Organization and Population: South-Western Victoria Reconsidered' in Arch. and Phys. Anthropol. in Oceania, Vol. XII, No. 3, 1977.

Bunganditj Moieties and Totems^{*}

Classes	Totems	Sub-Totems
Kroki	Wereo ti-tree	duck, wallaby, owl, crayfish, etc.
	Wirmal an owl	?
	Murna an edible root	bustard, quail, small kangaroo, etc.
	Karaal white crestless cockatoo	kangaroo, she-oak, summer, sun, autumn, wind, etc.
Kumite	Mula fish-hawk	smoke, Banksia, etc.
	Parangal pelican	dog, Acacia melanoxylon, fire, frost, etc.
	Waa crow	lightening, thunder, rain, clouds, hail, winter, etc.
	Wila black cockatoo	moon, stars, etc.
	Karato a harmless snake	fish, eels, seals, stringybark tree, etc.

^{*} List published in A. W. Howitt's, The Native Tribes of South East Australia (London 1904), p. 123.

which was "limited to the males and gained through initiation."⁶ Patrilocality, the principle of residence among the Bunganditj, meant that when women married they had to live in their husband's group.⁷ The men were the only permanent residents in the territorial clan, the women of the group having married into it or being destined to marry out. In following the seasonal round of economic activity a number of local groups often joined together, sometimes for a period of months, to exploit particular resources.⁸ During the contact period, local population groups of between 50 and 100 individuals were often observed. It is likely that they consisted of several groups combined, particularly as they are mentioned in relation to sheep stealing - sheep being an abundant economic resource that invited co-operative exploitation.⁹

The members of the tribe belonged to two distinct groups, the territorial clan and the social totemic clan. Members of the territorial clan, or local group, were co-residents of a particular territory, while members of the social clan were scattered throughout the tribal land, and perhaps beyond. This system of social organization resulted in an individual having loyalties to his local group and also, through descent, to the local groups of his mother's brothers and mother's mother's brothers - members of his social totemic clan.

6. Elkin, p.119.

7. Patrilocality, i.e., the practice of a woman leaving her own camp to live with her husband, is never directly referred to in the sources but it is strongly implied. Stewart, for example, relates the story of a woman who lived with her husband at Rivoli Bay but "belonged to the Maria Creek tribe in her young days". With the death of her husband and child she returned to her people at Guichen Bay. See Stewart in MacCourt, p.76.

8. The Journal of the Mount Gambier Police, GRG 5, 151/1, records such a gathering at "a Stringy Bark Range about 10 miles from Mr Watson's station", near Penola, in 1849. Entries for June 3 and June 26, 1849, indicated that the gathering lasted at least a month.

9. Many references to groups of 50 or more, associated with sheep stealing, in the Colonial Secretary's Office, Inward Correspondence, GRG 24/6, e.g. CSO 1527/44, 589/45, 681/46, 1131/47.

Elkin commented on the implications of this organization -

the tribe is not just an aggregate of individuals nor of inter-related individual families; rather it is a family of countries bound together by those sentiments which function between members of a family and its near relatives.¹⁰

A feature of the Aboriginal kinship system is that a limited number of relationship terms are used and extended to cover the whole tribe, as well as outsiders. As Elkin explains, its "effect is to enlarge the family for the purpose of social behaviour until it embraces the whole tribe" -

by classifying various groups of the community under the normal relationship terms of mother, father, 'uncle', 'aunt', and so on, going no further up and down than grandparent and grandchild, nor as a rule, collaterally (sideways) than second cousin.¹¹

The existence of this classificatory system of kinship among the Bunganditj is indicated by their relationship terminology. Father and father's brothers were referred to as 'marm'. At another level, father's father and mother's father were both called 'koon-ap'; father's mother and mother's mother were 'kro'. Relations by marriage as well as blood were classed in this way: 'yowrine' meaning 'my father's sister' was also used for 'my mother's brother's wife'.¹² On this basis an individual knew his precise relationship

10. Elkin, p.113.

11. *ibid*, p.85

12. C. Smith lists Bunganditj relationship terms on pp.137-8 of The Booandik Tribe...

with everyone else in the tribe. In the event that a visitor's relationship was unknown, one was determined on the basis of the visitor's age, totem and local or social grouping.¹³

In Aboriginal society relationships are the basis of social behaviour. The best surviving examples of kin-governed behaviour in Bunganditj society are those pertaining to in-laws. A father-in-law, for instance, spoke to his son-in-law in a low tone of voice and used a phraseology different to that used in normal conversation.¹⁴ A mother-in-law and her son-in-law were obliged to avoid one another.¹⁵ Dawson described the extremes to which this practice was taken in Gunditjmara society. The following passage describes the behaviour observed by a woman's female relatives toward her husband -

The girl's mother and her aunts may neither look at him nor speak to him from the time of their betrothal till his death. Should he come to the camp where they are living, he must lodge at a friend's wuurn, as he is not allowed to go within fifty yards of their habitation; and should he meet them on a path they immediately leave it, clap their hands, cover up their heads with rugs, walk in a stooping position, and speak in whispers till he has gone past.¹⁶

13. Elkin, p.88 and 90.

14. Smith, pp.4-5.

15. E.M. Curr, The Australian Race (Melbourne 1886-87), p.461. Asreported by D. Stewart.

16. J. Dawson, Australian Aborigines (Melbourne 1881), p.29.

Kinship governed such things as the way in which family groups seated themselves in camp or at a tribal meeting, and the way in which food was apportioned at a meal.¹⁷ Kinship codified relationships which, in turn, governed social behaviour.

At the heart of the Bunganditj marriage system was the custom of 'wootambau', or exchanging. Smith described it in the following way -

Infants are betrothed to one another by their parents. Girls are betrothed by the father, with the concurrence of his elder brothers, into some family which has a daughter to give in exchange.¹⁸

As part of the exchange the future husbands, or their near relatives, were expected to present gifts to their prospective mothers-in-law.¹⁹ This practice continued until the marriage took place. The words for marriage were 'woo en' (given) and 'manen' (taken).²⁰ The evident aims of the system were to maintain the numbers of women in each group and to create an alliance between them. As not every family had both a son and daughter sometimes another relation, not already promised, was exchanged.²¹ Whilst most people were betrothed as infants, it was possible for such an agreement to be broken. Elopement, for example, while not condoned, was permitted.

17. Elkin, pp.142-3, a general discussion. Stewart in MacCourt, p.63, in a discussion of tribal organization and totemism D. Stewart refers to food-sharing partnerships apparently based on totemic affiliation. Also discussed in R.Brough-Smyth, The Aborigines of Victoria (Melbourne 1888), Vol. I, p.235.

18. Smith, p. 3.

19. *ibid.*

20. *ibid.*, p.5.

21. Though there is no specific reference to this in Bunganditj literature it was common among neighbouring tribes, for example, G. Taplin, The Narrinyeri (Adelaide 1879), p.8.

provided that the couple were of the appropriate moieties and an exchange could be arranged.²²

Marriage in this society was not so much a partnership between individuals as a contract between corporations. This is illustrated by the treatment of widows; when a man died, his wife, after a period of mourning, usually partnered her deceased husband's brother.²³ The custom ensured that the woman and her family were maintained and that she was not lost to the local group. While it was customary for a widow to marry her husband's brother, it was not obligatory. A widow could marry a suitor provided that he promised to give a sister in exchange.²⁴

A widow was allowed a period of mourning after her husband's death, but as an unattached woman in camp, her behaviour was regarded with some suspicion. If she waited for too long before going to her new husband pressure would begin to be applied. One way to do this was to publicly express condemnation in song. Such a song was recorded and translated by Tindale -

Dallying to get a young man, a young man
with whiskers; your widowhood is over;
leave the young lad; you are a 'several-years-
widow'; be careful, we are not unmindful of
your wiles.²⁵

This song belonged to the Tangenekald of the Coorong, north-western neighbours of the Bunganditj. Tindale claimed that if the widow persisted in her ways she would be ordered to go to her man, under threat of being 'boned!.

22. Smith, p.13. See also A.W. Howitt, The Native Tribes of South East Australia (London 1904), p.246.

23. Smith, p.13 and Stewart in MacCourt, p.87.

24. Smith, p.13.

25. N.B. Tindale, 'Native Songs of the South East of South Australia', in Trans. of the Roy. Soc. of Sth. Aust., Vol. 61, 1937, p.117.

Another important feature of the Bunganditj marriage system was the practice of polygyny. Smith wrote that most men had two wives but that some had as many as five.²⁶ Kootawar, a 'pangal' or shaman from Rivoli Bay, had eight wives.²⁷ G.A. Robinson's census of the Woollowero shows that those men described as 'chiefs', or as being influential, invariably had more wives than the other members of their respective groups.²⁸ Dawson observed a similar pattern among the Gunditjmarra: he claimed that 'chiefs' were allowed as many wives as they wanted, that their sons were allowed two, but that 'commoners', as he put it, were allowed only one wife at a time.²⁹ There was an obvious equivalence between the number of wives a man had and the amount of authority he enjoyed.

Though most men had at least two wives, some women had two husbands. The nature of this relationship was explained to Stewart by an Aboriginal girl from Mount Gambier -

If my father's brother 'plays with' my mother he will be 'my other father' (marmine wau) and she will call him 'nganape' (husband) and both men will refer of her (sic) as 'our wife', 'malangalo'. If my father's brother did not come for her he would be 'my wait' and he would call me by the same term.³⁰

Stewart was told by the Aborigines that it was common for brothers to have a joint wife.³¹

26. Smith, p.5.

27. *ibid*, p.77.

28. G.A. Robinson, Letterbooks 1841-45, Vol. 26, MS A.7647, No.1484 (ML) see Appendix II.

29. Dawson, p.27.

30. Stewart in MacCourt, p.85.

31. *ibid*.

ii. Authority and the Maintenance of Social Order

According to Smith, the Bunganditj had "no acknowledged chiefs" but were ruled by a convention of elders. These men, drawn from each local group, made up a council which occasionally convened for a 'murapeena', or meeting.³² Patchuerimen, an Aboriginal from Mount Schank, spoke of the role his father played in the tribe -

The Schank was my father's land, which he seldom left, except to act as a chief in quarrels and disputes, to prevent bloodshed.³³

The phrase 'to act as chief' indicates the informal nature of authority; it was a role played as the circumstances demanded rather than an office held by right. Tradition and knowledge were the foundations of authority, the elders were the custodians of tribal lore and their knowledge of the environment guided economic activities.³⁴

The association of age with leadership is indicated by the European aliases given to some prominent Aborigines: Patchueriman's father, for example, was known as 'Old Man Duncan'.³⁵ The group occupying territory at the southern end of Lake Bonney was led by Woolcothawin, or 'Old Man Dick'.³⁶ Of this group's involvement in sheep thefts and violence in the area, the local Magistrate, Evelyn Sturt, wrote -

The leader of the blacks, known as 'Old Man Dick', was seen with them and is the most mischievous native in this part, heading on all occasions any outrage that may occur.³⁷

32. Smith, p.x.

33. *ibid*, p.x.

34. Elkin, p.114.

35. Smith, p.119.

36. C.S.O., No. 1131/1847.

37. *ibid*.

The leader of a group at Mount Burr was 'Old Man Bull', the person selected to show the Governor around the local district when he visited Leake's station in 1845.³⁸

Individuals within the tribe belonged to two distinct corporations: the local group and the social clan. The nature and function of each group differed, and they both had their respective leaders. No discussion of this occurs in the literature concerning the Bunganditj but a lead as to how affairs were conducted, given two separate authorities, is found in Howitt's description of the Wotjobaluk -

As the totems were scattered over the whole country, and as there was a Headman in each local division, the men of totems other than his had to obey him in general matters, while they had to obey the head of their own totem in matters relating to it.³⁹

Like the Wotjobaluk, the Bunganditj determined descent matrilineally but were patrilocal. This meant that a variety of totems were represented in each local group, consequently, a convention, like the one described, was needed to avoid conflicts of interest between the two groups.

Throughout the tribe certain elders commanded greater respect and exerted more influence than others. Based on Sturt's assessment, Woolcothawin might have been such an individual but the exact nature and extent of his influence is not indicated. Among the Woolowero, Robinson claimed that two people, Mingburn of the Tarebung section and Koort Kirrup of the Palapnul, exerted the most influence

38. South Australian Register, 27 Feb. 1856.

39. Howitt, p.305.

within the tribe.⁴⁰ An incident, involving Koort Kirrup, illustrates the extent of his influence, it occurred during Robinson's visit to the Glenelg River in 1841 -

In June of that year he planned the death of Eurodep, a principal chief of the Jarcoorts, attached to the party of the Chief Protector - Eurodep was slain in a parley (in the absence of the Chief Protector) by Pongnorer, a fighting man of the Wanedeets.⁴¹

Koort Kirrup, the leader of the Palapnul section of the tribe, had sufficient influence to order a man from another section to kill Robinson's guide. While individuals such as Koort Kirrup had authority throughout the tribe, the various sections, or local groups, rarely acted in concert. The nearest they came, during the contact period, was when a group of 400 people drove off an attack by settlers who were trying to recover sheep. However, in this case, the group had formed for a murapeena, and their actions were purely defensive.⁴² The local group was not only the basic economic unit, it was the basic political unit.

The murapeena, or corroboree, was the focus of social activity and the forum in which disputes were resolved. Of this gathering, Stewart wrote -

A murapeena usually occurred at irregular intervals by arrangement between two or three men who had a grievance to ventilate; and possibly for tribal ceremonials associated with the initiation of some lads.⁴³

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40. See Appendix II, also G.A. Robinson, 'Report of an expedition to the Aboriginal Tribes of the Western Interior during the months of March, April, June and August 1841...', in Letterbooks 1841-45, Vol. 26, MS A.7047, 23 June 1841 (ML).
41. G.A. Robinson, Letterbooks 1841-45, Vol. 26, 29 July 1845, Correspondence No. 1484 (ML).
42. The Portland Guardian, 9 March 1844.
43. Stewart in MacCourt, p.64.

Smith described a 'trial' she witnessed at a murapeena held at Rivoli Bay. The case concerned a man named Permalooan who left three wives behind when he was taken to Adelaide to be tried for spearing a cow. While he was away one wife was killed by a suitor for refusing his advances and another, Makooning, went off with a local man named Little Harry. With the return of Permalooan, the question of Makooning's relationship with Little Harry was raised at a murapeena. The elders decided that Makooning could remain with Little Harry provided that he gave Permalooan a number of blankets and that he received several blows from a club.⁴⁴

More serious transgressions of tribal law were judged by the elders in secret and when the punishment of death was imposed the sentence was carried out secretly -

At a convenient time after the verdict, a bush kangaroo hunt would be arranged in some scrubby lonely spot, care being taken that the doomed man was one of the party. Some kangaroos having been killed, washed and partaken of, a man previously chosen stealthily hit the doomed man on the head with the booambah, and killed him.⁴⁵

The Gunditjmara had tribal executioners to carry out such tasks.⁴⁶

One means of maintaining order, without resorting to physical punishment, was to use cautionary songs in a public display directed at individuals who broke the law or offended public morality. The song in which a widow was instructed to go to her new husband, quoted in the first part of this chapter, is an example of the way

44. Smith, p.x-xi.

45. H. Hickmer (Panangharry), *The Early Recollections of Glencoe, Lake Leake, and the South-East*, in The Border Watch, 26 Sep. 1903.

46. Dawson, p.75.

in which people were coerced by public opinion.⁴⁷ In her Bunganditj vocabulary Smith quoted the word 'nur-i-pan-ine' (sang about me), adding that it was "considered a very great insult."⁴⁸ By such means people were punished by public humiliation.

A subtle, though seemingly arbitrary means of maintaining order, was fear of the supernatural. When a man died from unknown causes, it was generally reckoned to be witchcraft, consequently certain rituals were performed during the burial ceremony to determine the totem of the killer and, eventually, his identity. A man called Blueskin, working on Leake's station in the late 1850's, was found guilty at such an inquest. It was said that "a long-beaked cockatoo, white with red on the inside, called by the blacks 'cargahal', was found on the grave."⁴⁹ It was Blueskin's totem. On discovering this he determined to leave, saying -

It is no use; there is nothing surer than
I shall be killed somehow or other by the
other blacks if I stop here.⁵⁰

Though the decision seems arbitrary, it is possible that these inquests provided a justification for revenge in a pre-existing dispute. Interestingly, in the conversation recorded between Blueskin and his European employers, he didn't defend his innocence, but simply his decision to flee. The rationale behind

47. Op. Cit., p.

48. Smith, p.135.

49. Hickmer in The Border Watch, 30 May 1903.

50. *ibid.*

'totemic inquests' was that the spirit world operated unseen in the affairs of man and, under certain circumstances, would assist the elders in deciding innocence or guilt. The knowledge that unseen forces were watching over the activities of the tribe acted to caution people against breaking tribal rules.

Most conflict occurring in this society, whether it was between individuals or groups, was strongly ritualistic. As kinship governed behaviour generally, so too conventions ruled behaviour in physical confrontations. Stewart described the course of a dispute between two men -

Some taunting remark would rouse a man from his noorla (miami); he would start walking some ten to twelve paces, then stop and stamp his feet, calling upon his tormentor to come out and fight. Walking back the same distance he would stamp again. This was repeated for several minutes with gradually increasing pace and bitterness of tongue, until his initial steady walk developed into an excited run and his stamping antics became more defiant. The language became so foul that his 'friend foe' felt compelled to come out. The latter in a like manner stamped alongside the first man. Both would continue rushing and stamping along their respective tracks, all the while abusing one another in foul terms; but always respectfully addressing each other as "uncle" or "brother" etc., whatever their relationship be. And although working themselves into apparent madness, they never hit or attempted to hit each other unawares. But ultimately came to blows.⁵¹

51. Stewart in MacCourt, p.63.

Even though the fight was serious and the blows real, the manner in which it proceeded suggests that there were acknowledged limitations.

Murapeenas were an arena in which personal quarrels, such as the one described by Stewart, were settled. Harry Hickmer described the course of events at such a gathering -

The fighting - as they termed it, the growling, continued off and on for several days, after which all disputes it seemed were settled, and a day before their separation a great corroboree was to take place.⁵²

The fact that the combatants joined together in a corroboree before parting illustrates the degree to which social control over the violence was maintained. Furthermore, the elders, who observed the course of these disputes, had the authority to punish those who fought unfairly.⁵³ Even the punishment was ritually administered; those who had been wronged lined up facing the individuals who had wronged them and, as the tribal council stood at the end of the rows and looked on, delivered a single blow with a club as punishment.⁵⁴

Violence on a larger scale was also ritualistic. Stewart described a fight between groups of the Pinjunga and Bunganditj in which a strong element of ritual was apparent in the way the fight was halted -

Boomerangs, spears and waddies flew in all directions. Most were ineffective, owing to the open order in which the fighters pranced

52. Hickmer in The Border Watch, 30 May 1903.

53. ibid, 26 Sep. 1903.

54. ibid.

about avoiding even well aimed missiles. The first to be hit was a very noisy, active woman - a spear stuck in her windpipe. Then a man fell, badly hit by a boomerang. I thought he was killed. His fall stopped the fight; his companions closed around him, each man staining his forehead with the blood from the fallen man's wounds. Then uttering sorrow the other side left the field...⁵⁵

It seems that honour was satisfied with the serious injury of an opponent, and though the departing group was pursued, the fight was effectively over. The ritualistic nature of violence, on every level, prevented it from getting out of hand, while still serving the purpose of settling disputes.

55. Stewart in MacCourt, p.55.

FOUR

Belief and Ritual

i. Totemism

(Totemism is)...a view of nature and life, of the universe and man which colours and influences the Aborigines' social groupings and mythologies, inspires their rituals and links them to the past. It unites them with nature's activities and species in a bond of mutual life-giving...¹

Totemism is the basic metaphysic of traditional Aboriginal life, providing not only a description of the world but a means of influencing its workings. In one way totemism can be seen as an extension of the kinship system on a universal scale; the totem is one's universal family, one's 'tuman', or flesh, under which everything in nature, animate and inanimate, animal or vegetable, is classified. The unity which this metaphysic gave the world was not a poetic conceit but a practical reality, as is indicated by the following passage -

It was considered wrong to kill or use as food animals of the same totem as one's self. When forced by hunger one might break the rule by formally expressing sorrow for having to eat one's friends, and no evil results followed; but sickness and death were penalties of wilful wrongdoing in this particular.²

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1. A.P. Elkin, The Australian Aborigines (Sydney 1974), p.165.
 2. C. Smith, The Boandik Tribe of South Australian Aborigines (Adelaide 1880) p.x.

To belong to a totem was to be of one flesh, one corporate entity, and consequently to injure the totem was akin to injuring one's self or family.

The strength of the totemic bond is demonstrated in the following episode -

One day one of the blacks killed a crow. Three or four days afterwards a Boortwa (crow), named Larry, died. He had been ailing for some days, but the killing of his wingong hastened his death.³

In this case, the death of a Boortwa man was directly linked to the killing of his totem; the ailing man was not even responsible for killing the crow yet its death hastened his just the same. The logic behind this explanation was that the crow was psychically part of the Boortwa man and because they shared the same identity, the injury, in this case lethal, was transmitted from one to the other. Stewart wrote that when the Bunganditj spoke of their 'tuman', "they touch their breasts to indicate a close relationship - meaning almost a part of themselves."⁴

As nearly all deaths were attributed by the Bunganditj to sorcery an inquest was usually held to determine the sorcerer. In this inquest the role played by totemism was crucial -

Soon after dark the male friends of the deceased seat themselves in a half-circle about the body; and after some hours of silent watching the 'bo-ong' (spirit) of the one who caused his death will appear in a human form hovering over the body, and then suddenly vanish. It is recognised.

3. L. Fison and A.W. Howitt, Kamilaroi and Kurnai (Melbourne 1880).

4. ibid.

Next morning a shallow grave is scooped out in a soft place, a little grass or dry leaves is burnt in it to warm it; the body is put in a sitting posture, sticks are placed to keep the earth from pressing on it, and the grave is filled up and smoothed over. A few bushes are placed round the spot. The following day the smooth surface is examined, and the tracks of beetles, worms, or other animals are carefully noted. If they are recognised to be of the same tuman totem as the man already suspected, he must die.⁵

The reaction of one man, so accused, was noted in the previous chapter.⁶ Descriptions of detail in these totemic inquests differ but, in every case, it is the totem of the murderer which somehow appears and indicates guilt.⁷ It is as if the guilt is corporate and that all those belonging to the totem of the guilty party are implicated in the deed and, under certain conditions, betray their guilt.

Totemism is a philosophical system through which traditional Aboriginal societies understand the workings of the world. It is a system that reduces the world from the complex to the simple by dividing it up into a number of totemic families to which everyone and everything belongs. It is a belief, moreover, which pre-supposes the existence of a life-force to provide that unity; to explain the means by which the crow's death hastened the Boortwa man's demise, and how the murderer's totem is coerced into appearing at an inquest. Smith and Stewart might have recorded Bunganditj perceptions of this force when they separately referred to something called 'u-le'. Smith wrote that when someone died through sorcery the people expressed it by saying "Man-en yur-le ming",

5. Smith, p.10.

6. See p.

7. T. MacCourt and H. Mincham 'Duncan Stewart 1834-1913' in Two Notable South Australians (Beachport 1971), another description of the burial ceremony on pp.66 and 67.

meaning that a person's 'life' had been taken - "but 'life' is not the proper synonym."⁸ Stewart could not precisely define the word though he wrote that its literal meaning was "smell or scent of an animal or man."⁹ To have one's 'u-le' taken was to be dreaded. 'U-le' was the life-force, or at least an aspect of it, implicit in totemism; the force that enabled people and events to be supernaturally influenced.

ii. The Spirit World.

Mythology might concern itself with the past, with the origins of the tribe and its heroes, but it merely records part of a living, ongoing process of which the 'sky culture' is the contemporary manifestation. In relating the final episode in the Dreamtime existence of Craitbul and his family, the following passage illustrates their continued existence in the sky -

Craitbul and his wife and children, when they found themselves approaching their end, are said to have got onto a spear - the woman on the point, the boys next, and Craitbul at the end, and were translated to one of the stars. And to this day, when the star is visible, the blacks say, "Craitbul is up there."¹⁰

The sky-people, in the minds of the Bunganditj, did not languish in the past as historical memories, they lived on into the present and continued to exert an influence over the tribe as spirit-beings in the sky. The main link between the sky-people and those of earth was through the

8. Smith, p. 9.

9. Stewart in MacCourt, p.92.

10. Smith, p.16.

'pangal', or shaman, who was able to go up into the clouds and communicate with them. The sky-people taught the pangal songs and dances, they advised him about the future and, through him, contact between the spirits and their living relatives was established.¹¹

The Bunganditj had two different notions about what happened to the spirit after death, one belief was that it went 'kang-gnaro' (up above).¹² The spirit world of the sky was seen as a sort of paradise where everything was better than on earth: "a fat kangaroo is said, by way of praise, to be perfect, like the kangaroo of the clouds."¹³ Christian Aborigines, often death-bed converts, had a notion of heaven not unlike their traditional view of the spirit world. Two men, under Smith's care at the Aborigines' Home, expressed their belief -

The two brothers told me one night, when restless with pain, they could not fall asleep, they saw stars looking down upon them, and rejoiced that they spoke to Mam-bo-ong (Great Spirit). Billy said "Mam-bo-ong take our bo-ong (spirit) to this good place", adding "Weep dredbon bo-on; weep mootah, coona mena"¹⁴ (no hunger, no cold, nor winter there, brother).

Visions of the Christian and Aboriginal afterworlds blur, "Mam-bo-ong (Great Spirit or, more accurately, Father Spirit) was, in traditional belief, Craitbul, the mythical progenitor of the tribe.

The other belief concerning the fate of the spirit after death was that it went out to the sea.¹⁵ In one myth in which

11. Stewart in MacCourt, pp.85, 90, see also D. Stewart, Notebook 1853, D.2609(L) G.67, p.2(SAA).

12. Smith, p.28.

13. *ibid.*

14. *ibid.*, p.79.

15. *ibid.*, p.8.

three men were discussing the fate of the spirit, a magpie interrupted and offered the following advice -

...leave the dead in the earth till it turns to earth. The spirit goes to the land in the sea, where the sun rises and never comes back to earth. Wirmal said all blacks that did not kill their spirits would go the land in the sea.¹⁶

While the belief that spirits went 'to the land in the sea' might have preceded contact, it was clearly influenced by the arrival of Europeans. Significantly, the earliest contact was with whalers and sealers in the 1820's, almost twenty years before pastoral settlement.¹⁷ This accounts for the notion that each person had two spirits, one of which went to the sky, while the other went to the land in the sea and came back a white man.¹⁸

Besides a general belief in spirits the Bunganditj believed in evil spirits known as 'woor' or 'walim'.¹⁹ Woor was also the name of a human corpse. These spirits were free-roving and could be summoned, like diabolical familiars, by malicious individuals who wished to do injury to others. This role of sorcerer's intermediary is instanced in the case of a boy at the Aborigines' Home in Mount Gambier, becoming ill and the pangal being called for -

The pangal came and asked him whom he supposed has "mullad" him, i.e., bewitched him. The boy said he was playing with another black boy, and they had disputed something. The strange boy threatened to speak to the "Wirr" to bewitch him.²⁰

16. Smith, p.24.

17. ibid, p.25.

18. ibid, p.128.

19. ibid, p.132.

20. ibid, p.28.

One evil spirit, of immense strength, was said to pounce on people at night, carrying them off to be eaten.²¹ Another malevolent spirit, Tennateona, who was said to draw his power from the sea, was responsible for driving Craitbul and his family out of the west toward their eventual home at Mount Gambier.²² Some of these spirits who wandered the earth were individualized, recognized as a friend or relative who had recently died and often, by those encountering them, as someone who had held a grudge.²³

iii. Sorcery and Magic

Sorcery and magic, defined as the influencing of people or events by supernatural means, was an everyday aspect of tribal life. Though certain individuals were particularly adept at these arts, the techniques and rituals were understood by a majority of the people. The most dreaded form of sorcery was 'Kan-an-on' (beaten with a waddy).²⁴ It was said that an enemy would sneak up on someone at night and gently tap their limbs with a club, thus producing a deep stupor. The sorcerer would then steal his victim's life-force, extracting it with a blade of grass which was pushed up his nose. The final act was to open the victim's flank with the sharp end of a club and remove his kidney fat. Though no scars were left, the victim, upon waking, would realise that he had been 'kanan(ed)' and would eventually die.²⁵

In discussing sorcery, Stewart details one practice that was common, not only among the Bunganditj but also among neighbouring tribes -

They did not believe in death by natural causes, but always that an enemy caused it either by violence or by one or other of the

21. Stewart in MacCourt, p.91.

22. Smith, pp14-15.

23. G. Taplin, The Narrinyeri (Adelaide 1874), p.15.

24. Smith, p.10.

25. Stewart in MacCourt, p.92, see also D. Stewart, Notebook 1853, p.2.

several modes of enchantment. These latter took the form of securing a few hairs of the head, or a bone one had been eating, wrapping them up in a leaf with a little fat and some gum. Placed near a fire to burn slowly this would cause a lingering death to the person thus enchanted.²⁶

A similar practice was used by the Wotjobaluk. Howitt described an instance of a suitor threatening a woman promised to him with this form of sorcery if she didn't marry him.²⁷

Some other, more benign, magical practices are touched upon in descriptions of Bunganditj life. One such practice is recorded in a Bunganditj hunting song from Millicent; it describes a hunter smoking himself over a fire to remove human scent as well as evil influences.²⁸ Another form of hunting magic involved the used of a 'prahm' (wooden rod) with plaits of human hair tied to one end -

By burning a small portion of it between some lighted bark near where the ducks are, the smoke that arised stupifies the birds and renders them unconscious of danger, and they approach so near the snare that they become easy prey to the hunter.²⁹

Finally, in a curious inversion of the popular image of tribal ritual, though particularly apt for the South-East, the Bunganditj practised a rain-stopping ceremony.³⁰

26. Stewart in MacCourt, p.66.

27. A.W. Howitt, The Native Tribes of South-East Australia (London 1904) p.244.

28. N.B. Tindale, 'Native Songs of the South-East of South Australia', in Trans. of Roy. Soc. of Sth. Aust., Vol 65(2), 19 Dec. 1941, p.237.

29. Smith, p.39.

30. Stewart in MacCourt, p.96.

iv. The 'Pangal'

The central religious figure in Aboriginal society was the 'doctor' or shaman, known by the Bunganditj as the 'pangal'.³¹ The only pangal of note among the Bunganditj during the second half of the nineteenth century was a man called Kootawor. According to Duncan Stewart, Kootawor was both "feared and respected" by his people, an attitude doubtlessly engendered by his alleged supernatural powers; he was an exorcist and healer, a medium, a prophet, a sage and a ritualist.³² Smith described him as an "intelligent young man"; fascinated by the paraphernalia of European society he learned English quickly and instructed Duncan Stewart in the 'drual language'.³³ He was the only subject of Smith's 'biographical sketches' who was not converted to Christianity.

The most impressive ritual conducted by the pangal was the 'Moorn at Murade' (Sky peoples visit to earth). This was an important ritual because it provided a means of maintaining contact with the tribal ancestors who, in spirit form, 'lived on in the sky'. The ritual was usually held late in the evening on a moonless and cloudy night. It would begin with the pangal, having ordered all fires extinguished, and the audience to bow their heads or look away, being hauled into the sky on a rope lowered by the sky people. Once in the sky the pangal could persuade the ancestors to come down to earth and talk to the living. Stewart described what followed -

There was some talking and good deal of dancing ("laying"). "Those from above" in answer to the query "Who are you?" would reply that they were the "bo-ong"

31. Smith, p.131.

32. Stewart in MacCourt, p.90.

33. Smith, p.76.

spirits of some living natives whose names they would mention. I was permitted to be present at many of these seances, supposedly being well hidden among the squatting audience, as "those above" might be angry and strike me with a "well-ah" (a distant imitation of Jove's lightning).³⁴

To illustrate their presence the sky-people, at the end of the ritual, were said to send gifts down from above: food, damper, tobacco and clothing.

European observers were only too willing to find fraud in these performances: rather than ascending into the clouds, Kootawor simply climbed a tree; the voice of the spirits, they said, was Kootawor's voice disguised; and the gifts showered down upon the assemblage, far from materializing out of thin air, were carefully placed about the camp prior to the gathering. Yet, despite the apparent trickery, none of the tribe questioned Kootawor's honesty. Stewart wrote that "the natives, without exception, were firm believers in all that the pangal told them and no reasoning or ridicule of mine seemed to shake their faith."³⁵

Most sickness in the society was recognized as a product of sorcery and was cured by a rite of exorcism. An example of this is the previously cited case of a boy at Mount Gambier who, suffering from a severe cold, was diagnosed by the pangal as having been bewitched.³⁶

34. Stewart in MacCourt, p.29.

35. *ibid*, p.90.

36. *Op. Cit.* p.

Smith describes the pangal at work -

...he examines the patient from head to foot, squeezes the muscles with his thumbs, takes a mouthful of water and spouts it all over the patient, and repeats a long chain of imprecations (which he speaks with great vehemence) till completely out of breath. This mode of treatment is believed to be infallably efficacious in curing the patient. The pangal then sucks the sore parts with his mouth, keeping fine grass between his teeth, so as not to leave the mark of his teeth on the skin; and continues hissing and grunting till at last he finds a piece of bone or broken flint in the flesh, which he pretends he has taken out. The doctor pulls and drags the sufferer about most unmercifully, until he gets the foreign matter extracted, and then with great pride he shows the patient the cause of his pain.³⁷

This form of healing is very much like that practised by faith-healers all around the world even today. 'Exorcism' was the most dramatic approach to the treatment of sickness; herbal remedies were much more common. Herbs were used to treat maladies as diverse as toothache and rheumatism.³⁸

While most of the cases recorded of the pangal practising his healing rites concerned people who were physically ill there is one instance of a patient acting as if actually possessed. The patient was a boy named Wergon, or Peter, who had been adopted by the Smith family when they lived at Rivoli Bay. Though raised as a Christian,

37. Smith, pp.10-11.

38. *ibid*, p.11.

Wergon never lost his belief in the pangal or the power of sorcery. One day he had a fit and was found lying amongst the hot coals of a fire. Smith brought him back to her house where the pangal, present at the time, declared that the boy had been 'stricken by those above'. Kootawor claimed that he had been hit with a 'willa' - "a pointed bone, a hedgehog spine, or a bit of flint or broken glass."³⁹ The pangal went through an exorcism rite similar to the one described previously but, on this occasion, he acted as if he was trying to chase something out the door. Several times he shouted for the door to be opened so that whatever he was trying to exorcise would not be 'shattered' as he chased it outside into the dark. After one of the episodes he returned carrying a bone which he had magically removed from the boy's body and the patient revived. Duncan Stewart, who recorded this incident, was tempted to believe that it had been contrived by Wergon and the pangal "were it not", he wrote, "for the glowing cinders I saw him (i.e., Wergon) stuff into his mouth."⁴⁰

In totemism the Aborigines had a living bond linking man with the natural world which, in turn, provided a basis for their conception of the spirit world. Existing, as if in a parallel dimension, the spirit world was the medium through which contact with the ancestors was maintained, sorcery and magic could be practised, and the elements controlled. This other-world seems to have imprinted itself on to the natural landscape: trees, rocks, hills and caves all had some spiritual significance. Elkin illustrates how strongly this view of the land was held when he describes the impressions of a local group as they travelled

39. Stewart in MacCourt, p.96.

40. *ibid.*

away from their land -

as they got away from their own tribal territory, they passed into country of unknown totemic heroes and spirit-centres, some of which might be lethal to those who did not know how to approach them. Moreover, they were in a region where the forms of magic, being unknown, were endowed by their imagination with special potency, and might cause them disaster.⁴¹

These ideas about the nature of the land, and those inhabiting it, explain why trespass was viewed so seriously - the Bunganditj were unwilling to leave their own land and summarily executed intruders.⁴² More importantly, it shows how fundamental was their relationship to the land, for it provided not only the economic but also the ideological bedrock of their society.

41. Elkin, p.69.

42. Smith, p.xi. See also J.R. Hutchinson, *Reminiscences*, D.4837(L) G.67, pp.2-3(SAA).

CONCLUSION

The dominant impression to emerge from this study is the intricate relationship that existed between the system of land use and the nature of Bunganditj society. The hunter-gatherer economy conditioned both the size of the tribe's population and the fragmented nature of its organization. This in turn influenced the structure of authority and the nature of conflict. The Bunganditj belief-system was strongly linked to the tribe's association with its land. The complex inter-relationships between land use and social life figure prominently in explaining the nature and extent of Bunganditj social collapse.

PART TWO

FIVE

Images of the Other

i. European Images of the Aborigines

The Bunganditj were a short, stocky and hirsute people, not unlike the Ngarrindjeri of the Murray Mouth and the Aborigines of Western Victoria.¹ Shortly after settlement, Robert Leake described them as "numerous, but small in stature, very active and fierce."² One of the earliest published descriptions of the people was by George French Angas, who thought they were quite grotesque -

The natives belonged to a tribe totally different from those of the Milmeldura, whom we had met along the shores of the Coorong, and were inferior to them in physical appearance: the features were remarkably ugly, with a simple silliness of expression and their figures extremely slight and attenuated, with the abdomen of disproportionate size. They were filthy and wretched in the extreme; all their teeth were black and rotten, their skin was dry and that of one man presented a purplish-red colour.³

Angas' description was based on a group who exhibited clear signs of malnutrition.⁴ Ironically, his lithographer for South Australia Illustrated portrayed the Aborigines of the region as 'noble savages.'

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1. See, for example, the photographs in G. Jenkins Conquest of the Ngarrindjeri (Adelaide 1979) and M. Christie Aborigines in Colonial Victoria 1835-86 (Sydney 1979).
 2. A. Tolmer, Reminiscences of an Adventurous and Chequered Career at Home and at the Antipodes, Vol. I (London 1882), p.14.
 3. G.F. Angas, Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand (London 1847), Vol. I, p.154.
 4. T.D. Campbell, J.B. Cleland and P.S. Hossfeld, 'Aborigines of the Lower South-East of South Australia', in Records of the South Australian Museum, 1946, Vol. 8(3), p.477. Local copper

In the lithograph entitled 'Interior of the Principal Crater, Mount Gambier', a man, woman and child, not in the original sketch, are shown relaxing in an idyllic landscape.⁵

Each representation, whether verbal or pictorial, served the varied purposes of each author: Leake, isolated on the frontier, was concerned with their numbers and ferocity; Angas, an adventurer, was concerned with the sensation of their appearance, while Angas' lithographer was guided by the demands of composition and the tastes of the English public. The fabrication of an image to suit the desires of the image-maker characterizes the European image of the Aborigines.

Intellectually and morally the people of the Lower South-East, like Aborigines throughout the country, were said to be inferior to Europeans. Smith, who had some affection for them, disputed the argument that they were "too low intellectually and morally to be either Christianized or civilized" though she still insisted that they didn't "possess the mental strength and grasp of the average European."⁶ One oft-cited characteristic was their alleged inability to discriminate between right and wrong. In a number of court cases in the 1840's, when attempts were made to have Aboriginal witnesses take the oath, it was said that they had no word in their language for truth and that the best they could do was understand that if

and cobalt deficiencies in the soil are suggested as a possible cause of health problems.

5. J. Tregenza, George French Angas : Artist, Traveller and Naturalist 1822-1886 (Adelaide 1980), p.43 - reproduces the original sketch. The lithograph is in G.F. Angas, South Australia Illustrated (London 1847), Pl. XLVI.
6. C. Smith, The Booandik Tribe of South Australian Aborigines (Adelaide 1880) p.33.

a. Group of Aborigines camped east of Frew Park, Mt. Gambier, 1899.

b. Mt. Gambier Aborigines, 1874.



they lied they would be punished.⁷ A simple problem of language was presented as one of intellect.

It was generally held that the people were morally debased and, indeed, to European eyes, their nakedness, customs of wife-sharing and exchanging, and their treatment of widows, was extremely offensive. Smith was particularly offended by the latter -

It is the usual custom for a woman, after her husband dies, to be forced to lead an immoral life, under the care(!) of her nearest relative. This degraded existence is considered a token of friendship.⁸

An even more indignant and vociferous description of Aboriginal morality is provided by the Portland Guardian, a newspaper that served as a mouthpiece for the settlers of South-Western Victoria -

The delicate sensibilities imbibed in civilized life, in reference to conjugal fidelity, surrounded and supported by the awful mandate of heaven, and the careful guard of human laws, can find no place in the breasts of savage tribes, with whom intercourse between the sexes is all but absolutely promiscuous - who have no power higher than their own passions to consult, and no law to bind them but the want of cunning to elude.⁹

The tribes of the South-East, according to one source, were even more degraded than most. Singleton and Tolmer, in their joint reply to

7. For example, Colonial Secretary's Office, Inward Correspondence, GRG 24/6, No. 349, 1847, and the South Australian Register, March 18, 1848.

8. Smith, p.18.

9. The Portland Guardian, September 19, 1842.

Taplin's questionnaire about the Aborigines of the region, argued that they were "a much lower class of aborigines than those to the north, on the Murray."¹⁰ Presenting a pseudo-scientific argument they claimed their inferiority resulted from them having been pushed by their stronger northern neighbours through the barren lands separating the Murray Valley from the Lower South-East, the journey resulting in "customs, habits, weapons and implements" being forgotten.¹¹

The earliest image of the Aborigines formulated by the settlers, portraying them as cruel and barbarous savages, was primarily conditioned by fear. For about the first eight or nine years of contact in the Lower South-East the frontier was far from secure. The settlers were in an unfamiliar and sometimes hostile environment outnumbered by the local tribesmen and in constant fear for their lives and livelihood. A contingent of police was not stationed in the district till January 1846.¹² Samuel Davenport, in a letter from Rivoli Bay, dated 24 January 1846, conveys the sense of isolation and vulnerability felt by most early settlers -

The great cause of apprehension of loss is in the number and character of the natives and the wet of winter. Sleeping one night with Mr. MacFarlane under a shelter of bark, at a distance of only two hundred yards from the fold, with some ten to twelve men (shearers and shepherds) in the hut close by, the natives stole 120 ewes - and no trace of them next day.

10. G. Taplin, Folklore, Manners, Customs and Languages of the Aborigines of Australia, (Adelaide 1879), p.60.

11. *ibid.*

12. Mount Gambier Police, Journal, GRG 5, 151/1, (SAA).

On the last day in '45 or the first in '46,
for the first time in my life I drew a loaded
pistol at a human breast - but was saved firing.¹³

Attacks by about 50 fighting men on isolated stations were common in this period, but what the settlers feared most was a unification and uprising of the local tribes. In reporting a skirmish between the police, who had recently arrived, and the Aborigines near Mount Gambier in April 1846, Evelyn Sturt betrayed those fears -

I have remarked that the natives have (as winter approaches) been mustering in great numbers, and are united with many of the Glenelg tribe, members of which have left that River owing to the numerous murders and depredations committed by them. This circumstance will I fear render them seriously troublesome for some time.¹⁴

Similar fears were held at an earlier date in Western Victoria, particularly after an attack on Henty's station at Mount Gambier in March 1844. The men sent out to recover the sheep stolen in that raid were confronted by over 400 Aborigines on the Glenelg River.¹⁵

The editor of the Portland Guardian used this apparent evidence of unification to call for greater police protection in the district.

It is against this background of justifiable fear and insecurity that the image of the cruel and barbarous savage was formulated. The Aborigines were thought to be little better than animals. The terminology used to describe them and their society illustrates this - they are variously referred to as "savage blacks", "lawless hordes",

13. B.S. Baldwin (ed.) 'Letters of Samuel Davenport chiefly to his father, George Davenport, 1842-49, Part V : Nov. 1845 - Mar. 1846' in South Australiana, Vol X, No. 2, Sept. 1971. p.64.

14. CSO 681/1846.

15. The Portland Guardian, March 9, 1844.

"wild and predatory savages" and "barbarous tribes"; those living on stations were said to be "domesticated".¹⁶ This attitude is exemplified in the proposal of a stockkeeper -

My plan is to keep a good pair of dogs to run them down, until they catch them by the flesh, and make them roar like calves when they are attacked by dogs. If they are treated in this manner I'll warrant in a few days there will not be one found on the run. Where I stop I have hunted them off in this manner for many a mile.¹⁷

Though the accusations were vehemently denied, it was widely reported that some settlers in the Western Districts of Port Phillip went out on horseback and hunted Aborigines for sport.¹⁸

Besides fear, a mixture of self-interest and guilt were also involved in the formation of this image. The settlers were well aware that they were invaders violently dispossessing an indigenous people of their land, so they portrayed those people in such a way as to make it appear that they were acting in the people's best interests. An editorial in the South Australian Register, dated June 23, 1845, records the typical justification of the time; that the colonists were saviours rather than invaders, gratuitously spreading the benefits of British civilization and Christianity -

While it cannot be doubted that by our advent amongst them, and by our occupation and profitable culture of this fair and fruitful portion of the earth's surface, which they, in their savage ignorance, had only used

16. Epithets drawn from the Portland Guardian between the years 1842 and 1844.

17. Smith, pp.62-63.

18. Accusation made by Reverend Hurst in House of Commons, Sessional Papers 1844, Vol. 34, Return to an address on the 5th March 1844, on Aborigines (Australian Colonies), p.184.

as hunting grounds and battlefields, we are acting in consonance of the Author of the whole human family: just as certainly as is the fact, also, that they have rights which we are bound to respect, and that humanity, not less than interest, imperiously demands our best efforts to reclaim them from their abject condition in which we found them.¹⁹

The more base and degraded the Aborigines were made to seem, the more justified the invaders felt in their process of dispossession.

An important argument contained in the editorial quoted above is that the Aborigines did not profitably exploit the land but simply used it as 'hunting grounds and battlefields'. The Commissioner of Crown Lands for Port Phillip, at the time overseeing settlement in the Western Districts, wrote to the Superintendent of the Protectorate, Charles La Trobe, in 1842 and expressed similar sentiments -

The aborigines have no fixed place of abode; wandering is inherent to them; neither can I feel that any means will ever domesticate them for a constancy.²⁰

In both instances the impression is given that the Aborigines hardly occupied the land at all, they merely wandered over recognizable tracts. The Europeans equated occupation with the construction of dwellings, the cultivation of crops, the shepherding of flocks and the fencing of boundaries; anything less did not constitute possession.²¹

19. South Australian Register, June 23, 1845.

20. House of Commons, Sessional Papers 1844, p.180.

21. The history of British ideas on what constituted occupation and possession of land is discussed by Alan Frost 'New South Wales as terra nullius : the British denial of Aboriginal land rights', in Historical Studies, Vol.19, No. 77, Oct. 1981.

The duties of the first Protector of Aborigines, appointed in 1837, included affording Aborigines "protection in the undisturbed possession of their property rights, to such land as may be occupied in any special manner."²² The last clause, stressing occupation in a 'special manner', implied the construction of dwellings and cultivation of crops etc. and consequently did not recognise traditional Aboriginal ownership. In 1839, when Matthew Moorhouse was appointed Protector, all reference to the protection of Aboriginal property rights in the list of the Protector's duties was dropped completely.²³ The very nature of Aboriginal land use made it easier for the invaders to take the land and justify its theft in the process.

Another function of the early contact image of the Aborigines, emphasising their alleged lawlessness and cruelty, was that it tended to draw attention away from the atrocities committed by the settlers themselves. An editorial in the Portland Guardian, dated 10 September 1842, summarized the state of relations in the Western District in the following terms -

The present state of the aboriginal population, in the vicinity of the Glenelg, and some other parts of the district, is one of open and undisguised hostility against the settler.²⁴

This was true enough, but the article went on to portray the settlers as decent peace-loving folk suffering at the hands of wild and

22. Quoted by C.D. Rowley, in The Destruction of Aboriginal Society, (Melbourne 1972), p.77.

23. Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines, SAPP, No. 165, 1860, Appendix, p.1.

24. The Portland Guardian, September 19, 1842.

cannibalistic savages who seemed to receive more protection from the Government than did the settlers. It is revealing to compare this article with the comments made by Foster-Fyans, Commissioner of Crown Lands for Port Phillip, in a letter to La Trobe just a few months later -

the tribes on the Glenelg will become more quiet than hitherto, and I do not consider them in a worse state than the different tribes were in other parts of the District some time ago, the newspaper accounts exaggerate all their crimes, and I am of the opinion many of the settlers act in accordance with them, and in their lists of losses far exceed their bounds.²⁵

It is apparent that the image of the Aborigines was exaggerated at times to serve political ends; in this instance to draw more Government support to the region.

Once the frontier violence ceased and the invaders had established their dominance, by about 1848, in the Lower South-East, the image of the Aborigines changed dramatically. At first, in the period corresponding to the gold-rush, it improved as they began to fill the gap left by the exodus of labour. Official reports noted their "continued good conduct" and the valuable service they performed for the settlers.²⁶ At the same time they were still said to be lazy and unreliable.²⁷ Gradually, however, as their importance as a labour source diminished, they came more and more to be seen as a dying race, pathetic and ridiculous. The following description of the Aborigines

25. "Respecting Aggressions of the Natives 1842" (Consolidated File 42/2364) In Superintendent's Inward Correspondence, 1839-51, Series 19, (PROVic). Also reported in the House of Commons Sessional Papers 1844, p.260.

26. See, for example, Quarterly Reports of the Protector in the South Australian Government Gazette during the early 1850's, particularly SAGG 1852, p.367.

27. *ibid.*

from the Border Watch in 1862 is typical of the attitude -

A few aborigines are to be seen "knocking about on the Mount"; and the sight of the lubras is ludicrous, fluttering in the finest "rags of civilization".²⁸

During the period that Smith ran the Aborigines' Home at Mount Gambier, the people of the district ran something of a campaign on behalf of the Aborigines.²⁹ They were objects of pity now, curiosities destined for extinction. Even the Protector held this view; in 1867 he wrote "that all practical persons are fully aware of the utter impossibility of reclaiming the Aborigines of Australia".³⁰ He was convinced that they were a dying race.

The early contact image of the Aborigines was based partially on fact and exaggerated by fear: they were cannibals, though not to the extent imagined by the settlers and the newspapers; they did attack settlers, in defence of their land; they did drive off and mutilate sheep, though for economic as much as military motives; and they were immoral by the standards of British society. Contributing to this image were motives of self-interest and guilt. By portraying them as 'cruel and barbarous' savages, not only was dispossession justified - they were being saved from themselves - but the acts of violence were excused as equal and opposite reactions to Aboriginal aggressions. Furthermore, by exaggerating the 'outrages' committed by the Aborigines, a political purpose was served - greater Government support, particularly in the form of police. For a short time, after the violence of the frontier had subsided, the Aborigines enjoyed an improved image in the eyes of the Europeans because they had become useful to them, but gradually they came to be portrayed as a dying race, ridiculous and pathetic.

28. The Border Watch, June 29, 1862.

29. *ibid*, Mar. 24, 1866; May 6, 1866.

30. Crown Lands and Immigration Office, Inward Correspondence, GRG 35/1, No. 1324, 1867.

ii. The Invaders through Aboriginal Eyes

For all the difference it made to the Aborigines, the invaders from Britain might just as well have been from Mars. The earliest indication of a European presence in the area was the ships of whalers and sealers which were thought to be drifting islands.³¹ Descriptions of first contact with explorers and overlanders illustrate a reaction of terror to these strangers and their animals. The Bunganditj related their first impressions of such contact -

We had a peep through the bushes, and saw what we now know to have been sheep, cattle and horses and a dray. The bullocks bellowing was a terror to us...We followed them for days, till they camped near Salt Creek. We mustered pretty strongly here, and appointed a 'cranky' fellow to visit the white men; and they gave him a sheep's head, which he brought back. It was a great curiosity, and we examined it all - teeth, mouth, eyes and ears...We were very much afraid of the bellowing of the cattle; we took it for an expression of rage, and were afraid to go near them lest they would bite us.³²

The bullock, in particular, inspired fear. Dawson related a comical story about a group of Gunditjmara men who went to investigate the creature; they approached the animal and asked if it was a white man, then they requested that it give them the 'tomahawks' it carried on its head. The meeting was abruptly ended when the bullock charged.³³ The horse and rider were initially thought to be one animal.³⁴ These stories illustrate how totally alien the white

31. Smith, p.25.

32. *ibid*, p.26.

33. J. Dawson, Australian Aborigines (Melbourne 1881), p.105.

34. Harry Hickmer (Panangharry), quoted in E.M. Yelland, The Baron of the Frontier (Melbourne 1973), p.94.

men, their animals and technology were to the known world of the Aborigines.

The Bunganditj had to account for the presence of these newcomers and they did so, naturally enough, in accordance with their belief system. The Europeans were thought to be ancestors returned from the Dreaming. This was not a vague metaphorical explanation of their appearance but a literal one. Individuals were thought to be particular ancestors. Christina Smith, for example, was known as 'Muitboy', "a certain woman of the Booandik tribe...famed for her hospitality and generosity."³⁵ In a journal of his journey to Western Victoria in 1841 Robinson related an incident that illustrates how literally the belief was held. Having arrived at an all but deserted Aboriginal camp near the Crawford River, south of Henty's Merino Downs station, he introduced himself to those present, an elderly woman and two children -

I...read from my notes not only a long list of aboriginal names of sections and localities, but the individual members of the tribes. Her astonishment was unbounded. She gazed intently and, having pondered for some time, gave vent to a flood of tears and exclaimed: "Me tell you (calling me by an aboriginal name) calpaned (died) a long time ago. Me plenty cry. She was my relative. She knew my father and mother; and Enwer-nung my father, she said, was still living on the Glenelg, and my brothers, Cor-un-coo-nung and Benit-koi-young, were alone." She then turned to her children and, with great earnestness, informed them I had calpaned a long time ago, and had come back a whitefellow.³⁶

35. Smith, p.42.

36. G.A. Robinson, 'Report of an Expedition...' in A.S. Kenyon 'The Aboriginal Protectorate of Port Phillip', Victorian Historical Magazine, Vol. 12, No. 3, 1928, p.153. Entry for June 22, 1841.

It seems that which particular ancestor an individual was thought to be depended on his or her behaviour. Smith was a kind and generous woman and so she was "Muitboy", a woman famed for those attributes. Evelyn Sturt, who put down his freedom from attack to "the astonishment evinced at seeing the effects of a good rifle aimed by a correct eye", was thought to have been a chief who had fallen in battle.³⁷

Having decided who particular Europeans were, their positions within the kinship system were then known and so too was the behaviour one adopted towards them. Sturt, for instance, was a chief and a certain deference would have been exhibited toward him. This particular image of the Europeans was perhaps a means by which the Aborigines rationalized their new state of subjugation and an attempt to legitimate the relationships emerging between the races. Ironically, while the settlers were trying to "civilize the natives", the Aborigines were drawing them into their own kinship system.

The source of the belief that the invaders were ancestors returned from the dead is not hard to find for the Bunganditj traditionally believed that ancestral spirits, both malevolent and benign, wandered the earth. As a consequence of contact, the Bunganditj developed the notion that each person had two spirits, one of which went to the sky while the other went to the 'land in the sea' and returned as a white man.³⁸ This notion appears to have arisen early in the contact period because the 'land in the sea' was probably the 'drifting islands', or ships, of the whalers and sealers. The belief in an evil spirit called 'Tennateona' might have been a product of those sea-borne visitors.³⁹

37. T.F. Bride, Letters from Victorian Pioneers (Adelaide 1969), Facsimile, p.375.

38. Smith, p.128.

39. *ibid*, p.14.

Tennateona was said to be responsible for terrorising Craitbul and his family and driving them from one place to another -

They determined this time to strike inland, away from water (the sea), for it appears that this evil spirit could not exist far away from the sea.⁴⁰

It is also interesting to note that the first syllable of the word 'Tennateona' means 'tracks' or 'spoor'.⁴¹

The Aboriginal rationalization of the European presence, linked with a rapid social breakdown, provided the foundation of an apocalyptic world-view that emerged sometime prior to 1854. Both Smith and Stewart were aware of it while they lived at Rivoli Bay. Something of the belief is recorded in a conversation between Duncan Stewart and Wergon, alias Peter -

Peter observed, "The dual wish me to go away from this country." For what reason do they wish you to leave us? "They say there is a 'tunnage' (plague) coming to take women and children away, and the earth will be burnt. The dual want me to flee away to another country with them..."⁴²

Smith and Stewart believed the story was invented to scare Wergon away,⁴³ as the local group had previously tried because he was not Bunganditj; but the belief was authentic. At one time Kootawar, a shaman, organised a ritual to forestall the plague.⁴⁴ Similar stories had been passing down the east coast in advance of European

40. Smith, p.14.

41. *ibid*, p.131.

42. *ibid*, p.60.

43. *ibid*.

44. T. MacCourt and H. Mincham 'Duncan Stewart 1834-1913', in Two Notable South Australians (Beachport 1971), p.91.

settlement.⁴⁵ The meaning is clear, the plague "coming to take women and children away" was the white man. Smith, whose evangelism appears to have been largely based on the Book of Revelations, undoubtedly contributed to the belief. Wergon, who was adopted by Smith, was taught some of these stories and did some evangelism of his own -

He was frequently found seated in the midst of the group, entertaining them with portions of Scripture history, such as the destruction of the world, the final judgement, etc.⁴⁶

The Europeans were not only thought of as harbingers of the apocalypse (what could be more apocalyptic than the spirits returning from the Dreamtime), but the stories they spread actively contributed to that image.

Little evidence exists to indicate how the Aboriginal perception of the white man might have changed through time, however, a letter to the editor of the Border Watch, dated August 29, 1861, presents on Aboriginal attitude toward white settlement -

you white fellows have taken our country from us and hold it for your enjoyments and to make homes for yourselves,...are we to be left to the last point on the west coast is sold and at the fall of the hammer to be thrown into the sea as our father's land is sold and no room for us is left, for it looks to me this will be the way of it as the last land is sold here there and everywhere, and nothing left for us as far as the surveyor went yet, and those that bought our land tell us already, be off blackfellows this is our ground.⁴⁷

45. K. Willey, When the Sky Fell Down (Sydney 1979), pp.54-5.

46. Smith, p.55-6.

47. The Border Watch, August 29, 1861.

Initially the Bunganditj had difficulty comprehending the invaders, their dress, the animals they brought with them, their material culture being so alien, but eventually their presence was rationalized through the belief that they were ancestors returned from the Dreaming. This is an important concept because it conditioned much of their early behaviour towards the white - for instance, in the areas of authority and sexual relations. In another context, however, the belief that they were awakened spirits signalled a breakdown in the structure of the world as it was traditionally understood and, consequently, they were thought of as harbingers of the apocalypse. Later, a more pragmatic view seems to have emerged and the Europeans were characterized as exploiters, greedily denying the original owners of the land their rightful compensation.

The Failure of Resistance and Economic Collapse

i. The Impact of Resistance

The first overlanders and explorers to pass through Bunganditj territory were accorded an easy passage. Joseph Hawdon, driving sheep from Port Phillip to Adelaide in 1839 didn't once encounter the tribe, though he was aware of their presence.¹ Travelling through the district five years later Governor Grey's party received help rather than hindrance - a local Aborigine found water for them.² In 1845, when the settlement of the Mount Gambier district was beginning to gather pace, George Augustus Robinson, the Aboriginal Protector for Port Phillip, visited the region. He wrote of his encounter with a local group -

our movements had been watched by a party of Aborigines of whose proximity I was not aware until they shouted and made signs for us to go to them when I did so and found them a sociable and communicative people, but neither I nor Boloke could understand their colluquy, they seemed satisfied that we were friends as on leaving I could scarcely get rid of them.³

Both Grey and Robinson visited the area after settlement had begun, yet the only time violence is known to have occurred between the Aborigines and a party of overlanders or explorers was when one

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1. J. Hawdon, 'The Country between Melbourne and Adelaide', typescript extract from the Royal South Australian Almanack and General Directory for 1840, pp.119-125.
 2. G.F. Angas, Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand (London 1847), Vol. 1, p.153.
 3. G.A. Robinson, 'Report of a Journey of 1100 miles to the tribes of the North West and Western Interior during the months of March, April and May of the current year (1845)' in Letterbook 1841-1845, Vol.29, MSS A.7050-1 (ML).

of the European parties had a sheep stolen and a horse speared. Relating the story to Smith, the Bunganditj claimed that their motive was simply curiosity.⁴ It seems that the overlanders were allowed free passage because they were recognised as transients and not seen as a threat.⁵

Settlement was met with immediate resistance. The first settlers to establish runs in the district suffered continual harassment from raiding parties that averaged thirty to sixty fighting men. Edward Arthur, who settled at Mount Schank late in 1843, had his huts plundered, sheep and shepherds speared, and his land torched.⁶ Robert and Edward Leake, establishing their runs in the vicinity of Lake Leake, less than a year later, also encountered immediate resistance to their presence. In a letter to his father, dated June 1844, Robert Leake described the trouble he was having less than a month after settlement -

since the first part of my letter was written one of my outstations was attacked by blacks. Twice they succeeded in spearing sheep and carrying them off. The third time we were their masters and drove them off. We shot one and wounded others...I had one man speared in the arm. It has certainly dampened my spirits a little. On one occasion I believe there were 40 to 50 fighting men getting around us. We were not prepared for them, only one man was armed.⁷

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4. C. Smith, The Booandik Tribe of South Australian Aborigines (Adelaide 1880), pp.26-7.
 5. P. Corris, Aborigines and Europeans in Western Victoria (Canberra 1968). The author draws the same conclusion, p.56.
 6. E. Arthur, A journal of events from Melbourne, Port Phillip to Mount Schank, in the district of Adelaide, New Holland... First published 1844 (Hobart 1975), pp.40-45.
 7. Quoted in E.M. Yelland, The Baron of the Frontier (Melbourne 1973), p.37.

Samuel Davenport's overseer experienced similar problems as he was establishing the Mayurra run near Rivoli Bay in 1845.⁸ One explanation for the immediacy of conflict is that stations were being located on sites traditionally used by local groups. Lake Leake, Mount Schank, Mount Gambier and 'Mayurra' were traditional winter camping sites, favoured because they were on high ground with resources of fresh water. It is more than likely that small 'villages' of huts were permanently located there and re-occupied every year.⁹ The four locations mentioned were amongst the earliest to be occupied by settlers.

During the first couple of years Aboriginal resistance had some impact on the process of settlement. In 1844 Henty withdrew stock from the outstation he had established at Mount Gambier when more than 300 sheep were driven off and his men, sent to recover them, were repulsed by 400 Aborigines on the Glenelg River.¹⁰ Over the border a station owner and his hutkeeper were killed by Aborigines, who shortly after were threatening to take the sheep on the station for themselves. As a consequence of these threats, and an inability to get shepherds to work in the area, the stock was removed to one of Henty's runs.¹¹ Edward Arthur, complaining of poor economic conditions and continual Aboriginal harassment, sold out to Leake in 1845.¹² He, like other settlers, suffered when shepherds absconded,

8. B.S. Baldwin (ed.), 'Letters of Samuel Davenport chiefly to his father, George Davenport, 1842-49. Part IV, Dec. 1844-Oct 1845', in South Australiana, Vol. IX, 1970, pp.36, 49.

9. T.D. Campbell, J.B. Cleland and P.S. Hossfeld, 'Aborigines of the Lower South-East of South Australia', in Records of the South Australian Museum, Adelaide 1946, Vol.18(3), p.460.

10. The Portland Mercury, reported the removal of stock on the 24 April 1844; the initial attack was reported in the Portland Guardian, March 9, 1844.

11. House of Commons, Sessional Papers 1844, Vol. 34, Return to an address on the 5 March 1844, on Aborigines (Australian Colonies), p.233.

12. Yelland, p.49.

fearful of Aboriginal attacks.¹³

The impact of Aboriginal aggressions can be judged from another point of view, the agitation for police protection. A letter published in the South Australian Register in June 1845, written by a man who had recently returned from Rivoli Bay, describes the state of the district -

During my stay I was frequently threatened by natives, and once nearly speared. Mr. Sterling's shepherds have twice been attacked, and some sheep taken; and Mr. Grant's very valuable mare was killed. In fact depredations of this sort are committed on all establishments.¹⁴

To stress the seriousness of the situation, the writer suggested that the settlers were willing to take the law into their own hands if police protection was not forthcoming. The threat was already a reality: Edward Arthur, for instance, mounted a punitive attack on a local clan. Of this affair, he wrote - "a fight ensued; nor did they (the Aborigines) retreat until they had left many stretched on the grass - at a rough calculation, I should think about thirty fled."¹⁵ Bunganditj resistance cannot be said to have slowed the process of settlement, as stories of frontier violence did in Western Victoria,¹⁶ but it did frustrate settlement and accelerate the arrival of Government representatives such as the police, the Government Resident and the Aboriginal Protector. While the presence of such intermediaries, providing at least a partly independent scrutiny of frontier affairs, might have

13. Arthur, p.39, also A. Tolmer, Reminiscences of an Adventurous and Chequered Career at Home and at the Antipodes (London 1882), pp.13-14.

14. The South Australian Register, June 4, 1845.

15. Arthur, p.45.

16. Corris, p.56.

been expected to favour the Aborigines, the impact, which will be discussed in the next chapter, was quite the reverse.

ii. The Nature of Resistance

The Bunganditj applied traditional methods of warfare to their earliest conflicts with the settlers. Failing to appreciate the devastating effects of rifles and pistols, they suffered badly in open conflict. This is illustrated by an incident that occurred near Leake's station in May 1845 -

We came upon them after travelling ten miles, they immediately saluted us with their war shouts, advancing to surround us, I dismounted and approached them with another man. I never fired until a black rushed at me with a sharp pointed club, I fired and wounded him; there were five other armed men in company with me, and Mr. Leake. About two vollies were fired. I cannot positively say whether any were killed, but some I know were struck by the shot. They slowly retired into the tea-tree.¹⁷

Another description of the same conflict highlights the ritualistic aspects of the battle: the Aborigines, numbering about 200, were said to assume a semi-circular formation and stand their ground until the second volley had been fired.¹⁸ Traditionally, the Aborigines fought in the open with the contending parties at a distance from one another while spears and boomerangs were thrown. The battles

17. Colonial Secretary's Office, Inward Correspondence, GRG 24/6, No. 865, 1845 (SAA).

18. CSO 589/1845 (SAA).

often ended with the drawing of first blood.¹⁹ Such an approach to battle limited the extent of death and injury which was crucial for the survival of the typically small Aboriginal population groups. However, ritualistic approaches to battles with the Europeans had fatal consequences.

Tactics soon changed and local groups avoided open contests preferring, when confronted by European attackers, to retreat to defensive positions. This new tactic is evident in a clash between the Bunganditj and a party of police and settlers near Cape Northumberland. The Aborigines, rather than contest openly or surrender, withdrew into a ti-tree scrub which the Europeans were unable to penetrate -

Corporal McCulloch, Mr. Madder and one of his men endeavoured to penetrate the scrub but in so doing were met by the spears of the natives which they rested on the branches and darted forward as a person approached.²⁰

The tactic on this occasion was to no avail, as the police simply stood back and fired into the scrub mortally wounding four Aborigines.

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19. W. Clayton, Reminiscences of William Clayton from 1833-c.1912 (SAA, MF D.6424), describes a ritualistic battle between a group from Penola and another from Mount Gambier in the 1860's. Duncan Stewart described another fight that occurred in the 1850's, which ended when one man appeared to sustain a serious injury, see T. MacCourt 'Duncan Stewart 1834-1913', in Two Notable South Australians (Beachport 1971), pp.63-64. J. Dawson, in Australian Aborigines (Melbourne 1881) described the ritualistic nature of violence in Western Victoria and also noted that the drawing of blood was necessary to satisfy honour, p.76.
20. Mount Gambier Police, Journal, GRG5, 151/1, entry for August 17, 1847.

The greatest tactical advantage the Bunganditj had was an intimate knowledge of the local terrain and weather conditions, an advantage most effectively employed in the winter months. It was in winter that most attacks on stations occurred.²¹ The settlers and police sometimes describe having to give up pursuit of raiding parties because of the difficulty of travelling through swamps, which the Aborigines used to cover their retreat.²² A description of the pursuit which followed an attack on Addison and Murray's station, near the junction of the Glenelg and Wannon Rivers, illustrates the extent to which the Aborigines went to disguise their retreat -

MacPherson and his party were able to track, though in the most zig-zag and tortuous route, the sheep for a distance of sixty miles, while the place in which they were afterwards found was about sixteen miles from the spot from whence they had been stolen.²³

It is often argued that the Aborigines adopted guerrilla tactics to frustrate the process of European settlement, and while it is true that Bunganditj resistance usually involved small groups harassing isolated settlements, it was a course adopted as much by necessity as design. The Bunganditj did not have the social mechanisms nor the economic back-up to permit resistance on anything but a small scale. The only time large gatherings of Aborigines clashed with Europeans was when parties of Europeans came upon groups that were already assembled. The best example of this is the Glenelg River incident

21. See Appendix III, Conflicts between Aborigines and Settlers, 1843-48.

22. Mount Gambier Police, Journal, (SAA), entries for July 16 and August 4, 1847.

23. The Portland Guardian, April 27, 1844.

in 1844, when a party of Henty's men came upon a gathering of 400 Aborigines and were driven off.²⁴ The reason for this is that the traditional system of social organization, built upon a hunter-gatherer economy, did not allow local groups to join together on a large scale for more than a limited period of time.

In Bunganditj society the basic unit of population was the local group, a largely autonomous, economically self-supporting group which, prior to contact, might have averaged between 20 and 30 individuals.²⁵ The size of these groups was determined by the ability of the land to support a hunter-gatherer mode of exploitation. Larger gatherings did occur, and they sometimes lasted for months, but their existence was governed by the availability of an abundant economic reserve. The availability of fruit at the mouth of the Glenelg River, for example, enabled large gatherings of local groups at that place in summer.²⁶ At other times of the year, sizable gatherings were possible through the use of co-operative hunting and gathering techniques, in this way creating an artificial abundance.²⁷ The Bunganditj fought a guerrilla style war because it was the only one their social and economic system would allow, and not necessarily because it was the best form of resistance.

24. The Portland Guardian, March 9, 1844.

25. The average size of bands in the contact period appears to have been 50-60 but most of these groups are reported in relation to sheep theft. R. Luebbers, Meals and Menus: A Study of Change in Prehistoric Coastal Settlements in South Australia, Ph.D. Thesis A.N.U. 1978, suggests that Tanganekald clans (of the Coorong) ranged in size from 20-30 individuals, p.76.

26. R.H. Laurandos, 'Aboriginal Spatial Organization and Population: South Western Victoria Reconsidered', in Archeology and Physical Anthropology in Oceania, Vol. XII, No. 3, pp.15-16.

27. See Chapter Two.

There is evidence that the Bunganditj did organize, to a limited extent, beyond the level of the local group. There are some reports of Aboriginal raiding parties numbering between 30 and 80 men, which could indicate the association of two or three groups.²⁸ After an attack on Leake's station, his men came upon the raiding party's camp, which comprised about 200 men, women and children.²⁹ It appears that these uncharacteristically large groups were supported, not by traditional economic means, but by the settlers' sheep - an easily procured and seemingly limitless economic reserve. The discovery of these large groups was always related to the theft of sheep. It is ironic that the animal which was largely responsible for the conflict between Aborigines and settlers provided, for a time, an economic base which supported larger indigenous population groups.

Despite limitations on their ability to organize large scale resistance, the Bunganditj still had numerical superiority in face-to-face confrontations with the settlers, however, this was countered by the greater effectiveness of European weapons. Firearms, though notoriously unreliable at the time,³⁰ allowed small posses of settlers to inflict substantial losses on the Aborigines without having to fight on man-to-man terms. On stations where the settlers had

28. See Appendix Three.

29. CSO 589/1845.

30. The most commonly used firearms at the time were powder and shot muskets and pistols that frequently misfired or, if the powder was damp, didn't fire at all. 'Musket rifles' were being introduced during the 1840's and though their range of accuracy improved, they were still unreliable. See D. Shineberg 'Guns and Men in Melanesia', Essays from the Journal of Pacific History, compiled by B. MacDonald (Palmerston North 1979); and D. Featherstone, Weapons and Equipment of the Victorian Soldier (London 1978), Chap.2.

no compunction in using rifles and pistols, knowledge of their effect also acted as a deterrent, as Evelyn Sturt reflected in 1853 -

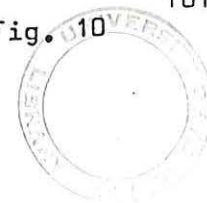
Our neighbour, Mr. Leake, suffered many losses from the natives, some thousands I believe, but we escaped attack, which I attributed to the astonishment evinced at seeing the effects of a good rifle aimed by a correct eye, for not a crow would dare crow on the highest tree but a rifle ball reached him, or a kangaroo bound through the forest within shot but the sharp ring of the rifle saw him stretched on the sward. I have always thought this gained their respect.³¹

The mobility provided by horses also allowed the Europeans to quickly pursue raiding parties, whereas if the pursuers were on foot, in unfamiliar terrain, they would have stood little chance of recovering their property. A large proportion of sheep stolen in raids were recovered. The viability of newly established sheep stations might have been considerably reduced had this not been the case.

As traditional Bunganditj economic life restricted the nature and extent of resistance, so the pastoral economy of the Europeans gave them certain advantages in countering resistance. The settlers, because they had permanent stores of provisions, quite apart from their stock, and employees who were not constantly needed on the stations, could afford to release men from their work to pursue raiding parties. They could also afford to employ mounted guards.³²

31. T.F. Bride, Letters from Victorian Pioneers (Adelaide 1969), p.375.

32. Baldwin, 'Letters of Samuel Davenport...Nov. 1845-March 1846, Part V', Davenport lists the wages of his station employees and in one entry writes "one man armed on horseback whose duty night and day as required is to watch the blacks, and visit each flock daily", p.65.



Population of the Lower South-East
1855 - 1876 *

	County	Male	Female	Total
1855	Grey	568	374	942
	Robe	320	212	532
1861	Grey	1870	1467	3337
	Robe	816	661	1477
1866	Grey	3602	2915	6517
	Robe	970	770	1740
1871	Grey	5037	4408	9445
	Robe	1371	1036	2407
1876	Grey	4648	4247	8895
	Robe	1272	1031	2303

* From census statistics published in the South Australian Parliamentary Papers - figures exclude Aboriginal population.

Furthermore, the Government of the Province had a vested interest in the success of their settlement and provided them with a police force. Though the troopers were not stationed in the Lower South-East until a couple of years after settlement, their main job, in the early years of their presence, was to patrol the stations and respond, with the back-up of local settlers, to any Aboriginal aggressions.³³

Unlike the settlers, the Aborigines could not separate their day-to-day economic activities from their fight for the land. Because of pressure from the Colonial Government, the police did sometimes act on behalf of the Aborigines, in isolated cases of murder or assault, but these actions were meaningless in terms of the overall struggle for dominance. The police acted primarily to defend the territorial ambitions of the settlers, not the rights of the original owners.

The nature of the settlers' economy, which was not directly linked to the natural productivity of the environment, allowed for a rapid growth in their population. The influx of settlers and the decline of the Bunganditj population, resulted in the Europeans becoming the dominant group by about 1849 or 1850. In the decade after first settlement, the Bunganditj population fell from about 1000 to an estimated 450, while the European population rose to almost 1000 (Fig. 10). It was in the late 1840's, just at the time when the European population passed that of the Aborigines, that open conflict between the two groups ended.

33. A typical entry in the Journal of the Mount Gambier Police during the first years of their presence was-"patrolled to Mr. Leake's woolshed having been informed that some natives were encamped in that neighbourhood", Jan. 29, 1846.

As the process of settlement continued the nature and motives of resistance changed. The attacks on the settlers were initially inspired by a desire to drive them from the land but, as the intruders became more firmly entrenched and their dominance became apparent, the attacks came to be dominated by economic necessity. On almost every occasion in which settlers and police pursued Aboriginal raiding parties, they came upon camps in which men, women and children were found eating stolen stock. After a theft of sheep from his station, Leake pursued the Aborigines and came upon a camp of 200 people with "fifty carcasses of our sheep cut up into quarters, (and) a number of joints of mutton cooked."³⁴

An indication of the economic basis of these attacks is in their seasonality; most occurred in the wet months between April and October, apparently peaking in spring and autumn.³⁵ The reason for this is that in the winter months the swamps filled and the Aborigines were forced to compete with the Europeans for the limited dry ground of the uplands - the Europeans for their stock and the Aborigines for their game. The pastoral stations along the Woakwine Range, in the Mount Burr/Glencoe region and around Mount Gambier precluded, or at least discouraged, Aboriginal access to traditional winter resources. Smith learnt from a local stockkeeper that Aborigines were hunted off some stations as a matter of course.³⁶ A police investigation of relations between Aborigines and settlers in the district, conducted in about May 1845, indicates the difficulties

34. CSO 696/1845.

35. See Appendix III.

36. C. Smith, The Booandik Tribe of South Australian Aborigines (Adelaide 1880), p.63.

faced by the Bunganditj in pursuing their traditional economic activities -

It was stated to him (Sgt. Major Alford) that damper poisoned with corrosive sublimate was given to them. Another method of ill-treatment which can be vouched for, is that of driving the Natives from the only watering places in the neighbourhood. The Native women appear likewise to have been sought after by the shepherds, whilst the men were driven from the stations with threats.³⁷

Under these conditions the pursuit of traditional economic activities became almost impossible and the Aborigines had virtually no choice but to hunt sheep and cattle. The economic nature of these attacks is illustrated, negatively, by the fact that there were fewer attacks during the summer months, a time when resources such as crayfish, fish, fruits and birds were abundant on the coastal margin, an area relatively unoccupied by the pastoralists.³⁸ The pattern of attacks also shows that the targets were not usually the settlers themselves but their stock and property; violence was directed against the settlers when they tried to stop thefts or recover property.

The settlers discovered bush 'hides' or 'kraals', constructed by the Aborigines to hide and store stolen stock. Following the murder of a shepherd and the theft of stock from Dunrobin station, near Casterton, a search party went out to track down those responsible.

37. CSO 116/1845.

38. See Appendix III.

The Portland Guardian describes what they discovered near the
Glenslg -

On skirting the scrub, the party discovered an artificial passage of about four feet wide, which had evidently been cut for the purpose of admitting the booty of the depredaters into the heart of the small forest. The horsemen rushed down the aperture as far as they could, but not in sufficient time to make any other discovery than the flock after which they were in search, feeding in an open spot in the heart of the scrub.³⁹

This occurred in April 1844. In August 1847, following the theft of 300 sheep from the South Australian Company's Benara station, the police pursuers discovered, in the sandhills of Cape Northumberland, what they described as "four well made bush gards."⁴⁰ A number of slaughtered sheep were found within them. The construction of 'bush-gards' and the attempts to conceal stolen sheep indicate that the Aborigines envisaged the possibility of maintaining them as a food supply. Sometimes when sheep were stolen and driven to their destination, they often had their legs broken to prevent them from wandering off.⁴¹

While the sheep and cattle became an economic necessity in the period between European occupation and the creation of alternate food supplies or livelihood, the tribe needed no more justification for their thefts than the force of tradition.

39. The Portland Guardian, April 27, 1844.

40. Mount Gambier Police, Journal, (SAA), entry for August 17, 1847.

41. CSO 865/1845 and CSO 681/1846.

Regardless of who owned the animals, they were on Bunganditj land and were considered fair game. Smith recorded the Bunganditj view on this subject -

My guide talked much about the treatment the blacks received from the early settlers; how when they killed a sheep - which was merely lawful game in their eyes, just the same as kangaroos, or emus, or any animal fit for food - they were hunted down and shot like dogs.⁴²

iii. Dependence on European Economy

The failure of resistance accompanied the collapse of traditional Bunganditj economic life and witnessed the population gradually drawn into a dependence on the European economy. The growth of this dependence was encouraged by both settlers and government. In 1846, Sturt wrote "it is the intention of some of the Settlers in this neighbourhood to distribute an amount of flour or blankets, to give them, in the hopes of thereby obtaining some control over them."⁴³ The Aboriginal Protector expressed a similar view in his report for the last quarter of 1847 -

From no station has a native been committed, where the tribes have assembled to receive flour. It is given with a view to prevent theft, when in want of food, and on condition of good behaviour, and I am glad to be able to say that a good effect has been produced.⁴⁴

42. Smith, p.41.

43. CSO 681/1845.

44. CSO 225/1848.

The rations were meant to be distributed monthly and to consist of 4 lbs. of flour per adult and 2 lbs. per child, with blankets supplied,⁴⁵ but the scheme did not always run smoothly - supplies often ran out or were delayed in their delivery and the quality of flour was frequently criticised.⁴⁶

Within the first couple of years of contact, Aboriginal groups were settling near stations, a fact noted by the Protector when he first visited the area in 1846.⁴⁷ However, attacks on station property and stock continued while this process was occurring and it is no indication of economic dependence. The attacks themselves indicate the desire of some groups to maintain their independence. It was not until the end of the decade that the Aborigines began to work for the settlers. The Government Resident at Robe reported the early indications of this trend in a letter to the Protector in 1849 -

the natives who formerly were too timid to approach the settlement, are now beginning to possess more confidence, and are rendering service to the Europeans - and the same may be reported of the Mount Gambier district.⁴⁸

For the Bunganditj the period between the end of frontier violence, in about 1848 or 1849, and the Victorian goldrush of 1851, represented a time of transition from traditional economic life to dependence on the European economy. The goldrush was the turning point. With the

45. CSO 930/1847.

46. Protector of Aborigines, Letterbook 1840-57, GRG 52/7 (SAA), entries for June 23, 1847, and August 1848.

47. CSO 125½/1847.

48. CSO 242/1849.

exodus of labour to the goldfields a void was created in the pastoral workforce which the local Aboriginal population largely filled.

The Government Resident reported these events in June 1852 -

the settlers of this district experienced great inconvenience in their shepherds leaving them for the goldfields, and the natives have supplied, in a measure, their places. It is estimated that 150,000 sheep are under the care of native shepherds.⁴⁹

Later in the same year the Government Resident reported that the majority of sheep were being shepherded by the Aborigines.⁵⁰

Records of ration distributions at the Robe Town police station show a sharp drop in the number of Aboriginal men attending the station after 1851, suggesting that many were gaining a livelihood on nearby pastoral runs (Fig. 12). In June 1853 rations were no longer given to the men, on the advice of the Government Resident who wrote, "the greater part of them are now constantly in the employ of settlers."⁵¹ He considered that their services were too important, in a time when labour was scarce, for any inducement to be provided for them to remain "idle and unsettled." Before this the settlers had to use inducements to encourage the Aborigines, who only a few years before they had been driving off their properties, to work for them. Those inducements seem to have been rations - better rations than the Government supplied. Harry Hickmer, who arrived

49. South Australian Government Gazette, 1852, p.367.

50. SAGG, 1852, pp.773-4.

51. SAGG, 1853, p.499.

Principal Occupations in the Counties of
Grey and Robe, extracted from the 1855
Census.

Occupation	Grey	Robe
Farmers	17	4
Agricultural Labourers	40	54
Stockholders	31	18
Carpenters	12	5
Sawyers & Splitters	21	0
Shepherds & others in charge of sheep	106	58
Stockmen & others in charge of cattle	17	10
Carriers & their assistants	15	7
Domestic servants	172	240
Others	482	268

No. of Aboriginal Men Receiving Rations
at the Robe Police Station 1848 - 1853

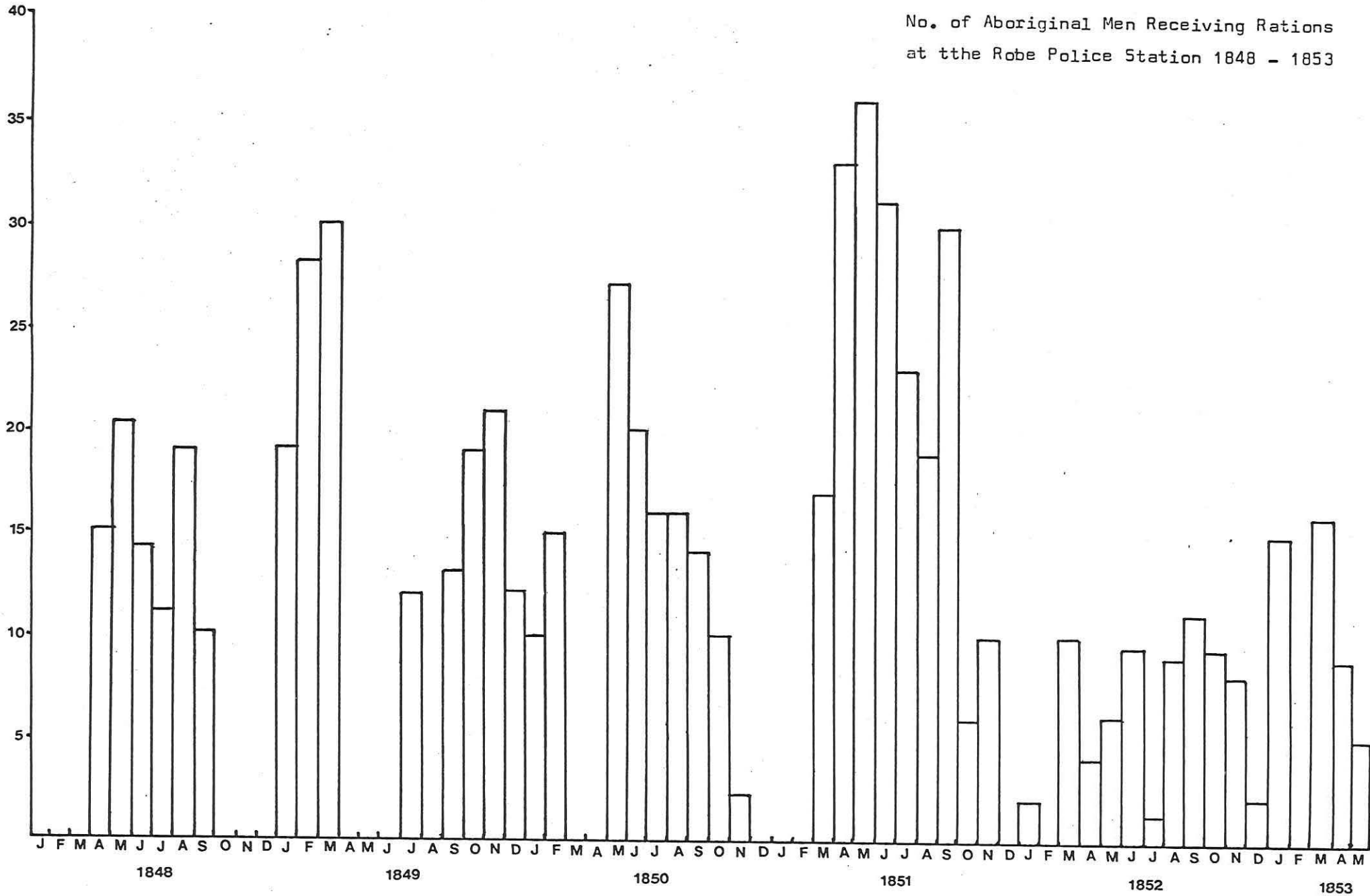


Fig. 12

at Leake's station in the winter of 1851,⁵² described the relations between Aborigines and settlers on the run -

At this time there were a great many blacks about the various stations, from which they would receive rations for various duties performed. Those at the Lake used to be given a certain allowance of flour, tea, sugar, rice, tobacco and sometimes meat. If any quantity at once were given to them it would all be used up in a day or two, and they would be crying out for more. There were always a great many hangers-on at the camp to assist in devouring the rations of the workers.⁵³

Half a dozen Aborigines were employed at the station, one as a stockrider, another as a wood-cutter, two as shepherds and two as general help.⁵⁴ As Hickmer wrote, others, not employed, also lived on the station. This dependence on the European economy did not entirely exclude traditional hunting and gathering activities. Hickmer himself described watching birds being hunted and seafood, along with native fruits, being brought back from the coast,⁵⁵ but these activities had become secondary.

In the mid-fifties there were probably well over 100 Aboriginal men employed on the stations, most as shepherds, but the number steadily declined as the enthusiasm for gold waned in the second half of the 1850's and the European labour shortage eased.⁵⁶

52. H. Hickmer (Panangharry) 'The Early Recollections of Glencoe, Lake Leake and the South-East', serialized in the Border Watch, 30 May 1903 (No. 1).

53. *ibid.*

54. *ibid.*

55. *ibid.*

56. M. Kiddle, Men of Yesterday (Melbourne 1980), pp.201-2.

The only figures showing Aboriginal employment are for the 1860's onwards. In 1861, 80 Aboriginal men were employed in the County of Grey out of a total Aboriginal population of 146 men; by 1866 the number had fallen to 9 in 60.⁵⁷ During the 1860's Aboriginal employment took on a more seasonal character and reports of destitution and reliance on rations, particularly during the winter months, increased in frequency.⁵⁸

In explaining the failure of resistance in Victoria, Michael Christie highlighted the superiority the Europeans attained through the use of firearms and the effectiveness of mounted troopers and native police.⁵⁹ Firearms and mounted police were undoubtedly assets for the invaders in the Lower South-East, but their value was heightened by the inability of the Bunganditj to effectively organize and maintain resistance. It is significant that the major victory the Bunganditj had in open conflict with the settlers was when, in a group of 400, they drove off a party of armed Europeans. As hunters and gatherers, the tribe's overall population, and the way it was organized, was limited by the natural productivity of the environment. Local groups were typically small, and largely autonomous, unable to join together for long periods of time without an abundant local economic resource to support such a gathering. Consequently, resistance took the form of individual local groups clashing with the invaders when and where settlement occurred. Under these conditions, firearms and mounted police were undeniably effective.

57. South Australia, Census Office, Census 1844-76, compilation of census figures.

58. SAGG, Reports of the Protector of Aborigines from 1864 onwards.

59. M. Christie, Aborigines in Colonial Victoria 1835-86 (Sydney 1979), pp.68-9.

At the heart of frontier conflict and the ultimate failure of resistance was the incompatibility of the contending economic systems. The Bunganditj were hunters and gatherers divided into small groups which moved through their land to exploit economic resources as they came into season, to the coast in summer and the uplands in winter - no one location could support a local group all year round. The invaders on the other hand were pastoralists, surviving on the profits of wool and cattle. Apart from the meadow land, on which to graze their stock, the natural flora and fauna of the land they occupied had no economic value to them. More often than not it was a nuisance. Kangaroos, for example, competed with their stock for grazing land. The two systems of land use brought the Aborigines and settlers into direct conflict. The Bunganditj moved through the region seasonally to exploit economic resources, but the Europeans, claiming specific areas of land, tried to exclude them access. The Bunganditj saw nothing wrong in hunting animals on the land, including sheep, but the Europeans needed the stock to make their profits. The Bunganditj traditionally used fire as an adjunct to hunting, but this killed sheep and cattle, becoming another source of conflict. The hunter-gatherer and pastoral economies, given the differing forms of land use, could not co-exist and once European dominance became established the traditional hunter-gatherer life-style of the Bunganditj broke down. To survive, they were forced into a dependence on the European economy.

SEVEN

Breakdown of the Bunganditj Social Order

i. Social Organization

About the year 1822 or 1823 the first ship was seen by the natives of Rivoli Bay...One morning some of the women went along the beach for shellfish, and returning were surprised by two white men. In running away one of the women dropped her child, and, on stopping to pick it up, was captured and taken away to the ship...¹

The earliest recorded contact between the Bunganditj and Europeans, involving the abduction of a woman, in many ways set the tone for relations between European men and Aboriginal women after settlement. As the European desire for land led to the collapse of the Bunganditj economic system, so their desire for women contributed to the breakdown of the social system. The settlers were almost exclusively involved in the pastoral industry and, like most pioneering settlements, their population was composed almost entirely of men. In 1846 the European population south of Rivoli Bay consisted of 248 men and 15 women, eight of the women of marriageable age and eight married. By 1855 the ratio had improved: there were 568 men and 374 women, but of about 200 women of marriageable age, 155 were married.² It was not until

1. C. Smith, The Booandik Tribe of South Australian Aborigines (Adelaide 1880), p.25.

2. South Australia Census Office, Census 1844-76.

Aboriginal Population of the Lower South East
1861 - 1876*

	ADULTS				CHILDREN		TOTAL		
	Healthy		Sick/Infirm		M	F	M	F	Total
	M	F	M	F					
<u>1861</u>									
Grey	152	101	11	16	27	29	190	146	236
Robe	43	19	7	6	7	6	57	31	88
<u>1866</u>									
Grey	46	30	-	2	14	7	60	39	99
Robe	18	12	3	4	7	8	28	24	52
<u>1871</u>									
Grey	20	12	2	1	6	6	28	24	52
Robe	18	12	2	3	7	7	27	22	49
<u>1876</u>									
Grey	18	9	2	1	2	3	22	13	35
Robe	9	5	-	3	3	-	12	8	20

* From census statistics published in the South Australian Parliamentary Papers.

the late 1860's that an approximate balance of the sexes was reached.³ This disproportion of the sexes on the European side of the frontier had serious consequences for the Bunganditj because women were the one thing, apart from land, which the Aborigines had and the Europeans wanted.

The Protector of Aborigines, Moorhouse, on his first visit to the Lower South-East in 1846, made the following observation -

I found a few (Aboriginal) families at most of the stations, as is usually the case; the shepherds and the hutkeepers always encourage a family or two, for the sake of the women.⁴

Though it is not something the settlers readily admitted, there were many sexual relationships, varying in their degree of permanence, between Aboriginal women and European men. An interesting aspect of these relationships is that some were condoned by the Aboriginal men. Some men 'shared' their wives, a practice of which Moorhouse was well aware -

On my way from Rivoli Bay to Mount Gambier I met a bullock driver who had a young native woman with him and had kept her for more than six months as his wife. I was informed that he was keeping the woman, against the consent of her husband, which was likely to be the case; as it is unusual for a man to give up his wife for six months in succession.⁵

3. South Australia, Census Office, Census 1844-76.

4. Colonial Secretary's Office, Inward Correspondence, GRG 24/6, No.125 $\frac{1}{2}$, 1847 (SAA).

5. *ibid.*

The point of contention, in the Protector's mind, was not that the Aborigine had given up his wife but that the bullock driver had kept her for too long.

The Bunganditj had no moral objection to sharing their women - it was common, for example, for brothers to share their wives - so it is not unusual that white men were sometimes allowed sexual license, or to enter into de facto relationships, provided they met the obligations expected of them. Sturt recognized this contract aspect of their dealings when he wrote "the first overtures a savage makes in barter is the tender of his unfortunate lubra."⁶ An attractive Aboriginal woman, Caroline, had a relationship with a stockkeeper on Sturt's Compton run and, according to Smith, "she had permission from her black 'coolie' husband to remain with the whites, since for her sake he would be allowed his 'tucker' and a blanket - also a little tobacco and grog."⁷ Those hutkeepers and shepherds who Moorhouse said encouraged families to settle near them might have gained some security from their liaisons, particularly in the early years of settlement when they were isolated and particularly vulnerable to attack, provided that they met the obligations expected of them.

Commenting on these relationships in her social history of Western Victoria, Margaret Kiddle observed that when women were kept for too long and gifts were no longer forthcoming trouble followed.⁸ Robertson, a settler on Wando Vale near

6. La Trobe Papers (La Trobe), p.242. Quoted in M. Kiddle, Men of Yesterday (Melbourne 1980), p.121.

7. Smith, p.85.

8. Kiddle, p.121.

Casterton in the 1840's, witnessed the relations set up between Europeans and Aborigines and he wrote about some of the more extreme consequences -

Mr. _____, of _____, on the Glenelg run, near me, kept a harem for himself and his men. The consequence was, he, like many more, had to sell out. All the men and masters got fearfully diseased from these poor creatures; they, of course, quarrelled with the natives, about their gins, and the natives, to be revenged for some of the insults, took away 48 ewes and lambs - they were followed by some of the neighbours and Mr. _____'s own men. They rushed their camp, shot two of the natives, one of them a female, said to be Mr. _____'s foremost black woman.⁹

Apart from stock theft, the main cause of conflict throughout the entire contact period was women. Disputes sometimes arose when the settlers did not fulfil their obligations, or when women were taken without consent or generally mistreated. One of the few instances of a European being murdered by an Aboriginal in this area resulted from the mistreatment of a man's wife. In 1847 Tatty Wanbourneen was charged with the murder of a hutkeeper named Carney. Of this incident Smith wrote - "the white man got his death through interfering with Tatty's lubra."¹⁰ Though it was apparently common knowledge in the district, this information didn't appear in the newspaper accounts or official correspondence concerning the case.

9. T.F. Bride, Letters from Victorian Pioneers (Adelaide 1969), p.165.
10. C. Smith, Diary, in Papers of the Smith Family, PRG 144 (SAA), p.36.

By the 1860's, when Bunganditj society had all but collapsed and European society was reaching a balance in the distribution of the sexes, Aboriginal women were still being abused by the whites. During the shearing season Aboriginal and itinerant labourers worked together on the stations. After they had been paid off, the whites used liquor to buy the favours of the women and the indifference of the men. The Assistant Colonial Surgeon for Mount Gambier witnessed the proceedings on one station at the end of the shearing season in 1865 -

Many of the shearers and other workmen brought bottles of spirits as a decoy to the lubras, and took them into the scrub for an improper purpose, sharing the grog at the same time with their men or coolies...¹¹

It was illegal for Aborigines to purchase liquor and so when the whites shared theirs they expected something in return.¹²

In Bunganditj society marriage was a contract between two clans; it was governed by kinship rules and guided by a panoply of obligations and prohibitions.¹³ Most marriages were arranged for individuals by their parents and people grew up with the knowledge of whom they were to marry. However, when the Europeans arrived and took women, whether by agreement or force, existing patterns of exchange were seriously disrupted. Conflict, not only with the Europeans but between clans, must often have been the result of these broken contracts. Furthermore, the

11. South Australian Government Gazette, 1865, p.581.

12. CSD 106/60, Circular relative to the duties of the police toward the Aborigines.

13. See Chapter Three.

removal of women from the existing exchange system created conflict by increasing the competition for the available women. Stewart, who considered the main cause of conflict within the tribe to be disputes over women,¹⁴ recorded the case of four Pinejunga men from Penola who killed a man so they could take his wife; they had previously tried to entice her away.¹⁵ On another occasion a Pinejunga man tried to take the wife of a man who had been sent to gaol in Adelaide for cattle theft, but when the suitor found her unwilling he killed both the woman and her child. This man was later killed for trying to take another man's wife.¹⁶

An unequal rate of depopulation within the tribe created further stress. The first Aboriginal census shows that in the County of Grey in 1861 there were 190 men to 146 women, a ratio of 4 : 3.¹⁷ The ratio of men to women gradually increased over the next 25 years till it was 2 : 1 in 1867.¹⁸ This disproportion of the sexes was almost certainly a post-contact occurrence. A census of the Woollowero, taken by Robinson in June 1841, shows that women outnumbered men in this adjoining tribe.¹⁹ Of the six bands from which he collected information, two had approximately the same number of men and women while the other four had more women than men. In two bands, one of which was the largest, women outnumbered men by two to one. The social impact of this disproportion of the sexes was exacerbated by the practice of polygyny, which meant that a few men, mainly elders, controlled most of the women.

14. T. MacCourt and H. Mincham, 'Duncan Stewart 1834-1913' in Two Notable South Australians (Beachport 1971), p.63.

15. D. Stewart, Notebook 1853 (SAA D.2609(L)), pp.16-17.

16. Smith, The Booandik Tribe..., pp.x, xi.

17. S.A. Census Office, Census 1844-76.

18. *ibid.*

19. G.A. Robinson, Letterbooks 1841-45, Vol.26, MS A.7047 (ML) Correspondence No. 1484.

To use the Woollowero once more to illustrate a point: in one band as few as 7 men controlled 25 wives, 11 had one wife each and 12 had no wives at all; put another way, less than one-third of the men monopolized more than half the women.²⁰

The consequence of this competition over women was the collapse of the traditional kinship system - marriages could no longer be arranged and the moiety system had to be disregarded. An indication of how far the traditional system had collapsed can be gauged from the answers to a questionnaire sent to the various districts of South Australia in the late 1870's. Compiled by Taplin, it was designed to gather information about the "manners, customs and languages" of the various tribes. The answers in the Lower South-East are revealing: many of the groups claimed they were not divided into classes, i.e. moieties, that there were no totems, and that blood relations were allowed to inter-marry.²¹ This might have been true for the time the survey was taken but, traditionally, there were moieties, totems and prohibitions on the marriage of blood relatives.

ii. Authority

One of the earliest acts of the Colonial Government toward the Aborigines of South Australia was to declare them British subjects; Hindmarsh, in his Proclamation speech, said of the Aborigines that they "are to be considered as much under the safeguard of the law as the colonists themselves, and equally entitled to the privileges

20. G.A. Robinson, Letterbooks 1841-45, Vol.26, MSS A.7047 (ML) Correspondence No. 1484.

21. G. Taplin, Folklore, Manners, Customs and Languages of the Aborigines of Australia (Adelaide 1879), pp.57-61.

of British Subjects."²² In its day, this policy was seen as evidence of the even-handed, humanitarian approach the Government intended to take but, in fact, it created as many problems as it hoped to solve. In the first instance, the Colonial Government failed to admit the existence of traditional systems of authority among the tribes and, secondly, they committed themselves to a long period of controversy due to Aboriginal ignorance of their newly acquired status.

Failure to recognize the existence of traditional authority was a measure of British cultural arrogance; they saw their job as one of raising the Aborigines up out of the stone age and providing them with the benefits of Christianity and civilization. Occasionally questions were asked about traditional authority but never was it seriously taken into account. The defence counsel for the first Aborigine charged with an offence against a fellow countryman eloquently highlighted the problem -

Mr Bartley thought it might be argued whether the prisoner was a British subject and answerable to British laws. This he could do so by his friend, although it was necessary the pleas should proffusely bear his signature. His offence might be punishable or might not by the laws of his own people, and if we are to try him, he might be subject to a second trial by them. This was not a conquered country, nor was there any law by which we, coming on it, could, without the consent of the natives, try offences among them.²³

22. Department of Aboriginal Affairs, 'A Brief Outline of Aboriginal Affairs in South Australia since Colonization', Pamphlet 1863, p.1.
 23. The South Australian Register, November 26, 1846.

The judge dismissed Mr. Bartley's plea claiming that there was no act empowering him to take traditional Aboriginal law into account and that he was obliged to consider the case as if it were any other involving subjects of Her Majesty. He concluded his reply in the typically patronizing tone of his day, saying "nothing would more advance their civilization than the fact of numbers of their own body being from time to time brought before the Court, which would impress upon their minds their amenableness to the law, and teach them the consequences of crime."²⁴ Traditional authority was not recognized and it was policy that it be broken down as quickly as possible by establishing the dominance of British law.

For the law to acknowledge the Aborigines as British subjects presented no difficulty, but for them to be made aware of their new status, their duties and rights, and accept it, was an altogether more complex problem. The responsibility for this was in the hands of the Protector and other Government functionaries, such as the Government Resident, Local Magistrates and the police.²⁵ Not long after arriving at Mount Gambier in 1846 it was recorded in the Journal of that station that Police Constable Robins and Dewson "patrolled round Mr. Leake's run, saw some natives and explained to them the consequence of sheep stealing."²⁶ It is apparent that the police had been instructed to 'educate the natives' of their new status. With this report, however, the police were probably just going through the motions to satisfy their superiors,

24. The South Australian Register, November 26, 1846.

25. CSO 1416/47.

26. Mount Gambier Police, Journal, GRG 5, 151/1 (SAA), Entry for March 7, 1846.

because the first effective interpreter was not stationed in the district till one was assigned to the Guichen Bay police in February 1848.²⁷ Duncan Stewart, in the Lower South-East, was not on the Government pay-roll till a number of months after this time.²⁸ It was not until the Protector's visit in July 1848 that there is some evidence of the message getting through. Moorhouse wrote -

I spoke to them and explained, as well as I was able, our laws relating to theft and they understood that stealing rendered them liable to punishment.²⁹

Unlike earlier attempts to speak to the Aborigines, the Protector, on this occasion, had an Aboriginal to interpret for him and one well enough acquainted with English to get the message across.³⁰ It was about this time that Aboriginal aggressions ceased, the reason for this, however, was not so much a growing awareness on the part of the Aborigines of their new status, rather it was as a consequence of a growing economic dependence on European society and the punitive aggressions of that society over the preceding years.

During the 1840's, British law, which was meant to protect the Aborigines as much as the settlers, did not effectively protect either group. Sir John Jeffcott, Knight Chief Justice of the Province, underlined the Government attitude towards the Aborigines in 1838, stressing that the law would actually discriminate in

27. CSO 225/48.

28. CSO 375/48, CSO 328/49.

29. CSO 1182½/48.

30. The Protector's attempts to assemble and speak to the Aborigines were frequently frustrated: on his first visit in 1846 he could find no one to interpret (CSO 125½/46); and early in 1848 when he visited the area he could not assemble anyone because four Aborigines had just returned from gaol in Adelaide and festivities were in progress. (CSO 1182½/48).

their favour -

I will go further to say that any aggressions upon the natives or any infringement of their rights shall be visited by greater severity of punishment than would be the case in similar offences committed upon white men.³¹

It is difficult to find many cases in the Lower South-East of Europeans being punished with 'greater severity', few enough were punished, but the law did certainly discriminate in favour of the Aborigines. It was not until 1853 that an Aboriginal from the area was found guilty and punished by the courts for a crime.³² Of those brought to Adelaide for trial before this time, on charges which included theft, stealing sheep and cattle, as well as murder, all were released because they couldn't be made to understand the charges, or because the evidence was insufficient. Though the law appeared to protect the Aborigines in this way, it actually had dire consequences for them because the settlers, believing that their rights were not being protected, took the law into their own hands. On some occasions the judges' rulings were quite inflammatory toward the settlers: one Aboriginal, charged with killing a settler's cow, was released when the judge decided that he had merely speared the cow and that it died when put down by its owner.³³

31. Department of Aboriginal Affairs, 'A Brief Outline...', p.2.

32. SAGG, 1853, p.818 and SAGG, 1854, pp.150-152. Over a dozen Aborigines were committed for trial in Adelaide between 1843 and 1853 but all were released; one who returned to the district in 1853 said - "very good Adelaide - plenty tucker - no me frightened" (CSO 1782/53).

33. The South Australian Register, March 18, 1848.

The threat that the settlers would take the law into their own hands had already been expressed before a police detachment was sent to Mount Gambier, but when it became apparent that the courts weren't backing the police up the threat became a reality. The Government Resident at Guichen Bay discussed the consequences of this state of affairs in a letter to the Colonial Secretary in January 1847 -

On the one hand a native cannot be punished if he is unable to defend himself from ignorance of what may be used against him - and on the other hand the shepherds and others when they observe that the natives escape punishment are induced to take the law into their own hands; and acting on the principle of self-preservation it is impossible to say what may be the result to the Aborigines as they may often suffer without the slightest chance of the aggression being detected.³⁴

Evelyn Sturt, a pastoralist and magistrate, betrayed the frustration felt by the settlers when on one occasion he suggested to the Colonial Secretary that a prisoner on remand in Adelaide be held over for the winter as he was a leader of aggressions against the settlers and "it appears somewhat improbable that the accused will be convicted."³⁵ Almost a year later, in reference to another case, he wrote that he was unwilling to commit natives except on undeniable evidence because their return to the district unpunished had a bad effect on their countrymen.³⁶ Sturt was losing faith in

34. CSD 220/47.

35. CSD 444/47.

36. CSD 102/48.

the law, at least as it affected the Aborigines, and which he was obliged to uphold.

That the settlers took the law into their own hands is beyond doubt but to what extent the Aborigines suffered by it is hard to determine. Sturt, however, gives a frightening intimation in a letter to the Colonial Secretary in 1846. In the letter, concerning the difficulty of obtaining evidence against David Morgan for the murder of an Aborigine, he made the following aside -

I have here to observe that it is impossible to get at the truth among the rest of the ruffians who infest the neighbourhood and I believe that a wholesale system of murder has been carried on, which it is most difficult to obtain any evidence of. I must inform you that the body of a Black was found by a man of Mr. Lawson, a settler, on a run in the neighbourhood, with the mark of a gunshot wound. Another native was shot it is supposed by a man of the name of Henry Sawyer, upon Mr. McKinnon's run, who reported the same to me and buried the body.³⁷

Many other secret killings were being carried out.³⁸ As a result of this situation the Government Resident wrote to a friend in Adelaide who was working on a new Magistrate's Bill, and he asked that a clause be added empowering a Justice to administer summary punishment.

37. CSO 1096/46.

38. The subject of 'secret killings' is discussed in Chapter Eight.

He clearly believed that the law as it operated in regard to the Aborigines encouraged settlers to take the law into their own hands, a temptation increased by the loss of time and money involved in travelling to Adelaide to give evidence.³⁹

Naively, the Colonial Government hoped that by making the Aborigines British subjects they would enjoy the protection of British law but because the courts protected them, through their ignorance of the law, they suffered as a consequence the lawlessness of the frontier. The Government made only token efforts to educate the Aborigines of their new status, a process that was so important if the granting of British status was to have any meaning. However, because of the tardiness of this process, authority was ultimately established by the law of the gun through both the authorized activities of the police and the secret activities of the settlers. It was not until the end of the first decade of settlement, the late 1840's, that the Bunganditj were clearly aware of, and resigned to, their subject status.

While the Bunganditj eventually became aware that they were subject to their invader's system of justice, it took longer for them to realise that their traditional system of settling disputes and administering justice was not recognized. This is evident in the case of Marponin who was beaten to death by four other Aborigines on Gifford's station near Robe: when told that the police would arrest them, one replied "Why will the police come and take us, we have not killed a white fellow."⁴⁰ They were not aware that they were liable to punishment for killing one of their own people and

39. CSO 2112½/49.

40. CSO 1825/1851.

they spoke openly to the settlers about what they had done. The defence of the four accused was that Marponin "made songs against them."⁴¹ The 'singing' might have been a form of sorcery, or of public condemnation reflecting an intertribal dispute; whatever the case the accused clearly felt that it was their right to be revenged.⁴²

There were also cases in which individuals, administering justice on behalf of the elders, were liable for punishment in the eyes of European law. It was customary, for example, for those found guilty of serious offences, whether by totemic inquests or more direct means, to be secretly executed.⁴³ Once guilt had been determined a hunt was arranged and the condemned man was invited to go along, only to be surreptitiously killed at some time after the hunt was concluded. This method of execution was used by a group of Aborigines to kill another on Doughty's Monbulla station near Penola -

Toon-kanerimen had a gun that he got at Dr. Dickson's place, they asked him (the deceased) to accompany them to shoot ducks - they said they had plenty flour and mutton. He went with them and was not seen alive afterwards.⁴⁴

It cannot be determined whether or not this was a killing sanctioned by the elders but it is interesting to note that the accused openly admitted their guilt and that the deceased's wife, the subject of

41. The South Australian Register, May 21, 1851.

42. N. Tindale, 'Native Songs of the South East of South Australia' in Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia, Vol.LXI(1937) and Vol.LXV, 2 (1941). Tindale discusses the types of songs from this area and their functions, pp.107-8.

43. See Chapter Three.

44. Stewart, p.8.

the dispute between the two parties, did not, in Stewart's words "burn or cut her hair, as is usual at the death of a near relation."⁴⁵ Harry Hickmer, who recorded the practice of secret executions, claimed that once the police became aware of the practice a number of people were arrested and tried for murder in Adelaide - in some cases, prison sentences were imposed.⁴⁶ It is apparent that some Aborigines who were simply administering the law of their own people were being punished for doing so by the laws of another.

The Europeans also undermined traditional authority by providing a means by which it could be circumvented. In 1851 Hickmer witnessed a murapeena in which an Aboriginal woman, the subject of a dispute, was in the process of being punished; she sought refuge at Leake's home and was granted it.⁴⁷ Smith, in particular, was guilty of providing refuge for those in trouble with their own people -

Whenever a dispute or quarrel occurs in any of the tribes, it invariably happens that some of the weaker ones have to come to the Home for protection, and remain there until matters have been amicably settled.⁴⁸

If laws exist which cannot be enforced then the effectiveness of those laws and the authority of those who administer them, is weakened; this is what was occurring in the Bunganditj society.

With the breakdown of their hunter-gatherer lifestyle the Bunganditj were drawn into an increasing dependence on the

45. Stewart, p.8.

46. H. Hickmer (Panangharry), 'The Early Recollections of Glencoe, Lake Leake, and the South-East', serialized in the Border Watch, September 26, 1903 (No. 7).

47. *ibid*, May 30, 1903 (No. 1).

48. Smith, p.45.

European economy. Employers became a new source of authority. Many Aborigines, working as shepherds, hutkeepers or bullock-drivers, were taken away from the immediate control of the elders. The Aborigines on the stations were exposed to the values and morals of the Europeans with whom they worked. There is a particularly gruesome illustration of the consequences of the younger men of the tribe associating with some of the settlers. A settler named Owen Curren, on the 'ruffian infested' border of the province, to use Sturt's phrase, gave an Aboriginal a gun to kill an old man of the tribe who was living on the station. Curren then gave him a knife with which to cut off the man's head, which the settler hung outside his own hut.⁴⁹

European interference in the traditional settlement of disputes and the administration of justice within the tribe rendered traditional authority largely ineffective. Aborigines who sought retribution for crimes they believed were committed against them, or who were administering punishment for breaches of tribal law, found themselves liable to punishment by European law. Further, individuals who found themselves the centre of disputes within the tribe could circumvent authority by seeking sanctuary among the Europeans. Finally, the growing authority of the Europeans as employers, and the changing residence pattern of the tribe, took many away from the direct influence of the elders and subjected them to the values and morals of the invading society. All these factors weakened the influence of, and respect for, traditional authority.

49. CSO 1096/46.

iii. Customs, Beliefs and Rituals

Government policy towards the Aborigines was based on the notion that they were caught in a backwater of human history and that it was a God-given duty to lead them into the modern world through the agencies of civilization and Christianity. It was believed that there was little, if any, inherent value in Aboriginal culture; that it was an impediment to civilization and the sooner it withered away and died the better. Though traditional beliefs and customs were being discarded as the Bunganditj were drawn into a dependence on the European economy, it was also policy for them to be discouraged.

In the mid-1860's an Aboriginal died on the Benara station and the Superintendent asked some friends of the deceased to bury the body but they refused, saying that "the old woman (meaning Mrs. Smith) would growl at them",⁵⁰ so it was only when they were paid to remove the body that it was finally interred under the supervision of Smith. Ranger Egan, a sub-protector of the Aborigines at Tarpeena, argued that "it is very injudicious to interfere with the customs of the Aborigines with regard to the burial of their dead, a ceremony which is performed by them with great care and solemnity."⁵¹ The Protector disagreed and sided with Smith -

Mrs. Smith is deserving commendation for her kindness to the natives when sick and hungry and the efforts to secure decent burial for the bodies of the departed. It is no doubt "very injudicious" and also very wrong "to interfere with the

50. Crown Lands and Immigration Office, Inward Correspondence, GRG 35/1, No. 3223, 1865 (SAA).

51. *ibid.*

customs of the Aborigines" if they are lawful and harmless, resorting to compulsory measures, but it is an important step toward civilization and christianization of the blacks when they involuntarily abandon any of their savage customs and superstitious rites.⁵²

Traditional burial customs had a significance beyond that of simple interment and mourning. The burial rite was associated with a ritual, best described as a totemic inquest, which involved both a seance over the body and a form of divination in which the surface of the grave was examined for animal tracks. Given the belief that all those who died an unexplained death were the victims of sorcery, the ritual was a means of determining the totem and identity of the murderer. Once the identity of the sorcerer had been discovered, retribution was planned. This custom was still being practised in the late 1850's; Hickmer recalled the case of a man dying on a nearby station and the rumour spreading that a cockatoo had been found on his grave. One of the Aborigines working with Hickmer, and a member of the cockatoo totem, came to believe that the divination incriminated him, so he thought it was wise to leave for another part of the district.⁵³ The significance of the totemic inquest was that it provided the tribe with a means of explaining misfortune and sanctioning action to redress it. Death disturbed the order of the world and this ritual, however arbitrary it may seem to us, provided a means of restoring order. That opportunity was lost, to be partly replaced by Christian beliefs, when the burial customs were no longer practised. Furthermore, the

52. Crown Lands and Immigration Office, Inward Correspondence, GRG 35/1, No. 3223, 1865 (SAA).

53. Hickmer in the Border Watch, September 26, 1903 (No. 7).

associated totemic beliefs, so important to the world-view of the society, lost one context in which they could be expressed and, like laws which cannot be enforced and wither away, the currency of this belief was being devalued.

As the belief-system collapsed it created tension between those who clung to the old ways and those who rejected them in favour of European values. An example of this occurred in relation to a funeral service -

It appears that a native known as King John died recently, and some quarrel arose from the circumstance that all the aboriginals in the locality did not assist in the funeral ceremonies of the deceased chieftain. Johnny Douting was one who was reproached by deceased (Cold Morning) with having neglected to pay proper respect to the King. A third native (Billy Glen) was standing near, and observing the quarrel, he ran and thrust a barbed spear through the body of Cold Morning.⁵⁴

The murder occurred on Leake's station in 1859, at a time when traditional funeral ceremonies were still being observed.

An important aspect of the Bunganditj worldview was a belief that the ancestors lived on in the spirit world and continued to exert an influence on the life of the community. Central to the survival of this belief was a ritual called Moorn et M'rade (Sky Peoples visit to Earth) in which the pangal communicated with the

54. The South Australian Register, March 16, 1859.

ancestors who taught him dances and songs and answered inquiries from living relatives. Smith witness what was probably one of the last of these rituals -

On one occasion he was to give an exhibition of his skills, and some of the family went to see him. An Englishman was present, and when everybody was waiting to hear the dead speak, he jumped up with a big stick in his hand, declaring he would break it across the pangal's back if ever he attempted such foolery again, and effectively broke up the meeting.⁵⁵

The Bunganditj had no idols to be smashed, but they had a belief-system that was ridiculed and attacked.

If any one person can be said to have played a major role in breaking down the belief-system of the tribe it was Christina Smith. From the time of her arrival in 1845 she set about the task of converting as many people as possible to Christianity. Seventy-five per cent of her book on the Bunganditj is taken up by 'memoirs' of the people she persuaded to abandon their ungodly ways and embrace Christianity.⁵⁶ One of Smith's earliest converts was a boy named Wergon who came under her care after he ran away from his parents.⁵⁷ Smith taught him English and filled his mind with scripture stories - on one occasion he went out into the bush to preach the word of Christ to a nearby tribe.⁵⁸ Smith's efforts at breaking down

55. Smith, p.77.

56. *ibid*, pp.47-121.

57. *ibid*, p.51.

58. *ibid*, p.62.

PLATE 3.

Early South Eastern and Mt. Gambier residents, 1901.

Left - T. Smith. Right - 'Lankey' (Canna).

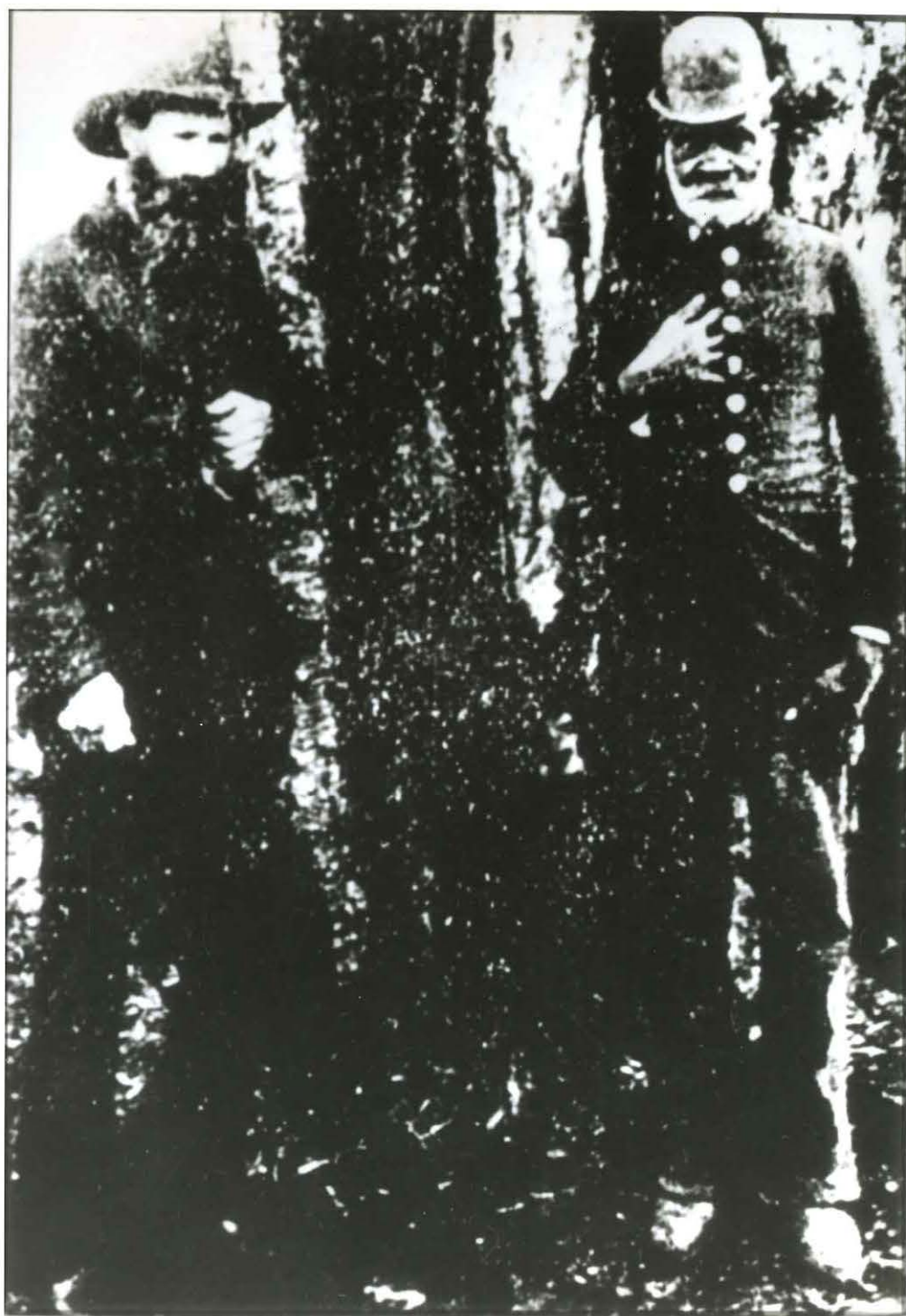


PLATE 4.

a. Members of the Booandik tribe, Mt. Gambier, with Mrs. C. Smith, 1866.

From left: Ellen, Tommy, _____, Mrs. Smith, Sally, _____.

b. Aborigines' Home, Mt. Gambier West, c. 1870.



the culture of the people, or 'civilizing them' as she would have put it, involved taking children away from their parents and bringing them up in her own household or, later, at the Aborigines' Home in Mount Gambier.

In the two to three years that the Aborigines' Home at Mount Gambier operated she had ten to twenty children under her care. Her charter from the Lord Bishop of Adelaide, Dr. Short, who paid for the Home to be built and gave Smith a salary, was "to teach and watch over such orphan natives and half-castes as may be placed under her care; or other native children whom the Mount Gambier, or other, Aborigines may be induced to stay with her".⁵⁹ This approach to de-culturation was in accord with the recommendations of the 1860 Select Committee which stated as its final submission "that permanent benefit, to any appreciable extent, from attempts to Christianize the natives can only be expected by separation of children from their parents and evil influences of the tribe to which they belong."⁶⁰ Though charged with the children's education and Christianization, her greatest concern was with the latter. Every day, in the morning and in the evening, the children had scripture lessons and on Sunday they were expected to go to church or Sunday school.⁶¹ The Protector, Dr. Walker, summed up the tenor of the school in his report for the

59. Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Correspondence Files 1866-1968, GRG 52/1, No. 247, 1866 (SAA).

60. Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines, South Australian Parliamentary Papers, No. 165, 1860, p.6.

61. Smith, p.45.

first quarter of 1868 -

Those now in the 'Home' appear to have received little instruction as some who have been resident for more than a year can hardly read short lessons of words of two or three letters, and the rest know imperfectly the letters of the Alphabet. They sing however several simple hymns and songs very well.⁶²

By this time the adults were quite willing to entrust the care of their children to Smith because many were unable to look after them any more - alcoholism was endemic and sickness rife in the late 1860's. Smith had some influence over the adults as well, as due to illness and destitution some set themselves up adjacent to the Home so they could receive food and medical care. Under such conditions of dependence, death-bed conversions were common.

62. CLIO 263/68.

EIGHT

Depopulation

The Aboriginal population of the Lower South-East at the time of first European settlement has been estimated at 2,000-2,500 individuals, of whom the Bunganditj made up no more than a half.¹ By the turn of the century the last full-blood Aborigine had died.² It is not possible to estimate the rate of depopulation for the period between first contact and 1860 because few population estimates were made, and those were for vaguely defined areas. In 1861 the first Aboriginal census, county by county, was taken and by this time the Aboriginal population of the Lower South-East was well enough known, and sufficiently settled, for it to be considered accurate. The census figures for the County of Grey, which included most of the Bunganditj territory, show a remarkably rapid decline in the Aboriginal population -

<u>1861</u>	<u>1866</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1876</u>
236	99	47	35

The figures indicate a decline of about fifty percent in each five year period, which is consistent with the decline in the Lower South-East generally.⁴ The devastating collapse of the Bunganditj population can be put down to three causes: frontier violence, disease and infecundity.

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1. T.D. Campbell 'Notes on the Aborigines of the South-East of South Australia', Pt. 1 and 2 in Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia, Vol. 58, 1934, and Vol. 63(1), 1939, p.34 (Vol. 2).
 2. *ibid.*
 3. South Australia Census Office, Census 1844-76. Bound copy of census figures as published in the South Australian Government Gazette (Barr Smith Library).
 4. Campbell, p.35 (Part 2).

i. Frontier Violence

Between 1843 and 1848, the period of frontier violence, 30 or so Aborigines were reported to have died at the hands of the settlers. The evidence indicates that this was only a fraction of the number actually killed. The Aboriginal deaths that were most often reported occurred in open conflicts with the settlers or police, that is, in Aboriginal raids on stations, or retributive raids on Aboriginal camps. Initially, the settlers had little compunction reporting these conflicts because they could justify any deaths in terms of self-defence. To the earliest settlers the threat to life and property was very real and so in reporting conflicts they illustrated the need for police protection.

It was one thing to report conflicts, quite another to detail the circumstances accurately. Leake's station was attacked on a number of occasions in May and June 1844, within months of being established.⁵ In one of these attacks, according to the settlers, a party of 50 natives attacked a shepherd tending his flock and they were only driven off when Leake and some of his men arrived on the scene. In the violent melee that occurred Leake reported that no more than one attacker was killed. A different story was given to the Commissioner of Police by Sergeant Major Alford who was sent to the district to investigate the incident. The Commissioner wrote, "on this occasion it would appear from the account given by Mr. MacIntyre, Mr. Leake's overseer, that eight natives were shot."⁶ Having earlier defended the settlers' actions as showing admirable restraint in the face of Aboriginal aggression, the Commissioner now wrote of "the secrecy in which these transactions have been cloaked."⁷

5. Colonial Secretary's Office, Inward Correspondence, GRG 24/6, No. 735 and 1527, 1844 (SAA).

6. CSO 116/45.

7. CSO 26/45, the Commissioner of Police defends the actions of Leake. CSO 116/45 writes of 'secrecy'.

Though it never eventuated, he wanted to issue warrants to apprehend MacIntyre, Leake and the others involved. Clearly the number of deaths reported to have occurred in conflicts such as these, and the number that actually occurred, did not necessarily match.

One reason for this secrecy was that the Government had made it very clear that the Aborigines were to enjoy the full protection of British Law. In his report on the Leake incident the Commissioner of Police wrote, "where death has ensued, and any dangerous wound has been given, it is proper that all witnesses to the transaction should be examined."⁸ It did not take long for the settlers to believe that their own system of law had betrayed them; this belief was strengthened when each Aboriginal sent to Adelaide for trial, on charges ranging from sheep theft to murder, was returned to the district unpunished. As a consequence, threats were made that the settlers would take the law into their own hands, and this is exactly what occurred.

In a report to the Chief Secretary's Office, dated 22 August 1864, Sturt wrote, "I believe a wholesale system of murder has been carried on, which it is most difficult to obtain any evidence of."⁹ This statement reveals the other sort of violence that was occurring - secret violence. By its very nature this type of violence is difficult to assess, but some examples exist that at least indicate its presence and extent. A good illustration is the case of James Brown who, with another man, secretly murdered an entire Aboriginal family - it was only because an Aboriginal^e secretly

8. CSO 26/45.

9. CSO 1096/46.

witnessed the deed that it was ever reported. Captain Butler, the Government Resident, summarized the witness's evidence -

he was going along the road with the dray - he heard shots fired - went aside to see what it was - under cover of the trees he saw four or five native women lying on the ground - two dead - he believes the others were dead also as they did not move - saw two white men - Brown was one of them and had a gun - The Corpl. visited the place with the native - there were five holes - took bones and hair out of them - there was also the foot of a native woman - picked up paper which was evidently discharged from a gun - the native is certain Brown was one of the men.¹⁰

Despite Butler's private assertion that there was "no question of the butchery or of the butcher", the case against Brown never passed the committal stage.

Across the border, near the Glenelg River, another incident occurred that indicates the extent of secret violence. In May 1842 Koort Kirrup was alleged to have murdered a station owner and his hut-keeper at Emu Creek - it was 18 months before Koort Kirrup was apprehended.¹² While being questioned in gaol by Assistant Protector Thomas, Koort Kirrup stated that nine of his tribe, he named each of them, were killed by the settlers in revenge.¹³ Besides the fact that these revenge killings were commonplace

10. Captain G.V. Butler, Letters written by Captain Butler, Guichen Bay, to Captain Bagot, D.3746/1-3(L) (SAA).

11. *ibid.*

12. New South Wales, Governor's Despatches, Vol 52, 1846 (pp.573-627) Enclosure No. 4 in Despatch No. 49/1846 (ML).

13. G.A. Robinson, Correspondence and Related Papers, Vol. 57, MSS A7078, pp.43-46 (ML).

the important aspect, in trying to assess the impact of frontier violence, is that news of them rarely surfaced.

Another form of secret violence perpetrated against the Aborigines was poisoning. While investigating the incident at Leake's station, Sergeant Major Alford also heard rumours that damper poisoned with corrosive sublimate was being given to the Aborigines.¹⁴ J.C. Byrne, who was wandering through the provinces during the 1840's wrote -

it became dangerous for shepherds, stockkeepers etc., at distant stations to pursue their former course of open violence, but corrosive sublimate, and other mercurial and arsenic preparations used for sheep dressing, offered an easy mode of getting rid of the Aborigines if they proved troublesome. The poison was mixed with flour made into bread and given to the victims.¹⁵

In 1844, about a year before Sergeant Major Alford heard rumours of poisoning, Governor Grey's exploratory party travelled to the South-East. A seemingly comic incident, described by Angus, taking place near Rivoli Bay, where the poisonings were said to have occurred, takes on a new and sinister meaning in the light of this knowledge -

On the brow of a steep, wooded hill, we surprised a party of natives, cooking their food around their fires. At our approach they flew down the descent and

14. CSO 116/45.

15. J.C. Byrne, Twelve Years Wanderings in the British Colonies from 1835-1847 (London 1847), Vol. 1, p.275.

hid among the bulrushes; but one old woman, unable to escape as easily as the rest, finding flight useless, began to chatter very loud and fast, pointing to her blind eye and her lean and withered arms, as objects of commiseration. "Damper" was given to her, and she continued in her terror to chew it very fast, without swallowing any until she almost choked.¹⁶

An old Bunganditj woman told Smith the story of the first overland party they met and how a man, appointed to visit the white men, brought back a shoulder of mutton and some damper - "we tasted the mutton, and found it very good, but we buried the damper, as we were afraid of being poisoned."¹⁷

Reports of poisoning were common in Western Victoria in the early 1840's. In 1841, near the junction of the Glenelg and Wannon Rivers, almost 20 Aborigines, mainly women and children, died as a consequence of eating poisoned damper.¹⁸ The value to the settlers of this method of murder, particularly in the early stages of contact when the Aborigines maintained their distance, was that more often than not it could go unnoticed. On the occasions when poisonings were detected, they were difficult to prove. James Brown, the man suspected of having murdered the Aboriginal family, was, on another occasion, charged with poisoning an Aborigine - he was found not guilty.¹⁹ Corrosive sublimate was used to treat sheep for scab

16. G.F. Angas, Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand, Vol. 1, p.173.

17. C. Smith, The Booandik Tribe of South Australian Aborigines, (Adelaide 1880), p.26.

18. M.F. Christie, Aborigines in Colonial Victoria 1835-86 (Sydney 1979), p.46.

19. R. Cockburn, Pastoral Pioneers of South Australia (Adelaide 1925-27), Vol. 2, p.141.

and it was sometimes argued that deaths resulted from eating such sheep. The Protector Robinson claimed that there was a high mortality among the Aborigines of Western Victoria from eating sheep impregnated with poison.²⁰ Even here, it is not beyond the realms of possibility that some of the deaths resulted from treated sheep being offered to the Aborigines.

Conflict among the Bunganditj, and with other tribes, was another factor contributing to the overall population decline. It was not until the late 1840's, when frontier violence had largely abated and the Aboriginal community was better known among the settlers, that the police began investigating violence among the Aborigines. A prominent cause of post-contact violence within the tribe was competition for women, competition that was exacerbated by the European presence and a more rapid decline among the female than male population. Smith cites the case of Boonodat who, unable to take the wife of a man at that time imprisoned in Adelaide, killed both the woman and her child.²¹ He was later killed trying to take a woman of the Pinejunga tribe, in the vicinity of Penola. A number of these conflicts were between Bunganditj and Pinejunga tribesmen. In 1853 a man was killed by four other Pinejunga tribesmen who wanted to take his wife. The Stipendiary Magistrate at Penla wrote that two of the men "were formerly committed by me to Adelaide for the murder of a Lubra near Rivoli Bay."²²

20. G.A. Robinson, 'Report of a Journey of 1100 miles to the tribes of the North West and Western Interior during the months of March, April, and May of the current year (1845)', in New South Wales Governor's Despatches, Vol. 51, 1846, MS A.1240, pp.353-5(ML).

21. Smith, p.x.

22. CSD 1782/53.

Another frequent cause of violence was alcohol, the problem most often surfacing during the summer months when the men were paid off after the shearing. The Border Watch described a particularly serious fight that occurred on the Benara station in January 1865 -

It appears that they had by some means got possessed of a quantity of spirits, which produced the usual result. There was a general fight, and about a dozen were more or less injured. One blackfellow had his arm smashed, another his head, while the lubra was stabbed with a knife.²³

During the quarter in which the fight occurred Dr. Clindenning, the Medical Officer for the Mount Gambier region, reported the death of nine Aborigines, the majority as a result of the Benara riot.²⁴ Dr. Clindenning wrote that most of his mornings were occupied treating cuts and contusions caused by drunken brawls that had occurred the night before.²⁵

ii. The Impact of Disease

Of all the diseases suffered by the Aborigines the most serious were respiratory; tuberculosis, pneumonia, bronchitis, whooping cough, pleurisy, asthma and influenza were the most common causes of morbidity and mortality. Prior to 1875, of the 30 or so deaths among the Bunganditj, for which a cause was recorded, a third were from respiratory diseases, yet even these figures do not indicate the full extent of the problem.

23. The Border Watch, 7 January 1865.

24. Crown Lands and Immigration Office, Inward Correspondence, GRG 35/1, No. 1445, 1865 (SAA).

25. CLIO 647/65.

Of the 65 Aborigines treated by the Medical Officer at Mount Gambier in the last half of 1864, approximately 30 suffered afflictions of the lungs.²⁶

Venereal diseases were present among the Bunganditj, but their extent and impact is difficult to assess. The Medical Officer treated half a dozen Aborigines for syphilis in the year 1864.²⁷ This is not an insignificant number, if it truly represents the extent of the disease in the area, but it indicates that the disease was far from being rampant, which is surprising given the abuse the Aboriginal women received at the hands of the settlers. The Protector of Aborigines, Dr Walker, making his first visit to the South-East late in 1861, wrote of the diseases which the Aborigines were most liable, "they are subject to inflammation of the lungs, diseases of the skin and rheumatism but syphilis is rare."²⁸ If syphilis was indeed rare, one explanation could be that yaws, a mild syphilitic disease present among the Aborigines prior to contact, provided cross-immunity.²⁹

A small-pox epidemic travelled down the Murray River and reached Lake Alexandrina as early as 1818, where it took a heavy toll.³⁰ There are indications that the disease spread down the Coorong, but there are no references to it in the Lower South-East. The apparent absence of the disease is even more surprising given that the tribe had contact with whalers and sealers as early as the 1820's. The Aborigines of Western Victoria recalled two epidemics that might have been small-pox in the years 1830 and 1847. Dawson wrote, "they still have a very vivid recollection of its ravages, and of

26. South Australian Government Gazette, 1865, p.8 and CLIO 647/65.

27. CLIO 1979/64, SAGG, 1865, p.8 and CLIO 647/65.

28. CLIO 342/62.

29. A.A. Abbie, The Original Australians (Adelaide 1967), p.71.

30. G. Jenkins, Conquest of the Ngarrindjeri (Adelaide 1979), p.29-39.

the great numbers cut off by it in the Western District."³¹

Given their traditional contacts with neighbouring tribes the Bunganditj, despite the lack of evidence, are unlikely to have been spared the disease.

Measles was a disease that often had devastating effects on populations without immunity. While the Aborigines contracted the disease its impact was rarely more severe than that on the European population, at least in Southern Australia. At the Aborigines' Home in the early 1870's, during an epidemic of measles, Smith described how an Aboriginal boy, despite living in a room with others who suffered the disease, did not contract it.³² Taplin, writing about the Ngarrindjeri, also commented on the relatively mild impact of measles.³³ It is possible that, like smallpox, it had spread through the community before settlement, or in the early stages of settlement, when deaths might have gone unnoticed, and that a resistance had developed.

The diseases introduced by the Europeans to a people with little or no immunity to them could not help but create widespread sickness, however, the devastating mortality that occurred need not have been an automatic consequence. The high mortality was a direct result of the lifestyle and living conditions the Bunganditj were forced to adopt following dispossession. Unhygienic living conditions, inadequate shelter, poor diet and alcoholism all combined to promote the spread of disease and reduce resistance to it.

Traditionally, the Bunganditj maintained hygiene by regularly shifting camp, movement associated with the diverse hunting and gathering activities of the tribe, however, once the Europeans had established their authority, and the tribal groups were prevented from hunting and gathering in their former style, the tribe adopted

31. J. Dawson, Australian Aborigines (Melbourne 1881), p.60.

32. Smith, p.116.

33. SAGG, 1846, p.641.

a more sedentary lifestyle. The bands were forced to remain near their sources of food - ration depots, towns or stations, for most of the year. As a result the camps became unclean, conditions in which tuberculosis and gastric disorders in particular flourished. The improper use of European clothing and blankets made matters worse -

the free and indiscriminate distribution of blankets by the Authorities, without attempting to check the dangers which arise from their improper use, has been the cause of appalling mortality. The unsuspecting natives took kindly, but, erratically, to the new articles, sleeping under them for awhile, or for as long as they lasted, and then reverting to their ancient customs of exposure. They further slept in the blankets, and walked about in them, whether they were dry or sopping wet. The inevitable result, especially in the early days of settlement, was that chest complaints became rampant and, finally, carried off whole tribes with consumption.³⁴

The tuberculosis bacillus was likely to have been carried in blankets or clothing that was not washed. The Protector, Dr. Walker, in outlining his Aboriginal policy shortly after taking up office, placed great store on blankets, "no greater boon can be conferred on the natives than a large warm blanket."³⁵ This was true, provided that they were properly used and regularly replaced.

34. H. Basedow, 'Diseases of the Australian Aborigines', in Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, Vol. 35, 1932, p.221.

35. CLIO 791/63.

As the Bunganditj were progressively denied the freedom to hunt and gather, or as their will to do so was destroyed, they were forced to adopt a partial European diet. The basis of that diet was supplied by the Government in the form of rations. As early as 1847 flour was distributed monthly from the Mount Gambier and Robe Police Stations.³⁶ During the 1850's Tarpeena replaced Mount Gambier as the central depot in the Lower South-East. At every full moon 4lbs of flour was given to every adult and 2lbs to every child at the depot; extra rations being given to the sick and infirm.³⁷ From 1852 the allowance for able-bodied men was discontinued to encourage them to work for the settlers during the labour shortage created by the gold-rush.³⁸ Apart from the fact that the rations themselves were meagre and lacking in nutrition, the distribution system was inefficient - there were continual complaints that the flour was too quickly exhausted, of inferior quality, and irregularly supplied. In a letter, dated 14 August 1848, the Protector highlighted some of the problems -

the flour for the Aborigines at the Mount Gambier station is exhausted and Corporal McCulloch is desirous of having another supply.

There is considerable difficulty in forwarding flour to Mount Gambier - it has to be landed at Rivoli Bay and thence carted 60 miles - one mile of which is over a difficult swamp. The flour costs 2s/lb when delivered there and the time of delivery is always uncertain.³⁹

36. CSO 930/47.

37. *ibid.*

38. S.A.G.G., 1853, p.499.

39. Protector of Aborigines, Letterbook 1840-57, GRG 52/7, Entry for 14 August 1848 (SAA).

With the re-establishment of the Protector's Office in 1861 more rations were supplied, and more frequently.⁴⁰ In his quarterly report, dated 9 March 1863, the new Protector instigated new ration quotas and the conditions by which those rations were distributed -

Rations to each native per diem flour, 1lb
sugar, 2oz
tea, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz

I do not think it advisable to issue rice as an ordinary article of diet but would use it only as a medical comfort. When substituted for flour the allowance to be 1lb with 4ounces sugar. Authority should be given to purchase meat for the sick and infirm when required, and to provide it in any serious case whenever certified to be absolutely necessary by any qualified medical practitioner. The issues should be made daily whenever it is possible.⁴¹

Though superficially an improvement on the old system, there were still problems, the most serious being access to the rations. At this time the rations were being distributed at Tarpeena which meant that the people on the coast, and those inland near Mount Burr, were expected to travel there. This rarely happened though, due to widespread sickness and perhaps fear of trespass.⁴² On two occasions the Protector travelled to Mount Burr and discovered that the group there was unwilling to move despite the promise of food

40. Department of Aboriginal Affairs, 'A Brief Outline of Aboriginal Affairs in South Australia since Colonization', Pamphlet, 1863, p.6.

41. CLIO 791/63.

42. Campbell, p.30-31.

and medical assistance.⁴³ They relied on the goodwill of the Sub-Protector to forward supplies to them when he could. For some time the same conditions applied at Mount Gambier, even when the Aborigines' Home was established.⁴⁴ The Protector initially opposed the establishment of depots at these locations due to the presence of public houses - yet Egan, the Sub-Protector at Tarpeena, issued rations from a building adjacent to a public house run by his son.⁴⁵ By the late 1860's other depots were being established at Mount Gambier, Mount Burr and later at Millicent and Cape Northumberland. Even here there was a lack of forethought because the Cape Northumberland depot was deserted during the long winters due to its inhospitable coastal location.⁴⁵

The Aborigines came to rely on the distributions as the basis of their diet, particularly from the 1860's onwards and especially during the winter months. In 1865, Crown Ranger Egan reported his June distributions -

A great many congregated here from different parts of the district for blankets, blue shirts, etc. Many able-bodied out of employment and quite destitute, had to get rations.⁴⁷

The rations supplied to the Aborigines, besides being insufficient and ineffectively distributed, were of poor nutritional value. The basic ration, flour, and the others,

43. CLIO 2212/66, CLIO 283/67.

44. CLIO 2212/66.

45. *ibid.*

46. CLIO 263/1868, the Protector wrote, "No natives have been at this station for several months, indeed, the coast is so bleak and cold that they resort to it only for a little while in mid-winter."

47. SAGG, 1866, p.134.

sugar and rice, were high in carbohydrates but low in protein, minerals and vitamins. Fresh vegetables and fruits, so important for the development of resistance to disease, were simply not available. The only time that high protein and high vitamin foods were available was summer when seafood and fruits could be gathered from the coast. Ironically, the Protector inevitably visited the South-East during this time and consistently reported that the general health of the people was good.

The consistent abuse of alcohol, besides the direct harm it can cause to the liver, debilitates the system and lowers resistance to disease. The Protector commented upon the relationship in reference to tuberculosis -

A predisposition to disease arises, no doubt, very often through insufficient and unsuitable food, an abuse of intoxicating drink, inordinate smoking and other excesses, for whatever tends directly or indirectly to debilitate the system tends to the production of tuberculosis.⁴⁸

Contemporary newspapers and official reports are littered with references to the abuse of alcohol during the 1850's and 1860's.⁴⁹

In 1864 Crown Ranger Egan wrote that there were 11 charges of drunkenness laid that year, adding, "I believe that this gives but a faint indication of the extent to which the vice prevails."⁵⁰

The Protector also considered the problem to be particularly

48. CLIO 791/63.

49. For example: Reports of the Protector in the South Australian Government Gazette, or articles in the Border Watch, 1862 onwards.

50. CLIO 647/65.

serious in this area -

The abuse of intoxicating drink... is unfortunately a very common vice amongst the natives. Drunkenness prevails, especially in the South Eastern District, to a fearful extent, and all efforts hitherto made to prevent the sale of liquor to the natives have been to a great extent fruitless.⁵¹

While the sale of liquor to the Aborigines was illegal, the prevalence of drunkenness indicates that the law was being ignored; if they couldn't obtain alcohol from public houses they got it from general stores and if that avenue failed there were always Europeans who would buy it for them.⁵² To protect these Europeans the Aborigines, when questioned by the police, usually claimed to have got their alcohol from travellers.⁵³ The Protector advocated higher penalties for those who sold liquor to the Aborigines, such as the removal of licences, but the best he ever achieved was occasional fines against publicans.⁵⁴ In 1844, the year Egan reported the 11 charges of drunkenness he also reported that "no charge was preferred against anyone for illegally supplying the natives with drink."⁵⁵ Compounding the problem was the habit of some settlers of paying off their Aboriginal employees in grog.⁵⁵

51. CLIO 791/63.

52. CLIO 1445/65.

53. The Border Watch, 28 November 1866.

54. CLIO 205/65 and CLIO 647/65.

55. CLIO 647/65.

Inadequate shelter, resulting in exposure to the elements, was another cause of sickness. The traditional huts of the Bunganditj were suitable for their purpose prior to contact, but after European settlement, when the general health of the people declined and they adopted a more sedentary lifestyle, the huts were inadequate. During the mid to late 1860's Smith provided shelter for as many as 16 children at the Aborigines' Home but she could not house the many sick and infirm adults who congregated there. In June 1866 she requested that the Protector arrange for a weatherboard house to be built near the Home for the adults. Agreement was reached over the construction of the building but, for reasons set forth by the Protector in his report for the first quarter of 1868, they were never erected -

Some disagreement with the Lord Bishop of Adelaide having taken place, Mrs. Smith had sent in her resignation as Superintendent; and until the matter is settled I have not thought it expedient to cause the addition to the "Home", which is leased to His Lordship, to be built.⁵⁷

Smith claimed that the Home closed in 1867 because of a shortage of funds, but a contributing factor must have been the epidemic that swept through the Home late in that year. Smith wrote of this period -

Death, however, found its way amongst our Home inmates, and was very severe. The report for the last six months of 1867

56. W. Clayton, Reminiscences of William Clayton from 1833-c.1912 (SAA MF D6424(L)).

57. CLIO 263/68

was much less cheering than for the first six. In August, sickness and death came upon our black people suddenly and for some time we had one or two funerals every week. The sickness was very general among the neighbouring tribes.⁵⁸

At least six are reported to have died in this period, during which, Smith wrote, "nearly all our inmates were patients, suffering from whooping cough, fever, or measles."⁵⁹ The irony is that those who did have good housing, by and large the remaining children of the tribe, suffered because the enclosed condition at the Home quickly spread contagious diseases.

iii. Birth Rate

Allied to the rapid decline of the Bunganditj population was the dramatically low birth rate. Though there is an absence of systematically collected statistics, some isolated figures illustrate the overall trend. At the Tarpeena depot in the first half of 1865, which included Mount Gambier at this time, there was only one birth but nine deaths.⁶⁰ The last six months of 1867 saw two births recorded by the Tarpeena depot to ten deaths, while at Mount Gambier in the same period there were no births and ten deaths.⁶¹ The census figures showing the number of children born in the County of Grey give another indication of the declining birth rate -

<u>1861</u>	<u>1866</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1876</u> ⁶²
56	21	12	5

58. Smith, p.46.

59. *ibid*, p.115.

60. CLIO 1445/65.

61. CLIO 1324/67.

62. South Australia, Census Office, Census 1844-76.

One factor contributing to the declining birth rate or, more accurately, the survival rate of infants, was the practice of infanticide. This custom existed to ensure the survival of the group; when times were hard, in winter, for example, one extra mouth to feed, and one woman less to gather food for the group, may have been the difference between survival and starvation. Infanticide continued for some time after contact, as James Smith reported in 1851 -

I am sorry to say that infanticide has been and still is practised among the natives here. We have no means of making an example of one to deter others...When a child is born, it is generally killed by one of the native women in attendance.⁶³

Dawson, discussing the Aborigines of Western Victoria, claimed that illegitimate children were often killed because they offended Aboriginal morality; this may sometimes have been the case among the Bunganditj.⁶⁴

A major cause of the declining birth rate was simply the rapid decline of the female population. By 1866 there were only 39 Aboriginal women in the County of Grey, and ten years later this number had been reduced to 13.⁶⁵ Of these women a percentage would have been beyond child-bearing age while others, as a consequence of venereal disease, would have been sterile or have suffered miscarriages and still-births. The reproductive capacity of the tribe was lost before there was time for the population to develop immunity to introduced diseases and to pass that immunity on to their children.

63. Smith, pp.34-35.

64. Dawson, p.28.

65. South Australia, Census Office, Census 1844-76.

The historical record indicates that the Bunganditj lost about thirty people as a direct result of frontier violence, but it also provides an occasional glimpse of extensive violence that went largely unrecorded. Clandestine shootings and secret poisonings probably accounted for more deaths than the official reports show. It is impossible to estimate the numbers killed in the Lower South-East as a result of frontier violence but the Victorian experience provides some clues. Official figures for Western Victoria suggest that about five per cent died in frontier clashes, while in Victoria, as a whole, Christie estimates that it might have been as high as fifteen to twenty-five per cent.⁶⁶ Many others died as a result of tribal violence exacerbated by the impact of European settlement.

Disease was clearly the main cause of depopulation. While widespread morbidity was the predictable result of introduced diseases, the high rate of mortality was largely attributable to the lifestyle and living conditions the tribe was forced to adopt as a consequence of dispossession. Unhygienic living conditions, poor diet, inadequate shelter, and alcoholism combined to spread disease and lower resistance to it. These factors particularly promoted respiratory diseases, of which tuberculosis was the greatest killer. The Government had the means to alleviate many of the problems but it did little and, in many cases, its actions, through ignorance and short-sightedness, actually contributed to the problems: the food rations, for example, were insufficient, poorly distributed, and lacking in nutritional value. Furthermore, the belief that

66. Christie, p.78.

the Aborigines were a dying race resulted in the measures taken for their relief being palliative rather than remedial. The former Protector, Matthew Moorhouse, expressed this attitude in his evidence before the Select Committee on Aborigines in 1860 -

As far as educating the native in civilization, I believe, in most instances, it is utterly hopeless. The only thing that can be done for them is to soften down their life, and, by humanely treating them, to make it as easy as possible.⁶⁷

67. Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines, S.A.P.P., No. 165, 1860, p.96.

CONCLUSION

European settlement was met with immediate resistance. For seven or eight years , as the frontier expanded in the Lower South-East, the Bunganditj fought a guerrilla-style war against the invaders. Once the Europeans achieved dominance the traditional economic system of the Bunganditj collapsed and the tribe was forced into a dependence on the European economy. This process was encouraged by the Government, and later made urgent by the labour shortage caused by the gold-rush. As the European population of the district grew the Bunganditj became less important to the economy and Aboriginal employment acquired a more seasonal character. From the late 1850's the history of the Bunganditj is one of social collapse, disease and destitution.

The failure of resistance was inexorably linked to the economic collapse of the tribe. The hunter-gatherer economy, which conditioned a fragmented social structure, limited the nature and extent of resistance. A guerrilla-style war was the only type of resistance the traditional structure of Bunganditj society would allow. Unable to hunt and gather traditionally the Bunganditj were impelled to attack the stock of the settlers which, in turn, created further conflict. Resistance of this sort was an attempt to maintain economic independence. The economic system of the Bunganditj was incompatible with the pastoral economy of the Europeans. Once the invaders gained dominance on the frontier, through the force of the gun and sheer weight of numbers, the economy of the Bunganditj collapsed. While some traditional hunting and gathering activities

continued, notably in the summer months, the tribe was increasingly forced into a dependence on the Europeans as sources of employment and charity.

The hunter-gather economy of the Bunganditj was their unifying social force and its collapse contributed to the breakdown of many facets of Bunganditj social life. Customs and beliefs, tied to the tribe's association with its land, lost their relevance. The structure of authority was weakened by a growing reliance on the Europeans for work or rations, and by exposure to the values and morals of the settlers. The health of the people suffered as they were forced into a sedentary lifestyle and the adoption of a largely European diet. All these aspects of social collapse were linked, directly or indirectly to the breakdown of the traditional hunter-gatherer lifestyle of the tribe.

Direct interference by Government and settlers was a crucial factor in the physical and social decline of the tribe. The settlers, for example, by taking Aboriginal women as wives or mistresses, disrupted the traditional marriage system of the tribe and not only created conflict between Aborigines and settlers, but exacerbated conflict within Aboriginal society. The Europeans also contributed to the breakdown of traditional authority by punishing those who were administering tribal justice, and by providing means by which authority could be circumvented. Even tribal rituals and customs, such as the 'Moorn at M'rade' and funeral ceremonies, were the subject of ridicule and attack - a practice encouraged by the Government.

Finally, Government attempts to protect and compensate the people, rather than assisting them, actually contributed to their decline. By declaring Aborigines British subjects the Government

hoped this would provide them with the protection of British Law, but when the settlers found that few Aborigines were being punished by the courts they decided to take the law into their own hands. The system of ration distribution, which many among the tribe became dependent upon, was ill-conceived and poorly administered. As a result of poor diet and living conditions the impact of introduced diseases was catastrophic.

The Lower South East and western Victoria

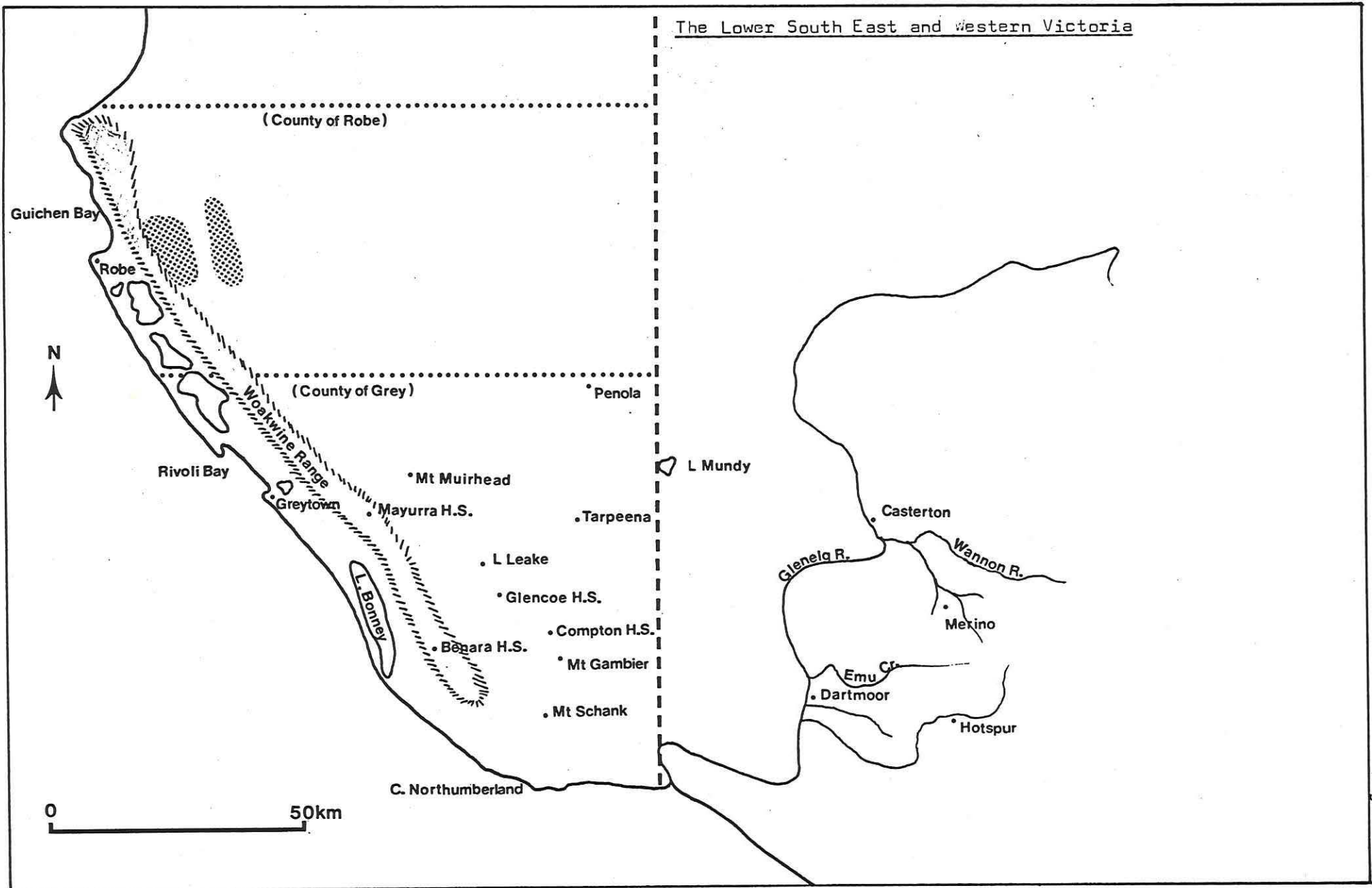


Fig. 14

Fig. 15 Early Settlers in the Lower South East
of South Australia *

1841	S.G. Henty	Mount Gambier
1843	E.& F. Arthur	Mount Schank
1844	J. Robertson	Mosquito Creek
	R.R. & E.J. Leake	Glencoe, Lake Leake, Tartwall & Mount Schank
	D. McFarlane	North-east of Lake Leake
	E.P.S. Sturt	Compton
	South Australia Co	Benara
1845	D. Cameron	Penola
	A. Johnson	Mount Muirhead
	G. Davenport	Mayurra
	N. Black	Mouth of Glenelg River
	D. Black	Near Cape Northumberland
1846	A. Cameron	Penola
	J.A.C. Hunter	23 miles N.N.W. of Mount Gambier
	D. Power	Near Mount Muirhead
	A. Sutton	Dismal Swamp
	J.T. Austin	Monbulla and Katnook

* From Appendix I in E.M. Yelland's The Baron of the Frontier (Melbourne 1973), p. 177.

Appendix ILinguistic Affinities : The Bunganditj and Neighbouring Tribes

The discussion in Chapter I about the linguistic affinities between the Bunganditj and neighbouring tribes is based on a comparative study of vocabularies collected from the area. Using a word list, based largely on that used by Curr in The Australian Race, I compared the vocabularies from 12 different locations and arrived at a percentage of shared words. Language, in this case, is used simply as a device to indicate affinities between areas - these are illustrated in the following chart.

Locations and Sources:

1. Mount Gambier	Stewart in Curr, E.M. (1886-7)
2. Dartmoor	Curr, E.M. (1886-7)
3. Woodford on the Glenelg	Curr, E.M. (1886-7)
4. Penola	Taplin, G. (1879)
5. Guichen Bay	Taplin, G. (1879)
6. Bordertown	Taplin, G. (1879)
7. Sandford	Jackson in Smyth, R. Brough (1878)
8. Crawford, Stokes, Lower Wannon and Glenelg	Tyers in Smyth, R. Brough (1878)
9. Upper Glenelg and Wannon	Curr, E.M. (1886-7)
10. Hamilton	Curr, E.M. (1886-7)
11. Portland	Curr, E.M. (1886-7)
12. Balmoral	Officer in Smyth, R. Brough (1878)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
1	.	97	94	73	54	47	52	56	45	24	38	28	%
2	97	.	94	70	52	54	52	39	36	27	34	31	
3	94	94	.	55	52	43	48	43	42	26	31	22	
4	73	70	55	.	60	69	29	24	18	36	26	35	
5	54	52	52	60	.	65	38	29	36	32	35	27	
6	47	54	43	69	65	.	30	28	29	37	27	33	
7	52	52	48	29	48	30	.	73	82	24	50	26	
8	56	39	43	24	29	28	73	.	82	28	70	27	
9	45	36	42	18	36	29	82	82	.	35	61	22	
10	24	27	26	36	32	37	24	28	35	.	26	75	
11	38	34	31	26	35	27	50	70	61	26	.	21	
12	28	31	22	35	27	33	26	27	22	75	21	.	

Appendix IIMemorandum concerning Koort Kirrup and his tribe

(G.A. Robinson, Letterbooks, 1841-45, Vol 26, No. 1484).

C.P.O. Melbourne 29th
July 1845

Sir,

I have the honour to transmit for the benefit of your information memorandum of particulars in reference to the Aborigine named in margin also the names of the Aboriginal natives inhabiting the Western boundary of the province by the Glenelg at the time of my visit in 1841.

I have the &c,

"G.A.Robinson"

Memorandum.

Koort Kirrup now under commitment for the murder of Mr. McKenzie is a Chief of the Palapnul a section of the Woollowero inhabiting the Country on the Western boundary of the Province by the Glenelg and with the exception of Mingburn Chief of the Tarkelbung at Smokey River the most influential in his district. Koort Kirrup first came under notice of Chief Protector in 1841. In June of that year he planned the death of Eurodep a principal Chief of the Jarcoorts attached to the party of Chief Protector. Eurodep was slain in a parley (in the absence of Chief Protector) by Pongnorer a fighting man of the Wanedeets at Winter's Station on the Wannan. Mingburn and Koort Kirrup have a plurality of Women and their Camps at the time of the Chief Protector's visit were on the Portland Bay Road, the former at the crossing place Smokey river and the latter at Emu Creek ford where the teams to and fro Portland and the interior usually stop. I was informed that the Aborigines in question were usefully employed in herding Bullocks and collecting fuel

but I regretted to learn that at times their camps were little better than common Brothels few natives however were present at the time of Chief Protector's visit and the district was perfectly tranquil. Mr. Thos. Snodgrass Son of the Colonel of that name occupied the run formerly located by Mr. McKenzie. The natives at the time of Chief Protector's last visit in April of the current year were remarkably peaceful, as proof Mr. Snodgrass frequently left the Station in charge of only two Aborigines from the Middle District without a single European present. Koort Kirrup is remarkably intelligent and a more shrewd Aborigine I have seldom met with, frequently he has delineated to me in the gaol the courses of the rivers, the Creeks, the Settler's Stations and the hills of his district with topographical precision; and in discoursing upon the murder of Mr. McKenzie stated that two Blacks from Portland ie Koort Pain and Pollyginnin killed Mr. McKenzie and that he was living at the time at Mr Wards a Settler on the Adelaide road, clearly making out according to his own shewing a very ingenious case of alibi. Sorry indeed should I be especially as this man is now under committal, to prejudice his case, but still I cannot help thinking from personal conversation and from the testimony of the witnesses (vide Depositions) that if disposed he is sufficiently acquainted with the English Language to make himself tolerably well understood on the general topic of common conversation.

I have the honor &c.

"G.A. Robinson"

Census

of some of the Sections of Woollowero inhabiting the Country on the Western boundary of the Province by the Glenelg obtained by the Chief Protector during the course of his Journey in 1841.

Palapnul Section				
Names of Male Abo ^s	Number of Females	Number of Children	Remarks	
Koort Kirrup	3	4	Chief	
Labarermin	1	2		
Tykonegigong	1	-		
Euernong	1	-		
Tinkarermin	2	1	Influential	
Pineninburnin	1	-		
Allendare-remin	-	-		
Bennel-koiyong	-	-		
Likoyan	1	2		
Hinemurermin	1	-		
Wane-bokarre	1	1		
Gungweerin	3	2	Influential	
Mingine-mingine	-	-		
Tarertone-burer)	Belonging to the	
Kolac burer)	Kolacburn Condeet	
Toropebin	1	1		
Karlperewerite	-	-		
Kalkarmin	1	1	Brother to Koort Kirrup	
Tarerbung Section				
Mingburn	4	5	Chief	
Banyoy				
Narokeburnin				
Tarlertkoning				
Aitelowarenin	3	-	Brother to Mingburn	
Pertbonearnin	3	3	Do.	
Woremnue				
Nomeberneen				
Ponegil				
Port port				

Names of Male Abo ^s	Number of Females	Number of Children	Remarks
Bokarer Section			
Tonemureimin	1	2	
Korrewineriu	5	6	Chief
Talinburong	1	-	
Kortburnong	1	1	
Pickine	1	2	
Nudwoorogine	1		
Laykareburer	5	7	Influential
Yallo-condeet Section			
Olart	2	1	Chief
Jonemoroin	2	3	
Ningermugite	5		
Wungbite	-	-	
Wanewookom	-	-	
Tourpin	1	1	
Kulke Kolac	1	2	
Kowweepinum	1	-	
Poit	1	2	
Gaytook	4	-	
Benekoyong	1	-	Very stout man
Woderong	-	-	
Ninemuremin	1	1	
Winemerin	-	-	
Yowenun	1	2	
Welemewroke	-	-	
Pelane	-	-	
Karlkwioni	-	-	
Patkooni	-	-	
Politeyenung	1	-	
Landarong			
Koubunong	-	-	
()abingwareong	1	2	
Bidjeonjeong	1	-	
Pit Pune	1	2	
Bonopeguberin	5	8	Chief
Howweremin	2	3	
Noromolmoke	-	-	

Names of Male Abo ^s	Number of Females	Number of Children	Remarks
Yallo-condeet Section			
Yaloluaremin	5	6	
Meen Kornung	-	-	
Ponungdeet Section			
Neenkorning	5	-	Chief
Komeburernung	-	-	
Liteen	1		
Pilandeen	4	5	
Marn	3	6	
Marntbonenemin	6	8	
Kotekuderrermone	5	4	Tall and athletic
Tonebonelein	-	-	
Moromereremin	4	3	
Witepoeong	-	-	
Kortmortmart	-	-	
Myrerpoorenenig	4	5	
Peeritloin	3	3	
Mundownin	1	4	
Boningonung	1	1	
Towunmuremin	1	1	
Parotowming	4	5	
Yardgonebar	1	-	
Woin	7	4	Influential
Wanebeleet	3	4	
Wokemurrermurine	-	-	
Pollodarlin	6	7	
Wonumburebure	1	1	
Eulacbundar	5	4	
Wineburemin	4	2	

Names of Male Abo ^s	Number of	Number of	Remarks
	Females	Children	
Yiyar Section			
Yardournin	1	1	
Kolaeer			
Yourernoon			
Wongote			
Poraremin			
Koyingmurang			
Waneyoon	2	2	
Keeripgil	3	-	
Beepinburn	6	7	Bung Bunge1 Conedeet

Appendix III

Conflicts between Aborigines and Settlers 1843-47*

- Spring 1843 Three attacks on stock and shepherds within a week at E. Arthur's Mount Schank run. In one attack a number of Aborigines were killed. Arthur reported a loss of 200-300 sheep per annum. (Arthur, p.41-46).
- April 1844 326 sheep driven off Henty's Mount Gambier run; tracked to the Glenelg River where Henty's men were driven off by 400 Aborigines. (Portland Guardian, March 9, 1844).
- May 1844 Two attacks on Leake's flocks - sheep speared and carried off. Attacking party numbered 40-50 men. (CSO 735/44). It was later reported that eight Aborigines were killed. (CSO 116/45).
- June 1844 Arthur reports sheep and horses speared, huts attacked. (Yelland, p.46).
- May 1845 165 sheep driven off the South Australian Company's Benara run while others were driven from Leake's station. Europeans confront 200 Aborigines and a fight ensues. Two Aborigines reported shot. (CSO 589/44 and 696/44).
- December 1845 120 ewes driven off MacFarlane's run, near Mount Muirhead; similar losses reported some months earlier. Horses also speared. (Baldwin, pp.44, 64).
- April 1846 A few sheep taken from Sterling's station; shepherd attacked. Raiders pursued and a fight occurred; about 50 Aboriginal men and a few women involved in the conflict - three shot. (Mount Gambier Police, Journal, April 18 and 19, 1846).
- April 1846 A party of 30 Aborigines drive 60 sheep from Leake's station. Aborigines flee when camp is raided. (Mount Gambier Police, Journal, April 24, 1846).

*Lists only the major conflicts involving attacks on stock or property in the Lower South-East.

- May 1846 100 sheep taken from Leake's station. (CSO 1008/46).
- May 1846 'Half a flock of sheep' taken from Leake's station; raiders tracked into dense scrub; all sheep (670) recovered. (Mount Gambier Police, Journal, May 12, 1846, and CSO 1008/46).
- December 1846 Bates' hut, near Lake Hawdon, attacked while Protector was there. (CSO 125½/46).
- February 1847 E. Sturt reports losing 250 sheep. (CSO 444).
- July 1847 Cow speared on Davenport's station; pursuit frustrated by swamps. (Mount Gambier Police, Journal, July 14, 1847).
- August 1847 Sheep taken from Doughty's run (Gleneleg Mouth); recovery hindered by swamps. (Mount Gambier Police, Journal, August 4, 1847).
- August 1847 100 Aborigines drive off 300 sheep from the South Australian Company's Benara run. Conflict near Cape Northumberland. Four Aborigines shot. (CSO 1131/47).
- August 1847 Sturt to the Lieutenant-Governor: "It has happened that the natives from the sea coast have through the winter committed various aggressions...Repeated complaints have been sent to me from Mr. Davenport's station, Mr. Hope's, and others, of them having killed many cattle, having driven them into swamps and there spearing them. They also have robbed a hut lately of Mr. D. Black's, and attempted to spear Mr. Mitchell. The Police though frequently on duty have not succeeded in apprehending any, owing to the swampy nature of the country." (CSO 1131/47).
- September 1847 Four head of cattle killed by an Aborigine; the Aborigine was killed by a pursuing overseer from Bates' station (near Lake Hawdon). (CSO 1261/47).

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