
When I was invited to consider reviewing this new book by Nancy Williams I immediately said 'yes' as I was very interested in obtaining a copy to read. Unfortunately, the process of ordering Australian scholarly books (whether actually printed in Australia as this one is or in Hong Kong) is a frustratingly long and arduous one from Canada. Sadly, the reverse is also true. As Two laws was not yet available when I left Australia in 1987, this invitation seemed like a perfect solution to the problem of acquiring the book expeditiously. I had conveniently forgotten, however, the dilemma that it would create for me to serve as its reviewer.

I approach this official review with triple trepidation. I have met the author on various occasions over the last six years, which has left me an admirer of her work and expertise such that I can not be true objective in my comments. Secondly, my contact with the Yolngu people of the Gove Peninsula has been almost non-existent. Finally, I am not a trained anthropologist but a lawyer who is very interested in the traditional laws of indigenous peoples as well as the relationship between common-law-based legal systems, imported through colonisation by what have subsequently become majority societies, and the aboriginal populations in these countries. To this list could be added the not inconsequential fact that I am also a foreigner. With these warnings to the reader clearly made apparent, let me offer my assessment and comments.

Two laws is a beautifully presented, fascinating, and important book indeed. It has been published with loving care by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, for which they deserve to be commended. The Institute has used excellent quality paper, clean type, good binding, and a thorough index and list of references to produce what is becoming particularly rare these days in scholarly works - a relatively inexpensive high quality hard cover book. In addition, it appears to be free completely of typographical errors. This level of attention is maintained right down to the paper cover, for which Dr Williams commissioned a painting from two Yolngu artists specifically to capture the essence of 'two laws' from their perspective.

The substance of this book is derived from the author's doctoral thesis and her field research in the rather well-known Yirrkala Mission in north-eastern Arnhem Land from 1969 to 1970. Dr Williams was extremely lucky as an anthropologist in many respects. She was fortunate in selecting as the community for her research the one that has probably been most influential in the development of the Aboriginal land rights struggle of the last two decades as well as in raising prospects for change in the Australian justice system. She was further blessed by being well received by the Yolngu living at Yirrkala generally. In addition, the kin position assigned to her was as sister to the President of the Village Council. Not only did this provide her with an excellent opportunity to observe the decision-making process within the Western-style governmental regime that had been constructed for this community by the Synod of the North Australia District of the Methodist Church, but her position was further enhanced by being appointed Assistant Secretary to the Council. The Village Council President, Roy Dadaynga Marika, is also a leader of the clan that 'owns' the land on which the community is situated as well as a very strong and highly regarded leader throughout the region, thereby enabling Dr Williams to
observe far more than the 'official' structure. Mr Marika continues to be recognised by white Australia as a prominent Aboriginal leader as witnessed by his investiture last year as a Member of the Order of the British Empire by the Queen. One of her first teachers was Galarrwuy Yunupingu, later the long-serving Chairman of the Northern Land Council.

Finally, Dr Williams happened to be present during a most opportune time period for an anthropologist. Until a year before her arrival, the only non-Aborigines living on the Gove Peninsula were a few missionaries. This was to change rapidly as by the end of 1969 some 1200 construction workers were present building the bauxite mine at Nhulunbuy for Nabalco, 60 Europeans were at a satellite tracking station twenty-five kilometres away and resident school teachers had arrived. These sudden influxes naturally brought significant changes as the Nabalco construction site provided access to liquor through its canteen, a few jobs for Yolngu men, a reason to have vehicles, an increase in alcohol-related offences, a threat to Aboriginal dominance of the region, and a challenge to the control over and responsibility for the land by the Yolngu. The Yolngu were forced to respond and they did in a way that has sent shock waves throughout Australia ever since. They went to court in May of 1970 to assert that they were the 'owners' of the land from a Western perspective in the sense that no one could use, alter or develop the land without their express consent and in accordance with Yolngu law. Mr Justice Blackburn of the Northern Territory Supreme Court rejected this claim in April of 1971, in the famous Gove Land Rights Case (Milirrpum and Others v. Nabalco Pty Ltd and Commonwealth of Australia, [1971] 17 Federal Law Reports 171). Although he did decide that the Yolngu had a system of law that could be generally recognised by the common law, he concluded that the Yolngu’s relationship to land did not constitute a property interest that could be protected by it. He further concluded that the doctrine of Aboriginal title did not exist in Australia as it did in New Zealand, Canada, the USA and other common-law jurisdictions. Unfortunately, Dr Williams had left Yirrkala by the time Mr Justice Blackburn’s decision was rendered so that Two laws does not discuss its immediate aftermath for the Yolngu. Its impact upon Australia generally is well known since it served as a seminal event in the expanding land rights struggle by helping to trigger the change in attitude in Parliament, as well as among many white Australians, culminating in the initiatives of the Whitlam government and the passage of the Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act under Malcolm Fraser. Somewhat surprisingly, Dr Williams pays relatively scant attention to the preparations for trial. Nevertheless, anyone who is interested in the background to the case and the events going on in Yirrkala at that time will find Two laws a fascinating account, as well as her other recent book The Yolngn and their land: a system of land tenure and the fight for its recognition (1986).

Dr Williams commences her study by introducing the reader to the context by briefly describing the history of north-eastern Arnhem Land since the time of contact, the Australian legal structure, the environment, the limited literature that existed on dispute settlement among Aborigines at the time of her study, and her own research objectives. Chapter 1 maintains this thrust but turns its attention specifically to Yirrkala and the Yolngu by describing the social and spatial characteristics, the relationships of the Yolngu with the missionaries and other non-Aborigines, the economic organisation, religious activities, and the concepts of kinship, clanship and leadership among the Yolngu.

The heart of this excellent book can be divided into two parts. The first consists of Chapters 2 to 5, which focus upon Yolngu law and procedure, while the remaining two chapters concentrate upon the relationship between Australian and Yolngu law. Dr Williams provides an exceptional investigation and analysis of the dispute settlement system and the underlying issues, so often unstated, to disputes. In doing so she demonstrates that most
previous commentators had over-simplified disputes or focused upon their explicit aspects, thereby overlooking their true nature or often misstating the reasons for the disputes. For example, several authors characterised certain conflicts among men as being over women *per se* or earlier explained them by defining women as a 'scarce commodity'. This analysis completely failed to realise the importance of women in terms of their rights to land, which they bring to their marriages. Thus, the nature of the disputes about land, power, and inheritance rights were miscast as being inspired by sexual or domestic desires.

Dr Williams is also to be congratulated for the depth of her analysis concerning the dispute resolution system of the Yolngu. She does not merely describe what might be characterised from a European vantage point as the criminal offences under Yolngu law and the sanctions for their breach, as has been most commonly done by anthropologists to date. She goes much farther than this as she explores selected aspects of non-criminal law (for example, contract, real property, natural resources and religious restrictions) while avoiding the artificial distinction that exists in most nation states through which they bifurcate their laws into criminal and civil components. Instead, Dr Williams adopts an approach more in keeping with Yolngu law by dealing with all disputes as grievances and characterising them in terms of the behavioural basis that gives rise to the complaint.

*Two laws* also describes the process through which disputes are addressed. The means for initiating a complaint are canvassed as are the motivations underlying the act that gave rise to the grievance. The discussion of the primary mechanism for settling disputes - the clan moots - and its procedures makes for fascinating reading. Each of the four phases of the moots is described in detail generally as well as within the context of a dispute over the violation of a marriage betrothal. An interesting parallel worthy of further investigation could be drawn between this Yolngu process and the moots of the Anglo-Saxons in pre-Norman England that continued to exist for more than a century after the conquest. Examining the commonalities might make it easier for non-Aboriginal Australia to relate positively to Yolngu law.

It is interesting to note that Dr Williams concludes this analysis by stressing that the process consists of *individuals* with grievances and leaders attempting to bring about satisfaction for *individuals* (her emphasis) rather than the common assertion that in small societies 'individual rights are sacrificed to maintain "social harmony" or "group survival"' (p.94). One might question this interpretation as confusing individual rights *per se* with the role of the individual in disputes. The interveners in the case examined at length all give exhortations to the 'defendants' to accept their blame and to remedy the offence for the good of the community so as to accord with Yolngu law. In this sense they seek acceptance by the individuals of adherence to the prevailing law as the vehicle to ensure protection of social harmony without concentrating upon an orientation that places the wishes (and rights) of the individual at the centre, derived from concepts of autonomous free will regardless of collective costs. This is not to suggest that the Yolngu deny free will, as it is evident in their belief 'that no person should be coerced to act or not to act' (p.105). Rather it is that this concept does not operate in isolation from responsibilities owed to others and the community as a whole as it increasingly tends to do in more so-called developed societies.

Although women are referred to in this part of the book regularly, it is usually in the context of their position within grievances regarding marriage or betrothals. The discussion, then, largely emphasises the situation of men under Yolngu law. It is unclear if the procedure, role of interveners, and the sanctions available are any different when women are the grievers. Likewise, women's law is left untouched.
The second broad component to this study is also extremely well articulated. Dr Williams provides an insightful overview of the Yolngu's response to Australian law in Chapter 6, especially concerning how the Yolngu react to the Australian justice system and its personnel, by analysing it within their own law and procedure. Therefore, she describes how the Yolngu attempt to make sense of the Australian legal regime on their own terms through their assumptions that the systems are roughly similar. This approach causes the Yolngu not to notice key differences between the two schemes (for example, that a judge is equivalent to a clan leader at a moot who only proposes sanctions but is not empowered to decide the grievance and actually order the imposition of the selected sanction). Chapter 7 describes the conflicts between the two regimes and the attempts of the Yolngu to protect their law by reducing the scope of their jurisdiction to 'little trouble' thereby leaving the police and courts to handle 'big trouble'. This action is taken unilaterally by the Yolngu and is not understood as such by most of the members of the Australian justice system. The latter do not see themselves as party to a relationship with the Yolngu in which there are reciprocal obligations. They regularly misunderstand the behaviour and expectations of the Yolngu so that they act in a manner that creates disappointment among the Yolngu, who see judges and police offices as breaching their part of these obligations. This represents in part the difficulty the Yolngu have in perceiving that Australian law is not tied tightly to community values, including even those of the majority society. Likewise it represents the lack of realisation that the justice system is currently staffed by people who do this work as a job (albeit a very important one) rather than as an integral part of their broader role as leaders of the community. One could wish that the author explored these differences in perceptions more fully as well as their resulting impacts.

Two laws represents the world from the Yolngu perspective as is evident from these two key words in the title. Although the views of the missionaries trickle through the study, as do, less frequently, the opinions of some other non-Aborigines on different matters (such as the mine), the beliefs of the Australian justice system personnel are left largely unknown. One can readily assume, however, that they do not possess the similar perspective of believing in two laws. While the police are prepared not to intervene in what they would classify as private arguments, this is likely based in many situations upon their lack of receiving an official complaint or upon the way in which the event may be characterised as non-criminal under Australian law. There is little evidence given to the reader on which to conclude that the dominant justice system is even cognisant of the existence of Yolngu law let alone prepared to recognise its rightful continuance. This is not meant to suggest that non-Aboriginal Australia is completely ignorant of Aboriginal law, as that would be to fly in the face of far too much evidence of such knowledge (for example, the Australian Law Reform Commission's Report on Aboriginal customary law, the dozens of decisions of the Northern Territory Supreme Court that take Aboriginal law into account in selecting appropriate sentences for Aboriginal offenders, the presence of various provisions in Territorial legislation that recognise customary law for certain specific and limited purposes). Nevertheless, these illustrations of acceptance are still within a context in which it is the dominant system that controls the decision as to when and what to accept. Furthermore, they identify incorporations of Aboriginal law within Australian law rather than a negotiating of separate jurisdictions in which each would operate independently. That is, they largely reflect a 'one law' approach in which selected Aboriginal customs will be given some legal weight. I only wish that Dr Williams also reported in detail upon the beliefs and reactions of the newcomers to Arnhem Land.

This superb study concludes with a ten-page afterword. This segment provides not only a home for her concluding remarks but also an opportunity to give brief glimpses to the
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reader of the changes that had occurred in Yirrkala from 1970 to 1985. This reviewer was left somewhat frustrated about the content of both components. In the former, Dr Williams raises the crucial issue of how similar the Yolngu are to other typical small-scale societies undergoing rapid colonisation and post-colonial rationalisation elsewhere. There are clearly certain common elements that can be distilled from the process of colonisation of indigenous peoples. It is only regretted that the author chose to draw comparisons exclusively with J.F. Collier's study of the Zinacantecos of Mexico as this may tend to undermine the validity of her analysis in the views of some readers.

Similarly, my mild complaint regarding her efforts to comment on what has transpired since the completion of her fieldwork in 1970 probably reflects my appreciation of the book as a whole and the desire for more. I would readily welcome a companion volume in the future (in addition to her 1986 book already mentioned), in which Dr Williams elaborated upon the changes that have transpired in the two laws over the intervening years. Let me also comment as a lawyer by encouraging efforts at articulating the general principles of the substantive fields of law of the Yolngu regarding both individual grievances and group matters.

Two laws provides a far greater sense of the breadth and sophistication of Yolngu law than is the case in the overwhelming majority of studies in legal anthropology. This is an accomplishment for which Nancy Williams can deservedly be proud. In addition, the Yolngu people can also be pleased at the way in which the story of their legal system has been told so expertly. Not only am I happy to recommend this book highly in its own right, but I also intend to hold it out as a model of how this critical subject should be pursued. What makes it even more valuable is that it is extremely well-written and accessible to the average reader: thus it deserves the broadest possible audience.

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Australia's founding fathers could never have envisaged John McCorquodale's large legal digest Aborigines and the law, for they did not contemplate ever counting the Aboriginal population (Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900). They also denied Aborigines any political power by not giving them the right to vote (Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902). They also excluded them from welfare benefits such as invalid and old age pensions, maternity benefits and child endowment. (Invalid and Old-age Persons Act 1908, Maternity Allowance Act 1912, Child Endowment Act 1941.1) Unless we are confronted with the dates of these Acts we tend to forget that until very recently our legal system blatantly discriminated against Aborigines. For example, Aborigines have been able to vote at Federal Elections only for the last twenty-seven years (Commonwealth Electoral Act 1962) and they were not counted in the census until 1967 (Constitution Alteration (Aboriginals) Act 1967).

1 This Act excluded 'Aborigines and Natives of Australia who are nomadic, or where the child is wholly or mainly dependent upon the State or Commonwealth for his support.'
1967 marks a watershed in Aboriginal Affairs, for then the referendum was passed which enabled the Commonwealth to legislate in respect of Aborigines in the States. From then onwards the entries under Acts in this digest become much more supportive of Aborigines. Indeed the first entry after the Constitution Alteration (Aboriginals) Act 1967 is the Aboriginal Enterprises (Assistance) Act 1967, which sets aside $4,650,000 'to enable persons of the Aboriginal race of Australia to engage in business enterprises that have prospects of becoming or continuing to be successful.' Then follow a series of State Grants (Aboriginal Advancement Acts) which divert millions of dollars to the States for the welfare of Aborigines. The year 1975 sees the Racial Discrimination Act. In 1976 the Commonwealth enacts even more revolutionary legislation: The Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976, 'one of the most far-reaching advances investing title to land in corporate bodies representing Aborigines'.

All this information comes from the first section of the digest called Acts. It cites most relevant legislation enacted by the Commonwealth and the States relating to Aborigines and Torres Straits Islanders. There is also some information on Pacific Islanders (Kanakas). The material is presented according to the actual order of enactment and those wishing to follow a theme, for example land rights, can consult the comprehensive index. Any Act which succeeded or modified or repealed another also contains a reference to that other, and also to any future legislation which repealed it. This makes the section particularly useful.

The section on bibliography is valuable too. It lists books, articles, reports of royal commissions and parliamentary inquiries, theses and even letters published in learned journals. McCorquodale comments on most of these.

The third section on case law is more comprehensive than the first, because McCorquodale realised that since he commenced his research the focus of legal change had shifted from the legislative arena to that of the courts. They have now become facilitators of social change 'in a way made possible and possibly not foreseen by the legislatures'. He therefore decided to give priority to updating the section on case law rather than on legislation. But he assures his readers that this will be rectified in future editions.

There have been some interesting landmark cases. For example, sensitive rules for the admission into evidence of confessions allegedly made by Aboriginal accused were laid down in R v Anunga, and the validity of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, as a lawful exercise of federal legislative power, was upheld in the High Court in Koowarta v Bjelke-Petersen. In his foreword Mr Justice Kirby draws attention to 'other cases that shine like jewels from the digest of cases in this book' (p.ix).

This part of the digest is particularly impressive. It covers more than 500 cases and includes all available Supreme Court and higher court cases, reported and unreported, that have affected Aborigines or included them as one party. Extracts are provided which illustrate attitudes, opinions or prejudices of white judicial authority to Aborigines from colonisation of Australia to the present day.

McCorquodale has annotated the cases with commendable political astuteness. For example, the student who is interested in the history of Aborigines and alcohol will discover that it was once a crime to supply alcohol to Aborigines, but that nowadays people are permitted to entice them to drink heavily. After reading Mr Justice Muirhead's recent plea to the Parliament of the Northern Territory not to permit people to foist alcohol on Aborigines, the student may well wonder if Australian society is not now engaged in a new form of genocide.

The crime dealt with in R v Steward Collin Mungkuri and Simon Nyaningu (also known as Peter Roger), which was heard in the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory in 1985, was manslaughter (p.416).
Mr Justice Muirhead said:

As usual in this depressingly frequent type of offence, the root cause is alcohol. For over 10 years sitting in this Territory, I have endeavoured to draw attention to the need for something to be done about the marketing, the regulation and supply of alcohol, particularly to our Aboriginal community, the need for detoxification units, modern treatment and rehabilitation centres. I've not been alone in this exercise but it's been entirely fruitless (p.416).

He then pointed out that as things are at present 'the courts can achieve little or nothing'. He also noted that Aboriginal councils are well aware of the problem for 'it is the Aboriginal people who almost entirely suffer its consequences (p.416).

Research undertaken by the Aboriginal Legal Service shows that in Alive Springs most serious crimes are alcohol-related. It has 39.58 per cent more outlets than any place in the Territory. Since 1983 the Aboriginal Tangentyere Council and the Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Service have been trying to persuade the Northern Territory Liquor Commission to reduce the number of take away licenses. But no notice has been taken of their pleas.

This section contains information relating to cases by year and jurisdiction. It would have been helpful to have also included an analytical table of the subject matter even though this can be discovered from the index.

McCorquodale compiled his digest on Aborigines and the Australian legal system for law students, but it will also be a useful reference work for everyone who is concerned about Aboriginal issues. It will also act as a much needed link for those who care about Aboriginal issues but are artificially separated by disciplines.

The operation of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976, and the development of both individual and corporate consciousness of 'Aboriginality', have reinforced the need for all associated with the administration of justice - judges, lawyers, police, welfare agencies, political scientists, academics, researchers or anthropologists to eliminate the divisions within and between professions and disciplines (p.xii).

In any future edition it would be worthwhile to consider the suggestions for improvement made by Mr Justice Kirby in his foreword, particularly his suggestion to include references to Aboriginal law. In the meantime the digest could be a very useful reference work for historians, for it contains within its pages the history of how Australia has used her legal system both to subordinate and liberate Aborigines.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


Smith, D.I. 'Licensed alcohol outlets and alcohol consumption in the Northern Territory', Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, 1985. MS.

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2 Smith:2.

3 Loorham:136.
Paul Wilson's central thesis in *Black death white hands* is 'that white Australians have created historical and social conditions that are violence provoking' for Aborigines. The history of race relations in Queensland is the major theme in this book. Wilson points out that 'the past must be remembered if only because the present can never really be understood without reference to it.'

Wilson draws attention to the high level of personal violence endemic in Queensland's Aboriginal communities. He notes that while killing is easily recognised as violence it also takes other forms, which are not usually recognised. He points out that while institutional violence often does not display physical force, intentionality and criminal action, it is as serious a social problem as murder. By using national as well as State statistics he shows that this type of violence is not confined to Queensland.

Wilson is particularly concerned with the violence inflicted on Queensland's Aborigines by white institutions, especially the paternalistic Queensland Department of Aboriginal Affairs. He also stresses the problems Aborigines have with other institutions: those that deal with education, employment, health, housing, and the law and its enforcement agencies. Wilson found that many Aboriginal males spend a large part of their adult lives in jail. He also found that many did not mind being in jail 'because there were few fights and few hassles'.

Wilson examines race relations in Queensland from a historical perspective as well as from the life cycle of one Aboriginal man, Alwyn Peters, who was accused of murdering his de-facto wife. He shows that Queensland created conditions which foster aggression in Aboriginal communities and particularly in the one into which Peters' was born. He maintains that we cannot divorce the history of dispossession, sense of hopelessness and futility that now exists among Aborigines from the acts that they perpetrate on one another.

The statistics of homicide and assault rates in these communities are frightening. They were obtained by the Public Defender, who was acting for Alwyn Peters, because the Queensland government does not keep any statistics on Aborigines. The homicide rate from 17 Aboriginal communities studied was found to be 39.6 per 100,000. This is ten times the national and State average. He points out that this rate is far higher than for American crime capitals. It was also found that there is a huge hidden assault rate on Aboriginal reserves of 226.05 per 100,000 compared with a Queensland figure of 43.85. This means that the hidden assault rate is probably 10-15 times the State or national figure. Research showed that the Alwyn Peter's type case was very common. Dossiers and transcripts revealed numerous cases of murder, manslaughter, and serious assaults. The figures indicate that violence and death are such common occurrences in Queensland's Aboriginal communities 'that every family, directly or indirectly, suffers the consequences of murder or serious assault'.

Anthropological research reported by Wilson showed there were two district clusters of reserves in Queensland. One cluster had a high rate of violence, while the other was relatively low (although the latter rate was high by white Australian standards). On high violence reserves 'alcohol was legally available; they had only low to medium levels of traditional culture; they had relatively high populations; most importantly they were
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reserves that had received displaced Aborigines from other areas'. Reserves with a lower incidence of violence exhibited nearly the reverse pattern. On these alcohol was not legally available; relatively high levels of traditional culture survived; they were generally isolated from white influence; they were not the receivers of people forced from their traditional areas.

Most of those who killed or assaulted others were extremely poor; they had a low level of education; they lived in overcrowded conditions; they had a history of ill health. This was also true of Alwyn Peters, who was born into a culture of violence. His parents were forced from their traditional homeland at Marpoon and resettled at Weipa South, where they had to live with other Aborigines and Torres Straits Islanders from whom traditionally they had kept their distance. Fights often broke out between these groups. Alwyn Peters associated his childhood and teenage years 'with fights, battles and vendettas in which knives and chains were used by opposing sides'. Throughout his childhood he saw his parents fight each other with fists and feet; he was often beaten by his father; he witnessed brawls at the canteen and soon realised 'that violence was the method most people used in Weipa South to exert control and to settle disputes'.

Wilson does not minimise the role that alcohol plays in accentuating violent behavior, but points out that whereas the judiciary is apt to see drunkenness as the major cause of Aboriginal violent crime, heavy drinking patterns have multiple causes. If Aborigines are to overcome alcoholism they need to have a sense of self worth and community esteem. As Queensland's Aboriginal communities are tightly controlled by white bureaucrats the prospects of their attaining this are at the moment bleak.

Wilson's chapter on self-mutilation throws light on a problem that is hushed up by white society - the high suicide rate of young males, most of whom appear in official statistics as accidental deaths. Aborigines call this phenomenon 'the black death'. Wilson shows that acts of self-mutilation by young males are common occurrences. He observes that while on the surface many of the acts may not appear to be self-destructive 'on closer examination they have an almost suicidal overtone to them'.

Wilson notes that homelessness, paternalism and powerlessness have crippled individual Aborigines and their communities for from four to eight generations. He points out that there are no universal panaceas, but notes that an inalienable title to their reserves would be an important step in the right direction. Wilson vents most of his wrath on the Queensland government and lets off very lightly the Federal government, which has the power to introduce national land rights. It would greatly improve the book if the history of land rights was a more prominent theme.

The book also contains a few pages on Palm Island. This needs to be fleshed out. Anyone can do this by reading Bill Rosser's deeply disturbing account *This is Palm Island*.

On the cover of *Black death white hands* is written 'revised edition'. Very little revision appears to have been done since the book was first published in 1982. But even if the book were up to date the story would be the same. Now that the white community is concerned over the huge number of Aboriginal deaths in custody *Black death white hands* is a timely reminder that this problem is multi-faceted and has its origins in our history.

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This is an interesting collection of essays, all with something to contribute to current discussions of black literatures, several of them of excellent quality. A number of the essays, including those of Watego, Headon, Muecke, Shoemaker, James and Sykes, concern themselves directly with Australian Aboriginal writing. Kunene writes about a South African Xhosa novel and its author's self-translation, Hudson looks at the connections between Black American art and politics during the 1960s, while Elder examines Ed Bullins' conscious use of elements of traditional African ritual in his Black American dramas. James compares Aboriginal, Maori and Black American writing 'through the relationship these literary works have with the cultural resources of black and white society'.

The collection as a whole identifies a number of key issues in the on-going debate about the nature and identity of black writing. The volume's title "Connections" points to one of them, the question of whether black writing from around the world has a recognisable identity of a literary and aesthetic nature as well as a recognisable community of purpose, which is variously defined in this volume as 'protest moving ... toward sophisticated cultural self-criticism' (p.5), 'consciousness raising' aimed at both black and white society (p.22) and so 'priming the black individual for a regeneration of the self' - and - of black writers, - 'the public sounds of our community weeping' (p.112). This issue was a particularly pressing one at the Conference on Black Literatures from which all the papers derive. It was held at the University of Queensland in June 1986 and, as Nelson, the volume's editor asserts 'the purpose of this anthology is to keep ... alive ... that ... creative dialogue among the various black people at the conference'.

The volume addresses a number of other hard questions about black literature, exemplified from diverse texts. If black literature aims to some large extent to be functional in the sense of politically and socially committed to certain aims, how should it be evaluated, and by whom? Are Western literary standards irrelevant and can we speak meaningfully of 'an aesthetics of resistance'? Can black writers construct genres, rhetorical techniques and levels of discourse that are not generated by the very mainstream white cultural norms they seek to escape or subvert? If they use the mainstream white language - in most of these cases English - how can they escape its cognitive toils? What is the future of writing in the various creoles many black artists speak?

All these questions and more press on some of the fundamental assumptions of Western literary culture. What is literature anyway? Does it include the 'Aboriginal contact literature' and oral histories analysed by David Headon as well as the short stories of Colin Johnson, Jack Davis and Archie Weller that Adam Shoemaker writes about? And what of oral literature, that contradiction in terms which formed and still often forms the basis of the traditional non-English language performing arts that the black writers in English increasingly look to as a possible source of a new and distinctive black aesthetic and literary forms?

And here we come to a crucial problem for Australian Aboriginal writing, as is made clear in different ways in the essays of Headon, Muecke and James. In the last named writer's essay, which he entitles 'Black literature in the Pacific: the spider and the bee', he uses a Swiftian distinction between the ancients and the moderns to position, respectively, Black American, Australian Aboriginal and Maori writing according to their ability to utilise their traditional cultural bases. I think James is right when he argues that Aboriginal writers are worst off when it comes to the assistance they have obtained from traditional verbal arts. There are many and complex reasons for this in addition to those James adduces,
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which are the inadequacy and cultural biases of translated texts, the decimation of traditional Aboriginal societies in many parts of Australia and the continuing alienation of Aborigines in the metropolis. One of the fundamental reasons, I suspect, is that unlike Maori culture, Aboriginal culture has always been pluralist: it speaks in many languages for many small cultural groups, so there is no one Aboriginal language that Aboriginal people - or any other - can learn and write in. Aboriginal oral arts were fundamentally religious and esoteric. Consequently their forms of expression were and still are likewise. They do not yield their skills or their secrets easily to any inquirer, whatever her or his primary cultural affiliation.

Two contributors to this volume in particular, Muecke and Kunene, address a further and crucial point that follows from that made in the last paragraph. To what extent can texts embedded in a culture whose values are unknown to or ignored by the dominant society that consumes translations of them ever translate in a way that does not do violence to the original productions? Muecke's answer I find unhelpful, but perhaps as a 'realist ethnographer' I have the blindness of a folly that still sees it as important for Aborigines and others to keep trying to document their oral performances, however imperfectly. In some ways, I found Daniel Kunene's article on A.C. Jordan's Xhosa novel Ingqumbo and its translation, which he worked at through much of his life, the most interesting essay in the collection. Here Kunene explores Jordan's attempt to be loyal to his original Xhosa work 'while insinuating other messages into it which the original did not have' (p.77), all to address his changing and growing non-Xhosa audiences. I look forward to a time when Aboriginal writers embark on such bicultural brinkmanship.

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Two Reviews

1. By Pearl Duncan
This is a beautifully presented book which contains illuminating narrative and over 150 full-colour illustrations. It makes the ideal presentation gift both for those of Australian or overseas heritage. One thing is certain, it is not a book to be left on the bookshelves. It is a valuable book for teachers, lecturers, and students and I recommend it to all readers in pursuit of knowledge and inspiration regarding Aboriginal culture.

Aboriginal art, particularly Western Desert art in acrylic on canvas, has been taken up by the New York art world. The exhibition of Aboriginal art at the Asia Society Galleries in New York last year created immense interest. In the wake of the excitement surrounding this new art market phenomenon, art enthusiasts conscientiously tried to unravel the symbolism of Aboriginal art. To help them, Peter Sutton and fellow anthropologists, Christopher Anderson and Francoise Dussart, with historians Phillip Jones and Steven Hemming, put together Dreamings.

This book, written with an intelligent New York art public in mind, was published in New York to co-incide with the exhibition. Sutton has stated that the book has tried to act
as an honest translation for 'one of the best known and least understood people in the world'. The exhibition and the book grew out of a concern to explore the significance of Aboriginal art, both to its practitioners and to the wider public, and to offer a basis for its interpretation and appreciation.

The authors successfully (and uniquely) achieved a historical treatment of Aboriginal Art. They have presented the first extended overview of the history of Aboriginal art scholarship; they have presented a substantial analysis of the Aboriginal aesthetic which reveals how it is integrated with the distinctive world view and social values of Aboriginal traditions; and finally they have examined the cultural, economic and political contexts of the production of Western Desert paintings for Australia and world art markets.

Chapter 1 is essentially concerned with an academic explanation of the Dreaming and how art is related both to the vast bodies of Aboriginal mythic narrative and to the wider symbolisms of daily life and belief. Thus, reproducing the culture in art form is also, in Aboriginal eyes, reproducing or following the Dreaming, and the Dreaming is the Law.

The second chapter examines the obstacles that have stood in the way of an appreciation of Aboriginal Art by the European cultural world for over 200 years. The authors show what kinds of knowledge contribute to a richer response to this art.

In Chapter 3 the writers explore the basis of the morphological meaning of Aboriginal Art, that is its visual logic and the way forms come together to create the look of the art. The reader should be able to understand the role of form and composition in creating visual effects and aesthetic responses when studying Aboriginal Art after reading this section.

Chapter 4 is devoted to acrylic paintings of Central Australian Aborigines which is one of the most exciting developments in modern art in Australia today, though surprisingly little has been written about it. The writers take its production and its historical and cultural context as the starting point for understanding acrylic works of the Western Desert.

The writers stress that the acrylic movement is in many ways a positive one for it represents a continuity of the Western Desert culture and the successful integration of part of that culture into a system which once actively attempted to destroy it. In essence, the acrylic movement demonstrates the strength and vitality of Aboriginal culture and provides a means of transmitting cultural knowledge at a time of flux and change. 'The power of the Dreaming does not stop at the museum door.'

In Chapter 5, the writers highlight the shift in opinion in the realm of Aboriginal art. The perceptions of what was once termed 'primitive art' have altered fundamentally with Aboriginal bark paintings and acrylic works increasingly capturing the attention of individual collectors, art galleries and museums. The writers assert that after two centuries of Western presence in Australia, Aboriginal Art retains its distinctive link with land based mythology and tradition but at the same time it displays flexibility and dynamism.

In the final chapter of the book, the writers refute the popular assumption held by non-Aborigines that Aboriginal culture and society would decline rapidly to extinction. They examine the processes of survival, regeneration and impact of Aboriginal culture. Aborigines in remoter parts of Australia especially maintained the fabric of their culture. A wave of cultural revitalisation among so-called detribalised Aborigines gradually began spreading from the 1960 onwards, especially in art. The more traditional forms of art that did survive in remote areas had impact not only on non-Aboriginal artists but on urban Aboriginal artists as well. The art produced by Aborigines has been influenced by white culture, and it is also true that white Australians are increasingly enjoying a reverse influence of Aboriginal Art.
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In this book, and the exhibition that it accompanied, the main focus has been on the kind of art that is firmly rooted in the pre-European past of Aboriginal art tradition and has demonstrated the continuing vitality of that tradition over much of Australia.

Peter Sutton maintains that in the literature on Aboriginal art a gap still remains which needs to be filled with another exhibition and another book. I look forward to this becoming a reality with tremendous excitement and anticipation.

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2. By Jim Porter.

We too often dismiss or declare irrelevant that which we know little about or do not understand. A personal point of view.

Aboriginal art is little understood beyond the realm of its producers and practitioners. It is a mistake of monumental proportions to simply dismiss it as being naive, simple, 'unrealistic' and incoherent. In truth it is a most comprehensive and accurate expression of one of the most complex and diverse communities of people ever to have existed in time. It is undoubtedly one of the most profound expressions of 'this is me, essentially me and this is what I am all about.' It is most stimulating and possessed of an intrinsic fascination. It is indeed sophisticated, complex, extremely coherent and immensely accurate in its presentation of all that is the essence of being Aboriginal.

As an educator of some competence in the field of visual education I have come to understand the critical importance of learning through 'looking and listening.' I must, therefore, consider myself committed to a learning process often referred to as 'visual literacy.' I believe this 'visual literacy' is a reasonably accurate description of the rather 'different' art that this superb publication comes to grips with. But more than just that this book is of great significance to all educators who believe that it is important for all Australians to at least understand that the long term cultural heritage of this country is of immense social and historical value and that the need to perpetuate it is of critical importance. Aboriginal art is voluminous in its content, supremely efficient in its presentation and fascinating to behold. It is one of the most complete histories of a people ever to have been 'written'. It is encyclopaedic.

In most countries formal education begins at an early age and much of that formal teaching is done through the use of visual material in concert with imaginative and descriptive language. Could not the same 'model' be employed when first introducing students to a learning experience concerned with developing positive understandings about 'other people'? Why not start at an early age with the pictures? I believe that is where the real value of a book such as this lies - off the bookshelf and in the hands of the qualified teacher.

Some thirty years ago Robert Redfield wrote: 'Whether we come to see the artifact as a creative mastery of form, or see it as a sign or symbol of a traditional way of life, we are discovering, for ourselves, new territory of our common humanity. We are enlarging the range of our recognition of human sameness as it appears in human difference.'

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Catherine Ellis presents us with a most thought-provoking journey into the essence of music; how music is viewed by mainstream western culture and by Aboriginal society, how difficulties in communication of music arise from different world views, and how some of these problems can be overcome through the medium of music education. Her background of study and experience give her a wide base for comment upon music and society; she is trained as a professional musician and musicologist, founded the Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music (CASM) at the University of Adelaide, and now serves as Professor of Music at the University of New England.

From the beginning, the reader sees that the book is a very personal one. Ellis draws freely upon her own background for examples that show the differing values in various cultural settings. For example, we see the problems a young child faces when the Scottish folk music she performs at home with joy and with high acclaim by her parents is not accepted as 'proper' music by her teachers. Such paradoxes are likened unto the difficulties faced by 'detribalized' Aboriginal people when they enter into the European education system.

Such paradoxes lead to the topic of the first chapter, 'Music as communication'. Ellis discusses the differences between the place of music in Aboriginal and white Australian cultures with an emphasis on music education and music therapy. The next chapter looks at the boundaries a culture puts around people and refers to the theories set out by Stan Gooch (Total man; towards an evolutionary theory of personality), Carl Jung and Gregory Bateson in examining the place of music in regard to perception, education, and spiritual experience.

Chapter 3 looks directly at South Australian Aboriginal music-styles, state of traditional forms, uses, texts, and techniques of performance as well as the cosmology behind the music. Ellis makes a more detailed analysis of Pitjantjatjara song in the next chapter with an examination of the Miniri/Langka ceremony and the different levels of meaning operating within a single performance.

The CASM figures prominently in the next chapter as we see how a group of Pitjantjatjara elders taught a class of white Australians to sing the Miniri/Langka song series, and reactions to the experience are shared by both cultures. Chapter 6 examines Aboriginal-European culture contact with a look at the place of music and its contribution to cross-cultural understandings by Aborigines as set out on a seven point scale from fully tribal to fully westernised. We then return to the history, philosophy, and general development of the CASM. Finally, Ellis gives a series of suggestions on how music can be taught in a way to enhance the education process as a whole, keeping cross-cultural values in mind, with an exploration of both music education and music therapy.

Ellis's holistic approach to music education is a fascinating one in which she seeks to make music teachers into 'educators of integrated people'. She has found therapy for herself through performance of what can be called 'classical' music. I would like to have seen more examples from Aboriginal society for this concept; the ones given in chapter 1 whetted my appetite for more.

At CASM, Ellis drew upon traditional Aboriginal techniques for music instruction, and, in Chapter 6, 'Aboriginal-European culture contact', she suggests that these methods...
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may be used in teaching subjects other than music. She admits, however, that serious problems arise when the 'master-student' model of Aboriginal music teaching is taken into the Western classroom. I would like to know how she envisions such a model working in the teaching of disciplines other than music. Teaching of singing or of musical instruments has followed to a high degree the concept of 'imitating the master', but I find it hard to extend this method to subjects such as mathematics or reading. She blames the problems upon the underlying model of literate thought in our society and states that maintaining a system of 'master-student' is possible; however, it makes very high demands upon the teacher. Again, I would like to see this topic expanded with some examples.

Much attention has been given to diagrams. The one on page 110 was particularly good in showing the relationships between a 'small song' and its melodic sections, text repetitions and rhythmic patterns and segments. The cone and the continuum in the introduction, however, were rather mystifying and somewhat frustrating to me because they were referred to several times in the text.

There is a set of appendices that consist of music and text examples. Figure A9 in the Appendix is a marvellously creative diagram showing the juxtaposition of rhythm, text, and melody in a three-dimensional coloured chart. The Appendix to Chapter 4 consists of verses of the Langka series, showing the repetitions of text; these are in Pitjantjatjara, and I would like to have seen an English gloss of some sort.

The book has appeal for a wide variety of readers. Chapter 3, 'Aboriginal music in South Australia', provides an excellent introduction to the music of Central Australia, and the lecturer in Aboriginal studies or anthropology who is searching for a perceptive treatment of the subject should include this section in a reading list. The psychological aspects of cross-cultural communication are fascinating to any reader in this climate of multiculturalism. Historians will find Chapter 6, 'Aboriginal-European culture contact', of interest, particularly in the way Aboriginal song texts reflect social history. Needless to say, the musician is challenged on many levels, and Chapter 4, 'The Pitjantjatjara musical system', explains Central Australian Aboriginal music in such a way that any musician will gain a new respect for the music. Educators will find the book directed to them in the first two and last chapters where a new theory of learning is suggested. Philosophy permeates the book with the ever present question of music in society. Finally, speaking as a lapsed music educator, I found each section stimulating and often profoundly disturbing. Many disciplines are covered in the book, but I believe that this book should be required reading for every music educator, both experienced teachers and those about to begin their careers.

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Dorothy Johnston, a well-known novelist and a member of Writers Against Nuclear Arms, has turned her attention to a significant series of events in recent history, events that affected many Aborigines and non-Aborigines, caused bitter feelings between Australia and Britain and helped to sever the ties between them so dearly loved by Prime Minister Menzies. The name Maralinga recalls the nuclear experiments carried out in the 1950s and '60s by British
military scientists, with the help and co-operation of the Australian Defence Department. Most of us have forgotten the details, so it is worth reading this well-researched account of these experiments and the closely guarded secrets finally revealed by the Royal Commission of 1984 headed by the fearless Mr Justice James McClelland. Dorothy Johnston visited Maralinga and the bomb sites, talked to Aborigines and non-Aborigines who had been involved and studied the relevant documents. She has written a powerful and sensitive novel, with credible characters admittedly fictitious but representative of those actually involved.

She writes superb descriptions of the climate and scenery of the Western Desert (evocative enough to set this reviewer longing to go there again). She makes entirely understandable the close ties of the Aboriginal inhabitants to their arid land and why many non-Aborigines (including Graham Falconer, the hero of the novel) feel its strange attraction. For example, Graham, an Australian serviceman, volunteers for a second tour of duty, returns once more as a civilian scientific assistant and visits the area several times during his later investigations. Each time he marvels at its special beauty.

Graham and his mates are employed on such tasks as building the towers for the bombs and, after the explosions, measuring the extent of the radiation fallout. From today's greater general knowledge the reader is shocked at the risks for the soldiers and the Aborigines, though it is not clear if the 'top brass' were fully aware of these at the time. More than once Graham and his fellows enter by accident a hazardous area and the reader is in suspense about their health for the rest of the book. And there is an encounter with an Aboriginal family who must have been at even greater risk. Throughout the novel the hero learns a lot about the Aboriginal inhabitants of the Western Desert and their problems, made even worse by Maralinga.

The novel actually begins with an Aboriginal family, one of the few left in the bomb area after their fellows had been rounded up and taken south to the Yalata Reserve. The couple, with their children, are woken in the middle of the night by one of the explosions. They are terrified but try to give it a mythical explanation. This is the family Nelganji, his wife and children, whom Graham's measuring party later encounter near a bomb crater. There is a graphic description, with near comical elements, of the soldiers' attempts to decontaminate these unfortunate victims by inducing them to take showers; the soldiers have to use cajolery and even some force to help this couple, who have not the faintest idea of what it is all about, though the children are easier to handle. We learn at the end of the book that the man has died but we are not told if his death was caused by radiation damage.

An important character in the story is Len Thompson, the Commonwealth patrol officer with the impossible task of ensuring that no Aborigines are in the danger area. He has been responsible in previous years for clearing everyone off the rocket range when rockets were being launched from Woomera and has got to know most of the desert people all the way from Woomera to a thousand kilometres inside Western Australia. He has learnt their dialects and has grown to respect and understand them, while regarding with dislike and suspicion the white invaders of their land. However Graham wins him over by his friendliness and interest in the Aborigines. Len tells Graham about the special plight of the Pitjantjatjara. He reckons that the opening up of the desert by the military experiments has been too fast and too sudden and has caused violent changes in the life of the people. Even before the nuclear experiments began many had been resettled at Yalata, though some had avoided the round-up and continued a more or less traditional life, as far as this was possible for isolated families. Of Yalata Len says:

Yalata's a place on the coast where a lot of the people from this country were taken before the British arrived. It was a mistake, lumping tribal people together in one big camp. And it's even more of a mistake to keep them there.
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One of the most depressing places on earth, Yalata. And Nelganji knows it.
That's why he's been living in the bush these past years, because he knows
what Yalata's like (p.98).

Since the time when Len Thompson is supposed to have uttered this condemnation of
the Yalata environment there have been improvements for some of the Yalata people, due to
the granting of title to the Maralinga Lands by the South Australian Government. Oak
Valley is an outstation where many of my old friends from Yalata now live, on their own
land, away from the alcohol and strife of the landless, displaced Yalata community. Their
new home is so near some of the bomb sites that a constant watch is kept on their health to
make sure that they are not exposed to radiation hazard. Though Dorothy Johnston visited
Oak Valley, her novel ends before this newer development. However, at the end of the
novel, when Graham pays one more visit to the Maralinga area, he drives a long way north­
west to visit Len Thompson, now camped with some of the Pitjantjatjara people on land
they were trying to reclaim as their own.

Earlier in the novel, Graham becomes the friend and trusted assistant of Charlie
Hamilton, Australia's chief scientist at Maralinga, who helps Graham to work for a year at
Britain's atomic research laboratories at Harwell, then encourages him to study at university
and take a degree in nuclear physics. The result is a scientist's post in the Department of
Defence in Canberra. As well as a picture of the Canberra bureaucracy, Johnston gives us a
graphic description of suburban life in Canberra, and analyses the consequent tensions in
family life. Graham, with access now to secret government files, is horrified when he
discovers the extent to which British military chiefs had misled their Australian opposite
numbers (or did some of these Australians know more than they told the public?). But when
he attempts to confirm and expose these findings he is blocked at every turn. Charlie
Hamilton, who had earlier shared his suspicions, is no longer of any help, having opted for
a quiet academic career at the National University. But Graham continues to endanger his
own career by continuing his investigations. The story ends at this point, though we know
that these secrets were revealed at the Royal Commission hearings in 1984.

I found Maralinga my love hard to put down until I had come to the end. This story is
so well told and the characters are so skilfully drawn that the reader can easily imagine them
taking part in this important period of both Aboriginal and Australian history.

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Survival in our own land: 'Aboriginal' experiences in 'South Australia' since 1836. Told by
Nungas and others, edited and researched by Christobel Mattingley, co-edited by Ken
references, notes and sources, index. $45.00 h.b., $27.50 p.b.

In this powerful book modern South Australian people speak eloquently of their feelings
about the past, focusing on many topics, such as missions, the law, language, education,
employment, the position of women and racial discrimination. It is a most compelling and
well chosen collection of primary sources, logically and soundly put together. The
statements by Aboriginal, here called 'Nunga', people have been collected and put together
as a well argued whole by Christobel Mattingley. The work deals mainly with the injustices
of the past but it ends on a positive note with a list of some of the achievements that
Aboriginal people in South Australia have attained, in the face of incredible difficulties.
Despite the many excellent qualities of the work, there are some problems. The book is powerful but it would make even more of an impact if the commentary were more moderate, and the Aboriginal people as well as the events were able to speak entirely for themselves. The comments by Mattingley are judgemental and uncompromising: they rarely allow for mitigating circumstances such as lack of understanding on the part of white people, and they generally assume evil intent. This attitude is evident from headings such as 'Before and after', 'From bush tucker to poison: rations', 'From dignity to cast-offs: clothing'. The section dealing with 'Before and after' paints an idyllic picture of life in pre-contact days. As for rations, everyone agrees now that they were not good for health. This however was not so obvious to people late last century, who had different views on diet. Moreover, rations were not altogether bad: they gave a sense of security to Aboriginal people. For many aged people who might well have died in the original harsh environment, rations, particularly when combined with some traditional foods, represented a reasonable living. It would have been worthwhile to point out that some of the worst tragedies happened when rations were interrupted or withdrawn from old people, sometimes simply through official bungling. Such for instance was the case of 'blind old Maggie', who, as a mature woman in 1861 had looked after King at Cooper's Creek, had brought him food and helped to save his life at the end of the Burke and Wills expedition: she died of starvation when rations to Tinga Tingana on the Strzelecki Track were halted in 1895.

The chapters on missions are uneven in quality and the attitude to missionaries in the commentary is uncompromising. Thus the section on Killalpaninna does not make it clear that this mission became a haven for Aboriginal people who had been relentlessly persecuted and driven out of their own lands along the Cooper, especially the Coongie area, and from Sturt's Stony Desert. On p.194 the commentary states: 'It is one of the ironic tragedies of our peoples' history that the missionaries' translations will remain as the memorial to the people.' It is not ironic if one realises that the missionaries did more than make translations of the Bible: they wrote grammars and dictionaries, and as is well known, the Rev. Reuther had a profound respect for Aboriginal mythology.

As regards the mission at Finniss Springs the commentary states (p.251): 'Requests to the station owners Messrs Woods and Warren, for a site for the mission brought this typical response', and there follows a letter about the scarcity of water. The comment 'this typical response' shows a misunderstanding of the motives of Messrs Woods and Warren, who are known to have been devoted to their part-Aboriginal descendants. Their hesitation about wanting a mission was due to the fact that they cared about the people already on Finniss and were truly worried about the lack of water. Francis Warren had come to Finniss in 1918 from Anna Creek and many Arabana people followed him there. The commentary continues with an account of the events of 1939 and states that 'Mr Warren from that time gave much practical help'. Mr Warren had done this for most of his life: the evidence of his descendants and records such as the report by Basedow vouch for it.

Research work is given short shrift in this book it is treated as yet another form of exploitation of Aboriginal people (pp. 132-4). Nevertheless we all hope that study can lead to better understanding and to the preservation of traditions: we hope that Mattingley's own research as witnessed in the present work will have that effect. The majority of the well-chosen photos comes from the South Australian Museum, the National Library of Australia and the South Australian Archives: these photos are after all the result of research. It is a pity that there is not more reference and indeed deference to the outstanding research that has

1 Tolcher 1986:151.
2 Basedow 1920:5.
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been done in South Australia, particularly as regards the work of Norman Tindale, Ronald and Catherine Berndt and Fay Gale. This would have added a different dimension of depth and insight. Just to give one example: in a telling sequence on employment, p.125 of the present book reproduces a letter from Albert Karloan of Point McLeay to the authorities, asking for a 'cinematographic unit' for the recording of 'illustrated songs and recitations', with an offer to pay back in instalments. It also shows the reply, which begins with the words: 'This is a ridiculous request.' Many readers might not know who Albert Karloan was, nor realise what a loss of knowledge the refusal entailed. The tragedy of rejecting this great man could have been made more clear by reference to his importance for the survival of traditions and by some mention of his later fate. The well-known book by Ronald and Catherine Berndt, From black to white in South Australia, is in fact dedicated to 'our friend, Albert Karloan' and on p.203 the Berndts describe how, when he was an old man, Albert Karloan wished to die in his home by the River Murray: 'When the Murray Bridge camp was officially closed in 1943 he was refused permission to remain, and died the following day.'

In a work of this magnitude there are inevitably minor mistakes. On p.3 the Warki and the Wotjobaluk are listed as South Australian groups, but they were basically Victorian, while the distinctly South Australian Karagura have been omitted. The important senior Adnyamathanha woman May Wilton (p.232) was not 'nee Pondi', which would have made her Kuyani; she was a De Mel. Something has gone wrong with the picture of David Unaipon (p.273) and a photo of the preacher Gollam Seymour appears instead. The picture on p.277 contains what is probably the last photograph ever taken of the most widely respected Adnyamathanha elder, Rufus Wilton, sitting in a wheelchair, but his presence is not acknowledged in the caption. The explanation of the photo on p.143: 'Three generations, Point Pearce 1969' might make the reader think that the picture represented three generations of the same family. This is not the case, as the oldest man, Jack Long, did not belong to the area at all; he came from Balranald, New South Wales, and had no descendants. It is obvious that practically all these errors stem from the sources, rather than from Mattingley.

The work is impressive, lively and well illustrated: it is vital reading for anyone interested in Aboriginal history.

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ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1988 12:2


The hundred years war is the story of Wiradjuri resistance against sustained assault. The devastating pressure of colonialism broke many individuals but failed ultimately to break the spirit of the people. If this sounds romantic, the story is far more than heroic stereotype. Peter Read has written a detailed history of a south-eastern Aboriginal nation, the Wiradjuri, carefully exploring the past through documents, places and memories to expose the pain caused by oppression as well as the resourcefulness necessary to overcome it.

The book breaks away from the misleading but still common periodisation by which Aboriginal history is charted according to the name of the state policies of the times, where 'Protection' is equated with 'segregation' and both are said to be different from the 'next' 'better' stage of 'Assimilation'. Read works by charting instead significant phases in the experience of the Wiradjuri themselves: these are then read back and used to analyse the New South Wales administrative record. The result is a historical model in which a similar pattern is repeated in four cycles of administrative intervention which all seek to 'change Aborigines into whites'. These cycles, whether the whites are missionaries or 'bureaucrats', all begin with idealism or at least a coherent plan which then meets Wiradjuri resistance to cultural absorption, leading to a 'mid-point' crisis marked by white frustration and bewildement at this resistance, then a shift to repression and authoritarian control to try to achieve administration goals. Contrary to the comfortable self-congratulation of the recent past, Read does not find that the administration after 1945 was 'better' than the old 'Protection': he sees it as a harsh continuation of Protection's dispersal policies.

These cycles interacted with a separate dynamic occurring within the Wiradjuri communities, in which the impact of colonialism, depopulation, loss of lands and of independence led to a decline in morale and confidence. This had not been accepted passively by the Wiradjuri, and Read has excellent accounts of resistance to administrators and the development of alternative strategies, like the independent farming blocks of the 1870s and the Bamblett family outstation on the Narrandera Sandhills in the 1920s. Nevertheless, a low point was reached in the 1930s. Then the political organising of Aboriginal activists combined with the politicising effect of enforced concentration on managed stations during and after the Depression acted to reverse the decline, beginning the long and very hard process of reconstruction and recovery which the Wiradjuri followed through the further and indeed intensified repression of the 1950s and 1960s.

One of the most powerful testimonies to the Wiradjuri resistance is the map Read has drawn of Wiradjuri country, with both the 'pre-invasion' boundaries as identified by Tindale and the boundaries of current association identified by Wiradjuri people today. The close congruence of the two is striking, despite two centuries of relentless attempts to disassociate the Wiradjuri from their own country.

Read makes detailed and careful use of documentary sources, including some wonderful nineteenth-century letters and petitions by Aborigines. The essential resource is, however, Wiradjuri oral history, the memories and experiences of Wiradjuri men and women which give us insight into a history which would otherwise be unrecorded. The material of this type in Read's book has actually been created in two ways. The first is the 'oral history' we are now familiar with: the 'historian' and 'participant' work together in a relaxed situation where the person remembering can reflect on and reassess their past with some sense of control. This has produced some important history: for example, Ossie Ingram's recollections, with their links with Wiradjuri oral traditions and their valuable insights into
the Narrandera Sandhills community. The second type of oral material is the recounting of incidents from the Link-Up work in which Read was involved with Coral Edwards and other Wiradjuri in rebuilding the family networks so ruthlessly shattered by colonialism. Here, more so than in the first situation, the insights are into the wounds and pain, the doubts and confusions caused by oppression, as well as into the intense importance of family links for the Wiradjuri [and perhaps for all indigenous people facing cultural assault]. The power of the material arising from the Link-Up work emphasises the role of political commitment and activism in the making of historical interpretations: without the thoughtful grappling with difficult issues which this work demands, neither the pain caused by oppression nor the courage required to fight back would be so visible.

Read's complex and subtle account forces us to ask questions about why these events have occurred. In the end, his model of varied but repeating cycles is descriptive rather than explanatory. There are many links drawn between the Wiradjuri and whites in the area, with for example the effects of selection on land access well charted; but the overall framework of the cycles themselves is not related to events outside the narrow limits of the administration of Aboriginal affairs. This means we have no way to explain when or why any one cycle tips over into authoritarianism except in terms of individual or collective administrator's levels of frustration. Yet sometimes 'outside' pressures are crying out to be noticed. For example, Read sees 1895 as the 'mid-point' of the 'second cycle' yet gives no cause for the shift to repression. The depression of that decade is not mentioned, nor the reappraisals it caused in government policies concerning charity, unemployment relief or attitudes about the working class. Yet not only can we guess that these must have had a major impact on the thinking of administrators in the Protection Board, but we can actually see them using the same language [for example, 'pauperisation'] as was being used by officials administering other arms of government concerned with 'depressed' groups such as the State children's relief institutions. Nor is the Board's political shift, made as it first recognised that the Aboriginal population was increasing, located in relation to the processes of 'national' definition going on at the time, the rise of scientific and popular racism, the enormous influence of eugenics and the high level of conflict along gender lines occurring then in non-Aboriginal society. Read has sensitive accounts of the flexibility of Wiradjuri culture, which, although severely damaged, had the resilience and richness to provide sources for reconstruction. Yet he writes as if European 'lifeways' had no such flexibility or historical specificity but were instead fixed and rigid patterns, rather than sites of conflict, contradiction and change.

The definition of 'the state' is also problematic. The 'hundred years' of the title has been chosen to mark the renewal of official government involvement in Aboriginal affairs with the creation of the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board in 1883, but Read rather assumes that the undifferentiated term 'bureaucrats' is adequate to indicate state control. The early Board was largely composed of (male) private philanthropists with some members of parliament. It is obviously very important that the chairman was the Inspector-General of Police, but the Board cannot be assumed to have been a simple arm of a unified 'state' however that might be defined. Both before and after the Board was reconstructed in 1916 to replace all the private members with public servants, it continued to become embroiled in long and bitter conflicts with other sections of government (notably with Lands and Education but, in 1936, with the Police Department itself), which were in turn each responding to pressure from different community interest groups. Even the Board's theft of Aborigines' Child Endowment, was a wrangle internal to the New South Wales government (in which Jack Lang had initiated the payment in 1927), not one with the Federal Government as Read suggests. When the Federal Government did become more involved,
after 1938, the relations between State and Federal administrations were marked by conflict as much as co-operation. The composition and aims of 'the state', then, need to be thrown open to question and explored, rather than assumed.

The tendency to ignore the wider contexts leads to an emphasis on the regularities in Aboriginal administrations which implies just that inevitability Read wants to move beyond. This is clearest in the discussion of the 'fourth cycle' from 1945 to 1967, which Read describes as 'already prefigured in five generations of knee-jerk reactions to Aboriginal resistance'. Read's argument that the periods 1909-29 and 1945-67 shared the same dispersal aim is incontestable and valuable, but his stress on the similarities allows us no insight into why he might then argue that the later period was more 'successful' in dispersing people, particularly when he is describing a concurrent Wiradjuri revival.

In fact, the differences in government tactics between the two periods seem to be more significant than the similarities in their long-term aims. Whereas the 1909-29 policies expected Aborigines to disappear instantly, the policies from 1936 and beyond assumed that Aborigines needed 'working on', 'needed' as Board member Professor Elkin suggested in 1948, 'a manager' to change their behaviour and attitudes so that they would be acceptable to whites and would want to assimilate. The involvement of anthropologists, the new professionals in Aboriginal administration in the 1940s, paralleled the rising influence of psychology and interventionist social theories in public administration in all areas. Read's fine descriptions of the bulldozers, 'dog tags' and 'pepper-potting' of the fourth cycle remind me not of the third cycle disperse-and-abandon policies but of the South Australian Aboriginal song:

"Prison's nothin' special to any Nungar I know,
'Cause the white man makes it prison most everywhere we go."

Michel Foucault's arguments in *Discipline and punish* concerning a shift from a focus on the confinement or change of the physical body to the control and surveillance of the mind seem relevant to this discussion. The bulldozers were not instructed to destroy every Aboriginal housing area, but rather to raze the 'unauthorised camps' and small reserves so that the Aboriginal population would be concentrated on a few managed stations, except when they went to the seasonal-picking work camps, on which employers and Board agreed no permanent Aboriginal dwelling would be permitted. Under the managers, Aborigines were to be 'educated' to assimilation (a step which, of course, seldom occurred because of Aboriginal resistance and few funds). The dog tags were a tool for dividing the Aboriginal population, for controlling access to both reserve or town and then exercising surveillance over and modifying behaviour in either place. The 'pepper-potting', by which carefully screened Aboriginal families were offered a 'house in town' only to find themselves deliberately isolated from other Aboriginal families, was again all about surveillance and behaviour modification.

The harsh segregation laws of 1936 may not have been used frequently after the War, but they did not remain on the books by accident. Their retention was a sign that the thrust of the whole policy was to remain the most comprehensive intervention into Aboriginal lives, by extending intrusive 'educative' controls far beyond the fences of the managed stations. No longer were people living away from those stations, on camps like the Narrandera Sandhills, to be any safer from surveillance, interference and control than those living within earshot of the managers. It is little wonder then that Aborigines' experiences of the 1909-29 and 1945-67 periods should have had significant differences, notwithstanding a sense of their Aboriginality being under attack in both.

Yet while Read's book does not answer all the questions it raises, its importance lies in its shifting of the ground of argument from one which privileges administrative definitions
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of past reality to one which privileges Aboriginal experiences, making them the starting point for historical analysis. It is inevitable that new questions will arise as new ground is opened. The hundred years war can be read together with its companion volume, Read's earlier Down there with me on Cowra Mission, to address the persistent question of the role of historians, particularly non-Aboriginal ones, in the writing of Aboriginal history. In the joint presentations of the lightly-edited Wiradjuri recollections of Down there, the analytical and more selective use of quotation in Hundred years war and in the collaborative analysis arising from Link-Up, Peter Read has explored some of the most promising options for historical work between Aborigines and non-Aborigines.

The result is an account of the Wiradjuri past and present which goes far beyond stereotypes of either passive oppression or simplistic, romanticised 'resistance'. Instead, we begin to see the Wiradjuri as a diverse and changing people, responding to pressures strategically, opening up new options where possible, retreating where necessary, defending and challenging when circumstances permitted at different times in different parts of their country. We are made aware of the many people scarred by their experiences but out of this we are made aware too of a committed reassertion by the Wiradjuri of the cultural values they continue to see as central to reconstructing their communities.

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This is a very good book indeed. Its principal subject is the experience of Aborigines in Gippsland in the second half of the nineteenth century and its theme the way in which these people passed from being clans of the Kurnai to becoming 'Aborigines' in the colony of Victoria. It consists of five essays devoted to various aspects of this process and a final chapter reflecting on the historiographical nature of the earlier essays and the work's relation to other recent writing on Aboriginal history.

By the standards of other areas of the Aboriginal past, Gippsland in the nineteenth century is fairly well-known territory and anyone familiar with the literature will already know the broad outline of what Attwood has to tell us. Moreover, he does not try to cover everything or restrict himself tightly to black experience. The events of the early frontier period form no more than a background to the discussion which is concerned mainly with the period after about 1860 when the two stations of Ramahyuck and Lake Tyers were of over-riding importance and which looks, above all, at 'cultural forms of domination'. The first essay examines the attempts of the missionaries, especially Hagenauer at Ramahyuck, to impose 'civilisation and Christianity' on those people whom they could attract onto their settlements. The second essay is devoted to the life of Bessy Cameron, a Nyungar woman from Western Australia, brought over to help at Ramahyuck and whose successes and problems in life tell us a great deal about the values and attitudes of the times; it is a moving story. The next essay deals with the various ways by which some Kurnai managed to live away from the stations and how they adapted customary ideas in the light of the situations with which they were faced. Chapter 4 shifts focus to the political sphere and shows how the 1886 Act forcing 'mixed-blood' people off the stations came to be acceptable
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to colonial opinion. The fifth essay is a perceptive discussion of the changing application of British law to Aborigines, involving quite brilliant commentary on several dramatic cases.

It is of no small importance that the book is beautifully written and that the text runs to no more than 150 pages. Even that includes numerous contemporary photographs with long, analytical captions. It is a pleasure to read an historian who knows how to show the depth of his research in notes and the effort put into making sense of his material by ridding his text of irrelevancies.

The structure of separate - though carefully linked - essays has the advantage of facilitating shifts in perspective on more or less the same material. The outstanding quality of the book is its breadth of sympathy: we look over the shoulder of missionaries, politicians, pastoralists, to say nothing of Aborigines of different character and times. Analysis is always set firmly in context and the subtlest of points teased out. Thus, at the end of chapter 3, we see how even the elements of continuity maintained by those Aborigines not involved with the stations ultimately served to support the missionaries' 'dominion' over the majority. In the following chapter, the careful exposition of Hagenauer's evolving opinions is not only a piece of insightful scholarship, but it contributes to a radical revision of our understanding of the 1886 Act. The advantage of hindsight is no excuse for historians avoiding the task of asking how things seemed to contemporaries of the events they are describing and, when that is done as well as it is here, it may even stimulate those advocating particular policies today to reflect on longer term consequences. There is abundant evidence here of good intentions, on the side of both Aborigines and Europeans, leading to unforeseen and unwelcome outcomes. In particular, the several elements in the transformation of aboriginal Kumai into Victorian Aborigines bear careful reflection.

As the final chapter makes explicit, this is an example of the new Melbourne style of 'ethnographic history', as that is understood by its leading practitioners such as Dening and Isaac. This chapter also sets out to locate the book within 'other work in Aboriginal historiography'. Such a discussion is unremarkable in these days of reflexive inquiry and yet another survey of the field has its uses. However, its shortcomings suggest some criticisms of the earlier chapters. With few exceptions, the canon of historians considered is restricted to those working in or around academic departments of History. This is only one tradition of discourse. Thus we hear nothing of, for example, Robert Tonkinson or David Turner, Chris Anderson or Barry Morris, Deborah Bird Rose or Robert Bos and we are told - rather incredibly - that 'the study of relations between missionaries and Aborigines . . . has not . . . been addressed in any extensive fashion'. More seriously, there is the issue of the relationship of Gippsland experience to that elsewhere. On the one hand, Gippsland is said not to be 'representative', but 'what took place in this area does foreshadow later developments in other places . . . These were patterns of experience which were repeated nearly everywhere in Australia sooner or later'. I doubt this as a generalisation. Similarly, while Attwood can legitimately excuse himself from an encyclopaedic study, the lack of any sustained discussion of disease and demography is a serious gap, given recent work on these topics. It all depends on whom you read and the comparative weakness of anthropological interest in Aborigines at Melbourne universities may not be entirely co-incidental.

This book does not go beyond the early twentieth century, a limit which is partly determined by the nature of the sources. Perhaps one day someone will write a book of equal quality on Aboriginal experience in Gippsland since then.

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Koori history: sources for Aboriginal studies in the State Library of Victoria. Edited by Tom Griffiths. Vol.11, No.43 of the La Trobe Library Journal, published by The Friends of the State Library of Victoria, Melbourne, Autumn 1989. Pp. 44. Black and white illustrations. $6.00 plus postage, single issue; annual subscription (2 issues) $14.00, including postage.

This number of the La Trobe Library Journal is a notable one for those interested in the history since European settlement of Victoria's Aboriginal people - Kooris as they prefer to be called in south-east Australia. The term Koori is explained in a contribution by Richard Broome. Other contributions reveal the wealth of archival material held in the library. A growing section is exemplified in the first article, the transcript of a tape telling his life story made by Albert Mullet, a well-known teacher of Koori culture in schools and colleges. Wayne Atkinson, another well-known Koori, in his introduction to Mullet's life explains his task as director of the Koori Oral History Program, of which Mullet's tape is a sample.

Other contributions describe: the journals of George Augustus Robinson, the first Chief Protector of Aborigines in the Port Phillip District (by Gary Presland); the papers of William Thomas, the first Assistant Protector (by Marie Hansen Fels, who warns that not all these papers should be taken at face value); the visitors' books of mission stations, in which visitors wrote their comments for posterity (by Bain Attwood); the papers of Joseph Orton, a Methodist missionary in the 1830s, on microfiche from the originals in the Mitchell Library (by Alex Tyrell); squatters' journals (by Ian D. Clark and Jan Penny); the Howitt papers (by Ian D. Clark); the newspaper collections, some of them on microfiche (by William Kerley and Richard Broome); two white artists and their vision of the Aborigines (by Christine Downer); the Godfrey Sketchbook, containing fifty-six drawings of Aboriginal people done between 1841 and 1845, discovered in 1988 and bought for the Library by public subscription (by Jennifer Phipps); records of humanitarian organisations formed to help Aborigines (by Richard Broome); the papers of Frances Derham concerning Aboriginal arts and crafts (by Jonathan Parsons); the collection of 'ephemera' consisting of political leaflets, handbills, posters, stickers and badges (by Marg McCormack).

This journal is an invaluable guide for anyone planning to research the history of the Kooris of Victoria.

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A statement on page 1 of Tiwi today says that 'the Tiwi language is spoken by about 1500-1600 people'. This seems to be a straightforward statement of fact; one does not have to get much further into the book before realising how misleading it is. Tiwi today is characterised by Lee as two codes or languages (Tiwi English being a third, not mutually intelligible with standard Australian English but being a tiwiised English rather than an anglicised
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Tiwi. The vast difference between Traditional Tiwi (TT) and Modern Tiwi (MT) is shown up by a couple of sentences taken from the texts in Appendix 2:

Parlingarri karri ngintirimajakujiirrangurlimayani wurarripi api awungarra ngintuwuripuramini. TT, analysed (with modified and simplified glosses so as to avoid abbreviations) as:

parlingarri karri ngi-nti-ri- ma- jakuji-rrangurlimay-ani
long ago when we-past-continuing-with-family-walk used to
Wurarripi
api awungarra ngi-ntu-wuripura-mini
people with many children well here we-past-leave used to

and translated as

'Long ago, when we used to travel on foot with the family, well, we would leave from here'; and in MT:

Kiyi neks moning, karri moning, kiyi puwuriyi yawulama tuwanga.
then next morning when morning then they went jungle again

'Then next morning, when it was morning, they went to the jungle again'. The only word in the MT sentence requiring analysis is puwuriyi, in which pu- includes both 'they' and 'past tense' while -wuriyi is 'go'. (See page 2 for a similar illustration.)

This book is the outcome of a project for which the author was temporarily employed by the Northern Territory Education Department. In about ten months in the field the researcher was expected to learn enough of TT (essentially, the language of the older people) and MT (the language of the younger people) to carry out a detailed comparison of the two. Given the impossibility of carrying out such a project in such a short time - something which could be properly done only over a period of many years - this publication can be described as a heroic effort. The most serious of its inevitable deficiencies is the inability of the researcher to distinguish between young people's language (as a stage in the learning of the very complex traditional language) and changes resulting from contact with English language and European culture. Others are shown up by the frequent use, especially in the notes, of expressions like 'I am not sure' (usually interpreted by me as 'I don't know' and 'I have no data on'. Many of these small deficiencies could probably have been cleared up by another field trip (it's easy enough to say that, but . . .). Another is the necessary concentration on elicited material for much of the data. None of these faults need be blamed on the author (nor, I would think, on the Education Department).

For the most part Tiwi today is heavy going, and I could not advise any non-linguist to buy it. After an interesting and informative introduction we have in five chapters (2 to 6) a detailed (but not exhaustive) survey of TT and MT phonology and grammar, set out in such a way as to facilitate comparison and containing much useful information for the interested linguist, but hardly suitable for a relaxing read after a hard day's work. I did not expect an easy read, of course, but I must say that I always think it an unnecessary extra burden to have to read with one finger in the notes page. These chapters are generally well done, although perhaps a reorganisation of some parts could have cut down on repetition. Once the very complex morphology has been mastered, Tiwi grammar seems to be fairly simple - for example, complex sentences involve only a limited number of conjunctions with no non-finite verb forms - and the space devoted to phrase-level and clause-level grammar seems excessive. The phonetic details, a very tiresome business to compile and organise, show the author's care, with generally few errors and inconsistencies (although the standard is not kept up in Tables 2.4 and 2.5). The frequent references to Lee 1982 make one wish this was published. In fact, it is very clear that a new and more detailed grammar of Tiwi is needed; Osborne 1974 is a fair introduction but there is much more that should be said (and, in fact, Lee does correct and add to Osborne's work at several points).
I found a need to use the index at times, and while I generally found it adequate, I had some problems. For example, while trying to sort out the difference between examples 5.30(c) and 5.37 I tried to find out the meanings of the endings -tawu and -tagha on the first words in the two sentences, using first the table of contents and then the index as a guide, but I was not successful.

Perhaps the author could have been more restrictive in accepting words as loans (with probable consequences in her phonological analysis of MT). If, for example, a speaker uses the word peyiti 'fight' in his formal style and uses fayt (that is the ordinary English pronunciation of 'fight') in informal speech, would it not be reasonable to think he regards the former as a Tiwi word (and so the linguist calls it a loan) and the latter as an English word that he happens to insert in his basically MT sentence?

I was surprised to note that Lee not only phonemicised but also phoneticised (is there such a word?) the English vowel that occurs in 'bird' as schwa. How, then, does one distinguish between unstressed occurrences of this vowel (as in 'sunburn') and real unstressed schwa (as the second vowel in 'button'); Chapter 7 gives a summary of the differences between TT and MT. Perhaps this should have been done in a more non-technical way for the benefit of readers who do not feel equal to tackling the detailed chapters preceding it.

Chapter 8, which a wider range of readers should find readable, useful and interesting, is well done. TT is typical of many northern Australian languages in that it is characterised by what I think of as 'pointless complexity'. (I am sure the native speakers of the language who, perhaps, view the language as a beautifully complex art form and not just a tool, would not agree with me on this, and I apologise to them for my ignorance.) Examples of the sort of complexity I mean are numerous. To take just one: there is a verbal prefix, (wu)ni-, called 'locative', which can mean, among other things, that the action denoted by the verb is at a distance; however, when the verb is imperative this function is fulfilled by a suffix instead and its form is -wa or -pa. The longer form of the prefix, wuni- is used when the verb is in the non-past tense, but it is generally - but not always - reduced to ni- following the non-past tense prefix mpi-. The form ni- is used when the verb is in the past tense, but when ni- is used the past tense prefix rri- is omitted. The form -pa of the suffix is used when the verb stem ends in a and the -wa form when it ends in a high vowel (which is changed to u ). Phew! Lee argues, very reasonably in my judgment, that this type of language is more vulnerable to change resulting from culture contact than is a less complex (and, I would add, more utilitarian) type. This suggests that TT may be beyond saving, and raises the question of whether the concentration on it in preference to MT in the Tiwi bilingual education programme is counter-productive.

It is interesting to note that the Tiwi language has been generally respected and encouraged over the years by the missionaries, and yet it has changed so dramatically. Lee discusses the probable reasons for this, and the possible survival of Tiwi, in some form, without being able to come to any confident conclusion.

There are three appendices. The first two are quite substantial and form an important part of the work. Appendix 1 is a comparative vocabulary of English, TT, formal MT and casual MT, in alphabetical order of the English entries. It is very informative but does not seem to have been compiled with the same care as other parts of the book; there are inconsistencies (compare the entries for 'nun' and 'sister', and compare the entry for 'angel' with the spellings of it on pages 53 and 55; note also spelling inconsistencies such as sowimap but katin ap, laynap but snik ap ). A chunk seems to have been omitted - note the jump from 'bite' to 'cage'.

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Appendix 2 comprises ten texts, nine in varieties of TT or MT and one short one in children's Tiwi English. This I found startling; probably because I had not been able to see the wood for the trees in the detailed grammatical chapters, I had not realised how closely MT approached English in its construction until I read the texts. I was almost tempted to identify the *tha* in *Tha wantim yikiti nahu?* 'You want food now?' with the English dialectal 'tha' (from 'thou'). The adjectives, the adverbs and the function words that replace the TT bound forms are not only mostly English, but they are placed just where we would put them in English. Unfortunately, a couple of texts are marred by what seem to be bad mistranslations: a line or so of text C seems to be missing from the English, and a sentence in the English of text D seems to correspond to nothing in the Tiwi.

A few brief notes to finish. I was pleased to see that the author does not subscribe to the common belief that accusative pronouns must not occur in phrases of more than one word (between you and me - page 111). I was intrigued to see that the title of the Tiwi dictionary uses *g* instead of *gh*. I never got used to those awful almost-flat apostrophes (for which, I suppose, one must blame Pacific Linguistics and not the author).

This is a substantial contribution to the field of language change in Australia. The errors are annoying to the fussy reader. The book contains the makings of a substantial article to make the author's insights available to the non-linguist (pardon my ignorance if this has already been done).

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


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John Harris's important study of the genesis of Northern Territory Kriol, one of only two creoles spoken in Australia, is adapted, with minor editorial revisions, from his 1984 PhD thesis. Despite having been written in a Department of Anthropology, its content, focus and methodological approach are predominantly historical. Harris bases much of his argument on an extremely thorough reading of the historical record, quoting diaries, journals, newspapers, official government and police reports and records, parliamentary debates, contemporary observations, accounts by travellers, personal reminiscences and literary works.

Until recently research into the pidgin and creole languages of Australia and the Pacific was neglected by comparison with those of Africa and the Atlantic region. Harris suspects that this is partly due to doubts about their legitimacy vis-a-vis the indigenous languages; part of the problem for descriptive linguists may also be that such languages cannot be
studied from a purely linguistic perspective - social and historical factors are included in their definitions and must be addressed in any comprehensive analysis.

Broadly defined, pidgins are simplified contact languages, formed through the fusion of two or more languages in social situations usually characterised by asymmetrical power relations. They have their own grammatical rules but, being spoken as secondary languages among people who do not share another tongue, are restricted to some degree in both form and function. Under exceptional circumstances a pidgin may become the primary language of a group of speakers; it then undergoes rapid formal and functional expansion and is known technically as a 'creole'. Whatever languages participate in the formation of particular creoles, the creoles themselves have been observed to share a number of linguistic features, a fact which has implications for the study of language simplification and expansion processes, language acquisition and language universals.

The book consists of a short introduction and eleven chapters arranged in four sections: theoretical issues in pidginisation and creolisation; pre-European background; linguistic developments arising from European contact; analysis and discussion. There are also five appendices containing all known examples of Northern Territory Pidgin English recorded prior to 1910, eight maps, an extensive bibliography, and an index.

An introductory chapter briefly discusses the antiquity of Aboriginal occupation in Australia, outlines some contemporary social aspects of Kriol, and generally foreshadows later discussion of the origin of Kriol and its place in the history of the English-based pidgins and creoles of the Pacific region.

Section 1 examines theories of language pidginisation and creolisation within particular linguistic and social contexts. This is a thoughtful review of the literature to the mid-1980s, which cannot of course include the theoretical advances made during the past half decade. Harris considers various models which have been proposed to account for pidginisation and concludes that the crucial social factor is inadequate access to the target language, the language which provides the greatest proportion of the pidgin's vocabulary. The linguistic processes of simplification involved are now generally held to be universal rather than specifically restricted to pidginisation. There is some elaboration of the possibilities of pidgin-creole development, a discussion of the connection between social context and creolisation, and a very brief survey of hypotheses regarding the processes of formal and functional expansion.

The second and third sections present the bulk of the historical data. Section 2 describes the historical and sociolinguistic background of the Aboriginal people of coastal North Australia before European contact, focusing on the relationships between the multilingual members of these speech communities and seafaring visitors from the north. This section draws on the work of linguists and anthropologists, particularly that of Urry and Walsh on the 'Macassan' trade pidgin which developed between Aboriginal people and Macassan trepangers.

Section 3 contains the core of the book, a comprehensive and detailed description of the linguistic consequences of the European invasion and settlement of the Top End of the Northern Territory. A thorough examination of the historical record leads Harris to propose various linguistic outcomes of the major contact situations. He finds no evidence of any contact language being spoken in the two earliest British settlements on the Northern Territory coast: Melville Island (1824-1829) and Raffles Bay (1827-1829). In the third settlement, at Port Essington (1838-1849), he finds evidence of an English-based pidgin and hypothesises that it was probably a relexification of the 'Macassan' pidgin. Another English-based pidgin developed at the settlement at Escape Cliffs, Adelaide River (1864-1866), but the first major site of pidgin development was the permanent European
settlement at Darwin in 1870, where it appears that various English-based pidgins emerged, probably influenced to some degree by the Port Essington and Escape Cliffs pidgins. By 1872 a rudimentary English pidgin was already developing in the various gold-mining camps outside Darwin and before the turn of the century there were well-established pidgin varieties spoken both in Darwin and in the camps.

It was the pastoral industry, however, that provided the most important context for the development of various cattle-station pidgins. Around 1872 the 'moving pastoral frontier' began to extend from Queensland into the Northern Territory and into the Kimberley region of Western Australia, with disastrous consequences for the Aboriginal people. In the cattle stations and frontier towns English-based pidgins arose, influenced not only by the traditional languages of their Aboriginal speakers but also by the south-east Australian pidgins used by the early stockmen. Nor does Harris ignore the Chinese connection. By documenting the nature of Chinese-Aboriginal-European contact on stations, in the mining camps and in the towns, he demonstrates that Chinese Pidgin English was almost certainly another factor in the development of the various local English-based pidgin varieties.

By the turn of the century most of these had converged into one widely understood language, which Harris refers to as Northern Territory Pidgin English. This began to creolise at Roper River Mission Station shortly after 1908, when remnants of the many language groups of the Roper River region gathered there for protection from the massacres of those early years. Harris demonstrates that all the factors which lead to the creolisation of a pidgin were present: language loss, social disruption, and a peer group of children who needed to share a means of communication.

Section 4 draws together the sociolinguistic and historical data presented in the middle sections to draw conclusions about the nature and origin of Kriol and its place, together with that of its pidgin progenitors, in the general history of Pacific pidgins and creoles. He also discusses the contribution of his data to theories of pidginisation and creolisation in the light of his earlier analysis of sociolinguistic theory.

Harris has made a major contribution to the historical study of Australian pidgins and creoles, a growing body of research carried out by linguists, anthropologists and historians. His comprehensive examination of the documentary evidence demonstrates the historical validity of Kriol as a language in its own right. He convincingly shows that the origins of Kriol are much more complex than previously believed and, in so doing, refutes claims that it arose entirely within the cattle industry or from Melanesian Pidgin English. He also analyses its place within the linguistic history of the Pacific region and demonstrates its historical continuity with the late-eighteenth-century pidgins of south-east Australia.

More broadly, the book also contributes to the sociohistorical study of creole languages throughout the world. By examining the development of creoles within specific sociocultural contexts, theories of the genesis of pidgins and creoles can be further developed and refined.

The book is scholarly, clearly written, well-signposted and logically arranged and exhibits the high standard of editing and printing we have come to associate with the publisher. I recommend it to readers with an interest in the history of pidgins and creoles, the contact history of the Northern Territory, the development of the Australian pastoral industry, early missionary activity amongst the Aboriginal people, and race relations in Australia.

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This little book is about developments leading to the institution of 'a measure of autonomy' (p.1) in community government in Katherine, one of the Northern Territory's larger towns, located about 330 kilometres south of Darwin on the Stuart Highway. The relevant events are divided into two periods. The first, 1937-60, begins with the establishment of a town Progress Association, and comprehends the wartime period of significant disruption (including military occupation and large-scale civilian evacuation), and gradual post-war reconstitution of the town, mainly under governmental direction from above and outside, from the Northern Territory Legislative Council and Assembly, and from Canberra through the former Administration. The second period, 1960-78, begins with the establishment of the Katherine Town Management Board, and ends with the municipal election of mayor and six aldermen.

The book was written under two immediate stimuli. First, local government was recently introduced elsewhere in the far north, in the new uranium town of Jabiru in Arnhem Land. The book asks what lessons might be learnt from the comparative study of the introduction of local government, and from the example of Katherine in particular. Second, Katherine has recently been the site of reactivation (post-war, that is) of a Royal Australian Air Force base, Tindal, which will have long-term effects on the town. Yet looked at from a perspective of several decades, this appears to be just one, if the latest and perhaps most thorough-going, of major external impacts to which the town has been subject, others having been the rapid boom-and-bust cycle of riverside peanut farms here in the Depression era, and the military occupation of the war years. One might also include the long story of ups and downs in the building and re-building of the Katherine meatworks, at different periods the focus of fond hopes for the Town's development. The inference to be drawn from the longer view is that this northern 'community' has been (and is) vulnerable to such external impact (p.1); and also, I think, that consideration of local government here is of wider interest to the extent that it raises, and is discussed in conjunction with, questions relating to the varying socio-economic bases of northern settlement.

Two themes are pursued in the book relating to the development of community government. The first is the nature of actions taken at higher levels of government (enlivened by discussion of particular political figures who linked Katherine to the larger Territorian political scene). The second is the history of attitudes and events concerning the presence of Aborigines in the town, and the formulation of issues in relation to their presence.

With respect to the first theme, Lea documents the slowness of moves towards local government, and occasionally asks why this should have been. From the first, however, he suggests that community government was not accepted in an entirely voluntary manner but to some extent had to be thrust upon the town. It is clear that he has in mind the outlines of an argument about why, paradoxically, 'autonomy' had to be by coercion. However, this is not discussed in a focused way until the last several pages.

Two ingredients of viable local government elsewhere in Australia are a reasonably stable and diversified economy and the presence of sufficient numbers of local property owners to ensure long term commitment. These characteristics have been notably lacking in many new northern Australian
settlements spawned by the mining industry, just as they were in Katherine in the post-war years (p.79).

Lea further comments that the 'advent of local government is unlikely in itself to promote community resilience ... unless such preconditions are already present' (ibid.).

Having followed the book's interesting but somewhat diffuse discussion of steps towards local government, I rather wished that Lea had cast it more concisely from the beginning in a wider political economy framework. To do so would have helped to organise and interrelate various sub-themes which float rather freely as the book stands: for example, the recurrent meatworks development schemes; issues concerning the sale, lease and conversion to freehold of land in the town; and the battle the Katherine Town Management Board perceived itself to be waging to secure urban amenities in the absence of either a rates basis, or the legitimisation of Board membership by election. Without such an electoral process, Board appointments were controversial in so far as public servants on it were not resident in Katherine, and private members were not considered to be a representative selection (p.48). This set of circumstances helps to explain why and how the issue could to a large extent be publicly formulated as one of governmental autonomy, in the face of obviously less-than-ideal socio-economic conditions for it. My complaint is that Lea does not act early enough in the book to establish it as an analysis of certain kinds of questions and issues relating to the institution of local government in the north and in Katherine in particular, but rather allows the book to present itself, for most of its pages, as an account of events, though he is clearly harbouring an organisation perspective or argument. Some interesting issues of social history also seem to be camouflaged by the linear imagery of progression towards local government. For example, early parts of the book tend to give the impression that the Progress Association and the Town Management Board are to be seen as successive institutions in local affairs. However, we later learn (p.57) that they operated for some time in parallel, something that reinforces the reader's curiosity about the existence of different interests and positions with respect to the town's history and development, and which need not be seen as simply successive. Overall, I think because the book does not attempt to relate systematically the history of community government to a sketch of the town's economy, we do not get from it a clear sense of what is similar here to other northern towns, and what is different.

With respect to the second theme, the history of Aboriginal issues in the town, the book has several interesting points to make. There is brief description of 'mixed-race' society in Katherine before the Second World War, a milieu evoked in Bill Harney's Grief, gaiety and Aborigines (1961). Lea recognises the long-term presence of this population in the town, and raises a question of the consequences for social relations of the Welfare Ordinance of 1953 and other policy moves towards 'assimilation', all of which, in the opinion of long-term Katherine people of partly Aboriginal descent interviewed by Lea, 'started the rot in race relations by heightening race consciousness' (p.49). But perhaps most interesting are Lea's observations concerning the extent to which, for a long period of time, there was an 'artificial separation' of Aboriginal issues 'from the general development issues affecting the whole town' (p.80) - this despite the recurrent presence of Aboriginal fringe campers around the town, and their role as a pool of cheap labour.

An area for a town Aboriginal compound had been projected in a sketch plan for Katherine development as early as 1945 (that is, following the disbanding of wartime control camps, when the awareness of Aborigines might have been particularly high). But it was only after passage of the Social Welfare Ordinance of 1964, which 'loosened restrictions on Aboriginal employment and their access to liquor' (p.58), and thus was a considerable factor in the rapid urbanisation of regional Aborigines in the 1960s and 1970s, that the
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earlier official policy of repatriation of 'unemployed natives' to reserves, stations, etc. became not only unworkable but also subject to more thorough-going review. Increased Aboriginal presence in the town gave rise to a great deal of concern about their 'lifestyle' and living conditions (and still does), but there also began to be positive initiatives for the development of housing and other facilities for Aborigines in the town, including the formation from 1974 of a town Aboriginal organisation under the auspices of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

Despite what I see as unwarranted restriction of explicit focus to the governmental (which the author himself seems to recognise as a limitation in the book's final pages), this history of local government is important for students of the north in that it consolidates information and perspectives on a key northern centre.

The book's bibliography fails to list several references cited in the text: Fenton (1947), Kelsey (1975), Kriegler [sic, should be Kriegler] (1980), and Mollah (1982).

A second review by the same reviewer.


This report on the Aboriginal population of Pine Creek, a small town just off the Stuart Highway 230 kilometres south of Darwin, is based upon survey data collected by the administration of a questionnaire to a large number of the town's Aboriginal people over a several-day period in 1986. As was intended (p.1), the material thus gathered is most revealing of conditions relating to housing and employment, and also establishes the following characteristics of the town's Aboriginal population.

1. It is more permanent than is commonly thought or planned for. Though in the past it was common for Aboriginal town populations to be characterised as 'transient', many Pine Creek Aborigines have long experience of town living, and in particular, there is a definable core population of permanent Aboriginal Pine Creek residents. Some people have had experience of life on cattle stations and/or in settlements, as well as in town.

2. It is larger than is commonly thought, probably at least twice the number revealed by census. Numbers are further swelled by visitors, particularly in the wet season.

3. It has low levels of education, training, employment, and skills and experience in camp management. Pine Creek is a mining town which has experienced a number of cycles of mining development and subsequent devolution, the most recent phase the large-scale re-development just west of the town of a gold mine: this has (directly and indirectly) added to the town a number of Europeans (130 or so) approximately equal to the town's Aboriginal population. The consequences of this project for Aboriginal employment levels, however, have been negligible. Aborigines are significant in the town's economy, but mainly as consumers of goods and services, largely bought with welfare dollars.

4. Its housing and related facilities (such as water, sewerage, electricity), though much improved in recent years, are still far below the expectations and standards of the non-Aboriginal population.

5. There is a notable degree of attachment to 'traditional' countries. There are two main camps in and near the town to the north-east and south-west, each ideally associated with different tribal identities whose territories lie in those general directions with respect to the town. Notions of tribal difference and territoriality continue to be reproduced, despite
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considerable intermarriage among people identifying with different groupings. For many people, however, Pine Creek itself is the area they know best and to which they have the greatest attachment.

These characteristics probably apply to many town-dwelling Aboriginal populations throughout the country, though (5) may not be everywhere applicable to the extent it is here. (But it should also be noted that the author treats the notion of 'attachment to country' as unitary, as if every respondent had one such affiliation. To the contrary, definition of territorial attachment is often not simple in this area, and perhaps is even increasingly complex, under post-contact living conditions. The same could be said of the survey material relating to 'tribal affiliation'.)

The study is sympathetically oriented towards improvement of living conditions, and concludes with a statement of needs and recommendations relating to housing, facilities, employment and training, camp management and other areas. The survey material on which the study is based provides an important and useful practical profile, but the methodology has its limitations, as the author acknowledges in noting, for example, the extent of under-reporting by respondents of government benefits (p.51). In the case of this datum, other information happens to be available which reveals the discrepancy with informant response. It is arguable, however, that some of the categories of data gathered by means of this kind of survey are in need of closer examination (see previous paragraph), and/or many of the data collected turn out to be squishier than the seemingly hard-nosed survey methodology might lead one to expect.

The need for close examination of categories and assumptions is exemplified by the author's frequent but unexplained use of the term 'community' in respect to the Aborigines of Pine Creek. Although there are clearly, as the author notes, high levels of kinship and intermarriage among Aboriginal people within the town, in what respects is there 'community' and the possibility of communal action, and in what respects not? How do contemporary conditions affect the unity or otherwise of these people? The fact that the survey was done in large part to provide the Pine Creek Aboriginal Advancement Association, the nominal Aboriginal town governing body, with documentation on the local population, at least partly underlies the study's assumption that this is, in some ways at least, a community. Other sorts of research might examine the nature and extent of integration and co-operation under contemporary conditions, and derive results of considerable relevance for the future, including for Aboriginal involvement in administratively-defined 'community government' for Pine Creek as a whole, a proposal mooted at the time this study was carried out.

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The purpose of this work is 'to accurately document an integral, but often ignored, part of Australian history.' It is aimed not at the specialist in Aboriginal history but at the general reader. The work assembles vivid accounts of massacres, the latest of which was the notorious Coniston massacre of 1928. The book is straightforward, easy to read, and the
cumulative effect of the accounts of slaughter and maltreatment leaves one with a sense of outrage.

The book however has one fundamental problem: it is entirely derivative. Anyone reading it is bound to ask: 'Where do these vivid accounts come from?' The answer is not immediately obvious, because - except in the last chapter - sources are on the whole not quoted in the body of the work; they are only given at the back under the heading of 'Further Reading'. Thus Chapter 12 consists entirely of a paraphrase of the highlights of Cribbin's careful work on the Coniston massacre, in his book *The killing times*. Chapter 9 gives similar treatment to Gordon Reid's book, *A nest of hornets*. Other chapters do the same with Pepper and Araugo, *The Kurnai of Gippsland*, and others with work by Henry Reynolds, Brian Harrison, Bruce Shaw and Salisbury and Gessner, but these sources are not quoted in the text. To give a more detailed example of this method one could quote Chapter 4, which deals with massacres along the Darling River 1835-1865. This chapter is heavily dependent on Bobbie Hardy's brilliant work *Lament for the Barkindji*, but no reference whatever is made to her. Elder has even borrowed a number of direct quotations that occur in Hardie's work, from an anonymous squatter, from the squatter Simpson Newland, and from Mitchell, quotations which give a feeling of life and authenticity to the account. Nevertheless the slant has been changed: in the present book the Newland quotation has been abbreviated in a way which detracts from the defiant spirit of Aboriginal people and makes them simply victims. The quotation describes a great elder named Barpoo who bore an undying hatred against white people. Newland says:

Cool reflection shows . . . what he must have felt when he saw the detested interloper take possession of all his country after slaughtering many of his people in their vain attempts at resistance.

Newland also states:

he openly took no aggressive step against the conquerors, but no doubt many a poor nameless tramp met his fate at the hands of the untamable black chief in revenge for the wrongs of his people . . . I have little doubt he knocked lonely travellers on the head as opportunity offered. But have not many of the heroic patriots of history done these things against the enemies and spoilers of their country.

All this has been omitted by Elder, who has even changed the final word of Newland's sympathetic comments: He quotes - still regarding Barpoo: 'There was clearly nothing left for him but to die too, and die cursing the white man.' Newland had written 'and die cursing the Boree'. Newland was one of the few people who had tried to put himself into the position of a dispossessed Aboriginal, and he was therefore using the Paakantji word for 'ghost', which had become an emotionally-charged term for 'white man'. Inevitably something has been lost by this unjustifiable change.

The present book has also heavily used works on oral traditions. These traditions have been recorded from Aboriginal people by a number of persons who have worked in different parts of Australia studying languages and oral literature. In these days, when many of us naturally have feelings of guilt about the past, it is not uncommon to find popular authors who somehow feel that two wrongs make a right and who therefore discriminate against all

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1 Cribbin 1984.
2 Reid 1982.
3 Pepper and Araugo 1983.
'white' writers. In the past many researchers did not name or give acknowledgements to their Aboriginal 'informants'. By a similar injustice in the present volume the linguists and historians have not been acknowledged but occasionally the Aboriginal story-tellers have been. The writers have not even been given a name. Thus C.D. Metcalfe worked for years among Bardi people in the Kimberleys and recorded, in the Bardi language, many stories of the early days particularly as told by Tudor Ejai. He edited, transcribed and translated some of these texts. All we are told in the present work is ('p.163): 'The story was told to a researcher by a Bardi elder, Tudor Ejai, in February 1970.' A paraphrase of Metcalfe's work follows, but the entire last section of the original has been left out. It deals with the escape by magic of three Bardi 'clever men' who had been imprisoned by the punitive expedition in the hold of a ship. The Tudor Ejai/Metcalfe story showed Bardi people having the last laugh, but this aspect has to some extent been lost in the present book. The story, 'The first white man comes to Nicholson River', recorded, transcribed and translated from the Djaru language by Tsunoda Tasaku is paraphrased without any reference to Tsunoda; similarly Jeffrey Heath's work on the massacre at Hodgson Downs. Two accounts of massacres told to Hercules by Wangkangurru people have suffered the same fate. The main aim linguists and historians have in transcribing the original texts so carefully is that the style and spirit of oral traditions should remain, so as to do justice to Aboriginal thought. The original in the language is usually worded in such a way that events speak for themselves, there is no preoccupation with hypothetical motives nor with judgemental statements. This makes the stories terse and to the point, an aspect that is lost in Elder's paraphrase. This is evident, for instance, in part of the story of Ngadu-dagali, which was told to Hercules by Ben Murray. A white vengeance party has set out in pursuit of several groups of Aborigines who have all taken part in the theft and slaughter of a bullock. It is never said whether this party consisted of stockmen or police. They are about to kill Ngadu-dagali's wife. Ben Murray's story is as follows:

They killed her, they ripped her open with a bullet.
He stayed down in the lignum, old man Ngadu-dagali he stayed there, and heard the crack of the rifle, 'It's true what's happened to me, they've just killed my wife'.
He waited until they went away at last and until they had moved a long way off. Then he got up (out of the lignum), he quickly went up to see that young woman lying there dead on top of the sandhill.
Oh yes, he buried her there, he buried her quickly and left, he got onto the track (of the others), he followed these people (the group that hadn't gone very far) and he said:
Alas, they killed her just like that, I am bereaved! They killed her just like that! Those (whitefellows) are ready to kill anyone anywhere!' That is how he spoke to them.

Elder has paraphrased this as follows (p.160):
One of the stockmen raised his rifle and fired.
Ngadudagali heard the shot and guessed what had happened. He was well hidden in the reeds beside the waterhole. Common sense overruled his concern for his

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5 Ejai and Metcalfe 1986.
6 Moses and Tasaku 1986.
7 Joshua and Heath 1986.
8 Hercules 1977.
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Ngadudagali hid in a lignum swamp: there are large areas of lignum in the Goyder Lagoon - Georgina overflow area where the events probably took place. In Elder's adaptation he is made to hide among reeds in a waterhole, a much more difficult proposition in that country. To Ben Murray it was perfectly obvious why Ngadu-dagali remained hidden, there was no need to talk about 'common sense'. Moreover Ngadu-dagali certainly did not follow the posse - he tracked a group of his own people who he knew were in the vicinity. Far from bewailing his fate on his own, his first concern was to warn the others. In Ben Murray's story these people did not heed the warning sufficiently and ultimately they too were all shot 'even the pitiful little babies'. Ngadu-dagali escaped and ultimately joined yet another group of his people. The story ends as follows:

The other people (those who had gone far away in the first place) finally all went right away and so did he. Then they left that country altogether.

This is rendered by Elder as:

The group who had walked far out into the desert just kept walking. They never returned to the area. And Ngadudagali, now a solitary figure in that vast shimmering wasteland, followed them for he had nowhere else to go.

This romantic conclusion is full of European attitudes to the desert, which is not even mentioned in the original, since the events took place in cattle country, on the edge of the Georgina floodplains in the Clifton Hills area. In the course of all this we lose sight of what really mattered to Ngadu-dagali and the others, the fact that they had to leave their own country for good. He went south to live around Marree. This is where Ben Murray met him and where most of the rest of the 'Tales of Ngadu-dagali' took place.

This is just one example of the way the traditions have been modified in the present book. We have very little material that comes directly from Aboriginal people, little that shows their view. It is therefore a great pity that even in a book like this their stories should have been altered for no very evident purpose.

The ideals and thoughts behind the present book are excellent. Yet the author's aims would have been achieved with greater historical and traditional accuracy if the work had been set out as a reader, with direct, duly acknowledged and unaltered extracts from published works.

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Hercus, Luise. 'Tales of Ngadu-dagali (Rib-bone Billy)', Aboriginal History 2(1) 1977:53-76.
Having only recently completed a study of the political economy of a remote region of Australia for a group of Aboriginal organisations, I was particularly interested to read this book, and to compare and contrast the situation of Aboriginal people living in two distinct, but in many ways similar, regions of northern Australia.

The publication of *Land of promises* represents the culmination of a major interdisciplinary research project, initiated by a number of Aboriginal organisations in the East Kimberley region of Western Australia; all of those involved in this project are to be congratulated on their efforts. The dozens of research papers published prior to the completion of this book provide a very comprehensive picture of the political-social-economic situation facing Aboriginal people in the East Kimberley region.

It is unfortunately all too rare that interdisciplinary research is undertaken within an academic framework. Although it is quite clear that any examination of 'development' issues affecting Aboriginal people requires a broad approach, the majority of academics remain severely constrained by their own intellectual disciplines and are generally unable to effectively cooperate with researchers in other disciplines. As a result, Aboriginal development is rarely seen by academics in the wholistic way that many Aboriginal people themselves see it.

Consequently it is often difficult for academic researchers to understand the process of change taking place in Aboriginal communities. As the authors of this book note, 'far from being hidebound by tradition and hostile to change Aborigines are innovative, flexible and pragmatic' (p.9). A multi-disciplinary approach is essential to understand the impact on Aboriginal people of the developments that have occurred in the East Kimberley region in the past 100 years, and of course in the rest of Australia. The processes of change in the past, and the Aboriginal responses to it, are the key to developing strategies that will be required to accommodate, and from an Aboriginal perspective to control, future change.

It is even rarer for a group of academics to be involved in a research project that has been initiated by Aboriginal organisations. The East Kimberley Impact Assessment Project

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(EKIAP) was established as an action-research and policy study, with the intention of assisting Aboriginal people and their organisations not only to understand the environment within which they were living, but more importantly to assist in empowering them to control the direction of development in the region.

An important part of the book deals with the concept of 'development'. In northern Australia, as in many of the other remote parts of the country, development usually means capital intensive, land extensive, exploitation of the natural environment, be it mining, pastoralism, or tourism. To question this form of 'development' is usually anathema to the large majority of the non-Aboriginal population in these areas, although the increasing concern about the state of the natural environment in recent years has significantly affected much of the national political debate over these issues.

Land of promises stresses the importance of sustainable development, and the promotion of activities which are not environmentally destructive. The East Kimberley region has suffered very considerable environmental damage since the non-Aboriginal population took control of the region's resources, and many activities, including large sections of the pastoral industry, survive only because of significant financial transfers from other parts of the Australian community.

The book argues that Aboriginal people can hope to benefit only marginally from the present pattern of 'development'. The economic benefits to Aboriginal people, such as employment or the financial returns from such developments have been, and are likely to continue to be, minimal. As the authors quite rightly stress, Aboriginal people have been marginalised as their loss of access to the region's land and its resources has continued, and government transfers, such as social security payments, do not represent an adequate form of compensation and should not be seen as substitutes for control over land. These income transfers simply represent payments for citizenship entitlements that any other Australian expects.

The importance of this book and the research project lies not only in the information collected but the emphasis given to the mechanisms for empowering Aboriginal people. Land ownership is the key, and without access to land Aboriginal people essentially have no power. While their organisations, which are usually government-funded, perform an enormously complex and valuable range of tasks, and can provide a political voice for Aboriginal people (such as the role performed by the land councils in the Northern Territory), the effective position in which most Aboriginal people find themselves is to be 'consulted' about developments initiated by organisations from outside the region, and quite often from outside of Australia. In no real sense, without access to land, can Aboriginal people negotiate about the developments likely to affect them, as the development of the Argyle diamond mine in the East Kimberley region so forcefully showed.

And hence the aptly-chosen title of this book. This region may have been a land of promise for Aboriginal people for thousands of years, and certainly it represented an opportunity for considerable financial gains by non-Aboriginal interests in the past hundred or so years. But for most Aboriginal people in the past century the reality has been little more than broken promises, paternalism and, as the debate over national land rights in the early days of the Hawke Government so clearly illustrated, blatant racism. As one of the quotes in the book so accurately observes:

Euro-Australians are shocked and fight tooth and nail rather than have an alleged black domination of Western Australia. Yet they can sit in their lounges and let a bunch of inexperienced people who have no allegiance to the land, virtually desecrate the country (p.131).
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The picture presented in this book is in many ways distressingly similar to the situation in Central Australia: poverty, drunkenness, high rates of incarceration etc. But there is at least one major difference. The Aboriginal Land Rights Act in the Northern Territory and the South Australian land rights acts, have given Aboriginal people the potential to take control of important aspects of their lives. The growth of the outstation movement on Aboriginal land, especially in the Northern Territory, represents a key Aboriginal initiative aimed at re-establishing control over lifestyles. For large parts of the East Kimberley region, where the bulk of the land has been alienated for pastoral purposes, this choice of lifestyle by Aboriginal people is much more difficult.

The book also highlights the issue of whether a regional development strategy is viable, within the context of an internationalised Australian economy. As with Central Australia, the East Kimberleys are remote but not isolated. A number of chapters deal with local strategies, which of course often need to be part of broader, national strategies. Local strategies are heavily constrained, but this book suggests the ways that steps can be taken, based on existing organisations and the struggle for national land rights, to advance the situation for Aboriginal people.

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