Australian Aborigines

**Geography and climate.** Varying conditions, but often dryness and climatic changes make it difficult to find food.

**Way of life.** The aborigines are 100% hunters-gatherers (no agriculture). They live in small family groups that are dispersed over a large territory and constantly move around in search of food. There are no permanent settlements. They camp in the bush and make temporary shelters against the wind.

**Using territories.** It is a matter of life and death to know exactly where and when to find food. Each small group has a detailed knowledge of their terrain and food supplies. It is equally important to move on to another territory if food supply runs out. The Australian aborigines developed a social organization that meets these *two needs*: division in small groups permits to gather detailed knowledge about their territory, and friendly “confederate” relationships between small groups permit all to use a wide range of lands and share knowledge about them. Since such system is vital for survival, *group lore* has absolute power and is above any individual.

**Social organization.** Reflecting the above needs, Australian social organization is extremely complex and looks like a wide network of small groups that are all related in two different ways:
1. Through the “Dreaming tracks,” totemically, ritually, mythologically — connection between groups that are far apart.
2. Through marriage (marriage system is patrilineal and patrilocal) — connection between neighboring groups.

**Social units:**
1. *Clan* (patri-group) — territorial unit, shares the same territory; exogamous.
2. *Brotherhood* (complex of patri-groups) — mythological-totemic network of clans; exogamous.
3. *Moiety* — a system of two brotherhoods (complexes) that are linked totemically-mythologically, but also through marriage (sometimes exogamous, sometimes endogamous: one moiety marries another moiety [or one brotherhood within the same moiety marries another brotherhood] according to a certain pattern).
4. *Connubium* — a kinship-marriage system consisting of two or more moieties, endogamous. Marriage between the two moieties happens according to a set pattern.

**The role of the Dreamtime and the tribal lore.** Since the complex network of totemic and marriage links that is crucial for survival is based on mythology (the events of the Dreamtime, the Dreaming tracks) and tribal lore, mythology and tribal lore are the two ultimate things that govern the aboriginal life. The Dreamtime is never far away from the aboriginal life (they constantly reestablish connection to it), and adherence to the tribal lore is strictly enforced.