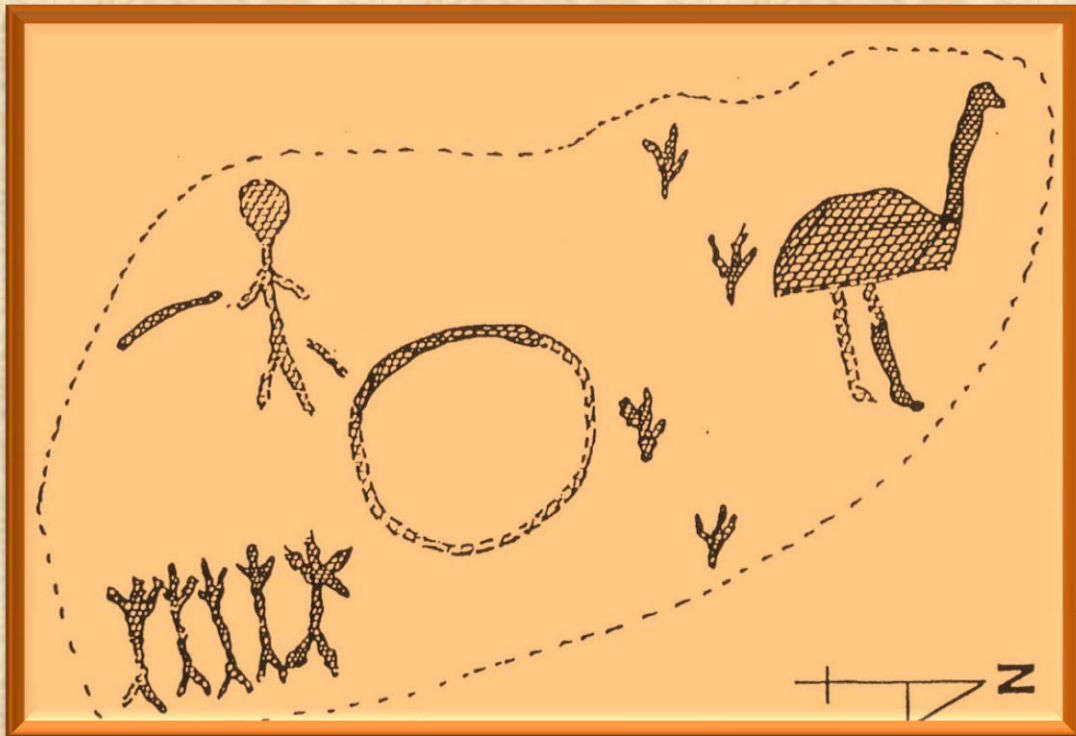


# PERAMANGK

A Social History of the Aboriginal People  
of the  
Southern Mount Lofty Ranges



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**WARNING: Indigenous people reading this are warned that the following booklet contains the names and images of deceased persons.**



## Introduction

Norman Tindale (1974) best sums up what is currently known about the Peramangk people, this Social History is an attempt to expand upon that knowledge. Tindale's observations are worth quoting at length for they give a solid grounding for the remainder of this text.

*"The ecological controls determining the relative stability of the separation of the tribes at the boundary between the circumcising and non-circumcising peoples in the eastern vicinity of Adelaide, South Australia, is of interest. To the east were a series of tribes of people occupying small territories, dependent on the waters of the Murray River and Lake Alexandrina for their livelihood. They were relatively sedentary except for free movements up and down the river within the limits to the hordal territories of their kinfolk in whose areas they had some rights, derived either from mother or from wife. To the west on the Adelaide plains were the Kurna, practising only the rite of circumcision without many of the ritual elaborations that came with the more drastic sub-incisional practices. They were nomadic to a greater degree but living in areas so relatively well-watered that the main seasonal movements were the only forced ones they faced. Each horde tended to travel in summer along the coastal part of their hordal territory and the wintered in the timbered foothill country, sheltering in cover of gigantic and often hollow red gum trees along the river banks. Often as a basis for shelter, they used a fallen tree and hollowed out beneath it, a practice hazardous when floods and heavy rain destroyed their fires and flooded their sleeping places. In summer, of course, they did not live near these gigantic trees (Eucalyptus Camaldulensis) for under stress of summer heat, red gums have a habit of suddenly throwing off great limbs apparently through build up of osmotic pressure within their tissues. This was a happening sufficiently frequent to cause fear in them of the trees.*

*...the upper slopes clothed in wet sclerophyll forests used only for the hunting of opossums, bandicoots and other small animals, and particularly for supplies of the Cossid larvae of the large moth Xyleutes Affinis found boring in the stems of golden wattles (Acacia Pycnantha). They also gathered the sweet gum resin that exuded from this shrub. This was not only an important food, but when treated with water, mixed with lime sand and melted by heat, it could be used in the hafting of their stone tools. There was little or no residence in the mountains by the Kurna. Although they were aware that the Peramangk were a circumcising people like themselves, yet they feared them for their reputed powers of evil magic.*

*The Peramangk lived much of the year in the vicinity of Mount Barker and on the strip of red gum country running north to Angaston district. In winter they kept to elevations below about 1,200 feet (365m) since the wet sclerophyll forests at high elevations were very cold and wet with a winter rainfall of 45 inches (115cm) and more. This rain came to them from the west over the Mount. Lofty heights, and as the westerly winds flowed down the eastern slopes toward the Murray plains, it decreased quickly to less than 15 inches (40cm). Their own territory was so well-watered that they had little occasion to use the Mallee covered limestone flatlands to their east. These areas, like the vast lands east of the Murray River had no surface water and could only be exploited in truly nomadic fashion, as the Ngarkat people did, by seeking water in one grove after another of Mallee trees and then shifting camp to another area. The Peramangk, anchored in their relatively fertile hills with supplies of small animals, acacia gum, Cossid grubs in season, and the ever-present resting corms of Cyperus had little need to venture down onto the plains.*



The lake Alexandrina tribes Warki, Portaulun, and Jarildekald did try to maintain contact with the Peramangk, because from time to time they were in need of large red gum bark sheets for their shallow dish like canoes. These bark sheets were in short supply along the lower reaches of the Murray River. They had to come to terms sufficiently to trade with the dreaded "Hills tribe". The Peramangk would accept the very supple whip-stick mallee spears made by the Jarildekald in return for which they allowed the lake peoples to come into the nearer parts of the hills and strip off sheets of bark-for canoe-making. Plotting of the distribution of surviving trees baring scars, suggests that the vicinity of Strathalbyn, with its possibilities of half dragging and floating newly made canoes downstream to Lake Alexandrina, was a favoured area for this contact.

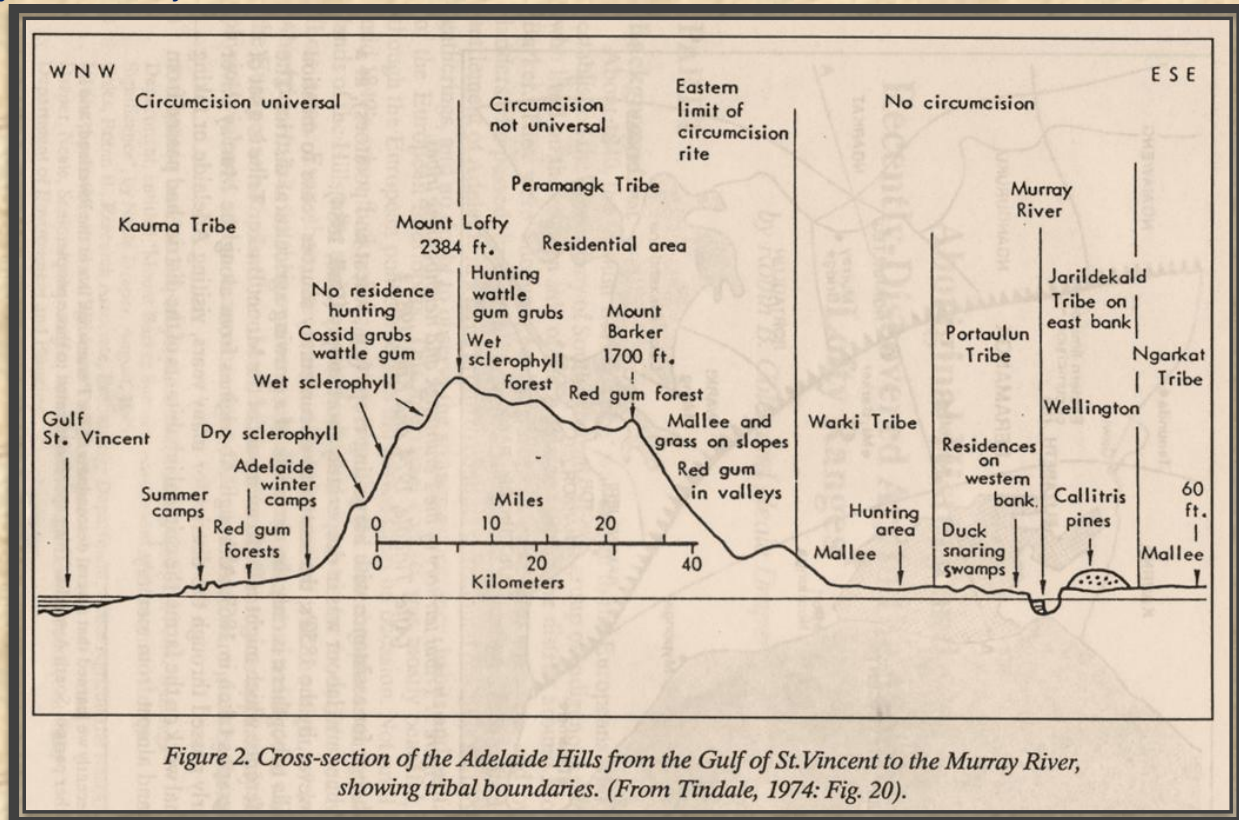


Figure 2. Cross-section of the Adelaide Hills from the Gulf of St. Vincent to the Murray River, showing tribal boundaries. (From Tindale, 1974: Fig. 20).

**Norman Tindales cross section from Adelaide to Wellington as it appears in the Torrens Valley Historical Journal, October 1988, No 33.**

No fewer than sixty canoe trees" have been noted, as well as the find of one of the large saddle-shaped stone implements, with two edge-ground cutting margins, which are believed to have been the tools used in chipping out the outline of the canoe in the tree and as a maul which served to drive in the numerous stringybark tree wedges used to separate the canoe bark from the tree. There was fear and mistrust of the Peramangk. Accustomed as they were to open country, the Murray River tribe had a strong dislike of closed-in forests and hills where one could not see the horizon. The Warki, Jarildekald, and Portaulun all had swamps, marshes, lake water, and stretches of never to supply the needs of small animals, fish and water fowl. Duck nets were set in the flyway of ducks, and nets were drawn along the shores of Lake Alexandrina. They had thus far less need for mobility than the Ngarkat of the Murray mallee to the east.

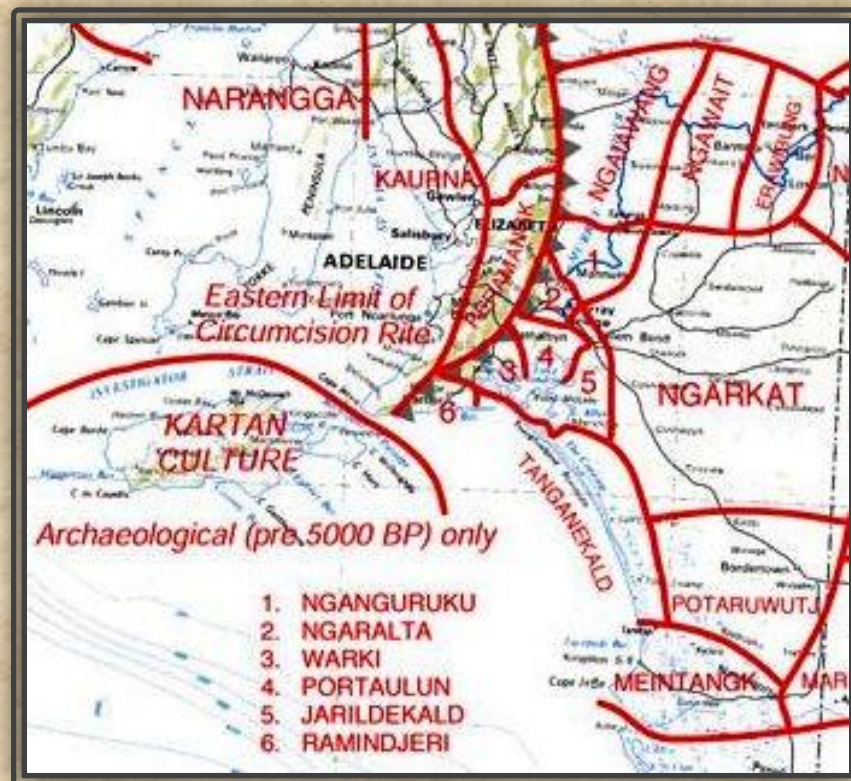


*In another section of this-work there is mention of the fears the river tribe had for the Proselytizing western peoples with their beliefs that all true men were circumcised. Here sufficient has been said to demonstrate the geographical controls affecting tribal boundaries across the Mount lofty Ranges."*

Norman B Tindale, 1974

## **Geography of Peramangk Country**

### **Lands of the Peramangk**



Taken from Tindale' 1974 map

*"In Mount Lofty Ranges from Myponga north to Gawler and Angaston; east to Wright Hill, Strathalbyn, Kanmantoo, and along the eastern scarp of the range to near Towitta. They practiced circumcision and were at enmity with the Lake Alexandrina people... Peramarma (Tanganekald term based on their name Pe:ra for the Tiers Range at Mount Barker), Mereldi (Ramindjeri term), Merildakald (Tanganekald term applied also to the Kurna), Marimejuna (mari = east, meju = man, Kurna term), Wangarainbula (wangara = hill, Ngaiawang term), Mount Barker tribe, Ngurlinjeri (Jaril-dekald name from ['?urle] hill and [injeri] belonging to), Tarrawatta (name of northern horde near Angaston)."*

<http://samuseum.australia.sa.com/tindaletribes/peramangk.htm>

The territory of the various family groups identified as Peramangk extended in a crescent shape from Myponga across to Currency Creek, swinging north along the western ridge line of the Mt Lofty Ranges to Sandy Creek. The eastern boundary followed the eastern escarpment north to Mount Karinya, with



the northern boundary following the south bank of the Gawler River. Access points to the River Murray could be found along Salt Creek to Mypolonga and Wall and in the North down the Marne River at Wongulla. The territory of the Peramangk shifted in post invasion times as numbers dwindled to include land from Clarendon west to Tungkillo and down along Salt Creek to Mypolonga, back in a narrow strip to Strathalbyn then south to Currency Creek, Bull Creek to Clarendon. The territory of the Peramangk people prior to European invasion followed clearly defined geographical boundaries and is confirmed by both art site locations, the Tjilbruke Songline (full version), and interviews given by survivors to Tindale in various journals.

### **Place names**

The following place names are drawn from a variety of sources, recorded as close to the time of invasion as possible. In many cases the original names of certain locations have been recorded in local histories, elderly recollections, property names, road names, the names of Hundreds, localities, waterways, towns and farms. The landscape remembers even if the people have forgotten. The list is not exhaustive, is open to reinterpretation, addition and correction. I hope it promotes discussion.

- **Batta-ngga:** Place of Tall Trees – Blue/Red/Pink Gum Forests stretching north from Meadows to Echunga. Fire stick farming practices had produced open grassland interspersed with large areas of tall gum trees. Perfect areas for camping & hunting with abundant water, food stuffs and raw materials for living and trade.
- **Barruka-ngga:** Place of Hidden Fire – Brukunga, synonymous with the Tjilbruke song line. A mountain of pyrite. The Peramangk would trade fire making kits, (Kangaroo thigh bones filled with pyrite, flint, and tinder) with their neighbours the Kaurna and possibly other groups as well. At the height of their power Peramangk people closely guarded the secrets of this area. Its cultural significance to a variety of groups, Peramangk, Ramindejri, various Narrindjeri groups, the Ngadjuri and Peramangk is paramount as indicated by the story of Tjilbrukie a song line shared by each of these groups. The fire making kits were traded to people as far away as Lake Victoria, and may have been cross traded further still.
- **Bokati-illa:** Swimming/Bathing Place – Hahndorf, a permanent waterhole on the upper reaches of the Onkaparinga River near Hahndorf where Peramangk children learnt to swim. Also a regular campsite in summer.
- **Donga-rangga:** Muddy Red Gum Place - The confluence of Giles Creek and the Finnis River.
- **Kangari-illa:** Caring Place – Kangarilla, by the name a location important to Peramangk women located at the head of the Kangarilla Valley that winds down to McLaren Flat. Language Notes: "According to F.S. Dutton's South Australia and its Mines published in 1846, Kangarilla is a corruption of Kangowirranilla, meaning 'the place for kangaroo and water', but more likely to be kangaroo and timber" (Cockburn, 1990: 112).

"Mr N.B. Tindale, anthropologist, says: 'It is derived from the Aboriginal word kanggarila which may mean 'birth place', but we have no information about the context". "In Kanggarilla Historical Records the compiler says: 'the Reverend Gordon Rowe of the Aboriginal Friends' Association obtained the following information from Mr David Unaipon, an eighty-two-year-old full blood member of the Tailem Bend tribe. His definition of the meaning of the origin of the name is - "Kang means two; Ra'mulia means outflow or water flowing ...." When first approached on the matter Mr Unaipon at once asked if there were two waterholes. Upon enquiry it was found that there were two ...'. (Manning, 1990: 162) (courtesy of <http://www.kaurnaplacenames.com>)



- **Kari-karinya:** Flying Place – Mount Karinya just west of Moculta marking the north eastern boundary of Peramangk territory and an important lookout over the Murray Plains and the northern Mount Lofty Ranges.
- **Kadli-umbo:** Dingo Urine (rainbow water) – Kaiserstuhl Creek, the waters of this creek run yellow brown out of the Kaiserstuhl conservation park and into the Gawler River. The waters colours comes from a combination of the yellows soils the creek flows through and the tannins released from rotting leaves. The area is also the sight of the performance of the Rainbow Palti, a dance shared by the Maura and Peramangk people. It also shares the name of the totem of the Tarawatta or Yuri-Ruka clans, the Dingo.
- **Kadli-parri:** Dingo Creek – Cuddlee Creek flowing into the Torrens River, named after the wild dogs once found in abundance in the area, but now hunted to extinction by European settlers.
- **Kali-tya:** Dingo Place (or camp) - A camping and meeting place on the banks of the Gawler River in the vicinity of where the old township of Gawler now stands. Kalitiya Language Notes: Williams (1840) gives Cud-lie-tie-par-rey 'Para River' (=kadlitparri) which derives from Kadlitpinna 'Captain Jack' + parri 'river'. Kalitiya could well be related to Kadlitpinna, a Kurna man known to have come from that district. (courtesy of <http://www.kurnaplacenames.com>)
- **Karra-watta:** Redgum Land – The stretch of country running north Lobethal to the Torrens through Kersbrook, the valley of the South Parra River up to as far as Williams Town. Also the name of the local clan/family groups who went by the same name – Karrawatta people.
- **Karrawirra-parri:** Red Gum Forest River – The River Torrens as it is known to Kurna people. As the Peramangk and Kurna shared a language and culture, a common border in this region and as the river passes through Karrawatta country there appears to be no reason for the River Torrens not to be known by this name amongst Peramangk peoples as well.
- **Kauwe-aurita:** Yellow Brown-Water place: Jacobs Creek as it flows into the Gawler River. The junction of these two waters ways was called Moorooroo, a name given to the local family group on the northern bank of the Gawler River but also a wide, yellow soiled used as a place for meetings between neighboring groups.
- **Kunga-tukko** (Kungatutto): Women's Lookout (or watching place) – Red Hill over looking Kanmantoo, a logical observation post looking down the Bremmer Valley. Peramangk people this side of the ranges adopted a hard KK sound instead of a hard TT sound. This pronunciation is distinctive of this region of Peramangk country. According to Tindale (1953) Kanmantoo is derived from the words 'kungma and tuk:o and literally means 'different speech'. Tindale is uncertain about the particular language from which these words are derived but suspects they come from someone living 'beyond the tribal boundary of the informant'. He notes that the place name Coomandook is derived from an inaccurate rendering of the same phrase. He thought that William Giles first used the name 'Kanmantoo'. [http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/56435/APPENDIX\\_8\\_Indigenous.pdf](http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/56435/APPENDIX_8_Indigenous.pdf)
- **Kunda-paringga:** (Kondoparinga) The Place of the Kangaroo River – Meadows Creek as it runs through the open forest clearings amongst the forests of Batangga and south to the Finnis River.
- **Kundupari** (Kundopari): Kangaroo River – Meadows Creek & Finnis River
- **Kuit-po:** Either Sacred Place or Meadows – The valley running from Meadows south east to Willunga and Mt Remarkable. The forest through here was dotted with wide open spaces created by mosaic burning to encourage the grazing of Kangaroo's and other game animals. The first European settlers to the area found the country already like this and named the town accordingly.
- **Kangawirra-illa:** Women's Forest and River: Macclesfield

- **Kurianda** - In the language of the Peramangk people of the hills it meant "a round area", all wallaby grass by the creek. The natural pound in which the town of Angaston was gazetted. Originally the name Kurianda – meant ceremonial dancing place, its name taken from the root words "Kuri" – dance/ceremony, and "anda", meaning - place of.
- **Ityangga**: Near by Place – Currently known as Echunga, the place is on the trade route through Battangga which follows a route along the Meadows-Kuitpo plain right down to Mt Remarkable. Language Notes: Eechungga 'near, close by, at a short distance' (Whimpress, 1975: 17 cited by Knight p.29)

"has been reported to be a corruption of an Aboriginal word meaning 'near' or 'close by'. However, a poem 'Aboriginal Nomenclature - By a Native', which appeared in the Register on 11 October 1893, suggests a different meaning - one stanza reads: Ko-ko-chunga (wood), where bronze-winged pigeons roost" (Manning, 1990: 103) "John Sutton, Secretary of the Ornithological Society, wrote to the author: "Echung" is one of the calls of the Rufous Whistler (*Pachycephala rufiventris*), one of the most beautiful songsters of the South Australian (and Australian) bush. The bird gives it as ee-chung (the accent on chung). It calls echung singly and often gives a rollicking song or play on this word finishing up with several "chungs". The species is common in the Mount Lofty Ranges. I have not "worked" Echunga but it is common at Meadows, Ambleside, Bridgewater and I have even heard it here at Mitcham. (I have been told that in some places the bird is known to boys as Echung. My idea is that Echunga means a place where Echungs or Rufous Whistlers were common and thus outstanding as compared with other spots. So far as I know, the Aborigines in and about Adelaide did not name birds by their calls although in other parts of Australia they did follow that practice." (Cockburn, 1990: 66) Source: Teichelmann & Schurmann (1840: 6) / (courtesy of <http://www.kaurnaplacenames.com>)

- **Lartingga-parri**: Flooding Land Creek – Mount Barker Creek/Laratinga Creek as it flows off of Mount Barker. The site is a wide relatively flat flood plain at the foot of Mt Barker with permanent water, and at one time almost permanent campsites, the only time the place was not continuously occupied was during periods of heavy rain when it was, and still is prone to inundation. Mt Barker council has named their wetland nearby Laratinga for obvious reasons.
- **Maitpa-ngga**: Autumn food place – Myponga, on the trade route south to Putpangga territory it was a place of plentiful water and food, particularly in autumn when the drying water holes allowed for access to freshwater mussels, turtles, and rush bulbs that were easily accessible in this otherwise boggy and marshy piece of country.
- **Maitpa-langga**: Flooding food place- Mypolonga, opposite Wall on the river Murray was considered Peramangk territory by Berndt & Berndt. It provided access to the river for Peramangk people and was a place of trade with the Ngaralta and Ngarkat people. Peramangk survivors lived in the area in the late 19th and early 20th century. Polly Beck's family lands extended from this area up to Nairne and Mt Barker. Polly was the daughter of George Beck a Peramangk man and through this connection her family had responsibility for this watta (worta/yerta). One of the thoughts on the origin of the name Mypolonga comes from the authority of the late Mr N.B. Tindale, an Ethnologist at the South Australian Museum, Mypolonga means "Lookout Cliff". It is a corruption of the local Aboriginal name Mupuldawang or Mupulawang. Evidently the local Aborigines used the cliffs on the eastern side of the river as a lookout. <http://mypolonga.com/history.htm>
- **Maitpana-litty**: Food for Them – A ration station 1-mile (1.6 km) from Mt Barker heading towards Echunga.
- **Maittanga**: Food Place – This is a location on the banks of salt Creek half way between Mypolonga and Pomeruk.



- **Moorooro:** Either 'Wide, dusty place', or 'Meeting of two waters' – The confluence of Jacob's Creek and the Gawler Rivers and adjacent area of Rowland Flat. In times past it was a place where family groups met in late summer and autumn for ceremonies and trade. The area was noted for its wide flat open areas, and when dances were performed there great clouds of yellow dust would rise up around the performers. The name was also given to the local family group who lived there.
- **Millindi-illa:** Singing/Magic Place – A permanent water hole on Milendella Creek at the foot of the eastern escarpment west of the old railway station, nearby are located semi-permanent campsites and art sites. The name is probably connected with the Aboriginal millin given to a form of sorcery or magic; thus milendella is 'the place of the man who wants millin'.

When taking revenge by means of millin, the native disguised himself by means of white streaks all over his face and the rest of his body and, taking a heavy club, he would steal noiselessly upon his victim and stun him with a heavy blow. He then pulled the man's ears as it was imagined that by doing so the victim would be unable to say who had attacked him. If he then went into battle, the wicked spirit would whisper in his ear and in consequence he would be unable to protect himself with his shield and so be killed; or he would tread on a deadly snake or be overtaken by a fatal disease. At some suitable moment the man who had used the power of millin in this way to destroy his victim would in turn be killed by the man's relations who, however, were not always particular whom they killed, even the brother of the man using the millin being sacrificed to satisfy their revenge. The natives lived in deadly terror of and nothing would persuade them that there really was no such power.  
<http://www.slsa.sa.gov.au/manning/pn/m/m8.htm#milendella>

- **Mukulta:** Head Shaped Hill – Moculta, Parrot Hill that overlooks the township was used as a look out by the local family group of this area. As it looked out over the northern boundary of Peramangk country and into Ngadjuri lands it was a significant feature in the local landscape. The name also can be found in the name Eucolta – Flagstaff Hill and Womma-Mukurta – Mt Barker.
- **Mulladi-illa:** Mulladilla, drying place – Mulirdilah Station, south Rhine region, along the creek banks either side of the creeks here are small salt flats, and areas by creeks & streams where ceremonies and burials took place.
- **Mitji-parri:** (Meechi) Mosquito River: Bremer River, the name Meechi was used by local Aboriginal people, Meechi being a local pronunciation of Mitji, a Kurna word for Mosquito/Wasp/Native Bee.
- **Ngarmaracha** (Ngumaracha): Women's Waterhole (or alternatively 'Umeracha' – fine waterhole) – A permanent waterhole on the River Torrens in the vicinity of the old township.

It is said that the town's unusual name is reputedly a corruption of the local Aboriginal word 'umeracha' which indicated a good water hole on the River Torrens. Somehow, between the Aborigines and the meeting of the South Australian Company in London in 1841, the word ended up as 'Gummaraka'.  
<http://www.smh.com.au/news/South-Australia/Gumeracha/2005/02/17/1108500204275.html>

- **Ngankiparri:** Women's River – Onkaparinga River, as it is known to the Kurna. QAs the Peramangk shared the river, a common language and culture there seems little reason not to surmise that they did not share the name of this river too.
- **Nangkitja:** Place of Grubs in the trees – Nangkita, near Mount Compass, according to Tindale.

- **Nguro-atpa:** Neck Place – Nuriootpa, referring specifically to the narrow lights pass through which people from both sides of the ranges would travel. A point along an established trade route to point along the upper Murray all the way to Lake Victoria and beyond. The name refers to the story of Yurebilla, a Giant Ngarno who came down from the north and was killed by people, his body became the Mt Lofty Ranges.
- **Pat-piari (Patpiori):** Place of Scattered Trees: Eden Valley and the areas around Kaiser Stuhl Hill. The practices of fire stick farming and mosaic burning by Peramangk people created large areas of open grass lands for Kangaroo grazing and left the landscape punctuated with large Eucalypts that were often used as shelters. Trees often have hollows facing south east (summer), or north east (winter). Trees were further marked with male and female symbols designating which were men's and which were to be used for women's camps.
- **Parnalartangga:** Autumn Flooding Place: Panalatinga Creek as it flows through Happy Valley and into the Field River. The lands around were known as a place to visit for freshwater foods but not a good place to camps because of the mosquitoes and frequent inundation.
- **Paintyi-illa (Paintyilla):** Place on the side – The location recorded in the name on the station Bundilla, on the Marne River at the base of the hills near Cambrai. An important water hole (now a weir) is located here and was known as campsite along the Marne River Trade route between Nganguruku and northern Peramangk people, the Tarawatta (or Yira-Ruka).
- **Pinatjuwingga (Peenakauwingga):** Bald Hill & Water Place: A location near Cherry Gardens indicating the geographical location of permanent water in an area noted in times past for the abundance of native cherries that would be collected in late summer and early autumn when water was at its scarcest.
- **Poona-watta (Poona-worta):** Good Country – The name of the local family group like the Tarawatta and Karawatta groups. In Kurna this place is known as Putpa-Yerta, the Lyndoch Valley. It was here that ceremonies were held. The Poonawatta or Wallaby People hosted meetings between peoples such as the Mauraura, Kurna, Nanguruku, Ngaiawang, Ngadjuri and other Peramangk groups, as recorded by George French Angas in the 1840's. Paintings of the ceremonies and the costumes of the various peoples were also created at this time.
- **Picodla:** EarLobe Place- Piccadilly Valley, the reference to the story of Yurebilla, or the place of the Giants Ear Lobe.
- **Pultari-illa:** Possum Place- A location near Prospect Hill (Kuitpo Valley) where possums were known to be plentiful.
- **Pereira:** Hills Place – As in Peramangk, a Yaraldi place name. A location near Woodchester, an important ceremonial and Dreaming place for Peramangk, Kurna and Ngarrindjeri peoples.
- **Perti-ngga (Partingga):** Place of Perti/Parti Grubs – Located in the reed beds (now gone) of Mt Barker township.
- **Pirraldi:** Bald-Moon shaped Hill – A round moon shaped hill above Belair used as a lookout onto the Adelaide Plains.
- **Pirramimma:** Place of Moon and Stars – Located on the Preamimma Creek, near the Preamimma Mine, a semi permanent waterhole where clear, windless nights the stars can be seen reflected in flat, clear waters.
- **Pilyara-ngga:** Place of Many Voices – A camping ground and meeting place on the flats at Sturt, across Marion road next to the Warriparingga Wetlands.
- **Towitto:** Reed Filled Place (springs) – Towitta north of Sedan, a place of permanent water, foods and reeds.
- **Tarra-ngga:** High (Rising) Place – Referring the hills surrounding the township of Angaston. These hills and the area to the south towards Collingrove were the home of the Tarawatta people.



- **Tarra-watta** (Tarraworta): High (Rising) Land – The name of both the district, and the family groups who lived here. Remembered in the name of Terrawatta Station next to Collingrove Stud, the name applies to the whole of the Eden Valley. Another name for the people of the region was Yira-Ruka who were closely linked to the Nanguruku people, who shared a similar language and frequently met for ceremonies and trade in the vicinity of the Marne River.
- **Taingappa** (Tainga-Tappa): Foot Track – Trail – A trail that follows the Marne River from Wongulla to the foot of Mount Crawford. An important trade route that linked the Peramangk and Nunguruku peoples. Important camping and art sites are located along the river with hollowed trees, burial and artefact sites. Evidence of Semi-permanent huts with stone foundations have also been located within the vicinity in the Eden Valley area along with stone fish traps also being located along the Marne River.
- **Ta-ingi-illa** (Taingilla): Ghost Moth Grub Place – A location in the vicinity of Tungkillo Township, an area noted for the abundance of Cossid Moth grubs. The area also abounds with She-Oaks, Calitris Pines, Blue, Red, and Pink Gums.
- **Tii-taka** (Teetaka): Sit and Trade Place – Mount Crawford, an area where large groups of people from all over would come to meet and trade. It is recorded that over 1000 people would gather here at any one time in the late autumn for ceremonies and trade. With permanent water available and an abundance of food, semi-permanent camps were located here for much of the year.
- **Tarr-nanda**: Rising Up Place – The land and surrounding hills of the area in which Tanunda is now located.
- **Tauondi-illa** (Toondilla): Way Through Place – The flat grounds on the banks of the Onkaparinga River where the Clarendon Oval is now situated. The winter camping grounds of the Kurna people and an important meeting and trading centre for both Kurna and Peramangk peoples. In the late 19th and early 20th century it became a place where Kurna and Peramangk survivors retreated to in the face of European invasion. Ivartitji's family and other survivors lived here at various times prior to their removal to Point McLeay and Point Pearce.
- **Tooka-Yerta**: Swampy Land – The lands around Tookayerta Creek that flows into Lake Alexandrina south of Nangkita.
- **Tala-ngga**: Flooding Place – The low lying areas on the south side of the River Torrens near Mt Pleasant Township. A diminutive of Yertala – flooding and 'ngga', denoting a place or location.
- **Wadna-ngga**: Place to make Wadnas or Place to use Wadnas – A location near Longwood, the name could mean either as the trees here grew straight and tall with few lower branches, but with plenty of possums about the use of the wadna stick used for climbing trees) would have been very necessary.
- **Wilyaru** (Wiljaura/ Wiyaru): Initiation Place – A location very near to Strathalbyn, is also the title for a fully initiated Peramangk/Kurna man. This site along with Pereira were on the initiation trail of Peramangk and Kurna men. It is remembered in the locality of Wilyaroo.
- **Warriparri**: Windy River – the Sturt River as it flows down from the hills from Heathfield to the Patawilonga Basin.
- **Warriki-illa**: Place of the Winds- The heights above Happy Valley and Happy Valley area, remembered in the farm Warrikilla and the creek that flows from it into the Panatalinga Creek. The area is known for fierce gully winds in the summer and autumn.
- **Yurebilla** (Yurabilla) / Yure-idla: Two Ears – Mt Lofty and Mt Bonython, the name refers to the story of Ngarno the Giant who was killed and whose body became the Mt Lofty Ranges. There are other stories connected to the two peaks, one concerning Two Men and another referring to the two moiety groups of the Kurna. Prior to European settlement the land to the west of the Mount Lofty Ranges was the country of the Kurna and to the east the Peramangk. To the

Kaurna, Yurrebilla (Yurr-ee-billa) or Urebilla is a name that identifies the area comprising Mt Lofty and Mt Bonython (Yurreidla) as the 'two ears' of the Kaurna ancestral being Nganno, Nar-na, or Nga:na. Nganno travelled across this landscape, and lay down to die following a battle; his body formed the Mount Lofty Ranges. A variant of 'Yurrebilla' or 'Yureidla' has been historically ascribed as being the origins of the nomenclature of the settlement of Uraidla (Martin 1996: 9-10) but it has more recently been associated with Kaurna nomenclature for Mt Bonython (Hemming 1998: 19; Clarke 1991: 63; Tindale 1974: 64; Wyatt 1879: 178-179). More recently the term Yurrebilla has been used to define the Greater Mt Lofty Park Lands that has been created along the Mount Lofty Range ridgeline reaching from Cox Scrub Conservation Park and Kuitpo Forest in the south to Para Wirra Recreation Park and Mt Crawford Forest Reserve in the north. Ngangki parringa and yulti have also been used to describe the Onkaparinga Valley and stringybark trees respectively. Notwithstanding this nomenclature and associative meanings, there is no specific evidence of Kaurna or Peramangk occupancy of the Piccadilly Valley. There is also no known Kaurna or Peramangk site within the Mt Lofty Botanic Garden. It is however known that the Peramangk frequented the Onkaparinga River valley, and it is believed that there were traverse routes used by the Peramangk to access Yurrebilla for communication and trade (Martin 1998: 10; Skipper 1837; Register 2 March 1839; Dunn 1980: 103). [http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/botanicgardens/pdfs/mlbg2\\_history.pdf](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/botanicgardens/pdfs/mlbg2_history.pdf)

- **Yertalla-ngga:** Flooding Land – The name refers to the Hoffnungsthal Lagoon. The area is a natural basin surrounded on all by high hills, water having nowhere to drain settles here after heavy rain. The connected story is that a Peramangk man named Jemie warned the German settlers not to build their town there because the lagoon frequently filled for long periods after heavy rains, but they did not listen. Looking on with amused bewilderment at the settlers' stupidity, the local Peramangk people were not surprised when after heavy rain the town was flooded out and the Germans decided to move their settlement closer to Bethany.
- **Womma-Mukurta:** Head Shaped Hill upon a Plain: Mount Barker, a large rounded hill upon a high plateau. Mt Barker was a favourite meeting and trading place with central importance for both Peramangk and Ngarrindjeri peoples. The Ngarrindjeri people used the summit as a burial platform place and attached a story about the Min:ka Bird (Willy Wagtail), said to be the bringer of important news, someone approaching or the approach of a person's (usually a child's) imminent death.
- **Yulti-Wirra:** Stringybark Forest – Referring to the stringybark forests that capped the Western Escarpment of the Mt Lofty Ranges. In particular a location in the eastern hills above Myponga.
- **Yak-tangga:** Either Gum (Calitris or Xanthorea sap) Place or Flooding Valley Place – A sign on the summit of Mt Barker names the place Yaktanga, this could either refer to a place the gum from either native pines or grass trees used for hafting spears and axes could be obtained, or it could refer to the locality below the summit, a valley known to flood after heavy rains.
- **Yeroona (Jero:na):** Wide Place – A township and homestead in a small valley leading north-west from the township of Kangarilla.



## **Geographical Observations about Peramangk Place Names**

- 90% of place names in the Mt Lofty Ranges are made in relation to physical features within the landscape and of what can be found there
- Several place names relate to food or water or tools and the times of the year that they are in abundance, eg maitpalangga, parnalartangga
- Other place names reflect both the major geographical feature of a place and also its physical state at certain times of the year, e.g. yertalungga
- 5% of place names refer to song-lines or stories within the landscape, e.g. Barrukangga, Kadliumbo, Karikarinya
- Some place names refer to not only the major natural feature of the area but also the name of the family group that occupies the region e.g., Tarrawatta, Karrawatta
- Many places names are made up of 2 more words contracted together to create a new place name or an entirely new word. Teichelmann noted that this flexibility in both Kurna and Peramangk languages allowed for the creation and pronunciation that was neither uniform nor consistent across family and culture groups
- The language of place names within the landscape shows a clear affinity with both Kurna and Ngadjuri languages. This is consistent with Tindale's findings that Peramangk people shared both a language and culture with these peoples.
- Place names within the landscape mark a clear boundary of Peramangk territory. This is consistent with Tindale's findings and is reflected in the locations of art sites along the eastern escarpment and the boundaries defined in the Tjilbruke and Nurrunderi song-lines.
- There are clear dialectic differences between Peramangk and Kurna place names, especially east and north east of Mt Barker
- Tindale noted that at two sites along the River Murray where Peramangk people had access to the River, Peramangk place names can be found, Maitangga, Maitpalangga, Tartangga, Taingappa
- The shift in Peramangk territorial boundaries recorded by Berndt reflects a shift in population and location of the traditional owners to areas between Manunka and Murray Bridge, across to Clarendon. The extension of Nanguruku lands into the Adelaide Hills further reflects the relocation of some Peramangk people to their relations along the River Murray, an area north of Manunka to Swan Reach.
- The depopulation of an area's original inhabitants and the subsequent taking over of this territory by other more populous groups is reflected in changing territorial boundaries, art styles, and place names. The landscape records the time of this change and the subsequent locations of the surviving populations.

## Peramangk Language and Associated Groups Word Lists

Peramangk	Kaurna	Ngarrindjeri	Ngadjuri	Maraura	English
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### B

Barruka	Barruka				Hidden fire
B okarti	Bukarti				Swim

### D

Dongarra	Dongara	Menengi			Muddy/swampy
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### I

Ityaa	litya				Nearby
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### J

Ju:ki*		Yuke-wakkalde			Bark canoe
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### K

Karno	Karnu	Ngurli			Mountain
Kooroo					Fire making tools
Kartiato	Kartanya	Pangalarke			First born daughter
Kuri	Kuri		Kuri	Kuri	Ceremonial gathering with singing & dancing (Coroboree)
Kuyeta	Kartameru	Pangali			First born son
Kunga					Female
Karra	Karra		Karra		Redgums
Kuit:po	Kuin:yo				Sacred/hidden burial place
Kadli	Kadli	Keli	Gadli	Kadli	Dog/dingo
Kauwe	Kauwie				Water
Kundo/kundu					Kangaroo
Kaika	Kaika	Kaike	Kaika	Kaika	Reed tipped



					spear
Kurru-angko					Kuri ceremony
Kumpiri*					Bunyip like creature
Kar:ri	Kari	Piendi	Kari	Kalti	emu
Karku	Karko	Mikurli			Red ochre used for ceremonies
Karri-woppa					Bunch of emu feathers

## L

Larti/larati					Flood
Lantara		Krinkri			Ghost/skeleton

## M

Marnitti					Mixture of red ochre from Onkaparinga Valley & grease smeared over body during important rituals & ceremonies
Mambarti					Hair tied with possum fur string around forehead, hair painted with grease & red ochre so as to hang down in thick matted pieces.
Meru/meyu	Meyu		Meyu	Meru	person
Mantu	Manto	Mankeri			Abdomen
Millindi			Millindi		Use of magic
Maitpa	Maitpa				Plant foods
Mukulta/mokulta	Mukurta	Kuli	Kakarti		Head (head shaped hill/mountain)

Miitji	Mitji-mitji	Murule			Mosquito/wasp
Mullardi/mullurdi					Drying
Marra	Marra	Tun:e	Marra	Marra	hand
Mingka	Karkanya	Mingka	Mingka	Mingka	Spirit bird
Midla	Midla		Midla		A woomera/spear throwing tool
Monarta	Munato				Fourth born daughter
Milta					Red ochre initiate
Mullabakka	Mullabakka				Dry bark shield
Mangkka	Mangkka	Mungaiyuwun			Cicitation scars

## N

Nurrondi					Charm/enchant
Nurrullurrulla					Doctor/sorcerer
Nurruti					Charm/spell
Nganki	Nganki	Mimini			Women/woman
Nguro					Neck

## P

Palti	Palti		Palti		Song (usually with a dance attached to its performance)
Pika	Kakirra			Patjira	Moon
Pirra		Tande			Moon/bald/bare
Poona	Putpa				Good
Pangkawirri	Wirri	Plonggi	Wirri	Pirara	Throwing club used by Murray/hills groups
Patta/batta	Patta				Scrub/trees & shrubs
Piori/piari	Piari				Scattered/widely spread
Paintyi					On the side
Pina					Bald/bare
Pulta	Pilta	Piltari	Pilta	Piilta	Possum
Parti	Barti		Barti		Witchetty grub
Parri	parri			Bari	River/stream
Puruk*		Wangami	Gudla	Puruk	kangaroo
Ponmonka*		Pondi			Murray Cod

## R



Rakangga*					Mannum area
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## T

Tukko/tutto					lookout
Tarra					Highland/rising slopes & hills
Tinyarra	Kurkura				Lad/youth/boy
Tainga		Ngoppurmi			Foot track
Tappa					Trail
Ta:inggi	Tainggi				Cossid moth grub
Tiitaka					Sit & trade
Tauondi/toondi	Tauondi				Way through
Tala					Flood/inundation
Tak:oni/tandan					Little hills spirit people
Tinda/ou:inda*				Dura	Totem/country
Tuku*					Snake
Tapurro	Tapurro				Rolled possum skin used as a drum

## W

Wadnaar	Wanda		Wanda		Chisel & stick for climbing
Watta/worta	Yerta		Yarta		Country/land
Wirra	Wirra		Wirra		Forest
Womma	Womma		Bitana		plain
Willi					Chest of kangaroo or other animal
Willi kundandi					Breking the chest bone
Witto/witta					Bulrush/reed
Warra	Warra		Warra		Speech/speak/language
Winman*					Cliff top lookout opposite Tartanga
Wirri	Wirri		Wirri		Throwing club
Wiltu	Wildu	Wulde	Wilto		Eagle
Woppa					Bunch of....

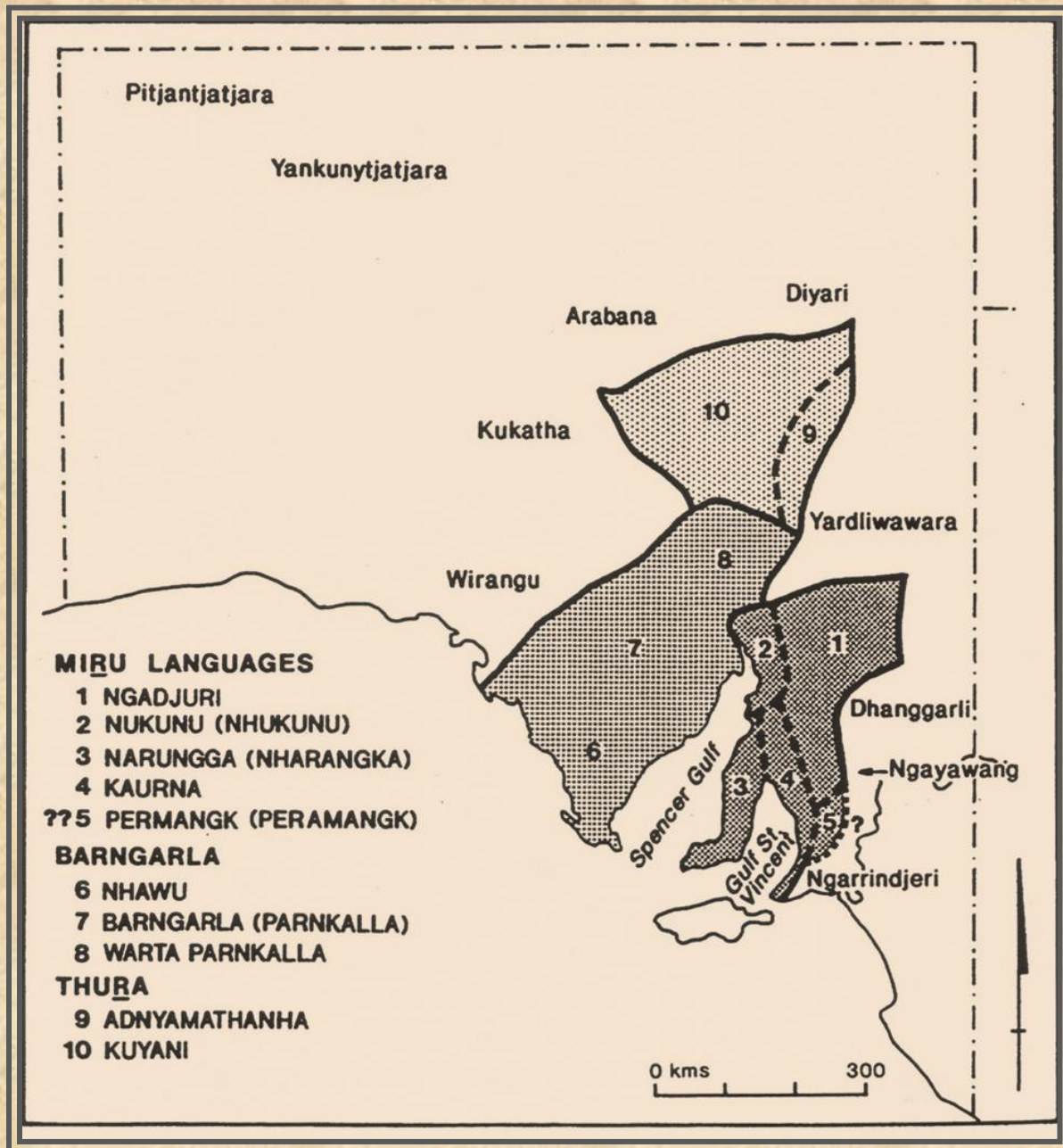
## Y

Yarida					Magic/sorcery
Yertalla					Inundated place/land
Yulti	Yulti				Stringybark
Yakku	Yakku	Purampe			valley
Yira		Korni	Yura		Men/people

\*denotes words used and shared by north-eastern Peramangk (Yira-ruka/Tarrawatta) and Ngangurku

## Notes on the language of the Peramangk People

The Peramangk dialects belong to the Yura-Thura group of languages as described by Luis Hercuse, in A Nukunu Dictionary 1992, AIATSIS. Norman Tindale when interviewing Robert 'Tarby' Mason, learnt that the language of the Peramangk was related not only to that of the groups west of the river, but also contained elements of the languages belonging to the Meru speakers as far north as Lake Victoria. This put them in close contact with the Nganguruku, Ngaiwang, and Ngadjuri and Maraura peoples. Hemming, S. & Cook, C. Crossing the River, Murray-Darling Basin Commission (1992).



Map drawn by Chris Crothers, taken from article "Sociolinguistic History of Kaurna, by Robert Amery.



The main dialects spoken by the hills people were akin to those dialects spoken by the Kurna and southern Ngadjuri. According to Rob Amery this puts it in the Yura-Thura group of languages. It is self evident from an examination of place names, and the names of implements recorded from various hills districts that there is some variation between the northern and southern Peramangk (just as there was between the northern and southern Kurna), along with the introduction and use of additional non-Yura-Thura words according to the local groups associations with its neighbours. An example of this is seen in the names of certain hills,

**Eucolta: Flagstaff Hill**

**Mucolta: Parrot Hill**

**Womma-Mukurta: Mount Barker**

The names of certain tools and implements were recorded by local hills residents and by George French Angas. The 'wadna' (climbing stick/chisel/scrapping tool), is recorded without variation throughout the hills and Adelaide plains. The 'mullabakka' (dry bark shield), is another whose name does not change from hills to plain. Some action words were also recorded, 'bukarti' means 'to swim' in Kurna, in Peramangk, the same word is 'bokarti'. There are obvious dialect differences, to the Kurna people, Lyndoch Valley was 'Putpayerta', to the Peramangk it was known as 'Poonawatta'. Another dialect variation appears in the words 'Maitpanalitya', and 'Kungatutto'. The Peramangk replaced a hard KK sound with a hard TT sound instead in at least some of their words. The grammar of the hills dialects follows that of the Kurna and Ngadjuri dialects, even when incorporating non Peramangk based words.

Peramangk people of the north east also used words that they shared with their cousins the Nganguruku. Tindale in his interviews with Robert Mason discussed this close relationship between the two groups. That Robert Mason knew much about the Peramangk language is not surprising, his grandmother was a Peramangk woman, and he was raised by his uncle Henry 'Harry' Mason, a Peramangk man, who was married to Gertie Dunn, a Peramangk woman. The increased adoption of Meru words coincided with the migration of many Peramangk refugees to camps and stations along the river Murray, even though they continued to visit, and camps at their traditional sites. The Peramangk people for the most part no longer lived full time in their former lands.

A lack of food, the need for work, and an increasingly hostile welcome in Adelaide were the main reasons for their shift to points along the River Murray. Thus many of the remaining Peramangk slowly became absorbed into the wider river communities, and were thus counted by ignorant Europeans as being from the Lower Murray culture groups. This despite the fact that they managed to maintain many of their arts sites, and continued with the Kombo-kuri's well into the twentieth century.

It is not surprising then to learn that the Peramangk people were multilingual, as this helped facilitate trade. The children learnt the languages of their parents and their trade partners. That the Peramangk participated in Rainbow ceremonies (Kombokuri) together with the fact that they were willing to introduce reciprocal initiation rites and marry women outside of their immediate culture groups says much for their shared language and culture with many surrounding groups of people. The Peramangk people maintained intimate, yet formal relations with groups not only on both sides of the hills, but also with groups as far away as the Maraura of Lake Victoria, the Ngarrindjeri of the Coorong, and the Ngadjuri of the mid-north. Their formal yet distant relationships extended much further, right up to the Diyari and Adnyamathana peoples of the Flinders Ranges and beyond.

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# Peramangk Populations and Family Groups

## **Peramangk (Clan) Family Group Pangkara's**

- 1. Merelde - Southern Fleurieu Peninsula (a name shared with the Ngarrindjerri of Currency Creek who were referred to by Tindale as the Merelda)**
- 2. Pongarang (Rufous Whistler) – Kuitpo Valley**
- 3. Paldarinalwar (Euro) – Hills & Plains around Strathalbyn**
- 4. Runganng – Handorf area & southern end of Onkaparinga Valley**
- 5. Jolori – Mount Barker Springs and Mount Barker Creek**
- 6. Mutingengal – North side of Mount Barker and Bremer Valley**
- 7. Wiljani (Emu) – Tungkillo & Mount Pleasant areas and southern end of Eden Valley to Marne River**
- 8. Tarrawatta (Dingo) – Hills above Angaston and the northern end of Eden Valley to Marne River**
- 9. Karrawatta – Lobethal and northern end of Onkaparinga Valley to the River Torrens**
- 10. Poonawatta (Wallaby)– Lyndoch Valley, west of Kaiserstuhl and south to the River Torrens**

Over much of Australia, the average family group is made up of between 30 to 50 related individuals. A few related elder males, the parents, wives and children. Each group had its own particular songs, sites, stories and resources that were unique to their area. The different Peramangk clans were united by familial links that extended beyond their borders through inter group marriage. Peramangk women would often marry outside of Peramangk territory, and likewise the Peramangk men would marry women from outside of their immediate family group. Examples of this are many; Jimmy Christmas married a Kurna woman, his daughter Jenny married a Ngarlata man, Mooroo Mason, a Ngadjuri man married Chilberri, a Ngaralta woman and so on. Weddings would often take place well outside of a family's home territory. Jimmy Christmas married his wife in Adelaide, Jenny Christmas married her husband in the country of the Ngarkat people and Monarta, a Peramangk, married John Mason, a Ngaralta man, in Adelaide. These intergroup relationships were the bonds that kept the people together. It was one thing to visit another person's country for ceremonial and trading visits. It was another thing entirely to stay.

Prior to European settlement in 1836 there were at least 10 family groups of Peramangk people. There may well have been more, but the effects of disease upon the resident Peramangk populations will never be truly known. With the destruction of a family group who were responsible for a particular pangkarra, its ownership would pass to another group who would then expand their territory to incorporate the lands of the now extinct former owners. If a family group became too small, they would

be absorbed by larger, neighbouring family groups with which they had close relations. This happened to the Tarrawatta and Wiljanie family groups of Eden Valley, who were initially merged into one group, becoming known as the Yira-Ruka by the Nganguruku. In-turn as their numbers dropped and they were driven out of their lands by violence, dislocation and disease, they migrated towards their relatives along the river and were eventually absorbed into the Nganguruku and Ngaiawang groups living along the Murray River near Moorundie and Mannum.

Custodial ownership of a Watta passed down the female line, an example of this is Polly Beck's father was George Beck; he married a woman who was of Peramangk descent. Polly Beck's father had custodial ownership of country that abutted Jerry & Jenny Mason's, Polly gained ownership (sic) when George died. This land ran from the south side of Mypolonga right up into the hills past Tepko, well past the traditional Ngaralta boundary, matching what the Berndt's mapped out in their book 'The world That Was'. So land ownership passed to the males of a family, but down the female line indicating matrilineal descent of ownership. Thus a man's title to a piece of land passed to him via his wife's mother....that was one of the reasons why the fathers of boys were always on the lookout for desirable father-in-laws for their sons. It was politics. It also helps explain why older men liked to have so many wives....more resources to control for their own extended families. Another example can be seen with Henry Mason's custodial ownership of both Yira-Ruka and Ngangurku lands. Thus when he died without issue traditional custodianship passed to his brother Robert and his family. Jenny Christmas' father was a Yira-Ruka man and her mother was Nganguruku. This ties in with the comments made by April Blair about matrilineal descent of clan totems and a how a person gained a particular totem or 'Tinda'. A mother would pass her totemic affiliations down to her children.

It has been assumed by European writers that Aboriginal populations in the Adelaide region were always low. The Kurna population was estimated to be no more than 600 in 1836, and the Peramangk, not much more than 300. This estimate does not however take into account the effects different diseases had upon the local indigenous populations even before the first European settlers arrived. Both Charles Sturt and Captain Hahn noted in their travels that many Aboriginal people bore smallpox scars. Indeed both men noticed that in areas where they expected large numbers of people to live, the local population numbers were well below expectation. Teichellman noted in his diary that there were many areas where only 1 or two people from a local family group had survived the arrival of European diseases. Evidence of the dramatic effects of the sudden onset of an epidemic were discovered at Swanport, near Murray Bridge in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when mass graves containing over 150 bodies were uncovered whilst road works were being done. Such was the devastating effects of disease upon the local populations that the proper burial and mortuary practices could not be carried out, and the dead had to be quickly buried to avoid further outbreaks of disease.

When diseases such as smallpox hit an indigenous population that has never been exposed, the effects are almost always catastrophic. Constance Cappel and Nobel Cook, writing about the effects that colonization had upon indigenous people in the Americas noted that first contact between Europeans and Indigenous populations lacking immunities to certain diseases, almost always ended in disaster for the indigenous populations. The epidemiological evidence is overwhelming and the experiences of



Aboriginal Americans when first coming into contact with Europeans is almost identical to that of Aboriginal Australians. Their words are worth quoting at length;

*“Nearly all scholars now believe that wide spread epidemic disease, which the natives had no prior exposure or resistance to, was the overwhelming cause of the massive population decline of the American natives... It was observed that disease began to kill immense numbers of indigenous Americans soon after Europeans and Africans began to arrive in the New World, bringing with them the infectious diseases of Europe and Africa...One reason this death toll was overlooked (or downplayed) is that disease, according to the widely held theory, raced ahead of European immigration in many areas, thus often killing off a sizable portion of the population before European observations (and thus written records) were made. After the epidemics had already killed massive numbers of American natives, many European immigrants who arrived assumed that the natives had always been few in number. The scope of the epidemics over the years was enormous, killing millions of people—possibly in excess of 90% of the population in the hardest hit areas... One of the most devastating diseases was smallpox, but other deadly diseases included typhus, measles, influenza, bubonic plague, cholera, malaria, tuberculosis, mumps, yellow fever, and pertussis (whooping cough).*

*...the natives of the Americas faced the introduction of several new diseases all at once, so that a person who successfully resisted one disease might die from another. Multiple simultaneous infections (e.g., smallpox and typhus at the same time) or in close succession (e.g., smallpox in an individual who was still weak from a recent bout of typhus) are more deadly than just the sum of the individual diseases. In this scenario, death rates can also be elevated by combinations of new and familiar diseases...”*

Constance Cappel 2007 (The Smallpox Genocide of the Odawa Tribe at L'Arbre Croche, 1763: The History of a Native American People, Edwin Mellen Press, 2007)

Noble David Cook 1998. (Born to Die: Disease and New World Conquest, 1492–1650. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.)

It is well recorded that there were at least three smallpox outbreaks amongst the people of the Adelaide region in 1789, 1829 and again in 1845. There were also constant outbreaks of other equally devastating diseases such as T.B, whooping cough, various STD's, measles, mumps and influenza. All of these combined to place severe pressure upon the local indigenous populations in the greater Adelaide area. If smallpox is used as an example it is found that the disease kills about 60% of people at first contact with a population with no natural immunity. It usually takes the very young, the aged and the sick first, followed by those who care for them second. Survivors are covered in hideous pox scars that last a life time.

A simple extrapolation of former population numbers prior to 1789 paints a disturbing picture of the effect that just this single disease had upon Peramangk people. Ignoring the 1845 outbreak, the number of 300 Peramangk people still being alive in 1836 gives a good starting number.

Year	Population	Disease	% of population
1836	300	smallpox	-
1829	750	smallpox	60%
1789	1875	smallpox	60%

If the worst case scenario is used and smallpox is combined with TB and Venereal diseases introduced by sealers and whalers then we get a 90% reduction in numbers.

Year	Population	Diseases	% of population
1836	300	Smallpox, TB, STD's	-
1829	3000	Smallpox, TB, STD's	90%
1789	7500	Smallpox,	60%

Using the worst case scenario as a guide the simple calculations indicate that there may have been as many as 1800 - 2000 Peramangk people living in the well resourced area of the Mount Lofty Ranges. If the best (sic) case scenario is used then there were still between 5000 to 8000 Peramangk people calling the Mount Lofty ranges home. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the numbers of survivors could be counted in the dozens. These numbers cannot be counted as completely accurate, but they do paint a rather grim picture as to the actual damage inflicted upon the Peramangk population even before the invasion truly began.

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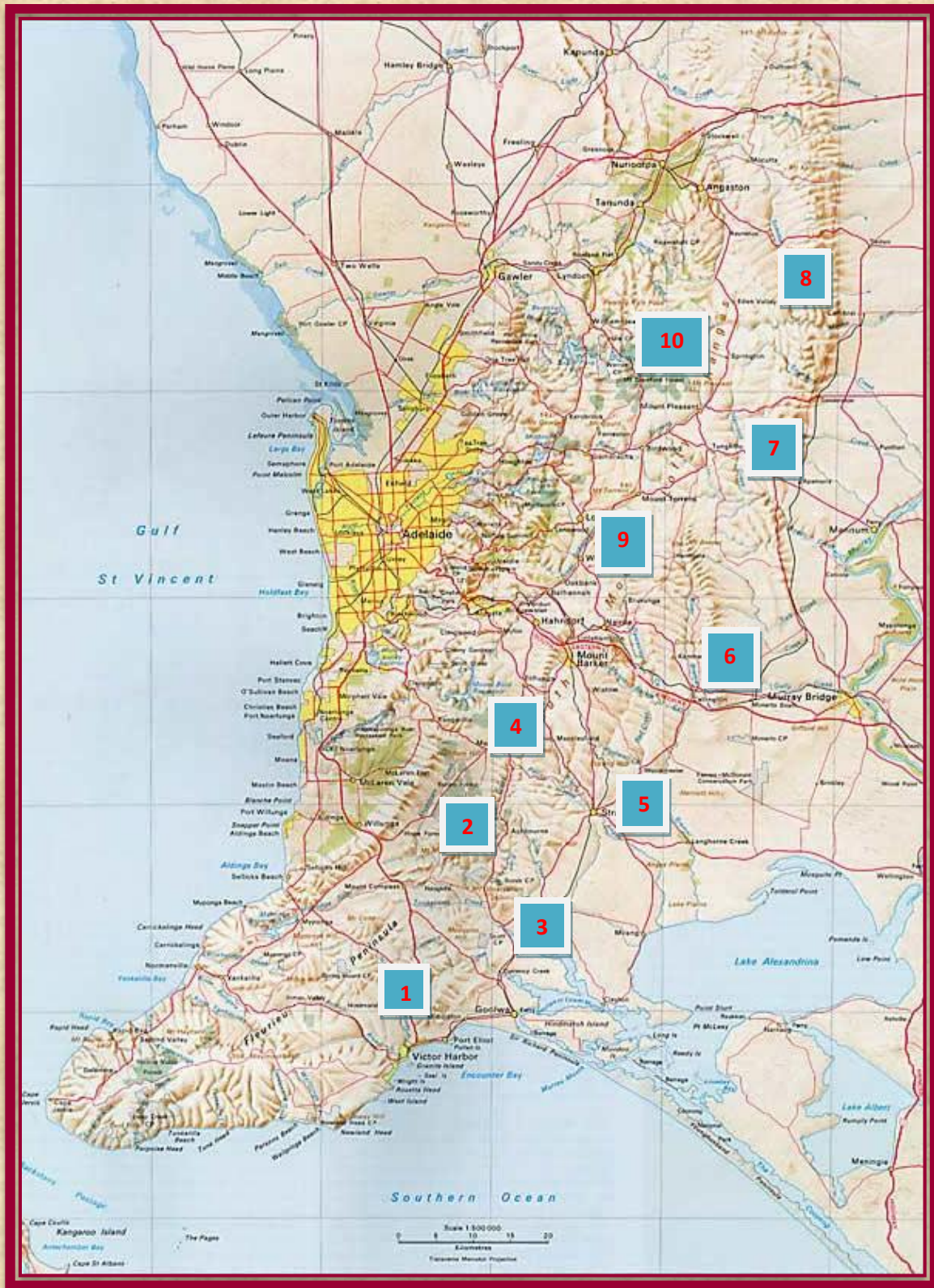
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Approximate Locations of different family groups according to Norman Tindale



# Stages of Life of Peramangk Men

Peramangk men like the women passed through five different stages of life as they aged. From birth to death, each major mile stone of their lives was marked with a ceremony that brought them into the next stage of their lives.

## **Kurkurra**

In the earliest stage of a boy's life he was known as a Kurkurra, an uninitiated boy. From birth until the age of about 10-12 he was allowed to live a life relatively free of restrictions, he lived with his mother or his mother's sisters and was raised amongst the women of the family and accompanied them on their daily tasks. This care free life was perhaps the only time where he was allowed to do as he pleased. He would watch the older boys and men and imitate their activities with games designed to hone many of the skills he would need in later life. These included using the kutpe, (a toy spear), hunting, tracking, food gathering and imitating the dancers in the ceremonies that were performed by the older men.

## **Wilya Kundarti**

At the age of puberty, or just before a Peramangk boy was introduced to the intermediate stage of life. At about the age of 11-13 he would undergo his first initiation ceremony, the Wilya Kundarti. Surrounded by elder men and women of his family the boy is first gently beaten with new growth branches of eucalyptus leaves. Then grabbed by his elders the boy was placed on a bed of gum leaves and one of the senior men would make cuts on his own arm allowing the blood to cover the whole body. Once this stage was completed the boy was allowed to carry a wirri for killing birds, and a small wooden spade (karko) for digging grubs out of the ground.

Once the boys had reached this stage preparations would be made for their full initiation into the world of adults. But this would not be done by their immediate family elders or in their own country. The next stage of their lives would be undertaken at the next Rainbow Ceremony where the boys would be initiated along with their umbilical cord trade partners into the mysteries of early adulthood.

Rainbow ceremonies & promised wives.....

## **Marnitti (Becoming a Milta)**

After the settling of disputes and before the performing of various dances of the Kombokuri, the Elder men and women meet to discuss who will be initiated into adulthood; both young girls and boys are selected for initiation from the meeting groups. The elder men (usually the mother's male relatives) of the visiting family or culture group undertake the Marnitti ceremony early in the morning. Edward John Eyre in his observations recorded the holding of a Marnitti Initiation ceremony and his thoughtful observations are worth quoting at length;

*"Early in the morning some of the male friends of the boy about to be operated upon, go behind him to seize him, upon which he sets off running as hard as he can, as if to escape; but being followed by his pursuers is soon captured and thrown down; he is then raised up and surrounded by several natives, who hold him and smear him from head to foot, with red ochre and grease; during this part of the ceremony, a band of elderly women, generally the mother and other near relatives, surround the group, crying or lamenting, and lacerating their thighs and backs with shells or flints, until the blood streams down.*



*When well ochred (milte ) all over the novice is led away by another native, apart from the rest of the tribe, or if there are more than one, they stand together linked hand in hand, and when tired sit down upon bunches of green boughs brought for that purpose, for they are neither allowed to sit on the ground, nor to have any clothing on; and when they move about they always carry a bunch of green boughs in each hand. (Wilyakundarti )*

*They are now ready for the ceremony... Three men then got up and seated themselves at the foot of the three spears, with their legs crossed... Two other natives then went over... to where the three novices stood shaking and trembling... seizing them by the legs and shoulders, and carefully lifting them from the ground, they carried each in turn, and laid them on their backs at full length upon green boughs, spread upon the ground in front of the three men sitting by the spears, so that the head of each rested on the lap of one of the three. From the moment of their being seized, they resolutely closed their eyes, and pretended to be in a deep trance until the whole was over. When all three novices had been laid in their proper position, cloaks were thrown over them...[members of the family] coming to the side of each, carefully lifted up a portion of the covering and commenced plucking the hair.*

*At intervals, the operators were relieved by others of both sexes, and of various ages; little children under ten, were sometimes but not frequently officiating. When all the hair had been pulled out, that belonging to each native was carefully rolled up in green boughs, the three lots being put together, and given to one of the wise or inspired men to be put properly away; bunches of green boughs were now placed under each arm of the boys as also in their hands, after which several natives took hold of them, and raised them suddenly and simultaneously to their feet, whilst a loud guttural, 'Whaugh', was uttered by the other natives around.*

*They were then disenchanted and the ceremony was over, but for some time afterwards, the initiated are obliged to sleep away from the camp, and are not allowed to see the women; their heads and bodies are kept smeared with red ochre and grease (marnitti), and tufts of feathers (Karaki-woppa), and kangaroo teeth (teryarkoo), are worn tied to the hair in front." Edward John Eyre 1844*

Andrew Cawthorne witnessed a similar ceremony take place in the Adelaide park lands in 1842 his description is worth noting;

*"When I came amongst the blacks on the other side of the river, my friends and I saw 3 squares of natives of an indefinite number. Each square had a young man who was smeared all over from the top of his head down to the toes, his feet with red ochre (milte ) and fat (marnitti) - presenting a perfect red man, not a bit of black being visible. He had also a large bunch of cockatoo feathers (Karaki-woppa), tied to his hair and hanging behind on his shoulders -also 3 or 4 large kangaroo teeth incorporated with the hair of his head very neatly (teryarkoo). It seemed as if it grew out of the- hair hanging over his forehead -and lastly he had some- string (just like what the ladies call 'a good-braid'" which it might have been) wound around his arms and neck loosely.*

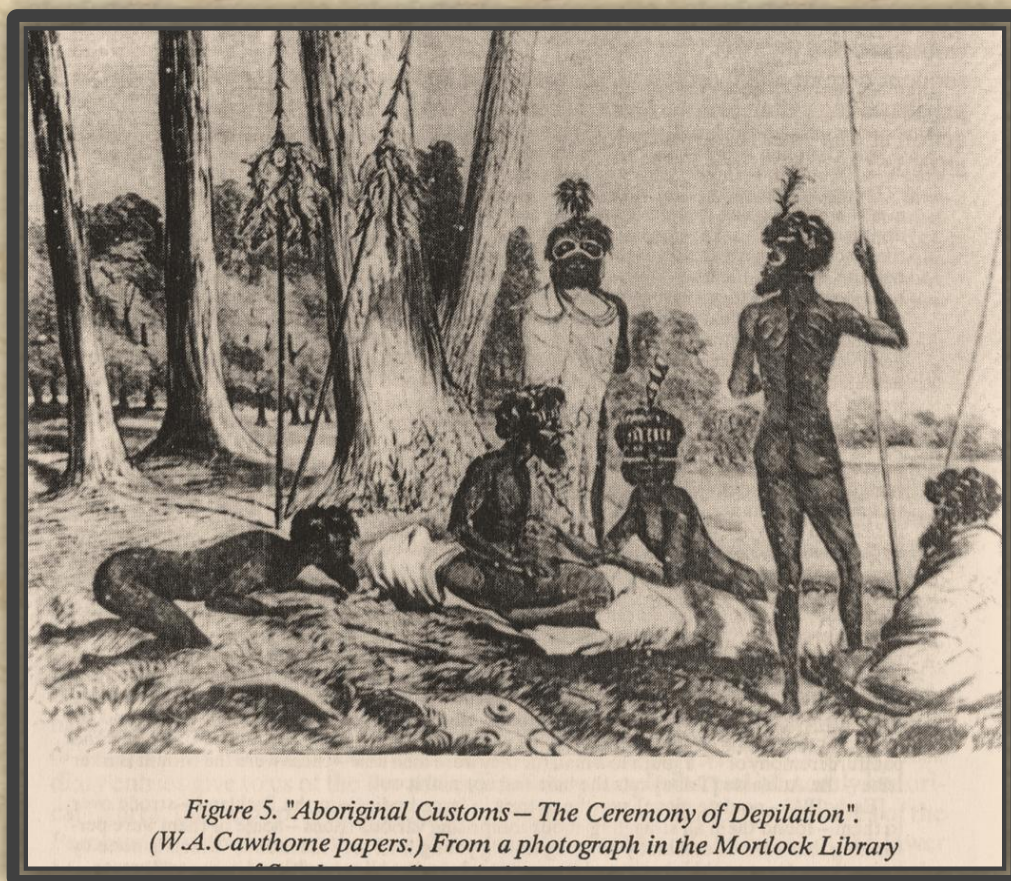
*These three youths in nudity made a great contrast to their black conductors who had all green branches of the gum tree (Wilyakundarti ) in their hands, while the young men are lying dead still, looking frightened and shivering with fear. After the squares met, some of the old men stepped out before them and performed all the rites... the young men must go through in battle. After this the branches were thrown in the circle and then the young men lay on them on their backs - then a large skin was thrown over the initiate.*



*One man sat at each head and one at the legs. When this was done -women came and sat down and cried very much and plucked out the hair of the thighs and abdomen. After plucking out a handful of it she went away and then she plucked hair from the face down to the foot not excepting a single place during the long and painful process. Yet not groan escaped the poor sufferers (see figure 5).*

*After this ceremony each man took up handfuls of the leaves and then took hold of the arms of the young men and lifted them up to a sitting position [at the] same time putting the green leaves under their arms accompanied with that curious noise like an explosion. After this they lifted them up on their legs, joined them arm in arm facing them towards their wurlies and then giving them a gentle push in the back while thus walking to the huts the old men. After this long and painful ceremony of transforming from a youth to a man for they were men now- these were the Mount Barker tribe..."*

Andrew Cawthorne 1842



Again in 1844, Cawthorne witnessed yet another Initiation ceremony adding further detail;

*"some of them were performing that curious ceremony of-inaugurating young men into manhood - which is on by laying them down on their backs and smearing their bodies all over with red ochre and grease and there a female comes forward and plucks-out the hair of the Os pubis !! !! The men-finished the work-over the sufferers at their head a spear is stuck into the ground with a "Taara" or belly-band to the head of it emblem. The suffering must be intense -but not a murmur of protest is heard by them - after the ceremony of plucking the hair is done, the "Miltas' as they are called, are raised to a sitting*



*posture and then lifted on their feet and with their hands locked in each other's they are sent away where their companions are ready to receive them – for sometime after this event - they wear string round one of their arms (Nguuyakurla) to prevent (?) fatal effects -which may proceed from the ceremony. “*

It is after this ceremony that the young man begins to live as an adult, he is taught what he needs to know to become a full member of adult society. He lives apart from the rest of the family with the older men and is taken on many trips around the country learning about its resources, its stories and other knowledge important to daily physical and spiritual life. At this stage in his life he is known as a 'Ngarilda', a young unmarried man. After a time he may once again mix in the company of the women of the group, he can have girlfriends, (Indeed he is encouraged to), his future wife is chosen from amongst the older women but he is not allowed to marry her until after his final initiation stage.

### **Wilyaru**

At about the age of twenty a Peramangk man was ready to undergo his final initiation into full adulthood. He would be taken off to a sacred place far from the main camps of his family group and would be tattooed (Mangka Bakkendi - to make incisions in the body), across his shoulders and chest with a sharpened, sacred piece of rock crystal (Kauwemuka: large rock crystal which Aboriginal men conceal from women and young men until the latter are tattooed the last time, which ceremony is performed with small splinters of the rock crystal). Eyre described the various stages of this long and painful process, during which time the young man would live apart from his family and travel around to all the different places sacred to his people.

*“The fourth stage (Wilyaru) is entered about the age of twenty, when the back, shoulders, arms and chest, are tattooed. He is called ngulte at the time of the operation; yellambambettu, when the incisions have begun to discharge pus; tarkange, when the sores are just healed; mangkauitya, at the time the cuts begin to rise; and bartamu, when the scars are at their highest elevation. Each tribe has a distinctive mode of making their incisions.”* Edward John Eyre 1844

One place we know that Peramangk men underwent their Wilyaru ceremony was at Woodchester Falls. This location is sacred not only to the Peramangk, but to the Ngarrindjeri and the Kaurna as well. Other sacred places for Wilyaru ceremonies were at the falls at the head of Salt Creek and at Water Fall Gully. The scars received by the Peramangk men were three 'chevron' tattoos across the shoulder blades, chest and upper arm (Mangka: elevated scars on the chest or back produced by incisions or tattooing; raised scars on chest and back from initiation). These scars signified to all observers that here was a fully initiated man with all the rights and responsibilities that went with it.

Between the end of this ceremony and usually before the age of 25, the Wilyaru man would take a wife. Often she was a much older woman who would either be a widow, or the divorced wife of another man. She would often have children that the new husband (Yerlinna ), would have to care for and help raise. He did not do this alone, but having such responsibilities taught him about the care needed to raise a family (Ngadla: Step-father). A man who could not properly provide for his new family had little chance of gaining further, younger wives in the future.

## Burka

The fifth and final stage of a man's life progress came with greater maturity long after he had attained his Wilyaru status. By now he was an older man usually with two or more wives and several children (Yerlitta/Father). A 'Burka' man was often seen as the head of his family and an elder of great knowledge who could be called upon to mediate in disputes between individuals and different family and culture groups. He would arrange marriages, set and conduct initiation ceremonies of the groups' younger members, he would lead songs and dances at the Kombo-Kuri's, and negotiate travels through another groups country.

It was a sign of a 'Burka' mans power if he was able to provide for his family and this was reflected in the number of wives and children he was able to support. Often a Burka's wives would be much younger than himself, their marriages to him having been arranged at a Rainbow ceremony not long after their birth. Peramangk Burka men like Parruwonggaburka "King John", had responsibility and traditional ownership over at tract of land (pangkara). John's country extended from Mypolonga to Echunga, and he was the traditional custodian of the Dreaming Lore for this 'pangkara'. Parruwonggaburka was the father of Monarta who married John Mason. With his death the ownership of the land passed to a responsible male relative.

The traditional roles of a Burka man are discussed in Norman Tindale's article about 'Tjirbruki' which is worth quoting at length for it provides a rare insight into the ceremonial and religious practices of men of the Fleurieu Peninsula before the time of invasion and the adoption by some groups of northern initiation practices.

*"The custom of giving of the navel string emblem at birth, passing it to a family in some clan distant from a clan of one's own tribe or even, in more than a few instances, to one as far away as beyond bounds of the adjoining tribe was already in operation. It involved, when the child moved to maturity, linking with a continuing silent trading system which helped to give him protection in the receipt of materials essential to his welfare, but not obtainable in his own living area. Special rules which prevented his meeting his trading partner, or even speaking to him, afforded protection.*

*A reference to Peiera in the country near the present day town of Woodchester may become a little more significant if a brief outline is given of initiation and trade happenings there which, in the Woodchester area, seem to have continued up to the historical present. It appears that even in the time of the Tjirbruki story important messengers circulated among the kindred tribes of the Peninsula carrying news of impending events, whereupon in due course many clans or families would begin to drift, particularly along tribal boundary lines, to the announced gathering place quite often to well wooded country in the general area of Peiera, a place at the point of confluence of several tribes even in more recent times. Such calls for initiation gatherings were made at intervals of several years. As the weather began to ameliorate in spring there were closer associations and gatherings with dances, enactments of incidents of stories, and the singing of songs. Also there were confrontations for the settling of disputes and even combat and killings. The passing of articles of trade took place at such times, always indirectly, since persons linked by their ngiangiampe bond did not speak to each other.*

*These occasions were the times of arrangement of future marriages, brides being sought for youths about to be initiated. Such youths had been for some time in casual isolation losing some childhood associations with their family and learning to forage for foods on their own in association with other boys of like age. This became increasingly so as the youth began to show signs of manhood and was*



*ritually driven from the women's camping area. After being subject to such ceremonial events such as depilation and being placed in state called [na'rambi] or sacredness-, he was coated in red ochre subjected to special rules of behaviour, including avoidance of any contact with the opposite sex and ritual avoidance of water, carried to the extreme he might only imbibe it through a hollow reed be carried over any streams that stood in his way. The cicatrisation of his body was an important event...*

*It was at initiation time that some older men might lead parties of younger men and youths on tours of country which they would not see at any other time. One known excursion from Peiera took such a party across the Mount lofty Ranges west to Potartang, or Ochre Cove. With the assent of navel-string-partners they would be allowed to carry away parcels of the red ochre which was important for their decorative needs.” Norman B Tindale 1987*

### **Yammaiamma or Nurrullurrulla**

There was another, much rarer stage for some Peramangk men. At the time of invasion some Peramangk people had reputations as powerful workers of magic. The early record of European settlers such as Cawthorne, Bull and Schurmann make note of the fear that was engendered in neighbouring groups by the powers of the Peramangk 'Sorcerers' (sic). It was a rare and puissant individual who became a Yammaiamma or Nurrullurrulla (Sorcerer). The Peramangk shared much magical lore with their northern cousins the Ngadjuri, even if they did not see eye to eye on other religious matters. Barney Waria, a senior Ngadjuri Elder, speaking the Ronald Berndt in 1944 spoke at great length about the creation of a “Mindaba” (Yammaaimma/Nurrullurrulla) man and the powers and responsibilities that he wielded;

*“Traditionally, several years after a young man's wilyaru, and if he had shown considerable interest in magical matters, a Mindaba with some of his colleagues would take him out into the bush...Here the postulant was red-ochred and smeared all over with fat...The Mindaba taught him how to bring on a situation of trance and, in that context, to talk with spirits. He was also informed about various forms of magical healing and sorcery and, especially, how to control his own spirit, how to make it leave his body during a trance. Further, he would be instructed in the art of divination during an inquest that took place after a person's death, to discover who was magically responsible.” Barney Waria 1944 & Ronald M Berndt 1986*

Teichellmann writing in the late 1830's noted the power and prestige that these men held, and also the fear in which they were regarded by people of different culture groups. He wrote at length about the role they played in pre-invasion society, and his words echo down the years when they are repeated and expanded upon by Barney Waria in 1944, and later by Norman Tindale in 1985.

*“One certain link between different tribes was at the level of the senior men who possessed special ritual knowledge and coordinated the initiation of young men. A class of persons of the male sex, who are their doctors and sorcerers is much dreaded by every native,’ they are generally called Yammaiamma or Warrawarra. They profess to be able to cure all diseases, produce sickness, blindness, & produce thunder and lightning, rain and hailstones, check the rain when long continuing, and transform themselves into any shape or substance' last year, one individual transformed himself into a she-oak, when pursued by Europeans another into water and drowned his pursuers. These persons are in possession of all mysteries and mysterious instruments, all of which they got from their ancestors, and are consequently the teachers of the younger men, who, in this respect, as soon as circumcised, or after having undergone an*

*answering rite, if of another tribe, are entirely under their control, and believe and obediently.”*  
(Teichellmann, 1841).

A Peramangk man's life was marked by many stages, from his birth unto his death, his way was mapped and his place in Peramangk society assured. As long as he understood the laws that governed behaviors and social relationships, and provided he was a successful family man, warrior, hunter and negotiator a Peramangk man was held in very high regard by all who knew him and was to be feared and respected by those who knew of him.



**“Parruwonggaborka”**



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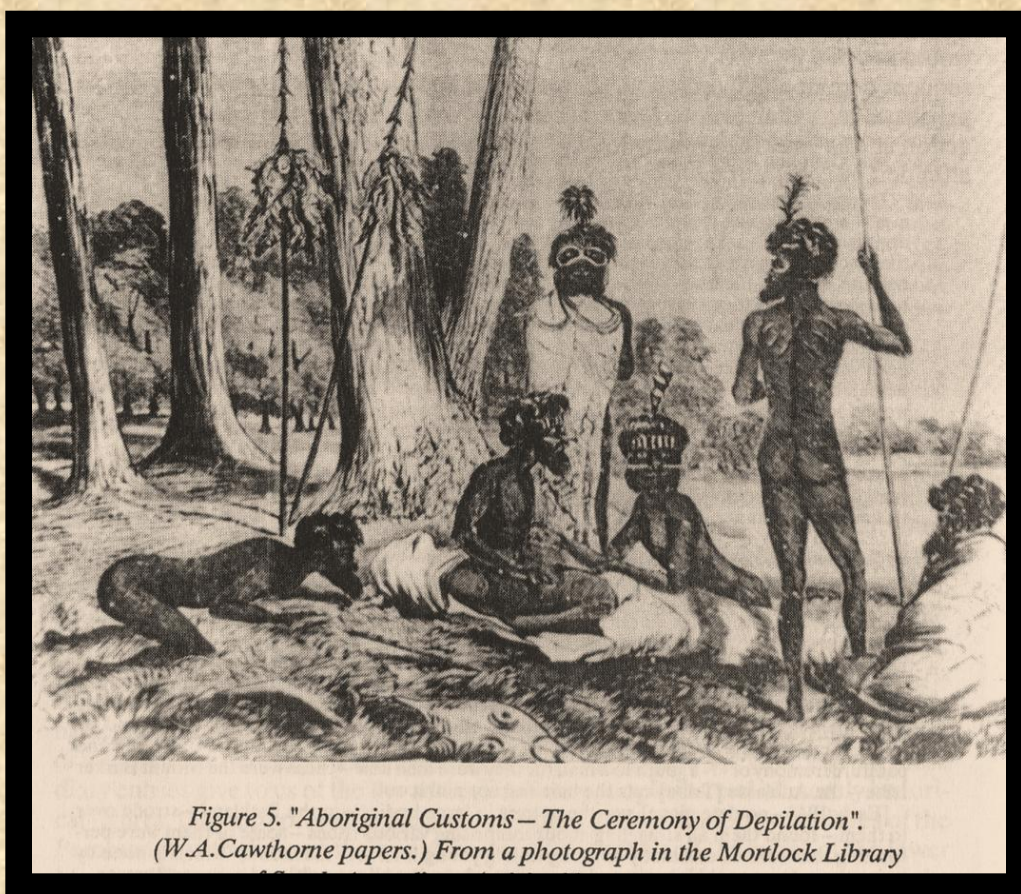
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## Stages of Life of Peramangk Women

Peramangk women like the men passed through various stages of life as they aged and joined the life of the clan. At large gatherings of several different family groups in the late spring and early summer, at about the time of the appearance of the Pleiades star group, the young women of the family began to be prepared for their coming initiation and travel to their new husbands lands.

**Takanna:** Prior to the onset of puberty the young girls lived with their family and were raised by their uncle's wives and the Elder women of the family group into which they were born. In this time they accompanied the women on their daily routines and were subject to few restrictions. In early infancy they were betrothed to much older men. These arrangements were generally adhered to, unless circumstances necessitated a change, e.g. the death of the promised man. With the onset of puberty the young girls underwent their first stage of initiation. Gathered together in a group away from the main camp, the young girls were first held down by senior male members of their family, one at the head, and one each holding down the arms and legs, they were then covered with a skin rug, whilst the Elder women of the family proceeded to pluck out all of their hair, except for their head. All the time reciting the ritual words that announced their passing into womanhood.





Similar in form to the boy's first initiation ceremonies, the young women are then covered in red ochre mixed with animal fat, then lead away to live apart from the main camp with Elder women in an unmarried women's camp out of sight of the young, unmarried men. There they learnt the secrets of their family. The Dreamings and Law that they needed to know were passed down to them, and these then were taken into the lands of her new husband. The totemic affiliations of the family also passed down the female line so that any children she bore were also of the same totem group as their mother.

The young women generally left to live with their husbands at about the age of 12, relatives nearer than cousins were not allowed to marry and the young women were generally married to much older men. They would often be the youngest of two or more wives, with some men having up to four. Once the marriage had been decided the young woman would pick up her net bag containing the tools and objects she would need to start her new life and head off to her husband's camp and thence to his families lands.

**Mangkarra (Chevron Scars):** Upon reaching their husbands family group the young women's education would continue under the guidance of the Elder women of her new family. They were then taught the more localized Dreamings and Laws of their new family as well as the skills and duties they would need to fit in with their new roles. Women rarely became mothers before the age of 16, but before then they would have to undergo their second initiation rite, that of the Mangkarra, or scarring of their shoulders. Edward John Eyre witnesses such a ceremony whilst living at Moorunde of the River Murray;

*"The method of performing the operation is as follows: the person whose back is to be tattooed is taken out early in the morning and squatted on the ground with her back towards the operator (always a male), and her head bent down between the knees of a strong old woman who is sitting on the ground for that purpose; the back is thus presented in the best position to the operator, and the girl, as long as her head is kept firmly in its position, cannot possibly arise until all is over. The man who performs the ceremony then commences by taking hold of a fold of the flesh on the girl's right side, just above the breech, with his left hand, whilst with his right he holds a piece of flint or shell, and cuts perpendicular gashes an inch long, three-sixteenths of an inch deep, and about half an inch apart, in horizontal lines from right to left quite across the back, the rows being half an inch or three-quarters distant from each other.*

*This is carried up the whole way from where he commences to the shoulders, and when freshly done, presents one of the most dreadful spectacles imaginable, the blood gushes out in torrents, and though frequently wiped away with grass by some of the women present, is scarcely removed before the crimson stream flows as profusely as ever. During the time of the ceremony the mother and other female relations lament and mourn, whilst they lacerate their bodies with shells. When the incisions are all made, grass or boughs are warmed at the fire, to wipe off the blood. The whole scene is most revolting and disgusting; the ground near where the poor creature sits is saturated with blood, and the whole back is one mass of coagulated gore... The ceremony occupied three-quarters of an hour, but it was two hours before the wounds had ceased to bleed, and even then, the dried blood was not washed off. Two kangaroo teeth, and a tuft of emu feathers were tied to the girl's hair, and she was smeared over with grease and red ochre, but was still forbidden to touch food until the morning.*

*Many weeks elapse before the wounds heal, and the inconveniences attending them are removed."*  
E.J.Eyre 1844

From this time on the young woman was allowed to partake in all the activities of the family group as here education continued.

**Tukkuparka:** Now that the young woman has undergone the Mangkarra ceremony she was known as a Tukkuparka. She held this title whilst she was still learning to be a wife and once she had given birth to her first child. Now that she was married she was welcomed into the world of adult women. It was after the birth of her first child that she had her belly scarred and again after each subsequent birth.

**Tukkupurlaitya:** A woman who had only given birth to two children was only allowed limited access to secret knowledge as a general rule. She did gain stories and ceremonies but learned only their general meaning and nature. Some of this lore was hers to own others she shared just a part of. As she moved from one group into another her Dreaming knowledge covered a much broader area, often outside of her birth country. Monarta of Echunga married John Mason Snr, whose country extended from Mount Barker, to Nairne, to Wall and Mypolonga.

E.J. Eyre described some of the more secret rituals concerned with child birth and child rearing

*"At childbirth, the placenta, which is considered as sacred, is carefully put away from the reach of the dogs as soon as thrown off from the uterus, and the female is up and following her usual avocations a very few hours after the accouchement... Infanticide is very common, and appears to be practised solely to get rid of the trouble of rearing children, and to enable the woman to follow her husband about in his wanderings, which she frequently could not do if encumbered with a child. The first three or four are often killed; no distinction appears to be made in this case between male or female children... If a woman, having young children, joins another tribe, the children go with her". E.J.Eyre 1844*

**Tukkuangki:** Now a mother of two or more children, the woman was now introduced to the full knowledge of women's business. Her views of the landscape and responsibilities were shaped by her experiences and she could now participate in the initiation of other younger women. She became known as Tukkupartapartanna – a woman of knowledge.

It was at this time that the woman would gain more scars upon her arms and chest. Eyre noted that after giving birth to several children, the older women would often be married off to much younger men (about the age of 25). They were often replaced by much younger women whom they had to then initiate into the ways of the family group as well as teach the young men their responsibilities of being husbands and fathers.

**Ngamma Ngamaitya:** A stout, older woman with large breasts, these older women would have shoulders, arms, stomachs and chests covered with Mangkamangkarrana scars, and would have full knowledge of the Dreamings and Laws they needed to pass onto the next generation of young women. They were often mothers and grandmothers to many children and the secrets of their totemic affiliations were passed down the female line guaranteeing their spread far beyond the birth country of the women. The Elder women would often begin their preparations in the spring with the appearance of the Seven Sisters constellation – Mangkamangkarrana, seven young women gathering food on the Womma (sky plain). These seven young girls were promised wives but lived separately under the guidance of the Ngamma Ngamaitya.

The weddings of the young women would usually take place in the late spring or early summer at points distant from their home lands as the various family groups gathered together in various places. These



gatherings of many different language and culture groups would comprise hundreds of people meeting in one place. The purposes of the gatherings were many, trade, settling of disputes, marriages, and the performance and exchanging of ceremonies, stories and law. The location of these “Rainbow Ceremonies” would rotate according to the time of the year, the location to be travelled to, the groups arriving and a broader cycle that determined who would host the gathering, where and when.



### Other Ceremonies & Information:

In his observations of women's lives Eyre noted many and it is worth quoting his journals at length:

*“Tribes may compel members to make restitution, as in the case of stealing a wife;*

*In their domestic relations with one another polygamy is practised in its fullest extent. An old man having usually from one to four wives, or as many as he can procure... The females and especially the young ones are kept principally among the old men, who barter away their daughters, sisters, or nieces, in exchange for wives for themselves or their sons. Wives are considered the absolute property of the husband, and can be given away, or exchanged, or lent... Female orphans belong to the nearest male relative, as also does a widow, instead of to the nearest male relative of the husband... it would appear, that of the Moorunde issues, the number of girls attending has been little more than one half that of the boys. This may, perhaps, arise in some measure from females assuming the duties of women, and being classed as such, at an age when males would still be considered as only boys. The principal reason, however, must, as before, be ascribed to a greater number of girls being left behind by the more distant*



tribes when they come to visit... Brothers often barter their sisters for wives for themselves, but it can only be done with the parents' consent, or after their death. If a wife be stolen, war is always continued until she is given up, or another female in her place... That children of either sex, always take the family name of their mother... That a man cannot marry a woman of his own family name... it seems that to each woman there would be about 1 1/3 child... each woman has, on an average, five children born (nine being the greatest number known), but that each mother only rears, upon an average, two... It would appear that the disproportion of the sex's increases in a ratio corresponding to the length of time a district has been occupied by settlers and their stock, and to the density of the European population residing in it... The girls, however, are always anxious to have this (mangkarra) ceremony performed, as a well tattooed back is considered a great addition to their other charms... The only other ceremonies undergone by the females are those of having the belly or arms tattooed, and of having the hair plucked from the pubes after the death of a child, and sometimes from other causes." Edward John Eyre, 1844

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Tindale, NB 1974, *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia*, Berkley, University of California Press.



## Rainbow (Kombo) Ceremonies

At certain times of the year Peramangk people would gather together in large clan groups and travel to the country of different language groups for the purposes of trade, ceremonies, initiations, dancing, the settling of disputes, the arrangements of marriages, catching up with friends and family and exchanging information of news and events about friends, family and happenings beyond their immediate lands. Often these gatherings would be causes to celebration between two or three different language groups, but at other times when seasons were good, gatherings of five or six different groups would occur. The gatherings were known as Rainbow Ceremonies and were an annual event. No one group would hold the event two years in a row as the vast numbers of people stopping in one area for an extended period of time would put a vast strain on local resources.

The usual time for such gatherings was late winter when the presence of abundant water supplies made travel easier. Peramangk people attended known ceremonies in the deserts of Tatiara, east of Mannum, at Lakes Victoria and Bonney, up near Wentworth on the River Murray, to the lower lakes and the Coorong, to Adelaide, to Moorundie on the River Murray and up as far as Clare. Groups Peramangk people interacted with included the Kurna, Ramindjeri, Ngarkat, Ngadjuri, Nanguruku, Ngaiawang, Ngaralta, Maraura, Ngintait, Erawirung, Ngawait, Warki, Portaulun, Jarildekald and Tanganekald.

[http://www.samuseum.sa.gov.au/page/default.asp?site=2&page=TIN\\_Tribal&level=3&code=4&item=E4](http://www.samuseum.sa.gov.au/page/default.asp?site=2&page=TIN_Tribal&level=3&code=4&item=E4)

Other times for these ceremonies varied according to the travels and needs of the various groups. Early autumn was another time that these meetings took place, but always the abundance of local resources and the availability of water dictated if, where and when Rainbow ceremonies would take place.

Tindale recorded in his interviews with Robert 'Tarby' Mason in 1952, that each group had its own version of dances they were brought for showing and sharing at the Rainbow ceremonies; that each group also shared in ownership of different parts of 'Songlines' that covered vast areas of country. The ownership of the current Rainbow ceremony passed from group to group on a rotational basis which was then passed to the next group to host the ceremony the following year, or meeting of the different language groups.

Edward John Eyre during his time as magistrate and Protector of Aborigines at Moorundie in the early 1840's recorded in detail such a meeting and celebration, and his observations are worth quoting at length;

*"when one tribe desires another to come from a distance to perform these ceremonies, young men are sent off with messages of invitation, carrying with them as their credentials, long narrow news, made of string manufactured from the rush. These nets are left with the tribe they are sent to, and brought back again when the invitation is responded to...Notice having been given on the previous evening...they assembled at an early hour after sunrise, in as clear and open a place as they could find. Here they sat down in a long row to await the coming of their friends. The men were painted, and carried their weapons, as if for war. The women and children were in detached groups, a little behind them, or on one*

side, whilst the young men, on whom the ceremonies were to be performed, sat shivering with cold and apprehension in a row to the rear of the men, perfectly naked, smeared over from head to foot with grease and red-ochre, and without weapons. The Nar-wij-jerook tribe was now seen approaching. The men were in a body, armed and painted, and the women and children accompanying them a little on one side. They occasionally halted, and entered into consultation, and then, slackening their pace, gradually advanced until within a hundred yards of the Moorunde tribe. Here the men came to a full stop, whilst several of the women singled out from the rest, and marched into the space between the two parties, having their heads coated over with lime, and raising a loud and melancholy wail, until they came to a spot about equi-distant from both, when they threw down their cloaks with violence, and the bags which they carried on their backs, and which contained all their worldly effects.

The bags were then opened, and pieces of glass and shells taken out, with which they lacerated their thighs, backs, and breasts, in a most frightful manner, whilst the blood kept pouring out of the wounds in streams; and in this plight, continuing their wild and piercing lamentations, they moved up towards the Moorunde tribe, who sat silently and immovably in the place at first occupied. One of the women then went up to a strange native, who was on a visit to the Moorunde tribe and who stood neutral in the affair of the meeting, and by violent language and frantic gesticulations endeavoured to incite him to revenge the death of some relation or friend. But he could not be induced to lift his spear against the people amongst whom he was sojourning. After some time had been spent in mourning, the women took up their bundles again, and retiring, placed themselves in the rear of their own party. An elderly man then advanced, and after a short colloquy with the seated tribe, went back, and beckoned his own people to come forward, which they did slowly and in good order, exhibiting in front three uplifted spears, to which were attached the little nets left with them by the envoys of the opposite tribe, and which were the emblems of the duty they had come to perform, after the ordinary expiations had been accomplished.

In advancing, the Nar-wij-jerooks again commenced the death wail, and one of the men, who had probably sustained the greatest loss since the tribes had last met, occasionally in alternations of anger and sorrow addressed his own people. When near the Moorunde tribe a few words were addressed to them, and they at once rose simultaneously, with a suppressed shout. The opposite party then raised their spears, and closing upon the line of the other tribe, speared about fifteen or sixteen of them in the left arm, a little below the shoulder. This is the generally understood order of revenge; for the persons who were to receive the wounds, as soon as they saw the weapons of their assailants poised, at once put out the left foot, to steady themselves, and presented the left shoulder for the blow, frequently uttering the word "Leipa" (spear), as the others appeared to hesitate.

Whilst this was going on, the influential men of each tribe were violently talking to each other, and apparently accusing one another of being accessory to the death of some of their people. Disclaimers passed on each side, and the blame was imputed to other and more distant tribes. The manes of the dead having been appeased, the honour of each party was left unsullied, and the Nar-wij-jerooks retired about a hundred yards, and sat down, ready to enter upon the ceremonies of the day..." EJ Eyre 1844

Not all meetings between language groups involved violence, often there were few reasons for violence, and if there was, then ceremonial restitution of disputes would take place and any animosities between different clans or language groups would be set aside so that the equally important reasons for the gathering could take place these being for the purposes of trade, ceremonies, initiations, dancing, the settling of disputes, the arrangements of marriages, catching up with friends and family and



exchanging information of news and events about friends, family and happenings beyond their immediate lands.

*"At these meetings all occurrences of interest are narrated, information is given as to the localities in which food is most abundant, and invitations are issued by the proprietors of these districts, to their relations and friends to accompany them thither...The position of one tribe towards another, whether on friendly terms or otherwise, is talked about, and consultations are held on the existing state of affairs, whether hostilities shall be continued or withdrawn, and future plans of operation are marked out...Whilst the men are occupied in discussing these matters, the females engage in a narration of family occurrences, such as births of children, marriages, deaths, etc..."* EJ Eyre 1844

Once the introductions had been made, and any differences between the groups had been settled, camps would be set up around a central compound or area with each group camping on the side according from the direction it had travelled from. Huts would be erected that housed between 2 to 5 families, with each family having its own fire. At night dances and ceremonies would commence 1 to 2 hours after sundown, usually by the light of a large central fire. Eyre describes these scenes at length;

*"... dances or plays are performed by the different tribes in turn, the figures and scenes of which are extensively varied...In some of the dances only are the women allowed to take a part; but they have dances of their own, in which the men do not join. At all times they are the chief musicians, vocal and instrumental. Sometimes, however, they have an old man to lead the band and pitch the tunes; and at others they are assisted by the old and young men... dances vary a great deal among the different tribes, both as to figures and music; the painting or decoration of their persons, their use of weapons, and the participation of the females in them... The females of the tribe exhibiting, generally sit down in front of the performers, either irregularly, in a line, or a semicircle, folding up their skin cloaks into a hard ball, and then beating them upon their laps with the palm of their hand, and accompanying the noise thus produced with their voices... Each person is conversant with his part; and all exhibit a degree of elasticity and gracefulness in their movements which, in some of the dances, is very striking and beautiful... The tribes who are not engaged in dancing, are seated in a large semicircle as spectators, occasionally giving a rapturous exclamation of delight, as any part of the performance is well gone through or any remarkable feat of activity exhibited...On one occasion I saw five tribes met together, and the evening was of course spent in dancing. Each tribe danced in turn, about forty being engaged at once, besides sixteen females, eight of whom were at each corner of the male performers. The men were naked, painted in various devices with red and white, and had their heads adorned with feathers. The women wore their opossum cloaks, and had bands of white down round their foreheads, with the long feathers of the cockatoo sticking up in front like horns. In the dance the men and women did not intermingle; but the two sets of women who were dancing at the corners of the line, occasionally changed places with each other, passing in this transit, at the back of the men. All sung, and the men beat time upon their smaller weapons whilst dancing..."* EJ Eyre 1844

Women performers often celebrated their own dances, and whilst many early colonists neglected to record these dances, Eyre was more discriminating in his observations;

*"In another dance, in which women are the chief performers, their bodies are painted with white streaks, and their hair adorned with cockatoo feathers. They carry large sticks in their hands, and place themselves in a row in front, whilst the men with their spears stand in a line behind them. They then all commence their movements, but without intermingling, the males and females dancing by themselves... The women have occasionally another mode of dancing, by joining the hands together over the head,*



*closing the feet, and bringing the knees into contact. The legs are then thrown outwards from the knee, whilst the feet and hands are kept in their original position, and being drawn quickly in again a sharp sound is produced by the collision. This is either practiced alone by young girls, or by several together for their own amusement..."*

The dances of Rainbow ceremonies were many a varied, with each group bringing to the ceremony its own songs and dances to be demonstrated shared and in some cases passed onto another group. Many groups would perform their versions of dances that were popularly known across vast distances, two of these were the Palti, and the Kuri dances. Other dances performed were the Canoe dance, the Kangaroo dance, the Wild Dog dance, and the Emu dance. Often the words to songs accompanying these dances would be sung, but the meanings of the words would not always be known.



**A version of the Rainbow Palti dance as performed by Peramangk people.**

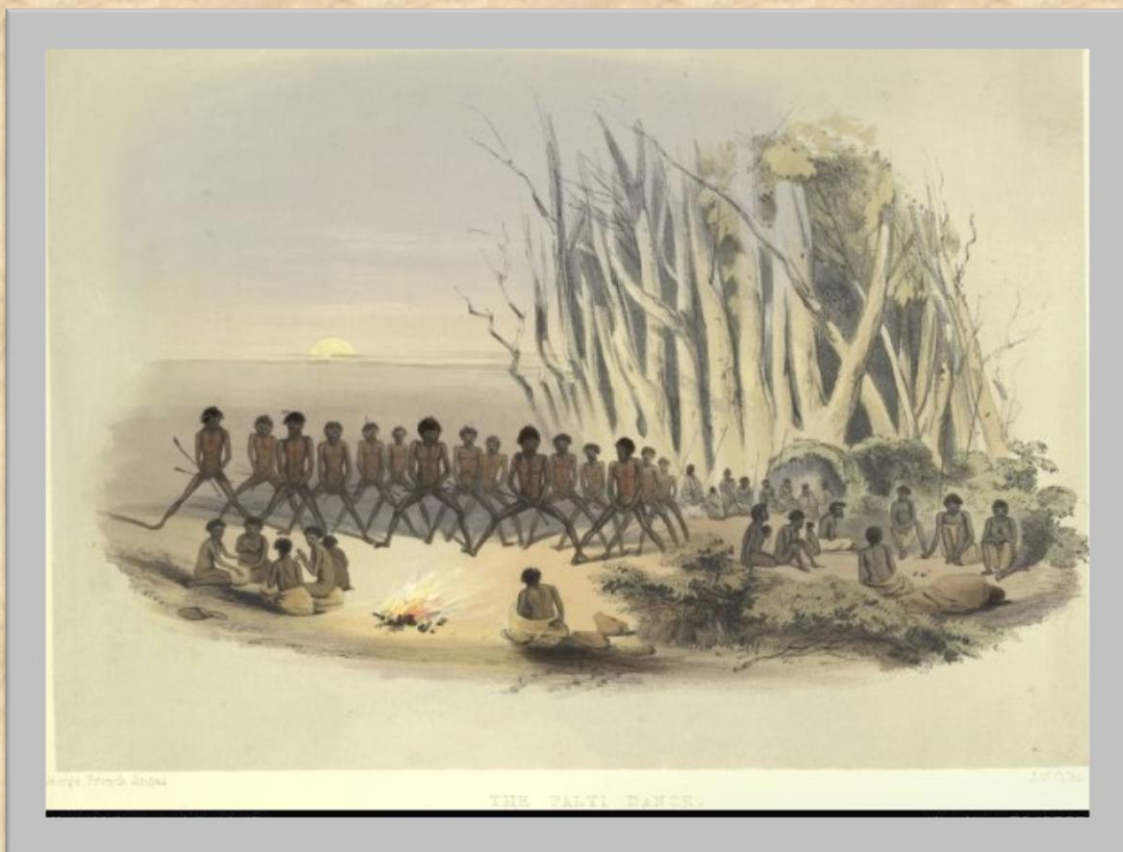
William Cawthorne recorded in his journals a vivid description of the Rainbow Palti as it was performed in the Adelaide Parklands in March of 1844;

*" About twenty five young men... were assembled. Some were ornamented with white marks and stripes on the face, chest, and back, and thighs; others had similar marks in red, and others a combination of both colours, all forming a striking contrast with their dark bodies. They carried wirris and spears, kattas and midlahs. These were the dancers. The spectators consisted of the elder portion of the tribe, who sat in a semi-circle facing a large fire, the dancers performing in front... The ceremony was commenced by the young men uttering a shout, and rushing up close to the singers; they then retreated and began*



*shuffling close together sideways and in rows. They started first a little on one side, then to the other, joining at intervals in the chorus, which consisted of a short sentence only; repeated simultaneously in a deep undertone. In this manner they danced eight or ten minutes. They then turned around, fronting the singers, their legs wide apart, and eyes glaring widely. In this position they chanted slowly..., making strange and indescribable motions with their legs, and while this was going on – the glare of the fire in the centre casting an unearthly hue over their figures and faces...The soft and somber moonlight scene, the extraordinary gesticulations of the players, accompanied with the shrill voices of the women and the hoarse notes of the men formed a tableau...*

*After maintaining this position for a few minutes the scene was changed. They now commenced to move their knees in and out with inconceivable rapidity accompanying the motion with a hissing noise. The chanting succeeded and then the hissing part again with its relative manoeuvres. This was then repeated three times, then with a simultaneous shout they all abruptly dispersed – the spectators showing their approbation of the performance by laughter and acclamations, some older men shaking hands together with delight at having the recollections of bygone days revived” W.A. Cawthorne 16/3/1844*



Painting of the 'Rainbow Palti' by George French Angas, Lyndoch Valley (Poonawatta) in the early 1840's.

Another of the dances performed at the Rainbow ceremonies was the Kuri dance. This particular dance was performed by the Peramangk people and its performance was recorded by different witnesses throughout the early days of settlement by Edward. J. Eyre, William. A. Cawthorne and George. F. Angas . Edward Eyre's description of the dance is worth noting;

*" They are painted or decorated with feathers in a similar way; but each dancer ties bunches of green boughs round the leg, above the knees, whilst the mode of dancing consists in stamping with the foot and uttering at each motion a deep ventral intonation, the boughs round the knees making a loud rustling noise in keeping with the time of the music. One person, who directs the others in the movements of this dance, holds in his hands an instrument in the form of a diamond, made of two slight sticks, from two and a half to three feet long, crossed and tied in the middle, round this a string, made of the hair of the opossum, is pressed from corner to corner, and continued successively towards the centre until there is only room left for the hand to hold the instrument. At each corner is appended a bunch of cockatoo feathers. With this the chief performer keeps a little in advance of the dancers, and whisking it up and down to the time of the music, regulates their movements."* EJ Eyre 1844

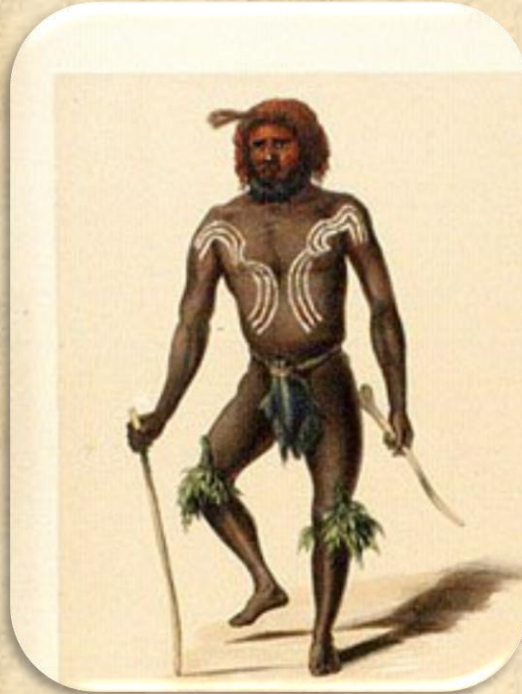
George French Angas whilst on a visit to Lyndoch Valley managed to painting a performance of the Kuri by the Poonawatta and Tarrawatta people. He then went on to paint and describe the different performer's body art that was used to decorate some of the male performers that night.





Painting by George French Angas of Kuri Dance by Peramangk people, Lyndoch Valley, 1844.

In the early morning after the Rainbow ceremony had ended Angas managed to persuade several of the performers to leave their decorations in place so he could paint them in some of the poses of the various dances. He recorded the art and decorations of both the Rainbow Palti and the Kuri dances.



*"a man from Lyndoch Valley adorned for the Kuri dance; his body is diversified with dotted lines and semi circles of pipe-clay mixed with grease, and his hair daubed with Karku, or red ochre from the Onkaparinga River. His knees are ornamented as usual with leaves of the gum tree and the stick is for the purpose of balancing his body during the steps of the dance"* GF Angas 1844



*“displays the most peculiar and universal attitude adopted in the performance of the Palti dance...While the legs are thus placed apart, the thighs are rapidly shaken from the knees upwards, and the Wirries held in the hand are struck together at intervals over the head of the performer. The body of the individual is likewise anointed with stripes of red and white clay mixed with grease; around his hair is a fillet of the front teeth of the kangaroo.” GF Angas 1844*



*“A man of the Wallaby (people of Lyndoch Valley), one of the principal men or leaders of the Kuri dance; painted and decorated like the other dancers but with the addition of the Palyertatta which he waves to*



*and fro before him, corresponding with the action of his head and legs..(in his hand) is the Palyertatta, made of two sticks bound together crosswise with opossum fur spun, and ornamented at the extremities by the feathers of wild fowl (emu mostly). Bunches of gum leaves are tied just above their knees, which, as they stamp about, make a loud swishing noise.” GF Angas 1844*



*“The remaining performer is distinguished by a long spear from the top which a bunch of (emu) feathers is suspended, whilst all down the spear the Magna is wound, compose of tresses of human hair spun together; this is called Koonteroo, and is held behind the back with both hands; occasionally however, the man alters his position and waves the Koonteroo to the right and left over the dancers” GF Angas 1844*

Robert Mason in his interviews with Norman Tindale in 1952 explained much about the body art work of the Dancers who performed in the Rainbow ceremonies, of the reasons for the ceremonies and when they took place. Robert’s grandmother was Jenny Christmas, a Peramangk woman from the Mount Torrens area, who married Jerry Mason senior, a Nganguruku man, at a rainbow ceremony hosted by the Ngarkat people of the Tatiara desert, (his great grandmother was Monarta of Echunga who married John Mason at a Rainbow ceremony at Tarndanyangga in Adelaide). He said;

*“The native name for a man’s own country in which he hunted was ‘qi:nda. A ‘qi:nda was like a ‘keinari. That word was used down river. It was like a boundary. “We talk about our ‘qi:nda”. He also pronounced the word ‘tin:da. It was a man’s bird, or friend. Each people had a ‘qi:nda or a “bird”. The “bird” of the people at Morgan was the ‘pu:ruk or kangaroo. Above Morgan was the country on the moon...Between Loxton and Wentworth was ‘tu:ku or snake. The Rainbow corobori came down the river all the way, it did not cross from Loxton. When men dance coroboris they paint white marks on their bodies to represent their “birds”. They are then called ‘lantara (slightly rolled r’s), or ghosts. The marks represent the skeleton or the bones of the ancestor. The marks are white lines across each side of the chest. Each ‘bird’ has its own marks.” Robert Mason & Norman Tindale 1952*

It has often been reported that various groups were in constant conflict or at enmity with each other, but upon closer examination of the available evidence, prior to European invasion this was just not the case. It is evident that prior to European settlement, people from the River Murray never went down to Adelaide. A statement by Kurna Elders to this effect was recorded by Cawthorne in the early 1840’s. Then more than 100 years later in 1952, Robert Mason stated to Norman Tindale that the Nganguruku people only travelled as far as the head waters of the Onkaparinga, around Lobethal, Mount Torrens and Springhead for the celebration of the Rainbow Ceremonies.

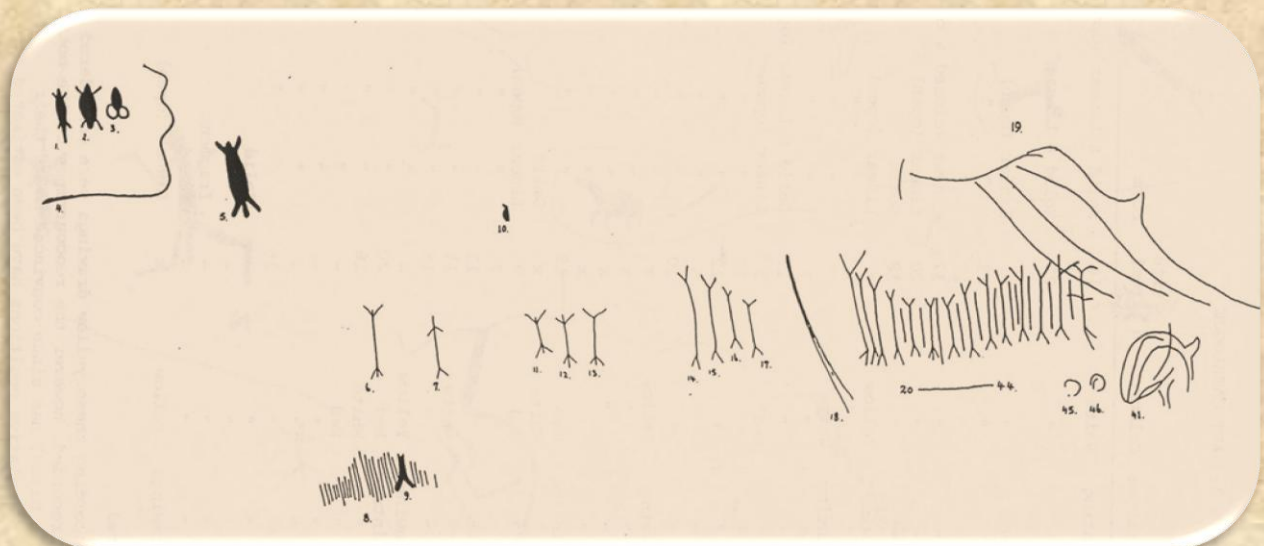
The Rainbow ceremonies clearly served an important role in managing the relationships between different language and culture groups. Their main purpose was to allow trade, ceremonies, initiations, dancing, the settling of disputes, the arrangements of marriages, catching up with friends and family and exchanging information of news and events about friends, family and happenings beyond their immediate lands. It is well established that Kurna people would travel into Peramangk lands for such ceremonies, but would not access the Murray River above the lower lakes. Maraura people travelled down river prior to European settlement in 1836, but would only travel to Peramangk territory in the Lyndoch and Eden Valleys.

There are various locations located both in and around Peramangk country where Rainbow ceremonies regularly took place; Teetaka (Mount Crawford), Laratinga (Mount Barker Springs), Tarndanyangga (Adelaide Park Lands), Windmill Hill near Hahndorf, Bungaree (Clare), Moorundie (Portee Station), Wall near Mannum, Kalitya (Gawler) and Poonawatta (Lyndoch Valley). These Rainbow ceremonies helped to regulate and normalize relationships between different language and culture groups. This did not mean that there was never conflict or ongoing feuds between different clans over unexplained deaths, wife stealing, broken laws and the like, but the gatherings did allow for peace to be restored and the equally important maintaining of intergroup relationships to take place.





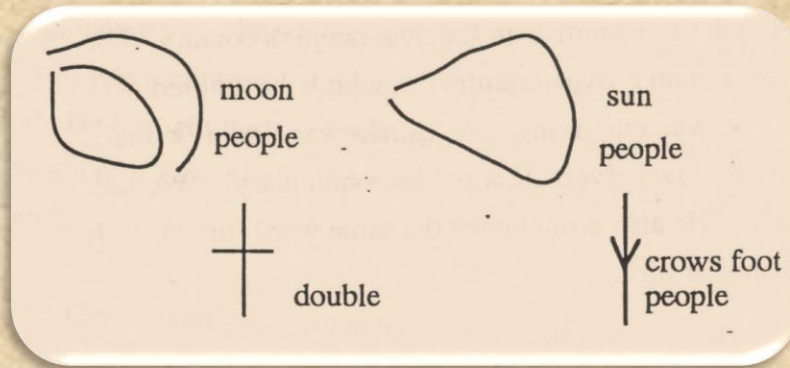
**The Kangaroo Dance as drawn by GF Angas, King George Sound.**



**Eden valley Art Site #3, this rock shelter painting is located overlooking a site frequently used for Rainbow Ceremonies near the banks of Saunders Creeks and the Marne River. P Hossfeld 1926.**

Tindale in his interview with Robert mason recorded the following details about art works adjoining ceremony sites;

*“When a man was killed his mark was placed in the cave near where he was buried so that men would remember the killing; he sketched on the ground some of the marks.*



*When men came to find the man who had been killed they would be taken to the cave and shown the mark. They would be satisfied he was killed; there would be a challenge for a fight. The marks in the cave show the number of men who have been killed. Ordinary people were buried in the ground sitting up with a mound of sand over them.” R Mason & N Tindale 1952.*

Similar marks can be seen in the bottom right hand corner of the painting that seems to show dancers equipped with wirries or spears, and singers and spectators looking on nearby. Tally marks indicate the number of visiting ‘persons of note’ who attended the recorded ceremony. It is interesting to note that in 1926 on his exploration of these art sites Paul Hossfeld, found fresh paintings, and grinding stones covered with fresh red ochre dust.

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## Dreaming Stories Connected to Peramangk Country

Throughout Peramangk country there were undoubtedly many dreaming stories and songlines. It is an unfortunate consequence of European invasion and ethnocentrism that most of this lore was lost very early on. From the number of art sites depicting serpents, turtles, emus, kangaroos, lizards, and countless human figures, it is a crying shame that only cursory interpretations of these sites can take place.





### **Tak:oni/Tandan** (Dwarf Spirits of the Mount Lofty Ranges)

*Little spirit men, 3' high with sparkling eyes, lived in the hills a few miles west of Lake Alexandrina, they would knock people about at night time when they ventured away from the campfire. They would even throw stones at them.*

A similar story exists in Ngadjuri country to the north; generally Barney Waria noted these spirits were within Ngadjuri country before the arrival of the Dreaming Ancestors.

*"The Wundawinyu were fond of teasing people by throwing pebbles at them as they sat quietly in the sun or rested by their fires at night; they lived in the creeks and in the clumps of ti-tree...Mungiura were to be found in the hilly country: occasionally they would peer over the top of a windbreak, and if their faces were seen, that would indicate an impending storm. Small creatures called Muripapa danced around in circles on misty mornings; and after a couple of days round grassy patches could be seen, made by their dancing feet."* Barney Waria (Ngadjuri Man) to R.M. Berndt 1943

### **Yurebulla- Two Mates**

*Two "Warrawarra" men travelled down from their own country, one was Dieri, the other Yanndruwanda. They travelled south in search of the spirit world which was said to be in the sky. They eventually reached Port Germein. Then they went on. It was very a very windy day and they heard a noise which frightened them. They discovered it was the limbs of a tree striking together. Continuing on they they came to Windamurthu – (a white flowers named 'Old Mans Beard') Creeper growing over a black stump. When they saw this they thought it was an old man standing there. Going on they came to a place where they heard the sound of someone beating on the ground. Creeping up, they saw an old man digging for wild onions. They went on through scrub country eventually coming onto a flat plain. It was very hot and they were annoyed by mitji-mitji (mosquitoes/midges). At last they came to the hills and climbed up to Mount Lofty. There they met 'Spirit People', (Yamaiaamma of the Peramangk) who talked with them, then told them to go back home. The two mates left the Mount Lofty Ranges.*

Barney Waria to R.M. Berndt 1987

Robert Mason told Norman Tindale in 1952.

*"that the circumcision rites first appeared at Riverton, that these rites were not known in the Hills or at Mt Torrens. He said that circumcised/sub-incised men called 'whistlers' (on account of having a front tooth knocked out) came down from the north-west. At first they were greeted warmly. The without apparent provocation one night they attacked an elder with a stone axe whilst he was asleep. Robert Mason's ancestors fought back and killed the men, placing their bodies in trees. The men had come from the Flinders Ranges. It was also mentioned that Robert mason's great-grandfather was a runaway from these people who had fled before he was fully initiated with the sub-incision ceremony."* Robert Mason 1952 to Norman Tindale



### **The Mingka Bird (Frogmouth) Two versions**

A bird that used to live atop Mount Barker (Karnumanto –Abdomen Mountain) and who at night would fly down to visit people crying like a baby. The birds cry foretold the coming of visitors and of an approaching death. In another tradition the Mingka Bird would cause people to get lost in the bush, where they would eventually die unless they kept their minds on what they were doing.

*“Uncle Milton told them stories of the Minka Bird that cried like a baby and no one wanted to hear because it brought a message of death. After someone had died he would point to the sagging roof of the house they had lived in and say to the children ‘Look. That’s where the Minka Bird perched, and the children would go some roundabout way to avoid this benighted place’ ...Ruby Hammond ‘The Dreaming of Ruby Hammond, by Margaret Forte 1995*

*“When you go out into the, the Mingka. This is when you’re growing up, it teaches you to be very alert, when you do go out into the bush you got to set your mind on what you’re doing and not on anything else, especially in the bush when you, you know my uncle, he got lost, because that bird he could almost mimic any sound that a human being makes, or dog, or a baby crying.. You know, these sounds, he’d make it, that bird would make it. And it could distract you from what you’re doing, and you’d think to yourself really what’s that noise, you’d head in that direction. Finally, you’d get tangled up with this bird that might, it’d have you, clean out of your, your, disorientated, you know. And you wouldn’t know, which way, which way to head. Where did I come in? And if it’s, if it’s night time well your finished. Even if it’s daytime and you’re in strange country, you don’t know where you are. Unless you’re a pretty good reader of, none of those fellas carried a, what do they call them, a compass. But you know there sort of things that these, these old, signs, and the birds. The old people they took particular notice to them because they was natural, and the old people are so attuned to nature, that they fashioned their life around nature. You know, they had no, no a technological things to find out all these, you know, takes a lot of takes a lot of technology to find out all about. But those, those old people they, they knew about these things you know...*

*If you see the Mingka, the old people used to tell us , Oh you don’t see them all you do is hear them’. But you know, we could, I could be sitting down here looking up now and see, oh that’s an owl, you know, or that’s, that’s some other sort of bird. But he could be the Mingka, see. He could be that bird out in the whats-a- name. But I’ve never heard an owl sort of [laugh] mimic any, there’s...”*

Colin Cook talking to Steve Hemming, Devon Downs, 1992, from “Crossing the River”.

### **Kadliumbo (Wild Dog Rainbow)**

Set in the Valley of Kaiserstuhl, through which flows Jacobs Creek, or Kadliumbo...The Wild Dog Dreaming.

### **Nganno the Giant (Three Versions )**

**Nganno and his son Gurltatakko.**

*Gurltatakko was murdered and Nganno after holding an inquest journeyed far and wide to find the murderer or murderers. On his journey he named the places of his country. When Nganno had found the murderers and killed them, he went back home, but his people on seeing him panicked for he was much*

*changed. They ran into the sea in fear where they were transformed into sea creatures. The he told them not to enter the water, one answered "I am a shark", and another "I am a whale and so on. In the end Nganno himself turned into a monster and entered the sea.*

The first version of Nganno was recorded by Tiechermann and Schurmann back in the late 1830's. The language of these stories was different to 'modern' Kurna. It was the language of Monana Meyu, the ancient ancestors. The songs of Nganno were sung in this language.

### **Nganno the Creator**

*In another story about Nganno; Nganno moved around the earth that was flat without rivers and streams. As he moved around he made the rivers and filled them with yabbies and fish to eat.*

### **Nganno the Giant**

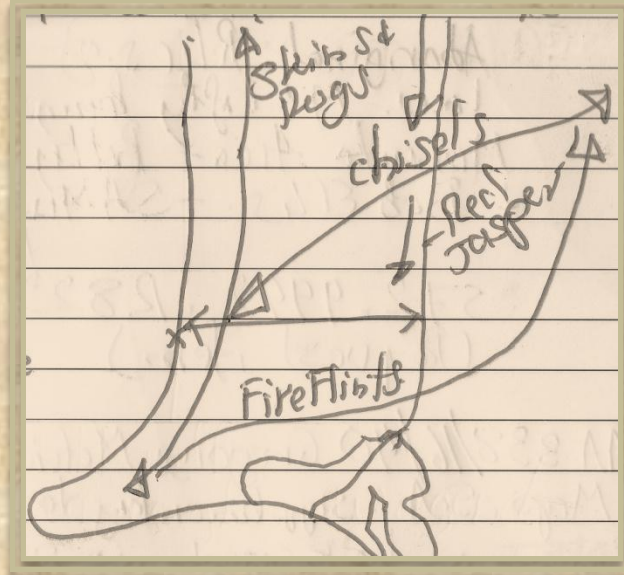
*In a third story about Nganno, told by Ivaritji, she said that Nganno was a giant who was killed by the Kurna people, and when he fell down his body became the Mount Lofty Ranges, with his two ears being Mt Lofty & Mt Bonython and his neck becoming German pass near Nuriootpa.*

### **Combined**

*"Gurltatacco Nganno's son was murdered and Nganno after holding an inquest journeyed far and wide to find the murderer or murderers. On his journey he named the places of his country. Nganno moved around the earth that was flat without rivers and streams. As he moved around he made the rivers and filled them with yabbies and fish to eat. When Nganno had found the murderers and killed them, he went back home, but his people on seeing him panicked for he was much changed. They ran into the sea in fear where they were transformed into sea creatures. The he told them not to enter the water, one answered "I am a shark", and another "I am a whale and so on. Coming out of the east, Nganno himself was killed by his own people who did not recognize him. When he fell down his body became the hills. Mt Lofty his two ears, Nuriootpa, his neck, and so on."*

The story of Nganno (Yurabilla/Yureidla) appears to hold several levels of symbolism and meaning. On its most basic level it is a story of creation; the southern Mount Lofty Ranges are formed from his fallen body. On another level it is a geographical 'mind-map' with certain locations equating to certain body parts and indicating other functions. On a deeper level it provides a religious and spiritual connection to the southern hills by the Kurna and Peramangk peoples who possessed intimate knowledge of the hills region. On a cultural level the story of Nganno is political as it demarcates a clear boundary between the Riverine and Desert cultures. The story indicates that the Peramangk were both border watchers, go-betweens and peace keepers who relied heavily on their reputation for sorcery and hidden powers to keep the differing groups apart.





***The positioning of the Peramangk homelands meant that trade goods and routes criss-crossed their lands in many places.***

Elements of the story can be found in the more complete and modern song-line of Tjirbruki (see Tindale 1974). The fundamentalist natures of both the Kurna and Murray River culture groups who were constantly at odds over religious practices and the like opened up a clear opportunity for the pragmatic Peramangk people to exploit to the benefit. The Peramangk managed to maintain cordial ties with the peoples on both sides of the Mount Lofty Ranges. They were the keepers of the older pre-circumcision culture whilst at the same time adopting limited answering initiation rites for the purposes of group interactions and trade.

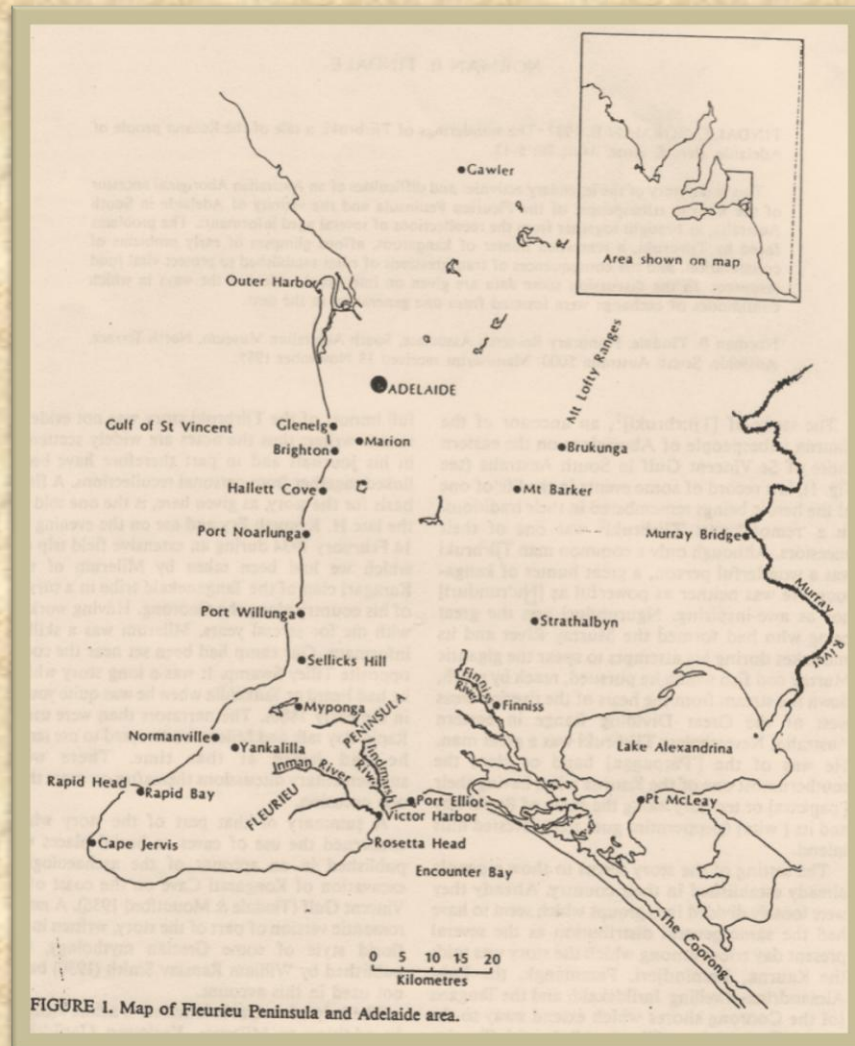
The slaying of Nganno represents a symbolic resistance and the setting of the limits of Western Desert, and Murrayan cultures, a divide that the Peramangk were able to sit astride with consummate ease.

### **Tjirbruke the Water and Fire Man**

('The Wanderings of Tjirbruki: A tale of the Kurna people of Adelaide', article by Norman B Tindale 1974)

This article appears in Tindale's book *Aboriginal tribes of Australia*, 1974; the story of Tjirbruki is quite lengthy and need not be repeated here. It is sufficient to note that this songline was possessed by several owners whose country formed the bulk of the Fleurieu Peninsula and the surrounds of Adelaide. The following notes written by Tindale give life to the songline crossing many groups' territories.

*"A firm basis for the story, as given here, is the one told to the late H. Kenneth Fry and me on the evening of 14 February 1934 during an extensive field trip on which we had been taken by Milerum of the Karagari clan of the Tanganekald tribe in a survey of his country along the Coorong. Having worked with me for several years, Milerum was a skilled informant. Our camp had been set near the coast opposite Tilley, Swamp. It was a long story which he had heard at Yankalilla when he was quite young in the early 1880's. The narrators then were using Rapid Bay talk and Milerum attempted to use terms he had heard at that time. There were supplementary discussions thereafter on more than one occasion.*



*The help of several informants is acknowledged. In addition to Milerum, Karlowan (Jarildekald tribe) supplied much data, and Reuben Walker spoke for the Ramindjeri and the people of Rapid Bay. Sustie Wilson, whose mother had been a Kurna, also had some Ramindjeri details, while Robert Mason of the Mannum area recalled some details of the Peramangk he had learned from his mother who was of that tribe. In 1929 Ivaritji, a Kurna woman, supplied the information about her father's and her own totem, the emu."* Tindale 1974

The attached map from Tindales article shows the area covered by the Tjirbruki songline, and the following list of places he visited gives some indication to the importance of the story to many different language and culture groups. Tindale notes that the story predates the introduction of the circumcision rites that were introduced from the north, but the story itself is not as old as the Nganno story, though there are common elements to both.

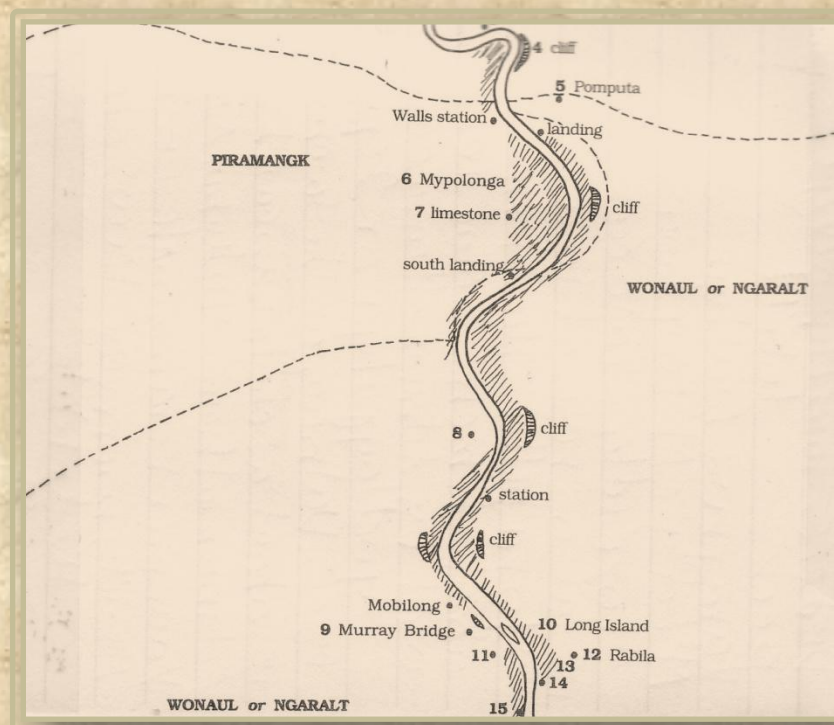
The one common factor that links all the groups together is there interdependence on each other for trade, marriage partners, ceremonies, news and religion. Tjirbruke represents a song-line that covers the boundaries of the southern Kurna, Ramindjeri and Peramangk people. The story is recorded in variations and in different sections with greater detail given by those with direct ownership or knowledge of their part of the song-line. The sections in Kurna and Ramindjeri are quite detailed



because of interviews by Norman Tindale with the traditional owners of the song-lines segments. The segments of the story that pass through Peramangk territory lack the same detail. The information may be recorded elsewhere and is either buried or ignored. Either way the story is significant to each group for several key reasons.

Firstly the story predates European contact and the introduction of certain religious beliefs and cultural practices that came from the Ngadjuri up north. It points to a life style similar to all groups, with close kinship ties, non-moiety based relationship practices, and close religious, cultural, language and trade ties. Secondly the story points to the relative with whom it was possible to travel through another group's country with the correct permissions and along established transit routes. The fact that the song line was shared amongst so many different groups shows strong cultural and religious relationships amongst the different groups.

The song-line of Tjirbruki records the eastern extent of Peramangk territorial boundaries, along the eastern side of the Mount Lofty Ranges, as far north as Gawler, and the Para River head-waters. Tjirbruki's story also conforms to linguistic boundaries in line with place names found in various sources. The only exceptions being those place names recorded by Milerum (Clarence Long) and the 2-3 access points along the river Murray at Wongulla/Swan Reach, and at Mypolonga/Wall.



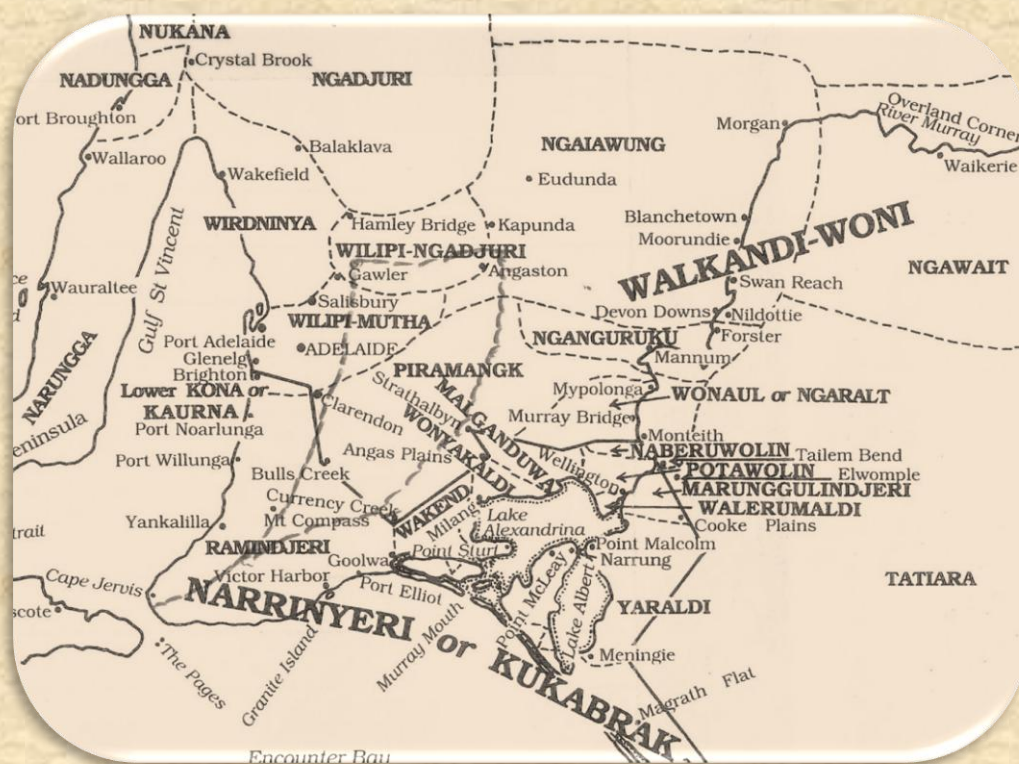
Peramangk Territory as recorded by R&C Berndt in "The World that Was" 1993

If the song-line predates European contact and aligns with topographical, linguistic, religious and artistic boundaries, then without doubt it places the territorial boundaries established by Ronald and Catherine Berndt in a much later contextual time frame. This then confirms the radical shifting of Peramangk territorial boundaries in a post invasion time period, as shown in the map above. The Berndt's in their ground breaking book "The World That Was" 1993 mapped out the Peramangk territorial boundaries as

they stood at the beginning of the twentieth century. They noted the expansion of Ramindjeri into southern Kurna lands, the relocation of Peramangk people to places along the river Murray and the assumption of Peramangk territory by Nganguruku/Ngaiawang people in the north.

As the Tjirbruki song-line predates the adoption of circumcision religious practices in any of the groups associated with the story, it would appear that this was a relatively recent innovation. This is especially so as it was only adopted by the Peramangk as an answering right during the time of European invasion as more and more Peramangk people settled in the Adelaide region. It was adopted not at all by the Ramindjeri or lower Murray people who kept up the older 'Red-Man' traditions of their ancestors. Further to this there was a reticence, or even downright hostility towards the sub-incising peoples further north, the Nukunu and northern Ngadjuri by all the groups linked to the song-line of Tjirbruki. These groups included the southern Kurna, Peramangk, Ramindjeri and Wilipi-Ngadjuri of the Barossa Ranges. The Kurna and Wilip-Ngadjuri talked about the Nukunu as murdering monsters, Robert Mason talked to Tindale about the rejection of the sub-incising beliefs by the Peramangk, and the Nukunu and northern Ngadjuri enshrined this rejection in the story of Yurebulla-the Two Mates, mentioned earlier. All of this evidence points to the relatively recent introduction of the circumcision rights and active resistance to the more fundamentalist religious movement of groups further north.

Thus the Tjirbruki song-line establishes clear links between different langaufe and culture groups, along with very precise geographical, ethno-linguistic and artistic boundaries. Brukunga, the sight of Tjirbruki's monument, the place of 'Hidden Fire', holds importance for many groups in the region, not just the Kurna people of the Adelaide plains.



Culture Group Boundaries as recorded by R&C Berndt, circa early 20<sup>th</sup> century.  
"The World That Was, 1993"



**Places visited by Tjirbruki in order of telling.**

- 1. Rapid Bay/Tankulwarun**
- 2. Carrikalinga/Karika:lingga**
- 3. Brighton/Wituwatangk**
- 4. Kingston Park/Tulukudangk**
- 5. Hallett Cove/Ka'reildung**
- 6. Port Noarlunga/Tainba'rang**
- 7. Port Willunga/Ru:warung**
- 8. Witawali**
- 9. Myponga Valley/Mait:pangga**
- 10. Muta'paringga**
- 11. Hindmarsh Valley/Jaladula**
- 12. Jerlto'worti**
- 13. Victor Harbor/Lat:arng**
- 14. Rapid Bay/Tankulwarun**
- 15. Rosetta Head/Longkowar**
- 16. Inman River/Mu:lapari**
- 17. Moon Hill/Towarangk**
- 18. Normanville Coast/Maikabanagk**
- 19. Lands End/Nutarangg**
- 20. Witawirra**
- 21. Port Elliot/Rawarangal**
- 22. Inman River/Mu:lapari**
- 23. Eastern side of Mt Lofty Ranges**
- 24. Strathalbyn/Wiljaua:r**

25. Woodchester Falls/Peirera
26. Mount Barker/Motongengal
26. Brukunga/Barukungga
27. Travelled along the eastern scarp of the ranges
28. Mt Crawford/Teetaka
29. Lyndoch Valley/Poonawatta
30. Gawler River Valley/Muliakipari
31. Gawler/Kalitya
32. Keeping to the coast he travelled south
33. Marion on Dturt Creek/Witawatangk
34. Sturt Creek/Warripari
35. Kingston Park/Tulukudangk
36. Hallett Cove/Kareildung
37. Port Noarlunga/Tainbarang
38. Ochre Cove/Potarta:ng
39. Port Willunga/Ruwarang
40. Witawali
41. Maitpanga
42. Warabari
43. Carrikalinga/Karika:lingga
44. Congaratinga/Kongarati:ngga
45. Cape Jervis/Parewarangk
46. Mount Hayfield/Wateira ngengal
47. west of Mount Robinson/Tjutju'gawi
48. Rosetta Head/Longkowar



#### 49. Brukunga/Barukangga

Red = Kaurna locations

Blue = Ngarridjeri locations

Green = Peramangk locations

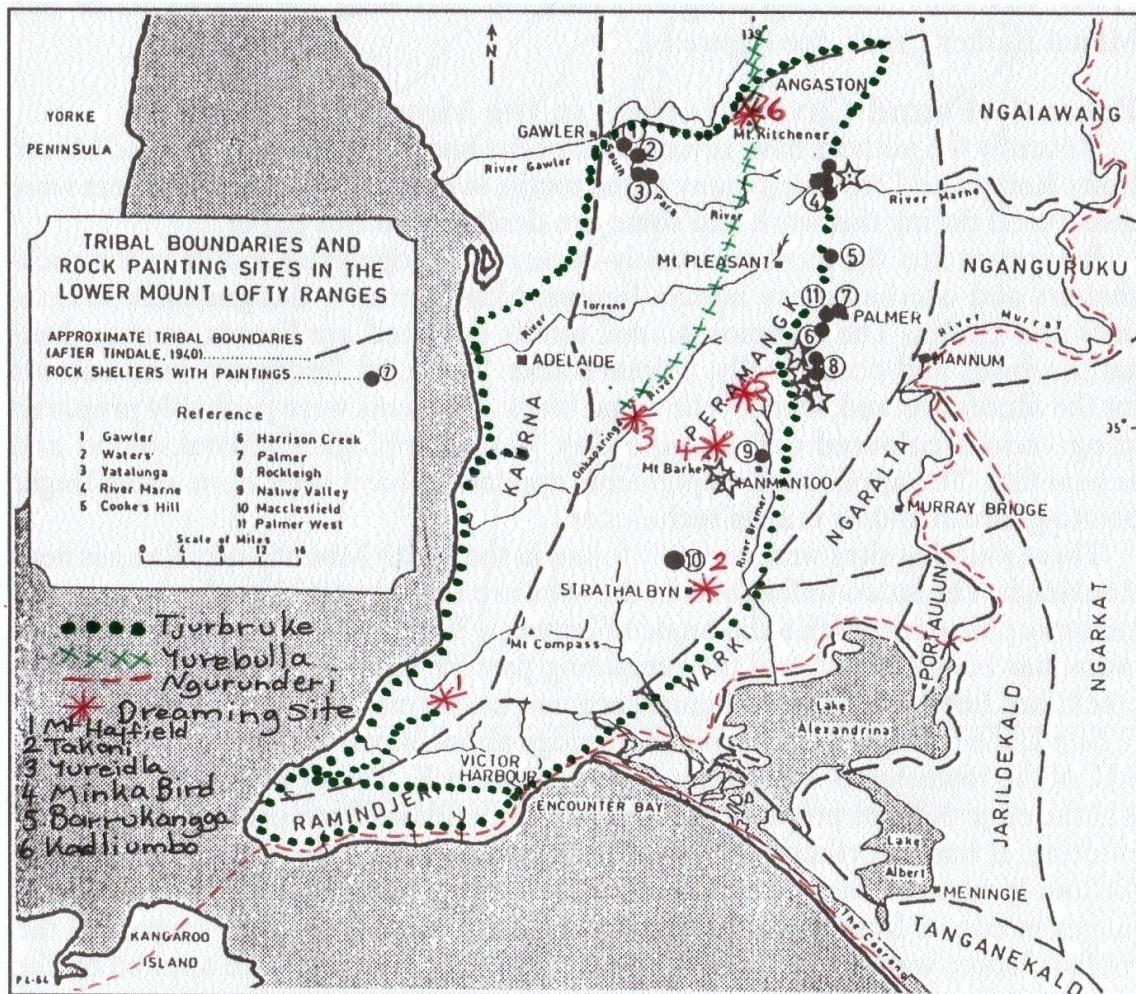


Figure 14. ● Rock-painting sites (after Preiss, 1964).

☆ Recently-found rock art sites.

The various Dreaming Trails and sites associated with Peramangk territory.  
Map taken from "Aboriginal History and recently Discovered Art in the Mount Lofty Ranges", Robin Coles & Neale Draper, Torrens Valley Historical Journal, October 1988, No 33.



## Peramangk Attitudes to Death and their Mortuary Practices

Peramangk peoples attitudes mortuary practices and their disposal of their dead varied very much according to their age, gender and the manner in which they died. A man killed in battle was buried with much ceremony, usually within a day or two, whilst a man who dies under mysterious circumstances, would have his death investigated at length by the Warrawarra's of his family group. The burial practices of the Kurna, Ngadjuri and the Peramangk people resembled each other in many ways. How a person was laid to rest demonstrated both the deceased social status and the regard in which they were held.

Young babies and children who died early were either burned or buried quickly, older children were either cremated quickly, or sometimes wrapped in bark and placed on a bier, at other times a grieving mother might carry the deceased child around upon their backs for several weeks before the burial. Old people were often buried with little fuss or ceremony, or if a person of status they may have been placed in a tree until the body was completely free of flesh, then buried.

William Cawthorne (1842), and Jane Saunders described burial practices of Peramangk notables, one man being interred in the Adelaide area after a fight, and the other Parruwonggaburka (Pongaranggaburka), at Echunga in 1845;

*"Saturday, December 24 1842 – the dead man was wrapped up in some rags they had put upon a bier of sticks and carried by four men to the bed of the river (Torrens) followed by the whole tribe – they after put the corpse down and a man began to dig a grave (running east west) while all the married women sat in rows round the body – crying and repeating melancholy song – some clasped the corpse, some pulled their hair out and cut themselves with pieces of glass all over their thighs, back and breasts...the men sat in groups, some laughing, some lamenting, some in obstinate, yet ferocious silence – others brandishing their spears...After it was dug (which took about an hour – only the cutta to dig with) and gum leavers got ready, two or three chaps step forward and with a sorrowful and melancholy face...then the men took their spears and waddies and stepped round the grave, their shouts and howlings and shrieks and tears mingled together rose loud and long, a sorrowful and heart rending sight – then the men stabbed one then beat another – and blood ran freely ...the corpse was put in while the women clung to it with the most heart rending cries – a quantity of leaves was placed in the grave and then filled with earth. ..after the grave was finished--- they dropped off one by one – and thus the burial ended."* W A Cawthorne 1842

Paul Hossfeld whilst recording the memories of early inhabitants around Mount Crawford recorded this small detail about the death of a young Peramangk woman;

*"This was a native girl who died at the Mount Crawford camp. She was wrapped up and placed on two long poles, across which other sticks had been placed. She was carried to the burial ground east of Eden Valley. The natives howled for one night, then set off early in the morning to the burial ground, howling the whole way."* Paul Hossfeld (1926)



Peramangk people as a whole recognised the direct impact this girl's death, like so many others before her, meant another irreplaceable loss to an already much diminished people. The ceremonial gathering of a great many people to mourn the girl's death was an expression of the depth of feeling the local people had for her. Relatives from distant kin gathered to mourn her death in an organised and highly ritualistic way. This form of mourning is still carried out today by Indigenous families across Australia, particularly in places where the old traditions have not faded or been lost due to invasion and dispossession.

Peramangk people also used platform, or sky burials for people that they loved and who had died early in their lives. Each family group had its own burial grounds and these were in use for hundreds of years. George French Angas (1847), and Paul Hossfeld (1926), recorded the use of sky burials (bodies upon biers) at divergent ends of Peramangk territory; Angas, the burial of a young man in Myponga, and Hossfeld of young woman at Teetaka, who was then taken to the burial grounds near Eden Valley. (Coles & Draper 1988)

People were buried in a seated position facing west, the corpse placed upon a bed of fresh leaves, their worldly goods placed in the grave beside them. This positioning of the body had some deep spiritual significance for both Peramangk and Kaurna people which can be hinted at if the story of Wonggayerlo is examined. This Dreaming story was recorded by Claymour Schurmann in the late 1830's and bears some significance upon the burial practices of the Kaurna and Peramangk people.



A 'sky burial' bier, drawn by GF Angas at Myponga

Tindoyerlimeyu had two good wives, and two 'long' sisters who were bad. He had the power over life and death. If a person was sick, they would spit on their hand and offer it up to him in the sky. If he was pleased then the person would get better, if not they would weaken and die. This was related to the 'charming' magic of the Warrawarra's. Every day he would travel to the west and settle in his grave – Wonggayerlo (the west – Gulf St Vincent – wongga: west; as in Wonggakka, westward), and each morning he would defy death and be born again. Thus when an eclipse occurred and covered the sun, Tindo's powers were taken away and people became mortally afraid of dieing. Tindoyerlimeyu's enemy was Kuinyo/Kuit:po, a being who would come about (at night), bringing great death and destruction. Claymor Schurmann – I'd Rather Dig Potatoes.

Peramangk people like the Kurna, Ngarrindjeri, Ngaiawang and Nganguruku all believed in a bird whose cry at night announced the coming death of a loved one. The Kurna called it Karkanya (Kestrel Hawk), the Peramangk and Ngarrindjeri named it Mingka (Tawny Frogmouth).



Peramangk peoples Mingka Bird, the Tawny Frogmouth (a member of the Nightjar family)

Tiechelmann and Schurmann recorded the Kurna views on this:

*"Karkanya s. a species of hawk. The voice of this bird in the night the Aborigines take as a prognostication that one or more of their number will soon die, particularly children, the souls of whom he is believed to take away, after which they grow ill. The name of this bird is derived from the ominous sound of its voice."* T&S 1837.

Another being of consequence for Peramangk and Kurna people was the figure of Nokunna, described as an;

*"Assassin; an imaginary being of the shape and colour of an Aboriginal person that steals upon the people in the night and kills them."* T&S 1837

This being was not imaginary, but referred to the practice of the Nukunnu Warrawarra's of sneaking into a camp and taking a person whilst they slept for the purpose of collecting kidney fat, using a small bone needle, or dagger. The wound would then be sealed, and the person would die within 3 days. This practice of the Nukunnu people was much feared, and lead to much overt hostility from the groups of the receiving end of these homicides. The Kurna, Peramangk, and the Ngarrindjeri violently rejected the religious practices of the Nukunnu, often with equally fatal results. (Refer to



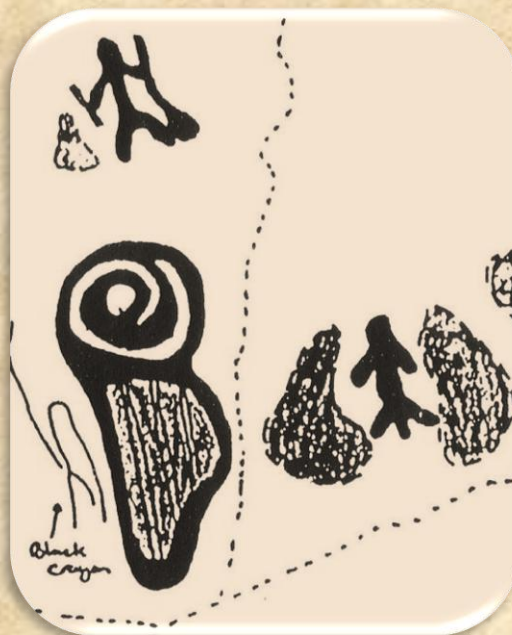
the story of Mooroo Mason and his adoptive peoples response to the approaches of sub-incising Warrawarra's from the north-west. - Tindale 1952)

The Nukunnu people referred to Warrawarra's as "sneakers, and killers", so they themselves acknowledged the practice of their Yammaiamma Sorcerers. Peramangk Warrawarra's too held a fell reputation, the Kurna people referred to a being called Kuinyo. This creature was described as;

*"Death; a monstrous being said to have the shape and appearance of an Aboriginal man except that he is larger with an immense abdomen. The Aboriginal people are very afraid of him and are in dread when he approaches them believing that the Kuinyo will always appear before the death of a person. Kuinyo only approaches when the fires have gone out. The result is that when he is feared to be near, people keep their fires burning. Since Kuinyo is a night being, he is not feared during the day time."* T&S 1837

The Peramangk word for this practice was Kuit:po, and it means something sacred or forbidden. The Kurna people referred to it as;

*"Kuinyunda: adj. bringing death; lethal; dangerous; forbidden sacred; as Kuinyunda mai - food that one must not eat"* T&S 1837



**Kuit:po/Kuinyo:** the art of sneaking up upon a person and 'charming' them into death. Note here in this rock art the presence of a Yammaiamma holding a wirri and a Yarida stick whilst beside him sits his kangaroo skin bag of bone daggers and tools used for charming magic. He quietly approaches a person sleeping behind a Ku, whose fire has gone out. Beside the sleeping man is a symbolic representation of the Yarida Stick, a vital tool in the art of Charming Magic.

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The Peramangk Yammaiamma too practiced 'charming' people, something they shared with their Ngadjuri cousins. That the Peramangk sorcerers were much feared comes as no surprise. The death of an otherwise healthy young person was a serious business that required both explanation and the

settling of a debt. The deaths of children and old people were seen as a natural, if tragic part of life. Death through punishment or other obvious violence too was seen as something that could be readily explained. People who broke the laws could be punished, and transgressing family groups could be made to provide recompense in the traditionally recognized manner. An unexplained death however required an inquest, and for this to happen, an investigation by a family groups Yammaiamma was needed before a wronged person's spirit could be laid to rest. The Peramangk people too suffered from the predations of Yammaiamma from other culture or family groups, and Kuit:po was something the ordinary Peramangk man or woman feared as much as anyone. With

Inquests into a person's death were called Wadnawadna Warra and were led by Yammaiamma men who were trained in the arts of talking to the spirits of the dead;

*"by this term the natives understand the inquest held upon almost every deceased person when the cause of death is not very apparent. The body is carried about upon a bier (Tirkatti or Kuinyorwirri) on localities -where the deceased had lately been living. One person is asking "Has any person killed you where you have been sleeping? Do you know him?" If the corpse deny it, then they go farther; does it give an affirmative answer, the inquest is continued on that place. The negative answer is believed to be given, when the bier does not move round; the affirmative, when the bier is moved round, which motion the corpse itself is said to produce, influenced by Kuinyo, who is hovering over the bier. If the murderer be present, then the bier spears him, i.e. goes against him, and a fight ensues" T&S 1837*

Such inquests were meant to satisfy the dead person's spirit that his or her relatives had avenged their death, thus allowing them to find rest. A real killer may exist, but was rarely if ever caught. At other times a symbolic killer was blamed and another family group would have to punish their own members as a way of settling the differences between different groups. This sort of 'payback' occurred when different groups would meet, such as for Kombokuris, before any cordial festivities could take place. If a known murderer was from a group then a ritual battle may take place. Issues of sorcery were taken very seriously, and until the concepts of revenge had been settled in a ritualistic manner, little real interaction between meeting groups could take place. Angas described such ritualistic and highly formalised 'battles';

*"Their battles usually occur at daybreak. The two tribes meet on an open plain, naked and painted, with their spears and shields in their hands; a bunch of emu feathers fashioned at the end of a spear is sent as a challenge to the opposite party, and then raising themselves to a...pitch of excitement...and uttering horrid shouts and yells-they quiver their spears and rush onto combat. When one man is slain, the fight generally ceases, though many others meet with severe wounds inflicted by spears and wirris" Angas 1847*





In ritual battles between disputing groups, death was a rare occurrence, but severe injuries from spears and warris (which could break bone), were very common.

Once the rituals and forms of revenge had been satisfied, then cordial relationships between the disputing groups could resume.

Often though, deaths could not be so easily explained, and the Peramangk people sought to ascertain a person's cause of death within the context of their understanding. Smallpox they knew well, and realized they had no defence against its destructive effects. Tuberculosis on the other hand was a mystery to them and anyone dying of this new disease needed to have their death properly investigated according to the traditions of the Peramangk people. This is exactly what happened in the case of the death of 'King John' – Parruwonggaburka, of Echunga, who died of T.B. in 1845. John was the husband of Merrithesso, 'Mount Barker Mary', a popular and well liked man who was one of the informants interviewed by Tiechermann and Schurmann for their dictionary of the Adelaide people's language in 1837-8.

John's Watta or Yerta was Parruwongga, (and his people the Pongarrang), and ran from Myponga up through the Kuit:po Valley through Meadows to Echunga. When he died, his death was seen as a great loss by many different people both Aboriginal and European, and he was honoured according to the traditions of his people. Jane Saunders witnessed both his inquest and funeral;

*"When he died there were great lamentations and the Blacks from the neighbouring tribes came to his funeral. There was one very curious custom observed. At sunset every night for about a week the body was placed upon a sort of bier and carried round in a large circle, a number of the blacks helping, and the rest following in procession. They all joined in a sort of wailing chant in which they asked the dead man why he had died and what tribe had killed him. Going over their various names, at last when they came to the name of the one they had decided to be guilty. A native representing this tribe rushed off into the bush, and was pursued by the others with yells of rage, and chased right*

*away, to return at his leisure, whilst the body was carried back to the wurley and watched over by the women with boughs in their hands to keep off the flies...*

*...at last when the different tribes had gathered, the funeral took place. They dug a large round hole (Wonga) on the top of the scrub range not far away. The body was fixed in a sitting position with his blankets placed around him and his weapons by his side, and thus they carried him to his last resting place and arranged him comfortably with green boughs over him to keep him off the earth, but his head was still below the surface (Wongandi). They built a wurley over him and lighted a fire in front and after wailing over his departure, they left him in silence and solitude. For a long time afterwards every full moon some of his tribe used to come and renew the fire and chant their lament.” Jane Saunders 1909*

John’s death hit his family hard, not long after his death, his wife Merrithesso also passed away from the same affliction, but if an inquest was held into her death it is not recorded.

The detailed description of John’s inquest and funeral highlights several aspects of Peramangk mortuary rites and traditions;

- The inquest was presided over by the family groups Yammaiamma men
- Prominent family members were actively involved in the inquest and funeral procession
- Southern Peramangk would dig a deep bowl shaped hole in which to place the deceased, seated facing west, upon a bed on leaves, surrounded by worldly goods. The hole would be filled in to ground level
- A small wodli would be built over the grave afterwards as a spirit home, and a vigil fire would be lit and maintained for some time afterwards to guide the spirit back to its resting place every night. (See Wongayerlo for the significance of this ritual.)
- Paruwonggaburka was a powerful and respected man. It is believed that representatives of up to five different family or culture groups (many hundreds of people) attended his funeral
- John was well respected by the early settlers. His death was noted in the Adelaide news papers of the time
- John’s death was attributed to homicide, at least on a ritual level, but in actual fact the Peramangk people knew he had died of an introduced illness, just like many of his country men and women before him
- The concept of ‘revenge or payback’ was satisfied, that a group or individual responsible for the killing was identified during the inquest via the Yammaiamma talking to the deceased
- The rituals were observed and a ceremonial form of ‘payback’ occurred, thus allowing John’s spirit to be laid to rest
- For some months after the funeral John’s family continued to honour and pay their respects to him and his spirit. John was a powerful Yammaiamma, leader and spokes person for his people and the place of his burial became “Kuit:yunda”, a place sacred or forbidden to others
- John’s name and the name of his Watta/Yerta could also no longer be used for a time

*“For a long time afterwards every full moon some of his tribe used to come and renew the fire and chant their lament, but they were fast dying out and I think they had a prejudice against the place” Jane Saunders 1909*

When a person died, people for quite some time would no longer use their name, it was because of this that birth order names such as Monarta, and Kodnarta were used instead. This practice was referred to as;



“Kadliadli: a deceased person; corpse; dead. The name was also reverted to when the namesake of the person also died. Since there is an aversion to use the name of a dead person, the name sake would adopt another name, usually the birth order name...” T&S 1837

So with the death of Parruwonggaburka, Parruwongga, the name of the Watta that bore his name could not be spoken for a time. So when a Peramangk person was asked the name of the country that John lived in, they would have been told that it was Kuit:po, something that is forbidden to mention, or talk about. This practice gave its name to the Kuitpo Valley, the place formerly known as Parruwongga, the home of Parruwonggaburka, and his family group, the Ponggarang.

Another example of a Peramangk burial was recorded and the details reflect those from above, but also indicate that men and women were given equal treatment when it came to matters of discerning the manner of their death.

*“They had been carrying her about their camping places for about a fortnight. King John (Parruwonggaburka) asked me to go and see her buried. I went with two others, on arriving at the place the men who carried her went to a certain spot and after some ceremony they took her for about three yards and walked backward and forwards 3 times, then laid the body down. Then they sat down in groups, made their fires, ate and then smoked their pipes. After a while the women got up and went near the body and began to lament, and falling on the body uttering the most piercing cries, on getting up we saw the tears streaming down their persons. They then spread out and collected bundles of dry grass, the men a quantity of bark and one began to dig the grave with a spade I had lent them. They made a small hole at first and when they got down about a foot they undermine it, and when I looked in it appeared like a large round pot...I went to see the grave the next day, they had left a small fire at one end and bark piled up like a roof over the grave, and all was neatly done, and for nearly a fortnight after one of them would come every evening to make the fire”*  
John W Adams, whilst living near Bull Creek, 1843, as it appeared in the T.Valley Historical Journal October 1988

Thus it can be seen that death was a deeply spiritual and involved process for the Peramangk people, as it still is for all Aboriginal people. The deeper meaning behind much of the ceremonial aspects of Peramangk mortuary practices has been lost, and unfortunately for everyone, that which has been recorded is just a shadow of what was.

## Peramangk Tools & Implements: Their Uses & Trade

### **B.**

**Babandi** – to dry a skin by stretching it on the ground

**Bakkamandi** – to peel a skin off of an animal

**Bakkandi** – to dig out roots

**Bakkebakketti** – knife

**Burtati** – roasted or steamed

### **G.**

**Gadlibarti** – native bee

**Gadlotti** – girdle worn around waist made from either human hair or possum fur

### **I.**

**Idarti** – dry grass, fresh gum leaves and a skin to lie upon, mattress

**Ipila** – sound made by beating kattas or wirris together

### **K.**

**Kadli** – dog

**Kadngi** – termite

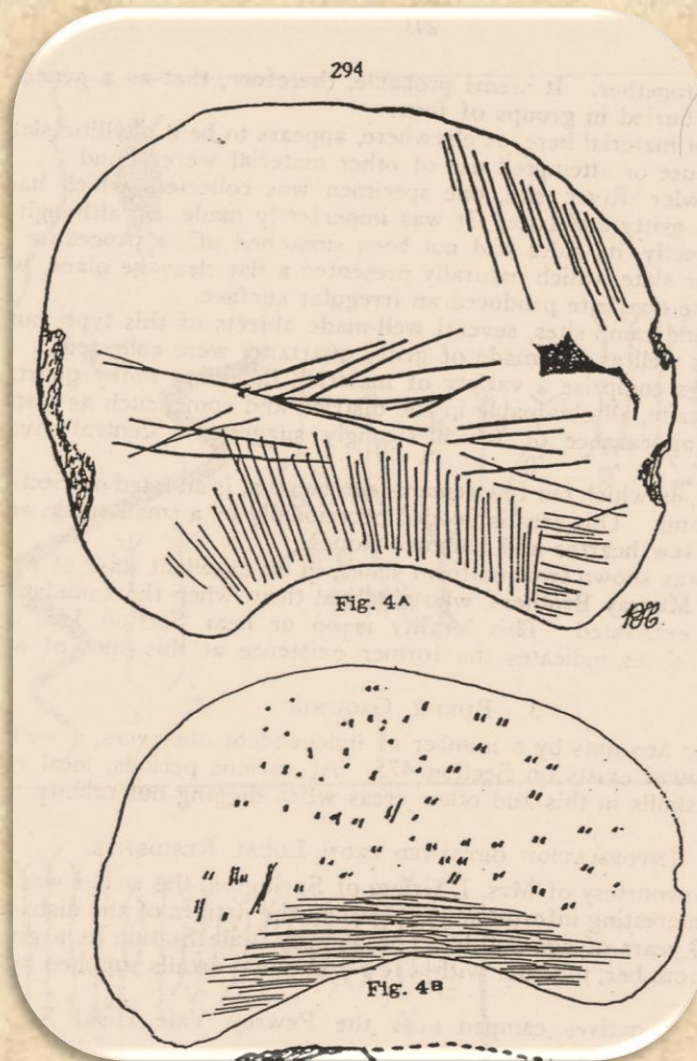
**Kadno** – goanna

**Kalta** – goanna

**Kambandi** – roast or boil

**Kandappi** – preparation of a kangaroo or other skin for a bag or cloak, which is done by scraping and smoothing the inside with a katta or reniform, slate scraper. The hide is stretched over a rounded log or large branch, then the fat and residual muscle is scraped off with sand then being rubbed over the inside of the skin to remove any fine traces of fat and muscle. The hide is then stretched over a fresh sheet of red or blue gum bark, smooth side down. This allows the tannins in the bark to cure the skin whilst it dries. Powdered wattle bark may be rubbed into the hide to hurry the tanning process along.





**Reniform slate scrapers used to prepare possum skins etc**

**Kandappendi** – to prepare a skin by scraping it

**Kanyandi** – to stew or steam in an earth oven, all large game such as kangaroos, dingos, emus, emu eggs and various vegetables are prepared for eating in this way. A hole is dug in the ground, a fire is made in it and then stones are heated in the fire at the bottom of the pit, during this time as the stones are heated, the food is prepared, when ready the stones are removed and larger pieces of remaining wood, if they are cooking a kangaroo, firstly they fill the carcass with hot stones and gum leaves, then the kangaroo is placed into the hole and covered in leaves, bark and earth; it is left for an hour or more, until steam escapes from the carcass, when this happens the food is ready to eat.



Kanyandi

**Kanyappa** – s mall piece of rock crystal for cutting

**Kanyayappa** – a hole for cooking food in

**Kappa** – marrow

**Kari** – emu

**Kariwoppa** – tuft/bunch of emu feathers. These tufts were usually of the softer down of the underside of the emu. They were collected for wearing at traditional dances and ceremonies. Only those men and women who had gone through the Marnitti Ceremony could wear the karri-woppa in their hair.



Kari-woppa

**Karko** – red ochre. This red ochre was highly prized and was imported from Ochre Cove at Moana. It was widely sort after, and seen as superior to that obtainable in the Ongkaparinga Valley. The most highly prized red ochre came from the Flinders in the far north hear Parachilna.



**Karko** – a digging scoop also known as a tuku made from sheoak. It was used in soft soils with one end cut to a slanting point. The tuku was used to dig out edible roots and tubers for roasting as well as to dig out bettongs, kangaroo rats, goanna's and other burrowing animals, grubs and insects.

**Kartando** – kangaroo skin

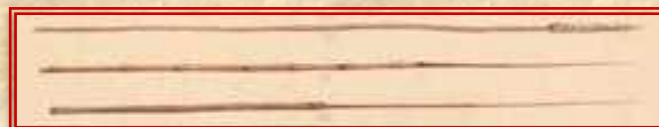
**Katta** – a heavy fighting stick or club, a woman's katta is longer and used for digging up roots, tubers and small animals from their burrows. This all purpose digging and fighting stick was mainly used to kill game animals such as emus, wombats, wallabies and kangaroos as they became caught in nets or snares.



katta

**Kauwemuka** – a large piece of quartz

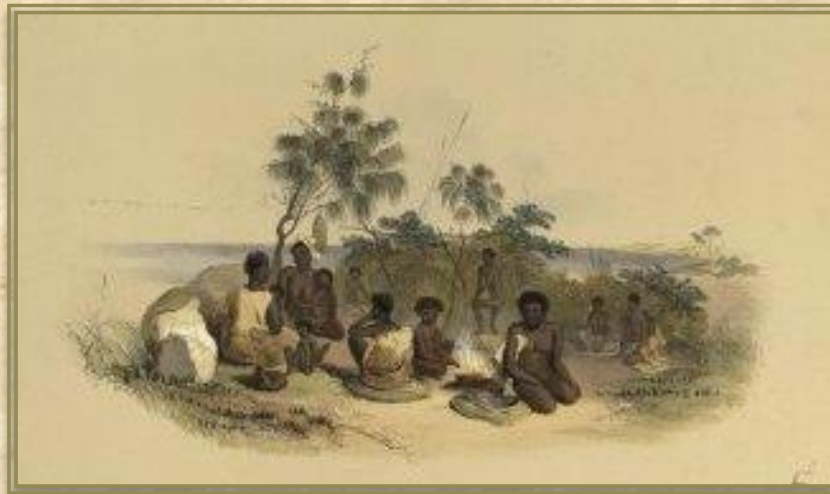
**Kaya** – spear made of light hard wood, tipped with grass tree shaft that breaks off when it hits the target and stays inside, designed to slow the animal down whilst keeping the wound open, making the animal easier to track if the spear did not kill it out right. Also these spears could kill at long range, with a lethal range of 100' or more.



Kaya

**Kokallokolla** – digger/scrapper

**Ku** – a windbreak made from piled up leafy tree branches as a temporary camp around a central fire. These types of shelters were mainly used during hot weather, or when a person was on the move and did not have time to set a more permanent home.



Ku

**Kudnamurro** – human excrement mixed with ashes, human blood and corpse fat, used to enchant ponds and creeks to poison the water for a short time. This made the water undrinkable and would certainly have made a person violently ill if they tried.

**Kundanya** – water in which tarnma has been soaked

**Kunggurri** – wattle gum, used as food (chewing gum)

**Kuntye** – fringe made of string, worn around the waste of young females

**Kurru** – grass tree. The grass tree or Yakka, had a multitude of purposes. The soft heart leaves could be ground up, mixed with water and cooked all year round. The flower stalks provided shafts for the Kyah, the resin was used both as hafting glue, and as a medicine to help with chest infections and could be rubbed onto wounds to disinfect them. The flowers stalks when dried were also essential in the making of fire, especially in the winter months. These stalks were stored in waterproof shelter sites, such as hollow trees and rock shelters in case a group had to create a fire in inclement, cold or wintery weather. The location of these caches was carefully guarded.





Using grass tree flower stems to make fire by adding dry sand to create friction..& heat..powdered stringy bark is also used as tinder...

**Kutpi** – small spear for boys to play with

**L.**

**Lukomb** - skin for carrying water, made from the skins of opossums, wallabie, or young kangaroo; the fur is turned inside, and the legs, tail, and neck, are tied up; they hold from 1 quart to 3 gallons.



**Lukomb**

**M.**

**Maiwondawondarti** - plate or dish, usually made from bark or carefully rounded wood. Cooked vegetables, small game animals, bush fruits, grubs and insects, soaked Tarnma flowers were all served up on these dishes. A suitable tree was found then fresh, pliable bark was cut to shape before being carefully peeled from the tree.

**Makki** – glass/clear crystal

**Manga** – thread made from possum fur, a string worn around the head

**Mangalya** – a kind of gum

**Mangatatta** – the long piece of the cross used for spinning string



**Mangayaingki** – the transverse piece fixed to the cross used to spin string

**Mantinda** – kangaroo skin

**Midla** – an instrument for throwing a kaya



A man using a midla to throw a kaya

**Minno** – wattle gum for eating & chewing

**Monde** – beating of women upon their possum skin cloaks

**Mudlarta** – bone or reed worn through nose

**Mullabakka** – dry bark shield, large and round made from specially chosen red or blue gum bark, cut and shaped whilst green then allowed to dry. The shield was designed to stop cold a spear rather than simply deflect it. Their flexibility also softend the blows of kattas and wirris when they were used in hand to hand combat. Each shield bore the personal design of the family group. The were painted with white lime or ochre and decorated with red ochre stripes and dot work that were unique to each family groupof the Peramangk people.

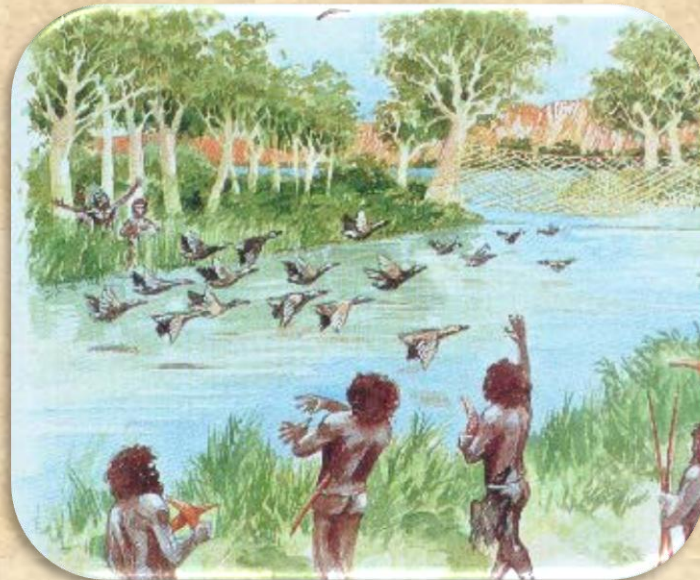




**Mullabakka in use by a Peramangk man**

**Munta and Minda**— large nets 10 to 100 feet long, (or longer), used for catching game like kangaroos, emus, birds, fish and other game. Kangaroos encouraged by open grasslands caused by generations of fire-stick farming and mosaic burning, were hunted by spear, club, net and dog. The nets for catching kangaroos and emus were 5' high and 100' long. They were held in a semi-circle and game driven into them. The string was made of grass/rush/reeds.

*“The emu and kangaroo are caught in very large nets, twenty yards long, and five feet high, which are here made of the roots of the marsh-mallow, baked and chewed, and then spun. Several natives will watch the emus as they go to drink at the lagoons, having heard the birds whistling, and set their nets in readiness; they then drive the emus towards the nets, where other natives are lying in ambush; the birds get frightened and entangled, the natives rush upon them, and when in the net seize hold of them and kill them with spears and wirris. They catch the wallaby with nets about fifteen yards long, and two feet high: parties go out and set these nets across the paths which the animals take when they come out of the bush to feed, and women are sent round to the farther end of the thicket, where they make a loud noise, and drive the wallaby into the nets. Before they go a-hunting, they make a practice of smoking their nets, imagining it will give them better sport. In the narrow channels, connecting the back-water lagoons with the Murray, nets for ducks are hung suspended across from the trees: a native holding the lower rope on each bank; a third native, with a triangular piece of bark, imitates the whistling of the duck-hawk, and throws the bark into the air, when the ducks, under the impression that it is really their enemy, the hawk, fly rushing into the net. In this way great multitudes are taken. Poles with nets are also put up in the passages leading to the water, and when the bronze-wing and crested pigeons come at dusk to drink, the nets are let go as they fly past, and sand is thrown at the birds to prevent their escape, or to make them alter their course into the net.” George French Angas 1847*



**Munta nets being used to catch ducks**

**Narnu** – native pine, used for making wirris and kattas because of its hardness and durability

**Narnuyakko** – gum of the native pine used for hafting .

**Nilti** – a species of rush used for basket making and for the twine use to make nets

**Ngallawirri** – a long, heavy club in the form of a sword used for fighting

**Ngarru** – white chalk or ochre

**Nguyakurla** – a string worn round the upper arm by ngulta's

**P.**



**Paityowattai** – a thin pointed bone, to the broad end of which is attached a piece of quartz, used by sorcerers to extract kidney fat during the process of ‘charming’ a person at night,



**Paityowattai**

**Palya** – a shrub from which a small rod is made of a twig, attached to which is a small hook of quartz and is designed to draw grubs out of their holes in trees and termite mounds .



**Palya**

**Palyertatta** – A dancing prop used as part of the ‘Kuri’ dances performed at the Kombokuri’s. Made of crossed branches, woven together with possum or human hair string, attached to which are tufts of young emu feathers. (see the description of the Kuri for further details)



**Palyertatta**

**Pangkawirri** – a wirri, which is heavy, made of sheoak or native pine and used by the river people

**Panjalu** - a large loose bag made from woven rushes. It was worn behind the back or under the arm, suspended on a string around the neck.



**Panjalu**

**Parnda** – lime/stone

**Parndo** – ball made of possum skins stuffed with feathers

**Parrandi** – to kindle, light as in fire

**Parti** – witchetty grub

**Pilta** – possum (the rugs made from pussom skin were made in winter when the possums fur was thickest and warmest. The animal was peeled, the skin scraped of fat, then using sharpened quartz or shell, a diamond pattern was cut across the skin whilst it was still 'green'. The skin was then pegged out upon a sheet of red or blue gum bark to dry, when enough skins, 20-30 were collected and dried, a person would sew the skins together by poking small hole in the edge of each skin then sew them together with sinew. The cloaks double as blankets and could be slung in such a way by mothers to carry a child upon their backs under one arm, the cloak being held in place by string, a bone clasp or hook.





**Pilta Skin Cloak**

**Pinki** – a small bag made of possum skin into which mysterious implements for the sorcerers

**Pinyatta** – honey from the grass tree

**Pitpauwe** honeysuckle tree, the flowers are soaked in water and then sucked for the sugary taste, a good way to drink brackish or unpalatable water

**Pitta** – cape barren goose

**Purno** – a net bag

**T.**

**Tainga** – sinew, muscle, footstep, track

**Taingilla** – cossid moth grub found in calitris and sheoaks

*“musquittoes around our fire were a plague; and large ghost-moths fluttered into the embers, in such quantities that the natives made a capital supper on their scorched and roasted bodies.”* GF Angas 1847

**Tainkyedli** – rush bag

**Tainmunda** – native mistletoe

**Taldamari** – a large hut or lodge, made in a similar fashion to a wodli but designed to accommodate 2 to five families. Each hut could be more than 20’ long and 10’ wide, some were even larger.



**Tando** – bag made of kangaroo skin, and carried by women



Tando

**Tandotitta** – a string used for carrying the bag

**Tantannako** – a large and heavy fighting club

**Tapurro** – the skin of a possum, stuffed and used as a drum

**Tarlti** – feather/wing

**Tarnma** – honeysuckle tree the honey in the blossom is a favourite food, the flowers are sucked for the nectar, or soaked in fresh water and then sucked whilst the water is like a sweetened cordial

**Tidlikurretti** – a girdle round the waist

**Tilti** – native cherry

**Timana** – raw, not cooked

**Tiwa** - native honey to find a beehive a person would catch a bee, and then attached a small downy feather to the be with soft gum, they would then release the bee and follow it back to its hive. Native bees have no sting so getting the honey was not that difficult unless it was located high up in a tree. The a wadna would have to be used.

**Tiwu** – black cockatoo

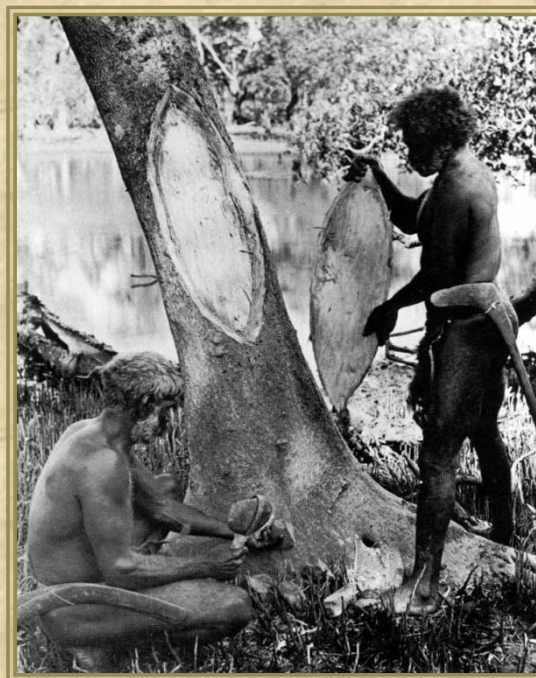
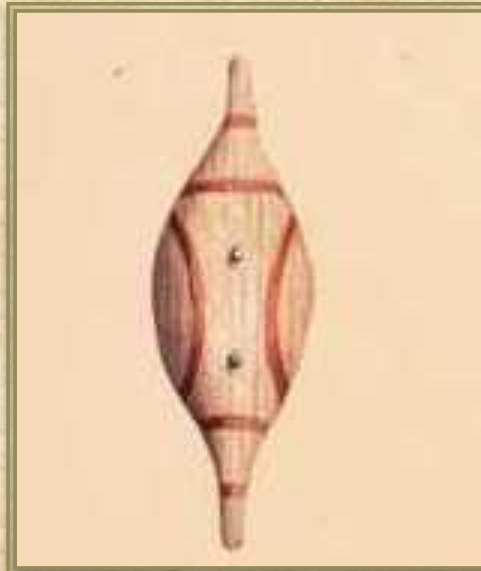
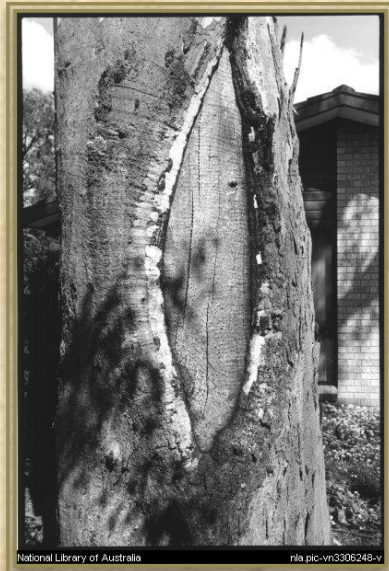
**Turnki** – cloak, cloth



**Turtiana** – coat, cloak, jacket

**W.**

**Wocalte** – a hard, wooden shield made to deflect spear and clubs



**Cutting bark with a stone axe to make a Wocalte**

**Wodlawornga** – a hut made against the burnt out hollow of a tree. These shelters were used in the worst of weather, with the openings generally facing to the north east away from the prevailing winds. The same trees were used year after year and especially heavy items were stored here, cooking fires were made in the hollow tree bases to keep the rain away from the fire. This was done at the beginning of March when the cooler weather set in.



### Wodlawornga

**Wadna** – a fire hardened stick/chisel used for climbing, one end of which was pointed and sharp for drilling holes into tree bark so that a person could climb high into a tree to collect eggs, honey, gum, native mistletoe, and to hunt possums.



Climbing a tree using a wadna to cut steps & toe holds into the bark.



**Waikurta** – string



**Waikurta** made from crushed & chewed bullrush fibres

**Wakkuinya** – barter/exchange

**Wangko** – ring tailed possum

**Warto** – wombat

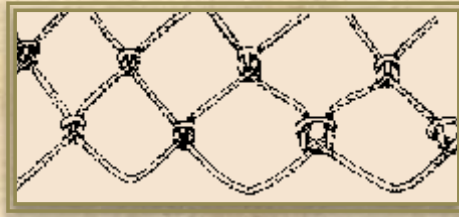
**Watpa** – skin, cloak



**watpa**

**Widni** – sinew in general or fibre which is made into string, nets, (like thread or cotton)

**Wika, or Kuyawika** – fishing net



**Knot work used to make nets of many different kinds. This particular example was used by the Ngarrindjerri of the lower lakes**

**Wikatye** – a net bag worn by men and women, a rectangle made of netted cords or tendons which had draw strings at each end to allow it to be made into a bag. It was worn around the waste or across the shoulders by women, and over the shoulder by men. This bag was used to carry food and essentials.



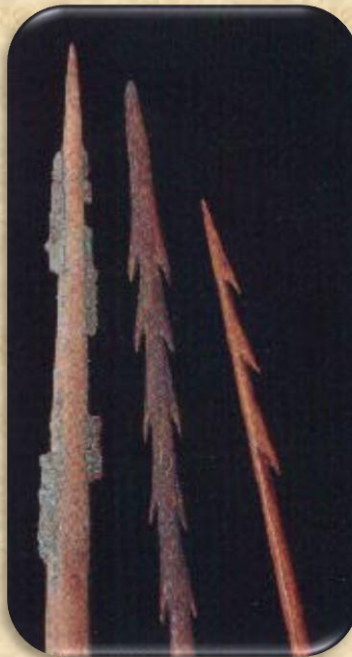
**Wikatye**

*“it is carried by the women, and contains generally all the worldly property of the family, such as shells and pieces of flint for knives—bones for needles—sinews of animals for thread—fat and red ochre for adorning the person—spare ornaments or belts—white pigment for painting for the dance—a skin for carrying water—a stone for pounding roots—the sacred implements of the husband carefully folded up and concealed—a stone hatchet—and many other similar articles.”* EJ EYRE 1844

**Willi** – the chest of a kangaroo or other animal, to divide a kangaroo by breaking its chest

**Winda** – a large spear thrown by hand





**Winda**

**Witowito** – a tuft of feathers worn as an ornament by young men on the forehead



**witowito**

**Wityo** – the thin bone of the hind-leg of a kangaroo, used as an awl or dagger, pin or needle (used to make the holes needed to sew skins together)

**Wirri** – a short throwing club made from native pine or sheoak. Both woods are known for their hardness and durability. The clubs were used for killing game at a distance making a whirling

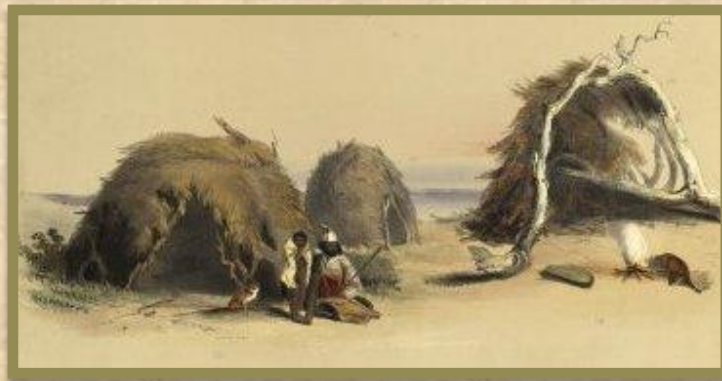
‘wirrrrrrii’, sound as they fly through the air. These clubs were deadly accurate up to 50’ or more. They were also used to kill game and in close quarters fighting. They were also used on occasion to mete out punishment with a sharp blow to the head.



**Wirris, in the foreground is a Pangkawirri or Plonge used by the Ngarrindjeri people**

**Wodli/Wurlie/Wadla** – a substantial shelter/hut made by digging three deep holes and then placing three interlocking stout branches with forked ends, into the holes then filling the holes in. Then sheets of bark, branches, leaves and grass were interwoven in such a way so as to make the small dome shaped hut almost completely water and wind proof. Some huts could accommodate up to four or five families, and were substantial enough to last for several months with regular maintenance. Often placed within were beds mad of soft leaves and grasse, then lined with a skin or cloak that acted as a blanket and bedding. A fire was built at the entrance to the hut for cooking and warmth. When large groups gathered together the huts were built close together in rows surrounding a central compound that would have several large fires and fire-pits, as well as smaller fires for each wodli.





### Wodli's

**Woppa** – bunch/tuft

**Y.**

**Yakko** – a kind of gum/resin, narnuyakko, calitris gum, a knife blade consisting of a sharp piece of flint fixed to one end of the wirri by this gum

**Yerki** – small burrowing animal (bandicoot or bettong)

**Yerkiwatpa** – cloak made from skin of a yerki

**Yerbanna** – red ochre traded down from the Flinders Ranges

**Yoka** – head hair

**Yoko** – boat, **bakkayoko** canoe made from large specially cut sheets of redgum bark traded by Peramangk people for whip mallee spear shafts and for access to good supplies of quartz and grass tree resin for hafting and the crafting of midlas. The Ngarrindjeri of the lower lakes would come into the hills and trade the shafts of the 'whip-stick' mallees for the right to take the red gum bark, and for access to the quartz and yakka gum they needed. These trips were also a time for ceremonies and the like that went with such trading missions. The Peramangk people continued to travel into the hills from the river to collect the items they required along with their lower lakes relatives, long after it became impossible for them to live in their former lands full time. Art sites were maintained and ceremonies were still held in some of the sacred places. But after the mid 1850's there was

simply not enough food to sustain the Peramangk survivors in their lands for any great length of time.



**Bakkayoko**

**Yurinda** – skin

**Yurnto** – small bag or pocket

**Yutuke** – sweet sap of the grass tree, also used for hafting flint axes, knives, chisels, midlas and spears

#### **Other Tools and Equipment**

**Small animal and bird snare** – using flexible small branches, the snares would be set in long grass and amongst low shrubs. Ducks, mallee fowl, curlews and small mammals would poke their heads through the trap and become stuck; slowly choking to death the more they struggled to escape.

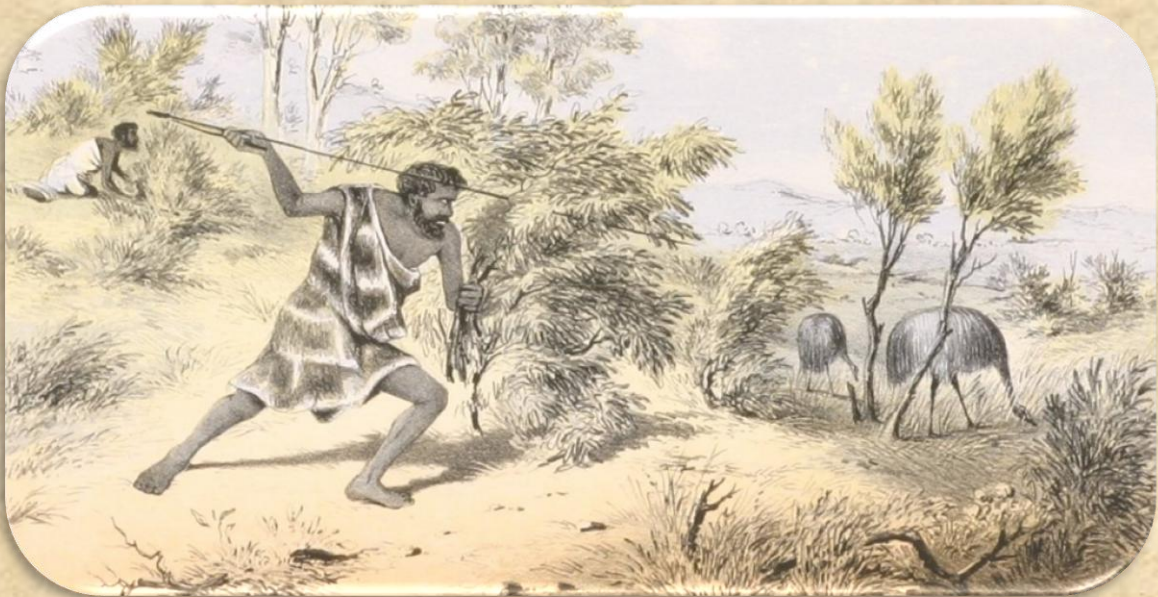


**Bone needles** - used for sewing skins together and net making

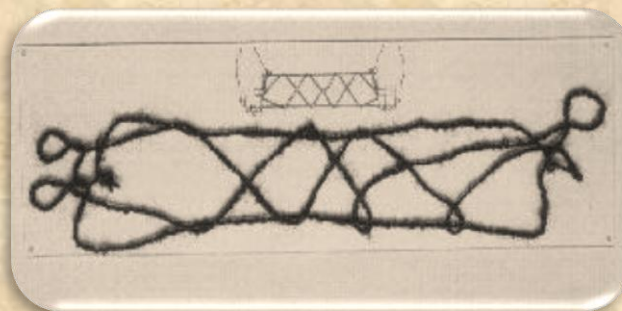




**Hunting emus** - using a blind of eucalypt branches, wearing a possum skin robe, using a kaya and midla, TS Gill 1844.



**String games** – in this case one made by Dorris Natoon, a Peramangk woman from the Eden Valley region.



**Ngarrindjeri fish trap**- woven fish traps similar to this one were used by Peramangk people in the Torrens, Ongkaparinga, and Salt Creeks. Stone fish traps were used in the creeks flowing out of Eden Valley such as the upper Marne and Saunders creeks



**Pine axe** – green stone was traded from the Ngarrindjerri people, the axe heads were then hafted to native pine using a mixture of grasstree resin and sand heated in a fire to make a solid, glass like substance with incredible strength and durability. Axe heads were sharpened by grinding there edges on hard stone surfaces, leaving elongated grinding grooves in the bed rock.





**Fish Traps** - Fish traps are rocks placed side by side to form a circle in water. Traps found in any single area can number from one up to a dozen. Peramangk people would then come along and remove the caught fish when the creeks were in flood during winter, or after a heavy down pour. Stone fish traps have been noted in the upper reaches of the Marne River, Saunders Creek and along salt Creek and the upper Bremer River.



**A Peramangk Mans Regalia - Parruwongaburka** (King John) of Echunga covered in Karko (red ochre) that depicts the designs of his family totem. He is wearing a witowito, and Kari-woppa in his hair. He carries in his left hand a mullabakka, painted with his family's design, and a winda (a wooden fighting and punishment spear). In his right hand he carries a wirri (used for hunting and fighting and well as for making music and as a prop whilst dancing).

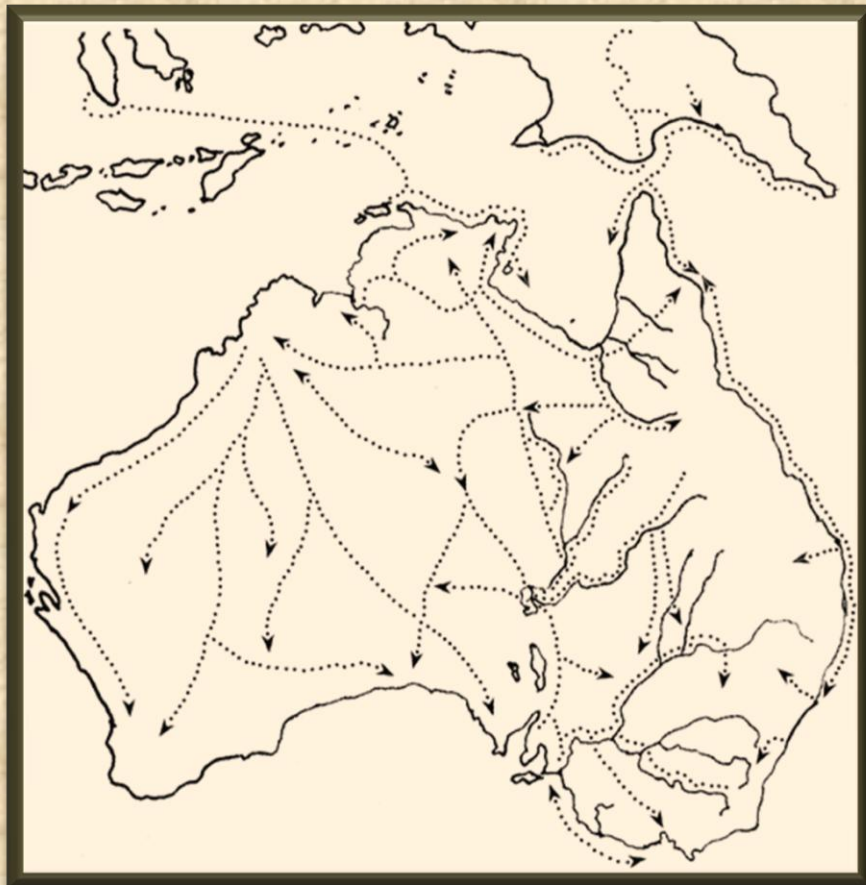


### **Peramangk Goods and Trade**

These are just some of the tools, implements and elements of costume used by the Peramangk people. The Kurna language labels are used mainly because the Peramangk dialects were closely related to Kurna and Ngadjuri. The Peramangk shared a common material culture with their neighbours, and many items were traded. The shafts for their windas came from the mallee via the Ngarkat and Ngarrindjeri, as did some of their nets and basket ware, the heads for their stone axes also came from these people. The highly prized red ochre came from the Ngadjuri people; the Peramangk also traded red jasper with them too. Flints came from the Kurna as did more red ochre.

In turn the Peramangk traded grass-tree stems and resin, sheets of redgum bark, possum and wallaby skins, milky quartz and pyrite with their neighbours, along with hard, stone for stone tools such as slate scrapers for cleaning skins and wadnas for climbing trees. These goods travelled along well established trade routes via inter-group relationships established through umbilical string trade partners.





### **Trade Routes Within and Beyond Australia.**

*Culture traits as well as ideas spread gradually, from one area to another, often being modified in the process (R&C Berndt 1964)*

### **Australian Trade Routes**

*"Trade has two main aspects:*

#### **Economic**

*Aboriginal people of the Lake Eyre Basin lacked good supplies of some necessary items, for example axeheads, soft-wood shields and red ochre. To obtain these they traded with neighbouring groups.*

#### **Social**

*Trading provided opportunities for Aboriginal groups to meet. They exchanged news, shared ceremonies, obtained wives and settled disputes. Trading was usually on a personal level, between "uncles" and "nephews", members of the same totem groups, or special trading partners.*

#### **TRADE ROUTES**

*Aboriginal Australia was criss-crossed by trade routes. Trade routes usually followed rivers or waterholes and often represented the paths of Dreaming ancestors of the region.*

*Trading parties needed permission to travel safely through the territory of other groups. They had to follow designated pathways and were not permitted to hunt whilst on a trading mission. They could use water to drink, but were limited in how far they could travel by the amount of food they could carry."*

### **A DESCRIPTION OF A TRADING ENCOUNTER**

*"All large gatherings were occasions for the exchange of goods. The main business of the meeting might be an initiation or mourning for some person who had died a few months previously. Firstly, the air was cleared of all grudges and suspicions by a series of accusations and counter accusations, leading to a ritual battle. Calm was restored and the trading took place. This was itself a sign of the groups' friendship.*

*The two trading groups stood opposite each other in two lines. Each man had a heap of goods at his feet. The man opposite would say he wanted such and such an article; this would be thrown over to him by the giver who would then announce his request, and so on. The actual relative values of the articles did not seem to matter so much as the giving, the friendship, and the emotional excitement. All were satisfied. Eventually, the goods were passed on in the directions where they were unobtainable and were needed."*

***from A.P Elkin "Aboriginal Trading Expeditions", c1940***

Taken from "Aboriginal Trade in the Lake Eyre Basin", Museum of South Australia Information Centre

Peramangk people traded for items that were not readily available in their own lands. The trade went in all directions. Evidence of this was unearthed by various recent archaeological digs in the Eden Valley area, as well as from site surveys conducted by various mining companies and government departments. Early records also suggest that trade goods travelled from much farther afield than just the immediate groups the Peramangk maintained contact with. Sea shells from the Gulf of Carpentaria, green stone axe heads from the south east and Victoria, Jasper from the Flinders Ranges and pieces of rock crystal from Lake Eyre are all indicators of the extent to which some trade goods travelled. With trade goods came news of events far from Peramangk lands, word of mouth was very accurate and events that happened as far away as central Australia or the Riverina were reported in some detail as trade goods passed from one group to another.



## **The Life of Parruwonggaborka “King John” of Echunga. 1800 – 1845**

Parruwonggaborka was born in Parruwongga, the Watta of the Ponggarang family group that extended from the hills west of Echunga, south-west through the Kuitpo Valley to the edge of the Myponga Vale. His extended family group numbered over 400 people prior to the arrival of the first smallpox outbreak, in 1789. By the time of his birth around 1800, the number of Ponggarang people had been reduced to a little over 150 souls. The 1829 smallpox epidemic reduced his family numbers to about 60 people, and by the time of his death in the middle of 1845, the number of Ponggarang had been reduced to less than 30 men, women and children. In the space of a little over 50 years more than 90% of Parruwonggaborka's family had been died as a direct result of contact with European society and their accompanying diseases.

In 1810, Parruwongga underwent the first stages of his initiation into manhood when he undertook the Wilyakudnarti ceremony. He regularly travelled with his family around Peramangk country and to lands beyond as they attended ceremonies in the lands of different family and culture groups. At about the age of 13 or 14, in 1814, when he first began signs of beard growth, Parruwongga, travelled into the lands of the Tarndanyangga people of Adelaide to undergo his Marnitti ceremony. It was after this time that he began living apart from his mother's camp in a place reserved for unmarried men whilst he learnt what he needed to know to become a man amongst his people. Parruwongga was taken to the places about Peramangk country that were sacred to his people, his name at this stage of life was Marnpi, the name of his totem bird, the Bronze-Winged Pidgeon.

By 1825, Parruwonggaborka had undergone his Wilyaru initiation ceremony and had received the triple chevron scars upon his shoulders, upper arms and chest that marked him as a member of the Peramangk people. He was married to a woman, who bore him at least 4 children, (the fourth being Monarta, who later married John Mason). All during his novitiate stage, Parruwongga had shown a keen interest in the workings of sorcery and magic, the Elder Sorcerer men of his family, the Yammaiamma, took note of this and not long into his 28<sup>th</sup> year, Parruwongga was chosen to undergo the rites and training associated with becoming a Yammaiamma man himself.

Parruwongga was taken into the forest away from his people, and inducted into the skills, secrets and mysteries of the Yammaiamma. He was taught how to see and speak with the spirits, how to charm people, how to conduct inquests into someone's death and how to both heal and slay people with the tools and magic he was taught. Most importantly he was taught the lore and law he needed to know and became a sacred guardian of that knowledge. This knowledge was Kuit:po, something sacred and forbidden to speak about to outsiders. Parruwongga became a man who was both feared and respected by those around him.

1829 again saw the scourge of smallpox return. The disease wiped out entire families. Parruwongga's family was no exception, he survived but the plague killed his first wife, his father and many other members of his family. When his father died, Parruwongga, assumed the mantle of “owner and guardian” of the lands of his family group the Ponggarang people, and changed his name to Parruwonggaborka. By the end of 1830, the Ponggarang people had been reduced to less than 100 people, and many of the survivors were covered in smallpox scars.



**A Peramangk man covered from head to toe in smallpox scars.**

**WA Cawthorne**

In 1830 Parruwonggaburka married again to a young woman named Merrithesso, and by the middle of 1831 his wife had delivered him a son whom he named Yarracha, and in 1833 a daughter named Garowie. By this time Parruwonggaburka was well aware of the predations of the Pindimeyunna of Kangaroo Island, who had visited great death and distress to his neighbours the Putpangga, and Ramindjeri people. Parruwongga, himself had seen Pindimeyunna, Collett Barker and his party when they travelled through his families lands to climb Mount Lofty in 1831. He knew that the man had been killed by men of the Ngarrindjeri who were responding to the attacks by the sealers and whalers upon their people.

*“They dress in kangaroo skins without linen, and wear sandals made of seal skins. They smell like foxes. They have carried their daring acts to extreme, venturing on the mainland in their boats and seizing on the natives, particularly the women, and keeping them in a state of slavery, cruelly beating them on every trifling occasion...”* **Kangaroo Island 1800-1836** by J. S. Cumpston, A. Roebuck Book iii, 1970

The appearance of the Europeans did not auger well for his people, and Parruwongga knew that should they arrive in numbers then his people would have to fight them despite the weapons at their disposal. The raids of the Europeans had already instigated a sharp increase in the number of



wife stealing raids undertaken by the Putpangga, Ramindjeri and Ngarrindjeri men. These raids and the diseases passed onto women who'd had sex with the Europeans, began to take a serious toll on the human resources of Parruwonggaburka's already beleaguered people.

The end of 1836 brought many unwelcome surprises for the Peramangk people and their neighbours. In the latter part of that year, the Kurna noted the arrival of small parties of Europeans who travelled their country's coast in a ship, stopping at different locations and stepping ashore. Colonel William Light was looking for a suitable place for the invasion/settlement to begin. After much debate he settled on Pattawilyangga (Holdfast Bay), and in the summer of 1836, the first settlers arrived from Kangaroo Island. News spread quickly that Pindimeyu (returned ancestors) had landed in large numbers. At first the Kurna treated these new arrivals with cautious courtesy fully expecting them to behave as normal people would. Reciprocal obligation, resource sharing and trade relationships were completely unknown to these new arrivals, and it soon became apparent to the Kurna, as more and more invaders arrived that, the Pindimeyu, were not their returned ancestors, and that they were not here just to visit, but were here to stay.

News of these new arrivals travelled quickly, and it was not long before the Peramangk, not just those around Mount Barker, but from all over Peramangk lands, travelled down to Pattawilyangga, and Tardanyangga (Adelaide) to see for themselves just what these strange people were. Parruwonggaburka and the Ponggarang were amongst the people who came to visit. This caused friction with the local Kurna people who wished the Peramangk people to return to their own lands. It was not long before Parruwonggaburka realised that these Pindimeyunna were a genuine threat to his own people as well.

It was not long before the diseases that the Europeans brought with them began to take their toll on everyone who came into close contact with them. Children and Elders began to die of measles, chickenpox, whooping cough, and the like and venereal diseases amongst the women saw a drastic drop in fertility. Such was the impact of these afflictions, by 1839, men outnumbered women by almost two to one. Parruwonggaburka and the other Peramangk Elders decided that most of the women and children should stay behind with the few surviving elders, rather than venture into Kurna lands and risk abduction by rival groups, or assault by unscrupulous European men. It was also an opportunity for Peramangk men to engage in wife stealing raids of their own, in an attempt to replenish their rapidly dwindling numbers. Women of marriageable age were becoming very thin on the ground.

1839 also saw the first systematic invasion of Peramangk lands as Special Surveys were conducted and the lands of the different Peramangk family groups were divided up and sold off to the highest bidder without any consultation or compensation being given to the previous owners. Parruwonggaburka's own lands were surveyed, mapped and eventually sold off to men such as wealthy English Quakers, John Barton Hack and John Hagen, who decided that Echunga would be an ideal location for a Quaker settlement. John Barton Hack established an English style estate with dairy herds, fields of wheat, orchards and 12 acres of grapes. Further west the land incorporating Meadows was part of the Seventh Special Survey undertaken by Charles Flaxman on 31 January 1839. The Peramangk people, and Aboriginal people were treated with little regard at best, and with outright hostility at worst. Parruwonggaburka protested at the treatment of Aboriginal people by the European invaders;

*“Formerly, only two men have been hanged; now it is enough; don’t hang again; don’t shoot again; lest we be charmed; lest we all die. The food will decompose, the pig will have to eat it” TS 1840*

The Ponggarang people tried to maintain their traditional lifestyles with ever increasing difficulty. The land was being cleared, kangaroos were harder to find, sheep and cattle were destroying their traditional food sources, and pastures that their ancestors and spent millennia cultivating through the use of fire and mosaic burning. Number fewer than 50 members the Ponggarang found themselves vastly outnumbered and out gunned by the European invaders, as food became harder to find, Paruwonggaburka and his people spent an increasing amount of time in Adelaide.

Spending much of their time camped on the northern side of the River Torrens near the village of Walkerville, the Ponggarang, joined other family groups such as the Jolori, Mutengengal, and Meralda trying to maintain their traditions whilst learning more about the Pindimeyunna (Europeans), surviving on handouts from the Colonial authorities, and earning a meager living doing work for the invaders such as cutting wood and harvesting crops. Paruwonggaburka at this time was introduced to the German missionaries Tiechermann and Schurmann by his friend and relative Mullawirraburka, and became a key member of the group of informants instructing the Germans on the lingua franca of the local area, Kurna.

Paruwonggaburka’s reputation as a powerful Yammaiamma was well established; he and his fellow Peramangk Yammaiamma were feared and respected by many different culture and family groups. In 1839, Mullawirraburka’s brother died under mysterious circumstances whilst out hunting. His relative Idlawaritya, and several other men came down Adelaide prepared to kill Paruwonggaburka for his part in the death. The Kurna Ityainaiipinna and Murroparraitpinna tried to intervene and settle the dispute, but Idlawaritya and his party would not be reconciled. They were firm in their belief that Paruwonggaburka had ‘charmed’ Mullawirraburka’s brother, and the Putpameyunna confirmed the story. The Putpunga people had good reason to want Paruwonggaburka dead, as several of their people had been victims of his ‘charming’ magic over the years. Eventually the dispute was settled, but not before an inquest was held and ritual revenge and payback had been meted out upon the Ponggarang.

By early January 1840, relations with the Putpameyunna had been restored and three groups, the Peramangk, Wirrameyunna and the Putpameyunna were engaged in playing a game of football called “Pando” (possum skin ball stuffed with emu feathers). Rainbow ceremonies with all the appropriate ceremonies and celebrations were held at this time, and Paruwongga’s daughter was married to John Mason, a Ngaralta man, from the lower Murray who was visiting Adelaide with his people. Later that summer on February 7<sup>th</sup> an aurora appeared in the southern sky, the Wirrameyunna, the Ramindjeri and the Peramangk saw the phenomena as a harbinger of their imminent destruction. How prophetic the readings of the three groups Yammaiamma were. Two days later the three groups participated in a joint ceremony, The Kurri led by Paruwongga was a highlight of the night.

In December 1842 a dispute broke out between the Ramindjeri, the Peramangk and their north eastern cousins the Ngaiawang from Moorunde. What the dispute was about is not recorded, but by the end of the day, 5 men had been killed (including a prominent Peramangk man), and many more had been wounded. The animosity between the different groups was highlighted by this unusual number of deaths. Still the southern Peramangk (camped on the banks of the Torrens) and Ramindjeri (camped in the south Parklands) had firmly established their presence in Adelaide.

William Cawthorne whilst talking with Paruwonggaburka camped in Adelaide with other Peramangk families asked him if he and his people were from Mount Barker. Paruwonggaburka replied;



*"No....Yes...Long-time ago me Mount Barker man – Me now long-time set down at Adelaide, me now Adelaide man"* WA Cawthorne January 1843

This interview took place in the Peramangk's new camping grounds around Walkerville, established after the police had raided their camp and burned them out to drive them away from the towns (and the Aboriginal peoples) only fresh water supply. This increasingly hostile environment proved too much for the many of the Peramangk who by the middle of autumn had moved back into the hills, breaking up into their smaller family units to spend the winter in their own family lands.

When the Ponggarang returned to their lands they found many things had changed, much of the land had been cleared around Meadows and Echunga, the Europeans greatly outnumbered them, and finding enough food to live on was extremely difficult. In the end the Ponggarang, like their country men and women else where were forced to eke out a meager existence as refugees and beggars within their own lands. Working for little or no money and paid with clothing cast-offs, and weevil ridden flour, the Ponggarang, encouraged by Parruwongga, began raiding gardens, and empty huts for food and useful tools. They saw this as only their due, and when driven to extreme hunger due to a lack of larger game animals, they speared the odd sheep or pig. The reactions of the settlers enraged. They were shot at, some were wounded other killed, many people were beaten, flayed with stock whips, or arrested and sentenced to time in the Adelaide Gaol

In November of 1843, Parruwonggaburka's people again headed down to Adelaide, joined this time by the Northern Peramangk, and their cousins the Nganguruku from Moorunde to join with the Kurna and Ramindjeri for Kombokuri. One of the purposes for such a gathering was to protest against their treatment at the hands of the European invaders and to 'charm' them all to death. William Cawthorne talked at length with a very angry Parruwonggaburka and other Peramangk people at their camp near Walkerville;

*"Cawthorne: What for all blackmen come down here?"*

*Parruwonggaburka: What for? (said with derision) Look after whiteman!*

*Cawthorne: What for look after Whiteman?*

*Parruwonggaburka: White fellow bloody rogue, white fellow no give rice, bullock, sheepy, sugar, no nothing, blackman come down here and kill all whiteman, police man, gentleman, whiteman, all!!! All!!! Blackman spear....Lookout you! When plenty fight, me kill you, me spear you, me, me, me...*

*Cawthorne: This will give some faint idea how the natives hate the whites, but as to their killing us, it is only bravado...but I would like to shoot a few of the devils which would bring them to order"*

William Cawthorne November 1843

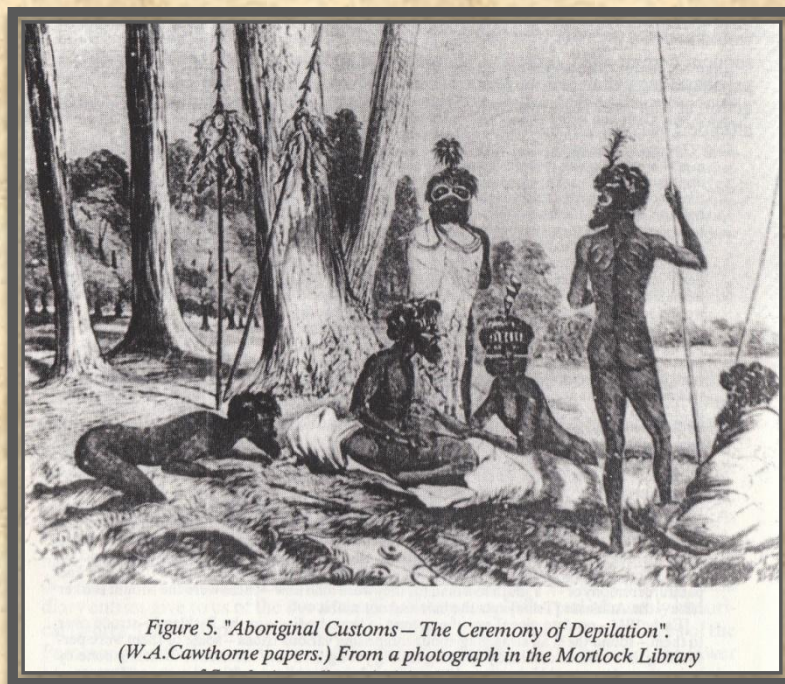
Thus were the sentiments of many Europeans and Aboriginal people expressed. The Ngarrindjeri, Ramindjeri, the Ngadjuri, the Kurna, and the Peramangk had all been cut down by disease, dispossessed, starved, beaten, hanged, whipped and shot out from their lands. Parruwonggaburka, Mullawirraburka, and many others had gathered their people together to face down the Europeans and drive them from their lands. But it was not to be, they were too few, their 'charming' magic could not work against so many invaders. This was not the last time that the Peramangk came to Adelaide, but it was the last time that all four culture groups would meet in co-operation in an attempt to drive out the invaders. Parruwongga's spirit was not yet broken, even though his people the Ponggarang were but thirty in number and many were suffering from the effects of tuberculosis.



One of these was a wife of Parruwongga, who died whilst he and his family were travelling back to their lands from visiting the Ramindjeri at Encounter Bay. She had died some time during the night and an inquest was held into her death;

*"They had been carrying her about their camping places for about a fortnight. King John (Parruwonggaburka) asked me to go and see her buried. I went with two others, on arriving at the place the men who carried her went to a certain spot and after some ceremony they took her for about three yards and walked backward and forwards 3 times, then laid the body down. Then they sat down in groups, made their fires, ate and then smoked their pipes. After a while the women got up and went near the body and began to lament, and falling on the body uttering the most piercing cries, on getting up we saw the tears streaming down their persons. They then spread out and collected bundles of dry grass, the men a quantity of bark and one began to dig the grave with a spade I had lent them. They made a small hole at first and when they got down about a foot they undermine it, and when I looked in it appeared like a large round pot...I went to see the grave the next day, they had left a small fire at one end and bark piled up like a roof over the grave, and all was neatly done, and for nearly a fortnight after one of them would come every evening to make the fire"*  
John W Adams, whilst living near Bull Creek, 1843, as it appeared in the T.Valley Historical Journal October 1988

Parruwonggaburka continued to be a leader amongst his people, he continued leading the Kombokuri's, settling disputes, arranging marriages, conducting initiations and participating in the day to day activities of a leading Peramangk Yammaiamma. In the summer time his people would travel down to Adelaide to spend time with relatives amongst the Kurna, Parruwongga's second wife, Merrithesso was from there. In May of 1844, Parruwonggaburka led his last Kuri dance, and undertook his last Marnitti ceremony, at a gathering of Peramangk, Ngaiawang, Nanguruku, and Kurna culture groups. By now he was suffering from the effects of Tuberculosis, and John knew that his time was slipping away.



A Peramangk Marnitti Ceremony led by Parruwonggaburka and other Peramangk Men.  
(Note the triple chevron scars on the shoulders of the men, a pattern of scars that was unique to the Peramangk People)



John spent the winter at his family's camp near Echunga, the cold weather did nothing for his illness, and he spent much time living indoors on the farm of the Sanders Family, being cared for by Mrs Sanders and Paruwongga's wife Merrithesso. Jane Saunders remembers vividly Paruwonggaburka's last days and recorded them in her memoirs in 1907. Her observations and memories are worth quoting at length.

*"Frequently they came on a begging expedition and would squat outside the gate...As a rule they were treated kindly by the settlers and seldom asked in vain. One woman, Mount Barker Mary, was sometimes employed to sweep up outside, and in doing this, she once swept up a penny, which she called black money and brought to us, though knowing its value. She was a good looking, intelligent woman and had a daughter 11 or 12, a nice bright girl called Garowie.*

*Her father was called King John, one of the Chief men, good looking too...but it was not long before he fell ill with consumption (TB), and it was sad to notice his rapid failure of strength. As long as he was able he used to come up for nourishing food which Mother always gave him, the last time he came Mother remarked that the inside of his hands was as white and delicate as any white man's...His [wife], Mt Barker Mary, Merrythesso...looked after him when he was ill and came for food when he was no longer able to walk.*

*When he died there were great lamentations and the Blacks from the neighbouring tribes came to his funeral. There was one very curious custom observed. At sunset every night for about a week the body was placed upon a sort of bier and carried round in a large circle, a number of the blacks helping, and the rest following in procession. They all joined in a sort of wailing chant in which they asked the dead man why he had died and, 'what tribe had killed him'? Going over their various names, at last when they came to the name of the one they had decided to be guilty. A native representing this tribe rushed off into the bush, and was pursued by the others with yells of rage, and chased right away, to return at his leisure, whilst the body was carried back to the wurley and watched over by the women with boughs in their hands to keep off the flies.*



**Battunga, Echunga, 1845**

*At last when the different tribes had gathered, the funeral took place. They dug a large round hole (Wonga) on the top of the scrub range not far away. The body was fixed in a sitting position with his blankets placed around him and his weapons by his side, and thus they carried him to his last resting place and arranged him comfortably with green boughs over him to keep him off the earth, but his head was still below the surface (Wongandi). They built a wurley over him and lighted a fire in front and after wailing over his departure, they left him in silence and solitude.*

*For a long time afterwards, every full moon some of his tribe used to come and renew the fire and chant their lament but they were fast dying out and I think had a prejudice against the place, also a few months after King John's death...Mt Barker Mary gave birth to a [baby]. There were curious rumours afloat about this child, that it would not live because it had no father to hunt for it. Some of the Matrons took up the matter and talked to the mother about it when she brought it round, gave her clothes for it and tried to persuade her to take care of it but she seemed rather sullen and next time she came the baby was gone. Not so very long after this she fell ill herself of the same complaint which had carried off her husband and many others of the natives consumphous." Jane S Sanders 1907-09, Echunga.*

Thus it was that 'King John', Parruwonggaburka, died in the winter of 1845. He was survived for a few months by his second wife, Merrithesso, and a baby, by just a few months, by his son Yarracha and daughter Garowie, about whom we know little other than the fact that he continued to live around Echunga for some time working for the local farmers. The Ponggarang clan continued to live in their traditional lands for a while, but their numbers were becoming too few and before long they left their lands for the relative safety of the ration station near Wellington. But this is not the end of Parruwonggaburka's family story, for he was also survived by a daughter from his first marriage, Monarta Mason, whose name was also Mary. She and her husband John Mason, went on to have children of their own, including Jerry Mason Snr, who would grow up to marry Jenny Christmas, a Peramangk woman of the Wiljani family group of the Mount Torrens district, and who have many descendents alive today. But that is another story...

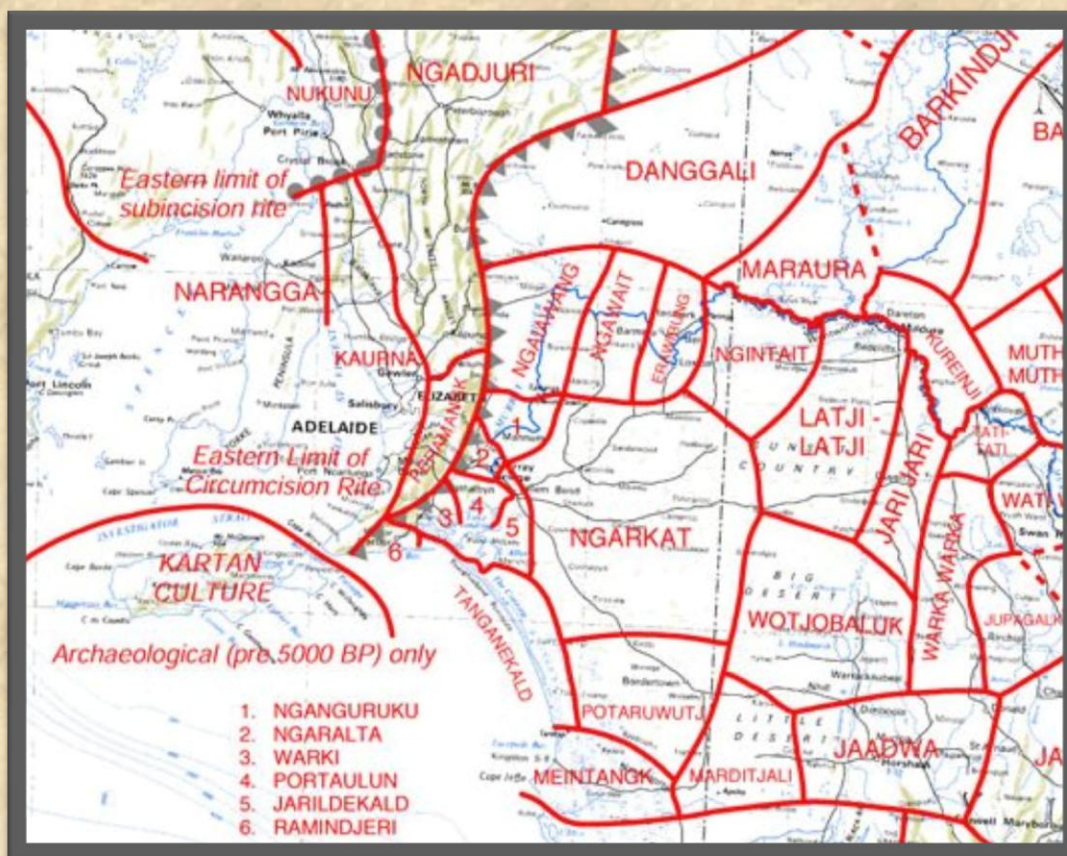




Parruwonggaburka as painted by George French Angas whilst posing with “Captain Jack”, Adelaide, 1843 and a modern reproduction of said same painting done in 1998.

## John ‘Mooloo’ Mason 1795 – 1872 & Charlberry , Mary, Monarta Mason ?? – 1886

John Mason was born in the lands of the Dangali people, west of the Menindie Lakes, sometime around 1794-5. His people spent much of the year living along the ephemeral creeks and streams that flowed out of the northern Mount Lofty Ranges, and only travelled to the interior deserts during the winter months. In times of drought water was mainly obtained from mallee roots, and the few permanent soaks and wells scattered throughout the desert country.



Taken from ‘Tindale – 1974’

During the spring of 1810 whilst visiting the Ngadjuri people at Riverton for the purposes of a Rainbow Kuri, Mooloo refused to undergo the circumcision ritual that was being forced upon the young initiates at the time. Having broken with the laws and traditions of his people he fled south to the river and into Ngaiawang lands.

*“When a man ran away from his tribe because he did a wrong thing he would go to the next tribe. If they could talk to him a little they might take him in. If a man went too far and they could not talk to him they would kill him dead.” Tindale/Mason 1952*

He followed a group of Ngaiawang people south along the river until he came to family group of the



Nganguruku , who were visiting Moorundie for and Rainbow Kuri of their own. There he was lucky to be taken in and adopted by them. He was put through a Marnitti 'Red Man' Ceremony, and continued south with his new family to live around the Mannum area.

*"When a boy arrives at the age of fourteen or sixteen years, the initiatory rites of manhood are celebrated. Two or more boys of the tribe being selected and caught by stealth, a friendly man seizes each one by the arms, and the operators commence by smearing their bodies all over with red ochre and grease. The women come up crying, lamenting, and cutting their own legs in the most dreadful manner with mussel-shells, until they bleed profusely. The boys are then led up by their relatives to a place where two spears are set up, inclined towards each other, and ornamented at the top with bunches of feathers. The boys lie down, with their heads towards the spears, and preserve silence during the whole ceremony. The Weearoos (Wilyaru's), or pluckers, who are persons selected from a distant tribe (Mothers Tribe), come gently up and commence plucking out the hair from their bodies ; at the same time, the spectators stand round carefully watching the operation. When this is finished, the friends gather green gum bushes, and place them under the arm-pits, and over the os pubis of the boys, who then walk away with much solemnity. The lads thus initiated, are entitled to wear two kangaroo teeth, and a bunch of emu feathers in their hair. They are likewise allowed to possess themselves of wives, to join in the exercises of the chase, and to go to battle with the warriors of the tribe."* GF Angas 1843-44

The Ngaiawang and Nganguruku people had been hard hit by smallpox, in 1810 were happy to add a new member to their family group, especially a distant relative who could speak their language. In 1825 Mooloo underwent his Wilyaru Ceremony. He travelled about the country of his adoptive relatives and took on the full responsibilities of manhood amongst his people. Mooloo continued to take a leading role amongst his people. He showed great interest in the workings of the Yammaiamma men, and in 1827 he was taken into the back country and taught the ways of communicating with spirits and of healing and killing by 'Charming' someone. One of the places he was taught about was Millindi-illa at the western edge of his people country on the border with the Wiljanie Peramangk family group.

In 1828, a group of northern Ngadjuri Yammaiamma men called 'Whistlers', (on account of having a front tooth removed as part of their initiation process), were travelling south through Ngaiawang and Ngarkat lands 'charming' and punishing those people who refused to adopt their religious and initiation practices. As they entered Nganguruku and Ngaralta lands near Mannum they were warmly, if cautiously welcomed. These were the same people Mooloo had fled from as a young man and he warned his people not to trust them.

Mooloo's mistrust was well founded, for one night whilst the Nganguruku and Ngaralta men were 'sleeping', two of the Ngadjuri men tried 'Millin – charm' one of the river elders with a stone axe. Mooloo and the other men of his family were ready for such a move and swiftly killed the Ngadjuri Yammaiamma men for their treachery. The dead Yammaiamma men's bodies were put upon a bier and placed in giant a Redgum. Later once their flesh had rotted away the;

*"...arm bones were taken from a powered man to use in making 'Neildjari". Mason's father inherited his grandfather's bones for killing when he died. Grandfather (Jerry) kept them in the floor of his hut. Hair string from dead people twisted together was on the bones."* Mason & Tindale 195?

Mooloo's new life was not without its high and low points. 1829 saw the return of the dreaded smallpox, and many more Nganguruku and Ngaiawang people succumbed to the effects of the disease, further reducing the once very populous regions along the river.

*"The smallpox entirely depopulated this district, before the whites came to settle on the shores of South Australia. The natives tell us that a long time ago it came down the Murray, spreading its ravages from tribe to tribe: whole tribes were cut off by its destructive effects."* Angas 1843

The disastrous results of this plague came as a double blow, just as their numbers were beginning to recover from the first smallpox plague in 1789-90. Such was the devastation that the proper funerary and mortuary rights could not be practiced and bodies were quickly buried in mass graves. At one grave at Swanport, near Murray Bridge more than 160 people were hurriedly buried to avoid further outbreaks of disease. Whole family groups along the river ceased to exist and the resultant destruction of the intricate web of cultural and familial ties would never be recovered.

In 1830 Mooloo saw his first Europeans, when Charles Sturt and his team were witnessed travelling down the Murray in two whale boats. Their coming was announced by Tenberry, a Ngaiawang man who was travelling with them. Mooloo's people looked upon these strangers with a mixture of curiosity and trepidation. They had long heard of the violent nature of these strange men with white skins from their neighbours the Ngarrindjeri, who had long suffered from their violent slaving and killing raids.

In 1837, reports started filtering back from neighbouring groups that the Europeans (Grinkri) had settled in large numbers in the lands of the Kaurna people on the western side of the ranges. Word spread quickly about the easy life to be had whilst visiting these strangers, and even though the Nganguruku rarely had cause to travel down into Kaurna lands; they now travelled down in force. The elders decided to leave most of their women and children behind and travelled through the lands of the Muntingengal and Pongarang Peramangk family groups (to whom they had close familial ties) and headed into Adelaide via Mount Barker.

There Mooloo's people found a hostile reception. Already under pressure from depopulation and displacement by the invaders the Kaurna and their allies the Ramindjeri frequently clashed over a variety of issues, not the least of which was the Kaurna people's objections to Murray River people living on their lands. Such was the violence between the two vastly different culture groups a school just for children from the river was set up to keep the two groups apart. Murray men conducted wife stealing raids amongst not only the Kaurna and Ramindjeri, but also their cousins the Peramangk. This level of occupancy by so many different groups in such a small area was unprecedented in living memory and conflicts were frequent and bloody.

Still not all was violence and upheaval for the visiting Ngaralta/Nganguruku people, Mooloo found a wife, Charlberry (Monarta), the daughter of Parruwonggaburka (a Ponggarang Peramangk Elder) and Merrithesso (a Ngaralta/Mutingengal Peramangk woman), and soon she gave him a son he named Rimmelliperindjeri, (Jerry Mason Snr). Mooloo's family moved back to the river and settled down to a life trying to cope with what their people had lost whilst maintaining a semblance of their traditional lifestyle.

Meanwhile ration stations had been set up by the Protector of Aborigines (sic) at Moorundie, Mount Barker and at Wellington. It was whilst camping at Wellington that Mooloo met a soldier who had been made Deputy Protector of Aborigines, Corporal George Mason. George and Mooloo became



fast friends, such that they exchanged names with Mooloo regarding George Mason as his 'white' brother. Mooloo learned English from his frequent interactions with George Mason and other prominent European settlers in the district. In 1842-3 whilst George Mason was escorting the Governor and George French Angas on a tour of the lower Murray, Mooloo met with Angas whilst conducting a Marnitti ceremony for some Pongarang/Mutingengal Peramangk boys.

*"Whilst encamped in a pine forest, we were approached by a droll-looking fellow : a tall, muscular native, perfectly naked, armed with a wirri and a spear, and having the hair of his beard, whiskers, and other parts of his body most carefully plucked out. From the crown of the head to the waist he was copiously plastered with red ochre and grease, which dripped from his long matted ringlets ; and his hair was ornamented with kangaroo teeth, fastened into it with clay, which hung down over his forehead. He had just passed through those ceremonies of his tribe which consist of initiatory rites into the state of manhood; and he held in one hand a branch of eucalyptus: the green bough being symbolical of his situation, according to the "rain-makers" or wise old men. This stately fellow came up to us in the most gentlemanly manner possible, stating that he was " berry good black fellow ;" and as he had no card, he gave us his name, ' Tom Ugly.' Another young man, who had undergone similar rites, and rejoicing in the English appellation of ' Jack Larkins' also made his appearance. Both these gentlemen fetched in a supply of water, and then sat down to assist us with our meal.*

*An elderly native, who called himself " Mr. Mason," ran up to us in great haste, greeting the corporal with all the demonstrations of the most cordial friendship. This old man had exchanged names with Mason, as a proof of his brotherly feeling: a distinction amongst his tribe of which he was not a little proud. The name given in return was "Mooloo," by which title Mason was generally known amongst the surrounding tribes. "Mr. Mason" introduced us to his lubra or wife Charlberri, who was wrapped in a round grass mat, which supported her picaninny at her back : the little creature was chewing the favourite bulrush root, a large net of which was suspended from its mother's shoulders. Beside her stood her son, a fine little boy, about four years old, called Rimmelliperingery; also chewing a long piece of bulrush root, and looking up at us intently with the largest, darkest, and most penetrating eyes I ever beheld: had not their whites been deeply tinged with yellow, and the long lashes been matted together with a mucous discharge from the eye, they might have been called beautiful. Rimmelliperingery is the pride of his tribe, and wears the upper mandible of the black swan round his neck ; which is regarded as a wizard charm."* **Angas at Lower Murray near Wellington 1843**

Mooloo and extended family moved around their lands, by now Mooloo Mason was one of the custodians of both Ngaralta and Mutingengal lands. He and his family spent much of their time working for the settlers around Mount Barker, whilst gaining their rations at Maitpanalittya, ('Food For Them', in the Peramangk language), a ration station set up half way between Mount Barker Township and the settlement of Echunga. Between the years 1839 and 1845 Mooloo and Charlberry Mason and remnants of Ngaralta and Peramangk family groups worked around Mount Barker. In particular Mooloo's family became regular workers and close friends with John Wrathall Bull and his family. His comments about Mooloo and his family are worth quoting at length.

*"My first experience in giving employment to the natives in a regular way was after I left Adelaide and commenced farming in the Mount Barker district. They picked up and bagged potatoes and did other farming jobs. On one of these occasions, after work was finished, I was talking to them at their camp in the dusk of the evening, on the side of the hill above my premises, when a large meteor*

*appeared (the largest I ever saw), which came from the east at an apparent slow pace, showing larger and larger as it approached. I supposed it fell to the ground at or on the east side of Mount Lofty proper, but I was informed it had been seen crossing the plains of Adelaide. At the camp were a large number of blacks, many of them employed by neighbouring settlers. They no sooner saw the meteor than they cast themselves with their faces on the ground, uttering one combined and long-continued hideous yell. When the meteor had vanished all I could say did not pacify or relieve them of their fright ; they persisted in saying it was devil-devil, come to kill blackfellows. On rising early the following morning I was greatly surprised to find the camp entirely deserted, nor did I see any of them till months afterwards...” John Wrathall Bull 1884*



**John Wrathall Bull c.1880**

At the time of the meteors appearance whooping cough, measles and tuberculosis were running rampant through the local Aboriginal populations. Whilst the people may have survived one of these diseases, most people (none of whom had any immunity) could not survive multiple infections. The effects of these diseases were catastrophic for Mooloo's family and for the family's of Aboriginal people across the district. Mooloo lost three of his wives and all of his children except for one, Jerry. John Bull's narrative continues;

*"...when some of them again visited me. They told me in distressing tones that many of the tribe had died through the coming of the big one fire. They undoubtedly had been suffering from some kind of fever, for those who had survived came in a most pitiable state of emaciation. They had suffered far away from the help of white men. I may mention that I have often given them medicine, which they were always eager to take, and so made excellent patients; the more nauseous the taste, the more they approved of it.*

*This tribe belonged to a piece of country on the banks of the Murray, called by them Wall. We called their chief King John, and the name of his chief lubra was Monarta, which was considered so pretty a name the whites never changed it. King John and Monarta often paid me a visit, and I set apart a small hut for them. He was a very good workman, and kept good order when I had a number of them employed."* JW Bull 1844



With the deaths of so many people, Charlberry took the name Monarta, she had originally gone by the English name Mary whilst working for the Europeans, the same name as her Mother (Mount Barker Mary), and the name of one of her relatives who had died.

*"When an individual dies, they carefully avoid mentioning his name; but if compelled to do so, they pronounce it in a very low whisper, so faint that they imagine the spirit cannot hear their voice."* GF Angas 1843

With the death of so many relatives, she reverted back to her birth order name, Monarta, the name by which she was to become well known. So to the Europeans Mooloo and Charlberry, became known throughout the hills and lower Murray districts as John and Monarta Mason.

Johns and Monarta's life had its problems, at one time whilst John was off working up river Monarta had travelled down to the river to see her relatives with some other members of her family, Jerry was being raised by Monarta's sister Garowie and her husband and was not with her when the incident happened;

*"On one occasion John appeared anxious to tell me something. At last he pointed to Monarta at a distance, and said—" You see Monarta ? " " Yes, what then you mean ? " " Well, by-and-by a piccaninnie come." I then found what had filled his heart with joy. This was Monarta's first promise, and all other children by his other lubras had died. He was dotingly fond of children. I introduce the above particulars to lead to what follows. After they left this time I did not see them for some months, when one day I saw two wretched black women slowly approaching. They did not as usual first visit the kitchen, but passed on at once to John's hut. I sent a female to see what was the matter? On her return she said Monarta was crying, and would not speak; that her hair was cut short, and there were large gashes on her head. I now went myself and questioned them, asking for John. At last Monarta blurted out — "John no more stop along of me; he say he kill me;" and then she put her hands up to inform me who had battered her head, and burst into a lamentable cry. After a pause I asked, "Where piccaninnie? " I had now touched on the cause of all this distress. I got no answer from Monarta, but the old woman said, " Piccaninnie dead ; tumble down in scrub."*

*After much trouble I got out of them that " Monarta walk walking through big one scrub, plenty hot day, no water, child and blanket on her back. John gone long way, child plenty cry, cry all same as wild dog, so she put him down and left him." On my expressing horror at her action, she justified herself by saying, " You see, master, he all same as wild dog." It appeared from the state she was in that John did not accept such a justification of her conduct, but beat her almost to death. It was many months before John became reconciled to her."* JW Bull 1884

Still John's great hope was his son Jerry, John doted over his son and taught him everything he knew. In 1849, at the age of 14 John, Yarracha (Monarta's brother), and the other Elder men took Jerry and some other boys through their Marnitti Ceremony. The boys then lived apart from their mothers whilst they were taken by John on tours of the country of their ancestors. By now John and men like him were few and far between. The Masons, Dunns (Ngarkat/Peramangk), Nettoons (Ngaiaawang/Peramangk), Dishers (Ngaralta/Peramangk) and families like theirs worked up and down the river shearing, cutting wood, fishing, trapping and making a living any way they could. Once a

year they travelled to Adelaide via Wellington, Echunga and Bridgewater to receive their annual blanket ration. The Mason's continued to move up and down the river going where the work was, living in camps at Mannum, Moorundie, Murray Bridge, Mount Barker and Wellington.

In 1860 whilst attending a Rainbow Kuri in the Tatiara Ranges, John's son Jerry underwent his Wilyaru initiation ceremony, it was at this time that he also married a Yira-Ruka Peramangk woman by the name of Jenny Christmas, whose father Jimmy Christmas was the custodian of the Yira-Ruka lands of Eden Valley and the eastern Barossa Ranges near Angaston. (The Yira-Ruka were made up of two family groups the Tarrawatta, and Wiljanie Peramangk.) Jenny's mother was a Nganguruku woman whose father had been a leader amongst the Nganguruku near Devon Downs and Nildottie. Like his father before him, Jerry too showed an interest in the arts of Sorcery and Charming (Millindi), and it was not long before John was teaching him what he knew about making "Neildjari".

Jerry Mason was destined to become a great leader in his own right, a man who would preserve the culture of his ancestors as best he knew how. Throughout the 1860's John, Monarta, Jerry and Jenny continued their life upon the river moving about with the work. It was not long before Jerry and Jenny had children several of their own. Henry 'Mengoan' Mason, their first child was raised amongst Jenny's relatives, the Doris Nattoon in the Nganguruku/Peramangk Traditions. His younger brother Robert, was raised by Jerry's relatives amongst the Ngaralta/Peramangk, the Dishers and Becks. Jerry and Jenny Mason also had a daughter, Annie who would grow up to marry Sam Disher. In time the two boys would undergo their own Marnitti and Wilyaru ceremonies, but they would be amongst the last Peramangk/Ngaralta/Nganguruku men to do so.

John's health began to fail, suffering from cataracts he was slowly going blind. Living mainly at a camp on the river flats near Murray Bridge he and Monarta still managed to travel but only with managed to travel to Adelaide every year for the Governors' picnic and their annual blanket ration. By now Monarta was famous around the district in her own right as a mid-wife and was frequently seen with other Elder woman caring for their grandchildren as their parents frequently had to travel a long way from home in order to gain employment. The last recorded sighting of John Mason was in Adelaide in 1871, by John Bull, a few months before Mooloo's death.

*"The last time I saw poor John, I was walking along one of our most crowded streets, when I saw two young black men leading an old and blind native, when one of them, on seeing me, must have mentioned my name, for the old fellow cried out, " Where's my master ? Oh, my master, Mr. B ! where is he ? " Now all eyes were on me ; but I could not resist the impulse to go to my old friend, although several gentlemen standing at the door of an hotel were greatly amused as he called out my name loudly. On my approaching him he cried out, " Oh, my master ! my master ! " and, throwing his arms round me, he kept patting me on the back in a most loving manner. I did not heed the laughter of some of the many spectators. I was rather proud of being the cause of the exhibition of so much affection from a poor benighted black fellow-creature." JW Bull 1884*

John died soon after and was buried at Cowirra Reserve, a burial ground that had been used by the river people for hundreds of years. His funeral was attended by many people from up and down the river. Monarta Mason continued to live along the river flats at Murray Bridge, becoming a local identity in her own right.

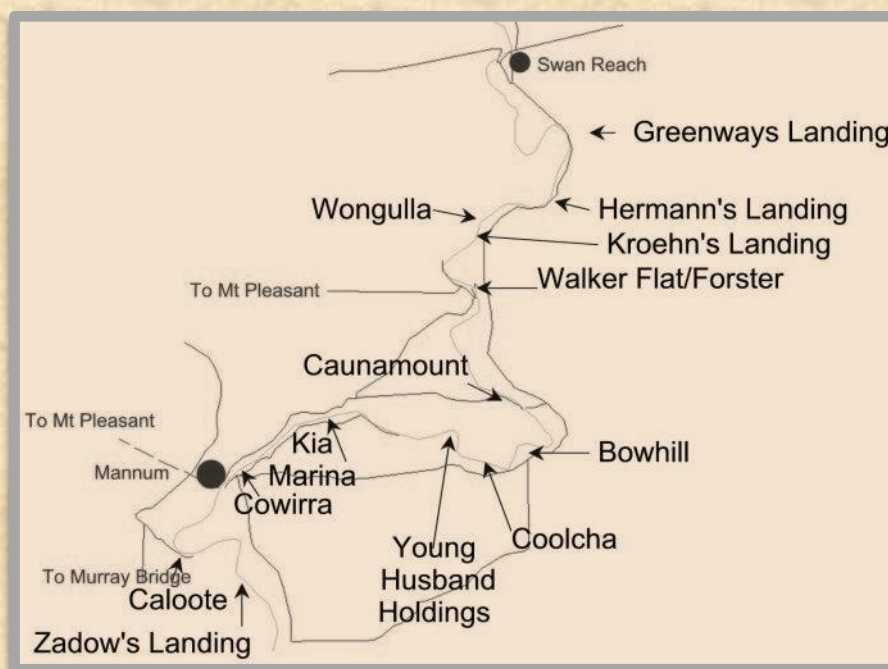
Monarta's life was well recorded in the Mount Barker Courier, even though she had not worked there for a long time, she was still fondly remembered by the local residents and was often written about when she attended local events in Murray Bridge. In 1873, less than a year after John's death she attended the opening of the new bridge across the river. She along with 19 other local Elders



saw an opportunity to confront the politicians attending the opening and express their true feelings about the Europeans invasion of their lands.

*"Before luncheon an historic and colourful confrontation took place between the Governor and one of 'Royal line' in the crowd from a group of about 20 local River Murray Aborigines stepped their Queen Monarta presented to the Governor by Mr N-H. Bunday, M.P. and dressed fantastically in coloured print and a crown of paper of various colours her comments have been recorded for posterity: "Well, Gub'ner, what you give me? My old man dead. You take away this country and build bridge. My people want you give 'em boats and food." With true diplomacy the Governor replied- he would consider the matter, consult his advisers and see what could be done" Adelaide Register, 7<sup>th</sup> November 1873*

All through the 1870's and 80's Monarta continued her work as a mid-wife and grandmother, helping to raise her daughters children, Jane, Margaret, Dick, Harold and Daisy Disher. She and her fellow women were often asked to sing for the local people. Monarta was a leader amongst her people, as were her two sons Henry 'Mengoan' Mason, and Robert 'Tarby' Mason. Henry was married to Gertie Dunn, the daughter of John Dunn, a Mientangk man who had married a Peramangk woman. Henry, by now a senior Wilyaru man was a custodian of the Ngangurku and Yira-Ruka/Poonawatta and Karrawatta Peramangk lands, as well as being a spokes person for many of the surviving Ngarkat families. Robert was married to Rita Lyndsay, a Ngaralta woman from Murray Bridge, he also was a senior Wilyaru man whose responsibilities included the lands of the Ngaralta and southern Peramangk.



**Location of Cowirra Reserve and other River Localities**

Monarta's popularity and pragmatism were well known, on Boxing Day, 1885, whilst attending the Committee of the Murray Bridge Athletic and Aquatic sports opening meeting, Monarta was questioned by one of the locals as to why so many of her people had turned out for the event;

*" She (Queen Monarta) was asked by an inquisitive stranger, 'What make all blackfellow here today?' she answered practically 'You give-um sixpence !' "* Mount Barker Courier, 26th December, 1885

The last known report of Monarta's appearance occurs in description of the Bridge Sports Day, 1886, in which

*"The river blacks were out in good force, for truly the harvest was likely to be a heavy one. Queen Monarta, like the maid in the song, "wore a wreath of roses on her head", while her somewhat capacious mouth was wreathed in eternal smiles. "* Mount Barker Courier, 31st December, 1886.

Within a year of this report into Monarta's activities, she was dead having stepped on a nail and died of septicaemia after being denied access to proper medical care. Her funeral was attended by hundreds of people both black and white and she was buried at Cowirra Cemetary alongside her husband. Charlberry – Mary-Monarta Mason may have been dead, but her legacy would continue for decades to come.

## Peramangk Family Tree





# Invasion, Dispossession, Dispersal & Survival

## Sealers and Whalers

*"In 1801 the first Europeans arrived in Kurna country. They were the sealers, who made their camps at several places on the southeast coast of South Australia. They were tough and violent men, many were ex-convicts, who lived off the sealing and whaling that was good in these waters. They kidnapped many Aboriginal women, Kurna among them, to live with them in the shanty towns that they erected. Conditions in these places were very primitive and the women were treated like slaves by most of the men".* Howard Groom 1986

In 1831 many Peramangk people would have had their first direct observation of a European when Collett Barker, a friend of Charles Sturt climbed Mount Lofty, coming via Mount Barker, straight through Peramangk country.

## Invasion & Settlement by "Peaceful settlers" 1836

When the first British settlers arrived in 1836 the Peramangk were already suffering from the aftermath of disease and bad relations with sealers and whalers. The Peramangk were hardly in a strong position to defend their land and were probably not aware that it was all to be taken from them. Many believed "that the whites were their dead relatives returned from pindi the land of the spirits. They called them pindimeyu, men from the grave. But before long, things began to go wrong. The pindimeyu I didn't behave like Peramangk should. They had no respect for sacred places, they did not share things with each other or with the Peramangk and they ordered each other around and seemed never to relax. Some Aboriginal people in Adelaide were curious about the newcomers. The new 'fast foods' - white flour and sugar - may have appealed to them. It was available without having to walk long distances, collect, husk, sieve and grind seeds or collect honey from bees' hives.

*"Whilst on the parklands and when we were few in number the [Aboriginal people] mustered pretty strong at times. I once saw about 500 assembled on the flat on the North Adelaide side, and it was there that they held their [song and dance performances] and their fights when other [Aboriginal groups] visited. We were told that distant [Aboriginal groups] about the Murray would come to steal wives for themselves and take them away. On one occasion we saw a [Aboriginal group] come by the hill of North Adelaide, marching in Indian file, some were daubed over with some red stuff marked with white stripes. They appeared much surprised to see white men camped there. The women belonging to the [Aboriginal group] about Adelaide came creeping around the huts and wanted us to go and shoot them."* John W Adams, 'My early days in the colony John W Adams, Balaklava, South Australia 1902', published in Torrens Valley Historical Journal, No. 33, October 1988

*'... [George Fife Angas was ... firmly committed to the principles of Aboriginal land rights and had expressed a desire to be given overall responsibility for Aboriginal policy. In a speech on "The Welfare of the [Aboriginal people] of South Australia" ... Angas declared that the colonists would treat with the [Aboriginal people] 'for the purchase of those lands which they claim as belonging to them' 1C Mann, d. Report of the speeches delivered at a dinner given to Captain John Hindmarsh, London 1835*

The Select Committee on South Australia in 1841 in the House of Commons in London, 'took evidence from Angas who spoke about the position of the [Aboriginal people]. He was a good witness with extensive financial interests in the colony. He had also provided patronage to the German missionaries working in South Australia and as a foundation member of the Aborigines

Protection Society was committed to indigenous land rights. His nineteenth century biographer that Angas had "set before himself the model of William Penn and his treaty with the North American Indians" 6 Hodder, George Fife Angas, London 1891, p 141)... Angas told the committee that the South Australian Act gave no recognition to Aboriginal right to land and in fact made it impossible to make any provision for reserves. Angas advocated a system of reserves which might eventually total as much as 10 % of the Colony ... that 10 acres of good land and 30 acres of what he called scrub land should be assigned to each individual.' Unknown author, academic essay, p 8-28

Terrawatta Estate, east of Angaston, where Angas land was situated included about one tenth Aboriginal reserve land located at Mt McKenzie on what was then called the Gawler River, now North Para River.

In early 1837 it was apparent to Peramangk and Kurna people that Europeans were here to stay. At first they treated Europeans like their own people but soon conflicts over food, land, women and laws saw Peramangk and Kurna being treated as strangers in their own lands. European attitudes also changed.

Europeans settler's responses to Peramangk in the hills, the areas around Mount Barker, Barossa Valley and the Onkaparinga Valley were the first to be taken for farming. Crafers was considered a dangerous place by many travellers. It was said that it was occupied by bushrangers, rumoured to be escaped convicts from Tasmania. The perception of the European settlers was that the Aboriginal people were beggars but what choice did they have since the Europeans, sheep and cattle had taken over their lands. Hand-outs of food and clothing may have been considered by the Peramangk to be part payment of debt for occupying their country.

Captain Hahn wrote the following in his journal while travelling to Mt Barker. It was he, as Captain of the Zebra, who brought the German migrants to Australia and then on to Hahndorf. Hahn observed that some of the Aboriginal people in the hills bore scars from smallpox, that they used kangaroo skin for clothing, the men wore their hair shoulder length and made it waterproof with ochre and oils (which would have looked a bit like coloured dreadlocks). He was offended by their nakedness just as they probably considered the dress of the newcomers very strange). He understood that they lived in small groups of around 50-60, each having its respected elders and that there were sometimes fights between groups, sometimes over women. This was possibly because so many Aboriginal women had been kidnapped by sealers over the prior decades. He was aware of their sense of humour in how they dressed in articles of European clothing, wearing perhaps just a coat and no pants or shirt.

*"...twenty or thirty, perhaps more, who used to come now and then, to camp for a week or two in convenient distance from the creek. The men and boys went out hunting opossums, kangaroos, birds etc. whilst the women and children caught crawfish" dug up roots with a sharp stick some called Waldies & Fidlars, the first a dandelion the 2nd a species of vetch wild carrots too and thistles were favoured diet.*

*They used to wade right into the waterholes pulling the crawfish from under the logs and stones and throwing them on the bank to the others. Frequently they came on a begging expedition and would squat outside the gate, saying [they were hungry and asking for bread and sugar and sometimes some clothing]. As a rule they were kindly treated by the settlers and seldom asked in vain. One woman" Mount Barker Mary, was sometimes employed to sweep up outside ... She was a good looking intelligent woman and had a daughter 11 or 12, a nice bright girl called Garowie. Her father was called King John ... he fell ill with consumption ... after this she fell ill herself of the same complaint ... The white men have a deal to answer for in the treatment of the [Aboriginal] races*



*everywhere. ...My brothers used often to visit the [Aboriginal people] in their whirley and the younger ones copied their weapons, spears, waddies and became quite expert in using them, accompanying the men and boys in their hunting expeditions, they learnt to climb quite high trees, cutting steps for their feet in the bark with their wadnas (a sharp pointed stick) and pulling the opossums and parrots out of their holes. ... "*

Reminiscences of Jane S. Sanders Echunga) born 1830, died 1909. Written 1907-1909

Hahn did not understand or value the low impact yet appropriate and sustainable technology of the Aboriginal people. Their shelter, to protect themselves from storm and rain was that:

*'Towards sunset, usually sixteen to twenty of them gather, pull down some bushy branches from the trees and lay them in a circle around the company. Then they light a fire in the middle around which they sleep. On the following morning each one goes his different way.'*

This must have been a very difficult time for such elders. They would have seen how the influence of the Europeans was damaging their culture and they probably agonised over the best ways to act for their future generations.

*"In 1837 much of Peramangk and Ngadjuri land was divided up and sold off without anyone telling them. Special surveys took place and the land was sold off between January 1<sup>st</sup> and December 3<sup>rd</sup> 1839. A brief but much simplified explanation of the Special Survey System is that anyone who paid 4,000 pounds in advance for a survey of 16,000 acres had the right to select 4,000 acres ahead of anyone else and also had priority over others in the purchase of any of the remaining 12,000 acres, as well as grazing rights over any of the land that was not sold. (Lewis' sources sometimes use the figure of 15,000 acres which was the area stipulated in the original regulations but the area had been changed to 16,000 acres before the Surveys were claimed). The purchase of the survey was able to make the most of the situation by selecting his 4,000 acres along both sides of rivers and other waterways so that, as far as possible, the remaining 12,000 acres had no access to water and, consequently, would be of little or no use to anyone else, it could mean in effect, that the purchase gained most or all of the 16,000 acres for the cost of 4,000.*

*It was coincidental that the land taken included most, if not all, of the known painting sites in Peramangk and Ngadjuri territory. This means that within three years of Light's first expedition into the Barossa<sup>4</sup> the [Aboriginal people] had lost control of their land and painting sites which may be presumed to have been of [spiritual] importance and as the land was stocked and settlers moved in they were progressively and rapidly deprived of their hunting and good gathering areas, rock shelters and access to the materials needed for building shelters. Since frosts occur in the Barossa region at any time from April to November, the loss of shelter was as serious as any of the other losses" Special Surveys as laid out between 1837-39 on Ngadjuri and Peramangk lands and settlers moved into land already owned."* Joy Chilman 1990



Chilman 1990

Some reserves were allocated for Aboriginal people near Adelaide and also in parts of the hills. There were reserves near Paris Creek between Meadows and Strathalbyn, one at Macclesfield and another between Eden Valley and Angaston. However, the size of the land was too small for survival by hunting and gathering and expecting Aboriginal people to undertake European style farming was in retrospect fairly inappropriate. The reserves were taken back again by the government in most cases.

*"Records show that the city of Adelaide was not a healthy environment. In its early years it was polluted by human and animal excrement, decaying remnants of food and generally poor sanitation. It was an excellent breeding ground for often fatal disorders of the bowels and lungs. Pneumonia, tuberculosis, whooping cough, diarrhoea and typhoid fever were common in the European settlement and decimated the local population. Aboriginal people were encouraged to wear British clothing without adequate education in the need to change out of wet garments or the need for laundering... The British government instructed the colonial authorities to appoint a "Protector of Aborigines". The Protector was expected to encourage the Aboriginal people to settle in'... locations near Adelaide where they could more easily be persuaded to adopt English customs, language and occupations, At first the settlers and the local Aboriginal people got along well, but because Europeans and Peramangk cultures differed so greatly, trouble soon began."* Kwan, Elizabeth 1987

The clashes between Aboriginal people and early settlers were as much about survival as they were about a collision between traditional laws and British government policy. The Aboriginal people whose lands were invaded saw their country appropriated (sic) by the British government when they



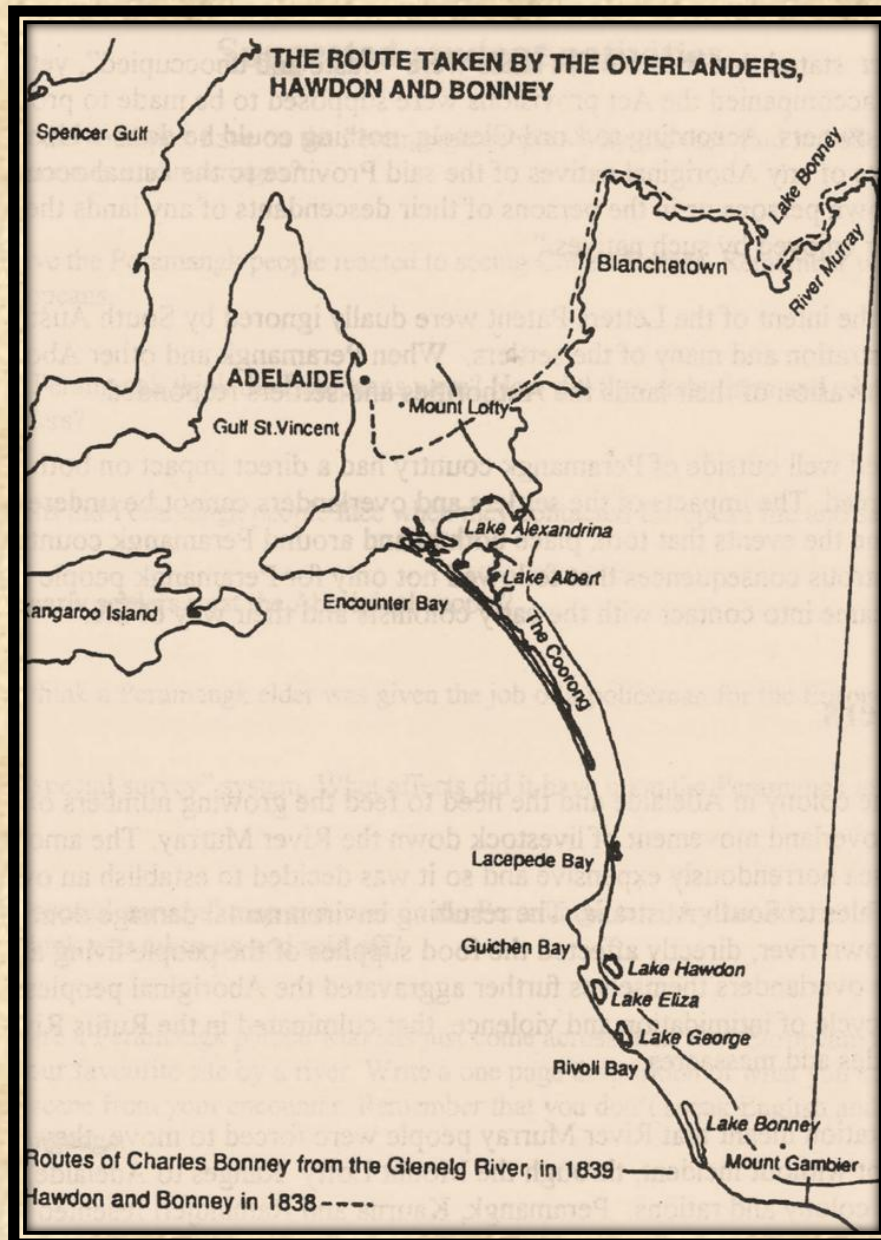
passed the Foundation Act. in 1834 This gave ownership of all lands within the colony to the Crown, to be sold to settlers by the South Australia Company The settlers arrived in the colony believing they had both the legal and God given right to clear the country side of all obstacles and that they were not under any obligation either legal or moral to provide what they saw as charity for the original owners of the lands upon which they settled. For Peramangk people and their neighbours, whose numbers had already been drastically been reduced by disease, this was to prove a disastrous policy.

### **Overlanders and settlers: war begins**

Prior to official settlement of South Australia in 1836, the British government had passed laws stating that Aboriginal lands in South Australia officially belonged to no one and were thus open for sale and settlement. This decision to set up the colony was based largely on the reports of Captain Charles Sturt who along with Collett Barker explored the Murray - Darling reaching the Murray mouth on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February 1830. His reports encouraged Major Mitchell to open up a land route along the river. He and his men forced their way down river with guns. His success encouraged other overlanders to drive sheep and cattle to the new colony from New South Wales starting in 1838.

The movements of the overlanders coincided with the special surveys that were paving the way for selection and settlement by wealthy lands owners and tenant farmers alike. At first Peramangk people treated the new arrivals as guests and even went out of their way to help by acting as guides and as cheap labour. According to early records the relationships with Peramangk people were cordial and cautiously friendly. Soon they began to realise that the overlanders and settlers were not just visiting or passing through, that reciprocal obligations were not going to be met, that is when active resistance began.

The clashes between Aboriginal people and early settlers were as much about survival as they were about a collision between traditional laws and British government policy. The Aboriginal people whose lands were invaded saw their country appropriated (sic) by the British government when they passed the Foundation Act in 1834 This gave ownership of all lands within the colony to the Crown , to be sold to settlers by the South Australia Company The settlers arrived in the colony believing they had both the legal and God given right to clear the country side of all obstacles and that they were not under any obligation either legal or moral to provide what they saw as charity for the original owners of the lands upon which they settled. For Peramangk people and their neighbours, whose numbers had already been drastically been reduced by disease, this was to prove a disastrous policy.



**Early routes of the overlanders**

The Foundation Act stated that the colonies lands were "waste and unoccupied", yet according to Letters Patent that accompanied the Act provisions were supposed to be made to protect the rights of the original land owners. According to Lord Glenelg, nothing could be done which would prejudice, "the rights of any Aboriginal natives of the said Province to the actual occupation or enjoyment in their own persons or in the persons of their descendants of any lands therein now actually occupied or enjoyed by such natives."

Both the spirit and the intent of the Letters Patent were dually ignored by South Australia Company, the colonial administration and many of the settlers. When Peramangk and other Aboriginal groups began to resist the invasion of their lands the Authorities and settlers responded. Events that happened well outside of Peramangk country had a direct impact on both the people and the lands they occupied. The impacts of the settlers and overlanders cannot be underestimated. It is important to examine the events that took place both in and around Peramangk country to fully appreciate the disastrous consequences that followed not only for Peramangk people but for all those groups who came into contact with the early colonists and their way of life.



## The overlanders

The setting up of the colony in Adelaide and the need to feed the growing numbers of colonists was the catalyst for the overland movement of livestock down the River Murray. The amounts needed made transport by sea horrendously expensive and so it was decided to establish an overland route from New South Wales to South Australia. The resulting environmental damage done by stock as they were moved down river, directly affected the food supplies of the people living along the overland route. The overlanders themselves further aggravated the Aboriginal peoples problems through a growing cycle of intimidation and violence, that culminated in the Rufus River incident and subsequent battles and massacres.

The resulting devastation meant that River Murray people were forced to move, they became refugees moving, not without incident, through the Mount Lofty Ranges to Adelaide, seeking shelter, news of the colony and rations. Peramangk, Kurna and Ramindjeri resented this movement of Murray people through their lands and violent confrontation was often the result. The actions of settlers and their interactions with local Aboriginal people have not often been recorded. When they were, the accounts given by settlers were often dismissive, inconsequential, or negative in their portrayal of Aboriginal people. Incidents of violence were often glossed over or not mentioned at all. Those who did record such incidents often did so in letters and diaries rather than in the public forum of newspapers and books.

Further to the north of Peramangk country their neighbours the Ngadjuri saw what had happened to their friends the Kurna and Peramangk and began to fight back. Both sides responded in an ever increasing cycle of violence which ended in the decimation of the Ngadjuri people. This attitude and method of clearing the land of its traditional owners was often carried into Peramangk lands but was kept very quiet by the early settlers. So that now only hints and rumours persist where once eye witness accounts would have revealed the true level of violence that had took place against Peramangk people.

## The settlers

Peramangk people were suffering at the hands of European settlers. They tried to oppose these intruders but soon learned through the lessons of their neighbours the dangers of all out war with Europeans. Johannes Menge was a multilingual geologist who ended up being thoroughly disillusioned with the new colonial society. He rejected their lifestyle and money and chose to live similarly to the Aboriginal people and took shelter in a cave on the banks of Jacob's Creek in the Barossa Valley near the North Para River. He hunted lizards which he would exchange with Aboriginal people for native vegetable foods. He recorded very early on the results of European occupation of Peramangk land.

*"At the moment, ...every valley in the hills and every green area on the plains not being used for agriculture, is already being so heavily covered with cattle and sheep, that arguments between neighbours, herdsman and shepherds over grazing areas and drinking wells can be heard everywhere... he (Aboriginal people), of the country do not fight among themselves, but they do steal sheep or pigs occasionally if they are hungry. If you hear that (they) sometimes kill people, you must take into account that the (Europeans) give them good cause to do so because of the brutal treatment of their wives as well as through provocation to anger and other passions. You would receive a horrifying letter if I were to describe to you the life of our so highly glorified Colony"*  
Johannes Menge 1844

The evidence of atrocities is further hinted at in the letters of William John Jury a miner who was employed by George Fife Angas, in the 1840s. Jury had only been in the colony a short time touring the Barossa and Flaxmans Valley districts when he wrote to Angas concerning his safe arrival and early doings.

*" Sir...I now feel it my duty to inform you of my safe arrival, I next took a tour of Flaxmans Valley was engaged for some weeks in going over the Brosa Range in serch of mines...by diging in... German Pass I have discovered a load...at home I hope the Lord will hear the Prayers of his people on behalf of the [Aboriginal people] but I will not wonder at their doing (the farmers) as they do when the Sabbath is so little regarded by many of the white men as they take the Gun and shoot more than they do on the other Six day"*

It is with chilling clarity that both Menge and Jury state within the limits of common sense, for their own safety, yet with justifiable outrage and horror, the goings on of some settlers when seeking to clear the country of its original owners. The experience of Ngadjuri people provides graphic evidence of what most probably happened to Peramangk people in some areas of their lands. To the north of Peramangk country, their neighbours the Ngadjuri, saw what had happened to their friends the Kurna and Peramangk, often with mixed results.

When George Hawker settled at Bungaree in 1841, many [Aboriginal people] were living there: it was their ancestral country. Years later George's son, Walter gave some information in a booklet of reminiscences.

*"When my father settled there were 800 [Aboriginal people] on the Bungaree country, which was their headquarters, because of the creek of drinking water which ran all the year round where my father settled, and the Hutt River only a few miles away, which with its big waterholes was never dry and many kangaroos watered along the Hutt River...Charlie, an [Aboriginal man], was turned against his own people to become a collaborator with the Europeans...[Aboriginal people] at first were curious about the white men, but after a time they became aggressive. They took away all my father's sheep, his bullocks and wagon. My father then got ten white men to help him. They attacked the [Aboriginal people], shooting a good many ... to stop another raid, my father appointed a more friendly black, called Charlie, as a policeman. He gave him a gun and ammunition and told him he must warn any offenders three times in the name of the Queen before he shot. Policeman Charlie when trouble was brewing used to call out to the would be offenders "I warn you three times in the name of the Queen", Bang went his gun and the offenders were shot. This was the best thing which could have happened as there was no more trouble from the [Aboriginal people]." Kwan 1987*

### **Resistance around Adelaide involving Peramangk and others**

Resistance to invasion came about as the result of Peramangk people being forced out of their traditional home lands by the activities of early European settlers, not all of these actions were violent, but the settler's actions or the results of their actions drove the Peramangk people from their homes stirring up much resentment in the process. By 1843 many Peramangk people had settled more or less permanently around Adelaide. In late 1843, organised resistance to the invasion took place when several groups gathered together to try to drive out the European settlers, but even then their vastly reduced numbers failed to have the truly desired effect. The colonists stayed, whilst organised mass resistance failed to bring about its desired results.

Something very drastic must have happened to unite these normally individualistic groups into such co-ordinated and resolute action. Desperation and a willingness to forgo all other grievances meant that Aboriginal people's tolerance and willingness to actively cooperate with the invaders had



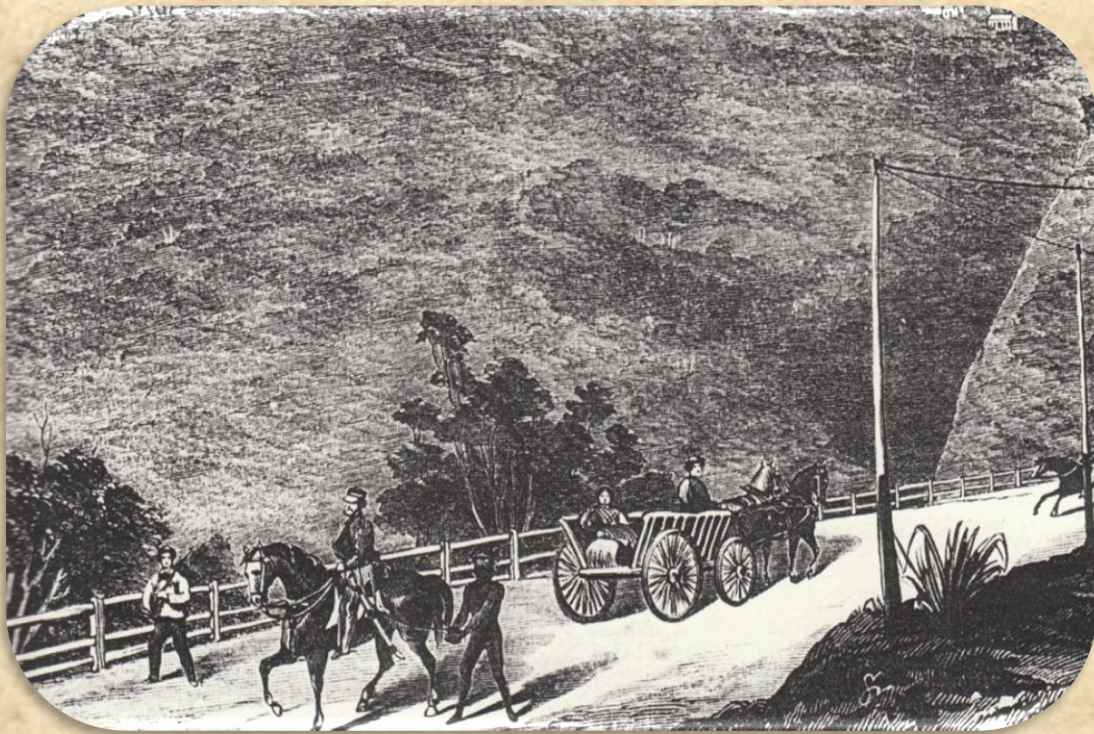
reached a bitterly disappointing and potentially violent conclusion. Needless to say there were no winners to this conflict but the Aboriginal people lost more than anyone else.

After initial settlement, the movements and actions of the overlanders had drastic and far reaching consequences for the Peramangk people. The movement of stock over the Mount Lofty Ranges drove out game animals and destroyed bush food sources. The actions of the overlanders against the River Murray people assisted movement towards Adelaide as people and their homelands were devastated by violence, disease and environmental destruction. This forced Aboriginal people from the River Murray people towards and through Peramangk lands thus putting great pressure on clan groups that were already much reduced by violence and disease.

### **Life in South Australia under English law**

By the mid 1840s Peramangk elders realised that their lives were never going back to the old ways. Many of them were dead from European disease, their land stolen, game animals gone, they were unable to practise their burning or hunting. Marriage and other ceremonies could not be performed. Peramangk people began to rely on European handouts for food, blankets and clothing. They had to often beg as they were now treated as thieves, beggars, trespassers and slaves in the land that was once their own.

Government policy set up ration depots, schools run by missionaries and church missions became refuges to which Peramangk survivors fled. Peramangk people worked as servants, scrub cutters, shepherds, shearers and labourers. They moved when the family system broke down to where their cousins in other groups lived and to where government handouts and protection were available. The ration depot at Moorundie (near Blanchetown) and missions at Matco (Mannum), Adelaide, Point Mcleay, Poonindie, Point Pearce and Wellington held mixed groups as diverse as Meru, Ngadjuri, Kurna, Peramangk, Nganindjeri, Tatiara and Nauo survivors. So by the end of the century, many Aboriginal people had lost their identities, language, culture and land.



**Mount Lofty, Lookout Corner, Illustrated Melbourne Post, 24 June, 1864**



At first there was conflict but gradually Peramangk people lost the will to resist and their society became a shattered memory, whose survivors became aliens in a land they no longer recognised. By 1848 there was less than 3,700 Aboriginal people south of Port Augusta, while there were 22, 000 Europeans - what hope did the Indigenous people have? North near Kapunda, in Ngadjuri country, The Register 19 June 1841, reported

*"... .a party of [Aboriginal people] had attacked the shepherds at Mr Dutton's station at Mount Dispersion and after dangerously wounding one of them had driven off about 800 sheep. Another shepherd with 900 sheep in charge, had been missing for three days, supposed to have been killed by the [Aboriginal people]".* Chilman 1990

*"The first step taken towards their improvement was to acquire knowledge of their language, so as to gain an insight into their character, habits, laws and prejudices. The next step was to induce them, by example and persuasion to adopt regular employment, and to erect fixed and more substantial habitations, in the neighbourhood of which land for cultivation was apportioned; and the success has been as follows: - they have assisted in erecting five cottages and a sixth has been erected with but very little aid from Europeans. In 1839 and 1840 they had one acre of ground under cultivation, and at the present time they have a plot of ground (three acres) cultivated by themselves, upon which potatoes, carrots, maize and melons are now growing.*

*As the language became more generally known, and facilities afforded to conversation they were to from time to time upon moral and religious subjects. On the 23'd December 1839, a school for the children was commenced, and since that period they have been assembled as regularly as practicable. In 1840 three hundred and sixty days, they were assembled two hundred and eighty-six and out of forty-one children that were in Adelaide the average school attendance was eleven daily. In 1841, January 10 to June 30s one hundred and eighty one days they were assembled one hundred and seventy eight and the average attendance was nineteen daily. At the end of the first year there were six that knew the alphabet; nine that could read monosyllables; seven that could read polysyllables, and four that could write upon the slate. At the end of June 1841 there were fourteen that knew the alphabet, thirteen that could read monosyllables, ten polysyllables, and write upon the slate or paper; six knew the rule of addition and two that of multiplication.*

*Since the 2nd of March, the girls have received sewing lessons from a number of ladies chiefly Wesleyans, who felt interested in the improvement of these people. The progress made under the tuition of these zealous ladies has been satisfactory and encouraging. Eight of the children are able to repeat the commandments, and narrate the history of the Creation, fall of our first parents, Cain's fratricide, the deluge, portions of early Jewish history, the advent of our Lord, several of his miracles, the doctrine of resurrection and final judgment.*

*The adults are much more inaccessible for religious instruction than the children; they are naturally proud and wise in their own estimation, and express themselves perfectly."*

Report of the Aborigines of South Australia, reprinted from Transactions of the Statistical Society in The Southern Australian May 30th 1842.

### **Seeds before the wind**

The end of Peramangk society and the scattering of the survivors Adelaide newspapers, the Southern Australian and The Register, reported contradictory views of the same incident which occurred in 1840. Scare mongering is all too common a complaint in the media today but these



accounts show that it occurred also in the 1840s. What might be their purpose in each case? In summary the Southern Australian reported that:

*"Two hundred and seventy [Aboriginal people], with only twelve women and children among them, had surrounded a surveyor's camp at Lyndoch and nothing less was expected than a general slaughter of settlers; the number of Aboriginal people] appeared to increase from all quarters until there were about 500 men. Captain Sturt was said to have estimated the number to be between 350 and 400. They were from the Milmenrura [Aboriginal group] [from the Coorong] and as proof, they still had a sailor's knife and other articles taken from the victors of "the late atrocities"\*. Three arrived from Gawler, apparently intending to deal with the situation. They rode into the Aboriginal people's camp and demanded an explanation of their intentions. They captured three [Aboriginal people]; two escaped and they confined one overnight but their object, to elicit information from him was defeated because "the stubbornness of the fellow was unconquerable" Chilman 1990 -*

The Register took a calmer view and in summary agreed that:

*'...blows with firesticks had been struck but asked under provocation...The [Aboriginal people] were from ... Lake Alexandrina, and numbered no more than about 50 to 100. Captain Sturt had not seen any [Aboriginal people because they had all gone before the police arrived and therefore was in no position to estimate their number. They were ... on one of their periodic excursions; "... there was nothing whatever like hostility in their behaviour ... The whole affair, it appears, arose from the timidity of the surveyor who has not been long in the neighbourhood and had never before seen the [Aboriginal people] on their hunting excursions, but the circumstance was never thought of as anything uncommon ..." The Register, 18 September to 2 October 1840 in Chilman 1990*

About 1840 the "Mount Barker [Aboriginal group]" was known to the Europeans who had established the new colony of South Australia as that group of Indigenous people who lived on the eastern side of the Adelaide Hills in the district around Mount Barker. They were encountered by European explorers, squatters and overlanders who passed through this area or settled there. Sometimes they visited the settlement of Adelaide in a large group to conduct ceremonial business and social gatherings, and no doubt to observe the strange appearance, habits and artefacts of the European interlopers. This interracial contact was mostly peaceful, although the European police troopers did harass them on occasion.

Not until the mid 1840s when flocks of sheep were crowding the watering places and grazing lands of the Peramangk and the animals which they hunted for food did open conflicts arise. Even then, the source of confrontation was the right of local [Aboriginal people] to take for their own use some of the animals, and material goods which the Europeans had placed on their traditional lands, There was apparently little physical violence and in some cases food and other items were given by farmers in exchange for assistance with harvesting crops, e.g. John Bull of Mount Barker paid for labour in wheat and potatoes, at a time when farm labour was in desperately short supply.

However, by the 1850s the scattered documentary sources cease to mention the {Peramangk}; there is only the chronicle of a growing agricultural district. The last reference which might refer to members of the Mount Barker [people] is a set of photographs taken in 1867. Although Aboriginal people from along the Murray River regularly passed through the district for many years, visiting Adelaide or taking seasonal work on the farms, the original inhabitants of the district had passed from sight and almost from memory.

### **Burned Grass Grows Anew**



By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century few if any Peramangk people lived in the hills. By now the survivors and their children were living in other peoples' country and were living with and marrying people from different groups. The old traditions and laws were disappearing as old people died. Peramangk people were possibly living at Swan Reach, Mannum, Wellington, Point Mcleay, and Point Pearce and in camps around Clare, Balaklava, Adelaide and Port Adelaide. They quite likely visited their traditional country camping in old sites on their way to and from Adelaide.

*"Mrs E Walsh grew up in Aldgate and remembers the visits made by an Aboriginal group to this hills town when she was a young girl. She estimates that she was about four or five years old at the time that she first remembers such visits, placing them around the turn of the century. The time of year was during the warmer months and the group consisted of about eighteen people. They always camped in the same spot near the willows by the creek. During their stay, which was only a short one, they would make baskets and feather flowers to sell to the locals. Mrs Walsh assumed that by selling baskets and feather flowers they were able to support themselves. The baskets she thinks were made from the reeds growing in the creek.*

*Mrs Gibb was about 10 or 11 years old when a group of [Aboriginal people] visited Aldgate and she remembers them camping near the present day RSL hall. They always came during the warmer months of the year, possibly in October or November. During the evening they would give a [performance]. A large group of people from the town would go to watch it. by a large group she means up to 15 people, this number being considered a crowd by the residents of Aldgate in the period around the turn of the century. She recalls that the men were naked from the waist up and thinks that they were probably wearing trousers. They decorated themselves with white ochre by highlighting the bone structure of the body. For example, they highlighted the bones in the arms, the rib cage and around the collar bone.*

*Descriptions of the body decoration styles of southern South Australian [Aboriginal people] often mention the highlighting of bone structure and this technique can be seen in the available visual records relating to this area. George French Angas painted a series of watercolours of South Australian Aboriginal people in the early 1840s and his representations of various ceremonies and types of body decoration provide good examples of the highlighting of the body's bone structure". Mrs Weatherald says that the [Aboriginal people] came once a year and that they camped by Stanley Bridge, on the Onkaparinga River [near Verdun]. Their camp was on a reserve used by the local people for camping and picnics. The remains of the old Stanley Bridge are still there and the area where the [Aboriginal people] camped is probably to the right of the new bridge, as you travel away from Adelaide. There were approximately twenty people in the group and there appeared to be families with most ages represented. According to Mrs Weatherald, the people would only stay in Grunthal for a few days and then they would continue on their long walk towards Adelaide. Mrs Weatherald was under the impression that they were going to Adelaide to collect rations. They did not come back through Grunthal on their return trip and she thinks that they probably went back through Mt Barker. Her brother, who also witnessed the visits and who associated with Aboriginal people, says that they came from the Murray River... Mrs Weatherald also knows some stories passed down to her from her mother. When her mother was just married and living in Grunthal, there were [Aboriginal people] living in the area all the year round. Her mother grew up in the Mt Barker area and she spoke of [Aboriginal people] travelling through Mr Barker and stopping to hold a [performance]. Her mother used to go to watch these and Mrs Weatherald thinks that these people came from the Murray. She also says that her mother mentioned that there were quite a few Aboriginal people permanently living in the Mt Barker area.*

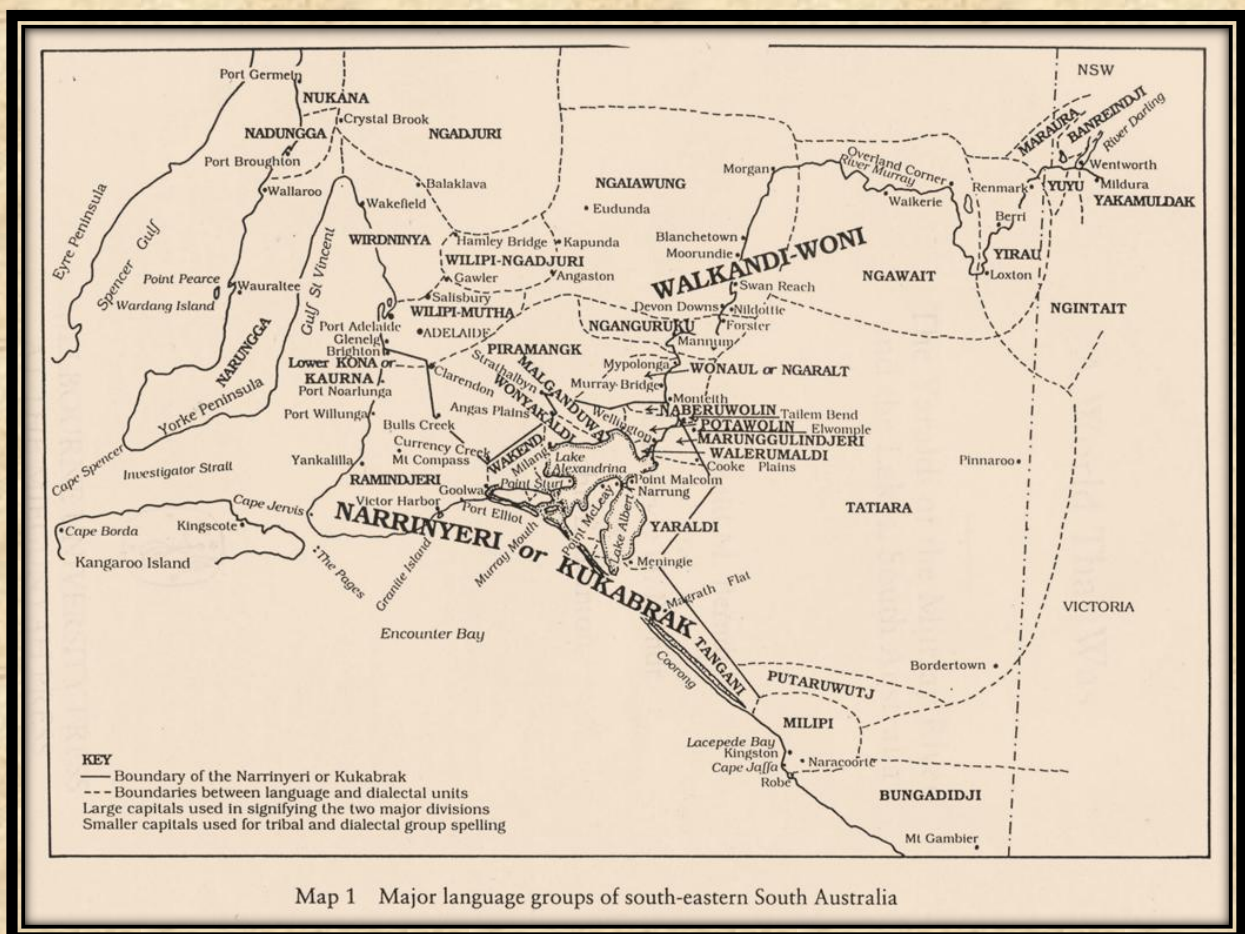
*Mr Gibb's description of the technique used for the creation of rhythm during the [song and dance performances] is an unusual one. It is well documented that the Ngarrindjeri, Kurna and people of*



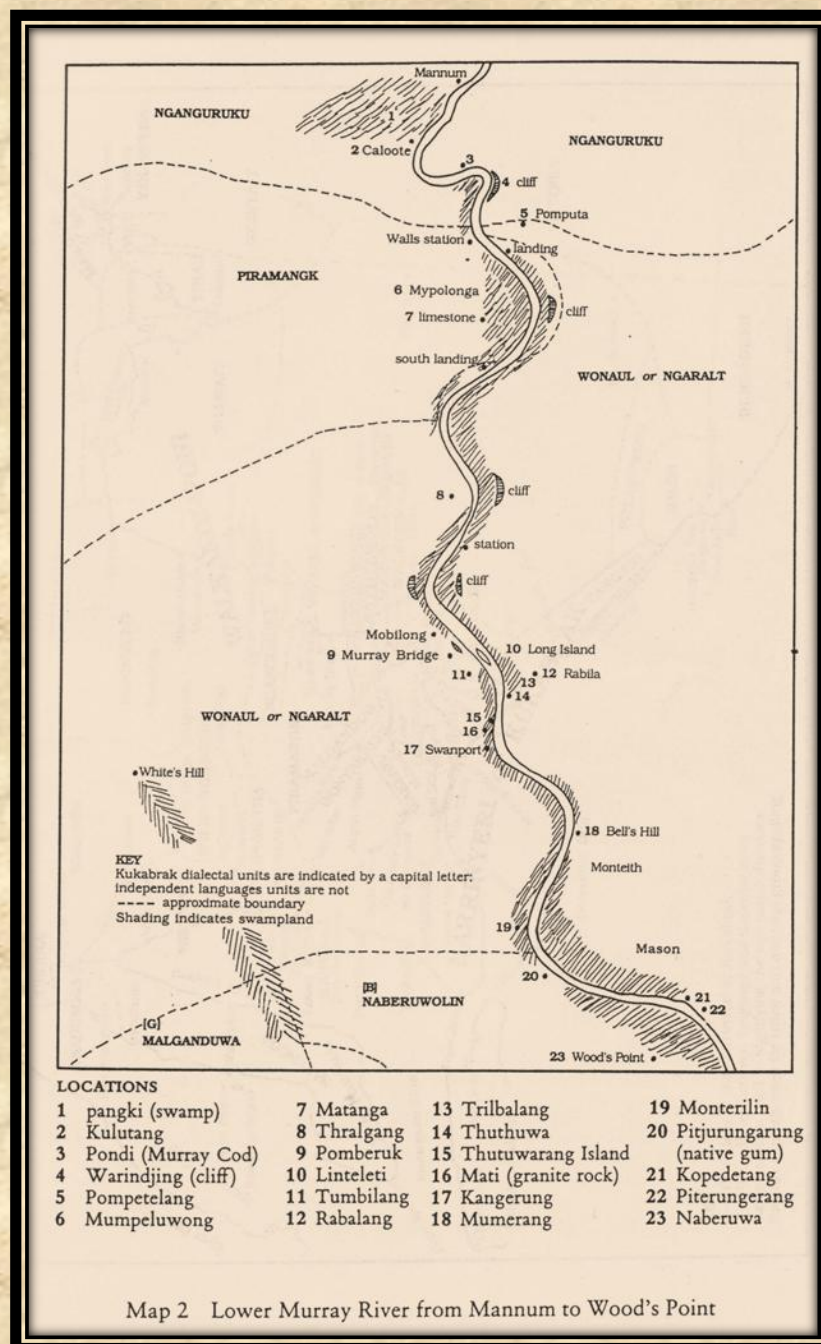
the Adelaide Hills used a small pad of skin on which to create a rhythm. It was usually used by the women, while the men made a tapping sound with their clubs, boomerangs or other weapons. It may be possible that the men in the Aldgate [performance] were making tapping sounds with devices manipulated with their fingers, as a substitute for the weapons used in the days before white contact.

Mrs Gibb estimates that there were up to 14 people in the Aboriginal group camping on the flat near the RSL hall. They didn't have tents, just saplings cut down and arranged in a type of windbreak. It was a temporary camp and they only stayed for the one night. They always had the Palti in the evening and it seems that it was held near to their camp-site.

Interestingly, Mrs Gibb was told where the Aboriginal group were heading and from where they had come. They were going to Adelaide to obtain rations and blankets and they had come from u.r.p at Wellington on the lower Murray. This locates them firmly in Ngarrindjeri territory and they were most likely from a camp called Marunggun, near Wellington. Probably the main Nganindjeri family used Marunggun at the turn of the century were the Karpany family. This family is still very large and there may be someone in the family who knows something of the trips to Adelaide via Aldgate by the Aboriginal people from Wellington. On the return journey from Adelaide, Mrs Gibb thinks that the group probably stayed at Stirling. Mr Sid Rogers of Stirling told her that he remembered some [Aboriginal people] camping at Stirling at about the same period as the people who were visiting Aldgate. Mrs Gibb also remembers someone telling her that the same group-also camped at Bridgewater. She thinks that they must have used the road from Wellington through Echunga to Aldgate. She doesn't know how far they travelled each day but she is certain that-they travelled on foot" Steve Hemming 1987



**The Boundaries of the Peramangk “Nation” as they stood at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century according to Ronald & Catherine Berndt in their Book “The World That Was”**



**Peramangk Occupation of the River according to Ronald & Catherine Berndt in their Book “The World That Was”**

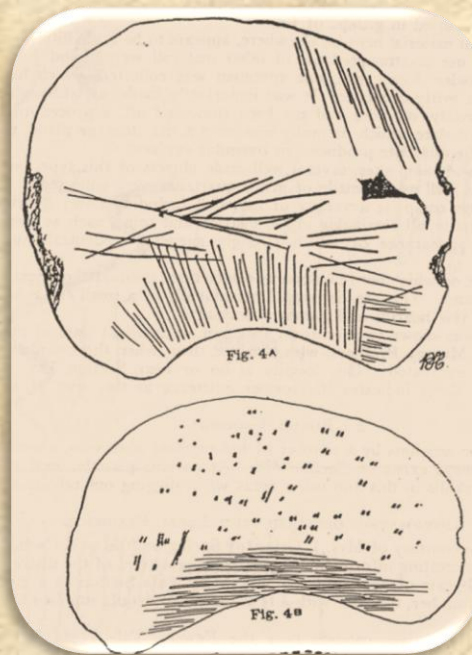


## Conclusion

John W Bull wrote that the Mount Barker tribe were extinct by 1894, but clearly as can be seen this was not the case. Different records and testimonies paint grim picture for sure, but it is a picture of survival against the odds. Peramangk people were living at Lyndoch in 1868; William Barlowe photographed at least two Peramangk men at Mount Barker in 1867. Revered Hale wrote that in 1860 there were Peramangk people living at Poonindie. Edward John Eyre set up Moorundie in the 1840's and Peramangk people were recorded as visiting there, whilst Tarby Mason admitted to Tindale that the Nganguruku and the Peramangk were closely related. Tindale also recorded that he learned a string game from Doris Nattoon, a Peramangk woman from Eden Valley. This he did in the 1940's. W.G. South reported that in 1913 that Peramangk people from the Lobethal area were living at Wellington. Steven Hemming in his research into the Aboriginal people of the Mount Lofty Ranges came to Adelaide from Wellington via Aldgate and Bridgewater. These people travelled to Adelaide along well established trade routes and performed the same types of dances that George French Angas recorded at Lyndoch in the 1840's. It has already been well established that the descendants of Jerry Mason and Jenny Christmas are alive and thriving today in the twenty first century.

The Peramangk people managed to maintain their many of their traditions well into the twentieth century. The work done by Paul Hossfeld in 1926 indicates that ceremonies and art sites were being maintained even up to at least the early 1920's;

*"The most extensive camp sites are situated on Sections 124 and 125, Hundred of Jutland. Here they cover several acres. They occur on the north side of the Saunders Creek, a perennial stream. They occupy a wind-eroded, sandy slope on the west side of a rough, stony, meridional ridge... The country to the westward consists of grassy slopes with occasional red gums. At the north-eastern extremity of the site, a small, dense belt of native pines supplies excellent shelter.*



**Figure 4 A**

Hearths are very numerous. A particularly interesting one occurs near the northern extremity of the site. It is peculiar in that, whereas the others are mere heaps of stones arranged in an irregular manner, this one consists of a ring of stones, **the two diameters of the hearth being 7 feet and 6 inches and 6 feet and 6 inches. The sand inside the ring is blackened, in contrast to the yellowish colour prevailing in the vicinity.**

This site yielded the majority of the hammer stones, chips, and slates collected. **One of the hammer stones had evidently been used for pounding red ochre, as one half of it was still covered with this material.** As in the Gawler River site, specimens of micaceous haematite, probably pounded and used for decoration, and chipped blocks of felspar-actinolite gneiss occurred. Another interesting feature noted was the presence of fire-cracked quartz, the presence of which on camp sites has been described from Olary.

**Several of the slates collected were sufficiently well preserved to have retained the original markings incised on them** by the natives. (Some of these are reproduced in Figs. 4 B and 4 C). An interesting point is the fact that several slates generally occurred together. In one instance, three were found in contact, projecting from the sand with their longer axes in a vertical direction, and in two other instances four slates were discovered together under the sand. One of the slates which has not been figured, carries incisions probably representing bird-tracks." Paul Hossfeld, 1926

Robin Coles and Richard Hunter in their researches into Peramangk art of the eastern ranges discovered several art sites near the Marne River and Saunders Creeks that showed relatively fresh ochres applied to the cave wall. The Marne "Taingappa" River and Saunders Creeks were major trade routes for the Ngangurku and Ngaralta peoples. The authors of this revived artwork show heavy river influences in their artistic styles. Considering what we already know about Henry and Robert Mason, the Disher Men and the Nattoons, it would seem to indicate just who the artists might have been.





***Figure 16. River Marne painting Site 6. Red, yellow and white-ochre painted figures. The unusual use of white-ochre dots to border several figures resembles the art in the Eden Springs painting site. Illustration of paintings by Robin Coles.***



***Figure 17. Boehm Springs painting site. A red-ochre figure painted on a rock slope. The figure is approximately 85 cm high and may represent a human with an elaborate headdress (T. Gara, pers.comm.). Illustration of paintings by Robin Coles.***

The records show that the Peramangk people are canny and pragmatic survivors, they have had to be for tens of thousands of years. They were not going to let an invasion and its associated problems, stop them from continuing as a voice to be heard. Strong and proud, the Peramangk People have not just survived certain annihilation, they have thrived. Everyone thought that they had disappeared into the dust of history, but someone forgot to tell the Peramangk.



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