

DEPARTMENT OF SCHOOL EDUCATION

Published by: Metropolitan North Region
N.S.W. Department of School Education
Curriculum Services
20 George Street
Hornsby 2077

The material has been produced by the N.S.W. Department of School Education. The material may be reproduced provided that:

- (i) the source is acknowledged
- (ii) it is used for educational purposes only

Cover illustration by Ivan Goolagong.

Quote in title from : Bungaree to Captain Theddeus Bellinghausen
Debenham G. (ed), *The Voyage of Captain Bellinghousen to the Artic Seas
1819-1821 Vol 1.*

CONTENTS		Page no.
	Forword	3
	Introduction	4
	Overview of the Resource	5
<u>SECTION ONE .</u>	THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE	7
A. THE LAND.		
	1. Geographical description.	7
	2. Countries & Languages	13
	3. Country & belonging.	17
B. TECHNOLOGY.		
	1. Tools, weapons, artefacts & utensils.	18
	2. Art - rock engraving, cave painting.	25
C. LIFESTYLES.		
	1. Food - fish & shellfish.	40
	mammals	
	birds	
	plants	
	2. Housing.	64
	3. Clothing & adornment.	65
D. THE PEOPLE		
	1. Kinship & marriage	66
	2. Law & religion	67
	3. Ceremonies - Music - Dance	69

SECTION TWO. INVASION AND RESISTANCE

A. THE SYDNEY REGION	82
B. HISTORICAL EVENTS	82
C. CULTURE CONTACT / CONFLICT - Case Studies	86
D. ABORIGINAL IDENTITIES	113

SECTION THREE. REBELLION REFORM AND REASSERTION

A. THE ABORIGINAL PROTECTION PERIOD 1850 - 1940's	124
B. THE APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME	142
C. POLITICAL MOVEMENTS IN THE 20's, 30's AND 40's.	145
D. ASSIMILATION 1940's - 1970's.	150

SECTION FOUR. THE CONTEMPORARY SCENE

A. ABORIGINAL STATISTICS	156
B. STEROTYPES	161

SECTION FIVE. APPENDIX

A. ABORIGINAL PLACE NAMES	163
B. CONTACT NAMES AND ADDRESSES	168
C. RESOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY	170

FORWORD

This booklet is an attempt to provide teachers with local and relevant reference material on the history of the Aboriginal People of the Metropolitan North Region.

It is not a general overview of the "Aboriginal people of Australia". It is a collection of material about the local area which will hopefully be used by teachers so that Aboriginal Studies and Perspectives will become more interesting and challenging for all students.

The following people helped collect, collate, cull and compile these materials. Their efforts are greatly appreciated.

Don Anderson	Principal Umina Primary.
Allan Arkins	Erina High School
Ron Ashby	Metropolitan North Regional Consultant in Aboriginal Education
Peter Atkinson	Mt. Penang S.S.P.
Christine Black	Gibberagong Field Study Centre Clerical Assistant
Julie Butler	Community Representative
Evan Campbell	Wyong Public School
Kevin Duncan	Community Representative
David Ella	Metropolitan North Region R.A.C.L.O
Bruce Foott	Gibberagong Field Study Centre
Margaret Foott	Berowra Public School
Val Francis	Brooke Avenue Public School
Rex Gardner	Metropolitan North Assistant Regional Director Education
Ivan Goolagong	Community Representative
Julie Goolagong	Community Representative
Keith Hall	T.A.F.E.
Lyn Hall	Metropolitan North Regional Consultant in Aboriginal Education
Alan Henderson	Wyong High School
Graeme Hillier	Erina West Public School
Peter Hourigan	Freshwater High School

Beverly McIlwrith	A.E.C.G. Regional Representative
Roger Pryor	Broken Bay S.S.P.
Greg Roberts	Metropolitan North Regional Consultant in Aboriginal Education
Helen TyasTungal	Metropolitan North Regional Consultant in Aboriginal Education
Jenni Williams	Darkinjung Aboriginal Land Council

If you have any comments and/or criticism's of this resource book please write to the:
Regional Consultant
Aboriginal Education K-12
C/- Metropolitan North Regional Office, 20 George Street,
HORNSBY. N.S.W. 2077

3

INTRODUCTION

The Department of School Education clearly states in the rationale of the Aboriginal Education Policy that "*Aboriginal education in New South Wales is concerned withthe education of all children in respect of contemporary and traditional Aboriginal society* " yet many teachers still only feel comfortable with the traditional aspects of Aboriginal culture. This resource aims to assist teachers to more successfully fulfil all of the aims of the Aboriginal Education Policy.

A chronological approach has been taken in this resource for simplicity of presentation. Teachers can adapt materials as they see fit and not be restrained by this approach if it does not suit the needs of their students.

Historical documents used in this resource were written by European people and have problems in that some of them saw Aboriginal life and customs through 'different eyes' - not only different in the sense of Aboriginal values versus European, but also in terms of their own interest in and emotions towards the Aborigines, and their tolerance and acceptance of the Aboriginal culture. Some of the colonists were more tolerant than others; some were also more observant than others. The descriptive terminology used often varies from writer to writer and terms are not always used consistently. Whilst in some cases having several different descriptions of particular observations or events can lead to clarification of a point, it can sometimes lead to apparent conflicts in the descriptions of the various activities and customs of Aboriginal people and are now the cause of some debate. For example, the word 'tribe' was used variously to refer to named groups of people from different geographic areas. These groups were not necessarily tribes (i.e. a political/linguistic group), but were often clans and/or bands of extended family groups which had come together for specific purposes.

In the journals, books, letters, etc. written by the colonists and visitors after 1800 the descriptions are based on 'hearsay' information they must have received from local residents or that they gained from the writings of people such as Tench, Hunter, White, Collins and

Stockdale, which had by that time been published. Thus these descriptions may not be accurate or truthful. It is necessary when using the historic documents to remember the biases which may have unconsciously, or sometimes consciously, crept into them and point this out to students.

The Metropolitan North Region is an arbitrary boundary as defined by the Department of Education. It ranges from the Harbour Bridge in the south to Lake Macquarie in the north., from Manly in the east to Galston in the west. The Metropolitan North Regional boundaries are not those of the traditional Aboriginal people and hence there is overlap from numerous different traditional cultural groups.

At all times local Aboriginal community input should be encouraged and sought. If in doubt as to who to contact, check with either the Regional Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer (R.A.C.L.O.) or the local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (A.E.C.G.) representative.

In this document an Aborigine is a person of Aboriginal descent, who identifies and is accepted as such by the community with which he or she is associated. (Commonwealth Government definition).

4

An Overview of the Resource

TOPIC section 1

The Land and The People

- A. The Land
- B. Technology
- C. Lifestyle
- D. The People

COMPONENTS

Part A. The Land

1. Geographical description
2. Countries and languages
3. Country and belonging

Part B. Technology

1. Tools, weapons, artefacts and utensils
2. Art, rock engravings, cave paintings

Part C. Lifestyles

1. Food - fish, shellfish, materials, birds, plants
2. Housing
3. Clothing and adornment

Part D. The People

1. Kinship and marriage
2. Law and religion
3. Ceremonies, music and dance

SCOPE - section 1

This section is primarily concerned with providing information based on traditional Aboriginal people. The general theme is the human being, land and the relationship between them which is looked at from differing aspects in each of the sections.

1. The geographical setting (vegetation, landform, rainfall, temperature) which can be addressed in terms of Aboriginal/non Aboriginal adaptation/habitability.
2. Consideration of country or in what way does/ did the Aboriginal citizen relate to his/her nation
3. Cultural geography, an examination of art, music/musical instruments and material culture of the traditional Aboriginal people in the Metropolitan North Region.
4. Language (dialects) of tribes/nations - linguistic and cultural notions of the same.
5. Environment and conservation issues relating to traditional Aboriginal culture.

TOPIC section 2

Invasion and Resistance

COMPONENTS

Part A The Moving Frontier - The Sydney Region

Part B Historical events

Part C Culture Conflict - case studies

Part D Aboriginal Identities

5

SCOPE - section 2

The emphasis is on the colonial situation of the first 100 years - the moving frontiers of European invasion and occupation of Aboriginal land. It can be related to local and colonial economic forces and the geography of Australia. Following this is an account of reserve creation in its differing contexts in NSW and around Sydney.

TOPIC section 3

Rebellion Reform and Reassertion

COMPONENTS

Part A. Political and Social Injustices - The Aboriginal Protection Period 1850-1940's

Part B. The Apprenticeship Scheme

Part C. Political movements in the 1920's, 30's and 40's

Part D. Assimilation 1940's - 1970's

SCOPE - section 3

A chronology or account of local and regional experiences and responses are discussed.

The experience of colonialism poses difficulties in obtaining information for earlier periods of European occupation (ie up to the 1880's in NSW). A much better account is available after because of the creation of the Aborigines Protection Board during which Aboriginal experiences became a firm part of oral history and institutional records.

This section will particularly highlight "The Apprenticeships Scheme" and the Aboriginal

political movements of the 1920's, 30's and 40's.

This section also deals with post WWII Aboriginal Australia and surveys a number of specific events and issues which have continued and refined the Aboriginal rights theme whether it be 'civil rights' or 'land rights.'

TOPIC section 4

The Contemporary Scene

SCOPE - section 4

Part A. Aboriginal statistics

Part B. Stereotypes

Socio-economic indicators and stereotypes about Aboriginal people.

TOPIC section 5

Appendix

SCOPE section 5

Appendix A - Aboriginal place names

Appendix B - Contact name and addresses

Appendix C - Resources and bibliography

6

A. THE LAND

1. GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION

THE NATURAL SETTING - THE SYDNEY REGION

The Sydney Region is centrally located on coastal New South Wales extending over 85km from Broken Bay in the north to the Woronora Plateau in the south, and from the Tasman Sea 80km westward to the foothills of the Blue Mountains. Covering an area of some 4080sq km, the Sydney Region exhibits a unique assemblage of natural features.

Geologically the region occupies the central portion of the Sydney Basin and exposed sediments date from the Middle Triassic, about 230 million years ago. The oldest rocks, Narrabeen shales and sandstones, outcrop at the northern and southern extremities of this saucer-shaped structure. They are overlain by the younger Hawkesbury Sandstone which, particularly in the low central portion of the region, is covered by the Wianamatta Shale Group. Igneous activity dating from the Jurassic (150 million years ago) has left a legacy of diatremes and dykes. Thermal doming and later episodic subsidence associated with the formation of the Tasman Sea

(60-80 million years ago) have contributed to the present topography.

Many of the suburbs are located on the Cumberland Plain, a complex of low, undulating hills of Wianamatta Shale extending westward from the southern shore of Port Jackson. It is bounded by three sandstone plateaux, the Blue Mountains to the west, the northern Hornsby Plateau rising sharply from Sydney Harbour and the more gradual ascent of the Woronora Plateau south of Botany Bay. While Wianamatta Shale outcrops on northern ridges, the coastal plateaux are mainly formed of Hawkesbury Sandstone which, being resistant to erosion, contributes to Sydney's spectacular coastal scenery. Subdued cliffs form where Narrabeen Shale outcrops, and brecciated diatremes are differentially eroded to form valleys within the sandstone. The structurally controlled bays and ports are rias or drowned river valleys, incised in the sandstone during ice ages when sea level was lower. Beaches and dunes are relict deposits derived from the ancient fluvial sands. The Nepean/Hawkesbury River System has been responsible for sedimentation seen in stepped terraces in the north-west of the Cumberland Plain.

Soil types are related to geology and landform. The most widely distributed of the soil types in the higher plateau is Hawkesbury Sandstone which is sandy, dry with a low water retaining capacity, hence plants that grow in it develop the capacity to store or lose very little water. The sandstone weathers to form the sandy dune areas along the coast where there are headlands of Hawkesbury Sandstone.

More fertile soil is associated with the clay rich, red brown earths of Wianamatta shale which becomes saturated when wet and cracks hard during very dry weather. It is found in the low lying areas in valley floors, such as the Cumberland Plain, the Nepean and Hawkesbury River valleys and from Ryde up to beyond Hornsby and Pennant Hills. The shale derived from igneous rocks weathers quickly in comparison to Hawkesbury Sandstone.

Narrabeen Shale is a darker red clay soil to be found in small areas around the Northern Beaches of Sydney - Collaroy to Palm Beach. It is rich in nutrients and supports a scrubby vegetation

See the map of the Sydney Region - Major landforms.

7

Sydney experiences a warm temperate eastern maritime **climate** with local variations due to landforms and distance from the sea. Coastal areas receive an average annual rainfall of 1210mm with an autumn/winter maximum and an average diurnal temperature range from 22C in January to 11.8C in July. Orographic uplift of onshore winds produces higher rainfall totals (up to 1350mm) on the coastal plateaux, while rainfall decreases to less than 700mm in the rainshadow belt east of the Nepean/Hawkesbury River. The diminishing effects of moderating sea breezes, and cold air drainage from the Blue Mountains, increase temperature range with distance from the coast. Frosts are experienced in winter in the western suburbs.

South east and north east **winds** are responsible for most of the rainfall during summer. While the westerlies are the prevailing winds during autumn, winter and early spring. On shore salty winds stunt vegetation in the coastal dune areas and the westerlies effect the vegetation on the windward slopes of plateau areas.

Local combinations of geology, landforms, soil and climate governed the original diversity and distribution of the flora, little of which now remains except in the national parks. The impact of human activities in most areas has been total. Woodland and open forest once dominated the coastal plateaux and dry western Cumberland Plain with tall open forest on the higher rainfall shale belt and in sheltered valleys in the sandstone areas. Elsewhere, remnant rainforest, heath, sedgelands, sand dune and mangrove communities contribute to the present vegetation patterns.

There is no doubt that the landscape of the study region has changed dramatically since European invasion.

It would also stand to reason that if the area was more fully covered with trees the animal and plant foods would have been quite high and therefore have supported a large population especially with the abundance of seafood available to them.

The rock engravings in the study area also display a number of animals not commonly seen in the area today eg. turtles, whales and penguins. This may indicate a fall in numbers of these animals due to changing environments and destruction of habitats.

8

LANDFORM, CLIMATE AND VEGETATION

The following map shows that this Region has very different types of topography. Compare this map with the rainfall map on the next page and discuss the vegetation that would occur naturally. Do you notice anything about the way the landform affects rainfall and vegetation?

Think about the following question and describe in words or pictures, what the country would be like in earlier times.

1. How much rain falls along the coastal area of this region.

2. What is the name given to the climate of the East Coast?
3. How much rain does the area of the Cumberland Plains have per year?
4. Why, do you think, that only short, small-leaved plants grow in the Hawkesbury sandstone areas of the plateaus.
5. What sort of vegetation would grow on the alluvial river flats and terraces?

Project

Find all the information you can about climate and rainfall in your area.

List the plants and animals which would be natural to your area.

Draw or **collect** pictures to describe the natural environment of your area.

Write a short story telling how you would have lived 500 years ago in that area. Imagine what food you would eat, what clothes and housing you would need and what materials you could use to make things needed to make your life comfortable.

2 COUNTRIES AND LANGUAGES

The original inhabitants of this continent were called Aborigines by the European colonists

because that is exactly what the name means (original inhabitants). They had different names for themselves depending on which country they come from. Today, the Aboriginal people call themselves KOORIES if they come from Eastern N.S.W., for example, or MURRIES if they come from Western N.S.W.

Aboriginal people were never nomadic. They moved around their own country just as many people do in Australia today when they go on a holiday to the mountains or to the city. However, Aboriginal people camped at different places within their own country, and did so because of religious beliefs or because seasonal food was available at that time.

There were at least 719 different countries in this continent. The people who belonged in these countries shared similar languages and lifestyles to their neighbours in that area, but they still considered themselves a separate community which was special to the land they lived on.

This study is concerned with the Aboriginal people who live and lived in the area of Sydney from Port Jackson north to around Lake Macquarie. Prior to disruption by European invasion, the Aboriginal people who habitually lived within the study area were primarily the Kuringgai and the Darkingung (Darginyung or Darkinjang) people. **See map of Aboriginal languages of the Sydney Region.**

Although there is a certain amount of conflicting evidence regarding the language and tribal groups and the spelling of these groups' names in the Sydney Basin, most recent studies suggest the following divisions to be valid (Capell 1970):

The language spoken around Port Jackson was a dialect of Dharruk (Dharug). The Dharruk themselves lived inland of Sydney and their territory extended as far north as the Hawkesbury River, a boundary they shared with the Darkingung. Darkingung territory extended from the Hawkesbury River northwards to Wollombi and the southern drainage of the Hunter River.

East of the inland Dharruk and Darginyung were the coastal Kuringgai (Gurinygai), who lived both north and south of Broken Bay. To the south, they merged with the Thurrawal (Dharawal) on the Sydney peninsula and north they merged with the Awabal (Awabagal) who were centred around Lake Macquarie and Newcastle.

There was considerable enmity and ritualised fighting between the Kuringgai of the study area and the people to the north and to a less extent, with the Dharawal (Thurrawal) to the south. Relationships with the inland Dharruk too, were sometimes strained (Collins 1798:44.) although trading occurred. Indeed, Dharruk was structurally a very different language from Kuringgai, having affinities with the languages of the north coast of New South Wales, whilst the Kuringgai spoke a language like those in the Western Desert (Capell 1970.)

By contrast relationships between the Kuringgai north and south of Broken Bay and the inland Darkingung and the Darkingung and the Awaba were apparently very cordial. Reciprocal visits were made each year between the groups and trade items were exchanged.

These trading sojourns were accompanied by festivities, and this enabled the clans of each group to barter for materials which were either deficient or non-existent in their own area.

The Darkingung had several trading routes in the Wollombi region. One route led up to the headwaters of the Wollombi Brook, on to Kulnura, and down to Ourimbah near Gosford. Indeed Kulnura was a favoured camping ground of the Wollombi people. Another trading route was from Howe's Valley near Putty, territory of the Darkingung across the mountains to Boree, 10km west of Wollombi. Residents of the Wollombi area also recall the Aborigines using the Boree Track and The Devil's Rock for intertribal ceremonies and initiations (Elkin 1949:129 quoted in Smith 1983).

There have been reported instances of materials which could have been traded into or through the Darkingung territory. The first item was a piece of sandstone, used as a grindstone, which was located at Moree in north-western N.S.W. The rock was identified as Hawkesbury sandstone, that is sandstone from Hawkesbury rock stratum. Also a pure form of Bathurst quartz was traded into this region for use in ceremonies.

A recent study has indicated that the Darkingung Aborigines were the central link in a trading sequence which extended from the Newcastle region south to the Port Jackson area. This idea is evidenced by the existence of cherts, a rock type whose source can be identified from geological mapping of rock strata. Cherts identified in the Darkingung area may have originated from as far away as the south coast. (Needham, 1981)

The MacDonald Valley is thought to have been used as a major trading route between the coast and inland (McCarthy 1939 :1). It was also thought to have been an access route from the Great Divide to Brisbane Waters and from Bulga Plains to Cockfighter Creek (McCarthy 1939 :407). The above routes as well as the trade route also included a route to Mangrove Mountain that went through Wollombi. A direct route between these two places lies along the Kulnura/Peat's Ridge. This may have been used as an access route. This ridge is quite predominant, and was also found to be the most accessible place to build the Peat's Ridge Road (Elkin 1946 : 6-7). The information about these trade routes comes largely from the descendants of the settlers in the area, remembering what their fathers had told them or what the Aborigines had told them (McCarthy 1939 :2).

The idea that Aborigines followed defined routes or paths and used ridge tops as access routes is, in part, supported by observations made during early European explorations of Port Jackson and Pittwater. Hunter, during the exploration of Broken Bay, found the country very rugged but stated that they could usually find paths well trodden down by the Aborigines travelling along the coast. These paths were found on the most easily accessible parts of the hills and used the shortest routes (Hunter 1793:102).

Also, Hunter describes a meeting with two Aboriginal men during exploration of the lower Hawkesbury or Colo River who had seen Europeans in Sydney. Hunter thought that these two had travelled from Sydney as they were the only people from this district who were not afraid of them and who also appeared to be familiar with European customs (Hunter 1793:120-1).

The Kuringgai officiated at the tooth avulsion puberty rituals held on the Sydney peninsula, and they joined with the feasting when a whale was washed ashore at Manly (Collins 1789:490). When Europeans first visited Brisbane Water in 1788, they recognised Aborigines whom they had seen in Sydney, and further contact between the two areas was demonstrated by the presence of goods obtained from Sydney in an Aboriginal camp on Brisbane Water (Bradley 1969:90;

Reference for trade: "Trade Routes" a video from the series, The Rainbow Serpent by SBS.

Travelling to remote and often spectacular locations, 'Trade Routes' analyses in social and economic terms how important the trade routes were to Australia's Aborigines and how a traditional system of nonequitable debt is so powerful it remains today.

See map from The Rainbow Serpent series showing trade routes in Australia.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE ABORIGINAL GROUPS

Something needs to be said about the relationships of the languages here discussed to each other. The boundaries of Kuringgai are now fairly clear except on the west. If Dharruk did not reach the coast between Manly and Broken Bay, where is its eastern boundary? There is no natural boundary and it is curious that although Port Jackson does seem to form a natural boundary on the south of the Kuringgai area, Broken Bay, a more difficult crossing, did not bound it on the north.

North of the Hawkesbury River Dharruk would meet Darkingung in the west and a Kuringgai dialect in the east.

The nature of the differences between these languages must now be indicated to provide evidence for classing Kuringgai as a language separate from Awabagal and giving it a separate status. This can best be done by means of a short vocabulary of all the languages in the area under discussion. This is presented in Table 1.

TABLE I
Vocabulary Comparisons in the Languages of the Sydney Area

English	Dharawal	Sydney	Dharuk	Kuringgai	Darkingung	Awaba
Beard	walu	walu	yariy	yari	yariy	yari
Cheek	walu	bira		yundariy		galu
Ear	guri	guri	guri	muranj	binuyari	nuraway, barabara
Eye	mabura	mai	mibarai	mi gay	mi gay	yaiguy
Fish	danj	mdgura	mdgara	mdgaru		mdguru
Forehead	yulu	yulu	yanan	gunbilan	yanan	yulu, jindiri
Hand	maramun	ddmara	ddmar	madjara	buril	madara
Man	juwinj	guri dalai	guri dalai	guri	guri	guri
Opossum	gurawura	burumin	wali	gurabil	giribil	wilai
Rain	bana	bana, wailan	murgu	bana	murgu	bwarin
Stone	gurabuy	gibar	gibar	buidja	djurug	dunuy
Sun	wuri	gain	guwinj	bangal	banal	banal

Water	yadunu	baidu	baidu	gugwinj, baidu	baidu	gugwinj gulun
Woman	mega	din	djin	nuguy	njuguy	nuguy

Notes: "Ear" and "man" are distinguished by the untrilled in the former, trilled in the latter. (Capel 1970)

16

3 COUNTRY & BELONGING.

The Kuringgai Aboriginal people who comprised several sub-groups such as the Gayimai, Camaraigal and Cadigal, lived in the Sydney coastal area bounded by Gosford, Port Jackson and Parramatta. The living area of individual "family" groups would have been much smaller.

The Aborigines living space was determined by the amount of food an area produced and that also determined the number of people in any one area at anytime. The Hawkesbury River, Broken Bay and the coastline provided much of the food for the Aborigines as is evident by the shell middens found at numerous locations along the foreshores. Kinship ties, trade, status and other cultural and social factors determined how far an Aboriginal group travelled.

Members of each tribe or nation shared the same language, social customs and shared territory situated within specific but elastic geographical units. Each nation consisted of a number of descendant groups or clans. The clan was the land owning group as ownership was by the group rather than the individual (Vinnicombe 19801V:2)

A wide network of kinship ties and obligations entitled land owning clans to economic and social links which extended far beyond their own territory. This meant that a temporary abundance of resources in one area were accessible to others.

Such extended rights and ties were promoted and maintained by regular gatherings at which songs, dances and stories were exchanged and wives were sought. Sometimes inter-clan or tribal rituals were conducted. It is significant to note that the 'religious' aspect of land ownership was more important to the Aboriginal people than the economic aspect (Vinnicombe 1980 p.1V:3)

Throughout Australia there is a strong affiliation between the Aboriginal people and their land and it has been said it would be as correct to speak of the land possessing them rather than them possessing land. (Vinnicombe 1V:3 1980 from Bennett 1977)

When Aboriginal people use the sayings 'my country' or being from such and such a country, they are most often expressing a different relationship (to that of the European usage) between themselves and their home region.

Just as Europeans add "n" to the word Australia when they say 'I am Australian' (I am a citizen, belong to Australia) so too do Aboriginal languages show this relationship by usually adding a small part to the name of their country (e.g. the Arrentye of central Australia add "renye" to their words for country to give a similar meaning as the "n" to the word Australia. Note that "renye" and equivalents used in other Aboriginal languages have the meaning 'of', or 'belonging

to', 'derived from' or 'inseparably tied to').

However, while the idea of nationality is virtually the same, Aboriginal peoples sense of belonging to country is distinctly powerful because of the awareness of ancestral occupation, historical occupation and the religious interpretation of human birth and ancestry. Aborigines take their identity from their country, as does an Indonesian from Indonesia and have rights parallel to the 'citizenship' rights of any people in their own country.

17

PART B. TECHNOLOGY.

1. Tools, Weapons, Utensils & Artefacts.

The Kuringgai Aborigines' knowledge of their natural environment was complimented by a rich material culture. It should be noted however that the implements of the material culture were all made of materials from the natural world, indicating a wider knowledge of this environment than just for eating purposes.

The tools and weapons used on the Central Coast area were similar to the those used by Aborigines throughout the Sydney Basin and the Hunter Valley.

The men used several types of spears, two of which were a single pronged one for hunting (the barbs of which were either oyster shell or wood) and a multi-pronged "fish - gig". These were usually carried in the hand as well as a spear-thrower, waddy (wooden club), wooden shield, boomerang and stone hatchet. The smaller items were often thrust into the band worn around the waist when not in use.

Up to three lengths of stem made up the shaft of the spear and these were joined together by resin from the base of the grass tree.

Fishing spears, known as mootim in the study area, were usually made from the stem of the grass tree Xanthorrhoea sp., with three strong prongs, (made from fish teeth, or bones, shells, stingray spines or hardwood.) bound to the end (Mathew in Harvard 1943:193)

Hunting spears, on the other hand, were barbed with bone or pieces of shell by the coastal people, while those who lived inland used stone (Collins 1798: 586). After contact by Europeans, bits of bottle glass were used. The barbs were fixed to the shaft by means of Xanthorrhoea resin which was softened with fire, and beeswax which afterwards set very hard (Hunter 1793: 495). The spears were thrown either straight from the hand, or with the aid of a spear-thrower or woomerah, which gave them added force. The spear-throwers, carved from wood, were also furnished with a piece of shell, stone or glass at one end which was used as a multi-purpose tool, or more especially as a gouge or scraper.

The waddy or club, made from a hard wood, was used in combat or for throwing at animals, as was also the boomerang. Shields, oval in shape, were carved from wood and then usually

decorated with a quartered design in red ochre and pipe clay. The manufacture of stone hatchets, known as mogo, was also described by the colonists. The stone was said to come from the shallows on the upper Hawkesbury and after being sharpened to a fine edge by friction, was bound to a wooden handle and fixed with gum (Collins 1798: 586).

The women were associated with fishing lines and hooks. Grinding stones were also used by the women to beat, roots and seeds to make them soft.

The fishing equipment used by the women was quite different. Their hooks were made of the inside of a shell resembling mother of pearl. This was the turban, Turbo torquata, which was broken into a ring two or three centimetres in diameter, then ground with a coarse stone file into a crescent shape, sharpened at one end and frequently notched at the other to attach the line. The shiny inside of the shell acted as a lure, and this, in addition to a ground-bait of chewed shellfish which was spat into the water to attract the fish, usually resulted in success. According to some accounts, hooks also were made from wood, bone or bird claws and these were probably baited.

18

The fishing lines were made from twisted grasses and fig tree bark which were also the material for nets and bags. In the bags (used by both men and women) they carried the meat from shell fish, ochre, resin, hooks and lines, shells ornaments and points for spears.

The women also carried coolamons (wooden vessels) to carry goods and after the contact period, tin pots and other containers. The net bags were often slung from the forehead and carried hanging down the back (Mathew in Harvard 1967: 189)

Several examples of the material possessions of the Aborigines who formerly lived in the study area have been preserved. Most of them were found stored in rock shelters and have subsequently been donated to the Australian Museum, Sydney. These items include an excellently preserved stone hatchet bound to a wooden handle, a large boomerang with an all-over incised design and a gnarled coolamon which has been repaired with gum.

Non-portable belongings such as bark canoes were usually left moored near the fishing grounds. The canoes had to be renewed at regular intervals. Bark was cut from the trees soon after rains when the sap was rising. At this time the bark is both stronger and more pliable. The ends of the bark were simply folded, skewered together with pegs and caulked with Xanthorrhoea resin (Hunter 1793: 495). The canoes were propelled with paddles, often to the accompaniment of a rhythmical song, or with a pole where water was sufficiently shallow (Collins 1798: 593). The canoe was kept open by sticks placed across the inside of the canoe. Paddles were about 1/2m in length, one paddle was held in each hand.

Spears made from Xanthorrhoea stems were much in demand by Aborigines who did not have this resource to hand and they were an important item of trade between the coastal Aborigines and those in the Hunter Valley.

Xanthorrhoea provided resin for hafting stone and shell implements and for mending leaking canoes and wooden vessels. In addition, segments of the resinous trunk, when rubbed together

readily produced fire (Bennett 1833:62)

Bark was used for many items - shelters (huts), shields, baskets, fishing lines, bowls, net bags. Phillip described the Aborigines putting a piece of bark over their heads when they slept and also using it to keep the rain from their heads and shoulders. The bark used for canoes was described by Worgan as coming from a tree which 'bears leaves like a Fir' and 'somewhat resembles the Fir in its Growth' (1788:11, 17). Worgan is probably referring to Casuarina. Soft bark from the tea-tree (probably Melaleuca sp.) was used to lay new-born babies on and to carry them about in.

Hardwood was used in manufacturing spears: for either the whole spear which consisted of one piece with the end sharpened to a point, or for part of a multi-component spear - e.g. a segment of the shaft would be hardwood with the remainder being of the flowering stem of the grass tree, or just the barbs would be hardwood. Collins referred to fishing spears ('the fiz-gig') being made out of wattle (1788 [1975]:461). Spearthrowers and some shields were also made of solid wood. Collins added that the wood used for shields was hardened by fire.

The wooden 'digging sticks' used by the women to obtain yams and other root vegetables would also have been hardwood. Other wooden items included bowls, parring sticks, 'swords' and 'scimitars', clubs, boomerangs, and axe handles. (Attenbrow 1988 pp42-43).

19

BONE AND SHELL TOOLS.

Bone tools were used all over Australia, as spear tips, fish gorges, harpoon heads, pegs for spear throwers and as death pointers or deadly weapons.

Cutting equipment included axes with stone heads attached to a handle with resin and bound securely with sinews. Chisels and knives were manufactured by shaping and sharpening a selected stone and attaching it to a wooden handle. Heavy wedge shaped choppers and mallets were used to shape canoes and shields. Suitable shells such as oyster shells were also used for cutting implements.

The canoes, fish-gigs, swords, shields, spears, throwing sticks, clubs and hatchets are made by the men; the women made the fishing-lines, hooks and nets.

To make these wooden implements, shell tools were frequently employed. The shell at one end of the throwing stick is intended for sharpening the point of the lance and for various other uses. Shell tools were sometimes sharpened with the teeth and could be used while held in the hand.

LOCAL HUMAN TECHNOLOGY

An eyewitness account from Swancott (1955) - referring to the collection of animals in the Tuggerah Lakes District.

This district has ever been noted for its saleable timber, many of the trees attaining a height of 80 or 90 feet before putting forth a branch. I had previously heard of natives ascending these trees for the purpose of securing an opossum, honey, bird's nests and other articles of food, by means of cutting

steps or notches in the trees as they ascended.

My desire now was to witness the performance. By the offer of 6d I had very little difficulty in obtaining a volunteer, a very old man. On standing up this man presented a remarkable figure; his legs and arms were long and sinewy, his feet large and well flattened out and his stomach, on account of the amount of kangaroo meat in camp, was round like a globe. The tree which he was about to ascend was estimated at 70 feet to the lowest branch, a blue gum with a smooth bark.

He at once fixed upon the proper side for ascending, then standing close up to the tree he cut one notch at about the height of his forehead; then without shifting his position he cut a second one on the level with his waist. Standing with his right foot in the cut, he made a third one at the height of his forehead, then standing with his left foot in the first cut he was able to make a fourth cut at his full height. As there is little or nothing to hold on by, except a small cut made by the climber, into which he can barely insert the tips of his fingers, it is necessary that the body be kept close to the tree. This is the only way which can be adopted, unless by the employment of a vine, which many blacks use by passing it round a tree like a rope and so holding on while cutting these notches.

23

2. ART, ROCK ENGRAVINGS, CAVEPAINTINGS.

The antiquity of Aboriginal people is now documented by a number of world archeological firsts found in the past few years.

Not only the first cremations in the world (26,000 years old), but the first ceramics (30,800), the earliest use of ochre for art (32,000), the first edge-ground axes (23,000), some of the earliest rock carving (at least 20,000 years old) and the earliest mastery of the boomerang (12,000 years old). (Dawn of Man - extract from *Aborigines of Hunter Region*)

ENGRAVINGS

The engravings of the Sydney district and Hawkesbury River catchment are unique and world famous. Engravings are found in many other parts of Australia but they are usually quite different from those of the Sydney area. Also interesting is the relative abundance of engravings in this area. In Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park alone, there are a couple of hundred groups of engravings comprising in all a thousand or more figures. There are probably several thousand more in the rest of the Hawkesbury River catchment. It is likely, then that the engravings played an important role in the cultural life of the Aborigines here.

Middens are associated with tidal water, whilst engravings are associated predominantly with Hawkesbury Sandstone ridges. Since the sum total of ridge length in the Sydney and Gosford/Wyong district far exceeds the sum total of estuarine shore-line, the frequency of

engraving sites may be expected to exceed the number of middens.

The ages of the engravings are unknown. Some must be less than 200 years old, because they depict European objects such as ships. Others may be much older. Researchers are attempting to devise effective methods of dating the engravings, but for the moment we can only guess. There is some evidence that Hawkesbury Sandstone weathers relatively quickly and some engravings may therefore appear older than they really are.

The wide range of degrees of weathering seems to indicate a cultural tradition continuing through time, but lack of geological information about the properties of the sandstone prevents absolute dating of the faintest figures.

McCarthy (1937 : 406) has suggested that figures which have wide and deep smoothed grooves may be the oldest, probably having been re-rubbed by generations of artists.

There are several references to the carvings in the writings of the early colonists - mainly just observations of their presence around the settlement. George French Angus conducted the only anthropological research on the engravings.

We selected "Old Queen Gooseberry" (as she is generally styled by the colonists) to be our guide, promising her a reward of flour and tobacco if she would tell us what she knew about these carvings, and conduct us to all the rocks and headlands in the neighbourhood where like figures existed. At first the old woman objected, saying that such places were all *koradjee* ground, or "priests' ground," and that she must not visit them; but a length, becoming more communicative, she told us all she knew and all that she had heard her father say respecting them.

She likewise consented at last to guide us to several spots near the North head, where she said the carvings existed in great numbers; as also impressions of hands upon the sides of high rocks. (Angus 1847) 25

Aboriginal Carvings, or Outline Tracings, upon Rocks and Headlands in the vicinity of Port Jackson.

FROM: *Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand, George French Angus 1847 Vol. 11.*

These are to be found on North Head, on South Reef Promontory, on Middle Head, at Camp Cove, at Point Piper, at Mossman's Bay, and at Lane Cove on Mr. Kirk's property.

The subjects represented are the human figure, the hieleman, or shield; kangaroos, birds, flying squirrels, balck swans, and various sorts of fish, some of them twenty-seven feet in length.

In Lane Cove, in Middle Harbour, at George's Head, and at Port Aiken, are carved heads; and at the latter place, parts of the human body cut in intaglio. At Port Aiken and in Middle Harbour they are found in caves, formed by projecting masses of rock, called by the natives "Giber Gunyah" stone or rock house.

Relative to these tracings, or carvings, upon the surface rocks of projecting

headlands, their uses or intention are now only legendary. The natives say, that "black fellow made them long ago".

They agree in stating that the tribes did not reside upon these spots, assigning as a reason - "Too much dibble-dibble walk about;" for they greatly fear meeting the "dibble" or some evil spirit in their rambles, and never leave their camp at night. They state that these places were all sacred to the priest, doctor, or conjurer - for the one is the other among these tribes. A man potent in spells and of great dread, is the Ko-ra-gee - Chiruga. The oldest person in the Sydney tribe, is the widow of the chief who ruled when the first fleet arrived, and whose name was "Bungaree;" thence dignified as "King Bungaree."

His queen has survived her glories, and she now totters about, very aged and decrepit, known as "Old Gooseberry;" but her memory is still good. In her statements she says she was no eye-witness- "Bel I see it, my father tell me" - so that all is a matter of legend relating to these carvings.

Location of Engravings.

The soft nature of the Hawkesbury Sandstone provided an ideal medium for engraving. There are thousands of engraving sites within a radius of 100 kilometres of Port Jackson, depicting animals of all kinds, weapons, people, tracks and dreaming characters. Most of them are lifesize, but they range from small animal tracks to gigantic figures possibly of the culture hero, Daramulan, over ten metres in length. Kangaroo and whale outlines on a comparably large scale also occur.

McCarthy (1937 : 91) had observed that the outline engravings of the Sydney district do not appear to extend over the whole of the Hawkesbury sandstone terrain. They have not been recorded further north than the Putty and Wollombi districts, although cave art in the region extends further across the plateau, north to the Hunter and Goulburn River valleys and west toward the Great Dividing Range.

26

Comparison of the engravings in the north-western section of their range with those in the Sydney-Hawkesbury coastal districts reveal some differences, both in subject matter and technique. Among the engravings described here, there are, as would be expected in an inland area, few fish or marine subjects, which are common on the coast, but many kangaroo and emu tracks, which are subjects which are uncommon in the coastal districts, although the animals themselves are well represented among the engravings there. The significance of this is not known.

The localities selected for these carvings are most varied in character, but they are generally bare of trees. This arises partly on account of the rocky ground where the large smooth surfaces most often occur, and partly perhaps to secure for the more important groups a commanding view of the surrounding country and of sites of other carvings, and the ocean or some sheet of water.

The tops of sea cliffs are favourite sites, and also the table-lands and the ridges of the hills along which the people travelled; sometimes the bald rocky prominence formed by the crest of a range

is selected, at others the smooth rock that frequently forms the floor of a "saddle," or a ledge towards the heads of a valley, or in the bed of a stream. They are also generally found near where dry caves and rock-shelters have been inhabited.

Methodology

Although it is not absolutely sure how the engravings were made it is thought that the outline of the subject was first drawn perhaps with charcoal or scratched on the rock surface. Sometimes the outline of the shadow of a man, or that of dead animal was traced in this way.

Regarding the methods for the production of the outlines in the first instance, some of the figures are probably drawn by laying the object to be represented upon the rock, and marking it round. Another method was by drawing the outline in the case of a man or woman by means of the shadow.

The majority of the figures are, however, probably drawn by eye and exhibit a considerable amount of ability, being either true to nature, or to some adopted design of a deity or spirit.

Next, a number of punctures (pecks) was made around the outline with the sharp corner of a hard stone (e.g. ironstone) or perhaps with a stone gad and hammer. As yet no specialized implements used by these rock artists have been found. If you look carefully at some of the engravings you will see that some of the punctures overlap to form the outline. Other engravings, said to be the most sacred, show that the grooves have been rubbed smooth with an abrading stone.

Some engravings show evidence of regrooving. The largest galleries must have taken many hundreds of hours to produce. The purpose of these sites is not known, but at least some of the larger groups with sacred figures were used during male initiation ceremonies, and these sites were under the control of the *koradji* men of authority and power.

An outstanding feature of many of the kangaroo tracks is the engraving technique which as been used. Of the two hundred or so which occur, about sixty per cent have been engraved by hammering or pecking of the rock away to a fairly uniform overall depth, up to 2cm deep. In some the engraving has been accurately executed to produce a figure with regular, well defined edges. The technique has apparently been dictated by the artist's desire in these cases to reproduce an accurately shaped impression of the animal's track. 27

In some cases the tracks occur together with the animal, providing an interesting combination of techniques in one composition. Among the other figures, a single footprint has been engraved using a similar technique. These hammered figures, which have apparently not been described previously in the engravings of the Sydney-Hawkesbury district, suggest a limited regional development in technique.

The older figures appear to have had the deeper and broader grooves and are generally well smoothed, while those of a later date graduate from this to one formed only by slight punctures cut close together without any subsequent rubbing.

Engraved ships have also been recorded in sites throughout the area. This implies that engravings were still being executed at contact, at most 200 years ago, and that some drawings and engravings are contemporaneous. Mathews gives an account of stencilling being done during

the 1840's by Aborigines of Wollombi Brook (Mathew 1897: 144).

Content and Subject Matter.

In Ku-ring-gai, Muogamarra and Dharug National Park, a number of large figures are depicted which are thought to represent Ancestral Heroes. They are quite dissimilar to one another and could represent different heroes. Daramulan and Baiami were thought to be the principle heroes of the Aborigines in the Sydney area. He was an ancestor of the tribes in this area.

The Durkinung conceived of Daramulan and Baiami as being separate creatures (Mathews 1897a:3). During intertribal initiation ceremonies the Durkinung, as did some coastal tribes, sculptured Daramulan in relief on the ground and carved him on trees (Mathews 1897a:2-3; Howitt 1904:533,540, 1883:447; Berndt 1974:29). Baiami was also represented alongside of Daramulan in the Durkinung ceremonies (Mathews 1904:204).

Daramulan was thought to be married to Kurikuta (Berndt 1974:28) (other names Tippakalleum, Mailkin and Bimpoin - Backhouse 1843:556).

The Kurikuta belief thought to be widespread and she was also supposed to have carried 'charms' made of quartz and wrapped in possum skin. Women were not allowed to see the contents of these skins; one report tells of a European being killed by an Aboriginal for showing a woman the crystals (Backhouse 1843:556-7, quoted in Smith 1983 : 26-27).

The grooves around these Daramulan figures are deep and smooth, suggesting they were used over long periods of time for ceremonials. There is no way as yet of determining an age for engravings. They could be anything from a couple of hundred to a couple of thousand years old.

Most of the motifs found among the Sydney engravings are figurative, and in outline form. Subjects include men and women, animals, birds and marine creatures familiar to the Aboriginal people; common implements; bird and animal tracks and human footprints; some simple geometric figures such as circles; and many irregular shapes whose subject is unidentifiable by uninformed Europeans. Recognisable portrayals of plants and invertebrates are very rare. The scale of most figures is between half and full life-size; there are very few miniatures (unlike most figurative art in other parts of Australia).

Although Koalas and Wombats have been identified in the art record, they are uncommon. The so-called Koalas in engravings often have long legs, buttocks and rounded heads, making them look more like stylised humans in profile than animals. There is a record of an unmistakable image of a Wombat on an engraved rock near Peats Ridge Electric Sub-station, and Fred McCarthy reports several others (McCarthy 1939).

28

Fish are frequently depicted in the rock art of the study area, both drawings and engravings but few are recognisable as to species (Macintosh 1950:152-83). There are exceptions, however, notably eels usually represented with distinctive gills and stingrays shown with ovoid bodies, long tapering tail and two eyes on a flat head. One of these representations is of unusual size, being an engraving 8 metres long on a high ridge in Dharug National Park, at least 20km. from the sea. Curiously, stingrays are said to have never been eaten by the Sydney Aboriginal people (Collins 1798:548), but it is unclear whether this was a temporary prohibition relating to seasonality, age-group or sex, or whether it was a general totemic taboo. Bowdler identified

stringray from the midden at Bass Point (Bowdler 1970), and Aborigines in other areas enjoy the flesh of stingray (Meehan 1977:499).

Macropods form the highest proportion of animal engravings in the open art sites of the study area. Macropods are also the animals most frequently drawn in the rock shelters. Bone counts from the excavations in Upper Mangrove Creek, the area furthest from the coast, are markedly macropod-dominated, constituting as much as 75-80 % of the total count (Aplin in Attenbrow 1980). There would therefore appear to be a close correlation between selectivity in hunting and selectivity in art in the areas furthest from the fish-dominated coastal area.

Although birds are depicted both in drawings and engravings, they are seldom recognisable as to species, with the exception of the Emu, and more rarely Lyre Birds and Brush Turkeys. Emus may be shown singly or in groups, sometimes with their young or with eggs.

Emu tracks are another motif frequently encountered in the art record, but more especially in engravings on exposed horizontal surfaces. They are often placed in a linear sequence just as the tracks would be seen in nature. The tracks may lead to or from a rock pool, may link one engraving with another, or may be associated with images of actual emus.

Snakes are not usually identifiable as to species in the art, but there are exceptions, such as the very clear black charcoal drawing of a Death Adder *Acanthopis antarcticus* with its stout body and distinctive thin rat-like tail. The snake, with tongue extended, is drawn in an elongated honeycombed niche in a large shelter at Cave Point in Ourimbah State Forest. Usually, the snakes are simply shown as serpentine lines which frequently follow natural graining in the rock surface. Sometimes, naturally occurring columnar shapes in the rock have been further modified with engraved lines to enhance the snake-like qualities.

One such example is on a flat rock surface in Kur-ring-gai Chase National Park south of the Hawkesbury River and there is another example on a vertical face of a rock near Mangrove Creek.

As well as providing highly prized food, Goannas feature prominently in the art. Sometimes they are portrayed in such a way that it is difficult to ascertain whether they are indeed depiction of reptiles, or whether they are humans with long tails. In both instances, the arms or forelimbs are shown extending upwards and outwards, with claws or fingers splayed apart. When the tail is long, the figures look predominantly reptilian; when the tail is short, they appear predominantly human, seated in a squatting position.

There also appears to be a correlation between the Dharruk/Dharawal boundary at Botany Bay and the way kangaroos are usually drawn. To the north of Botany Bay (Dharruk and Kuringgai people), kangaroos are almost always depicted in profile with two legs, one eye and one ear. To the south of Botany Bay (Dharawal), kangaroos have four legs, two eyes and two ears. Drawings of eels in rock shelters to the north of Botany Bay usually show the head pointed up, while south of it the head points down.

29

Interpretation.

There is no record of the "meaning" of any of the Sydney engravings, or the artists' motives for

making them, or the part that they played in the ceremonial life of these coastal groups. Comparisons with other areas of Australia suggest that the features of the motifs would have been dictated by local mythology, that ceremonies would probably have been performed at some sites, and that some groups of carvings would have been secret to the initiated men and forbidden to women and children. For example - two important culture heroes of south-east Australia were Baiami and Daramulan, who were associated with the sky. It seems quite reasonable that some of the large anthropomorphic figures found among the engravings might be portrayals of these beings. Elsewhere in N.S.W. , Baiami was represented on the initiation ground by a large human figure shaped of earth; carved figures in the Sydney area may have had a similar role. But in other parts of Australia, where local Aborigines are still able to explain the meanings of rock carvings and cave paintings, individual motifs usually have a very specific interpretation, and mythological prominence does not often correlate with artistic prominence. It is, therefore, not very useful to identify particular engraved figures in the Sydney area as characters in local mythology.

The majority of engravings are unlikely to have been initiation sites, and represent other aspects of local Aboriginal culture. Many life-sized human figures and family groups are found and they seem to reflect the different kinds of activities carried out by the group. Indeed there are some engravings which depict women wearing European dresses and others depicting sailing ships, confirming that the engravings continued to be produced after contact with Europeans.

However, McCarthy (1939), in his study of the large series of engravings on the plateau between the Hawkesbury River and Mangrove Creek, concluded that most of the sites there probably sacred ritual centres in which the figures were engraved and used by initiated men during ceremonial visits. Such a conclusion seems reasonable for several of the groups of engravings occur in conjunction with a large rock shelter containing drawings in very rugged and inhospitable country. The presence of large anthropomorphic figures and lines of large footprints in some groups, and the remains of a stone arrangement at one might reasonably be accepted as indicators of a ceremonial function. Women had their own private initiation ceremonies and places that were for women only.

McCarthy's view (1939) that figures in which the outline grooves have been smoothed by rubbing were probably the most important ones to the Aboriginal people, was supported by Elkin (1946).

McCarthy (1939 : 19,405) and Elkin (1946 : 126) have commented on the significance of human, animal and bird tracks as links between groups of engravings and as probable indicators of sacred tracks and ritual paths followed by ancestral beings and by the Aborigines. In several groups, engraved tracks and footprints serve as directional links between sets of engravings.

CAVE DRAWINGS- methodology.

The cave drawings are made in several different ways and with different materials, and are much more durable than might at first be supposed, for the sandstone when dry is very porous, and readily absorbs any oily material to a depth of two centimetres or more.

Drawings in charcoal and red ochre are the most frequent. The outlines of the figures are sometimes drawn with a firm line of a brown tint. This probably is a fatty substance, and the

rest of the figure is filled in with charcoal or red ochre lines, and occasionally solid black or red colour.

Drawings with a white material are more rare. The white pigment is probably in most cases made from the ashes from camp fires in the caves, which in this district are generally composed of calcined shells and wood ashes. This mixed with fat would be readily absorbed into the stone. These have the peculiarity of being readily seen in a dim light.

The Aborigines made cave paintings, usually in one colour, of wallabies, fish, men reptiles and birds. These paintings were applied in black, white, red or yellow ochre or pigment. However, these are not as common as engravings in the Sydney area.

Content.

The most lasting examples of Sydney Aboriginal art are to be found on the Hawkesbury Sandstone rock which surrounds the Cumberland Plain. In the rockshelters and overhangs which are so abundant, the Aborigines drew representations of the objects which were familiar to them. Animals, particularly wallabies, fish and eels, were frequently drawn in outline with charcoal, or sometimes painted with white clay or red ochre. Negative images or stencils of hands, boomerangs, hatchets and spears were produced by blowing pigment from the mouth.

HAND STENCILS.

Stenciled markings of hands with white material is common and red and also black stencilling are also occasionally met with. In this method the palm of the hand is placed against the rock and the paint is then squirted from the mouth upon the rock, while the natural surface is covered by the object. Sometimes the paint appears to have been applied in a state of powder after the whole surface had received a coat of fatty matter. Captain King, an old Aboriginal person, many years ago informed Mr. Izard, of Brooklyn, Hawkesbury, that the hand-marks were made with a mixture of ashes and blood, and squirted from the mouth. In some cases where durability perhaps was not needed pipe-clay was used.

The most common form of painting was hand stencils. These were made by spraying the paint mixture from the mouth, whilst the hand was held flat against the wall of the cave. The paint was allowed to spray around the hand and between the fingers.

One view expressed in Aboriginal circles is that they were formed by the initiated person filling his mouth with ochre and then forcing it through the aperture left by the missing tooth. This would represent a symbolic act. But frequent stencils of the hands of children are found suggesting that this activity was not the province of only initiated men.

Concluding Comments

It is essential that Aboriginal art sites be preserved, and this can only be done with the co-operation of everybody. Unfortunately, through ignorance, neglect and vandalism, many invaluable engravings have been mutilated or destroyed. They can never be replaced!

Aboriginal people today retain a emotional attachment to their land. This special relationship should be respected and all students must be taught to treat any sites they visit with respect.

should be respected and all students must be taught to treat any sites they visit with respect.

31

An example of past ignorance can be found in the book: *Pioneers of the Hornsby Shire 1788-1906* (Hornsby Historical Society, Griffin Press 1978)

At the northern end of Quarter Sessions Road there are the remains of a camp site where there were a number of carvings. Many have been lost but some remain.

There was a carving among others of a large upright kangaroo all quarried away in the 1930s. Axe-grinding grooves that remained were bulldozed and destroyed in 1977. The carvings that remain show a wallaby sitting up, two dead wallabies, three fish, a koala and a noose. There is also in the vicinity a tree showing scars where bark has been cut from it. There was also a ritual stone arrangement. This too, has been bull-dozed away.

Further south was an area which may have been another camp site where stone tools were made. Nearby an aboriginal skull was found last century, so part of the complex had been used for burial. Since that time the spot has been known as 'Blackfellow's Head', the name being carved in the large flat rock area near the quarry.

Another site in Thornleigh lies west of the station in what was to become the 'Slaughteryard Paddock'. Here it is likely grass seeds were gathered and wallabies speared as they came to feed on the grass. Farther east was another aboriginal campsite destroyed when the railway went through in 1884.

Organising an Excursion to an Aboriginal Site.

When organising an excursion to a site the following points should be considered;

- * How does the excursion fit into the class' program of work?
- * Are Aboriginal people involved?
- * Is the excursion to focus on traditional, transitional or contemporary aspects of Aboriginal history/culture?
- * Who needs to be contacted for permission to go to the site?
- * Are there any restrictions on entry to the site or on behaviour there?
- * What strategies can be developed to sensitise students to the significance of the site?
- * Have you and other supervisors visited the site and devised methods of class management for the particular site?
- * What work can students carry out at the site?
- * What follow-up will there be?

How does the excursion fit into your class program of work?

Any excursion should be part of a continuing program of work. There are a number of reasons why this is particularly important for excursions involving Aboriginal Studies. For example, it is important that:

*Students know exactly where they are going and what is expected of them during the excursion and follow-up activities.

A great number of Aboriginal sites have been vandalised because people visiting them have not appreciated or respected their significance.

Are Aboriginal people involved?

It is imperative to consult and involve the Aboriginal community when planning an excursion to an Aboriginal Site. There may be implications for that particular community. For instance, recently the Mootwingee National Park has gained publicity because the local Aboriginal people have identified three sacred sites within the park that should be viewed by men only. Public access to these areas is therefore inappropriate.

If a site has been vandalised or weathered extensively the community may not want your class to visit the area. One way to reduce the risk of damage is to record the site on video-tape, preferably with an Aboriginal person narrating, and use it in the classroom.

It is imperative that you know the wishes of the local Aboriginal community and that you respect

those wishes. Contact the local or Regional Aboriginal Lands Council Office.

If the site is situated in an area where there are no Aboriginal people, the National Parks and Wildlife Service employs Aboriginal Sites Officers who will assist you with information and may even accompany the excursion.

37

Is the excursion to focus on traditional, transitional or contemporary aspects of Aboriginal history or culture?

When thinking of an excursion in Aboriginal Studies most teachers still tend to think in terms of excursions that highlight traditional aspects of Aboriginal life.

Even a visit to a site which at first appears purely traditional will allow the teacher to raise issues which are related to contact history or contemporary Aboriginal society. On such excursions, for example, you might raise issues like:

- * changes to the vegetation since contact
- * changes to the physical environment
- * changes to the animal population
- * damage to the actual site
- * responsibility for such sites
- * Land Rights

Sometimes it might be possible to use the one site to look at all three aspects of Aboriginal history. For example, at Mt. Pleasant near Bathurst there is a bora ring; the grave of Colonel Patterson, the commander of the local garrison in the late 1820s; and a huge blue metal quarry which is still operating. A teacher could use this site to raise issues covering the whole spectrum of Aboriginal history. There are probably many other sites with the same potential.

Who needs to be contacted for permission to go to the site?

In the first instance, discover whether the local Aboriginal community is responsible for the site. If it appears that no community person or group has responsibility for the site then contact an Aboriginal Sites Officer at the National Parks and Wildlife Service or the Local or Regional Lands Council. These people should be able to clarify the position regarding the site and also give you further information about it. If the site is on private property, it may be necessary to seek permission from the owners to visit the site.

Are there any restrictions on entry to the site or on behaviour there?

Many people will need to be sensitised to this issue. If visiting a sacred site it may be useful to compare it to similar sites in non-Aboriginal society such as churches, cathedrals or war memorials and suggest that the same standards of behaviour apply.

Teachers should also make students aware that Aboriginal sites are governed by law. A general rule should be to "take nothing but photos, leave nothing but footprints." Teachers should also be

wary of the "collector's syndrome."

Some sites may be particularly sacred to Aboriginal people. If visiting such sites it is important to take care so as to avoid giving offence.

In particular, find out:

- * whether the site is sacred to men or women
- * are there any restrictions on either men or women entering the site
- * to whom do these apply?

If there are any restrictions then they should apply to all, not just to Aboriginal visitors to the site. Such restrictions may make certain sites completely inappropriate for excursions. They should therefore be determined very early in the planning of the excursion.

38

What strategies can be developed to sensitise students to the significance of the site?

If the visit to the site is part of a continuing program of work, then the class should have received some information about its significance well before the actual visit to the site.

A number of techniques can also be devised to sensitise the students before they enter the immediate vicinity of the site. If possible, the local community should be consulted about appropriate techniques. Some possible alternatives could be:

- * use of paint or ochre to decorate faces or bodies
- * prohibitions on breaking twigs or making other noises,
- * prohibitions on stepping on human shadows or
- * listening and concentrating exercises.

Have you and other supervisors visited the site and devised methods of class management for the particular site?

Though this may be difficult to arrange it is always advisable. Much damage can be caused to Aboriginal sites by children milling about. This could be avoided if teachers were aware of where they could place groups and are definite in giving instructions. Teachers will be able to do this if they have visited the site previously. It is also suggested that there be no more than one class in anyone area at the one time.

What work can students carry out at the site?

The most useful technique of class management anywhere is having something interesting and relevant for the students to do. This is particularly important when visiting Aboriginal sites. Children who are bored and have nothing to do are much more likely to cause damage to a site than children who are usefully occupied.

Therefore, it is important that, after visiting the site, the supervisors devise a number of activities for the students to carry out. These will of course vary depending on the site and the class but some which come readily to mind include:

- photographing
- sketching
- writing descriptions
- recording information

recording emotions
marking prepared checklists
answering prepared questionnaires.

What follow-up will there be?

Whatever has been learnt on an excursion needs to be reinforced. It is important that there be some follow up in later lessons. Again, this follow up can take many forms. Some possibilities include:

- * writing up a report of the excursion
- * undertaking further research to discover more about the site. (The Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies in Canberra, NSW National Parks and Wildlife and Aboriginal Land Councils would be a useful sources of information about most sites.)
- * inviting guest speakers associated with the location that was visited to talk to the class.
- * developing a class resource such as a poster record of the visit to the site.

39

PART C. LIFESTYLES

1. FOOD.

In the Hawkesbury Plateau the oldest scientifically dated Aboriginal kitchen midden is 12,000 years B.P. To put this in perspective with events in other parts of the world, agriculture and pottery in South East Asia date from 85,000 B.P. and the Egyptian Pyramids are dated at 4,500 B.P.

For Aboriginal people, the Sydney Coastal Area with its numerous bays, beaches, freshwater lagoons and streams provided an almost perfect environment. Food was in abundance and the climate pleasant. These were the same reasons that the area was settled by the European invaders nearly 200 years ago.

Much of our knowledge about the Aborigines of the Hawkesbury Plateau is hypothesis as the people were devastated and scattered within thirty years of the European invasion.

Traditional Aboriginal society was (and still is) a complex of interrelationships. Living religious and spiritual life was interwoven. All activities hinged on a deep understanding of nature. The men and women knew the haunts and habits of each and every animal. They could recognise the signs of their passing, their particular niches. They knew the seasons, their coming and their waning, and any variations in animal behaviour as a result of these changes. The women knew when to harvest the seeds, berries and the roots of plants, how to treat and prepare them for eating.

The Aboriginal people relied upon an equally intricate pattern of understanding nature. Every nook and cranny of every gully and hill within their territory was etched into their memories. Moreover, they also knew the religious stories behind the origins and behaviour of flora and fauna. For the Aborigines, their lives were intimately linked with the material and religious lores. (*Aborigines of the Hunter Region*)

Fish and Shellfish.

When members of the First Fleet encountered the Aboriginal people on the coast of New South Wales, fish were noted to be their principal item of diet during the summer months.

Vinnicombe lists 39 species of fish (including eels, stingrays and sharks) identified from middens on the NSW South and Central Coast, these included marine as well as estuarine sites (1980: Table 1). Snapper and black bream were the most common fish remains, followed by leatherjackets, wrasse, rock cod and groper. Vinnicombe points out that the species found in middens may not represent all the species eaten by Aborigines.

Fishing Methods.

There appears to have been a marked division of fishing technology between the sexes: the men speared fish with long-handled multi-pronged fish gigs, while the women fished with hand lines and hooks (Lawrence 1969:195-6)

Fish are most successfully speared in shallow water and the men either stood on rocks or in the water, or in simple bark canoes. The speed and dexterity with which they were able to hurl the spears was frequently remarked upon, and sometimes, in order to see the fish more clearly, they would lie on the canoes with their heads partly under water (Collins 1798:556).

40

The women with their hand lines either fished from rocks, or more usually, from the bark canoes which they manoeuvred with great dexterity. Young children accompanied the women while fishing. It was common practice to have a small fire burning in the centre of the canoe, laid on seaweed, sand or a tablet of clay, so that fish could be cooked and eaten straight from the water. The women usually sang while fishing, some of the ditties being designed to persuade the fish to take their baited hooks (Collins 1798:557, 601). In fact, fishing seems to have been a pleasant, social pastime as well as a serious quest for food, as illustrated by the description of a party of Aborigines fishing near The Entrance on Tuggerah Lake in the summer of 1834.

They wait till the water is shallow, and then several enter, together swimming and wading, and persue the fish with astonishing swiftness and dexterity; the spear usually make of the stem of the grass-tree, has three strong points, and is sometimes thrown from the hand alone, and sometimes from a sort of sling of a peculiar construction which gives it amazing force . . . ; they seem to enjoy the sport excessively, laughing and shouting all the time, in which the rest of them on shore seemed to participate, it was really a very animated scene. (Matthews in Harvard 1943)

Sometimes night fishing was practised from canoes, using a flare to attract the quarry (Scott)

From the Aboriginal food-getting point of view there must have been a constant necessity for observation of and adaptation to, the changes in micro-environment as well as to the changing seasons. Changes in silt depositon bring changes in fish-feeding grounds. Changes in temperature dictate whether the fish will be in deep or shallow water. Changes in salinity dictate whether fish and crustaceans are likely to be closer to, or further away from, the fresh water or saline source. A sound knowledge of these varying ecological factors, and an understanding of the effect of one level on another, would have been a basic requirement for the

successful food provider. Moreover, the difference in the availability and distribution of fish in summer and in winter must have had a marked effect on the fishing strategies of the Aborigines.

Because of their predilection for spear fishing, the men in particular would have been affected. Shallow water is the first environment to be forsaken by the fish in winter, and spear fishing is most effective in shallow water (the average length of a fishing spear is 2.5-3 metres). The women, who fished with lines, could have adapted their techniques to follow fish down to deeper water. Indeed, it was noted during the period of first contact, that at the end of winter when the weather was very dry, the men around Sydney were constantly employed in burning patches of grass in order to catch rats and other animals, while the women were still employed in fishing (Hunter 1793:469).

Fishing with hook and line, however, is apparently a relatively recent introduction to Aboriginal technology, the oldest known hooks in Australia being 700 years old (Lambert 1971). Prior to the introduction of line fishing therefore, the men as well as the women were likely to have sought sustenance from terrestrial rather than marine sources during the winter.

The importance of shellfish to coastal Aborigines can be seen by the large number of shell middens which still line the bays of Sydney Harbour and Broken Bay. These middens, which occur both in the open and in rockshelters, contain archaeological evidence pointing to the importance of fishing and its associated technology for at least the last 2,000 years.

41

One of the early European settlers industries was the collecting of shells, secondary only to timber, for they were collected together with oyster shells, and sent to the Hawkesbury and to Sydney where limeburners converted this relatively pure form of calcium carbonate to lime by burning the shells over hot coals, above which a stream of air was directed. The residual powder was slaked with water and when mixed with sand was used as mortar in the building trade, in which it was an essential product for over fifty years. (Brennan n.d.)

The New South Wales coastline is rich both in species diversity and abundance of marine shellfish, and these provided a much sought after source of food for the coastal Aboriginal people. Inland, the freshwater mussel, *Velesunio* sp., does not appear to have been an important food item in the study area, although a small number of shells have been found in as many as 14 rock shelters in Upper Mangrove Creek (Attenbrow 1980).

Although shellfish were gathered and eaten by all, the task was predominantly the province of women and children (Bowdler 1976; Brayshaw 1967:58). A great variety of shells have been identified among the middens. Broadly speaking, they fall into categories of shell that are found on rocks and in sand along the open coastline, and shells that are found on rocks and in sand or mud in estuarine conditions. Some species, such as mussel and oyster, may be found in both environments.

The most commonly eaten shells of the coastal rock platforms are Oysters (*Saccostrea commercialis*); two species of Mussels (*Mytilus planulatus* and *Trichomya hirsutus*); Limpets (*Patellanax* and *Cellana Cartruts Dicathais orbita*); Turban shells (*Turbo undulata* and *Turbo*

torcata) and Triton shells (*Cabestans spengleri*), Pipis, (*Plebidonax deltoides*) which favour sand along high energy surf zones. Of the estuarine species, Oysters and Mussels are adapted to intertidal rocky areas, the former also growing on mangrove roots. Sydney Cockles (*Anadara trapezia*) and Whelks (*Pyrazus ebeninus*) favour mud flats, and also larger Mud Oysters (*Ostrea angasi*) and scallops.

The shells were often hafted into the end of spear-throwers. Shells fixed to the end of a short stick were also used as a chisel for pointing their spears and for separating the oysters from the rocks. Shell was also used to barb spears. Fish-hooks were also made from shells. (Attenbrow 1988 :58-59).

Cuttlefish, squid and octopus were also undoubtedly part of the Aboriginal menu, but evidence of their use is lacking both in the archaeological and the ethnographic record.

From archaeological as well as ethnographic evidence, it is clear that Aboriginal people like many other societies enjoyed crustaceans as an adjunct to the menu.

The largest crabs are usually free-swimming, whereas the smaller crabs are more sedentary and do not move far from their holes they dig in the sand or mud. Free-swimming crabs include blue swimmers and mud crabs, both highly prized as food, while soldier crabs are examples of the smaller edible species. Lobsters were also caught in small hoop nets.

MAMMALS.

Larger Marsupials

There is a contemporary account of Aborigines hunting near the junction of the Hawkesbury River with the MacDonalld in the autumn of 1834 described by a party travelling down the river by boat.

The dead, unbroken silence of the bush was suddenly broken by the sound of voices. On approaching more closely, a group of Aborigines was found to be hunting a small species of Wallaby, called by them Wallabuning. A number of them assemble and while some of them run along the tops and sides of the rocky heights shouting and screaming, drive down the poor little frightened inhabitants to the flats below where others attack them with their spears and dogs. (Mathews in Havard 1943:237)

The use of burning grass to attract kangaroos to the new growth comes from Threlkeld, who recorded that the Aborigines from his mission at Lake Macquarie all went "to the mountains" for three weeks to engage in a "superstitious ceremony". The rituals included a kangaroo hunt for

three weeks to engage in a "superstitious ceremony". The rituals included a kangaroo hunt for which preparation was made by burning off a large part of the country (Threlkeld in Gunson 1974:206).

Kangaroos, wallabies and emu were sometimes caught by means of a large net, which was fixed in a semi-circle amongst the trees. The animals, frightened by the cries of the hunters and their dogs, were driven into the nets and quickly killed (Collins 1798:305; Fawcett 1898:153; Brayshaw 1966:60, Note 64).

Substantial snares for catching animals and birds were seen at the base of Richmond Hill on the Hawkesbury River in 1788. They were approximately 15 metres in length, and had converging sides tapering to a small wicker gate. The walls were constructed by rushes and weeds with earth thrown up to form an additional embankment. The hunted animals were driven into this foil and then presumably speared. Other traps were seen on the banks of lagoons, where deep holes covered with grass had been excavated, "so that bird or beast stepping over it would inevitably fall in and from its depth, be unable to escape" (Collins 1798:558).

The Smaller Marsupials.

The bones of Long-nosed Rat Kangaroo (*Potorous tridactylus*), have been identified in a rock shelter formerly used by Aborigines in Upper Mangrove Creek (Aplin in Attenbrow 1980). Significantly the shelter is near the damp, lush creek bed at the juncture of three gullies.

The large Brush-tailed Possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*) is one of the most widely occurring mammals in Australia. It is an important fur-bearer, and was exploited to this end by Aborigines and early colonists alike (Collins 1798:526). As many as four million possum pelts were sold in the London and New York markets in 1906. Their populations are not adversely affected by human changes to the landscape, and may even have increased. They leave distinctive claw marks on the bark of the trees as they clamber up the trunks. This evidence was closely observed by the Aboriginal people, who then pursued the animals to their day-time hide-outs and nests, adeptly climbing the trees and chopping away the wood until the possum could be pulled out. The bark of many trees was cut into notches to provide footholds, or branches were placed at an angle against perpendicular trunks to facilitate the ascent. Smoke was also sometimes used to chase the animals out (Barrington 1795:66).

43

Long-nosed Bandicoots (*Perameles nasuta*) and Short-nosed Bandicoots (*Isodon obesulus*) are ground dwelling animals with a wide distribution. The latter species have been identified among the bone debris from Aboriginal shelters in Upper Mangrove Creek.

Bones of the Tiger cat have been identified among Aboriginal food refuse at Mangrove Creek (Aplin in Attenbrow 1980) and also from Burrill Lake (Lampert 1971).

Koalas, Wombats & Echidnas.

Despite the fact the Koalas and Wombats still are common animals within the study area, and are both easy prey, they do not appear to have been an important item of diet for the Aborigines. Ethnographic accounts of their use as food on coastal New South Wales are sparse. The analysis of bone material from excavations in upper Mangrove Creek has yielded but few Wombat identifications and no Koalas (Aplin in Attenbrow 1980)

The Echidna or Spiny Ant-eater (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*) is another widely distributed and popular food animal, weighing up to 6.5 kilograms. Aborigines must occasionally have competed with Echidnas for food, for both enjoyed the high fat content provided by ants and ants' eggs (Collins 1798:558).

Whales.

Perhaps one of the most significant events which could occur along the coast was the beaching of a whale. Bands of people would travel great distances to share in the feast of whalemeat, providing an opportunity for social contact as well as an abundant supply of food. The meat was usually cut from the dead animal with sharpened shell tools, commonly a valve of the Sydney cockle (*Anadara trapezia*). One whale came ashore at Manly in 1790 and people quickly gathered for the feast.

Seals.

The distribution of the Australian Fur Seal used to extend along the coast of New South Wales to north of Newcastle, but seals were so excessively hunted for their fur that they became exterminated on the Central Coast by the middle of the last century. Breeding colonies are usually in rocks, inaccessible places and pupping takes place early in the summer. Seal bones have been identified among midden debris on the South and Central Coasts and were therefore certainly exploited by the Aborigines on occasions.

Dingoes.

Dingoes, like humans, are not native to Australia, but the precise date of their arrival has not been established although it is known to be at least three thousand years ago (Mulvaney 1975:138). Bones of dingoes have been identified from the South Coast middens and from Upper Mangrove Creek.

Rats.

There are a number of references to Bush Rats and Swamp rats being another source of meat which the Aborigines hunted and ate. With all shy nocturnal animals, the recognition of their spoor, and a sound knowledge of their habit and habitats, would have been a decisive factor in providing clues as to where they might be found during daylight food-collecting hours. Animals that follow set routes are also far more susceptible to being snared than those that wander freely. Fire however, was an important agent in flushing rats from cover. In the spring of 1790, after a dry winter period, the Aboriginal men were observed to spend much of their time burning off grass on the north shore opposite Sydney, in order to catch rats and other animals (Hunter 1793:469).

45

Flying Foxes or Fruit Bats.

The Flying Fox, a surprisingly large animal with wing spans in excess of 1.25 metres, was an important source of food. Although they eat wild figs and other fruits, they are principally blossom feeders and depend on native trees with differing flowering seasons for sustenance.

In February 1791, Hunter recorded huge numbers of Flying Foxes appearing near Parramatta. It was estimated that 20,000 were seen hanging on the branches of trees within the space of a mile. Hunter noted the fox-like appearance of the bats and remarked that they were very fat and

were reckoned excellent food by the Aborigines(Hunter 1793:507).

Threlkeld, on the other hand, who was working among Aborigines on Lake Macquarie immediately north of the study area, notes that the men had a great veneration for the bat. If a man were to kill one purposely, he would also be killed. Bats were apparently associated with powerful notions of respect or taboo - the men would not look at them directly, nor mention them by name, although the women were permitted to do so (Gunson 1974:206). It is not clear from this account whether the bats referred to are the smaller bats that dwell in caves and hollow trees, or the larger fruit bat or Flying Fox.

Birds.

In the Gosford-Wyong region where there is an abundance of lagoons, shallow tidal waterways and shallow low-lying swampy areas, there are great numbers of gulls, coromorants, plovers, terns, black swans, pelicans and ducks of many species.

Black Swans nest along the western margins of Tuggerah Lake and there are descriptions of swan's nests dotted over the whole of the shallow beaches, each containing several eggs. Swans lay from four to six eggs sometimes as many as eight and the eggs were much enjoyed by the Aboriginal people, even if they were close to hatching (Mann in Swancott 1955, Pt.4:68). Laying season is in the spring, and after moulting during the laying season, swans and ducks are flightless until new feathers have grown. They are, therefore, easy prey at this period.

Penguins are another bird that is easy prey when on land, since they too are flightless. They nest and rear their young in colonies in secluded rocky areas and return to their burrows at regular hours to roost at night. The bones of Fairy Penguins were identified among midden refuse at three of the South Coast sites (Lampert 1966, 1971; Bowdler 1970), so were certainly included in the Aboriginal diet in the past.

Of the forest birds, nomadic **Pigeons** and **Lorikeets**, **Parrots** and **Cockatoos** may occur in great numbers when feeding on seasonal blossoms, fruits and seeds of selected trees. With a good aim, the birds may be knocked down with boomerangs or throwing sticks. Carion eaters, on the other hand, occur in pairs rather than in flocks, and the Aborigines used to set bait for the common crow (*Corvus* sp) which they then caught and ate with great relish (Collins 1798:548). Crows have also been identified among the bones from Currarong shelter on the South Coast (Lampert 1971).

Brush Turkeys (*Alectura lathami*) and **Lyre Birds** (*Menura* sp) are ground feeders of substantial size, and are usually found in pairs where there is plenty of leaf litter to shelter the insects on which they feed. Both birds are included in the topics represented by the Aboriginal artists of the area.

47

The Emu is far and away the largest of the Australian birds, attaining the weight of a human when full grown. The flesh was much sought after by Aborigines and the eggs are likewise large and good eating.

Certain birds were held in awe by some Aboriginal groups, and were never killed or eaten . Indeed, not even their names were allowed to be referred to directly. Threlkeld quotes one such

Indeed, not even their names were allowed to be referred to directly. Threlkeld quotes one such example from Lake Macquarie where the women, but apparently not the men, paid such respect to a bird like a woodpecker (Gunson 1974:206).

Reptiles

Snakes.

There are many species of snakes in the coastal bush of New South Wales, but despite the fact that many of them are venomous, they were often killed and eaten. During the winter they are in a state of torpor and remain hidden and inactive, but when the sun is hot enough they may come out to bask (Cogger 1975). The non-venomous Diamond Python (*Monelix spilotes*) and venomous front-fanged snakes, (Elapidae and Boidae), are among the species identified from the Mangrove Creek excavations (Aplin in Attenbrow 1980), and snakes as well as possums, bandicoots and goannas are listed as part of the festive fare enjoyed when Aborigines from two areas meet for a dance near Tuggerah Lake (Swancott 1955:69).

Skinks & Lizards.

The larger skinks (*Egernia*) and Dragon Lizards (*Agamidae*) are widely distributed and were a popular item of diet. They are mostly ground dwelling insect eaters and are diurnal in behaviour. Mussel Shelter, one of the sites excavated in Mangrove Creek, had proportionately more reptile bones in it than the other deposits, a finding in keeping with its proximity to dry rocky slopes high up the valley (Aplin in Attenbrow 1980). Since skinks and lizards are dependent on sun for maintaining their body temperature, they are markedly less active in the cold, and are therefore more easily caught before they have time to warm up after a cold night (Bustard 1970:32).

Goannas.

The Lace Monitor or Goanna (*Varanus varius*) may grow up to two metres long and provides a good quality meat in greater quantity than the far smaller lizard. Goannas predate on insects, other reptiles, nestling birds, small mammals and carrion. Although predominantly ground foragers, they usually take to a tree when disturbed. During cold weather, they become torpid when they are easily caught (Cogger 1975:241).

Insects.

Popular additives to the diet of the coastal Aborigines were the larvae of various Homoptera, commonly known as witchetty grubs, which emerge from the ground during maximum plant growth in summer. Cicada larvae would also have been available in summer, though it is not certain that they too were eaten. Hunter notes that the Aborigines ate a grub found in a small gum tree and Collins mentions that they tasted just like sweet marrow when digested of their antennae and legs (Hunter 1793:516; Collins 1798:557).

As well as providing a source of food, animals also provided a range of materials which were used to make implements, and personal ornaments: bone, teeth, skins, fur, feathers, claws and talons. Bone was used for the points or barbs in spears and fishing.

In her diary describing a trip to the Gosford/Wong area in 1833, Mrs Felton Mathews referred to the women wrapping themselves in 'blankets, or cloaks of sewed opossum skins'. Animal

to the women wrapping themselves in 'blankets, or cloaks of sewed opossum skins'. Animal hair/fur and sinew were used in the manufacture of many items. Phillip mentions 'the fur of some animal' being used to make lines and nets.

Items such as feathers, bones, claws talons and teeth were often used as ornaments - in particular, gummed into hair. Collins added that children's hair was decorated 'after the custom of the country' as soon as the hair ' could be taken hold'. (Attenbrow 1988: 49-50).

Plant Resources.

The Aborigines of coastal New South Wales relied heavily on plants for food even though there was normally an abundance of animal protein available.

The European settlers made reference to several plant foods eaten by the Aboriginal people but unfortunately specific identifications are seldom possible from these reports. However, three plants common to the Sydney-Hawkesbury area are so distinctive as to be clearly recognised from their descriptions: Burrawang (*Macrozamia communis*), Giant Lily or Gynea Lily (*Doryanthes excelsa*) and Grass Tree (*Xanthorrhoea* sp).

Bradley describes Burrawangs as " a kind of nut growing bunches somewhat like a pine top" and notes that the food is poisonous without being properly prepared.

In Broken Bay, Bradley saw Aborigines feeding preparations from this nut to their children and tasted some himself, which he thought good (Bradley 1786:92). Hunter, too, describes a nut which had violent effects on those who ate it unprepared. After taking the kernel out of the hard outer shell, the Aborigines soaked the nut in water for 7 or 8 days, changing the water every day. The final preparation was roasted in embers and Hunter pronounced it almost as good as chestnuts (Hunter 1793:479).

According to oral tradition, the Aborigines of the Broken Bay area soaked the Burrawang seeds by suspending them in string bags in flowing water but it is also possible that rock pools were used.

A plant which grows prolifically on the ridge tops around Somersby and Kulnura, and which is abundant throughout the Spencer and Upper Mangrove Creek area but absent on the Bouddi peninsula, is the imposing Gynea Gigantic Lily (*Doryanthes excelsa*). This striking plant with sword-like leaves and robust flowering stalk up to 4 metres high, bears a cluster of large red flowers at the top. In the heart of each bloom is an accumulation of sweet translucent gluey nectar, much sought after by bees and humans alike. When the flowering stems are young and swollen, they too are filled with sweet sap and were roasted in the embers, as also the roots, which were made into a sort of cake and eaten cold (Cribb 1974:120). The long straight stem of this plant was used, on occasion, for spear shafts (Scott in Brayshaw 1966:84).

Xanthorrhoea arborea or grass tree .

This species of an easily recognised genus, so frequently seen growing with *Angophora costata* on the rocky hillsides of Sydney, epitomises 'the bush'. The resin impregnated trunk varies from scarcely apparent to 2m tall, flourishing a great tuft of long grass-like leaves up to 1.5m long. The cream flowers are massed in complex cylindrical spike lofted on a pole to 2m. Birds and insects, particularly butterflies, flock to its heavy flow of rich nectar in spring. The fruit is a

shining brown capsule.

52

The young centre shoots of this decorative plant are edible, the long straight flower stalk was used for spear-shafts and the small white flowers, tightly clustered around the terminal metre of the spike, are rich in delicious nectar. Licking one of these long flower heads must fulfil every child's dream of the 'biggest lolly in the world'.

Although the task of collecting vegetable foods usually fell to the women and children (Brayshaw 1966:48) Hunter comments on a party of Aboriginal men collecting wild fruits when they were in season (Hunter 1793:487).

Several species of wild fruits and berries ripen from November through to late summer, and many of these trees and shrubs have a wide distribution. Common to all the areas surveyed are Lillipilli (*Acmena smithii*), Dumplings (*Billardiera scandens*), Native Cherry (*Exocarpus cupressiformis*), Blueberry Ash (*Elaeocarpus reticulatus*), Geebung (*Persoonia* sp). Also common to all the areas in Gristle Fern (*Blechnum cartilagineum*), Wombat berries (*Euctrephus latifolius*) and Geranium sp. all of which have starch-rich root systems. Other widely distributed climbers such as the wild yam (*Dioscorea transversa*) and False Sarsparilla (*Hardenbergia violacea*), also have edible underground tubers.

Plants such as Wild Figs (*Ficus*), the Giant Lily (*Doryanthes excelsa*) and Burrawang (*Macrozamia communis*), are local.

For the central coast north of Broken Bay, Bennett notes that:

"Wild honey was especially plentiful in the area. A local speciality was the sweet drink called Bael or Bool obtained by soaking Banksia flowers in water.....Yams, Fern Roots, the growing heart of the Cabbage Tree Palm, the Quandong, the Bumbel (native orange) and various edible berries contributed variety to the flesh and fish diet." (1969:5)

The use of fern roots as food is often referred to in the early literature (Lawrence 1969:198), and although this is sometimes identified with the Bracken Fern (*Pteridium exulatum*), it is more likely to be Bungwall Fern (*Blechnum indicum*) and Gristle Fern (*Cyathea* sp.) which were also used as food. Hunter describes a temporary bark hut in the wooded hills inland from Sydney near which were found the bones of a kangaroo and "a piece of root resembling that of a fern tree" which showed evidence of recent chewing (Hunter 1793:65).

When travelling along the Hawkesbury River, Hunter remarks:

The natives here, appear to live chiefly on the roots which they dig from the ground; for these low banks appear to have been ploughed up, as if a vast herd of swine had been living on them. We put on shore, and examined the places which had been dug, and found the wild yam in considerable quantities, but in general very small, not larger than a Walnut; they appear to be in the greatest plenty on the banks of the river; a little way back they are scarce. (Hunter 1793:150)

The roots of reeds and rushes Phragmites and Typha both water-fringe plants, were another good source of vegetable food, and the rhizomes of various species of orchids were also used. Then there were edible fungi such as Blackfellows Bread (Polyporous mylittae). Bradley says of the Sydney Aboriginal people:

54

I have several times met with small parties of them seeking roots and spongy substances which grow on some of the trees. The fern and some other roots they prepare by moistening and beating between two stones a considerable time before they use it. (Bradley 1786-92 [1969]:134)

From the archaeological viewpoint, the reference to the use of stone pounders is of interest. Another specific reference to stones being used in the preparation of vegetable food can be found in Hunter:

This season, in which fish is so scarce [July 1788],... they [the Aborigines] were frequently found gathering a kind of root in the woods, which they broiled in the fire, then beat between two stones until it was quite soft; this they chew until they have extracted all the nutritive part, and afterwards throw it away. This root appears to be a species of the orchid (Hunter 1788:80)

An important factor to be borne in mind when assessing vegetable food potential in any given area is the effect of fire, which in the Sydney-Hawkesbury area plays an even more significant role than seasonality and rainfall.

Use of Fire.

The Aborigines were seldom seen without fire. They carried it about with them - i.e. as a burning piece of wood held in the hand or else in the bottom of their canoes.

Tench recorded a method of making fire which he saw the Aborigines use:

They take a reed, and shave one side of the surface flat; in this they make a small incision to reach the pith, and introducing a stick, purposely blunted at the end, into it, turn it round between the hands (as chocolate is milled), as swiftly as possible, until flame be produced.

Tench said it was not only laborious, but the effect tedious, and this was the reason they always, if possible, carried it with them. (Attenbrow 1988 :110-111).

There were frequent mentions of smoke and fire in the First Fleet journals, including fires directly observed being lit by Aborigines. There are also some more general comments on burning practices:

They (the Aborigines) also, when in considerable numbers, set the country on fire for several miles extent; this, we have generally understood, is for the purpose of disturbing such animals as may be within the reach of the conflagration; and thereby they have a opportunity of killing many. We have also had much reason to believe, that those fires were intended to clear that part of

the country through which they have frequent occasion to travel, of the brush or underwood, from which they, being naked, suffer very great inconvenience.

The fires, which we very frequently saw, particularly in the summertime, account also for an appearance that two thirds of the trees in the woods were very much scorched with fire, some were burnt quite black up to the top we sometimes, upon our arrival here conjectured that it proceeded from lightning, but upon looking farther, it appeared too general amongst the woods to be occasioned by such an accident. (*Hunter1793:43*).

59

The weather now being very dry, the natives were employed in burning the grass on the north shore opposite Sydney, in order to catch rats and other animals, whilst the women were employed in fishing: this is their constant practice in dry weather.

Governor Phillip's Journal, Sept 1790.p312

Comments on Aboriginal burning were also made by George Worgan, surgeon of the *Sirius*, describing a trip to North Head on 28th May, 1788:

.....returning we made a circuit over to part of the hill where we observed a great fire. We found it to be burning of healthy brushwood, which we supposed the natives had set on fire for some purpose, but what we could not conjecture. We observed likewise fires of this nature in several other parts of the country.

Whether the burning was all deliberate, or included some accidental escapes on these windy days from the lighted sticks they carried about with them, the burning was certainly frequent.

The evidence for Aboriginal maintenance of grasslands by burning in many parts of the country is very strong (Gould 1971, Hallam 1975, Flood 1980, Clark 1981). On the basis of the above ethnographic evidence burning practices in the Sydney region and on the North Shore would have been frequent. These fires would have been very mild, serving several purposes: keeping the ridges clear of brush for ease of travel, encouraging new growth for larger mammals and thereby also locating the game, making the hunting of smaller animals (lizards, possums, rodents) easier, keeping down shrub invasion in areas of braken fern, whose roots were an important source of carbohydrate, and promotion of vigorous regeneration of shrub food resources such as geebung (*Persoonia* sp.) and native currents (*Leptomaria acida* and *Leucopogon* sp.)

According to Ross (1976), the Kuringai's movements were north-south through their coastal territory and this would coincide with the north-south ailgnment of the topography and the shale ridges carrying the tall forest with grass understorey easily kept open for travel.

The advent of European settlement soon began to alter the vegetation pattern of tall forest with little undergrowth. Major Mitchell certainly attributed this to a changed fire regime and, in 1848, commented that "the omission of the annual periodical burning by natives, of grass and young saplings, has already produced in the open forest lands nearest to Sydney, thick forests of young trees, where formerly a man might gallop without imp[ediment and see miles before him."

It is possible that, by opening up the forest, logging could also have caused these changes but whatever the case of the changes in the vegetation structure, a new fire regime did develop- less frequent but hotter and wilder bushfires fed by the fuel of the shrub understorey. In 1850 a great fire swept the North Shore from Hornsby to St Leonards, and area described as being then dense forests and thick undergrowth prior to the fire. (McLaughlin 1985)

An account of a visit to Tuggerah with some companions
(Account by J.F. Mann 1842 SWANCOTT 1955).

J.F. Mann was an early settler of Gosford.

"Tuggerah" in Aboriginal language means "cold, bleak, exposed," and is most applicable to this expanse of water, the shores being low and sandy, and the whole surface exposed to the winds of heaven. It is separated from the ocean by low, narrow sand ridges, through which a channel affords an occasional outlet, but this outlet is most frequently silted up. 60

The lake abounded with fish of all sorts, but what attracted my attention in the first instance were the black swans; their nests built in the water of sticks were dotted over the whole of the shallow beaches of the lake. Every nest contained several eggs, and we each collected as many as we could conveniently carry. The several points of land which extended into the lake were black with ducks, and water fowl; they were in thousands, and covered acres of ground. The outlines of the sand flats were indicated by a countless number of pelicans.

Well laden with spoil, we arrived at the blackfellows' camp shortly before dusk, and were agreeably surprised to find that by the forethought of Long Dick, a separate encampment had been prepared for us. It was built of sheets of bark, tent shape, and lined with dry grass a log to sit on, and wood for a fire, also provided. Dick now took possession of us and relieved Emu of his responsibility. The site of the camp was prettily situated on the bank of Wyong Creek, which hereabouts joined the Lake.

A bark canoe, paddled by a very old, grey headed man, now silently approached and drew up close to our camp. The canoe was so laden with fish of all sorts as to be but a few inches above water. The old man, by name "Jew Fish," at once commenced to throw the fish on shore. There was no rush or scramble for them; in fact no one seemed to pay the slightest attention. Dick, however, selected some of the best for our use and undertook to act as cook. Collecting some grass, he placed it upon the charcoal fire, and paced the fish at once on the top of it; by this means the scales came off in a much more complete manner than by scraping with a knife. At the same time the body of the fish swelled, so that when cut open the whole of this inside came away at once, and was ready for the grill. Some few opossums, bandicoots, snakes and iguanas, and other items had been secured by these people during the day; so with the addition of fish and the donation of all bad eggs we had found in the swan nests, there was bountiful supply of food.

"Close up picanniny sit down" was the comment when a bad egg required boiling for ten minutes. When broken into a frying pan and fried it had much the appearance of a pancake. The taste was by no means disagreeable.

It was evident that some of the young fellows were special wits and were listened to attentively. Mimicry they excelled in and it was just as well that none of the individuals personated were present to recognise their peculiarities in the hands of the blacks.

On the following morning while getting our guns ready for a shooting excursion, we were unexpectedly told to sit down. "Bime-by, you hear 'im plenty noise, plenty kangaroos".

A battue by the blacks had already been fixed upon and most of the women and elderly men had noiselessly started off early to take up positions in the surrounding ranges, leaving 12 or more young men behind.

Shouts were soon heard as those who had gone up approached the camp, driving the kangaroos before them. The poor animals came hopping along to the flat at the foot of the hill, to be killed by the spears and boomerangs of the blacks who were concealed behind trees and bushes.

61

The accuracy with which the blacks threw their spears and boomerangs was something marvellous. All took effect. One kangaroo while passing within a few yards of me was struck by a boomerang and killed. Some of the animals were skinned and cut into joints; others were placed bodily on the fire. We secured some tails for our own use.

The battue and cookery was in anticipation of the arrival of a deputation from the Wollombi tribe; so with the addition of the ducks, pigeons and the fish provided by Mr. Jewfish, the camp was well supplied with food. Next day, Long Dick, Emu and others were unable to move. "Too busy" was the excuse. They had eaten too much the night before and pointed to their distended stomachs. Dick, when asked "How many possums did you eat?" replied, "Murry load," and "how many kangaroos?" "Two or three."

About twelve men of the Wollombi tribe arrived and joined in with the feasting and a corroboree was held that night. We were not privileged to witness the proceedings.

FOODS EATEN BY ABORIGINES OF COASTAL N.S.W.

PLANTS.

N.B. Some of these plants are poisonous without considerable preparation to remove the toxins. Do not eat any of them unless you know them to be harmless.

Scientific name	Common name	Part eaten
Cyathea australis	Rough tree fern	fruit
Doryanthes exelsa	Gynea lily	root
Pteridium esculentum	bracken fern	rhizome
Carpobrotus aequilateras	pig face	fruit and leaves

Astroloma humifusum
Leucopogon parviflorus
Monotoca elliptica
Eupomatia laurina
Geranium spp
Burchardia umbellata
Acacia spp
Alocasia macrorhizos
Dioscorea transversa
Ficus spp.
Acmena smithii
Acmena brachyandra
Oxalis corniculata
Livistona australis
Billardiera scandens
Podocarpus elatus
Persoonia lanceolata
Leptomeria acida
Cissus hypoglauca
Cissus antarctica
Xanthorrhoea resinosa

native cranberry fruit
 native currant fruit
 pigeon berry fruit
 native guava fruit
 tuber
 milkmaids roots
 wattle seeds
 cunjevoi lily shoots
 yam roots
 fig fruit
 lillipilli fruit
 native myrtle fruit
 clover sorrel leaves and roots
 cabbage tree palm terminal bud
 apple berry fruit
 plum pine fruit
 geebung fruit
 native currant fruit
 native grape fruit
 native grape fruit
 grass tree leaf bases

young flowers
 and shoots

62

Macrozamia communis
Solanum laciniatum
 Honey was also much relished.

burrawang seeds
 kangaroo apple seeds

BIRDS.

Scientific name

Phalacrocorax spp.
Puffinus tenuirostris
Puffinus gavia
Puffinus carneipes
Eudyptula minor
Diomedea cauta
Pachyptila turtur
Morus bassanus serrator
Diomedea
Cygnus atratus
Anas spp.

Common name

cormorants
 mutton bird
 fluttering shearwater
 fleshy footed shearwater
 little penguin
 white capped albatross
 fairy prion
 Australian gannet
 Molly hawk
 black swan
 ducks

SHELLFISH.

Scientific name

Anadara trapezia
Pyrazus ebeninus
Crassostrea commercialis
Ostrea angasi

Common name

Sydney cockel
 Hercules club whelk
 rock oyster
 mud oyster

Cabestana spengleri	Spengler's triton
Dicathais orbita	cartrut
Haliotis ruber	abalone
Mytilus planulatus	edible mussel
Trichomya hirsuta	hairy mussel
Plebidonax deltoides	pipi
Chlamys spp.	scallop
Ninella torquata	turban
Subninella undulata	lightning turban
Austrocochlea obtusa	striped periwinkle
*Pyura praeputialis	cunjevoi
*not a shellfish but an invertebrate of the sea.	
CRUSTACEA	
Reptantia	Lobsters, crayfish, crabs

Reference: *Aborigines of N.S.W.* published by The National Parks and Wildlife Service.

2. HOUSING

Dwellings were constructed from sheets of bark removed from growing trees which were then flattened and supported on timber frames. The more temporary "hunting huts" which were usually seen inland were "A" frame structures made from pieces of bark about 3.35 metres long and from 1.22 - 1.83 metres broad, bent in the middle and set up at an acute angle. The windward end was sometimes blocked off for added protection (Phillip 1789: 103; Collins 1798: 555). Some of these huts were so small as to shelter one occupant only, others were large enough for a family.

On the coast, the huts were sometimes built on semi-circular design "in the form of an oven with an entrance" and were large enough to hold 6 or 8 people (Collins 1798: 555). The entrances were so low as to necessitate stooping or crawling, and the fires were usually built at the mouth of the hut rather than inside or outside. There were seldom more than 8 or 9 huts grouped together (Bradley 1969: 140; Barrington 1795: 20). One particularly well-constructed dwelling at Broken Bay was described by Surgeon White.

In the hut were two very well made nets, good quality fishing lines, some spears, a stone hatched of superior quality and two wooden vessels for carrying water (White 1962: 157).

In addition to constructed huts, of which there is now little or no surface evidence in the

archaeological record, the Aborigines of the Sydney Basin also made frequent use of rock shelters, a point emphasised in many of the early journals.

When walking between Port Jackson and Broken Bay in August 1788, White noted:

All along the shore we met the natives who seem to have no fixed residence or abode, but, indiscriminately, wherever they meet with a hut, or, what is more common, a convenient excavation, or hole in the rocks, take possession of it for a time. (White 1962: 157, Bradley 1969: 140).

This type of housing did not require any trees to be cut down, so the environment was not changed.

Barrington and Collins recorded the following:

They appear to live chiefly in the caves and hollow of the rocks, which nature has supplied them with, the rocks about the shore being mostly shelving and overhanging so as to afford a tolerable retreat.....They make a fire at the outer part of these dismal holes which throws a heat in
(Barrington 1795: 20).

Besidebark huts, they made use of excavations in the rock; and as the situations of these were various, they could always choose them out of the reach of wind and rain. (Collins 1798: 555).

Collins goes on to mention that at the entrances to the rock shelters, a luxuriance of soil was noticed, and on turning up the ground, the colonists found it rich in shells and other organic remains. These deposits proved a valuable resource, many loads of shells being burnt into lime, while the residue was wheeled into the gardens and used as manure (Collins 1798: 555).

64

Hunter described how the sandstone rocks had weathered into cavities suitable for habitation. He noted the wide distribution of such shelters both along the coast and inland, and commented that some were large enough to lodge forty or fifty people. Unlike Barrington, who described the rock shelters as "dismal holes," Hunter remarked that in cases of necessity, the colonists used the shelters and thought themselves not badly off (Hunter 1788: 60).

Hunter corroborates Collin's observation on fires:

.....in order to make their apartment as comfortable as possible, they commonly make a good fire in it before they lie down to rest; by which means, the rock all round them is so heated as to retain its warmth like an oven for a considerable time; and upon a little grass, which is previously pulled and dried, they lie down and huddle together. (Hunter 1788: 59).

Since the rock shelters used by the Aborigines are still in existence today, and since the floors of the shelters are usually protected from the accumulation of vegetation to which sites in the open bush are subjected, rock shelters are now the most prevalent evidence of Aboriginal usage of the area.

3.CLOTHING AND ADORNMENTS.

The Aboriginal people who camped, hunted and foraged in this area usually wore a long cord of opossum hair wound many times round their waists. From this belt hung three or four tassels or strips of opossum skin, usually one in front, one behind and one on each hip.

Their heads are covered with thick black hair, some curled, some not, and almost all have a fillet of net-work round the forehead; perforated, and they are fond of inserting a small white bone from the leg of the kangaroo (sic), which projects two or three inches on each side of the nose; the hair is ornamented in various ways, some twist a feather from some bird, others fasten a long tail to their back hair, to hang down the back in a queue, but it is somewhat strange these ornaments are all peculiar to the men, the women are almost always seen wrapped in blankets, or cloaks of sewed opossum skins, without any attempt at adorning their features (Harvard 1943: 186-187) Fish oil was sometimes rubbed into the skin as a guard against the cold, as well as against mosquitoes and biting flies (Collins 1798: 551).

Both sexes were also ornamented with raised scars on the breast, arms and back. The incisions were made with pieces of broken shell, and the wounds were prevented from healing in order to intensify the scar tissue. In some instances, the scars were in the form of animal tracks. Body paint was also frequently used, especially in association with particular ceremonies. The patterns applied were various, but specific descriptions include large white circles round each eye or broad bands below the eye. Cheeks and breasts were daubed, wavy lines applied along arms and legs, and the ribs were marked out in white. The right to wear specific decorations was inherited, and the designs were often linked to a particular clan emblem or totem.

Cloaks of possum skins sewn together with sinews were worn in winter. Yarn was spun and tassels were made from fur and feathers. These were used as personal adornment. Ornaments like nautilus shells were cut into an oval shape and hung around the neck. Knotted bags were used to carry oysters.

65

In the early days of the European settlement the Aborigines were very fond of ornamenting themselves with any European clothing they could get hold of old shirts, trousers, handkerchiefs etc. However, it is suggested by some historians that they wore European clothing only in order to win favour on occasions when they sought personal contact with the colonists. The Aborigines saw European clothing as a means and not as an end.

PART D. THE PEOPLE

1. Kinship & Marriage.

Early European observers were of the false opinion that the Aboriginal people had no social, political and military organization to speak of. "Tribe" is merely a convenient term to describe

a number of "clans" or "bands" (anthropologists' terms) who had much in common in their social organisation, language and customs, and who regarded each other as closer relatives than more distant clans or bands. A large tribe had around 1500 members; a clan varied in size from less than fifty to over two hundred.

It is widely accepted that the total Aboriginal population in 1788 was between 250,000 to 1,000,000 made up of about 600 tribes, each with its own language or distinct dialect.

The hordes or family sub-divisions of the clan were those who habitually occupied and collected food with a given area, but horde had right to the land of the entire clan, and also to the land of the clans with whom they inter-married, some of whom may have belonged to different language groups. Wives therefore not infrequently spoke different languages or different dialects from their husbands, while the children spoke both. The languages of adjacent clans were thus mutually understood.

There was therefore, a wide network of kinship ties and obligations which entitled land-owning clans to economic and social links which extended far beyond the core territory in which each horde habitually moved. It also meant that resources occurring infrequently were accessible to all. These extended rights and ties were promoted or maintained by regular gatherings or corroborees at which songs, dances and stories were exchanged and wives were sought. There was also inter-clan and sometimes inter-tribal participation in specific rituals such as food increase rites and initiation ceremonies.

Major decision-making and the administration of tribal law was nevertheless in the hands of male elders, who reached their position of respect and authority through progressive and hierarchical initiation into tribal lore. Older females also had their own esteemed position in society especially with the younger girls and wives.

In the Darginung organisation, the two sections in Moety 1 were called Bya and Kubbi while in Moety 2 they were Kembo and Ippai. Children always took the moiety of the mother but never her section; they took the other section in her moiety. That is, the children of a Bya woman would be Kubbi, the children of a Kubbi woman would be Bya and likewise for Moety 2. Potential husbands and wives had to be from different moieties but also had to belong to suitable sections. A Bya man could only marry a Kumbo woman, for example.

The regulations for marriage can be set out like this:

Moiety 1	Moiety 2
Bya	Kumbo
Kubbi	Ippai

66

- Bya men married Kumbo women. Children were Ippai.
- Kubbi men married Ippai women. Children were Kumbo.
- Ippai men married Kubbi women. Children were Bya.
- Kumbo men married Bya women. Children were Kubbi.

A person's totem was also inherited from his or her mother, regardless of the totem of the father. We can define a totem as a natural object or species with which a person or group had a special relationship. People who belonged to Moety 1 had totems such as Bee, Emu, Bandicoot, Wedge-tailed Eagle and Stingray. In Moety 2 the totems included Grey Kangaroo, Diamond Python, Wombat, Black Snake and Wallaby. So, for instance, when a Bya Bee man married a

Kumbo Diamond Python woman the offspring would be Ippai Diamond Python.

There were exceptions to the above rules but these were also subject to restrictions. It was possible for two people belonging to the same section to marry as long as they belonged to appropriate totems. For example, a Kubbi Bandicoot could marry a Kubbi Stingray. Because men and women of the same totem were regarded as brothers and sisters they could not marry each other. (Turbet 1988 pp 75-76)

2. Law & Religion

At the heart of Aboriginal religion is the idea of the Dreamtime. This idea is kept alive in the stories of the ancestral spirits, stories which varied among the groups but which were usually rich in detail. These stories are often referred to as myths, though to the Aboriginal people they are not myths but truths which they believe in and which form the basis of their social living. The sky-heroes laid down the patterns of behaviour which had to be followed - failure to observe these and failure to carry out rituals correctly could result in lack of rain or food, and punishment for the wrong - doer.

An important spiritual contact for the Aborigines lay in the plants & animals. Each person born into a clan was immediately identified with a particular animal. This was his totem. He became totally familiar with its haunts and habits. He dare not kill his totem, or eat it, and its appearance was an omen
(An artistic key to a culture - Bob Beale Newcastle Herald 5.11.82)

Throughout all these social arrangement there is a very strong thread of religious feeling, so strong in fact that it is impossible to understand the Aboriginal manner of living without being aware of it. This can be seen again in the relationship of the Aborigines to the land. Individuals did not own land in the European sense - the land they occupied was passed down from previous generations and entrusted to them. It has been said that the land seemed to own them, rather than the reverse, since it was the spiritual home of their ancestors, who included the ancestral beings who had wandered the land in the Dreamtime. Therefore the Aboriginal people regard this land as entrusted to their care, rather than owned for a practical purpose. The clans (groups of people related by descent from a common ancestor) would jealously guard their spirit homes, including the sacred sites of their clan and sacred rituals, totems, and songs. They regarded the land in a religious as well as a practical way, as a home of the ancestral spirits as well as a source of food and materials. It is clear that the Aboriginal people were and are very religious and their life was strongly shaped by their beliefs.

67

The anthropologist F.D. McCarthy has summarized this well:

To the initiated man his religion explains the origin of life itself and of his tribal customs, the source of this supply of food and raw materials, and the mysterious world beyond the comprehension of his scientific or general knowledge. To him it is religion of great sanctity, inspiring in its mythology

and songs, and impressive in its often colourful ceremonies.....It becomes a most important part of the adult life demanding a great deal of time and energy in the enactment of ritual, a tremendous concentration of intelligence in the memorization of the myths, song-cycles, ritual procedure and art designs, and an absolute faith in the efficacy of the beliefs and ceremonial activities.

STORIES OF THE AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES

By R.H. Mathews

Some examples of Stories recorded by R.H. Matthews.

Arrival of the Thurrawal Tribe in Australia.

In the remote past all the animals that are now in Australia lived in another land beyond the sea. They were at that time human creatures, and resolved to leave that country in a canoe, and come to the hunting grounds in which they are at present. The whale was much larger than any of the rest, and had a canoe of great dimensions; but he would not lend it to any of his fellows, who had small canoes, which were unfit for use far from the land. The other people, therefore, watched, in the hope at an opportunity might present itself of the whale leaving his boat, so that they could get it, and start away on their journey; but he always kept a strict guard over it.

The most intimate friend of the whale was the starfish, and he conspired with the other people to take the attention of the whale away from his canoe, and so give them a chance to steal it, and start away across the ocean. So, one day, the starfish said to the whale, "You have a great many lice in your head; let me catch them and kill them for you." The whale, who had been very much pestered with the parasites, readily agreed to his friend's kind offer, and tied up his canoe alongside a rock, on which they then went and sat down. The starfish immediately gave the signal to some of his co-conspirators, who soon assembled in readiness to go quietly into the canoe as soon as the whale's attention was taken off it.

The starfish then commenced his work of removing the vermin from the whale's head, which he held in his lap, while the other people all got quickly into the canoe and rowed off. Every now and again the whale would say, "Is my canoe all right?" The starfish, who had provided himself with a piece of bark to have ready by his side, answered, "Yes, this is it which I am tapping with my hand," at the same time hitting the bark, which gave the same sound as the bark of the canoe. He then resumed his occupation, scratching vigorously about the whale's ears, so that he would not hear the splashing of the oars in the water. The cleaning of the whale's head and the assurances as to safety of the canoe went on with much garrulity on the part of the starfish, until the people had rowed off a considerable distance from the shore, and were nearly out of sight. Then the patience of the whale becoming exhausted, he insisted upon having a look at his canoe to make quite sure that everything was right.

When he discovered that it was gone, and saw all the people rowing away in it as fast as they could go, he became very angry, and vented his fury upon the starfish, whom he beat unmercifully, and tore him almost to pieces. Jumping into the water, the whale then swam away after his canoe, and the starfish, mutilated as he was, rolled off the rock on which they had been sitting into the water, and lay on the sand at the bottom till he recovered.

It was this terrible attack of the whale which gave the starfish his present ragged and torn appearance; and his forced seclusion on the sand under the water gave him the habit of keeping near the bottom always afterwards.

The whale pursued the fugitives, and in his fury spouted the water into the air through a wound in the head received during this fight with the starfish, a practice which he has retained ever since. When the people in the canoe saw him coming after them, the weaker ones were very much afraid, and said, "He is gaining upon us, and will surely overtake us, and drown us every one." But the native bear, who was in charge of the oars, said, "Look at my strong arm. I am able to pull the canoe fast enough to make good our escape!" and he demonstrated his prowess by making additional efforts to move more rapidly through the water.

This voyage lasted several days and nights, until, at length, land was sighted on ahead, and a straight line was made for it. On getting alongside the shore, all the people landed from the canoe, sat down to rest themselves. But the native companion, who has always been a great fellow for dancing and jumping about, danced upon the bottom of the canoe until he made a hole in it with his feet, after which he himself got out of it, and shoved it a little way from the shore, where it settled down in the water, and became the small island now known as Gan-man-gang, near the entrance of Lake Illawarra into the ocean. When the whale arrived shortly afterwards and saw his canoe sunk close to the shore, he turned back along the coast, where he and his descendants have remained ever since.

3. CEREMONIES, MUSIC AND DANCE

INITIATION.

One of the most important components of traditional lifestyle was the initiation. It was one of the ceremonial and spiritual foundations on which Aboriginal society has been built.

Aboriginal boys were initiated into manhood through a complete series of ceremonies which were witnessed and described in some detail by early settlers, as well as by anthropologists of the late nineteenth century (Collins 1798: 564-581; Howitt 1883). The rituals promoted growth in social and economic status as well as a gradual revelation of the sacred stories and objects of the tribe. A young man's initiation was held over a period of years. Tuition in hunting, fishing and self-control, as well as in tribal responsibilities, culminated with an education in tribal lore and tradition (Brayshaw 1969: 117).

Initiation ceremonies varied with different Aboriginal groups. In the Sydney area, initiation ceremonies included dances in which dogs and kangaroos were imitated, and an effigy of a kangaroo was displayed. At times, the older men who instructed the initiates repaired to a secluded place in the bush to prepare their various disguises. At the culmination of a series of symbolic rites, the boys were mounted on the shoulders of seated elders, and an upper front tooth was knocked out using a special piece of bone as a punch and a stone as a mallet. Once the operation was completed, the initiate was presented with a hair girdle as mark of manhood, and a headband into which was stuck slips of foliage from the grass tree (*Xanthorrhoea* sp.). Only the white base of the foliage was used, which protruded from the head in spikes like a radiating coronet (Collins 1789: 579, 580).

The initiation ceremonies described below represent those practised by the Aboriginal tribes spread over the coastal district of New South Wales, from Newcastle south to about Sydney. One of the principal dialects was the Darkingung, which was spoken by the tribes occupying the country on the southern side of the Hunter River, from Jerry's Plains downward towards Maitland, extending southerly to Wollombi Brook, Putty Creek, and including the Macdonald, Colo, and Hawkesbury Rivers.

The locality selected for the gathering is some place where there is a good camping ground, with plenty of water for camp use, and also where game is numerous enough to provide food for the people. Messengers were despatched to the head men of all the adjacent groups who were expected to participate in the ceremonies. Each of these messengers carried the usual emblems of his mission, namely, a bullroarer, a belt, several "tails". The messenger remained with the group to which he had been sent until they were ready to accompany him to the appointed meeting place.

When all the people who are expected have arrived, the old men meet adjacent to the camp, and fix the day on which the business of the meeting the initiation ceremonies shall commence. Shortly after nightfall, they proceed to the sacred ground and light pieces of dry bark at the fire burning there, and then come marching back towards the camp shouting and waving their firebrands in the air. They enter the public ring and dance round, the women beating time for them, after which they throw away the firesticks and call out the names of water-holes, etc, and then go away to their camps.

Early next morning the novices are brought into the ring and placed sitting down on the bank, their mothers and the other women being outside. One of the head men then enters the ring and sticks a spear into the ground near one side. The boys' heads are now bent down, and the women are covered with rugs, bushes or grass, some of the old men being deputed to watch them.

As soon as this is done two men sound bullroarers (minyawaok) in close proximity, whilst the other men beat their weapons together, and the man who has been appointed guardian to the novice, usually his brother-in-law, now catches him by the arm and leads him away.

Shortly after the boys get out of sight the covering is removed from the women by the old men who have charge of them, and they are set at liberty. All hands then gather up their baggage and remove the camp to another locality, perhaps some miles distant, which was determined by the head men at the same time that they fixed the day for taking the boys away. About a hundred yard from the main encampment - on the side towards that part of the hunting grounds into which the novices have been taken the old women, and mothers of the boys, erect a gunyah, called the watyoor, composed of forked saplings, rails and boughs. It is built in a straight line, and is open on the side facing the direction from which the novices will approach it. It is large enough to hold all the novices and their

guardians, and has leaves strewn thickly on the floor for them to lie on. Near one end of this long gunyah all loose rubbish is cleared off the surface of the ground to make it fit for dancing on. Every morning the mothers of the novices, accompanied by the old women of all the tribes present, repair to the watyoor, and light one or more fires in the cleared space, around which they sit and sing songs which have reference to the novices.

70

When all the formalities have been carried out, the men and boys start away to the part of the district in which it has been decided to remain whilst carrying out the ceremonies in the bush. The time spent at camps in the bush generally occupies about a fortnight, being regulated by the weather other considerations. About the middle of this period, preparations are made for the extraction of one of the novices' upper incisor teeth.

On the day which has been appointed for the return of the novices their mothers proceed to the watyoor, being painted with coloured clays. They wear headbands round their hair, in which are fastened various ornaments, such as the feet of the porcupine (*Echidna*), the teeth of animals, and the tail of the native dog hanging down behind. They are accompanied as usual by the other old women of the tribes present, and on this occasion several old men go with them to make the necessary arrangements for the reception of the novices.

The novices march right on into the watyoor, and each boy lies down on the leaves opposite his mother's yam-stick, their guardian's remaining in front of them. The mother's now go back to the main camp.

Next morning the guardians and novices leave the watyoor and go into the bush for some days, gaining their living by hunting. In the course of a few days the novices are again brought back to a place near the women's camp, painted and wearing their full dress. Pieces of bark or rugs are spread upon the ground, on top of which each mother lays some food for her son.

When everything is ready the guardians bring the novices marching up and on their arrival each boy picks up one of the dilly bags. At the conclusion of their repast the novices are taken into a camp provided for them near that of the single men, and the mothers return to their own quarters. From this time onward the boys will not be permitted to stop at their mother's camp but must remain with the men.

The ceremonies being now at an end, all the groups get ready for their departure to their respective countries, and in the course of a few days most of them are on their way homewards. (Mathews 1897).

Girls and women had their own education system and ceremonies which little has been written about as most of the written records of Aboriginal life were recorded by European men.

As soon as a girl was born she was promised by her family, to be the wife of one of the men, in the right clan. While a baby she had the little finger of her left hand amputated. A strong spider's web was wrapped tightly around the last joint, stopping blood circulation, and in a

short time, by drawing the cord tighter, the top of the finger was removed. This was supposed to help them become better at fishing but there was some religious significance to this custom.

DEATH & BURIAL

Burial ceremonies differed but there was always a high degree of mourning for people of prominence or "brave warriors". Women, particularly were emotional mourners. Their cries of grief would last for days because for them death was a time of sincere mourning. (*Aborigines of the Hunter Region*)

Mourning for the dead also involved smearing with body with pipe-clay, and grief was demonstrated by wailing and gashing the head so that blood mingled with the white clay.

The early Europeans colonists were of the impression that the methods by which bodies of the dead were disposed of varied according to age - the young were buried in the ground, while those who had passed middle age were burned (Collins 1798: 601; Barrington 1795:27).

Bodies were incinerated overnight, then the ashes and bones were raked into a tumulus which was marked with two logs of wood. Men were buried with their hunting and fishing weapons, and also with whatever clothing they owned. The name of the deceased was not permitted to be mentioned, and certain food prohibitions had to be respected (Collins 1798:601; Barrington 1795: 27).

W.J. Enright (1937) describes a Darkingung burial. (*Mankind* June 1937 Vol 2 No 4)
The body was trussed up with knees near the head, and carried on a sheet of bark from the place of death. Arriving at the place of burial the body was placed on the ground and the earth was piled on it in the form of a mound with the aid of the boomerangs.

MUSIC, SONGS & DANCE.

Music and dance are central to traditional Aboriginal life. They form the core of religious ritual and provide much of the communities aesthetic and recreational activity.

Aborigines performed music and dance on many different occasions. Public entertainments, often involving several local groups, were usually performed near the general living area of a camp and were attended by everyone. Music and dance played an important part in initiation and death rites, which were often performed in secluded areas. Songs and dances of initiation were often known and performed only by the initiated.

Non-sacred songs covered subjects such as fighting, hunting and fishing, relationships between men and women, the weather and dreams. Sometimes they were based on contemporary events.

For example, at a Botany Bay corroboree in 1790 a man sang about Bennelong's hut, how it had been built for him by Governor Phillip and about other events at the settlement as well. (Turbett 1988 :127)

Relatively little of the poetry and songs have survived and even with some of the songs we have there is an uncertainty about correct translation, since it was in this field of expression that Aborigines used most of their idiom.

Groups of Aborigines made up their own songs and poems, collectively or individually, rarely long but always much to the point. They would laud brave warriors, ridicule persons deserving scorn and would comment on a current happening. These were the pieces favoured for the nightly camp fire. If dancing could be woven into song, then there would be a new dance.

72

A number of songs were recorded north of Sydney and as with songs from other parts of the country they are short and repetitive. Threlkeld gives a translation of the following Awaba song:

Ah, is it so!
Where is the man?
Man away!
Where is the man?
Ah, is it so!
etc.

Eliza Dunlop of Wollombi translated several songs, two of which are given below. The first song is about the first sighting of horsemen.

What is there? See what it is?
It eats the grass. It is tied by a rope.
What is beside it? A spirit.
Is it a stump we see through the maze?
It rests on the grass. See it walks.
It's like the fork of a tree.
It's a spirit.
Go away cold, Why tarry so long?
Return into the blue sky.
Get behind the clouds, the spirits will let you in.
Why remain, cold? Let the bright sun shine forth.
Go away, cold and remain with the spirits above.
Go away.

Song makers were highly esteemed individuals. Threlkeld tells us about old Wullati who, when visiting the Lake Macquarie mission, would often sing and dance in time with his clapping sticks

well into the night.

A certain female singer was also enthusiastically welcomed by the Awaba whenever she visited. Once she started singing, men, women and children would throw off their European clothes and join her in dance and song. Threlkeld says that song men and song women composed impromptu and if a song proved to be popular, messengers would be dispatched to teach it to other groups. Some Port Stephens people once arrived at Lake Maquarie to pass on a new song that had been revealed by a dying man.

Corroborees were not the only occasions at which songs were sung, in fact, one observer states that the Port Jackson Aborigines sang all day long. Women sang while fishing and kept time with a song while paddling. On sighting a school of dolphins, people chanted a short, repetitive song which changed words whenever the animals dived. A similar chant was recited when a pelican was seen overhead. There were also songs, usually performed by women, for the sick and dying. (Turbett 1988 : 128)

There are some sacred songs and dances known only to the initiated persons. The sacred or ritual language was used, according to the degree or level of the initiated person. Sometimes these gatherings were related to only the mysteries of initiation; on other occasions new songs and dances would be taught to the initiands to prepare them for the next step in their initiation. 73

Various types of ceremony were intended to manage conflicts. There were ceremonies for resolving disputes between individuals, conducting diplomacy between groups, making peace and preparing for war. Again there are regional variations, though music and dance were almost always central to them. Some songs and dances are performed on more than one kind of occasion or in more than one kind of ceremony.

DANCE.

In his account of the first four years of settlement at Sydney Cove, Captain John Hunter describes an Aboriginal "crib-berie", calling it 'a dance'. This is probably the origin of the word 'corroboree.' What especially impressed Hunter was a leg quiver, a movement that later observers also saw as a central feature of Aboriginal dance.

He wrote:

"One of the most striking of the principal beauties of their dancing was that of placing their feet very wide apart, and, by an extraordinary exertion of the muscles of the thighs and legs, moving the knees in a trembling and very surprising manner, such as none of us could imitate."

(Hunter 1793).

The word 'corroboree' is often used for the total complex of dance, song, the body decorations of the performers, the objects they used, the sounds of musical instruments, the body movements, shouts and calls of the dancers, the involvement of non-singers and non-dancers, the spatial arrangements of all participants, the skilful use of lighting and other theatrical techniques. These elements, when taken together, can have a powerful effect on those privileged to witness them. Divorced from each other, they, lose much of their impact.

However R.M. and C.H. Berndt in *The World of the First Australians* warns that:

'Corroboree' has passed into English as a word for all Aboriginal ceremonies and rituals and entertainments involving singing and dancing, and social effervescence generally. Howitt (1904: 413) says it is probably derived from "some tribal dialect in the early settled districts of New South Wales, and has been carried by the settlers all over Australia." Haygarth (1850: 103), among others, spells it as 'corrobory,' and seems to imply that it is a word used in the Sydney district. However, it is too vague a term, lumping sacred and non-sacred together in an undifferentiated way, without adding anything distinctive to compensate for using it.

Many early descriptions of dancing and dramatic performances (ceremonies and rituals) were marred by misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and prejudices deriving from the writers' sex and cultural background, at that particular time. We read statements like these:

.... at other times the songs will consist of the vilest obscenity.

I have seen dances which were the most disgusting displays of obscene gesture possible to be imagined, and although I stood in the dark alone, and nobody knew that I was there, I felt ashamed to look upon such abominations. The dances of the women are very immodest and lewd.... (Taplin, in Woods, 1879: 37-8.)

Or, Some corroborees are lewd in the extreme, and it is generally understood that at such times sexual restrictions are shamefully, or from the native point of view shamelessly, relaxed. (Mathews :1897)

What does this tell us about European perception of Aboriginal morality?

74

Dances were usually held at night. In the early days of British settlement, Bennelong Point was a common venue for corroborees (the present building on the site is therefore appropriately located!) and the proceedings of one of these were recorded by a European observer. The eyewitness describes how, prior to the dancing, the young men were carefully painted by the young women and notes the great concern shown by the men with regard to their appearance. Likewise, Threlkeld mentions that husbands and wives decorated each other at Awaba dances.

White clay was the principal pigment at corroborees. Saliva was used to moisten a part of the skin where the white markings were to be particularly outstanding. The patterns painted were probably similar from head to foot, cross-bars on the back and chest and white circles around the eyes were all observed at Sydney. The face was always painted. For these secular occasions the main object of body painting was probably ornamentation.

At the Bennelong Point corroboree, music was provided by a man who sang and hit together two hardwood clapping sticks, one of which was held against his chest like a violin. At his feet sat a group of boys and girls who also sang. They kept time by hitting with their open hands the hollow formed between their crossed thighs and stomachs.

During the evening a number of dances were performed and there was plenty of variety. Sometimes the dancers were all men, while in other performances women were the only participants. In some dances both sexes joined in. One dance began with only a few boys but ended up with movements observed where pairs dancing back to back, dancers holding green branches and a group sitting down and then all rising together. At Sydney corroborees the dancers themselves sometimes sang. (Turbett 1988 : 128-129)

The whole complex of songs, stories and dances provides the meaning of a ceremonial

performance. Even in Aboriginal society, only a few people share the deep knowledge and experience of religion and ritual that enables them to appreciate the songs fully. Others, nevertheless, can appreciate the theatrical brilliance and subtleties hidden beneath the performers' exuberance and skill.

Mr R.J. Wild, a resident of Manly for 50 years recorded that in the late 1870's he saw Aboriginal people doing "corroboree" on vacant land next to St. Mathews Church at the Corso Manly. (Swancott n.d.)

INSTRUMENTS.

Aboriginal musical instruments are essentially rhythmic in purpose and consist mainly of percussion. Even the well-known didjeridu, a wooden trumpet indigenous to the northern third of the continent, produces two pitches and in some traditions only one. Its main purpose is to produce rhythmic accompaniment and a drone rather than melody.

A variety of percussion instruments are employed across Australia. Paired boomerangs, one held in each hand, are clapped and tapped together in various rhythms and are used in many places to accompany singing. Clapsticks (also known as songsticks) are widespread. Men and women clap their hands, slap their laps and buttocks and stamp their feet. Dancers in all areas commonly have boughs of eucalyptus foilage tied to their legs to produce an abrasive resting sound in rhythm with the dance.

In constructing their sound instruments Aboriginal people used the resources at hand. If the appropriate materials were not readily available they were adept at contriving some workable substitutes.

75

There are examples of highly successful ways in which traditional Aboriginal dance and music forms have been incorporated into modern performance ideas, eg:

Gondwanaland
Goanna Band
Aboriginal and Islander Dance Theatre Company at Glebe.
Coloured Stone

For resources on Aboriginal music contact:

Black Books
13 Mansfield St,
Glebe.
Phone. (02) 660 0120.

Musical Instruments

Look at the map of Aboriginal Sound Instruments.

Draw as many of these instruments as you can and describe what you think they are made of.

Think about these questions:

1. Along the East coast tropical rainforest area, what is the most common kind of musical instrument?

2. Where are the hollow-log instruments made?

How does the vegetation of the country affect other musical instruments which are made there?

3. Name all the different kinds of musical instruments which are made on the coastal areas of the continent.

4. From what part of the continent do skin drums come?

5. Some places have many different kinds of musical instruments. What does this tell you about the climate and vegetation?

Listen to a tape of Aboriginal music and try to distinguish as many kinds of musical instruments as you can.

Tapes can be purchased from:

Blackbooks

13 Mansfield Street,

Glebe.

(02) 660 0120

Source: TAFE Aboriginal Education Unit, Aboriginal Society and Culture Resource Book.