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Preface

We are pleased to present Volume 35 of *Aboriginal History*.

Since becoming editors last year, Shino Konishi and I have had reason to reflect on the history of the journal and its relationship to the broader field of Indigenous history in Australia. Earlier this year, my thoughts on this were further fuelled when I attended a conference here at the Australian National University (ANU) marking 30 years of Subaltern Studies, a field that in many ways parallels the development of Australian Aboriginal History. Indeed, both began to develop around the same time and in the same place. In his paper for the conference, which traced interconnections between Subaltern Studies and Aboriginal History, Bain Attwood noted that the names 'Aboriginal History' and 'Subaltern Studies' had initially referred to publications more so than schools. The journal *Aboriginal History* and the series *Subaltern Studies*, both of which are still in press, were established within a few years of each other. *Aboriginal History* published its first volume in 1977; the first volume of *Subaltern Studies* appeared in 1982. Both were based at ANU, and in particular closely associated with its Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies (now the College of Asia and the Pacific). In each case, these publishing ventures were foundational to the development of the fields that go by these names. A generation on, *Aboriginal History* and *Subaltern Studies* can publish only a small sample of the large and ever-expanding body of scholarship produced in their respective fields. Importantly, though, each publishes work that not only reflects elements of the original, and to some extent shared, visions for these fields, but which also continues to stretch interpretive possibilities, subjects and themes, and methodological approaches. In their different ways, as Attwood noted, the fields of Aboriginal History and Subaltern Studies expanded the horizons of historical scholarship and writing to represent the perspectives and experiences of people hitherto excluded from conventional, national histories. In both instances, this involved adopting a multidisciplinary approach, as well as drawing on a wide range of sources, including oral testimony, visual images, and vernacular writings. This volume of *Aboriginal History*, now in its 35th year, demonstrates the ways in which this vision for an expanded horizon of history continues to furnish new insights into and interpretations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's experiences, while sometimes also continuing to push the limits of history-writing.

In her article, Grace Karskens extends her cross-cultural research on early colonial New South Wales by focusing on the uses of European clothing by Aboriginal men. Using methods drawn from visual analysis, material culture studies, and ethnographic history, she teases out possible meanings that Aboriginal men ascribed to clothes, especially military coats. In the process, her study reveals a dense and complex social world of relations shaped by exchange and trade, diplomacy and hierarchy.

In their contributions, Leah Lui-Chivizhe and Noah Riseman use oral testimony to tell important new histories. Lui-Chivizhe describes the participation of Torres Strait Islander men in railway construction work in Western Australia. Riseman focuses on the life of one man to explore intersections between the experience of institutionalisation as a member of the Stolen Generations and later as a member of the Australian armed forces. Both articles are distinguished by their critical reflections on the nature of personal and collective remembrance, the ethics of using oral testimony in writing Indigenous history, and the relationship between oral and archival evidence.

Ian D Clark's article reminds us of the importance of meticulous and careful archival research, especially when it comes to histories of frontier violence. In an article that answers Michael Connor's refutation of the 'Convincing Ground' massacre, Clark not only exposes flaws in Connor's own reading of the archival evidence but also has something to say about his methods as a massacre denier. At the same time, Clark further contextualises and explains the evidence upon which his own interpretations and conclusions about the Convincing Ground massacre are based.

In this 35th volume, we mark yet another milestone in the history of the journal. Early on in the journal's life, Isabel McBryde, who remains an active member of the Aboriginal History Board, suggested that 'occasionally the journal might produce issues devoted to a particular theme'. James Urry responded to the suggestion by proposing a volume devoted to Aboriginal-Asian contact history, which was published as Volume 5 in 1981. Thirty years later, Christine Choo and Peta Stephenson, leaders in the field of research into Aboriginal-Asian relations, have edited a special section on the same theme. The four papers included revisit old topics and address new ones.

Campbell Macknight published a piece in the 1981 volume on his research into contact between Macassans and Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land; in this volume in 2011 he reflects with insight on the development of his own scholarship and on research in this area more generally. What he offers, then, is a double-layered history. Anna Shnukal did not contribute a piece to the 1981 volume, but in 1985 (Volume 9) she published her first piece in *Aboriginal History*, which was on Torres Strait Islander creole. Her contribution this time focuses on Filipinos in the outer Torres Strait islands and the families they established with Indigenous women. Marriage is also the theme in Julia Martínez' article. She explores marriages between Indonesian men and Indigenous Australian women, which provides new perspectives not only on the history of Indonesians in Australia but also the White Australia policy and its effects. Victoria Haskins provides a fascinating story drawn from the colonial archives that documents one Chinese family's efforts to be allowed to employ Aboriginal workers. She uses this case to explore 'how local politics of race played out on the frontiers of white Australia in the early twentieth century'. As Stephenson and Choo note in their introduction to the special section, the four papers together 'retrieve pre-colonial and colonial

relationships that place white settler narratives of Australia's social development in a wider perspective. In the process they challenge the ideological foreclosures and sometimes methodological timidity of mainstream nationalist histories'.

In commending this volume of *Aboriginal History* to you, we wish to express our gratitude to the many people who assist with its production. We especially thank Geoff Hunt, copyeditor, Tikka Wilson, production manager, and Luise Hercus, reviews editor, as well as the entire Aboriginal History Board. We also wish to thank Shannyn Palmer and Julia Torpey who provided much needed editorial assistance. Finally, we would like to acknowledge Professor Angela Woollacott, Head of the School of History in the College of Arts and Social Sciences at ANU, where the journal is currently based, for her continuing support.

Maria Nugent

Red coat, blue jacket, black skin: Aboriginal men and clothing in early New South Wales[1]

Grace Karskens

In 1819 a group of Aboriginal men from the Nepean River and the Blue Mountains came to Sydney, where they met some of the Frenchmen from the corvette *Uranie*. The French visitors were on a voyage of scientific discovery, and had planned a journey across the Blue Mountains. Most likely the Aboriginal men had agreed to act as their guides. Artist Alphonse Pellion sketched them at their camp on the edge of Sydney, and his drawings show that they were all wearing jackets or coats. Tara and Peroa, from the Nepean River, were not wearing trousers. Neither, probably, were the others – the engravings made from Pellion's sketches show them only from the waist up, and the Frenchmen noted with some shock that this was the usual manner of dress for the Aboriginal men in Sydney.[2]

Images of Aboriginal men wearing jackets or coats without trousers are common in colonial paintings from the late 1810s and in the 1820s. Whether the warriors in these pictures stand resplendent in silver braided scarlet, or slouch insouciant in torn, ill-fitting coats, most historians have interpreted the garments as sure signs of the low status of Aboriginal people in settler society. The jackets are indicative of a people reduced to beggary and drunkenness, of cultural annihilation, of a people without hope. These interpretations reach unbroken back to the responses of new or visiting colonists of the 1820s and 1830s (older colonists knew better). Around 1838 an anonymous rhymester – probably Baptist Minister and temperance advocate John Saunders – scribbled a poem at the bottom of an ugly caricature of Aboriginal people drinking and fighting. The third verse directly links the jackets with alcohol, violence and degeneration:

> Now we see the end, these sans culottes
> Decked with white mans cast off coats
> Display their love in blows
> One Gin with rum is stupefied
> The second sups the infernal tide
> Till basest passion glows[3]

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1 Thanks to Tim Rowse and Brad Manera and two anonymous readers for their invaluable advice on this paper.

2 de Freycinet 2001[1824]: 123–124, 306; Quoy et al 1950[1819]: 7–12; Pellion 1819a, 'Sauvages de la Nouvelle Galles du Sud (d'apre nature dans leur Camp pres de Sidney (20 dec. 1819)', watercolour, Mitchell Library.

3 Saunders Rev John (attrib) c1838, poem accompanying 'Real Life in Sydney', lithograph, with letterbook 1834–1847, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

Fig 1. Alphonse Pellion (attrib), 'Sauvages de la Nouvelle Galles du Sud [Tara et Peroa]', watercolour, 1819.

Source: Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, SV/118.

No doubt the term 'sans culottes' raised a smile among those who could remember the French Revolution. These tattered, motley urban Aborigines were without even the rough trousers of the Parisian militants – they were *sans* anything. Especially amusing and popular were the 'world-upside-down'

cameos of key figures such as Bungaree, the famous leader and spokesperson of the 'Sydney Tribe', whose European finery contrasted ludicrously with his 'grotesque' face and bare feet.[4]

Fig 2. Artist unknown, 'Real life in Sydney', lithograph, c1838.

Source: Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, B1106, with handwritten poem, very likely by Rev John Saunders.

Historians have used this contrast too, though here the purpose is not comedy but the revelation of dispossession and pauperisation. In his seminal *White on Black*, the first sustained study of white artists' depictions of Aborigines, Geoffrey Dutton wrote of Bungaree as beggar, mimic and drunk: 'When he wore the braided jacket and cocked hat given him by various governors, he had only to look down at his bare feet to know where he really stood'.[5] Writing in the aftermath of WEH Stanner's clarion call for historians to break the silence on Aboriginal dispossession, Dutton saw the fine red jacket as a sham, a bad joke. The bare feet tell us what is really going on.

Dutton's poignant words, like his chapter title, 'Instant Degeneration', set the tone and the conceptual approach for much of the commentary on Aborigines

4 Hansen 2007: 27–32.
5 Dutton 1974: 29.

wearing European clothing. Art historian Michael Rosenthal concluded of the jacket-wearing Aboriginal man in Augustus Earle's 'Native Family Sitting Down on an English Settler's Farm' (c1826) that his 'carelessly-worn European attire and pipe smoking exemplify the radical incompatibility between the two cultures'.[6] In her pioneering history of dress in Australia, Margaret Maynard applied a hegemonic model in which the dominant settler culture utterly supplanted the Aboriginal one. Here clothing was a weapon of coercion in the colonising process, forced upon naked Aboriginal people in order to civilise and subdue them. Maynard suggested an inverse relationship between European clothing and Aboriginal well-being: 'The adoption of European dress is likely to have aided in the destruction of Aboriginal culture through the undermining of self-esteem and erosion of health'. Those who chose to wear clothes did so only for 'expedience, a desire to please, or merely as imitation', and were savagely lampooned by whites for their trouble. So clothing could have no real meaning from an Aboriginal perspective.[7]

Keith Vincent Smith's sympathetic biography of Bungaree explored his extensive wardrobe of coats and hats in detail, as well as the way he wore them, his dignified demeanour and extravagant gestures. But in the end, Smith concurs with Dutton, and cites him: Bungaree, 'realising the hopelessness of his position and the loss of his heritage … was determined to play it for laughs'.[8] More recently, Craig Wilcox, in his lyrical cultural history of the British army in Australia, also meditated upon Bungaree and his coats. Most famous of course is the 'fine scarlet coat' he wore, together with 'the great cocked hat, the crimson sash, gleaming gorget', in Augustus Earle's 1826 oil portrait. Here, argues Wilcox, is evidence for 'Aboriginal aesthetics and ambitions too'. Yet he does not pursue this promising idea. Once more, the finery contrasts with Bungaree's expression, 'somewhere between regret and resignation' (in fact Bungaree smiles gently in this portrait). Other pictures reveal 'rapid decline', due not to advancing years but heavy drinking. So jacket-wearing remains empty mimesis: Aborigines were merely mimicking the red-coated soldiers, a rather pathetic appropriation of a key British symbol of power by 'people who now found themselves powerless'.[9]

But look more closely at the paintings and sketches, especially those that were done on the spot. The men in them do not play the part of abject beggars or pathetic mimics. Jules-Louis Le Jeune's 1824 informal pen and ink sketch of Bungaree shows him wearing a long greatcoat and standing at the helm of his fishing boat, arm outstretched over the waves. His friends, either jacketed or naked, stand with their spears or pull at the oars of the boat.[10] The men in Pellion's watercolours, Tara and Peroa, do not look like beaten refugees either. They stand relaxed, hands in the pockets of their oversized jackets, and meet the viewer's gaze full on, or casually look away.

6 Rosenthal 2000: 39.
7 Maynard 1994: chapter 4, 59, 70. See also Watson 1998.
8 Smith 1992: loc cit, quote 158.
9 Wilcox 2009: chapter 2, quotes 12, 13, 15, 123.
10 Le Jeune 1824.

Fig 3. Augustus Earle, 'A native family of New South Wales sitting down on English settlers farm', c1826.

Source: National Library of Australia NK12/45.

Augustus Earle's watercolour of an Aboriginal family camped in front of a settler's house depicts the jacketed, trouserless man sitting cross-legged on a blanket on the ground with his back to the artist and the viewer, smoking a clay pipe, seemingly intent on his own business or thoughts, and uninterested in the white people around him.[11] Earle's lithograph 'Natives of N. S. Wales as seen on the streets of Sydney' (which, like his other negative portrayals, appears to have been created later in England from earlier separate sketches) reveals a seemingly damning scene of degraded Aboriginal people drinking in the street. Yet even here, only two of the jacket-wearing men are drinking rum-and-water 'bull' from the bucket. The other jacketed man stands watching, and carries a traditional club. The women do not drink, and one carries a large fish, suggesting the continuance of women's traditional fishing.[12]

Perhaps Earle was responding to the growing taste for ugly caricatures of Indigenous people in this period. We can see this in the popular silhouette prints of the 1830s, where the ragged jackets were ever more closely associated with the 'corrosive effect of alcohol and dependence'.[13] By the 1840s, Aboriginal people

11 Earle c1826, 'A native family of New South Wales sitting down on English settlers farm', watercolour, National Library of Australia.

12 Earle c1830, 'Natives of N. S. Wales as seen in the streets of Sydney', lithograph, National Library of Australia.

13 Thomas 1999: 58; Fernyhough c1836, 'A series of twelve profile portraits of Aborigines of New South Wales, drawn from life and on stone', silhouettes, 1840, 'Natives of NSW drinking Bull',

were depicted wearing other articles of clothing as well – shirts, dresses and ragged trousers. But the image of the jacket worn without trousers recurred occasionally in art. Perhaps it was literal in Walter G Mason's picture of a public meeting in Sydney during elections in 1857, which includes a group of Aboriginal people listening to the speakers on the hustings. It made a vestigial appearance in ST Gill's 1866 caricature 'Native Dignity', which parodies Aboriginal appropriation of European finery, as well as the pretensions of the disconcerted respectable white couple in the background.[14]

Fig 4. Walter G Mason, 'Public meeting at Macquarie Place, Sydney, during the election', print, wood engraving.

Source: National Library of Australia, PIC S1266.

silhouette, National Library of Australia; Nicholas 1840–42, 'Profiles of the Aborigines of New South Wales 1840–1842', silhouettes, National Library of Australia; Carmichael 1826, 'King of Black Natives', watercolour and ink, Mitchell Library; Phelps 1840, 'Native Scenes', pen and ink drawings, Mitchell Library.

14 Mason 1857, 'Public meeting at Macquarie Place, Sydney, during the election', print, wood engraving, National Library of Australia; Gill 1866, 'Native Dignity', lithograph, National Gallery of Australia.

Fig 5. ST Gill, 'Native Dignity'.

Source: NK2459/6.

Given the long silence over Aboriginal history, and given the parlous state of many Aboriginal people in terms of life expectancy, standards of living and economic opportunities, it is not surprising that historians have seen these paintings and descriptions as damning evidence of a long, unbroken history of Aboriginal material and cultural impoverishment. But did Aboriginal warriors

in the early colonial period consider *themselves* as degraded, culturally lost or outcast people? The pictures and the glimpses we have of them suggest something else, something more. In any case, does putting on a jacket, or wrapping oneself in a blanket, indicate 'instant degeneration' and culture loss, or at best a black sort of humour? If bare feet, and sitting down together on the ground, were customary among Aboriginal people, do they reveal only poverty and deprivation? Is mimicry always meaningless, merely reinforcing the power of the invaders? What if we track and reconsider this practice of jacket-wearing as a way of exploring the Aboriginal world, and the ways Aboriginal men in particular responded to the invasion of 1788?

*

Clothing and appearance signify boundaries and identity, as Maynard points out, but they are also instant visual codes triggering underlying assumptions about race and culture.[15] Tim Rowse has written of such 'unsettling' moments, as a 'crisis of the conventions of perception'. But he argues that such moments are also a way to explore 'others' imaginations and ways of life' as well as our own. The things we do not understand, things that unsettle us, are precisely those which reveal most clearly 'the "interfering glosses" through which we look'.[16]

Rowse opens his study of Aboriginal men and clothing by recounting the visit of two eminent judges, John Kerr QC and Justice Richard Kirby, to a cattle station in Arrernte country near Alice Springs in 1965. They were there as part of the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission's inquiry into whether Aboriginal pastoral workers were to be included in the Northern Territory Cattle Industry Award. Kirby was head of the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, and Kerr was representing the pastoralists, who argued that the increased wages were unjustified. Expecting to find the Aboriginal workers living in the 'bucolic contentment' that white pastoralists had described, Kirby and Kerr were taken aback to find the people poorly dressed, in 'dreadful sort of half-world clothes … such as old army jackets, which make them half white man and half native'. Rowse points out that the white men turned away from this unsettling evidence, retreating instead into romantic representations of Aboriginal workers in handsome cowboy clothes, such as the works of Darryl Lindsay and Russell Drysdale, which 'retained their masculine dignity' within colonial pastoralism.[17]

Rowse's analysis of the uses and meanings of cowboy clothing offers some key insights into the way Aboriginal men and clothing might be explored. First, Kerr and Kirby appear to have experienced something of the same disquiet as observers in Sydney in the 1820s when they saw Aboriginal men wearing old jackets. Here, then, are Rowse's 'glosses': Europeans expected, and perhaps still expect, to see either 'pristine hunter' *or* Aborigines wearing clothes in the

15 Maynard 2006: 103.
16 Rowse 1991: 1–2.
17 Rowse 1991: 3–4.

European manner. Hybrid dress signals something in between, something not easily definable. It is precisely this disturbing glimpse, this 'something in between' that leaves room for an Aboriginal side of the story.[18]

Second, Rowse examines the role of cowboy clothes by reading them within the wider gendered, political and economic contexts of the Northern Territory pastoral industry. The meanings and significance of clothing worn by Aboriginal men cannot be generalised across time and place – they are enmeshed in, and therefore contingent upon, particular historical contexts.[19] Thus, an old, torn coat might well reveal poverty in one circumstance, but can signify something quite different in another. Philip Jones argues similarly that the nature of frontier encounters depended on circumstance, particular actions, myriad variables. It is necessary therefore to look carefully at the 'moment of exchange', and to see that 'frontiers were loaded with other possibilities'.[20]

Jones demonstrates that the artefacts of frontier encounter and collection themselves carry information: they are 'the chains along which social ideas run'. Ethnographic artefacts which 'crossed over' may well reveal 'ideas generated *within* the Indigenous culture of origin'. What of European artefacts, like glass, metal hatchets and clothing, which crossed the other way, and were adopted and adapted by Aboriginal people? What can they reveal or suggest about Aboriginal culture response and world-view 'from within'?[21]

But here is a further difficulty. Flaked glass and metal blades may make it into public collections, but as Margaret Maynard points out, dress generally is marginalised in such collections. Even within such assemblages, 'working clothes, prisoners' clothes and European-influenced Indigenous clothes are rare inclusions'.[22] The jackets worn by warriors have not survived, the artefacts are absent. It is not possible to see or touch the real fabric, study the colour, cut, stitching, buttons, piping, braid, the tears and stains. These coats and jackets are ghost artefacts, recorded only in the paintings and words of white people, and then often conveyed through thick lenses of ridicule, revulsion or pity.

Jacket wearing by Aboriginal warriors in the early colonial period is a practice lost to history, just as these garments themselves have long disappeared. Yet these repeat glimpses are a faint but insistent *leitmotif*. In tracking them something more might be recovered about the encounters between colonists and Aboriginal people, the lived texture of negotiated lives and spaces in the early colony. What 'forgotten codes and protocols', and what larger scenarios of negotiation or accommodation – or cultural adaptation – might jacket-wearing suggest?[23]

*

18 See also Brock 2007: 1; Jones 2007: 11–12.
19 Brock 2007; Land 2006; Kovacic 2006.
20 Jones 2007: 5–6.
21 Jones 2007: 6–7.
22 Maynard 1991: 77.
23 Jones 2007: 6.

Jackets and coats were significant objects during the earliest encounters between the Berewalgal and Eora in January 1788. After Governor Phillip and his party had broken the ice by ritual gift-giving, some Kamaygal (the people of Botany Bay) came forward to inspect the strangers more closely. They were particularly curious about the clothes, as Surgeon George Worgan wrote later, 'feeling the Coat, Waistcoat, and even the Shirt and on seeing one of the Gentlemen pull off his Hat, they all set up a loud Hoop'.[24]

What struck the Berewalgal, on the other hand, was the sight of so many 'perfectly naked' people, walking about as if being stark naked was the most normal thing in the world. The newcomers, who were accustomed to wearing a number of layers of clothing, associated wearing clothes with being 'civilised', while being unclothed was an instant marker of 'savagery'. The unclad body triggered a whole range of responses: the most basic was that it indicated a total lack of 'modesty'.[25] The First Fleet officers also saw it as evidence of the poverty and deprivation of the savage state. Giving these poor creatures clothing was thus an act of kindness and charity.

Here we encounter a linguistic and conceptual gap. The Eora may have been unclothed, but they were not naked, for they dressed their bodies in many complex and distinctive ways. As Ian Gilligan points out, 'dressing (rather than clothing) the body is a universal feature of all known human cultures', so there can be 'no such thing as nakedness'.[26] In the Sydney region, each of the more than 30 groups of Aboriginal people dressed their bodies in distinctive ways. Men and women were marked by with cicatrices (raised scars) in distinctive patterns on their chests and arms. They painted their bodies with clay: white for corroborees, red for war, contests and mourning. Men everywhere wore long beards, but the different groups were distinguished by their hairstyles. Those from the Botany Bay area gummed their hair in dreadlocks, which to the Berewalgal looked like 'the thrums of a mop'; other groups adorned their hair with the teeth and the tails of animals. Men and women sometimes wore multi-stranded necklaces made of dried reeds, or cascades of kangaroo teeth. Initiated Eora men of the coastal Sydney region were also marked by a missing front tooth, while women had lost the top two joints of the little finger of their left hands. Many had pierced septums, for wearing small bones or sticks.[27]

As for clothing, the groups of the colder, higher regions to the south wore possum fur cloaks, slung over the shoulders, fastened at the front. But in the Sydney region, apart from the *barin*, or apron, worn by prepubescent girls, and the string waistband in which warriors carried their tools, the Eora wore no clothes at all. Their sex could thus be instantly gauged. However, as the Berewalgal

24 Worgan, George, letter to Richard Worgan, 12–18 June 1788, with journal fragment 20 January 1788 – 11 July 1788, Mitchell Library.

25 Russell 2010: 34.

26 Gilligan 2008: 487.

27 Collins 1971[1798], 1: 551–552; Worgan, George, letter to Richard Worgan, 12–18 June 1788, with journal fragment 20 January 1788 – 11 July 1788, Mitchell Library: 9; Attenbrow 2002: 107–111, 118.

gradually realised, modesty was nevertheless part of Eora women's culture. Their customary way of sitting was with one leg bent and the foot covering the genitals.[28] For men, though, there was no such consideration: in fact it was vitally important that their manhood be visible.

In fact the Eora probably did not possess a concept of nakedness, or a word for naked.[29] The Berewalgal's layers of strangely textured and coloured (and no doubt pungently odorous) clothing must have seemed like so many extra skins. And removing what looked like part of one's head to reveal hair underneath must have been astonishing. No wonder they whooped in amazement. But these extra skins stopped the process of encounter and communication dead in its tracks, because the Eora warriors and elders could not tell if these pale creatures were men or women: they had no beards and their genitals were hidden. Eora society was deeply gendered. Men dealt with men, though often the negotiations revolved around women. The truth, first revealed when a sailor was ordered to drop his trousers, elicited another great whoop: they are men![30] Physical appearance – clothing, lack of clothing, hairstyles, scars, tattoos, painted skin, beards and clean-shaven chins – thus profoundly shaped the encounters for both peoples, and would continue to do so over the long colonial period.

Not long after the first encounter in Botany Bay, a jacket was given as a sign of friendship – though not by the official party, but ordinary sailors who went on shore to meet the Kamaygal. Unlike their superiors, the sailors were 'without Arms or any thing to protect themselves, sailor like'. They met men, women and children who were very friendly, and who 'eagerly accepted of a Jacket which one of the sailors gave them'.[31] It was probably a blue sailor's jacket, either brought along deliberately, as a gift; or perhaps peeled, still warm, from the wearer's back. Even if the coat was of little practical use to the Kamaygal, it was obviously an item the strangers held in some esteem, for they all wore them. As a gift it was clearly a sign of friendship. Since exchange and gift-giving was common to both cultures, both groups understood this ritual.[32]

Meanwhile relations were also being wrought by the governor and officers. Instructed to treat the natives kindly and 'live with them in amity', they were trying to keep the upper hand in managing cross-cultural relations, as well as attempting to prevent contact between convicts and sailors (whom they saw as brutal) and Aborigines.[33] But it was through the officers' efforts that certain jackets – the soldiers' red coats – soon developed very different meanings. They were associated not with friendship and amity but with danger and violence. These

28 Collins 1971[1798], 1: 562, 457; Attenbrow 2002: 109; Brock 2007.

29 Cf Donaldson 1985; Kohen 1993: 208–262.

30 Bradley 1786–1792: 60, 63; Worgan, George, letter to his brother Richard Worgan, 12–18 June 1788, with journal fragment 20 January 1788 – 11 July 1788, Mitchell Library: 4, 9; King 1786–1789: entry 20 January 1788.

31 Bradley 1786–1792: 61.

32 Worgan, George, letter to Richard Worgan, 12–18 June 1788, with journal fragment 20 January 1788 – 11 July 1788, Mitchell Library: 2; McBryde, 1989: 169–182.

33 Governor Phillip's Instructions, 27 April 1787, in Watson 1914–1925, *Historical Records of Australia*, series 1, vol 1: 1, 13–14; White 1962[1790]: 109.

Berewalgal's gestures of peace were always performed under the watchful eyes of red-coated soldiers and sometimes accompanied by demonstrations of the might of their weaponry. Musket balls were fired through the hardwood shields (*elemong*) the Eora warriors used to protect themselves in battle. As Lieutenant Watkin Tench coolly remarked, 'Our first object was to win their affections, and our next was to convince them of the superiority we possessed: for without the latter, the former we know would be of little importance'.[34] The natives were to be treated kindly, but they had to be shown exactly where they stood. The Eora understood the gun part perfectly.

Unsurprisingly, then, the red coat soon became a sign of danger. 'They know and dread the superiority of our arms', wrote Surgeon John White, for 'they carefully avoided a soldier – or anyone in a red coat'.[35] The colour red was also significant in Eora culture: painted in clay on the body, it was the colour of anger, revenge, fighting and mourning. The messengers who ran from one country to another with news were painted red too: it signalled important events, it was the colour of alarm, of warning.[36] Soon the mere sight of the soldier's red coat caused the Eora to melt into the bush, so preventing any opportunity for contact, let alone friendship. The officers were disappointed. After all the initial friendly overtures and meetings, and all those gifts, the Eora avoided the Camp at Sydney Cove for months.

But by May 1788, Eora warriors were stealing convicts' jackets, often while the latter worked cutting timber or rushes on the harbour. The earliest recorded incident occurred near Balmain, upriver from Sydney, and it had terrible consequences:

> Some Canoes landed at Major Ross Garden up the Harbour, they stole a Jacket & several other things which were afterwards found in one of the Canoes by some of the Convicts who followed them along the shore to the next Cove where they landed…[37]

Rumours that the pursuing convicts killed an Aboriginal warrior soon spread, and may explain the first killings of convicts shortly after: payback attacks on two rush cutters working in the same area. One was beaten to death, the other appeared to have died of shock.[38]

Thefts of jackets continued, and they infuriated the convicts. In January 1789 another party of rush cutters working down the harbour found that three jackets

34 Hunter 1968[1793]: 39; White 1962[1790]: 111; Worgan, George, letter to Richard Worgan, 12–18 June 1788, with journal fragment 20 January 1788 – 11 July 1788, Mitchell Library: 3; Tench 1979[1789/1793]: 35, 37, 50.

35 White 1962[1790]: 110, 111; Clark, Ralph, letter to Lt William Collins, 1 October 1788, Letterbook, Mitchell Library.

36 Tench 1979[1789/1793]: 278; Smith 1992: 143.

37 Bradley 1788.

38 White 1962[1790]: 132, 134; Worgan, George, letter to Richard Worgan, 12–18 June 1788, with journal fragment 20 January 1788 – 11 July 1788, Mitchell Library: 33; Collins 1971[1798], 1: 16–17, 30–31; Tench 1979[1789/1793]: 50.

had been taken from their boat, the two culprits paddling away like lightening. Their coxswain set off in pursuit, and, finding the jackets in a canoe beached on a small island, reclaimed them and stole the canoe as well. His boat was followed by a hail of spears from the enraged Eora men.[39]

At this early stage the thefts may have been opportunistic. Jackets, unlike trousers, were the items left lying about when it was hot. It might have been retaliation for the convicts' and sailors' thefts of Eora tools and implements they found about the camps 'to sell to the people on the transports'.[40] The European objects the Eora desired – and later demanded – were usually practical things, like steel axes and fish hooks, food and drink, while they left the useless beads and mirrors on the sands. So jackets seem odd things to target. They may have seen them potential trade items, adding them to the other goods that passed from hand to hand along the customary trade routes up and down the coast and between the coast and the interior. But as shown, the Eora of the Sydney coastal region did not customarily wear clothes, even when they were cold, so it is unlikely that they were wanted for warmth or protection. In any case these garments would at first have been extremely uncomfortable if not completely impractical for such active people, who used their backs, shoulders and arms constantly for paddling canoes, carrying children, for throwing spears with deadly accuracy, for parrying with shield against the spears of enemies. One man who tried on a shirt seemed 'appeared to be deprived of the use of his limbs'.[41] Wearing a jacket would have involved considerable discomfort and a sacrifice of mobility, at least in the beginning. What could have induced warriors to want, and then wear, such a garment?

By early 1790, the Eoras' keenness on jackets had filtered through to the higher echelons of the colony. On one harbour outing Phillip and his companions saw a group of women on a point near Rose Bay (*Pannerong*). They 'throw'd … a Jacket & several other things' onto the beach there. Phillip might have been thinking of an early excursion he made in Broken Bay, when a woman had wanted his greatcoat so badly, she sang, danced, flirted, wheedled and wept for it, all to no avail. Later he ordered men's frocks and jackets for the Eora, writing that 'these would do for men and women alike'.[42] But it was men alone who would commandeer jackets.

In the boat with them that day off Rose Bay was an Eora man, Woollarawarre Bennelong. Relations had fallen to such a parlous state during the previous year that Phillip resorted to kidnapping warriors in order to force open a means of communication. The young man Bennelong, grabbed from the beach at Manly in November 1789, proved to be an enthusiastic student and admirer of everything the Berewalgal showed him. Phillip dressed Bennelong over-warmly in a coat in an attempt to alter his physical sensibilities, to make him feel the cold, and so

39 Collins 1971[1798], 1: 52.
40 Collins 1971[1798], 1: 17, 23, 37.
41 Hunter 1968[1793]: 107.
42 Bradley 1790: entry 3 February; Worgan 1788: 25; Phillip cited in Maynard 1994: 62.

come to know his own nakedness.[43] This first coat was thus a tool employed to civilise the native. It was red, like those of the soldiers, though not made of fine felted wool, but 'the coarsest red Kersey', a primitive sort of fabric.[44] Bennelong eventually rejected it. He escaped from Government House in May 1790, leaving his clothes behind. The governor and officers were deeply disappointed: another cross-cultural experiment seemed to have failed.

But four months later Bennelong summoned Phillip to meet him on Manly beach, and a boat was hurriedly loaded with 'wine, beef and bread, and a jacket or two', as well as knives.[45] Jackets played an important, symbolic role at this meeting. Bennelong was presented with two jackets, one each by Phillip and David Collins, and he put them both on. Another warrior Coleby, a rival of Bennelong's, who had been kidnapped with him, but escaped, was also presented with a jacket, but he 'held [it] in his hand, not knowing how to put it on himself'. Not to be outdone by Bennelong, Coleby 'begged [Lieutenant Waterhouse] to put on the jacket which had been given … which Mr Waterhouse did for him'.[46] It would have been quite a feat, for these were older-style military coats, long at the back and each as heavy as a blanket.[47] Nevertheless, these gifted jackets, while certainly second hand, were not ragged cast-offs, or made of crude fabric. Wearing them may have reinforced the warriors' status as leaders and diplomats; it was also a sign of goodwill and politesse towards the Berewalgal.

Then, suddenly, the conversation and good relations evaporated. Phillip was steadily surrounded by warriors and then speared in the shoulder by a man he did not know.[48] The jackets and other gifts did not protect him, for they did not deter the warriors from what appears to have been the true purpose of the meeting: ritual punishment.

The spearing, though terrifying, in fact marked a turning point in relations. Phillip recovered quickly, and within weeks a significant reconciliation took place on a beach on the north shore opposite Sydney in November 1790. Bennelong and his new wife Barangaroo, their friends and family, received visits from parties of officers bearing gifts and food – and jackets. Bennelong was presented with many gifts, but the one that 'pleased him more than anything else' was yet another jacket: a military red coat with silver epaulets.[49]

Gifts of jackets were not without precedent in British imperial history. Craig Wilcox points out that in North America, 'giving red coats to Indian confederates in the perpetual frontier fighting against other Indians or against the French and Spanish was common'. They were strategic gifts, meant to forge alliances in the

43 King 1786–1790: 395; Clendinnen 2003: 108–109.
44 King 1786–1790: 395; National Museum of the American Indian, 'Wool Trade Cloth in the Collection of the National Museum of the American Indian, Glossary', 2001, <http://www.nmai.si.edu/wooltrade/glossary.shtml>.
45 Hunter 1968[1793]: 141.
46 Hunter 1968[1793]: 141.
47 Brad Manera, pers comm, 16 March 2011; see Fosten 1989: 27, loc cit; Smith 2007: 97.
48 Phillip, in Hunter 1968[1793]: 307–308.
49 Phillip, in Hunter 1968[1793]: 311.

'embattled beachheads [of] Massachusetts or Pennsylvania'. But Wilcox does not see the New South Wales jacket-gifts in this way. After all, 'it made little sense in Australia where frontier fighting was far smaller in scale', so the practice must have been merely 'an unthinking continuation of a tradition'.[50]

Yet Phillip *was* embattled, and strategic gifting precisely is what was occurring on the shores of Sydney Harbour. Phillip could not control the movements of convicts, soldiers or sailors into Aboriginal country and they continued to be attacked, beaten and killed by Aboriginal warriors. Neither would he punish the warriors, even if he could, for his orders were to 'treat the natives kindly' and he had forbidden anyone from shooting or otherwise harming them. But fear, hatred and a longing for payback began to writhe among the convict populace. Phillip did not want a rebellion on his hands; but nor did he yet know much about the Eora – their numbers, their intentions. It was vital that a communication be opened so that the colonists could convey both their friendly, peaceable intentions – and their superior strength of arms.[51]

In Bennelong, then, the officers saw hope for peace between the two races, for they regarded him as a leader and a go-between, someone with whom they could negotiate, someone they hoped could control his people and stop the killings. The fine red jacket was a diplomatic tool in this process, a gift of esteem, an expression of hoped-for alliance and co-operation. As it turned out, their hopes were misplaced; and Bennelong seems to have understood and used the jacket in different ways altogether.

Shortly after that first reconciliation on the north shore, Bennelong and his people finally came into Sydney. The inclusion of Aboriginal people in the town had been official British policy as well as the genuine hope of Phillip and several of the officers from the start.[52] Bennelong and Barangaroo were frequent visitors to Government House, and Bennelong always wore the favourite scarlet coat when he was in Sydney. As David Hansen points out, this kind of mimicry was not merely flattery of the Berewalgal leaders, but a customary form of respect.[53] Again, just wearing it would have involved considerable effort and inconvenience, for it would have hung down to the back of his knees and felt heavy, hot, prickly. Whether Bennelong also wore it in Eora country away from Sydney is unknown, but it is possible that the red coat reinforced his meteoric rise in status among his own people, too. Bennelong had brokered this breakthrough with the Berewalgal, they were his new allies. He seemed to be very busy shoring up his position with the other Eora groups, the Kamaygal and Gweagal of Botany Bay and the powerful Cammeragal of Middle and North Harbours.[54] Remembering the symbolic and visual power of the red coat, Bennelong's new jacket may have been a powerful asset in his ongoing negotiations with the other groups.

50 Wilcox 2009: 13, 15–16.
51 Karskens 2009: 361–371.
52 Tench 1979[1789/1793]: 53.
53 Hansen 2007: 27–32; Brad Manera, pers comm, 16 March 2011.
54 Tench 1979[1789/1793]: 200; Phillip, in Hunter 1968[1793]: 314, 315; Smith 2001: 68–69.

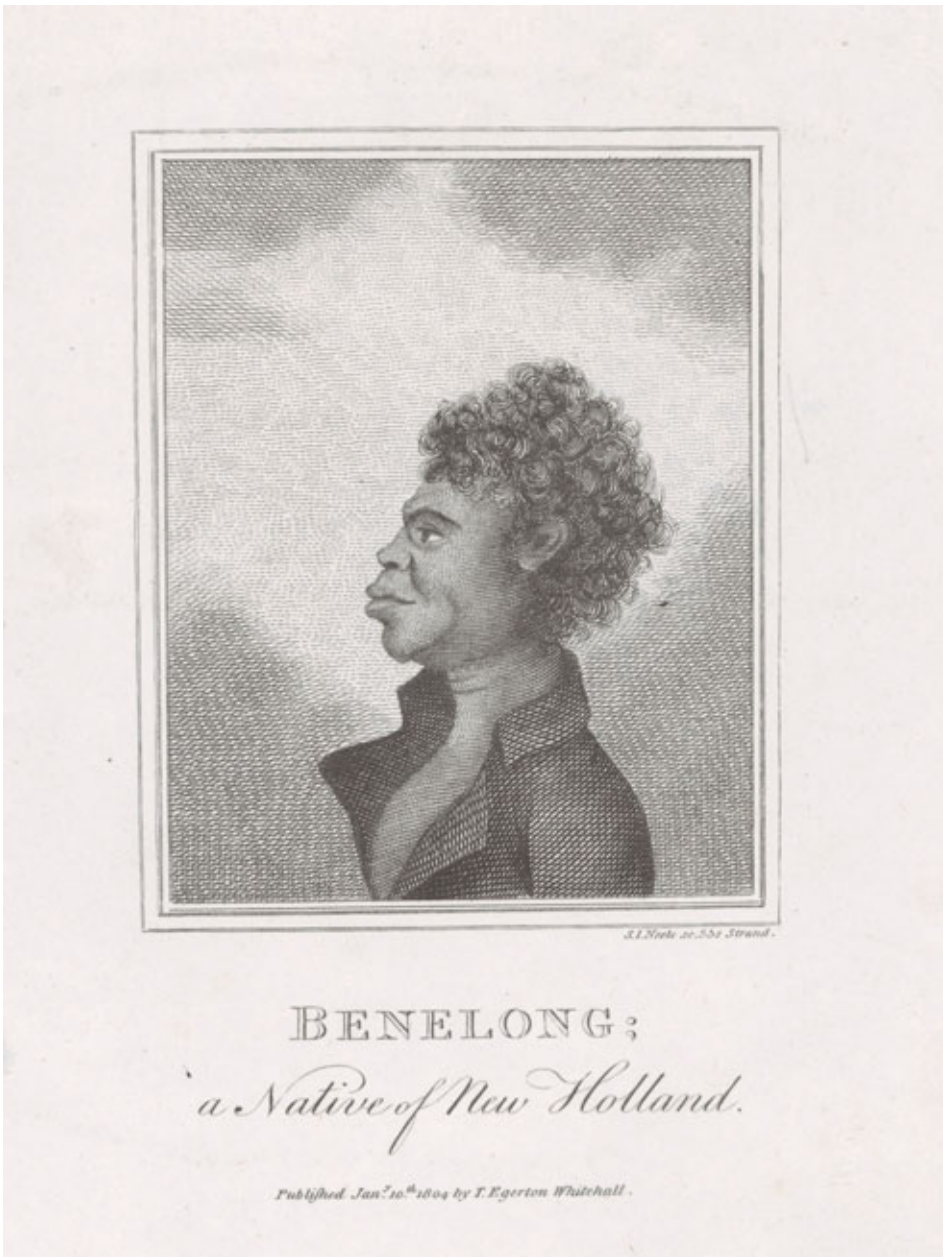

Fig 6. SJ Neele, 'Benelong a Native of New Holland', c1800.

Source: National Library of Australia, PIC S4297.

Bennelong was given many presents of clothing, but he often took garments with him when he left Sydney and returned without them. This was regarded by jealous white observers as evidence of savage, childish wastefulness, but it is likely he was using them as gifts or for trade. Nevertheless, he kept at least one

other coat, for an early nineteenth century portrait shows him wearing a tailcoat (probably dark blue), the collar turned up – and without a shirt.[55] It is possible, then, that the Aboriginal way of wearing jackets – straight over the skin, keeping the cicatrices on the chest visible – was established in the mid to late 1790s.

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In the decades following, jacket-taking, gifting, trading and wearing continued, and can be glimpsed in places far from Sydney. These glimpses are rare and scattered, but I believe they represent a continued practice. The colony expanded relentlessly, first to Parramatta in 1790; then to the Hawkesbury-Nepean River and its tributaries from 1794; and then to the southern regions around Campbelltown and Appin after 1809. The town of Sydney itself had not appropriated much land, and violent conflict there was limited to skirmishes and attacks on individuals or small groups who ventured into the areas around it. But when the Berewalgal began to take much larger areas of land for farms, they ignited a series of frontier wars. Aboriginal people resisted the invasion of their country, first at Prospect, then on the Hawkesbury (1795–c1809) and finally in the southern region (1814–1816). This was not a war with two distinct sides, though, for settlers also befriended Aboriginal people, giving them maize and clothing in the hope of continued good relations. Settlers also exploited the politics of tribal relations, forming alliances with some Aboriginal warriors against their enemies.[56]

War, friendship and revenge often twisted together on the frontier. In the foothills of the Blue Mountains in 1799, Aboriginal warriors killed two Hawkesbury settler men, Thomas Hoskisson and James Wimbow, while they were out on a hunting trip together. Hoskisson had always been on good terms with the Aboriginal people, but Wimbow had taken the daughter of one of the warriors to live with him. In retribution for their deaths, settlers at the Green Hills (later Windsor) killed two adolescent Aboriginal boys, Jemmy and Little George. These boys were well-known among the settlers, who had probably seen them grow up. The term 'boy', is misleading, for although they were only aged 16 or younger, they had been initiated and were therefore warriors.[57]

Before the killings three Aboriginal boys, including the two victims, had approached James Metcalfe as he worked on a farm, who invited them into the house. One of the boys, 'the biggest of the three' picked up Metcalfe's jacket, which was lying on the ground, and put it on before he followed the others into the house. It must have hung loose on the slim young frame, because once inside, he was seized, the coat was immediately pulled off, and a tomahawk was found hidden in the sleeve. What followed was a sort of rough trial, with more and more angry settlers arriving to interrogate the boys on the murders of the

55 Neele 1803.
56 Karskens 2009: chapters 5, 13.
57 Collins 1971[1798], 2: 281; R v Powell and others, 15–16 October 1799, in Minutes of Proceedings, Court of Criminal Judicature, State Records of NSW, X905: 323, 329–362.

settler men. One boy escaped, but the other two were bound, taken to a barn, and shot and stabbed to death. Their bodies were later found, and the killers were arrested and tried for murder.[58]

Why did the oldest boy put the jacket on? The accused white men insisted it was to hide the weapon in the sleeve and therefore bespoke his violent intentions. But the boys, like all warriors, were openly armed anyway, with spears and womeras. These were also taken from them. Putting on the coat may have been a ritualistic gesture: to meet with white men, a warrior put on one of their coats, as a sign of…what? Politeness? A mimesis which was a 'customary form of respect' in this most urgent and dangerous of situations? An acknowledgement of the seriousness of the boys' predicament? The fact that it was Metcalf's coat suggests they were claiming a sort of allegiance with him. The boys clearly knew him well, and, indeed, he was the only one in the room that night who spoke up against killing them, while the rest bayed for blood. But neither Metcalfe nor his coat could protect them from the terrible act that followed, any more than Hoskisson's gifts to his Aboriginal friends had protected him. The coat was stripped off as soon as the boy entered the room, suggesting that the settlers, too, knew its meaning and intent, and would have none of it. It was as if the shared understandings, objects and rituals which had grown between the two groups had to be stripped away for this kind of frontier justice to be enacted.

Right from the start, the colony at Sydney Cove was a place of movement. Far from being a frightening alien 'gaol', the bush, waterways and coastlines constantly beckoned explorers, fortune-hunters, tourists and sightseers, escapees, foragers, fugitives and eventually cattle thieves and bushrangers. The latter, of course, are only vaguely glimpsed in official records; they are a kind of constant, murmuring 'underside' of colonial history.[59]

Their journeys also involved encounters and negotiations with Aboriginal people, and here too coats and jackets were objects of desire and trade. Settlers who went on exploratory journeys might find themselves jacketless through trading. One 1804 traveller 'in search of curiosity' walked to the Cowpastures, already a popular rambling and tourist destination, and found the Aboriginal people there (probably the Murringong) drove hard bargains. Desperate to possess a clutch of young emus, the traveller managed to talk the Aboriginal man out of demanding all his clothing in exchange for them. But the black man would not budge on the jacket, despite the white man's protestations that he would 'fall victim to the extreme coldness of the night'. That 'objection he effectually silenced by demanding, What for I should be colder when I had parted with my jacket than he himself was that never had one?'. 'This argument was unanswerable' wrote the flummoxed traveller 'and as I did not choose to part with the birds, I was necessitated to deal for them in his own way'.[60]

58 R v Powell and others, 15–16 October 1799, in Minutes of Proceedings, Court of Criminal Judicature, State Records of NSW, X905.

59 Karskens 2009: chapter 9, 356ff.

60 *Sydney Gazette*, 23 September 1804.

It was September, so the locals had just emerged from the winter months, when temperatures can fall below 0° Celsius. Here, then, one reason for demanding jackets may well have been practical – for warmth and protection – in the same way that certain other useful European artefacts were readily adopted: steel axes and fishhooks, for example, and glass, which could be fashioned into sharp blades, scrapers and spear points.

Even as far away as Jervis Bay, 150 kilometres south of Sydney, Aboriginal men sought jackets. In October 1805, a group of sealers led by ex-convict Joseph Murrell landed in Jervis Bay to collect water for a voyage to King Island in Bass Strait. They were attacked by hostile warriors, Murrell was speared in the back and the crew retreated to nearby Bowen Island. There a seemingly more friendly group visited them, and 'begged a jacket or two'. They promised to bring fish, and left 'four boys as hostage' with Murrell's group. But perhaps the voyagers in fact took these boys by force, because 'these wretches soon returned accompanied by a vast number of others armed in their canoes'. A battle of muskets and spears ensued, two warriors were killed and several more wounded. A third attack saw the voyagers depart speedily in their whaleboat, leaving their provisions and necessaries – and presumably jackets – behind.[61]

Clearly, the demand for jackets had spread far from Sydney. But why did the warriors of Jervis Bay want them? For warmth? For meeting with the strangers? Either way they continued to be key items in the constellation of things which crossed over in what Philip Jones calls the frontier zone: that edgy, dangerous, unpredictable place. In 1809 the crew of the vessel *Hawkesbury* were similarly attacked at isolated Mangrove Point on the lower Hawkesbury River. Armed men clambered aboard as they were sleeping. They responded with musket fire, killing at least two warriors. Still the people on the shoreline tried to get them to land, and 'exposed a jacket with some other articles they had stolen, at the same time inviting one of the people to come for them'. The white men thought it a ruse, a deadly lure. Or was it a desperate attempt to make peace, stop further killings? Either way, this jacket had been acquired in what was then still Aboriginal country, isolated from towns and settlers. It was clearly considered a valuable object, a bargaining tool, something which might serve an important purpose.

Aboriginal men closer to the urban areas also continued to take jackets from carts or boats where the whites left them.[62] The garments disappeared along the trade or exchange networks; at other times they were worn by the thief himself. Jackets appear to have been adopted as the customary dress of resistance fighters. The warrior Tedbury, son of the famous resistance warrior Pemulwuy, was arrested at Pennant Hills in 1805 after a series of attacks and raids on settlers in the region. Marched under guard back to Parramatta, he nearly escaped by

61 *Sydney Gazette*, 27 October 1805; see also 3 November 1805.
62 *Sydney Gazette*, 30 December 1804, 3 June 1815.

'flipping his jacket' and slipping away.[63] I suspect that the Aboriginal gangs who bailed up travellers on the Parramatta Road with the same swagger and defiance as white bushrangers were wearing jackets too.

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Aboriginal people have lived in Sydney ever since Bennelong, his family and friends 'came in' in late 1790. They came out of curiosity, having heard the stories about the town which moved like wildfire across the country. They joined Aboriginal people already living there, drawn by the great resources of food and drink that Sydney offered, and by the great contests and corroborees held in the town. They camped in the bushland encircling the town, or on the north shore. Some probably came to be close to children who went, or were taken, to live in the white people's houses.[64]

It is worth remembering what the British originally expected Aboriginal people to do when they settled down in town among the whites, since these expectations shaped the way they described them. They envisaged the Eora living harmoniously among them, living in proper houses, speaking English, cooking and eating English-style food, exercising public decorum and of course wearing clothes. As for economic use, the British thought that Aborigines might make quite a 'serviceable people', performing the lowliest and hardest labour, tending stock, sailing boats, drawing water and hewing wood. Officially Aboriginal people were British subjects, bound and protected by British laws, though in practice they had no such rights or responsibilities.[65]

What is striking about the earliest urban Aboriginal people is the way they so quickly forged new lives among the invaders in the growing port town, in ways which were nonetheless compatible with their customary habits and laws. They still camped in the open in the bushland that surrounded the town, or sheltered in traditional bark and timber gunyahs. They continued to eat familiar foods – shellfish and fish cooked quickly over a fire – but also adopted maize and bread, and the pleasures of alcohol and tobacco. Fishing provided most of their income, for they found a ready market for fresh fish and oysters among the townsfolk and they also mastered European-style fishing boats. From the earliest years, too, Eora men in particular made deliberate, almost hyper-masculine, claims to urban space through their initiation rituals, fights and the great contests which enforced Aboriginal Law. Aboriginal urban geography thus overlaid the white one, and of all these places, the great contest ground at the south end of Hyde Park (now the site of the Sydney Anzac Memorial) was pre-eminent.[66]

As for clothing, during the first decade of the nineteenth century, most observers reported that Aboriginal people in Sydney continued to go about the

63 *Sydney Gazette*, 19 May 1805.
64 Karskens 2009: chapter 12.
65 Collins 1971[1798], 1: 543; Tench 1979[1789/1793]: 239; Phillip, in Hunter 1968[1793]: 352.
66 Karskens 2009: 431–446.

town unclothed, and artists depicted them that way too.[67] Old colonists were apparently completely accustomed to this, though newcomers were invariably shocked. 'I met a native today', gentleman convict John Grant told his mother in 1804, 'a tall, black, stark naked Man! By Job, it startled me at first, for the fellow turned a corner suddenly near me, in the town'.[68] Settler-on-the-make Christiana Brooks spluttered that it was 'disgraceful to a town such as Sydney to meet natives of both sexes entirely naked'.[69] Even in the 1820s they appear in some images unclothed, and some Aborigines worked that way as well. A visiting Russian captain reflected mildly that 'one soon gets accustomed to looking at them, and does so without disgust'.[70] Evidently it was the Europeans who had to adjust, not the other way around.

By the late 1810s, though, Aboriginal people always asked their visitors for clothing, and jackets and coats had become the dress of choice among Aboriginal men living in or visiting Sydney – those who chose to wear anything at all. They wore the garments in distinctive ways. In contrast to the fashionable tight-fitting jackets and slim pants of the higher ranks of white men, and the soldiers' close-cut red coats, the warriors' jackets were ill-fitting – sometimes too tight, but more often loose-fitting and worn unbuttoned, without trousers or shirt. The looser fit would have been more comfortable to people who normally went unclothed; free movement was essential for hunting, fighting, hurling spears or defending oneself. The too-tight fit – buttons straining across chests, cloth straining under arms – suggests that wearing the jacket was considered necessary, even if uncomfortable: a jacket that was too small was better than none. The unbuttoned coat would also leave the all-important cicatrices visible, while absent trousers could leave no doubts about gender.

Jacketed warriors were often portrayed with the spears they always carried. One jacketed man in Earle's lithograph 'Natives of N. S. Wales as seen on the streets of Sydney' carries a traditional club – a *waddy*. Others added additional small items of dress. Jedat, a warrior from the Nepean River, wears a red head scarf (with a clay pipe tucked jauntily into it), together with a cascade of kangaroo teeth on his chest. Bungaree customarily wore a clay-daubed plaited headband with his jackets, as well as the engraved gorget presented to him by Governor Macquarie.[71]

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67 See Evans c1808, 'New South Wales, View of Sydney from the West side of the Cove No 1', watercolour, Mitchell Library; Lewin 1808, 'Australian and his wife', pencil sketch, Mitchell Library; Eyre c1808.

68 Grant 2000[1804]: 38.

69 Brooks cited in Maynard 1994: 64.

70 Bellingshausen 1981[1820]: 43; see Carmichael 1829a, b, 'George Street from the wharf' and 'Sydney from the Parramatta Road', intaglio engravings, National Gallery of Australia.

71 Freycinet 2001[1824]: plates opp 124, 306; Pellion 1819a, 'Sauvages de la Nouvelle Galles du Sud (d'apre nature dans leur Camp pres de Sidney (20 dec. 1819)', watercolour, Mitchell Library; Pellion 1819b, Drawings and etchings of Nepean and Springwood Aboriginal men by and after Alphonse Pellion, Mitchell Library; Earle c1830, 'Natives of N. S. Wales as seen in the streets of Sydney', lithograph, National Library of Australia; Le Jeune 1824; Mikhailov 1820, Sketches of Aboriginal people, in album of photographs of drawings and watercolours in the State Russian Museum, Leningrad, copies held in National Library of Australia; Artist unknown c1838, 'Real Life in Sydney', lithograph, Mitchell Library.

Many of the coats were indeed military coats. The symbolic prestige and power they held in the contact period appears to have continued. In Pellion's 1819 sketch of the men from the Nepean, Tara wears a double breasted civilian tailcoat in dark blue wool, a garment commonly worn as undress by military personnel. Peroa, standing side on, wears a sleeved military waistcoat made of unbleached wool with yellow facings which had probably belonged to a soldier of the 46th regiment (the South Devons). These were the items of 'undress' that the soldiers wore for ordinary duties. The regiment was in Sydney between 1814 and 1817, so this jacket was not a discontinued item, but current issue uniform. Peroa must have acquired it relatively recently when the sketch was made.

Fig 7. Alphonse Pellion, 'Jedat et Nemare', pencil sketch, 1819.

Source: Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, PXD 923/2.

Pellion's other sketches and notes were later transformed into an engraved composite image showing Nepean men Jedat, Tara and Nemare from the waist up. Jedat (with bandana and pipe) sports a red officer's coatee with yellow facings. These garments, introduced around 1790, were much lighter, shorter and more comfortable than the coats that Bennelong and Coleby had worn two decades before. Jedat's coatee could have also have originated with the South Devonshires, or it might have come from the New South Wales Corps. Tara appears again in his blue tailcoat, though one sleeve is shown 'torn off' with

artificial jaggedness by the artist. Meanwhile Nemare wears a convict-issue yellow waistcoat, which would have been a more comfortable option. His hair is dreadlocked and the cicatrices are clearly visible on his upper arm.[72]

Fig 8. E Forget, 'Nouvelle-Holland, Port Jackson, Sauvages des environs de la Riviere Nepean', print, based on sketches by Alphonse Peron, Paris c1822.

Source: Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, PXD923/5.

One of the coats shown in Augustus Earle's 1830 tableau 'Natives of N. S. Wales as seen on the streets of Sydney' is also identifiable: the man with the waddy standing with his back to the artist wears an officer's coatee. This one is red with buff facings, the little tails nattily turned up to reveal the buff. It originated either with the 48th Regiment – in New South Wales between 1817 and 1824 – or the 3rd Regiment, three detachments of which were in Sydney from 1823 to 1827, the same time Earle was visiting. The fact that warriors were wearing officers' coats is significant. While soldiers were forbidden to sell or give away their uniforms, officers purchased their own, and were thus free to gift or trade them. It is possible that warriors had personal links with the officers from whom they acquired their jackets, in the same way that warriors in the early contact period had exchanged names with officers, and were known by these European names long after their namesakes had departed.[73]

72 Brad Manera, pers comm, 11 April 2011.
73 Brad Manera, pers comm, 11 April 2011; *Sydney Gazette*, 15 January 1809; Smith 2007: 22, 93, 100.

Fig 9. Augustus Earle, 'Natives of N. S. Wales as seen in the streets of Sydney', c1826.

Source: National Library of Australia, NK1239/3.

A close comparison of Earle's picture, itself made up of separate sketches, and the anonymous lithograph 'Real Life in Sydney', reveals the extent to which these images were recycled, manipulated and rendered increasingly grotesque in the 1830s. The man in the coat reappears in the same garment, tails and all, but is now depicted in a fight. The women no longer carry fish but drink from the black glass bottles. The same child appears, in the same pose, his belly horribly distended. The other figures are wearing the convict, naval or military front fall trousers and slop shirts of two decades earlier.

Bungaree's famous red coat – very likely the one given to him by Macquarie in 1822 just before the Governor left the colony – signalled his status as leader and representative of his people, at least to the Europeans. It was the uniform of a Brigadier General, or a general's Aide-de-Camp, though the elaborate epaulettes are missing. Fascinatingly, in Earle's portrait, Bungaree wears the coat it as it would have been worn by a general on parade, with the front buttoned back to reveal the dark facing, rather than simply buttoned up. This would have involved a complicated set of hooks and eyes, and considerable time and trouble.

Bungaree also wears the correct bi-corne hat and sash for this uniform, though the hat is missing its feather hackle. The baggy, ragged slop trousers he wears are thus a striking contrast to the careful correctness of the uniform.[74]

Fig 10. Augustus Earle, 'Portrait of Bungaree, a native of New South Wales', c1826.

Source: National Library of Australia, NK118.

74 Brad Manera, pers comm, 11 April 2011.

But Macquarie's coat was no strategic gift, as Phillip's had been to Bennelong. Macquarie believed that the war between Aborigines and settlers was over, and that a permanent peace had been established. He wrote that he gave Bungaree his own old uniform 'to dress him out as chief'. It was a genuine, very personal parting gift, bespeaking friendship and farewell, but it also reflects the vice-regal couple's taste for the fashionably exotic, their love of the visual. Bungaree was the Macquaries' friend and 'favourite', so perhaps there was an element of 'dressing him up' in the general's coat, for visual effect, an eye-catching spectacle of reversal: the striking red coat on the black skin, the symbol of prestige and power on the body of a native man.[75]

Bungaree's own personal flamboyance and taste combined spectacularly with his role as welcomer of ships, go-between, peacemaker and elder, and his public persona in Sydney (in 1829 the *Sydney Gazette* declared firmly that 'Boongaree is identified with Sydney').[76] The red coat became almost inseparable from the man himself, an object of mystique and meditation. Yet Bungaree had a much larger wardrobe of coats and elaborate hats, including a Russian great coat with frogs, a drab brown suit, a bright blue dress coat with gold frogs and loops, a full dress naval uniform, and a canary yellow convict suit, and he wore them all at different times.[77]

So red coats and other military garb very likely continued to command attention, and carry status. They offered, too, the beauty of cut, colour and embellishment, and possibly they also represented the bonds of friendship.[78] But the warriors did not shun the humbler garments – the stigma of yellow convict clothing, for example, did not necessarily cross over into Aboriginal culture, as seen demonstrated in the case of Nemare and his waistcoat. Bungaree was seen in his yellow suit, too, and the warriors also begged, bartered or stole the humble blue gurrah convict's or labourer's jackets. Again, it seems that having access to a jacket or coat was more important than what type it was. Perhaps the humbler garments were approximations and substitutes for the military jackets.

Most telling of all is the way the warriors so easily shucked the jackets off when back at their own camps, or for corroborees and contests. When Bungaree visited Frenchman Rene Lesson in 1822 on his way to corroborees and contests, he appeared a transformed man. The coat and plumed hat were gone, his powerful body was dusted with red ochre and painted with red and white clay, his canoe filled with spears and clubs.[79] The warriors moved easily back and forth between white and Aboriginal worlds, and they had made the white world partly their own.

75 Macquarie 1822: entry 11 February ; Wilcox 2009: 21.
76 *Sydney Gazette*, 9 July 1829.
77 Smith 1992: 153.
78 Wilcox 2009: 20–21.
79 Lesson, cited in Smith 1992: 128–129.

Fig 11. Phillip Parker King, 'Boon-ga-ree aboriginal of new St Wales 1819 who accompanied me on my first voyage to the N W coast', 1819.

Source: Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, PXC767.

To the Europeans, the warriors seemed to be deliberately subverting the purposes of modesty and propriety. Wearing clothes was considered a key sign of the 'civilisation' process in action, for it was assumed that simply being in the presence of clothed white people would open Aboriginal eyes to their own 'nakedness', awaken a sense of shame, and teach them modesty. But after 40 years, some Aboriginal people still customarily went unclothed. Women wore blankets wrapped around them like togas, or like mantles, with holes cut in the middle, while the men wore jackets in ways that caused consternation, for 'they especially hate clothes for the lower part of the body'. Lesson spluttered in 1822: 'The stubbornness of this race in rejecting even the narrow loincloth would deeply astonish the moralist'. (Jacques Arago added highly improbable loincloths to his even more improbable pictures of Aboriginal men.) Despite the obvious and rather radical adaptation involved in wearing jackets (not to mention shaving, adopting metal hatchets, eating new foods and adapting to town life), another French visitor, Hyacinthe De Bougainville wrote in 1825 'they have remained absolutely the same since the Europeans set foot here'.[80]

There were some Aboriginal men who wore trousers: the sailors. Since 1791 they had joined crews on the coastal, sealing and international voyages, and adopted the 'wide trousers, round jackets and straw hats' of sailors. Despite their contribution to early trade and exploration, and their trousers, they too were condemned. Louis de Freycinet decided that he could not count them as 'civilised natives' because they 'have been so degraded by the intemperate use of strong liquor that they are not of much use to anybody'.[81]

The other common response was ridicule, sometimes mingled with horror and disgust, or pity for these poor creatures, who could not know how to wear clothes properly, and seemed to be the victims of cruel hoaxes. The less-than-enchanted Lesson described Bungaree's

> Bowing and scraping, his grotesque way of dressing made him look even more ridiculous. He wore an old dragoon's helmet, and around his chest flapped a toggled greatcoat left to him by the last Russian expedition'.[82]

Surgeon Peter Cunningham amusingly contrasted Bungaree's 'gold-laced blue coat' with his 'bare and broad platter feet'.[83]

The Russian visitors on the ships *Vostok* and *Mirnyy* arrived in 1820 expecting to see the natives of New South Wales unclothed. But when Bungaree's welcoming party boarded the ship, Captain Bellingshausen could find no proper way to describe them. He wrote of Bungaree's trousers, headband and breastplate, his wife Matora's blanket, and the kangaroo teeth in her hair. And yet he wrote: 'all were naked'.[84] Their artist Pavel Mikhailov made beautiful sketches of Bungaree,

80 Lesson (1822) and Bougainville (1825), cited in Dyer 2005: 189, 196, 180; see Arago 1971[1823].
81 de Bougainville 1999[1825]: 174; Freycinet 2001[1824]: 300.
82 Lesson, cited in Dyer 2005: 181.
83 Cunningham 1966[1827]: 74.
84 Bellingshausen 1981[1820]: 34.

Matora and the sailors Mahroot and Salamander, but he must have asked them to remove their clothing, so he could depict them in their 'proper' native state.[85] Here it becomes clear that clothing was associated with 'the corruption, the debasement, the brutality and the profligacy which was introduced among them'.[86] 'Nakedness' bespoke savage life: wild and primitive, but at least pure, unspoiled and 'genuine'. Perhaps most disturbing to unaccustomed white eyes was the Aboriginal combination of dress and undress, this tatterdemalion upending of every expectation. They were the same 'dreadful sort of half-world clothes' from which Kerr and Kirby recoiled a century and a half later.

*

Pity, revulsion, annoyance, laughter, unease, a taste for the exotic: these were the responses of visiting Europeans to Aboriginal jacket-wearing, the lenses through which they saw them. These lenses offer insights into the way longstanding 'conventions of perception' shaped the Europeans' view, and the pictures and texts they made. But what do the longer view, the 'moment of exchange', and the wider social and cultural contexts, suggest about the jackets from an Aboriginal perspective? What are the 'interpretative possibilities'? Clearly, they were desired by Aboriginal men from the early years, the practice spread quickly into the vaster Aboriginal hinterland, and the garments were steadily acquired through gift, trade or theft. The glimpses available suggest that this practice cannot be explained as empty mimicry, by European coercion, or as signs of impoverishment and culture loss. They suggest a 'third way' of seeing, one which moves beyond the binary of pure, unchanging savage/corrupted outcast. They suggest a syncretic culture, and hidden dynamics of contact, negotiation and concession which reach back to the earliest years of colonisation.[87]

David Hansen, in his fine meditation on Earle's portrait of Bungaree, wrote of the meanings of Aboriginal mimesis as 'the adoption of new gestures to permit the maintenance of Aboriginal protocols of meeting under the new regime'. He focused on the 'dance of encounter' in which Aborigines quickly mimed the movements of the strangers in a 'ritual physical performance … to neutralise the charged, uncertain and dangerous space of the meeting'.[88] Jacket-wearing may represent an early example of these new protocols, this mimetic strategy of 'dancing between the very same and the very different'.[89] In this scenario, coats and jackets were sought after so that black men, particularly younger men, could meet white men with the proper rituals and gestures in those 'charged spaces'. It was a way of neutralising the power of the Europeans, with their deadly *gee-rubber* (muskets), of making the strange familiar, a gesture proclaiming: we

85 Mikhailov 1820, Sketches of Aboriginal people, in album of photographs of drawings and watercolours in the State Russian Museum, Leningrad, copies held in National Library of Australia.
86 Govett 1836: 202.
87 Rowse 1991: 5; Thomas 1999: 43–46.
88 Hansen 2007: 32.
89 Taussig 1993: 129.

too are men, and warriors, we can match you, but we do it our way. Perhaps it was also, as Anna Cole perceptively writes, 'a process of copying or imitating something in order to change yourself as well as the thing you imitate'.[90]

Warriors of particular renown, like Bennelong, may have inspired young, newly-initiated boys to copy them. And while some jackets were traded, begged or stolen, others signified links with their original owners: Bennelong with Phillip and Collins; the Aboriginal boy with the settler James Metcalf. Bungaree's wardrobe represented his links not only with Governor Macquarie but the many ships' captains and visitors he welcomed into Sydney.

Most obvious is the profoundly gendered nature of the practice. Although there were attempts by women to acquire jackets very early in the contact period, and even though jackets were ordered for them well into the 1810s, jacket-wearing appears to have been commandeered exclusively by men. This may well have been prompted and encouraged by the way European men dealt officially and diplomatically only with Aboriginal men. After the smallpox epidemic of 1789 especially, young, often aggressive men dominated cross-cultural relations, partly because the disease appears to have killed a disproportionate number of older people, and women, but also because Governor Phillip and the officers deliberately dealt with younger warriors in their twenties and thirties, rather than the old men who had earlier controlled all the meetings.[91]

In Sydney the jackets, along with metal hatchet, clipped beards, or shaved or stubbly faces, marked out warriors in the post-invasion, post smallpox era. They may have signified male status in a new order, as well as a continuation of the old order, which Inga Clendinnen aptly calls a 'tough warrior culture'. We might link them with the determined efforts to create masculine ceremonial and ritual spaces within the early town. Jackets may also have been a means by which Aboriginal men could signify gender identification with white men – the most significant concern from the beginning – and rough alliances, not as ciphers to do their bidding, but as men meeting on equal terms to negotiate over power and authority, over hunting and travelling, over goods – and over women.

The fact that *both* jacket-wearing and being unclothed were customary also suggests that personal, group or cultural choices were being made according to circumstance. Here the possibilities are multiplied by what we do not, and perhaps cannot, know. We 'see' warriors wearing jackets when in town, and/or in the company of whites, but observers suggested that they were shucked off back at the camps. Bungaree, like the Arrernte decades later, wore clothes for meetings with whites, and in the streets of the town, but took them off for ceremonies and contests.[92] Did jacket-wearing have any meaning outside the towns, far from the farms and roads, away from the white people? Perhaps future researchers will glimpse them, lying around the campsites, buttons glinting in

90 Cole 2010: 215.
91 Karskens 2009: 372–378.
92 See footnote 76; Brock 2007: 11–12.

the firelight. But then it will be necessary to re-imagine the vaster Aboriginal world, as Tiffany Shellam has done in her study of the King Ya-nup of King George's Sound in Western Australia, a world in which the goings on at Sydney Cove might well have been only one small aspect of Aboriginal relations and politics.[93]

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93 Shellam 2009.

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Making history: Torres Strait Islander railway workers and the 1968 Mt Newman track-laying record

Leah Lui-Chivizhe

On 8 May 1968, in the red desert of Western Australia's Pilbara region, workers on the Mt Newman railway construction project, contracted to Morrison-Knudsen-Mannix-Oman (MKMO), broke the world record in track laying. In one day they laid, spiked, and anchored 4.35 miles (about 7 kilometres) of track, breaking the previous record of 2.88 miles (4.6 kilometres) set in the United States in 1962.[1] The *Hedland Times* reported that this historic event was due to 'the talents of [MKMO's] engineers in developing new machines and techniques with the best skills of its rail laying crew'. Most significantly, the article pointed out that this crew was 'largely composed of Thursday Islanders'.[2]

While few Australians are aware of this historic event, within the Torres Strait Islander community the track-laying record is well remembered and celebrated. Stories are passed down to family members through anecdotes and songs, with memories triggered by precious photographs and mementoes. The telling and re-telling of the event draws from many first-hand accounts which have been passed from one generation to the next, with the stories augmented by family photographs and songs, both those sung by the railway workers and new songs commemorating their achievements. More recently, there have been a number of local, grass-root initiatives to celebrate the track-laying record through memorial, film and song. My own contribution is an oral history project entitled *Laying the Tracks: Torres Strait Islanders in the Northern Railways*, which will document the history of Torres Strait Islander involvement in the northern Australian railways between the 1950s and 1970s. This article explores the uses of memory in the construction of history, and traces the little-known history of the Torres Strait Islanders' track-laying record through the use of historical documents and an interview with a former railway worker, John Culear Kennell Snr.

Memory and history

The relationship between memory and history is complex and often contentious. While memory is dependent on *what can be remembered,* history's primary focus

1 'Rail laying breaks record', *BHP Review*, Spring 1968: 16–21.
2 'New World Record at Mt Newman', *The Hedland Times,* 16 May 1968.

is on *what happened* and the extent to which the past can be substantiated by documentary evidence. Where academic history is generated through extensive research and critical analysis, memory is reliant on the mind's recollections and as such, it is often cast as unreliable, selective, or faulty. While history is championed for its perceived objectivity and universal authority, memory has been castigated for its subjectivity and inability to deliver irrefutable factual knowledge. The development of the oral history method as a tool for the 'democratisation' of history and for recording 'history from below' has, however, contributed to a closer affiliation.[3]

In discussing the tensions between history and memory, social historian and oral history scholar Paul Thompson argues that instead of viewing memory and history as oppositional, it is far more productive to see them as 'doing the same things, perhaps with a different emphasis'.[4] Thompson proposes that personal memory is 'the thread of every individual's life history', and as such is central to how individuals understand 'themselves and their own sense of both history and self'.[5] Public history, he argues, is the modern version of this, 'the functional equivalent to the traditions passed down orally in non-literate societies but now transmitted in a much more complicated way'.[6] While they may differ in their scope and sophistication, memory and history are both undeniable ways of relating to and relating the past.

Turning to the documentation of Indigenous history in Australia, the passing down of stories through the generations has played an extremely significant role. Whether documented in the form of oral histories, life stories or testimonials, memory has contributed to a considerable and growing body of work. Examples include Ann McGrath's *'Born in the Cattle'* (1987), Deborah Bird Rose's *Hidden Histories* (1991), Peter and Jay Read's *Long Time Olden Time* (1991), and Nonie Sharp's *Stars of Tagai* (1993). While scholars can and do take issue with each other over how oral histories are collected, interpreted and used, the publication of these studies contributed to an opening up of the academy to the rich potential of Indigenous memory and recollections of the past. Additionally, the burgeoning field of Indigenous life writing, such as autobiographies, family biographies, and memoirs, is a powerful indication that memory and oral history continue to provide a critical avenue for Indigenous people to speak about their own experiences. In Oliver Haag's examination of the development of Indigenous Australian autobiographies, he lists 177 published works between 1950 and 2004.[7]

The problem of how to establish truth in oral accounts can also beleaguer the work of historians. Thompson argues that since memory is prone to containing both facts and myths, it is important to both believe and doubt oral accounts. Historians should, he argues, 'make use of what we can believe and also of what

3 Attwood 2005; Portelli 1998.
4 Thompson 1994: 2.
5 Thompson 1994: 2.
6 Thompson 1994: 2.
7 Haag 2008.

we must doubt, and to bring the two together in a new interpretation which fuses both memory and history'.[8] In a similar vein, in *Telling the Truth about Aboriginal History* Bain Attwood asserts that as historians began to grasp the complexity of the relationship of memory to the past, they have come to see that the greatest value of oral history lay in its capacity to provide 'something other than factual or documentary knowledge'.[9] This, he goes on to argue, has allowed the development of works that are 'informed by the assumption that something of the truth of past events and/or their aftermath is evident in the manner in which they have been remembered'.[10]

Anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose extends the discussion on truth in oral history by offering an example of how one Aboriginal community in northern Australia recognises truthfulness in oral accounts.[11] Drawing from her oral history research with the Yarralin people of the Northern Territory, Rose uses the term 'faithfulness' rather than truthfulness. She identifies three criteria for assessing the faithfulness of an account – place, presence, and genealogy. *Place* refers to knowledge of the location of the event, as this can determine who can speak about it and is also a form of proof. *Presence* refers to whether the speaker is giving an eyewitness account of an event. *Genealogy* denotes that if it is not an eyewitness account, the speaker can identify who told the story and whether or not that person was an eyewitness. Rose argues that in the conscious deployment of these criteria, Aboriginal standards for faithfulness are not 'inconsistent with the kinds of criteria Western historians bring to bear on historical sources'.[12]

Alessandro Portelli has argued for the capacity of oral histories to 'enlarge' historical knowledge.[13] They can, he suggests, provide historians with new ways of thinking about the past; their underexploited value resides in their power 'to tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did'.[14] Viewing oral accounts in the ways suggested by Portelli encourages us to think beyond mere recollections, to explore people's motivations and the layers of meaning they attach to the events they witnessed or in which they participated.

The stories of the hundreds of Islander men who in the 1960s travelled to work on the railways in northern Australia are no doubt imbued with nostalgia and most certainly with pride for what they were able to achieve. If we take up Portelli's challenge, we are sure to find much, much more. The men were moving onto the Australian mainland at a time of tremendous social and political change for Indigenous people. They were also leaving behind a place where for decades government practices included, in Martin Nakata's words, the 'control of labour,

8 Thompson 1994: 12.
9 Attwood 2005: 174.
10 Attwood 2005: 175.
11 Rose 2003.
12 Rose 2003: 125.
13 Portelli 1998.
14 Portelli 1998: 67.

finances and freedom of movement and restrictions on consorting with others'.[15] In the red dust of the Pilbara, far away from the Torres Strait, the men were part of the large multi-national workforce, pocketing their earnings and 'making a name' for themselves.

In the accounts of former railway workers and their families, little comes close to the 1968 track-laying record. This singular event has captured the imagination of Islanders and its memorialisation underscores Islanders' determination that it not be forgotten. The efforts of the many Islander men in railway construction and the celebrated 1968 record might also be read as a 'natural' progression, given their fathers, uncles and grandfathers before them had also been hard working manual labourers in the Strait's fishing and shelling or marine industry.

Torres Strait Islanders and labour

Incorporation of Torres Strait Islanders into the regional labour force began in the marine industry with the small-scale harvest of beche-de-mer or trepang. After the first pearling station was established on Tudu (Warrior Island) in 1868, Islander labour was increasingly sought after. As pearl and, later, trochus shell began to be harvested in commercial quantities, the industries became reliant on Islander labour, which was both local and cheap.[16] In the main, Islanders were employed as crew on pearling and fishing boats, often working under South Pacific Islander skippers and from the late 1890s, with Japanese divers on the pearl luggers.

In an effort to promote Islander self-reliance, a former member of the London Missionary Society, FW Walker, established Papuan Industries Limited (PIL) on Badu Island in 1904.[17] The company gave Islander families and clans the opportunity to purchase their own boats, paying them off as they sold their harvest. Looking to service those islands that PIL could not, the Queensland government established a parallel agency and before long Islanders from all over the Strait began to buy luggers and cutters. Known as 'Company boats', Islanders became owners working as equals alongside the private operators, the 'Master' pearlers for whom they had previously crewed. When PIL folded in 1930, the Queensland government took control over all Company boats, and Islanders were soon working to the stringent conditions set by the government.[18] In early 1936, a general strike unfolded across the region as Islanders refused to work the government fishing boats. Protesting against the increased control over Islanders' lives, their demands included freedom of movement, the right to run their own affairs, choice over where and with whom they could work, and better pay rates.[19] Jeremy Beckett described the strike as the 'first organised Islander challenge to European authority', and while the government made

15 Nakata 2007: 131.
16 See Beckett 1987; Sharp 1993; Shnukal et al 2004.
17 Beckett 1987; Nakata 2007; Sharp 1993.
18 Beckett 1987; Sharp 1993.
19 See Sharp 1993 for a detailed analysis of the 1936 strike.

changes, which included convening the first conference of Islander Councillors in 1937, they retained control of the Islanders' boats and wages.[20] By the late 1930s, the Director of Native Affairs reported that 510 men had been employed in the marine industry in the 12 months to December 1939, with 26 Company boats employing 378 men.[21]

The Second World War interrupted Islander employment in the marine industry. The Australian government requisitioned large vessels for defence purposes and immobilised smaller vessels for fear they may fall into the hands of enemy soldiers.[22] With the war on their doorstep and no other job prospects, many of the men signed up with the defence forces. At the end 1942, 730 men had enlisted and during what became known as 'army time', Islander service men got to be part of a much bigger world, working alongside white soldiers and often doing the same work for less pay.[23]

The end of the war would see many of the men return to work the fishing and pearling boats, but they had been exposed to a different world during 'army time', and this experience had changed them. Although Islanders were now 'allowed' to live on Thursday Island, and were being incorporated into a post-war version of colonialism in the region, rates of pay in the marine industry and for those who remained in the defence forces continued to be a source of discontent. Beckett argues that the recollections of 'army time' and of those who ventured to the mainland and experienced 'equal wages and freedom from supervision' added further to Islander dissatisfaction.[24] As a consequence, more and more Islander men sought permission to work on the mainland.

In 1948 approximately 80 Islander men were recruited to work as cane cutters in the Gordonvale area of north Queensland.[25] Others followed this initial group of cane cutters, as a decline in the marine-based economy in the 1950s saw a growing number of Islander men out of work and with few long-term local employment prospects. The Annual Reports of the Department of Native Affairs from the late 1950s to the early 1960s registered the governments' concern over the long-term sustainability of the trochus and pearling industry and the consequences for employment in the region.[26] In June 1955, the Director of Native

20 Beckett 1987: 54–55.

21 Queensland Home Secretary's Department 1940, 'Report upon the Operations of certain Sub-Departments of the Home Secretary's Department – Aboriginal Department, Information contained in Report for the year ended 31st December, 1939', RS 25.4/3, Online collections, Stolen Generations, To Remove and Protect [hereafter OC SG TRP], AIATSIS.

22 Queensland, Director of Native Affairs 1943, 'Native Affairs – Information contained in Report of Director of Native Affairs for the twelve months ended 30th June 1943', RS 25.4/3, OC SG TRP, AIATSIS; Hall 1995.

23 Hall 1995; Beckett 1987; Nakata 2007.

24 Beckett 1987: 84–85.

25 Queensland Department of Health and Home Affairs 1948, 'Native Affairs – Information contained in Report of Director of Native Affairs for the Twelve months ended 30th June 1948', RS 25.4/3, OC SG TRP, AIATSIS.

26 Queensland, Chief Protector of Aboriginals 1957, 'Native Affairs – Annual Report of Director of Native Affairs for the year ended 30th June 1957', RS 25.4/3, OC SG TRP, AIATSIS; Correspondence, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Queensland State Archives, Item

Affairs reported that approximately 800 Islanders had moved onto the North Queensland mainland. The Department had reported that Islander men and their families had left their home islands 'of their own volition … to seek work in the cane fields, the Railways Department's service and other vocations'.[27] By 1965, the same department reported that 200 men were employed in railway work on the Queensland mainland.[28]

While the departmental reports cited above give some context for the movement of Islanders onto the mainland, they do so from the perspective of the Queensland government. They offer glimpses of bureaucratic processes for sourcing employment for Islanders on the mainland and for monitoring their movements once they left the Torres Strait region. Other documented sources include news stories, which in the main, painted a picture of Islander physical prowess and an imputed suitability for hard manual work under an unforgiving sun. Little has been documented about this history from the point of view of Islanders themselves.

Yet the collective memory of Islanders is replete with stories of adventure and achievement. Those interviewed for the *Laying the Tracks* project described how some of the men would adopt pseudonyms in an effort to evade detection by officials of the Queensland Department of Native Affairs. Young Islanders would also add a few years to their real ages, having learnt from others that some contractors wanted only adult workers. Venturing onto the mainland made for many exhilarating experiences, and the stories of these railway men continue to be told today. A recurring theme in these stories is the 1968 track-laying record.

Remembering Torres Strait Islander railway workers

The efforts of Islanders to commemorate the 8 May 1968 track-laying record reveal the esteem with which many Islanders view this event. While 1 July recognises the arrival of missionaries in the Torres Strait in 1871, and 3 June marks the anniversary of the *Mabo 2* Native Title decision in 1992, there is a nascent movement towards adding 8 May to the calendar of Islander celebrations.

To date, there have been two key attempts to memorialise officially the 8 May 1968 track-laying record. In mid 1992, in response to requests from a Port Hedland Torres Strait Islander organisation, BHP donated the Goodwin-Alco M 636 locomotive engine (No. 5499) as a commemorative gift, in recognition of the significant contribution of Torres Strait Islander men on the Port Hedland to Mt Newman railroad construction project. With the ongoing support of BHP, the Commonwealth's Department of Environment and Heritage, the Australian Railway Heritage Society, and a Perth-based Torres Strait Islander organisation,

ID715731.

27 Queensland Chief Protector of Aboriginals 1955, 'Native Affairs – Annual Report of Director of Native Affairs for the year ended 30th June 1955', RS 25.4/3, OC SG TRP, AIATSIS.

28 Department of Native Affairs, Correspondence, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Annual Reports 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, Queensland State Archives, Item ID715731.

the engine was transported to Perth, restored, and is now housed at the Rail Transport Museum at Bassendean in Perth.[29] The second and related activity focused on the state's north coast. Port Hedland is at the shipping end of the Mt Newman railway line, and it is here that Islander community members in northern Western Australia requested that a sculpture be erected in recognition of Islander railway workers. Originally planned to mark the 40th anniversary of the track-laying record on 8 May 2008, budget constraints have delayed its construction and installation. Torres Strait Islanders in Western Australian remain determined, however, to see the statue erected in the near future.[30] Significantly, these memorials were initiated by Islanders, many of who are former railway workers or are the children of former railway workers. The permanent and public nature of the memorials are a powerful means of inserting the contributions of Torres Strait Islander railway workers into the public history of the development of the mining transport infrastructure in northern Western Australia.

Taking the story of Islander railway workers to a wider audience was also an objective for Indigenous filmmaker Kelrick Martin, who released *Island Fettlers* in 2006.[31] The 25-minute documentary tells the story of Tom Saylor, who left Erub (Darnley Island) in the 1960s to work in the Pilbara. Saylor's story gives a sense of the challenges he and presumably many Islander men faced in coming to terms with the heat and isolation of the Pilbara. Unlike many of the Islander men who left at the end of the major construction jobs to 'chase' lucrative contract work, Saylor married a local woman and made his life in the Pilbara. His recollections of railway experiences are interspersed with comments about how he and his family were able to build and maintain a sense of 'islanderness' in the Pilbara. In making the documentary, Martin cited the importance of being able to tell an Indigenous story from an Indigenous point of view. Having grown up in Broome, about 600 kilometres north of Port Hedland, Martin recalled hearing fragments of stories of Islander railway workers in his youth, and hoped that after viewing the film, audiences walked away with a 'newfound respect for Torres Strait Islanders' and some sense of having 'learnt a previously hidden episode of Australian history'.[32]

Adding to the numerous stories, there are also many songs that recall the experiences of the Islander railway workers. In 2005, Grail Films in Townsville produced *Eastern Torres Strait Islander Railway Songs*, which recorded some of these songs and several dances. The songs are performed by a group of Murray Islanders in Torres Strait *Broken* and the *Meriam* language of Mer (Murray Islands). With titles such as, 'Hamersley Iron', 'Mt Isa Line', 'Goods Train E', the songs identify the many places where the men worked and their work conditions. The singers include Elemo Tapim, who provides translations and comments on the songs, which he says acknowledge the hard times, but also celebrate the good times of railway life. Although the songs 'are not written in

29 G Pitt, pers comm, 25 August 2009.
30 G Pitt, pers comm, 25 August 2009.
31 *Island Fettlers* 2006.
32 Core Films Pty Ltd 2006.

a book', Tapim states, they are 'written in our minds'.[33] His participation in the recording also exemplifies the three criteria identified by Rose as being important for establishing truthfulness or faithfulness in oral histories. Having worked in the railways in Western Australia and Queensland for close to 25 years, Tapim is familiar with many of places that the songs relate to and he is able to identify the songwriters and the context for many of the songs. He also acknowledges that recording the songs contributes to the ongoing transmission of the history.

More recently, inspired by stories about the 1968 track-laying record, Thursday Island band Northern Xposure recorded the song 'Railway Kebele' as a tribute to the Mt Newman tracklayers. The lyrics include the following verses:

> I pick 'em up and lay 'em down
> I turn those sleepers around
> We have lots of miles to go
> But we cannot leave.
> We have broken the world record,
> In blood, sweat and tears
> We salute those who have passed on
> But their memories are here.[34]

The song expresses a long-held and high regard for the 1968 tracklayers, and their perseverance and commitment to finishing what they had been contracted to do. Another project that draws inspiration from the 1968 track-laying record is a musical production being developed in Queensland. In 2007 a community-based arts group began working with Islander musicians, singers and actors, conducting workshops with Torres Strait Islander communities around the country. The group is developing a script and writing the music and lyrics for a musical production to be based around the record-breaking event.[35]

These community-based initiatives proffer diverse ways of commemorating the efforts and achievements of Torres Strait Islander railway workers, contributing an added component to the memory and oral histories, what Bain Attwood calls 'memorial discourses'.[36] With the exception of the musical production, they were conceived by and continue to be directed by Indigenous people, predominantly Torres Strait Islanders. As Islander railway stories are told in songs or on film, these grassroots initiatives demonstrate that the memory of Islander involvement in northern Australian railways is very much alive in the minds of Islanders and is re-remembered and augmented in numerous ways. The projects described above reveal the profound admiration that many Islanders have for the 1968 track-laying record makers.

33 *Eastern Torres Strait Islander Railway Songs* 2005.
34 Northern Xposure 2008: 'Railway Kebele' track 2.
35 'Railway history', *Torres News*, 20 April 2007.
36 Attwood 2005: 172.

Breaking the record

In October 1967, the American-Canadian consortium, Morrison-Knudsen-Mannix-Oman (MKMO), began construction on the 427 kilometre (265 miles) rail link between Port Hedland and the Mt Newman iron ore mine at Mt Whaleback. The material, machinery and labour requirements of the project were enormous. The job required 870,000 sleepers and the first shipment was sourced from the south of the state, pre-cut to the 2.6 metre requirements and pre-drilled before being shipped to MKMO's Port Hedland storage yard. The total weight of the rail required was 62,100 tons and was transported by sea from Port Kembla in New South Wales. The 60kg/m lengths of rail were welded into strings of steel 440 metres long, stockpiled until required, and then loaded onto the steel carrying trains. The job also required 18,000 tons of anchor plates, spikes, rail anchors and other material. As the material requirements for the job were being organised, preparation of the rail bed was also being carried out. Six quarries adjacent to the railway sidings turned granite outcrops into the tons of ballast required to form the rail bed, the compacted base on which the rail is laid, as well as the material for bedding down the track once it has been laid. After watering and compacting, the surface is smooth and pavement-like and after being graded level, it was ready for track laying.[37]

The workforce, which peaked at 1343 in June 1968, had a strong international constituency and included large numbers of Yugoslav, Greek, Italian and Portuguese workers. They were accommodated in air-conditioned pre-fabricated quarters in one of seven camps located along the length of the railroad. Torres Strait Islander tracklayers, who were invariably referred to as Thursday Islanders, comprised about one-third of the 137-man track laying team.[38] In March 1968, the tracklayers settled into a ten-hour day, working six days a week and the railway line snaked slowly out of Port Hedland and headed toward Mt Newman.

Local newspapers and popular magazines such as the *Australasian Post* documented the presence of Torres Strait Islander labourers in the railroad construction workforce in Western Australia. On 5 May 1966, the *Australasian Post* ran a story titled: 'Track layers from Thursday Island … and they're the best'.[39] The story told of the movement of Islanders into Western Australia in early 1965 to work on the Perth to Kalgoorlie railroad construction and described the Islanders as 'tremendous workers, strong, willing, fast and efficient'. The previously cited *BHP Review* article described the Islander workers on the Mt Newman Project as 'the skill and brawn behind the operation', men who were 'fast becoming legendary figures of the Australian railroad construction scene'.[40] The article commended the workers for their 'skill in handling the heavy rail, their fitness, their rhythmic team work, their spiritedness and obvious pride in and enjoyment of their work'.[41] For the Islanders, they took pride in their

37 *BHP Review* 1968; McIlwraith 1988; Mt Newman Mining Company 1969.
38 *BHP Revie*w 1968.
39 'Track-layers from Thursday Island… and they're the best', *Australasian Post*, 5 May 1966.
40 *BHP Review* 1968: 20.
41 *BHP Review* 1968: 20.

strength and ability. Many had made their way to Western Australia in 1965, capitalising on the reputation for physical strength and hard work forged on the Townsville to Mt Isa Rehabilitation Project with Hornibrook Construction in the early 1960s.

Of the Islander men who had worked on the Mt Newman Project, many are now in their sixties and seventies, and others have passed away. Despite the passage of time, a rich bank of knowledge about the Mt Newman job and the May 1968 track-laying record remains stored in the memories of former railway workers and their families. In 2008, John Culear Kennell was interviewed for the *Laying the Tracks* project. Mr Kennell has considerable experience in railway construction and was working for MKMO in the period that included the day of the track-laying record. It is his recollections about this event and other aspects of his railway experiences to which I now turn.[42]

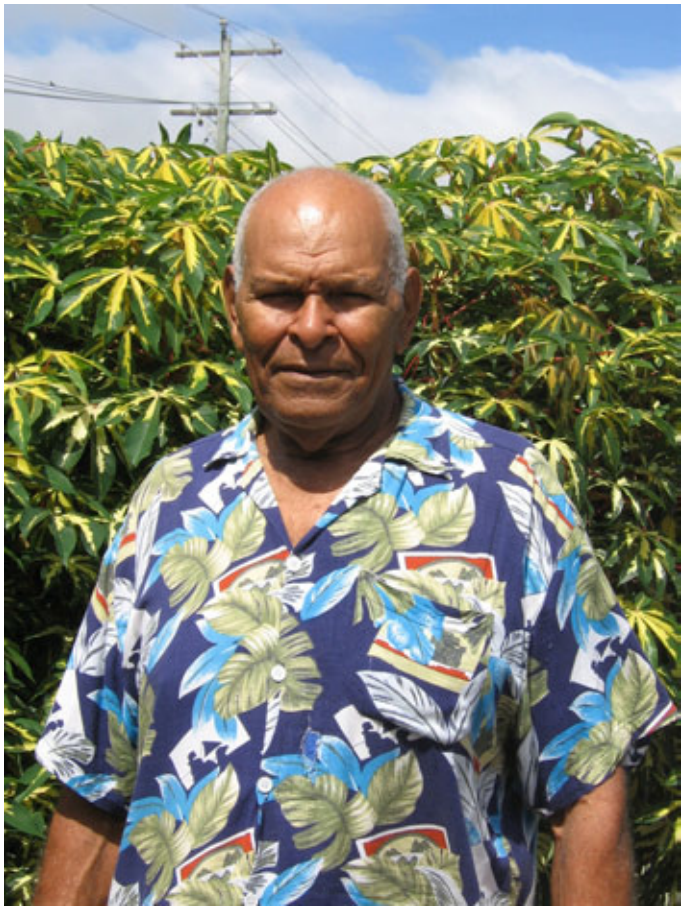

Fig 1. John Culear Kennell, Mackay, Queensland, January 2008.

Source: Reproduced with the permission of John Culear Kennell and Leah Lui-Chivizhe.

42 John Culear Kennell Snr interviewed by Leah Lui-Chivizhe and Shino Konishi, 2008.

Fig 2. Islander track-layers positioning the 360 foot rail over sleepers on the standard-gauge railway line, Upper Swan, Western Australia, February 1965.

Source: © *The West Australian*.

Fig 3. Islander railway workers on the standard-gauge railway line, Western Australia, February 1965.

Source: © *The West Australian*.

Fig 4. Many Islander workers were flown by chartered planes between north Queensland and the Pilbara. There is little documentation on this image of workers in front on an ANSETT-ANA DC4. Based on the history of the aircraft, it is likely the image was taken between 1965 and 1966.

Source: Reproduced with the permission of the Shire of Roebourne, Local History Office, 2005.512.

John Culear Kennell remembers

Like many Islander men of his generation, John Kennell started working when he was in his teens. At 14, he became a deckhand on a pearling lugger in the Torres Strait and after several seasons joined the crew of a trochus boat skippered by his older brother, Jack. His brother's boat, owned by a Mackay businessman, worked the reefs adjacent to the Queensland coast usually as far south as Mackay, where Jack was living. When the shell price dropped in the mid 1950s, the Kennell brothers moved on to cutting cane on the Queensland mainland. Due primarily to the seasonal nature of the cane-cutting work, John Kennell took on other jobs. He worked building bridges for the main roads department before venturing into railway work in 1958. The short term contract work with the railway suited his circumstances, he said, enabling him to move between the railways and cane cutting. In a chance encounter with a cousin in Townville in early 1961, Kennell got word that good money was being offered for labourers to work on the Townsville to Mt Isa re-laying project. He headed west and at Hughenden was signed-on by the contractors for the project, Hornibrook Construction.

His abilities and attitude to the work soon brought him to the attention of the bosses and he was quickly promoted to the level of gang supervisor. When the Hornibrook job ended in 1964, Kennell was instrumental in recruiting Islander men to work on the standard gauge project in southern Western Australia in 1965. He was one of the 100 or so men who travelled by train from north Queensland to Perth to work on the standard gauge project in the south of the state.

In early 1968, Kennell was recruited for the Mt Newman job and offered a position as a gang supervisor or foreman. Making his way to Port Hedland via Darwin, Kennell was astonished by the large numbers of Islander men he saw when he arrived in Darwin. Somewhere upwards of 50 men were waiting to be recruited for railway construction work in Western Australia. Kennell spent almost six weeks in Darwin, waiting out the wet season, before being flown to Port Hedland by MKMO.

The track laying for the Mt Newman job was undertaken by 137 men divided into a number of gangs according to the different stages of the track laying process. Of the gangs, the front steel gang, back steel gang and the ballast and surfacing gang included large numbers of Islanders and all three gangs were supervised by Islander men; Patrick Levi on front steel, John Kennell on back steel and Percy Mallie headed up the ballast and surfacing gang. Kennell recalled the track laying process in this way. As the 440 metre strings of steel were guided onto the sleepers, the front steel gang were responsible for manoeuvring the rail and sleepers into place before every fifth sleeper was fixed to the rail with spikes. The spikes, long heavy nails with an offset head, were driven into place manually or with a spiking machine. This allowed the train carrying the rails and other machinery to move forward and backward when required. The back steel gang had to ensure every sleeper was evenly spaced before completing the spiking and anchoring. Anchoring involved the use of machinery that clamped the rail to either side of the sleeper.

The final gang, the ballast and surfacing crew, were responsible for finishing off the job. A sledge machine was used to lift the track and distribute the ballast underneath the sleepers and additional ballast was spread between the sleepers. The rail was aligned and the ballast was tampered or packed down to give the track the most effective support and guard against buckling of the rail.

In the front steel gang, the crew of 12 or so Islanders had worked with Patrick Levi on the Dampier-Tom Price construction job that had finished around mid 1966. Levi's crew were as familiar with Levi's work approach, as he was with theirs. This would not be the case for John Kennell, however. When he first started on the Mt Newman job, Kennell was told that due to a fracas involving Islander workers on the Dampier-Tom Price project, no other Islanders, with the exception of Levi's gang and a few other men including his brother, would be employed by the firm. As a result, his gang of 30 was comprised predominantly of non-English speaking workers, many of whom he thought were Portuguese. Kennell knew from the outset that it would be an enormous challenge and the

gangs' inexperience was reflected in their performance. Over several days, Levi's front steel gang was setting the pace at 3.2 kilometres of track laying each day. At best, the back steel gang were managing to complete only half that.

One Friday afternoon a supervisor asked light-heartedly, 'John, couldn't you do your job'. Kennell quickly replied 'give me my Torres Strait Islanders, they know me and I know them'. About the pre-dominantly non-English speaking gang he supervised, Kennell said, 'they're good blokes, but they got no experience'. Experience aside, the language barrier, was also taking its toll. 'When I want a hammer, I have to draw it in the sand', Kennell said, adding 'I can't run back and forward, for 30 men'. After the brief exchange, the supervisor left, returning at around 5pm and said to Kennell, 'John, you win … ring Darwin and bring them over … the firm will pay the fares'. After the evening meal, Kennell rang a couple of the Islander men he knew in Darwin and told them: 'collect 30 boys, and go to the airport'. By Sunday afternoon, the newly recruited Islander workers were in camp and on Monday Kennell's back steel gang was reformed. The new gang was now a mix of Portuguese and Islander workers and to assist with his supervision duties, Kennell identified two leading hands, one of them Portuguese and the other, an Islander. With his new crew, the gang worked faster. 'By the time Patrick Levi reach the ballast pit', Kennell said, 'we right there, behind Patrick Levi'. With a different crew, Kennell had managed to significantly improve on the track laying time of the back steel gang.

An attempt at the world record had floated in and out of the conversations of the workers for some weeks, although no one was certain just where along the long stretch of line it would be attempted. Kennell had noticed that project supervisors were closely watching the work of the steel gangs. At one point he said, 'they swap us, put me on front steel and Patrick on my gang', believing that the supervisors did this to see whether the two gangs could work faster. Kennell later told the supervisor that the men in the front steel gang 'look forward to working for Patrick, just like mine look forward for me'. Clearly, there was some sense of loyalty among the men to the foremen they had signed on with. In terms of where the record might be attempted, Kennell was certain that the firm had long established the feasibility of such an attempt and in all likelihood had selected a stretch of track already.

On the day of the record, Kennell recalled being on site for the usual 6am start. As the track-laying crews readied themselves for the day, he noted the presence of several American and Canadian 'bosses'. One of the project supervisors approached Kennell and they talked about an attempt at the world record. When the supervisor said 'John, we have studied it, Patrick Levi will drop four mile of steel', Kennell's gut feeling that the crews were being readied for this day was confirmed. The supervisor went on to say that if the old record were to be broken, it would be almost totally reliant on Kennell's back steel gang. The supervisor told Kennell: 'because you've got so many thousand sleeper to be spaced, so many thousand sleeper to be plated, spiked and anchored … the world record lays on the back, not the front'. Kennell knew this to be true. His crew of 30 men had more processes to complete compared with the front steel gang. With his

knowledge of the task and his experience of leading the back steel gang, Kennell knew that unless his crew were able to fasten the steel to the sleepers with both precision and speed, there could be no record.

Kennell was then asked if he required more men and was told to select whomever he needed. Kennell called for ten more men and said '"give me Mr Manaway" a South Sea Island man, he's got this own men, bring them over, so when that ol fella come I tell him, "you look after anchoring, anchoring and spacing [in the] back"'. After allocating tasks within his gang, he assembled his crew of 40 around him and said 'the firm wants a world record today and it depends on us at the back'. With those words, the workers went to their work positions. As soon as the rail started being dropped by the front steel gang, Kennell recalled with pride, 'you can see them boys move different, they move with one spirit'.

Buoyed by the prospect of setting a new record, the track-laying crews advanced quickly. By 11am, the front steel gang had managed to drop the first 3.2 kilometres of steel. Kennell had to move his men and machinery off the track to allow the empty rail wagons to be shunted back into the siding. His crew took a *smoko* break and the wagons containing the next load of steel were shunted into position. By 4.30 or 5 in the afternoon, Levi's front steel gang had dropped the final quantity of rail and within an hour or so; Kennell's back steel gang and then the ballast and surfacing gang completed their components of the job. At 5.50pm, close to 12 hours after they had started, 7 kilometres (4.35 miles) of heavy-duty standard gauge rail had been placed, spiked and anchored. A new record was set.

Back at their camp later in the day, the workers celebrated, the revelry lubricated by a keg of beer courtesy of the bosses. Kennell's final comment about the track-laying performance of the men amounted to a quietly spoken, 'it was a highlight for the boys'. He recalled that news of the new track-laying record was broadcast in the Western Australian press in the days following the event.

Conclusion: making history from memories

What is clear from news stories and the few official accounts of the Mt Newman Project is that Torres Strait Islander men played a critical role in the track-laying record in May 1968 and in the overall construction of the railroad. Using Kennell's oral account, I have sought to show how his recollections can be used to construct a history of the Mt Newman Project and the track-laying record from the point of view of the Islander workers.

In terms of the veracity of his account, Kennell fulfils Rose's criteria of *place* and *presence*. He is also named in magazine articles and several photographs of him appear in new stories and other accounts of the Mt Newman Project. Supplementary to Rose's criteria, Kennell's own efforts to record or perhaps remember the 1968 track-laying record included keeping lists of the Islander men in the track-laying crews, with details of the different roles of crew members. There is considerable overlap between Kennell's list and another list

of Islander workers collected by the sister-in-law of one of men on the back steel gang. Kennell also provided numerous photographs taken during his time on the Mt Newman Project. While the lists of workers and the photographs provide avenues for corroborating particular aspects of Kennell's accounts, they are also rich sources of information that can be drawn on to flesh out and deepen our engagement with this little known history.

Over 45 Islander men worked on the track-laying gangs on the Mt Newman Project, and so it is to be expected that there will be multiple, potentially conflicting, narratives. Accounts may vary according to the ages of the men, the work they performed, and each individual's motivation for working on the Western Australian railroad. Yet it is possible to weave from their personal memories the beginnings of a collective history. Furthermore, the stories and recollections of the accompanying Islander spouses and children can position the men's stories in a familial, and potentially in a broader socio-cultural, context. For the men who have passed away, their stories, too, continue to be told by their children and other family members, instilling additional layers of meaning and complexity.

Within the personal memories and oral histories of Islander railway workers lies the potential for a powerful collective history of Islander migration and labour force participation. Writing this history is long overdue and a necessary act of recognition of the hundreds of Torres Strait Islander men, who for a time became railway workers, and who played an important if unrecognised part in the development of northern Australia.

Acknowledgements

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The stolen veteran: institutionalisation, military service, and the Stolen Generations[1]

Noah Riseman

Lance-Corporal David Cook is an Aboriginal man of mixed descent born in Ebor in the New England region of New South Wales on 16 May 1945. This is the borderland of the Djungutti and Gumbaynggirr peoples, but Dave Cook does not self-identify with any particular Aboriginal mob. Around the time of Dave's tenth birthday, he and his four siblings were removed from their parents. Dave was placed in Kinchela Boys Home for three years before being fostered out with three of his sisters. At the age of 17 Dave enlisted in the Army; he served two tours of duty in Vietnam before being discharged in 1968. Though a successful soldier liked by his peers, Dave's life spiralled downhill in the 1970s. Cycles of violence, imprisonment, and racism threatened to turn him into another Aboriginal statistic until he got his life back on track through reconnecting with his siblings.

This article uses the prism of Dave Cook's life story to analyse the relationship between the armed forces and the Stolen Generations. Little research has been conducted in the history of Indigenous service, and even less on Indigenous service post-Second World War.[2] The dominant argument proposed by Robert Hall and other historians is that military service provided new social and economic opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advancement, as witnessed in high-profile Second World War Indigenous veterans such as Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker), Reg Saunders, and Charles Mene.[3] This argument certainly has merit, and among the testimonies of veterans of Korea, Vietnam, and the Gulf War, and other ex-service personnel, similar themes of new economic opportunities, learning skills and contributing back to their Indigenous communities have permeated ex-servicemen and women's

1 As a warning to any Indigenous readers, this article uses the names of persons who are deceased. It also discusses some very sensitive Stolen Generations material such as abuse and welfare files. The author gratefully acknowledges the financial assistance of the Army History Research Grant, Dave Cook and his family's generosity and the constructive suggestions of the two referees.

2 The only source that significantly examines Indigenous service post-Second World War is the documentary *The Forgotten* 2003. Other sources that address aspects of Indigenous service post-Second World War include: Carroll (RL) 1992; Jackomos and Fowell 1993; Stasiuk 2004; Smith 2001; Kartinyeri 1996; Moremon 2003; Bray, Laughton and Forster 1995; James 2010. The most comprehensive histories of Indigenous service during the Second World War are Hall 1997; Ball 1991. For the First World War see Winegard 2009; Huggonson 1993; Pratt 1990.

3 See Hall 1995; Gordon 1965; Ramsland and Mooney 2006: 179–201.

life stories.[4] But there is one commonality among the majority of documented cases in which Dave Cook does not fit: they were not forcibly removed from their parents as children and thus were not members of the Stolen Generations. Certainly their lives were subject to discrimination, but they maintained their family connections and some sense of personal autonomy and agency over their own lives.

This was not the case in the life of Lance-Corporal David Cook. Instead, Cook's life followed many of the common trends among Stolen Generations survivors as outlined in the *Bringing Them Home* report (1997) and the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (1991). In Cook's case, while his experience in the Army was positive and free of racism, it did *not* provide the escape and new opportunities commonly touted among historians of Indigenous service. Contrarily, the Army was an environment where Dave thrived because it prolonged his institutionalisation. He was treated as an equal, but at the same time it could not undo the damage that had been done to him as a result of being Stolen. After his service in Vietnam, Dave Cook went on a negative trajectory through prison, family violence, and confronting both de jure and de facto discrimination. Dave Cook's life story suggests that while the armed forces did provide many significant opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advancement in the post-Second World War era, when it came to the Stolen Generations the military was not necessarily an escape from the institutionalisation and long-term trauma so prevalent among survivors of removal.

Historiography and methodology

Before delving into Dave Cook's life, a few preliminary comments are necessary on the historiography of links between the Stolen Generations and the armed forces. Social welfare historians have indicated that enlisting in the armed forces was not uncommon for survivors of out-of-home care. The military provided a steady job with a steady income and accommodation, and the regimentation and discipline mirrored the institutionalisation experienced through the welfare system. This trend applies not only to the Stolen Generations, but also to other removed and institutionalised groups such as the Forgotten Australians.[5] When looking at Indigenous service in general, there are no clear numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service personnel because prior to 1993 the armed forces did not record the race or ethnic background of enlistees. In 1993 there were 697 Indigenous full-time members of the Australian Defence Force, making up a little over one percent of the total services.[6] Yet the exact number of Indigenous people who served in conflicts such as Korea or Vietnam

4 *The Forgotten* 2003; Jackomos and Fowell 1993; Bray, Laughton and Forster 1995; *I Hope the War Will be Over Soon* 1988; Bostock 1991, 'Black Veterans of Vietnam', unpublished manuscript, Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies [hereafter AIATSIS].

5 Commonwealth of Australia 2004: 161; Murray et al 2008: 132–133.

6 Smith 2001: 136.

is unknown.[7] It was service in these conflicts, as well as the First and Second World Wars, during which Stolen Generations members would be among the ranks of Australian Defence Force personnel.

Though there are no clear statistics, there is anecdotal evidence and oral testimony that suggest the armed forces were a destination for numerous Stolen Generations survivors. Yet only a few historical sources have mentioned the armed forces in the context of Stolen Generations. Peter Read has presented excerpts from Stolen Generations survivors who enlisted in the Army or Navy.[8] The *Bringing Them Home* report makes one mention of the Army in a submission from the Northern Territory that reads: 'I worked there for seven and a half years, never got paid anything, all that time… So I had to join the army to survive'.[9] A handful of Stolen Generations biographies – such as Rob Riley's and Alec Kruger's – mention military service; interestingly, though, in these biographies military service plays a minor role in the Stolen Generations members' wider life stories.[10] Beyond these minor mentions of the armed forces, there is no indication as to the fate of those individuals who served. Dave Cook's story sheds some light on the experiences of those Stolen Generations service personnel.

The methodology behind this article is quite complex for numerous reasons. First and foremost, the mere nature of the Stolen Generations and the personal nature of Dave Cook's life story require sensitivity. The main primary sources for this article are oral testimony, Dave Cook's welfare file and his service records, in conjunction with key Stolen Generations documents such as the *Bringing Them Home* report. The article takes the approach of contextualising and juxtaposing Dave's oral history narrative with written primary and secondary sources because, as oral historian Alistair Thomson cautions, oral historians interviewing veterans need to be critically aware of the interviewees' motivations for participating, the form of narrative and the impact of public memory on the participants' recollections. Thomson suggests that such critical awareness 'will make more careful and nuanced use of personal testimony in their [historians'] reconstruction and interpretation of historical events: what happened, how and why it happened, what it felt like and meant for participants'.[11] When I interviewed Dave, he was quite adamant that he wants his life story shared and is comfortable having the sensitive, personal details of his life disclosed because he wants Australians to understand the impact of the Stolen Generations on Aboriginal people and the Vietnam War on veterans; for this very reason Dave provided a copy of his welfare file and Department of Veterans' Affairs health records.

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7 Staff at the Australian War Memorial are currently tracking service numbers of all identified Indigenous service personnel in all Australian conflicts. For Korea, the Australian War Memorial has identified approximately 35 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service personnel and for Vietnam approximately 260.

8 Read 1999: 91, 138.

9 National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (Australia) 1997: 114.

10 Beresford 2006; Kruger and Waterford 2007.

11 Thomson 2006: 20.

The other complication is my position as a non-Indigenous academic researching Indigenous history. Clare Bradford wisely remarks:

> [t]o speak for any group without being a member is a chancy move to make, but to speak for people formerly colonised is to replicate colonial processes which assume that "we" know what "they" think and desire.[12]

To avert the risks of re-colonising Dave Cook's story, this article centres Indigenous persons – Dave Cook in particular – as the primary actors rather than as passive objects in the wider historical context. The privileging of Aboriginal voices aligns with Indigenist methodological aims to focus:

> on the lived, historical experiences, ideas, traditions, dreams, interests, aspirations, and the struggles of Indigenous Australians. Indigenous Australians are the primary subjects of Indigenist research. Indigenist research gives voice to Indigenous people.[13]

Significantly, as the author is non-Indigenous, this article could not be classified as Indigenist or applying Indigenous Standpoint Theory.[14] Yet the *aims* and *outcomes* of this research adhere to the principles of such research methodologies, working through a collaborative approach between non-Indigenous academic and Indigenous active participant.[15] Oral historian Heather Goodall writes:

> [t]he public work which leads us into genuinely new relationships will be that which poses questions on which diverse groups of people want to collaborate and which fosters a strong enough sense of confidence to allow an exploration of complexities and ambiguities.[16]

While there are some conclusions which can be drawn from this article, I hope that, following Goodall's suggestion, it will open a space for further dialogue, inquiries into Indigenous military service and/or the Stolen Generations and collaborative research partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

Dave Cook's stolen childhood

David Cook spent his early childhood living with his mother, father, five sisters and a younger brother; Dave was the second child. He does not recall much of his life before removal, nor does he discuss the actual forced removal of himself and his siblings. Dave's welfare file indicates that he was removed around his tenth

12 Bradford 2001: 133.
13 Rigney 1999: 117. See also Foley 2003.
14 For Indigenous Standpoint Theory, which is similar to Indigenist research methodology, see Nakata 2007; Foley 2005–06; Tuhiwai Smith 1999.
15 See Somerville and Perkins 2003.
16 Goodall 2002: 24.

birthday in 1955 and placed at the notorious Kinchela Boys Home in Kempsey, New South Wales, for three years. Enough has been documented about Kinchela to suggest that these were probably very hard years. Dave recalls:

> [I]f you played up in Kinchela Boys Home, if you done something that you shouldn't've done, your punishment – they – all the boys would be lined up, and the punishment used to happen when you go to, um, lunch, or dinner, or tea. They all lined up, and you have to walk down the line, and they've gotta hit ya. They can't hit ya in the face; they punch you in the chest, in the belly [makes smacking sound]. And if you didn't hit hard enough, you'd go up the end of the line.[17]

Cook's testimony aligns almost perfectly with other accounts of this ritual,[18] and other Aboriginal testimonies describe graphic incidents of physical and sexual abuse that occurred at Kinchela.[19]

Kinchela was also the site of institutionalised labour for the Aboriginal boys. Cook describes how they did not receive an education, but rather worked in the gardens and tending to livestock such as cows.[20] As Peter Read indicates, 'the work the boys were compelled to do, such as scrubbing and washing, was not the life of normal healthy boys'.[21] Institutionalisation at Kinchela went beyond the rigidity of labour. The residents were referred to by numbers instead of by names. Routine, structure, and hierarchy were strictly enforced at Kinchela, and this had a profound impact on the Aboriginal residents.[22] Marlene J Norst describes the institutionalised Stolen Generations members at Kinchela as 'captives … totally "removed" from their own cultural traditions – languages, beliefs, ways of seeing and doing – and then actively encouraged to despise and to feel shame rather than pride in their roots'.[23] In regards to Dave Cook, one letter from Kinchela would later state, '[w]e remember him as an excellent type of boy during his period of three years residence at Kinchela'.[24] Thus Dave Cook ostensibly succumbed readily to this regime and became an institutionalised man.

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17 Cook, David, interview with Noah Riseman, Raymond Terrace, New South Wales, 20 January 2010, transcript: 16.

18 Simon et al 2009: 31–41; Norst 1999: 20; National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (Australia) 1997: 166.

19 National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (Australia) 1997: 160, 166–167; Read 1999: 68; Simon et al 2009: 41–47; Norst 1999: 20; Ramsland 2004: 102–103; Ramsland 2006: 237–248; Harrison 2002: 8.

20 Cook, interview with Riseman, 2010, transcript: 1. See also Simon et al 2009: 24–31; Harrison 2002: 10–11.

21 Read 2009: 153.

22 National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (Australia) 1997: 166; Simon et al 2009: 20–62; Haebich 2000; *Who Killed Malcolm Smith?* 1992.

23 Norst 1999: 22.

24 AF White, Manager, Aboriginal Boys' Training Home, Kinchela, 9 June 1961.

After his three years at Kinchela, Dave Cook was fostered to a Mrs Smith[25] of Allworth outside of Newcastle.[26] Describing the impact of life after institutions such as Kinchela, Norst writes:

> Having successfully been made to believe that black was white, they were then thrust defenceless into the 'real' white world where their assimilation proved to be an illusion and they were despised for being black. Here they found no acceptance and felt completely disoriented.[27]

The feelings of being an outcast and confrontations with racism most certainly were the case for Dave Cook. He testifies that he was taunted because of his race, but he was able to fit in with 'New Australian' migrant youth who were also derided by locals.[28] Cook's comments inadvertently align with a critical argument pursued by historian Anna Haebich – that although the histories of Indigenous people and ethnic minorities during the assimilation period from the 1950s to the 1970s were most certainly different, there are parallel developments within the history of assimilation 'of these different groups who were subject in varying degrees to the assimilatory pressures of nation building at the time'.[29]

Cook was fortunate that three of his sisters were also fostered to Mrs Smith, but their younger brother remained at Kinchela. Living with Mrs Smith, Cook's life continued down a path common to many Stolen Generations survivors. The NSW Aborigines Welfare Board reports consistently described Cook as 'very well clothed', 'very well behaved' and 'very kindly treated'. The reports indicated that Cook was 'not very bright in school' but that he was 'happy and well'.[30] Dave Cook's testimony supports the reports that he was not physically abused, but he certainly contradicts the idea of being content. Cook suggests that Mrs Smith simply fostered him and his sisters as a source of income. He recalls being kicked out of home by Mrs Smith, though he does not indicate why.[31] Correspondence between Mrs Smith and the Aborigines Welfare Board suggests that Cook would not 'obey her' and thus she could not have him in her home.[32] Instead, Cook was taken in by the Thomas[33] family. The Thomas' assessment was quite different from Mrs Smith's, writing that they were 'deeply concerned for

25 Name changed to protect identity.

26 Peter Read points out that from 1957, the New South Wales Aborigines Welfare Board advertised for foster parents, considering fostering a more economic alternative to running institutions such as Kinchela. See Read 1999: 62–64. For a history of child removal in New South Wales, see National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (Australia) 1997: 39–55, 600–610; 'To Remove and Protect', AIATSIS, online, accessed 30 June 2010: <http://www1.aiatsis.gov.au/exhibitions/removeprotect/index.html#>

27 Norst 1999: 22–23.

28 Cook, interview with Riseman, 2010, transcript: 2.

29 Haebich 2008: 14.

30 'Inspection Report on Aboriginal Ward Boarded-out or placed as adopted boarder', 30 June 1958, 16 January 1959, and 4 June 1959.

31 Cook, interview with Riseman, 2010, transcript: 1–2.

32 Letter from Mrs Smith to Aborigines Welfare Board, 13 November 1961; Letter from EH Mason to Superintendent, Aborigines Welfare Board, 14 November 1961.

33 Name changed to protect identity.

David's welfare & aim to see that David is well cared for & justly treated'.[34] The alleged behaviour problems that manifested during Dave's time with Mrs Smith coincide with the findings of the *Bringing Them Home* report about the impact of institutionalisation often leading to delinquency during adolescence.[35] Though the records and Cook's testimony do not indicate the extent of delinquency, the diverging opinions of the Thomas family and Mrs Smith suggest that providing a supportive environment was more conducive to Cook's development. Dave Cook remained with the Thomas family until just after his 17th birthday, at which time he enlisted in the Royal Australian Navy. Dave never saw his father again, and he would only ever see his mother again twice when he was an adult. He remarks, '[t]here was nothing. It was like meeting a stranger'.[36]

Service in the Australian Defence Force

Dave Cook says that he enlisted in the Navy as a form of escape. Whereas the documented experiences of other Indigenous service personnel have suggested the armed forces as an escape from government regulations, controls, reserve life, and discrimination,[37] Cook's testimony suggests it simply was to escape the drudgery of his life. In fact, he claims that it was to escape his sisters, still living with Mrs Smith, whom he describes as demanding and thus making his life quite difficult. At that time Dave did not hold any grudge against the government for taking him away because he did not realise child removal was a phenomenon specifically targeting Aboriginal children across New South Wales. He recalls:

> And I didn't know they treated the whole lot of the, uh the rest of the Aboriginals the way they treated us, cuz I was so young; y'know what I mean? And I kept saying, 'Why are they treating me like this all the time?' Y'know. And I thought it was a personal thing with me.[38]

Cook's points about self-doubt and his inability to see the 'big picture' of the policies of child removal are not surprising given the psychological impacts of being Stolen, the denigration of Aboriginality and the subsequent effects of institutionalisation on removed children's self-esteem.[39]

Dave Cook's time in the Navy was short-lived; he was soon discharged for failing his examination on completion of the Recruit Disciplinary course. There

34 Letter from Mr Thomas to EM Mason, 20 November 1961.
35 National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (Australia) 1997: 190.
36 Cook, interview with Riseman, 2010, transcript: 39.
37 Hall 1995; Jackomos and Fowell 1993; Bostock 1991, 'Black Veterans of Vietnam', unpublished manuscript, AIATSIS.
38 Cook, interview with Riseman, 2010, transcript: 32.
39 National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (Australia) 1997: 177–211.

were also letters expressing problems with Cook's 'slovenly dress and habits'.[40] According to Cook, it was racism rather than a lack of discipline that drove him out of the Navy. He states:

> And I was the only Aboriginal in the outfit, and there weren't many Aboriginals in- in the- in the forces. And, it didn't matter what I done, I just couldn't do it right. He just didn't want me in his outfit. He just- I was a blot on his- on his outfit, being Black.[41]

Testimony from an Aboriginal Korean War veteran suggests similar problems of racism preventing him from joining the Navy, and historian Jason Sear argues that the Australian Navy was the service that traditionally discriminated most against non-Europeans.[42] Cook moved home for only a few months before he signed up again, but this time in the Army. Cook served in the Royal Australian Engineers in New Guinea and Borneo. In 1965 he volunteered to go to Vietnam attached to the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment.[43] He did two tours in Vietnam in 1965–66 and in 1967–68.

The address on Dave Cook's attestation form reads 'Aborigines Welfare Board',[44] indicating that it was still his legal guardian at the time of his enlistment. In fact, in Cook's Welfare file there is correspondence between the Aborigines Welfare Board and both the Army and Navy in relation to both Cook's behaviour and welfare. The Aborigines Welfare Board wanted confirmation that Cook had enlisted in the Army.[45] Even after Cook's enlistment, his mother was sending letters to the Aborigines Welfare Board in an effort to communicate with him. Cook's mother clearly did not know that Dave had joined the Army, and the Welfare Board simply told his mother to contact Department of the Army.[46] Yet the Superintendant of the Aborigines Welfare Board was still sending his own personal letters to Cook, indicating that he clearly had Cook's address in the Army. Thus the Aborigines Welfare Board continued to exert power over aspects of Cook's Stolen life, even as he seemingly escaped their control through enlistment in the armed forces.

When asked about racism in the Australian Army, Dave definitively declared: 'never once did I have any prejudice pinned on me in the Australian Army.

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40 Lieutenant DG Bowen, RAN, to HJ Green, Aborigines Welfare Board, 6 September 1962; 22 August 1962, Dave Cook welfare file.

41 Cook, interview with Riseman, 2010, transcript: 2.

42 Egglestone, Private Cedric 'Ned' and Don McLeod, Royal Australian Infantry Corps 1998, interviewed by Bill Bunbury, 3 September 1998, RSL Reservoir, Australian War Memorial AWM S01907; Sears 2001: 71.

43 Record of Service, Cook, D, 214933, in Department of Veterans' Affairs Medical File, SS00205; David Cook service records, service number 214933, Central Army Records Office [hereafter CARO]; Cook, interview with Riseman, 2010, transcript: 3–6.

44 Application form for males for enlistent in – The Australian Regular Army, in David Cook service records, service number 214933, CARO.

45 HJ Green, Superintendant, to The Aborigines' Welfare Officer, 5 February 1963, Dave Cook welfare file.

46 Norma Cook, to HJ Green, Superintendant, 4 July 1963; HJ Green, Superintendant of Aborigines Welfare, to Miss Norma Cook, 19 July 1963, Dave Cook welfare file.

Not once'.[47] This was the first time in Dave's life in which he was a complete equal with non-Indigenous people. In fact, not once in Cook's service records does the word 'Aboriginal' appear;[48] this is common among service records of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Korean War and Vietnam War veterans. Cook served in Vietnam with three other Indigenous people: Billy Coolburra from Palm Island, Torres Strait Islander Bill Unmeopa and a Yamatji man from Western Australia named Frank Mallard.[49] Their Commanding Officer, Captain Sandy MacGregor, writes: 'they were rarely, if ever, subjected to racism. The strong bond between soldiers – and engineers in particular – transcended more obvious differences like colour and culture'.[50] Interestingly, both Coolburra and Cook have commented on the contrasting prevalence of racism in the United States Army. Dave states: '[t]he whitefellas lived here, the blackfellas lived here. The blackfellas ate in this mess and the whitefellas ate in this mess … Even the Australians were shocked at the racism that it was because they've never seen it so blatant'.[51] Other Aboriginal veterans have similarly commented on racism in the American Army.[52] As this was not the case in the Australian Army, Dave saw it as an opportunity for escape from the problems he confronted in Australia. He even wrote to the Aborigines Welfare Board, expressing interest in seeing his brother, still at Kinchela. Dave wrote, 'I'm going to try & get him to join the Army or Navy if he think he can or should'.[53]

Dave had quite an active time in Vietnam and received significant praise from his superior officers and peers. An early report from his basic training declared, '[a]n above average soldier – handles weapons well – could be developed into NCO material – very carefree nature – works well without supervision'.[54] Dave lived up to these expectations, as he was ultimately promoted to the Non-Commissioned Officer rank of Lance-Corporal. Captain Sandy MacGregor writes: 'Dave was one of the wilder elements in the troop – but he was also one of the best forward scouts in the Australian Army'.[55] Cook got himself into trouble on occasion. He recalls one particular incident during which he got into a brawl with several American soldiers in a bar, resulting in him being hauled away by American Military Police.[56] Dave managed to miss the Battle of Long Tan by virtue of accidentally shooting himself in the leg two days prior. During

47 Cook, interview with Riseman, 2010, transcript: 9.
48 David Cook service records, service number 214933, CARO.
49 David Cook actually did not know that Frank Mallard was Aboriginal, nor is he mentioned as Aboriginal in Sandy MacGregor's book. Mallard is indeed Aboriginal, though, and comes from a Yamatji family with a strong tradition of Aboriginal service. Frank Mallard, interview with Noah Riseman, Northbridge, Western Australia, 24 November 2010; James 2010: 223–230.
50 MacGregor 1993: 81.
51 Cook, interview with Riseman, 2010, transcript: 6. See also MacGregor 1993: 85.
52 Bostock 1991, 'Black Veterans of Vietnam', unpublished manuscript, AIATSIS: 11–12; Bostock 1991, Interviews with Aboriginal Vietnam Veterans for proposed book 'Black Veterans of Vietnam', AIATSIS.
53 Letter from Dave Cook to Mr and Mrs Green, November 1963, Dave Cook welfare file.
54 'Individual Training – Progress Report', 6 March 1963, in David Cook service records, service number 214933, CARO.
55 MacGregor 1993: 85.
56 Cook, interview with Riseman, 2010, transcript: 7–8; MacGregor 1993: 85–87.

his second tour of duty, he missed the Tet Offensive by virtue of being bitten by a scorpion. During the Tet Offensive, Cook's section was hit quite hard, with all but one soldier being wounded or killed.[57] In Dave's own words, the psychological impact of missing Tet was enormous; he says: '[w]ell, I went over the hill. I went troppo. They sent me back to Australia'.[58] These Vietnam experiences of Cook's are not dissimilar to the histories of other Australian Vietnam veterans.[59] Essentially, as Dave himself posits, the war experience was indeed similar to non-Indigenous Australians – for better and for worse. But it was upon his return to Australia and his discharge from the Army that the long-term impacts of being Stolen would re-manifest.

Civilian spiral

Like so many other Vietnam veterans, Dave Cook experienced Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) after his discharge in December 1968. He recalls the difficulty of adjusting from being in the jungle of Vietnam one day, and the next being at home in western Sydney with a partner and two screaming children. This new family was the result of relations Dave had with a woman in Australia during his time of service, and the two children were born while he was overseas. Dave says, '[t]he change was so terrific- horrific, y'know. I just couldn't handle it'.[60] Stories of Vietnam veterans' difficulty adjusting to civilian life and experiencing PTSD are not uncommon and also transcend race and culture.[61] Yet unlike most veterans, Dave had to deal with the compounded problems of confronting racism and entering a society for which his Stolen childhood had ill-prepared him. PTSD has not only been common among veterans, but also among Stolen Generations survivors. The *Bringing Them Home* report indicates that '[t]hese [removed] children are more likely to "choose" trauma-prone living situations in adulthood and are particularly vulnerable to the ill-effects of later stressors'.[62] Dave very candidly admits that his family and work life after Vietnam were volatile. He admits to being an ill-prepared and unfit father, which adheres to findings of the *Bringing Them Home* report about the intergenerational impacts of forced removal.[63] He admits to physically abusing his wife, which is how he first got into trouble with the police and entered the legal system. Cook does not attribute this violence to alcohol abuse, though, which was common among Army members in the 1960s–70s.[64]

57 Cook, interview with Riseman, 2010, transcript: 8–9.
58 Cook, interview with Riseman, 2010, transcript: 9.
59 See, for instance, Maddock 1991.
60 Cook, interview with Riseman, 2010, transcript: 11.
61 Department of Veterans' Affairs 1998–99; Burstall 1990; Giblett 1990; Maddock 1991. Kristy Muir discusses how PTSD has impacted veterans of not just Vietnam, but other conflicts as well. See Muir 2007; Muir 2003, especially 'Introduction'.
62 National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (Australia) 1997: 196.
63 National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (Australia) 1997: 222–226.
64 Cook, interview with Riseman, 2010, transcript: 13, 15; McGregor 2010: 192–193.

Dave's unashamed bias against the police problematises some of his oral testimony about his legal problems. Nonetheless, much of what he recalls aligns with patterns presented by *Bringing Them Home* and the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody*, lending validity to much of his testimony.[65] Dave acknowledges that he returned from the Army hating authority; when he encountered racist police officers, his post-Army confidence resulted in him retaliating rather than passively accepting police abuse. He also emphatically believes that police targeted him for being Black; he cites examples of police pulling him over while driving, hurling racist abuse at him and his wife, and often stacking charges against him that were unfounded and unrelated to his assaults.[66] Problems of police stereotyping of Aboriginal people, verbal harassment and racial profiling were explicitly highlighted in the *Royal Commission* among the issues hindering positive relationships between Aboriginal people and police. As the *Royal Commission* succinctly summarised, 'far too much police intervention in the lives of Aboriginal people throughout Australia has been arbitrary, discriminatory, racist and violent'.[67] This was the experience for Dave Cook.

Dave does not deny committing crimes; he acknowledges:

> I've been locked up, and, um, through violence. Iron-barring people-hitting them with iron bars – they weren't, they were other people, y'know. And, uh, you just can't do that sort of things; I know that now-[68]

Dave spent much of the 1970s and 1980s in and out of prison as punishment for these assault convictions. The question at hand, though, is whether Dave's Army or childhood trauma led to this destructive life cycle. Certainly one cannot definitively say that it was one or the other, but a few pieces of evidence suggest that his Stolen childhood had more of an impact and that the Army trauma reinforced this. First, the links between child removal and Dave's offending patterns receive support from the *Royal Commission* and *Bringing Them Home* report. The *Royal Commission* determined that 'the legacy of child removal has had a distinct role to play in institutionalisation and consequent juvenile offending'.[69] As early as 1982 the Australian Law Reform Commission similarly determined there to be a link between 'very high rates of Aboriginal juveniles in corrective institutions and of Aborigines in prisons' and 'their having been placed in substitute care as children'.[70] Dave's own experience in the criminal justice system also mirrors *Royal Commission* findings about the high proportion

65 Peter Read effectively points out that despite the biased nature of some oral testimonies, '[t]he answer is that the written records uphold them'. Read 1999: 173.
66 Cook, interview with Riseman, 2010, transcript: 12–13, 20.
67 Australia 1991: section 13.2.3.
68 Cook, interview with Riseman, 2010, transcript: 15.
69 Australia 1991: section 11.7.6.
70 Australian Law Reform Commission, *Aboriginal Customary Law: Child Custody, Fostering and Adoption* (Sydney, 1982), 6, in National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (Australia) 1997: 190.

of Indigenous people in custody. Dave recalls: 'there's a lot- a lot of Aboriginals … And it was the cream of the Australian Aboriginal youth back then was locked up. A whole generation of them, and it was sickening to see'.[71]

The other evidence that suggests the Stolen Generations experience was the primary cause of Dave's post-Army spiral emerges through general studies of Australian Vietnam veterans, PTSD and the legal system. When asked if there were any other Vietnam veterans in prison, Dave could think of only one. He said, '[h]e was a white. But he was, uh, he was a lot worse than me. He was a man armed holdup. He used to run around doing armed holdups'.[72] The topic of Vietnam veterans and the Australian criminal justice system is clouded in myths and false constructions borrowed from the United States. Indeed, historians have found that many aspects of Australia's national myths surrounding the Vietnam War and the anti-war movement have been based falsely on United States' experiences.[73] Similarly, myths about criminality and Vietnam veterans have transmitted from the United States to Australia. There is data from the United States that suggests that Vietnam Veterans suffering PTSD were over-represented in the prison population. In 1975, for example, 30 per cent of adult male federal prisoners in the United States were Vietnam veterans.[74] By 1987 it was estimated that up to 25 per cent of American men who saw combat in Vietnam had been charged with a criminal offence.[75] This over-representation fuelled public perceptions of criminality and Vietnam veterans, and the popular perceptions transferred to Australia along with other American memories of Vietnam.

Yet the evidence suggests that there are no parallel correlations of Vietnam veterans and the criminal justice system in Australia. There is no mention of prison or criminality in the most comprehensive inquiry into the status of Australian Vietnam veterans conducted by the Department of Veterans' Affairs in 1998–99.[76] A psychology study providing an overview of literature on both American and Australian Vietnam veterans and the problems of PTSD was published by Bruce Boman in 1982. This article focuses on PTSD and interrelated problems of personality changes, depression, substance abuse, and treatments for PTSD. Boman debunks the myth of criminality among Vietnam veterans: '*the amount of criminal behaviour among Vietnam veterans has been said to be no greater than what might have been predicted from their behaviour prior to entering military service*'.[77] The only journal article even to address the question of PTSD, Australian Vietnam veterans and the legal system – published in 1987 – principally describes the United States experience. The article by Terry Shulze describes the rise of PTSD as a legal defence among American veteran defendants, which could have

71 Cook, interview with Riseman, 2010, transcript: 21.
72 Cook, interview with Riseman, 2010, transcript: 22.
73 See, for example, Grey 2010; Grey and Doyle 1992; Pierce, Doyle and Grey 1991.
74 Boman 1982: 119.
75 Shulze 1987: 38–40. For more information about American Vietnam veterans and the criminal justice system, see Erlinder 1984.
76 Department of Veterans' Affairs 1998–99.
77 Boman 1982: 120, emphasis added.

potential ramifications in Australia.[78] Yet despite sensationalist media accounts in the 1980s of Vietnam veterans allegedly committing crimes, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs Arthur Gietzelt reported a study in Victoria in 1983 which found that Vietnam veterans were disproportionately *under*represented amongst the prison population by approximately one-third.[79] Thus it is clear from evidence – or rather lack thereof – that the stereotype of criminal behaviour being preponderant among Vietnam veterans is not applicable to Australia. The reasons for this divergence from the American experience of PTSD have not been adequately researched, and they are outside the scope of this article.[80] What set Dave Cook apart from the majority of Australian Vietnam veterans – including other Aboriginal Vietnam veterans – was that he had been institutionalised even before he joined the Army.

The impact of institutionalisation on the Stolen Generations has already been well-documented.[81] *Bringing Them Home* summarised:

> Psychological and emotional damage renders many people less able to learn social skills and survival skills. Their ability to operate successfully in the world is impaired causing low educational achievement, unemployment and consequent poverty. These in turn cause their own emotional distress leading some to perpetrate violence, self-harm, substance abuse or anti-social behaviour.[82]

Dave Cook was one of the people that fell into this pattern. Dave Cook's service records include a psychological assessment given upon enlistment which highlighted extant mental health problems. The test was a series of yes/no questions, and the assessor noted ten responses which indicated cause for concern. The two questions that deserve mention here are: 'Do you feel like jumping when you are on a high place? YES' and 'Do you feel that your childhood was a happy one? NO'.[83] Moreover, his original employment allocation after basic training commented, '[t]est results are average. A willing worker but appears easily misled. General appearance is average'.[84] These mental health problems did not preclude Cook from being an effective soldier, and in fact the Army regularly

78 Shulze 1987: 38–40.

79 Senator Arthur Gietzelt, Minister for Veterans' Affairs, in Parliament of Australia 1986.

80 Non-Indigenous Vietnam veteran Gary McKay suggests that Australian soldiers were more professionalised and had a better rotation system that fostered teamwork, unity and a sense of camaraderie among soldiers. McKay speculates, '[w]hen we came back we found that people on the whole imagined us to be like the Americans; but having seen the US Army in action, witnessed their lack of professionalism and the problems they had because of their draft and drugs, the Americans were the last people with whom we wanted to be compared.' McKay 1987: 188.

81 National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (Australia) 1997: 187–192; Read 1999: 190.

82 National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (Australia) 1997: 178.

83 Australian Army Psychology Corps: Test SDI, no date, in David Cook service records, service number 214933, CARO.

84 DP3 Employment Designation Training, 6 March 1963, in David Cook service records, service number 214933, CARO.

enlisted men with low educational standards because it was difficult to attract applicants during an era of full employment.[85] Nonetheless, the tests indicate that the Australian Army could already identify psychological problems even before Dave Cook was dispatched to Vietnam. Certainly one could argue that the Vietnam experience exacerbated mental health problems, but the original causes – being Stolen and institutionalised – predated his tours of duty, and the service records suggest that the Army merely noted the mental health problems without treating them.

Wider ramifications of Dave Cook's life story

Dave Cook's life was his alone; while aspects of his experience as a member of the Stolen Generations, a Vietnam veteran and an Aboriginal man in prison may mirror wider patterns, these relationships do not detract from his own feelings, his own memories and his personal development. While Dave Cook's life is the case study examined in this article, other sources affirm the argument that the armed forces merely prolonged the institutionalisation of Stolen Generations members. The story of Rob Riley, Noongar activist and civil rights advocate, highlights the ongoing trauma experienced by Stolen Generations ex-servicemen. Riley was removed from his family and placed in Sister Kate's Home in Perth. He too confronted racism when in the wider community and he too experienced abuse during his childhood. Later in life, Riley commented that his institutionalised childhood made him 'grow up thinking that we were totally alone in the world. We had no family, no belongings no identity'.[86] Rob joined the Army in 1973; fellow Sister Kate's inmate Sue Gordon recalls, 'Aboriginals from an institutional background felt comfortable in the army – and the army offered seconds at meal times, which did not happen at Sister Kate's!'[87] Riley's experience in the Army was egalitarian like Cook's. He wrote in 1987, 'there was a system that everybody, no matter who it was, has to put up with, conform to'.[88] After his Army service, Rob Riley's life did not spiral downward like Dave Cook's. He received a tertiary education, became a leading member of the West Australian Aboriginal Legal Service and Chair of the National Aboriginal Council. Yet as Quentin Beresford writes, '[o]utwardly he emerged [from the Army] self-assured and confident yet he bore hidden scars: the damage done by institutionalisation, sexual abuse, broken family ties and racial harassment'.[89] Ultimately depression stemming from the long-term impacts of Riley's traumatic childhood consumed him and tragically he committed suicide in 1996. Thus like the case of Dave Cook, even though his service in the Australian Army had a positive impact on his life, it did not overpower the damage of his Stolen childhood.

85 Grey 2001: 209–210.
86 Beresford 2006: 69.
87 Sue Gordon, quoted in Beresford 2006: 74. Non-Indigenous Australians from welfare institutions have expressed similar sentiments. See Murray et al 2008: 132.
88 Rob Riley, in Beresford 2006: 74.
89 Rob Riley, in Beresford 2006: 74.

Dave Cook did manage to get his life back on track after serving six years in total in prison because of his determination to reconnect with his family. He says, 'I decided to come home, I rang me sister and they says "Yeah, come home and stay with us." Everything panned out'.[90] He worked for his brother-in-law for much of the late 1980s–2000s. He is now retired and receiving a pension; at the time this article was written, Cook was in Cambodia assisting with land mine clearing under a program run by a fellow veteran. His relationships with his children are estranged, which he also attributes to his Stolen childhood. He remarks:

> it's mainly because I got no love in me body. I can't love anybody; y'know what I mean? I got no feelings for nobody … I know I'd like to experience it, but I'm a little too old for it now.[91]

Dave's inability to make emotional attachments reflects the intergenerational impacts of child removal outlined in *Bringing Them Home*.[92] He does not confront racism anymore in his daily life, but he does recall key moments in recent years when he encountered racism. One such incident was during the time of Hansonism in the late 1990s – when One Nation Party founder Pauline Hanson tapped into public discontent over Aboriginal affairs and so-called special treatment – and resulted in a brawl in his hometown. The other major occurrence happened at a Vietnam veterans' reunion. While disagreeing with a fellow member of his Vietnam company, the gentleman retorted:

> 'Ah, you Black cunt!' Y'know. No one's ever said that to me. No one! … So, out of all the guys I meet in the Army, there was no one – not nothing like that said – in Vietnam, maybe because I had a gun. They would never say that.[93]

Although this was an isolated incident which did not represent the overall sentiments of the ex-service community, it still demonstrates that military service was not the perfect escape from the wider racial attitudes of Australian society and some servicemen still held prejudicial attitudes, even if they did not overtly express them during the Vietnam War.

In conclusion, the Army was not able to rescue Dave from the cycle of disengagement and anti-social behaviour so common among Stolen Generations survivors. Dave Cook's story suggests new questions of inquiry for historians of both the Stolen Generations and of military history. Following Goodall's suggestion, this article 'take[s] the risk of not knowing the answers to all the questions at the outset'.[94] Dave Cook's life story does not automatically correspond to every Stolen ex-serviceperson, just as there is no one 'model'

90 Cook, interview with Riseman, 2010, transcript: 23.
91 Cook, interview with Riseman, 2010, transcript: 25.
92 National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (Australia) 1997: 222–225.
93 Cook, interview with Riseman, 2010, transcript: 27.
94 Goodall 2002: 24.

Stolen Generations case. Nevertheless, his life story indicates that broadening oral history research into the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service personnel can widen historical and contemporary understandings of the impact of military service on Indigenous people. Dave Cook's life story suggests that the argument of the Army as an 'escape' for Aboriginal people has its limitations. To summarise in Dave's own words:

> Don't get me wrong. I was no angel; you know what I mean? But because everything just sort of went haywire from the organised life I had in the Army to the disorganised life that I had out in civilian street.[95]

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95 Cook, interview with Riseman, 2010, transcript: 12.

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The Convincing Ground Aboriginal massacre at Portland Bay, Victoria: fact or fiction?

Ian D Clark

In 2005 the so-called 'Aboriginal History wars' moved from Tasmania to a new convincing ground in Victoria. Michael Connor contested the historiography behind an alleged Aboriginal massacre at a site known as the 'Convincing Ground', at Allestree, on the coast some ten kilometres north of Portland.[1] The site came to public attention in January 2005 when Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Officers halted bulldozing and development work that had begun as part of a proposed coastal residential development.[2] It subsequently became the subject of a Federal Court Native Title case and a Victorian Civil Administrative Tribunal hearing.[3] The dispute with the residential developer was settled in February 2007 when it was agreed that an area of land that encompasses the Convincing Ground would be set aside as a reservation.[4]

The purpose of this paper is to respond to Connor's critique that the massacre did not take place and that I have fabricated the story and embellished the narrative. The paper rebuts Connor's claims and others, by revisiting my earlier work on the Convincing Ground and by presenting new and important material. It examines the strategies Connor uses to claim the massacre could never have happened, and critiques his interpretation of the evidence. By identifying his key tactics and showing how he has deliberately set out to manipulate and misread the evidence, the paper deconstructs Connor's approach as a massacre denier.

Connor's claims

The Convincing Ground 'massacre' has been discussed by myself, Critchett, Connor, and Anderson.[5] In a recent opinion piece, in his role as editor of *Quadrant Online*, Michael Connor offered the following comment on the historiography of the Convincing Ground:

> Another story [in Clark's 1995 *Scars in the Landscape*] is based on original sources which have been misread and misused to put together a massacre

1 Connor 2005a, b, 2006, 2007, 2010.
2 Michie 2005.
3 Bradmore 2005.
4 Watt 2007.
5 Clark 1989a, b, c, 1990a, 1994, 1995; Clark and Ryan 2005; Critchett 1990; Connor 2005a, b, 2006, 2007, 2010; Anderson 2006.

> narrative. All Clark has really achieved is the ruination of modern lives and the inflaming of dissension in a small coastal community. It is the incident he places at a locality named the Convincing Ground near Portland in Victoria. Clark's story is unfounded. After a committee of the Victorian Heritage Council heard evidence, and what appeared to be 'oral history' based on Clark's history, committee member Damien Cash, the only historian who heard the case, issued this dissenting comment which accurately sums up what has happened: 'the massacre claim was revealed a case study in the misuse of historical evidence, beginning with a series of errors made by Robinson in 1841–42, and then perpetuated through a series of unreasonable conclusions and other errors made by historians'. In this particular instance Richard Broome is involved in the mess these errors have caused, and rather than acting to set the record straight, he has contributed to Clark's misuse of sources himself adding an invented death toll of sixty people.[6]

Connor contends here that false knowledge of the massacre has led to the 'ruination of modern lives and the inflaming of dissension in a small coastal community'. On the contrary, Connor's intervention has caused irreparable grief and harm. Connor's use of vituperative language is ultimately counterproductive to the investigation of massacre where a cool head and temperate language is critical. Semelin has argued that when '[c]onducting empirical case studies on a particular massacre', the 'facts need to be reconstructed almost as if they would in a police investigation'.[7] Connor implies that historians violently disagree with the evidence. As will be shown in this article, this is a simplistic assessment that assumes that history is a one-dimensional flat terrain in which certainty can be known. Ultimately this view is counterproductive to the investigation of massacre, which is typically a difficult task as 'massacre is often carried out in secret'.[8] Bain Attwood, in a public lecture in September 2005, on the release of his book *Telling the Truth about Aboriginal History*, raised some critical issues that take us to the heart of the debate over the Convincing Ground. He asked:

> 'Whose accounts should they [the public] believe? Which of the historical narrators or history-makers should they trust? Where might the truth of this history lie? There might also be other questions they are asking too: Can we learn the truth about what happened there more than 170 years ago?'[9]

Convincing Ground: the context

George Augustus Robinson, the Chief Protector of Aborigines in Port Phillip from 1838 until early 1850, learned of the Convincing Ground in May 1841 on

6 Connor 2010: 35–36.
7 Semelin 2007: 376.
8 Semelin 2007: 376.
9 Attwood 2005b: 2.

a visit to Portland. He considered that it was a 'remarkable' place on the coast whose name originated from severe conflict between Aborigines and Europeans. Connor observes:

> On the coast outside Portland in Victoria is a locality known as Convincing Ground. *Scars in the Landscape* played a role in placing a massacre as the origin of the place name. In the writings of the Chief Protector of the Aborigines George Robinson, was an after-dinner story of violence which he embroidered on, and which was, almost 150 years later, much improved by Ian Clark and other historians. The story Robinson was told by a white settler only emerged late in the twentieth century when transcriptions of his papers were made.[10]

In this statement Connor is questioning first, the integrity of the informants; second, the situation in which the evidence was first presented, including Robinson's account; and third, my own account of the event. Let us take these issues in order. Connor questions the integrity of the people who attended the dinner and their 'after-dinner story of violence' by implying that all after dinner stories are unreliable. Connor conveniently overlooks the fact that the informants were the elite of the Portland district. Connor's view of Robinson's account is that it 'is interesting but as historical evidence it lacks clarity. Where it took place and how many people were involved is not clear. When it took place was not specified. Who, if anyone was injured is not suggested'.[11] He continues:

> Neither Blair nor Tyers had long been in Portland. Both men were offering suggestions for the origin of the place name. Here, it is important to note, Blair did not say that the fight over the whale was the basis of the place name but 'some transactions with the natives of the kind mentioned'.[12]

Connor claims that Robinson's 'story' only emerged late in the twentieth century, but on this point he is wrong as a survey of the publication of Robinson's material clearly shows.[13] Connor is using the tactic of deflection here, also known as 'furphies' or 'red herrings', to divert the reader away from considering critically important aspects of Robinson's evidence. Connor claims the incident did not become known until Robinson's journals were published in the late twentieth century. Robinson's references to the Convincing Ground were in his private journals for 1841 and 1842 and in an official report of his 1841 journey that he submitted to government in late 1842. The 1841 journal entries have been transcribed and published by Presland, and Clark, and the 1842 journal entries have been published by Clark.[14] Parts of Robinson's official report were published by Kenyon, and Learmonth, and the complete report has since been

10 Connor 2005a: 140.
11 Connor 2005a: 142.
12 Connor 2005a: 142.
13 Similar claims were made by Keith Windschuttle in his arguments against the Cape Grim massacre in Tasmania: see McFarlane 2008: 128.
14 Presland 1980; Clark 1988, 1998, 2000a.

published by Clark.[15] Kenyon published an abridged version of the official report in 1928, and although he omitted as much as 50 per cent of its content, he did reproduce Robinson's discussion of the Convincing Ground. This would suggest that Kenyon is the first known published report of the incident. Thus Connor's assertion that the 'story Robinson was told by a white settler only emerged late in the twentieth century when transcriptions of his papers were made' is clearly incorrect.

Origin of name 'Convincing Ground'

A second example of deflection used by Connor is to focus on the dispute surrounding the origin of the name 'Convincing Ground'. He implies that if the name did not exist at the time of the incident, or that it had another meaning, then the massacre could not have taken place. Analysis will show that denying the name does not deny the massacre. There are at least four explanations of the origin and meaning of the place name 'Convincing Ground' found in primary and secondary literature relating to south-west Victoria. The first explanation involves Aboriginal people and whalers in disputation and has two variants: one found in Robinson's writings from 1841 and 1842 is that the dispute was over a beached whale; the other, presented by Critchett, is that the dispute was over whalers' abuse of Aboriginal women.[16] The second explanation, which Robinson sourced from CJ Tyers in 1841, is that the name originated from whalers choosing that site to settle their disputes. It was repeated by Dunderdale and by Moorhouse.[17] A third explanation promoted by local historian JG Wiltshire in 1976 is that it originated from Major Thomas Mitchell's visit to Portland Bay during his 1836 'Australia Felix' expedition. Local historian JM MacKenzie has suggested a fourth explanation that it was a 'whalers term for his outdoor factory' where whale oil was 'tryed out of the blubber', but no other authority has supported this explanation.[18]

Dispute between Aborigines and whalers over a beached whale

George Augustus Robinson is the sole source of this explanation, based on information given to him by Edward Henty and James Blair in 1841 during a visit to Portland when he was touring the Western District of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate. Robinson was given two explanations, however he

15 Kenyon 1928; Learmonth 1934; Clark 1990b, 2001.
16 Critchett 1990.
17 Dunderdale 1973[1870]; Moorhouse 1888.
18 MacKenzie 1976: 25. Geoff Parker, in an unpublished manuscript dated 24 November 2005, has advanced the following view that in 1833 Edward Henty and Captain Liddle of the Henty owned vessel the *Thistle*, when on a visit to Portland Bay 'dug a turf from a hill overlooking the beach and carried it back to Launceston to help convince Thomas [Henty] that Portland Bay was the end of the Hentys' long quest' for land suitable for pastoral development. Thus, the 'place were the black clod of earth was removed is Edward Henty's "convincing ground"'. No other source has supported this interpretation of the origin of the place name.

believed that the explanation involving a clash over a disputed whale was the most feasible. Robinson visited Portland in May 1841, and on 16 May during a meal he shared with Charles Tyers, Daniel Primrose, Edward Henty, and James Blair, he learned the origin of the name Convincing Ground.[19] He related in his journal:

> Mr Edward Henty and Mr Blair called and spent the afternoon. We had tea and coffee, wines and dessert after dinner. Mr Henty said the Blacks at Mt Clay are a bad set and he did not think I should get a communication with them. I said I did not lay wagers but I could venture to do so in this case; that I should get to them. He related one story of their badness. He said that some time ago, I suppose two or three years, a whale broke from her moorings and went on shore. And the boats[20] went in to get it off, when they were attack by the natives who drove them off. He said the men were so enraged that they went to the head station[21] for their firearms and then returned to the whale, when the natives again attack them. And the whalers then let fly, to use his expression, right and left upon the natives. He said the natives did not go away but got behind trees and threw spears and stones. They, however, did not much molest them after that.
>
> There is a spot on the north shore, where the try[22] works are I think, which is called the 'Convincing Ground' and I was informed that it got its name from some transactions[23] with the natives of the kind mentioned, so Mr Blair said. Mr Tyers however said it was because when the whalers[24] had any disputes they went on shore and there settled it by fighting. I however think the former the most feasibly, especially after what Mr Henty himself stated.[25]

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19 Surveyor Charles Tyers arrived at Portland on 14 November 1840; Daniel Primrose was described by Robinson as clerk of the bench, sub-collector of customs and postmaster; and Edward Henty arrived at Portland on 19 November 1834. James Blair was appointed Magistrate at Portland Bay in 1840 and arrived at the Bay in October 1840 (Bride 1983: 176).

20 Connor mistranscribes this as 'boat' – it is most certainly 'boats'. Peel (1996: 24), in a discussion of whaling at Portland, has noted that a 'whaling party conventionally consisted of three boats, or four where the competition was strong'. She notes that whale boats were usually manned by five oarsmen and a headsman except when competition increased when a boat with seven or more oarsmen might be used.

21 Connor (2007: 1) comments 'the word "station" is incorrect. Robinson's writing is unclear and I suggest the word may be "flenser", so that the men went to the "head flenser" for arms. If this reading is correct, it suggests that in this whaling station guns were secured by a responsible person. It also suggests that Henty had reasonably detailed knowledge of the event'. Connor's reading is incorrect: the word is clearly 'station' – the letter he takes to be 's' is most certainly the consonant 't'. It has the t cross bar that is not found in the consonant 's'.

22 Connor (2007: 1) correctly transcribed this as 'try'; earlier transcriptions by Presland (1980) and Clark (1998, 2000a) had 'big'.

23 The manuscript reads 'transactions'. This is the only time the particle 's' is used; in all later discussions Robinson uses the singular.

24 Connor correctly transcribed this as 'whalers'; it was mistranscribed as 'whites' by Presland (1980) and Clark (1998, 2000a).

25 Robinson, Journal 16 May 1841.

The following day, Robinson added further details to his journal:

> [Blank] miles from Double Corner is Messrs Hentys' fishery. This spot where the buildings are is called the Convincing Ground, see note for Sunday and Monday. It is stated that the natives fought the whalers. Now, the cause of this fight, if such an unequal contest can be so designated, firearms [are] certain death against spears, was occasioned by the whalers going to get the whalebone[26] from the fish, when the natives, not knowing their intentions and supposing they intended to take away the fish which the natives considered theirs and which it had been for 1000 of years previous, they of course resisted the aggression on the part of the white men.[27] It was the first year of the fishery,[28] and the whalers having used their guns beat them off and hence called the spot the Convincing Ground. That was because they convinced them of their mistake and which, but for their firearms, they perhaps could not have done.[29]

Connor's commentary on this entry is that:

> Robinson has expanded on the whale incident. He offered no sources for the new information or suppositions he was adding to the original story. … The original 'aggression' in Henty's story had been on the part of the Aborigines, Robinson now transferred that to the whalers. If the Aborigines in Henty's story were from the local area, though they may not have been, they would have known that the whalers were only after part of the whale. 'It was the first year of the fishery' may be an invention on the part of Robinson and is little help in dating the incident for it is uncertain what fishery he was referring to.[30]

Connor reveals here that he is an eisegete, in that he dismisses or ignores parts of the evidence that do not suit his argument. Connor assumes that the Aboriginal people would have known that all they had to do was wait till the whalers had finished with the beached whale and it would have been theirs without interruption (*a la* Mitchell's 1836 account of the sagacity of the Aborigines in waiting for discarded whale carcass). Yet, that assumes that the Aborigines had previously seen whalers flensing beached whale, and this might well be the

26 Whalebone is also known as baleen.

27 See Clarke 2001. Mark Staniforth (2008: 126) has commented that 'Groups of Indigenous people in Australia had utilised beached (or stranded) whales as a food source long before permanent European settlement in 1788 and whale strandings were occasions for feasting'. Especially, since whale meat was a rich source of protein for Aboriginal groups (Staniforth 2008: 130). Anderson (2006: 137) has noted that archaeological evidence in the Portland area demonstrates Aboriginal use of coastal areas and occupation for at least 12,000 years.

28 Edward Henty landed in Portland Bay on 19 November 1834 (Learmonth 1970: 3). William Dutton settled permanently in Portland Bay in 1828, and settled at Double Corner in 1829. Presland (1980) mistranscribed this sentence as 'It was the first guns of the fishery'. This subsequently misled research by Critchett (1990) and Clark (1995). The sentence was transcribed correctly by Clark (1998, 2000a).

29 Robinson, Journal 17 May 1841 in Clark 2000a: 208.

30 Connor 2005a: 145.

point of the Convincing Ground incident: that because it occurred in the first year of the fishery it might have involved the first clash over a beached whale that had been harpooned. Hence the importance for the whalers of making a stand and convincing the Aborigines that they no longer had free access to beached whales. Connor's comment that Robinson might have invented the sentence about it being the first year of the fishery is implausible, and so can be dismissed as empty eisegesis. Connor contests the integrity of Robinson as a source of information, yet he was the most experienced massacre investigator in Australia at the time. He had investigated massacres of Aboriginal people in Tasmania in the early 1830s and his accumulated knowledge of how massacres happened had given him great insights into their investigation.

In his official report of his 1841 journey into western Victoria, Robinson discussed the incident in the following terms:

> Among the remarkable places on the coast, is the 'Convincing Ground', originating in a severe conflict which took place a few years previous between the Aborigines and Whalers on which occasion a large number of the former were slain. The circumstances are that a whale had come on shore and the Natives who feed on the carcase claimed it was their own. The whalers said they would 'convince them' and had recourse to firearms. On this spot a fishery is now established.[31]

Major TL Mitchell and his exploration party arrived in Portland Bay in August 1836, and although Mitchell's journal does not specifically mention the Convincing Ground as either a place or an incident, on 30 August 1836 he does discuss interactions between whalers and Aboriginal people that are very reminiscent of the account told to Robinson in 1841:

> I understood it frequently happened, that several parties of fishermen, left by different whaling vessels, would engage in the pursuit of the same whale, and that in the struggle for possession, the whale would occasionally escape from them all and run ashore, in which case it is of little value to whalers, as the removal, &c, would be too tedious, and they in such cases carry away part of the head matter only. The natives never approach these whales, nor had they ever shewn themselves to the white people of Portland Bay; but as they have taken to eat the cast-away whales, it is their custom to send up a column of smoke when a whale appears in the bay, and the fishers understand the signal. This affords an instance of the sagacity of the natives, for they must have reflected, that by thus giving timely notice, a greater number will become competitors for the whale, and that consequently there will be a better chance of the whale running ashore, in which case a share must fall finally to them.

31 Clark 1990b: 108; 2001: 21.

> The fishers whom I saw were fine able fellows; and with their large ships and courageous struggles with the whales, they must seem terrible men of the sea to the natives.[32]

An entry in Francis Henty's journal for this period notes that he rode with brother Edward and Mitchell 'to the convincing ground with him [ie Mitchell] when we parted'.[33] This could well explain the similarity between Mitchell's narrative and the later one given to Robinson – they both derive from Henty. Another observation to make on Mitchell's comment is that the reluctance of Aboriginal people in 1836 to approach beached whales that had escaped from whaling crews along with their contentment with eating cast-away whales is consistent with them having been taught a lesson that they were not to try to take beached whale but to wait their turn. Thus it is plausible that the Convincing Ground incident had already occurred and that Mitchell was describing the post-incident reality.[34]

Aboriginal harvesting of beached whale is supported by local squatter Thomas Browne, who argues that the Aboriginal people on and near the south-western coast of Victoria

'had been for untold generations accustomed to a dietary scale of exceptional liberality. The climate was temperate; the forests abounded in game; wild fowl at certain seasons were plentiful; while the sea supplied them with fish of all sorts and sizes, from a whale (stranded) to a whitebait'.[35]

It is also confirmed by an article in the *Portland Guardian* of 13 July 1844. The newspaper reported that Aborigines were attracted to 'putrid carcasses of 2 or 3 whales near double corner after regaling themselves on the savory morsel which drew them from their ordinary haunts and employment to Portland. … Portland residents had not for two years witnessed such a large gallery of Aborigines and many visited their encampment and were confounded to see them profess to cook, and actually devour the filth which the whale carcass of the time rapidly decomposing, afforded them'.

When Robinson camped at Double Corner on 14 May 1841, 'from the general report of the settlers I was induced to suppose that the majority of the natives would be congregated at Portland Bay as the whaling season had commenced, and they would go there in quest of cun.der.bul, whales'. Robinson considered the congregation of large numbers at Portland Bay would be opportune for

32 Mitchell 1996: 242–243.

33 Peel 1996: 163.

34 Of course another observation is that Mitchell's account lacks substance. Parker (2005) has suggested that the known practice of shore-based whaling – that of deliberately beaching whales for processing by tonguers – contradicts Mitchell's account. However, Parker's qualification is only sound if the whales are beached reasonably close to the try-works as any distance would make it difficult to carry strips of blubber to the nearest rendering plant. Mann (1839: 242) refers to the practice at Portland: 'A few years ago they had seventeen whales killed and dragged ashore at one time'.

35 Boldrewood 1969: 40. Browne was at Squattleseamere station on the Eumeralla River south of Macarthur from 1844 until 1862.

he could procure supplies more easily for a large party at the bay than if they were inland as he would have to cart them at much expense. However, once in Portland, he learned from Edward Henty that 'the blacks had not visited the settlement at the bay for some years and the blacks at Mt Clay and between the first and second rivers are a wild set and will not allow white persons to come to them'.[36] At his first meeting with Blair, the police magistrate, Robinson noted: 'Mr Blair has had no communication with the natives and only knows what has been told him'.[37] Further on he noted: 'There have been no natives seen at Portland for the [blank] years. Indeed, they never visit the town and the Mount Clay natives will not allow any person to go near them'.[38] Again, this avoidance of Portland by the Mt Clay people supports the contention that things were not right at Portland.

Connor is of the view that a 'serious contemporary argument against the massacre story is the behaviour of the Aborigines' during Robinson's visit to the Portland district in May 1841. He claims that: 'Travelling to a camp closer to Double Corner they showed absolutely no fear of crossing the Convincing Ground site, or of the whalers'.[39] In fact Robinson and his attendants had a difficult time in keeping the Aborigines and the whalers apart.[40] The young whalers they encountered, both at the Convincing Ground and in the bush, tried hard to attract the attention of the Aboriginal women. This is Connor's third example of deflection. He is arguing that the massacre could never have happened because the Aboriginal people did not avoid the Convincing Ground during Robinson's visit in May 1841. Connor reveals his superficial understanding of the operation of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate, in that he does not understand Robinson's *modus operandi* when he travelled in the early years of the protectorate with the intention of meeting Aboriginal people. Nor does he comprehend the affection and respect that Aboriginal groups conferred on Robinson. They were as keen to meet with him as he was with them. The reason for their willingness to travel to Double Corner was to meet with Robinson and to receive the gifts and food they were promised, as can be seen in the description above. Robinson left Melbourne with two European assistants who were attached to the protectorate's central office in Melbourne, and Pevay, one of several Aboriginal Tasmanians in Robinson's care. As they travelled through the Western District, Robinson recruited local Aboriginal people to travel with him as guides and envoys, and as facilitators of meetings with other Aboriginal people. When he arrived at Portland, Robinson was accompanied by a large entourage of Aboriginal people.[41] Robinson travelled with as much fanfare as he could orchestrate; he wanted to impress upon the Aboriginal people of western Victoria that he was their Chief Protector, and that

36 Robinson, Journal 15 May 1841 in Clark 2000a: 202.
37 Robinson, Journal 15 May 1841 in Clark 2000a: 202.
38 Robinson, Journal 16 May 1841 in Clark 2000a: 206.
39 Connor 2007: 2.
40 Connor is obfuscating here, another well-known tactic of massacre deniers. In fact, Robinson had trouble keeping the whalers from the Aborigines, not *vice versa*. Connor is seeking to subvert the historical context.
41 See Robinson, Journal 28 May 1841 in Clark 2000a: 226.

he had many gifts and supplies to distribute. He also wished to gather as much intelligence about them as he could about their language, social groupings, customs, demography, and so forth.

Robinson's visit was a significant event – significant enough that it saw the Kart gundidj and other clan remnants living with them willingly break their apparent prohibition against visiting Portland. Thus, Robinson's visit to Portland and his meeting with the local Aboriginal people represented a fundamental repositioning of their relationship with local Europeans as their apparent avoidance of Portland appears to have ended with Robinson's visit. This was confirmed with striking effect on 2 June 1841, less than a fortnight after Robinson had left Portland to continue his tour of the Western District of the Aboriginal protectorate. On that day, Police Magistrate James Blair sent a letter to Superintendent La Trobe:

> A messenger has just arrived from the Convincing Ground with the intelligence that upwards of 200 Blacks have assembled there & the whalers are in consequence obliged to remain on shore, being in momentary expec- of an attack on their huts.[42]

The dispute with whalers was over Aboriginal women

Jan Critchett has argued that there is another explanation of the conflict between whalers and Aboriginal people: that on 23 March 1842, MacDonald, the headsman at Captain Alexander Campbell's station on the Merri River near Port Fairy told Robinson 'some whalers had got among or with the N- [Native] women', and that this was the cause of the Convincing Ground dispute.[43] However not only has Critchett mistranscribed Robinson's journal entry, she has misunderstood its context. Robinson's entry is as follows:

> It was 8 or 9 years ago the collision between the whalers & blacks took place at the Convincing Ground. MacDonald, the headman, said some got among or with the native women.[44]

On this day Robinson met with 30 Aboriginal men and women from seven Dhauwurdwurrung clans. Presumably these people discussed the Convincing Ground massacre or it was raised by MacDonald or Campbell. With the correct transcription, MacDonald may not be claiming a different cause of the Convincing Ground massacre, but simply stating that some of the whalers were having sex with Aboriginal women. The greatest flaw with Critchett's argument is that when Robinson came to finalise and submit his official report of his

42 Blair 2 June 1841 in VPRS 10. This was not the only time conflict ensued after Robinson had visited a locality and met with local Aboriginal people. James Kirby (1895: 52) at Piangil on the Murray River near Swan Hill considered Robinson's visit to the station in 1846 was the cause of conflict that ensued between Aboriginal people and the Beveridge family.

43 Critchett 1990.

44 Robinson, Journal 23 March 1842 in Clark 2000a, 2: 48.

1841 journey, which he completed and submitted after his March 1842 sortie to Port Fairy, he did not change his description of the Convincing Ground: the narrative continued to be around conflict over a beached whale, not over access to Aboriginal women. Robinson was never afraid to comment on and be critical of the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women, so it is unlikely that he would be coy here. Thus the two sentences are not connected and the cause of the dispute remains contested ownership of a beached whale.

Connor makes much of the 1842 report: 'Robinson's last reference to the Convincing Ground appears in his official report which was not written until October 1842 – some 17 months after he had visited Portland'.[45] He is critical that the 'text has sometimes been given out of chronological order by historians' and in his article and chapter he places it in the correct order. Connor makes much of this chronology, but ultimately it is a deflection that when examined in greater detail does more harm than good to Connor's case. That the official report was in all likelihood finalised after Robinson's 1842 visit to the Port Fairy district strengthens the Convincing Ground case and weakens Connor's argument dramatically. The report was submitted to government on 7 October 1842, the date of its accession. Robinson returned to Melbourne from his five month Western District expedition in August 1841 and promised La Trobe 'a full report of my proceedings I shall do myself the honour to transmit for the information of the Government'.[46] Robinson took 14 months to submit the report. We cannot be certain when the final report was written, but if we accept that it was written after Robinson's March 1842 Port Fairy visit, then the consistency between Robinson's official report and his 1841 journal entries confirms that Critchett's and Connor's arguments that there is another explanation for the conflict between the whalers and Aborigines have little credibility.

Another problem with the two sentences in Robinson's 23 March 1842 journal entry is that they may not be related to one another. Connor observes that in my 1995 publication I seem to be:

> separating the two sentences so that the first is taken to be a reference to the fight over the whale and the second no more than an irrelevant general comment about whalers and women. When Clark told the story in *Scars in the Landscape*, he did not print the two sentences or even mention MacDonald.[47]

Connor is correct: this was a deliberate separation. In Robinson's journal his narrative for that particular day is interrupted by two pages of jottings. On the first page was the sentence that: 'It was 8 or 9 years ago the collision between the whalers & blacks took place at the Convincing Ground'; and on the second page, the sentence: 'MacDonald, the headman, said some got among or with the native women'. While Connor quite rightly went to the primary source and

45 Connor 2007: 3.
46 Robinson, VPRS 10 Item 41/1207 in Clark 1990b: 99.
47 Connor 2005a: 149.

consulted Robinson's 1841 manuscript, he should also have gone to Robinson's 1842 manuscript where he would have seen that they are not in all likelihood connected, and this would have made sense of the Convincing Ground entry in my 1995 publication. Nevertheless, even if they are related, the argument that MacDonald is proffering a new explanation for the Convincing Ground incident is flawed.

A place where whalers settled their own disputes

When Robinson was told about the Convincing Ground place name he was given a second explanation by surveyor CJ Tyers. He said that the name emerged because 'when the whalers had any disputes they went on shore and there settled it by fighting'.[48] Surveyor Tyers had been in the Portland district since November 1840. Of the two explanations given to him, Robinson considered Blair's explanation relating to a contest over a beached whale to be the more feasible, especially after what Henty had told him.

There are two nineteenth-century published references to the Convincing Ground. The first from George Dunderdale gave the following explanation of the name: 'the Convincing Ground, which was so-called because the whalers used to go down there to fight, and convince one another who was the best man'.[49] The second reference is found in a March 1888 address entitled 'Victoria' given by Dr James Moorhouse, the Right Rev the Lord Bishop of Manchester, which he delivered to members of the Manchester Geographical Society, and subsequently published in the Society's journal:[50]

> At last, however, two gentlemen called Henty went from Tasmania and landed at Portland. They set up an establishment, which was partly a grazing establishment and partly a fishing establishment. They catch whales there, which is, perhaps, something you did not know. This was one of the employments of the persons engaged by these Hentys. I may tell you, in passing, that it was difficult to keep order in those early days. The people were not lawless, but they were rough. And when the partners got any persons to enter their service they were apt to affirm their own independence and there was no way of reducing them to subjection and of keeping order in the little settlement but by appointing one of the partners to [be] the representative of physical force. There was a certain field, which was called the "Convincing Ground", and if any man thought he was a better man than the master, Mr Henty would say "Come to the Convincing Ground". Thither they would go, take off their

48 Robinson, Journal 16 May 1841.
49 Dunderdale 1973[1870]: 40.
50 Connor makes no reference to this source.

> coats, and try who was the better man of the two. For the most part Mr Henty thrashed his man, but if a man thrashed Mr Henty he was dismissed.[51]

This is an extraordinary discussion in that it places the Henty brothers as central participants in the explanation of the Convincing Ground as a site where intra-whaler disputes were settled. Indeed, Moorhouse is not stating that this is a place where whalers *per se* settled their disputes, but where the Henty brothers settled their disputes with their employees, who may or may not have been whalers. Thus it was a site where employer-employee disputes were resolved. Moorhouse came to Victoria where he was installed in early 1877 as the second Anglican Bishop of Melbourne, and left Victoria in March 1886 to become the Bishop of Manchester.[52] How could Moorhouse have known this intimate detail? Who was his source? Did he visit Portland during his bishopric? We learn from Moorhouse's biography that each year he would set out on visitation tours that would last several months at a time.[53] However Sturrock, in her recent discussion of Moorhouse in the field, implied that he concentrated his visits on Gippsland, north-east Victoria, and the goldfields, and does not give any indication that he visited the Portland district.[54] We know from Edward Henty's obituary[55] that the Hentys were Anglican. Indeed, Sturrock confirms that the Henty family in Melbourne were actively involved at St Stephen's Richmond,[56] so we can assert with some certainty that Moorhouse knew the Hentys personally. What do we make of Moorhouse's statement? Presumably it came from either Edward or Frank Henty or one of their children. Is it perhaps the boasting of an old man in his later years overstating his physical prowess during the early years of Portland's settlement trying to impress his listener with a crude system of employer-employee dispute resolution? Does it tell us anything about the origin of the place name or does it simply provide us with a variant description of the use of the site by the Hentys?

Connor argues that Robinson got it wrong, and considers that of the accounts given to Robinson, those of Blair and Tyers:

> Tyers's suggestion was possibly more feasible, for 'convincing ground' was a phrase with definite and known meanings in the nineteenth century. In the Australian National Dictionary a convincing ground is defined as a place where prize or grudge fights were held. Illustrating usage, the dictionary gave examples ranging from an 1830 Sydney newspaper to a 1951 Australian novel. In 1898 George Dunderdale, in *The Book of the Bush*, wrote that Portland's Convincing Ground 'was so-called because the whalers used to go down there to fight, and convince one another who was the best man'. Dunderdale would not have read

51 Moorhouse 1888: 40.
52 Badger 1974.
53 Rickards 1920: 104; Serle 1949.
54 Sturrock 2005.
55 *The Argus*, 15 August 1887.
56 Sturrock 2005: 17.

> Robinson's journal and would not have known that this was the origin for the place name suggested much earlier by Tyers – he may only have been repeating what everyone in the nineteenth century took for granted.[57]

Connor is citing from the second edition of Dunderdale's work, and has not indicated that it was first published in 1870 by Ward, Lock & Co, of London. He also fails to mention that Dunderdale arrived in Victoria in 1853 and never lived in the Portland district. When he arrived in Victoria, he joined the central goldfields, and within four years had settled at Colac where he commenced his first appointment in the government service. In 1869 he left western Victoria for public service in south Gippsland, from where he published *The Book of the Bush*. He published very detailed accounts of early colonial life in Victoria, some of it of events that took place before he arrived in the colony. How could he know this detail? How did he come across these 'truthful sketches'? Walsh and Hooton consider Dunderdale's stories and sketches 'consist of historical narratives or fictional reconstructions of Australian history, dealing with the more colourful aspects of topics such as discovery and exploration, pioneering in Gippsland, convicts, shipwrecks, whaling, sealers and swagmen'.[58] It is possible that Dunderdale knew Tyers and received information directly from him,[59] so Tyers may be the source of the Convincing Ground gloss that he presents. Connor seems to put aside the textual criticism he applies to Robinson and his informant Blair and then fails to apply it to Dunderdale. As a result, he blindly accepts Dunderdale's explanation of the convincing ground because Dunderdale was 'repeating what everyone in the nineteenth century took for granted'. Once again, Connor is being misleading and selective of nineteenth-century references to convincing grounds. It is possible that Tyers and Dunderdale were simply guessing the origin of the Convincing Ground place name by applying their understanding of its use in other contexts in Australia.

Connor makes the following comment on the validity of Tyers' gloss on the toponym: 'Tyers suggested it was a place where the whalers went to settle their disputes. This is a completely feasible suggestion. Convincing Ground was a common term for such a place and has been used in this sense in other parts of Australia'.[60] A search of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Australian newspapers and publications confirms that 'convincing ground' was indeed a term in common use. However, its application is not as simple or as exclusive as suggested by Connor. A brief sortie through the literature confirms that the use of the term 'convincing ground' is not confined to the definition given by Partridge and Beale as 'The site for a grudge fight'.[61] Its use in early Sydney was as the place where convicts were hanged,[62] and in Brisbane in 1830 it referred

57 Connor 2005a: 142.
58 Walsh and Hooton 1998: 70.
59 Dunderdale 1973[1870]: 265.
60 Connor 2007: 1.
61 Partridge and Beale 2002: 250.
62 Anonymous 2004: 21.

to a place of punishment of prisoners,[63] of convincing those being punished of the error of their ways. It is often used to refer to the space or ground or arena where a contest is settled, hence its common usage to refer to sporting contests such as pigeon shooting at Green Ponds in Tasmania,[64] horse racing,[65] skiff racing,[66] a ploughing competition in Longford, Tasmania,[67] boxing matches,[68] trials at agricultural shows,[69] shooting matches at Ballarat,[70] as well as the polling booth for a parliamentary byelection in Brisbane.[71] Edmund Finn described a Grand Stand serving as a convincing ground for a contortion contest known as 'collar grinning', that was held on the first public race day in Victoria on 6 March 1838 on Batman's Hill.[72] The venue for Melbourne's first duel between Peter Snodgrass and William Ryrie in 1840, 'a grassy common on the verge of the swamp northwardly adjoining Batman's Hill', was also referred to as 'the convincing ground'.[73]

In these examples the use of the term 'convincing ground' implies overcoming, vanquishing, and winning a contest, whether it be a sporting contest or a political contest. This understanding is consistent with Blair's explanation that the place name 'Convincing Ground' near Portland owes its origin to a dispute between whalers and Aborigines over a beached whale. The whalers named it Convincing Ground because it was where they had overcome and vanquished their Aboriginal opponents in the contest over a beached whale and they had shown the Aborigines the error of their ways. This is what toponymists refer to as an 'incident name' commemorating an event.[74] But equally, its use in contemporary literature is consistent with Tyers' explanation that it originated with whalers settling their disputes by fighting. Thus both explanations have credibility when compared with other vernacular uses of the term 'convincing ground'.

One of the curious things about Tyers' explanation is the fact that other than the Dunderdale reference and the address by Bishop Moorhouse, it is not possible to find any other contemporary reference to the Convincing Ground near Portland as a place where whalers settled their disputes. Henty's writings, for example,

63 Evans 2007: 40.
64 *Hobarton Mercury*, 12 July 1854.
65 *The Courier*, 12 April 1844; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 May 1849; *The Argus*, 31 October 1855; Wheelwright 1861: 237.
66 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 December 1865.
67 *The Mercury*, 8 October 1861.
68 *The Argus*, 5 January 1909.
69 *The Argus*, 1 December 1871.
70 *The Argus*, 15 July 1862.
71 *The Courier*, 17 December 1862.
72 aka Garryowen 1888: 713.
73 Garryowen 1888: 777. It is also possible to find another instance of 'convincing ground' surviving in a local place name. In New South Wales there is a Convincing Ground Road at Karangi near Coffs Harbour. According to GE England (n.d.) the history of this place name is as follows: 'In the village at the Beacon Mines the 400 inhabitants appointed a committee to keep order in the little community. All arguments had to be settled on Sunday morning at 10 o'clock on a cleared space called the Convincing Ground'.
74 Hodges 2007: 398.

do not discuss whalers going to the Convincing Ground to settle disputes, which is striking given Moorhouse has situated the Hentys as central to the Convincing Ground narrative. This must weaken the claim that its origin stems from a series of convincing events in which whalers went to this place to settle their grievances.

There are two toponymic possibilities not considered by Connor. The first is that the toponym 'convincing ground' may be polysemic in its vernacular usage in nineteenth and early twentieth century Australasia, that is, that it is a toponym with multiple, related meanings, as seen in the variant meanings chronicled above. The second is that the 'convincing ground' toponym at Allestree may be an onomastic palimpsest, representing accumulated iterations, glosses or etymologies laid one over the other, literally the accumulation and reinforcement of toponymic ideas over time. It is common to find place names with contested histories – a careful reading of any place names dictionary will reveal many examples. It is plausible that the dispute over possession of the beached whale predated and preempted the use of the site as a convincing ground in Tyers' sense, where the whalers elected to settle their own disputes, that is, that it became the ground where the whalers chose to settle disputes between themselves, as they had earlier with the Aborigines. Thus it is possible that both explanations are not mutually exclusive, and may both have integrity, yet Connor does not countenance this possibility.

Origin of name: Mitchell's 1836 *Australia Felix* expedition

In the third explanation which is posited by local Portland historian JG Wiltshire,[75] and repeated by Wright,[76] the name is held to have originated with Major Thomas Mitchell's *Australia Felix* 1836 exploration party, who, at that point on the coast on 30 August 1836, was convinced that 'the shapes which I thought were rocks were indeed whalers' huts'.[77] However, the major problem with this explanation is that the place name existed before Mitchell's visit. The earliest reference to the Convincing Ground locality is an entry in Edward Henty's diary dated 17 September 1835, where he noted that he 'walked to Convincing Ground'.[78] This reference proves that the explanation that the name originates from Mitchell is erroneous. I was one of the first to note the shortcomings of Wiltshire's explanation, yet it is still promulgated by some sources such as Wright.[79]

So we have three accounts of the origin of the 'Convincing Ground' toponym: Blair's account that it related to a particular conflict between Aboriginal people and whalers over a beached whale; Tyers' account that it originated from the settlement of disputes between whalers; and Wiltshire's version that it is connected with the explorer, Mitchell's, 1836 visit to Portland.

75 Wiltshire 1976.
76 Wright 2003.
77 Wiltshire 1976: 26.
78 Peel 1996: 89.
79 Clark 1990; Wright 2003: 39.

In discussing the shortcomings of 'historical realism',[80] Attwood has noted that the lack of hard documentation in academic accounts for an alleged killing 'does not necessarily mean that the violence that their accounts point towards did not occur. (A lack of hard evidence does not mean the absence of a violent event)'.[81] Attwood promotes another approach 'reading the signs' as offering new potential to understand the past. He writes:

> As such, the task of the historian is not simply one of extracting information or quarrying facts from historical sources in order to reveal some reality. (Reading the signs regards this approach as necessary and crucial for historical research, but not as sufficient). Instead, the role of the historian is also one of discerning meaning in historical texts by attending to their creative dimension in order to suggest what the reality might have been. In this, historians contend that much in historical sources *points* to the real rather than *reflecting* it.[82]

Robinson was adept at reading the signs when he met both Aboriginal people and Europeans on the frontier. He read such contextual evidence as the fractured Aboriginal demography on the Portland coast, and the inter-cultural interaction he witnessed at Portland and its hinterland, especially the views he received from Henty, Blair, and Lilley, as supporting Blair's explanation of the origin of the Convincing Ground place name. All this points to this toponymic explanation as the most likely.

Evidence for violence between Aboriginal people and whalers in Portland Bay

Corris has noted that the 'sealers and whalers who began to visit the southwest coast early in the nineteenth century left little evidence of their activities there', and observed that evidence of their relations with Aborigines is hard to find.[83] He observed that local squatter Thomas Browne aka Rolf Boldrewood 'hinted at more violent and passionate contacts between whalers such as "Port Fairy

80 Attwood (2005a: 161) understands this as the view of some historians 'that the frontier could be known by adopting conventional scientific methods', by assuming 'that historical truth would be realised by doing large amounts of research and sifting through the so-called historical record for historical facts (which they regarded as "hard historical evidence"). They asserted that their interpretations were grounded in the historical sources and historical facts, and they provided accounts in which they amassed examples and detail as documentary proof of the story they told'.

81 Attwood 2005a: 162. This latter point is worth reinforcing. Many early colonists such as Niel Black (Journal 9 December 1839), GT Lloyd (1862), and Henry Meyrick (correspondence 30 April 1846) confirm that violence against Aboriginal people and Aboriginal deaths were widespread in early Victoria. Meyrick's letter reveals an unwillingness to detail this violence and suggests that there existed in colonial Victoria an attitude of silence that preserved the anonymity of those involved and made detection extremely difficult. Connor fails to discuss this silence.

82 Attwood 2005a: 163.

83 Corris 1968: 52.

Campbell and his merry men", and the Aborigines, but he gave no details'.[84] In March 1836, John Wedge in a letter to John Montagu, the Colonial Secretary of Van Diemen's Land, referred to an attack on Aboriginal people in Westernport Bay by a party of whalers who were employed to strip bark. Captain Hart brought Charles Griffiths' party of whalers from Portland at the end of the 1834 season to Western Port to strip wattle-bark in an effort to keep them in employment and prevent them from being employed by an opposition fishing party.[85] Wedge discussed attacks on Aborigines at Portland, in the following words:

> About a year and a half ago a similar attack was made upon the natives and four of their women were taken from them. It is to be lamented like outrages have been committed upon the Aborigines at Portland Bay and other whaling stations, and unless some measures be adopted to protect the natives, a spirit of hostility will be created against the whites, which in all probability will lead to a state of warfare between them and the Aborigines, which will only terminate when the black man will cease to exist.[86]

In 1839, a Launceston doctor, GC Collier wrote to the Colonial Secretary in Sydney of an alleged massacre of Aboriginal people in Portland Bay by ex-convict servants of the Henty family. Governor Gipps directed Police Magistrate Captain Foster Fyans to investigate the allegations. Of the men at Portland, Henty reported 'from the appearance of the men about the place, I conclude they are a bad lot of ruffians[87] – quite independent … every fellow appears the Master and no doubt numerous bad, and improper acts, have been committed and hid from us'.[88] Fyans recommended that a Police Magistrate and three constables and three mounted policemen be appointed 'which would be the means of … keeping the community in decent order for if allowed to go on in their present state – I fear all will not end well'.[89] Fyans noted of the Aborigines in the Portland district in 1839: 'About 30 miles from this [Portland] towards Port Fairy, the natives are numerous and to all appearance in great agitation on our appearance, which to me fully proves of bad acts being committed on them'.[90] Police Magistrate James Blair once he had taken his position at Portland 'certainly found the men unruly. He described the Portland population as composed of the "very dregs of society". "The majority of the people here", he wrote in late 1840, "are men who had absconded from whaling gangs and the lawless lives they have led … render a much stronger force necessary to subdue them"'.[91]

In all the correspondence from Collier, Fyans' report, and in the depositions taken from the Henty brothers, there is no reference made to the Convincing Ground.

84 Corris 1968: 52.
85 Powling 1980: 14.
86 JH Wedge to John Montagu, 15 March 1836 in Jones 1981: 35.
87 Jones (1981: 252) transcribes this as 'they are a sad set of ruffians'.
88 Bassett 1954: 446.
89 Bassett 1954: 446.
90 Jones 1981: 254.
91 Critchett 1990: 120–121.

Edward Henty deposed that since his arrival on 19 November 1834, until October 1838, 'we were on the most friendly terms with the natives'.[92] Stephen Henty gave Fyans the 'Journal of everything which has taken place at this establishment since November 1834, and to the best of my belief, every occurrence which has taken place has been entered in the books now produced and delivered to you'.[93] Stephen Henty, in his 1854 letter to La Trobe does not mention the Convincing Ground, but he does assert that during 1835, 'we were entirely dependent upon ourselves, both for supplies from Van Diemen's Land and for protection against the natives and the many runaway prisoners who were at large at and around the whaling establishment'.[94] The implications here are that the Hentys and their men were not involved in the Convincing Ground incident and/or that it occurred before they arrived in November 1834. Learmonth has observed that it 'was not until after two months' residence that any natives appear to have been seen near Henty's settlement; the sealers and whalers of former years had no doubt driven the aborigines back from the locality'.[95]

Who was involved?

It is likely that the whalers who disputed ownership of the beached whale were 'tonguers'. Tonguers 'were those who contracted to tow the whale carcasses ashore and to cut them up and who received in payment the oil from the dissected carcass, including the tongue and interior parts'.[96] The violence levelled at Edward Henty by his whaling men during a dispute over pay in April 1835, when Henty intimated he was going to cut a beached whale with help from other employees, adds credibility to the massacre account.[97] If the whalers were willing to threaten Henty with violence, how much more violent would they have been willing to be toward Aboriginal people over possession of a disputed whale?

In terms of the Aboriginal people involved, it is presumed that those involved were local clanspeople – three clans in Portland and its surrounds have been reconstructed: the Kilkarer gundidj of the Convincing Ground and the Ngure gundidj and Borne gundidj from the vicinity of Portland.[98] In 1841 Robinson learned that the Kilkarer gundidj clan that belonged to the Convincing Ground had been reduced to two young men: Pollikeunnuc and Yarereryarerer. He

92 Cannon 1983: 631.
93 Cannon 1983: 633.
94 Bride 1983: 123f.
95 Learmonth 1934: 103. In the 1845 Report from the NSW Select Committee on the Condition of the Aborigines, James Malcolm, a settler at Merriang, north of Melbourne, since 1836 (see Billis and Kenyon 1974: 110), replied to the question 'to what extent the blacks have suffered loss of life from the whites?', that 'I have heard that some blacks have been killed in the district; but this has not been the case with us, so much as it is said to have been in the Portland Bay District' (New South Wales 1845: 15).
96 Bassett 1954: 310.
97 Peel 1996: 61.
98 Clark 1990.

also noted that the remnant of these clans had united with the Kart gundidj of Mount Clay, where they remained.[99] The western end of the Mount Clay range is within 13 kilometres of Portland.[100] This demographic information is consistent with the Aboriginal origin of the Convincing Ground name and attests to some intervention in their decline. It is also consistent with Wedge's correspondence that 'outrages have been committed upon the Aborigines at Portland Bay and other whaling stations'.[101] It underscores that introduced disease can not plausibly account for this demographic decline, as it is unlikely that three contiguous coastal groups would be practically defunct by 1841, yet an inland group only 13 kilometres away would be some 158 strong. This demographic contrast was noted by Wiltshire when he observed that by the 1830s there were very few Aboriginal people belonging to Portland remaining, however not far inland, 'there were quite a number of natives living their normal lives'.[102]

Robinson also learned that Aboriginal people had not visited the Portland township since its formation. The entries in Robinson's journal and report are as follows:

> [Edward Henty] Said the blacks had not visited the settlement at the bay for some years and the blacks at Mount Clay and between the first and second rivers are a wild set and will not allow white persons to come to them. (In this they are wise).[103]
>
> There have been no natives seen at Portland for the [blank] years. Indeed, they never visit the town and the Mount Clay natives will not allow any person to go near them.[104]
>
> [George Lilley, merchant, auctioneer and commission agent] said a black had not been seen in the town for some years. He thought all was not right.[105]
>
> No natives were seen in the township or vicinage since its formation and the nearest were those of Mount Clay, twenty miles east but too wild it was said to communicate with.[106]

This is a significant point for in other settlements in the Port Phillip district, such as Melbourne and Geelong, Aboriginal presence was a major issue and protectorate officials were under constant pressure from colonial authorities to discourage Aboriginal people in townships.[107] The extraordinary absence of Aboriginal people from the Portland township and the existence of a remnant

99 Robinson, Journal 19–20 May 1841 in Clark 2000a.
100 Bonwick 1970: 91.
101 Wedge's 1836 in Jones 1981: 35.
102 Wiltshire 1975: 10.
103 Robinson, Journal 15 May 1841 in Clark 2000a: 202.
104 Robinson, Journal 16 May 1841 in Clark 2000a: 206.
105 Robinson, Journal 21 May 1841 in Clark 2000a: 217.
106 Robinson 1842 report in Clark 2001: 21.
107 Cannon 1993: 66f.

from the three clans local to Portland also supports the thesis that relations between the whalers and local Aboriginal people at Portland were poor.[108] Another observation that requires some explanation is that until Robinson's visit in 1841, Aboriginal people had kept away from the whaling stations in Portland Bay. This is contrary to the situation in South Australia where whaling stations attracted large numbers of Aboriginal people.[109] Aboriginal avoidance of Portland and its whale fisheries attests to a violent past, and supports the likelihood that a massacre took place.

How many Aboriginal people were killed?

In terms of the Convincing Ground incident and the number of Aboriginal deaths, Robinson noted the following in his journal:

> My acquaintence with the natives is not so intimate as to ascertain the extent of the injuries to which they have been subjected but it has not been of the best description as the admission of E. Henty and others of the attack made in consequence of the whale will shew. There is only two of the tribe who once inhabited the country at the Convincing Ground now alive (see vocabulary), and only one old man who belonged to the tribe once belonging to the country where the township of Portland now is.[110]

In his official report of his 1841 journey, Robinson reported that 'a large number of the former [ie Aborigines] were slain'.[111]

Connor is right to be concerned with the estimates of the death toll of the massacre. Some of them are extrapolations based on estimates of typical Aboriginal clan sizes in south-west Victoria. However there are potentially so many depopulation variables at play (such as European violence, introduced disease, infertility caused by venereal disease) that any death count for this massacre can only be speculative. The most explicit comment from Robinson was that a large number of Aborigines were slain. This is supported by the depopulation he noted of the three clans in the immediate neighbourhood of the Convincing Ground locality.

Robinson made the following entries concerning the specific demography of the Kilkarer gundidj belonging to the Convincing Ground locality:

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108 Connor (2005a: 144) asserts that I have 'misrepresented' these entries. I agree with Conner that my assertions that there was a Kart gundidj embargo on visits to the township (see Clark 1990: 33; 1995: 22) is a misreading of 'will not allow any person to go near them'. However, Connor's interpretation of the significance of the absence of Aboriginal people in Portland since its formation is similarly flawed. There are four distinct references to this avoidance and Connor (2005: 144) only alludes to the first two. Arkley's (2000: 177) reading of these texts is consistent with my reading, that is, that Aboriginal people had been absent from Portland for several years.

109 See Clarke 2001: 29.

110 Robinson, Journal in Clark 2000a: 216.

111 Clark 2001: 21.

> Yare.rer.yare.rer.mer.nite, 18, and Pol.like.un.nuc, 18, the wild young man who was troublesome to me, are Kil.care.rer conedeet, country between Surrey and Double Corner. These two are all that are left of that tribe, so they stated.[112]
>
> There is only two of the tribe who once inhabited the country at the Convincing Ground now alive (see vocabulary), and only one old man who belonged to the tribe once belonging to the country where the township of Portland now is.[113]

In his papers of vocabulary notes and jottings that he took while in the field, Robinson lists six Kilkarer conedeet:

- Yam.bur.rer
- Pone.gare.rer.min
- Pol.like.en.nuc
- Pone.gare.rer.min
- Car.cur.rer.cort
- Um.ber.rer.boorn.[114]

However there are inconsistencies between this and a list of 'Cart conedeet', where at least three of these names are recorded as 'Cart conedeet': 1. Yarm. bar.rer; 2. Poeng.gar.rer.min; 3. Poenk.ar.rer.min.[115] Assuming Robinson's larger Kilkarer gundidj list is in error, this leaves four Kilkarer gundidj, the two young men Yarereryarerermite and Polikeunnuc and another two: Carcurrercort and Umberrerboorn. It is possible that Robinson's field notes were wrong and he corrected them when he wrote his journal entries. However, it is important to note that when he wrote his official report of his 1841 journey he did not amend his journal observation that there were only two Kilkarer gundidj men living. In his official report of the 1841 journey, Robinson presented the following: 'of the once powerful Kil-care-er, who inhabited the country between Portland and the Surry River, two young men, Pol-like-un-nuc and Yare-rer-yare-rer, survive'.

Writing on Kilkarer gundidj demography, Critchett notes that there were six Kilcarer 'survivors' near Portland in 1841.[116] Connor is also aware of the larger figure in Robinson's papers and asserts: 'Although this [the claim that there are only two left of this group] has been generally accepted by historians it is incorrect'.[117] Clearly Critchett and Connor did not examine the various census lists with any care, for had they done so they would have been aware of the discrepancies identified above. Connor makes much of the different estimates

112 Robinson, Journal 19 May 1841 in Clark 2000a: 213.
113 Robinson, Journal 20 May 1841 in Clark 2000a: 216.
114 Clark 2000b: 111.
115 Robinson papers Clark 2000b: 112.
116 Critchett 1990: 78.
117 Connor 2005a: 145.

of the death toll, yet given the careful analysis of the demographic information available to us, we will never know the precise numbers of Aboriginal people killed in this massacre. This is the case with most mass killings.

When did the massacre occur?

In my reconstructions I have considered that the massacre took place in 1833–34.[118] Critchett concurs with this timeframe.[119] There are four references in Robinson's writings that mention when the event may have taken place:

- 'two or three years ago'.[120] Robinson is guessing here, and if the incident is the source of the place name, then his guess is obviously incorrect, as primary sources show the name was in common usage in 1835, which is something Robinson would not have been privileged to know as he was not a local.
- 'It was the first year of the fishery, and the whalers having used their guns beat them off and hence called the spot the Convincing Ground'.[121] If the origin of the place name is tied to the conflict over a beached whale, and as the name was in usage by 27 October 1835, then it had to be before October 1835.
- 'It was 8 or 9 years ago the collision between the whalers & blacks took place at the Convincing Ground'.[122] The source of this statement is unclear. It could be the whaler Captain Alexander Campbell, or MacDonald, a headsman, presumably in the employ of Campbell, or an unidentified Aboriginal source.
- 'severe conflict which took place a few years previous'.[123]

In 1841 Robinson was told by Henty and Blair that the event occurred in the first year of the fishery at Double Corner. However, given Wedge's October 1835 account that there were three whaling establishments at Double Corner, it is unclear as to which fishery Robinson is alluding to. The Henty brothers established their fishery during the 1835 whaling season,[124] and although this is the year in which Edward Henty first began to use the place name, later correspondence between the Henty brothers and colonial authorities never mentioned the Convincing Ground in any discussion of conflict with Aboriginal people. Therefore, the year 1835 is unlikely as there is no reference to the confrontation in any of the writings of the Henty brothers for that year. Presumably, then it occurred prior to Edward Henty's arrival in November 1834, which means that the reference to the first year of the fishery, must be

118 Clark 1989: 16; 1990: 63; 1995.
119 Critchett 1990: 121–122.
120 Robinson, Journal 16 May 1841 in Clark 2000a: 205.
121 Robinson, Journal 17 May 1841 in Clark 2000a: 208.
122 Robinson, Journal 23 March 1842 in Clark 2000a vol 2: 48.
123 Robinson 1841 Report in Clark 2001: 21.
124 Peel 1996.

to another fishery, presumably William Dutton's. The third reference dates the massacre occurring in either 1833 or 1834, and this temporal reference is the most plausible, as this period falls within the first year of Dutton's fishery from March 1833 to March 1834,[125] thus there is a synchronicity between Robinson's second and third references.

Connor asserts that one of the fundamental problems with the dating of the Convincing Ground incident as being in the whaling season of 1833/34 is that 'Clark undermines his own case. For at that time, Edward Henty, whose story is our only source for the incident, had not even arrived at Portland'.[126] Yet it is curious that Connor does not apply this same concern to Tyers or Dunderdale, neither of whom were present at the genesis of the Convincing Ground toponym. He is happy to accept them as sources, even though Tyers had not arrived until late 1840 and Dunderdale had not arrived in Victoria until 1853.

Conclusion

In 2005, Connor presented a case study in which he assessed the historiography of the Convincing Ground. He concluded: 'On the presently available evidence there probably was a fight between Aborigines and whalers over a carcass of a whale at Portland but it was probably not at Convincing Ground and probably Convincing Ground was not named because of a massacre. A possibility is that the whale in Henty's story broke free and ended up beached at or near Double Corner, not at the Convincing Ground, and the fight took place there'.[127] According to Anderson, by focussing 'on anomalies in dates, transcription errors[128] and descriptions of events by various people as recorded by George Augustus Robinson and subsequently analysed by academic historian Ian Clark', Connor 'seeks to support his broader agenda that academic historians have manipulated sources to present incorrect evidence, and bad history'.[129] Anderson's assessment of Connor's critique of the historiography of the Convincing Ground is that 'on the balance of "probabilities" Connor fails to achieve his goal of undermining Robinson's credibility as the sole official source and Clark's subsequent analysis, though he does raise legitimate concerns about the work of later researchers and cultural heritage consultants, who have arrived at their own conclusions with no basis in the historical facts available'.[130] Anderson further comments

125 Wiltshire 1975: 16.
126 Connor 2005a: 149.
127 Connor 2005a: 133–134.
128 It is interesting to note that when the Heritage Council of Victoria registered the Convincing Ground on the Victorian Heritage Register, it commented: 'The submissions to the Committee contain numerous discussions about the differences in transcription of Robinson's journals. ... The Committee has reviewed these, and concludes that given the difficult nature of the original documents, transcription errors are unsurprising, and that most of the possible differences in transcriptions raised at the Hearing are of little consequence in determining the cultural heritage significance of this place' (Buckley et al 2006: 13 in Anderson 2006: 139).
129 Anderson 2006: 139.
130 Anderson 2006: 139.

that Connor's claim that the 'good news is that the [massacre] probably never happened' is 'sensationalised' and 'unsupported' by Connor's own research.[131] Warden has noted that '[o]ne of the more instructive outcomes of the history wars has been the reminder, painful for some, that getting one's facts and footnotes right is a duty rather than a virtue. … The recent *battle of the facts and the footnotes* has inflated and exaggerated simple errors into gross moral failing. What was once pedantry in criticism has been newly fashioned as a flail against the *fabricators*'.[132]

This study has shown that Connor's research into the usage of the phrase 'convincing ground' in the nineteenth century has been superficial. Likewise, his analysis of publications that discuss the specific Convincing Ground toponym near Portland has been inadequate. He failed to refer to Dunderdale's first edition and was unaware of Moorhouse's Manchester address. Although Connor has attempted to deny that the Convincing Ground massacre took place, his tactics of massacre denial have failed. He has employed methods of exegesis and report discounting to dismiss evidence that does not suit his argument; he has used the tactic of deflection; deliberately obfuscated the evidence; contested the integrity of the informants and the situation in which the evidence was first presented; challenged the integrity of GA Robinson; questioned the different estimates of the death toll; and focused on minor anomalies in dates and mistranscriptions as evidence of 'bad history'. The actual date of the massacre is uncertain, and we may never know the numbers of Aboriginal people killed. However the evidence that it took place is overwhelming.

Connor's wider research also has been found wanting. His preference for one explanation of the origin of the Convincing Ground toponym over the other is biased and his examination of other uses of the term 'convincing ground' is superficial and inadequate. His analysis suggests his position was predetermined. He avoided consideration of the implications of three factors: the demographic decline of the Aboriginal clans in the vicinity of Portland; Aboriginal avoidance of Portland; and independent confirmation that relations between the whalers and Aboriginal people at Portland Bay were violent. When taken together these factors support the narrative that the Convincing Ground toponym has its origin in a dispute between whalers and Aborigines over a beached whale. Furthermore, Connor fails to consider the possibility that the phrase 'convincing ground' is polysemous which means that we should not expect to find a singular homogenous explanation or application in the literature. He also fails to discuss the real possiblity that the toponym may be a palimpsest and that both the Aboriginal-whaler dispute narrative and the intra-whaler dispute narrative may be legitimate explanations relevant at particular moments in the place's history.

131 Anderson 2006: 141.
132 Warden 2006: 6 (itals in original).

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Special section:
Indigenous Australian and Asian histories

Introduction

Peta Stephenson and Christine Choo

In 1981 *Aboriginal History* published a special issue on Aboriginal-Asian contact history. It comprised articles by scholars 'with knowledge of Aboriginal culture and history' on aspects of Aboriginal-Asian relations in Australia. In 2011 we offer a small selection of new work that builds on scholarship in this field over the last 30 years. (The richness and diversity of scholarship produced over three decades is reflected in the Select Bibliography appended to this Introduction.)

To introduce the four articles included in this Special Section it is, we believe, worth revisiting some of the articles published in 1981, partly to acknowledge their groundbreaking significance, and partly to appreciate the continuities and differences between scholarship then and now. Before 1981, studies of Aboriginal-Asian contact had been confined to specific groups and areas (see Berndt and Berndt 1954; Macknight 1976; Warner 1931–32, 1969). The 1981 volume was remarkable for bringing these perspectives together and recognising them as evidence of a much larger and continuing pattern of inter-cultural exchange.

Still, some biases are obvious and were noted at the time. In his introduction to the 1981 volume, James Urry acknowledged that while the articles covered all the major 'Asian' groups that Aborigines had encountered, which he listed as Indonesian peoples in northern Australia, Chinese and Japanese in northern Queensland, and Afghans in central Australia, there were no studies from Western Australia. This is a curious oversight given Western Australia's rich history of Aboriginal-Asian contact. Absence of coverage may have been due to a lack of information, and this lack may have reflected a proto-nationalist determination at that time to narrate Western Australia's history as one of unilateral progress. At any rate it is striking that, apart from a brief mention of Asian people's presence in Western Australia in articles by Ian Crawford and Neville Green, no discussion of the Asian presence or Aboriginal-Asian exchange occurs in *A New History of Western Australia* edited by CT Stannage, which was also published in 1981. This said, we acknowledge that neither the 1981 articles in *Aboriginal History*, nor those published here, achieve a comprehensive regional coverage. Our point is merely that the omission of one third of Australia's landmass is notable.

Another distinguishing feature is that the majority of the contributors to the 1981 issue were anthropologists with ethno-linguistic expertise; in this current collection historians working with the archival record predominate. In 1981, Luise Hercus reported 'Afghan' first contact stories told to her by two Arabana speakers and two Wanganuru speakers; Christopher Anderson relied on Norman Mitchell,

a Kuku-Yalanji descendant, for information about Chinese-Aboriginal contact in North Queensland, while Peter Austen transcribed two stories, shocking as well as amusing, about Afghan male interactions with Indigenous women related to him by Diyari speaker Ben Murray. For these scholars, evidence of Aboriginal-Asian contact had emerged in the course of pursuing other enquiries; it was a side-effect of collecting life stories that were originally valued because they were vehicles of preserving threatened Indigenous languages.

That the primary focus of these writers lay elsewhere had two consequences. One was an astonishingly rich historical contextualisation of the personal stories presented; the other, though, was a relative absence of textual interpretation. On the whole, the testimonies are taken at face value and the language in which they are framed, and the subject positions this implies, remain largely uninterrogated. The reconstruction of the life of artist Tommy McCrae by Cooper and Urry remains an exemplary introduction to the social, economic and legislative disadvantage that one Aboriginal person experienced in nineteenth-century Australia. But its focus is historical rather than biographical. The proposition that McCrae's cartoon 'Aborigines chasing Chinese' did *not* represent anything he had ever witnessed surely suggests the figure of the trickster or fabulator, the same stereotype applied in other popular contexts to the opium-smoking 'Chinaman'. Likewise, Ben Murray's anecdote of an Afghan man exposing himself to an Aboriginal girl surely demands explanation, whether this is to be pathological, cultural or political. The 1981 essays presented a range of visual and oral materials that raised complex issues about subjectivity, but on the whole the authors chose not to develop these.

Athol Chase's study of Japanese influence at Lockhart River is exemplary in another way: it captures in great detail the social, cultural and economic worlds of two 'subject' groups under colonialism. Chase concludes speculatively that the 'multi-ethnic experience' might have strengthened 'local Aboriginal identity to resist later attack'. However, this exception reinforces our general point that the 1981 contributors were primarily concerned with Aboriginal life stories. What has happened since, though, is the progressive reframing of such personal testimonies in narrative and interpretive frameworks derived from a range of disciplines concerned with probing questions of identity. It has also become apparent that the subjectivities of the 'subaltern' communities involved in inter- and cross-cultural exchange are far more variable and complex than earlier historiographies allowed.

The more exhaustive enquiries into personal lives reflected in the articles presented here, as well as in the work of many of the scholars listed in our bibliography, aim at expanding biographical knowledge, but they also insist on the historical construction of these lives. What the 1981 scholars documented in such a groundbreaking way was, it turns out, only the tip of an historical iceberg of environmentally, socially and politically framed *relationships* that new interpretative perspectives from the broad fold of cultural studies has articulated.

The four articles included in this section were chosen from a broad range of offerings in response to our call for papers. They offer fresh perspectives on Indigenous Australian relations with Makassans (Campbell Macknight), Chinese (Victoria Haskins), Filipinos (Anna Shnukal) and Indonesians (Julia Martínez). In a retrospective piece that reflects on his unparalleled contribution to Australian scholarship of the trepang industry, Macknight urges an inversion of geographical perspective. In making this call, Macknight helps incidentally to illuminate the importance of the accompanying articles by Shnukal, Martínez and Haskins. Macknight's reading of the Makassan trade as an encounter with (Indigenous) Australians relocates Australia's north coast on the edge of an eastern 'Mediterranean'. It is instructive to think of the Chinese, Filipino and Indonesian men, albeit few in number, whose life journeys traverse the coastal settlements of Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland in the same way. Instead of appearing as isolated – and proportionally insignificant in terms of the national story – these people are seen to belong to an economic diaspora whose sources are in metropolitan seagoing regions to the north.

Although hitherto little explored, it is likely that this cheap Asian labour was as important to the 'opening up' of Australia's northern and western coasts as the annexation of unpaid Indigenous labour was in occupying Australia's interior. Within this inverted perspective, ethnic and cultural minorities which have been historically and historiographically disparaged as inferior – a racist judgement that underwrites the discriminatory legislation that Shnukal, Martínez and Haskins document in moving detail – prove to be vigorous exponents of a mercantilism at home throughout the archipelago, and more than competitive with their white peers when it came to the organisation of labour, capital and transport. This is a point that the letter written by Charles Gore to Searcy, the Sub-collector of Customs for the South Australian administration in 1903 (reproduced in Macknight's article), eloquently illustrates.

The articles by Shnukal, Martínez and Haskins document similar experiences of legislatively-enshrined racial discrimination from three different ethnic standpoints. It may reasonably be asked what is gained – apart from an intrinsically valuable expanded historical database – from the rehearsal of the history of Indigenous Australian-Asian discrimination along (respectively) Filipino, Indonesian and Chinese lines. Although subtle discriminations occurred in the politics of race in northern Australia, so that Chinese might stand slightly higher in the scale of humanity than Filipinos and Indonesians, the real value of these articles is to extract from the official records the lineaments of exemplary life stories – exemplary because, although numerically few, the characters whose struggles with discriminatory legislation are painstakingly narrated here, experienced the full impact of policies whose practical implications were diffused, and even imperceptible, in other parts of the community.

The Quan Sing affair (Haskins), the story of Santiago Remidio's attempt to marry Nazareth Ansey (Shnukal), and the parallel cases of frustrated intermarriage in the Torres Strait Islands (Martínez), illustrate the attempts of a Commonwealth government to engineer the present and future, socially and economically. But

perhaps their methodological interest resides in the determination of the authors to extract from the official records the historical subjectivities of those involved. This is a necessary procedure where subalterns only speak, as it were, through the enactment of the legislation ranged against them. The bias of court records is obvious: pronouncing as unnatural the desire to contract legal unions, they stigmatise the most normal of activities as monstrous.

Shnukal's study repositions the clash with classifications as an episode within a much longer history of Filipino-Aboriginal encounter, mutual accommodation and 'naturalisation'. In this expanded temporal perspective, it is the white legislation and its executives who seem the 'outsiders'. Martínez, similarly, 'celebrates the endurance of families who survived the dual burdens of immigration restrictions and the so-called protection of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Acts', adding geographical breadth to Shnukal's historical depth. Haskins' account of the extraordinary persistence of Quan Sing and his Australian-born daughter Yuanho Quan Sing to assert their rights to employ Aborigines suggests that in time this family had, against its own will, to define itself oppositionally against a raft of discriminatory laws consolidating its entrepreneurial identity. All three scholars show how life stories can be deduced from the friction with unjust laws when these laws are themselves relativised and placed in the context of perennial human needs for sustenance, security and succour.

Macknight discloses something more: the necessary evolution of the historian in relation to the subject matter. Graduating from archaeology to human geography, and via both to an immersive, almost radical empiricism able to incorporate his personal experience into the sifting of historical probabilities, Macknight shows how the strictest attention to the facts can, and should, coexist with an educated historical sympathy. This tacit alignment with, and respect for, the absences in the historical record is not evidence of any lack of rigour. On the contrary, a vigilant human empathy acts as a stimulant to scour often meagre records ever more patiently. The buried testimonies recovered here have a symbolic significance in understanding the vicissitudes of modern nation building that far outweighs their number. They retrieve pre-colonial and colonial relationships that place white settler narratives of Australia's social development in a wider perspective. In the process they challenge the ideological foreclosures and sometimes methodological timidity of mainstream nationalist histories.

In framing this introduction we are grateful to Professor Paul Carter for his assistance.

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The view from Marege': Australian knowledge of Makassar and the impact of the trepang industry across two centuries

Campbell Macknight

When Matthew Flinders and Robert Brown met the trepanging fleet from Makassar off north-eastern Arnhem Land in 1803 and interviewed Pobassoo, its 'old Commander', they asked a very well-informed question; according to Brown, 'They [that is, the trepangers] denied having any of their celebrated Poison wch they call Ippo, on board'.[1] Given the long and complicated history of the European understanding of this poison, it is not clear how Flinders and Brown picked up the common association of 'ippo', or more usually in Malay 'upas', with Makassar.[2] The significance of the question in this discussion, however, is that it demonstrates how these British observers of the trepang industry in northern Australia were able to place the trepangers within a known context. Neither Flinders nor Brown had ever visited Makassar – or would in the future, but they knew this detail about the world of South Sulawesi and the Indonesian archipelago more generally. It is a useful point from which to begin a survey of the changing attitudes of those who saw this industry in action, before turning to the outlook of those who have studied it subsequently.

Almost everyone who has written about the trepangers has been concerned to describe the nature and consequences of the interactions between these visitors and local Aboriginal people. Indeed, for most anthropologists and historians of Aboriginal societies their interest in the industry relates directly to the question of assessing the impact of this external contact on Aboriginal Australia and the response, especially in Arnhem Land. The effects of such interactions have been studied across many fields, but particularly in language, art, music, religion, health and economic life, and the memory of the industry is still strong. Yet, as we shall see, just as one cannot understand the historical sources without understanding the changing times at which they were written, so one needs to take account of the outlook and limited knowledge of later scholars in their accounts of the industry and its impact.

1 Brown journal, 18 February 1803, British Museum (Natural History). See also Flinders 1814, 2: 230; Brown 2001: 373.

2 See the seven pages of discussion and quotation in Yule and Burnell 1903: 952–959. From the form of the word used by Brown, I suspect he knew it from Rumphius.

A narrowing focus

Three points need to be made about the general context within which Europeans made observations of trepangers and the trepanging industry up to about 1850. Firstly, there was much in common between the world of the observers and that of the trepangers. Most obviously, all the Europeans, such as Flinders, but also the British military and others at early British settlements, depended upon and were intimately familiar with the operation of sailing vessels, as were the trepangers. The praus seen by Flinders were somewhat smaller than the *Investigator*, but they depended on the same basic technology. Similarly, other aspects of technology, especially guns, and of social and economic organisation were not widely divergent.

Secondly, the territorial claims of the various imperial powers were far less assertive in the first half of the nineteenth century than they became towards the end of the century. Flinders and King in their meetings with the trepanging fleets were beyond even the formal boundaries of New South Wales.[3] Admittedly, the western boundary of the British claim was moved in 1824 to cover the settlement of Raffles Bay, and thus all of the coast regularly visited by praus coming around the eastern end of Timor, and the remainder of the continent, including the Kimberley coast, was claimed in 1829 to cover the Swan River settlement, but there was little desire for exclusive control, even had that been possible. Conversely, in Makassar, although the praus seem to come from the area under the direct control of the Dutch East India Company in the eighteenth century – and later the Dutch colonial government, with a brief British interlude – the reality of Dutch power was rather more relaxed. Trepang was never a trade item of interest to the Dutch Company itself, though the trade in trepang, like that in all items, was recorded by the Dutch, as we shall see. Trepang was one of those items which the Company was content to leave to locally-sponsored production and independent trade with China, and the same applied to the successor governments in the nineteenth century. There was, however, much interest in the prospect of other trade between north Australia and the eastern parts of the archipelago. This motive lay behind the foundation of the Raffles Bay settlement, though nothing much came of it. One European vessel, probably the *Heroine* from the Port Essington settlement, is even recorded in the Makassar harbour records as bringing a few goods from 'Nieuw Holland or Marege' in 1842, and there was much coming and going from Port Essington with other closer islands.[4]

Thirdly, the Enlightenment view of non-Europeans persisted on the ground – or perhaps even more aptly, on the deck – long into the nineteenth century and decades after the tide of intellectual thought had moved into a concern with ranking and hierarchy. This earlier view was concerned to compare peoples and societies, rather than to place them on a ladder of development with, towards

3 Gammage 1981.
4 Spillett 1972: 85; Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, Jakarta, Arsip Makasar, 354.4.

the end of the nineteenth century, clear evolutionary implications.[5] If the 'other' was merely different, not lesser or lower, then there was the possibility of mutual learning. Flinders and Brown on board the trepanging prau in 1803 exemplify this attitude: they seek information of all kinds; they accept Pobassoo's warning to be careful of Aboriginal people; having discovered that the praus come from Makassar, they are happy to reply in turn that they come from Port Jackson and then to record the version of this name written in what were, to them, unfamiliar characters.[6] There is a strong mutuality in this exchange. Another example of this open, comparativist view can be seen in the attitude of Collet Barker at Raffles Bay in 1828 and 1829. On 17 May 1829, just before a group of praus returned to Makassar, Barker and a group of prau captains sat down together and compared notes on maps, but this was merely the final interview in what had been nearly two months of fairly constant and friendly dealing between Barker and prau captains and their crews.[7] Ten years later, George Windsor Earl, the best informed of all nineteenth-century British observers of the trepangers from his extensive experience in the archipelago, was still hearing from one of the captains Barker had met about the respect in which Barker had been held. Earl himself displays much the same open-minded curiosity about others and sympathy with the fate of individuals.[8]

Much of this general context changed as the nineteenth century wore on and, for our interests in the coast of northern Australia, a date of about 1850 provides a useful hinge. There were important differences between the attitudes of the earlier British hydrographers and those condemned to endure the tedium of the early settlements, on the one hand, and, on the other, the outlook of those South Australians associated with giving some reality to South Australia's possession of its Northern Territory from 1863 onwards.

There is an instructive contrast between Barker's accounts of his attempts to mediate between aggrieved trepangers and local Aborigines and Alfred Searcy's exuberant narrative of his handling of a similar situation at Melville Bay in 1884. Barker records the arrival on 2 April 1829 of a 'very small' prau which was 'in want of everything'. It had come from just around the corner in Bowen Strait where the Aborigines had taken some rice.

> One of the first things they asked was permission to proceed with a party into the country to punish [the Aborigines]. This of course I did not accede to, telling [the captain] that as we were on friendly terms with them, I could not allow any hostilities to take place from this settlement. That

5 The significance of this change in European understanding of other societies has only recently become apparent in relation to Australia, though it has a long and complex history more generally. See Macknight 2008b. In appreciating the importance of this change, I am much indebted to Carroll 2005 in particular.

6 Flinders 1814, 2: 232. Brown (2001: 373) omits the actual characters, but they are there in the original manuscript. Cense (1952: 250) seems to have been the first modern scholar to have been able to read them.

7 Mulvaney and Green 1992: 134–168.

8 Earl 1846: 56. See also Mulvaney and Green 1992: 151 for Bapa Padu.

> had he landed in the Straits I should not have interfered, but added that I should not approve of his acting even there in the manner he proposed against the blacks of our neighbourhood, who we were endeavouring to bring into some order.[9]

On 13 May, Barker had actually to intervene in person to prevent a party of trepangers attempting to take Aboriginal hostages to obtain the return of some stolen canoes.[10]

Searcy, the Sub-collector of Customs for the South Australian administration in Darwin, had hired a steamer – admittedly not a very large or comfortable one – for a voyage along the Arnhem Land coast to investigate whether some trepanging praus had by-passed the new arrangements for paying Customs duties and purchasing fishing licences. On 29 March 1884 in Melville Bay in north-eastern Arnhem Land, he found two praus; one had paid up, the other had not. '[The captain's] excuse I considered fairly good, so fined him only £10, which sum, with the dues, he paid up in gold.' Searcy also met 'a very fine, tall, well-made nigger' called Cadado.

> The masters of the proas came aboard while Cadado was there, and complained that as soon as the rice was cooked for their men, the black captain and his followers took it. I talked to Cadado, and told him that if he interfered with the Malays, white men would come and growl. I also informed the Malays that in a measure they must defend themselves, but that if they used any unnecessary violence they would be punished. Cadado promised never to steal again. He must have had a relapse, however, for not long afterwards the Malays killed him. The Malays told me that they were not frightened of the natives, but were afraid that the whites would punish them if they interfered with the blacks. I did not believe this at the time, but it seemed as if it were a fact.[11]

The essential point of the British intervention in both cases is the same: both Barker and Searcy urge the trepangers not to resort to violence. But notice the differences. Searcy has a steamer, not a sailing vessel, and, as he makes clear elsewhere, 'I always used a Martini-Henry carbine when after big game.'[12] There was no shortage of the latest ordnance aboard his steamer. Moreover he has no hesitation in applying the requirement to pay the imposts of the colonial administration of the Northern Territory – and himself fixing an arbitrary penalty for avoidance! This is a clear assertion of effective territorial control. Lastly, he assumes that it is the European who is in a position to 'growl' and to punish either side of the dispute. There is no room to doubt the superior power of British justice.

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9 Mulvaney and Green 1992: 140.

10 Mulvaney and Green 1992: 165.

11 Searcy 1907: 94–96. See also Macknight 1976: 110–111; Correspondence received in the office of the Minister controlling the Northern Territory, State Records of South Australia [hereafter SRSA] GRS 1 1884/445.

12 Searcy 1907: 63.

There are other differences too. Barker, who was 44 at the time of these events, came from an educated background in England and had served in Sicily, Italy, Portugal, Spain, France, Canada and Ireland, before arriving in the Australian colonies.[13] Searcy, who was only 30 at this stage of his career, had grown up in Adelaide and had not yet left South Australia other than on his voyage to Darwin.[14] Yet what is most remarkable about Searcy is his capacity to transcend the grosser limits of his background; he has the imagination to realise that some others at least see the world differently. Many lacked such imagination.

They also lacked the benefit of Searcy's official position. The following letter, written on 30 March 1903 almost exactly a century after Flinders and Brown interviewed Pobassoo and about 20 years after Searcy was in Melville Bay, shows in its jumble of tangled syntax, prejudice and special pleading just how far the attitudes of some people on the ground – and with different interests – had changed. Copies of the letter were sent to various South Australian Government officials.

> Sir,
>
> I am trying to make a living down the Coast fishing and preserving 'Beche de Mer' commonly called 'Trepang' but find that on account of the Malay Proas being allowed to come over here yearly, it has such a debasing effect on the natives that a whiteman cannot get them to work.
>
> The law prohibits us from giving the natives intoxicating liquors but the Malays are able to supply them with a great quantity, and so the blacks will not work unless they get a certain amount, and so we are only able to make a bare living.
>
> Another thing is the Malays spread the venereal decease [sic] all along the Coast and shortly after the 'Proas' come it[']s no uncommon thing to see five or six men and women in a camp rotten. I saw three die on C[r]oker Island last year, and young women too.
>
> I am given to understand that the duty collected from the Malays only amount to about £300, and it takes all that to pay the expenses of collecting, and the said 'Proas' take away yearly between 4 & 5 thousand pounds in fish, Turtle-Shell and Pearls.
>
> Again, they are under the Dutch Flag, and are allowed to build houses and in fact live ashore for six months of the year in Australia, but if we should wish to go over say to the 'Auru' or Key Island, we are prohibited from fishing within (3 leagues') not three miles, and if only wanting wood and water, and go on shore for the same, we if [we are] caught stand a good show of losing our boat and plant. (Hardly fair — is it.)

13 Mulvaney and Green 1992: 3–26.
14 Macknight 1988.

> The general opinion of all of us that are trying to make a living down the Coast is that if the Malays were stopped from coming, that the Whites and Natives would benefit greatly and the industry would grow very shortly into a big sourse [sic] of revenue to the N. T. but we cannot compete against the Malays whose Grog and Rice costs so very little in Maccassar [sic] …
>
> Charles E. Gore[15]

In the event, the government obtained more balanced and reliable information so that nothing in particular came of the charges in this and similar letters.[16]

A striking feature of the attitudes displayed in this letter is the emphasis on the territorial integrity of Australia, along with a recognition that the Dutch imperial power insists on a reciprocal claim. Both territories are seen as subject to the oversight and control of their respective governments. We should also note the depersonalised categories used: 'Malays', 'natives' or 'blacks', and even 'whitemen'. There is no sign that our letter-writer knows the name of any individual 'Malay' or 'native' as Searcy or Barker so clearly did. Nor is there any doubt about the priority of the various interests to be considered. Even if the 'natives' are to be protected from intoxication and disease, it is only so that they may supply more labour to 'white' enterprise. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, we can see in the letter the assumption that all initiative lies with the writer and his kind, aided where necessary by the power of his government. If only the 'Malay' trepangers can be prohibited from coming by government regulation, then 'all of us that are trying to make a living down the Coast' will be free to develop the industry.

In the end, it was this final argument that led to the effective prohibition of the trepanging voyages from Makassar to the Northern Territory coast in 1906, but it was a complicated affair and a hollow victory for local enterprise.[17]

This review of the attitudes of contemporary observers of the trepanging industry in Australia reveals a gradual narrowing of sympathies over a period of about 100 years following Flinders' account. This is not just the result of the change in the intellectual climate from an earlier Enlightenment outlook to the Social Darwinism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, but even more importantly, a constriction of focus and a decline in knowledge. By contrast, in the century since then, a broadening of approaches to the study of the trepanging industry and ever wider sympathies among its students have gradually become apparent. These developments have affected the ways in which the impact of the industry, that is the interactions of the trepangers with local people and the long-term consequences of such interactions, has been understood.

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15 Correspondence received in the office of the Minister controlling the Northern Territory, SRSA GRS 1, 1903/461. See also the very similar letter in SRSA GRS 1, 1903/438.

16 The wider context of these letters and their reception is described in Macknight 1976: 121.

17 For a detailed discussion of these events, see Macknight 1976: 122–126.

Widening views

The first major ethnographic research in the area visited by the trepangers, that is along the coast from the Cobourg Peninsula to the bottom of the Gulf of Carpentaria, was conducted by Norman Tindale on Groote Eylandt in 1921 and 1922. This was, in a sense, accidental since Tindale's primary motive for the trip had been to collect entomological specimens for the South Australian Museum, though he had also made some preparations for ethnographic research, at least as it applied to working with Aboriginal people. Once in the field, however, he could not fail to record the abundant evidence of the former industry. A measure of his unfamiliarity with the origins of the trepangers can be seen in a research note from 1922; working with an informant, Rupert, a Nungubuyu man,

> I asked him if the word 'sail' 'tumbula' of Ingura [Tindale's term for the main language spoken on Groote Eylandt] is Malay. Rupert says it is also the Macassar word, the Malay word being again different. If other words substantiate this one can fix the origin of the Malay traders who came here & are said yet to ocassionally [sic] trespass along the coast.[18]

In his published list of words 'probably all of foreign origin', he notes some possible Malay sources, but admits that the items in the list 'have not been compared with Macassar or Bugi vocabularies, in which the sources of some will probably be found'.[19]

Today we should admire the typical precision of Tindale's observations rather than note his lack of access to sources on the finer points of linguistic and cultural divisions in the Indonesian archipelago. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the word 'Malay' continued to be the most common term to describe the trepangers and reference was made only to the Malay language for linguistic comparisons. This is well demonstrated in Jennison's excellent article from 1927 which draws on linguistic material from South Goulburn Island and from Elcho Island.[20] More famous is Warner's discussion of cultural influences based on his fieldwork at Milingimbi between 1927 and 1929.[21] Warner uses the term 'Malay' consistently throughout his work. Thomson who worked extensively in eastern Arnhem Land in the late 1930s, but was publishing in the 1940s, is highly inconsistent in his usage of 'Macassar', 'Malay' and now 'Indonesian', though he thought that the trepangers brought a 'virile culture'.[22]

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18 Quoted in Walter 1988: 66. This thesis provides an extended discussion of Tindale's work on Groote Eylandt and in many other places. Rupert's information is correct; the regular Makassar word is *sombala'*, which derives ultimately from Sanskrit, while the usual Malay/Indonesian word is *layar*. In relation to the suggestion that trepangers were still trespassing, it is most unlikely that this was so. Tindale knew little of the history of the industry.

19 Tindale 1925–28: 132.

20 Jennison 1927.

21 This was first published as an article (Warner 1932), but the material has also appeared in the various editions of his great book, *A Black Civilization*. On Warner, see also Hamby 2008.

22 For example, see the use of these terms in Thomson 1949: 82–94, but similar casualness is also apparent in his other publications from the 1940s.

It would be unfair to criticise researchers such as those just mentioned for not looking more closely at the trepangers themselves. After all, the central focus of these anthropologists was Aboriginal society. The work was also being done in Australia where, at that time, any investigation of the background in the Indonesian archipelago would have required access to scholarly – and linguistic – resources not readily available. One remarkable exception to this lack of interest is Tindale's reference to the Dutch publication of late sixteenth-century drawings to illustrate sails and vessel shapes similar to those known on Groote Eylandt.[23]

The situation is more complex with the work of Ronald and Catherine Berndt who conducted their research in various locations along the Arnhem Land coast between 1946 and 1951, with many later visits as well. They recorded an extraordinary body of ethnographic data, much of which they published with exemplary dispatch. Perhaps it was just this desire for speedy publication that meant that there is often some lack of analysis in their writing. Although there is reference to the trepangers and their influence on Aboriginal societies in many of the Berndts' multifarious books and articles, the most sustained account is to be found in their book, *Arnhem Land: Its History and Its People*, which was published in Melbourne in 1954.[24] This is a treasure trove of information of all kinds: the published literature, archival sources from the South Australian records, and direct testimony from local informants. Whereas Tindale and Warner had been content to note that many men had travelled back to Makassar with the trepangers, the Berndts provide the detailed account of Charley Djaladjari with the names of many localities and words for specific items.[25] For anyone familiar with Makassar, many details are instantly recognisable. For example, among the islands near Makassar listed by Djaladjari is 'Djamaluna island with its gardens and large water tanks.'[26] Samalona is a small coral cay, about seven kilometres off the coast directly in front of Makassar. Its main use these days is for recreation and there are no gardens, but tanks are still needed for water.

The Berndts are largely responsible for introducing four elements into the study of the trepangers which have, ultimately, proved unhelpful. The first is the word 'Macassan'. This term appears to have been first used in an article published in 1947, but deriving from their fieldwork in 1945 before they went to Arnhem Land. They write, 'Before white settlement, Chinese, Malayan, Javanese and Macassan traders in search of trepang, béche-de-mer, dugong oil, cowries,

23 See Tindale 1925–28: 132. The reference is to GP Rouffaer and JW Ijzerman (eds), *De Eerste Schipvaart de Nederlanders naar Oost-Indië onder Cornelis de Houtman 1595–1597* (Linschoten Vereeniging VII), Martinus Nijhoff, 's-Gravenhage, 1915, pl. 27–28. The second plate does indeed show a vessel from South Sulawesi with a large rectangular sail among others seen by the Dutch along the north coast of Java. The then Public Library of South Australia, next door to the museum where Tindale worked, was one of only two subscribers in Australia to the Linschoten Vereeniging at the time; it registered its copy of the volume on 25 June 1915, about three months after publication.

24 In fact, my copy has the date of 11 December 1953 under the name of its first owner, so it may have been available a little before 1954.

25 Berndt and Berndt 1954: 51–58.

26 Berndt and Berndt 1954: 58.

etc., visited parts of the northern coast'.[27] This context suggests that they then knew little of the history of contact between north Australia and the archipelago and casually invented this new term. It has persisted.[28] In part, this is because it helps to have some term by which to refer to those involved in the trepang industry and 'Macassan' serves easily as noun and adjective. Moreover, it does make the link with Makassar which was port of origin and return for the praus. The difficulty arises from confusion with the name of the cultural and linguistic group which provided most of the crew – and which also gave its name to the city which is officially known today as Makassar. To itself, this group is known as Mangkasara'; in Bugis, it is Mangkasa'; the most usual form in Malay or Indonesian is Makassar or Mengkasar; the modern Dutch form is Makassaars; while in English one finds Macassarese, Makassarese, Macassar and, my current preference, Makasar. It is important to state clearly that the term 'Macassan' (or 'Makassan') has no currency in an Indonesian context; it should not be used as an equivalent for 'Makasar'.[29]

The second difficulty introduced by the Berndts was to suggest, however tentatively, that the trepanging voyages began 'in the early sixteenth century'.[30] While many previous authors had offered guesses on when the industry began, this estimate looked more definite, although the 'tentative calculations' on which it was based were not given. Such a date before European contact with the continent has two consequences: it suggests that the observed effects of contact in Aboriginal societies arose over about 400 years and it serves the rhetorical purpose of distancing the industry from European contact. The matter of dating is further discussed below.

Thirdly, the Berndts described an overarching structure to the relationship between trepangers and Aborigines. They write:

> With the coming of the Europeans, to which Flinders' visit served as a prelude, Macassan contact began a second phase that lasted until 1907. It was during this time that the traditional trading relationships between the Indonesians and the Aborigines became seriously strained.[31]

27 Berndt and Berndt 1947: 249.

28 The similarity in handwriting between the final '-n' and '-r' has also led to many examples of mis-transcription of nineteenth century manuscript sources. See, for example, my own error in Macknight 1969b: 66, note 3 and in Mulvaney and Green 1992: 135 and 163. I am confident that other examples, when checked against the original manuscript, would show the same mistake.

29 I myself have used the term 'Macassan' extensively, though I limit its meaning with some precision (Macknight 1976: 1–2). I now try to avoid it in all contexts. In the 1960s I took over the term from Mulvaney who, in turn, derived it from the Berndts. It is also widely used in the publications of the *Records of the American-Australian Expedition to Arnhem Land* in 1948, but note that McCarthy and Setzler offer a definition not very different from mine: 'By Macassan and Malayan we refer to the fishermen and traders from the islands northwest of Australia who visited the shores of Arnhem Land … They came from Macassar in Celebes and from other Indonesian localities.' McCarthy and Setzler 1960: 287 note 67.

30 Berndt and Berndt 1954: 15.

31 Berndt and Berndt 1954: 73.

Several previous ethnographers had generalised about the nature of these relationships. Tindale, for example, wrote that the attitude on Groote Eylandt 'towards the Malays was one of hate'.[32] This view was confirmed by Worsley, though he noted that the passage of some three decades had softened and idealised the memory.[33] I have argued that such generalisations are not sustainable and, indeed, some of the evidence presented above illustrates the variety of relationships.[34] The element introduced by the Berndts, however, was to suggest two generalisations: generally good relations followed by generally bad relations. The lure of this narrative structure has proven hard to resist.

Lastly, there is a failure in much of the Berndts' writing from this period to distinguish clearly between material about which they have been told by informants and conclusions based on credible evidence; in other words, between myth and fact. A simple case is the manufacture of earthenware pottery in Australia. As the Berndts reported, the manufacture of pottery is described in songs they recorded, but this is not evidence to say, unequivocally, this happened in Australia.[35] In fact, there is very strong evidence that most earthenware pottery found in Australia was manufactured in South Sulawesi, though some may come from elsewhere in the archipelago. It is highly improbable that any was made in Australia.[36]

A more complex example is the question of the 'Baijini'. While Mountford too, working at the same period as the Berndts, heard stories of the 'Baijini',[37] the Berndts built an elaborate narrative which assigned contact with these people 'remembered particularly for the golden copper colour of their skin'[38] to a period before 'Macassan' contact. The 'Baijini', it is claimed, settled on the coast; they built houses, grew food, wove cloth, as well as gathering trepang.[39] As the Berndts themselves realised, much of this material is conflated with observations of the 'later' trepangers and a thorough analysis would require detailed knowledge of the realities of language and culture in Makassar, at least in the first instance. The Berndts offered a few hints only. While it has long been clear that the 'Baijini' stories as such do not reflect any historical reality in Australia, their presentation by the Berndts, and especially the claim of contact before the sixteenth century, has led to much confusion.[40]

In 1948 as part of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land, that is at more or less the same time as the Berndts were beginning their work in Arnhem Land, Fred McCarthy and Frank Setzler undertook the first significant archaeological investigation of sites associated with the trepangers.

32 Tindale 1925–28: 131.
33 Worsley 1954: 9–12.
34 Macknight 1972: 285–290.
35 Berndt and Berndt 1954: 43–44.
36 Macknight 1972: 309–310. Bulbeck and Rowley (2001) report further confirmation of this.
37 Mountford 1956: 333–338, 440–442.
38 Berndt and Berndt 1954: 34.
39 Berndt and Berndt 1954: 32–39.
40 The recent work of McIntosh on this material is discussed below.

They excavated two graves on Winchelsea Island and recorded the usual signs of processing sites there and at two sites in Port Bradshaw. While they recognised the overall purpose of the sites, they did not analyse how the remains reflected the processes involved and, despite consulting the best available experts, they could get no useful dates for the pottery they collected.[41] Although there is a general awareness of the former trepanging industry and the local influence of the trepangers throughout the publications from the 1948 expedition and McCarthy refers to an Indonesian publication relating to rock art in South Sulawesi,[42] nowhere does McCarthy mention that he himself had been in Makassar ten years before.

This lack of awareness of the background to the industry in South Sulawesi was addressed in two magisterial articles in 1952. AA Cense, who had lately returned to the Netherlands after a long career in Indonesia and, as secretary to the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, had access to its excellent library, reviewed the historical references to the industry and discussed the ethnographic publications from Australia, including the early articles of the Berndts. He also appended an account of the route taken by the praus from an old trepanger whom he had known in Makassar in the 1930s.[43] In a note, Cense mentions that he had just seen an article by HJ Heeren, covering much the same material.[44] Both articles analyse the evidence for cultural and other influences by the trepangers on Aboriginal societies on the basis of an excellent knowledge of the background of the trepangers themselves. It is unfortunate that their publication in Dutch has prevented many later researchers consulting them. Among Australian scholars of the period only Manning Clark seems to have engaged seriously with the Dutch sources and, in a slightly confused account of the industry, he refers to both these articles.[45]

Modern understandings

In 1961, John Mulvaney in his first overview of Australian prehistory discusses the trepangers under the title 'proto-historic influences'.[46] In 1963 and 1965 he visited various places around the coast of Arnhem Land to investigate the potential for archaeological research. A lecture on the industry he gave soon after returning from the second trip is full of insights, based on a remarkably

41 McCarthy and Setzler 1960: 220–223, 228–229, 287–294. It is important to note that in 1969, with further knowledge, Kamer Aga-Oglu amended her opinion on the date of one critical sherd (Macknight 1976: 162, n 22). Although not published until 1960, the text of McCarthy and Setzler's chapter on archaeology had been completed very much earlier, according to Dr Martin Thomas.

42 McCarthy 1960: 400.

43 Cense 1952. An English version of the account of the route appears in Macknight 1969b: 180–185.

44 Heeren 1952.

45 Clark 1962: 37–38.

46 Mulvaney 1961: 99–100.

wide reading of the sources and the initial results of his fieldwork.[47] When I began my PhD research under his supervision in 1966, he most generously made all his previous material available to me.

My doctoral thesis, which was submitted to the Australian National University in December 1969, described the trepanging industry conducted around the coast of Arnhem Land by men from Makassar; its chief point of originality, at least within the Australian literature, was to view the enterprise from the deck of a prau going south to Arnhem Land or Marege' as they called it, rather than looking from the beach at what was coming over the northern horizon. This was a move which, I remember, took some intellectual effort to achieve and it is not by chance that the book which eventually resulted from the thesis is entitled *The Voyage to Marege'*.[48] In large part, I set about a thorough reading of the sources already known from the work of those just mentioned, with a view to drawing these together into an overall account. Seasons of fieldwork in 1966 and 1967, however, added new aspects to my understanding.

It was a magic time to be doing fieldwork in coastal Arnhem Land: the various settlements could be reached by regular air services and small boats were available to reach nearby sites; the centralisation of control in the then Welfare Branch of the administration and the practical assistance of the Methodist Overseas Mission made many practical matters much easier to arrange than they have been more recently; to my surprise, delight and education, enough old men were still alive and willing to pass on significant information about the industry to an eager young listener; and the Australian National University provided adequate funding and many other resources.

Coming at the matter with a strongly archaeological approach, there were several questions that I managed to resolve. One was to understand the layout of a processing site and the actual processes involved.[49] By visiting several dozen sites between Groote Eylandt and the Cobourg Peninsula – and excavating on many of them – it became clear that the trepangers had arranged their activities on a site in a standard pattern. Moreover, the artefacts collected on the surface and by excavation, including abundant earthenware, high-fired Chinese stoneware, Dutch gin bottles, copper fish-hooks, and Dutch coins, were remarkably similar from site to site and confirmed Makassar as the home port of the praus.[50] Lastly, the sheer range of the sites emphasised the geographical spread over which the industry was conducted and the extensive opportunities for interacting with local people.

By the happiest of ironies, in 1969 Mulvaney followed up McCarthy's initiative from 1938 in investigating prehistoric sites in South Sulawesi with the hope

47 Mulvaney 1966.
48 Macknight 1969a, 1976.
49 My understanding of the processes involved has been much helped more recently by observing the modern methods in South Sulawesi and, more importantly, by information from friends at Tasmanian Seafoods Ltd, the firm which has resurrected a significant export industry in trepang.
50 These collections are now held in the Northern Territory Museum and Art Gallery in Darwin.

of establishing links with Australia. With RP Soejono, he led a joint team of Australian and Indonesian archaeologists to revisit and re-excavate key sites. Even if nothing came of the hope of establishing prehistoric links between South Sulawesi and Australia, the 1969 expedition did open up collaboration with Indonesian archaeologists that has continued until the present. It also allowed me to visit Makassar for the first time and I met Mangngellai Daeng Maro who had come to Arnhem Land with his father in 1905–06 and 1906–07. I also went sailing on a prau very similar to those that had come to Australia and was able to check many details of my understanding of the general background.

This first visit inspired me to embark on a long-term research interest in the past of South Sulawesi. The subsequent growth in historical, archaeological and sociological understanding of the area – much more from the work of others than from my own efforts – has been spectacular. We know in very great detail about the place from which the trepangers came and about their intellectual and cultural world. We can now see the historical and cultural circumstances into which the industry fits both in general and in particular detail, such as burial practice or the nature of the earthenware pottery.[51]

One matter about which, for many years, I was not entirely happy was the question of the date at which the industry began, that is, when did trepangers from Makassar first start working along the coast of Arnhem Land and down into the Gulf of Carpentaria. In successive statements, I have gradually changed my position on the answer to this question. In the 1960s, I was concerned to argue against early dates, such as the Berndts' guess of the early sixteenth century quoted above. Given some evidence from the eighteenth century and unwilling to make too great a distinction between the industry along the Kimberley coast and in Arnhem Land, I opted for 'about the beginning of the eighteenth century'.[52] By 1976, I had discovered the Dutch report from Timor in 1754 referring to occasional voyages to the 'Southland' to collect trepang and wax and I had heard from Mangngellai Daeng Maro a legend about Makasar leaders escaping to the Gulf of Carpentaria after a defeat in 1667 and eventually bringing back the first cargo of trepang. I was then willing to suggest a date 'between about A.D. 1650 and 1750' with 'the most probable period within this century [being] the last quarter of the seventeenth century'. Moreover '[the industry] may well have begun in a small, irregular and secretive way.'[53] Ten years later and with Heather Sutherland's encouragement and guidance, I had begun to explore the Dutch archives and I suggested

> subject to confirmation by more detailed archival work, that the whole trepang trade through Macassar was on a small scale and locally based in the mid 1720s. It had probably begun only a decade or so before [and]

51 Bulbeck and Rowley 2001.

52 Macknight 1969a: 391. I have never accepted at face value several early radiocarbon dates from my excavations. On this question, see Bulbeck and Rowley 2001: 59–60 and the sources they quote. Daryl Guse has recently taken some new samples from the same context at the Anuru Bay site as that which yielded one early date, but no results are yet available.

53 Macknight 1976: 97.

> as we know from other documentary sources, Macassan trepangers had certainly reached the north Australian coast by the middle of the eighteenth century.[54]

My current opinion is based on that 'more detailed archival work' as reported by Gerritt Knaap and Heather Sutherland. We now have a remarkably full account of the whole trade of Makassar through the eighteenth century which places the trade in trepang within its context. Not only was Makassar the point of trade for trepang from Australia, but it was – and remains – the centre of the trade for the whole archipelago. This new research confirms my suggestion that the trepang trade began a few years before 1720 and was initially very small. Up to the 1760s most trepang came from relatively close at hand and was exported first to Batavia, and thence to China. In the 1760s the average annual export was 3469 pikul (210 tonne). In the 1770s, by which time a large proportion of the trepang went directly to China in an annual junk, the export had grown to 4568 picul (276 tonne) and then in the 1780s to 7068 pikul (428 tonne).[55]

If we combine the sudden jump in the quantity exported around 1780 with Pobassoo's statement to Flinders in 1803 that he was one of the first to come to Arnhem Land about 20 years before, backed up by later information obtained by Flinders in Kupang, it seems highly probable that it was Arnhem Land which provided the new quantities. I now believe that the industry in Arnhem Land began around 1780.[56] The evidence indicating earlier activity in Australia, in particular the 1754 report from Timor, applies to the Kimberley coast, a point I did not realise clearly enough before.

Despite all the new evidence about the trade in trepang and other marine products during the eighteenth century, some puzzles remain. One is the lack of explicit mention in the eighteenth century records of praus bringing trepang from Marege',[57] or for that matter, Kayu Jawa, the name used for the Kimberley coast. I previously suggested that Buton or Bonerate, as the nearest known ports on the route to Australia, might disguise the eventual destination, but the figures on the trade with these two places, though they do include significant quantities of trepang, make it clear that this explanation will not work.[58] Yet the name, Marege', was certainly known in the late eighteenth century as it is applied to a type of trepang in a 1788 list.[59] A possible explanation may lie in the wide gap between the import figure and export figure for trepang and other marine products as recorded. Thus of the 428 tonne of trepang annually exported, on average, in the 1780s, only 167 tonne is identified as import.[60] In this systematic under-reporting of imports – which is seen throughout the century in the figures for other maritime products as well – there is plenty of room to accommodate

54 Macknight 1986: 70.
55 Knaap and Sutherland 2004: 99–102.
56 This point is argued more fully in Macknight 2008a: 136–137.
57 This name is used in the comparable records from the 1840s. See Macknight 2008a: 138.
58 Macknight 1986: 70; Knaap and Sutherland 2004: 142–143.
59 Knaap and Sutherland 2004: 232.
60 Knaap and Sutherland 2004: 99.

very large quantities of cargo from Arnhem Land, though it is not clear why such items were not noticed.[61] Since a large proportion of the export went on a single junk to China, it seems likely that the export quantity is reasonably accurate. If so, the considerable quantity of trepang must have been imported from somewhere.

Another puzzle is what to make of the legend that some of the Gowa fleet from Makassar, defeated by the Dutch at Buton in 1667, made their way to the north Australian coast.[62] While there could be an element of truth here, it is strange that no one has yet noticed a reference to the matter in the abundant and much studied written sources for the period. It is also difficult to see any link with the beginning of the trepang industry in Australia, given what we otherwise know about the history of the trade.

In 1972 I published a review of all the claims which had then been made of ways in which the trepangers had influenced Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.[63] It is now worth asking how the new precision in our understanding of the nature and date of the industry affects the question of influence. The extent of that influence has continued to receive considerable scholarly attention.

Some of this work has filled out, but not significantly changed, the points I made in 1972. The best example is in the matter of language where far greater expertise and experience in Aboriginal linguistics has been matched by access to modern sources from across the archipelago.[64] By a remarkable stroke of good fortune, however, we have in the works of BF Matthes, the nineteenth-century Dutch Bible translator, and especially in his Makasar dictionary, a detailed, contemporary account of the main language used by the trepangers, along with many other details of their life.[65]

In two areas, further work has significantly transformed and extended my earlier understanding. Both involve the long-term ramifications, within Aboriginal societies, of changes and material deriving from contact with the trepangers. While the initial outcome of the contact has long been apparent, it is now clear that there have also been more complex consequences.

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61 Knaap and Sutherland (2004: 98) offer some suggestions to explain the discrepancy relating to trepang specifically and especially that not coming from regular centres of trade. As their work continually makes clear, the figures merely reflect the records and are averages; particular circumstances and arrangements may often have made the reality somewhat different from year to year. In addition, policy and implementation differed across the decades. Yet whatever the problems of detail, there can be no question of the cogency of their main conclusions drawn from sources across the century, in this case the steady growth of the trepang export – and import – from the 1720s, with a marked rise in the 1780s.

62 Macknight 1976: 96.

63 Macknight 1972.

64 Walker and Zorc 1981; Evans 1992, 1997. Some of the suggestions by Urry and Walsh (1981) seem excessively speculative.

65 Matthes 1859. Much later work on the language confirms the value of this dictionary and associated materials.

Over many years, Ian McIntosh has developed an analysis of the 'Baijini' stories of north-eastern Arnhem Land, mentioned above. Whereas the Berndts presented the stories as evidence for actual historical events in a 'pre-Macassan' phase of contact, McIntosh accepts the difficulties with this interpretation and sees the specific material as deriving from Aboriginal experience with the trepangers, especially on visits to Makassar.[66] He then moves on, however, to consider what Aboriginal thinkers have done with this material and describes the sophisticated intellectual structure they have developed to account for the relations between outsiders and themselves. This takes the question of influence far beyond the mere transference of particular cultural items from one group to another. McIntosh traces the ways in which the memory of historical events – in this case the well documented visits to Makassar and elsewhere by Aboriginal men in the nineteenth century – can produce outcomes which ramify through the thinking of succeeding generations. The analytical task for research on these stories is to tie particular elements to the observed nineteenth-century reality and trace out the transformations.[67]

A good example of the richness of this approach can be seen in McIntosh's treatment of the Aboriginal – and more specifically his informant and friend Burrumarra's – understanding of Islamic matters. He shows how the *wurramu* ceremony, as described by Warner and the Berndts and observed by himself, has both an 'outside' meaning with various relatively straightforward historical references and an 'inside' meaning referring to underlying power relationships and their transformations. Various songs are based on Arabic prayers, though their meaning as understood by any pious Muslim is now not recognised. What makes this material of particular interest is the excellent chronological control over the three stages of the process. It is highly unlikely that anyone in Arnhem Land has heard the Muslim prayers since the last trepangers from Makassar went home in 1907 – at least until very recent times and in a completely different context. Next, we have Warner's record of the songs from the early 1920s, confirmed by the Berndts' material from around 1950. Though the Berndts knew Burrumarra as a young man, McIntosh is reporting his mature reflections on the material from the 1990s. There is no reason to suppose that this is the end of the process of re-working and re-interpretation.[68]

In a similar way, but with very different materials, Scott Mitchell has traced out the economic ramifications of contact with the trepangers, especially for the people of the Cobourg Peninsula. While Rose had long ago hypothesised that the availability of dug-out canoes had transformed the economic possibilities and allowed a larger population on Groote Eylandt,[69] Mitchell shows, with some very elegant archaeology, how more recent middens in his study area

66 This is essentially my position over many years. See Macknight 1972: 313; 2008a: 144.

67 See McIntosh (2008) for his most recent account, with references to earlier papers.

68 See McIntosh 1996. Both Cense (1952) and Heeren (1952) have dealt in detail with the derivation of the songs and expressions in question and on the basis of a good understanding of the Islamic originals. McIntosh seems not to have consulted them.

69 Rose 1961.

reflect an economy more focussed on marine resources only accessible with reliable watercraft.[70] Again, we can see the consequences of influence, as well as the simple observation that dug-out canoes and their making were derived from contact with the trepangers. Since the widespread use of the canoes by local people must derive from considerable contact – that is, from a period when the industry was reasonably well established – this must be after about 1780. By 1839 at the latest, however, Aborigines on the Cobourg Peninsula were manufacturing the canoes.[71] The speed of the Aboriginal response is both impressive and instructive. While Thomson had proposed that access to certain material goods had given a special impetus to the ceremonial exchange cycle,[72] Mitchell's material suggests the transformative effect of new technology, rather than merely the intensification of existing features of the economy.

In one area, I quite failed in 1972 to see the implications of the data; that is the introduction of smallpox. Although I listed the evidence suggesting that this disease was derived from contact with the trepangers,[73] I did not then link this with the widespread smallpox epidemics which afflicted most of the continent. The whole topic is now definitively covered by the work of Judy Campbell.[74] There can be no serious doubt that the several epidemics in the nineteenth century began in northern Australia and spread southwards and, though much work remains to be done in elucidating the history of the disease in the archipelago, there is no difficulty in sourcing the infection back to Makassar. Indeed Robert Brown, with Flinders, noted traces of smallpox among the men he met in 1803.[75] Much work is also needed to trace the limits of the epidemics and the scale of mortality in different parts of the continent.

There has been much debate in recent years about the origin of the smallpox observed in Sydney in April 1789 and no little ingenuity displayed to suggest that it could have been derived from the British settlement.[76] Such a conclusion seems to me both far-fetched and unnecessary. The overwhelming probability must be that it was introduced, like the later epidemics, by trepangers on the north coast and spread across the continent to arrive in Sydney quite independently of the new settlement there. If, about 1780, the trepang industry brought large numbers of men from the archipelago to Arnhem Land for the first time, the date of the epidemic's arrival in Sydney, with its terrible effects on a relatively dense, but entirely virgin population, makes a great deal of sense.

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70 Mitchell 1994, 1995, 1996.

71 Cameron 1999: 55.

72 Thomson 1949.

73 Macknight 1972: 292–293.

74 Campbell 2002. See also Macknight 1986.

75 Brown's journal 18 February 1803 British Museum (Natural History). In view of the interest in this question, it is worth transcribing all that Brown says on the matter: 'In the small pox they use the cold affusion. The water is procur'd as cool as possible & during the eruptive fever is pour'd on the patient 3 times a day, viz early in the morning, at noon & at 6 PM. If this practise is not regularly follow'd with a strict attention to the hours the patient commonly dies. Among the people we saw very few were pitted by the small pox & those very slightly.' See also Brown 2001: 373, but I have worked from the original.

76 Butlin 1983; Warren 2007; Mear 2008.

I recently had the pleasure of returning to western Arnhem Land where Daryl Wesley is re-investigating some trepang processing sites to understand more details of the conditions of contact between the trepangers and local people. He and his team are also systematically studying the rock art of the Wellington Ranges, some 10 to 20 kilometres inland, which shows much evidence of this contact. Here again, it may be the abundance of such art, as well as the motifs themselves, which reveals changes in Aboriginal ways of thinking.

Conclusion

There sometimes seems to be no end to the possibilities of tracing the eddying whirlpools of the trepangers' influence in indigenous societies. In 1972, I used another metaphor when I summed up their impact:

> Macassan influence contributed merely an exotic colour to the cultural fabric of certain Aboriginal societies. While this colour might well have become more marked had the contact been more prolonged, the underlying pattern was still very clear, even in areas of strongest influence.

In essence, this remains a valid assessment. Within a 'traditional' context, the people of the Cobourg Peninsula, or Groote Eylandt, or north-eastern Arnhem Land, or anywhere else across the continent whose lives were changed either directly or indirectly as a result of the trepangers visiting the north coast retained the essential character of their languages, economy, social organisation, religious belief and symbolic system.

The metaphor, however, is too simple and too static. It misses the sense of agency and the complexity of process that we can now discern. It fails to notice the importance of Aboriginal response immediately, or over time, and it has no space for the role of the individual. Moreover, if we consider the history of northern Australia into the 'non-traditional' present, many more agents and externally-driven processes need to be taken into account. Within this history, the memory of the trepang industry from Makassar can be, and has been, put to a wide variety of uses for a diverse set of interests.[77]

Flinders' account of his meeting with the trepanging fleet made the industry's existence known to a very wide audience and this now passes for general knowledge, especially in northern Australia. In particular, for contemporary historians of Aboriginal experience, the story of the trepang industry and the outcome of interactions between the trepangers and Aborigines is a well-known theme. Today, we can also, with some assurance, place these matters within an emerging regional history. Modern Australians look north-west towards to Makassar with considerable understanding of the history and present circumstances of that area. It is not true to say, however, that the wheel has come

77 See Macknight 2008a.

full circle since Flinders and Brown asked Pobassoo about the 'ippo' poison; we know far more than they or any of their contemporaries did. What we can do, two centuries later, is to share their expansive and inclusive view of the region's affairs.

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‘The privilege of employing natives’: the Quan Sing affair and Chinese-Aboriginal employment in Western Australia, 1889–1934

Victoria Haskins

In September 1921, two permits to employ Aborigines were forwarded to the Western Australian Chief Protector of Aborigines, AO Neville. The permits allowed Miss Yuanho Quan Sing of Derby in north-western Western Australia to engage the services of two individuals: ‘Bobbydol’ and ‘Roebourne Annie’. The permits had been authorised by the Resident Magistrate and local Protector of Aborigines, William Hodge. ‘Miss Quan Sing was told … you could not grant her a permit to employ [A]boriginals’, explained the covering note, ‘but not withstanding this & the cancellation of her permit last year, she persists in her endeavour to obtain the privilege of employing natives’.[1] Neville immediately directed Hodge to cancel the permits, telling him, ‘Quan Sing and his family have made numerous efforts from time to time to employ natives, all of which have been frustrated’.[2]

Indeed the ‘privilege’ of employing Aboriginal workers had been fought hard for by the Quan Sing family, initially by Quan Sing snr, and subsequently by his eldest daughter Yuanho Quan Sing, who was, as she would repeatedly point out, Australian-born. Tracing the long-running confrontation of this Chinese-Australian family from a remote north-western township with the racial politics of Western Australia’s Aboriginal administration offers a rare, detailed glimpse into the significance of Aboriginal employment control for constructing categories of inclusion and exclusion in the Australian colonising project. ‘Quan Sing’s affair’, as one official termed it, also highlights how local politics of race played out on the frontiers of white Australia in the early twentieth century, revealing the instability and fragility of colour-coded citizenship, and the role of ‘Aboriginal protection’ in the development of Australian citizenship in the early twentieth century.

It is a story that might be considered the most marginal of histories. Chinese people, and Asians generally, were explicitly prohibited from employing Aboriginal workers in Queensland (from 1902), Western Australia (from 1907),

1 Initials illeg, Memo to CPA, 19 September 1921, ‘Quansing – Employment of Natives’, series 2030, consignment 993, item 1939/0793, State Records Office of Western Australia. Unless otherwise stated all further references to the Quan Sing case are drawn from this file.

2 Copy, telegram Chief Protector Aborigines to Resident Magistrate Derby 20 September 1921; Copy, Chief Protector Aborigines to Resident Magistrate Derby 20 September 1921.

and the Northern Territory (from 1910); elsewhere in Australia, one looks in vain for any documented Asian-Aboriginal employment relationship amongst the detailed records of the various state bodies regulating Indigenous workers in the twentieth century. A rich body of historical scholarship on Asian-Aboriginal relationships suggests that legislation restricting Asian employment of Aborigines was driven largely by the authorities' concern with controlling interracial sexuality and reproduction, even where other concerns, such as the desire to secure white economic advantage over Asians, or simple anti-Asian racism, were evident.[3] Histories of Aboriginal labour emphasise the control and advantages these permit systems provided to white employers. However, the material and symbolic impact upon the Asian community of being denied access to Aboriginal labour by the same permit system is not considered.[4] Nor have these restrictions been analysed in any depth in broader discussions of discriminatory anti-Asian policies passed from the late nineteenth century, although it has been understood that Chinese issues were central to the development of an ambiguous and contradictory legal framework for Australian citizenship.[5] The popular image of the degrading, corrupting Chinese that seemingly justified such restrictions, a stereotype generally dismissed with ease by historians,[6] might yet reveal more about the importance of declaring Chinese exclusion by refusing to admit them as employers of Aboriginal workers. As Claire Lowrie has recently highlighted, the evidence that Chinese people could and did employ domestic servants – both Chinese and non-Chinese – suggested to white colonists and officials that the Chinese were as capable of exercising 'colonial mastery' as the British. This was a threatening concept. The response was the discursive construction of the 'corrupting Chinese master', that worked to deny even powerful and wealthy Chinese the status of legitimate colonisers.[7] Prohibiting Chinese men and women from employing Aboriginal workers pointedly and quite unequivocally excluded them from the colonial project.

The Quan Sing story does not provide much insight into the nature of relationships between Chinese employers and Aboriginal workers. The voices of the Aboriginal people are entirely missing from the archival records, while neither Yuanho Quan Sing nor any of her family expressed their opinions on the individuals they employed, or about the Aboriginal community more generally. Those who refused to countenance the Quan Sings' employment of Aborigines also never ventured any criticism or comment on the way they managed their relationships with their employees. Yuanho Quan Sing was supported at times by local officials who commented favourably enough on her treatment of Aboriginal people she employed, but provided little detail. For these reasons it

3 May 1984; Evans, Saunders and Cronin 1988; Choo 1994, 1995, 2001; Ganter 1998, 2006; Yu 1999; McGrath 2003; Martinez 2000, 2006; Stephenson 2007; Lowrie 2009: 199–203.

4 For Western Australia see Hetherington 2002; Jebb 2002. For Queensland see Robinson 2008; Kidd 2007.

5 Atkinson 1995; Ryan 1995; Chesterman and Galligan 1997: 80–81; Markus 2001; Rubenstein 2004.

6 For instance see Ganter 2006: 78, 126; Evans et al 1988: 310–311; Stephenson 2007: 62–64, 66.

7 Lowrie 2009: 200–201.

is not possible to reach any real conclusions about the nature of the employer/employee relationship in this specific case, nor understand whether, and why, Aboriginal people might have been prepared to work for this family.

The insights the story *does* provide are into the mentality of the government and officials, both local and in Perth, at the time, in administering policies that prevented Asian people from employing Aboriginal workers in any capacity. Insight can also be gained into the significance of the exclusions for Asian families like the Quan Sings, along with an understanding of why they, and others, might have sought 'the privilege of employing natives'. More generally, the story of the Quan Sing affair provides an opportunity to contribute to the historicisation of Australian citizenship.[8] If Asian exclusion was the flipside of Aboriginal protection,[9] together these processes combined to constitute the un-excluded, un-'protected' white Australian citizen.

'Quan Sing's Affair'[10]

When Quan Sing snr was first charged with 'working an [A]boriginal Boy' at Derby Local Court in April 1908, and fined £1 and ordered to pay 18/- court costs, he was annoyed. He had, he asserted, a recently acquired and valid general permit to employ Aborigines. Suspecting malice on the part of a local policeman and the Court Clerk, Quan Sing snr wrote to the Western Australian Attorney-General to protest against the charge and to seek reinstatement of his permit. '[A]ll I ask for is Justice … as is due to any Respectable Citizen', he appealed.[11]

Quan Sing snr had been convicted under new regulations to the 1905 *Act to make provision for the better protection and care of the Aboriginal inhabitants of Western Australia*. Introduced in December 1907, these included directions that no further employment permits to 'Asiatics' were to be issued 'whatsoever', and that all existing permits 'or agreements' were to be cancelled, at the discretion of the local Protectors. Asians were classified as undesirable employers of Aborigines, alongside hotelkeepers, for whom permits were also no longer allowed, under the same regulations.[12]

The Western Australian permit system dated back to 1886 legislation that instituted a voluntary contract system for employers of Aborigines.[13] In 1905 the *Aborigines Act* had made it unlawful to employ 'any [A]boriginal, or a male half-

8 See Chesterman and Galligan 1997; Irving 2000; Dutton 2002; Rubinstein 2004; Holland 2007.
9 Ganter 2006: 93.
10 Arthur Adams, Resident Magistrate and Protector, to Chief Protector, 16 October 1909.
11 Quan Sing & Co to Attorney-General, Perth, 28 April 1908.
12 Aborigines Department Circular to Protectors of Aborigines, 17 December 1907, Extract from *Government Gazette* (WA) 20 December 1907, emphasis added.
13 *Aborigines Protection Act 1886*(WA). For discussion see Hetherington 2002: 149; Crowley 1954; Biskup 1973: 36.

caste under the age of fourteen years, or a female half-caste, *except under permit*', requiring employers to produce their permits on demand to police or appointed Protectors of Aborigines.[14]

Nevertheless there had been no explicit racial restrictions on permits in 1905. This was despite the fact that the legislation had arisen in the wake of a 1904 Royal Commission, which had heard the then Chief Protector Henry Prinsep complain that contracts could be entered into without his knowledge, that he had no power to 'prevent any Asiatic or European from being an employer under the Act' nor could he 'prevent Europeans or Asiatics allowing an [A]boriginal to enter, remain in, or reside on their premises' (unless they were 'European' publicans), and indeed, that he could not 'prevent the greatest scoundrel unhung from employing an [A]boriginal under contract'.[15]

The omission was even more remarkable given that the Commission had been headed by the new Queensland Chief Protector of Aborigines, Walter Roth, who had been involved with the passage of a 1902 amendment to Queensland's *Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897* specifically excluding Chinese employers from holding permits to employ Aborigines in Queensland. As Northern Protector in Queensland in 1898, Roth had given explicit directions to local Protectors not to allow Chinese permits and had explained during the Queensland debates on the anti-Chinese amendment that without such restrictive legislation 'my hands are forced to allow the [A]boriginals to be employed by Chinamen'.[16] But perhaps the experience in Queensland, where the 1902 amendments had been a contentious matter of public discussion, and restrictions against all Asians were not able to be secured, explains the more discreet approach taken in Western Australia.[17] The restrictions against issuing permits to 'Asiatics' were ushered in very quietly indeed, as regulations announced in the government gazette at the very end of 1907.

Certainly the regulations appear to have caught Quan Sing by surprise. After he interviewed the then Chief Protector of Aborigines, Charles Gale, on the matter, leaving with him a copy of his letter to the Attorney-General and information that others, including an Indian man and a Chinese baker, were employing Aboriginal workers, Quan Sing applied for an exemption from the regulations. This being refused, he persuaded Gale to agree he could re-engage the Aboriginal worker originally contracted to him, for the balance of the term of the contract, if

14 *Act to make provision for the better protection and care of the Aboriginal inhabitants of Western Australia 1905* (WA).

15 Roth 1905: 32, 40.

16 See Evans et al 1988: 311, 252; Ganter 1998: 16; 2006: 77.

17 In fact reference to Chinese people, specifically, during the course of the Commission had been limited and relatively innocuous, see Roth 1905: 53, 83, 101, 50. Ganter 1998: 16, notes Roth's reluctance in the Queensland case to jeopardise royal assent. Other research by Ganter suggests that the 1907 Western Australian regulations may have been originally framed to restrict only Afghan employers, but extended to all Asians under the new Chief Protector, Gale, in 1908: Ganter 2006: 108.

he could find him. When Quan Sing could not re-locate his former worker Gale directed the local Resident Magistrate Adams to allow him to employ someone else instead, to Adams' chagrin.

Six months later – no doubt when the term of his original permit had expired – the Derby police initiated proceedings against Quan Sing for the illegal employment of an Aboriginal man and woman. Quan Sing then insisted that he had been given verbal authority by both the Chief Protector and the Minister of Works, who was, incidentally, also the State Premier. Quan Sing was, however, charged and fined again. And the following day, he was charged again. Quan Sing threatened to lodge an appeal with the Supreme Court, but to his dismay both the Chief Protector and the Premier refused, awkwardly, to provide statements in his defence.

Despite being warned that he would be 'dealt with severely' if he came before the court again, it is evident that Quan Sing continued to employ Aboriginal workers. In February 1910 he complained of police 'interference' with Aborigines in his employ.

An oral history recorded by the descendant of an Aboriginal woman who was 'washing and ironing' for the Quan Sings, dated to 1910, provides a clue into what might have happened. The interviewee's grandmother had told her children to play while she was working, when a 'police buggy and horse' appeared, and 'two Aboriginal police boys sang out to them in their language if they like to go for a ride':

> the girls didn't understand the meaning of that joy ride … they were taken away forever.
>
> They could hear my grandmother's voice from that boab tree [the 'Prison Tree' in Derby, where the children were held overnight] calling out in Nyikina but they couldn't answer.
>
> Next morning the boat was coming in from Wyndham. … Mum said that the last thing they can remember they put them on the train. And from there that train went straight down to the jetty. … By the time Granny got down to the water, this old jetty, they put them already down in the cabin.[18]

Possibly, the children were taken in retribution for Quan Sing's persistent defiance. However, as the removal and institutionalisation of mixed-descent Aboriginal children in the region dramatically intensified in this period,[19] it is just as likely that the children were taken as part of a broader general sweep of

18 Speaker's name withheld, Oral history recorded by Mary Anne Jebb, Derby, undated, pers comm (email) Mary Anne Jebb, 1 June 2010; and abbreviated version dated to 1910 in text on current display at Old Derby Gaol Interpretative Centre, Derby, 'Under the Act', nd; see also transcribed version, Dunnybudgies, 'derby gaol', 13 February 2002, <http://www.kuramancreative.com/dunnybudgies/states/derbygaol.html> accessed 28 May 2010.

19 Haebich 2000: 242; Choo 2001: 151–152.

child removal in the area. Indeed, it would have been more remarkable if they had not been taken. Whether the mother had been targeted specifically because of her employer, or a blind eye had been turned to Quan Sing's employment of her, Quan Sing's demand for an investigation into the removal of her children would have antagonised the local police.[20]

Towards the end of 1910 Quan Sing wrote once again to Gale, asking for the recovery of his permit to enable him to employ 'a native woman to assist' his wife, who was due in a month to give birth to their seventh child. All of their children except one infant were at school and when the new baby arrived it would be a 'necessity' that his wife had help in the house.[21] His request was refused. In September 1911, however, Quan Sing had managed to secure a permit, from a new, apparently sympathetic Resident Magistrate, named Gurdon, at Derby. By the end of the month, the police at Derby had reported this breach of the regulations, and under instructions from the Aborigines Department Gurdon was forced to cancel the permit.

In April 1913, Quan Sing wrote again to the Attorney-General requesting a permit to employ someone to assist his wife, 'as it extremely hard for her to do the whole of the washs the single hand with so many childrens (7 childrens) after my elder daughter to go to the Claremont Methodist ladies college'.[22] Again, refused.

In September 1915, some months after the appointment of a new Chief Protector, AO Neville, Quan Sing called on his offices in Perth to ask if the 'boy' he had previously employed could be returned to him, and again, some seven months later, to point out that two hotelkeepers, an Indian man and a Chinese baker all employed Aboriginal workers in Derby, and to request a general permit. Quan Sing's efforts resulted in a desultory investigation by Neville into his claims but, once again, a refusal to provide him with a permit.

It was at this point that Quan Sing's daughter, Yuanho Quan Sing, made her first application for a permit to employ '[A]borigines womens' in August 1917. She explained that as she was born in Derby, she understood that she was entitled as a 'natural born British subject' to such a permit, and she asked the Protector to 'oblige' her 'to have fair place same as anybody in Derby'.[23] The current Resident Magistrate at Derby, a man by the name of Elliott, sent an anxious telegram to Neville pleading that he not grant her a permit, as it was just a subterfuge by her father and would create a 'lamentable precedent'. It seems the police in

20 In the end, the Police Investigator only recommended that Quan Sing should see the Chief Protector Gale about the matter, according to Quan Sing: annotation, WO Sallenger to Quan Sing, 28 March 1910.

21 Quan Sing to CF Gale, 5 November 1910.

22 Quan Sing to Attorney General, Perth, 14 April 1913.

23 Miss Y Quan Sing to the Protector of Aborigines, 27 August 1917.

Derby were threatening to prosecute Quan Sing, yet again, for employing an Aboriginal worker at this time, and Quan Sing had engaged a solicitor's firm to forestall them.[24] Yuanho Quan Sing's application was refused.

Yuanho Quan Sing's response was defiant. Pointing out as her father had done that others were infringing the regulations in Derby, she again requested a permit, and was again denied. In October the following year, she was given a permit by Sergeant Crowe of the Derby police, which Neville immediately directed be cancelled. However, at the end of 1921, when Neville ordered the newly arrived Resident Magistrate Dr William Hodge to cancel the two single permits he had issued to Yuanho Quan Sing, he would encounter unexpected resistance.

A natural-born British subject

The argument that she was entitled, as a British subject, born in Australia, to employ Aboriginal labour, was at the centre of Yuanho Quan Sing's case for a permit, and it would be this argument that would perplex and indeed divide the authorities. That it was an argument her Cantonese-born father could not have made was not lost on Derby's Resident Magistrate, Elliott, who considered her application a ploy by her father. Nor was it lost on the authorities in Perth. The Aborigines' Department sought advice from the Solicitor-General of Western Australia, who replied that while the grant of a permit was 'discretionary', it was definitely not to be granted to an 'Asiatic'. Although there was no definition of 'Asiatic' as such, 'the question does not turn on whether the applicant is a British subject or naturalised'. At any rate, he opined, 'I think a person born of [C]hinese parents should be deemed an Asiatic'. And finally, given that her father had been refused a permit, 'I do not think it should be issued to his daughter living with him'.[25]

Quan Sing snr had protested to the Attorney-General at the time of his first conviction that he had been a 'respectable resident of Derby since 1889' and as an employer of Aborigines under permit every year since, he had 'never been subjected to such annoyance before'.[26] His application for an exemption from the regulations set out his respectable status as an importer and merchant. He was a 'married man residing with my wife and six children'; had been a 'law abiding resident' since his arrival in the colony; and could provide character references from 'leading Government officials' at Derby.[27] His application was probably made on the advice of the sympathetic Chief Protector Gale, who forwarded it to the Colonial Secretary with a covering note pointing out that: 'These regulations

24 Telegram, Elliott to Chief Protector Aborigines, received 24 September 1917; Memo, Secretary to Chief Secretary, 25 September 1917.
25 Solicitor General, Western Australia, memo, 29 September 1917.
26 Quan Sing & Co to Attorney-General, Perth, 28 April 1908.
27 Quan Sing to Chief Protector of Aborigines, 4 June 1908.

were made to prevent Afghans encouraging native women about their camps, it was never meant to apply to a respectable married man with a wife of his own country.'[28]

An exemption constituted no threat to the new system, but on the contrary, endorsed the power of the authorities to decide who could and could not be permitted to employ Aboriginal workers. While Quan Sing's application for exemption was refused by the Colonial Secretary, it seems Gale was able to manoeuvre a limited kind of informal permit for him anyway – much to the aggravation of the local Resident Magistrate at the time. As the course of the Quan Sing story makes clear, the way the system functioned allowed local authorities a degree of latitude in their discretion to both dispense permits and to turn an unseeing eye where they chose. Having suspected local malice from the outset, Quan Sing's refusal to defer to the local police and officials unsettled the usual method of regulating Aboriginal employment. His repeated insistence that other non-white employers were being allowed Aboriginal workers in Derby – what Magistrate Elliott would describe with annoyance as his 'idle carping'[29] – resulted, eventually, in Neville asking Elliott for a report on 'Asiatics' employing Aborigines. Elliott's response is fascinating for the insight it provides into the operation of the permit system at the local level.

Elliott denied knowledge of any Asians employing Aborigines in the West Kimberley. He stated he had only issued permits to those who applied through the Derby police, and were recommended by them as 'fit, and proper persons to employ Natives'. The Indian man whom Quan Sing alleged employed Aborigines to drive carriages was Joseph Griffiths, government contractor and wood carter. He was, Elliott informed Neville, born in Barbados, and therefore a British subject, 'entitled to all the privileges of a Britisher'.[30]

Elliott's response highlights the contemporary understanding that being born in a country under British rule conferred all the rights and 'privileges' of British status. No doubt this would have been salt in Quan Sing's wounds. Three years earlier he had lost a different (though related) battle, when the local Derby court refused his application for renewal of his license to sell liquor on the grounds that legislation passed in 1911 disallowed the issue of such licenses to any person not a 'naturalised British subject'. Quan Sing had taken the case to the federal authorities, claiming to be born in Hong Kong and thus a British subject, but as he could not produce a birth certificate, and had given his birthplace as Canton on all his children's birth certificates, the license was not granted.[31]

28 CF Gale to Under Secretary, Colonial Secretary's Department, 11 June 1908. See footnote 17.
29 F Elliott to Chief Protector of Aborigines, 20 September 1916.
30 F Elliott to Chief Protector of Aborigines, 20 September 1916.
31 'A Chinese Puzzle: The hard case of Quan Sing', *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), Friday 25 July 1913: 10.

But Elliott's spirited defence of Griffith's permit went further. Clearly, the right to employ Aborigines was a measure of acceptance and inclusion in the white community, at the local level as much as at the state. Griffiths was, admitted Elliott, 'what you would term a Colored Man', but 'not necessarily … an Asiatic':

> Color cannot be the line of demarcation in his case, and I would remind you that, that Great and Good Man who lived some two thousand odd years ago Jesus Christ was a colored man, but no one has ever presumed to dub him an Asiatic. Moreover I can assure you, that if a petition were got up on his behalf, it would be signed [illeg] by all the inhabitants.[32]

Quan Sing's claim that the Chinese baker, Ah Chee, employed an Aboriginal woman, was never directly addressed. Elliott's denial of any knowledge of Asian employers suggests that this employment was carried out without a permit, but tolerated nevertheless. As Ganter observes with regard to the Northern Territory, there 'had always been exemptions to the rule of Chinese exclusion from employing Aborigines',[33] but it was not only a matter of formal exemptions – evidently, the employment of Aboriginal workers by both hotelkeepers and Asian employers was a hazy part of the everyday reality of life in north-western Australia, and tolerance depended very much on the sympathies of local authorities.

Yuanho Quan Sing's determination to acquire a permit must be seen in this context. The regulation of Aboriginal employment was clearly being utilised to structure a tiered social order. By asserting her rights as a 'natural born British subject', Yuanho Quan Sing was both claiming her 'fair place', and challenging the power of the authorities to decide where she should be located. Indeed, in her first letter to Neville she stated that hotelkeepers in Derby were circumventing the permit system by organising associates to take out permits on their behalf, and that her father's friends were prepared to do the same: she 'trust[ed]' he would not object to this, but would 'oblige our [family] as same as you oblige everybody at Derby'.[34]

On learning she was not to be given a permit, Yuanho Quan Sing then sent a carefully worded letter by registered post to Neville:

> I desire to bring under your notice the following clause which I have noticed in the Aborigines Act, reading viz "No permit is shall be granted for employment of any [A]borigines or any half caste under the age of fourteen or female half caste to any premises licensed for the sale of intoxicating liquor." and wish to point out to you that practically all the licensed premises here have been and are still employing [A]borigines contrary to this clause.[35]

32 F Elliott to Chief Protector of Aborigines, 20 September 1916.
33 Ganter 2006: 154.
34 Miss Y Quan Sing to the Protector of Aborigines, 27 August 1917.
35 Y Quan Sing to Protector of Aborigines, Perth, 10 October 1918 (original emphasis).

The Department 'must have overlooked' that particular clause, she continued, or have 'allowed an infringement of the Act for Derby'. Therefore, she argued, the Department 'should also allow an infringement of the clause referring to my case & grant permit to me to have the matter justified'.[36]

Rejected again, Yuanho Quan Sing wrote to Neville in May 1918 declaring that every hotel and wine shop, as well as 'other Chinese premises and gardener', had been employing Aborigines for both 'inside' and 'outside' work. 'Now I will also … employ Aborigines as same as everybody in the town … I trust that you will not objection [sic]. Now I beg to ask you to protect me same as everybody'.[37] Neville replied that he regretted he was unable to comply with her request.[38]

It is clear that Neville considered the advice the Department had received from the Solicitor-General in 1917 an unshakeable rebuttal of any claim that Quan Sing's daughter might make as a 'natural born British subject', and he clung tenaciously to the notion that the categories of 'Asiatic' and 'British subject' were mutually exclusive as his justification for refusing to consider her application.

But not all would find the reasoning compelling. Late in 1920, the Police Sergeant at Derby, WS Crowe, decided that Yuanho Quan Sing was indeed a fit and proper person to employ Aborigines, and informed the Chief Protector he had issued her with a permit. Neville explained, in a tone of weary patience, that 'many' applications 'by this girl and her father' had been refused, and the Crown Law department had ruled that 'these people were deemed to be Asiatics within the meaning of the law and the Solicitor General said that if a permit had been refused to Quan Sing he did not think it should be issued to his daughter'. He informed Crowe that the permit had to be cancelled. At the same time, interestingly enough, Neville mentioned that he had directed the Resident Magistrate to cancel a permit issued to a Nellie Ah Chee at Derby: the Ah Chee family were the bakers to whom Quan Sing snr referred in 1908 and again in 1916.[39]

It would seem that Yuanho Quan Sing had decided to make her application through Crowe, evidently a newcomer, and had spent some time making her case. 'Miss Quan Sing was born in Derby WA and is therefore a natural born British Subject and is recognized as such & her name is on the Commonwealth & State Electoral Rolls & she votes at every election', Crowe replied. 'The Aboriginal Natives she employs are well treated and should you desire me to cancel the permit please let me know on what ground as Miss Quan Sing will

36 Y Quan Sing to Protector of Aborigines, Perth, 10 October 1918.
37 Miss Y Quan Sing to Chief Protector of Aborigines, Perth, 16 May 1919.
38 Copy, Chief Protector of Aborigines to Miss Y Quan Sing, 29 May 1919; copy, Chief Protector of Aborigines to the Resident Magistrate, Derby, 29 May 1919.
39 Copy, Chief Protector of Aborigines to Officer in Charge, Police Station, Derby, 29 October 1920.

take the matter up'.[40] Neville was resolute, insisting that while 'the regulation continues in force, no Asiatic whatsoever should receive a permit',[41] and Crowe complied with his orders.

The newly arrived Resident Magistrate, Dr William Hodge, who granted two individual permits to Yuanho Quan Sing at the end of 1921, was less amenable. Neville had forwarded copies of his previous correspondence with Crowe when directing Hodge to cancel these two permits, but Hodge took exception, retorting that he failed to see how the Solicitor-General's reading of the law applied to Miss Quan Sing. The dictionary definition of 'Asiatic', Hodge told Neville, was 'one that is born or belongs in Asia'. Miss Quan Sing was born in Western Australia and had never been out of the state in her entire life, 'and therefore is not an Asiatic'. She had the vote in both federal and state elections 'as an Australian citizen by right of birth'. Indeed, he went on:

> If Miss Quan Sing is to be counted an Asiatic because her Parents were Asiatics there is no Australians except perhaps the Aboriginals as if the children born in Australia take the Nationality of their parents they would all be Europeans Africans or Americans.[42]

Neville forbore from engaging with that line of argument, instead retreating to the line he had taken previously: that he was bound to observe the ruling of the Crown Law authorities, and so it was 'not possible … to sanction employment of natives by the Quan Sing family'. Informing Hodge that the previous Resident Magistrate had been 'very much averse to granting such a permit' and had said it would 'create a lamentable precedent', Neville tried to persuade Hodge against sanctioning Chinese employment by slyly calling him on side against the race. 'Quite apart from the legal aspect', he coaxed, 'it is most undesirable that any association be permitted between Asiatics and Aborigines. This Department is constantly meeting trouble which arises through such association, and it was for this reason that the Regulation was instituted in the first place'.[43]

But Hodge would not have it. 'The ruling of the Solicitor General does not touch on the point of Australian born persons of Asiatic parentage', he wrote back. Children of all other nationalities born in Australia were Australians, Hodge insisted, and the children of Quan Sing were Australian by birth also. Refusing or cancelling Miss Quan Sing's permit would set a much more lamentable precedent 'of injustice' – 'Dont admit Chinese if you dont like them [sic]', he snapped, 'but if admitted give them justice'. 'I have not cancelled this permit nor do I intend to do so', the Magistrate continued.

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40 WS Crowe, Sergt S/C Protector of Aborigines to the Chief Protector of Aborigines, 12 November [1920].

41 Copy, Chief Protector of Aborigines to Sergeant Crowe, 22 December 1920, quoting 'Dr Stow'. This is not the same advice given by the Solicitor-General in 1917. No copy of the 1916 ruling Neville quoted exists in this file.

42 W Hodge to Mr Neville, 10 October 1921.

43 Copy, Chief Protector of Aborigines to the District Medical Officer, Derby, 4 November 1921.

> Rather than do so I would resign the position of protector of Aborigines and will do so if you wish, but I decline to have any hand in a proceeding which appears to me grossly unjust and think that these injustices are of national importance at the present time and detract from the honour of Australia as a nation.[44]

No doubt startled by his vehemence, and perhaps also stung by Hodge's contempt, Neville did not know how to reply and sent a lengthy memo to the Minister for the North-West instead. 'For years Quan Sing of Derby has consistently applied to us for permission to employ [A]borigines, and has just as consistently been refused', he explained. 'After the father found it was no use to apply further, his daughter began to plead, but was likewise refused'. Neville recommended that Police Sergeant Douglas, presumably Crowe's successor and possibly the person who had forwarded the permits authorised by Hodge to the Chief Protector, should take Hodge's place should he decide to resign his appointment as a local Protector over the matter. 'Incidentally', Neville concluded, 'a native recently under illegal engagement to Miss Quan Sing has proved to be a leper'. (A very clear example, indeed, of how negative stereotypes of the Chinese were manipulated to enforce their exclusion as employers.)[45] Colebatch advised Neville to explain to Hodge that he was not taking issue with him on the matter but that it was simply a matter of obeying the law. Neville then wrote to Hodge again explaining that he had been directed to tell him that 'it is not a question of the Department disagreeing with your view but a question of carrying out the law' and asking him to 'kindly comply and notify me accordingly'.[46] Hodge continued to serve as Resident Magistrate at Derby until his death in 1934,[47] but it was Sergeant Douglas who informed the Quan Sing family that they would never be issued a permit in future.

There was nothing further in the Quan Sing file until 19 years later, when an aging but still vindictive Neville queried the issue of two single permits to a man called Quan Sing at Carnarvon. The terse reply of the Carnarvon sergeant who issued the permits confirming that Quan Sing was, indeed, both Australian born and of the Derby family – 'All Quan Sings now living are Australians – I am quite aware that Asiatics should not be given permits' – marked the end of the Quan Sing file.[48] By 1939 Neville had to accept the principle Yuanho Quan Sing had argued for in 1921, at least when it came to Chinese-Australian citizenship. Recognition of Aboriginal citizenship was, of course, still decades away.

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44 W Hodge to Chief Protector of Aborigines, 24 November 1921.

45 Chief Protector of Aborigines to Minister for the North-West, 9 December 1921. There is nothing on the file and no reference to any other record to corroborate Neville's claim.

46 Copy, Chief Protector of Aborigines to the Resident Magistrate, Derby, 13 December 1921.

47 According to a newspaper report he died by accidentally drinking sheep dip on the eve of his retirement, and despite attempting his own remedies: 'Doctor's Death: Sheep Dip Drunk by Mistake', *Sydney Morning Herald*, Wednesday 21 November 1934: 14.

48 Sergeant Page, Protector, to Commissioner of Native Affairs, 20 September 1939.

Privilege and the permit system

Knowing what to make of the Quan Sings' quest is problematic. While testifying to the practical and symbolic significance of access to Aboriginal labour, the eagerness of the family to acquire this badge of coloniser status also signifies their eagerness to join the colonising project. Yet we must also recognise that Quan Sing and his daughter's determination was matched by the resolution of the Aboriginal authorities – particularly, Neville – not to provide them with this 'privilege'. This contestation demonstrates that being allowed to employ Aboriginal labour actually defined Australian citizenship.

As a potent marker of inclusion in the community of colonisers, the reservation of the right to determine who was given official endorsement to employ Aboriginal workers was critical. The negotiation of the two Chief Protectors with the various local authorities in Derby gives us an indication of the classic colonial tensions that this produced. On the multiracial frontiers of white Australian settlement the authority of the centre to control race relations was to some extent weakened, and clearly local powerbrokers resented the Chief Protector's overbearing interference.

Hodge's rather fierce response may well highlight the start of a shift within white Australian attitudes regarding the meaning of citizenship. The Magistrate's insistence that people once permitted to enter the country and raise families were entitled to citizenship rights signalled a crucial move from the earlier concept of British subject status, as elaborated by Elliott. (In pointing out that under the 'birthright' formulation presented by Neville only Aboriginal Australians could be considered genuine Australians, Hodge was trying to show how absurd this was, not making a radical case for Aboriginal citizenship let alone Indigenous birthrights.)

Nothing in this story suggests that the Quan Sings were any better or worse employers of Aboriginal people than others. Instead, what emerges from the large file on 'Quan Sing's affair' is that the status of Chinese residents, and especially Australian-born Chinese, was a particular problem for 'White Australia' in the early twentieth century. If the issue of their employment of Aborigines was so controversial, what does this mean for our understanding of the Aboriginal permit system? The use of the term 'privilege' is especially revealing. Privilege connotes a thing that might be granted or withheld. To interpret the Quan Sing story usefully, it might be read most productively for its absences, and what it tells us about those for whom such 'privilege' was *not* controversial. By excluding Chinese Australians on the basis of race, and race alone, the permit system underlined that race was the first and foremost condition of the 'privilege of employing natives'.

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A double exile: Filipino settlers in the outer Torres Strait islands, 1870s–1940s[1]

Anna Shnukal

Surprisingly little has been published about the early Filipinos in northern Australia and their relationships with local Indigenous people, compared with their Japanese, Indonesian and even Chinese contemporaries.[2] Despite their origins in the 19th-century marine industries, each community manifests different characteristics, composition and historical trajectories. Examining the similarities and differences among them sheds light on early Australian history and the role played by government policy and powerful individuals in regions far from centres of power and poorly served by communications. The early Filipinos of Broome and Darwin were in general more socially and legally constrained and hence relatively less prosperous than the Filipinos of Torres Strait. Most of the latter lived on Thursday Island, the regional commercial centre, while others established majority Filipino communities on adjacent Horn Island (from 1889) and Hammond Island (from 1929). The subject of this article, however, is the small group who chose to live for an extended period on the outer (more remote) islands with their Torres Strait Islander wives and children and were thus doubly exiled – both from their homeland and the Filipino communities of Thursday and Horn Islands. It also examines the link between ancestral identity and land, arguably the topic of most interest to their descendants, and demonstrates the tenuousness of land claims made by contemporary Torres Strait Islanders of Filipino descent on the sole basis of orally-transmitted accounts of land acquisition.

'Exile' denotes prolonged absence from one's native land or former community; it may connote forceful expulsion, nostalgia or regret but this is not its core definition, otherwise one could not refer to 'voluntary exile' for economic, political, social, religious, artistic, even financial reasons (witness the wealthy United Kingdom 'tax-exiles' of the 1970s). For Australian writer, Kate Jennings, and others of her generation, the experience of 'exiling ourselves – it was more

1 Sources for this paper include the Somerset and Cooktown registers of births, deaths and marriages; Missionaries of the Sacred Heart register of baptisms 1884–1894; Murray Island register of births, deaths and marriages 1885–1961; alien registration cards 1916–1917; Queensland Department of Native Affairs correspondence; Thursday Island court records; tombstone inscriptions, divers' registers, newspaper reports and Torres Strait field research notes from interviews 1980–2010.

2 See, however, Austin 1992; Chase 1981; Cubillo-Carter 2000; Hennessy 2004; Ileto 1993, 2004; Nailon 2005a, 2005b; Nailon and Huegel 2001; Puertollano 2008; Ruiz Wall and Hunt 2008; Shnukal 2004.

serious than expatriation – was one of gain, of wholeness'.[3] The Filipinos under discussion were 'self-exiles', both 'pushed' by endemic poverty and 'pulled' by economic, social and political opportunities to seek their individual destinies in the strait.

Those who settled in the outer islands chose their double exile for personal reasons, yet they shared with their countrymen those social and psychological characteristics that bind a group together. Although not a culturally homogeneous or cohesive group, the Filipinos were perceived as such in Australia: they came from similar island backgrounds, their ages, physical appearance, education and economic interests were similar, as were their understandings, values, prejudices and ideals. Their islands were distant colonial outposts of the Spanish empire; the islands they found were distant colonial outposts of the British empire. Spanish rule bestowed Spanish names, a *lingua franca* and a deep Catholic belief; and as Christians, they were an anomaly among the strait's Asian communities,[4] although this did not lessen the prejudice of the European Protestant majority. Whatever their differences, the Filipinos recognised their mutual bonds as 'countrymen' and their lives were as intertwined at sea as on shore: they lived cheek by jowl both on the boats and in the cottages and boarding houses of Thursday Island. Almost all of them continued to work in some capacity in marine occupations until physically unable to do so.

Filipinos in the Torres Strait marine industries

Filipino seamen arrived in Western Australia to join its pearl rush from the late 1860s, moving across northern Australia as opportunities arose. Payable quantities of pearlshell gathered on Warrior Reef in early 1870 set the Torres Strait industry in train but, as in Western Australia, it depended to a large extent on unskilled, local Indigenous 'swimming divers', who took shell from shallow waters or reefs close to shore. A few years later the industry was transformed by adoption of the divers' dress: corselet, helmet and air hose. Divers could now descend to previously inaccessible depths in search of more productive beds and diving was no longer a minimally-skilled, individual occupation but a far more hazardous and uncertain undertaking. The rewards for experienced divers and tenders were prestige and high wages, almost comparable with Europeans, and far outstripping those of ordinary boat crews.

From the late 1870s mass indenture began to replace individual recruitment and large numbers of seaman signed shipping agreements in Asian ports for terms of between 18 months and three years. Pearling provided the impetus for Thursday Island's development and supported its various businesses either directly or indirectly. As a resource-based industry, it was hostage to volatile prices in an

3 Jennings 2010: 24.

4 A small number of adult Japanese became Anglicans from the mid-1890s, the early converts being instructed by the honorary catechist, Taira Kashiwagi, until his departure from Thursday Island in c1912. In time, many locally-born children of Japanese and Indonesian heritage also became Christians.

overseas market it could not control, the constant pressure of shell bed depletion and, equally, the serendipitous discovery of fresh fields. The Filipino population fluctuated in line with demand for shell, external forces determining the mass movements of Filipinos to other parts of north Australia, New Guinea, Dutch East Indies or back to the Philippines.

The first enumeration of the Torres Strait Filipino population was made in 1884 by the newly-arrived Catholic priest, who found 'about forty Filipinos' living on Thursday Island and 'about four hundred Catholics from Manila scattered amongst the various islands. They were there fishing for pearls'.[5] The following decade marked the height of Filipino participation in the marine industries but by the mid-1890s Filipinos without strong ties to Australia were beginning to leave the region, particularly after the introduction of restrictive race-based legislation from 1901. Overseas markets for shell collapsed in 1905 and again during the First World War.

1912 was the last year in which Filipinos were employed as divers and persons-in-charge in Torres Strait. They comprised around 20 per cent of the total between 1895 and 1898, with a slow decline from 1898 to 1901. The fleets with their Filipino divers and crews left depleted Torres Strait for the Dutch Aru Islands in 1905; others moved to Darwin, Broome and the New Guinea coast and thereafter Filipinos declined precipitously both in numbers and as a proportion of the total workforce. By contrast, the Japanese increased their participation to the point where, in 1906, they completely dominated the industry and continued to do so until the Second World War.[6]

As marine industry profitability rose and fell and the Filipinos' finances, physical capacities and family circumstances changed, they alternated between the more capital-intensive pearling industry and the less capital-intensive bêche-de-mer (trepang), trochus and tortoiseshell industries. During the 1880s and early 1890s they gained a reputation for raiding Cape York mainland camps for labour, abducting women and illegally employing Aboriginal men without signing them on articles. In response to these well-documented abuses and the disease and violent reprisals that followed, the government implemented a series of laws and regulations to constrain the activities of 'coloured men', including blameless Filipinos who fished from their small cutters along the coast of Cape York with their wives and children, taking on their affinal kinfolk as seasonal labour. The most significant was the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897* and later amendments, which made it illegal to carry locally-born women or minors on boats, no matter what their relationship was to the owner. *The Pearl-shell and Bêche-de-Mer Fishery Acts Amendment Act 1898* prohibited non-British subjects from renting or purchasing boats; the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* prevented them from bringing younger relatives and countrymen to Australia; and *The Aboriginals Protection Act 1901* placed restrictions on marriages

5 Dupeyrat 1935: 68.
6 Bach 1955: 279.

between Indigenous women and non-Indigenous men. These laws, however, were insufficient in the eyes of the local European shellers, who called for even more stringent legislation to curb 'alien' employment of Aboriginal people.

Marriages

The marriage and naturalisation patterns of early Filipinos (and to some extent Indonesians) in Torres Strait are unique among its Asian communities, in that they contracted many stable unions with local Indigenous women and were encouraged to become naturalised by the then government resident, John Douglas, who wrote approvingly that they were 'the only Asiatic people who have become thoroughly domesticated among us. When they have made a little money, they send an order home for a wife; they then marry, beget children, and frequently become naturalised'.[7] A man's choice of wife – based on his individual values, personal aspirations and economic circumstances – was, in hindsight and based on his Australian-born descendants' biographies, the chief determinant of their fate until the 1970s.

Contemporary documentation of the earliest unions between Filipino men and local Indigenous women is fragmentary, since Catholic marriages were not performed on Thursday Island until October 1884 and only legal marriages were registered. Vital registration and baptismal data also provide evidence of a few unmarried couples and their offspring, as do tombstones and incidental details in court documents. From this admittedly incomplete record, I have identified 20 Filipino men with Cape York Aboriginal partners and 40 with Torres Strait Islander partners. Judging from the names and birthplaces of the Aboriginal women, many of them were related and they, their children and their extended kinfolk were crucial to the success of the men's fishing enterprises, fetching water and wood from the mainland or small islands, cooking, gathering trepang from the reefs and smoking it for packing and export. These small family businesses were profitable enough to support everyone involved and maintain the boats and equipment.

Table 1 lists only those marriages between Filipinos and Torres Strait Islanders of non-Filipino descent mentioned in subsequent discussion. 11 of the wives are the daughters of European, Pacific Islander, Sri Lankan or West Indian fathers. A devastating series of introduced diseases, culminating in the 1875 measles epidemic, halved the original population of some 3000–3500.[8] By the 1880s the ethnic composition of the Torres Strait Islander population was significantly altered through intermarriage between local women and immigrants of diverse origin. Later marriages also took place between Filipinos and the Torres Strait-born daughters of Filipino fathers. These comprise arguably a separate ethnological category and are listed in Table 2, again limited to the families referred to in the paper. Without statistical analysis I cannot say how this rate compares with other immigrant groups but I assume such marriages were encouraged, even actively initiated, by the woman's father on cultural and religious grounds, since he generally decided his children's marriage partners.

7 Queensland Legislative Assembly Votes and Proceedings 1896, Annual report of the Government Resident, Thursday Island 1894–1895: 2.

8 Mullins 1992.

Table 1: Filipino men with Indigenous wives (Aboriginal wives marked with an asterisk)

Name	Dates	Birthplace	TS/ Aboriginal wife	Dates	Birthplace
BLANCO, Juan	c1864-1911	Capiz	*Annie DUPAR	c1878-1945	Escape River
CANENDO, Matteo	c1854-1922	Leyte	*Katie WANTO	c1870-1920	Cape Grenville
CARABELLO, Thomas	1848-1935	Cebu	Morabisi	c1871-1920	Yam Island[1]
CADAUS, Augustino	c1860-1952	Santa Iloco	Lavinia WARE	c1887-1924	Yam Island
DELACRUZ, Lopez[2]	c1876-1915	Manila	Anna RANDOLPH	c1884-1964	Nepean Island
DELGARDO, Isidoro	1860-1940	Algal	Guni Maria Louisa	c1868-	Yam Island
FABIAN, Gregorio	c1853-	Capiz	Kuruwara Philomena KADOBA	c1864-1933	Two Brothers Island
FRANCIS, Juan (Johnny)	c1853-1925	Capiz	Yadh Ellen GARCIA		Coconut Island
FRANCIS, Juan (Johnny)	c1853-1925	Capiz	Lenwath Nellie MATAU	c1881-c1914	Skull Island
FRANCIS, Juan (Johnny)	c1853-1925	Capiz	Uludh Patagam GARIBA IKUL	c1874-1930	Skull Island
GALORA, Pedro	c1840-1920	San Aciento	Clara GONELAI	c1866-1909	Jervis Island
GARCIA, Andrew			Yadh Ellen		Skull Island
GUIVARRA, Pedro	c1867-1899	Masbate	Wazan Annie PITT	1881-1933	Murray Island
LLOREN, Magno	c1881-	Leyte	Felicia Magdalina PITT LOSBANES	c1886-1912	Halfway Island
LOHADO, Antonio	c1868-1918	Antique	Nancy SAKI	c1871-1916	Burke Island
LOSBANES, Cyriaco	c1878-	Iloilo	Felicia Magdalina PITT	c1886-1912	Halfway Island
MONMARILE, Firmino	c1877-	Lingayan, San Fernando	Margaret Mary	c1886-	Yam Island
RAVINA, Pedro	1862-	Zambales	Siau LIFU	c1884-1911	Darnley Island
REMIDIO, Pablo	c1865-1941	Vigan	Caroline Maria LIFU	c1871-1902	Murray Island

Name	Dates	Birthplace	TS/ Aboriginal wife	Dates	Birthplace
ROAS, Ramon[3]	c1856-1926	Zamboanga	Kias Mary Ann	c1866-1940	Banks Island
SPAIN, Claudio	c1868-1928	Marianas	Jane	c1872-1912	Darnley Island
SUECO, Sabelo	c1862-1902	Cebu	Mary WALTON	1871-1918	Warrior Island

[1] Although Morabisi's birthplace is recorded as Yam, she was the daughter of a Sri Lankan seaman and Konai from Darnley Island; she is elsewhere referred to as a 'halfcaste', Kemuel Kiwat, pers comm, 1996.

[2] Descendants took the surname 'Lopez'.

[3] Descendants anglicised their surname to 'Raymond'.

Table 2: Filipino men with Torres Strait Islander wives of Filipino descent

Name	Dates	Birthplace	TS-Filipino wife	Dates	Birthplace
DORANTE, Santiago	c1865-1948	Samar	Wasada NAPOLEON	c1887-1945	Murray Island
IRLANDES, Raymundo	1896-	Leyte	Victorina (Nina) LOPEZ	1902-	Thursday Island
KANAK, Joseph	c1866-1939	Guam	Raphaela FRANCIS	c1898-	Darnley Island
LLOREN, Magno	c1881-	Leyte	Luisa CARABELLO	1902-	Darnley Island
REMIDIO, Pablo	c1865-1941	Ilocos	Nicolossa HIERONYMO MORALES	1885-	Banks Island
SABATINO Nicholas	1871-1948	Iloilo	Johanna LOHADO	1898-	Darnley Island
SIM, Eustacio	c1864-1931	Panay	Maria Eusebia GALORA	1889-	Thursday Island
XEROMENES, Domingo	c1874-1914	Cebu	Eleanora ROAS	c1889-1939	Thursday Island

Women traditionally married young, soon after puberty, and there can be a considerable age difference between husband and wife. Ages are generally approximate but among the Filipino-Torres Strait Islander wives for whom we have recorded birthdates, the youngest was Maria Eusebia Galora, who married Eustacio Sim, then 24, when she was just 13 years and 11 months old; Eleanor Roas was 15 when she married Domingo Xeromenes aged 30. Another marked trend is the number of marriages among the children of Filipinos seen in the Blanco, Bullio, Canendo, Dorante, Elarde, Garcia, Guivarra, Irlandes, Kanak, Lopez, Manantan, Pasquale, Raymond (Roas), Remidio, Sabatino and Sueco families.

During the early years, there were relatively few constraints on the young men's movements and sexual relationships must have been common with women on the islands close to the pearling grounds. Before 1884, however, the only negotiation was with the woman herself and her kinfolk. The authorities labelled these unregistered unions 'prostitution' and suspected the men of entering into them for the basest of motives. In 1901 the state began to interfere in marriages between Indigenous women and non-Indigenous men: under section 9 of the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Acts 1897-1901*, they could not marry without written permission from the chief protector, acting on advice from the local protector. The then chief protector, however, took the enlightened position that, since it was 'a practical impossibility to prosecute all the men – Europeans, Asiatics, and [Pacific] Islanders – living with aboriginal females, under the harbouring clauses of the Act', he encouraged marriage 'rather than lay my department open to the reproach of sanctioning concubinage and prostitution'.[9]

This original tolerance (though not approval) of interethnic marriage was overtaken by a growing ideological commitment to 'racial purity' and a revulsion from 'miscegenation', which swept the Anglo-Germanic world (including Australia) during the interwar years. The local protector sought to extend his control over the marriages of the previously exempt 'half-castes' of Thursday and adjacent non-reserve islands, including the children of Filipino-Indigenous marriages, who were technically 'Australian-born Filipinos'. In the early 1920s Santiago Remidio (Filipino father and New Caledonian-Murray Island mother), was refused permission to marry Nazareth Ansey (Rotuman father and Rotuman-Murray Island mother) unless both became permanent residents of Murray Island and Santiago agreed to relinquish his 'unprotected' status and become 'subject to full departmental control as a native'.[10] There was, however, no attempt to control the Filipino-European children or others of mixed Filipino heritage.

Land tenure in the outer islands

Land and kinship are the interlinked foundations of Torres Strait Islander traditional society: both were necessary for survival and both continue to be a source of conflict. Among issues raised during the native title claim process were the ownership/custodianship distinction and the status of unwritten agreements giving immigrant heads of families in the outer islands rights of access to and use of another's land. Surviving documents, as well as oral accounts by descendants and others, throw light on such issues and, despite their disparate provenance and viewpoints, confirm each other in many details. In addition to agreements allowing an outsider to build a house and establish a garden on a particular

9 Queensland Parliamentary Papers 1906, 'Annual report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals 1905': 15.

10 Chief Protector of Aboriginals to Protector of Aboriginals, Thursday Island, 29 May 1923, Queensland State Archives [hereafter QSA] A/58773.

piece of land in exchange for money or goods, families might equally well establish themselves on land inherited by the wife from either parent, which was then passed to her children. However, while the occupational, special or informal leases granted by the authorities for specific purposes were officially registered, informal land tenure agreements generally went undocumented.[11] Some Filipino-heritage families complain of being disinherited by the native title process but the settling of most Torres Strait claims means that evidence can be considered more dispassionately and in a less litigious environment than previously. The following case studies illustrate the family context in which land transfer was negotiated and the limitations of unwritten agreements and inherited memories.

Eastern islands

Murray, Darnley, Stephens and Nepean Islands comprise the eastern islands, inhabited by the Miriam people originally from the Kiwai region of New Guinea. Foreigners who married local women lived on their wives' land and children born on the island were considered to have certain rights to small parcels of land. The nature and extent of those rights, however, are strongly contested. Pablo Remidio and Juan Blanco and their families lived for a period at Murray Island on their wives' estates: Caroline Maria Remidio inherited land from her mother and the Blancos presumably lived on land owned by the family of Annie's first husband, a Murray Islander named Ned Dupar. Santiago Remidio, born in 1888 at Murray Island, inherited a portion of land at Mas from his mother. On 5 July 1924 he officially made Sagigi caretaker during his absence. On 15 November 1924 Epseg, appointed caretaker for Caroline's land, Gazir, when she left the island, officially handed back the land to Santiago, although he remained caretaker until the land was required. These agreements were signed by the parties, witnessed by the local schoolteacher and recorded by the Murray Island court. Further entries minutely describe the shape, extent and boundaries of the land.[12]

Darnley, Stephens and Nepean Islands were all settled from Murray Island. They are intervisible, tiny Nepean lying between larger Darnley and smaller Stephens Islands. In 1885, after the removal of Pacific Islanders from Murray to Darnley Island, the Indigenous population became a minority, although they retained almost all of the land. After the discovery of the 'Darnley Deeps' shell beds in 1893, Darnley became a centre for pearling operations and for about a decade hosted a small Filipino community. Giving evidence into the death of Cyriaco Losbanes, in December 1903, Juan Blanco stated 'plenty my countryman there'.[13] They included Blanco himself, Thomas Carabello ('Thomas Manilla'), Louis Castro ('Louis Manilla'), Juan Francisco Garcia (Johnny Francis), Pedro Guivarra, Joseph Kanak, Magno Lloren, Cyriaco Losbanes, Pedro Ravina, Sabelo

11 For example, land for a bêche-de-mer or pearling station could be granted under section 10 of the *Pearlshell and Bêche-de-Mer Fishery Act 1881*.

12 Murray Island court records 1924; Colin Sheehan, pers comm, 2003.

13 Inquest into death of Ceriaco Losbanes, QSA JUS/N317/384/03.

Sueco and their families. Most of them left for Thursday or Horn Islands during various closures of the beds but others remained. The children of Thomas Carabello and the Dane, Thomas Randolph, grew up with the Pau children at Sebeu, part of Isem on Darnley Island, on Pau family land.[14]

In August 1982, a few months after Koike Mabo launched his eponymous court case, Joseph Sabatino spoke to me about the land belonging to his grandfather, Joseph Kanak, at Darnley Island, which was being used by Charlie Gela. He explained that, because he and his wife had moved to the Hammond Island Roman Catholic mission after their marriage in 1954, they had lost that land. Land was under the control of the council and could not be sold.[15] He was referring to Egriu 'Village', which Francis leased from the biggest landowner, the *mamus* ('chief') Bogo Pilot. According to descendants, Francis gave Egriu to his daughter, Raphaela, after her marriage to Joseph Kanak but handwritten letters from Francis to the chief protector indicate that the agreement with Pilot was in the nature of a lease rather than a purchase: in the first, he writes 'I rent the ground from Mamouse and in Darnley for 20 years'; in the second that 'the agreement is up now, with me and Bogo and he hand over this property to my daughter Rafila'.[16]

Joji Ohshima, leader of a Japanese ethnographical research team to the strait in the late 1970s, relates the history of ownership of 'Village Z' on Darnley Island. He chose to study land, because it 'is the most important asset of Darnley Islanders and land tenure indicates how island social relationships work' and because, in this particular village, 'the history of land ownership and inheritance of land is relatively clear'. Although he names neither the place nor the individuals concerned, it is possible, from information from the families concerned, to reconstruct the relevant early sequence of events. I have inserted names and dates in square brackets.

> Up to about one hundred years ago the area where Village Z [Egriu] is now located belonged to a native Erub Island man [Bogo Pilot]. Around 1900–1910 a Filipino fisherman [Johnny Francis] bought a block of that land for £50, married a woman of Erub [actually from Skull Island] and lived there. The couple had a daughter [Raphaela] and they gave the land to her and moved to Auridh [Skull Island]. That daughter has since moved to Hammond Island, so she married out [to Joseph Kanak]. She gave the ownership to a friend, P [Charlie Gela], who lived in Keriam Village on the north side of the island, which is now abandoned. P took his children and nephews and moved to Village Z. It was at that time when Christian missionaries were coming into the area [1915].[17]

14 The connection was through Eti, the Pau family ancestor, whose sister, Konai was the maternal grandmother of the Carabello and Randolph children, Kemuel Kiwat, pers comm, 1996.

15 Joseph Sabatino, pers comm, 1982.

16 John Francis to Chief Protector of Aboriginals, 17 November 1911 and 8 June 1915, QSA A/58658.

17 Ohshima 1983: 495. Ohshima must be referring to the handover from the London Missionary Society to the Church of England in 1915. Margaret Lawrie was told in the 1960s that the owner

However, the local protector had the power to ignore such agreements and send any immigrant-headed family away from a reserve island. This was supposedly the case for Guam-born Joseph Kanak, who, his family claim, was evicted from Darnley Island to Hammond Island 'for inciting the natives' and asked the Gela family to caretake the land.[18] In 1915 Kanak left the diving fleet after his marriage to the convent-educated Raphaela Francis and the couple made their home at Egriu, Raphaela's birthplace, where their first seven children were born.[19] Kanak served as a local policeman for the next 15 years while also tending his gardens, which 'were at once the pride and envy of the natives and half-castes'.[20] There is no written evidence that Kanak was evicted from Darnley Island but the authorities certainly kept an eye on outer island 'half-caste' families for signs of dissent. The Kanak family's decision to relocate to Hammond was probably prompted more by the priest's urging, the prospect of freedom from government 'protection' and regular access to the sacraments, the promise of good land for gardening and closeness to their two daughters who were then boarders at the Thursday Island convent.

As to Stephens Island, it had lost most of its Indigenous population by the late 19th century, when 'Claudio Spain', a whaler from the Marianas, took a Darnley Island woman, Jane, to live there with him. Claudio died on the island in 1928. He and Jane had a daughter, who married a son of Bogo Pilot, and two sons, one of whom took the surname 'Cloudy', the other 'Stephen' after the name of the island. Nepean Island was uninhabited when Bogo Pilot permitted Santiago Dorante to settle there with his family. It is said that the argumentative Dorante originally settled on Darnley Island, where several of his nine children were born, but came into conflict with local residents and Pilot may have leased him Nepean to avoid further confrontations and/or possibly through a relationship with his Murray Island wife, Wasada.[21] Dorante family members moved away in the early 1930s, some to Stephens Island and others to the Hammond Island mission and the island is again uninhabited.

Central islands

Yam Island, near Warrior Reef, was another centre of pearling operations. When I lived there briefly in 1982, I was told that it was once the site of a small 'Malaysian' community and shown a 'Malaysian' child's grave. Juan Blanco's second child was also born on Yam Island (his first was born at Darnley Island) and the Cadaus, Delgardo and Sabatino families lived there for a considerable

of the fishtrap at Egriu was 'Francis (Manila man, Aurid)', Lawrie, Folder on eastern island fishtraps, MS MLC 1791–334, John Oxley Library (now Queensland Memory), State Library of Queensland.

18 Angie Ross Akee, pers comm, 1988.

19 His last entry as a holder of a man-in-charge licence is in February 1915, Register of men in charge licences, 1915–1957, QSA SRS721/1.

20 *Annals of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart*, 1 December 1939: 415.

21 Alma Pilot, pers comm, 2008.

time. At Yam Island in September 1931, Fr Doyle gave communion to three 'old Manila men', possibly Augustino Cadaus, Isidoro Delgardo and Nicholas Sabatino.[22]

Cadaus had married a Yam Island-born woman, Lavinia (Nellie) Ware, the daughter of a New Caledonian fisherman and a Yam Island woman in a Catholic ceremony in 1906, and their two daughters were born at Yam. Cadaus, who worked as a tender and trepanger, is described in one record as 'half Filipino', which usually indicates that his father was Spanish. He settled permanently on Yam Island with his two daughters and their families and died here in 1952, the last surviving Filipino settler.

The diver, Isidoro Delgardo, married another Yam Island woman, Guni Maria Louisa, again in a Catholic ceremony on Thursday Island in 1890. Their child, Francesca, was baptised on 9 June 1886, suggesting that the couple had been together since at least 1885 and through that relationship Delgardo would have had rights to settle on his wife's land.[23] There appear to be no surviving children and Delgardo eventually moved away to Hammond Island.

Iloilo-born Nicholas Sabatino married Johanna Lohado, the daughter of a Filipino father and Burke Island-born mother. Their first child was born at nearby Warrior Island, five subsequent children at Yam (one being Nicholas Florentino, whose grave was shown to me as evidence of the island's 'Malaysian' community), and the last two at Hammond Island. His descendants claim that Sabatino was given land at Yam by the traditional landowner, Baluz, in recognition of the close (possibly sibling) relationship between his wife's mother and Johanna's grandmother. Johanna's grandsons explained that her land is located on the shoreline and the almond tree she planted as a marker is still there.[24] At least two of her children, Florentino and Mary, were born under that tree and we may assume that their placentas are buried there, as required by custom. There was once an old bêche-de-mer pot on the shore but it has been replaced by a store, fish factory and fuel depot. Neither of Johanna's surviving children were acknowledged as having rights to the land, the council explaining that land on the island was scarce and that, being women and no longer residents, they did not have to be consulted.

Unlike Yam Island, the other small central islands were not major pearling centres but Skull Island was for many years home to the renowned diver, Johnny Francis ('Francis Cranky') from Capiz.[25] The island had supported an Indigenous population in the mid-1830s but was uninhabited when the ni-Vanuatu Matau and two countrymen took an occupation lease over it early in the 20th century.[26] Lenwath Nellie, one of Matau's children by Yarka from Skull Island, was

22 Deere 1994: 23.
23 Algal may be a suburb of Manila or possibly 'Algar', a Spanish place name. Francesca's birth was not officially recorded.
24 Ambrose Bin Juda and Bora Bin Juda, pers comm, 2005.
25 Francis arrived in Torres Strait in 1884. *Kranki* means 'crazy' in Torres Strait Creole.
26 Queensland Pearl-shell and Bêche-de-mer Commission 1908: 268.

Francis' second wife.[27] Francis and his third wife, Uludh Patagam, moved to Darnley Island around 1895, possibly for their children's schooling.[28] The chief protector had given Francis written permission to stay on Skull Island 'for life' on 6 September 1889 but in 1911 the new protector refused to allow Francis to return to Skull Island from Darnley, because the islands were about to be proclaimed Aboriginal reserves.[29] However, Francis and Uludh did return after his daughter's marriage to Joseph Kanak. The Anglican priest, Rev MacFarlane, described their life there in 1925, not long before his death, in a 'composite iron-and-coconut-leaf dwelling'. From his three central island-born wives Francis

> has inherited some family estates. But as far back as the [18]80s he was given permission by the then Administrator, the late Hon. John Douglas, to settle there, and with scrupulous care preserves the documents giving him the right of residence. Wrapped in old official envelopes and tied with thick cord, Johnny is confident that they are quite safe stowed away in a worn-out leather schoolbag. His will is there also, as well as his papers of naturalisation and some fishing licenses ... Just now he spends his days, hobbling along with the aid of a long stick, in planting coconut trees and making his garden.[30]

John Francis Kanak, who stayed with his elderly grandparents in the early 1920s, recalls that they

> lived from their garden and Uludh made bread from coconut *tuba* [coconut wine]. They never felt hungry. There was lots of water and there was a plantation of coconuts and he also planted taro, sweet potato and corn. Uludh made yeast with *tuba* – her husband showed her how to do it and she made bread with it … They ate a lot of fish and never wasted anything. Passing divers who knew him from the early days or by reputation would bring them rice and flour. Recognising Uludh's ownership of the island, visitors always asked her permission to anchor a boat or go onshore.[31]

Francis died on the island in June 1925. Uludh 'dressed him and put him inside the house and sat down outside to mourn. She made smoke signals to let her relations, who were trochus fishing near Roberts Island, know that something had happened to her husband. He was buried by hurricane lamplight and Uludh then went and sat outside in a small boat'. She was too fearful to remain on the island and resettled on nearby Yorke Island. When Joseph and Raphaela

27 There is no official record of Francis' marriage to Yadh from Skull Island, which may have occurred before 1884. Yadh was probably the mother of Cornelio Garcia, whom Francis raised as his son and whose father may have been a relation. Francis himself wrote that his three wives came from Skull Island.

28 John Francis to Chief Protector of Aboriginals, 8 June 1915, QSA A/58658.

29 Chief Protector of Aboriginals to John Francis, 11 October 1911, QSA A/58658.

30 MacFarlane 1925: 11.

31 Maria Johnson Gebadi, pers comm, 2000.

Kanak moved to the Catholic mission at Hammond Island, they took the ailing Uludh with them. She died shortly afterwards at Thursday Island, where she is buried.[32]

St Joseph's Roman Catholic mission at Hammond Island (Keriri)

The Hammond Island Catholic mission became the third Torres Strait community of predominantly Filipino character, when a number of outer island families exchanged departmental for church control and moved there after its opening in 1929. The mission was originally conceived of as a home for 'the Catholic half-castes of Torres Straits', who, being emblematic of the local failure of the 'white Australia' policy, were proving an embarrassment to authorities.

Hammond Island belongs to the Kaurareg from south-west Torres Strait, who in 1922 were removed at gunpoint to Banks Island. The Catholic church then negotiated government permission for a mission station which would give its residents 'the opportunities of practising their religion' and 'their own homes with garden plots, [where they could] enjoy a measure of independence and detachment conducive to their general well being'.[33] By late October 1928 Fr John Doyle had obtained a government grant and pledges from 'a few old Manila men' to settle there and train the young men 'to work the land, look after poultry etc'.[34]

The first applicant was Joseph Kanak, then aged about 65 and living with his family on Darnley Island. Persuaded by 'consideration of their present and future welfare', he set about transferring his home to the mission.[35] The Sabatino and Dorante families followed, as later did the elderly widowers Pablo Remidio and Isidoro Delgardo, and the population grew to 130 before the 1942 evacuation.[36] Other pre-war residents with Filipino connections include Annie Blanco and her third husband, the Aboriginal Bob Quetta; Annie's son and daughter-in-law, Silverio and Josephine Blanco; Annie Randolph Lopez with some of her children and their families; Alfonso and Marcellino Canendo and their wives. Only a minority of the original inhabitants returned after the war and the mission's pre-war Filipino character survives only in photographs and the memories of its residents.

Contemporary identity

Examples from three documents a decade apart demonstrate the changing legal classification of the wives and children of Filipinos. Until at least 1920, their

32 Maria Johnson Gebadi and Dulcie William, pers comm, 1999.
33 *Annals of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart*, 1 December 1939: 415.
34 Deere 1994: 17.
35 *Annals of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart*, 1 December 1939: 415.
36 Fr Tom Mullins, pers comm, 1988.

status was unambiguous: when Luisa Carabello Lloren, the Darnley Island-born daughter of a Filipino father and Yam Islander mother, left Australia with her Filipino husband and Thursday Island-born step-children in 1920, each was categorised as an 'Australian-born Filipino'.[37] In 1912 the outer islands were designated as reserves and the children living there became 'Aboriginals', whereas those living on and around Thursday Island were increasingly known as 'Filipino half-castes', whatever the legal classification of their fathers, on the basis of their Indigenous maternal ancestry: in 1930 Gregorio Galora, son of the naturalised Pedro Galora, referred to himself as 'a half caste Filipino'.[38] On the mainland in 1941, however, Isabella Ravina, daughter of Pedro and Siau Ravina, is referred to as 'an Island girl'.[39]

Stone's description of the wellsprings of political action could equally well be applied to the construction of personal identity:

> The individual is moved by a convergence of constantly shifting forces, a cluster of influences such as kinship, friendship, economic interest, class prejudice, political principle, religious conviction and so on, which all play their varying parts and which can usefully be disentangled only for analytical purposes.[40]

The third and fourth generation, especially those born on the mainland and who are well-educated professionals, emphasise their Indigenous rather than Filipino family connections, which in many cases are barely remembered or acknowledged. Changing legislation and ideology have influenced their self-identification: while aware of their Filipino ancestry, they grew up identifying as Torres Strait Islanders, more familiar with their maternal Indigenous heritage, knowing the Philippines only through inherited stories. They were enculturated not as Filipinos but as Torres Strait Islanders, surrounded from babyhood by extended kin, their only difference being their physical appearance, Catholic religion and familiarity with a repertoire of songs and (at that time) exotic dishes and musical instruments. With the exception of Dorante, Kanak and Sabatino, their names and stories are largely forgotten today, with daughters assuming the surnames, religion and 'custom' of their Torres Strait Islander husbands and sons remaining on the mainland post-war. Thus, Adam Lees, a descendant of Juan Blanco and a senior Indigenous Affairs Advisor at Mount Isa Mines, previously employed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, identifies himself only through his ancestral connections with 'Mer Island (Peibre Clan) and with the Indigenous people of Cape York Peninsula'. The Torres Strait Islander identity of Maria Dorante Mene, who works for the Queensland Health Department, lies in her knowing her unique place in the world. Secure in that

37 Certificates of Exemption from Dictation Test, NAA J2483 287/100, J2483 288/1, J2483 288/2, J2483 288/3, J2483 288/4.

38 Rex v Victoriano Blanco, Walter Busch and Casimero Manantan for assault, Circuit Court, Cairns, 1 April 1930, QSA A/28874.

39 Inquest into death of Milko Yovanov, QSA JUS/N1094/30/41.

40 Stone 1971: 65.

identity, which is at times questioned by Indigenous clients, she tells me: 'When I cross the water from Horn Island to Thursday Island I know who I am and where I belong.'[41]

Conclusion

The Filipino outer island settlers arrived in Queensland before federation, attracted to Torres Strait by employment opportunities and good wages. They came from great upheaval in their homeland to a no less turbulent Torres Strait, as its traditional society, religion, economy and politics were overwhelmed by an influx of foreigners. At a time of relatively free movement of people the Filipinos managed to exert a good deal of control over their lives before they and other 'coloured aliens' were targeted by economic, social, legal and administrative restrictions.

The men chose a different fate from the majority of their countrymen. By committing to a new home and immigrant identity among a different people, they were doubly exiled, a choice made less wrenching in places so geographically and topographically similar to their islands of origin (and by their frequent absences for work among compatriots). They all knew each other, with some connections being forged in the recruiting ports, others in the strait itself through shared work, recreation and worship. Despite the overwhelmingly Protestant character of the strait, they kept their Catholic religious faith, married their baptised Torres Strait Islander wives in the Thursday Island church and sent their locally-born children to the Thursday Island convent for education. They witnessed each other's marriages and became godparents to each other's children. Their children often intermarried.

The intangible legacy of the men and their families consists of stories, recipes and songs, the memories of older inhabitants and the skills in diving, *tuba*-production and music-making they passed on to their descendants and privileged others, as they did their first names and their parents' names. The Dorante family's tenure at Nepean has passed into local folklore: the fiery Santiago is said to have beaten his wife and, desperate to escape to the safety of her family, she swam through the shark-infested waters to Darnley Island. Wasada's totem was Beizam (Shark) and sharks formed a line on either side of her to keep her safe. The Filipinos' tangible legacy consists of graves in local cemeteries, coconut plantations – Johnny Francis claimed to have planted 'a couple hundreds of Cocoanut' trees on Skull Island and elsewhere[42] – fruit trees (pawpaw, banana, mango and pineapple), stands of bamboo and sisal hemp (to make 'Manila rope') and the first freshwater wells dug by Filipino divers and their crews. When they left their outer island homes, they generally sold their chickens, ducks and goats; their houses were torn down and any building materials of value, such as galvanized iron and nails, were salvaged for further building; their household gardens were

41 Adam Lees, pers comm, 2000; Maria Dorante Mene, pers comm, 2010.
42 J Francis to Chief Protector of Aboriginals, 20 December 1915, QSA A/58658.

taken over by later residents or are now overgrown and untended, like Thomas Carabello's rice plantation on Darnley Island. Only some of their wells are still in use, among the few physical survivals of the Filipinos' decades-long sojourn in the outer islands of Torres Strait.

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Indigenous Australian-Indonesian intermarriage: negotiating citizenship rights in twentieth-century Australia[1]

Julia Martínez

This story of Indigenous Australian-Indonesian intermarriage is one that sheds light on the changes to citizenship entitlement in Australia and the struggles of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Asian peoples to lead their lives free from government intervention. Indonesian-Australian contacts remain relatively unknown in Australian history. Early Macassan relations with the peoples of Northern Australia, brought to light by Campbell Macknight, stands out in Australian history as a significant first contact with Asia. More recently Regina Ganter has continued the Macassan story into the twentieth century exploring encounters with northern communities across Australia.[2] But the story of wartime disruption faced by the families of Indonesian men and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their long wait for citizenship rights has yet to be told.

In Australia, the history of Indonesian migration has tended to be overshadowed by European preoccupations with the larger numbers of Chinese immigrants and, in the context of the pearl-shell industry, with the skill and status of Japanese divers. In the 1981 special edition of *Aboriginal History*, Athol Chase wrote of encounters with Asians in the Queensland pearl-shell industry describing the influence of Japanese language and culture.[3] He mentioned the presence of 'Malays' on Thursday Island but gave little sense of the significance of their legacy for the Aboriginal peoples of northern Queensland. It would be almost 20 years before historians would begin to piece together these stories. My aim here is to focus on Indonesians in an effort to shed light on their experiences. This article builds on Regina Ganter's discussion of Indonesian families from Badu and Thursday Islands in the Torres Strait.[4] The terms Malay, and more specific terms such as Macassan and Koepanger, have been used to refer to people from the Dutch East Indies.[5] The term Indonesian, which relates to the post-colonial period after 1949, is used here as a general term.

1 Thank you to the anonymous readers for their helpful suggestions. This research was supported under Australian Research Council's Discovery Projects funding scheme (DP0771117).

2 Macknight 1976; Ganter 2006.

3 Chase 1981.

4 Ganter 2006: 193.

5 See Campbell Macknight's discussion of terminology in this volume.

While the Queensland case study is significant, it should be acknowledged that this story could be told of communities in both Western Australia and the Northern Territory. Western Australia's Kimberley coast was the site of generations of intermarriage between Indonesians and Aboriginal peoples. Sarah Yu has written of these experiences, critically exposing the stereotypes imposed on Malay-Aboriginal encounters including the notion that Asian fathers did not care about their children. She points to the fact it was the government policy of deportation that forced Malay fathers to leave their children behind.[6] Christine Choo has explored the restrictions imposed by missionaries in their effort to curtail contact between Aboriginal women and Malay men.[7] In Darwin, another of the pearling ports, Malay-Aboriginal families such as the Pons and Ah Mats were well-known and respected. Further post-war immigration led to more Indonesians marrying into local communities.[8]

In exploring the lives of just a few Indigenous Australian-Indonesian families, I hope to demonstrate that their experiences, far from being marginal to Australian history, were central to post-war challenges to the White Australia policy. In the context of the immigration policy, marriages between Indigenous Australians and Indonesians highlighted inherent flaws in Australian immigration policy and the fact that citizenship legislation took little account of marriage status. The fact that these marriages also came under the jurisdiction of state-based administrators of Aboriginal affairs added a level of complexity to an already fraught issue of public interference in private lives.

The 2003 publication of *Lost in the Whitewash: Aboriginal-Asian Encounters in Australia* highlighted the need for Australian history to move beyond the black-white binary of the colonisers and the colonised.[9] Ann McGrath's contribution demonstrated the degree of government control over intermarriage, noting that the Northern Queensland Protector, Walter Roth, was opposed to Aboriginal marriage to 'coloured aliens'. His chief concern was that Chinese men, who had been barred from employing or cohabiting with Aboriginal women under the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897,* were marrying to get around the Act. By 1901 new regulations forced those wishing to marry to apply to the local police officer, who would then refer the matter to Protector Roth.[10] Each case was considered individually and in 1901 several Javanese and Malay men were granted permission to marry. McGrath also notes that in 1927 in Queensland four Malays were issued marriage permits.[11]

The level of government control over marriage demonstrates that the White Australia policy was far more than a matter of immigration restriction. It was the basis for internal population control including the criminalisation of miscegenation. In the first two decades after Federation, steps were taken to

6 Yu 1999: 66.
7 Choo 2001.
8 Yu 1999: 66; Choo 2001; Martínez 1999: 49. See also Stephenson 2009.
9 Edwards and Shen 2003: 9.
10 McGrath 2003: 44.
11 McGrath 2003: 45.

limit the growth of the so-called 'half-caste' Aboriginal population because of fears that population growth would undermine the work of government officials towards achieving a predominantly white population. In Darwin, where the Federal government had authority from 1911, anthropologist Baldwin Spencer advised against allowing intercourse between Aboriginal women and men of other 'races'.[12] He was mostly concerned to prevent Chinese men from having sexual relations with Aboriginal women but the policy was also aimed at white men.

The official stance on miscegenation was stated in section 53 of the Northern Territory *Aboriginals Ordinance 1918*:

> Any person (except an aboriginal or a half-caste not living with his wife) who—
>
> *(a)* habitually consorts with a female aboriginal or half-caste ; or
>
> *(b)* keeps a female aboriginal or half-caste as his mistress ; or
>
> *(c)* unlawfully has carnal knowledge of a female aboriginal or half-caste,
>
> shall be guilty of an offence.[13]

Men found guilty were liable for up to three months imprisonment. As in Queensland, interracial marriage was only permitted with the permission of the Protector.

Katherine Ellinghaus, in her study of interracial marriage, refers to national policies of 'biological absorption'.[14] It was not until the 1930s that biological assimilation was considered as an official policy. Dr Cecil Cook, Chief Protector of Aboriginals in the Northern Territory and AO Neville, Chief Protector in Western Australia, advocated the absorption of 'half-castes' into the white population.[15] Cook's policy was to encourage the 'mating of white male and half-caste female, thereby gradually eliminating colour'.[16] This was a controversial plan in the 1930s, not because of humanitarian objections, but because of the lingering belief in white racial purity. But this shift in racial policy made little difference to Asian men. Asian-Aboriginal relations continued to be policed and prevented in the context of immigration concerns, using the excuse that Asian men were a morally degrading influence.[17] For those few relationships that were permitted, it was on the understanding that minor exceptions would have little impact on broader population goals.

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12 'Northern Territory Marriage with Aboriginals', National Archives of Australia [hereafter NAA] A1/1 1912/3519.
13 Ordinance No 9 of 1918, *Government Gazette*, 26 October 1918.
14 Ellinghaus 2006: 208.
15 Anderson 2002: 246.
16 Cook to Morley, 28 April 1931, NAA A1/1 1936/6595.
17 Martínez 2006: 142.

Indonesians arrive in Thursday Island

This account of Indigenous Australian-Indonesian intermarriage begins in the 1870s when pearling stations were established on the islands adjacent to Thursday Island, Kaurareg territory, and thousands of Asian men were brought to work in the pearl-shell industry.[18] The first Malay divers were introduced shortly after 1874. Some men, from the western regions of the Dutch East Indies, were brought to Australia via Singapore, recruited by 'coolie' brokers and shipped under three-year contracts of indenture. Others, from the eastern islands of the Dutch East Indies, were recruited from Kupang in West Timor, Ambon, and Dobo in the Aru Islands. They came from islands in Timor and Maluku, including Babar, Roti, Alor and Sawu Islands. The cultural heritage of these islands, with animist traditions and Christian influences, had more in common with the Torres Strait Islands than with the Javanese culture most often associated with Indonesia. There were some obvious differences however. Jeremy Beckett has argued that the Asian men had a marked impact on Torres Strait society, as they 'introduced marriage payments in the form of cash and manufactured goods' which in turn prompted Torres Strait Islander men to offer matching payment for wives.[19]

The first census taken at Thursday Island in 1885 indicated a resident population of 139 Europeans, 77 Malays, 49 Filipinos, 20 Sri Lankans, 16 Aboriginal people, and a handful of Chinese, Japanese and Arabs. In that same year there were 257 Malays engaged in the marine industry and this peaked at 270 in 1886.[20] Apart from Malays, the pearling masters employed Pacific Islanders and 'Manilamen'.[21] In 1896 the population was 1354, including 626 Europeans, 233 Japanese, 119 Filipinos, 115 Malays, and Chinese, Pacific Islanders, Aboriginal Australians, Cingalese, and Javanese. There was a small second generation of Malays with the census recording three Malay women and 14 children. The number of Malays on fishing vessels remained steady with 270 Malays employed.[22] By 1902 there was a reduction in the number of Malays with the pearl-shell crews including 172 Malays compared with 397 Pacific Islanders and 246 Torres Strait Islanders.[23]

After 1901 the pearl-shell industry was granted an exemption from the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* and permitted to import Asian workers on yearly Certificates of Exemption. This exemption came under question in the 1910s and was only made official after a Royal Commission.[24] The decision to allow Asian indenture was made on the proviso that Asian indents would not remain in Australia permanently and that they would have limited contact with Australian society. Intermarriage defied both those objectives.

18 Shnukal and Ramsay 2004: 35.
19 Beckett 1977: 85.
20 Shnukal and Ramsay 2004: 37–38.
21 Beckett 1977: 82.
22 *Brisbane Courier,* 24 November 1897: 5.
23 Dashwood 1902: 4.
24 Ganter 1994: 112.

The Commonwealth *Naturalization Act 1903* replaced the *Queensland Aliens Act 1867*. Under the Queensland Act, Asians had been able to apply for naturalisation provided they were married and had lived in Queensland for three years.[25] The new Commonwealth Act denied naturalisation to any 'aboriginal native of Asia'.[26] Marriage, therefore, was no longer relevant to naturalisation.

While marriage may not have helped to secure permanent residence for Indonesian husbands, it did afford their wives a greater degree of freedom. If Torres Strait Islander women had been subject to the letter of the law, then by virtue of the 1903 Naturalization Act, which specified that a married woman took on her husband's nationality, then these women would have become citizens of the Dutch East Indies. But full citizenship was available to neither party as colonised subjects. Even so, these marriages did lead to the wives becoming exempt from the controls placed on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders under the Act. This, however, remained a legal 'grey area' throughout Australia. It apparently did not apply in the Northern Territory *Aboriginals Ordinance 1918*, in which 'Aboriginal' included 'a female half-caste not legally married to a person who is substantially of European origin or descent and living with her husband'. As in Thursday Island, however, in practice married women in Darwin were more likely to be permitted to live independently.

In 1904 Torres Strait Islanders were classified as 'Aboriginal' and the children of Asians and Torres Strait Islanders were classed as 'half-caste' and subject to the Act if they lived with or 'habitually associated with' Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.[27] In order to avoid these restrictions, Asian-Torres Strait Islander families moved to Thursday Island. Here they were apparently disconnected from their Aboriginal families, who were not permitted to move to Thursday Island under legislation aimed at segregating Asians from Aboriginal people.[28] One such example was Ahwang Dai, a Dayak, who came to the Torres Strait in the 1880s from Singapore and in 1891 married Annie from Badu Island and had 11 children.[29]

As Asian men and their families congregated on Thursday Island, the next generation of Asian-Aboriginal children were more likely to marry newly arrived Malays. Those children deemed to be 'half-caste' and under the age of 21 were still subject to the rule of the Protector. In 1914 the Protector of Aborigines, William Lee-Bryce denied Atima, the daughter of Ahwang Dai, permission to marry a Malay man. Instead, Atima was married informally in 'Malay fashion'.[30] In another case, Cissie Malay, who was 'designated as a half-caste Aboriginal woman and under the age of 21', was also forbidden to marry when Drummond Sarawak applied for permission in 1916.[31] Despite this, the couple were married

25 Shnukal and Ramsay 2004: 43.
26 'An Act relating to Naturalization', No 11 of 1903, Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers: 91.
27 Shnukal and Ramsay 2004: 44.
28 Shnukal and Ramsay 2004: 44.
29 Ganter 2006: 83.
30 Ganter 2006: 83–84.
31 Faulkner 2007: 6–7.

unofficially and their son Ali Drummond was born in 1917. Cissie Malay was the daughter of a Yadhaigana woman, Nara Para from Red Island, and a Javanese man known as Jimmy Malay.[32]

In some cases marriages were permitted. Bora Bin Juda, who was born in Macassar in 1895, came to work on Thursday Island aged 19.[33] On 29 December 1922, he married Mareja Doolah, who was born on Badu Island in 1902. In a letter to the Sub-Collector of Customs on Thursday Island, JG McLaren, Secretary of the Department of Home and Territories wrote that the Protector of Aboriginals had recommended that 'no further objection need be raised to the marriage in this case'.[34] He agreed to allow Bora Bin Juda to remain in Australia and to re-engage as an indent for further service 'subject to good behaviour'. The exception was made because Mareja Doolah was officially categorised as a 'three-quarter caste Malay'. But McLaren wrote that he would be glad if the Sub-Collector would inform employers that:

> the marriage of indents to local women is to be discouraged and that serious consideration will be given to the question of refusing to allow the re-engagement of any indent who in future marries locally.[35]

That is to say that after the marriage had taken place the men would be deported. An investigation showed that there were six other Malay indents married to or living with 'half-caste' Aboriginal women, namely Bagu Bin Amat (with two children), Olie Daybees (Willen Dewis), (two children), Hadji Salem (two children), Doola, (one child), Sayed Bada (five children), Tommi Loban (two children), and Subden Bin Osane (two children).[36]

It would appear that at this time the government's first priority was to prevent Indonesians from gaining permanent residence and that the prospect of a child being left without a father was justified on these grounds. McLaren wrote:

> it is realised that if an indent gets a lubra into trouble, it is reasonable to expect him to recognise his responsibilities in the matter; but if such a person were permitted to marry at Thursday Island and thus be practically assured of permanent residence, there would appear to be some danger that other indents might follow his example for the purpose of securing like concessions, and the question arises as to whether it would not be preferable on the whole to prevent marriage in such cases and to require the indent to leave the Commonwealth as soon as his term of engagement expires.[37]

32 Faulkner 2007: 5–12.
33 Application for Registration, 17 February 1940, NAA J25 1957/4689.
34 McLaren to Sub-Collector, 10 November 1922, NAA A1 1922/19013.
35 McLaren to Sub-Collector, 10 November 1922, NAA A1 1922/19013.
36 Customs and Excise Memo, 17 October 1922, NAA A1 1922/19013.
37 McLaren to Sub-Collector, 15 September 1922, NAA A1 1922/19013.

Given that marriage no longer served to make Malays eligible for naturalisation, it was a curious reading of the law, to suggest that marriage to an Aboriginal Australian would 'practically' assure them permanent residence.

In another case, in Western Australia, there was no such assumption. In 1936, after a Malay indent married a 'half-caste' woman, the Broome Pearling Inspector stated that despite the marriage he would have to leave the country 'when he ceases to be employed on pearling vessels'.[38] Despite this, the man was permitted to remain in Australia in yet another example of officials bending the rules.

In 1939 with the review of the Protection Act by Chief Protector Bleakley two separate Acts were promulgated in Queensland: the *Aborigines Preservation and Protection Act 1939,* and the *Torres Strait Islanders Act 1939*. While Torres Strait Islanders were described as a distinctive group, and believed to be living in a 'more developed' way than mainland Aboriginal people, they were still subject to similar government surveillance and control of work and wages.[39] Torres Strait Islander women who had married Malay men and were living outside the Protection Act on Thursday Island were relatively free from this control, but that was to change during the Second World War.

War-time evacuation

On 24 January 1942, fearing that Japan was about to attack Australia, the government gave the order to evacuate Thursday Island.[40] The evacuation ships made their way south to Cairns and the *Orminston* disembarked a number of Aboriginal-Indonesian families. Afterwards there were claims of an adverse public reaction to the new 'coloured' arrivals. The Army and the Deputy Director of Native Affairs, Cornelius O'Leary, decided to send the next shipment of approximately 200 Thursday Islanders on the *Katoora* and the *Britha* to the Cherbourg Aboriginal Settlement located 272 kilometres north-west of Brisbane. Once there, the men were signed up to work in a range of jobs including sugarcane-cutting, cotton-picking and cattle work.

While the Malay men were sent out to work, the women and children mostly remained in Cherbourg. They found themselves alone, cold, and unable to leave because they were now being treated as 'wards' under the Act. From 1911 to 1940 nearly 6000 mainland Aboriginal people had been removed to settlements such as Cherbourg as part of an attempt to segregate the Aboriginal population. Their first experience of this regime was shocking to Thursday Island families.[41]

38 Pearling Inspector to Chief Pearling Inspector, 2 April 1936, State Records of Western Australia (SROWA) 477 245/1936.
39 Ganter and Kidd 1993: 553.
40 Osborne 1997: 16.
41 Osborne 1997: 31–35.

In June 1942 Willem Dewis (known as Olie Daybees), an Indonesian from Thursday Island, went to Cherbourg to try to get the Indonesians released with the idea that they could move to Brisbane. Dewis was born in Tepa on Babar Island in Maluku in 1893. His wife, Noressa, was born on Badu Island. They had eight children, the youngest, Josephine being born in 1945. O'Leary supported racial segregation to an extent that was unfamiliar to Thursday Islanders and condemned Dewis' attempt to 'get every Malay to Brisbane' where, O'Leary argued, 'they would become a menace to health and objectionable residents of any suburb'.[42] He claimed that all the Indonesians were employed in Cherbourg whereas in Brisbane they would be unemployed.

Dewis had already contacted Police Sergeant Holly at Thursday Island in an attempt to gain his help. Living in Red Hill, Brisbane, Dewis wrote that they had been forced to go to Cherbourg which he described as 'not a nice place' and 'only good for the aboriginal not for us because you know for yourself Sir how we lived up T.I.' He complained about the quality of the food they were given, being fed with bread and jam but no butter. They were given meat every second day but no vegetables. He said he had complained to Mr O'Leary but to no avail. Dewis wrote that he did not wish the Department of Native Affairs to be in charge of them. Demonstrating the extent of their lack of personal freedom, he wrote that the families at Cherbourg had been split up with husbands and wives sleeping apart in dormitories, and boys and girls also sleeping apart. He wrote that they 'are like prisoners because they are not allowed to sit with their family and have their meals'.[43]

O'Leary was adamant that the Thursday Island evacuees were not to leave Cherbourg. He wrote to the superintendent of Cherbourg stating that: 'Under no circumstances must any evacuee leave your Settlement without my permission'. His concern was that Palos Annidlah, stepfather of Sammy Lewin, had apparently been given permission to leave by the superintendent. Sammy Lewin had come to Brisbane and had been admitted to Wattlebrae Hospital suffering from typhoid fever which they presumed he had contracted at Cherbourg Settlement. The superintendent was ordered to arrange for inoculations immediately.[44] Given that typhoid fever is usually contracted from contaminated food or water, this points to the dire state of hygiene in the Cherbourg Settlement.

Bora Bin Juda was living at the Cherbourg with his wife Mareja and their four children. He worked there until he broke his arm when breaking in a horse. In January 1943 Bin Juda left to look for work but his wife remained at Cherbourg. He was employed in a range of short-term jobs: as a builder's labourer for £4 per week, as a sugarcane cutter; and then in the Farleigh Sugar Mill for £5 per week. Later in 1943 Bin Juda went to Red Hill, Brisbane and was employed by the Civil

42 Deputy Director of Native Affairs, 24 June 1942, Queensland State Archives [hereafter QSA] IF/44.
43 Dewis to Sergeant Holly, 19 May 1942, QSA IF/44.
44 Deputy Director of Native Affairs, 22 May 1942, QSA IF/44.

Construction Corps on the New Dock at Bulimba for £15 per fortnight. He paid £1 per week to rent a house that he shared with his son Saul Juda who was then 15 years old.[45]

Whilst the men were able to leave Cherbourg to seek employment it was another matter to get their wives and children out. There was some suggestion that the government was paying for their accommodation but according to the Director of Native Affairs the fee for accommodation at Cherbourg was 1 shilling per person per day, payable by the husband. In the period from March to October 1942 the accommodation of one wife and six children was calculated as £64/1/- or several months wages. The men were sent letters demanding payment before their wives and children could be released. A poignant record of this troubled time was a simple telegram from Dorsena Bin Garape to her husband Assan Bin Garape stating: 'Can't leave here unless you pay settlement, love Dos'. In December 1942, Bin Garape, who was employed at the Mackay aerodrome, sent money for fares to Mackay and agreed to pay the rest of the money in instalments. Dorsena was given approval to join her husband in Mackay on 14 December 1942.[46]

The war years must have been extremely difficult for those who had large families, even after they were permitted to leave Cherbourg. Hassan Bin Awel, who was born in Amboina, Maluku in 1891, was married to Saia Ah Wang, born on Badu Island in 1909. They were married in 1926 and had seven children. Before the war Hassan was working on-shore in connection with the pearling industry. During the war years, Hassan was moved around Queensland. He shifted from Mackay to Chermside in February 1943 to work in the Civil Construction Corps camp and after one month was transferred to Tamborine for another five months. After that he went on to Meeandah for a few months and then to the Banyo Civil Construction Corps to work for the Main Roads Commission. In January 1944 he was living in Kelvin Grove with his wife and children. By the end of the year he had moved to live in Paddington, though he was still employed by the Banyo Civil Construction Corps. The government files that so carefully track his whereabouts have very little to say about the difficulties that his wife and children must have experienced during these years of constant moving. Two of their children were born during these years so they had small babies to look after as well. In February1947 Hassan moved again to live in Red Hill where he was employed by the City Council. The government then requested that he return to Thursday Island where he worked until his retirement in 1956.[47] His story is typical for the Indonesians who were evacuated from Thursday Island.

45 Reports by Constable 3142 Red Hill Station, 29 July 1943; Constable 3295, Rosalie Station, Brisbane, 26 July 1943; Constable 3063 Farleigh Station 14 August 1943, NAA J25 1957/4689.

46 'Evacuation Coloured People other than Islanders and Aboriginals', QSA IF/44.

47 Nulty, 20 November 1959, NAA J25 1957/12548.

Post-war Thursday Island – towards naturalisation

Following the end of the war, the government was eager to reestablish the pearl-shell industry in Queensland and most concerned that there were Asian indents moving around freely in Australia against the terms of their contracts. The Department of Immigration quickly located the men and demanded that they return to work in the pearling industry or face immediate repatriation. For those who were married to Torres Strait Islander women there was little choice. They were forced to return to Thursday Island. A list of pearling indents employed on Thursday Island during 1951 showed 22 Indonesians identified by their region of birth and these men had some 50 dependents.[48] The list included ten men from Timor who had arrived in Australia between 1908 and 1934; four men from Makassar, Celebes (Sulawesi) who had arrived between 1911 and 1936; six men from Ambon, arriving between 1914 and 1944; and three others.

Having lived in Cairns and Brisbane during the war years, it was difficult for many of the families to adapt to life back on Thursday Island. In 1950 a letter was sent to Senator Courtice on behalf of H Joseph, Secretary of the Indonesian Social Club protesting that they had been refused permission to visit Cairns with their children for a holiday. He said that they had been on Thursday Island from 14 to 34 years and that they were not naturalised 'although a considerable amount of money has been spent on legal costs in order to achieve naturalisation'.[49] This was the first suggestion that the pearl-shell workers were seeking naturalisation as a means to avoid deportation.

Historian Sean Brawley has explored a separate naturalisation case, which appeared before the High Court in 1949. Indonesian woman Annie Jacob came to Australia as part of the wartime evacuations from the Dutch East Indies with her husband Samuel Jacob and their children. Her husband died in 1944 and later Annie married white Australian John O'Keefe. Despite their marriage, the Australian government was not prepared to grant her permanent residency. Instead she was granted a temporary Certificate of Exemption from the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901–1948*. After Arthur Calwell tried to deport Annie the case went to court and the High Court determined in 1949 that she was not a prohibited immigrant on the basis of a technicality – the authorities had failed to administer the Dictation Test.[50] This case demonstrated beyond doubt that marriage to an Australia at this time did not help those seeking to circumvent the White Australia policy.

The Thursday Island cases were different as these men were long-term temporary residents with Australian-born children, but even these factors were not sufficient in making a case for citizenship. Even so, these factors did sway

48 P Kersley to Commonwealth Migration Officer, NAA J25 1958/850.
49 Collins to Courtice, 26 March 1950, NAA J25 1958/850.
50 Brawley 2006: 4–9.

the local officials. In June 1950 CW Kirk, Sub-Collector of Customs, who had been in contact with Joseph, wrote in support of their request to go on holidays to the mainland, stating:

> I might point out these people all have pretty large families all born on Thursday Is, they had sons overseas on active service in World War 2, and themselves worked on Allied small ships or on defence on the Island. The visits to the mainland for holiday purposes is requested that all should be permitted to go at different times, and it was also suggested at the meeting that the person going on a months holiday with his family should put up a bond. The attached list shows 23 Men and 16 Wives, including one De-facto, the number of Children would average five per family.[51]

The fact that Indonesians were denied freedom of movement within Australia reached the new Indonesian government. Indonesian independence in 1949 brought with it a review by the Indonesian government of colonial labour practices, including conditions in Australia's pearl-shell industry. By March 1952, the Indonesian government was considering banning Indonesian pearling indents from working in Australia.[52] In 1955, after failing to agree with the Australian government over rights of permanent settlement for Indonesian nationals, the Indonesian government banned further indentured immigration.[53]

While the Indonesians on Thursday Island were lobbying against the restrictions imposed on them by their status as indentured workers, in Canberra a broader debate was taking place over the administration of the White Australia policy. It is not clear to what extent the protests from Indonesians and their supporters influenced government policy. More likely, it was the case of the Japanese wives of returned soldiers that provided the initial catalyst for change. Mrs Cherry Parker, the Japanese wife of Gordon Parker, a white Australian man who had served with the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan, was the first Japanese 'war bride' to be permitted to enter Australia in 1952. Her story, which was splashed across the newspapers of the time, prompted a rethink of the stringent restrictions of the White Australia policy. The media emphasised the romance of their love story and made much of her personal beauty.[54] The front page of the *Argus* carried a photograph of their two young daughters and their Australian grandmother with the caption: 'The happiest grandmother in Melbourne'.[55] As Keiko Tamura observed: 'Their experience presented a case in which faithful love could conquer all barriers: racial, cultural, linguistic and of international relations'.[56]

51 Kirk, 19 June 1950, NAA J25 1958/850.
52 Australian Embassy, Djakarta, to DEA, 15 March 1952, NAA A1838/2 1531/49.
53 Martínez 2005: 137.
54 Tamura 2001: 249.
55 *Argus,* 11 July 1952: 1.
56 Tamura 2001: 250.

The Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council was asked to review the policy regarding non-Europeans in Australia and in 1954 the council voted to grant Australian citizenship 'to Asians who have permission to remain in Australia without any restrictions under the Immigration Act'.[57] A commitment was made to grant permanent residence to Asians with professional qualifications or distinguished in government or humanitarian service, but that admission of 'lower class' Asians should be prevented. When Harold Holt, Minister for Immigration, presented his recommendations to cabinet in July 1956 they included an additional proposal to adopt 'a more "liberal attitude" towards non-Europeans already in Australia who had breached their entry conditions, especially in relation to restrictions on their occupation'.[58] This recommendation was intended to help those pearling indents who were no longer working in the pearl-shell industry but might otherwise have been dismissed as 'lower class'.

The shift away from the pearl-shell industry was an important step towards achieving naturalisation. Once the Indonesian men were free from the restrictions placed on indents, they could qualify for naturalisation as permanent residents 'not under immigration restrictions'. Non-Europeans seeking naturalisation were required to have been resident in Australia for 15 years (as opposed to five years for Europeans) but this was a minor matter given that most of the pearling indents had been resident long before 1941.

The case of Cherry Parker inspired another important change, which was the 1956 decision to grant naturalisation to the Asian spouses of Australian citizens. She was naturalised in January 1957.[59] The term 'spouse of an Australian citizen' was soon applied to Indonesian men married to Aboriginal women. Since the passing of the 1948 *Nationality and Citizenship Act*, Aboriginal peoples had been formally Australian citizens, though this Act did not confer citizenship rights.[60] For example, Esek Anaktotote, who was born in Tepa on Babar Island in 1910, arrived in Thursday Island in 1926. In 1946 whilst living in Brisbane, Anaktotote married Possa nee Usope, widow of Paolos Annidlah. She was born on Badu Island in 1906. Possa had four children from her previous marriage to Timorese pearling indent Henry Lewin who had died around 1935.[61] Despite his marriage, in January 1948 the Department of Immigration decreed that if Anaktotote was not prepared to return to work in the pearling industry as an indentured labourer then he would be given one month's notice to leave the country. The Wanetta Pearling Company had offered to sign him on but as they had no pearling boats operating that year the government was not satisfied with this arrangement.[62] In 1957 his status was changed from 'pearling indent' to 'spouse of an Australian Citizen'. The Sub-Collector of Customs, HJ McMahon, reported in 1957 that he:

57 Tavan 2005: 90.
58 Cited in Tavan 2005: 94.
59 Tavan 2005: 95–98.
60 Chesterman and Galligan 1997: 156.
61 Esek Anaktotote, NAA J25 957/3859.
62 Kersley to Sub-Collector, 7 January 1948, NAA J25 957/3859.

> supports his wife, working on the waterfront as a casual labourer, when available. He receives very good pay. He own and works a small vegetable farm on one of the neighbouring Islands.[63]

At a time when the category of 'spouse of an Australian Citizen' could apply equally to a husband as to a wife, there was still the notion that his financial support for his wife was a necessary factor in his qualifying for this category.

The most pertinent change for Indonesian indents who were officially in Australia as temporary immigrants was the June 1957 recommendation to extend permanent residence and citizenship rights to all non-Europeans who had lived in Australia for 15 years but were still classed as temporary residents.[64] The Minister for Immigration, Athol Townley, formalised further conditions, that they were 'of good character; had not wilfully disregarded the conditions of their admission; had an adequate knowledge of English; and had taken part in normal Australian life'.[65]

Having lived under the shadow of the White Australia policy the indentured workers were finally offered the possibility of naturalisation, providing they passed English language tests and demonstrated involvement in so-called 'normal Australian life'.[66] In 1958 19 Indonesian nationals were granted Australian citizenship and over the next eight years a total of 142 Indonesians were naturalised.[67] Bora Bin Juda, for example, returned to Thursday Island in 1947 and engaged in pearling until his advanced years forced him to retire from the industry. In 1952 he was employed casually on the wharf.[68] In 1958 he applied to become an Australian citizen and was naturalised on 11 August 1960.[69]

While the new changes to the naturalisation legislation seemed to suggest that all the Indonesians would now be able to qualify for citizenship, there was still some degree of reluctance on the part of the administrators that suggested disapproval of intermarriage still existed. The application for naturalisation of Albert Herwawa in 1961 was one such case. Herwawa was born in Timor in 1906 and came to Australia in 1926. He returned to Thursday Island after the Second World War and married Ruth Ketchell. Following his application for naturalisation in 1961, the Sub-Collector of Customs sent the Immigration Department a favourable report. He noted that Herwawa had engaged in pearling part-time until 1956 and had worked as a casual wharf labourer since 1948. He was found to qualify for the criteria of mixing with Australians given that as a wharf labourer 'he constantly mixes with Australian workers' and the Sub-Collector noted that his

63 Report, 22 July 1957, NAA J25 957/3859.
64 Tavan 2005: 99.
65 Tavan 2005: 102.
66 Markus 1994: 171.
67 Markus 1994: 172.
68 Nulty to Secretary, 20 November 1959, NAA J25 1957/4689; Draney, 10 December 1952, NAA J25 1958/2442.
69 Bruce to Nulty, 4 September 1957, NAA J25 1957/4689.

home, which was very tidy, was amongst Australians, and that he was able to converse freely in English. He also mentioned that Herwawa was a member of the Malay Club and that his main hobby was fishing.[70]

A second report, however, was sent from the Thursday Island Police Station stating that Herwawa had married a Thursday Island woman, Ruth Ketchell, 'who is many years younger than he'.[71] This police report prompted the Commonwealth Migration Officer, TM Nulty, to write to the Director of Native Affairs seeking his view as to whether or not Herwawa should be granted citizenship. Nulty wrote:

> Asian pearling operatives, or former operatives, are only normally eligible to apply for citizenship by virtue of their marriage to Australian citizens but this in itself does not entitle them to naturalization, and each case is considered individually. As the majority of these pearlers … qualify to apply for naturalization only by reason of their marriage to native women, it is considered desirable to obtain the views of your Department on their suitability to acquire citizenship of this country before proceeding with the grant of naturalization to them.[72]

This request for the permission of the Director of Native Affairs reveals the persistence of the 'Protector' mentality. The Director simply pointed out that the Sub-Collector was responsible for these reports and made no further comment and Herwawa was granted citizenship in 1962.

The process of gaining naturalisation was not merely about freedom of employment or movement. It also conferred a greater financial security for these men as they retired after many long years of working for the benefit of the Australian economy. The story of Karel Kaprisi born on Babar Island in 1907 demonstrates this. He came to Thursday Island in 1926 and married Sophia Takai, a local Thursday Island widow, in 1948. Sophia was of Malay descent and during her stay in Cherbourg she was already widowed with three Malay-Japanese children. She and Karel had four children together and when she died it was left to Karel to care for the large family. In 1955, with diver's paralysis leaving him crippled with arthritis, he was receiving workers' compensation. In 1960, just months before his naturalisation, he received a letter from the Department of Social Services advising him that his benefits were liable to be terminated as he was not an Australian citizen. DA Radke, the Sub-Collector of Customs on Thursday Island, wrote to explain to the Commonwealth Migration Officer in April 1960 advising him that Karel was distressed because he was supporting a family. Thus Karel's naturalisation in August 1960 was a timely intervention and offered the prospect of a more secure financial future.[73]

70 Radke, 10 April 1961, NAA J25 1959/641.
71 Cavanagh, Senior Sergeant, 1 June 1961, NAA J25 1959/641.
72 Nulty to Director of Native Affairs, 27 June 1961, NAA J25 1959/641.
73 Karel Kaprisi, NAA J25 1959/156.

For some the 1960 naturalisation ceremony came too late. Bagu Bin Amat, who was born in Pontianak, Borneo in 1891, was married to Raima Ah Wang, a Badu Island woman. Together they had six children. The government finally approved his naturalisation application on 27 January 1959 but sadly Bagu Bin Amat died on 11 February 1960 before he could take up Australian citizenship.[74]

During the large naturalisation ceremony held in 1960 on Thursday Island nine Indonesians, former pearling indents, were naturalised. The town clerk reported that some 250 people attended the ceremony and the speakers were WJ Fulton, MHR, HA Adair MLA, and T Gilmore, MLA, who had a special message of congratulations from Dr Noble, the Minister for Health and Home Affairs.[75] With the Malay men confirmed as Australian citizens they were now entitled to vote in Australian elections. Ironically, their wives, the Australian citizens who helped the men to qualify for citizenship, were, as Torres Strait Islanders, not officially granted the right to vote under Queensland law until 1965 with the passing of the *Election Amendment Act 1965*.

With no new Indonesian immigration after the 1950s there was a gradual decline in the memory of Indonesian cultural heritage as the next generation tended to identify themselves as Torres Strait Islanders.[76] Samantha Faulkner wrote about her grandfather Ali Drummond acknowledging his Malay heritage, but also emphasising his current identification as a Torres Strait Islander, writing:

> Today, Ali is a respected elder and recognised across Australia. He's a Cultural Ambassador for Thursday Island and the Torres Strait, educating non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, which assists greatly in the role of reconciliation.[77]

The stories of Indigenous Australian-Indonesian marriages are important because they enable us to remember and celebrate the endurance of families who survived the dual burdens of immigration restrictions and the so-called protection of the various Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander acts. In the years since these men gained citizenship, there has been remarkably little recognition of their special place in Australian history. Theirs is a story of patience and persistence in remaining in Australia as temporary residents for some 50 years, hanging on by the tenuous threads of yearly Certificates of Exemption.

As a study of Australian citizenship and marriage law, this article has only touched on some of complex problems posed by this grey area of the law, and the often incompatible regulations imposed by the separate state and federal systems. More work is needed to understand the diversity of the state systems and more importantly the gaps between the letter of the law and its application.

74 Nulty to Adair, 13 July 1960, NAA J25 1958/3085.
75 Allen to Commonwealth Migration Officer, 18 August 1960, NAA J25 1959/1420.
76 Shnukal and Ramsay 2004: 46.
77 Faulkner 2007: 81–82.

The history of Indigenous Australian-Indonesian intermarriage provides a new, personal dimension to Australia's historical relations with Indonesia. While the histories of early Macassans have given us a sense of Indonesians as temporary visitors who remained outsiders, here, we see Indonesians in quite a different light, as settlers rather than sojourners and with close continuous ties to Aboriginal and Torres Straits peoples and with experiences of Australia that went far beyond their anticipated segregated role in the pearl-shell industry.

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Book Reviews

Digging up a Past by John Mulvaney, xiii + 348pp, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2011, ISBN 9781742232195 (hbk), $59.95

John Mulvaney begins this rewarding excavation of his own life and times by noting a preference for AB Facey's autobiography title, *A Fortunate Life*. There is no doubt that Mulvaney *has* had a fortunate life; certainly more so than Facey whose chronic bad luck – childhood work abuse, serious war wounds and close family loss – renders his title ironic. As he relates, Mulvaney considers his own life and career to have been punctuated by a succession of fortunate alignments, from his arrival at the University of Melbourne during its History Department's 'golden age' of the late 1940s, to his serendipitous presence at critical moments in Australian archaeological history, at Lake Mungo and at Kutikina Cave on Tasmania's Franklin River. But his emergence as a scholar versed in Old World prehistory just as reliable carbon dating techniques were developed during the 1950s was probably the most critical conjunction. The dating breakthrough shifted archaeology methodology from one based on analogy and deductive conjecture to one of incontrovertible fact. As Mulvaney puts it, his 'probing of dusty resources in the State Library during 1950, coincided with Willard Libby's testing of the dating potential of radiocarbon 14, in America. Australian archaeology grew in step with this revolutionary time machine'. This new certainty gave the principal impetus to Mulvaney's pioneering, paradigm-shifting role as Australia's foremost archaeologist, for at least three crucial decades. During his active career the acknowledged span of Aboriginal occupation in Australia was extended tenfold, from barely 5000 years to 50,000 – where it rests today, give or take a few millennia.

Archaeology became a race to the bottom. Stratified sites in landscapes which had undergone demonstrable geomorphological and ecological change were suddenly desirable, and by 1959 Mulvaney had pushed the earliest date for Australia's human occupation to 5000 years, based on his recent excavations at the Fromm's Landing rock-shelter on the Murray River. Just three years later, a meticulously documented sequence of 16,600 years' occupation at Kenniff Cave in Queensland meant that Australia had a Pleistocene human past that could be discussed meaningfully against an Old World context. Of course, luck played a part in drawing Mulvaney to these sites, and in obtaining the dates; but his substantial contributions as scientist and historian, scholar and public intellectual, owe more to his formidable capacity for concentrated research, and a certain doggedness. This has marked his commitment to many worthy projects – and a few lost causes. *Digging up a Past* provides the inside story on all these, ranging from Mulvaney's creative partnership with Rhys Jones in the successful

archaeologically-inspired campaign to save Tasmania's Franklin River from being dammed, to the disappointing fate of the Pigott Committee's report on the new National Museum. Mulvaney remains bitter, for good reason, about the eventual result: a diminished museum 'on a cramped piece of land with no room for expansion', housed in a 'structure that is reminiscent of a fun fair … with curved walls and constricted spaces that are unsuitable for exhibits'.

As the eldest of five children, growing up in modest circumstances in a south Gippsland town, before his schoolteacher father took up a position at Rainbow in the arid Victorian mallee, Mulvaney learnt to make the most of rare opportunities; instances of vacillation or moral dilemmas do not enter this book's script. Otherwise, the young Mulvaney's course towards the Academy, and specifically the Humanities, was steered by a succession of good teachers and his own innate abilities, signalled early and emphatically by his 1937 grade 7 examination results at Rainbow Higher Elementary School, ranging from 'eight per cent for Arithmetic and a fail in Algebra, to 95 for English and Geography and 100 per cent for History'. From then on it seems that Mulvaney not only kept a weather eye on his own academic performance, but was keenly aware of the quality of education being offered to himself and those around him. This is as true of his intensive training as a navigator in Canada and England during the Second World War, as of his undergraduate studies and teaching at the University of Melbourne, Cambridge University and the Australian National University. In fact, aside from holding the reader's interest in his own life and career, Mulvaney has managed to deliver a fascinating intellectual history of several university departments, introducing us in turn to a succession of characters who helped to shape twentieth-century ideas and cultural life in Australia, including Leonhard Adam and Kathleen Fitzpatrick, John O'Brien and George Nadel, not to mention Manning Clark ('even banal material sounded profound'). Similar insights provide thumbnail sketches of some of the key figures of international prehistory, such as Grahame Clark, Glyn Daniel, Abbe Henri Breuil or Charles McBurney, whose lectures and supervision 'combined profundity with impossible concepts'. McBurney invited Mulvaney to join his 1952 expedition to Cyrene in Libya, 'one of the great experiences' in his life, and one which helped to mould the archaeological methodology he would apply so successfully on his return to Australia. It seems to have been Mulvaney's formative years spent in the Melbourne department which equipped him with a sure and steady grasp of his own culture, the signature basis of his confident interrogation of Australia's deep past and of the history of its anthropological thought and practice, perhaps expressed most strongly in his masterly treatment of the life of Baldwin Spencer and his network of Central Australian colleagues.

Mulvaney cites more than 90 of his own publications in this volume. Each illuminates a moment or phase in his developing career; none of the works are lightweight, and all illustrate his gift for rendering previously arcane subjects accessible, even fascinating and compelling. The long series began with his publications on the historiography of Aboriginal anthropology and history, helping to finally end Stanner's 'great Australian silence'. The ground-

breaking *Prehistory of Australia* (1968) was exemplary in that respect; the first work of Australian archaeology to find a wider audience. Notably for readers of this journal, Mulvaney was among a small group who founded *Aboriginal History*, almost 35 years ago, 'a brave venture between linguists, historians and prehistorians'. This is, of course, just one small instance of Mulvaney's activism in neighbouring cultural domains, evidence of an eclecticism he finds perfectly natural. It has propelled him into several diverse roles, such as cultural heritage protection, advocacy on behalf of the Australian Academy of Humanities and of course, the vexed area of museums.

Digging up a Past began as John Mulvaney's modest attempt to construct a readable memoir of his life for his own family, and there are passages in the book which drop down a notch into the mode of a humble and unpretentious record of events. These passages, such as the account of a boisterous family holiday in Africa – complete with safari adventures, as well as a guided tour by Louis Leakey of his famous Olduvai site (Mulvaney had seen the *Zinjanthropus* skull 'in Cambridge during 1961, when Leakey plucked it from its case, like a magician with a rabbit'), are constructed partly from the daily journal of events and family movements kept by Jean Mulvaney. She, and the six Mulvaney children, are never far from the main story and on occasion take centre stage. The book is partly a tribute to Jean's memory, who shared and contributed to Mulvaney's remarkable life and career for 55 years. Jean and the children feature in the compelling selection of photographs chosen to illustrate the book. I hoped there might be an image or two of the famous Mulvaney backyard cricket matches at Yarralumla, but perhaps these are still to be dug from what must be a substantial and immensely significant archive.

Philip Jones
South Australian Museum

An Appreciation of Difference: WEH Stanner and Aboriginal Australia edited by Melinda Hinkson and Jeremy Beckett, xvii + 293 pp, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2008, ISBN 9780855756604 (pbk), $39.95

Melinda Hinkson and Jeremy Beckett's *An Appreciation of Difference: WEH Stanner and Aboriginal Australia* is a tribute nearly 30 years after his death to one of the most esteemed anthropologists who worked in Indigenous Australian contexts. It is also a reflection on what Stanner achieved in his lifetime and what his work contributes to current Indigenous issues and Indigenous studies in Australia today. The contributing authors to the volume have worked with Stanner, the man, either as students and colleagues, or with Stanner, the intellect, by reading and using his work to extend and develop their own ideas. Some extrapolate from his contributions to policy-making in the past to critique it in the present as Jon Altman (pp. 271–280) quite brilliantly does in the final chapter. This important book is both a poignant biography and something more. The authors use Stanner's work to think through the foundational issues concerning what it is to be Australian. If Australian identity depends on the dispossession of Indigenous Australians and subsequent interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, as in my view it does, then this book ranges across many of the key issues in the development of that identity to date. These include the development and politics of policy-making in relation to land, social justice and sustenance of culture for Indigenous Australians; the appreciation of Indigenous Australian worldviews and life ways and the intellectual challenges that all these issues raise. The various authors offer different perspectives of how these challenges might be met by using and/or critiquing Stanner's work.

The various transdisciplinary contributing authors of the volume draw from Stanner's body of work, published and unpublished, and on recollections of working with him in his extraordinary career both within and outside the academy. The chapters reflect on aspects of Stanner's career in the British colonial service in Kenya, in the British academy, his various positions in the Australian army during the Second World War, his work as Chair of Anthropology at the Australian National University, in founding the Australian Institute for Aboriginal Studies and the Council for Aboriginal Affairs. Inevitably, however, due to the productive nature of Stanner's writing, the book is largely dedicated to working with Stanner's ideas. These ideas are arguably most accessible in his famous 1968 Boyer lectures. Threaded through Stanner's five Boyer lectures are the arguments that non-Indigenous Australia had little interest in Indigenous Australia, had almost completely wiped the history of interaction between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples from the public record, and that he had little hope for change because the reasons for what he called 'the great Australian silence' were systemic.[1] That is, as Ann Curthoys (pp. 235–237) argues, a racial structure was established in the first few years of contact whereby it was believed that Aboriginal life ways were so damaged that they were doomed to extinction,

1 Stanner 1974: 27.

and this structure endured into the 1960s. Stanner argued in his lectures that contrary to the beliefs of non-Aboriginal people, Aboriginal life ways, although changing, were still alive in 1968 and that the people living in these worlds were in Nancy Williams' words, 'intelligent, even brilliant human beings' (p. 211).

The contributing authors generally agree that, although Stanner's assessment did not take all Australian discourses operating over the history he discusses into account, he was largely right, and his criticism of the treatment of Aboriginal peoples in Australia was well justified. The consensus of the authors is that although there have been significant steps in acknowledging Indigenous interactions in Australian history and in some policies concerning the improvement of Indigenous Australians' circumstances, many if not all of Stanner's concerns are still current.

I first read the Stanner Boyer lectures in the late 1970s and found them to be so moving and powerful that I decided to learn all I could about relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. After reading Stanner's *Whiteman Got No Dreaming* (1979) I wanted to become an anthropologist myself. It is not an exaggeration to say that reading Stanner changed my life. I cannot speak for the extent of Stanner's influence on the authors of *An Appreciation of Difference*, but it is clear from what they have written that Stanner's work is still current and significant to generations of scholars across disciplines. He is not, however, an entirely heroic figure and *An Appreciation of Difference* is certainly not hagiography. The various contributing authors reveal a man with flaws and frailties in personality, body and intellect. Yet he emerges as someone extraordinary in being able to express his appreciation of humanity in our various manifestations and aspects. This book is a remarkable achievement in being a rigorous critique of Stanner's work that is simultaneously a tribute to it.

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The Many Worlds of RH Mathews: In Search of an Australian Anthropologist by Martin Thomas, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2011, ISBN 9781741757811 (hbk), $59.95

This biography of RH Mathews (1841–1918) should go a long way to granting him the recognition he so dearly craved in life. Although a professional surveyor, Mathews was from a marginal Australian rural background (Mutbilly in New South Wales) and came to anthropology late, at the age of 50. Perhaps as part of his competitive 'ethnomania' (Thomas' apt term), he could also be pugnacious as a scholarly rival. He was not of the caste, nor of the powerful social network, of the doyens of the Australian branch of the discipline in his day, and ran foul of Sir Baldwin Spencer and AW Howitt in particular. The role of colonial class in this rift could have been explored further in this work. However, as Martin Thomas shows, Mathews made his own contributions to the establishment's siege mentality. Still, like AP Elkin and others including myself, Thomas does not believe Mathews deserved the degree of opprobrium, rejection and studious ignore to which he was subjected in life, nor the post-mortem obscurity from which he is only now escaping.

The rejections of Mathews by highly placed contemporaries, especially Spencer, who made something of a career of making and breaking other people's careers, had their long legacies afterwards. Somewhere in the mid 1980s, when I was combing Mathews' papers for a detailed study of the Bora ritual complex in New South Wales, I considered it was time his works should be facsimiled, translated where necessary, pulled into logical groups, given a set of linking commentaries, and indexed, as a single large volume. The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Council did not warm to this proposal and it disappeared. In an abbreviated form a similar idea reappeared in the 2007 volume edited by Martin Thomas, *Culture in Translation: the Anthropological legacy of RH Mathews* (ANU E-press). This and the present volume, and – not to be underestimated – the post-1993 swathe of native title research projects in south-eastern Australia, have made sure that Mathews will not slip back into obscurity for some long time.

Thomas' book begins with the onset of Mathews' Aboriginal possession in 1892. This foreshadows the fact that his approach to this particular life is thematic as much as it is chronological in structure, and the narrative weaves back and forth in time to an extent. If you are a strict chronologist you will get some vertigo from this, but others will not mind.

Here and there the narrative settles in for a quiet stay among the infinitesimal. Thomas has a taste for Mathews' interest in the fine grain, the details, of Aboriginal people's traditions. This gives the book solidity, which will be welcomed by many, if not by those drawn only to the glamour of the broad and abstract sweep. Mathews was no grand theoriser, although he read theorists. Nor was he much concerned, at least in his writings, with post-classical Aboriginal society, nor with the politics of Indigenous affairs. In these ways he was much like most

of his colleagues of the time, an antiquarian. This narrowness of concern was to be significantly abandoned by Australianists after the First World War, when a younger and more politically engaged generation entered the field.

This book brings some of Mathews' not always riveting papers to life, by telling us here and there who were the historical individuals with whom he worked, and at times showing us their photographs. Also here and there in the text are photographs from places where he did not personally work, which dilute the otherwise south-eastern consistency of the tale. The maps and plans are apposite but several are too reduced to be readable.

Having lived before the post-1950s age of Western self-exposure and self-reflection, with its mixed blessings of the candid, the tumid, and the squalid, Mathews left behind little that allows us to pry into his soul. On this score the contrast between this biography and that of TGH Strehlow by Barry Hill (*Broken Song: TGH Strehlow and Aboriginal Possession,* Knopf 2002), is considerable, even though Thomas does his best to give us some psychological insight into his sitter.

There are some errors of fact in the book that might have been weeded out by circulating the manuscript among people who have specialised in relevant subjects. For example, it is said that before and after Francis Gillen's death Baldwin Spencer 'continued to publish as "Spencer and Gillen" despite the latter not having written a word of these books' (pp. 262–263). The corrective to this urban myth was provided by Philip Jones in 2005.[1]

If I have a serious reservation about this work it is because of how much of it is taken up with the author's own self-exposure and the narration of his journey of discovery. Reflexivity and biography may not be antithetical in theory but one can easily get into the way of the other – unless autobiography is the genre. Even there, a balance is still needed. Abundant self-analysis amid a thin scattering of facts, or, on the other hand, a relentless listing of events in a working life in the absence of any inner voice, can put the autobiographical project out of kilter and kill off readers. In the case of a biography most readers will be interested in the subject, not the writer.

It is to be hoped that this very finely produced new biography will stimulate similar research on other figures in the history of Australian Indigenous studies. We are still without major biographies of Donald Thomson, Ursula McConnel, WEH Stanner, Norman Tindale, Ronald and Catherine Berndt and others who came in the wake of colonial ethnographers like Mathews, and built on their efforts.

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1 'Indispensable to each other: Spencer and Gillen or Gillen and Spencer? Collaboration and Language', *Strehlow Research Centre Occasional Paper* 4: 6–25.

Aboriginal Darwin, A Guide to Exploring Important Sites of the Past and Present by Toni Bauman, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2006, ISBN 9780855754464 (pbk), $34.95

Aboriginal Sydney: A Guide to Important Places of the Past and Present by Melinda Hinkson (text) and Alana Harris (photography), Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2001/2010, ISBN 9780855757120 (pbk), $29.95

These two books may be part of an Aboriginal Studies Press series on Australian urban centres, as they are almost identical in design and to a point, in content. Both describe historic sites, with details of how to get there, but they also include recent or present day memorials to Indigenous people, and even noteworthy events in which an individual takes priority over site. These include, in Sydney, Laddie Timbery's art and craft stall at La Perouse – hardly history, but still an 'important Indigenous site' of the present; and in Darwin, a photo of the Tiwi member Marian Scrymgour being danced into the Legislative Assembly by Maurice Riolo. Both the books therefore edge away from place-centredness towards the purely historical. Again, the Sydney text carries instructions how to visit some – but not all – of the historic sites: Hinkson does not identify the location of the Aboriginal Legal Service, or the Medical Service, or the Black Theatre, for no very obvious reason. Bauman locates all her sites, though at times I would have liked a photograph of what certain sites long demolished, such as the Kahlin Compound, look like today. I would have appreciated a photo of the spot where, for instance Dakiar Wirrpanda was brought ashore from Caledon Bay, or, for that matter, the grave of his victim, Mounted Constable McColl. Even the identification of the office of Cecil Cook, the pre-Second World War Director of Aboriginal Welfare, or for that matter, of Harry Giese, the last (pre-Whitlam) Director, would have been interesting, and also reminded readers of the intimate connection between Darwin Indigenous life and the bureaucracy. Yet we can note with gratitude Bauman's recognition of the old Darwin Oval, Mindil Beach Government House and the Museum and Art Gallery. We can thank Hinkson for her researches on sites in Parramatta such as the Old Market Place where Governor Macquarie held the first 'Native Conference' and the site of the church where the star Aboriginal pupil of Blacktown Native Institution, Maria Lock, married the convict John Lock.

The Sydney text, however, has many more gaps. The author is drawing rather a long bow in presenting Yarra Bay House at La Perouse as a signifier of Stolen Generations incarceration. The Marella Home at Kellyville and the Anglican Home at Mulgoa would have been much better choices, but neither of these two places is noted at all. The Brickfields, the site of much Aboriginal colonial social activity, near the present War Memorial in Hyde Park, and the notorious Circular Quay camp, near today's Museum of Contemporary Art, would not have been hard to research and identify. A serious omission is the reserve at Sackville Reach on the Hawkesbury River, where scores of Koori people lived for decades. The Aboriginal Inland Mission church, still standing at La Perouse,

was most important in the lives of Sydney Kooris, and beyond. To be fair, some apparent omissions are not altogether the fault of Hinkson and Harris. A number of important sites have only emerged publicly through oral history, which is not easy to come by in a quick research tour evidently relying on what is publicly available. Information on the Narrabeen town camp has only emerged from Dennis Foley in the last decade, while the significance of Biddy Giles' farm at Mill Creek, on the Lower Georges River, and the Saltpan Creek community in the same area, has not yet entered the wide public domain despite the efforts of Heather Goodall and Allison Cadzow. Readers of Bauman, impressed by the attention given to Aboriginal achievers through various public biographical plaques, may wonder why are the analogous plaques in Sydney not equally noted. In truth Sydney is not well endowed with plaques of any kind apart from those attached to colonial buildings in the inner city. One of the few Indigenous plaques on the Opera House walkway is to Oodgeroo Noonuccal, but none of those dedicated to local identities embedded in Darling Street, Kings Cross, are to an Aboriginal person. Joy Janaka Williams, who sued the state for wrongful removal and subsequent institutional lack of care, and who spent a number of years in the area, would be a likely candidate for recognition here. Other areas important for medium or long-term residence in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were the Field of Mars, on the Lane Cove River, and Quakers Hat Bay, near the Spit, and Bungaree's Farm on Georges Head. These do not appear even in the later edition of Aboriginal Sydney.

An interesting difference between the two urban histories becomes apparent. Because Darwin's Aboriginal population was proportionately larger, almost every public space and many buildings were, and are, highly significant to Aboriginal people. The shared spaces of Fannie Bay Gaol and Darwin Hospital come immediately to mind. Fannie Bay Gaol and the old Darwin Hospital are highly relevant to the Larrakia people as well as Indigenous transit visitors, and are cited in the book. Analogously, Sydney's Long Bay Gaol, the former Royal Women's Hospital at Paddington, the Bidura transit 'depot' in Sydney's Glebe and the Parramatta Girls Home are surely equally significant, but Indigenous numbers and associations are swamped by the association of people and other histories. Thus it emerges that while very many of Aboriginal Darwin's sites are shared, almost all the Sydney places are Indigenous only. The cultures and histories divided earlier and rather more deeply in Sydney.

Photographs, of course, are critical in tourist books. The work of professional photographer Alana Harris has been reproduced fairly well by Aboriginal Studies Press, and certainly much better than the press's photos decades ago. Bauman has used pictures by a number of people, particularly Julie Wells. In both books, though, many of the photographs are too small to be useful beyond an aid in recognition.

Future editions, and the studies of other cities which I hope are to come, should adopt modern technologies such as GPS referencing and on-line presentations downloadable on i-pods. Both books are good starts, but there is much scope for

development. The 2010 edition of Hinkson and Harris might well have taken advantage of new knowledges, but apart from one or two additions it is not much more than a reprint of that of a decade before.

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Urbanizing Frontiers: Indigenous Peoples and Settlers in 19th-Century Pacific Rim Cities by Penelope Edmonds, 317pp, University of British Colombia Press, Vancouver, 2010, ISBN 9780774816229 (pbk), CAD $35.95

In Australia, classical notions of the frontier and its associated histories of invasion, displacement and violence would tend to point us towards the outback or the bush rather than the urban centres where most of us live today. Penelope Edmonds thoroughly unsettles this notion of a distant frontier by moving it back to the edges of the continent, to the port towns where Europeans first landed and where most of them remained. The frontier was not simply 'out there', synonymous with the unruly boundaries of an expanding pastoral economy, but very close to home. This reorientation recognises that our cities were indigenous spaces from the time of European settlement and, in turn, it understands 'Aboriginal histories as urban histories' (p. 238). It also challenges more conventional accounts in which Aboriginal people 'exit the scene' in the early nineteenth century, only to return to urban areas as 'new migrants' in the twentieth century.

But *Urbanizing Frontiers* does more than this. In the recognition that these themes are not unique to Australia, Edmonds places the early colonial history of her case study, Melbourne, in dialogue with Victoria, British Columbia, to produce a comparative and transcolonial analysis of two sites at the 'edges of empire'. Melbourne and Victoria are valuable comparative case studies because both cities were built on indigenous lands, both were imagined as Empire's Edens, 'lights of civilisation and Britishness on the Pacific Ocean' (p. 20), and both were vital economic hubs in expanding imperial webs, remade by gold rushes and migration. Yet they differed in several fundamental ways. In Canada indigenous people were more fully integrated into the fur trade, whereas in Australia the pastoral economy marginalised Aboriginal people on their own land. Melbourne began life as an 'illegal, outlaw settlement' (p. 79), whereas the mercantilist influence of the Hudson's Bay Company, the 'colonizing power by proxy' in Victoria (p. 102), kept renegade settlers in check. Approaches to treaty-making diverged in both places, as did attitudes towards and patterns of interracial intimacy between white men and indigenous women. Ultimately, Edmonds concludes, there was a more favourable colonial impression of aboriginal people in British Columbia because white settlers were far more dependent on them.

Yet, what is striking is the extent to which settler colonialism ultimately constructed indigenous people in both cities as 'inconvenient, anomalous, and vagrant' (p. 137). Edmonds makes a particularly productive reading of the contemporary power of Enlightenment stadial theory, where progress was intimately entangled with the human relationship to land. Cities were believed to stand at the pinnacle of social and cultural evolution; they represented 'the apotheosis of civilization' and 'became a synecdoche for empire and its ideological paradigm' (p. 61). In Pacific Rim settler colonies the ideological and material investment in new cities 'was explicitly racialized as the exclusive destiny of the Anglo-Saxon races' (p.

62). The original inhabitants of the soil were deemed out of place, a danger to health, order and governance. At the same time, the creation of cities created new spaces for aboriginal people, usually on the urban margins, and Europeans expected to see them living in their midst. In fact, they sought them out, and their motivations for doing so varied from spectacle to sex. By attending to the city as the scene of everyday life and not simply to the 'grand designs', Edmonds moves us beyond triumphant nineteenth-century accounts of New World urban development to interpret cities not so much as sites, but as processes – of land transactions, of mobility and its regulation, of interracial encounters, of the generation of knowledge about race, class and gender – processes, in sum, of 'the transformation and reordering of bodies and spaces'.

Urbanizing Frontiers is a fine example of comparative colonial history. This sort of history requires research in multiple locations often separated by vast distances, engagement with the historiographical contours of at least two countries, and a conceptual language to bridge them. The challenges of structure – where to begin, what to put next and what to omit – are magnified too, so in light of these methodological and technical challenges there is certainly much to admire here. There is some repetition in places and a tendency to overuse questions, but these do not detract from the rich and compelling evidence or the insightful analysis which is developed with reference to postcolonial, feminist and spatial theory.

Edmonds stresses that settler colonialism's urban histories were unique. Unlike the 'inward-looking protective cantonments' in established cites such as New Delhi, or the 'sequestered hill stations' in India (p. 65), settler colonial cities were large and expansive, envisioned as transimperial Anglo-Saxon cognate space: Melbourne and Victoria were both 'London reproduced'. The scale and vision of urban settlement and its relationship to the rural hinterlands in Australia and Canada was distinctive, yet I kept hearing echoes from elsewhere in the empire, particularly with respect to the relationship between indigeneity and urban space. In Fiji, for example, which was never envisaged as a white man's country, indigenous landownership was preserved under colonial rule, but, crucially, not in the port capital. Fijians were displaced from Suva and their presence there, along with a range of non-white 'others', was a continual source of debate and anxiety. Maybe we need to ask further questions about the racialisation of urban space *per se*, in whatever colonial context it comes. A wider comparative lens would be fascinating, one which embraces the connections between colonial formations we have more readily kept distinct. In the Pacific World this would mean bringing these settler outposts on the Rim in closer dialogue with the sea of islands that stretched in between. This would also entail a more extended discussion of the material networks that linked them through travel, technology, public speakers, newspapers and global performances, those things explored briefly in Chapter 7.

To reiterate, *Urbanizing Frontiers* is a sophisticated monograph, carefully crafted and impressive in scope. It deserves a wide readership in indigenous studies, colonial history, urban history and historical geography, while also making an important and timely contribution to both Australian and Canadian history. It

shows us the extent to which the urban histories shared by indigenous peoples and newcomers in the formative decades of the nineteenth century have left unfinished business in our postcolonial cities today.

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Singing Saltwater Country: Journey to the Songlines of Carpentaria by John Bradley with Yanyuwa families, xxiii + 301 pp, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, 2010, ISBN 9781742372419, $39.99

John Bradley's *Singing Saltwater Country:Journey to the Songlines of Carpentaria* provides a compelling account of the author's work with Yanyuwa people in and around the town of Borroloola in the Northern Territory. As he describes in this memoir/ ethnography (which is co-credited to Yanyuwa families), Bradley came to Borroloola as a primary school teacher in the early 1980s. At Borroloola, he rapidly become fascinated with the sacred songlines or *kujika* which link the Sir Edward Pellew group of islands with the Australian mainland in the south-west Gulf of Carpentaria. Indebted to his Yanyuwa informants for teaching him 'language, country and *kujika* [italics added]', the non-Aboriginal Bradley describes the book as part of a 'reciprocal deal', translating Aboriginal knowledge into 'a form that could be preserved for the future' (p. xvi). With this publication (alongside an ambitious attempt to animate Yanyuwa *kujika* for use in the Borroloola school), Bradley proposes to deliver on that deal.

The book sits uneasily in between multiple genres. As a memoir – even a diary – it provides a fascinating account of the author's attempts to explore the phenomena of Yanyuwa *kujika*, and the broader 'multidimensional dynamic' of Aboriginal knowledge that surrounds it (p. 242). Like Bruce Chatwin's *Songlines* (1987), *Singing Saltwater Country* is as much concerned with the possibilities of intercultural communication as it is with classical Aboriginal culture, providing a detailed account of the author's own 'journey' into understanding. This is intensely personal and occasionally moving, conveyed in a simple and straightforward style which strains towards lyricism on occasion, and is accompanied by some hand-drawn illustrations and maps by Nona Cameron. While Bradley arguably lacks the literary gifts of Chatwin, his engagement with this material is much deeper and richer – his journey with Yanyuwa people stretching now across three decades – making Chatwin's exegesis seem impoverished and even perfunctory in comparison. As such, it recalls the work of the other great chronicler of Aboriginal songs, TGH Strehlow, as well as Bill Harney and AP Elkin's collaboration on *Songs of the Songmen*.[1]

As ethnography, the 'thickness' of Bradley's writing is exemplary. In describing his first meeting with key informants Jerry and Elma, Bradley writes:

> They were sitting back to back, engaged in constant commentary on the vehicles and people going past. They shouted questions to passing kin on the whereabouts of other kin, and requests for tobacco, money, 'beef' and bread.
>
> I was introduced to them, but sat down with Eileen [another informant] so I could continue my Yanyuwa lesson. I was trying to make sense of

1 Strehlow 1971; Harney and Elkin 1949.

> male and female dialects, as I had received comments that I was speaking 'too much like a woman'. Eileen, because we were at school together every day, saw it as her task to get me to speak like a man.
>
> As Eileen and I talked, Jerry said loudly and suddenly, 'Me! I'm number one singer [i.e. of *kujika*] myself!' Without hesitation, Elma bluntly responded 'Bullshit!' (pp. 122–123)

Interspersed with colourful episodes like this, Bradley provides his own transcriptions and translations of *kujika*, laid out on the page like poetry. From his 'number one singer' Jerry, Bradley reproduces song verses associated with the Dingo Dreaming:

> *Warrakiwarraki*
> *Warrakiwarraki*
> *Kakami kakamayi*
>
> Well-made stone blades
> discarded flakes lie scattered (pp. 132–133)

Those without access to Bradley's impressively encyclopaedic knowledge might be surprised to learn about verses like these being sung for stone tools, as Bradley himself was surprised at the time (p. 133). Rather than simply commenting on this, however, Bradley explains the significance of these few lines at length, connecting them to his understanding of kinship and Aboriginal Law, and challenging the reader 'to come to feel something about it [i.e. the *kujika*] like these old men [like Jerry] did' (p. 134). Surpassing the generic constraints of both memoir and ethnography, at these moments *Singing Saltwater Country* can be seen as akin to the hermeneutical approach to the study of religion, discussing Yanyuwa *kujika* the way Christian and Jewish scholars discuss the Bible and the Torah. As well as this Dingo *kujika*, which is transcribed and translated in full, Bradley also applies this approach to the Rainbow Serpent, Tiger Shark, Brolga, Groper, Spirit People, Sea Turtle, Crow and Spotted Nightjar and Hammerhead Shark *kujika* in the Gulf.

However, while *Singing Saltwater Country* offers much breadth, mystery and intellectual satisfaction for readers, his unique approach combining multiple genres will likely disappoint some. As a memoir, I wanted to know more about how Bradley managed his movements into and out of what anthropologists call 'the field'. While he describes the impact of his learning on his experience of place in Yanyuwa country – calling out 'without embarrassment' to a flock of brolgas in Yanyuwa, as a kind of 'kinsman' of these birds in Yanyuwa terms (p. 249) – he offers little insight into his life in Melbourne, and the intellectual accommodation that his extraordinary experiences with Yanyuwa people presumably entails. Similarly, Bradley offers little insight into Yanyuwa peoples' intellectual accommodation of others, including anthropologists.

Other anthropologists who have worked at Borroloola and throughout Aboriginal Australia might be disappointed with Bradley's partial engagement with their

discipline, and many of its more pressing current concerns. Apart from a slight index of 'Further Reading' (pp. 289–292), *Singing Saltwater Country* contains no references to academic writing, ignoring the publications of those who worked with Yanyuwa people before Bradley, such as John Avery.[2] As ethnography, I particularly wanted a more fulsome account of Yanyuwa life, including Yanyuwa peoples' engagements with the Australian state. Bradley offers no analysis of the impact of large-scale state transfers of resources to Aboriginal people in the form of welfare payments and funding for 'outstation' developments and the like, which arguably led to an efflorescence of ritual traditions like *kujika* at places like Borroloola in the late 1970s and 1980s. There is also no analysis of the causes of cultural knowledge loss beyond repeated references to 'radical and tragic' contemporary change (p. 248). While Bradley provides a superb account of one aspect of Yanyuwa life – possibly the central aspect of Yanyuwa life in the period he describes – those who come to this book hoping for further insight into the issues which provoked the Commonwealth Government's declaration of a state of emergency in Northern Territory communities in mid-2007 might well be left wondering what all the fuss was about.

This partiality is both a weakness and strength of *Singing Saltwater Country*. While it might enable idealists and romantics to ignore the problems in places like Borroloola, it offers a useful corrective to those who would see contemporary Aboriginal life solely in terms of pathology, reminding readers of the inheritance of belief and value that infuses much of what we understand as Aboriginal culture. As a contribution to a nascent hermeneutics of such culture – and an invaluable record of it – Bradley has more than delivered on the deal he made as a young primary school teacher struck by the beauty of the songlines.

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2 Avery 1985.

Mari Nawi: Aboriginal Odysseys by Keith Vincent Smith, 216 pp, Rosenberg Publishing Pty Ltd, Dural, New South Wales, 2010, ISBN 9781921719004 (pbk), $35.00

In writing this book, Keith Smith's aim was to reveal and celebrate the significant roles that Aboriginal people played in Australia's early maritime history. It is based on research Smith carried out for his PhD submitted in 2008, and focuses on the experiences and lives of Aboriginal people who sailed on ships that sailed through Port Jackson/Sydney Harbour to destinations around the world in the period 1790 to 1850. These destinations included not only places around and close to the Australian coastline and England which are commonly referred to, but also other countries entailing long distances – such as New Zealand, Macquarie Island, North and South Americas, South Africa, India, Tahiti and Hawaii.

There are many people whose names are familiar – Bungaree who is famous for sailing with Mathew Flinders around Australia, and Bennelong who sailed to England with Yemmerrawanne. However there are numerous other people whose names are not so well known. Smith describes how these people became guides, go-betweens, boatmen, sailors, steersmen, pilots, sealers, whalers and trackers. Most of them went willingly on these voyages, but there are descriptions about many others who were sent to penal colonies on Norfolk Island and Tasmania because they were judged to be criminals (for example, Musquito who was sent to Tasmania). Several Aboriginal women also went on voyages, sometimes accompanying their husbands. Some of these voyagers also settled in other countries, such as Thomas Chaseland (various spellings), who lived in New Zealand and whose first and second wives were Maori.

Smith has undertaken much meticulous and detailed research in many institutions around the world and the book is packed full of interesting information, which provides details about the lives of the Aboriginal people who went out on the ships and also provides contexts for the voyages on which the Aboriginal people went. There is some repetition and there are also many details which seem extraneous. I found these irritating as they detracted from the fascinating overall story and stories of individual voyagers which Smith has to tell about the opportunities Aboriginal people took to travel the world. The non-essential details often made it difficult to follow the lines of argument that Smith makes and are necessary where details come from a wide range of disparate sources. The documents include not only the well-known published journals and reports written by the British officers and settlers and visitors from other countries (for example, the French and Russians), but also unpublished ships logs and shipping records.

In the background details about Aboriginal life and activities, a shell fishhook from the Sydney area is cited as being 600 years old and stone files at one of the Curracurrang sites as being 2000 years old (p. 14). In a recent review of the

evidence for hook and line fishing along the New South Wales coast, I found the earliest shell fish-hooks are ca 1000 years old and that they are almost always made from *Turbotorquatus*. A date of 2000 BP for stone files at Curracurrang 2 cannot be supported as there is no clear association between the files and the sample radiocarbon-dated to ~2000 BP and it is not possible to date the age of these specimens; all other stone files along the New South Wales central and south coasts are <=1000 years old.[1]

This is an interesting book about a little known aspect of the activities of Aboriginal people who were associated with Sydney Town, Port Jackson, in the early years of the British colony. Well worth buying by anyone interested in what happened to Aboriginal people in the Sydney region after colonisation. There is often a perception that there were few Aboriginal people living in coastal Sydney in the early nineteenth century; this book clearly shows otherwise.

Reference

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1 Attenbrow 2011.

Singing the Coast by Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins, xiv + 240 pp, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, ISBN 9780855757113 (pbk), $34.95

Singing the Coast by Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins looks through the eyes particularly of the present Yarrawarra community of Corindi Beach in the north, and members of Muurrbay Aboriginal Language Centre and other contributors in the south, to 'deep map' connections in Gumbaynggirr society. Through memories and stories, the authors connect in time the Gumbaynggirr journey through the 'no man's land' of the non-Indigenous contact period to enduring elements of the Dreaming. Similarly they show connections in space:

> Through law and custom Gumbaynggirr people learn about connections across country made in linking trails and songlines. (p. 198)

At the same time this work recognises the changed sense of identity forged through the stages of white contact.

The authorship is an interesting collaboration: 'The authorial voice is Margaret's in conversation with Tony' (p. ix). The non-Indigenous Margaret Somerville is meticulous in having the Indigenous Tony Perkins examine his contributions to the work, for she is aware that: 'Writing in the space between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal voices and identities is a risky business'. However there is such collaboration with several other presenters both from the north and the south. It could therefore be argued that there is multiple authorship. In addition several people from Jalumbo at Yarrawarra did research that helped in 'joining the dots' to obtain the final picture in this work. There is ambivalence as to whose goals this work intends to serve. One aspiration that can be shared by black and white is:

> How can we bring traditional understandings of singing the country, singing for the renewal and wellbeing of people and places, into a contemporary present? (p. 3)

However the following indicates possibly the central theme and purpose of this work:

> This writing is about the process of coming to know. It is about how white people can learn to live in this country differently. Through many years of working closely with Aboriginal people I have learned to think through place. I call my work 'oral place story' rather than oral history. (p. 19)

Aboriginal people could have aspirations like this for non-Aboriginal people. But it is clear that Somerville owns this purpose and so possibly the major authorship of this work too.

The stories retold from the southern Muurrbay are regularly about the *matter* of Dreaming song and story – beginning with the story of the 'Women who made the sea' as told in Gumbaynggirr by Harry 'Tiger' Buchanan.

This is contrasted with the northern lived experience of Yarrawarra – and this technique is used from the beginning of this work.

Starting with present day Yarrawarra the reader is rapidly taken back to the post land-loss Aboriginal world at nearby Corindi Lake, an area called No Man's Land, at the sea-margins of the new white-owned land of 'selectors'. Over the years for this Gumbaynggirr community much of the matter of traditional story and language has been lost and practices modified. However the *form* of Aboriginality has been retained. In the freedom to live outside the crushing 'mission' experience, the Aboriginal people here are depicted as adapting willingly and without loss of identity.

Since plentiful food, especially seafood and building resources were at hand, people could retain their lifestyle as well as 'incorporate elements of white culture into their daily lives'.

The estuary of No Mans Land / The Lake is in fact seen as the 'quintessential in-between space where stories could be born'. In this northern 'pole' of the Gumbaynggirr areas depicted, elders such as Clarence Skinner are seen as holders of the Dreaming, through story, song and language.

However, the reader is then brought further back from this seemingly idyllic transitional space to a cataclysmic event in the lifetime of Tony Perkins' great-grandmother: the massacre of several ancestors at nearby Red Rock, henceforth called 'Blood Rock' by the local people.

With terrible beauty we are given the description and interpretation of the survivors escaping though a cave/ tunnel which is near to a women's birthing place.

> For Tony, the massacre and rebirth story became the conceptual framework of the rebirth of his people. These stories locate Tony in relation to the whole story of an ending and a new beginning. (p. 36)

The silence following this event, and a taboo on women visiting the massacre site, is symbolically seen by Somerville as an adaptation of the traditional 'crying song' of women bewailing a tragedy.

A quarter of a century elapses between this tragedy and the re-birth of the people at nearby 'New Farm'. However this establishment is viewed as a song of rebirth symbolised by the establishment of a community band replete with homemade and refurbished instruments. 'Laughter and singing were born again as the old people made music and sang' (p. 40).

We encounter 25 charming historical and contemporary photos appropriately located within the chapter 'Making home in No Man's Land'. This era after the massacre and the period of liminality following it, is a world of adaptation symbolised by the tin and bark humpy shifting and adapting to meet the need; a 'belonging place' largely escaping the traumas of the stolen generations.

A meditative sample of the varied and rich foods of this world is presented for us – for food-getting stories were the most common ones given to Somerville. Thus, scenes of prawning in the estuary; getting *gugumbal* shellfish in the rock-pools and pipis from the sand; seasonal sea fishing that evokes legendary stories of dolphins obeying the call to drive fish shorewards; bush tucker from native plums to carpet snakes; river food such as cobra (wood-worm) – are all depicted with the accompanying skills and prescriptive rules that apply to each. Thus 'place' is ingested.

There is a pervasive sense of the spiritual in this No Man's Land, although in the present twilight world of the Dreaming, this spirituality is expressed in taboos rather than the enlightenment Somerville seeks. She has become familiar with the stories of spirits of particular places but finds it 'challenging to write about this partial and incomplete knowledge' (p. 122). And yet we are introduced to various spirits such as those of deceased persons prevented from returning to the young children whose faces have been masked by pipeclay, and to the spiritual presences in healing and rainmaking.

The spiritual power of no longer performed initiation and ceremony is seen by Somerville as being transferred, particularly through Tony Perkins, to oral storytelling, memories of stone 'property', initiation scars and places to avoid. 'In the absence of initiation, places of taboo came to stand for [sic] power of initiation itself' (p. 145). These translations are not seen purely as loss, however, for:

> In the embodied traces that remain in people, in places and in stories, lies the possibility of transformation. (p. 152)

The focus of *Singing the Coast* now moves to the southern 'pole' of the Gumbaynggirr world at Nambucca Heads and Muurrbay Language Centre. It moves from Yarrawarra's transformed practice of Aboriginality in the modern context, to viewing the active promotion at Muurrbay of the Gumbaynggirr Dreaming in language and story and (through the associated Many Rivers Language Centre) the facilitation of the revival of other coastal Aboriginal languages. The reader is immersed in the Gumbaynggirr Dreaming stories through which language is mapped onto country: for instance how the *Ngambaa Baga-baga*: the Ngambaa man's knee on the river below Muurrbay became 'Nambucca'.

Here, as at Yarrawarra, adaptation and historical change are noted: for instance the relationship of the people to *Girr-Girr*: Stuart Island and their removal from it. But it is *revival* – the language and story-based recapture of the Dreaming (in contemporary form) that is here emphasised. Hero ancestors are celebrated and linkages with the overlaid aspects of Catholic religion recognised; for example, where the hero-ancestor Birrugan is recognised as Jesus and Birrugan's mother, Gawnggan, as Mary. The central place of the last Gumbaynggirr story-man, 'Tiger' Buchanan, is acknowledged, as is the work of the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture group in publishing his stories.

Somerville describes how a process of 'deep mapping' has been developed in collaboration with researchers at Muurrbay and other contributors.

> In deep mapping we map the storylines of the places where Gumbaynggirr people live now and where they lived in the past, and the creation stories of the ancestors. The story we produce here follows the same processes as deep mapping, beginning with the present and moving back into the deep past. The past is always partially visible in the present, it is never completely erased. (p. 164)

'Connecting the dots' is the final chapter of this work, beginning with a meeting of north and south: Yarrawarra and Muurrbay. This meeting is part of an effort to broaden place knowledge beyond the regional, including 'boundaries, language, movement, exchange, storylines and ceremony.' Each of these categories is accorded respect in this work. There is an emphasis on the linkages connecting one's identity with father's and mother's kin and country.

The work notes 'Tiger' Buchanan's section name as *Wambuungga* and initiation name as *Maruwanba*. An extension of this theme, not covered in this book, could be the links that these names entail *beyond* the Gumbaynggirr language groups. For instance, the Dhanggati to the south have the same kinship and initiation names as the Gumbaynggirr, although Gumbaynggirr and Dhanggati languages differ markedly; and in living memory members of these language groups have had shared initiations and have frequently intermarried.

The work concludes with clan linkages to *miirlarl*, special places. Poignantly, though both the Muurrbay people and Tony Perkins, having lost much of ceremony and site, live 'in the shadow of initiation' (Gary Williams), the *nunguu* (kangaroo) *miirlarl* which they both acknowledge, persists as a spiritual bond for and between them.

The treatment of themes in this work is as tidal and circular as the spirituality of the society described in it. This may come partly from the meditative style, partly from the long passages where different speakers are quoted, treating the same subject matter from their own perspective. Readers demanding linear, dialectic or scientific presentations may find some parts repetitive or unclear. The authors however are comfortable with liminality, with evoking the interstices between the mesh. For the paradox is that not even a partial ability to see the world through present day Gumbaynggirr eyes is possible without this apparent obscurity. This is a thoughtful and respectful work that acknowledges the validity of a refashioned Gumbaynggirr identity.

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Coming to Terms: Aboriginal Title in South Australia edited by Shaun Berg, xix + 570 pp, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 2010, ISBN 9781862548671 (pbk), $39.95

The legal pursuit of Aboriginal land rights can trace its lineage to the Gove Land Rights Case of *Milirrpum v Nabalco Pty Ltd* (1971) at which the court held against the Yolngu applicants. That legal battle eventually led to the *Northern Territory Land Rights Act 1976*. The Mabo case 20 years later led to the creation of the *Native Title Act 1993* and a process whereby Aboriginal communities Australia-wide can pursue a (relatively weak) form of land rights. Both the Gove Land Rights Case and one of the early native title matters to go to the High Court, *Fejo v Northern Territory* (1998), explored the significance of the Letters Patent issued by King William IV on 19 February 1836 when creating the Province of South Australia. Neither of those matters considered the Letters Patent to have protected the rights of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. This book argues that the matter is much less clear in South Australia.

The relevant passage from the King's decree, cited repeatedly in this volume, reads:

> Provided always that nothing in those our Letters Patent contained shall affect or be construed to affect the rights of any Aboriginal Natives of the said Province to the actual occupation or enjoyment in their own Persons or in the Persons of their Descendants of any Lands therein now actually occupied or enjoyed by such Natives.

The argument, in a nutshell, is that this means that any appropriation of lands occupied by Aboriginal people in South Australia was in breach of the Letters Patent, potentially giving rise to compensation. It could perhaps be described as a posthumous argument for land rights. According to the co-authored contribution by Simmonds and Berg, the relevant provision would have had legal force until at least 1842, possibly 1857, and perhaps beyond. Even on the earliest date of 1842, the lands appropriated during the six years since colonisation were significant and would include most if not all of contemporary greater Adelaide. Should the argument for compensation be legally correct, the implications could be substantial.

Berg is a commercial lawyer with a long-term commitment to acting for the Ngarrindjeri community of South Australia in matters of native title and heritage. That the arguments in this book are close to the heart of his clients is made clear in the preface by three senior Ngarrindjeri men. They describe the question of the Letters Patent as unfinished business and ask why the colonists ignored Aboriginal rights, when King William IV intended to protect them. They would like the South Australian government of today to seriously address this matter and assume responsibility for the failings of its early predecessor.

All the other contributors to the volume are lawyers, many distinguished, and for the non-legally trained the reading can be hard going. But it makes sense

for it to be so, as the book itself seems to be a building block for a potential future court action on this question of land rights particular to South Australia. The composition of the audience that attended the launch of *Coming to Terms* suggests that the significance of the Letters Patent is taken seriously; the Attorney-General, the Solicitor-General, members of the judiciary and other high profile lawyers were present to hear Shaun Berg's talk.

The tenor of the book, like the book launch itself, however, is fairly cautious, leaving me with the overall impression that the question is really more moral and political than legal. On the face of it, the wording of the Letters Patent is unambiguous as is the fact that the colonisation of South Australia did not adhere to its spirit. Legally, however, the standing of the document seems less certain. In places, this book makes a rousing case for why the Letters Patent has legal standing equivalent to that of statute, but at other times the authors seem very aware that there are legal opinions to the contrary. The fact that this book has been published prior to any legal challenge on the issue makes me wonder whether the editor is aware that such a challenge would be risky and is pursuing a morally based political argument instead. Given the current status of the land rights position in Aboriginal affairs and the emphasis on 'practical reconciliation', however, I do not think that the South Australian government will seriously engage with such a moral argument on the issue of past injustices. I think a legal challenge would be unavoidable if one wanted to pursue this matter further, and it will be interesting to see whether such a challenge will follow this work. The eight chapters by the various contributors are followed by a 300-page appendix of historic material relevant to the matter, including of course the Letters Patent, excerpts of historic legislation and other official documents considering the status of Aboriginal people in the context of South Australia's colonisation. It consequently provides a good resource for anybody who wishes to pursue this question further, whether from a legal or an historical perspective. The contribution of this book may well be that it has pushed this matter to such a point where one South Australian Aboriginal community or another will take it up and put it to the test in the very legal system that provided King William with the authority to appropriate Aboriginal lands in the first place. No doubt, should this matter ever make it to the court, *Coming to Terms* will be found on the bar tables of lawyers on all sides of the argument.

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Indigenous Participation in Australian Economies: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives edited by Ian Keen, 195 pp, ANU E Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, 2010, ISBN: 978-1-921-66-686-5 (pbk), $24.95

Some of the chapters in this book are important additions to the body of research on the engagement of Aboriginal people in the colonial and twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Interestingly someone should advise Ian Keen that for some Aboriginals it 'still is' colonial engagement, even more so after the 'intervention'. However Keen is certainly correct when he states that Indigenous Australia has been more or less invisible in many economic histories of Australia (p. 1). The text subject outline is: Aboriginal Australians-Economic conditions; Business enterprises-Aboriginal Australian; Aboriginal Australians-Employment; Economic Anthropology-Australia; Hunting and gathering societies-Australia; and Australia-Economic Conditions (p. iv). Enthused, I read on. However after 10 chapters I had to ask myself was some of this work relevant to what the book proposed? There are exceptions. Half of the text is very good. My favourite is Chris Haynes' chapter, which is passionate and relevant to current academic argument: a new voice in an industry that appears at times to be bogged down in the glory of a bygone era researching the exotic with little to no Aboriginal voice and content.

The text arose from an ARC linkage grant and proceedings from a wonderful conference, the Australian Anthropological Society, the Association of Social Anthropologist (United Kingdom) and the Association of Social Anthropologists of Aotearoa (New Zealand) held in Auckland 2008. This was a conference that I attended and presented at, which included many excellent papers by Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars. It's a pity this publication was not more representative of the high standard of presentations at that conference.

The editor groups the chapters into clusters which are explained (at some length) in pages 9–13. They begin with a broad overview of the settler colonial economy starting with Christopher Lloyd who writes of settler capitalism and economic hybridity; it is not until his conclusion (p. 36) that the realisations of destroyed economies and the future are outlined. Overall I found the chapter over-generalising, often set in early to mid twentieth-century beliefs which I thought we had moved on from. Lloyd seems to spend the first few pages waltzing around the issues and the concept of *'terra nullius'* searching for political correctness which leads to an oversimplification of Aboriginal settlement (pp. 24–25). Rudimentary oversights on land use management are concerning as is the summation that Aboriginal economic activity is reduced to that of the simplified forager. The discussion on Australian settler capitalism and the disintegration of Aboriginal societies follows a brief discussion on hybridity. This is the strength of this paper: the origins of Australian settler capitalism, socioeconomic hybridity, and the evolution of Australian settler capitalism in the nineteenth century, and the disintegration/integration of Aboriginal societies. Care must be taken however in understanding hybridity in economic-socioeconomic and in real

market terminology. Lloyd provides a sensitive explanation (p. 29). However from the reviewer's Indigenist position, Aboriginal hybrid economies *are not* the retention of traditional ways of life. Rather:

> *'they are the malnourished economic activity from a deformed and mutated society struggling to survive under the yoke of colonialism and dominance by an invading society'*. You can quote me on that!

Lloyd goes on with international examples which confuse the issue rather than simplify the Australian situation. Jon Altman's work is referenced. However in the author's belief it too is limited in its case analysis, for it does not illustrate comparatives of the economic division and integration of Aboriginal groups based on their resources – opportunity recognition and ability to maximise available assets based on their overall economic position within a wider geographic range that also includes regional and urban populations. It is far more opportunist. Lloyd is somewhat fixated in the foraging community. Altman gives Aboriginal people agency; Lloyd does not.

The importance of this paper was lost on side issues and the author's generalisations. Perhaps the paper would have been enriched by wider referencing on Aboriginal economic activity, literature from scholars such as Dr Heather Builth and Dr Ian J McNiven concerning their work on the Gunditjmara as examples. However this would be in contrast to Lloyd's fixation on the foraging Aboriginal without established economic interactions, established trade routes and the production of value added products produced in surplus for exchange – sale? The quote by Rowley (p. 38) finally shows some empathy to the British domination of the Aboriginal economy. The balance of the conclusion is shallow, superficially linking into the subject matter.

Chapter 3 by Ian Keen examines Aboriginal concepts of property on the frontier that includes King George Sound in Western Australia to Raffles Bay in the Northern Territory. It's a wonderful paper as Keen provides the reader with a ride into history that is well referenced and seemingly unbiased. He attempts to show the intricacies in inter-racial interaction between peoples with vastly different standpoints and values. He tries to explain these in an uncomplicated way, from bartering, demand sharing and reciprocation. The discussion on property concepts in late eighteenth-century England (p. 43) are described allowing the reader a comparative in understanding the following discussion on the interpretation of Aboriginal 'property' (pp. 44–48). I found the writing style and explanation easy to absorb. Keen then reviews amateur anthropologists' accounts of Aboriginal property (pp. 48–52). This is followed by his overview of the early professional anthropologists' accounts of Aboriginal property. That is then followed by English property categories (pp. 54–55) and finally a summation of the kinds of Aboriginal 'property' (pp. 55–56). This separation of the amateur from the professional is novel and important. Keen allows the reader an insight into Aboriginal tangible property and more importantly the intangible and the overarching concept that there is no equivalent between Aboriginal property and the European concepts of ownership. His conclusion

is balanced as he questions the ethnocentrisms within his profession. Keen simply concludes: 'Anthropologists need to record and interpret more of the Indigenous discourse about "owning" things' (p. 57). Race relations in Australia could possibly be vastly improved if settler society (white Australia) read and understood this chapter.

Chapter 4 by Jeremy Beckett is disappointing, written no doubt in his sleep from previous publications over many, many years. Nothing new! Rather a short ethno-history and a modern interpretation of post Second World War Islander migration to the mainland were given. The data is dated in the author's nostalgic overview of his own life's work. This chapter does not address Keen's summation of the text (p. iv). Rather it is about a succinct group who *are not* Australian Aboriginals and arguably this chapter is an orphan within an academic text on Aboriginal economy.

Chapter 5 by Anthony Redmond and Fiona Skyring provides the reader with an explanation of the exchange–Wurnan economy at Karunjie station in northern Western Australia. An insight into white brutality towards Aboriginal Australians and the links with Afghans figure in this remote micro study. Aboriginal people took what they could from an unfair exchange in labour (p. 87) and the most desirable objects into their Aboriginal trade system that existed prior to the European contact and economic subjugation. This is an important story illustrating not only the evil of some white pastoralists on the frontier. I applaud the authors for their links into 'factual history' in the reconstruction of details pertaining to the Wurnan economy, the Aboriginal economy.

Chapter 6 was another important paper and one that I enjoyed. Diana Young is a talented academic. Her paper is on dingo scalping and is one of the better papers in this collection. She illustrates the importance of the 40 year development of the dingo trade on the development of a frontier economy, skilfully managed and manipulated by the missionary industry to substantiate its own survival and the ultimate destruction of the Aboriginal economies. She also illustrates the influence of tourism and its low wages. Young's overuse of the word 'dreaming' is perplexing however; this Spencer and Gillen fictitious phrase that has crept into our vocabulary could be well substituted with more accurate Indigenous terminology or language. Apart from this oversight, it is well written and researched as to the changing development of Central Australia and the changing economies of its traditional residents by waves of explorers, missionaries, graziers, doggers and western economics. The alleged 'corruption' by cameleers and the doggers paying cash to Anangu was unacceptable, so it was better to manage the industry by a 'Mission' (p. 94). Once again Aboriginal people, even though they had showed money management skills for several years, had this stolen from them as Christianity 'cashed' in for the Mission's survival, not the betterment of Anangu. Young links the work of Elkin, Tindale, Love, Charles Duguid (p. 94), Dick Kimber (p. 98) and many others into an important paper on the history and corruption of the Aboriginal 'reserves' and Aboriginal culture by the progressive waves of intruders bringing a new economy, the western economy.

Chapter 7 by John White is based on the history of the south coast of New South Wales from the early nineteenth century concluding with the pea and bean industry in the Tuross Valley in the mid twentieth century. No doubt important for some due to its relativeness and currency within many Sydney and South Coast Aboriginal families even today. However the discussions on the expansion of colonial capitalism in the nineteenth century and Aboriginal engagement with the settler economy seem to lack detail in the Aboriginal involvement in a wages and cash economy. Possibly there are two different papers, or parts, one about laws and regulations, and the impact of the *1909 Aborigines Protection Act* and another about the people in the fields and their employers. The romanticism shown by White in the closing sentence, 'An Aboriginal worker's employer was a patron and a whitefella's employer was simply a boss' (p. 122), lost him credibility. It illustrates a naivety, possible ignorance and lack of grounded qualitative interviews with those that toiled for pennies when the white worker was often paid much more and invariably treated better. True, some Aboriginal workers were allowed to stay on their traditional lands (p. 119), most however were forced to move in the circuit, from Bega, Bodalla – the Tuross to the Goulburn Valley, the Riverina, or Wagga or back to the Monaro; wherever a crop needed picking, sheep dagged, fences mended, ensuring they lived on the fringe and in poverty … and one step ahead of the Protector. Or, they were forced back onto the coastal missions such as Wallaga Lake. The paper provides a possibly biased insight into the rise and fall of one segment of the rural economy involving Aboriginal labour.

Lorraine Gibson in Chapter 8 reviews Wilcannia and 'the justification of white moral values' (p. 137) and highlights the nepotism so prevalent in the white management of blacks (p. 131). Pages 129–130 provide the reader with an enlightening view of insider/outsider ontology. This paper questions 'who is you', with black and white meeting only at the point of service delivery. Overall her findings are: 'You are who you are not by virtue of what you have become' (p. 137). This paper goes deep enough to explain Aboriginal attitudes that are at the interface between Aboriginal priorities and colonisation. Gibson looks at the related elements and redefines what 'work' is within a wider range of Aboriginal socio-cultural meanings. Perhaps her concluding sentence is the perfect summation: 'This sense of self, for the most, is not determined by engagement in the capitalist division of labour; indeed, the greater the engagement in the capitalist economy, the more problematic and fraught a sense of self and of belonging can become' (p. 137). This is a complex paper that allows the reader to combine the structural and psychological factors of the overarching economy and the Aboriginal socio-cultural determinants and needs verses settler cultural expectations to explain 'work' and Aboriginal involvement. Well worth the investment to read and reflect.

Chapter 9 jumps from concept to concept and attempts to understand and/or address sustainable livelihoods after the mining ends. It is highly referenced to the point that one starts to question why? The paper is speculative, whilst it

addresses important issues. Holcombe's paper, and above all her writing style, does little to arouse my interests and I should leave my comments there. Let the reader formulate their own understanding.

As mentioned in the introduction, in Chapter 10 Chris Haynes provides a hard-hitting paper addressing tourism in Kakadu. 'Cultural tourism has created significant disadvantage for the Aboriginal people of the area' (p. 165): at last honesty! Let the reader enjoy this chapter, and realise the poor dividend to traditional owners from tourism (p. 173). Aboriginal people in the far north are being short-changed (p. 181) as are the tourists with the misrepresentations of Aboriginal culture by non-indigenous tour guides (p. 175).

Keen as editor left the best till last. No doubt I will reference Chris Haynes for many years to come; this paper made a huge impact on me as a reviewer for its depth of content. Would I purchase this text or recommend it … outside of a library resource centre possibly, it does contain some very good material. Definitely I recommend it for a resource centre. No doubt the reviewed text will be quoted by many in their industry substantiating what they do. The work by Keen, Redmond and Skyring, Young, Gibson, and Haynes I enjoyed with much pleasure. They alone are worth reading this important addition to a body of research on the engagement of Aboriginal people in the European frontier, the settled history of Australia.

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Aboriginal Family and the State: The Conditions of History by Sally Babidge, xix + 269 pp, Ashgate, Farnham, United Kingdom and Burlington, Vermont, 2010, ISBN 9780754679356 (hbk), £60.00

This book is an updated version of Sally Babidge's award-winning doctoral dissertation (2004) which explored continuities and transformations in kinship practices amongst Indigenous people living in the major mining centre of Charters Towers and its hinterland in north Queensland. Most of the people with whom the author worked live in a post-pastoral work era where the memories of that industry, together with their marginalised participation in a fossicking economy, form an essential part of many people's self-regard. However, the local domestic economy is now mostly based upon state transfers with occasional additional income injections coming from cultural heritage protection agreements in the extensive mining exploration areas. Expertly deploying the classical anthropological method of sustained, fine-grained participant-observation in conjunction with a thorough review of the documentary record, Babidge gained an acute appreciation of the powerful historical forces coming to bear upon a fiercely administered Indigenous population, subjected until at least the mid-1970s to life under Queensland's draconian *Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897* with its regime of random punitive removals of adults and children to other far-off settlements (such as Palm Island, Yarrabah and Woorabinda), its Kafkaesque intensive bureaucratic surveillance, and the ensuing marginalisation of local Aboriginal people from the mainstream economic and political life of the town.

Babidge paints a portrait of a distinctive and now highly mobile Aboriginal population situated within a wider socio-cultural region which at the time of her fieldwork was on the cusp of the massive economic and political transformations brought about by the renewed minerals boom currently reshaping the face of northern Australia more generally. For the Aboriginal people of Charters Towers, this new phase of the mineral boom exploded in the years immediately following Babidge's field work and has brought some new employment opportunities, encouraged the rise of some Aboriginal contracting businesses, but also made the cost of living, especially housing, much higher and made the continuation of Aboriginal housing co-operatives an even more essential element of the accommodation problem.

Babidge found that the social meaning of the local term 'family' in the Charters Towers area is used polysemically to refer to 'a number of different sets of, but overlapping, relations' (p. 101) which differentiates the local notion of 'family' between the shifting and labile nature of people's every day economic, political and social relationships, on the one hand, and, on the other, the descent-based 'family constructs' which gain prominence in organised political forums (such as native title claimant groups and other corporate-type aggregates), which rely upon descent connections to legitimate (a very limited) participation in natural resource management. As Babidge acknowledges, despite the analytical

value of the distinction between everyday bilateral relatedness vis a vis 'family structures', no clear division is sustainable between these two types of sociality because 'people bring the politics of everyday relations into organised politics, and draw the processes and outcomes of organised politics into their living arrangements' (p. 128). Babidge demonstrates how keenly felt obligations are a critical component of the contemporary social world but also allow a filtering of demands from kin so that more or less stable groupings of familial sets are maintained within the larger polity. This has important implications for managing the demands made upon the kin group and their rights and interests in land and its resources in the contemporary era. Babidge shows that while her subjects' kinship arrangements somewhat resemble Peter Sutton's description of Aboriginal cognatic 'families of polity' in other parts of heavily-settled Australia, this model alone could not capture the complexity through which relatedness is performed and experienced. Babidge is critical of a stream of British social anthropology which over-valued descent structures (seen as having 'jural status', i.e. a public significance which transcends the concerns of the individuals involved) vis a vis kinship (characterised by the less formal significations accorded to more private, familial relationships). Babidge found that anthropological models which focused attention upon corporate group membership at the expense of the multi-faceted demands of everyday kinship, commonly fail to take account of how individuals negotiate their involvement in group interactions and decision-making.[1] To be fair to Sutton, he is clear that all kinship relationships, from the most informal and seemingly contingent to the more structured, cognatic surnamed family, possess certain jural qualities because kinship always involves a public dimension in that it relies on recognition from a 'wider polity' and is never simply a biological aggregation of persons.[2] In Sutton's model, 'families of polity' always mix 'both ideology and action, and of the mix of Aboriginal people's models with their observable behaviour'.[3]

An over emphasis on the primacy of public, jural descent structures over more private and domestic kinship relations is, of course, not simply a product of British social anthropological models (which actually recognised the dynamic relationship between everyday, agentive kinship practices and indigenous ideologies of jural descent quite early on)[4] nor of traditional Indigenous ideologies about these topics. Babidge shows how corporate entities are often elicited and solidified in response to the focus on descent structures by the state itself which seeks out well defined, bounded groups with which to negotiate over native title rights and interests, eliciting the kinds of groups it needs to do this in response. That this is the case is demonstrated by the fact that while federal government agencies often elicit broad regional indigenous groupings that mirror the requirements of its legislation and procedures, State and local jurisdictions commonly elicit more compact, localised groupings.

1 For a discussion of the 'optative' elements of Aboriginal kinship, see also Sutton 2003: 214-216.
2 Sutton 2003: 208.
3 Sutton 2003: 210.
4 Evans-Pritchard 1940; Fortes 1953: 165.

In common with many other transactional models of small-scale gift/service economies,[5] Babidge follows Gaynor Macdonald's argument that in local giving/receiving/demanding processes the 'focus is on the relationship rather than the object'.[6] It is worth considering, though, whether a too exclusive emphasis on the exchange relationship as distinct from the gifted object/service, might not continue to over-dichotomise the exchange process, especially in a regime where the state has traditionally maintained an extremely tight rein on the local distribution of things, from rations, blankets and clothes in the early settlement and mission era to welfare dollars in the present.

In this otherwise excellent book, I found the discussion of intra-kin conflict was somewhat muted compared to the discussion of the early settler versus Aboriginal conflict and the effects of contemporary intra-group Aboriginal battles over native title group membership and housing allocation. Kin-based conflict has formed an essential part of the discussion of kinship in other important works on this subject in Aboriginal Australia, some written by field-work co-evals of Babidge,[7] and others which are a generation or two older.[8] I wondered if this muting might be seen as contributing some substance to the recent round of accusations that anthropologists have failed to describe and analyse violently conflictual conditions in contemporary Aboriginal settlement life. Ultimately Babidge's work is too fine-grained and ethnographically rigorous to be diminished by that kind of topical characterisation but the book might have still have achieved a little more in this regard. This book remains highly recommended reading for those working in intensely settled areas of Australia where the distinctiveness of Indigenous kinship practices is too easily overlooked.

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The Secret War: A True History of Queensland's Native Police by Jonathan Richards, 308pp, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2008, ISBN 9780702236396 (pbk), $39.95

The Queensland Native Police are a curious outlier in the history of Australian settlement; whereas for much of the twentieth century the story of frontier violence between Aboriginal people and settlers largely disappeared from national history, accounts of the operations of the Queensland Native Police were surprisingly persistent. I recently came across an article from a 1914 issue of *The Queenslander* which praised the European officers of the Native Police, who were 'always on the side of justice and propriety', but then revelled in their violent reputation, something explained away by the actions of the 'black police', that 'constabulary of half-tamed savages' who were the 'ruthless arm of the law'. Accounts such as this, Jonathan Richards tells us, were characteristic of the literature about the Queensland Native Police until the 1960s. Produced by 'journalists, novelists and popular historians', these accounts perpetuated romantic stereotypes and had an eye for the sensational. Richards' study is an important corrective.

It would have been easy to write a narrative of the rise and fall of the force, but Richards chooses instead to give us an almost sociological study which cross-sections the constitution and operations of the force. Early chapters detail the formation of the force and its operations on the Queensland frontier. Against claims that such a story could not be told because the records had been lost or destroyed, Richards digs deep into the archives, especially inquest files, and constructs a detailed and convincing picture of their activities. Like Tony Roberts in his recent study of violence in the Gulf country, *Frontier Justice*, Richards is also sensitive to the way in which secrecy was a structural imperative of the force. The tension between the formal role of police as 'upholders of the law', and their understood role as 'a retaliatory force, not a preventive one', is expertly explored, as are the consequences of this on the ways the frontier was reported and remembered. Richards explains that among the various frontier myths that circulated was a belief, accepted as fact by some writers, that a settler could get a 'licence to kill' Aboriginal people. The 1914 account of the Native Police in the above-cited edition of *The Queenslander* perpetuates this very myth. The surviving son of a massacred family, we are told, went to Brisbane where the authorities gave him a 'rifle and free leave to return to the district and shoot as many blackfellows as he could manage'. The 'licence to kill', as Richards' clearly shows, was a myth, but the message encoded in the myth, retold with such nonchalance, is disturbing indeed.

The book also provides a detailed examination of both European and Aboriginal service in the force; the backgrounds of the officers and men of the force, the organisation of the rank and file, and the disciplinary issues that were faced. I was somewhat surprised at the number of European officers who were charged with offences, indeed, offences against Aboriginal people, but as Richards

demonstrates, this was not so much an indicator of the forces transparency, as it was of these officers' failure to maintain its opacity. The sections detailing how Aboriginal people were recruited, and their relationship to the European officers who commanded them, is especially valuable for teasing out the complexities of service in this colonial paramilitary force. The chapter which examines the Native Police in the context of other comparable colonial forces is a reminder of how commonplace it was within empires to use Indigenous people themselves to help in the subjugation of their own people, and to serve the ends of 'empire building'.

In this excellent study Richards not only provides us with a meticulous account of the operations of the force, skilfully unpicks the myths surrounding them, but he also aids our understanding by placing them in a broader imperial context.

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The Aborigines of Victoria and Riverina by Peter Beveridge, xxxiv + 221 pp, Lowden Publishing Co, Donvale, Victoria, 2008, ISBN 9781920753085 (pbk), $45.00

I remember the morning as overcast when we gathered on the veranda at Tyntynder homestead, a group of Mallee primary school-children on our day out to Swan Hill, a trip made by so many like us for decades. This trip was undertaken by generations of local people and undoubtedly influenced their views: the impressiveness of the colonial buildings at Tyntynder was offset by the exotica of the artefact collections. All was overshadowed by the stories told of the killing of Andrew Beveridge by what were deemed 'treacherous local Aborigines'. Versions of that received narrative would have coloured the reception of the first edition, in 1889, of the work under review, and will shape the reception of this second edition, though likely in quite a different manner.

The family of who was to be the long lamented Andrew Beveridge ran Tyntynder and other pastoral stations both downstream and inland from Swan Hill for over 30 years from 1844. Peter Beveridge, Andrew's brother and the author of the present book, was the central figure in the family business for much of that period. Earlier clashes with local Aborigines had led to the killing of Andrew Beveridge, and these clashes continued for some years afterwards. Hostilities only ceased when a point was reached where – as a character in one of Peter Beveridge's fictional works said – the family 'tired of the slaughter'.[1] Conflict was not confined to struggles with the Aboriginal population, as the Beveridges also clashed in court with other pastoralists over occupation of the area where Swan Hill now stands, and armed stand-offs flared with other squatters in the 'back country' away from the Murray particularly in later years as pasturage became scarcer. All this followed on from the family being ordered by the colonial authorities in 1845 to leave the district they had just occupied: they had moved beyond the permitted boundaries of expansion! Ironically it was conflict within the Beveridge family on the back of drought and mismanagement that led to Peter Beveridge having to leave the region and then the remainder of the family sold their interests and severed their connection in 1876.

Peter Beveridge held status as a colonial gentleman as a result of this frontier pastoral experience and this was strengthened by his other attainments. He assisted a number of scientific expeditions to the mid-Murray region and corresponded widely. A collector of flora and fauna and ethnographic objects and member of a range of learned societies, he also pursued creative writing in addition to his better-known ethnographic writings. These writings, in common with his other work, stemmed from deep personal experience of the region where he spent the greater part of his life. His contact and engagement with Aboriginal people extended into forms of intimacy that stretched beyond the experience of most of his peers. He had travelled widely with Aboriginal people,

1 'John Fairfield, the Overlander: an Australian Story', MS, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.

including during the years of violence before and after the killing of his brother. He had employed many of them on his pastoral stations and acted as their Local Guardian. This strong link with Aboriginal people is reflected in his writing.

Once retired and having moved 'down country', Peter Beveridge had enhanced opportunities of continuing the writing projects that he had pursued for many years. The major fruit of this period was a draft manuscript of *The Aborigines of Victoria and Riverina*, which was published posthumously in 1889. This first edition was generally very positively received, being reviewed as a work 'not to be missed' by 'those who take an interest in the Aborigines of this country'.[2] Peter Beveridge's work was rated higher than the works of R Brough Smyth (1878) and E Curr (1886–87) due to his more direct experience. His work could perhaps be better understood as it was based on more direct observations and greater sympathy, and was less detached in manner. Despite the standing in colonial society of Beveridge and his family this was no guaranteed outcome, as shown in an early survey of Australian literature where the work of his brother MK Beveridge, *Among Gum Trees*, was acknowledged as 'the first attempt to relate the legends of the aborigines in verse' but was dismissed not just on the basis of a negative view of the poetry, but also because 'the legends themselves are worth little'.[3] The message is clear: writings on Aboriginal people could form interesting curios but details of Aboriginal lore held little worth.

How then might the work be received by readers when perspectives on Aboriginal culture have much altered? As the work itself has undergone alteration those changes need to be considered initially. The recent edition contains additional material in the form of illustrations previously published in Brough Smyth's work and from *The Picturesque Atlas of Australasia* together with biographical notes on the artists concerned. The illustrations add to the volume though it may have been preferable to some readers at least to use illustrations more directly related to the region. It also contains a short biographical note on Beveridge himself from readily available sources which sketches his personal background without providing any particular new insight into his character or experience. The sketch errs also when listing his brothers as it overlooks his brother John. Another biographical note, this time on ML Hutchinson, the publisher of the first edition, follows before the main text. While many of these new additions add to the work – the retention of the inordinate number of typographical and textual errors from the first edition severely detract from it, and the readily recognisable errors in English usage and spelling should definitely have been removed.

In one instance at least a misprint leads to elucidation. The reference 'Tarp' in place of 'larp' highlights that particular section, a section that should be familiar to both ethnographers and entomologists. Beveridge is not referring to psyllids as we would expect nor is the cultural practice around gathering this 'larp' (more regularly spelt as 'lerp') what we might recognise. While surprising, this account has echoes of his observations on interaction of native flora and fauna

2 *The Argus*, 26 October 1889; *Kilmore Free Press*, 2 August 1889.
3 Alexander Sutherland, 'Australian literature in Its First Century', *The Argus*, 10 July 1886.

elsewhere in his writings and thus illustrates the depth of his knowledge even when particular accounts differ from other authorities. His account, though unfamiliar, deepens our knowledge in a way other accounts could not.

Despite the depth of his knowledge Beveridge often presents his material in ways that would be offensive to many readers today and which detract from his account more generally. He appears dismissive if not contemptuous of what he claims are the actions and motivations of Aboriginal people, for example in his account of venereal disease, yet he provides a strong amount of detail not found elsewhere. It is apparent that he is writing for a particular colonial audience in a way that will demonstrate his knowledge on the one hand, yet demonstrate detachment and superiority on the other. Such an approach would have confirmed his status and authority during his own era, whilst blocking criticism from those who dismissed the work of his brother Mitchell Kilgour Beveridge on the basis of it focusing on Aboriginal people, as noted above.

This inbuilt fault in his approach leads to great variation in the accuracy of his analysis of what he has seen and experienced and can obscure what is a consistently important layer of detail of practice rarely found elsewhere. His more pointed writings on topics of Aboriginal life, customs and beliefs found in newspaper accounts and journal articles can transcend these limitations but they are not available to the general reader. At times however his experience and admiration of the way Aboriginal people held to their beliefs breaks through his mannered superiority. Certainly his dialogic account of his own debates with Central Murray people on religious matters in Chapter XI shows greater generosity than some other parts of his work and also portrays Aboriginal people as the clear winners of the debate for those not convinced of the a priori superiority of Christianity. All sections of his work have similar depth of material and all are worthy of careful study.

Apart from reflexive dismissals of Beveridge's work on account of his involvement as a direct actor in frontier violence, or because of the offensive tone of his writing on Aboriginal people, his work might also be dismissed by some readers as that of one of the 'early ethnographers'. As such it would be classed with the work of AW Howitt, RH Mathews, John Mathew, Robert Brough Smyth and EM Curr and deemed of little worth due to a generalised 'lack of scientific rigour'. Such reactions appear to be declining and there is a thawing in attitude with substantive research being carried on in recent years on the works of John Mathew and RH Mathews. This is a positive development as in common with the work of his 'amateur' peers Beveridge's writings stem from informants who can be identified. Thus personal histories developed and regional ethnographies were re-created from observations made when the Indigenous communities of the areas in question were relatively little affected by the inroads of Europeans. Such re-creations require a depth of knowledge amply demonstrated by Beveridge and the other early ethnographers. That depth of knowledge is more than enough reason for readers of today to return again to works such as *The Aborigines of Victoria and Riverina*.

Edward Ryan
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Great Central State: The Foundation of the Northern Territory by Jack Cross, xii + 404pp, Wakefield Press, Kent Town, 2011, ISBN 9781862548770 (pbk), $39.95

In his 'author's note', Jack Cross tells us that his book 'is the result of forty years of detailed archival research concentrating on the period 1860 to 1911 and using, where possible, only primary or contemporary sources'. His basic theme is the creation and eventual dissolution of a South Australian dream during the period when that colony ruled the Northern Territory. The dream was of the Great Australian State, bestriding the continent from south to north; an Australian colossus, gateway to an unlimited Asian market for the pastoralists and businessmen of South Australia. Cross begins at the beginning, with a chapter on the origins of the dream, the confusion in the initial acquisition of the Northern Territory which saw its principal parliamentary opponents become the custodians of the lands they had never wanted and the efforts of constantly recycled parliamentary ministries to devise a feasible settlement plan. The next three chapters follow chronologically. Chapter 2 traces the fortunes and misfortunes of Boyle Travers Finniss and the 1864 expedition he led to Escape Cliffs with high hopes of founding a modified Wakefieldian empire, only to face fierce dissension among his own men and his Adelaide political masters, humiliating recall and the ultimate failure of the whole scheme in 1866. Chapter 3 covers the political turmoil of 1866 to 1869 which led ultimately to George Goyder's northern surveys and the founding of Palmerston town on the shores of Port Darwin, and the fourth chapter concentrates mainly on the early history of the town and its environs.

To this point, the book is carried by a broad mainstream of events centring on politics and major personalities in Adelaide and the effects of their policies – or the lack of them – on Territory land settlement and industry. Later chapters tend to be more diffuse. Chapter 5 discusses aspects of government attempts to create new hope in the languishing colony, through gold discovery and exploitation, followed by a laissez-faire policy, defined by the author as 'opening the floodgates of North Australia to South-East Asian migration and trade'. A third stream of hope lay in attempts to encourage the migration of religious groups; and this aspect, relating to Santals, Mennonites, Japanese and Jews, is the subject of Chapter 6. Chapter 7, 'Coming of the gauchos', deals with some aspects of pastoral colonisation, mainly in the 1880s and a final short chapter – more of a note – touches on events from that time until the Commonwealth takeover in 1911.

There is notable scholarship in this book and Jack Cross is at his best in tracing the motives and machinations of the Adelaide political class, the pastoralists and the speculators who formed the driving force behind both proponents and opponents of the Great Central State. Here, Cross' reliance on meticulous examination of primary and contemporary sources really pays off: the detail of political conflict and personal idiosyncrasy, particularly in the early chapters, is quite remarkable and is presented with clarity, plus a modicum of well-judged

dry (and often wry) wit. It is likely, though, that the main themes of the book could have been enhanced by consideration of the plethora of secondary sources that have grown up during recent years. It is difficult to judge how much Cross had read, since little of it appears in his footnotes and the book does not include a bibliography. Details of attempts to attract religious migrants to the Territory and accounts of early pastoral treks are fascinating, but they do seem to be more of a diversion than a continuation of the main theme; and the complicated story of the dream's end, the Commonwealth/South Australian negotiations for transfer to the former in 1911 are barely touched upon.

Perhaps the most notable omission in the book is analysis of Aboriginal dispossession in the pursuit of the white man's vision. 'No attempt has been made', writes Cross, 'to analyse the response of the indigenous peoples to the invasion of their country by rootless nomadic outsiders except at the most descriptive level'. That, at least, is a refreshingly honest assessment of the invaders – and Cross makes it clear that he does not wish to impinge on the right of Aboriginal people to write their own history. His empirical descriptions of massacre and dispossession may be sparse but they are blunt; 'And so the intermittent war went on', he says, 'with the scales gradually tilting towards those with superior technology'. The process of power acquisition, oppression and exploitation of conquered peoples may be a constant in world history; yet never morally justified and Jack Cross would not have it so.

The book's diction is lucid. The book is well illustrated, cogently argued, competently referenced with few errors, and it will certainly become essential reading for all who wish to understand South Australia's role in the Northern Territory.

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Nharangga Wargunni Bugi-Buggillu: A Journey Through Narungga History by Skye Krichauff, xi + 203 pp, Narungga Aboriginal Progress Association and Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 2011, ISBN 9781862549104 (hbk), $39.95

This book has an interesting genesis based on a Masters thesis and written for the Narungga Aboriginal Progress Association. The author, Skye Krichauff, sets out to write the early contact history of the Narungga of Yorke Peninsula in South Australia. Surprisingly, the colonial process through the nineteenth century generated a very limited amount of archival material. The period under investigation was too far back to be accessible through oral accounts, so Krichauff was left with a historical record which gave her the bare outline of events but frustratingly little detail. She has on the whole done an admirable job of presenting a history which reflects both sides of the colonial encounter from the earliest seafaring explorers who sighted the Yorke Peninsula coastline in the early nineteenth century to the establishment of a Christian mission, Point Pearce, in the 1860s.

Although the book has a slightly polemical tone, Krichauff tries, I think successfully, to present an even-handed account of both the Narungga and the early explorers and colonisers. She argues that through the nineteenth century the Narungga were in control of their own lives and made informed decisions about how to relate to the people who gradually came to occupy their lands. This historical approach is not as novel as Krichauff implies (the footnotes, there is no bibliography, do not reflect a wide reading of Australian colonial history), nevertheless, she makes her point well and on the whole convincingly. The Narungga, unlike the Kaurna, their neighbours on the Adelaide plains, were not inundated by large numbers of settlers. The colonisation of Yorke Peninsula was gradual and dispersed. The men who came to the peninsula were on the whole willing to accommodate themselves to the Narungga, who in turn did not act aggressively towards the interlopers. The period of violent conflict was very brief compared to many other regions of Australia, lasting less than a year, (apart from a couple of later incidents). Krichauff assumes that the Narungga were so isolated from the rest of Aboriginal Australia that they were unaware of the Kaurna experience and that they dealt with the colonisers on a one by one basis. Some on the southern coastal regions may have been influenced by whalers and sealers coming to their shores to take women, although there is little documentary evidence that they did so, but otherwise Krichauff does not reflect on the wider colonial context.

My main concern with the approach Krichauff takes is in her attempt to, 'provide colour and tone to the emerging picture, [she] seized on and interpreted clues and used conjecture and imagination' (p. 7). The result is a rather speculative approach to history. It seems rather presumptuous to guess at Narungga motivations, especially in the early days of contact. Occasionally the speculation seems ill informed, for instance, where she wonders if the Narungga men might have expected a survey party to supply them with women (p. 42), rather than

speculating why these strange men seemed to be without women. This conjectural tone is even used where Krichauff does have evidence. Sometimes Krichauff adopts the language of her sources referring to Narungga chiefs and assuming the Narungga would have viewed early exploring parties as hierarchical, even though their own experience was of non-hierarchical socio-political system.

At other points in this history Krichauff's approach works well. Her handling of the violence which erupted in 1849 is empathetic, particularly her analysis of settler interests. She accumulates an impressive range of data from diverse sources in her discussion of a man known as Jim Crack who was an interpreter and police guide and as such appears more regularly in the records than other most other Narungga.

The book ends with the establishment of Point Pearce mission by a Moravian missionary Julius Kuhn. Again Krichauff tries to be even-handed in her discussion of Kuhn and Narungga responses to him, but her analysis would be helped by a wider reading of the extensive secondary literature on missions in Australia where she would find that current scholarship considers Aboriginal as well as missionary motivations behind the formation of missions.

The book is handsomely presented with paintings by Edward Snell and William Cawthorne on the cover. The Contents, however, lacks a list of illustrations and maps used in the book, and rather inexplicably some illustrations lack captions. A bibliography would also be helpful for the reader.

Skye Krichauff with the support of the Narungga Aboriginal Progress Association has filled a gap in our knowledge of early South Australian colonial history in *Nharangga Wargunni Bugi-Buggillu*, and reminds us that we should never assume that all colonial history followed predictable trajectories. She discovered the Narungga were able to live on at least some of their lands relatively independently through much of the nineteenth century, although by the twentieth century their numbers were sadly depleted and they no longer inhabited the southern part of the peninsula.

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Rethinking the Racial Moment: Essays on the Colonial Encounter edited by Alison Holland and Barbara Brookes, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle, 2011, ISBN 9781443828628 (hbk), £39.99

This valuable collection invites readers to engage with the ways that 'moments' can reveal the workings and limits of imperial and colonial power. In a really useful introduction, Alison Holland sets out the context for the collection she has edited with Barbara Brookes, pointing to shifts in global politics post 9/11 and ensuing critical responses – including from historians interested in the genealogies of globalising systems such as the formation of racial difference. Seeking to extend the idea of the 'racial moment' as described in *Race and Nation* edited by Paul Spickard (Routledge, 2005), Holland argues for the application of a more active and diverse notion: that of 'racialising moments' as a methodology for the critical investigation of racial difference. Rather than fundamental or essential categories, the formations of whiteness, Indigeneity and other racial formations are thereby revealed as they were lived: in process, never complete, always relational and contextual, and often contradictory.

With its focus on Australia and New Zealand, *Rethinking the Racial Moment* provides a satisfying combination of interconnection and comparison with diversity. The trans-colonial conference on which the collection is based helps to break the nexus between metropole and colony, or indeed between white and black, that has often characterised colonial history. Similarly, by looking beyond simplistic notions of whiteness or non-whiteness, it asks us to reconsider the complexities of colonial encounters in relational mode; to realise that racial formation was a fragile and sometimes contradictory process. And, thirdly, through applying a global approach to investigating these operations on both sides of the frontier, the collection offers a really exciting set of studies exemplary both for their fine-tuned analysis and for their capacity to look outwards from the archives towards the global geo-politics of past and present.

Contributions range from Hsu-Ming Teo's evocative study of early nineteenth romantic fiction as a racialising moment in relation to European literary representations of the Orient to Tony Ballantyne's insightful investigation of the cosmopolitan maritime culture in New Zealand in the 1850s and 1860s on the cusp of systemic colonisation. A consummate discussion by Angela Woollacott concerns the role that employment of unfree labour played in confirming the free status of white settlers in Australia and New Zealand. While through his study of a leading white male settler in the same era (Alfred Howitt), Leigh Boucher sets out in compelling detail the ways in which a biographical approach can illustrate the fragmented and contingent ways in which settler colonialism has been lived and experienced, and how marginalised figures such as wives and daughters, as well as Indigenous people, have been material to the capacity of its key men. Vicki Grieves draws from family memories of loss in the face of colonisation to consider Indigenous family formations despite the impacts of an inter-colonial discourse of slavery through which white men's property

rights included Aboriginal women and their off-spring as future labour force. Turning again to New Zealand, Barbara Brookes investigates the campaigns of Maori leaders in the interwar years influenced by hegemonic ideas about racial purity. Understanding themselves to be like white men with whom they shared Aryan ancestry, they argued also against sexual relations between 'their' women and Asian men on the grounds of racial contamination. Similarly, Alison Holland writes persuasively of non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal utilisations of ideas of uplift in her study of the Yurtookee Club in Adelaide in the 1940s in order to uncover the diverse ways in which Aboriginal and humanitarian politics interacted within that project. Another of the outstanding chapters in this collection is by Rani Kerin who interrogates the humanitarian investment in the idea of Aboriginality through the multiplicity of racial moments in the life of an Aboriginal boy, Sydney James Cook adopted by Christian reform and Aboriginal rights activists, the Duguids (Phyllis Duguid was involved also in Yurtookee). The final chapter offers a fascinating study of the term 'indigenous' as applied by liberal imperialists to the particular rights of 'natives' under international law, and its implications for the emergence of global indigenism in the second half of the twentieth century. Tim Rowse concludes that non-racial notions of Indigenous cultural difference within Western non-racial thought were as influential in the emergence of this political movement as the history of Indigenous self-assertion itself.

One of the central features of the collection is the contributors' assumption that Indigenous perspectives are integral to the kind of history they write. Drawing on whiteness studies, transnational feminist scholarship, postcolonial studies, Indigenous history and critical imperial history, although they cover a wide-range of topics each illustrates how racialising moments have been specific sites with sometimes diverse and contradictory effects, including those articulated and enacted by 'the colonised' themselves. Under the rubric of this interrogative framework, their contributions provide a wonderfully engaging snapshot of new settler colonial history in Australia and New Zealand. It is possible that more might have been said about the spatial aspect of contact history, including where violence rather than accommodation dominates. Obviously racialising moments are locations in time and space as well as representational 'spaces' in which 'notions of racial privilege and subordination are marked, transformed and appropriated on both sides of the colonial divide' (p. 9). But aside from this concern, *Rethinking the Racial Moment* is highly recommended as a volume for teaching as well as one to be enjoyed by readers eager to sample some of the most innovative and well-written history coming out of Australia and New Zealand in recent years.

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Contributors

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Footnote style

1. Rowley 1971: 107. See also Barwick 1981.

2. Fisher to Hassall, 20 July 1824.

3. Fison and Howitt 1880: 96-108.

4. *Evening Mail,* 12 March 1869.

5. Solly to Stokell, 4 March 1869, AOTCSD 7/23/127.

Footnote numbers are placed after punctuation marks in the text. Please do not use ibid. or similar abbreviations, but repeat the short citation.

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