BOOK REVIEWS

Black and white Australians: an inter-racial history 1788-1975.

The main difficulty in evaluating this book is that we are nowhere told at whom it is aimed. Since it is published by the self-proclaimed educational section of Heinemann's, it is reasonable to rule out the general public as the intended audience. This is a pity because reading Franklin's book would do something to improve most Australians' understanding of themselves; though they might become rather bored in the process. Franklin's lifeless prose and the publisher's uninspired presentation do not make the book suitable for junior secondary school classes; the vocabulary is too advanced and the general approach too dreary for the book to appeal to third or fourth form students. This too is a pity since most of the available texts are racist, and we very much need a basic history of the relations between black and white Australians. The book is too elementary in its research and in its arguments to take its place in serious tertiary teaching, although it would be useful as a starting point, or better still, as one of a number of ready references. This too is a pity since most of the available texts are racist, and we very much need a basic history of the relations between black and white Australians. The book is too elementary in its research and in its arguments to take its place in serious tertiary teaching, although it would be useful as a starting point, or better still, as one of a number of ready references. And so we are left with the book being used by senior high school students and first year tertiary level students. As part of a wider reading list, Franklin's book could be helpful to slower students who don't know when they are reading uninteresting stuff; or in tutorials where one of the eight page chapters is abut as much as students will read by way of preparation. As there are twenty-seven chapters it would be possible to 'do' a chapter a week, with one to spare. Given the abysmal state of classroom teaching in tertiary institutions it is not too much to fear that this is happening already.

Presumably no one would consider that Franklin has made an original contribution to scholarship. The book attempts something of which we need a lot more, namely, bringing together, in one volume, the research results of other people. Such synoptic work is a specialised and difficult task, and is not to be attempted by everyone. People such as Geoffrey Blainey, Henry Mayer and Bill Mandle have mastered the trade. But success requires more than time and money. Certain literary attributes are essential, and it is these which Franklin lacks. Looked on as an introductory text, Black and white Australians is a failure because it lacks a vital spark, whether of imagination, ingenuity or indignation. It is neither hot enough to grip those parts of us which respond to a good story, well told; nor cold enough to rivet our intellects.

The careless, one might almost say slipshod, manner of presentation further detracts from the book's value. There are a lot of factual errors, references to sources are inaccurate and occasionally distort the original meaning, some recent works have not been consulted and the coverage is unbalanced.

But these factors alone do not explain why the book has been unfavourably reviewed on more than one occasion. What has upset historians is something more fundamental: the style of social science. Because this journal will bring historians and social scientists into frequent proximity, there is a special point in exploring this matter in the context of a book review. Historians have been mostly upset by what they would call her ahistorical approach. Her book reads as if she finds all of Australia's past something of a surprise. Despite her integrative efforts, race relations remain detached from the general developments of black and white society. Her account lacks the resonance which even well-done 'tunnel history' can possess. There is more to the problem than this. After all, a great deal of well-trained academic writing also lacks resonance. Why single Franklin out for attack?

The answer is that her style makes obvious what the historian's style will usually conceal. Franklin was trained in the law, and then in social science. The law proceeds by quoting cases, often one after the other, in order to establish the validity
of the argument being put before a court. Social science often moves similarly, by giving a survey of the literature before adding the researcher's own material. This is how Franklin writes her historical narrative. The building materials are clearly laid out end to end. The discontinuities are marked by the end of paragraphs.

If this helps to explain why Franklin writes as she does, and why historians have found her writing so annoying, nothing of the above discussion explains why historians and social scientists, in general, write as they do. The question obviously requires more investigation than can be expected here, though the following is part of the answer.

About four years ago I had to read some scientific papers as background for an historical article. The thing that struck me was how poorly the papers were argued. The logical steps were either absent or perfunctorily established. Solecisms abounded. The evidence and ideas moved towards the conclusion, but there was no sense of obligation on the part of the scientific authors to spell out the linkages in their arguments. In contrast, historians are extraordinarily careful about getting their arguments in the proper order, and about being seen to marshal their evidence in ways which support their arguments.

The difference between the two styles is startlingly obvious. Yet, there is no evidence that scientists are wrong more often than historians. The scientific style cannot be as dysfunctional to science as it would inevitably be to history. How is it then that scientists can get away with their inadequately expressed aetologies? The answer has to do with the volume of evidence available to each. Scientists generally have thousands of experiments on which to fall back. Indeed, their papers are usually little more than a writing-up of these multitudinous instances. Historians, on the other hand, are often lucky to have one hard fact. Certainly they are never likely to have ten thousand examples with which to rebut contrary arguments. These relative abundancies and scarcities have influenced the style of writing of each group. Historians have to compensate for their paucity of data by constructing the toughest possible arguments. They develop stylistic tricks which enable them to cover up the gaps in their arguments. The historians' prose has to be a seamless web precisely because their nakedness would be exposed if they wrote as abruptly and as autarkically as scientists, even the so-called social scientists.

Social science stands somewhere between the life sciences and history in terms of the volume of evidence at its disposal. Social science has borrowed from both the life sciences, with their multitude of cases, and imitated the physical sciences by adopting mathematics as the criterion of correctness. Buttressed by both these supports, social scientists are less worried by the cracks in their arguments than historians would be. Faced by similar gaps, historians would adjust their adverbs and fiddle with their metaphors.

This is not to denigrate the historians' approach. Indeed, its literariness can often speak a great truth. For example, the principal fault in Franklin's chapter on 'Black Australia' is precisely this question of tone. Because her paragraphs are explicit paraphrases they are lifeless and leave the impression that Aborigines are less than human. Though there is almost nothing that one could quote as an instance of a racist attitude in Franklin's book, the cumulative effect of her writing is unfavourable to Aborigines because she never brings the bits and pieces together. It is not that she writes badly. She writes clearly and without pretension. Compared with much of the gobbledygook in the social sciences, she writes very well. The point at issue is not her personal writing facility. Rather, it is a matter of realising how historians traditionally treat the evidence available to them, and why each side can find the other utterly unconvincing.

Perhaps the one benefit from the otherwise unpromising prospects of any multidisciplinary enterprise will be a greater awareness of how and why the different disciplines write. Not surprisingly, intellectuals have not been anxious to scrutinise
their own daily practices (their work of writing) with the zeal that they have directed to Aboriginal food gathering.

HUMPHREY MCQUEEN  CANBERRA SCHOOL OF ART


This book represents pioneer archaeological research work of great interest to both prehistorians and historians concerned with Aboriginal culture of the recent past.

While the title epitomises the low-key approach, it is an exemplary, detailed and clear presentation of the results of an archaeological excavation. It details the features of the site, the problems it posed both in interpretation and digging technique as a field investigation, the methods adopted and the results. All are supported by a wide range of photographs, plans, section drawings and line illustrations of finds. This detail of presentation is a vital part of any excavation report. It enables the reader to reconstruct the site and the stages of its investigation, as well as to assess the excavator’s interpretation of the finds. Excavation reports, for this reason, can be unwieldy things to produce; to the publisher they must seem over-loaded with awkward tables, too-numerous line drawings and photographs. Yet reports are meaningless to the serious reader otherwise. Queensland University Press is to be congratulated on publishing the report in this format, in a manner which makes it a useful primary source of data rather than a synthesising summary. The production process chosen, which allowed drawings and photographs to be set in the relevant text, adds to the usefulness of the book. However, some of the quality of the half-tone plates seems to have suffered in reproduction.

The book is an unusual venture also as the publication of archaeological investigation of an Aboriginal burial ground. Since the research reported here was completed such investigations have been subjects of debate and controversy, a delicate area in which tension easily escalates between the research commitment of the archaeologist or physical anthropologist and the sensibilities or the dictates of tradition for the Aboriginal community (either as a whole or of residents within a local region). For such reasons publication of this book was delayed and Dr Haglund feels obliged to defend its belated appearance in her introduction. Her defence is in terms of the information gained by both Aboriginal and prehistorian from such investigations and the further insights this information may give into the complexity of Aboriginal culture. Throughout the book the reporting of excavation of skeletal materials and its interpretation is respectful, subordinated to the aims of acquiring knowledge and the conservation of material remains from the past, artefactual or skeletal.

When the investigation began in 1965 it was a rare event — the first full scale excavation of its kind in Australia — but it was undertaken largely as a salvage project. As legislation to protect Aboriginal relics or archaeological deposits had not then been enacted in Queensland, an emergency excavation seemed the only answer to the problems posed by the Broadbeach burial site south of Surfers Paradise on Queensland’s Gold Coast. These included whole-scale destruction of parts of the site in soil quarrying, damage to other parts by natural erosion exacerbated by the effects of heavy traffic on nearby access roads. In addition there was continual disturbance from the diggings of vandals, souvenir hunters and the merely curious.

Dr Haglund presents her report on the field investigations as an archaeological analysis, assessing the material recovered and exploring its interpretation in archaeological terms. The field work involved was exacting; historians as well as archaeolo-
gists will learn much from the exposition of the methods adopted to ensure the recovery of fragile material (especially the bones of vertical bundle burials) from friable, unstable sand deposits and the recording of its context. The approach and the presentation is strictly archaeological, working from the data in the ground and analysis of the features of the burials and their stratigraphic context, to their interpretation in terms of rites and rituals. The author suggests that four stages of activities and burial practices are represented in the burial ground whose use extended over some twelve hundred years. She bases this on careful analysis of the sequence of burial types as shown in the stratigraphic relationships of various burials, the general stratigraphy of the deposits, and of shell horizons found over parts of the site. Burial types include primary and secondary disposition, with extended and flexed primary inhumations, and disposal of bones after exposure as either bundle or parcel burials. There were two cremations. The form of the pit dug to contain these burials also varied. Yet these variations may be discerned within a context of continuity. In itself this is perhaps the most exciting discovery — the continuity of burial practices and use of the same locality for disposal of the dead and associated ceremonies by a group of hunter-gatherers for over a millennium. This has other significant implications for our understanding of Aboriginal culture and history.

From the features of the burials and their stratigraphic context, problems of dating and the technicalities of recovery, Dr Haglund moves on to discuss the population represented. It is one in which most age groups are found from infant to adult, though 38 per cent of the total of well over one hundred is under five years of age. Interestingly, 85 per cent of the total is male. A chapter is also devoted to analysis of the stone artefacts recovered. Here the definitions are clear and sound. Yet considering that the number of artefacts recovered was surprisingly large for a site of this kind, the analysis, especially in comparative discussion, did not have the depth of that devoted to other aspects of the site.

As the site belongs to the last millennium, the evidence of local ethnology is relevant to its interpretation. So this becomes a matter of historical as well as archaeological analysis. In chapter six Dr Haglund surveys the available historical evidence, comparing it with the archaeological. Here the data is fragmentary and elusive. So the depth of comparative analysis that could raise fascinating theoretical questions about the use of written as against material evidence for ritual practices, beliefs and ceremonial, was perhaps not possible. The issues raised by this section, however, could have been explored further.

ISABEL McBRYDE

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY


Historians of the Aboriginal people, by the nature of the subject, must become students of Australian ecology. Few peoples other than the Aborigines have adapted themselves so well to their environment and maintained their relationship with the land for so long without interference from less environment-conscious interlopers. When writing a local history in 1968 I used the term 'Aboriginal ecology' to account for the Aborigines' natural place in the life of the land, in particular the periodic summer burning of teatree scrub and the consequent conversion of swamp-land into grassy plain. I had read enough nineteenth century accounts to know that the tribal boundaries of the district followed natural boundaries. My reading of Aboriginal religion told me that the most meaningful of religions was that which related man to the land and the environment which gave him his living. Available work on trade routes and ceremonial exchange informed me that Aboriginal man's
Peterson's *Tribes and boundaries in Australia* is the first major symposium to deal with the whole question of tribes and territoriality in terms of ecology. It is a specialist's book of primary interest to the anthropologist. But it should also be regarded as basic reading for all ethnohistorians, whether prehistorians or historians of culture contact in Australia. Only by facing the problems which this book poses are we able to come nearer to understanding the subtle connections between Aboriginal man and the land which is at once a source of livelihood and religion.

The book is a collection of essays expanded from papers given at a symposium convened by Professor Derek Freeman at the Australian National University in 1973. The major theme is the controversy regarding the meaningfulness of the term 'tribe' and the extent to which 'tribe' can be defined politically, spatially and linguistically among Australian hunter-gatherers. The book is dedicated to two of the pioneers in the field of tribal delineation, Norman B. Tindale and Joseph B. Birdsell, both participants in the discussions. Other papers are contributed by Josephine Flood, Nicolas Peterson, D. J. Mulvaney, Aram A. Yengoyan, Ronald M. Berndt (the least convinced of the usefulness of the concept of tribe), Kenneth Maddock, D. H. Turner, F. G. G. Rose, R. M. W. Dixon and E. P. Milliken.

Apart from familiarising himself with the ecological determinants of Aboriginal history, the historian might gainfully learn from the methodology of historical anthropology in tackling problems of contact and pre-contact history. Josephine Flood uses an historical approach supplemented by archaeological work to unravel man's place in the ecology of the highlands of southeastern Australia, an area where Aborigines had disappeared by the end of the nineteenth century. Peterson's own paper gives a historical perspective to the tribal question by surveying the work of earlier writers as well as depending on work in other cultural areas to introduce and support his view of the importance of drainage divisions. Mulvaney's well documented paper on inter-tribal activities is by far the most useful for the historian and is an excellent reconstruction from written sources as well as field work, emphasising the ecological patterns of pre-European history. One hopes that other research workers will continue to sift hitherto unpublished material in missionary and government archives to further expand the work of Mulvaney, F. D. McCarthy, C. C. Macknight and others, perhaps throwing more light on individuals engaged in trade and exchange in immediate post-contact times. Most of the papers are more specifically based on anthropological or linguistic field work but Kenneth Maddock's on communication and change in mythology has important implications for people working in oral history.

The book is well presented with extensive diagrams and maps and maintains the high standard of editorial production which we have come to expect from the publications of the Institute.

NIEL GUNSON

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY


Salvado, a Spanish Benedictine, was one of a group of Benedictine missionaries who came to Western Australia in 1846 to convert the Aborigines to civilization and Christianity. Four parties set off to different parts of the colony. Three of these enterprises were overcome by despair, starvation and disaster and were abandoned. Salvado's party survived and built the New Norcia mission about 80 miles north of Perth. Salvado's memoirs, now translated from the Italian, describe the early history of the mission, the 'habits and customs' of the Aborigines in the
locality, and, of less interest, the natural history and early colonisation of Australia.

The first Aborigines Salvado encountered in Perth and Fremantle greeted him with the cry 'maragna', which he was told meant simply 'food'. That the tribal remnants in the towns wanted food is not surprising, but Salvado's account makes clear that tribal Aborigines, living largely undisturbed beyond European settlement, were also very quickly attracted to European food. On their third day in the bush Salvado's party was visited by a crowd of Aborigines armed with spears. The missionaries offered them damper, tea and sugar: 'When they first tried the sugar they spat it out suspiciously, but seeing that we were quite happy about it, they tried some more, found they liked it, nodded their heads in signs of approval, and encouraged the others to eat. In a few minutes they had disposed of all we had to spare, and were quarrelling over the precious remnants'. It was food, and to a lesser extent medical services, which kept the Aborigines interested in the missionaries.

The Benedictines first travelled with the Aborigines in the bush. They helped to carry the children and to gather roots, lizards and grubs. This policy accorded with some of the best thinking of the day — it was recommended by the 1837 British Select Committee — and with the popular belief that it was difficult, if not impossible, to get an Aboriginal to settle in one place. Salvado soon saw the disadvantages of peregrination and was able eventually to demonstrate the falsity of the popular belief. While Aborigines were on a hunting expedition, Salvado discovered, they had no time or patience to listen to a missionary. The best time to find a receptive audience was when the Aborigines were gathered around their fires at night 'repeating their legends and stories, as the Arabs do'. Also, if the missionaries travelled with the Aborigines, they had less time to devote to agriculture at headquarters. And it was food that interested the Aborigines most. So Salvado stopped his excursions and devoted his efforts to establishing a mission station and farm. Aborigines who wanted food worked on the farm. This was a common approach, but Salvado extended it by paying wages and allotting individual plots to competent workers. He supervised the spending of wages and profits to prevent fraud or their dispersal through the operation of tribal obligations. By these means he turned Aborigines of the first-contact generation into farmers. His guiding principles mark him out as one of the most enlightened integrationists of the early colonial period: 'It is no use saying that the native cannot appreciate the value of money or take pride in possessions; he rapidly learns to do both, and then devotes all his energy to increasing his store of worldly goods and bettering his lot. But if he is made to feel only the burdens of civilised life, and not the benefits, and his wages are so low that he sees no point in working for other people's profit, then he prefers the freedom of his nomadic life to the limitations of our civilisation, and goes back to the bush'.

At the mission the Benedictines insisted that the Aborigines appear clothed, though Salvado realised that there was nothing 'unchaste or improper' in their nudity. They attempted to prohibit fights among the Aborigines but with little success. The children attended the mission school and a few entered orders in Perth and Europe. The missionaries learnt the Aboriginal language. Here, whatever the conversion rate — and it seems to have been, as usual, low — a useful accommodation between the races was being effected. It was endangered, though, by the spread of settlement; shepherds transmitted venereal disease, thrashed natives who wouldn't do their bidding, and ridiculed the Benedictines. Salvado's response was to acquire more land and to attempt to isolate the mission from the surrounding society. New Norcia survived and grew, but it became, perforce, an enclave rather than a gateway to the wider society.

Salvado begins his account of 'habits and customs' with a vigorous defence of Aboriginal intellect and capacity. He was a close and sympathetic observer of Aboriginal life, firm, of course, in his belief in the superiority of European civilisation, but tolerant and not easily shocked. His tone is similar to Tench's or to Bishop...
BOOK REVIEWS

Gsell's of Bathurst Island. Professor Ronald Berndt offers a critical commentary of Salvado's ethnography in an Appendix entitled 'Salvado: a man of and before his time'. This may be another way of saying that in the early colonial period, European views of the Aborigines and their relations with them were more varied than is sometimes imagined.

JOHN HIRST
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE


Daniel Matthews was the enthusiast, publicist and polemicist whilst his wife, Janet, provided the steadiness, practicality and determination. Together, between 1874 and 1888, they built an Aboriginal mission on the N.S.W. side of the Murray River to provide schooling, protection, religious instruction, and indeed a home and land, for the destitute and demoralised remnants of the central Murray Aboriginal peoples. To their work they brought a shared commitment to nonconformist Christianity, a genuine interest in and concern for Aborigines, and an unquestioning acceptance of the rightness of their middle-class, mid-Victorian values.

The task they had set themselves was not an easy one. The full-blood Aboriginal population had dwindled in Victoria from Curr's estimated 15,000 in 1841 to fewer than 900. When Daniel and his brother William took out pastoral leases opposite Echuca on the New South Wales side of the river in 1865 and 1868, they found the local Aborigines homeless, powerless and confused. Their own lands given over to millions of sheep, they sat on the fringe of the white man's world, hoping there might be a place for them, waiting to be shown but, for the most part, ignored.

In his ten years on the Murray prior to the opening of Maloga, Daniel moved freely among Aborigines. He and William ran a shipchandlers and general merchants store which took them on business up and down the river. Daniel quickly developed an interest in the Aborigines he met and they were soon calling him maranooka (friend). He visited the Victorian government Aboriginal mission at Coranderrk on many occasions and was impressed not only with the mission's work but also by the spirit of the Aboriginal people. He determined to build just such a mission for the people around Echuca and after his marriage to Janet in 1872 they combined to make his dream a reality.

Land was available: his brothers had agreed to his using part of their lease to build a school and mission. Finance was more difficult to come by, for the N.S.W. government had no interest in protecting its Aboriginal people. Daniel had to rely on public subscriptions to help him get started, and continued to rely on them throughout his years of work for Aborigines until his death in 1902. Fund raising and publicising the mission became, in fact, his major role. Janet bore his children and ran the mission during his frequent absences.

The work progressed. By 1880 there were forty-five students enrolled at the school; Janet had a matron to assist her; an irrigated garden was producing excellent vegetables; and Daniel had the men helping him build wooden huts for the married couples. There was opposition, particularly from the squatters who saw his work as interfering with 'their' Aborigines. But there was also growing support and Daniel was delighted when, on a visit to Sydney in 1881, the Aborigines' Protection Association of N.S.W. was formed with a promise of government aid.

This year marked a turning point in the N.S.W. government's attitude towards Aborigines. In addition to its promise of support for the Aborigines' Protection Association, it appointed a Protector of Aborigines and followed this up in 1883 by forming an Aborigines' Protection Board. But the year also marked the beginning of
the end of Daniel's and Janet's work at Maloga. Once it appointed a Protector and
began putting money into Maloga, the government wanted some control over the
running of the mission. Policy expectations were that the Aborigines on the mission
reserves would settle there, build homesteads, begin farming and eventually become
self-sufficient. At Maloga this was not happening. For a start, the mission was built
on private land and Daniel could not employ Aborigines in his irrigated gardens
because of local criticism. The men and women were paid in ration cheques and
obtained cash only for work they did off the mission. The buildings erected on the
mission, though occupied and used by the Aborigines, were government property.
As for becoming self-sufficient, Daniel did not have enough land to be a successful
farmer and the mission was never in a position to support itself.

In 1887 Daniel was removed from his position as superintendent of the mission.
He was appointed Religious Teacher and George Bellenger became secular manager
responsible for all the work on the station. Eighteen hundred acres almost adjoining
the Matthews' property had been set aside as a reserve for the Aborigines and the
decision was taken to shift the mission there from Maloga. In 1888 Daniel and
Janet resigned their positions and their long years of work and struggle at Maloga
virtually ended.

This bare summary does little justice to Cato's well-written and interesting
account of Maloga and of the lives of Daniel and Janet Matthews. As it stands it
makes the Matthews' look like a pair of typical 'do-gooders' who couldn't quite
cope and finally had to be bailed out by the government. Yet, despite the odds,
Maloga succeeded in producing a generation of Aborigines to whom many of
Melbourne's Aboriginal leaders of recent years can trace their ancestry.

How it did this is not clear from Cato's account and one would have hoped to
have seen the daily regimen and the training programme at the mission more clearly
spelled out. Daniel's and Janet's personalities must have played an important part in
their success as teachers, together with their readiness to share their lives fully and
lovingly with their people. Daniel was paternalistic and strict. But Janet compen­sated for this and, since she was the one most constantly with them, her contribu­tion must have been of considerable importance. At the same time the quality,
perceptiveness and desperation of the Aboriginal people who came to them has to
be appreciated as equally contributing to Maloga's success. There were some, like
George Keefe and Billy Russell (p. 182), who demonstrated an independence and
an ability to make their own decisions which offended Daniel's paternalism.

Cato has made good use of primary sources: particularly Daniel's and Janet's
diaries; annual reports Daniel wrote for supporters of the mission; family memoirs;
newspaper clippings which Daniel assiduously collected; and records of the
Aborigines' Protection Association of N.S.W. and of the Aborigines' Protection
Boards of N.S.W. and Victoria. These are frequently cited in the text.

In all, Cato has made a useful contribution to our growing knowledge of the
treatment of Aborigines in N.S.W. in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Per­haps she has not succeeded in fully elaborating the significance of Maloga as an
Aboriginal mission — and this may have to wait till the history of other missions
and of the people who ran them are written. Nonetheless it is a contribution to an
area of Australian history which has been little studied until recently.

The book is excellently made, with a clear and readable type face and high
quality illustrations. However, the proof-reading was totally inadequate and the
author has gone on record as having protested to the publisher.

ALEX BARLOW

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL STUDIES
BOOK REVIEWS


Mrs Bobbie Hardy ends her study of the Darling River Aborigines with two arresting pictures. In the first, two semi-trailers arrive at Tibooburra and the Protection Board officer in charge announces that the entire Aboriginal community of seventy is to leave in the morning for Brewarrina, 350 miles to the east. That was the people's first news of the shift. Unlike the members of many other Aboriginal communities, the Maliangapa of the Corner country had men in jobs, children in school and access to a hospital. With intense regret, but without hope of effective resistance, the Maliangapa submitted to the change that destroyed them as a coherent group linked to a particular place:

Lorna Ebsworth, herself forced to relinquish a job at the hospital, managed to get the message through to her father at Yandama Station. He was well placed there, but resigned immediately and joined his family late in the evening. Brother Alby was working on far-out Naryilco, and was among those who had to make their own way across to Brewarrina later. After two days they were at Brewarrina, a hated place of prohibitions, unemployment, alcohol and bag humpies.

In the second picture, Aborigines join the procession at the 'Back to Wilcannia' celebrations under the sign 'Wilcannia's First People'. At the local school the Governor is presented with a carved shield. Concurrently, the Parents' and Citizens' Association is trying to stop Aboriginal children from attending the same school.

Lucid, and enlivened by carefully selected details that come from much reading and listening, these pictures are fair examples of Hardy's work and they indicate one of the strengths of the book. It is a regional history with a strong narrative line able to provide much particular information and move the reader through a variety of emotions without letting him escape for long from the pathos of communal fragmentation. The brevity of (and rare patches of repetition in) the section of the book covering the period 1910-1940 are to be regretted. Readers would have appreciated more about May Quale and others who battled on the edges of settlements and cultures. Jeremy Beckett has already given some insight into the lives of half-castes of western New South Wales. Meeting social obligations and looking for work, some half-castes acquired an extraordinary range of skills and a close knowledge of a territory stretching over thousands of square miles from the Murray to beyond the Queensland border. They deserve to be better known. Aborigines in sport could also have been given more than a few scattered references.

Some scholars will at times regret Hardy's lack of precision. The region that she deals with is not clearly defined, and while this is not generally important it leaves the meaning of some comments unclear. She says that apart from one Aboriginal child being educated privately in Broken Hill in 1913, 'not a single one was attending any of the dozen or more State schools that were scattered at wide intervals throughout the country'. It is not immediately clear what is meant by 'the country'.

The reader is also left uncertain about the amount of violence among the Barkindji before contact with Europeans. On page one Hardy says:

The fixed boundaries of the tribal lands were marked by trees or rocks, and none disputed them, so that there was no call for cataclysmic war of territorial aggression, nor need for an arms race or secret weapons. Yet on page twelve she speaks of 'feuds' both between different groups of Barkindji and between Barkindji and their neighbours. Tribal legend, she explains, 'confirms how indeterminate were the divisions between the Barkindji and the aliens beyond their borders'. On page twenty-three she concedes that 'much blood was spilt' by parties obliged to kill in retribution for the death of a relative, whether that death was due to natural causes or violence. And on the next page she asserts that 'there were occasions when battle casualties were considerable'. The harmony of page one

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has disappeared and the chances of Barkindji dying violently has apparently increased sharply. The thoughtful Barkindji, rather than not engaging in any arms races, were probably desperately concerned about belonging to a fighting force that was as numerous, efficient and well-equipped as possible.

Sometimes Hardy's lack of precision is a fair reflection of the available evidence. She is able to write of the Aborigines' 'dim memory' of poisoning (p. 91), and other 'guarded references' to poisoning (p. 121), but is unable to cite any particular case. Knowing of whites 'souveniring' Aboriginal children elsewhere, she asserts that 'doubtless' instances occurred among the Barkindji (p. 145); but again can point to no particular case. Yet there are also points where she may have been able to exploit her sources further and extract more explicit information. She writes of the violence on the Paroo in the 1860s: 'McCullough and Curlewis were only two of the many who were killed' (pp. 114-115). What is 'many' here? Another five, fifteen or more? While Hardy discusses the various factors that led to a decline in Barkindji population, she does not attempt to say which were the most lethal. Hardy is in a better position than most (perhaps all) of her readers to offer an intelligent guess about whether bullets killed more than certain introduced diseases. But she makes no comparisons.

This, then, is a regional history with great merit. We need more such studies. Yet, while Hardy conveys much information with skill, others will have to sift the evidence finer for answers to questions that worry students of Aboriginal history.

The photographs are excellent; another map is needed; and the notes on sources are helpful but sparse.

HANK NELSON

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