

## Abstract

This thesis presents an analysis of new data as a result of archaeological excavations the writer (and volunteers) conducted across three locations at a past Peramangk Aboriginal site near Springton in the northern region of the Mount Lofty Ranges, South Australia. The majority of research focuses on what the excavated materials can reveal about the relationships to country and past lifeways of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who used this landscape, and how these relationships are interpreted in the light of ethnographic and surface material relevant to the region.

This study area is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly to my knowledge there have been no previously documented archaeological excavations of Aboriginal sites in the Mount Lofty Ranges, and secondly there are few conventionally recorded details about the Peramangk people in whose territory the study takes place. What makes the areas to be excavated so special, is that a 1926 historical account describes some surface and surrounding archaeological features. This along with my more detailed 1997 surface archaeology report and the accounts of others, provides a valuable framework from which comparisons may be made with excavated materials, particularly since I argue most of the cultural material is contemporaneous being relatively near the surface. The value in these investigations apart from enriching our knowledge bases, lie in their potential to support or refute some of the observations that have been made in historical accounts, and to work towards a better informed interpretation process.

Historical accounts (Tindale, 1974) suggest that Peramangk people were completely surrounded by no less than 7 different language/ tribal groups and if this arrangement was long standing, it would seem feasible to suggest that complex trading and social relationships would have existed. With postulated rising sea levels some 9,000 years ago, there would have been considerable pressure on territorial borders as the western (now Kaurana) neighbours lost much of their above water territory. That evidence of significant interaction between Peramangk and some of their surrounding neighbours took place in the specific area of this study, has been supported by the surface survey, corroborated by the excavated analysis, and suggested in the ethnographic accounts.

Of some surprise in addition to the Indigenous evidence, was the discovery of the probable remains of one of, if not *the* first non-Indigenous evidence for activity in the study area, being possibly a wood cutter's hut, again matching oral accounts.

Finally I postulate from the evidence uncovered, that the large fireplaces which form a focus near the centre of the study area, most likely were used as part of elaborate mortuary practices involving raised platform smoke drying of the deceased. Some perplexing over-representation (by volume compared to ash/charcoal) of burnt micaceous schist in one of the excavated fireplace assemblages is discussed, again in comparison to others' reports, and I suggest it along with quartz has been intentionally placed in the fireplace for likely ceremonial purposes.

This thesis provides a systematic and quantified documentation and analysis of the nature of excavated material in conjunction with ethnographic accounts and surface surveys. The documentary evidence for trade and ceremonial use, concurs with the archaeological evidence for trade and ceremony, and many of the surface features were found also to relate to both ceremonial, and occupational activities.