

---

## **UNIT 2 ABORIGINALS PEOPLE AND EUROPEAN SETTLERS' COLONISATION**

---

### **Structure**

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Objectives
- 2.3 Aboriginal Traditional Society
  - 2.3.1 Origins
  - 2.3.2 Culture and Lifestyle
- 2.4 Colonisation
  - 2.4.1 Colonial Policies on Aboriginals
  - 2.4.2 Impact on Identity
- 2.5 Summary
- 2.6 Exercises

### **Suggested Readings**

---

## **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

---

In Unit 1 we discussed that an Australian identity, in its early formative years, was predominately associated with white and Anglo-Celtic origin. For, most Australian historians traced the country's evolution from the period of European colonisation. However, in recent years, Aborigines have begun to assert their sense of identity vis-à-vis those that had been imposed upon them by the dominant settler society. This issue of aboriginal identity today is closely linked to the political and community awareness and associated 'territorial' and 'customary' rights of the aboriginals. These current issues of concern regarding the Australian identity will be discussed in greater details in one of the subsequent units. What concerns us in this unit is to seek answers to such questions as to who constitute the Australian Aborigines; what was their identity before the European colonisation; what was their society like; what were their traditions and practices; how did the European colonisation affect them and what changes did it make on their life and culture?

---

## **2.2 OBJECTIVES**

---

After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- describe the lifestyle of Australian Aborigines before colonisation;
- discuss the colonial attitudes and policies;
- understand the social and political impact of colonial policies; and
- debate on the changing concept of the Australian Aboriginal identity.

---

## **2.3 ABORIGINAL TRADITIONAL SOCIETY**

---

### **2.3.1 Origins**

The literal translation of the word 'Aborigine' is "people who were here from the beginning". It is not synonymous as the word 'indigenous' which means to originate in an area. This implies that the Aborigines too migrated to Australia. Some historians tend to argue that Aborigines came to Australia from South East Asia. If this is valid then it is most unlikely that they came upon Australia by chance. Rather it was a concerted overseas migration, which means that the Aborigines were among the world's first successful sea-voyagers. Reasons for their immigrating to Australia could be many from war, famine, changing sea levels or simply curiosity.

Radiocarbon dating has revealed that Aborigines migrated to Australia about 40,000 years ago. Human remains found at Lake Mungo in southern New South Wales can be dated back to 30,000 years and at Keilor near Melbourne at 45,000 years. According to some historians, future findings may indicate the existence of Aborigines in Australia much before that. Over the years, the Aborigines would have moved down from the coast slowly into the hinterland adapting themselves as they went along to the changing climate and environ, facilitated by technological changes.

Thus the notion of pristine natives with a "pure" culture is an artificial one-many Aborigines had considerable contact with Melanesians and Indonesians long before the European colonists arrived in Australia. Aboriginal groups also influenced each other. Waves of change swept the entire continent-changes in tools and implements, in social organisation, and in ceremonial practices and mythological precepts. Thus it is argued that Aboriginal culture was dynamic, not static.

### **2.3.2 Culture and Lifestyle**

As the Aborigines occupied the continent, their culture evolved in all its variety. It was a complex and changing society and most of the available anthropological evidence on the subject coming from Europeans suggests that it was in a continuous process of change. Also, the fact that there were approximately 300,000 Aborigines living in 1788 divided into about 500 tribes each with their own distinctive territories, history, dialect and culture made it difficult to assess the nature and reasons for the change. The engravings and paintings of the Australian Aborigines found throughout the country have a wide variety of styles and subjects. According to the beliefs of many Aboriginal groups, people have been in Australia since the beginning-"the Dreaming". During this period ancestral spirits came up out of the earth and down from the sky to walk on the land. They shaped its rocks, rivers, mountains, forests and deserts. They also created all the people, animals and plants that were to live in the country and laid down the patterns their lives were to follow. The spirit of the ancestors gave Aboriginal people their laws, customs and codes of conduct and is the source of the songs, dances, designs and rituals that are the basis of Aboriginal religious expression. Much of Aboriginal art is bound up with the "Dreaming" stories and the rituals and ceremonies that are performed to maintain the links between people and the world of spirit.

By studying the technical tools and implements used by the Aborigines in the past, one can see the diversity and the similarities of the various groups. They were all nomadic hunter-gatherers using the same basic tools of stone hammers, knives, scrapers and axe-heads. Wooden items included spears, digging sticks and vessels. Using fish-bone tipped weapons if living on the coast and stone edged weapons if in the desert, each tribe foraged for food across their defined territory. Australian anthropologist, Kenneth Maddock, observes: "Australia is the only continent to have

been populated until modern times exclusively by hunters and gatherers..." Because the Australian Aborigines did not cultivate land to grow crops or domesticate animals, they have often been portrayed as being a backward race. However, this can be disputed. Their nomadic life was shaped in response to the environment, responding to nature rather than setting up their own plot of land and settling down. Moreover, there were few plants suitable for cultivation and few animals, which could be domesticated and raised. Domestication of animals was not possible due to the animal species such as the kangaroos, wombats, possums and snakes that were found in the continent of Australia. The Aborigines did harvest crops in the sense that they made a form of flour from various types of flora.

Extremely skilled and efficient, the Aborigines moved across the land systematically, the men with their tracking and stalking skills and the women with their digging and bush skills collecting fruits, yams, small animals and seeds. For most of the year, the Aborigines of a particular tribal group moved about in small groups of several families within their territory and collected together for social, ceremonial or trade purposes at intervals. In spite of this, there was great love and loyalty towards their tribe and especially towards their land. It was a spiritual as well as economic relationship with the land. The landscape was symbolic and religious to the Aborigines. To them each site was - be it a rock or a tree or a waterhole - are places which their great ancestors had created and where they are still alive.

Conflict within a group was minimised by the kinship system the basis for which was that the whole group was regarded as family. The terms for immediate family members such as father, mother, brother or sister were extended to everyone in the tribe. This ensured that potential conflicts were controlled, obligations fulfilled and each individual securely related to the group. Human relations were secure, ordered and stable. Power and authority in Aboriginal society rested on older men though some women too had a say in their later years. However, not all old men were in the body of elders. Only those who proved themselves to be the most diligent, intelligent and conformist in the long period of learning the secret knowledge of the tribe were admitted. Aboriginal society was governed by the wisest and dedicated to the continuance of the group and its traditions. There was no leader but a more egalitarian diffusion of power among a dozen or so men.

---

## 2.4 COLONISATION

---

Prior to European colonisation, the Australian Aborigines lived a lifestyle based on the above mentioned Dreamtime beliefs. It was Captain James Cook from England and his staff, including the botanist Sir Joseph Banks, who later supported settlement in Australia. Cook landed at Botany Bay on the eastern coast. He charted the region and named it New South Wales. In 1786 the British government announced its intention to establish a penal settlement at Botany Bay, on the southeast coast of New South Wales. Mindful of British economic interests and keen as always to save public expenditure, the government planned that Botany Bay would become a self-financing colony through the development of its economy by convict labour. Captain Arthur Phillip of the Royal Navy was made commander of the expedition. He was to take possession of the whole of Australia, including Tasmania and islands off the east coast, east of the 135th meridian, and given near absolute powers over the territory as governor. The population of Australia at the time of the arrival of the whites in 1788 was probably between 250,000 and 500,000.

Colonisation began with the landing of a shipload of British convicts in order to establish a penal colony. Britain moved quickly after the American Revolution ended in 1783 to establish its first settlement in Australia, since it could no longer ship British convicts to America. By the mid-

1800s, Britain had sent more than 150,000 prisoners to two colonies, which formed the early territories of New South Wales and Western Australia. Approximately 20 per cent were women, and about one-third were Irish, the majority coming from the poorer classes of British towns. The colony consisted of embittered convicts, predatory gaolers and free immigrants coming from a class of poor urban working class. They were from the urban factories and slums showing signs of alienation and seen as inferior to the rest of the society in England. Most were unemployed, looking for jobs and victims of the dismal conditions prevalent in England. It was only by 1793 that free settlers began moving to Australia.

Perhaps it was partly the callousness with which life was viewed at the time of settlement that shaped the dominant conception of the Aborigines as 'savages'. It was also partly a result of the preconceived notion of the sixteenth century (during the African slave trade) that 'black' is dirty and 'white' is pure. There was another conception (mostly among the educated) which viewed Aborigines as 'noble savages' suggesting that they were courageous and in perfect harmony with nature.

However, the economic and political requirements of the British Crown overrode these conceptions, taking precedence over the policy decided by the Crown. International law (European) of newly discovered lands at the time followed the concept of terra nullius-lands which were not being used/ inhabited in the European sense belonged to nobody and could be freely taken. If the land was being used and the soil tilled then the rights of those using the land had to be recognised. Thus whereas in North America and New Zealand treaties were signed with the Aborigines, in Australia no rights were recognised by the State.

Overall, the Australian Aborigines went through stages of being conquered through an 'invasion' and taking of their lands. It was a clash between the settlers who saw land as an economic commodity to be used or exploited and bought or sold and the aborigines who saw land as a religious symbol and a part of their life, to be respected and served. Between 1820 and 1870, the European frontier settlers moved across southern and eastern parts of Australia. This was a result of the decision of the British government which wanted to encourage wool production in Australia in order to reduce its wool imports from Germany. Many adapted to the new lifestyle. However, the settlers were often contemptuous of the Aborigines and separated them from their society and the people became the fringe dwellers of society. Others were removed from their families and placed into institutions.

### **2.4.1 Colonial Policies on Aborigines**

Australian colonial history can be said to be divided roughly into four broad periods (which at times overlapped) before the formation of the federation in 1901: The foundation years from 1788 to 1821; the ascendancy of the pastoralists from 1820 to 1850; 1850 to 1892 which was the period of the gold rush leading to a massive increase in the population; and the period of nationalism and the labour movement from the 1880 to 1900. However, often the Australians regard the gold rush as the watershed which divides their history. Before gold was discovered, colonisation developed at a slow and quiet pace but with its discovery, the pace of life underwent quite a drastic change.

It is seen that from the early 19th Century, the decision of how to treat the Aborigines was in a sense taken. In principle, the official colonial policy throughout the 19th Century was to treat the Indigenous people as equals, with the intention of eventually converting them to Christianity and European civilisation through schools for Aboriginal children. Such acts, however, stressing good intentions, were infrequently supported and always under-financed. In fact, moving from a policy

of protection to one of punishment was typical of the early colonial government. The perpetual dilemma that they faced was-should they be assimilated into the settler society or be segregated from it? The failure of the early policy initiatives which favoured assimilation hardened racial attitudes and gave more credence to the idea of segregation especially in the late 19th Century. Thus the first few decades of colonisation in most places in Australia consisted of "keeping the blacks out" of pastoral stations, a policy which some scholars have argued, meant the extermination of the majority of Aborigines. The reason given for their segregation was the fundamental incompatibility between the developing pastoral capitalist society of the settlers and the tribal hunter-gatherer society of the indigenous population.

From the late 1830s, the remnants of the tribes in the settled areas had already begun to be moved onto Reserves and Missions where they were 'managed' by Whitemen and were forbidden from teaching their children their language and customs. While the assimilationists argued that Aborigines and colonists were destined to occupy a common land and should be encouraged to mingle together as one people, it was understood that amalgamation could occur only with the black imitating and following the ways of the white. The Aborigines then were not thought to be innately different or inferior but simply 'unpolished' and 'uncivilised'. In order to inculcate a sense of discipline into the Aborigines, work was recommended which also augmented the supply of labour. Here the missionaries agreed with secular officials. They too sought to make Europeans of their black brethren but they placed more emphasis on Christianising than civilising. They concentrated on the children, segregating them from their parents. Yet, overall the missions attracted only a handful of Aborigines and usually they responded only because of the lure of food and blankets or by the desire for stimulants namely, tobacco, tea and sugar. The Aboriginal attitude was that if Europeans were willing to give food away, why not accept it instead of spending hours on hunting-gathering. However, even when floundering to work out new means of survival amid the new political realities, the Aborigines hung on tenaciously to their culture.

It was difficult to coerce Aborigines to adopt the capitalist work ethic of work, while they still had alternate means of subsistence. Employers complained that in the course of clearing land, because it was the Aborigines' habit never to pass by food, the discovery of wild yam, a bee's nest or a wallaby would result in all hands immediately ceasing work for however long it took to procure the food source. Another barrier to the "desire for steady employment" was the Aboriginal habit of "shielding the indolent" by sharing the proceeds of the day among their fellows, meaning that everyone received some return whether they worked or not.

The mid nineteenth century was a period of the discovery of gold fields leading to a rush of people to an almost empty continent of Australia which was said to have fabulous riches. The years between 1851 and 1860 brought an increase of 740,000 people, so much so that the population touched 1,144,000-three times more than what it was a decade before. So engrossed became people with the task of discovering and digging for gold that business was affected. On hearing of gold being discovered, neighbouring areas would close down their shops to go digging for prospective gold. The rush to Australia at this point of time had become world-wide centering on the Victorian fields. The population of Victoria was growing about 50 per cent annually in the early 1850s. While to begin with people from other countries outnumbered those from the British isles, the balance was soon changed. New South Wales and Sydney shared in the benefits of the sustained outpouring of gold, but it was not at the same rate as that of Victoria and Melbourne. So in that sense the gold rush marked a watershed in colonial history. Before that the colonial structure relied mainly on export income largely from wool. But gold helped create Australia's own reservoir of capital becoming less sensitive to investments from London. Along with the huge crowd of gold seekers went a large number of traders and others who could cater to the needs and requirements of this new group of free spenders.



This is about the time (along with the upheaval caused by gold) that self-government came to New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania (at the time called Van Diemen's Land), making way for transfer of control to the colonists themselves. By 1856 four new constitutions had been approved and the business of setting up colonial administrations subject to local parliamentary support had begun. However, there were not enough farms to feed the enlarged population. Land was monopolised by the pastoralists who were not interested to shift onto farming. Also, now that power over disposal of Crown land had been transferred to the colonial legislatures, the clamour to provide opportunities grew and the government was faced by the land hunger of the newly enfranchised people. This was a period of a new Australian "frontier nationalism" where the colonists were determined to manage their own affairs without any interference from the British and shape their own destiny. Thus the struggle to "unlock the land" dominated politics. This was not an easy task for the colonists as all the good land had already been sold. Geographic and climatic conditions did not encourage farming in the dry hinterland. In spite of there being no special incentive for immigrants, new settlers continued to arrive. The rate of growth of the population far outstripped Canada during the same period. Therefore the struggle went beyond mere politics and was instead a case of the men fighting for their futures, with their livelihoods wrapped up in the policies they espoused. By 1870s, a sense of permanence had come to the frontier. Territorial limits to the amount of good land that could be colonised had been reached and emphasis was more on making better use of the already existing land.

This kind of a sudden increase in population resulting in the spread in settlement resulted in bitter clashes with the aborigines. The aborigines, given their nomadic nature could fall back as more land was occupied but soon found themselves cornered and completely cut off from their traditional areas of food hunting, gathering and social and cultural practices. There is no evidence of any concern for dispossessing the aborigines of their land. Since the aborigines did not show any permanent habitations, land was considered unoccupied. Even though the Aborigines resented this intrusion, they could not fight to regain their territory and were no match to the brutal fire power of the rifle or gun of the settlers. The aborigines steadily faced elimination due to open clashes resulting in their death or more frequently due to slow poverty and exposure to new diseases. Their lifestyle was forced to change as they lost their lands becoming more sedentary than nomadic and they had to rely more and more on whatever they were given by the colonists.

In South and Western Australia, the aboriginal protectorates were set up and missionary efforts made to Christianise and civilise them. Each colony soon had reserves, schools and farms set up. In the more remote areas the aborigines were dependent on the whim of the individual settlers. Face to face confrontations and assault too took place which only served to increase the pace of annihilation. The local tribes could adjust themselves to the new factor in their environment only when settlement reached dry land and the rush of settlement on this land slowed.

Soon after the establishment of the self-governing territories, Aborigines occupied the special position of 'protected persons' to protect them from the evils of settlement. The colonial 'outlook' towards the aborigines had undergone change. In colonial Victoria, 1860 was a significant turning point when a Central Board was appointed to oversee the interests of the Aborigines in reaction to the parliament reserving land for aborigines and provide funds for the food and clothing. Even in the year in which Queensland became self-governing in 1859, a Native Police Force was sanctioned which became the principal means by which the whites attempted to control Queensland. This force consisted of armed Aborigines under control of white officers. The opening up of inland Queensland was carried out with the help of aboriginal trackers. While the previous

policies aimed at driving away the aborigines, now with labour shortages, the aboriginal source of labour was attractive. Some of the earliest legislations to protect the aborigines were more concerned with opening up the frontiers in Queensland. The Native Labourer's Protection Act 1884 required employment of all native labourers on ships in Queensland to be documented. This, it is argued, was more to collect revenue and to protect Queensland's reputation and self-governing status. One of the most significant Aboriginal Affairs Acts ever passed by an Australian legislature to incorporate the aborigines was the 1897 Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act legislated in Queensland. It was claimed to be a benevolent law, ostensibly to save Aborigines from extinction. Yet, its function was not only to serve as a system of control but also to create a cheap and reliable labour force and to deny the aborigines any rights that other "citizens" had. With this Act the colony of Queensland, with the largest aboriginal population in Australia, announced that there was no need for federal intervention into Queensland Aboriginal affairs as they had been taken into the fold of their law. This law was highly restrictive controlling aboriginal movement, employment, freedom to marry or any other kind of personal and autonomous decisions. For example, section 9 of the Act permitted the relevant minister to remove and keep every aboriginal within any district on any reserve situated within the district. The Minister could also move aborigines from one reserve to another (a power used in colonial Victoria to prevent unified resistance to governance). While these restrictions were given the label of 'protection' as the aboriginals now were less likely to be killed, they put in place a formal system of governance which excluded the aboriginals from 'equal' treatment. Thus the control of the aborigines shifted from the guns of the settlers to their administrators.

The move to establish legislative controls over Aboriginal labour was also bound up with the political imperative of establishing a federated nation in 1901, in order to strengthen the strategic and economic position of the emerging Australian capitalist class. The Queensland government had initially sought to meet employers' demands for a ready supply of cheap and tractable labour by setting up schemes for importing indentured labourers, particularly from China and the South Pacific islands.

The Federation, however, was founded on the "White Australia" policy. As part of the political settlement underpinning Federation, the employers agreed with the trade union and Labor leadership on a platform of excluding "coloured races", in order to divide Australian workers from their Asian-Pacific brothers and sisters. Federation was accompanied by the passing of "whites-only" labour laws, from which Aborigines were conveniently exempted. During the 1900s separation was an official government policy which lasted for many decades and today, many Aboriginal people do not know their origins. In other words, they are not aware of which tribe they are descended from or the names of their parents and or grandparents. They are a lost generation.

### **2.4.2 Impact on Identity**

What is modern "Aboriginal" identity? Is it a colonial formation or something which has evolved over time including the ideas of the European colonial settlers? Sometime in the 20th Century, the differences between Aboriginal tribes seemed to collapse for the settlers and they began to view them as homogenous using a common term "Aborigines" instead of names for individual tribes.

Apart from the Aborigines in the mainland Australia, there are also the Torres Strait Islanders who take their name from the strait that separates the Australian mainland at Cape York from the south coast of Papua New Guinea. Although they had long-standing contact with Australian Aboriginal people in the south and Melanesians to the north, the Islanders are a distinct people

with their own culture and identity. This has now been recognised officially and the Islanders in the Torres Strait and on the mainland have a distinct voice in national affairs.

The question however remains-what is Aboriginality and who are the Aborigines? Is their identity based on their perception of themselves or on the western coloniser's perception of them? Attitudes towards the Aborigines have been changing over time, ever since colonisation.

Prior to the formation of a federation in Australia, various colonies established their own regimes to govern the Aborigines. While there were a number of similarities to be found, they differed in important respects. For example, Victoria differentiated between the aborigines and those they called the 'half-castes'. The Victorian colonial authorities introduced policies forcing 'Aboriginal natives' to live on reserves whereas the others were forced to merge with the mainstream 'white' society with whatever modest benefits or support removed. Some Aboriginal people managed to evade these regulations and lived outside the reserve system. However, many families lived on reserves and missions around the State, including Coranderrk, Lake Tyers, Lake Condah, Framlingham, Ramahyuck and Ebenezer. The Central Board to Watch Over the Interests of the Aborigines, established in 1860, assumed central control of Aboriginal people's lives and living conditions. In 1869 it became the Board for the Protection of Aborigines (Board). The Board developed policies and expected mission and reserve managers to implement them. It sought to control the work, behaviour and lifestyles of Aboriginal people in Victoria. Missions and reserves were complex environments where clothing and rations can be read as sites of coercion, control and resistance. However, theoretically, the Victorian Aborigines could vote in elections from 1856 following the adoption of the Victorian Constitution in 1855. Queensland still had a substantial indigenous population whereas, in comparison, Tasmania's Aborigines had been nearly wiped out by 1847. Ten years later, and a year before Queensland was officially gazetted, a government report observed that Aboriginal tribes in the southern mainland state of Victoria had been largely destroyed.

All these policies were reflections of the various ways in which Aborigines were viewed at the time and perhaps until recently. Colin Tatz, while describing the various ways in which the Aborigines are perceived talks of them being perceived as a 'race', as a 'class', as a 'culture' and 'civilisation'. Much has been written about Aborigines as Australoids and about their unique physical anatomy. Thus race came to mean "full-bloodedness" or purity of blood. In other words, how the aboriginal looked in terms of the colour of his skin and his physical features was important. The darker the skin, the fuller was the blood and the closer the aboriginal to being a savage barbaric heathen. The Aborigines were also perceived as a separate class because of legal barriers set down by the government not allowing them to leave reserves, enter business deals, or marry a non-Aborigine without permission. A different set of rules applied for the Aborigines vis-à-vis the whites. Aboriginal culture was perceived very simplistically by government officials, missionaries and the settlers. For them it was a "heathen" belief consisting of ceremonial practices that were barbaric, uncivilised and essentially "un-Australian".

By the 20th Century sizable communities of Aborigines able to practise traditional lifestyles were confined primarily to the Northern Territory, Queensland, and New South Wales. Not until the 1950s did the Aboriginal population begin to inch back to its pre-European level and the government begins to review and correct past treatment. So now Australia has a new view of the Aborigines resulting from aboriginal assertiveness about identity, decision making, land rights recognition of their culture. However, a major criticism of this new acceptance is that 'white' anthropologists have attempted to reconstruct an aboriginal image which is pure and pristine and which goes back to the days before colonisation. So much so, it became difficult to accept the



Aboriginal view of their own aboriginality. This in turn has led to problems of differentiating between 'real' and 'other' aborigines. This included colour, race, values that they hold. What is important is that an identity or a culture can be proud of its values that they have inherited without having to prove that they are practicing these inherited set of values. After all, any society has to evolve and cannot remain static or in limbo for centuries.

---

## 2.5 SUMMARY

---

Australian history essentially began with colonisation. Yet we know that the Australian continent has a rich culture which goes back many years before colonisation. Radio-carbon dating has revealed that Aborigines migrated to Australia at least about 40,000 years ago. What concerns us is to try and understand who the Aborigines were and who they are today. What kind of an impact did colonisation have on them?

According to the beliefs of many Aboriginal groups, people have been in Australia since the beginning-the Dreaming. The Aboriginal culture has been dynamic, not static. As the Aborigines occupied the continent, their culture evolved in all its variety. The fact that the Australian Aborigines did not cultivate land to grow crops or domesticate animals, they have often been portrayed as being a backward race. This was the basis on which colonisation took place occupying and taking over land which the colonisers explained was terra nullius or belonging to no one.

Overall, the Australian Aborigines went through stages of being conquered through an 'invasion' and taking of their lands. However, the settlers were often contemptuous of the Aborigines and separated them from their society and the people became the fringe dwellers of society. The Australian colonial history can be said to be divided roughly into four broad periods (which at times overlapped) before the formation of the federation in 1901: The foundation years from 1788 to 1821; the ascendancy of the pastoralists from 1820 to 1850; 1850 to 1892 which was the period of the gold rush leading to a massive increase in the population; and the period of nationalism and the labour movement from the 1880 to 1900.

Soon after the establishment of the self-governing colonial territories, Aborigines occupied the special position of 'protected persons' to protect them from the evils of settlement. The colonial 'outlook' towards the aborigines had undergone change. However, while the colonial policy was claimed to be benevolent, ostensibly to save Aborigines from extinction, they have been accused of being more concerned with opening up the frontiers, to seek aboriginal labour and to protect their reputation and self-governing status.

The Colonial policy also had an impact on the formation of aboriginal identity. Sometime in the 20th Century, the differences between Aboriginal tribes seemed to collapse for the settlers and they began to view them as homogenous using a common term "Aborigines" instead of names for individual tribes. They have been generally grouped in terms of a race, class and a culture which was either primitive or too 'noble'. However a new view of the Aborigines resulting from aboriginal assertiveness about identity, decision making, land rights recognition of their culture is now taking centre stage.

---

## 2.6 EXERCISES

---

- 1) Give a brief description of the Aboriginal community in Australian society around 1788.
- 2) Give an account of the process of colonisation in Australia.

- 3) Critically examine the social impact of the Australian colonial policy towards the Aborigines.
- 4) Do you think colonisation of Australia changed the way Aborigines perceived themselves? Explain.

---

## SUGGESTED READINGS

---

Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Australians* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1994)

Henry Reynolds, *Black Pioneers* (Ringwood: Penguin, 2000)

Kenneth Maddock, *The Australian Aborigines: A Portrait of their Society* (Melbourne: Penguin Books, 1982)

Gillian Whitlock and David Carter, *Images of Australia* (Victoria: University of Queensland Press, 1992)

Ann McGrath, *Born in the Cattle: Aborigines in Cattle Country* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1987)

Manning Clark, *A Short History of Australia* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1963)