

Lardil

1. Description

- 1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family: Lardil (Kunana, Ladil, Laierdila, Lardill) (1)
- 1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): lbz
- 1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): Mornington Island is located 16 30' S and 139 30' E in the Gulf of Carpentaria (1)
- 1.4 Brief history: The Lardil people are the original inhabitants of the Mornington Island, and had been the largest tribal group in the area. The Lardil avoided contact with people/cultures outside of their until the early 1900s
- 1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: Resisted communication with outside world until the early 1900s. The township of Gununa began in 1914 when the Presbyterians sent missionaries and the Lardil and Yangkal peoples were brought together. In 1948, after a tidal wave devastated the water supply, the Kaiadilt people were also brought into the mission.

Since the early part of this century Mornington Island had been managed under the Queensland Aborigines Act by the Uniting Church. In 1978 the Queensland Government decided to take over control of the Island. The community protested the decision and sought Commonwealth Government support for its cause. Later that year agreement was reached between the Commonwealth and the State for self-government via a local authority (Mornington Shire Council) (2)

- 1.6 Ecology (natural environment): Climate is dry, tropical with a specific summer rainfall maximum. When rain occurs it is often intense with approximately 20mm per rain per day. Tropical cyclones affect the area relatively frequently and past records indicate that cyclones cross the coast close to Mornington Island about one year in ten. Cyclones are often associated with destructive storm surges and the maximum storm surge height predicted for Mornington island is 6 metres (2)
- 1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: approximately 1,100 Lardil remain as of 1999 (2)

2. Economy

- 2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): Seeds and nuts, very little (3)
- 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: rock cod, crab, oysters, turtle; delicacy is dugong, or sea cow (11)
- 2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Hunting implements include boomerangs (different kinds), digging sticks, fighting sticks, shields and spears (6)
- 2.4 Food storage: Selected food which was available and ate it for nutritional purposes. There was no refrigeration or storage containers. Local knowledge of which plants were edible, palatable, or delicious, as well as the best time for harvest, harvest and preparation methods, were passed down by word of mouth to the next generation. Some plants or their fruits are less toxic at certain times. Generally did not boil water, so their cooking methods (and hence their menus) were different from those used by the early settlers and modern users. They did not have pots or pans, although northern tribes were known to have used bailer shells. They did not make tea or coffee, nor similar drinks. They did not make jams, jellies, or chutneys, and made little use of flavorings. (21)
Apart from Bunya nuts they only used food from their tribal area and did not trade.
- 2.5 Sexual division of production: Men hunt and fish, women care for child and gather or do craft work (11)
- 2.6 Land tenure: Every clan possesses a drawn small of land, that they call their territory, with limitless right of access and hunting in the section of before sea; according to their philosophy the earth belongs to all the members of the tribe therefore all has the right of go hunting in the other people's territory. However the owners, although absent, conserve some rights on whichever food captured or collected in their zone: if it comes harpooned a large fish the preda uniform in two equal parts comes so as to offer one half to "dulmandas" (the hosts). (8)
- 2.7 Ceramics: Wood carving, building stone fish traps, rolling of hibiscus bark string, making of string bags from grasses (11)
- 2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: a hunter was prohibited from eating his 'own kill' - a taboo discarded in the famine of 1947 Normally it is to the advantage of a hunter to be generous because he cannot always consume what he has caught so he might as well share it and, in so doing, establish a right to share in the catch of others. Sharing permeates traditional Mornington culture: what can and cannot be shared, with whom one can, cannot and must share etc. In the case of big game, such as dugong and sea turtle, people had the right to certain portions which they did not have to ask for (16)
- 2.9 Food taboos: dulnhu fish a type of bream about eight inches long (14)
- 2.10 Canoes/watercraft? Primarily used rafts made from a series of branches or trunks from saplings tied together (11)

3. Anthropometry

- 3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): 180 cm; 161 cm (18)
- 3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): 147 lbs; 126 lbs (18)

4. Life History, mating, marriage

- 4.1 Age at menarche (f): No records found
- 4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): early 20s (14)
- 4.3 Completed family size (m and f): 3-4 (2)
- 4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): No records found
- 4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): Men: late 20s, Women: early 20s, tend to remarry multiple times because male death rate is so high (11)
- 4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: very minimal divorce rates (11)

- 4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: Dominantly polygynous until missionaries settled on the island, up to 15 wives at a time (11)
- 4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: No records found
- 4.9 Inheritance patterns: No records found
- 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: No records found
- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: None (11)
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): Endogamy is strictly enforced by the elders and those clinging to the traditions, but many of the younger generations began to practice endogamy, wanting to marry for love like the 'White people' (14)
- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized? Men are the sole provider in the family, both of children and of resources, even if he has multiple wives. The wives are bound to him unless they are mistreated multiples time, in which case they are free to leave and elope. (14)
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows"): No records found
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)? : No records found
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape: Not much mention of rape among Lardil, some mention of Lardil men raping white women (11)
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin): MBD/FZD the children of female cross-cousins or male cross-cousins are expected to marry, in accordance with the skin group system (14)
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? Yes. One wife at a time was confined to camp to look over the children and cook, while the others could do as they pleased, more sexual freedom was given to women already pregnant seeing as their husbands had already claimed them (11)
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring: No records found
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? : No records found
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females: 1:4.5 (male:female) (12)
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades:
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older): Men generally began their martial career by obtaining a widow from an elder that had died and gaining more wives from them on (11)
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect? Kinship lies primarily in the relationships between the skins groups, and while there can be great unrest and violence between individuals, kin relationships are regarded very highly (11)
- 4.24 Joking relationships? No records found
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations: descent through the male line (16)
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules: punishment is spearing one or both offenders (16)
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? They always have to gather and prepare the grass-seeds for their families' uses. There is no marriage ceremony. When the man considers it is time that he should take the damsel promised to him, he makes a demand to her father or uncle, and they order the girl to go to his camp, called "Youllo," which is pitched some short distance away, and formed by a few boughs laid on the ground in a half circle. It is merely a break-wind, and is moved in the direction of the wind each night. The natives have no permanent place of habitation, and only stay a few day (22)
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? Follows the kinship rules on inheritance (22)
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?) The Lardil possess extremely complex wedding system and they are married closely choosing the companion in way in compliance with the rules taxes from the social custom and the several taboo. In such matter they consider the white men little less than animals that couple themselves without some discretion: this example illustrates as which confusion degree can carry the incomprehension. (8)
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? Arranged by either parents or close kin through the deneeyan ceremony (14)
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: ritualized fighting was often involved in gaining a wife (11)

Warfare/homicide

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: No percentages found for cause of death. Most common cause of death for aboriginals was disease, hunting dangers, and warfare (13)
- 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: Most likely cause of out-group death would be improper use of resources or stealing between neighboring peoples or because they were unhappy with the treatment they received from outsiders, in group deaths generally spark from relationship problems such as adultery or unjust wife sharing (10)
- 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: Most common causes of outgroup killing are violent, usually spears. In group killing occurs most commonly from danger at sea. The ratio of men to women in the communities was very uneven due to the high amount of risk men had fishing and hunting (10)
- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): Currently the Lardil maintain relationships with those outside of the tribe because the language and majority of the customs are slowly dying out. Previously, tensions between the Lardil and other tribes or outsiders had been high and violent outbreaks were very common (11)
- 4.18 Cannibalism? None

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: The Island is divided into two areas; Windward side and Leeward Side. This is further subdivided into four clan groups two to each side; Windward side: Larumbanda and Djigurrumbanda clan groups. Leeward side: Balumbanda and Leelumbanda clan groups.

Each family group comes from one of these clan groups and each is further divided into specific 'country' or 'nyerrwi'. Because there is no 'ownership' of country a special 'custodianship' will fall onto the responsibility of a chosen person from the clan group. This person is called the 'Dulmada'. (6)

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): Stationary on the island (12)

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): The male elders were the general governing body and responsible for the allocation of important economic resources, the maintenance of behavioural codes, trade and feud with neighbors, male initiation ceremonies and the ritual expression of religious and cosmological knowledge to manipulate the behaviour of people and of activity in the natural environment (17)

5.4 Post marital residence: Once married, a man and women would leave the windbreak of their parents, the windbreak of the single initiated men, or the windbreak of widows or single women, and build their own for their family (including multiple wives) (19)

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): Several violent interactions with tribes close in proximity (Yangkaal, Yulkulda) as well as mainlanders and outsiders to the aboriginals. Most disputes were over territory boundaries as well as resource distribution, in addition to couples attempting to elope out of the traditional marriage system. (4)

Every clan possesses a drawn small of land, that they call their territory, with limitless right of access and hunting in the section of before sea; according to their philosophy the earth belongs to all the members of the tribe therefore all has the right of go hunting in the other people's territory. However the owners, although absent, conserve some rights on whichever food captured or collected in their zone: if it comes harpooned a large fish the preda uniform in two equal parts comes so as to offer one half to " dulmandas " (the hosts). (8)

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): No records found

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: No records found

5.8 Village and house organization: family groups of 15 to 20 that own a portion of the land and water sources, for social and ceremonial purposes, they were divided into the windward (south & east) and Leeward (north and west) moieties. Totems or Dreamings, further describe tribal sub-sections. Totems are hereditary, and the killing or eating of the totem is restricted. Thuwathu, the Rainbow Serpent, is believed to have made all the landmarks and food and water sources (2)

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): Each domiciliary group occupied such a circular unit at night (a windbreak), each group comprising (a) a nuclear family, (b) a small group of single initiated men, or (c) a small group of widows and single or unattached women (19)

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? On the ground, but use a low to the ground circular wall called a windbreak or *wungkurr* (made from leaves, grass, vines, branches) to block wind and weather from all directions with sand built up around the bottom for sturdiness opening at the front where the fire was kept. Large pieces of paperbark were used as protection from the rainy season (19)

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: each family country is protected and looked after by the eldest man in each clan (6)

5.12 Trade: Trade both with other tribes on the island as well those from the mainland. Would prefer to not associate with outsiders but need the business (11)

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? Not structured hierarchy exists among the Lardil, but men who are the best providers and hunters generally have the most wives and the largest say in decision making because they play the biggest role in providing for the community (14)

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR: The majority of rituals and ceremonies deal with initiation and marriage. The Lardil maintained their strict cultural values and systems until the early 1900s when missionaries reached the islands and began to instill Christian/Western ideals and values into the people

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): No records of medical men or women, but Lardil male elders had the power of sorcery and were supposedly capable of such feats as "inducing a terrible storm to come down on his enemy. There are reports of using under arm perspiration as a healing agent (20)

6.2 Stimulants: No records found

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): Circumcision necessary for all males. While women played little roles in the initiate processes, they were allowed to veto if they thought their child was took you. Later in life the young men were subjected to subincision, sometimes more than once. (5) A male is considered ready for initiate processes when facial hair appears (9)

6.4 Other rituals: Young men undergo circumcision when they are to becoming an adult/man, and at the time are taught a sign language called Marlda Kangka. This enables them to communicate only with other men who have undergone the transition to adulthood. After a year or more, young men who were brave enough moved on to the second stage of initiation: penile subincision, the reward for enduring the pain was a second auxiliary language, Damin (14)

A custom known as deneeymen consists of placing a child on a person's lap as a means of claiming them. If a girl is placed on the lap of a man, she is to marry him, unless given permission by him to do otherwise. The lap placement means to be responsible for taking care of someone. If a boy is placed on a man's lap, he is entitled to an daughters that the boy's parents may eventually have.

6.5 Myths (Creation): 'Sea Law' or 'Saltwater Law', comes from Dreamtime, the myth collection which is the basis for their belief system. 'The Dreaming' refers to an ancestral time of creation that incorporates beliefs concerning the formation of the coastal environment by ancestral beings who left sacred emerges in particular sites. The energies can be used for catalyzing the fertility of

particular animal species or meteorological phenomena. A potent and pervasive entity in the sea in the 'Rainbow Serpent' who punishes humans for breaking the 'Sea Law'. (12)

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): Lardil received their songs and dances from the dreamtime (2) The Lardil have many crafts and artwork they create: ceremonial spear (only decorated by men), wood carving, Lardil are known for distinctive wooden hats made of human hair and tree bark (6)

6.7 Sex differences in RCR: No records found

6.8 Missionary effect: The original Lardil have kept their traditions separate from the Christian missionaries who invaded and those who were previously Lardil and have associated with the mission (2)

6.9 RCR revival: None

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: Mornington Islanders do not fear death to the extent that Westerners do. In their traditional beliefs there is no heaven or hell, there is some belief in reincarnation, which takes the form of a person's totemic spirit being reborn but the individual dies never to reappear (16)

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? Death in Lardil tends to be treated euphemistically; it is common, for example, to use the phrase *wurdal yarburr* 'meat' when referring to a deceased person (or corpse). *Yuur-kirnee yarburr* (literally, 'The meat/animal has died') has the sense 'You-know-who has died', and is preferable to a more direct treatment. It is taboo to speak the name of a deceased person, even (for a year or so) when referring to living people with the same name; these people are addressed as *thamarrka*. The deceased is often known by the name of his/her death or burial place plus the 'necronym' suffix *-ngalin*, as in *Wurdungalin* 'one who died at Wurdu'. Sometimes other strategies are used to refer to the dead, such as circumlocution via kinship terms (7)

6.12 Is there teknonymy? None

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.) Every society has a spiritual belief system. For most Australian Indigenous groups this belief system is what is called 'The Dreamtime'. In Lardil peoples' belief there are Marnbil, Dhual-dhual and Ghingin who are the Lardil people's creation ancestors – they along with Thuwathu (the Rainbow Serpent) and Nyaranbi (Dingo) are responsible for making our customary laws, ceremonies and laws that govern how we behave and treat our land and sea country. They gave us our totems, kinship system and land and sea story places. Marnbil, Dhual-dhual and Ghingin and Thuwathu are very important ancestral beings and they created important story places whose moral implication tells us how we should behave to members of our family, how we collect and prepare our bush food, create and sing our corroboree. Many of the dances performed by the Mornington Island Dancers are based on creation stories and stories of significance. Many were 'dreamed' for ceremony and it is to their credit that the Lardil Dancers are still able to perform these dances in much the same manner as their forefathers and mothers did. (6)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint: The body paint is used when they participate in rituals and use different patterns to show the lay of the land and to pay homage to their respective totems/skin groups. (15)

7.2 Piercings: Not common

7.3 Haircut: No records found

7.4 Scarification: Subincision as a young man, meant to show them shedding any last traces of femininity as they move into manhood. Maybe be opened up at various occasions later in life to represent further bloodletting. (5)

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): Head bands are common on the men, otherwise body painting, pendants and other jewelry are reserved for rituals and ceremonies (15)

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: Painting of artifacts and bodies for public dancing and ceremony. Men personalized their boomerangs and spears with patterns and stripes using white, ochre, or black pigments prior to ritual dueling. Body painting, some would use human blood to stick feathers and colored balls to the skin. (5) Ceremonial dancers wear woven hats, arms bands, and skirts, women have a dancing string. The dancers use clapsticks (either plain or decorated) and are accompanied by a songman with his singing boomerangs. Occasionally a didgeridoo will be used. (6)

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: Men decorate their weapons and their bodies, sometimes in scarring ways, women are dancers and have a dancing string (8)

7.8 Missionary effect: Many missionaries stayed away from Mornington Island for a number of years due to its inconvenient location, but in 1914 Reverend Robert Hall made it the island where he organized a school and established a mission which many of the Lardil took interest in. The Lardil were friendly to the missionaries. Many of the children began to attend the school, although irregularly. One Lardil man, named Bad Peter, was outraged at the policies and lack of generosity from the mission and killed Rev. Robert Hall in 1917. Hall assistant, Rev. Wilson, took over after Hall's death and kept the school going for 20 years after. Many of the Lardil maintained their lifestyle and hunter gather ways seeing as the missionaries were mostly only interested in the children. More and more missionaries made their way to the island but a majority of the people disregarded their teaching and just used them for provisions. The dissipation of the Lardil culture can mostly be contributed to movement off the island and to the mainland (5)

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: No records found

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system: Reported that many young people stray from treating kin, especially sisters, in the traditional manner. Because the changes in classification occur through skin group and marriage, there are many misconceptions about how individuals should identify their kin, and so genealogy and lineage must be recorded very specifically and accurately.

Male skin group	Totems	May marry only female skin group	Children will be
Ngarrijbalangi	<i>Rainbird, shooting star, egret</i>	Burrarangi	Bangariny
Bangariny	<i>Brown shark, turtle</i>	Yakimarr	Ngarrijbalangi
Buranyi	<i>Crane, salt water, sleeping turtle</i>	Kangal	Balyarriny
Balyarriny	<i>Black tiger shark, sea turtle</i>	Kamarrangi	Buranyi
Burrarangi	<i>Lightning, rough sea, black dingo</i>	Ngarrijbalangi	Kamarrangi
Yakimarr	<i>Seagull, barramundi, grey shark</i>	Bangariny	Kangal
Kangal	<i>Barramundi, grey shark</i>	Buranyi	Yakimarr
Kamarrangi	<i>Rock, pelican, brolga, red dingo</i>	Balyarriny	Burrarangi

(3)

8.2 Sororate, levirate: Neither, relationships must follow the skin group system. A widow is preferred to marry off to someone is a 'little farther away' in kinship than the brother of her husband (14)

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

In Lardil kinship system there are 8 skin-groups which are assigned 'skin-names' and their associated totems. They are:-

1. Ngari-Boolungi Rainbird, shooting star, egret
2. Nungaringi Brown hawk, turtle
3. Bulunyi Crane, salt water, sleeping turtle
4. Bulyarini Black tiger shark, sea turtle
5. Burulungi Lightning, rough sea, black dingo
6. Gumerungi Rock, pelican, brolga, red dingo
7. Gungulla Barramundi, grey shark
8. Yugumari Seagull, barramundi, grey shark (6)

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

-belief in sorcery, only men can be sorcerers (5)

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