

The Terramungamine Incident: a Double Burial with Grave Goods near Dubbo, New South Wales

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ABSTRACT. In 1987 a female adult skeleton with a small child was found near Dubbo, NSW, during the course of landscape gardening. Although the burials were disturbed by the landscaping work, artefacts found at the time can be associated with the burials. The presence of certain artefacts raises questions concerning the status of the female, and the cause of her death.

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At a time when archaeologists are becoming more and more specialised (*viz.* three authors to this paper), it is difficult for one person to maintain the breadth of research interests of someone like Fred McCarthy, to whom this volume is dedicated. The less tangible side of Aboriginal culture associated with death, ritual and art has been as important to McCarthy as his interest in the more mundane aspects of stone tool technology. In this paper, we discuss a burial and associated grave goods with unique evidence of both ritual and the more mundane aspects of stone technology.

Grave goods provide unique evidence. Hiscock (1988:67) argues that grave goods buried in ritual contexts must be considered as caches. He defines a cache as deliberate storage in a concealed location for some future use. In this paper we prefer the term 'grave goods'.

Although Morwood (1984) suggests that ritual caches were not uncommon in Australia, most human skeletal remains recovered are rarely associated with grave goods. To take an example in southeastern Australia, only about twenty burials have been recovered with grave goods in all of Victoria (D. Clark, Victoria Archaeological Survey, personal communication). The rarity of burials identified with grave goods may be because so few burials have been recovered using proper archaeological methods, and archaeological excavations mostly avoid places where burials are likely to be. Until very recently most human remains were recovered by non-archaeologists such as police and fossickers like the infamous Murray Black who collected the bones of about 1800 individuals (Mulvaney, 1989:66). Those people were primarily interested in the bones, not the context or culture.