

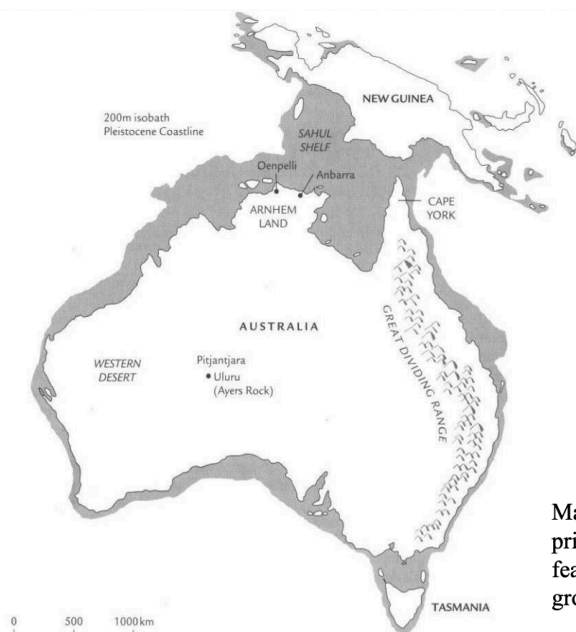
Topic 5

Monday, March 6, 2023

9:30 AM

Australian Aborigines

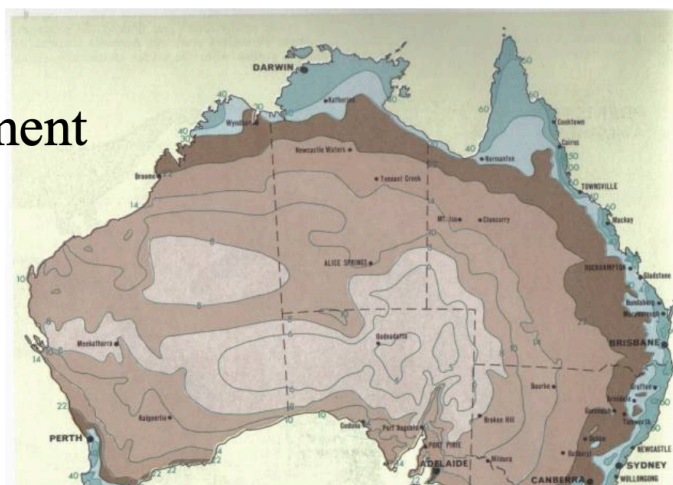
The Australians have been the historical, evolutionary and sociological prototype for the study of hunter-gatherers and for the relations between man and the nature. From the onset of modern anthropology they have inspired, challenged or provided the limiting case for nearly every view of man's behavior... (Peterson 1986: v)



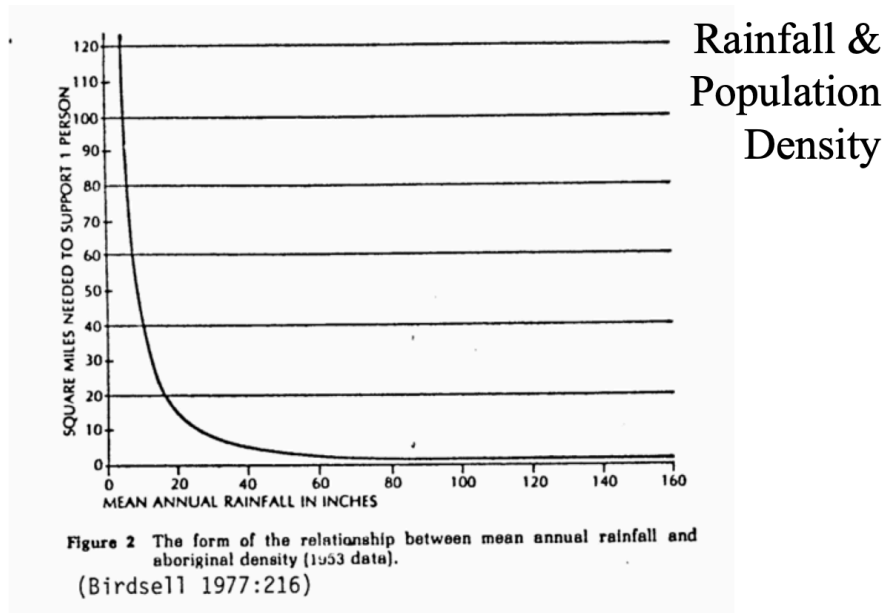
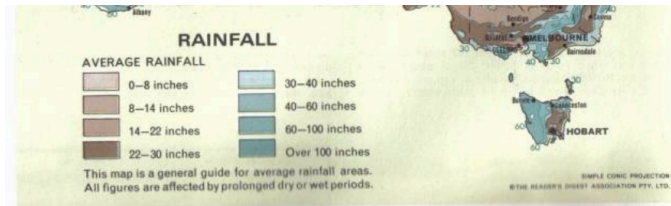
Map of Australia showing principal geographic features and locations of groups and sites.

Environment

- Aridity
- Human population density



largely
determined
by rainfall



Population Stability & Balance with Nature

- A testing case: foraging people were more "in balance" with the environment than village farmer or larger-scale societies.
- Aboriginal societies had optimum size
- Carrying Capacity
 - The number of people who could, in theory, be supported indefinitely in a given environment with a given technology and culture
- Joseph Birdsell
 - Estimated tribal territories were optimally populated at 60% of their carry capacity to allow for random fluctuations in resources
 - Assumed intentional infanticide involving up to 50% of birth was the primary mechanism limiting population

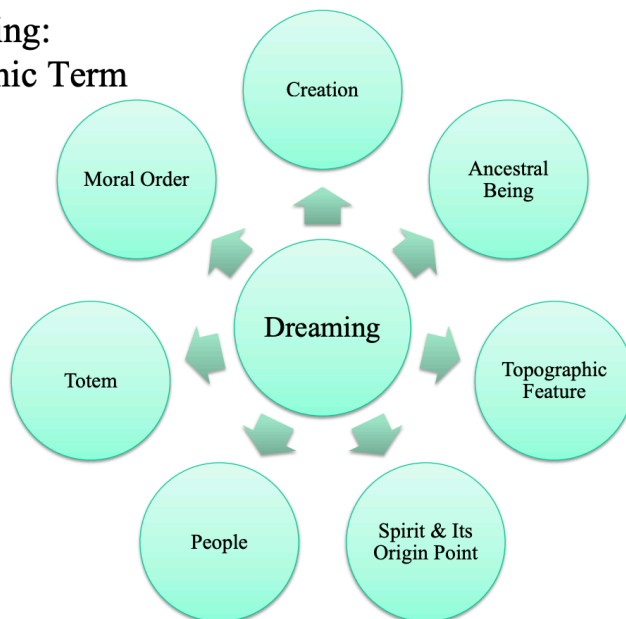
Foraging Conditions Relating to Infanticide

- Both mobility and the burden of carrying children increase when resources are scarce
- Nursing would be prolonged since there was no baby food other than mother's milk, often for 4 years or more
- The autonomy that women maintained in reproductive decision making

The Dreaming

- The key element of aboriginal culture
- A complex, multidimensional concept
- Recognizes the interdependence and vitality of all parts of the cosmos
- Permeates all aspects of the culture and defies easy categorization

Dreaming:
The Emic Term



The Totem

Australia	Elsewhere
Specific animals, plants, natural phenomena, or other objects that originated in the Dreaming are the spiritual progenitors of aboriginal descent groups	Refers to any cultural association between specific natural objects and human social groups

Totemism

- A particular way of knowing the world, an aboriginal epistemology
- Bases on the noumenal, a nonempirical way of knowing
- Exists alongside, and does not conflict with, a scientific epistemology that Aboriginal people use to create, store, and reproduce detailed information about the phenomenal world that appears to their senses.

Radcliffe-Brown	Levi-Strauss
Aboriginals first ritualized species because they were good to eat, and then adopted them as totemic emblems for their social groups	Totemism resulted from a universal tendency of people to create mental sets of paired opposites (good to think)

Dreaming: Cosmogony & Cosmology

Cosmogony	Cosmology
An ideological system that seeks to explain the origin of everything people, nature and the universe	An ideological system that explains the order and meaning of the universe and peoples places within it

Dreaming: Dreamtime & Law

Dreamtime - Everwhen/Eternal Dreamtime, when regarded as a mythic cosmogony

Law / Dreaming Law - When is referred to as the moral authority for behavior

The Dreaming

- Answers the basic meaning of life questions
- Offers a detailed charter for day to day living, including basic social categorized and ritual activities
- Ascribes cultural meaning to the natural environment

Sacred Sites and Uluru

- The Dreamtime ancestors make a direct link between people and their land by means of the sacred sites - the physical remains of ancestral beings or

their activates

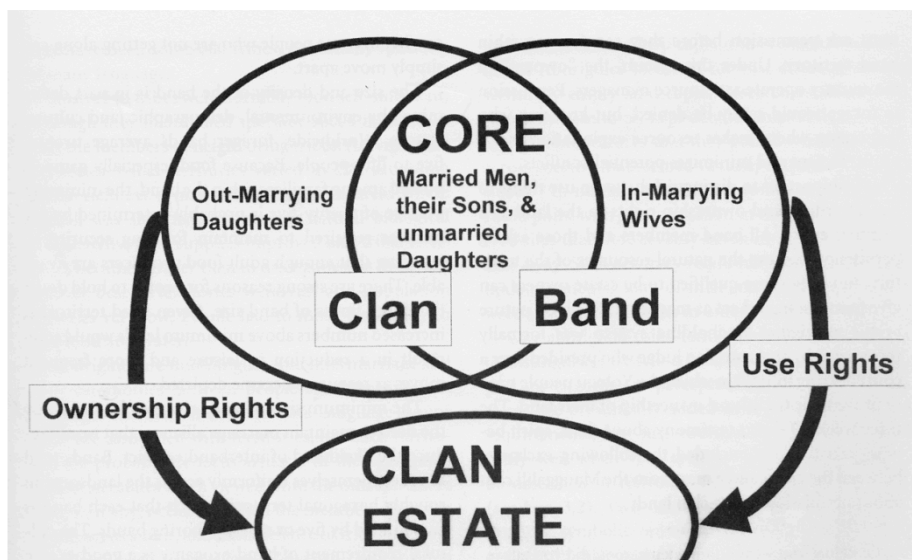
- Uluru (Ayers Rock)
 - A weathered dome, and the largest such monolith in the world
 - A perpetual Dreamtime monument crammed with cultural meaning

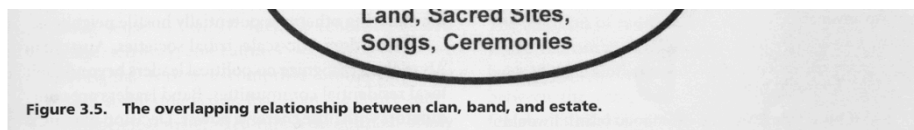
Dreaming Locations / Sacred Sites

- Centers for ritual activity (increase ceremonies), and help define territorial boundaries, and regulate use of resources (sites believed to be dangerous)
- Dreaming tracks serves as devices to help fix in memory the location of permanent water holes - critically important
- The spirit essence localized at certain sites also completes the direct link between people and their individual Dreamings

Aboriginal Band, clan, and Tribe

Band	Clan	Tribe
A group of 25-50 people who camp and forage together (patrilocal)	A named group claiming descent from a common but often remote ancestor and sharing a joint estate (clan exogamy)	A politically autonomous self sufficient, territorially based society that can reproduce a distinct culture and language and form an in-marrying (endogamous) society





Aboriginal Band: equality & Flexibility

- Australian society is based on highly flexible bands - helps reduce conflict because people not getting along can simply move apart
- Distinguish between use rights to band territory and ownership rights to the land as a religious estate, and overlapping claims are recognized- discourages any concentration of social power

Band Size: 25 as a minimum average

- Maintain foraging security by ensuring that enough adult food producers are available
- Maintain marriage alliance that would reduce the likelihood of interband conflict

Magic Number: 50 & 500

- The optimum sizes: 50 for Australian bands; 500 for tribes
- The tribe must be large enough to support a demographically viable population through intermarriage (endogamy), and reproduce a distinct language and culture
 - Average 500(>200, <1000)
- Aboriginal bands politically autonomous, but not totally self-sufficient (exogamy) tribes normally fully sufficient

The forager way of life (Pre-European conditions)

- The small size - the most important physical feature
- Domestic mode of production
- "the original affluent society" (Sahlins 1968)
- Wealthy in nature, land, people, and intangible culture
- A sustainable no-growth culture

Forager mode of thought VS accumulation mode of thought

Forager mode of thought	Accumulation mode of thought
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Accumulation is antisocial	Not accumulating is antisocial
"comic economy of sharing"	Sharing only within one's own household as proper
Suspicious of anyone who takes leadership position	Leadership as positive trait
Territory as an inviolable possession, a common property too sacred to be sold or alienated	Land is bought and sold by individuals, private property protected by government

Daily life: Kinship, age and Gender

- Polygyny
 - A form of marriage in which a man may have more than one wife
- Gerontocracy
 - An age hierarchy that is controlled or dominated by the oldest age group

