

Southern Anthropology – a History of Fison and Howitt's Kamilaroi and Kurnai

by Helen Gardner and Patrick McConvell

xx + 329 pp., Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 2015,
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Review by Raymond Madden
La Trobe University

A quote from the preface sums up the importance of this work:

Working through the primary material, Gardner and McConvell, from their different areas of expertise, became convinced of the ongoing value of this evidence and the singularity of Fison and Howitt's anthropological vision from a southern perspective. This point became the central thesis of this book. (p. xx)

The book is set out across five sections (1. Southern Anthropology, 2. Finding Kin: Fison in the Antipodes, 3. Kin and Skin, 4. From Encounter to Page: The Writing of *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*, 5. The Reception and Legacy of *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*) and these five sections are divided into 18 chapters. There is a generous list of figures, as well as a list of maps and tables. As well, there is a useful 'Note on Spelling' to assist the reader. Furthermore, the book contains an excellent foreword by Nicolas Peterson, which appropriately positions Southern or Antipodean Anthropology in the global world of ideas about the human condition.

While many anthropologists may be aware of the influence of Howitt, especially in south-east Australia, the importance of the combination of Fison and Howitt and the influence of their work on an anthropology moving away from evolutionist ideas to one more influenced by human relativity is worth reiterating and *Southern Anthropology* effectively makes this point. Helen Gardner, from Deakin University, Australia, and Patrick McConvell, from The Australian National University, were each responsible for sections of the text, with Gardner writing the core of the book and McConvell authoring

the opening and closing sections. In this way they were able to bring their expertise, in History and Anthropology respectively, to bear to the final product. The result is a pleasing text, both technically well-presented and yet still accessible and easy to read. The influence of Howitt and Fison on Morgan, and vice versa is very much worth noting as these ideas have gone on to be influential even today. In particular Howitt and Fison's contribution to kinship studies is illuminated, both historically and anthropologically.

Southern Anthropology is an excellent revision of the import of *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*, which was first published in 1880. *Southern Anthropology* lays out how ideas laid out back in 1880 have gone on to have an influence that is worthy of remark, and worthy of serious reconsideration of the place of southern anthropology in the global world of ideas about the human condition.

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