THE BUDJ BIM CULTURAL LANDSCAPE, located in the traditional Country of the Gunditjmara Aboriginal people in south-eastern Australia, consists of three serial components containing one of the world’s most extensive and oldest aquaculture systems. The Budj Bim lava flows provide the basis for the complex system of canals, weirs and dams developed by the Gunditjmara in order to trap, store and harvest kooyang (short-finned eel – Anguilla australis). The highly productive aquaculture system provided an economic and social base for Gunditjmara society for six millennia.

The Budj Bim Cultural Landscape is the result of a creation process narrated by the Gunditjmara as a deep time story, referring to the idea that they have always lived there. From an archaeological perspective, deep time represents a period of at least 32,000 years. The ongoing dynamic relationship of Gunditjmara and their land is nowadays carried by knowledge systems retained through oral transmission and continuity of cultural practice.

Over a period of at least 6,600 years the Gunditjmara created, manipulated and modified these local hydrological regimes and ecological systems. They utilised the abundant local volcanic rock to construct channels, weirs and dams and manage water flows in order to systematically trap, store and harvest kooyang (short-finned eel – Anguilla australis) and support enhancement of other food resources.

The highly productive aquaculture system provided a six millennia-long economic and social base for Gunditjmara society. This deep time interrelationship of Gunditjmara cultural and environmental systems is documented through present-day Gunditjmara cultural knowledge, practices, material culture, scientific research and historical documents.

It is evidenced in the aquaculture system itself and in the interrelated geological, hydrological and ecological systems.

The Budj Bim Cultural Landscape is the result of a creation process narrated by the Gunditjmara as a deep time story. For the Gunditjmara, deep time refers to the idea that they have always been there. From an archaeological perspective, deep time refers to a period of at least 32,000 years that Aboriginal people have lived in the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape.

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