NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETING

The 1st General Meeting of the Society for 1985 will be held in:

THE CONSERVATION CENTRE, 120 WAKEFIELD STREET, ADELAIDE
ON
MONDAY 25TH MARCH 1985 AT 8.00 PM.

AGENDA

1. Apologies:

2. Minutes of previous General Meeting:
   The Minutes of the previous General Meeting, held at the
   Conservation Centre, Monday 22nd October 1984, to be confirmed.
   A copy of these minutes is attached.

3. New Members:
   The following new members have joined the Society since the
   last general meeting:
   
   Dr Rupert BEST
   Mrs. M. BENNETT
   Mrs D. TUNBRIDGE
   Mr Fred TEAGUE
   Mr J.L. COONEY

4. Papers and Journals:
   Papers and journals from other societies and organizations will
   be tabled at the meeting.

5. Speaker:
   Mrs Virginia Kennedy will present an illustrated address:
   "A Traverse of the Gibson Desert."
   Mrs. Kennedy's son Ross served as surveyor and navigator for a
   crossing of the Gibson Desert by a party led by Mr Rex Ellis.
   Slides illustrating a NW - SE traverse - not previously attempted,
   will be shown. The party photographed fine examples of rock art.

6. Supper will be served.
NGURUNDERI: THE DREAMING HERO, CHASES FLOOD.

NGURUNDERI, THE EPIC

The river peoples, from the Darling to the sea, shared an epic; the account of Ngurunderi, the great Ancestral Being. Each group had the Ngurunderi Dreaming account although details varied from group to group. Each knew, also, more about the happenings within their own territory than they did of any other.

The great account was not secret. Everyone knew it. Children began to learn about Ngurunderi and others when they were quite young. There may have been sacred and secret details in the chage of only a few, but we do not know them or need to know them; indeed, it is none of our business. The grand epic itself is enough.

The information given here has to bring together, in a shortened, simple and non-Aboriginal form, what is known. We do not have the full account of any one group — all we have, in fact, are incomplete accounts from a relatively few groups. These accounts, also, are scattered over the years; even in 1984 river Aboriginal people were disclosing a few new details.

This interpretation of the epic, then, has to be a modern 'cut-and-paste' one, one which telescopes and no doubt distorts an ancient account.

It would not meet the requirements of any one of the old traditional groups. But like all true epics it is greater than the translation. It rewards those who listen to it.
While considering how to catch Ponde Ngurunderi made two rafts, called Lala. He then set nets in the lake to catch food for his two wives and children. The nets, however, were broken by mischief-making underwater beings called Muldjewangk. One still exists in an underwater cave near Wellington. The family had to go hungry.

Ngurunderi had not given up on Ponde, who was slowly swimming across the lake, heading for the Murray mouth. Deciding to call upon his brother-in-law, Nepele, for help, he asked Nepele to go across the lake to see if he could spot Ponde. Looking down from the cliff at Rawukung (Point McLeay) Nepele saw Ponde approaching and, from his vantage point, speared him.

Ngurunderi hurried over the lake, using his two rafts. Reaching the eastern shore of Lake Alexandrina he pulled his rafts high upon the land. Today they can be seen as Lolangengul, "The Two Watercraft", or the twin summits of Mount Misery. He now set about completing his great task. In order to stock the Lakes with plenty of fish Ngurunderi took his flint knife and cut Ponde into seven pieces. One became the silver bream, another the perch, another the callop, another the cat-fish, and another the small mud-fish. The sixth piece became the small sprat and the last piece, by command of Ngurunderi, kept on being a River Murray Cod. In this way the Creation Being's Spirit was usefully diversified and the lakes and river enriched with fish.

THE MAKING OF THE MURRAY

Coming from the northern part of Australia, Ngurunderi took up the pursuit of Ponde, a gigantic cod. They sped down the River Darling and out into the Murray, which was then nothing but a small creek. Behind Ngurunderi followed his people.

Ponde sped on, his tail working furiously from side to side, scouring out a deep and wide river channel.

Ngurunderi followed in his canoe, often launching a spear but never being able to hit the agile Ponde. At every launch the desperate Ponde swept his tail and changed course a little, so creating the great bays and reaches to be found all the way down the river.

Ponde desperately made a right-angled turn to the south where present-day Morgan stands, so bringing into being the great Nor'West Bend.

Near Mupulerwong (Hypolonga) Ngurunderi stopped on a large blue rock, which still bears his footprint. It was at Kauwirru (Mannum) that Ponde suddenly changed direction again, carving out a great bend called Ponde to this day.

It was at Kabuthut, now known as Mason, that the mighty hunter, now becoming weary, sharpened his aim. With a mighty throw he struck Ponde in the tail. With shock Ponde charged, clearing out the long straight stretch to Peindjalang, the northern edge of the site of the present-day Tailem Bend or Tagalong.

Ponde then swam into the deeps of Lake Alexandrina, sank beneath its surface and disappeared. Ngurunderi rested.
Having seen to it that there would always be sufficient fish for his people Ngurunderi travelled about the region. He went, for example, to the summit of Mount Barker, which as a consequence became rich with Life Force. Altogether the whole country was a bountiful one.

It must have been while he was away on one of these expeditions that a powerful leader of people in the lower Coorong stole his children. Ngurunderi went down the Coorong and in the mighty fight that followed the great Ancestral Hero slew his enemy and rescued his children. One of his footprints still remains near Kingston S.E.

Ngurunderi had a son, named Matamai or Martummeri, who died before his time. In grief, Ngurunderi preserved the shell of the body with smoke. The Life Force, of course, remained intact. And so life went on.

In order to conserve the various species of plants and animals, and for other reasons, a variety of foods were forbidden to certain people. Each local group and family had a piece of territory to maintain, and it maintained them. The environment had to provide food for all, not only day by day but for ever. Lack of restraint spelt death for all. For that reason breaking the laws regarding food carried the death penalty.

The women of Ngurunderi's group were not allowed to eat silver bream. One day, although they had no need to, the wives of Ngurunderi fell to temptation and cooked and ate some silver bream. Realizing, soon afterwards, the seriousness of their actions they fled.

THE FLIGHT OF THE WIVES

The two wives crossed Lake Albert in a raft, heading west. Where they landed, at Thrairum Point, the materials of their raft gave rise to the reeds and rushes still found so abundantly there. They then crossed the Coorong and headed for the Murray mouth and beyond.

Suspicious about his wives' absence, Ngurunderi searched and found evidence of law-breaking and flight. He followed. At Port Elliot he stopped for food, casting his net into the waters of the cove; it became known as Ngurunderi's fishing ground. Then he cast aside his net; it can now be seen on the first rock of Netung (Pullen's Island).

Moving on he heard his wives but missed them. He threw a spear into the shallows and so gave rise to Granite Island. Reaching the western end of Encounter Bay he stamped his feet, so creating Longkwar (The Bluff), so named because it looks like a Lonk or club. Resting on it, he ate some muntthiri berries, and those of the pig face. They were once prolific in the area. Looking around from The Bluff he could not see his wives but threw some reed spears about. These landed in the shallows, giving rise to the small rocky islands now to be seen in the vicinity.

Ngurunderi travelled on, glimpsing his wives at King's Point. When he reached there he could not find them, but threw a reed spear into the shallows, creating West Island. Finally he was successful; he caught the two runaways at Toppong. He gave them the beating they deserved for all his trouble, and then, tired, rested.
The wives fled again, reaching Tunkalilla, near the end of the Flieurieu Peninsula. They walked down Tjurbuk, or Blowhole Creek, the place of the formidable and well armed Ancestral Hero Tjurbuki, or Tjilbruke, who kept the region. They asked the Blue Crane for permission to cross to Karta, which was given. They then began crossing the low-lying ground which stretched to the highlands of Karta, now Kangaroo Island. In those days the sea was much lower than it is today, and it was easy to wade across.

Ngurunderi, who had been forced to take up the chase again, spotted the two women walking out on the flats. He did not attempt to pass into the Tjurbuk region, however. He stopped. His wives, however, kept going. It was not until they were half way to Karta that Ngurunderi cried out, in a voice of thunder. As a consequence water poured down, the west wind whipped up the sea and the two hapless women drowned.

Ngurunderi wept. Although he knew that the women had broken a law of life he still loved them. The Life Force, however, whispered to him and he transformed the two women into enduring rock. Thus immortalized they can still be viewed from high points as the Meralang, or The Pages, sometimes called The Sisters. Still half way between the present mainland and Kangaroo Island, they remain as grim reminders of the inevitable consequences of breaking basic laws of life.

TO THE HEAVENS

Ngurunderi, much grief-stricken, decided to leave the country he had given to his people. Commanding the waters to move back he walked to Karta, resting near present-day Kingscote. A huge tree marks the spot. He then travelled further to the west, to the limit of land above sea. Here the sun sank into the sea. Here was the earthly limit of Spirit. It was here, then, that he began his second preparations for his people.

When he was ready he plunged into the depths of the sea, so cleansing himself in the old life. He sought, too, and found, the spirits of his wives, and brought them out of the ocean.

Ngurunderi then threw a line back to his people's country, to the Life Force of his physically dead son, Matanai. Following his father's tracks and then climbing along the line, Matanai was rejoined with his father. Ngurunderi, with his wives, then went up into Wyirrewarri or Waterwar, the realm of the sky. There he remains, in the company of Nepele and others, bright star clusters, as a Sky Being. Merely to look at him brings comfort to the Narinjeri.

Since then whenever a Narinjeri person dies Matanai throws them Ngurunderi's line, and so they are able to come safely to the west, the place of the spirits. After due time, and having cleansed themselves, they are able to go up to Wyirrewarri, where there is infinite space for infinite stars. There are all reunited.
REFERENCES


Smith, Paul : Communications to G. Woolmer.


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FINDINGS

A series on research: AERIAL ARCHAEOLOGY

A sky-high treasure trail

This summer's drought was bad news for farmers and West Country hoteliers, but to aerial archaeologists it spelled a golden harvest. Crop marks - the telltale reflections of buried archaeological structures - appear when plants are under stress from lack of moisture. In years that are dry on average it is only Britain's lighter and better-drained soils that provide such marks. On heavier land, or in the wetter west and north, conditions have to be much more severe before arable and pasture fields reveal their hidden treasures.

Since archaeological aerial photography began in earnest, 40 years ago, this country has known four droughts on a par with this year's. During each of these, 1949, 1959 and 1975-6, resources were too thinly spread to do proper justice to the thousands of windows that fleetingly opened on to the past. This year, things were better organized and two dozen separate photographers are now cataloguing the results of more than 900 hours of airborne survey.

For some it is a story of spectacular discoveries in previously neglected regions, for others, working patiently in better-explored territories, it is a less glamorous but none the less vital tale of amplification.

Top: Aerial outline of Roman army post at Exeter - (1) shows how the rich growth of crops on a filled-in ditch and poor growth (2) on shallow soil above a wall can indicate buried remains.