NOTICE OF ORDINARY MEETING

The first general meeting of the Society for 1978 will be held in the Museum Education Building, North Terrace, Adelaide at

8.00PM MONDAY 27 FEBRUARY 1978

This meeting will be held in February in lieu of March due to the Easter Weekend and the Festival of Arts. No meeting will be held in March

AGENDA

1. Apologies.

2. Minutes of the General Meeting held on Monday 24 October 1977 to be confirmed. A copy of these minutes is attached.

3. New Members.
   The following new members have been elected to the Society.

   Miss Carolyn L. Boots
   Miss Mary K. Sackes
   Miss Andrea H. Pearce
   Dr. Jennifer M. Brown
   Mrs. Berteena D. Koch

   Papers and journals from other Societies or Organizations will be tabled at the meeting including the following:-

   Conservation Council Newsletters Vol. 5 Nos. 11, 12, 13 & 14
   Anthropological Society of N.S.W. March Newsletter
   Anthropological Society of Victoria Newsletter No. 136
   ECOS Research 14 Nov. 1977
   University of California Berkley General Catalogue 76/77
   Tantara Nos. 4-5 1976
   Asian and African Studies 1977
   Mankind Vol. 11 No. 2
In this address I hope to rectify this situation in part. First I will consider the characteristics of the Cult, and describe the levels of initiation. I will then place the phenomenon in an historical perspective.

The accumulation of material objects is a characteristic of Western European Society, we are informed. The cult under consideration has developed and refined this trait to a level where it assumes a deeply significant role in the lives of its members. Further the objects of their interest are restricted to those items which relate to the past. Collectors I am concerned with further restrict their interests to objects of the Aboriginal past: namely the stone artefacts found on campsites, workshops, and quarry sites or as isolated finds where they were dropped by the last owner, hundreds or thousands of years ago.

The cult is bound together by common practices, preoccupations and rituals but generally lacks tight formal organisation. Small numbers of the cult will form, often on a seasonal basis for purposes of field collecting, but they soon disband. Some may retain a loose connection with each other, through learned or semi-learned, or professional societies. Others retain an affiliation with the Museum, the Cult Temple, where a High Priest of the sect can generally be found to pontificate upon any subject relating to cult matters. There too, the ritual objects are stored in secret underground vaults, away from the prying eyes of the uninitiated.

A common characteristic of cult members is territorialism. The interest in, and often jealous guarding of, certain areas as personal collecting grounds typifies almost all members of the Cult, but is especially pronounced in the higher levels of the initiation. This preoccupation takes the form of a close affinity with a particular area. Generally, this area will be associated with his own initiation, and his involvement increases with his growing familiarity with his totemic sites, and objects from that area. He may often live close to the area and have other affinities as well. In some instances the territories are so well established that once an implement is known to have come from a particular region the collection can be identified. An example of this is Mr. Boehm of Sutherlands. He located, and collected from over 40 sites. All were restricted to a small area between the Adelaide Hills and the River Murray around Sutherlands. The quartz pieces that typify the area are readily identified as being the consequences of Boehm's work. Boemoliths (as they are now called) incidentally are not known to have any special connection with that other well known object of similar name, the boomerang.

Another example of the territorially oriented collector is Mr. Michael Mudie, a former manager of Arcoona Station. This collection is limited to the boundaries of his station. This still gave him a reasonable amount of scope. Working alone, and with Mr. Draper Campbell, he moved across the Arcoona landscape amassing thousand of Adzes, scrapers and microliths. The Arcoona collection held by the South Australian Museum occupies some 40 cubic feet and Mr. Mudie tells me he has also sent implements to Canberra. We have recently sent come to China so the distribution of Arcoona artefacts is spreading thanks to western transport systems, and the diverse cultural affiliations of the priests and disciples of collectionism.

The background of collectors is varied. Basically they seem to belong to two groups. The first is the man on the land: either owner or manager. Mr. Boehm and Mr. Mudie both fall into this group. For collectors of this type the implements are another manifestation of the variety and interest of the land itself and, in the early stages at least, curiosity about the implements themselves is secondary to that interest.

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The second group of disciples is urban based, usually members of another kind of priesthood – the White Collar Cult. The significance of this dual affinity is not yet fully understood, but apparently, in this case at least, the god of neither cult is especially jealous, provided that the proper observances are performed. Limited observations of these disciples indicates they are individualistic, and derive intense satisfaction from 'roughing it' away from city restrictions. Mr. D.T. (Draper) Campbell was one such professional, a dentist and lecturer at the Dental School, he devoted an immense amount of time to field archaeology and to implement analysis. Incidentally, a student of his tells me a certain way to divert him during lectures was to ask a leading archaeological question. He never could resist the bait!

Another example of this professional element is J.E. Johnson. A geologist, some would hold this against him, he began sending specimens and site reports to the Museum in the 1950's. His careful notes describe art sites in the Olary Province and the North-west ranges, whilst his implements are collected from these areas and in the more remote parts of the Flinders Ranges. His notebooks, in a firm neat hand, are packed with detailed descriptions of site locations, and beautiful, scale sketches of the implements he collected. Documentary evidence of this kind is rare, and should help the High Priest to arrive at the significance of cult objects and associated practices. It is hoped that one day a philologist will be able to offer an analysis of such names as Booloomata, Moolawatana and Wingellina, which appear frequently in Johnson's notebooks.

My preceding comments refer to the characteristics of collectors generally. They constitute a loosely organised Cult, practising alone as a rule, generally concentrating on a particular territory. There are, however, levels of initiation within the group that can be easily discerned from the material relics they leave behind.

Those implements in the South Australian Museum marked "Australia" and the more hesitantly marked "S. Australia(?)" are readily assigned to the vacation collector who was fascinated by, for example, a huge hammerstone at the time that he found it. After it had been a doorstep for several years it, and a host of other memorabilia, were passed on to the Museum to calm the conscience of the collector or to provide him with a warm glow of having given to the State's collection. Few names stand out amongst these donors who really flutter like bewildered moths in the lamp light of the Cult never really understanding or partaking of the inner glow that fills the hearts of initiates.

Of course some do penetrate to the rank of the first initiation. They learn that the ritual of collecting requires the application of runic symbols to the ritual objects. Thus we get a wide range of implements bearing the personal codes, shorthand and local terms that render a curator's life interesting and challenging. There was the memorable collection of microliths from "B.P." that kept us on tenterhooks for some weeks. Then the challenge of "George's Gate, 1/4 mile S.W. of" occupied me in idle moments for some six months! "Emu Springs" was a tricky one: there are five entries in the Gazetteer. None of them was the Emu Springs in question. It was two years before I solved that to my satisfaction. Further do you know how many Red Banks there are in South Australia? Any how many Salt Creeks? To decide which Red Banks or Salt Creek one is dealing with requires the skilful sleuthing of a Sherlock Holmes. Then there are those implements whose location is as precise as "near Maree", "Strzelecki Track" or "Coopers Creek - 60 miles from"!
This is the role of the High Priest: in solitude and semi-darkness to commune with the Mysteries, to contemplate the Ineffable, and ultimately to reveal the hitherto unknowable.

Within this first level of initiates a few names do stand out, but perhaps we should pass on.

It is only when collectors have undergone the second stage of initiation that they become conversant with the deeper mysteries of the Cult, begin to practise its curious rituals and enter into its full life regularly. To achieve this level requires dedication. Its membership is characterised by an inner compulsion to keep collecting regardless of conditions and comfort. A passion to quest for completeness yet never to attain it will send them back to a site again and again. Indeed there seems a certain masochism required for this initiation. The heavier the material, the more inaccessible the site, the more extreme the climate, the more likely those people are to return. This initiation through hardship admits one to a level of grace bordering on sanctity.

An example or two will demonstrate what I mean. One of these initiates, Mr. Dick Kimber tells the story of collecting in the Murray Mallee at a soak with the delightful name of Paraparitch. He spent the day collecting and when picked up after ten hours he was so exhausted he was on his hands and knees, but still collecting! Indeed what was left at Paraparitch is not now worth going out for!!

Mr. Harold Cooper for many years would catch the train to Hallett Cove, walk out to the Headland and collect the huge implements of the old Kartan campsites there. Having filled his string dilly bag he would return to the railway station, and then to Adelaide. Over a period of some years he amassed 55.1 cubic feet of material from this site. It is estimated to weigh well over two tonnes. Incidentally it is Dick Kimber's boast that he brought back any material from Hallett Cove which Cooper had scorned as too easy.

The bearing of physical hardships with fortitude holds an important place in initiation, but members can find grace, as it were, by additionally undertaking long hours of routine and repetitious gestures. Many gain considerable recognition for the detailed data they record on every item collected: location, date, collector all meticulously inscribed for posterity. Almost all members at this level of initiation gain a kind of immortality by providing detailed information regarding the exact location and description of sites. The provision of this information along with the ritual objects gains the initiate the highest recognition from the High Priests of the Cult, who generally then indicate that the member is ready for the final stage of initiation.

The final stage involves the entry of the initiate into the Inner Sanctum of the Cult when he is permitted, nay encouraged, to carry out dreadful rites using balances, calipers and other instruments of calculation. He will be able to quantify, calculate, to classify and scrutinize. The proof of successfully completing this final phase is the production of a dissertation, which may be published as proof of divine favour.
Few have ever achieved this pinnacle within the Cult so I shall mention those most notable of the sect. Harold Cooper must head such a list. Not only did he assiduously collect from Hallet Cove, but he followed the material remains of the "Kartan" to sites on Kangaroo Island, along the coast at places such as Fishery Creek and north to the River Wakefield. Thus he established the provisional distribution of what appears to be one of South Australia's earliest manifestations of human activity. His papers on this subject published in the Holy Writ of the Cult otherwise known as the Records of the South Australian Museum are of considerable value and interest.

Draper Campbell is one whose career can be traced by his collections from the first level of initiation, through to the final stages. His large collection from the South-east of the State, together with a detailed report constitutes a very valuable collection. This work published in 1947 represents the first archaeological regional survey ever undertaken in Australia. His interest then focussed on the microlith industries and he produced a study on the distribution of pirri points which was one of the first such studies made in the country.

J.E. Johnson has written, though not published, a fascinating paper based on his observations of Central desert material. Its careful observation of detail combined with his professional geological insight places it in advance of its time in Australia.

Most of the people mentioned so far have now passed on to the Happy Collecting grounds but the Cult is still active. We even have some members in our own society. Mr. Ron Hewitt belongs to the Arcoona subsection. He has collected widely in the area, been a source of invaluable information concerning sites and published an account of hordes of implements he has located. Mr. Peter Davis similarly belongs to this subsection and his collections have helped to swell the Arcoona collection to its goodly 108 cubic feet. I believe Mr. Rodney Weathersbee has also been associated with Arcoona, but he really is noted as a specialist in the Birdsville Track. Kangaroo Island and Hallet Cove may be Cooper sites but Blazes Well, Dulkaninna and Maroochuchowie are incontestibly Weathersbee's. However, like Cooper he has ranged widely and recorded assiduously. The area west of Port Augusta and the south coast of the Fleurieu Peninsula are the better known for his enthusiastic collecting and recording.

Another subsection exists in the totemic region of the River Broughton.

Ms. Margaret Nobbs makes an interesting case. She is not a true collector, rather a recorder and thus foreshadows the development of a schism with the cult. Nevertheless she deserves mention as her dedication to the Olary area is characterised by all those qualities necessary to attain the highest level of initiation. It is believed that she is the only woman to have achieved admission to the higher levels of the cult: which in view of her potential heresy is noteworthy.

It will have been noticed that all the initiates work in a voluntary capacity; cult members believe they receive their reward in the next cycle of Creation. The full-time High Priests on the other hand, are paid to minister to the members. As in all sects some such priests have been more venerable than others and there is one in particular whose hand can be seen behind so many cult activities and rituals.
Whilst the initiates accumulated material from the far flung corners of the state, making immense aggregations from select sites, Norman Tindale selected small, representative samples wherever his many field trips to totemic centres called him. As a founding High Priest - the father of the Cult, in fact - Tindale never had to establish his divine credentials in the lower orders of initiation by collecting in bulk; he used his arcane knowledge to collect selectively, for the elucidation of the Mysteries.

For some forty years, from the early 1920's he reigned as supreme head of the Cult Temple, formulating new Mysteries conducting novel rites in their elucidation and initiating and directing the lower orders of the Cult. Without his priestly guidance the work of Cooper, Campbell and Johnson would almost certainly have taken other directions and perhaps these men would never have achieved their elevated positions within the Cult.

One of the most novel rites introduced by Norman Tindale was that of excavation. Reserved for the cult elite, this practice was first celebrated in 1928 when he excavated Devon Downs, the rock shelter on the River Murray. The value of the experience in illuminating ritual objects accumulated by the sect was so great that the ritual has become an established part of the Cult activity, priests from rival clans interstate even being allowed to participate on some occasions. Within the cult there is a specialist sect carefully trained for participation in this ritual. Generally they are carefully disguised so that their identity remains secret - as is appropriate on hallowed ground - but careful investigation has revealed that the Honorary Secretary to this Society and his wife are well versed in the unusual rites associated with this aspect of cult life.

Despite expansion of the Temple, and the presence of a new generation of High Priests, many aspects of its life continue as ordained by the Venerable Tindale. The ritual objects, now amounting to more than 1,000 cubic feet, are stored in the same style of caskets, they still receive cryptic numerals when accepted, and the record system, whilst modified by later reformist movements, retains its basic integrity. It is through such subtle areas as these, from the oral traditions of those who know him and from the documentary evidence found mainly in the Holy Writ that the shadowy figure of the High Priest emerges as a major guiding and initiating force within the Cult. Though absent in the flesh (having become a prophet to be honoured outside his own country) his spirit moves us still.

Having outlined the characteristics and organisation of the Cult in some detail I would now like to examine it in an historical perspective.

There was a small sect in the late nineteenth century which was keenly interested in the Aborigines, who were regarded as a relic of the past; a type fossil still living in defiance of evolution but doomed to disappear in the face of European superiority. This was the philosophy of Daisy Bates for example, and it impelled some early studies of the Aborigines. Just as some interested themselves in the living people others speculated about the past. For many the situation was summed up by R.W. Palliène's comment:

   Excavation would be in vain ... they were an unchanged people living in an unchanged environment.(1)
Sir Spencer Baldwin expressed the same view in a different way when he said:

The Australian is homogeneous...he found an exterminated no predecessors, and...his arrival was not followed by successive waves even of himself.(2)

This was hardly the atmosphere to stimulate widespread archaeological inves-
tigations! However, some work was done by those not so wise in cult dogma. In N.S.W. in 1892 a road engineer called Stratham described a midden he had excavated. His approach was highly scientific. A few years later in South Australia Colonel White conducted an excavation on his property, Reedbeds, at the mouth of the Torrens River. Implements were found well below the present river level and considerable antiquity was deduced for them. At the same time Howitt and Howchin were collecting from surface sites. These collections are only located in a very general way, such as "Adel.dist" reflecting the assumption of homogeneity of Aboriginal culture. Yet they represent the earliest activities of the Cult and formed the basis of some of the earliest descriptions of South Australian implements, thus providing the first data to demonstrate that there were technological differences across the country, although such studies were still in the future.

The 1920's and 1930's represent a great leap forward for Australian archaeology and saw the Cult become firmly established. Just as many anthropologists now saw that the Aboriginal people had a future, and a diverse culture, so it was to be demonstrated that they had a past, and quite an extensive past, marked by changing modes of implement making. As early as 1890, Etheridge pointed out that the present island of Tasmania must have been populated whilst a land bridge still existed between it and the mainland. He concluded:

Herein lies one of the strongest proofs of man's early existence on the island continent of Australia(3)

Such an argument ran counter to current thinking and, apart from the strength of the geological evidence there seemed no way to test the hypothesis. You will recall Palliene's assertion that "excavation would be in vain".

It is in proving the hypothesis of the antiquity of man in Australia that our South Australian sect came into singular prominence, for with Hale and Tindale's excavation of Devon Downs in 1929 it was demonstrated that stratified sites of considerable depth existed in Australia. Devon Downs contained 6 metres of deposit. This implied considerable antiquity for the lower levels, but until radio carbon dating was invented over twenty years later the exact length of occupation at the site could not be determined. Yet within the deposit Tindale noted a change in the nature of the stone implements and devised a "cultural sequence" for Australian implements. Whilst this sequence has been extensively modified in the light of subsequent work the very demonstration that Australia had a prehistory, had seen the changes from one style of tool-making to another marked a tremendous breakthrough in thinking about our past. Three migrations of man into Australia were hypothesised to explain these changes. The notion that the dingo came with one such migration was floated, and the suggestion of climatic change in Australia during man's presence all flowed swiftly from the new sect. Not without controversy, of course! But controversy proved to be the locomotive of inquiry. More field work and fresh evidence followed. In a search for the oldest cultures Tindale, Magrath and later Cooper searched Kangaroo Island and adjacent mainland sites and found
evidence of Man who must have existed prior to the flooding of the Backstairs Passage with the rise in sea levels between 8,000 and 10,000 years ago. The men of this period produced a characteristic tool kit called "karton" by the workers, who argued very logically for its great antiquity.

This sudden launching of prehistory and an established cultural sequence brought in its wake to the South Australian sect a means of establishing a relative chronology for the thousands of surface sites that exist all over the state.

A card system was devised to record the location and details of such sites, and to record the nature of the collection from each site. Thus surface collection received a great fillip. Encouragement was given to anyone interested in swelling the knowledge of the distribution of the various "cultures". Thus the Cult grew rapidly and initiates at all levels were accepted, and collecting became very widespread.

Whilst the activities of the Cult slowed with the distractions of the war, during the 1940's, Draper Campbell was able to complete his survey of the South East of the State. The motivation for it remains unclear but I suggest that Tindale wanted to test his culture sequences on the series of sand dune systems that have developed, parallel to, but inland from, the present coastline and which represent earlier sea levels. The work appears to have been problem oriented, and planned to develop an understanding of an area's prehistory using geomorphology to provide relative dating in a period before more absolute methods existed. The result of this survey was a concise report and the accumulation of 829 cubic feet of artefacts. Apart from reflecting Campbell's high state of grace within the Cult, this large volume indicates his personal interest in implement morphology and his recognition of the need for large samples to provide statistically valid results in artefact analysis.

Campbell's interest in implement analysis and distribution was manifested in work on other implement types, such as the pirri point. The work showed promise of providing valuable new data on local creations and distributions. But the Cult was to face new challenges from the fifties onwards. Radio-carbondating allowed absolute dating of organic material, introducing a new element of accuracy into archaeology. From other parts of Australia evidence to contradict Tindale's tri-partite migration theories was accumulating.

Between 1960 and 1965 Mulvaney dug Fromm's Landing, a few miles from Devon Downs and the new evidence called for a revision of the last thirty years of work. New complexities were recognised. Lack of data to answer the new problems became the most obvious fact relating to prehistory in Australia. At this stage A.N.U. took the lead as Cult centre for Australian Archaeology. In consequence the South Australian sect now appeared more provincial because of the vast amount of work being done elsewhere. Careful site recording of rock art, the aggregation of the Arcoona collection, along with site details, and continuing work in the Murray River Valley have characterised the sect's work over the past ten to fifteen years. Collection was still encouraged but the growing crowding in the sacred crypt made it increasingly difficult for the High Priests to officiate, and slowly this aspect of the Cult life, once such a dynamic aspect of it, has been curtailed.

The Goldsborough House basement became available for storage of the ritual objects in 1976 and with due presidential modesty they have now been re-sorted and stored in a manner which allows individual items to be located. This
reorganisation facilitates the study of objects from general totemic regions, and has thus led to a realisation that for large areas of the State, there are few records and very restricted collections.

This realisation may be seen as a challenge to re-vitalize the Cult, and provide opportunities for the initiation of new apostles. Perhaps the Cult may channel its interests in new directions.

I suggest there are several areas that require urgent action. The first of these is the marriage of all information already accumulated about South Australian field archaeology. The site card system of the South Australian Museum gives a superficial view of the location of habitation sites across the state. Locations are often vague and there are large gaps in the coverage of the state but the backbone of site location is there. However, there is much more to man's way of life than catching a kangaroo, or spending a week with his family fishing. These habitation areas need to be related to other known archaeological sites, to art and ceremonial sites when they can be known. The interpretation of a campsite changes if it is known to be close to art sites, ceremonial grounds or to an ochre quarry. There is a growing awareness of the complexity of hunter-gatherer organisations and of their relationship to each other and to the land. The present knowledge needs drawing together to throw more light on prehistoric life in South Australia.

A second area for work is the filling of serious gaps in our knowledge. We have meagre collections from the Coorong and the River Murray, although the latter has been studied extensively. The Western Desert is virtually a closed book and so are the Murray-Mallee areas. The Western desert appears secure from intense activity for a while so perhaps we can leave it in peace, archaeologically, for the present. The same cannot be said for the Fleurieu Peninsula, for the Coorong or for the Flinders Ranges. Rapid land development and recreational expansion threaten to destroy these areas before they can be adequately charted. Similarly formerly remote areas like the Arcoona region have suddenly become the focus of extensive mineral exploration programmes which threaten to obliterate the vulnerable surface sites before they can be scientifically investigated.

The collections held represent a point of reference, the starting point for regional surveys but they require more accurate field documentation. In a few cases additional collecting on a scientific basis may be needed to elucidate problems and to eliminate bias in the collection; but most importantly what is needed at present is data putting sites into their geographic and cultural context. This should enable an intelligent management programme for sites in the field, and allow intelligent and urgent research programmes to be enunciated and pursued.

Perhaps this conclusion is a call for the Cult members to rally to a crusade: a crusade to locate and document South Australia's archaeological sites, to save them from destruction by development, mining and unscrupulous collecting and the press for more research and more workers. There are important projects to be outlined and pursued but the High Priests remain few in number and often preoccupied by the rituals and ceremonies they have devised and inherited.
Therefore much remains to be done by those honorary initiates, who have been largely responsible for carrying the Cult this far into the twentieth century. Perhaps it is their role to determine the nature of the rites and ceremonies pursued by the Cult in future.

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(1) Quoted by Mulvaney: 1969: The Prehistory of Australia p. 102

(2) Quoted by Mulvaney in Australian Aboriginal Studies ed. H. Shields 1961

(3) E. Ethridge, Proceedings of the Limean Society of N.S.W. 5 (2) 1890: 256