

1. Description

- 1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family: LARDIL. Australian, Pama-Nyungan, Tangic; Related to Gayardilt, Nyangga, Yugulda. All apparently use English more than Lardil. Nearly Extinct.ⁱ
- 1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com):
- 1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): -16.563/139.432ⁱⁱ
- 1.4 Brief history: Macassan trepangers once traveled from Sulawesi to Mornington in search of sea cucumbers. It lies in the subequatorial zone of Australia, in the Gulf of Carpentaria. It is the largest of six islands making up the Wellesley group. Discovered in 1802 by Lieutenant Matthew Flinders of the Royal Navy, the Lardil were living on the island. They had little to no subsequent contact with Europeans until the island was visited in the early part of this century. They had exchanges (frequently hostile) with the Aborigines who then lived on the other smaller islands of the Wellesley group.ⁱⁱⁱ
- 1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:
- 1.6 Ecology (natural environment): The area, being on an island, has a relatively large amount of water and plant vegetation. At the same time there are parts of the island that are dry and arid.^{iv}
- 1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: There are approximately 26 different clan countries. The owners of country or claimants of ownership are known as Tulumata. The total population of the island is hard to determine but there from several hundred people to a little over one thousand.^v

2. Economy

- 2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): One of the main carbohydrate staples on the island in recent years has been beer and the consumption of alcohol. Brought to the island by European travelers, alcoholism runs rampant on the island.^{vi}
- 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: Fishing and game hunted from the area. Women in the area are known for collecting oysters usually due to the fact that it is less strenuous than other food collection methods.^{vii}
- 2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Although there is little literature with regards to weapons for warfare, violence on the island had been known to perpetuate with the use of spears and knives mostly involving suicides and murders.
- 2.4 Food storage:
- 2.5 Sexual division of production: Men are known to do the more strenuous labor in the group with the women doing collecting activities.
- 2.6 Land tenure: There are 26 countries on the island each belonging to a different organization. The island, however, is more focused on tapestries and paintings rather than ceramics.
- 2.7 Ceramics: In art on the island, there is an importance of the dingo and the shark in initiation ceremonies. The island, however, is more focused on tapestries and paintings rather than ceramics as a form of artwork. However, clay is often used in body paint for ceremonies.
- 2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: N/A
- 2.9 Food taboos: A food taboo which exists on the island is called "malkiri" and is the belief that the great spirit of the Dreaming ancestors is guarding the coastline. If a person disregards the law about food by mixing land and sea food or taking land food into the sea, the guardian spirit of that place enters the person's stomach. If this occurs, a song man must be called to sing the song to the appropriate spirit, to induce vomiting in the affected person and thereby rid themselves of the offending spirit.
- 2.10 Canoes/watercraft?: There are boats which are used to get to the mainland, however, the inhabitants of the island are relatively self sustained except for when it comes to matters such as the purchase of alcohol.

3. Anthropometry

- 3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): 5 foot 7 for men 5 foot 5 for women.
- 3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): 150lbs for men, 120lbs for women.

4. Life History, mating, marriage

- 4.1 Age at menarche (f): Early Teens
- 4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): Early Teens for both men and women.
- 4.3 Completed family size (m and f): Very complicated due to extended family and the nature of relationships. All available research is questionable due to distrust to outsiders however I believe that the completed family size can be seen as anyone inside of your own community. In a larger sense, everyone on the island relates to someone else so the sense of kinship is muddled.
- 4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): N/A
- 4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): Early Teens.
- 4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: It is difficult to determine the percentage of marriages ending in divorce for several reasons. First, because of the distrust of outsiders all information is possibly untrue. There are, however, divorce laws for the state of Queensland but there are no divorce laws for the island itself. It is assumed, however, that the laws of Queensland apply to the island as well.
- 4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: Although I cannot find any evidence to support/reject polygynous marriages, I have the distinct feeling from the research done on the island that either polygynous marriages are frowned upon or they happen rarely.
- 4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: While gifts are often given to impress the parents and daughter, there is no formal bride purchase.

- 4.9 Inheritance patterns: “The ideal person to marry was always someone related to you – either a first or second cousin. The intermarriage of owners of country secured a way for the dreaming to be handed down.” Essentially control of a region or “country” is controlled by male heredity. If there is no male descendant
- 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: Some of the conflict which exists on the island is not physical or emotional, but spiritual. Many books discuss the idea that children on this island are having an identity crisis due to much cross breeding amongst traditions which results in sometimes conflicting traditions. According to “From Hunting to Drinking” Children “are indulged and rarely disciplined. If one parent becomes exasperated at a child’s unruly behavior and attempts to do something about it then the other parent is almost certain to intercede. If children are disciplined this normally consists of a few smacks and then they are immediately cuddled and given the breast to pacify them. It is believed that white Australians are cruel and harsh upon their children.” According to the book, this carefree life continued until boys were initiated and girls were married once their breasts began to fall, being more traumatic for the boys to be forcibly separated from indulgent mothers.
- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: No mention of homosexual activities on the island with regards to indigenous peoples.
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):N/A
- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized?: Paternity is determined through the male line.
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”): She bears the children and has them through pregnancy. Further details as to what the previous beliefs of the society were are difficult to determine as there are multiple cultures on the island which interact with each other.
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?: No, again (as with question 4.14) it is difficult to determine which beliefs are Lardil. It is because Mornington Island is very diverse in the sense that all of the cultures interact with each other.
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape: In personal accounts through women in the society, it has been shown that there instances where rape or sexual coercion occurs. However, since the area is under the jurisdiction of Queensland, Australia and all of its laws, there is no widespread problem.
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin): First or second cousins. Other preferable groups include people from skin totems outside of your own.
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?: Sometimes
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring?: N/A
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?: The women do most of the child bearing in the society, with most of the teaching going to them as well. In several first hand accounts it has been stated that men in the society are lazy and leave it to women to do most of the work. This account tells how this perpetuates through generations as men have the final say in what is taught to the children. This may be, however, a biased opinion since the book it is taken from is from the women’s prospective.
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females: N/A
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades: N/A
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?: It is noted that while a sibling can become a spouse, the spouse of a man cannot have another husband. In this sense, women can sometimes be rejected as members of society until they are married because people do not want to accept them as siblings, but as a wife. In the case of one author, a friend married her so that she would be accepted into society, not for sex.
- 4.24 Joking relationships?: In one book, “Paint-Up: Amanda Ahern and the Mornington Island Elders” it discusses how the writer, in an attempt to gain the trust of the people within the society.
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations: Ownership of the 26 countries on the island is passed through male descendants. With each area comes certain totems, or beliefs, that are associated with the area which are also associated. If there is no male descendant available, the current leader may determine who will succeed him upon his death, usually someone in his biological family.
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules: There are two main sets of rules which guide the possibility of incest, both conflicting. The first is a complicated set of marriage rules which stipulate that only certain members of skin totems can marry other members of different skin totems. At the same time, it has been historically shown that there is a preference within the society to marry first or second cousins as stated in the book “Paint-Up”, “ The skin system was created to maintain tenure of country. The ideal person to marry was always someone related to you-either a first or second cousin. The intermarriage of owners of country secured a way for the dreaming (ownership) to be handed down. The country and its resources were then maintained through the custodial relationship with the lad itself. In the Lardil system, you cannot belong to the same skin group as your own parents. You skip a generation and belong to the same generation as your father’s father.” However, since the advent of Europeans, there has been a decline in the enforcement of either of these preferences and more and more people are marrying outside of these rules.
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony: According to “Paint Up”: As the distinctions between the skin groups become increasingly blurred, relationships suffer. The young people’s sense of place, purpose and how to behave are diminishing in direct accordance with their sense of place within the system.” “the ideal person to marry was always someone related to you – either a first or second cousin. The intermarriage of owners of country secured a way for the dreaming to be handed down.” “Some people today, because they have not come from a straight skin marriage, have claimed their mother’s totem and skin group to place themselves within society.”
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?: Last name is not as important in this society as which Totem you belong to. Totem refers to the personal spirit or path you choose to follow and is free for each person to decide and can be chosen at any time. Many times, however, people choose the totem which is specific to the area they live in but this is not a prerequisite.

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?): It is usually preferred that people marry others outside of their group. : In modern times, it is not as important that people marry others outside of their group or inside. It is, however, preferred to be married within a group due to the competitive nature of males in society. As stated before, there is an instance where an author married a friend because she was being treated coldly by other members of the group who wished to marry her.

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: Siblings may not marry (or at least are not supposed to.) This is seen as a taboo on the island and can lead to conflict in instances where people will not be accepted as a sibling because they would rather have them as a wife.

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: There is no warfare on the island in recent years due to European influence. However, there has been 15 homicides in a 25 year period. The majority of these assailants have been male (only one woman) with a majority of the victims being female. In a 65 year period, there have been 28 suicides, the majority of these being single males under the age of 30 according to "From Hunting to Drinking"

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: As mentioned above, there have been 15 homicides during a 25 year period and 28 suicides in a 65 year period. Since there is no warfare in the group anymore, due to the Queensland authority, there are no figures for outgroup violence.

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: Again, as stated above, there have been 15 homicides in a 25 year period with a majority of the assailants being male and the majority of victims being female. In a 65 year period, there have been 28 suicides, with the majority being single males under 30.

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): The society is broken up into 26 "countries" which are continuously interacting with each other on the island. Often family lines are blurred due to the constant breeding between groups.

4.18 Cannibalism?: No

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: Since there are only 50 people on the island that speak Lardil, it is impossible to determine how many people are in each village. For the rest of the island, however, villages can get as large as several hundred.

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): N/A

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): The society is divided into 26 countries which separate the island.

5.4 Post marital residence: Wife and husband live within the same household.

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): There are territories which are defined by Locality name into 26 regions on the island. While some of the boundaries are defined by rivers and/or other natural features while other divisions are done by splitting smaller islands in half. There are no records for any active defenses on the island.

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): In recent years, with the onset of European methodology, there have been an onset of sending children into his and hers dorms as well as to boarding schools on the mainland. However, there seems to be no formal separation between men and women beyond European standards. The range which parents discipline their children is just as varied as in the United States.

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: In one book, "Paint-Up: Amanda Ahern and the Mornington Island Elders" it discusses how the writer, in an attempt to gain the trust of the people within the society.

5.8 Village and house organization: N/A

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): There are mens' and womens' houses for children but there is no evidence that these houses exist for older men and women. There are records that men and women can live with their parents as they get older.

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? : N/A

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: Lineages are determined by paternal descent. Each country is owned by claimants known as Tulmata. The clans each recognize a senior member as their traditional owner of their particular country. There is a lot of movement between the clans, with ceremonies, intermarriage, and the sharing of resources. Each clan distinguishes itself by identifying with a particular animal or bird species that inhabits the country. The island is also governed by the Mornington Island Association of Village Elders and then became incorporated into the Muyinda Aboriginal Corporation.

5.12 Trade: There is almost constant trade between the different countries on the island. The island's trade is overseen by the Muyinda which oversee the production of art and artifacts for sale and exhibition on the mainland and overseas but also supervise the passing on the traditional knowledge, such as how to make artifacts, the resources used in production, traditional law, stories, sacred sites, and hunting skills for land and sea food.

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?: Besides the elders of each village, there seems to be no social hierarchy. There is, however, skin divisions which signify who you can marry. Again, there seems to be no difference between these skin groups as a determinant of importance.

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR: There seems to be a lot of time which is allocated to RCR.

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): There is little mention of songmen which are used to cure people if they violate laws with regards to spirits on the island. One such instance is that if a person disregards the law about food by mixing land and sea food, then they must have a songman sing the appropriate song to the spirits and induce vomiting in the person.

- 6.2 Stimulants: I could find no stimulants which were native to the land, however, there has been rampant use of alcohol and drugs since the Europeans came to the island. There are several theories as to why this is occurring including the fact that “They had learned that it was dangerous to encounter a White person in the bush so they were forced to hang around the towns and stations doing odd jobs and begging. In their despair many took to alcohol and opium. This led to the Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium act.
- 6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): Once the men reach a certain age, they use paint ups to describe their heritage and their beliefs. It is applied with koyal (white clay) and red ochre. Sometimes either kapok (wild cotton) or chopped-up white cockatoo feathers are stuck directly into the skin. In the old days the feathers were stuck on with a mixture of blood and sugar. Nowadays, the dancers paint-up with acrylic paint as it is readily available and easy to apply while touring.” – Paint Up.
- 6.4 Other rituals: The people believe in totem, which is the “dreaming spirit” of the Aboriginal people which links them to the days of creation in the Dreaming. The relationship of people and their totems has been passed down for thousands of years. They are born with their totems almost as if the totems are their brother and sister. Totems are inherited through an ancestor who gave birth to human or other children and connect them with nature and the gods.
- 6.5 Myths (Creation): “The ancestral beings belonged to the long distant past, when they made the features of the landscape, and the laws, customs, and rituals for the humans who followed. A totem or dreaming is founded on the belief that there is a special link between a person and something in natural environment.
- 6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): The primary cultural material are artistic painting which are used to pass on totems (body paint) to future members of that totem.
- 6.7 Sex differences in RCR: The main difference is that only men seem that
- 6.8 Missionary effect: One of the major problems on the island in recent years has been the onset of alcoholism. Mentioned earlier in the questionnaire, one of the theories as to why this occurs is due to a lack of jobs for aboriginals and a general sense of despair in the community. There has been, however, no attempt to make body adornments more modest in recent times due to the influence of Christianity. There is a missionary on the island though it does not specify which denomination.
- 6.9 RCR revival: There has been a revival in the sense that a greater attempt to document their religion has taken place.
- 6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: People believe that suicide and murder are ways of killing parts of the society.
- 6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?: N/A
- 6.12 Is there teknonymy?: No
- 6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.): They believe in multiple in multiple spirits/gods which represent the different aspects of life. Totems have been described earlier in this passage as the “dreaming spirit” of the Aboriginal people which links them to the days of creation in the Dreaming. There are several types of totems, each with different totems which relate to different spirits. Thuwatu is considered the main spirit of the islands. Totems can be broken into geographical totems, which one can inherit from the place where they belong. A conceptual totem occurs when an expectant mother encounters an animal during her pregnancy and the child is often named after the animal. And skin totems which relate to skin groups, the community being divided into four or eight sub-groups. Each of these groups identifies with certain animals or natural phenomena in the environment.

7. Adornment

- 7.1 Body paint: A body paint is used to paint totems on the bodies of the men where they will dance in various ceremonies. The totems signify who they are/what they believe in.
- 7.2 Piercings: None apparent
- 7.3 Haircut: Women wear their hair medium to long while men wear their hair short to medium.
- 7.4 Scarification:N/A
- 7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):Body paint is applied which consists of a natural clay, often feathers, and other materials. It is applied in such a manner that
- 7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: Simple cloth clothing because the body paint is more important to the ceremony.
- 7.7 Sex differences in adornment: Only ceremonial adornment for men was mentioned as it is more visual/pronounced.
- 7.8 Missionary effect: One of the major problems on the island in recent years has been the onset of alcoholism. Mentioned earlier in the questionnaire, one of the theories as to why this occurs is due to a lack of jobs for aboriginals and a general sense of despair in the community. There has been, however, no attempt to make body adornments more modest in recent times due to the influence of Christianity. There is a missionary on the island though it does not specify which denomination.
- 7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: None needed.

8. Kinship systems

- 8.1 Sibling classification system: Pretty much everyone on the island is related to each other in some fashion. Sibling can refer to either biological or someone of importance not necessarily related to the person through blood line.
- 8.2 Sororate, levirate: Neither is permitted.
- 8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.): N/A

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

Numbered references

1.

ⁱ http://www.ethnologue.com/14/show_language.asp?code=LBZ

ⁱⁱ <http://www.postcodes-australia.com/areas/qld/north+queensland/mornington+island>

ⁱⁱⁱ Christen, Kimberly A. *Aboriginal Business: Alliances in a Remote Australian Town*. Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research, 2009. Print.

^{iv} Ahern, Amanda. *Paint-up*. St. Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland, 2002. Print.

^v http://www.ethnologue.com/14/show_language.asp?code=LBZ; <http://linguistlist.org/forms/langs/LLDescription.cfm?code=lbz>

^{vi} McKnight, David. *From Hunting to Drinking: The Devastating Effects of Alcohol on an Australian Aboriginal Community*. London: Routledge, 2002. Print.

^{vii} Huffer, Virginia, and Elsie Roughsey. *The Sweetness of the Fig: Aboriginal Women in Transition*. Sydney: New South Wales UP, 1980. Print.