EXPLORERS AND ABORIGINES:
A SURVEY OF CONTACT BETWEEN AUSTRALIAN
ABORIGINES AND SIX LAND EXPLORERS, 1828 - 1862.

Lee Kelly
B.A. (Hons) Thesis.

Supervisor: Professor G. Blainey.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction.
2. Individual Explorer's Attitude to the Aborigines.
3. Dealings: The Events of Contact.
5. Conclusions.
1. INTRODUCTION

Australian land explorers of the 19th maintain a place in Australian history as "discoverers", opening up the land for settlement. In penetrating far beyond the settled districts these explorers were not only the first to see new lands, they were usually the first to meet the Aborigines living there. Often they were asked by the government to include in the journals of their expeditions information about the habits and customs of these people.¹ My research is a study of the journals of six such land explorers; Charles Sturt, Thomas Mitchell, George Grey, Edward John Eyre, Augustus Charles Gregory, and John McDouall Stuart, whose journeys spanned the years 1828 to 1862, from the point of view of their contact with Aborigines. The objective was to analyse their responses to the people they met and the culture they observed.

Land explorers were chosen in preference to other early observers and interactors for several reasons. Firstly, their journals were read in both the colonies and England for the information that they contained about new lands. Thus, the explorers' comments on the Aborigines had a potential influence on public opinion. Secondly, their position for experiencing the Aborigines was in many ways unique.

¹ Appendix: 1.
Observing the Aborigines, they were more vulnerable than others. Settlers and missionaries, if they were on the frontier, had their civilization behind them to which they could retire and naval explorers could seek sanction on the boat. The land explorer had no such refuge; once he left the settled districts he became immersed in the land. His isolation from his own culture was more complete and his ability to distance himself from the Aborigines less.¹

Interacting with the race, land explorers were different, as their position in the land was theoretically not determined by their wanting something from the Aborigines. Unlike missionaries they were not there to win souls, and unlike settlers they didn't seek immediate possession of the land, rather they were scouting to see if it was worth possessing. They had different needs from the Aborigines and judged them on different grounds.

¹. Comparing land to naval exploration, Charles Sturt thought that the isolation of the land explorer made contact with the Aborigines more dangerous for them:

"It will be borne in mind, that there is a wide difference between penetrating into a country in the midst of its population and landing from ships for the purpose of communication or traffic... Boats while landing are covered by their ships, and have succour within view; but not so parties that go into unknown tracts. They must depend on their immediate resources and individual courage alone."

The land explorer combined the roles of interactor and observer and his own position for responding was not static as he was moving through the land. He experienced the Aborigines, and the land in common with them. He had to survive both with the people, and within the same environment as them.

Having decided on land explorers, the time span 1828 to 1862 was chosen as it seemed to represent a beginning and an end. In 1828 Charles Sturt, who was really the first of the explorers to travel far inland, began his career; and by 1862 John McDouall Stuart had made a crossing of the continent. The time span was kept deliberately large to see if responses varied over the years. A variety of geographical areas was another requirement to preserve the sense of the explorer being the first in the area. The chosen six explorers appeared to best fit this criteria.¹

The study is not one of culture contact; it is of one culture in contact with another. The Aborigines left no written records of their meetings with the explorers and we can only speculate about their thoughts.² My focus is therefore on the whites, and more particularly on the leader of the expedition. Presumably he is largely the dictator of actions towards the Aborigines and the official journal of an expedition is his own record of his experiences.

¹ Strezlecki, Leichardt, Kennedy, and Burke and Wills were other likely contenders. They were eliminated finally because either information was available for only one of their journeys or they did not offer the geographical variety desired.

² Appendix: 2.
Relying solely on the leader's journal as the record of his experiences is problematic as he can be selective in his inclusion of material and shape the story to suit his own purposes without our being aware of it. Fortunately, for Charles Sturt's inland expedition of the years 1844 to 1845, the journals of two party members have survived.¹ As alternative information these journals prove that subject matter and judgments of the Aborigines rests in part on individual factors. They also raise the possibility that the leader experiences more than he includes in his journal. Geographical discovery is his priority and he may use his journal more to document this purpose of the expedition than his contact with Aborigines.

All the explorers submitted brief reports at the conclusion of their expeditions to their respective employers and the journals of Stuart and Gregory are collections of such reports. The remaining four expanded on these, publishing collected works years later and there is evidence they shaped the story in retrospect, thus casting doubts on the value of their records as first impressions. Sturt and Mitchell appear to change only their descriptions of certain incidents. Eyre and Grey pose greater difficulties as they both compiled their journals after having had more extensive experience with the Aborigines. The two men submitted theses on the Aborigines to accompany their journals and they betray in these a depth of knowledge they could


not have gained exploring.\textsuperscript{1} To use this material would defeat the purpose of this exercise. Consequently, I restricted myself to considering only those remarks that reflect experiences detailed in their actual journals. Studying manuscript journals would have eliminated this problem but these are scattered in interstate libraries. The result is to acknowledge that this is a reading of only one side of the story, told in a manner that suits the individual involved.

The story the journals tell, and which I seek to analyse, is of contact between Europeans and Aborigines. These European explorers shared a common cultural background. Their own culture was a fact of their being they brought to contact and which significantly influenced their behaviour in the arena. At its most basic level what this "cultural baggage" gave the explorers was a way of thinking that affected how they perceived themselves and the other culture.

Anthropologists debate whether in cross-cultural perceptions it is ever possible for the observer to objectively evaluate another culture. Inevitably the way the observer reasons and understands determines how he conceives of reason in another culture.\textsuperscript{2} The explorers, as 19th men, were not preoccupied by a need for objectivity. Often they consciously judged the Aborigines by reference to their own standards. What they didn't realize was that certain elements of their own culture were so rooted in their thought process as to be not consciously felt.

\textsuperscript{1} Appendix: 3.

\textsuperscript{2} Hanson, F.A. \textit{Meaning in Culture}. London, 1975. pp. 51-56.
All the explorers set out to "discover" new lands and this very concept shows an unconscious cultural bias. To "discover" means to be "the first to find out about", but the land was unknown only to the Europeans. The Aborigines living there had already "found" it. By claiming to "discover" the explorers reserve the concept of time to themselves, judging history begins when they enter the land. The cultural assumption of "discovery" is extended as the expedition progresses through the descriptions and names the explorers give to the new land and its flora and fauna.

Places are named according to either the explorers own experiences in the land, or as honorary gestures to individuals important to them or their society. By their naming techniques they make and remake their own worlds in the landscape. They impose on it their own status hierarchy by naming important geographical features after people like governors and royalty,


2. Mitchell articulates this best, writing at the commencement of his first expedition:
   "We advanced with feelings of intense interest into the country before us, and impressed with the responsibility of commencing the first chapter of its history. All was still new and nameless, but by this beginning, we were to open a way for the many other beginnings of civilized man."


and less significant discoveries after friends and associates. 1.

Alone amongst these explorers, Thomas Mitchell had a preference for adopting Aboriginal place names. As Surveyor-General of N.S.W. he ordered his men to use these as policy. 2. However, Mitchell did not intend this to be honorary for the Aborigines, his motives were practical; it made it easier to cut and divide the land as travellers could obtain information about the environment from the natives. 3. The practice, as Mitchell adopted it, was bent to suit his culture's method of conceiving of space - maps. Long Aboriginal names wouldn't do for these so he gave his surveyors linguistic principles to abbreviate by. 4.

1. Eyre on his 1840-1 expedition provides an example. He names a small creek after a companion (Scott Creek) but the first range he meets in hundreds of miles after the Secretary of State for the Colonies (Russell Range). Journals of Expeditions of Discovery into Central Australia, and overland from Adelaide to King George's Sound, in the years 1840-1; sent by the colonists of South Australia with the sanction and support of the Government: including an account of the manners and customs of the aborigines and the state of their relations with Europeans. 2 Vols. Originally published London, 1845 and reproduced as an Australian Facsimile Edition. Adelaide, 1964. Vol. 1. p. 91. Vol. 2. p. 53.


In judging the land and its productions, the single standard used is that of the explorers' culture. Areas are "barren" or "fertile" and rated according to how Europeans could use them; flora and fauna are described by analogy with knowns. All are given definition by scientific principles of classification; the land is divided into geological types and flora and fauna into biological species.¹

The example illustrates how the explorers read their experiences in the land via the frame of reference provided by their own culture. More directly in terms of their responses to the Aborigines, it shows how they make unconscious judgments born of their cultural baggage. In this instance, they commit themselves to the idea that the landscape was unoccupied and undefined before their arrival. They take total possession stripping the land completely of the definition the Aborigines had given it.

Europeans of the 19th thought of themselves as the civilized and of the native races as savages.² All the explorers adhere to this vision of the two cultures. They considered the Aborigines a people living a savage existence although what they stress within this scheme, for example the fact they are savages or human beings living that way, varies.

---

¹ When something totally new was "discovered" new categories were formed on the basis of these classification principles to encompass it. Thomas Mitchell has a new species of plant and an extinct animal he found named after him.


² Journal of an Expedition into the Interior of Tropical Australia, in search of a route from Sydney to the Gulf of Carpentaria, undertaken by order of the British Government. London, 1848. p. 36.

Another aspect of the explorers' cultural baggage is that they are members of a specific society. This society furnishes them with a framework of ideas as distinct from a way of thinking. Bernard Smith and D.J. Mulvaney, studying the reactions of Australian society to the Aborigines, maintain that by the 1830's the dominant image amongst the colonists was of the savage as a comic, rather ridiculous figure.\(^1\) Mulvaney sees Sturt, Mitchell, Grey and Eyre as reacting against this, stressing instead the humanity and culture of the Aborigines.\(^2\) Mulvaney's point is not factually incorrect, all four explorers he mentions do offer their conclusions on the race as the reality and as evidence the Aborigines have been unfairly judged.\(^3\) What I would refute is any suggestion they are just reacting against an image as that would be to confuse the way they say something for the reason they think it.

---


2. Mulvaney. Ibid.

In determining how the explorer responds to the Aborigines, social images and general cultural baggage are crucial but they are not the only influences. The explorer is also an individual and he is on an expedition. These three factors combine to form the essential context for all the explorers' responses. At any given moment on the expedition they interact and exert varying influence.

For the purpose of analysis I have divided discussion of responses into three parts. The explorers' dealings with the Aborigines which are the actual events of contact, are separated from their descriptions of Aboriginal culture and people. Obviously this is a false distinction as the same person operates in both roles. To remedy this disunity I have included a preface which proceeds in chronological order to outline the distinguishing features of each individual explorers' responses to the Aborigines.

2. THE INDIVIDUAL EXPLORER'S ATTITUDE TO THE ABORIGINES

Charles Sturt and Thomas Mitchell are natural contemporaries. Their explorations encompass the same time span and they crossed each others paths at several points.

Sturt came to Australia in 1827 as a British army captain and during the years 1828 to 1846 he made three inland journeys sponsored by the colonial government. On the first of these expeditions in 1828, Sturt was sent to trace the Macquarie River and in his travels also found and named the Darling River. The following year, exploring the Murrumbidgee River by boat he discovered the Murray River, tracing this to its mouth in South Australia before returning home upstream.

Thomas Mitchell was a Scot and, like Sturt, he arrived in Australia as an officer in the army. He came to work in the survey department, advancing to the position of Surveyor-General of N.S.W. in 1828. In that capacity he lead four expeditions into the interior, radiating north, west and south from Sydney. His first experience was in 1831 exploring the area around the Gwydir and Namnny Rivers and reaching as far as the Darling. Mitchell was subsequently sent twice to trace this river which Sturt had discovered. On his first attempt in 1835, he reached the site of the later day Menindie. Trying again in 1836, he travelled along Sturt's Murray River till he found what he guessed was its junction with the Darling, and then headed south into Victoria, finding rich land he labelled "Australia Felix". Mitchell concluded his exploring career in 1846 with a journey into inland Queensland.\footnote{Thomsen, Gael. "Thomas Livingstone Mitchell" Ibid. pp. 238-242.}

Aborigines played an important role on the journeys of both these explorers. Travelling along major waterways they met many, and often they sought these people for information about the land and included natives as guides in their parties. The outcome of these encounters was vastly different; Sturt never killed any Aborigines, whereas there were five separate incidents of shooting on Mitchell's first three expeditions.
and three of his men were killed.\textsuperscript{1} Mitchell's last expedition was relatively peaceful, though the suggestion is he retreated in the face of potential trouble.\textsuperscript{2}

In the historical and contemporary comparison made between Mitchell and Sturt the latter emerges as the hero, the "gentlest and bravest of Australian explorers", \textsuperscript{3} while Mitchell is represented as the jealous glory-seeker.\textsuperscript{4} The difference in the outcome of their contact with Aborigines is an important ingredient in this judgment. In 1836 a London newspaper, reporting on Mitchell's second expedition, spoke of it being a "singular fact" that with 24 men he couldn't avoid violence. This is compared to Sturt on his Murray expedition maintaining peace despite all the difficulties of river navigation and with only 6 men.\textsuperscript{5} Mitchell was not necessarily an inhumane man, what he lacked was Sturt's patience and control over the situation. Ironically it is what causes him to fail in his dealings that makes Mitchell a more acute observer than Sturt.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} Appendix: 4.
\item \textsuperscript{2} Cumpston, J.H.L. \textit{Thomas Mitchell: Surveyor-General and Explorer}. Melbourne, 1954 p. 190.
\item \textsuperscript{3} Kennedy, D. \textit{Captain Charles Sturt}. London, 1958, p. 32.
\item \textsuperscript{4} This characterization of Mitchell is made particularly by Sturt's biographers. The best example is the recent work by Michael Langley, \textit{Sturt of the Murray: Father of Australian Exploration}. London, 1969. p. 111.
\item \textsuperscript{5} The \textit{London Times} February 25th, 1836.
\end{itemize}
Sturt's personal response to the "savages" does reflect a genuine kindness and sympathy as all his biographers claim.\(^1\) He allowed for Aborigines' fears when meeting them and as an observer he continually stressed their humanity.\(^2\) Sturt had a sincere interest in the Aborigines and by the time of his third expedition considered himself their advocate.\(^3\) He would try to interpret what he saw, comparing "hill", "scrub" and "river" natives. Nonetheless, what is evident in all his descriptions is the centrality of his cultural baggage and personal attitudes to his judgments.

Sturt's behaviour towards the Aborigines appears to mirror his treatment of the men in his exploring parties. He was anxious to act towards them with justice, whilst always enforcing discipline, and he would not have his authority questioned.\(^4\) This personal characteristics of keeping in control gives an aloofness to Sturt's relationships with both groups.

---

4. This theory is partly based on information in the journal of Daniel Brock, a member of Sturt's third expedition. Brock seems to have been an over-sensitive character who hardly had a good word to say about anyone, least of all Sturt. However, his facts generally tally with Sturt's and the journal of the party's surgeon, Dr Harris Browne. If the malice is removed from Brock's statements his journal gives a picture of Sturt's leadership.
To the Desert with Sturt. pp. 127-8, 146-7, 155.
His journals contain almost no personal details about the men on his expeditions,¹ and the study of the diaries of two members of his third expedition indicates that he similarly omitted intimate details about the Aborigines. The two diarists, the party's surgeon Dr. Harris Browne, and Daniel Brock one of the men, refer to a native boy still being with the party late in 1844 and early 1845.² Sturt does not even mention this boy. Nor does he record that December was the time the natives seemed to increase their families, as Browne does, and that they wondered if the socks the Europeans wore were attached to their legs, as Brock relates.³

Sturt's policy of meeting the Aborigines with tact and kindness appeared to work and his experience to confirm that he had the power to manipulate them. He did not see reason to doubt his own standards. Sturt thought an impressive Aborigine was the chief of Cawndilla, there being a grace and polish in his manners that more befitted a drawing room.⁴

---

1. This is a complaint made by Edgar Beale. Sturt: The Chipped Idol. p.202

2. Brock. To the Desert With Sturt. p. 84. wrote in December that Tam-pi-wam, or Bob, was a good lad. Browne offered to ride back from Depot Glen in April 1845 with "our black boy" to get help for Poole, a party member striken with scurvy. Finnis. (ed) "Dr. John Harris Browne's Journal at the Sturt Expedition" in South Australiana. Vol. 5. 1966. pp. 47-8.

Brock. Ibid. p. 134.

The experience of success in contact seems to reinforce rather than undermine the cultural superiority and paternalism in Sturt's attitude. He concluded that overall the Aborigines were a mild and inoffensive race.¹ Confronted with the reality that the movement of Europeans into the countryside more often brought bloodshed than benefits to the Aborigines, he did not question the principle of invasion. Sturt thought that what they needed was a change of approach, and advocated violating the freedom and independence of the people as a method. Children should be taken away from their families and have their savage laws superseded by education for the great ultimate good that civilizing would bring.²

Mitchell's attitude towards the Aborigines is harder to assess. As an explorer he was one of the most overt dispossessors of the Aborigines. Conscious of his role as a harbinger of change, he relished it, considering it almost by divine intention that white intelligent man should inherit the land as he could improve the soil and extend on the natural plan.³ Mitchell's belief in progress didn't swerve⁴ yet he of all the explorers most clearly saw the negative impact this could have on the natives.

---

Mitchell's experience was of the extremes of contact. He had violent clashes with river tribes and made some of the most derogatory remarks about them of any of the explorers. The Darling natives he said were "fire-eaters" and "barbarians". ¹ Conversely, Mitchell used native guides extensively and towards these he lacked Sturt's reserve, speaking of Yuranigh the guide on his 1846 expedition as "my guide, companion, councillor and friend". ²

Mitchell reconciled these paradoxes in himself by altering his observations and judgments according to the type of interaction involved. He increasingly saw Aborigines in large groups as the savages and belligerents, while small peaceful parties or individuals were "children of nature". ³ Towards this latter group he was not only more sympathetic in attitude, as an observer he displayed a keen perception and understanding devoid of Sturt's paternalism. ⁴

Describing the "children of nature" Mitchell contradicts the usual historical depiction of himself as brash and confident and Sturt as modest and sensitive. ⁵ Both men witnessed Aboriginal


2. ibid., Journal of an Expedition into the Interior of Tropical Australia. p. 414.

3. Ibid. p. 70.

4. This point that Mitchell was a perceptive observer despite his "inept dealings" is made by Lyndsay Gardiner, Thomas Mitchell. London, 1962. p. 10.

corroborees in a situation where they felt safe and the different descriptions they give illustrates the point. Sturt thought the dance in which the Aborigines imitated birds and animals was a curiosity worth seeing. He added with a condescension kindly meant, they thought as much of them as Europeans would the finest Convent Garden play.\(^1\) Mitchell's description dwells more on the excitement of the scene, and how the dance invigorates the Aborigines, firing them with energy.\(^2\).

Observing small groups, Mitchell could be more objective, allowing the actual experience to have a greater impact on his judgments. This brought him nearer at times to assessing the Aborigines by their own terms than any of the other explorers. Many praised the physical superiority and skills of the Aborigines; where Mitchell was unique, was in arguing the whites were inferior by comparison.\(^3\) He reflects this experience in his conclusions on the race, drawing attention to the quickness and intelligence of the natives.\(^4\) Mitchell did not portray them as mild and inoffensive as Sturt did, this was not his memory of them.

---

3. The best example of his idea of Aboriginal physical superiority is in his *Journal of an Expedition into the Interior of Tropical Australia* pp. 64-5. On his third expedition Mitchell compares the skills of the Aboriginal guides to those of his men. *Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia*. Vol. 2. p. 162.
Like his contemporaries, Mitchell viewed the Aborigines as mankind on a lower scale. He discussed their customs by parallel to other primitive races on the assumption there was little difference between the races as man approached nearer the condition of the animals.\textsuperscript{1} What Mitchell began to see through his experience was that the Aborigines were happy in their low condition. Having no clothes didn't detract from their beauty as physical specimens\textsuperscript{2}. In fact their nakedness gave them an intensity of enjoyment from nature of which his own "woollen-jacketed, straw-hatted, great-coated race, full of work and care" was ignorant.\textsuperscript{3} This perceiving of Aborigines more in their own terms reaches fruition on his last expedition when he overhears a group singing. Mitchell assumes it is a sign they are happy even though it was a cold night, they had little means of subsistence and there were strangers near. He admits it is not a happiness Europeans would envy.\textsuperscript{4}

Observing Aboriginal skills, physical superiority and happiness, Mitchell starts to ponder what his civilization has to offer. Travelling up to Bogan River in 1846 he blushes for his pallid race as the Aboriginal guides, looking for water, find the "cloven foot" of cattle had been before them exhausting supplies.\textsuperscript{5} On one occasion he determined that all the whites

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} Ibid. Vol. 2. pp. 347-8.
\item \textsuperscript{2} Ibid. Vol. 1. p. 184.
\item \textsuperscript{3} Mitchell, T.L. Journal of an Expedition into Tropical Australia. pp. 160-1.
\item \textsuperscript{4} Ibid. p. 175.
\item \textsuperscript{5} Ibid. pp. 70, 83.
\end{itemize}
bring is negative, teaching the Aborigines the punishment of original sin, before they knew the shame of nakedness. The only real kindness would be for the Europeans to leave these people alone. 1.

The conflict which such observations caused for a 19th man who believed in progress is most obvious on Mitchell’s last expedition. Watching a groups of natives wallowing in the mud, he weighs up the pros and cons. They had no idea of personal hygiene yet they were happy and had perfect teeth whereas a European had decay, even though they ate the best foods and kept themselves clean. The point he makes is, "what then is civilization in the economy of the human animal?" Mitchell seems to ask more generally, what do we offer them that is better than what they have? He finds his answer in seeing animal gratification as transient and dull, while his civilization strives for loftier goals, principally the gratification of the mind. 2.

Mitchell’s experience of small groups, and of living closely with the native guides in his parties, challenged his assumptions of what divided the two cultures. As he saw the Aborigines less as "savages", the Europeans by comparison became less the superior "civilizers". The movement in thought is transitory and restricted to contemplation at the scene of contact. Mitchell believed in the principles of his culture and he emerged from his experiences with his superiority intact and preaching civilizing. 3.

1. Ibid. pp. 65-66.
2. Ibid. p. 329.
George Grey, like Mitchell and Sturt, was a British born explorer with a military background. He came to Australia as the leader of a British government expedition to survey the north west coast. Grey landed at Hanover Bay in 1837 and Shark's Bay in 1839, spending part of the intervening period travelling around Perty.¹ As an explorer Grey had an ignorance that was unsurpassed. He arrived in Australia with no first hand experience of the land or the climate and the harshness of both baffled him. Neither of his two attempts to explore were successful, the 1839 venture degenerating into a desperate struggle for survival.

Beset by so many other difficulties while exploring, the Aborigines became just another environmental hazard, and, with the exception of his trips around Perth, Grey met few. His contact was more with the culture he saw in the landscape, or restricted to observing Kaiber, the native guide he took with him in 1839.

Responding to the Aborigines he did meet, Grey proved himself to be an intelligent observer. He was quick to recognize their skills and instead of being annoyed when Kaiber was of no great value in helping him to survive in strange lands, as John McDouall Stuart was on the one occasion he used a guide, he realized the localized nature of their knowledge.² Grey certainly had no animosity towards these people. However, more than any of the other explorers his position in the land was motivated by a personal ideology that prohibited the formation of a real sympathy.

Grey had spent the years 1830 to 1836 stationed with his regiment in Ireland, where he seems to have become convinced of the need for social reform. He saw the hope for the future in the British colonies and this prompted him to volunteer for exploration.\(^1\). Grey came to Australia a staunch believer in the British Empire, progress, and the civilizing mission, bringing with him all the useful plants and animals he could to convert a barren wilderness into a garden.\(^2\). His plan was to stock the land in an actual attempt to remould the landscape into a form more acceptable to his culture.

Always thinking in terms of progress and development, Grey naturally judges the Aborigines in these terms. He thought the north west coast of Australia could become an important trade point where big profits could be made using native labour, and he discussed their potential to be civilized.\(^3\). Similarly to Mitchell, Grey thought the right of the whites to invade rested in part with their being able to improve the land. He spoke of the Aborigines "anomalous position in a land so fertile".\(^4\). Grey differs from Mitchell in that he never let his experience question this belief; he was too committed to his cause.

\(^1\) Rutherford, J. *Sir George Grey*. pp. 5-7.


\(^3\) Ibid. Vol. 1. p. 252, 279.

Edward Eyre's exploring career and personal background is in contrast to that of the previous three men. He had immigrated to Australia when only 17 and his career in the colonies was largely as a private adventurer. During the years 1837 to 1843 he conducted four private overlanding journeys and led five expeditions. The most important of these was his "Northern Exploring Expedition" between the years 1840 to 1841. Born of the desire of South Australian settlers to extend the available grazing lands and open up an overland stock route to other colonies, Eyre left Adelaide as the leader of this expedition in June 1840. First heading north, he was repulsed by the sterility of the land and instead tried to proceed westwards along the coast. "Waterless horizons" again plagued Eyre and at Fowler's Bay he decided he could succeed only with a smaller party, sending all but his overseer Baxter, and three native guides home. Eyre and one of these natives reached King George's Sound in July 1841. Baxter was murdered along the way by the other two natives.

Eyre did not meet many Aborigines on this "long, harassing journey" but towards those he did he showed a kindness reminiscent of Sturt. The two men were personal friends and it is likely that the already successful Sturt had a strong

---


influence on the youthful Eyre.1 Eyre's response differed from Sturt's, however, in that he extended the reason and tolerance which Sturt illustrated in his dealings to his judgment of individual behaviour.2 Where Sturt would dismiss negative behaviour as characteristic of a savage,3 Eyre would look for the reasoning of a human being living as a savage. It needs to be added that Eyre probably experienced the Aborigines more as individuals that the other explorers. He travelled in small parties and always used native guides.4

The best example of Eyre's personal attitude is his reaction to the murder of Baxter. Native improvidence in making no allowance for their future needs was something all the explorers noted and thought betrayed the Aborigines as savages.5

1. Sturt was closely associated with the "Northern Exploring Expedition". He helped to raise funds for its organization and supported Eyre as the choice for a leader. For a time he was chairman of the expedition's organizing committee. Eyre took copies of Sturt's journal with him on the expedition. Ibid. Vol. 1. p. 5, 346.


3. Sturt thought, for example, that desertion by native guides could be explained by the savage's love of freedom. Two Expeditions. Vol. 2. p. 60.

4. Dutton, The Hero as Murderer refers to Eyre as the loneliest of the Australian explorers. p. 11. Eyre himself provides the evidence he experienced the Aborigines as individuals. Speaking of two of the natives with him on the 1840-1 expedition, Eyre says one had been with him for four years and the other for two and a half. Journals of Expeditions of Discovery. Vol. 2. p. 24.

5. For example, Sturt, Narrative of an Expedition into Central Australia. Vol. 1. pp. 142-3.
Eyre wrote that they gorged themselves on food and water whenever they could, having no idea of temperance, prudence or the evils arising from excess.\textsuperscript{1} Such a judgment is in itself cultural baggage; it is a European concept of time to plan for the future and was almost a moral for\textsuperscript{19}th men, the bible itself stating "sufficient for the day is the evil thereof".\textsuperscript{2} That the explorers should particularly notice improvidence is understandable as from the uncertainty of their position in the land they had to exercise great caution in their use of food and water.

To Eyre with his strong belief in duty,\textsuperscript{3} the rashness of the natives was anathema. Nevertheless, he appreciated that this notion of storage of resources was not comprehended by them, and he was sympathetic to the guides' complaining about food shortages.\textsuperscript{4} When considering the motives behind Baxter's murder this becomes one of the extenuating circumstances in judging the natives. Eyre looks at the reasoning of a savage and a human and decides "Nor would Europeans, perhaps, have acted better".\textsuperscript{5}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1} Eyre, E.J. \textit{Journals of Expeditions of Discovery}. Vol. 1. pp. 270-1, 288.
  \item \textsuperscript{2} Dutton, G. \textit{The Hero as Murderer}. p. 113.
  \item \textsuperscript{3} Eyre is continually talking of his duty to the settlers to make the journey a success. \textit{Journals of Expeditions of Discovery}. Vol. 1. p. 314.
  \item \textsuperscript{4} Ibid. Vol. 1. p. 370.
  \item \textsuperscript{5} Ibid. Vol. 2. pp. 24-7.
\end{itemize}
The sort of detailed information that the journals of Sturt, Mitchell, Eyre and Grey contain about the Aborigines is noticeably lacking in those of later land explorers, John McDouall Stuart and Augustus Charles Gregory. Neither used Aborigines as guides in their parties, \(^1\), nor did they habitually go out of their way to meet them. Aborigines on the journeys of these two seem to be of incidental importance except as a threat to safety. \(^2\). They are rarely mentioned in Gregory's journal and Stuart, although he refers to them more, did not meet great numbers until his sixth expedition. The lack of information in Stuart's journals is the more surprising as he spent a total of 3½ years away from civilization \(^3\) and the route he took is said to have been heavily populated by Aborigines at the time. \(^4\).

---

1. Stuart had used a native guide on his first expedition north of Adelaide in 1858 and was not impressed, finding him of no particular value in navigating the land or finding water. 

2. Stuart regularly articulates the attitude that all he wanted from contact was peace. At Bishop's Creek in May 1860, for example, he was resting his horses after a long spell without water and some natives were bothering the party. Stuart conducts an interview with them, and then writes: "I hope they will not trouble us anymore but let me get my horses rested in peace". 
Ibid. p. 206.


The reason for this virtual lack of response appears to lie with their position in the time span selected; they were a different breed of explorers engaged on a different type of work. They went exploring with specific goals in mind rather than to remedy general ignorance about the interior as earlier explorers did.¹

Gregory in particular appears to lack the idealism of the others. He was employed by different groups in the years 1848, 1855 to 1856, and 1858, to explore the land for their purposes.² Stuart's expeditions between the years 1858 and 1862 were along a basic route north of Adelaide which he progressively extended over six journeys reaching the Indian Ocean in 1862. The South Australian government sponsored his

---


2. Gregory had conducted two brief expeditions around Perth with his brothers and some other settlers in 1846. The success of these expeditions led to the formation of the "Settlers Expedition" in 1848 north of Perth, organised by the colonists and supported by the government, with Gregory being appointed leader. He was recommended by the Governor of Western Australia to lead the "North Australia Expedition" of 1855 to 1856. This expedition was born of agitation in England to open up the top north western corner of Australia because of the area's access to Asian markets. His last "job" in 1858, was on behalf of the N.S.W. government to search for the lost explorer Ludwig Leichardt and simultaneously to link up the surveys of Kennedy and Mitchell. Waterson, D.B. "Augustus Charles Gregory in Australian Dictionary of Biography: 1851-1890. Melbourne, 1969. Vol. 4. pp. 293-5.
last two expeditions, hoping that the discovery of a
route across the continent would bring trade and the overland
telegraph to Adelaide.\footnote{Quick, M. "John McDouall Stuart" in Journal and
Proceedings of R.A.H.S. Vol. 49, 1963. pp. 304-6.} To cross the continent was Stuart's
great dream and he fought desperately hard for the distinction.\footnote{One historian speaks of Stuart as a martyr to this
case. Grimm, G. The Australian Explorers: Their Labors,
Perils and Achievements. Melbourne and Sydney, 1888, p. 194.}

Achieving their specific exploration aims was top
priority for Gregory and Stuart and they could afford to
ignore the Aborigines more because they needed them less.
In their exploring work Gregory and Stuart did not face the
environmental "unknowns" to the extent of earlier explorers.\footnote{To Sturt, for example, the climate was still strange.
He explained to his readers in the journal of his third
expedition that what would seem a fine temperature in
England was experienced as harshness in Australia
because of the rapid variation that occurred.
Narrative of an Expedition into Central Australia.
Vol. 1. p. 193.}

They expected to find harshness inland; Stuart had been a
member of Sturt's third expedition and Gregory received advice
from Sturt about the interior before leaving in 1855.\footnote{"Proposed Exploration by A.C. Gregory and Mr. E. Hang
with correspondence from Charles Sturt." South Australian
Parliamentary papers. 1854. no. 117.}

With no illusions of inland seas or north west flowing rivers,\footnote{Sturt's great dream was to find an inland sea and
Mitchell's is said to have been an inland river that
flowed north west to the sea.
Gardiner, L. Thomas Mitchell p. 26.}
they were not incumbered by transporting whale boats as
Sturt and Mitchell were.
Stuart and Gregory did most of their exploring work with relatively small, light parties. They used horses instead of heavily loaded drays and a feature of their journeys are the immense distances travelled. Gregory took four months to accomplish what took another explorer a year, and Stuart covered 10,000 miles on his last three expeditions. Obviously such mobility worked against close observation of the Aborigines. The botanist on Stuart's 1862 expedition complained his small collection was a result of "our hasty mode of travelling."

Stuart and Gregory were less vulnerable to the environment and consequently to the aid Aborigines could offer in navigating it. Travelling by horseback they did not need natives to select the best routes for drays, and they could travel further before they needed water. To find their daily water, small parties were sent to scout in advance when in unfamiliar areas. Aborigines they met were questioned for information about this precious substance but the movement of their parties was not restricted by obtaining such aid.


Self-reliance is what distinguishes Stuart and Gregory from earlier explorers. They were not soldiers leading armies of exploration as much as "professional bush journeymen",\(^1\) having spent the years prior to leading expeditions, surveying and travelling in outlying areas.\(^2\). They didn't need to rely on the Aborigines as they had their own skills. Other explorers praised the tracking ability of the Aborigines while Stuart did this himself. He could tell from one set of native footprints that they had been running and in which direction.\(^3\).

The result is that their journals contain little spontaneous observation of Aboriginal life; they didn't communicate with many, they didn't experience their skills, and what they did see of Aboriginal life they tended to relate to their own purposes. Stuart notices a large pile of mussels around a waterhole less as an indication of native diet than that the water was permanent.\(^4\).

---


4. Ibid. p. 113.
All the explorers recognized there was a risk in contact to the safety of the party which was offset to some extent by their perception of the benefits the Aborigines could be. How well they were surviving themselves in the land influenced their willingness to take that risk. Sturt's behaviour on his third expedition illustrates the point. Actively seeking Aborigines for information about water when advancing, he could afford to ignore them when heading home from Cooper's Creek to a known water supply.\(^1\) How Sturt reasoned under the particular circumstances was how Gregory and Stuart reasoned generally; the risk involved in contact outweighed benefits received.

3. DEALINGS: THE EVENTS OF CONTACT

Whilst there is a divergence in what the explorers were seeking from contact, a safe assumption is that peace was a common goal. Apart from the claims of humanity, they all appreciated that conflict with the Aborigines threatened the success of the expedition and most were cautioned to avoid it where possible.\(^2\) All, however, resorted at times to violent gestures to disperse the Aborigines such as firing guns above their heads and charging them with horses, and only Eyre and Sturt did not shoot Aborigines.

1. Manuscript Diary of Captain Sturt: April 9th, 1845 - November 10th, 1845. Archives Department, Public Library of South Australia. No. 28. Entry October 16th, 1845.

2. Appendix: 5.
In discussing what brought the explorers presumably against their will to the use of violence, the Aborigines remain an extraneous variable. Although comparison reveals that the explorers reacted differently to similar behaviour by the Aborigines, indicating other variables must be operating. Sturt and Mitchell achieved different results when travelling in the same area, and Gregory, who met few Aborigines, had more violent encounters than others who met many. The difference amongst the explorers is not in how they read the situation. Variation is manifested in the individual's sense of an alternative to violence, determined more by his own attitude and experiences.

Every event of contact occurs at a specific moment in time but the explorers brought to that moment a common perception of themselves and the Aborigines. These 19th men thought of the Aborigines as savages, and this idea affected both how they responded to them in contact and how they read their experiences. Basically, they all subscribed to the notion that it could be assumed the Aborigines would attack unless proven otherwise, as they were savages unused to restraining their passions. Humanity was always tempered by a firmness believed necessary when dealing with dangerous savages.

The explorers realized some of their activities annoyed the Aborigines such as camping on their waterholes, but they didn't see their presence in the land as cause for complaint. Mitchell concedes in retrospect that the hostile Darling natives were probably reacting to what they sensed was an invasion,1 and others

---

allowed that the Aborigines might justifiably resent the intrusion of the Europeans.\(^1\) While they could contemplate the principle, in their travels through the land the explorers did not treat it as owned and, not acknowledging themselves as trespassers, did not ask permission to enter. Towards the Aborigines they met they considered themselves peaceful in intention and thus they sought the reason for violence in Aboriginal behaviour.

Grey's claim to being attacked by Aborigines is perhaps the most realistic. Twice on his first expedition they appeared from nowhere, armed and aggressive, and he did not shoot to kill until spears were thrown.\(^2\) Grey saw his experience as proving that the Aborigines were savages who acted on impulse.\(^3\) He did not connect the events with the fact his party had landed at what he noticed was a favourite fishing spot of the natives.\(^4\). In Grey's terms, what an Aborigine would resent was his accidentally shooting one of their dogs\(^5\), not the unceremonious intrusion of his party into their land.

---


With the exception of Grey, violence generally erupts before Aboriginal weapons are thrown, implying that the result is based on an interpretation of Aboriginal intentions. In their definition of what constitutes "hostile intentions" there are elements common to all the explorers. Crucial to their reading of the situation is the idea of dangerous savages. What causes Stuart to shoot Aborigines at Attack Creek in 1860, and convinces Mitchell of the need for violence to control the natives at Menindie in 1835 and Mt. Dispersion in 1836, is not in essence dissimilar to why others disperse them by violent gestures.

In all the acts of violence on the expeditions, a feeling of the party being vulnerable and of the leader losing control was apparent. The number of Aborigines relative to the numbers of the party was directly related to their sense of security. Even though the explorers believed in the power of their guns it was recognized they could only do so much when numbers were large. Mitchell at Menindie does a rough calculation of the number of Aborigines per men and guns and feels insecure.1 Sturt, who experienced little trouble from the Aborigines on his 1828 expedition, concluded afterwards it was unsafe to go into the interior with less than 15 men because of them.2

The explorers own concepts of space similarly affected their sense of security. They didn't like being in a position where they felt the natives had an advantage. Nor did they like the Aborigines surrounding the party or invading their personal space by touching them. Positive peaceful contact is represented as that where order and decorum are maintained.

These fears are inspired by the assumption of native treachery, usually resulting from negative contact experiences in which the natives were seen as the hostile ones. Eyre on his expedition round The Bight frightened off a group of Aborigines who had been particularly friendly on the grounds of prudence as he saw them numerically and spatially advantaged.

1. Stuart, describing the attack on his party by Aborigines in 1860, emphasized it was done while they were in a scrub. Hardman, W. (ed) *Explorations in Australia. The Journals of John McDouall Stuart.* p. 216. Sturt noted while on his Murray voyage that his party was nervous travelling in narrow sections of the river as it was thought the natives could easily attack. *Two Expeditions.* Vol. 2. p. 209.

2. Sturt's 1830 Murray expedition provides the best illustration of this point. He wrote in January of how the party tired of contact with the Aborigines as these people were always pulling them about and fingerling them. Sturt admitted the situation was aggravated by the "abominable filth" of the natives. *Two Expeditions.* Vol. 2. pp. 131-2.

3. Eyre wrote "the best conducted, most obliging natives I ever met with" were a group who did not trouble or importune for anything and didn't crowd around "in that unmannerly disagreeable manner, which savages frequently adopt". *Journals of Expeditions of Discovery.* Vol. 1. p. 223.

Not unnaturally "shipping spears" was read as "hostile intentions" but so was other not necessarily aggressive Aboriginal behaviour. The noise they made with their "war songs" and shouting, and their dancing, jumping or throwing dust, are ingredients of the majority of descriptions of scenes of violence. Witnessing these activities so vastly different from their own behavioural patterns induced ideas of barbarity, evil savages, and fear amongst the explorers. Stuart, telling the story of Attack Creek, described the noise as "fearful"[^1] and thought the natives' jumping about made them appear "like so many fiends"[^2]. A group of Aborigines dancing in a circle at Menindie reminded Mitchell of the witches in Macbeth.[^3]

More directly related to the outbreak of violence was the Aborigines lighting fires near camp, following the party and stealing.

Writing on violence in the culture contact situation, Greg Dening has defined it as the ultimate social control likely to occur when cultural divisions are so great no other controls are possible.[^4]. Convinced they displayed friendship towards the natives, the explorers certainly thought they used violence when Aboriginal behaviour allowed for no other controls. Evidence suggests this may have been a misreading produced by their own assumptions and fears, and an example is provided by

---

[^1]: South Australian Register. October 6th, 1860.
[^4]: Dening, G. Islands and Beaches. p. 4.
one of their number. Charles Sturt, in common with the others, saw the Aborigines lighting fires near camp as an overture to attack. After once experiencing success in avoiding this outcome, Sturt decided it was a fear based reaction.\(^1\). That the explorers mistook fear reactions for aggression is a possibility. A Warramungu tribesman recalling Stuart's visit to Attack Creek, told an anthropologist that there had been no attack the Aborigines just wanted to get Stuart out of the area.\(^2\).

Most of the explorers could comprehend tangible fear responses in individuals, such as climbing trees on their approach. However, they didn't apply this standard to group behaviour. Threatened by the danger of fires to their safety, feeling vulnerable because they were outnumbered or outpositioned, frightened by the noise and strange dances of the Aborigines, they could see only aggression.

On the other hand, the explorers were unable to communicate verbally with the majority of Aborigines they met. They relied on expressing their peaceful intentions via gestures, often in themselves cultural assumptions. The explorers thought for example, they could display friendship by leaving Aboriginal camps undisturbed. What an Aboriginal might be more inclined to notice was not what they didn't take, but

---

rather the strange footprints they left behind.\(^1\)

Lack of communication was something the explorers didn't allow for in their analysis of why conflict occurred. Insurmountable cultural divisions and a misreading of the meanings behind behaviour may have been what evoked violent responses from normally humane men.\(^2\) Mitchell's comments on returning from conflict with the Darling natives in 1835 seem symbolic. He was happy to be again amongst Bogan River Aborigines as they spoke a few words he understood, making them appear infinitely less savage "after the total want of any common terms with the savages we had lately seen".\(^3\)

---

1. Stuart made such gestures.
   This can be compared to information an anthropologist collected from men of the Aranda tribe in 1933 who remembered Stuart's journey of 1860. These Aborigines spoke of being terrified of the footprints left by the men and their horses. Stehlow. Comments on the Journals of John McDouall Stuart. p.8.

2. Sturt, for example, gets annoyed when information obtained from the Aborigines about the environment turned out to be incorrect. He concluded one couldn't depend on what they said as they exaggerated and he blamed himself for believing them.
   Eyre experienced how there could be mutual misunderstanding in such situations. Meeting a group of natives on his second attempt to get around the Bight in 1841, Eyre followed them thinking they were leading him to water. The Aborigines took Eyre to the beach and he realized they probably thought his party had come from the sea and wanted to return. He realizes it was his own assumptions that made him think they were being lead to drinking water. Journals of Expeditions of Discovery. Vol. 1. p. 238.

Given the consensus on what constitutes a danger situation, the variation in the outcome of meetings with the Aborigines was a matter of how each explorer responded. They were all individuals with their own understanding of their experiences and they operated under a particular set of circumstances created by the state of the expedition.

In terms of avoiding violence when they saw themselves threatened, Sturt, Eyre and possibly Stuart, are the most successful. They tempered their humanity with both a firmness and an allowance for what they saw as the Aborigines' fears.

Sturt was the originator of this response, developed on his 1828 expedition when travelling with Hamilton Hume, an experienced explorer with some knowledge of the Aborigines. Sturt witnessed how both Hume and himself could placate Aborigines who seemed bent on "mischiev" by allowing for their naturaltimidity and not exciting their savage instincts.¹ Sturt developed a policy of approaching slowly, keeping the animals away as they frightened the Aborigines. Brandishing a green bough he thought they recognized as the emblem of peace, he would then sit down noticing this was their customary way to meet people. Once peace was established friendship was displayed by presents, and power by firing off a gun.² Eyre and Stuart, both personally connected with Sturt, practised variations of this method.³

---

Sturt remains unique in that he consistently tried to convey concepts beyond friendship to the Aborigines. Using presents as the gesture, he regulated their flow to demonstrate that the whites liked order and punished theft.\textsuperscript{1} Sturt didn't just disperse Aborigines when they became disagreeable as other explorers did. He tried to bridge the communication barrier by non-verbal, peaceful gestures that allowed for conveyance of his meanings.

Sturt intended only good will and actively strove for peace. His experience illustrates the variables determining the outcome of contact may be less Aboriginal behaviour than the individual's attitude, itself reliant on how well he was surviving in the land. Travelling down the Murray in 1830, Sturt carefully cultivated peaceful relations with the Aborigines. Returning home aware of the route to civilization, and conscious of how far this was to travel with few provisions and exhausted men, Sturt lost his patience and several times used violent gestures with the Aborigines.\textsuperscript{2} He threatened to shoot one native whose fishing net was stretched across the river, assuming it was a deliberate attempt to impede his progress.\textsuperscript{3}

\begin{enumerate}
\item Sturt actually gave the order once to the man on duty to shoot on some Aborigines who were prowling around at night and making such a din the party couldn't sleep. Fortunately for Sturt's reputation, the man fired without taking aim. \textit{Ibid}. Vol. 2. pp. 210-2.
\end{enumerate}
Mitchell's record of contact in terms of the number of violent incidents with Aborigines was disastrous. All the shooting was done by his men without orders, but he was psychologically as prepared for violence as they were.¹ What Mitchell lacked was what Sturt in particular had; control over his men and the contact situation.

On Mitchell's first expedition one man was nearly captured by Aborigines because he lagged behind the rest of the party.² This sharply contrasts with someone like Stuart who always kept himself or his second-in-command at the front and rear of the procession.³ Unlike Sturt, Eyre, and Stuart, Mitchell regularly let others make the advances to the Aborigines. A man called Dawkins was used on his first expedition,⁴ and nearly got himself speared on one


³ Fragments of some remarks by Stuart on the conduct of members of his 1862 expedition. Loose sheets accompanying his manuscript journal, the so called "pencil diaries". Archives Department, Public Library of South Australia. No. 27. p. 1.

⁴ The reason Mitchell let others make the advances to the Aborigines seems to be because he had a bias toward verbal communication. The people he sent to communicate with the natives were usually those he thought might be able to understand the language. Native guides were often used for this purpose. Dawkins seems to have been employed on the first expedition because he could speak the half English/half Aboriginal language stockmen used with the native's. Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia. Vol. I. pp. 63-4.
occasion when he tried to imitate friendship by tasting a 
kangaroo which some natives left roasting in their flight from 
camp. Mitchell said that Dawkins had been warned of the 
necessity for a gradual approach "but he was an old tar and 
Jack likes his own way of proceeding on shore".¹ Lack of 
control and fear and uncertainty characterize the violence 
that occurs on Mitchell's expeditions.

After experiencing "native aggression" Mitchell 
abandoned the use of "friendly gestures" and was ruled by a 
conviction of native treachery.² On the issue of using 
presents as a gesture, Mitchell portrays very clearly his 
cultural bias in reading his experiences. He had used 
presents to demonstrate friendship but he did not make such 
a gesture of the giving as Sturt did. Mitchell gave one 
present to a chief who had just tried to steal his handkerchief³ 
and to another who appeared more intelligent and less covetous 
than the rest.⁴ Despite this random distribution, Mitchell 
was certain that the Aborigines understood his meaning and 
equally certain he rightly judged their reaction to it. He 
declared presents couldn't be given to savages; as instead of 
being received "with that sense of obligation, which might 
have been shewn by any class of human beings, however savage"⁵.

¹. Ibid. Vol. 1. p. 87.
⁵. Ibid. Vol. 1. p. 293.
the presents convinced the Aborigines the whites were weak. ¹
Mitchell's judgment rests on his own culture's system of
meanings; "gifts" are a gesture of goodwill and "stealing" is
a malicious action. He assumes the Aborigines understand the
difference; that a "possession" is attained when something is
put in your hands, whereas it is "theft" if you take it
yourself out of someone's pocket or off the ground. Mitchell's
attitude is not untypical he just emphasizes the point more
than the others.

Gregory's conviction of native treachery seems to engender
violence on his expeditions. The closest thing he had to a
contact policy was defence. On his 1856 expedition, for example,
some Aborigines were detected "stealing into camp" one night
and he decided that as they were clearly up to no good they must
be dispersed. He fired a gun above their heads, and when they
responded by slipping their spears, fired at them. ² In
fairness it must be noted Gregory had already witnessed a
native attack³, and his official instructions for his 1848
expedition quoted the experiences of Grey, Mitchell and Eyre,
as exemplifying the need to remember the nature of barbarians. ⁴
Again for Gregory the cumulative knowledge gathered by the
time of his expeditions influenced his response.

---

3. Gregory was a member of "His Excellency Governor Charles
   Fitzgerald's Expedition to the Geraldine Mine, 1848". A
group of natives made a surprise attack on the party
and the Governor was speared.
   Ibid. pp. 32-3.
4. "Colonial Secretary; s Letter giving directions to
   Gregory August 28th, 1848" in *Journal of the Royal
4. DESCRIPTIONS: OBSERVATIONS OF ABORIGINAL CULTURE AND PEOPLE

How safe the explorers felt in the contact situation had a direct relationship to their responses in their other role as observers of Aboriginal culture and people. Meeting large groups their descriptions concentrate on outward forms; the appearance of the natives, and whether they practised any strange customs such as extracting teeth; or what was relevant to the explorers safety, the numbers of Aborigines, their weapons, manner, and whether they understood the whites' gestures. All the explorers find "chiefs" among the tribes but Eyre later writes chiefs are not a feature of Aboriginal society.\(^1\) Presumably this misconception arose from the need to focus their communication gestures on a person. Observing small groups the fear was taken out of contact and the explorers could dwell more on Aboriginality; the habits and customs of the people.\(^2\) Judgments vary according to the type of contact involved, as what they could admire about an individual such as a bold spirit seemed more defiance when manifested in large groups.\(^3\)

---


2. Charles Sturt provides an illustration of this point in the description he gives of a tribe met on his journey down the Murray, as opposed to what he notices about four natives following the party several days later. Two Expeditions. Vol. 2. pp. 95-6, pp. 113-4.

3. Mitchell on his 1835 expedition admired the "manly conduct" of some Aborigines covering the retreat of their fellows upon the approach of his party. On another occasion when Aborigines came boldly forward making signs for the party to be off Mitchell thought it defiance. Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia. Vol. 1. p. 284, 245.
In coming to terms with this experience of Aboriginal culture and people the explorers used the way of thinking provided by their own culture. They did not describe and judge Aboriginal culture so much as the "knows" they could recognize or what was unusual to either their own experience or that of their society. Observing the Aborigines they made conscious judgments and looking through the eyes of their own culture extended this process to the very things they noticed. Their descriptions often tell us more about the attitudes and prejudices of 19th century Europeans than about the Aborigines.1.

The explorers recognized the people as good physical specimens, although the degree of admiration depended on the individual. Charles Sturt, the "English, tory gentleman", was the least impressed2. and "plucky little" Stuart, himself short of stature, the most enthusiastic thinking them wonderfully tall.3. Muscular strength and physical development were

---


3. The description of Stuart as a "plucky little fellow" is made by Sturt and quoted by one of Stuart's biographers. Mudie, I.M. The Heroic Journey of John McDouall Stuart p. 158. Stuart described a tribe he wasn't impressed with as small. John McDouall Stuart's Explorations Across the Continent of Australia. (Baillier edition) p. 61.
attributes the explorers could understand and admire; perhaps
were even frightened of. Mitchell wrote watching a native hunt:

"Had I been unarmed I had much rather
have met a lion than that sinewy biped."1.

Aboriginal women did not share the compliment, the
explorers thought them fairly miserable creatures. They
couldn't admire their physical strength nor could they see any
beauty in these females so different from perfumed and
corsetted Victorian ladies. Sturt and Mitchell both found what
they judged attractive females, and their distinction rests on
their being unlike Aborigines. Sturt's beauty had long curly
locks of clean hair,2. and Mitchell's was so far from black
that the colour was very apparent in her cheeks.3.

What the explorers generally viewed as the positive
attributes of the Aborigines and their society tended to be
those characteristics that most closely paralleled their own
cultural norms. Humanity was noted when expressed in forms
the explorers could understand; when they saw familial affection
or emotional ties between Aborigines.4.

1. Mitchell, T.L. Three Expediti ons into the Interior of

2. Manuscript diary of Captain Sturt April 9th, 1845 -
November 10th, 1845. Entry October 8th.

3. Mitchell, T.L. Three Expeditions into the Interior of

4. Sturt, Charles. Narrative of an Expedition into Central
Mitchell, T.L. Journal of an Expedition into the Interior
of Tropical Australia. pp. 111-2.
Hardman, W. (ed) Explorations in Australia. The
Conversely, bad was that which was really different and the explorers couched these in terms of "savage characteristics". Especially noted was the lack of personal hygiene amongst these "savages". The explorers wrote of filthy hair,"fishy paws", and revolting habits such as eating half cooked food and drinking fat.¹ Making no allowance for future needs was considered characteristic of savages, as was their treatment of women. Aboriginal marriage was seen as less co-operation than exploitation, with women being forced to provide for themselves and treated as beasts of burden when the Aborigines were on the move.² Such was not the 19th man's idea of family, or the woman's role. Misunderstanding of the duties of Aboriginal women is common, perhaps born of its being the men who normally approached the explorers. Women and children were mostly seen on their travels alone and apparently deserted.

Observing Aboriginal culture the explorers dwelt on its outward manifestations; weapons, food gathering equipment, huts and graves. Within this range there was a bias towards discussing the economic factors of life. This stress was partly because these things were most obvious to their eyes.


It was also partly because they could look at such things as fishing nets and know their purpose, making possible value judgments of a conscious nature. Huts, for example, were clearly for protection from the elements and, as such, thought rude structures. The explorers reveal their cultural assumptions by judging good huts as being those of a more permanent nature. Mitchell thought some he found with thatched roofs indicated that their owners were more rational beings.¹

Generally the explorers appreciated Aboriginal skills in hunting, and often praised their nets and the wells they dug for water. Overall though, they thought the Aborigines had a low standard of living. Commenting on native diet they wrote of "principal foods", implying both lack of variety and scarcity.

Sturt decided that in many areas the natives had a scanty and precarious existence.² He noticed they ate the vegetable productions of the land, and thought that usage of these foods meant the natives were reduced to the last extremity.³ Gregory defined the diet of Cooper’s Creek Aborigines as fish, rats, grass seeds, and a few roots.⁴ Mitchell admitted the Aborigines had adapted well to the

meagre resources of the land. At the same time he implied that lack of food was a population depressant by suggesting a wild breed of cattle be introduced to increase the Aborigines' numbers.¹

Eyre and Grey deviate from this idea, arguing that in their natural state the Aborigines were not pressed for food.² Eyre's disagreement can be traced to his exploring experiences, proving economic scarcity was an interpretation not a fact.

Characteristic of this myth of scarcity is that its adherents see animal food as the major component of the Aborigines' diet rather than plant foods.³ Examining the remains at native camps, they recognized the bones of fish and animals and they could see these creatures present in the landscape.⁴ Vegetable productions were less obvious to their

---


Grey notices in this passage (pp. 258-9) the comment made by Sturt that the Aborigines eating mimosa gum cakes showed they were reduced to the last extremity (footnote 3, previous page). Grey says these cakes were in fact a favourite item of food amongst the natives and deemed a luxury.


4. George Grey provides an obvious example of this process. Landing on the north-west coast in 1837 he found the remains of nuts and mussels at a native camp. Shortly afterwards Grey refers to these two items as constituting "the food" of the natives. Journals of Two Expeditions of Discovery. Vol. 1. p. 104, 109.
eyes. They had more reason to notice the spears of Aboriginal men, as they were a threat to their safety, than the digging sticks of the women. 1 Thus, when the explorers could see no animals they assumed the Aborigines had little food. 2

This misreading of Aboriginal diet is simultaneously a misreading of the landscape, born of judging it from the perspective of the explorers own culture's needs. Sturt's comments about diet mainly pertain to his first and third expeditions when he travelled in arid areas. 3 His eyes were looking for grass and water. Unable to satisfy his needs, Sturt decided it was a sterile environment. Rather than seeing plenty for the natives, he thought they partook of the poverty of the land. 4 The explorers as a group equated

1. Blainey, G. Triumph of the Nomads. p. 158.

2. In the area of New Years' Creek in 1828, Sturt finding the country barren, decided the natives must have been forced off this land as they could no longer survive there. Two Expeditions. Vo. 1. pp. 73-4.

3. Sturt's first expedition in 1828 was to explore the Macquarie River that Oxley had discovered but was prevented from tracing completely because of marshes. In 1828 the colony was in a drought so it was hoped this problem would be negated. Sturt went inland conscious the country was suffering from a bad drought and he looks to see how the Aborigines coped with this adversity. Two Expeditions. Vol. 1. pp. 1-2, 149-150. Similarly, on his third expedition one of the major barriers to progress was lack of water. Narrative of an Expedition into Central Australia. Vol. 2. p. 123.

abundance with things green; grass and lush valleys.¹

Mitchell, who didn't share Sturt's ignorance of vegetable productions since the native guides on his last two expeditions pointed them out, makes the same mistakes. Travelling down the Lachlan River in 1836, he noticed the natives had some unusual balls which he thought might be hemp. "Barney", one of the guides, explains to Mitchell that they were a food, and Mitchell speculates this must be the "staff of life" in such barren areas.²

Underlying Mitchell's response, and most likely that of the others, is a prejudice against the land in its natural state³ and against the nomadic Aborigines for not developing it. Mitchell's thoughts were towards improving the land and he judged Aboriginal society static and helpless because they lacked the ability to do this.⁴ Aware that the Aborigines


3. Sturt had no great respect for the land he saw on his travels. He wrote in his introduction to Two Expeditions that so far in N.S.W. no indigenous fruits of any value had been found. Sturt spoke of "the poverty of the soil in N.S.W." pp. LVII, XL.

ate roots and ant larvae, he considered this indifferent food requiring more labour to extract than would be necessary to cultivate the soil "Under the more provident arrangements of civilized man". ¹

Eyre's experience on his 1840 to 1841 expedition illustrates how this instinctive way of thinking could only be broken down by the experience of alternative empirical evidence. On the journey north Eyre seems to operate under the same assumptions as the others. Meeting an old man abandoned by his tribe, Eyre explains that the discarding of the weak was necessary in a savage society when a large extent of ground had to be wandered over to procure daily food. ²

Journeying westward, Eyre had to continually battle to survive in a harsh environment. The contrast between his experience of the land and the observed fact the natives survived there, fosters a breakdown of the myth of a food scarcity amongst the Aborigines.

While travelling to Fowler's Bay, a group of natives accompanied the party collecting five different types of food along the way. Eyre records his surprise at the apparent ease with which they each secured an abundance of food for the day by merely walking across the country.¹ Forced to be more reliant on native foods, Eyre consciously breaks through the cultural barriers of food prejudice² that caused Mitchell and Sturt to label various native vegetables indifferent.³ He noticed more what foods the Aborigines ate, and he could appreciate their value, praising a flog root as excellent and nutritious.⁴

Eyre found his own skills were irrelevant in this barren environment and he learnt to value native methods. He had used native guides before but Aborigines, in the life and death struggle this expedition became, were directly and indirectly of greater positive benefit. A technique observed from them of obtaining water from morning dew saved the lives of the party in April.⁵ Similarly, Eyre only succeeded in

1. Ibid. Vol. 1. p. 213.
2. Ibid. Vol. 1. p. 381.
rounding the Head of the Bight because he followed a native pathway and a group of natives helped dig out a well.¹

Eyre's cultural superiority was humbled by his experience. He decided the presence of natives in an area was no proof of the existence of visible water as they had skills in obtaining it which whites lacked. Unimpeded by the myth of economic scarcity he could eventually see the two cultures judged the worth of lands by different standards. What Europeans thought barren and worthless were valuable and productive areas to the Aborigines.²

The economic bias in the explorers' descriptions reflects the fact that it was harder for them to see and judge the intangibles of Aboriginal culture. Clothes, ornaments, buildings and artifacts were their usual standards for assessing a culture.³ Finding the Aborigines lacked these

¹. Ibid. Vol. 1. p. 278.
   Eyre later wrote, and it seems based on this exploring experience, that the Aborigines had a psychological adaptation to the land. They were not frightened of barren areas as Europeans were. Confident in their own resources, the Aborigines calmly collected their daily needs of food and water before they required them. Europeans had more difficulty surviving in harsh lands because their terror increased their distress. Ibid. Vol. 2. pp. 254-5.
things, they thought them devoid of the finer things of life.¹

None of the explorers had any great respect for Aboriginal culture since to their eyes it was largely invisible.²

---

1. The point that the explorers didn't respect a culture that lacked all their usual standards for assessment is best evidenced by Sturt's description of the Darling natives. He described what clothes they did have, noted that they lived mainly on fish and mentioned their weapons. He then added they weren't warlike, didn't take pride in their arms, and appeared to have no idea of a superintending Providence. Sturt concluded:

"On the whole I would say they are a people at present, at the very bottom of the scale of humanity."

Geoffrey Blainey, Triumph of the Nomads p. 217., has argued that Europeans of the 19th saw lack of clothing as a sign of material poverty and again this is most obvious in the case of Sturt. He continually notes in his journal how the Aborigines suffered from the cold and wrote at the conclusion of his exploring career:

"Nor would any charity be greater than to supply these poor people with clothing."


2. The problem of the invisibility of Aboriginal culture was greater for the later explorers who had little real communication with the natives. When three Aborigines visited Gregory's camp on his 1856 expedition, he could find little to observe despite the rarity of this small group contact. Gregory could only write they had no clothes, no weapons, and their conversation was unintelligible.

Journals of Australian Exploration. p. 185.
Considering their notion of religion was of a God and a great First Cause with an attendant train of theology, it is not surprising the explorers saw the Aborigines as having no positive religion. Grey thought they made up traditions to disguise ignorance about the origins of their rituals. What is more revealing of the attitudes of these Europeans is the way they all assumed the Aborigines believed in evil spirits.

Savages and superstitions seem to be equated in their minds. Sturt concluded some unusual poles he saw on the Darling were to appropriate some deity, but Mitchell later argues Sturt had seen fishing poles. Strange behaviour of the Aborigines dancing, chanting and painting themselves was often witnessed in the contact situation when the explorers were concerned for their safety. This experience confirmed their association of savages with evil.


5. Stuart observed what he called "a farce" put on by the natives at the Taylor River in 1862. The combination of dark figures, dancing and chanting by fire light made Stuart write: "They appeared like so many demons, dancing, sporting and enjoying themselves in the midst of the flames."

John McDouall Stuart's Explorations Across the Continent of Australia. (Baillie edition) p. 82.
What direct evidence the explorers found of Aboriginal culture they could only understand in terms of their own culture's meanings. Aboriginal paintings seen by Grey, Gregory and Stuart are evaluated from the standard of art as a media for representing real things. They looked for what the paintings depicted and judged them "rude outlines" or bad work on the basis of realism in execution.  

Grey found a great number of paintings on his first expedition and his descriptions exemplify how cultural baggage influenced both subject matter and judgments. Of the 50 - 60 specimens of Aboriginal art Grey found in one cave the majority, he said, were of animals and "indifferently executed". He ignored these in favour of dwelling on what was unusual or remarkable. Describing these latter works Grey found his culture provided no means for evaluating what was so completely different. He could give no judgments and resorts to noting dimensions and colours, or offering crude analogies. One painting of a head circled by bright rays, he wrote, was "something like the rays one sees proceeding from the sun when depicted on the sign board of a public house". These paintings impressed Grey and created a problem for him as they didn't agree with his preconceptions of what a savage was capable of. He later theorizes they were done by a superior group or person to exercise control over the savages.


5. CONCLUSIONS

Responding to the Aborigines, the explorers had difficulty escaping the fact they were 19th Europeans. The way of thinking provided by their own culture put bounds on their vision. Their cultural baggage made them see themselves as the civilized and the Aborigines as savages. As observers, their culture was a means for evaluating the positives and negatives of Aboriginal culture. They couldn't see beyond their own concepts of family, women, personal hygiene, and time with its bias towards the future, development and permanency. Such notions were an integral, but often unconsciously felt, part of their conception of life. The explorers misunderstood the meanings of a people's behaviour and a culture that was so different from what they knew.

There was some variation in the way these men of a common culture responded to the Aborigines produced by the fact the individual has a role in determining his own experiences. Personal coolness and patience such as Sturt, Eyre and occasionally Stuart, display could turn what all the explorers would read as a potentially violent meeting with the Aborigines into a peaceful one.

Reality could act as a crucible questioning assumptions brought to contact, depending on how vulnerable the individual was or allowed himself to be. Sturt showed a reserve with the Aborigines which Mitchell and Eyre lacked, rendering their observations at times more reflective of their actual personal experiences. Sturt was a kind and humane man and his judgments of the Aborigines seem largely a testimony to this character trait. Gregory and Stuart were self-reliant and, not needing the Aborigines, they didn't experience them to the extent of the others.
In determining responses, the conclusions provided by the explorers own cultural way of thinking could be reinforced or challenged according to the individual's own experience of surviving in the land and with the Aborigines.
APPENDIX 1: INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN TO THE EXPLORERS TO OBSERVE

The typical points the explorers were asked to notice about the Aborigines were their; numbers, vocabulary, means of subsistence, religious ideas, and habits and customs.

STURT


MITCHELL


GREGORY


I was unable to locate specific instructions to observe the Aborigines for Eyre, Stuart or Grey although the latter mentions being given some orders about contact.

Grey, George. Journals of Two Expeditions of Discovery in North-west and Western Australia during the years 1837, 1838 1839. Vol. 1. p. 4.
APPENDIX 2: ABORIGINAL RESPONSES

There are two sources of information for piecing together a sketch of what the Aborigines thought of the explorers; information provided in the explorers' journals, and work done by later day researchers amongst the remanants of tribes met by the explorers.

Evidence in both sources suggests the Aborigines clearly wondered what manner of creatures these whites were. Mrs. Langloh Parker collecting the legends of the Narran tribe of N.S.W. spoke to some Aborigines who remembered the coming of Mitchell. They told her of their terror of the wheel tracks left by Mitchell's drays. They would not let their children tread on them but carefully lifted them over, lest their feet should break out in sores as they were supposed to do if they trod on a snake's track.1 Returning home from his inland journey of 1831, Mitchell noticed the Aborigines seemed to have followed his tracks.2

Strehlow, an anthropologist working amongst the Aranda tribe of Central Australia through whose territory Stuart passed on his journeys, was told a similar story as Mrs. Parker. Some Aboriginal men who had been boys in 1860 said they were frightened of the footprints of both the men and the horses as neither creature seemed to have any toes.3

---


The explorers noted in their journals the Aborigines terror of the animals, especially the horses. Sturt tells of meeting one man who obviously thought the white man and his horse were the one being.¹ Mitchell observing two natives covering the retreat of others as they fled from his party, noticed they must have thought the whites couldn't see as well as they because they stood perfectly still pretending to be trees.²

Of the whites they actually met the Aborigines perhaps wondered if they were humans or spirits. Stuart was asked by a group of natives at Newcastle Waters if it would be alright for them to visit the camp after the party had gone.³ The journals tell of Aborigines examining the explorers to see if they were white all over. They compared limbs with the Europeans and counted their fingers and toes. Daniel Brock, a member of Sturt's third expedition, described the natives amazement at the whites' boots and their attempts to see if socks were a part of their legs.⁴ Aborigines Sturt met wondered where the party's women were.⁵


There is strong evidence the Aborigines explained the presence of the whites in the land by conceiving of them as Aborigines reincarnated. Several of the explorers quote incidents of the Aborigines bursting into tears at meetings. Grey had the experience of being greeted as a dead relative returned on one of his excursions around Perth. He explained this belief to readers:

"they themselves never having an idea of quitting their own land, cannot imagine others doing it; - and thus, when they see white people suddenly appear in their country, and settling themselves down in particular spots, they imagine they must have formed an attachment for this land in some other state of existence; and hence conclude the settlers were at one period black men, and their own relations."¹

Sturt's journey down the Murray in 1830 provides an interesting case for speculating how this belief may have influenced the outcome of contact. Sturt tells of how in January, whilst travelling down the Murrumbidgee in a boat, the party met a group of Aborigines who seemed to take his companion McLeay for having originally been a black. They proded him to see if he had a spear wound and called him "Rundi".²

Following this incident four natives began accompanying the party down the river introducing the Europeans to new tribes when they came ashore. Sturt calls them "our ambassadors" and


describes how they camped near the party at night. At Sturt's famous meeting with 600 natives at the junction of the Murray and Darling Rivers one of these "ambassadors" intervened to placate the natives just as hostilities seemed inevitable.¹

One of Sturt's biographers quotes the work of Reverend George Taplin amongst the Aborigines of the Lower Murray in relation to these events. Taplin wrote that these peoples Dreaming was based on the mythical figure of Nurundere or Ngurunderi, who had made all the things on the earth. This figure was fair with red hair, came down the river in a bark canoe and was speared in the thigh by a malignant spirit before departing for the spirit world.² That the Aborigines took the red-haired McLeay for Nurundere is an interesting possibility and one that is the theme of a fictional work by J.K. Ewers, Who Rides on the River?

Strehlow provides some clues on how the Aborigines might have viewed Stuart's entry into their territory. He says that many of the waterholes along Stuart's route, particularly those in the MacDonnell Ranges, were sacred sites in Aboriginal religion and could not normally be approached on pain of death even by the local population. They were allowed to be visited only by initiated male members of local totemic clans, and only at special times. These men weren't allowed to camp, eat, or slaughter animals in the area, and all weapons had to be left outside its limits.³ Stuart may thus have unwittingly committed serious offences. He notices once in his journal

1. Ibid. Vol. 2. pp. 97-104.


when near the Finke River, the weapons of natives stashed in the bushes.¹

Strehlow suggests it is likely where Stuart saw the largest groups of hostile natives, at Attack Creek in 1860 and at the Taylor River in 1862, the tribesmen had assembled for ceremonial gatherings. As such they would indeed have resented his presence.²


APPENDIX 3: DISCUSSION OF EVIDENCE THE PUBLISHED JOURNALS
OF THE EXPLORERS WERE ALTERED IN RETROSPECT

JOHN MCDOUALL STUART

Stuart's journals, although they are official reports, were edited for publication by a William Hardman in London. Stuart's biographers claim that Hardman butchered his works to such an extent they are no longer valuable as evidence.\(^1\). Certainly Hardman paraphrased sections of Stuart's work when he was travelling in areas already described but comparison with reports of Stuart's expeditions published as parliamentary papers, does not indicate he substantially altered any details. For the sake of accessibility I used Hardman as the reference except for Stuart's last expedition as there is an unedited published version of his journal available (Bailliere edition). What seems to be the main difference between Stuart's manuscript journals and the published reports is that place names Stuart gave were changed somewhere along the line. The published version of the journal of his sixth expedition leaves out criticism Stuart made of the party's botanist.

CHARLES STURT

Recent biographers of Sturt, Beale and Swan, claim he omitted geographical errors and highlighted the hardships

---

of his expeditions in his published works. The claim is one of exaggeration as regards his dealings with the Aborigines and it is impossible to refute as Beale and Swan rely on sources unavailable to me. I did manage to examine Sturt's manuscript journal of his third expedition and found it little different to his published one except in detailing a few minor incidents Sturt probably left out to save repetition.

THOMAS MITCHELL

Mitchell can be actually caught changing his story. Following the shooting of Aborigines by his party at Mt. Dispersion on the Muarray River in 1836, an enquiry was held by the N.S.W. Executive Council. Evidence submitted at this included a letter Mitchell wrote to the Colonial Secretary's Office while still on the expedition reporting the incident very much in terms of exultation at winning a battle. It was the tone of this letter, coupled with the fact Mitchell had planned an ambush on the Aborigines, that alarmed the government and so an enquiry was called. Mitchell stated in the letter the party recognized the Aborigines at Mt. Dispersion as the same ones they had trouble with at Menindie the previous year. He added that he discovered later they had come down specifically to fight his party.

Telling the story in his journal Mitchell mentions early on the blacks told him the "myalls" were coming down to fight him and he speaks of planning to use violence only as the last resort and in self-defence.

---

The comparison made possible by having two sources available is a great bonus for understanding Mitchell's attitude. The letter reveals how important the assumption of native treachery was to the way Mitchell read his experiences. Mitchell's journal entries indicate how by the time of writing he had isolated the Darling natives in his mind as a uniquely aggressive groups unrepresentative of the race as a whole.¹

EDWARD JOHN EYRE

Following Eyre's 1840-1841 expedition, he was appointed Resident Magistrate and Protector of the Aborigines at Moorunde on the Murray River. For 3 years Eyre held this position, his job being to control the Aborigines in the light of violence that had erupted between them and overlanders in the late 1830's.² Moorunde is admitted as a basis for experience in his conclusions on the Aborigines.³ Also in the body of the journal there are instances when Eyre seems to be writing as a former protector of Aborigines.⁴


GEORGE GREY

Grey spent five months after his 1839 expedition as Resident Magistrate of King George's Sound where he says himself there were often as many as 200 Aborigines.\(^1\) If one actually examines Grey's contact with Aborigines on his two major expeditions it is very minimal, and hence, much of what he later writes about them must be based on other experience.

---

APPENDIX 4: RECORD OF ACTUAL VIOLENCE ON MITCHELL'S EXPEDITIONS

1831 Expedition:

Two members of a three man team dispatched for extra supplies are murdered by the Aborigines. 1.

1835 Expedition:

April: Party's botanist becomes lost and cannot be found. Presumed murdered by the Aborigines. 2.

May 15th: Overseer Burnett shot an Aborigine. 3.

July 11th: Three Aborigines shot by Mitchell's men at Menindie after an incident in which they said the Aborigines had tried to steal a kettle. 4.

1836 Expedition:

May 27th: Mt. Dispersion. Preventative dispersal measures taken by Mitchell led to violence when one man started shooting. At the subsequent government enquiry into the incident it was stated 7 Aborigines were killed and 4 wounded. 5.

2. Ibid. Vol. 1. p. 204.
"Case in the Enquiry before the Executive Council relative to the treatment of Aborigines on the Expedition." N.S.W Government Gazette. Vol.1, 1837. Supplement January 21st. Evidence was taken from Mitchell's men at this enquiry and it is a valuable source for analysing the violence at Mt. Dispersion and at Menindie the previous year. The two incidents were closely connected in the eyes of Mitchell and his men.
June 21st: The Aboriginal guide with the party, Piper, shot an Aborigine. ¹

July 28th: One of Mitchell's men shoots an Aborigine after Piper convinced him it was necessary. ²


APPENDIX 5: INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN TO THE EXPLORERS REGARDING CONTACT WITH THE ABORIGINES

MITCHELL


GREY

Same reference as for Appendix 1.

GREGORY

Same reference as for Appendix 1.

STUART


Webster, M.S. John McDouall Stuart. p. 162.

I could not find any specific instructions for Sturt or Eyre but both men received government sponsorship for their expeditions and thus were probably aware of the official policy to civilize and protect. The attitude of the government during the period is best expressed at the enquiry into Mitchell's incident at Mt. Dispersion.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

This bibliography is divided in several ways which I think requires an explanation. General readings are distinguished from the specific readings for each explorer, and the latter category is further divided into primary and secondary sources. The primary source material available for each explorer varied, making it difficult to find a uniform method of organization. Basically, where other contemporary sources were used, such as the journals of other members of an expedition, these are separated from the explorers' own writings. The writings of the explorers included such things as letters to the government, reports to geographical societies, manuscript and published journals. Generally, I listed this material in chronological order but often there is overlap and where this occurs sources are divided into types, for example, parliamentary papers, published journals, etc.

GENERAL READINGS

Bennett, C.L.


Blainey, Geoffrey.

Dening, Greg.


Favenc, E.

*The Explorers of Australia and Their Life-Work.* Melbourne, 1908.


Fitchett, W.H.

*The New World of the South: Australia in the Making.* London, 1913.

Geertz, C.


Grimm, Reverend G.


Hanson, F.


Lawrence, Roger.


pp. 249-261.
Dening, Greg.


Favenc, E.

The Explorers of Australia and Their Life-Work. Melbourne, 1908.


Fitchett, W.H.


Geertz, C.


Grimm, Reverend G.


Hanson, F.


Lawrence, Roger.

Mulvaney, D.J.


Sinclair, D.

The Savage: A History of Misunderstanding.

Smith, Bernard.


Stone, S. (ed)

CHARLES STURT

PRIMARY SOURCES.

1. Sturt's Own Writings

Printed Material

Sturt, Charles.

**Two Expeditions into the Interior of Southern Australia during the years 1828, 1829, 1830 and 1831; with observations on the soil, climate, and general resources of the colony of N.S.W.** 2 Volumes. Originally published London, 1833 and reproduced by the Libraries Board of South Australia. Australian Facsimile Editions no. 4. Adelaide, 1963.


Narrative of an Expedition into Central Australia performed under the authority of Her Majesty's Government during the years 1844, 5, and 6; together with a notice of the Province of South Australia in 1847. 2 Volumes. Originally published London, 1849 and reproduced by the Libraries Board of South Australia. Australian Facsimile Editions no. 5. Adelaide, 1965.

Manuscript Material

Manuscript Diary of Captain Sturt: April 9th, 1845-November 10th, 1845. Archives Department, Public Library of South Australia. No. 28.

2. Contemporary Material

Brock, Daniel.


Finnis, H.J. (ed)


SECONDARY SOURCES.

Beale, Edgar.

Camp, K.R.


Cumpston, J.H.L.

Charles Sturt: His Life and Journeys of Exploration. Melbourne, 1951.

Ewers, J.K.


Gibbney, H.J.


Howard, J.M.


Kennedy, D.


Langley, Micheal.


Sturt, Mrs. Napier George.

Swan, K. & Carnegie, M.

THOMAS MITCHELL

PRIMARY SOURCES.

1. Mitchell's Own Writings

Mitchell, T.L.

"Letter to Colonial Secretary. Bullabalakit on the River Namnoy, December 23rd, 1831."

"Letter to Colonial Secretary. Peel's River, February 29th, 1832." in


---

"Account of a Recent Exploring Expedition to the Interior of Australia by Major Mitchell." in


---


---

Dispatches and Maps relating to Sir Thomas Mitchell's Exploration to the North. Published by the Government of N.S.W. Sydney, 1846.
Journal of an Expedition into the Interior of Tropical Australia, in search of a route from Sydney to the Gulf of Carpentaria, undertaken by order of the British Government. London, 1848.

2. Contemporary Material

SECONDARY SOURCES.

Beale, Edgar.

Cumpston, J.H.L.

Gardiner, L.

Harvard, Ward. L.


Thomsen, Gael.


Parker, Mrs. K. Langloh.


Salier, Cecil. W.

PRIMARY SOURCES.

1. Grey's Own Writings

Grey, George.


Journals of Two Expeditions of Discovery in North-west and Western Australia during the years 1837, 38, and 39, under the authority of Her Majesty's Government. Describing many newly discovered, important, and fertile districts, with observations on the moral and physical condition of the aboriginal inhabitants, &c. &c. 2 Volumes. Originally published London, 1841 and reproduced by the Libraries Board of South Australia. Australian Facsimile Editions no. 8. Adelaide, 1964.

2. Contemporary Material


SECONDARY SOURCES.

Henderson, G.C.


Rees, W.L. & L.

*The Life and Times of Sir George Grey, K.C.B.* Auckland, 1892.

Rutherford, J.

EDWARD JOHN EYRE

My study of Eyre concentrated on his "Northern Exploring Expedition" of the years 1840 to 1841. Prior to this Eyre made four overland journeys and led two minor expeditions. In the years after 1841 he was involved in a further two expeditions. I have listed primary sources located for these other journeys as background material. The sources are arranged according to this career division.

PRIMARY SOURCES.

1. Early Career

Reports by Eyre of his early journeys were printed in the South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register:

2nd Overland Journey: Sydney to Adelaide 1837-1838.
    July 14th, 1838.

3rd Overland Journey: Sydney to Adelaide 1838-1839.
    March 2nd, 1839.

1st Expedition: North of Adelaide 1839.
    July 13th, 1839.

2nd Expedition: Port Lincoln Area 1839.
    October 19th and 26th, 1839.


"Expeditions of Discovery in South Australia by Edward John Eyre Esq."
2. "Northern Exploring Expedition"

Eyre, E.J.

Journals of Expeditions of Discovery into Central Australia, and overland from Adelaide to King George's Sound, in the years 1840-1; sent by the colonists of South Australia, with the sanction and support of the Government; including an account of the manners and customs of the aborigines and the state of their relations with Europeans. 2 Volumes. Originally published London, 1845 and reproduced by the Libraries Board of South Australia. Australian Facsimile Editions no. 7. Adelaide, 1964.

3. Subsequent Expeditions

Expedition in search of a lost settler, C.C. Dutton, north of Adelaide in 1842.

Eyre's own report is published in the South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register. November 12th, 1842.

The expedition is also referred to in the writings of two of Eyre's contemporaries:

McLean, James.

Tolmer, Alexander.


Expedition up the Murray to the Darling in 1843.

"Extract of a Report by Mr. Edward John Eyre to Governor Grey, dated Moorunde 20th January 1844, containing a notice of the lower course of the Darling. Communicated by Lord Stanley."


SECONDARY SOURCES.

Body, Judith. F.


Dutton, Geoffrey.


Hume, Hamilton.

Life of Edward John Eyre Late Governor of Jamaica. London, 1867.

Uren, M.


Uren, Malcolm. & Stephens, R.

AUGUSTUS CHARLES GREGORY

PRIMARY SOURCES.

Gregory, A.C.


SECONDARY SOURCES.

Birman, W. & Bolton, G.

Cumpston, J.H.L.


Waterson, D.B.

John McDouall Stuart

Primary Sources.

Stuart's journals are available in the form of parliamentary papers and as collected works. In the light discussion about his published journals being distorted (Appendix:3), I have listed both.

1. Stuart's Own Writings

Published Journals

Hardman, William (ed)

Explorations in Australia. The Journals of John McDouall Stuart during the years 1858, 1859, 1860, 1861 and 1862, when he fixed the centre of the continent and successfully crossed it from sea to sea. Originally published London, 1865 and reproduced by the Libraries Board of South Australia. Australian Facsimile Editions no. 198. Adelaide, 1975.


Reports Published as Parliamentary Papers by the South Australian Government

"Correspondence relative to explorations by Mr. John McDouall Stuart of country to the north of Port Augusta and west of Lake Torrens." 1858, Vol. 2. No. 114.
"Journal of an expedition into the unexplored country to the north west and south west of Port Augusta by Mr. John McDouall Stuart." 1858, Vol. 2. No. 119.

"Extracts from John McDouall Stuart's journals of exploration, being his diary from November 4th to December 18th, 1859." 1862, Vol. 3. No. 219.

"Diary of J.M. Stuart Esq. of an exploratory trip towards the north west coast of Australia, during the period from 2nd March to 3rd September, 1860." 1861, Vol. 2. No. 65.


**Manuscript Material**

Pencil Diaries in one notebook, being Stuart's original diary of his 1862 expedition. Includes loose sheets containing incomplete summaries of portions of the journey and fragments of some remarks by Stuart on the conduct of members of the expedition. Archives Department, Public Library of South Australia. No. 27.
2. Contemporary Material

"Report by Mr. F.G. Waterhouse on the Flora and Fauna, Natural History and Physical Features of Australia, on the line of John McDouall Stuart's route across the Continent, from the South to the North Coast." South Australian Parliamentary Paper. 1863. No. 125.

SECONDARY SOURCES.

Betheras, J.L.


McMillian, D.


Mudie, Ian Mayelston.


Pike, D.


Strehlow, T.G.H.

Quick, M.


Webster, Mona Stuart.
