

1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family:

Ngarrindjeri, alternate names: Yaralde, Ngarinyeri, Narrinyeri

Language: Australian> Pama-Nyungan> Narrinyeri (now Extinct)

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com):

Nay

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

Southeastern Australia Lower Murray. Around latitude S 34 16' and longitude E 140 20'

1.4 Brief history:

Had contact with exploring Europeans during 1700s and then had contact with missionaries for a period of time before most of their land was taken away to be farmed. The aborigines were killed by disease mostly.

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

European colonization wiped out the society. Missionaries shaped the culture before it disappeared and the missions/stations helped to suppress the culture by schooling the children and restricting what they were taught and learned, which caused much of the oral traditions to be lost. Diseases from Europeans were very destructive to the Aborigines and caused a massive number of deaths.

1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

Near the Murray River with fertile soil and an abundance of easily obtained food. The Yaralde lived on the shores and surrounding area of lake Alexandrina and lake Albet. Low rainfall in the region but the river provided all the water that was needed. Flat country mostly with swamps and brushy grasslands (2 pg xxiv and 1,13)

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density

The most densely populated region prior to European colonization as a result of the amount of available food and resources(2-pg xxiv). Population up to 6000. Home range is a little vague. Generally small home range sizes because of the number of people living in the area.

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

roots and seeds, vegetables

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

Fish, mussels, birds (depends on the season)

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

Spears, spear throwers, Shields, fighting clubs, boomerangs (2 pg-75)

2.4 Food storage:

Yes: Seed drying and smoking of fish (2-pg xxiv)

2.5 Sexual division of production:

Women would collect food and make nets and baskets and do other domestic tasks. Men would hunt and fish. (2 pg 34)

2.6 Land tenure:

land was controlled by the clan living on it. The clan would be a smaller section of the larger "tribe". Other clans would have to ask permission to use the land or would need to have certain obligations to cross the land

of another clan. Clans or other “tribes” crossing the land of other clans was very common and fishing or hunting was often allowed. (2 pg 27-29)

2.7 Ceramics:

No

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

Sharing is very important and clans will share food with each other or a harvest of something on their land, but they expect to be shared with in return. For example if one clan is building a large fish net they will go out and catch many fish and then signal a neighboring clan to come and receive some of the fish they caught. (2 pg 28)

2.9 Food taboos:

Many food taboos for pregnant women. They were not supposed to eat fatty foods and women who were breastfeeding were not to eat certain roots and plants or it would taint the milk and make their baby sick. (2 pg-140,141) food taboos for boys going through initiation. During male initiation there are food taboos about what they can eat. They are not to eat food that was touched by any woman.

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

Canoes made from the bark of certain trees.

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

couldn't find

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

couldn't find

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

11 to 12 (2 pg 153)

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

Did not find exact number, but because contraception is used heavily it seems that the first birth would be somewhat later than other aboriginal tribes.

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

Didn't find any numbers

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

1.5-2 years (2 pg 39)

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

Right before or at puberty for girls. (2 pg 39)

Men did not usually get married until 2 years after they were initiated as men so they were older than the women at their first marriage.

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

High, most women would have been married at least 2-4 times by the time they died but never to two men at the same time. (2 pg 34)

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

Around 45% of males are said to have been married polygynously and the other men would also have been married but just monogamously. (2 pg 35-36)

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:

Not mentioned. The husbands family does provide a presentation of food at the wedding ceremony which could maybe seen as a form of bride purchase but not the typical dowry.

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

Didn't really find anything. There were very few things to inherit and when a person died, their possessions were often burned.

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

Parents teach their children how to do the important work that they will have to do when they get older. Fathers teach their sons how to hunt, fish, use a canoe, swim etc and mothers teach their daughters how to make baskets and gather vegetables and other food. Grandparents are also important in teaching children their talks and are important in teaching the children about the past and religious things. (2 pg-75)

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

Did not find data

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

Exogamy is practiced. People must marry outside of their clan and many of their parents' and grandparent's clans as well as clans bordering their territory or clans that they trade with. (2 pg 31, 42)

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?

Paternity is not partible. Contraception was used by the women in order not to become pregnant by men who were not their husbands. (2 pg-39)

4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows")

Basically as the receptacle for the fetus to grow (2 pg-132,133)

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?

Yes

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape

If a woman was running around in a village chasing men she would be grabbed by a bunch of men and they would gang rape her throughout the night as punishment for chasing after men too obviously (2 pg-189).

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)

From far away and the least related the better.

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

Yes, they have a large choice in who they decide to marry and can sleep with anyone they want as long as they do not get caught and the relationship is not taboo.

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

Men would have women who they visited regularly for sex and would give the woman a gift such as a fishing net or rug.(2 pg-189)

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

The father

- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females
Didn't find
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades
Didn't come across it
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)
No. It seems that they tend to know who the exact father is because they widely use contraception in order to only have children with their husbands.
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?
Respect of elders is very important even at a young age.
- 4.24 Joking relationships?
No
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations
Through the father. Patrilineal (2 pg-146)
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules
Yes, very complicated and confusing to understand. People do not marry someone in their clan. It is preferred to marry someone from farther away and cannot be related to your parents. Doesn't look like cousins are supposed to marry each other. (2 pg 32) Can't marry someone from your clan, your mother's mother's clan, your mother's father's clan, or your father's mother's clan. These are the basic clans you can't marry with but there are more clans you can't marry with if they share land boundaries or if you have certain trade relations with the other clan. (2 pg 31)
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?
Yes, it is public and involves the wife is brought to her husbands camp by her male relatives and she carries fire sticks. They she sits with the groom while they watched a dance and singing. The husbands' parents and siblings would provide food. (2 pg-36)
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?
From the father. Different names are given to a person during different parts of their life and in some periods such as male initiation, the boys do not have recognized names. Males are given a secret name as well which they can't share with anyone else.
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)
Always outside of the community is preferred
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?
Marriages are originally arranged by the parents and or close kin, but it is ultimately the woman's choice if she will marry the man or not. (2 pg 36)
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:
Women want to marry men who are considered to be good hunters or fishermen because they will gain a higher status if their husband has a higher status. If a husband is a especially good sorcerer then that will also elevate a wives status. (2 pg-33)

Warfare/homicide

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:
Didn't find a number, but many of the men live to an old age and then die naturally. Most of the neighbors

were peaceful and the percent of deaths caused by warfare would probably not be extremely high.

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

Out group violence causes much more death. Raiding and warfare cause many more deaths than in-group fighting

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:

In-group: Incest relationships, murder

Out-group: raiding, stealing women, sorcery, etc

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):

There were many neighboring societies that the Ngarrindjeri could trade with and have ceremonies. Some of these other societies had different languages but they could still understand each other

4.18 Cannibalism?

No, but the Ngarrindjeri did accuse some of their neighboring enemies of being cannibals. (2 pg-20)

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

40-50. The clans were not nomadic and would spend most of the year in permanent villages. The group could not become too large or they would run out of firewood and other resources.

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

Moved farther inland during the cold winters to the scrubland where there was more vegetables, fruits and animals to eat. They would usually stay in one camp for the whole winter and then move back towards the coastal river area once the weather warmed up. (2 pg-15)

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):

A single headman in charge of each clan, but within each clan the headman would appoint people to a council which he could call a meeting with to discuss conflict within the clan or about fishing expeditions or marriages, deaths etc... For inter clan governing there was a large meeting called yanarumi where there was a paramount headman who was above the individual clan headmen. They would all meet to discuss such things as war and was government like. (2 pg-58) The paramount headman inherited his position from his father and held it until his death. He was the highest "chief" over the whole tribe. (2 pg-60)

5.4 Post marital residence:

Men move out of their parents' house or a house that they lived in with their brother and they get their own hut and fire. The wife moves from her village/camp to her husbands' village and lives in his hut.

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

Most boundaries are just features of the land although some of the different clans or tribes will have poles or piles of rocks that will mark boundaries of land. There are no defenses at these boundaries and really no active defense at all. Hunting parties travel around their land and will sometimes run across enemies, so they could be considered a form of patrol of sorts.

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

Males would be separated from the girls when they went through their initiation. Overall it seemed that there were not many divisions in their social interactions. All sexes and ages were usually involved in the ceremonies and rituals.

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

There is a special friendship between the man who initiates a youth into manhood and the boy who he initiated. (2 pg-174-175)

Special friendships between men who were initiated together. They would share with and help each other

always if it was about food or in battle. They would even share wives. (2 pg-182-183)

5.8 Village and house organization:

Houses made from a wooden frame covered in mud and turf. Houses had their doors facing away from the winds.

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

different camps are set up for the girls and boys initiation ceremonies, but there are no special structures that remain in a village.

A structure was erected in the center of the town for the dead to be layed on and smoked but it was not a permanent structure. (2 pg-271)

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

On beds inside of their huts. It would become cold in the winter and they would cover themselves in skins and cloaks and they slept on top of beds made of reeds, skins, seaweed or rugs. (2 pg-149)

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:

Clans are the major form of organization

5.12 Trade:

Extensive trade with well established trade routes. Traded items such as rugs, fish/animal oils, cloaks, red ochre and the tobacco pitjuri. Usually the trading was with groups who lived up river.

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

Men who are known for being very good at a particular skill such as fishing/hunting/sorcery had a higher status and the women who married them would also have a higher status. There was a head man who would be in charge of each clan

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

A lot. There are many different ceremonies and rituals and tons of sorcery/black magic being used all the time

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

Yes, shamans/medicine men or women were specialists who made most of their living by doing that one job. (2 pg-75)

6.2 Stimulants:

Pitjuri (a type of native tobacco)

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

The bodies of the dead were sometimes smoke dried and placed in placed in caves or limestone shelters (2 pg-16)

6.4 Other rituals: Initiations

A crying baby would be held over a smoking fire and once it breathed the smoke it would supposedly not cry as much afterwards.(2 pg-144)

When girl have their first period they have a ritual where they become women. They go to a separate women's camp and they have pieces of grass stuck to them, which are then lit on fire and will leave non-permanent blister scars. After they are burned they have their backs cut with six rows of horizontal lines that were then filled with red ochre. These would turn into thick permanent scars. (2 pg-155)

Males have a type of circumcision ceremony when they are around puberty age, and then after that but unrelated comes the initiation into manhood.

Male initiation begins when the boys are captured during a ceremony with lots of dancing and singing. Male relatives sneak up on the boys and catch them to carry them away to the male initiation camp. There they strip them of clothing and then pluck out their pubic hair and moustaches. After the hair plucking, the boys are covered in red ochre or blood in the old days and are not allowed to sleep or eat for three days. After this special hammocks and frames are made for the boys to sleep on for so that they would not touch the ground. The boys were separated from the women and everyday the elder men would covert the boys in the ochre paint and oil again. The initiation was supposed to last until the youths beard had been plucked three times after it had grown to 2 inches in length sometimes up to two years. The final ceremony of the initiation was to pluck the beard one last time and then wash the young men of all their ochre and then burn everything that was used by the boys during the initiation including their weapons (2 pg- 170-185)

6.5 Myths (Creation):

Ngurunderi was a mythic being, who came from north on the Murray river. He was following his wives who left him and he followed the Murray cod south. The cod was afraid and its swimming caused the turns in the river and the swamps next to it. On his journey looking for his wife, he created all the fish in the river and lakes and he turned some of the people he found into the birds. He eventually made his way to the ocean and there he created a bunch of islands by throwing his spear into the water. He also made some other important landmarks along the way as well as the milkyway.

This is the closest thing I found for a creation myth but there may be a different one that tells how the earth was made? (2 pg-223-227)

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

Art made by using red ochre, singing and dance.

Games: wrestling in order to win a club, playing keep away with a ball, throwing clubs at a rolling hoop in simulation of hunting. (2 pg-167-168) these games were used in order to distract boys from worrying about their initiations into manhood.

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

Men initiate males into manhood, and women initiate girls into womanhood.

6.8 Missionary effect:

Made people wear clothing, discouraged the initiation ceremonies, and the practice of sharing wives and other promiscuity. Suppressed the original religion and associated practices.

6.9 RCR revival:

No

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

When someone died, their spirit left them and went to the west where it would join up with other spirits of the dead. When death came the life force dissipated and went to the land of the dead where it merged back into the original supply of life source. The land of the dead was believed to be in the sky.

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

There was a taboo against naming dead people right after they died, but there was not a specified amount of time for the to taboo to last. It seems that it eventually wears off by the time the body is done being smoked at around 8 to 9 weeks. (2 pg-274)

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

No

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)

A worship of different mythic "gods". Ngurunderi seems to be the head spirit/god. There are many other

mythic spirits who help keep order in the world. People can meditate and “dream” and have some sort of contact with the unseen world of the spirits. Their Religion was clearly explained, but much of it had been lost or forgotten by the time people were able to study them.

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

yes. During ceremonies such as the male initiation they would lay a base color down on their skin from red ochre or charcoal and then make white dots over it and white lines on their foreheads. (2 pg-172)

7.2 Piercings:

didn't find

7.3 Haircut:

during male initiation the boys hair was sometimes pulled out.

During mourning, widows will cut off their hair and so will widowers. (2 pg-273)

7.4 Scarification:

Yes, usually during special rituals such as becoming a woman.(2 pg-154)

Did not find any reference to scarification on men.

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

Not really, just the paint and adornment specifically for certain ceremonies and rituals

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

Different cloaks or clothes. Women would sometimes wear a loin-cloth in order to show that they were fertile. They would wear the cloth after their first period and initiation into womanhood.

During male initiation into manhood the boys would be painted up with red ochre and other paints.

During mourning, women would cover themselves with charcoal.

Some dances the dancers would tie branches to their ankles to perform magic.

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

Not in every day adornment but ceremonial adornment was sometimes different depending on the ritual.

7.8 Missionary effect:

Ended some of the scarification practices and some forms of tribal punishment as well as some of the very loose rules about sex and multiple wives. People started to wear clothing instead of wearing nothing.

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

No

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

Not described but probably present

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

No

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

Not described well. Very complicated rules about who can marry who and how people are considered to be related to each other. A person does not need to be related by blood to someone for them to be considered a father or son for example. Men who are initiated together will share wives and both sets of their children will call both of them father. Kinship was not clear.

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

The smoking of dead people's bodies and the using of their fat to make sorcery is very strange

Numbered references

1. Bell, Diane. *Ngarrindjeri Wurruwarrin*. Melbourne, Vic: Spinfex Press, 1998.
2. Berndt, and Stanton. *A World That Was*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 1993.