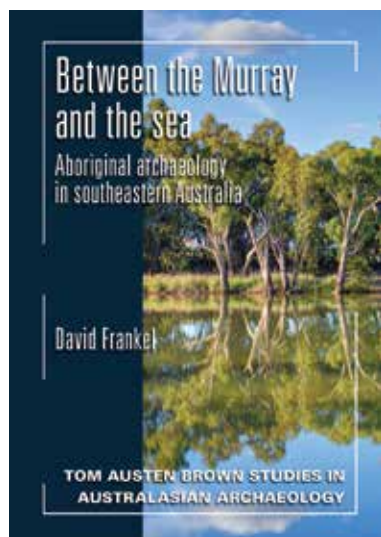


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Between the Murray and the Sea: Aboriginal Archaeology in Southeastern Australia

By David Frankel

2017

Sydney University Press

Paperback and e-book, 282 pages, illustrations, photographs

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Reviewed by Jack Norris, Monash Indigenous Studies Centre

This book surveys the area between the Murray River and the coast, covering the many landscapes and archaeological sites found in Victoria and the south-eastern corner of South Australia. The book is arranged into mostly regionalised landscape-focused chapters such as 'Along the Victorian Coast' and 'The Central Murray'. However, some chapters focus on a time period. For instance, 'Approaching the

Present' (chapter 11) covers Indigenous archaeology during the colonial era.

Frankel covers most, but not all, of the key sites of the south-east, providing an accessible text that synthesises the archaeology of the region, making it a suitable text for non-specialists. However, some archaeology specialists will be disappointed by Frankel's meagre engagement with current debates in Australian archaeology and how they connect with the sites he examines, such as the megafaunal extinction and intensification debates. Another disappointment is that Frankel does not really engage with the ethics and philosophies of contemporary Indigenous archaeology, nor does he draw upon the perspectives of contemporary Aboriginal communities on their cultural heritage.

These critiques aside, the book proves to be a suitable resource for bringing into the classroom the historical narratives that archaeology can tell us about Victoria's First Nation histories. Frankel's work will be useful in covering the ancient past of Victoria, as well as how disciplines like archaeology are utilised to study the past, and how they are conducted in Australia. The book is also dotted with ethnohistorical and historical extracts regarding Aboriginal peoples and cultural customs, which prove useful sources in themselves for teaching about Victoria's First Nation histories and cultures. The use of these extracts also illustrates how disciplines such as history, anthropology and archaeology are often utilised together to explore and understand the past, as well as navigating the present in Australia.

The book proves a valuable resource for examining the life of Aboriginal peoples before and after British colonisation, examining in its pages the archaeological evidence of differing

economies, settlement and cultural patterns at various points in time and in differing landscapes. This will be useful for the Victorian Year 9 Curriculum, looking at the before and after of British invasion and settlement for Aboriginal peoples. Additionally, Chapter 11, which covers the archaeology of the colonial frontier period, will be a valuable resource in providing students and teachers with a different perspective for cross-cultural contact histories. This chapter will be highly useful for Year 9 students as well as for Unit 3 VCE Australian History. Chapter 11 is also useful for post-Federation history, covering the archaeological excavations of the Aboriginal missions and reserves around Victoria.

This book is also a worthwhile resource in other disciplines, such as in Years 7 and 8 Geography. For example, Frankel discusses the cultural value and history of landscapes, such as how our coastal landscapes have changed over millennia. An example is the formation of Port Phillip Bay due to changing sea levels witnessed by and remembered in the histories of the Boonwurrung, Woiewurrung and Wadawurrung peoples of the Port Phillip Bay area.

The book is well-illustrated, with useful visuals and maps, as well as photographs of archaeological sites and materials. The photographs are valuable in showing what archaeological excavations look like in Victoria. Unfortunately, the print version only has the images in black and white; I recommend getting access to a digital copy, where the images are colourised.

This book is an accessible introduction to the Indigenous archaeology of south-eastern Australia for teachers and students wishing to engage with the archaeology of this region.