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Place Name SUMMARY (PNS) 4.02/05

'PONKEPURRINGA'

(last edited: 4/8/17)

NOTE AND DISCLAIMER:

This essay has not been peer-reviewed or culturally endorsed in detail.

The spellings and interpretations contained in it (linguistic, historical and geographical) are my own, and do not necessarily represent the views of KWP/KWK or its members or any other group.

I have studied history at tertiary level. Though not a linguist, for 30 years I have learned much about the Kurna, Ramindjeri-Ngarrindjeri and Narungga languages while working with KWP, Rob Amery, and other local culture-reclamation groups; and from primary documents I have learned much about the Aboriginal history of the Adelaide-Fleurieu region.

My explorations of 'language on the land' through the Southern Kurna Place Names Project are part of an ongoing effort to correct the record about Aboriginal place-names in this region (which has abounded in confusions and errors), and to add reliable new material into the public domain.

I hope upcoming generations will continue this work and improve it. My interpretations should be amplified, re-considered and if necessary modified by KWP or other linguists, and by others engaged in cultural mapping: Aboriginal people, archaeologists, geographers, ecologists and historians.

Chester Schultz, 21 July 2017.



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Abstract

'Ponke'-*paringga* was a Kaurana name for all or part of the Onkaparinga River on its coastal flood-plain. The name was recorded as 'Ponkepurringa' on a map published by Sturt in 1833, the only known primary source of the spelling.

This information must have been obtained in 1831 by the *Isabella's* search party under John Kent after Captain Collet Barker's death at the Murray Mouth. Their informants were probably the Aboriginal woman Sally (Kalinga, later known as Sally Walker), her father Condoy, and/or the Kangaroo Islander George Bates. Since Barker and Kent approached the Onkaparinga from the sea and regarded it as an 'inlet' rather than a 'river', the location of this name was probably further downstream than *Nurlungga* (see PNS 4.02/06) and *Ngangki-paringga* (see PNS 4.02/04). The possible meanings 1, 2, 3 and 4 (below) match a location on the estuary where samphire and salt marshes prevail or near the dunes surrounding the mouth (i.e. from the mouth upstream to Section 863/321, or perhaps to 864/338).

'Purringa' certainly represents the Kaurana word *paringga*, 'at the river, river place'. The name therefore means "place of the 'Ponke' river". However, the correct spelling of 'Ponke' and its meaning (if any) are very uncertain.

Place-names do not always have a lexical meaning. However, the compound with *pari* suggests that the original of 'Ponke' did have one. If so, it may perhaps have been:

1. *purnki* '[dark] red-brown', which could refer to the colour of the samphire on the saltmarshes (e.g. on the Onkaparinga River Recreation Park on and adjacent to Sections 313, 314, 319 and 320); giving *Purnki-paringga*, 'place of the red-brown river'. OR possibly (but less likely)
2. *pangka* 'lagoon', referring to the estuarine lakes; giving *Pangka-paringga*, 'place of the river and lagoon(s)'.
3. Since the informants were bilingual southerners, and the word *pangki* occurs in Ramindjeri with the related meaning 'reed swamp', it is also possible that they gave version 2 in an adapted form as *Pangki-paringga*.

Alternatively, 'Ponke' might not have a dictionary meaning:

4. It might possibly represent the generic name of dangerous mythical beings (possibly called *pungki* or *pangki*, or related spelling), one of which was reputed to inhabit a dune spring hollow near the mouth of the river. If so, the name would be *Pungki-paringga* or *Pangki-paringga*, 'river place of the *pungki* or *pangki* [creature]'.
5. It is also possible that the original of 'Ponke' was 'just a name', with no referent apart from identifying this place (like 'Rome' or 'London').

A third line is conceivable: that the name was misprinted and actually represents *Ngangkiparingga*:

6. i.e. The original handwriting (by Barker, Kent and/or Sturt) was something like 'Honke', which could have been Kent's representation of *Ngangki*; but it was mis-transcribed at some stage before or during publication. This would make the whole name simply a variant record of *Ngangkiparingga* ('women's river place'; see PNS 4.02/04). This interpretation, though accepted by most previous authors, is very uncertain linguistically.

We cannot be certain which of all these possibilities (if any) are true.

Coordinates	-35.157846° Latitude, 138.480563° Longitude (400 metres due east of Port Noarlunga oval)
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Language Information

Meaning	Uncertain: PERHAPS 1. 'dark-red river place'; OR POSSIBLY 2. 'lagoon river place'; OR POSSIBLY 3. a Ramindjeri-influenced variant <i>pangki</i> [Ramindjeri 'reed swamp']; OR POSSIBLY 4. 'river place of the <i>pungki</i> or <i>pangki</i> creature'; OR POSSIBLY 5. ' <i>pungki</i> or <i>pangki</i> river place' [name of site; no other referent].
Etymology	Uncertain: PERHAPS 1. <i>purnki</i> 'dark-red'; OR POSSIBLY 2. <i>pangka</i> 'lagoon, lake'; OR POSSIBLY 3. a Ramindjeri-influenced variant <i>pangki</i> [Ramindjeri 'reed swamp']; OR POSSIBLY 4. <i>pungki</i> or <i>pangki</i> [generic name of a mythical creature] OR POSSIBLY 5. <i>pungki</i> or <i>pangki</i> [name of site, with no lexical meaning]; + <i>pari</i> 'river' + <i>ngga</i> 'at, place of'
Notes	There is a remote possibility that 'Ponkepurringa' is a mis-transcription of a variant English spelling of 'Onkaparinga' = <i>Ngangkiparingga</i> .
Language Family	Thura-Yura: 'Kaurna'
KWP Former Spelling	PERHAPS 1: Purnkiparringga OR POSSIBLY 2: Pangkaparringga OR POSSIBLY 3: Pangkiparringga OR POSSIBLY 4 and 5: Pungkiparringga or Pangkiparringga.
KWP New Spelling 2010	PERHAPS 1: Purnkiparingga OR POSSIBLY 2: Pangkaparingga OR POSSIBLY 3: Pangkiparingga OR POSSIBLY 4 and 5: Pungkiparingga or Pangkiparingga.
Phonemic Spelling	/CV(r)N(k)Vparingka/
Syllabification	PERHAPS 1: "Pu-r-n-ki paringga": OR POSSIBLY 2: "Pangka-paringga": OR POSSIBLY 3: "Pangki-paringga": OR POSSIBLY 4 and 5: "Pungki-paringga" or "Pangki-paringga":
Pronunciation tips	Stress first syllable; Secondary stress on the 3 rd syllable. Every 'a' as in Maori 'haka'. Every 'u' as in 'put'. In 1: "Pu-r-n-ki paringga": <i>ur</i> as in 'lure' (not as in 'burn'). <i>r</i> , <i>n</i> and <i>k</i> are all sounded: i.e. <i>r-n</i> as in American pronunciation of 'barn'; <i>n-k</i> not as in 'bunk' but as in 'barn key'.



Main source evidence

Date	[1831] / 1833
Original source text	“ Ponkepurringa Cr. ” [<i>leading back into ‘Hay’s Range’ = Mt Lofty Ranges</i>].
Reference	maps in Charles Sturt 1833, <i>Two Expeditions into the Interior of Southern Australia</i> : Vol. 1 ‘Map of the Discoveries’, and Vol.2: 228.
Informants credited	John Kent 1831, Collet Barker 1831.
Informants uncredited	Kurna informants / Collet Barker; and/or ‘Sally’, ‘Condoy’, Bates, et al / Kent 1831.

Date	1840
Original source text	- “ pangka : lake; lagoon; Lake Alexandrina”. - “ punga : shade; shadow”. - “ purkipurnki : reddish; brownish; not quite black”.
Reference	Teichelmann & Schürmann 1840, <i>An Outline of a Grammar...</i>
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	Mullawirraburka, Kadlitpinna, Ityamaitpinna, etc, 1838-40.

Date	1857
Original source text	- “ Bar,ngka : Lake Alexandrina. Variant: <i>Parnka</i> ; <i>Pangka</i> .” - “ pangka Variant: <i>Bar,ngka</i> . Lake Alexandrina.” - “ punga : shade, shadow”. - “ purnki purnki reddish, applied to the beard & hair. Syn: <i>tindyo tindyo</i> .”
Reference	Teichelmann 1857, <i>Dictionary of the Adelaide Dialect</i> (unpublished MS, transcribed by Jane Simpson 1994).
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	Mullawirraburka, Kadlitpinna, Ityamaitpinna, etc, 1838-44.

Date	[c.1829] / 1886
Original source text	“When out hunting the Cape Jervis natives showed a mysterious dread of the Onkaparinga River, alleging as a reason that it was inhabited by some terrible animal which would exterminate the tribe if they came within range of his sense of smell”.
Reference	‘Old George Bates’, <i>Advertiser</i> 27/12/1886: 6d.
Informants credited	George Bates.
Informants uncredited	Aboriginal informants, probably including ‘Sally’ and/or Condoy.

Date	n.d. [before 1908]
Original source text	- “He crossed Korra-weera with moon-catching strides, And reached Penna-Yoona where Pongkie resides.” - “ pongkie , reflection of one’s self in water”.
Reference	‘Link Luckhurst’ n.d., quoted in Rodney Cockburn, <i>Nomenclature of South Australia</i> , Adelaide, WK Thomas & Co, 1908: 5-6.
Informants credited	
Informants uncredited	

<i>Date</i>	n.d. [before 1915]
<i>Original source text</i>	“Onkaparinga... Near the mouth, between Noarlunga and the sea, the first syllable changes to ‘ ponke ’, meaning shadows or reflections in water”.
<i>Reference</i>	Charles Hope Harris, MS notes on place-names etc [bound volume]: 79, in Harris papers, PRG 1112, State Library of SA.
<i>Informants credited</i>	
<i>Informants uncredited</i>	

Discussion: THE FIRST KAURNA PLACE-NAME ON RECORD:

For a brief history of European contact with the lower Onkaparinga River, and the recording of Aboriginal place-names on it, see PNS 4.02/04 Ngangki-paringga.

Part 1. HOW THE NAME WAS OBTAINED: CAPTAIN BARKER 1831, BATES, CONDOY, SALLY:

In 1833 Charles Sturt published his account of his epic voyage down the River Murray in 1829-30. With one eye on English plans to colonize the region if good land could be found, he added a “concluding chapter... relative to the promontory of St. Vincent, or Cape Jervis,¹ [which] has been furnished me by the kindness of Mr. Kent”. John Kent was the commissariat officer of Captain Collet Barker’s regiment, and provided Sturt with an account of Barker’s final overland trip to the Murray Mouth in 1831, his disappearance, and the subsequent search party which Kent led.

Sturt’s book contains two maps, and on both of them we find three place-names: “Waccondilla Cr”, “Cutandilla”, and – attached to a watercourse which is obviously the Onkaparinga River – the name “Ponkepurringa Cr”.² All three names are clearly in Kurna language, and they are the first Aboriginal place-names ever recorded in South Australia as far as we know. All of them are located west of the Mt Lofty Ranges, a region which in 1833 Sturt had never seen; and in 1830 he had not spoken to any Aborigines in the vicinity of the Mouth. There can be little doubt that he obtained these names from Kent.³

¹ He means Fleurieu Peninsula and the neighbouring regions in the Gulf.

² ‘Map of the Discoveries in Australia’, Sturt 1833, Vol.1 [before Chapter 1]; ‘Chart of Cape Jervis’, Vol. 2: 228. See also my essays PNS 4.02/05 ‘Ponkepurringa’, 4.04.01/03 Wakondilla and 4.04.03/03 Kurtandilla.

³ For a fuller discussion of the Barker search party and these names, see my forthcoming history *Feet On the Fleurieu*.

On 17 April 1831 Barker and his men had landed from the *Isabella* at what we now call Port Noarlunga, rowed the ship's boat up the "inlet",⁴ and established a camp for about a week at the river loop later called 'Horseshoe' (today's Old Noarlunga), while some of them explored northwards. As far as we know they did not meet any Aborigines during this excursion, and in any case would not have been able to speak with them unless the Aborigines knew some English.⁵

Then they sailed south, anchored at Carrickalinga, and landed for a quick overland exploration to the Murray Mouth. When Barker swam the Mouth and disappeared, Kent returned to the ship. He found a camp of Aboriginal people at Cape Jervis and enlisted the aid of two of them, 'Sally' and her father Condoy, and also of two men living on Kangaroo Island, George Bates and Nat Thomas. Guided by all of these recruits, the regiment landed again at Carrickalinga, re-visited the Mouth, and obtained circumstantial information about how Barker had been speared by three men on the eastern side of the Mouth.⁶

Kent must have obtained the three place-names from one or more of these local recruits. Far the most likely of them is Sally, who "spoke English tolerably well" because she had been on a long sealing voyage to Albany a few years earlier.⁷

Accordingly, back in Sydney Kent relayed to Sturt the first known record of this 'inlet', its name "Ponkepurringa Cr", its location, and his own description of it.⁸

1.1. THE THREE BARKER PLACE-NAMES:

Sturt obviously asked Kent for information about the east coast of the Gulf, which he had not visited. For this area of interest to London, he clearly considered it worthwhile to publish any second or third-hand information, and even to try mapping it from Kent's description (presumably verbal). His map included a set of data from Barker's party which not only described this country

⁴ In the main text Barker and Kent called this watercourse an "inlet" (Sturt 1833, Vol. 2 :233).

⁵ Ex-surveyor Talbot thought that "*Captain Barker doubtless obtained the name of the river from the blacks*" (HC Talbot n.d. [1872-1924] 'The Talbot Book', SA Geographical Names Unit: 150a-2). But in the absence of any hint in the records that Barker communicated with Aborigines at all in the Onkaparinga-Adelaide region, or even saw any, this assumption is extremely doubtful.

⁶ During this operation the Kangaroo Islanders raided the Aboriginal camp near the Mouth and the abducted a young girl; she provided the information (see my *Feet On the Fleurieu*).

⁷ Dr John Davis report to Colonial Secretary, 19 May 1831, in *J. Proc. Royal Geographical Society (SA)* Vol. 6 (1903): 24. It is not likely that Sturt's three place-names were part of Bates's own repertoire, as they are too accurate in form by comparison with sealer's adaptations like 'Yanky-lilly' for *Yarnkalyilla*. 'Sally' was later known as Sarah or Sally Walker, but her real name was Kalinga (see my history *Feet On the Fleurieu* [in progress]).

⁸ It has been said (with what evidence I do not know) that "[Barker's] notes were taken care of by Mr Kent, and became of great value to Sturt, who by them was enabled to satisfactorily complete his own chart" (CH Harris 1893, 'Geographical Nomenclature of SA': 485 [annotated copy in State Library of SA]). However, I have not been able to trace any such notes.

from the Gulf to Encounter Bay but provided some of the landmarks by which to travel around in it: the “Flat & beautiful Valley” crossing from the Gulf to Encounter Bay;⁹ the “Fine Valley” penetrating the range from the gulf side¹⁰ towards the headwaters of an “Extensive Valley” which has a river flowing into Encounter Bay;¹¹ a little to the north of those headwaters, a valley “Cutandilla” on the west; and on the coastal plains northward from that, “Waccondilla Cr”,¹² “Ponkepurringa Cr” and “Sturt R”.¹³ Even Barker’s party had not visited the places marked between Carrickalinga and Onkaparinga; they must have been told about them. The entire little catalogue of places west of the range looks very much like a basic oral visitors’ guide to Aboriginal routes from the Onkaparinga over the range to Encounter Bay, with some of their geographical context.¹⁴ local knowledge such as Sally and Condo would have had.¹⁵

Part 2. THE NAME ‘PONKEPURRINGA’ AND ITS INTERPRETATION:

Certainly ‘purringa’ must be the Kurna word *paringga*, ‘at the river’. But what is ‘Ponke’?

These two simple syllables raise a whole jungle of alternatives in both language and history. Many of them have just enough credibility to make them worth mentioning; but in the end they are not resolvable, because the lines of transmission are not clear enough, and we just don’t have enough solid evidence.

We must allow for the rather complicated process by which the only record of this place-name came to us: beginning with men in 1831, with no linguistic training, under urgent pressure, making hasty observations and holding interrupted conversations with Aboriginal people who used an unfamiliar language and sound system; then their hasty scribbled notes; discussions with Sturt several weeks later; a manuscript map by Sturt sometime in the next two years; then to the editors of his book, their drafts, and the printers who laid out the type. Several of these steps could have

⁹ The Inman.

¹⁰ Possibly the Myponga.

¹¹ The Hindmarsh.

¹² The Washpool, a salt lagoon – now extinct – immediately north of Sellicks Beach (see ‘Wakondilla’).

¹³ Barker had named the Sturt River after his friend and colleague.

¹⁴ We know that one standard route went via Mt Terrible (just above ‘Waccondilla’ and near the gully at ‘Cutandilla’ where the Victory Hotel stands), across the ‘fine’ Myponga valley and through Hindmarsh Tiers to the ‘extensive valley’ of the lower Hindmarsh. Another went from Sellick’s Hill southwest through Myponga Beach and turned back east through Wattle Flat to the ‘flat and beautiful’ Inman valley. See my discussion of both these routes in *Feet On the Fleurieu*, Chapter 2. On both of these routes ‘Cutandilla’ was an important landmark and water site (See PNS 4.04.03/03 Kurtandilla).

¹⁵ From his time living on the mainland, Bates may have known a travel route north beyond Sellick’s Hill, but it is very doubtful that other Kangaroo Islanders knew it. See *Feet On the Fleurieu* for a full discussion of this issue.

involved the misreading of somebody's handwriting, ending with the possibility of unwitting typographical error. As Rob Amery observes, "anything could happen".¹⁶

Then we must also allow for the fact that untrained English hearers often used the letter 'o' to represent sounds which could be either *a* or *o/u* as pronounced by their informants.¹⁷ 'Ponke' could therefore represent *Pangki* or *Pungki* or a range of other spellings with different variations in the consonants, each of them potentially a different word.

2.1. IS 'PONKEPURRINGA' A VERSION OF 'ONKAPARINGA'?

Since the general location of the place is not in question, most previous authors have assumed that 'Ponkepurringa' is another representation of the well-attested name *Ngangkiparingga*.¹⁸ Doubtless they have been attracted to that path because 'Ponkepurringa' looks rather like today's official spelling 'Onkaparinga'. But this accident of history is irrelevant. Sturt could not have been influenced by a spelling which was not invented until three years after his map was published; here he is an independent primary source.

The question is: Can we believe that 'Ponke' could have originated as a written representation of the spoken word *Ngangki*?

It is *conceivable* that *Pangki* was a dialect variant of *Ngangki*, and also *conceivable* that *Ngangki* was mis-heard as *Pangki*; but neither of these is very likely. The reasoning is technical.¹⁹

¹⁶ Amery p.c., email 26/8/14.

¹⁷ Kaurna language has only three meaningful vowels, *a*, *i* and *o/u* (it does not distinguish between *o* and *u*; KWP New Spelling uses 'u'). However, the neighbouring Ramindjeri-Ngarrindjeri language distinguishes both *o* and *u*.

¹⁸ See PNS 4.02/04 *Ngangkiparingga*.

¹⁹ 'PONKE' AS A VERSION OF *NGANGKI*: DIALECT? OR MIS-HEARD?

There is no problem with *angki* being represented by 'onke'. Known records of *Ngangkiparingga* represent the first vowel by every one of the five English vowel characters except 'i' (see PNS 4.02/04). The issue hangs on the initial consonant *ng*.

1. Was 'Ponke' a dialect variant of *Ngangki* (something like *Pangki*), so that the informant did actually say an initial *P*? –

It is very hard to see how there could be a shift of pronunciation from *Ngangk* to *Pangk*. Rob Amery says it is conceivable, citing <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhinoglottophilia> [12/9/14], which gives one example worldwide of dialect change from *ng* to *p* (in Bantu). But it seems very doubtful that this could be applied to our case, as no dialect variants of this kind were recorded by the linguists, no dialect variations in the word *ngangki*, nor any at all between Adelaide and the Onkaparinga.

2. Was 'Ponke' (*Pangki*?) a mis-hearing by Kent, and the informant actually said *Ngangki*? –



Was published 'Ponke' a misprint or mis-transcription of *something else* hand-written which could represent *Ngangki*?

For example: was the published capital P originally a different consonant, one whose capitalized form might be mis-read as a capital 'P'? – perhaps capital B, F, J, R or T. But it is just as hard to see how *ng* could have been mistaken for any of these sounds as for *p*. Could the original have been 'H'? – for it is true that an Englishman might use 'Honke' to represent *Ngangki*.²⁰ But it is even harder to imagine a capital H which could be mistaken for a capital P.²¹

It is perhaps conceivable that the first two letters 'Po' are a transcription error for 'R O' (i.e. perhaps Kent or Sturt had written 'R Onkepurringa', where the R would mean 'River'). In this case the transcriber must *also* have added 'Cr' as the missing descriptor in 'Ponkepurringa Cr'. But this seems to grasp at straws. The map marks "Sturt R" on the same coast with the R last, not first, while presenting 'Ponkepurringa Cr' and 'Waccondilla Cr' in precisely similar format.

Thus we see that it is very hard to imagine any way by which the published 'Ponke' could represent an original sounded *Ngangki*, and the likelihood is therefore low.

2.2. A DIFFERENT NAME, PROBABLY LOCATED SOMEWHERE NEARER THE MOUTH:

Accordingly it is not only possible but likely that 'Ponkepurringa' is a different name from 'Onkaparinga'-*Ngangkiparingga*. If so, then there is a geographical implication. Because Barker's team was probably asking about the estuarine part of the 'inlet' when they obtained the name from Sally or Bates, it is likely that this name applied to the estuary rather than the Horseshoe.²²

Mis-hearings of *Ngangkiparingga* abound in the records (for the standard spelling 'Onkaparinga' and its variants, see PNS 4.02/04 *Ngangkiparingga*). Almost all of them omit the initial consonant, because English speakers could not hear or understand *Ng* at the beginning of a word. Newcomers to Aboriginal languages often still have trouble with initial *ng*.

Some English speakers have represented an initial *Ng* by H: e.g. Williams has seven of these in his wordlist, including "Hun-ge-ter" for *ngangkitta* (W Williams 1839, 'The Language of the Natives of South Australia', *SA Colonist* 1(19) 1840: 296). Some have represented it by the common English N: e.g. "Nounkaparinga" for *Ngangkiparingga* (see PNS 4.02/04).

But it is very hard to see how the sound *ng* could be mistaken for the sound *p*. Phonetically, *p* and *ng* are completely different sounds: "A voiceless bilabial stop is quite different to a velar nasal, though they are both peripheral consonants" (Amery p.c., email 26/8/14).

²⁰ See the note above on mis-hearing.

²¹ 'F' could occasionally represent an original *v* in language further north such as Adnyamathanha, and the *v* in turn is cognate with Kurna *p*; but this takes us back to the start.

²² For the historical application of *Ngangkiparingga* mainly to the Horseshoe and ford, see PNS 4.02/04.

At the time when Barker and Kent rowed up the river and camped at the Horseshoe, they were not foot travellers but seamen. They had seen and approached this 'creek' or 'inlet' from a ship. They did not walk south from it, did not communicate with local Aborigines, and therefore did not know the importance of the ford at the Horseshoe. It was irrelevant because they had a boat, and in any case wanted to head north not south.

Sturt's map names 'Ponkepurringa' as a 'Cr.' (creek), but Kent and Barker actually described the whole watercourse up to the Gorge as an 'inlet', the word which they also used for the Port River,²³ signifying a tidal estuary rather than a freshwater river. Maps from the 1839 surveys marked the Onkaparinga as salty right up to the Gorge,²⁴ though when Light examined the river in June 1837 "we found the water at ebb tide fresh to within a mile of the sea".²⁵ Rather surprisingly, the Sturt map also labels 'Waccondilla' as a 'Cr' – this is The Washpool, the 'salt lake' or tidal swamp near Sellick's Beach, and Blue Lagoon, whose feeder creeks would not have been discernible from a ship.²⁶ But they did not land there and had no close-up experience of it. They came in mid-autumn when "the deeper pools [at Old Noarlunga]... had been filled by the torrents during late rains". No doubt the lagoons and swamps at both Port Noarlunga and the Washpool were replenished, much larger than they have ever been in today's living memory, and very visible from the masthead as Barker sailed first up the coast then down again.²⁷

Thus it is very likely that when Kent obtained the name 'Ponkepurringa', it was an estuary which he asked about. If Kent's informant was Sally or Condoy, they would probably have known both names and given him the one he seemed to want.

These considerations tend to support CH Harris's claim (see below) that 'Ponkepurringa' applied "near the mouth".

The Kurna would certainly have had a number of different names for different places on or near this river from the Gorge to the mouth. Even if *Ngangki-paringga* could perhaps be used for the whole stretch as well as a particular part of it, we also know *Nurlungga*,²⁸ *Pirrangga*,²⁹ 'Tiiirungga' and 'Tāinbariangk',³⁰ recorded by reliable observers at first settlement.

²³ Sturt 1833, 2: 233, 237.

²⁴ Maps: see 'SA No.13' (1839), C 256; & its derivatives, e.g. McLaren's 'Country South of Adelaide', C 236, C 803, C 274, State Library of SA.

²⁵ D Elder (ed.) 1984, *William Light's Brief Journal*, Adelaide, Wakefield Press: 121.

²⁶ See PNS 4.04.01/03.

²⁷ By contrast Light, arriving in the spring of a hot dry year, had to search hard for the Onkaparinga even though he had been alerted to its existence by his Kurna guide 'Doughboy' (see my forthcoming history *Feet On the Fleurieu*).

²⁸ See PNS 4.02/06.

²⁹ See PNS 4.02/01.

³⁰ See PNS 4.02/09 and 4.02/02.

Do we now have another one?

This question involves us in some more historical input, and some more linguistic and geographical analysis.

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Part 3. 'PONGKIE' AND 'PONKE': A MYTHICAL BEING IN THE BAROSSA AND AT ONKAPARINGA?

There is also on record a vocabulary item 'pongkie' which seems to fit 'Ponke' exactly, but its origin is very doubtful. Some tantalizing fragments about it have come down to us that seem to relate to it, mainly from ex-surveyors who were enthusiasts of Aboriginal place-names around the 1890s, and a couple of brief memories from first contact.

Two of the enthusiasts had been second-generation surveyors with the Survey Department of SA. Their enthusiasm was lifelong, and both of them left material with the Department. Horace Talbot's scrapbook is still a valuable reference today for SA place-names;³¹ but it was the other man who concerned himself especially with Aboriginal names. Charles Hope Harris, born in 1846, began his surveying in 1869, left the Department a number of his own maps, and contributed information to Talbot's scrapbook. He compiled the first more extended South Australian 'nomenclature'.³² This was published and provoked a spate of letters on place-names to the *Register* and other newspapers. From this material, and with contributions and editing by both Talbot and Harris, Rodney Cockburn then produced his very large 1908 compilation, *Nomenclature of South Australia*.³³ In the hundred years since that pioneering publication, much of their data has been recycled by other authors on SA place-names.

Harris apparently believed both of my conjectures above: that 'Ponkepurringa' was a different name from 'Onkaparinga', and that it applied nearer the mouth. In an undated draft paper he wrote,

Onkaparinga... Meaning: Mother river, plentiful, derived from 'ungke' or 'nangko' mother, and 'para' or 'perra', water running between deep banks; and 'inga' long and winding. Near the

³¹ HC Talbot, 'The Talbot Book', MS and typescript notebook/scrapbook held by SA Geographical Names Unit.

³² In September 1893 Harris delivered a lecture-essay to the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science called 'Geographical Nomenclature of South Australia'. It is available in the State Library of SA "with some amendments in writing by the author".

³³ See Rodney Cockburn 1908, *Nomenclature of SA*, Adelaide, WK Thomas & Co: Preface and p.2.

See Amery & Schultz, forthcoming, 'On the Trail of Kurna Place Names', *Journal of Anthropological Society of SA*.



mouth, between Noarlunga and the sea, the first syllable changes to 'ponke', meaning shadows or reflections in water.³⁴

If we ignore the first half of this with its inaccurate linguistics,³⁵ we find that the second half is a piece of lore which might have some credibility. It *could* perhaps have come to Harris from earlier surveyors or settlers who had heard it directly from Kurna people. Or, of course, it could have come from Harris's own armchair speculations, based on a small acquaintance with Kurna language either from his early experiences or perhaps from the published sources.³⁶

There is another snag. Cockburn's 1908 book quotes a second author who also told of a 'Pongkie'. Under the title "Tandarnya", Cockburn introduced "a legend of the aboriginal tribes who inhabited the district around the capital. It was told in the early days and put into verse by 'Link Luckhurst'".³⁷ The poem is about the Red Kangaroo ancestor Tarnda, and contains these lines about him retreating north from Adelaide:

... Tarnda took fright.

He crossed Korra-weera³⁸ with moon-catching strides,

And reached Penna-Yoona where Pongkie resides.

One of Harris's known informants, John Jacob Senior, identified 'Penna-yoona' as the hill Kaiserstuhl,³⁹ in the Barossa and just over the border in Ngadjuri country. Both 'Penna-yoona' and 'Pongkie' might therefore be Ngadjuri words rather than Kurna.

Appended to the poem is a glossary of words which are largely in Kurna language. It includes "pongkie, reflection of one's self in water". 'Luckhurst' is the nearest I can get to a primary source for this spelling and its alleged gloss.

³⁴ CH Harris papers, PRG 1112, bound volume: 79. Harris's etymology for *Ngangkiparingga* is linguistically quite wrong, but does illustrate the kind of thing interested settlers of his generation were passing on in what I call their 'folklore' about place-names.

³⁵ For instance, *ngga* is the standard Locative suffix 'at', not an adjective 'winding'. This error happens also in the account of 'Kondoparinga' which probably also came via Harris: see PNS 7.03/03 Kondoparingga.

³⁶ e.g. Teichelmann & Schürmann 1840 "punga, shade, shadow"; Wyatt "ePongarre, shade, reflection in water". The former is Kurna, the latter Ramindjeri, as indicated by the italic preface e; but Harris may not have made this distinction.

³⁷ "Tandarnya" in R Cockburn 1908: 6, who says "It was told in the early days and put into verse by 'Link Luckhurst'". I have not been able to find the original source of Cockburn's 'Luckhurst'. It seems to have been contributed directly for Cockburn's book. Far the most likely contributor of such material is Harris, but this would not necessarily make him the author.

³⁸ 'Korra-weera' is one of the spellings in Wyatt 1879 for *Karrawirra*, the name of the 'redgum forest' by the River Torrens in Adelaide.

³⁹ CH Harris, "Kaiserstuhl... Native name Panauna or Pinna yuna by John Jacob Senr.". PRG 1112, bound volume, :61. See also PNS 9/05.

It is by no means self-evident that the mythical ‘Pongkie’ had the same name and meaning as Sturt’s ‘Ponke’ river at the Onkaparinga. But this link between ‘Luckhurst’ and Harris in linguistic and geographical information appears to imply that they shared a tradition about it. We have no exact date either for Harris’s draft note or for ‘Luckhurst’, nor do we know for sure who ‘Luckhurst’ was. Harris’s 1893 publication does not contain the etymology, but he was the main contributor of Aboriginal information to Cockburn 1908. Quite likely ‘Luckhurst’ was Harris himself, writing between 1893 and 1908 on the basis of unrecorded information from some old survey worker or settler (new, or newly recalled).⁴⁰

So much for the documentary origins of ‘Pongkie’. What about the content?

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Part 4. PUTTING TOGETHER LANGUAGE, STORY AND GEOGRAPHY: ‘PONGKIE’, ‘PONKE’, AND THEIR POSSIBLE ORIGINALS:

4.1. THE ABORIGINAL WORD:

It is *possible* that ‘Luckhurst’ or Harris knew some otherwise unrecorded Kurna vocabulary. ‘Pongkie’ could represent *pungki* (or something like it), and that could be a dialect form (or Ngadjuri variant) of the common Kurna word *punga*, ‘shade, shadow’.⁴¹

Or it might be the otherwise unrecorded personal name – *Pungki* or the like – of a being in the mythical traditions of the wider area from the Barossa to the Onkaparinga and further south.

4.2. THE WORD, THE BEING, AND LOCATION:

4.2.1. The ‘Luckhurst’ legend covers territory from Adelaide to Kaiserstuhl Hill but does not go as far south as the Onkaparinga. But his story may be credibly included in our study insofar as a Being who often lives at Kaiserstuhl might also at times live in the Onkaparinga River; or both

⁴⁰ Harris consulted many pioneer settlers about Aboriginal stories and place-names, including the story of “*Pootpobberie*” as told by pioneer interpreter James Cronk and remembered after the latter’s death (‘C.H.H.’ [Harris] in *Public Service Review*, Feb 1913, reprinted in *Journal of the Anthropological Society of SA* 21/2, 1983: 3-4). Perhaps ‘Tandarnya’ was another such: perhaps Harris remembered this one too from Cronk’s re-telling of the “*early days*”, used Wyatt’s publication to touch it up, then versified it. We don’t know. The only local connection with the name Luckhurst which I have been able to trace so far [Sep 2014] is the long-term town clerk of Clare, John Luckhurst Smith (1844-1920), who arrived in SA in the 1860s (data from Australian Births, Deaths and Marriage Indices, on Ancestry.com [11/9/14]). His obituary claims that “*For many years he was town clerk and surveyor*” (*Register* 8/6/1920: 7b). No such surveyor is listed in SA (Bill Watt p.c., email 11/9/14); but it is possible that he had been a survey labourer or assistant. As such he may have known Harris and Talbot. ‘Link Luckhurst’ could be Smith, or either of the other two writing with some reference to him; but it was Harris, not Talbot, who contributed the Aboriginal material to Cockburn (Cockburn 1908: 2).

⁴¹ However, the informants who gave ‘Ponkepurringa’ were Sally and Condoy, who were not northerners but southerners; or possibly Bates, who learned language from them. It is unlikely that they would have used a northern dialect form.

places might harbour one of a class of beings called *pungki* or *pangki* (parallel with the generic *nukuna* spirits who sneak up in the night to kill people).

4.2.2. To back him up, two other stories are on record about a feared being who lived in the Onkaparinga.

4.2.2.1. Interviewed in old age, Kangaroo Islander George Bates said,⁴²

When out hunting the Cape Jervis natives showed a mysterious dread of the Onkaparinga River, alleging as a reason that it was inhabited by some terrible animal which would exterminate the tribe if they came within range of his sense of smell.

‘Cape Jervis’ in the 19th century meant what we call the Fleurieu Peninsula. Bates claimed to have lived with the people of that region around 1829 and hunted with them up to the Onkaparinga.⁴³ It is noteworthy that a couple of years after this, Condoy and Sally (two of the tribe with whom he hunted), along with Bates himself, became the original informants for the place-name we are considering, ‘Ponkepurringa’. In the context of ‘Pongkie’, we are tempted to see another and independent connection between Bates’s ‘terrible animal’ and ‘Ponke’.

4.2.2.2. Another record hints that this ‘animal’ might have been a local variation of the beings described in wider Australian folklore as ‘the Yowie’ or ‘Yahoo’, whose feet turn backward.

In 1842 Capper, in his London-based magazine of the Empire, published an essay about them.⁴⁴ The anonymous author cited a story told by “Mungaroke, a native of a tribe near Adelaide”,⁴⁵ who took it very seriously and showed obvious signs of “apprehension” while telling it (presumably onsite at what is now Port Noarlunga). He had heard it from some other Aboriginal men who had been guides for a “gentleman” travelling “from Encounter Bay to Adelaide at the first settling of the colony”. The party rested in “a strangely formed hollow among the sand hills at the mouth of the river” on its northern side. One of them, ‘Koteragee’, became very perturbed. He had previously been one of four⁴⁶ who, returning southward from a visit to the Adelaide tribe, had come across a

⁴² ‘Old George Bates’, *Advertiser* 27/12/1886: 6d, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/37164779/2297822>.

⁴³ See my history *Feet On the Fleurieu* (in progress).

⁴⁴ Anon. [H Capper ed.] Feb 1842, ‘Superstitions of the Australian Aborigines: the Yahoo’, *Australian & New Zealand Monthly Magazine* Vol.1 No.2, London, Smith, Elder & Co: 94, <http://www.nla.gov.au/ferguson/14605988/18420000/00010002/21-30.pdf> [27/7/17]). Many thanks to Des Gubbin for showing me this reference.

⁴⁵ In the context of the Capper essay, written for a magazine with Empire-wide distribution, ‘near Adelaide’ could include Encounter Bay, and ‘Mungaroke’ could have been Ramindjeri. The same essay cites “*Old Con*” (Condoy) as “a native near Adelaide”, though we know his base was Encounter Bay and the southern Fleurieu, and there is no record of him visiting Adelaide.

⁴⁶ These four could have been either Fleurieu or Encounter Bay people. Their names are given but could be in either Kaurna or Ramindjeri language: “*Bidjoke, Munchee Munchee, and Koteragee*”.

'Yahoo' sleeping at that very spot and tried (unsuccessfully) to kill it. Mungaroke's story was "subsequently confirmed" by the same three men who had experienced it.⁴⁷

Was this 'terrible animal' or 'Yahoo' also the 'Pongkie' or 'Ponke', and did it have some relationship to reflections in water? Was 'Ponkepurringa' (*Pungki-paringga* or *Pangki-paringga*) named after it?

There is not enough hard evidence to be *sure* of this link between the Bates and Capper stories and the Harris-Luckhurst etymology, nor to apply it (as Harris did) to the Onkaparinga River. Nor should we grant too much Aboriginal authority to the details of Luckhurst's 'Tandarnya' story-poem and Capper's tale; both are third-hand at least and therefore low in quality as primary sources. Nevertheless, such a link does have other resonances in an emu myth from Yorke Peninsula, outlined to me by senior Kurna man Lewis Yerloburka O'Brien.⁴⁸

On balance we may say that *possibly* these records were derived (rather distantly) from genuine versions of the Yowie, which *perhaps* was locally called *pungki* or *pangki*; and that all this is quite uncertain.

⁴⁷ Since it is little known, I include the full text of Mungaroke and Kotaragee's story as given by Capper's correspondent: "A gentleman, who required to travel from Encounter Bay to Adelaide at the first settling of the colony, took with him some natives for guides. The party continued onwards very satisfactorily, and passed the Onkaparinga, when it rested for a short period in a strangely formed hollow among the sand hills at the mouth of the river. Listless and inactive from fatigue, the whole of them remained, with the exception of Koteragee, who, upon being questioned as the cause of his restlessness, with evident circumspection informed them that he once had a very serious adventure upon the spot on which they were with a Yahoo. Curiosity being awakened by his statement, he was requested to detail the circumstances, which he did to the following report. They arrived at the banks of the Onkaparinga, when Munchee Munchee, one of the party, proposed that they should halt and kindle a fire, by which they could cook their lizards, &c., and refresh themselves, as they would meet with no more water on their journey for a long distance" [to the south, presumably via Aldinga]. "This being agreed to, the males proceeded accordingly to the bottom of the dell for water, when, to their great surprise and dismay, they espied something lying beside the spring apparently in a sound sleep, which they immediately recognised to be a Yahoo, or one of the natives' arch enemies. After a little deliberation the trio wound up their courage, and determined at least to rid the world of one monster. Accordingly, stepping up to the object of their hate and fear as noiselessly as shadows, they simultaneously discharged a shower of blows on the head of the intended victim, notwithstanding which, the semi-incarnate being sprang upon its feet and attempted resolutely to escape; but finding itself hemmed in on every side, it darted at Bidjoke (one of the trio) with its fiendish talons, who, however, eluded the monster by a backward leap; upon which Munchee Munchee flew at the demon, and with a terrible stroke on the temple brought it to the ground; and then, with Bidjoke, fell upon and held the Yahoo fast, while Koteragee drove his waddie through the skull from ear to ear. Being determined to leave no chance of reanimation, they threw the carcase into the river, and stood a few moments to observe the issue. The body, although apparently motionless, by some unaccountable means floated to the opposite side of the stream, and to their utter consternation and amazement started at once into life, and bounded off into the furze that grew on the opposite bank".

⁴⁸ There may be something in Harris's extrapolation, according to Lewis O'Brien (p.c. 17/10/14). He knows a Narrunga story from Yorke Peninsula about the place-name 'Curramulka' or *Gardi-malka*, meaning 'emu face'. At this waterhole the emu, like Narcissus in the old Greek myth, fell in love with his own reflection in the water. As his punishment, forever after when he drinks he can swallow the water only by lifting his head up, preventing him from seeing his reflection. Uncle Lewis notes that it makes little sense for a reflection (Link Luckhurst's 'Pongkie') to 'reside' at Kaiserstuhl Hill which has no open water. More likely it was Tarnda who spent time there as well as in Adelaide, and perhaps also during his travels saw his reflection at 'Ponkepurringa'. Of course all this is speculative.

4.3. LINGUISTIC POSSIBILITIES WITHOUT THE 'BEING': *PUNGA*, *PURNKI*, *PANGKA*, *PANGKI*:

For a moment let us confine ourselves strictly to etymologies for Sturt's 'Ponke'.

The second vowel 'e' represents *i* and is *probably* correct; but it is unstressed and could *perhaps* have been mistaken by an inattentive hearer. But even allowing for this, known local vocabulary from reliable records has only a few words which 'Ponke' might represent. Those with a second vowel *a* will be less likely than those with *i*.

Kaurna has *punga* ('shade, shadow'), *pangka* ('lake, lagoon'), and *purunki* ('red-brown').

We could also cite Ramindjeri-Ngarrindjeri *parnggi* or *panki* ('deep water', a meaning which rules it out at once), and *pangki* ('reed, reed swamp') or 'creeping swamp root' (a late usage not found in the early records).⁴⁹

4.3.1. *PUNGA*:

Quite apart from the alleged connection of 'shadow' with the 'Pongkie', did Barker's team hear *Punga-paringga*, 'place of the shadow river'? Was there an otherwise unrecorded usage of *punga* to mean 'reflection in water', as its related Ngarrindjeri equivalent does (also re-introducing the idea of 'spirit' or 'ghost' in its second meaning).⁵⁰

But *punga* has no consonant cluster.⁵¹ i.e. the sound *ng* is not followed by a *k/g* as required by 'Ponke' and shown in all the other alternatives; thus making this one phonetically this less likely than the others.

4.3.2. *PANGKA*:

Or, assuming a mistaken second vowel in Sturt (as above), we have *pangka* ('lagoon, lake'), giving *Pangka-paringga*, 'place of the river with lagoon(s)'.

Could there have been a Kaurna *pangki*, a dialect variant of *pangka*, so that *Pangki-paringga* could also mean 'place of the river with lagoon(s)'?

4.3.3. *PURNKI*:

Returning to the vowels as published, 'ponke' could represent Kaurna *purunki*. This was recorded in the 1840s in the reduplicative form *purunki-purunki*, meaning 'reddish, brownish, not quite black' –

⁴⁹ See M Gale 2009, *Ngarrindjeri Dictionary*, Raukkan Community Council: 96, 98.

⁵⁰ South of Adelaide the Kaurna speakers had Ngarrindjeri-speaking neighbours with a related word *pangari* which means 'reflection in water' and 'spirit, ghost' as well as 'shadow'; and Wyatt spelled it "*pongarre*", enabling a possible confusion with 'Ponke'. However, recorded Kaurna expressions for 'reflecting an image' used the word *turra*, not *punga*.

⁵¹ In *punga*, the *ng* is as in 'stringy', not as in 'finger' or *paringga*.

perhaps the colour of dried blood.⁵² In its simple form *purunki* probably denotes a lighter shade of red-brown. Was there an area called *Purnki-paringga*, 'place of the red-brown river'?

.....

Part 5. INCONCLUSIVE CONCLUSIONS: PANGKA, PURNKI, AND THE ONKAPARINGA ESTUARY:

Can we draw any conclusions?

Several of the above candidates for a derivation make some sense geographically.

5.1. *PUNGA*: 'REFLECTIONS IN STILL WATER':

Perhaps we could allow that *punga* might perhaps be used also to denote 'reflections' (though there is no evidence for this). The Onkaparinga on its flood plain is normally smooth in its flow. In many parts of the estuary, especially under original conditions, there would often have been still clear water easily accessible from the banks, with clear reflections. However, it is less likely that such a universal experience as reflections would have been used as a place identifier.⁵³ With this added its phonetic and semantic doubts above, it goes to the bottom of the list.

5.2. *PANGKA* 'LAGOON' and *PANGKI* 'REED SWAMP':

Kurna *pangka* and Ngarrindjeri *pancki* would make clear and simple sense as ecological identifiers.

The Kurna word *pangka* ('lagoon, lake') is more likely than *punga*. In combination *Pangka-pari* means 'lagoon river'; and with the optional Locative it is *Pangka-paringga*, 'river place with lagoon(s)'. There are records which suggest that this compound word may have been a generic Kurna name for any biggish tidal estuary of a river. Lake Alexandrina was known to Kurna speakers as *Pangka*. The river name 'Bungala' is probably *Pangkarla* ('two lagoons'), probably referring to its intermittently swampy mouth at Normanville, and it was perhaps also called *Pangkarla-paringga*, 'place of the river with two lagoons'.⁵⁴ A Kurna-speaking man (almost certainly Mullawirraburka) identified the "Murray river, Goolwa" as a *Parngka-pari*. He probably

⁵² For reasons unknown, the term *purkipurunki* was considered to be insulting when applied to a man's beard. *Purunki* was also given (paradoxically) as a synonym of *tintyo-tintyo* 'young, green, raw'.

⁵³ – unless they were associated with a story located at this place. But, as we have seen, the evidence for that is very doubtful.

⁵⁴ See PNS 5.02.01/01 Pangkarla. This word was thought by the first surveyors to be the name of the river.

meant the Goolwa Channel, seen as part of a large area which included the small lagoons immediately to the west, as well as the main lakes of the Murray estuary.⁵⁵

The estuary of the Onkaparinga has included open lagoons even in a dry summer, and they are a permanent feature of this river in a way that is not so with other rivers of the Adelaide-Willunga area with the exception of the Patawalonga system as it once was before it was drained for farming. Even in recent times there have been several large areas of intermittent flooding and a small permanent lagoon near Port Noarlunga,⁵⁶ but before the upstream river flow was controlled by farm dams and the Mt Bold Reservoir, the lagoons were certainly more permanent and bigger in winter than now.⁵⁷

Even so, the second consonant *a* renders *pangka* / *parnka* less likely as the original of 'Ponke', because we have a meaningful word with *i*.

The Onkaparinga estuary certainly featured reed swamps, and still does.⁵⁸ But for *pangki* to mean 'reed swamp', we would need a hypothetical Kaurna word or variant, unrecorded at first contact, while we know that Kaurna speakers used *witungga* ('place of reeds') for the same meaning. Otherwise *Pangki-paringga* would be hybrid of a Ngarrindjeri word *pangki* with a full and accurate Kaurna word *paringga*: a usage very unlikely under most circumstances.⁵⁹

But in this case two of the three informants in 1831 were southerners: Sally who is known to have been bilingual in Kaurna and Ramindjeri, and Condoy who possibly was too. Thus it could be that Sally gave a southern adaptation *Pangki* even if the standard form on the Gulf was *Pangka*.⁶⁰ The same probability would apply if it was Bates who conveyed the name to Kent, because he would have learned it from the same two people.

⁵⁵ *Parnka* (with a sounded *r*) is a known variant of *pangka* ("*Parnka*" and "*Barnka*" in Teichelmann MS 1857). Wyatt recorded "*Parrungka perre*", given to him in 1837 by an "*Onkaparinga man*" who was almost certainly the well-known 'Onkaparinga Jack' or 'King John', i.e. Mullawirraburka. The sounded 'r' no doubt caused Wyatt to imagine an extra (liminal) vowel after it, written as 'u'. The reduplicative form *Parnka-angka* was given to Wyatt as a name for "*land near the Goolwa*", probably the lagoons on the Tokuremoar Reserve near Goolwa; he represented the word as "*Parrungka unka*" or "*Parrangocka*". See Wyatt 1879: 179, and my discussion in PNS 7.03/10 'Parnka & Parangacka'.

⁵⁶ See military survey map Noarlunga 1:50,000, 2nd ed. (1979), 6627-IV.

⁵⁷ "Approximately 75% of pre-settlement flows have been diverted away from the estuary" (SA Department of Environment & Heritage 2005, *Onkaparinga Estuary Information Package*: 8, http://mrdeptula.weebly.com/uploads/9/9/0/6/9906097/onka_info_pack.pdf [28/7/17]).

⁵⁸ See *Onkaparinga Estuary Information Package*: 10, 18.

⁵⁹ The only known examples of hybridized place-names date from much later and the 'foreign' word is adapted inaccurately, not merely reproduced: e.g. Milerum's "*beringgi*" for *paringga* (see PNS 5.03/04 Watara-paringga).

⁶⁰ Sally did exactly this when giving "*Moote-paringa*" for *Murta-paringga* in 1837 (see PNS 7.02/04). The question whether she meant 'reed swamp' or 'lagoon' might then become irrelevant, remembering 'Tolkien's rule' that the speaker does not usually analyse a place-name even if she could (*The Letters of JRR Tolkien* (ed. H Carpenter, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co 1981: 250-1); cp. Tindale's observation about Milerum (Tindale Ramindjeri vocabulary card 'wita' in AA338/7/1/17)).

So far everything has depended on several steps of conjecture. But the last Kurna item requires even less of a stretch.

5.3. PURNKI 'DARK-RED' SAMPHIRE?

Purnki, 'red-brown', also fits the ecology of the estuary. This word is not only ecologically credible, but in linguistic terms it fits our source 'Ponke' easily.

In 1831 the alluvial soil of the surrounding country "was observed to be a rich, fat, chocolate coloured earth" – perhaps dark reddish brown?⁶¹ – and supported "natural meadows, lightly timbered, and covered with a variety of grasses".⁶² But soil colour is less likely to be used as an Aboriginal identifier of a place.

Which leaves us with the watercourse. Why would the *pari* – the *river* – be known as 'red-brown'?

In the 1830s while its flow was in the natural state, the river itself would not have been red-brown; this would signify red algae, a modern pollution problem. But this estuary has "the only saltmarshes south of Adelaide along the eastern shores of Gulf St Vincent", with samphire as one of its defining features.⁶³ These samphire flats were once much bigger than they are now, or even than they were earlier in the twentieth century before reclamation. They are typically a dull dark red,⁶⁴ and would be a very likely identifier of the place for the Kurna people. 'Ponkepurringa' might therefore be *Purnki-paringga*, 'red-brown river place'.⁶⁵

In view of the many uncertainties, it is not possible now to be sure which meaning (if any) was 'Ponke': (in descending order of probability) *Purnki*, *Pangka*, *Punga*, or even *Ngangki*.

Somewhere in the middle of the probabilities, it might be the generic and lexically meaningless name of a dangerous being, heard as 'Pongkie' or 'Ponke', with several possible originals: *Pungki*,

⁶¹ For dark red-brown soils, see the Red-brown Earths (Dr2.23) of the Adelaide & Port Noarlunga basins: KH Northcote, 'Soils', in Twidale et al 1976, *Natural History of the Adelaide Region*, Royal Society of SA, :63 map, 64, 69-70. Also the 1:10,000 Lower Onkaparinga Regolith-Landform Map ('onkaparinga_river_25k.pdf') online at http://crclme.org.au/Pubs/MAPS/onkaparinga_river_25k.pdf.

⁶² Sturt 1833, 2: 233.

⁶³ *Onkaparinga Estuary Information Package*: 11; cp. map of the saltmarshes on p.12.

⁶⁴ See e.g. photograph on p.11 of *Onkaparinga Estuary Information Package*; Figs. 2 and 3 in NSW Department of Primary Industries 2013, 'Coastal Saltmarsh' (online at http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/459628/Coastal-Saltmarsh-Primefact.pdf [17/9/14]); and the striking photograph of red samphire at the Onkaparinga Estuary, in the front cover collage of www.communitywebs.org/OnkaparingaParks/pdf_files/Onkaparinga%20Mangrove%20survey%202010.pdf [15/9/14].

⁶⁵ For the insights about algae & samphire I am indebted to Andy McKinnon of Friends of Onkaparinga Park (pers. comm. 18/10/11). Cp. "Wetlands and fringing vegetation: Along the riverbanks and in the shallow wetlands, alluvial silts with high organic content have accumulated (DEH 2004)"; & the accompanying photograph of deep red floating vegetation (*Onkaparinga Estuary Information Package*: 9).



Pangki, *Parnki* (with retroflex *m*), *Par-n-ki* (with three separate consonants in a cluster), or even *Pur-n-ki* 'red-brown [thing]' as above.⁶⁶

One out of this same array of possible spellings could even be a place-name pure and simple: a word like 'London' or 'Rome' which does not refer to any other word in current use and so has no 'meaning' other than the place itself. However, the fact that the word is compounded with *paringga* makes that alternative less likely.

5.4. THE ODDS:

We don't know. Until more evidence turns up I remain agnostic about whether a *Pungki* / *Pangki* being is the referent of the name; but my personal view is that the odds tip towards the ecological *Purnki-paringga*, 'place of the red-brown river'.

As a name for the estuary proper (rather than the whole flood-plain), a name such as *Purnki-paringga* would not necessarily be exclusive. It is possible that the whole area from the Horseshoe to the mouth was known as *Ngangki-paringga*, 'women's river place', and that other sites in the area – including 'Ponkepurringa' – were all seen as particular places within this larger unity.⁶⁷ And in the area near the mouth, *Tayinparingga* ('Tāinbariangk', 'Tainbarang')⁶⁸ might be a smaller part of the middle-sized entity *Purnkiparingga* – or *vice versa*, subject to further investigation of what *tayin* might mean.

.....
End of Summary

⁶⁶ *Purnki* might also relate to the colour of blood, suggesting Bates's voracious 'animal'. But this is speculation rather than confirmation.

⁶⁷ See PNS 4.02/04 Ngangkiparingga.

⁶⁸ See PNS 4.02/02.