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My first contact with Lake Tyers was in 1937 as a boy of thirteen years. In the company of Aborigines I illegally visited and stayed with friends. In those days the gate to the mission was locked (we hopped over it). You had to obtain permission from the manager to visit anybody on this mission, as government Aboriginal settlements were called. These visits were to continue regularly for many years until 1963, when as a field officer with the Aborigines Advancement League (Victoria) I officially visited Lake Tyers with Sir Douglas Nicholls. It was during the Save the Lake Tyers Campaign when the Government was trying to close Lake Tyers. Our role was to give support to those that wished to stay and prevent the closure of Lake Tyers.

In 1967 I transferred from the A.A.L. to the Aborigines Welfare Board and was appointed Officer-in-Charge of Lake Tyers. The clock had turned a full circle. I was now supposed to evict illegal tenants and visitors: friends who had previously lived at Lake Tyers but had been forced off by Government policy with nowhere to live. Many families were living in huts and humpies others were sleeping under the Snowy River bridge at Orbost and on the fringes of rubbish dumps. When the A.W.B. was abolished I became a field officer for the newly formed Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and I was stationed in East Gippsland.

I first met Phillip Pepper and his family in 1939 when I stayed at Mrs Pepper's mother's place in Newmerella. Granny Aggy Thomas lived only a few doors from the Pepper family. In later years, in particular the 1960s when the Aboriginal rights movement was gaining momentum, Phillip and Ethel Pepper were in Melbourne and Canberra regularly attending the meetings. Phillip Pepper's book is about Victorian Aboriginal history and the Pepper family. In it Phillip traces his family's history from his grandfather Nathaniel Pepper, the first tribal Aboriginal to be baptised in Victoria. He tells his story with the help of a close friend, Tess De Araugo who did the research and documentary references.

We are most fortunate that Phillip has told his story. Most Aboriginal people of his generation have passed on and today there are no more than three or four Aboriginal people of his age group living in Gippsland. So many Lake Tyers people died so young, through consumption and other diseases.

White Australian history tells you that Australia was discovered by Captain Cook, yet Aborigines will tell you they were here thousands of years before he arrived. Since the arrival of the white man the Aboriginal has suffered in many ways through white men's treachery, attitudes and non-acceptance of the Aboriginal as an equal except with his forced attention on Aboriginal women.

Until recently the white community was unaware what was happening on Aboriginal settlements in south-east Australia; yet these Aboriginal communities, victims of government policies, lived only a few miles from neighbouring white communities. All important issues were decided by whites; when Aborigines objected to white men's authority they were moved from the station and separated from their families. Any Aboriginal that had the courage to complain to the Board would have his complaint referred to the manager, who could then expel him as a trouble maker.

This book should have been written many years ago but most Aborigines did not have the opportunities or the financial resources that are now available. The Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australian Council assisted with a grant which has made possible the publication of this book. We are fortunate that there are people like Tess De Araugo who has listened and recorded as Phillip told in his own words. It is a book that tells of Aboriginal history passed on by word of mouth from one generation to another. You are what you make yourself to be is the previously untold part of Australian
history that every Australian should read. There has long been a need for such a book, not only for white people but for Aborigines, especially the young who are now wanting to know more of their forgotten history and culture. It may enable some white people to understand why most Aborigines have hatred for whites.

Phillip talks of policies and regulations which divided families, children taken away from their parents, the tragedies and misery that fell on so many families. He laughs and jokes and remembers the good times but for others who lived at Lake Tyers, Framlingham and other settlements it was a life of hardship. At Lake Tyers they were not allowed to own a vehicle until about 1965. Phillip tells of the good managers, like John Bulmer. Captain Newman was a beauty, he loved the people. The likely reason he left Lake Tyers was that he displeased the Board by helping residents. As for Captain Howe, he was a hard one. Phillip gives a detailed criticism of Mr Len Rule, who spent over thirty years at Lake Tyers as Assistant Manager and Manager. But many former Lake Tyers people have come to Mr Rule's defence. To this day they keep in contact with his widow, who still lives a few miles outside the Lake Tyers boundary gate.

Very few Australian people realize the contribution that Aborigines made in the First and Second World Wars. Phillip tells us about his dad, his brother-in-law, his uncle and other Lake Tyers men that served in France and at Gallipoli. His uncle Henry Thorpe was awarded the Military Medal; so was Bill Rawlings of Framlingham. They were both killed in the same battle a few months before the war finished. Then there were the twenty-six Lake Tyers men who enlisted in the Second World War.

The institution at Lake Tyers served the purpose of removing Aborigines from public view and conscience. I think Phillip and his family are fortunate that they did not remain at Lake Tyers. There were opportunities off the mission and the Pepper family, with some education and skills, took those opportunities. But life was not easy. Phillip recalls the year of 1924 at his father's soldier settlement block at Koo-wee-rup when his mother died and the farm was ravaged by floods. Then the depression — it was hard times for black and white.

Phillip speaks highly of Rev. F. Hagenauer, the Moravian missionary who brought his grandfather from the Ebenezer Mission in the Wimmera to Ramahyuck Mission. The old people called Hagenauer Moongan and his wife Yucca, words in the Gippsland language for father and mother. He died in November 1909 after having worked for and amongst the Aborigines of Australia, mainly the Victorians, for over half a century. He had during his time held the office of Secretary of the Board for some years, and had been inspector of the Aboriginal missions in Victoria.

Phillip tells us Hagenauer saved the people in those days because he stopped all the tribal business on the mission. He got them to bring all the weapons and things and put them in a heap and burnt them. Once they were Christians there was no more need for corroborees either. Much praise is given to missionaries. It is true that they provided Aborigines with support that the government and community lacked. But the missionaries, by their attitudes of that time (not now) played a major role in destroying Aboriginal culture by banning their languages and culture.

In Our land till we die, a history of the Framlingham Aborigines recently published by Jan Critchett, she quoted a Parliamentary debate of 1890. The local member stated: 'No matter what the treatment of the blacks might be in other places, the Aboriginal Board had shown itself thoroughly unsympathetic toward the Aborigines in the neighbourhood of Warrnambool; and as to the inspector, the blacks there would rather see the devil himself than old Hagenauer coming amongst them, because every visit the inspector paid them was followed by some treatment . . . distressful to the blacks'.

Phillip talks about the 1886 Act which required all able-bodied half castes under thirty-four years to leave the stations and support themselves. The Act broke a lot of people's hearts. One could not have chosen a worse time, for Victoria was severely affected by the depression. The Board prevented marriages between fullbloods and half castes. Aborigines suffered by harassment in the Board's attempts to close the stations, but people were determined to stay. The Act was later amended so that half
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castes could be assisted by the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines. But later the Board’s policy extended to all people living on settlements. Families who had no employment training, who had depended on rations, who had never paid rent, were suddenly dumped on the fringes of towns.

This is a book that deserves to find its way into every home and onto the reading lists of school courses in Australian history. Among the most valuable features of this book are its reproductions of many old photographs, some taken over a hundred years ago.

This is Phillip’s story, but it is only the beginning. He plans to publish a two-volume history titled ‘What did happen to the Aborigines of Victoria’.

ALICK JACKOMOS BALWYN, VICTORIA


This well-illustrated brief history of the Framlingham community grew out of Jan Critchett’s thesis research on the history of two Aboriginal stations in the Western District of Victoria. This book was written to explain the background of a modern controversy about the management of the Framlingham Forest near Warrnambool. In April 1979 Aboriginal people blocked public access to this park, and requested the State Government to recognize their rights to own and protect this land.

The forest area had been owned by their ancestors; indeed, it was part of the Framlingham Aboriginal Reserve from 1861 until 1891, when 3,679 acres were excised, leaving only 586 acres as Aboriginal reserve. Most members of the Aboriginal community had to camp illegally on the excised land until the 1930s, because officialdom considered these ‘half castes’ ineligible to reside on the Aboriginal reserve. But the exiles and their descendants resisted all efforts to disperse their community. They had their own definition of Aboriginal identity. They were loyal to their own place and their own people. They went on caring for this land and the graves of six generations of relatives and friends buried here.

Finally policy changed to accommodate reality. In the 1960s their right to remain was acknowledged, although officials continued to encourage dispersal for ‘assimilation’. For generations members of this community had earned their living by casual labour and dairy farming on the remnant reserve and excised land. Since the 1960s there has been a continuous campaign to regain control of the forest area. A thousand acres had been sold to local farmers but the authorities continued to reject all proposals for its use by Aborigines.

The 1979 protest, which gained nationwide publicity, has a special significance as one of the first ‘land claims’ in south-eastern Australia. In September 1980 Prime Minister Fraser, in his role as the local federal member, intervened to suggest a possible formula for settlement of the Aborigines’ claim to own and manage the forest area. After twelve months the State Government has not yet announced any final settlement.

Criticett’s study is mainly devoted to a sketch of the period between 1829 and 1934, outlining the consequences of European intrusion, the struggle to establish the Framlingham station in the 1860s, and the dispute over its closure in 1889/90. She draws on the archives of the Board responsible for Aboriginal policy, but the greatest contribution of this book is the detailed analysis of local newspaper reportage. Five of the six Victorian Aboriginal stations were closed between 1890 and 1924, to suit bureaucratic convenience and to placate neighbours who coveted the reserved land. Only Framlingham was defended by a sizeable proportion of the local European population.

The letters and deputations of the Framlingham folk are mentioned in Critchett’s book, but I wish she had given us a little more biographical detail about the families who have fought for their homeland for so many generations. I wish, too, that she had
said a little more about the just and warm-hearted manager of Framlingham, William Goodall Jr. This Tasmanian-born son of a local farmer had taught in a district school for three years before he was hired by the Board in 1869, largely at the Aborigines' request. He was then twenty-two. In 1889 he was hastily transferred to another public service branch when (for the second time) he escorted an Aboriginal deputation to Melbourne to protest to the responsible Minister about harmful Board decisions. Critchett does give more detail about the local member, John Murray, the brash youngster elected in 1885 who campaigned for the 'half castes' through the 1890s, changed the Act for their benefit in 1910, and assumed direct control of Aboriginal affairs while Premier and Chief Secretary 1913-1915. But she does not mention Murray's spinster sister, who assisted the Framlingham folk for decades. In a 1951 publication, *Their music has roots*, Anna Vroland recorded a number of songs composed by Victorian Aboriginal communities. She mentioned that Europeans in the Warrnambool district recalled a lament sung by the Framlingham folk at the death of a prominent resident decades before. After the funeral the Aborigines had gone into the bush to continue their keening and observers had caught only the refrain of their lament: ‘Miss Mary Murray, Miss Mary Murray, Miss Mary Murray . . .’

This district was developed by impoverished selectors, many of them Irish. Their views about dispossession, like their views about mourning etiquette, coincided with those of the Framlingham folk. In 1889 some 556 residents of the surrounding district sent the Chief Secretary a petition protesting the injustice of removing the 'original possessors of the soil'. Almost everyone in the vicinity eventually protested Board plans to alienate all of the Aboriginal reserve and send the occupants elsewhere.

We need many more local histories of this kind before we can make authoritative pronouncements on Australian 'race relations' in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries.

DIANE BARWICK


Most people with even a smattering of knowledge about Australia or Australian Aboriginal Studies, would be aware of a number of features of Aboriginal demography. After contact with the European population in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there was a considerable population decline. In recent years there has been a high rate of natural increase. Indeed the demographic parameters are in many cases similar to those of an underdeveloped country, high fertility and lowering mortality although infant mortality had historically been very high. But past these generalities, and the wider debates they engender because of the reality of the living conditions that they reflect, there is very little of substance known to anyone outside a fairly small circle of people who have attempted to unravel the complexities of the issues.

Dr Smith's book is a welcome contribution to the Academy of Social Sciences series on Aborigines in Australian Society. It is based on his doctoral thesis some ten years ago and his work for the National Population Inquiry between 1972 and 1976. It also contains material from his time with the Health Research project at the Australian National University. The very nature of the subject matter means that it may be a little offputting for some readers. The quality of the data he has had to work with would horrify most demographers, while the demographic detail and subtleties of the piecing together of the history of Aboriginal population may be a little too much for some anthropologists or prehistorians to come to grips with. It is a painstaking piece of work, putting together information from a wide range of sources and assessing their meaning for the Australian Aboriginal population. Given this wealth of detail it is unfortunate that the production contains a number of proofing mistakes, mainly typographical.
The book also contains a long overdue debunking of the demographic work of Professor J.B. Birdsell, whose seemingly sophisticated methodology for ascertaining the historical demography of the Australian Aboriginal population has reigned unchallenged for years in disciplines where mathematical expertise is rare.

This book is more than a study of demography, because Dr Smith has had to address himself to another question before he can attempt to state how many Aborigines there were at a particular point in time and what the likely future population might be. That other question is a sociological one, 'who is an Aboriginal?' Changes that have taken place between the various data sources as to who is doing the identification, together with the more complex issue of change over time in the propensities of people to identify themselves as Aborigines, make the study of the demographic characteristics of this population, its fertility and mortality, extremely complex. For this reason alone Smith's work and his conclusions are cushioned throughout with a wide range of caveats and suppositions. Indeed he concludes, at one stage, by saying, 'whether the high rates of growth of the population continues, increases or decreases, it may not be possible, at least in the medium term to tell with any certainty whether natural increase, or changing identification, or both, are responsible' (p.245).

Smith uses this point to call for the institution of a system for collection of reliable Aboriginal vital statistics. Whilst there seem to be excellent reasons for supporting this call, it raises a question which has implications for the future of the Aboriginal population. The simple sequence of events, one that has occurred recently in the United States in one form, and in the United Kingdom in the other, is whether the better identification of a minority groups leads to increased government support or increased discrimination. In the United States, minority groups are anxious to see their numbers fully accounted, (some would say over counted) for the benefits this will lead to from programs distributed on a per capita basis. The other line of reasoning, relating to increased discrimination, has been used in the United Kingdom by groups pressing for the collection of less data in censuses on the grounds of invasion of privacy. There are groups both within the Aboriginal community, and associated with it, who would take a similar line.

Given the fact that there are differences in the demographic parameters between the Aboriginal population and the non-Aboriginal, the question becomes: will it be easier to identify the preconditions that lead to these differences and hence enable actions to be taken to reduce them if reliable statistics are kept? The answer would have to be yes, although there is an implicit assumption that there is something inferior about the values of the parameters in Aboriginal society. Whilst there would be little disagreement that a reduction of mortality (especially infant mortality) is desirable, there is more room for disagreement, particularly culturally specific, about fertility rates. But is not just a question of the initial identification, much of which is patently clear in a qualitative way; it is one of monitoring change and increasing the effectiveness of the programs.

Dr Smith has provided the background, laid down the parameters of future study and produced a book that should be a standard reference for anyone seriously working in the field of Aboriginal Studies.

GRAHAM HARRISON
DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION AND ETHNIC AFFAIRS, CANBERRA

The Aboriginal Health Service (A.H.S.) in Fitzroy, an inner Melbourne suburb, is an Aboriginal-run service delivering medical (including dental) services to Aborigines. Decision making in connection with administration and policy determination is in the hands of Aboriginal people; professionals provide medical expertise and advice only.

The A.H.S. began in 1973 as a self-help scheme by local Aborigines with assistance from a volunteer medical practitioner. Growth has been quite spectacular. The April 1981 Newsletter of the Service states that there is a current staff level of 32 (25 Aboriginal people and seven non-Aborigines) and that in the first nine months of the present financial year there was a patient load of 9,550 (total figure for the previous year was 11,000). The same Newsletter announced that staff was currently working without wages because of financial problems. Main funding since 1974 has come from the Commonwealth Government through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. At the same time the same government more generously funds another Aboriginal health agency, the Special Services Health Section (S.S.H.S.) of the Victorian Health Department.

Nathan's study, based on 239 interviews with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health workers and non-specialist Aboriginal community members, is concerned with the V.A.H.S., and S.S.H.S. and 'main stream' providers of health care such as local doctors and hospitals. Nathan sees little difference between the approaches of the S.S.H.S. and 'main stream' providers. Their shared viewpoint is that the chronic health problems of Aborigines will only be remedied when they learn to overcome their nervousness about presenting themselves to health agents and learn to use services which are available to all citizens. Readers may recall that, in essence, this is the opinion of Max Kamien in The dark people of Bourke (A.I.A.S., 1978).

The conclusion reached by Nathan is that the V.A.H.S. is best able to meet the health needs of Aborigines, because it is controlled by Aboriginal people and because it treats disease within a contextual framework, taking into consideration the economic and cultural factors which hinder or prevent many such Aborigines from presenting themselves for medical attention. Generalising from the Fitzroy situation, Nathan emphasises that in order to cope with Aboriginal chronic ill-health it is more beneficial and economic for Aboriginal-run health services to be established and encouraged than it is to adopt other approaches.

Hopefully, the message of Nathan's well-researched book may have a positive influence on those who provide health funding, and save the V.A.H.S. from the periodic financial crises which trouble it and disrupt its important services.

It is a cause for some concern that Nathan's first chapter dealing inter alia with the methodology of her study fails to provide information on how her informants were chosen. This omission could lay her open to a charge of bias and could lessen the impact of the study.

ALAN WEST

ABORIGINAL ARTS BOARD, SYDNEY

Law: the old and the new — Aboriginal women in Central Australia speak out. By Diane Bell and Pam Ditton. Published for Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service by Aboriginal History, Canberra, 1980. Distributed by Australian National University Press. Pp x + 147, p.b. $5.95 plus postage.

This is an important book. It is part of a current move to put the record straight about the role and status of Aboriginal women. There is little literature on Aboriginal women; this book makes a significant addition. To quote page 5:
In the past women have rarely been consulted on matters concerning their life choice. Their attitudes and preferences on the basics of life — health, housing, education, community development — are neither known nor sought by those fact finding missions which regularly visit Aboriginal communities in search of data on which to base programmes, policies, and projected estimates. Yet we found women had opinions which are important and respected within their society.

As a report commissioned by the Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service for the Law Reform Commission, its data and presentation are somewhat different from general academic works. The authors are both women. Diane Bell is an anthropologist and Pam Ditton is a legal practitioner. They had just three months in which to conduct the fieldwork and prepare this detailed and comprehensive report. Given the speed and accuracy of the production the authors must surely be forgiven the points where readers may feel the treatment is a too slight or the comments not sufficiently distilled.

In this short space of time the authors visited six different types of Aboriginal communities in Central Australia which they felt were representative of the range of problems facing Aboriginal women today. They recorded the views of women in each place and have presented them as six case studies and as an overview of the main issues concerning Aboriginal women in Central Australia.

The greater proportion of the book details the six communities visited. A brief summary of the present situation in each community is given and this provides excellent background material for readers unfamiliar with the diversity of life situations in which Aboriginal women find themselves today.

Warrabri is a large settlement of some 750 Aborigines and a considerable number of white ‘managers’. Almost half of the Aborigines are traditional owners of the area but at least as many speak a different language and were brought here from an area much further north. It has all of the familiar and negative features of large isolated, institutionalized settlements elsewhere in Australia. Gambling, alcohol and fighting are commonplace. The old and the new law are in conflict.

Willowra is an Aboriginal-managed cattle station. It is run by a stable and integrated Aboriginal community. The women who have inherited the land are important and respected. Here the old and the new law work together. The women feel that they are consulted. Ngurrantiji is an outstation or homeland. It was established in 1977 by several families who walked off the Kurundi cattle station and is now a flourishing and stable community. It is the home of Myrtle Napanangka Kennedy.

Murray Downs is a European-managed cattle station which has an Aboriginal camp living near the homestead. The quality of life varies enormously from one station to another. At Murray Downs both family and ritual life continue and although the people are not managing their own affairs as fully as at Willowra the women feel that they do maintain some authority.

Respect and authority are harder for women to maintain in the towns. The book cites examples from both Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. The problems women face in these areas are explained and the difference in attitudes between town camps where the residents have a lease to their property and those without are enunciated.

The book concludes with a section which sums up the issues as women see them in each situation. Women in the different communities experience the impact of the new law upon the old in different ways. In the areas where Aborigines are in control, as on the outstations and their own cattle stations, women do not seek new or formal
channels to express their opinions. But in European-controlled situations they require safeguards to protect their views and their interests in a largely male-dominated political and legal system. It is clear that in all issues, whether they be related to the old law, like tribal marriage, or to the new, like alcohol, women have important and constructive comments to make.

The authors prove their point quite cogently that, in future, 'women must be included at all levels of the consultative process and the delivery of services'. It is not often realised that the loss of land ownership has had just as devastating an effect on women's authority, identity and self-respect as it has had on men. Their rituals are also tied to land and their role in these is crucial in the maintenance of harmony in the community and the resolution of conflict in the family.

FAY GALE

UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE


The penultimate chapter of Sansom's The camp at Wallaby Cross is the best. By describing how one man successfully mounts a ceremony, Sansom introduces the main types of camp residents, their basic inter-relationships, and the social situation they share and daily reconstruct. Unfortunately for the book as a whole, this chapter also undermines the basic assumptions of the rest of Sansom's analysis and, thereby, questions its general validity. Throughout the book Sansom argues that because the Darwin fringe-dwellers are people 'entirely without property', they invest their relationships with each other with words. According to Sansom, words are objects of exchange and constitute an economy. In the penultimate chapter, however, Sansom lists other items which, although not all 'property' in any straightforward sense, are nonetheless valuable resources which the fringe-dwellers exchange. Cash, food, liquor, tyres, hair, women, and even protection get exchanged during the preparations for the ceremony which is itself but the culmination of quite significant, long term exchanges between the fringe-dwellers and other Aborigines. Without a doubt the fringe-dwellers value what people say, how they say it, and even have developed a proprietary sense about the right to express certain meanings and understandings. Given Sansom's evidence, however, it is extreme to argue that the fringe camp's economy is based on words and, particularly, that the Darwin fringe camps are distinctive sociological entities because they emerge as 'jurisdictions of the word'. The penultimate chapter also denies Sansom's basic assumption that Aboriginal fringe camps be understood apart from their relationships with 'white' Australians. The very categories 'fringe' and 'Mission' (categories which Sansom takes as sociologically self-evident) document the fundamental importance of 'white' power in everyday Aboriginal social life. In particular, the exchange of ceremony for hair which the Wallaby Cross people tried to complete makes little sociological sense without consideration of how the two communities were related to 'white' authorities. Sansom's emphasis on the 'jurisdiction of the word' and on the fringe camp as locale of Aboriginal 'escape' combine to reproduce yet again the failing of most studies of contemporary Aborigines. In his final chapter Sansom states: 'Because each countryman of the Darwin hinterland has more to do with other Aborigines than with Australian whites, relationships between countrymen can be treated as events within a segregated social field in which social processes are determined by an internal dialectic' (p. 265). Nothing could be further from the truth.

These fundamental reservations aside, Sansom has highlighted an interesting and important aspect of the fringe-dwellers' social life — how they do politics by managing the meaning of everyday events. He explains how negotiations about what people accept as the facts (the 'given word') gradually give rise to highly typified and
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socially accepted units of experience ('happenings'). Of particular interest is his discussion of the relationship between these emergent typifications and the recruitment of people who attest to the authenticity of a 'happening'. He also explains how changes in the identities of individuals and groups with respect to Wallaby Cross can be negotiated by manipulating who has access to political discussions. In the light of my earlier comments, however, what remains unclear is precisely the conditions which determine what gets accepted as true, who is allowed to speak authoritatively, and why. Sansom has demonstrated that people's talk is important to this. Are we to accept, however, that the talk itself determines how people understand what is said and whom they permit to say it?

This raises an ambiguity in Sansom's use of the term 'word'. He apparently derives his use of the term 'word' from the Aborigines. As I read it, however, the term 'word' does not refer to units of spoken language, but to knowledge. People do not own spoken units of language, they own authoritative knowledge and the right to transmit it to others. This is generally characteristic of Australian Aborigines and cannot be explained with reference to the propertylessness of Aboriginal lifestyles. In the pre-colonial era, the monopoly of authoritative knowledge (particularly religious knowledge) by old men was a critical element of their generalized gerontocratic monopoly of all valuable resources, including women. In the current situation, there is a multiplicity of types of knowledge, command of which conditions access to, and control of, different types of resources. Australian bureaucrats, for example, variously value Aborigines' command of 'white' knowledge or 'black' knowledge and dispense conventional houses, pensions, support for outstations, rights to speak in negotiations about land rights and uranium, and many other resources accordingly. Aborigines negotiate with 'whites' as much as with each other about what counts as knowledge and who controls it.

This is common knowledge. Nonetheless, it raises two questions relevant to Sansom's analysis. How distinctive are such negotiations to fringe-dwellers? In Sansom's terms, are the camps distinctive because they are 'jurisdictions of the word'? More generally, is a sociolinguistic mode of analysis which focusses on the formal properties of speech the most useful approach? My answer to both questions is no. Neither the fringe camps nor Aborigines generally are distinctive in their politics of meaning. The key to politics of meaning, moreover, lies not only in speech, but in the many and varied conditions which determine how people come to interpret speech, property exchanges, the allocation of value and the like. The generation of meaning is not limited to acts of speech. Talk is a critical aspect of social life. It does not exhaust it.

In conclusion, what worries me most about this type of analysis is how it perpetuates the myth that Aborigines are somehow quite distinct from non-Aboriginal Australians. It is an anthropological commonplace that different peoples share different cultures and interpret the world accordingly. But a principal problem for analysis is how much Aborigines must take others' cultural understandings into account in their everyday interpretation of the world.

Moreover, one cannot take for granted that Aboriginal cultural understandings have not themselves changed in confrontation with Europeans. The unilateral segregation of Aboriginal culture from its context denies the relevance of these questions.

JEFF COLLMANN


The publication of Annette Hamilton's book is long overdue. Written originally as an M.A. thesis on the basis of anthropological fieldwork carried out in 1968-69 among Anbarra at Maningrida, Northern Territory, it was at that time the only available
detailed study of Australian Aboriginal child-rearing methods. It was pathfinding in much the same sense that Phyllis Kaberry’s ethnography of *Aboriginal women* was in 1939. Both ethnographies broke new ground in an area of Aboriginal research that had previously been treated as marginal and unimportant. Now, more than a decade later, despite the growing number of publications dealing with the lives of Aboriginal women, *Nature and nurture* still remains the only study of its kind. Though the present publication is aimed at a slightly different audience — ‘for the generalized, as well as the specialized, reader’ — to that of the academic thesis from which it has been revised, its strong point is still undoubtedly the detailed ethnographic description that Dr Hamilton presents of child-rearing practices amongst the Anbarra.

How refreshing it is to find an account (Chapter One) of the researcher in the field coming to terms not only with other people’s expectations of her but also with her own expectations of what, ideally, her research should be about, and of how sensitivity to this dialectic can temper the fieldwork approach. It is apparent that Dr Hamilton’s responsiveness to these factors — ‘So I stopped trying to be a proper anthropologist and sat all day in the camp with mothers and children’ (p. 12) — allowed her to capture the minutiae of everyday action and behaviour necessary for an understanding of Anbarra childrearing and child development. Interestingly, this willingness to observe and record the fine detail of camp life is similar to the methodological emphasis in Kaberry’s excellent ethnographic accounts. Also, Hamilton has made an innovative use of more statistically oriented, time-interval observations of interactions and behaviour which gives an added dimension to her description, even given the limited sample that she dealt with.

The first eight chapters constitute Part One. They provide an enormous wealth of information on the way in which the Anbarra deal with all aspects of child development, from the practices and beliefs concerning conception, pregnancy, birth, through infancy and childhood up to the age when children enter into adult status. This is presented as an ‘inside picture’ (p. 116), an ‘Anbarra model of child development’ (p. 16) — though Hamilton’s own information indicates that no such explicit, coherent model exists in the minds of Anbarra adults. Though some of the findings of Part One might be expected, the thoroughness of her data is welcome. Many comments are provocative and demand further attention and thought. Anbarra childhood is said to be characterized by an open air of adult permissiveness and indulgence with few constraints on the child in terms of eating patterns and routine, and little or no attempt being made by adults to toilet-train infants. The stress in adult-infant interaction is on the child’s autonomous control over people and food. Hamilton presents numerous points of comparison with European child-rearing practices and beliefs. She notes the importance of people, not things, as the source of stimulation for Anbarra children, emphasizing physical and sensory stimulation and a mode of adult communication with children which is initially based on ‘non-semantic’ sounds. She also points out the increasing sexual differentiation between boys and girls in terms of how adults talk to and physically relate to them. Her painstaking observation of the child’s social environment removes it from the amorphous group of undefined ‘others’ typically referred to in many ethnographies.

Yet, children are reared in a predominantly female world, but more particularly it is the actual biological mother and then actual and close classificatory female matrilineal kin (in that order) who are the consistent caretakers of children. Her data show clearly that from early childhood onwards girls also tend to remain closely linked with their mothers and other female relatives while boys progressively become more involved with their fathers and other males. This leads one immediately to reassess the established descriptions of male initiations as a sudden wrenching away of boys from the female world: Hamilton’s information shows that the separation has been a constant, but gradual development from a boy’s earliest childhood.

Hamilton’s occasional speculative forays on the relationship between Anbarra beliefs and practices concerning childrearing and development and adult social interaction are perceptive though frustratingly abrupt. Her comments on the role of breast-feeding as a ‘ritual of attachment’ (p. 31) and the focussing of children’s assertive behaviour towards food; their primary dependence on actual biological kin; their exposure to
non-verbal communicative systems; and the apparent disdain and coolness with which adults seemingly respond to highly emotional, aggressive children, all lead us on to further questions about the nature of adult interaction and behaviour. In Part One these questions are only minimally alluded to. We are told how Anbarra adults view children but not what this tells us about how they view themselves and other adults. One could continue detailing the array of information presented in Part One of this book — it remains an invaluable source of comparative material for future researchers. Her Appendix on Anbarra demography circa 1968 increases its ethnographic value; such studies should be an obligatory part of all future publications.

The remaining four chapters of Part Two briefly deal with some of the wider theoretical issues raised by the data. Though these later chapters contain a number of provocative and well-argued reflections on the nature of Anbarra child-rearing and development, it is the less satisfying section of the book. A discussion of the significance of demographic pressures, natural selection and infanticide for Anbarra child-rearing and development leads her to conclude that Aboriginal infancy is more a period of socialization through modelling, rather than direct training, in which a rigorous selection is unconsciously imposed by people: '... the surviving child had to be self-assertive and make its wants known to its caretakers while, in turn, its caretakers had to be responsive to the child's demands' (p. 127). The Anbarra child is characterized as active in making overt demands and the caretakers 'passive' to what are regarded as the child's innate needs, which can only be met through social interaction rather than through direct training, routines, punishment and reward. In this second half of the book Hamilton deals in brief, somewhat disconnected chapters, with issues such as the development of language, sensorimotor skills and intelligence. She notes amongst other things the consistently advanced motor development of infants in the first 15 months of life. Discussion also examines the nature of the child's developing perception of self and other; and the relevance of Freudian, Piagetian and social learning theories for understanding the nature and outcome of Anbarra child-rearing practice and beliefs. These discussions are then used to forshadow what has been an underlying premise of the book — that '... there is a natural, biologically determined way for infants and adults (and others) to relate to one another and that this produces an eminently 'social' (though not particularly hard-working or well repressed or wealthy) type of human being' (p. 161). While the latter comments may bring protests from some, and there could be a more detailed analysis of the relationship between childhood and adult society, nevertheless, Hamilton's speculations are penetrating and clearly indicate directions for future research and discussion.

There is always more that one could expect of a book, especially one which has led the reader to ask further questions of his or her own, and in this latter respect Dr Hamilton has succeeded; *Nature and nurture* should be recommended reading for people in need of some new ideas. Given then, the general excellence of the contents of the book it is unfortunate that the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies has chosen a format which bears a closer resemblance to a women's magazine cookbook, or a children's storybook, than to an academic publication.

DIANE SMITH

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*Aborigines of the west* fills gaps in the literature on Australian Aborigines by describing those who live today in Western Australian cities and towns alongside European Australians, and other who live on remote stations and settlements, and by...
reconstructing to some extent the way their ancestors lived and how Europeans disrupted
this traditional life over the last 150 years. It is one of the valuable series commissioned
for the sequicentennial year of European settlement, though it would be a wry joke to
suggest that this book in any way celebrates that event. For the Aborigines 1829 presaged
death by violence for many and by painful new diseases for countless more; destruction
of their way of life; and 150 years of hardship and discrimination. The consequent
despair and reaction is revealed by some of the contributors, particularly by those who
are themselves Aborigines, such as Ken Colbung, Jack Davis, May O'Brien and Joan
Winch, though more hopeful developments are described by Ribnga Green and Keith
Truscott.

A great merit of the book is that it does not in any way imply that the Aborigines
of today have 'lost their culture', a common attitude of European-Australian writers
even if they are sympathetic to Aborigines. The same writers do not suggest that they
themselves have lost their culture because the car and the tractor have replaced the
horse, and electricity and gas have replaced wood fires. The contributors to this book
emphasise that Aborigines in Western Australia have maintained an Aboriginal identity
and have changed by degrees their ancient culture into one which is still predominantly
Aboriginal.

Because of their remoteness many Aboriginal groups in the north and west of
the State were almost unchanged by European contact at the turn of the century, but for
these there are no published reports equivalent to those of Spencer and Gillen on the
Northern Territory, Roth on Queensland, or Howitt, Curr, Brough Smyth and R.H.
Mathews on southeastern Australia. Admittedly the State government attempted to
match these reports, but made a doubtful choice of author in Mrs Daisy Bates. She
collected much valuable material between 1901 and 1911 but lacked the training to
analyse and present this material, so that the book she wrote for the Western Australian
government has not yet been published.

Ronald M. Berndt's opening chapter on traditional Aboriginal life 'concentrates',
as he explains, 'on traditional Aboriginal areas existing today', and his information
'relies mainly on systematic investigations . . . made since the 1930s, with only indirect
reference to earlier literature'. (It is worth noting that most of these systematic investigations
have been made in the 1960s and 1970s and were initiated by the editors of this book,
who came to the University of Western Australia in 1956.) Professor Berndt admits that
there is valuable information in the archives; but there is no doubt that there is less
published literature about the Aborigines of the south-west than about those of the
south-east of this continent.

In just over five hundred pages a remarkably wide range of subjects is covered:
traditional life, history since contact, conditions today, language, education, health,
traditional medicine, race relations, government policy past and present, Aboriginal
studies in educational institutions. There are thirty-nine contributions, mostly ten to
fifteen pages long, so the treatment of each subject is short. Though carefully condensed
to present the most important aspects, they often leave the reader tantalised and wanting
to know more. Nowhere is this more so than over prehistory and archaeology. Ian
Crawford's seventeen-page article on 'Aboriginal Studies at the Western Australian
Museum' — a survey of extensive research in several fields — can afford to devote only
three pages to prehistory, so that this important aspect is almost left out of the book, even
though the few sites that have been studied by archaeologists suggest that Western
Australia could yield discoveries as important as those anywhere on the continent. In
their foreword the editors explain why they have not included archaeological material,
as they originally intended. They write that, 'as it took shape, the focus on the socio-
cultural and linguistic dimensions became plainer: the emphasis, clearly had to be on
traditional Aboriginal life seen through the eyes of the present...'. So, with the satisfying
feast this book offers, one should not ask for more.

The book is divided into five main headings. Part One consists of Ronald M.
Berndt's review of traditional Aboriginal life, Catherine H. Berndt's contribution on
Aboriginal women, with new and original ideas from one who is pre-eminent in her
development of this subject; an overview of Aboriginal languages by W.H. Douglas,
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which made the special features of these easily understandable to a layman; and Jack Davis' moving poem and prose essay on the first 150 years.

Part Two deals with traditional culture, contact history, and the present condition of Aborigines in four main divisions of the State. It is the longest and most detailed. The first section is about the south-west corner, an enclave of non-circumcising people surrounded on two sides by the sea, and on the other two sides by people of decidedly different culture, whose initiation rites included circumcision and subincision. The opening contribution by Sara Meagher and W.D.L. Ride, on the Aboriginal use of natural resources in the south-west reveals one important difference — the richness of the resources enabled the inhabitants to maintain an almost sedentary existence. This is followed by Ronald M. Berndt's brief summary of traditional social and cultural organisation, and Michael Howard's short history of what has happened to the Aborigines since European settlement, and how in spite of much disruption they maintained a separate identity. Then Ken Colbung describes what it was like to be on the Aboriginal side of this culture contact.

The next section, on the Eastern Goldfields, begins with W.H. Douglas describing the special features of the Western Desert language and some of the differences between its dialects. J.E. Stanton gives an account of the Mount Margaret community and how it has changed from its mission-directed days to being an autonomous Aboriginal entity. W.J.K. Christensen traces the history of the Aborigines of the Kalgoorlie-Boulder area, which had an influx of people at various times from different districts; he then tells what it is like to live there today.

There follows a section of the central-west of the state, which Robert Tonkinson opens with a description of the people of the western fringe of the desert, in particular those now regarded as the 'Jigalong mob'. John Wilson then recounts the story of the Pilbara, from the strike of stations hands in 1946 through the period of Aboriginal mining enterprise in the 1950s and 1960s. Dennis Gray examines the survival into the present of traditional medical practices on the Carnarvon Aboriginal Reserve.

Part Three opens with the longest contribution in the book; it is by the late Professor Elkin and the editors write: 'We are particularly pleased that it has been
possible to include this chapter, virtually the last contribution of an outstanding anthropologist'. It records Aboriginal-European relations over the previous 150 years, including the actions of government and government departments and other institutions such as missions. For the last fifty years Elkin had had personal involvement through being asked for advice, and consequently there is some first-hand experience included. Susan Tod Woenne next reviews the many commissions of enquiry which have been set up by the Western Australian Government, the first in 1883, the last in 1975. This investigated the much publicised 'Skull Creek incident', which involved a clash between police and Aborigines near Laverton. Terry Long then deals with the development of government policy toward Aborigines, first at the Colonial Office in London, which was more sympathetic than its successors in Perth. The tone of Perth seems to have been set as early as 1837, when, to reproduce a statement from the Legislative Assembly quoted by Long: (p. 358)

The Council has all along thought that although the amelioration and civilisation of the Aboriginal people was an object desirable, yet the protection of the lives and property of the British subject was a matter of more urgency and still greater importance.

B.J. Wright follows with an article on Aboriginal sites and their protection; he shows more confidence in the determination of government to protect these sites than the nation witnessed during the Noonkanbah confrontation (presumably the article was already in press when those events took place). Keith Truscott's contribution 'Changing perspectives of local Aboriginality' and Ribnga Kenneth Green's on 'Aborigines and international politics' give important and original viewpoints on these matters from the side of Aborigines themselves.

Part Four focuses on education and is perhaps the most hopeful part of the book; it suggests that education can best enable Aborigines to take over decisions for their own future and to deal with European-Australians on equal terms. Susan Kaldor and Ian Malcolm write about language, not in this case about indigenous languages, but about the special kinds of English spoken by Aboriginal children, often making it harder for them to learn from teachers who speak standard Australian English; so that there is now a specialist field known by the letters TSESD (Teaching Standard English as a Second Dialect). May L. O'Brien then writes of the educational difficulties of the children who are between two cultures; Michael George describes the programmes for adult education for Aborigines; and Joan Winch explores the problems connected with Aboriginal health.

Part Five, 'Aboriginal Studies' contains descriptive articles about the kind of studies that are operating in the Museum of Western Australia (Ian Crawford); in the schools (C.F. Makin); in teacher education (John L. Sherwood); in the Western Australian Institute of Technology (Rodney McKeich and Ray F. Morland) and the University of Western Australia (Ronald M. Berndt). This is an impressive account of growing attention being paid in these institutions to the oldest Australians.

Altogether this must have been the greatest book bargain offered for years — 543 pages, hardcover, for $15.00 ($10.00 in Western Australia, we are told). Before this review was sent to press, the second edition appeared. It is encouraging to hear of a good book whose first edition is sold out in a year, at a time when worthwhile books are remaindered before some potential buyers have even heard of them. The new edition is in paperback at $19.95, but it is still worth the price. The few misprints have been corrected and it has an index, sadly lacking from the first edition, in the rush to get it out on time. It has also an interesting additional article, by Paul Hasluck, historian and at various time politician, cabinet minister and Governor-General. He makes some wise and thought-provoking comments which should not be dismissed out of hand by concerned European-Australians or politically active Aborigines. His main theme is that the past is water under the bridge and cannot be reversed, the Europeans are not going to return whence they came and the Aborigines have vastly different cultures from those at the time they first met and accordingly the accommodation between them
has to be different. Paul Hasluck seems to hanker still after the assimilationist policy of which he was the chief architect in the 1950s. Those readers who do not agree with him must concede that he puts his case well.

ISOBEL WHITE

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY


*Living archaeology* is an attempt to set out a unified theory of ethnoarchaeology. Gould argues that general, uniformitarian principles can be established between ecological variables and human adaptive responses to a level at which we can look at variations from these principles as evidence of symbolic and ideational (i.e. 'cultural') behaviour. 'Only by looking for and recognising anomalies to general patterns of conformity to utilitarian expectations in human behaviour can we reliably infer when and under what conditions symbolic and ideational factors make a difference in the ways people actually behave' (p. xi).

If this is the program, we can ask two questions. Has Gould established any general principles? Can the archaeological record be looked at usefully in terms of deviations from these (Gould's 'anomalies')? Gould's key, indeed his only principle, is derived from ecology, and is that there is a *limiting factor* in any environment, that is, some factor which will determine the number of individuals which can survive a period of maximum stress. The idea of a limiting factor, he claims, 'is as decisive for explaining human behaviour as any other uniformitarianist principle in natural science' (p. 112).

Using this principle, and assuming that Aboriginal society is technologically (*sensu lato*) static, Gould then looks at the adaptive strategies of the forty or fewer Western Desert Aboriginal people he worked with during two field seasons. He concludes that these strategies are based on a 'risk-minimising' pattern and never violate environmental requirements to any extreme degree.

He then looks at the works of Meehan on contemporary Anbara shell-gathering, H. Allen on the contact-period Bagundji, Flood on moth-hunters and Beaton on macrozamia collectors, and suggests that the same 'risk-minimising' principle was common to all Aboriginal societies ('Windfalls won't do'). He accounts for the large gatherings common to many groups of Aboriginal societies in terms of information exchange — information which served to minimize risks. He also appears to suggest that away from the desert where limiting factors are less limiting, Aborigines continued to develop resource optimising behaviour through technological change until the nineteenth century.

He then turns from ethnographic and ethnohistoric subsistence data to lithic technology, where he attempts again to demonstrate that a 'risk-minimising ... mode of adaptation' (p.138) exists. This he does by showing that at Puntutjarpa rockshelter in the Western Desert, used over the last 10,000 years, there is throughout a small component of 'exotic' stone used for adzes. This stone makes adzes which are less durable than those made in some local stone, and its use is therefore an *anomaly* in terms of mechanical efficiency or economy of effort. The anomaly is explained by the use of stone to maintain the long-distance social networks that are critically necessary in times of subsistence stress.

Other anomalies are discussed, including Gould's own studies at the James Range East site, the irregular distribution of Victorian greenstone hatchet heads (McBryde), the ever-popular fishless Tasmanians (Jones), and the increase in exotic stone at Burke's Cave in the recent past (H. Allen). Then, with a swift trot through Chinese markets, crashed World War II aircraft, the last gunflint maker of Brandon, a bow in the direction
of two anomalies which defy Gould (Aboriginal — dog relations and the absence of waterbags in parts of the desert), the book ends. What has been achieved?

In terms of the two questions asked earlier, not much. Gould’s approach is far too crassly utilitarian to be of much value in theory building, while at the operational level his ‘general principles’ turn out largely to be based on his belief as to what a ‘reasonable person’ might be expected to do.

But at a more particularistic level the book is quite worthwhile. Gould does bring an intelligent and inquiring mind to bear on some real problems in Australian archaeology, such as how is the lithic record likely to be formed. His description and discussion of variations in subsistence behaviour throughout Australia will be an eye-opener to many people who think all Aboriginal people lived in the desert. The book is well-written, though the humour is heavy-handed. Above all, perhaps, the book does try to start work on the problem of how to utilise the wide range of information on modern Aboriginal societies in the interpretation of the archaeological record. Given that the usual approaches have been either to ignore the ethnography in archaeological analyses or apply it, like whipped cream, as a garnish, *Living archaeology* is at least a sustained attempt to point towards a new approach.

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In the assessment of a descriptive grammar of any language the following basic questions are usually asked:

a) is it a full and accurate account of the language?

b) what is the theoretical framework of the linguistic analysis?

c) does it throw light on any related languages and on any general linguistic principles?

These important questions fade into relative insignificance when one looks at Tamsin Donaldson’s work, because it has a different dimension: it brings back to life the language of northern central New South Wales which was at the verge of extinction. This is achieved from the linguistic point of view because it is a thoughtful and sensitive description ‘from the inside’ as it were, because the author has in fact become one of the most competent living speakers of Ngiyambaa, though she modestly only hints at this in passing (p. 10). This resurrection of Ngiyambaa has also been achieved in a practical way: Tamsin Donaldson’s work has imbued the remnants of people of Wanggaaybuwan descent with pride in their language. Having worked on the neighbouring language, Baagandji, I know that in the 1960s members of the older generation of Wanggaaybuwan — the only ones who have real competence in the language — actually ‘planted’ in the bush rather than admit their knowledge, whereas now they speak happily amongst themselves and are even willing to let members of the younger generation listen and try to learn. The texts (Appendix A) and the songs (Appendix B) are an important element of this description ‘from within’. The traditional stories, for example ‘dhwuwi, the hairy wanda’ and ‘wa:way, river-maker’ represent at least a fragment of what the extensive traditional literature in Ngiyambaa once was, while the recent stories such as ‘a pig that wasn’t’ lets us share in the life and the humour of the Wanggaaybuwan.

The Ngiyambaa grammar, though well organised and carefully thought out, does not attempt to squeeze Ngiyambaa into a fixed framework, a tendency that makes some linguistic work so dull and monotonous to both technical and lay readers. Tamsin Donaldson’s grammar uses those aspects of modern linguistics that are most apt to
describe Ngiyambaa, and she pays particular attention to those characteristics that single out Ngiyambaa from other Australian languages.

In the phonology one of the most interesting features is the series of sequences of vowel — glide — vowel, such as -ayi- usually pronounced [e:] and -awu- usually pronounced [o:]. At first glance one might feel tempted to think that this transcription obscures what is really there — the language is full of 'e' and 'o' sounds, yet none appear in the transcription. In fact from the practical point of view the old transcriptions Wongaibon and the spelling of place-names such as Girilambone 'full of stars' seem to give a marginally better impression of the actual pronunciation than -buwan. Even a linguist — who had obviously failed to read section 2.4.3 carefully — has actually been heard to pronounce [waya:y buwan] instead of [wana:y bwa:n]. Nevertheless I cannot see any solution to the problem better than the one adopted in this book: it is in fact the only solution that is linguistically justifiable. Furthermore, the few literate people who do know some Ngiyambaa have never had the slightest difficulty reading the transcription correctly and it is after all for them and for their descendants that the book will hold an even greater significance than for the general public.

Morphology and syntax are on the whole treated together in this book because the most interesting features of both are inextricably interwoven. This is of significance particularly in the discussion of the complex system of compound verb roots. One of the most difficult aspects of Ngiyambaa grammar is the array of 'implicative' and aspectual suffixes. Only the suffixes referring to time were previously known for central New South Wales languages, i.e. different verbal suffixes implying that an action took place in the morning, the afternoon, all day or all night. Tamsin Donaldson has been able to analyse the finest nuances of Ngiyambaa expression, being able to sense the implication of suffixes that convey intricate and to the outsider unexpected shades of meaning. She discusses for instances verbal suffixes which show that an action was undertaken 'to get even', 'of necessity' and 'in a group'. This is of importance from the general linguistic point of view as an example of extreme focussing of all kinds of concepts in the verb, but it also gives most valuable insights into modes of expression and the corresponding modes of thought and social behaviour. Fortunately Tamsin Donaldson and the other Ngiyambaa speakers are now preparing a dictionary and this means that despite the centuries of almost complete neglect we will have the good fortune of getting a first rate record of the major language of northern central New South Wales. This will enhance knowledge of the other languages of this group, Wayilwan, and particularly the now extinct Wiradjuri which once covered such a large part of New South Wales. The work is a major contribution to the study of Aboriginal languages.

In such an outstanding work there is little to criticise. In the introduction it might have been good to mention John King ‘Tap’ of Dareton, and Edie Kennedy of Ivanhoe, the only first-class speakers who permanently live away from the Murrin Bridge community. A serious major problem is the price of the book, which at $55 is far beyond the reach of many younger Wangaaybuwan and other interested people who would love to own it.

LUISE A. HERCUS  AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY


This is one of those books which become landmarks, if not watersheds, in the history of a scholarly pursuit. Basically a summary of R.M.W. Dixon’s own encyclopaedic grasp of Australian (Aboriginal) linguistics, it presents a unique synthesis and distillation
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of the recording and analysis of Australian languages since 1770, and introduces many new hypotheses. Aimed at three main audiences — the general reader, the general linguist, and the student of Australian languages — the book reflects Dixon's prodigious ability to engage the mind of the non-specialist in an encounter with a difficult subject.

It is perhaps inevitable that someone writing such an overview arouses the pedantic ire of specialist readers, even if they have restricted their more dogmatic and simplistic statements to the area of their least competence. The best parts of this book are concerned with descriptive and historical linguistics. They contain much that will inform and stimulate not only general readers but specialists as well.

Dixon actually attempts not only to survey and introduce the entire field of Australian linguistics, but also to present the first detailed and copiously supported argument concerning the genetic unity and historical development of the languages. Dixon considers the latter to be the main contribution of the book (p. xiv); I agree. Some readers of Aboriginal History will take a special interest in this, especially where Dixon considers the relationships of Tasmanian and Tiwi, for example, to mainland languages, and the possibility of links with language families outside Australia (see Chapter 8). Demonstrating the genetic unity of a set of languages involves being able to reconstruct at least significant amounts of the proto-language from which they are thought to have descended through various intermediate stages, and being able to show what regular changes they have undergone. Much of the new content of this book consists of the advancing of reconstructions and other hypotheses of a historical order, interspersed mainly through Chapters 6, 7, 10, 11 and 12.

I will not give a blow-by-blow account of the book's contents — interested readers can scan the list of contents in their bookshop or library. Instead let us examine one particular aspect of them that may be of greatest interest to the anthropologists, archaeologists and historians of Aboriginal society who may be the principal readers of this august journal. I refer to Dixon's exposition of the role of language in the social and cultural life of Aboriginal people.

This exposition is largely contained in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. Chapter 2, 'Tribe and language', deals with the relevance of linguistic variation to Aboriginal society, or rather to a set of aspects of that society. This set is presented as an ordered, but unstructured or non-integrated, string of social institutions of the kind that commonly receive titles (nouns) or other marking (e.g. in pronouns) in Aboriginal languages. Thus we hear of sections, moieties, subsections, totems, 'tribes'; curiously, semi-moieties do not rate a mention but appear to have been identified with sections (p. 25). This discussion reveals little vision of the society as such, few unifying principles on which to ground and rationalise — or even poetically unify, in the Stannerian manner — the seemingly gratuitous paraphernalia of social categories and distinctions. This is all the more surprising, in a sense, when one reflects that Dixon frequently treats ethnically defined categories as if they were the sociological constructs of an anthropological analysis: for Aborigines do, after all, have a vision of their own society. Dixon's Aborigines tend to lack flesh and blood, coming together under the ethnic cement of linguistic unity in annual tribal hoots to perform their intricacies, but seemingly rather like a band of Morris dancers in Whyalla, in the innocence of entertainment and with the rootlessness of official 'culture'. The simplicity of Dixon's exposition of Aboriginal cultural life mocks statements such as this: 'In terms of social organisation, however, it is Europeans who appear to be primitive by comparison with Aboriginal Australians...' (p. 6). Perhaps all comparisons are odious, although we make and act on them hourly. But how does one compare whole societies? Or bits of them? Refugees vote with their feet on such matters. Academics may enjoy the luxury of setting Aranda kinship against the Toongabbie Leagues Club, but I know of none who have become permanent members of Aboriginal society.

It is clear from Chapter 2, and especially from Chapter 3, that the features of Aboriginal cultural life which most elicit Dixon's interest are those features formally manifested in language, and which are therefore necessary explanatory elements in
grammatical or phonological descriptions. Ultimately, the relevance of a survey of ‘avoidance styles’ (Chapter 3.3) is, from this point of view, their contribution to semantic theory rather than their elucidation of the ‘principles out of which social relationships, in their interactional aspect, are constructed’ (Brown and Levinson 1979:60). Thus we have an exposition of an elaborate form of hyponymy known by Dixon as ‘mother-in-law language’; yet without an ethnographic (i.e. not simply an informant’s) account of how such a device is manipulated in conversation we do not have an etiquette so much as a highly interesting pocket dictionary of generics. Overt lexical manifestations of this kind are readily identified and investigated from a socially external standpoint, while other devices of equal interest, such as the sliding scale of vulgarity in humour, are harder to isolate and often can only be adequately ‘studied’ as the ethnographer acquires them as part of his or her own competence.

While Chapter 3 is essentially a pre-structural-functionalist collection of customs, Chapter 4 provides a contemporary account of Aboriginal English, the role of language in Aboriginal community cohesion and disintegration, and the bilingual education programme. There is a fascinating account of the origins of aspects of present-day Aboriginal English in eighteenth-century New South Wales. But I think Dixon over-emphasises the influence of language loss on the decline of sociality among Aborigines. In 4.2 he effectively writes off the cultural future of about half the relevant population when he writes:

Many tribes have completely disappeared; there are others that retain a considerable population but have quite lost their language — largely as a result of the dormitory system [?] — and must be indistinguishably assimilated into white society, almost inevitably at the lowest level. Their remaining sense of ‘Aboriginality’ depends to a large degree on a few linguistic shibboleths . . . (query and italics added).

In 1972, announcing plans for bilingual programmes in the Northern Territory, the Sydney Morning Herald supplied an apt headline — ABORIGINAL CHILDREN TO KEEP OWN DIALECTS; they could have added that only in this way could they hope in the long term to keep their own culture, to retain any sense of “Aboriginality”. As von Sturmer (1973) has pointed out, this is rather like saying that the survival of Italian culture depends on the continuance of spaghetti.

The greater (linguistic) part of this work is a highly scholarly edifice of summation, survey, and generalisation, the creation of a body of knowledge from a body of facts. It now gives us a linguistic counterpart to the set of classic texts which include Elkin on traditional society and Mulvaney on prehistory in Australia. With regular updating and revision, it should enjoy a much deserved success for many decades to come.

References


PETER SUTTON

ADELAIDE
We do not normally publish correspondence relating to reviews, nor encourage such debates. However in this case the reviewer suggested that the author might wish to write a ‘rejoinder’ or some reply to the review. So we publish Dixon’s comments, sent in a letter to the Review Editor:

I don’t like replies to reviews but I would like to make just one point, as follows: I would question Sutton’s suggestion (after von Sturmer) that saying the survival of Aboriginal culture depends in large measure on the continued use of Aboriginal languages is rather like saying that the survival of Italian culture depends on the continuance of spaghetti.

Surely saying that the survival of Aboriginal culture depends on the continued use of Aboriginal languages is like saying that the survival of Italian culture depends on the continued use of Italian. If anyone were to suggest that the survival of Aboriginal culture depended on the eating of witchetty grubs then this would be like saying that the survival of Italian culture depends on the eating of spaghetti.

R.M.W. DIXON
AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY


The photogenic qualities of Aborigines and of the wilder areas of Australia make this book a feast to the eye, since every page has one or more magnificent coloured photographs. In addition, it has a thoughtful text, with a few mistakes evident to the specialist but perhaps excusable in view of the considerable knowledge of Aboriginal culture to be gained from it. It reveals to the layman the richness, beauty and variety of Aboriginal culture as it was in the past and as it persists in some areas today, a matter for pride for all Aborigines, not only for its material content but also for its splendid body of beliefs and myths. The myths come from all over the continent, some from vanished people of the south-east and south-west, even though the photographs of living people are from the north and west. Australian dreaming should enlighten those who still think of Aboriginal culture as meagre in content and degraded in quality.

The illustrations show not only the people themselves but also their art, their craft, their daily activities of hunting, gathering, tool-making, painting and carving, and the country which means so much to them, with its rocks and mountains, its seas and deserts, and the wild animals and birds that dwell there. The art includes rock engraving, cave and bark painting, carving and decorating figures, as well as music-making, dancing and body decoration.

A sad comment is that the book presents a somewhat idealised picture compared with the real living conditions of most Aborigines today. An interesting contrast would be revealed by a companion volume containing pictures of city slums and town reserves where so many Aborigines perforce live. Such a volume could not conceal the miserable conditions, but might be able to capture what Australian dreaming cannot do — the abiding warmth and personal support that still exists in even the poorest Aboriginal community.

ISOBEL WHITE
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In Lords of the ring Dr Peter Corris provides fight fans with an historical account of prize-fighting in Australia — from the first recorded bare-knuckle contest of 1814 to modern day boxing promotions of the 'Rocky arvo' kind held in February 1979. From his researches Corris has put 'flesh on the bones' in just sufficient quantity to create the atmosphere of smoke, blood and sweat; ingredients which have been an inescapable part of boxing for generations. Corris' book should have wide appeal to those who wish to reminisce or learn more from the factual biographies of the boxing greats of yesteryear.

The sociologist, interested in sub-culture development, will also find the book appealing. It was fluctuating economic factors during the first half of the twentieth century which, Corris believes, maintained the steady flow of boxing talent and the fans who supported particular idols. The boxing tents, a familiar sight at showgrounds and which Jimmy Sharman helped make popular, provide the main recruiting source. From the boxing tents, the link between country and city, most fighters graduated to the preliminary bouts the stadiums scheduled, and then on to feature in main attractions. Money was important to both boxer and promoter. The exploitation of their boxers by promoters, entrepreneurs and handlers is not shirked by Corris who 'pulls no punches' in exposing this sordid side of professional boxing where money, rather than talent, often dictated who would win or lose.

Corris forecasts the extinction of professional boxing. A softer more comfortable age, together with '... widespread education, greater social mobility, large scale investment in other sports and a growth of other forms of entertainment' (p.188), are the reasons given for declining interest. Could Australia's present high unemployment provide the re-birth professional boxing so desperately needs in this country? This is unlikely in an age when a first grade rugby league player has greater income earning potential than a boxer, and a much larger fan club. Boxing, whether amateur or professional, will still continue to attract its 'Fancy'.

A highlight of the book is the contribution Aboriginal fighters have made in creating Australia's boxing history. Perhaps the honour of encouraging Aborigines to participate in prize-fighting is due to John 'Black' Perry. Son of a black American drummer in the 3rd Regiment of Foot and a Jamaican woman, Perry is the first recorded coloured person to have fought professionally in Australia. His ability proved no match for the local talent and when no one was prepared to accept his challenges he turned to handling fighters. His protegé, 'Perry's Pet', a part Aboriginal, beat Sam Bishop in eight rounds of bare-knuckle fighting in June 1850. Other Aboriginal fighters to emerge at this stage were Yellow Johnny and Yellow Jemmy, both part Aboriginal and a fullblood, Black Billy, alias 'Young Sambo'. One of the most successful Aboriginal fighters in the 1850s was Harry Sellers who gave exhibition bouts on the goldfields following his win over Jack Bailey in 1859.

Corris informs us that the first Aboriginal to hold an Australian title was Jerry Jerome, who became middleweight champion in 1913. He graduated from the boxing tent to stadium fighting in 1907 at the age of thirty-three!

Thereafter, Aboriginal boxers featured regularly between the two World Wars. Such fighters as Irwin 'Tiger' Williams, whose ankle weakness limited him to four round bouts; Alby Roberts, a tough welterweight, and Merv Blandon, who won the bantamweight title in 1993. The 1930s saw the rise of Ron Richards, a part Aboriginal, who many consider to have been one of the best professional fighters Australia produced. Despite his boxing skill, which enabled Richards to win titles in three divisions and the Empire middleweight title, he died penniless in 1967, a victim of poor financial management, drink and gambling. Similar fortune befell the Queensland Aboriginal 'Elley' Bennett and the part Aboriginal Jack Hassen. When Dave Sands, the holder of the Australian middle, light heavyweight and heavyweight titles and the Empire middleweight title,
died in a truck accident in 1952 he, like Jerome, was penniless. The experiences of these Aboriginal fighters add support to Corris' charges of exploitation by their connections.

In more recent times Aboriginal fighters to excel have been Lionel Rose, holder of the Australian and world bantamweight titles, Hector Thompson and Tony Mundine. But for the Aboriginal contribution much of Australia's boxing history would lack lustre.

Corris' book will complement others which trace particular facets of Australia's historical development. One is left wondering if the timing of the book's publication is a trifle early. With Australia's Bicentenary planned for 1988 the book will make a useful contribution. Indeed it will, in the boxing vernacular, 'go a round for a pound'.

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In Portraits of "the Whiteman" Basso documents one type of Western Apache verbal play which deals with the Apache vision of 'the Whiteman'. He also offers an interpretive framework for this kind of joking.

The book has a foreword by Dell Hymes, five chapters, an appendix of a number of joking performances, notes and references. Chapter 1 outlines Indian models of 'the Whiteman'; Chapter 2 sketches the historical background and the current local situation. Chapters 3 and 4 are devoted to interpreting the jokes. Chapter 3 presents a few jokes and proposes answers to why they are funny. Chapter 4 places joking behaviour within the context of Western Apache society. Chapter 5 considers change and its effect on joking themes. Through the book cartoons provide a graphic counterpart to the verbal joking described by Basso.

Basso's interpretive framework, according to the blurb, 'draws on current theory in symbolic anthropology, sociolinguistics, and the dramaturgical model of human communication developed by Erving Goffman'. More specifically, Basso develops the notion of a primary text, actual observed non-joking behaviour of white men which is used as raw material, from which joking performances are constructed. Through the two principles of contrast and distortion (pp 44-5) the primary text is transformed into a secondary text which is a kind of rough facsimile of the primary text. I find the notion of primary text rather vague. No primary texts are actually presented in the book and it is difficult to see just what such text would contain. Surely they cannot be perfect, undistorted renditions of chunks of Apache life? This would be a tall order even if one knew how or where to segment 'bits of life'. Presumably the ethnographer would have to reconstruct the primary text by looking at what actually is a text (whether as oral literature or as a transcription) viz. the secondary text. In fact Basso may be merely telling us that the Western Apache draw on everyday experience for their jokes.

It is a pity that so much space is devoted to the interpretive framework. Hymes in the foreword rightly remarks that 'the portraits speak for themselves'. The detailed commentary (pp 48-55) on a single text is for me the most illuminating part of the book but does not draw its force so much from the interpretive framework as from Basso's thorough ethnographic knowledge of the Western Apache. In presenting the texts and in descriptive accounts (e.g. Chapter 2) Basso is at his best. Elsewhere the prose can be unnecessarily burdened with jargon, for example: 'Concomitantly the joker confers a joking identity upon the butt, imputing to the latter membership in a status-role category that is structurally implicated by the fore-grounded category in which the joker has placed himself' (pp. 40-41). For instance, the joker is a subordinate and the butt is the boss; in the joke, the boss becomes an underling and the joker, the boss. Simple enough?
Basso's achievement should not be underestimated however. Imitations of Anglo-Americans occurred relatively infrequently, especially in comparison with other forms of verbal play. Over a ten year period Basso witnessed only 12 performances and gathered reports on only 27 more, stopping when one of his consultants said 'Stop, you've bothered it too much already' (p. xix). Only after nineteen months fieldwork did Basso witness a joking performance. Not surprisingly people are loath to engage in verbal play in front of a whiteman when that verbal play highlights the shortcomings of whites. The ethnographer needs the trust of the local people formed from long and close association and considerable fluency in their wider context. The Western Apache 'whiteman' jokes are in a special joking register of English, but the explanation of these jokes and the native categories used to refer to whitemen are of course only accessible through the Western Apache language.

Portraits of "The Whiteman" points to a neglected area of Aboriginal life. There have been many opportunities in Australia for Aborigines to observe and satirise the behaviour of Europeans. Since first contact Aborigines have coexisted with Europeans with varying degrees of intimacy: as domestic servants in European homes, as employees in cattle and other industries, as clients to missionaries and government officials, as part of the frontier. In Australia many researchers must have at least had an inkling that jokes were made about whitemen but so far no-one has documented them. Researchers on Aborigines will face similar problems to Basso. Aborigines may be reluctant to let Europeans in on the joke; especially when they are the butt. European investigators will need a good sense of humour, a long acquaintance with the people, a thorough knowledge of their language and know when to stop! Perhaps it would be easier for the documentation of such jokes to be undertaken by Aboriginal researchers.

More attention might have been focussed on the status and function of the joker in Western Apache society. In at least one Aboriginal society, the Murinbata (Murrinhpatha), attitudes to the joker are ambivalent: he is valued because he is 'always making people laugh' but there are some reservations because the ideal in this society is the 'quiet man' with whom the joker is explicitly contrasted. The joker's status is sufficiently recognised that there is a special term in Murinbata for this category of person, but one suspects that the joker can never achieve the universal respect given to the 'quiet man'. It would be interesting to know (in Aboriginal or any other society) how individuals become jokers, whether they have a special function in ceremonial life, whether individuals cease to be jokers after a period, and similar questions.

Of particular relevance to Aboriginal history is the changing nature of jokes about Europeans. Basso stresses that Western Apache jokes are not merely acting out a set of fixed stereotypes but are consistently innovative and contemporary. A team of physicians came to the Western Apache community during Basso's fieldwork to eradicate diarrhoea in infants and to 'educate mothers in the proper techniques of breast feeding'! They soon earned the rather unflattering title of 'those who play with babies' shit' and became the subject of joking imitations. Jokers produce new conceptions of 'the Whiteman' and to that extent function as active agents of cultural change. It is a pity that researchers had not recorded Aboriginal jokes about Europeans from first contact but in the future recording of such jokes on a regular and widespread basis will provide an inside view of the changing visions of the European in Aboriginal society.

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BOOK NOTES

(Inclusion here does not preclude review in future issues)

This volume gives a survey of archaeological approaches to reconstructing the diversity of human life and activities in the Sydney region since the late Pleistocene. Its chapters cover historic and prehistoric archaeology, discussing both the reconstructed picture and the methods used to acquire it.

A series of lectures on the Aborigines and Australian cultural history, in which Professor Smith develops his theme of the 'spectre of Truganini' haunting Australian culture from the earliest days of settlement.

The revised edition of this biography (originally published in 1965 as Pastor Doug) is now available in a paper-back edition.

A survey of Leichhardt's exploration and 'the mystery' of his last expedition. Plates and maps add to the interest and there are many references to Aboriginal contacts with the explorer and those who searched for him.

The text and 55 tables (including statistics on housing, income, health and education) provide up-to-date information on a Victorian community. The author explains that her intention is to make available the data to the people who provided it.

An excellent survey of Aboriginal culture, past and present, in the various regions of New South Wales, presenting the response to environmental diversity from the desert plains of the west to the snow fields of the southern uplands. The chapters cover the life styles of the various regions, as well as general themes such as technology, social organisation, tribal divisions, and rock art. Preservation and conservation questions are canvassed, with discussion of legislation, and also the role of local Aboriginal communities in this and in site recording programmes.

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The Heritage Unit of the South Australian Department of the Environment produced in mid-1981 several publications relating to its recording programme in the Flinders Ranges in association with local communities. *Minerawuta — Ram Paddock Gate* is a 24 page booklet with many illustrations. It presents the results of a site survey and collection of oral history from the elders of the Adnjamathanha community relating to the settlement of Ram Paddock Gate from 1920 to 1929.

*The push from the bush; a bulletin of social history devoted to the year of grace 1888,* (9), July 1981.
These bulletins of the Australia 1788-1988 Bicentennial History project each contain several articles on Aboriginal history. Free copies and information on the project may be obtained from Dr S.G. Foster, Assistant General Editor, Australia 1788-1988, c/o History, R.S.S.S., Australian National University. P.O. Box 4, Canberra, A.C.T. 2600.

*Social Alternatives,* 2 (2), August 1981. *Special Issue: Black Alternatives in Australia.* Edited by Christopher Anderson and David S. Trigger. Department of External Studies, University of Queensland, St. Lucia. $2.75.
Twenty articles, poems and short stories, plus book reviews, provide useful coverage of contemporary Aboriginal history in Australia.

Various authors discuss issues in the methodology of oral history and pay tribute to the pioneering work of Jan Vansina.

A new interdisciplinary journal publishing material on native people and native affairs in Canada and other countries. 'Native' is the term preferred by the indigenous Inuit (Eskimo) and Indian people of Canada, and the editors invite contributions in English, French, or 'any of the native languages of Canada'. As well as original articles, the journal includes special sections. In this issue, 'Discussion and debate' is focussed on land claims research. Other sections on 'Policy', and 'Native Studies' programs in Canadian universities, as well as book reviews, have considerable relevance for researchers in Aboriginal history.

This volume of case studies of women's economic, social and political roles in twelve societies is devoted to analysing the changes which followed European colonization. Detailed studies of specific societies or communities in North and South America, Africa and the Pacific (including Diane Bell's account of marriage choices in Central Australia) challenge the timeless and static depiction of the past in much anthropological
literature. The editors' introduction, entitled 'Women and anthropology: conceptual problems', provides a useful discussion of ethnocentrism, gender bias and the hazards of an ahistorical approach to the study of other societies.

This anthropological analysis of decision-making by Canadian politicians and public servants focusses on the formulation of a radical new policy expressed in a 1969 White Paper. The negative response of Indians and the public forced the Trudeau government to repudiate the policy, and admit that the history of Indian land rights had relevance for the present. Weaver was given access to government documents, and interviewed the people who played a major role in formulating the disputed policy. Her comments on the 'liberal' ideology underlying policies aimed at assimilation and her analysis of political strategies in the policy-making process should interest researchers studying the history of Australian Aboriginal administration.

This superbly illustrated volume by 'the Book Builders of 'Ksan' could be a model for Australian Aboriginal communities wishing to publish a historical record of some aspect of their past. Individual authors are not named. This history is based on consensus agreement about the validity of oral texts recorded by the elders of one community of the Tsimshian tribe of northern British Columbia, Canada, together with archaeological and documentary evidence. When the elders' recollections do not agree, the conflicting evidence is noted. The Book Builders provide a meticulous description of past and present usage, giving details of the timing and transformation (including incorporation into their language) of innovations acquired from Russian and British visitors to their homeland. This history of food traditions demonstrates the continuity of their heritage. The photographs of food preparation show the people of today using the skills of past and present in their normal domestic routines. The people of 'Ksan have always used all the resources of their environment; thus their book tells how to use modern freezing and canning techniques, as well as the older methods of drying and pit storage, to preserve the bounty of their land. Their recipes utilize innumerable varieties of fish and shellfish. 'Ksan the past is not dead, and innovation is not evidence of assimilation. At 'Ksan the flavours of past and present mingle. Nearly a century ago the anthropologist Franz Boas began to write about the indigenous cultures of the Northwest Coast; the vitality of one of these cultures is exemplified in this second production by the Book Builders of 'Ksan.