

The Secret Life of Memorials

Through the Memory Lens of the Australian
South Sea Islanders

Julie Kaye Mitchell



Archaeopress Publishing Ltd
Summertown Pavilion
18-24 Middle Way
Summertown
Oxford OX2 7LG

www.archaeopress.com

ISBN 978-1-78969-095-8
ISBN 978-1-78969-096-5 (e-Pdf)

© Julie Kaye Mitchell and Archaeopress 2019

Cover: photograph of Mackay Cane Cutters Memorial

All photographs not otherwise attributed, were taken by the author.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owners.

Printed in England by Severn, Gloucester, UK

This book is available direct from Archaeopress or from our website www.archaeopress.com

Contents

List of Figures	iii
List of Tables	v
Acknowledgements	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Introduction - Research Overview	1
1.2 Research Aims	5
1.3 Research Questions	6
1.4 Research Design.....	6
1.5 Overview of the Structure of the Research.....	7
1.6 Notes on Terminology.....	8
1.7 Memorials / Monuments	10
1.8 Conclusion.....	11
Chapter 2: Research Context - Literatures	12
2.1 Introduction.....	12
2.1.1 The ASSI Cultural Landscape and Heritage Paradox	12
2.2 Paradox One: The Song Of Homer	13
2.2.1 Historical Representation.....	13
2.2.2 Historiographical Representation	20
2.2.3 Concluding the Song of Homer.....	22
2.3 Paradox Two: The Ship of Theseus	23
2.3.1 Material Representation	23
2.3.2 Entangled / Shared Material Culture.....	26
2.3.3 A Rudderless Ship.....	27
2.4 Conclusion.....	28
Chapter 3: Theoretical Concepts - Liminal Spaces	30
3.1 Introduction.....	30
3.2 What Is Memory From An Archaeological Viewpoint?	30
3.3 An Archaeology Of Memory In Time And Place.....	32
3.4 Unravelling The Memory Matrix - Organising Key Concepts	33
3.5 A Quadrant Framework Of The Historic ASSI Event	34
3.6 A Quadrant Framework Of Ensuing ASSI Event Concepts.....	36
3.6.1 Relationships Between Quadrants 1 and 2.....	37
3.6.2 Relationships Between Quadrants 3 and 4.....	38
3.6.3 Relationships Between Quadrants 1 and 3.....	39
3.6.4 Relationships Between Quadrants 2 and 4.....	40
3.6.5 Relationships Between Quadrants 2 and 3.....	41
3.6.6 Relationships Between Quadrants 1 and 4.....	42
3.6.7 Overall Relationship Of Quadrants	43
3.7 Conclusion - ASSI Memory Sites.....	43
Chapter 4: The Memory Practices - Material Constructs	44
4.1 Introduction.....	45
4.2 ASSI-Related Memory Sites	45
4.2.1 Research Area.....	45
4.2.2 Selection of Sites.....	47
4.2.3 Sites Selection Method 1: Visitor Centre Email Response.....	47
4.2.4 Sites Selection Method 2: Structured Heritage Databases	49
4.2.5 Sites Selection Method 3: Unstructured Internet Search Engines And Field Work.....	50
4.2.6 Data Collection Recording Policy And Data Standards.....	55
4.2.7 The Database Variable Fields	55
4.2.8 Research Variables Database	62
4.3 Conclusion.....	66
Chapter 5: Embedded Memory - Language Based	67
5.1 Introduction.....	67

5.2 ASSI-Related Memory Sites	67
5.3 Verbally Embedded Historical Memory	68
5.4 A Rose By Any Other Name	70
5.5 Weighty Words.....	75
5.6 Historical Photographs	79
5.7 Memorials as Idealised Histories (Positive and Negative)	84
5.8 Conclusion	89
Chapter 6: Entangled Memory - Cognitive Meaning	91
6.1 Introduction.....	91
6.2 Entanglement Issues: Memory By Inference Or Connotation	94
6.2.1: Entangled Landing/ Leaving Places	94
6.2.2: ASSI Memory Subsumed by Sugar Industry.....	96
6.3 Transport Networks and Over-Building	99
6.4 Islander Built Boundary Walls.....	103
6.5 ASSI Lost in Colonial Settlement Narrative	107
6.6 Conclusion	112
Chapter 7: Interactive Memory - Philosophical Constructs	113
7.1 Introduction	113
7.2 Public Art.....	114
7.3 Interpretive Boards and Statues	120
7.4 Stylised Metal Cane Cutter Sculptures	123
7.5 Naturalistic Statues	131
7.6 Conclusion	136
Chapter 8: Networked Memory	140
8.1 Introduction	140
8.2 Networks of Meaning	141
8.2.1 Mackay Lagoons Sector	141
8.3 Built Heritage	144
8.3.1 Religious Buildings	144
8.3.2 South Sea Islander Burial Grounds.....	152
8.3.3 Sunnyside Sugar Plantation.....	152
8.3.4 Cudgen South Sea Islander Burial Ground.....	153
8.3.5 Joskeleigh (Sandhills) Historical South Sea Islander Cemetery	156
8.4 A Tale Of Two Museums.....	158
8.4.1 Joskeleigh ASSI Museum	158
8.4.2 Australian Sugar Heritage Museum	159
8.5 Memory Styles	162
Chapter 9: Conclusion	167
9.1 Introduction.....	167
9.2 ASSI-Related Memory Sites As Materialised Memory.....	168
9.3 Public Memory Of The Colonial ASSI Past.....	168
9.4 Remembering The ASSI In The Present	170
9.5 Memory Strategies	171
9.6 The Role Of Memory Sites.....	172
9.7 Historical Archaeology	173
9.8 Future Archaeology Focus.....	173
Appendix 1: Legislation	175
Appendix 2: Australian South Sea Islander Organisations	176
Appendix 3: Visitor Centre Email Template	177
Appendix 4: Extended Detail Data Base	178
Appendix 5: QHR Original Record for SSI Sugar Wagon Trail Yeppoon	181
References	183

List of Figures

Figure 1.1: The Western South Pacific Ocean in relation to Australia (www.geographicguide.com).....	1
Figure 1.2: South Sea Islanders Labour Group in Daintree, Queensland 1870 (State Library of Queensland, Negative No: 189100).....	2
Figure 1.3: Recruiting ship ‘Para’ by Ship Captain Wawn, 1880 (State Library of Queensland, Negative No: 65320)....	3
Figure 1.4: South Sea Islanders on a labour vessel (State Library of Queensland, Negative No: 16954)	3
Figure 1.5: Vanuatuan sand drawing of labour ship (Author’s photo 2 June 2012)	5
Figure 1.6: History culture example – Islander Commemoration Festival 2013 (www.assis.org.au)	7
Figure 2.1: Cartoon in The Bulletin 1886 of auction of South Sea Islander (Wikimedia Commons).....	13
Figure 2.2: South Sea Islanders outside of a plantation building ca. 1870 (State Library of Queensland, Negative no: 189100)	14
Figure 2.4: WANTOK Representatives (SBS News 7 November 2013).....	15
Figure 2.3: South Sea Islanders Queensland, 1906 (State Library of Queensland, Negative no: 23815).....	15
Figure 2.5: The Isis Memorial Childers, Queensland (Author’s photo 23 October 2013)	17
Figure 2.6: Islander traffic routes 1863 to 1902, from ‘The Blackbirders’ (Docker 1970)	18
Figure 2.7: Islanders waiting for deportation in Cairns 1906 (State Library of Queensland, Negative no: 23842)	19
Figure 2.8: Board Game copyrighted in 1914 (National Archives Australia ID: 3423240)	20
Figure 2.9: Bundaberg South Sea Islanders Anniversary Festival Poster 2013 (Bundaberg Regional Council).....	21
Figure 2.10: Islands visited by labour vessel Ariel in 1893 (Queensland State Archives, Item ID1235095, Correspondence).....	22
Figure 2.11: Fairymead Mill, Bundaberg, c 1890 (Queensland State Archives, Image ID 3511).....	24
Figure 2.12: South Sea Islander Huts, Childers 1904 (Queensland Historical Atlas from University of Queensland).25	25
Figure 2.13: Pacific Islands Collection Adelaide Museum (Author’s photo 16 March 2012)	25
Figure 2.14: Islanders in mixed European and Traditional attire, Mackay 1890 (State Library of Queensland, Negative No: 13355).....	26
Figure 2.15: Yasso Point, named in memory of Mackay South Sea Islander couple (Author’s photo 9 May 2013)	28
Figure 3.1: ‘Ceremony with Turtle’ by Andrew Tovovur (Author’s photo 3 June 2012).....	31
Figure 3.2: Mossman Canecutters Memorial (Author’s photo 1 April 2012).....	32
Figure 3.3: Integral grouping of aspects surrounding the ASSI labour event (past)	35
Figure 3.4: Integral grouping of attached themes determined from literatures (present)	36
Figure 3.5: Quadrant 1 - Quadrant 2	37
Figure 3.6: Quadrant 3 - Quadrant 4	38
Figure 3.7: Quadrant 1 - Quadrant 3	39
Figure 3.8: Quadrant 2 - Quadrant 4	40
Figure 3.9: Quadrant 2 - Quadrant 3	41
Figure 3.10: Quadrant 1 - Quadrant 4	42
Figure 4.1: Locations of research ASSI memory sites (detailed in Table 4.3).....	44
Figure 4.2: ASSI Descendant Groups (in red – see key) set against historic Australian sugar cane cultivation areas of 1874 and 1884 (Griggs 2011:47)	46
Figure 4.3: Data entry template	55
Figure 4.4: Example of a statue memorial – The ‘The Hoe Man’ - Gordonvale	57
Figure 4.5: South Sea Islander Honour Roll	58
Figure 4.6: Chindera Cemetery.....	60
Figure 4.7: Ingham Immigrant Remembrance Wall.....	61
Figure 5.1: Buderim Kanaka Wall on Escarpment	69
Figure 5.2: Yasso Point Marker, Bowen	71
Figure 5.3: Yasso Point Cairn, Bowen	72
Figure 5.4: Yasso Point Shelter And History Board, Bowen.....	73
Figure 5.5: Maryborough Kanaka Memorial	75
Figure 5.6: Point Vernon Cemetery signpost (Author’s photo 23 October 2013).....	78
Figure 5.7: North Queensland ASSI Fishery Falls Monument.....	79
Figure 5.8: 1880 SSI Specimens mixed (State Library of Queensland, Brandon album, ID 6298-0001-0020)	82

Figure 5.9: Gordonvale mosaic (Author's photo 21 June 2016)	83
Figure 5.10: 'River Reflections' mosaic panels – Innisfail	84
Figure 5.11: 'Take Me Too' tile and plaque (Author's photo 18 February 2014)	85
Figure 5.12: Childers Memorial Totem metal engraving (Author's photo 23 October 2013)	85
Figure 5.13: Forgotten People monument, Mackay (Author's photo 8 May 2013).....	86
Figure 5.14: Interpretive Tree Guide, Mackay (Author's photo 8 May 2013).....	86
Figure 5.15: Polson Cemetery, Point Vernon (Author's photo 23 October 2013)	88
Figure 6.1: Kanaka Monument (John Thompson) – Childers	92
Figure 6.2: John Thompson Memorial, Childers (Author's photo 23 October 2013)	93
Figure 6.3: Port Douglas Sugar Wharf(s).....	95
Figure 6.4: Sugar Cube Memorial, Mackay	97
Figure 6.5: Oaklands Sugar Mill Remnants, Morayfield	98
Figure 6.6: Habana Tramline Causeway and Wharf Site details	100
Figure 6.7: South Sea Islanders' Sugar Wagon Trail – Yeppoon.....	101
Figure 6.8: Islander-built trail, Yeppoon	103
Figure 6.9: South Sea Islander Stone Wall - Mon Repos.....	104
Figure 6.10: Sunnyside Sugar Plantation (former) remains	105
Figure 6.11: Stone wall in farmland, Bargara (Author's photo 26 October 2013).....	106
Figure 6.12: Replica stone wall, Bundaberg (Author's photo 23 October 2013)	106
Figure 6.13: Fitzgerald Landing Cairn, Innisfail	108
Figure 6.14: Old and new cairns, Fitzgerald Landing, Innisfail (Author's photo 21 June 2016)	109
Figure 6.15: Chjowai memorial, Innisfail (Author's photo 21 June 2013)	109
Figure 6.16: Pioneers Of The Sugar Industry Memorial – Innisfail	110
Figure 7.1: 'Forty-year-old white actor dressing up as a 14-year-old Tongan boy in brown face' (Bolitho 2014 - Image courtesy buzzed.com).....	113
Figure 7.2: Bowen South Sea Islander Mural	116
Figure 7.3: Close up of local identities cameos on Bowen wall mural (Image courtesy http://www.robcaz.net/bowen.htm)	116
Figure 7.4: Cane farmer statue and mosaic, Gordonvale (Author's photo 21 June 2016)	117
Figure 7.5: Gordonvale mosaic - 'SUGAR - NATURE'S SWEET GIFT'	118
Figure 7.6: Example of interpretive board, Cairns Esplanade	119
Figure 7.7: Robert Towns statue, Townsville, QLD (Author's photo 10 May 2013)	121
Figure 7.8: Robert Towns statue with interpretive board, Townsville (Author's photo 10 May 2013).....	121
Figure 7.9: Mossman Cane Cutters Memorial	124
Figure 7.10: South Sea Islander Totems, Childers (Author's photo 23 October 2013)	125
Figure 7.11: The Isis Kanaka Story – Childers	126
Figure 7.12: South Sea Islander Totems – Childers	129
Figure 7.13: Mackay South Sea Islander Canecutter Memorial	132
Figure 7.14: South Sea Islander (KANAKA) Memorial	134
Figure 7.15: Buderim Reconciliation At St Marks	135
Figure 7.16: Buderim South Sea Islander Memorial	137
Figure 7.17: Chindera Corowa Park	138
Figure 7.18: Corowa Park dedication newspaper clipping (Tweed Regional Museum)	139
Figure 8.1: Mackay Lagoons ASSI Meeting House, exterior-interior (Author's photos 8 May 2013).....	141
Figure 8.2: Mackay Sugar Mill, from the Mackay Lagoons Meeting House (Author's photo 8 May 2013)	141
Figure 8.3: ASSI Original Family Trees Plantings 'The Forgotten People'	143
Figure 8.4: Mackay Homebush Mission Hall	145
Figure 8.5: St. John's Mission Church.....	147
Figure 8.6: Bundaberg Cemetery (Google Earth image 8 August 2008)	148
Figure 8.7: South Sea Islander Church And Hall - Bundaberg Cemetery	149
Figure 8.8: Underground oven 'cuppa murri', Bundaberg (Author's photo 23 October 2013).....	150
Figure 8.9: Wood carvings, Bundaberg (Author's photo, 23 October 2013)	150
Figure 8.10: SSI Heritage and Community Complex layout, Bundaberg (Author's photo 23 October 2013)	151
Figure 8.11: Canecutter memorial, Point Vernon (Author's photo 23 October 2013)	151
Figure 8.12: Commemoration service honouring unmarked ASSI graves at Sunnyside Plantation, Bundaberg	152
Figure 8.13: Cudgeon Burial Ground, Chindera	154
Figure 8.14: Joskeleigh (Sandhills) Historical South Sea Islander Cemetery	157

Figure 8.15: Joskeleigh South Sea Islander Museum	159
Figure 8.16: Australian Sugar Heritage Centre (Museum) - Mourilyan ‘South Seas.....	160
Figure 8.17: Refined White Exhibition	161
Figure 8.18: Display examples in the Australian Sugar Heritage Centre, Mourilyan (Author’s photo 28 December 2012).....	162
Figure 8.19: ‘Behind The Cane - The Untold Story Of South Sea Islanders In Australia’ Musical	163
Figure 8.20: Romancing The Cane Festival.....	164
Figure 8.21: Integral grouping of ASSI-related memory sites as nodes in networked relationships	166
Figure A4_1.....	178
Figure A4_2.....	180

List of Tables

Table 2.1: Australian Acts Specific to South Sea Islands Labour (Queensland Government State Archives)	16
Table 4.1: Visitor centre email responses.....	48
Table 4.2: ASSI-related places listed on heritage databases.....	49
Table 4.3: Summary Research Database.....	51
Table 4.4: Research relational variables database.....	62
Table 4.5: Research Relational Database Variables Categories and Counts	63
Table 4.6: Frequency of themes across research ASSI-related memory site assemblage	64
Table 4.7: Frequency of form types across research ASSI-related memory site assemblage.....	64
Table 4.8: Frequency of fabric types across research ASSI-related memory site assemblage	64
Table 4.9: Frequency of ASSI-related memory site function across research assemblage	65
Table 4.10: Frequency of ASSI-related memory site initiator across research assemblage	65
Table 4.11: Frequency of ASSI-related memory site environment across research assemblage.....	65
Table 4.12: Frequency of ASSI-related memory site setting across research assemblage.....	66
Table 4.13: Chronological frequency of ASSI-related memory site across research assemblage	66

Acknowledgements

On an academic level, I would like to acknowledge Flinders University, South Australia, who allowed me the time to focus on this research through the financial support of an Australian Postgraduate Award scholarship. Also the Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, for the extended support of a Graduate Student Fellowship via the inspiring Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage Project (IPinCH). Thanks are due also to the indefatigable Associate Professor Heather Burke who stoically edited my offerings in record time, answered emails instantaneously, and made our face-to-face meetings easy by visiting me in Queensland.

On a personal level, my heartfelt gratitude goes to my wonderfully supportive family whose lives have been affected by my absence for the last five years. My amazing sons Jarrad and Travis who were forced to cope with their own university degrees without a mother or a family home when I disappeared interstate for the duration. As well as my loving parents who never question my life choices, even when facing their own twilight years struggles and remain a font of moral support by telephone, along with my siblings Paula, David and families who stepped up to fill the gap.

Many individuals aided this research in various roles of government, private, university departments and volunteer staff along the way. However one person in particular managed the entire research journey with me, acting in every support role possible, from research assistant to picker up of pieces, brow mopper to assistant site recorder. To my amazing partner Ian Hendy-Pooley goes my undying love and appreciation. Thank you for your IT expertise, uncomplaining support and companionship.

Lastly, I would like to dedicate this research to the memory of the Australian South Sea Islanders, past, present and future, who deserve acknowledgement here and in the National Narrative.

Chapter 1 Introduction



Figure 1.1: The Western South Pacific Ocean in relation to Australia (www.geographicguide.com)

1.1 Introduction - Research Overview

The use of a Pacific Islands indentured labour workforce in colonial Australia is an episode of the country's history with contested historiography, current social, cultural and political repercussions, and residual cultural heritage and identity issues for the descendant community (Banivanua-Mar 2007; Bolitho 2014; Connell 2010; Flanagan et al 2011; Hockley 2011; Quanchi 1998). The 19th century transportation of over 60 000 indigenous South Sea Islanders is unique in Australian history and has impacted physical and social landscapes (Hayes 2002, Ingram 2013; Irvine 2004; Mercer 1995; Moore 2009). However, recruitment histories and the group's tangled colonial history, subaltern status and marginalisation have resulted in a lack of material culture to connect them to their Australian heritage, posing challenges for archaeological investigation (Barker & Lamb 2011; Gistitin 1995; Hayes 2000, 2001, 2002; Mullins & Gistitin 2006; Willis Burden 2006).

Although most faced mandatory expulsion within four decades, people of South Sea Islands descent are still living in Australian communities, but memory of their part in the Australian story remains in the liminal, threshold territory of their indentured ancestors (Fatnowna 2002; Maclellan 2012; Mclean 2011; Moore 1979, 2001, 2009). As historian Clive Moore articulated in a radio interview broadcast in September 2013, the present situation of the Islander community remains largely forgotten:

Australians have a lot of amnesia even about Indigenous Australians ... since they haven't been taught this in history in school. The same thing applies to South Sea Islanders. Anyone who lives along the Queensland or the northern NSW coast knows that they're still there [and] are puzzled that they're still here in Australia. They think that they've already gone (Moore in Ingram 2013:5).



Figure 1.2: South Sea Islands Labour Group in Daintree, Queensland 1870
(State Library of Queensland, Negative No: 189100)

From this we understand that the general Australian perception, even within local communities, is one of cognitive dissonance, as existing beliefs are challenged when it comes to the reality of a temporally extended Australian South Sea Islander (ASSI) presence. Existing social memory of the ASSI indentured labour event, despite the volume of the original 60 000 workers and 40 000 descendants (Irvine 2004:126) or the enormous impact their labour had on determining the current landscape, has simply been forgotten or overwritten in historical narratives.

Even where the descendants themselves have retained family histories (Fatnowna 2002), and despite the existence of historiographical texts (Moore 2009; Quanchi 1998; Shineberg 1999), details have not been transferred to the broader community, and memories of the ASSI are once again isolated and disconnected outside of their localities. Further compounding the situation, the descendant community have effectively been silenced from the national narrative, forced to inhabit a liminal position on the periphery of Australian society, denied acknowledgment of cultural heritage, and separated by generations from the Pacific Islands (Flanagan et al 2011; Gabey 2013; Ingram 2013; Irvine 2004; Lake 2002; Mercer 1995). As a cultural group the ASSI were only formally recognised by the Commonwealth Government in 1994 and by the Queensland Government in 2000. 2014 marked the

150th anniversary of the arrival of the first labour transport ship.

Conventionally, the archaeological key to accessing and establishing an ASSI heritage would be through the physicality of material culture. 'As an index of past action, material culture is ultimately connective, it connects people to the physical world, to temporal processes, and through its physicality directs them to future action' (Jones 2007:46). However, the situation for ASSI archaeology is characterised by the distinct paucity of ASSI discernible material culture. Although not indigenous to Australia, the ASSI labourers were brought directly from indigenous situations on various Pacific Islands (figure 1.1) and often with few material objects in their possession. Moreover, many of the relatively few Islander-specific artefacts that were brought with them have been lost from an archaeological context, due to the traditional use of organic materials, and colonial/ industrial entanglements.

Thus, even though historical archaeology has the capacity to incorporate textual and oral histories, it struggles to offer physical evidence of cultural heritage connections. Or even to support or disprove the current history/ memory conundrum of descendant oral histories that are at odds with historiographical texts which pivot on contentions regarding exact recruitment circumstances including practices of



Figure 1.3: Recruiting ship 'Para' by Ship Captain Wawn, 1880
(State Library of Queensland, Negative No: 65320)

kidnap versus willing indenture agreements (Flanagan 2011; Gabey 2013:1; Irvine 2004:4; Kerr 1995:15). Indeed, both history and memory claims are themselves categorically biased, as personal memories are subjective and historical information depends to a great degree on what questions are being asked and what records or items from the past are available.

Despite these challenges, the emergence of several relevant themes in historical archaeology, including concepts of labour, entanglement, multi-vocality, memory studies and the contemporary past, has attracted some archaeological attention regarding the ASSI event (Barker & Lamb 2011; Beck 2009; Hayes 2002). The limited results tell a story of sparse extant evidence of ASSI indentured labour presence and require archaeological interpretation 'because more often than not they are part of the landscape rather than imposed upon it' (Hayes 2002:81). Terrestrial research (Hayes 2000;2001;2002) has determined that although physical aspects of the ASSI past are 'rooted in the cultural landscape ... they are not particularly obvious to the wider community' (Hayes 2002:82). In the maritime context, Beck's research of the Queensland labour trade, which focused on the historic shipwreck of labour vessel the Foam, also noted 'the dearth of archaeological research into the Queensland labour trade' (Beck 2009:209). Most recently, Barker and Lamb excavated a stone mound which linked significantly to Melanesian



Figure 1.4: South Sea Islanders on a labour vessel
(State Library of Queensland, Negative No: 16954)

indentured labourers and they too wrote of 'the near invisibility today of a distinctive SSI archaeological signature' (Barker and Lamb 2011: 69). Evidence of the ASSI event then, continues predominantly as personal descendant histories, documental references and a near invisible archaeological signature (Barker & Lamb 2011:69; Hayes 2002:78; Moore 2013:5).

However, physical manifestations of the ASSI story, in the form of eruptions of communal memory in public spaces, have arisen over the intervening years at various points on the Queensland landscape. These are memorials, sites of memory, spaces where history and memory intersect (Healy 1997:26; Besley 2005:1) and, as such, represent claims to be remembered both in the Australian historical record and the national narrative. For the purposes of this research, the perspective on memorials as history and memory intersections provides the ideal entry point to negotiate ASSI representation.

There are, of course, many ways of interpreting memorials, supported by the long and significant academic attention they have attracted. Lydon, for example, asserts that memorials can be considered to be 'physical traces of the past, [which] assume a prominent position ... somewhere between the landscape and artefact, [and that] such places individualise collective memory at the same time as they express a consensual narrative history' (Lydon 2005:109).

Memory itself though, is difficult to define and can exist in many forms at a variety of scales (Casey 2004:20). A brief discussion of these follows in section 1.6 'Notes on Terminology'. Memory is expressed tangibly through statues and monuments created to memorialise. Intangible expressions can occur via oral histories, mythology, kinaesthetically danced stories, and aurally transmitted songs and music. For memory of the ASSI, a dichotomy between tangible and intangible representation epitomises the current state of tension between oral and written versions of the labour story and reflects differing traditional styles of memory keeping.

Contrasting with the 'colonialist impulse' for the physicality of memorials (Besley 2005:38) are sand drawings that are traditional memory keeping and transmission practices in the Pacific Islands homelands of the ASSI. Inscribed in 2008 on the 'UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity', these are intricate designs traced in sand or dust to accompany spoken histories; a particularly fascinating style in its enduring yet transient quality. The stories themselves, and the accompanying designs, must be actively learned, passed down through generations, and tell involved culturally-specific histories, that stem back to creation stories. However,

once the story is told—arguably 'materialised' through voice and design, and present in physical, tangible form—the sand or dust is wiped, or blown clear again, and the story returns to the intangible state of human memory.

A children's sand drawing lesson at the Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta (Vanuatu Cultural Centre) in 2012 had an adult instructor who narrated, while children proudly and carefully performed accompanying drawings in an immersive and participatory process. On this particular day examples varied in content from ancient tales of belonging and culture origin, to a story of European black-birding ships (figure 1.5), which indicates that sand drawing is a dynamic and evolving process, that adopts new events as they become part of the communal identity and heritage pool. Unlike the situation in Australia, the Vanuatuan national narrative includes the indentured labour event into social memory by dynamically sharing the (hi)story over generations.

Such social memory shifts indicate that memory is not a static and passive component of the past, but an active process quite capable of change and reinterpretation, and that a society's remembering of a more inclusive, multi-vocal past does not necessarily require the erasing of one history to make way for another. This suggests that avenues for remembering the ASSI indentured labour event within the broader collective of Australian social memory are still possible and raises questions about Australia's Western memory practices, which have resulted in 'colonial histories often centred upon monuments and other heavy tangible statements' (Lydon 2005:112).

A focus of this research therefore, is to investigate socio-cultural practices of remembering and identity creation through the archaeological enquiry of ASSI representation in Australian memorials: How are the ASSI portrayed/constructed in Australian memorials? What kind of ethnicity is ascribed to them and what does this mean? What aspects of the ASSI event are represented in Australian memorials? Does this vary regionally, and, if so, why or why not?

Some memory theorists argue that what is actively being forgotten is as important as what is being remembered (Connerton 2008; Jones 2007:9). For both individual and social memories, people must forget some things in order to be able to form new ones: 'The process of collective forgetting is thus not one which is opposed to collective memory, but an important component of it' (Harrison 2013: 588). This concept places an interesting slant on the 'forgetting' of the ASSI indentured labour event in the Australian national historical narrative, when we consider 'forgetting [as] a necessary form of cultural production, a vital decision-making process by which we choose to emphasise and

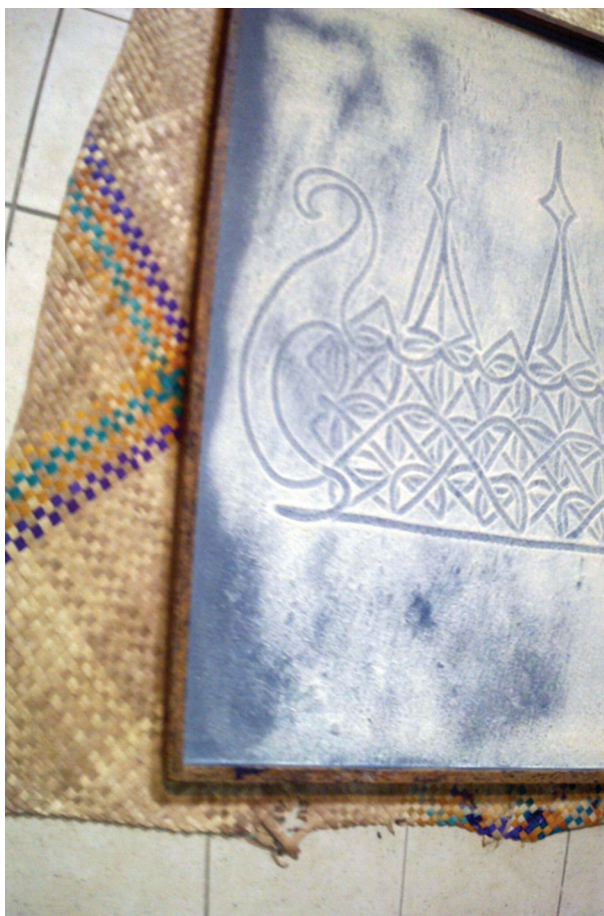


Figure 1.5: Vanuatuan sand drawing of labour ship
(Author's photo 2 June 2012)

memorialise events that have social value, and forget those which are irrelevant' (Harrison 2013: 589). In this light, it can be argued that the forgetting of the ASSI labour event is part of a wider colonialist narrative in which industrial expansion in Australia is remembered at the expense of the labour relations that created it.

Sites of memory connected with the ASSI event, therefore, offer layers of meaning while presenting a conundrum of sorts for archaeological investigation; at once presenting a tangible, physical location and material culture, but inextricably linked with the intangible 'slippery fish', memory. Providing a physical representation somewhere between remembering and forgetting, memory sites 'reflect who and what communities choose to remember' (Besley 2005:38) and can be construed as 'crossroads, points where space and time meet memory and as such [are] crucial to belonging' (Kolstrup 1999:1).

This research puts forward the argument that in lieu of definitive material culture, an historical archaeological investigation of contemporary memory sites and memorials connected with the ASSI colonial labour event and consequent post-colonial situation, when

viewed together as an assemblage, presents both an entry point to establishing a physical, spatial connection to the event and a contraindication of the general level of forgetfulness apparent within local social memory and the broader Australian national narrative. As with Nora's (1989:7) conceptualisation of memorials as *lieu de memoire* - sites of memory that remind people of the past, but exist in place of the real environments of historical memory or *milieux de memoire* - so too can ASSI-related memorials be addressed as contemporary memory sites, physical objects and places that have emerged to take the place of historical material connections. Further, the existing tensions between written history and oral memory accounts can also be explored from this space when considered from the concept that memory sites 'can operate between history and memory, at the intersection rather than belong to one or other category' (Healy 1997:26).

In addition to considering ASSI-related memorials as material objects which represent or symbolise aspects of the ASSI event, this research argues that by viewing the memorials as an archaeological assemblage, a further material engagement focus is enabled (Alberti et al 2013:29; Latour 2005; Malafouris 2004; Van Oyen 2015). This allows consideration of the ways in which material properties contribute to the interchange between materials and humans in the world to produce meaning (Alberti et al 2013; Buchli and Lucas 2001; Malafouris and Renfrew 2010), specifically in this case, the ties between materiality and memory (Connerton 2008; Jones 2007; Malafouris 2004; Van Dyke & Alcock 2003). In this way, along with ameliorating the contemporary post-colonial problem of inequality for minority groups, some contribution towards understanding the complexities of social memory for archaeological method and theory is offered, working from a contemporary surface assemblage to recognise relationships between past and present objects and events (Harrison 2011; Martin 2013).

1.2 Research Aims

Social memory of the ASSI labour event was selected as the focus for this research for three key reasons: it is a contemporary socio-cultural issue requiring attention, it is a gap in archaeological knowledge/attention and it provides a prime opportunity to explore the potential of archaeology to investigate aspects/relationships of materiality and memory. As an archaeological encounter, the ASSI story has themes of unequal power relations, issues of race, class, identity and representation, and offers a post-colonial perspective on ASSI history at both the local/micro and extended/macro scales.

Added to the research questions which follow, this research aims to provide a working example of the

relevance of contemporary archaeology, reinforcing its strength as a dynamic means to access and disseminate cultural heritage information that is pertinent not only to studies of the past, but also to current and future social and political issues. ‘What better reason for archaeology to exist than to meet the needs of people?’ (Atalay et al. 2014:8). The focus, while designed around a contemporary situation, addresses not only ‘the present itself, but also the spaces in which the past and future intervene within it ... encompass[ing] not only the study of contemporary material cultures, but also the pasts and futures which they embody and evoke’ (Graves-Brown et al 2013:11). In this way the research may then be considered a precursor to a future activist archaeology which involves working more directly in collaboration with ASSI descendants and other local communities to connect the many other facets of Australian South Sea Islanders’ cultural heritage.

1.3 Research Questions

As well as the practical outcome of providing a spatial connection to the historical ASSI labour event, several theoretical questions revolving around relationships of material culture and the intangible quality of memory are posed:

- **PUBLIC MEMORY OF THE COLONIAL ASSI PAST**
What aspects of the contested ASSI (hi)stories are represented in Australian memorials and how are they represented?
How are the ASSI portrayed / constructed in Australian memorials?
- **REMEMBERING THE ASSI IN THE PRESENT**
What is the relationship between ASSI-related memory sites and contemporary debates about Islander identity and cultural heritage?
To what extent does the past construct the present, or the present determine understandings of the past?
- **MEMORY STRATEGIES**
What do comparisons and contrasts between ASSI-related memorials tell us about the ways humans interact with materials to produce meaning?
What can this ASSI memorial research tell us about accessing human memory strategies through the material record?
- **HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY**
What is the relevance of an archaeology of the contemporary world to issues of present day relationships and inequalities?
Do memorials create memories or hold memories?

These questions are explored through the mechanics of memory inherent in commemorative material culture, focussing on aspects of materiality, cultural heritage and memory practices represented at public memory sites. To what extent do memorials create social memory, or social memory create memorials?

1.4 Research Design

The broad scope of the research questions, asking about social memory and materiality, are obviously open to broad general conclusions and may be affected by local specifics, such as issues of identity, race, class and gender, which involve more than a quantitative exploration to provide meaning. The research paradigm, therefore, requires space to support both quantitative and qualitative information. The combination of collection methods, discussed in chapter four, supports this outcome, providing a sample cross section of data within the spatial and temporal parameters, of the entire Queensland sugar area. The data derived is then able to be considered by way of individual case study and across the entire assemblage, while at the same time providing the capacity to speak to broader research interests. In order to further understand the relationships between materiality and public memory and their roles in how people communicate meaning about past events, aspects of actor-network-theory (ANT) consider connections between the psychological concepts involved in the creation of memory sites and the physiological aspects of their material existence.

This approach facilitates a consideration of ASSI-related memory sites from multiple perspectives focused on the materialised expression of memory. Also enabled is discussion beyond typologies, styles and categories to consider the relational meaning and distributed agency of these objects within the complex network of public memory.

In this way the research design also supports the relevance of ‘an archaeology of the contemporary world’ (Graves-Brown et al 2013; Harrison 2011; Olivier 2011), which ‘encompasses not only the study of contemporary material cultures, but also the pasts and futures which they embody and evoke’ (Graves-Brown et al 2013:11). As Lydon (2009:ix) points out, ‘[a]rchaeology is often used as a metaphor for a past that is distant and divorced from the present’. Following these lines of thought, by considering heritage remembrance structures that are connected with the original ASSI event as strategies to link the present day to an invisible past, this research design applies archaeological thinking to the contemporary socio-cultural landscape. This also speaks to Harrison’s (2013) call for an archaeology ‘in and of the present’, which sees archaeology as an engagement primarily with the present, and considers traces of the past within

it, rather than ‘the modernist trope of archaeology as excavation and the idea of a past which is buried and hidden’ (Harrison 2013:141). ‘[T]he archaeology of the contemporary is about surfaces and assemblages (Harrison 2011), and moreover a world that is being lived’ (Graves-Brown et al 2013:16).

This also sits well with Holtorf’s (2012:29) argument that archaeologists searching for the past will instead find their present. Holtorf argues that considering archaeological artefacts and methods as a social practice that supports a ‘history culture’ is a way of negotiating current social realities and understandings in which ‘archaeology reflects and is embedded in present-day society’ (Holtorf 2012:5). Of particular relevance to ASSI heritage due to the varied memory keeping practices, ‘history culture’ is a term coined by Holtorf in the 1990s, which comprises all references in society to past times, that is, all occasions where the past is present in everyday social life.

This includes heritage sites, museum exhibitions, school lessons, tourist brochures, political speeches, historical novels, TV documentaries, some advertisements, academic lectures, narrated folktales, and guided tours to ancient monuments and other sites of memory (Holtorf 1996:119).

It can be argued, therefore, that the seeking to reconcile the contentious and forgotten ASSI past through the materials-based discipline of archaeology, is itself a reflection of evolving contemporary Australian societal attitudes. Even then, as people view, interact and instigate such archaeological projects, a certain divide often exists between the role that artefacts from the past play in the lives of those engaging with them in the present. This appears as an awareness that the objects, and their (hi)stories belong to past people.

This research works on the premise that by working with memorials connected with the ASSI indentured labour event, we are reconciling the past with both the present and the future. By interpreting these memorial structures as enduring time travellers, existing in multiple temporal dimensions of past, present and future, we are able to see the past enduring as a part of the present. ‘A monument of the past is a structure of meaning to be received and not recovered ... the meaning of a monument of the past is the future of the monument’ (Ashok 2007:13 in Holtorf 2008:414). Also, by considering memorial structures in this way, as connected to the ASSI labour event, we are, in effect, providing a physical dimension to an invisible cultural heritage which has been missing, and will, by its materiality, endure into the future.

In this way, we consider the role of archaeology in current relationships and inequalities, asking whether

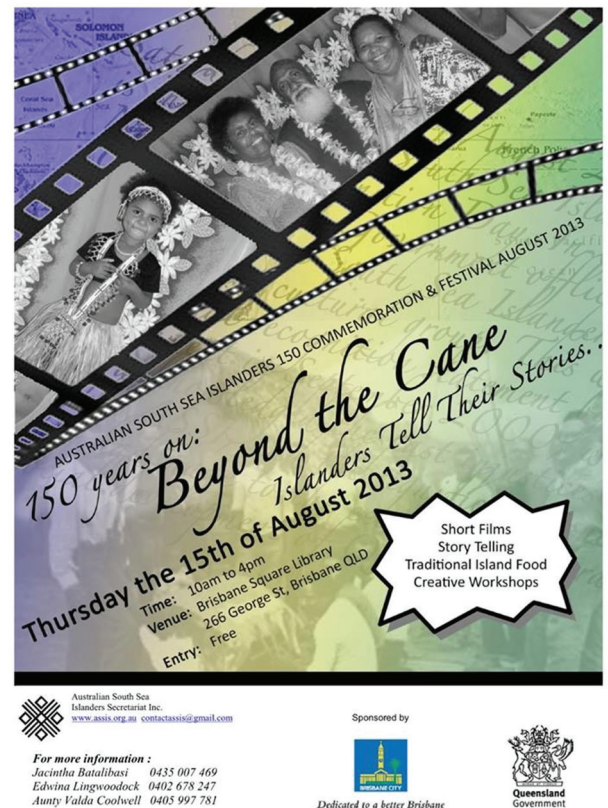


Figure 1.6: History culture example – Islander Commemoration Festival 2013 (www.assis.org.au)

archaeology can be a tool for change, have a wider social impact, tackle current social issues, and thus, encourage community development. This research may then provide the foundation for further archaeological investigations, in collaboration with ASSI descendants and their local communities.

1.5 Overview of the Structure of the Research

Structurally, this research is organised to travel through broad temporal paradigms, proceeding from an initial review of past ASSI historical circumstances, through the theoretical considerations underlying the research data framework designed in the present, to a discussion of research outcomes and their implications for the future.

Chapter 1 (Research Introduction) provides the introductory overview, with brief context statements to position the research aims, questions, methodology, concepts, terminology and chapter structure that follows. The historical research presented in this chapter lays the foundation upon which the current situation of cultural invisibility and historical memory amnesia can be understood. This chapter defines the study area and sites, establishing the ASSI as the lens which sets the focus of the research on the archaeological challenges

of dealing with a primary intangible aspect of the human experience, namely memory.

Chapter 2 (Research Context – Literatures) elaborates the research context, summarising the past background and current ASSI situation, and reviews and contextualises historiographical literature to locate the research within themes of Australian historical archaeology. From this, two recurrent themes emerge, namely, aspects of materiality and the creation of memory, which are discussed in the light of ancient heritage paradoxes. This leads to the conclusion that the interaction of the tangible and intangible aspects of ASSI heritage are best interpreted through ASSI-related memory sites, which share accessible and complementary components of materiality and narrative based presence. This chapter defines the research space and supports the research premise of a collated assemblage of ASSI-related memorials and memory sites as a focus for material engagement.

Chapter 3 (Theoretical Concepts - Liminal Spaces) considers the implications of an archaeology of ASSI memory through a customised integral framework to group concepts inherent in the complexity of the ASSI memory situation. This organises the perspectives of embedded historical memory, entangled formation processes, theoretical valuations and agency in social memory networks into a useable model to inform the interpretive chapters that follow.

Chapter 4 (The Memory Practices - Material Constructs) describes the collection methodology and recording policy leading to the presentation of the data that together make up the assemblage. From individual site biographies, a summarised format is extrapolated and then further reduced to present the research assemblage as variable categories of data from which frequency graphs are generated. In this way a concise, readable database provides a workable means to compare and contrast the most obvious features, while also having access to site specific details for reference and interpretative discussion.

Chapter 5 (Embedded Memory - Language Based) investigates the embedded linguistic qualities of memorials to create and transfer versions of the past to public awareness. These include the narrative values of photographic and created imagery, the symbolic representation of script and the chronological effects of story telling that are represented through opposing messages.

Chapter 6 (Entangled Memory - Cognitive Meaning) considers the non-verbal communication transmitted through relational behavioural aspects enacted in placement and fabric choices. Where the historical narratives attached to ASSI-related memory sites can

be understood to transfer a representative version of the past, it is the solid physicality of material objects that anchor these pasts in the physical format of material culture. In this way, embedded narratives and entangled placements reframe local histories, making these pasts visible in the public sphere.

Chapter 7 (Interactive Memory - Philosophical Constructs) alters the focus of attention from ASSI-related memory sites as versions of the past, to consider how they interact with the present day philosophical viewpoints of their supporting communities. This allows interpretation of the publicly accessible features of memorials, such as aesthetic presentation and form, that influence contemporary audiences on a level that provokes reaction and opens narratives, both of which influence the construction of local and national identity and historical awareness.

Chapter 8 (Networked Memory) retains the focus in the present, discussing the ASSI-related memory sites as nodes in networks of contemporary meaning. This uncovers their agency in the memory transmission process through the social dynamics and networked memory practices of human/material interactions. This focus on their relational trajectories as nodes in networked relationships, also extends to connections with time, linking them to the pasts they represent, as well as to new relationships with places and objects in evolving presents.

Chapter 9 (Research Conclusion) concludes the research, elucidating the contribution of this research towards understanding the complexities of human memory strategies in the post colonial arena of reconciling conflicting historical narratives. Offering an overall recap of the study, followed by a discussion addressing the research questions, the chapter concludes the research with suggestions for future related study foci.

1.6 Notes on Terminology

Social/collective/public memory - What's in a name? Many ASSI descendants do of course possess and actively pass down personal familial histories; memories transmitted in the form of spoken word, sometimes accompanied by memorabilia such as photographs, or sites specific to those individuals (Fatnowna 2002; Gabey 2013; Maclellan 2012). However, for the purposes of this research it is the broader, cumulative memory existing in local communities that is of interest. It is through this shared, group memory that communities identify and define themselves, expressing their claims to place, culture and belonging through the versions of the past that they agree to retell through narrative and physical representations (Anderson 1991:49; Olick & Robbins 1998: 117).

There are arguably subtle differences between the terms used to describe this shared memory, sometimes referred to as social, communal or public memory, according to the interpretation of the user. For example Young opposes the term collective memory with 'collected memory' to emphasise the inherently fragmented and wide ranging agendas of a community. He also avoids the term 'collective' because society's memory cannot exist outside of individual people (Young 1993:xi). Olick and Robbins in their research about social memory identified several other terminologies that have been used including 'official memory, vernacular memory, public memory, popular memory, local memory, family memory, historical memory, cultural memory ... myth, tradition, custom and historical consciousness' amongst others (Olick and Robbins 1998:112).

The actual concept of collective memory according to Halbwachs, who is credited with its introduction, is that various groups of people have different collective memories which influence their consequent behaviours and constructions of reality and use mental images in the present to reconstruct the past (Halbwachs 1992 translated by Coser). Extending this can liken it to that of Anderson's concept of nationalism which he describes as 'imagined communities' whose creation is also enabled by the reproduction of particular narratives (Anderson 1983:49). In a similar way it can be argued that the collective or public memory of a past is also imagined: an imagined past that is enabled through the production of images, narratives and other representational forms. Although actual events and people did in fact exist, happen and pepper the narratives that collective memories may chronicle, they are subjective, distant, foreign lands 'to which we no longer have an organic experiential relation' (Halbwachs 1992:38).

This ability to transmit information about things which do not actually exist physically, experientially or even temporally in an individual's present, is a crucial component of the human condition. It allows discourse on concepts such as 'social constructs' or 'imagined realities' and it is theorised that this particular ability for abstract communication was instrumental in the 'cognitive revolution' which appeared between 70 000 and 30 000 years ago and enabled sapiens 'not merely to imagine things, but to do so collectively' (Harari 2014:25). This ability was arguably an important contributory factor for human propulsion to the top of the food chain as the capacity to transmit conceptual information in this way gave 'sapiens the unprecedented ability to cooperate flexibly in large numbers' (Harari 2014:25).

Despite this ancient inherited ability to cooperate however, the contestation surrounding an applicable

term to refer to the generally accepted phenomena of a collective or social memory of the ASSI remains. The term 'social' memory too has issues for some archaeological interpretations because its meaning can be ambiguous, 'construed as a kind of material or domain ... [or used as an] explanation of some other state of affairs' (Latour 2005:1). Pollard explains a problem with language that refers to social entities such as social memory as 'presupposing both the existence of reified forms and a distinction between the 'social' and other things, people, processes, relations. etc.' that results in an 'ontological separation of practices and of the material from the 'social'" (Pollard 2013:174). Instead, he suggests, for archaeology 'the social needs to be relocated as emergent within networks/meshworks of interactions not just between humans, but within wider assemblages that take in other organisms, things, energies, performances, technologies, and so forth' (Pollard 2013:174).

The terminology arguments ultimately lead to a nature/culture divide. The terms 'collective memory' and 'social memory' may both presuppose a cultural entity, which somehow operates outside of the natural, human individuals who make up the group community. Further, the application of either term to physical memorials may also presuppose an ontological separation, that is as material proxies via cultural practice taking the place of natural or actual human memories. Although there is merit and room to consider both of these positions within the research, the use of these (now) theoretically laden terms may limit the ability to discuss and reach conclusions from the data.

Further, although both terms are sometimes used interchangeably, important differences have been drawn. 'Social memory derives from a basis in shared experience, shared history or place, or a shared project [which] presupposes pre-existing relationships ... that one did not [necessarily] experience oneself but that were undergone by consociates ... and is often concerned with aspects of the relationships themselves' (Casey 2004:22-23).

Collective memory, in contrast, has no such basis but is instead distributed over a given population or set of places ... is formed spontaneously and involuntarily ... focused on a given topic: typically an event ... person or nation' (Casey 2004:22). From this point of definition then, for the research to refer to either social memory or collective memory would alienate one or other group of members of the local community, either by excluding the intimate group identities inherent in social memory, or by excluding the collective memory of people who have moved into the spatial location more recently, but who nevertheless may well hold 'memory' of the historical background of their extended community

and place, but lack 'any shared basis in experience, history or place (Casey 2004:24).

However, both social and collective memory along with individual memory all contribute to public memory, 'an out in the open historic background that members of the public speak in terms of, that is revisable while also stabilising in any given direction of public events ... constituted from within a particular historical circumstance' (Casey 2004:25-26). While the other modes of remembering deal primarily with reminding us about the past, public memory 'is radically bivalent in its temporality ... both attached to a past [that] typically originates from an event of some sort and acts to ensure a future of further remembering of that same event' (Casey 2004:17). Therefore, as it is through the material evidence in contemporary public memory spaces that this research intends to gauge the physical representations of local communities' historical memory, 'public memory' will be the general term to discuss the ways in which the ASSI are remembered for the remainder of this research.

1.7 Memorials / Monuments

Assigning a discernible difference to the words 'monument' and 'memorial' is a process open to conjecture. One school of thought assumes a binary position of functionality 'presum[ing] that 'memorials' recall only past deaths or tragic events and provide places to mourn, while 'monuments' remain essentially celebratory markers of triumphs and heroic individuals' (Young 1993:3). Extending this to consider the twin aspects of the human cognitive condition memory, that is remembering and forgetting, it has been asserted that 'we erect monuments so that we shall always remember and build memorials so that we shall never forget' (Danto in Young 2013:3).

However, in the course of this research, and in general parlance, the two words have proven to be interchangeable, with both understood as a structure which serves to remind or recall a significant person or event. Monument comes from the Latin 'monere', which means to remind, to advise or to warn and may be construed as a commemoration effort that is designed to pay respect and honour someone or something perceived as crucial to the beliefs of the erecting society. For this reason monuments are often used to reinforce political or culturally significant ideologies. Memorial, on the other hand, from the Latin 'memoria', meaning memory, may be understood to serve more as a general reminder, a statement of fact, or to focus on the memory of someone or something now passed. This includes landmark objects, gravestones and war memorials as well as all monuments.

For the purposes of this research then, all styles of memory sites or commemorative structure will be referred to as memorials so as to remove any perception of preconceived meaning or bias inherent in choosing between the two terms. Thinking of Australian memorials in this way, as efforts of materialising memory, supports the premise that memory arises from the mutual engagement between person and world, is not merely data stored in the mind, but 'emerges through intersubjective experience with the material world' (Jones 2007:41).

Memorials, as the physical representatives of personal experience, can be construed to represent noteworthy people or events 'by proxy'. In other words, the memorials act as the agents, or substitutes for past events. Much like Pacific Islands sand designs, memorials represent and illustrate a culturally-specific historical narrative, albeit in a form that doesn't outwardly involve the recipient as an inclusive holder of the narrative, but imagines them as a viewer, rather than a participant. However, the relationship between the past event and the memorial isn't a static one-to-one. Memorials depend on the contemporary context at the time of their creation for their particular interpretation, materialised through their scale, form, design and wording. Like a translation, there is a choice of substitutions which will be different in different contemporary contexts. Further, future viewers will also interpret and perceive meaning from them in different ways depending on personal, cultural and educational prerogatives. This can be understood as another nature/culture divide. The natural solidity of rock for example, when used as a memory object, takes on a cultural meaning which is also capable of delivering different messages to different viewers. Lydon writes of this:

The irony of material culture is that its very inertia lends it an objectivity and autonomy that appears to evade ideology, seemingly reflecting the natural state of things, yet its meaning is mutable, altering according to circumstance. Its very durability allows its meanings to be interpreted and re-interpreted over long periods of time, in processes of re-valuation and re-inscription (Lydon 2005:112).

Australian memorials, therefore, as modes of cultural heritage delivery, play an important role in transmitting the memory of a communal past. This suggests that existing commemorative memorials related to the ASSI indentured labour event can be re-evaluated in terms of their roles in constructing identity and locality in communities. In this way an ideal foundation for linking a comprehensive Australian heritage for South Sea Islanders is possible, with the potential to further animate and connect disjointed pieces of oral and

textual history without losing individual localised content and identity.

1.8 Conclusion

Chapter 1 has introduced the overarching focus of this research: to explore and discuss, through the lens of the Australian South Sea Islander indentured labour event, how we might understand the interpretive challenges posed by a lack of material culture when considering relationships of public memory and materiality and the questions which emerge from considering those challenges in an archaeological context. The concept of a nature/culture divide regarding memory was introduced, contrasting the natural capacity of individual humans to remember (nature) with different cultural practices such as memorials or sand drawings used as external structures to represent, maintain, transmit or give a physical dimension to these memories (culture). This divide was also identified in the properties of memorials themselves, at once static in their physicality, while also fluid in their ability to be reinterpreted. Finally, it was determined that despite localised oral histories and memorials, memory of the ASSI in the Australian national narrative however, remains intangible, seemingly invisible to broader contemporary public memory despite having a presence in local history culture narratives and individual memories. This suggests a lack of cohesion, rather than a lack of memory.

It is this broader collective memory of past times that is the key element to redressing the ASSI representational imbalance within the Australian (hi)story. All the relatively discrete ways, ‘commemorations, museum displays, statuary, historic houses, historical writing, films, image-making, graveside orations and the myriad ways in which relationships between past and present are performed can be thought of as constituting social memory [and] displac[ing] history onto the larger field of memory’ (Healy 1997:4-5). This memory makeup is further compounded by competing historiographical threads of the indentured labour event, and by archaeological challenges and limitations to the determining of material culture connections of ASSI people to historical place, which are discussed in the following chapter. The overriding issue therefore can be construed not as a lack of memory, but as a lack of cohesion to enable a fuller story, including competing narratives, to emerge into current social awareness. This research introduces the premise that historical archaeology can provide the connective platform to facilitate this outcome.

The following chapter contextualises the Islander situation in Australia and details relationships of current ASSI heritage with previous historiographical texts and archaeology to understand the circumstances that have led to their representational issues, and thus the gap this research addresses.