Aboriginal History

Volume seventeen 1993
ABORIGINAL HISTORY INCORPORATED

The Committee of Management and the Editorial Board

Peter Read (Chair), Peter Grimshaw (Treasurer/Public Officer), May McKenzie (Secretary/Publicity Officer), Neil Andrews, Richard Baker, Robyne Bancroft, Valerie Chapman, Ian Clark, Niel Gunson, Luise Hercus, Bill Jonas, Harold Koch, Isabel McBryde, Campbell Macknight, Ewan Morris, John Mulvaney, Rob Paton, Diane Smith, Elspeth Young.

ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1993

Editor: Valerie Chapman.
Review Editor: Luise Hercus.

CORRESPONDENTS


Aboriginal History aims to present articles and information in the field of Australian ethnohistory, particularly in the post-contact history of the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. Historical studies based on anthropological, archaeological, linguistic and sociological research, including comparative studies of other ethnic groups such as Pacific Islanders in Australia, will be welcomed. Future issues will include recorded oral traditions and biographies, narratives in local languages with translations, previously unpublished manuscript accounts, resumes of current events, archival and bibliographical articles, and book reviews.

Aboriginal History is administered by an Editorial Board which is responsible for all unsigned material in the journal. Views and opinions expressed by the authors of signed articles and reviews are not necessarily shared by Board members. The editors invite contributions for consideration; reviews will be commissioned by the review editor.

All editorial correspondence should be addressed to The Editors, Aboriginal History, Department of History, The Faculties, Australian National University, Canberra 0200, Australia.

Subscriptions and related inquiries should be sent to BIBLIOTECH, Australian National University, Canberra ACT 0200.

© Copyright Aboriginal History Inc., Canberra, Australia. ISSN 0314-8769. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part of this publication may be reproduced by any process whatsoever without the written permission of the publisher.
Gordon Briscoe

Obituary for Professor Fred Cossom Hollows (1929-1993)

1

Damiris Bairstow

With the Best Will in the World: the Demise of the Gampignal on the AA Company's Estate at Port Stephens

4

Don 3aker

John Piper, 'Conqueror of the Interior'

17

Jack Bohemia, Bigfoot Jagarra, William McGregor and Fossi Pluto

Gooniyandi Stories of Early Contact with Whites

38

Sally Hodson

Nyungars and Work: Aboriginal Experiences in the Rural Economy of the Great Southern Region of Western Australia

73

Russell McGregor

The Concept of Primitivity in the Early Anthropological Writings of A.P. Elkin

95

D.J. Mulvaney

Australian Anthropology: Foundations and Funding

105

Rondi Wie

The Aboriginal Biographical Index in the Library of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies: A Research Aid

129

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Judith Wright McKinney

131

REVIEW ARTICLE

Noel Loos

Scenes from an Academic Life: A Review of 'One Blood' by John Harris

133

REVIEWS

143

The Index for Volumes 1-16 will be issued separately in 1994.
# ABORIGINAL HISTORY

**VOLUME SEVENTEEN 1993**

**PART 1**

## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gordon Briscoe</td>
<td><em>Obituary for Professor Fred Cossom Hollows (1929-1993)</em></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damaris Bairstow</td>
<td><em>With the Best Will in the World: the Demise of the Gampignal on the AA Company's Estate at Port Stephens</em></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Baker</td>
<td><em>John Piper, 'Conqueror of the Interior'</em></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Bohemia, Bigfoot, Jagarra, William McGregor, and Fossil Pluto</td>
<td><em>Gooniyandi Stories of Early Contact with Whites</em></td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally Hodson</td>
<td><em>Nyungars and Work: Aboriginal Experiences in the Rural Economy of the Great Southern Region of Western Australia</em></td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Professor Fred Hollows.
The Fred Hollows Foundation.
OBITUARY FOR PROFESSOR FRED COSSOM HOLLOWS
1929-1993

Gordon Briscoe

Frederick Cossom Hollows was born in Dunedin, New Zealand, in 1929, the second son of Joseph Alfred and Clarice Hollows. Fred was born at a time of great world economic turmoil into a family which was tolerant, Christian and socialist, with a long British labour heritage of political radicalism. His paternal grandfather, a coal-miner in Lancashire England, migrated to New Zealand in the 1870s. This was a time when working people were locked in a great struggle for better living conditions, and a greater share of the wealth of what they produced from their labour. This struggle began in the 1830s during the early part of the great Industrial Revolution.

Fred's radicalism came from a Christian up-bringing sharpened by his early student days at Glenleith Church of Christ College, University of Otago, Dunedin, where he studied Divinity, Arts, and the physical sciences, and by his membership of the New Zealand Communist Party. Fred was a committed socialist when he went into the study of medicine in which he graduated at the University of Otago in 1956. Bourgeois customs and manners, however, were never allowed to come between the practice of medicine and humanism. Not long after graduating in medicine, he left for England. There, he worked as an epidemiologist under the famous Archie Cochrane, who was Professor of Respiratory Medicine at the Welsh National School of Medicine, and it was through him that he took an interest in eye diseases.

Fred's early epidemiological work on glaucoma, a blinding disorder related to increase in ocular pressure, was carried out mainly in Welsh mining towns. The findings of Fred's first research paper, 'Source of variation in tonometry', showed that earlier research was statistically unsound. The paper was delivered at Oxford in the early 1960s. He published numerous articles in the 1960s and 1970s. Two of these publications were 'Intra-ocular pressure, glaucoma suspects in a defined population', British Medical Journal of Ophthalmology, 1966, and 'A critical review of methods of detecting glaucoma', in Glaucoma, by J. Hunt, Edinburgh, 1969, both published with P.A. Graham. In his work on trachoma in Australia, he was responsible for the NTEHP Report, National Trachoma And Eye Health Program, Royal Australian College of Ophthalmologists, Sydney, 1980.1

Following research in England, Fred Hollows was appointed Associate Professor of Ophthalmology at the University of New South Wales and its Prince Of Wales Hospital at Randwick in the late-1960s. It was at this time that a number of political events were just taking shape.

One of these events was the emergence of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI) which, in the mid-1960s, spearheaded the campaign leading to the 1967 Referendum. The outcome of the Referendum changed

Division of Historical Studies, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, Canberra.

The Editors acknowledge with gratitude the kindness of the Fred Hollows Foundation, Sydney, in providing two of their photographs of Fred Hollows for publication.

the Constitution in two respects: first, to allow Aborigines of 'full descent' to be counted in the national census (in reality all persons of mixed Aboriginal descent had been counted in every census since 1901, while people of 'full descent' were counted in some places but not published); and, second, to make it possible for the Commonwealth to make laws on behalf of Aborigines.

The other event was the emergence of the Gurintji Committee which drew Fred into the 'land-rights' and 'equal-wages dispute' fought by the trade unions and Aboriginal stockmen of the Northern Territory against the pastoralists and land owners of that state.

As a member of the Gurintji Committee (a committee made up largely of university students, left-wing socialists, communists and trade unionists) Fred saw some of the Gurintji stockmen's eye conditions in his Randwick clinic. These men were introduced to Fred by Frank Hardy, novelist, journalist, communist and political activist, who was also a member of the Gurintji Committee. Frank Hardy asked Fred to go to the Gurintji camps at Wave Hill in the Victoria River District of the Northern Territory. Fred became perplexed by the eye conditions he found there, conditions which had been seen only in African peoples.

On his return from Wave Hill Fred saw there were more complex conditions relating to the social and political circumstances of a subjugated people: poverty, eye diseases, poor health in general and a population prepared to tough it out against those who had disturbed the social structures they had had in place. Immediately on his return Fred became identified with the Gurintji struggle. He was also a committed anti-apartheid protestor. That was in 1970 when I first met him.

That meeting between us was in Redfern, at a meeting called by myself and Dulcy Flowers (a member of FCAATSI and a nurse of Torres Strait Islander descent). In attendance also were people such as Shirley Smith, Ross McKenna, John Russell of the South Sydney Community Aid and Fred, together with one of his medical students, Paul Beaumont. The story of the medical service development is well known so I need not recount that. I left the political scene in NSW to return to my home in the Northern Territory, and then to the Departments of Aboriginal Affairs and Health in Canberra. That was during the latter part of 1973.

In 1974 Archie Kalokerinos made his now famous statement that Aboriginal blindness rates were the highest in the world. Fred contacted me to see if a program was possible to deal with the problem. With others, I encouraged him to talk in terms of a program to eradicate trachoma and other eye problems for both rural whites and Aborigines. Fred accepted the challenge. His proposal to the then Minister for Health, Dr Doug Everingham, included this principle and the objective that if operations were to take place they were be done as soon as possible and as close as possible to where people were living.

Before the Labor Government was dismissed on 11 November, 1975, the Minister for Health approved a grant of $1 million to the College of Ophthalmology to conduct a rural eye health program. To Ralph Hunt's eternal credit he always supported the program even when threatened by the Queensland Government to ban it from re-entry to that state. Fred Hollows was the Director, and I was his Assistant Director, of the National Trachoma and Eye Health Program (NTEHP).

The program lasted as a national program and was split up into state-based services after the mid-1980s. The two-year screening program examined 105,000 people in 465 camps, country towns and large urban centres. Of that number, 15,000 Aborigines were treated, with 1,000 eye operations being performed on them. Fred spent considerable amounts of his own money and time supporting the Aboriginal health movement, from which he became increasingly alienated as it became part of the status quo. I advised him to
FRED COSSOM HOLLOWS

spend more time with his new family and, later, to get involved in helping the socialist revolution in Eritrea.

Gradually, Fred succumbed to secondary infections from a cancer located in his kidney. Following an operation to remove one kidney Fred mounted an incredible fight. That struggle for life was both a very public one but equally it was very private. For me it was the kind of death that only great men and women come to experience. Fred Hollows became a great Australian. He did so because he was a socialist and a truly skilful eye surgeon, a sound medical epidemiologist and an eternal student of politics, medicine and socialism. Fred delighted in the argument of new ideas and new theories of interpreting the world. Very near to the end of his life he used all these skills to object to the way males who practised anal sex had monopolised the debate on the adequacy of AIDS policies.

Fred argued that AIDS was predominantly a problem among homosexuals and that government health authorities had given in to the 'gay' lobby over the issue. He said it was not good enough to promote 'safe sex' and then to tolerate anal intercourse and penetrative sex between HIV positive people.

AIDS policy and the effects of AIDS, he also argued, would have a catastrophic effect upon Aboriginal young and traditional community 'blood-letting' practices in some parts of rural Australia. It was gratifying to know that Fred's efforts to change the 'bull-nosed' way the Labour Government acted was his triumph. It was a triumph over personal threats made to himself and his family, over personal vilification by the 'gay' lobby and over anarchistic activities against him during his efforts to raise money for his support of the revolution in Africa and his program. He did it when Government funded bodies refused to speak out against the prospect that young Aboriginal migrants moving to the city for work which did not exist would turn to male prostitution for large sums of money from wealthy homosexuals, many of whom died in comfort and with public sympathy, while the ignorant Aboriginal youths would die a horrible death alone and in public disgrace. These are things which Fred fought for. These are the things which made Fred Cossom Hollows a great human being and a great humanist.

Professor Fred C. Hollows, as that great Aboriginal woman Mrs ('Mum Shirl') Smith always called him, was survived by his three brothers, John, Colin and Maurice, his wife Gabi, and his seven children, Ben, Tanya, Cam, Emma, Anna, Rosa and Ruth. He was given state funerals on Monday, 16 February, in both Sydney and Brisbane. His body was laid to rest in the Bourke cemetery, New South Wales, on Wednesday, 17 February, 1993, attended by many Aboriginal and other friends. It is unfashionable to refer to people these days as being 'the friend of Aborigines', but for Fred Hollows that is what he was. He was without racial prejudice and he knew more Aborigines, and entered their camps, than most other people. Fred lived up to his word in that he left the world a better place for having lived, and we will never see his like again.
WITH THE BEST WILL IN THE WORLD: SOME RECORDS OF EARLY WHITE CONTACT WITH THE GAMPIGNAL ON THE AUSTRALIAN AGRICULTURAL COMPANY'S ESTATE AT PORT STEPHENS

Damaris Bairstow

European settlement of Australia was to change for all time the traditional life of its indigenous people. Whilst the more violent incidents should not be forgotten, European contact with the Aboriginal people was not always marked by conflict and ill intentions.1 Some, in the nineteenth century, saw Australia as a new land, recently raised from the sea. This accounted for there being so much sandy soil and for the flora, fauna and indigenous people, none of which had yet developed into the higher orders of the north.2 England was judged to hold to

the great and magnanimous principle of planting a colony in the most remote region of the world, in order to civilize the natives and make that country beneficial to mankind.3 These views were common to educated English gentlemen such as those dispatched to govern the giant London-based enterprise, the Australian Agricultural (AA) Company. This paper explores the record of black-white relations in one region of New South Wales, the area between Port Stephens and the Manning River that was granted to and under the control of the AA Company.4

What follows is not intended as a balanced research paper. It is a series of quotations from the records of the Company's officers, especially Robert Dawson,5 and other contemporaries. Incidents may have occurred which were not reported to those who are quoted here, but there is no reason to suppose that the records lie. With the possible exception of James Macarthur, whose aim was to discredit Dawson, these were men and women of probity.

Damaris Bairstow is an historical archaeologist in private practice in Sydney; 37 Grasmere Road, Cremorne, 2090.

---

1 In the course of research into European settlement of Port Stephens, NSW, the author found forgotten and unpublished contemporary records of the Gampignal people. See Bairstow 1985.
2 Blair 1879, p.222; Pinkerton 1802, II, p.471.
3 Delano 1817, p.448.
5 Robert Dawson (1782-1866) was appointed to found the Company's estate. In this he would have the guidance of a colonial committee of shareholders with expert knowledge of local conditions. Unfortunately for Dawson and for the Company, the committee appointed comprised Archdeacon Scott whose position made it inappropriate for him to act, Captain Phillip Parker King RN whose naval commitments kept him at sea, James Macarthur, son of John Macarthur Snr., Hannibal Macarthur, James' cousin and James Bowman, James Macarthur's brother-in-law - the 'Family Committee' - with whom Dawson was to fall foul. Dawson arrived in NSW in November, 1825. In 1828 the Family Committee succeeded in having him dismissed. Dawson returned to England where he published his Statement of ... Services ... as Chief Agent of the Australian Agricultural Company, an embittered defence of his conduct. His more reasoned and extensive work, The Present State of Australia was published in 1830. The book is filled with Dawson's delight in the countryside and in its 'sable' inhabitants, the concept of the 'noble savage'. For those who know it, the book has become the major contemporary account of the Gampignal people. (Flowers 1966; Court to Committee 10/12/1825 with Encl. AA Co. Records)
The land and its people

Two rivers discharge into Port Stephens from the north: the Myall close to the coast and the Karuah further inland. This was the land of the Gampignal, part of the Worimi. Although speaking the same language, different clans occupied the two rivers, each tending to stay within their own territories with little contact between them. There is evidence to suggest that the Karuah Aborigines feared those on the Myall and by 1826, when the A.A. Company settlers first came to Port Stephens, Europeans had ample reason to fear the latter.

The Myall was rich in timber. Sawyers and fellers had been employed to procure it. In the words of H.T. Ebsworth who arrived in Port Stephens in the middle of 1826:

These were generally desperadoes, emancipists as they are called, and not unfrequently Convicts accompany them, the whole superintended by an overseer, who is generally selected as a fit leader for this kind of banditti. These people were the first who came in contact with the natives; they contrived to conciliate them when they could make them useful as guides, or in procuring them kangaroos and other game; but they were sure to give the natives some cause for offence ere long, either by shooting, striking them, or taking away their Gins (wives), and the consequences were what would naturally have been expected. These wild men lay in ambush, and speared their oppressors whenever they could, and in return the sawyers were obliged, for their own protection to shoot them on all occasions that presented themselves, 'till at length the Blacks obliged them in many instances to abandon their stations; they then went in search for others, where they again created the same kind of evils, which were followed with similar results.6

Other reports echo Ebsworth's. The accounts which the Aborigines gave R. Dawson of the timber getters were disgusting and even terrible. Several boys and women were shown to me whose fathers and husbands had been shot by these marauders for the most trifling causes one, for instance, for losing a kangaroo dog, which had been lent him for the purpose of supplying the white savages with game.7

As a result the Myall aborigines had become exceedingly hostile towards white men, with whom they had once been upon good terms, and ... acts of violence had been committed on both sides. One of the consequences was that the natives inflicted vengeance [sic] upon almost every white man they came in contact with, and as convicts were frequently running away from the penal settlement at Port Macquarie to Port Stephens ... numbers of them were intercepted by the natives and sometimes detained, whilst those who fell into their hands and escaped with life, were uniformly stripped of their clothes.8

The reputation of the Myall River Aborigines was well known. Oxley's party had been attacked at Seal Rocks in January, 1818. Dawson, before his departure for Port Stephens, was warned 'against the savage and treacherous conduct of the tribes, who were said to be

6 A Letterbook ... kept by H.T. Ebsworth ... 1826, ML. B852-2, pp.43-5. Henry Thomas Ebsworth (c.1806-1853) arrived with Dawson in 1825 in NSW to act as secretary for the colonial committee but was forced to return to England in 1826 due to ill health. He became clerk and later secretary to the Company.
7 Dawson 1831, p.21.
8 ibid., p.42.
more ferocious and mischievous in this spot than in any other known part of the colony. His encounter with both the Myall and the Karuah Aborigines proved to be otherwise.

First settlement, 1826

In January, 1826, Dawson set off to inspect the land along the Karuah River which had been recommended as the site for the Company's grant. At Newcastle he hired an Aboriginal guide, Ben, who was a member of the Karuah clan. The Karuah people, being further from the sea and transport routes than those on the Myall, had less contact with Europeans and therefore less reason for fear or aggression. Through Ben, Dawson met delegates from the tribe. His record of this encounter reveals his 19th century paternalism, but it reflects also mutual good will and the policy of appeasement. Dawson told the delegates that he should be glad to see the whole tribe at Port Stephens; that [he] intended to remain there, and would protect them ... and take care that nobody should hurt them; that if they would sit down with me as my brothers, [he] would also be a brother to them, and would give them food and clothing, and lend them muskets to shoot kangaroos with ... We thus separated, with every demonstration of kindly feeling and confidence on both sides.10

The 'kindly feeling and confidence' of the Aborigines was soon confirmed. Having selected what was to become the village of Carrington as the site for settlement, Dawson instructed his men to build bark huts. As soon as we had raised the frames for some of our intended inhabitations, we were sadly at a loss for bark to close the sides and cover the roofs. Seeing their plight, Ben brought a dozen of his fellow tribesmen to assist. They having received each a small hatchet, set to work in good earnest, and brought such a quantity of bark in two or three days as would have taken our party a month to procure. Before a white man can strip the bark beyond his own height, he is obliged to cut down the tree; but a native can go up the smooth and branchless stems of the tallest trees, to any height, by cutting notches in the surface large enough only to place the great toe in, upon which he supports himself, while he strips the bark quite round the tree, in lengths from three to six feet. These form the temporary sides and coverings for huts of the best description. ...

Whatever difficulties I might have to encounter, in the first instance, from the wants, restless dispositions, and complaints of the white population, of almost every age and sex, whom I was about immediately to introduce to this new peaceful place, I felt no ordinary degree of pleasure and relief on experiencing such prompt and effective assistance from the natives.11

The good will of the Company's personnel was soon to find response even among the Myall River Aborigines. In the course of the next two years, several Port Macquarie escapees arrived at Carrington, all in the most pitiable condition, naked, wounded, and nearly starved. They all told a similar tale; that no hostility was exhibited towards them by any other tribes than those inhabiting the coast about Cape Hawke and the river Myall,
near both of which the timber-cutters were at work, and that the natives were exasperated in the highest degree against them.\textsuperscript{12}

In contrast the Company's servants, by and large, were spared. Two emancipist sawyers in the Company's employ, lost near the Myall, were captured by armed Aborigines. They, too, were stripped of their clothes, but their shirts bore the AA Company stamp. Seeing this 'the blankets and jackets were all returned instantly, and the sawyers were conducted to the nearest stock station, where they all took tea cordially together.'\textsuperscript{13} On another occasion a convict was lost and picked up by Myall River people. Again in Dawson's words, 'they took the greatest care of this man as soon as they found he belonged to me, and brought him home.'\textsuperscript{14} Whilst we have only Dawson's account of these incidents, Henry Dumaresq, in an interview with the Company's Court of Directors in November, 1827, praised Dawson for his amicable relations with the Aborigines which had 'enabled him to bring together in harmony hostile tribes.' Dumaresq added, 'the natives ... have not taken even a cob of corn.'\textsuperscript{15} Dawson's policy of appeasement bore fruit.

**Tommy**

Overshadowed by the notorious Myall Creek massacre twelve years later, the murder on the Myall River has faded into historical obscurity. In 1826, Tommy, an eight year old Aboriginal boy, was murdered by a gang of timber getters. In Dawson's words:

To accomplish this barbarous act they enticed the lad to a lonely part of the river, where they strangled him ... and then threw him into the water; having, as they afterwards confessed, put him out of the way to prevent his telling tales in his communications with the natives, with whom they were at variance.\textsuperscript{16}

Pennington, the gang superintendent, 'a most respectable, although unfortunate settler', who had befriended the boy and discovered his body, came to Carrington for assistance. In his capacity as magistrate, Dawson set out to arrest the culprits. Four men were committed to trial in Sydney: John Ridgeway, Thomas Chip, Edward Colhurst and a man called Stanley who had escaped but was tried in his absence. These men were white. All were convicted and sentenced to be hanged.\textsuperscript{17}

In contrast to the press coverage given to the massacre on Myall Creek, the report of this trial commanded but a couple of sentences.\textsuperscript{18} Whether this was because the trial was considered un-newsworthy or whether the editors had been instructed not to inflame public opinion at a time when the press was also reporting that tribes were massing along the

\textsuperscript{12} ibid., p.42.

\textsuperscript{13} ibid., p.303.

\textsuperscript{14} ibid., p.146

\textsuperscript{15} Information given by Dumaresq to Court, 29/11/1827, AA Co. Records. Henry Dumaresq (1792-1838) came from a military family and had been educated at the Royal Military College, Great Marlow. He had been appointed military secretary to General Darling and accompanied Darling to NSW as his private secretary. Dumaresq was AA Company commissioner at Port Stephens from 1834 until his death in 1838. There is little report of black-white relations in the Company records of this period but there was no ill treatment. The missionary, James Backhouse, a pro-Aboriginal admirer of Threlkeld's work at Lake Macquarie, visited the estate in July, 1836, and commented on the good treatment of the Aborigines at Carrington. His only criticism was of the Company's lack of effort to 'civilise' them. Although another visitor, the pious Charlotte Anley, was more concerned with the treatment of prisoners, she also makes no mention of mistreatment of the Aborigines. By this time, however, although the tribes to the north survived in number, there were few Aborigines left at Carrington. (Gray 1966; Backhouse 1843, pp.400-1; Anley 1841, pp.62-3).

\textsuperscript{16} Dawson 1831, p.43.

\textsuperscript{17} ibid., pp.41-44.

\textsuperscript{18} *The Australian*, 23/9/1826.
GAMPIGNAL AT PORT STEPHENS

Hunter River cannot now be known. Political considerations may have been the reason for the six months delay in fixing a date for execution. As it transpired, the death sentences were not carried out.

A date was fixed, and a place, Carrington, that the Aborigines might see that 'white man's justice' applied also to whites. While the scaffold was being built a group of Myall River Aborigines entered one of the Company's outstations and demanded blankets and flour. Spears were thrown, and an unarmed shepherd wounded. White resentment was aroused. Dawson, apprehensive of the effect the execution would have on the settlement, especially among the convicts who formed the majority of the population, requested a further postponement. The sentences were reduced to life imprisonment on Norfolk Island.19

Tony

Tony's murder had occurred well away from the Company's settlement and involved none of the Company's personnel. The shooting of Tony, a Carrington Aborigine, by Byron, a convict constable in the Company's employ, was closer to home. Again Dawson acted immediately. He

issued a warrant for the constable to be brought up at a certain hour the next day, handcuffed, and in the custody of two armed soldiers, wishing to make as much display as possible on the occasion, to prove to the natives that I wished and intended to protect them.20

This was done in the presence of 'the natives ... who fixed themselves to be spectators of the scene.'21 The shooting, however, had been accidental. Byron was returned to Sydney without further punishment, and this seemed to satisfy the Aborigines who had no thirst for revenge.22

The tribe moved into the bush so that Tony's funeral could take place according to tribal ritual away from European presence.

During their absence, our people expressed themselves sorry that the blacks had gone away, as they could get no water carried for them from the spring, or obtain any fish without them. The procuring of bark, too, for repairing old and erecting new huts, was at a stand. In short, the value of these poor, inoffensive people, was never so highly estimated and felt as when they were gone; and their return was consequently hailed as a benefit restored to the settlement at large.23

The settlement consolidates, 1827

The settlers had become heavily reliant on the support of the Aborigines.

Their services had almost become necessary to the families in carrying water, collecting and chopping firewood, and supplying them with fish, which they did in abundance. The native women and children were constantly in, or loitering about the doors of the huts, where it was quite common to see a black woman dressed up with an old gown or cap, and dandling in her arms the infant of a white woman; while others, especially young girls, frequently assisted their white neighbours at the wash-tub. Native children of both sexes

19 Dawson 1831, pp.231-3, pp. 259-60.
20 ibid., p.87.
21 ibid., p.89.
22 Minutes of a Meeting of the Colonial Committee, 15/9/1826, Macarthur Papers, ML. A4314.
23 Dawson 1831, p.88.
too, were often seen at their games in all parts of the establishment with the white children; and it was no unusual thing to see a black man, for short periods, at one end of a saw, and a white man at the other, working together with as much cordiality as if they had both been of the same colour and nation.24

Aborigines under white supervision built the first washpools for the Company's sheep. They picked the wool clean from seeds. They collected the marine shell that was needed for lime.25

Several natives attend us regularly; our Boat's Crew consists of six most excellent fellows, who handle the oar with the expertness of experienced seamen; others are employed as messengers; some attend at table; in short we find them useful in every department. Our little black Gin is an excellent washer.26

For Dawson, they acted as ... guides on every occasion, not only when [I was] on horseback, but also in the boat, in which they frequently rowed me up the rivers and various creeks, accompanied often by only one white person. So good an understanding subsisted between us ... that had it been necessary, I should have had no hesitation in trusting myself alone with them in any situation. The assistance which I derived from them, whether as guides or labourers, exceeded any thing I can describe; and the satisfaction this afforded me, as well as the pleasure I received in the society of these cheerful and obliging people, supported me greatly in the daily performance of the arduous and anxiously responsible duties which I had taken upon myself.27

These services were not coerced. It is true that I generally had a considerable number employed, and could get any work done by them which I required; but they were not always the same people. Several hundreds were in the habit of visiting us at different periods, and I placed no restraint upon any of them, there were always enough who were willing, as a temporary change and a little novelty, to supply the places of those who had become tired of labour.28

In order to render them easy and happy, it was necessary to prevent them from entertaining an idea that they were under unreasonable restraints; and I took care always to inform them, that if they wished to leave me and return to the forests, they could do so whenever they pleased.29

I never forgot that they have not been brought up to work; that they will not labour long at a time; and that if too much is expected and exacted, their friendship will soon cease for us.30

Dawson, however, had no doubts of the superiority of the European way of life. Nature prompts all to the gratification of their animal propensities; to those happily born in civilized life the charms of social intercourse, and the

24 ibid., p.100.
25 Examination of Charles Hall, 26/5/1828, ML A4322; verbal communication by Jas. Macarthur to Court, 10/10/1828, ML A4318; Ebsworth 1826, p.41.
26 A Letterbook ... kept by H.T. Ebsworth ... 1826, ML B852-2, p.59.
27 Dawson 1831, p.28.
28 ibid., p.157.
29 ibid., p.155.
30 ibid., p.94.
GAMPIGNAL AT PORT STEPHENS

gratifying communication of intellect, soon fix their hold on the mind; while
the untutored savage has no source of enjoyment open to him save the
uncontrolled exercise of his liberty, and the unchecked pursuit of selfish
pleasure ...  

One ought never to forget that they are the untutored children of nature ...
Like children, they must be treated with firmness and kindness, and suffered
to have a holiday in the woods, to indulge in their old habits, whenever they
ask for it ...  

To maintain a friendly intercourse with them - to humanize them, as it
were; to do them all kindness in my power in return for our interference with
their country; and to receive an equivalent in their labour for the food which
was given to them, were all I aimed at: and the result fully equalled my
expectations.

This is the attitude of Enlightenment coupled with the Protestant Ethic and contemporary
Eurocentredness. The childlike Aborigine could be educated and, whilst never to become
the equal of the European, could be brought to a state of grace. The difficulty lay in

The mildness of the climate, the great facilities of obtaining food in every part
of the forest, the attractive freedom and pleasures of a hunter's life ... which
rendered it extremely difficult to attach them to any one spot.

While Lady Parry included the Aboriginal women amongst those to be enlightened, she
was to express the same difficulty:

I do not see scarcely any hope of civilizing them ... If we can only attach one
or two of them, & teach them, they may teach others, but they do not like to
remain long together in one place & having first to make them understand
your language increases the difficulty.

A mastery of the English language was, it seems, a condition of Enlightenment.

To the Australian-born James Macarthur, the Aborigine was neither childlike nor
innocent but an affront to the sensibilities of civilised men. On Christmas night, 1827, the
Aborigines performed a corroboree at Carrington for the entertainment of the Europeans.
Macarthur was not amused:

Such exhibitions when removed from their proper scene, the Forest, become
truly disgusting. As I did not chuse to be a spectator, I retired early to our
tent. I was shortly afterwards followed by Mr. Cordeaux, who could not
refrain from expressing his indignation at the brutality of exposing a young &
well educated female to the pollution of such a scene. Mrs. Croasdill, he said,
had been obliged to pass amidst this band of inebriated & highly excited
savages to her chambers; even there it must have been quite impossible to
exclude out the sound of their indecent revelry. I have more than once had

31 ibid., p.268.
32 ibid., p.94.
33 ibid., p.157.
34 ibid., p.156.
35 I.L. Parry to C. Martineau, 10/6/1830, SPRI, Ms 438/25/3. Dawson was succeeded as Commissioner of the
AA Co. in 1829 by Sir Edward Parry RN (1790-1855). In 1803 Parry joined the Royal Navy where he
gained preferment under the patronage of Admiral Cornwallis. By 1810 he had been promoted to Lieutenant.
After the end of the Napoleonic Wars the Admiralty turned its attention to the North-West Passage, and for
more than a decade Parry was involved with a series of expeditions. In 1829 he was knighted for services to
Arctic exploration. In 1826 he had married Isabella, daughter of Sir John Stanley later first Baron Stanley of
Alderley, by whom he had ten children. Parry had been chosen for his ability to command. His wife was an
added bonus. Most of the record from this period comes from Lady Parry's letters to her sisters in England.
These were personal letters, not for publication. (Parry 1967).
occasion to feel for this lady's situation & blush for Mr. Dawson's insensibility.36

The lady in question does not appear to have been consulted. Her reaction may have been more akin to that of the young Lady Parry who was to watch a corroboree three years later. She wrote to her sister:

Some of them [were] quite without covering, others very decent according to Indian fashion, but as I said before you are not at all shocked by the black people & scarcely notice that they are not clothed but are more inclined to admire their straight limbs.37

Tucked away in the Company's records are more ominous reports. At the bottom of the Return of Sick from April to July, 1826, after 84 cases of lung complaints, gastric cases and ophthalmic diseases are four cases of venereal disease - 4.7%. In the following nine months the percentage rose to only 7.4% or 20 venereal cases out of 269 sick, an increase which could be accounted for by the increased numbers of convicts and emancipists. The convict population had risen from 29 in May, 1826, to 204 by April, 1827, emancipists from 8 to 55. In the same period the number of free men, Company officers and indentured servants, had risen from 21 to only 42, the majority of these being stationed at Carrington. Aboriginal women working for the Company were protected from interference. Those in the Aboriginal camps were not. There seems to have been no violation of the tribal women during the first year or more of the settlement but as convict numbers grew, discipline began to break down. It was difficult if not impossible to enforce discipline upon convict shepherds isolated in the bush. At the end of 1827, James Macarthur was writing of 'familiarity' between the European men and the tribal women and of 'disease' as the consequence. While there are no figures available for the period of his visit, in the first three months of 1828 recorded cases of venereal disease had risen to 51.9%, 54 cases of syphilis and 14 of gonorrhoea out of a total, including accident victims, of 131. A report later in the year recorded 17 venereal cases then being treated out of a total of 28 (60.7%). First convicts and, soon after, free servants were prohibited from entering the camps. Severe penalties were imposed for disobedience but diseases had already spread among the Aboriginal women.38 By March, 1828, they had, according to John Macarthur, already put a stop to the increase of the black population inasmuch as there is not a single black infant to be seen in the arms of a mother.39

Though John Macarthur was deliberately discrediting Dawson, it is clear that the prohibitions were too late. Dawson himself had foreseen some such harm to the Aboriginal people.

The increase of society, and the spread of the branch establishments of the Company, necessarily occasioned a more promiscuous communication between white people and the native than was useful to the latter; and as no

36 Journal kept by Mr Jas. Macarthur at Port Stephens, 25/12/1828, AA Co. Records. Until the middle of 1827 James Macarthur had concurred 'in the most favourable report upon the good management of Mr. Dawson' but receipt of a letter in June in which Dawson stated that he was no longer prepared 'to make the Company's grant a burial ground for all the old sheep in the colony' changed his mind. In fact the only member of the committee Dawson named as selling him old ewes was James Bowman, but the accusation was enough for the 'Family Committee'. The Macarthurs closed ranks to achieve Dawson's dismissal. (Committee to Court 30/4/1837, Dawson to Jas. Macarthur 30/6/1837, AA Co. Records.

37 I.L. Parry to L.D. Stanley, 13/5/1830, SPRI, Ms 438/25/82.


39 Jno. Macarthur to Court, 26/5/1828, ML. A4322.
beneficial system for their amelioration could be carried to any extent, unless they were removed to a distance from vicious society, and placed under the eye of a zealous, humane person, employed for that purpose only, every day's experience convinced me that the character of the natives would retrograde in proportion to the increase of European population, which at that place could not be of the best description.40

Reports of venereal disease cease suddenly. The effects on the Aboriginal population would not have ceased, though the absence of any mention of disease among the natives by Parry, who succeeded Dawson in 1829, and his wife's acceptance of Aboriginal women both at the settlement and with her small children suggest that the Macarthur reports, even if basically true, must be limited to Aborigines in the bush with whom Lady Parry had little contact. Communication between convicts and Aborigines no doubt lessened with the return to the government of nearly a hundred of the more recalcitrant prisoners and the discharging of almost the entire emancipist workforce during 1828. Contracts with twenty of the more unruly indentured servants were also terminated.

The settlement expands

In April, 1828, Dawson's appointment was suspended by the colonial committee with whom he was at variance. With his departure from Port Stephens, relations with the Aborigines in the hinterland deteriorated.

From Dawson's records it is clear that a different Aboriginal group occupied the centre of the Company's grant, the land from Johnston's Creek to the Gloucester River.41 A Company exploitation of this land had only just begun when Dawson left. As the Company's flocks increased, sheep were moved on to the tribal lands to the north. Sheep were in the care of shepherds, one shepherd to each flock, two or three flocks being grazed together. Isolated in the bush and often unarmed, these men felt vulnerable.

By May, 1828, there were reports of Aborigines becoming 'troublesome' to shepherds at the outstations but it was not for over a year that any major incident occurred. On the 7th August, 1829, a convict shepherd was killed and the following day Carl Rantzsch, a free shepherd, was speared. An armed party was sent north. The Aborigines fled into the bush but one was shot, by an Aboriginal tracker who may have acted out of fear since he was on the land of another clan, but he was under European command. J.E. Ebsworth, who had been given temporary control of the estate, expressed no dismay over the incident. Indeed, he hoped 'it would serve as a warning.'42

The reasons for these attacks are not recorded, but later incidents followed a pattern and the pattern is a classic tale of misunderstanding with tragic consequences. The Company issued flour and blankets to some of the clans. The records are not clear as to which groups were considered entitled to them since some whose lands had been taken were excluded. The groups to the north seem to have received nothing, yet it was their land which now was being invaded. Doubtless they too felt entitled to share the white men's goods and were angered when their requests were refused. All later attacks followed a refusal to hand over flour or blankets. Retaliation was aimed at frightening off the Aborigines and comforting the shepherds. Whilst hardly to be described as appeasement, the Company's policy of non-molestation remained firm. Reprisals occurred only after attack and attacks were few.

40 Dawson 1831, pp.224-5.
41 ibid., pp.118-19.
42 J.E. Ebsworth to Brickwood, 17/9/1829, ML. A4326. James Edward Ebsworth (c.1805-1874) was first cousin to H.T. Ebsworth. He served the AA Co. from 1827 until 1851, rising quickly to second-in-command.
In August, 1830, an emancipist shepherd was speared after refusing flour to a band of between 14 and 20 Aboriginal hunters. Again an armed party was sent in pursuit. As the Aborigines fled, the Company men opened fire killing one and wounding several others. Whether the shooting was by an Aborigine or a European is not recorded, but the group was under the command of Field, the free constable stationed at Carrington. 43 Three years were to elapse before another incident occurred. This time a free shepherd, James Henderson, was killed. The Aborigines responsible could not be traced but, in Parry's words:

the Blacks which accompanied our party could not be constrained from killing some others whom they met with, as belonging to the same tribe [as those responsible].44

No action was taken against the Company's trackers nor against the Company officers who commanded them. The murder of black by black passed with little comment. The reaction of the London Board, as expressed in their immediate reply to Parry's report, was that they hoped no 'ill consequence' or 'bad feeling' between the settlers and the Aborigines had resulted.45 Official policy was still one of appeasement. As it transpired, this was the last such incident on the estate. In May, 1835, a sheep was stolen and an overseer beaten at an outstation near the Gloucester River. Soldiers were sent to the scene, but the Aborigines having fled across the Company's boundary were not pursued.46

These outbreaks were all in the north of the estate and the 'wild blacks' of the north were contrasted with those around Carrington both in Parry's Journal and in his wife's letters home.

The natives here are very superior ... and are a fine race of people ...
I never saw a more harmless race of people than these blacks appear to be, though they tell me that they are not all as harmless and quiet as they appear to be in this place ... You may ... trust them with anything, & they make very safe and useful messengers to different parts of the settlement. If you lend them a gun or boat to get game or fish, they are sure to bring them home safe with the produce of their labour.47

In later years, 'troubles' near the Gloucester were reported from time to time,48 but these troubles involved only the loss of some stock. In 1840 a young Aborigine was brought before the magistrate at Stroud and duly reprimanded for having speared a cow, which seems to be the height of retaliatory measures taken. Phillip Parker King, the Company's then commissioner, when reporting the matter to his London superiors, advised:

the Blacks are well conducted, and very kindly treated by us and are very useful ... You may rest assured, Gentlemen, that every one of your Servants in authority are [sic] disposed to do every thing they can to second the philanthropic views of the Government towards ameliorating the condition of the Aboriginal Inhabitants of the Country.49
GAMPIGNAL AT PORT STEPHENS

But the best will in the world did not save the Aborigines. Their land had been usurped, their society shattered. The tragedy is reflected in the words used in Company correspondence. The 'pleasure' Dawson gained from the 'society' of the Aborigines had changed under Parry to a policy of non-molestation. By 1840 King sought only to 'ameliorate the condition' of the surviving people.

Aboriginal numbers were dwindling. Europeans had brought diseases other than venereal. William Scott, who was born in Carrington in 1844, recorded that in his youth measles decimated the clan there. Furthermore,

the tribe did not multiply as it must have done in earlier times. There were few young boys growing into adolescence and the bora ceremonies were beginning to die out. By the time Scott left Port Stephens in 1873, the Aborigines, who had once been variously numbered at between three and six hundred, 'had dwindled to about fifty members. Perhaps there were fewer than that.50

There are no Aborigines now at Carrington. The bora ground survives as does a tree bearing the scar from a bark canoe. Both are protected by legislation in a way that those who attended the bora ceremonies, who built the canoe, were not.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Abbreviation:
AA Co. Records
Australian Agricultural Company Records, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, incorporating the ANU Archives of Business and Labour, Australian National University, Canberra.

ADB

ML

SPRI
Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge.

---

Australian (newspaper), Sydney.
Backhouse, J.A. 1843, A Narrative of a Visit to the Australian Colonies, London.
Delano, A. 1817, A Narrative of Voyages and Travels, Boston.

attacked. There was no killing on either side and King's party withdrew to the ship ('King, Phillip Parker' 1967; King 1827).

50 Bennett 1928, pp.8-9, 34, 42. William Scott, the son of the storeman at Carrington, was born at Carrington and spent his childhood there. His only playmates were Aboriginal. Scott's reminiscences were edited and there could be omissions, but it is doubtful if any are relevant. Bennett, the editor, was deeply concerned with the fate of the Aboriginal people on the Port Stephens estate. This was the reason for publishing the memoirs of the old man in 1928. (Hodgson to Court, 8/12/56, AA Co. Records.)
King, P.P. 1827, Narrative of a Survey of the Intertropical and Western Coasts of Australia ... London.
JOHN PIPER, 'CONQUEROR OF THE INTERIOR'

D.W.A. Baker

There are two John Pipers in Australia’s history. The better known was John Piper, 1773-1851, military officer, public servant, bon vivant and landowner near Bathurst who was the subject of a short, somewhat romantic and perhaps over-sympathetic biography by M. Barnard Eldershaw: The Life and Times of Captain John Piper, Sydney, 1939. One of its two authors, Marjorie Barnard, also wrote the lively sketch of his chequered career in the Australian Dictionary of Biography. The lesser known John Piper, usually referred to simply as Piper, the subject of this article, was an Aborigine who accompanied Thomas Mitchell on his 1836 expedition into Australia Felix. Very probably he got his name by being referred to as ‘John Piper’s boy’, this phrase being abbreviated to ‘Piper’. Almost all we know about this Piper comes from the second volume of Mitchell’s Three Expeditions into Eastern Australia and the copy of the journal of Mitchell’s second-in-command, Granville Stapylton.

Mitchell’s intention on this his third expedition was to complete the survey of the lower reaches of the Darling that he had begun in 1835. He organised his party in a valley near Orange, in March 1836 after a very dry summer. Even the Lachlan, he had learned at Bathurst, had dried up. He was to travel westwards to the Darling; water would be an acute problem. He therefore welcomed the assistance of an Aboriginal guide. He had with him twenty-three convicts or ex-convicts, several of whom had been with him on earlier expeditions. The man he trusted and relied on most was Alexander Burnett whom he designated Overseer. Mitchell’s second-in-command, Stapylton, was, of course, a gentleman, an assistant surveyor. He did not join the party until nearly a month after it had started.

A group of Aborigines came to the camp while Mitchell was preparing to set out. Among them was John Piper from the Bathurst district twenty or thirty miles to the east. He spoke English adequately and agreed to accompany Mitchell as far as he went, provided he was allowed a horse and was clothed and fed. He seemed to be on excellent terms with Burnett who assured Mitchell that Piper would not desert, as had an Aboriginal guide on an earlier expedition, because after penetrating the interior Piper’s fear of the savage Aborigines would prevent him abandoning the expedition.1

Piper was then a young man, not just a boy, because he was old enough to take a wife. But he thought of himself as still a young man, not yet old enough to eat the flesh of an emu. To do so, he believed, would make him come out with boils all over his body. Mitchell, like most of his contemporaries, had little sympathy for such absurd superstitions.2 It took an earlier generation of rationalists like David Collins to realise that many Aboriginal beliefs were no more bizarre than those held by many Europeans.3

Presently though, Piper decided that he was old enough to eat emu. The ceremony which would enable him to do so consisted chiefly in being rubbed all over with emu fat by an ‘old man’. One of the convicts, John Richardson, was considered to be an old man—he

D.W.A. Baker is Visiting Fellow, History Department, Australian National University.

---

1 Mitchell 1839, pp. 1-4.
2 ibid., p. 29.
3 See, for example, David Collins 1798, pp. 547-8.
Thomas Mitchell's Third and Fourth Expeditions.
was thirty-nine and Piper reluctantly allowed himself to be rubbed with emu fat by Richardson. From that time he had no objection to eating the flesh of that bird.4

From the beginning, Piper despised the convicts. Like everyone else around Bathurst, he knew the distinction in white society between bond and free and at first Mitchell was the only man in the expedition free of the convict taint. Piper would act, therefore, only on Mitchell's orders. Out in the bush, he made all the 'white-fellows' look stupid. He and the other Aborigines who were with the party from time to time could read traces on the earth, climb trees or dive into water far better than the ablest of the white men. In tracing lost bullocks, in speaking to other Aborigines, in hunting, Piper was the most accomplished man in the camp. In stature, he was the tallest and in authority he liked to think of himself as second only to the 'Major'. Mitchell half acquiesced in this self promotion in order to secure his best exertions.5

When Granville Stapylton joined the expedition,6 Piper was somewhat put out. Here was a rival. He appeared at Mitchell's tent and said, 'That fellow has two coats', implying that Mitchell ought to give one of them to him. Mitchell recorded the demand with an exclamation mark: what a cheeky fellow Piper was. Stapylton, for his part, recognised no rivalry. He was misanthropic. He had no time for Mitchell, loathed the convicts and barely recognised Piper except as a curiosity. He was, Stapylton thought, 'a lazy rascal useful only as an interpreter'.7

A couple of days after Stapylton joined the party, the expedition reached Lake Cargelligo, about 200 miles from Bathurst. Though partially dry it was the home of innumerable ducks, black swans and pelicans and its waters abounded with fresh water mussels which formed the chief food of the hundred or so Aborigines living on its shores. Mitchell sent Piper forward to tell these people about the expedition and to prevent any alarm at its appearance. The ease with which Piper conversed with these people proved to Mitchell that Aboriginal dialects did not vary as much as some people thought. He did not realise that the people at Bathurst and at Lake Cargelligo both spoke the same language—Wiradjuri.8

One night, while the expedition was by the lake, Piper left the camp and went to the Aboriginal gunyas. The next morning he returned and behind him marched a woman loaded with a new possum skin cloak and various other presents that had been given to him along with his new wife. How Piper arranged this matter with complete strangers was something Mitchell could not understand but he noted that several Bathurst Aborigines also hoped to obtain wives from Lake Cargelligo. Piper's wife was called Kitty and Stapylton referred to her sarcastically as Madame Kitty. She was a tall, strong woman with great presence of mind but strangely disfigured having a blind eye, opaque and white, rather like that, Mitchell thought, of some Indian idol. Almost certainly this was the result of smallpox.9

Thus reinforced, for Kitty proved to be very useful, the expedition continued down the largely dry course of the Lachlan going from one waterhole to another. Piper recruited an old, experienced man from Lake Cargelligo to act as a guide. He often used one word as they went down the course of the river which Mitchell recorded as quawy believing that it

---

4 Mitchell 1839, pp. 346.
5 ibid., p. 162.
6 ibid., p. 30.
7 ibid., p. 162; Stapylton 1986, p. 60.
8 For this and other information about Aboriginal languages I am indebted to Luise Hercus.
meant a pond on the river which never dried up; each *quawy* having its own particular name. But Mitchell misunderstood. The word, best spelled *waway*, means the rainbow snake which lives in some, but not all, permanent water holes. No Aborigine would ever enter a water hole inhabited by a *waway*. When camped for a few days near Hillston beside a water hole which evidently did not have a *waway*, the party had an experience which left a nasty taste in everyone's mouth. The pond was a big one and Piper thought it might contain fish. He dived in with his fishing spear and, to his horror, brought up, instead of a fish, the putrid leg of a man. The guide from Lake Cargelligo apparently knew about the immersed body for he had not drunk any of that water, but had left the expedition there and returned home. It appeared that two Aborigines had been travelling in company, that one had died and that the survivor had simply tipped his companion's body into the water hole.10

Within a couple of days, Piper managed to find another man to replace the guide from Lake Cargelligo so the expedition continued down the course of the Lachlan. On 2 May, when about half way between Hillston and Booligal, Kitty came back from leading the expedition to tell Mitchell that there was water ahead and that there were Aborigines beside it. The party approached cautiously but the Aborigines were terrified, as was often the case when they first saw white men and their animals, and fled; all except a boy, about seven or eight years of age, who was quite blind, very likely from smallpox, and a little girl, perhaps four years old, who sat down beside him.

Afterwards an old man, some more children and the mother of the four year old girl came to the explorers' camp. The old man told Mitchell the names of the water holes between their camp and the Murrumbidgee but he refused to act as a guide. But the mother of the young girl, prompted by the old man, agreed to accompany the expedition. She was a widow named Turandurey, so she and her daughter, Ballandella, joined the expedition. Turandurey proved to be an excellent guide. She was about thirty years of age; she knew the country well; she was adept at finding water and she could converse freely with other Aborigines on the lower reaches of the Lachlan. Perhaps her own language was Mathimathi and she had learned some Yitayita and Wiradjuri.11

About this time two other young Aborigines attached themselves to Mitchell's party. They were both called Tommy. Mitchell's men called one Tommy Came-first; the other Tommy Came-last. Mitchell, always conscious of the need to conserve his food supplies, tried to discourage them. Tommy Came-first was told firmly to leave the party but he refused. He said he would follow the party despite the 'Majy's' orders as he could always find possums in the trees. When Mitchell was told this he was pleased by his independence and allowed him and Tommy Came-last, whom he had somehow picked up in the bush, to remain with the expedition. So Mitchell took with him down the Lachlan and into Australia Felix a little Aboriginal community. There were Piper and Kitty, Turandurey and Ballandella and the two Tommies.12

On 7 May Piper's skills as an interpreter were put to the test. When a few miles from Oxley, the expedition met an Aboriginal family which had just come north from the Murrumbidgee. Mitchell wanted to question the head of the family, an old man, about the supplies of water to the south and told Piper to open negotiations. But etiquette demanded patience and silence between the two Aboriginal men for some considerable time. Piper and the old man stood about eight yards apart, neither looking at the other and both remaining silent for a quarter of an hour or more. Mitchell was irked by this delay and told

10 ibid., p. 41, p. 56; Stapylton 1986, p. 64.
11 Mitchell 1839, pp. 60-4.
12 ibid., p. 67.
JOHN PIPER, 'CONQUEROR OF THE INTERIOR'

Piper to ask certain questions but was ignored. Piper still remained silent. Turandurey, however, became the channel of communication for both men spoke alternately to her in low voices. At length Piper addressed the old man directly, raising his voice a little, but with his head still averted. The other answered in the same way, until, by slow degrees, they got into conversation. So eventually Mitchell learned that there was water a mile or two further on, that the Lachlan contained much more water a couple of days journey lower down and that the Murrumbidgee was not much further to the south.13

Mitchell found the Murrumbidgee on 12 May about thirty miles downstream from what he believed was its junction with the Lachlan. Piper was called on once more to negotiate with the people living there, probably Yitayita speakers. He was the first to discern a group of Aborigines on the other side of the river. Mitchell told him to cooee; they answered the call and soon appeared on the opposite bank where they sat down silently, each man with a green bough twined round his waist or held in his hand. These Aboriginal men, Mitchell had discovered, could not immediately speak to each other on first meeting, but no such convention inhibited the women and Turandurey now stood boldly forward and addressed the men opposite her in a very animated and apparently eloquent manner. Mitchell admired her appearance and earnestness and delighted in the confident authority with which she spoke. He thought himself very fortunate to have met with such an interpreter.

At length the Murrumbidgee Aborigines proposed swimming over. Mitchell invited them to do so, speaking to Piper who then spoke to Turandurey who then spoke to the Murrumbidgee dwellers. They then requested that those wild animals, the sheep and the horses, might be driven away. At this both Turandurey and Kitty laughed and laughed, but the animals were removed as requested. The warriors of the Murrumbidgee were about to 'plunge into the angry flood' wishing, Mitchell supposed, to show off like so many Caesars before the two women. But their obvious fears of the sheep said little of their prowess in the eyes of those whom they would impress.

The weather was cold but the first man across carried with him a piece of burning wood and quickly converted his glowing embers into a fire to dry himself. He was soon followed by a grey haired chief and two other men. Piper tried to talk to them but had great difficulty in understanding their language. He said it was 'Irish'. This was not a witty way of saying that the language was unintelligible, as one might say that some foreigner was talking double Dutch. It was a statement of fact, for most Irish convicts in the 18th and early 19th centuries knew only Gaelic and, consequently, many Aborigines learned 'Irish' as their first European language. One of the swimmers, however, was from Lake Cargelligo and Mitchell was intrigued to see him act as an interpreter between Piper and his friends of the Murrumbidgee. From all this parleying Mitchell was confirmed in his belief that the Murrumbidgee presently ran into the Murray and that this larger river was joined at a greater distance by the Darling from the north.14

The expedition camped on the Murrumbidgee for a couple of days while Mitchell with five men went upstream to determine where the Lachlan entered the larger river. In Mitchell's absence that night, a group of Aborigines came into the camp, sat down and demanded food. Through Piper they enquired particularly why the 'Majy' had gone to the Lachlan junction with so few men because the Aborigines living there were very savage. Stapylton was alarmed and next day sent off a mounted party with Piper to follow Mitchell's tracks and assist him if necessary. Mitchell was not attacked and Piper found his

14 ibid., pp.75-7; Troy 1992.
tracks returning to the camp. He was following these when he came across a group of Aborigines, all armed with spears, also following in Mitchell’s footsteps. He sounded the bugle and the Aborigines, much alarmed, drew up at a distance. They would not allow Piper to approach them but one came forward and told him that ‘Majy’ had gone home. Piper was dubious about this and to still his fears he insisted on examining the points of their spears.15

Now freed from anxiety about lack of water, the expedition followed the Murray downstream until 21 May when, nearing the Murray, the four year old girl, Ballandella, slipped from the cart in which she was travelling and fell under one of the wheels which broke her thigh. Mitchell at once got his medical attendant to set the fracture, but as the femora had been broken near the socket it was difficult to bandage the limb so as to keep the bone immobile. The child bore the pain with admirable courage and patience and her mother showed every concern, soothing her daughter with soft and musical terms of endearment. This treatment and the mother’s care were successful and Ballendella eventually recovered from this mishap.16

Mitchell now decided to form a depot beside a lake near the Murray. Here he left Stapylton in charge of eight men to guard the stores and look after the stock. He took with him, to go down the Murray to the Darling, fourteen white men; Piper looking splendid in new boots, white sox and a red shirt; Kitty, who could make herself useful as a driver of a cart, and the two Tommies. Turandurey and Ballandella were left in the depot with Stapylton. The girl was now strapped securely to a board to ensure the bone was not disturbed in its healing. There was now no possibility of these two returning to their home on the Lachlan. They had become a fixture and would have to wait with Stapylton for Mitchell’s return from the Darling. Meanwhile, the assistant surveyor looked at the attractive young widow and decided it would be his duty ‘to keep off the Black Gentry’.17

Mitchell planned to travel light. Rations, tents and gear were packed into two carts each to be drawn by five bullocks. He thus hoped to cover fifteen miles a day and have his men in good shape to deal with the ‘fire-eaters’ of the Darling.18

While the party was still on the higher reaches of the Lachlan, Mitchell had been told by the locals that the Aborigines of the Darling, who spoke some form of Paakantyi, were coming to fight him. The reason for this belligerence was an affair on the Darling near Menindee which had occurred the previous year during Mitchell’s second expedition. Mitchell had been in the camp about three-quarters of a mile from the incident at the river and the account he gave of it, in the first volume of his Three Expeditions, depended on what the convicts who were engaged in the conflict told him. Their story was that several Aborigines had been shot, two or three probably killed, after some of them, although unprovoked, had attacked a watering party. The truth was almost certainly far otherwise. Several Aborigines of Menindee reported to Sturt and his party nine years later in 1844 that they had seen this shooting and that it accompanied the rape of a woman by one of the convicts or (the details vary a little according to the different reports) that it occurred after a quarrel about a convict’s refusal to give the woman a kettle promised in return for sexual favours. Whatever the truth, Mitchell and his men had every reason to anticipate hostility. This must have especially weighed on the minds of the four convicts in the party who had been involved in the killing.19

16 ibid., pp. 86-7; Stapylton 1986, p. 74.
18 ibid.
19 Sturt 1984, p. 32, pp. 38-9; Brock 1975, pp. 50-1; Browne 1966; pp. 32-3; Eyre 1845, II; pp. 470-2.
By 24 May 1836, Mitchell and his light party reached Lake Benanee about eight miles from Euston. The lake was then a full sixteen miles in circumference and its surface and beaches were covered with Aborigines. They loudly shouted the news of the arrival of the white men from group to group and many of them followed the explorers in a body as they continued on for a mile or two beyond the lake before making camp.

Mitchell and his men, to their surprise, recognised several of the Aborigines they had encountered at Menindee, two hundred miles away, some ten months earlier. Whether these Darling Aborigines had come to attack Mitchell and his men, as they suspected, is doubtful for they had women and children with them and could only have conjectured about the route he would take. It was more likely that they were on a journey, perhaps undertaken at regular intervals, to dance a corroboree with Aborigines near the junction of the Murrumbidgee and the Murray. Such a corroboree had taken place about three weeks earlier.20

The Darling Aborigines at first gave no sign of hostility. Each man carried a green bough and the elders did all they could to guide the expedition onwards by the easiest of paths. Mitchell was puzzled by this unexpected civility and remained suspicious, although it was now far easier to communicate with them because both Piper and Kitty knew something of their language.

During that afternoon many women and children assembled before the camp and now and then small groups came right up to the tents. Mitchell learned through Piper that after the shooting at Menindee the Aborigines living there had fled precipitately to the westward and had not returned to the Darling for some months. Mitchell had pointed out to him a son and two daughters of a woman who had been killed. The girls looked alike and reminded Mitchell of their mother. The younger was the most beautiful Aboriginal girl Mitchell had ever seen. As she sat, naked, she reminded Mitchell of the statue of ‘Eve at the Fountain’, a famous work by Edward Hodges Baily which had instantly given the sculptor an international reputation. While Mitchell looked at her, regretting the tragic fate of her mother, an elder who stood by begged him to accept her in exchange for a tomahawk.

That evening was a time of great anxiety for the whole party. It must have been especially so for the four convicts who had done the shooting. Of these four, Joseph Jones, the man who had probably raped and had then murdered an Aboriginal woman and killed her child, must have been particularly apprehensive. Would he be marked out as a special target for vengeance? Would the Aborigines tell Major Mitchell through Piper what had really happened? If they did would he be able to make a plausible denial? These private fears were unfounded; there was no discussion of the earlier killing but the general anxiety for the safety of the party remained.

Night closed in. The Aborigines lit a cordon of fires around the camp, sent away their women and children and could not be kept away from the carts. Piper became alarmed when Kitty overheard them arranging for three men to seize and strip him while others attacked the tents. He approached Mitchell with a look of thoughtful responsibility and asked him what the Governor had said to him about shooting blackfellows. Mitchell told Piper that the Governor had said positively that they were not to shoot them unless their own lives were in danger. Piper said these hostile blackfellows were only myalls or ‘wild natives’, and that their lives were in some danger. Mitchell recognised this but thought the danger not extreme. It was now about eight o’clock. He came out of his tent and found an Aboriginal man talking to Kitty. He ordered him away and then drew up his men in a line and, as arranged, let off a rocket. The men gave three cheers and the Aborigines ran off.

20 Mitchell 1839, p. 131.
From a distance they prepared a corroboree and invited the explorers to attend it. Piper told them to get lost and they did not, in fact, proceed with the dance.\(^{21}\)

The Aborigines again approached the camp soon after day-break. They set fire to all the surrounding scrub so that it seemed it would soon be enveloped in smoke. Mitchell went to his tent for his rifle and directed eight men to advance towards the Aboriginal camp displaying their muskets but not to fire unless attacked, and to return at the sound of the bugle. The Aborigines at once fled and the expedition got under way. After a mile or so the party heard the Aborigines following in their rear; they kept at a considerable distance but Mitchell observed through his telescope that they were armed as if for war. He was now alarmed that these Aborigines seemed so little deterred by their knowledge of the power of firearms. Moreover, Piper had gathered that there was another group of these Darling Aborigines lower down the river so Mitchell believed his party was sandwiched between two groups of hostile and dangerous opponents. However, that day's journey and the next were accomplished without further incident, although Piper knew from the tracks on the ground that the party was constantly kept under observation.

Towards the evening of 26 May seven Aborigines, probably Thatithati, who lived along the Murray and who seemed unfriendly towards the Paakantyi from the Darling, came towards the explorers' camp. Piper recognised several he had seen at Lake Benanee and invited them to talk through him to Mitchell. They told Mitchell (what he already knew) that the Darling Aborigines did not live at Lake Benanee but had come from afar to fight the white men. One of these informants repeatedly asked Piper why Mitchell had not attacked the Darling Aborigines while he had had the chance to do so. They were the same Aborigines, Mitchell was told, who had intended to kill Charles Sturt and his men six years earlier when they were sailing down the Murray near its junction with the Darling. That massacre had been prevented by an intrepid Murray dweller, an elder who had recently died and who had been greatly esteemed by his compatriots. Mitchell asked Piper to say how much the white men also respected him.

So, that evening Mitchell was confirmed in his knowledge of the continuing hostility of the Menindee Aborigines and informed that the influential elder who had earlier kept the peace was now no more.\(^{22}\)

The next morning, 27 May, Mitchell's party went on its journey as usual but it had not gone far before the men heard a vast body of Aborigines following their tracks, shouting prodigiously and raising what Mitchell, no doubt advised by Piper, took to be war cries. There were, perhaps, four hundred of them as Mitchell later counted 135 fires at one of their encampments.\(^{23}\) Mitchell now felt he had to decide whether to wait for the Aborigines to attack or to anticipate the expected blow by a pre-emptive strike. He had already been warned by Piper that the men watering and herding the cattle at night were likely to be picked off one by one. This was a risk he could not take.

The expedition was then travelling along the outer bank of the Murray which was relatively free of timber but which had a good deal of scrub further from the river. Mitchell sent his trusted overseer, Alexander Burnett, together with Piper and half his men into this scrub with orders to hide and allow the Aborigines to follow along the track towards the two carts which Mitchell intended to halt out of sight after crossing a low hill.\(^{24}\)

Peering through the bushes, Burnett saw a large body of Aborigines approaching; he thought there were between two and three hundred of them; all were men and all were

\(^{21}\) ibid., pp. 90-5.
\(^{22}\) ibid., pp. 95-9.
\(^{23}\) ibid., p. 123.
\(^{24}\) ibid., pp. 101-2.
JOHN PIPER, 'CONQUEROR OF THE INTERIOR'

armed with bunches of ten or fifteen spears. When the leading Aborigines were fourteen or fifteen yards away one of their dogs gave the alarm by barking. On being discovered, Burnett's men advanced towards the Aborigines who at once drew together in a body and retreated down the bank towards the river. It was then that Charles King, one of the killers on the Darling, without waiting for orders, raced forward and fired at the Aborigines. This shot made them run for their lives. The rest of Burnett's party then ran down the bank and started shooting.

As soon as the firing began, Mitchell, who was out of sight about three hundred yards away, went to the top of the hill and saw the Aborigines swimming across the river. They swam backwards, keeping an eye on the gunmen and at each flash they instantly dived under water. The men with Mitchell also ran furiously down the steep river bank to join in the shooting, not a man remaining with the carts, Kitty alone being left with the horses and cattle. Mitchell himself, his fourteen men, Piper and the two Tommies were strung out along two or three hundred yards of the river bank firing at the Aborigines as they swam about a hundred and forty yards to the safety of the reeds along the opposite bank. They continued shooting for four or five minutes and fired perhaps seventy or eighty shots. Mitchell thought one of the two Tommies sent one man to the bottom and that Piper hit one or two. Piper was later told that seven Aborigines had been killed and four wounded. This rout and slaughter gave great satisfaction and unspeakable relief to Mitchell's fear crazed men. Mitchell himself, though regretting the necessity of killing 'savages', thought he would always remember that day as one on which the manifest wisdom and goodness of God deserved the especial gratitude of man. Piper's feelings are not recorded, but he was a bellicose fellow and no doubt enjoyed the action, whatever concerns or regrets he may have felt about it afterwards.25

As the expedition continued down the Murray, travelling a dozen miles or so a day, Piper acted as interpreter whenever the party met groups of Aborigines, although Mitchell was beginning to have doubts about the accuracy with which he did so.26 There was no doubt, however, about his and Kitty's general usefulness in negotiations. On the last day of May, when the party was approaching the junction with the Darling, they saw a big group of Aborigines who, when they saw the white men, began jumping, wringing their hands and shrieking as if in a state of utter madness or despair. They ran away but Piper and Kitty ran after them and quietened their fears. The next day, while the expedition was going northwards up the Darling, these Aborigines accompanied Mitchell's two carts in single file on each side. They carried no spears and were apparently no threat. Mitchell was riding some way ahead of his party and, chancing to look back, he was so alarmed by the close contact of such numbers with his men that he halted and shouted a warning. An old man and several other Aborigines suddenly turned and ran. When Mitchell went back to the carts the rest of the Aborigines fell back, those in the rear running off at full speed as if some plan had just been frustrated. Piper and Kitty were able to explain. These particular Aborigines, it seemed, believed that European clothes were impervious to spears, so they had decided to abandon their arms and had detailed six or eight of their number to each of the white men in order to overpower them by a sudden, simultaneous attack. Mitchell's warning had disrupted this scheme.27

Mitchell travelled up the Darling for only a couple of days till he was confident that it was the same river he had been on the previous year. Not wishing to spend more time in the desert he returned to the Murray and started upstream to rejoin Stapylton at the depot.

25 ibid., pp. 102-4; Mitchell 1836, 27 May; Government Gazette 1837, pp. 65-72.
26 Mitchell 1839, pp. 105-6, p. 108.
27 ibid., pp. 110-3.
ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1993 17:1

When the party returned to the place where the shooting had been done, Piper carefully read the ground. He told Mitchell that many of the Darling Aborigines had left their spears, nets and other possessions on the ground when they fled and had later returned for them. He also said that a considerable number had not swum across the river but had simply retreated along the bank. Mitchell now estimated that their numbers on that fatal morning must have amounted to at least a hundred and eighty.28

Mitchell’s party again reached Lake Benanee on 9 June. The lake was now almost deserted. He saw only one or two men fishing and took Piper down to the beach to talk to them. They found most of the Aborigines had abandoned the huts along the shore but a few boys ran out into the water. Piper pursued them till they were up to their ears in water. Mitchell soon could scarcely distinguish them from the floating water fowl and feared they would drown. He called to their pursuer to come back, but Piper would not be baffled by mere boys and walked on through the water like a giant, brandishing a short spear. Finally, near the centre of the lake he overtook one of the boys and led him back towards the shore. Mitchell thus learned that the Darling Aborigines had only the day before returned to Lake Benanee. For nearly two weeks since the slaughter they had remained on the south bank of the Murray and were then fishing in a lagoon near the river, where Mitchell later saw the smoke from their fires and heard their voices but had no further contact with them.29

Next day Mitchell reached the depot and found all was well. No Aborigines had approached the camp. Ballandella’s leg was healing well, her mother having been unremitting in her care of the child. Good grass had been found so all the stock were fresh and well fed. The reunited exploring party soon continued to travel upstream along the northern or right hand bank of the Murray. They were now very close to the junction with the Murrumbidgee. From the number of huts along the river it seemed to Mitchell that the inhabitants, probably Mathimathi speakers, were numerous but he did not know how many had died from smallpox. They were, though, shy and there was little contact between white and black. But they did not seem to talk Irish like the Murrumbidgee Aborigines. When he could get close enough, Piper still seemed to be able to talk with them.30

Mitchell crossed the Murray on 13 June. It took all day to get the wagons, carts, stores and stock across the 110 yards of water. The local Aborigines seemed very friendly and watched with interest. Several came up to Mitchell in the morning and laid several newly made nets at his feet. He declined to accept any of these gifts except one beautifully woven bag, telling its owner, through Piper, that he would give him a tomahawk in return for it when the party had passed over the river.

That evening Mitchell, accompanied no doubt by Piper, visited the Aborigines to whom he owed the tomahawk and sat down at their fires. There were about twenty of them, all men. The man who had given Mitchell the bag expressed his gratitude for the tomahawk by offering him another net. He also introduced his son. He had observed the two Tommies to be well dressed, well fed and apparently happy and Mitchell gathered that he was willing to place his own son under his care. But Mitchell was apprehensive and distrusting. He tried to explain that he had no more tomahawks to give away and that his men were likely to be ‘very saucy’ with their guns if too much troubled. He now believed it was necessary all the time to impress on the minds of even the most friendly of these ‘savages’ that the white men, though inoffensive, were strong and dangerous to provoke.31

28 ibid., pp. 122-3
29 ibid., pp. 124-5.
30 ibid., pp. 126-8.
31 ibid., pp. 128-30.
After crossing the Murray, the expedition camped for a couple of days. Mitchell was busy with his maps and the blacksmith with the boat carriage. Piper talked to the local Aborigines. They told him that the Darling Aborigines had danced a corroboree with them about six weeks earlier and had promised to return in a month’s time but had not turned up. They asked Piper whether he had seen any of these Aborigines. Piper simply denied having seen any of them. When he reported this conversation to Mitchell the Major rebuked him for not telling the truth: that the explorers had been obliged to fire upon them and kill some of them. He asked Piper why he had lied. His excuse was that he could not tell the truth ‘because they would hate me so.’ Unfortunately Piper’s language does not reveal whether his motive was fear or shame. Perhaps it was a mixture of both.32

Piper by this time had become so homesick that he begged Burnett never to mention Bathurst to him. Though so far from his home he could still point directly towards it. To return there, however, except eventually with the expedition, was out of the question and, as Mitchell receded ever more southwards, poor Piper was, as it were, dragging an ever lengthening chain. But he knew Mitchell intended to return and could be confident of his eventual repatriation. In the meantime he and the two Tommies, who were his humble servants, enjoyed the pleasures of the chase, exploring the bush with the party’s dogs and looking for game several miles in front of the plodding bullocks and the wagons. Kitty and Turandurey stayed close to the main party and often gave notice of obstacles in time for Mitchell to avoid them. He had learned sufficient of their language to ask for directions and to understand their replies. He felt deeply indebted to these five Aboriginal friends for the assistance they were always ready to provide.33

The expedition continued travelling upstream along the southern bank of the Murray. By 20 June it was in Watiwati country approaching Swan Hill. Mitchell noticed smoke coming from reeds by the river a mile or so away. Piper went boldly up to the fire and found three families in three canoes on the river. Some of them, he told Mitchell, had come from Waljeers, more than a hundred miles away on the Lachlan — another example of the way Aborigines travelled big distances around the country.34

The next day the party came across Lake Boga, a few miles south of Swan Hill. As they approached it they disturbed a group of Aborigines, probably Wembawemba, who fled from their huts leaving their fishing spears, skin cloaks and other possessions behind. They soon appeared on the lake in twenty-four canoes, all making for a small island in its centre. This was covered with reeds and so formed a fortress from which the Aborigines could easily throw their spears against any assailant without being exposed or even seen. Mitchell took his party on but left Piper and the two Tommies behind to find out, if they could, the name of the lake and the course of the river. This proved disastrous. When the expedition was out of sight, a dozen Aborigines, armed with spears and boomerangs, sprang from the reeds and, when Piper asked the name of the lake, the angry answer was ‘I won’t tell you’. They blamed him for bringing the white fellows into their country and said they did not like him. An old man called on the others to kill Piper. Two spears were thrown at him which he parried with his carbine. He then fired at the man nearest him, wounding him in the jaw. The others immediately disappeared into the reeds. The wounded man fell; Piper reloaded and killed him with a shot through the body.

It was getting dark when Piper rejoined the expedition. He was full of importance about killing his man, or so Stapylton thought. Mitchell was disappointed that Piper had got

32 ibid., p.131.
33 ibid., p. 135.
34 ibid., p. 137.
At the end of June, attracted by the fertility and beauty of the country, Mitchell left the Murray and turned south-west into Victoria. On 30 June, having directed the party on its way, he ascended Pyramid Hill which rose some 300 feet above the surrounding plain. There was a magnificent view, shining fresh and green in the light of a fine winter’s morning. Here, he declared, was a most inviting land and one without inhabitants. He was half conscious of the obvious fact that the land had its Aboriginal inhabitants because the last sentence in his journal said he was the first European intruder on the sublime solitude of these verdant plains. The Aborigines were there. He was seeing them and hearing them and observing the smoke of their fires all the time, but they simply did not count as inhabitants. Mitchell felt he was the harbinger of mighty changes and that his steps would soon be followed by the white men and their stock for which this superb country seemed to have been specially prepared.

There were changes for Piper too. Since his fatal contact with the people at Lake Boga, Piper had enjoyed little success in meeting the Aborigines. Repeatedly they were seen but only at a distance, for they ran off when they saw the expedition, and all the waving of green boughs and the invitations shouted by Piper could not make them stop and talk. Perhaps he was reaching the limits of the area in which he could understand the local language and make himself understood. Certainly once he was in Victoria his usefulness as an interpreter was practically exhausted; the languages had become too different from his own.

But Piper continued to be useful in other ways. When Mitchell reached the Loddon River he ingeniously built a bridge across it on a fallen tree. Unfortunately, the night before the party was to cross it, the river suddenly rose so much that the bridge was four feet under water. The expedition crossed by boat and the carts and wagons were hauled through the water by drag chains and a strong team of bullocks on the far bank. One cart was pulled by a rope to the bottom of the river when the rope broke. The water was now about twenty-three feet deep, but it was not too deep for Piper to dive to the bottom and fix a heavy chain to the submerged cart by which it was safely hauled out on the far side.

Mitchell was euphoric about the magnificent country they were now passing through, but Turandurey was homesick. Ballandella was fast recovering the use of her broken leg and no longer needed the care of the white men. Kitty thought she might get a bigger share of the rations if the mother and child left the party. She persuaded Turandurey to start her journey home by pretending to go with her, intending to abandon her and her child in the bush and return to Piper and the expedition.

In the middle of the night of 1 July, just before the expedition crossed the Loddon, the two Aboriginal women and the child silently disappeared. There was a heavy frost that night which made it difficult to track the absconders. Piper was absent all the next day looking for them and returned during the evening with Kitty and Ballandella, but not Turandurey. Both women’s feet were shockingly frost bitten; Turandurey’s being so bad that she could not walk. Stapylton thought that being alone in the bush without fire she would die when the frost returned that night. The next morning, however, Turandurey struggled into the camp with her feet in a most deplorable condition. She was angry with Kitty for her treacherous conduct and, according to Piper’s interpretation, she sorely
JOHN PIPER, 'CONQUEROR OF THE INTERIOR'

reproved her. The two quarrelling women with their frost bitten feet could not have been of much assistance when, on this day, the expedition was occupied in its difficult crossing of the Loddon.

Despite this setback, Turandurey still wanted to go home but Ballendella did not want to leave the expedition. On first joining the party she had preferred a snake or a lizard to a piece of bread, but now she preferred bread and wept when Turandurey proposed to take her home. Mitchell had got to know and respect Turandurey and would not keep her or her child against her will. To help them return to the Lachlan he gave her a tomahawk to make a little canoe for Ballandella which, by swimming, she would push across the Murray. She left the expedition on 4 July and returned to the encampment on the Loddon. There were many Aborigines on the opposite bank who very angrily wanted to know who had made the fires on her side of the river. She was afraid, made no reply and hid herself. They danced a corroboree in a furious style during which she and her child crept away and spent two nights in the rain without fire. Her feet were still not fit for travel so she crawled fifteen miles back to the expedition on her hands and knees. Piper, for some reason, seemed very angry at her return, but Mitchell made sure she was treated with as much kindness as before.39

During the rest of July and most of August the party travelled through Victoria generally in a south-westerly direction towards the mouth of the Glenelg. They often saw or heard Aborigines, but more often than not the local inhabitants ran away or refused to have anything to do with the white visitors. Stapylton recorded a marked change in Aboriginal behaviour. On seeing the expedition, the Aborigines now stooped down, almost to the ground, and silently, stealthily stole away without the clamour of many voices heard earlier further north. Stapylton puzzled over this and thought it might have been due to Aboriginal terror on seeing a new race of beings. It is possible, however, that the new caution now so evident was due to the knowledge, spreading from the scene of the slaughter on the Murray, that this group of white travellers was extremely dangerous. Aborigines here, as in other places, travelled widely. Mitchell’s camp near the Grampians, for example, was visited by two Aborigines who had a smattering of English and who had been at two European cattle stations. News of the massacre could well have spread widely through south-eastern Australia.40

But not all Aborigines were so frightened or so shy, and now and then Piper seems to have been able to understand at least the gist of what was being said to him. Near Wedderburn, he managed to talk to an old woman and several boys. They said, pointing to the south-east, in the direction of Port Phillip, that a station of white fellows was there and that they had been to the sea which was not very far away (in fact it was about 120 miles). The old woman spoke with expressive gestures of a part of the coast she called ‘Cadong’, where the waves raged, and of a river she called ‘Woollamaee’ running into it. The next morning Piper persuaded an old man with his wives and some boys to come into the camp to talk to Mitchell. The man pointed towards Cadong to the south-west, that is, towards Portland, about 160 miles away. He said it was not Port Phillip but water like it. When Mitchell mentioned the Aboriginal name for Lake Alexandrina, ‘Keyinga’, the old man said it was a place filled with rain water, that is a river, and not like Cadong which was salt water. He described the whole country to the south-west as abounding in good water and excellent grass. Piper’s face brightened up with the good news the old man gave him and he assured Mitchell that they would ‘find water all about: no more want water.’ Mitchell

40 ibid., p. 127, p. 139; Mitchell 1839, pp. 180-1.
rewarded the man with a tomahawk on which he at once sat and continued to talk to Mitchell very fluently. Piper explained that he was saying how glad he was to receive the gift and listing with a sort of poetic fervour all the various uses to which he would put the axe. These conversations, though no doubt assisted by pantomime, indicate that Piper could still understand a good deal of what was said to him.41

The next meeting with Aborigines was much less fruitful. On 18 July, not far from Mount Zero, the expedition was travelling along a river when some Aborigines were heard on the opposite bank. Piper approached them as cautiously as possible but could not persuade them to cross the river. All he could do was to discover that their name for the river was ‘Wimmera’. In this way another Aboriginal name was fixed on the map.42

Between Mount Arapiles and the Glenelg River, the expedition met a more confident group of Aborigines. One of the carts had fallen behind the main party and the solitary driver was approached by four Aborigines who demanded tomahawks; but being an old bushranger, the driver coolly laid out all his cartridges, one by one, before him on a tarpaulin, with his pistol and carbine, ready for action. On seeing this, the Aborigines backed off.43

The next day, 28 July, the party remained in camp but a convict named Pickering and Piper went out reconnoitring. They found some huts which probably belonged to those Aborigines the bushranger had met the previous day. The huts were empty except for one Aborigine who refused to listen to, or could not understand, Piper’s explanations. He furiously poised his spear at Pickering and Piper called to him that he would be speared if he did not immediately fire. He did so and wounded the man in the upper arm or the shoulder. But he was not badly hurt and not at all intimidated; he followed Piper and Pickering some way from his hut, throwing burning branches, fire sticks and mud at them and loudly shouting for help from his compatriots.44

The consequences were not as serious as Mitchell feared. As the expedition proceeded the next day several Aborigines approached the chaining party. One of them spoke loud and fast, pointing to where Pickering had fired the shot the day before, and then, touching his shoulder in allusion to the wound, he raised his spear at another convict named Blanchard. He yelled in alarm. The Aborigine was satisfied. He lowered his spear, laughed and came forward quietly and showed it to the frightened chain man. Another convict ran for help but the Aborigines quietly vanished into the bush before it came.45

Piper’s next meeting with Aborigines came about a week later, on 5 August, when the expedition was camped near Chetwynd (so named after Stapylton’s third given name). The men heard some Aborigines approaching through the bush. Piper as usual went towards them and found they were all women with their children. From the moment they saw the white men, their cattle and horses, until they were quite out of hearing, their shrieks were so loud and incessant that it seemed they had no earlier knowledge or rumour of the expedition being in their part of the country. In the evening several Aboriginal men were heard approaching. Piper and Burnett invited them towards the camp but they could not be persuaded to sit down and talk. Piper had failed again.46

There was better luck next time, for luck seems to have played a part in determining whether a conversation would occur or not. On 10 August, on the Wando River, a few

---

41 ibid., p. 166.  
42 ibid., p. 184.  
43 ibid., p. 195.  
44 ibid., pp. 196-7; Mitchell 1836, 28 July.  
45 ibid., 29 July; Mitchell 1839, pp. 197-8.  
46 ibid., pp. 205-6.
JOHN PIPER, 'CONQUEROR OF THE INTERIOR'

miles north of Casterton, Mitchell on horseback saw two figures in the distance who either did not see, or did not mind him. As he got closer he saw they were a woman with a small boy. She took fright and began to run but Mitchell soon overtook her and, with the few Aboriginal words he knew, he persuaded her to stop until Kitty and Turandurey came and talked to her. Luckily, this woman was not as alarmed as might have been expected and she and Mitchell’s two women seemed to understand each other perfectly. So Mitchell through Piper and then through the two women of the expedition questioned the woman of the Wando about the nature of the country. He was delighted to hear that the whole of the land to the east was similar to the well watered and fertile land they were in and that there was firm land for the passage of the carts and drays: in Piper’s words, ‘there was no more sticking in the mud.’ When the party left her, Mitchell gave her a tomahawk and his two women explained its use to her and, on Mitchell’s instructions, assured her of the white men’s friendliness to the Aborigines.47

A few days later, on 14 August, some of the bullocks were missing and the expedition had to wait till they were found. Two parties went in search of them, one guided by Piper, the other by the two Tommies. When most of the bullocks had been brought in, the expedition started again but two were still missing. They had not been found the next day. This was a loss Mitchell could not tolerate. He told Piper that unless they were found he would have no provisions for a week, and he condemned the bullocky who had lost them to be kept on watch every second night for the rest of the journey.48

Presumably the bullocks were found for Mitchell says no more about them; certainly Piper was not long out of favour. His physical abilities continued to be useful. His exceptionally acute hearing enabled him to discern the distant sound of a waterfall and Mitchell sent him off to examine it and to see if the Glenelg was navigable by the party’s whaleboats. Piper, too, repeatedly climbed trees to look over the country ahead and Mitchell was prepared to alter course on the advice Piper gave him from aloft in the trees’ branches.49

Mitchell traced the Glenelg down to the sea which he reached on 20 August and then led the expedition south-east towards Portland where he was surprised to find, on 29 August, the farming establishment, begun a couple of years earlier, of Edward and Frank Henty. As well as the Henty brothers there were several groups of whalers based on Portland Bay. Mitchell spent some time there watching a whale being chased and learned of a remarkable example of Aboriginal adaptation to the coming of the white man. The local Aborigines had never even shown themselves to the white people at Portland Bay. They had nevertheless learned both to assist and benefit from the whaling. Often several different boats pursued the same whale and in this competition the whale would occasionally escape and run ashore. It was of little value to the whalers as its removal from the beach was too difficult. They therefore left the whale where it was to provide abundant food for the Aborigines. So they became accustomed to watch out for whales and, whenever they saw one, they sent up a column of smoke which the whalers recognised as a signal. The Aborigines clearly realised that by giving this notice a greater number of whalers would compete for the whale and it was more likely to finish up on the beach.50

Piper would often accompany Mitchell on journeys away from the main body of the expedition but sometimes he would stay in the camp while Mitchell was away exploring or taking angles. He might spend the time hunting kangaroos which the Aborigines in the

47 ibid., pp. 211-3.
49 ibid., p. 222, pp. 234-5.
50 ibid., pp. 242-3.
party relished though the white men did not fancy them. Mitchell’s return to the camp was often first announced by Turandurey and Ballandella who could hear the sound of horses’ feet at an astonishing distance, long before they appeared in sight. Piper was usually the first to meet Mitchell and would assure him of the safety of the party as if he had taken care of it during the Major’s absence. Mitchell encouraged his sense of responsibility by giving him credit for the safety and well-being of the encampment.51

On the long return journey, generally north-eastwards from Portland to Sydney, the expedition met few Aborigines. Mitchell knew they were in occupation of the whole country by the smoke from innumerable fires he observed whenever he looked over the land from the tops of hills or mountains. But they were not aggressive like the Aborigines on the Darling and usually avoided the white travellers. The party often heard voices in the bush, but the local inhabitants seemed to Mitchell to be as timid as kangaroos and no more likely to approach members of the expedition.52

This was not what Mitchell wanted. He always hoped to learn from the local people the nature of the country ahead and their names for its natural features. Piper was well aware of this and always did his best to persuade Aborigines to come to Mitchell for questioning. His diplomatic skills, however, were limited by the shortness of his temper. Near Hamilton, Piper met two Aborigines and invited them to the camp but all to no effect until, finally enraged at one of them, he threw his tomahawk at him and nearly hit him as he sidled off into the bush. This earned him a severe reprimand. Mitchell was quite prepared to capture an Aborigine by force in order to question him and then release him. Piper often carried handcuffs for just this purpose. But mindless mayhem Mitchell would not tolerate.53

The expedition’s progress through the western district of Victoria was fearfully slow. It was a wet season. The ground was soft. The carts were repeatedly bogged and the bullocks were exhausted from the continuing heavy hauling through the mud. Mitchell decided on 17 September to split his party. He would go ahead with fourteen men, the freshest of the bullocks drawing the light carts and a month’s provisions. Stapylton and the remaining nine men were to stay where they were, encamped near Dunkeld, for two weeks to rest the remaining bullocks before following Mitchell’s tracks to the Murray where he would arrange for further supplies to be sent. The party’s Aboriginal members arranged among themselves that Piper, Kitty and Tommy Came-last should go with Mitchell while Tommy Came-first and Turandurey should remain with Stapylton.54

When Mitchell was about to set out with his reduced party he noticed that Turandurey had marked her face with white ochre around the eyes — a sign of mourning; Ballandella’s face, was similarly painted. Turandurey, who was as careful and affectionate as any mother could be, had decided to entrust her daughter’s welfare to Mitchell’s care. He was pleased by this proof of Turandurey’s confidence in him and glad of the opportunity he was being given to observe the effect of a European education on an Aboriginal child. Turandurey probably despaird of ever being able to train her daughter in her traditional ways and realised, according to Mitchell’s account of her feelings, that women were much better treated by Europeans than by Aborigines. Piper, for instance, had said that Aboriginal law was that the first two attempts of a woman to leave her husband might be punished by a beating but that for the third he might put her to death.55 So Ballandella went with

51 ibid., p. 244.
52 ibid., p. 247, pp. 253-4.
53 ibid., p. 256; Mitchell 1836, 22 June; Stapylton 1986, p. 146.
54 ibid., pp. 186-7; Mitchell 1839, pp. 262-4.
55 ibid., p. 86.
Mitchell's party under the immediate care of Kitty; eventually she would be adopted into Mitchell's family and sent to school.56

A couple of weeks later, not far from Heathcote, Piper's keen eyes lit on a razor in a deserted Aboriginal encampment. On the blade of the razor was inscribed 'Old English'. If such an artefact was found so far from European settlement it seems almost certain that news, or at the very least rumours, of the white men had come too.57

On 7 October, two days later, the party was camped close to Mitchellstown. Piper discovered that a group of Aborigines had been following them. He and Burnett persuaded seven of them, including an old man and two boys, to approach the encampment. Mitchell went out to meet them as he did not want them in the camp. They told him the name of the creek they were on and gave him two neatly woven baskets in exchange for two tomahawks. But then several of the Aborigines did come right into the encampment. Piper at first wanted to make friends with these people but, as usual, found it difficult to do so. He then became angry and stormed around, sword in hand, trying to send them away. Piper was always an angry young man. His word on picking up his musket was usually 'bell gammon soldiers', meaning 'soldiers are no joke!' 58 Three of the visitors tried to placate him by telling him what he said was a 'long yarn'. One wonders how much of it he understood. The old man meanwhile went around casting a covetous eye on everything in the camp. Long after it was dark they still sat around with scarcely any fire and, Mitchell believed, bent on mischief or murder. He had earlier arranged with his men what to do in such a case. At a given signal, Burnett leaped out, wearing a gilt mask and holding in his hand a blue light with which he fired a rocket. Two concealed men bellowed hideously through speaking trumpets while the others shouted and discharged their guns into the air. The astonished Aborigines at once disappeared and the explorers saw them no more. In their haste, they left behind the two tomahawks given to them and several roughly shaped heavy clubs. These clubs, Mitchell believed, had been fashioned with the sole purpose of beating out the white men's brains as soon as they fell asleep. The incident prompted the darker side of Mitchell's judgment. He was convinced that no kindness or understanding could restrain the desires of these wild men to kill the white strangers when they first appeared among them. No explorer was safe, he thought, unless a member of a powerful and well armed party.59

This farce, which might easily have turned into tragedy, was the expedition's last meeting with Aborigines. From now on they kept out of Mitchell's way although, no doubt, they kept his party under observation. But there were dangers other than the hostility of the local inhabitants.

On 13 October the party reached the Broken River at Benalla. James Taylor, a convict who had been brought up in a hunting stable and had been transported for horse stealing, was in charge of the expedition's horses. He was also the bugler and the other men called him Tally-ho. He was a skilful rider and Mitchell often used him to swim his horse across rivers to discover the best place for the cattle to climb out on the opposite bank. On this day he rode into the water and simply disappeared. Burnett, going on foot to the spot, called out, 'the man's gone!' The horse came out with the bridle on its neck but the only sign of

56 ibid., pp. 265-6; Brook 1988, pp. 63-76. Brook's article describes Ballandella's subsequent life, her marriage and what is known of her descendants. His discussion of Turandurey's experiences on Mitchell's expedition has several inaccuracies and I cannot accept his suggestion that on this expedition she became pregnant or that Piper was the father.
57 Mitchell 1839, p. 288.
58 ibid., p. 79.
59 ibid., pp. 289-90.
Tally-ho was his cap floating on the river. Piper, Kitty and two convicts were immediately in the water. Within six or eight minutes at the most, Piper brought up the body from the bottom. It was still warm and kept so for three hours by continuous rubbing while the lungs were alternately inflated and compressed. But it was all without success. The medical attendant laid out the body between two large sheets of bark, no doubt cut by Piper, and it was buried in a deep grave. Tally-ho had been popular with his fellow convicts and Mitchell, too, was saddened by his death.60

It took four days for the expedition to travel the fifty miles between Benalla and the Murray near Howlong. The next day Piper and Burnett went across the river by boat to find a suitable place for the expedition’s passage which was accomplished in two days. Mitchell wondered whether squatters had already occupied the north bank of the Murray but the party could find no traces of sheep or cattle although Piper, skilled tracker that he was, traced the wheels of a gig drawn by one horse and accompanied by several others. These impressions, however, were several months old and did not indicate that white men had settled there.61

As soon as he could, Mitchell pressed on northwards towards the Murrumbidgee where he hoped he might meet with settlers once more because his supplies were very low. By 22 October his men were delighted to discern many tracks of cattle and Piper was able to point out a spot where a bullock had been eaten by Aborigines.62

Two days later, on 24 October, with Piper always assisting to find the best route, Mitchell reached the hut of a stockman called Billy Buckley on the Murrumbidgee about a dozen miles upstream from Wagga Wagga. He was most hospitable and, as it happened, several drays with supplies of provisions arrived coming along the road from Sydney. The trials of the journey were over. Piper was at least as pleased as the white men to emerge from the land of the myalls, especially when he met at this station several Aborigines whom he knew. He termed them ‘civil blackfellows’ and was very pleased that his important position in the expedition enabled him to lionise over them.63

A couple of weeks after Mitchell had left for Sydney, Stapylton’s rearguard reached the Murrumbidgee. Turandurey duly arrived with this group; her feet had probably not fully healed and she had evidently come most of the way riding in a cart and eating flour. She had put on so much weight that Stapylton recorded that she had grown enormously fat. To the best of his knowledge no improprieties with her as a female had ever taken place. She now left the party and was married to King Joey, from the Lachlan. Stapylton gave her two blankets as a wedding present. She left with her new husband for her home which she had left six months earlier.64

The two Tommies had become attached to Mitchell and, having arrived in Sydney, hoped to accompany him on his planned trip to England. Mitchell felt he could afford to take one, but not both, and finally decided to take neither. He arranged for their safe passage through the colony to Bathurst on the way to their own country and gave to each what clothing he could spare. Both wept when, at last, they left Mitchell’s home.

Back in Sydney, Mitchell was both paternal and patronising towards Piper who seemed to relish more than anyone else the triumph of the successfully completed expedition. Mitchell clothed him in his own red coat and gave him a splendid cocked hat and feather, which had belonged to Governor Darling. Piper’s portrait thus arrayed soon appeared in the

60 ibid., pp. 296-7.
61 ibid., pp. 301-5.
63 ibid., pp. 310-11.
JOHN PIPER, 'CONQUEROR OF THE INTERIOR'

ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1993 17:1

print shops, an ingenious artist, William Fernybough, having drawn his likeness very accurately. Piper was just the sort of man to enjoy enormously all his newly acquired importance. He carried his head high as everyone seemed to know him and many people gave him gifts of money, with which he purchased silk handkerchiefs for himself and dresses for his wives — for he had now obtained a second to Kitty. To Mitchell’s great pleasure, Piper abstained from intoxication and looked down with contempt on those many wretched, drunken Aborigines who led an abandoned, sordid existence around Sydney.

Piper soon tired of Sydney and became impatient to return to his own country, near Bathurst. Mitchell carefully fulfilled all the conditions of their agreement, allowing him an old musket, blankets and so on and decorating him with a brass plate on which he was styled, not as usual ‘King’ for, he said, there were ‘too many kings already’, but ‘Conqueror of the Interior’ — a far more splendid title. 65

We know little about Piper after these triumphs except that he travelled around the colonies a good deal visiting Sydney again, the Hunter Valley, Moreton Bay and even Adelaide. By 1843 he was back in the Bathurst district and had told a surveyor there, W.R. Davidson, that he was willing to accompany Mitchell on another exploring expedition. By this time Mitchell was planning a journey into Queensland to discover a route to the gulf of Carpentaria and he was delighted to learn that he might again have Piper’s services. He told Davidson that Piper would be ‘most essentially required.’ 66

Accordingly, when Mitchell set out for the north at the end of 1845 he took Piper with him and provided him with a horse and saddle, a double-barrelled gun, clothing, the same rations as the other men, blankets and a place in a tent. Mitchell also recruited from Boree another Aborigine, Yuranigh, who was younger than Piper but who proved to be even more useful. A third Aborigine, Dicky, a boy only ten years of age, was a native of the lower Bogan; he provided local knowledge as the party travelled down that river. 67

At the end of January 1846, while the party was camped for a few days on Duck Creek, ten miles or so north-east of Nyngan, Mitchell was told that Piper intended to desert the expedition and take with him the two other Aborigines. The Surveyor-General felt a deep sense of betrayal. Piper referred to the ‘Majy’ as his ‘old master’ but would now heartlessly leave him without a single Aboriginal guide at a time when such a guide was most required. As a consequence Mitchell now had nothing but evil to say about Piper: he never had intended to stay with the expedition to its end; he had not improved in speech or manners during the past ten years; he was a very bad shot and awkward with a horse; he could elicit no clear information as an interpreter; he went unwillingly about doing anything. All the others in the camp were actively at their work; Piper did no work and was the only dissatisfied person.

Piper had just drawn a week’s rations and was baking all the flour into bread. Mitchell ordered him to be seized and brought before him and Edmund Kennedy, his second-in-command, sitting as magistrates. Piper denied he intended to decamp, but Yuranigh declared he had proposed to him that they should leave the party and go in search of women. The magistrates decided that Piper should be held under arrest, sent to the nearest police station and returned under a police guard to Bathurst so he would be unable to induce the other Aborigines to desert. This measure seemed to have the required effect on Yuranigh and Dicky who served faithfully for the whole of the year-long journey. Yuranigh said that Piper had only himself to blame for what had happened to him and that he had acted like a fool. 65

---

66 Mitchell 1848, p. 47; Mitchell to Davidson, 13 November 1843.
67 Mitchell 1848, pp. 25-6, p. 47.
For Mitchell it was a sad end to an association which he had regarded as a friendship. What Piper felt we cannot, alas, ever know. But perhaps he felt some remorse when, at length, Yuranigh returned to Boree having completely replaced him in the 'Majy's' affections.68

LIST OF REFERENCES


Eyre, Edward John 1845, Journals of Expeditions of Discovery into Central Australia, London.


_____, 1848, Journal of an Expedition into the Interior of Tropical Australia, London.


Troy, J. 1992, '"Der Mary this is fine cuntry is there is in the wourld": Irish English and Irish in late eighteenth and nineteenth century Australia', in The Language Game: Papers in Memory of Donald C. Laycock, eds T. Dutton, M. Ross and D. Tryon, Canberra, pp. 459-477.

Central Kimberley Region, Western Australia
GOONIYANDI STORIES OF EARLY CONTACT WITH
WHITES

Jack Bohemia, Bigfoot Jagarra, William McGregor
and Fossil Pluto

PART I

TEXT 1: EARLY CONTACT WITH THE WHITES

By Fossil Pluto

[Recorded at Fossil Downs, 1966, by Howard Coate.]

Transcribed and translated by Howard Coate and Fossil Pluto, Fossil Downs, 1966; retranscribed and retranslated by William McGregor and George Nayindu, Fitzroy Crossing 1980.]

thiwa, niyaji thangarndi wini jamininyinhingi whites, this story is just from my
goowajjangi grandfather
jaminyangga; goowajjangi my grandfather; told it
jaminyangga goowajjajyi, nd ngoorroo my grandfather told the story, and his
ngaboongoa, goowajjajja ngarragi jaminyi father, he told my grandfather
malngarri wardbirri ngamoo, mangarri; when the white people came, (they) didn't;
ngarranawinbirra know about them

Jack Bohemia was born on Old Bohemia Downs Station around the turn of the century. He worked for many years as a stockman on that station and a number of others in the region, and from 1938 until the 1970s as a tracker for the Fitzroy Crossing police. He is best known for his involvement in the apprehension of Banjo, who allegedly killed two white men on Billiluna station in 1922. In 1972 he was awarded the British Empire Medal for thirty two years service to the Western Australian police and community. Jack Bohemia is currently working with William McGregor on producing a book of his experiences as a police tracker (Nyibarri: Kimberley tracker).

Bigfoot Jagarra, a contemporary of Jack Bohemia's, was born on Fossil Downs station, where he worked for most of his life as a stockman. He now lives in Mulurrja, a community on the Margaret River some twenty kilometres upriver from Fitzroy Crossing. Bigfoot Jagarra is widely regarded as the most knowledgeable Gooniyandi lawman alive today.

William McGregor holds an ARC Fellowship in Linguistics at University of Melbourne. He has made a depth study of Gooniyandi (published in 1990), and is currently engaged in writing an encyclopaedic grammar and dictionary of Nyulnyul, and shorter sketch grammars of Warrwa, Unggumi, Yawijibaya, Umiiida, Unggarrangu and Gunin.

Fossil Pluto (deceased) was a highly regarded Gooniyandi/Kija lawman who lived on Fossil Downs station.

---

1 Gooniyandy is a traditional Australian language spoken by one hundred or so Aborigines living in Fitzroy Crossing region of the Kimberley, Western Australia (see McGregor 1990 for a descriptive grammar). The texts below are represented in accordance with the system I have employed elsewhere - see e.g. McGregor 1988 and Bohemia & McGregor 1991 - except that, for considerations of space, a columnar rather than facing page layout has been employed.

The orthography employed here is almost identical with the latest variant of the practical orthography chosen by speakers of the language. The main difference is that retroflexion is represented by an r preceding d, n, or l. (retroflexion is not represented in the practical orthography).

2 We would like to thank Howard Coate for generously making both the tape recording and the original transcription and translation of this text available to us, and for permission to use it in this paper.
they saw them
they saw horses, but they thought they
were spirits of dogs
the horse was a dog spirit
they called it a grass country devil, and
white people again they called them
dwellers of the long grass	hey had never seen them before
they sniffed around this way, the white
men smelt different
they, they camped, the night, and speared
them during the middle of the day
my grandfather, told me this story, before

they killed white people
not now, they were ignorant of them
(before)

they thought that the horse was the spirit
of a dog
horses, which the white people were
riding
grass country devil, and long grass
dweller, they called white people long
grass dwellers
they speared only the policemen who
killed our old people, in the old
days
Aborigines, thought about them (the
police), mistakenly, that they were very
wild
white people tramped the country,
Aboriginal country
the police were ignorant, in a body, the
Aborigines were sitting on the other
side whole
like that all the wild policemen killed
Aborigines
up this river, for good, and down, north
this, bandarangarri Margaret River

then, he covered, Margaret River
the bones of the dead people lie about
everywhere, because of that
others stole women
they killed our forebears
then they got wild and speared them

they didn't know about them
then Aborigines were OK
GOONIYANDI: EARLY CONTACT WITH WHITES IN THE KIMBERLEY

malngarrinyali yaa wardbirriwirrangi, white people again went to them, looking
walalawali for a fight
walajinbirra they were looking for a fight with them
ngiwayi jibiri, gindiwa, boorroonggoo ngirnda south downstream, upstream, north this
miga way
yaningi joornanygarra malngari waranggoorroo today the white people are good, they are
joornanygarra waranggoorroo, mangarri good, they don't kill Aborigines
gardboowoorra, yoowooloo
wilawoo ngara, ngarawirili, malngarri now, they are quiet, whites
mangarri mangarri waranggoorroo 'this time we don't do something to do
joomanygarra with relatives
thiwa, yaabjangga, goornbooga wardbirriwirrangi should some, women go with white men,
malngarriyirra, thiwamoowa we find only part Aboriginal children
gilbajawarrawirrangi with them
yalawa ngarlarrayawoorraminhi the little one lies on his back
mangarri balajinhingi, yiganynhingi its not from being sent to the whitemen,
wardjawoorroo they went sneakingly to them

TEXT WITH INTERLINEAR TRANSLATIONS

thiwa, niyaji thangardi wini jaminyi -nhingi
red this word only grandfather -ABL
'Whites. This story is just from my grandfather.' (1)

jaminyi -ngga; goowaj -jangi
grandfather -ERG name -he:caught:it
'My grandfather told it.' (2)

jaminyi -ngga goowaj -ja -yi nd ngoorroo ngaboo -grandfather -ERG name -SUBJ -he:was and that father
ngga, goowaj -nga ngarragi jaminyi
-ERG name -he:extended:to:it my grandfather
'My grandfather told the story, and his father told him.' (3)

malngarri ward -birri ngamoo, mangarri, ngarra -ma
white:person go -they:were before not know -IND
-winberra -they:extended-to-them
'When the white people came, no one knew about them.' (4)

mila -ya -winbirra
see -LOC -they:extended:to:them
'They saw them.' (5)

3 The following abbreviations are used in the interlinear translations: ABL - ablative; CHAR - characterised by; COMIT - comitative; DAT - dative; DEF - definite; DW - dweller of or inhabitant of niche; EMP - emphatic; ERG - ergative; ETC - etcetera; FACT - factive mood; INCL - including; IND - indefinite, identity not known; IT - iterative; LOC - locative; PRE - prelative; PL -0 plural; PROG - progressive aspect; REP - repetition, again; SEM - simulative; and SUBJ - subjunctive mood. For discussion of these grammatical categories, see McGregor 1990. A questionmark in the interlinear gloss line indicates that the meaning of the word or morpheme is not known.
When they saw horses they thought they were spirits of dogs.' (6)

'The horse was a dog spirit.' (7)

'They called it a grass country devil; and white people again they called them dwellers of the long grass.' (8)

'They had never seen them before.' (9)

'They sniffed around this way; the white men smelt different.' (10)

'Then they camped the night, and speared them during the middle of the day.' (11)

'My grandfather told me this story before.' (12)

'They killed white people.' (13)

'Not now; they were ignorant of them (before). (14)
GOONIYANDI: EARLY CONTACT WITH WHITES IN THE KIMBERLEY

daarri thiminyja -ngarri miga -wirri -nhi
mistakenly:believe spirit:of:animal:dog -COMIT say -they:were -on:him
niyaji dimana -yoo
this horse -DAT
'They thought that the horse was the spirit of a dog.' (15)

dimana, malngarri -ngga rayidim -ja -wirra
horse white:person -ERG ride -SUBJ -they:extended:him
'Horses, which the white people were riding.' (16)

marrimbala, gilimboorr -ngarna, gilimboorr -ngarna goowaj
grass:country:devil long:grass -DW long:grass -DW name
-binbirra malngarri
-they:extended:to:them white:person
'Grass country devil and long grass dweller; they called white people long grass
dwellers.' (17)

woodij -gila -winbirra miga limba -ga
throw:spear -FACT -they:extended:to:them like:that policeman -ERG
-moowa gard -bi -winbirra yarrangi boolgawoolga
-only it -IT -they:extended:to:them our old:men
ngami -ya
before -LOC
'They speared only the policemen who killed our old people, in the old days.' (18)

yoowooloo, miga -wirri -wirrangi, daarri, yilbaya
man say -they:were -on:them mistakenly:believe policemen
thirri -mili warang -birri
wild -CHAR sit -they:were
'Aborigines thought that the police were very wild.' (19)

malngarri -ngga riwi ngirnda mood -birra,
white:person -ERG country this squash -they:extended:him
yoowooloo -yoo riwi
man -DAT country
'White people tramped the country, Aboriginal country.' (20)

niyaji ganginy -binbirra, ngaandi, yaanya -binyi
this ignorant -they:extended:to:them body other -PER
warang -ja -wirri
sit -SUBJ -they:were
'The police were ignorant; the Aborigines were sitting on the other side whole.' (21)
miga -ngga g ardi -bi -la -winbirra
like:that -ERG hit -IT -FACT -they:extended:to:them
ngirndi -ga -ngarriya limba yaanya -ngga thirri -mili
this -ERG -INCL policeman other -ERG wild -CHAR
-ngga -ERG
'Like that, all the wild policemen killed Aborigines.' (22)

warlibirri ngirnda gindiwa, yilba, jibirri, boorroonggoo
river this upstream forever downstream north
ngirnda, bandarangarri, mayalnga
this (a very short river) Margaret River
'Up this river, for good, and down north, this Margaret River.' (23)

niyi -nhingi, jaroong -ja -windi, mayalnga
that -ABL ? -SUBJ -he:got Margaret River
'Then, he covered Margaret River.' (24)

goongi balwal -wa -ya -woorra niyaji,
bone lie:about -PROG -SUBJ -they:extend:to:it this
miga -nhingi
like:that -ABL
'The bones of the dead people lie about everywhere because of that.' (25)

goornboo yaabja -ngga maaraal -ma -winbirra
woman other -ERG steal -IND -they:extended:to:them
'Others stole women.' (26)

gard -bi -winbirra yarrangi
hit -IT -they:extended:to:them our
'They killed our forebears.' (27)

niyaji -nhingi thirriny -goowa -wirmi woodij
this -ABL get:wild -PROG -they:effected throw:spear
-binbirra
-they:extended:to:them
'Then they got wild and speared them.' (28)

mangarri ngarra -ma -winbirra
not know -IND -they:extended:to:them
'They didn't know about them.' (29)

wila joornanygarra warang -birri yoowoooloo
finish good sit -they:were man
'Then Aborigines were OK.' (30)

---

4 The meaning of the term jaroong - is unclear. From the context, however, the sentence would seem to suggest that the policeman went along the Margaret River killing Aborigines.
GOONIYANDI: EARLY CONTACT WITH WHITES IN THE KIMBERLEY

malngarri -nyali yaa ward -birri -wirrangi,
white:person -REP what's:it:called go -they:were -on:them
walawalaji
look:for:fight
'White people again went to them looking for a fight.' (31)

walaji -winbirra
look:for:fight -they:extended:to:them
'They were looking for a fight with them.' (32)

ngiwayi jibirri, gindiwa boorroonggoo ngimda miga
south downstream upstream north this like:that
'South, downstream, upstream, and this way.' (33)

yaningi joornanygarra malngarri warang -gooroo, joornanygarra
now good white:person sit -they:are good
warang -gooroo, mangarri gard -boo -woorra yoowooloo
sit -they:are not hit -IT -they:extend:to:it man
'Today the white people are good; they don't kill Aborigines.' (34)

wilawoo ngara, ngarawirili, malngarri
finish quiet quiet white:person
'The country is quiet now.' (35)

mangarri ganginy -garra
not ignorant -we:extend:to:them
'This time we don't do something to do with relatives.' ' (36)

wini yaabja -ngga, goomboo -ga ward -birri -wirrangi
only other -ERG woman -ERG go -they:were -on:them
malngarri -yirra, thiwa -moowa gilba -ja -wara -wirrangi
white:person -ALL rd -only find -SUBJ -we:will:be -on:them
'When some women go with white men, we find only part Aboriginal children with them.' (37)

yalawa ngarlarra -ya -woorrarni -nhi
close back -SUBJ -? -on:him
'The little one lies on his back.' (38)

mangarri bala -ji -nhingi, yiganyi -nhingi ward, -ja
not send -IT -ABL uncertain -ABL go -SUBJ
-woorroo -they:are
'We didn't send them to the whitemen, they went sneekingly to them.' (39)

---

5 From the meaning of the individual words in this sentence a meaning like 'We are not ignorant' is suggested. This also fits with the context. However, the Gooniyandi speaker provided the translation given here, the interpretation of which remains obscure.
TEXT 2: EARLY CONTACT WITH THE WHITES
By Jack Bohemia

[Recorded at Fitzroy Crossing, 1982, by William McGregor, and transcribed and translated shortly later by William McGregor with the assistance of Jack Bohemia.]

these people, were bushmen
(they) didn't know of white people
later the white people came to them
um, reds, they called them reds
'where are these people from, the whites?'
(they said)
they didn't know about white people
horses, they saw them
horses, they called by the name 'maroonbala'
they called it 'marrinbala'
then, then, they got them together, white
people
work, they gave them
they didn't know English, they just worked

as for food, they didn't know; about white
man's flour, damper, tea, nothing
they just ate it
what, what's it called, the white people told
them 'eat this food'
they looked, try try, ..., they tried it; they
ate it, they tried it; and ate it

'ah it's good!', they said, 'good!'

'this food it good'
then they all ate it
then everyone ate it
they learnt about these (foods)
they ate the food, and finished it
tea etc, tea, tea, ? the boss put out (for
them)
they drank and drank it, 'ah good one,' they
said
'good!', they all said
'we'll eat it hungry'
they ate it up
now they knew, before; they were ignorant

they didn't know about (white people's)
foods, they didn't know about white
people, they were just ignorant
they ate it up
GOONIYANDI: EARLY CONTACT WITH WHITES IN THE KIMBERLEY

they taught him, them, the white people taught; them they taught them then they knew he gave them work finish they were knowledgeable later, what-cha-ma-call-it, they noticed wagons, bullocks pulling them 'I don't know what it is pulling it' he said ... they said 'the track lies' they called it 'baarri' they didn't call it a wagon, but a 'baarri' the bullock, yes they called it 'booloomani'

wagons 'baarri', they called them tracks, they found them it goes east then, they knew now they knew OK bit by bit, they misunderstood them English, they misunderstood it they spoke, just a little later on, they learnt, and the white people gave them horses 'ride this!' they rode it OK they learnt, to ride horses they knew now what-cha-ma-call-it?; um; cattle, he got them, the boss, called Bill Richardson he bought the cattle, in Queensland they brought them there they breed, they grow up, cattle ah, those old people were knowledgeable now, the old people they knew now, they knew now how to ride bullocks about brand ...

they branded them in the yard yards, they made them they made it, the whites, the whites, they followed them the white man; taught them they made the yard they made it and finished it a yard, for cattle
at Goobardiya, and east, at Joonyoo, there
they made yards, at the homesteads
yes at both places
right there; they branded; the cattle
they branded them and finished
they grew up a little now, the cattle grew
up a little
then, after two, three, three years
the cattle were big then, big cattle
send; he sent it, the boss sent (word)
downstream
they droved them, to Derby
in a boat, they put them
in a vessel, called a boat
they put them in there
the sent them down to the big city
then they ret; returned
again, they branded, cattle
they branded the little ones with brands
they branded them OK
in the build up to the wet
as it gets hot, they leave off work
they left work and took a break
GOONIYANDI: EARLY CONTACT WITH WHITES IN THE KIMBERLEY

mangarri binarri wajbali -yoo
not know white:people -DAT
'They didn’t know about white people.' (6)

yawarda, mila -wirra
horse see -they:extended:him
'They saw horses.' (7)

yawarda, goowaj -birra yingi, maroonbala
horse name -they:extended:him name horse
'They called horses "maroonbala".' (8)

yingi goowaj -birra marrinbala
name name -they:extended:him horse
'They called it "marrinbala".' (9)

niyi -nhingi, niyi -nhingi, maroorr -winbini, wajbali
that -ABL that -ABL muster -he:hit:them white:people
-ngga -ERG
'Then the white people got them together.' (10)

warrgoom, ngang -bindi
work give -he:caught:them
'They gave them work.' (11)

mangarri yingglij -joo binarri, winhi warrgoom -birri
not English -DAT know only work -they:were
'They didn’t know English, they just worked.' (12)

manyi -yoo, mangarri binarri; balawa -yoo, thamba
vegetable:food -DAT not know flour -DAT damper
di -yoo marlami
tea -DAT nothing
'They didn’t know about white man’s food, flour, damper, tea, nothing.' (13)

wini ngab -birra
only eat -they:extended:him
'They just ate it.' (14)

ngoornndo, ngoorndoongoornoo -ngga, gardiya -ngga miga
someone what’s:it:called -ERG white:person -ERG say
-mi -wirrangi manyi ngirndaji ngab -binggirra
-he:effected -on:them vegetable:food this eat -you:pl:will:extend:to:it
'What’s it called, the white people told them "Eat this food." ' (15)

ngab -birra: eat -they:extended:him

'They looked. Try, ... try, ... . They tried it; they ate it. They tried it and ate it.' (16)

"Ah, it's good!", they said, "good!' (17)

manyi ngirnda jimandi vegetable:food this good

'This food it good.' (18)

ngab -birra garndiwangoorroo -ngga -mi eat -they:extended:him many -ERG -next

'They they all ate it.' (19)

garndiwangoorroo -ngga -mi ngab -birra many -ERG -next eat -they:extended:him

'Then everyone ate it.' (20)

binarri -wirri niyaji know -they:went this

'They learnt about these (foods).' (21)

manyi ngab -birra:, wili vegetable:food eat -they:extended:him finish

'They ate the food and finished it.' (22)

di -nyooloo di, nalija, joowa, yoodoo -ngarni maja -ngga tea -ETC tea tea ? put -he:extended:to:it boss -ERG

'Tea, etc, tea, and ? the boss put out (for them).' (23)

ngoorlooloo -birra yaa, jimandi girli, drink -they:extended:him what's:it:called good same

miga -wirri say -they:were

'They drank and drank it, "Ah, good one," they said.' (24)

"Good!", they all said.' (25)

---

It is not clear precisely what the speaker intended to say here. As Jane Simpson has pointed out, the most likely possibility is that *drau* or *drawu* is a version of the English word *try.*

50
ngirinyija: girli ngab-ba: wirni
hungry same eat -we:will:extend:to:it only
' "We'll eat it hungry." ' (26)

ngab-birra: wili
eat -they:extended:him finish
'They ate it up.' (27)

binarri -wa-wirri -ma, ngamoo. wa. warangla warang
know -PROG -they:were -now before wa ignorant sit
-binirri
-they:were
'Now they knew; before they were ignorant.' (28)

mangarri manyi -yoo binarri, wajbali -yoo mangarri
not vegetable:food -DAT know white:people -DAT not
binarri, wirri warang -birri wajbali
know only sit -they:were ignorant
'They didn't know about white people or their foods; they were just ignorant.' (29)

ngab-birra: wila
eat -they:extended:him finish
'They ate it up.' (30)

binarri: -bindi, -bindimi wajbali -ngga
know -he:caught:them -they:effected:them white:people -ERG
binarri: -binmi
know -they:effected:him
'They taught them; the white people taught them.' (31)

binarri -ma warang -birri
know -now sit -they:were
'Then they knew.' (33)

warrgoom ngang -ji -wina:: wili
work give -IT -it:extended:to:them finish
'He gave them work, finish.' (34)

binarri -wa -worri
know -PROG -they:were
'They were knowledgeable.' (35)
'Then what-cha-ma-call-it, they noticed wagons, bullocks pulling them.' (36)

'I don't know what it is pulling it," he said ... they said.' (37)

'The track lies.' (38)

'They called it "baarri".' (39)

'They didn't call it a wagon, but a "baarri".' (40)

'The bullock, yes, they called it "booloomani".' (41)

'But they called wagons "baarri".' (42)

'They found it's tracks.' (43)

'It goes east.' (44)

'Then they knew.' (45)

'They knew, OK.' (46)
GOONIYANDI: EARLY CONTACT WITH WHITES IN THE KIMBERLEY

yoowarni yoowarni, dardigirr -mi -wirra
one one misunderstand -IT -they:extended:to:them
'They misunderstood English.' (47)

yingglij, dard; dardigirr -mi -wirra
English dard misunderstand -IT -they:extended:to:them
'They misunderstood English.' (48)

jijag -birri, thigi -yigi
speak -they:were short -short
'They spoke just a little.' (49)

wamba, binarri -ya -wirri, gardiya -ngga le; ngang
later know -SUBJ -they:were white:person -ERG lea give
-bindi yawarda
-he:caught:them horse
'Later on, they learnt, and the white people gave them horses.' (50)

ngimda laja -winggirra
this ride -you:pl:will:extend:to:it
' "Ride this!" ' (51)

laja -wirra:: wila
ride -they:extended:him finish
'They rode it, OK.' (52)

binarri -wa -wirri, goordangoornoonga laja -wirra
know -PROG -they:were ? ride -they:extended:him
'They learnt to ride horses.' (53)

yilba binarri -wirri -ma
forever know -they:were -now
'They knew now.' (54)

ngoorndooongooroo; we;
what's:it:called ?
'What-cha-ma-call-it?' (55)

booloomani, doow -nga maja -ngga yingi Bill
Richardson bullock get -he:extended:to:it boss -ERG name
'He got cattle, the boss, called Bill Richardson.' (56)

booloomani bayim -jingi, Queenslan -nhingi
bullock buy -he:caught:it -ABL
'He bought the cattle in Queensland.' (57)
ngilmangi  ward  -birra
from: the: east  go  -they: extended: him
'They brought them.' (58)

niyaji  -ya  breedim,  growimup  -birra  booloomani
this  -LOC  -they: extended: him  bullock
'There they breed cattle.' (59)

e;  niyi  -yarni  yoowoooloo  binari  -irri  -ma,  boolgawoolga
ah  that  -PL: man  know  -they: were  -now  old: men
'Ah, those old people were knowledgeable now.' (60)

binari  -wa  -irri,  binari  -wa  -irri  -ma: -laja
know  -PROG  -they: were  know  -PROG  -they: were  -now  ride
-laja -irra  booloomani:: wilaj  -ji -irra  -brand
-ride  -they: extended: him  bullock  around  -IT  -they: extended: him
'They knew now, they rode bullocks about, brand ...' (61)

brandim  -birra  yard  -ja
-they: extended: him  yard  -LOC
'They branded them in the yard.' (62)

yard  ngarag  -birra
yard  make  -they: extended: him
'They made the yard.' (63)

ngarag  -nga,  wajbali,  wajbali,  boorlooboo
make  -he: extended: to: it  white: people  white: people  follow
-wirra
-they: extended: him
'The white man made it, and they followed him.' (64)

wajbali  -ngga;  binarrig  -ji  -wina
white: people  -ERG  know  -IT  -it: extended: to: them
'The white man taught them.' (65)

yard  ngarag  -birra
yard  make  -they: extended: him
'They made the yard.' (66)

ngarag  -birra::  wili
make  -they: extended: him  finish
'They made it and finished it.' (67)

yard,  booloomani  -yoo
yard  bullock  -DAT
'A yard for cattle.' (68)
"At Goobardiya and east at Joonyoo, there they made yards, at the homesteads." (69)

"Yes, at both places." (70)

"Right there they branded the cattle." (71)

"The cattle grew up a little." (73)

"The cattle were big then." (75)

"The boss sent word downstream." (76)

"They droved them to Derby." (77)

"They put them in a boat." (78)

"In a vessel called a boat." (79)
niyaji -ya dagoorr -warri -wirra
this -LOC enter -IT -they:extended:him
'They put them in there.' (80)

jibirri balal -yingi nyamani -yirra mayaroo
downstream send -he:caught:it big -ALL house
'The sent them down to the big city.' (81)

niyi -nhingi balal; balbirra -winmi
that -ABL ret returned -they:effected
'Then they returned.' (82)

ngambirri -nyali, jilyjarni -wirra, booloomani
again' -REP brand -they:extended:him bullock
'Then they branded cattle again.' (83)

jilyyarni -wirra lambalambardi:: brand -ngarri -ngga
brand -they:extended:him little (x2) -COMIT -ERG
'They branded the little ones with brands.' (84)

jilyyarni -wirra:: wili
brand -they:extended:him finish
'They branded them, OK.' (85)

barrangga -ya
build:up:to:wet -LOC
'In the build up to the wet.' (86)

barrangga -barrangga -wa -wani, wila gad
build:up:to:wet -build:up:to:wet -PROG -he:fell finish leave
-birrini
-they:hit:him
'As it gets hot, they leave off work.' (87)

gad -birrini wirni -mi warang -birri
leave -they:hit:him only -next sit -they:were
'They left work, and took a break.' (88)

TEXT 3: EARLY CONTACT WITH THE WHITES
By Bigfoot Jagarra
[Recorded by William McGregor at Mulurrja, 1982, and transcribed and translated by William McGregor with the assistance of Jack Bohemia, at Fitzroy Crossing, 1982.]7

---

7 In the transcription below WM indicates that the speaker is William McGregor; X indicates another participant in the interaction whose identity is unknown. Everywhere else, the speaker is the narrator.
GOONIYANDI: EARLY CONTACT WITH WHITES IN THE KIMBERLEY

doowoo, ngaarriya; doowoo nyamani bagilayi
cave, in a hill; there was a big cave
WM: mhm;
they camped there
X: ah great
ye:
WM: Mm
yes
WM: mm
paper; paperbark, they pulled off paperbark
for water (vessel)
X: mm
they shut it up
WM: mm
X: mm
and in a hill, inside, in a cave they camped
X: that's all
mm
WM: mm
what else was it snakes emus and so on they
made it on top

WM: aha
(laughter)
X: (incomprehensible)
WM: mm
vegetable food
WM: mm.
vegetable foods, small potatoes, small
potatoes
X: yes, all around, ...
they ate it
WM: mm
mm, bush plums, and ??, they used to eat
X: (incomprehensible)
WM: mm
yes
X: all over the place
WM: um, yes
not; no; not flour food
WM: mm
no
WM: mm
then he may have come with flour, a white
man
WM: mm
'who is this who has come up?'
'it's a devil that has come'
well the whites quietened them down
right; niyajinhingi, ma::; manyi; niyingga
openim, wajbalingga, bilawa ngang
jaji ngirnda::, openimbinmi
yinigawanmanhi, bilawa bidingga openim
	right, nyoon, galardingarri

X: galardi
galardijangi bilawangarri
WM: ye
X: (...)
like a white one
WM: nhnn
clean
WM: yoowayi
nyoonnma; garlardingarri, bilawangarringga

WM: aha
X: (... white one
mm
WM: ye
well yinigawanmanhi
WM: n;
marlami, labda; ngab; ngaboowarni
yan.ginbani, yinigawanmanhi ngaboo

marlami, niyajingga; niyi girli mamoo
bijngarni gardganboo
X: (...) 
gadboonggoorroo, bilawa
bidingga briyandi; jinali thalig, nyag; niyaji
wajbali, yijgawoo
WM: nhn
X: killim for live
n:
WM: nhn
(laughter)
boolgawoolga waranggilawirri, (sniff)
wilawoo ngarragi thangarndi niyaji giribli,
girrangi winhi
WM: nhn

ORIGINAL TEXT WITH INTERLINEAR TRANSLATIONS

dooowo, ngaarri -ya; doowo
cave rock -LOC cave
'A cave; there was a big cave in a hill.' (1)

WM: mhm: (2)
'They camped there.' (3)

'Yes.' (5)

'Yes.' (5)

They pulled off paperbark for water (vessel). (7)

'Yes.' (5)

They shut it up.' (9)

'And in a cave in a hill they camped.' (12)

'What else was it, snakes, emus and so on, they made it on top.' (16)
WM: *aha* (17)

(laughter)

X: *(Incomprehensible)* (18)

WM: *nhn* (19)

X: *(Incomprehensible)* (20)

WM: *mhm* (21)

*manyi*

vegetable: food

'Vegetable food.' (22)

WM: *mhm* (23)

*manyi*, *wajarri*, *boongga*

vegetable: food small: potatoes small: potatoes

'Vegetable foods, small potatoes.' (24)

X: *ah, all round, (...)* (25)

*ngab* -*birra*

eat -they: extended: him

'They ate it.' (26)

WM: *mhm* (27)

*n?n?, manyi digooloo, giyirndi ngab* -*a* -*wirri*

*Mm vegetable: food bush: plum ? eat -PROG -they: went*

'Mm. They used to eat bush plums and so on.' (28)

X: *(Incomprehensible)* (29)

WM: *nhn* (30)

*ye:*

'Yes' (31)

X: *all round* (32)

WM: *aha, ye:* (33)

*margarri; mang; manyi margarri* *bilawa*

not vegetable: food not flour

'Not flour.' (34)

60
GOONIYANDI: EARLY CONTACT WITH WHITES IN THE KIMBERLEY

WM: *m: (35)*

*marlami*
nothi
'No.' (36)

WM: *mhnm (37)*

*bilawa -ngarri -mi bij -ja -ngarni, wajbali*
flour -COMIT -next emerge -SUBJ -it:emerged white:people
'A white man may have come with flour then.' (38)

WM: *nhnm (39)*

*ngoornadoo ngirnda bij -ngarni*
someone this emerge -it:emerged
'"Who is this who has come up?" ' (40)

*ngirnda girli mamoo bij -ngarni*
this same devil emerge -it:emerged
'"It's a devil that has come." ' (41)

*well wajbali -ngga kwailim -ji -wina*
well white:people -ERG quiet -IT -it:extended:to:them
'Well, the whites quietened them down.' (42)

*right? niyaji -nhingi, ma:; manyii; niyii -ngga openim,*
this -ABL vegetable:food that -ERG
*wajbali -ngga, bilawa ngang*
white:people -ERG flour give
'Right, then the whites opened (the bags) and gave them flour.' (43)

*jaji ngirnda::, openim -binmi*
something this -they:effected:him
'"What is it?". They opened (the bags).' (44)

*yiniga -wanna -nhi, bilawa bidi -ngga openim*
do:something -we:pl:will:extend -on:him flour they -ERG
'"What will we do with it?" (they asked), as they opened the bags of flour.' (45)

*right, nyoon, galardi -ngarri*
rub white:clay -COMIT
'Right, they rubbed themselves (as) with white clay.' (46)

X: *galardi*
white:clay
X: 'White clay.' (47)
galardi -jangi bilawa -ngarri
white:clay -SEM flour -COMIT

'With flour, like white clay.' (48)

WM: ye (49)

X: (Indecipherable) (50)

like a white one
'Like white stuff.' (51)

WM: nhn (52)

clean (53)

WM: yoowayi
yes
WM: 'Yes.' (54)

nyoon -ma; galardi -ngarri, bilawa -ngarri -ngga
rub -now white:clay -COMIT flour -COMIT -ERG

'They rubbed themselves with the flour, like white clay.' (55)

WM: aha (56)

X: (...) white one (57)

mm
'Mm.' (58)

WM: ye (59)

well yiniga -wanma - nhi
well do:something -we:pl:will:extend -on:him
"Well, what will we do with it?" ' (60)

WM: mm (61)

marlami, labda; ngab; ngaboo -wa -mi yan.gin -bani
nothing must father -his -next ask -you:will:fall

yiniga -wanma - nhi ngaboo
do:something -we:pl:will:extend -on:him father

"Nothing. You'll have to ask your father next, "What will we do with it, father"."' (62)

marlami, niyaji -ngga; niyi girli mamoo bij -ngarni gard
nothing this -ERG that same devil emerge -it:emerged hit
-ganboo
-he:hits:us

"Nothing. That's a devil that has come; he might kill us." ' (63)
GOONTYANDI: EARLY CONTACT WITH WHITES IN THE KIMBERLEY

X: (Indecipherable) (64)

gød -boonggoorroo, bilawa
leave -you:will:hit:it flour
' "Leave that flour alone."' (65)

bidi -ngga bryandi; jinali thalig, nyag; niyaji wajbali;
they -ERG in:turn spear hook:up:spear pierce this white:people
yijgawoo
bad
'In turn they hooked up spears and speared that white man, poor bugger.' (66)

WM: nhn (67)

X: killim for live
X: 'Killed him dead.' (68)

n::
Mm. (69)
WM: nhn (70)

(laughter)
boolgawoolga warang -gila -wirri, (sniff)
old:men sit -FACT -they:were
'The old men were sitting around.' (71)

wila -woo ngarrayi thangarndi niyaji girrib -li girrangi
finish -DEF my word this finish -I:caught:it your:pl

winhi
only
'That's all of my story; I've finished it's yours.' (72)

WM: nhn (73)

PART II

WILLIAM McGregor

The purpose of this second part to provide some background interpretation for the texts presented above. In particular, I will be engaging in a process of textual exegesis, in an attempt to come to some clearer understanding of what the texts mean, or might mean, to

---

8 This is a somewhat revised and expanded version of a seminar presentation to the conference 'Aborigines making history', jointly organised by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies and the Australian National University, on 16 May 1988. I am grateful to the participants of the seminar - particularly Eve Fesl, David Nash, Helen Ross - for their comments. I am particularly grateful to Jane Simpson and Peter Read for stimulating comments on an earlier written version of this paper.
speakers of Gooniyandi, to Gooniyandi people, and what light this might throw on the ways in which they conceptualise the past. I strongly believe that non-Gooniyandi readers of the above Gooniyandi texts will take with them a set of reading practices and cultural baggage which will predispose them to particular readings, which are possibly quite inappropriate, and bear little resemblance to the narrator's intentions. And it is only by a process of exegesis - informed by both a knowledge of the particular language and the culture - that we can come to anything resembling an understanding of the meaning intended by the narrator.

**Genre of texts**

I propose that the genre of texts 1 and 2 is a type of exposition, rather than narrative, and that text 3 is perhaps closest to what might be called report. The first thing to notice about the texts is their generality: with a single exception, no attempt is made to establish or identify individual participants, nor are the events alluded to located specifically in time or space.\(^9\) The texts, in other words, deal in terms of generalities: generic sets (Aborigines and whites), and generic events - in the majority of instances, the events referred to are general classes of events, rather than specific occurrences.\(^10\) In these terms the three texts contrast sharply with prototypical narratives in Gooniyandi, which as a rule involve both (i) at least one specific and individuated participant, and (ii) beyond the introductory segment providing the setting, a sequence of specific events, which are almost always located in space - that is, at some named place. Perhaps in keeping with this, texts 1 and 2 show a much higher frequency of verbs of cognition and perception than narratives normally do.

Elsewhere\(^11\) I have argued that narratives in Gooniyandi show the following defining pairs of properties. Firstly, they are structured in terms of one or more STORY UNITS, which contain as inherent constituent elements minimal stories. Minimal stories consist of three conjoined events such that the first and the third are stative, and the second active, with the further property that the third is in some sense an inverse of the first. Secondly, the text as a whole shows the pattern Complication A Peripetia A Denouement, where the Complication represents some kind of disturbance from a previously prevailing inertia, the Peripetia a switch from this disturbed state to the state which prevails finally. The Denouement thus represents not just any stable state, but the resolution of the Complication. The three texts we have been looking at do not, considered as wholes, satisfy these structural descriptions. In particular, the events and states of minimal stories are presumed to be specific and not generics; and the overall organisation into Complication A Peripetia A Denouement does not seem to be satisfied - texts 1 and 3 do not seem to end with a resolution at all; text 2 may, but it is not a resolution of the initial Complication.

How then are the texts then structured?

I would suggest that Text 1 consists of an initial Prologue, which states the topic and authority for the narrator (we return to this later). This is followed by three somewhat narrative like segments (except that they deal with generic events and persons, rather than

\[^9\] The exception is the white man Bill Richardson, mentioned on line 57 of text 2. However, it will be noted that this person does not play a significant role in the unfolding of the text. Once mentioned, the speaker almost immediately forgets him. True, the following clauses have a third person singular Goal (patient or object if you will - see McGregor 1990 for a definition); however, it is by no means clear that he is being specifically referred to, other than in lines 57 and 58 - generic and indefinite Goals are frequently treated as singular for the purposes of pronominal prefixing in Gooniyandi.

\[^10\] Note that in Gooniyandi the past tense alone covers the sense of past habitual or past characteristic.

\[^11\] McGregor 1987.
individuated ones). The first is lines 4 to about 17; the second is from about lines 18 to 35; and the third is from line 36 to the end. Ignoring the matter of genericity, the first segment begins with the Aborigines in a state of ignorance (line 4), and ends with them in a more knowledgeable condition - see line 14. The second segment begins with Aborigines and whites killing one another in the olden days (lines 18 and 19), and ends with peace and harmony (lines 34 and 35). One might make a case for regarding these as minimal stories, or minimal generic stories, were it not for the fact that the intervening material does not really lead up to the concluding state, but rather merely elaborates on the initial state. The final segment does not seem to have this type of structure at all: it seems to be no more than a report on the particular circumstances, which, though it seems to be clearly regarded as unsatisfactory, is not resolved.

Text 2 is rather similar. It also begins with a type of Prologue outlining the major participants (which are again generic). Then the first narrative like segment begins with a state - that of ignorance of the whites and their ways. It restates this state in a number of variants - ignorance of various different things. There follow, interwoven with the various statements of states of ignorance, a number of events, which culminate in the state of knowledge of line 55. The text then concludes with a rather lengthy narrative like segment describing life on the stations in the early days. This final segment also seems to be a type of report.

It is noteworthy that the themes of texts 1 and 2 tend to be not the main human participants, but items with which human participants come in contact. Furthermore, these thematic items are almost everywhere Goals (or patients) in their clauses. In text 2, for instance, there is a sequence of segmented themes (i.e. themes which occur on their own information unit) thiwa 'red' (line 4 - note that this does not refer to white people, but attributes a name to them), yawarda 'horse' (line 7), waddgoom 'work' (line 11), manyi 'food' (line 13), and so on. Similar remarks hold for text 2, except that there the themes are not segmented. In both these ways texts 1 and 2 contrast sharply with narratives, which typically have the human protagonists as the sentence themes, and furthermore these thematic protagonists are typically Actors, rather than Goals.

Texts 1 and 2 are apparently dissimilar. However, I suggest that they are each structured as follows. They consist of a sequence of arguments of the form point plus exemplification. Thus, what I have just described as initial state in a type of generic narrative may be alternatively analysed as thesis; the remaining parts of each segment may be seen as evidence in support for this thesis, or elaboration of the thesis - that is, general event sequences are used as evidence for, or elaboration of the general theses. Finally, there is a short concluding piece which states a contrast to the initial thesis; in these texts, it is the now as opposed to the then of the initial thesis. Thus we have a structure something like Thesis^Elaboration^Contrast. In the case of Jack Bohemia's texts, the Elaboration also leads into the Contrast in such a way as to provide the intervening causal chain (throughout, it is familiarity through experience and trying the white items and ways); thus text 2 is rather more narrative in character than text 1, where the contrast is devoid of explanation.

Text 3 seem somewhat different. It clearly falls into two parts, but neither is particularly narrative in the sense of having either minimal story structure, or resolution structure. Each part does no more than relate sequences of generic events; the first comes to no particular conclusion, but merely paves the way for the introduction of the theme - or complication - of the second part. The second part, if it comes to a conclusion at all, it is a

12 The theme - what the utterance is about, or the 'peg' on which it is hinged - in Gooniyandi occurs in initial position in a non-elliptical clause (see McGregor 1990 for detailed discussion).
very local one, and one which is quite a typical for Gooniyandi narratives - and it certainly
does not resolve the complication of this segment. Text 3 could reasonably be regarded as
an instance of report.13

Putting things another way, these three texts seem to have DESCRIPTION as their
primary purpose, rather than the relating of a story with a plot. For this reason it would
seem reasonable to group them together as expositions, as distinct from narratives.
However, it must be noted that the pieces seem to be merely strung together one after
another, and that in each cases, even though there are recurrent themes, there is no clear
articulation of a single argument.

I conclude this discussion with brief mention of a couple of observations about the
micro-structure of the texts.

Firstly, texts 1 and 2 (but not text 3) both begin with brief statements of overall text-
topic, which function rather like titles in English writing. Text 1 begins with the word
thiwa 'whites', which stands outside of the remainder of the sentence - grammatically, it
does not belong to the following clause, and it occurs on its own tone unit. It represents
what the story is about - whites, or more accurately, white and Aboriginal interaction. Text
2 begins with a more elaborate statement of topic - 'these people were bush people'. But
although this is a full clause, it would seem to be functionally similar to thiwa 'white
person' in text 1. It states what the story is about, namely the olden days Aborigines,
those who lived in the 'bush' - observe that this is the way it is expressed in Gooniyandi,
just as in English. Bush people are those who do not live in settled communities; in
genral they are regarded (by the modern Gooniyandi at least) as rather unsophisticated. A
similar, though not identical case might be made for the first word of text 3, which could
be regarded as a synoptic statement of the main theme of the first half of the text:
traditional life, typified by the mention of doowoo 'caves'.

Secondly, the three texts do not involve TRAVELLING SEQUENCES;14 that is, they do
not have within them sequences of the type 'X left place1, X travelled, X arrived place2'.
These sequences are typical of narrative texts, and in part function as markers of
authorisation of the text.13 Interestingly, there are few indicators of authorisation within
these texts; the only really obvious one occurs in the first few lines of text 1, where Fossil
Pluto defers to his jaminyi 'grandfather' (father's father) as his authority for telling the text.

THE TOPICS AND HOW THEY ARE DEALT WITH

The three texts introduce a number of inter-related themes, some of which recur
throughout the texts, while others are mentioned in only one or two of them. These include
the following:
(1) Ignorance on the part of early days Aborigines of white people and their ways, and
language.
(2) The Aborigines learn white man's ways, and how to deal with new things language,
and concepts, etc..
(3) A strong concern with the names given by the early days people for the new items
brought by whites.
(4) The contrast then vs. now emerges in each text, though in slightly different ways.
(5) Jack Bohemia stresses the adaptation of Aborigines to white ways, and their crucial
role in the cattle industry of the north west.

13 In the sense of, for example, Martin 1985, p.7, and Martin & Peters 1985.
15 ibid.
GOONIYANDI: EARLY CONTACT WITH WHITES IN THE KIMBERLEY

(6) Fossil Pluto lays stress on the conflict between black and white, something which is largely ignored by Jack Bohemia.

(7) Fossil Pluto raises the issue of sexual relations between whites and blacks in the last lines of his text.

(8) Fossil Pluto also alludes briefly to ownership of the land. None of the others mention this theme.

Let us look at these themes a little more carefully.

(1) Each text mentions the lack of knowledge on the part of the early days Aborigines of white people, their foods, their artefacts and animals (especially the horse) and their ways of life and language. Consider for instance lines 4 to 9, and lines 14 to 15, of text 1; lines 2, 6, 12, 13, 30, and 38 of text 2; and lines 41, 45, 55, and 60 of text 3. (Note that Jack Bohemia is the only one to mention language difficulties.)

Not only did the Aborigines not know about the introduced items, but also that they either misunderstood them (their nature, etc.) or misused them. Thus for instance, in line 6 of text 1 we find that they thought horses were spirits of dogs, and in line 8 that whites were dwellers of the long grass, presumably some sort of spirit beings. Again, line 41 of text 3 indicates that at first whites were thought to be devils. And again in text 3, lines 45 to 66 deal with flour: it is thought to be white clay, and used as such - they rubbed it on themselves, probably when acting as avengers (who traditionally painted themselves up with white clay before going on revenge expeditions). This would seem to best explain line 66.) Although Jack Bohemia's text does not mention this misunderstanding about flour, he was well aware of it, and commented on it himself on other occasions. He also mentioned that tea was thought to be gri, a type of sap used to poison fish - gri turns water to a reddish colour like tea. Thus the early days Aborigines thought that the whites were trying to poison them.

Ignorance, it will also be noted, is advanced as perhaps the main reason for conflict. See text 1, lines 18-19, 21, and 29.

(2) The second theme - that Aborigines learnt white man's ways, and how to deal with new things language, and concepts, etc. - is the major theme of text 2, by Jack Bohemia. It is briefly alluded to in text 1 (see lines 14 and 29-30), where Pluto merely says that whereas before people were ignorant, now they are not; text 3 seems to ignore it completely.

(3) Texts 1 and 2 both mention the names given by early days people for the new items brought by whites. Lines 6 and 8 of text 1 indicate that horses were first called thiminyjangarri, 'spirits of dogs' and marrimbala 'grass country devil'. (One of the common words for 'horse', dimana, apparently also had this original meaning in Gooniyandi, according to information from Jack Bohemia.) Line 8 also indicates that whites were called gilimboorrngarnanyi, 'dwellers of the long grass'. Jack Bohemia also cites marrimbala (and a variant maroonbala) as the early name for the horse (see lines 8 and 9). However, Bohemia says (in line 3) that thiwa was the first name given to whites - whether or not this is true, it certainly is the word that most Gooniyandi speakers identify as the Gooniyandi word for 'white person'. Bohemia also gives the words for two other introduced items: baarri 'wagon', booloomani 'cattle' (see lines 40 and 41 respectively).

This is very interesting information for the historical linguist, as it is possible on the basis of such information to establish different time periods of different linguistic adaptations to the white society. We can trace, for instance, the following changes over time, with respect to some of the more common introduced items:
These two texts would seem to closely associate naming with understanding, such that knowing the correct name is identifiable with understanding, while having an incorrect name is tantamount to misunderstanding. Thus the early names for white people and horses reflect the early misunderstandings about the nature of these novelties. Both were presumed to be from the spirit realm. In a similar way, flour was understood to be white clay, which put it in the world of retribution, law, rather than food. These early names gave way to names which reflected a changed understanding of the introduced item. Thus, whites were not understood any longer as spirits, and so were named after a physical attribute, the colour of their skin. The term dimana 'horse' was one used over a wide area extending as far as the Queensland border.\(^{16}\) The final column reflects the modern linguistic situation, in which there has been a shift from speaking Gooniyandi firstly to speaking Walmajarri as a lingua franca amongst Fitzroy Crossing Aborigines, followed by a shift to speaking Kriol. Today, the most common and frequent terms for introduced items are pan-Kimberley, and not the ones speakers associate specifically with particular languages.

(4) The contrast between then and now emerges in slightly different ways in the three texts. Fossil Pluto contrasts the violence of the frontier with the relative peace of today (line 35 of text 1). Jack Bohemia (text 2) contrasts the ignorance of the past with respect to whites and white artefacts etc. with the knowledge of the present. (This is a view he holds independent of this particular text - that knowledge of whites and their ways is important, and a necessary prerequisite for everyone who lives in the modern world.) Thirdly, Bigfoot Jagadda contrasts the 'then' of the traditional past with the 'now' of the period of first contact (rather than the now of the present). Thus relative calm is imputed to the traditional life, where people lived and ate (lines 1 through to about 35).

(5) The adaptation of Aborigines to white ways, and their crucial role in the cattle industry of the North West is stressed by Jack Bohemia. Thus the second half of Bohemia's text (lines 51 onwards) deals with stockwork. First, in lines 51 to 54, we have the Aborigines learning to ride horses as the first thing they learn about stockwork. Then in lines 57 to the end of the text, there is a piece about stockwork, and the various jobs it entails. The Bill Richardson of line (57) was the first manager of Old Bohemia station, on which Bohemia was born and where he first worked for many years. (It was Bohemia's belief that this was the first station in the region; however, written historical sources disagree and place Fossil Downs as the first in the region.) This segment (lines 57 to the end) describes how Aborigines learnt to look after ('grow up') the cattle (line 60), brand them (line 62-63), and make cattle yards (lines 64-69). In lines 77 to 83 we have the Aborigines driving the cattle to Derby, to be put on the boats - thus there were Aborigines who were entrusted with jobs requiring responsibility, diligence and ability to work without supervision. It was not the case that, as is often said, the Aborigines had to be supervised all the time to ensure they worked.\(^{17}\)

---

\(^{17}\) See also Shaw 1986; McGrath 1987; Marshall 1989.
GOONIYANDI: EARLY CONTACT WITH WHITES IN THE KIMBERLEY

The final three lines of the text allude to the practice in the north of Australia of not working during the wet season (roughly December to April). Aboriginal employees were normally free to 'go bush' at this time.

The opinions expressed here are of a man who has worked all of his life in white employment, first as a stockman and later as a police tracker. Indeed, he excelled in each to the extent that he is regarded as amongst the best stockmen of the Kimberley region (by younger Aboriginal men whom he taught), and the best tracker of the north-west. Although the other two narrators also presumably worked on the stations, their major claim to fame is as lawmen, and they do not mention stockwork.

(6) The conflict between black and white is a recurrent theme in Fossil Pluto's text. However, it is by no means a one-sided battle. Lines 11, 13, 18, and 28 all refer to Aborigines killing whites. In fact, the first violent act is attributed to Aborigines. Lines 18, 19, 22, 25, 27, and 31 refer to whites killing Aborigines, or their propensity to do so. Conflict is, however, largely ignored by Jack Bohemia and Bigfoot Jagadda. In fact, it is not mentioned at all by Bohemia, and Bigfoot mentions it only indirectly, in line 42 of his contribution (text 3), by the allusion to 'quietening down'. And again in line 66, except that this time it is Aborigines spearing a white man.

(7) Miscegenation is the final issue mentioned in Fossil Pluto's text. The theme is first mentioned in line 26, but the speaker then goes on to talk about fighting and killing, not returning to this theme again until line 37 (or possibly 36 - the meaning of this line (like line 38) is by no means clear). The results of these liaisons - 'part Aborigines' - are also mentioned.

It might be noted here that Pluto presents it not as rape by white men, but that the Aboriginal women went sneekingly to the white men. (There is, however, some equivocation, or at least duality in his thought: the first mention puts it as whites stealing Aboriginal women.) In other words, on this issue, as for the others, the Gooniyandi speaker has not presented Aborigines as prototypical patients, whites as prototypical agents. In fact, a strong characteristic of the three texts is that they portray Aborigines as ACTORS. They are not the mere passive recipients of white violence, but also contributed themselves to the violence of the frontier - not, it should be noted, as a form of resistance.

The other recurrent theme, which is perhaps an extension of this theme of Aborigines as actors, is learning and cooperation; they adapted to the new world in such a way as to retain their agentive potency.

(8) Finally, only Fossil Pluto alludes, albeit briefly, to the issue of ownership of the land. He merely states in line 20 that whites tramped over Aboriginal land, and this is given as one of the reasons for conflict (the other being ignorance, as has already been mentioned). Thus, in the context of these texts, there seem to be no strong arguments presented for exclusive Aboriginal ownership of the land.

Relation to other stories of early contact with whites in the Kimberley and elsewhere

These three Gooniyandi texts are not untypical of stories of the early contact with whites and there are available similar stories from other Aboriginal groups that deal with some of the same, or a set of very similar, basic elements. I have recorded quite similar texts in other Kimberley languages, including Unggumi, Bunuba, and Aboriginal English; and Helen Ross (pers. comm.) reports that she has collected similar texts in Kriol, Aboriginal English and Kija at Turkey Creek. Published texts and text portions include Thoorribiliny (1987), McGrath (1987), Nathan and Japanangka (1983), and Moses and Tsunoda (1986), amongst many others.
Nathan and Japangangka\(^{18}\) include a piece on early contact, which forms part of a larger text told by a group of Warlpiri women to Pam Nathan (in Warlpiri), a translation of which appears on pages 47 to 50 of that book. (It may be relevant that neither author is a linguist, and the story was not collected primarily for the purposes of linguistic investigation.) That text falls roughly into two parts: the first, approximately three-quarters, deals with traditional lifestyle; the final quarter mentions contact. Specific issues mentioned are: (a) Aborigines' lack of clothing, which is overcome with gifts from whites; (b) ignorance of the white man; (c) trying white man's food (in this instance, it is beef that they try first, flour later); and (d) wondering where the whites come from (compare line 5 of text 2 and line 40 of text 1). However, the contrast between then and now is largely absent and naming practices are not mentioned. Likewise, Thoorribiliny\(^{19}\) deals mainly with the initial conflict, and its later resolution, but also briefly deals with the theme of the Aborigines' ignorance of white foods, and their later control of white foods, artefacts, and institutions (such as riding, branding cattle, and so on). Thoorribiliny's text is also a part of a larger text, one with a political purpose. Here the past is contrasted with the present, and the text about the early contact is used partly as an argument for Aboriginal control of some tracts of land. The summary and excerpts of a similar piece by the Gurindji woman, Amy Laurie, in McGrath\(^{20}\) deals with (a) mistaken beliefs about whites and horses - that they were devils; (b) conflict and massacres; (c) bringing cattle and quietening the people; (d) miscegenation; (e) and introduction of white foods.

Some accounts of first contact are, however, rather different, in that they are predominantly focussed on a single issue, that of the violent confrontation between whites and Aborigines. For instance, the Jaru story by Robert Moses\(^{21}\) relates just one issue, the violent confrontation between cattlemen and Aborigines over access to water.

One very striking difference between the three Gooniyandi stories and the other accounts alluded to above is that the latter\(^{22}\) all mention massacres, using these as the main illustrations of white-Aboriginal conflict. The Gooniyandi stories do not refer to specific massacres, although they do refer generically to massacres or large scale killings. That is, they take no single instance as an exemplar for the violence of the frontier. Indeed, as we have seen, they place as much weight on Aboriginal violence as they do on white violence.

It is interesting that, like Jack Bohemia, Moses and Thoorribiliny, who were recorded by linguists, both mention language. Both discuss difficulties of communication due to the lack of a common language, and use this as part of the explanation of the conflict.

There are some interesting similarities and differences amongst the additional texts we have mentioned in this section in terms of their organisational patterns. As is the case for the Gooniyandi texts, there is neither detailed temporal location, nor spatial succession. Although events are in some instances given spatial locations, what is absent is the detailed place to place movement characteristic of most narrative genres in Aboriginal languages. I suspect that there may be reasons for this; in all areas dealt with, the events fall out of living memory, and probably also outside of the living memory of the generation before the speaker. (In this context, it would be interesting to compare stories from people whose contact has been more recent - e.g. the Desert people who arrived in Fitzroy Crossing in the

---

19 Thoorribiliny 1987.
22 Including Thoorribiliny 1987; Moses & Tsunoda 1986; McGrath 1987.
mid 20th century.) Thus we might expect a significant reduction in the details remembered of the early contact stories that speakers of today may have heard as children.

In some instances the stories have the overall structure of narratives; they do not use narrative segments as parts of illustrations of more general points, as in the case of the Gooniyandi texts. Examples of this type include Moses' contribution in Hercus and Sutton, and Laurie's in McGrath. One wonders whether this generic difference might be relatable to 'external' factors such as the temporal distance from initial contact, and the nature of the actual contact: whether, for instance, it was characterised by conflict over a long period of time, with numerous events of various types, or whether it was typified by single particularly violent events, which have been inter interpreted as standing for, as exemplary examples of, the frontier of conflict.

Conclusion

In this part of the paper I have discussed the three Gooniyandi texts presented in Part I, identifying themes and the ways in which they are dealt with. I have also briefly compared these texts with texts on similar themes from other Australian groups. My main purpose has been to draw attention to these texts as statements by Aborigines. At the same time, it is my interpretation presented here, and I have been involved in all phases of the production of the Gooniyandi texts. The texts are not 'pure' in any sense, as statements by Gooniyandi people 'untainted' by white influence. The need for exegetical investigations such as this is, firstly, that when the cultures are as different as Aboriginal and white there is room for misunderstanding and confusion on each side; and secondly, related to this, in the context of today we need to examine 'original' source materials - or what is as close as possible to original materials - not merely those which have been put through the mill of a historian's interpretation. To put it another way, this is one relatively small aspect of a number of larger projects I am currently working on whose aim is to present effectively Gooniyandi views of past events, rather than to use these texts like documents in a library, as fields to be mined for evidence to support my own theories of Kimberley history. More generally, it is a call for the development of new genres for talking about the past.

The three texts are about the past, and make arguments about the past. But we should still raise the question: are they historical? It is by no means clear that every text dealing with the past should qualify as a historical text (even though it may contain historical information). The vast majority of Gooniyandi texts I have collected about the past are quite different to the three which have been the focus of this paper. They are narrative in form, and specific and individuated in both participant (character) and event reference. Moreover, they incorporate an ideology of the past which relates past events and happenings to PLACES, rather than times, and for this reason the term historical is at best misleading. Our three texts are neither narrative nor place orientated. Nor are they time orientated. The fact that they present arguments and elaboration of theses makes them resemble modern history (whose essential character has been described by Legge as argumentative, and defending a point of view), perhaps more than Gooniyandi narratives of the past. Differences must, however, be kept in mind. Unlike modern history, these texts deal almost exclusively in generalities, and do not refer to particular events of the past.

---

23 Hercus & Sutton 1986
LIST OF REFERENCES

Hercus, L. & Sutton, P. (eds) 1986, This is What Happened: Historical Narratives by Aborigines, Canberra.
Legge, J. 1988, Perspectives on the past, plenary paper presented to Conference 'Aborigines making history', Canberra, 16 May.
Marshall, P. 1989, Raparapa: All Right, Now We Go 'longside the River: Stories from the Fitzroy River Drovers, Broome, W.A.
McGrath, A. 1987, Born in the Cattle, Sydney.
Shaw, B. 1986, Countrymen: The Life Histories of Four Aboriginal Men as Told to Bruce Shaw, Canberra.
NYUNGS AND WORK: ABORIGINAL EXPERIENCES IN THE RURAL ECONOMY OF THE GREAT SOUTHERN REGION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Sally Hodson

Introduction

From the turn of the century until the 1960s, when they became marginalised as workers as a result of structural and technological changes in the rural economy, Nyungars in the Great Southern Region of Western Australia (Map) were a convenient pool of reserve labour for wheat and sheep farmers as seasonal and economic conditions required. Usually they were engaged in contract work - shearing, crutching, clearing and fencing - and domestic work. Not only was the participation of Nyungars in the capitalist economy necessary for their survival, since much of the land on which they had formerly hunted and gathered had been cleared with the development of the wheat belt, but they were also subjected to intense pressure from government administration to adopt European work values and behaviour. Yet, as an increasing number of anthropologists have come to realise in recent years, local populations are not merely reactive in the face of these external forces operating upon them.

In this paper, I examine the nature of the Nyungar interaction with the capitalist economy by drawing on the oral testimonies of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people relating to the period from the mid 1930s to 1970. Components of this interaction are kinship ties and work; patterns of work; value of bush resources; Nyungar and capitalist value systems; and relationships between Nyungars and farmers. Finally, Nyungars' skills in managing adaptation to change are reflected in their assessments of the value of their contribution to the regional rural economy.

Kinship and work

The aim of the Western Australian administration (the Department of Native Affairs and its successor the Department of Native Welfare) was to control and train Nyungars in an effort to make them more acceptable to the European community. The inculcation of the European work ethic was seen as an integral part of this training which, for younger Nyungars at least, meant preparation for individual success in the wider society, albeit at its lower levels. However, as will be shown in the following section, the social imperative

Sally Hodson completed her MA degree in Anthropology at the University of Western Australia in 1989 and since then has been working in North and Central Australia.

1 The word Nyungar (alternatively spelt Nyoongah, Noongar, Nungar, Noongah, Njungah, meaning 'man' or 'person', is the generic name which the Aboriginal people living in the south-western corner of Western Australia, south and west of a diagonal line extending from just south of Geraldton to just west of Esperance (see map), use to refer to themselves.

2 Crutching refers to the process of removing wool from the hindquarters of sheep to prevent them from becoming fly-blown.

3 I spoke with twenty-five Nyungar people, fifteen men and ten women aged between 45 and 80. I also interviewed eight non-Aboriginal farmers; a former Protector; a retired teacher, a missionary couple; and a former District Officer with the Department of Native Welfare. Material drawn from taped interviews is referenced by the letter T followed by the tape number. Material drawn from untaped interviews is referenced by the letter T followed by the number assigned to that interviewee. These interviews, carried out in 1986 and 1987, were part of the research for an MA.
The Great Southern Region, Western Australia
remained strong for Nyungars, with kinship ties influencing where people worked, with whom they worked, the type of work that they did and how they shared the available resources. The basic Nyungar economic unit was the household, defined as those who occupied the same house or camp. While this typically consisted of parents and their children, the domestic boundary was very flexible and members would frequently be joined by other close relatives: unmarried uncles and aunts, widowed grandparents, nephews and nieces. Birdsell's comments on the Nyungar practice of sending children to live with their mother's kin for varying periods of time throughout their childhood; while the oral histories indicate that young men in particular often spent time with different uncles and aunts before they married. Moreover, in some families the father might be absent from the household, either temporarily because of work or imprisonment, or permanently through marital separation or death. In these situations the woman left on her own with children would often join her parents' household. Thus, the actual composition of the basic Nyungar economic unit varied greatly.

The work performed by Nyungar men and women in the paid economy was made possible by the division of labour within the household whereby women assumed responsibility for the unpaid domestic tasks: cooking, washing and childcare. Nyungar women also contributed to the family finances, and some were the sole providers either because they were single, separated or widowed, or because their husbands, as a result of illness, age or injury, were no longer able to work. The records and annual reports of the Department of Native Affairs up to the 1950s depict women as involved only in domestic employment. This, however, is more a reflection of the assumptions held by administrators regarding the most suitable work for women than of the real situation. A different picture emerges from the Aboriginal narratives, one which shows that many women worked with the men on clearing contracts. The contribution of women was freely acknowledged by the male interviewees: 'she worked like a man' was a description frequently applied to wives or female relatives. While shearing did not entail the same involvement of women, there were those who worked regularly as shed hands and a few also did stock work.

When the type of work and the demands of schooling permitted it, children worked alongside their parents, and in this way farming skills were transmitted from one generation to the next. The process began informally from quite an early age as children played in the paddocks near the adults. As they grew older they helped by picking up stones and small roots, pouring poison around tree stumps and looking after the smaller children. Cutting posts and fencing was another area where children could assist by gathering the posts into heaps and helping to 'run out' the fencing wire. An informant remembered, too, that when he and his wife took on large mallee clearing contracts, their children drove the tractor while they followed behind loading the trailer with roots (T 7). Later on, Nyungar boys worked as shed hands in the family team and were given the chance to gradually acquire shearing skills. While girls learned about some aspects of agricultural work along with the boys, they also learned about domestic work from their mothers and other close female relatives. However, the living circumstances of many Nyungars, particularly up until the 1960s when most people still camped on farms and on reserves on the outskirts of country towns, did not lend themselves to the transmission of all the domestic skills required by

---

4 Birdsell 1988, p. 143.
5 Education became compulsory for Aboriginal children in 1948.
European employers. Therefore, it was usually those girls who spent time in missions and settlements who acquired these particular skills.

Kinship was the key principle in the Nyungar organisation of contract work. Although the size of the work unit was fluid, depending on the availability of work and the size of the job to be done, those working together were invariably close relatives. Clearing, in particular, was seen as 'a family thing' as the nature of the work permitted, and in many cases required, a team approach. A sequence of tasks was spread out over a number of years. First, the heavier timber was chopped down and the tree stumps ringbarked and poisoned. Where timber was smaller, tractors were often used to roll down the vegetation. The following year towards the end of summer the burning up of vegetation and trees took place, sometimes with the use of horses to drag the larger logs into piles. The newly cleared land was then ploughed, but before seeding could take place the stumps and mallee roots had to be collected and burnt, and stones piled into heaps. This process was repeated each year until ploughing no longer turned up roots and stones.

While some households liked to operate on their own when they cleared land, people generally preferred to work with wider networks of kin. When a large contract was taken on, the acreage was either divided up into smaller areas which were allocated to individual households, or everyone worked together on the same job. Most commonly, close male relatives and their families worked together - for example, parents with their adult sons and daughters-in-law or brothers and their wives. It was also not unusual for a man to work with his wife's relatives, with her father, brothers or uncles and their families. Some work teams encompassed three generations. The size of the work units varied, with individual households 'meeting up' for some jobs and then going off to do others on their own, yet the combinations that together formed the larger groups tended to remain fairly stable. One man, for example, remembers that his family almost always worked with his mother's sister and her husband and children (T 19). Young men moved around a lot, working and spending time with different members of their extended families, particularly their maternal or paternal uncles, before they married and established regular work relationships.

Clearing contracts were negotiated between the person who took on the job and the farmer, and it was this person who was paid on completion of the contract. The money was then shared out among all the members of the team after the deduction of any expenses incurred by the contractor: for example, for tobacco, equipment such as axes, files, oilstones and water bags and, in some cases, 'the odd booze up'. The usual practice was that the proceeds of these collective endeavours were divided among participants according to their contributions, although several 'key men' in the Great Southern Region employed their own work teams and ran profitable enterprises allowing material accumulation.

Shearing was the other main task carried out by Nyungars. It formed the backbone of their work year, with clearing being fitted in around shearing. The season lasted for two to three months from August or September, and even those men who were not shearers were usually involved as shed hands or wool pressers. Six months later the shearers returned to

---

6 In the Great Southern Region during the period under consideration these consisted of the Carrolup Native Settlement, which reopened in 1940 and operated until 1952 when it was handed over to the Baptists Aborigines Mission; Gnowangerup Mission which closed in 1985; and the St Francis Xavier Mission at Wandering which opened in 1950.

7 Nyungars move in a world which is typically full of kin and the kinship idiom is used very generally as the following quote indicates:

I still call people uncle and aunt who are my second cousins but that's the way things happen in this area, there's no such thing as a second cousin, even your mother's cousin or your father's cousin was your uncle or aunt ... My first cousins are like my brother or sister and it wasn't uncommon for aunts to rear up nephews and nieces and they call her 'Mum' or call their natural mother 'Mum' and call their aunt 'Mum' too. That happened a lot (T 7).
their regular sheds to do the crutching, a much faster job involving only a few days at each shed, and to shear the lambs that had been too small at shearing time.

Shearing teams were also made up of relatives and once again the size of the job largely determined the size of the work unit, as a Nyungar man explained:

Sometimes the shed was big enough for all of them to work in and at other times the sheds weren't and of course they would go to other smaller sheds, they would split up (T 4).

As with clearing contracts, one person would act as representative for the team, making the necessary arrangements with the farmer and sorting out any problems that arose. Each member of the team, however, was paid separately according to the number of sheep he had shorn or, in the case of shed hands, at a daily rate.

Other forms of employment were not as amenable to the operation of the kinship principle as contract work. The unskilled labouring jobs which became available to Nyungars from the 1950s were usually positions for individuals rather than groups. Nevertheless, the kinship network continued to operate to a certain extent as an avenue for finding employment. Thus, by recommending relatives or letting them know when jobs were available, Nyungars could sometimes arrange that they were working with kin. This was often the case with the various public works programs which generally employed Aborigines in groups, rather than singly, as did the abattoirs and the woollen and timber mills.

With paid domestic work women seldom had the opportunity to work with other Nyungars, and this sense of isolation, particularly in live-in situations, undoubtedly contributed to the reported reluctance of young Nyungar women to take up this employment.\(^8\) Glenyse Ward\(^9\) gives a graphic description of the loneliness experienced by live-in domestics in her autobiography, *Wandering Girl*, which she dedicates to '... all the Aboriginal women who, as girls, had to face hard times working on white people's farms in the Great Southern and other districts of their own country'. Live-in positions were taken mainly by young single women sent out from the missions and settlements. More commonly, Nyungar women living in or near towns would work for a number of employers - the wives of doctors, local businessmen and farmers - on a regular basis. They would wash, clean, iron, polish the silver, clean windows, scrub floors; in short, 'do all the work the white women didn't want to do' (T 25). More rarely, they looked after children.

Nyungar women who lived on farms with their families sometimes worked in the farmhouse, but many were fully occupied caring for their own families or preferred to be out in the paddocks with their husbands. It seems that this preference was based not only on the desire to work with other Nyungars, but also on a dislike of being in the position of servant and of being closely supervised. Haebich\(^10\) also documents this preference for agricultural work among many Nyungar women who, as she puts it, disliked working 'under the eagle eye of white mistresses'. A woman interviewee remembered that her mother refused to work in other people's houses because 'she was a very proud woman, she wasn't going to be a lackey for anybody'. Instead, she helped support her family by milking cows twice a day at the local convent for sixteen years without a break (T 25). The archival material indicates that a reluctance to leave home and to be in an environment where there were no other Nyungars also deterred a number of young women from taking on other kinds of work.

\(^10\) Haebich 1985, p.250
An important aspect of Nyungar social relations was the obligation to share resources with close kin. This was stressed by many of the Nyungar interviewees, and the European administrators and farmers also frequently commented on the Nyungar 'communal spirit'. People shared contract work when it was available; as one man explained, 'if you saw somebody who had no work, you'd say "well, you can come and have a hundred acres" or something like that' (T 19). Food, shelter and money were other resources shared by Nyungars. The following extracts from the Nyungar narratives express the high value that was placed on this ideal:

Nyungars, they will always be very good natured towards one another. If so and so didn't have any bread or meat or sugar, if he went to the next person and they had some, they'd share and share alike, with food (T 15).

... we'd share everything. If one Nyungar had a five pound note, he'd give the other bloke half, that's how we were. Nobody was broke if his mate had money, this is why Nyungars are still broke today (T 10).

The practice of sharing was essential to Nyungar survival. The Department of Native Welfare was clearly aware of this fact although it opposed the practice because it was seen to militate against individual success. During the 1950s, when the demand for Nyungar labour had declined and Aborigines had only restricted access to Social Service benefits, the Southern District Officer commented that the communal spirit was particularly evident during times of unemployment and that 'even obtaining subsistence would be difficult if they did not assist each other from time to time'. 11 It was not only the unemployed but also widows, invalids and old people who were supported by their kin. After pensions were made generally available to Aborigines in 1960 (except for those considered to be 'nomadic' or 'primitive'), the Superintendent of the Southern Division noted that there had been a marked economic improvement amongst pensioners. These people had previously comprised what he referred to as the "hanger-on" section of the native population' because they had 'lived off the charity of relatives'. 12

Each of the extended kinship networks or clusters of interrelated families 13 to which most Nyungars belong was, and continues to be, associated with a particular stretch of country known as a 'run', which was identified by the string of places within it. For example, 'my family's run stretched from Kukerin, Dumbleyung, Katanning, Broomehill, around Kojonup, Kulikup and the Boyup Brook area' (T 3). These places were also recognised by other Nyungars as 'belonging' to that family group. Others writing about Nyungars have also noted the existence of 'runs'. 14 Haebich 15 found that Nyungars often had ties of traditional ownership with their runs, and my own research also suggests that this was the case. The Nyungar interviewees indicated strong attachments to these areas - even if they had moved to the city many years before - and a desire to be buried there alongside their relatives.

The loosely drawn boundaries of the family run defined the area within which Nyungars moved in search of work. As one man explained,

See, it was in Ongerup where the Woods, they had that area around Ongerup, they'd do all the shearing and the picking and the haycarting, and then Borden, there was Harry Brown and the Roberts and then in Gnowangerup

12 AR 1963, p. 18.
13 Birdsall 1988 adopts the term 'all one family' to refer to such a group. She observes that each group has a surname which is used when people are discussing the kin group affiliation of individuals.
14 For example, Birdsall 1988, p. 141; Haebich 1988, p. 36; Toussaint 1987, pp. 81-2.
15 Haebich 1988, p. 36.
NYUNGARS AND WORK IN SOUTHERN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

there was the Williams and there was some Woods too and Picketts. Some of the names I've missed out ... the Pennys, there was a lot of Pennys in Borden (T 15).

Since Nyungars tend to establish close relationships among an extended network of kin through both their mother and father, there was the option, when parents came from different areas, of moving to another run. This practice seems to have been quite common among young men before they married.

Within each run there were particular places where people met up between jobs and these often had traditional or historical associations. One such place was Cape Riche on the south coast between Albany and Esperance, which had once been a camp site used by Nyungars employed by pastoralists as shepherds along this stretch of coast. Another meeting place was at Woodanilling where a woman remembers her family camping, ... on a piece of crown land with access to water and far enough from the townsfolk that they weren't screaming their heads off. Other Nyungars camped there all the time, that's where they used to meet, play games, tell their stories (T 25).

The designated reserves on the outskirts of some of the towns also served as meeting places and somewhere to live between jobs.

People often moved in a circular fashion around their run, particularly during the shearing and crutching seasons. It is in this context that a second use of the term 'run' - to refer to a particular string of sheds at which people 'shore' each year - can be distinguished, a use which was not limited to Aborigines but was common throughout the pastoral industry.16 The following quote from one of the Aboriginal narratives illustrates this use of the term:

The Nyungars had a run they used to do every year, they used to go from one shed to another and one lot would do ... Tambellup way and we'd go out around Borden and there was another mob out around Ongerup way (T 17).

Although men often worked the same shearing runs as their fathers, it was also not uncommon for them to establish separate runs.

In concluding this discussion of kinship and work it can be said that kinship pervaded Nyungar social and economic life. In his analysis of the nature of contact between capitalist and non-capitalist societies, Wolf17 maintains that in order to transform people into economic actors they have to be made independent of prior social commitments to kin. In spite of the administration's attempts to effect such a transformation, Nyungar collective activities and values persisted.

Work patterns

Most Nyungar people worked under contract. Certainly, very few waged positions were available to them at this time, but even so, almost every interviewee stated a definite preference for contract work, a preference which was explained in the following ways:

I was a wage earner at times, wages were OK but they wasn't as good as contract. It was something we did if there was nothing else available, it was the money I was chasing (T 8).

If you go out and do a day's work, you sort of take your time doing it, well, I'm only talking about root picking anyway. But if it was done on a

---

16 The term 'run' has commonly been used in the pastoral industry in two ways: to refer to land occupied by pastoralists and to refer to the seasonal migratory pattern of casual workers

17 Wolf 1971, p. 279.
contract basis you got stuck into it, try and get the job done quick as you can. The quicker you got it done, the more money you earned (T 15).

You'd work better for yourself, see, you could please yourself when you worked. When you worked with the farmer you'd be sitting down at dinner, then you'd have to go right out again carting hay again, but when you got the contract work you could say 'right', before the sun rises you can go out and work, see, when it's nice and cool. Once it gets a bit warmer, you can lay off until about 3 or 4 o'clock and then start working until 7. Sometimes when I was burning up I'd go till 12 o'clock at night (T 32).

These narratives contain two rationales for this preference for contract work. The first, that it was more lucrative, and the second, that it allowed workers more autonomy in terms of when, how and with whom they worked. It is likely that a desire for mobility was also involved. As one woman observed, 'Nyungars never stop still, you know' (T 21). In relation to the first point, it is interesting to note that the archival evidence indicates that it was not uncommon for people to leave regular jobs and go shearing, although, in the long run, they were usually financially disadvantaged by the move. This suggests that there was more than money involved when people decided to give up secure positions for lucrative, but brief, seasonal employment. The second rationale, that relating to autonomy in the work place, is an important one that needs to be examined more closely.

In a well known article, Thompson draws attention to the distinction between task-oriented labour which exists in pre-industrial societies and time-measured labour which predominates under capitalism. This distinction has been used in the Australian context by Morris when comparing the pre-contact and current work practices of Aboriginal people in northern New South Wales. It is also useful in discussing the work experience of Nyungars. Thompson notes that task-oriented labour is characterised by irregular work patterns where bouts of intense labour alternate with periods of idleness, and he asks whether this is not in fact a 'natural' work rhythm. Certainly, when Nyungars were employed under contract, they tended to work without regard to clock time and to vary their work pace. Tonkinson, commenting on the 'lack of appreciation of time' in his study of Aboriginal people in the Narrogin area, says that he never saw a Nyungar wearing a wristwatch and that there was also a lack of clocks. Nyungars are aware of the European preoccupation with the clock as a measure of human labour time, in fact of all human activities, and often refer jokingly to 'Nyungar time', by which they mean an indifference to the clock and a corresponding lack of punctuality. When the task demanded it they were prepared to work long hours. During the burning off phase of clearing, for example, people often had to wait until the evening for the breeze which was needed to fan the flames. As a consequence:

You would work most of the night burning off what you had stacked during the day and you could have a hundred acres on fire ... Thousands of fires and all those fires had to be stoked, all the ends when it burnt down, chuck them all together again and they would burn out ... 12, 16 hours, up to 20 hours a day, this was a normal day if you was contract root picking because you would start as early as you possibly could in the morning and you'd work all night if you wanted to, if you had to (T 8).

18 NW 115/1956.
19 Thompson 1967.
20 Morris 1983.
21 Thompson 1967, p. 73.
22 Tonkinson 1962, p. 114.
NYUNGARS AND WORK IN SOUTHERN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

At other times, however, they worked at a slower pace and took time off to join up with relations at one of the regular meeting places in the Great Southern Region. Spending time with kin, as indicated in an earlier section, was very important to Nyungars and contract work allowed them more opportunities to 'meet up' than did regular wage employment, since they could suit themselves to a certain extent about when and for how long they worked.

Contract work also permitted the integration of 'life' and 'work' which, I would suggest, was how Nyungars themselves preferred to operate. One farmer recalled that when he contracted someone to do a clearing job, 'half a dozen might turn up and do it and they'd all knock off and kick a football around or something' (T 34); and another observed that Nyungars 'are inclined to treat it [i.e. work] as a way of life rather than making a lot of money' (T 27). With contract work, children became familiar with the world of work from an early age, often treating it as a game. One woman remembers helping her father as a child:

There was a lot of stones dug up out of the ground. I said 'We'll build a house out of the stones', it was more like fun you know. Kids used to run around building these big castles of stone [laughs] (T 21).

Spatially, too, there was often little separation between their place of work and where they lived, since Nyungars usually camped in the paddocks close to where they were clearing. Washing, rather than being a solitary and onerous chore, tended to be a sociable activity. One man recalls that on the reserve,

Washing was a woman's job. They'd make a day of it, go to the nearest dam and get into it, stay there all day ... a group of women laughing away and having a good time there doing the washing (T 9).

The absence of the clearly defined boundaries between 'work' and 'life' which exist in capitalist societies is even more obvious when we look at subsistence activities. People recall with pleasure collecting 'bush tucker' and catching rabbits for sale and domestic consumption:

We got them out of the root heaps or used a gun or a stick, we used to go and knock them on the head with that, but that was more or less a sport we used to have on a Sunday ... A great mob of us used to go down to the river and chase these rabbits around (T 17).

Perhaps most importantly of all, as discussed earlier, contract work enabled people to be with their kin.

The use of bush resources

Nyungars in the Great Southern Region continued to hunt and gather bush resources. When people were in employment, they purchased basic grocery items such as tea, flour, sugar, potatoes, onions, baking powder and fat and, if they were working for farmers, they were sometimes supplied with mutton and, less commonly, dairy products. However, many Nyungars supplemented their diet with 'bush tucker' while they were employed, and when work was scarce this reliance became more pronounced - 'you lived off the bush mainly' (T 16). The administration was aware of this situation. When the scale of rations in Western Australia was lower for Aborigines than for others in the 1930s it appears that there was an assumption that Aborigines would supplement government rations with bush food.23 During the 1950s the Southern District Officer observed on a number of occasions that those who were out of work were living on damper and whatever meat could be caught or

23 WAPD 102, 1938, p. 2117; Rowley 1972, p. 49.
trapped. However, it must be noted here that economic necessity was not the only reason why people continued to pursue these activities. People relished the taste of bush tucker, and hunting and gathering were also enjoyed for their social and recreational value.

Rabbits were staple items for everyone, as were kangaroos for those who lived near uncleared bush country, and even people who were living on town reserves or at the Gnowangerup Mission went hunting at weekends. One man expressed his family's dependence on these important sources of food by saying 'I was reared up on kangaroo and rabbit'; and a woman remembered that her family ate 'stacks of rabbit - baked rabbit and rabbit stew and curried rabbit'. The introduction of myxomatosis in the 1950s, at a time when the demand for Aboriginal labour was starting to decline, was disastrous for Nyungars as the disease effectively removed a major item from their regular diet. Other sources of protein that were obtained from the bush included goanna, possum, birds, marron and gilgies (freshwater crustaceans), bardi grubs, emu and fish. Bush fruits and tubers which were obtained included *tjork* or *korn*, a kind of sweet bush potato which was roasted; *kurnuk*, *kolberis* and quandongs which were either eaten raw, stewed like plums or made into jam; and wild figs. Wild honey 'robbed' from trees was also highly prized.

Nyungars obtained not only 'bush tucker' from the environment but various other raw materials which were turned into useful items. Mattresses were made from 'blackboy' rushes: 'you'd lay it all one way and the next lot the other way and then the next lot that way, it contoured to your body ... spread the blanket on top of that'. Huts were also made from this material in the earlier part of the period. Rugs, known as *waggas*, were fashioned out of old jute bags stitched together as a ground sheet or backed with a blanket or the skins of kangaroo, rabbit or fox. They were used extensively to sit on and for bedding. In these ways, Nyungars continued to draw on indigenous resources and processes and thereby satisfied some of their material requirements outside the capitalist economy. The Nyungar economy can thus be described as entailing 'multiple enterprise', a term which Anderson uses in relation to Aboriginal economies which have components based both on wage labour and bush resources.

Nyungar and capitalist values

It is not easy as a non-Aboriginal researcher to determine retrospectively the extent to which Nyungars conformed to the European work ethic. Apart from the issues that arise when using oral history, which I will not attempt to address in this paper, there were obviously differences within the Nyungar community regarding the degree to which individuals accepted or rejected European values and behaviour. It was generally believed among farmers, for example, that training at missions made better workers: 'they copied the whites more and adopted their way of living more easily'. A Nyungar woman who became a nurse believed that her mother's insistence on careers for her daughters stemmed from her upbringing in a white family. In their studies of Aborigines in the Narrogin and Brookton areas respectively in the early 1960s, Tonkinson and McMath concluded that, while the majority of Nyungars continued to hold economic values that were seen as constituting a 'barrier' to assimilation, there were several families in each town whose attitudes and behaviour were considered to be more European than Aboriginal. These

---

27 A discussion of some of these issues is contained in an excellent article by Goodall 1987. I also found the work of the Popular Memory Group 1982 useful.
families lived in town houses, held permanent jobs, and, in Narrogin, had very little contact with Aborigines living on the reserve.

It seemed, too, that different patterns of work behaviour may have prevailed in different areas. One man said that in the South West, where he had grown up, Nyungars were 'more sophisticated' and expected everyone to work five days a week, but when he moved further east, he felt less constrained to do this:

I'd pick up a few days here and there and ... I think I was getting two pound ten a day and three days, then I could live off that for the next couple of weeks ... if you wanted to work one day a week that was up to you (T 8).

In the area that he was speaking of, around Gnowangerup and Borden in the 1940s, there were still a number of full-time speakers of the Nyungar language, and he remembers ceremonies being performed at that time. It is likely, too, that, as well as geographical variations, Nyungars had different expectations of people at different stages of their life cycle, with young single men being given more leeway in terms of their economic behaviour than those with families.

The archival evidence and the oral testimonies of both Nyungars and their employers suggest that, generally, people did not submit meekly to the pressures exerted on them to perform in the manner expected by Europeans. Resistance to the imposition of the dominant culture's values regarding work can take many forms. In their study of the economic life of Aborigines on the far south coast of New South Wales, Castle and Hagan suggest that seasonal work - in this case bean picking - not only allowed Aborigines to retain some degree of independence and self-esteem, but also offered the opportunity for a little vengeance, since they could terminate their contract at any time. I have no evidence that this occurred in the Great Southern Region, but certainly those Europeans who treated Nyungars well appear to have had fewer problems with uncompleted contracts. One woman recounted with glee leaving her job on a chicken farm where she was expected to do all the housework as well as look after the chickens. She did not wait to obtain permission from the Department, and the first that her employers - 'the laziest mob of people I ever saw' - knew about it was a note on the kitchen table which said 'Gone home to Katanning, see ya' (T 28). During the early 1950s the Department received complaints about the growing 'truculence' of some workers, which was attributed to their growing awareness of their worth to farmers. The District Officer was apparently told by some farmers that they dare not take any action against such workers for fear of being burned out. It is impossible to tell whether this fear was based on reality or was a product of paranoia.

For Nyungars, the stealing of sheep to supplement an often meagre diet may also have contained an element of defiance. This seems to have been a not uncommon occurrence: 'knocking off the odd sheep here and there when you're starving, we didn't feel that was wrong, they had plenty of sheep' (T 7). It has also been suggested that illegal drinking and gambling by Aborigines - which it appears from the oral and archival material were happening in the Great Southern Region - constitute direct acts of defiance. Morris believes that these activities were not only a rejection of discriminatory legislation, but also

---

29 Douglas 1973, p. 49 has labelled this language, which is constructed from both English and the original Nyungar language, 'neo-Nyungar', and most Nyungars today still speak it.
31 AR 1950, p. 12.
33 Morris 1988, pp. 51-3.
that their persistence was a political act in that they were collective group activities and the aim of assimilation was to instil a sense of individual rights and property in Aborigines. At the same time, he points out, drinking was also a means by which Aborigines accommodated to European domination and thus provides an example of the close connection between accommodation and resistance.

Moving away was one tactic that Nyungars used to avoid unwelcome attention from the Department's staff or the police. A documented instance of this refers to people moving out of a particular district to avoid prosecution for being 'idle and disorderly' at a time when there was no work available.34 On another occasion a family had 'gone bush' in order to avoid execution of a warrant for their removal. They had learnt of the warrant when the local paper published the proceedings of the Municipal Council's health and welfare committee at which the Department had informed the committee of their intended removal.35 The isolated position of many Nyungar families living out on farms, often helped to keep them away from the notice of the authorities.

Attempts by the Department to train the younger Nyungars frequently met with opposition. The Carrolup Native Settlement was reopened in 1940 ostensibly to provide education for children of mixed descent. It soon became evident, however, that it was to operate as a multipurpose institution to which Aborigines were removed because of lack of employment, poor living conditions, venereal disease and other illnesses, and 'intractable' behaviour, as well as for the purpose of formal education.36 Staff at the Settlement complained that most of the young men who were held under warrant were 'practically refusing to work'37 and absconding and escapes from detention were common. The protests at the Settlement regarding the withholding of a portion of their wages for placement in a trust account and the issuing of store orders to the value of the remainder - protests that were ultimately successful - are further evidence that Nyungars were not passive in their response to the dictates of the Department.38 Even after the adoption of more subtle methods of inculcating European values, this resistance continued, as the following complaint made by Commissioner Middleton to his Minister in 1960 shows:

Just as many natives stubbornly refuse to accept any measures designed for their personal welfare and advancement or their assimilation ... so it is that many of their teenagers do not want post primary education or training or being submitted to any restriction of their liberty in any shape or form39

The measures that were used by the administration to try to instil in Nyungars a sense of property and a desire to save appear to have met with mixed success. According to both Nyungars and farmers, a large proportion of people's earnings was spent on food so that often, when a contract was finished and the account for stores bought on their behalf had been settled, there was very little money left. Card playing and two-up were popular recreational activities in some areas, especially during the shearing season when earnings were generally higher than at other times of the year. Nyungars accumulated very few possessions, at least partly because of their need to be mobile, as the following extract explains:

---

34 NA 34/1949.
35 NA 190/1949.
36 NA 653/1940.
37 ibid.
38 NA 964/1941; NA 3/1940.
39 NW AN number 1/7 Acc. 1525 12-6/2.
NYUNGARS AND WORK IN SOUTHERN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

You hadn’t got much to carry, your blankets and tent if you’d got one, a couple of cups and a can, you might have a pan but you mightn’t have a pot (T 21)

It was certainly important to Nyungars that they have money in their pockets, but they showed little desire to hoard it. Apart from one couple who said that they did so in order to have something to spend at the local agricultural show, none of the interviewees indicated that he or she had saved money. People were generally more interested in the immediate purchasing power of money; as one man explained ‘none of us was banking any money, Nyungars get it to spend, gone today …’ (T 10).

Within the limits imposed by economic and political constraints Nyungars insisted on working in the way that best suited them. A common theme running through the narratives of non-Aboriginal people was the inability of employers to control fully the economic behaviour of Nyungar workers. Consequently farmers were sometimes frustrated by what they saw as the Nyungars’ ‘casual’ attitude to work and yet felt powerless to change it.

Relationships between Nyungars and farmers

Employment provided one of the few points of contact between Nyungars and Europeans in the region and the patterns of interaction that developed within this context were thus important in determining Nyungar-European relations generally. The picture that emerges from the Aboriginal narratives and, to a lesser degree, from those of European farmers who employed them, is of fairly harmonious relationships between the two groups. Aborigines were almost unanimous in asserting that farmers were generally ‘good blokes’ who had treated them ‘fairly’. Reluctance to criticise former employers to a white interviewer, as well as the somewhat unsatisfactory relations which exist today between the two groups, may have contributed to a rosy representation of past race relations. Certainly, antagonisms and hostilities did exist on both sides, as comments made during interviews with both Nyungars and Europeans revealed. There were farmers who refused to employ Nyungars and, conversely, certain farmers for whom Nyungars would not work. At a less extreme level, each voiced complaints and dissatisfactions about the failings of the other group in the work situation. Nevertheless, it is clear from both sets of narratives that many of the encounters between farmers and Aboriginal workers were amicable and that their relationships were often characterised by genuine affection and respect.

Within their runs Nyungars had a number of employers or ‘bosses’ with whom they had a varying amount of contact. With those farmers who employed Nyungars only once a year to do their shearing, the relationship tended to be seen by both as a purely commercial transaction. Nevertheless, there was a measure of continuity involved since the same core of shearers usually returned each year to the sheds in their run. Shearers and shed hands would stay up to several weeks on each farm until they had ‘cut out’ the shed and were ready to move on to the next one. Between shearing seasons they had very little contact with these farmers apart from approaching them prior to the start of the shearing season for a ‘sub’, or cash advance, on their contract. For Aborigines, the sub system provided a means of tiding them over periods of unemployment and, although farmers complained about the system, it seems that many of them paid subs to Nyungar shearers while labour was scarce.

Most Nyungar families were associated with one or two particular farms within their runs to which they returned each year after they had completed shearing and whose owners they regarded as their ‘main’ bosses. They often remained on these farms for lengthy periods while the land was being developed - one man remembers as a child spending fifteen consecutive years on the same farm - although during slack periods they might
move temporarily to neighbouring farms. This association was expressed by Aborigines in terms of ownership; for example, 'certain Nyungars had their own farms they'd go to, they go there and work every year ... everybody knew where they were going' (T 19); or, as another man succinctly put it when talking about the farm where he spent much of his childhood: 'It was known as a [his family name] farm' (T 2). The characterisation of this sort of work arrangement by Nyungars as 'permanent' is indicative of the sense of security that was derived from these links to specific farmers, links that in earlier times were sometimes made explicit through the adoption of employers' names even where there was no biological connection.40 In the 1950s and 1960s, as work became more scarce, this pattern changed, and Nyungars rarely spent more than a few weeks on any one property, although even then the association often continued.

From the Nyungar perspective, the employer-employee relationship, particularly the one between themselves and their regular bosses, was a reciprocal one involving mutual obligations: 'you looked after them and they looked after you' (I 6). In return for their labour and loyalty, Nyungars expected that these bosses would either send for them when there was a job to be done or, when approached, would provide them with work or with a loan of cash or meat to tide them over the lean times. These loans were 'cut out' later when work was available (a practice that Nyungars referred to as 'like paying off a dead horse'), although it seems from the complaints of farmers that not all debts were discharged in this manner.

The connection which Nyungars felt to particular employers was recognised by these farmers. As one man, who had employed members of the same family as his father had done before him, said:

I think there was families associated with particular farms and I think that worked both ways, I think that a lot of Nyungars used to like to associate themselves with different farmers too (T 27).

Another white informant recalled that when her husband was sick, two boys whose family used to work for them came to visit:

They wanted to know how [he] was. They came just as friends, they weren't looking for anything or asking for anything ... maybe they feel that somehow they belong or we belong (T 31).

It was generally accepted amongst the farmers that Nyungars worked better for those whom they liked and respected and that they were more inclined to 'let down' employers whom they considered to be 'bad'.41

Most employers understood that if they wanted access to a regular supply of labour, then they had to be prepared to meet their obligations in terms of providing loans and advances. Farmers complained frequently about the existence of bad debts, yet the continuation of the practice indicates that they realised that this was an integral part of the exchange between themselves and their regular workers. It would be wrong to ignore the fact that a genuine humanitarianism was also involved at times, as one farmer revealed when he talked about Nyungars who had shorn for him:

We knew darn well if they came here and asked for a sub they really needed it, so you couldn't refuse them, I think my dad appreciated that and I did, we didn't like lending people money but there is a reason there (T 27).

These links were not only recognised by the particular farmers who were party to them, but by everyone else in the European community. It was well known who were the main

41 NA 190/49.
employers of Aboriginal labour in each district; as one farmer said, 'it was accepted that we always have them here' (T 12).

While the relationships between Aborigines and their employers were individualistic, with perceptions varying on both sides as to who constituted a good boss or a good worker, it is possible to discern from the Aboriginal narratives that there were certain criteria used to evaluate an employer's behaviour. The first of these was the employer's perceived willingness to meet his obligations in terms of providing work, loans and meat as discussed earlier. It was also important that he demonstrate a degree of trust in his workers by leaving them to do the required work without supervision and by taking their word that they had completed a job. One old man referred to a farmer who used to employ a lot of Nyungars on his property as:

a good man - he used to tell you what to do and then he never seen you until you came back for your cheque. When you come back he never looked whether you'd done it or not, he'd pull his little drawer out and there was all cash, notes ... pay you up straight away (T 12).

Honesty in their dealings with their workers was another factor which was taken into account by Nyungars in judging employers. Before a contract was started a price would be agreed on by both parties. This was a verbal agreement and Nyungars say that some farmers tried to cheat them by dropping the price once the job had been completed. An old man recounted with amusement how he had discovered that a farmer had sewed an extra piece onto his measuring tape so that it would appear that the area of land that he was paying to have cleared was smaller than it actually was (T 33). The usual response, however, to this sort of tactic was to boycott the farmers who resorted to them. According to a man who had employed Nyungars for many years, it was impossible to exploit Aborigines:

If someone cheats them, they won't get them back on the property, they say 'no, he's not honest, he put it over me, don't you go and work for him'. That's your punishment for not giving him what you promised and also they'll never trust you again (T 35).

Nyungars were also very sensitive to the attitude of their employers towards them and appreciated it when they were given the same treatment that they believed would be accorded a European worker. An old lady who had worked for a doctor and his wife in order to support herself and her children, said that 'they were wonderful, there was no sticking out on the woodheap and that, there was all one table' (T 21) The practice of feeding Aborigines outside was deeply resented, as one man's comments about a former employer indicate:

He'd feed you on the woodheap, that's where he fed me ... I was in the chaff cutting team, you know how dusty it is inside those big sheds. When we knocked off for dinner we had to eat out on the wood heap ... If I could get away with it, I'd burn him right out and him in the house with it too, he was a dog ... (T 12).

Another factor that contributed to the respect felt for a particular boss was the provision of meat and dairy products to employees, particularly when no charge was involved. If at least some of these requirements were met, then it appears that workers were willing to ignore or at least tolerate other less desirable traits in their employers. An incident recounted by one old man illustrates this point:

Another bloke down here ... when you worked for him ... he was a decent sort of a bloke in a lot of ways but us Nyungars couldn't get a beer in those times, you understand, we wasn't allowed. He'd come along and chuck a bottle of
beer to each one of us then he'd go back. He'd give us time to get rid of it, you see, then he'd write our cheques out. He'd come over to the fence then. 'Righto, you black fellas' - he wouldn't say black fellas he'd say something else, you know what I mean - 'come on you black' [here he knocks on the table four times], chuck all the cheques over the fence, now we got to sort our own cheques out ... That's how he used to pay us ... but he was a good fella, meet on the street he'd pull up and give a few bob, I've got work down here for you tomorrow'. We'd have to go down, see [laughs] (T 12).

The qualities that farmers valued in workers were reliability and honesty. There were complaints, voiced in the interviews and in the archival material, that Nyungars accepted 'subs' for jobs and then did not turn up or that they left before the work had been completed. Some farmers believed, too, that they had been deliberately tricked by particular Aborigines who had either accepted a price for a job and then, after they had started, demanded a higher one or who had only cleared roots and stones around the outside of the paddock and left the remainder untouched (T 23; T 31). Yet, despite this dissatisfaction with some workers, the dominant feeling was that those Nyungars who had been employed on a regular basis were good, reliable workers who could be trusted. Their skill in handling and shearing sheep was widely acknowledged: 'they didn't knock the sheep around' and 'they were clean shearers' were frequent comments. And they were generally seen to be 'slow but good' at clearing tasks. There was one other quality in employees that gained currency at certain times and that was sporting ability. A retired couple recalled that when more players were needed for the local football team an effort would be made to find jobs in the district for young Nyungar men, especially if they were members of families known to excel at the sport (T 31).

Although farmers were more inclined than Nyungars to regard the exchange between them as simply a commercial transaction, there were some who were paternalistic in their attitude to their regular employees. It seems that this type of relationship had its origins in an earlier time when the relationship was more obviously exploitative in terms of working conditions and return for labour. Certainly, it appears that the relationships that most closely resembled paternalism were those sustained by the older established landholding families and their Aboriginal workers, which had persisted across several generations on both sides. There tended to be a degree of possessiveness on the part of these European employers, as indicated by their references to 'our natives', and by their claims to a special understanding of Nyungars based on their long association with them.42 They were also protective of their workers. One Nyungar man partly attributes his father's success in preventing the removal of himself and his siblings to the Carrolup Native Settlement to the assistance of:

some farmers who backed him, backed him up ... I don't think they would allow them [i.e. Department of Native Affairs officers] on the property while we were there ... because we never saw them there but as soon as we got to Cranbrook, that's where we had them come there. They'd come there, they'd search the place (T 19).

There were certain farmers, too, who would allow other Nyungars apart from those who were working for them to camp on their property, thus providing a venue where people could 'meet up' away from the often hostile environment of the towns. That this was not a widely accepted practice is suggested by the following comments about the owner of a large property:

42 McGrath 1987, p. 96, p. 100 makes a similar observation in her discussion of Aborigines and paternalism in the northern cattle industry.
NYUNGARS AND WORK IN SOUTHERN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

He didn’t seem to care if people was working for him or not, they could still go and stay there. Some of them would leave from there to go working, they’d be always welcome back on his property. They had to go past his house and his shed, he wouldn’t say there’s too many up there or something like that (T 19).

On another farm where up to a hundred Nyungars lived at any one time, anyone coming to pick up people for work or for football was required to let the farmer know before they took them off the property: as another farmer commented, ‘they were sort of protective towards the Aborigines, they sort of took responsibility’ (T 31). There was often a degree of benevolence in the attitude of these farmers towards their employees. This was revealed in such actions as the presentation of turkeys at Christmas time and the setting aside of a plot of land for burial purposes (T 34). In the latter case, workers were able to fulfil their desire to keep their dead on the property where many of them had been born and which they regarded as their home, and were also saved the expense of a town funeral. Sometimes the sense of responsibility extended beyond the grave, with farmers making provision for workers in their wills, instructing that particular Nyungars be given help when needed or allowed to camp on the property or, in one case where a man had worked for twenty-five years for the same family, to occupy the cottage which had been erected for him (T 10; I 10; I 11).

When considering the nature of the relationship between Nyungars and Europeans, it is impossible to ignore the existence of miscegenation which has had a profound effect on race relations in the region. Apart from one woman who commented that the resentment felt by the wives of European men who had fathered ‘half-caste’ children had affected attitudes to Nyungars, white informants were silent about this sensitive subject. Nyungars were more open. The subject of miscegenation was brought up by a number of the Aboriginal informants and it is clear from their comments that a considerable degree of bitterness still exists. One middle-aged man explained that it used to be a very common practice for ‘cockies’ in his area to ‘knock around’ with the young daughters of the Aboriginal people whom they employed, and although Nyungars did not like it, there was very little that they could do to prevent it. There was a law against non-Aborigines having sexual relations with Aborigines but he could not remember anybody being prosecuted; however, some men were taken to court and made to pay maintenance for their offspring (T 1). Nyungars are also bitter about the refusal of many of the farmers to acknowledge or ‘own’ their Aboriginal offspring and to provide for them. The grandfather of one informant was a wealthy landowner who employed a large number of Nyungars on his property and who fathered quite a few children. These children took his name but, when they were older and he brought his English bride to live there, he paid them to change their surname to avoid embarrassing her (T 25). There was always the fear, too, that the Department would be notified and the children removed from their mothers if it was obvious that there was no male partner. One strategy that was adopted in an attempt to prevent this was for these children to address their maternal grandparents as ‘Mum’ and ‘Dad’ (T 1).

In this discussion of the interaction between Nyungars and farmers in the region it has been shown that Nyungars were able to create a degree of security for themselves in an uncertain economic situation by developing particular and enduring relationships with some farmers. The strength of these ties is attested to by the fact that some of the long established relationships still endure today, even though the reason that led to their establishment - that is, the need for labour - no longer exists in the same way that it once did. That this is the case is largely due to the effort that some Nyungars put into maintaining the relationships. Where occasional work is still available, employers will
sometimes call for their old workers to do a few days' casual work (T 1; T 10; T 32). More commonly, though, the relationship is maintained on a purely social basis. Nyungars will make a point of visiting their former regular bosses even after they have moved away from the area and have just returned to see relatives or attend a funeral (T 1; T 33; I 8; T 31). Some farmers, too, continue to recognise the ties, allowing Nyungars to pick dead wool on their property and providing meat at a low cost as well as, less frequently, cash loans to former employees (T 10; T 28; I 11). Even where physical contact is not maintained, both parties may still follow with interest major events in each other's lives, such as births, deaths and marriages.

Nyungar assessment of their economic history

The Nyungars who were interviewed are very proud of their work histories and of their former self-sufficiency. In the 1940s there was sufficient work to allow people a certain amount of choice about what they did to earn a living. Some preferred not to pick up stones, others avoided mallee stump picking - one said that as a young man he 'couldn't handle walking on to a thousand acres of mallee rootpicking and seeing one mass of mallee roots' (T 7) - and almost everyone disliked picking dead wool. Young men in particular loved to drive machinery: 'us boys, we were happy as long as we were driving something that moved' (T 4). As farm work became scarcer, however, people had to be prepared to do anything: 'wherever I could get it, where it came I done it, couldn't do nothing else, I couldn't pick and choose from job to job' (T 12). This meant that they had to possess a wide range of skills. One man commented wryly that 'there were lots of skills in the unskilled labour market' (T 4), and another interviewee said proudly: 'I was an all round woman, I could do anything [laughs]' (T 21). They had to work hard in order to survive and they remember few occasions when they received assistance from the Department of Native Affairs (later Native Welfare). Rather, it is regarded primarily as the agency that was responsible for removing children from their families: 'all they wanted to do as far back as I can remember was get us and put us in Carrolup ... they would just take people with force' (T 19).

Nyungar people's recitations of their work histories, says Baines in a paper about Nyungar fringe dwellers, are their 'curriculum vitae' which serve to deny the negative stereotype of Aborigines as lazy and loath to work which is so often held by non-Aborigines. She also maintains that Nyungars have countered the dispossession of their lands by labouring on the self-same land. Certainly, the country has meaning for them not only because of its associations with camping places, sources of water and particular kinds of food, and mythical happenings, but also in terms of the transformation wrought on it by Nyungars themselves - the paddocks cleared and fences erected. The following excerpts from the narratives illustrate this point:

My family cleared most of Knowangerup, Borden, Ongerup, all round there, it's just amazing how they worked (T 11).

I put a lot of the fences up near the mission, all still standing there, I cleared a lot of country there (T 32).

Nyungars are confident about the dominant position that they once occupied in the rural labour market:

All the shearing teams were Nyungars in those days, wadjalas [whites] had a job to get a job shearing, they were battling especially [in] the big sheds ...
NYUNGARS AND WORK IN SOUTHERN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Nyungars had the shearing game wrapped up right throughout the southern part of the State and in the wheatbelt as well (T 3).

... clearing new country, rolling down with tractors, ploughing, it was all Nyungar work. There was Nyungars in each town doing their work ... whether they were shearing, clearing, they were all doing their part in each little district, this went right through I think (T 10).

A widespread sentiment amongst older Nyungars is that they also played a pioneering role in the development of the land for agriculture, and that their contribution to the Great Southern Regional economy has largely been ignored. In Knowangerup several people pointed out that the local history book contains no reference to them apart from the first chapter which describes 'traditional' Aboriginal society at the time of European invasion.45

Farmers, too, they feel have kept silent:

I don't think the old farmers would have told the younger people who did clear their land. The younger blokes have got it in their minds these days that Nyungars are bludgers, loafers, they didn’t care that the Nyungars were the ones that cleared their land and that they were underpaid to do it. That's the reason why these days they think nothing of Nyungars, they never respected Nyungars. If they saw what he had to do in those times, they would think a lot different now (T 19).

Conclusion

It has been said that the ties that develop between people who are involved in collective and self-organised tasks serve to promote cultural unity and to increase the capacity of those people to resist domination.46 My own findings support this claim. Contract work was the most prevalent form of work undertaken by Nyungars, who preferred it because they were able to choose with whom, how and where they worked and to hand down work skills from generation to generation. There emerges from both the Aboriginal and the European narratives a strong sense of Nyungars having created a degree of autonomy for themselves in their work lives, which challenges any depiction of them in official reports and earlier studies as passive victims. This autonomy, I argue, arose from the persistence of Nyungar economic values and work patterns within the constraints imposed by the State and the labour market and, in some situations, from direct opposition to the political and cultural domination of the State.

LIST OF REFERENCES


45 It should be noted that this and other local history books in the region tend to ignore not only the contributions of Nyungars, but also of the working class and women. Instead, they provide a litany of the achievements of prominent individuals and families in each area.


Haebich, A. 1988, *For Their Own Good: Aborigines and Government in the Southwest of Western Australia, 1900-1940*, Nedlands, W.A.


McMath, R.D. 1962, Problems of employment and assimilation among part-Aborigines of the Brookton area of Western Australia, unpublished honours dissertation, Dept of Anthropology, University of Western Australia.


**WA Government Publications**

Annual Reports of the Department of Native Affairs and its successor, the Department of Native Welfare. Most of these were printed as Parliamentary Papers and the remainder can be found in the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority library. These reports are referred to by the letters AR followed by the relevant year.

Western Australia, *Parliamentary Debates*. These are referred to by the letters WAPD.

**Archival Material**

Files of the Department of Native Affairs and its successor, the Department of Native Welfare which are located in the State Archives. Unless stated otherwise, the accession number used to locate these files is 993. These files are referred to by the letters NA or NW followed by the necessary identifying information.
ABORIGINAL HISTORY

VOLUME SEVENTEEN 1993

PART 2

CONTENTS

Russell McGregor

The Concept of Primitivity in the Early Anthropological Writings of A.P. Elkin

95

D.J. Mulvaney

Australian Anthropology: Foundations and Funding

105

Ronda Wie

The Aboriginal Biographical Index in the Library of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies: A Research Aid

129

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Judith Wright McKinney

131

REVIEW ARTICLE

Noel Loos

Scenes from an Academic Life: A Review of 'One Blood' by John Harris

133

REVIEWS

J.J. Fletcher, Clean, Clad and Courteous: A History of Aboriginal Education in New South Wales, and J.J. Fletcher, Documents in the History of Aboriginal Education in New South Wales (Dianne Snow); Nonie Sharp, Footprints along the Cape York Sandbeaches (Athol Chase); Waddy Boyoi and Johnny Walker, Reminiscences of eighty years. As told to Bruce Shaw, Bush Time Station Time (Ann McGrath); David S. Trigger, Whitefella Comin': Aboriginal Responses to Colonialism in Northern Australia (C.C. McKnight); Barbara Henson, A Straight-Out Man: F.W. Albrecht and Central Australian Aborigines (John Mulvaney); Bill Dodd, Broken Dreams, and Mabel Edmund, No Regrets (Ewan Morris); Kevin Keeffe, From the Centre to the City (Alex Barlow); Handbook of Australian Languages, Vol. 4, eds R.M.W. Dixon and Barry J. Blake (Luise Hercus); Sherry Saggars and Dennis Gray, Aboriginal Health and Society: The Traditional and Contemporary Struggle for Better Health (David McDonald); Marketing Aboriginal Art in the 1990s, eds John Altman and Luke Taylor (John Rudder); Jennifer Isaacs, Desert Crafts: Anangu Maruku punu (John Rudder); Peter Read and Jay Read, Long Time, Olden Time: Aboriginal Accounts of Northern Territory History (Francis Good); Herb Wharton, Unbranded (Pearl Duncan); Alyawarr to English Dictionary, compiled by J. Green (H. Koch); Aratjara: Art of the First Australians, Traditional and Contemporary Works by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artists. Exhibition held at Düsseldorf, April-July, 1993, and to be held in London, Humbleback, Louisiana, and Melbourne (R.G. Kimber); Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography, Vol. 2, eds David Carment and Barbara James (C.C. Mcknight); Maggie Brady, Heavy Metal: The Social Meaning of Petrol Sniffing in Australia (Marika Moisseeff); Poignant Regalia: 19th Century Aboriginal Breastplates and Images. Exhibition (C.C. Macknight); Tony Austin, Simply the Survival of the Fittest: Aboriginal Administration in South Australia's Northern Territory 1863-1910 (C.C. Macknight); Kent McNeil, Common Law Aboriginal Title (Neil Andrews); Joseph B. Birdsell, Microevolutionary Patterns in Aboriginal Australia: A Gradient Analysis of Clines (L. Freedman); Margaret Bain, The Aboriginal-White Encounter: Towards Better Communication (Margaret Sharpe); Jeremy Long, The Go-Betweens (R.G. Kimber).
THE CONCEPT OF PRIMITIVITY IN THE EARLY ANTHROPOLOGICAL WRITINGS OF A.P. ELKIN

Russell McGregor

'A civilized and a primitive race are in contact and, indeed, in clash'.¹ These are the terms in which A.P. Elkin, in the 1930s, persistently described the problems of Aboriginal-European interaction in Australia. What did he mean by these words? And why did an anthropologist whose orientation was avowedly functionalist continually invoke the twin concepts of 'primitive' and 'race'? The key feature of functionalist anthropology was its synchronic approach to the study of clearly delimited units termed 'societies'. To this enterprise, what was the relevance of the inherently time-oriented notion of primitivity or the biologically-based idea of race? Partly, it may have been that these concepts were items of intellectual baggage inherited from an earlier anthropology and not yet subjected to adequate disciplinary scrutiny by the new generation of scholars.² Yet it was more than this. The concept of a primitive race performed a significant function in Elkin's functionalist anthropology. This paper examines some manifestations of the primitive race concept in Elkin's writings of the 1930s, both as an item of inherited intellectual baggage and as an explanatory device to which he had frequent recourse.

The proximate origins of the concept of primitivity lay in 18th century Enlightenment ideas of progress. However, it was late 19th century evolutionary theory which firmly established primitivity as a legitimate scientific construct. According to these anthropologists, the Aborigines of Australia represented the nadir of evolutionary development, although some preferred to award this dubious distinction to the inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego or the Hottentots of Africa. In the second and third decades of the 20th century, British social anthropologists began to turn their attention away from an evolutionary concern with reconstructing the past progress of mankind, devoting their efforts to explaining the functioning of indigenous societies in Africa, Asia and Oceania. However, the transition from evolutionary to functionalist anthropology marked more a re-orientation of focus than a radical rejection of the older perspective. The creation of functionalist social anthropology was part of the increasing professionalisation of the discipline. While evolutionists were seen as spinning speculative accounts of the early history of mankind out of fragmentary information acquired at second or third hand from missionaries and travellers, the new generation of anthropologists demanded a more empirical, more 'scientific', approach to the study of society. This involved intensive fieldwork in specific, closely delimited social units, by trained observers who searched out

¹ Elkin 1933, p. 8.
² The anthropologist Gillian Cowlishaw adopted this perspective in her analyses of the persistence of the concept of race in Australian social anthropology. However, Cowlishaw's perspective was that of the anthropological 'insider', whose primary purpose was the reforming or reorientation of the discipline by pointing out the supposed errors of the past. While her accounts were both historically informed and perceptive, Cowlishaw's stance as internal disciplinary critic led her away from a full historical contextualisation of such figures as Elkin. Also, her major targets appear to have been a later generation of anthropologists, including the Berndts and Maddock. See in particular Cowlishaw 1988 a, pp. 60-79. See also Cowlishaw 1986 a, pp. 2-12; 1986 b, pp. 3-24; 1988 b.

Department of History and Politics, James Cook University of North Queensland.

95
the mechanisms by which the society was kept smoothly running. The essentially historical aspirations of the evolutionists were abandoned in favour of a synchronic focus on the 'ethnographic present'. But while functionalists were critical of the conjectural excesses of evolutionary anthropology, they advanced no critique of its fundamental premises. Far from it. Functionalists were heavily indebted to evolutionary ideas, Radcliffe-Brown going so far as to describe himself as one 'who has all his life accepted the hypothesis of social evolution as formulated by [Herbert] Spencer as a useful working hypothesis in the study of human society'. It was simply that Radcliffe-Brown and his colleagues, in their efforts to make their discipline more 'scientific', eschewed speculation about an ultimately unknowable past in favour of empirical evidence about a presumed-to-be knowable present.

Functionalist anthropology grew up in opposition to the diachronic approach of its evolutionary forebear; but not in opposition to the substantial evolutionary premise that human societies followed a developmental sequence, along which some societies had advanced further than others. Thus it was only too easy for the new anthropologists to adopt the same labels, and frequently to slip into the same conceptual world, as their predecessors. Some societies were more primitive - those were the ones anthropologists studied; some societies were more advanced - those were the ones anthropologists came from. How humanity had progressed from one to the other, which had been the central concern of the evolutionists, was relegated to the realm of speculation, beyond scientific inquiry. But the primitivity of such societies as the Australian Aboriginal remained a taken-for-granted fact.

Like primitivity, race was a concept which had its roots in the 18th century and attained its most grandiose elaboration in the evolutionary science of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Racial attributes and racial differences came to be accepted as fundamental to an understanding of the nature of humanity. Moreover, as Nancy Stepan has argued, the persistent tendency in science was to reify the racial category: to conceive races as real natural entities rather than as the constructs of scientific investigation. Although there were significant differences in the extent to which anthropologists actually invoked race as a determinative agency, as long as races continued to be regarded as 'real' entities, they comprised a legitimate part of scientific explanation. In Britain, a sustained attack on racial science did not get under way until the mid-1930s; even then, the tendency was to minimise the significance of racial differences rather than to challenge the fundamental assumption of the reality of race. This was well exemplified in the 1935 classic, We Europeans, co-authored by the social anthropologist A.C. Haddon and the evolutionary biologist Julian Huxley. The target of this polemic was Nazism; in particular, the authors attacked those doctrines which they regarded as perversions of racial science for Nazi propaganda purposes. Whatever critique there may have been of the concept of race itself, it was vastly overshadowed by criticism of its political misuse. Moreover, the views expressed by Huxley and Haddon were not necessarily representative of the British
anthropological fraternity. Organised scientific opposition to Nazi doctrines in the 1930s floundered in Britain because of lack of agreement over the nature and significance of racial differences.9

The widening professional split in British anthropology, between the social and the physical branches of the discipline, probably contributed more to the persistence than to the challenging of racial ideas, at least in the short term. In carving out the study of 'primitive' societies as their own academic territory, social anthropologists left the study of racial differentiation of affinities to specialists in the field of physical anthropology. The distinction was not altogether novel; but in the writings of evolutionary anthropologists there had been a conflation of the racial with the cultural, the biological with the social. The boundaries between these two did not begin to become distinct until about the 1920s, and then more as the outcome of disciplinary fission than of any sustained critique of the actual concepts.10 The fact that functionalist anthropologists focussed their attention on society did not mean that they denied the existence of inherent racial differences; merely that the detailed consideration of such matters lay outside their own disciplinary boundaries. The concepts of neither race nor primitivity were subjected to any searching critique; they were disengaged from the academic discourse of functionalism, but were pragmatically 'available' as occasion demanded.

It is notable that while the concepts of primitivity and race occupied no significant place in Elkin's academic studies of Aboriginal kinship systems and religious rituals, they figured prominently in his many writings advocating the cause of Aboriginal welfare.11 Paradoxical as it may seem from the perspective of the 1990s, it was when Elkin was in his humanitarian, social reformist mode that he leaned most heavily on the concepts of primitivity and race. For while a purely functionalist approach may have been well suited to the task of recording and analysing the workings of a presumed 'traditional Aboriginal society', it had serious limitations when applied to the practical task of resolving the 'Aboriginal problem'.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the practical value of social anthropology was enthusiastically promoted by its practitioners. Motives may well have been mixed. A new discipline claiming pragmatic relevance could expect better access to government funding than could one whose horizons were limited to the academy. Yet there is no reason to doubt that anthropologists like Radcliffe-Brown sincerely believed that their studies would benefit both the colonial rulers and the indigenous ruled. Before the Second World War the best interests of the two were seen as by no means incompatible, and anthropology was championed as a means of bridging the gap between administrator and native.12 In the post-War era of decolonisation, this close association of anthropology and imperialism became

10 This is not to deny that a distinction between the social and the biological aspects of human existence had previously been made; it is rather to note that until the inter-war years, the distinction had been more hazy, enabling scientists to slide easily - and quite legitimately - from one to the other. It may also be pointed out that an absolute distinction between the two is not maintained even in the anthropology of the 1990s; the issue of 'Aboriginality', of major concern in current Australian anthropology, is one that appears to involve both a biological and a cultural dimension.
11 This division of Elkin's work is purely a matter of analytical convenience, by no means implying that his writings can be neatly divided into two mutually exclusive categories. His scientific works were strongly influenced by his humanitarian concern; his social reformist writings by his scientific outlook. Nonetheless, some of Elkin's publications consist almost exclusively of academic analyses of bodies of empirical data; others are explicitly aimed at reorienting popular opinion and administrative programs concerning the Aborigines. Compare, for example, his Studies in Australian Totemism 1934, with another publication from the same year, 'The Aborigines, our national responsibility', pp. 52-60.
12 See for example Radcliffe-Brown 1930, pp. 257-80.
the subject of considerable soul-searching on the part of anthropologists. Although the post-colonial critics seem to have often exaggerated the fidelity of the two parties, it can scarcely be doubted that there was an intimate relationship between functionalist anthropology and colonial administration. The historian of anthropology, Ian Langham, has remarked:

An anthropology with the avowed aim of uncovering the factors which kept societies in smoothly-functioning harmony, and a national colonial policy which imposed its will upon distant peoples by plugging into the indigenous political organisation, could not have been innocent playmates. However, the association here was between functionalism and a policy of indirect colonial rule, as in parts of Africa, where imperial authority and indigenous peoples remained geographically and culturally distinct. In this context the functionalist anthropologist undoubtedly had much to offer: he or she explained the social mechanics; the administrator operated the machine. In the very different Australian situation, where there was no question of indirect rule, where according to Elkin himself the Aboriginal social mechanism either had already broken down or soon would, functionalist anthropology had rather less to offer.

Far from being a matter of indirect rule over a distant people, Elkin's self-appointed task was to promote the incorporation of the Aborigines into the Australian nation. As belief in the 'doomed race' idea waned, there was growing pressure, from the late 1920s, for a long-range policy which would ensure a permanent place for Aborigines in Australian society. In addition, Elkin was motivated by an ardent Christian humanitarianism which demanded justice for the Aboriginal people. His 'positive policy for the future' was social assimilation. Whatever assimilation may have become in the hands of administrators after World War Two, for Elkin it was not simply the Europeanising of the Aborigines. Rather, it was a process by which Aborigines would be assisted to adjust to the circumstances of modern Australian society, in which process they would play 'an active part in working out a blend of their own and Western culture'. Certainly, the emphasis was on the Western ingredient of the blend; yet Elkin clearly saw that an insistence on the complete Westernisation of the Aborigine was symptomatic of 'an ignorant or conceited view of the universal application of our standards'. If Aborigines were to attain a fuller participation in the Australian nation, they had to be assisted over 'the difficult times of transition from the "old stone-age" to that higher stage of culture to which we desire to lead them'. The 'higher cultural stage' was envisaged as very similar to that of the West; but it was not an exact replica.

Elkin's 'positive policy for the future' drew on three basic currents of anthropological thought: an evolutionist - perhaps better named progressivist - theme, which entailed a model of social change as an advancement from primitivity toward civilisation; a racial theme which posited inherent differences between human groups in terms of their capacities for such advancement; and a functionalist theme which envisaged social change as a piece-by-piece reassembly of the components of a social mechanism. The three

---

13 See for example Asad 1973. For more recent analyses of the relationship between imperialism and anthropology see Stocking 1991.
15 A similar colonial relationship prevailed between Australia and Papua and New Guinea; and it is noteworthy that practical anthropology courses at the University of Sydney in the inter-war years were focussed squarely on Melanesian studies.
16 Elkin 1937, p. 500.
17 ibid., p. 478.
18 Elkin 1934b, p. 60.
currents did not always flow smoothly together. Indeed, the confusion which is apparent in many of Elkin's articles on Aboriginal welfare can best be understood in terms of the tensions between them. Nonetheless, in general terms, the evolutionist or progressivist view provided the basic framework. In Elkin's words, the task was 'to frame and put into operation a policy designed to raise them in the scale of civilisation'. Nonetheless, in general terms, the evolutionist or progressivist view provided the basic framework. In Elkin's words, the task was 'to frame and put into operation a policy designed to raise them in the scale of civilisation'.

Racial determinism was most salient in his earliest writings. In a series of articles published in 1929, significantly entitled 'The Practical Value of Anthropology', he adopted Pitt-Rivers' concept of 'culture-potential', an ill-defined notion which posited inherent differences in the capacities of various races to attain a 'high' cultural level and to adapt to changing social circumstances. Pitt-Rivers identified himself as 'generally speaking' a functionalist anthropologist; but more than anything else he exemplifies how readily old-fashioned racial determinism could be incorporated into new-fashioned functionalism. For Elkin, 'culture-potential' was an alluring concept, for it provided an explanation of the apparent failure of Aborigines to make a satisfactory adjustment to Western civilisation, while retaining the functionalist doctrine that every element of a society, every custom, belief, ritual and artefact, performed some essential role in the workings of the social mechanism. In his 'Practical Value' articles he maintained a conventional distinction between 'primitive' and 'civilised' peoples, explicitly relating this to differences of racial endowment. He explained that:

The fundamental unity of human races ... does not mean that all races are biologically equal with respect to all their powers. Indeed ... there are differences. As already stated, some races possess certain powers in greater degree or in more individuals, or in both, than do others. Thus, the Australian Aborigines and the African negroes are human and have their powers, but they are not necessarily equal to the white or yellow races, especially as regards those traits which are most important for the development of advanced culture.

The notion of innate racial attributes which delimited Aboriginal capacities for social 'advancement' remained a persistent theme in Elkin's writings throughout the 1930s. In his 1932 article, 'Cultural and Racial Clash in Australia', racial determinism was far less overt than in his 1929 'Practical Value' series. Yet he persisted in the view that Aborigines laboured under a racial handicap, maintaining that:

we must face the physiological fact that the aborigine is, generally speaking, endowed with a comparatively small size of brain, the average capacity of

19 Particularly in his earliest articles, where Elkin grappled with the thorny questions of the extent to which racial attributes may delimit a people's ability to progress and the potential relevance of functionalist anthropology to Australian problems, his arguments are notable more for their confusedness than their clarity; see for example 'The practical value of anthropology' 1929. As he came to a more mature understanding of these issues, the confusedness was moderated in later articles, but did not disappear; see for example his 1937 article, 'Native education', especially pp. 484-500.

20 Elkin 1934c, p. 15.

21 As a practical discipline, functionalism emphasised the need to maintain a smoothly-running social system through times of socio-cultural change, and the need for scientific expertise in engineering the desired modifications. In line with these ideas, Elkin argued that the transformation of Aboriginal society required that the existing traditions and institutions be built upon, rather than torn down; see for example Elkin 1935, pp. 117-46; Elkin, 1934a, pp. 3145; Elkin 1934c, pp. 1-18.

22 Pitt-Rivers 1927, p. 10.

23 See especially Elkin 1929, pp. 367.

24 ibid., pp. 345.
which is twenty per cent less than ours. Now this implies a handicap in the brain machinery required for adaptation to and overcoming of, circumstances, especially such as have been introduced by a people whose brain capacity is so much higher.25

The adoption by Aborigines of a civilised way of life, according to Elkin, 'would appear to demand a gradual development of the brain-mechanism'.26 Although he did not use the term 'culture-potential' in this or any subsequent article, the essential idea of a connection between biology and culture remained. 'Thus the Australian aboriginal race', he wrote, 'is going down to biological history as another instance of a type which was so adjusted to, and specialized for, one environment, that it could not adapt itself to another.'27

Yet Elkin's acknowledgment of innate racial differences and deficiencies did not imply a denial of Aboriginal capacities for social advancement; it merely set the limitations and direction of that process. Racial impediments may have prevented Aborigines from becoming fully Europeanised; it would not prevent them from becoming civilised. In his review of Porteus's *Psychology of a Primitive People*, he asserted that:

> There is no reason for expecting that our civilisation in all its developments would be the most suited to the aborigines; there are racial differences and inequalities, but this does not necessarily imply, as Porteus categorically states, that the aborigines 'are certainly unadaptable to a civilised environment.' After all, there are other types of civilised environment, and any race must ultimately develop its own from within.28

In Elkin's conception, 'civilisation' for the Aborigines entailed no radical departure from Western norms. It seems that he envisaged an Aboriginal acquisition of the essentials of European economic, religious and social forms, while retaining the trappings of Aboriginal art, ceremonial and culture. He insisted that 'the best in their own religion' should be retained,29 and that 'what was of social and moral value in the native order' should be appreciated.30 The value judgements were being made from a self-confidently superior European perspective. Fundamentally, Elkin's notion of a distinctively Aboriginal form of 'higher culture' was a compromise between the competing demands of the necessity for social progress and the innate impediments of race.

Over the course of the 1930s the theme of racial determinism in Elkin's writings became more and more attenuated. It did not disappear, but became more of a problem which lurked in the background of his developing social assimilationist perspective. In his 1937 article on 'Native Education' he argued for the implementation of ambitious educational schemes which would provide Aborigines with a means of access to the wider Australian society. His optimism on this score, however, was tempered with doubts: 'so far they [the Aborigines] have shown little power to adapt themselves to our culture; there may be biological reasons for this, for their adaptation to aboriginal life may have become part of their very physiological make-up.'31 Race remained a sufficiently important issue for Elkin to devote the first chapter of his 1938 book, *The Australian Aborigines: How to Understand Them*, to the topic. It was a conventional summary of physical features, racial origins and affinities, in which he included the remark:

---

25 Elkin 1932a, p. 38.
26 ibid., p. 39.
28 Elkin 1932b, p. 112.
29 Elkin 1934b, p. 60.
30 Elkin 1937, p. 500.
31 ibid., p. 496; see also pp. 470, 498-9.
ELKIN'S EARLY ANTHROPOLOGICAL WRITINGS

The question 'Are the Aborigines the lowest race of mankind?' is not easily answered. Physically, they have some primitive features, for example, the thickness of the skull-bones, the shape of the face, the retreating nature of the forehead and the comparatively small brain. By this stage of Elkin's career, the significance of such matters had been considerably moderated, as he had come to place emphasis more on the socio-cultural determinants of primitivity. In his preface to the book, in which he urged white Australians to adopt a respectful appreciation of Aboriginal people, he declared that: 'Some folk carry the metaphor of a child-race too far'. Clearly, he believed that the metaphor did carry some validity; but how far could it be legitimately carried? Elkin provided an answer:

A child-race is so called because it has not attained to the stature of our civilisation; its grown men and women, however, are adults; they do not think as children but as social personalities who are responsible for the development and maintenance of the social, economic and religious life of their community.33

Behind the banal phraseology there was a significant point: Aborigines were a primitive people, but their lack of development was, primarily at least, at a social rather than at an individual, biological level.

Even in his earliest writings, where racial determinism was at its strongest, socio-cultural factors were awarded considerable prominence. In his 1929 'Practical Value' series he expressed puzzlement over the relative significance of race and culture in determining a people's characteristics. Three years later, in 'Cultural and Racial Clash', his views were still equivocal, although expressed without the same degree of bewilderment. Alongside his assertion of inherent racial limitations, he propounded a straightforward view of social progress, resonant with the principles of 18th century stage theory:

The position demands that if he [the Aborigine] is to survive, he must pass with great rapidity from the food-gathering stage of complete dependence on nature, and from the socio-mystical organization of tribal life, to a stage in which nature is exploited, and in which mechanization and economics control the outlook on nature and society.34

Over the succeeding years Elkin gave increasing prominence to the economic aspect of Aboriginal primitivity. He came to qualify the adjectives 'primitive' and 'civilised' in explicitly economic terms, referring to 'their peculiar primitive food-collecting stage of economic life',35 and to the 'cultural clash which has arisen from the invasion of a primitive food-gathering people's country by a civilised, agricultural and industrial people'.36

Indeed, the shift in Elkin's interpretation of Aboriginal primitivity over the course of the 1930s was primarily a shift from a racial to an economic perspective. As a functionalist anthropologist he insisted that the economic aspects of life were inextricably intertwined with religious beliefs, kinship systems and so forth. Yet he was prepared to go some way toward awarding primacy to economics as a determinant of other socio-cultural attributes, arguing that: 'The Australians are a food-gathering people, and around their peculiar economic position their social organization and religious life are orientated'.37 He maintained that Aboriginal life

33 ibid., p. vi.
34 Elkin 1932a, p. 38.
35 Elkin 1937, p. 468.
36 Elkin 1938, p. 21.
37 Elkin 1937, p. 472.
has been adjusted to one set of economic conditions - food-gathering - and great skill is evinced in it. Skill, however, is not sufficient. The aborigine realizes that nature varies and that he is dependent on her, and so his 'philosophy of life' has become closely interwoven with nature and his food-gathering efforts.\(^{38}\)

A corollary of this economic view of Aboriginal primitivity was an emphasis on economic development as a key aspect of social progress. Elkin strongly endorsed an educational system which would provide Aborigines with a knowledge of the significance of time, and the value of money, ... teaching him to recognize the significance of contract [and] eradicating the nomadic background and developing the community sense centred upon the provision of a home for the individual and his family and the exploitation of the soil and domestic animals as a source of food supply.\(^{39}\)

As Elkin came increasingly to the view that the culture of the Aborigines depended more on their economic circumstances than on their innate racial attributes, he became more optimistic about their prospects for social 'advancement'.

In line with this trend, Elkin attempted to rebut the prevalent assumption of an ineradicable nomadic instinct, which, he claimed, had 'become quite a shibboleth where Australian aborigines are concerned'.\(^{40}\) As early as 1934 he pointed out that 'too much emphasis can be laid ... on the nomadic aspect of aboriginal life'.\(^{41}\) Later in the decade, his arguments were more explicit and more comprehensive. The nomadic habit was, he wrote: often referred to in terms which imply that it is biologically and ineradically rooted and is therefore an insuperable bar to progress. But after all, it is not the fundamental thing about the aborigines for it is itself a consequence of their food-gathering manner of life ... The nomadic feature of the life of some primitive peoples is not the expression of a fundamental instinct; it is a cultural trait which food-producing (horticulture and agriculture) changes, but which pure pastoralism may accentuate; the cause of this again is economic and geographical.\(^{42}\)

Continuing the Enlightenment theme, Elkin argued that if the appropriate circumstances were provided, Aborigines would adopt a settled life of agriculture and industry. He returned to the issue in his 1938 monograph on the Aborigines: This point requires emphasis; the nomadic aspect of Aboriginal life is not biologically founded, but is culturally, in short, economically, determined. If the means of gaining a livelihood be changed, then the characteristics of nomadism will be changed.\(^{43}\)

For Elkin, the basic task was to raise a primitive, nomadic food-gathering people to the 'higher cultural stage' of settled agriculture and industry. The conception was as old as the earliest humanitarian and missionary endeavours in Australia. These had failed, he believed, because they lacked the insights of a modern, scientific approach to the problems of 'cultural and racial clash'. Elkin's assimilationist program was founded, in more senses than one, on an assured faith in Progress.

\(^{38}\) ibid., p. 463.
\(^{39}\) ibid., p. 483.
\(^{40}\) ibid., pp. 467-8.
\(^{41}\) Elkin 1934 c, p. 16.
\(^{42}\) Elkin 1937, pp. 462-3.
ELKIN'S EARLY ANTHROPOLOGICAL WRITINGS

Professor A.P. Elkin was not an original, creative theoretician. He was, rather, a diligent worker who advanced the status of anthropology and the cause of Aboriginal welfare by perseverance and dogged toil. His efforts on behalf of a 'primitive people' whose lives had been upturned by the incursion of civilisation were inspired, most fundamentally, by an ardent Christian humanitarianism. Science was harnessed to the cause; so, too, were whatever currents of thought came to hand. The concepts of race, culture, evolution and society were all called into service, and in the 1930s all were legitimate elements of anthropological explanation. His eminent colleagues and contemporaries such as Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski had devised sophisticated methodologies for the study of human societies; but for an understanding of the overarching process of social change he turned to the much older tradition of evolution - or rather, of progress. His 'positive policy for the future' was framed in the explicitly progressivist terms of raising a 'primitive' people to a 'higher' cultural stage. Its most notable features are not innovativeness or novelty, but the common-places of the idea of progress which echo back through 19th century evolutionism to the 18th century Enlightenment.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Cowlishaw, G. 1986a, 'Aborigines and anthropologists', Australian Aboriginal Studies, no. 1, pp.2-12.
______ 1988b, Black, White on Brindle: Race in Rural Australia, Cambridge.
______ 1932a, 'Cultural and racial clash in Australia', Morpeth Review, no. 21, pp. 35-45.
______ 1933, A Policy for the Aborigines, Morpeth, NSW.
______ 1934a, 'Missionary policy for primitive peoples', Morpeth Review, vol. 3, no. 27, pp. 31-45.
______ 1934b, 'The Aborigines, our national responsibility', The Australian Quarterly, vol. 6, no. 23, pp. 52-60.
______ 1934d, Studies in Australian Totemism, Oceania Monograph no. 2, Sydney.


As its inaugural President, in 1890, A.W. Howitt welcomed the establishment of an Anthropology Section within colonial Victoria's Royal Society. That tiny but optimistic group was destined to have its stability destroyed by the great economic depression of the 1890's, but in 1890 it constituted a unique combination of talent, because three of Australia's most significant anthropological pioneers held membership. In addition to public servant Howitt (1830-1908), there was his missionary collaborator, Lorimer Fison (1832-1907), while the youthful biology professor, Baldwin Spencer (1860-1929), was both secretary and editor of the Royal Society of Victoria. Their interests and objectives epitomise Australian anthropology, at least until the creation of that continent's first academic department of Anthropology, at Sydney in 1926.

The evolutionary paradigm and Aboriginal people

Howitt solemnly instructed the membership,1 that 'it behoves us ... to set earnestly to work to record all that can be learned as to customs and beliefs, the arts of peace and war, of probably the most primitive race now existing of mankind'. Howitt neither questioned the moral obligation, incumbent upon amateurs and scientists alike, to undertake this empirical assemblage of ethnographic data, nor its urgency. He was stimulated by the social evolutionary paradigm known today as Social Darwinism and excited by the assumed potential of Aboriginal society to act as a storehouse of fossil customs and primeval survivals,2 which would supply vital clues concerning 'the probable origin and development of social institutions'. These people supplied the prototype of hunter-gatherer society, in every aspect, economic, social and physical, 'the iconic people of anthropology', as Elvi Whittaker termed them at the Workshop. Time was short. Howitt already had predicted the virtual extinction of the Aboriginal race across the continent within a generation.3 That same year, a science congress was consoled by James Barnard,4 that the passing of the Aboriginal race was inevitable and in the ultimate interests of future humanity: 'It has become an axiom that, following the law of evolution and the survival of the fittest, the inferior races of mankind must give place to the highest type of man'. Regrettably for the future of anthropology, neither Howitt nor his colleagues pondered the ethical issues associated with their data amassing mission, as they and their successors pried or cajoled their way into the secret life of their informants. Even though they were persons of integrity and had good rapport with their (male) English speaking informants,

Emeritus Professor John Mulvaney is Secretary, Australian Academy of the Humanities. This paper was delivered in July 1990, at the Canada-Australia Workshop on Science and Technology, Victoria, British Columbia. It was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and organised by Dr Richard A. Jarrell, Department of Science Studies, York University, Ontario, and by Professor Roy McLeod, Department of History, University of Sydney.

1 Howitt 1891, p. 22.
2 ibid, p. 16.
3 Howitt 1889, p. 96.
4 Barnard 1890, p. 597.
they assumed a scientific ‘objectivity’ which justified generalising their scraps of information into comprehensive general propositions. Social theory so dominated their collecting, that usually the names of their informants were omitted, while they showed little concern for the social problems of fringe dwelling detribalised people. Their concern was to record those institutions, customs or artefacts which they assumed were authentic survivals of traditional society.

One theme of this paper concerns the consequences of this emphasis upon the social evolutionary model. In a recent lecture, Nicolas Peterson5 questions the extent to which past governments utilised anthropological expertise, and notes the infrequency with which anthropologists believed that Aboriginal society offered opportunities for applied anthropology, rather than emphasising the urgency of salvage. Peterson correctly concludes that the evolutionary paradigm led researchers into theoretical rather than practical issues. It was the functionalist school of anthropology, later introduced by A.R. Radcliffe-Brown at Sydney, which concentrated upon horticultural/agricultural societies, such as New Guinea. Such societies were more amenable to indirect rule and therefore were thought to possess greater relevance to functionalist theory than the less hierarchical Australian societies, which were neglected by most fieldworkers.

Even so, these early ethnographers were the most expert authorities available, their status and contacts resulted in their opinions being known, even if they were not consulted officially. As examples, Howitt served on a Victorian Royal Commission on Aborigines; Spencer was appointed by the Commonwealth government to advise it on Northern Territory native policy; W.E. Roth, a medical officer and ethnographer of note, was Queensland’s Protector of Aborigines and headed a Western Australian Royal Commission. Whatever form these influences took, the consequences for Aboriginal people often proved tragic. Their publications or contacts indirectly served to underpin popular prejudices and misconceptions. Their theories justified laws and behaviour which effectively denied human dignity and civil rights, while ignoring the individual as the essential human social unit. This identification of anthropologists with official bureaucracy in the past is largely responsible for the ambivalent place of anthropologists in contemporary Aboriginal society. Unfortunately, also, archaeologists are popularly associated with evolutionary theory, so they are also subject to suspicion or antagonism from revitalised Aboriginality, whose philosophical basis, the Dreaming, is creationist, a concept bolstered today by Fundamentalist Christian influences.

Howitt’s exhortation to ethnographic research also failed to mention a paramount consideration of modern research, that is the manner of its funding. Probably this matter was so obvious to his audience that it was irrelevant, because funding was not always regarded as the lifeblood of Australian research. Self-help was then the customary order. No publicly funded research granting schemes existed until well into the twentieth century, and although the four existing universities were state enterprises, financial provisions for research were minimal. As for anthropology, it was not taught anywhere under any of its manifestations, until a Chair of Anthropology was established at Sydney university in 1926. Although Australian benefactors drew their wealth chiefly from the pastoral exploitation of Aboriginal lands, they seldom endowed any academic enterprises, while anthropological needs were ignored. The changing nature of support for anthropological research is another theme examined later.

At the time Howitt urged the investigation of Aboriginal society, few would have questioned the dismissive assessment of Baldwin Spencer’s friend and colleague, Edward

---

5 Peterson 1990.
Jenks, an academic lawyer, published his popular *A History of the Australasian Colonies* in 1895. 'The Aborigines ...', he wrote, 'have had no influence over Australian history. Absolutely barbarous and unskilled in the arts of life, dragging out ... a wretched and precarious existence even before the arrival of European settlers, they could offer no resistance to the invaders, and they have, in fact, been entirely ignored (except as objects of charity or aversion) in the settlement of the country'. Only in the past few years have most European Australians recognised the invalidity of such assumptions concerning Aboriginal society.

**Prejudice and dogma in anthropological history**

The opinions typified by Jenks remained orthodox for decades and they still have their cynical adherents. Aborigines remained the passive recipients of 'research' based upon preconceived philosophical or evolutionary notions. The establishment of anthropology as a discipline must be assessed within this ideological context. There is little point in recapitulating much of the evidence here, because it has been expounded elsewhere. Other recent reappraisals include papers by Peterson,8 Jones9 and the detailed biographies of A.P. Elkin10 and Sir Baldwin Spencer.11

Before selecting some case studies which reflect the development of the discipline in Australia, it is necessary to provide some background as to why it is that the present non-Aboriginal Australian population faces moral, political and legal dilemmas in its relationship to Aboriginal Australians. For this situation, earlier 'experts' share much of the responsibility and it is an essential aspect of the growth and standing of anthropology. This is an assessment with the wisdom of hindsight. It is only fair to observe that many ethnographers were humanitarians in spirit and were well in advance of their contemporaries in their racial attitudes and their integrity.

The crucial message conveyed by recent archaeological discoveries and the existing close collaboration between communities and anthropologists, concerns the essentially human values which characterised Aboriginal society from ancestral to contemporary generations. The varied burial rituals and other ceremonial activities inferred from the evidence, the antiquity and great stylistic variations in art and the concern for spiritual life and intimate connections with the land, all demonstrate that the spiritual and social life which characterised Aboriginal societies in 1788, possessed immense time depth. Yet early colonists brought a contrasting package of perceptions to bear on Aboriginal society. They deemed it impossible for Aborigines to possess any creative imagination, spirituality or humanitarian attitudes. As significant and influential interpretations of Aboriginal life, it is appropriate to commence with two early explorers, (Sir) George Grey and E.J. Eyre, men who wrote informatively and sympathetically about Aboriginal society.

George Grey discovered the Wandjina rock art form in the Kimberleys in 1838. We know today that this tradition of huge, mouthless beings both unites the present generation with Dreaming creation time and identifies it with the local landscape in a deeply meaningful manner. In his published journal, Grey described the paintings objectively

---

6 Jenks 1895, p. 16.
7 My own contribution to this discourse includes the following: Mulvaney 1958; 1970; 1971; 1981; 1986; 1987; 1988.
8 Peterson 1990.
9 Jones 1987.
enough. He noted that markings around one figure resembled ‘written characters or some ornament’ and that they wore ‘a sort of dress’ (actually ceremonial body painting). He went further in his concluding remarks:

But the art and skill with which some of the figures are drawn, and the great effect which has been produced by such simple means, renders it most probable that the painting must have been executed with the intention of exercising an influence upon the fears and superstitious feelings of the ignorant and barbarous natives ...

Grey was more specific in his report to the Colonial Office, parts of which were published. He assumed the art to be the work of a ‘race of Asiatic origin,’ and so set a speculative pattern. According to the taste or prejudices of later authors, these foreign artists and their ‘script’ were Greek, Egyptian, Assyrian, Indian, Malay, and in the ultimate Von Daniken lunacy, men from outer space. Obviously, this is a form of racism. As Aborigines were rude and elementary artists, it is implied, these paintings were beyond their creative capabilities. This denigration of Aboriginal art had a remarkably durable role in conditioning other Australians to overlook the vigour and the symbolism of Aboriginal art in its many manifestations. Aboriginal art has appeared in art galleries only during the past two decades.

After later residence at Albany and then as South Australian governor, Grey became more familiar with and sympathetic to Aboriginal culture. His journals are an important source for language, attempts to infer rules of kinship and contain the first reference to the existence of totemism. In correctly inferring the importance of law in Aboriginal society, he formulated an interpretation which deprived that society of any innovative changes, denying any creative role or freedom to individuals. Presumably the rigid world which Grey described was the antithesis to his concept of British democracy (‘civilisation’). Because so many later colonists echoed such views, they merit quotation:

But to believe that man in a savage state is endowed with freedom either of thought or action is erroneous in the highest degree. He is in reality subjected to complex laws, which not only deprive him of all free agency of thought, but, at the same time allowing no scope whatever for the development of intellect, benevolence, or any other great moral qualification, that necessarily bind him down in a hopeless state of barbarism, from which it is impossible for man to emerge ...

Divine Providence, Grey believed, had placed Aborigines in Australia, and because they were in the thrall of barbaric custom and ignorance, they ‘must have been instructed how to provide for their wants, how to form weapons ... to capture animals ...’ A divine ‘Infinite wisdom’ deliberately peopled the continent with this unchanging lifeway, ‘until the race ... (came) into contact with a civilised community, whose presence might exercise a new influence under which the ancient system would expire or be swept away’.

Such an anticipation of the White Man’s Burden clearly empowered European settlers under Divine sanction to subdue the earth, to dispossess the inferior occupants of the land. These sentiments, it should be noted, were those of a colonial governor, writing two decades before the Darwinian ‘survival of the fittest’ became a catch-cry. Grey’s explorer contemporary, Edward John Eyre, also recorded important data about Aboriginal society. Like Grey, however, his model of spirituality was moulded by the precepts of Victorian
Christianity. The Aborigines, Eyre concluded, have no religious belief or ceremonies', despite the fact that he described ceremonial activities at considerable length—'all generally so absurd, so vague, unsatisfactory and contradictory, that it is impossible ... to say ... whether they have any independent beliefs at all'. These dismissive conclusions on Aboriginal intellectual life were offered by two of the most observant Europeans to describe indigenous society. It is significant that such an ideological perspective left no place for imagination or individuality. As they wrote before Darwinian evolutionary theory became popularised, it is not surprising that Aboriginal culture later was subjected to even worse misunderstanding by exponents of social evolution. Social Darwinists converted Australia into the exemplar of primitive society on the lowest rung of evolutionary progress, as human and institutional survivals since before Adam.

C. Staniland Wake was a typical early overseas social theorist. In 1872, he drew upon sources such as those quoted above. 'They represent the childhood of humanity', Wake concluded of the Australians. 'On all questions of morality, and in matters connected with the emotional nature, mere children'; their art 'may be classed with the productions of children'.

From England Wake corresponded with the founding fathers of Australian anthropology, Lorimer Fison and A.W. Howitt. In their turn, they drew inspiration from the great American social theorist, Lewis Henry Morgan. Morgan urged them to use Aboriginal ethnography as a social laboratory, not because of any interest in their culture as individual people, but as a scientific guide to the origin of human institutions. 'You are several strata below barbarism into savagism', Morgan wrote in 1872, 'and nearer to the primitive condition of man than any other investigator. You have in their institutions of consanguinity, marriage and tribal organisation, far reaching and intelligent guides, not only to their present, but also to their past, condition. When all the facts are ascertained ... we shall recover the thread of man's progress from the first to the last clearly and accurately defined ...'

In this global network of kindred social Darwinist theorists, Howitt and Fison also worked closely with the English social theorist, Edward Tylor, who considered that the Tasmanians were the living 'representatives of Palaeolithic Man'; 'just as mollusca of species first appearing far back in the earlier formations may continue to live and thrive in modern seas'.

Alfred Howitt ranks as one of Australia's most versatile and engaging intellects. It is significant, however, that although he wrote a major anthropological book on Aboriginal society, his The Native Tribes of South-East Australia (1904) deals with a society already deemed by him as past. He ignored current problems of contact and social disruption, and even omitted the names of his individual informants, despite the fact that he knew many of them well. This 'scientific' detachment probably explains his attitude as a member of the 1877 Victorian Royal Commission on the Aborigines, where present problems were the issue under investigation.

The report of that Royal Commission contained some sound observations on the nature of Aboriginal society, including the significant admission, that 'the care of the natives who have been dispossessed of their inheritance by colonisation is a sacred

16 Eyre 1845, II, p. 355.
17 Wake 1872, p. 83, p. 79, p. 75 for quotations.
19 Tylor 1893, p. 150.
20 Victoria, Royal Commission on the Aborigines 1877, p. xii, p. xvi.
obligation ... their degradation was no less shameful to humanity than appalling in the sight of Christian men'.

Moral principles stated, however, the Commission recommended what is seen today as a heavy-handed and misguided paternalism. There is no evidence that Howitt disagreed with its recommendations, which included the establishment of centralised government stations, or that he rejected its unfortunate anthropological interpretation. This stated firmly, that 'it may be supposed that attachments to localities and hereditary tribal enmities, would militate against any efforts to bring them in: but the existing local attachments are ... of recent origin; on the breaking up of the tribes consequent upon the breaking up of their territories and on the decrease numerically ... the love of the land on which they were born, and which they considered therefore as theirs, became lessened. The tribes, as tribes, no longer exist, and the individuals yet remaining have formed associations which are not necessarily connected with former tribal boundaries ...'

This rationalisation for further dispossession from Aboriginal lands must have appealed to white settlers. It contrasts with the agreed decision of an earlier Victorian Legislative Council Select Committee on the Aborigines.21 In 1859, that committee accepted the advice of the Chief Protector, William Thomas, that central stations were impractical for humanitarian reasons. 'The blacks would not leave their own hunting grounds, and would pine away at once if removed from them. The various tribes would never agree ... consequently the idea of settling them together was reluctantly abandoned'.

Baldwin Spencer, a biologist and director of the National Museum of Victoria, achieved an international reputation for his anthropological field work around the turn of the century. Spencer, who had been taught by Tylor and was befriended by Howitt, typified the intellectual stance of the paradigm of evolutionary social theory. It served to divorce living informants as individuals from abstract social, but assumed scientific principles. As the most influential adviser to government of his generation, he was sent to Darwin in 1912, to formulate policy for the Commonwealth government. He advocated a stern paternalist policy based upon social Darwinist concepts.

Assessed from the modern perspective, it is regrettable that even his most constructive recommendation, the establishment of major Aboriginal reserves, was conditioned partly by his biologically determined thesis that the Aboriginal race was destined to become extinct, and therefore humanitarian principles coincided with the expediency of studying them while there was time.22 The priority of science was given public expression at the 1913 Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) meeting in a resolution,23 'That in view of the rapid decadence and disappearance of the Australian aborigines, it is urgent that, in the interests of science further records and collections, illustrative of the beliefs, customs, and manner of life ... should be made for public preservation'.

Spencer's formal scientific training overshadowed his personal humanitarianism. In his 1901 museum handbook, for example, Spencer deplored the passing of the Tasmanians, chiefly it seems, because of their scientific potential:24

They were, in fact, living representatives of palaeolithic man, lower in the scale of cultures than any human beings now upon earth. It is a matter for the
deepest regret that they were allowed to become extinct without our gaining anything but the most meagre information ...

As for the mainlanders, they 'may be regarded as a relic of the early childhood of mankind left stranded in a part of the world where he has, without the impetus derived from competition, remained in a low condition of savagery'. Capitalism and progress therefore went together. As James Frazer observed of Spencer's findings:25 'In the struggle for existence progress depends mainly on competition; the more numerous the competitors, the fiercer is the competition, and the more rapid consequently is evolution'.

This intellectual tradition largely continued in the person of A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, the first holder of an anthropology chair at an Australian university and one of the most influential anthropologists this century has produced. Radcliffe-Brown came to Sydney in 1926, but had previous field experience in Western Australia. Radcliffe-Brown worked amongst the inmates of the Lock Hospital for venereal diseases, on Bernier Island in 1910. Amongst its miserable 'living dead' (as Daisy Bates termed those incarcerated people), Radcliffe-Brown collected genealogies and checked kinship systems, with scientific zeal and objectivity.26 This interlude was surely an instance of Radcliffe-Brown's reported model scientific anthropologist:27

He treats the human native as the chemist does his substance ... if he admits human sympathies and interests, he impairs the validity of his work. He then becomes a human being. The ideal anthropologist must not judge "this is good, or this is bad", he must only record and deduce.

Radcliffe-Brown proved equally detached when he delivered an ANZAAS presidential lecture in 1930, extolling the virtues of Applied Anthropology and the need to formulate general laws of social change and social control.28 Significantly, the purpose of this social anthropological research as he expounded it, was to improve administration in Papua New Guinea. His discussion of Australian research needs was restricted to human biology. Evidently, he saw no scope for the application of social anthropological concepts to Aboriginal administration:

Australia, by its possession, in the aborigines, of a highly specialised variety of our species affords an opportunity for very important investigations in the field of Human Biology, an opportunity, however, which must be seized very soon, since, with the rapid disappearance of the race, in a few years it will have gone.

White Australia

During the early decades of this century European Australians worried over two racial issues which they considered basic to the fabric of society. The first concerned the maintenance of a White Australia, the other the problem of the so-called half-caste population. The roots of both these racial obsessions had diverse origins in the Australian psyche, but they were bolstered and given academic respectability by scientists with social evolutionary preconceptions. Eugenics, social engineering, promised to improve the racial stock through selective breeding of the population within Australia, while strict immigration laws ensured the continuing purity of the White gene pool. Radcliffe-Brown sensibly thought that it was 'premature' to create an applied science institute of Eugenics,
until greater knowledge was obtained of the principles of heredity and variation. However, he conceded that it was desirable 'to improve the average quality of the human stock, to breed finer men and women, to eliminate as far as possible the feeble-minded and degenerate'. When giving evidence to a 1933 Western Australian Royal Commission on the treatment of Aborigines, a medical witness expressed matters more bluntly:

I wish to speak of the half-caste and the breeding out of the half-caste, the black man, whose presence irritates us ... and who is now in addition a standing menace to our dreams of a white Australia.

Significantly, the thirties ushered in the racial evils of Hitlerite Germany, with which these sentiments were in accord. Australia was actually at war with Germany, when the Western Australian Commissioner of Native Affairs praised the use of 'corrective discipline' for Aborigines, which was not a policy employed 'elsewhere, except in Germany, I doubt whether methods such as these have been adopted in dealing with the forced labour of natives ...'

In 1937, the state and commonwealth governments adopted the Policy of Absorption, believing 'that the destiny of the natives of Aboriginal origin, but not of the fullblood, lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth and it therefore recommends that all efforts be directed to that end'. The consequence was the assimilation policy of transforming 'them' to 'us'. One of Australia's major moral and social problems today, is inherited from the consequences of this denial of human rights, when children and parents are separated 'for their country's good'. The policy was espoused, amongst others, by Radcliffe-Brown's influential successor in the Sydney Chair, A.P. Elkin.

Assimilation had been supported previously by Baldwin Spencer, who advised the Commonwealth government: 'The aboriginal', he informed parliament, 'is a very curious mixture; mentally, about the level of a child who has little control over his feelings ... He has no sense of responsibility and, except in rare cases, no initiative'. As for half-castes, 'the mother is of very low intellectual grade, while the father most often belongs to the coarser and more unrefined members of higher races'. Anticipating Radcliffe-Brown and Elkin, Spencer saw the solution in the removal of such children from their aboriginal mothers 'even though it may seem cruel to separate the mother and child, it is better to do so ...'

In the light of such evidence for cultural bias, it is understandable that Aboriginal people feel antagonistic to, or suspicious of, anthropologists. This applies equally to archaeologists, whose late arrival on the Australian scene means they were not involved in those previous ideologies or activities. However, they have been labelled together with an earlier generation of 'diggers,' whom archaeologists disown. These were the biological scientists, vainly optimistic and racially biased, who equated non-whites with evolutionary primitiveness, and who promoted eugenics and comparative racial studies, while throughout the first half of this century they removed burials to museums in their hundreds. The rub for archaeologists like the author is that, in reference to ancient burials, they are aware that those remains are now important for totally different reasons. The chief of these is the

29 ibid.
32 Jacobs 1986, p. 15.
33 Mulvaney 1989a, pp. 199-205.
cultural and genetic data encoded in those burial practices and bones, which is of future deep significance to Aboriginal people themselves and scholars.35

This selective survey of the perceptions of earlier prominent authorities in the white community indicates that even though they acted in good faith within their ambient culture, they provided intellectual justification for policies which today are recognised to be terribly wrong, morally, socially and legally. Aboriginal critics accuse ‘anthropologists’ of justifying the dispossession of their people, and what they term as ‘genocide’. Although these accusations are invalid today, even the most sympathetic pro-land rights ‘anthropologist’ cannot refute them as applied to the past. Understandably, to say ‘sorry, anthropologists were wrong’, may not satisfy Aboriginal critics, yet it is best to admit reality and then to seek appropriate future solutions. It is worth reflecting that the anthropology discipline was established when ‘science’ held sway in a remarkably subjective ambience. Even its most enlightened Australian practitioners subscribed to such notions as the mental inferiority of the Australian race, the need for firm interventionist control of all Aboriginal people, and their imminent (and scientifically immutable) racial extinction. They also adhered firmly to the dogma of White Australia. It seems paradoxical today, when this awful intellectual inheritance is the greatest conscience stirrer and inhibitor of the discipline.

Paradoxical indeed. While Aboriginal society and its material conditions and living standards worsened, social evolutionists salvaged away, deducing survivals from the survivors and contributing substantially to intellectual models erected overseas by historians and sociologists of ideas. The impact of Australian data began in the 1870’s, when Howitt and Fison were transmitted via Lewis Henry into the schema by Friedrich Engels, The Origin of the Family. Fison and Howitt, Spencer and Gillen, became familiar footnotes in conflicting theories and constructs of enormous importance in the western world during the early decades of this century. Such contributions to social theory included works by Wake,36 Crawley,37 Andrew Lang,38 Thomas,39 Van Gennep,40 Westermarck,41 Marrett,42 Hartland,43 Durkheim44 and Freud.45 There were strong ideological links, it seems, between Sir James Frazer’s Golden Bough and Australian flora; the pre-fieldwork Malinowski quarried a mass of Australia ethnography.46 Theories of the origin and symbolism of European cave art, propounded by S. Reinach and H. Breuil originated in the pages of Spencer and Gillen.47 It is ironic, therefore, that none of the Australian data utilised in these diverse schema were collected by professional anthropologists, while many of the ideas advanced by those celebrities who adopted them, were obsolete before any anthropological post became established in Australia. It also is

35 Mulvaney 1989 b.
36 Wake 1889.
37 Crawley 1902.
38 Lang 1903; 1905.
39 Thomas 1906.
40 Van Gennep 1906; 1909.
41 Westermarck 1906.
42 Marett 1909.
43 Hartland 1909.
44 Durkheim 1912.
45 Freud 1913.
46 Malinowski 1913.
ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1993 17:2

highly relevant in retrospect, that the Aboriginal people were mere ciphers in those grand evolutionary designs.

**Intellectual networks on the periphery**

Although an anthropological division had been established in 1888, at the inaugural congress of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, anthropology remained the preserve of a few amateurs, particularly public servants, clergymen and pastoralists.48 Such busy enthusiasts were remarkably dedicated, usually working in geographic isolation, far removed from their intellectual peers, in our ambient cultural environment of indifference or racial contempt. Often, their sole reward was praise from some distant great man whom they never met.

Their perseverance in the face of physical and intellectual adversity is a cogent argument for applying the model—patron/client: centre/periphery—to the growth of Australian anthropology. Well documented intellectual relationships, such as those between Lorimer Fison and Lewis Henry Morgan, Howitt and E.B. Tylor, R.H. Mathews and Mrs Langloh Parker with Andrew Lang, Spencer and Gillen with Sir James Frazer, proved rewarding motivational and directional lodestars for the colonial beneficiaries of metropolitan patronage, praise and publicity.49

When applied to the local situation, however, this model’s imperial centrality and simplicity conceals the extent to which the clients were themselves initiators of field methods, or devised innovative concepts, which did not slavishly imitate their patron’s pattern.50 The network of contacts established around the continent between ‘clients’ proved equally important. Just as Howitt drew inspiration from overseas mentors, for example, so he encouraged local linkages by producing and distributing at least eight types of questionnaire between 1874 and 1885. Such questionnaires were based originally upon the one circulated by L.H. Morgan, which reached Fison in Fiji in 1869. However, Fison and Howitt modified that form in 1874, and thereafter Howitt devised questionnaires which were ambitious variants of their original adaptation, together with others on astronomy, body marking, ceremonial painting and song.51 Alternative questionnaires were distributed by other ethnographers during this same period. These included E.M. Curr,52 the South Australian missionary, George Taplin,53 and R. Brough Smyth,54 to whose volumes Howitt and Fison both contributed, although they subsequently criticised the standard of his compilation.55

These prominent postal ethnographers became patrons to their own far-flung networks, occasionally obtaining publication space for their clients from their own metropolitan mentors. Such mutually congratulatory networks regretfully competed with other systems, sometimes their central directors being accused of ‘pirating’ opposition questionnaire techniques or data.

This intense sense of rivalry clouded the wisdom of clergymen, public servants and academics alike, ironically at the very period when urgent collaboration in the supreme interests of science was invoked. Jealousy, a desire to monopolise knowledge of a region,

---

50 e.g. Mulvaney 1987; Jones 1987.
52 Curr 1886.
53 Taplin 1879.
54 Smyth 1878.
55 Howitt to Fison 25 Sept. 1878 (Tippet coll. TB3/33/19).
or fame in being the first to communicate it, soured this otherwise major voluntary research effort. Such petty colonial attitudes carried over into Federation and characterised some later professional anthropologists, who were notorious for their territorial dominance, or for impeding access to 'their' people or State. This petty behaviour has been documented in relations between A.P. Elkin, the Sydney anthropologist and South Australian researchers.56

The initial stage of systematic research consequently was marred by self-interest. The otherwise judicial Howitt, for example, ignored questions about ethnography from James Dawson, who was compiling his *The Australian Aborigines* (1881). After Howitt informed Fison of this request, Fison criticised 'your Mr Dawson and his cool request'. Indeed, the reverend gentleman termed such scholars 'literally cannibals'. Howitt also failed to respond when an American ethnographer sought details about gesture language, 'because I can see a most valuable chapter' on that subject himself. Four months later he had devised and distributed a questionnaire on gesture language and had received a completed form from Central Australia.57 E.M. Curr, compiler of the four volumes, *The Australian Race* (1886), cordially supplied Howitt with information in 1874, whereas he was posting circulars himself by 1879. Rivalry became mutually intense. Howitt reported on an occasion when he met Curr in Melbourne by chance—He 'did not get much out of me—I did not get much out of him'. It was due largely to their fear that Curr would 'scoop' their discoveries, that Howitt and Fison hurried publication of *Kamileroi and Kurnai* (1880). This was done at considerable financial cost, and in full knowledge that their mentor, L.H. Morgan, had not recovered his costs on *Ancient Society*, even though 1000 copies had sold.58

The missionary, Reverend George Taplin, posed different problems. He was an early collaborator, returning completed questionnaires to Fison in 1872 and 1873. When Taplin published his own book, *Folklore, Manners, Customs and Languages of the South Australian Aborigines* in 1879, he made no reference to Fison initiating him into the postal questionnaire technique. Neither Fison nor Howitt was mentioned, but Taplin highlighted his later contacts with the South African ethnographer, W.H. Bleek.59 As Taplin first wrote to Bleek on 29 January 1874, it suggests that Fison and Howitt had some cause for pained accusations, that Taplin appropriated their questionnaire technique and ideas without acknowledgement.60

The most violent character assassination during those forthright times involved Baldwin Spencer. He cried plagiarism, when evidence supplied by R.H. Mathews was used by Andrew Lang as a stick to beat James Frazer's theories via Spencer and Gillen. Spencer wrote angrily to Frazer, effectively expunging Mathews from the scholarly lists. He claimed support for his accusations from Howitt, Fison and W.E. Roth, although the justice of such blackballing is questionable.61 Elkin championed the cause of Mathews.62 Spencer also dismissed as 'rubbish', the theological interpretation of Aranda religion by the

57 Dawson: Fison to Howitt 24 Aug 1877 (Fison papers NLA MS 7080); Howitt to Fison 21 Apr 1877, 21 Mar 1880 (Tippett coll TB3/33/13). American: Howitt to Fison 1 Feb, 27 June 1881 (Tippett Coll).
58 Howitt to Fison 10 Apr 1880 (Tippett coll); Fison to Howitt 22 July, 25 Oct 1879 (Fison papers NLA MS 7080); Mulvaney 1971, p. 297. Morgan: Fison to Howitt 14 May 1880 (NLA MS 7080).
59 Bleek 1874.
60 Taplin to Fison 4 Oct 1872, 1 Dec 1873, Fison to Taplin 5 Mar 1875 (Fison papers NLA MS 7080); Howitt to Fison 6 Oct 1879 (Tippett coll); Mulvaney 1971, p. 300, p. 342; Bleek 1874, p. 132; Taplin 1879, p. 1.
61 Mulvaney and Calaby 1985, p. 215; Howitt to Fison 19 Apr 1899 (Tippett coll).
62 Elkin 1975-6.
Lutheran missionary Carl Strehlow.65 His own understanding of the nature of Aboriginal ceremonial life was equally in error.

**Artefact collection and distribution**

Aboriginal artefacts had been collected as curios or exemplars of savage life since 1788. The postal ethnographers went further, in collecting material objects chiefly to illustrate the technology and intellectual level of Aboriginal culture. While they retained items in their private cabinets or donated them to regional or colonial (later state) museums, many objects were sent to their overseas patrons. Tylor even requested specific items from Howitt.64

Not surprisingly, their typological arrangement of exhibits 'confirmed' the 'primitive' characteristics of Australian technology, by being placed at the beginning of any linear sequence. The classic statement of evolutionary material typology was presented by Lt. General Pitt-Rivers, although Spencer echoed him in his 1901 *Guide to the Australian Ethnographical Collection* of the National Museum of Victoria. All Aboriginal weapons, Pitt-Rivers stated:65

assimilate the forms of nature; all their wooden weapons are constructed on the grain of the wood, and consequently their curves are the curves of the branches ... In every instance in which I have attempted to arrange my collection in sequence, so as to trace the higher forms from natural forms, the weapons of the Australians have found their place lowest in the scale, because they assimilate most closely to the natural forms.

During that period of minimal museum funding, curators used local artefacts as a form of barter currency to exchange for ethnographic items from other cultures. In this way Australian material culture became widely dispersed in European and American museums.66 Baldwin Spencer freely dispersed his museum's collection (largely accumulated through his initiatives) in the cause of comparative ethnography. He sent at least 153 specimens to Leningrad in 1908, in exchange for a Samoyed sledge and accoutrements.67

Missionaries on the Australian periphery also initiated networks which supplied information and artefacts to their European birthplaces or religious centres. German Lutheran missions, in particular, played a major role in supplying institutions in the Fatherland with exhibits. Although many collections were destroyed during wartime bombing, surviving collections are important because of their representativeness and the early date at which many were acquired. The meticulously documented records of these Lutheran missionaries constitute a major anthropological resource. Pastor Carl Strehlow's *Die Aranda und Loritja-Stamme*, six publications between 1908 and 1921, is a work based upon a deeper linguistic knowledge than that possessed by his contemporaries, Spencer and Gillen. Fortunately for Australian culture, some Lutheran missionaries also supplied the South Australian Museum with unique material. The most significant of these was J.G. Reuther (1861-1914), based at Killalpaninna, east of Lake Eyre.68

64 Mulvaney 1970.
65 Myers 1906, p. 11.
66 Cooper 1990.
67 ibid, p. 307; Mulvaney & Calaby 1985, p. 250.
Research funding before 1914

Although there were no public funds dedicated for anthropological research during the era before the University of Sydney department opened in 1926, there were many expedients which assisted that cause. One related to the use of government printing offices to facilitate publication. Possibly the earliest official assistance was engineered by R. Brough Smyth, secretary to the Victorian Board for the Protection of the Aborigines. He collated material for his *Aborigines of Victoria*, printed in 1878 by the Government Printer, as also was E.M. Curr’s *The Aboriginal Race* (1886). Smyth authorised the printing of the first series of Howitt and Fison questionnaires in 1874, although postage fees were a burden on its authors, as was the expense of printing *Kamileroi and Kurnai*, for which they shared the cost of publishing 550 copies.

Until the premature abolition of the Geological Survey of Victoria in 1869, Brough Smyth also served as its secretary. The Victoria Survey achieved notable success under the direction of A.R.C. Selwyn, later to achieve Canadian fame. The interface between geology, archaeology and ethnography was evident in the progress reports issued by the Survey; which included references to middens and artefacts. Robert Etheridge, a staff member, later directed Sydney’s Australian Museum, adding an interest in enlarging its ethnographic collections to his palaeontological expertise. Inspired by the Survey’s example, A.W. Howitt published a series of detailed field studies of Gippsland geology, combining much invaluable ethnography with perceptive geology.

Both of Taplin’s books were published by the South Australian government, initially after the intervention of the colonial governor, Musgrave, who was sympathetic to salvage ethnography. W.E. Roth’s research was published officially in Queensland, while his period as that state’s Chief Protector of Aborigines provided him with research opportunities.

Howitt wished to have paid leave of absence in order to undertake a major programme of fieldwork. Both for himself and for future knowledge, it is frustrating that deaf ears were turned both in Victoria and Britain. Fison endeavoured to obtain his friend’s release, when Howitt was in his prime. He wrote to E.B. Tylor in Oxford, observing: ‘Anthropologists all the world over ought to combine and move heaven and earth to get Howitt released from his official duties and turned loose among the Australian aborigines. He is the man of all men to do the work if he could only get at it’.

Fison wrote from Fiji consoling Howitt, ‘I wish I could help you in your Australian researches … I can do nothing but try to set Tylor and others torturing the Colonial office to get you set apart for a year or two …’ There is no indication, however, that Tylor, Howitt’s patron, acted upon Fison’s suggestion. Indeed instead of receiving official encouragement, by 1885 Howitt’s Minister had ordered him to desist from encouraging Aboriginal ritual ceremonies, because it incited pagan ways and caused absenteeism from rural labour. His later transfer from the bush to Melbourne terminated his fieldwork.

Baldwin Spencer paid all expenses involved in his own early field excursions. Even the 1901 transcontinental expedition with Gillen was largely at his expense, although *The Age* newspaper defrayed some costs, in return for a series of articles. He received a more positive response than Howitt from his metropolitan patrons, Frazer and Tylor. In order to facilitate

---

69 Mulvaney 1987, p. 62.
70 e.g. Fison to Howitt 14 May 1880 (Fison papers NLA MS 7080).
71 Taplin 1879, p. 1; Bleek 1874, p. 130.
72 Roth 1897; 1901-10.
73 Fison to Tylor 27 Sept 1881; Fison to Howitt 7 Nov 1881 (Fison papers NLA MS 7080).
74 Mulvaney 1970.
the 1901 expedition, Frazer initiated a petition to the Victorian and South Australian governments, seeking leave of absence for both Spencer and Gillen, and signed by the British academic establishment. The governments assented, granting them leave on salary and providing for their staff replacements. Spencer and Gillen also made varied and extensive use of rail and telegraph facilities, so this expedition ranks as the first major government assistance for anthropological research. Regrettably, the government assistance related more to the influence and prestige of the rich and famous, than to a desire to learn about Aboriginal society. The proud metropolitan patrons later basked in the publicity of this successful expedition, but although Spencer’s financial investment was considerable, his backers provided nothing but their signatures.75

Two other systematic anthropological expeditions proved landmarks in anthropological history, but their funding was British. The Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Strait, under A.C. Hadden in 1898, set a pattern which, in its use of movie film and sound recording, Spencer and Gillen emulated. The 1910-11 Oxford and Cambridge Expedition to Western Australia was led by A.R. Brown (later Radcliffe-Brown), with a Western Australian government contribution in the person of Daisy Bates. A less celebrated and relatively unstudied series of solitary journeys was that by the German ethnographer, E. Eylmann, between 1896 and 1898, whose corpus of artefacts is invaluable.76

The Commonwealth government assumed control of the Northern Territory from South Australia in 1910. Baldwin Spencer was appointed a Special Commissioner to the Territory and Chief Protector of the Aborigines for the year 1912. His brief was to advise the government on Aboriginal welfare and administrative matters, but historians have neglected this significant development. It was the first occasion upon which an academic with anthropological expertise (the foremost authority in Australia) was appointed to formulate policy. The government paid all the considerable costs involved. Spencer’s report was tabled in parliament in 1913, after a change in government to an administration unsympathetic to his costly recommendations, and only months before the war swept its consideration into oblivion. Although its precepts combined bleak social evolutionary theory with firm paternalism, his recommendations included the creation of several large Aboriginal reserves. If implemented, this policy might have altered the course of Aboriginal history and European settlement.77

One important outcome of Spencer’s year in the Territory was his Native Tribes of the Northern Territory (1914). This is the classic study of northwestern Arnhem Land. His generalised tribal designation for the Alligator Rivers people, Kakadu, has been perpetuated in the World Heritage property named Kakadu Park. The recognition of Aboriginal bark painting as an art form effectively dates from Spencer’s initiative in collecting and donating over 200 bark paintings to the National Museum of Victoria, of which he was the honorary director. His Native Tribes of the Northern Territory illustrated and described examples, the first detailed account of bark paintings.78

The recurring theme of ethnographic salvage was reiterated in the same year as Spencer’s report to parliament. The 1913 Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science congress resolved:79 ‘That in view of the rapid decadence and disappearance of the ... aborigines, it is urgent that, in the interests of science, further records and collections ... should be made for public preservation ...’

75 Mulvaney & Calaby 1985, pp. 189-91.
76 Eylmann 1908; Courto 1990.
77 Spencer 1913; Mulvaney & Calaby 1985, pp. 280-314.
78 Spencer 1914; Mulvaney & Calaby, pp. 303-4.
79 Resolutions of Section F, AAAS 1913, p. 453.
AUSTRALIAN ANTHROPOLOGY

Social evolutionary interest in Australia culminated in 1914, when capital cities hosted the British Association for the Advancement of Science meeting. It was a triumph for Baldwin Spencer, one of its organisers. Delegates included his Oxford classmate and Pitt Rivers Museum curator, Henry Balfour, together with R.R. Maret, head of his former college, and Haddon and Rivers, members of the 1898 Cambridge Expedition to Torres Strait. Symbolic of the changing physical and intellectual climate, World War I commenced while the delegates were in Australian waters and Bronislaw Malinowski was aboard the ship, while Radcliffe-Brown attended the congress.80 Peterson notes another significant pointer towards change. The British Association meeting resolved to establish a research committee to advance the teaching of anthropology in Australia, but the war intervened.81

Professional anthropology

The saga of the establishment of the Sydney department is well known and is not reviewed here.82 As Peterson emphasises, the post-war need to administer the complex region of Papua and the Mandated Territory of New Guinea resulted in an emphasis upon the role of anthropology teaching in training administrators. Ethnographic salvage for social science theory formulation, or to record ‘dead’ cultures, no longer provided the sole justification for anthropology. Probably the emerging Functionalist anthropology, which stressed indirect rule, appeared more appropriate to New Guinea control than any Australian application, where salvage remained the habitual goal.

This ambivalent role for anthropology in Australia was exemplified at the 1921 AAAS congress, whose president was Spencer. Resolutions included:83

That there be urged upon the Federal Government the need for endowment of a chair in Anthropology, especially in view of its value in the government of subject races.

and

That there be ... notice of ... the desirability of at once investigating and recording the Ethnology of the northern part of Western Australia.

The same congress inaugurated the Australian National Research Council (ANRC), which took the lead in promoting the cause of anthropology. Agreement eventuated in 1925 to establish a chair at Sydney, when the Commonwealth and State governments consented to contribute the costs of staff and establishment. They did so in the knowledge that the Rockefeller Foundation had promised a massive injection of research funding.

Peterson, who worked in the Rockefeller New York archives, has described the reasons behind this intervention. It developed from a 1923 request to the Foundation from the eugenicist Galton Society to undertake a major study of ‘primitive’ societies.84 This would have concentrated on the human biology of small-scale societies living under situations where genetic natural selection was operating unhindered by medical intervention. Although this Galton Society proposal was not implemented, the Rockefeller Foundation provided an untied sum, with human biology expected to figure prominently in research projects. Between 1926 and 1938, £52,500 was granted, an enormous sum in the Depression era.

Previous discussion in this paper indicates that with Radcliffe-Brown’s appointment to the chair, the Foundation obtained an anthropological collaborator sympathetic to studies in racial eugenics. Those Rockefeller dollars, together with £3000 granted in 1940 by the

81 Peterson 1990.
84 Peterson 1990.
Carnegie Corporation, constituted almost the total anthropological research component in Australia until after World War 2.

A notable exception was Donald Thomson’s Arnhem Land fieldwork in 1935-36, paid for by the Commonwealth government. To that administration, which was lobbied by many interest groups following the deaths of Japanese pearlers and Northern Territory police at the hands of Aborigines, his two expeditions were more in the nature of fact-finding or peace-keeping tokens of interest, rather than academic research. This probably explains why the relatively large expenditure of £3175 was sanctioned.

The Rockefeller funds supported forty-two projects involving thirty researchers or institutions, constituting a virtual honour role of Australasian region anthropologists between the wars. A high proportion of funding was expended in Papua New Guinea, while human biology received a low priority. Those anthropologists whose careers were largely determined or assisted by Rockefeller support included A. Capell, A.P. Elkin, R. Fortune, C. Hart, I. Hogbin, P. Kaberry, U. McConnel, R. Piddington, S.D. Porteus, H. Powdermaker, A. Radcliffe-Brown, L. Sharp, W. Stanner, T. Strehlow, D. Thomson, L. Warner and C. Wedgewood. What biological research was achieved largely involved initiatives by the South Australian Board for Anthropological Research, rather than by grantees centred on Radcliffe-Brown’s (later Elkin’s) department.

It is ironic that Australian cultural life was so moribund in the thirties, and British concern for its Dominion’s cultural well-being so slight, that it was the Carnegie Corporation of New York which sponsored an investigation of Australia’s decaying moveable cultural relics. The recommendations of the critical Report on the Museums and Art Galleries of Australia were ignored by all authorities, then in the forced parsimony of the Depression.

The Foundations continued into post-war Australia as significant patrons of anthropology. Except for the establishment by the Commonwealth government of the Research School of Pacific Studies at the new Australian National University, which embraced research in anthropology, and its recognition of post-war obligations in the South Pacific by funding the training of administrative officers at the Sydney-based Australian School of Pacific Administration, government priorities lay elsewhere. The Carnegie Corporation continued its positive role, when it funded the initial three years of the sub-department of Anthropology, at the University of Western Australia, from 1955. This soon developed into Australia’s second teaching department of anthropology. Between 1956 and 1958, Carnegie funds also funded two research projects, totalling £1800.

For a few years from the late fifties, the Nuffield Foundation supported archaeological research, the grants amounting to several thousand pounds. Most significantly, it was support from the Myer Foundation and the Myer Charity Trust, totalling $78,000 that, in 1964, initiated the landmark ‘Aborigines in Australian Society Project’ of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia. The series of ensuing publications, especially Charles Rowley’s three distinguished volumes of 1970, played a crucial role in the early seventies in alerting non-Aboriginal Australians to Aboriginal deprivation and needs. It also directed historians to the neglected field of Aboriginal history since 1788.

The Rockefeller Foundation

It is evident that the philanthropic Foundations have exerted a profound influence on the growth of Australian anthropological investigation and social knowledge. In a series of

87 Markham and Richards 1933.
critical though repetitious papers, Donald Fisher argues that the subtle 'gatekeeper' functions assumed by the Rockefeller Foundation in particular, have blurred the distinction between academic and intellectual independence on the one hand, and the control of avenues of research and teaching on the other. Fisher argues that the establishment and dominance of functionalist/structure-function anthropology during the inter-war period in the British Commonwealth was assured only because Rockefeller intellectual concerns and finance proved critical. Because Foundation objectives to promote increased efficiency coincided with the 'functional view (which) involved the search for definite laws of social process', Fisher concluded, it implied 'an ideological convergence between the tenets of Social Anthropology and the objectives of Rockefeller philanthropy'.

The extent to which such sweeping and cynical claims are valid, may be evaluated by considering some aspects of Foundation relations with the Sydney department. A case study of the treatment of Ralph Piddington, a departmental graduate and a Rockefeller Fellow is particularly relevant. Before examining that case, however, it is emphasised that, in opposition to Fisher's thesis, the Australian National Research Council files reveal its complete freedom of action from Foundation pressure. The ANRC, advised by an anthropological committee chaired by Radcliffe-Brown (later by A.P. Elkin), administered Rockefeller funds. The only note of censure in correspondence arose when Radcliffe-Brown attempted to act executively without reference to the ANRC. Although so few grants concerned human biology, the original prime purpose of Rockefeller initiative, no reference to this neglect or any rebuke was received from New York.

It is relevant to note Foundation reaction to an ANRC. emergency, when the ANRC Treasurer committed suicide in 1934, after embezzling funds. Fortunately for anthropology, Rockefeller money remained intact, unlike £5000 misappropriated from the Carnegie Corporation. Even so, this episode revealed laxity and unprofessional administration. Instead of criticism, the Foundation advanced £700 in case it was needed in the emergency, and proceeded to unconditionally allocate its funding for the next three years.

On the occasion of the expiry of its funding agreement in 1938, the Foundation sought ANRC reflections on the success of the programme. 'We are interested in knowing whether our assistance has led to the recognition of the importance of continuing activity and if local financing will be sufficient to maintain it', its Director observed.

Although the response to the second query was not encouraging, the Foundation’s note of acceptance was both courteous and understanding, with no indication of disappointment, irritation or warning for lost opportunities, past or future:

It is evident from the record that there was notable achievement in the direction of the two objectives of the Foundation grants ... The Department of Anthropology has certainly become established ... and there is at least a fair prospect of continuance of a limited amount of research in the Western Pacific.

Ralph Piddington and the Rockefeller Foundation

Ralph O'Reilly Piddington (1906-74) graduated from Radcliffe-Brown's Sydney department. After completing his Master's degree he was awarded a Rockefeller Fellowship by the ANRC to work amongst the Aborigines in the Broome area of northwestern

---

88 Fisher 1980a, b; 1983; 1986.
89 Fisher 1980a; 1986, p. 5-8.
90 ANRC papers, NLA, MS 482, box 61/855, 24 July 1930.
92 Walker to A.B. Walkom, 10 Mar, 12 July 1938 (ibid).
Australia. He completed two fieldwork seasons during 1930 and 1931, for which the quality of his research was commended by senior anthropologists. On 14 January 1932, the Sydney newspaper, *The World*, published an interview with Piddington, under the headline ‘Aborigines on cattle stations are in slavery’. In his stinging attack, Piddington cited specific instances of gross racial discrimination and urged a government inquiry into the conditions of Aborigines across northern Australia. These accusations were reported in the overseas press and excited some interest amongst humanitarian welfare organisations.

In the same newspaper, on 7 July 1932, Piddington published a signed column-length article, detailing actions by police and pastoralists and labelling the Western Australian government as ‘callously indifferent’, that State as a ‘plague spot of European oppression’, and the affair ‘a national disgrace’. With the knowledge of hindsight of Kimberley racial history and of the details which Piddington later supplied to the ANRC in his defence, there is little doubt that he spoke the truth, tinged perhaps with the rash emotionalism of youth.

Whatever the merits of his claims, the wrath of the Western Australian Chief Protector of Aborigines, A.O. Neville, was visited upon him, via the ANRC. Neville was in an ideal position to complain, because he was a member of the ANRC anthropology committee on Rockefeller funding awards. Piddington was in London by the time of Neville’s delayed accusations. Raymond Firth, as acting-head of Sydney’s anthropology department (following Radcliffe-Brown’s translation to Chicago), wrote sternly to Piddington on 8 September 1932.93

The matter is serious, especially since Mr Neville informs me that you would not be welcome should you think of returning ... for further work, and any other anthropologist will be asked in future to give an assurance that he will not make statements reflecting against the administration without first giving the administration an opportunity of refuting or investigating these charges.

Piddington delayed his sturdy and detailed response until 17 July 1933, because he wished to discuss matters in person with Firth, who was going to London in 1933. He detailed incidents and individuals behind his general newspaper denunciation, emphasising that his attack was not directed upon Neville’s under-funded Department of Aborigines, but ‘upon the general attitude of white people to Aborigines’; besides, he had informed Neville of many injustices previously, and in person.

This did not satisfy the ANRC council, whose secretary, A.J. Gibson, informed Piddington on 23 December 1933, that ‘failing a satisfactory explanation’, further funding would be terminated. It must be inferred from a previous letter from Gibson to A.P. Elkin, Firth’s successor as chairman of the anthropology advisory committee, that Elkin agreed with this action. By that date, also, the Western Australian department belatedly furnished the ANRC council with its slate of accusations concerning Piddington’s behaviour in the field.

This dossier had been assembled from reports by local officials and makes intolerant reading today.94 Piddington was observed to drive female Aborigines in his vehicle; he was seen to transport liquor; he was ‘said to be addicted to drink’; he took informants away without consulting authorities; his conduct was ‘hardly in keeping with the position he held’. Generally the tenor of those accusations was petty. For any Broome resident of those times to criticise alcohol consumption was sheer hypocrisy. It also revealed complete ignorance of the nature of anthropological fieldwork, while incidentally illuminating local

93 ANRC papers, NLA, *MS 482*, box 61/859A. Unless otherwise stated, all documents relating to Piddington are included in this file.

94 Various documents are in ANRC box 61/589A, together with other material in *MS 482*, boxes 22/300 and 45/762.
racial attitudes towards Aboriginal people. One witness even seemed critical that Piddington travelled with his wife. However, his most heinous offence, commented on by two officials, was Piddington’s presence in Broome ‘at a convivial evening when the Red Flag and Communist songs were sung’.

On 23 December 1933, Gibson also wrote to E.E. Day, at New York Rockefeller Foundation headquarters, informing him in more temperate terms than his letter of that day to Piddington, of the intended withdrawal of support by the ANRC (As the ANRC previously had commended Piddington’s two field seasons to the Foundation, Gibson needed to be diplomatic.)

If Fisher’s thesis is valid, that the Rockefeller Foundation subtly promoted conservative, capitalist values, the ANRC termination of Piddington’s support should have been commended. The reverse is the case. On 31 January 1934, S. May, Assistant-Director of the Rockefeller Foundation, wrote a lengthy letter to A.J. Gibson, with a copy to Piddington.

May observed sagely that they were concerned with the charges against Piddington for several reasons. In the first place, he had been praised by experts for the quality of his research and there had been a considerable investment in the expectation of his succeeding in a professional career. As Piddington had made public criticisms concerning the treatment of Aborigines, ‘there would seem to be a reasonable doubt of the objectivity of those who prefer the charges against him, since they would appear to be officials who might have been irked by ... criticism’. Those accusations were levelled only months after Piddington’s newspaper articles, and claims of drunkenness rested upon ‘hearsay’. As for the Red Flag, ‘it would not seem to us that the fact that Mr Piddington was heard to have sung Communist songs with a group of friends was conclusive evidence that he is a Communist; but, in any event, the Foundation does not inquire into political opinions of fellowship applicants’. In the opinion of the Foundation, therefore, the charges ‘would not constitute a valid ground’ for terminating Piddington’s fellowship. Therefore May suggested that the ANRC consider the matter further, in the light of Piddington’s response to the accusations.

Although the ANRC and its anthropological advisors remained unforgiving, they were thrown into confusion when, on 24 May 1934, Piddington wrote refuting the accusations and notifying his wish to resume fieldwork. The file contains a lengthy exchange of letters between officials and the Foundation, seeking some alternative arrangement, such as Piddington remaining in England. Gibson informed May on 4 July 1934, that the ANRC was adamant that Piddington could not return to Western Australia, because ‘it is not possible to ignore the representation of an official of Mr Neville’s standing’, who also sat on their advisory committee.

How valuable was Neville’s opinion? He was a dedicated but overworked public servant, not an anthropologist.95 Like many later Aboriginal affairs administrators, he was prone to take attacks on government policy as personal criticism, and he probably felt jealous of the opportunities afforded young researchers unavailable to himself. Neville’s stated mission was to ‘breed-out’ the black population.96 Miscegenation was the ultimate solution, he proclaimed, believing that ‘atavism is not in evidence so far as colour is concerned. Eliminate in future the full-blood and the white and one blend will remain ... the race will become white’. An eastern Aboriginal leader described the policy of his department as ‘out Hitlering Hitler’.97 The extent of his authoritarian eugenic scientism

---

95 Jacobs 1986.
96 ibid, pp.16-17.
was expounded at length some years later in his book *Australia’s Coloured Minority*. ‘The native must be helped in spite of himself!’, Neville announced,⁹⁸ ‘Even if a measure of discipline is necessary it must be applied, but it can be applied in such a way as to appear to be gentle persuasion ... the end in view will justify the means employed’.

ANRC secretary Gibson already had revealed his prejudices on 16 May 1934, in a letter to Professor D. Copland, Rockefeller Fellows Adviser in Australia. He drew attention to an item in Mr and Mrs Piddington’s Perth hotel expenses during a week’s stay in 1931. At the time Piddington had submitted that account, he stated that he did not expect such personal items to be charges against his grant. Notwithstanding, Gibson primly observed with hindsight, that the ‘liquors’ account for £5/13/3, ‘seems to lend some colour to the charges’ of excessive drinking in Broome.

Copland obviously felt uncomfortable as the intermediary and requested that the entire Piddington file be sent to him. He reported on 3 September that he had heard that Piddington was ‘discouraged’ and felt that it was pointless to return to certain unemployment. Copland hinted that he hoped for some compromise advice which he could present to the Foundation, offering a ‘view of the situation rather more favourable’ to Piddington.

The file was then handed to Elkin for advice, as chairman of the anthropology committee. Elkin’s counsel was both expedient and intellectually authoritarian. Having read the correspondence, Elkin concluded on 18 September 1934, ‘and it may be that, for the sake of the Rockefeller Foundation ... we should give Piddington a grant ...’ He then stated the terms. Any return to Western Australia was impossible, even though Piddington had offered to submit any criticisms to Neville before their publication—‘after all, we have to consider Neville who has helped us considerably with research work in Western Australia’. (The ‘us’ in this case probably should have read ‘me’, because Elkin had established friendly contact with Neville since his own 1928 Kimberley research.) Elkin suggested sending Piddington somewhere else in northern Australia, but only if he studied social anthropology. Here Elkin’s prejudices showed. He had heard that in England, Piddington’s ‘interest had been transferred to an aspect of Psychology. I, personally, could not recommend that a field worker should be sent to do Psychology, for I do not think that the expenses involved in Professor Porteus’ expedition and Piddington’s second expedition were justified’. (S.D. Porteus worked under Rockefeller auspices in 1929. Before Piddington’s second expedition he spent some time in Porteus’ department at the University of Hawaii, studying racial psychology.)

Less inflexible than Elkin’s committee, and concerned for Piddington’s welfare, the Rockefeller Foundation finally abandoned Piddington’s Australian cause and arranged for him to remain in London and to prepare for fieldwork in Africa. When conveying this welcome news to Gibson on 19 November 1934, almost three years after Piddington’s offending newspaper interview, Copland reminded the ANRC that such eminent authorities as Malinowski, Firth, Seligman and Westermann all expressed ‘entire satisfaction’ with Piddington’s research. Indeed, he remained in their London School of Economics, completing his doctorate in 1938. Undeterred, by Copland’s implicit rebuke, Gibson responded by thanking Copland on 10 December, because his news ‘relieves my Executive of a good deal of worry ... by the departure of Piddington for fresh fields, in a new continent’.

Except for service during World War II, Piddington only returned to his native land in 1967, when he revisited his former research area, on a grant from the Australian Institute of

---

⁹⁸ Neville 1947, p. 81.
Aboriginal Studies. In retrospect, his treatment appears as possibly the first of several blatant denials of academic (and civil) freedom to anthropologists. Other important but unstudied cases meriting investigation concern Donald Thomson's exclusion from Cape York, apparently at the instigation of missionary authorities during the fifties, and the Commonwealth administration's refusal to permit Fred Rose to enter Arnhem Land a decade later. Each case has involved a government instrumentally acting in concert with the often sympathetic collaboration of the relevant timid or politicised academic establishment. In this instance the Rockefeller Foundation showed tolerance, generosity and restraint, while the Australian administrators of Foundation largesse based their case on hearsay and the influence of a self-interested public servant, placing academic considerations on the lowest level.

As the newly appointed head of Australia's only anthropology department, A.P. Elkin revealed himself to be an adviser whose concept of anthropology was narrowly defined and who was willing to be guided by expediency. Just as he eliminated psychological anthropology from the 'true way' of social anthropology (and continued to do so), he also treated research by South Australians on various biological and material culture fields with a dismissive and unhelpful approach. From the author's experience of conditions and researchers during the forties and fifties, it is evident that Elkin frequently hindered research by any but those in, or from, his own department.

Such possibly uncharitable observations explain, to some extent, the slow growth of anthropology in other centres. They neither explain the cultural apathy which characterised white Australian attitudes to the indigenous people, nor excuse the harsh paternalist and Eurocentric policies adopted by State and Federal Aboriginal 'welfare' bureaucracies during this same stark period.

To the present

Anthropology in Australia originated with the dedication and financial sacrifices of a few persons imbued with the urgency of salvaging past evidence for the future. The development of significant fieldwork in Australia and New Guinea between the wars was the consequence of Rockefeller benefaction. Through the forties to the sixties, substantial contributions flowed from the Carnegie Corporation and the Nuffield Foundation. It is evident that research until the sixties resulted from American and some British capital. Only in the sixties did local Foundations capital provide some funding. Government contributions to genuine anthropological research proved rare indeed. It is worth noting that while the Commonwealth government appointed two staff anthropologists to the Papua New Guinean administration between the wars, no comparable appointments occurred in Australia. There was one exception, when E.W.P. Chinnery, a former New Guinea government anthropologist, was appointed Director of Native Affairs in the Northern Territory in mid-1939. The potential of that appointment was unrealised, as the outbreak of war followed and swept aside any good intentions. It is evident that State administrations variously appointed Commissioners or Directors of Native Affairs, or Chief Protectors of Aborigines. Such titles disguise, however, the reality that such officials simply were public servants appointed to implement policy. Their departments did not undertake independent research into cultural matters, economic needs or social means. Frequently they were ignorant of anthropology, and were unsympathetic to the problems of Aboriginal culture and were untrained to cope with special requirements.

99 Discussed in Mulvaney 1988, p. 211.
The critical change in Australian attitudes belongs to the late 1950's, probably associated with the booming economy and expanding population. The Murray Commission into university needs resulted in a massive expansion of universities from seven to nineteen in about fifteen years from 1960. Some of these institutions adopted anthropology as a priority for teaching. The decade from 1957, when the author introduced the first teaching of Oceanic and Australian prehistory in a university, witnessed some 25,000 years added to Australia's human past by archaeologists, and the growth of environmental, and ecological studies in relation to human settlement. Australian and Melanesian discoveries today place this region in the forefront of the global history of Homo sapiens.

In 1959, a Liberal Party member of the House of Representatives, W.C. Wentworth, proposed the creation of an Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. Like Howitt seventy years before him, Wentworth stressed the theme of urgent salvage. The Act establishing the AIAS in 1964 represents a cultural benchmark, because its budget supported comprehensive research across a broad spectrum. Only since then, have major projects resumed on a scale surpassing the Rockefeller programme over thirty years previously. Between 1965 and 1975 every State enacted (although inadequately implemented) legislation to protect Aboriginal sites and relics.

More significant, however, was the growth of Aboriginality from the late sixties. This is a fundamental cultural revival and identity search, so that by the end of this century Aboriginal anthropologists should be undertaking their own major research. The challenge to all governments and to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians, is to ensure that research and teaching funding in anthropology is adequate, and it is undertaken in an ambient cultural environment in which the urgency of salvage and the rivalry of self-interest are no longer the motivating forces, where interracial harmony and mutual respect have replaced them.

**LIST OF REFERENCES**

Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science 1913, 'Section F, Reports of Research Committees', *Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science Reports of Meetings*, vol. 14, pp. 448-53.

Australian National Research Council, Papers, National Library of Australia, Canberra.

Barnard, J. 1890, 'The Aborigines of Tasmania', *Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science Reports of Meetings*, vol. 2, pp. 597-611.


Cooper, C. 1990, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collections in Overseas Museums*, Canberra.


---

100 Mulvaney 1986.
AUSTRALIAN ANTHROPOLOGY


Fison Papers, National Library of Australia, MS 7080, Canberra.


Freud, S. 1913, Totem and Taboo, London.


_____ 1841, Journals of Two Expeditions of Discovery, 2 vols, London.


Hartland, E.S. 1909, Primitive Paternity, London.


_____ 1989a, Encounters in place: Outsiders and Aboriginal Australian 1606-1985, St. Lucia, Qld.


ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1993 17:2

Peterson, N. 1983, Donald Thomson in Arnhem Land, South Yarra, Vic.
Roth, W.E. 1897, Ethnological Studies among the North-West-Central Queensland Aborigines, Brisbane.
Rowley, C.D. 1907 a, Outcasts in White Australia, Canberra.
_____ The Remote Aborigines, Canberra.
_____ 1913, 'Preliminary report on the Aboriginals of the Northern Territory', Bulletin of the Northern Territory, no. 76, Department of External Affairs, Melbourne.
_____ 1914, The Native Tribes of the Northern Territory, London.
Taplin, G. 1874, The Narrinyeri ... Adelaide.
_____ 1879, Folklore, Manners, Customs and Languages of the South Australian Aborigines, Adelaide.
Thomas, N.W. 1906, Kinship Organisations and Group Marriage in Australia, Cambridge.
Tippet collection, St Marks National Theological Centre, Canberra - Fison papers.
_____ 1909, Les Rites de Passage, Paris.
Victoria, Royal Commission on the Aborigines 1877, Report of the Commissioners to Enquire into the present Condition of the Aborigines of the Colony ... Govt pr, Melbourne.
In 1982 Laurie Parkes and Diane Barwick announced the beginning of a national Aboriginal biographical register at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. The register (to become known later as the Aboriginal Biographical Index) was intended to be an important record of the achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and a much needed resource for family and community history research. In 1982 the Index comprised 1,100 card entries recording biographical information about individuals and families.

The Index was established in the Library by Laurie Parkes and Diane Barwick, with special funding by the Institute's Council. Its development was continued by Diane Barwick whose systematic searches of the Library's resources resulted in a total of 12,000 card entries in the Index by the time of her death in 1986. With further support from Council, work on the Index was continued by Diane Smith who, in 1990, reported to Council that the Index held 20,164 records of biographical information relating to 14,392 people. By December, 1992, there were more than 31,000 entries on cards and a computer database, relating to approximately 21,000 individuals and families.

The Aboriginal Biographical Index includes biographical information extracted from published sources within the Library. Owing to the extent of this information, only a very small proportion of sources has been searched and indexed to date. Work has focused on publications of greatest biographical interest, particularly reports by government administrators of Aboriginal affairs, and magazines published by such bodies as the NSW Aborigines Welfare Board and church missions. Such publications contain a wealth of information that is not easy to access without some kind of index of names. They also belong to a period in Australian history that witnessed the taking of children from their parents and families - the very people who are now using the Index to further their family history research.

In 1991 the Council of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies agreed to a proposal that the current researcher give high priority to the integration of biographical information held in the Library's special collections of films, audiotapes, and pictures. My work in 1992/93 is to begin this process with the Pictorial Collection, using my experience as acting curator of the Collection in 1991.

Between April and December 1992, just over one quarter of the biographical information stored in the Pictorial Collection was transferred to the Aboriginal Biographical Index by systematic examination of each photographic collection within the Pictorial Library. Non-restricted biographical information is extracted from caption lists accompanying the collections and is transferred directly onto the Index's database. This central point of access to the Library's resources has streamlined biographical searches considerably.

Ronda Wie was the Aboriginal Biographical Index research officer in the Library of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies until June 1993. She now lives in Darwin.

1 Parkes & Barwick 1982.
The Aboriginal Biographical Index is heavily used by a range of researchers including AIATSIS staff (particularly in relation to the forthcoming Encyclopedia of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia), family history researchers and authors. Recently the ACT Department of Land, Environment and Planning searched the Index for names of prominent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people before assigning street names to two new suburbs in Canberra. Requests for information also come through organisations acting on behalf of individuals, such as Link-Up, the education unit at Goulburn Gaol and various offices of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

As well as requesting information by telephone or mail, researchers are welcome to visit the Library to use the card index themselves or obtain a printout from an online search of the database. Many family history researchers use the Index as the first step in their search. They may then be directed to other organisations, such as church or government archives, and advised on how to apply for access to these records.

Other aids to researchers have resulted from work for the Index. Thesauri of personal and community names have been maintained to include variations in spelling and changes in choice of names over time. A geographic register lists information sources for local areas. These may be titles of publications, such as *Land Rights News* (NT) or *Torres Strait Islander Monthly*, or names and addresses of local organisations.

It is hoped that continued funding will support expansion of the Aboriginal Biographical Index to incorporate other sources of accessible, non-restricted biographical information in the AIATSIS Library. Because of Australia's history over the past two hundred years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from all over the country will always be searching for their family histories. The Aboriginal Biographical Index has already been found to be invaluable through its centralisation and integration of biographical information from all the states and territories in supporting that search.

**REFERENCE**

Parkes, Laurie & Barwick, Diane 1982, 'Beginning a national Aboriginal biographical register at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies', *Aboriginal History*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 135-39.
LETTER TO THE EDITOR

PO Box 93
BRAIDWOOD 2622
8 January 1993

The Editor

Aboriginal History
Australian National University, Canberra

Dear Editor

Now that the proposal for an Aboriginal Treaty is once again in the air, after the hiatus under the Hawke government and its reneging on Aboriginal land rights, and the result of the Mabo Case in 1992, it seems time to clarify for a new historical generation the respective roles of the National Aboriginal Conference (as it then was) and the white-organised Aboriginal Treaty Committee. Confusions are arising on both roles (see e.g. Dr Veronica Brady's review of my own *Born of the Conquerors*, in *Overland Magazine*, December 1992, where Dr Brady implies that the term 'Makarrata' was 'forced upon' the Aboriginal Treaty Committee, and other misinterpretations.)

It becomes worth while to recall the events of 1979 and later years, to elucidate the respective roles of the NAC and the Aboriginal Treaty Committee and their raison d'être.

As I outlined in the book *We Call for a Treaty* (Collins/Fontana 1985) the Aboriginal Treaty Committee was formed in April 1979, under the chairmanship of Dr H.C. Coombs, its object being to press for a properly negotiated Treaty acceptable to both Aborigines and the white community. Almost at the same time, the then governmental advisory Aboriginal body, the National Aboriginal Conference, demanded a treaty between the Federal government and Aborigines as a nation. This demand followed on a much earlier demand by the Larrakia people of the Northern Territory, in March 1972, concurrently with the establishment of the first Aboriginal Embassy on the lawns of Parliament House.

The NAC's demand followed on the defeat in the High Court of the so-called Coe Case, brought by Paul Coe, seeking 'declarations and relief' on behalf of the Aboriginal people of Australia 'in respect of the occupation, settlement and continuing dealing in the lands comprising the Australian continent' by the Australian government and the United Kingdom and asserting 'the sovereignty as a nation of the Aboriginal people'.

Much could be said of the role of former members of the Council for Aboriginal Affairs, set up by Prime Minister Holt, in these moves. Nugget Coombs, who chaired the ATC, brought to it long experience of the problems and difficulties of the issue and a deep sympathy with Aborigines; Professor Bill Stanner did the same though his term with the ATC was short, ending with his death in 1981. Their joint experience made them wary of any involvement with government and its instrumentalities, and the Committee, made up of private people on a voluntary basis, determined from the beginning that it would rely for all its funding on voluntary donations and its own fund-raising efforts. An impression seems to have taken hold that it was in fact a side-arm of the Federal government. However, no money was ever offered to it from any government or industry and indeed the Committee would almost certainly have refused any such offer. It operated throughout as an entirely voluntary organisation.

The word 'treaty' was adopted from the first as being the only term appropriate to dealings binding in national and international law between the white occupants of Australia and the country's original owners, who had never made any agreement or admission of any right of ownership by the European occupiers. This tallied with the wording of the
right of ownership by the European occupiers. This tallied with the wording of the Australian Constitution on the deprivation of property of any citizen of Australia, and the right of compensation for such deprivation.

The National Aboriginal Conference, however, as an advisory body, was funded by the Australian Government, insofar as it had any funding at all. It made no pretence on its own behalf of being truly representative of Aboriginal opinion; but it was the only Aboriginal body then able to organise discussion with the Federal government and with the wider Aboriginal and Islander communities.

It was in November 1979 that Senator Chaney, the then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, announced that he 'welcomed the initiative' the NAC had taken with respect to 'a proposed national agreement between Aborigines and the Commonwealth.' But the proposed agreement would be titled, not a Treaty, but a 'Makarrata'. This word, from the Yolngu language, was said to have been suggested by a Yolngu member of the NAC under some Ministerial pressure, and to mean 'the end of a dispute between communities and the resumption of normal relations.'

Apart from the fact that word seemed remarkably inaccurate as applied to the 'dispute' between Aborigines and the white community, it seemed to ATC to be an attempt to sidestep the word 'treaty' as a binding formulation, on insufficient grounds.

The word, as no doubt the Minister intended, was immediately popular with the media. The Committee itself, however, never accepted or used it to describe the proposed instrument which would cover the whole of Aboriginal and Islander Australia, and certainly not as a word acceptable at the level of negotiation between nations. Its meaning was never fully explained, there was controversy as to its implications, and the Minister's intention in using it seemed at least suspect.

Our view was confirmed immediately by the reaction of Aborigines themselves and their organisations. The Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, for instance, expressed suspicion of the motivation of the Federal government in imposing the word, and of the setting up of a sub-committee of the NAC to tour Australia discussing the idea of a 'Makarrata' with Aboriginal groups. The funding provided to the committee for the purpose was laughably inadequate. (A fuller treatment of the subject can be found in the chapter headed 'Treaty or Makarrata?' in my book written for the ATC, whose text was approved by the committee's members.) In fact, the ATC never used the word to describe its proposals, either in correspondence or in statements for the media; and both we and the sister organisation, the Treaty Committee in Townsville, discouraged its use as far as we could, among the general public and in the media.

This clarification should be enough to dissociate the ATC from attempts to portray it as an arm of government policy - policy which, throughout the Committee's existence, was never such as to generate any confidence in the purity of its intentions. When the Committee closed its operation in 1983, it did so because the Hawke government's pre-election promises to Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders were so generous that it was unlikely that it could continue to function on donations from the public, at least at the level which had been maintained before the Hawke government took office.

Yours sincerely

Judith Wright McKinney
(formerly secretary to the Aboriginal Treaty Committee from 1980 to 1983, and author of the book We Call for a Treaty)
A radical Aboriginal Christian, I shall call her Ruth, came to see me to discuss her postgraduate research. Almost immediately her eyes fell upon my copy of One Blood which was on my study table. This was not surprising as it is almost 1,000 pages long, 5\(\frac{1}{2}\) centimetres thick, and has one of the most attractive covers I have seen, an original painting by the extraordinarily talented Sally Morgan. Ruth bristled at the sight of it and labelled it emphatically 'rubbish'.

Although I had not read it all at that time, I felt somewhat embarrassed that I had missed this unmistakable quality. Apparently, according to Ruth, John Harris was simply excusing the inexcusable actions of the early missionaries. He was letting them off too lightly.

After filing her response away in my mind for this future reference, we discussed her project. She wanted to come to an understanding of why the early missionaries had acted in such a racist, paternalistic way. She requested some direction to prime sources, so I suggested mission records, diaries, journals, reminiscences, newspapers etc., the various repositories I was aware of and the guides to their holdings. I began to think I was making it sound too daunting for someone just starting a research project. Then, it hit me. Surely, the first port of call would be One Blood, Part A, 'Nineteenth century: Aboriginal missions extend west, south and north'. The inescapable quality of rubbishness was again referred to.

'But, surely,' I said, 'whether you agree with him or not, he has narrated their exploits and described, discussed and copiously referenced the people you are interested in.'

Actually, I thought his analysis of racial attitudes of the missionaries and the culture that spawned them was one of the best and most thorough I had come across.

Ruth agreed that it might be useful after all, even if only to reveal where the treasure was buried.

I first discussed One Blood with a colleague who was also trying to understand 'what made them [nineteenth century missionaries] tick'. He also thought John Harris protested the case of the missionaries too much; that he was trying to excuse them for their cruel acts and past destructiveness of Aboriginal society, for the personal harshness and cruelty they sometimes exhibited. At that stage I hadn't opened my copy. Certainly, Harris doesn't emphasise those aspects of missionary life that fascinated my colleague. Nor, I think, does he ignore them. In fact, his analysis of missionary attitudes and the institutional responses reveal the historical dead weights the Christian churches had loaded on themselves.

It may be useful at this point to look at Harris' analysis of the Anglican Church's most

---

Dr Loos is Associate Professor in the Department of History and Politics, James Cook University of North Queensland.

---

1 Harris 1990.
famous missionary to the Aborigines, Ernest Gribble. His conclusion is succinct and accurate: 'Ernest Gribble will always remain a paradox, both praised and criticised, revered and denounced'.\(^2\) Harris emphasises how reluctant Ernest Gribble was to become a missionary to Aborigines when asked by his ill and dying father to take over the newly established Yarrabah Mission. He had accompanied his father, John Brown Gribble, to found the Warangesda Mission on the Murrumbidgee River in New South Wales and another on the Gascoyne River in Western Australia. J.B. Gribble had exposed the settlers' callousness towards Western Australia's Aborigines, drawn down on himself the wrath of the colonial establishment and was eventually rejected by the Western Australian church.

While describing Gribble's work at Yarrabah, Harris notes: "Like nearly all missionaries of his era, Gribble did not have a high regard for traditional Aboriginal culture".\(^3\) He points out "[Gribble] was not afraid to use physical punishment ... that he resorted to the use of fists or stockwhip mostly in response to abuse of women".\(^4\) Of Gribble's work at Forrest River Mission (now Oombulgurri), Harris remarked:

For fourteen years, Gribble administered the Forrest River Mission with autocratic paternalism. ... Believing, not without reason, that the mission provided the only hope for the Aboriginal people, Gribble insisted even more sternly upon adherence to the disciplined mission life. He used physical punishment more frequently than before, desperately trying to realise his dream for the people, to make the mission their refuge and their home ... Elkin found Gribble to be an angry despot ... 'Gribble thought his job was to turn them into British subjects and salute the flag every morning,' wrote Elkin, 'It was a sad picture. ... There is too much repression', Elkin wrote, 'and I regret to say, a little terrifying in the attitude taken up inside the mission towards the inmates'. ... Like his father, John Brown Gribble, Ernest Gribble was a complex and difficult man. He was most difficult, however, to those who sought to harm Aboriginal people, and his anger at their mistreatment drove him to his obsession with isolating and protecting them.\(^5\)

Reading the above comments on Ernest Gribble in isolation from the rest of the text, you could hardly conclude that John Harris was trying to minimise the negative aspects of Gribble's personality and actions as Chaplain-Superintendent. I have included some examples in the above extract of Harris' putting Gribble's actions into an understanding context. Yet these are minor qualifications for the overall picture of Gribble that emerges is a very flattering one, with at times a tinge of the triumphalism that is so common in missionary literature:

In Christian terms, there was exceptionally sound and rapid spiritual progress in the first few years of Yarrabah mission ... Many were baptised in the first few years of the mission. As early as 1896, nine Yarrabah Aboriginal people ... were confirmed ... The nine confirmees were given responsibilities at Yarrabah. It was one of the strengths of Yarrabah that Christian leadership was encouraged much earlier than at most missions. Although their authority derived from Gribble's recognised authority, it was nevertheless real leadership.\(^6\)

---

\(^2\) ibid., p. 518.
\(^3\) ibid., p. 509.
\(^4\) ibid., p. 510.
\(^5\) ibid., p. 513, p. 516, p. 517.
\(^6\) ibid., p. 507, p. 508.
The above facts are true but they raise a number of unexplored questions. For example, do baptisms and confirmations measure 'sound and rapid spiritual progress' especially when they have been achieved in such a short time? My sympathy goes out to John Harris for I have confronted, not very successfully, the same question. From the present historical perspective such spiritual progress looks like conforming to missionary expectations; yet some of these early converts would soon venture out to endure unknown hardships as missionary explorers in assisting Gribble and Bishop Gilbert White establish Mitchell River Mission on the other side of Cape York Peninsula. Is that a better measuring stick? There may be more than a little truth in Tariq Ali's recent assertion that conversions to religious faiths and to other ideologies result not from personal conviction but for more material reasons. In certain settings he believed it was difficult to oppose pressures that were exerted. Born again Christians will no doubt enthusiastically endorse this view. Yet the process of conversion Tariq Ali suggests as the norm may still result in sincere commitment and a way of life that is consistent with the teachings of that faith or ideology. Perhaps such behavioural changes can lead to the cognitive changes and the personal commitment Tariq Ali apparently saw as initially absent. Whiteman's study of 'people movement' using Barnett's model of innovation, as modified by Tippett, may have a lot to tell us of the conversion process, especially about the function of exposure to the new ideas and behaviour over time, the role of the missionary as advocate of change, and the role significant others in challenging the old gods and acting as innovating catalysts within their culture. In the Elcho Island Revival movement beginning in the late 1970s, Djiniyini Gondarra himself, has, perhaps, quietly challenged the old gods by suggesting that Aboriginal Christians will modify or reject some old beliefs and practices they come to see as incompatible with Christianity.

The tone of triumphalism derives also from extracts from Gribble's three books. He was no shrinking violet when it came to discussing his work with Aboriginal people. The paradox of this dedicated, remarkable man remains. Paul Smith's honours thesis was on Gribble's Yarrabah years; Christine Halse is completing an autobiography of Ernest Gribble; Neville Green has written extensively of Gribble's Forrest River Mission years in his Masters and, I understand his doctoral thesis; I have written of Gribble's role in the Anglican Australian Board of Missions (ABM) which supported his work as Chaplain-Superintendent at Yarrabah and Forrest River, and as Chaplain at the Palm Island Queensland Government settlement. Daniel Craig also wrote extensively on Gribble in his doctoral study of Yarrabah. Finally, Randolph Stow used Gribble as the model for Heriot in his brilliant novel, To the Islands. The image of Gribble that emerges from each study is different, sometimes remarkably so. All of us, with the possible exception of Stow, used the relevant ABM Archival material. We have all waded through the voluminous Gribble Papers.

It is of course trite today to point to the subjectivity of the historical process. The different responses I have indicated to the life of Ernest Gribble simply illustrate this. The historian takes into the task certain values and interests, focuses on data relevant to these,
and develops his/her theme. Harris makes it very clear\textsuperscript{12} that he is writing from a Christian perspective even when he is critical of the methods used:

My Christian belief is that it was the duty of the Christian church to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to Aboriginal people. Not only have I recorded how the church did that, but also, where necessary, I have criticised the manner in which it was brought - even, occasionally, questioned whether what was being brought was the Gospel at all.

Harris' parents, like Gribble's, were missionaries to the Aborigines and he grew up as a child on Aboriginal missions. The first words in the book are: 'I have been writing this book for most of my life'.\textsuperscript{13} It is not surprising that Harris focuses on what he perceives as the positive contributions the various Christian churches have made to Aboriginal people.

Of the growing number of books dealing with Aboriginal mission history, there are three, I think, which deserve special comment: \textit{One Blood; Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions}, edited by Tony Swain and Deborah Bird Rose; and \textit{Series of Reflections of Aboriginal Theology}, by Djiniyini Gondarra.\textsuperscript{14} Harris provides a two hundred year sweep of Christian missions from the ethnocentric, inadequately conceived and resourced efforts of the early nineteenth century to the more enlightened attempts in recent years to work in partnership with Aboriginal Christians. Swain and Rose solicited contributions from writers in the field interested in making an analysis of the missionary situation from ethnographic or historical perspectives. Consequently there are articles from such disciplines as history, anthropology, linguistics, and religious studies, some from Christians who have worked on missions or been associated with them. The Christian contributors are understandably, like Harris in \textit{One Blood}, often often quite critical of past mission practices. The focus of the contributions varies greatly of course, but the quality is remarkably high throughout. I will choose three as examples. Kenelm Burridge's 'Aborigines and Christianity: An Overview'\textsuperscript{15} is a sophisticated global study of the subject which I found especially valuable. Bob Tonkinson revisits Jigalong, the scene of his earlier triumph, to review his analysis with admirable, academic integrity;\textsuperscript{16} and John Taylor walks confidently in the footsteps of Lauriston Sharp in his analysis of the Aboriginal response at Edward River to recent (post 1938) missionary activity.\textsuperscript{17} It really can't be called intrusion here as Wik-Munkan and Thaiore people asked the Anglicans at nearby Mitchell River for a mission to be established in their country. They were fortunate to get Joseph William (Chappie) Chapman, one of the most endearing characters in Australian mission history. I found especially fascinating Taylor's analysis of how the first generation of Aboriginal Christians came to understand the Christian faith, values, personalities and practices, a process he explores at greater length in his fine doctoral thesis.\textsuperscript{18} The new wine was not being poured into empty wineskins. It mixed with the grand old wine of Aboriginal religious belief. Understandably the new ideology was fitted into the existing Aboriginal world picture and conceptualised in terms that made it meaningful to the first generation of Aboriginal Christians, some of whom are still living at Pormpuraaw, as Edward River Mission is now called. These are just three examples of the 33 articles in this valuable book.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} Harris 1990, pp. 9-10.
\item \textsuperscript{13} ibid., p. 9.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Djiniyini Gondarra 1986; Swain & Rose 1988.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Swain & Rose 1988, pp. 18-29.
\item \textsuperscript{16} ibid., pp. 60-73.
\item \textsuperscript{17} ibid., pp. 438-51.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Taylor 1984.
\end{itemize}
Djniyiny Gondarra's book has 'Let My People Go' emblazoned on the cover and I think this would have been a much better title. It is really a 35 page pamphlet containing four theological reflections on Aboriginal theology. Yet, in many ways, it is the most surprising of the three. Djniyiny was for seven years an ordained Uniting Church minister to his own people at Galiwin'ku (Elcho Island) and for two years a lecturer at Nungalinya College in Darwin before being appointed the first Aboriginal Moderator in the Uniting Church. Inevitably, for Djniyiny with his zeal for holistic evangelism, Aboriginal theology reflects on mission history, the place of Aborigines in Australian society and the issues confronting Aborigines today, such as 'housing, employment, training, community development, land rights, health and youth work'.

Djniyiny studied theology in Papua New Guinea and has been influenced by third world theologians such as the African, Charles Nyamites. His holistic evangelism demands an identification with the poor and oppressed. He likens the Noonkanbah oil explorations in sacred Aboriginal sites to a bulldozer's crushing of the Ark of the Covenant in Old Testament times in the holiest of holy places in the temple in Jerusalem. And he quotes enthusiastically Kath Walker's poem, 'Aboriginal Charter of Rights', which contains the lines:

Give us Christ, not crucifixion.
Though baptised and blessed and Bibled
We are still tabooed and libelled.
You devout Salvation-sellers,
Make us neighbours, not fringe dwellers;
Make us mates, not poor relations,
Citizens not serfs on stations.

He notes:

As Aboriginal Christians in Australia, we have adopted nearly all of the customs and ways of life of the early missionaries. This is very sad indeed, but the early missionaries in North Australia have been very successful in convincing the people that our ways of life, our culture and beliefs were seen as pagan, bad to be linked with the Christian faith. This is very damaging ...

Essentially Djniyiny sees Christianity as the fulfilment of Aboriginal religion which he regards as equivalent to the Old Testament. In this book he explores with profound simplicity the Aboriginal Christianity of sacred sites, totemism, Aboriginal spirituality, and the Aboriginal contextualisation of religious expression. To his Aboriginal readers he stresses the defects not only of mission Christianity but also of contemporary western society and values, including its theology with its emphasis on individualism and rationalism. This is a development in Christian theology which will challenge white Australian Christians, something which Djniyiny believes is long overdue.

He states with confident faith:

Black preachers and evngelists have preached many years to convert the white church - that Christ's power of resurrection is a power to set man free from the power of sin and death, and from the sin of domination over other people.

20 ibid., p. 16.
21 ibid., p. 29.
22 ibid., pp. 17-18.
23 ibid., p. iv.
24 ibid., p. 10, p. 11.
After reading this I would like to believe that a heavenly host of long gone missionaries will rejoice that they haven’t been totally counter-productive; that, with all their limitations which we academics take pains to point out, the Galiwin'ku revival movement could still take place. It was and is an autonomous Aboriginal response.

It is also important for white academics to understand this development within Aboriginal culture for, to many Aborigines, Christianity is now as central to their lives as the Dreaming. Indeed, another of Djiniyini’s essays is entitled: *Father You Gave Us the Dreaming*. Consequently, understanding the role of the missionary as an advocate of culture change becomes more, not less important. Where the change has been anything more than superficial window dressing, the innovators, of course, have always been Aboriginal people. Djiniyini overtly and John Taylor indirectly have demonstrated this.

Whenever my students express interest in undertaking an individual project exploring some aspect of the topic, Aborigines and Christianity, I tell them to start with Swain and Rose, John Harris, and Djiniyini Gondarra. Not unexpectedly it is Djiniyini who surprises them most, Christians and non-Christians.

It is not only writers who bring their own experiences to a book. So do readers, especially when the subject is religion, in this case, Christianity. At my Australian History Association paper on the Aboriginal Christian Co-operative Movement, one participant congratulated me and added, ‘Actually, I thought I would give it a miss when I saw it was about missions’. An author who had spent years researching a famous missionary was told by one publisher that it would not be acceptable because the picture of the missionary was too positive and favourable and would offend Aboriginal activists. One of my publishers told me, when I informed him of my plan to write a mission history, that it sounded exciting, but it would never sell.

John Harris may have exploded the myth that very few people are interested in mission history. My students surprised me by showing more interest in purchasing a copy of *One Blood* than in all of the other new books I introduced them to during 1991. It was awarded the Australian Christian Book of the Year at the 1991 Christian Booksellers' Convention, but we did not know that at the time.

The size of the book leads you to expect an encyclopaedic thoroughness although Harris denies that this was his aim. He deals chronologically with his subject but emphasises a theme he considers appropriate to the time and the place. Chapter 1, subtitled ‘Early New South Wales and Aboriginal Missions’ is titled, ‘The shock of the new’; Chapter 2, subtitled ‘Civilisation and mission permeate north and south’ is titled ‘The destruction of the old’; chapter 3, subtitled ‘Protectorates, reserves and missions’, is titled, ‘The hobbling of the remnant’. There is of course thematic overlap. Indeed, the chronological approach used to analyse different geographical areas highlights the fact that each mission was a new beginning in a unique socio-historical situation. The book is divided into four parts to reflect this chronological analysis of different areas. Each of the two parts dealing with the nineteenth century is rounded off by a chapter analysing an important relevant theme that transcends to some extent the time/place approach. Thus chapter 4 concludes Part A by looking at ‘Key nineteenth century missionaries in eastern Australia’ under the title ‘The cries of the compassionate’; Part B concludes with an analysis of ‘Missionaries and Aboriginal culture in the Nineteenth century’.

For the twentieth century, Harris devotes Part C to ‘Aborigines and the church in settled Australia’ and Part D to what he terms ‘traditional Aboriginal communities’; that is,

26 ibid., 1986, pp. 1-12.
SCENES FROM AN ACADEMIC LIFE

those living in the more remote areas where they were allowed to retain, or determinedly retained, more of their pre-contact culture.

Harris deals very thoroughly with the material on the nineteenth century when the missions and missionary personalities were comparatively few compared with the explosion of missionary activity in the twentieth century. He used a case study approach to deal with the missions in remote areas in the first half of the twentieth century, choosing as his example the Church Missionary Society (CMS) missions in the Northern Territory. While I found this chapter very interesting, I do not think it does justice to this period which was 'the golden age' of missionary expansion, the period when so many existing Aboriginal communities came into being. For much of Aboriginal Australia, it was more important than the nineteenth century.

The other chapters on the twentieth century go a long way towards atoning for this. His analysis of the role of the churches in 'settled Australia', especially that of the non-denomination missionary organisations, the United Aborigines Mission and the Aborigines. As Harris noted:

> By 1944, UAM, with eighty-three missionaries had the largest number of missionaries of any organisation working with Aborigines. With AIM's sixty-two missionaries, the two organisations accounted for nearly half the missionaries of all denominations in the whole of Aboriginal Australia and ninety per cent of those working in settled areas.

Harris is quite critical of the missionaries of these two organisations. They had a 'very strict, conservative evangelical doctrinal stance ... accepted the system which kept the Aborigines oppressed' and did not clearly separate 'the gospel from a Western world view and way of life'. But, as is shown throughout this book, this is true of many of the other missionaries to Aborigines. The same could be said of the criticism of UAM's narrow-minded and regimented institutions. Indeed, for all institutions the happiness and welfare of the Aborigines depended greatly on the personality of the individual missionary.

Harris has discussed thoroughly the broader historical context which his religious history fits into. His discussion of the assimilation policy and the evolution of self-determination in chapters 10, 12, and 13 will be rewarding for general readers as well as for those interested in religious history. This provokes the question: for whom has this book been written?

It seems to me that Harris hopes to catch the interest of readers who have little knowledge of the Aboriginal historical experience since colonisation. He fleshes out the kind of detail you find in such introductory texts as Broome's *Aboriginal Australians* and Yarwood and Knowling's *Race Relations in Australia*. Indeed, often he adds new perspective and detail to a well-worn topic, as in the section on the land rights struggle. Harris is also aiming squarely at two specific groups: committed Christians and mission knockers. It becomes clear from reading his book that support of the Aboriginal struggle for justice is an inescapable Christian responsibility, not an optional extra. He informs his Christian readers of the struggles and achievements of previous generations of Christians. He also brings out the negative aspects of the missionary movement and the failings and mistakes of individuals. Many of his Christian readers will be surprised, some shocked and offended, because most are ignorant of the history and have only a warm, comfortable

29 Harris 1990, p. 555.
30 ibid., pp. 555-58.
32 Harris 1990, pp. 800-29.
feeling that missionaries were out there doing good to Aboriginal people, whatever that might mean. Harris obviously believes that Christians have to know the truth.

He also addresses the knockers, people he considers unreasonable in their criticism of missionaries. He attempts to put the missionaries into their historical context and obviously thinks much of the criticism is based on present values and insight. This book, then, is part of the Christian apologetic tradition. It attempts to tell the true story, to correct anti-Christian misconceptions, and in doing so to arouse the faithful to a greater Christian commitment. It comes at a time of growing academic interest in the Aboriginal mission experience as Swain and Rose's *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions* indicates. All will have to confront *One Blood*. I suspect John Harris meant this from the beginning.

Harris is certainly not going to convince everyone. Many see Christians as hypocrites because their practice was often sharply in conflict with the message they brought. They are expected to be better than they were - better than it is reasonable to expect most of them to have been, at that time, Harris might respond. Some Aborigines feel too bitter to accept that the missionaries' past actions can ever be put into a reasonable perspective. Determined secular humanists, contemplative agnostics and born-again atheists will probably see Harris' explanations as irrelevant special pleadings. Finally, however, it is perhaps Aboriginal Christians, like Bishop Arthur Malcolm and Djiniyini Gondarra, who will test the worth of Harris' explanations. John Harris has certainly had extensive contact with Aboriginal Christians throughout Australia and brings their perspectives frequently into his work. He asserts that, since the 1930s, the percentage of Aboriginal Christians has been greater than that of the rest of the community. I am not sure how this can be validated although I suspect he is right. What is clear is that Christianity is now at least as much part of Aboriginal culture as it is of white Australian culture. As such it is deserving of serious academic study. This book is an important contribution to this debate.

*One Blood* is well-written and always interesting to read, even when Harris climbs into his pulpit to rouse his fellow Christians to a greater commitment or to speak seriously to the ungodly. The book has been extremely well served by its publisher, Albatross Books, who have not only allowed him a length that would make many writers green with envy but also used an astonishing number of excellent photographs. And then there's Sally Morgan's cover.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Craig, D. 1979, The social impact of the State on Australia and brings their perspectives frequently into his work. He asserts that, since the 1930s, the percentage of Aboriginal Christians has been greater than that of the rest of the community. I am not sure how this can be validated although I suspect he is right. What is clear is that Christianity is now at least as much part of Aboriginal culture as it is of white Australian culture. As such it is deserving of serious academic study. This book is an important contribution to this debate.

*One Blood* is well-written and always interesting to read, even when Harris climbs into his pulpit to rouse his fellow Christians to a greater commitment or to speak seriously to the ungodly. The book has been extremely well served by its publisher, Albatross Books, who have not only allowed him a length that would make many writers green with envy but also used an astonishing number of excellent photographs. And then there's Sally Morgan's cover.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Craig, D. 1979, The social impact of the State on an Aboriginal reserve in Queensland, Australia, PhD thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of California, Berkely.
Green, N.J. 1986, European education at Oombulgurri, an Aboriginal settlement in Western Australia, MEd thesis, University of Western Australia, Perth.
Harris, J.W. 1990, *One Blood: Two Hundred Years of Aboriginal Encounter with Christianity: A Story of Hope*, Sutherland, N.S.W.

33 Swain & Rose 1988.
34 Harris 1990, p. 659.
Loos, N. (forthcoming), *White Christ, Black Cross: The Aborigines, the Australian Board of Missions and the Anglican Church.*

Smith, P. 1980, Like a watered garden, Yarrabah 1892-1909: the foundation era, BA(Hons) thesis, Department of History, James Cook University of North Queensland, Townsville.


BOOK REVIEWS


Clean Clad and Courteous, along with its companion volume of documents, marks a significant watershed in studies on Aboriginal history. Up until the publication of these books the history of Aboriginal education has been sorely neglected by educational historians and social historians alike. However, as the author so succinctly argues in the preface to the main volume, 'the school has largely gone unnoticed as a means used by white communities to deal with the Aboriginal problem' - yet schools have been used in the cause of pacification, christianisation and europeanisation to protect white interests. Thus an account which places education at the centre of Aboriginal history is long overdue.

Together the books represent two decades of research. Research began when Fletcher was appointed historian to the NSW Department of Education and he 'began noticing evidence of discrimination against Aborigines in historical documents'. This cohered into an MA thesis in the late 1970s, and finally emerged as the more comprehensive account available in these two books.

As this suggests, the central themes of both books are initially established as how schooling has been a means of systematic discrimination against Aborigines and how schooling has acted to protect white interests. Curiously, however, it is the theme of discrimination which is developed - leaving the latter implied throughout. This theme is developed in the main volume (Clean, Clad and Courteous) through a discussion on four different patterns of policy formulation which are discernable in discrete periods across the past two hundred years.

The framework of the first pattern was established through the Native Institution in 1814, and continued through various Missions and policy recommendations to the 1860s. Essential elements of this pattern consisted of an attempt to europeanise through conversion to Christianity, the removal of children from parents to achieve this, and the dismal failure of these attempts.

During the 1870s a new pattern began to emerge. The essential elements of this new pattern were a desire by Aborigines for integration (evident in the enrolment of 'a significant number' of Aboriginal children in schools), and a desire by white communities for the segregation of Aborigines. By alternating chapters on the policy formulation process within the Department of Education and the Aborigines Protection Board, Fletcher illustrates how segregation was the path the government took. Across these chapters a great deal of attention is given to the formulation of Education Department policies around the turn of the twentieth century which excluded Aboriginal children from state schools on the demand of white communities (unless the children were 'clean, clad and courteous'), and which established a separate system of Aboriginal schooling.

By the 1930s another pattern began to emerge, largely (it is suggested) because of increasing numbers of Aborigines throughout the state in general, and the increasing number on reserves in particular. This new pattern involved the construction of a policy of education for assimilation, which was to be achieved mainly by dismantling the segregated

---

1 Fletcher, Clean, Clad and Courteous, p.7.
system. For various reasons the government found implementing this policy to be fraught with difficulties. Consequently de-segregation was not actually achieved until the 1960s. After de-segregation was in place, however, increasing evidence that the 'regular' school system was failing Aboriginal children was brought to light. Hence in the 1980s another pattern emerged, this time through a range of new legislation, organisations and policy which sought to promote positive discrimination in education for Aborigines.

Throughout this substantial account the author provides overwhelming and continuing evidence of systematic discrimination against Aboriginal children - evidence such as the limited curriculum made available in the Aboriginal School system, the appointment of unqualified teachers, the sub-standard conditions of school buildings, the channelling of Aboriginal children into unskilled labour, the extreme under-representation of Aboriginal children in secondary and tertiary education, and (white) beliefs about the ineducability of Aborigines.

None of this is particularly new or startling to those involved with Aboriginal education. What is both new and valuable, however, is the careful collation of a vast range of official documents related to education which cover two centuries of Australian history, the development of a systematic argument about the history of Aboriginal education, and the contextualisation of this argument and evidence within broader social policy on Aborigines.

Both the argument and evidence are supplemented by the companion volume of documents. On its own this collection is a major feat of research. The author has drawn together and reproduced excerpts from 245 sources - including government reports, gazettes, journals, pamphlets, books, articles, personal correspondence, official memoranda, inspector's reports, newspapers, minutes of meetings, and parliamentary debates. A great deal of this material has never been published before, and will therefore provide an extremely useful resource for anyone interested in Aboriginal history. While the documents have been arranged to follow the structure of the main volume, the detailed commentary throughout each chapter is designed so that the book can stand alone.

There can be no doubt that these two volumes make a significant contribution to our collective understanding of Aboriginal history and that they will form an indispensable resource for teaching in the area. Together they illustrate the crucial role education was intended to play in the process of colonisation. Perhaps, however, we need to take up this challenge sooner rather than later. For this reader at least, on balance the strengths of the books are matched by several crucial limitations.

One significant limitation is the liberal paradigm which shapes the general argument. All in all the history of Aboriginal education is depicted as a move from policies of intense racial discrimination to more enlightened attitudes and policies (although the author never hesitates to point out that discrimination remains). In general terms this construes segregation as less desirable than assimilation; an argument that contemporary people involved in Aboriginal education might well dispute. Witness, for example, Pemulwuy College in Sydney.

More particularly the liberal paradigm is inadequate for meeting the tasks the author sets initially. _Clean, Clad and Courteous_ begins with the two-pronged argument that education policies have been used to discriminate against Aborigines and to protect white interests. While Fletcher provides an insurmountable wall of evidence that education policies have discriminated against Aborigines, the simultaneous advantaging of non-Aboriginal people always remains implied. This obscures the extent to which shifts in policy may have resulted from ongoing attempts by non-Aboriginal people to construct and maintain their position of dominance. If this theme had been explicitly addressed then the
recent shifts towards 'positive discrimination', for example, would have been discussed quite differently. At the very least the author would have been forced to consider ways in which current policies might represent a continued attempt to empower non-Aboriginal people.

Another obvious limit is the remarkable way in which child removal policies are discussed and dealt with. When I began reading this book I was relieved that an educational historian was finally putting these policies at the centre of their account. But by the second chapter they had disappeared completely. This is primarily because, according to Fletcher, removal policies were evident only in the nineteenth century. How, I wondered in furious puzzlement, could the details and arguments so succinctly put forward by Peter Read and others on child removal throughout the twentieth century be simply left out?2

On rereading the book I discovered they are not left out. Rather, they are reconstituted in a way which defuses the intention of both the 1909 Act (and its amendments) and Protection Board policies, and the explicit function of Cootamundra Girls' and Kinchella Boys' Training Homes. The training homes, we are informed, were for 'orphans' (so presumably lay outside the scope of the book). Certainly the APB formulated apprenticing policy, but this is never traced through into its implementation phase. And the 1909 Act is obscured by more pressing concerns, such as why one Departmental Report was longer than other. Although each of these arms of the child removal policies can be neatly explained away, this is done in such a piecemeal fashion that I was left with the overwhelming impression that Fletcher simply did not want to include this in his argument. But perhaps he did not know how to is a more accurate explanation. To insert discussion on the twentieth century child removal policies and the role education played in facilitating them would have challenged the liberal paradigm itself.

Less obvious are several related but important limitations which result from the focus on government policies. At first glance this indicates that the issue of Aboriginal agency is raised and disposed of quite legitimately. This does not mean that the books are totally devoid of Aboriginal voices. In fact, *Clean Clad and Courteous* provides many tantalising glimpses of Aboriginal responses to various policies, particularly over the expulsion of their children from state schools. At this level it simply remains for future historians to explore these glimpses in more detail and to insert them into this existing account.

At a deeper level, however, it means the books share all the problems of histories which fail to incorporate Aboriginal agency. The most fundamental of these is the way in which Aborigines are inevitably constructed as passive within the historical text. In *Clean Clad and Courteous* this approach leads to a general picture of Aborigines as the passive victims of oppression. This is not to deny that Aboriginal people have been disempowered consistently and savagely since white invasion. Rather, it is to suggest that by focussing on government policies the struggle which is always at the heart of the colonising process is effectively silenced. By marginalising Aboriginal voices within these books Fletcher has, by default, marginalised not only the actual struggles Aboriginal people were involved in but the very issue of contestation.

Contestation, struggle and conflict are further silenced by the rather dubious assumption that enrolling a child in a school meant that Aboriginal people wanted to be 'integrated' into white communities. This is not only an unsubstantiated assumption but a dangerous one ... dangerous because it suggests that Aboriginal people wanted the same thing from schooling that white communities and government departments wanted.

Lessons from the history of education in New Zealand pointedly demonstrate the problems involved here. When the first missions were set up in New Zealand (1814

---

onwards), the missionaries intended to use schooling as a critical instrument in the process of christianising and thereby civilising Maori. Yet Maori only tolerated the presence of the missionaries and their schools because they either directly (by supplying themselves) or indirectly (by encouraging traders to come) provided Maori with muskets - which were used to enhance traditional patterns of *utu*. By the late 1820s and into the 1830s Maori shifted their attention to acquiring the knowledge that produced this technology. As missionaries were the main purveyors of European knowledge at the time, and as schools were the formal institution for transmitting this knowledge, missionary schools began to thrive. To put this more concisely, analysis which incorporates a closer scrutiny of what Maori wanted from schooling illustrates very clearly that the indigenous and colonising agenda were very different indeed. To assume they are one and the same grossly distorts the historical account we end up with.

Moreover, it could be argued that it is the conflict between these differing agendas - and the struggle for empowerment which they embody - which is the driving force between policy changes. This stands in stark contrast with the mutually reinforcing arguments found in *Clean, Clad and Courteous*. Here policy formulation is seen to result from the pressure put on the government by lobby groups, with the lobby group which forwards the most persuasive argument or uses the most effective strategies (etc.) having its view implemented. Alongside this runs the argument that the government is a neutral vessel which simply represents the interests of the most effective lobby group of the day. The implication we are left to draw from this (pluralist theory of the state) is that Aborigines themselves are really to blame for all of these policies; if they were in some way better at making their voices heard then they could have captured and used this neutral government for their own interests.

Perhaps this is a little pedantic, for Fletcher makes it perfectly clear in the Preface and throughout the book that his focus is on government policy. But the theoretical implications nonetheless remain. Because Aboriginal agency is not systematically incorporated in the argument we are left with the subtle message that Aboriginal people are not only passive victims of oppression but are also tacit agents of their own oppression.

As such, *Clean Clad and Courteous* and its companion volume of documents represent both the heights and the limits of liberal history. The books are underscored by a keen sense of moral outrage which leads to a carefully articulated description of the ways in which education has been used to discriminate against Aborigines over the past two hundred years in New South Wales. Yet Aboriginal people and their views on education are silenced, and through this process are ultimately held responsible for their own oppression.

Clearly the books represent a significant start in linking education with Aboriginal history. Equally as clear is the fact that we still have a long way to go.

**LIST OF REFERENCES**


---

The most accessible literature in this area is Binney 1969; Jackson 1975; Parr 1961.
BOOK REVIEWS


Dianne Snow
University of Auckland


Documentary history, oral account and a 60-year-old autobiography provide the ingredients for this account of an Aboriginal and Islander community in northern Cape York Peninsula. The book is essentially a summary historical study of Injinoo near Bamaga, with a current appraisal of this small community's future. The focus is upon the groups who once occupied the northern part of Cape York Peninsula, including Muralug (Prince of Wales Island), and whose descendants form the core of Injinoo community. Some brief opening anthropological interpretation is provided, and succeeding chapters trace the early exploration period, the shock of contact from the Jardine brothers at Somerset, the coastal lugger industry and later mission influence. There is an examination of the recent history of the community and its people, their political battles through the repressive period of Queensland government, and their current aspirations and actions. This takes up 151 pages of the book, with the final section of some 70 pages ('A story of love and destiny') devoted to a romantic account of the McLaren era, drawing upon present-day oral accounts from a McLaren descendant and Jack McLaren's well-known book 'My Crowded Solitude' (1926) for inspiration.

All of this represents something of a mixed offering, especially once the basic historical material is covered. There is an interesting account of the origins of the old Cowal Creek settlement (as Injinoo was formerly known) where local Aboriginal people formed their own settlement, with later input from the Anglican Church. With the government creation of the Bamaga complex in the 1950s they were incorporated into the government welfare system, and to some extent dominated by the arrival of considerable numbers of Torres Strait Islanders. Little thought was given in this period to the Aboriginal people whose traditional lands were being appropriated for immigrants (forced and voluntary) from the Torres Strait and elsewhere.

I found the analysis of current situations (Chapter 9) less satisfactory. The Deed of Grant in Trust tenure created by the old National Party government and given to Injinoo and other Aboriginal communities needs fuller explication, especially with regard to its central failure to recognise traditional tenure rights. These rights only received recognition with the passage of the Aboriginal Lands Act 1991. Curiously, there is no discussion of this significant recent legislation which was passed by the Queensland Parliament mid-1991, and which was the subject of considerable conflict and publicity throughout much of that year. The recent Labor government history needs much more critical attention than the paragraph or two provided.
The short anthropological summary at the beginning concentrates on the northern area, but offers some observations on social linkages further south, though curiously it does not draw upon the recent literature and research. There is much in the literature on Peninsula social organisation since Thomson and McConnell in the 1930s which is relevant here. Beckett's book on the Torres Strait, while dealing elsewhere in the region, would also seem an important reference on colonial domination in the area and is a perplexing omission. I have some difficulty with the description and location of some of the groups making up the current community, and I noted a couple of factual errors. The Lockhart River court decision regarding Farndale was by appeal to the full bench of the Supreme Court of Queensland, not the High Court (p.5). Robert Logan Jack was the government geologist, not a surveyor (p.70) and Lockhart River mission started in 1924, not 1923 (p.103). There are problems with page references for a number of the index items.

Part IV (A Story of Love and Destiny) sits oddly as a concluding section. For this reader the 70 page amalgam of a re-work of McLaren's story and local oral history strikes a discordant note with the authorial voice falling somewhere between McLaren's inimitable prose and an old fashioned romance novel. McLaren can be safely left to his own merits and the oral history would have been more effective if presented strictly in its own terms. The book seems to be aimed at the general reading public and perhaps the local community, rather than a specialised scholarly audience, and it is a useful starting point for anyone interested in this part of Aboriginal Australia.

Athol Chase
Griffith University


Bruce Shaw must be one of Australia's most prodigious collectors of Aboriginal oral history. He has published two major life stories of Aboriginal men of the Kimberleys, a collection and now the reminiscences of Waddi Boyoi and Johnny Walker. Most of Shaw's informants have died since he interviewed them in the 1970s, so we are privileged to read their narratives. And Shaw’s painstaking transcription and careful checking and proofing sessions must be admired. This book provides further important evidence of Aboriginal culture and history. Along with Shaw's other collected accounts, a valuable bank of material on Kimberley history is now available, along with insights into Aboriginal analyses and ways of remembering.

Shaw's editing has already been subjected to various critiques - from too 'Europeanized' to too 'Aboriginal'. Rendering speech into writing will never result in a 'pure' form, but I find myself also dissatisfied, strung between two poles. On the one hand, the book is no speed-read, for its origins are spoken narrative in 'Aboriginal English' which do not lend themselves to the book medium. Poetry can be read slowly, but we are trained to read prose - especially English prose - differently. On the other hand, Shaw's rendition of the narratives into more readable English detracts from its beautiful rhythms, the vibrancy and revelatory tone of the spoken form. When Shaw provides an example of 'free translation' in his Appendix (p.172), one cannot help but 'hear' the speech as one reads, which is a far
BOOK REVIEWS

more exciting experience. But I guess the dilemma is how many readers, Aboriginal or not, would persevere with this 'foreign' speech?

This collection is not comparable to the more sustained reminiscences of Grant Ngabidj or Jack Sullivan. Many themes were introduced by Boyoi and Johnny which were not followed up for clarification, so their difficulty is compounded. Nonetheless the stories are sometimes compelling, shocking, puzzling and contain many themes which analysts of Kimberley history should certainly examine. Myths are dispelled; new Aboriginal understandings of events are introduced. Forget those living-in-total-harmony-with-the-environment stereotypes, especially if humans are to be counted as part of the landscape. Tribal murders and sorcery are prominent themes in the first section, 'Bush Time'. Indeed murder, revenge killings, strange deaths and cannibalism make for some grisly reading and I was left wondering how lucky the narrators were to survive. Could it all have been exaggerated? Shaw admits his questions emphasised 'massacre stories', but he elicited more answers on murders carried out in the world of Aborigines than those across the colonial 'divide'. (p.7) Here the informants are shaping the narrative they want to deliver, not the questioner. When the whites appear relatively permanently on the scene, in 'Station Time', we hear as we might expect of white men's poison and guns, but also of white men's suicides, their alcoholism and other deaths due to gruesome shooting, horse, dray and other accidents. Kangaroo hunts, consumption of animal guts, blood, flesh and male rituals are prominent as well as conflict 'over women', who are represented in all their 'otherness'. With black women relegated to a 'sweethearts and wives' chapter, Johnny and Waddi project a distinctively male world.

The men's understanding of events is clear and precise and it is specifically that of a non-literate people, from within an Aboriginal cosmology. The book contains some revealing vignettes: for example Waddi's stark description of being detained for murder but not being charged and the repetitive narratives of reporting deaths to white police which show this practice must have become one of the rituals of death. (p. 103) There is a mysterious explanation of the bombing of Wyndham, where Waddi understands that the church, the government and the Aborigines could have appeased the Japanese by giving them half of Ningbing station upon which to settle their soldiers. (p. 108) That narrative deserves some analysis by scholars for the light it sheds on black explanations of Australian colonialism. On more recent times, Johnny viewed cases of black men marrying white women as eminently newsworthy, although he had only heard of them from afar. Of his community in the early 1970s, he stated 'The biggest trouble is arguing over women, and grog.' (p. 151) The impact of grog is an important theme for both men, and fascinating in this light is Waddi's comment, influenced by his contact with Catholic missions: 'Father says the wine is Father's law, His blood, but I can't drink it.' (p.146)

Ann McGrath
History, University of NSW


Despite its more expansive sub-title, this book is an excellent ethnography of the Doomadgee mission settlement, based on fieldwork between 1978 and 1983. These were the
last years in which the settlement was administered by the Christian Brethren missionaries, since after 1983 staffing of the mission, including the school, was taken over by the Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement. After a few years of preliminary work, the present settlement had been founded in 1936 on the Nicholson River, in cattle country about half way between Burketown and the Northern Territory border and some 100 kilometres from the coast.

The time and location are important, for although each situation had its particular features, Doomadgee was typical of a class of settlement founded by various denominational groups across northern Australia in the first three or four decades of the century. In the 1970s and 1980s these have passed from mission control. Many aspects of the settlement as described by Trigger will be familiar to those with experience of other missions; there is the physical development of the settlement complex with clearly defined domains for different groups, the missionaries, whose dedication and even self-sacrifice in the interests (as they see them) of the Aboriginal people are undoubtedly genuine, are at the same time endowed with opportunities for authoritarianism that would not be accepted in the wider community, even the dominance of certain individuals and the nature of faction and dispute take on a particular cast in these circumstances. All this is analysed skilfully and lucidly explained. The generous use of quotations from tapes supplies an effective sense of immediacy, though I found the suppression of personal names somewhat artificial and not really necessary on grounds of privacy, since all opinions are accorded respect.

Like any good modern ethnographer, Trigger deftly includes himself in the picture, at least in terms of his actions and options at Doomadgee. I would have liked a bit more on what lead him there. He also pays serious and fair attention to the missionaries. More importantly, he describes in some detail the historical circumstances of the whole Gulf region which lead members of several Aboriginal groups, especially some from the Northern Territory, to move eastwards and eventually settle on the mission. He has been lucky here to have the careful historical research of John Dymock and others to provide easy access into the sources.

For the historian of north Australia or of Aboriginal experience generally, the book gives a carefully researched account of a situation which was once relatively common, but has now passed. Although there are a few references to comparable studies, such as the Tonkinsons descriptions of Jigalong in Western Australia, the main comparative work is yet to be done. This, however, raises two further issues.

The first concerns the selection of the central concepts of analysis. These are fairly described in the final sentences of the book:

Through pursuing the theme of resistance and accommodation, I have sought to make clear the effects of the political and economic structures of colonialism on people in a region of northern Australia. The study is thus an ethnography that seeks to reveal the political implications inherent in the cultural processes of daily life. (p.225)

In fact, there is little detail on the economy of the mission in a simple sense, but the nature of authority and the operation of power are central to the discussion. There is some danger here of reductionism; everything is reduced to power relationships. For example, while Trigger is aware that the 'Christian ideology' of the missionaries and those Aborigines influenced by them can be treated in many ways,

[m]y discussion centres on whether Christianity operated historically to legitimate the domination of Aboriginal society, or provided a basis for forms of Aboriginal resistance. Considered thus, Christianity's primary sociological
BOOK REVIEWS

significance is located within the operation of settlement power relations. 
(p.189)
Surely there has now been enough written about Aboriginal Christianity, especially in the north, for the interest of a wider focus to be apparent.

In my view, the concept of colonialism is something of a red herring in this context. For one thing, there is an ambiguity in the way it is used here that is not resolved. Is the colonial relationship between southern Australia and north Australian society and economy as a whole, including Aboriginal interests, or is it between 'white Australia' and Aboriginal society and economy, especially in the north? Outside the formal constitutional sense, the use of the term, colonialism, is necessarily metaphorical and, in the literature, covers a range of applications from Marx to Mannoni and many others. I think the book would be better without the word or, at least, with a very clear discussion of its exact meaning in this context.

A comparative approach raises a second issue which deserves further analysis. David Turner, in his Tradition and transformation, which describes several aspects of change among some groups at the Angurugu mission on Groote Eylandt, concluded that, in the long term, no separate identity could be maintained. Robert Tonkinson too, in his later work on Jigalong has admitted that he over-estimated the capacity of the Aborigines to maintain the integrity of their symbolic world. Trigger does not ask about the future of that sense of Aboriginal separateness over against the missionaries which loomed so large in the Doomadgee he knew. In many ways, the possibility of an option for maintaining a society and economy separate from others (black or white) is now the most pressing problem for many Aboriginal communities and it would be interesting to know how this question looks at Doomadgee - or looked in 1983.

While one may regret what is not here, in the end it is far more important to stress what is. All the residents of Doomadgee may count themselves fortunate to have got such a fair and sensitive observer as Trigger to record their communal life. The rest of us have the benefit of this admirably clear account of the concerns and attitudes of the various residents as a crucial moment of transition in the life of that community. Such ethnographies are all too rare.

C.C. Macknight
The Australian National University


It is rewarding to learn that previous editors of Aboriginal History sought copy from Pastor Albrecht, but unfortunately he was then too frail to write (p.282). Unfortunate, because he was a key figure in Central Australian affairs for almost half a century and, as this well written book amply demonstrates, he was widely respected by Aboriginal people. His approach to them all, male and female, Aranda, Loritja, Pintubi, Pitjantjatjara, Warlpiri and others, was not an intellectual one. Rather, it was 'more on the basis of a common humanity, attuning himself to the practical realities of their everyday lives' (p.226).
Frederick Wilhelm Albrecht was born in Poland in October 1894. The author fails to notice the symbolism, that it also was October 1894 when Carl Strehlow arrived to superintend the Finke River Mission, named Hermannsburg. Two years before Albrecht's death in 1984, the ownership of the Hermannsburg lease passed to five Aboriginal land trusts. Strehlow ruled Hermannsburg as a benevolent despot for twenty-eight years; Albrecht's somewhat milder autocracy covered a quarter century, although his influence in the Centre continued after his transfer to Alice Springs.

Both missionaries suffered from severe personal illness, also from the tyranny of both distance and penury, and from the petty persecutions to which 'Germans' were subjected during world wars. They were both theologians of their time, so their God was a severe one who brooked no pagan rites or false beliefs. It is testimony to Albrecht's intellectual honesty and sincerity in attempting to comprehend Aboriginal thought, that he came to admit his ethnocentric and philosophical bias (eg. p.249). This significant record of an ardent missionary experiencing spiritual confrontation on the colonial frontier offers valuable insights.

Hermannsburg under these men was arguably the most successful missionary enterprise in Australia. It certainly protected more Aborigines from persecution, or worse, than any mission. With hindsight, the price may seem high in terms of deprivations of civil rights and destruction of traditional culture. Segregated and locked sleeping quarters for children; elders barred from performing ceremonies and sacred objects desecrated, for example. Yet the very firmness of the system offered sanctuary and direction to societies disintegrating before harsh landtakers and their cattle. In context, Hermannsburg was a haven of peace and charity from the time of policeman-terrorist W.H. Willshire in the 1880s to the Coniston massacre and after.

Partly because Strehlow's son did so much to perpetuate his father's memory, Hermannsburg and its white painted village setting is identified with Carl Strehlow. Read the numerous Aboriginal tributes to Pastor Albrecht included within this carefully researched study, however, and analyse the extent of Albrecht's efforts on behalf of the material and spiritual welfare of the Aboriginal people across a wide swathe of the Centre, and his contribution becomes evident. His biography was overdue. Barbara Henson achieved the task with a light and sympathetic touch. Students of race relations should read it.

This is a good general account of Albrecht's life and activities. It may not satisfy specialists, however, because it touches on many salient issues in a chronological narrative form, rather than subjecting them to close analysis. The book depends upon the extensive Albrecht archive and related Lutheran sources, so that outside trends and cross-currents impinge less strongly than they might. Examples include some comparative appraisal of Australian missions between and after the world wars; the psychology and tensions within all small, isolated communities (p.73); the role of the wartime army in the Centre in promoting race relations (p.146); the probability that wartime demands may explain the slowness of Chinnery, Director of Native Affairs, in reaching decisions (p.137); Ted Strehlow appears frequently, but he merited deeper consideration - those unfamiliar with the context could not appreciate the nature of the 'running controversy', or 'the break-up of his first marriage', from those terse comments (pp.278-9).

Another facet of Australian history meriting further exploration was commonwealth government Aboriginal policy. To what extent was ministerial apathy due to anti-German or anti-religious sentiment? The sheer pettiness of government decisions concerning blanket supply (pp.33-4), water pipes (p.45), and the delivery of pipes to the wrong place (p.94) shocking examples. A serious outbreak of scurvy was ignored by authorities (p.46).
BOOK REVIEWS

Albrecht's supreme material achievement was to bring water to Hermannsburg from Kaporilja Springs, in the face of lack of funds, government and mission administration apathy, or expert advice that it was physically impossible. Visitors to Hermannsburg should look beyond the solid Strehlow buildings to the huge concrete water tank which so improved the quality of life, and to the flattened petrol drums from which buildings were constructed at little cost. These matters are treated carefully by the author.

Pastor Albrecht's career reflected changing attitudes to race relations and mission policy within the Australian community, but he was years ahead on many issues. He was concerned that later 'welfare' policies were designed by mission staff or white bureaucrats to create 'more activities which in the end would have to be run by European staff', while stifling Aboriginal initiatives (pp.217,268). As the basis for positive development he increasingly emphasised personal, individual contacts (p.258). He sensed that anthropologists of his time unduly emphasised preserving traditional culture, ignoring the reality of social and economic change (p.149); he considered that Daisy Bates did 'incalculable harm' (p.143).

It is not surprising that he encouraged the development of Albert Namatjira's talents. Neither is it contradictory that he proved unsympathetic to Albert during the later years of his success, because he was disrupting Hermannsburg social life.

One of Albrecht's major material and spiritual contributions was his outreach policy which took him on exhausting camel treks to distant places and resulted in the establishment of outposts where Aboriginal evangelists ministered to their own people (p.227). That Aboriginal pastors continued their ministry after his departure is testimony to his work. These men provided Barbara Henson with some of her most interesting oral evidence. Listen to Pastor Ungkwanaka as late as 1986 (p.107): people 'still think today they might be shot because station owners might get greedy of the country'. In old age Albrecht recalled only one occasion in Centralia 'where the Aborigines have been preferred before the bullocks' (p.268).

Students of Territory or missionary history, and of race relations, all would benefit from reading this book. Let humanitarian Albrecht have the last word, appropriately written to an historian, Mervyn Hartwig, in 1961. In requesting a copy of his thesis on the Coniston massacre for the Lutheran President General, he observed (p.251):

I also think that it may never see the public press as it is such a terrible indictment. Yet if we are to redeem our past sins in this country, it will be only if people's eyes are opened wide to facts as you have dug up.'

John Mulvaney
Australian Academy of the Humanities


These two additions to the rapidly growing list of Aboriginal autobiographies tell very different stories. Mabel Edmund, who is of Aboriginal, German and South Sea Islander descent, was born in 1930 and grew up in North Rockhampton's South Sea Islander community. She left school at thirteen and went to work on a cattle station, where she met
ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1993 17:2

her future husband. After she got married she spent many years tending a market garden and raising her children in the Rockhampton area, but a new field of activity opened up for her in 1970 when she was elected as a shire councillor. She displayed her strength of will as a black woman and a Labor Party member in a council dominated by white National Party men, then went on to serve in various Aboriginal-controlled and government organisations. After her husband died she studied art, and is now a successful artist with paintings in galleries and private collections. Mabel Edmund's book was highly commended in the David Unaipon Award for first-time Aboriginal authors. Despite what Sally Morgan says on the cover, Mabel Edmund is not a gifted writer, though you get the feeling that she is probably an entertaining storyteller in person. However, her story is no less interesting for being told in a very plain style.

Bill Dodd was only born in 1965, so the broad outline of his life is much simpler than Mabel Edmund's. He grew up in the small country town of Mitchell, Queensland, where he developed a love of horses at an early age. After his father died he left school and became something of a larrikin. At the age of eighteen he had to abandon his ambition to work with horses when a diving accident left him a quadriplegic. Six months of rehabilitation were followed by six years in a nursing home before he finally returned to his family in Mitchell. He now moves about in a wheelchair and uses a splint on one finger to type. He has obviously become much more thoughtful since his accident, and though he still loves horses his ambition now is to write. He has got off to a good start with this book, which won the 1991 David Unaipon Award and is told in an engagingly humorous, blunt and colloquial style.

Ewan Morris
Australian Defence Force Academy


Let me begin by saying that Keeffe offers us a deeply sensitive and perceptive analysis of the difficulties Aboriginal Torres Strait Island people face in Australia in meeting the difficult challenge of developing a curriculum which allows access to and participation in the dominant society without forsaking a primary identity in Aboriginality (p. 60).

It is not a dilemma that is unique to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people either in Australia or in other parts of the world. In this year of indigenous people, it is important to remember that education remains a major instrument of neo-colonialist control, especially through its use in the curriculum of cultural colonialism.¹ We have heard much in recent years of the concept of 'the inclusive curriculum', i.e., a curriculum in which the whole variety of gender, culture, ethnic tradition and other differences between people is adequately and visibly presented and equally valued. It is also, or should be a curriculum which accepts, encourages and builds on those special skills which are preferred and culturally valued which individual students may bring to their schooling. It is not, however, a curriculum which seeks through 'including' these varieties of difference to

¹ Barlow 1990, p. 68.
change them so that they 'merge' into the dominant preferred 'culture' in the school with a view to graduating the student as thoroughly assimilated into some unified overarching 'Australian culture'. More than one approach to both multi-cultural and Aboriginal and Islander education has set just such assimilation as their end aim.

Keeffe has based his analysis on four key concepts which he defines in his introductory essay and on the further concept of 'Aboriginality' which he analyses at some length in the three essays which form the second part of the book. (I refer to Keeffe's chapters as essays for that is how he has conceived his book, as a series of essays in which he explores and analyses the issues involved in developing educational programs for and about Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders). His four key concepts are 'education', 'curriculum', 'power' and 'culture'.

It is important to read this introductory essay closely for in it Keeffe explains how his experience in teaching in Aboriginal and Islander community schools in urban Brisbane, Cape York and Central Australia, led him to a realisation that according to who used them and in what context, the meaning of these words and the concepts they invoked were truly problematic. As regards Aboriginal and Islander education and studies he concludes;

The realm of culture is a contested terrain and the curriculum is a significant site in this terrains. Aboriginal are locked in a dynamic struggle with groups in the dominant society and with themselves over the right to claim its ground. They are seeking a restructuring of this particular field of knowledge and control. The Aboriginal education and Aboriginal studies curriculum is part of a wider and more difficult tussle for power than can be seen in the centre of Australia and in the city' (p.10).

Examples of this tussle for power form the major context of a number of the following essays. First we hear the story of how a group of Pintubi teachers from Walungurru school in central Australia adapted their traditional art form to make a statement about Pintubi people's experience of education and about what they needed to do so as to regain control over their culture in and through their school's curriculum. This provides an opportunity to expand on the cultural content of such an empowering curriculum and to discuss the place of Central Australian art in schooling in that region.

The second essay explores the contesting concepts of 'Aboriginality' which emerged in a cultural awareness camp held for Aboriginal students outside Canberra. This exploration leads to an examination of the competing perceptions of 'Aboriginality as persistence' and 'Aboriginality as resistance'. Both are useful in categorising the approaches favoured by teachers in attempting to teach about Aborigines and Islanders today. Keeffe highlights the dangers of an 'Aboriginality as persistence' approach. He stresses that Aboriginal culture, both in Central and in urban Australia is interacting with both other Australian as well as other Aboriginal cultures and is in this sense active and evolving. Thus, Aboriginal culture neither in the Centre nor in the city should be seen 'as a residual but pure extract from a traditional essence' (p.60).

On the other hand 'neither should Aboriginality in the city be written off as simply a twisting of old themes into new forms to suit changing political and economic circumstances' (p.61). For every Aboriginal and Islander group, its own form of Aboriginality lies at the heart of its culture and its education.

The second group of essays in Keeffe's book provides his essential content. In these he explores more fully the theme of Aboriginality as introduced in his second essay, and sets out to contrast the various perceptions of Aboriginality, the use of the concept in education and the relationship between Aboriginality and ethnicity. This latter embodies a critique of those Australian social scientists who seem to equate Aboriginality with ethnicity.
The remaining essays continue to illustrate the theme of the curriculum and culture as contested sites. Part 3, under the title of 'Yangangu culture and the curriculum', in two essays discusses curriculum approaches to bilingual/bicultural education in Central Australia, and tells us how the Pintubi teachers at Wajungurru school went about developing a curriculum which would reflect and contain their Yangangu Aboriginality. Part 4 looks at the place of Aboriginal history both in Australian history and in the Australian history curriculum. The effectiveness of pre-entry ('bridging') programmes for Aboriginal and Islander students seeking post-school education is savagely criticised:

At a broader political and educational level, the case study suggest that an emphasis on autonomy at the group level has placed limits on individual Aboriginal access to further education, postponing and retarding any chance of educational equality, social autonomy or economic self-determination'. (p.166).

There is little to quarrel with in Keeffe's depiction of the educational dilemma that faces Aborigines and Islanders who seek to obtain the advantages education seems to offer them without paying the price of acculturation for it. My only complaint would be at what he has omitted - a guide to curriculum review and renewal in Aboriginal studies. His original research brief under the research fellowship on which his book is based was 'to investigate strategies for curriculum development in Aboriginal studies and Aboriginal education' (p.3).

The focus of his essays, as I have detailed then has been on the curriculum and culture in Aboriginal and Islander education. He has dealt with some of the issues involved in presenting and embodying Aboriginality in the curriculum, and it is evident that he has addressed the tasks involved in developing Aboriginal studies in the curriculum (see Chapter 9). It seems a pity then that he should choose to publish elsewhere2 'a guide to curriculum review and renewal in Aboriginal Australian studies' (Note 2, p.15). This is especially to be regretted given the emphasis placed under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Program released by the Commonwealth Government in 1989 on Aboriginal studies in all Australian schools. The findings of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody has renewed this emphasis, as has the recently appointed Commission for Reconciliation.

Teachers and our State and Territory education systems continue to need direction on how to develop in their schools' Aboriginal studies programs so as to meet the demand that they adequately present contemporary and historic Aboriginality, with reference to its local forms, whilst at the same time leading students to a respect for the contribution Aboriginal people have made to the evolution of Australia as a country and as a nation. Without a study of approaches to the development of Aboriginal studies in the curriculum the book remains a significant, but incomplete, study of the present status of knowledge in the fields of curriculum development in Aboriginal education and Aboriginal studies.

LIST OF REFERENCES


Alex Barlow
Australian Info International

BOOK REVIEWS


The Handbook of Australian Languages is an outstanding series of works on Aboriginal languages. Each volume contains four major descriptions of individual languages, following a well established and thorough descriptive pattern, and each includes a vocabulary and texts where possible. The series is an invaluable guide, anyone interested in the field of Australian linguistics is bound to use the series constantly.

The present volume continues the tradition of occasionally including languages for which the bulk of our information comes from last century: Barry Blake has written a grammar of Woiwurrung, the Melbourne language. This is a thorough and competent study, based on all the available sources. The historical introduction is excellent, written with insight and understanding. One minor blemish is that (p.55) John Dunmore Lang appears as 'James Dunmore Lang'.

It is a pity that the spelling of the main sources has not been included in the vocabulary except where the interpretation was particularly uncertain. This means that not all the information, obviously collated with great care and expertise, is made available to the reader. Inclusion of this information would have given justification to the phonemic transcription that is given. Just to quote one example: in the absence of further data the reader is left puzzled as to why the well-known toy throwing-stick witj-witj or with-with, attested also from the other Kulin languages, is transcribed as wuywayit. Presumably the spelling of the sources was not included because of the constraints of the format. The reviewer, for ever an optimist, would like to think that if the work could have been lengthier more information could have been extracted from the data by further comparison with closely related Kulin languages. For instance the ending -eit which is used by Thomas as a quotation form (p.75) could be compared with the Wembawemba potential -ij. This interpretation is in keeping with the sentence from a psalm (from Thomas's work quoted p.78) where 'wooranderroneit' is used in the sense of 'I would lift up'. In Wembawemba the -ij form appears in a very similar context with the verb wawa 'to follow' in a hymn recorded by the reviewer:

Yandang  wawitj  kirkunditj
I would follow God (lit. 'the one belonging to Heaven')

Yandang  wawitj  wathipuk
I would follow Son-his

Yandang  wawitj  nja!
I would follow indeed!

The interpretation of Thomas's -eit as -ij / ith is strengthened further by the fact that word-final -ij / ith is written as -eit elsewhere in the Woiwurrung data, e.g. guritch, 'sister's husband' (p 85 and 112) appears also as kooreit, 'brother in law' (p. 85 and p. 113) - and surely these cannot be two separate words. Because of the complexities of spelling and particularly because of the utter confusion between u and a in the source material there are many other words which are duplicated; for instance the word budji 'stomach' and butj 'stomach' are one and the same. The corresponding word wutjup in Wembawemba and Werkaya has precisely those two meanings.

The information we have on the related languages in a number of cases enables us to see that Woiwurrung followed similargrammatical rules. Thus mirruk 'his eye' is the normal third person possessive form of mir 'eye' in Wembawemba and Werkaya, and the retroflex nasal rn is part of the system of morphophonemic changes connected with
possessive suffixes and not part of the stem, as is shown by parallel examples: lar 'camp', larnuk 'his camp'; kar 'leg', karnuk 'his leg'. The same seems to have applied in Woiwurrung. Similarly babanhu 'female' presumably reflects rules (attested from Wembawemba and Werkaya) regarding the use of a laminal nasal before the third person possessive marker: babanhu is therefore not a separate word, but the third person possessive form of ban 'mother'. burruñ -dhuth 'night-time' (69) means 'at night'; it does not contain an unknown suffix -dhuth but it is burruñ-dh-uth, the locative form in -uth (presumably pronounced atha / adha) with the common Kulin insertion of a stop after the final nasal as in yirram-b-uth 'tomorrow'.

In Werkaya there is a 'particularising' suffix -i which is commonly used at the end of the first member of compounds, especially in compounds denoting body parts. The examples given by Blake (p.79) could be explained in the same way.

On p. 80 we read

A scan of the vocabulary reveals that quite a number of words contain two meaningful parts. Unfortunately however, it has not been possible in most cases to ascertain the status of some of these parts (compounding element or suffix) or to determine their meaning.

There is no question that this statement is sadly true and it is not likely that we will ever be able to analyse some of these complex words. Two examples are chosen to illustrate the point:

\[
\begin{align*}
djinang-aluk & \quad \text{shoes} \\
\text{foot-} & \quad ? \\
\hline
\end{align*}
\]

and

\[
\begin{align*}
dharrang-aluk & \quad \text{trousers} \\
\text{thigh-} & \quad ? \\
\hline
\end{align*}
\]

In the Kulin languages possessive words follow the pattern

Stem+ Case marker + possessive marker

These words are therefore readily analysable from the available Woiwurrung data:

\[
\begin{align*}
djinang-al-uk & \quad \text{belonging to his (anybody's) feet, i.e. shoes} \\
\text{foot- GEN his} & \quad ? \\
\hline
\end{align*}
\]

and

\[
\begin{align*}
dharrang-al-uk & \quad \text{belonging to his (anybody's) thighs, i.e. trousers} \\
\text{thigh- GEN his} & \quad ? \\
\hline
\end{align*}
\]

One of the compound words in the vocabulary that can be be partly analysed is pirmbial 'rainbow' which must contain the word bial 'redgum'. There are a number of words which are partly analysable in that they contain the 'having' suffix -bil, well attested in other Kulin languages as-wil. This applies for instance to wigabil 'old', and to wāndharrabil 'crooked'; it applies to some of the adjectives denoting colours and to burmabil 'wet', which I suspect contains a misreading of m for n, not by Blake but by his sources, and should be barna-bil 'water-having'. This group of words also includes what was obviously a recently coined word, wurrgadabil 'coat' which is simply another spelling of wurrgarrabil 'black', presumably because men's overcoats were usually that colour. wykoon in wykoon primpum 'widower' is equivalent to Wembawemba wiken 'dead' and the compound therefore means 'dead wife (his)'. The most interesting of the many other at least partly analysable compounds is Dirrn-galk 'Milky way', dharranggalk 'comet' which must contain the word galk, 'bone', 'tree'. There is a possibility that the first part of the word is connected with dhurrarranyun, dharranhun and taudarding 'white', and that the compound means 'white tree'. The presence of the word galk might make one speculate about the idea behind the Central Australian Urumbula myth, the vision of the Milky Way as a giant tree.
which grew right up into the sky. Perhaps something of the kind was known to Woiwurrung people too.

Clearly, had there been space for a major monograph rather than a section of the Handbook much, much more could have been made of the analysis of Woiwurrung. However, in order to make an analysis of all the data with complete certainty one would have to have intimate knowledge of the language and hands-on experience of learning it. We are about ninety years too late for that, and we must be grateful to Barry Blake for what he has achieved with the difficult and scattered materials available.

The other contributors to this volume of the Handbook have had the opportunity for hands-on experience, though R.M.W. Dixon got to Mbabaram speakers well past the eleventh hour. The best preserved language is Panyjima from the Pilbara region of WA, studied by Alan Dench, and intimate knowledge and understanding are a hallmark of this work. The reviewer had recently for the first time listened to her limited data from south-eastern coastal WA, a long way from Panyjima, and had endless trouble trying to distinguish between alveolar and retroflex consonants. Here, right near the beginning of Dench’s work lay the answer: he was able to work out the environments in which backing and fronting of these consonants occurred both in Panyjima and a number of other WA languages. He does not simply give a list of phonemes but shows important phonetic insights. Perhaps in a later edition he might give us a translation for the tantalising sample sentences 1-3. Because of the work he has done with other languages in the area, notably Martuthunira, Dench has a real understanding of what is going on in Panyjima, and this is evident throughout. The language is particularly interesting as it is nominative-accusative, double case-marking is a conspicuous characteristic, and the verbal derivational system shows features unusual outside the Ngayarda language group, such as a collective. Dench includes a study of Paathupathu, a special form of the language used in speaking to certain kinsmen and in initiation situations. This study has important implications for understanding what was felt to be the core structure of Panyjima, and for understanding how avoidance styles can function in general.

The study of Djabugay from far North Queensland by Elizabeth Patz is a fascinating piece of work. Djabugay was recorded by Hale in the early 1960s, when there were still a number of fluent elderly speakers. Later the language almost became extinct. It was kept alive and revitalised by a determined and far-sighted speaker, Roy Banning, and is now being taught in local schools. The present work is based on the material recorded by Hale, supplemented with recordings made with Roy Banning by H. Cassels and by Elizabeth Patz herself. In conformity with the wishes of Djabugay people she has used the orthography that was developed by M. Quinn and R. Banning in their school program for the language. Elizabeth Patz is known for her work on a neighbouring language to the north-west, Kuku Yalandji. She has used her wide knowledge to great advantage not only in the recognition of cognates, but also in the understanding of the features that are unique to Djabugay such as the absence of inchoatives formed from nouns and the absence of causative transitive verbs formed from nominals.

The fourth language described in this volume, Mbabaram, was once spoken in the rainforests of far north Queensland. Tindale considered the rainforest people to be genetically different and ‘Tasmanoid’ and thought the languages in the area were different from other Australian languages. In 1964 R.M.W. Dixon went to investigate the situation. He found that one of the rainforest languages, Mbabaram and a related and extinct language Agwamin did indeed appear different from other Australian languages. Mbabaram was only partially remembered by two elderly speakers and he was only able to record some 300 words. He recognised that the ‘different’ appearance of Mbabaram was due to profound
phonological changes. His early publications on Mbabaram in 1966 showed this. They were read avidly at the time by the reviewer, but they were highly theoretical and hard to understand. The present work does more than make amends for this: it is a model of just how much a brilliant and experienced linguist can draw even from very limited data.

Luise Hercus
Australian National University


Although we have virtually no national data on the health status of Australia's Aboriginal population, the available data demonstrate conclusively the gap between the health of Aboriginal people and that of the non-Aboriginal population. Teachers and students, researchers and commentators, have had access, over the years, to such epidemiological data as are available, particularly through the work of the Aboriginal Health Unit of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Much has been written about Aboriginal health, but the literature has been diffused throughout various journals and book chapters. What has been missing has been books which provide systematic and comprehensive descriptions and analyses of the Aboriginal health field as a whole.

In 1991 two books were published which sought to fill this gap: Aboriginal Health and Society: The Traditional and Contemporary Aboriginal Struggle for Better Health by Sherry Saggers and Dennis Gray; and The Health of Aboriginal Australia, edited by Janice Reid and Peggy Trompf (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Sydney, 1991). Although their contents overlap, these books have different focuses and fill different needs. The former seeks to provide a coherent, political economy-based argument about Aboriginal health. The latter contains far more material and is the work of a number of authors each concentrating on her or his own chapter's theme. Reid and Trompf have made considerable efforts to present an Aboriginal viewpoint (although most of the contributors are non-Aboriginal people); Saggers and Gray have explicitly written from a non-Aboriginal perspective for a non-Aboriginal readership. Both are excellent books and are already being used as key resources for people keen to better understand and to communicate about contemporary issues in Aboriginal health.

Aboriginal Health and Society, the subject of this review, was written (Saggers and Gray tell us) as a text book on Aboriginal health 'for undergraduates and graduates in both health and social science-related courses' (p.ix). The book takes an overtly political economy perspective. In seven chapters, it sets out a range of orientations to studying Aboriginal health, describes traditional patterns of health and disease, discusses historical factors (particularly colonisation and its consequences), contemporary Aboriginal mortality and morbidity, mainstream and Aboriginal-controlled health policy and services, and concludes with an integrating chapter on the political economy of health and illness generally and Aboriginal health particularly.

Given these contents, one would expect the book's sub-title to be 'The Political Economy of Aboriginal Health', not 'The Traditional and Contemporary Aboriginal Struggle for Better Health'. Indeed, readers expecting the book to focus on Aboriginal
people's own struggles to improve Aboriginal health will be disappointed. Although the significance of that struggle is not denied by the authors, the approach that they have taken to political economy means that Aboriginal people's own roles and experiences in creating change receive less emphasis than the need for change in power relations in Australian society generally, and internationally.

The book is valuable for its comprehensiveness and consistent theoretical basis. The individual chapters are written in stand-alone form thus enhancing the book's usefulness for reference purposes. Its data and sources cover the period to 1989 (although one June 1990 statistic has found its way in [page 176] and the authors cite their own 1991 chapter in Reid and Trompf).

The political economy focus is the book's organising theme. In the main, the authors differentiate clearly their presentations of factual, descriptive information from their interpretations. The final chapter draws together the material presented earlier, provides an overview of political economy concepts and presents the book's conclusions: first, that the poor health of Aboriginal people reflects their relative powerlessness and poverty and, secondly, that action needs to focus on the link between health, illness and capitalism and the relationships between capitalism and medical practice.

For this reviewer, the main weakness in the book is one of structure, rather than content. The book is littered with sociological jargon the meaning of which will be unknown to many readers. The concepts represented by these terms, such as 'political economy' and 'structural determinism', are key concepts essential to the book's arguments. However, in the main they are either left undefined or defined and discussed only in the final chapter. A different organisation, one in which the reader is introduced to the sociological constructs far earlier in the book, would make its contents more understandable and its central theme more convincing.

A second concern is the authors' references to Aboriginal organisations, especially the Aboriginal community-controlled health services. Either the authors are ambivalent about the role of these crucial elements in Aboriginal health or they were unable to devote sufficient space to this area. Few readers will be convinced, through Saggers and Gray's presentation, of the importance of the Aboriginal health services in achieving Aboriginal people's health and broader social goals. This reflects, I suggest, the book's efforts (which I support) to argue in two directions simultaneously, namely the need to redress the unequal power relations which exist between the dominant Australian society and Aboriginal people on the one hand, and the need for Aboriginal perceptions to shape the definition of Aboriginal health problems and to determine the nature of service delivery aimed at enhancing the health of Aboriginal people.

In conclusion, readers seeking a wide-ranging presentation of information on the nature and causes of Aboriginal health and illness and policies and priorities in this area, along with discussions of policy options for change, will find this book valuable. Those who already hold a 'new public health' or political economy of health orientation are likely to applaud Saggers and Gray's interpretations and proffered solutions. Readers unfamiliar with this orientation, or even opposed to it, will be challenged by this book to give more weight to the importance of power relationships as a key determinant of the health of Aboriginal people.

David McDonald
Australian Institute of Criminology

161

This book, as the preface from Altman and Taylor indicates, is a collection of papers drawn from a workshop by the same name as the book and held in Canberra in 1990. Any book of such a length and with eighteen contributors is obviously not capable of considering any one subject in-depth. However what the book lacks as an in-depth study is irrelevant to its practical purposes. Anyone wanting such coverage should consult the 'Aboriginal Arts and Crafts Industry Report' of the Review Committee chaired by Altman.

The workshop drew together over 60 people from all areas of interest in Aboriginal art but particularly people with practical experience in the industry. The papers presented include contributions from artists, Aboriginal Art Centre staff, retailers, small scale manufacturers, a government policy maker, educators, anthropologists and people involved in copyright procedures. The result of the combination of practical experience and diversity of perspectives is a book which gives not just a quick dip into the diversity of the Aboriginal Arts Industry, but also a collection of anecdotal comment and experiential details which will be of use to a wide ranging audience. There is also information here of value to all persons involved in any area of creative endeavour from visual arts to writing, and from production to marketing. Altman's introductory paper informs what has happened in the Aboriginal Arts Industry since the 'Report of the Review Committee', outlines general features of the industry, highlights the pivotal role of local publicly funded art centres and contrasts those centres marketing fine art from those marketing tourist art. He also provides us with the information that in 1987-88 as much as 45% of production was bought by overseas visitors, while only 5% was exported, meaning of course that 50% was sold to the home market in Australia.

Areas discussed in the other papers include the contrast between the tourist and fine arts markets, the need for relating together types of production and appropriate markets. Advice is given on the details and meanings of copyright and the legal processes of protecting and financially developing created works. Advice is also given on the need for sound financial marketing and management support at all levels from that of the individual artist to that of the large commercial wholesale and retail art businesses.

Several writers describe a range of the different practices and practical issues at the large Aboriginal Art Centres while others speaking from an entirely different viewpoint present issues that are concerned with personal or cultural relevance of the artistic production and the difficulties involved on occasion with resolving differences between cultural (meaning religious) and economic values in the production and sale of some items.

Alltogether this book can make a useful and practical contribution to the work of any person involved in the Aboriginal Arts Industry but additionally will be of practical assistance also to others involved in other artistic endeavour than Aboriginal art.

John Rudder
Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
BOOK REVIEWS


Desert Crafts appears to be designed for the dual purpose of servicing the tourist market, and beyond that to popularise the craft produced by the Anangu people and sold through the Maruku Craft Centre. The Anangu are defined as being the Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara and Ngaanyanyatjara but as also including the Matutjara and Ngaatjatjara. The book divided into three sections, gives in the first part, a quickly and easily digested introduction to the people and their desert environment, a brief skim over some of the mythology of Uluru and Katajtjuta and an outline of the process by which the Anangu have regained ownership of their land. While this latter is brief it gives enough detail to indicate that this was not easily achieved.

Part two outlines the development of the craft industry in this desert region as it relates to the Maruku Centre. It skims quickly from early attempts by individuals to make an income by selling carvings by the roadside to the development of the Amata Craft centre and subsequently the process of the development of the Maruku Centre, Maruku Arts and Crafts, based at Uluru. We are then taken on a craft buying trip with Maruku staff and introduced to some of the realities and discomforts of the work involved and the processes by which the various artefacts are gathered and brought to the Centre.

The third section describes the production processes by which the separate items are made and emphasises the authenticity of artifacts and the artistic creativity of the small carvings produced. It closes with very brief references to the desert crafts from other sources giving a courtesy nod to the work of Winifred Hilliard and others who have developed various craft industries among the Pitjantjatjara, and includes an even briefer reference to paintings from Papunya and Yuendumu, largely dismissing the relevance of the latter with the comment that 'Maruku has curbed the dotty fever from becoming an epidemic, preferring to quietly encourage the maintenance of valuable traditional woodworking skills, even in the face of pressures from the tourist market'.

Throughout, the narrative is enlivened by delightful anecdotes and combines with the wide selection of coloured photographs to present a glowing representation of the Anangu, their artistic skills and creativity, their authenticity as hunters and gatherers and their humanity. They become a people without spot or wrinkle and fitting representations of the image of the noble savage.

With all the positive aspects of this book yet I find myself disturbed by it. Many things are larger than life, particularly the Anangu and this is graphically reflected in the larger-than-normal-text type face used for quotations from them. In contrast, some things are smaller than life and this conflict between reality and unreality is expressed throughout. The visual presentation of the book itself is one uncomfortable example of this. The combination of highly magnified details of the textures of pokerwork, carved design and other close up photographs are combined with small scale photos that one would like to be able to see more clearly. The overall effect is an awkward sense of attraction and repulsion in some ways a true but apparently inadvertent representation of the desert itself. The book is designed for both quick skimming and more thoughtful consideration and these two design features are in conflict with each other. To see the large, one has to look past the small and to see the small one has to look past the large.

Overall the book will achieve what it set out to do. Its intention is not to provide an exhaustive coverage and this should not be expected, though in the general discussion I did not find any major ethnographic errors. It provides a useful introduction to the Anangu and it will serve its obvious purpose which is to popularise Anangu craft and increase cash flow.
for them. It will also make the world aware of the work being done by the two people who manage the Maruku crafts. One wonders however of the future with all this activity. The desert is a big place but already in some areas all the quandong trees have been turned into little wooden creatures and there are no replacements. Will the river red gum, the bean tree and the spearbush also become more scarce and will Desert Crafts and Maruku by their very effectiveness in popularising the industry be simultaneously contributing to its demise? Is it time for Maruku to look to the future, do some environmental impact studies, and start carefully encouraging some other art forms that are a little less 'authentic' and a little more kind to the fragile desert environment?

John Rudder
Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies


This work presents a collection of extracts from interviews with Aboriginal people from all over the Northern Territory, taped in 1976-77, and recorded mostly by the authors. The Northern Territory Department of Education, which commissioned the recordings, declined to make use of them; but rather than let them continue to languish in obscurity, Peter and Jay Read have done a service to posterity by selecting over eighty extracts of interviews, and presenting them in both book and audio cassette form. The book contains verbatim transcripts of the selected pieces, and copies of the original recordings of virtually all these selections are presented in a box of three cassettes, which is separately packaged, and may be purchased separately also.

The majority of material to read and hear comprises interview questions and their often detailed responses, from a wide range of speakers. There has been very little compromise with this speech in the transcripts, which are as close to being completely verbatim as the transcribers could manage. The point of note here, of course, is that for people not very familiar with the speech of outback Aboriginal people, sometimes the language forms used by the speakers can be very difficult to comprehend. The dilemma for presenters of any oral history material recorded with speakers for whom 'standard' English is not a first language is that any attempt to re-present the written form in a 'standard' language is to intercede yet another element of control between the speaker and the audience. The verbatim transcripts will be the vehicle through which most of the audience for this work will come to initially comprehend the ideas, stories and views of the informants. But for virtually any oral history recording of informal speech, no matter what language is used, transcripts are a representation in non-verbal language of something that was spoken, not written, and are always, to a greater or lesser degree, only a reflection of that inimically human activity of personal communication. Consequently, the tape recordings are a vital element of the work. Without them, readers have only the transcribers' understanding of what was being said that day out bush; even though the transcripts have been very thoroughly and skilfully worked. But through the recordings, the listener has the means to appreciate much sense and feeling.
BOOK REVIEWS

that is beyond cold print: one can reach past the conventions of the written form in direct access to the informant.

However, readers will come across a number of difficulties. The verbatim transcript is sparse on translation or interpretation of the informants' speech, with only occasional insertion of words within square brackets to amplify sense. The compilers were clearly motivated by a desire to minimise 'editorial interference', and concerned that full translations would not represent 'a wholly Aboriginal view'. Whilst commendable motivation, this view begs the question of just how 'wholly' transcripts can reflect the reality of speech forms from a non-literate linguistic environment anyway. Furthermore, the language forms used are usually different enough from those familiar to many for whom the book and cassettes are intended, to often challenge comprehension. Probably the fullest appreciation of the material would come from reading and listening at the same time, but unfortunately, much of the sound has been indifferently recorded, has high levels of ambient noise, and is not without some minor editing errors - bits missing or repeated, and sometimes brutal cuts and joins. For the 'average' reader who is not accustomed to following audible speech with transcription and text, a tape player with a good pause button and headphones are recommended. But given the richly expressive way these informants speak, most book owners with the tapes will not be deterred by the little extra concentration needed. To hear Dinny Japaljarri speaking in the extract from which the title is drawn makes the printed words seem bland, and the provision of verbatim transcripts is more than ample for the listener's perception of words, if not always grasp of meaning. The authors and publishers are to be commended for not letting the superficial audio difficulties prevent broad access to this valuable body of records.

Indeed, the Reads have gone to considerable lengths to assist the reader/listener, both in the task of comprehending the language, and in appreciating the context of the events and ideas dealt with by informants. Comparisons between translations and transcripts usually throw up many examples of where transcripts beg outright misunderstanding by the general English readership, but the book's prefatory pages include a succinct note on the language of the stories, which is compulsory reading for anyone not wholly familiar with it. Whether all this information can be sufficiently remembered by readers as they become involved in the rich tapestry of events that follow is a moot point.

A selection of the memories of any group of individuals is only going to provide a sometimes arbitrarily scattered series of relatively minute reflections of the broad sweep of events, but the Reads have been able to arrange the material with usually brief introductory comments for the extracts, and bridging accounts of some of the major events which provide the basis for the selection and arrangement of material. This makes the whole work a very coherent presentation. The editorial text often provides general interpretation of the stories, or aspects of them, so possible misunderstandings are minimised. Most importantly, a particularly useful chronology of events in Northern Territory history since 1820 is provided, which includes details of the establishment of key places and legislative changes, against which the events recorded in the book and cassettes are placed in context. There are also several small-scale sketch maps which help appreciation of the basic facts of some stories, and a large-scale Territory map showing most of the locations mentioned. Also included are often excellent black and white photos of most of the speakers, some of the places and activities mentioned, and some fascinating archival images.

Of course, this editorial work of the collectors goes well into the realm of authorship, and is an inevitable structure between voices and audience. The authors often refer to other publications where closer analysis and description, with support from a wide range of sources, is available on particular aspects occurring in this work; although some of these
are also rich in oral history quotations, in *Long Time, Olden Time* the written text is basically contextual, and the primary value of the combined book/tapes publication is its voice.

The oral history material is arranged into two broad groupings: firstly, conflict; and secondly, living with whites. Apart from a concentration of material about the killing times, also provided are Aboriginal views of the process of adaptation to change and involvement in the conqueror's economy, and war against the Japanese. The author/editors explain that they resisted any temptation to re-work or expand the material beyond the way it was prepared for publication in 1978, and that the outcome reflects their pre-occupations in the seventies. Much of their vision at that time is still apt, but one aspect of selection that does impinge noticeably on the work's scope is that few of the informants were women. In any oral testimony there is always a distinct and very interesting difference in style and manner between genders, which was highlighted for me in listening to the few inclusions from women in the tapes. More importantly, however, there are few indications in this work of the effects that European domination and dispossession have had on Aboriginal women which are quite different from that experienced by men, for example on both their traditional and modern roles and identity in relation to children, marriage and work, education and health care.

Nevertheless, many of the speakers, some of whom could remember specific massacres, have since died, and we are indebted to the collectors for having preserved their voices and memories, of these events in particular. Even today in the nineties, there is clearly insufficient appreciation in Australia generally of the degree and detail of how the new arrivals practiced the near genocidal appropriation of the land of the first inhabitants, let alone the long saga of difficult, though often brave and humorous process of adaptation. Despite the naturally selective nature of collected oral history extracts, and the compact style of the brief editorial text, this work provides a rich insight into the texture of human interaction which goes well beyond journalistic actuality, whilst placing the informal recollections within their historical context. It is more than a useful historical text for study: oral history crosses lines in the publishing world, and affords both information and enlightenment in the context of a direct experience of informants which holds interest for its own sake.

**LIST OF REFERENCES**


Francis Good


Very little is written about the great contribution Aborigines have given to the early days of the cattle industry in Australia. At first the Aborigines were inexperienced but they soon developed great skills at station work. Initially they were attracted to stockwork in order to

---

1. For example, Rose 1991.
2. For example, see Hamilton 1975.
BOOK REVIEWS

get European food. Many of them were forced to accept such employment because their hunting and gathering lifestyle was disrupted. These people found themselves in a very tough world. But many Aborigines developed a liking for the work. It was exciting work and close to nature and the land.

Cattle management required mustering (sometimes wild herds), calving, weaning, branding, earmarking, dehorning and castrating calves, dipping and inoculation, and droving.

'Unbranded' is a very easy to read, often light-hearted novel. Herb Wharton relates his story without any vindictiveness or malice but the reader can read between the lines that life in the bush was sometimes unjust and often harsh.

This is the story of three bushmen, Sandy is a white man; Binda, a murri; Mulga is related on his mother's side to Bindi, and on his Irish father's side to Sandy.

Their saga tells how Sandy achieves his life-long ambition of owning a cattle empire; how Bindi successfully assists his people attain their tribal lands and how Mulga, who noticed many things, particularly the quirks in human nature, set about putting his thoughts down on paper.

Woven into this fine tapestry of bush experiences is the theme of their enduring friendship which covers forty years in the Mulga country of the far west.

I found this book to be enjoyable, light reading but for all its gentleness, it really 'packed a punch' in that it improved my meagre knowledge of bush life and heightened my awareness of the valuable contributions Aborigines have made in settling this country. This book should be found in every school library and the libraries of other places of learning. It helps to fill a gap in the 200 years history of white settlement.

Pearl Duncan
Queensland University of Technology


This book represents the most comprehensive work published so far by the Arandic Languages Dictionaries Program of the Institute for Aboriginal Development, which since the mid eighties has produced a series of wordlists on Central Australian languages belonging to the Arandic family. This project has been partially funded by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

The book has an attractive cover reproducing a detail of a batik from Mary Akermarr's 'Wild Orange Dreaming'. The acknowledgements list, among others, the names of 72 Alyawarr contributors, grouped according to the community of their residence. These communities can be identified on a map, given in the Introduction, of the Alyawarr region, which is centred on the Sandover River some 200 kilometers north-east of Alice Springs. Other topics covered in the Introduction include a guide to pronunciation, rules for spelling and hyphenation, charts explaining the system of kinship-related 'skin names', a description of the layout of dictionary entries, and a short bibliography. At the back of the book are tables of the numerous pronouns and word endings. Also near the end of the book is an English to Alyawarr Finder, consisting of a 70-page wordlist arranged alphabetically by the English terms.
The core of the book is a 242-page alphabetical listing of the Alyawarr vocabulary. Headwords are in bold typeface, followed by an indication of their part of speech (noun, verb, pronoun, etc.). Verbs are given in the present tense form. Different senses of the word are numbered. Each sense is illustrated with an Alyawarr sentence, which is followed by its English translation. To illustrate I reproduce an entry:

arrkerneyel v.i.
1. try something out. Artwar ampwele nhak amerr ikwerenh arrkerneyel. The old man over there is trying out his spear thrower. 2. taste something. Arrkernenharey amerne anatyre anwekanther. Taste the bush potato for us.

Words or phrases derived from the headword are listed in the same entry. Thus under inteng 'rotten, stinking, sour' are listed: intengerreyel 'go rotten'; inteng-inteng 1. 'plants with strong smell', 2. 'stink bug'; inteng-aperte 'smelly, foul'. Where there is a difference in pronunciation between the far eastern (Lake Nash) dialect and the other (western) dialect, words are followed by (LN) or (W) respectively. Attention is called to words that sound almost the same as the headword. Thus under the entry for aleny 'tongue' we find: "Sounds similar to arleny 'dry'."

Natural species are identified by their scientific term where possible. Thus inap is rendered as 'porcupine, echidna, anteater (Tachyglossus aculeatus)', and is accompanied by a sketch. The numerous illustrations aid greatly in recognising plants, animals, artefacts, and poses (such as 'stand with hand holding the other above the wrist (behind back)' (p. 82).

The headwords include the grammatical suffixes of the language. Suffixes are alphabetised with the other headwords, but indicated by a preceding plus sign; e.g. +e1 ending

instrumental (shows what he action is done with).

Here, as generally, the superscript distinguishes between headwords that are pronounced and spelled in the same manner.

Some technical comments can be made of the writing system (which, we are told was finalised by decisions made at a meeting of literate Alyawarr speakers (p. xiv). But first a word about stress. Nothing is said about stress in this book. Apparently the first vowel that follows a consonant is the one that is stressed, i.e. pronounced loudest. The interested language learner would have been helped if this general rule had been provided in the Introduction.

Final vowels are not generally written. Thus 'water' is spelled kwaty, whereas in Arrernte it is spelled kwaty. There are linguistic justifications for this practice. For example, final vowels are predictable (every word potentially ends in one) and there is never a choice as to which vowel occurs at the end of a word. It is always e unless the vowel needs to bear stress, in which case it is a. In this book a stressed final vowel is written and spelled as a, in for instance ika 'shell'. The analysis here appears to represent the views of Gavan Breen.1

Hyphens are used to separate (a) the two parts of a reduplicated word such as kwatykwyaty 'watery', (b) some compound words, such as apwert-arlkwenh, a type of grass that literally translate 'stone-ate', (c) "long" suffixes and enclitics (those containing two or more non-adjacent consonants), except when they follow short word stems. Enclitics are words that are pronounced as part of the preceding word. Their meaning is less integrated with the word stem than is that of suffixes. Hence a case could be made for separating all enclitics by a hyphen. As for compound words, it seems odd that derived verbs in -erre- or -irre- are hyphenated, since they are clearly compounds. In fact irre- is listed as a separate

1 Breen n.d.
verb meaning 'become' (p. 162), and there is variation between compounded and non-compounded forms. Thus we find (p. 162) in the same sentence pwerep ayeng irreyel- 'frightened I become' and ayengan apwereperreyel- 'I -EMPHATIC frightened-become'. An alternative representation of the latter would be ayeng-an apwereperreyel-, with hyphens separating off the enclitic -an and dividing the compound verb.

The combined policy on hyphenation and (not) writing final vowels leads to some awkward consequences in the writing system. In the first place, the reader needs to mentally insert a vowel e between consonants separated by a hyphen, such as kwaty-kwaty, kanty-they 'by the tail' (p. 229), ilek-penhe 'why'. Secondly, suffixes are analysed as beginning with a vowel. Hence 'in the water', which is spelled kwatyel, is analysed as kwaty-el 'water-LOCATIVE' But this analysis is not applied consistently. Longer suffixes that occur on nouns are given as beginning with a consonant. Thus 'into the water' is kwaty-warl and 'without water' is kwaty-weny (spelled without the e that occurs between the consonants separated by a hyphen. On the other hand verbal suffixes are given with initial vowels, e.g. etyke, -emer. Short noun stems, those which end in a stressed vowel a, such as rwa 'fire', are said (p. xv) to have their suffixes begin with a vowel e, before which the final a of the stem is dropped. Thus 'in the fire' and 'without fire' are rwele and rweweny, analysed as r(a)-el and r(a)-eweny respectively.

An alternative policy, which I have used for Kaytetye, an adjacent language with an identical system of sounds, is to treat all words as ending in the vowel e, and suffixes where possible as beginning with a consonant, whether or not hyphens are used to separate off suffixes. Then the words above would be analysed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>'water'</th>
<th>'fire'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kwaty</td>
<td>rwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kwaty-le</td>
<td>rwe-le</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kwaty-warle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kwaty-weny</td>
<td>rwe-weny</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here all the formal bits have a consistent spelling. The only inconsistency with pronunciation is that the final e when it is stressed (here only in rwe) is to be pronounced as a.

The intricacies of Arandic phonology and the orthography that best represents it have been the subject discussion among linguists and literate speakers for a considerable number of years. The policy represented here is not definitive. It is envisaged that 'as more people become literate it is probable that speakers of Alyawarr will refine the spelling system as it appears in this dictionary' (xvi).

To the reader who is neither a linguist nor a speaker (or learner) of Alyawarr this book will primarily be of interest for the copious information about Alyawarr culture, environment, and worldview that can be gleaned from the perusal of this dictionary. These insights can be gained both from observing the categorisation that is revealed by the words and from the illustratory sentences, each of which provides a little window into the world of the Alyawarr.

**LIST OF REFERENCES**

Breen, G. n.d., The syllable in Arrernte phonology. (unpublished paper)

H. Koch
Australian National University

---

2 See the texts in Koch & Koch 1993.
Aratjara: Art of the First Australians. Traditional and contemporary works by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists. Exhibition held in Düsseldorf, April-July, 1993, and to be held in London, Humbleback, Louisiana, and Melbourne.

Ulrich Krempel's 'Preliminary Remarks' indicate that 'the purpose and intention' of the Aratjara exhibition is to gain 'an understanding of OTHER PEOPLE'S ways of seeing and thinking.' As the catalogue of the same name was the only way in which viewers of the exhibition could discover the names of the artists, tables of works or any other details about the background of the artists, does the catalogue succeed in giving 'an understanding' as suggested?

The catalogue is, as with a number of similar catalogues in recent years, in reality a sizeable book of 379 pages. The sub-title, 'Art of the First Australians', is probably essential as an explanation for almost all readers, particularly as the major viewing and purchasing audiences have been European. It is available in German, French and English: this review is of the latter edition.

There can be little doubt that photographic reproductions of the art-works, artists at work, country of the artists and occasionally historically significant items will be the initial reason for purchase. The majority are beautifully clear photographs with conventional limited captions. (The 'Exhibition Register' notes pp. 331-52 gave expanded details). There are occasional minor problems with the latter, the captions on pp. 246 and 280 being intermingled, and incorrect or variant spellings of people's names occurring on pp. 256-61. Despite such flaws, the book is worthy of purchase for the illustrations alone.

Readers are presented with a wide range of writing styles and interests; contributions range from 3 to 18 pages in length, each page being in two columns and totally approximately 700 words. Not all pages are numbered, and some articles which draw on other research do not have accompanying reference notes. However the 'Editor's Comments', a 'Glossary' and other information near the end of the book (pp. 353-64) provide useful guides for the more interested readers. The list of authors (p. 378) incorrectly describes Dick Kimber as a 'journalist', but is otherwise adequate.

Before commencing a brief review of the contributions, it is worth reiterating that the exhibition and catalogue were prepared with primarily European viewers and readers in mind. Most people who purchased the book would not have been to Australia, and would have had little idea of the way of Aboriginal cultures and arts.

Bernhard Luthi provides the major introductory article (pp. 15-31). As an artist who worked hard to overcome many difficulties in having his concept of the exhibition accepted, and who has direct experience of the arts in Europe, North America and Australia, he is aware of '[the] practice of marginalising contemporary art which is not part of our immediate [Western] cultural sphere'. His writing, which traces the European history of artistic interest in indigenous peoples, is 'characterised by personal careers'. He attacks the prejudices which have for so long prevailed and his perception is that 'Australian society - and particularly - the Australian government - [has] engaged in a conspiracy of silence'. 'In cultural terms Australia was a nonexistent continent [without art] - and it has remained so to this day!'

This bleak, condemnatory view of a non-existent continent with non-existent art jolts the general Australian reader and, presumably, Australian artists too.
Luthi's article is followed by Jean-Hubert Martin's thoughtful contribution, 'A Delayed Communication' (pp. 32-5). The difficulty the Aboriginal art-works pose for comprehension above-and-beyond 'the visual impact and the formal quality' are considered. In essence, though, he and, indeed, directly or indirectly all of the writers, support Luthi's view that marginalisation is no longer acceptable.

[There] are creators all over the world today producing fascinating works. Let us give them a chance to display them, to express themselves and to talk about them. Don't let's wait for them to die before allowing their works into the museums. We need to substitute a dialogue - or the word of the artist - for the delirium of Western interpretation and excessive verbalising.

Ulrich Krempel complements this message (pp. 37-40), suggesting that 'a few slow steps into the context of Aboriginal art are necessary if we are to truly grasp intention, content and technique'.

These 'few slow steps' are variously developed in the ensuing articles. Gary Lee, a member of the Larrakia (Larrakeah) people of Darwin and Cox Peninsula, brilliantly illustrates 'the history of non-appreciation' in Australia (pp. 41-8). He examines the works on display in government buildings in Darwin, clearly telling how Larrakia culture has been totally ignored, and suggests that the evidence that does not illustrates 'the government's exploitation of Aboriginal culture'. Galarrwuy Yunupingu takes a very different approach (pp. 64-6) but, as he points out, it took the famous 1963 Bark Petition to the Federal Parliament to show that the Yirrkala people 'were not people who could be painted out of the picture or left at the edge of history'. Banduk Marika, in 'Yirrkala Today', develops from the Yunupingu comment, and, after telling of the positive aspects in the arts and general culture, appeals to all people 'to love their land'.

Two of the other Aboriginal contributors, Les Griggs (pp. 82-3) and Gordon Barnett (pp. 85-91) indicate how they have almost had to jack-hammer away at barriers to be able to express their Aboriginal identity, while Djon Mundine (pp. 76-8) tells of his craft-adviser, mediator and educational roles. Ownership, control, the right to develop in a dynamic way using modern media - these are the themes of Gary Lee's further strong article on the Kimberley country and arts (pp. 197-204). He perceives a continuum of Aboriginal culture in the numerous developing interests and concludes on a positive note:

While an analysis of art from the Kimberley region brings into question such issues as commercialisation and the problematic balance of old and new ways, it also shows that besides analysing, one can do, and Kimberley Aborigines are doing all, in music, literature and painting, of what is happening in different levels in different parts of Australia.

Lin Onus, in a lucid presentation covering the entirety of southern Australia (pp. 289-96), discuss the 'political and artistic situation of Aboriginal people in those areas of Australia where the impact of colonisation was first felt'. The overwhelming perception is of a 'renewed sense of identity and spirit' through rediscovery of peoples' artistic origins, and the ability to apply such knowledge both in the present and into the future.

Diane Moon gives a brief, factual account of Maningrida, showing how the artistic traditions are 'open to change' (pp. 79-81). This concept, or observation, is well-developed in an extremely well-researched article by Judith Ryan (pp. 49-63). The author emphasises the 'contemporary' nature of works that are available, no matter what the background of the Aboriginal artists. In a wide-ranging study she rightly observes of the creations:

They are not fossilized relics of a changeless world, but art - that is, part of a living process - and project a dynamic, changing aesthetic.
Henrietta Fourmile (pp. 73-5) shows how 'the patriarchal obsessions of white Australia' marginalised Aboriginal women artists, but indicates how acceptance and recognition developed during the 1980s-1990s.

Linday Wilson's 'The Islands Of The Torres Strait' (pp. 95-102), Mark Hollingsworth's 'Cape York Peninsula and Northern Queensland' (pp. 109-115), and Paul Tacon's Arnhem Land study (pp. 127-134) are all important, readable, academic contributions. They complement the earlier-mentioned Kimberley study by Gary Lee, and in their totality give an erudite coverage of the entirety of northern Australia. As Tacon observes, the Aborigines have retained contact with their lands and cultures, despite many pressures, and they 'emphasise that their is a living tradition that changes with circumstance'. Once again, there is a clear statement that the cultures are dynamic, respecting their ancestral pasts, yet adapting to the present on their terms.

The final geographical settings to be considered are the desert regions of Australia - in part already lucidly referred to by Judith Ryan. Kimber attempts a different, less academic, approach than the above-mentioned authors, and presents something of a 'mixed bag' (pp. 221-39). Editorial advice indicated that the toa art of the Diyari as well as all central and Western Desert arts and some social aspects should be commented upon, including - in a direct way - the life and art of Albert Namatjira, Subsections, Cutstations, Ground Paintings, Women's Art, and the art of Papunya, Yuendumu, Lajarnanu and Balgo. The author uses 'comfortable' European perceptions early in his article, but then lets the mythological trails carry readers westerly. Along his route, with a pause at Alice Springs, he repeats some well-known points, postulates some ideas on article developments, uses his own knowledge and experiences fairly extensively, acknowledges the significance of art-advisors of integrity, and is a little anti-intellectual. A disappointing aspect is that the map and article were the only ones in the book for which the gallery-proofs were not available for a final check; this has resulted in over 100 errors in spelling and punctuation. Some of these are simple, such as the almost constant misspelling of Killalpaninna, Diyari and occurred, but others - such as dep for den, winked for oriented and chair instead of chain - make nonsense of the original intent.

Finally, from this reviewer's perspective, the most interesting article of all is 'Jardiwarnpa Jukurrpa' as told by Darby Jampijinpa Ross (pp. 280-83). It is probably the most difficult of all for any European who has not been to Australia to comprehend, and, indeed, one really needs to have met Darby Jampijinpa and to have travelled the country with him to appreciate his story. This being the likely case, and Australia being Luthi's 'nonexistent continent', it is impossible not to argue with Jean-Hubert Martin's observation. Here is a genuinely interested French student of Aboriginal art, who in many ways represents all Europeans, all residents of North America, and probably most in Australia:

One can more or less imagine what 'Dreaming' is ..., but it is difficult to go much further than that. Following Aboriginal explanations one can recognise and name the various elements in these paintings. The thought structure, the references and the speech - which reach us distorted by translation - still remain an enigma despite the valiant attempt to explain them in the ensuing texts. (p. 32)

As a series of texts, then, the book fails - probably to the surprise of some of the contributors. Perhaps this was inevitable, given the marginalisation of Aboriginal arts for such a long time: the works dazzle, the words fail. Perhaps nationalism erects too many barriers. And perhaps it requires a degree of immersion in Aboriginal lands and cultures to
Begin to scratch the surface of understanding. And then again, perhaps the perception of future is too pessimistic, and Darby Jampijinpa is worth listening to again.

I'm just telling this story straight. True, true, true. He came to the snake cave. The name of the place is Ngama. Where is this dog Kungarra-pungu staying? He staying at the snake cave Ngama.

I'm just telling you the story. Law, Aboriginal law. (p. 281).

R.G. (Dick) Kimber


This handsome book obviously deserves a place on the shelf beside its predecessor in any reference library concerned with Australia. The problem with reviewing it is to stop reading it. Following the first volume which covered the period up to 1945, this one includes entries on people whose main activity in the Northern Territory lay before 1978, including quite a few omitted from the earlier volume. Since many of the subjects are vividly remembered or even still living, there are many good 'Territory stories' - in several senses of the phrase. In practice, a fairly light editorial hand on the style of the individual authors combined with some respect for the standard requirements of a biographical dictionary makes a good recipe for lively reading. For a visitor wanting the feel of Territory history and unwilling to embark on a conventional narrative account, this would be an excellent alternative. This history is significantly different form that of the rest of Australia, and it shows in these lives.

One aspect of this difference is in the proportion of the population of Aboriginal descent and there has been a real effort to reflect this in the selection of subjects. On my count, there are seventeen entries for Aborigines and one for a Torres Strait Islander, to say nothing of the Chinese, Germans and a host of others from the most surprising backgrounds. Any count, however, has to be a bit arbitrary since something is told of the life of many more individuals than those who are accorded their own entry. What is very striking is the number of non-Aboriginal people whose lives were significantly affected by relations with Aborigines, either as policeman, settlement superintendent or missionary, or by marriage, dependence for labour or child care. Given the obvious impact of Europeans and their ideas on Aboriginal lives, it is useful to be reminded that the influence was not all one way. Nowhere in Australia has the line between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal been entirely clear and that applies, above all, in the Northern Territory.

A particularly helpful category of entry is that of people, such as Sir Paul Hasluck or the artist Ian Fairweather, who only had an involvement with the Territory for a brief period or in one aspect of their career. They were still a part of the scene.

In any such collaborative enterprise it is possible to see some unevenness in treatment, regret some omissions or even pick up the odd slip, but some of these details can be attended to by a continuing programme of publication. What we have to date is a major contribution and there is ample scope to continue the project which has produced the two volumes so far.

Among much else, this second volume contains the best entry in a biographical dictionary I have yet read; R.G. Kimber's four and half pages on T.G.H. Strehlow is a
ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1993 17:2

masterpiece of objectivity, sensitivity and insight. Anyone interested in the study of the Aborigines must read this, as well as anyone who can appreciate a moving human story. And for the funniest entry, there is the same author's account of W.D. Hunter - but I won't spoil your laugh.

C.C. Macknight
Australian National University


This is the most comprehensive document ever written on Australian Aboriginal petrol sniffing. It is the result of extensive research involving the analysis of far-ranging medical data, an in-depth review of the literature on the world-wide use of volatile substances, and long-term anthropological fieldwork in a number of Aboriginal communities. The exhaustive bibliography is in itself an excellent research tool, and the synthetic presentation of data in the form of figures, tables and maps makes the findings easy to consult and to compare. In addition, this book offers a sensitive understanding of Aboriginal community life.

Brady's unstated goal is to provide new information for the development of alternative strategies to deal with petrol sniffing. In order to do so, she adopts a perspective that stands in contrast to the common approaches to substance abuse in which Aboriginal are envisaged as the helpless victims of external factors. The originality of Brady's approach is to analyse petrol sniffing from an inside or emic point of view, by listening, observing, and reconstituting the words and attitudes of the users, their relatives, community members and health workers. She is thereby able to explore the possibilities of social control that Aboriginal communities have over this practice. In doing so, she furnishes the reader with a variety of original and at times unexpected findings and hypothesis. Brady's theoretical perspective, inspired by N.E. Zinberg' s model (Drug, Set and Setting. Yale University Press, New Haven, 1984), distinguishes three interrelated determinants in drug use that she considers in the following order: the substance itself; the attitudes and personality of the users or 'set'; the socio-cultural environment and its influence on use or 'setting'.

The book begins with a survey of drug abuse among Australian Aboriginal people (Chapter 1) - petrol is used mainly in remote communities of Western Arnhem Land, Central Australia and the Eastern Goldfields region of Western Australia - and of petrol sniffing by minority groups and indigenous populations abroad (Chapter 2). The pathological effects of petrol sniffing as well as the different treatments employed, both overseas and in Australia, are discussed in detail in Chapters 3 and 4. The users' motivations are presented and discussed through accounts of interviews with sniffers, ex-sniffers and family members in Chapter 5. The author reveals a consistency between the need to express one's independence through petrol sniffing and an Aboriginal cultural emphasis on individual autonomy, emphasis that may prevent parents from interfering directly with the self-destructive behaviour of their children. One of Brady's most original findings is the discovery that young people, notably those in Central Australia, engage in
BOOK REVIEWS

petrol sniffing with the intention to lose weight and to refuse their mother's food. In Arnhem Land, this oppositional attitude takes the form of membership in 'hard' gangs.

In Chapter 6, Brady documents different attempts at local control and offers a cultural interpretation of their failure or success. Such attempts typically involve conflicts between the necessity of action at the community level and family loyalties sustained by the Aboriginal social organisation, as illustrated by the problems confronting community appointed wardens who have to face the anger or even retaliation of sniffers' kin; much as the body is the individual's 'business', caring for children is the parents' 'business'. As a consequence of this, people in positions of community decision-making are reluctant to take responsibility for other people's children. Similarly, and also because the forcible removal of children evokes painful memories, parents are highly suspicious of welfare officers. Instead, they would rather seek the intervention of the police (in certain cases by means of special by-laws). On the other hand, the incarceration of petrol sniffers involved in minor criminal offences does not seem to have a long term rehabilitative impact.

Chapter 7 examines the history of petrol sniffing and the anomalies of its distribution. According to the author, the spread of this phenomenon since the mid 1970s, relates, among other things, to the development of settlements through missions and government policies, and the decrease of child mortality. These historical and demographic changes resulted in a dramatic increase of peer group size along with greater opportunities for meeting through schooling and during big sport events; at the same time, Aboriginal people have become more dependent on the white system to solve their problems. The final chapter documents and discusses Australian and overseas interventions and proposes an extremely original explanation for the absence of petrol sniffing in particular regions of Australia. Indeed, this book can also be read as an excellent detective story in which the detective-author tracks the reasons for which petrol sniffing is prevalent in certain localities and not in others, in spite of the fact that these different types of communities are not only spatially close to each other, but also entertain close kinship relations, share rituals and engage in social activities entailing regular visits of their respective members to each other. As in any good thriller, the final answer, offered as an hypothesis, is revealed only at the end: 'the most compelling explanation for the distribution of the practice is the historical and social context of the cattle industry' (p. 192).

Brady convincingly brings to bear a number of historical, economic and cultural influences in accounting for the absence of petrol sniffing in communities developed on cattle stations. In spite of very harsh working conditions, Aboriginals employed in the pastoral industry, through continuous contact with their land, were able to maintain cultural values and activities considered by them to be essential: ceremonial life, visits to sacred sites, gathering of bush foods, etc. At the same time, Aboriginal labour and skills were indispensable to pastoralists and as such were highly valued. Moreover, in these areas, camp life and disputes remained largely in Aboriginal hands, Western interference through government officers and schooling being minimal or delayed for a long time. As a result, such persons could benefit simultaneously from their own culture and from that of Western society, the two appearing in a more complementary than conflictual light, as was commonly the case in mission and government settlements.

However, in spite of a considerable body of evidence, Brady seems unwilling to integrate the various elements of her argument into a unitary perspective: '[...] in some intangible way, she concludes, in these populations self-esteem and male identity have remained intact, so that young people have not yet sought to express their personal autonomy through the act of petrol sniffing (emphasis added)' (p. 190). This reluctance to come to grasp with the implications of her insightful hypothesis, appears to be related to
an initial methodological choice to put aside socio-political considerations, a position that is largely maintained throughout the study. It is this, perhaps, that prevents Brady from taking advantage of her own outstanding fieldwork data in order to fully develop the implications of her final hypothesis, as though an overly historico-political point of view would interfere with her overall emic perspective. It is worth briefly questioning this assumption, for although doing so implies a reframing of certain of her statements, it also confirms the validity of the underlying aim of her approach, namely, to place Aboriginal youth problems within Aboriginal hands. This reframing consists, essentially, in recognising the degree to which the ability of young people, notably young males, to achieve autonomy in a constructive rather than self-destructive fashion, is dependent upon the re-empowerment of adult community members.

In Aboriginal societies, men gained most of their prestige from their involvement in ritual life, this being one of the main conditions allowing them to collectively take responsibility for young males, and in doing so to participate in their transition from childhood to adulthood. Once immersed in a dominant culture that has little respect for their Law and ceremonial practices, the status of Aboriginal men quickly degraded. Caring for young males tends to remain in the hands of Aboriginal women while men's fathering roles are undermined and neglected. In the absence of positive male models, young men's achievement of autonomy is highly problematic. In this light, it is not very surprising that petrol sniffer are predominantly male, and that in their attempt to assert their autonomy they tend to demonstrate their masculinity by either endorsing the hyper-masculine style of 'hard' gangs or, as fatness is culturally related to femininity and being mothered, by trying to lose weight. Now, within this overall development, Aboriginal men within the pastoral industry occupied a fairly exceptional position. By contrast with communities having arisen from missionary or government administered settlements and in which petrol sniffer typically occurs, communities linked with cattle stations, in which petrol sniffing is absent, are also those, as Brady observes, in which a prestigious male identity remained intact. In these cases, a commitment to the rules of Western society did not entail men being disinvested of their valued masculine identity; on the contrary, they not only preserved that associated with their Aboriginality, but also gained the stockman's image of virility. In this light, it is worth noting that in the only well-documented case of a community's success in overcoming petrol sniffing, the male elders have been involved in decision-making regarding their own affairs for a number of years, ever since they became the first Aboriginals to own and run a cattle station.

This overall perspective, in which the confirmation of adult men in their status of decision makers is held to be a precondition for young males achieving personal autonomy in a positive manner, sheds new light on the use of funding in communities as reproved by Brady: priorities are principally given to adult projects, such as the acquisition of vehicles or the development of road facilities. According to her, these projects, rather than meeting the needs of youth, will first of all benefit older men by increasing their involvement in ceremonial activities, and therefore their prestige. Sniffing thus appears as one of the few ways left for youths to assert themselves. However, the latter's self-destructive behaviour obviously related to their difficulty in becoming autonomous in a society where parents and grand-parents have become dependent on welfare policies. From this point of view, one might suggest that prestige acquired by Aboriginal elders, far from being an obstacle for the achievement of adulthood by young males, may well be, in that it provides positive male models, one of its important conditions. This indeed would appear to have been the case for Aboriginal stockmen. A sense of pride and self-esteem acquired by relatives and community members have facilitated their ability to assume a position of responsibility for and
authority over their young people; reciprocally, it also favoured their being accepted as such by the youths themselves. It should be noted that stress is being placed here not on 'traditions' as such - as for example in the phrase 'tradition-oriented communities' - but rather on the context in which Aboriginals determine what is valuable for themselves: the elimination of any designedly exogenous, non-Aboriginal precondition in the definition of what is or is not 'truly' Aboriginal. In this respect, Brady's suggestion that Aboriginal communities make insufficient use of their 'cultural resources' (pp. 179-180) may be inappropriate. On the whole, the more Aboriginal adults are able to overcome the dispossession of social roles that they have undergone, the more they are able to assume their parental responsibilities and to participate in culturally suitable corporate actions concerning youth issues.

General speaking, in missions and government settlements, the responsibility for children has been taken over by representatives of the dominant non-Aboriginal culture as the virtual competitors of the children's own relatives. Adults may then feel that they have nothing to offer their youths other than what their culture allows them to tolerate from younger children: behaviour that is bossy and may even be harmful to themselves. The fear of not showing enough love combined with the Aboriginal equivalence, documented by Brady, between love and generosity, makes adults very vulnerable to their youths' blackmail: if you don't give me what I ask for (food, money, etc.), it means that you don't love me and I will go sniffing. This could explain the author's observation that 'while individuals adults often spend freely on material items for their young kin [demonstration of love ..., when it comes to the allocation of larger amounts of community funds, young people are rarely catered for [resisting an impingement upon their parental prerogatives]' (p. 178). Any attempt at community action concerning youth that does not directly and constantly involve parents (asking for their help and advice), is not only culturally unacceptable, but also perpetuates the dispossession of their parental role. Undermining such attempts - for example when youth workers, even Aboriginal ones, appear to compete with parents' prerogatives - represents the only effective power left to Aboriginals for asserting their precedence with regard to their children. Unfortunately, the author does not make a direct link between this widespread attitude in communities with petrol sniffing problems and the fact that in the neighbouring ones without these problems, parents, because they have kept a sense of value of themselves, can exert their authority without fear of losing their children's love and respect.

In connection with this last point, it should be mentioned that Brady's inference that 'setting aside family loyalties' and 'kin-based sentiment' (p. 174) is necessary for overcoming petrol sniffing, is not convincingly demonstrated. Her own data, in accordance with other current anthropological research, shows that Aboriginal social organisation is largely founded upon kin loyalties, the latter remaining a key factor of Aboriginal identity that must be respected in order for Aboriginal social control to be developed. In this respect, the case of indigenous communities overseas is a telling one: 'One of the most effective approaches to petrol sniffing among some native American populations has been intense parental involvement in monitored alternative activities, together with parent 'patrols' (p. 174). One may argue that it is precisely because these initiatives involve parents, and in doing so, comply with family loyalties, that they have been successful. From this perspective, one possible off-shoot of Brady's work might well be an analysis of the mechanisms underlying the convergence of family loyalties that enable effective corporate action to be undertaken.

In conclusion and ironically enough, Brady's analysis of the distribution of petrol sniffing allows us to reconsider in an entirely new light the socio-political factors that she
herself purposely sets aside: the maintenance of an active, economic and culturally significant contact with the land may well have played an essential protective role. Inversely, the disruption of such contact, even when only partial or temporary, seems to have represented a significant factor in the development of harmful behaviour specific to Aboriginal youth such as petrol sniffing. The re-empowerment of Aboriginal people is in itself a healing process; as this study shows, it has also been an effective preventive measure against self-destructive behaviour.

Marika Moisseeff
Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies


This exhibition is perhaps the most public current example of Aboriginal history and merits review in its own right, as well as for its catalogue. The editors would be pleased to receive further comment on this exhibition, or reviews of other exhibitions, films, television programmes and the like dealing with Aboriginal history.

This splendid exhibition displays 183 breastplates, ranging in date of inscription - and presumably manufacture and donation - from 1816 to 1930. An early nineteenth century military gorget illustrates the possible origin of the concept of the breastplates and a considerable number of photographs of Aboriginal people includes some showing breastplates being worn. The Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales is to be congratulated on such a good idea for an exhibition. I am told that, when it was shown in the Hyde Park Barracks in Sydney, the effect was rather crowded, but no such criticism can be made of the spacious accommodation at the National Library of Australia in September and October, 1993. Later venues are to be the Queensland Museum, the Wollongong City Gallery and the Western Australian Museum. As for other major exhibitions in recent times, a substantial catalogue is available (ISBN 7310 0261 X). Although Tania Cleary, the collections manager of the Historic Houses Trust, has been responsible for both the exhibition and the catalogue, the differences between them provide a good starting point for discussion.

The first achievement of both the exhibition and the catalogue is to establish the breastplate as a category of object. In one sense, the use of breastplates to identify, dignify and reward particular Aborigines is widely known and they appear in several well-known images, such as the various portraits of Bungaree, but what is new is their number and range in time and space. While there is a certain sense of immediacy in the display of the objects themselves, they remain, for the most part, rather unimpressive as specimens of craft or art. A far stronger impression is created, to my mind at least, by the series of crisp photographs in the catalogue and, even more, by the standardised and studiously objective information provided for each specimen. Here is the raw data of artefact description; transcription of inscriptions, careful measurement, description of present condition, current location and details of provenance and publication. By contrast, the exhibition captions provide only the barest information. The catalogue, however, invites further research and makes a start itself. There is a supplementary list of breastplates not in the exhibition - it would have been helpful to assign these numbers for future reference - and a list of
book plates known from the literature. The makers of the book plates are briefly discussed and there is a first attempt to map distribution, though more could be done on this. Similarly, the sub-categories of book plates for chiefs, kings, queens, royal couples, royalty, rewards, in recognition of service and unspecified recognition can only be seen as a preliminary effort to put the material into some order. I suspect that other features, such as date or location, would prove more meaningful, and such analysis is quite possible on the basis of the data in the catalogue.

There is a disjunction here between the effect created by the display focussing on the book plates themselves - a sense of all but tangible contact with a world long gone - and the more distanced effect of the dispassionate provision of data ripe for analysis. The catalogue is certainly very much more than just a record of the exhibition.

In one respect it is less. The exhibition contains many more historical photographs of Aboriginal people, both as individuals and as groups, and often with no particular reference to the subject of book plates. These extra photographs, which range widely in time and place, have only basic captions. While there is a great deal of particular interest in these images, the overall effect is to create a sense of Aboriginal presence. Since the overwhelming majority of people shown must now have died, by the mere effluxion of time if for no other cause, there is a further and very general impression of loss.

This impression clearly affected the interpretation many, perhaps most, visitors put on the history of Aboriginal experience as shown in the exhibition. As the result of another piece of good curatorial practice, these interpretations can be sampled from the comments in a book which solicits the public's reactions. The theme of pignancy is often picked up and there is an overwhelming assumption that there has somehow been something tragic, or at least to be regretted, about this history. There is talk of reparation and Mabo. Insofar as one can divine the self-identity of the writers, non-Aborigines are perhaps even more given to such reflections that Aborigines are. There is a widespread willingness to infer meaning from looking into the eyes of individuals in the photographs.

The impression created by the catalogue, on the other hand, is significantly different. As well as what one might call the technical material, there are several short essays. Tania Cleary gives a brisk summary of the book plates' history and distribution, as well as a helpful cautionary page on the book plates and nineteenth century photography. A good deal of historical source material is reproduced as relevant to particular items. Much more challenging - or provoking - are four other pieces. Ysola Best tells the story of her great-great-grandfather, Bilin Bilin, or 'Jackey Jackey - King of the Logan and Pimpama' as one can just make out on his book plate in the photograph which graces the exhibition poster and the cover of the catalogue. Phil Gordon gives an Aboriginal view of the phenomenon of book plates and how they have been studied and valued. Paul Behrendt emphasises the incomprehension between colonisers and colonised, but this is challenged, at least in this instance, by the republication of Edward Ogilvie's remarkable letter to the Sydney Morning Herald in 1842 describing his friendly relations with people in the Clarence River valley. Here, at least, was no incomprehension, for Ogilvie's friend, Toolbillibam, was 'much delighted at finding me speaking his own language'.

In these essays lies the basis for a reading of the book plates quite at odds with that suggested by the exhibition. Perhaps they can be seen not as symbols of incomprehension and dispossession - though there was clearly plenty of both - but rather as the expression of attempts at recognition, signs of mutual interdependence and even pledges of friendship and gratitude. That is all from the white side. On the other, Gordon comments, 'they are symbols of Aboriginal survival and of cultural vitality and as such are emblems of the past
that form an important part of the material culture of my people in the future'. I cannot refrain from quoting Best's conclusion:

The term 'King' is a foreign concept to Aboriginal Australia. However if one could go back in time and interview those individuals to whom Bilin Bilin was well-known, would they not say he protected his country and his family? Did he not set in place strategies to ensure that the orphaned Logan River people would not become an extinct race of people but would survive and continue to fight for their land and their rights? Will people call him a 'king' or could it be that he is a majestic eagle whose spiritual presence continues to influence his descendants to care for and protect their own country.

Of course none of this will influence the ideologues and politicians, both black and while, who know what they want to see, but the great merit of this exhibition and catalogue is the opening of a variety of interpretations. That is a considerable service to the study of the history of Aboriginal experience.

C.C. Macknight
The Australian National University


Perhaps it is now time to ask whether we should be grateful for any book concerned in some way or another with the history of Aboriginal experience. I do not wish to suggest that this is a bad book; it does deliver 'an overview of the reaction of government authorities to Aborigines in the Northern Territory' during the South Australian period. Within the limits it sets for itself, it is a clearly written and competently argued historical account, supported by a proper apparatus. (An index is an important omission.) It is very pleasantly produced, reasonably priced and has a range of interesting illustrations.

My concern is that there is no challenge in the book. It tells a story with which any conceivable reader is now fairly familiar, at least in outline. The South Australian government, in the second half of the nineteenth century, did not have much of an Aboriginal policy and relations between colonised and colonisers in the Northern Territory were dominated by the racism, prejudice and perceived - probably wrongly perceived - economic interests of the latter. By any standards one may speak of oppression and exploitation; the level of violence was excessive, even by the standards of the time and place. The specialist reader will be familiar with the details of all this from a very considerable literature and, most recently, Gordon Reid's A Picnic with the Natives which covers almost exactly the same ground. There is, of course, much to be said for more than one account of any topic and it is a nice exercise in historical interpretation as to why Reid plays down the level of Aboriginal resistance, while Austin plays it up.

My disappointment with the book stems from a section at the end of the Introduction which is worth quoting:

This study is incomplete, for it is the work of a non-Aboriginal male, is based on White, mainly official, sources of information and is essentially about attitudes of non-Aboriginal people and the policies - for want of a better
BOOK REVIEWS

word - they applied to Aborigines. Only when the work is complemented by studies written by Aboriginal men and women, drawing on Aboriginal oral accounts and providing Aboriginal interpretations, will something resembling balance be possible.

Such unreflective positivism simply will not pass muster in the 1990s. Consider, to begin with, the implications of 'incomplete', 'complemented' and 'balance'. More disturbing because of what it reveals about the intellectual framework within which the book places itself, is the concern about the author's gender and, especially, the construction of Aboriginality. (There is a curious passage on p. 44 which states that 'only in ... "colonial Australia" [in Rowley's use of the phrase] ... has the Aboriginal community, as such, survived'.

Perhaps it is unfair to look for much sophistication in what is an unpretentious and straightforward little book, but it is exactly this sort of pragmatism, in another context, that is criticised in the book. The best history being written about Aboriginal experience, and about those non-Aborigines associated with that experience, is now more reflective, more adventurous in its categories and more challenging to the reader.

C.C. Macknight
The Australian National University


How is it that the common law, which first dispossessed the indigenous people of the lands settled by the British, has become the instrument by which the same people have been able to enforce their title to land against the crown in the crown's own courts?

One explanation is to be found in McNeil's Common Law Aboriginal Title which analyses the common law doctrine on native title. He gives a blueprint for indigenous people who have the resources to argue for native title based on possession. He provides arguments to those citizens who wish to live in more just societies. He should be read by those advising governments who are unable to understand that there are titles to land in Australia, and throughout the former British empire, which were not granted by, and which pre-existed the advent of, the crown as paramount lord.

History and precedent
McNeil's book is a meticulously researched piece of historical scholarship but it is not only history. He distinguishes between historical and legal analysis in determining what effect the advent of the crown's sovereignty had on indigenous interests in land. His purpose is to unravel the doctrinal principles of the common law which can be discerned behind ad hoc events throughout the empire. The principles he reveals show that the common law does recognise and protect the interests of indigenous people.

History and the common law have a complex relationship. The doctrine of precedent appears to be an application of historical method: a search for past decisions which covers facts similar to those of the present case and binds the court to reach the same decision.1 If

1 Cross 1968, pp. 23-32; see also Butterfield 1944, pp. 47-68.
a precedent is relevant, cannot be distinguished on the facts and is decided by a court of sufficient status, it binds a later court. Legal analysis however diverges from historical method. As Maitland observed:

A lawyer finds on his table a case about rights of common which sends him to the Statute of Merton. But is it really the law of 1236 that he wants to know? No, it is the ultimate result of the interpretation set on the statute by the judges of twenty generations. The more modern the decision the more valuable for his purpose. That process by which old principles and old phrases are charged with new content, is from the lawyer's point of view an evolution of the true intent and meaning of the old law; from the historians point of view it is almost of necessity a process of perversion and misunderstanding.²

It is surprising to read lawyers who over 80 years later manage to write: 'The historical approach which emphasises fidelity to precedent ... jostles with the reformist approach where rules are utilised by the application of twentieth century concepts of justice and equality to produce a particular result.'³

Under the classical version of the doctrine the common law never changed. If a superior court decided not to follow an earlier precedent that precedent never was the law.⁴ In contemporary common law the courts have freed themselves from that fiction and openly acknowledge a failure to follow a precedent. Their justification will be an opinion that following a precedent will fail to satisfy social congruence or system consistency and that the values which underlie the doctrine, including protecting a justified reliance on previous decisions, are no better served by following a precedent than overruling it.⁵

It is not surprising that the decision of the High Court in Mabo v Queensland (No. 2)⁶ ('the Murray Island land rights case') to approach the rights of indigenous Australians on a doctrinal, rather than a historical basis, has been attacked as revolutionary by those interest groups who fear that profits, which previously they had negotiated with state governments to channel to themselves, may now go to indigenous Australians.

What is surprising is the attack on the High Court by lawyers who are familiar with the doctrine of precedent.⁷

Aboriginal rights in the conquerors' courts

McNeil's thesis is that, if common law doctrine is applied consistently, indigenous people in occupation of lands when British sovereignty was proclaimed, have a freehold title. The occupation of land carries with it a legal presumption of possession. Possession carries a presumption of seisin. Seisin presumes a freehold estate.

McNeil's argument unfolds slowly through a detailed analysis of occupation, possession and seisin in English law following the Norman conquest. The principle that the crown is the paramount lord and owns all the land in England, the doctrine of tenures, is a legal fiction which is recognised by the limitations imposed on its use. It explained the relationship between the crown and those subjects whose ownership of land predated the conquest. He then turns to the acquisition of sovereignty by the crown over lands abroad, to

² Maitland 1911, pp. 490-1.
³ Lumb 'The Mabo Case', p. 5.
⁵ Eisenberg 1988, pp. 104-5.
the classification of those territories and to the effect of these on interests in land in the law of the indigenous people. His clearest example is from Belize. Titles to land owned by British settlers, which existed prior to British sovereignty, became freehold titles when the crown acquired sovereignty.

McNeil argues that the occupiers of land at the advent of the Crown's sovereignty have two ways of proving title: by interests under their own customary law; or, by exclusive occupation which gave a common law title through possession. The focus of his thesis is on title by possession. The doctrine of tenures does not dispossess the holders of such titles. The crown's interest hovers over the land giving the crown paramount lordship but not possession. The existence of a fee simple held by indigenous people is confirmed by the prohibition on English settlers obtaining title to the land by direct negotiation. An Australian example is Governor Bourke's repudiation of Batman's purchase in 1835. The governor's action was approved by the Secretary of State for Colonies who was anxious for Aboriginal people to be protected and their rights defended.

McNeil outlines Canadian and United States of America law where aboriginal title is not recognised as giving a fee simple but a lesser possessory title. Finally he turns to Australia. He notes the remarkable fact that the issue of indigenous land titles was not litigated in Australia for almost two centuries until Milirrpum v Nabalco Pty Ltd ('the Gove land rights case') in 1968-1971. He states that Blackburn J was unsympathetic to the recognition of common law Aboriginal title. He was only willing to recognise its existence where it had been recognised by the crown and to deny the plaintiff's claim. The plaintiffs lost on every point of law and fact.

McNeil argues that Australian judges deciding the question of the content of Aboriginal title are not bound by precedent in the same way as Canadian and Americans judges are and that they are able to decide it on a doctrinal basis. The decision in the Murray Island lands rights case has supervened. It follows North American precedents in finding that native title is less than fee simple and susceptible to extinguishment by the crown. The decision was on the basis that the Meriam people had interests in land under their own customary law, the second basis for native title noted by McNeil. The plaintiffs in the Murray Island land rights case also relied on their exclusive possession giving rise to a fee simple. McNeil's work played a significant role in the development of this argument. Toohey J noted his judgement owed much to McNeil. Deane and Gaudron JJ have described his work as a 'landmark'. Dawson J, in a dissenting judgement, was less complimentary describing McNeil's analysis as 'a theory'. The other judges concluded that the plaintiffs had title under their own law and only briefly considered what rights exclusive possession conferred. They stated that there were considerable difficulties with it.

With the benefit of hindsight provided by this case the major criticism to be made of McNeil's work is his concentration on possessory title and his view that native title based on customary law is limited. A customary law title is, in his view, only a judicial response to the fact of occupation. His preferred approach is one based on the proof of the people's occupation of traditional lands. He cites the Gove land rights case but this decision must now be doubted as authority. However, a title based on possession may be more attractive to indigenous people as it does not require details of customary law to be revealed and...

---

8 (1971) 17 FLR 141.
9 (1992) 107 ALR 1 at 162.
10 id., at 174.
11 id., at 128.
12 id., at 41, Brennan J with whom Mason CJ and McHugh concurred.
considered or expose the autonomy of indigenous legal systems to the same level of control through the courts.

McNeil refers to features of the common law which may become familiar again to Australians. The idea that a tribunal should inquire into any clog on the root title of the crown as paramount lord is not novel. The inquest of office, performed by the coroner, and informations of intrusion, in the Court of Exchequer, were used to resolve uncertainties about the king’s title to an area of land. He notes that the proof of customary title has not presented difficulties in jurisdictions where courts have a practice of accepting such evidence. The difficulties for indigenous people giving evidence in such proceedings cannot be ignored. Hearing under the Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976 have, through the intransigence of the Northern Territory government, become as formal and as hostile as a common law adversary trial. It is possible, with modification to procedures and the assistance of social scientists and interpreters, to accommodate testimony about customary interests in land in adversarial hearings.

A not so common law?

Much of the legal criticism of the Murray Island land rights case has been answered in advance by McNeil’s work.

Lumb is the most extensively published critic. He has attacked the decision to recognise native title as part of an Australian common law as based too much on policy and departing too far from precedent. The court disturbed a legal understanding which had existed for over 150 years and in doing so fractured the skeleton of precedent. Another article shows that he has used the term ‘understanding’ advisedly as, in it, he concedes that there was no precedent binding on the High Court. McNeil shows that the decision has maintained the unity, at the time of reception, of the common law throughout the Empire. On his analysis the Murray Island land rights case is not revolutionary and the High Court's finding of a title less than a fee simple, is conservative. McNeil also demonstrates that the common law which was received from England was a common law and not a unique law for each colony. Lumb criticises the High Court for using precedents from other common law jurisdictions to fashion ‘new doctrine’. Australia would be the only former British territory which had no doctrine of native title if the High Court had decided otherwise. Lumb’s view is the one which fractures the skeleton of precedent by fracturing the skeleton of the common law itself.

Lumb claims that the High Court overturned Blackstone’s doctrine that, in a settled colony, only titles to land recognised by the crown existed. He states this law was almost etched in pillars of stone in Australia as a result of the Privy Council decision in Cooper v Stuart. This ignores the limits which the common law placed on its fiction, the doctrine of tenures, and a decision which McNeil cites and is referred to by a number of the judges

---

13 Williams 1989, pp. 158-9 refers to the problems of communications and difficulties Yolgnu elders had in understanding the procedures of a common law trial including their role as witnesses, the purpose of cross examination and their relationship with the judge.


15 Lumb 'The Mabo Case', p. 5; Moens 1993, pp. 58-61.

16 ibid., p. 5. This absence of binding authority is noted by Deane and Gaudron JJ in their judgement. They state four cases have been decided in Australia. In all but one, and arguably in it as well, the comments were not part of the reason for deciding (ratio decidendi) but were additional comments (obiter dicta). The described these comments as mere assertions. No party sought to argue that Aboriginal people had any entitlements. Aboriginal people had not been heard nor did the courts appear to consider their entitlements. (1992) 107 ALR 1 at 78.

17 Lumb 'Native Title to Land', p. 86; Lumb 'The Mabo Case', p. 11.

18 (1889) 14 App Cas 286.

184
in the Murray Island land rights case. Barwick CJ in Administration of Papua New Guinea v Daera Guba referred to the traditional result of acquisition of territory by settlement: the crown acquired the ultimate title to land subject to the usufructuary title of the inhabitants.\textsuperscript{19} The Murray Island land rights case says nothing more than this. Barwick CJ is not generally described as a reformist applying twentieth century concepts of justice and equality.\textsuperscript{20} There were no pillars of stone. Lumb does not deal with McNeil's point that while a colony is classified as settled as matter of law, as a basis for receiving the common law, it must in the end have a factual basis. New South Wales was regarded as settled but the factual basis cannot be other than that Australia was not terra nullius. Brennan J supports McNeil's view noting that the first time terra nullius was put to the test in the Gove land rights case it failed.\textsuperscript{21}

The High Court also fell into error, according to Lumb, in failing to distinguish between Torres Strait Islanders and Aboriginal people. It did not follow Re Southern Rhodesia\textsuperscript{22} where a distinction was made between societies which had reached different stages of development. Strangely Lumb does not state in his article published abroad the reasons for decision in that case although he refers to it at some length in the one published in Australia.\textsuperscript{23} Readers of McNeil's book will be aware of the implications of following that decision. The High Court is unlikely to describe Aboriginal people as 'so low in the scale of social organization that their usages and conceptions of rights and duties are not to be reconciled with the institutions or the legal ideas of a civilized society.'\textsuperscript{24} This, as McNeil points out, is contrary to the finding in the Gove land rights case that Yolgnu society was based on a system of laws which provided a stable order of society.\textsuperscript{25} Lumb must have forgotten this part of that decision, which he otherwise appears to approve of, when he wrote '[t]he problem of the Australian Aborigines is that their groupings did not amount to an organised society ....'\textsuperscript{26} and '[s]pecifically, in relation to Australia there would be grave problems in determining whether a systems of customs varying from tribe to tribe and clan to clan constituted law in the sense of a body of ascertained rules which could be applied by the courts.\textsuperscript{27}

Lumb suggests that the High Court was wrong to extend the decision relating to the occupation of land by Torres Strait Islanders to land occupied by Aboriginal people on the basis that Torres Strait Islanders had gardens and Aboriginal people did not.\textsuperscript{28} Lumb is of the view that the claims of groups which had gardened would be more sustainable in terms of native title than those who moved over a very large area of land.\textsuperscript{29} Blackstone appears to support the distinction in native title between agricultural societies and others. But as McNeil observes Blackstone went on to consider the American colonies where this distinction had no practical effect. It is extraordinary to suggest that such a distinction

\textsuperscript{19} (1972-3) 130 CLR 353 at 397.
\textsuperscript{20} Lumb 'The Mabo Case', p. 5.
\textsuperscript{21} (1992) 107 ALR 1 at 26.
\textsuperscript{22} [1919] AC 211 at 233-34.
\textsuperscript{23} Lumb 'The Mabo Case', pp. 4-6.
\textsuperscript{24} [1919] AC 211 at 233-34. This decision was explicitly rejected by Brennan J as a 'discriminatory denigration of indigenous inhabitants, their social organisation and customs ... [T]he basis of the decision is false in fact and unacceptable in our society ...', (1992) 107 ALR 1 at 27.
\textsuperscript{25} (1971) 17 FLR 141. Toohey J observed Blackburn J refused to apply the Re Southern Rhodesia test, (1992) 107 ALR 1 at 145.
\textsuperscript{26} Lumb 'The Mabo Case', p. 8.
\textsuperscript{27} id., p. 13.
\textsuperscript{28} id., p. 5 ; Lumb 'Native Title to Land', p. 5.
\textsuperscript{29} Lumb 'The Mabo Case', p. 5.
should be revived. It ignores decided English cases to which McNeil refers. In Red House Farms Ltd v Catchpole the English Court of Appeal unanimously decided that hunting, in that case shooting, over marshy ground gave adverse possession against the lawful owner of that ground. It also ignores that the waste lands of a manor, forests and moors used for hunting and other lands not cultivated were never regarded by the common law as unowned.

The final points which Lumb makes, that the High Court should not concern itself with the equality of Australians before the law and that the fact that some parliaments have legislated on land rights now makes judicial decisions in the area a trespass into the preserve of executive government, are not addressed by McNeil directly.\(^{30}\) Nor could they be. They are too novel to have been anticipated and are, therefore, beyond the scope of this review.

**LIST OF REFERENCES**


Lumb, R.D. 1993a 'The Mabo Case - public law aspects', in *Mabo; A Judicial Revolution*, eds M.A. Stephenson & Suri Ratnapala, St Lucia, Qld. ('The Mabo Case')

_____ 1993b 'Native title to land in Australia: Recent High Court decisions', *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, vol. 42, pp. 84-100. ('Native Title to Land')


Maurice, Mr Justice 1989, 'Reasons for ruling, appendix 1', in *Warumungu Land Claim, Report No 31, Report by the Aboriginal Land Commissioner, Mr Justice Maurice, to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and to the Administrator of the Northern Territory*, Canberra.

Moens, Gabriele A. 1993, 'Mabo and political policy-making by the High Court', in *Mabo; A Judicial Revolution*, eds M.A. Stephenson & Suri Ratnapala, St Lucia, Qld.


Neil Andrews

University of Canberra

---


In two, uniquely comprehensive, field studies in Australia in 1938-39 and 1952-54, Joseph Birdsell studied the human biology of some 5000 Australian Aborigines in great detail. He collected a truly massive series of data on serological, dental, non-metrical and metrical features of individual men and women from most parts of the continent. In addition, he accumulated a wealth of material on genealogies, marriage, infanticide, sibships, fertility, sex ratios and survivorships; and he measured a considerable number of crania from various regions of Australia. As he accurately states in his *Resume*: 'As a result of more than 50 years of close collaboration with Dr N.B. Tindale, Ethnologist, South Australian Museum,'

---

30 Lumb 'Native Title to Land' pp. 86-9.
Adelaide, the evolutionary population structure of these hunter-gatherers has been more completely defined than that of any other population at any economic level' (p. xvii).

Starting with his PhD thesis in 1941, Birdsell produced an ongoing series of classic studies, progressively expanding his analysis and interpretation of the vast store of data he had generated. His modelling and hypothesis proposing a trihybrid origin for the Australian Aborigines, coming in as a succession of waves of Barrineans, Murrayians and Carpentarians, respectively, has been the central concept emerging from what became a lifelong commitment.

The present book is a major re-study and analysis of his data and conclusions but it is primarily concerned with examining, in great detail, the microevolutionary patterns in the indigenous Australian Aboriginal population. The text is subdivided into 6 parts. Part A includes 'Introduction and Methodology'; Parts B to E deal with serology, dentition, morphological variation and metrical features, respectively; Part F is 'Analysis Involving Regional Trends, Time, Ecology and Language'.

In Part A, Birdsell sets out the rationale behind his study: The data reveal: "... populations showing microgeographical variation among adjacent demes in an extensive spatial matrix", and this provides "... a test of the hypothesis of Sewall Wright that a large population containing many small demic units is expected to show rapid evolution" (p. 3). The methodology for the study is gradient analysis.

In this first section of his book, Birdsell clearly describes population structure in pre-contact Australian Aborigines (family, band, tribe), he details his tribal samples (which he equates with demes), and then outlines microevolutionary forces (mutation, selection, gene flow, intergenerational drift and founder effect), the Australian environment and, briefly, the prehistory of Australia (especially his trihybrid theory of occupation).

In the main section of the book, Parts B to E, Birdsell produces tables, mostly for each sex separately (a few are pooled), of mean values or frequencies for each feature he studied, and for each he includes the numbers of individuals in the sample. In all, his study describes some 150 features in a sample of almost 3000 individuals, grouped into over 60 tribes (demes), and also in a number of pooled samples. For the relatively small areas his field work on living individuals did not cover, he utilises data from Sharp, Warner and the University of Adelaide Expeditions. To supplement his serological data, he draws on many studies including, Simmons et al., Campbell et al., Gay, and Voss and Kirk; similarly, for crania he used data from Hrdlicka, Howells and others.

The parameters Birdsell examined are all defined but some of the measurements and observations are idiosyncratic and their assessment subjective; the adjustments to comparative data he makes (e.g. cranial - living) are often questionable. The detail of his study can be illustrated by some of the unusual features he measures; these include: circumaruncular hairs, nasal cartilage anomaly, ear slant, and thumb extension. In addition to the tables and definitions, for each feature (usually of pooled sexes) he produces a map of Australia with contour lines (isophenes) for a gradient analysis of clines. The tables and figures, plus an analysis and discussion of each feature - in which he often finds evidence of his three originating populations, especially the Barrineans, comprise the major part, 400 pages, of the book.

In the final Part of his book, Birdsell starts by outlining Sewall Wright's concept that: "... in numerically small populations, chance changes might trigger new directions which become incorporated in the long-term adaptive trend" resulting in: "... an adaptive landscape consisting of a considerable number of peaks of heightened fitness separated by lower saddles of reduced fitness" (p. 433). Birdsell shows that the Australian population is similarly structured to Wright's model and provides a test of his 'shifting balance'
hypothesis. The gradient analyses of clines that Birdsell produces for his 1952-54 Western Australian series samples, clearly show the landscapes Sewall Wright predicts, and Birdsell's analyses of the maps reveal that there is: '... a great deal of regional differentiation that shows no particular cohesive patterns' (p. 434).

Using a series of environmental features (geographic and climatic), Birdsell next outlines his concept of 'refuge areas' in the north-east, forested tablelands of Queensland; the extreme south-east corner of the continent; and the top north-eastern area, Cape York. In these postulated refuges, he discerns the clearest evidence of his three, successive, colonising populations of Australia, the Barrineans, Murrayians and Carpentarians. Examining hypothetical inland and a coastal transects of tribal samples down through the eastern part of the continent, Birdsell concludes: '... in terms of continuous variation in space: three polar populations can be identified of the eastern coastal transect but that in the interior transect, which had no refuge area, but two are evident in the data' (p. 437).

In addition, Birdsell describes examples of founder effect and time scale from his data ($R^2$), a fitness estimate (tawny hair), and a transient polymorphism (nasal cartilage anomaly). He also uses dyadic pairs to compare inter- and intra-phyletic language differences with cumulative serological, dental, morphological and metrical features. Birdsell examines ecological and social relations in the Kimberleys, and compares his results with those of the Endler computer simulations. On the important question of 'Gene flow and Migration versus Adaptive Change', Birdsell examines four environmental zones and concludes, for example for the south-west refuge area, that: 'While local adaptive changes are no doubt present, they have been overshadowed by attributes characterizing the incoming Carpentarian populations from the north.' (p. 451). His final concluding point is that the Australian Aboriginal population: '... which has expanded from a few hundred to perhaps 100,000 or more may be judged to have manifest interdemic selection over a period of perhaps 10,000 years.' (p.453).

In reviewing this book it is unfortunately necessary to comment on the excessively poor proof-reading, for example, in the first 100 pages I noted ten typographical errors and, in the final 5 pages, nine errors. It must also be remarked that the index is rather limited and the references selective and sometimes lacking.

Microevolutionary Patterns in Aboriginal Australia is a book which will permanently remain the classic study of the human biology of the Australian Aborigines. The time has passed when the sort of samples available to Birdsell would be available. Because of this, and the nature of some measurements and their assessment, it might not be possible for future researchers to add to his data bank but it is to be hoped that the raw data will become available from a suitable repository for further study and analyses. Although his trihybrid theory will remain controversial, human biologists and anthropologists world-wide and, especially, the Aboriginal population of Australia, will for ever be in debt to Joseph Birdsell for his skill, dedication and foresight in assembling and analysing this vast collection of irreplacable information.

L. Freedman
University of Western Australia
BOOK REVIEWS


In the 'Foreword' to Bain's book, Isobel White writes (p. ix):

Among the thinkers and writers about Australian Aboriginal society there seldom appears one who comes to grips with beliefs and thought. ... Margaret Bain, an almost unknown writer but one who has lived with Aborigines for many years, has dared to enter this difficult and controversial field. ... Ever since I first began to exchange ideas with Margaret Bain, I realised I was in the presence of a profound and original thinker, one who could illuminate many problems in the relationship between Aboriginal and European Australians.

The possibility of miscommunication increases with cultural distance of the interlocutors. Differences in language use and construction of discourse can account for some of this. Differences in the 'meaning' of body language and gesture can shed light on other aspects. Differences in social and cultural norms (what is said, what is assumed) are known to be important. However Bain argues that deeper differences in total world view, and in handling abstractions that occur between traditional Aborigines (specifically the Pitjantjatjara of Finke) and whites is the root cause of the most frustrating breakdowns in communication, frustrating to both sides. While her findings are disconcerting, she has produced a coherent and far-reaching theory which accounts for the Aboriginal-white miscommunication. Other explanations are piecemeal by comparison.

My acquaintance with Margaret Bain goes back over thirty years, when we met at a linguistics course. She impressed me then, and has impressed others since, as an outstandingly genuine person, not self-aggrandising, and not looking for the 'easy answer' to any problem. Her 1971 paper 'Aboriginal concept - "being" rather than "doing"' was widely accepted and quoted as an clear perception of differences in Aboriginal and white societies.

Margaret Bain's initial training was in science. Many times in the development of scientific understanding of nature, a theory which has seemed adequate in the light of the data available to a particular generation has needed to be refined and patched as more data comes to hand, until the whole patchwork becomes too complex. Then, after this stage is reached, a new, more all-embracing theory is put forward, providing a far simpler explanation of the phenomena, and accounting for all the data.

Bain's book puts forward such a thesis. Like the most recent Quantum Electrodynamics theory in physics, it is disturbing and perhaps will not seem to make sense to some, although others, including some urban Aborigines, immediately recognise it as accounting for the problems that arise. The same problems appear to be present in some other cross cultural situations where westerners are in contact with certain traditional cultures.

To read the book adequately requires some reasonable knowledge of more fields than most specialists in any one of these fields have, and an ability to hold a number of variables in mind at the same time, so that it cannot be classed in its entirety as 'an easy read'. Nevertheless there are many real life examples of communication breakdown or communication problems written into the book to illustrate - and substantiate - her ideas, and these are easy to absorb.

Bain makes a distinction, which many linguists (and others) will be familiar with, between competence (or capacity) and performance. What Aborigines (and whites) are
capable of is not at issue in her book, and she notes that with extensive and in-depth interaction with whites Aborigines do learn to function in the white system. (While Bain emphasises also that she is comparing two systems, not grading one against the other, it is a fact of life that it is the Aborigines who are likely to be disadvantaged in a society dominated by whites, rather than the reverse.) What she attempts to analyse and account for are the performance problems, what happens in the real day-to-day and year-to-year interactions of Aborigines and their communities with whites and their society.

Bain suggests that the problems in cross-cultural communication between Aborigines and whites have been brought into sharper focus since the moves (in the sixties and later) to give Aborigines a more genuine 'say' in their own future in the world. Prior to that there were boss-employee relationships, manager-community relationships, missionary-'flock' relationships, but not too many real attempts for Aborigines and whites to relate as equal negotiators. Such attempts to do so have often produced such comments as those she quotes in her book: 'White man never tell Aborigine everything', 'White people are liars', 'white people are like children', and (from the other side) 'You can work with Aborigines all your life. They can teach you a lot; then something happens and you find you don't know them. You can't get to know a black.'

Bain attributes the problems to the different world views of Aborigines and whites, and the different degrees of abstraction used in both societies, not to any basic difference in logical processes. Both groups, in her experience as in the experience of others (a number of whom she quotes), use the same logical processes. It is the underlying assumptions and the degree(s) of abstraction that differ.

The book is organised in eleven chapters. The author recounts a number of examples of communication breakdown, focussing on 'economic encounters', discusses authoritative western views on Aboriginal concepts of Aboriginal ritual, the 'Dreaming', magic and symbolisation and her response to these, then in six chapters introduces and substantiates her two explanatory tools, contrasting degrees of abstraction and contrasting concepts of process. This section includes a chapter on the place and the people (the place being Aputula or Finke, once a railway stop), and two chapters giving empirical support for the proposed explanatory tools, one on language and one from a questionnaire (not of her design nor specifically for investigation of the problems she addresses) and responses to it. Chapter 9 applies these tools to account for the Aboriginal-white encounter, chapter 10 looks at conclusions and consequences, and chapter 11 at questions of self-determination and self-management by Aboriginal communities.

On the basis of her analysis of Aboriginal ritual, of Dreamtime concepts, and handling of hypothesis (if clauses and sentences), Bain argues that the community under study habitually did not proceed beyond what she calls 'the first degree of abstraction'. First degree of abstraction, she states, retains a link with perceived reality. Members of the community could discuss a situation that had occurred, and could (for example) discuss what could have happened had conditions been different (if the road had not been wet, they wouldn't have crashed), or what could happen given a concrete condition (if you are thirsty here, you can dig in the sand and find a soak), but could not engage in discussion of hypothetical scenarios at the next level of abstraction, e.g. if the Government supplies more funds, what sort of housing would you like to have? or if I come back next week I'll take you to Alice Springs. Such hypothetical questions and statements were seen as firm promises (the Government will give more funds, what sort of housing would you like to have?, and when I come back next week, I'll take you to Alice Springs), with consequent anger and disappointment when such things did not happen.
BOOK REVIEWS

In her chapter on language, Bain finds no bar in the language to the handling of hypothetical ifs. In fact white speakers of Pitjantjatjara could use the language effectively in this way - but the only people who understood them in the sense intended were other white speakers of the language. It was as though there was an agreement not to use the language in this way, rather than any inherent problem in the language itself. One small point in Bain's description which could be cavilled at is her reference to English use of the subjunctive. The vestigial English subjunctive is not used by many of us or very often; it is perhaps more prevalent where Bain currently lives. However with or without the subjunctive, white native speakers of English understand If I come back next week I'll take you to town makes no firm commitment about coming back next week, even though it promises the ride contingent on such a return.

As noted above, the book draws on a number of disciplines, including linguistics, anthropology, cognitive science, logic, and thus most readers will find at least one section of the book hard to absorb. Bain often takes a particular point of theory or recognised fact, and works from it to establish another point by logic and inference, then she brings in empirical evidence. In the writings of other scholars, she clearly separates what she accepts from what she does not, and if it is relevant to her thesis, justifies her views with evidence or logic. If the section she does not accept is not (in her opinion) pertinent to the point she wishes to make, she leaves it to one side, separating it from what she wishes to build on or discuss. Some readers, myself included, may find at times there are more variables to handle than they can easily hold in consciousness at any one time.

Central to the Aboriginal world view, as Bain sees it, is that the model for the world is the relationships and interactions between kin. This contrasts markedly with what she sees as the prevailing western view of cause and effect in the natural and social world, of nature as inanimate and separate from people, and of dealings between people that include what she calls transactions as well as kin-based interactions. Some transactions in white society are quantifiable: in the developed west the price for an item in an economic transaction is not affected by any kin relationships between the buyer and seller, whereas an Aboriginal store worker was expected to be partial by his kin to be partial to them. Other transactions in white society are determined by need, not relationship: yet when Bain made the effort to help an injured stranger when she was too tired to go on a night excursion with her Aboriginal 'brother', he was incensed.

In white society one's kin are a small subset of the people one interacts with, and in general, economic transactions are neutral to any relationship. In a store the price of an item to the buyer is not affected in general by friendship or kin relationship between buyer and seller (or if so not to an extent to erode the profit margin). Or if A does B a good turn, or comes to B's rescue in an emergency, B need not expect that this sets a precedent for A to do more for B. In contrast, the Aboriginal world is made up entirely of kin, and certain kin have a right to expect other kin to be partial to them whenever the opportunity is there. If A and B are in certain relationships and A has money or provisions, B has a claim on a share. Even the outsider who has been accepted into the system has pressure to 'share' vehicle, petrol, money, food, etc.

In the Aboriginal world view described by Bain (and many other scholars), not only people, but every animal, plant and thing in the natural world is classed in kin terms. One's homeland is 'mother', certain animals and rocks are 'brother' or other relations. (I recall an elderly town dwelling Aboriginal man in Lismore, NSW claiming the Nimbin Rock as nanahng nganyah 'my sister'.) Ceremonies are worked as interactions between mutually dependent kin (kangaroo and emu for example). Kin accomplish things by interaction, and people 'look after the land' by engaging in these ritual interactions, without which the
fabric (like the fabric of a family) will not hold together or function well. As Bain presents it, this is in marked contrast to the western idea of caring for the land. However, such new-old views of the world as the panentheism propounded by such scientists and scientific philosophers as Charles Birch and Matthew Fox may suggest that the Aboriginal world view (where all is kin and interaction) preserves a truth which has been lost sight of in the dichotomy materialistic science makes, and which has been ascendant for so long in the west.

There is little doubt in my mind, and in the minds of many others with long experience in or contact with Aboriginal communities, particularly in 'remote' areas, that the problems of miscommunication Bain addresses are real, and cannot be accounted for merely from the white person's lack of facility with the Aboriginal language (whether a traditional language, or a creole or a form of English) and the Aboriginal person's lack of expertise in 'white' English. Among these who have heard her ideas propounded are a number of urban Aboriginal people, some of them tertiary educated, who without hesitation have seen her theories as highly relevant in accounting for the communication breakdowns between whites and Aboriginal individuals and communities, not always from 'remote' areas. A colleague considers her thesis accounts well for intercultural communication problems of westerners with Samoans. In my experience, interacting with people in the Philippines, in situations where my grasp of the other person's language, or theirs of mine is similarly imperfect, the same problems do not present themselves so strongly. The impression Bain has gained is that these problems are most marked in the interaction between traditional fisher-gather-hunter (or hunter-gatherer) peoples and those from an agricultural or technological culture. Perhaps this is because their life styles have more need for planning with contingencies in mind.

Readers who have endeavoured to interact at more than a superficial level with remote area Aborigines will recognise the issues Bain is grappling with in this book, and will perhaps feel her thesis is the most adequate explanation to date to account for the cross-cultural miscommunications. It should be emphasised that there is no firm dividing line between traditional Aborigines and whites on these issues, and some of what Bain describes will be pertinent in analysing interactions in and between different socio-cultural groups in the mainstream society. Young idealists may well reject her thesis out of hand; however if any one of them can come up with a better explanation of why the problems are there, Margaret Bain would be among the first to welcome their findings.

A possible contribution to the cross-cultural miscommunication Bain describes is yet another factor which perhaps is not addressed overtly in this book. In my experience in interaction not only with Aborigines but with white people of working class background, certain general principles are often not overtly stated, but illustrated by real life examples only. The over-arching mental concept seems present, but never verbalised. However in my experience in Aboriginal communities, unverbalised concepts are not at a high level of abstraction, and retain firm links with the concrete. In working class white society this avoidance of verbalisation of concepts is often linked with an avoidance of 'big words', by which is meant the more abstract words of Graeco-Latin origin. David Corson's book *The Lexical Bar* is one which deals with this issue. While certain concepts may at times not be verbalised in working class society, working class people can and do work at a higher level of abstraction than Bain's first degree. However, just as the avoidance of 'big words' among many working class people is a deliberate choice, Bain hints that the avoidance of the second degree of abstraction appears a deliberate choice in traditional Aboriginal society. This may contribute to the miscommunication Bain addresses, but it clearly does not account for the totality of it.
BOOK REVIEWS

I recommend Bain's book as a significant contribution in the field of cross-cultural communication, and her thesis deserves careful consideration for what it might contribute, not only in Australia in communication between whites and Aborigines, but in other cultural and linguistic areas.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Bain, Margaret S. 1971, 'Aboriginal concept - "being" rather than "doing". in Seminars 1971, Centre for Research into Aboriginal Affairs, Monash University, Melbourne, pp.1-20.

M. Sharpe
University of New England


The Go-Betweens is an essential reference for anyone at all interested in the history of the Northern Territory. Jeremy Long, himself a patrol officer in the 1950s-1960s, tells clearly and well the story of 'Patrol Officers in Aboriginal Affairs Administration in the Northern Territory 1936-1974'. It is most fortunate that the work was accomplished whilst most of the patrol officers were still alive: their records, photographs and reminiscences not only contributed to the account, but hopefully will allow correction of misconceptions in some of the recent 'politically correct' publications.

A brief Introduction traces the history of Protectors of Aborigines from 1837, before outlining the development of the NT patrol officers' service. The chapter headings then indicate the progressive development of the philosophy behind administration, the various duties, and the experiences and responses of the officers. Illustrative of these chapters are: 'A False Start In Arnhem Land, 1934-36', 'Patrol Officer Strehlow In The Centre, 1936-39', 'Adventures In Arnhem Land 1949-51', and 'From Native Affairs To Welfare 1951-54'.

Difficulties on the field are touched upon, and well-illustrated with photographs that anyone with an eye for detail can appreciate. Furthermore, though, the insensitivity of distant administraive 'desk wallahs' and per-pushers is indicated in extracts from the correspondence.

Much of the material deals with frontier history a century after it had been experienced elsewhere in Australia - travel to remote Arnhem Land and desert regions; encounters with Aborigines who had never previously directly experienced the impact of the wider society (and vice versa for the patrol officers); investigations of ill-treatment of Aborigines by a wide range of exploitative 'white' people; patrols to check on reports of murders; and other such aspects. The image might have been romantic and glamorous, but the reality was, in the main, hard work. Interestingly, despite their often quite remarkable experiences, the patrol officers did not receive publicity even remotely comparable to the mounted police. Ion L. Idriess elevated the police work to legendary status, which is often enough entirely reasonable, but with the exception of Kyle-Little's Whispering Wind (1957), occasional references in Bill Harvey's various books of the 1950s-1960s, and Lockwood's The Lizard Eaters (1964), very little is readily available on the exploits of the patrol officers.
The changing Federal Government perspectives, as worked out by Northern Territory administrations, are well presented over time. And, as the author states:

Though the title of 'patrol officer' was an anachronism by the late 1960's, the need for people trained for work with Aboriginal people did not diminish. Half of those who took the ... training course did so after 1966; they were being trained for work that was changing but not disappearing' (p. 169).

In that the last patrol officers' training course was held in 1974, the date is an appropriate cut-off point for the study, although it is recognised that many of the officers continued to work for the various Aboriginal organisations created thereafter.

Although *The Go-Betweens* is an excellent book, I do have some quibbles with it. The Introduction rightly refers to South Australia, employing significance on development of Protectors' roles and concerns, but does not at all pursue this, relying instead on the situation which prevailed in Victoria (oddly never referred to as other than the 'Port Phillip Protectorate'). As South Australia had responsibility for the Northern Territory to 1911, and formally provided many members of the work-force until the mid-1970s, this State's role is worthy of further investigation. Similarly, although reference to Papua-New Guinea is important to mention in the Introduction, the impression is given (p. xii) that the patrol-officer responsibilities established by Hubert Murray were of the 1920s-1930s era. In fact, the Kiap Army officers of World War I, having taken over from the previous German administration, put into practice that which is described during 1915, (as is indicated in the relevant volume of the official War history edited by C.E.W. Bean).

'Sins of omission' can hardly be said to have occurred in the main text, and all officers are listed in appendices, thus allowing further follow-up by any future researchers. Similarly, much as the focus is of necessity the patrol officers themselves and their administrative associates, other people of varying significance are mentioned - people like Dr Charles Duguid, Professor A.P. Elkin, and Miss Olive Pink. An important point is that, throughout the text, the integrity and concerns of the patrol officers, and occasionally of the wider NT population, are given due, but not exaggerated, regard (e.g. see pp. 82-3).

There are ample opportunities for further research - the reminiscences of Aborigines about their times of service, the role of women, and other aspects, all to some extent considered by the author. One would hope, too, that Jeremy Long soon follows up this book with a number of volumes giving the actual patrol accounts, many of which are interesting and readable historical documents, presently either rare or unpublished.

In conclusion, Dr Jeremy Long's book illuminates a previously little known, yet most interesting, period of human endeavour in the Northern Territory. It is highly recommended as a purchase to all interested in Aboriginal and other Australian people's relationships, and to historians and general readers alike.

R.G. Kimber
INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS

Typescripts must be double-spaced and with ample margins to allow for editorial marking. Footnotes should be typed on a separate sheet and numbered consecutively throughout the paper. The List of References should also be typed on a separate page. Tables, figures and maps should be submitted in final form (except for size), on separate sheets, numbered on the back, and accompanied by a list of captions and photographic credits. Submit two hard copies and keep one. Once manuscripts are accepted, authors may wish to submit final versions on computer disks, preferably unformatted and preferably using Microsoft Word (Version 3.02 or any later version) for Macintosh computers.

Authors should follow the usage of Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers, 4th edn (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1988). The only exception is in the referencing system, where a modified version of the author-date (Harvard) system should be used. References to sources should be placed in footnotes, but these footnotes should follow the format employed in the Harvard system. Full details of archival and manuscript sources should be given unless they can be abbreviated in such a way as to allow the full reference to be found in the List of References. Where possible give identifying numbers for archival material. For example:

1 Rowley 1971, p. 107; see also Barwick 1981.
3 Fison & Howitt 1880, p. 96.
4 See Cox 1821.
7 Riddett 1988, p. 6.
8 Victoria River Downs Manager to Administrator of the Northern Territory, 13 August 1953, Australian Archives (NT): CRS FI; 52/758.

The List of References should follow the form given in the Style Manual for lists of references in the Harvard system. Where full details of archival sources have been given in the footnotes they need not be listed in the List of References. Journals titles must be given in full. For book and journal titles maximal capitalisation must be used; that is, capitalisation of the first letter of every word except articles, prepositions and conjunctions. For the titles of journal articles and of articles or chapters in books use minimal capitalisation (capitalisation only of the first letter of the first words of the title and subtitle and of words that normally have an initial capital). Details of authors' names must be given as on the title page; do not abbreviate. For example:

LIST OF REFERENCES

Cox, G. 1821, Journal kept by Mr George Cox on his late tour to the Northward and Eastward of Bathurst etc., MS, Mitchell Library, Sydney.
Curr, E.M. 1886-87, The Australian Race, 4 vols, Melbourne.

NOTE: This Volume is listed in the International Current Awareness Services, and the International Bibliography of Social Sciences. Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in Historical Abstracts and America: History and Life.