Ethnohistory and the Antipodes[1]

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Australia has a large Indigenous population, characterized in the 19th and much of the 20th century as quintessential "Stone Age" hunter-gatherers, often providing archetypes for anthropological theorizing during that period. Currently there are major national debates around Indigenous issues in Australia, including historical issues, and broad Indigenous, academic and popular interest in Indigenous history. Yet paradoxically little has been published about Indigenous Australians in academic journals outside Australia in recent times.[2] Consequently this paper will endeavor to inform those outside Australia of the historical background to the current discourse in Australia. In so doing it will touch upon some of the debates around the relationship between history and anthropology, consider the different streams in ethnohistory, and examine the historiography of ethnohistory, using exemplars drawn from Australia and elsewhere. Parallels with the development of ethnohistory outside Australia, particularly North America, should also be evident as a result of these deliberations. As a further outcome a typology will be presented, characterizing historical and archaeological studies that draw upon ethnographic information, or are concerned with the ethnohistory of particular cultural groups or aspects of those groups. Finally, a partial case study will be presented, consciously employing a particular ethnohistorical approach, to illustrate the value of that approach, and in so doing highlight an unacknowledged dimension of traditional Indigenous culture in Australia.

Anthropology, in its original conception arose as an exclusively Eurocentric project intent on the acquisition of ethnographic information, in its broadest sense, so as to "understand and explain the strange customs and beliefs" of the "exotic cultures" (Sturtevant 1966:11; see also Cowlishaw 1992:24-25) encountered during the period of European imperial expansion beginning in the 16th century. As an adjunct to those developments, historical studies of indigenous peoples first came to prominence in the second half of the 19th century. The "findings" of such research were often embraced by the notable "evolutionary anthropologists" of that time, in works engaging in the highly speculative theorizing. The proposition, and ensuing international debate, that "group marriage" existed among some Indigenous populations is perhaps one of the better known example of this speculative treatment of an element in the alleged history of indigenous cultures (Hiatt 1996:36-56). The concurrent formulation of social Darwinism, with Herbert Spencer as one of its principal proponents, and the "scientific history" of the unilinear "culture stage" models of the evolutionary anthropologists, typified by Tylor, Morgan and Lubbock, also saw the reputed histories of indigenous peoples being heartily embraced, implicitly or explicitly (Corris 1969:202; Dening 1966:23). While this marked the beginnings of anthropology, and prehistory, as formal disciplines, such approaches came to be largely discredited and supplanted by other paradigms (Hiatt 1996). Indeed, in rejecting this type of approach, Radcliffe-Brown pronounced in 1941 that there was absolutely no value in what he called "conjectural history" (Radcliffe-Brown 1941:1-2). The British school of social anthropologists, exemplified by the functionalist Radcliffe-Brown, and the structuralists, such as Levi-Strauss, arrived at the view that history and anthropology were essentially irreconcilable (Dening 1980:36-38; Trigger 1985a:4-5). Nevertheless, as cultural relativism asserted itself as the dominant ethnological paradigm in the course of the 20th century a role for history in anthropology began to gain acceptance. From the Boasian perspective, indigenous peoples could not be evaluated or judged by the so-called "universal", "absolute" or "objective" standards of outsiders,

particularly where these cloaked the prejudices or preconceptions of those promulgating those standards, but only "in terms of the ethical principles of their own society" (Trigger 1985a:113-14). Consequently, as some of these cultures appear to have changed over time, the inference drawn from the endeavors of the "diffusionist" or "historical" school was that indigenous peoples could have their own history, as valid as any other people's history (Trigger 1980:667).

Given these antecedents it is not surprising that debate and discussion about the nature of what we might now call "ethnohistory" began even before it was first considered to be a discrete field of study. Part of the reason for this, as outlined above, was the perceived difficulty of reconciling anthropology with history, this dichotomy being the source of tension within these subject areas from an early stage (Dening 1966:23; 1980:35-38; Geertz 1990; McBryde 1979:132; Sturtevant 1966:1-6). As noted earlier, "historical" materials were first utilized in studies of indigenous cultures in the 19th century by "evolutionists" such as Morgan (Dening 1966:23; Trigger 1985b:24). However, it was not until the 1920s that the term "ethnohistory", in the sense of engaging in a deliberative approach, was first used, by Kroeber (McBryde 1979:131). Acculturation studies in North America first employed this approach in the 1930s (Trigger 1980:671-72), as ethnohistory began to emerge as a recognized discipline, or, for some, a sub-discipline (Euler 1972:202; Wiedman 1986:ix). This trend culminated in the appearance of the first ethnohistory journal, *Ethnohistory*, in 1954.

Ethnohistory is certainly not a field with any immediate definitional unanimity or common understanding as to its purview, with differing conceptions of what constitutes ethnohistory already apparent in the first issue of *Ethnohistory*. Voegelin, in introducing the journal, stated that it was for "ethnologically minded historians … [and] historically minded ethnologists" (Voegelin 1954a:2). In the same issue, however, archaeologist Glenn A. Black saw ethnohistory simply "as an adjunct to archaeology" (Black 1954:156). Voegelin nevertheless ventured to specifically define ethnohistory, as "the study of identities, localities, movements, numbers, and cultural activities of primitive peoples from the earliest written records concerning them, onward in point of time." (Voegelin 1954b:168). Herskovitts, in the following year, also attempted to produce a formal definition of ethnohistory, describing the "ethnohistorical method" as the "welding of ethnographic and historical materials" (Herskovitts 1955:473). A little over a decade later Sturtevant, one of the principal practitioners in that period, formed the view that ethnohistory had "two principal interests which may be labeled historical ethnography and the historiography of nonliterate cultures" (Sturtevant 1966:7). Dening, in the same year, 1966, wryly suggested ethnohistory was "only history writ polysyllabically" (Dening 1966:23), before proceeding to identify the purpose of ethnohistory as being, "the description of illiterate societies by literate observers at the time when contact between the two had not changed or destroyed the illiterate society" (Dening 1966:25). Euler was more precise when, in 1972, he reasoned that ethnohistory involved "the understanding of culture or cultural process … … in categories based upon modern ethnographic field observations" (Euler 1972:201). Seemingly with such diverse and disparate notions as to what constituted ethnohistory Carmack, in a review of the field in the same year, could only conclude that it had "yet to be defined" (Carmack 1972:230). While this may have been the case, ethnological concepts and precepts continued to be seen as central to ethnohistory. Consequently, as Axtell put it in 1981, "ethnohistory is essentially the use of historical and ethnological methods" (Axtell 1981:5; see also Axtell 1997:12), and "is

barely distinguishable from the branch of anthropology known as historical ethnography" (Axtell 1981:6).

During the 1980s and 1990s a marked change in how ethnohistory was being formulated appeared to take place. Effectively ethnohistory was re-inventing itself. While still employing terms such as "historical ethnography," it was now seen as something "capable of capturing the simultaneous unity and diversity of social processes, the convergence and divergence of prevailing forces of power and meaning" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:37). In keeping with those views, ethnohistory has increasingly come to be seen by many practitioners as the study of "cross-cultural dynamics over time" (Salmond 2004:xxii-xxiii). Accordingly this has posed a conundrum as to how to treat historical situations involving interaction between different cultures, which Comaroff and Comaroff argued could only be resolved "by treating modernity (and postmodernity) as a problem in historical ethnography" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:37). Thus issues of cultural relativism in evidence and interpretation came to the fore, with many ethnohistorians embracing postmodernism and deconstructionism as the theoretical justification for the resultant heuristic re-orientation. This, at times, has resulted in a vociferous response from those who do not subscribe to those methodologies or who suspect a hidden agenda, with Davison, for example, claiming it as "an attack on the structure of knowledge" (Davison 2000:15).

Given the significance of these developments a brief digression is warranted in order to enunciate the philosophical position I hold in regard to the nature and purpose of history, with particular reference to ethnohistory, what it purports to communicate and how it is communicated. The necessity for this exposition arises from the epistemological challenge posed by "postmodernism" as well as its relevance to the question of what is ethnohistory. Clearly this analytical methodology has brought the relationship between history and anthropology into sharp relief, arising from the primary focus on "cross-cultural dynamics." Key features in its application appear to involve a broader and more inclusive embrace of evidence and interpretational perspectives, the "unpacking" of assumptions and interpretations made by one or both parties in the course of cultural interactions, and the rejection of absolutist constructs (e.g. Geertz 2000:222). Consequently, cultural interactions have come to be seen in terms of a historical discourse between different parties with different culturally conditioned notions and concerns in the context of hegemonic relations (Geuijen et al. 1995; Kuper 1999:43).

In practice, certainly in Australia, New Zealand and Oceania, postmodernism has in recent times provided the theoretical justification for the recognition and incorporation of the divergent perspectives of the different actors in the documentation, interpretation and analysis of historical scenarios, usually culture-contact situations involving the indigenous and the invader or interloper. This appears to have a parallel in North America in the form of "New Indian History" (Mihesuah 1996). Certainly many insightful and revealing studies have been published based on this approach (e.g. Clendinnen 2003). Philosophically, one critical element in this school of thought is a challenge to the validity of objective, "scientific" or universal explanations. Conversely, the postmodernist view sees reality as consisting of relative individual truth, a construct of our own minds, with all viewpoints having equal validity. The apparent dichotomy posited by the postmodernists in this context, between relative and absolute truths, appears to me, nevertheless, to simply be a recapitulation of the long standing philosophical debate between objectivism and subjectivism.

As an operational response to this philosophical problem I would suggest that the dichotomy can be resolved by the recognition of the concept of "cognitive consensus". What this is can be exemplified by firstly considering the sensory perceptions of any individual, be they hallucinations, illusions or otherwise, which can be taken as being equally valid for all individuals. Thus one cannot deny the validity of the experiential reality of an individual who has what others might think is an hallucination but which they believe to be true. However, normally many individuals share common perceptual experiences, experiences that match those of many others, so that together they share what I call a "consensual reality". This is not an objective reality but a shared or common reality. Similarly, I would argue, there are groups of people, often with a common "culture", who share not only the same perceptions but experiences, concepts, meanings, assumptions, paradigms and so forth, thus constituting a consensual group and forming a "cognitive consensus". Of course in many of these things there may not be complete congruence, but there is, nevertheless, a common understanding or acceptance within the consensual group of what the others in the consensual group may mean, even if they don't agree with their conclusions. The significance of this is that these shared realities allow people to communicate with each other, there is a common "language" being used. It is illustrative that even those who argue the postmodernist position by necessity still rely upon cognitive consensus at some level to communicate their position to others. Those who reject such an hypothesis and embrace a purely subjectivist brand of postmodernism simply invite the risk of generating individualized, selective, self-referent, obscurantist discourses to which others are unable to relate. In applied terms the parallel notions of "shared," "mutual" (Harrison 2004:5-6) or "inclusion" (Huggins 1998:125) histories could be viewed as an appropriate practical expression of the "cognitive consensus" concept, one which accords validity to the perspectives and agency of the various actors while at the same time incorporating the methodological capacity for negotiation and modification of the conceptual framework, the cognitive consensus, that is employed.

In this context, a fundamental issue is the question of what is history and for what purpose is history written. The reason this issue has become relevant is due to the challenge posed by Indigenous historians in Australia, beginning with what is history? "History" as found in mainstream academic publications and publicly available writings found in libraries, bookshops and homes throughout much of the world, is largely the product of a particular cultural tradition deriving from Europe. What constitutes "history", for what purpose is historical research and writing carried out, what forms of evidence are acceptable or not acceptable, how the evidence is interpreted and what chronological frame of reference is used, are all elements in accord with a culturally based cognitive consensus of the traditional Western concept of "history". Some contemporary Indigenous oral accounts, drawing on narrative structures characteristic of traditional culture, can also be considered a form of "history". However these approaches reputedly, "defy most Western canons of historical 'truth'," (McBryde 1996:10) with the historical "facts" being placed into an explanatory framework that is usually characterized in the Western tradition as "myth" or "legend". In Australia, historical figures such as the famous navigator Captain Cook, or the notorious "bushranger" Ned Kelly, feature symbolically in some accounts of this form (Mackinolty and Wainburranga 1988; Rose 2003:122-25). Even events relating to the first known contact between Australia and the outside world, arising from the voyage of the *Duyfken* along the west coast of Cape York in 1606, provides the starting point for a series of extended narratives of this type (Karntin 1986:99-103; see also Gladys Nunkatiapin quoted in Gilbert 1978:292, Henderson 1999:129-167 and Wallamby family member

quoted in Roberts and McLean 1976:35-36). Cognizant of this cultural difference some Indigenous historians have asserted that "Aboriginal history should be written by Aboriginal people", (Working Party of Aboriginal Historians 1981:21) that their history is "legend, tradition, story, myth-making, song, painting, dance," and that it is "as valid as any other including white historiography" (1981:22). In effect it is another cognitive consensus, one to which many Indigenous Australians subscribe, a culturally specific expression of the universal "historical consciousness" (Whiteley 2002:406) common to all humanity.

Another critical difference that exists between Western derived forms of historical writings and indigenous historical narratives lies in the purpose of indigenous historical narratives, which, for the Iroquois for example, provided "a guide to the social, political and moral order in which they lived" (Trigger 1976:19). Furthermore, the basis upon which "evidentiary" authority is ascribed in indigenous history (McBryde 1996:12; Wilmot 1985:42), as well as the treatment of timelines, diverges from those of the Western tradition. In Indigenous historical narratives chronometric timelines are not necessarily followed, instead time may be treated as broadly relative, directional but unlocated, "rhythmed", circular or cyclical (Krech 1991:362; Swain 1993:14-20; Working Party of Aboriginal Historians 1981:23).[3] Accordingly Indigenous historians assert that they should not, therefore, subject themselves to "the discipline of history nor the white concept of knowledge" (Working Party of Aboriginal Historians 1981:24). Moreover, some Indigenous scholars have claimed that their cultural heritage gives them a privileged perspective in the interpretation of sources, a perspective that non-Indigenous historians are unable to emulate (McBryde 1996:12; Working Party 1981:21,24; see also Mihesuah 1996). While on this basis the Western and indigenous historical paradigms would appear irreconcilable, there is hope that the impasse may possibly be resolvable through utilization of the notion of "shared" or "mutual history" alluded to earlier. Potentially this could provide an arena for the negotiation of these differing forms of cognitive consensus where necessary, so that some form of parallel presentation could be formulated, paradigmatic integration or compromise achieved, or common ground found.

While this philosophical exposition may suggest a new way of conceiving ethnohistory it still does not enunciate what is ethnohistory, what are its key features and what forms or genres of history fall within its bailiwick. Before considering that question further, however, an examination of additional aspects of the history of ethnohistory in Australia is warranted, noting in passing a number of the central issues in contemporary Australian ethnohistory. This will hopefully be informative for readers not familiar with ethnohistory in Australia, as well as provide some of the content for later discussions.

The beginnings of ethnohistory in Australia, as mentioned previously, can be traced back to the evolutionary anthropologists of the 19th century and their reliance on ethnographic information about Indigenous Australians to support their respective cases in the "historical" debates in which they were engaged. As in North America, much speculative history, or more accurately prehistory, seeking to uncover the origins and antiquity of Indigenous Australians, originated in this period as well (e.g. Curr 1886:152-207; Smyth 1878:lxi,lxiii-lxvii,lxx-lxxii; see also Griffiths 1996; Trigger 1980:665-66). In the following period, 1910 to 1924, little interest, even outright hostility, was shown to Indigenous Australians by non-Indigenous Australians generally, with minimal research being carried out and few works published. This probably reflected the view of many non-Indigenous Australians, taking their cue from social Darwinism and the catastrophic

decline in Indigenous populations, that the extinction of the "doomed race" was nigh, all that was required was to "smooth the dying pillow" (McGregor 1993).

The publication in 1924 of Horne and Aiston's *Savage Life in Central Australia* (Horne and Aiston 1924) marked the beginning of new wave of interest in Indigenous people, at least by concerned individuals in the rest of the Australian community.[4] This was followed in 1926 by the appointment of arch-functionalist Radcliffe-Brown to the first (and for many years only) Chair in Anthropology in Australia, at Sydney University. As a consequence of his influence, and the dominance of his rigidly ahistorical functionalist anthropology, few historically based ethnographic studies were carried out in Australia in the succeeding decades. Efforts to professionalize anthropology, commencing in the 1930s, as the university based practitioners in Australia and elsewhere attempted to build the credibility of the discipline and inject what was considered to be appropriate rigor (Sturtevant 1966:12-13), also contributed to the eschewal of historical studies. Those failing to subscribe to the functionalist orthodoxy were marginalized, American anthropologist Daniel S. Davidson being a notable Australian example. He drew heavily upon historical materials and Boasian approaches in his efforts to recreate a past for Indigenous Australians in terms of putative "diffusional" histories, but his work was, and still is, barely acknowledged.

The main priority of the nascent anthropological profession was the documenting of the remaining "traditional" societies which were supposedly "fast disappearing," to use the parlance of the time. Certainly many Indigenous groups were undergoing rapid change brought about by the impacts of forcible dispossession and the official "protection" and "assimilationist" policies that saw many Indigenous Australians confined to missions, reserves or unpaid work in the pastoral industry (see for example Biskup 1973). But Indigenous culture did not disappear, it was simply transformed. By the beginning of the 1960s, while few Indigenous Australians were living "traditional" lifeways, Indigenous culture was, nevertheless, alive and well, albeit largely hidden from the general population as a result of geographical remoteness and the de facto "apartheid" produced by the policies of preceding decades. The emergence of this contemporary Indigenous culture seemingly caused a form of identity crisis for anthropology in Australia, with anthropologists appearing to be in denial, willfully ignoring that emergence.[5] Consequently it was historians, or so it has been argued, who first addressed this phenomenon (Cowlishaw 1992:22-26). However, when Manning Clark, the doyen of Australian historians, first published his *History of Australia* in 1962, Indigenous Australians were barely acknowledged, being only treated incidentally as objects of British colonial policy in Australia (Clark 1962). Like most other mainstream historians of the period, Clark did not give recognize in any sense the traumatic impacts and profound changes that had occurred in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations in the course of the British colonization of Australia. That historical sequence should have accorded them a significant role in the telling of the Australian story, which indeed is now becoming the case.

Within 15 years of the first publication of Clark's *History* a dramatic transformation ensued, bringing the "great Australian silence" (Stanner 1969:25,27) to an end. The initial signs of this sea-change came in 1963 when the newly founded Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies[6] published their first "Newsletter", followed in 1968 by their short-lived "Ethnohistory Series". To some extent this was a reflection of a social and political trend in Australia signifying a growing willingness of non-Indigenous Australians to

accommodate Indigenous Australians. This trend found expression in overwhelming support for a national referendum in 1967, finally giving Indigenous Australians effective constitutional recognition in their own land.

Reflecting the emergence of Indigenous Australians from the shadows of Australian society, the publication of Rowley's *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society* in 1970 gave clear indication to many that Indigenous history was assuming the status of a legitimate field of enquiry (Rowley 1970). With the growth of ethnohistory internationally, and non-Indigenous Australians, particularly historians and anthropologists, now beginning to engage with Indigenous Australians and their history, the appearance in 1977 of Australia's first dedicated ethnohistory journal, *Aboriginal History*, was a timely development. Its charter was seen as encompassing "particularly the post-contact history of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, historical studies based on anthropological, archaeological, linguistic and sociological research, including comparative studies of other ethnic groups" (Editorial Board 1977:inside cover). This remains, with minor changes,[7] its brief to this day. Following this, the publication of Henry Reynolds' groundbreaking *The Other Side of the Frontier* in 1981 sparked popular interest in ethnohistory for the first time (Reynolds 1981). Finally, the appearance in 1983 of another journal with a substantial ethnohistorical content, *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, published by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, signified that ethnohistory in Australia had become accepted as a mature discipline and a highly relevant field of study for Indigenous Australians, historians and others.

As matters now stand, most ethnohistorical research and writing undertaken in Australia is strongly focused on the historical (i.e "Contact" and "Post-Contact") experiences of groups of Indigenous Australians and their interactions with non-Indigenous Australians. Ethnohistory has also penetrated the Australian public's consciousness, and been central to a number of national debates, in what have become known as the "history wars" (Macintyre and Clark 2004). While reflective of differing ideological positions, these debates have brought into question the nature of ethnohistorical evidence, particularly where that evidence is limited in scope, based on oral sources or open to widely varying interpretations. The "Hindmarsh Island Affair" (Simons 2003), and the fierce debate triggered by historian Keith Windschuttle's contestation of the evidentiary basis for the actuality, extent and impact of massacres of Indigenous Australians in the colonial era, and the characterization of frontier conflict (Attwood and Foster 2003; Manne 2003; Windschuttle 2000a,b,c) are but two examples.

Although the rise in studies documenting, examining and reflecting on the historical experiences of Indigenous Australians is clearly an important development in Australia, there is more to ethnohistory than this, in Australia as elsewhere. It will be noted that in the earlier phase of ethnohistory, studies involving the utilization of ethnographic information drawn from historical sources, both written and oral, predominated. This is reflected in the initial attempts to define ethnohistory documented earlier. With the advent of post-modernism and the ascendancy of the "historical" stream of ethnohistory there has been an attendant decline in such studies. A number of reasons can be put forward to explain this development, apart from the obvious one of a shift in emphasis to other forms of ethnohistory as priorities and practices have changed. These reasons include the history of the relationship between history and anthropology, the changing nature of ethnohistory, and the character of the evidence base. This has particularly been the case in Australia. In essence the use ethnographic information drawn from historical sources has become

problematic. To understand why this is so, it is necessary to return to the history of ethnohistory and the usage of historically based ethnographic information, not only in ethnohistory but also prehistoric archaeology, and by extension, prehistory.

In terms of the relationship between history and anthropology, as discussed earlier, the dominance of functionalism as the accepted anthropological paradigm in Australia for much of the first half of the twentieth century strongly discouraged historical studies in the mainstream of the discipline (Mulvaney 1964a:1). When functionalism's influence began to fade in the late 1950s and early 1960s historical studies with an ethnographic intent began to appear more frequently. But this trend was then overtaken by the surge of interest in Contact and Post-Contact history and cross-cultural interaction. That surge also coincided with the reformulation of ethnohistory, so that earlier notions that it involved "historical ethnography" of "non-literate", "illiterate" or "primitive" peoples became patently anachronistic. Reinforcing the resultant reticence to undertake "historical ethnography" was the reliance of such studies on 19th century sources that were, in the main, riddled with racist, paternalistic and social Darwinist assumptions, and frequently incorporated significant cultural misunderstandings and pejorative, judgmental, views. Moreover, Indigenous voices and perspectives counteracting those biases and providing informed insights were usually absent from the corpus. These impediments, and the contemporary focus on history from the Contact and Post-Contact Periods has, at times, raised the suspicion that historically based ethnographic studies are a form of "antiquarianism".[8]

Prehistoric archaeology is another discipline that has employed ethnographic "data" of an historical nature, and continues to do so. Usually the purpose in this has been to establish the context for specific archaeological studies, guide investigations, develop ethnographic analogies and explain archaeological findings (Charlton 1981:129,136; Gaughwin 1988:253; Schiffer et al. 1978:5; Sturtevant 1966:9). But it too has been influenced by the shift in attitudes to historical ethnographic sources, so that it would appear in numerous instances individual researchers have only been willing to utilize accepted "authorities" in their work. Paradoxically these "authorities" are often the very evolutionary anthropologists, such as Spencer and Gillen, Haddon, and Howitt and Fison, considered to be so problematic by others (see for example Mulvaney 1964b). It would seem that in the absence of suitable alternatives these authorities are accorded "authority" status not necessarily because of the quality or validity of their work, but simply because of the international prominence they achieved in the early 20th century.

A more significant issue for prehistoric archaeology has been the failure, deliberate or otherwise, of many archaeologists to rigorously apply historical methods in dealing with historical materials of an ethnographic nature. Isabel McBryde, for example, in her seminal paper in 1979, was highly critical of how Australian archaeologists, specifically prehistoric archaeologists, were utilizing historical information. She pointed out the dangers of the profession misusing such information, selectively exploiting it in what she called the "data quarry" approach (McBryde 1979). She was also critical of those archaeologists for "uncritically" accepting this type of evidence (1979:140). I, and others, have argued that the problem may still exist (see Byrne 1996:94; Gerritsen 2000:4-5,9-10,12-13,15-17; 2001a). Compounding this difficulty, Australian archaeologists at times have been treating ethnographic statements from historical sources, particularly those from the accepted "authorities" referred to above, as if they were scientific statements and not matters of judgment and interpretation. If one extends this issue into the realms of

prehistory there appears to be further confusion over whether historical data is even acceptable or not, what types of evidence are acceptable and in what circumstances is it applicable (Gerritsen 2001a:18-9). Consequently, the use of ethnographic information based in the past still continues to be a problematic area for Australian prehistoric archaeology.

One might conclude, based on the preceding arguments, that ethnography has a long and troubled past in ethnohistory and related disciplines in Australia. I am not arguing, however, that this necessarily precludes its use, rather, that judicious treatment and appropriate methodological rigor is required. How it has been, and can be used, and what are the appropriate ways of treating it in historically based work are issues which bring us back once more to the more fundamental question of the nature of ethnohistory. As noted earlier, broadly speaking there appears to be two distinct strands to ethnohistory. One of these is focused on historical matters concerning contemporary indigenous cultures and their past experiences and interactions with outsiders. In Australian terms this relates to people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent. This strand does not necessarily or usually incorporate ethnographic components, it simply employs an accepted historical methodology,[9] to produce historical studies with relevant perspectives, be they social, economic, legal, biographical, whatever the case may be. It may be appropriate at this point to call this form "ethnic ethnohistory"[10] and acknowledge that if such research is to be culturally neutral it ought to be applied to any or all "ethnic" groups identified in those terms.[11] Of course historical circumstances can provide an imperative and an avenue for particular ethnic groups to recount their history which may not be heard otherwise. But it should also be recognized that there is scope for this concept to be applied more universally, so that works such as Churchill's *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples* for example, could also fall under this rubric (Churchill 1956-58).

Regarding the other strand of ethnohistory, ethnohistorical studies incorporating a significant ethnographic component, this, in my view should be considered a distinct branch of ethnohistory, what might best be termed "ethnographic ethnohistory".[12] The origins and antecedents of this form have already been briefly considered. As far as I am able to ascertain the earliest formal ethnographic study produced in Australia which consciously employed a significant component of historical materials was the evolutionist H. Ling Roth's *The Aborigines of Tasmania*, first published in 1890 (Roth 1890). Following that, the aforementioned Daniel S. Davidson extensively utilized historical materials in a series of studies carried out principally between 1928 and 1954. Davidson considered his work was a form of comparative anthropology, though others have termed this methodology "trait comparison" (Sturtevant 1966:32-35). His intention was to establish a relative chronology for the diffusion of particular cultural characteristics originating from outside Australia as well as within Australia. Although deriving from the "diffusionist" tradition much of Davidson's work was based on in-depth archival and documentary research and was an innovative attempt to arrive at a relative chronology in the era before there was radiocarbon dating. While the value of this approach was quite limited, it only seemed to be workable where the diffusion was relatively recent and from a distinct point of origin, he nevertheless produced a range of comprehensive studies, usually on a continental scale, which included netting and basketry techniques, burial customs, watercraft and particular types of weapons (Davidson 1933; 1935; 1936; 1949). Many of these are still considered to be valid today.

Apart from work by Davidson, Frederick D. McCarthy and Aldo Massola (Davidson and McCarthy 1957; Massola 1956), very little further research of this nature appears to have been carried out in Australia until the later 1960s. A spate of historical studies then appeared, some of the more notable being Betty Hiatt's reconstruction of the traditional subsistence economy in Tasmania and Rhys Jones' examination of how the Tasmanians had incorporated dogs into their hunting strategies in the brief period between the initial British occupation and the disintegration of much of their traditional lifestyle. (Hiatt 1967; Jones 1970).[13] It is difficult to determine whether the surge in such research was a purely Australian development or one triggered by influential studies carried out in other parts of the world in this period, by the likes of Tooker, Trigger, Hickerson and Lantis in North America, and Dening in relation to Polynesia (Dening 1980; Hickerson 1970; Lantis 1970a; Tooker 1964; Trigger 1969).

Whatever the case may be, substantive ethnographic research based on historical materials continued to appear in Australia during the 1970s and 1980s, before seeming to diminish in the last decade. Examples from this period include Gunson's ethnography of the Awabakal of the central north coast of New South Wales based on the writings of the missionary Rev. Lancelot E. Threlkeld, Hallam's research on the traditional use of fire in the south west of Western Australia, a volume edited by McBryde on aspects of traditional culture in the New England region of New South Wales, Flood's innovative investigation of traditional moth hunting in the alpine regions of south eastern Australia, Lourandos's attempts to reconstruct traditional lifeways of the Gunditjmara and others in south west Victoria, and Barwick's and Clark's work on Victorian ethnogeography, all highly regarded in their respective fields (Barwick 1984; Clark 1990; Flood 1980, 1987; Gunson 1974; Hallam 1975; Lourandos 1980a,b ; McBryde 1978).

An examination of the methodology employed by these and other researchers, and the historiographic discourse in this domain, reveals a veritable profusion of terms being employed to describe this type of research. However, these terms have often been applied in an inconsistent, contradictory, ambiguous, even self-contradictory, manner, a point also made by Krech (1991:348). For example, some of the more common terms used have included undifferentiated "ethnohistory"(Lantis 1970b:5; McBryde 1978:1), "ethnohistoric[al] reconstruction" (Carmack 1972:239; Gunson 1974:v; Hickerson 1970:7; Krech 1991:355), "reconstructed ethnography" (Boyd 1996:4), "reconstructive ethnohistory" (Davidson 1988:19), "historical ethnography" (Axtell 1981:9; Carmack 1972:238; McBryde 1979:137,143; Sahlins 1992:1; Sturtevant 1966:7; Trigger 1969:ix, 1985b:24; Wiedman 1986:xi), "area historical model" (Flood 1980:24), "independent thematic studies" (McBryde 1979:131), "culture history" (Lantis 1970b:40; Wiedman 1986:ix), "trait comparison" (Sturtevant 1966:32-35), "comparative ethnography" (Sturtevant 1966:8; see also McBryde 1979:133), "ethnographic study" (Cowlishaw 1992:27), "ethnographic ethnohistory" (Trigger 1976:13), "synchronic reconstruction" (Krech 1991:348), "regional ethnohistories" (McBryde 1979:131) and "historical reconstruction" (Wiedman 1986:ix). Moreover, at times researchers cite examples that are supposedly representative of a designated methodology but which do not appear to match that methodological category. One instance of this is Sturtevant citing Homans' *English Villagers of the Thirteenth Century* as an historical ethnography when it is difficult to see it as anything other than social history (Homans 1942; Sturtevant 1968:475).[14]

These terms have, in practice, been applied to studies framed in ethnological terms that incorporate historical materials or documentation,[15] but terms such as "written documents"

(Sturtevant 1966:7), "amateur ethnography" (Barwick 1984:100), "library" (Hickerson 1970:6) and "archival" (Hickerson 1970:6; Sahlins 1992:1) sources, have also been used. Oral traditions,[16] sometimes called "oral testimony", "memory ethnography" or "memory culture" (Hickerson 1970:32; Lantis 1970b:5; McBryde 1978:3; Berndt 1981:171; Boyd 1996:1), are often included as components in such studies, as is archaeological evidence in some instances (Sturtevant 1966:8; Sahlins 1992:1). Finally, terms such as "historical ethnography" are also sometimes employed in ethnoarchaeology, usually being applied to the development of ethnographic analogies and projects seeking to gain insights into site formation processes (Davidson 1988:19; Hughes 1991; McBryde 1979:129-130,147).[17]

Considering the temporal dimension of these types of study it should be noted that the particular researchers have not always been cognizant of, or explicitly addressed, this issue. In cases where it has been addressed, earlier conceptions tended to see ethnographic studies of an historical nature as being purely synchronic (Carmack 1972:238; Dening 1966:24-25; Sturtevant 1966:7). Later views have embraced the idea that they could be either synchronic or diachronic (Lantis 1970b:5; McBryde 1979:132,147; Wiedman 1986:viii). Two difficulties arise with synchronic studies however. Firstly, they are usually framed around the idea of describing what Australians would now call "traditional" societies, generally seen as the way Indigenous groups were structured when contact at a local level between Indigenous Australians and outsiders first took place. But these "traditional" societies may have been influenced considerably prior to this contact, by diseases, trade items, ideas, information and so forth (Trigger 1980:672; Reynolds 1981:7-17). As we cannot know with any certainty from historical materials or oral traditions how much and in what way these societies may have been influenced some caution is required, and the researcher needs to consider and take account of this possibility.

The second issue relates to the problem that observational data, or other types of historically derived evidence, were not necessarily collected synchronously and oral traditions may refer back to a different point in time. Observational evidence, often involving brief contacts made by European explorers and the like, may relate to a period covering decades before significant intrusion or occupation by non-Indigenous people took place in that particular locality. This period is sometimes referred to as the "protohistoric period". The observations and evidence relating to that period may be supplemented by more substantial accounts or records from the Post-Contact period, where the invaders, as agents of change, are recording societies undergoing rapid transition. I use the term "quasi-traditional" (Gerritsen n.d.a) to describe such situations, recognizing that features of traditional society persisted for some time and that certain elements have since become incorporated into contemporary Indigenous culture. However, other elements, such as traditional subsistence patterns, were irrevocably altered and ceased virtually within an ethnographic instant. Consequently synchrony in historical studies is only an idealized concept, and in reality must be treated as an approximation. Diachronic studies consider the temporal distance between two synchronic points, and so must also be subject to similar qualification.

Having made these necessary qualifications I now propose a simple typology of historical studies framed in ethnographic terms to encompass all forms of "ethnographic ethnohistory". Such a typology should not, however, be viewed as prescriptive, being simply a classification based on the parameters of research of this nature. The first item I am proposing in this typology is "historical ethnography", a commonly used term. This form consists of a synchronic study framed in ethnographic terms, normally focused in

Australia on the Contact period, but using the same source materials that would be acceptable in any historical study, such as primary documentary sources and oral traditions. Artifacts (e.g. canoe trees), sites (e.g. stone arrangements), rock art, ordinary and aerial photography and other forms of remote sensing can also be included as evidence in such studies, even though these may also be considered in archaeological investigations (Kruckman 1986; Wiedman 1986:vii). Gunson's *Australian Reminiscences and Papers of L. E. Threlkeld* and Hallam's *Fire and Hearth* are Australian examples of such studies. Research of this nature may relate to particular groups, particular areas or regions, or specific topics. If applied more broadly an historical ethnography could, in theory, be done on "*The Tribes of Britain in 44 B.C.*" for example, although, as pointed out earlier, there is actually no real tradition of historical ethnography research being applied to European contexts in those terms (McBryde 1979:136-37).

In the second instance I am proposing the term "ethnographic history". This is identical to "historical ethnography" except that it applies to diachronic studies. Few studies of this nature have been carried out, perhaps one of the better known being Hickerson's analysis of change in the social structure of the Chippewa of the eastern United States (Hickerson 1970).[18] Very little such research along these lines has been carried out in Australia, the clearest example appearing to be Jones' study of the Tasmanian's incorporation of dogs into their hunting strategies. Here the time period involved was quite short but, as it was framed in terms of a contradistinction to the hunting strategies at time of Contact, it would seem to qualify.

As the third proposition, I am putting forward the concept of "reconstructive ethnography". This involves an integration of "historical ethnography" and archaeology, by necessity late prehistoric archaeology, to produce a holistic synchronic study. Other researchers have alluded to this form of research, using terms such as an "integrative approach" (Gaughwin 1988:253) or "synthesizing" (Charlton 1981:154) the different evidence bases to produce a reconstruction or "composite model" (Gaughwin 1988:253). In North American archaeology, an approach such as this has been designated as the "direct historical analogy" (Charlton 1981:136) or "direct historical approach" (Sturtevant 1966:9),[19] aimed at producing "sociocultural reconstructions" (Charlton 1981:154). Flood, in her reconstruction of moth hunting, based her methodology on what she called a "direct area historical model" (Flood 1980:3). But the distinctive feature of "reconstructive ethnography" in my view is that neither the historical nor the archaeological evidence bases are necessarily given primacy (Gaughwin 1988:253), and that it need not inform specific archaeological investigations but can utilize the findings of prior archaeological research. Flood's moth hunting study is an example of a reconstructive ethnography, where the historical ethnography component has guided the archaeological research.[20] Research I have conducted on the traditional settlement pattern in south west Victoria is an example integrating historical ethnography with previous archaeological research (Gerritsen 2000). A recent publication, Val Attenbrow's *Sydney's Aboriginal Past* (Attenbrow 2002), is an excellent Australian example of this methodology being consciously employed. Finally, it should be noted that some caution is required in such studies regarding the issue of what has been called "naïve historicism" (Ames 1991:937; Hiscock 1999:101; Murray 1992:8). This applies to attempts to project historical ethnographic findings into deeper prehistory, a project fraught with dangers, the most obvious being that cultures change and consequently any inferences beyond the recent past may not be valid.

In approaching research in ethnographic ethnohistory Flood advocated "using the totality of extant historical records" (Flood 1980:24). However, this is an ideal and achieving it in practical terms is rather difficult. No matter how much effort is expended in locating sources there is always additional evidence hidden away in some archive or other completely unexpected place. Certainly there is an enormous corpus that can be drawn upon, such as early exploration accounts, surveyors' reports, geologists' reports, naturalists' field trips, compilations, biographies, amateur ethnographies, social histories, travelogues, adventurers' accounts, reminiscences, newspapers reports and accounts, letters, diaries, journals, published journal articles, government records and reports, maps, manuscripts, photographs, parliamentary papers, private papers, theses, local histories, music, and so forth. Ideally all potential sources of information should be consulted if possible, not just a portion, because even though it may be impossible to locate the "totality" of evidence, in-depth research is still essential if one is aiming to conduct rigorous ethnographic ethnohistorical research.

Oral traditions, including myths and legends, and other forms of evidence, such as linguistics, must also be included if one is aiming for a "totality" of information. With oral traditions there is a growing body of published material in Australia contained in a variety of ethnic ethnohistories, either as a substantive portion of the work or containing passing references to traditional life. Documenting oral traditions can be a difficult undertaking, however, as it is not always easy to determine who is in possession of relevant information and how valid it is (Baker 1999:27-9).[21] Furthermore, a variety of factors influence what traditional knowledge is retained and what is lost or discarded, and at times different informants may contradict each other or other sources of information (Berndt 1981:168-171; Borofsky 1994; McBryde 1978:1,3).[22] These issues may be compounded in regional or multi-regional studies.

As has been pointed out by others, information gleaned from all these sources may be fragmentary, scattered, limited and possibly contradictory (Flood 1980:24; Hickerson 1970:6; McBryde 1978:1,3). Consequently historical ethnography, and the other forms ethnographic ethnohistory, can, at times, be akin to piecing together a jigsaw puzzle, Trigger describing it as a "process of triangulation" (Trigger 1976:18). But this should not be considered an insurmountable obstacle to such research, and profound insights can occasionally be achieved through the correlation of information contained in seemingly unrelated sources. Nevertheless, every item of evidence needs to be critically examined as there is considerable scope for it to contain misconceptions, biases, deceptions, distortions, misapprehensions, omissions, overgeneralizations, misjudgments, exaggerations and such like. This issue has been treated in some depth elsewhere (e.g. Borofsky 1994; Carmack 1972; Dening 1966:26-27,30-33; 1990; Isaac 1994:303-4; McBryde 1979:142-43;). Another problem with this form of ethnohistory that is not always acknowledged relates to the assessment of the available sources. Often there is little contextual information about, or knowledge of, the observer or informant and this makes it difficult to determine the validity of their evidence (McBryde 1979:142). But, as in any sound historical research, it is the researcher's duty to weigh and assess the available evidence and make considered judgments.

While the assessment, as outlined above, of individual items of evidence is seen as imperative in research based on historical ethnographic sources, broader, unquestioned assumptions and unchallenged distortions may also pose a problem. Several such assumptions and distortions permeate and hamper contemporary Australian ethnohistory

in my view, an assertion some may find surprising given the current perceived necessity of deconstructing the colonizers' discourse. The tendency to cite the works of "authorities" such as Spencer and Gillen is a case in point. They particularly accentuated the so-called "primitiveness" of the tribes of central Australia, diminishing traditional Indigenous culture in the process, in order to provide legitimacy for their position in the social anthropology debates raging at that time (Attwood 1996:101-2; Cowlishaw 1992: 21,25; Griffiths 1996:46,50; Morphy 1997:30-37; Mulvaney 1964b:52,55; Thomas 2004). Another bias arises from the salvage, recent and contemporary ethnographic studies that have been carried out in Australia. These have concentrated on groups least affected by Post-Contact intrusion, those living in tropical northern Australia, and the arid environments of the Western and Great Sandy Deserts in the west of Australia. There is a tendency to portray these cultures as being representative or indicative of all traditional Indigenous cultures (Lourandos 1980b:246).[23] This poses the danger that the diversity and variation in traditional Indigenous cultures may be overlooked, especially in temperate Australia where those cultures are predominantly, if not exclusively, documented only as traditional cultures through limited oral traditions and/or historical sources (Gaughwin 1988:253; Murray 1992:12-14).

Perhaps one of the most insidious biases lies in the almost universal portrayal of Indigenous populations in their traditional circumstances in Australia as non-sedentary or nomadic hunter-gatherers, without any qualification, reservation or question (see for example Attwood 1989:60; Clarke 2003:56; Swain 1993:76-77).[24] It is in effect a stereotype. And this is in spite of contrary evidence provided by a growing body of work arguing that some traditional Indigenous groups in certain areas were highly sedentary, lived in substantial, permanent settlements and engaged in planting and agriculture, or other forms of food production (Builth 2002; Gerritsen 1994:64-66,82-92; 2000; 2001a:25; 2001b; 2002; 2004; n.d.b; Lourandos 1980a,b; Williams 1988). The failure to acknowledge this or, with some exceptions, to investigate further is the result, I presume, of paradigm blindness. Prehistoric archaeological research in Australia, and the agenda driving it, is a typical example of this. The current prehistoric archaeological agenda was formulated as a reaction to the "Antiquarianism" of the late nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries, the view that Indigenous peoples only occupied Australia recently and there was no time depth to that occupation (Byrne 1996:92; Griffiths 1996). When it was finally proven that there was indeed a very long history of an Indigenous presence in Australia, and that culture changes had taken place in that time, the investigation of this became, and remains, the predominant concern of prehistoric archaeology (Griffiths 1996; Holdaway and Stern 1996:355,364-366). Given that agenda and the presumption that Australia was a "continent of hunter-gatherers", the notion of investigating the late prehistory of areas where more complex socioeconomic societies may have been present, with the exception of south west Victoria, barely registers. Ethnohistorians, on the other hand, being primarily concerned with ethnic ethnohistory relating to Contact and Post-Contact history, and also seemingly assuming all Indigenous populations were nomadic hunter-gatherers, by and large do not concern them themselves with historical ethnographic investigations of the more complex socioeconomic societies either.

To illustrate why the research agenda in Australia ought to include such concerns, as well as some of the other issues raised here, and to demonstrate the historical ethnography methodology in practice, and the insights that can be gained from it, I will now briefly consider the beginnings of an historical ethnography on the topic, "large structures". On 26 July 1836, as explorer Major Thomas Livingstone Mitchell was traversing around the

western end of the Grampians [*Gariwerd*], a mountain range in western Victoria,[25] he reached a place now known as White Lake. Here he "noticed some huts of very different construction … being large, circular, and made of straight rods meeting at an upright pole in the centre; the outside had first been covered with bark and grass, and the entirety coated over with clay. The fire appeared to have been made nearly in the centre; and a hole at the top had been left as a chimney" (Mitchell 1839:2:194). Mitchell then went on to say that the "place seemed to have been used for years, as a casual habitation" (1839:2:194). From the material left behind it seems to have been occupied at the time of Mitchell's visit, although the residents were not present, probably having absented themselves to avoid him and his party (1839:2:194-95). I have pointed to this example in previous research, noting that it had been referred to in a number of publications, but that this report took on a completely new dimension when considered alongside an account recorded on the same day by Mitchell's deputy, Granville Stapylton (Gerritsen 2000:2). In his journal entry Stapylton wrote "Passed today several Guneaks [dwellings] of very Large dimensions one capable of containing at least 40 persons and of very superior construction" (Stapylton quoted in Andrews 1986:146).

It would appear both accounts were referring to the same structure. Taken together these indicate an erection qualitatively different from those elsewhere, even the "substantial" structures that were reported historically in south west Victoria (Gerritsen 2000). But the White Lake structure is not the only large structure reported in inland Australia. In 1857 another government explorer, George Goyder, reported encountering a large structure of similar capacity in a "settlement" south west of Lake Blanche in South Australia, one of the most arid regions in Australia. This structure Goyder described as being "constructed in a similar manner to those described by Captain Sturt [dome-shaped and plastered with clay; see Sturt 1849:254], and are very warm and comfortable, the largest capable of holding from thirty to forty people, quite round, from three to four feet [90 cm – 120 cm] high and entered through a semicircular opening, through which we were obliged to creep" (Goyder 1857:3).

Another structure of similar dimensions was seen by yet another minor explorer, David Lindsay, in 1886, "One mia-mia [dwelling] was seen large enough to accommodate thirty or forty natives," in this instance on the north eastern side of the Simpson Desert, in the south east of the Northern Territory (Lindsay 1890:4). Another individual, John Conrick, founder of Nappa Merrie Station on Cooper's Creek in south west Queensland (Tolcher 1986:52-54), had in fact, recorded seeing such a structure in the same area 12 years earlier, stating that it "the largest wurley [dwelling] I have found anywhere. It was 90 ft. [27 m] in circumference, and was used for holding corroborees" (Conrick n.d.:37). This may well have been the same structure seen by Lindsay.

Structures of these dimensions do not appear to have been common in traditional Indigenous cultures in Australia. So these observations raise a series of questions, to which I do not necessarily have a ready answer. What were they for, did they serve the same purpose, why were they in those locations? The only clue we have is Conrick's claim that they were used for "corroborees" [ceremonial events].[26] Conrick provides no evidence to explain why he thought corroborees were held there, although he may have arrived at this conclusion because of some incidental observation. This could be a possibility, which at least gives some basis for developing a provisional hypothesis, that these structures were "lodges" used for some ceremonial purpose.

In considering this hypothesis an examination of other reports of larger structures seen in the east central Australian region may provide some guidance. For example, a German "squatter",[27] Carl Emil Jung, had observed "hundreds of visitors" arriving and the men building a large "cone-shaped hut" made from "heavy wooden logs" built over a pit "four meters long, three meters wide and approximately one meter deep" on Cooper's Creek, east of Lake Eyre in South Australia, in 1865 (Nobbs 1992:136,138). Similarly Alfred Howitt, who had spent time in the area in 1861 when searching for the lost trans-continental explorers Burke and Wills, described "a hut of logs … being conical in form and covered with boughs" built over "a hole about two feet [30 cm] deep, twelve feet [3.6 m] long, and from eight to ten feet wide [2.4-3.0 m]" (Howitt 1891:91). According to Howitt (1891:91) this was constructed by the local Diyari for "rain-making ceremonies," but it was apparently torn down once the ceremony was over. Another larger, reputedly permanent, conical structure was seen by Mitchell in "a native village, in which the huts were of a very strong and permanent construction" in Paakantyi country on the lower-central Darling River in western New South Wales in 1835, with one of these being "unusually capacious ... capable of containing twelve or fifteen persons" (Mitchell 1839:1:262). But this last structure may simply have been a larger dwelling bearing no relation to the Diyari ones, or those seen by Goyder, Conrick and Lindsay. Mitchell, although providing a plan drawing of it, gave no clue as to its purpose. While suggestive, none of this evidence provides the basis for making further inferences as to the purpose of the large structures seen by Goyder, Lindsay and Conrick

Regarding the White Lake structure, this may well have been a permanent dwelling and not a ceremonial structure. This conclusion is based firstly on corroborative evidence provided by the Jarwadjali people from that region. Following dispossession many ended up at a mission in south west Victoria, Lake Condah Mission (Clark 1994:513), where they reputedly told the Rev. J. Francis that formerly they had lived in "communities of 30-40 and even more, occupying one Mia mia [dwelling]" (Letter: J. Francis to J. Dawson, 14 April 1868 quoted in Williams 1985:75).[28] Supporting the inference that the White Lake structure was a dwelling and not a ceremonial structure is the fact that the White Lake structure seems to have been only one of a number of larger structures encountered on the same day as the expedition approached White Lake, and Mitchell mentioning what appear to have been domestic articles lying about inside (Mitchell 1839:2:194-95).

Having visited this site in the Wimmera district in September 1999 I was struck by the relatively arid nature of the country. White Lake, while not very large, seemed to offer permanent water and some additional sources of subsistence and raw materials (reeds for food and fiber, fish, perhaps eels), did not, however, strike me as being a particularly "rich" environment (Personal Observation, 19 September 1999). To explain the presence of such a structure I hypothesized that it may have been part of the cultural developments found in south west Victoria, where increasing sedentism appears to have been underwritten by increasing extractive efficiency (Gerritsen 2000:40-43).[29] But it also occurred to me that White Lake lies about half way between the confluence area of Lake Victoria, the Murray, Rufus and Darling Rivers, and south west Victoria. Perhaps White Lake was an evolving exchange centre, a conjecture supported by the fact that it appears to have lain on a major trade route, as reconstructed, between those areas and around the Grampians (McBryde 1984a:136,fig. 1). Whatever the case, the White Lake structure, the other examples mentioned above, the numerous references in available literature to "villages" and "settlements" consisting of dwellings described as "substantial" or

"superior construction," would seem to be quite inconsistent with the notion that all Indigenous Australians were nomadic in their traditional circumstances.

With these examples and the brief discussion here I offer no solutions. It does illustrate, nevertheless, that there is still much to be learned about Indigenous cultures as they were traditionally, that there are significant sources of untapped data, that the data are often scattered, limited and fragmentary, that each piece of evidence is, in itself, limited or problematic, but that if considered as a whole some analysis, making sense of it all, is possible. There is also scope for further research, in this instance inquiries could be made to determine if there are oral traditions relating to these aspects of traditional life, archaeological investigations employing appropriate protocols are possible and further literature searches could be carried out. Furthermore, it hints at the possibility of theoretical treatments being applied in some circumstances. McBryde (1979:144) originally drew attention to the need and value of subjecting the evidence, albeit often subjective and impressionistic, to some form of analysis. She pioneered this approach with her studies of the greenstone axe trade in south eastern Australia and trade in the Lake Eyre Basin (McBryde 1984a,b; 1987), but others have followed her example and theoretical treatments have now been used in ethnographic ethnohistory in considering settlement patterns, settlement sizes, degree of sedentism, human-plant interactions and types of subsistence economies in Australia (e.g Gerritsen 2000; 2001b; 2002; n.d.b; Williams 1988).

Flood pointed out in 1988 that without historical ethnography we would have had no notion that moth "hunting" was an integral part of traditional life in the alpine regions of south eastern Australia. Herein lies the most valuable contribution that can be made by ethnographic ethnohistory, its ability to shed light on many little known aspects of traditional Indigenous life in many parts of Australia. Even now, where it is claimed no information exists on a particular aspect of traditional Indigenous life, it can be demonstrated that indeed there is a wealth of information available that can be easily accessed if appropriate research is carried out (Gerritsen n.d.a).

In conclusion it only remains to reiterate that despite a troubled past historical ethnography and other forms of ethnographic ethnohistory in Australia, as elsewhere, have much to offer. This potential can be realized if appropriate methodologies are recognized and employed. As with any historical research some effort is needed in locating sources, some rigor is required in assessing those sources and some imagination is necessary to get the most out of those sources, to maximize that potential. Above all such research needs to be culturally sensitive and can assist in providing the basis for indigenous peoples to reclaim their past.

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[2]   For example there has not been a major article relating to Indigenous Australians published in *Current Anthropology* since 1994.

[3]   Form and features of the landscape provide narrative structure in much Indigenous mythology and it is an approach that has been taken up in recent postmodern analysis. See for example Rose and Clarke 1999.

[4]   Often these "concerned individuals", such as Mary Bennett (1930), and Daisy Bates were attempting to "rehabilitate" the image of Indigenous Australians as a counter to the negative attitudes that had arisen.

[5]   Ronald and Catherine Berndt's *Arnhem Land: Its History and People* (1954) was an exception.

[6]   Now known as the Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS).

[7]   The most notable change has been the addition of "contact history".

[8]   An accusation first leveled at one of the pioneers of ethnohistory in Australia, Diane Barwick (Kijas 1997:56), but also recently by a reviewer of one of my papers.

[9]   In recent times in Australia this has come to incorporate historic or "Contact" archaeological studies as well; see Harrison 2004:166-196 and Harrison and Williamson 2004.

[10]   "Folk history" is a term that has been used in the past which equates fairly closely to this. (e.g. Carmack 1972:235-38; Krech 1991:348; Sturtevant 1966:22; Wiedman 1986:x-xi)

[11]   "Ethnic ethnohistory" should also be taken as embracing ethnogenesis.

[12]   I take the term ethnography to mean a description of a discrete social group or culture in terms of all, or part, of an inventory of items, such as kinship, material culture, customs, belief systems and so forth, characteristic of that discipline.

[13]   Others significant studies from this period included Corris (1968) and Lawrence (1969).

[14]   Ethnic ethnohistory could, in my view, be considered a branch of social history but that does not mean that social history, as Sturtevant and Trigger (1980:672; 1985b:33-34) appear to presume, is a form of ethnohistory..

[15]   These are widely used terms, for obvious reasons. See for example Lantis 1970b:5; Trigger 1985b:23.

[16]   This is very common; see Flood 1980:28; McBryde 1979:137; Sturtevant 1966:8; Trigger 1985b:23. "Oral traditions" can include information from an individual with some experience of an aspect of traditional life (probably differing from salvage ethnography only in the extent of the experience), or information handed down from generation to generation.

[17]   Davidson (1988:22) also includes "ethnographic archaeology" (developing analogies based on information provided by a former participant) and "archaeological ethnography" (analogies developed through direct ethnographic observation by the archaeologist) as forms of ethnoarchaeology.

[18]   Another example is Townshend's (1970) study of culture change in the *Tanaina* of southern Alaska.

[19]   Technically the "direct historical approach" involves a synchronic historical ethnography as a starting point for a retro-temporal diachronic cultural prehistory (Axtell 1981:7).

[20]   The principal difference between this and historical ethnoarchaeology seems to be that historical ethnoarchaeology aims to develop a model or hypothesis that can be tested rather than aiming at some form of integration of the different information bases.

[21]   The question of the validity and treatment of oral sources seems to have been a matter of some debate in North America recently; see Echo-Hawk 2000, Mason 2000 and Whiteley 2002.

[22]   Written and oral sources may also be in conflict with archaeological data.

[23]   See for example the sample contained in the *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Hunters and Gatherers* (Lee and Daly 1999:317-371).

[24]   And this is in spite of the well known fact that the Torres Strait Islanders, who are Australians, engaged in intensive cultivation and lived in villages, particularly in the northern and eastern islands.

[25]   The Grampians are a rugged mountain range, 500-1,000m [1,600 – 3,100 ft] high, running east-west through central western Victoria.

[26]   Apart from historically recorded oral commentary regarding the White Lake structure there are no other oral traditions recorded that I am aware of relating to these structures.

[27]   A "squatter" was a common term applied to those who occupied Indigenous lands to run sheep along the "frontier", such as it was, in Australia in the 19th century, gaining subsequent Crown approval with the granting of a lease.

[28]   James Dawson, an amateur ethnographer who extensively used Indigenous informants, stated in a subsequent publication that in "what appears to be one dwelling, fifty or more persons can be accommodated" (Dawson 1881:10).

[29]   It should be pointed out that cross-cultural research shows that increasing sedentism is correlated with great labor investment in the construction of dwellings as well as the presence of communal structures, both factors applicable to the White Lake structure; see Kelly 1992:56-57 and Rafferty 1985:115,129-31,135-36.

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