

The Yorta Yorta Movement for the Land and Water Management in the South East Australia

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Abstract

This paper clarifies the present Yorta Yorta land right movement that entangles the power relationship between ‘dominant’ and ‘dominated’ social groups. It also shows that the present movement is the civil movement conducted by the Multitude, which relies on the divers background people who share, pass, and create the common knowledge on the environment issues. It also discloses the generalization to conduct the movement in terms of the environment issue causes in deteriorating the Yorta Yorta indigenety. The possibility to continue this movement, therefore, depends on collaborative work with non-indigenous peoples, and relies on recognition from the wider society to the Yorta Yorta as Traditional Owner who takes the movement for the environmental civil movement in their control.

Introduction

This paper will consider the Yorta Yorta¹ indigenous movement for the management of river and forest resources located at the middle basin of the Murray River on the border of the State of Victoria and the state of New South Wales. Firstly, the paper will briefly clarify the Yorta Yorta political actions considering their history of the land rights struggles. Secondly it will examine the recent Yorta Yorta movement focusing on the Co-operative Management Agreement between the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation (YYNAC) and the State of Victoria, which was reached in 2004. In so doing, it will analyze the idea of environmental management and the relationship among each stakeholder in terms of the accounts by the Yorta Yorta people, the local people and staff from environmental NGOs, and it will look at government reports, opinions from each stakeholder and some articles from local newspapers. Consequently, I will show that the social movement for the environmental management of the Yorta Yorta people has been taking place not in the conventional binary structure between White and Black but in the interactive situation with the in-

1 The name expression of Yorta Yorta has been transformed by researchers, governors and Yorta Yorta individuals; Pinegerine (1840), Waveroo (1840), Bangerang (1880), Walithiga (1890), Kailtheban (1890), Yota Yota (1890), Yotta Yotta (1890), Joti jota (1930), Pangerang (1940), Yorta Yorta (1959). In this paper I will use the following two expressions; Yorta Yorta and Bangerang, which are used by Yorta Yorta or Bangerang individuals in their daily lives.

dividuals and groups that have diverse backgrounds.

1. Research Area

The main areas of my study are the following towns around 250 km up to the north from Melbourne city; Echuca, Moama, Barmah, Cummeragunga Aboriginal community, and Mooroopna and Shepparton along the Golburn River diverging from Murray River. The Barmah forest is a part of the largest River Red Gum wetland in the world and the size of the forest with the Millawa forest on the New South Wales side is around 30,000 hectares. The forest has more than 385 species of indigenous flora and 273 species of indigenous fauna and is listed as a wetland of international significance under the Ramsar Convention and moreover reaches two migratory birds agreements with Japan and China. The Barmah forest contains many sites of cultural significance to the Aboriginal people.² The study areas including the Barmah forest abound in the primal industry such as fruits, vegetables, rice, dairies, livestock and sawmills. Most of people running the forest and agricultural industry are the descendants of the Anglo-Celt settlers who had immigrated into this area since 1840s.³

1.1 White Australia and Yorta Yorta Community

According to 2006 census, the total number of the indigenous Australian is around 420,000 and it is about 2.3 percent out of all of Australian population. Around 73 percent out of all indigenous population lives in the urban and suburban area. Inter-marriage rate between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people is more than 68.7 percent (Peterson and Taylor 2003: 105–122). The proportional rate of the Victorian indigenous population comparing with the total population in the Victoria state is 0.6 percent. By comparison with this small ratio, the percent of cities and towns where Yorta Yorta mainly live is the following; Echuca is 3.1 percent, Shepparton is 4.5 percent, and Barmah is more than 20 percent.⁴ Therefore, these areas have some indigenous population in the dominant White population and Rowley define the area with Power Nation between “White” and “Black” as “White Australia” or “settled Australia” (Rowley 1971: 421). In addition to these towns, nowadays the Yorta Yorta people mainly live in other towns along the Murray and Goulburn River basin and Melbourne suburb. Total number of them is over 5000 (Atkinson 2005: 9).

The previous analyses of the relationship between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous peo-

2 According to the archeological investigation in July 2002, the number of the indigenous heritage is the following: Meden (13), mound oven (113), Scar Tree (114), burial site (3), artifact (2) (pamphlet from Victoria National Parks Association 2008).

3 Since 2005, output of the primary industry around the research area has been on the decline due to the long term drought.

4 See Australian Bureau of Statics 2006

ple in White Australia have been classified into 4 categories. There are “assimilation”, “amalgamation”, “pluralism” and “transformation”. First is a group who lost traditional way of life and was assimilated into the wider society. Second type is an indigenous group who protested against wider society. Third is a group who adapted the wider society. Last type is a group who transformed new way of life (Keen 1998: 6). The researches on the Yorta Yorta also have been conducted along these 4 types. Most of them relate to “pluralism” and “transformation” on the Yorta Yorta Land Rights Movements since 1990s. This has been induced by the historical event on the Yorta Yorta Native Title Claim since 1994 so the researches have merely been taken out of the framework on the Native Title Claim (Sutton, 1998; Hagen 1999, 2001; Atkinson 2000; Morris 2003; Ritter 2004; Strelein 2006).

A few researches on the Yorta Yorta out of the framework on the Native Title Claim can be found in the recent papers written by the Yorta Yorta academics (Atkinson 2000; Morgan & Strelein & Weir 2006) and PhD student (Weir 2009). These papers focus on the recent Yorta Yorta movement for environmental management on the river and forest with non-Indigenous stakeholders but main arguments still rely on the binary structure between the Yorta Yorta and non-Indigenous People.

This paper will take consideration on the previous works but it will also clarify the recent Yorta Yorta Movement on the environmental management not in the context of conventional binary structure between White and Black but in the interactive situation with the individuals and groups that have diverse backgrounds. In addition to this, this paper will explain the recent issues on the indigenous rights over the land. In this issue it will clarify that the contemporary issue on the indigenous land rights have been transformed into negotiated solution since 1998 from litigated solution since 1970s. It will, therefore, suggest the necessity to consider interactive relationship between indigenous people and non-indigenous people after brief inquiring into the functional role of indigenous representative body in taking negotiated process into consideration.

1. 2 Yorta Yorta Political Organization

The Yorta Yorta is an eminent Aboriginal group in over 40 Victorian Aboriginal groups. They have continued to fight for their civil, political, and social rights since 1860s. Most of the Yorta Yorta descendants call their places as ‘country’ or ‘home place’ (Atkinson 2000: 14–36, Barwick 1988: 27). The Yorta Yorta country mainly locates in the Barmah, Moira and Millawa forests on the border between New South Wales and Victoria. Since colonization, the Yorta Yorta culture has radically transformed in a short time. As a part of surviving and adapting to the colonial context such as Maroga Mission, Cummeragunja reserve⁵ under the protection and the assimilation policies.

5 The Maloga Mission was established on land selected by Daniel and William Matthews from 1874 until 1888. D. Matthews trained the Yorta Yorta in terms of Christian ethic but many of the Yorta Yorta still ↗

Identity of Tradition Owner has been transformed. Some academics define that relationships with country have not always continued through colonization, and the trend in South East Australia has been for Traditional owners to define themselves with language groups and family groups as their most important political identity (Finlayson 1999: 139–140, Sutton 1998: 86, Weir & Ross 2007: 189). This applies for the Yorta Yorta. It can be found into the transformation of the Yorta Yorta representative bodies and its functional roles.

Now I will concern transformation of the Yorta Yorta political organizations. The Yorta Yorta people established two Aboriginal political organizations in 1930s. Australian Aborigines League was found in Melbourne in 1936 and in the following year, Aboriginal Progressive Association was established in Sydney. These organizations actively set movements for demanding equal rights with other Australians. These movements were supported by the eminent Yorta Yorta leaders such as William Cooper, Margaret Tucker and Douglas Nicholls who were born and grown up in Maroga mission or Cummeragunja reserve. These organizations had the unique functional roles because the collaborative work with non-Aboriginal staff. Most of them were the Anglo-Celt Europeans who belonged to churches or humanitarian organizations. They mainly worked in the indigenous organizations as administration or volunteer staff (Attwood and Markus 2001: 1–8).

Given the focus on the current political aspect on the Yorta Yorta people, they have established some important organizations since 1980s. In 1983 two organizations were established. One is the Yota Yota Land Council in New South Wales which manage a portion of old Cummeragunja reserve under the 1983 Aboriginal Land Rights Act (New South Wales) and another is the Yorta Yorta Tribal Council in Victoria that promotes the negotiation with two state governments; Vic and NSW for demanding the decision-making in managing Barmah forest and a part of Murray river. In 1989, the tribal Council was replaced by the Yorta Yorta Murray-Goldburn Clan Group Corporation (YYMGGCGC) under the registration in Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976 (Cth). Since 1999 the Clan Group turned to be the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation (YYNAC).

When YYMGGCGC was established, they identified 16 family groups as their significant ancestral families on the basis of identifiable ancestors such as Kitty who had 8 kids between 2 white men; Cooper and Atkinson, and other 8 individuals. Therefore, individual members who consist of YYNAC belongs to one or some of 16 family groups and each family group has sibling relationships (Atkinson 2000: 54, 73, Hagen 1999: 78–80). However, one family group prefers to identify themselves as the Bangarang people recorded by a pastoralist in 1870s and although they are a part of YYNAC, they have different opinions on the political matters from the Yorta Yorta people.

↘ continued to camp at traditional places in the bush, along the rivers and at pastoral stations. With the creation of the NSW Protection Board in 1883, Cummeragunja of 5 km upstream from Maloga was reserved from 1888 until 1953 and the wondering Yorta Yorta were taken to the reserve. Around 1200 acres of Cummeragunja were returned to the Yorta Yorta Land Council in 1983 under NSW Aboriginal Land Right Act.

Thus, given the careful consideration to these facts, I use the Yorta Yorta or the Yorta Yorta people except those who identify themselves as the Bangarang people.

2. Yorta Yorta Native Title Claim

The current phase of the Aboriginal right movements was triggered by the passage of the Native Title Act (Commonwealth) by the federal government in 1993. The following year until 2002 the Yorta Yorta people submitted their claim against around 400 oppositions including individuals engaging in some primly industrial companies and the 3 state governments (New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia) and some local governments in terms of the following demands; 1) the Yorta Yorta control for resources in the claimant areas and the rights to occupy, live and posses there, 2) the rights to exclude others to access the claimant areas without informed consent, 3) practice of the rights and obligation in terms of the Yorta Yorta traditional law and costumes and 4) the right to use minerals and other resources on and under the ground (Atkinson 2000: 111–129; Broome 2005: 381–384).

From 1994 to 95 before the start of the Yorta Yorta Native Title Claim trial, the Yorta Yorta represents had the mediation with the local people. The responses from the local people during the mediation process showed their high skepticism against the Yorta Yorta people. One reason is that some of the Yorta Yorta partners are White people and their ancestors such as Kitty had White partners; that is, Atkinson and Cooper. The other is that the local people, who engaged in agriculture, Timber cutting, cattle grazing businesses, worked with the Yorta Yorta people together until recent day. Some local newspapers supported this local peoples' skepticism through the opinion section of the newspapers. In the end, the mediation was failed (Atkinson 2000:103).

2. 1 Fail of Yorta Yorta Native Title Claim

The Yorta Yorta Native Title Claim was the first claim to utilize the litigation process after passing the Native Title Act 1993 (Commonwealth) that was resulted from Mabo decision in 1992.⁶ The federal court treated some written documents by settlers and mission manager as more proper historical documents than oral documents by the Yorta Yorta individuals. Their Native Title and interests had not been continuously maintained through the experience of colonization. Only J in the federal court judged that the Yorta Yorta traditional laws and customs had been washed away by “the tide of history” in 1998. Accordingly, High Court accepted the federal court decision and dismissed the claim in 2002 (Strelein 2006: 84–91).⁷

6 In Native Title 1993, there are three controversial points; 1.existence of an identifiable community, 2.traditional tie and possession with land in terms of traditional law and custom, 3. succession of tie and possession with land.

7 The Federal Court Judge Olney J judged that “by 1881 those through whom the claimant group now seeks ↗

2. 2 Outcomes from the Movement

Although the Yorta Yorta lost their Native Title Claim, they got some achievements to improve their recent conditions of land and daily lives. A small portion of Cummeraguga was returned to the Yorta Yorta Land Council from the New South Wales government in 1983. In 1980s their movements brought to construct the Dharnya center, which plays a significant part in educating the Yorta Yorta people and non-Aboriginal people on the Yorta Yorta history and their contemporary issues.⁸ Indigenous Land Corporation, which was formed in 1995, purchased 2 lands to YYNAC in 2000. They founded the Yanbina Indigenous training center for the Yorta Yorta youth to get more high educational record and economic improvement in 2001.⁹ In 1999, YYNAC made an alliance with other 9 indigenous groups along the Murray-Darling lower rivers and set the Indigenous nations, which have a right to negotiate water management with federal, 4 states and territory governments. After the fail of the Yorta Yorta Native Title Claim in 2002, the Co-operative Management Agreement with the Victoria State government was reached in 2004.

3. Co-operative Management Agreement on Forest and River

The main objectives of the agreement are to facilitate; 1. the active and resourced involvement of the Yorta Yorta People in decisions about the management of the designated areas including the integration of the Yorta Yorta knowledge, internal decision-making processes and perspectives into management planning and work programming; 2. the development of mutual recognition and trust; 3. the identification and promotion of employment, training and economic development opportunities for the Yorta Yorta people (The State Government of Victoria 2004: 2). Although this agreement stressed the promotion of employment, training and economic development opportunities as one of the aims, my study in 2006 revealed that the unemployment rate of the Yorta Yorta people in the Cummeragunga Aboriginal Community and the Barmah was more than 64 percent.

3. 1 Conflict on the VEAC Recommendations

The co-operative management agreement has been encouraging the Victoria government and

↘ to establish native title were no longer in possession of their tribal lands and had, by force of the circumstances in which they found themselves, ceased to observe those laws and customs based on tradition which might otherwise have provided a basis for the present native title claim". He saw this from the following evidence citing the 1881 petition for land by the Yorta Yorta; "all land has been taken possession of by the government and white settlers" so that there is "no doubt gave rise to their desire to change "our old mode of life' in favor of 'settling down to more orderly habits of industry' (Olney J. 'the members of the Yorta Yorta Aboriginal community v the state of Victoria and others', VG no 6001 of 1995). In fact the petition was written in Sydney by Mathews without any recourse to the words or thoughts of those community members whose names were actually attached to it (Cato 1975: 279–280; Hagen 2001: 226).

⁸ Since May 2007, Dharnyal center has been closed due to the white Ants attack.

⁹ Since April 2008, Yanbina Indigenous training center has been closed because of financial problem.

the Yorta Yorta to have some meeting for mutual understanding. Especially, the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) established in 2001 was in charge of investigation for the quality and amount of water in the Murray and other rivers connecting with the Murray, and for the state forest and parks' condition and bio-diversity including the Barmah state forest and park. This committee submitted 3 significant reports in 2006, 2007 and 2008.

The first report in 2006 focused on the geological, historical, economic, political and environment conditions within the study area. The second report in 2007 set the explicit proposals and recommendations for land and water management and takes many parts in this report for the cooperative management in the new national parks with Aboriginal Traditional Owners.

To inform these reports on the local and national levels, VEAC held three methods. One was to have official meeting with community reference group, which has 24 local represent members and Indigenous Steering Committee, which consist of 10 Indigenous represent members. Second was to hold the public meeting at the 8 local cities and one at Melbourne from six of August to 25 September 2007. Third was to collect the submission of public opinions for 2006 and 2007 reports.

Among the public meetings, I attended 4 meetings and took some interviews from participants on the VEAC recommendations. As the result, it disclosed that there are 3 different main stakeholders; that are, local people who engaged in the timber cutting and the cattle grazing business, indigenous people and the local, national and international environmental NGOs including students and intellectuals from the city.

Different types of opinions toward the VEAC recommendations show the difficulty for each stakeholder to reach a compromise. VEAC got around 6800 opinions from individuals and organizations. I focused on 6 organizations which supported or did not support VEAC recommendations on the Barmah forest because these main organizations were selected as a member of community reference group or Indigenous Steering Committee. One is YYNAC which is a part of Indigenous Steering Committee supporting establishment of new national park in Barmah forest with 6 additional comments.¹⁰ Other groups are international, national and local environmental NGOs such as the Friend of the Earth (FOA), the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) and the Goulburn Vary Environmental Group (GVEG) which were members of community reference group supporting VEAC recommendations on prohibition of cattle grazing and timber cutting, proposition of the effective ways for using water resources, establishing of 7 new national parks and increasing levels of involvement of indigenous groups as traditional owners for decision making in river and forest

10 1) Yorta Yorta connection and caring for Country, 2) Joint Management of the Barmah National Park and what this would mean to the Yorta Yorta, 3) Existing infrastructure and utilization in Joint Management, 4) the cooperative Management Agreement ,5) Opportunity for socio-economic self-determination, 6) Bio-physical impacts of current activities and Yorta Yorta strategic direction in inter/trans disciplinary approaches to scientific research (Submission for Victorian Environmental Assessment Council River Red Gum Investigation Final Proposals Paper from Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation, 2007.

management.¹¹

On the other hand, 2 main groups against VEAC recommendations on prohibition of Cattle grazing and Timber cutting business in the Barmah forest are the Barmah Forest Cattlemen's Association (BFCA) and the Barmah Forest Preservation League (BFPL) which are members of community reference group consisting of local people, local shires and member of National party. They made some alternative propositions for river and land management instead of establishing the National Parks.¹²

Main opinions from 6 organizations, therefore, are categorized into 6 topics; 1) promotion for indigenous involvement in managing new national parks, 2) abolishment of grazing and timber cutting business in the forest, 3) setting new national parks, 4) water resources management, 5) recreation such ecotourism, 6) alternative proposition of land management.

First and fifth topics on the indigenous involvement into managing the new national parks and the recreation have unanimous from all stakeholders, but local peoples' representative groups such as BFCA, BFPL want to be treated equally with the Yorta Yorta people. On the other hand, second and third topics on abolishing grazing and timber cutting business in the forest and setting new national parks are supported by YYNAC, FOE, VNPA and GVEG but BFCA and BFPL are unwilling to support them. These local peoples' representative bodies, instead of setting new national parks, proposed improvement for environmental management through their 150 years local knowledge using "the current Barmah ecological community" based on the "cattle grazing" and "timber cutting" business in the forest and river.

3. 2 Dispute on the VEAC Recommendations in Local Newspapers

I also analyzed the different types of opinions from the local people, indigenous people and others on the VEAC recommendations through 525 articles in 4 local news papers (Riverine Herald, Shepparton News, Country News, Kyabram Free Press) from January 2005 to January 2009. In 2005 and 2006 opposition from the local people against the VEAC report started out. It also showed that although some opinions supporting for the VEAC report or VEAC recommendations

11 1) Submission for Victorian Environmental Assessment Council River Red Gum Investigation Final Proposals Paper from Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation, October 2007, 2) Submission for Victorian Environmental Assessment Council River Red Gum Investigation Final Proposals Paper from Friends of the Earth, 8 October 2007, 3) Submission for Victorian Environmental Assessment Council River Red Gum Investigation Final Proposals Paper from Friends of the Earth International, 17 August 2007, Submission for Victorian Environmental Assessment Council River Red Gum Investigation Final Proposals Paper from Victorian National Parks Association, 8 October 2007, 4) Submission for Victorian Environmental Assessment Council River Red Gum Investigation Final Proposals Paper from Golburn Valley Environmental Group, 9 October 2007.

12 1) Submission for Victorian Environmental Assessment Council River Red Gum Investigation Final Proposals Paper from Barmah Forest Cattleman Association 3 October 2007, 2) Submission for Victorian Environmental Assessment Council River Red Gum Investigation Final Proposals Paper from Barmah Forest Preservation League 6 October 2007.

from the Yorta Yorta people appeared, the number of oppositions from the local people had remarkably increased since 2007. In addition to these tendencies, it also revealed that the local people did not only oppose to the VEAC report or VEAC recommendations but also to the local and international environmental NGOs. It was 61 articles by 2009. On the other hand, not many local people opposed to the Yorta Yorta people. It was 20 articles by 2009. On the other hand, the number of articles to support the VEAC reports was 131. 22 were from Indigenous individuals including the Yorta Yorta and 41 were from staff from local, national and international environmental NGOs.

Most of these articles for or against the VEAC recommendations were written by spokespersons from some organizations. For instance, J.L. from the international environmental NGO, FOE wrote 3 articles. N.R. from the national environmental NGO, VNPA wrote 18 articles. In these articles, they emphasized on the following 3 points; 1) setting new national parks, 2) abolishment of cattle grazing and timber cutting business in the national parks, 3) promotion for 17 indigenous people which are recognized as the Traditional Owner to involve in managing new national parks under the fair negotiation with the Victorian state government.¹³

As for the indigenous spokesperson, W. Atkinson and H.A. from YYNAC wrote 8 articles and 3 articles respectively. Their points are very similar with what environmental NGOs proposed. They demanded for abolishment of cattle grazing and timber cutting business in the national parks and promotion for the Yorta Yorta people under the status as traditional owner to involve in managing new national parks with the joint management with the Victorian state government.¹⁴

Spokespersons from the local peoples are K. T., who is the represent of BFCA and lives in the Barmah, and M. R., who is the represent of the River Red Gum Environmental Alliance (RRGE).¹⁵ KT wrote 13 articles and MR wrote 5 articles respectively. They asserted the following 3 points; 1) less recognition from the academics who are staff of VEAC and the environmental NGO staff for

13 1) (1) Shepparton News 3rd September 2007, (2) Riverine Herald 5th October 2007, (3) Riverine Herald 30th July 2008, 2) (1) Riverine Herald 6th September 2006, (2) Riverine Herald 15th November 2006, (3) Shepparton News 20th November 2006, (4) Riverine Herald 3rd August 2007, (5) Country News 6th August 2007, (6) Shepparton News 20th August 2007, (7) Riverine Herald 22nd August 2007, (8) Country News 17th September 2007 (9) Shepparton News 26th September, (10) Shepparton News 19th October 2007, (11) Country News 25th August 2008, (12) Riverine Herald 12th September 2008, (13) Country News 15th September 2008, (14) Country News 28th September 2008, (15) Country News 13th October 2008, (16) Country News 27th October 2008, (17) Country News 10th November 2008, (18) Riverine Herald 5th December 2008.

14 1) (1) Shepparton News 23th August 2007, (2) Country News 10th September 2007, (3) Riverine Herald 12th September 2007, (4) Shepparton News 5th October 2007, (5) Country News 8th October 2007, (6) Riverine Herald 10th October 2007, (7) Shepparton News 12th October 2007, (8) Riverine Herald 21st November 2008
2) (1) Shepparton News 30th August 2007, (2) Riverine Herald 14th September 2007, (3) Riverine Herald 3rd December 2008.

15 River and Red Gum Environmental Alliance consists of 18 local groups. In November 2008, this organization handed out a counter report; "Conservation and Community", which highly supports the idea of the Ramsar wetland reserve against the VEAC final report.

the reality that some local people are in danger of losing their jobs, 2) local knowledge on management of the river and forest by the local people who has 155 years history, 3) recognition of the Bangerang people as the Traditional Owner in the area.¹⁶

As a consequence, my study reveals that there are four different views; first is the view from local people who oppose to the VEAC recommendations due to the potential risk of losing their jobs such as Cattle grazing and timber cutting. Second is the view from local, national and international environmental NGOs including urban intellectuals and students that support VEAC recommendations and Indigenous peoples' demands. Last is the view from the Yorta Yorta people who demand for acknowledgement as the traditional owner that is a care taker in the Barmah forest under the Joint management and the Bangerang people who is a family group of YYNAC collaborates with local people.¹⁷

The analysis on the disputes over the VEAC reports disclosed that the Yorta Yorta's Land Rights negotiation has taken place in terms of the collaborative work with various people who have multiple backgrounds. Next this paper will clarify what sort of strategy the Yorta Yorta people have taken to conduct their movements.

4. Strategy for Yorta Yorta Movement

It seems to be two types for the Yorta Yorta people to conduct their movements. One is that the Yorta Yorta people treated the VEAC recommendations as a global agenda in terms of 'environmental issue'. It seems some strategies by the Yorta Yorta intellectuals to promote their distinctive rights as the indigenous people within this agenda. Besides this, one of 16 family groups in the YYNAC; that is, the Bangerang people is supporting the local stakeholders and conducting the movement by means of the solidarity with local people. It can be said that the former group uses wide network and the latter one uses narrow network.

16 1) (1) Riverine Herald 15th November 2006, (2) Riverine Herald 24th August 2007, (3) Country News 27th August 2007, (4) Shepparton News 27th August 2007, (5) Riverine Herald 31st August 2007, (6) Shepparton News 5th September 2007, (7) Shepparton News 11th September 2007, (8) Shepparton News 14th September 2007, (9) Shepparton News 17th October 2007, (10) Shepparton News 15th October 2007, (11) Riverine Herald 21st November 2007, (12) Country News 18th August 2008, (13) Riverine Herald 28th November 2008.

2) (1) Shepparton News 28th July 2008, (2) Riverine Herald 30th July 2008, (3) Country News 18th August 2008, (4) Riverine Herald 26th November 2008, (5) Country News 22nd July 2009.

17 VEAC submitted the final report to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change in July 2008. Turning to the end of 2008, MECC and the Victorian state government accepted this recommendation. Consequently, while local people, who are mainly 55 employees in stock grazing and timber harvesting company around Barmah Forest would lose their jobs, the Yorta Yorta could get 56 job opportunities. The Victorian government has a plan to give \$4.4 million in compensation for local people ("Yorta Yorta Aboriginal Nation" Riverline Herald, December 12, 2009; "no headline" Riverine Herald, January 2, 2009; "A postcard to the premier" Riverine Herald, January 16, 2009).

4. 1 Wide Network

One example on wide network by Yorta Yorta intellectuals can be seen in the role of W. Atkinson who is a senior lecturer at the University of Melbourne and a Yorta Yorta elder. He said that one of the significant outcomes from the Native Title Claim is to attract the great deal of attention on the Yorta Yorta issue from local and international NGOs including students and intellectuals from Melbourne.¹⁸

Atkinson invites his students to the Yorta Yorta country and gives 4 days' intensive course; that is, "On Country Learning". He has commenced this program since 1996 and Students can get some credits through this course after 2003 and annually around 20 to 30 students attend this course. They can learn the Yorta Yorta history and contemporary issues from the local Yorta Yorta people who work in Aboriginal organizations in communities.

I attended this course in February 2007. Last day, after the presentations from each student on the Yorta Yorta issue, W. Atkinson stressed the next phrase; "change the world by the pen". Some of the students encouraged to involve into the Yorta Yorta movements and organized two action groups; one is the Victorian Cross Campus Indigenous Solidarity and another Darnya Action Group. Some of the students in these groups are originally from the communities along Murray and Goldberner rivers so they play significant roles in raising awareness of the local people mindset on the Yorta Yorta and getting trust from some local peoples.

Beside the students, there are special guests. Some are OGs or OBs from the University of Melbourne and others are the Yorta Yorta professional musician and theatrical director. For instance, J.L. is an Melbourne University OB and works in FOE as facilitator of the Barmah-Millawa Forest Red Gum Campaign. As this paper already mentioned in previous chapter, FOE strongly supports for the Yorta Yorta people. They also make alliance with the previous two students' action groups and other NGOs like VNPA. As for the Yorta Yorta guests, L. B. and A. J. are key figures. The former is the professional singer and the latter is an eminent indigenous playwright and director who edited the performance "Yanagi Yanagi", which treats lost of the Yorta Yorta Native Title Claim as one of "the events that followed and the continuing denial of Yorta Yorta justice" (James 2003: V).

Most participants in this course were encouraged to join the dispute on the VEAC recommendations and these NGOs staff and students willingly participated in the dispute over the local newspapers.

4. 2 Narrow Network

Other example on narrow network by Yorta Yorta can be found in the role of the Bangerng

18 Atkinson, W. Interview with Author, Caravan Park at Moama, February 14 2008

people who is a member of 16 family groups in YYNAC. The Bangerang Cultural Centre, originally known as the Aboriginal Keeping Place, which displays artifacts and provides a resource centre for educating people about the cultural heritage of the Aboriginal people, was built as part of the International Village project in Shepparton. First conceived in 1974, the Keeping Place was finally opened in 1982 after many years of planning. The Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australia Council, to which a Bangerang elder S. A. was appointed in 1976, met with the local community with the result that the Shepparton Aboriginal Arts Council Co-operative was set up with funding by the Arts Board in Shepparton municipal council. This example clearly shows the political relationship between the Bangerang and the local government. Next I will show how the Bangerang people took the collaborative action with the local people against the VEAC recommendations.

The Bangerang elder S. A. joined in the public meeting against the VEAC recommendations organized by the local people for negotiating with represents from the VEAC at Nathalia town hall in 13 August 2007. After this meeting, the local people held the Annual General Meeting (AGM). In the opening remark of this meeting the name of S. A. was announced then his participation into this meeting was appraised by all participants. In the end of the meeting, a chair person stated the next year action plans. There is a specific place in the Barmah state park for the Yorta Yorta people where their ancestors had a ritual ceremony. The English name of the place is "Bucks Sand Hill" surrounded by the wood fence due to the cultural heritage site. YYNAC had demanded the addition of the Yorta Yorta word; "Garradha Molwa", which means a burial and ceremonial site with the Victoria state government since 1999 and in July 2007, the word was added on the English transcript plate.

Among the targets of the next year action plan in the AGM, local people reconfirmed revival of the English transcription and demanded omission of the Yorta Yorta word. The Bangerang elder S. A. was also willing to support this action plan.

After the AGM, I asked a man from Nathalia about "who is the Traditional Owner in this area?" and the man replied "the Bangerang is the real Aboriginal people in this area so S. A. is the real Aboriginal. The Yorta Yorta is not real Traditional Owner in this area".

This example shows that the Bangerang people have collaborative work with the local government and people to join the anti-movement against VEAC report's recommendations.

This chapter has concerned the Yorta Yorta movements as two types. One is the Yorta Yorta group who utilizes wide network which consists of collaborative work with students and intellectuals from city and the local, national and international NGOs. Other is Bangerang group who utilizes narrow network which consists of alliance with local government and people.

4. 3 Meaning of the Yorta Yorta Movement

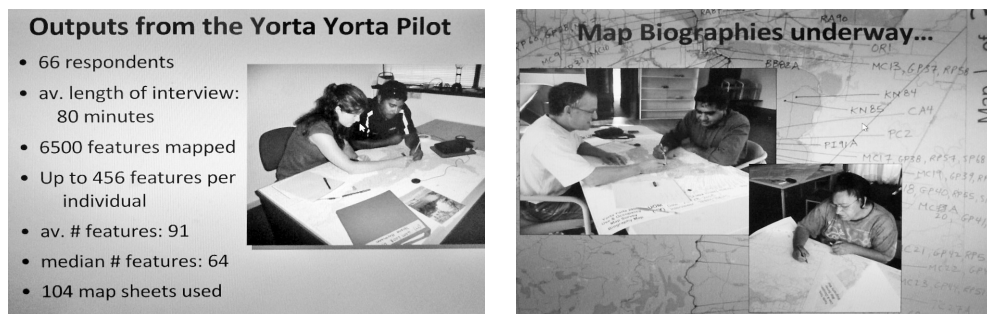
Two models of the Yorta Yorta movements show transformation of their movements into the

new style in terms of solidarity with non-indigenous people such as academics, students and the international, national and local NGOs, and local government and people. In these ways, the Yorta Yorta movement has widely been accepted in Australian society, but due to generalization of the Yorta Yorta movement as social movement, these ways also would deteriorate their authenticities as indigenous people. Therefore, the Yorta Yorta and the Bangarong both have to seek their authenticities as real indigenous people to persuade non-indigenous people and to conduct their movements in control.

In the case of the Yorta Yorta, since 2006 they have been seeking their authenticities through making the “Land Use and Occupancy Map” supported by Canadian specialists (the Yorta Yorta people call the map as “cultural map”). The aims of this map are the following; firstly, it lets Australian society acknowledge the Yorta Yorta as Traditional Owners on the river and forest; second it delivers social, economic, environmental and cultural outcomes for the Yorta Yorta and; third it gives the Yorta Yorta opportunity to get partnerships based on respect, honesty, and capacity to participate equally, with shared responsibility and clearly defined accountability and authority (see Figure 1).¹⁹

The Yorta Yorta collected around 6600 sites as their cultural and spiritual significance from 66 respondents and they trained six coordinators for cultural map who have responsibility to record their traditional and living knowledge of forest and river into the map and take the living knowledge over the next generations. The use of this information will be utilized by the YYNAC to negotiate outcomes in relation to natural resource management, in particular environmental management plans, watering plans with a view to establish discussions with government regarding the Yorta Yorta’s right to have allocations of cultural water to return water flow to the areas that need it the most to encourage the spawning of fish and other species and therefore ensure their existence

Figure 1



(source: Mldrin 19. 02. 2009, Retrieved 7 September 2010, from <http://www.slideshare.net/pdalby/mltrin19022009>)

19 L. Joachim, Interview with Author, January 19 2008

for future generations of the Yorta Yorta people (Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation News 2009).

In the case of the Bangarong, they took advantage of the name “Bangarong” to get authenticity from local people. The name “Bangarong” was recorded by E. Curr who settled around Barmah forest and set pastoral site in 1840s and the naming was recorded before the “Yorta Yorta” (see footnote 1). Thus Bangarong people were acknowledged by local people as a real Traditional Owner in the area.

VEAC final recommendations was passed in the Victoria State Parliament in September 27th, 2009 and this decision led to the creation of the new Barmah National Park under the Parks and Crown Land Legislation Amendment (River Red Gums) Act 2009 which commenced 29 June 2010. The exploration over the ongoing relations with wider or narrow network under this new circumstance is the remaining issue I will further research and analyze.

5. Conclusion

This paper has concerned political divisiveness in the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation and it has clarified the relationship between the Yorta Yorta with some environmental NGOs and academics and the Barmgaong with local government and people through the dispute over the Co-operative Agreement between the YYNAC and the state of Victoria focusing on the VEAC recommendations. Consequently, it revealed that the present Yorta Yorta movements do not only occur on the binary situation between the Yorta Yorta and local people and government, but on the multiple conditions due to involvement of the international, national and local environmental NGOs and the intellectuals from the urban area. Moreover, a family group in YYNAC takes corroborative work with local government and people. Thus, the strategies for conducting the movements have transformed in terms of wider or narrow network. In this context, the wider society has tended to treat the Yorta Yorta people and the Bangarong people as one of the mere actors who support this civil movement so the movement threatened the Yorta Yorta and the Bangarong to lose their authenticities as Traditional Owner in their country.

In preventing the Yorta Yorta and the Bangarong from losing their authenticities as Traditional Owner and, in conducting their movements in control, they had to seek the way to maintain their indigenities. The Yorta Yorta people projected their traditional and living knowledge on the forest and river into the Cultural Map. On the other hand, the Bangarong people used the name “Bangarong” to get solid trust from local people who keenly support “Bangarong” as the Traditional Owner in the area.

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