Specimens and Stone Tools: Aboriginalism and Depictions of Indigenous Australians in Archaeological Textbooks

Submitted by
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Cover Illustration:

Walbiri man from Yuendumu using a tula adze mounted on a wooden handle. Photograph appears in all three volumes of Mulvaney’s Prehistory of Australia (1969:plate 25; 1975:79; 1999:247)
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Statement of Authorship

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis presented by me for another degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

Belinda G. Liebelt

March 21st 2004
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Abstract

This thesis explores the ways in which academic archaeological research has contributed to knowledge about past Aboriginal life ways. In particular, it examines the specific construction of Indigenous Australian history in three archaeological volumes written by one of Australia’s most well known ‘prehistorians’: John Mulvaney. These three texts are Mulvaney’s *Prehistory of Australia* published in 1969, 1975 and 1999, the last co-authored with Johan Kamminga.

The study is an attempt to consider specific ways in which an acknowledged academic archaeologist has taken an active and dynamic role in shaping Australian perceptions, politics, legislation and social opinions about Indigenous Australians’ past, through the production of knowledge. It uses key concepts of knowledge/power formulated by Michel Foucault, and Edward Said’s notion of Orientalism, to extract and analyse meaningful information from the text and the images.

This study maintains that mainstream contemporary ‘prehistoric’ archaeology has largely remained unchallenged as a colonial Aboriginalist discourse on the Indigenous Australian past. Post-processual and post-colonial archaeological practices have become extremely popular in Australian archaeology, but have done little to dislodge the conventional notions of Aboriginality as expressed in textual discourse. This thesis explores the particular ways in which textual discourse continues to perpetuate colonial attitudes and depictions within our archaeological discipline.
Chapter One  
Introduction

This thesis explores the ways in which academic archaeological research has contributed to knowledge about past Aboriginal life ways. In particular, it examines the construction of Indigenous Australian history through archaeological textbooks. While the topic of the depiction of Aboriginal history has been in contention for at least fifteen years (Attwood 1989a; 1996a; Attwood & Arnold 1992; Becket 1988; Byrne 1996; Griffiths 1996; Harrison 2000; Murray 1992; 2000; Russell 2001), I consider this construction in more specific terms using three archaeological volumes written by one of Australia’s most well known ‘prehistorians’: John Mulvaney. The three texts I will focus on are Mulvaney’s Prehistory of Australia published in 1969, 1975 and 1999, the last is co-authored with J. Kamminga.

This study is an attempt to consider some of the specific ways in which an acknowledged academic archaeologist has taken a dynamic role in shaping Australian perceptions, politics, legislation and social opinions about Indigenous Australians’ past, through the production of knowledge. In particular this study also considers the contemporary depiction of the ‘Other’ in one of its most institutionalized, systemized forms: the scientific discipline of Australian ‘pre-contact’ archaeology. While it is clear that there are many different archaeologies in Australia today (for example Harrison & Williamson 2002), I explicitly examine depictions of ‘prehistory’ from Mulvaney and, latterly,
Kamminga’s viewpoints. Just how does the interpretation, presentation and packaging of an Indigenous past in a Western archaeological textual form, construct and effect the present?

1.1 Thesis questions

I have devised three open-ended questions to extract key information from the chosen archaeological textbooks, as well as to take into account the social and political climates that have helped contribute to those representations and presentations of Aboriginal peoples and their pasts. These questions are as follows:

1. How are Indigenous Australians, and their pasts, depicted in the archaeological textbooks under study?
2. What are the politics of the creation of ‘prehistory’ and the depiction of Indigenous Australians and their pasts in those texts?
3. What could be the repercussions of these modes of representation for Indigenous Australians, and Australian society in general?

The first question is my main research objective. To answer this question, I will look at encoded information within the three volumes to try and elicit significant meanings about the depiction of Indigenous Australians, through the text and the images. While I could have chosen many different archaeology books, I chose Mulvaney’s for several reasons. Mulvaney has been considered as one of Australia’s foremost public intellectuals for quite some time, and his work within
the discipline of Australian archaeology spans over four decades (Bonyhady & Griffiths 1996). His three editions of Prehistory of Australia, and his interesting and significant attitudes towards the discipline of archaeology, outstandingly illustrate the development of academic professionalism towards the study of Australia’s deep human past.

The second and third questions reflect on the political and social issues involved in creating an Indigenous past within archaeology and, more generally, Western society. Both the second and third questions require consideration of the interplay between the past and present in archaeological representations of an ‘Indigenous past’. The conceptual method I adopt derives from readings of the works of Michel Foucault (1969; 1973; 1974; 1976; 1979) and Edward Said (1978). While my theoretical chapter (Chapter 3) will consider some of the theories and ideas these academics employ in more detail, my analyses (Chapter 5) apply their theoretical insights to my own investigations of Mulvaney’s texts. In order to include the images, I have considered Jane Lydon’s (2000; 2002a; 2002b) work at Coranderrk Aboriginal Station and concepts of ‘authenticity’ from Lynette Russel’s Savage Imaginings (2001). Lydon looks at historical photography taken in the 1860s, originally designed to document the ‘civilising’ process of Indigenous Australians. Lydon’s work considers depiction from an archaeological and post-colonial viewpoint. I address similar issues of visual representation, including photographs, drawings and other images within the pages of Mulvaney’s volumes. Russell’s research into depiction and representation of the ‘Other’ through visual formats, such as
popular media and through the museum, is also useful in examining the images from Mulvaney.

1.2 Relevance to archaeology

My study in no way stands alone as a first attempt at the deconstruction of Australian archaeological practice. In the 1980s archaeological approaches moved from processual, to post-processual, as they were influenced by a wave of contemporary theory including post-structuralism, feminism and post-colonial studies. This move drastically changed Australian archaeological research objectives to become more inclusive towards Indigenous Australians, to be more respectful of their requests and cultural needs, and to reflect on the nature of conventional archaeological practice. At the same time, Aboriginal rights movements have meant that Indigenous people have became more influential in asserting their rights and opinions within the discipline of archaeology.

A well-established body of post-processual theory and practice exists within archaeology that reflects on the subjective nature of archaeological practice (Gero & Conkey 1991; Hodder 1982; 1989; Shanks & Tilley 1987; Tilley 1990; 1993; Spector 1993). Researchers have argued that knowledge derived from scientific experience cannot be considered or understood as a privileged source of information about the past, as it is experienced within an individual’s subjective cultural coding and is historically situated (Hodder 1992; Tilley 1990). Such arguments maintain that the primary duty of archaeology is to deconstruct and neutralise traditional archaeologists’ claims that a purely scientific, objective
understanding of the past can be reached (Shanks and Tilley 1987:195; Tilley 1989:338). Therefore, in this context, it is important to consider the ways in which archaeology has constructed itself and its subject matter in order to help unpack the authoritative role that archaeology takes in providing decisive and influential ‘truths’ about the Indigenous past. As Denis Byrne has appropriately mentioned in his research into archaeology’s acquisition of an Indigenous past:

Archaeology in Australia can only be post-colonial to the extent that its practitioners deconstruct its colonial underpinnings. Archaeology in Australia must decolonise itself before it can claim to be post-colonial (Byrne 1996:82).

Critical archaeologies assert that the relationship between the present and interpretations of the past is political and economic (Leone 1998:61). They emphasise that a past can be discovered or interpreted archaeologically, so that one can comment on the origins and impact of that tie, so that the ideological and class-centered nature of history is illuminated.

The act of writing always presupposes a politics of the present, and such writing is a form of power. It can not escape power. Any kind of writing about the past is inevitably simultaneously a domestication of the difference of the past, an imposition of order. Writing the past is not an innocent and disinterested reading of an autonomous past produced as image. Writing the past is drawing it into the present, re-inscribing it into the face of the present (Tilley 1989:193).

Archaeologists such as Tilley have maintained that writing about the past is a highly political endeavour that draws the past into the present, for the interest of the drawers. Therefore it is important to consider the many agendas that archaeologists have in considering an Indigenous past. The choices that Australian archaeologists make in what they examine, what they challenge, what
they exclude and include, and what they proclaim as ‘knowledge’ and ‘truth’, all have direct and powerful implications on contemporary society and each one of its interest groups, especially Indigenous Australians.

Australian archaeology of the 1990s can be considered, in part, to be a time of reflection and self-analysis (Burke, Lovell-Jones & Smith 1994). As Mulvaney and Kamminga’s most recent edition of *Prehistory of Australia* was published in 1999, it can be assumed that their book is a reflection of Australian archaeological contemporary practice. However, examinations of the text reveal that in many ways, the text is not reflexive; it fails to acknowledge many disclosures that are widely debated in archaeology today (See Chapter 5).

Several researchers have offered critiques of the discourse on Aboriginal identity within archaeology. Denis Byrne (1996) argues that Australian archaeology has played a leading role in Australia’s acquisition of an Indigenous past and the creation of the concept of ‘national heritage’. Bain Attwood (1989a; 1992; 1996a) has considered the political, social and historical circumstances prevalent in Australia that have created the identity of ‘the Aborigines’. Tim Murray (1992, 2000) has written on the discourse of Australian ‘prehistoric’ archaeology and has argued that it has undergone radical changes over the last thirty years and is still in the process of changing. These researchers all argue for Australian archaeology’s recognition of the ways that it constructs and defines its ‘Other’ and the political and social implications of these practices.
Most useful to my own study is a special edition of the *Journal of Australian Studies* in 1992 (eds. Attwood & Arnold). These papers discuss European Australians’ ways of knowing Aboriginal Australians, using concepts from the works of both Foucault and Said. The collection examined the power/knowledge relations working in Australia in Aboriginal studies (including archaeology and anthropology) since European invasion that has produced a discourse of Aboriginalism comparable, in part, to Said’s notion of Orientalism (1978). Such a discourse has been characterised by three things:

1. ‘Aboriginal Studies’ as the teaching, research and display of scholarly knowledge about Indigenous people by European scholars who claim that Indigenous people cannot represent themselves and therefore must be represented by experts who know most about Aboriginal people.

2. A style of thought based upon an epistemological and ontological distinction between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’. In this distinction Europeans imagine themselves as radically different from Aboriginal people and characterize them as the ‘Other’.

3. The construction of a corporate institution for exercising authority over Aboriginal people by making statements about them, authorising views of them, and ruling over them (Attwood 1992 adapted from Said 1978:2-3).

While Attwood and others argue for Aboriginalism as existing during the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries in the practices of anthropology and later archaeology, they also mention that subtle changes have occurred since the 1950s and 60s, which have effectively challenged this
Aboriginalist discourse. The authors argue that today Aboriginal people are represented and viewed by researchers as socially constructed subjects with identities that are relational and dynamic rather than oppositional (in the binary sense) and given (Attwood 1992:xv). This collection of papers laid down a challenge that involved historicising the processes that have constructed Aboriginal people, therefore revealing how colonial power/knowledge relations have operated to construct Aboriginalism and Aboriginalist discourse (Attwood 1992:xv). The journal maintained that by choosing to step away from colonial methods of establishing an identity for Aboriginal people, Aboriginalism can be abandoned and cultural interchange created; neither patronising nor exploitative, between Aboriginal and European Australians.

It is my contention that mainstream contemporary ‘prehistoric’ archaeology has done little in the endeavour to overcome the creation of Aboriginalism, and that it largely remains as a discourse that embodies elements of colonial attitudes in its writings. I will demonstrate this assertion by examining Mulvaney’s three texts. I acknowledge that most archaeologists today practice an ethical, well-meaning and well-informed archaeology. I am arguing that the over-arching aims of Australian archaeological discourse have remained unchanged. By focusing on a contemporary ‘artefact’, I consider the ways that Mulvaney and Kamminga’s 1999 text emerges from a political and social context that largely opposes Aboriginalism and Aboriginalist discourse (Attwood & Arnold 1992).
1.3 Choosing Mulvaney

People may assert that the analysis of a text does not reflect anything of value that can be commented on; it is simply one book, written by one person, at one period in time. However, we may say the same of an archaeological site; it can only tell us limited information and does not reflect a collective set of data. This does not mean that we do not investigate the site as an integral and interesting source of information in itself. In addition to this, it is possible to recognise Mulvaney as an individual within archaeology who has had a great influence on the discipline. Through his understanding of power and the individual, Foucault has recognised the significant roles that individual’s play within the generation of knowledge and the exercise of power:

Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application (Foucault 1976:98).

If we consider Mulvaney as a vehicle for the exercise of power, it is therefore relevant to adopt a Foucauldian perspective to consider the key role of Mulvaney in the production of a discourse of the Aboriginal past. Mulvaney has been integral to the development of Australian archaeology in the field, within the university and within cultural heritage management (see Chapter 2).

I am not critical of Mulvaney’s personal opinions, but rather wish to offer constructive critiques of his contribution to the discipline. I believe Mulvaney to have made an outstanding contribution to archaeology. His campaigning against
many outdated and racist ideas about Indigenous Australians over many years must be commended, irrespective of differing approaches to archaeological study today. He has also been instrumental in achieving protection for Indigenous heritage sites of significance, and for helping to create worldwide acknowledgment and respect for Indigenous cultures. Any academic can only ever hope to achieve a certain amount within their working life and Mulvaney has gone above and beyond in so many achievements. In all his endeavors, his ultimate goals were reconciliation and mutual understanding between all Australians. Any criticisms I make are respectful and reflect contemporary critiques of the contemporary development of Australian archaeology, of which Mulvaney’s texts and ideas are emblematic.

1.4 Terminology

I have tried to translate complex terminology into everyday language and to avoid excessive jargon. However, as much of my thesis is theoretical and is concerned with representation, this has not always been possible. In reference to ‘prehistorian’, I have chosen to write the word using quotations (as in ‘prehistoric’ or ‘prehistorian’). Like others (David and Denham in press), I do not accept the term ‘prehistory’ as an appropriate title for the investigation of Indigenous history before European invasion. Throughout my thesis I have referred to the past before and after invasion as either the Indigenous Australian past, Indigenous Australian history, or simply the Aboriginal past and Aboriginal history. Thereby, I make little distinction between ‘post’ and ‘pre’ European invasion. This is deliberate as I believe there is no line
to draw for Aboriginal history. If specifically needed, I make the distinction using the terms ‘pre European invasion/contact’ and ‘post European invasion/contact’.

In my work, I have found that while a number of Indigenous people have asked to be called ‘Aboriginal’ or ‘Aboriginal people’, just as many prefer the term ‘Indigenous Australian’ or 'Indigenous Australian peoples’. Both titles hold their own assumptions in greater society and I make no attempt at reconciling them, instead opting to use both titles interchangeably. In any case, most Indigenous Australians with whom I have discussed this would prefer that cultural/language group names, or affiliated nation titles are employed, i.e. those that designate the particular country or region that a person is from, rather than homogeneous titles that are used too frequently today. Unfortunately though, the textbooks I examine have adopted a homogenous approach, which thereby constrains my choice of language for critique.
Chapter Two

Historical Background

This chapter is important in examining the historical, social and cultural contexts for successive editions of the *Prehistory of Australia*. It includes a brief revision of the historical concepts associated with European invasion that led to the subsequent scrutiny of Indigenous Australians as objects, and their study as examples of ‘primitive human specimens’. It considers the early development of archaeological practice, and the cultural context in which Mulvaney was trained and matured as a young archaeologist in Australia. The chapter ends by contemplating Mulvaney’s contributions to archaeology in more recent years.

2.1 Progress and Evolution

It can be argued that the two dominant concepts of Australian history in the nineteenth century were the ideas of progress and evolution (Griffiths 1996:10). However, it must be noted that these two ideas did not solely mature out of the 1800s, but rather developed over an extended period of time. On a general level, the concept of progress can be traced to ideas from the Enlightenment (Trigger 1989:55). Many scholars argue about the period in which the Enlightenment occurred, but there is a general consensus for around the end of the seventeenth, to the eighteenth centuries (Sim & Loon 2001:96; Trigger 1989:55; Thomas 2004:28). The Enlightenment greatly influenced European concepts of human nature and rationality, and proposed that reason could deduce scientific truths. Through the exercise of reason, Enlightenment
philosophers determined that European society had matured through various stages and had reached virtuous levels of ‘civilisation’ (Trigger 1989:57-8, Thomas 2004:28-9). Enlightenment philosophers created comparative studies of the living peoples they encountered overseas, whose cultures were judged to be at different levels of complexity, and arranged these cultures to form unilinear sequences from simple to complex (Trigger 1989:59). Indigenous Australians were invariably placed towards the bottom of such evolutionary ladders (Golson 1977). Many Europeans held ‘noble savage’ ideas about the nature of ‘primitive’ humans as being in the early stages of maturity, in the childhood of their humanity. The writings of Rousseau in the later half of the eighteenth century characterise the nature of this understanding:

The sweet voice of nature is no longer an infallible guide for us, nor is the independence we have received from her a desirable state. Peace and innocence escaped us forever, even before we tasted their delights. Beyond the range of thought and feeling of the brutish men of the earliest times, and no longer within the grasp of the ‘enlightened’ men of later periods, the happy life of the Golden Age could never really have existed for the human race. When men could have enjoyed it they were unaware of it and when they have understood it they had already lost it (Rousseau 1762 in Peters-Little 2003:16).

It is possible that the concept of the ‘noble savage’ gained popularity among Europeans at a time when they felt they had lost the ability to make use of nature’s gifts, and instead were trapped in a world of letters, magistrates, commerce and politics (Cranston 1991).

When Darwin’s The Origin of Species was published (1859), scientific potency could be added to the European assertion of Indigenous societies as inferior.
Attitudes that classified Indigenous societies as having a lack of cultural and technological progress, now asserted that Indigenous Australians were also in a less evolved biological state (Griffiths 1996:10). The culmination of the ideas of biological evolution and progress are well illustrated in Darwin’s *Descent of Man* (1871:521) when he wrote, ‘at some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate, replace the savage races throughout the world’. The implications of such research were felt far and wide in Australia as these ‘social Darwinist’ views took a popular hold. The extent of social Darwinist influence is demonstrated in 1878 by the opinion of a clergyman in a Melbourne newspaper:

> If (aborigines) [sic] are related to us by unity of descent, from some common animal progenitor, they at least are surely far less distinctly human than animal, they had not, in fact, had time to be evolved from their animal beginning to that level where humanity becomes distinct, and begins its independent progress; and no more powerful argument, apart from the facts of geology and paleontology, can be urged in favour of Mr. Darwin’s theory of the Descent of Man, than the existence, the physique, the habits, and the fate of the Australian Aborigines (Macallister 1878:160, in Mulvaney 1964:39).

As examples of the ‘lowest evolutionary savages’, by the mid 1800s, Indigenous Australians had become examples for biological anthropology, and were studied accordingly (Murray & White 1981:256). Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen’s *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (1899) placed Aboriginal ethnography on an internationally respected basis (Trigger 1989:141). Like many European researchers, Spencer described Aboriginal people as a ‘relic of the early childhood of mankind left stranded…in a low condition of savagery’ (Spencer 1901:12).
Research during these early times was often devoted to geologically establishing Aboriginal antiquity by clear association with extinct fauna, as could be demonstrated in Europe. Such attempts failed. Scientists concluded that buried stone artefacts were no more ‘primitive’ than those in recent use and that the harsh environment and violently changing surface deposits made ‘normal’ (read ‘European’) interpretations of deeply buried materials improbable. A final difficulty was that Australian artefacts did not fit European typologies, as Aborigines used ‘Palaeolithic’ and ‘Neolithic’ technologies simultaneously. (Murray & White 1981:256).

From the 1890s onwards, a number of amateurs and non-professional enthusiasts became interested in the most visible features of archaeological sites, most often stone tools, and went about collecting thousands of Aboriginal ‘relics’ for personal collections and also to donate to museums (Du Cros 2002:18). The collection and display of natural and cultural oddities had been seen as an esteemed social and educational activity within Western civilisation for several centuries (Russell 2001:7). Such collections have their origins in the age of European discovery and exploration of the private gentleman’s ‘cabinet of curiosities’ as a show case for the exotica of the New World. However, by the mid-nineteenth century these ‘cabinets’ gave way to the scientific museum whose role was to explain nature and culture through scientific classification and categorisation (Griffiths 1996:21).
In the early twentieth century, anthropologists became extremely interested in ‘race’ as a scientific research area. Edward C. Stirling, Dean of the Adelaide Medical School and Director of the South Australian Museum, nurtured an interest in physical anthropology after absorbing evolutionary theory from Cambridge. Stirling traveled with Baldwin Spencer and Francis Gillen on the Horn Expedition, and later encouraged a rising generation of medical doctors and scientists to study the physical anthropology of Aboriginal people. These associates included John Burton Cleland, Robert Pulleine, Frederic Wood Jones and Thomas Draper Campbell. These scientists committed themselves to an investigation of the racial origins of Aboriginal people, believing the race to be of a homogeneous stock. Later generations, including N. B. Tindale and F. J. Fenner, reworked such theories into a hybrid constitution, which was later developed and refined by J. Birdsell. (Anderson 2002:196).

2.2 Early archaeology and history in Australia

In archaeological terms, ‘modern’ archaeology is considered to have begun in 1930:

For the historian of Australian Aboriginal studies, 1930 represents a watershed…. Publications appeared in that year, which typified a new systematic attempt, in Australia, to apply stratigraphic, rather than conjectural principles, to the uncovering of Aboriginal prehistory. Hale and Tindale’s archaeological techniques at Devon Downs in 1929 were outstanding in their generation; the subsequent publication of their results achieved objectivity of description and illustration within the limits of contemporary practice. In the same year Oceania commenced publication; for the first time Australia maintained an academic journal devoted to the record of native peoples. …[1930 is] the year in which objective studies of Aboriginal past and present reached maturity within Australia (Mulvaney 1958:44).
However, it is clear that research within Australia had not reached this maturity in all regions. In 1928 R. W. Pulleine, speaking about the Tasmanian Indigenous population at a presidential address to an anthropological congress, stated that:

...there is a uniformity of culture only modified by the availability of different materials for manufacture...It is to be feared that excavation would be in vain, as everything points to the conclusion that they were an unchanging people, living in an unchanging environment (Pulleine 1928:305).

This summed up well the overall positioning of many public and academic views of, not just Tasmanian Aboriginal people, but also views of Indigenous Australians’ history in general. Aboriginal cultures, as well as the Australian landscape, were viewed as completely static. At this point, Indigenous peoples were deemed to have made no impact on the land in which they lived, created no structures, and modified nothing. While archaeology had ‘matured’, the general public held beliefs, that in many cases, still resonate today (Du Cros 2002:20-1).

During this time, if Aboriginal people did have a past in Australia, it was not considered to be ‘history’ in a European sense. Those compiling a history of Australia rarely bothered to include Indigenous Australians. A school primer published in the wake of Australia’s birth of a nation expresses the ‘logic’ of why this was so:

When people talk about ‘the history of Australia’ they mean the history of the white people who have lived in Australia. There is a good reason why we should not stretch the term to make it include the history of the dark-skinned wandering tribes who hurled boomerangs and ate snakes in their native land for long ages before the arrival of the first intruders from Europe... for they have nothing that can be called a history. They have dim legends, and queer fairy tales, and deep-rooted customs which have
come down from long, long ago; but they have no history, as we use the word (Murdoch 1917, in Attwood 1996b:102).

The excavations by Hale and Tindale at Devon Downs in 1929 and later by McCarthy who dug at Lapstone Creek and published in 1948 helped to question Aboriginal antiquity and speculated on cultural changes in the past. However, these investigations were not extremely successful in altering the opinions of Aboriginal people as ‘unchanging’ (Du Cros 2002:20-1).

2.3 Background to Mulvaney

Mulvaney was educated in the late 1940s at Melbourne University and then at Cambridge, studying under Grahame Clark and Glyn Daniel (Griffiths 1996:89). He returned to Melbourne University in 1949 to become a tutor and became a senior lecturer by 1959. By 1971 he had moved to the Australian National University to become a professor of ‘prehistory’, a position he held until his retirement in 1985 (Horton 1991:186). Mulvaney did his undergraduate degree in history, and only later developed his interest in Aboriginal ‘prehistory’ during his studies at Cambridge. Along with Mulvaney, between 1960 and 1964 more than a dozen staff and graduates were appointed at three universities (Sydney, New England and Australian National University). Nearly all of these graduates were trained at Cambridge, most were not Australians, and only one (Jack Golson) came with any Australian experience. In addition to John Mulvaney, there was Vincent Megaw, Isobel McBryde, Judy Birmingham, Richard Wright and Rhys Jones (Du Cros 2002:22).
In 1961, the formation of a well-financed semi-government body, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies\(^1\), began providing funds for research (Du Cros 2002:23). Following in Tindale and McCarthy’s footsteps, a young Mulvaney dug at a rock shelter at Fromms Landing on the Murray River in South Australia between 1956 and 1958. Mulvaney’s dig marked the first excavation in which radiocarbon dating was applied, pushed human antiquity in Australia back to at least 4 800 BP (Mulvaney 1960), and represented a watershed in archaeological ‘discoveries’. In 1961, the oldest date for human occupation in Australia was 9 000 yrs, by 1968 there were four sites older than 20 000 years, and by the early 1970s at least two sites older than 30 000 years were known (Murray & White 1981:256-7).

Mulvaney’s work in archaeology introduced standards of excellence to archaeological fieldwork. He was actively involved in the Australian Heritage Commission, the Museum of Australia, and he was instrumental in the establishment of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (Horton 1991:186). As Acting Principal of the Institute, in 1971 he organized a conference that considered the professional obligations of archaeologists and anthropologists to Aboriginal informants and communities. When the Institute was established in 1961 there were no Aboriginal members, and no Aboriginal representatives attended the 1971 conference (Bonyhady & Griffiths 1996:15).

\(^1\) Now known as the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Studies, or AIATSIS.
Mulvaney began meetings with Aboriginal people in 1974 at the Biennial Meeting of the Aboriginal Institute, and in 1975 Aboriginal rights was the first topic discussed at the first meeting of the new Australian Archaeological Association, organized by Mulvaney and Isabel McBryde (Bonyhady & Griffiths 1996:15-6). Mulvaney was alarmed at the lack of Aboriginal contribution to Australian archaeology and in archaeological and historical meetings and conferences. In an interview in 1989 he tells that it was not for want of trying:

> Back in 1979 … we had the biennial meeting of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies and there were Aboriginal people present and we put the case. My view was that here was a marvelous opportunity for Aborigines to write Australian History. It was a thing we ought to do. I don’t need to tell you that there wasn’t much interest in this sort of thing in earlier days … We were trying to portray, if you like, an ideal world before the Europeans arrived (Mulvaney 1988, in Attwood 1989b:6).

In later years, Mulvaney has moved from being at the forefront in the research and protection of Aboriginal heritage, to being in the spotlight as acting against Indigenous Australian's wishes. As Indigenous rights movements succeeded in obtaining ownership of their heritage, his views on repatriation have been intensely debated within the archaeological arena. In particular, the conflict over the return of the Kow Swamp burials placed him in direct opposition to many Indigenous Australians and other archaeologists (see for example Bowdler 1992; Langford 1983; Mulvaney 1991; Pardoe 1992). Despite these oppositions, Mulvaney has courageously upheld his views on these issues. Today Mulvaney is colloquially known among archaeologists and others as ‘the Father of Australian Archaeology’ and has been celebrated for his outstanding contributions towards the development of a professional and distinctive branch of learning in Australia.
Chapter Three

Theory

The term ‘theory’ can encompass an enormous range of ideas. Within archaeology, theory may be considered the reasons ‘why we do archaeology’ (Johnson 1999:2). In my own terms, theory provides us with a range of methods and perspectives to analyse the historical, political, social and cultural contexts in which we live. In archaeology, theory provides an influential basis to explain why and how we practice, and helps us to better question suppositions, identify inherent prejudices, and aid in challenging the boundaries of an ever-changing discipline. In short, theory is a very powerful tool.

This chapter will clarify the theoretical concepts used to analyse the data from Prehistory of Australia. As this data appears in two different forms – text and images – I will need to use diverse theoretical applications in order to investigate it. I will begin by examining some key ideas of Michel Foucault (1969; 1973; 1974; 1976; 1979) and Edward Said (1978). Both these social theorists were greatly involved in the counter-modernity movements of post-structuralism and post-colonialism and I have used their concepts to analyse the text of the three editions of Prehistory of Australia. While Foucault provides a basis from which to analyse the relationship between knowledge and power in Mulvaney’s texts, Said’s Orientalism provides a way of conceptualising the ‘Other’ that can be also applied to Aboriginal studies in Australia (Attwood & Arnold 1992). In order to analyse the images from Prehistory of Australia, I consider the methods of Jane
Lydon (2000; 2002a; 2002b) in her studies of Corankderrk Aboriginal Station, and concepts of ‘authenticity’ from Russell (1994; 2001).

**3.1 Theory for the text**

My thesis can be considered as a ‘deconstruction’ of an archaeological text. The term ‘deconstruction’ was coined by Jacques Derrida and is best understood as a textual strategy for exploring and excavating specific tensions and instabilities within a text, in order to destabilise hierarchical oppositions and self-evident ‘truths’ (Hedges 2004). However, my study does not follow deconstructivist patterns in identifying binary oppositions and exposing their instabilities from within the text, rather it considers the process of building of a Foucauldian discourse through the vehicle of a textbook, and therefore can only be labeled ‘deconstructivist’ in a superficial sense. It is more deeply concerned with constructions of knowledge and the exercise of power in order to perpetuate an Aboriginalist (Attwood & Arnold 1992) discourse in the manner of Edward Said’s Orientalism.

**3.1.1 Michel Foucault**

Foucault’s theories have been adopted and applied with great popularity throughout the arts, humanities and social sciences ever since their conception in the late 1960s. His broad-ranging research into the ways that power/knowledge relations operate in Western society have become important works in discharging influential and authoritative discourses on the human sciences.
Foucault is most concerned with tracing the ways that, since the classical era, our society has sought to understand human nature, through the scientific classification and systemisation of knowledge (Rabinow 1985:4-6). Foucault believes:

…that the real political task in a society such as ours is to criticise the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent; to criticise them in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight them (Foucault 1974:171).

In other words, Foucault’s discussions of the formation of discourses seek to historicise grand narratives and scientific practices that claim to uncover ‘truths’, in order to show their subjective, irrational, and changing natures.

Foucault’s earliest work focused on writing historical studies of repression. In Madness and Civilisation (1969), he discusses a history of insanity from the end of the sixteenth, to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the text he traces the specific ways that madness was defined and contained over time. Foucault describes the defining and classifying of the insane as ‘dividing practices’, and argues that these practices are characteristic of the different fashions and diverse procedures in which the subject is objectified by a process of division, either within himself or from others (Rabinow 1985:8-9). Foucault also describes these practices later in The Birth of the Clinic (1963) and Discipline and Punish (1975).

In The Order of Things (1970) and Archaeology of Knowledge (1972), Foucault takes a slightly different approach. In The Order of Things (1970) he analyses
the changing historical discourses of the human sciences, to show that diverse sets of discursive practices are ordered accordingly to underlying codes and rules which change radically over time, and are culturally specific (Tilley 1990:290). In *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) he attacks Western society’s dominant intellectual tradition in both the social sciences and philosophy. In both texts, he considers a particular way of writing intellectual history, and how these conceptual structures have become accepted and/or subsequently rejected (Tilley 1990:292). In these texts Foucault discusses what can be called ‘scientific classification’, and the latent grid of knowledge which organizes every ‘scientific’ discourse and defines what can or cannot be thought scientifically (Horrocks & Jevtec 2004:63). Effectively, what Foucault does by tracing this ‘scientific classification’ and ‘dividing practices’ practiced in history and experienced by those classed as ‘insane’ (or medical patients, or delinquents) is to record a ‘genealogy’ (Foucault 1976:82-84). Genealogy describes Foucault’s attempt to reveal discourse at the moment it appears in history as a masked system of repression (Horrocks & Jevtic 1997:97).

Foucault notes that Western culture is distinctive in giving utmost importance to the problem of the subject in social, political, economic, legal, philosophical and scientific traditions (Rabinow 1985:7) and that his most general aim is to:

...discover the point at which these practices became coherent reflective techniques with definite goals, the point at which a particular discourse emerged from these techniques and came to be seen as true, the point at which they are linked with the obligation of searching for the truth and telling the truth (Foucault 1980 in Rabinow 1985:7).
For my own study, the 1969 edition of *Prehistory of Australia* can be seen as the exact point in time Foucault is looking for. In Australian archaeology, Mulvaney’s text emerged as a practice with a definite goal, within a particular discourse, intent on the telling and searching of the ‘truth’ about Indigenous Australians.

For Foucault there can be no distinction between knowledge and power, as they act within each other. Knowledge in Foucault’s terms can be divided to different types: scholarly, intellectual, scientific knowledge and local or popular knowledge. Collectively, he designates local or popular knowledge as ‘subjugated knowledges’. By subjugated knowledges Foucault means two things. He is referring firstly to the:

> Historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systematisation…. The blocks of historical knowledge, which were present, but disguised within the body of functionalist and systematising theory and which criticism…has been able to reveal (Foucault 1976:81).

Secondly he refers to:

> A whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity (Foucault 1976:82).

Here Foucault identifies and isolates the knowledges and experience of people such as the delinquent, or the psychiatric patient, or in my case, the Indigenous person, whose ‘low ranking’ knowledge has been deemed historically to be unqualified against scientific discourses, and has been shoved aside or suppressed within the formal system of knowledge in our society. It is the suppression of these types of knowledges through time that Foucault likes to
Foucault argues that it is through local knowledge’s reappearance that criticism, a challenge to traditional scientific histories, performs its work.

A useful question to ask at this point would be, ‘what is Foucault’s dislike of scientific knowledge’? In writing genealogies of the historical knowledge of struggle (or writing about subjugated knowledges) Foucault would say he is concerned:

…with the insurrection of knowledges that are opposed primarily not to the contents, methods or concepts of a science, but to the effects of the centralising powers which are linked to the institution and functioning of an organised scientific discourse within a society such as ours (Foucault 1976:84).

Foucault is making it clear that he is not opposed to science or scientific knowledge, but rather to the power science is given, how scientific knowledge is chosen and institutionalised over other knowledges, and how it creates truth and right. For example, Foucault asks, ‘Is Marxism a science?’ This is a question that has been debated for a very long time. For Foucault, the problem is not the answer but the asking of the question:

What types of knowledge do you want to disqualify in the very instant of your demand: ‘Is it a science’? Which speaking, discoursing subjects – which subjects of experience and knowledge – do you want to diminish when you say: ‘I who conduct this discourse am conducting a scientific discourse, and I am a scientist’? Which theoretical-political avant-garde do you want to enthrone in order to isolate it from all the discontinuous forms of knowledge that circulate about it? (Foucault 1976:85).

Foucault makes it clear that in the asking of the question we are already predetermining what types of knowledge to empower. Foucault says that in
contrast to the projects that try to inscribe knowledges in the hierarchical order of power associated with science, a genealogy should be seen as an attempt to release local or historical knowledges from that subjection and render them possible of opposition.

In relation to subjugated knowledges, Foucault discusses ‘normalising discourses’. Foucault believes discourses (or practices) to be ‘extraordinary inventive participants in the order of knowledge producing apparatuses’ (Foucault 1976:106-108). All disciplines carry a discourse that speaks of a rule - not a juridical rule but a natural rule, or a norm. By ‘norm’ it is understood as a fundamental truth. Natural rules or norms can be identified in academic scientific discourses today. An example would be the oft-quoted pseudo-biological understanding of difference in women and men; women are naturally nurturing, men are instinctively more aggressive. Discourses have the power to create truth or right within their private realms of practice, which subsequently becomes normalised within each discipline and flows through society (Foucault 1976:106). Normalising discourses are thus endowed with very powerful effects.

A component of this thesis is to unpack how successive editions of the Prehistory of Australia contributed to the development of a normalising discourse. To consider Mulvaney as a part of the constitution of a normalising discourse in archaeology, we begin to see how ‘truths’ are formed about Indigenous Australians today. In addition, we can further address the problems
of academic discourse to silence and over-rule the subjugated knowledges of Indigenous Australians.

### 3.1.2 Edward Said

In 1978, Edward Said identified the creation and persistence of a normalised discourse of Orientalism. Said explains Orientalism as:

> … a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘The Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘The Occident’ (Said 1978:2).

Said saw Orientalism as a Euro-centric perspective to consider and examine difference between the East and West. Said defines the ‘East’ as the Middle East and Asia, although he concentrates mostly on the Middle East (Said 1978). Said argues that the West – concentrating mainly on Britain and France - has developed a very strong imperialist tradition of ‘understanding’ the Orient, based on a Western experience of it (Said 1978:1). This distinction (East and West) is made both geographically and culturally, as the East has been seen as the contrasting image of the West, in its culture, personality, and ideas. Said points out that this is not only an ideological distinction, as it is ingrained within the West in institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, and even colonial bureaucracies and styles (Said 1978:1). Most importantly, Said identified that a normalised discourse of Orientalism could be tracked in texts:

> … texts can create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Foucault calls a discourse, whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it (Said 1978:94).
In Said's analysis, he examines material evidence, such as paintings and textbooks, to conclude that the West's creation of the Orient is a degrading representation. Said argues that the Orient is constructed by the West as feminine, weak, with a lack of history and culture, and in every way opposed to the ideals and values of the masculine, colonial West. For Said, the Orient has been invented since antiquity as a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, and remarkable experiences (Said 1978:1). The Oriental is irrational, depraved, childlike, “different”. In contrast, the European is rational, virtuous, mature, and “normal” (Said 1978:40). For Said, Orientalism (or the study of the East) becomes more of an indicator of the power the West holds over the Orient, than about the Orient itself. This power is enforced through scholarship: the West ‘understands' the Orient better than it could possibly know itself, and represents and dominates it for this reason. Said states:

… everyone who writes about the Orient must locate themselves in relation to the Orient; translated into their text, this location includes the kinds of images, themes, motifs that circulate in the text – all of which add up to deliberate ways of addressing the reader, containing the Orient, and finally, representing it or speaking in its behalf (Said:1978:20).

Here Said explains that anyone who writes about the East is effectively in a relationship with it, and consequently will have encoded information in the text about the way the ‘Other’ is represented and spoken for. Said reads between the lines, so to speak, to extract meaningful information about this depiction.

I adopt the method Said uses to examine narrative to determine depictions of the Orient to explicate Indigenous Australian representations. While Said’s work
has previously been used to identify Aboriginalism in Australia (Attwood & Arnold 1992), I use his work mainly for his methodological approach.

3.2 Theory for the Images

While Edward Said considers imagery to be evidence towards the depictions of the Orient, much of his data was text-based. In order to consider the images in Mulvaney, it is important to consider the ways in which they can be usefully analysed. Jane Lydon’s work provides an example within the discipline of archaeology to draw on.

Lydon’s work at Coranderrk Aboriginal Station (2000; 2002a; 2002b) examines historical photographs taken in the 1860s that were originally intended to document the process of ‘civilising’ Indigenous Australians. These include photographs taken by European contractors for newspapers, magazines, and the government, which were destined for circulation within the general European Australian public to show how well Indigenous Australians were becoming assimilated into European society (Lydon 2002:60-74).

Lydon derives a double cultural meaning from the images she studies. For Indigenous Australians, she believes the photographs contain information about important historical events, such as the physical movement of Aboriginal people off their ancestral land to live at Corankderrk, and can strengthen Indigenous claims to land. For ‘White’ Australian society, she argues these photographs
demonstrate how people in the past thought about race and difference. So, for example, the photos of people taken in traditional Aboriginal attire define themes of ‘savage’, or ‘authentic’ and photos of Indigenous Australians wearing European clothing and living in houses represents ‘changed’, or ‘civilized’ people (Lydon 2002:60-74). These photographss helped shape European Australia’s notion of Aboriginal peoples as the ‘Other’.

In her studies, Lydon effectively looks at the development of how we think about ‘us’ vs. ‘them’, and considers the boundaries we put around ourselves and others to determine difference (Lydon 2002:60-74). The analysis of photographs as receptacles for meaning is a comparatively new concept in Australia, and Lydon’s work demonstrates that significant information can be drawn from these sources. Lydon reads the albums of photographs from Coranderrk Aboriginal Station as ‘artefacts’ of the colonial project, excavating from this photographic record a history of ways of ‘seeing’ Aboriginal people (Williamson & Harrison 2002:7).

Within the broader field of Indigenous studies, Lynette Russell has explored European textual and visual representations of Aboriginal Australians to find that they have characteristically involved images and imaginings of primitivism, great antiquity and sameness (Russell 2001:24). In particular, she has examined iconographic images from the magazine *Walkabout*, a popular Australian travel and geographic magazine produced for nearly forty years from 1935. Russell’s research (1995) deliberately attempts to examine both images and their captions
to determine whether they supported or contradicted each other. Russell established that many of the images and their captions presented a common theme of Aboriginal people as being exotic, idealised and naturalised. She identified this representation as a function of the discourse between ‘White’ Australia and the ‘Other’; a discourse which has engaged in refining and developing pre-existing and popular notions of Aboriginal Australia (Russell 2001:36-7). Russell’s identifications of concepts of the ‘traditional’ or ‘authentic’ Aboriginal person are integral to my study in identifying a well-established convention of imaging and representing the ‘Other’ through imagery.
Chapter Four

Methods

Given the theoretical nature of my work, the methods chapter is not the same as those describing a practical study in which a hypothesis is stated, raw data is collected, examined and then analysed and deductions are drawn about some particular element of a cultural group, or collection of artefacts. However, I have still collected data, and analysed it to illuminate something meaningful about Australian archaeology. I have still considered the outcomes of my study, and I have followed a methodological process.

4.1 Choice of text

I had considered other archaeological texts for possible analysis before choosing Mulvaney’s (and Kamminga’s) three editions of *Prehistory of Australia*. These were also designed to give an authoritative, inclusive and scientific view of human culture. Fagan’s many editions of *People of the Earth* (1980; 1995; 2001) would have been an extremely interesting, albeit highly general, text to unpack. Josephine Flood’s *Archaeology of the Dreamtime* (1999; 2004) could have provided a similar study as Mulvaney’s, however, it is clear that Flood does not have the same legacy within the development of Australian archaeology as Mulvaney. White and O’Connell’s *A prehistory of Australia, New Guinea and Sahul* (1982) could have demonstrated a similar study to my own, but is not as contemporary as Mulvaney’s and Kamminga’s most recent text.
Against these other texts, Mulvaney’s three editions stand out for many reasons. They are extremely useful in looking at the development of an authoritative voice on ‘prehistory’. Before the publication of his first book, Mulvaney himself had designated Australia as ‘the dark continent of prehistory’ (Mulvaney 1961 in Mulvaney 1975:15). In 1969, when the first edition of Prehistory of Australia came out, very little was known about the Indigenous Australian past from a scientific, evolutionary Western point of view. Not only can Prehistory of Australia (1969) be read as some of the ‘first knowledge’ on the ‘discovery’ of Australian ‘prehistory’, it can also be seen to reflect current values in archaeology at the time, current theoretical formations, and illustrate the direction that Australian archaeology was heading. The 1975 edition did not vary greatly from Mulvaney’s first, but contains valuable information about the way that archaeology was changing during this exciting time of ‘discovery’. A comparative study of the two editions could prove to be interesting in terms of identifying what Mulvaney thought was worthwhile updating, in such a short space of time. If the 1969 edition of Prehistory of Australia was concerned with setting a definitive method for examining ‘prehistory’, then by the time of the 1975 edition the agenda was set.

Politically and socially, a great deal has happened in Australia since 1975, and hence Mulvaney released a third edition of Prehistory of Australia (1999), co-written with Johan Kamminga. This latest edition is bursting with a wealth of information for an audience looking to learn about Indigenous Australian ‘prehistory’; or an audience looking to learn exactly how we construct that
history, like myself. While Mulvaney’s first two editions can be examined as containers for data about the early years of Australian archaeological development, the 1999 edition reflects mature, contemporary archaeological practice.

4.2 Counterpoint texts

Initially, I had intended to explore at least three other archaeological texts as counterpoints to Mulvaney editions. These counterpoint texts would have served to highlight different theoretical viewpoints in the construction of an Indigenous Australian past. The counterpoint texts were:


However, there proved to be insufficient time and text space to incorporate them into this study.

4.3 Extracting the data

The process of deconstructing Mulvaney’s texts and reorganising the data in an assessable form ready for evaluation is not self-evident. It requires a complex process of reading and re-reading the text in order to dig down and unpack concealed layers of meaning that have been encoded into the words and images, via historical principles and standards. Edward Said’s approach to
identifying Orientalist discourse in the texts that he examines is based on his belief that anyone who writes about the Orient automatically locates themselves in a relationship to it. This relationship is translated into the text in deliberate ways of addressing the reader, containing the Orient and speaking on its behalf (Said 1978:20; see Chapter 3). In examining Mulvaney’s texts I have endeavoured in much the same way to identify the ways that Mulvaney has located himself in relation to Aboriginal people within his texts. In saying this, I must also acknowledge the relationship that I am in with Mulvaney (and Aboriginal people), and that we both exist within the realms of pre-understanding (David 2002) that culturally and historically have shaped our attitudes and outlooks.

The containment of Mulvaney’s texts into quantifiable, categorised databases is a multifaceted and extremely subjective task, much like that Mulvaney takes on himself in trying to contain Aboriginality. The result is necessarily an artificial representation that cannot truly capture the depth and complexity of whatever existed in the first place. It is this process I am critiquing, hence the paradoxical, hermeneutic nature of my work. Nonetheless, archaeological practice calls for the classification of our data, and so to undertake this task, databases were formed to record information from the three texts.

4.4 Databases

Three databases were created to record the 1969, 1975 and 1999 editions of Prehistory of Australia. Later this information was collated into one single
database, which can be found in Appendix A of this thesis. As the data takes the form of textual representation, themes and questions had to be devised to ask of the text, in order to help tease out any evidence on the depiction of Aboriginal history and people. Table 1 represents the broad-ranging themes and questions that I devised in order to extract the information from the texts. These themes and questions were formulated after reading the theoretical works of Foucault and Said (see Chapter 3), and reflect the nature of my thinking during the developmental processes of my thesis. These themes and questions do not reflect the final approach to the analysis of my results.

During discussions and final analysis of the textual data, these themes had to be collapsed. It was simply too complicated to examine all of these themes in detail, and a considerable task for the time and word-space of an honours thesis. Instead, the data was used - not to illustrate themes - but to best demonstrate the production of a Foucauldian discourse on the ‘Other’ as it has been identified in Australian archaeology (see Chapter 5).
Table 1. List of themes and questions to extract preliminary data from the text of Mulvaney’s three editions of Prehistory of Australia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEMES</th>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
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| Language | • What words are used to describe people/places/object?  
          | • What historical importance/baggage do these words hold?  
          | • How does Mulvaney create authority with language?  |
| Ownership| • Who owns the past for Mulvaney?  
             | • Ownership of control/objects/cultural knowledge?  |
| Gender   | • How is gender represented?  |
| Difference| • How is difference constructed/perceived between Indigenous and non-Indigenous?  
             | • What aspects of the past/cultures are excluded/included?  |
| Measuring| • How does Mulvaney ‘measure’ cultures/behaviors?  
               | • What are cultures ‘measured’ against?  
               | • How does ‘classification’ work?  |
| Distance | • How is distance created between:  
             | - Aboriginal people and their cultures?  
             | - The authors and Aboriginal people?  
             | - The reader from Aboriginal people and the authors?  |
| Time     | • How is time measured?  |
| Knowledge| • How are knowledges sorted/graded? (in a Foucauldian sense)  |
| Imagery  | • How does the chosen imagery of the book add to our ‘understanding’?  
             | • What about the choice of layout/colours/pictures?  |
| Environment| • What is the positioning of the environment in relation to ourselves?  |
| Truth    | • How is something proven as ‘true’ for Mulvaney?  
             | • What ‘truths’ are questionable?  
             | • How is the idea of ‘authentic’ constructed?  |
| Power    | • How is power generated by Mulvaney (authoritative voice)?  |
| Complexity| • How is complexity measured?  
               | • What does ‘complex’ mean?  |
| History  | • To what extent do our conceptions of the past play in Mulvaney’s analysis of ‘prehistory’?  
               | • How does history affect the present?  
               | - Mulvaney’s opinion  
               | - In my opinion  |
| Culture  | • How do we define culture/s?  |
| Evolution| • How does the conception of evolution shape Mulvaney’s ideas?  |
| Influence| • When is it clear Mulvaney is influenced by his own cultural bias?  
               | • When might this not be clear?  |
| Race     | • When does Mulvaney illustrate differences between race?  |
4.5 Imagery

A separate method was used to analyse the images, plates and illustrations from the three *Prehistory of Australia* editions. To begin with, I chose to collate the images from each edition as certain ‘types’ and calculate them on graphs and tables for comparison. This was done by separating images that portrayed different representations. For example, images that were drawn or painted and depicted Aboriginal people hunting and gathering would form a ‘type’. Similarly, photographs that presented Aboriginal people within the landscape making or using implements could form another ‘type’. This method became complex when I began to categorise ‘types’ of images that were drawn or photographed artefacts, maps, sketches, diagrams etc. The categorisations were then converted into data, which could be represented on line and bar graphs. However, the results of the graphs were complicated and failed to show any substantial differences or similarities in my ‘types’ of images, or any temporal changes over the three editions. Instead, a ‘case-by-case’ methodology was adopted. Using this approach, all the images that showed Aboriginal people in them were chosen from the 1969 and 1999 edition. These images were then included within the discussion of my thesis as part of Mulvaney’s visual representation of Aboriginality. To assess the images chosen, broad ‘types’ were identified within my discussion chapter. For example, images that placed Indigenous people within the landscape were grouped, compared to those that showed Aboriginal people wearing European style clothing, compared to images that may depict ‘noble savage’ themes (see Chapter 5 for discussion).
In this chapter, I examine the three editions of *Prehistory of Australia* as exemplary texts in the ongoing construction of a particular normalised discourse, namely, Australian archaeology. I will initially examine the 1969 volume to consider the ways that Mulvaney represents Aboriginal people through both text and images. Here I will show the ways that Mulvaney uses precise forms of scientific categorisation, while at the same time including contradictory idealistic and romantic notions of Aboriginality. I will show his formation of a discourse that simultaneously champions scientific knowledge of the ‘Other’, while reinforcing conventional colonialist concepts of Aboriginal people as only existing in the past as ‘traditional’ people that lived close to nature and practiced ‘hunter-gatherer’ techniques. I will also unmask meanings in the texts that subjugate and oppress Indigenous people’s knowledges\(^2\) of themselves and their pasts, as inadequate and unscientific.

The second edition of *Prehistory of Australia*, published in 1975, is in many ways a continuation of the first. Mulvaney makes few changes to the text or images, except for additional research carried out between 1969 and 1975. For this reason I have included only a modest discussion of this text. Mainly, I will

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\(^2\) In the pluralising of the word ‘knowledges’, I am referring firstly to Indigenous Australians’ diverse and differing experiences within their own cultures and social backgrounds within Australia and the Torres Strait. I am also referring to ‘knowledges’ in a Foucauldian sense (1976:82), in identifying different types of ‘knowing’ by different cultural and social groups within Australia.
discuss the ways that the 1975 edition can be perceived to have strengthened Mulvaney's discourse from his first text; the huge influx of scientific study in the 1970s effectively concreting a particular way of conceptualising the Aboriginal past in archaeology.

In the 1999 edition, I will demonstrate several examples in which Mulvaney and Kamminga once again coagulate their study as a discourse on the Indigenous Australian past, in the face of Indigenous Australians' and post-colonial archaeologists' challenge of traditional colonial discourses about the past. I will consider the ways that Mulvaney and Kamminga defend their scientifically-based arguments, by using power/knowledge relationships to assert similar representations of Aboriginal people as Mulvaney had done in his previous texts. At this point I will examine the ways that the ‘Other’ has arrived in the twenty-first century through Mulvaney's (and Kamminga's) text in an attempt to determine if recent scholarly research on Aboriginalism (Attwood and Arnold 1992), has had a great effect on Mulvaney’s discourse.

5.1 The First Edition

In 1961, Mulvaney had designated Australia as ‘the dark continent of prehistory’ and had offered the opinion that many years would elapse before an ‘archaeology of Australia’ could be written (1969:12). Therefore, by publishing Prehistory of Australia, he must have reached some fundamental conclusions about the Aboriginal past in order to provide a basic summary of current archaeological practice. While Mulvaney himself believed that his first book was
neither an exhaustive nor definitive text (1969:13-4), the book was to become very influential. Within the archaeological arena, Mulvaney’s 1969 edition of Prehistory of Australia stood as a seminal work serving to interest and educate a generation of Australian archaeologists throughout the 1970s (Horton 1991:186). As a primary synthesis, it included an overview of separate compartments that could be used to analyse the Aboriginal past. These can be easily distinguished by examining Mulvaney’s contents page:

- Protohistory
- Landscape and People
- Ethnohistory
- Prehistory
- Aboriginal Origins
- Field Archaeology

These chapters can be considered as fairly self-explanatory categories - in archaeological terms - in which to order and understand the Aboriginal past in the 1960s and 70s. However, the very fact that we can consider them as self-explanatory today is evidence that they have become ‘normalised’ within our discipline. The ‘Protohistory’ chapter is dedicated to examining the more recent past and the exterior influences on Aboriginal society from incoming cultures. Mulvaney’s ‘Landscape and People’ chapter links cultural adaptation to the environment. The ‘Prehistory’ chapter considers contemporary archaeological research into the distant past and establishes a basic knowledge of ‘prehistoric times’. Ethnographic (‘Ethnohistory’) and biological anthropological methods and research (‘Aboriginal Origins’) are examined in these chapters. Finally, a ‘Field

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3 The term ‘protohistory’ is used by Mulvaney to designate the ‘period between first alien contacts and the effective European occupation of a region’ (1969:14).
Archaeology’ chapter is dedicated to descriptions of surviving archaeological sites within the landscape. Pictures and diagrams appear at the end of the book in this edition, while artefact tracings appear throughout the text. There is a chronology of radiocarbon dates at the end of this volume as well. Mulvaney does not include Aboriginal history of the present, nor any changes to Aboriginal society that have happened in the post-European contact period.

In this edition, Mulvaney uses a mixture of culture history and processual approaches; however it would be incorrect to label Mulvaney a true processualist as he would always assert that Aboriginal man was more than ‘only what he ate and where he camped’ (Mulvaney 1975:126). Within this first text Mulvaney often uses typologies, diffusion and culture history approaches to define groups of people (1969:106-7), but also considers vegetation, climate, rainfall, water dispersal, geographic factors and glacial periods as crucial factors in cultural adaptation (1969:40-64). In doing so, Mulvaney reflects current and past research practices, as he includes traditional researchers’ work such as Tindale’s and McCarthy’s, while at the same time employing his own, more scientifically rigorous approaches.

While Mulvaney’s 1969 text was by no means the first of its kind to implement a discourse of the Aboriginal past, it can be considered a good starting point to consider such a discourse in ‘modern’ terms, as his involvement marked the

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*The use of the term ‘man’ is not a reflection of my own writing, but a historical convention employed by Mulvaney in his texts.*
beginnings of the specific way that we conduct archaeology today. In 1969 Mulvaney had crystallised a distinctive method for categorising and ‘understanding’ the Indigenous Australian past and by implication, Indigenous Australians themselves. We can consider Mulvaney’s first text as a starting point to a normalised discourse for two reasons.

Firstly, Mulvaney was one of the first ‘prehistorians’ to offer a synthesis of Aboriginal culture that tried hard not to embody the racist presumptions of Aboriginal people as ‘savage’ or ‘primitive’ exemplars (1969:177). Rather, Mulvaney often championed Indigenous Australians for their ability to survive in the face of adversity (1969:12) and has written repeatedly about the disagreeable procedures and representations created by anthropologists prior to more ‘contemporary’ practice (Mulvaney 1958; 1964; 1989; 1998; 1990). Mulvaney has also argued that the concept of the ‘unchanging savage’ inhibited the development of ‘prehistoric’ archaeology in Australia throughout this early period (1958). As the first archaeologist to apply the skills and knowledge of British archaeology to an Australian context, he also discarded the notions of Tindale and McCarthy, as being based on insufficient evidence. It seems his main aim was to establish a platform on which to found modern Australian archaeology (Moser 1995).

Secondly, as Mulvaney’s excavation results and interpretations were backed with new procedures of radiocarbon dating, he was the first in a line of researchers to bring a new scientific power and authority to the discipline
through absolute dating. This is likely to have given Mulvaney a confident scientific edge in which to confirm his research validity, further enhancing his ability to break free from the research biases of the past. Until this point researchers could only speculate on the antiquity and chronology of the Aboriginal past. To date, radiocarbon dating started by Mulvaney remains the scientific method to procure ‘truths’ about the past, and challenging these paradigms of ‘truth’ are extremely difficult.

For the above two reasons Mulvaney’s text can be seen as an early example in a strong tradition of authoritative writings on the nature of Aboriginal people and their pasts in the second half of the twentieth century. Using the validity and power of science, and dis-association from the practices of past researchers, Mulvaney’s construction of knowledge has created a powerfully normalised way of understanding that continues today. I would now like to deliberate on some of the more specific ways that Mulvaney has created an ‘objective’ Aboriginal identity in his first edition of Prehistory of Australia, as well as considering the ways in which he romanticises and paternalises the past.

5.1.1 Identity and Discourse in 1969.

In his 1969 volume, Mulvaney was largely preoccupied with refuting many of the pre-existing representations of Indigenous Australians. He was extremely vocal in maintaining the position that it was nonsense to consider that ‘Aboriginal Australians’ physiology, social system and material culture were unchanged relics of the primeval human stock … that their brains were childlike and their
society mirrored ‘primitive’ humanity before agricultural people ‘progressed’” (Mulvaney 1999:147). Mulvaney preferred to present Aboriginal people as dynamic, changing and innovative:

Aboriginal society, despite its latter-day critics, was never static. There was scope for the innovator as well as for the dreamer, and the Aborigines were not captives of an unchanging and hostile environment. That is the essence of Aboriginal prehistory, which endows it with the creativity of the human spirit (1969:177).

The discoverers, explorers and colonists of the three million square miles which are Australia, were its Aborigines ... The dispersal of the Aborigines throughout this vast land, their responses and adjustments to the challenges of its harsh environment, and their economical utilisation of its niggardly resources are stimulating testimony to the achievements of the human spirit in the face of adversity (1969:12).

As a campaigner for such a view during the 1960s, Mulvaney would have seemed quite radical. Considering that Indigenous Australians were only given the right to vote in the 1967 referendum and only recognised as having presiding rights over land since the Mabo ruling of 1992 (Mabo v Queensland, no. 2), Mulvaney’s opinions have to be taken in their historical context. As illustrated above, Mulvaney marveled at Aboriginal people’s ability to survive and achieve success against the harsh Australian elements, and much of the text is dedicated to understanding this achievement. Ultimately, it seems in Mulvaney’s eyes this success is testimony to the human spirit, a quality that Mulvaney mentions many times. Such a quality, for Mulvaney, is a universal characteristic that all human beings possess, and it is this quality that Mulvaney must see in himself as well as the people he studies. However, despite this common humanity that renders Mulvaney on the same level as the people he studies, he
simultaneously distances himself from them by taking an active role in
categorising them, defining them and speaking on their behalf.

In 1969, Aboriginal identity for Mulvaney rests in a scientific understanding,
based on an economic categorisation:

The exploitative techniques of the Aborigines were limited to
combinations of hunting, fishing, gathering or foraging activities. They
practiced neither agriculture nor simpler horticulture and never
domesticated any indigenous animals; even the dingoes which they
introduced but apparently never fully domesticated ate more of their
masters’ food than they retrieved for them. Aboriginal life was nomadic,
while the number, frequency and distance of the shifts depended upon
local conditions (1969:66-7).

Within his text, over and over again Mulvaney describes Aboriginal groups who
were nomadic to particular degrees, hunted and gathered through various
means for survival, did not domesticate animals, and did not employ agriculture.
For Mulvaney, Aboriginal people were largely parasitic (1969:75) on the
environment, they had adapted to their local conditions, and they moved
nomadically based on environmental changes and circumstances. Mulvaney
attributes the metaphysical elements of Aboriginal people's lives as being
consumed with 'mythological significance' and 'religious sanction'; they have no
political cohesion or tribal council between groups of people. Ownership to land
and social groups are determined by religion and hunting rights:

Ideally, a tribe is a social group which claims hunting rights and religious
sanction for its occupation of an area; its boundaries are loosely defined
usually by reference to natural features which have mythological
significance; its members assume that they are in some manner
distinctive, though actual or implied genealogical relationship, obedience
to common behavioral rules and the use of a common language or
dialect. But it is not a ‘nation’ or ‘confederation', for there is no political
cohesion between its constituent groups and there is no paramount or tribal chief or tribal council (1969:53).

These descriptions can be considered as rudimentary ‘hunter gatherer’ categorisations derived from a more general understanding of ‘prehistoric hunter gatherer’ societies (for example see Lee & DeVore 1968). His discussions of ‘hunter gatherer’ life ways are thorough, and include an analysis on the nature of the technology employed to assist this type of economic practice, including wooden implements, stone tools, bone tools and fishing implements, with particular emphasis on stone tools (1969:68-94). For Mulvaney, Aboriginal technology is the embodiment of simplicity, portability, and adaptability (1969:78). Artefacts are assigned with meaning according to their utilitarian function; there is little inference to suggest that they may also retain metaphysical or spiritual meanings.

Complementary to these particular ‘objective’ discussions, are particular images. Three images illustrate the manufacture and use of wooden implements (1969: plates 24-5). The first illustration depicts suspended wooden artefacts as examples of Aboriginal culture. These artefacts have been x-rayed revealing the explicit ways that the stone blades have been hafted to the handles. The other two images provide these artefacts with a ‘context’. More specifically, this ‘context’ includes a picture of two Walbiri Aboriginal men near Yuendumu with their weapons. A kangaroo is slung over the second man’s shoulder, and they stand within an arid landscape. The second image is of a Walbiri man making a wooden and stone implement.
These images can be considered close matching replicas to an archetypical vision of Aboriginal people. This representation includes variations of the image of the naked black hunter from Central Australia, often perched on one leg, bearded, holding a spear or boomerang and looking into the distance within the landscape (Russell 2001:1-3). However the inclusion of one or two ‘stereotypical’ images such as these could be argued as dispassionate examples of one form of Aboriginality, among many. In considering all the Aboriginal images found in Mulvaney, extremely compartmentalised classifications begin to emerge.
Mulvaney uses this image to demonstrate traditional ‘noble savage’ stereotypes. (1969:253)

Figure 3. Walbiri tribesman from Yuendumu, Central Australia, removing bark from a ghost gum to make a container (1969:265).

Figure 4. (top left) George French Angas, water colour ‘Miami, Portland Bay’, 1845. (1969:260) Figure 5. (bottom left) Aboriginal group, Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, Healesville, Victoria, c. 1879 (1969:260) Figure 6. (top left) Aboriginal ceremony, photographed near Bairnsdale, eastern Victoria (1969:260) Figure 7. Eucalypt bark canoe, Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, c. 1879 (1969:260).
Figure 8. A Walbiri tribesman at work grinding an axe-head in a diorite quarry near Yuendumu, Central Australia (1969: 267) Figure 9. In Central Australia, elaborate ground drawings were an integral part of many ceremonies (1969:269).

In all these representations, the subject matter is never engaged with the photographer. The subjects are always producing the ‘specimens’ of cultural evidence in question, or posing within their ‘natural’ setting. These images originate from three places; Central Australia, Coranderrk Aboriginal Station in Healesville, Victoria, and nineteenth century paintings. Each shows particular representations of Indigenous culture. As mentioned above, the images from Central Australia convey to the audience the stereotypical Aboriginal image. These images seem to be the most recognisably ‘Aboriginal’ ones and are likely to resonate with the viewer. Each image (figures 3, 8 and 9) reproduces elements of Indigenous culture as only witnessed in ‘traditional’ Northern Australian contexts outside of settled Australia and in the distant past (Harrison 2000; Russell 2001). Consequently, these images reinforce notions of Indigenous Australians as only existing in ‘traditional’ ways, divorcing urbanised or ‘non-traditional’ Indigenous Australians from this identity.
Lydon (2000; 2002a; 2000b) has examined photography from Coranderrk Aboriginal Station and reads similar images as artefacts of the colonial project. Her studies have emphasised that photography in the nineteenth century at Coranderrk was used as a way for Europeans to visually determine themselves as drastically oppositional to Aboriginals; as their ‘Other’ in a structured view of the world where Europeans existed as ‘civilised’, and Aboriginals as ‘primitive’. The photographs that Mulvaney has chosen to illustrate Aboriginal culture from Coranderrk (figures 5-7) would fall into this ‘primitive’ category. These images have been posed for the camera as representations of an exotic and primitive ‘Other’, as an opposition to the ‘civilised’ photographs of the people living at Coranderrk wearing European clothing and living in European style housing. In choosing to value and import these types of images into his discussion, rather than images that portray European influence and culture change, Mulvaney makes a conscious decision in the kind of history he portrays. Interestingly, figure 6 is the exception to the rule in depicting Aboriginal people in European clothing while conducting a ceremony.

The third type of imagery used by Mulvaney to demonstrate Aboriginality is European nineteenth century painting (figures 2 and 4). These illustrate an extremely romanticised version of Aboriginal people. Figure 2 is indicative of ‘noble savage’-type imagery and indeed Mulvaney uses it as an example of many early explorers’ romanticised concepts of Aboriginal people. The other image however, is used to demonstrate hunting weapons and is contrasted as an early example of Aboriginality against the later one from Coranderrk (figure
27). All these images depict Indigenous Australians in a close relationship to the environment, upholding the notion that ‘real’ Aboriginal people have a natural affinity to land, they live like flora and fauna, with very little need for anything that may exist in the ‘modern’ world (Peters-Little 2003:22). It is important to also note that Mulvaney has not named even one of these Aboriginal people, they are pacified and passive objects within his discourse, immortalised ‘relics’ of a long gone past. It is a system of representation where the readers’ only interaction with the subject is to gaze upon them in order to understand them.

Only approximately 11% of the illustrations in Mulvaney’s 1969 edition of Prehistory of Australia include representations of people. The vast majority of pictures are of artefact tracings, archaeological sites, excavations, artefacts, and rock art. These images can be contrasted to the former to display vast differences from the images of Aboriginal people within the volume. A sample of such images appears below:

**Figure 10.** (previous page, left) Bone points from Glen Aire (1969:85).
**Figure 11.** (previous page, right) ‘Scrapers’ from Green Gully, Victoria (1969:141)
**Figure 12.** (top left) The Gallus site, Koonalda cave, Nullarbor Plain, South Australia (1969:263)

**Figure 13.** (bottom left) Skeletal remains, Green Gully, Keilor, Victoria. This portrays a rescue operation begun by the author in 1962 (1969:264)

**Figure 14.** (top right) The site of the Keilor cranium, Keilor, Victoria (1969:264)

**Figure 15.** (bottom right) Kintore limestone cave, Northern Territory. General view of the 1963 excavations (1969:264).

**Figure 16.** (from left to right) two trident fish spears; x-ray of quadruple-pronged fish spear; perforated baler-shell pendant; perforated and incised pearl oyster shell ornament; Kodj granite axe; x-ray of the same specimen (1969:260-1).
This systematic categorisation and measurement of artefacts, characteristic of Mulvaney’s objective archaeology, has varied consequences in the creation of a normalised discourse. In contrast to the images of Aboriginal people, the images of ‘archeology’ include excavation, stratigraphy and the imposition of order onto the photograph. Within the text archaeologists are shown uncovering or discovering the archaeological past, while Aboriginal people are shown demonstrating this past. Artefacts are arranged into classifications and are pictured as ‘floating’ on the page. This divorcing of artefacts and sites from people (figures 10, 11 and 16) helps Mulvaney to distance these objects from their context and create them as self-fulfilling indications of Aboriginality. It is possible to view Mulvaney’s text as having many of the same objectives as a museum, in the way he demonstrates classification to his audience through observation. Russell has commented on the nature of Indigenous objects that are put on display in Western museums:

Common to all forms of exhibition...is the powerless of the items on display. Once removed from their indigenous context, non-Western objects housed in either the artistic or anthropological display are captured by a discourse that disempowers objects and reduces them to being examples of the ‘Other’ (Russell 2001:8).

In much the same way, the objects (including human objects) in Mulvaney’s pages are unspoken and passive in his archaeological discourse. Byrne argues that practices of natural history set the stage for the practice of heritage management by introducing the classificatory habit, and by encouraging the idea that objects (artefacts, sites, etc) could be used to represent peoples and cultures (1996:90).
Towards the end of the 1969 text, and in contradiction to the scientific categorisations, discussions and portrayal of Aboriginal people and cultural artefacts already mentioned, Mulvaney conveys to the reader a sense of the allure for archaeologists experiencing the Aboriginal past ‘in its natural setting’:

It was dusk on a wintry evening in 1960 when I reached The Tombs. The frieze of predominately red stenciled hands seemed almost luminescent, while the curved rock amphi-theatre was dominated by a single figure – the stencil of a man with arms outstretched, standing before the entrance to a low deep cave. It was a memorable occasion, and to me, the brooding stillness and the chill air are an essential element in recalling the aesthetic or intellectual impact of the site, although this cannot be conveyed pictorially; so also, is my later realisation, that fingers of handprints within the recess behind the figure were ‘mutilated’. An uncongenial spot to linger in, presumably it was even more so for an Aboriginal; this was no gallery dedicated to the proposition of ‘art for art’s sake’ (1969:171).

Such a quote illustrates Mulvaney’s passion for the Indigenous past; its ability to induce mystery and allure ready for the archaeologist to ‘discover’ and interpret. Interestingly, Mulvaney conveys a sense of how the experience of the rock art cannot be measured, for the environmental settings are essential in recalling the impact of the site. Despite this, the majority of Mulvaney’s archaeology is spent trying to decontextualise, categorise, and systemise much of the ‘evidence’ for the past.

Here lies the tension in Mulvaney’s work, between a professed dispassionate scientism and romanticism. While professing his undeniable attraction to Indigenous sites, Mulvaney simultaneously distances himself from Aboriginal Australians in the present (and also the politics that are perceived to go hand
and hand with this). This is evident through the portrayal of people in his book who only exist ‘traditionally’. Mulvaney fails to recognise a discord in the presentation of the past in the present. He believes it is possible to obtain an independent understanding of past Aboriginal life ways before European contact, but fails to realise that the only understanding of Indigenous people we can have is one pre-determined by our presence. It is simply not possible to understand Indigenous Australians from any other vantage point than through a cloud of politics in the present (Attwood 1996b). However, in 1969 the reflexive and subjective nature of research had not been emphasised in archaeological studies, and so Mulvaney’s text must be taken in context.

5.2 The Second Edition

In Mulvaney’s own words, ‘In 1969, so little was known about Aboriginal origins and cultural development that accounts were necessarily scrappy and focused on stone tools’ (1999:xv). However, if the 1969 edition of Prehistory of Australia was responsible for structuring some of the new ways in which the archaeological community could arrange the Aboriginal past, by the 1975 edition these ideas had been fixed through an upsurge in research following Mulvaney’s first volume. The 1975 edition was produced because Mulvaney felt that the pace of research and discovery was moving so fast that even by the time of his 1969 publication, it was outdated. By 1975, several PhD theses had been completed on Australian ‘prehistory’ and graduates were publishing their findings internationally (Mulvaney:1999:xv). By this time the antiquity of Indigenous Australians had been pushed back at least 30,000 years and
radiocarbon dating had been developed sufficiently to reach back in time to provide scientific ‘truths’ about ‘ancient’ history.

The second edition follows much the same structure as the first, and chapter headings are similar except for an expansion of the ‘Prehistory’ chapter to include ‘Pleistocene Origins’, ‘The Australian Core Tool and Scraper Tradition’, ‘Pleistocene Beasts and Fossil Man’, ‘The Australian Small Tool Tradition’ and ‘Incipient Agriculturalists?’. Additionally, there is a ‘History and Explanation’ chapter dedicated to a discussion of the development of Australian archaeology. Mulvaney makes few changes to the existing text and, in most cases, only adds some new ideas and new research on particular topics. Most of this research is in relation to colonisation patterns, stone tools, megafauna, and questions of agriculture. This book has an increasingly ‘processual’ tone, as Mulvaney adds research informed by ‘new archaeology’.

A considerable difference exists in the formatting between the first and second editions of *Prehistory of Australia*. Pictures and illustrations within the 1975 edition now appear in the text rather than at the end, and consequently this book tends to give the impression of being more accessible, user-friendly, and ‘interpretive’. Rather than an uninterrupted discussion, the images give a visual consciousness of ideas of ‘Aboriginality’. Artefacts can be gazed upon at the same time as they are ‘explained’. While this point is valuable to note, it must also be said that this was possibly an artificial artefact of publication/printing technology rather than a specific decision on Mulvaney’s part.
The nature of archaeological research had changed slightly in 1975 as Indigenous Australians asserted more control over research and heritage.

Consequently Mulvaney made the following statement to justify his practice:

Contrary to the deduction of some reviewers, I do consider that the purpose of prehistory to be the people and not their artefacts. My purpose is to write without the emotion which has blunted the point of much writing concerning Aboriginal history and culture. True understanding of the complexity and depth of the Aboriginal cultural heritage will come to both black and white Australians only through objective knowledge. This survey does not claim to be about modern Aborigines, but about their past (1975:13).

Here again, Mulvaney states his position as an archaeologist pursuing ‘prehistory’, divorced from the politics of the present. Mulvaney makes clear that he believes that the past is about understanding people (although not modern people). It is clear that Mulvaney is convinced that the pursuit of truth through science will bring benefits to Australian society in the form of reconciliation.

Mulvaney also expressed his concern at increasing discontent from Aboriginal people about the study of human remains:

It is unfortunate that some people react emotionally to the systematic excavation and study of prehistoric burials, because they confuse careful and respectful treatment with the morbid grave robbing of earlier generations...It must be emphasised that the study of human origins and racial differention is essential to man's self knowledge. Scientists have not singled out the Aborigines for concentrated research: all the races of mankind are involved, but Australian research is late in the field. (1975:198)

What is clear in this quote is Mulvaney's ability to hide behind a mask of scientificity and negate the historical conditions under which knowledge is produced. This is an extremely contradictory view in Mulvaney, as on so many
occasions he has historicised earlier anthropological practices, revealing their inconsistencies and racisms in the production of knowledge.

5.3 The Third Edition.

By this time, the 1999 edition of *Prehistory of Australia* can be considered as part of an established, academic discipline. It no longer stands alone as a seminal synthesis; other respected texts offer different readings of Aboriginal pasts (Flood 1999, 2004; Lourandos 1997). Now Mulvaney, along with Johan Kamminga, must account for two and a half decades of new research, new perspectives, changed political and social situations and completely reversed attitudes towards research about Indigenous Australians:

> While we have made substantial changes in content, we decided to maintain the orientation and much of the structure of the earlier books written by Mulvaney as sole author. The hazards of publishing a review of a rapidly expanding subject are manifest. To update descriptive content after two decades is a large but relatively straightforward task, but to give an adequate coverage of the alternative perspectives and debates is far more difficult. Indeed, our book is a personal appraisal of Australian prehistory because there can be no single version (1999:xv).

Mulvaney and Kamminga make clear that many of the issues they attempt to tackle in this new edition are the same endeavours as those of years ago. Specifically, they list colonisation patterns of the continent, timing of first human arrival, megafaunal extinctions and human biology (1999:xv-xvi). Research into these questions is fully explored within the book in addition to new issues, such as heritage ownership, and an attempt to cover some of the more metaphysical elements of the Indigenous past, as they are understood archaeologically, such as the Dreaming and relationships to land. Mulvaney and Kamminga’s summary
of ‘prehistory’ takes the focus of much of the text, and is divided into different regions for occupation; such as the desert or the coast. It is clear that in comparison with the 1969 edition, where accounts of the past were sketchy and premature, a great deal can be said about Aboriginal ‘prehistory’ with confidence.

The book gives an authoritative and documented analysis of a well discovered and researched past. It is finely presented with colour illustrations, black and white images, excellent archaeological drawings and small rock art tracings on each page as ‘decorative elements’ (see figure 17). It is an exceptional amalgamation of four decades of research, and an excellent ‘specimen’ for examining the culmination of the development of archaeology discourse on the Indigenous ‘Other’.

![Figure 17. These figures are a sample of the decorative rock art that Mulvaney and Kamminga use in the borders and above the titles of their textbook. These images have no provenance except for a note at the beginning of the book that states: ‘Note: The images that appear in the margins throughout the book represent a small sample of the richness and variety of Aboriginal rock art’ (1999:xx). The use of rock art for aesthetic purposes in his text, can be considered evident of Mulvaney’s further romanticisation and appropriation of the Indigenous past.](image-url)
5.3.1 Identity and Discourse in 1999.

While in 1969 Mulvaney was making radical statements about Aboriginal culture being innovative and dynamic, in 1999 Mulvaney and Kamminga’s synthesis is considered to be the traditional and the established approach to archaeology. Mulvaney and Kamminga now have to defend themselves against post-processual and post-colonial attitudes that claim for subjective knowledge and relativity; these things threaten the very foundations of Mulvaney’s past claims. Despite this threat though, it is clear that Mulvaney and Kamminga is a popular text, and this author would strongly argue that the 1999 edition of Prehistory of Australia could be found on the majority of Australian archaeologists’ bookshelves today.

Mulvaney and Kamminga do not claim ignorance in hearing Indigenous voices within the realms of archaeology, nor do they disregard other archaeologists’ approaches. Here Mulvaney and Kamminga reiterate the views from Aboriginal people in regards to their study:

> Aboriginal people assert that both their land and the interpretation of the culture and history have been appropriated by white Australians. They see Australian prehistory as their past, their heritage, and therefore theirs to do with as they wish, and to share with others only on their terms (1999:7).

This is a direct response to Ros Langford’s speech in 1983 on the repatriation and study of human remains:

> You seek to say that as scientists you have a right to obtain and study information of our culture. You seek to say that because you are
Australians you have a right to study and explore our heritage because it is a heritage to be shared by all Australians, white and black. From our point of view we say you have come as invaders, you have tried to destroy our culture, you have built your fortunes upon the lands and bodies of our people and now, having said sorry, want a share in picking out the bones of what you regard as a dead past. We say that it is our past, our culture and heritage, and forms part of our present life. As such it is ours to control and it is ours to share on our terms’ (Langford 1983:2).

By identifying this Mulvaney and Kamminga are clearly aware of current politics regarding those Indigenous Australians who demand their heritage back. They comment on the nature of ‘new-age’ researchers’ work that makes an effort to incorporate new approaches to the control of the past:

Another perspective within the profession is offered by the palaeoanthropologist Colin Pardoe, who accepts Aboriginal ownership of their ancestors’ remains and whose fieldwork is collaborative and often requested by local Aboriginal communities. Facilitating reburial is now part of Pardoe’s research practice, though he mourns the loss of data, research potential, and the scientific standard of replicability of results by restudy of the original material (1999:9).

While Mulvaney and Kamminga have clearly heard of newer practices on the creation of a discourse of the Aboriginal past, they maintain many of the same practices that Mulvaney embodied in his first text. Particularly, Mulvaney asserts his claims in the text for free scientific inquiry. Mulvaney considers that the claim of ownership and control is a form of reverse cultural imperialism, it threatens the preservation of information about Australia before 1788, it places free intellectual inquiry in jeopardy and it deprives future Aboriginal people of valuable information about their pasts (1999:9). It is unclear in the text whether this is Kamminga’s perspective as well. It is not the intention of this analysis to determine whether Mulvaney’s views on repatriation are acceptable, but it is
important to consider these views as part of a discourse of Aboriginalism. Foucault examines power and knowledge relations as they come together at the margins, for example in the asylum or the prison, where there is a direct relationship between the oppressor and the subject. He argues to locate power in its most extreme points of exercise, where it is always less legal in character (Foucault 1976:96-7). It is here he argues that cracks begin to show. Likewise, the contested area of repatriation can be seen as a weak spot, where the hierarchical order of scientists and Aboriginal people come together, and the more powerful have to demonstrate their strength. The way that Mulvaney does this is by monopolising 'the greatest good', in asserting that human remains are human heritage and are biologically important for all cultures’ understandings of their history. It has been argued that the assertion of a human characteristic which values history and heritage in this particular way is a colonialist and Eurocentric value that deems European ways of valuing heritage and history as universal and desirable methods in which to consider the world around us (Smith 1998:28-35; Byrne 1991:270-6). Such a view disvalues distinctive Indigenous understandings of their past and demoralises alternative methods of valuing heritage.

Through language and terminology, Mulvaney and Kamminga reserve powerful methods to assert particular existences of Aboriginality. As a scientifically ‘neutral’ practice, the terms employed by the authors are powerful yet subliminal indicators of classification. A number of the terms that have been used in previous editions, and up to the 1999 edition, have a great deal of cultural
baggage attached to them, and their appropriateness can be questioned. Classifications such as ‘prehistory’ and ‘hunter gatherer’ were traditionally developed in a time where they not only referred to people and the past, but particular ways of being and existing that were considered to be socially and politically inferior or superior (David & Denham in press). For example, a ‘hunter gather’ was considered as inferior; presumed to have a lack of intelligence or evolitional ability to develop to agriculture. Similarly, ‘Prehistory’ references an evolutionary period before the ‘superior’ ability of writing was adopted. Clearly this can be considered offensive. These terminologies have been engineered to privilege the culture of their designers, according to that culture’s terms (David & Denham, in press). While Mulvaney may not have outwardly asserted Aboriginal peoples inferiority in 1969, he did classify them strictly in the above mentioned categories.

The continuation of the use of the word ‘prehistory’ has been of some controversy for a substantial amount of time and Mulvaney and Kamminga comment on their persistence in using such a term:

The title of our book may attract criticism as implying that the Aboriginal past is somehow marginal to ‘real’ history. In 1988 a meeting of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies resolved that it would use the term ‘history’ in referring to the Aboriginal past before written records. Despite this, the term ‘prehistory’ is embedded in archaeological writings in Australia and overseas, though it is being displaced by the more general (and less accurate) terms ‘archaeology’ and, less commonly, ‘pre-contact archaeology’ (1999:xvii).

Here Mulvaney and Kamminga acknowledge that there is a strong conceptual tension in using these value-laden words. They mention that people may read
into these terms to consider the Indigenous Australian past as inferior; the cultural baggage is very apparent. Yet by stating this, they shake the words free somehow of this tension, neutralise them, and can go on to use and perpetuate them ‘objectively’. This has tended to be a habitual practice by Mulvaney. In acknowledging a prejudice it can effectively be divorced from practice. The act of pursuing long-established and habitual language helps to reinforce traditional notions of what ‘Aboriginal’ people are; only existing as a prelude to ‘history’, and shuts down other archaeologists’ and Indigenous Australian’s endeavours to move away from this particular pigeonhole.

For Mulvaney and Kamminga, time has been one of the greatest gifts to Aboriginal people: ‘Archaeologists played a leading role in campaigning for legislation to protect Aboriginal places and material relics. Also, archaeology has given material and scientific support for Aboriginal claims of deep antiquity (Mulvaney & Kamminga 1999:6-7). Archaeologists are solely responsible for the common catchphrase that many Aboriginal people use today to assert land claims: ‘Aboriginal people have lived in this continent for X thousand years!’ For Mulvaney and Kamminga this surely demonstrates to Indigenous Australians the benefits of archaeological investigation into their pasts (1999:10).

Mulvaney and Kamminga also assert that archaeologists have been responsible for putting to rest many of the preconceptions about Indigenous Australians as being unchanging and timeless, by demonstrating that throughout time the Aboriginal past was not static, there are links overseas, and traditions changed.
across time and place (1999:2). However, for Aboriginal people themselves, it must be considered what ‘the gift of time’ has actually given. Aboriginal concepts of the Dreaming have always been dismissed as ‘religion’, ‘myths’ or ‘stories’ about the past. Even with archaeologists’ validations that Aboriginal people have been here an extremely long time, such assertions were never taken seriously until backed by the ‘truths’ of a scientific, normalised discourse. Mulvaney and Kamminga assert their opinions on the validity of the Dreaming when considering megafaunal extinctions and the overkill theory:

These Dreaming accounts are attractive to prehistorians, but it must be cautioned that they are the product of oral transmissions from elders in one generation to younger people in the next. Is it likely, then, that they are factual records of environmental changes that occurred hundreds of generations in the past? Although we suspect not, other prehistorians may give them credibility (1999:121).

Until direct archaeological evidence is at hand, any speculations concerning prehistoric menus belong more appropriately to a nostalgic Dreaming (1999:129).

While Mulvaney & Kamminga are ‘giving a gift’, (argued to be well received by Indigenous Australians due to its adoption into land claims), they are also taking something away. The comments above make clear that the Dreaming cannot be relied on as having legitimacy in asserting time depth, and Indigenous Australians have no choice but to use Western notions of time to assert their claims. This valuing and disvaluing of certain types of knowledges is discussed by Foucault as the repression of subjugated knowledges (1976:81-3). In this case, we see Mulvaney and Kamminga suppressing Indigenous knowledge as inadequate and insufficient to explain Aboriginal history in this country. On many accounts, Mulvaney and Kamminga disvalue knowledge of Indigenous elders.
and knowledge of the Dreaming as religion, myths, stories. The existence of such a metaphysical, indefinable element to Indigenous culture presents a problem for Mulvaney and Kamminga, for it cannot be categorised, measured and contained. For them, it is this quality in the Dreaming that makes it so inconceivable as a credible constituent to discuss. If Dreaming concepts do not accept scientific explanations of the past then they are effectively comparable to a dogmatist religion:

Aboriginal creation beliefs assume a virtual biological stability for people, plants and animals, conflicting with Western biological evolutionary theory and environmental evidence. This surely affects Aboriginal attitudes to archaeological explanation of human origins on this continent. Recent archaeological discoveries also coincide with the vogue for New Age dogmas and Christian fundamentalism, so that such beliefs possibly reinforce community opposition to evolutionary biology and research on human remains (1999:11).

Neither author has indigenous Australian ancestry and our approach to Australian prehistory is based on the tenets and practice of Western science and philosophy. There is the potential conflict between the pragmatism of Western science and the timeless concept of the Dreaming, between human evolutionary theory and belief in a multitude of indigenous creations. Traditionally orientated Aboriginal people believe that their founding ancestors did not come to Australia from Southeast Asia, but were created by supernatural being within the land itself, and that existing natural features in the landscape testify to Dreaming creations. Paraphrasing the Gospel of St John, the first Australian may point to such sites as symbolising ‘before the white man was I am’. These different intellectual viewpoints are crucial elements in contemporary life, but they should not prevent the sincere and documented presentation of one of these explanations of the past. (1999:xviii)

In these quotes lurks Mulvaney and Kamminga’s genuine belief in archaeology’s ability to provide ‘truths’ about the Aboriginal past. Dreaming is considered to be akin to religion, which while ‘useful’ in today’s society, should not be used to stop scientific investigation towards the ‘truth’. In placing Aboriginal Dreaming conceptions in the same category with religion, Mulvaney and Kamminga
ultimately place them in direct opposition to science. Such a science vs. religion debate was started in the nineteenth century when Darwin's biological evolution concept won popular belief (Trigger 1989:102-3). Hence, Aboriginal people and their ‘timeless concepts’ are seen as backward - as relying on misinformed understandings – unchanging in the face of Western ‘pragmatic’ science. Consequently they become disvalued as meaningful information in which to understand the past. In correlating Dreaming with religion, we also receive a false understanding of the depth and complexity of concepts of Aboriginal spirituality. Many religions today easily fit into a Western understanding of the way our society operates. They may not agree with evolutionary schemes of the past, but in general they support many of our society’s ideals and values, and they co-exist within the larger framework of our social and political system. Indigenous Dreaming concepts cannot be separated from everyday life and should not be viewed as ‘religion’. This fails to take into account the complexity, sophistication and depth of Indigenous Australians’ Dreaming concepts that are interwoven into every aspect of life. Indigenous Dreaming is closely related to knowledge, and consequently is disvalued when considered in this case. By disvaluing Indigenous knowledges and explanations of the past, and championing scientific explanations, Mulvaney effectively determines the scientific method as the only ‘legitimate’ way of accessing history prior to 1788. Therefore Mulvaney and Kamminga’s ‘gift of time’ to Aboriginal people in their 1999 text, is as much (if not more) of a gift to themselves, other archaeologists, and Australia; all of which have different agendas in its acquisition.
Having already examined the images from Mulvaneys 1969 edition of *Prehistory of Australia*, and considered Mulvaney and Kamminga’s contemporary arguments against the defense of their discourse, we can now consider photographs and images taken from Mulvaney and Kamminga’s 1999 text to identify changes over time. The images below represent all the pictures in Mulvaney and Kamminga that include portrayals of Aboriginal people, three images that can also be found in the 1969 edition (see figures 1, 5 and 7). Despite the test of time, these images can be considered in similar ways to the ones Mulvaney used in his first text.

**Figure 18.** Wilgie Mia red ochre quarry in the Murchison region of Western Australia (1999:30).

**Figure 19.** Extinct species of marsupial megafauna (1999:123).

**Figure 20.** Life at Lake Mungo about 30,000 years BP. This reconstruction is based upon archaeological finds and inferences drawn from them, but telescopes data across thousands of years into one day. (1999:198)
Figure 21. Awabakal people exploiting the sea coast in about 1820, probably at Red Head, near Newcastle. (1999:plate x)

Figure 22. Tasmanian float canoe (1999:324)

Figure 23. Australian watercraft (1999:323)

Figure 24. Flaking spearheads at Ngilipitji quarry, eastern Arnhem Land, 1935. (1999:243)

Figure 25. Arnhem Land woman preparing waterlily-seed cakes, an important food in the dry season. (1999:83)
Figure 26. Walpiri man from Yuenduma using a tula adze mounted on a wooden handle, with characteristic two-handed grip. This arid-zone tool almost certainly was a regional invention. (1999:247)

Figure 28. Tasmanian Aboriginal residents at Oyster Cove. 1858. N. B. Plomley identified the people in the photo as (back) Tippoo Sahib and Patty; (centre) Mary Ann; (sitting, from left) Wafferty, Trugemanner (Truganini), Caroline and Sarah. (1999:341)

Figure 27
Kimberly Wandjina art being renewed by a traditional artist in 1966 (1999:plate xvi)

Figure 29.
Members of the northern Queensland Djungan community visiting the Ngarrabullgan excavation in 1993 during a Ranger training programme coordinated by the Kuku Djungan Aboriginal Corporation: From left, Ross Craig, Malcom Grainer, John B. Grainer Jnr and archaeologist Roger Cribb (1999:7).
Clearly, particular visions of Aboriginality emerge from the images found in Mulvaney and Kamminga’s 1999 text. In particular we begin to see a trend in different types of Aboriginalism depending on spatial and temporal contexts. The first trend can be illustrated by figures 19 to 23. Each of these images represents an artificially constructed vision of Aboriginal people, as they are not actual photographs. These images are what characterise Aboriginal identity in the ‘prehistory’ of Australia. They are drawn and painted images, as ‘real’ ones obviously cannot be procured. They are generally photographs of Indigenous Australians living peacefully within nature and exploiting natural resources. These images have little temporal significance as they are spaced as far as 30...
000 years apart (figure 20) to just under 150 years ago (figure 21). These images are symbolic of the 'timeless' narrative of Indigenous culture, despite Mulvaney’s and Kamminga’s best efforts to bring time depth to ‘prehistory’. Spatially these images nearly all correlate (with the exception of figure 19) as depictions of southeastern Australian Aboriginals; who were often coast, lake or river dwelling people. Arguably, this is due to the fact that southeastern Indigenous Australians were the most affected after European invasion, and there are less ethnographic photographic examples of ‘traditional living’, at least compared to Western Desert and Arnhem Land people. Such representations greatly embody romanticised notions of Indigenous Australians; specifically they can be considered as ‘noble savage’ imagery. In contemplating this, consider that these images do not display Aboriginal groups fighting or conducting any kinds of violence, they do not attempt to portray spiritual or metaphysical elements of the Indigenous past and they refrain from picturing Aboriginal people in obvious political scenarios (such as negotiating trade). In the same way that we may look at an African zoological catalogue to see lions in their natural habitats, Mulvaney has imported images into his texts that focus solely on human interaction with the environment, and thus naturalise the Indigenous body within the landscape.

A second set of images identified in the 1999 edition are those from the Western Desert and Arnhem Land (Figures 18, 24-7, 28). Like in the 1969 edition of Prehistory of Australia, these images are hallmark portrayals of Aboriginality and are almost certainly most the recognisable ‘Aboriginal’ images. This is due to
their resemblance of archetypical imagery of Aboriginal Australia that is included today in tourism brochures, magazines or on postcards (Marcus 1999). Again these images include the depiction of nakedness, of ‘blackness’, of simplicity set in outline against the sky, the desert or undifferentiated distance (Marcus 1999:128) They are imported into the text as specimens to demonstrate the manufacture of artefacts to ‘showcase’ these implements’ ‘context’. These images represent the closest thing Mulvaney and Kamminga can get to picturing ‘prehistoric’ Aboriginal people. Each photograph depicts an individual or group (as in figure 18) that does not look at the camera. None of these people are named. The subjects do not speak to us themselves; we can not hear their voices. They can not tell us about their histories, their families, their experiences as lived individuals existing within a rich cultural system of understanding (Marcus 1999:143). These passive subjects can only exist in the pages of Mulvaney and Kamminga’s text, where they are explained in a sterile and systemised ‘understanding’ of the past.

These images can be contrasted with a third type of image from Mulvaney (figures 28 and 29). This third type of imagery display elements of European influence. It is not coincidence that Mulvaney has named both the images that show the most ‘colonised’ representations of Aboriginal people. Naming these individuals represents the process of bringing them into the discourse of Australian archaeology, and endowing them with power. However, it also represents their division as ‘real’ or ‘traditional’ examples of Aboriginal culture. Figure 29 is used in Mulvaney and Kamminga’s 1999 text to demonstrate the
history of colonisation in Tasmania. Hence this vision of Aboriginal people is one associated with the degradation and decline of ‘traditional’ culture and the assimilation into European history. Figure 28 can be illustrative of Aboriginal people becoming the ‘observers’ of their own culture. This is further demonstrated when Mulvaney and Kamminga discuss the study of human remains:

… future Aboriginal scientists are themselves likely to investigate these vital aspects of the place of indigenous people and their ancestors in the human family (1999:148).

Clearly Mulvaney and Kamminga speak of a future for Australian archaeology that assimilates Aboriginal people into archaeology so that they may become part of the process of writing ‘Australian history’.

Finally, we see a repeat of the images of Corranderrk Aboriginal Station. As exemplars of Aboriginality that represent ‘authentic’ and ‘traditional’ people (see section 5.1.1), they slot into the 1999 edition of contemporary archaeological discourse as easily as they did in the 1969 edition.
In 1969 Mulvaney took a radical approach in writing the Aboriginal past. Breaking away from conventional notions that had deemed Aboriginal people as ‘savage’ and ‘primitive’, he offered a perspective that conceptualised Aboriginal peoples and their pasts as dynamic and changing. Within his text he asserting that ‘there was scope for the innovator as well as for the dreamer, and the Aborigines were not captives of an unchanging and hostile environment’ (1969:177). This dynamism of Aboriginal people, determined by Mulvaney, was ‘testimony to the achievements of the human spirit in the face of adversity’ (1969:12). In light of this assertion, Mulvaney along with his contemporaries, used the powerful verifying apparatus of science, to confidently ‘discover’ and map a conceptual history of deep Aboriginal antiquity in this country. These ‘discoveries’ were presented in Mulvaney’s text through typologies that were designated as ‘prehistory’, ‘protohistory’, ‘Aboriginal Origins’ and the like bringing a time phrase to a previously ‘timeless’ Aboriginal past.

In his 1969 edition, Mulvaney defined Aboriginal people in his text via an economic categorisation (1969:66-7). Based on this scientific understanding, Mulvaney further conceptualised the Aboriginal past in terms of Indigenous Australians’ various ways of adapting to the environment both spatially and temporally (1969:68-94). As demonstrated through the images that Mulvaney includes to support his discussions, Aboriginal people and their ‘artefacts’
became passive and subjective exemplars of Aboriginality. For Mulvaney, these
demonstrated a ‘traditional’ existence living close to nature. Here exists a
tension in Prehistory of Australia between a professed dispassionate scientism
and romanticism. In portraying Indigenous Australian’s as ‘traditional’,
naturalised and passive subjects, Mulvaney idealises and romanticises them.
This is surely contradictory to the objective, dispassionate intention of
Mulvaney’s work. Mulvaney fails to recognise a discord in the presentation of the
past, in the present. He does not disclose that the only understanding we can
possibly obtain of Aboriginal people, is one through a cloud of politics from the
present. In 1975 Mulvaney solidified this view on the Aboriginal past by
asserting that:

True understanding of the complexity and depth of the Aboriginal cultural
heritage will come to both black and white Australians only through
objective knowledge (1975:13).

In 1999, Mulvaney, with a new collaborator, Johan Kamminga, updated two and
a half decades of research of archaeological research to condense into
Prehistory of Australia. This contemporary edition can be said to exist at the
core of Australian archaeological practice, as it defines ‘prehistory’ and the
nature of ‘prehistoric’ research for all current archaeology practitioners. In this
edition, Mulvaney and Kamminga must demonstrate that they are aware of the
diverse approaches to the contemporary study of the Indigenous past, as well as
the perceived ‘politics’ that run with this. They do this by including Indigenous
perspectives on repatriation, reiterating Aboriginal peoples’ assertions that ‘both
their land and the interpretation of their culture and history have been
appropriated by White Australians’ (1999:7). However Mulvaney and Kamminga assert that different intellectual viewpoints ‘should not prevent the sincere and documented presentation of one of these explanations of the past’ (1999:xviii).

In the 1999 edition, Mulvaney and Kamminga reserve powerful methods to assert particular existences of Aboriginality. In particular, they present Aboriginal knowledge of the Dreaming as an inadequate method for determining information and understanding of the Indigenous past (1999:xviii, 11, 121, 129). On many occasions they compare knowledge of the Dreaming to concepts of religion, which further devalues Indigenous knowledge as unscientific and thus unable to compete as a successful way of interpreting the past. Mulvaney and Kamminga also use the word ‘prehistory’, which can be considered historically as a culturally encoded word to signify ‘inferior’; as a prelude to actual history.

The images that Mulvaney and Kamminga import into the 1999 edition of *Prehistory of Australia* can be seen as further perpetuating stereotypical visions of Aboriginality, that were already functioning in Mulvaney’s 1969 edition. The portrayal of the naturalised Indigenous body within the landscape can be seen on numerous occasions in these images (figures 18 to 27). Such imagery provide evidence to suggest that Mulvaney and Kamminga have tried to preserve the ‘noble’ while despising and hoping to destroy the image of the ‘savage’ in their texts (Peters-Little 2003:19). His creation of an idealistic notion of the past of Indigenous Australians’ life as leisured, adapted to the environment and actively changing in time and space serves to elevate
Indigenous culture and advocate it. A year before publishing his 1999 edition of Prehistory of Australia, Mulvaney himself had even noted that a contemporary understanding of Indigenous culture may prefigure a return to more traditional concepts of Aboriginal people:

Indeed, some recent enthusiastic accounts of the simple hunting life possibly foreshadow a return to a new concept of the noble savage. At least this time it is based upon a truer understanding of the depth of the spiritual life of technologically unsophisticated peoples, and their close bonds with the land and its intelligent exploitation (Mulvaney 1998:35).

Such an assertion clearly demonstrates a conceptual understanding of Indigenous culture as highly idealised and romanticised, naturalised within the landscape. If ever an objective understanding of Indigenous Australian culture were reached, surely it would not incorporate the erratic, subjective and irrational discourse that exists in Mulvaney’s and Kamminga’s Prehistory of Australia.

6.1 A genealogy of Mulvaney

In unpacking Prehistory of Australia though the analysis of text and images, I have created a kind of Foucauldian genealogy. This genealogy has identified the moment in Australian history where research and knowledge of Indigenous Australians has proclaimed itself to be 'true' and 'unbiased' in a radical break from the past. Such a break was characterised by the wide identification and acknowledgment of past practices within Australia and their subsequent rejection. Mulvaney has been integral to this identification and rejection process in his accounts of early anthropological and archaeological approaches.
(Mulvaney 1958; 1964; 1989; 1998; 1990). However, this thesis has drawn attention to some of the ways that Mulvaney has failed to identify the more contemporary practices in archaeological discourse. This study has asserted that Mulvaney employs discourses of Aboriginalism in his *Prehistory of Australia* editions. As a genealogy, it has highlighted a period in the development of Australian ‘prehistoric’ archaeology that has become commonly known among archaeologists as a period of ‘professionalism’. This has been characterised by an authoritarian reliance on scientism, with the aim of achieving a reconciled Australia released through the power of ‘truth’ (or knowledge). In searching out the ‘truth’, Mulvaney systematically rejected and discarded constructions of Aboriginality from the past, to replace them with his own ‘unbiased’ and ‘objective’ visions that would ultimately free Indigenous Australians from repression and misunderstanding in this country. Mulvaney’s 1969 and 1975 texts emerge out of history as Foucauldian discourses with coherent reflective techniques and definite goals, with the obligation of searching for and telling the truth. In this search, Mulvaney has systematically suppressed Indigenous knowledges of themselves and their pasts as inadequate, and taken on a powerful paternal role in to ‘tell the story’ of the Aboriginal past.

### 6.2 Limitations and future research

Obviously, this thesis has had strict limitations of time and space. While it considers a number of the elements of the creation of a normalised discourse in Mulvaney’s three volumes in detail, many more themes could be extracted and expanded out. Of particular interest, would be a feminist perspective of the ways
that patriarchal discourse is generated in Mulvaney and these patriarchal systems extended into the past. Another theme that could be powerfully researched through *Prehistory of Australia*, is the discussion of race and genetics, and the ways that the Indigenous body is objectified and scrutinised through archaeological discourse. If more space and time were allowed here, such an investigation would have been included in this study. It would also be relevant to consider to what extent Aboriginal people have helped define the representations of their pasts within Mulvaney’s text, as it is clear that relationships and influences between archaeologists and Aboriginal people can go both ways.

If this were a PhD thesis, it is most likely that an investigation into many other Australian archaeology texts would prove an extremely interesting, and perhaps more comprehensive, study on the depiction of the Aboriginal past. For example, using counterpoint texts (as was my preliminary research aim) such as Bruno David's *Landscapes, Rock-Art and the Dreaming* (2002) and Josephine Flood's *Archaeology of the Dreamtime* (2004) may demonstrate substantial differences and outcomes in methods of contemporary archaeological research. Future investigations into representation in archaeology hope to offer an alternative perspective on the unpacking and dismantling of Aboriginalism. This could help to determine a ‘bigger picture’ in establishing to what extent *Prehistory of Australia* is an accurate reflection of contemporary archaeological practice. This could also include a reading of Mulvaney’s other publications to contrast against his *Prehistory of Australia* editions. It is likely that a comparison
as such, could elucidate vast differences in his approach between his shorter articles and all-encompassing dictations on the past such as Prehistory of Australia.

An attractive approach to future research could be to look into some of the repercussions of archaeological interpretation within general society. This could include a study into people’s understanding of the Indigenous past, using an ethnographic approach. Although challenging, a study could be carried out surveying a number of people from particular communities and from many different socio-economic classes to determine exactly what individuals in our society know and think about the Indigenous past. Such studies have already been carried out in order to better understand what Australians know of ‘archaeology’ on general terms (Du Cros 2000). A study into public understanding of Indigenous Australian archaeology could prove to be informative in assisting archaeologists to uncover just how their research reaches the public, thus investigating some of the applied outcomes a powerful normalised discourse can have in our society.

6.3 Use of Study

Bruno David has noted how it ‘is easy to forget the basic assumptions that have given rise to popular notions’ (David 2002:i). This can be said to be especially true when we consider the creation of Aboriginal history in Mulvaney’s texts. It is reasonably simple in archaeology today to acknowledge the subjectivity of one’s own work. Mulvaney and Kamminga themselves state in their opening
arguments in 1999 that ‘indeed, our book is a personal appraisal of Australian prehistory because there can be no single version’ (1999:xv). However, despite being a ‘single’ appraisal, it is clear that their text is characteristic of a universal ‘understanding’ of Indigenous culture based on the tenets of Western society and scientific practice. It is my contention, that this text is widely accepted and acknowledged within our archaeological discipline as a popular and well-read book. Therefore, it is necessary to constantly remind ourselves of the outcomes that uncritical acceptance of this type of ‘understanding’ brings. It is certainly not easy to realise that normalising discourses are created, rather than given in our society. This study itself follows the rules and guidelines to writing a thesis according to conventional archaeological practice and methods. It consequently accepts the doctrines of normative discourses that have been created in our discipline and that regulate the system of the production of textual knowledge. However, by returning to the fundamental concepts that underpin many of the post-processual and post-colonial approaches to archaeology (Foucault and Said) I have tried to show how contemporary archaeological practice is indeed, historically situated, and that today it is perpetuating truisms, as it did in the past, and most certainly will do in the future.

We must consider today how much of archaeology rests on the basic foundations laid in Mulvaney’s texts? Clearly current post-processual practices in archaeology (David 2002; Harrison & Williamson 2002; Lilley 2000) do plenty to challenge and help correct the un-ethical nature of past research in Australian Indigenous archaeology. However, how many of these approaches can be
considered as merely building on top of archaeology’s normative discourse, rather than challenging the underlying discourse itself? This thesis attempts to dig at the foundations of ‘modern’ archaeology through the medium of textual and visual representation of the ‘Other’, in order to unpick the ways that we have constituted archaeology as a coherent and powerful knowledge producing apparatus.

Over the last twenty years, academic research from within the social sciences and humanities has been characterised by comprehensive post-colonial and post-modern studies into the representation of the ‘Other’. However, the investigation of this topic in archaeology can be considered as grossly under-represented. In this thesis I have demonstrated that colonial underpinnings still exist in at least one facet of archaeological research. Further studies may dispute these findings; however I believe that research into other archaeological texts would prove that these colonial underpinnings still exist elsewhere.
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