BOOK REVIEWS


Because of the place of Aboriginal Australians within the evolutionary discourses of western knowledges, feminist debates over the place and nature of women's lives have always been important for Aboriginal women. The range of contributing authors contained within this volume serves to remind us that even within the overwhelmingly masculinist departments of anthropology and the related disciplines of musicology, prehistory and linguistics, there has been no shortage of distinguished women scholars working on the varied aspects of the lives of Aboriginal Australian women.

It is something of a mystery to have to account for the way in which academic women can be active in their scholarly research, yet at the same time, omitted from the histories of the disciplines and the bodies of knowledge which they help to generate. Peggy Brock's volume indicates the ways in which academic interest in Aboriginal Australian women began long before Bell's important work, Daughter of the dreaming (1983) and the importance of particular women in initiating the debates which later women were to take up. Brock's volume is important, then, for the ways in which it helps to place our interest in its topic, the cultural knowledge of Aboriginal Australian women.

In this context, Catherine Bemdt's introductory chapter, 'Retrospect, and prospect' in which she looks back over 50 years of dedicated and intensive fieldwork across Australia and then to the future, is particularly important. Not only does she outline the elements of the necessary interface between field-worker and the people she works with, but she provides a number of insights into the development of debates over the nature of Aboriginal women's lives, debates yet to be resolved. Fay Gale's account of her connections and work with Aboriginal Australians living on the mission at Pt. McLeay is also interesting in this context and her paper provides a useful summary to the volume.

Those debates are, within this volume, worked out through the study of a range of South Australian Aboriginal cultures. To the degree that they cohere, the papers provide a focus within a geographical area in which similarities and some important differences can be mapped to show the need for caution and specificity in developing generalisations. There is material on Pitjantjatjara, Pukatja, Antikirinja, Kukata, and the Ngarrenjeri of the south, and each of the papers presents arguments concerning the scope, nature and significance of women's 'cultural knowledge'. Of recurring concern is the difficulty of maintaining and transferring this knowledge under the conditions in which so many Aboriginal women live.

Several of the authors, (Helen Payne and Catherine Ellis, for example), address issues that arise from relating cultural texts to cultural sites and practices. Such texts can be musical, verbal or performative, and these papers indicate the ways in which elements of women's culture familiar to non-Aboriginal observers interweave to form a complex and many-dimensional cultural praxis so rich that its diversity is difficult to grasp. Jen Gibson's paper sets out the range of activities in which the Aboriginal women of Oodnadatta have a critical and constructive role and responsibilities while Jane M. Jacobs, working around Port Augusta, uses women's knowledge of ceremonial ritual, family and contact history to explore issues relating to the positioning of Aboriginal women within the knowledges developed around them by inquisitive academics. Gibson also provides a discussion of the
place of women's knowledge within the developments of national parks and the inevitable tourism which accompanies them.

The density of women's rites and knowledge is well illustrated in Luise Hercus's accounts of the late Topsy McLean and Maudie Naylon, both born at the end of the nineteenth century in the central Simpson Desert and both influential. Hercus's article, notable for its ethnographic content, will be of value to all students of Aboriginal life.

While the range of issues tackled by the volume's authors varies, each of the contributors addresses that of the 'status' of Aboriginal women and there are several useful discussions of the ways and circumstances under which women may exercise power and be 'women of power'. The overall conception of the volume is such that it falls within a long tradition of western narratives on Aboriginal society and the themes emerging throughout the text are those of loss, retrieval and what James Clifford might refer to as 'salvage' ethnography. Each of the authors places herself within her text and sets out her relations with the women being written about. Growing from debates about women's status and roles, the discussions of power sometimes encounter the conceptual difficulties that are found within the scholarly predecessors of the volume. It is here that the ethnographic detail provided by Hercus and Ellis and Barwick is valuable for they provide ways of scrutinising the theoretical framework within which the volume is set - they provide the possibility of reflexivity and critique. Feminist debate developed outside anthropology has, of course, moved on from the discussions of women's status which characterised the seventies, and rather than making it easier to work with women, have made it perhaps more problematic. These papers push that earlier framework to its limits, and illustrate very well the advantages and difficulties inherent in its use. This is an interesting volume with a place in the history of Australian Aboriginal studies, and will provoke much discussion.

Julie Marcus
National Museum of Australia


This is yet another useful book in the Allen & Unwin series on Aboriginal history and race relations, produced in paperback format with John Iremonger's encouragement. With his departure from that publishing house, it is to be hoped that this attractive library continues to grow.

Governing savages is the striking title on both the cover and title page. It is rather irritating for an intending purchaser to have to read the more informative small print on the credits page, in order to learn that the real subject concerns 'the Commonwealth and Aborigines 1911-1939'.

This volume should prove a helpful text for Aboriginal Studies units at higher school or undergraduate level. Amongst its good points are the extent to which sources are quoted at length and references to those many sources in archives are carefully cited in footnotes. It is written clearly and contains well chosen illustrations with meaningful captions. Great insight into Northern Territory mores and social history is provided by the E.H. Wilson collection of photographs, of both white and black people during the thirties. They could be characters from the vivid pages of Xavier Herbert's Capricornia.
BOOK REVIEWS

Having pronounced it to be a well documented and attractively set out introductory text, which covers many subjects not previously treated at this critical level, it is necessary to comment on what the book is not. It consists really of a series of insightful short essays on diverse aspects of race relations, rather than a comprehensive history. No theme is treated at the level of detail which it merits, while the study ends without any concluding chapter which draws the threads together. The author's sense of anger and disgust provides the book with feeling, but I sense that the worst examples tend to be treated as the typical. There is little evidence here that there were any compassionate citizens domiciled in the Territory, which seems unlikely.

The device of treating themes around the careers of different officials or representative individuals is an interesting one, but it can prove misleading by employing specific cases to imply general rules of behaviour. For example, a very different account of 'the anthropologist' would result from the substitution of Donald Thomson or W.E.H. Stanner for A.P. Elkin. Both were little-mentioned, but prime actors in the Territory during the thirties. Surprisingly, 'Chief Protector' Baldwin Spencer, received little attention, though his policy merited attention; his character differed from that of Dr C.E. Cook, who features prominently. F.C. Urquhart, earlier scourge of Queensland's 'Kalkadoon' people, was more significant as Administrator than a single incidental mention. Given the number of colourful Territory missionaries, including Bishop Gsell, it is surprising that Markus sought examples outside the Territory and turned to Rev. J.R.B. Love and Rev. E.R. Gribble, contrasting types certainly, but domiciled in the Kimberley.

These examples are mentioned simply to emphasise that this is an impressionistic survey, not a comprehensive history. Not surprisingly, perhaps, selection favours those who were misguided, notoriously wrong or outright racist in their attitudes to Aborigines. (Judge Wells is a classic case of the man who has found the author he deserves; a detailed study would prove worth the attempt). I suspect that there were also sympathetic characters in the Territory who attempted to alleviate the harsh system, but few appear here.

Apart from Justice Wells, there are several figures sketched in this study who should be subject to major research. Dr Cook is a prime candidate. However, observations by Cook quoted earlier in the text suggest that he was shrewder and more critical than most of his generation on some matters, once he was separated from his genetic obsessions with 'breeding out the black'.

I agree that Vic Hall was 'a most unusual policeman' (p.20); his career requires evaluation, assisted by his publications. The role of T.G.H. Strehlow as a patrol officer during the thirties certainly warrants research. As a critic of A.P. Elkin's control of anthropology in Australia, I confess that this book assisted me to appreciate his positive role during pre-war years.

This is a book based upon the written documents. The definitive study will have to take these sources further and combine them with the rich oral evidence which is being collected. This makes a helpful introduction.

John Mulvaney
The Australian National University

A cultural revival is going on in New South Wales among the Aboriginal people.1 By recording the traditions and oral history of the Ingelba group Patsy Cohen and Margaret Somerville are contributing to this movement; they are helping strengthen Aboriginal identity.

The authors of Ingelba and the five black matriarchs are friends. They met when Patsy Cohen, who is Aboriginal, was doing a TAFE course designed by Margaret Somerville, who is white, to relate Aboriginal people's experiences and perception of the world. As Cohen, who conceived the idea for the book, had not yet completed the transition from orality to literacy, she asked Somerville to be her 'writer'. She explained that she was interested in learning more about Ingelba, an Aboriginal reserve, firstly because it was there at the age of nine that she established her Aboriginal identity. But she also wanted to record the stories of the five black matriarchs who lived there, because she wanted young Armidale Aborigines to know that most of them are descended from the five matriarchs - Granny Widders, Granny Wright, Granny Morris, Granny Maria and Granny Mackenzie. As a result of this conversation the authors decided that the three main concepts around which they would structure their project would be identity, place and kinship.

Patsy Cohen was born at Woolbrook in 1937. Her father was a white man. Her mother was an Aborigine. While her father was in the Middle East Cohen and her sister and brother were taken from their mother, charged with being neglected children, and made wards of the state. The two girls were sent to Bidura, an institution for state wards, and from there they were sent to a foster home. When that did not work out they went back to Bidura. This pattern was repeated many times. As Cohen 'was clawin at meself and stealin' she was given an I.Q. test, which showed she was subnormal. As her antisocial behaviour could now be explained to the satisfaction of the authorities she was sent to a home for retarded children. She was eventually returned to Bidura and later sent to Newcastle to the King Edward Home. By now she had been separated from her sister, and because she was so difficult she was sent to live with her Aboriginal grandparents at Ingelba.

In 1893 Ingelba, a site of 42.09 hectares, about 80 kilometres south of Armidale, was declared an Aboriginal reserve. When Cohen's grandparents were alive it was a thriving Aboriginal community, but it is now deserted. Nine year old Cohen, who had expected white grandparents, was dismayed when she found they were old and black. She told Somerville: 'I was frightened of them blacks 'cause it was the first time I had ever seen blackfellers.' The old shack in which they lived shocked her too. 'It was far from the North Shore homes that I was used to living in.' But after about two or three months she found herself enjoying the freedom of the large reserve and the closeness of the large extended family of seventeen. She knew this was where she belonged.

When Cohen was thirteen she had to leave Ingelba because her grandmother was very ill. She was sent to Lindwood Hall, an institution for older female state wards. There she was reunited with her sister, but the reunion was a sad occasion. Cohen now thought of herself as Aboriginal. But her sister, whose skin was a lot lighter than hers, said she did not want to have anything to do with her Aboriginal relatives. When she left Lindwood Hall Cohen returned to Ingelba, but when an officer of the Protection Board realised she was pregnant she was sent to a home for unmarried mothers. After this she went to Armidale,

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married Jimmy Widders, and had five children. She later married Jack Cohen and they had a child.

As most of the information about Ingelba and the five matriarchs was not written down, but held in oral form by the local Aboriginal community, this information had to be collected. In order to do this the authors organised two major events and several smaller ones. Firstly, they went to the site of the old reserve with thirty people from the Armidale Aboriginal community, some of whom had lived there. The memories of these people spanned fifty years. Conversations were recorded while walking with those who remembered the landscape as it was when Cohen's grandparents were alive. Two years later the authors organised another collective activity for sixty people - a visit to the Woolbrook cemetery where many Ingelba people, including Cohen's relatives, are buried. As they tended the graves the informants talked about the deceased as if they were still alive, and their conversations were recorded.

Revisiting Ingelba made it possible for Cohen to reconstruct the life of her grandparents, particularly that of her grandmother, Clara Pacey, who was a remarkable woman. Cohen's grandmother's first husband was Walter Dixon. They had seven children. She later married Pop (Alf) Boney by whom she had another six children, two of whom died in infancy. She also looked after her brother-in-law's seven children when his wife died, as well as her grandchildren Cohen and her brother. She did all the cooking at night (one Christmas she cooked for forty-eight people) and every week she did a huge wash. Although she could not read or write she was a competent farmer and was highly respected by everyone in the neighbourhood. Cohen (p.37) recalls:

She had a great relationship with all the cockies round there. If she ever needed a bull or a ram she was always given one, or if it was a bad year for feed for the stock, she could always go and get feed off the cockies for her stock.

Cohen and Somerville have not only reconstructed a fascinating life story, but they have also shown that in changing from hunter-gatherers to farmers, this family, and there were many others, compressed a couple of thousand years of cultural evolution into a few generations. This is a remarkable achievement.

From the recorded conversations Cohen and Somerville obtained a considerable amount of information about the five matriarchs who lived at Ingelba five or six generations ago. These women owed their position to the fact that they were able to 'straddle two worlds'. Born to parents who were traditionally oriented they grew up in a period when the 'silence and secrecy started', when Aboriginal culture was looked down on by dominant whites. They were expected to 'change over from their old cultures to the European white man's ways. And they just sort of dressed up like white ladies and gentlemen' (p.109). Unlike the men, who were unable to retain their secret initiation ceremonies, the women kept their traditional childbearing and childrearing roles. Although they taught their granddaughters white ways they also passed on to them much of the traditional knowledge, skills and beliefs. The authors consider that the leadership of these women in cultural adaptation and their assurance of cultural continuity suggests that their role was always at least equal to their male partners', and they point out that 'conditions under white settlement often favoured their taking a leading role in cultural change' (p.111).

While conducting their research Cohen and Somerville obtained a great deal of valuable information about how women's knowledge is transmitted through the kinship networks which have replaced the traditional formal kinship systems. These days Aboriginal people relate to their past through their collective kin - the grannies, grandfathers, uncles and aunts - some of whom they have only been told about, others whom they remember. In this context while granny and grandfather can denote a blood relationship, more importantly it
implies a relationship enjoyed by the whole community with the old person. All really old people become grandparents, and are regarded as the keepers of wisdom and Aboriginal lore. Younger adults are called uncles and aunts and they usually have ‘practical obligations and rights in childcare, domestic arrangements and sharing resources.’ These new kin networks provide ‘a sense of group identity in place and sense of historical relationship to place’ (p.52).

Women maintain these new kin networks through kin talk, which involves having a detailed knowledge base far more complex than a family tree and containing many details of human relationships.

These details included all sorts of information that was recorded by non Aboriginal people in written form, in births, deaths and marriage registers. There was also further information that needed to be remembered because of the specific circumstances of Aboriginal culture since contact (p.141).

No one knows everything but each person contributes something to the store of community kin knowledge.

For these people, as for most Aborigines, it is not only traditional knowledge which gives them a unique sense of identity, but also shared, often terrible experiences during the period of contact. These are as much a part of contemporary culture as the Dreaming.

Women also preserve the memories of those long dead by collecting and looking after photographs, and handing on objects from one generation to another. While conducting their research Cohen and Somerville were able to examine the contents of a tin trunk kept by one of the five matriarchs, Granny Morris. It contained over sixty items all wrapped in cloth or enclosed in containers.

Modern Aboriginal women work hard maintaining kinship networks. They are involved in organising and catering for all festivals and funerals, they accept responsibility for keeping in touch with close relatives, seeing that resources such as transport are shared, and they teach the children of the next generation the skills and responsibilities they need to know.

Ingelba was not only surrounded by stations which provided work for the men, but it was also rich in natural resources, and so people stayed there and much cultural knowledge survived and was handed on. The interviews revealed for example: knowledge of the bora rings, of goonge or spirit stories, of the traditional doctor and traditional medicine, of birthing practices, of bush tucker, the notion of Ingelba as a spiritual place, the fact that a certain tree was used for making brooms, that hair trimmings had to be burnt, while at the same time weekly ceremonies conducted by missionaries and organised dances had replaced regular corroborees and tribal meetings. This information indicates a culture in extremely rapid transition, but not one that is dying. There is no hint here that these people have lost their culture, as many have suggested, rather that it has successfully adapted to changing conditions.

Howard Creamer has drawn attention to the fact that ‘the nature of Aboriginal identity in New South Wales is seen by many as problematic and becoming more so ... The task of clarifying who is an Aboriginal is vital, not only for the acceptance of modern Aboriginal identity by the general public, but also for the provision of services by the government which relies on the identification of Aboriginal people as a special group.’

In 1991 Ingelba and the five black matriarchs shows that although its authors live in the same town in similar types

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3 Creamer 1988:45.
of houses, have families of much the same size, yet they have different cultural backgrounds.

Cohen and Somerville's research shows that the descendants of the five Ingelba matriarchs can claim a different identity to that of white Australians. If Cohen's and Somerville's book did nothing more than this it would be important, but it does much more. Though it would have been helpful if the book had been more clearly set in the context of national events, it still makes a significant contribution to Aboriginal history.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Margaret-Ann Franklin
The University of New England


In the early 1970s, when Aborigines belatedly started to impinge upon the consciousness of academic historians in Australia, several collections of primary sources were published in quick succession. The best of these was Henry Reynolds's Aborigines and settlers, and in re-reading it today one is still struck by the remarkable breadth of his treatment of the history of relations between Aborigines and Europeans. It has now been out of print for several years, though, and hence another such collection is only to be welcomed. We need to ask, however, whether this is 'a new book', as the editor claims, or merely a revised edition of the 1972 volume.

From one perspective, the answer is in the affirmative: Dispossession is a substantially larger compilation with nearly twice as many documents on comparable subjects; most of the documents are new and little more than half the original sources are reproduced; there is a much wider range of documents, not only the printed and official sources which characterised the earlier collection but also a larger number of extracts from manuscript sources such as 'private' diaries and letters, as well as from newspapers; and the written word is now supplemented by many well chosen illustrations. As such, the breadth of historical evidence is much greater and the reader's understanding of European colonisation can only be deepened.

From another viewpoint, however, this new collection is all too familiar, reflecting the fact that Reynolds has not significantly revised his interpretation - this despite serious criticisms by other historians in recent years. Where his account does diverge from the earlier study, this by and large constitutes a narrowing in Reynolds's conception of the nature of the relationships between the colonisers and the colonised (and in my view this is the major weakness of Dispossession).

How can this be explained? One of the main differences between the two collections is the principle which has determined the selection and organisation of the material. Whereas
the argument of *Aborigines and settlers* was more or less implicit, here it is boldly propounded as the chapter headings suggest; for instance, 'White Australia: guilty or not?' instead of 'The morality of settlement', 'Missionaries: savours or destroyers?' for 'The missionary impulse'. This is not just a matter of method, however, since it also reflects Reynolds's dichotomising representation of relations between Aborigines and Europeans as well as his penchant for examining the past in terms of its moral lessons for the future. As a result, much is necessarily omitted: accommodation between Aborigines and Europeans, a subject of indisputable importance (and one accorded a separate chapter in *Aborigines and settlers*), is effectively disregarded; the reader of *Dispossession* will, moreover, remain ignorant of the nature of inter-Aboriginal relations and will fail to appreciate regional differences in the relationships between the indigenes and the invaders, even though these matters were considered in the earlier collection and their importance has been emphasised in recent studies; furthermore, the role of disease is neglected, despite Reynolds' acknowledgement in *Aborigines and settlers* that depopulation overshadowed all else in post-contact Aboriginal communities and that this view has since been reinforced by Noel Butlin's work; lastly, Reynolds's examination of the question 'settlement or conquest', the only new section here, does not provide any of those sources that provide the basis of historical interpretations contrary to his own.

A further weakness of the collection lies in its eurocentric nature; perhaps this is unavoidable given the comparative dearth of Aboriginal written sources for the colonial era - the focus of this book - although Reynolds might have drawn on his own prodigious research in order to provide a sample of those sources he so imaginatively used in *The other side of the frontier*, thus showing the processes of cultural change and response from the perspectives of the indigenes. The Aborigines' political activities are accorded some consideration but only with regard to their radical demands for land and compensation; a chapter which could have been called 'Equality or difference' was required here to reveal that Aborigines - as Reynolds concedes but does not document - have also sought to overcome their oppression by battling for those 'civil rights' sanctioned by the dominant political order. This would need to be preceded by a chapter which laid bare the devastating impact of government policy and practice on Aborigines in the twentieth century, one which could draw upon the growing wealth of Aboriginal oral sources.

For at least one other reason, teachers and students of history will continue to rely on *Aborigines and settlers* rather than the later edition; compiled at a time when he and other young historians were challenging an older generation of scholars who believed 'there was nothing in it' Reynolds offered useful insights into the historiographical issues of contact history. Partly as a result of his pioneering work 'Aboriginal history' has become a respected field of study, and Reynolds now strives to reach an audience beyond the academy. This is undoubtedly much needed and more academic writers should follow Reynolds's example; yet in doing so they must be careful to remain true to the imperatives of rigorous scholarship.

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1 See Curthoys 1983.
3 Butlin 1983.
4 See, e.g., Frost 1981.
6 See Reynolds 1990.
BOOK REVIEWS

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Bain Attwood

Monash University


This book admirably solves the problem of how to provide a *festschrift* for two of Australia's most eminent anthropologists.

Part One, a mere 63 pages, provides a brief sketch of the Berndts' lives and work. It comprises an overview by Raymond Firth, an appreciation by Claude Levi-Strauss, a biographical sketch by the editors and a select bibliography provided by the Berndts themselves. This is informative and useful, without being indulgent.

Part Two, a more substantial 185 pages, comprises ten essays focusing on 'Aboriginal autonomy' as experienced in relation to recent government policies of 'self-management' for Aborigines. Connections are made by several of the contributors between this theme and the work of the Berndt's, but they are not laboured or forced. Part Two reads, as a consequence, much like many other edited volumes of essays which have attempted to focus on a single theme. That is, it is in some parts incisive and useful and in other parts fairly mundane and repetitive.

In the first chapter of Part Two, the editors provide a useful introduction to the concept of Aboriginal autonomy in policy and practice. They note that while the term 'autonomy' does not appear in government policy statements of the last decade or so, it is clearly related to the central policy terms of 'self-management' and 'self-determination'. Definitions both of autonomy and of these central policy terms, the editors argue, tend to be absolutes, when in 'social reality' autonomy is always 'constrained' (p.68). The editors note instances of some degree of Aboriginal autonomy occurring much earlier than the official policies of self-management and self-determination. They also note the significant constraints placed by governments of recent years on the exercise of Aboriginal self-management, usually in the name of a higher Australian 'common good'. White attitudes, the inadequately analysed heterogeneity of the Aboriginal population, conflicts over how the Aboriginal population as a whole is to be represented in its dealings with the nation-state, unresolved jurisdictional conflicts between Federal, State and Territory governments and unresolved questions relating to the form of local government for Aboriginal communities are all seen as contributing in
different ways to the constrained nature of Aboriginal autonomy. The editors note the recent re-organisation of the Federal government's Aboriginal affairs portfolio in an attempt to provide a 'new deal' for Aboriginal self-management and, while not being dismissive of this development, are also bound to acknowledge the more fundamental nature of the constraints on Aboriginal autonomy they have identified. All this usefully sets the scene for what is to come: i.e. another nine papers by former students or associates of the Bemds focusing with only two exceptions on recent attempts to exercise some degree of autonomy, however constrained, in specific remote Aboriginal communities in the western half of Australia.

One of the exceptions is a useful paper by Hans Dagmar considering in general terms the role of local 'Aboriginal interest associations' over recent years in 'representing Aboriginal interests to the outside world' and 're-organising and strengthening an internal Aboriginal social and political order' (p.101). This builds nicely on the editors' introduction and is similarly aware of the many constraints on such organisations in carrying out these roles. Within their communities, local Aboriginal interest associations face 'different levels of deprivation; different economic aspirations; different degrees of attachment to distinct Aboriginal patterns of thinking and behaviour; and different levels and forms of skills for organising the promotion of common interests'. Externally they face 'variations in levels of access to resources and the market; differences in competition from outsiders and non-Aboriginal businesses; differences in adequacy or organisational support on the part of government; and differences in legal and political structures with which the associations have to operate' (p.111). The other exception is a paper by David Turner focusing on the form of local government to be adopted in remote Aboriginal communities. Turner has been closely associated with the Northern Territory's 'Community Government' model and is clearly still a strong advocate of it. He sees it not only as the appropriate 'middle ground between separation and assimilation' for Aboriginal communities, but also as a potential way of re-structuring the universe of Australian state and local government structures along more 'pluralist democratic' lines. The latter claim is grandiose and far-fetched and, to my mind, somewhat discredits and casts doubt on the former. Turner's piece is, in the editors' words, 'thought-provoking', but to my mind it is too undisciplined and wide ranging to make much of a contribution.

The seven papers which focus on particular remote communities are also something of a mixed bag. The best and most tightly argued is, to my mind, Tonkinson's own piece focusing on the development of greater autonomy for Aboriginal women in relation to Aboriginal males at Jigalong from pre-contact times through the eras of the pastoral frontier and the mission to the present. He engages in critical debate with Bell's recent work which suggests that Aboriginal women's autonomy in relation to their men has lessened rather than increased from pre-contact times through the various periods of European settlement. He cites Catherine Berndt's and others' work as supporting his view, and casts Bell as out on a limb. Erich Kolig's piece on the use of myth as a political weapon in struggles for community autonomy at Noonkanbah is also useful and tightly argued. Other contributions are useful in elaborating the struggle for a degree of local Aboriginal autonomy in a number of different contexts, though they tend in the end to be somewhat similar and repetitive. All tend to be cognisant of the constraints on exercising such autonomy which exist within a local community comprised both of Aborigines with very different aspirations and also white employees of Aboriginal community organisations with agendas partly of their own making. They also at times tend to blame government and dismiss the policy of self-management as something of a sham. This is not, to my mind, always adequate as analysis or justified by the facts they present. However, it does give some insight into the powerful nature of external constraints on Aboriginal exercises of community autonomy and these
BOOK REVIEWS

other case studies are all worth reading, if only to gain an appreciation of that fact. Get a copy of the collection, read and consider for yourself. There is much here worth considering, and much that can be taken further.

Will Sanders
The Australian National University


This book tells of negotiations over the years from the early 1970s to the late 1980s between Aboriginal people of Lake Nash and the white management of that cattle station for their continued residence and control of places sacred to them, in particular the waterhole and its surrounds. It came across my desk no doubt because of the oral testimony it contains. Although certain chapters report Aboriginal viewpoints first hand, it is not an oral history. We are staying is instead a painstaking reconstruction blow by blow of attempts on the part of the Aboriginal community to negotiate with on the one hand an absentee landlord, the Texan cattle company that held the leasehold of the station, and on the other hand the on-site station management. The negotiations covered virtually a generation and taken together are an indictment of the white absentee (and frequently non-Australian) landlord system which prevails still in many parts of Australia's cattle and sheep station country. We know about the England based Vestey Company and its long running mismanagement of Victoria River Downs (to receive more spotlighting in a forthcoming book prepared by Deborah Bird Rose) and the group of companies involved in scandals at Gove and Mapoon. To this list should now be added the King Ranch syndicate based in Texas.

This is a long book meticulously researched from a variety of primary sources which included correspondence, minutes of meetings, notes (for example from telephone conversations), and personal (verbal communications), as well as a relatively short list of secondary sources: books, reports, essays and theses, newspaper articles, and transcripts and court actions. It would be heavy going for most students but is nonetheless a useful source book which should be on the library shelves of any Aboriginal studies centre.

The first five chapters are a prelude to the Lake Nash land claim. Chapter one sketches in the early history of the area and is co-authored with Paul Memmott (who was one of the editors for the autobiography of Elsie Roughsey 1984). This is followed by a chapter on the early establishment of the cattle station and three chapters on Aboriginal working conditions through World War Two to the landmark judgement of the Arbitration and Conciliation Commission on the granting of award wages to Aboriginal workers in the early 1960s and the Woodward Commission early in the 1970s. The rest of the book traces the shifting employer-employee relationships on the station from the 1960s to the late 1980s.

The story is one of evasion of responsibilities on the part of white managements towards their Aboriginal employees over the years. This included tactics of delay, ignoring correspondence written on behalf of the Aboriginal community, to misunderstandings and sometimes outright intimidation (though not face to face) on the part of one white station manager. Participants are named on both sides. One might expect at first that this bids fair for defamation actions against the authors on the part of Percy Crumblin, manager of the station through some of the worst times, and Arthur Bassingthwaithe the managing
director of Swift Australian, the Queensland and Northern Territory Pastoral Company, and King Ranch Australia (p.61). But evidence of their obstructionism and sometimes sheer bloody mindedness is I think overwhelming. No doubt the publishers sought legal advice before they went to press.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


Bruce Shaw
Adelaide


**DOING, SPEAKING AND WRITING**

Aboriginal songs have been translated before, but the Dixon-Duwell collection is the first anthology of its kind. Even readers familiar with the work of Strehlow and Berndt will be struck by the quality of this new publication. Bob Dixon's Dyirbal songs, which open the collection, are stunning in their immediacy. We have an Aboriginal reaction to a white girl in a red dress, registered with all the unspoilt innocence of early contact - the dress metamorphosing into a dancing butterfly. There is a touchingly evocative meditation on woman as creature of two worlds, living with her husband's people through an act of male aggression, crossing borders, like the wandering scrub-hen and, like the hen and the rainforest fig, fruitful. (For border-crossing, feminists read 'transgressing'.) There is a moment of seduction and wonder as a traveller pauses at dawn to look over his shoulder at Goondi Hill through the (imagined/real) flapping wings of a mythical bird (one thinks of the prince in Stravinsky's *Firebird*). Examples multiply: the infatuated but sadly incapacitated drunk who stumbles wonderfully over Freudian logs under the luring, half-closed look of his wife's 'sister'; the dwarf who gets his own back on the sorcerer whose singing shrunk him; the bottled-up male who watches teeny-bopper girls bouncing in waves that burst, foam and spray - while he can't go in (a very painful poem); the metapoet who produces a fine song about the fact that he has a cold and can't sing (shades of Coleridge's *Dejection: an Ode*).

For contrast, and for something closer to the spirit of Berndt's translations, we have the measured lyricism and dignity of Margaret Clunies Ross's Arnhem Land mortuary songs. 'Mortuary' might give some the wrong impression: these songs overflow with life. The author of *Finnegans Wake* would have given his writing hand for those eels whose softly-farting 'sh sh' provokes the macrowinds of the monsoon; or for the belching, forging cockatoo; or for the masses of dark honey oozing from the hollow tree which houses life and death; or the grimly-dancing funereal crow; or the brilliantly observed bitterns, brolgas and so on.
BOOK REVIEWS

The sheer variety of this anthology is impressive. In addition to the often highly personal Dyirbal songs from Queensland, whose effect is lively and (to European eyes) impressionist, and to the Anbarra songs from Blyth River which function as units within larger cycles, rather like Berndt's sequences, there is a Walpiri narrative, as well as Wangkangurru material from the Simpson Desert: part-comic narrative, an austerely beautiful lament and intense occasional pieces, cheerfully regarded sub specie aeternitatis as 'rubbish' songs. All these are clearly intended for widely different, sometimes more, sometimes less formal social situations.

The two editors and the four recorder-translators (Stephen Wild and Luise Hercus for the Walpiri and Wangkangurru songs respectively) supply the Aboriginal-language text alongside the translation (which is right and proper), as well as maps, notes on the Aboriginal singers, introductions of various kinds and signposts for further reading. Such necessary aids are all too brief, though one can see why they were kept to a minimum. Inevitably the reader is brought up against the fundamental problematic of translation, not merely 'into English' but into 'textual' form. I was fortunate enough to witness performances of the Djambidj songs in Canberra, both at the Goethe Institute in 1979 and the Institute of Aboriginal Studies in 1982. But anyone can imagine the immense leap involved in transition from (more or less) improvised singing, something after the manner of jazz, to the printed page. A brief comparison between the versions of the Djambidj songs given in the booklet accompanying the Clunies Ross and Wild LP disc and the 'same' songs as they appear in this anthology shows how elastic must be one's notion of the 'text' in this case. Add to this the usual difficulties of translating poetic material (metrically specific in the case of Dyirbal) and of translation period. Not surprisingly the 'intention' of the song (using the term in the Husserlian sense) is rarely transparent to the reader, who needs to be told about its content. But, with a minimum of signs, we find our way: translation, which is impossible, actually works and works superbly.

Mention of translation raises the related issue of interpretation, which focuses attention on the tantalising intellectual question: what exactly is it that is being translated into a 'text'? This is a hermeneutic question, one of understanding constructing its own object. Certainly the originals of these song-texts are not texts at all, they become textual in the very process of being understood, interpreted - translated. The framework of this anthology is part anthropological, part literary, since those are the categories most readily available to the editors. The category of the pre-textual original is quite different, however, and it is very far from being constituted by textualisation and translation per se. The honey-ant man who sings his elaborate song of seduction, pointing his string cross at his beloved, does so not to express his desire but to satisfy it, that is, precisely to seduce. The song is, in the language of the theologians, 'efficacious', it has an ex opere operato power, doing what it says. The gloriously impatient Dyirbal husband who (like Arthur Boyd's 'Bridegroom waiting for bride to grow up') can't bear the suspense of a child-wife is not just singing about his impatience, he is shortening the wait. The furious black man who sings his hate for his white master while holding the reins of the master's horse is not telling anything, he is doing. (I am reminded of the picture of a falling white rider at the Giant Horse Gallery, Cape York: a possible case of sorcery-art.) The Lake Eyre 'Heat Song' brings about the withering wind it calls up. The Pulawani increase-song, sung as a dirge for a dead sister, movingly gives voice to sorrow, but presumably also functions as a loving spell, to preserve the life of the dead even as it calls into being a renewal of nature, dry to wet, seed to tree. Such a sacramental dimension is surely alluded to in the Clunies Ross rendering of a Morning Star song line as 'true bone, true substance of bornumbirr (verum corpus: substance/accident)'. This is the context in which we have to understand the appeal to
mimesis, including the specific element of mimicry in the Arnhem Land songs about animals and birds. To imitate is not merely to mirror, as in the European post-Platonic tradition, but to become. If we may misquote Marx: singing is a matter not of representing the world but of changing it. In short the pre-textual object of interpretation in this case is activity.

How to translate 'action' into 'text' - with all that is implied in that historical transition; the hermeneutic difficulty faced by the Dixon-Duwell anthology becomes an existential one for Aboriginal people themselves. In Paperbark, the first anthology of black writing, edited by Davis, Muecke, Mundurooro and Shoemaker, the definition of self-identity in a time of change is no mere editorial problem but a fundamental issue for every contributor, from David Unaipon to Gary Foley. It is a question of the nature and role of Aboriginality - which takes the further form of a question about the nature and role of writing for black Australians. Not surprisingly, this generates profound, though stimulating, ambivalence. It surfaces in the editors' introduction, which pays homage to oral traditions while concentrating on writing; which sees a 'paradox' in Aboriginal use of European genres; which stresses collectivity of authorship yet feels bound (rightly) to publish Unaipon as an individual, under his own name; which denigrates 'pretentions to literary grandeur' yet promotes its 'well-established writers'. The title 'Paperbark', we are told, is itself ambiguous. Does it indicate creativity or a shroud, a joining of old and new (bark/paper), as in the attractive story of Oodgeroo's name, or a capitulation and loss of identity; can the European 'text' be used against itself, allowing black words living space on that white page?

There are no easy answers to these questions, which inform the various texts of this collection and which arise in varied contexts of binary opposition: speech/writing/, fact/fiction, politics/literature, individual/collective. The two Unaipon stories, both delightful though one is a serious account of the Narroondarie myth, the other a tragicomic children's tale, designedly combine Christian and Aboriginal theology, Biblical and colloquial English, European (indeed bourgeois) moral codes and Aboriginal law. Something even more complicated is worked out in William Ferguson's 'Nanya', the story of a desert tribe founded on an act of transgression against black law. The result is primitive animalism, society without sexual prohibitions and language: pure Lacanian Freud and a defence of civilisation - with all its discontents. 'Nanya' is also interesting because it is something handed down, having multiple authors. Other texts in the anthology are of this kind: Lydia George's story of the dugong, Ngiti Ngiti's possum story, or Snowy Hill's powerful account of black suffering on a Western Australian station. On the other hand, for all their concern with a common heritage of oppression, stories like Waller's or Mudurooro's or Davis' or Morgan's present themselves unambiguously as authorially individual. Moreover they present themselves as 'literary'. Weller's crafted texts, gently romantic in spite of their harsh subject matter, Mudurooro's highly self-conscious story of alienation, another 'wildcat' loner: these are very much at the opposite pole to Paddy Roe's (brilliantly witty) account of his first visit to Perth or Banjo Worrumarra's Kimberley story of resistance, both of which represent 'speech' at its most vivid and straightforward, as distinct from 'writing' with its complications and ambiguities. One stage further in this direction and we return to the idea of song as activity (there are in fact two examples of that in the book, both translations).

In terms of the fact/fiction polarity, however, the complementary opposite of the 'literary' texts in this anthology is the text that exactly parallels, say, a story of black urban youth by Mudurooro or Weller - and yet is true, i.e. factual. One can only congratulate the editors for including, for example, Bropho's saga (half Tingari, half Jimmy Dean) of teenage
car-theft across the expanse of Western Australia, or Ruby Langford's moving plea for her jailed son - or the son's story-from-prison (boxes-within-boxes) for his daughter. In some stories ('Mission Truck'), the passage from fiction to fact occurs within the one text. Elsewhere the anthology focuses on historical fact, including varied documents: an 1841 children's letter to Governor Gawler; a 1966 community letter of protest and frustration from Nepabunna Mission; a 1925 letter relating to an incident in which a black woman thrashed a white man (wonderful!); Rob Riley's letter requesting Land Rights in the Land of the Great Fair Go; Pat Dodson's request for 'dignity', 'land', 'life'; excerpts from addresses to the anti-Bicentenary crowd on Australia Day, 1988.

There is more in Paperbark: autobiography (Everett's splendid 'Waterdogs', for example); song (from Country and western cliche to the very lovely 'Brown Skin Baby'); fable (by Hyllus Maris); play and film script (by Gerry Bostock); even an excerpt from Bran Nue Dae, the first black rock opera in this country. The overall effect is of unstoppable verve and creativity in the most oppressed of all Australian groups. Whatever else Paperbark does, it establishes that black speech/writing constitutes its own 'independent paradigm', complex, ambiguous, dissociating itself from white paradigms even as it rejoins them, heterogeneous and one, affirming a positive communal identity against the historical odds. The precise nature of the paradigm remains obscure. What 'is' black writing, black speech? What 'is' Aboriginality? The answer must be: the contents of a book like this one. What I earlier termed the object of interpretation is here impossible to fix simply because it is in motion. It is not even possible to recuperate this object by means of the anti-essentialist back door (a sleight-of-hand which would assimilate Aboriginality to Foucault and Derrida). If anything emerges from Paperbark (not merely through editorial preference), it is that black writing overwhelmingly chooses the realist mimetic mode, that Post-Structuralist bête noire. Stubbornly, Black defines itself in its own terms.

Because black and white also mutually define each other, because, as Galarrwuy Yanupingu put it in 1988, we are all Australians, Paperbark and The honey-ant men's love song should be read by all Australians.

Livio Dobrez
Bond University


The forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families is the subject of this book which examines in detail the effects of former policy and legislation on the lives of Northern Territory 'part-Aborigines'. Although the term part-Aborigine is offensive to Aboriginal people, previous government policy sharply differentiated between lighter and darker skinned Aboriginal people.

Incarcerated in government 'half-caste' homes or within missionary homes in Darwin, the ramifications of the separation of these lighter skinned children from their families and culture are just beginning to be made public.

Take this child follows generations of children from the mission through the government home to the missionary home. It begins by outlining the motives of the missionary Retta Dixon after whom the children's home was named, before moving on to
an examination of the forever changing 'good ideas' that became government policy. The
intentions of the missionary and government were similar. Both aimed at promulgating
assimilation based on the mistaken belief that Aboriginal people were an inferior race who
had to be gradually, ever so slowly drawn up to the standards of white people.

Interspersed between explanations of policy are graphically recounted personal histories
of child removal from the point-of-view of the victims - the mother whose baby was taken
while still at the breast, - the mother who, in vain, attempted to prevent her child being
taken by coating his skin with ashes to make him darker, - the child forever remembering
the screams of her mother chasing the truck that was taking the children away, sometimes
forever, and the young girl regurgitating water to feed a baby accustomed to breastmilk.

The Retta Dixon Home for part-Aboriginal children in Darwin is the central focus of
the book. The reasons behind its establishment and prolonged existence are studied in detail.
Full background of events and of people, particularly missionaries and politicians, are
provided. From the plethora of rhetoric from the Legislative Council, well-chosen extracts
of policy statements create a vivid image of the rigidly closed minds and tunnel vision of
the white officials and politicians from the days of the Aborigines Act of 1911 through the
depression and war years until the end of the 1970s. These extracts encapsulate the views of
a society unable to see beyond its own self-interest, one so steeped in ignorance about
Aboriginal people that policy-makers, at the stroke of a pen, could deny whole groups of
indigenous people basic human rights.

Take this child was the motto of the Aborigines Inland Mission, a zealously religious
organisation which ran the Retta Dixon Home. Although unqualified to care for children,
(only minimal training was introduced in 1956), the A.I.M.'s motto became government
policy and despite government recognition that the missionaries running the Home were
often unsuitable and incompetent, the Home continued until 1980. The book recounts from
personal oral histories the physical and psychological maltreatment of the children and the
reader can experience the devastation of the child cut adrift from family and a supportive
community, taught to fear his/her own relatives and to believe that to be black was a sin.
Children who ran away were placed in reformatory institutions often as far away as
Melbourne or Sydney.

The 1953 Welfare Act prevented children being removed without their mothers' consent
but after so long, many mothers and the children themselves believed they were state wards
and the missionaries did not disabuse them. So removal continued often under the guise of
education and training and from the 1950s on, fostering and adoption of children to families
in southern states was common.

This powerful, well-researched and well-documented investigation is an excellent
addition to Aboriginal history as a whole and will also appeal to a much larger audience as
the topic is becoming more widely known. The book provides a great deal of statistical data,
perhaps too much for the reader to grasp the individual impact of each one. In this sense the
work could become a reference for the events of each mission or home. Also the continuity
of the storyline is somewhat disturbed by the tendency to jump backward and forward in
time leaving the reader struggling to remember which particular person and policy was in
place at the time. Familiarity with Northern Territory locations and with historical points-
of-reference is also assumed; however despite this, the picture created is clear and delivered
with telling impact.

The oral history accounts are gripping and poignant as seen in the case where a woman,
removed as a child along with her baby cousin, returns to her mission home and is
confronted by her aunt looking for her baby given into the care of the older child 40 years
BOOK REVIEWS

Before. That mother still waits for her baby to return and we, the readers, join the mother in longing to know what happened to that baby.

*Take this child* sets out to investigate the impact of state and national policies on one distinct location however all over the country similar scenes were occurring. This book provides a beginning, a place to start in investigation, in understanding and in learning from the consequences of past policies. There are however other lessons to be learnt from the survivors of places like the Retta Dixon Home and hopefully Barbara Cummings' effort will inspire others to share with us some of what they have learnt.

Back in the present, the book does not make comfortable reading for the complacent but challenges the reader to examine his/her own attitudes. While it is unacceptable today to express a belief in racial superiority and discrimination, how much have people's underlying attitudes really changed? As an Aboriginal person who has experienced both personally and through family and community, the impact of separation on the lives of our people, for me this book represents evidence, yet again, of the depth of the tragedy that was child removal, the inappropriateness of one culture legislating for another and the indomitable strength that is Aboriginality.

The book concludes with a summation of the feelings of ex-Retta Dixon Home inmates. The bonds forged in childhood remain between the children themselves and the preceding generations also institutionalised at the Home. They, and others like us, nationwide, will 'remain vigilant to ensure that this part of our history is never repeated' (p.136).

Louise Harding
Link-up (NSW) Aboriginal Corporation, Sydney


Nils Holmer is well-known in the field of Australian linguistics, particularly for his salvage work on languages of north-eastern NSW.¹ In the early seventies he worked with Aboriginal people in many Queensland townships and settlements, notably Cherbourg and Woorabinda. The present volume gives his findings from that fieldwork. The following languages are represented (in Holmer's orthography) and are documented in separate sections: Mer, Saibai, Gugu Bujun and related languages, Gangulida, Kantyu and Koko Yalandji, Bundjil and Wanyi, Garwa, Punthamara. The format of each section consists of notes on phonology and morphology, followed by a short vocabulary.

The work does not pretend to be anything other than simply 'notes'. These notes however are fieldnotes: they do not involve library work and have not been checked against any other information available at the time of the fieldwork or since then. Uncertainties remain even over the basic question as to which languages are being documented. Thus we are told (p.36) that two people had some knowledge of a language, presumably the one 'related to Gugu Bujun' neither of them was sure of its name (probably *wagaman*, the Chilligo or Everton language).

¹ Holmer 1966 and 1967.
Similarly (p.105) in the section on Bundjil and Wanyi we are told about the two people on whose information the whole section is based:

Since it is likely that both informants have supplied data from various Queensland languages (and perhaps some others as well) we shall present the material in one sketch and in one mixed vocabulary, marking entries supposed to be Wanyi by the signature *Wan*.

This scarcely inspires confidence and rightly so: I have not been able to find a single Wanyi word among the items labelled *Wan*.

Most of the languages covered in Holmer’s notes have been studied subsequently and major works have been devoted to them; for instance Sandra Keen’s work on Yukulta (Holmer’s Gangulida), and the monograph on Kalali (Wangkumara) by McDonald and Wurm. None of these publications have been taken into account: they are not even mentioned by Holmer. The present book is written as if in a vacuum, and not even place-names have been checked. Common Australian words such as djina ‘foot’ (p.108) are called ‘Queensland words’, although Capell’s list of such words was published in 1956. The section on Punthamara and Kalali is more complete than the others, and here we can see some of Holmer’s perspicacity as a linguist. Even with the limited data at his disposal he was aware of the fact that here was a very special kind of classifying system. Although considerable subsequent work has been done on this language group Holmer’s materials are useful.

It remains nevertheless open to doubt whether there is justification for an uncritical edition of any scholar’s fieldnotes.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


Luise Hercus

The Australian National University


*Loose leaves* presents a portrait of the missionary Pastor W.G.F. Poland who participated in a social experiment often repeated in Australian history - the resettlement and re-education of an Aboriginal group. The people in this case were the Guugu Yimidhirr speakers of Cape Bedford, north of Cooktown in North Queensland. Drawing upon his seventeen years of experience as a missionary among these Aborigines, Poland wrote a series of recollections

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2 Keen 1983.

3 McDonald and Wurm 1979.
that have been translated by Herma Roehrs to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of his landing in Australia. The translation is highly readable, the style fluent and the subject matter very interesting for both lay and professional readers. Poland originally wrote these recollections to inform, entertain and obtain assistance for his evangelical work from German mission supporters. He also hoped that the reminiscences would be a memento for his children of their earliest years.

During the period 1888 to 1909 Poland worked with another missionary, G.H. Schwarz, to care for his charges 'in the desert' and this description of the Cape Bedford Mission seems to have been an apt metaphor. Arriving in Cooktown from Germany in 1888, Poland's first impression was that he had landed in a hot and harsh environment the inhabitants of which were spiritually barren. The missionaries were like gardeners in both a physical and spiritual sense. They not only attempted to cultivate crops under difficult climatic conditions on infertile land, but also strove to systematically erode the culture of the Guugu Yimidhirr and replace it with a set of Lutheran doctrines. These efforts slowly and steadily became more successful but the work was difficult and progress was slow. Poland was often frustrated in his teaching and sometimes despaired of success. Time has shown that his work was not in vain. Descendants of the early converts and their families today reside as members of Hope Vale Mission, near Cooktown. Without missionary intervention it is highly unlikely that the Guugu Yimidhirr would have survived as a cultural group. If Poland could be resurrected for a visit to Hope Vale, he would undoubtedly feel that his efforts had been blessed.

Loose leaves consists of three booklets, each of a varying number of chapters, organised in a loose chronological order. The first booklet's chapters describe daily life, the problems of communicating with an Aboriginal group, adjusting to a new climate and landscape, the frustrations of a missionary's work, and aspects of Poland's family life. The second and third booklets elaborate on these themes and topics. There are descriptions of the difficulties of travelling between the mission station and Cooktown, dangers of bush living, the problems of growing crops and becoming self-sufficient in food, the rigours and joys of daily mission life, and case studies of Aboriginal converts. All three booklets contain humorous and interesting anecdotes of mission life.

Three Appendices add to the book's interest. The first two are official Government reports which complement Poland's accounts of the hardships of mission life. The third Appendix gives some additional personal information about this compassionate and adventurous man.

These recollections reveal the gradual erosion of the Guugu Yimidhirr traditional culture, epitomised by the increasing numbers of converts and the declining number of traditional initiations. Poland must have attained a good grasp of the Aboriginal vernacular and regularly preached and taught in it. Over forty hymns were translated for Aboriginal use, as well as selected sections of the Bible.

Poland's descriptions illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of his work, his sincerity and also the pathos of the Aboriginal situation a hundred years ago. For example, when a group of Aborigines, driven by need to offer to work in the mission gardens, comes into camp, he takes the opportunity to preach the gospel to them. Because he comes empty-handed, with no tobacco, they continue what they were doing or go back to sleep so that he has to talk loudly to attract their attention. They enter into disputes with him about his Christian teaching, but soon get bored and disperse to chase a goanna. The missionary's talk comes to an abrupt end (pp.36-9).

This episode presents some of the central themes of this book: the reluctance with which adult Aborigines met Poland's evangelising and the manner of the European pastor in
addressing his audience. At the same time it reveals the tolerance of the people in dealing
with Poland's direct threats and criticisms. It exposes Poland's absolute belief in his own
spiritual and intellectual superiority and the righteousness of his work. It also shows the no-
win situation of the Aborigines - forced by circumstances beyond their control to ask the
missionaries for help and receiving it at a cost. Poland's recollections show how adults were
considered a lost cause and how therefore the missionaries devoted much of their energies to
'rescuing' and educating children by isolating them from their families in dormitories. Some
of these children eventually became the foundation members of the current Lutheran mission
of Hope Vale.

Loose leaves is a set of recollections based on memories of conversations and
experiences, diaries and letters. There is a ring of authenticity in the anecdotes and
descriptions. Poland's remembrances can be seen as a series of vignettes of what it was like
to be a Lutheran missionary working in such a place. Whilst contemporary readers may find
Pastor Poland's attitudes and conduct distasteful, notably how he considered the Aborigines
to be inherently inferior and treated them accordingly, it must be remembered that he was a
'child of his times'. Unlike many of his white contemporaries who had contact with
Aborigines, from his stories he appears to have been compassionate, caring and sincere. The
extent of his love for his charges and of their love for him is evident in the moving account
of his leave-taking from the Hope Valley settlement before he went with his family on
furlough to Germany.

The book has value for historians because it adds to our knowledge and understanding of
Australian, and particularly of Aboriginal history. For the church historian, it fills a gap in
the knowledge of early missionary ventures. It presents a most interesting picture of one of
the pioneers in Aboriginal resettlement and education.

For anthropologists, the reminiscences are both tantalising and disappointing. In
various chapters there is mention of aspects of traditional Aboriginal life including death and
initiation ceremonies, sorcery, hunting and food gathering, male-female relationships. Most
of this Guugu Yimidhirr culture is but briefly or incompletely described and often in a
derogatory manner. Although Poland was in a situation where he could have obtained
interesting information about Aboriginal culture, unfortunately he was so constrained by his
work habits and background that he was neither interested in, nor receptive of, much
ethnographical information that came his way. Poland believed that the Aborigines were in
the grip of the 'dark' forces of sorcery and Satan, and that his form of Christianity would
save the Aboriginal souls. He had no appreciation of Aboriginal history, customs and
beliefs and lost a unique opportunity to gain insight into the rich spiritual life of the
Aboriginal adults at Cape Bedford. His teachings and educational practices were undoubtedly
one of the major forces that resulted in the eventual loss of much of the traditional cultural
heritage of the descendants of these Aborigines.

Loose leaves is also an important book for the present-day descendants of Hope Valley
and Elim. They will cherish its rare photographs, many of which are of their ancestors. The
Guugu Yimidhirr Aborigines owe their present-day ethnic identity and cultural development
largely to the work of the pioneering missionaries, Schwarz and Poland. Without the
intervention of these two men, the Guugu Yimidhirr as a tribal entity probably would have
disappeared altogether. It was fortunate for them that the mission was established on their
tribal lands and, most importantly, that the missionaries strongly believed in the use of the
Aboriginal language in the education of their charges. Initially all teaching - secular and
religious - was carried out in the local vernacular. This by itself was a prime factor in
maintaining ethnic identity. While much of Guugu Yimidhirr traditional culture disappeared
as a result of the missionary intervention, this group has survived with a strong, albeit
BOOK REVIEWS

newly defined, cultural tradition. *Loose leaves* documents the early stages of this process and, as such, gives the Hope Vale people insight into the soul of one of the founding fathers.

Fiona Terwiel
Canberra


Many books on how to conduct family research and compile family trees have appeared in the last decade. This is one of the best. It is aimed largely at those Aborigines in urban and rural Australia whose families have lived within the parameters of white society, but it is also a good introduction for persons of non-Aboriginal descent who might feel the urge to find out more about their forbears. Indeed its greatest asset, apart from the design motif, is its easy conversational style which suggests, quite properly, that anyone can engage successfully in genealogical research without special academic qualifications. The book will benefit particularly those persons of mixed race descent whose parents or themselves were separated from their families and brought up in institutions.

Because it is essentially a practical book very little attention is given to the broader field of Aboriginal genealogy. About the only acknowledgment of traditional genealogical values is a quotation from Michael Anderson's 'Aboriginal philosophy of the land' (p.xiii):

> When a child is born into the world it is related to every other human being that lives. It finds itself in a constellation of belonging. Aborigines have one of the world's most extensive kinship organisations which interconnects, through religion, with all the world of living and inanimate things. Death cannot deprive a child of a mother or father or an uncle or an aunt or a brother or a sister.

There is a strange irony in the fact that this book encourages a search for individual ancestry whereas the ultimate aim of traditional Aboriginal society appears to have been the reintegration of the living family into the social fabric of the past represented by the land. Each generation relives the same totemic drama, names recur in recognisable frequency, and the individual ancestors are absorbed into the anonymity of the tribal totemic lineage. While Westerners might worry about the individuality of each of ego's 2496 ancestors in 12 generations or in a direct line of patrilineal descent; Aboriginal elders recognised the inconsistency of having individual family histories when everyone shared the tribal history. It is rather like saying that everyone of English descent is likely to be descended from the entire population of England at a given period so a national history of England is more relevant to one's identity than the history of one line of descent.

There is, however, a sense of immediacy about the title of the book, *Lookin for your mob*. Those who are meant to use it are in the business of establishing an identity in what has largely become a 'white feller's nation'. They will be interested in re-establishing links with particular kinship groups and their ancestral lands to reinforce that identity. The book provides many listings of institutions including several pages devoted to the numerous Aboriginal missions. Those who might be daunted by such lists should take courage from
Iris Clayton's excellent foreword. In her four final paragraphs she provides a resume of her own family research. This record of practical experience is an excellent introduction to the subject and shows how rewarding it is to persevere even though at times one feels like 'chucking it in'.

The book is a visual delight, largely owing to Fiona Kerinaua's artwork and its adaptation throughout the text. Even if one is not tracing Aboriginal ancestors this book deserves a place in good Australian home libraries.

Niel Gunson
The Australian National University


The book is a collection of fifteen articles by Australian and French contributors, presented at a symposium on the French perceptions of Aborigines. Its aim, as set by the editor in the foreword, is twofold: 'draw attention to the extent of the French contribution to Aboriginal ethnography, both historically and in the present, and ... bring together studies of French ways of seeing and responding to the Australian Aborigine' (p.5). It is divided into four sections: the first two sections (10 articles) cover reports of contacts made with the Aborigines of Tasmania and Australia by several French expeditions of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the third section (four articles) is devoted to the representations of Aborigines in French literature in the 19th century, and the fourth section (three articles) treats of Aboriginal societies in contemporary French social theory.

As the contributors include members from various disciplines (history, anthropology, French studies and literature) in the academic world and outside (museum staff and others whose qualifications are not specified), the treatment is rather uneven. The result is a book which approaches the subject from a broad range of perspectives but never goes deeply into the many questions which are raised throughout.

The first section provides a historical account of the French expeditions to Australia and Tasmania over a period of seventy years, from the Marion du Fresne expedition to Tasmania in 1776 (Plomley) to that of Baudin in 1800 (Horner), Barrallier to the Blue Mountains in 1802 (Smith); and Dumont d'Urville, also in Tasmania, in 1840 (Rosenman). Most of the material is presented in the form of clippings from the original texts with some commentaries of a general nature to place the texts within a historical perspective. The second section takes up the same themes - indeed, given the similarities in the contents of the articles, it is not clear why they should be divided into two sections. As a result the articles in the second section appear simply to repeat what was said in the first section, and the book would have benefited from having those two sections condensed into a single, shorter one.

This is all the more so for the third section, devoted to literary perceptions of the Aborigines in French 19th century fictional and non-fictional literature; it is really only an extension of the first two sections, whereas modern French anthropological perceptions occupy only three articles in the final section. As an anthropologist whose fields of study are Indonesia and Madagascar, my evaluation of the book is naturally slanted toward
anthropological issues since, as Glowczewsky rightly remarks, 'the fields which constituted classical anthropology - kinship, mythology, or totemism - developed out of Australian data' (p.220). As such, I cannot help wondering why there is such a disproportionately small number of articles treating contemporary French sociological perceptions of the Aborigines in the book.

One reason which comes to mind is that the Aborigines are a sensitive political issue which must be handled with care, and do not make the kind of topic readily amenable to international debate, especially with a country such as France whose position in the Pacific was seriously contested in Australia at the time of the symposium. In a political climate such as this, there is safety in concentrating upon data from the past centuries. The second reason, as Glowczewski's article makes clear, is that, until quite recently, few French anthropologists had any practical knowledge of the Aborigines from the field, although, paradoxically, the Aborigines have long provided the stuff upon which French social theory is based.

One important point made by the book is that the French perceptions of Aborigines followed an evolution which corresponded to a shift in philosophical paradigms from the pre-Revolution ideal of the noble savage of Rousseau, i.e. natural man in all his splendour, untouched and unspoilt by civilisation, to the post-Revolution views of Comte and Saint-Simon, of the historical evolution of man marked out by increasingly complex stages in social organisation, with at the apex, modern scientific European societies. The first emphasises that the most noble dimension in man is a natural attribute intrinsic to the human make-up which is gradually destroyed by society, where the second makes natural man a brute whose history lies in the future as he is gradually humanised (the word is not too strong) by contact with members of the scientific societies.

It is clear from the book that the Aborigines failed to live up to the French expectations. Unlike more attractive cultures like the Tahitians who were brought to the attention of the Europeans by Bougainville, the Aborigines seem to have suffered from their lack of appeal to the European travellers. As soon as the contacts go beyond mere sighting and exchanges of signs, their image deteriorates. They are described as black, dirty, covered with mud, soot and tattoos, with spindly legs and a prominent belly. Instead of being gentle, generous and grateful as one would expect them to be, they turn out to be vindictive, brutal and dishonest. To make matters worse their integration into white society proves to be disastrous. The nineteenth century humanists are thus forced to face the sad prospect of their inevitable extinction in the near future (Horner, Rosenman, Grant). For the French, whose initial enthusiasm was grounded upon aesthetic and philosophical ideals, this disenchantment led to an intellectualisation of the Aboriginal culture which allowed them to retain an interest in the culture without being confronted with it. This was possible only because the Aborigines remain culturally, historically and spatially remote from the French, in contrast with the British whose interactions with the Aborigines were conducted at the more pragmatic level of trying to cohabit on an inhospitable land, and having to deal with the perceived inability of the Aborigines to become integrated in the emerging Australian society.

Paradoxically it is this distancing which enables the French to retain much of the concept of 'primitiveness' which was attached to the Aborigines from the early contacts onward; however it is no longer associated with individual behaviour, but with cosmology (Durkheim, The elementary forms of religious life), patterns of classifications (Durkheim and Mauss, Primitive classification), kinship (Lévi-Strauss, The elementary structures of kinship) or modes of production (Testart, Le communisme primitif). Individuals cease to exist in favour of systems. No longer the ideal model of the noble savage, the Aborigines
are turned into the blueprint of social organisation in human societies. Interestingly enough, in Madagascar where I am working at present and where the French initial idealistic view of the Malagasy survives in the strongly emotive commitment of France toward that country, a theoretical study of enduring substance on the systems of kinship or modes of classification of the Malagasy remains to be done. One would have wished this phenomenon to be explored further in the book, beyond a passing reference in the last two articles (Lucich, Glowczewski), as it touches upon a major dilemma in the discipline of anthropology.

All in all the book is easy to read and informative, and it is designed to appeal to the reader with an active interest in Aborigines rather than to the expert who may find it wanting in analytical comments. Its general tone is mild enough not to upset any sensitivity and, being firmly anchored in past perceptions, it is able to detach itself from the ideological dimension which usually pervades a topic as political as this. Unavoidably, this lack of commitment to any particular conviction leads to a rather bland text which draws no conclusions and leaves the reader wanting an additional chapter at the end where all the issues barely touched upon throughout the book, could be developed and discussed in a satisfying manner.

Arlette Filloux
Madagascar


Jeanette Hoorn has done an excellent job of writing the accompanying text for the drawings of Joseph Lycett depicting the life and land use of the Aborigines of Sydney circa 1820-22. Her emphasis is on Lycett's drawings as ethnographic text, and in her discussion of the scenes she refers to the descriptions of Aboriginal society by L.E. Threlkeld of the London Missionary Society, who established an Aboriginal mission in the Lake Macquarie district in 1825.

The interpretation of social activity depicted in artwork (or photography) is a minefield for the unwary. In this instance, separated by both historical time and culture from the subjects of Lycett's work, Hoorn is to be commended for her use of Threlkeld's diaries. He interacted on a daily basis with the Aborigines of the region Lycett was familiar with, and he had the necessary intellectual curiosity, sensitivity, cross-cultural perspective (he had extensive experience in Polynesia) and literacy to describe them.

Indeed, it is in this area that Hoorn, in her anxiety to stress the Aboriginal assertive occupancy, defence and utilisation of their land, perhaps reads a little too much into Plate 4 'A distant view of Sydney and the harbour, Captain Piper's Naval Villa at Eliza point on the left, in the foreground a family of Aborigines', the first drawing she discusses. The predominant artistic practice at the time these drawings were executed was to relegate the Aborigines to the woodlands, along with the native flora and fauna.

This also became a tradition in historical writings, persisting until recent years when the active resistance of Aboriginals to colonisation began to receive attention from historians and others. Hoorn describes the central figure in a scene of a domestic group returning from a food-gathering quest' '... [he] faces the spectator head-on with his arm
BOOK REVIEWS

drawn across his chest, ready to defend himself and his companions, he [Lycett] shows them as people in control of the land and ready to defend their use of it.' Maybe. But the buildings in the background (across Sydney Cove to Point Piper and Circular Quay) indicate that the time of defence of the land is well past, at least in the Sydney region, and the man is simply carrying his hunting or fishing spears. Nevertheless, Aborigines did assert and defend their rights to their land and continue to do so vigorously, and Hoorn is absolutely correct in the point she wishes to make.

Lycett's drawings are remarkably similar in subject matter to those of a later amateur artist R.A. Ffarington1, although much better executed. Both sets of Aboriginal scenes are very rich in ethnographic content, and help to bring alive the often scattered and scant written descriptions of Aboriginal lifestyle of the period. Executed on the east and west coasts of Australia respectively, they highlight the similarities in Aboriginal cultural forms generally in the round of seasonal food-gathering activity and ceremonial life, for example the various hunting and gathering activities such as spearing game and fishing, and the stylistic form of the corroboree. They also show regional variations, for example in body decoration, details of burial and mortuary rites, and artefacts. Additionally, they are testimony to European intrusion into the land as boats anchor, trees are felled and roads made, buildings are erected, and, in the case of Lycett Plate 16 'Aborigines with spears attacking Europeans in a rowing boat', the intruders are attacked.

Hoorn briefly places Lycett in context as a convicted forger, deported to New South Wales in 1813 and as a ticket-of-leave employed by the police, then convicted a second time in 1815 and sent to Newcastle gaol where he worked for the regional commandant. She defends his apparent lack of originality in his artwork and his eclectic borrowing of styles on the grounds that the nature of his work for the government meant he was often required to copy from drawings provided by others. Fair enough, Lycett had well developed drafting skills as the landscape backdrops to his figure drawings illustrate, and it was not until he was released from gaol and appears in the colonial muster 1819-1822 that he was his own master. He then faced the vexatious task of supporting himself as an artist and so remained unliberated from the stylistic demands of his patrons. Hoorn also observes (p.7) that Lycett was no skilled figure painter, a point amply illustrated. Plate 11 'Group of Aborigines with shields and spears' contains ten drawings of the one figure with slight variations, while in Plate 10 'A family of Aborigines taking shelter during a storm' the figures are executed in quite a different stylistic manner.

In his Aboriginal subject matter Lycett could take advantage of their otherness to express his own. His drawings have a freshness and spontaneity which is generally very appealing. His naive style is direct and conveys a sense of authenticity which is lacking in many representations of Aborigines where formal art training severely obscures the eye of the artist. The engravings from Collins 1802 (p.12) and J. Heaveside Clarke's 'Throwing the spear' 1813 (p.17) are cases in point, the artistic merits of the works notwithstanding. The Collins example is actually an engraving by F. Powell, probably from a sketch by Thomas Watling who portrayed Aborigines in naturalistic settings and poses as he observed them, in contrast to this example.2

In Plate 14 'Aboriginals spearing fish ... ' Lycett approaches the 'typical' ethnographic painting, analogous to the typical landscape in which various elements (flora and fauna) are

1 Lois Tilbrook, Ffarington's folio: South-west Australia 1843-1847, Art Gallery of Western Australia, 1986. See also article by Tilbrook in this volume.
assembled to illustrate the characteristics of the region. Aborigines are engaged in various forms of fishing - spearing fish in the sea from a rocky outcrop using four-pronged fishing spears, spearing marine life in a stream, diving for crayfish, roasting fish, interacting socially while fishing, cooking and eating seafood on the beach, and keeping a lookout on the headland. This same point can be made for Plate 6 'Contest with spears'.

Lycett intended his drawings to illustrate facets of Aboriginal life in the colony of New South Wales, his social scenes are intriguing and his landscapes convey a sense of the Australian countryside. Jeanette Hoorn has aided admirably his task by providing written descriptive context.

Lois Tilbrook
Sydney


Since the early 1960s, when assimilation lost favour among Australian activists, the Aboriginal hope was always to gain self-government in their communities without white men's heavy interference, and to run an agenda in accord with their Aboriginality.

There is a despondent conclusion in Peter Read's biography of Charles Perkins, a very complex character who was the Secretary to the federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs until November 1988. This is that despite all Perkins's effort, after his dramatic suspension from his position, after long and vehement arguments in Parliament, and after the creation of the ATSIC structure by unsympathetic politicians, he lost his chance of wresting power for Aboriginal groups from mining councils and government intrusion.

Perkins was born near Alice Springs in 1936, a son of the remarkable achiever Hetti Perkins, organiser of meals and shelter for the town's outcast children. She was descended (on her mother's side) from eastern Arreme people. In 1941 an Anglican missionary, Father Percy Smith, fearing the wartime military presence there, removed some promising Aboriginal lads, including young Perkins, to suburban Adelaide, where his hostel confined the boys in Edwardian gentility and authority but provided much love. The institution became despotic when it lost Father Smith. The rebellious Perkins endured an unhappy apprenticeship until his strong talent for soccer took him to England, and brought him self-regard. On returning to Adelaide, he picked up 'assimilation' politics.

Peter Read concentrates on his political activity, first in social work among Sydney Aborigines, following his graduation from Sydney University in 1966. Read's account of the 1965 'Freedom ride', when Perkins led university students on a bus tour investigating some intolerant country towns, is vividly written. The Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs (FAA), a citizens' welfare association, had been set up in South Sydney in 1964 by the Reverend Ted Noffs, for Aborigines migrating to the city. Perkins was its most vigorous Manager, encouraging young blacks like 'Chicka' Dixon onto the staff, and encouraging other employers to do likewise. But the dedicated Myrtle Cocks had prepared the ground for the FAA prior to Noffs, and persistent agitation from another association (the Aboriginal-
BOOK REVIEWS

Australian Fellowship) had ended legal discrimination in 1963, thus paving the way. Read also has not mentioned the pioneer educational work of Tranby College.

Having visited many reserves in New South Wales, Perkins joined the federal Office of Aboriginal Affairs in 1968 with a clear notion of the innate strength of the Aboriginal community. He had supported the 1967 Referendum campaign of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI) by providing the Foundation building as the venue for its Sunday meetings but Read has by-passed the successful Referendum. He asserts (on page 122) that the FCAATSI Aboriginal and Islander delegates had met in closed session for the first time in 1968, but (Sir) Doug Nicholls had begun a tradition for such closed sessions in 1960. The Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship (which, throughout, Read calls the Australian Aboriginal Fellowship) closed down in 1969 because its campaigns had succeeded in abolishing official racial segregation within New South Wales.

Although, as Read says, the FACCTSJ was deeply divided in 1970 by the attempt to alter its Constitution to allow only Aborigines voting and executive rights, the division was not upon racial lines. FCAATSI believed in integration, not assimilation. The World Council of Churches' financial grants were shared with the breakaway National Tribal Council, enabling FCAATSI to hold annual conferences in isolated Townsville and Alice Springs.

Perkins was above all one who demanded Aboriginal control of Aboriginal agendas. Read does not investigate how it was that FCAATSI, Aboriginal-run from 1973, was wound up in 1978 despite its new name and nationalist style.

It is sometimes difficult to follow the sequence of events, because Read, in order to contain the discussion of a subject touching different times of Perkins's career, will step from one year back to another, or forward to 1988 (when he interviewed Perkins). Due to the slow progress in Aboriginal politics it is possible that this method is acceptable, but readers not aware of the history will be puzzled.

The strength of the book is where Read establishes Perkins's motivations and purposes during his long term (1973-1988) as a 'hands-on' manager of Federal affairs. He would openly condemn perceived ministerial ignorance or perfidy, but he also had a knack for restraining inflamed Aboriginal meetings. His own good relations with different Ministers (like Holding and Chaney) were better than the media ever disclosed. After the Aboriginal Development Commission was launched with Perkins as chairman, Read shows that, by buying properties to diminish racial discrimination, whatever the probable economic risk, the ADC was ahead of the Department in acting for genuine Aboriginal social needs.

Jack Homer
Canberra


Goonininup is the Aboriginal name of the area until recently occupied by the Swan Brewery, the river frontage at the base of Mount Eliza, only about two kilometres from the centre of Perth. It is a level piece of ground with a freshwater spring on the north bend of
the Narrows looking across to South Perth, west down the Swan River towards Fremantle and the Ocean and east up Perth Water and to the upper reaches of the river. While Europeans see it as an unrivalled site for prestige development, the Aborigines claim it as a place of myth and history where the Waugal, the great ancestral snake, 'crawling his way to the sea, created the Swan River' (p.44).

This brief well-documented, well-illustrated survey fulfills its author's claim to be a 'compilation of recorded information about the Swan Brewery area from the time of early European exploration and settlement until 1987, that is, prior to the major dispute over the future of the Swan Brewery' (p.6). Since 1829 it has been in turn a small shipyard, a market garden, a 'feeding depot' for Aborigines, a 'Native Institution', a flour mill, a convict depot, a tannery, an ice plant and a brewery. A road linking Perth and Fremantle was built through it in 1853: this is now a paved highway carrying heavy traffic. The Swan Brewery occupied the site from 1888 until early in the 1980s (the report under review does not seem to record the date on which the company ceased its operations there). The illustrations include a distant view of the site and a close-up photograph from the early 1900s, but a recent close-up is lacking.

In 1980 Aboriginal organisations laid claim to the site with plans for an Aboriginal Commemorative Centre. There followed much controversy, but since this report was written a decision has been made by government in favour of the Aborigines.

Isobel White  
The Australian National University

Growing up Walgett: young members of the Walgett Aboriginal community speak out.  

This little book consists of a collection of autobiographical fragments, written by students and ex-students from Walgett school, collected by the teacher, Cilka Zagar, who inspired the writing. What she and the children have to say is both touching and depressing, and the comments from a number of adult people in the town reflect quite different readings of the book.

Cilka Zagar's loving and productive relationship with the Aboriginal people of Walgett could be of great interest to teachers in racially divided communities. Her disciplinary practice consisted of getting the children to write about themselves. She says: '... they know that I want to know and that I really love them. They so often told me not to be so ignorant and to listen. So I learned to listen and they are still telling me'.

That theme of listening is one frequently heard from Aboriginal people and these young people's view of their lives may be a good beginning for the outsiders who are working in similar communities. The lives are represented in varied ways. Perhaps the most striking thing is the extent to which alcohol and racism, and even the experience of gaol, is part of everyday life. Some are angry at others for drunkenness and trouble; others describe their experiences of drinking, stealing and 'having a good time'. The stories are naive and in some ways could be those of young people anywhere expressing frustration at the limitations of their environment. Several say the town is still 'home sweet home'. The frequent references to difficulties with school and employment have as a backdrop a sense of community and
BOOK REVIEWS

kin which emphasises that Aboriginal identity is a major and conscious aspect of these young Aborigines' lives.
The book is attractively produced and illustrated.

Gillian Cowlishaw
Sydney


The title of Gordon Reid's book stems from a remark made by Inspector Paul Foelsche, head of the Northern Territory Policy Force from 1870 to 1904. In 1874 Aborigines killed a telegraph official at the Roper River and Foelsche wrote to his friend John Lewis that he was despatching a party to recover the body and 'to have a Picnic with the Natives'. Foelsche's irony and subsequent vague reports of white punitive action on the Roper are not untypical in the theme of Reid's tale, summarised in the book's sub-title, 'Aboriginal-European relations in the Northern Territory to 1910', for, sadly, frontier violence generated elsewhere in Australia was repeated during the process of northern settlement. The book begins with a brief summary of South Australian experience before that colony's first attempt at Northern Territory settlement in 1864. British experience at the military settlements of Fort Dundas, Fort Wellington and Victoria, Port Essington, plus Aboriginal encounters with A.G. Gregory and John McDouall Stuart are covered with equal brevity. So are the Escape Cliffs fiasco and Aboriginal encounters with Overland Telegraph personnel and early droving parties. Chapters on the police and pastoral industry form the core of the book with Foelsche as a focal point. Mission activity, and the results of the belated South Australian humanitarian response complete the story.

Reid readily concedes that the book is 'written from the top', that is from mainly official records and without an Aboriginal perspective - but that is the major problem with all studies relating to Aborigines which are beyond the range of oral history. Much of the work is not original; the sections on Aboriginal-white relations in Central Australia rely heavily on M.C. Hartwig's excellent doctoral thesis, studies by Hassell and Gibbs provide the South Australian background prior to 1864, theses by Schmiechen and O'Kelly the mission side, and Elder's study of C.J. Dashwood much of the material on the humanitarian response. Reid's conclusions about the failure of South Australian Aboriginal policy - if inaction can be dignified by that name - and the reasons for the survival of Aboriginal culture in the north are not new either.

But the book is still a considerable achievement, partly for its depiction of Foelsche, who deserves to rank highly with the modern proponents of 'multi-skilling'. Administrator, policeman, amateur dentist, photographer, firearms expert, said to be 'the best lawyer outside the South Australian Bar', he also had a deep interest in Aboriginal culture coupled, says Reid, with a detachment that allowed him to sanction its destruction. However, the book's most notable achievement is to bring together widely scattered sources of information to form the first concise account of Aboriginal-white relations during the forty-seven years of South Australian rule in the Northern Territory.

Reid's style is fluent and lively, apart from a certain tedium in the later chapters, probably induced by excessive reliance upon official reports. In this work is seen the current state of knowledge; it will also show to those with particular interest in the subject how far we have yet to go in gaining a close understanding of black-white interaction. Still
unpublished studies in that area by Tony Austin and of the Northern Territory policy by Bill McLaren will help. Much more needs to be done - but it can safely be said that Reid's book is a valuable milestone along the way.

Alan Powell
The Northern Territory University


This volume has been seven years in the making, its gestation having spanned that of its publisher, the Northern Territory University (and gone past the bicentenary goal). All 216 subjects are dead, and most flourished before 1945, although there is much coverage of post-WWII events. The entries are set out in the style of the Australian dictionary of biography (ADB), whose files were drawn on for this volume. Unlike the ADB, the contributors are unpaid volunteers.

A praiseworthy feature of the volume is the inclusion of the biographies of numerous Aborigines, generally ones known through their association with ethnographers, missionaries, explorers or the police (as tracker or prisoner). Thus Aboriginal men comprise all but one of the Aboriginal entries in the volume: the only woman among the score of Aboriginal entries is Memorimbo (Rash Poll) of Port Essington.

The Aboriginal biographies are mostly of men of the 'Top End' and Roper River. These are by John Harris (Billiamook and Umballa, Gajiymuma, Maric, Medlone, Memorimbo, Mira, Miranda), Keith Cole (Gabarla, James Japanma, Lazarus Lamilami), Bruce Shaw (Major, Nemarluk), Robyn Maynard (Kwalba, Spider Ngapunun, Yirawala) and one by E.W. Pretty (Tuckiar). John Harris also contributed the entry for James Noble, a Queensland Aboriginal missionary. The children of an Aboriginal mother and white father who have entries are Reuben John Cooper (by Anne Briggs), and Harold Hamilton and Timothy Hampton (both by Keith Cole). R.G. Kimber wrote the only entries on central Australian Aborigines apart from Kwalba (Arrarbi, Erlikilyika, Minyana Jakamarra), and these, like Kimber’s other contributions, are among the most detailed, and show what can be made of limited and scattered sources. Note that the Aboriginal entries are due to a small number of writers and are of high standard.

Given the nature of pre-1945 Northern Territory life, there is some Aboriginal involvement in most lives included, and much of interest to make the volume a necessary reference for any student of Northern Territory history. The frontier nature of the area and period covered, on the fringes of literacy and of official records, has hampered the contributors. In addition, the small size of the non-Aboriginal Territory population of the period presumably led to kinds of selectivity which the editors have had to accept. This can be seen in the unevenness of the articles, especially of non-Aboriginal subjects. The non-Aboriginal subjects are mostly 'Territorians': people who, as Xavier Herbert quipped, were usually born elsewhere. Actually, more than half the subjects were born in a southern state (NSW, Victoria, SA or Tasmania), and only seven were born in the Territory (mostly Top End Chinese).

A number of biographies have been authored by family members. These 'family' entries may be the ones which the editor refers to when he notes a departure from ADB practice:
we have rejected the established custom of editorially-imposed unity in favour of allowing the maximum permissible expression of personality, attitude - and even idiosyncracy - to come through in the writings of each author; 'colour' is not incompatible with historical worth (p.v).

Indeed there is much colour, detail and interest in some of these family articles and they are a welcome part of the volume. Unsurprisingly most conform to the maxim 'Speak no ill of the dead' and it is a pity that the editors have allowed contributors to make no mention of discreditable but important episodes, such as the criminal charges brought against C.G.H. Stott (1933/34) and against W.W. Braiding (1945), both relating to alleged assaults on Aboriginal people.

From the Aboriginal lives included it is notable that some of the nineteenth century Aborigines travelled extensively beyond the Territory with their European associates. For instance, the two Larakia men Billiamook and Umballa who 'were among the first Aboriginal people to welcome Goyder and his survey team to Port Darwin in 1869' went by ship to Adelaide the next year. 'On their return to Darwin, they caused considerable surprise by disembarking in the uniform of the Adelaide Volunteers.' And Medlone, who was 'about four years old in 1839 when the Port Essington garrison was established', along with two other young boys, was stranded for a time in Hong Kong in 1847.

It is easy to cite persons omitted from such a collection, and of course the editors' choices cannot follow a non-existent objective scale of worthiness for inclusion. And one could accept the editors' policy that the spread of entries should provide a broad reflection of life in the Territory rather than focusing on eminent public figures.

Nevertheless, there is cause for comment in the roll call of this volume, highlighted by some later and repetitive entries and the inclusion of some quite marginal subjects. For instance, there is a biography of Baudin of almost two pages, his only connection being his naming of features of the coastline without setting foot on it; and of Alexander Forrest, who at least was on Northern Territory soil (remembered in a cairn on the Stuart Highway, not mentioned).

The meaning of the cut-off date of 1945 for Volume One is not explained in the preface, and accordingly there is no clear division between this volume and the next. We assume that T.G.H. Strehlow is held over to the next volume, yet his Northern Territory years were all pre-1945 and after that he was only a visitor. On the other hand Lamilami (c1908-1977) is included though the years that earn him a place are post-war. Likewise Yirawala (c1890-1976) could be thought of as flourishing in the 1960s and 1970s, when he was making his reputation as a bark painter.

As the editors say, A special effort has been made to record the lives of migrant groups, women and Aborigines, those people whose contribution to Territory society has been great but often poorly documented.

Accordingly, they felt that it was better to publish what could be found on such people, no matter how incomplete, than to leave them unrecorded.

The emphasis away from 'public figures' may explain but not excuse the absence of Justice T.A. Wells (mentioned under Tuckiar, whom he sentenced), or even Herbert Basedow (mentioned in the Mackay entry). But it would have been good to see articles for such figures as Bill Harney, C.H. Chapman of The Granites and the Centralian Advocate, the Policeman writer Vic Hall, Frank ('Frances of Central Australia') McGarry, or explorer-prospector Alan A. Davidson. Given the preponderance of CMS mission workers included,
ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1991 15:2

it is strange not to find important and interesting Methodists like James Watson, T.T. Webb and the unlucky Len Kentish (who had his head chopped off by the Japanese).

If limitations of space were the concern, and 'eminent public figures' to be played down, the editors would have done well to omit some of the more than thirty articles from the ADB (simply giving a list of such omissions).

A notable Aboriginal omission is Albert Namatjira, featured however in the Rex Battarbee entry. There is no shortage of material now on 'The Man from Arltunga' Walter Smith, but there is no summary here of Kimber's biography. Bill Liddle of Angas Downs would have been an interesting inclusion with his several wives and children who have played important parts in the life of the Centre. Top End omissions, definitely pre-1945, include Durmugam (Smiler), with some material from archives to add to Stanner's biography; Harry Makarola (Mahkarolla), mainstay of the Milingimbi mission, and a key figure in the 'Caledon Bay affair' and trial - and with Lloyd Warner's 23 page biography of this man, his chief informant! The 'Caledon Bay affair' figures 'King' Wunggu and his sons are also absent, along with 'Slippery' Binjarpuma, a notorious figure in north east Arnhem Land in the 1930s and 1940s, and Thomson's right hand man Sergeant Reiwala. Other Aborigines who might have been included are the likes of Mariana, the 'King' of Bathurst Island, who would be well worth including as the first successfully to press a 'land rights' claim against the Commonwealth in the late 1930s; Warumungu men King Dick (Cubadgee) and Willoberta Jack, or 'King' Charlie and Zulu (whose dealings over the Tennant Creek reserve with W.E.H. Stanner and geologist Woolnough are not mentioned in their entries).

The unevenness extends into some of the articles. The column on A.P. Elkin makes his links with the Northern Territory seem more tenuous than they were. Similarly the Chewings is taken with minor amendment from the ADB, with no amplification of his Northern Territory life.

As in the ADB, each entry closes with a useful list of sources. These vary quite a lot: some are merely 'Family information', while others, including most of those of Aboriginal subjects, are detailed. Some additional references that have been overlooked include the following: there is a photograph of Billiamook in the Foelsche collection, and several of his original drawings in the J.G. Knight collection, both in the SA Museum; the Stanner papers at AIATSIS; the Stott ethnographic collection is at the SA Museum. Lindsay Crawford 'a bachelor throughout his life' is mentioned in the reminiscences of his centenarian daughter Nellie Flynn; this, by the way, is not the only omission of mention of well-known Aboriginal descendants of a European subject.

Errors and omissions are inescapable in a work of this kind and even the ADB, with its numerous paid staff, publishes lengthening lists of errata. We hope that the NTDB would follow the same practice, and have sent a list of corrections and additions to them. Here we comment on a few of the articles on subjects relevant to Aborigines:

We are not told that A.M. Blain (MHR) used Parliament in 1940 to slander the Hermannsburg missionaries and T.G.H. Strehlow as Nazis.

Ellen Kettle says that C.E.A. Cook failed to implement certain parts of the 1928 Bleakley Report and furthermore that 'the government had long been concerned over the failure'. There is no evidence for the alleged concern of the government, and Donald Thomson was surely not 'recommending more support for the church missions' - this is one point on which Cook and Thomson saw eye to eye.

1 'Ninety-nine years of living history', Northern Territory Digest, August/September 1980:14-16.
Mounted Constable Murray, we are told by Carment, 'was born during the 1890s in Victoria' (sc. 9 February 1884) and 'died in Adelaide during the 1960s, survived by his wife'. The vagueness here is exceptional: most entries pay attention to the basics of birth, death and marriage. The Barrow Creek constable position never 'carried with it the title of Chief Protector of Aborigines', and there is no mention of Murray's later postings to Harts Range and Roper River; or of the Anderson & Hitchcock exhumations (from the 'Kookaburra' site) or the Willoberta Jack affair, both 1929 events being fairly well documented.

Gordon Sweeney did not recommend 'a new mission near the mouth of the Liverpool River', but more mission patrols to the area - by Aboriginal workers.

The NTU Press have produced the volume well, but there could have been a bit more attention to detail in final editing. The only photographs are the portraits in a collage around the cover, but there is no key to them: for instance, on the front is a good portrait of C.L.A. Abbott, and on the back of Miss Pink. Unlike the ADB, the pages lack a running header, which makes locating entries a bit slower. The editors have attempted to supply a 'qv' to direct the reader from one article to another, but the policy has not been applied uniformly. Several Aborigines are cross-referenced under variant spellings of their names, but not Lamilami (Merwulidji), and a number of contributors use idiosyncratic spellings for names from Aboriginal languages.

For all its shortcomings, this volume is an essential reference for those interested in Territory history.

Acknowledgement
We are grateful to Neil Andrews, Willis Crocker, Philip Jones, R.G. Kimber, Jane Simpson and Michael Walsh for discussion of the book under review.

David Nash
ANU, AIATSIS

Jeremy Long
Sydney


This book represents the final report of a three year Research Fellowship in Aboriginal Language maintenance at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. It deals initially with the statistics of language loss, showing how of some 250 languages that existed at the time of first contact, at least 160 have already become extinct and only 20 are in a relatively healthy state. Subsequent chapters deal with the following:
The importance of keeping language strong,
Attitudes and policies on Aboriginal languages,
What is being done to keep languages strong,
Recurrent problems in keeping language strong,
Key issues in Aboriginal language maintenance,
The language loss process.

The book remains a report both in style and content, summarising the state of affairs and suggesting measures to arrest the decline of the languages. There are occasional brief
quotations from Aboriginal people about their experiences, for instance being forced to speak English in dormitories, but on the whole details and personal aspects are absent. It would have had considerable impact if for instance we had been given the history of just one of the many failed language revival projects, following it through from the initial enthusiasm and euphoria, through various vicissitudes, such as the departure of the enthusiastic people and local jealousies, through to inertia and final collapse. From such a study it would become clear that shortages of funds, lack of support staff and similar matters stressed by the author (p.85), important as they might be, are not as vital as the human factor: the main difficulties with such projects are usually unforeseen and even unforseeable. The excellent Wangkumara program at Bourke for instance collapsed mainly because the skilled speaker, on whose knowledge and support the project depended, had to leave town as the cotton gin affected his health. In several other locations programs declined because of local rivalries. In one town the headmaster was instrumental in starting a language revival program, but then felt threatened by the influx of outside finance and radical young staff over whom he had no control, and who he felt disrupted his school. In another much smaller township the community was totally split over the language issue. Such cases show that solutions are indeed even more difficult than is implied by the report.

An aspect of language that is not discussed in this work is nevertheless worthy of being included: language is important not only as a code of communication as Schmidt stresses, but also as a vehicle for traditional literature. As the language declines, the esoteric knowledge of the details of traditional literature, the ancient songs and the detail of the mythology are lost, and these more than anything else give identity to people and their land. A language package cannot save them directly, but can do so indirectly, through inspiring growing pride in Aboriginal traditions.

There is occasional reference in this book to Batchelor College, and some mention of the Institute for Aboriginal Development, but it would have been valuable if we had been given more detail about their important achievements, as well as further information on some of the excellent specific language courses that are now available. The present book is useful as a summary of the status of Aboriginal Languages in the late eighties. It contains valuable recommendations which need to be implemented.

Luise Hercus
The Australian National University

BOOK NOTES


Aboriginal Studies Press has produced another beautiful picture book, with appeal to adults and children, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. The first one, The story of the falling star, reviewed previously, was from New South Wales. This one is from Western Australia and tells about the constellation Europeans call the Pleiades or the Seven Sisters. Greek mythology tells how the Pleiades took refuge in the sky from the unwelcome attentions of a lecherous man; the Aboriginal legend is similar.
BOOK REVIEWS


Graeme Dixon is the first winner of the David Unaipon Award for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island writers. His poetry is vigorous and disturbing, whether he is writing about prison life, ill-treatment of Aborigines by Europeans, temporary forgetfulness induced by alcohol, or of the homesickness suffered by Aboriginal city-dwellers for a faraway birthplace.


This book is the record of an exhibition of photographs at the Museum of Victoria on show from 4 September 1989. The earliest exhibits were photographs taken in the 1870s, the most recent in the 1980s. They reveal women of strong character from girlhood to old age.


This useful textbook answers many questions that the beginning student might ask about Aboriginal languages, for example whether they are 'primitive', i.e. simple, or complex, and how many there were in 1788. It is a pity that such a useful little book carries such a high price.


This number consists of one article by the late Eric Michaels himself, the other nine are in his memory and there is a partial guide to his written work, much of it concerning Australian Aborigines and television. The last three articles, by Deborah Bird Rose, Tim Rowse and Robert Hodge are about Aborigines and television and Michaels' unique vision of the relation between the two.

Isobel White
The Australian National University

Editors' note

Owing to lack of space some book reviews have been held over until the next volume.

Thanks
Sally - Isobel White

197