

# ABORIGINAL HISTORY

Volume 36, 2012



# ABORIGINAL HISTORY

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E P R E S S



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## Preface

We are pleased to present Volume 36 of *Aboriginal History*.

The volume is made up of a mix of papers, reflecting again the rich interdisciplinary project that is Aboriginal history. What that project is and has been, how it developed and was defined (or indeed not defined), and the role the journal played in shaping it, is the subject of the final article in this volume. Depending on how you look at it, it's either a long essay or a short history. In it, Bain Attwood details the personalities and the politics surrounding the foundation and early years of the journal and the intellectual stakes involved in the various disputes that emerged and at times erupted. The history of the journal is, then, also a history of the field. Attwood has drawn extensively on the journal's archives, as well as interviewed many of the players involved, including some members of the Aboriginal History Board who were there from the outset, such as Niel Gunson, Isabel McBryde and Luise Hercus. For the important historical record it provides, the current Board, chaired by Peter Read, was keen for the piece to be published. As the journal editors, we were pleased to endorse this and to bring about its publication. We acknowledge and appreciate the two referees who willingly reviewed the article for us.

The five articles that precede it cover a range of topics, disciplines and approaches. There is only one obvious commonality, which is that two of the five are about Cape Bedford Mission (or Hopevale) in Cape York. But that is where the similarity ends. Jonathan Richards' article explores the evacuation of the Cape Bedford mission during the Second World War, providing an alternative account to the conventional interpretation. Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg is an ethnomusicologist. Her article examines the contemporary uses of church music and song to tell local histories and to express belonging to place at Hopevale. Amanda Nettelbeck and Robert Foster provide a history of rationing on the nineteenth-century settler frontiers in Australia and North West Canada. Their article is a model of the value of a comparative approach. Jennifer Jones' piece about the editing of Ella Simon's autobiographical text, *Through My Eyes*, provides original insights into the complicated politics and meanings of assimilation. Anne Scrimgeour's article on the Pindan mob's challenge to the restrictive leper line in Western Australia illuminates an important event in the twentieth-century history of Aboriginal politics.

As usual the volume includes an impressive number of reviews of books across many topics and the fields. We hope you enjoy them, and thank our review editor Luise Hercus for the work she does in commissioning them.

For this volume we also acknowledge Professor Adam Graycar, Director of the Research School of Social Sciences in the College of Arts and Social Science at ANU, for a small grant that allowed us to employ an editorial assistant. Laura

Rademaker, a doctoral student in the Australian Centre for Indigenous History, where the journal is based, undertook this role with efficiency and aplomb. We are grateful to her.

Finally, as we were preparing this volume for publication we heard the sad news that Dick Barwick, a longstanding supporter of *Aboriginal History*, had passed away. An appreciation of him and his contribution follows.

Shino Konishi and Maria Nugent



## Dick Barwick: An appreciation from the Aboriginal History Board

*Richard Essex (Dick) Barwick*, foundation friend of *Aboriginal History*, vertebrate zoologist, palaeontologist, Antarctic explorer and Aboriginal-rights activist, died peacefully in Canberra on 10 November 2012. He was born in Christchurch, New Zealand on 1 September 1929, attended Christchurch Boys High School and, after a variety of work experiences, attended Victoria University College (Victoria University of Wellington) where he took a Bachelor's degree in 1956, followed by a MSc (Hons) in 1957. Richard then accepted a job as a Junior Lecturer, Zoology, at Victoria University of Wellington. In 1959 he applied for a lectureship at Canberra University College soon to be part of The Australian National University where he enrolled for a PhD. Shortly after he was appointed to the Zoology Department at ANU. In 1961 his soon-to-be wife Diane came to Australia from Canada to study for her PhD in Anthropology and on her first day at ANU Richard glanced down the communal breakfast table at University House and asked 'Who is that attractive new student?' After their marriage, due to commitments of study, they spent most of their early life apart, with Diane in Victoria and Richard in Canberra. Richard would drive to see Diane every weekend he could. Diane completed her PhD in 1964, and Richard in 1965.

The Zoology Department meanwhile had expanded, with Richard's interests in vertebrate biology invaluable supporting both teaching and research in this core area of animal biology. Richard retired as a Reader in Zoology at ANU in 1992, continuing on as a Visiting Fellow in the Research School of Earth Sciences. Since his first days at Victoria University Richard had had a keen interest in History, Archaeology and Anthropology. Indeed, he was a founding member of the New Zealand Archaeological Society. This, and his interest in ethnographic art, led to a number of collaborations with Diane. Diane's role as editor was instrumental in establishing the international reputation of the journal *Aboriginal History* and Richard contributed more than 30 journal and monograph covers. When Diane died in 1986, over the next few years Richard and his daughter Laura edited, and published a number of Diane's unfinished manuscripts, including the major work *Rebellion at Coranderrk* (1996).

Richard's contribution to the life of the University was extraordinary. His diverse roles included service on a number of key management committees including the ANU Press, Buildings and Grounds, the Northern Australia Research Unit, and The Edith and Joy London Foundation (the University's coastal campus). Richard also served as the Bailiff of the Edith and Joy London Foundation and as Master of the Cellars at University House. The logo he designed for the House in the 1970s is still in use. Although he had initially viewed science as something to fall back on if he failed to make it as a working artist, he quickly discovered that his real calling was the seamless marriage of the two. Richard had a great passion for education and anything he set his sights on received every ounce of his considerable mind. He had a vision of life that can only be described as panoramic.

Thanks to Laura Barwick for these details of her father's life

Dick Barwick was there from the beginning. He was there to support our first editor, his loving partner Diane Barwick, and the journal simultaneously. It was his logo that we used first, and continue to use, as the journal's icon. He designed the first cover, and nearly all the subsequent covers, of the annual volume, and most of the monographs. He gave expert advice on linguistic and other typefaces that were hard to reproduce. When we asked him to design a letterhead – back it came within days. When we asked him to design individual letterheads for the office bearers, back they came too, within days.

Helping push along the major monograph, Diane Barwick's *Rebellion at Coranderrk*, seemed so simple when he took control of the massive manuscript after Diane's sudden death. We consulted him on printers, typefaces, illustrations and cost. He came with us to Capital Territory Printers to make sure everything was in order, and helped to load them into the Land Rover ute for distribution, remarking, 'I drove across Australia in one of these'. Of course, he was there at the launch of *Rebellion*, at Healesville, and was working, with Laura Barwick on a new edition at the time of his death.

Adventurer, intellectual, friend, we mourn his passing deeply. And we hope that, whoever holds the authority in the place he is now, that he or she exercises that power wisely. Otherwise Dick will soon be cheeking the establishment in the way that he always rejoiced in doing.

Peter Read, Chair, Aboriginal History Board

Dick was all those things, zoologist, geographer, Antarctic medallist, natural history and heraldic artist, designer of books and bookplates – a virtual polymath – and these skills all came together in his support of Aboriginal issues and his unselfish unpaid work for Aboriginal History. He once thanked Aboriginal History for providing a career for Diane and he was dedicated to keeping her memory alive. In his last years he carried out two projects of significance to Aboriginal scholarship. With the assistance of his daughter Laura he made an inventory and prepared the valuable Papers of Diane Barwick, sorted into 45 series containing hundreds of folders and other items (37.05 m), for permanent deposit in the State Library of Victoria. The transfer was made in 2006.

In 2009 he graciously agreed to do all the art work for '*I Succeeded Once*': *The Aboriginal Protectorate on the Mornington Peninsula, 1839-1840* by Marie Hansen Fels, number 22 in the Aboriginal History Monograph series. He designed the cover and prepared 45 illustrations which involved redrawing maps, cleaning textual images from the papers of Protector William Thomas and enhancing photographs. Needless to say this involved countless hours of painstaking work and dedicated attention to detail. A commercial publisher would have been charged thousands of dollars for this work but Dick did it in memory of Diane and out of regard for Aboriginal History.

Diane and Dick were my friends from University House days. When Diane produced the first volume of *Aboriginal History* I gave her a bottle of 1930

#### DICK BARWICK: AN APPRECIATION FROM THE ABORIGINAL HISTORY BOARD

Para port for Christmas. At board meetings whenever it looked as if we might be stuck for funds Diane would say 'We can always sell the Para port'. Dick apparently kept it as a symbol of the journal's success so, without drinking it, we can symbolically toast to the successful Barwick partnership.

Niel Gunson, Founding Chair



# Assimilation discourses and the production of Ella Simon's *Through My Eyes*

Jennifer Jones

*Through My Eyes* (1978) was among the first Aboriginal women's narratives available to a mainstream audience.<sup>1</sup> Ella Simon, a prominent Biripi woman from Taree on the mid north coast of New South Wales, made oral recordings of her life story in 1973. She was determined that her resultant autobiography would prove to Aboriginal and white readers alike that 'white and black can live together; that they've got a lot in common'.<sup>2</sup> Ella Simon believed that publishing her life story would provide a forum for her complex and then controversial views on assimilation. This article contests, on the contrary, that the editorial process that transformed Simon's oral recordings into a written text did not respect nor accurately convey Ella Simon's views on how 'white and black' could 'live together'. By examining transcripts of Simon's original oral recordings, I demonstrate how lack of cultural literacy amongst her non-Aboriginal collaborators led to the prioritisation of monocultural understanding of assimilation, to the detriment of Simon's more pluralist views.

Ella Simon resolved to articulate her sense of Aboriginality and defend her positive interpretation of assimilation in response to unsettling events in the Purfleet Aboriginal community: events that reflected wider reform and change in Aboriginal affairs. Rapid changes in the governance of Aboriginal communities and in Aboriginal politics were increasingly discrediting assimilation as a concept. According to Simon, the period 1968 to 1971 severely undermined the certainties of the assimilation era at Purfleet.<sup>3</sup> During this period two sources of paternal oversight were removed; the Station Manager in 1968, and the resident United Aboriginal Mission (UAM) missionaries in 1971.<sup>4</sup> Purfleet matriarch Patricia Davis-Hurst observed that the loss of external supervision threatened the security of some residents:

The Welfare Board followed in the steps of the managers and was dispensed with, being replaced by the Housing Commission. ... It was

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1 Following Oodgeroo's *Stradbroke Dreamtime* (1972) [published as Kath Walker], Margaret Tucker's *If Everyone Cared* (1977) and Monica Clare's *Karobran* (1978).

2 Simon, in Brosgarth 1977: 2.

3 Simon, extract from oral manuscript, Tape Five Side A, transcribed and edited by Jennifer Jones 2009, transcript in the private collection of the author.

4 Purfleet had a missionary presence for the previous 71 years. See Ramsland 2001: 90–91.

hard to comprehend that at last the reign of the manager was over. The people were confused, mainly because they always had someone telling them what to do.<sup>5</sup>

Other Purfleet residents, including a recent arrival, Aboriginal activist Kevin Gilbert, viewed the changes as inconsequential and believed that the 'new deal for black people' promised by the referendum was a sham.<sup>6</sup> As Russell McGregor argues, disenchantment with the outcomes of the 1967 referendum influenced a new push for meaningful Aboriginal self determination in the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>7</sup> Calls for Aboriginal land rights, Aboriginal distinctiveness and autonomy gained national prominence with the erection of the tent embassy at Parliament House, Canberra in January 1972.<sup>8</sup> In February 1973, Gilbert joined other local activists in demanding self determination in Taree. These calls disturbed Ella Simon, one of Purfleet's most prominent and respectable Aboriginal matriarchs, who had long endorsed cross racial collaboration and assimilation. Advocates of assimilation often held varied opinions of the pathways and outcomes of the policy. Assimilation was not a 'monolithic strategy pursuing some predetermined ends', but a 'shifting and indeterminate discourse open to varied, even opposing inflection'.<sup>9</sup> This article extends and complicates scholarship on the complexity of assimilationist discourses, which has focused upon national discourses, policy and policy makers.<sup>10</sup> It argues that the editing and production of Ella Simon's life narrative reveals the diverse and competing meanings of assimilation at the grass roots level in the early 1970s. Simon's approval of assimilation was posited upon her belief in the possibility of a dynamic interaction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal traditions and world views – a view that would later be defined as integration. The editorial treatment of her oral manuscript starkly demonstrates how this interpretation of assimilation differed from those of her non-Aboriginal collaborators. Ella Simon advocated equal rights, respect for difference and expected that assimilation was reciprocal; that mainstream white culture would adapt to Aboriginal lifeways and accept a degree of indigenisation. Her collaborators, by contrast, acted upon the then prevalent and homogenising assumption that assimilation was a process by which Aboriginal people adjusted to western civilisation and that equal treatment was necessarily 'difference-blind'.<sup>11</sup>

5 Davis-Hurst 1996: 93.

6 Gilbert 1973: 102.

7 McGregor 2009.

8 The tent embassy, a highly symbolic public assertion of Aboriginal rights, was erected on the lawns of Parliament House by a group of Sydney based activists on Australia Day, 26 January 1972. See Goodall 1996: 338.

9 McGregor 2001: 55.

10 See for example McGregor 1999; Rowse 2005b; Haebich 2008.

11 See Taylor 1994.

## The Context of *Through My Eyes*

Ella Simon's commitment to Aboriginal assimilation as she interpreted it was reflected in her role as a foundation member of the Purfleet Aboriginal branch of the Country Women's Association (CWA) formed in 1961, and subsequently in the management of the Gillawarra Gift Shop (a successful Aboriginal tourism and cultural education enterprise run by a voluntary committee from 1963 to 1973). Membership in these mixed-race committees enabled Simon and her Aboriginal peers to harness the resources and power of prominent white members of the Taree community, improving outcomes in education, health, employment, and housing for the Purfleet community; outcomes that had been difficult to otherwise obtain under the rule of the Aboriginal Welfare Board (AWB).<sup>12</sup> In February 1973, however, Black Power activists led by Aboriginal poet Kevin Gilbert ousted the mixed-race committee that operated the Gillawarra Gift Shop, insisting, 'That "the people" wanted the shop'.<sup>13</sup>

By the late 1960s, the term 'black power' had come to represent a 'mood of assertiveness' that accompanied demands for recognition of Aboriginal cultural difference, rights to land and autonomous leadership of Aboriginal organisations.<sup>14</sup> Between 1968 and 1970, key Aboriginal organisations experienced increasing polarisation 'between "Establishment" and "radical" Aborigines',<sup>15</sup> who demanded that white Australians relinquish leadership roles in Aboriginal organisations. These divisions were sometimes generational, with members of the increasingly educated and urbanised younger generation rejecting the world view of conservative Elders like Ella Simon.<sup>16</sup> As Felton and Flanagan later explained in their *Tidda's Manifesto*:

If we continue to listen to white people's analysis of our oppression we will begin to question our own reality and our objectives will become oppressed. We believe that this has happened to so many of our old people who went through the missions. Our old people tend to talk of missionaries with great fondness, yet when we, as the next generation, hear about the way they were treated by Whites we react with a lot of anger.<sup>17</sup>

Ella Simon was an 'Establishment Aborigine'; a political conservative and Evangelical (later Pentecostal) Christian with long-standing connections in

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12 I examine the achievements and challenges of cross-racial collaboration in the Country Women's Association in greater depth in my forthcoming book *Country Women and the Colour Bar*, which is based upon research made possible by an ARC Post Doctoral Fellowship.

13 Simon 1978: 108.

14 Attwood 2003: 185.

15 Minutes, January to June 1970, Council for Aboriginal Affairs, 7 Dec 1967, Box 1, Series 1, Item 6, Barrie Dexter Papers MS4167, AIATSIS Library. The FCAATSI, Sydney based Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs, and the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League all experienced the contestation of white leadership by 'radicals' in 1969–1970. See Taffe 2005; Lothian 2005: 179–200; Broome 2010: 141.

16 McGregor 2009: 348–349.

17 Felton and Flanagan 1993: 57–58.

respectable Taree circles. Her disapproval of the noisy approach of militant or even left-leaning politics was well known.<sup>18</sup> So when Black Power advocates, under the auspices of the Purfleet Aboriginal Advancement League, threatened to damage the productive cross-racial collaborations Simon and others had carefully cultivated, she was forced to respond. The Gillawarra Giftshop Committee meeting minutes records this provocation as the exclusion of the two Taree Chamber of Commerce representatives 'who had been members of the [Gillawarra] committee since inception [and] were not invited to continue with the management'.<sup>19</sup> Ella Simon was incensed and tendered her resignation in an act of solidarity:

It was against my principles not to have a mixture of black and white. They wanted it run by Aborigines only. I just didn't want to work under an all-Aboriginal committee, that's the truth. I felt it was just another colour-bar ... Doing this wasn't assimilating them. It was just getting them back where they were, and I couldn't be any part of that.<sup>20</sup>

Simon viewed the strategies of Black Power advocates as isolationist, achieving an unwelcome return to racial segregation. Simon believed that the assertion of Aboriginality did not require a rejection of assimilation. One of the common interpretations of cultural assimilation was that Aboriginal people would willingly relinquish their Aboriginal culture and associations in exchange for civic benefits.<sup>21</sup> Government literature suggested that Aboriginal people must 'live and work and think as white Australians do so that they can take their place in social, economic and political equality with the rest of the Australian community'.<sup>22</sup> Ella Simon's view of assimilation varied significantly from the policy officially adopted by the New South Wales Government and from the view widely held within the mainstream white community.<sup>23</sup> Influential anthropologist AP Elkin recognised that Ella Simon's standpoint on assimilation did not imply cultural absorption. He explained Simon's defence of assimilation in his foreword to *Through My Eyes*:

Mrs Simon felt that the Black Power Movement wanted to control all Aborigines as a people apart, whereas her own objective was assimilation,

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18 In 1961, Ella Simon refused to assist a beloved cousin and her family when they were made homeless during the Purfleet rent strike. A political conservative, Simon was against the rent strike 'because Commo's were involved'. Faith Saunders, interview with Jennifer Jones, 19 December 2004, Taree, unpublished transcript in the private collection of Jennifer Jones. She also opposed the Freedom Ride because the activists were simply 'stirring up a hornets' nest and shooting off'. Alan Duncan quoted in Curthoys 2002: 57.

19 'New Committee for Gillawarra Shop', *The Manning River Times*, 2 April 1974. History of the Gillawarra Gift Shop, nd, File 3, Gillawarra Gift Shop papers, in the private collection of Alan Cowan, Forster, New South Wales.

20 Simon 1978: 108.

21 Haebich 2008: 182.

22 Department of Territories 1958. Pamphlet held in the Aboriginal branches and Associations folder, Country Women's Association of New South Wales (CWA of NSW) archives, Potts Point, Sydney.

23 See Rowse 2005a for a comprehensive discussion of the differing approaches to assimilation.



that is, mutual respect and cooperation of Black and White in one society of Australian citizens – a goal which was later called integration. She did not mean either biological or cultural absorption.<sup>24</sup>

Ella Simon believed that assimilation could accommodate an Aboriginal socio-cultural order, but she did not frame her claims with the more politically palatable term 'integration'. Here Elkin interprets Simon's standpoint on assimilation as future oriented and productive. Whilst other Aboriginal people, described by Elkin as 'disillusioned fringe dwellers' attempted to return to their 'former tribal culture' which was now in 'shreds',<sup>25</sup> Ella Simon was weaving something new and viable:

Mrs Simon, for her part, sought neither to retreat into the traditional past, nor to reject citizenship with its responsibilities and privileges. On the contrary she sought to weave a new 'mat' of materials old and new, Black and White, and of the spiritual and moral fibres of both Aboriginal and Christian faiths.<sup>26</sup>

I presume that Elkin observed elements of this 'new mat' in his reading of *Through My Eyes*, a text that conforms to the *Bildungsroman* model of autobiography. Yet *Through My Eyes*, which is narrated by a single, integrated authorial persona, differs considerably from the original oral narrative in content and form.<sup>27</sup> With recourse to the oral manuscript, this article contests that Ella Simon attempted to demonstrate the compatibility of Aboriginal and Christian world views and hence the viability of assimilation by adopting an Aboriginalised narrative form.

### Strands in the 'new mat'

What historical experiences convinced Ella Simon to publicly endorse assimilation? Ella Simon was born in 1902 and raised by her maternal grandparents on Purfleet Mission which had been gazetted in response to demands by white locals for racial segregation.<sup>28</sup> The Aboriginal reserve, originally located within the town's boundaries, had been shifted three times between 1880 and 1900 in response to white complaint; until 18 acres of land was granted as a government reserve in May 1900, two miles south of Taree on the southern side of the Manning River.<sup>29</sup> A UAM volunteer commenced work with the Purfleet community in May 1901, the mission hall and school building

24 Elkin in Simon 1978: 7. From the 1950s some activists preferred the term 'integration' to 'assimilation' as they believed it implied a mode of incorporation into the nation that was more respectful of Aboriginality. See McGregor 2009: 345–346.

25 Elkin in Simon 1978: 9.

26 Elkin in Simon 1978: 9.

27 This article concentrates on editorial choices concerning narrative form. See Jones 2009c for examples of the impact of decisions to include or exclude particular content from *Through My Eyes*.

28 Byrne and Nugent 2004: 50.

29 Ramsland 2001: 75.

was opened in June 1903.<sup>30</sup> One common premise amongst UAM missionaries, who were drawn from the ranks of the evangelical faithful, was the belief that conversion could be equated with the adoption of a European world view. Their fundamentalist theology was also frequently expressed in a strict and narrow set of moral principles.<sup>31</sup> As John Harris notes, it was not until the 1960s that cultural integration was widely accepted by many missionaries in Australia.<sup>32</sup>

The UAM became the most active of the non-denominational mission societies and as UAM missionaries worked on Aboriginal Protection Board Aboriginal Stations and Children's Homes; they became closely associated with repressive government practices.<sup>33</sup> The influence of the UAM at Purfleet, however, declined as control of the Aborigines Protection Board increased. The Aboriginal Protection Board gained legislative power over Aboriginal people in New South Wales in 1909 and installed a live-in Manager at Purfleet in 1932. The Manager at Purfleet assumed many of the welfare and teaching roles previously occupied by the resident missionary, maintaining authoritarian control of resident's temporal needs including housing, rations and clothing. In response, the UAM moved its mission hall off the government station in 1935, in order to maintain an independent presence.<sup>34</sup> Religious events conducted under the auspices of non-denominational groups like UAM and Christian Endeavour became one of the few avenues for cross-racial contact between Aboriginal and white women outside of paid employment.

One of the greatest obstacles to achieving assimilation was the obstruction of some in the white community who did not want to absorb Aboriginal people. This was particularly evident in rural areas of New South Wales, in which the majority of Aboriginal residents still lived. Aboriginal Stations had first been established as enclosed and supervised spaces in order to achieve segregation, creating 'a buffer against contact between Aboriginal people and whites', popularly known as the 'colour bar'.<sup>35</sup> Legislation at local, state and federal government levels limited the rights of Aboriginal people to participate in community life and to access services. These restrictions ranged from exclusion from the census, to segregated treatment in public hospitals and inferior state-delivered education. The colour bar also operated at an informal level; Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people both had a tacit understanding of which public services or spaces were off limits to Aboriginal people. These unspoken local codes prescribed the availability of shopping facilities, saw the operation of curfews, specified tolerated locations

30 Telfer 1939: 61.

31 Harris 1990: 590.

32 Harris 1990: 551–560.

33 Harris 1990: 556.

34 Ramsland 2001.

35 Goodall 1996: 90. Enclosure also enabled the Aboriginal Welfare Board to disperse Aboriginal people who were defined as non-Aboriginal under the *Aborigines Protection Act 1909* (NSW). See Read 1988: 55. Maintaining an enclosure was easier in locations where the station could be fenced and gated, or where remoteness discouraged access. As Purfleet was actually bisected by the Pacific highway, physical enclosure was impossible. Its status as an Aboriginal Station was announced by 'large and prominent notices'. Ramsland 2001: 150.

for Aboriginal housing and determined which community organisations or social functions Aboriginal people could expect to attend; including churches, service organisations, sport and recreation venues.

Although official government policy required Aboriginal assimilation after 1951, legislated and informal rules of the colour bar meant that there was little social mixing between Aboriginal and white women. Aboriginal Stations remained off-limits to the white community, with all requests for admissions requiring the approval of the Manager. Government officials realised that assimilation could only proceed with the assistance of influential local brokers who would be willing to defy the norms of the colour bar. This was affirmed by a government publication that stated:

No matter on what scale, Government and Mission efforts cannot achieve [assimilation] – it is a matter for each individual Australian. Assimilation cannot be achieved with sporadic bursts of good will, but depends on sustained understanding and practical assistance.<sup>36</sup>

When the Country Women's Association of New South Wales began recruiting Aboriginal women into a special Aboriginal CWA branch at Toomelah Aboriginal Station near Boggabilla in 1956, Aboriginal Welfare Board authorities soon approached the organisation to provide this 'sustained understanding and practical assistance' in other locations with large Aboriginal populations around the state.<sup>37</sup> Formed on Aboriginal Stations from 1956 to 1961, Aboriginal branches of the CWA provided a means for cross-racial mixing, skills transfer and personal development.<sup>38</sup>

Ella Simon joined the CWA in 1960 when a branch was opened on Purfleet Station.<sup>39</sup> She soon became an active member of the CWA and other community groups including Quota and the Gillawarra Gift Shop Committee. Here Ella delivered countless lectures on Aboriginal culture to tourists and interested community groups and she would, 'really enthrall them with her talks about the old days in the Aboriginal community'.<sup>40</sup> As Taree community member Pam Saunders recalled:

They were running a tourist program at Purfleet in them early days, cultural education and tourism. They would do the corroborees and tell

36 Department of Territories 1958. Pamphlet held in the Aboriginal branches and Associations folder, Country Women's Association of New South Wales (CWA of NSW) archives, Potts Point, Sydney.

37 Letter, HJ Green to Mrs AB Streeter, 29 June 1956, File C16990, Series 9, Aborigines Welfare Board Correspondence Files, State Records Authority NSW, Sydney.

38 See Jones 2009b.

39 The Purfleet CWA branch closed in 1969. Foundation member Patricia Davis Hurst attributes the decline due to 'lack of interest' and community preoccupation with new challenges of self management. Patricia Davis Hurst interview with Jennifer Jones, 8 December 2004, Taree, unpublished transcript in the collection of the author; Simon 1978: 106.

40 Alan and Judy Cowan interview with Jennifer Jones, 23 February 2010, Forster, unpublished transcript in the collection of the author.

the stories and we'd sit around the campfire. All the tourists would come in; busloads of tourists would come in. We'd get visitors from all over the place.<sup>41</sup>

The Gillawarra Gift Shop provided a platform to assert cultural survival, challenging the common assumption that Aboriginal people of mixed racial heritage living in settled areas had 'lost their culture'. The Gillawarra Gift Shop, which had evolved into something of a community centre for Purfleet people, also provided an avenue for interaction, education and cooperation with non-Indigenous people.<sup>42</sup> The Gillawarra Gift Shop was therefore an important forum for the assertion of Aboriginal identity and the practise of assimilation. Ella Simon's vision of a shared future was thus directly challenged when the Black Power faction of the Purfleet Aboriginal Advancement League wrested control of the gift shop committee.

### **Narrating *Through My Eyes***

Ella Simon's hurried retirement from the Gift Shop left her with time on her hands and fresh motivation to champion her beliefs. A white friend, Anne Ruprecht, who had been encouraging Ella Simon to write her life story for a number of years, suggested she use her cultural education lecture notes as a foundation for the manuscript.<sup>43</sup> Ella Simon's strength, however, lay in oral presentation. Her cousin Faith Saunders described her as someone who was not shy to speak out, 'She was an open person, someone who talked'.<sup>44</sup> Rather than writing her autobiography, Ella Simon obtained a tape recorder and began to record in May 1973, completing the last tape in December 1973. She recorded her narrative in three distinct contexts; when she was alone, in the presence of Anne Ruprecht, and in conversation with an Aboriginal relative. As I will demonstrate below, the recording context was to have a significant bearing on the eventual narrative voice of the published text.

The immediate challenge for foundational Aboriginal women authors like Ella Simon was to communicate their story to a mainstream readership that was unfamiliar with Aboriginal experience and culture. This necessarily requires the author to adopt 'a mediating position between their own cultures and those of non-Aboriginal readers'.<sup>45</sup> The mediation process also involved another layer; the transcriber and the editor of the text, both of whom played a role in

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41 Pam Saunders interview with Jennifer Jones, 19 December 2008, Taree, unpublished transcript in the private collection of the author.

42 Simon 1978: 107.

43 Their relationship was founded and consolidated through shared involvement with the Christian Endeavour Union in Taree, an evangelical youth organisation for deepening the Christian life. Anne Ruprecht interview with Jennifer Jones, 13 October 2004, Sydney, unpublished transcript in the private collection of the author. see Harris 1990 for a description of the relationship between UAM and Christian Endeavour.

44 Faith Saunders interview with Jennifer Jones.

45 Sabbioni 1996: 72.

translating the oral narrative into written form and are predominately non-Aboriginal.<sup>46</sup> As Jennifer Martinello argues, this exchange between author, transcriber and editor involves 'display and reception, writing and reading, inscribing and interpreting'.<sup>47</sup> This brokerage role is perhaps best conducted by someone who understands and values Aboriginal cultural expression. Ella Simon's non-Aboriginal collaborators, however, were ill equipped to recognise what constituted worth in Aboriginal cultures. This failure to faithfully mediate the translation of oral narrative to written text and how this affected treatment of the theme of assimilation is the focus of the following section of the article.

Ella Simon's non-Aboriginal friend Anne Ruprecht oversaw the publishing project; applying for government funding, coordinating the transcription and publication of the manuscript. This process saw the manuscript pass through the hands of several non-Aboriginal typists, 'friends and daughters of friends' who were willing to volunteer their services or receive nominal remuneration.<sup>48</sup> An official from the Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australia Council, a highbrow author freelancing as an editor for the Arts Board, and the publisher at Rigby were also involved in turn.<sup>49</sup> Decisions made by these individuals crucially shaped the published text.

### Cultural literacy and the oral manuscript

One of the immediate problems of interpretation faced by the collaborating transcribers and editors was the issue of audience in the manuscript. Simon recorded her oral manuscript in three distinct contexts, with each influencing her mode of address. Three of the five tapes were recorded when Simon was alone, and here she addressed her narrative to the uninformed imagined reader.<sup>50</sup> One of the tapes was recorded in the company of Anne Ruprecht, and she is addressed as a moderately informed non-Aboriginal friend. The final tape records a yarn with her cousin Maude, whom she addressed as a highly-informed Aboriginal insider. Figure 1 below illustrates how the oral narrative addressed to the insider audience was most heavily edited; with only 15 per cent of topics covered finally included in the published text. Thirty per cent of topics narrated in the presence of Simon's non-Aboriginal friend were included in the published text, while 47 per cent of topics addressed to the imagined reader were included in the published text.

46 For a discussion of the politics of cross-racial editing see Heiss 2003; Jones 2009a.

47 Martinello 1999: 169.

48 Anne Ruprecht interview with Jennifer Jones.

49 This process is examined at length in Jones 2009c.

50 Anne Ruprecht gave me the surviving tapes, which I had digitised in 2008. I presume a number of tapes did not survive as large sections of the published text are not replicated in the oral manuscript.

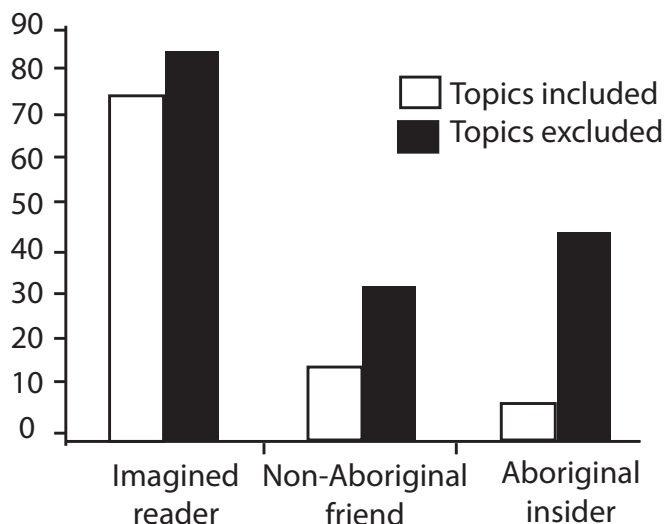


Figure 1: Editorial treatment of the three recording contexts.

Source: Compiled by author with the assistance of Edgar Burns, Sociology Department, La Trobe University.

Narrations recorded in conversation with Ella's cousin Maude adopt the conventions of 'Indigenous yarning' to regulate the recollection of family and community oral history. Yarning is a group activity that allows participants to recall the past collectively, so 'that each participant [is] able to assist and confirm the others memories'.<sup>51</sup> The maintenance of family and community oral history relies upon the verification of personal accounts, as the individual teller, their relations and other community members may all act as custodians for certain stories. Family and community oral history is highly esteemed and valued as intrinsically trustworthy by Aboriginal people, particularly in comparison with official records that may have proven false or defamatory.<sup>52</sup> This suspicion of the written record contrasts the general acceptance of documentary evidence among the non-Aboriginal Australian community as a source of historical knowledge that is perceived to be more reliable than remembrance.<sup>53</sup> Clearly, the discussion format of the yarns, which concentrated upon the verification of family history topics and therefore presumed insider knowledge, proved unsuitable for adaptation into a self-focused and seamless first-person narrative expected and preferred by mainstream readers of autobiography.

Interestingly, the only yarning narratives that subsequently appeared in the published text covered topics that were also repeated elsewhere in the manuscript; that is, they were also addressed in a modified form to a non-Aboriginal audience. Repetition is a characteristic of indigenous yarning

<sup>51</sup> Barker 2008: 9.7.

<sup>52</sup> Nugent 2003.

<sup>53</sup> Nugent 2003.



traditions. Walter Ong suggests that narrative originality in oral cultures relies upon 'managing a particular interaction with this audience at this time – at every telling the story has to be introduced uniquely into a unique situation'.<sup>54</sup> Ella Simon frequently repeats the same story in different recordings; each rendition had a different emphasis and often includes different details. This responds to the particular audience and the teaching intent of the narration. Eight stories are the subject of multiple telling in the oral manuscript, but these stories are featured only once in the published text. The majority of stories repeated in the manuscript are twice told; Gathering bush tucker, the story of Charlie and the goanna, Legend of the brush turkey, Legend of the kookaburra, and the story of the formidable Winmurra women. The issue of traditional marriage law and contemporary marriage practise is broached seven times, while the issue of miscegenation is addressed nine times. Repetition clearly reflects the importance of these topics to Ella Simon and their integral relationship to her narrative aims. The oral manuscripts emphasis on marriage and miscegenation clearly reflects her interest in assimilation and its outcomes. In both of these cases the multiple narrations are consolidated by the editors and represented only once in the published text.

The following section of this article examines the repetition of two linked stories, an account of family tragedy during the 1912 floods and the legend of Coolumbra, which are accorded three recitations in total. Each recitation addresses a distinct audience; the uninformed imagined reader, the moderately informed non-Aboriginal friend and the Aboriginal insider. Each version is told with a distinct purpose and with deliberate inclusions or exclusions that relate to the audience and intention of the retelling.

### **The 1912 floods and the legend of Coolumbra**

The first rendition, on Tape Three Side A, was recorded in the absence of a physical audience, and hence addresses the imagined reader. It is a story that recalls the wisdom of a revered elder, Granny Russell, and her use of the oral tradition to comfort her grieving family after the 1912 flood. The narrative intention of the story is also to assert the compatibility of Aboriginal and Christian religions.

*Tape Three Side A* [addressing imagined audience]

The six years of my schooling was the most miserable time of my life, ... nobody understood me. We had a good life at home; we read the Bible each night. It was here that we heard all about the legends and the Dreamtime of the Aboriginals. An awful time came; it rained for six weeks and the floods came. Each week the river would rise and we felt that the worst had come. Grandfather was very ill, and he died. Then the Uncle died; within a few day of one another, then the Aunt, three weeks later, all because they couldn't get the Doctor's attention, because of the

54 Ong 1982: 41.

floodwaters. Four children [were] left by my Aunt, and a wife and two children left by the Uncle. Grandma ... tried so hard to keep the family. She had five of us, four of her own and myself. The Uncle was the eldest; he was 16 years of age. He started to work in the bush cutting sleepers [Tells story of hardship keeping family]. It was in this period of time, at night, that Ma told us the legend of Coolumbra, a type of Jesus. [Retells legend]. This is like the story in the Bible often we would read at night, and grandmother would line it up with the story of Coolumbra, about Jesus feeding his disciples on fish and honey. This man was speared by a hostile tribe, the legend goes, and he was tied to a tree. His mother knew this, as the blood dripped from the *bulli baun*. This is only a legend, but how true.<sup>55</sup>

In the context of unhappiness at school and the tragic death of three family members, including an Aunty that Ella loved as a mother and Grandfather she considered to be her 'daddy', Granny Russell recalls a legend that affirms the compatibility of the 'two worlds' the family straddles; Aboriginal and Christian. The juxtaposition of the family tragedy and the Coolumbra story thus links a specific event in family and community experience to broader processes of colonialism and cultural survival, offering 'options available for determining the meanings of events'.<sup>56</sup> Granny Russell uses her story to authoritatively demonstrate the viability of religious syncretism, to offer comfort and to empower her mourning family. In this regard, Granny Russell's Aboriginal oral history is future oriented. As Deborah Bird Rose explains, 'oral narratives show how to reclaim the past in order to liberate the future'.<sup>57</sup> That is, the stories anchored in the past also address the needs of the present. They offer the young Ella, and ultimately the imagined readers of her life story, a cultural bridge to make sense of lived experience in a post-colonising society. This is particularly significant given the prevailing view amongst UAM missionaries, the missionary group that served at Purfleet, that Aboriginal people must relinquish their cultural beliefs in order to prove their conversion and assimilation. Granny Russell and Ella Simon refute this belief.

55 Simon, extract from oral manuscript, Tape Three Side A. This extract, originally 640 words, has been edited to 450 words for brevity. The Coolumbra legend is as follows, 'She told us how he came across from the Wallamba River to Red Head. Saying goodbye to his mother, he told her to hang up his *bulli baun*, which meant his loincloth, and if she saw blood dripping from it, she would know that he had been killed. Now Coolumbra was a good man. He was very clever and the people were very jealous of him. One day, they planned that they would kill him, because he was too good for them. They started to travel, and as they got near Blackhead, in the Manning district, he came across a cave. Here you are not able to go across, you have to go around. The people had to leave Coolumbra then, because he was able to walk across the opening without any trouble. The legend goes that it took three days for them to walk around. When the people arrived after the three day walk around the beach, they arrived at the beach where Coolumbra was; he had a fire burning with fish cooked on the coals. He also had honey for them to eat'.

56 Bird Rose 1989: 138.

57 Bird Rose 1989: 146.



Simon also mobilises the authority of her grandmother at another point in the oral narrative in order to demonstrate religious syncretism and the validity of Aboriginal cultural practise. In a discussion of initiation ceremonies, which was not included in the published text, she narrates:

The initiation ceremony was very lovely. The grandmother had been to a few of them, and she said that some of it was very pathetic; the son would be taken out and they was given that law [describes circumcision]. They had a purification, and that's biblical you know, they drug you through the fire to be purified. They drug you over the fire, and to me, years after I become interested in the bible and read so much of the Bible, I could see lots of things in the initiation. It was really parts of the Bible story.<sup>58</sup>

Here Simon's parallel between Aboriginal initiation practices and Christian purification is validated by the grandmother's eyewitness account. This appeal to an esteemed elder demonstrates that her interpretation has the highest possible credentials and offers an opportunity for the non-Aboriginal collaborators to show respect for an Aboriginal world view. Nevertheless, the topic was not included in the published text.

The second rendition of the 1912 flood, recorded on Tape Four Side A, recounts the family tragedy narrative in greater depth and excludes the link with the Coolumbra legend. As the yarning narrative addresses an insider audience of Aboriginal family and community members, its primary purpose is not to recount familiar legends, but to confirm and perpetuate family history. Roberta Sykes argues that a primary function of the representation of Aboriginal characters in Aboriginal literature is to locate and validate 'black heroes for our children'.<sup>59</sup> In this narrative, the heroic actions of Maude's father, who swims the swollen Manning River, and the resilience of Granny Russell, are the primary focus.

*Tape Four Side A* [addressing Aboriginal audience]

*Ella*: Do you remember your mother when she died?

*Maude*: I can just remember them; we stood around the door lookin' in, you know. Dad was there cryin'.

*Ella*: Grandmother was nursing and we used to take it in turns, you know, to sit up with her. It was raining – *oh it rained for weeks and weeks and weeks*. Grandfather and Uncle Victor was buried just before your mother, about six weeks before your mother died. Your mother got pneumonia after all this weather. Auntie Mabel got pleurisy, and Aunty Elsie had bronchitis; there was a whole sick crew. ... I remember your mother tossing and turning, you know, and your father tried to get to town. He couldn't get the doctor out because that was a terrific flood and that would be

58 Simon, extract from oral manuscript, Tape Five Side B. This extract, originally 180 words, has been edited here for brevity.

59 Roberta Sykes quoted in Martinello 1999: 169.

about 1912 ... Your father swam; he put his clothes on top of his head to go to get your mother's medicine from the doctor. [Describes at length the courageous attempt by Maude's father to get medicine] But they couldn't save her life. She died, and I felt that the bottom had fallen out of my boat too when she died, because I loved her so very much. Well I thought that was a terrible trial for our Granny Russell, ... She must have been a wonderful woman...

*Maude:* Yeah

*Ella:* To put up with all that and go through it.<sup>60</sup>

In contrast to the first telling of the 1912 flood narrative, which is intended for a non-Aboriginal audience, this version addresses Aboriginal listeners. Emphasis is placed upon the identity and experience of a range of characters; the audience hears about Granny Russell, Grandfather Russell, Maude's Mum and Dad, as well as Victor, Elsie, and Mabel, 'the whole sick crew'. Aboriginal family history is characteristically 'crowded with the names of family members', as naming honours their experience and makes their memory available to present and unborn generations.<sup>61</sup> Ella Simon apparently appreciated that non-Aboriginal audiences would not be interested in the personalised version of this story, so she depopulates and generalises it for a wider readership in the rendition on Tape Three.

The third narration, on Tape Five Side A, was recorded in the presence of Ella Simon's non-Aboriginal friend Anne Ruprecht. This telling of the Coolumbra legend, like the description of the initiation ceremony discussed previously, is contextualised by a shared belief in Christianity. Although the 1912 flood narrative is excluded, the coda to this version of the Coolumbra legend is linked to the flood experience. In this version Ella contests that rain events result from the failure of strangers to observe Aboriginal protocols. This rendition of the Coolumbra legend not only illustrates links between Aboriginal spirituality and Christianity, but also the need for non-Aboriginal Australians to respect an Aboriginal world view.

*Tape Five Side A* [addressing non-Aboriginal friend]

I don't know if I told you the story of Coolumbra? Coolumbra means 'Jesus' and he was a very, very clever man. Now my Grandmother told me this when I was a little girl, because she was very religious. She told me the story of Coolumbra. She said he was very clever and he was so clever that everybody was jealous. Then one day, they said they was going to kill him. This happened somewhere along the Tuncurry water, on that side. ... He told his mother that when he left there, they wear a thing around their waist called a *bulli baun*, which is to put in their

60 Simon, extract from oral manuscript Tape Four Side A. This extract, originally 716 words, has been condensed for brevity.

61 Dianne Barwick quoted in Nugent 2003: 150.

spears or their boomerangs. It's made out of kangaroo strips or human hair. Well, this *bulli baun* was to be hung up in the mother's camp. He said to the mother; 'when I go and you see blood dripping off it, you will know that they have killed me', so he left to go. When he got along the road, he got with some people that was going down the coast. He told them that there was a gorge that you couldn't go across – they had to go around. According to the legend, it was three days that they walked around. But he told them that he would go across and meet them on the other side. When they got to the beach side, he was there sitting with the fire made and fish cooked on the coals, and some honey for them to eat. Now that is a bible story; about the honey and also about the fish cooking on the coals because Peter found that when he came ashore – the fish was cooked on the coals. So, it is the same story. Then when he got over to Redhead, that's just how it is; he was killed. He was speared and hung on the tree. That tree was there when I was a girl. They used to tell me when I went down there that we weren't to touch a certain tree or take a leaf off it, because we would make it rain. This was a legend – a story tree – and we weren't to touch it. We were afraid to touch it. Now, if you was a stranger, and you walked over to the sea, you would have to sing out in the language, 'it's only me' then you would be able to swim, and there would be no rain or anything to disturb or wind or anything to bother you; you would tell them that you were coming.<sup>62</sup>

As with the first telling, this recitation links past, present and future to Aboriginal place and culture. By aligning the Coolumbra story with Christian Gospel stories, Ella Simon establishes the contemporary relevance of Aboriginal spiritual beliefs for Aboriginal people living in settled areas.<sup>63</sup> She also indicates the level of respect that should be ascribed to these beliefs. Further, Simon mentions the location and survival of the 'story tree' and describes how 'you', the 'stranger' should make an approach. This mode of address invites all strangers who inhabit Aboriginal places, including contemporary readers, to understand and respect Aboriginal temporality.

The complex intersection of audience, form and narrative intention in these three versions of the Coolumbra story and the family tragedy of 1912 are not reflected in the single version published in *Through My Eyes*. The editors chose to combine versions one and three, and to delete the content of version two, which directly addresses the interests of Aboriginal readers.

*Published text: Chapter two, page 31*

All my life I have felt that everybody misunderstood me, especially when I was little ... The only really happy times, when I felt I belonged was when we got together at night and grandmother would make us read

62 Simon, extract from oral manuscript Tape Five Side A.

63 For example, the three day quest, the crucifixion, fishes and loaves and honey all hold biblical resonance.

the bible. ... Then she would bring us right back to the old Aboriginal way of thinking and talking about the legends ... I was so happy sitting there and listening to the beautiful stories she told us and they were so near to the bible stories we had just read. Then she would tell us about Coolumbra. Coolumbra was travelling with his tribe from the Wallamba to the coast near Blackhead. He said 'goodbye' to his mother and told her to hang up his 'bulli baun' (loin cloth made from kangaroo skin) and when she would see blood dripping from it, she would know he had been killed. Now, Coolumbra was a very good man and so clever that others were jealous and said they would kill him. When they got to an opening in the rocks along the seashore, they could not cross it so he told them to go around. He crossed the opening, and when the others arrived, there was Coolumbra on the beach with a fire burning and fish cooking on the coals and he also had honey for them to eat. His enemies were able to catch him there, tie him to a tree and they then speared him to death. His mother knew he was dead because blood dripped from his bulli baun as he had said. I was taken to the only tree on that beach, a mangrove tree. We were told not to touch this tree. If we did, it would bring very heavy rain.<sup>64</sup>

By excluding reference to the 1912 flood, the published version fails to indicate the strategic significance of Granny Russell's retelling of the Coolumbra story within the context of Aboriginal historical experience. Rather than asserting the contemporary relevance of the Coolumbra story, Granny's tale is framed as 'the old Aboriginal way of thinking and talking', relegating it to the bygone past. The published version also removes Ella Simon's direct address to 'you', the 'stranger'; whose failure to show respect to country is implicated as causing heavy rain and destructive winds. Instead, in the actions of the Aboriginal participants in the story, 'we ... would bring very heavy rain' by touching the story-tree. These editorial decisions silence testimony to Aboriginal resilience and survival and deny ontological coequality between Aboriginal and Western cultures.<sup>65</sup>

This examination of Ella Simon's oral recordings clearly demonstrates that the Aboriginalisation of narratives published in the 1970s depended upon the cultural literacy of the collaborating parties; namely the transcriber and editor and publisher. As Joseph Pugliese reminds us, 'the meaning of a text is ... critically dependent upon the specific cultural literacies they bring to any reading of a text'.<sup>66</sup> Ella Simon's collaborators lacked the cultural literacy required to value important cultural characteristics of her oral narrations. Charles Taylor argues that non recognition or misrecognition 'can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted and reduced mode of being'.<sup>67</sup> Ella Simon recorded her life story in response to provocation by Aboriginal activists who were intent

64 Simon 1978: 31.

65 See Fabian 1983.

66 Pugliese 2001: 98.

67 Taylor 1994: 25.

on self determination and dismissive of assimilation, a doctrine and mode of living that she held in high esteem. By textualising features of her oral tradition and demonstrating the validity of religious syncretism, Ella Simon attempted to prove to Aboriginal and white audiences that assimilation did not require the rejection of Aboriginality. She sought to demonstrate that assimilation, or 'white and black liv[ing] together', could include both the equalisation of rights and entitlements, and respect for cultural difference. She envisaged her life story as a means to develop respect for Aboriginal culture amongst the non-Aboriginal community. Ella Simon also recounted different versions of particular stories in order to provide a resource that met the needs of an Aboriginal audience. The failure of her collaborators to acknowledge the value of the oral features of her narration suggests the assumption of a less hospitable view of assimilation; that being treated equally required the homogenisation of difference. Such assumptions hampered the capacity of the published life story to fulfil important aims and ultimately led to the cultural impoverishment a foundational Aboriginal life narrative.

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# Food and governance on the frontiers of colonial Australia and Canada's North West Territories

Amanda Nettelbeck and Robert Foster

In recent decades historians have been turning from a national towards a transnational framework to examine the patterns and processes of colonial governance. This paper aims to contribute to those debates by examining the roles and outcomes of ration distribution as an institutionalised tool of Aboriginal governance on the nineteenth century settler frontiers of colonial Australia and north-west Canada.<sup>1</sup> In so doing it is not our aim to rehearse established scholarship on the history of rations policy in specific times and localities,<sup>2</sup> but to consider the degree to which the evolution of rationing policies reflects shared administrative goals and dilemmas in Aboriginal governance across different colonial contexts. To date, there has been little attention to the role of rationing policy across Australia's colonies, let alone in comparison with other jurisdictions of British settlement. In some key respects, Australia from the 1840s and western Canada from the 1870s represent two ends of a spectrum in shared colonial policy across British settler colonies. On the one hand, they shared a set of similarities in the issues and problems their governments faced with the rapid expansion of settlement after the mid-nineteenth century, of securing Aboriginal people's amenability to British rule, and of approaching the management of Aboriginal populations through a mixture of conciliatory and coercive measures. On the other hand, administrative approaches to Aboriginal peoples in these two jurisdictions evolved in light of some crucial differences.

The origins of these differences lay in the fact that in Canada, unlike Australia, the expansion of the west was always conceived in terms of centralised development designed to ensure a relatively seamless transition to the authority of Ottawa. This entailed the arrival of 'law and order' ahead of settlement in the form of the North West Mounted Police, the negotiation of land cession treaties with First Nations peoples of the prairie lands, and the managed process of their transfer onto designated reserves. In comparison, Australia's settler frontiers evolved in a much less administered and more circular fashion. There was no

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1 This paper connects to a larger study of the legal subjugation of indigenous peoples on the comparative settler frontiers of Australia and Canada with Russell Smandych (University of Manitoba) and Louis Knafla (University of Calgary), supported by an ARC grant. The authors would like to thank Geoffrey Gray for his comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

2 In the Australian context, see for instance Reece 1967; McGrath 1987; Rowse 1998; Foster 1989, 2000; Smith 2000; Jebb 2002; Wells 2003; O'Brien 2008, 2011.

single discernable frontier phase but a series of evolving frontiers, from colony to colony and from decade to decade, in which settler occupation of Aboriginal lands took place without land cession treaties, and ahead of any concerted support from a distant seat of government. Across Australia's colonies, the expansion of settlement without the controlling oversight of effective government established a pattern of conflict between Aboriginal peoples and settlers that colonial administrators found repeatedly difficult to resolve. Nonetheless, it was well understood by colonial administrators that European settlement had a devastating effect on Aboriginal access to traditional resources, and that this was an actual or potential source of conflict with settlers. Strategic interventions in forestalling the risk of violence and opening communication with Aboriginal groups came to include the distribution of food and other kinds of provisions, a formal governmental practice initiated in 1814 by New South Wales' Lieutenant-Governor Lachlan Macquarie with his 'feast for the natives'.

Yet rations policies, as they became more formalised over time in Canada and Australia, were at the heart of a much more complex matrix of administrative intents and purposes. As Tim Rowse has argued in relation to Central Australia, rations policy constitutes 'a site of rich meanings, a central generator of colonial ideology'.<sup>3</sup> In both emergent colonial nation-states, the distribution of provisions furthered an objective to gain control over Aboriginal populations, but the means by which this was achieved varied markedly, and the pivotal point of difference was the question of Aboriginal settlement on reserves. Over the course of the 1870s most of the Aboriginal nations of Canada's North West Territories signed land cession treaties which preceded their move onto reserves. Over time, rations became increasingly key to a centralised policy of Aboriginal containment that the reserve network facilitated. In Australia, where there were no land cession treaties, the reserves that were established during the nineteenth century under the control of private missionary groups served only a small percentage of the Aboriginal population. The majority of Aboriginal people were remade in the eyes of settlers and of the law into landless people trespassing on country once their own. Tim Rowse has argued that in so far as rationing practices in twentieth century Central Australia were transferable across a variety of institutions – from the mission enclave to the police station to the pastoral station – they reflect a diversity of institutional approaches to Aboriginal governance.<sup>4</sup> This institutional diversity is also true of how rationing practices evolved in Australia's colonies over the second half of the nineteenth century, and helps to describe how, in contrast to Canada, rations policy contributed to the colonial governance of Aboriginal people through a broad objective of dispersal.

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3 Rowse 1998: 4.

4 Rowse 1998: 5.

## Food and conciliation

One of the clearest initial parallels in the intention and rationale of rationing as it evolved in nineteenth century Canada and Australia was its shared origins in the giving of food as a gesture of reconciling Aboriginal people to colonial rule. The practice of distributing provisions to Aboriginal people at ceremonial gatherings as a show of goodwill, and implicitly as a means of establishing Aboriginal acquiescence to colonial authority, was of course a long established tradition of British colonialism. In Canada, gifts of food and other provisions typically accompanied land surrender or friendship treaties negotiated during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and were intended to inspire Aboriginal people's confidence in the government's bounty and future benevolence.<sup>5</sup> The various treaties negotiated between the First Nations of the prairies and the Canadian Dominion over the 1870s endorsed the exchange of First Nation lands and loyalty to the Crown for monetary annuities, medical and agricultural supplies, education, and other goods.<sup>6</sup> Only one of the numbered treaties included provisions for rations in case of famine, a condition that would become contested as the era of starvation bit across the North West Territories.<sup>7</sup>

In Australia's colonies, where no land cession treaties were entered into, the provisioning of Aboriginal people with food, blankets and other goods held perhaps a stronger moral imperative, and the practice was often understood by government officials and ordinary settlers alike as a necessary compensation for taking possession of Aboriginal lands.<sup>8</sup> As one correspondent to the Brisbane press observed in 1851, the government's annual distributions of blankets to Aboriginal people were 'but a trifling compensation ... for the usurpation of their lands'.<sup>9</sup> Richard Broome has examined colonisers' obligation to provide for dispossessed Aboriginal people in terms of mutual (as well as asymmetrical) understandings of 'right behaviour', an ethic which unofficially underpinned a system of exchange between settlers and Aboriginal people and which extended from the frontier into the post-frontier period.<sup>10</sup> With reference to the history of Victoria's Coranderrk reserve, he argues that this was an obligation Aboriginal people actively sought to remind colonial officials of, with mixed results.<sup>11</sup> Colonisers also raised the argument that Aboriginal people should be provided with some 'equivalent of what we have taken from them' not just as a humanist sentiment but as an economic strategy: as Western Australia's Agricultural Society suggested in 1834, a small annual expense on Aboriginal welfare would aid in 'the attainment of ... a territory more extensive than ever yet owned'.<sup>12</sup>

5 Ray et al 2000.

6 First Nations held considerable negotiating power in the forging of the early treaties up to 1875, before the bite of the starvation era. Tobias 1983: 520–521.

7 Carter 1999: 121–127.

8 O'Brien 2011.

9 *Moreton Bay Courier*, 31 May 1851.

10 Broome 2006: 43.2–43.3.

11 Broome 2006: 43.3.

12 *The Perth Gazette*, 11 January 1834.

If the informal obligations of provisioning Aboriginal people held more force in Australia's colonies where, unlike Canada, no negotiations for Aboriginal lands were ever formalised, Australia's and Canada's governments shared other, more strategic intentions to enlist rationing as a means of eliciting from Aboriginal people the kind of conduct the colonial state desired. In both jurisdictions, in the early phases of contact when colonial relationships had yet to be fully determined, the distribution of provisions was seen by officials to hold powerful leverage as an inducement to peace. For instance, Samantha Wells has examined the conciliatory role of rations in the late nineteenth century context of the Northern Territory, where government distribution of rations to the Larrikia was specifically regarded as a strategy for impressing upon them the advantage of 'leav[ing] alone the property of the white people'.<sup>13</sup> The use of provisions to induce Aboriginal people not to interfere with European property was similarly employed by the Canadian government when the telegraph line was being built across the prairie lands. In 1876 Inspector of Surveys Leif Crozier was sent out to inform Aboriginal people along the telegraph line's path that they would receive 'presents' of food and other supplies on the condition that 'they did not interfere with the public work'.<sup>14</sup> As it turned out, this was not easily done. Crozier undertook a ten week journey across Saskatchewan following the telegraph line's route, but early snow had already driven most Aboriginal bands much further south. Aware that the authorities required his assurance of Aboriginal people's 'peacefulness' before proceeding further with the works, he persisted until he was able to make his required distributions to as many scattered groups as 'I could hear of', before leaving the remainder of the task till the following spring.<sup>15</sup>

Crozier's anxiety to assure the government that he had done his best to fulfil this duty provides a glimpse into the leverage held by Aboriginal people in using the government's 'gifts' to negotiate their own terms in the colonial relationship. In this case, Crozier reported his failed efforts to enlist the help of Cree chief Big Bear to gather people together for the distribution of the government's provisions. Big Bear declined, Crozier suspected, because he was suspicious of the government's motives.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, when the Blackfoot nation was negotiating Treaty 7 with government representatives in September 1877, some Blackfoot chiefs refused the provisions brought by the treaty commissioners until they received assurance that 'their acceptance would not be regarded as committing the Chiefs to the terms proposed'.<sup>17</sup> In colonial Australia, also, as Jessie Mitchell has argued, the acceptance or refusal of colonisers' 'bounty' gave Aboriginal people leverage to negotiate the nature of those relationships.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, Aboriginal people might demand recognition of their rights by voicing their

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13 Wells 2003: 209.

14 Inspector Crozier to the Police Commissioner, 17 February 1876, RG 18, vol 10, file 108, Library and Archives Canada [henceforth LAC].

15 Inspector Crozier to the Police Commissioner, 17 February 1876, RG 18, vol 10, file 108, LAC.

16 Inspector Crozier to the Police Commissioner, 17 February 1876, RG 18, vol 10, file 108, LAC.

17 Morris 1880: 256–257.

18 See for instance Mitchell 2006.

grievances when government provisions were reduced or cancelled. Robert Reece has examined, for instance, how the annual distribution of blankets in 1830s New South Wales, as a residual form of Macquarie's original annual 'feast for the natives', was regarded by Aboriginal people as an entitlement and its discontinuation as a 'breach of faith'.<sup>19</sup> In this respect, as an important aspect of establishing colonial relationships, rations and other provisions were not simply a tool of social management controlled by colonial agents and institutions, but were part, even if an asymmetrical one, of what Richard Broome has called 'a complex two-way flow of power'.<sup>20</sup>

If the distribution of provisions to Aboriginal people initially featured for colonial administrations as an instrument of conciliation and inducement to peace, the systems of rations distribution that subsequently evolved in both Australia and Canada emerged more clearly as part of a systematic means of Aboriginal governance, as well as a response to necessity. In both jurisdictions, colonial authorities were aware that provision of food and other goods could prove to be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, rations were regarded as a primary means of inducing a return in the form of Aboriginal labour, and thereby of furthering a goal of Aboriginal 'civilisation'. In Canada in particular, one of the rationales behind treaty-making was of reducing Aboriginal people's dependence on the hunt – and their capacity to range the prairies that this entailed – by providing them with the seed, stock, farming equipment and instruction that would turn them towards agricultural self-sufficiency. In colonial Australia, while it was rarely imagined that Aboriginal people would become a self-supporting agricultural class in the same way, it was anticipated that they would at least become a fruitful source of labour for settlers, and educated into an ethic of industry. On the other hand, the idea that food should be distributed gratuitously to Aboriginal people invited fears in both Canada and Australia that such a policy could encourage 'indolence' rather than 'industry', 'dependency' rather than 'self sufficiency'. In this respect, rations policy held a visibly contradictory place within colonial ideology, and was at the heart of official anxieties about how best to induce Aboriginal engagement with a colonial economy.

Ultimately, in both these jurisdictions, competing ideological concerns about rations as a tool of Aboriginal governance were to some degree forced into the background by the pressing problems of Aboriginal starvation that came to the Canadian prairies with the disappearance of the buffalo from the 1870s, and to the Australian colonies with the ongoing and uncompensated appropriation of Aboriginal lands. Although ration distribution had its strategic uses and setbacks, it also proved to be an unavoidable government response to mass want. But although these administrative concerns were shared in Australia and Canada, the intents and effects of ration distribution were shaped by rather different forces that underpinned some key divergences in the ways that the governance of Aboriginal people evolved.

19 Reece 1967: 197–205; see also O'Brien 2008: 162.

20 Broome 2006: 43.10.

## Rations in colonial Australia

In a number of Australia's colonies, the origins of a formalised ration system lay in the consequences of violence on the frontier and the efforts of colonial governments to conciliate Aboriginal people to settler occupation of their lands. Until the 1830s in New South Wales, Port Phillip, South Australia and Western Australia, government-sponsored 'feasts' – accompanied by the provision of clothing, blankets and other goods – were one means by which Governors or other colonial officials sought to pacify Aboriginal people in the wake of frontier violence and communicate the government's message of benevolent intentions.<sup>21</sup> Later, more formalised systems of rations distributions evolved as a means of maintaining peace in frontier districts. In the wake of the Rufus River massacre in South Australia in 1841, in which more than 30 Maurara people were killed following conflict with overlanders from New South Wales, Governor Grey established a post at Moorundie on the Murray River. Grey's proposal was that 'presents' of flour would be distributed from this post to Aboriginal people on 'every other full moon' as a means of pacifying Aboriginal peoples not yet acquainted with European settlement, and its distribution would be 'dependent on their good conduct'. Such regular assemblies would also, he hoped, provide an opportunity for Aboriginal people to bring grievances to his notice, and 'prevent a recurrence of scenes similar to those' that had lately occurred on the Rufus River.<sup>22</sup>

The Governor came to regard the distribution of rations as an effective frontier strategy for Aboriginal pacification, and it was henceforth adopted as policy. By the late 1840s a broader system had been established in South Australia geared around remote police posts. As police were posted to newly opened frontier locations, their tasks included the monthly distribution of rations to Aboriginal people on the full moon, and a 'registry' was kept of those who attended.<sup>23</sup> Over the next decade the system was refined to a daily ration of 1 lb of flour, 2 oz of sugar and a half oz of tea, to be distributed once a week. Blankets were issued once a year on the Queen's Birthday. As the Protector of Aborigines put it in 1852, rationing Aboriginal people at 'feeding stations' in frontier districts where violence was likely to flare provided a preventative means of 'keeping them quiet'.<sup>24</sup>

Similar systems were adopted in other colonies. In Moreton Bay, blankets were initially distributed to Aboriginal people as a gesture of conciliation across the different police districts, though in later years the distribution became limited to the 'aged and infirm' or otherwise 'most necessitous and deserving'.<sup>25</sup> In Western

21 For contemporary reportage of Governors' or Chief Protector Robinson's 'feasts' see for instance *The Sydney Gazette*, 31 December 1814 and 20 April 1839; *The Perth Gazette*, 28 March 1835; *The South Australian Register*, 25 May 1839.

22 Governor Grey to Lord John Russell, 30 October 1841, GRG 2/5/1841/52, State Records of South Australia [henceforth SRSA].

23 Matthew Moorhouse to the Colonial Secretary, 5 March 1847, GRG 24/6/1847/286, SRSA.

24 Protector's Letterbooks, 1 November 1852, GRG 52/7, SRSA.

25 The practice lapsed and was resumed in 1848. *Moreton Bay Courier*, 6 May 1848 and 26 May 1849.



Australia, food depots were established in the early 1830s in districts outside of Perth, where monthly distributions of flour were made to Aboriginal people 'in the event of [their] good conduct or rather the absence of misdemeanour'.<sup>26</sup> The Protector of Aborigines Charles Symmons considered the system successful in providing a 'check to violence and aggression' and therefore as a form of protection to settlers.<sup>27</sup> It also had the perceived benefit of keeping Aboriginal people away from the township of Perth, where their 'annoyance' of the white inhabitants was regarded as requiring additional policing.

As the examples of outlying food depots indicated, the assembly of large numbers of Aboriginal people was perceived as undesirable when places of distribution were in the vicinity of settled townships.<sup>28</sup> After Moreton Bay's annual blanket distribution starting taking place from Brisbane's police office, settlers complained that Aboriginal people would commit 'outrages' on their way to and from the town, and urged that the distribution should take 'in their own districts'.<sup>29</sup> In comparison, the system of distributing rations from outlying police stations was regarded as an advantage because it kept Aboriginal people away from townships and further aided in their surveillance and control. For police, rations could be used as an effective tool of reward and punishment. In the early years of settlement in South and Western Australia, police might withhold rations from a group as a punishment for crime such as stock theft, and as a means of inducing the group to give up the perpetrators. As early as 1840 in Western Australia, the withholding of rations took the form of a preventative model of self-policing: Native Constables were employed on the payment of daily rations, which were withheld if any 'outrage' were committed amongst the Aboriginal people they policed.<sup>30</sup> By the same token, extra rations or tobacco were given to groups as rewards for compliant behaviour such as identifying an alleged miscreant, or for providing a desired service to the authorities.<sup>31</sup>

However, underlying the perceived advantages of rations systems in the Australian colonies as an effective means of Aboriginal pacification, surveillance, and reward for 'useful' conduct were concerns that unless they served as payment for labour, rations would produce the opposite of their desired effect. In 1833 *The Perth Gazette* expressed some disapproval that food depots provided Aboriginal people with 'bread &c without any return', and warned that they 'are becoming most accomplished beggars'.<sup>32</sup> South Australia's Protector of Aborigines Edward Hamilton also warned that the provision of supplies, 'except in exchange for an equivalent of labour', could lead 'to improvident habits and indolence'.<sup>33</sup> A popular perception amongst settlers was that a rations system could do little in

26 Protector's Quarterly report, 31 December 1840, *Perth Gazette*, 9 January 1841.

27 Protector's Quarterly report, 31 December 1840, *Perth Gazette*, 9 January 1841.

28 For instance, Wells 2003: 209–212 on complaints about ration distributions in Palmerston in the Northern Territory.

29 *Moreton Bay Courier*, 31 May 1856.

30 Protector's Quarterly report, 31 December 1840, *Perth Gazette*, 9 January 1841.

31 Protector's Quarterly report, 31 December 1840, *Perth Gazette*, 9 January 1841.

32 *The Perth Gazette*, 2 March 1833.

33 *South Australian Government Gazette*, 18 March 1875.

'educating' Aboriginal people into industry, and that no amount of food, clothing or instruction would deter Aboriginal people from their own 'uncivilised' habits.<sup>34</sup> As Anne O'Brien has argued, although settlers did not entirely shed a consciousness that provisions formed some kind of reparation for dispossession, this increasingly became displaced by a belief that Aboriginal 'pauperism' was the 'natural' result of indolence.<sup>35</sup>

In order to encourage the able-bodied to find work in the colonial economy, ration distributions became restricted in a number of Australia's colonies to the elderly, infirm or destitute, a practice later formalised after the establishment of Aboriginal Protection Boards. This left open the possibility that Aboriginal people could continue to support themselves through traditional means by hunting and fishing. From 1859 in South Australia rations were not to be given to 'able-bodied natives if there is reason to believe they can get work or can obtain their subsistence by fishing or hunting'.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, from the 1850s in Western Australia food distributions were narrowed down to a modest ration of flour, sugar and tea to the destitute or the sick.<sup>37</sup> The fact that governments at this stage did not include meat within rations was a symptom of the assumption that Aboriginal people could continue to practice traditional means of subsistence on the land.

In this respect South and Western Australia's practices differed somewhat from the ration distribution system in Victoria, where from the 1860s a more extensive network of reserves and missions prevailed under the authority of the Central Board for the Protection of Aborigines. Although meat was provided within the standard ration to the elderly and the infirm, it was not provided to the able-bodied who, it was expected, could provide their own meat either by buying it with their modest wages or by hunting and fishing. However, as Richard Broome has argued in relation to conditions at Coranderrk reserve, this led to a Catch-22 situation whereby, lacking the means to purchase meat, men might leave off paid work to hunt or fish, only to have their flour, tea and sugar ration cancelled because they were not working.<sup>38</sup> The purpose of rations within the mission system entailed a more explicitly moral goal of encouraging 'civilisation and Christianisation' than the goal of 'keeping the peace' that underpinned distributions from police stations,<sup>39</sup> though at least this was something which Aboriginal people had power to ignore. As early as 1843, for instance, Port Phillip's Assistant Protector William Thomas recorded his discouragement at seeing Aboriginal people leave his mission station supplied with flour and

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34 For instance, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 September 1865; *Rockhampton Bulletin*, 26 January 1876.

35 O'Brien 2011.

36 Report of the 1860 Select Committee of the Legislative Council upon the Aborigines, *South Australian Parliamentary Papers*, no 165 of 1860: appendix, ii.

37 Hasluck 1942: 102.

38 Broome 2006: 43.9.

39 See, for instance, Broome 2006; Mitchell 2006.



blankets, knowing they were unlikely to return; this was a situation, he wrote, which 'enervates the hope I once held and the zeal that glowed in my breast of civilising and Christianising these people'.<sup>40</sup>

In Australia's colonies rationing systems might have evolved from the combined objectives of Aboriginal pacification and inducement to labour, underpinned by an assumption that people would continue to sustain themselves on natural game, but there was little doubt amongst colonial observers that European monopolisation of the land produced widespread Aboriginal deprivation. As settlement expanded from colony to colony, police, administrators and settlers often understood that hunger was a significant cause of Aboriginal attacks on settlers' stock and property. South Australia's Commissioner of Police reported in 1851: 'We see the Native driven from his hunting grounds and his food ... we see the White man, in possession of food and water in abundance ... and [the] results are murder and robbery'.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, in his 1842 'Proposal for the Better Treatment of the Aborigines', influential Port Phillip grazier John Hunter Patterson observed that Aboriginal 'depredations' on settlers' property were committed for the 'sole purpose of obtaining food', and argued that 'an adequate provision must be made for supplying them with the first necessities of life, for it is idle to talk of reforming, or even of retraining, by punishment or otherwise, a starving population'.<sup>42</sup> By the late nineteenth century in Western Australia, the Resident Magistrate at Derby observed that Aboriginal people in the region were almost entirely 'dependent on charity', as the availability of natural game was 'insufficient' to keep them.<sup>43</sup> If the concept of conciliating Aboriginal peoples to colonial rule had partly underpinned early practices of providing food provisions, the impact of Aboriginal starvation as a direct consequence of the spread of settlement revived debate about the obligations on colonial governments to provide compensation.

In response, some colonial governments initiated variations on rationing practices. In Western Australia, ration distributions were managed in outlying regions by the Resident Magistrates who represented the seat of government in remote districts, but rations were only provided to those for whom 'out-door relief' was deemed unavoidable, and only then by application to the Governor. The adult daily ration scale set in 1878 for such cases was 1 lb of bread, 1/3 oz of tea, and 1 1/2 oz of sugar, with the rider that 'no extra allowance will be sanctioned, excepting on a Medical Certificate that it is absolutely necessary'.<sup>44</sup> Over the years, as Western Australia's government attempted to reduce its expenditure on 'out-door relief', increasing Aboriginal destitution invited considerable

40 Protectors' reports in *Despatches of the Governors of the Australian Colonies, with the Reports of the Protectors of Aborigines*, House of Commons Parliamentary Papers (HCPP), no 627 (1844), 324.

41 Chief Secretary's Office correspondence files, GRG 24/6/1851/1733, SRSA.

42 John Hunter Patterson, 'A Proposal for the Better Treatment of the Aborigines of Australia Felix', *Australasian Chronicle*, 28 June 1842.

43 Resident Magistrate at Derby to the Chief Protector of Aborigines, 10 August 1898, Acc 255, file 28, 1898/15-1900.49, State Records of Western Australia [henceforth SROWA].

44 General Order No 11, 19 July 1878, Acc 527, file 1059 (1878-1883), SROWA.

public controversy, one settler writing to the Chief Protector that limitations on Aboriginal rations effectively constituted a policy 'to starve – morally to murder considerable numbers of them'.<sup>45</sup>

By the end of the century in Western Australia, however, rations had become distributed as payment for work from pastoral stations, for by this time it was established that Aboriginal labour constituted 'a most useful factor in the prosperity of settlers'.<sup>46</sup> In 1896, after a tour of pastoral stations in the Kimberley region, George Marsden reported to the Aborigines Protection Board that whereas in the northern districts cattle were previously 'being killed wholesale' and 'Police had to be sent out there to put down the trouble', now Aboriginal station workers considerably outnumbered white station workers. What is more, fewer Aboriginal people now received government rations at all, because Aboriginal station workers shared their rations with 'outside natives'.<sup>47</sup> Pamela Smith has examined the evolution of the Aboriginal rations system from the 1890s on pastoral stations in the Kimberley region in light of two economic imperatives: one was that providing rations to Aboriginal people proved to be effective in preventing cattle killing, and the other was that it enabled pastoralists to gain control over a cheap labour force. As elsewhere, flour, tea and sugar comprised the basic ration, though depending on the generosity of the station owner, salt beef might also be provided to those who worked at the homestead.<sup>48</sup>

In South Australia, the innovation of transferring responsibility for ration distribution from police or magistrates to pastoral stations occurred earlier, from the early 1850s. On the surface, a government decision to pass responsibility for ration distribution to pastoral stations might have seemed counter-intuitive, since the pastoralists who now managed Aboriginal rations were those who not many years previously had been driving Aboriginal people from their runs. However, the introduction of pastoral leases gave new logic to the shift. In 1848 the imperial government authorised a new system of 14-year leases which replaced the system of annual licences. These were designed to give sheep and cattle farmers more secure tenure and the government more control over the dispersion of settlement, but most importantly, the leases specified that they were 'not intended to deprive the natives of their former right to hunt over these Districts'. Although these terms were intended to apply to all the Australian colonies, they were more fully articulated in South Australia because just as the form of pastoral leases was being debated locally, the government was seeking to address the problem of frontier violence in the colony's western districts.<sup>49</sup> According to the conditions of the lease, Aboriginal people had an 'unobstructed right' to access pastoral lands, use its 'springs and waters', erect dwellings, and to 'take and use as food birds and animals *ferae naturae* in such a manner as

45 Robert Bush to the Chief Protector, 1 August 1898, Acc 255, file 28, 1898/15–1900.49, SROWA.

46 1883 Native Commission report, cited in Hasluck 1942: 31–32.

47 Report of George Marsden to the Aborigines Protection Board, 24 October 1896, Acc 495, item 35, file 2146/1896, SROWA.

48 Smith 2000: 80–81.

49 *South Australian Government Gazette*, 30 January 1851. See also Foster 1998: 1–2.

they would have been entitled to do' before the lease was granted. Pastoralists now risked forfeiting their land if they denied Aboriginal people these rights. Perhaps most importantly, experience had by now shown that Aboriginal people were adept at station work. In country where it was difficult to attract European labour, Aboriginal people were available, exploitable and skilled. By providing station owners with rations to distribute, the government not only gave them a means of attracting Aboriginal labour to the station, but also of subsidising its cost. The government rations still comprised only flour, tea and sugar with the expectation that Aboriginal people would secure meat through wage labour or traditional hunting.

From the settlers' point of view, distribution of rations from pastoral stations gave them access to a government-subsidised labour force. From the government's point of view, sub-contracting the management of rations to settlers established a means of Aboriginal administration that was not only economical but also effective, encouraging the entry of Aboriginal people into the colonial economy while obviating the need to establish additional government-run reserves or appoint more regional administrators. From an Aboriginal point of view, rations provided from pastoral stations offered a reliable source of subsistence to compensate for declining traditional resources. But most significantly, an incidental benefit of this system in the longer term was that it enabled Aboriginal people to remain connected to their traditional lands and customs. Pastoralists generally demonstrated little concern about the traditional practices of Aboriginal life, provided that Aboriginal labour was reliable and the business of the station was unaffected. As a consequence Aboriginal people were able to speak their language, continue living in their country, and maintain their religious and cultural practices.

### **Rations in Canada's North-West Territories**

In Canada's North West Territories, as in Australia's colonies, a regular system of ration distribution emerged more from circumstance than planning. In an ideal world, the land cession treaties undertaken through the 1870s would have led to the form of managed development of the North West Territories imagined by Ottawa, in which the forfeiting of First Nation sovereignty would lead through agricultural education to Aboriginal people's assimilation within the colonial economy. The reservation of agricultural land for Aboriginal use, the payment of annuities, the provision of seed, stock, agricultural equipment and farm instructors would, according to this ideal, have obviated a need to supply rations. But establishing independence through agriculture did not proceed as planned. Brian Titley has suggested that as early as 1877, soon after the signing of Treaty 7, the government's capacity to implement the anticipated Aboriginal transition from hunting to agriculture was compromised by a range of practical obstacles: these included a chronic shortage of equipment, supplies and suitable personnel; the cumbersome paper trail required to approve expenditures from Ottawa; and the government's own fear of 'encouraging idleness'.<sup>50</sup>

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50 Cited in Titley 2008: 55; see also Carter 1990: 88–102.

By the end of that decade, the fast decline of the buffalo from the prairies had truly taken its toll. Only Treaty 6 had provided for the possibility of famine, making the provision of food to First Nations people an unanticipated expenditure. Missionary Constantine Scollen, who in 1876 had urged the Canadian government to forge a treaty with the Blackfoot nation, was by 1879 writing to the Assistant Police Commissioner that people were now suffering from 'unparalleled' want. The government was 'not prepared for the emergency', he wrote, and if the coming year was to be as bad as the last, 'we shall either have to provide for the Indians or fight them; there is no other alternative'.<sup>51</sup> With the loss of the buffalo as a traditional staple, the Department of Indian Affairs was obliged to take on the responsibility of a rations policy whose expenditure it would spend the next decades attempting to shrink. The peoples of Treaty 7 were most affected by starvation: Vic Satzewich has calculated that through most of the 1880s, the people of Treaty 7 were the highest recipients of 'supplies to destitute Indians', their cost running up to half and sometimes as high as 70 per cent of the total Department of Indian Affairs' annual budget.<sup>52</sup> Government efforts to reduce rations expenditure, therefore, went hand in hand with the rations policy from the moment of its inception.

In Australia's colonies, colonial governments had avoided including meat in rations on the grounds that Aboriginal people could continue to hunt native game, though the gradual disappearance of game from lands given over to pastoral use made this assumption increasingly problematic. On the Canadian prairies, meat was a necessary inclusion in rations not only because the buffalo were fast disappearing, but also because the traditional hunt, now required to cover ever-expanding distances, ran counter to the goal that people would settle down to their reserves. Along with flour, the primary ration was beef; it was relatively economical and could be readily sourced, initially from Fort Benton south of the border, but later in support of the local ranching industry in western Canada. A primary difficulty, however, was that there was never enough food to meet the need. Another on-going difficulty was that the supplies provided by traders for distribution on the Indian Agencies were frequently of a substandard quality; the Indian Agent on the Blood reserve in the Treaty 7 area, for instance, complained constantly of musty flour, underweight supplies and inferior coal.<sup>53</sup>

Vic Satzewich has argued that the Department of Indian Affairs' rationing policy in the Treaty 7 region of Alberta, where the need was highest, was shaped by four competing forces: on the one hand, it furthered the Department's objective of Aboriginal confinement and supported the economic interests of the ranchers who supplied the beef; on the other hand, it was constrained by the Department's obsessive concern with economies, and was constantly vexed by the grievances of First Nations people.<sup>54</sup> These competing forces inevitably produced a set of dilemmas for the Department of Indian Affairs. If Aboriginal people in want of

51 Scollen to Assistant Commissioner Irvine, 13 April 1879, RG 10, vol 3695, file 14/942, LAC.

52 Satzewich 1996: 197.

53 Correspondence files 1899–1906, Blood Indian Agency, M1788, Glenbow Archives.

54 Satzewich 1996: 193.

food had to go further and further afield to obtain it, the government's efforts at containment were undermined. If on the other hand Aboriginal people were provided too readily with supplies, it was feared that the 'civilizing' agenda would be undermined by a culture of idleness and dependency. As in Australia's colonies, this fear led to various government schemes whereby rations would serve as reward for labour or government service.<sup>55</sup>

Yet underlying these ideological anxieties was the constant pressure to cut costs, and from the late 1880s, the most pragmatic solution to cost-cutting was to whittle down the amount of beef rations. Agents in charge of Indian Agencies in treaty areas were told to reduce rations to 'make beef on hand last' until the next budget allowance.<sup>56</sup> Indian Agent reports in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were replete with accounts of how and how much ration costs had been reduced.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, Vic Satzewich notes that by the late 1880s, 'an Indian Agent's chances for promotion were tied, in part, to his success in reducing rations expenditures in his Agency'.<sup>58</sup> The attack on a farm instructor in 1893 and the fatal shooting of a ration issuer in 1895 were just two consequences of these economies.<sup>59</sup>

Faced with the prospect of famine, attacks on ranchers' cattle might have seemed an obvious option for relief, but as the mounted police discovered, ranchers often held an 'exaggerated idea' of cattle theft from Aboriginal 'depredations'.<sup>60</sup> That cattle theft was lower than might be expected was perhaps less the result of natural forbearance than of the efficient system of policing that kept Aboriginal people in check and contained on reserves. Aware that hungry people would kill cattle if the opportunity arose, the North West Mounted Police monitored the risk of Aboriginal cattle theft with constant patrols, the Police Commissioner assuring the government that it would be 'impossible for us to do more than we are now doing'.<sup>61</sup> Nonetheless, as mediators between the ranching industry, the government and Aboriginal people themselves, the police were well aware that reductions in ration expenditure created an ever increasing problem. They reported to their superiors the complaints they regularly received from Aboriginal people about the government's shrinking rations; Chief Red Crow from the Blood reserve warning Superintendent Sam Steele that although he tried to keep his people 'law abiding', he 'could not answer for their actions if they were not properly fed'.<sup>62</sup> But unwilling or unable to relax the department's constraints, the Indian Commissioner insisted that although rations had been somewhat short, times were hard across the country and one could also find white settlers 'without a mouthful of meat'.<sup>63</sup>

55 Carter 1990: 84–89; Tobias 1983: 526.

56 Blood Indian Agency correspondence files, 14 June 1904, M1788, Glenbow Archives.

57 For instance Blackfoot Agency reports and returns, 15 June 1907, M1785, Glenbow Archives.

58 Satzewich 1996: 200.

59 See Correspondence regarding the attempted murder of Farm Instructor Nash, RG 18, vol 73, file 233/1893; Correspondence regarding the shooting of Frank Skynner, RG 10, vol 3912, reel C-10197, file 111/762, LAC.

60 For instance Sam Steele to the Police Commissioner, 7 July 1890, RG 18, vol 43, and 9 March 1893, RG 18, vol 80, file 258/1893, LAC.

61 Police Commissioner to Indian Commissioner, 11 March 1893, RG 18, vol 80, file 258/1893, LAC.

62 Report of Sam Steele, 7 May 1897, RG 18, vol 137, file 333/1897, LAC.

63 Indian Commissioner to NWMP Comptroller, 28 June 1893, RG 18, vol 82, file 387, LAC.



Because in most treaty areas rationing was a matter of government discretion rather than formal obligation, it could be strategically adapted as circumstance dictated. Although the provision of rations was understood as a necessary response to dire need, few historians disagree that the government's power to regulate ration distribution was instrumental in gaining authority over Aboriginal people after the signing of treaties, and of ensuring their acquiescence to federal Indian policy. Hugh Shewell has argued that government relief in the form of rations was enlisted over decades as part of the Department of Indian Affairs' determination to erode Aboriginal people's political and cultural autonomy.<sup>64</sup> Gerard Friesen and Sarah Carter have also argued that although emergency rations were necessary interventions from the late 1870s, the government was not slow in using food as a means of coercion.<sup>65</sup> Through the coming years, the settlement of Aboriginal peoples onto reserves was facilitated by the supply or withholding of the rations upon which they were increasingly dependent. Cree leaders who were resistant to the treaties were 'starved into submission'; and when the Assiniboine resisted leaving Cypress Hills for a new reserve at Indian Head, their rations were whittled down until they were compelled to move.<sup>66</sup> Once First Nations peoples were settled onto reserves, the withholding of rations was a strategy employed to maintain obedience by individual Indian Agents. On the Blackfoot reserve, for instance, Indian Agent Magnus Begg would stop the rations of 'young bucks' as punishment for leaving the reserve without permission.<sup>67</sup> On the Blood reserve, Indian Agent William Pocklington withheld rations as a means of inducing the group to give up local perpetrators of crimes.<sup>68</sup>

As was also the case in Australia, rations could serve not just as the stick but also as the carrot in securing Aboriginal people's acquiescence to government policy. In early 1885, in the climate of the simmering tension that would become the North West Rebellion, Commissioner Dewdney sought to secure Aboriginal loyalty by increasing distributions of food and other goods to those people who remained on their reserves and exchanged supplies for labour. In the Qu'Appelle area, where chiefs lobbied him with their grievances, he increased flour, tea and bacon rations for all bands. In the Treaty 7 region, he increased rations as a gesture of 'goodwill', and travelled to Blackfoot Crossing himself to provide chiefs with tea and tobacco.<sup>69</sup> On individual agencies, such as Hobemma in the Treaty 6 region, the Indian Agent used bacon as a means of keeping the atmosphere of rebellion at bay.<sup>70</sup>

These measures, however, lasted only so long as the crisis required. Within the decade the Police Commissioner was warning the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs that Aboriginal discontent was becoming an urgent matter, that

64 Shewell 2004.

65 Friesen 1987: 150-151; Carter 1999: 142-143.

66 Carter 1999: 143-148.

67 Inspector Wood to Superintendent Howe, 2 May 1896, RG 18, vol 122, file 333/1896, LAC.

68 Inspector Sanders to Sam Steele, 7 March 1893, RG 18, vol 73, file 233/1893, LAC.

69 Titley 2008: 178-179.

70 Samuel Brigham Lucas papers, 15 April 1885, M699, Glenbow Archives.

the current ration scale was in his opinion 'totally insufficient to sustain life', and that if Aboriginal people were to live, the settlers' cattle must suffer.<sup>71</sup> Over the years, the North West Mounted Police forwarded reports to the Department of Indian Affairs of petitions received from Aboriginal peoples that government rations were inadequate to the point of starvation.<sup>72</sup> Nonetheless, with bad winters on the prairies and reports of poverty amongst settlers, the government's very provision of rations to Aboriginal people helped to fuel resentful sentiment amongst the non-Aboriginal community that settlers were 'not nearly so well supplied' as Aboriginal people, who had 'little to complain of'.<sup>73</sup> The inadequacy of government efforts were not lost on some settlers, however, who feared the risk of an Aboriginal uprising if the government did not provide better rations, for as one correspondent to the press warned, the ration allowed 'is not sufficient to keep a dog alive'.<sup>74</sup>

That Aboriginal deprivation was a consequence of their dispossession was a cycle also observed by mounted police on Australia's frontiers some decades earlier. Ironically, however, the very absence of land cession treaties in Australia's colonies seemed to increase the imperative to provide compensation by way of provisions, while the formality of land cession treaties in Canada's North West Territories, where rations were not included in most of the treaty terms, seemed to justify the authorities' efforts to cut them back. Observing in 1851 that no increase in police numbers would reduce Aboriginal stock theft when it was driven by desperate want, South Australia's Police Commissioner argued it is 'but a bare act of Justice' to alleviate that want 'with an equivalent for that food of which he has rightly or wrongly been deprived'.<sup>75</sup> Yet when a similar argument was put to Judge Macleod in defence of 16 men from the Blood reserve on trial for cattle killing in 1894, he responded with the prediction that if the cattle killing continued there was a likelihood of their rations being cancelled 'as there was nothing in their Treaty calling for rations'.<sup>76</sup>

Over time, the Canadian government's efforts to reduce ration expenditure were largely successful, even though its goal to create agricultural self-sufficiency on Aboriginal reserves was not. In 1899, the Secretary to the Indian Commissioner compared the results of plans over the past decade to make the North West Territories' First Nations self-supporting. In 1888, he reported, there were 15,000 Aboriginal people living on reserves in the North West, excluding Manitoba. Almost all were rationed, at the annual expense of \$372,000, and only 2500 were self supporting. A decade later, the government's ration expenditure had been reduced by more than half to \$180,000. The number of self-supporting people on

71 Police Commissioner to Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 30 September 1894, RG 18, vol 101, file 75/1894, LAC.

72 For instance RG 18, vol 19, file 1888; Correspondence regarding the Condition of Indians, Battleford District, RG 18, vol 101, file 509/1894, LAC.

73 Indian Commissioner to NWMP Comptroller, 28 June 1893, RG 18, vol 82, file 387/1893, LAC.

74 Letter to *The Free Press*, 18 April 1893. See also Lux (2001) on the inadequacy of rations compared to settler sentiment about government benevolence.

75 Chief Secretary's Office, Correspondence files, 10 June 1851, GRG 24/6/1851/1733, SRSA.

76 Satzewich 1996: 207.

reserves had increased, as had the value of produce from Aboriginal farming, but the figure of those dependent upon rations remained high, at almost 10,000 people.<sup>77</sup> Despite the government's plans, the reserve system's rigid constraints on Aboriginal mobility, coupled with the ranching industry's monopolisation of the land and the disappearance from the prairies of natural game, had created a subjugated class of people reliant for their subsistence upon rations.

## Conclusion

With its origins in early practices across the Empire of providing food and other goods as a means of conciliation, a system of ration distribution evolved in both Australia and Canada as part of a broader administrative agenda for Aboriginal management. In both jurisdictions, rations were strategically increased or withheld, as circumstances dictated, as a means of ensuring Aboriginal acquiescence to colonial policy. In this respect rationing held instrumental value in the governance of Aboriginal people, even in face of administrative anxieties that dependence on government supplies would impair rather than induce the contributions to the colonial economy that Aboriginal people were desired to make. Yet the intended role and effect of ration practices also varied across these jurisdictions in light of differently evolving circumstances.

In Australia, where no formal negotiations ever took place for appropriation of Aboriginal lands, rations served variously over time as a means of pacification to offset the risk of frontier conflict, of keeping Aboriginal people away from pastoral stations, stock and townships, and of maintaining surveillance in outlying regions. Although rationing emerged from a series of *ad hoc* processes rather than as dedicated policy, it came to hold considerable purchase as a strategy shaped initially by a broad colonial objective to disperse Aboriginal peoples from lands now taken up by pastoral settlement. At the same time, in the absence of any foundational recognition of Aboriginal sovereignty, it was also understood, although not consistently, as a government obligation in the face of profound Aboriginal deprivation caused by European settlement. In this respect, rations can be seen as part of a larger policy agenda that emerged in the Australian colonies after the 1830s defined by the concept of Aboriginal 'protection' – a concept which, despite failing to fulfil its stated objectives through a rule of law, was perceived to justify Aboriginal dispossession. In the wake of campaigns by settlers and mounted police to secure control of Aboriginal lands, the growing importance of Aboriginal labour to the pastoral industry changed the nature and purpose of rationing. This change took place early in South Australia with the introduction of new pastoral leases in 1851 which formalised Aboriginal people's rights of access to those lands. Although these rights were often not honoured by settlers in newly-opening districts, an inexorable shift was occurring whereby the pastoralists who had earlier lobbied for police protection from Aboriginal attack were now requesting rations to help them secure Aboriginal labour. The

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77 Report of the Indian Commissioner Secretary, 26 June 1899, RG 10, vol 3993, file 187/224, LAC.



South Australian government's outsourcing of the ration system to pastoral stations in the 1850s was an early example of this economic pragmatism, but a consequence of the system was that Aboriginal people were able to maintain connection to their traditional country and customs as workers in the pastoral industry, a pattern that unfolded across Australia over the second half of the nineteenth century. In contemporary native title cases, this has served to prove continuous occupation of traditional country, and case by case, might be said to contribute to a form of retrospective 'treaty making' two centuries after British settlement.

In Canada's North West Territories, where people were more immediately confined to reserves, rations more quickly became a government dilemma in face of its unsuccessful plans for a self-supporting industry of Aboriginal agriculture. On the surface, it might seem that treaty negotiations gave the First Nations peoples of Canada's North West Territories more power than Aboriginal peoples in Australia's colonies to set the terms of their relationship to the new colonial state. Some historians have argued that rather than being simply imposed settlements, the treaty making process provided Aboriginal peoples with crucial negotiating power.<sup>78</sup> Others have argued that the treaties fell so far short of their promise as to reduce Aboriginal rights within the first decade of European settlement to a cycle of 'oppression, land theft and starvation'.<sup>79</sup> What remains undisputed is that the era of starvation that followed on the prairies, and people's subsequent containment on reserves, meant that the vision promised by the treaties – of an altered form of autonomy within a new colonial economy – remained primarily unfulfilled. By the end of the nineteenth century, Dominion control of the North West Territories was firmly established and First Nations peoples were designated to reserves in line with government policy. In an age of extreme want on the prairies, the strategic supply or withholding of rations had been instrumental in facilitating this process. Even into the early twentieth century, reserve lands shrank as the government sought out country suitable for new settlement; and as Andrew Graybill puts it, while waiting for the sale of land to ranchers, the government 'offset its financial shortfall by reducing the natives' promised beef rations'.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> For instance Freisen 1987: 147.

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# **‘Battlin’ for their rights’: Aboriginal activism and the Leper Line**

Anne Scrimgeour

In 1957, three Aboriginal men travelled north across the twentieth parallel, to the north-east of Port Hedland in Western Australia, to encourage Aboriginal workers on Wallal Downs Station to leave their employment. After several days of discussion, the men left Wallal with 17 people, including most of the workers. In returning south, they breached Section 10 of the state’s Native Welfare legislation which made it illegal for Aboriginal people to cross from north to south of the twentieth parallel.<sup>1</sup> Although this action placed those involved in conflict with the authorities, Aboriginal men and women travelled back and forth across the line during the following months in repeated breaches of the legislation. This article argues that these activities were an example of activism carried out to challenge restrictive legislation in an effort to achieve equal rights for Aboriginal people.

The men and women involved in these activities were members of an Aboriginal organisation that had its roots in the Pilbara pastoral workers’ strike of a decade earlier, and which had been engaged in a number of cooperative enterprises, principally mining.<sup>2</sup> This organisation was known in the late 1950s by its company name, Pindan, but was also known by reference to its non-Aboriginal advisor, Don McLeod, as ‘McLeod’s Group’ or simply ‘The Group’.<sup>3</sup> As individuals came and went from the group, its numbers fluctuated, but generally numbered a few hundred. Its membership was made up of people from a number of different language groups, including the Ngarla, Nyamal and Kariyarra (Ngarluma) speaking traditional owners of the Port Hedland and Marble Bar area, as well as newly arrived migrants from the desert region to the east and north. These included Nyangumarta-, Mangarla-, Warnman-, and Western Desert-speaking people, many of whom were first-generation migrants into the pastoral area.

The importance of the group’s industrial action in Australia’s labour history has been highlighted by Michael Hess in an article on the history of strike, although he notes, too, that in a situation of colonial domination the demand for the right to organise is profoundly political.<sup>4</sup> The group used strike action not only to

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1 *Native Welfare Act 1954* (WA).

2 Accounts of the strike and of the mining cooperatives that developed from it include Hess 1994; Wilson 1961; Biskup 1973: 219–257. Biographical, autobiographical and novelised accounts include Hale 2012; Palmer and McKenna 1978; Read and Coppin 1999; Brown 1976; Stuart 1959.

3 Wilson 1961: 2.

4 Hess 1994: 68.

achieve improvements in wages and living conditions on stations, but also for political ends. In early 1949, for example, its members successfully used the threat of an escalation in strike action to prevent the state Department of Native Affairs closing the Twelve Mile camp near Port Hedland, used by some of the strikers as a base for their activities and for their school.<sup>5</sup> Later that year the group responded to the prosecution of some of its members by visiting stations in large numbers to remove workers, effectively flooding the jails when those involved were also arrested.<sup>6</sup> As a result of this action, according to strike leader, Dooley Binbin, the government 'finally had to change the law'.<sup>7</sup>

As well as industrial action, the group used other strategies to achieve political ends. In an action described by John Wilson as 'a key point in the formation of the Group', for example, 400 men, women and children disobeyed a police order to remain outside the town during the 1946 Port Hedland horse races, by marching into the Two Mile camp in an open demonstration of defiance of the police and pastoralists. During this incident they decided on non-violent strategies to resist police intimidation, which were used effectively in encounters with police on this and later occasions.<sup>8</sup> In a similar action, strikers marched into Port Hedland to release Don McLeod from the police lock-up.<sup>9</sup> Members of the group believed that over the years such actions had led to changes in legislation that had impacted negatively on their lives. Human rights activist, Jessie Street, who visited Pindan work camps in 1957, reported that members of the group believed that 'they were entitled to the same status and rights as white British subjects' and that Western Australia's Native Welfare and other restrictive legislation deprived them of these rights.<sup>10</sup> John Wilson, who spent time with the group in 1959 and 1960 as an anthropology student, notes that members of the group saw their activism as leading directly to changes in the law. He remembers being told by Jacob Oberdoo, one of the group's leaders, that they 'had beaten the government on those laws'.<sup>11</sup> Another group leader, Dooley Binbin, told participants at the 1963 meeting in Canberra of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines (FCAA) that 'we tell the government to go to hell'.<sup>12</sup> The group 'developed confidence and tactics of opposition', Wilson wrote in his thesis, and 'believed they had influenced changes in State labour and Native Welfare laws'.<sup>13</sup> Charles Rowley wrote that members of the group had become '*political* men and women'.<sup>14</sup>

5 Tommy Sampie, undated letter to the Government; Sergeant Plunkett to Middleton, 11 February 49; Middleton to Sergeant Plunkett, 11 February 1949; Middleton to McDonald, 15 February 1949, State Records of Western Australia [henceforth SROWA], Series 2030, 1948/0732.

6 Scrimgeour 2012a; Wilson 1961: 68.

7 Wilson 1961: 68.

8 Wilson 1961: 63–64.

9 Wilson 1961: 65–66.

10 Street 1957.

11 John Wilson, pers comm, 5 August 2012.

12 Horner 2004: 90.

13 Wilson 1961: 68.

14 Rowley 1971: 257, original emphasis.



This article provides evidence that the group's political activism continued beyond the end of the three-year strike. Its activism has, I believe, been largely overlooked in studies of Aboriginal activism and the struggle for Aboriginal rights in Australia. John Chesterman has argued that it was activism within Australia, together with international pressure, that led, from the 1950s, to a gradual dismantling of legislation that had operated to deny Aborigines basic citizenship rights.<sup>15</sup> Some studies of the activism that led to legislative change at this time make brief reference to the Pilbara strike as an example of Aboriginal resistance<sup>16</sup> or as an important precedent in the Aboriginal struggle for equal wages and the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>17</sup> In discussions of the achievement of Aboriginal rights, too, brief mention has sometimes been made of the establishment and early financial success of the group's cooperative companies.<sup>18</sup> Charles Rowley referred to Pindan as 'the first group of Aborigines who effectively challenged white bureaucratic domination'.<sup>19</sup> Michael Hess suggests that the self-supporting communities established by the group a generation before the land rights and outstations movements deserve greater recognition in these terms, and that their histories require greater scrutiny.<sup>20</sup>

Other studies, however, including Jennifer Clark's and John Chesterman's studies of the Aboriginal and civil rights movement of the late 1950s and 1960s, make no reference to the group's activism.<sup>21</sup> Clark possibly viewed the activities of Aboriginal people in the Pilbara as constituting the 'local and scattered' activism which she described as uncoordinated and unsustained, and therefore largely ineffective.<sup>22</sup> Such a view ignores the fact that although the group was geographically isolated, its activities were widely publicised, and served to influence and inspire southern organisations and activists.<sup>23</sup> Faith Bandler and Len Fox claim, for example, that 'Don McLeod's people' had 'a big impact' on the Aboriginal movement in New South Wales, by raising awareness that Aboriginal people were denied 'ordinary citizenship rights'.<sup>24</sup> Sue Taffe has noted the degree to which the activities and achievements of the Pindan group informed and inspired those involved in FCAA (FCAATSI after 1965).<sup>25</sup> In *Rights for Aborigines*, too, Bain Attwood acknowledges that the Pindan cooperatives become 'a sort of symbol' for leaders of the Melbourne-based Council of Aboriginal Rights, but although he discusses the Gurindji strikes at length, the political activities of the Pindan group are not included in his discussion of Aboriginal activism.<sup>26</sup> This article attempts to redress this oversight by examining action taken by the

15 Chesterman and Galligan 1997: 192.

16 Lippmann 1991: 26-27.

17 Anthony 2007: 20; de Costa 2006: 54-55; a longer discussion of the Pilbara strike in terms of the campaign for equal wages is provided by Bunbury 2002: 43-65.

18 Burgmann 2003: 54-55.

19 Rowley 1978: 22.

20 Hess 1994: 82.

21 Clark 2008; Chesterman 2005.

22 Clark 2008: 4.

23 Attwood and Markus 1999: 62.

24 Bandler and Fox 1983: 93, 96.

25 Taffe 2005: 31-32, 51.

26 Attwood 2003: 143-144.

Pindan group in 1957, a decade after the strike, in relation to legislation which restricted the freedom of movement of Aboriginal people, as an example of the group's political activism in directly opposing legislation believed to be unjust.

## The leper line

In the decade since Aboriginal people had first walked off Pilbara sheep and cattle stations in 1946, their action in withholding labour, and the subsequent development of Aboriginal mining cooperatives as an alternative source of employment, had led to significant improvements in wages and conditions for Aboriginal people who remained in or returned to employment on stations.<sup>27</sup> The effect of this industrial action, however, was limited by the operation of Section 10 of the *Native Welfare Act 1954* which prohibited the movement of Aboriginal people from north to south of the twentieth parallel without the permission of the Commissioner of Native Affairs.<sup>28</sup> Enacted as a measure to prevent the spread of leprosy from the Kimberley to the southern areas of the state, the legislation effectively restricted the activities of the Pindan group to south of the twentieth parallel. Wages and conditions for Aboriginal people north of the line remained poor. As I have argued elsewhere, pastoralists on Wallal Downs, Mandora, and Anna Plains stations, just to the north of the line, used the legislation to prevent their workers leaving their employment, and to prevent the spread of industrial unrest among their own workforce. Pay, food, and working conditions on these stations remained poor. According to Native Welfare Officer, Adrian Day, Aboriginal workers on these stations 'considered themselves victims of the line which ... prevented them from seeking better employment conditions further south'.<sup>29</sup> The restriction on movement across the leper line also prevented them maintaining family and cultural links with people further south.<sup>30</sup>

Restrictions on the freedom of movement imposed by the legislation and enforced by pastoralists north of the line was also resented by members of the Pindan group. In 1991, Pindan member Paddy Yaparla recalled being told by Reg King, the manager of Wallal Downs Station, that he could not pass north of the Wallal boundary fence. 'It's not allowed to be come through in the twenty parallel', King told him:

'Paddy, you know that twenty parallel between Pardoo and Wallal, shouldn't be get through in that, not allow! What all belong to Port Hedland district he got to be stand by at this gate and turn back. And what all the Broome people [must stop at] this gate and come back from there'.

27 Scrimgeour 2012b.

28 Enacted in 1941 as the *Native Administration Act Amendment Act 1941*, inserted as Section 10 of the *Native Administration Act 1905-1940*, and retained as Section 10 in the *Native Welfare Act 1954*.

29 Native Welfare Officer Adrian Day to Middleton, Commissioner of Native Welfare, 9 May 1957, SROWA, Series 2032, 1950/0667/58.

30 For a more detailed examination of impact of the strike on wages and conditions in the region, and the effect of the leper line legislation on wages and conditions north of the twentieth parallel, see Scrimgeour 2012b.

And I said, 'I come through there and 'e haven't got a notice, ..., nothing. Just an ordinary fence and an ordinary gate I see'm. ... This country been free before. We bin get through up and down and the old people bin take us up and down in this country. We bin brought up in this country. And we was going up and down just very free, right up to Broome and back and right up to Port Hedland'. I tell the King about that and after that he tell me, 'well look, shouldn't have come through ... not right to be come'.

'Well', I say, 'this my country, can't help it I come through, this is in my country'.<sup>31</sup>

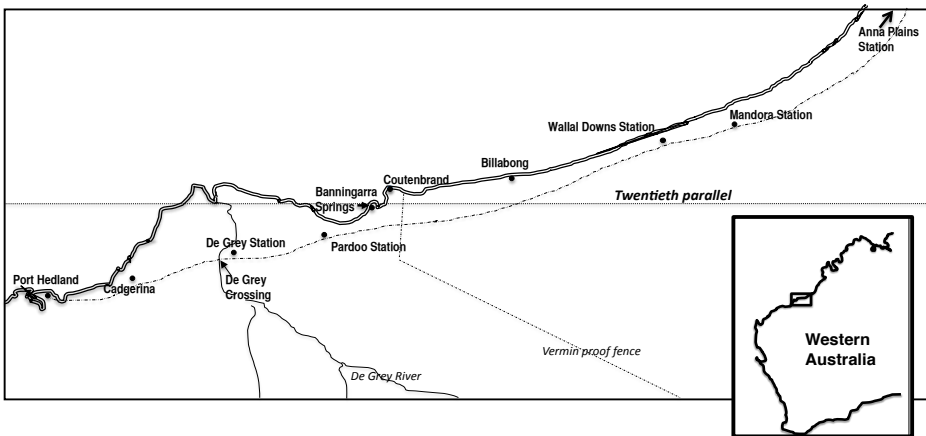


Illustration 1: Map of coastal north-western Australia showing principal places north and south of the twentieth parallel.

Source: Author.

## Crossing the line

In 1957 most of the members of the group were living in work camps along the coast to the north-east of Port Hedland. They had, for a period, shifted their activities away from mining, with the exception of two small beryl-mining operations, to the collection of buffel grass and kapok seed for sale to a distributor in Sydney, and dryshelling for mother-of-pearl shell, used in the manufacture of buttons. This latter had brought the group good returns but was highly seasonal, and could only be carried out during periods of greatest tide range.

31 Yaparla, Paddy 1991, oral history recording, recorded by the author at Woodstock Station.



Illustration 2: Pindan shelling camp on the coast near Cadgerina, 1959.

Source: Photo courtesy of John Wilson.



Illustration 3: Dooley Binbin (facing camera) with other group members, 1961.

Source: Photo courtesy of John Wilson.

Early in 1957, when McLeod was away campaigning for Aboriginal rights on a speaking tour of Melbourne and Sydney, Pindan leader and company director, Ernie Mitchell, received a message from Aboriginal people on Wallal Downs and Mandora stations, just north of the leper line, that they were dissatisfied

with conditions there and wished to leave the stations to join Pindan. Although the immediate motivation for making the illegal incursion across the line was to respond to these requests, the political nature of the act is evident in the fact that Mitchell arranged for Dooley Binbin to lead a team across the twentieth parallel to investigate the situation on the closest weekend to 1 May, May Day, and the date on which the strike had begun in 1946.<sup>32</sup> On Friday 3 May Dooley, an experienced campaigner and one of the principal organisers of the 1946 strike, travelled across the line with two other Pindan members, Laka Flower<sup>33</sup> and Raymond, and made camp a little distance from the Wallal homestead. Over the next two days they carried out discussions with the Aboriginal people at Wallal as opportunity presented itself. On the Sunday other Pindan members arrived with a truck, and further discussions took place. When the station manager, Reg King, noticed them in the 'native camp' that afternoon, he ordered Dooley to leave under threat of police action. 'I knew of [Dooley] as a trouble maker amongst the natives', King wrote in a police report. The men left about two hours later, taking most of the local people with them. The 17 people who left, including both workers and older people who received government rations as indigents, and a young child, were taken on the back of the Pindan truck to the shell camp of Banningarra Springs, located on the coast just a few kilometres south of the line.<sup>34</sup> A few days later they were examined for leprosy by a medical practitioner from Port Hedland, at the request of Ernie Mitchell. They were also visited by police and Native Welfare officers responding to complaints made by King. In the group's headquarters at the Two Mile camp in Port Hedland, Ernie Mitchell refused to make an official statement to the police, stating merely that he had been in touch with his solicitor in Perth.<sup>35</sup>

The group staged a second incursion over the line during the weekend of 22 and 23 June. According to McLeod, this trip was made in response to 'an appeal from those working over the line for us to get moving and come up'.<sup>36</sup> Murlangajayi (Norman Mula), who left Mandora to join the group on this occasion, later told the police:

Long time ago I sent Dooley message to come and see me. I want to tell Dooley tucker no good and we not getting money. I want pay fortnight same as other stations. Sometime I think Boss forget to pay me. I tell Native Welfare fellow when he at Mandora, but he do nothing about it.<sup>37</sup>

32 Day to Middleton, 9 May 1957, SROWA, Series 2030, 1950/0667/57.

33 Or 'Lugger'.

34 Day to Middleton, 9 May 1957, SROWA, Series 2030, 1950/0667/57; Sergeant Hasleby to District Inspector McGeary, 10 May 1957, SROWA, Series 76, 1957/3461 v2; police statement made by Reg King, 5 May 1957, SROWA, Series 76, 1957/3461 v2.

35 Hasleby to McGeary, 10 May 1957, SROWA, Series 76, 1957/3461 v2.

36 McLeod to Bill Bird, 7 August 1957, JS Battye Library of West Australia MN 1444 [henceforth Battye] 1568A/2/3.

37 Norman Mula, police statement taken by Hasleby, De Grey River, 15 July 1957, SROWA, Series 76, 1957/3461 v2.



The trip was also prompted, according to McLeod, by claims made by a woman from Mandora, Winnie Grey, who had joined the group when she was in Port Hedland to give birth in hospital. She had reported that the women at Mandora were forced 'to put up with all sorts of indignities'.<sup>38</sup>

On the evening of Friday 21 June a group of men, again led by Dooley, drove across the line to Mandora Station. Two of their number, Nganakulu (Jack Kurala) and Tommy Woodman, were dropped off as they passed through Wallal. The others went on, picking up three people from an outcamp on Anna Plains Station, and then returning to Mandora the following morning. There, Dooley spoke to everyone about leaving the station to join Pindan, saying,

the stations don't give you enough money and a good home to live in. They only give you bread and meat. Down at our camp where we live we get plenty of tucker. Now who wants to come with me can come. ... You don't have to go if you don't want to but any one that doesn't go will have to chuck in a few quid.<sup>39</sup>

Seven people elected to leave Mandora on the Pindan truck, and were also taken south of the line to Banningarra Springs.<sup>40</sup>

Meanwhile, the manager of Wallal, Reg King, had returned home after sunset on the Friday evening to be told that two of 'the McLeod group', Kurala and Woodman, were there, attempting to persuade more of his workers to leave. He reacted violently, forcing them out of the area by driving his jeep at them and ordering a station hand to shoot them. Shots were fired, and in the process of being driven off, the foot of one of the men was run over. According to McLeod,

our team tangled to some extent with the local squatter who tried to run two of our chaps down in a Jeep and kept extorting [sic] his mate to drop the two of them with a rifle, it was largely bluff as he only managed to run over one of their toes and not badly while his mate didn't have the guts to do his stuff.<sup>41</sup>

When the Pindan truck, returning from Mandora, arrived on the Saturday to collect Kurala and Woodman, they found them gone. One of the men, Paddy Yaparla, later recalled,

I pull up Wallal, I trying to get a couple of people from Wallal.

'No!' [King] said, 'no, you not taking them, you go'.

'Where's my two boy?' I ask'm.

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38 McLeod to Bill Bird, 7 August 1957, Battye 1568A/2/3.

39 Monkey, police statement taken by Hasleby, Mandora Station, 12 July 1957, SROWA, Series 76, 1957/3461 v2.

40 De Pledge to the Officer in Charge, Port Hedland, 23 June 1957; Police statements made by Smiler Boodarra, SROWA, Series 76, 1957/3461 v2.

41 McLeod to Bill Bird, secretary of the Victorian branch of the Seamen's Union, 10 July 1957, Battye 1568A/2/88.

'I don't know where that two fellas gone'.

'E bin here and he bin chase them about, chase them with a motorcar, fire a shot, every way. ... And after that and I say, 'right, I'll see you, when I find those two boys, and I'll be back'.<sup>42</sup>

Setting off to find out 'what happen, ... get shot or what, run over or anything like that' they located the two men on the Pardoo-Wallal boundary, recognised as the leper line. 'I picked [up] them two boys', Yaparla recalled. '[I said], "Dooley, you want to come back with me and see that King Reg? We'll do a fight against of him"'.<sup>43</sup>

Yaparla's recollection of Dooley's response to his suggestion that they return to confront King is an indication of the degree to which the group were prepared to refer to the mainstream legal system as a means of achieving justice. 'Oh never mind', Dooley replied, 'Never mind, we'll go. We'll get him in a court, we'll catch him in a court, we'll do it. He'll [be] bugged. He won't pull through in that, nothing'.<sup>43</sup>

### Publicising the illegal act

Don McLeod probably learned of the group's breach of the leper line when he returned from his speaking tour of Melbourne and Sydney to Perth, where he was joined by Pindan leaders Ernie Mitchell and Peter Coppin. Coppin spoke at a stop work meeting in Fremantle on 27 May, and the following day all the three men addressed a large crowd at a public meeting the Perth Town Hall on their struggle for independence and equal rights. At this meeting, McLeod told the audience that they were going make sure that 'the iniquitous leper line' could no longer be used to prevent them organising in the Kimberley region, where 'the biggest concentration of slave labour is employed'.<sup>44</sup> When Mitchell and Coppin returned to Port Hedland (accompanied, incidentally, by the left-wing activist, Jessie Street, who visited the group as part of a survey on the Aboriginal situation in Australia) McLeod remained in Perth, where he began informing the group's supporters, including trade unions, of their plans to break through the leper line, 'so there will be a fairly wide knowledge of what is involved if the baloon [sic] goes up suddenly'.<sup>45</sup>

McLeod was a prolific letter-writer with a wide network of correspondents in trade unions and Aboriginal and civil rights organisations. Publicity was an essential component of the group's activism. By carrying out their illegal action openly, and making public announcements of their transgressions, Pindan hoped to create awareness of the unjust law being challenged, and to build support for their position. Moreover, publicity meant that any police or Native Welfare

42 Yaparla, Paddy 1991, oral history recording, recorded by the author at Woodstock Station.

43 Yaparla, Paddy 1991, oral history recording, recorded by the author at Woodstock Station.

44 ASIO report, NAA A6119/3306; McLeod to 'Bill', 16 June 1957, Battye 1568A/2/156-7.

45 McLeod to the group's secretary in Perth, Jack Williams, 12 July 1957, Battye 1568A/2/66.

Department response to the group's actions was open to public scrutiny, and had to be carried out within the law. McLeod's role as publicist was important, therefore, in enabling the group to carry out campaigns such as this.

## **Making the legislation unworkable**

One of the tactics the group employed in opposing Section 10 was to try to make the legislation unworkable. The remote and inaccessible location of the leper line had always made the legislation difficult to police, a difficulty the group hoped to exploit. They hoped, McLeod wrote, 'to bluff them into leaving ... this section of the act go as another casualty of our struggle'.<sup>46</sup> The group planned to compound the difficulties involved in policing the line by crossing and recrossing it in large numbers; if the authorities were to take action in response to their breach of the line, they would be faced with the need to prosecute large numbers of people. It was a strategy the group had previously used to good effect.<sup>47</sup> McLeod wrote that they planned 'to send up a hundred of our own and bring them down if they get into us so there will be some large scale arrests if they do start'.<sup>48</sup>

At the end of June, the Western Australian Minister for Police and Native Welfare, John Brady, decided that 'the natives' should be shown that 'they cannot break the law and get away with it'.<sup>49</sup> In accordance with the provisions of Section 10, orders were issued to those who left northern stations, instructing them to return north of the line within 30 days, or risk prosecution. Leaders Ernie Mitchell and Peter Coppin agreed to bring those who had left Wallal in to the Pindan headquarters at the Two Mile camp in Port Hedland to enable the orders to be issued, preferring to co-operate in this way rather than 'have the wolves poking around our various camps'.<sup>50</sup> They planned, in McLeod's words, 'mucking about for a week if we can' before bringing the people in to the Two Mile, in order to delay the deadline by which the orders to return north were carried out. They hoped that by the deadline many of those involved would be taking advantage of the good tides north of the line, and many others would have travelled back and forth.<sup>51</sup> Brought into the Two Mile by Coppin, the Wallal people refused to be interviewed by the police or to make a statement.<sup>52</sup> 'Some may go back', McLeod wrote,

46 McLeod to Bill Onus, 22 July 1957, Battye 1568A/2/35.

47 Scrimgeour 2012a.

48 Telegram Day to Middleton, SROWA, Series 2030, 1950/0667/78; McLeod to Bill Bird, 10 July 1957, Battye 1568A/2/88.

49 Brady to Middleton, 26 June 1957, SROWA, Series 2030, 1950/0667/62.

50 McLeod to Williams, 21 July 1957, Battye 1568A/2/46.

51 McLeod to Williams, 10 July 1957, Battye 1568A/2/77.

52 Day to Middleton, 22 July 1957, SROWA, Series 2030, 1950/0667/85.



but as we will have between one and two hundred of our own battlers to mix up with[,] it will avail them little to hunt them back as they will need to proceed against us as well if further action is contemplated as we are in constant movement passing up and down over the line.<sup>53</sup>

As Section 10 included the provision that permits to remain south of the line could be issued on application, subject to certain conditions, those who had received orders to return north also received a letter from the Native Welfare Department, advising them of that right. McLeod wrote to the department in reply:

I have been asked to reply to you on behalf of the fifteen people from North of the 20th Paralell [sic] to whom you wrote on 24 July. I am asked to thank the Minister for his solicitude on behalf of those concerned. I am also asked to convey to you the view that it is held that Section 10 of the Welfare Act appears to be in conflict with Section 92 of the Commonwealth constitution and also the Quarrantine [sic] Act and in this case it would not be possible to sustain the restriction on travel and intercourse.<sup>54</sup>

The group's solicitor, TJ (or 'Diver') Hughes, also addressed a response to the department, suggesting that proceedings be taken against one person to make a test case of the issue.<sup>55</sup>

On 26 July, summonses were issued on Dooley out of the court of Petty Sessions at Port Hedland charging him with breaches of Section 10 on two counts, under subsection 5 which made it illegal to 'cause a native' to travel from north to south of the line. However, the remoteness and inaccessibility of the work camps meant that Dooley was still 'somewhere up the coast' some four weeks later, and the summons had not been served.<sup>56</sup> By this time, with tides becoming favourable for dry shelling, a large group of Pindan people, including many of the new arrivals from Wallal and Mandora, shifted north of the line to Kurtamparanya, or Cape Keraudren, known at that time as Coutenbrand, on Pardoo Station, and to Billabong outcamp, or Warrungkul, on Wallal Station. McLeod continued to keep the trade unions and other supporters informed of developments (in his terms 'awake to what we are up to'), telling the unions that 'as we now have a large camp working shell over the line who will be returning this weekend it will be interesting to see what happens for if they start arresting people who have breached the line they will have quite a crowd to put inside'.<sup>57</sup> Ron Hurd, of the Fremantle branch of the Seamen's Union, responded with a telegram, 'Advise us immediately any difficulties'.<sup>58</sup>

53 McLeod to Shirley Andrews, 17 July 1957, Battye 1568A/2/53.

54 McLeod to Day, SROWA, Series 2030, 1950/0667/90.

55 Hughes to Day, 1 August 1957, SROWA, Series 2030, 1950/0667/95.

56 Hasleby to McGear, 17 July 1957, SROWA, Series 76, 1957/3461 v2.

57 McLeod to trade unions, 29 July 1957, Battye 1568A/2/22.

58 Ron Hurd to McLeod, 31 July 1957, Battye 1568A/2/20. This union had previously supported the group, having imposed a ban, in 1949, on the shipment of wool from stations that failed to meet the demands of Aboriginal strikers.

Pastoralists north of the line complained to the police about the presence of groups of people on their properties, the manager at Pardoo reporting that lambing ewes were being unsettled by 20 or so people camped at Coutenbrand.<sup>59</sup> The large camp at Billabong outcamp was also causing headaches for Reg King at Wallal, who complained that 'at least 60 blacks' were camped there, 'disturbing the sheep and no doubt eating them'.<sup>60</sup> He asked the Port Hedland police for 'some assistance to remove them to some spot where they cannot do any damage'. Before the strike, police had been active in responding to pastoralists' complaints by forcing groups camped on pastoral leases to shift, and shooting their dogs in dawn raids.<sup>61</sup> Without access to information on their legal rights, Aboriginal people had been powerless in the face of this. Through their association with McLeod, however, they had gained knowledge of their rights to enable them to resist harassment. A spokesman for the people at Billabong, Albert Orange, told the police that as Aboriginal people they had a right to camp at the Billabong windmill, which had been erected at a natural soak. The police found no evidence that sheep were being killed, and felt that this was just another case of 'The Pastoralists v McLeod'. Although no action could be taken on the matter of trespass, and there was no evidence of sheep stealing, the police reported that those camped at Billabong would be in breach of Section 10 when they finished shelling and returned south. Moreover, Pindan men, Narti (Jimmy Imburri), Ernie Mitchell and Minyjun (Monty Hale) had been travelling back and forth across the line to take them supplies and bring away the shell. The police found these movements were, however, 'practically impossible' to police, due to the distance and the time involved.<sup>62</sup>

When the 30-day deadline for Wallal people to return north had expired, police found about half of them working shell at Coutenbrand. As they had technically complied with the order to return north, they could not be apprehended, although police knew they would return south again as tides became less favourable. Some of the older people from Wallal, however, and a couple with a young child, were living in grass-seed camps south of the line at Cadgerina and at the De Grey River Crossing near De Grey Station. On 2 September a number were identified by police and Native Welfare officers at Cadgerina. They were told to roll their swags to be taken into Port Hedland. The group leader at Cadgerina, Gordon Snowball, asked the officers if they had discussed with Mitchell their intention to 'take these old men away'. The policeman told him that he would see Mitchell about it later. The Wallal people, including the small girl, were apprehended and taken directly to the police lock-up in Port Hedland. On the same day three older women from Wallal were apprehended at De Grey Crossing and also lodged in

59 Smith, manager of Pardoo Station, to F Thompson, 27 August 1957, SROWA, Series 76, 1957/3461 v2.

60 King to Hasleby, 21 August 1957, SROWA, Series 76, 1957/3461 v2.

61 Police reports provide evidence of this. See, for example, the patrol report of Constable McRae, 28 October 1944, SROWA, Series 76, 1939/1777v7; the patrol report of Constable Lindley, 21 December 1944, SROWA, Series 76, 1943/0099v7; and the patrol report of Constable McMahon, SROWA, Series 76, 1939/1777v7. See also Morrow 1984: 33.

62 Hasleby to McGeary, undated, SROWA, Series 76, 1957/3461; Monty Hale, pers comm, 14 January 2012.

the lock-up in Port Hedland.<sup>63</sup> Arrangements were made by the District Officer of Native Welfare to have these people removed back north of the leper line.<sup>64</sup> Because of the poor conditions at Wallal, and to enable them to make use of commercial airline services as a means of transport, the authorities had decided to transfer them to Broome rather than back to the station.

### Challenging legislation in the courts

The group were unaware of the Native Welfare Department's intention of transferring these people to Broome. Orders to return north issued by the department on those who had left Wallal and Mandora had informed them that failure to comply could result in prosecution, a prospect welcomed by the group as a means of testing the legislation in court, and of increasing publicity for their campaign. On learning that members of the group were being held in the police lock-up, Mitchell sent an urgent wire to McLeod, in Perth to attend court on another matter. McLeod was unconcerned, telegraphing Mitchell, 'we can handle this quite easily; just carry on'.<sup>65</sup> He told Mitchell:

Tell Dooley and the rest of the people not to worry about this bit of nonsense [sic] ... These summonses are just ordinary court cases and are issued under the Native Welfare Act and we wont expect to get a decision in the local court but that wont matter as we will appeal at once and take them first to the supreme Court and then the High Court and if necessary to the Privvy [sic] Council ... and by then we will have organised quite a lot of support through the trade Union Movement as well as the usual Court proceedings.<sup>66</sup>

He felt that everything was going according to plan. He hoped to be able to arrange bail for those in the lock-up and to have their charges heard when Dooley came up for trial, and wrote that day to the Deputy Leader of the Federal Labor Party, Arthur Calwell, informing him of the arrests and the charges brought against Dooley.<sup>67</sup> He also arranged an interview with the Minister of Native Welfare, John Brady, in an attempt to negotiate the release of those apprehended. Referring to the minister as 'an old schoolmate of mine', McLeod was unaware that it was Brady himself who had initiated the action being taken against the group. Brady made no mention of the plan to return people to the north.<sup>68</sup> Believing the interview had gone well, McLeod wrote to Mitchell later that day, saying 'Dont worry about the people in the Peter<sup>69</sup> I will be on to this as

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63 Charles White, Police Report, 4 September 1957, SROWA, Series 76, 1957/3461 v2; Day to Middleton, SROWA, Series 2030, 1950/0667/117; Mitchell to McLeod, 10 September 1957, Battye 1568A/3/136.

64 Day to Middleton, SROWA, Series 2030, 1950/0667/118.

65 McLeod to Mitchell, incorrectly dated 31 August 1957, Battye 1568A/3/173.

66 31 August 1957, Battye 1568A/3/173.

67 3 September 1957, Battye 1568A/3/164.

68 McLeod to Mitchell, 4 September 1957, Battye 1568A/3/161.

69 Colloquial term for a prison cell.

soon as I can tomorrow and you can be sure they will not be forced to go back'.<sup>70</sup> As he wrote this, five of those who had been apprehended, including the young child, were already on their way to Broome, and the other three older men were flown out the following day.<sup>71</sup>

The group's solicitor, Hughes, was unaware of the group's removal to Broome when he wired the police in Port Hedland on 5 September, seeking information on the charges under which they were held. Receiving a reply: 'Natives apprehended under Section ten subsection six native welfare Act and returned north of Boundary Line', Hughes immediately responded with a letter of protest to Brady. Their removal to Broome had, he said, been carried out 'secretly in such a way as to prevent them from having any judicial determination upon the validity of their arrest detention in jail and transportation North'. He added,

I venture to say that it would be difficult to find throughout the world an enactment or decree involving such a ruthless invasion of human rights or providing for such use and abuse of arbitrary [sic] power.

Arguing that if the section were shown to be invalid, those concerned would be in a position to bring proceedings for wrongful imprisonment, Hughes demanded that they be returned to the south. He suggested that if summonses were served against them they could then be adjourned *sine die*, and Dooley's case proceeded with as a test case.<sup>72</sup> Meanwhile, McLeod updated trade unions and supporters on the latest developments and addressed a meeting of waterside workers.<sup>73</sup> He and Hughes sought an adjournment of Dooley's case to allow themselves time to prepare a defence.<sup>74</sup>

### The stand-off at De Grey Crossing

While it is clear from these events that McLeod and Hughes were engaged in a political campaign to draw attention to and challenge the leper line legislation, the question remains of the extent to which the Pindan people who moved back and forth across the line at that time saw their actions in these terms. Certainly there were social and economic motives for their activities, as crossing the line enabled group members to re-establish ties with family members on northern stations, and to access shelling sites north of the line. That they had political intent in their involvement in these activities, however, is suggested by the group's history of political activism, discussed above, and by their belief that their activities could lead and had led to changes in legislation that denied them access to equal rights. The decision to time the Wallal walk-off to coincide with May Day is also evidence of the political nature of these events. However,

70 Battye 1568A/3/162.

71 Hasleby to McGeary, 5 September 1957, SROWA, Series 76 1957/3461 v2.

72 Hughes to Brady, 6 September 1957, SROWA, Series 76, 1950/0667/106.

73 McLeod to Ron Hurd, 16 September 1957, Battye 1568A/3/117.

74 McLeod to Mitchell, 1 October 1957, Battye 1568A/3/39.

the strongest evidence that members of the group were engaged with these activities as political action can be found in the response made to the attempted apprehension of a further five of the Wallal people in early October.

Following the apprehension and transportation to Broome of the eight people from Wallal, the group put up fiercer resistance to attempts to make further apprehensions. When police and Native Welfare officers again attempted to apprehend those who had left Wallal, they identified at the De Grey River Crossing five Wallal men who had been working at Coutenbrand when the earlier arrests were made. A group of some 30 or 40 people were at the Crossing engaged in gathering buffel grass seed,<sup>75</sup> and their response to the attempted apprehension of the five Wallal men is evidence of their belief in the injustice of the leper line legislation, and of their active involvement in the campaign to oppose it. When instructed by a Police Constable to roll their swags and accompany him to Port Hedland, the five Wallal men refused, and were supported in their refusal by the rest of the group. Kurrkurrayinya (Jimmy Toile) and Albert Orange acted as spokesmen, Toile stating that 'the five natives concerned could not be forced to go North of the line as that was an infringement of freedom and that they were free to move when [and] where they liked the same as any white man'.<sup>76</sup> Toile and Orange also told the officers that, since they had all recently been north of the line at Coutenbrand, they were in fact all Section 10 offenders, and if the police were going to arrest anyone for breach of the Act, they should arrest them all. They believed Section 10 to be illegal, they said.<sup>77</sup>

To prevent the police arresting the men from Wallal, the people at the De Grey Crossing employed strategies of non-violent resistance. When attempts were made to physically separate the Wallal men from the rest of the group, everyone, men and women, closed in around the officers, a strategy the group had developed as early as 1946 to avoid the use of violence in confrontations with police,<sup>78</sup> and which they had used on previous occasions as a group response to threats of force.<sup>79</sup> Advised that they could be arrested, the group stated that it made no difference to them.<sup>80</sup> Referring to Pindan's activities at this time, the Commissioner of Native Welfare, SG Middleton, wrote that Pindan members 'and their white and coloured leaders and advisors' welcomed prosecution and imprisonment when they were, 'as they put it, "battlin' for their rights"'.<sup>81</sup>

Efforts by the Native Welfare officer to reason with the group proved equally futile. Jimmy Toile stated that the Native Welfare Department had done nothing for them over the past few years, that the officers did not visit their camps when they were on patrols, and that they would have nothing at all to do with

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75 Hasleby to McGeary, report, 11 October 1957, SROWA, Series 76, 1957/3461 v2.

76 Parker to District Officer, Native Welfare, 3 October 1957, SROWA, Series 2030 1950/0667/120.

77 Parker to District Officer, Native Welfare, 3 October 1957, SROWA, Series 2030, 1950/0667/120.

78 Wilson 1961: 64.

79 Mac Gardiner (Pirntilkampanyaja), oral history recording 18, recorded by the author at Warralong, 5 August 1993.

80 White to Hasleby, 4 October 1957, SROWA, Series 76, 1957/3461 v2.

81 Middleton to Minister Brady, 16 October 1957, SROWA, Series 2030, 1957/0509/10.

the department or its officers. The police officer later reported that the Native Welfare officer was held up to ridicule, and that he 'was more hindrance than help in trying to persuade the natives to leave the camp and board the vehicle'. 'No sign of violence was shown', he wrote, 'but it was obvious from the way they were talking among themselves that these five natives were not going to be taken into Port Hedland'.<sup>82</sup> There was nothing the police could do but return to Port Hedland empty handed.

The following day the group at the Crossing were approached by Police Sergeant Haselby, accompanied by the Native Welfare officer and a Police Constable, to make another attempt to bring those concerned in to Port Hedland. Murlajalayi (Norman Mula) and his wife Lola, who had joined the group from Mandora, had arrived from Coutenbrand the previous evening, bringing the number of people to be apprehended to seven. Despite his intention to force those involved to return to Port Hedland with him, Haselby met with the same resistance. 'They all stood firm in their refusal to be taken back north of the line', he wrote. They had no grievance with the police, they told Haselby, but they would have no dealings with the Native Welfare Department, and would continue to be uncooperative as long as one of its officers was present.<sup>83</sup> They asked to be summonsed to give evidence at Dooley's trial, saying they had engaged a solicitor to represent them.<sup>84</sup> Given the level of resistance he encountered, Haselby considered that it was unwise, after all, to force those concerned to accompany him, and he returned to Port Hedland.

With the situation at a stalemate, Sergeant Haselby visited the group's main camp at the Two Mile in Port Hedland to appeal to Ernie Mitchell to assist him in overcoming the impasse at the De Grey Crossing. Mitchell agreed to assist him to bring in the seven people on condition that they not be returned north until after Dooley's hearing. As the group had refused to have anything to do with the Native Welfare Department, including travelling in its vehicle, Haselby was obliged to use his own vehicle, at his own expense, when he drove back out to the grass-seed camp with Mitchell the following day. There, Mitchell informed group members of McLeod's concern that their leper line activities not hamper production, and he suggested that those involved should 'accept transport arranged by the sergeant out of his own pocket and "volunteer" to come to Port Hedland'.<sup>85</sup> They agreed to do so, and were lodged in the police lock-up. It was a somewhat embarrassing outcome for the police, and, in reporting to his senior officer, Haselby downplayed Mitchell's role in these events, suggesting instead that he was able to make the arrests once Native Welfare officers were no longer involved. In return for Mitchell's cooperation, Haselby undertook to hold those concerned in the lock-up to allow time to have them subpoenaed as witnesses

82 Brennan to District Officer, 3 October 1957, SROWA, Series 2030, 1950/0667/120; White to Haselby, report, 4 October 1957, SROWA, Series 76, 1957/3461 v2.

83 Brennan to District Officer, 3 October 1957, SROWA, series 2030, 1950/0667/120; White to Haselby, report, 4 October 1957, SROWA, Series 76, 1957/3461 v2.

84 Day to Middleton, 3 October 1957, SROWA, Series 76, 1950/0667/117.

85 Day to Middleton, 3 October 1957, SROWA, Series 2030, 1950/0667/117.



in Dooley's case. He made the request himself to Native Welfare Officer Day to hold off on the arrangements for their removal to Broome, as Mitchell refused to deal with that department.<sup>86</sup>

Given the arrangement made between Haselby and Mitchell, Day urgently requested instructions from Perth. The Commissioner of Native Welfare, SG Middleton, felt himself placed in a humiliating position. Having offered the Wallal and Mandora people the option of applying to the Minister, individually and in writing, for permission to remain south of the line, an option they had refused to accept, he felt himself 'manoeuvred into a situation where to save face we had to interpret a verbal request as an application for a permit'. He urged the Minister to sign permits allowing the seven to remain below the line, although later wrote that 'it is probably certain they will throw the permits away'.<sup>87</sup>

## Outcomes

Written permits to remain south of the line until the end of the year were distributed on 10 October, and the seven people were released from the lock-up.<sup>88</sup> Four days later they gave evidence in the local magistrate's court about their living conditions at Wallal. The case was, however, as McLeod wrote, 'mostly a legal argument' about the validity of Section 10. 'We really would rather be found guilty in the first place', he wrote, 'as otherwise we would have no chance to get the measure tested in a higher court'.<sup>89</sup> Evidence was heard on the circumstances under which Aboriginal people left Wallal on 5 May, with no argument against the Crown case that Dooley took people south of the line. Rather, Hughes argued for a dismissal of the charge on the grounds that, as the people referred to were not free, were poorly paid, and lived in conditions of slavery, the Act was contrary to the Imperial Anti-Slavery Act, and therefore had no force throughout the British Empire. The second charge against Dooley, relating to the removal of people from Mandora, was adjourned *sine die*. Dooley was found guilty of causing the Wallal people to travel south of the leper line and fined £1, with £32 costs, but the Magistrate reserved decision on the validity of Section 10. An appeal made to the High Court for the decision to be reviewed was dismissed in March of the following year.<sup>90</sup>

On one level, the group's challenge to the leper line had failed, and the legislation remained in place. However, Paddy Yaparla, who recorded his own account in 1991, remembered the outcome of these activities quite differently. As he

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86 Mitchell to McLeod, 4 October 1957, Battye 1568A/3/22-23; Day to Middleton, 6 October 1957, SROWA, Series 2030, 1950/0667/117-118; Hasleby to McGeary, 11 October 1957, SROWA, Series 76, 1957/3461 v2.

87 Day to Middleton, 6 October 1957, SROWA, Series 2030, 1950/0667/118; Middleton to Minister Brady, 16 October 1957, SROWA, Series 2030, 1957/0509/11.

88 Hasleby to McGeary, 11 October 1957, SROWA, Series 76, 1957/3461 v2.

89 McLeod to Mitchell, 9 October 1957, Battye 1568A/3/17.

90 Day to Middleton, 18 October 1957, SROWA, Series 2030, 1950/0667/130; Haselby to McGeary, 16 October 1957 and 23 November 1957, SROWA, Series 76, 1957/3461.

remembers it, it was Reg King, not Dooley, who was under trial in the court case. He recalled that when he and Dooley returned to Port Hedland after their altercation with King:

I sent word for solicitor, Mr Hughes, crown lawyer from Perth, and he coming, and we had a court there. Oh, that King Reg was shivering! ... When the ... constable been get the name: 'You know who that man? He's the crown lawyer from Perth, Mr Hughes', after that he shaking, ah he knock the table, knock the chair, everything. And he walk out, he's tell, 'walk out and settle down'. After he come back again he shivering again, can't, he can't get through in that, nothing. And he pull that man, King Reg, Mr. Hughes [told him], 'come on, you stand up here, I want to bump you with a car, same as what you bin done with those two boys'. ... 'Oh I can't', shivering and shivering! Fined him for two hundred, two hundred pounds for that, and let him go.<sup>91</sup>

Yaparla's recounting of these events reflects the degree to which the group's actions were indeed successful. Although Section 10 remained in place following the court cases, both the Police and Native Welfare Departments refused to administer it. Even while Dooley's case was going to trial, Sergeant Hasleby of the Port Hedland police reported that policing the legislation was 'becoming more difficult and bitterness by members of the McLeod group towards the Native Welfare Department, increasing'. Although members of the group freely admitted to travelling back and forth over the line, he argued that it was 'almost out of the question with the limited staff here to obtain positive evidence owing to the time and distance involved'. He insisted that the legislation could only be enforced if the Native Welfare Department took responsibility and kept track of people's movements.<sup>92</sup> 'Sergeant Hazleby [sic] believes that it is a matter which does not concern the Police', Native Welfare Officer Day wrote. Day argued that they were facing 'mass migration figures' if they proceeded with the plan to return offenders to the north. 'The Hon. Minister's instructions, specific at the time they were delivered, cannot be conscientiously applied in practice to the present situation. On this, the local officer in charge of Police is in agreement'.<sup>93</sup>

While King was not fined £200, as Paddy Yaparla remembered, he was no longer able to use the legislation to prevent Aboriginal workers seeking better conditions in the south, or to prevent Pindan group members from entering Wallal. Although pastoralists on stations above the line continued to make complaints about breaches of the legislation, they were ignored by the authorities. Some two years later Native Welfare Commissioner Middleton reprimanded a Patrol Officer for wasting time reporting that Aboriginal people had crossed the line to attend ceremonies. The legislation was, Middleton said, 'ineffective and useless

91 Yaparla, Paddy 1991, oral history recording, recorded by the author at Woodstock Station.

92 Haselby to McGeary, 11 October 1957, SROWA, Series 76, 1957/3461 v2.

93 Day to Middleton, 18 October 1957, SROWA, Series 2030, 1950/0667/134.



and certainly not required for any welfare purpose', and it was not the duty or responsibility of the Native Welfare Department 'to institute action of behalf of the Health and Police Departments'.<sup>94</sup>

No longer willing to administer the legislation by prosecuting Aboriginal people who breached it, the Native Welfare Department now took action to counter the illegal activity by addressing a major cause: the poor conditions for Aboriginal workers on stations north of the line. Whereas permits had previously been issued to pastoralists, medical officers and government officials to enable them to have employees or patients travel over the line, Aboriginal workers on Wallal and Mandora were now informed that permits could be applied for and 'easily obtained' if they wished to travel south of the line to seek better working conditions. Although workers asked how that *mirlimirli* (paper permit) could stop them getting leprosy, many expressed the intention of making use of this provision.<sup>95</sup>

Concerned that poor working conditions played 'into the hands of persons traditionally opposed to pastoralists and constituted authority',<sup>96</sup> the department applied increased pressure on pastoralists on these stations to improve conditions for their Aboriginal workers. Instead of prosecuting Aboriginal people for breaches of Section 10, the department now looked at the possibility of prosecuting pastoralists for failing to meet minimum conditions for employing Aboriginal people. Adrian Day reported that when he visited Wallal shortly after Dooley's hearing, 'all the natives complained that the food was very poor, being almost entirely bread and meat, month in and month out'. When he attempted to discuss this matter with the manager, King declared that he had 'more to do than hang around and talk about niggers'. It was at this point that Day raised the possibility of prosecution, and noted a marked change of attitude in King, who became, suddenly, much more willing to discuss the provision of better food for his Aboriginal employees.<sup>97</sup>

Yaparla's memory of these events also reflects the degree to which the group successfully used such action to undermine legislation. Their action over the leper line contributed to the international and domestic pressure being placed on Commonwealth and state governments at that time to amend discriminatory legislation. While Dooley's case was being heard in the Magistrate's Court in Port Hedland, Middleton wrote an argument for the removal of Section 10 from the *Native Welfare Act*. It was clear that the Pindan group would continue to defy the legislation and cross and recross the line, and while it remained in place the department would continue to attract severe public criticism. 'Whatever the outcome of the Court case may be', he wrote,

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94 Middleton to District Officer, 9 October 1959, SROWA, Series 2030, 1950/0667/164.

95 Day, Patrol report 4 1957-8, p 2, SROWA, Series 2030, 1957/0160.

96 Middleton to Managing Director, Wallal Downs Pastoral Co, 29 April 1958, SROWA, Series 2030, 1943/0118/203.

97 Patrol report 4 1957-8, 31 November 1957, SROWA, Series 2030, 1957/0160.

it is certain that in the eyes of 95% of the Public of Australia and in most places elsewhere in the World the Department will appear in the invidious position of being the oppressors of the people it purports to aid and protect, while the McLeods, Hughes and others will emerge as knights in shining armour fighting the good fight for the oppressed natives.<sup>98</sup>

He was unsuccessful, however, in obtaining the support of the Department of Public Health to have the legislation dismantled.

Middleton thought that 'it would be surprising if the question was not also taken up in Parliamentary circles' and, indeed, the matter was raised in Federal Parliament by Arthur Calwell in January of the following year. Citing a letter he had received from McLeod about Dooley's prosecution, Calwell stated in Parliament that 'apparently in Western Australia there is a line across which certain Aborigines cannot pass. Such a state of affairs should cease forthwith'. He referred to the incident in which King had driven his vehicle into two members of the group. 'This is not a matter any Minister in the Parliament can deal with', he said, 'but it does indicate how necessary it is to have uniform laws and conditions for the aborigines'.<sup>99</sup>

## Conclusion

The Pindan group took action over the leper line in 1957 as part of their opposition to government control over Aboriginal lives. As the actions of Pindan people at De Grey Crossing show, they were prepared to face prosecution to achieve their political goals. They were successful in their attempt to render the leper line legislation unworkable by repeated breaches of the law. They were successful, too, in bringing to public attention the existence of a law they believed to be unjust. They directly challenged the legislation in courts of law, and although they were unsuccessful in having the legislation removed from the Act, did succeed in reducing its impact on their lives, and on the lives of the Aboriginal workers on Wallal and Mandora stations. This was example of Aboriginal political activity as defined by Attwood and Markus,<sup>100</sup> in that Aboriginal people were consciously attempting to change the condition of their existence by putting pressure the government to change or ignore legislation that restricted their freedom of movement. They were, as they told Native Welfare Commissioner Middleton, 'battlin' for their rights'.

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98 Middleton to Brady, 16 October 1957, SROWA, Series 2030, 1957/0509/10-11.

99 Hansard, 3 December 1957, SROWA, Series 2030, 1957/0509/13-14.

100 Attwood and Markus 1999: 7.

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# **‘What a howl there would be if some of our folk were so treated by an enemy’: The evacuation of Aboriginal people from Cape Bedford Mission, 1942<sup>1</sup>**

Jonathan Richards

One fine and warm winter morning in May 1942, the *Poonbar*, a medium-sized coastal vessel, steamed into the Endeavour River at Cooktown, North Queensland, and berthed at the town’s wharf. After she tied up, over 200 Aboriginal people carrying a small amount of personal possessions emerged from a cargo shed on the wharf. The people were herded by about a dozen uniformed Queensland police as they boarded the boat. The loading, completed in just over an hour, was supervised by three military officers, two senior police and a civilian public servant. As the ship cast off, the public servant, who boarded the boat with the Aboriginal people, threw a coin to a constable on the wharf and shouted ‘Wire Cairns for a meal!’ Unfortunately, the wire did not arrive at Cairns in time, and as a result the party of Aboriginal people was given little food until they reached their destination, 1200 kilometres and two day’s travel away.

The war between Japan and the Allies was nearing Australia, and this forced evacuation of Aboriginal people was deemed necessary for ‘national security’ reasons. Although the evacuation has been written about by a number of scholars and Indigenous writers, the reasons for the order have not, I believe, been clearly established. Similarly, the identity of the forces – military or otherwise – that carried out the evacuation have never been conclusively determined. This article addresses these two issues alone.

Japanese forces captured Singapore in February 1942, landing in New Guinea soon after. Darwin was bombed for the first time on 19 February, followed by more air raids in March and April.<sup>2</sup> In late March, the Deputy Director of the Queensland Department of Native Affairs, Cornelius O’Leary, wrote to the Home Secretary in Brisbane advising ‘the evacuation of Cape Bedford aboriginals may be necessary’:

It is understood that the military authorities are considerably exercised by reason of the location and control of this Mission, and that representations

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1 Andrew Standfield Sampson at Cooktown to Mrs Bennett at Eumundi, 18 May 1942, Queensland State Archives [henceforth QSA], SRS 505/1/4685.

2 Unknown 1942: 155.



are being made by Major Lawnton [sic, Laughton], Chief Intelligence Officer, Victoria Barracks, for the removal of the Mission inmates to a location south of the Tropic of Capricorn. It is considered by Military Authorities that the alleged assistance rendered the Japanese Army in New Guinea by German missionaries could be repeated at Cape Bedford Mission, and the Authorities are not prepared to take the risk of such.<sup>3</sup>

These allegations of missionary collaboration and the circumstances that brought O'Leary to this conclusion, which ultimately resulted in the forced evacuation of over 200 Aboriginal people from the Cape Bedford Aboriginal Mission, are worth serious consideration.

Ultimately, the recorded reasons for the evacuation clearly show that military needs were more important than the mission residents. This article, exploring the factors that resulted in this 'deportation', arises from research into the origins of the evacuation order, and into the identity of the forces that cleared the Cape Bedford Mission of Aboriginal residents. Specifically, what were the reasons for the removal? Was the evacuation ordered by the Australian military? Were any American soldiers involved or was this a domestic affair, and why have some people believed that Americans took part?

The removal of the Cape Bedford people was arguably the only forced mass evacuation in Queensland during wartime. Although many individuals and families in northern Australia self-evacuated as war approached, this was the only community that was completely displaced. According to historian Mark Copland, the Cape Bedford removal was also unique because it was the only time that the state government took action as a result of federal government intervention.<sup>4</sup>

There were other comparable events in Australia during the Second World War. Aboriginal missions in Western Australia and the Northern Territory were evacuated, and some missionaries were interned. Soldiers took charge of the (Lutheran) Beagle Bay Mission in 1940, but no armed forces were involved in the voluntary evacuation of the (Methodist) Croker Island Mission during April 1942. Some Aboriginal people were evacuated from Mornington Island, while other families remained there throughout the war. Many Thursday Island residents fled south in January 1942, but as Elizabeth Osborne notes, 'no one was forced to leave'.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Indigenous people throughout Torres Strait were placed 'beyond the front line of Australia's defence' after Queensland's Director of Native Affairs gave orders for them not to be evacuated.<sup>6</sup> Although 90 Hammond Island residents from Torres Strait were removed to the Darling Downs and 200 'coloured residents' from Thursday Island were taken to Cherbourg (both in southern Queensland) for the duration of the war, other northern missions were left undisturbed.

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3 O'Leary to Home Secretary, 23 March 1942, QSA, SRS 505/1/4685, letter 3964 of 1942.

4 Copland 2005: 116.

5 Osborne 1997: 22.

6 Osborne 1997: 91.

'WHAT A HOWL THERE WOULD BE IF SOME OF OUR FOLK WERE SO TREATED BY AN ENEMY'

Despite this ad-hoc evacuation policy, a steadily growing anxiety about a Lutheran mission, established and staffed by German missionaries, in what was rapidly becoming a critical operational area for the defence of Australia, culminated in the removal of Indigenous people from Cape Bedford Mission and the internment of the missionaries. Most who have written about this event, including several Aboriginal authors, accept this apparent circumspection as the primary or sole reason for the mission's total evacuation. For example, Aboriginal activist Noel Pearson says 'security' was the 'most likely reason' for the removal.<sup>7</sup> However, any thorough investigation of these details must start by considering the reasons for the evacuation, and then turn to reviewing the surviving records.

Three main points are discussed in this article. These are, firstly, the general panic due to fear and threat of invasion, compounded by rumours (later proven untrue) of missionaries assisting the enemy. Secondly, the unique situation of the Cape Bedford people, mistreated by authorities and not given sufficient time to take their personal belongings when evacuated on a long and traumatic journey. And lastly, the rapid construction of a military airfield – immediately after the evacuation – on land previously occupied by the Cape Bedford Mission.

Some refer to the removal as 'exile'. Others stress the fear of Aboriginal collaboration. Pearson states the removal was made 'by order of the Military Authorities, acting with the knowledge and collaboration of the Department of Native Affairs' but does not fully explore the reason for the removal.<sup>8</sup> He notes that many people believed they were taken south 'for their own protection from the Japanese'.<sup>9</sup> Other Aboriginal people thought they were removed because of a fear that they might assist Japan. Pearson concludes that the 'utilisation of labour' may have been 'one of the reasons' for the evacuation, although the 'relevant documents' were 'unavailable' at the time of his writing.<sup>10</sup>

Kirstie Close, who wrote about Cape Bedford during the Second World War in her Master's thesis, concludes that the evacuation was related to labour, land, autonomy and government control.<sup>11</sup> She believes the issue of labour was more important than protection, arguing that if the safety of Indigenous people had been the real reason for the removal, other missions would have been evacuated as well.<sup>12</sup> Close acknowledges that land was important, and that an aerodrome was constructed on the mission's site, but contends that labour was the main issue:

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7 Pearson 1998: 204.

8 Pearson 1998: 203.

9 Pearson 1998: 203.

10 Pearson 1998: 214–215.

11 Close 2009: 7–8.

12 Close 2009: 49–51.

The war became a justification for the further appropriation of land and supreme control over Aboriginal labour. The desires for land and labourers far outweighed any thought for the Mission resident's safety.<sup>13</sup>

There were, obviously, important reasons for the evacuation apart from the fear of Aboriginal 'fifth-columnists' assisting a Japanese invasion.

### **The Cape Bedford Lutheran Mission**

Cape Bedford is situated about 30 kilometres north of Cooktown, Queensland's most northerly port. Established in 1873 after gold was discovered on the Palmer River, the town soon became a major administrative and commercial centre, but Cooktown was effectively isolated from other North Queensland centres. A railway connected Laura in the hinterland to the port, but there were no usable roads connecting the town with other centres and all supplies were brought by coastal ships. Until air travel became possible in 1937, passengers mainly arrived or left by sea.

The first Aboriginal Reserves in Queensland were proclaimed in the late 1870s, and the Cape Bedford Reserve followed in 1881.<sup>14</sup> However, in the same year, detachments of Queensland's notorious Native Police killed large numbers of Aboriginal people in the area following the death of Mrs Watson from Lizard Island, 50 kilometres north of Cape Bedford, close to the mission's boundary.<sup>15</sup> In 1885, Johann Flierl, a Lutheran missionary from South Australia, established the Cape Bedford Lutheran Mission.<sup>16</sup> Flierl left in 1887 and was replaced by Pastor George Schwarz, known by Aboriginal people as 'Muni'. He renamed the mission, now called 'Hope Valley', and remained for more than 50 years.<sup>17</sup>

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland were placed under *The Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1898* (Qld), which meant that every aspect of their lives, especially education, employment, residence and marriage, were totally controlled by the state's network of Aboriginal Protectors. The old ways were largely gone. Under the Act, government gained the power to move individuals and families wherever, and whenever, officials saw fit.<sup>18</sup>

Cape Bedford became the home for Aboriginal children and adults 'removed' during the early decades of the twentieth century by government officials and police from other parts of Queensland, particularly Cape York Peninsula, and

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13 Close 2009: 47, 59.

14 *Queensland Government Gazette*, 1 December 1934, Volume 29, no 26: 390.

15 Haviland with Hart 1998: 35; Falkiner and Oldfield 2000; Richards 2008: 42.

16 Haviland and Haviland 1980: 126.

17 Evans 1972.

18 Copland 2005: 15–16.

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the state's northern and western regions.<sup>19</sup> By 1934 the reserve covered 225,300 acres, including settlements at the Eight Mile, near Cooktown, and Spring Hill, further north near the coast.<sup>20</sup>

As this article describes, most of the Aboriginal people from the Cape Bedford Mission were forcibly taken in the winter of 1942 to the Woorabinda Aboriginal Settlement in Central Queensland, inland from Rockhampton, and between Emerald and Moura.<sup>21</sup> Numbers of the Cape Bedford people died while at Woorabinda and the survivors were not allowed to return to the mission until several years after the war. They came back to a new settlement called 'Hopevale', about 25 kilometres from the old mission, gazetted as an Aboriginal Reserve in September 1952. Roy McIvor, one of the last surviving evacuees, describes the confusion this caused:

It is not clear why the Hope Valley people were moved. Some thought it was because of their allegiance to Muni [Schwarz], while others believe it was because of rumours that the Hope Valley bama [Aboriginal people] were communicating with the Japanese through morse code and smoke signals.<sup>22</sup>

Roy McIvor's remarks about the reasons for the evacuation are particularly insightful:

There is also speculation that it may have been because the military wanted to move their landing strip from Four Mile to the more strategic site of Muni's land at Eight Mile. The military did this only a few months after the Hope Valley people were taken away.<sup>23</sup>

One other writer arrived at a similar conclusion. Derek Townsend, a biographer of Queensland Premier Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, stated the 'Hope Valley Mission Station' was 'closed down in the war so that the RAAF could move in'.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the evacuation being mentioned in a number of books, including some based on oral history, little research appears to have been done on the reasons for the evacuation or on the key figures involved.<sup>25</sup> The origins of the removal order, and the extent of Australian or American involvement, have remained unexplored until now. Research has conclusively established that the evacuation of all Aboriginal people at Cape Bedford was recommended by Australian military intelligence officers, approved by the Queensland government and paid for by the Commonwealth government. There was, it seems, little or no documented American involvement in the event.

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19 Haviland 1997: 150; Pearson 1998: 167.

20 *Queensland Government Gazette*, (1934) Volume 143, no 152: 1520–1521; Rigsby 1997: 8.

21 McIvor 2010: 74–79.

22 McIvor 2010: 74.

23 McIvor 2010: 74.

24 Townsend 1983: 204.

25 Kidd 1997: 163; Donovan 2002: 137–138; Ganter 2006: 215; Evans 2007: 193.

## The fear of Japanese invasion

Many Australians were convinced that Japan intended to invade Australia during the Second World War, and was only prevented from achieving this by determined military action in New Guinea and the Coral Sea.<sup>26</sup> Despite recent research which conclusively proves Japanese operations were intended to prevent offensive actions from Australia and not to facilitate invasion, many Australians apparently still believe this to be a verifiable historical truth.<sup>27</sup> These continuing popular misunderstandings are probably related to the long-standing anxieties, easily and often inflamed by media or politicians, which many Australians experience about the possibility of Asian invasion by boat.<sup>28</sup> Invasion scares are readily located in Commonwealth and State records, and have been well documented by Australian historians.<sup>29</sup> For example, in 1923, the Investigation Branch of the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department wrote to the Queensland government:

The Naval Intelligence Officer has reported to me that his Department has received information that "thousands of Japanese are now living on and near the coast of the Gulf (Carpentaria). There are at least three fully self-contained villages on the coast and what supplies are not grown locally they obtain from Japan".<sup>30</sup>

Queensland police were asked to report on 'this rumour', but 'patrols were not necessary'. Similarly, in 1934, the *Courier Mail* chartered an aeroplane to search (unsuccessfully) for a 'Mystery Japanese Sampan' supposed to be carrying 'Many Rifles' near Dunk Island.<sup>31</sup> In early 1943, a Japanese landing 'scare' at the Gulf of Carpentaria caused many residents to rapidly evacuate the district.<sup>32</sup>

Jacqui Murray's work gives us a good insight into the misunderstanding that most Australians had of East Asia during the 1930s.<sup>33</sup> As she showed, despite occasional fears among senior politicians and the media, many Australians were ignorant about circumstances in East Asia and often dismissed Japan as 'a nation of little import'. Murray notes 'there was very little news of Japan in the first six months of 1940' as the Australian Government tried to suppress any news that might be 'in any way provocative to Japan'.<sup>34</sup> Augustine Meaher IV concludes that Australians were indifferent to the threat of invasion, 'preoccupied with domestic matters'.<sup>35</sup> However, Pam Oliver argues that relations between Australia

26 Frei 1991: 160–161; Johnston 2006: 11; Meaher 2010: xxviii.

27 Powell 2007: 97.

28 Stanley 2008: 25.

29 Horner 1988.

30 Commonwealth Investigation Branch to Home Secretary, 8 June 1923, QSA, A/44700, letter 6511 of 1923.

31 Harbours and Marine, April 1934, QSA, HAR/69; *Courier Mail*, 22 March 1934, 7 April 1934, 9 April 1934.

32 Stanley 2008: 129.

33 Murray 2004.

34 Murray 2004: 215–216.

35 Meaher 2010: 119.

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and Japan, until 1937, were mainly friendly.<sup>36</sup> It seems that media censorship, a blind faith in 'superior' British firepower and little interest in public affairs generally combined to lull Australians into widespread indifference about Japanese intentions and capabilities.

This attitude was shared by British leaders. In July 1941, Churchill wrote to the Secretary for Foreign Affairs and the Armed Forces: 'I do not consider a war between Britain and Japan is likely at the present time'.<sup>37</sup> Newspaper coverage until December 1941 was overwhelmingly focused on Europe, with German advances making daily headlines in Australia. The sudden outbreak of war in the Pacific brought 'confusion, panic and recriminations'.<sup>38</sup> Authorities in Canberra announced 'This is a total war. We are all in it together. Combatants and civilians must all play their part'.<sup>39</sup>

Although some politicians and many of the public were apparently not aware of the possibility of war in the Pacific, senior British and Australian military officers certainly were. Records show that discussions between the Queensland and Commonwealth governments concerning war preparations had begun in 1939, when several North Queensland airfields were listed as 'required for defence purposes'. An Inland Defence Road, linking Brisbane with Cairns, was approved. Cooktown's existing aerodrome was initially listed as third in priority after the airstrip on Horn Island, near Thursday Island, and Coen, but soon elevated to second, and £5000 was allocated to improve the town's airfield.<sup>40</sup> A contract for the reconstruction of the Cooktown aerodrome was approved and the Cooktown Rifle Club provided a volunteer 'Vulnerable Point' guard at the aerodrome from June 1939.

State Premiers met with federal government officials in Canberra during March 1939 to discuss co-operation between the states and the Commonwealth during wartime. One of the first items on the agenda was internal security, which included 'special arrangements' and measures 'as necessary' to control potential enemy agents.<sup>41</sup> Co-ordinated responses, including 'the control and internment of hostile persons or persons of hostile association', and 'the protection of vulnerable points', were agreed:

The control of hostile persons or persons of hostile association also involves their constant observation and their arrest when required.<sup>42</sup>

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36 Oliver 2010: 249.

37 Ministry of Defence (NAVY) 1995, *War With Japan Volume 1: Background to the War*, HMSO, London: 26–27.

38 Murray 2004: 238.

39 Department of Home Security to Department of Army, December 1941, National Archives of Australia [henceforth NAA], MP 508/1, 82/713/48.

40 Civil Aviation Department to Main Roads Commission, 7 June 1939, and Air Board to Main Roads Commission, 26 July 1939, QSA, A/6467.

41 War Cabinet Minute, 4 February 1942, NAA, A1196, 15/501/239.

42 War Cabinet Minute, 4 February 1942, QSA, QS 1043/1, 151, Part 3.



These National Security regulations gave authorities the power to remove and restrain, without formal charges, justification or right of appeal, any group or individual perceived as a threat to Australia.

In late 1940, a defence conference was held in Singapore to discuss Japanese expansion in Indochina and Siam (Thailand). Intelligence officers noted:

One unusual condition prevailed which would facilitate landing operations by the Japanese. This was Japanese motor fishing vessels capable of towing four or five large sampans, which could transport up to 1,000 or more troops with stores and light guns. The passage of expeditions could not be opposed by surface vessels, for the Japanese would make use of little known and extremely shallow passages in which they could escape observation unless a constant patrol by light-draft craft were maintained.<sup>43</sup>

Concerns about innovative Japanese tactics were a constant undercurrent of what became known as 'The War in the Pacific': 'Possible invasion of the coast would have to be with shallow draught craft, such as sampans', claimed one newspaper correspondent.<sup>44</sup> Soon after, the Commonwealth Director of Military Operations and Intelligence prepared a 'Report on Queensland Guarding Arrangements (including Cooktown Aerodrome)', which stated there was 'no real threat to the aerodrome' and he recommended the military guard be withdrawn.<sup>45</sup> Six months later, the army's Northern Command recommendation that the guard be retained revealed the aerodrome's importance.<sup>46</sup>

Towards the end of 1941, anxiety about Japanese intentions steadily increased. Ned Hanlon, Queensland's Minister for Health and Home Affairs, wrote to Premier Forgan Smith, noting there were 26 towns along 2000 miles of coastline in Queensland 'of considerable strategical importance to Australia', all of which were 'particularly easy targets for enemy aircraft and other hostile enemy action by sea'.<sup>47</sup> Plans were made for the orderly evacuation of civilians from Northern Australia. Queensland's Commissioner of Police wrote to all his officers, informing them: 'You are advised that the time is fast approaching when the question of compulsory evacuation of various classes of civilian population in the coastal belt of Queensland will definitely have to be considered'.<sup>48</sup>

Rail passes were issued to civilians and petrol stockpiles 'for evacuation purposes' were established at Queensland police stations.<sup>49</sup> One secret War Cabinet minute stated evacuation might be undertaken from areas 'contiguous

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43 Ministry of Defence (NAVY) 1995, *War With Japan Volume 1: Background to the War*, HMSO, London: 26.

44 'North must be ready for scorched earth', *Courier Mail*, 21 February 1942: 5.

45 Director of Military Operations and Intelligence to Department of Defence, 16 November 1940, NAA, MP 729/6, 25/401/238.

46 Department of Defence to Department of Air, 11 June 1941, NAA, MP 729/6, 25/401/238.

47 Hanlon to Premier Forgan Smith, 4 September 1941, QSA, A/6478, letter 7820 of 1941.

48 Commissioner of Police to all police, 26 January 1942, QSA, A/73478, 279M4.

49 McIntyre 1992: 15-17.



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to possible targets', and noted 'special arrangements will be necessary for maintenance of security'.<sup>50</sup> National Security Emergency Control Regulations were proclaimed for North Queensland. Regulation 32 covered 'the evacuation of civilians, animals and things', while Regulations 54 and 55 gave the military 'power to take possession of land' and authority to 'take over land and buildings for service use'.<sup>51</sup>

The War Cabinet ordered compulsory evacuations of women and children from Darwin in December 1941, although nurses and missionaries 'who may wish to remain' were exempt.<sup>52</sup> Voluntary evacuations began in North Queensland during early 1942, soon after Japanese forces attacked New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.<sup>53</sup> Rabaul fell at the end of January, and Japanese aircraft using the town's airfield began operations against Allied forces in the Southwest Pacific.

However, a meeting of State Premiers and the federal government in February 1942 decided that 'undue emphasis should not be placed upon evacuation measures as this would be detrimental to the morale and to the maintenance of essential production'.<sup>54</sup> The arrival of advance units of American forces in February 1942, two months after the Japanese raid on Pearl Harbor, left Australians in no doubt about the proximity of the enemy.<sup>55</sup>

Parties of 'coloured' evacuees and missionaries from New Guinea, the Torres Strait and other islands in the Southwest Pacific arrived by aircraft, launch and steamer at Cairns and Townsville. Regina Ganter has noted how 'colour-coded evacuations' began across North Australia, with white women and children moved before Indigenous and Asian people.<sup>56</sup> Cooktown was one of the first towns evacuated in North Queensland. There was, as previously noted, no road connection between Cooktown and the remainder of North Queensland at the time, so speedy evacuation was difficult. The civilian population began to panic:

All available accommodation outward has been booked up for some time ahead. The weekly launch carried as many as possible on Friday last. It would appear that the exodus is restricted to the amount of accommodation available on outward trains from Cairns. Most of the people leaving the town have departed hurriedly leaving furniture and most of their other household effects.<sup>57</sup>

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50 War Cabinet Minute, 4 February 1942, NAA, A 1196, 15/501/239.

51 Army HQ to Civilian Evacuation Service, 6 December 1942, NAA, SP1008/1, 469/3/41.

52 Civilian Evacuation Service to Premier's Department, December 1941, QSA, A/6472, letter 10454 of 1941; Alcorta 1991: 19; Somerville 2011: 3.

53 'Voluntary evacuation for whole coastal area', *Courier Mail*, 30 January 1942; 'Population transfer: move from North Queensland', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 February 1942: 7; Moles 2005: 12-17.

54 War Cabinet Minute, 4 February 1942, NAA, CP80/1, Bundle 1/S97.

55 Potts and Potts 1985: 26.

56 Ganter 2006: 216.

57 'Cooktown notes', *Townsville Bulletin*, 4 February 1942: 2.

Hundreds of women, children and elderly residents left coastal centres, catching trains south from Cairns to Brisbane and inland to the Atherton Tableland. Evacuation from Cooktown continued, as 'many of the workers and their families' left the town: 'Last week the launch was again filled and plane services were heavily taxed. The few women and children remaining are expected to be going shortly'.<sup>58</sup>

When Darwin was first bombed on 19 February 1942, some newspapers speculated that this might be the first phase of a Japanese invasion:

The Darwin bombings may or may not have been the precursors to an attempted landing in force in the Northern Territory, but there are many strategic reasons why a sharp attack on some part of the Queensland coast, followed by an effort to secure a permanent base, may be expected. A bombing and supply base in a North Queensland port would link up with the New Guinea enemy bases.<sup>59</sup>

'The battle for North Queensland', exclaimed the *Cairns Post*, 'may open at any moment'. On 23 February, the military took 'general control' of the northern part of the Northern Territory.<sup>60</sup>

Newspapers stopped publishing news from Cooktown in early March 1942, which meant that important events in the district were largely unnoticed by other Australians. According to the final 'Cooktown Notes' in the *Cairns Post*, 'The proximity of the Japanese is the uppermost thought in each mind'. Potential 'Japanese sympathisers' were 'removed':

Quite a few people have been rounded up during the last few weeks, the cause of their internment being known to the authorities. The weekly launch carried away a big complement of passengers. Possibly only about 15 females remain, with a sprinkling of children.<sup>61</sup>

It is unclear who these 'potential collaborators' were, although there were a number of 'alien' families in the district, and this may refer to some of them. There was little or no public debate about the legality or appropriateness of these wartime imprisonments. Internees were taken to Enoggera in Brisbane, and later further south to Tatura in Victoria.

Plans for a 'Scorched Earth Policy' in Northern Australia were openly and widely discussed.<sup>62</sup> News about the proximity of Japanese operational bases in New Guinea prompted concern. 'The Japanese will try to get aerodromes and footholds on the coastal area, from which they could bomb the centres of population. Australia must avoid that at all hazards and keep the Japanese

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58 'Cooktown notes', *Townsville Bulletin*, 14 February 1942: 2.

59 *Cairns Post*, 23 February 1942: 5.

60 Powell 2007: 99.

61 'Cooktown notes', *Cairns Post*, 4 March 1942: 3.

62 'Scorched earth plan for Army', *Courier Mail*, 3 February 1942: 1; 'North must be ready for scorched earth', *Courier Mail*, 21 February 1942: 5.

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aeroplanes far from the cities and towns' said the *Courier Mail*.<sup>63</sup> Six days later, on 16 March 1942, news of the first air raid on Thursday Island emerged.<sup>64</sup> German propaganda broadcasts claimed New Guinea would be taken in 'days or hours': 'After the occupation of New Guinea, enemy bases in North Australia, Cooktown, Townsville or Thursday Island will be entirely at Japan's mercy'.<sup>65</sup> HV Evatt, the Australian Minister for External Affairs cabled the Australian High Commissioner in London on 26 March stating 'I believe very short period ahead of us will determine whether our country will be overrun', adding a 'full scale invasion' was 'likely'.<sup>66</sup>

In April, one month before the Cape Bedford Mission evacuation, senior army officers prepared for the worst, including the 'total evacuation of Brisbane' if necessary: 'evacuation plans should be made for the area of the whole coast of Queensland, all of which must be considered as open to enemy operations'.<sup>67</sup>

### **The fear that Aboriginal people would assist a Japanese invasion**

Some Australians thought Aboriginal people might collaborate with the Japanese army.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, Lutheran missions had been under suspicion in the First World War:

The missions under review have unquestionably been active and dangerous enemy outposts. Whatever good they may have done or whatever the value of their religious efforts, there can be no question of the extremely valuable services they have rendered to Germany both politically and commercially.<sup>69</sup>

By 1942, some military intelligence officers obviously connected Japanese knowledge of Australian coastal waters with previous interactions between Aboriginal people and Japanese fishing vessel crews to conclude that major potential national security threats existed in Australia's tropical north. This subject, and the responses of European Australians, is discussed by Noel Pearson, by Robert Hall (in his seminal work on Aboriginal people during the Second World War) and by Kay Saunders.<sup>70</sup> Hall states the Services 'particularly the Army which was responsible for internal security, suspected them of favouring a Japanese victory'.<sup>71</sup>

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63 'Aerodromes on coast must be held', *Courier Mail*, 10 March 1942: 3.

64 No Japanese attacks took place at Thursday Island, but eight raids were made on neighbouring Horn Island; see Dennis et al 2008: 290.

65 'Japanese bombs on Thursday Island', *Townsville Bulletin*, 16 March 1942: 3.

66 Hudson and Stokes 1982: 683.

67 Army HQ to Army GHQ, 2 April 1942, NAA, MP 508/1, 82/713/48.

68 Stanley 2008: 145.

69 Pro-German Missions Report, 1919, NAA, A367, C612: 2, cited in Pearson 1998: 211.

70 Saunders 1995; Hall 1997; Pearson 1998: 204–210.

71 Hall 1997: 113.

As several historians have noted, A Naylor, the former Superintendent of Yarrabah Mission near Cairns, wrote to the military forces at Townsville in late January 1942 drawing attention to 'a possible menace to the people resident in North Queensland':

[I]n particular, in reference to the Aboriginal population spread out along the Eastern Seaboard from Cape York southwards. There are several Aboriginal reserves including the Yarrabah Mission Station near Cairns, and if not under Military control it is possible for these aboriginals to convey information by signalling in native fashion by fire, smoke and other means, to the invader.<sup>72</sup>

The letter, duly forwarded to the army's Northern Command at Townsville, was annotated 'Former Yarrabah superintendent Campbell reports that the matter of smoke signalling is not possible on a workable scale'.<sup>73</sup> However:

The Cape Bedford mission is conducted by the Lutheran Church and the superintendent is believed to be a German. This may a source of dissemination of information to the enemy. If this is so, it would appear to be highly desirable to exercise some supervision on this place, if this is not already being done.<sup>74</sup>

Military intelligence was not accurate. By the beginning of the Second World War, Schwarz, a naturalised Australian, had completely severed all ties with his German family.<sup>75</sup>

Japanese knowledge of Australia was probably reasonably detailed as a result of pre-war activities. In 1937, four articles on the pearling industry by popular author Ion Idriess, titled 'Problems of the North', appeared in Brisbane's *Courier Mail*.<sup>76</sup> The final item contained a warning to Australians:

Australian pearling vessels manned by Japanese and other foreign crews can land lawfully on our coasts whenever they are in need of wood or water. That these are found wherever there is a camp of aborigines is easily understood.<sup>77</sup>

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72 Former superintendent Naylor to Commandant of Military Forces at Townsville, 28 January 1942, AWM 60, 66/1/88.

73 The annotations on Naylor's letter were made by the 'Brigadier Commanding the 11th Infantry Brigade' at Townsville.

74 Naylor to Commandant of Military Forces at Townsville, 28 January 1942, AWM 60, 66/1/88.

75 See 'Schwarz, George Heinrich', *German Missionaries in Queensland* website, <<http://missionaries.griffith.edu.au/biography/schwarz-georg-heinrich>>

76 Idriess 1937a, b, c, d, 'Pearl shelling industry may be lost', *Courier Mail*, 7 January 1937; 'Quiet, workmanlike, and efficient', *Courier Mail*, 9 January 1937; 'Legitimate competition of Japanese for shell', *Courier Mail*, 11 January 1937; 'It is dangerous to leave our backyard unfenced', *Courier Mail*, 12 January 1937.

77 Idriess 1937d, 'It is dangerous to leave our backyard unfenced: tropic seas a great industrial asset', *Courier Mail*, 12 January 1937.

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Idriess said the Cape Melville tribe 'welcomed' the Japanese luggers and sent their women to the crews in return for trade goods.<sup>78</sup> Pam Oliver argues there was 'little active spying' by Japanese in Australia before the war, but some members of the public thought the espionage had already been completed.<sup>79</sup> JT Woods of Toowong, who 'several years ago was in the Government service stationed at Thursday Island', wrote to the *Courier Mail*:

They know every inch of the Queensland coast. Thursday Island could be destroyed in a couple of hours. They would not attempt a landing there; if ever they did attempt a landing it would be lower down the coast, for they have had all the coast down as far as Mackay mapped out for years ready for this present conflict.<sup>80</sup>

Other Queenslanders offered similar advice to the authorities. Mrs Jessie Miller contributed her thoughts: 'My father used to be the superintendent of the light on Cape Melville, and during the pearlshell season the Japanese used to frequent the bay'.

Her father, she stated, told her:

On one occasion, two Japanese, who said they were officers of the Japanese Navy, in charge of luggers, told my father that they knew of passages in the reef through which they could bring naval vessels. It is an excellent landing place and has a plentiful supply of water.<sup>81</sup>

The pre-war maps compiled by Japanese navigators in Australian coastal waters were probably better than Australian charts because of their many years of pearl-shell harvesting experience. The nautical maps would, undoubtedly, have been very useful to Japanese military forces. However, it is worth noting that the Japanese maps of Cape York Peninsula and the Gulf of Carpentaria currently held in the Queensland State Archives were compiled in 1942, not before the war.<sup>82</sup> Unfortunately there is no record of where these particular maps were found. One retired Japanese pearl diver told Regina Ganter that fishing boats were used by the Japanese navy to spy and make charts in other parts of the Southwest Pacific, so it is reasonable to assume that similar activities took place off the coasts of Australia.<sup>83</sup>

Pastor LA Borgas, the Superintendent of the Seventh Day Adventist Mission at Mona Mona, near Cairns, wrote to the Director of Native Affairs at Brisbane in February asking for advice on evacuation due to the 'imminent invasion of

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78 Idriess 1937c, 'Legitimate competition of Japanese for shell: difficulty of protecting native women', *Courier Mail*, 11 January 1937.

79 Oliver 2010: 246.

80 *Courier Mail*, 6 February 1942: 4.

81 *Courier Mail*, 12 February 1942: 4.

82 Japanese maps, 1942, QSA, SRS 4848/1/2.

83 Ganter 1992: 188-189.

Australia by Japan'.<sup>84</sup> O'Leary replied: 'the Authorities have given no direction for compulsory evacuation of aboriginals'. He said standard air raid precautions should be provided, but:

[A]part from that no detailed plan of evacuation exists. In an extreme emergency there is of course always the possibility of an evacuation of aboriginals to the western settlement outside of Duaringa.<sup>85</sup>

The Aboriginal settlement at Woorabinda, near Duaringa and inland from Rockhampton, was seen as the best place for any wartime Indigenous evacuees from the North. However, it seems, at this stage, that authorities did not share some of the public's distrust of Aboriginal people.

Not everyone agreed with the removal, and the way in which it was conducted. After the evacuation of the Cape Bedford Mission, former Cook Shire Chairman Andrew Standfield Sampson wrote from Cooktown to Mrs Bennett at Eumundi, the daughter of missionary Schwarz, apologising for the way 'officialdom' had dealt with her family. He said:

[T]he efforts of the police (and government) would have been better directed if they had rounded up the "myall" blacks from here to Cape York whose struggle for existence is so great that their tracking instincts are highly developed and who for years at places like Barrow Point and Starcke River have been fed and given tobacco by the Jap luggers. I am told by Miss Black that these aboriginals have openly stated that the Japs told them, that the country belonged to the blacks, had been stolen from them by the whites and that "bye and bye" they (Japs) would give it back to them (the blacks) so!<sup>86</sup>

He also wrote 'What a howl there would be if some of our folk were so treated by an enemy', and added a postscript informing her 'you may make what use you like of this letter' in writing to the authorities, which she promptly did.

In late March 1942, Australian papers began publishing stories about Lutheran missionaries assisting Japanese forces in New Guinea:

Lutheran guidance of the Japanese is the acme of treachery. Now that the Lutheran traitors have openly joined the Japanese, the story of their treachery and the amazing laissez faire of the old Administration can be told. After war began they did not conceal their views. Civilians reported that native children were taught the Nazi salute, gave evidence of the use of secret radios and pointed to the elaborate aerodrome landing field

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84 Superintendent Borgas to Department of Native Affairs, 11 February 1942, QSA, QS 505/1, 1E/14.

85 AS Sampson to Mrs Bennett, 18 May 1942, QSA, QS 505/1, 1E/14.

86 AS Sampson to Mrs Bennett, 18 May 1942, QSA, SRS 505/1/4685.



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network. Australia, in danger of a Japanese attack, must take a more realistic attitude towards its suspected aliens, whether naturalised or unnaturalised.<sup>87</sup>

A communiqué released by Prime Minister John Curtin said 'there was unconfirmed information indicating support of the enemy by German missionaries', but the newspaper reporters were already convinced, one stating 'there is definite proof that certain Lutheran missions were the centres of activity'.<sup>88</sup> Attitudes began changing quickly after this, and the evacuation of the Cape Bedford Mission soon became a military intelligence priority. Four months later, in July 1942, and long after the removal of the Cape Bedford Mission residents, some of the press was still circulating similar views:

[T]here was definite knowledge, not merely suspicion, that many German missionaries, both Lutheran and Roman Catholic, indulged in anti-British activities. There was also definite knowledge that the native followers of these German missionaries were taught anti-British sentiments.<sup>89</sup>

It seems that anxiety about 'potential sympathisers' took longer to subside in some rural Queensland districts than it did in other parts of Australia. Hall says suspicion of Lutheran missions in Australia began – well before December 1941 – when the Beagle Bay Mission in Western Australia was taken over by Army Intelligence and the German missionaries interned in 1940.<sup>90</sup>

Cape Bedford, although apparently ignored for two years, did not escape attention. As noted earlier, O'Leary wrote to the Home Secretary on 23 March 1942, three days after claims of alleged Lutheran 'treachery' first appeared in the papers, saying:

[I]t is considered by Military Authorities that the alleged assistance rendered the Japanese Army in New Guinea by German missionaries could be repeated at Cape Bedford Mission, and the Authorities are not prepared to take the risk of such.<sup>91</sup>

O'Leary's report predated official correspondence, which may suggest he had been holding informal meetings with military authorities. Brisbane was just a big country town, and casual encounters between top public servants and military officers were quite possible, and almost unavoidable. Army Headquarters in Brisbane wired Melbourne urgently recommending detention orders for the Cape Bedford missionaries, George Schwarz and Victor Behrendorff, three days

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87 'Traitors leading Japanese', *Courier Mail*, 20 March 1942: 1; 'Lutheran traitors: guides for Japanese soldiers', *West Australian*, 20 March 1942: 5.

88 'Japanese advancing in north New Guinea: treacherous aid from Lutheran missions', *Canberra Times*, 21 March 1942: 1; 'Nazi centres revealed: Fifth Column in New Guinea', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 March 1942: 10.

89 'Nazis' hand in New Guinea', *Rockhampton Morning Bulletin*, 31 July 1942: 6.

90 Hall 1997: 114.

91 O'Leary to Home Secretary, 23 March 1942, QSA, SRS 505/1/4685, letter 3964 of 1942.



after O'Leary's report, on 26 March 1942.<sup>92</sup> Four days afterwards, on 30 March 1942, the Director of Military Security at Brisbane wrote to the Director-General of Military Security at Canberra, noting 'German missionaries were assisting the Japanese in New Guinea':

Cape Bedford with ten German missionaries and 300 Blacks is ideally suited for use by the Japanese and if they have persons in that area who are prepared to assist them, the danger becomes greater.<sup>93</sup>

He recommended the mission be closed and the removal of all inmates to Barambah (now known as Cherbourg) Aboriginal Settlement in southern Queensland, stating senior police and the Chief Protector of Aborigines (JW Bleakley) had 'fully agreed' with the action.

The Director-General of Security wrote to the Minister for the Army (Frank Forde) regarding the Cape Bedford Mission:

[T]here is a good reason to fear that there may be some fifth-column activity there as a result of the presence of about 10 missionaries who are probably all of enemy extraction. It is desired to know whether or not the position at Cape Bedford is regarded from the point of view of Army as a dangerous one and if so and I am informed I will take steps at once to ensure that the whole of the 300 Aborigines are removed to Barambah.<sup>94</sup>

'Action', he said, 'should be taken at once'. The file was annotated:

The information is sparing and the source of report not disclosed. The national status of the missionaries is not shown. The strategic and practical value of the locality as an enemy base is not supported by data. Notwithstanding this, on the data disclosed I consider there is sufficient to warrant precaution if no protecting force is stationed there, the real point is whether the missionaries and natives could and would assist the enemy as guides on the mainland. It seems reasonable to assume that they may do so.<sup>95</sup>

Again, military intelligence was severely lacking. The origins of the claim there were ten missionaries, 'who are probably all of enemy extraction', at Cape Bedford, is unknown. One memo between two army officers, dated 7 April, stated a German missionary at Cape Bedford was 'suspected to have been in direct contact with Japanese'. Fear of Aboriginal people assisting Japanese invaders was apparent: 'This station is in a most inaccessible spot and strong suspicions that Japs have already been ashore'.<sup>96</sup>

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92 Army HQ to Army GHQ, 26 March 1942, NAA, MP 742/1, 1/6/204.

93 Director of Military Security to Director-General of Military Security, 30 March 1942, NAA, MP 742/1, 1/6/204.

94 Director of Military Security to Director-General of Military Security, 30 March 1942, NAA, MP 742/1, 1/6/204.

95 Director-General of Military Security to Minister for Army, 31 March 1942, NAA, MP 742/1, 1/6/204.

96 Captain Graham to Major Wilkinson, 7 April 1942, NAA, MP 742/1, 1/6/204.

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The officer in charge of the Cooktown police station was 'advised in strictest confidence' that the army and the government were carefully considering what to do with the mission.<sup>97</sup>

Close states the army did not conduct any form of judicial inquiry into these allegations of 'treasonous activity'.<sup>98</sup> Under National Security regulations, hearings were not necessary. Detention orders for missionaries Schwarz and Behrendorff were signed by Forde (the Minister for Army) on 17 April. Schwarz wrote to the Department of Native Affairs on 27 April advising 'a man of the local Air Force arrived here and informed me that he had orders from his commanding officer to take immediate delivery of my car'.<sup>99</sup> On 29 April the army wrote to Forde urging the 'disbanding' of the mission based on the report from the Director-General of Security. '[T]here is danger of tremendous harm being done if the missionaries should decide to give assistance to the enemy. This danger is far too great to permit of our taking any risks'.<sup>100</sup> But was this, as Roy McIvor says, the only reason for the evacuation of the Cape Bedford Mission?

## The mission aerodrome

Cooktown's first civilian airfield, established in 1937, was located on salt pans west of the town at a place known as 'The Four Mile'. Until that time, aircraft had been landing on the town's racecourse.<sup>101</sup> The new 'aerodrome' was surrounded by earth banks designed to prevent inundation during high tides, but the field was always damp and planes often became bogged. Nearby hills also made aircraft operations difficult and dangerous.

After war began, additional buildings were erected to accommodate advance units of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) and military aircraft began operating from the airfield in late 1940. In 1941, an officer reported twice on the existing facilities at Cooktown, noting on each occasion the absence of a water supply.<sup>102</sup> Improvements, as previously noted, were carried out, and the airfield (now known as 'Advanced Operational Base Cooktown') was handed over to the RAAF in early 1942. However, the problems of drainage and the shortness of the runways meant the search for an alternative site continued in earnest.

At the same time that the decision was made to 'disband' the Cape Bedford Mission, a report appeared stating land at 'The Eight Mile' on the Endeavour River, owned by missionary Schwarz, would be the most suitable site for a new military airfield.<sup>103</sup> Larger events also affected developments at Cooktown:

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97 Department of Native Affairs to Protector of Aborigines at Cooktown, 16 April 1942, QSA, SRS 505/1/4685.

98 Close 2009: 53.

99 Schwarz to Department of Native Affairs, 27 April 1942, QSA, SRS 505/1/4685.

100 Department of Army to Minister for Army, 29 April 1942, NAA, MP 742/1, 1/6/204.

101 Ryle 2000: 314.

102 Royal Australian Air Force, NAA, B 595/120, 65/97/16, Pt 3; Sinclair 2005: 12.

103 Main Roads Commission 1949: 25; Sinclair 2005: 25.

during the first week of May, Allied forces won the Battle of the Coral Sea, now recognised as the first naval battle in which opposing vessels never sighted each other. Japanese convoys heading for Port Moresby were recalled and invasion was stalled. Apart from submarines, Japanese naval ships never came so far south again. Although this was an inconclusive battle, it was significant because aircraft and aircraft carriers had replaced battleships for the first time in history. Airfields were now critical sites, and military priorities took precedence.

Fear of Aboriginal 'fifth-column' activities remained. On 6 May, RAAF pilots reported 'smoke signals given from the Cape Bedford mission on arrival and departure of planes' at Cooktown.<sup>104</sup> Senior army officers in Brisbane reported 'Execution of warrants held over pending decision to remove all natives to Barambah to prevent them going bush and making contacts for Japanese' and 'The removal of the aborigines from the Mission is a matter for the Queensland Government'. Brisbane's approval was advised on 10 May: 'Queensland state authorities fully prepared to arrange removal of the aborigines from Cape Bedford'.<sup>105</sup> Although the army had first recommended the mission's evacuation, it was clearly understood that the removal process was a State matter. Military authorities recognised that the State would remove the Aboriginal people while the Commonwealth would provide the funding for the evacuation and proceed with the internment of the missionaries.<sup>106</sup>

Perhaps there was awareness that the removal of the missionaries might have created confusion amongst the Aboriginal people on the Cape Bedford Mission. It is also possible that the authorities were aware of the urgent need to acquire land for the new RAAF airfield, namely the land on the Endeavour River currently owned by missionary Schwarz. Regardless of the real reasons, the story that emerged was that the Cape Bedford people had been removed because of the fear that their 'contamination' by German missionaries might make them more amenable to assisting a Japanese invasion. It is unclear when the Lutheran Mission Board in Adelaide was advised of the evacuation.

On 10 May, the same day that O'Leary advised the evacuation had been approved, a Main Roads Commission memo was sent to the Allied Works Council, the Commonwealth's peak body for defence infrastructure. Noting the current work on the existing airfield, the memo stated:

The position is that Cooktown's field is out of favour of the operational men. The general scheme includes an airfield at or near Laura. However, a suitable site for a strip was located just across the Endeavour River on the McIvor River Road.<sup>107</sup>

104 Army HQ to Army GHQ, 6 May 1942, NAA, MP 742/1, 1/6/204.

105 Army HQ to Army GHQ, 9 May 1942, NAA, MP 742/1, 1/6/204.

106 Army HQ to Army GHQ, 10 May 1942, NAA, MP 742/1, 1/6/204.

107 Main Roads Commission to Allied Works Council, 10 May 1942, QSA, 18925 Defence Roadworks Files, 22A-1-85.

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The memo's author recommended approval for the proposed mission airstrip. Two weeks later a decision had clearly been made: an urgent memo from 'M.R.C. Base Section No 2 to the Officer in Charge of U.S. Works' stated: 'Rush Priority: Cooktown Endeavour River Site, approximately 3 miles upstream from Cooktown Aerodrome; clear and level 7,000 runway'.<sup>108</sup> Work on a military strip at Mareeba, south of Cooktown, began on 12 May, suggesting that both construction tasks were approved at the same time.<sup>109</sup>

A progress report in July 1942 advised 95 per cent of earthworks had been completed and 30 per cent of the airstrip constructed.<sup>110</sup> Between 50 and 100 men were employed on this job for the next 18 months. A company of Australian soldiers was assigned to guard the 'Mission Aerodrome'.<sup>111</sup> The Main Roads Commission reported on the 'replacement strip' for the existing Cooktown 'drome' at the end of 1942, noting 'Emphasis is placed on the unsuitability of this aerodrome for RAAF purposes and an economic analysis justifies its abandonment'.<sup>112</sup> An attached report said Cooktown Aerodrome was only used for the refuelling of transient freight and combat aircraft, and the Endeavour River strip was 'primarily designed for U.S. Army bomber operation'.

Work on the old airfield had been abandoned to 'permit construction of the U.S. Army Aerodrome', and 'it is now proposed that fighter squadrons should be based on this aerodrome'. This was the first reference to American involvement in the project. The new airfield, now known as the 'Cooktown Mission Strip' was completed, at a cost of £98,000, in early 1943.<sup>113</sup> After the war, civilian aircraft continued to operate from Cooktown's 'old' airfield until a cyclone in 1949 damaged the tidal barriers and prevented further aircraft use.<sup>114</sup> The 'Cooktown Mission Strip' then became the town's official airport and remains so to this day.

## The evacuation

During the first week of May, Army Headquarters at Brisbane wrote to Army GHQ at Melbourne asking 'Could decision be given immediately re transfer of mission natives on arrest of principals'.<sup>115</sup> O'Leary ordered Cecil Foote, the Acting Superintendent at the Palm Island Aboriginal Settlement, near Townsville, to proceed to Cairns.<sup>116</sup> Foote, three military guards and police would carry out

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108 Main Roads Commission Base Works to Works Department, 25 May 1942, QSA, 18925 Defence Roadworks Files, 22A-1-85.

109 Waters 2003: 10.

110 Main Roads Commission to Allied Works Council, 11 July 1942, QSA, 18925 Defence Roadworks Files, 22A-1-85.

111 September 1942, AWM, AWM 54, 243/6/102.

112 Engineer Bettridge at Cooktown to District Engineer at Townsville, 30 September 1942, QSA, 18925 Defence Roadworks Files, 22A-1-85.

113 Main Roads Commission to Allied Works Council, 16 April 1943, QSA, 18925 Defence Roadworks Files, 22A-1-85.

114 Ryle 2000: 372.

115 Army HQ to Army GHQ, 6 May 1942, NAA, MP 742/1, 1/6/204.

116 Department of Native Affairs to Superintendent Foote, 10 May 1942, QSA, SRS 505/1/4685.

the evacuation at Cape Bedford; other soldiers would help 'guard' the evacuees at Cairns.<sup>117</sup> This detail – about the forces that carried out the evacuation – is the second reason for this research. Differing accounts have emerged, including widely-believed claims that armed soldiers conducted the removal.

Former missionary Howard J Pohlner says the evacuation was carried out by 'half a dozen trucks, with local drivers, accompanied by armed American soldiers'.<sup>118</sup> Pohlner's interpretation of events, and of those involved, was apparently based on the recollections of Schwarz, 'a Cooktown identity' named Charlie Sanders, and one Aboriginal informant, George Bowen. According to historian Robert Hall, 'the Army' and a 'convoy of trucks' removed everybody from Cape Bedford on 17 May.<sup>119</sup> He gave no details of the forces involved, but resident Victor Cobus recalled 'armed American soldiers' loading the mission people on to trucks, 'without even the chance to get our things'.<sup>120</sup> Linguist John Haviland and resident Roger Hart said 'soldiers' and 'military police' were involved.<sup>121</sup> Noel Pearson quotes one informant who stated 'there were about nine Army trucks that day', and although soldiers were mentioned, 'the Authorities' sent 'nineteen policeman and police Main Boss' to stop any attempt to 'run away'.<sup>122</sup>

Ros Kidd states the relocation, which she described as 'appallingly bungled', was conducted by military and police.<sup>123</sup> Cairns writer Vera Bradley quotes retired policeman Tom Griinke, who said about 12 police and three Military Intelligence officers removed the mission.<sup>124</sup> No weapons are mentioned. Local historian Don Sinclair includes extracts from both Pohlner's and Bradley's books.<sup>125</sup> Most recently, Roy McIvor described the men who moved them as 'soldiers or policemen'.<sup>126</sup> Records reveal the truth.

Plans for the eventual destination and transport remained fluid until the last minute. On 11 May, the power to requisition a boat for the voyage from Cooktown to Cairns was granted to local naval authorities under National Security general regulations. At first, launches normally used to carry tourists were to be provided by Hayles, a Townsville ferry and launch hire company. However Foote sent a telegram from Cairns to Brisbane on 12 May: 'Hayles only allowed carry fifty-five each trip hence reason insistence remove full party one time'.<sup>127</sup> On the same day he reported: '12 police were going to Cooktown tomorrow and will assist there'. His next statement was revealing:

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117 Foote reported a police sergeant, 11 constables and three military intelligence officers went with him. CH Sanders wrote from Cooktown, saying 'Police headed by the Sergeant of Police at Cooktown and Cairns arrived in Lorries, Cars & Armed Guard', Sanders to Department of Native Affairs, 25 May 1942, QSA, SRS 505/1/4685.

118 Pohlner 1986: 112.

119 Hall 1997: 116.

120 Cobus and Cobus 1994: 11.

121 Haviland and Hart 1998: 133.

122 Pearson 1998: 212–213.

123 Kidd 1997: 163.

124 Bradley 2003: 113–114.

125 Sinclair 2005: 17–19.

126 McIvor 2010: 74.

127 Foote to Department of Native Affairs, 12 May 1942, QSA, SRS 505/1/4685.

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I understand they have certain instructions regarding certain people there and that is the main reason for their visit and that they will leave the boat again at Cairns.<sup>128</sup>

This suggests that it was the missionaries who were the military's main concern, not the Aboriginal people, which focuses attention on the land owned by Schwarz. Once he was interned, compulsory acquisition of the proposed airfield site would be a mere formality. Behrendorff, who resigned from the mission six weeks earlier to enlist in the Australian armed forces, was arrested on the same day at Bundaberg, in south-east Queensland, and interned.<sup>129</sup> As previously noted, Schwarz's car was confiscated in late April, suggesting he was probably aware of what was about to happen.<sup>130</sup> The 'eight' other alleged missionaries, listed in military intelligence reports, disappeared from records. They never existed.

As noted, one police officer's recollection of events has been published. According to Constable Tom Griinke from Innisfail, 'Sub Inspector Roache from Cairns was in charge of a party of ten, called in from Cairns and Innisfail police stations, to assist Sergeant Teichman and Constable Jack Peters (both stationed at Cooktown) with the evacuation'.<sup>131</sup> Griinke said they travelled to Cooktown on Hayles' launch, and on the morning of 17 May 'we were driven to the Mission in a convoy of army trucks and helped the natives pack their few belongings'. Firearms, which were not routinely carried by police, were never mentioned. Foote reported he organised one truck from the aerodrome, five from the Department of Main Roads and three local trucks.<sup>132</sup> Only one appeared to be a military vehicle, and there is no record of any American military involvement in the removal exercise. Presumably each of these hired trucks came with a driver. In April 1944, an invoice for £46/11/8 'due for hire of trucks used in the transport of aboriginals from mission aerodrome to Cooktown for transfer south' was sent to the army by the Queensland Main Roads Commission.<sup>133</sup> According to Foote:

The whole party and Sergeant Teichman of Cooktown set out for the Mission, arriving at the part where Mr. Schwarz lived about 9am. We then went to the 18 Mile where most of the natives lived in charge of Mr. Behrendorff. On arrival we found all houses closed up and no natives there. Runners were sent out and they were located along the river and picked up.<sup>134</sup>

The residents had already left for their own safety. According to Victor Cobus, Schwarz moved the residents from the mission because of the threat of invasion.<sup>135</sup> Roy McIvor tells how families, including the Pearsons, moved from

128 Foote to Department of Native Affairs, 12 May 1942, QSA, SRS 505/1/4685.

129 Commonwealth Investigation Service, NAA, A 1533, 1957/3354.

130 Schwarz to Department of Native Affairs, 27 April 1942, QSA, SRS 505/1/4685.

131 Bradley 2003: 113–114.

132 Foote to Department of Native Affairs, 29 May 1942, QSA, SRS 505/1/4685.

133 Main Roads Commission to Department of the Army, April 1944, NAA, MP 742/1, 1/6/204.

134 Foote to Department of Native Affairs, 29 May 1942, QSA, SRS 505/1/4685.

135 Cobus and Cobus 1994: 11.



the mission to humpies by the river.<sup>136</sup> Despite clear instructions for Foote to ensure that sufficient supplies were provided, and all 'personal effects' gathered, one eye witness claimed 'they were not given time to collect their belongings', particularly carpentry and building tools.<sup>137</sup> No details about the evacuation or ultimate destination were given to the residents, who did not know whether their removal was to be long-term or permanent.

When applications for compensation were made in 1943, the army claimed 'the only items left in the huts after the evacuation were just the few necessities and curios that could be expected to be found in an Aboriginal's hut'.<sup>138</sup> When the army finally sent a compensatory payment to Lutheran authorities in 1945, the Department of Native Affairs wrote back, stating:

At the time of the evacuation of the Cape Bedford tribe from this area, which was carried out at very short notice and without warning, much of the personal effects of the natives was abandoned and lost.<sup>139</sup>

Several months later, Foote was called on to explain why the Cape Bedford people were not properly fed during the evacuation. He offered an explanation:

These people were brought to Cooktown during the afternoon and night of 17 May. The boat on which they were to leave arrived at Cooktown at about 7-30am on 18 May and left about 9am the same day remaining there only sufficiently long enough to load the people, implements, material, etc. I had brought from the Mission.<sup>140</sup>

'I naturally concluded', he said, that the people would be fed on the journey to Cairns, but as the boat was about to leave the Captain told him he 'did not intend to feed the people'. Foote said he threw two shillings to a constable on the wharf and asked him to send a telegram to Cairns asking for a meal to be ready. However, the boat arrived at Cairns before the telegram did, and the evacuees were immediately loaded on a train at the Cairns wharf. The evacuees were possibly carried south in goods or cattle wagons, but this was not uncommon in wartime Queensland. Many soldiers travelled north in the same fashion. According to one informant, 'soldiers and government agents used to walk among them on the train occasionally speaking to them in German, evidently hoping to confirm their suspicions'.<sup>141</sup> The evacuees discovered shops and refreshment rooms were mostly closed every time the train stopped.<sup>142</sup> Apart from three meals en route, little food was provided for two days, and they slept on the train.

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136 McIvor 2010: 72.

137 AS Sampson to Mrs Bennett, 18 May 1942, QSA, A/58886, letter 4050 of 1942; Department of Native Affairs to Defence Hirings, 21 November 1945, QSA, SRS 505/1/4685.

138 Army Hirings to Department of Native Affairs, 18 September 1943, QSA, SRS 505/1/6B/690.

139 Department of Native Affairs to Defence Hirings, 21 November 1945, QSA, SRS 505/1/6B/690.

140 Foote to Department of Native Affairs, 30 September 1942, QSA, SRS 505/1/4685.

141 Cited in Haviland 1985: 175.

142 Pohlner 1986: 113.



## The aftermath of the evacuation

The people from Cape Bedford had lived in the warm northern tropics all their lives and nothing could have prepared them for the cold, flat country they arrived in on 20 May. Many of 254 evacuees died within six months of their arrival, and officially 33 of the Cape Bedford people passed away at Woorabinda, far from their own country.<sup>143</sup> This figure is questionable; one letter from the Woorabinda superintendent dated March 1943 records 48 deaths and 13 births since the evacuees' arrival in May 1942.<sup>144</sup> The high fatality rate forced Dr Raphael Cilento of the Health Department to send a senior officer to investigate. He found rough shelters, poor food supplies and contaminated water, combined with the superintendent's neglect and attitude of indifference towards Aboriginal people, to blame but government officials failed to act. As Ros Kidd notes, places throughout Queensland like Woorabinda were nothing more than 'impoverished communities of impoverished individuals'.<sup>145</sup>

Most of the able-bodied men were quickly sent to work, which Close argues was one of the main reasons for the evacuation.<sup>146</sup> One news story about Aboriginal people picking peanuts and cotton in Central Queensland supports this argument, but if manpower was in such desperate need, all Aboriginal people would have been either evacuated from the north or otherwise engaged in wartime work.<sup>147</sup> They were not, and there is insufficient evidence to support this argument as the primary reason for the mission's evacuation. Furthermore, Kidd notes that the cost of evacuations from Cape Bedford and Hammond Island during 1942 forced the Department of Native Affairs to slash subsidies to other missions, which suggests that the financial gains from the labour gained by removal was consumed by the exercise cost.<sup>148</sup> Only the Cape Bedford people were forcibly 'deported'.

Apart from the reasons for the evacuation, Close's estimation about the size of the labour force is incorrect. Her argument that the government's Manpower Directorate considered the 'influx of additional labour incredibly appealing' and gained 'approximately 250 labourers' as a result of the removal is not supported by records.<sup>149</sup> As she notes, there were only 36 single men on the mission, and 50 men began work soon after their arrival at Woorabinda. Furthermore, official correspondence from March 1942 listed 170 adults and 100 children at the mission, and obviously not all the adults were capable of full-time employment.<sup>150</sup> It is likely that 100 workers at most were gained for the war effort as a result of the removal.

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143 Kidd 1997: 163–164; Rigsby 1997 says 60 (25 per cent of the Cape Bedford people) died at Woorabinda, while Pearson 1998 states that more than 70 died, including 60 in the first year.

144 Superintendent Woorabinda to Department of Health and Home Affairs, 8 March 1943, QSA, SRS 4326/3/18.

145 Kidd 1997: 165.

146 Close 2009: 8.

147 'Aborigines do their bit in war effort', *Courier Mail*, 8 October 1942: 4.

148 Kidd 1997: 167.

149 Close 2009: 53–55, 65–66.

150 O'Leary to Department of Health and Home Affairs, QSA, SRS 505/1, Box 690.

John Haviland, who has written much on the mission's history, describes the period at Woorabinda as 'both traumatic and liberating' for the Cape Bedford people, who attended 'ordinary' schools, worked in 'paid employment' and met 'new people' for 'the first time in their lives'.<sup>151</sup> He also notes that other Aboriginal people from Cooktown were not evacuated and were 'left to fend for themselves'.<sup>152</sup> Over 200 Aboriginal people remained around Cooktown for the duration of the war.

According to Noel Pearson, Cape Bedford people retained a separate identity and successfully resisted the entrenched gambling and drinking culture at Woorabinda.<sup>153</sup> Meanwhile, the missionaries were interned with other 'aliens' at Gaythorne in Brisbane. Schwarz was eventually released on condition that he remained in southern Queensland, and he went to live with his daughter at Eumundi north of Brisbane.

No other Aboriginal mission in North Queensland was forcibly evacuated, and closure was only recommended in one other mission. In April, several weeks before the removal of the Cape Bedford people, the Presbyterian Church Offices at Brisbane wrote to the Office for Civilian Evacuation regarding the evacuation of missionaries. They said a Military Intelligence officer 'insistently advised' the Mornington Island Mission to 'evacuate all white personnel and half caste girls', so the girls were sent to Doomadgee, and the church asked for help with the 'very considerable cost'.<sup>154</sup> Army HQ at Brisbane reported to Army GHQ at Melbourne about the evacuation of missionaries from Mapoon, Weipa, Aurukun and Mornington Island, saying the Military Intelligence officer who 'gave very strong advice' at Mornington Island was Captain Hall, but there was 'no military pressure' at the other three missions (Mapoon, Weipa and Aurukun).<sup>155</sup>

The Bishop of Carpentaria, Stephen Davies, wrote to the Deputy Director of Native Affairs in June stating 'a Military Intelligence officer, Lieutenant Beaman, visited recently and discussed with him the evacuation of Aboriginals from Cape York Peninsula'. Davies said 'I found that Lieutenant Beaman was forming opinions on insufficient and in some cases inaccurate information'.<sup>156</sup> O'Leary replied, stating no decision had been made to date, and said: 'You can be assured that the Queensland Government will give the fullest consideration to any suggestions by the Military Authorities but is not likely to act hastily in the evacuation of Peninsula aboriginals'.<sup>157</sup>

Kay Saunders regards Beaman's intelligence report, sent in August 1942, as 'influential'.<sup>158</sup> This report appears to be the 'Secret Memo' from the First Australian Army, sent to the Queensland Public Service Commissioner, providing a priority

151 Haviland 1985: 180.

152 Haviland and Hart 1998: 133.

153 Pearson 2009: 26.

154 Presbyterian Church to Office for Civilian Evacuation, 27 April 1942, NAA, MP 508/1, 82/713/48.

155 Army HQ to Army GHQ, 14 June 1942, NAA, MP 508/1, 82/713/48; AWM, AWM 60, 91/1/4.

156 Bishop Davies to O'Leary, 10 June 1942, QSA, QS 505/1, 1E/18.

157 O'Leary to Bishop Davies, 19 June 1942, QSA, QS 505/1, 1E/18.

158 Saunders 1995: 132.

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list for the evacuation of Aboriginal missions and settlements. According to the list, Cowal Creek and Lockhart River would be the first to be evacuated, followed by Cooktown, then the remaining Gulf and Peninsula centres.<sup>159</sup> None of these places were evacuated, but a note on a file from O'Leary, stating the Cooktown people 'would probably be safer transferred to Woorabinda as was done with the Cape Bedford aboriginals', suggests one lesson had been learned from the Cape Bedford exercise: 'in any evacuation it is essential that transport be made available for the private effects of individuals'.<sup>160</sup>

It is worth stressing the Cape Bedford Mission evacuation was unique in wartime Queensland. Elizabeth Osborne says, and Mark Copland's research on Indigenous removals confirms, that only two other groups were moved in 1942: 90 Hammond Island residents from the Torres Strait were taken to the Darling Downs and over 200 'coloured residents' from Thursday Island were ordered to evacuate to Cherbourg, both in southern Queensland.<sup>161</sup> Correspondence about removals from Cape York Peninsula later in the war revealed that health, not fear of collaboration with the Japanese, was the main concern but few were removed.<sup>162</sup>

Requests for compensation began in late 1942, when solicitors for the Lutheran Mission Board wrote to the Main Roads Commission.<sup>163</sup> Five months later the District Engineer reported to Brisbane, saying the church was extended to provide a kitchen, 'the RAAF has occupied the Mission House and will ultimately acquire all buildings', and recommending £23/10/- be paid as compensation. The solicitors replied:

We have been in touch with the RAAF in regard to the occupation of the Mission property without making much progress. We are now in touch with the USA Forces who, we understand, are sharing the occupation with the RAAF and trust to make some progress.<sup>164</sup>

American forces took joint control of the airfield late in 1942, but in May 1943 the US Army Supply section wrote to the Department of Native Affairs, saying: 'when the U.S. Army occupied your property at Cooktown, it was in compliance with orders from the proper Australian Army Authorities and it was necessary for the defence of the country at the time'.<sup>165</sup> One month later, the Australian Army advised: 'no troops under command of this formation have been in occupation of the mission buildings since May 1942'.<sup>166</sup>

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159 HQ First Australian Army to Public Service Commissioner, 18 September 1942, QSA, QS 505/1, 1E/18.

160 O'Leary to Public Service Commissioner, 29 September 1942, QSA, QS 505/1, 1E/18.

161 Osborne 1997: 16, 32; Copland 2005: 118.

162 Copland 2005: 197-198.

163 Chambers, McNab & Co to Main Roads Commission, 24 September 1942, QSA, 18925 Defence Roadworks Files, 22A-1-85.

164 Chambers, McNab & Co to Main Roads Commission, 8 May 1943, QSA, 18925 Defence Roadworks Files, 22A-1-85.

165 Army Supply Section to Department of Native Affairs, 22 May 1943, QSA, SRS 505/1/6B/690.

166 HQ First Australian Army to Department of Native Affairs, 27 June 1943, QSA, SRS 505/1/6B/690.

It was eventually established that units from the RAAF, US 94th Coastal Battery, the Australian Army and the Allied Works Council had occupied former mission buildings during the construction of the airfield. The army stated they only occupied the mission site for two weeks 'immediately subsequent to the evacuation'.<sup>167</sup> The sum of £23/10/- was accepted from the Main Roads Commission in May 1943.<sup>168</sup> In 1948, compensation of £3000, and rent (at £12 per month) from June 1942, was paid to missionary Schwarz for the Endeavour River land.<sup>169</sup> A further £455 was paid to Schwarz in 1952.

Despite the lurid media stories of Lutheran treachery in New Guinea, military authorities soon realised there was no basis for the claims that missionaries had assisted the Japanese. In February 1945, publishers Angus & Robertson issued a press release advising that 'the first edition of George Johnston's "New Guinea Diary" contained allegations of disloyal conduct by Lutheran missionaries in Papua and New Guinea'. They now stated 'such allegations ... are without foundation'.<sup>170</sup>

In September 1947, Pastor Schwarz and a Lands Department official were flown over the old mission site, and together they chose a new location for the settlement. The third passenger in the plane was a young, recently-elected parliamentarian from the South Burnett area, Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, the chairman of the Hope Vale Mission Board.<sup>171</sup> He successfully submitted compensation requests to the War Damage Commission and in 1949 persuaded the Labor Government to allow the surviving evacuees at Woorabinda to return home. Pearson observes that some Aboriginal people 'identified him as being the Moses who delivered them from exile' but also notes how Bjelke-Petersen often denied Aboriginal human rights.<sup>172</sup> Bjelke-Petersen, Queensland's Premier from 1968 to 1987, earned an international reputation as an extreme right-wing conservative politician. Leading Queensland historian Raymond Evans specifically describes the treatment of Indigenous people under his regime: for example, the *Aborigines Act 1971* (Qld) was found to have breached 15 articles and sub-clauses of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.<sup>173</sup> Health, housing, imprisonment and employment statistics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people in Queensland often caused overseas visitors to express horror and claims of 'apartheid' style race relations.

Finally, after years of absence, the Cape Bedford survivors returned to their own country, and started rebuilding their lives in the new settlement of Hopevale. The trauma of wartime evacuation south was left behind but never forgotten.

167 Department of Native Affairs to Department of Health and Home Affairs, 7 December 1944, QSA, SRS 505/1/6B/690.

168 Chambers, McNab & Co to Main Roads Commission, 8 May 1943, QSA, 18925 Defence Roadworks Files, 22A-1-85.

169 'Cooktown Aerodrome', NAA, J 56/11, QL687 Pt 2; NAA, A 705, 171/93/743.

170 Angus & Robertson, 8 February 1945, QSA, SRS 505/1/6B/8/690.

171 Department of Native Affairs, 24 October 1947, QSA, SRS 505/1/4685; Rigsby 1997: 9-10; Townsend 1983: 209.

172 Pearson 1998: 186; 2009: 32.

173 Evans 2007: 233.

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The reasons for the forced removal, and the identities of those who carried it out, are important parts of Australia's and Queensland's history, and should not have remained uninvestigated for so long.

## Conclusion

The coastal steamer *Poonbar* took the Cape Bedford people from Cooktown on the first step of their journey to Central Queensland, but discovering the reasons for their evacuation, and the identity of those who carried out the order, has taken longer. Uniformed Queensland police supervised by a public servant and three military intelligence officers quickly herded over 200 Aboriginal people from their homes. Although the war between Australia and Japan was the main reason for 'the evacuation of Cape Bedford aboriginals', claims about 'the alleged assistance' given by German missionaries to Japanese forces in New Guinea were eventually proven to be untrue. Despite the argument that 'Authorities' were 'not prepared to take the risk' of Aboriginal collaboration with invaders, removing the Cape Bedford Mission allowed the construction of a strategically-vital military airfield.<sup>174</sup>

This was the only forced evacuation in Queensland during wartime, and one of only two mass evacuations of Indigenous people in the state during the Second World War. Anxiety about a Lutheran mission, established and staffed by German missionaries, in northern Australia, was used as an excuse to remove all Indigenous people from the Cape Bedford Mission. In central and southern Queensland, some of the men were used to replace European workers who had joined the armed forces, but this labour supply was not the main argument for the evacuation. The risk of Aboriginal collaboration was not credible. There were, as this research has shown, more reasons for the removal than the fear that Aboriginal 'fifth-columnists' might assist a Japanese invasion.

This article has examined three main points. Firstly, the general panic across Australia in 1942 over a threatened Japanese invasion, followed by rumours of German Lutheran missionaries assisting the enemy, claims subsequently proven to be false. Secondly, the unique situation of the people evacuated from the Cape Bedford Mission, rounded up by police during a deportation that was so rushed they were not able to take their personal belongings and essential tools. Thirdly, their traumatic journey south and exile for many years. Finally, as this paper has shown, a military airfield was quickly built on land previously occupied by the mission, suggesting this was the real justification for removal. Military demands for a strategic airstrip were paramount and the fact that construction began one week after the evacuation was approved supports this conclusion.

It seems that the evacuation of the Cape Bedford Mission, supposedly to remove potential enemy sympathisers from an operational area and to make a small supply of labour available for the war effort, was really about using the mission

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174 O'Leary to Home Secretary, 23 March 1942, QSA, SRS 505/1/4685, letter 3964 of 1942.

as a military airfield. This shameful episode deserves to be widely known because, as Andrew Stanfield Sampson accurately noted in 1942, imagine the controversy that would have erupted if the Cape Bedford evacuees were white Australians.

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# **‘We are Lutherans from Germany’: Music, language, social history and change in Hopevale**

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg

You know, to me, we have lost that pride in ourselves ... who we are. We’re Lutherans from Germany. We have to sing all English ... [correcting himself] no German songs. We have no more pride in ourselves.

Praise God in our Language! This very moment, throughout the world, every nation, country, thank God for the Saviour in their Language. Why not we?

I think it would be good if we could revive that, especially at times like this, when there’s joy in our hearts, to know that we have a Saviour. Why not thank him from our hearts...

I think we Aborigines of today need to look at ourselves, and try and find out who we are. We seem to copy white man everywhere. We’re just like copy cats. We want to act like them and get drunk and sit in the pub on high stools and cause ourselves suffering and pain, and that’s not the way to go...

[Sings ‘Hark the Herald Angels Sing’ in Guugu Yimithirr]<sup>1</sup>

The excerpt is a transcription of fieldwork footage filmed during the Carols by Candlelight festivities in December 2004 in the Lutheran Australian Aboriginal community of Hopevale, Northern Queensland. It documents the speech given by local Indigenous Pastor George Rosendale in which he reflected on the Lutheran heritage of the former Northern Queensland Hopevale Mission.<sup>2</sup> He urged local Indigenous people to seek support in their Lutheran religious heritage of three generations suggesting it might encourage them to reflect on the level of alcohol misuse in the community and alter their ways. He stated that the excessive drinking habits of many local Indigenous people is a negative way in which they seek to imitate white Anglo-Australian culture. As an alternative, Pastor Rosendale advocated that not only should Hopevalians seek support in

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1 Rosendale, George, 19 December 2004, speech Christmas Carols by Candlelight, Hopevale.

2 Hopevale is sometimes spelt as Hope Vale and known throughout history by different names depending on the location of the main township: Elim, Cape Bedford, Spring Hill and now Hopevale or Hope Vale. The location of the main township changed as cyclones and heavy rains often destroyed the main settlement, causing Hopevalians to move.

their Lutheran faith, but that they should also consider Indigenising it through re-introducing the practice of singing Christian songs in their local Indigenous language Guugu Yimithirr, as opposed to English. He also referred to the German heritage of the Lutheran faith and suggests that the loss of faith and the increasing loss of language competency in Guugu Yimithirr amongst the local population are causing a loss of pride. This is because, Pastor Rosendale believes, the singing of hymns in the local language is more meaningful and speaks to the heart as people are better able to understand how they are worshipping.

Pastor Rosendale's speech is an interesting one as it not only demonstrates how the local community have made Lutheranism their own, but also how Pastor Rosendale no longer views the Christian identity and the singing of Christian hymns as being imposed, non-Indigenous and 'foreign'. Whereas the faith introduced by German Lutheran missionaries has been accepted, the consumption of excessive amounts of alcohol is still viewed as being a non-Indigenous activity which conflicts with an Indigenous identity, especially a Christian Indigenous identity. The speech raises interesting questions as to how Hopevalian identity has been shaped through history, place and song and how musical and spiritual practices are constantly changing in response to the local circumstances and musical globalisation.

In this article I will firstly examine what was known of local non-Christian musical practices prior to missionisation to contextualise the reasons why Hopevalians have chosen to adopt the Lutheran hymn tradition so thoroughly in comparison to other Indigenous missions. My aim is to describe a local history, as opposed to looking at the processes of missionisation more generally across Australia. The latter has already successfully been done elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> Neither do I intend to offer a comparative outlook in this article other than to indicate that the Hopevalian context is quite different to that of other Indigenous communities both historically and socially. Magowan, Grau and McDonald have worked with other Indigenous communities documenting their Christian musical practices.<sup>4</sup> In Hopevale, missionary intervention succeeded in all but obliterating local, pre-colonial ceremonial, musical and spiritual practices.<sup>5</sup> The things that remained were the local language, oral mission history, hunting techniques, and a knowledge and love of Country. Hopevalian scholar and politician Noel Pearson pointed out in 1986 that whilst painting, song and dance do have their place in Hopevalian culture, they exist as 'curios', and will remain so until the local community affords them cultural and religious significance.<sup>6</sup>

This situation contrasts significantly with for example Magowan's social context on Galiwin'ku in Arnhem Land with the Yolngu, where pre-colonial traditions have absorbed and adapted Christianity to suit local spiritual understandings of the Christian Gospel. In Arnhem Land community members are still able

3 See for example Harris 1994; Swain and Rose 1988.

4 Magowan 2007, 2001, 1999; Grau 2001; McDonald 2001.

5 See for example Pearson 1986: 8, 24; Jack, Walter, Interviewer David Woodgate, 2000, *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project* [Oral History]; Hope Vale, 2000: interview 26 October.

6 Pearson 1986: 8.

to compose and perform using song and dance styles derived and developed from pre-colonial practices. This is not the case in Hopevale, although as I shall demonstrate, Hopevalians are currently shaping their own interpretations of what it means to be a Christian Indigenous person through song, using their uniquely local identity based on mission history, family and Country. Unlike in Arnhem Land and other parts of the Northern Territory and Kimberley Hopevalians do not compose their own hymns either in English or in Guugu Yimithirr, the local language because their knowledge of non-Christian and non-Western musical forms is scant to non-existent. The process of Indigenisation after a very conservative Lutheran approach to worship is slow, relatively new and therefore specific examples of Indigenisation are rare and few. It must also be added that this article is itself a historical document to a fashion. Due to lack of funding I have been unable to return to Hopevale for a long enough period to thoroughly explore how things have changed and thus this scholarly contribution should be contextualised in that it reflects for the most part what I observed between September 2004 and June 2005 combined with a brief visit in 2009 and might not incorporate the changes that have occurred since.<sup>7</sup>

After examining what was known of local non-Christian musical practices prior to missionisation, I will show how Aboriginal Lutherans in the community of Hopevale have historically constructed, performed and negotiated their Indigenous identities through Lutheran hymnody and how this is gradually changing due to global influences from the music industry, changes in linguistic practices and a slow move towards the Indigenisation of musical practices. Here again I aim to offer a local perspective, which has been informed by earlier discussions on the constructions of Indigenous identities in Australia more generally.<sup>8</sup> This contextualised discussion will include an analysis of the relationship between geographical location, or 'Country', Aboriginal spirituality and music. I will show how Hopevalian musicians have begun to quote hymnody in self-composed Country and Western song styles, using the English language. These new songs refer to the local spirituality, geographical areas, people (both alive and deceased) and a shared social history. I will argue here that this emerging musical trend can be viewed as one way in which Hopevalian spirituality and musical styles are 'Indigenising' whilst 'globalising and modernising' after many years of conservative, Lutheran musical and spiritual worship. This Indigenisation takes place, I argue, through the performance of Aboriginal concepts of Country and shared oral (contemporary) history in songs. I will suggest this approach to musical performance may be one way in which Hopevalians are reconciling their localised mission history with their modern identities as Aboriginal Christians.

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7 I spent one year facilitating the local Hopevale Community Choir during an applied ethnomusicological project for my PhD. This project was by a reciprocal arrangement whereby the community asked me to revitalise and facilitate the local choir and in return assisted me with my field research.

8 See for example Beckett 1988; Langton 1981.



## Non-Christian musical practices prior to missionisation

The Hopevale community is an old Lutheran mission settlement in Northern Queensland, Australia. In 1886 land was bought by Pastor Johannes Flierl for the purposes of creating a mission to Indigenous Australians of the Cooktown area and beyond. It was in response to the decimation and maltreatment of the local Indigenous population by settlers who arrived during the Palmer River Gold Rush and later exploited the pearling, fishing and cattle industries.<sup>9</sup> The mission was initially administered by the Lutheran church of Neuendettelsau, Germany. In Hopevale's oral history, the figure of Pastor Georg Heinrich Schwarz (nicknamed *Muni* by local Indigenous mission residents) looms large. Although not the founding missionary, Schwarz presided over the mission's development between 1887 and 1942. Later the Lutheran Church of Australia took over management of the settlement and today it is the local, Indigenous Community Council and Church Councils that manage the former mission. During the period between 1887 and 1942 missionary Schwarz, with the help of his more musical colleague Pastor Poland (based on the mission between 1888 and 1909), translated sections of the Bible and hymns into the dominant local language Guugu Yimithirr. Congregational and later choral singing in Guugu Yimithirr became popular pastimes in the community. Hymns were taught and sung during school times, evening social gatherings and worship. Lutheran hymnody and harmonised congregational singing thus became local musical traditions. The importance of this local musical practice in shaping identities was increased by the number of Stolen Generation residents on the Hopevale Mission. Members of this generation are children of Aboriginal descent, who were removed from their Indigenous families during the protectionist eras of Australia's history. To these Stolen children, the Lutheran musical tradition and those of the European settlers were the only ones with which they were familiar.

In 2005 very little was known by Hopevalians about the musical history of the settlement and area prior to missionisation. Only one older resident living on the mission in 2005 had a performative knowledge of older songs being sung on the mission that related to non-Christian themes.<sup>10</sup> Historical sources do hold some clues as to what types of music may have been performed in the past. These sources, however, were written by the first northern protector Walter Edmund Roth<sup>11</sup> and local missionary Wilhelm Poland. The sources are not comprehensive and do not reflect Indigenous interpretations of the music being performed in

9 Local language and family groups included no less than 50 in the area (Pohlner 1986: 14). By 1986 the remaining kinship groups included: Dhanil Warra; Ngurrumungu Warra; Dingaal Warra; Gulaal Warra; Daarba Warra; Binhhi Warra; Ngaagdha Warra; Dhiidharr Warra; Buurnga Warra; Gambaar Warra; Dhuubi Warra; Nugal Warra; Gaamay Warra; and Nguymbarr Nguymbarr (Pohlner 1986: 182). Other family groups also lived in the area and were descendants from people of different areas not traditionally settled in the local vicinity. Their settlement occurred due to the removal of children to the mission from other areas.

10 I am grateful to uncle Lyndsay Nipper (now deceased) for sharing his songs with me during my fieldwork. The songs have now been placed in the Indigenous Knowledge Centre in Hopevale.

11 Walter Edmund Roth (2 April 1861 – 5 April 1933) was appointed the first Northern Protector of Aborigines in 1898 and was based in Cooktown, Queensland, near Cape Bedford. From 1904 to 1906 he was Chief Protector and part of his duties was to record Aboriginal cultures.



any way. It is also impossible to assess how accurate Roth and Poland's records are, given the current lack of non-Western, pre-colonial musical practices in Hopevale.

Roth writing in 1909 about an initiation ceremony at Cape Bedford (where the Hopevale township was then located, on the beach 30 km west of the current township) records that the dances were about animals and natural phenomena. These phenomena included the dances and song cycles of the brolga (or native companion as the bird was known in Roth's time), owl, pheasant, body louse, black palm, frog, an unidentified fresh water fish, mosquito, crab, honey, kangaroo, a dog running after a lizard, fresh-water mussel, stone fish, alligator, eel, and flying fox, closing with the snake dance.<sup>12</sup> All these animals, insects and water creatures are part of the local flora and fauna at Cape Bedford and therefore likely to have been totemic animals to the Aboriginal people living at Cape Bedford during Roth's visit. It is unclear, however, how much Roth and the missionaries understood about these songs and their significance. Roth accorded little spiritual significance to the initiation ceremonies and their dances, songs and art, writing that:

Beyond being commanded what not to eat, the novice here receives no instructions whatever concerning his sexual or social relationships, no moral or ethical precepts are incalculated, nor is any form of education (in ways of hunting, weapon-making, etc.) imparted; indeed, from what I learnt and saw, I should judge that his education, such as it is, is greatly misguided and retarded by attendance at the ceremony ... after every form of enquiry, direct and indirect, I was able to satisfy myself that throughout all these series of performances, not one has any ethical or educational significance – there is not indeed the slightest intention of pointing a moral to adorn a tale.<sup>13</sup>

Missionary Poland arrives at the same conclusion, writing:

From start to finish, the ceremony seemed to lack deeper significance. If deeper meanings had at one time existed, they had obviously been lost completely to the present generation. All our attempts to get to the bottom of what was really going on were in vain, even among the baptized Christians. The latter would certainly not have kept it from us if they had known.<sup>14</sup>

Roth draws this conclusion despite his observation that there was an 'essential portion of the ceremony' which the novices had explained to them.<sup>15</sup> Similarly Poland writes that at the end of each presentation of dances during initiation ceremonies, the novices were given 'a whispered and most profuse explanation

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12 Roth 1909: 172.

13 Roth 1909: 167.

14 Poland 1988: 96.

15 Roth 1909: 171.

of the meaning of the play [dance]'.<sup>16</sup> Poland does not elaborate on what was whispered however, and Roth makes no further mention of the exact details of the information being passed on to the initiates. This might suggest they were not told and had not heard what was said and therefore had only a partial understanding of the knowledge being transferred.

The non-Christian songs which accompanied the dances also received little attention as no aesthetic or didactic merit could be perceived by Roth and the missionaries. With regards to the chorus of male singers, Roth writes 'the shouting is nearly all "au! au! au!", hardly any words being spoken, the whole performance being what we should almost call "dumb show"'.<sup>17</sup> Poland too, attributes little merit to the traditional singing, referring to it as 'monotonous' or 'irritating'. In mortuary ceremonies the melodies sung were said to have been rendered as a 'monotonous falsetto singing' by the men. This singing was accompanied by 'ear shattering wailing' from the women.<sup>18</sup>

During the missionary period disrespect for elders was also cultivated through regular preaching by Poland and Schwarz who sought the help of young children to increase conversion rates. Poland recalls some of the preaching he did, writing:

You [Indigenous, Cape Bedford] children, I wish that you, too, would tell them about it [the Gospel]; you who have discovered something better since living with us! Tell your parents and relatives that they cannot go on as they are. Your chance of being believed may be greater than ours. Can you bear to see them [parents and relatives] continuing along the path which will, in turn, lead each of them to eternal destruction?'<sup>19</sup>

With the decline of ceremonial customs and initiations, local Cape Bedford Aborigines came to church and adopted the Lutheran faith and with it, its hymnody. For younger children who had been raised on the mission or those who had not been initiated Christianity became a 'traditional' spirituality as it was the only religion they came to know well. Through preaching and hymnody missionaries sought to instil amongst their flock Christian moral values and spiritual beliefs. Hymnody and congregational singing played an important part in the formation of an Aboriginal Christian mission identity.

### **Consolidating a Lutheran, Hopevalian identity through song**

Congregational and hymn singing played an important role in the processes of evangelisation at Cape Bedford and the formation of a Christian identity. Choruses and hymns were ways in which the Christian gospel was musically communicated to the Aborigines. Since the Guugu Yimithirr people did not

16 Poland 1988: 96.

17 Roth 1909: 172.

18 Poland 1988: 21, 38, 86.

19 Poland 1988: 108-109.

read or write when missionaries arrived, hymnody was a more effective mode of communication as the message was in a format which could be heard, learnt and orally transmitted through song. Pohlner writing about Hope Valley (near Cape Bedford) records:

Singing was traditionally an important means of communication. When Pastor Bartholomaeus came to Hope Valley in 1939 there was an elderly aborigine Toby, camped in the stable. He had come to the Mission as an old man. When the young pastor asked how he had come to know Jesus he replied, 'Through listening to the boys singing hymns every night.'<sup>20</sup>

Hymnody also became more meaningful once missionaries Poland and Schwarz had grasped one of the local languages, Guugu Yimithirr and translated the hymns and Gospel. Historical records indicate that Hopevale residents enjoyed singing. Poland, comments that: 'Scarcely an evening goes by without the sound of open-air singing'.<sup>21</sup>

Hymnody was also used to counter local non-Christian beliefs and practices. Poland records several 'translations' of hymns into Guugu Yimithirr for the purposes of religious instruction, such as *Christus der ist mein Leben* (*Abide, O dearest Jesus*) and *Ringe recht, wenn Gottes Gnade*.<sup>22</sup> The second hymn is based on a German chorale and was 'translated' by Poland to instruct the young boys who were ready to become *ngumbal*, initiated men, against the perceived evils of *ngancha*, their initiation ceremony.<sup>23</sup> According to Poland, missionary attempts at devaluing the initiation ceremonies at Cape Bedford were rewarded. He describes how young boys laughed at a community elder when he came to the mission to collect the boys ready to be initiated and asserts that the: 'Guugu Yimithirr tribe probably never celebrated another *ngancha*, apart from a small group, the younger generation had settled down with us for good'.<sup>24</sup>

The role of hymnody at Cape Bedford was therefore to introduce the Gospel whilst devaluing traditional Aboriginal culture. Hymnody and congregational singing were also used to ridicule the elders who practised traditional initiation customs. The eventual loss of the initiation ceremonies had a negative impact on the ability of young men to identify with the culture of their ancestors and parents. The traditional initiation ceremonies had helped to impart genealogical, historical, geographical, biological as well as spiritual information. Their loss at Cape Bedford meant that the Aboriginal people were no longer able to form an understanding of their pre-Christian spirituality, social histories and identities through ceremony and song.

The Lutheran, specifically Hopevalian, identity was further consolidated when Hopevalians (then called the Cape Bedford people) were forcibly removed in

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20 Pohlner 1986: 110-111.

21 Poland 1988: 85.

22 Poland 1988: 85, 99.

23 See, for example, Swijghuisen Reigersberg 2011.

24 Poland 1988: 99.

1942 to the Indigenous reservation, Woorabinda, during the Second World War. Woorabinda is an Aboriginal reserve now managed by an Aboriginal council. It is situated 2000 kilometres south of Cape Bedford, and south-west of the larger Queensland town of Rockhampton on Australia's East Coast. The climate at Woorabinda is substantially colder than that of tropical Cape Bedford. The people of the Cape Bedford Mission were taken there without warning on 17 May 1942. They were not given the option to oppose the move. The Cape Bedford travellers were offered very little food during the journey and many people were extremely cold because they did not have suitable clothes for the harsher climate resulting in many deaths due to influenza. At Townsville, 50 older people were taken to live on Palm Island Aboriginal reserve off the coast. The elders were the main guardians of oral communal history and their removal at Townsville, combined with the influenza and dengue fever epidemics that followed, led to a significant loss in the community's historical knowledge.

Hopevalian people today conceive of this 'evacuation' as an exile in bondage away from their Promised Land, their home in Northern Queensland.<sup>25</sup> It led to the further decimation of the Guugu Yimithirr people and resulted in a loss of oral, musical and spiritual knowledge. Hopevalian elder Eric Deeral records that a quarter of the population was lost within two weeks.<sup>26</sup> Local history recounts the evacuation and the hardships experienced through various media<sup>27</sup> and as I shall demonstrate later, through oral history and song.

In response to this adversity those still remaining formed a close-knit community in Woorabinda. Woorabinda's white overseers were less restrictive in their admission and protective policies for Aborigines in comparison to Cape Bedford's missionary Schwarz. As a result the Cape Bedford people were able to experience regular interaction with other institutionalised Aborigines for the first time. They could now compare their life at Cape Bedford with that in Woorabinda. One of the differences was that Woorabinda was spiritually diverse. In the 1940s Woorabinda counted no less than three Christian denominations: a Roman Catholic Church, a Church of England congregation and the Aboriginal Inland Mission (AIM). There had been the suggestion that the Cape Bedford congregation should join the Church of England on account of Mrs Schwarz's Anglican background. The Cape Bedford Indigenous elders, however, opted to maintain their Lutheran practices, rather than amalgamate with other churches. Pohlner states that 'the Cape Bedford Aborigines were not for experimenting. They suffered enough loss.'<sup>28</sup>

Lutheran hymnody sung in Guugu Yimithirr, was instrumental in maintaining the community's denominational and Northern Aboriginal identity during its exile in Woorabinda. Pohlner records that '[g]lorious singing resounded through

25 Pearson 1986: 63.

26 Deeral undated: 6.

27 See, for example, mission newsletters written by George Bowen in Pohlner 1974: 6-7; a locally produced video documentary, Aboriginal Co-Ordinating Council Media Facility 2002; published history written by local people such as Deeral undated: 6-7.

28 Pohlner 1986: 114.

the Woorabinda settlement, not only on Sundays, but every morning and evening'<sup>29</sup> and visiting Lutheran Pastor Vic Wenke was of the opinion that '[i]t was most inspiring to hear the [Cape Bedford] natives sing. At times I was hardly able to hear the music of the organ'.<sup>30</sup> Singing also helped maintain Hopevalian morale and kept alive memories of their home in Northern Queensland:

June Pearson: Quite a lot of the old fellas they learnt to sing in the churches in Woorabinda, because they sang a lot to stay happy to come back home.<sup>31</sup>

This remembrance through Lutheran hymnody helped to sustain emotional and spiritual bonds with their geographical homes. This illustrates the fact that the performance of Christian hymnody, as translated directly from German hymnals using the German melodies, was able to give voice to spiritual bonds to a geographical area. The performances included sentiments of longing for, and a spiritual connection to, this same area.

It was also at Woorabinda that the Cape Bedford people received their first publication in Guugu Yimithirr: a book of worship which included 27 hymns, translated by Poland and Schwarz.<sup>32</sup> Mrs Schwarz additionally sent out a set of 12 Sankey song books and a tune book.<sup>33</sup> It is likely that the frequent singing of the hymns in their own language heightened the people's sense of unity socially, linguistically, spiritually and musically. The rendition of the Lutheran hymns in Guugu Yimithirr contributed to the construction of a regional, Aboriginal Lutheran identity, which was compared and contrasted with that of the other residents from Woorabinda.

### The different uses of language in Hopevalian hymnody

An important element in the Hopevale tradition of hymn singing which helped to define Cape Bedford identities during the evacuation was the use of the local language Guugu Yimithirr. At the time of my own research, the significance of Guugu Yimithirr was being contested. Perceptions about its appropriate use and meaningfulness are constantly evolving and differed between generations.

Pastor Rosendale, whose quote opened this article, not only advocated the use of Guugu Yimithirr in hymnody as opposed to English, but also suggested that the German pronunciation of certain words should be used:

George Rosendale: When we singing in Guugu Yimithirr *yurra* [You, plural, addressing his comment to Daisy Hamlot] shouldn't be saying 'Jesus' [pronounced in an English fashion].

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29 Pohlner 1986: 114.

30 Pohlner 1986: 123.

31 Pearson, June interview with Muriel E Swijghuisen Reigersberg, 29 November 2004, Hopevale.

32 Schwarz 1946.

33 Pohlner 1986: 121-123.

Daisy Hamlot: Yeah, yeah ... hmmm, Jesus [pronouncing it in a Germanic fashion].

GR: We, when we talk about, in Guugu Yimithirr, when we talk about Jesus [English pronunciation], we say it like the Germans, I think. Jesus [Germanic pronunciation]. Jesus ... Jesus, and I had a bit of an argument with what-his-name, because we wanted to spell it that way, Jesus [Germanic pronunciation], Y, I, S, U, S and eh, some of the oldies they didn't like it. But that's the way we ... and I always think that way. Like 'God' [English pronunciation], we don't pronounce it 'God' [English pronunciation] either. 'Gott' [Germanic pronunciation]. G, O, T.

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: Oh, so like the German, Gott.

GR: Well, in the Guugu Yimithirr, when the old people learnt, that's the way they learnt to use His name, 'Gott'.<sup>34</sup>

From the above interview transcript it is clear that not all people agree with Pastor Rosendale's recommendations about the use of Guugu Yimithirr in worship and the Germanic pronunciation of certain words, even if they are part of the community's historical worship practices. This is not only due to an antipathy towards the Lutheran church, but also to the linguistic diversity of the Hopevale community, changes in the prevalence of the use of Guugu Yimithirr, personal linguistic preferences, and changes in the levels of literacy in the community. At the time of research most people preferred to use English and Guugu Yimithirr in song.

Historically speaking German was used very little on the mission. The Cape Bedford Mission became a place where Guugu Yimithirr and English were learnt and taught by the missionaries and mission Aborigines: Guugu Yimithirr to facilitate evangelisation and English to enable communication with the non-Indigenous settlers.<sup>35</sup> The use of Guugu Yimithirr provided an Indigenous alternative for Aborigines who had been removed from areas where Guugu Yimithirr was not originally spoken. It also unified those who already spoke it in their common need to preserve an integral element of their culture.

The use of a common language in daily life or song did not entirely consolidate the mission identity. Haviland writes:

It is only in grammars and linguists' imaginations that idealised speaker-hearers possess monolithic linguistic 'competence'; in practice principled variation or haphazard extemporising, and sometimes downright error, is the rule. Hopevale is an Aboriginal community where the

34 Rosendale, George interview with Muriel E Swijghuisen Reigersberg, 23 March 2005, Hopevale.

35 Haviland and Haviland 1980: 129; Haviland 1985: 172.



traditional multiplicity of language varieties is overshadowed only by an even greater range of social variation in origins, biography, loyalty and circumstance among speakers.<sup>36</sup>

Changes in the Cape Bedford people's literacy levels and further acquaintance with the settler community also required that English was learnt. Pohlner quotes a letter from Schwarz written in 1911 to the church inspector:

Sunday Services and the morning and evening devotions are always held in Koko Yimidhir [Guugu Yimithirr]. But the catechizing (teaching) is done in both languages [English and Guugu Yimithirr] and is better understood that way. There are many things which neither we nor the natives can adequately express in our language and we have to make long explanations which even then may not be quite clear. If this is the case even the natives prefer to use the English language. You, dear Inspector, do not seem to be happy about giving the English Bibles to the natives. Several years ago I would have agreed with you. For they had only limited use of the English Bible. But today it is quite different.<sup>37</sup>

In recent times Aboriginal English has become more prevalent due to increasing access to mass media. Unlike in the former mission's past, Guugu Yimithirr is no longer taught in a structured fashion.<sup>38</sup> At the time of research most people I worked with spoke a combination of Guugu Yimithirr and Aboriginal English. When asked what language people preferred to use in song, answers varied. Many youngsters would say English was their language of choice, while some choir members suggested that to them both English and Guugu Yimithirr are equally meaningful when it came to singing hymns. These facts suggest that whilst Guugu Yimithirr is important, the English language has become incorporated to such an extent that it has become as meaningful as Guugu Yimithirr to some Hopevalians.

Interviews I conducted, however, also indicated that this opinion varied according to performance context and the level of knowledge a singer had of the Guugu Yimithirr language. Some translated hymns contained older Guugu Yimithirr words which singers did not know how to pronounce. They thus found it easier to sing these songs in English. Interviews also indicated that for public performances, some choir members liked singing in Guugu Yimithirr because it elicited appreciative comments from external audiences:

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: We should do a few Guugu ones, actually for the tour.

Daisy Hamlot: Because them people in Cooktown like us singing in Language [in Guugu Yimithirr].

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36 Haviland 1985: 171.

37 Pohlner 1986: 58.

38 This, however, is changing. Hopevalians are developing their own teaching resources for the local primary school.



MSR: Well, you should do it more often. Remember what Pastor George said at the Carols by Candlelight?

DH: What he said now?

MSR: He said we need to sing in Guugu more. What do you think about that? Do you like singing in Guugu?

DH: Yeah ... I don't mind.

MSR: Do you prefer it to English? What's easier for you?

DH: I like it in English because, some words I don't know too, in Guugu you know.

MSR: The ones in the yellow book [Pastor Rosendale's translated hymns 1986]?

DH: Yeah.

MSR: Is it old Guugu, or too difficult?

DH: Yeah some words there I can't pronounce it properly see? Most of them I know, [but] the hard ones...

During the same interview Daisy also said:

DH: They [the predominantly white audience at the Carols by Candle Light ceremony] liked that 'Silent Night' we sang, in Guugu!...

MSR: So, on the whole, do you prefer singing in English, would you say?

DH: Yeah.<sup>39</sup>

This particular discussion demonstrates that although there may be some community members such as Pastor George Rosendale who would advocate the use of the local language and a Germanic pronunciation of words in speech and song, not all members of the community are equally comfortable with this idea, Daisy Hamlot being one of them. She prefers singing many of her hymns in English. Nevertheless, Daisy was aware of the appeal that singing in Guugu Yimithirr had to external audiences and therefore felt the language should be used.

Auntie Daisy Hamlot's divided opinion is not unique. Auntie Myrtle Bambie also said that she had been complimented on her use of Guugu Yimithirr by audiences in Cooktown after having performed there for a Carols by Candlelight concert and a Tsunami fundraising event. She herself, however, equally enjoys singing in English and does not necessarily prefer singing in Guugu Yimithirr over singing in English.<sup>40</sup> Auntie Myrtle also commented that the use of Guugu Yimithirr was

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<sup>39</sup> Hamlot, Daisy interview with Muriel E Swijghuisen Reigersberg, 4 February 2005, Hopevale.

<sup>40</sup> Bambie, Myrtle interview with Muriel E Swijghuisen Reigersberg, 1 March 2005, Hopevale.

decreasing and that her grandchildren could not always understand her when she used it to address them. This she thought, was disappointing and suggested the use of hymnody as a means of teaching the younger children the Guugu Yimithirr language. These findings show that singers actively construct their performative identities linguistically through deliberately choosing to sing in either Guugu Yimithirr or English depending on where they are singing and to whom.

During my fieldwork period, elders felt the younger generation in Hopevale was becoming less literate in comparison to those Hopevalians educated by mission staff of the past. New religious songs in Guugu Yimithirr were not being composed for worship purposes and only older translated Guugu Yimithirr hymns or English hymns performed. The breakdown of family units caused by social difficulties has contributed to the decline in the tradition of hymn-singing and music-making in family homes as well. Thus the transmission of the Guugu Yimithirr language through hymns and songs has declined. Youths often favour listening to, or performing, more popular music styles such as Country and Western, reggae, and hip hop. Most contemporary songs written by Hopevalians are in English or may use the odd Guugu Yimithirr word, but not much more. This suggests that the route to Indigenisation may not lead along the linguistic path alone but needs to incorporate various aspects of the local culture.

### **New compositions: Modernisation, globalisation and Indigenisation**

#### *Verse 1 'Take my people back home'*

...

Hear my plea  
I can see him on his knees  
Please Lord,  
Look at us  
We had no choice  
But to leave our home land  
We are now in Your hands  
Please take my people back home  
Oh Lord take care of me

#### *Refrain*

Take my people back home  
To the place where they were born  
Their hearts are broken and torn  
I can hear their spirits singing  
Rock of ages  
Cleft for me  
Let me hide myself in Thee<sup>41</sup>

41 First verse of composition by Thea and Neville Bowen, 'Take My People Back Home', Transcript of field recording, 3 March 2005.

The lyrics to the above song were composed by Neville and Thea Bowen. They describe a community elder praying to a Christian God for the community's release from exile in Woorabinda and the community's wish to go back home to Hopevale. The last three lines of the refrain also quote the hymn 'Rock of Ages', a community favourite. The musical style used by Thea and Neville is Country and Western with two voices harmonising diatonically. Harmonically and instrumentally, the song reflects the influences of Country and Western music in the community, which alongside hymnody, rap, hip hop and reggae now forms part of the local musical diet. This music is consumed through CDs, satellite television and to some extent radio in the local area where there is reception and demonstrates the effects of global mass culture on a local level. Hopevalians now also record themselves on a regular basis and CDs circulate the community.

The subject matter of 'Take my people back home' is localised too, for it refers to local people and a shared social history. This is similar to the subject matter of other songs by Indigenous Australian artists, who also refer to local geographical areas and shared histories and experiences in new popular music compositions. The link between geography, history, kin and song is not a new one and pervades Indigenous Australian music-making.<sup>42</sup> This is because Indigenous spirituality is inextricably linked to geography and a sense of place, or 'Country'. Local flora and fauna, as well as weather conditions and other natural phenomena are referred to in song, art, dance and story-telling. The performance of these art forms in the more 'traditionally orientated' communities such as those in the Northern Territory is said to promote the wellbeing of local Country and the persons living there. It is also through these art forms that local history, customs and Indigenous Law are transmitted. Consequently, references to Country in song, dance and art are tremendously important in the formation of Indigenous identities.

In the context of Hopevale, what is unique about Thea and Neville Bowen's composition, is that it is one of the first examples I encountered that incorporated a quote from a Christian hymn into the song's structure, or referred to the community's Lutheran and Anglican musical and spiritual heritage. In most other local compositions by, for example, the popular band *Black Image*, no such references to Christianity were found at the time of research. *Black Image* do, however, refer to their Country and people in their songs. The band members have Guugu Yalanji connections and their song 'This Land' on the album *Beautiful Land and Sea* pictures the Country of singer Damien Harrigan's father at Wujal Wujal.<sup>43</sup> The lyrics express the beauty of the rainforest where it meets the sea and reef. In their song 'Beautiful Land and Sea' Dylan and Damien Harrigan capture the connections of their mother's and father's countries at Wujal Wujal and Hopevale on the Cape York. They use Guugu Yimithirr words and refer to local geographical spots in their texts whilst using a variety of musical styles ranging from reggae, blues, Country and Western and pop. No songs on the album refer to their Christian heritage however.

42 See, for example Breen 1989; Dunbar-Hall and Gibson 2004; Walker 2000.

43 The Black Image Band 2007.

During regular Sunday church worship between 2004–2005, no references were made to Indigenous forms of spirituality either, despite Pastor George Rosendale's best efforts to introduce these in the 1980s. A uniquely Hopevalian Christian spirituality linked to geography, the local language and people outside of church still existed, however. In conversation with community members I discovered, for example, that hymns 'touched the hearts' of people because the hymns reminded the listeners and singers of 'the old people' or ancestors. They remembered who had loved particular songs or sung them on particular occasions at particular places. References to hymns in connection with place and person were also found elsewhere, church obituaries being one example of this:

On Sunday the 23rd of January Walter was up early, moving around, doing his own thing. Ella, his wife started singing: 'I am coming Lord' and surprisingly, he joined in and the two sang the hymn, followed by a few more. They then sat and watched the beach, with Walter describing each bird, and naming them in language.<sup>44</sup>

Here again, references to hymn-singing are being made in the same text which describes the Indigenous practice of naming or listing flora and fauna. Despite the lack of newly, locally-composed hymnody in the community, hymns are still associated with Country and are able to elicit an emotional response from Hopevalians linking their Country to their Lutheran spirituality.<sup>45</sup>

I suspect that, with the Lutheran Church of Australia becoming less conservative in recent years, opening up debates on Indigenous theologies it is likely that Hopevalian musicians will follow suit and begin composing songs in English and Guugu Yimithirr referring to Country, a Christian spirituality and the shared contemporary social history of their ancestors and community. I argue here that this is a form of re-Indigenisation and re-sacralisation as during the evacuation, hymnody became inextricably linked to Country and ancestors. Aspects of Indigenisation and re-sacralisation in song include references to local geographical areas and Country, 'the old people' or ancestors, local history *alongside* references to Christian hymnody, and worship. Whilst the songs therefore are not based on pre-contact musical styles, I suggest that it is likely that the re-Indigenisation is taking place on a different platform, where the community's shared, more contemporary, post-contact social history is helping shape the significance of their Christian identities and their secular as well as sacred relationships to Country. This is already happening outside of the church environment in Hopevale by devout elder Willie Gordon who describes his relationship to Country and his spirituality in the co-authored publication *Guurbi: My Special Place*.<sup>46</sup>

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44 Obituary Walter Bowen, January 2005.

45 See also Swijghuisen Reigersberg, in press.

46 Gordon and Bennett 2007.

## Conclusion: Why are these changes significant?

The musical changes described above are important because they may be one way in which Hopevalians could come to reconcile their localised mission history with their modern identities as Aboriginal Christians. These processes of reconciliation and healing in many Aboriginal communities, Hopevale included, are still on-going.

Pastor Rosendale's Carols by Candlelight speech refers to the social problems which especially the younger generation of Hopevalians are experiencing. Young men in particular, suffer from high levels of substance overuse, usually alcohol and hydroponic *gunja* (cannabis) and some petrol sniffing. Many have been incarcerated and others have committed suicide. Domestic violence and child abuse are not uncommon and in many instances have become normalised, although not accepted.

In an interview Pastor Rosendale commented that:

GR: But, what I am trying to do is to, to revive some of this [land-based spirituality] for the theologians to look at, but some of them came up ... guns ... after all that condemnation they put me through ... now they looking at how can they improve Christianity among the Aborigines. I told them at the time, I said: 'The horse has spoken. Now they are in your paddock' ... and I said: 'In your paddock you got alcohol, you got drugs ... and whatever. Do you prefer that?' ... You'll find it hard, you ... they [people in Hopevale] are between this ... and this ... 'These people here [in Hopevale], they ... I believe they are too white orientated. And, which is sad, because it's taken away from them, that which really speaks to them. And ... the message, message would be more meaningful to them they were ... but they in between here and there.'<sup>47</sup>

As Koen and others have recently demonstrated in their text on Medical Ethnomusicology<sup>48</sup> music can have a profound effect on improving wellbeing. I argue here, that the re-Indigenisation and sacralisation of Hopevalian popular music may be a way in which Hopevalians will be able to create and nurture an identity which is uniquely theirs. The re-sacralisation of Country through music and the acceptance of the community's Lutheran heritage, will allow for the reconciliation of a modern, Indigenous identity which has its spiritual base in concepts of Country and allows for the transmission of local, post-contact oral histories through song. The answer may not solely lie in the increased use of the Indigenous language, as Pastor George suggested in his Carols by Candlelight speech. It may include the more regular use of locally composed music in church, which reflects the local Hopevalian Lutheran spirituality. Whilst the performance of newly composed materials in church was still relatively rare between 2004 and 2005, I observed in 2009 that the use of the local language was on the rise, and that people were re-introducing Indigenous dancing styles and

<sup>47</sup> Rosendale, George interview with Muriel E Swijghuisen Reigersberg, 23 March 2005, Hopevale.

<sup>48</sup> Koen et al 2008.

painting into the community, some incorporating the community's Lutheran heritage. This to me was evidence that local Indigenous people are striving to reconcile their mission history with their Indigenous heritage. Whilst in the past they were denied access to their Indigenous heritage, today they are working towards incorporating their Christian beliefs with their pre-colonial heritage. It is my hope that the trend described above will continue so that, next time I visit, my Indigenous friends will say: 'We are Lutherans from *Hopevale*, welcome to our Country.'

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# The founding of *Aboriginal History* and the forming of Aboriginal history

Bain Attwood

Nearly 40 years ago an important historical project was launched at The Australian National University (ANU). It came to be called Aboriginal history. It was the name of both a periodical and a historiographical movement. In this article I seek to provide a comprehensive account of the founding of the former and to trace something of the formation of the latter.<sup>1</sup>

Aboriginal history first began to be formed in the closing months of 1975 when a small group of historically-minded white scholars at ANU agreed to found what they described as a journal of Aboriginal History. At that time, the term, let alone the concept of Aboriginal history, was a novel one. The planners of this academic journal seem to have been among the first to use the phrase in its discursive sense when they suggested that it 'should serve as a publications outlet in the *field* of Aboriginal history'.<sup>2</sup> Significantly, the term was adopted in the public realm at much the same time. The reports of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections (the Pigott Report) and the Planning Committee on the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia, which were the outcome of an inquiry commissioned by the Whitlam Labor Government in order to articulate and give expression to a new Australian nationalism by championing a past that was indigenous to the Australian continent, both used the term.<sup>3</sup> As

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2 In an article one of the founders of the journal Peter Corris authored in 1967, he used the term 'Aboriginal History' several times but largely in its temporal sense. The term he adopted for the approach he recommended to this past was 'ethnohistory'. See Corris 1969: 203.

3 The Pigott Report was penned largely by the prehistorian John Mulvaney, whose 1969 book *The Prehistory of Australia*, had turned Australian history on its head, not least by asserting that

these more or less simultaneous references to 'Aboriginal history' might suggest, the founding of a journal devoted to the subject was the product of a moment of ferment that was both scholarly and political in nature.<sup>4</sup>

In recent years the term 'Aboriginal history' has been used in a very general way. As the anthropologist Gillian Cowlshaw has argued, this is problematic since the focus of much the work bearing this moniker is not in fact the Aboriginal sphere but rather the British colonisers and their successors' treatment of Aboriginal people. In the period that *Aboriginal History* was being founded, 'Aboriginal history' had a very specific set of meanings that centred on the former word as well as the implications of a project that sought to join together the domains of Aboriginality and history. One of my purposes in the second part of this article is to recover those meanings. They were the subject of considerable and at times bitter debate among the founders of the journal. I recount the terms of this conflict and consider its outcomes, not least because the decision of the journal's editorial board to commit itself to a particular definition of Aboriginal history had a major impact on the journal's development and the directions it took. In the fourth and final section of this article I reflect upon this fact since it can be said to have lessened the amount of influence the journal might otherwise have had. More especially, I pinpoint what might be regarded as a fundamental problem in the enterprise of Aboriginal history, one which was probably inherent in its very nature, or at the very least a consequence of it being born of a certain historical moment and forged in particular historical circumstances.<sup>5</sup>

The founding of the journal, the subject of the first part of this article, owed much to the fact that there were a large number of scholars at ANU interested in the pre-colonial (pre-1788) and the post-colonial (post-1788) past of Aboriginal people; indeed, I suggest that a journal of this kind would not and could not have been formed anywhere else in Australia. I argue, moreover, that the nature of the journal was influenced in a relatively systematic manner by the disciplinary backgrounds of its key players, and in a somewhat haphazard way by the differing status of those disciplines in the Australian academy in respect of the study of Aboriginal people. More specifically, I contend that the background that the principal figures had in the areas in Pacific, Native American and Southeast Asian history was crucial to the way it evolved, not least because the study of the Aboriginal past had been neglected by historians of Australia. Most of the factors noted here, I seek to demonstrate, shaped the manner in which fundamental questions concerning the nature of the journal's project, as well as the nature of Aboriginal history as a historiographical enterprise, were addressed by the

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the Aboriginal people were the country's first discoverers, explorers and colonists, and the historian Geoffrey Blainey, who had just published a popular, celebratory history of pre-colonial Aboriginal Australia, *Triumph of the Nomads*.

4 National Collections: Submission to Cabinet, 12 December 1973. National Archives of Australia, Series A5915, Item 846; *Museums* 1975: 16, 71, 73, 84, 87; *Gallery* 1975: 11, 25; Niel Gunson and Robert Reece, Circular letter on behalf of the Editorial Board, 11 November 1975, Barwick Papers, Series 17, Box 2, BARI02404, my emphasis. All further references to Barwick's Papers are to this series number unless otherwise stated.

5 Cowlshaw 2006: 182.

founders of the journal. These questions included who should be its principal subjects and whose perspectives should be privileged; what sources or resources should be drawn upon and how should they be used; which disciplinary approaches were best suited to the task of recovering and representing this past; and should vernacular accounts of the past, especially Aboriginal ones, be regarded as merely sources for Aboriginal history or as histories in their own right? In one way or another, most of these questions raised a larger matter about authority, which proved difficult to resolve.<sup>6</sup>

The forming of new journals, it probably goes without saying, requires considerable forethought and much hard work. The name of Diane Barwick will be forever associated with *Aboriginal History*, and rightly so. As readers will see in the second part of this article, it is difficult to grasp the story of the journal's early years without attending to the role Barwick played and the influence she came to have on its direction. I have felt compelled to devote a third part to a consideration of Barwick's relationship to the journal and the toll this took upon her.<sup>7</sup> At the same time one of my goals in writing this article has been to highlight the key role of Niel Gunson, who was the journal's founding and guiding figure, as this has tended to be submerged in previous accounts of the periodical.<sup>8</sup>

## I Conceiving, planning and funding the journal

Sometime in the 1960s Niel Gunson (1930– ) began to consider founding a journal devoted to the history of Australia's indigenous people. He had both a scholarly interest in the Aboriginal past, which owed much to his historical research on missionaries, and a humanitarian concern for contemporary Aboriginal people, which owed a good deal to his Congregational background. In 1959 he had completed a study of evangelical missionaries in the Pacific for a PhD at ANU, and the following year, after being appointed to a lectureship at the University of Queensland, he undertook research on German Gossner missionaries who established at Zion Hill in the late 1830s one of the earliest missions in Australia. At the same time Gunson accompanied a white South African liberal leader, Margaret Ballinger, on a visit to Cherbourg, the largest of Queensland's Aboriginal reserves, during which she criticised the conditions and expressed the opinion that black South Africans were better off than Aboriginal Australians. 'This', he has recalled, 'made me think of my responsibility towards the Aboriginal people'.<sup>9</sup>

6 By the early 1980s Aboriginal people themselves were posing questions about who had the right to represent the Aboriginal past and demanding a say in determining how this history should be told and by whom, but this phenomenon followed the founding of *Aboriginal History*. See McBryde 1985.

7 For a valuable study of Barwick and her work, see Kijas 1992, 1993 and 1997. These discuss Barwick's role in the founding of *Aboriginal History*. However, Jo Kijas was handicapped by the fact that Barwick's voluminous papers, which include eight boxes of material relating to the journal, were unavailable at the time she conducted her research. She had to rely on the memory of key participants who had forgotten some of the critical moments in the journal's early years.

8 See, for example, Attwood 2005: 40.

9 Gunson 1959 and 1960–61; Gunson, 'My Personal Introduction to Aboriginal History', account prepared for the author, manuscript, 17 January 2012; Niel Gunson, interview with author, 18

In 1962 Gunson returned to ANU to take up a research fellowship in the Department of Pacific History in the Research School of Pacific Studies. There he began work on two historical projects relating to Aboriginal people: a collection of historical sources pertaining to the missionary Lancelot Threlkeld, who had established an Aboriginal mission on Lake Macquarie in New South Wales in the mid 1820s; and a local history of Cranbourne (where he had spent his childhood) that would include a chapter about the Aboriginal people in the pre-colonial era as well as a couple of chapters about their relations with the European intruders in the first generation of contact. At the same time, Gunson helped to establish the National Aboriginal Day Observance Committee (NADOC) of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and assumed the role of its chairman. He saw NADOC as a body that attempted 'to do something about the apathy of the public in regard to the Aboriginal community', especially 'its rights, its problems and its cultural heritage'. The organisation's work included staging annual exhibitions of Aboriginal artefacts and paintings.<sup>10</sup>

At some point, the conjunction of Gunson's scholarly interests and humanitarian concerns led him to contemplate starting a journal focusing on the Aboriginal past. That he chose a periodical as the means to pursue his passions is probably unsurprising; he worked in a Department of Pacific History (created by the New Zealand historian JW Davidson) in which a journal devoted to the field of Pacific history had been launched in 1966. *The Journal of Pacific History* was to provide Gunson, who was involved in that enterprise from the outset, with a model, if not *the* model, for what became *Aboriginal History*. (The early 1970s also saw the founding of several journals devoted to South and Southeast Asian history, as scholars took a growing interest in decolonisation, and this might have exerted some influence on him as well.) However, precisely when and how Gunson decided to found a journal dedicated to the past of Australia's indigenous peoples is unclear.<sup>11</sup> All we can know for sure is that it took several years before his idea came to fruition and that his proposal stalled at least once along the way.<sup>12</sup>

It seems that Gunson's idea of the journal arose most immediately out of his experience as Chairman of NADOC in the ACT in the late 1960s. He had hoped that the body would act as a co-ordinating body for all the organisations in the nation's capital that had an interest in Aboriginal people, especially the churches and service clubs. But by the end of 1968 he realised that the times

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January 2012; Niel Gunson to author, 8 April 2012; <<http://missionaries.griffith.edu.au/qld-mission/zion-hill-mission-1838-1848>> accessed 14 April 2012.

10 Gunson to the Executive of AIAS, 29 April 1964, Stanner Papers, Series 18, Item 19; Gunson, Script of Speech for General Meeting of NADOC ACT, 6 June 1967, NADOC ACT Chairman's Report 1968, 19 November 1968, Gunson Papers; Gunson 1968: xi-xii; Gunson 1974: vii; Gunson, interview with author, 18 January 2012; Gunson to author, 8 April 2012.

11 Two of Gunson's accounts of this, based on memory, are a matter of public record (Gunson 2000 and 2006). My account, based on a consideration of the documentary historical sources, his recollections (both public and private), and the contemporary historical context, differs from Gunson's on several key points.

12 Foster and Varghese 1996: 107; Gunson 2006: 72; Gunson, 'My Personal Introduction to Aboriginal History'.

were changing. The federal government, following the success the previous year of the referendum to alter two clauses of the Australian Constitution referring to Aboriginal people, had appointed a new advisory committee, the Council for Aboriginal Affairs; and Aboriginal leaders such as Charles Perkins and Kath Walker had begun to demand that Aboriginal people take charge of organisations that purported to represent Aborigines. It was evident to some white Australians at least that the days of white dominated organisations were over. 'The NADOC Committee felt it was better for Aboriginal people themselves to take a more active part in promoting their own culture', Gunson has recalled. In the early months of 1969 the ACT NADOC committee agreed that it should disband. In the wake of this, Gunson travelled to Sydney to seek the guidance of Perkins as to what he might do now to help Aboriginal people, though it seems that he had already decided that the best way he might continue to serve the Aboriginal cause was by doing what he knew best, namely history, or, more specifically, by founding a journal of Aboriginal history.<sup>13</sup> A periodical of the kind he had in mind would, Gunson later remarked, 'instruct others about the history of the Aboriginal people, ... enabl[e] Aborigines to record their own history and give it a greater place in the national life'.<sup>14</sup>

At this time, if not earlier, Gunson had a conversation with Peter Corris (1942– ) about his idea of a journal.<sup>15</sup> Corris, before embarking on a PhD at ANU in 1967 on the labour trade in the Solomon Islands, had done research (for a Masters at Monash University) on the history of the first generation of contact between Aborigines and Europeans in the Western District of Victoria. This was one of the first studies of this kind and it became one of the first of a crop of books published on the subject. At much the same time Corris had penned a thoughtful consideration of recent scholarly work on the post-colonial Aboriginal past and recommended a series of research projects. In the light of all this it is not surprising that he was sympathetic to Gunson's proposal. However, it seems that Gunson's colleagues were not. They included WEH Stanner. In his Australian

13 In an appreciation Gunson wrote in 2000–01 after Perkins has passed away, he stated: 'I told [Perkins] that our NADOC committee was disbanding but that there was a lot of goodwill and that I would like to know what we could do to help the Aboriginal cause. After some discussion which provided no solution he suddenly said to my surprise 'You're a historian aren't you, do something about Aboriginal history' (2000: 258–259; see also Gunson 2006: 76). For two reasons I believe it would be a mistake to attribute too much significance to Perkins' remark. Gunson had already thought of starting a journal and the story he tells here seems to owe a good deal to the moment that prompted it (Gunson 2006: 259; Gunson to author, 17 April 2012 and 18 April 2012).

14 NADOC ACT Chairman's Report 1968, 19 November 1968, Gunson to Rev WS Pidgeon, 13 December 1968, Gunson to Chairman, Canberra Regional Board, Baptist Homes Trust, 29 July 1969, and Gunson, Script of Speech for the Launch of Vol. 5 of *Aboriginal History*, 8 July 1982, Gunson Papers; Attwood and Markus 1999: 239–241; Attwood 2003: 321; Gunson, 'My Personal Introduction to Aboriginal History'; Gunson, interview with author, 18 January 2012; Gunson to author, 8 March 2012, 12 March 2012, 8 April 2012, 17 April 2012 and 18 April 2012.

15 Gunson once claimed this conversation took place in the early to mid 1960s (Gunson 2000: 258), but he has recently conceded that this cannot be so (Gunson, personal communication, 17 January 2012) as the two men only met for the first time in 1967. Gunson kept diaries during this time which might help date this conversation, but these are unavailable at present and Corris has no recollection of their discussion (Gunson, personal communication, 17 January 2012; Gaby Naher to author, 25 January 2012).



Broadcasting Commission Boyer Lectures of 1968 the renowned anthropologist had criticised what he called 'the great Australian silence' about the relationship between Aborigines and white Australians, chastised historians for their role in perpetuating it, recognised that there another 'side of the story' whose telling 'would have to be a world – [or] perhaps ... an underworld – away from the conventional histories of the coming and development of British civilisation' in Australia, suggested that it would 'cut like a knife' through much of what white Australians said and wrote, and argued that they would have to bring this material, which he self consciously called ethnohistory, 'into the sweep of our story'. Yet, according to Gunson, Stanner was opposed to a journal of the kind Gunson had in mind and told him that it would 'raise expectations in the community at large and eventually backfire against Aborigines who were not able to live up to these'. Senior historians at ANU were, Gunson remembers, similarly discouraging. This reflected a more general scepticism among academic historians about the worth of historical studies that focused on Aboriginal people. At this time the editor of Australia's premier academic journal in the field of Australian history, *Historical Studies*, is said to have told a young historian by the name of Henry Reynolds 'not to waste time on writing about Aborigines as there was nothing in it'.<sup>16</sup>

At this point Gunson seems to have set aside his idea of a journal. But in 1973 another historian interested in the history of relations between Aboriginal people and Europeans arrived in his department. Bob Reece (1942– ) had come to do a doctoral thesis on the cession of Sarawak (on the north-west coast of Borneo) to the British Crown at the end of World War Two. A few years earlier he had completed a major study of contact between Aborigines and Europeans in New South Wales in the 1830s and 1840s (for a Masters at the University of Queensland). It was, as I have already implied, unusual at this time for an academic historian to conduct such research. Reece met Gunson soon after he began his Masters thesis and had been excited to learn that there was at least someone who took a genuine interest in it, and in the next couple of years both Gunson and Corris read some of the chapters of his dissertation as it progressed. After Reece arrived at ANU he revised this thesis for publication as a monograph. In its preface, after observing that his research had been influenced by the fact that all the documentary sources available to him had been created by the settlers, Reece expressed regret that it had not been possible 'to say more about the Aborigines' perceptions of the whites' and suggested that this task would have to be undertaken by others. Yet his doctoral work had introduced him to a seminal essay by John RW Smail that urged historians of Southeast Asia to adopt approaches that would enable them to recover what this American scholar called the 'autonomous history' or the 'autonomous worlds' of local peoples, and this prompted Reece to ponder how the same might be done in the Australian context. In 1976, he would seek out contemporary Aboriginal perspectives of the past, travelling with the filmmakers David and Judith MacDougall to Moree

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16 Corris 1966, 1968 and 1969; Stanner 1969: 22–25; Felton 1991: 32; Reynolds, cited Daly 1998; Gunson 2000: 258; Gunson 2006: 76; Gunson to author, 12 March 2012.

in northern New South Wales in order to collect an oral tradition regarding the 1838 Myall Creek Massacre, and he would present a seminar paper at ANU on Aborigines in Australian historiography. But, before this happened, he and Gunson discussed the latter's proposal of a journal of Aboriginal history, and Gunson decided to revive it.<sup>17</sup>

By this time interest in undertaking research in the field had been sparked among a larger number of historians, and a shining example of what could be done had appeared. In 1970–71, Charles Rowley's three-volume history of Aboriginal policy and practice, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society, Outcasts in White Australia*, and *The Remote Aborigines*, which had sprung from a Social Science Research Council project on Aboriginal welfare begun in 1964, had been published by the ANU Press. This landmark work, as historian Stuart Macintyre has reminded us recently, 'wrote Aborigines back into Australian history'. More particularly, it uncovered a rich lode of material buried in Australian libraries and provided the first systematic historical account of the destruction and dispossession of Aboriginal people.<sup>18</sup>

In September 1975 Gunson called a meeting to discuss the purpose of a journal of Aboriginal history, its viability, the formation of an editorial board, the make-up of a national committee (to serve as correspondents and consultants), the costs involved and the need for sponsors, though he had already ensured that there would be agreement on who would assume the journal's key positions. Gunson sought a wide base of support for the journal. He, Reece and Corris (in whose names the meeting was called) invited three other historians: Ann Curthoys (1945– ), Hank Nelson (1937–2012), and Charles Rowley (1906–85). Curthoys had completed a PhD thesis at Macquarie University two years previously in which she had compared the response of British settlers to Aborigines, Chinese, and non-British Europeans in New South Wales in the mid to late nineteenth century, and had recently been appointed to establish a Women's Studies programme in the School of General Studies at ANU, where she was housed in its Department of History. Nelson was one of their colleagues in the Department of Pacific and Southeast Asian History and a specialist on Papua New Guinea who had done a Masters thesis (at the University of Melbourne) on missionary attempts to civilise and christianise Aborigines in the Port Phillip District of New South Wales. And Rowley was the author of the recently published trilogy on the history of Aboriginal policy and practice.<sup>19</sup>

Gunson also invited two anthropologists and a prehistorian who he personally knew: Diane Barwick (1938–86), Nicolas Peterson (1941– ), and Isabel McBryde

17 Smail 1961; Bob Reece to Gunson, 14 February 1966, Gunson Papers; Reece 1969; Reece 1974: viii; Reece to Peter Corris, 24 June 1975, Reece Papers; MacDougall 1976; Reece 1976; Reece 1982; Sears 1993: 6–7; Gunson 2006: 76; Bob Reece to author, 8 and 9 February 2012.

18 Macintyre 2010: 156–157, 161, 163.

19 The Journal of Aboriginal History, Agenda for Foundation Board Policy Meeting on 4 September 1975, and The Journal of Aboriginal History: Scope and Management, undated, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02404; Gunson and Reece, Circular letter, 11 November 1975; Curthoys 1973; Nelson 1966; Gunson to author, 8 March 2012.

(1934– ). Barwick was a Canadian-born scholar who, since completing a PhD thesis in anthropology at ANU in 1963, had undertaken a good deal of historical research, largely during a term as a research fellow in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology in the Research School of Pacific Studies at the University (1966–72), which culminated in the completion of a draft book manuscript on the history of Coranderrk Aboriginal Reserve (50 kms north-east of Melbourne). Peterson, a research fellow in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology in the Research School of Pacific Studies at ANU, would have been seen by the journal's founders as an anthropologist who was currently working with Aboriginal people and he had recently undertaken some historical work as the Research Officer for the Commonwealth government's Aboriginal Land Rights Commission. (Very soon, an increasing number of anthropologists in Australia would become more historically minded as a consequence of the work they undertook on behalf of Aboriginal communities under the provisions of the Commonwealth's *Northern Territory Land Rights Act 1976*, which required claimants to provide evidence of their historical occupancy and use of the land.)<sup>20</sup> McBryde was a senior lecturer in the Department of Prehistory and Anthropology at ANU, who had, after taking her first degrees in Latin and History, trained as an archaeologist and undertaken pioneering ethnohistorical research about the Aboriginal people of New England in Northeastern New South Wales. And, shortly after the journal's first meeting, a linguist, Luise Hercus (1926– ), who had been appointed to teach Sanskrit in the Faculty of Asian Studies at ANU but who had also undertaken research salvaging Victorian Aboriginal languages that were on the brink of extinction, was invited to join the editorial board. As it turned out, the involvement of most of the historians named here, that is, Corris, Curthoys, Reece and Rowley, as well as nearly all of the historians who succeeded them on the editorial board, was to prove relatively short-lived.<sup>21</sup> It was the anthropologist Barwick, the prehistorian McBryde and the linguist Hercus who would join Gunson in becoming the journal's key figures. This outcome in terms of disciplinary representation was partly a consequence of the lowly status of the field among academic historians at this time. Very few tenured positions were on offer at ANU for those working on 'Aboriginal history' and so they had to depart for university posts elsewhere.<sup>22</sup>

The inaugural meeting did much to establish the nature of the journal, which was going to be known as *The Journal of Aboriginal History*. Those attending

20 This growing interest in history among Australian anthropologists paralleled the importance that history had come to have among North American anthropologists several decades earlier in the context of their work for the Indian Claims Commission, which had played a major role in the foundation of the new sub-discipline of ethnohistory (see McMillen 2007 and Harkin 2010).

21 In these early years several historians served for varying lengths of time: Andrew Markus, Lyndall Ryan, Peter Biskup, Kerry Howe and, most importantly, Stephen Foster, who became the chairman of the editorial board for the period 1985–88. Nelson was a member of the board for a lengthy period but, while he made an important contribution at times, his involvement was spasmodic (Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 28 November 1986, Gunson Papers).

22 Barwick 1963; McBryde 1966, 1974 and 1978; Hercus 1969; Peterson 2006: 32–33; Luise Hercus, interview with author, 18 January 2012; Gunson, interview with author, 18 January 2012; Gunson to author, 8 March 2012.

seemed to agree on most matters, though there was a degree of ambiguity surrounding some important questions, as we will see later. Most importantly, they felt that the journal should try to nurture a historical enterprise that would depart from many of the conventions that had long dominated the discipline of history in European countries. This had several dimensions. First, what the journal's planners described as both 'the field of Aboriginal history' and 'the field of Australian ethnohistory' would expand the temporal sense of history in that it would focus not only on the time that had traditionally concerned historians of Australia, namely the era since British settlement commenced in 1788, but also the pre-colonial period that had long been held by Anglo-Celtic Australians to be the preserve of the disciplines of anthropology, archaeology and linguistics. 'While it will be concerned principally with articles relating to the post-European contact history of the Aboriginal people, it will also publish articles of a historical nature in fields such as anthropology, prehistory, linguistics and sociology', the journal's planners stated. Perhaps realising that this was ambiguous, they added: 'Thus an article on traditional [i.e. pre-colonial] trade routes reconstructed from prehistory and oral sources would be welcome'. As it turned out, the journal was to publish little work of this kind (much to Gunson's regret). Its interest in such research was criticised by the eminent anthropologist AP Elkin, who was the founder and long-time editor of the anthropological journal *Oceania*. He was probably keen to ensure that his discipline maintained its dominance in the field of Aboriginal Studies. 'I don't think the journal should stray into the fields [covered by] of anthropology, prehistory, linguistics, etc', he told Reece. 'After all, there are journals and monographs and so on to deal with such topics.' Second, those taking the lead in planning the journal presumed it would concentrate largely on Aboriginal people; that is, Aborigines would be the primary subject and subjects of the past under consideration. This said, the founders of the journal were of a mind that the journal should include work on other non-European minority groups such as Afghans and Chinese.<sup>23</sup> But it seems that they chose *The Journal of Aboriginal History* as the periodical's name in order to distinguish the journal – and in turn define 'Aboriginal history' – as a historical endeavour that would or should have a different set of priorities from the field of Australian history.<sup>24</sup>

One of those who grasped the latter point was opposed to the journal's undertaking. Sir Paul Hasluck had been Minister for the Territories in the Menzies Government between 1951 and 1963 with special responsibility for Aboriginal affairs (and most recently Australia's Governor-General), and he had previously authored a scholarly history of relations between Aborigines and Europeans. He was one of a number of figures in the field of Aboriginal Studies whom Gunson and Reece approached to seek their opinion about their proposal or to get their endorsement of it. 'After the coming of the Europeans', Hasluck was to tell

23 Gunson and Reece might have been dissuaded from pursuing this after Elkin pointed out that the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies would be unwilling to provide any subsidy for the publication of articles of this nature (AP Elkin to Reece, 27 October 1975, Gunson Papers).

24 Gunson and Reece, Circular letter, 11 November 1975; Elkin to Reece, 27 October 1975; Gunson, interview with author, 18 January 2012.

Gunson, 'I find difficulty in separating the idea of the history of aborigines, or the idea of the history of the Europeans from the more comprehensive concept of the history of Australia. I also wonder whether historical truth may suffer if a history of aborigines is put in a separate compartment from the history of the Australian people'. Hasluck's concerns were not solely intellectual ones. He was apprehensive that the journal was a venture that was contrary to the policy of assimilation he had championed during his years in office. '[T]he social and political development of Australia', he warned Gunson, 'may suffer if persons looking at the history of Australian development in the broadest national sense continue to either exclude aborigines from the general view or minimise their place in it, or to regard them as being something apart from the rest of life in Australia'. More especially, Hasluck was suspicious that the conception of the journal was informed by what he saw as a contemporary tendency to favour 'a policy of "separate development"'. He concluded: 'I find myself in full sympathy with your project so far as it is concerned with gathering information which will bring a clearer insight into the pre-history of Australia, the language, traditions and customs of the aboriginal people, and the social and cultural consequences of European settlement, but I am out of sympathy with the idea of "aboriginal history" as a distinct and separate field of historical studies in Australia'.<sup>25</sup>

In replying to this criticism Gunson set out what he saw as the journal's project: 'I certainly respect the view that the Aboriginal people should be thought of simply as Australians and consequently the subject of Australian history. Nevertheless, I believe that it is time to present an Aboriginal perspective which would illuminate much of Australia's past and balance the European oriented history of our country'. Presenting Aboriginal people's perspectives or points of view both in the past and of the past would become fundamental to the way in which most, though by no means all, of the journal's editorial board regarded the work of the periodical. In describing the journal's enterprise to Hasluck, Gunson similarly made it clear that he hoped the journal would do more than simply publish work concerned with Australia's dark colonial past. 'I would be distressed if all our contributors concentrated on themes of social injustice', he told Hasluck, 'but only because I believe that this would not reflect the whole picture of Aboriginal-European relations'. This point was critical to the kind of journal Gunson and his fellow planners had in mind. Their concerns were broader than, or even different to, those historians who sought to represent those relations primarily in terms of the exclusion, exploitation and extermination of Aboriginal people (to use the terms of a book that had been published recently). In concluding his reply to Hasluck, Gunson remarked: 'My own personal concern is to present an accurate account of the past in an age when activists of different persuasions are only too eager to argue that what people think happened in the past is more important politically and socially than what actually happened'. This was no mere window dressing. Accounts of Australia's past were becoming increasingly important because the nature of the political claims being advanced at this time, most especially 'land rights', were fundamentally historical in the

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25 Hasluck 1942; Sir Paul Hasluck to Gunson, 6 November 1975, Gunson Papers.



sense that they were grounded in the past or at least representations of the past. In this context Gunson was committed to a position that scholarly work could be relatively objective and that this endeavour should be to the fore.<sup>26</sup>

In keeping with the premise that the principal historical subject and subjects of 'Aboriginal history' would be Aboriginal people, the journal's planners envisaged that it would pay considerable attention to the role that the culture of the Aboriginal people had played in shaping their post-contact history. For those working in the field of Pacific history the adoption of this approach was axiomatic. JW Davidson and his acolytes not only had a conviction that the history of contact between Europeans and non-Europeans in the Pacific could only be properly understood by historians broadening their conceptual framework so they considered and analysed both sides or both points of view; they also believed that the response of indigenous peoples to European intruders had been largely determined by the pattern of their own cultures. In accordance with this approach, the planners of the journal stated: 'The basic concern of the Journal will be the writing of inter-cultural history, i.e. where possible, authors will be expected to analyse historical situations by examining the sources of the two or more cultures involved'. This in turn had significant implications for the nature of historical practice. As in the case of the practitioners of Pacific history and ethnohistory more generally, the horizons of the discipline of history had to be expanded so that its resources included non-European material and its conceptual frameworks drew upon those used in other disciplines. 'Thus', Gunson and Reece stated, 'considerable importance will be given to oral tradition [and] vernacular records, and the insights of prehistory, anthropology, etc'. (During this period, historians of European societies were increasingly drawing on concepts and methods they gleaned from the work of cultural anthropologists such as Victor Turner, Mary Douglas and Clifford Geertz.) The Australian anthropologist Jeremy Beckett, who was among the scholars Gunson and Reece approached for support, welcomed the proposal to include oral tradition and urged the journal's promoters to 'include other material that expresse[d] Aboriginal perceptions'. Prehistorians, most notably Isabel McBryde and John Mulvaney, advocated much the same kind of approach and called upon historians to look beyond the written word, especially by considering the material record of the past.<sup>27</sup>

Yet there is a sense in which the planners of the journal had a traditional conception of their enterprise and thus what 'Aboriginal history' would mean. The naming of their enterprise *The Journal of Aboriginal History* might suggest that its promoters had both the principal meanings of the term 'history' equally in mind; that is, that they wished to reveal the myriad ways the past could be represented as much as they wished to uncover what actually happened in the past. However, while it is clear that they wanted to include material that would, in their words, 'illustrate Aboriginal perceptions of the past', it is apparent that

26 Evans et al 1975; Gunson to Hasluck, 13 January 1976, Gunson Papers.

27 Davidson 1966: 5, 8-10, 13; Mulvaney 1969; McBryde 1974; Beckett to Gunson and Reece, 18 October 1975, Gunson Papers; Gunson and Reece, Circular letter, 11 November 1975.

they regarded Aboriginal oral traditions, vernacular writings and the like as sources *for* the writing of Aboriginal history rather than sources *of* Aboriginal history or as histories in their own right. Thus, they were planning to distinguish between articles, reviews and review articles (of the kind usually accepted by learned journals) on the one hand, and notes and documents (which would include unpublished manuscripts, oral traditions and the like) on the other, and in fact this division was adopted in the early volumes of the journal, with the latter printed in a smaller font than the former.<sup>28</sup> In making this distinction, the journal's promoters were following the way in which *The Journal of Pacific History* conceptualised its content.<sup>29</sup>

In terms of audience the journal's planners envisaged a much broader readership than most academic periodicals usually seek. There were at least two reasons for this. First, they believed that the periodical should strive to cater for the needs of Aboriginal readers. 'The stage is being reached when many Aboriginals are asking questions about the past and it is important that there should be available a body of scholarly writing for their reference and use', Gunson and Reece argued. It might be contended that their premise was a paternalistic one in the sense that they assumed that Aboriginal people needed guidance and that non-Aboriginal scholars were able to provide this. Yet it can be argued that this goal reflected a real need. As Charles Rowley had observed in the opening chapter of *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, both Aboriginal and white organisations pressing for reforms in Aboriginal affairs repeatedly made reference to the way Aboriginal people had been treated in the past but the impact of their arguments was 'diminished by the lack of a common fund of historical knowledge'. Second, they were aware of what they described as 'increasing public interest in Aboriginal history' in both schools and the media, and consequently they hoped that the journal would gain a wider readership than most scholarly journals and thereby 'serve a valuable social function'. This approach reflected the dual reasons (the scholarly and the political) the journal had been created. In keeping with this reason it was hoped that the periodical would seek to avoid professional jargon, have a greater preoccupation with good writing than was usual in an academic journal, and include illustrations and an attractive looking cover (in the manner of the British magazine *History Today*).<sup>30</sup>

28 In due course this distinction was the subject of some disagreement between members of the editorial board. Indeed, as early as April 1978, the minutes of a board meeting recorded: 'As usual there was the problem of deciding if articles were appropriate for part 1 or 2. Documentary type articles and archival material would automatically go into part 2 but other vernacular or oral history type articles about which there was some doubt would just have to be looked at individually and a decision made' (Gunson to Reece, undated [c. March-April 1977], Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 10 February 1978, and Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 14 April 1977 [sic, 1978], Gunson Papers).

29 Gunson and Reece, Circular letter, 11 November 1975; document, undated [c. October 1975], Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02404; Barwick to Peter Grimshaw, 22 February 1979, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02408.

30 Rowley 1970a: 8; Gunson and Reece, Circular letter, 11 November 1975; Gunson to Anthony Forge, 14 January 1975 [sic, 1976], Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02404.



The planners of the journal assumed it would be an occasional publication, though preferably one that appeared annually. They had good reason to be cautious. John Mulvaney, for one, had doubted there were enough scholars working in the field to make the journal viable. However, Gunson and Reece believed that there were a growing number of scholars doing research in the area, and assumed that the journal would both attract material that authors currently placed in more general historical journals but where it tended to be submerged, and stimulate further research in the field.<sup>31</sup>

The journal's inaugural meeting decided that it would be overseen by an editorial board based in Canberra, and that its members would play a major role in its production by performing much of the work of refereeing. This policy, which became the journal's practice, could not have been adopted in any other place in Australia. As the roll-call at the journal's first meeting has revealed, there was a critical mass of scholars at ANU who were working or had worked in the field of 'Aboriginal history' and whose advice and input could be drawn upon. To their names several more could be added, such as the prehistorians Jack Golson, Rhys Jones and Mulvaney,<sup>32</sup> the archaeologist and historian Campbell MacKnight, the demographer FL Jones, the anthropologists Marie Reay and WEH Stanner, and the linguist RMW Dixon. The discipline of prehistory was especially important. Mulvaney and McBryde's vision of it as an area of study that sought to provide an integrated study of the past by drawing on disciplines like archaeology, anthropology, geomorphology and history provided something of a model for the work the journal would encourage. And, as the editorial board was to learn in due course, they could rely on the moral support of the historian Ken Inglis, Professor of History in the Research School of Social Sciences. He had recently observed the burgeoning of indigenous history at the University of Papua New Guinea while he was professor of history and later Vice-Chancellor; he had previously authored a book about the controversial case of an Aboriginal man convicted of murdering an eight-year-old girl in South Australia; and he had been married to Judy Inglis, an anthropologist working among Aboriginal people in South Australia who had a similarly historical approach to Barwick's and whose interest in the past and its impact on the present can be said to have played a part in laying some of the groundwork for the emergence of Aboriginal history as a field before she tragically died in 1962.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, it might be argued that the unconventional nature of the Institute of Advanced Studies at ANU encouraged an inter-disciplinary venture of this kind: the disciplines were located in multi-disciplinary research schools, rather than single-discipline departments, and the Research School of Social Sciences and the Research School of Pacific Studies were both housed in the Coombs Building, where members of staff gathered together regularly over morning and afternoon tea.<sup>34</sup>

31 Reece to Corris, 24 June 1975; Corris to Gunson, 12 October [1975], Gunson Papers; document, undated [c. October 1975]; Gunson and Reece, Circular letter, 11 November 1975.

32 Although Mulvaney was first sceptical about the viability of the venture, he soon backed it (Reece to Corris, 24 June 1975; cf Kijas 1993: 86–87).

33 For a discussion of Inglis' work, see Kerin 2007.

34 Gunson and Reece, Circular letter, 11 November 1975; Ken Inglis to Gunson, 4 May [1978], Gunson Papers; Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 5 May 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02274; Inglis to Dorothy Green, 6 December 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 2,

Like any journal, *Aboriginal History* had to find a source of money to meet, at the very least, the cost of publication. Gunson and Reece seem to have assumed that the novel historical nature of their project meant that they would be unable to win any funding from ANU. They proposed to seek funding from several public sources instead, which included the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the Literature Board of the Australia Council for the Arts, and the Aboriginal Arts Board. Their first port of call, however, was the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, a body the federal government had established in 1964 in order to advance the study of Aboriginal culture. In October and November 1975 Gunson and Reece put a proposal to its Publications Committee that included a suggestion that the journal become the Institute's publication,<sup>35</sup> though the journal's editorial board would determine and oversee the material submitted to it. After some consideration, the Institute, which continued to be dominated by the discipline of anthropology, rejected the proposal. At this point Gunson and Reece approached HC (Nugget) Coombs, the senior Commonwealth public servant who until recently had been Chairman of the federal government's small advisory body the Council for Aboriginal Affairs as well as Chairman of the Australia Council for the Arts, but he no longer held any governmental position and was unable to help. For several months it looked as though the venture might falter. Although Gunson reconvened the editorial board in the closing months of 1976 and planning for the first volume resumed, by year's end the journal had still not secured any funding.<sup>36</sup>

At this point Gunson seems to have turned to Peter Grimshaw (1932–2003), the Business Manager for both the Research School of Pacific Studies and the Research School of Social Sciences. (He would play a valuable role in the journal's affairs after Gunson invited him to be its treasurer and its public officer.)<sup>37</sup> Grimshaw in turn made an approach to the Director of the Research School of Pacific Studies, Professor Wang Gungwu, explaining that the journal would have two aims: 'it would serve as a vehicle of communication for scholarly work on Aboriginal history, [and] provide a source of reference for Australians (both white and black) to become better acquainted with Aboriginal history'. Grimshaw was a skilled

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BARI02407; Barwick to Tom Stannage, 20 March 1979, and Inglis to Barwick and Stannage, 6 August 1979, Barwick Papers, Box 3, BARI02427; Foster and Varghese 1996: 240–242; Kerin 2007: 439; Mulvaney 2011: 332.

35 In 1983 the Institute began publishing its own journal, *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, which had a broader focus and a more popular approach than that of *Aboriginal History*.

36 Shirley Andrew, Editor of Publications, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, to Gunson, 27 October 1975, Gunson and Reece to Andrew, 10 November 1975, and Forge to Gunson, 18 December 1975, Gunson Papers; Gunson and Reece, Circular letter, 11 November 1975; Minutes of AIAS Publications Committee Meeting, 14 December 1975, AIATSIS Records, File Z73/7-3, Part 3; Gunson to Forge, 14 January 1975 [sic, 1976]; Minutes of AIAS Publications Committee Meeting, 5 March 1976 and 25 June 1976, AIATSIS Records, File Z73/7-3, Part 4; Forge to Gunson, 26 March 1976, HC Coombs to Gunson and Reece, 5 April 1976, and Gunson to Wang, 21 December 1976, Gunson Papers; Reece to Beckett, 2 April 1976; Curthoys to Gunson, 3 November 1976, and Markus to Gunson, 4 November 1976, Gunson Papers; Rowse 2000: 174.

37 Gunson has recalled that Grimshaw had a strong feeling for the cause of indigenous people largely born of the fact that he had spent his early years in Papua New Guinea (2003: 245–246). But perhaps the principal reason for Grimshaw's invaluable support was that he was the quintessential patron who loved to see money being used to advance good causes (Stephen Foster to author, 5 March 2012; Tom Stannage to author, 8 March 2012).

academic operator. He knew how to make a pitch. 'In considering [the latter aim] in its proper perspective', Grimshaw suggested, 'one could almost be forgiven for forming the conclusion that the need for such a journal is of national importance. If our First Australians require such a journal to learn a little about their own history then the need assumes such a degree of importance'. Wang, a historian of China who had previously held the chair of Far Eastern History in the Research School of Pacific Studies, was sympathetic to the idea of a journal of the kind Gunson and Reece were proposing. Nevertheless, he was cautious. According to a recent account by Gunson, Wang had been involved in a similar kind of venture at the University of Malaya in Singapore that had been taken over by political interests. Certainly Wang wished to clarify the institutional arrangements Gunson and Reece had in mind for the journal they were planning. 'Is it to be an ANU journal? A department journal? Or is it to be an independent journal?', he wished to know. In the new year Gunson advised Wang that it would be an independent one. In the meantime, Grimshaw had found a source of funds that Wang could draw upon to support the venture with a one-off grant. The Research School of Pacific Studies had been receiving grants from the Ford Foundation (whose founding charter stated that its resources should be used 'for scientific, educational and charitable purposes' to advance 'public welfare'). Grimshaw had been investing these funds wisely, they had accrued several thousands of dollars in interest, and there were no restrictions on their use. Why not allocate the journal \$2000 from this little nest egg, Grimshaw suggested. Wang happily agreed.<sup>38</sup>

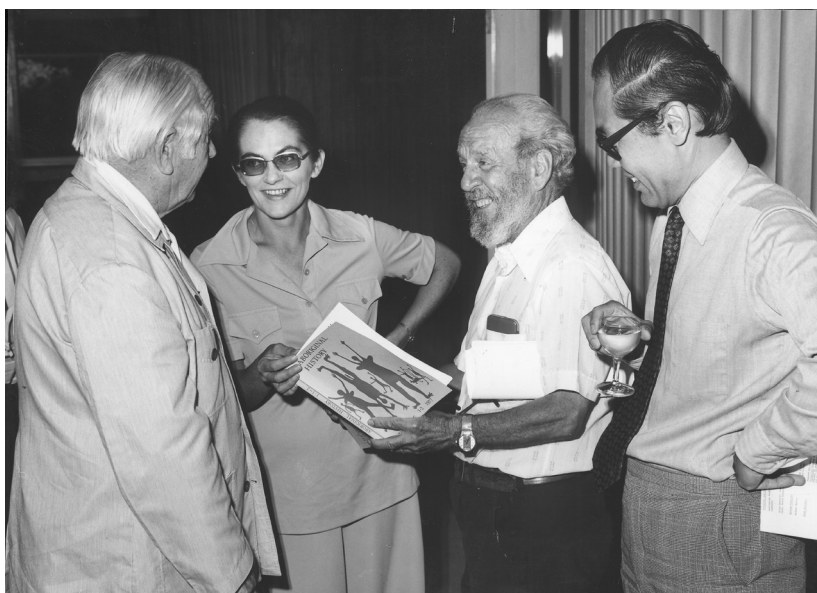


Illustration 1: From left to right: WEH Stanner, Diane Barwick, Nugget Coombs and Wang Gungwu at the launch of Volume 1 of the journal.

Source: University Archives, The Australian National University: ANUA225-1173-3.

38 Grimshaw to Wang, 13 December 1976, Gunson to Wang, 21 December 1976, Wang to Gunson, 21 December 1976, Gunson to Wang, 16 March 1977 and a minute on this by Wang, 22 March 1977, Gunson Papers; <<http://www.fordfoundation.org/about-us/history>> accessed 25 January 2012; Gunson 2003: 245.

However, by this time, March 1977, the journal needed more money as the ANU Printery had increased its quote for the first volume. Subsequently the journal's planners decided they should approach the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies once more. Fortunately, its Publications Committee happened to have a small amount of money left over in its budget and the Institute's Principal, Peter Ucko, agreed to grant the sum of \$500. The *Journal of Aboriginal History* was, finally, in business.<sup>39</sup>

At this stage the journal's editorial board had chosen most of the articles for the first volume but it was by no means clear who the executive editor or editors would be. According to Gunson's accounts of this matter, which rely on memory, Barwick was anointed as one of the journal's foundation editors at the moment of the journal's founding. The documentary record suggests otherwise. In the early stages of planning Barwick's name was never mentioned as a potential editor and it seems evident that the journal's founders were of the opinion that its editors should be professional historians. But by the early months of 1977 a change in personal circumstances had necessitated an alteration in these plans. Corris, having returned to the Research School of Pacific Studies at ANU to assume a research fellowship in 1971, had departed for a university post elsewhere and would soon choose to leave academic life to embark on a career as a literary journalist and a novelist; and Reece, having submitted his PhD and moved to Sydney to take up a temporary position with the New South Wales Education Department, was unable to take responsibility for steering the journal's first volume through to publication. (For his part Gunson had decided that, rather than be one of the journal's principal editors, it would be better if he were to perform the role of the chairman of the board that he had been playing from the outset, all the more so as he was committed to being the joint editor as well as the manuscripts editor of the *Journal of Pacific History*.) These changes presented the journal's planners with something of a quandary. In early March, Diane Barwick told Ann Curthoys: 'I don't think the projected Journal of Aboriginal History has an editor, although last week Niel was talking as if he thought Lyndall [Ryan] or I ought to feel called to higher service'. She added: 'I'm merely one of the ad hoc committee Niel assembled'. Yet Barwick had already begun to play an important role. A few months earlier, as Reece and Gunson were trying to meet proofreading deadlines, she had agreed to negotiate which papers would appear in the first volume, and it must have become apparent that she had the energy, the drive, the time and the skill to be the journal's principal editor or at least one of its editors. As a result of all these factors, it appears that sometime in the next few months the journal's board agreed that Barwick and Reece should be the co-editors of the first volume; that Gunson would take care of documents; and that Andrew Markus (1948- ), a historian appointed to a tutorship in the Department of History in the School of General Studies at the beginning of 1974, would replace Corris as review editor (after being invited by Reece to join the editorial board in November the previous year).<sup>40</sup>

39 Note for Meeting, 24 March 1977, Grimshaw to Gunson, 25 March 1977, Gunson to Peter Ucko, 28 March 1977, and Ucko to Gunson, 19 April 1977, Gunson Papers; Barwick to Reece, 19 October 1977, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02403.

40 Reece to Corris, 24 June 1975; undated document, [c. October 1975]; Gunson and Reece, Circular letter, 11 November 1975; Markus to Gunson, 4 November 1976; Barwick, Diary, 28 February 1977, and Barwick, Daily Notebook, 8 March 1977, Barwick Papers, Series 9, Box 1, BARI00280; Barwick to Ann Curthoys, undated [8 March 1977], Gunson Papers; Gunson to Wang, 16 March





Illustration 2: Niel Gunson at work in his office in the Coombs Building at ANU in 1977.

Source: Niel Gunson Personal Collection.

As it turned out, Barwick would become the senior editor of the journal for the next five years. For much of that time, she was assisted by a succession of co-editors: in 1977 by Reece, in 1979 and 1980 by Tom Stannage (1944–2012), and between 1980 and 1982 by James Urry (1949–). Stannage was a historian who had recently completed a history of Perth that devoted some attention to the history of Aboriginal people in that city, whose teaching of Australian history at the University of Western Australia had encompassed Aboriginal-European relations, and who held a research fellowship in the Department of History at the Research School of Social Sciences during the time he was co-editor. Urry was an anthropologist with a background in archaeology and history who worked as a bibliographer at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies on his arrival in Australia (after undertaking doctoral studies in anthropology and history at Oxford University) before taking up a senior tutorship in the Department of Prehistory and Anthropology in the School of General Studies at ANU. These two men made important contributions to the journal but Barwick was the principal figure.<sup>41</sup>

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1977; Reece to Gunson, 18 April 1977, Gunson Papers; Barwick to Reece, 19 October 1977; Gunson 1985: 4; Gunson to Stephen Foster, 15 April 1986, Gunson Papers; Gunson 2000: 259; Corris 2000: 104–105; Gunson 2006: 76–77; Reece to author, 20 January 2012; Markus to author, 28 February 2012; Gunson to author, 8 March 2012.

41 The Journal of Aboriginal History: Scope and Management; Agenda for Aboriginal History Meeting of 25 November 1977, 17 November 1977, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02403; Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 13 October 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02408; Gunson to Corris, 28 April 1978, Gunson Papers; Stannage 1979; Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 20 July 1979, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02275; Constitution of

During these early years of the journal Gunson provided a home for it in the Department of Pacific and Southeast Asian History and anchored its affairs. As I have noted, he had his own sense of what the journal should become, but he also welcomed younger scholars onto its editorial board and was willing to allow those such as Barwick to pursue their own particular conception of the venture. He had an easy going personality and did his best to ensure that the journal's monthly lunchtime board meetings were friendly and civilised affairs. Most importantly, he was to wisely steer the ship through some troubled waters.<sup>42</sup>

## II Defining and debating the nature of Aboriginal history

While the editorial positions on the journal were being worked out, the periodical continued to be known as *The Journal of Aboriginal History*. However, at some point in the later months of 1977, its name was altered though it is not altogether clear why this occurred. According to Barwick, there was some apprehension that the subscriptions for a *Journal of Aboriginal History* would be muddled with those for the *Journal of Pacific History* since they had the same postal address. But perhaps the journal's key figures realised that the name *Aboriginal History* could help them to better articulate a particular orientation for the enterprise by placing an emphasis not only on Aboriginal people as subjects and actors but Aboriginal perceptions and perspectives as well.<sup>43</sup>

Barwick was particularly important in this regard. Nonetheless she was apparently diffident when Gunson first approached her about the journal. 'I had struck this kind of hesitancy before, particularly by senior anthropologists only too well aware that failure of an Aboriginal-oriented venture tended to reflect adversely on the Aboriginal people rather than on those organising the project', he has recalled. 'Expectations, I was told, were raised and could not be lived up to.' However, Barwick's reservations about the journal proved short-lived. She soon threw herself into the work. There are probably several reasons why this occurred. Barwick had a passionate intellectual, moral and political commitment to recovering the past of Aboriginal people, especially from their perspective, and to trying to spread knowledge of this as widely as possible. Furthermore, she relished the opportunity to work in a collective enterprise, particularly one in which a large number of supportive women were involved, most of all Isabel McBryde, Luise Hercus and, for a shorter period, Diane Bell. Barwick was reluctant to interpret the world in terms of gender, yet women played a major role in the journal's work, and their research appeared in its pages more often than it did in the traditional journals, which continued to be largely the preserve

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Aboriginal History Inc, section 5(2), Gunson Papers; Aboriginal History, Chairman's Report for 1982-83, 18 March 1983, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI00136; Gunson 2006: 77; James Urry to author, 30 January 2012; Stannage to author, 8 March 2012.

42 Urry to author, 14 February 2012; Markus to author, 28 February 2012; Stannage to author, 8 March 2012.

43 Contents of Vol. 1, Draft Flyer, undated, Gunson Papers; Barwick to Grimshaw, 22 February 1979; Gunson, interview with author, 18 January 2012.

of men who dominated the Australian academy. There is a sense, too, in which Barwick both wanted and needed a vehicle like the journal. She often felt herself to be a marginal figure in the academy, the discipline in which she had been trained (for reasons that will be discussed shortly), and a university in which a patriarchal hierarchy could determine the future of its teachers and researchers. Moreover, after her research fellowship in the Research School of Pacific Studies came to an end and she had a child, Barwick only had intermittent academic employment. In contrast, being editor of *Aboriginal History*, though it gave her neither a room nor any remuneration, provided her with some kind of status and authority.<sup>44</sup>

Barwick's appointment (if that is the right word) as one of the editors for the first number of the journal was to prove crucial to its direction. She made the enterprise her own and became the dominant force in its production. As we have observed, the nature of the journal had been carefully defined during or even before its first meeting, but Barwick would both sharpen and deepen particular aspects of the enterprise. This was so because in its early years she solicited much of the material that was submitted, played a major role in choosing what was accepted, and reshaped many of the papers.

Barwick's training had given her a particular intellectual orientation. As an Honours student at the University of British Columbia, where she was supervised by Harry Hawthorn, and as a curatorial assistant at the Provincial Museum of Natural History and Anthropology, Victoria, where she was guided by Wilson Duff, she had acquired a training in anthropological research that paid a good deal of attention to the role that the past played in the culture of the contemporary indigenous peoples of the area as well as their special status as its first occupants. This historical mindedness was in stark contrast to the approach that dominated Australian anthropology. Nearly all Australian anthropologists worked on so-called traditional Aboriginal communities in areas remote from cities and towns in southeastern Australia, and they paid scant regard in their anthropological writings to the historical changes these people had undergone as a consequence of contact with non-Aboriginal peoples. Furthermore, they directed their PhD students to do the same. But for her doctoral research Barwick undertook a study of 'part-Aborigines' in Melbourne and she paid considerable attention to the role that historical factors had played in producing what contemporary anthropology claimed these people no longer had, namely a distinctive Aboriginal culture. In other words, much about Barwick's work was doubly unfashionable. At this time, and, indeed, for many years to come, few anthropologists in the Aboriginal area conducted fieldwork among 'part-Aborigines' in 'settled Australia' or provided any historical treatment of Aboriginal communities in their anthropological studies. (Those like Jeremy Beckett, who sought to straddle the disciplines of anthropology and history and who befriended Barwick soon after her arrival in Australia, were unusual.)

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44 Reece 1986a; Gunson to Foster, 15 April 1986; Bell 1986; Williams 1986: 1-3; Rowse 2007; Gunson, interview with author, 18 January 2012; Reece to author, 21 January 2012; Urry to author, 14 February 2012; Marian Quartly to author, 16 February 2012; Stannage to author, 8 March 2012.



Furthermore, Barwick's approach was different in that she privileged the role of ethnography rather than the more conceptual work traditionally emphasised by many in her discipline.<sup>45</sup>

In the several years following the award of her PhD in 1964 Barwick began to combine the insights she had drawn from the ethnographic field work she had conducted among the Aboriginal community in Melbourne with the knowledge she was gleaned about these people from documentary research she carried out in the government archives. By the mid 1970s, if not earlier, she had become committed to trying to understand the lives of Aboriginal people, past and present, by adopting an approach that drew upon both ethnographic and historical approaches. This in turn prompted her to consider what the field of Aboriginal history could or should be. During the journal's early years, Barwick never explicated her concept of Aboriginal history in any thorough way (just as the journal's promoters were reluctant to make more than a brief statement in its first volume).<sup>46</sup> Yet the kind of journal she had in mind and pursued is evident in letters she wrote to contributors to the journal as well as to her fellow editors and members of the editorial board, and in the content of the early volumes of the journal.

Barwick, and those closest to her on the editorial board, namely Hercus and McBryde, were determined that Aboriginal history would focus on Aboriginal people. This had, at the very least, two, inter-related dimensions. First, Aborigines rather than anyone else were to be its principal subjects. At the launch of the journal's first volume, Barwick stated that its task was to bring about a new kind of Australian historical writing by 'put[ting] Aborigines in focus instead of in the footnotes'. What she meant was not altogether clear, but a few years later she spelt this out when she insisted that 'innovations in language and kinship systems, economic adaptations, migration, trade and exchange, the spread of ceremonies, and other changes *within* Aboriginal society [were] as important to Aboriginal history as the changes imposed by European control'. This is to say that Barwick prescribed the undertaking of what might be called an internal history. This made clear that the project of Aboriginal history was to be different from that of the history of colonialism as its primary subjects were to be the indigenous peoples, and developments among them, rather than the colonisers.<sup>47</sup>

Second, Aboriginal perspectives, albeit mediated in large part by white scholars, were to be to the fore. This emphasis not only involved the kind of shift in moral

45 Barwick 1983; Beckett 1986: 81; Cowlshaw 1992: 23–25; Kijas 1992: 5–7; Kijas 1997: 52, 56.

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

47 Barwick, Notes for Speech at the Launch of Vol. 1, 31 January 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02273; Barwick 1980: 7, her emphasis.

viewpoint from the European to the indigenous that characterised recent work on colonialism. It also entailed a shift in the sense of one's standpoint so that one looked over the shoulders of the indigenous people or even through their eyes. Barwick stated emphatically in December 1976: 'Luise Hercus and I have been insisting that this [journal] must focus on Aboriginal history not white men's opinions'; and in May 1980 she asserted that white scholars 'must try to explain Aboriginal reaction in Aboriginal terms, or we are still telling the story from the white man's point of view'. This was one of the reasons why Barwick and Reece chose Stanner's article "'The History of Indifference Thus Begins'" to open the first volume of the journal. 'It is *unique* in emphasising the Aboriginal perception of historical events', Barwick told its author. 'This is precisely what we want for the journal[:] the perception that Australian historians have not – probably cannot – provide.' In Barwick's eyes, Stanner's was a 'great paper' because, apart from its focus on Aboriginal agency during the first sustained encounter between Aboriginal people and the British at Botany Bay and Port Jackson, it provided what she called 'an inversion of the white perceptions'. Here, too, at least in its stress on Aboriginal perspectives, Aboriginal history departed from the history of colonialism: whereas the latter tended to assume that colonialism had simply led to the destruction, degradation and decline of Aboriginal culture and sought to tell the story of this phenomenon, Aboriginal history assumed the survival of an autonomous indigenous world and tried to tell a story of its adaptation to the colonial presence and the ways in which this continued to shape Aboriginal people and their sense of themselves.<sup>48</sup>

Barwick as well as Gunson, Hercus and McBryde assumed that the work of *Aboriginal History* and Aboriginal history more generally should be interdisciplinary in nature or even that it *had* to be an inter-disciplinary enterprise in order to be able to focus on Aboriginal perspectives. In their opinion the discipline of history was not up to the task. This position had consequences for much of the editorial work that had to be undertaken in the first year or so of the journal's life. Some of these tasks were merely technical: a particular system of referencing was devised, which more or less amounted to an amalgam of the in-text (Harvard) style and the documentary-note (Oxford) style, in order to accommodate the range of disciplines that would be represented (as well as to make references accessible to general readers); and varitypists or typesetters were found in order to reproduce the particular type style or styles used in Aboriginal language texts. At the same time, agreement had to be reached in regard to the nature of authorship statements for material that was the product of collaboration between non-Aboriginal scholars and Aboriginal story-tellers, which had traditionally appeared under the name of the former only. There was more or less a consensus about such matters among the members of the editorial board. The same could not be said of a much larger issue, namely the very nature of the journal's enterprise.<sup>49</sup>

48 Barwick to WEH Stanner, 12 December 1976, her emphasis, Barwick Papers, Box 7, BARI02629; Barwick to Bruce Sommer, 20 February 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI01545; Barwick 1980: 2, 13; McBryde 1996: 2–3, 10–12.

49 Barwick to Reece, 19 October 1977; Barwick to Bruce Shaw, 2 July 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02272; Urry, Circular letter, undated [c. mid 1978], Barwick Papers, Box 6, BARI02502; Barwick to Julie Rigg, 11 July 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02273; Shaw to Barwick, 13

Barwick believed that the approach most historians adopted in the field of 'Aboriginal history' was deeply problematic. Indeed, in her eyes, their work merely amounted to studies of 'race relations'. By this, she meant that it was unduly preoccupied with the history of colonialism. To Barwick's way of thinking, Aboriginal history was the kind of work that Luise Hercus and Peter Sutton had recently produced: a volume of Aboriginal people's stories regarding the contact experience that were drawn from their oral traditions and told in their own languages (which Hercus and Sutton had persuaded their fellow linguists to make available even though few of them had much historical interest in those texts).<sup>50</sup> Barwick made this opinion plain in much of her correspondence. In October 1978, in the course of urging the geographer Fay Gale to consider some of her students' theses for contributions to the journal, she emphasised: 'I'd like something from the Aborigines' point of view, not more race relations from documents, which is all the historians are doing'; and earlier that year, as she advised the anthropologist Bruce Shaw what he might submit, she complained: 'The historians have published innumerable studies from documents which gives only [the] white man's view'. In March 1979, in the course of encouraging the Aboriginal historian Bill Rosser to submit material to the journal, she clarified what she was after: 'I want *Aboriginal History* to emphasise Aborigines as actors in history; [and provide] the view from the other side'. Consequently, she called upon authors to produce accounts that focused on Aboriginal agency and Aboriginal perspectives. For instance, she asked Shaw to prepare an article that might be 'an Aboriginal version of employment on a particular cattle station, or a reminiscence of a massacre, or recollections of early contact or encounters with specific Europeans'. In adopting this approach, Barwick was very conscious that Aboriginal accounts could differ markedly from academic ones. As she later observed in her important essay 'Writing Aboriginal History', academic works, addressed to a white Australian audience, tended to focus on the oppression and hardship of Aboriginal people and sought to not only instruct but reproach their readers. By contrast, Aboriginal accounts, usually intended for both settler and Aboriginal audiences, revealed a greater range of experience and feeling and were less inclined to pass judgement on those who acted badly. Writing about one of these histories, Barwick pointed out: 'the funny bits are told with relish and explained in more detail than the poverty, prejudice and official decision which formed the inescapable framework of Aboriginal life'.<sup>51</sup>

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July 1978, Gunson Papers; Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 14 July 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02410; Barwick to Sylvia Hallam, 1 September 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 3, BARI02436; Barwick, Abstract for Current Developments in Aboriginal History, Barwick Papers, Series 4007, Box 2, BARI01511; Barwick 1980: 13; Isabel McBryde, Proposal for a thematic issue of *Aboriginal History* devoted to interdisciplinary studies of Aboriginal Societies in South-Eastern Australia, 16 July 1982, Barwick Papers, Box 5, BARI02468; Diane Barwick, Aboriginal History: Editorial Responsibilities and Board Policy, 18 March 1983, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI00136; Gunson, Retiring Editor's Report, undated [c. 1987], Gunson Papers.

50 The volume appeared several years later: Hercus and Sutton 1986.

51 Barwick to Shaw, 20 February 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI01545; Barwick to Donald McKaskill, 26 May 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02273; Barwick to Edgar Wells, 17 June 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 3, BARI02430; Barwick to Fay Gale, Barwick Papers, Box 3, BARI02432; Barwick to Bill Rosser, 14 March 1979, Barwick Papers, Box 3, BARI02431; Barwick 1980: 4;

Barwick's position on Aboriginal history, as we have already noted, grew in large part out of her own research experience. She had become convinced that accounts of the past that relied upon documentary records provided at best a partial understanding, primarily because they contained very little of the worldview of Aboriginal people. She was particularly interested in revealing how history, both as a past and as accounts of that past, lived in the present. In order to provide Aboriginal perspectives, or what she often called 'the view from the other side', Barwick believed that oral history had to be conducted. 'Documents written and preserved by only half the participants in historical events are likely to tell only half the story', she wrote. 'Other records have been preserved in the oral history of Aboriginal communities.' At this time a small but growing number of historians in the west were beginning to realise the potential of oral sources to recover the lives of those said to have been 'hidden from history'. Most notably, the English historian Paul Thompson had published in 1978 his seminar text *The Voice of the Past*. But many historians in Australia, as elsewhere, remained wary of the method of oral history and drew attention to the vagaries of memory. In the early years of the journal Barwick saw to it that a good deal of material involving Aboriginal oral material was published in its pages. As she commented in a reader's report she wrote on Hercus' article 'Tales of Njadu-dagali (Rib-Bone Billy)', which was to appear in the first volume of the journal, 'I think the use of Aboriginal-language texts is very important for the proposed Journal of Aboriginal History'. In publishing what largely amounted to Aboriginal authored texts, Barwick urged the journal's board to adopt a policy that ensured they were given the same status as academic articles submitted by white scholars. Recommending the publication of Hercus' 'Tales', she pleaded: 'Can such MSS stand alone rather than being submerged in an "oral history department" as somehow separate (inferior?) to white-man-history?' In due course Barwick was very pleased that the journal had published Francesca Merlan's '"Making People Quiet" in the Pastoral North: Reminiscences of Elsey Station', Bruce Shaw's 'They Did it Themselves: Reminiscences of Seventy Years', and Peter Read's 'The Price of Tobacco: The Journey of the Warlmala to Wave Hill', in its first two volumes, in large part because she believed that they were instructive examples of the different ways 'oral history' could be deployed to good effect.<sup>52</sup>

Barwick championed the use of oral history for several reasons. She believed that it could not only provide Aboriginal perspectives but help make sense of documentary sources and so ensure a more accurate account of the past. As this might suggest, Barwick's approach to understanding the past was fundamentally empirical, as indeed was the approach of historians like Thompson. She tended

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Barwick 1981: 75, 77, 79, 83; Barwick, Aboriginal History: Editorial Responsibilities and Board Policy, 18 March 1983, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI00136; Hercus and Sutton 1986: 1, 4; Urry to author, 7 February 2012.

52 Barwick, Report on Hercus, 'Tales of Nadu-Dagili', 24 March 1977, Barwick Papers, Box 7, BARI02629; Barwick to Shaw, 20 February 1978; Barwick to Francesca Merlan, 2 July 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02399; Barwick to Rosser, 14 March 1979; Barwick to Rosser, 9 April 1979, Barwick Papers, Box 3, BARI02431; Barwick, Mace and Stannage 1979: vii.

to be very critical of any work that relied upon oral history alone. This led her to damn a book that was widely acclaimed on its publication in 1977: *The Two Worlds of Jimmie Barker*. Had its compiler, Janet Mathews, consulted the documentary record, Barwick insisted, she would have been sceptical of some of her informant's claims. After reading the manuscript of her fellow editor's review of this book for the first volume of the journal, which revealed that Reece had accepted the veracity of Barker's testimony, Barwick dashed off a letter chastising him: 'For a serious history journal of this kind I think the reviewer ought to regret that the author was not aware of written sources and did not question the old man about specific happenings'.<sup>53</sup> This, Barwick added, would have enabled 'the dual perceptions' (provided by the oral and the documentary sources) to be 'put side by side'; that is, they could be compared and consequently Mathews' text would have been corrected.<sup>54</sup>

Barwick was similarly emphatic that scholars working in the field of Aboriginal history needed to draw on the discipline of anthropology, or more especially the work of ethnography in order to understand the Aboriginal past. 'Too few of the historians writing about contact really understand the culture of the Australian Aborigines', she was inclined to say. This was a further reason why Barwick and Reece selected Stanner's "'The History of Indifference'" as the lead article for the journal's opening volume. In that article Stanner largely sought to understand the Aboriginal response to contact by reading the journals, letters and despatches of the intruders in the light of his knowledge of Aboriginal customs and conventions. By doing this, he was able to draw into question long held Anglo-Celtic assumptions about the ways in which Aboriginal people had reacted to the British presence. One example must suffice. 'The records make much of the Aborigines' apparent hostility', Stanner noted. 'But the shaken spears did not necessarily indicate outright hostility', he argued. 'Universally, the Aborigines used such gestures at all meetings of great significance; there was always something of ritual in them; and curiosity must have been at least equal to fear or anger.'<sup>55</sup>

By this time the historian Henry Reynolds had already begun to draw upon anthropological approaches in order to understand the Aboriginal response to their conquest and dispossession.<sup>56</sup> Barwick, McBryde and Urry welcomed this work but they were nonetheless critical of it. They thought that Reynolds, in common with most historians, tended to make sweeping generalisations about Aboriginal culture and history rather than attending to its spatial and temporal variations. Here was another dimension of what the journal's editors had in mind for Aboriginal history, namely a focus on the Aboriginal in the sense of the local, as in the traditional use of the word 'aborigines' or *ab origine*: 'those

53 Reece revised his review of the book in the wake of Barwick's trenchant criticism (cf Reece, ms of his review, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02403, and Reece 1979: especially 162).

54 Barwick to Reece, 7 November 1977, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02403; Barwick to Shaw, February 1978; Barwick to Rosser, 9 April 1979; Thomson 2007: 52.

55 Stanner 1977: 5; Barwick 1980: 2.

56 See Reynolds 1976 and 1978a.



believed to have been the inhabitants of a country [or place]'. In the light of this criticism, the journal's editorial board welcomed a short paper Reynolds submitted (after Barwick had asked him if he had anything sitting in a drawer that might be of interest). As McBryde observed, 'I was glad to see the paper confining its study to one region, which allows the comprehensive examination of all evidence and avoids the sweeping generalisation that must have regional exceptions. We need to base our knowledge of contact history more firmly in the detailed regional study before embarking on far reaching analysis'. In keeping with this emphasis, the journal's board developed a policy of encouraging its authors to refer to Aboriginal people by their 'clan/tribe/language or regional name'.<sup>57</sup>

This emphasis on the *aboriginal* further distinguished Aboriginal history from the historical work focusing on colonialism. This approach was articulated most clearly in an article Reece later wrote, 'Inventing Aborigines'. After noting that Aborigines were a by-product of the European colonisation of the country (in the sense that they had only come to have a common culture and a common consciousness as a consequence of that past), he asserted that historians were guilty of inventing a kind of national history for the Aboriginal people that distorted understanding of their past. 'Although doubt has been cast on the validity and usefulness of national historiography itself, there seems to be a naïve need to generalise about "the [Aboriginal] experience"', Reece argued. 'This does not mean', he hastened to add, 'that European Australians cannot or should not write Aboriginal history, but that they should be more cautious in writing about an entity which has been fictional until recent times'. Consequently, Reece suggested that Aboriginal history should largely comprise local histories.<sup>58</sup>

In fact the editors of *Aboriginal History* were critical of a good deal of the research that historians had done on the post-contact Aboriginal past. In particular they were troubled by the dominance of the concepts such 'the frontier' and 'resistance'. In their opinion, this was problematic for several reasons. First, the stress placed on conflict overshadowed the other ways Aboriginal people and settlers had related to one another. 'Many of us are outraged by the cruelty and dishonesty of settlers and governments', Barwick was to observe in 1980. 'But the contact process is a complex cultural pattern.' Second, Aboriginal people tended to be caricatured as the vanquished, which denied them any agency in the history of contact. 'Aborigines', Barwick insisted, 'were not passive objects of European attentions'. Third, so much attention was being paid to the violence committed by Europeans that the phenomenon of Aboriginal people killing one another,

57 Henry Reynolds to Barwick, 6 March [1978], Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02272; Barwick to Reynolds, 15 March 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02272; Referees' Reports on Reynolds, 'Before the Instant of Contact', 23 March 1978, 3 April 1978 and c. April 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02402; Barwick, Comments on ms of Andrew Markus, Review Article, 11 July 1977, Barwick Papers, Box 7, BARI02629; Urry 1978; Reynolds to Barwick, 29 May 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02272; Barwick, Aboriginal History: Editorial Responsibilities and Board Policy, 18 March 1983; Ramson 1988, entry for 'Aborigines', see <<http://203.166.81.53/and/index.php>> accessed 14 February 2012.

58 Reece 1987: 14-15.



and the fact that the frontier was not a common front on the Aboriginal side, had been overlooked. 'What impressed me most is the unabashed reminiscence about Aborigines killing each other', Barwick told Shaw after reading the manuscript of his book *My Country of the Pelican Dreaming*. Fourth, while the editors of the journal recognised that the new revisionist history of the Aboriginal-European encounter could have political consequences,<sup>59</sup> they were critical of authors who seemed to be more interested in passing judgement on the past than in trying to understand it. Indeed, as we have already observed, they were committed to the pursuit of dispassionate, reasoned, scholarly inquiry.<sup>60</sup>

Most of the criticisms the journal's principal figures made of the work of historians were variations on a theme: it was too Eurocentric. But the editorial board's wish to focus on Aboriginal people, agency and perspectives meant that it was often reluctant to publish studies that might otherwise be regarded as research that advanced historical understanding of the post-contact history of Aboriginal people and which was accepted for publication by journals devoted to Australian history. Perhaps the best example of this was the editorial board's response to a paper the historian Alan Frost submitted in 1980, 'Of Distant Lands and their Peoples'. In it Frost sought to explain why the British had acted in the late eighteenth century as though the Australian continent had no Aboriginal owners and so had seen no need to negotiate for cession of land. Most of the journal's editorial board were critical of the fact that this paper did not shed any real light on Aboriginal people or culture.<sup>61</sup> As one referee observed, 'Frost has sufficient material to express the European attitude of applying *terra nullius* to the Australian situation, using his historical references to support his argument. With a little more research he could indicate what was the make-up of Aboriginal society at the time of European contact'.<sup>62</sup> The historian Peter Read, who joined the editorial board in 1981, was more or less expressing what had become the

59 Indeed, they sought to ensure that the journal would be a force for reform in scholarly practices. For example, they directed authors to pay attention to the nature of their language by avoiding terms such as 'half-caste' and 'full-blood' and to seek expert advice on matters that might offend Aboriginal conventions of propriety and privacy (Barwick, Memo for Editorial Board Meeting 8 September 1978 re the use of expletives and obscenities in quoted texts, and Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 13 October 1978, Gunson Papers; Barwick to Richard Broome, 18 July 1980, Barwick Papers, Box 3, BARI02438; Barwick, Aboriginal History: Editorial Responsibilities and Board Policy, 18 March 1983).

60 Barwick to Sutton, 17 March 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 3, BARI02432; Referees' Reports on Reynolds, "'Before the Instant of Contact'", 3 April 1978 and c. April 1978; Barwick to Shaw, 20 October 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02272; Barwick 1980: 12-13; Urry to Sandy Yarwood, 15 October 1980, and Urry to John Stanton, 22 January 1981, Barwick Papers, Box 4, BARI02439; Hercus and Sutton 1986: 2-3; Reece 1987: 15-16; Hercus, interview with author, 18 January 2012; Urry to author, 7 February 2012.

61 Frost declined the Board's invitation to undertake major revision of his paper and offered it instead to the editor of *Historical Studies* (since retitled *Australian Historical Studies*), John Hirst, who promptly accepted it (Frost to Urry, 14 October 1980 and 14 January 1981, Barwick Papers, Box 4, BARI02439; Frost 1981).

62 This matter had contemporary legal and political implications, as one referee observed: '[Frost] would then be in a position to compare the two and, I suspect, the end result would be a rejection of the Europeans' concept of applying *terra nullius* to the Australian situation' (Referee's Report, 4 September 1980, Barwick Papers, Box 4, BARI02439).

journal's policy when he commented, a year or so later: 'I think there should be a severe limitation on articles about *whites* in *Aboriginal History*, especially administrators, e.g. *no more than one article per issue*'. This was not merely a matter of policy but one of practice. The material that the journal published, at least in these early years, *was* distinctive. Much of it would not have been accepted by a more traditional kind of scholarly historical journal, which tended to place greater emphasis on causation, chronology and consequence. Indeed, it can be argued that only one or at most two of the articles published in each of the volumes printed in the journal's first ten years would have found a home in a conventional journal of historical studies (for example, those by John Ferry and WEH Stanner/Diane Barwick in vol 3, John and Leslie Haviland and Noel Loos in vol 4, and Gregory Lyons and Henry Reynolds in vol 7).<sup>63</sup>

In the light of what I have been arguing here it is probably not surprising that most of the scholarly articles published by the journal during Barwick's time in the editorial chair were authored by academics trained in the fields of anthropology, archaeology and linguistics rather than history. In each of the first three volumes only one in four of the scholarly articles published could be said to be the work of a historian. Furthermore, Barwick can only have regarded one of these as truly satisfactory, namely Lyndall Ryan's 'The Struggle for Recognition', which was an article in which its author had drawn on ethnohistorical, archaeological and historical sources to give an account of the emergence and development of distinctive 'part-Aboriginal' communities and life ways in Tasmania in the nineteenth century as they adapted the traditions of their Aboriginal and European forebears.<sup>64</sup>

In the early years of the journal Barwick expressed a wish 'to balance theoretical [and] descriptive articles', and in its first volume she and Reece published an article by Beckett that deployed the Marxist concept of internal colonialism in order to explain the modes of production at work in the Torres Strait pearling industry and the Island society's relationship with Australia. But Barwick had little interest in theory and preferred descriptive accounts, especially those that emphasised indigenous agency and perspectives. Most of all, she welcomed material that had a strong biographical focus.<sup>65</sup> For instance, she was assiduous in encouraging Shaw and his students to produce Aboriginal life stories, and she warmly praised Beckett's account of George Dutton, which was published in the second volume, and Read's study of five Aboriginal men, which appeared in volume 4.<sup>66</sup>

63 Ferry 1979; Stanner and Barwick 1979; Urry to Alan Frost, 16 September 1980 (and nine reader reports), Barwick Papers, Box 4, BARI02439; Haviland and Haviland 1980; Loos 1980; Gunson to Peter Read, 1 April 1981, Gunson Papers; Referee's Report on Bill Thorpe, 'The Protector as Hero', 19 October 1981, original emphases, Barwick Papers, Box 6, BARI02500; Lyons 1983; Reynolds 1983.

64 Barwick, List of letters to be sent to solicit contributions, undated [c. 1978], Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02425; Barwick to Stanner, 12 June 1980, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02423.

65 For examples of Barwick's own biographical work, see Barwick 1985a and 1985b.

66 Barwick to Shaw, 20 February 1978; Barwick to Merlan, 2 July 1978; Barwick to Jeremy Beckett, 9 August 1978 and 6 September 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02442; Shaw to Barwick, 21

Finally, in respect of Barwick's approach, she was eager to publish scholarly papers by Aboriginal authors in order to achieve what she called 'the double view of Aboriginal history'. Indeed, she worked hard to solicit contributions from the few Aboriginal people working in this way at the time. This was to no avail, though Barwick was able to publish some material that drew attention to the growing interest among Aboriginal people in the resources provided by the records and the remains of the past. For example, she commissioned a short article (by the anthropologist Athol Chase) describing a visit Aboriginal men from the Lockhart River in North Queensland had made to the National Museum of Victoria in Melbourne in order to see material the anthropologist Donald Thomson had collected in the 1920s and 1930s, and later the journal would publish pieces on black family history (by Niel Gunson) and Aboriginal community involvement in the founding of a university Aboriginal research centre (by Fay Gale). Furthermore, Barwick was assiduous in trying to recruit Aboriginal people for the journal's editorial board, though the terms of Marcia Langton, Gloria Brennan, John Newfong, and Les Malezer tended to be short as their services were in great demand by government or community bodies elsewhere in Australia.<sup>67</sup>

Given its path-breaking nature, it is not surprising that *Aboriginal History* experienced some moments of discord in its early years. In the course of 1977 serious conflict occurred, prompting what Barwick rightly called an 'editorial crisis'. This arose as a result of a clash over a book review Andrew Markus had asked a fellow historian Humphrey McQueen, one of Australia's most prolific reviewers, to write,<sup>68</sup> but there can be no doubt that larger matters were at stake.

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November 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 4, BARI02452; Barwick 1978: 13; Barwick to Lois Tilbrook, 22 January 1980, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02319; Barwick to Read, 10 December 1980, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02421; Hank Nelson to Urry, 26 June 1982, Barwick Papers, Box 5, BARI02483; Beckett to author, 8 February 2012.

67 Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 10 March 1978, Gunson Papers; Barwick to Reece, 14 March 1978 and 21 April 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02274; Grimshaw to Gloria Brennan, 23 April 1979, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02407; Barwick to Rosser, 14 March 1979; Barwick to Athol Chase, 23 March 1979, and Barwick to Markus, 23 March 1979, Barwick Papers, Box 3, BARI02429; Barwick to Susan Bulmer, 20 November 1979, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02424; Chase 1979; Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 18 January 1980, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02423; Gunson to John Newfong, 18 February 1980, Gunson Papers; Aboriginal History Editors' Report 20 March 1980, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02423; Barwick 1980: 5; Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 29 May 1981, and Gunson to Les Malezer, 9 June 1981, Gunson Papers; Gunson 1981; Gale 1982; Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 26 October 1984, Gunson Papers; McBryde, personal communication to author, 28 March 2012.

68 Two years earlier Gunson and Reece had invited McQueen, who had published a short book on Aborigines and racism in 1974, to serve on the journal's national committee, but he had declined on political grounds, telling them: 'I wish you well with your volume, will subscribe, and might even submit for publication. But because Marxism is such a frail blossom in Australia, I have drawn a line at being officially associated with other than Marxist publications – and even there I'm growing increasingly fastidious. In any case, my decision was confirmed by your intention to work through the [Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies] which – irrespective of personnel – is a state apparatus' (Humphrey McQueen to Gunson and Reece, 18 October 1975, Gunson Papers). In the midst of the editorial crisis of late 1977, McQueen was to tell Barwick: 'In general, the whole business has merely confirmed my original decision not to be closely associated

These concerned what the journal's editors should commission and/or accept for publication in terms of both articles and reviews, and who they should publish in disciplinary terms, which raised the question of which disciplinary practitioners should have the authority to decide these matters. These issues went to the heart of the question of what Aboriginal history should be as a historiographical project. At the same time there was a personal dimension to the conflict that occurred, and this should not be overlooked.

It is apparent that Barwick and Markus had radically different conceptions of the enterprise. Barwick had accepted an editorial role on the basis that the journal would place its emphasis upon Aboriginal people. By contrast, Markus' research, as well as the work he wanted to promote in the journal, focused for the most part on European racism and especially white Australian attitudes, ideas, laws, policies, practices and structures.<sup>69</sup> This was evident in a review article he wrote for the first volume of the journal, 'Through a Glass Darkly', which was, appropriately, subtitled 'Aspects of Contact History' rather than 'Aspects of Aboriginal History'. It differed markedly from the articles in the same volume as well as a good part of a select bibliography whose preparation Barwick had overseen. Whereas their focus was upon Aboriginal people, his was not.<sup>70</sup> As Barwick caustically but unfairly remarked in the course of making a series of highly critical page-by-page notes on a draft of Markus' review article: 'p. 9 "Lastly ... Aboriginal response" – this is typical of the extent of historical writing!' To make matters worse, Barwick believed that Markus wanted to turn the journal into a version of the journal *Labour History*, rather than promote Aboriginal history. (Markus had been the assistant editor of *Labour History* during 1976–77 and had remained a member of its editorial board after joining the board of *Aboriginal History*.) In keeping with these differences, Markus rejected Barwick's claim that Hercus' 'Tales of Nadu-Dagli (Rib-Bone Billy)' was ground breaking, and insisted that a paper by fellow historian Ann Curthoys (who had a similar historical approach to his) should have been included in the first volume rather than the one by Ryan which focused on Aboriginal people and perspectives. To make matters worse, Markus had a poor opinion of the outcomes of the research that had been conducted since the revival of interest among historians in the field. 'Considering the amount of energy expended in the last ten years', he had remarked, 'the quality of the yield has been disappointing'. Moreover, he

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with the whole project of a journal. Only my friendship with Andrew [Markus] allowed me to weaken to the point of promising a review'. He added: 'Perhaps journals are to academia what barricades are to insurrections: militarily useless, but the best way to see who is on the other side' (McQueen to Barwick, 28 October 1977, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02403). Not surprisingly perhaps, this remark infuriated Barwick (Barwick to Reece, 18 November 1977, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02403).

69 For the nature of Markus' work, see Markus 1974, Markus and Curthoys 1978, especially his essay 'Talka Longa Mouth: Aborigines and the Labour Movement 1890–1970', Markus 1979 and Markus 1990, but cf Markus 1986, Johnson and Markus 1987, and Attwood and Markus 1999.

70 That this was the opinion of those such as McBryde seems to be evidenced by a remark she made to Barwick a few years later: 'We have not had a survey article on Aboriginal History and we *really should!*' (McBryde to Barwick, undated note [c. May 1980], Barwick Papers, Series 4007, Box 2, BARI01511, her emphases).

was critical of the pioneering study of Charles Rowley, for which Barwick had undertaken research and which had drawn on Barwick's own work, and this rankled with her.<sup>71</sup>

Generational differences played a role in this conflict, Barwick having been born a year before World War Two began, Markus three years after it ended. By the mid to late 1970s, Barwick had worked in the field for some time; Markus was holding his first academic position. In particular, Barwick regarded Markus as something of an upstart, one of a younger generation of historians whom she accused of having 'hopped on the bandwagon' since Rowley had published his trilogy. More to the point, she felt that he did not recognise, let alone acknowledge, her claim to have considerable expertise on the basis of having worked in the field for 15 years. She felt slighted by Markus' consideration in his review article of the work done in the field, and found it necessary to point out to him that she had at least '*produced* a book' (i.e. a monograph), unlike a historian whose work Markus had discussed at some length (Reynolds),<sup>72</sup> and that he had overlooked the historical work that she as well as other anthropologists had done. But it is clear that the disciplinary background of the two interlocutors was the most important factor in this conflict. Barwick believed that those in the disciplines of anthropology, linguistics and prehistory had the most to offer, largely because the fieldwork they conducted tended to bring them into close contact with Aboriginal people who were often absent or anonymous in the documentary record. She argued that Markus knew few of the scholars in those disciplines and that this meant that he lacked the knowledge to choose appropriate reviewers. Markus believed history should be the dominant discipline, thought that Barwick lacked knowledge of and contacts among historians in the country, and doubted her competence to select papers submitted by historians. He was of the opinion, too, that any history worth its salt should strive to reveal something about both the causes and consequences of the past, which required a greater emphasis on colonial forces than Aboriginal ones, and he thought that some of the papers that Barwick championed did not meet these criteria.<sup>73</sup>

71 Rowley 1970b; Barwick, Comments on Markus draft of 'Through a Glass Darkly', 11 July 1977, Barwick Papers, Box 7, BARI02629; Barwick, File Notes, 14 November 1977, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02404; Barwick to Reece, 18 November 1977, her emphasis; Reece to Barwick, 21 November 1977, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02403; Front Matter, *Labour History* 33, 1977: [i]; Markus 1977: 172; Reece to Barwick, 26 January 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02274; Markus 1977: 171-172; Aboriginal History, Chairman's Report 1977-78, undated [c. March 1978], Gunson Papers; 'Current Research', *Aboriginal History* 2, 1978: 185; Kijas 1993: 84; Markus to the author, 10 January 2012.

72 Barwick was referring here to the book on Coranderrk she had authored and which was due to be published by the ANU Press. She later decided to withdraw the manuscript as she felt it needed more work. It was published posthumously in 1998 (in a monograph series the journal had begun two years earlier).

73 Barwick, Comments on Markus draft, her emphasis; Barwick, File Notes, 10 and 11 November 1977, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02404; Barwick to Reece, 19 October 1977, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02403; Barwick to Reece, 18 November 1977; Barwick to Reece, 21 November 1977, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02403; Stannage to author, 8 March 2012.



In the end this conflict boiled down to a question of how much autonomy the journal's principal editor and its review editor should have in performing their roles and to whom they should be responsible. Both Barwick and Markus felt the other had too much influence over what the journal would publish. Eventually, Markus requested that the matter be placed on the agenda for one of the editorial board's monthly meetings, after Barwick and Reece had sought to override his authority in respect of McQueen's review. He presented two proposals: first, that the review editor be responsible to the editorial board, rather than to the editor(s), as Barwick and Reece had been insisting, and that the selection of reviewers and books for review as well as the decision to publish reviews be determined by the review editor alone; and, second, that the selection of articles be decided by the editors and four specially designated members of the Board whom he hoped would be historians, rather than by the editor(s) after consultation with all the Board members.<sup>74</sup>

In effect, Markus' proposals, or at least the latter one, raised the very question of what kind of historiographical enterprise *Aboriginal History* would be. This was recognised by the journal's key players. Gunson told the board in his chairman's report: 'As with most big ventures there have been some teething problems and some real problems. It is partly to consider some of these that we are holding this meeting. The basic issues for our attention are the questions of editorial responsibility and the nature of Aboriginal history'. Barwick responded to Markus' proposals by spelling out her conception of the journal: 'I accepted co-editorship on the assumption that this new journal would emphasise *Aboriginal* history, drawing on the expertise of historians, anthropologists, archaeologists and linguists who have undertaken extensive research in this broad field and would aim at an audience including all these disciplines as well as interested laymen and students'. She had since become aware, she complained, that her colleagues thought it should 'primarily [be] a *history* journal, explicitly modelled on the specialist journals *Pacific History* and *Labour History*'. Such journals, she argued, were not an appropriate model for *Aboriginal History* given its subject matter and the audience it was seeking to reach. 'This broad field', she insisted, 'is not the preserve of and cannot be mastered by members of any one discipline'. This consideration, Barwick argued, should determine the journal's editorial policies. In other words, in selecting scholarly articles and referees and in choosing books and book reviewers, the periodical had to be guided by the broad range of specialist knowledge held by members of the Board. Only this could ensure 'coverage of the field of Aboriginal history'.<sup>75</sup>

74 Markus to Gunson, 15 August 1977, Reece to Barwick, 29 August 1977, and Reece to Markus, 29 August 1977, Gunson Papers; Markus to Barwick, 8 November 1977, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02403; Barwick, File Notes, 11 November 1977; Agenda for Meeting of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting 25 November 1977, 17 November 1977; Barwick to Reece, 21 November 1977, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02403.

75 *Aboriginal History*: Chairman's Report for 1977, 24 November 1977, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02403; Barwick, Amendment of Proposals 3 and 5: Editorial Responsibility and the Nature of Aboriginal History, [24 November 1977], her emphases, and Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 25 November 1977, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02403, her emphases, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02403.



In an unusually long meeting – nearly three hours – these matters were thrashed out. Markus won support for his proposal regarding the roles and responsibility of the review editor, though it was agreed that he should be guided by the knowledge of the Board's members in selecting books and choosing reviewers. But, more importantly, his proposal to circumscribe the authority Barwick had been exercising as the journal's editor was defeated. In fact, only one Board member, Curthoys, backed his motion along these lines. Gunson's support for Barwick's position might have played a crucial role here, though in the paper he had prepared for the meeting he had tried to caution both the warring parties: 'As to the nature of Aboriginal history, I hope it remains as wide a concept as possible[,] allowing both the closely documented research articles and the more imaginative and speculative reinterpretations. History is about evidence of man's activities but it is also about ideas, so we must be careful not to become too exclusive'. This said, nearly all of the board's members seem to have been predisposed towards a venture that focused on Aboriginal people, actors and points of view. At the meeting's close, Gunson wisely sought to reconcile the opposing parties by suggesting that the editorial arrangements for the next year remain more or less the same (though Reece would now become a 'corresponding editor' in the light of his appointment to a position at Murdoch University in Western Australia). Not for nothing did Barwick once describe Gunson as 'an experienced peace chief from Pacific History'. In the course of the following year, Markus would press for more representation for historians on the journal's board but to no effect. Barwick was increasingly able to impress her conception of Aboriginal history on the journal.<sup>76</sup>

The editorial board's commitment to developing the field of Aboriginal history determined a good deal of the journal's content in its early years, at least in what was called Part 2 of each number.<sup>77</sup> Gunson in particular was determined to ensure that the emerging sub-discipline had solid foundations, which is why he took responsibility for the documents section. The journal's editors both commissioned and prepared material that was designed to draw attention to the available resources. An extensive bibliography of published and unpublished research on 'Aboriginal History and Social Change' was prepared (by Barwick, Urry and David Bennett) for the first volume; a series of pieces describing major archival and manuscript collections appeared in the subsequent five volumes; and the book reviews were regarded as a means of alerting readers and researchers to newly published books in the field. But the journal's editorial board also welcomed papers that revealed the enormous variety of source material that could be used in researching Aboriginal history, especially those in which Aboriginal people were prominent, hence the publication of articles on ethnographic film (Ian Dunlop), painting and drawing (George Chaloupka and

76 Aboriginal History: Chairman's Report for 1977; Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 25 November 1977; Markus to Gunson, 28 April 1978, Gunson Papers; Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 5 May 1978; Barwick 1980: 5.

77 The division of each volume of the journal into two parts was dictated by the conditions of the federal government's book bounty, which helped to offset the journal's costs.

Carol Cooper), song (Tamsin Donaldson), ceremony (Luise Hercus and Isobel White), creative writing (Adam Shoemaker), language (Tom Dutton et al), music (Paul Black and Grace Koch), and myth (Peter Austin and Norman Tindale).<sup>78</sup>

During the early years of the journal Barwick became interested in publishing material that considered not only Aboriginal perceptions and perspectives on the past but also what might be called Aboriginal conceptions of history. In March 1978 the linguist Peter Sutton had made a series of observations about 'Aboriginal views of history' in a letter to Barwick and told her he would 'like to see some papers devoted to the investigation of Aboriginal historiography'. In response she encouraged him to write about 'Aboriginal notions of history'.<sup>79</sup> More particularly, she noted that the Belgian scholar Jan Vansina had studied African peoples' uses of myth as charter, and suggested it was time that the same was done in regard to Aboriginal people.<sup>80</sup> In due course Barwick's interest in how Aboriginal and European approaches to representing the past differed from one another seems to have been sharpened by a statement a Working Party of Aboriginal Historians for the Bicentennial History made in 1981. In this declaration, she noted, they challenged 'the premise that Aboriginal history must satisfy historians' criteria of causation, chronology and writing style'. Yet it would seem that neither Barwick nor any of the members of the journal's editorial board were willing to embrace the kind of consideration that the exponents of cultural studies were beginning to devote to this matter. The journal rejected a paper submitted by Stephen Muecke entitled 'Discourse, History, Fiction: Language and Aboriginal History' that took the Working Party of Aboriginal Historians' statement as its point of departure and focused on an official account, an Aboriginal oral narrative and a novel regarding the Aboriginal figure Pigeon (or Jandamarra), largely because it failed to exhaust the various ways in which Pigeon's life story could be told, which included the kind of account an academic historian would provide.<sup>81</sup>

78 Document, undated [c. October 1975]; Barwick to Humphrey McQueen, 19 October 1977, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02403; Archives and Publications, undated memo [c. 1977], Gunson Papers; Barwick to Bulmer, 30 November 1979; Barwick to Tilbrook, 22 January 1980.

79 Sutton eventually did so in an important essay. See Sutton 1988.

80 This said, the journal's editorial board was to reject a paper the anthropologist Erich Kolig submitted regarding the transition from mythical to historical thought among Aboriginal people on the grounds that it did not fit with the kind of work it was publishing (Erich Kolig to Barwick, 4 June 1980, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02423; Editorial Board Decisions Required, 19 November 1980, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02421; Urry to Erich Kolig, 25 November 1980, Barwick Papers, Box 4, BARI02441). An essay Kolig had published the previous year on Aboriginal Captain Cook stories (1979), which was more ethnographic in nature, would have been more to the journal's liking.

81 Referee's Report on Hercus, Tales of Nadu-Dagili; Peter Sutton to Barwick, 8 March 1978, and Barwick to Sutton, 17 March 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 3, BARI02432; Barwick to Sutton, 5 April 1979, Barwick Papers, Box 3, BARI02429; Working Party 1981; Barwick 1981: 80-81; Urry to Stephen Muecke, 18 January 1982, and Readers' Reports on his paper, Barwick Papers, Box 7, BARI02522. Muecke's paper found a home in the opening number of *The Australian Journal of Cultural Studies*. Later, Muecke co-authored a paper that was more along the lines the journal favoured, and this was accepted (Muecke, Rumsey and Wirrunwarra 1985).

Barwick's commitment to promoting historical research by Aboriginal people led her to initiate one of the journal's most important ventures, the production of a guide to researching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander History, in order to cater for the growing number of Aboriginal people interested in telling their own people's history. She proposed this publication after persuading the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies to sponsor a workshop on oral history for Aboriginal people in June 1979.<sup>82</sup> Her objects were as much political as they were pedagogical. As she advised the editorial board of *Aboriginal History* in March that year: 'I have stressed [to the Institute] that mere talk sessions and even tuition in oral history interviewing will not satisfy the needs of the practitioners and will provide little feed-back to their communities unless guide-sheets are prepared covering the various topics in collecting historical material and the writing of history ... [And] until Aboriginal researchers have access to this kind of information they will not have real equality'. Barwick's co-editor, Tom Stannage, warmly embraced her plan. He had prepared a handbook on local history in Western Australia several years earlier. It would provide one model for the guide, a handbook for indigenous historians produced by the University of Papua New Guinea's journal *Oral History* another. Stannage believed that there would be great demand among university teachers for such a handbook. Together, he and Barwick persuaded the Board that most of the work could be done by its members and that it should be published by the journal as a supplement. They offered to serve as editors, and Michael Mace, the chairman of the Institute's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee, lent support. Time was of the essence since Barwick wanted the handbook to be available at the workshop. In early April they asked a long list of contributors, most of whom were either members of the Board or on staff at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies and ANU, to write short, informative essays and submit them by the end of the month. Most obliged, and after considerable editorial work in the course of the next month or so as well as an all-night stint by the printers, copies of the guide appeared at noon on the first day of the workshop. The handbook was remarkably comprehensive. The anthropologist Howard Morphy pointed out at the time that there were no essays on the visual arts, dance, oral literature (in the form of myth, poetry and song texts) and anthropological writings, but it nonetheless covered a large array of sources and crossed over many disciplines. Most importantly, it met a need. Before a year had passed, the first printing of some 1000 copies had been exhausted, and a second one was ordered, and by the autumn of 1984 a third print run was required. (By 1990, the handbook was in its fourth printing.)<sup>83</sup>

82 For a report of this conference, see Anon 1979.

83 Barwick to Stannage, 16 February 1979, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02407; Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 16 March 1979, and Barwick, Confidential Memo: Project: Publication of a Supplement to *Aboriginal History*, 15 March 1979, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02407; Stannage, Barwick and Michael Mace, Circular Letter, 4 April 1979, Stannage to Markus, 5 April 1979, and Instructions for Authors, undated [April 1979], Barwick Papers, Box 3, BARI02427; Barwick to Ted Thomas, 20 May 1979, and Barwick to Catherine Burke, 21 June 1979, Barwick Papers, Box 3, BARI02427; Barwick to Reece, 24 June 1979, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02406; Howard Morphy to Barwick, Stannage and Mace, 26 June 1979, and Barwick to Burke, 31 July 1979, Barwick Papers, Box 3, BARI02427; Barwick, Mace and Stannage 1979: [vii],

Apart from the emphasis the journal's editorial board placed on Aboriginal history in the various senses of that term, it is apparent that its key figures wanted to nurture research on particular aspects of the encounter between Aborigines and Europeans (and it might be noted that these were its preferred terms, rather than 'black' and 'white', because the latter pair was perceived to smack of a particular way of conceptualising cultural difference that the members of the editorial board abhorred). The second volume of the journal was headed 'The Impact of the Pastoral Industry' and it contained three scholarly articles (Jeremy Beckett's 'George Dutton's Country: Portrait of an Aboriginal Drover', Diane Bell's 'For our Families: The Kurundi Walk-Off and the Ngurrantiji Venture' and Francesca Merlan's "'Making People Quiet" in the Pastoral North') and two contributions in the 'Sources for Aboriginal History' (Bruce Shaw and Sandy McDonald's 'They Did it Themselves' and Peter Read and Engineer Jack Japaljarri's 'The Price of Tobacco'). Yet, as Barwick admitted, the choice of this theme had happened by chance. She would have preferred to devote a volume largely to the impact of the missions, especially if there could be material that told the story from both sides. Barwick was of the opinion that missions were, as she put it to one of her correspondents, 'the most important social change endeavour in Australia for the last century and more'. In fact she was dismayed by the tendency among her contemporaries to cast the missions as the destroyers of Aboriginal culture and she wanted to encourage work that captured the complexity of the encounter between missionary figures and Aboriginal people. Barwick set about trying to solicit material for a volume of the journal that would largely focus on missions, but insufficient material was submitted.<sup>84</sup>

In late 1978 McBryde suggested the journal consider doing volumes along thematic or regional lines and commissioning members of the editorial board to take responsibility for these. Some Board members doubted that thematic issues would meet the journal's remit of being inter-disciplinary but the proposal was accepted nonetheless. Shortly after, Urry put forward a proposal for a special issue devoted to Aboriginal-Asian contact, which would pay special attention to relations between Aboriginal people and Chinese, Malays and Afghans, and this volume was scheduled for volume 4 and eventually made up volume 5 of the journal. A few years later McBryde (who had become the journal's review editor in mid 1979) proposed a special issue devoted to an inter-disciplinary consideration of questions of group identity, territories and group interaction among Aboriginal societies in southeastern Australia, which grew out of a series

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[ix]; Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 18 January 1980, and Barwick to Tom and Maria Stannage, 7 April 1980, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02423; Aboriginal History Reports for 1980-81 and 1983-84, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI00136; Aboriginal History Report for 1989-90, 30 March 1990, Gunson Papers; Stannage to author, 8 March 2002.

84 Barwick to TGH Strehlow, 1 February 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02273; Barwick to Kay Saunders, 21 April 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 3, BARI02432; Barwick to Reece, 21 April 1978; Barwick to Edgar Wells, 17 June 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 3, BARI02430; Barwick to Reece, 21 November 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02274; Barwick to Saunders, 23 March 1979, Barwick Papers, Box 3, BARI02429; Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 25 May 1979, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02407; Barwick, Aboriginal History: Editorial Responsibilities and Board Policy, 18 March 1983; Isabel McBryde, personal communication to the author, 28 March 2012.

of meetings of scholars working in this part of Australia that she convened, which appeared as volume 8. The journal's next volume was devoted to Aboriginal languages, and was overseen by Luise Hercus and Tom Dutton.<sup>85</sup>

At the outset, the journal's editors made clear their wish to nurture historical research that was not only inter-disciplinary in nature but comparative as well. The description of the work they were interested in publishing made reference to studies that compared the experience of Aboriginal people with that of other groups such as Pacific Islanders in Australia. Barwick was especially keen to publish studies that drew on the insights to be gained from comparative history. She believed that North America was a more useful comparator for Australia than South Africa or South America, the latter of which had been used by more than one author submitting work to the journal, simply because their post-contact pasts had greater similarities, but at this time Barwick was more or less alone in doing such work.<sup>86</sup> In its second volume, the journal published a review article focusing on a recently published survey of the history of race relations in Australia and New Zealand, but Barwick was dismayed by what she saw as its author's simplistic discussion, and the journal published hardly any comparative studies, as historians increasingly abandoned such studies as they sought to focus on indigenous perspectives.<sup>87</sup>

So much for the directions in which the journal's key figures sought to take the field of Aboriginal history. What of its impact? The planners of *Aboriginal History* were by no means certain it would succeed, and the first number had already gone to press before the editorial board decided it would press ahead with the next one. Nonetheless, they were bold enough to order 1500 copies of the first volume.<sup>88</sup> It soon became apparent that there was considerable interest in the journal. There was a pleasingly large number of subscriptions and sales for the first volume even before the board sought to advertise the journal, though it thought that history was less well represented among its subscribers than the

85 Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 13 October 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02408; Urry, Proposal for a special issue of *Aboriginal History* devoted to the theme 'Aborigines and Asians', 9 November 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 7, BARI02523; Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 17 November 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02408; Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 20 April 1979, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02407; Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 25 May 1979; Grimshaw to Markus, 5 June 1979, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02274; Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 20 July 1979; Isabel McBryde, Proposal for a thematic issue of *Aboriginal History* devoted to interdisciplinary studies of Aboriginal Societies in South-Eastern Australia, 16 July 1982, Barwick Papers, Box 5, BARI02468.

86 In 1980 Barwick presented a paper at ANZAAS, 'Making a Treaty: The North American Experience' (copy held Barwick Papers, Series 4007, Box 2, BARI01522). This was published in the journal after her death: Barwick 1988.

87 The journal's aims, *Aboriginal History* 1, 1977, inside back cover; Barwick to Reece, 29 September 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02274; Hartwig 1978; Constitution of Aboriginal History, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02274; Barwick to Heather Goodall, 4 February 1980, Barwick Papers, Box 4, BARI02446; Barwick 1980: 9; Montgomerie 1997: 155.

88 The same number of the next three volumes were printed, but it was agreed in 1981 that this number was excessive and that 1000 copies was a more sensible print run (Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 21 August 1981, Barwick Papers, Box 6, BARI02497). Yet by 1988 vol 1 had sold out and a second printing had to be done (reprint of vol 1, inside front cover).



disciplines of anthropology and archaeology. By the time the second volume had been published, sales and subscriptions had reached 800, enabling the journal to become self-supporting. The first two volumes sported an attractive cover based on figures discovered in an Aboriginal rock shelter in Cape York and designed by Barwick's husband Dick, a zoologist at ANU, and this might have helped sales in bookshops.<sup>89</sup> Most importantly, the journal soon attracted a healthy number of submissions, nearly 30 in the case of the second volume, some of which seem to have been lying in drawers for want of a suitable forum for publication.<sup>90</sup> This interest made it easier for the journal's board to reject material it regarded as unsuitable for publication, which it often did in no uncertain terms.<sup>91</sup>

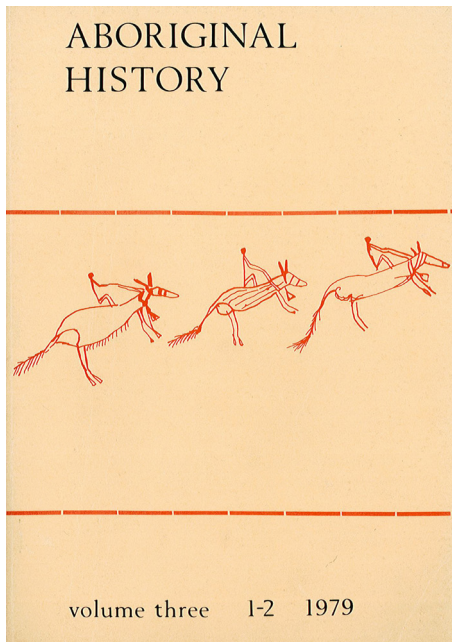


Illustration 3: Dick Barwick designed the covers for the journal for many years. This one, for vol 3, comprised the detail of an example of rock art in Magela Creek Catchment, Western Arnhem Land, known as the 'Pack Horse Scene'.

89 The image used for the cover of volumes 1 and 2 can be seen in Illustration 1. Thereafter, nearly every volume, at Urry's suggestion it seems, had its own particular design, devised by Dick Barwick but based on an Aboriginal drawing, engraving or painting (Urry to author, 7 February 2012).

90 This included a paper by Stanner on 'Aboriginal Humour', which had been written in 1956. Barwick encouraged him to offer this to the journal in 1980 (Barwick to Stanner, 12 June 1980, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02423), and it was published in vol 6.

91 Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 25 November 1977; Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 10 February 1978; Barwick to Strehlow, 9 March 1978, Barwick to Reynolds, 15 March 1978; Barwick to Peterson, 18 May 1978, Barwick to Julie Rigg, 11 July 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02273; Aboriginal History Publicity Committee, Informal Notes, presented to meeting 8 September 1978, and List of the purchasers of vols 1-3, undated, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02408; Memo, 24 September 1979, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02406. Barwick 1980: 6; Aboriginal History, Report for 1980-81, March 1982, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI00136; Yarwood to Barwick, 23 October 1980, Barwick Papers, Box 3, BARI02433; Kenneth Liberman to Barwick, 6 February 1981, Gunson Papers; Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 20 February 1981, Barwick Papers, Box 6, BARI02498.



Tracing the influence of a book or a journal upon an area of scholarship is never easy. It might be argued that the journal's conception of Aboriginal history influenced the direction that historical scholarship took in the field in the 1980s. Yet what might be described as an Aboriginal turn in historical work has more often than not been attributed to Henry Reynolds' 1981 book *The Other Side of the Frontier* rather than to the journal.<sup>92</sup> Reynolds' approach was in keeping with one championed by the journal's editors, and a good deal of what he considered in his monograph as well as the papers he wrote earlier was anticipated by research undertaken or overseen by McBryde. Nevertheless, his work undoubtedly had more impact on historians than the material published by the journal. There are several reasons for this but one of these is especially worthy of our attention here. Reynolds' purpose in *The Other Side of the Frontier* was rather different to that of the journal. He cast the history of Australia from an Aboriginal perspective not so much because he wanted to grapple with the nature of Aboriginal people's experience but because he wanted settler Australians to empathise with the Aborigines' dark past and thereby become supporters of a political struggle seeking to ensure that Aboriginal people would become citizens of the Australian nation state. In other words, there is a sense in which his approach, unlike the journal's, remained a Eurocentric one, and thus one that could be more readily put to use in the principal Australian public domains. Arguably, there was a tension from the beginning in the field of 'Aboriginal history' between those who wanted to use accounts of the Aboriginal past in this realm to serve what they saw as the needs of *both* Aboriginal people and the Australian nation, and those who were more concerned to serve what they saw as the needs of Aboriginal people in domains that were more of their own making.<sup>93</sup>

It might be argued, furthermore, that the journal's particular conception of Aboriginal history, and its stress on the inter-disciplinary work it believed was required to fulfil this project, deterred many historians from submitting work and so diminished the amount of influence it might have had. The editorial board's commitment to its particular definition of Aboriginal history was questioned at the outset of the journal's life. The historian Jo Woolmington welcomed its emphasis on Aboriginal people but queried whether there would be any place for research of the kind she was conducting at the time, namely a study of the English humanitarians of the 1830s and 1840s. This, it might be argued, lay at the heart of the concerns Markus had expressed during the journal's early editorial crisis. A decade later, Gunson would observe that 'good articles on Aboriginal History were being published in other historical journals' and express concern that the journal was 'in danger of being regarded as too esoteric'. I will return to this matter at the end of this article. In the meantime I wish to consider the way in which Barwick went about performing the role of the journal's editor and the impact this had upon her.<sup>94</sup>

92 For a discussion of *The Other Side of the Frontier* and its publication, see Attwood and Griffiths 2009: 11–19.

93 McBryde, Report on Reynolds, 'Before the Instant of Contact', 23 March 1978; Urry, Report on Reynolds, 'Before the Instant of Contact', 3 April 1978; Attwood 2011: 176.

94 Jo Woolmington to Gunson and Reece, 27 October 1975, Gunson Papers; Gunson, Retiring Editor's Report.

### III The burden of the editor

Whatever influence the journal might have had, the production of it during its early years undoubtedly took a toll on its principal editor, Diane Barwick. Although the support provided by the Research Schools of Pacific Studies and Social Sciences had enabled the venture to begin, it never secured the kind of university sponsorship enjoyed by the most prestigious historical journals in Australia such as *Historical Studies*. This meant it was never able to engage a full- or even a part-time officer to undertake the numerous mundane tasks involved in the publication of a periodical (though the board enjoyed wonderful secretarial assistance, provided by May Mackenzie and paid for by the Research Schools of Pacific Studies and Social Sciences). Most of this time-consuming work, which was made worse by the numerous failings of the journal's printer, was undertaken by Barwick. (All of the volumes produced during her editorship were plagued by printing problems and only appeared in the year following their publication date.)<sup>95</sup>

The burden was all the greater because of the manner in which Barwick tackled the task of editor. The journal became a labour of love for her, and her commitment to it was out of the ordinary. There are probably several reasons for this apart from the intellectual and political ones canvassed previously. Barwick's position in the academy, as we observed earlier, was a tenuous one. While her research was greatly admired by the likes of John Mulvaney and Charles Rowley, it was held by many to fall between the fields of anthropology and history and thus met the requirements of neither discipline. Barwick, partly as a consequence of this perception, only held two one-year full-time academic positions during the period under consideration here, and neither of these proved very satisfactory.<sup>96</sup> The marginal position Barwick felt she occupied increasingly rankled with her, and perhaps all the more so as the impact of second-wave feminism on Australian universities deepened. At various times she described herself as 'unemployed' and 'an unfunded housewife scholar', and in her author notes for publications

95 Gunson, Proposal for University Sponsorship of *Aboriginal History*, for Discussion at Editorial Board Meeting of 20 February 1981, 26 January 1981, Barwick Papers, Box 5, BARI02469; Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 1 August 1984, Gunson Papers; Gunson, interview with author, 18 January 2012.

96 In the case of the first, a one-year lectureship in 1978 in the Department of Prehistory and Anthropology in the School of General Studies, Barwick felt unappreciated more or less from the outset, and even complained that she felt like 'a pariah' among the anthropologists there. In the case of the second, a one-year research fellowship in 1979–80 in Inglis' Department of History in the Research School of Social Sciences, Barwick enjoyed the company there but confessed to feeling like 'a cuckoo in the historians' nest' as she was convinced that her appointment struck her colleagues as 'very strange' (Barwick to Reece, 5 January 1978, Barwick Papers, Series 17, Box 1, BARI02274; Barwick to Lyndall Ryan, 6 April 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02273; Barwick to Francesca Merlan, 2 July 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02399; Barwick to Reece, 24 June 1979). According to Peter Read, historians in the Department of History were baffled by the seminar presentation Barwick gave during her fellowship which featured a detailed account of genealogical connections between Aboriginal people that were central to her treatment of the history of Coranderrk (Kijas 1993: 80–81; Peter Read, personal communication, 19 January 2012).

she provided her residential address instead of an institutional affiliation. The worse Barwick's position became in the academy, the more she threw herself into her role as editor of *Aboriginal History*.<sup>97</sup>

There seems to be further reasons why the journal's editorship became so important to Barwick. Although she gave the impression of being very sure in her opinions and could be very forthright in expressing these, she lacked confidence in her own research. In this context the role of critic must have become an increasingly attractive one. Barwick once quipped to Lyndall Ryan: 'of course it is much easier to criticise than to write!' By immersing herself in the work of the journal she might even have been trying to escape from her own writing tasks. While she had authored several essays and a book manuscript between the early 1960s and early 1970s, Barwick found it increasingly difficult to complete substantive pieces of research.<sup>98</sup> Consequently she seems to have not only adopted the role of a midwife but assumed the part of a ventriloquist, rewriting or perhaps even writing parts of the articles on which she worked. In many cases her editorial interventions enhanced an author's treatment of a subject, and in others it ensured that research was published that would have otherwise remained buried in a drawer.<sup>99</sup> This work brought Barwick recognition

97 Barwick to Reece, 7 January 1979, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02274; Barwick, 'Editors' Report, 17 November 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02408; Barwick, Memo, 15 March 1979; Draft of List of Contributors for *Handbook for Aboriginal and Islander History*, undated [c. May 1980], Barwick Papers, Box 3, BARI02428; Barwick, Mace and Stannage 1979: [ix]; Barwick to Grant McCall, 22 July 1982, Barwick Papers, Box 5, BARI02468; Barwick to Marie Fels, undated [c. 1984], Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI01545; Reece 1986b: 71, my emphasis; Stannage to author, 8 March 2012.

98 This pattern of publication can be traced in Barwick 1988: 2–4.

99 This was the case with Stanner's famous 'The History of Indifference Thus Begins', which had begun its life in 1964 as a chapter for a projected book on Australian Aborigines that Stanner had been contracted to write by an American publisher but which he had abandoned (Len Bloom to Stanner, 14 June 1960, Contract between Chandler Publishing Company, San Francisco and Stanner, November 1960, Bloom to Stanner, 28 September 1964, Stanner Papers, Item 224(a); Stanner 1977: 3). After reading Stanner's first draft of this chapter Barwick suggested a number of changes, which included shifting some discussion from the footnotes into the text, explaining some anthropological matters in order to ensure that readers were able to grasp his account of Aboriginal perceptions of Europeans, and adding a new title – Stanner's chapter had been called both 'Foundation and Pattern' and 'Foundations' (Barwick to Stanner, 12 December 1976; Barwick to Stanner, 11 June 1977, and Stanner to Barwick, undated [c. June 1977], Barwick Papers, Box 7, BARI02629; Barwick, undated note on a copy of 'Foundation and Pattern', Stanner Papers, File 225(a)). In case my account here as well as one by Ann Curthoys (2008: 240) might lead readers to conclude that Barwick's contribution to Stanner's article was more important than it actually was, I will make a couple of points. First, the anthropologist Len Bloom (who had commissioned Stanner to write the book for a series for which he was the editor) had previously suggested to Stanner that he move discursive material in his footnotes into the text (Bloom to Stanner, 28 September 1964), and Stanner had done this in the course of revising the chapter for his book (copy of 'Foundations', held Stanner Papers, Series 1, Item 225[a]). (Barwick had read an earlier version of the essay and so was unaware Stanner had made this change [Stanner, 'Foundation and Pattern', ms with Barwick's annotations, Stanner Papers, Series 1, Item 225(c)].) Second, and more importantly, Stanner had in any case placed considerable emphasis in his original chapter on the ways in which Aboriginal people might have understood their early encounter with Europeans, and while he happily acted upon a series of editorial suggestions Barwick made (see Stanner annotations on a copy of Barwick to Stanner, 12 December 1976, Barwick Papers, Box 7, BARI02629), these did not change the article in any substantial sense (cf 'Foundation and

but it was for her as an editor rather than an author. In all this, it might be argued, Barwick was typical of many academic women of her generation, who had been taught to regard themselves as helpmeets to senior male colleagues.<sup>100</sup>

Barwick has rightfully been remembered as a dedicated and a meticulous editor but she assumed tasks that most journal editors would never bother to undertake. For example, she sought to check everything in the articles that the journal's editorial board accepted for publication. In preparing a memorandum for the guidance of the board in March 1983 at the end of her time as editor, she insisted: 'Future editors should be guided by Urry's Law: the correctness of quotations, footnotes and bibliography is inversely related to the fame of the author – and never trust members of the Editorial Board'.<sup>101</sup> But this was as much 'Barwick's Law' as her fellow editor's. Producing a journal prior to computerisation was undoubtedly a more arduous and time consuming task than it has become, but some of the tasks Barwick performed as the journal's editor were unnecessary. At least two members of the journal's editorial board during Barwick's time have described her as a master of supererogatory work.<sup>102</sup> Whether this was so or not, it is undoubtedly true that she was, as Gunson remarked upon her untimely death, 'conscientious beyond the call of duty'.<sup>103</sup>

It appears that Barwick not only relished but resented the fact that the burdensome task of producing the journal largely fell on her shoulders. In the course of her seven-year reign as editor she threatened to resign on numerous occasions. The first of these occurred during the journal's first year of publication. 'I have worked nearly full time on this bloody journal since 24 May and I am totally fed up', Barwick angrily told Reece in October 1977. 'You and Markus can get

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Pattern' and 'Foundations' with Stanner 1977). This said, Stanner did compliment Barwick upon all the hard work she had done on his essay: 'The editing is splendid – I congratulate you on it. Even I like this version' (Stanner to Barwick, undated [c. June 1977], his emphasis, Barwick Papers, Box 7, BARI02629). The manuscript version of the article carried an authorial note which stated that the paper had been 'revised by the editors [of the journal]', but this was omitted prior to its publication (cf the ms, held Barwick Papers, Box 7, BARI02630, with Stanner 1977: 3).

100 Barwick to Ryan, 19 September 1973, Barwick Papers, Series 10, Box 2, BARI01682; Barwick to Gunson, 20 August 1982 (unsent letter), Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI00136; Reece 1986b: 71; Beckett 1986: 82; Stephen Foster, personal communication to author, 15 January 2012; Foster to author, 5 March 2012.

101 It seems that Barwick often tried to find solace in humour, which was perhaps one reason she cherished a paper Stanner wrote on Aboriginal humour in which he observed that '[laughter] is the good angel of enmity' (1986: 48). Several years earlier, Barwick had, half-jokingly, written to her long-time friend Jeremy Beckett: 'Got [your] paper [on George Dutton] on the first [August 1978] ... and checked the bibliography (nearly every entry wrong, you [...])' (Barwick to Beckett, 9 August 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 4, BARI02442).

102 More than one of Barwick's colleagues suggested to me that Barwick felt a need to have control over the journal's work. The documentary record lends some support to this claim (Urry, The McRae Paper: a note on a dispute, 5 April 1982, and Minutes of Aboriginal History Editorial Board Meeting, 24 February 1984, Gunson Papers; Urry to author, 7 February 2012; Foster to author, 5 March 2012).

103 Merlan to Barwick, 13 June 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 2, BARI02399; Gunson to Barwick, 28 July 1982, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI00136, original emphasis; Barwick, Aboriginal History: Editorial Responsibilities and Board Policy, 18 March 1983; Gunson to Foster, 15 April 1986; Williams 1986: 2; Reece 1986b: 71; Beckett 1986: 82; Anon 1987: 1; Foster, personal communication to author, 15 January 2012; Hercus, interview with author, 18 January 2012; Beckett to author, 7 February 2012.

out the next issue. I have better uses for my time.’ For several years Barwick never made good these threats, but by the middle of 1982 she was forced to recognise that she had no choice but to give up the editorship of the journal: her monograph on the history of Coranderrk awaited further revision, she was co-editing two collections of essays, and, most importantly, she had accepted a commission to write the opening volume of an *Oxford History of Australia*, which had to be completed by 1985 so that it was ready for publication by Australia’s bicentenary.<sup>104</sup>

Following her resignation, Barwick helped see into publication the two collections of essays, which included two substantial essays of her own, but when she died suddenly of a cerebral haemorrhage in April 1986 she had neither completed the revision of her history of Coranderrk nor commenced the writing of the *Oxford History* volume. She had instead allowed herself to be distracted by bibliographical and biographical projects. These advanced the work of Aboriginal history and were typical of her generosity as a scholar but they might not have been the best use of her time. Certainly, her premature death – she was yet to turn 48 – robbed the continuing world of Aboriginal history of the considerable knowledge she had acquired but had yet to commit to paper. Her closest colleagues feel the loss to this day.<sup>105</sup>

In tendering her letter of resignation as the principal editor of *Aboriginal History*, Diane Barwick expressed her appreciation of what Niel Gunson and Peter Grimshaw had done ‘to create a new journal and a new discipline’. Yet, however much these two men and especially the former had laid the necessary groundwork for the journal and proven a sage guide, this achievement was primarily hers. Prior to the founding of *Aboriginal History* there had really been no such concept, let alone a historiographical movement. While Barwick had not been able to realise some of what she sought to bring about – for example, only a handful of the articles the journal had published can be described as truly interdisciplinary in nature – by the time she stepped aside as editor she had set down the direction that *Aboriginal History* has followed to this day.<sup>106</sup>

104 Barwick to Reece, 19 October 1977; Barwick File Notes, 31 October 1977; Barwick to Reece, Friday, 18 November 1977; Barwick to Reece, 21 November 1977; Barwick to Reece, 13 September 1978, Barwick Papers, Box 1, BARI02274; Barwick, Editors’ Report, 17 November 1978; Contract for Vol. 1 of the *Oxford History of Australia*, January 1980, Barwick Papers, Series 22, Box 1, BARI02314; Barwick to Gunson, 22 July 1982, Barwick Papers, Box 5, BARI02468.

105 Barwick to Penny Taylor, Registrar, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 11 March 1985, Barwick Papers, Series 10, Box 1, BARI00008; Outlines for *Oxford History of Australia* Vol. 1, Barwick Papers, Series 22, Box 1, BARI02133; Barwick, Beckett and Reay 1985; Barwick 1985a; Barwick 1985b; White, Barwick and Meehan 1985; Beckett 1986: 82; Reece 1986b: 3–4; Laura and Richard Barwick, ‘Editors’ Preface’, in Barwick 1998: x; Hercus, interview with author, 18 January 2012; Urry to author, 14 February 2012.

106 Barwick to Gunson, 22 July 1982; Gunson to Foster, 15 April 1986.



#### IV Whither Aboriginal history?

This said, one might argue that *Aboriginal History* has been beset by a fundamental problem, and that the journal has never addressed, let alone attempted to resolve it. As I have already noted, Aboriginal history, as it was defined by the journal, involved a focus on Aboriginal people in terms of perspective. This approach entailed not only a way of seeing but an evaluation of the relative importance of this. In other words, a shift in perspective from the colonisers to Aboriginal people involved a greater assessment of the importance of what lay at the end of that point of view, namely the Aboriginal people or the Aboriginal world. However, it can be argued that this shift was and is not enough to sustain a field and its inquiry: a realignment of this kind, which is subjective in nature, demands a correlative in the objective world of the past if it is to realise the other meaning of perspective, namely being able to view things in their true relation or relative importance. Some of the practitioners of Aboriginal history sought to meet this requirement by emphasising the significance of the underlying social structures and cultural processes of Aboriginal communities, and thus the importance of the internal or domestic history of Aboriginal people, rather than the significance of political power, military capacity and economic strength and thus the relative importance of the objective relationship between the colonisers and the indigenous people, which was the approach adopted by historians of colonialism. Yet a focus on the autonomous world of Aboriginal people and its social and cultural dimensions can only illuminate so much about their post-colonial history, let alone the history of post-1788 Australia, since most Aboriginal communities lost their autonomy in the wake of the incursion of the European colonisers. This is to argue that a shift in perspective in the sense of adopting an Aboriginal-centric approach to the past did not and cannot meet the needs of perspective in its other sense, that of relative importance, or at least it cannot do so in the eyes of many historians. In this regard it is noteworthy that the account Henry Reynolds presented in his famous study *The Other Side of the Frontier* barely extended beyond the time of the first generation or so of contact.

In the decade following the founding of the journal, major political and intellectual changes occurred that were to have a major impact on its enterprise. Beginning in the early 1980s, Aboriginal spokespersons asserted that they should be the ones to tell the history of Aboriginal people, thereby challenging the right of white scholars to undertake research or at least the way in which they did their work. Younger white scholars, or at least those working in the discipline of history, were persuaded that they should not pursue research that focused on Aboriginal people and Aboriginal perspectives. By the early 1990s many had accepted the claim that Aboriginal history was Aboriginal people's business. (It has been claimed that the same phenomenon occurred in New Zealand in respect of Maori history.)<sup>107</sup> Consequently, there was a marked decline in the amount of historical research being conducted by historians that met the journal's definition of Aboriginal history.

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107 See Howe 2003: 51.



At much the same time the discipline of history in Australia was influenced by the ferment of postmodernism, which, apart from anything else, resulted in a marked growth in cultural and intellectual history as well as cultural studies. This, too, seems to have had a considerable impact on the amount of work being undertaken in the field of Aboriginal history as the journal defined it. A new wave of research focused on representation in one sense or another in order to examine the nature of European knowledge and its relationship to power. This had several strands. One examined the ways in which European explorers and discoverers sought to possess the land discursively, particularly through practices such as naming, mapping and surveying. The most influential study of this kind was Paul Carter's *The Road to Botany Bay* (1987). A second investigated the work of scientists, especially physical and social anthropologists, and their relationship to government policy and practice in Aboriginal affairs. The most notable studies in this regard were Russell McGregor's *Imagined Destinies* (1997) and Warwick Anderson's *The Cultivation of Whiteness* (2002). A third considered assimilation, largely in terms of the role it played in the governance of Aboriginal people, as for example in Tim Rowse's *White Flour, White Power* (1998). In the fourth strand, feminist historians posed questions about the relationships between white women and colonialism, particularly in respect of those who acted as missionaries, guardians or campaigners for the rights of Aborigines, as for instance in Fiona Paisley's *Loving Protection?* (2000). In a fifth strand, there were studies that considered the ways in which settlers had remembered or forgotten the Aboriginal past, as for example in Tom Griffiths' *Hunters and Collectors* (1996) and Chris Healy's *From the Ruins of Colonialism* (1997). A further strand, though this work had begun earlier, was research that focused on Anglo-Australian law. The most notable study here was Henry Reynolds' *The Law of the Land* (1987). Little, if any, of this work appeared in the pages of *Aboriginal History*.<sup>108</sup>

It might be argued that there are several means of addressing what I have suggested is a fundamental problem in the nature of Aboriginal history. One way is to champion a focus on the personal and the local, which is what those like Barwick, McBryde and Urry recommended. Yet such an approach tends to produce a patchwork of Aboriginal histories rather than a larger indigenous history. A second approach is to consider the ways in which the very concept of the Aborigines came into being, rather than taking Aboriginality for granted and thus treating it in an ahistorical manner. This involves tracing the ways in which an Aboriginal consciousness emerged as a social and cultural phenomenon in the context of the colonial encounter. This is what Reece recommended in his article 'Inventing Aborigines' and which I sought to do in *The Making of the Aborigines* (1989), where I argued that the way the pre-colonial aboriginal peoples came to acquire an Aboriginal consciousness in the post-colonial era should be the subject of inquiry. Yet there have been few studies of this phenomenon. More broadly, one might examine the ways in which Australian settler nationalism and Aboriginality have shaped or even helped to constitute one other. But perhaps

108 At the same time, the nature of the discipline of anthropology in Australia had changed enough for its journals to welcome historically oriented material, such as Cowlshaw 1990 and Morris 1990, which they might previously have rejected.

even work of this kind will not resolve the problem described here. Consequently one might have to conclude that Aboriginal history, at least in the sense that this journal came to define it, is a very important yet rather circumscribed historical project.

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## Book Reviews

*A Different Inequality: The Politics of Debates about Remote Aboriginal Australia* by Diana Austin-Broos, 224 pp, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2011, ISBN 9781742370491 (pbk), \$29.99.

How often have you heard a well-meaning person asking 'What is the answer to the "Aboriginal problem"?' Aboriginal Australian academics once responded by attesting that *whites* were the problem, and that Aborigines must be given back their land. Today those same people are involved in intense debates about just what to do about the ongoing post-Mabo tragedy in remote Australia. So yes, this is a now-acknowledged, but a confusing, multi-faceted problem. Violence and early death are endemic. People are suffering. Too many deaths of loved ones – of very young people, of sharp-witted people full of life, humour and fun, and of talented, accomplished leaders in their prime.

Austin-Broos's eloquent preface sums it up: 'Remote Aboriginal Australia is one place where great beauty can be juxtaposed with seemingly endless grief' (p. xix). The social indicators – the early mortality rates, the poor education standards, the violence and murders, the health crises, the alcohol and drug abuse statistics, the poor outlook and lack of employment opportunities – all combine to present a picture of unendurable horror. Sure, there are good news stories in certain communities and the numbers of high-achieving Aboriginal people are increasing. But we are talking remote communities, where it is hard not only for people and resources to get in, but for the people who live there to get out.

What happened to the 1970s and 1980s optimism behind Aboriginal land rights and 'self-determination', where Aboriginal people would be permitted to create their own futures, ones purportedly free of government and church authoritarianism? Austin-Broos walks us through both the discrediting of 'assimilationist' ideals and the unhelpfulness of anthropology's postcolonial critiques. She sees former ideas displaced by 'pathology', which conceptualises the problem of remote communities as a kind of socio-cultural disease zone of 'unhealthiness' and aimless welfare dependency. Yet what followed recently was the heavy-handed and often ineffectual Northern Territory 'intervention', one of a series of 'failed policies', and 'answers to the Aboriginal problem' mooted during the last century.

On the positive side, people in remote communities still hold onto many facets of a culturally complex, richly storied and remarkably ancient tradition that links them to the history of the Australian landscape 'before time', and that outsider seekers are ever-keen to share. Optimists hope that tourism and other industries



may develop to support hybrid economies that combine the traditional with the modern and enable Aboriginal people a place within a capitalist market economy. While it worked to a certain extent in the pre-Second World War days of the cattle industry, and more recently, the art industry has grown remarkably rapidly, is any economic feasibility simply an overly romantic, impossible aspiration?

As we watch the communities from which some of the most successful international artists appear to self-destruct with endemic despair, one has to be doubtful. But, as Austin-Broos points out, was it ever acceptable to impair human rights in order to aspire to better education and health outcomes? And, while many people living in remote 'homelands' communities are involved in an art movement that is internationally acclaimed and enjoyed, and that makes money, what happens to that money? Does it only create worse pressures by the wayward young on the elderly wisdom holders?

This highly intelligent, well-argued book reveals the deeper complexities of this debate, drawing upon strong expertise and wisdom towards a deeper understanding. By keeping her focus upon remote communities, Austin-Broos avoids homogenising and over-generalising across the complete range of Aboriginal urban and rural experiences.

Weighing into the debate by arguing the need to reconcile 'culture difference' and identity politics with 'equality', Diane Austin-Broos is refreshingly objective in her approach. She cuts through all the sensitivities and power politics of adversarial positionings to hone in on the issues and the theories that underpin them. With special aplomb, she interrogates the changing role of anthropology in informing economic policy.

One of the great strengths of this book is its willingness to give parity to knowledge coming from a range of disciplines, and to critique the failures of these several disciplines, and the university centres and think-tanks that she argues have adopted overly narrow, often ideologically-based approaches. Pointing to the failure of anthropological and political thinkers to consider historical influences, she gives equal attention to less-heard players. For example, to the creative-thinking economist Bob Gregory, who argues the possibility of Aboriginal equality only if they change 'postcodes'. In other words, he argues against remote-living as unviable. Austin-Broos also reveals how both academics and more popular opinion-makers have shifted their positions and approaches and have changed alliances.

Austin-Broos is courageous in her quest to find a balance between acknowledging the 'difference' of Aboriginal values and aspirations against the causes of continuing, if not worsening, social and economic inequality. In attempting to be fair to the many different players, Austin-Broos fearlessly disagrees with even the most formidable key thinkers. And undoubtedly, many of these writers will

be miffed by her slam-dunk conclusions about their reports, articles and books. Yet Austin-Broos also comes back to their ideas, allowing seemingly dismantled positions to subtly bounce back with potentially renewed value.

While Austin-Broos understands the importance of land politics and deeper associations for Aboriginal communities, she brings fresh clarity to the associated poor educational, employment and health disadvantage of remote living. She is sceptical of those who romanticised the 'homelands' of spiritual-meaning solutions and who would not let go of the prospect of cultural survival as key to Aboriginal happiness. She is also sceptical of those who pathologise Aboriginal society as essentially harbouring domestic violence and child abuse.

There is too much covered in this book to touch on everything here. The downside of its analysis is that as one reads on, the issues only become more complicated. While complexity should never be shunned, the last couple of chapters do start to become rather micro if not circular in their critiques of various think-pieces, which slightly detracts from the clarity of the book's overall argument. Nonetheless, it is terrific to see Allen & Unwin's list starting to include scholarly, intricately argued books of such significance.

In conclusion, Austin-Broos expresses concern about advocates of philanthropic means as a key route to providing remote education. She argues that the state should be providing excellent primary education as a basic right for all Australian citizens. On the one hand, it is disturbing to see Aboriginal people agreeing to developments by resource companies that will destroy significant cultural sites on the basis of seeking a decent education for their kids, when this is provided free of charge elsewhere in Australia. On the other hand, perhaps they are making the most of available opportunities.

Above all, in this book, I would have liked some more values-oriented interrogation of what 'equality' might mean in these Aboriginal societies. Is the issue only about 'equality' compared with or delivered by a wealthy developed urban world, or is it also about internal factors that limit or work against opportunity within Indigenous societies? Although culturally-based income distribution patterns are mentioned, the way this impacts upon 'equality' and social opportunity could be further scrutinised.

Perhaps it would also have been helpful for Austin-Broos to draw upon examples from Canadian and United States history and recent politics. Education successes and professionalisation happened in North America far earlier than in Australia, and often due to private philanthropists setting up now-maligned educational institutions based upon boarding.

While reading it, I had the urge to underline just about every page and I always felt assured that its balanced syntheses of key policy arguments and its sensible critiques were highly reliable. Everyone interested in Aboriginal policy, a key national challenge, should read this book. I have already recommended it to a politician or two. You should too, although it is not a book of answers. While it is rich with intelligently-argued insights, it is too nuanced to have the political

clout of a Noel Pearson-style opinion piece. While this book points the way towards some directions, it does not navigate the routes of detailed policy implementation.

As a historian, I note while Austin-Broos wished anthropologists had been more historical in approach, she herself has moved away from analysing 'historically-based' inequality. I think she is right. Whereas history is a foundational element, 'the problem' must be scrutinised in the context of what is possible and likely in the present-day, in its capitalist-driven urbanised world. As Austin-Broos so ably shows, history is not the only reason for this essentially *different* kind of inequality. Demonstrating both empathy and a degree of calm acceptance, Austin-Broos is genuinely concerned and worried about these communities. And, as she shows with the story of 'Matthew', remote community life goes on, in its complex, different, painful, everyday, up-and-down ways.

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*'Fire and Hearth' Forty Years On: Essays in Honour of Sylvia J. Hallam* edited by Caroline Bird and R Esmée Webb, 142 pp, Records of the Western Australian Museum, Supplement no 79, Perth, 2011, ISBN 9781920843656 (pbk), \$33.75.

As Australian archaeology emerged in the 1970s, one of the pioneers of the field was Sylvia Hallam, one of the few archaeologists working in Australia's western third. This early work set a high standard. *Fire and Hearth*, her analysis of past Aboriginal landscape burning has few comparisons as a treatise encompassing history, ethnography and archaeology, and taking full advantage of a wealth of colonial-era documentation (Hallam 1975). The present volume, edited by Caroline Bird and Esmée Webb, celebrates four decades of Sylvia's contributions to Australian archaeology and ethnography, through research, teaching and service to the archaeological community. Many of the contributions are from her former students, covering a range of disciplines and themes, and attest to the influence of an original thinker. The quality of journal format production is also good, with excellent illustrations and colour figures and photographs.

Chapters in this book fall into two main themes: explorations in archaeology and ethnohistory starting with Western Australia (Gibbs; Smith; Mulvaney; Randolph; Schwede) and ending with several papers beyond the West (White; Clarke; Bird and Rhoads; Brown, Kee and McConnell; Armstrong). In between these are three papers on the development of Hallam's role in Western Australian Aboriginal history and biography (Reece; Tilbrook; Green). Apart from White and possibly Armstrong, these authors had a direct connection with Sylvia Hallam in early stages of their careers, and all derived inspiration to various degrees from her work. On these criteria there would have been several other potential contributors among Hallam's contemporaries and students, who could have added still other research strands. However, the 13 contributions in this volume provide a good overview of Hallam's research and some of the work that it has inspired.

Synopses of Hallam's role in the early development of Western Australian archaeology are aptly provided in two short pieces by her contemporaries and peers from the east coast, Isabel McBryde and John Mulvaney. The first research paper in the volume is by Martin Gibbs, who brings to light his Honours dissertation describing the primary historical and ethnographic data on Aboriginal gatherings at a celebrated fish-weir near Perth. This work epitomises the Hallam approach to documentary evidence to illustrate the very recent past and from there suggest or infer earlier developments towards the complex ceremonial and social practices described historically (see also Reece's contribution). While such data should not be accepted uncritically, many regions of Australia allow some form of this approach (McBryde 1979). Gibbs's paper suggests several forms of ethnographic and archaeological evidence that archaeologists may search for in documenting the development of these networks over time.

Moya Smith's paper, based on her contemporary but more processually-oriented PhD thesis, nevertheless highlights the value of ethnography, and of another Hallam approach, the regional study, in her analysis of artefact assemblages on the Esperance sand plains at the margins of the south-western Australian biographic region. The south-west, she argues, largely features many small artefact scatters that are very uniform (the influence of quartz as the predominant raw material accounts for a lot of this), expediently produced, and lack time depth, creating an impression of high residential mobility across the region. It takes ethnographic interpretation to reconcile this record with the historic evidence for complex organisation, in that constant mobility within and between territorially-affiliated dialect and clan groups enabled much economic, social and ritual activity.

Reporting his rock art analyses in the north-west of Western Australia, Ken Mulvaney notes Sylvia Hallam was one of the first to predict a great antiquity for rock art of the Dampier Archipelago. The succession of motif subjects that Hallam noticed is consistent with Mulvaney's comprehensive analysis of patination and production methods indicating at least five phases of artistic style. Mulvaney observes that despite early identification by Hallam and others of the potential of Dampier Archipelago rock art to chart cultural and landscape changes over a vast period, governments continue to neglect this highly significant heritage resource.

A neglected field in south-western Australian archaeology is the study of stone arrangements: while difficult to date and difficult to interpret, Randolph's outline of his site management work in the 1970s shows that they are widespread and varied across the region, and that Hallam was one of the first to systematically record any of them. These features are a tantalising but under-valued part of the archaeological landscape of the region.

Cautioning against uncritical acceptance of Sylvia Hallam's four-phase sequence of artefacts based on surveys of the Swan Coastal Plain around Perth, Schwede presents evidence for intrusive European materials amongst stone artefacts in unconsolidated pre-European sand deposits. While Schwede does not investigate means of testing for disturbance, such as refitting, or sedimentological analysis, her paper warns against over-enthusiastic acceptance of orthodox chronologies – something that Sylvia Hallam would probably agree with.

The three essays in the middle of the volume by historians highlight the different research directions resulting from Hallam's forays into colonial era records of Aboriginal people. Reece presents his interviews with Neville Green and Sylvia Hallam, recalling the labour of an army of research assistants and volunteers in transcribing and cross-referencing decades of hand-written colonial records and hundreds of names, to create the four Aboriginal volumes of the Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians. Green says the reward is seeing the value these volumes have for Aboriginal people researching their family histories, and the parts they have played in reconciliation and Native Title (eg *Bennell v State of Western Australia* 2006).

An essay by the late Lois Tilbrook recounts how, from starting points in history and archaeology, Tilbrook's and Hallam's research interests converged, leading to ten years of collaboration, culminating in a broad perspective of Aboriginal history ranging from the ritual and economic life of Aboriginal societies of the pre-colonial south-west through the colonial-era conflicts and to the infamous *Aborigines Act 1905* (WA). Written to engineer the disappearance of a people, the investigative powers that this Act enabled ironically led to the recognition of more Aboriginal people than had been thought to exist. The third essay, by Green, reviews colonial justice before the 1905 Act, in which Aboriginal people from across Western Australia were sentenced in the harshest possible terms for the most dubious of convictions, often leading to their transportation 1000 or more kilometres south to Rottnest Island prison.

Leaping across the continent, White describes the artificiality of the notion of agricultural and non-agricultural societies divided by Torres Strait, a subject close to Hallam's heart. He cites her interpretations of historical Aboriginal south-western land management and protection of yam grounds, and parallel developments in the south-east, as evidence for Australian plant cultivation. The southern regions of Australia are missing large chunks of archaeological evidence for this, but new technologies to better understand residues on artefacts and microfossils in sediment cores may help archaeologists to eliminate the kinds of preconceptions that White grappled with, and develop more detailed and particular comparisons within and between Australia and New Guinea.

Clarke uses twentieth century mission records and anthropological observations from Groote Eylandt for charting cross-cultural interaction and change, rather than towards Hallam's goal of documenting pre-colonial conditions. Clarke suggests that the latter is a futile goal in northern Australia where inter-cultural contacts began centuries before historical records. Nevertheless these data represent a mine of detailed information about culture and economy that could be exploited archaeologically.

One of Hallam's favoured approaches was the topographical archaeological survey, epitomised by her Swan Coastal Plain surveys, which was innovative for the time. Now a relatively common approach, or at least better understood, Bird and Rhoads apply it to the Wimmera in western Victoria and develop a useful tool for understanding past population distributions and for heritage management.

In a similar way, topographical archaeological approaches were applied in Tasmania, where Hallam's students Brown, Kee and McConnell each applied regional perspectives in heritage management. Coupled with these approaches was their training in analysis of historic records, which allowed them to better appreciate views from the 'other side of the frontier' and the interests of descendent communities who were then assuming a greater role in heritage decision-making.



The final paper, by Armstrong, has only one obvious connection to Hallam's research, the interpretation of historic records. This time they are Charles Darwin's observations on hunter-gatherer cultures during his voyage on the *Beagle*. Detailed analysis of the observer's biases enables inferences about historic events – unlike the other papers, it is unclear how the author's research relates to Hallam's.

Taken together the papers in this volume represent a detailed view, albeit incomplete, of the diversity of research that in some way or other was connected with or inspired by Hallam's work. This research requires an acceptance of the value of ethno-history, a sense of the archaeological topographic landscape, and an appreciation of multi-disciplinary approaches. While these ideas may be unexceptional today, they were new in Western Australia when Hallam began to apply them. This volume provides a good overview of the development and findings of an important phase of Australian archaeology.

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*Blue Mountains Dreaming: The Aboriginal Heritage* (Second Edition) edited by Eugene Stockton and John Merriman, 255 pp, Blue Mountain Educational and Research Trust, Lawson, 2009, ISBN 9780646503868, \$60.00.

I (RP) recall the first edition of *Blue Mountains Dreaming* published in 1993. It was a delight then to see the disparate knowledge of Aboriginal heritage for the mountains west of Sydney brought together in such a fine volume. It still sits on my bookshelf in Blackheath alongside ragged maps and bushwalking guides that I constantly thumb through before heading out to explore the country that has so many layers of meaning. So I have been keenly awaiting this second edition of the book edited by Eugene Stockton and John Merriman, hoping it would live up to the benchmark set by its predecessor. I was not disappointed.

The second edition of *Blue Mountains Dreaming* has been refreshed with new information as well as including a wider range of authors, all accomplished experts in their own fields. While the book disappointingly lacks direct contemporary Indigenous input, there is still scope for this to feature in future editions. The dynamic character of research in the mountains certainly calls on the editors to update the volume more regularly.

Edition two of the book is divided into ten chapters, one appendix and a detailed and well-considered index. Chapter 1 'New Discoveries', by one of the editors Eugene Stockton, clearly and concisely sets out the general scene for the remainder of the book. One could easily be critical of the quality and consistency of the drawings and maps in this short introductory chapter and in other parts of the book. But in a sense this handcrafted character adds to the charm of the volume and speaks to the deep feelings Stockton has for the Blue Mountains. He has lived there for much of his life and it is his passion for the country that holds the volume together as much as the intellectual rigor of the contributors.

The remaining nine chapters generally cover the range of topics typically associated with edited books that have a regional focus, with the order of the chapters being structured to take the reader seamlessly through the material. First we have a well-written discussion about the past and present climates by Mooney and Martin (Chapter 2). These two climate scientists have managed this complex discussion without falling into the trap of environmental determinism, or bombarding the reader with too much climatic jargon. The following chapter by Stockton tackles the archaeology of the Blue Mountains. Stockton has an encyclopaedic knowledge of the archaeological work undertaken over many decades and he is to be commended for summarising all of this work in 31 pages. A trained archaeologist would probably find reason to critique Stockton's use of concepts such as 'tool' types and the various technological phases he describes. But one assumes most people who will read this book are not trained archaeologists and, to be fair, the bibliography at the end of the chapter gives readers suitable references to follow for alternative lines of enquiry and analysis. Matthew Kelleher's chapter on Aboriginal art is beautifully illustrated and has a clear

discussion of the various art forms and the theories about their meanings. The next three chapters deal with the Darug people (Val Attenbrow), Gundungurra country (Jim Smith) and traditional subsistence patterns (John Merriman). All three of these chapters are readable, finely researched pieces written by knowledgeable, experienced authors. Chapter 8, authored by Dianne Johnson, deals with The Gully Aboriginal Place at Katoomba, probably the best known contemporary Aboriginal site in the Upper Blue Mountains. Not surprisingly, considering Johnson's previous publications on The Gully, this is an outstanding and thoroughly engaging chapter and is recommended as a standalone read for people who only browse the entire book. The final two chapters on the Dharug and Gundungurra languages by Kohen and Steele and by Steele are relatively short linked pieces, with a clear structure allowing even a non-linguist to easily understand something of the character of these two languages.

The book has bibliographic references at the end of each chapter that are comprehensive and well laid out. But in edited volumes this can be a bit frustrating for researchers who have to troll back through the volume to chase up poorly remembered points. Fortunately for this book there is an index by Jeanne Rudd that directs the reader rather elegantly through the diverse literature. It is pleasing to see that Rudd is suitably acknowledged for her work in the list of contributors.

Appendix 1 by Stockton entitled 'Baiaime' seems oddly placed as an appendix rather than as a chapter. The piece is presented as a treatment about the notion of there being a High God, known by various names including Baiaime, which was recognised by many Aboriginal groups. The appendix is in fact much more than this. It also includes an interesting discussion about the incorporation of Christian ideas into traditional Aboriginal spiritual beliefs. Stockton's deep understanding of Christianity through his life in the ministry makes this a worthy discussion, particularly as it includes a geographically wide-ranging survey of relevant ethnographic literature and rock art analyses. It would have been good to expand on this theme and perhaps to have had a secular view included from a co-author (perhaps in the third edition of the book).

For a researcher working in the Blue Mountains (JT), this volume provides a good solid secondary source account of present knowledge. What it lacks, however, is a summary discussion about what is missing and what future research questions might be profitable to pursue. In this regard the volume would have benefited from a more substantial foreword that reflected on the themes that have developed since the first edition was published. Inspiring other researchers, students and the public with unanswered questions is after all the hallmark of a good general history.

The real failure in this volume is the absence of local Indigenous authorship. There are many and diverse views among local Indigenous people about the deep history of the Blue Mountains. My (JT) own current research is addressing this topic through archival research as well as oral and visual recordings. Without an analysis of the contemporary attachment of Indigenous people to place, it is

not possible to really appreciate much of the history of the area. Capturing the imagination of readers through these accounts would have lifted this volume well above its place as a traditional well written regional history. While the editors may argue that the diversity of Indigenous views means that a single account would not be inclusive, there are research methods and sources (such as oral transcripts) that can overcome such issues. Hopefully this crucial research can be part of any third edition.

Like many 'regional' books that draw together specialist authors it is sometimes hard to tell who the book is aimed at, as we have alluded to above. The beautiful front cover and A4 format suggests a coffee table market. Many of the chapters are, on the other hand, well-constructed academic pieces that could easily be part of a tertiary reading list. At once this makes the book a little confused and at the same time all the more appealing. Perhaps it is the bespoke character of this book that gives it this dual personality, trading on both academic rigour and handcrafted charm. We both look forward to a third edition of *Blue Mountains Dreaming* that builds on the present edition and includes further new and innovative interpretations.

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*The Biggest Estate on Earth* by Bill Gammage, xxiii + 434 pp, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2011, ISBN 9781742377483 (hbk), \$49.99.

Throughout my life as a plant ecologist, I have yearned to 'see' the grasslands and grassy woodlands as they were in Australia before 1788. I felt that I might have had the smallest glimpse 34 years ago, as I crouched in a tiny remnant of grassland near a railway siding in Sunshine, Melbourne, one that had been regularly and recently burned. Since then, my imagination has been drip fed by fragmentary historical accounts and years of work in the more intact and extensive woodlands of southern Queensland. Stephen Pyne's book *Burning Bush: a Fire History of Australia* (1992) convinced me that Aboriginal burning was frequent and deliberate, for a number of reasons, including the manipulation of vegetation to attract fauna and make them easy to access. The account of people leaving camp for water or wood at dusk, illuminating their way by setting fire to the vegetation struck me deeply – that is a lot of burning.

I have often wondered why Pyne's book had relatively little impact on the debate around fire regimes and vegetation management, but no such fate awaits Bill Gammage's *The Biggest Estate on Earth*. This book sings – it is vivid, richly illustrated and forcefully argued. The annotated pairing of historical and current day landscapes with interpretation is engrossing. Gammage goes on to argue that the park-like vistas described by European newcomers were as man-made as those in their homelands. These were achieved by deliberate, frequent and planned use, and withholding, of fire. While no one can be comprehensively correct in all aspects of a book of this size, the broad evidence and message is clear: Aboriginal land management was active, knowing and wide-ranging. If Gammage's message achieves a mind shift in the general community it will be a great thing, particularly in southern Australia. Even greater will be our treasuring, adopting and adapting the values and fragments of knowledge that enabled Aboriginal people to maintain the landscapes at a level of functionality we can only aspire to. The tragedy of their dispossession is not only theirs, but ours, seen every day in degraded pastures and despoiled waterways.

In his book, Gammage reveals that he is deeply troubled by the attitude of plant and landscape ecologists, who in his view, apply the standards of science to history, while not necessarily applying them in their own profession. This, according to Gammage, results in ecologists discounting historical evidence and failing to understand the deeper elements of history that take one into the mindset of peoples in the past. Appendix 1 is a frontal attack in anticipation of criticism of the book, and is rather startling. Nonetheless Gammage is quite right – scientists are as prone to subjectivity as anyone else. For instance, ecologists are champions for the protection of species diversity and their ecosystems, and are highly sensitive to the way their messages might be (mis)interpreted when delivered to land managers and policy makers. Statements about 1788 tree densities caused some angst amongst ecologists (eg Benson and Redpath 1997) around the time of the introduction of vegetation protection legislation,



with concerns that historically-reported low densities would support a case for ongoing tree clearing. In terms of Gammage's own writing, the problem for me is not so much subjectivity, but the beguiling language that so lyrically and confidently fills in details of action and intent around the quoted evidence. I love it for its completeness of narrative, and of course he may be right, but I also know the ubiquity of uncertainty in all disciplines.

Gammage does not dwell on the implications of his historical account for current day land management in southern Australia where ongoing Aboriginal connections are fragmented or absent, and there is the massive job of translating all this evidence into the context of a landscape transformed by an industrial society. Straddling the cultural boundary of wilderness concepts and Aboriginal management, most land managers are confused; the threatened 'woodland' birds love trees and dense shrubs, but the rising tide of dense regrowth in reserves and post-agricultural land is a far cry from the open grassy places described so rapturously by the explorers and settlers in Gammage's book. How does one re-establish a fire regime in small heavily treed patches of vegetation? Are native shrubs invading ex-pastures self-limiting or only controlled by fire? Should they be controlled at all?

We most definitely need to understand what the 1788 vegetation was and how it was managed, not because we could ever re-construct it on any but the smallest scales, but because it provides the clues to the persistence of native plants and animals, a context for fire management and a standard of land care that we need to aspire to. The landscape templates deduced from historical accounts are important, and are an unexpectedly positive re-enforcement of landscape design principles that have been developed for agricultural landscapes, with their elements of intensively used open areas necessarily concentrating on the better soils and lower parts of the landscape and stratified areas of decreasingly intensively used vegetation – functionally equivalent to being less burnt (McIntyre et al 2002). Gammage concluded that all the best country was treeless. It still is, but not for the same reasons that it was. We now have additional tools for controlling trees apart from fire – cropping and fertilisers disrupt regeneration and induce poor health, unfertilised land will naturally regenerate trees even under grazing, but herbicides can be used to thin these. Technology is a potentially useful substitute for fire, but we still need to be guided by the requirements of the biota (the ecologists' task) and those tantalising glimpses of how things once were, to inspire us to greater things. *The Biggest Estate on Earth* amply provides us with the latter.

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*Aboriginal Child Welfare, Self-government and the Rights of Indigenous Children: Protecting the Vulnerable Under International Law* by Sonia Harris-Short, 354 pp, Ashgate, Farnham, 2012, ISBN 9781409419549 (hbk), \$138.60.

This scholarly work in law and history provides a thoroughgoing account of Aboriginal child welfare policies and practices in Australia and Canada. Importantly, Harris-Short links the debates around child welfare to issues of sovereignty, decolonisation and self-government. Arguing for a radical reconceptualisation of approaches to child welfare services in Aboriginal communities, the author sees the recognition of indigenous rights at the international level, through the adoption of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which formally acknowledges the colonisation of indigenous peoples, as an opportune moment to shift the paradigm of international and national law. Rather than becoming entangled in arguments over collective rights versus individual rights, she suggests that in combination with other human rights instruments, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a more nuanced approach is achievable.

The book is organised into four parts. Part I sets the context with three personal narrative accounts of children removed from their families and communities in Australia and Canada. The nature of James's story will be familiar to Australian readers, as it is drawn from the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's *Bringing Them Home* report. The report was, at the time of publication, innovative in the primary use of first-hand narrative accounts as the evidentiary basis for a legal inquiry. Richard Cardinal's story, the first Canadian narrative, is drawn from a short documentary film about a Métis boy who tragically committed suicide at the age of 17 while under the care of the provincial child welfare system. There is also the story of Lester Desjarlais, a 15-year-old Ojibway boy who committed suicide after years of abuse while under the care of an Aboriginal-controlled child welfare agency.

Part II begins with an historical overview of the policies and practices of Aboriginal child removal to missions, dormitories and residential schools in Canada and Australia, drawing on well-established historiography. Harris-Short clearly places these practices within the general context of colonisation, highlighting the effects not just on individual children and families, but on Aboriginal communities as a whole, inter-generationally, disrupting the continuity of Aboriginal culture. She documents the shift, in the 1950s, to the administration of general child welfare policies. Routine institutionalisation was phased out, and children, particularly those with lighter skin colour, were placed in homes, with fostering and adoption by non-Aboriginal families vigorously promoted. Harris-Short argues that the application of liberal legal standards understood to be in the children's best interests demonstrate cultural chauvinism because it fails to recognise the importance of Aboriginal cultural identity, including specific child rearing practices.

The last chapter in this section brings us to the contemporary period, where there is evidence of increasing judicial sensitivity and significant legislative reforms, incorporating the Aboriginal placement principle into child protection and adoption law. While significant, as Harris-Short points out, in focusing on the care of children post-removal, such changes have deflected attention away from the more difficult issues associated with the failure of the child protection system and how to avoid the removal of children in the first place. Aboriginal children are vastly over-represented in child protection processes, nine times more likely to be subject to a court order than non-Indigenous children (p. 89). In Canada, legislative reforms in some provinces, such as Manitoba, delegate administrative and management responsibility for child welfare to Métis and First Nations communities. However, this does not extend to the law and had resulted in uneven outcomes in the courts when considering the importance of indigenous cultural identity as a factor in the child's best interests. Harris-Short suggests that the failure of legislative reforms provides support for arguments that involve restoring authority to Aboriginal communities for self-government over child welfare.

It is to this issue that Part III is devoted. In Canada, there have been moves towards community-driven self-government in certain fields, such as areas of criminal justice, health and social welfare. However, in some communities, the legacy of colonialism has resulted in disintegration and disfunctionality, sometimes with devastating consequences for children exposed to sexual abuse and violence. Harris-Short elaborates on the inquiry into the death of Desjarlais, which found evidence of sexual abuse occurring across reserve communities in Canada. Here, she discusses the effects of internal colonialism on Aboriginal men in leadership positions.

In the final chapter in this section, Harris-Short points out that the theory supporting the inherent right to self-government would provide a platform for indigenous autonomy and governmental powers over internal, and possibly, external matters. In 1982 in Canada, the Constitution was amended to entrench Aboriginal rights, precluding extinguishment after this date (s. 35), thereby providing for the right to self-government, including self-government over child welfare. While the Supreme Court decision in *R v Sparrow* (1990) suggested the endorsement of an inherent rights approach, this has not been supported by subsequent decisions. Treaty negotiations have been more productive. While courts have largely failed to find the right to self-government, in 1995, the Canadian Government accepted the inherent right to self-government of First Nations peoples and negotiated agreements at the regional level have occurred across the country.

In the face of the failure to deliver self-determination via national mechanisms, the author turns to international law. In Part IV, Harris-Short discusses the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Article 3 of the Declaration contains the unqualified right of indigenous peoples to self-determination. She argues that international law can provide for internal self-determination, while at the same time protecting the individual rights of vulnerable people, if

responsibility is vested in the Aboriginal community itself. The individualistic nature of human rights law, respecting, for instance, the child as the subject of rights separate from the community, may be at odds with an indigenous assertion of collective cultural identity. However, Harris-Short argues that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, recognising the inter-dependence of the child with family and community, may be the basis for a dialogue over the reconciliation of these principles.

Overall, the book is a significant and thought-provoking contribution to a discussion of indigenous peoples' right to autonomous control over the welfare of vulnerable children in their communities. Harris-Short is mindful that in Australia, where there is staunch opposition to self-government and in some communities overwhelming challenges, such proposals may strike a hollow chord. However, she asserts that the 'concept of sovereignty is key' (p. 287).

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*The Aborigines' Protection Society: Humanitarian Imperialism in Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Canada, South Africa and the Congo 1836-1909* by James Heartfield, 379 pp, Columbia University Press, distributed via Footprint Books, Sydney, 2011, ISBN 1849041202, \$62.00.

'Accounts of the rise of the British Empire in the nineteenth century have properly taken economics and race as the overriding drivers.' So argues James Heartfield in the concluding chapter of his impressive new history of the Aborigines Protection Society (APS). Heartfield does not wish to disrupt the prevailing wisdom, but contends that recognising 'the humanitarian wellsprings of colonial policy' adds an important dimension to the historiography of the British Empire. In a wide-ranging study taking in several sites of British imperial endeavour, Heartfield shows that the APS regularly advocated greater powers for the Colonial Office in a quest for what it conceived as 'responsible imperialism'. In this way, it played a significant role in Britain's imperial expansion.

The APS was formed in 1837 at a high point of humanitarian influence in Britain. The Reform Act of 1832 had recast the Westminster parliament, increasing the power of the so-called 'philanthropists', a diverse group consisting of Quakers, evangelicals and non-conformists, who campaigned against slavery and supported missionary endeavour. After the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, many prominent philanthropists turned their attention to the plight of Aboriginal peoples in British settlements. Led by Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, they convinced the House of Commons to conduct a Select Committee on Aborigines (1835-37). The committee's report advocated a policy of Aboriginal 'protection' and the APS was formed to lobby the British government to implement this policy. For seven decades it was a prominent and sometimes controversial voice in colonial affairs before finally merging with the Anti-Slavery Society in 1909.

Heartfield's book is divided into two parts: the first provides a broad outline of the APS in a predominantly metropolitan context. He explores the origins of the society in the anti-slavery movement, analyses the Select Committee hearings and report, and charts the society's 'difficult relationship to Empire' (p. 43) over subsequent decades. A good example of this difficulty is the society's ambivalent response to Edward Eyre's brutal suppression of the Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica in 1865; Eyre's earlier experience as Protector of Aborigines in South Australia, and his friendship with APS secretary Thomas Hodgkin played a role here.

The thematic approach of much of the first part is somewhat counter-intuitive; this reviewer wondered whether a chronological treatment might have provided a more coherent introduction to the society and better demonstrated its shifts in policy as it negotiated key changes of the nineteenth century, such as the rise of settler self-government, the Darwinian revolution, and the intensification of racist ideology. Nevertheless, Heartfield introduces several themes of importance, most notably the society's gradual embrace of Imperial power as

the best solution to its humanitarian aims. He shows that APS changed from opposing the annexation of new territories to supporting it, in the hope this would enable the Colonial Office to rein in the excesses of settlers who were beyond British jurisdiction. Under its final secretary, Henry Fox Bourne, 'the Aborigines' Protection Society came close to becoming a champion of imperialism' (p. 47).

Heartfield gives some consideration to the view that the APS was a socially superior institution, noting that many members (especially the Tory ones) were anti-democratic. This is evident in the society's support for the traditional authority of chiefs and suspicion of egalitarian forces within indigenous populations. A disdain among APS members for settlers in the colonies is also identified: Heartfield argues that many Britons looked down on the 'dregs' that they perceived were the typical settlers and suggests that the APS fed off this prejudice. Similarly, he shows that opposition to the APS often pointed to the apparent hypocrisy of the philanthropists and their love of distant causes, such as the conclusion of the satirical *Punch* magazine: 'with many of the worthy people of Exeter Hall, distance is essential to love' (p. 59).

Part 2 of Heartfield's book provides six varied case studies, which examine the path of native policy in Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Canada, South Africa and the Congo. Each location attracted the attention of the APS during its seven decades of lobbying: Australia was a significant site of experimentation in protection policy in the 1830s and 1840s; the New Zealand Wars were high on the society's agenda during the 1860s; while South Africa (with its large indigenous population) was prominent throughout. The book is a clear demonstration of the value of transnational history, with each case study presenting a unique story. For the most part, however, these contrasts are mediated through an analysis of metropolitan policy. The author makes this clear in his introduction: 'first and foremost it is a history of the Aborigines' Protection Society and the way it shaped the policy of the British Empire towards natives' (p. xi). With this aim in mind, his book is a clear success; collectively, the case studies paint a detailed picture of the society, its aims, its challenges and its failures.

The Australian material is dealt with intelligently. Although Heartfield's research is necessarily broader than it is deep (a synthesis of a few secondary sources) his account is a valuable addition to the literature. He gives a good account of Australia's significant role as a laboratory for ideas of Aboriginal protection in British imperial policy, pointing to the influence of the Black War in Van Diemen's Land and George Augustus Robinson's 'friendly mission'. The Port Phillip Protectorate features prominently, but relevant material from other colonies, especially South Australia and Western Australia, is also provided. Heartfield describes the rebirth of Aboriginal protection in South Australia and Victoria following the emergence of self-government in the 1850s, although his account is relatively brief. Some more detail about the changed political circumstances and a sense of how the APS viewed these developments would have been welcome, but perhaps this would be to ask too much of such a wide-ranging

study. Heartfield briefly traces the Australian experience of protection into the twentieth century and notes the painful legacy of the Stolen Generations, which he argues was a logical outcome of the policies of the 1830s Select Committee.

James Heartfield's prose is more often descriptive than it is analytical, but he lets his account of the society and his six varied case studies speak for themselves; the result is a compelling book, rich in historical detail, that will be of considerable value to a range of scholars working in related fields.

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*The People of the Paroo River: Frederick Bonney's Photographs* by Jeanette Hope and Robert Lindsay, 112 pp, Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water NSW, Sydney South, 2012, ISBN 9781742323282, \$24.99.

At the back of Bourke lies the Paroo River, the last tributary of the Darling that flows unregulated by dam or weir. The town of Wanaaring – really a hamlet – is nestled within its serpentine bends. Graziers arrived at these always brown and usually sluggish waters in the mid-nineteenth century, as did an epidemic that brutalised the population of Paakantyi-speaking people, indigenous to the area. What followed for the Paakantyi was typical of the Aboriginal experience in western New South Wales. Doing what they could to recover and regroup, many formed strategic relationships with their colonisers and contributed to the sheep and cattle businesses that overran their ancestral lands.

Highly atypical in the colonial context was Frederic Bonney (1842–1921), the protagonist of *The People of the Paroo River*. A native of Staffordshire and an alumnus of Marlborough College, Frederic followed his brother Edward to Australia, arriving in Melbourne in 1865. The Bonney family included clerics and academics. There was also a Charles Bonney, uncle to Frederic and Edward, who served as a commissioner of Crown Lands and as a parliamentarian in South Australia. Charles had played a role in opening the overland stock route along the Murray River in 1838 and helped inspire his nephews to come to Australia where they established themselves on the Paroo. Their property, Momba Station, is now part of Paroo-Darling National Park.

The Bonney story would be unremarkable were it not for the fact that Frederic was a deft photographer. With his camera he channelled his deeply humanist vision. This is not the first book on Bonney. Robert Lindsay who, with Jeanette Hope, is co-author of the volume under review, published a shorter study in 1983, based on a series of photographs held by the Mitchell Library. *Held* (in the past tense) is the critical word here. Scandalously, all but 13 of these priceless portraits of Paakantyi people, dating from the 1870s, 'disappeared' from the Mitchell collection some time after the publication of Lindsay's first book. Consequently, many reproductions in *The People of the Paroo River* were by necessity made from the duplicates he ordered in the early 1980s. While Lindsay has generously (and hopefully not rashly) now donated his duplicate copies to the library, they are a poor substitute for the lost originals, printed from glass negatives.

The new book was inspired by the unearthing of a further cache of Bonney photographs, contained in an album put together by a Scottish medico and zoologist, Dr John Kerr Butter, that is now in the collection of the National Library of Australia. Butter lived ten kilometres from Bonney, who returned to England in 1881. This may explain how Butter became the owner of 29 Bonney photographs, a quarter of which are group portraits of Paakantyi. The remainder are views of the river country and station life in the 1870s. The new book contains reproductions of all known Australian photographs and commentary on the life and times of the photographer, based on careful archival research.



Much of my knowledge of the upper branches of the Darling comes from my investigation of the Federation era ethnographer, RH Mathews, who wrote extensively on this region of Australia. Mathews published on the mourning rituals of the area, influenced as they were by the presence of gypsum. When ground into a plaster, known as 'kopi', widows and widowers would mix it with water and mould the resulting paste about their head to form a grieving cap to signify their loss. These traditions were coming to an end when Mathews wrote about them in the early 1900s, but they were still in vogue during Bonney's time on the river. Among the many Aboriginal people whom Bonney befriended was a woman named Wonko Mary. A quartet of photographs, in which Mary is seen at various stages of the mourning period, are among the most resonant in Bonney's oeuvre.

The interface between Aboriginal people and photographers has for some years now provided important ground for rethinking the colonial experience, as is seen very notably in Jane Lydon's work on nineteenth-century Victoria. While Hope and Lindsay's study makes no attempt to scrutinise visual culture with this sort of rigour, it throws light upon it by reproducing the work and making thoughtful commentary, milking to the utmost the fairly minimal documentary evidence of Bonney's life story. The main disappointment is that the standard of photographic reproduction is mediocre.

Viewed collectively, Frederic Bonney's photography gives a vivid insight to the Paakantyi world in the decades following the invasion of their homelands. We meet Bonney's subjects as pastoral workers, as makers of ceremony and as producers of material culture. The sitters pose willingly in these photos, which betray not a hint of approbation on the part of their maker. In terms of both content and technical quality, these are exceptional images for the period. Photography could only be a hobby for Bonney, the fulltime grazier, yet in his ethnographic picture making he found his metier. Quite possibly he took many more photos than those now attributed to him. Not surprisingly, his work found its admirers in the colonies and was exhibited at the Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880.

It is likely that Bonney would be better known had he remained in his adopted country. But his brother's ill health forced the sale of Momba Station. Frederic retired to England after little more than a decade and a half in Australia. Installed in the village of Colton, where he lived the remainder of his days, Bonney – as we know from surviving photographs – decorated his house with a remarkable collection of Aboriginal artefacts, obtained during his Paroo years. Some were later acquired by the University of Cambridge. Bonney kept a knowing eye on the emerging science of anthropology and was utterly appalled when he heard Carl Lumholtz speaking condescendingly on the ways of 'savages'. Bonney, in contrast, said of the people of the Paroo that he 'loved them for their loyalty and integrity'.

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*Irrititja – the Past: Antikirrinya History from Ingomar Station and Beyond* by Ingkama Bobby Brown and Petter Attila Naessan, 64 pp, Keeaira Press, Southport, Queensland, 2012, ISBN 9780980594256 (pbk), \$25.00.

'History is finished now', declares Ingkama Bobby Brown (p. 35), but clearly not, as this historical account of Antikirrinya language and culture testifies. This charming book, a collaboration between Bobby Brown, the Indigenous co-author, and a non-Indigenous linguist Petter Attila Naessan, is a valuable contribution to what is a sparsely documented part of South Australia, and to Anangu history pertaining to that region. Such ventures provide not only a written record of a world that is disappearing, but also a legacy for future generations of 'Antikirrinya' to seek out and treasure.

Herein lies what we found to be the main issue with this short book: it is not clear who the intended audience actually is. While this volume is commendable in aiming to blend both a vernacular recount and historical research, it is an approach that may speak more to researchers rather than local Antikirrinya readers. We are told (p. 9) that the initial idea for the project came from Ingkama Bobby Brown who wanted to make sure that *tjamula kamila arangka*, 'the ways of the grandparents', could be documented for future generations. This commendable aim follows in the wake of many similar published and unpublished accounts by Indigenous authors. Many of these succeed because they are written in a style and format that appeals to a local audience and they are filled with relevant photographs or illustrations.

Our concern with this book is that the style of the two authors has not blended into a coherent final text. Is this book Bobby Brown's story, that is, a transcription of a personal oral history? Or is it a 'report' that seeks to make sweeping reference to the broader linguistic, historical, demographic, ecological and geographical context of the Antikirrinya region? A defter merging of these two aspects, both of which are valuable and interesting, would have made for a more engaging read. Bobby Brown has a very important story to tell, however we learn so little about him. The authors could have made more use of the chronological structure of Brown's oral narrative to contextualise relevant diversions into the referenced literature. The book would also have benefitted from a genealogy of Brown's family, also for Brown's story, especially his account of '*puyu pakarnu 1953-angka*' the Weapons Research Establishment bomb testing in South Australia, to be linked more carefully to Naessan's account of South Australian history. Likewise, given Brown's interest in plants in his vernacular texts, it is strange that the scientific names of the plants are not highlighted in the English texts.

Language is a key theme in this book and this is made apparent in the Preface and the broader description of the 'language ecology' (pp. 31–35). As a linguist, Naessan takes care to explain his approach to spelling, pronunciation and translation. Upfront he highlights some of the quandaries associated with the standardisation of writing in newly literate languages such as the Western

Desert family of languages by focusing on the use of diacritics, ie underlining, in some orthographies to represent the retroflex sounds. As he so rightly points out, this can be cumbersome for literate Western Desert speakers and for all who try to write certain Western Desert languages on computers. The Ngaanyatjarra orthography developed by Amee Glass and Dorothy Hackett (see Glass and Hackett 2003) has indeed created a more durable system for maintaining the retroflex sounds in written language. In his transcription of Brown's Yankunytjatjara texts Naessan proceeds to use Ngaanyatjarra orthographic conventions not only for the retroflex sounds, but also for the tap or trill 'rr', in order to 'simplify the process of writing', despite the orthographic conventions typically adopted for Yankunytjatjara and also Antikirrinya (see Goddard 1996: 9). Naessan also decides to use a 'shorter' version of the language name, that is 'Yankunytjarra' (p. 5) rather than the standardised spelling 'Yankunytjatjara', even though he has provided a morphological description of the standardised form (ie the language having *yankunytja* meaning 'going' and *-tjarra* meaning having/with). Unfortunately, the language names that he uses (ie Yankunytjarra and Pitjanytjarra) do not make sense grammatically. This unnecessary and confusing simplification of the language names had us perplexed, as did other orthographic idiosyncracies (Pregon/Fregon; Aranda/Arrernte; Mable Creek/Mabel Creek; 'Arnangus'). For those who are fluent readers of Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara the text is difficult to read because of what appears to be a jarring spelling style.

Nevertheless, this is an important contribution to the documentation of an otherwise neglected region of South Australia and the hard work involved in producing this book needs to be applauded.

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*Doctor Do-Good: Charles Duguid and Aboriginal Advancement, 1930s-1970s* by Rani Kerin, 203 pp, Australian Scholarly Publishing, North Melbourne, 2011, ISBN 9781921875298, \$39.95.

Despite his prominent status as a campaigner for Aboriginal rights, it has taken until 2011 for Charles Duguid to be the subject of extensive biographical treatment. In her elegantly written and sympathetic biography, historian Rani Kerin details the activism of a man whose 'efforts were, on the whole, appreciated by Aboriginal people and the wider society' (p. 2). Best-known for his role in the establishment of the Ernabella Mission in South Australia, this in fact was just the beginning, for it set the scene for 40 plus years of campaigning.

*Doctor Do-Good* is not a typical birth to death biography. Kerin instead focuses attention on Duguid's public life, his campaigning, and his rise to national prominence from the 1930s to the 1970s. Archival limitations necessitate this focus on Duguid and his public life, for he maintained an extensive collection of personal papers from the 1930s onwards. Despite this, Kerin successfully demonstrates the breadth and variety of his campaigning, his longevity, and the important role of his wife, Phyllis, in his work.

Kerin is also interested in assessing Duguid's 'exceptionalism' as a campaigner. This is a question of much importance and significance in Australian history, given, as she notes, the criticism of 'do-gooder' white campaigners in recent scholarship. In light of this, Kerin considers Duguid's personal ambitions, character, and his successes and failures as a campaigner. His platform was certainly different to other white campaigners of the era, preferring to argue for 'equality of treatment' rather than biological absorption or segregation, both prominent policies at the time. As a trained doctor, he was a methodical and practical man, but one of action too who sought out immediate solutions to issues, which found expression in his platform of Aboriginal advancement founded on his belief that Aboriginal people were not doomed to die out, but could be brought slowly into mainstream Australian life. He experimented with this philosophy at Ernabella from 1937. It was a cause that he remained committed to throughout the remainder of his life, and which found expression in all his campaigns.

*Doctor Do-Good* is structured in three parts, covering the main arc of Duguid's campaigns in a largely chronological format. In Part 1 Kerin examines Duguid's best-known public campaigns, and establishes the intellectual context for the emergence of Ernabella, setting the scene for the arrival of Duguid into the midst of missionaries, intellectuals, government officials and anthropologists all debating the extinction of Aboriginal peoples. Duguid, she argues, was exasperated by these groups, but happily drew upon their ideas combining them into a philosophy that he put into practice at Ernabella: a medical mission, and an experiment in using a mission to retain traditional ways of life. Duguid's involvement in the 1946-47 rocket range campaign against British and Australian

government plans to test rockets in Central Australia on Aboriginal reserve land, is covered in Chapter 2. It was a battle to save the reserve land. Land was an essential part of Duguid's philosophy: to retain the land was crucial to maintaining traditions and culture. It was this that motivated his involvement, fearing what the loss of land would do to a way of life, and to Ernabella.

Duguid's lesser known campaigns and his private life form the basis of the chapters in Part 2. Phyllis and Duguid's working and private relationship are examined in Chapter 3, while Chapter 4 explores the relationship between the Duguid's and their adopted Aboriginal son Sydney James Cook/Duguid. Phyllis was a reformer before she married Charles in 1930, and during her marriage she was to become a leading advocate of Aboriginal and mixed race women in Adelaide. She believed in Aboriginal advancement, fostering it through women's organisations during the Second World War. Twenty years younger than Charles, and raised in Adelaide by parents who valued education, Phyllis became a teacher, and a reformer active in women's social and political organisations, including the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). She took part in establishing the League for Protection and Advancement of Aboriginal and Half-Caste Women in Adelaide, a pro-Aboriginal lobby group and the first organisation to use 'advancement' in its title. Concerned for the welfare of young women in the city, they group sought to establish a recreation centre, but quickly moved beyond this practical vision to much larger ones, including pushing for the appointment of women protectors and protective legislation.

Duguid is revealed as a man full of confidence in his vision, self-righteous at times, and prone to myth-making, with a desperate desire for public recognition. Nevertheless, his concerns for Aboriginal rights and welfare were sincere. This is an excellent biography of a man, his campaigns, visions, ideals and personal ambitions. It also offers insight into the context of the times, and carefully places Duguid into his historical and intellectual context. Kerin also navigates the contested history writing about white campaigners in Australia's past, but she does it with grace and a light hand. Duguid is the star of this book, but Kerin does not celebrate him in the manner of the great man, even if he carefully cultivated that image for himself.

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*The Tale of Frieda Keysser: Frieda Keysser and Carl Strehlow: An Historical Biography. Volume I: 1875-1910* by John Strehlow, 1198 pp, Wild Cat Press, London, 2011, ISBN 9780956755803 (hbk), \$89.95.

The Strehlows have had more than their share of postcolonial critique, because in the postcolonial revolution of Australian Aboriginal politics old-school historians were lined up along with protectors and missionaries for all being part of the problem, not part of the solution. Once complex issues are reduced to simple slogans suitable for banners we know there is a problem, and it is therefore apposite to turn our historical attention to the generations of activists before our own, who were as committed as ours to a set of ideas, though the ideas have indeed changed. A quick glance at missionary salary-scales and retirement provisions signals that they were not in it for the money. The mortality and morbidity rates of missionaries ring out self-sacrifice, not self-aggrandisement. 'Labourers in the vineyard of God', they called themselves, and humility was a valued discursive currency: what a different world they inhabited.

So much has been written about Rev Carl Strehlow and the Hermannsburg mission in Central Australia that placing his wife Frieda at the centre of a history seems a refreshing change in perspective. Frieda is an interesting historical subject, but she is only the canvas on which this family saga unfolds, and the book sweeps well beyond a biography of a missionary wife who pointedly goes by her maiden name in this book. It is an exhaustive history of Hermannsburg mission and its Arrernte and Luritja residents, and a well-researched and interesting recovery of the histories of the Keysser and Strehlow families in Germany from the interior view of the family by a direct descendant: John Strehlow (JS) is a son of Ted Strehlow and grandson of Carl and Frieda Strehlow.

It was never going to be a small book, with a 19-page timeline beginning with Charlemagne's formation of the Holy Roman Empire in the year 800, and the directory of persons including 47 Indigenous people, the ones usually absent from missionary histories. JS, for whom the most direct way to Germany is via Alice Springs, Cairns and Port Moresby, explains German history to Australians, and Australian history to Germans. So that we do not get lost in the 'cast of characters', he provides every possible finding aid: an index, a genealogy trailing back to 1314, 11 maps, three appendices and close to 300 illustrations, including unpublished photos, and close-ups on Frieda's freckled Backfisch<sup>1</sup> face. That JS became consumed with this project of recovery speaks from the list of archives and repositories he visited since 1976 when he met his Tante Martha in Gunzenhausen near Munich and found her a complete stranger: he burrowed in the United States, the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom and Australia, and in 41 German institutions.

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1 *Backfisch*– small fry, a term usually describing private school teenage girls in nineteenth century Germany. Similar to *giovinetta* in Italian, or *midinette* in French.



With scalpel precision JS peels back brittle skins of intergenerational pain in this Buddenbrooks-style family saga of the Keysser/Strehlow family, and in places his storytelling craft holds its own to Thomas Mann with its deft caricature of good intentions.

Frieda and her brother Christian (missionary in Papua New Guinea) were the last of the grand Keysser dynasty of the mighty Keysserhammer (iron forge) in tiny Geroldgrün, and the first in 300 years who inherited nothing of the once grand family fortunes. Their grandfather Rev Johann Erhard Fischer wrote a 696-page history in 1863 about the introduction of Christianity to Bavaria, and was closely allied with the founding of the Bavarian Neuendettelsau mission society, which trained many of the Lutheran missionaries destined for Australia. Frieda lost her doting father at age four, and never got on with her mother, who re-married and died ten years later. Like Emily Brontë, Frieda became something like 'a Baptist chapel on top of a volcano'. She was bundled off to a finishing school in the Lutheran institution at Neuendettelsau, which her grandfather helped to establish, an entire village, as Strehlow observes, that is organised around the uplifting of women. Here she met Carl Strehlow, who had been barred from a decent education by a well-meaning, anti-intellectual, tyrannical father who had served time in prison rather than bend to doctrinal reform. Two injured children now meet as workers in the vineyard of God, and much more injury to come, because, too busy being parents to the Arrente people, they could not parent their own: the three eldest were sent to Germany in 1910. When Frieda re-joined them 20 years later, widowed and retired, her children harboured a deep resentment of her. This is reminiscent of the busy German Goddeffroy collector in Queensland, Amalie Dietrich, whose abandoned daughter destroyed all evidence of her mother's life and work and invented her own published version of it. One such second-generation version is Ted Strehlow's *Journey to Horseshoe Bend*, an account of the Strehlow's time at Hermannsburg mission and Carl Strehlow's death at remote Horseshoe Bend in 1922 when nobody could come and fetch the sick man who had served the Aranda mission for 28 years. JS calls his famous father's book about the equally famous grandfather 'mostly fiction'.

Three generations of pain speak from this book: 'in our family everyone competed and nobody helped each other'. Carl and Frieda's children scattered in Germany – Rudolf in Hamburg, Karl in Berlin, Martha near Munich – as if they were neglected and abandoned by their busy parents, and only JS's father Ted (or Theo) remained with his parents in Australia. Ted became a noted anthropologist in his own right, though JS thinks his father never properly acknowledged his intellectual debt to the work of grandfather Carl: to deny or ignore his achievements was a revenge in which all Carl's children conspired. JS claims that none of the Indigenous people in Alice Springs remembered Carl Strehlow's name, and his abandoned grave halfway between the mission and Adelaide radiates the idea that 'Carl's life and work had been a failure' and presumably, that the price of success was too high, at the expense of a decent family life. Carl Strehlow was a man whose children did not know him. Ted, too, in turn abandoned his children by leaving his wife and remarrying, and even



omitted them from his *Who's Who* entry: generations of pain and inadequate parenting. Indigenous people who have their own traumas of institutionalisation and removal should find this perspective eye-opening.

Despite this hard look at the family, JS seeks to recover his grandparents' professional contribution to science and to the welfare of Indigenous people at Hermannsburg. Missionary women are notoriously difficult to recover from the records, but Frieda has left a resumé, a diary covering 20 years and two travel accounts, all held by family in Berlin. The author also has a copy of the mission chronicle kept by Carl Strehlow. JS understands well that women, who have been played to the margin of mission histories, are the key to understanding their success and failure. Strategic marriages formed bonds of kinship between the Lutherans involved, and in great-uncle August's sitting room three such matches were made, including Frieda's. Frieda is shown here as the key in turning around infant mortality at Hermannsburg, where there were few Indigenous children. During three long excursions along the Birdsville Track, and all around the Coopers Creek in 1883 and 1884, missionary Johann Flierl encountered about 250 Aborigines, most of whom he already knew, and only about six children. 'Something must have gone wrong in the inner world of the women' argues JS, to have so few children, (p. 264) adamant that flippant references to cultural genocide are not a satisfactory answer. He offers a few alternative explanations. Inter-group violence from pay back increased to a furious rate as Indigenous people were shunted off their land, where previously dispersion and distance ensured that pay-back was slow. Wrong marriages caused many of these, and JS is at pains to point out that it was not the missionaries who introduced wrong marriages, these had always been a feature of Indigenous society. JS argues that the missionaries were practically the only people who stopped the shooting, opposed blood-feuds, eliminated venereal disease, and ensured the birth rate did not fall away – for this special credit to Frieda at Hermannsburg. They acted as whistleblowers about outrages from native police and sometimes sheltered refugees from the law because they did not trust in the integrity of the police.

Three worlds collided in a place like this: avowedly anti-German people – such as the emerging anthropologist Baldwin Spencer and the local police constable Cowle – suspected the missionaries of undermining the British empire, and the pious Lutherans had a deep distrust of the intentions of settlers towards Aborigines. JS thinks it is no accident that elsewhere in the world regimes which later overthrew British rule were often set up by people who had been introduced to Western ideas through a mission school, because the missionaries had shown them how to crack the system (p. 559).

Carl Strehlow arrived at Hermannsburg in 1894 during a serious drought that up-ended many stations and white colonisation was in retreat. The mission-cum-station had been abandoned by an earlier group of Lutherans, and dubious men had meanwhile been left in charge of the cattle station: cattle rustlers, ferals who ignored the colour bar, riff raff in the contemporary opinion – this was precisely when the Horn scientific expedition came through and Baldwin Spencer formed an indelibly negative impression of the place and was to become an influential

adversary of Carl Strehlow. Young Strehlow arrived as a greenhorn and was treated like one, his English was poor, he travelled without water, and he could not boil an egg, until his betrothed arrived from Germany with 627 kilograms of luggage to set up house. It was a journey forever, no visits home. JS captures the enormity of what these young people asked of themselves.

They had no suitable training, but young Carl completely understood the absolute centrality of food. He personally doled out the food three times a day every day to everyone on the mission, to be consumed within his view in the Esshaus, so that no traditional obligations could be brought into play.

JS vents much scorn throughout the book on the 'self-appointed experts' like Francis Gillen and on the whole profession of anthropology that gorged itself on information supplied by missionaries, all the while criticising them, with its career professionals too busy to spend time with Indigenous people. They ignored conflict like inter-tribal conflict, payback, violence, and infanticide, so that anthropology was bankrupt before it ever opened for business, JS writes. The book seeks to rectify every mistake that has ever been made in judging Carl Strehlow and Hermannsburg: nobody was forced to enter the mission, and Indigenous people were not stripped of their culture by the mission. Only about a quarter of the mission residents were Christians, and only Christians were barred from corroborees, simply because Lutherans did not dance.

While the argument might be predictable from someone whose family has been so picked over by critics, this is original scholarship with original insights, ideas and reflections, not gleaned from well-ploughed publications. JS is scornful of the errors of the published work on Hermannsburg, and only a few have slipped in here – confusing Bloomfield with Cape Bedford on p. 262, overlooking that Easter egg painting is alive and well throughout (Catholic) Germany, referring to Kalbensteinberg as Kalbensteinbach, and in some instances one can either believe it or not, because the sources are sparsely annotated. The doctrinal sectarianism of the South Australian Lutherans who supported the mission, too, gets short shrift: it was the 'Lutheran theocracy of the country', 'indulging in their favourite pastime, religious schism based on irrelevant doctrinal disputes' (p. 300). The book is a vindication of the Strehlows, but it is eminently readable and interesting, and the language is often deft, the work and its conclusions entirely original.

In his effort to give due credit to Carl Strehlow, JS is a little too light on acknowledging the Indigenous informants like Johannes Pingilina who assisted in the linguistic project at Coopers Creek, and to Georg Reuther whose voluminous recording of Indigenous lifeworlds, customs, beliefs and language show a man who was completely immersed and knew how to respect the material. But it is a good read with many surprises, and ample material for a movie and the author's background in theatre shines through.

Regina Ganter

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*The Habitat of Australia's Aboriginal Languages: Past, Present and Future* edited by Gerhard Leitner and Ian G Malcolm, 389 pp, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin, New York, 2006, ISBN 9783110190793 (hbk), \$137.00.

Ecological metaphors have become trendy in linguistics of late, as the complexity and inter-relatedness of botanic systems neatly parallels that of human societies and their languages. *The Habitat of Australia's Aboriginal Languages* engages the metaphor of ecological habitats to investigate the most significant changes to the Australian language landscape since European invasion. The papers in this volume cluster around three key aspects of habitat disturbance: traditional languages and how they have adapted, contact languages and how they have evolved, and how languages have come to operate in education and the law.

Harold Koch provides a very useful overview for those wanting an insight into the unique constellations of structural features (ergativity, 'kintax', pronominal ex-/inclusivity, complex verb morphology, unique semantic distinctions and metaphor) that have continued to captivate Australianist linguists from historical, descriptive and typological persuasions.

Michael Christie takes us into the 'habitat' of Yolngu languages, with a particular focus on activities designed to situate health and education services more firmly in a Yolngu perspective. For example, Christie describes how Yolngu educational theorists and practitioners such as Raymattja Marika-Mununggiritj and Mandawuy Yunupingu have drawn upon the concept of *ganma*, a confluence of salt and fresh water, to elaborate their approach to 'both ways' education. This aims to develop Yolngu people who can live successfully in just such a place 'where Balanda and Yolngu meet' (Yunupingu 1991: 101 cited in Christie). While *ganma* represents the process, *garma* is the context, the site for this to happen. Garma is the name of a ceremony and the site on which it is performed: 'a place where people know they are welcome if they treat the place, its owners, its history and its visitors with respect' (p. 73). It also entails all the preparatory and organisational work necessary to conduct the final performance properly, and here the Yolngu have found a road-map for how pedagogical and curriculum planning can be properly done. One is left with the overwhelming sense of how much intellectual and practical work Yolngu people have undertaken to articulate their own culture in order to reconcile with and accommodate the systems, institutions and language of the recent European arrivals. And one is haunted by questions of how well this has been reciprocated.

Michael Walsh's contribution to the volume begins by outlining some of the problems with assessing language vitality in the Australian context using scales, censuses and other statistical means. By way of contrast, in attempting to describe the status of the Murrinhpatha language (presently spoken in the Wadeye community in the Northern Territory), Walsh provides a detailed historical account of the language in its broader language ecology. This approach gives a richness to our understanding of its relative strength that is hard to

distil into a numerical scale. He briefly tackles some of the reasons that may contribute to language loss, and whether language loss necessarily entails a loss of cultural knowledge or practises. This is followed by some observations on how new Aboriginal languages (Kriols and mixed languages) have found a place in the language ecology of many Aboriginal communities, and how traditional Aboriginal languages are being used in new, often cyber, spaces. His sweep through the language landscape would have been incomplete without a word to those languages currently being woken from their slumber, and to that end there are a number of good references here for those seeking inspiration in this area. Walsh is optimistic about the future, particularly in regard to two new opportunities for Aboriginal people to carry out university-based training and research into their languages. One of these (the Language Endangerment Program at Monash) is now defunct.

This sad fact is politically contextualised by Graham McKay's chapter, an historical overview of policy initiatives aimed, directly and indirectly, at the maintenance of Indigenous languages. His illuminating account situates language policy relating to Indigenous languages at the nexus of attitudes to both Indigenous people (exclusion, assimilation, integration, etc), and linguistic diversity (including migrant languages). McKay examines both significant national initiatives, such as the National Policy on Languages, and state and territory based policy that have largely been generated out of education departments and the legal system, and often had an indirect focus on Indigenous languages. He catalogues their relative legacies, and from this there is much to reflect on about the role and efficacy of ad hoc, government-directed language planning to date, given the continual decline in speaker numbers (of most traditional languages) also clearly described in the chapter.

Four chapters focus on what linguists call 'contact' languages. These are languages that arise when two groups of people with distinct languages meet. John Harris explains these processes and the associated technical terminology (pidgin, creole, etc) in clear, accessible terms. His chapter is in large part an overview of contact languages that have arisen through interactions with English, but this is given historical context by a brief examination of the evidence of pre-European language contact and the linguistic results. This serves to highlight the relative experience with multilingual communication that Aboriginal people brought to early encounters with Europeans, and is an essential antecedent in the story of the rise and spread of early pidgins and creoles in the period following European arrival. Harris is keen for readers to see contact languages in Australia as not only 'products of disturbed language ecologies but also instruments of that disturbance' (p. 132) and thus the recent history of Kriol is presented in this light. Refreshingly, Harris also points out that in the process of contact language development, simplification is not impoverishment, but rather 'optimisation', thus turning the discourse of loss that so often accompanies the spread of Kriol on its head. Malcolm and Grote present a summary of features present in the varieties of Aboriginal English spoken around Australia, describing their origins and the present-day functions which sustain their use. The section on

geographic, social and stylistic variation is important as it emphasises that fact that Aboriginal English is really a 'complex continuum of varieties' (p. 168). This is often overlooked and a homogenous view of Aboriginal Englishes is perpetuated, even by those who quote (but misinterpret) these very authors. Under the section on pragmatics the authors state some often-repeated claims regarding features of Aboriginal interaction, specifically that there is no 'need or expectation of turn taking' (p. 161) or obligation to respond. For recent work on this topic, which reveals the situation to be considerably more nuanced than is presented here, I would recommend to the reader Gardner et al (2009), Gardner (2010), and Mushin and Gardner (2009). Farzad Sharifian delves into how kinship categories are reflected in the grammatical systems of various Australian languages. Those not familiar with the author's theoretical 'schemas' approach to cognition to which this data has been applied, will nevertheless find much of interest in terms of how kinship permeates the grammar of many Australian languages. His chapter examines traditional languages on their own terms, but also examines how grammatical encodings of kinship in these languages have been imported into later contact varieties such as Aboriginal English. Gerhard Leitner takes a look at the flipside of language contact: how the development of Australian English (AusE) has been influenced by contact with Aboriginal languages. Beyond commonplace words in AusE that have their origins in Aboriginal languages, Leitner shows how AusE has been influenced by contact with Aboriginal people in a broader sense: words such as *sorry*, *country*, *native*, *reserve*, *dreamtime* now have a uniquely Australian semantic scope through their use by and about Aboriginal people. Moreover, he considers how the progenitors of semantic expansion have also shifted since contact, from the non-Indigenous coloniser to Aboriginal people themselves.

Appropriately, the final chapters deal with the relevance of Australia's complex language ecology in two key areas of applied research: education and the law.

Partington and Galloway give a comprehensive account of the many issues that have been discussed over the past 20–30 years in relation to the formal schooling of Aboriginal people. They are specifically concerned with factors that might account for the apparent differences between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal students in school 'success'. In attempting to scope out the myriad of policy and initiatives in this area, there is unfortunately little room for critical evaluation of these policies and how they may or may not have translated into, among other things, educational empowerment. However, in mapping the chaos the chapter serves as a companion piece to the contribution of Ian Malcolm and Patricia Königsberg who take the reader deeper into specific educational issues. The authors bring much-needed rigour to the ways in which outcomes and objectives for Indigenous people have been defined in the educational sphere. In other words, who controls what is in 'the gap'. They point out that educational authorities have largely defined Indigenous success in terms of equal attainment on 'outcomes common to the mainstream' (p. 276): the gap is thus defined as what non-Indigenous students do that Indigenous students do not, rather than as the distance to the educational goals each group has set for itself (an



approach that would give equal energy to goals relating to the development of multilingual and inter-cultural competence often articulated by Aboriginal people as of equal importance). This has resulted in a biased testing regime that is based on 'monocultural and monodialectal' benchmarks, and thus takes no account of Indigenous students' 'foundational linguistic competence' (p. 277). The idea of a 'gap' is therefore redefined by the authors as one of expectations. This is a very useful contribution to the growing number of international and national critiques of 'gap talk' (eg Lingard et al 2012), and will continue to be relevant beyond the Australian Government's current use of the term.

Some of the most important academic and practical work on language issues in Australia has centred on the way non-native speakers of Australian English fare in our legal system. Diana Eades elaborates some of the key linguistic issues for speakers of Aboriginal English attempting to navigate the legal system, and for a justice system tasked with providing 'equality before the law'. Her presentation takes us through a number of case examples, including the two earliest cases in which linguistic evidence became part of the defence, and more recent cases where the language issues centre on misunderstandings arising out of features of the interview process. She also describes the very practical work that has been done to educate legal professionals (eg with the publication of a handbook) about the ways in which miscommunication can and does arise. Eades also demonstrates that work focusing on language issues can take us only so far, for the 'participation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system cannot be separated from socio-political issues involved in race relations in Australia' (p. 321).

Rob Amery presents a history of Aboriginal languages in the tertiary sector, where they have been present in two senses: as the object of research, and as the subject matter for language courses. In Amery's account Aboriginal languages have been more significant in the former sense than the latter, but receive equal treatment here. Amery gives a run-down of the sub-disciplines within linguistics that have been applied to Aboriginal languages. His account compliments that of Koch in providing reference to research beyond the descriptive and comparative linguistic traditions. Importantly, this chapter also chronicles the history of teaching of Aboriginal languages at the tertiary level, so that we may record what attempts have been made, what great things have been achieved, and may be still but for more favourable policy (particularly regarding class sizes) and funding environments.

Terry Ngarritjan-Kessarar and Linda Ford, who contribute the concluding chapter, reflect on each paper in the volume and provide an Aboriginal perspective on the central theme of the book: namely the change to their language habitat since colonisation. They share many personal anecdotes and perspectives which give vivid expression to the ideas raised throughout the volume. As well as articulating their own experiences, they refer to the increasing scrutiny given to Indigenous-related research by Indigenous academics. Of all the habitat 'disturbance' described in this volume this is surely the most needed and welcome. As soon as

our highest academic institutions succeed in entwining Indigenous thought and scholarship within their own limited micro-climates we may be truly optimistic about the future diversity of Australia's language habitat as a whole.

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*A Wild History: Life and Death on the Victoria River Frontier* by Darrell Lewis, 319 pp, Monash University Publishing, Clayton, 2012, ISBN 9781921867262 (pbk), \$39.95.

Although over the past three decades I have been interested in, frequently visited, and occasionally researched and written on the history of the Victoria River District in the Northern Territory's north-west, there is much about the region that I did not know until I read Darrell Lewis's *A Wild History* and the earlier doctoral thesis on which it is based. *A Wild History* successfully tells the story of a remote and sparsely populated part of Australia but one that is of continuing fascination to many Australians. Lewis has a wealth of personal insights based on his long-standing and intimate association with the Victoria River District. His meticulous research and first hand knowledge of the region's people and places result in a ground-breaking study. The narrative is clear and strong with a commendable absence of jargon. The book significantly complements other work on Australian frontier history.

Each chapter in *A Wild History* is almost a separate essay yet the overall structure works well. There is a thematic focus on 'the various moments and types of early contact between Aborigines and whites, and the formation of a local settler society' (p. xxi). The Victoria River District's physical environment, its Aboriginal people before contact with Europeans and its pastoral industry are also covered in considerable depth. The emphasis is on the period between the 1880s and the early 1900s.

Many appropriate, and usually intriguing, examples are considered. Attention is devoted to individuals such as the policeman WH Willshire and the pastoralist Joe Bradshaw who played significant and sometimes violent roles in Aboriginal-European contacts. Outlaws, dreamers, alcoholics and various others are described. Lewis offers sensitive and shrewd assessments of them. While sources on individual Aborigines are generally more limited than they are for Europeans, wherever possible Aborigines like Jimmy and Pompey are named and discussed. The chapter on the ruggedly beautiful Jasper Gorge conveys a powerful sense of place. Its analysis of the 'most famous event' (p. 134) in the gorge's history, when Aborigines besieged the teamsters George Ligar and John Mulligan in 1895, pays careful attention to detail.

The book is an impressively original contribution to knowledge of its subject area. It is based on a thorough examination of relevant sources, including the use of many hard to locate unpublished materials and interviews. While other historians, the best of whom is Lyn Riddett, write about the Victoria River District, no one else considers the place, the people, the specific period and the themes in the same depth. Most of the material presented does not appear in other studies. *A Wild History* makes perceptive observations about regional identity, the physical environment's impact on both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal settlement and how people remember their histories. On the latter

point, Lewis points to a 'weak transmission of local knowledge from generation to generation among local whites' and how older Aborigines 'know their country intimately from years spent working on the stations and from going on extended wet season walkabouts' (p. xix). He succeeds in his aim of beginning the 'the process of "resurrecting" the history of the region and transforming the "wild imaginings" into "wild history"' (p. 295).

*A Wild History's* presentation also warrants praise. The book is sturdily bound and attractively produced, with a striking cover design, well laid out pages and numerous images and maps, all of which complement the text and are important components of the evidence presented. Source references are where they should be, in footnotes at the bottom of each page. The bibliography is well set out and the index is easily understood.

Given that the book is 'for the ordinary reader rather than academics' and does not directly engage with 'current (and usually ephemeral) historical controversies and debates' (p. xxiii), it is perhaps unfair to criticise it for only occasionally mentioning previous historical scholarship yet more references to such scholarship would be helpful. Lewis does not, for instance, refer to the cultural historian Mickey Dewar's argument based on a comprehensive study of literary sources, including some relating to the Victoria River District, that the Northern Territory frontier is a place quintessential to the Australian experience. There is no mention of Bill Wilson's pioneering work on Northern Territory police history. Wilson, incidentally, points out that Mounted Constable Willshire quite frequently fell behind in writing his journals, which he later attempted to reconstruct. This may partly explain why, as Lewis observes, there are differences between the journals and Willshire's book *Land of the Dawning* and presents another perspective on Lewis's statement that 'the journal was deliberately incomplete' (p. 106).

In spite of my small criticisms, *A Wild History* is a major contribution to understanding Australia's frontier past. When describing their nation's historical frontiers Australians quite frequently use the names 'bush', 'outback' and 'never-never' and locate them in areas like the Victoria River District that are a long way from the more closely settled parts of the continent. Lewis's findings convincingly support Graeme Davison's notion that the Australian frontier was more than just a line on a map and represented an idea as well as a place. Henry Reynolds' foreword wisely observes that *A Wild History* 'is a story with which every Australian should become familiar' (p. vi).

David Carment

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*Outside Country: Histories of Inland Australia* edited by Alan Mayne and Stephen Atkinson, 360 pp, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 2011, ISBN 9781862549609, \$34.95.

*Outside Country* makes a compelling case for telling the history of inland Australia. Its strength lies in its attention to 'everyday lives' and 'ordinary' people. While it gestures towards a grander purpose – Alan Mayne, for example, describes a role for such histories in 'informing debates about important and complicated issues for the nation's future' (p. 2) – it is the untold stories within untold stories that hold this book together and make it so enjoyable to read. Making a virtue of 'small scale' stories that exhibit the 'human touch', this collection 'acknowledges disappointments and hardships, the mistakes and the ugly events, as well as things that elicit respect and pride'. It is a 'history to learn from' (p. 4) in more ways than one.

Reflecting the complexity of the region, the topics covered in this collection are diverse, from Jodi Frawley's intriguing discussion of Dr Jean White and the Prickly Pear Experimental Station at Dulacca (on the western Darling Downs in Queensland) to Raelene Frances' fascinating exploration of cameleers and sex-workers in Kalgoorlie. Ruth Ford utilises a wonderfully rich set of letters by settler women in the Victorian Mallee to tell a complex story of hope and optimism in difficult circumstances. Heather Goodall reflects on the entanglement of culture and history at two highly significant Aboriginal sites on the upper Darling system: Boobera Lagoon, near Boggabilla on the MacIntyre, and the native fisheries at Brewarrina. Documenting cultures in the process of change, Goodall's chapter challenges legalistic interpretations of culture as static and unchanging. Rick Hosking analyses South Australian historical pioneering novels, Lionel Frost considers the expansion of railway systems into the interior and Jenny Gregory closely examines the mobile lives of residents of Kurrawang, a small town in southern Western Australia that was completely relocated in 1938. Charley Fahey follows the fortunes of a migratory mining family and, in a second essay, explores the history of the Australian family farm. Essays by Keir Reeves and Christopher MacDonald on Cradle Valley in Tasmania, Fiona Davis and Patricia Grimshaw on Cummeragunja Aboriginal reserve, and Erik Eklund on memory and identity in Broken Hill and Mount Isa round out the collection.

'Indigenous wellbeing' is highlighted as one of four issues the book addresses (along with 'gender equality', 'cultural pluralism' and 'ecological sustainability'), however only two of the book's 17 chapters (four of which are introductions by Mayne, and one of which is an afterword by Atkinson) deal in any substantial way with Indigenous issues. Of these, only Goodall's chapter is about the 'Outside Country'; the other, on Cummeragunja, is about a place that – according the editors' own map (p. 7) – is not part of the inland corridor that comprises Australia's 'Outside Country'. While Davis and Grimshaw present an interesting account of social life at the troubled reserve, enlivened by Davis' oral history research, they struggle to make it fit with the collection's main themes. Given the increasing number of researchers working on Aboriginal history

topics across Inland Australia, I have to question its inclusion. Yet, overall, the collection more than achieves its purpose: by relaying the mysterious lives of men and women of inland Australia, by exploring the perception, meaning and experience of isolation, this book forces readers to re-imagine the Centre.

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*Pygmonia: In Search of the Secret Land of the Pygmies* by Peter McAllister, 265 pp, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 2010, ISBN 9780102236914, \$34.95.

*Pygmonia* begins with McAllister's (allegedly) first encounter, in both print and reality, with the (supposed) Pygmies of the North Queensland rainforest in 2007. It ends with an assessment of whether these rainforest 'Barrinean' people are, in any meaningful sense, Pygmies. In between, McAllister traverses the mythology, folklore, anthropology, genetics and human biology of the world's Pygmies, both real and imagined, from ancient Greece to now. He recounts this kaleidoscope of information in a generally accessible and often quirky written style, evidently intended to appeal to a wide readership – although the chapters devoted to genetics and biochemistry inevitably become jargon-laden and somewhat laborious. McAllister is careful, however, to balance such passages of scientific explication with longer stretches of narrative prose. Among the latter is a particularly fine chapter recounting the life of Ota Benga, a Babinga Pygmy man from the western Congo who in the early twentieth century fashioned a career for himself in the United States as both human exhibit and independent personality.

Unfortunately, the book does not get off to a good start. On the first page, McAllister claims that until 2007 he had never encountered the notion that Pygmies lived in North Queensland. Yet the blurb tells us that he is 'a qualified palaeo-anthropologist and archaeologist, with degrees in archaeology from the University of Queensland and the University of New England'. With that background, how could he possibly have been unaware, until 2007, of Tindale and Birdsell's claim to have found 'pygmoid' people in the North Queensland rainforests? Tindale and Birdsell first published this claim in 1941. Over subsequent decades, it was frequently repeated (and perhaps more often refuted) in the anthropological and archaeological literature. In 2002 Keith Windschuttle and Tim Gillen made quite a splash with a *Quadrant* article, 'The Extinction of the Australian Pygmies', which claimed that scientific knowledge about Pygmies in Australia had been suppressed in a politically-motivated cover-up. Windschuttle and Gillen's article drew numerous counter-attacks, including a devastating one by Michael Westaway and Peter Hiscock, published in this journal in 2005. Somehow, if McAllister is to be believed, all this passed him by, completely unnoticed despite his professions as anthropologist and archaeologist.

More likely, McAllister adopts this chronology because it suits his narrative. The year 2007 was when he visited North Queensland for a scientific conference, and took the opportunity to visit Yarrabah to see the local 'Pygmies' for himself. For the sake of the story, it is best if his first hearing of the Pygmies and first visiting them are brought into close temporal proximity. That is a perfectly acceptable narrative technique, telescoping events for dramatic effect. However, it is not a wise technique to employ when, as in this case, it undermines the narrator's own claimed expertise.

After the prologue, the book picks up pace. By Chapter 2, McAllister is explaining the theories of the nineteenth-century French anthropologist, Armand de Quatrefages, according to whom modern-day Pygmies are the remnants of a primordial human race who had once populated the Earth, before being supplanted by larger varieties of the human species. Thenceforward, de Quatrefages' theories become McAllister's constant reference point: a set of postulates about human origins, evolution, migration and diversity against which subsequent theorising about Pygmies can be conveniently compared and contrasted. Generally, the comparisons provide an effective means of illuminating and simplifying some complex and contentious issues, although sometimes they become a little stretched. More importantly, McAllister's version of events glosses too lightly over a major shift in scientific thinking between de Quatrefages' day and our own.

The big shift in scientific thinking about human diversity occurred shortly after the Second World War with the discarding (albeit incompletely) of the concept of racial types. McAllister alludes briefly to this shift, but gives it too little weight. Scientific thinking about Pygmies before the Second World War (including that of de Quatrefages and Tindale and Birdsell) was framed within an assumption that humanity was divided into discrete races, who in the past had variously merged with, suppressed or exterminated each other. The specific theories they propounded, whether about Pygmies or any other facet of human diversity, made sense only in the context of that assumption. With the shift in scientific thinking from 'races' to 'populations', such theories lost their intellectual moorings. It is true that essentialist ideas of race persisted, in science as in other domains. However, the changes in how scientists understood Pygmies were due not only to changing scientific methodologies and technologies, as McAllister intimates, but to more fundamental changes in how human diversity was conceived.

In the final chapter, 'Return to Yarrabah', McAllister revisits arguments for and against the 'Barrinean' Aboriginal people's status as remnant of a Pygmy race left isolated in the North Queensland rainforest. It is an anticlimactic ending. For reasons I cannot fathom, he never names any of the recent protagonists in these arguments – Windschuttle and Gillen, Westaway and Hiscock, for instance – although their identity is obvious to any reader familiar with the literature. His account of their disputes is as flat as his conclusion is banal: 'Barrinean people are not an outpost of Pygmonia'.

But the journey is as important as the destination. The journey McAllister takes us on, although sometimes a bit touristy, visits some fascinating and revealing episodes in the changing ways in which Pygmies have figured in Western peoples' attempts to understand human origins and diversity.

Russell McGregor

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*Indifferent Inclusion: Aboriginal People and the Australian Nation* by Russell McGregor, 229 pp, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2011, ISBN 9780855757793, \$39.95.

This book is a welcome addition to the field of Indigenous history in Australia, written by one of its foremost scholars. It offers an engaging and readable account of the quest for Aboriginal inclusion in the Australian nation over the middle decades of the twentieth century. Tracing the incremental, often partial, successes of that quest, McGregor provides a new perspective on familiar events, policies and ideas, arguing that the inclusion of Aboriginal people in the nation was often thwarted by the apathy and indifference of white Australians.

The nation – or rather conceptions of it – are at the heart of McGregor's story, which as he explains is one concerned with 'the transformation of the Australian nation' (p. xii). It is this transformation, from an idea of the nation that was strongly embedded in ethnic nationalism at the beginning of the twentieth century, to a wider, more inclusive concept of the nation placing greater emphasis on civic elements, that provides the framework for McGregor's careful elucidation of the ideas which drove attempts to bring about Aboriginal people's inclusion in the nation. The strength of this approach is the fresh perspective it brings to bear on familiar episodes in the history of Indigenous-settler relations in this country. One example is his treatment of the policy of biological absorption pursued in Western Australia and the Northern Territory in the 1930s, and of its abandonment in favour of sociocultural assimilation. McGregor observes that despite the continuities between these approaches, the move toward sociocultural assimilation suggested a significant change, away from a nation conceptualised in strongly ethnic terms and toward one imagined in civic terms (p. 17). Another example is his discussion of the 1967 referendum, an event in Australia's political history that has been frequently misunderstood. In McGregor's view, the real significance of the referendum victory was as an affirmation of the principle of Aboriginal inclusion in the nation (p. 158).

Approaching his subject through the lens of inclusion versus exclusion leads McGregor to critique some previous scholarship and widely held assumptions about Aboriginal affairs in the mid-twentieth century, especially in relation to the ideal of assimilation. McGregor explains in his preface that an aim of the book is to 'promote a more nuanced understanding of what assimilation meant in mid-twentieth-century Australia' (p. xii). In this he succeeds admirably, building on the work of scholars like Tim Rowse, Rani Kerin and Anna Haebich, all of whom have turned their scholarly talents to the topic of assimilation in recent years. While acknowledging the terrible consequences of child removal and cultural devastation, McGregor emphasises that 'the meanings of assimilation were not exhausted by these practices', and that many of those who supported assimilation were opponents of such actions. In complicating understandings of the idea of assimilation and its close relation integration, the book helps to explain the appeal of the concept to Indigenous activists as well as to many white

reformers and administrative officials. Likewise, considering appropriations of Aboriginal artistic and cultural elements in the 1950s and 1960s, McGregor observes the positive aspects of the phenomenon – a greater receptivity to the inclusion of Aboriginal people in the nation – as well as its superficiality and appropriative nature.

This is an unashamedly political book. Aboriginal history has in many ways always been political. Many of its early practitioners were passionately concerned to achieve social justice for Aboriginal people, and were open in their political stances. This book continues in that tradition, speaking explicitly to current political debates in both its preface and its epilogue. The book's politics will not appeal to all its readers. McGregor's rehabilitation of the concept of assimilation, partial as it is, will be particularly polarising. But this is good scholarship, attentive to the nuances of the past and to the historical context of the ideas and reforms under discussion. The book offers a valuable contribution to our understanding of Australia's past, the changing ways in which the nation has been conceived, and the gradual, though incomplete, success of the efforts of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal reformers to achieve Aboriginal inclusion in that nation. In that sense, the book is a fine sequel to the author's earlier work, *Imagined Destinies*, revealing how the destinies of Aboriginal people were imagined by a range of players in the middle of the twentieth century.

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*Germans: Travellers, Settlers and their Descendants in South Australia* edited by Peter Monteath, xxi + 449 pp, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 2011, ISBN 9781862549111 (pbk), \$34.95.

As a South Australian of German origin this book promised to be of some interest to me, but it should be so well beyond the small subsection of us who meet these parochial criteria. Anybody interested in Australian Aboriginal history will find much of value in this volume. Not only did a significant number of early German colonists and visitors to Australia pay close attention to the Aboriginal population, but their perspectives at times also provided an interesting contrast to the prevailing attitudes and approaches of the Anglo settlers and bureaucracies.

This is a substantial volume of 21 essays, most of which focus on one or several Germanic individuals. Many chapters do not relate to Aboriginal history, but concentrate on other pertinent issues such as scientific and administrative contributions of German colonists or the position of Germans during the Second World War. There are also some fascinating forays into nineteenth century German history as the experiences of the migrants are traced back to their origins. I will not focus on those in this review.

The significant contribution of German missionaries to the recording of Aboriginal languages and cultures in South Australia has already received some attention, largely with a focus on the life and work of Johann-Georg Reuther and Otto Siebert at Killalpaninna, Carl Strehlow at Hermannsburg and Clamor Schürmann and Christian Teichelmann in Adelaide (eg Amery 2000, Hercus and McCaul 2004, Jones 2002, Kenny 2009). *Germans* provides a welcome addition to this field with chapters discussing the work of the Lutheran missionaries Meyer and Schürmann among the Ramindjeri of Encounter Bay and the Barnjarla of Eyre Peninsula respectively, and an account of the brief Moravian mission attempts among Diyari people on Coopers Creek. All three chapters provide interesting insights into the passive resistance of Aboriginal people against the conversion attempts by the missionaries; the Moravians in particular also experienced more active resistance.

Meyer, who worked at Encounter Bay from 1840 to 1848 left there feeling his missionary activity had been in vain. One of his letters describes how a man who had assisted him for several days to learn the local language eventually had enough and withdrew, subsequently quickly excusing himself when Meyer came to his camp to seek further assistance. When this account is combined with comments by a local police officer, who claimed that 'the Murray people' did not come to Encounter Bay much anymore because Meyer asked them too many questions about their ancestors and beliefs, it is clear that Meyer was perceived, by some at least, as an intruder and a nuisance. Others seemed to have a different relationship to him, with Meyer also writing about the willing assistance he was given by some members of the Aboriginal community who appreciated the fact that he spoke their language.

Small passages say much about the issues grappled with during these early cross-cultural encounters on both sides. For example, the passing note that Ramindjeri people expressed their concern for Meyer's welfare, because they believed that he worked too much speaks both of their empathy and their difficulty in understanding the German's drive for incessant work while Meyer clearly struggled to adapt to Aboriginal interactional norms.

The historian Lockwood provides a general overview of the early Lutheran mission activities, with much attention paid to the work of Schürmann. Schürmann initially worked with Teichelmann in Adelaide and had actually intended to work with Meyer at Encounter Bay, but ended up at Port Lincoln instead where he remained until 1846 and then again from 1848–1853. His story is dominated by a lack of support and downright resistance to his work by the colonial authorities. In Port Lincoln, Schürmann was placed in the middle of violent conflicts between Aboriginal people and colonists and his attempts at seeking justice for the former were not appreciated by the latter. During his second stint he ran a school at Port Lincoln, encouraged by the Governor who was looking for ways to separate children from their parents and thereby their cultural ways. Eventually, however, an Anglican alternative was established just to the north at Poonindie and the Governor first withdrew his financial support and in the end shut down Schürmann's school. Along the way, Schürmann had lamented the fact that the people simply would not stay with him (he blamed his inability to provide rations), and he was not able to pursue them through the bush to live alongside them. Schürmann too left without a record of converts among the Aboriginal community.

Despite their 'failure' as missionaries, both Meyer and Schürmann produced significant ethnographic and linguistic texts about the people they worked with at Encounter Bay and Port Lincoln. Gale, a linguist who contributed the chapter on Meyer, points out that it is this record rather than their attempts at conversion that is invaluable to the community today and Lockwood suggests that they would have provided Aboriginal people with a humanitarian experience of Europeans that was all too rare during this period.

Bill Edwards, himself a Uniting Church minister who worked for decades in Pitjantjatjara communities, writes about the attempt by Moravian missionaries to establish themselves at Kopperamanna on Coopers Creek. Their inspiration for this endeavour came from accounts about the humanity that the Aboriginal people from Coopers Creek showed King, the sole survivor of the Burke and Wills expedition. The Aboriginal people who the Moravians encountered at Kopperamanna were less hospitable though and repeatedly threatened to kill them. The missionaries arrived in the district in 1866 and abandoned it after only two years, having had to rely on police protection for much of this time. A minor shortcoming of this paper is that it uses the cover term *Diyari* for all the Aboriginal people of this north-eastern part of South Australia, despite the fact that King is much more likely to have been looked after by Yandruwandha speakers and the hundreds of people who gathered when threatening the missionaries were probably of various language groups.

Lally and Monteath provide quite a different perspective in a chapter on the artist Alexander Schramm who arrived in Adelaide in 1849 where he died in 1864. Apparently, he was only able to eke out a very humble existence through the sale of his art, which is of significant value today. Among the various subjects of his paintings were a number of depictions of Aboriginal life. These include scenes of Aboriginal camps in what is now suburban Adelaide, as well as images of encounters between Aboriginal people and colonists. Regarding a painting called *An Aboriginal encampment, near the Adelaide foothills*, the authors observe, 'the closely observed detail offers evidence in an almost documentary scientific sense of accoutrements, clothing and activities indicative of the circumstances of daily life' (p. 155). The authors point out that Schramm's work is different from that of most British contemporaries in that he provides individualised details of his Aboriginal subjects who take central place rather than simple clichés at the margins of colonial imagery.

I was a little disappointed with the chapter about Erhard Eylmann, a pioneer ethnographer who travelled through South Australia and (mainly) the Northern Territory between 1896 and 1898 and published a significant volume on his journeys that remains untranslated to this day (Eylmann 1908). I had hoped for an insight into some of his key ethnographic findings, especially as the author, Schröder, emphasises that some of the details Eylmann recorded had previously been unknown and remain of ongoing anthropological interest. But there is little information about what these details may be, apart from a broad-brush outline of his general interests. On the other hand, it was interesting to learn that Eylmann's last publication in 1922 concerned begging among Europeans in South Australia. The chapter focuses primarily on Eylmann's life story, which shows him to have been a remarkable stoic and a man with great dedication to the scientific endeavour even during the many periods of personal hardship.

A final piece of early history centres on a somewhat enigmatic doctor by the name of Hermann Koeler who visited Adelaide between 1837 and 1838 and recorded numerous observations about local Aboriginal life in a subsequent publication. According to Mühlhäusler, the chapter's author, both Koeler's linguistic and historical observations have been long overlooked by English speaking researchers and he provides a brief outline of their relevance to our understanding of early Kurna society. Koeler's contribution essentially consists of a small number of words not recorded elsewhere and some detailed and insightful accounts of Aboriginal life on the fringes of the new European colonisers. His accounts are marred slightly by his belief that the South Australian Aboriginal people sat at the bottom of a racially designated hierarchy.

In conclusion, this volume provides valuable new information about the work and relationship of Germans with Aboriginal people in South Australia. It also highlights the combination of high scientific standard and self-abnegation that seemed to mark the work of many of these Germans. Given the significant role played by Germans in South Australia, however, it is unlikely that this will be the last contribution on this topic.

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Kim McCaul

Adelaide

*Frontier History Revisited – Colonial Queensland and the 'History War'* by Robert Ørsted-Jensen, 278 pp, Lux Mundi Publishing, Brisbane, 2011, ISBN 9781466386822, c\$27.00.

This book has been precisely written as a thorough rebuttal of K Windschuttle's work. It is not simply incidentally attacking him at various points. It has been written to knock him off his perch, and it succeeds. It is a political history of colonial Queensland dealing with black and white relations and the colony's parliamentary history as well as the key players, both inside and outside of parliament including the press. Ørsted-Jensen flags a further three volumes of work, yet to be published, entitled *The Right to Live*, which delve into the foundation of frontier policy, frontier policy and political dissent, and struggling for change of policy.

*Frontier History Revisited* certainly packs a punch. There are five chapters, the first: 'Queensland and Australian Colonial History' is critical of the paucity of studies and analysis of early Australian colonial histories, and in particular that of Queensland, which is identified as sporadic and inconsistent. This, even to the extent that 'on certain issues [they are] almost non-existent'. Unpalatable though this might be to some, one cannot help but agree that generations of Australian historians, with some notable exceptions, have accepted earlier written works and appear to assume that they do not need re-assessment. This is a pivotal criticism, which rightly singles them out as being in need of exposure to more 'critical evaluation'. In contrast, the primary sources tell a completely different story – one that is genuinely more honest and elucidates events in a way that cannot be done with the earlier secondary sources. Jonathan Richards has also noted this flaw (Richards 2008: 6). It is an important observation about Australian historiography.

Similarly the work deals with issues relating to the pre-occupation by previous Australian historians with patriotic nation-building that embraces a biased approach rather than allowing one 'to reflect and judge on what always will remain the core issues in human history, namely the struggles, sufferings, welfare and rights of *all* mankind' (p. 4). This perspective is a breath of fresh air that carries over into the rest of the book. Ørsted-Jensen goes on to identify that many of the white people who criticised the policy of violence on the frontier had in fact also participated in some way with the carnage. Next he contextualises the population of Indigenous Queensland in relation to the rest of the colonies of Australia and their pre and post contact numbers, as well as recognising the impact of at least two major smallpox epidemics. From the research of Butlin and then Prentis, the author concludes that Queensland had the highest Aboriginal population at 37.9 per cent that he notes is: 'the only possibility to rationally explain the Queensland colonial experience' (p. 15). That is, the formidable resistance and largest massacres of white settlers in Australia (Hornet Bank and Cullin-la-Ringo), as well as the longest serving Native Police service (51 years, 1859–c1910), and the highest estimates and more frequent references to violence.



There is also a consideration of casualty figures that confirms Queensland's pre-eminence in this unsavoury record of killing. In 'Accusations and Denials', Ørsted-Jensen considers the campaign against the 'black armband mode of history' and effectively deconstructs the denialist viewpoint with stunning veracity.

Chapter 2, 'Fact or Fabrication?' deals with an array of topics initially related to words and phrases brought up in the 'history war', such as 'dispersal', 'invasion', 'guerilla war' and 'war of extermination'. Under the sub-heading of 'Retribution Ratio' innumerable examples are given where the ratio of killings (black to white) vary greatly, from the conservative Reynolds/Loos ratio of 10:1, to 12:0, 25:0, 47:0, 59:3, 17:1, 29:1, 30:0, 60:0 and 50:1. The research here is compelling as each story behind the ratio is given and sources from which they have been derived cited so that the historical proof is particularly creditable. An unfortunate aspect is that these examples appear to be just the tip of the iceberg. Then there is a consideration of the class of officer who served in the Native Police and how it was not seen as necessary to perform body counts of the numerous 'collisions'. Under the sub-heading 'Forensic Evidence' Ørsted-Jensen tackles the absurdities of Windschuttle's method of argument and persuasively demolishes them using evidence from the primary sources. The discussion about Blagden Chambers' (1836–1943) *Black and White – the story of a massacre and its aftermath*, originally published between 1926 and 1927 and dealing with the late 1860s,<sup>1</sup> enables an insightful assessment of frontier violence to haunt the reader. The poisoning episodes of Kilcoy and Whiteside stations are also examined and their unpleasant ramifications considered. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of how white attitudes on the frontier hardened from the 1850s and into the 1880s.

Chapter 3, 'The Purging of the Evidence' looks at the deliberate obfuscation by the colonial government about the recording of 'the number of blacks captured, wounded or killed, and the number of murders and other outrages committed by the blacks' (p. 93) between 1 January 1865 and 25 April 1866.<sup>2</sup> While the question was accepted in the Queensland Legislative Assembly, it was never answered, or when it was the Premier lied. Then the official reporting system by the Native Police is identified and it is apparent that officers were to be discrete about what they and their troopers did on their dispersals far from the public eye. Here, once again, Ørsted-Jensen has discerned further methods of hiding the truth of Native Police operations when he identifies a system of double book-keeping where there was an official diary record and another for internal use. The last component of this chapter deals with the destruction of records and they are identified as having been very systematically, deliberately and comprehensively destroyed. Some reports survived because they were filed in other departments, but as the author notes they were cleansed of details that should have been there

1 In serial form in *Country Life*, New South Wales.

2 Ørsted-Jensen, *Frontier History Revisited*, p.93; *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 25 April 1866, as reported in the *Brisbane Courier* 26 April 1866 and *Queenslander* 28 April 1866.

because of established directives. This effectively contradicts Jonathan Richards' belief that the archives tells us everything we need to know and that official records have not been purposely destroyed. They had.

Chapter 4, 'The Myth of Missionary Prominence' is a detailed assessment of the role missionaries played in the propagation of the so-called 'Exeter Hall' objection to the treatment of Aborigines and effectively demonstrates that missionaries did not really begin their influence until the last decade of the nineteenth century. This contradicts Windschuttle's claim that they were supposedly instrumental in falsely exaggerating the violence on the frontier.

Chapter 5, 'Conclusionary Notes' wraps up further inordinately false or grossly misleading claims by denialists and identifies a much more rational interpretation regarding frontier violence. The fallacies propagated are shown to be just that. Ørsted-Jensen considers the falsehood of denying past governments for policies regarding the treatment and control of Indigenous Queenslanders and blaming foreign influences for these aspects. The uncovering of primary source documents which clearly identify the Executive Council and Governor's involvement in directing the Native Police is truly significant. This in conjunction with his discussion of death toll estimates is illuminating, and far more convincing than anything purported by Windschuttle and his fellow denialists.

Appendix A gives a listing of the death toll of the invader that coherently substantiates the author's interpretation. This includes a comprehensively detailed breakdown from 1827 to 1900 with a concluding summary. Appendix B is a thought provoking analysis of what happened to 'The Lost Native Police Reports'. In a common sense manner the file categories at the Queensland State Archives are assessed. From this comes the remarkable fact that 'only 10 percent of all our file volume is from the actual Police Department and 47 percent is from the minister's office!?' (p. 256). Ørsted-Jensen's argument that the Native Police files had been seriously culled is very convincing and the Appendices are a valuable contribution to Queensland historical research.

However, it is rather disappointing that a professional publishing editor was not used to smooth over some of the more awkward English phrasing that detracts from the flow of the work. It is apparent that Ørsted-Jensen is not a native English speaker and one wonders how the work got to the stage of publishing without this aspect being remedied. This is unfortunate as his research and ideas are truly exceptional. On a similar level, the frequent use of the phrase 'as we shall see' is somewhat irritating and might have been better to eliminate or varied by re-phrasing. Lastly, Yarrabah Mission was set up at Cape Grafton, not at Bellenden Ker (p. 146), which is some 40 kilometres to the south (see Bottoms 2002: 237-239, 278; Halse 1992: 57 *passim*). However, these points are relatively insignificant when considering the comprehensive scope and thorough coverage that the author has achieved.

This is truly an excellent and refreshing work in the world of Australian historical writing. The author argues:

Good historians are supposed to allow the material they uncover to influence them, they are not supposed to carefully select and massage the evidence to fit some political or ideological position of the present. Windschuttle does the latter, he has carefully picked the weak and insufficiently argued points in the body of work of what he clearly from the very beginning classified as his 'political opponents', and rather than carefully investigate and apply some unbiased scholarship and analysis, and thus attempt to mend such gap in our knowledge, he went on to prey on it. He simply commenced to twist and spin-doctor on the evidence he had in front of him, for the purpose of some specific political interests and positions of the present (p. 166).

One cannot help but agree. *Frontier History Revisited* is an extremely valuable contribution in understanding colonial Queensland and sets a very high standard in historical research. This work is a 'tour de force' and is a 'must have' for those wanting to understand the colonial machinations of Queensland's early politicians and is a damning indictment on those contemporary critics who would deny the true extent of brutality on Queensland's colonial frontier.

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Tim Bottoms

Cairns

*Historical Dictionary of Australian Aborigines* edited by Mitchell Rolls and Murray Johnson, 213 pp, The Scarecrow Press, Inc, Lanhan, Toronto, Plymouth, UK, 2011, ISBN 9780210259975 (hbk), \$75.00.

The *Historical Dictionary of Australian Aborigines* has been published as part of a series called 'Historical Dictionaries of Peoples and Cultures'. Other editions (there are 11 in total) have featured groups of people such as The Kurds, Gypsies, Tamils and Jews. The dictionary, numbered at just over 200 pages, is a surprisingly comprehensive account of Aboriginal history and culture for its relatively compact size. The dictionary entries themselves, covering Aboriginal culture and tradition, people, places, organisations and significant historical events, are accompanied by a chronology, an introduction from the historian Henry Reynolds and an extensive bibliography divided into different disciplines and thematic works. The different sections combine to make this a very useful reference work for students, both undergraduate and beyond, and anyone with an interest in the 'history, economy, society and culture of the Aboriginal past and present' (p. vii-iii).

The Series Editor, John Wonoroff's foreword makes explicit three important factors in any understanding of the Australian Aboriginal past and present: that at the moment of colonisation all aspects of Aboriginal life were 'intrinsically linked to the territory of each particular group', that the life-experiences of Aboriginal people since colonisation have differed widely throughout Australia, and that despite the resilience of Aboriginal people and the significant gains made since the initial devastation inflicted by British occupation, Aboriginal people are still socially and economically marginalised within Australia and their overall living standard, in many places, remains incomparable with that of other Australians.

The chronology begins 60,000 years BP, the point in time of the earliest evidence that humans were present on the Australian continent. The chronology is punctuated, over ten pages, by significant points in time in the Aboriginal past. The first contact between Europeans and Aboriginal people occurs two-thirds of the way down the first page. The following nine pages document encounters, disease, massacres, historical figures, government policy decisions, the establishment of significant Aboriginal organisations and moments in time that have either denied or restored Aboriginal political, social and economic rights. The chronology contains those events that you would expect, the Batman Treaty, Myall Creek, the formation of the Aborigines Advancement League, the 1967 Referendum, Mabo and the national apology to the Stolen Generations. A little more surprising, and extremely welcome, are those entries not usually covered in a chronology of this kind; the timeline also tells the reader that in 1868 an all-Aboriginal cricket team toured England, in 1942 at Skull Springs, an estimated 200 Aboriginal people from 23 language groups met to discuss action for ending

their exploitation, and in 2010 residents of Alice Springs Town Camp Ilpeye Ilpeye agreed to surrender their Native Title to the Commonwealth government in order to convert tenure and to pave the way for private homeownership.

Henry Reynolds's introduction fleshes out the chronology and gives it life with his narrative, reiterating as he does so, Wonoroff's emphasis on the importance of understanding the historical factors that have undoubtedly shaped an Aboriginal past and present. Reynolds writes that by the time Europeans arrived Aboriginal people had developed a relationship with the physical world around them and had moulded themselves to their country with 'art, religion and ritual' (p. 1). He also points out that the 'slow and fitful settlement over a vast and varied continent meant that Aboriginal experience differed greatly' depending on where and when it occurred (p. 2). However, Reynolds argues that despite this difference in experience, there are common and powerful themes that hold true for all Aboriginal people; that of terra nullius and land rights, the violence of invasion and official policies that had their foundations in Social Darwinism and theories of evolution, and the complete exclusion from political and legal rights as enshrined in the constitution.

Reynolds concludes his introduction by acknowledging that great disparities remain between Aboriginal and other Australians across all the social indicators, something that has 'continued to shame and vex national life to the present day' (p. 6). He also acknowledges that an emphasis on unemployment, substance abuse, domestic violence and poor health in the media and public commentary obscures a diversity of experience among Aboriginal people. Reynolds argues that this preoccupation overwhelms the significant achievements Aboriginal people have made in regard to their fight for political equality and the various ways in which Aboriginal people have celebrated their culture with story, song, dance and art and sought to share it with a world beyond Australia.

The dictionary itself is a comprehensive account of important Aboriginal individuals and organisations, covering resistance fighters from the frontier, political figures and organisations, artists, musicians and successful sportspeople. Many of the individual entries themselves are detailed, with good historical overviews of significant developments such as that of Aboriginal media and the Aboriginal art movement or more politically charged moments in Australia's history like the ushering in of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*. There is also considerable detail on lesser-known entries, such as the genesis of 'Alice Springs Town Camps' that help to demonstrate the diversity of Aboriginal history and experience within its definitions and historical overviews.

However, despite this diversity, the inclusion of some entries and the omission of others seems at times a little skewed in favour of southern experience. Similarly, despite the argument for diversity amongst Aboriginal culture and experience, some of the entries work to 'pan-aboriginalise' in their use of terms or language. 'Koori' is defined as the word used by Aboriginal people in Victoria or New South Wales to refer to themselves, as is Nunga in South Australia, Murri in Queensland and New South Wales, and Nyungar in south-west Western Australia. However,

Anangu, the word used by Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara speaking people in South Australia, the Northern Territory and some parts of Western Australia to refer to themselves is accompanied by the words ' See ULURU'. Anangu are the Traditional Owners of Uluru, however, to reduce the definition of the word to this is to undermine the meaning and use of that word for Anangu; it is about much more than a connection to that most famous of natural features.

Similarly, *Tjukurpa* is mentioned in the 'Uluru' entry, however, despite 'The Dreaming' and 'Ancestral Beings' being included with separate entries, *Tjukurpa* does not receive an entry of its own. *Tjukurpa* is a crucial concept still spoken of widely and a dictionary such as this would benefit from giving it, and the Arrernte *altyerrenge*, definitions of their own, provided by people who speak those languages and can translate the meaning of those words best into English. Similarly, 'Coolamon' and 'Corroboree' are both entries that give the impression that these terms are used indiscriminately amongst Aboriginal people Australia wide. In contrast, I have never encountered either of these terms being used in the Northern Territory and imagine that it may be similar in other northern parts of Australia; in Pitjantjatjara, one of the most widely spoken of Aboriginal languages, the respective terms *piti* and *inma* are used and are words that one would encounter often if working or living with many Pitjantjatjara speaking people.

Rather than being criticisms, my focus on these particular entries serves to highlight that a better, more nuanced, understanding of these important Aboriginal concepts and languages can contribute in no small measure toward a greater understanding of the complexity and diversity of Aboriginal history and experience and way of being-in-the-world. The combination of the different sections, particularly the inclusion of the extensive bibliography, makes the *Historical Dictionary of Australian Aborigines* an excellent work of reference for academics, students and interested people alike. Despite the few examples cited above, the breadth and detail of the entries, in conjunction with the Chronology and Reynolds' introduction, work to provide a rich and diverse account of the Aboriginal past, as experienced in different parts of Australia, and a context for a better understanding of an Aboriginal present.

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*Tasmanian Aborigines: A History since 1803* by Lyndall Ryan, xxix + 448 pp, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2012, ISBN 9781742370682 (pbk), \$35.00.

Rarely are we able to witness an academic's scholarship on the same subject mature across her career. *Tasmanian Aborigines* can trace its beginnings in Lyndall Ryan's 1975 PhD thesis, published in 1981 as *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*. That groundbreaking work was the first history of Tasmanian settlement to reference the field journals of GA Robinson, and the first to conclude 'the Tasmanian Aborigines have survived'. A second edition in 1996 reprinted the original text with a new introduction and two new concluding chapters. *Tasmanian Aborigines* might recount the same history, but the text is rewritten completely. It is indeed 'vastly different from its predecessor', as Ryan puts it. It warrants its new title.

It is 'an odd irony' writes Ryan in *Tasmanian Aborigines*, that Keith Windschuttle's 'key argument that settler massacres were largely invented' should have 'become the starting point for important new countervailing work in the field'. Was Ryan's new book likewise inspired? Perhaps originally, and it will for that reason be read with curiosity and anticipation, but readers will find *Tasmanian Aborigines* far more than a response to Windschuttle. Thankfully so, for his accusations, which can be boiled down to a handful of mistakenly tangled footnotes (to which Ryan responded thoroughly in Robert Manne's 2003 *Whitewash*) could hardly sustain an entire new history, and nor does Ryan attempt to make it do so.

From the outset Ryan attempts to refresh her approach to a field that must now be so familiar to her. Ryan has been inspired by the research into Tasmania's colonial history. Following Aboriginal Elder Patsy Cameron's important history *Grease and Ochre*, Ryan titles her opening chapter 'Trouwunna', returning an indigenous name to Tasmania, and all that a name can evoke and represent. James Boyce's portrayal of first generation Van Diemonians has clearly influenced Ryan's description of Tasmania's early agricultural and sealing communities as a 'Creole Society', an effective contrast to what follows: the pastoral 'invasion' that so terribly altered Tasmania's history.

The subsequent three parts that recount the war, the forced removal of the Aborigines, and their incarceration, are perhaps Ryan's finest. Forming the core of her original book, they are here enriched with a masterful command of primary sources and a maturing of writing. The narrative is careful and thorough. We are immersed in detail – indeed over a third of the book is dedicated to 21 terrible years – but it is also suspenseful and page turning. We emerge finally to celebrate 'survival'. As Ryan extends the narrative into the present, she also, appropriately, extends the simpler idea of 'survival' into the complexities of contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal politics: land rights, repatriation of human remains, stolen generations and the legal debates over identity. Considering the controversial and complex nature of contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal communities, Ryan's account is useful and well informed.

*Tasmanian Aborigines* seems bigger than its predecessor, covering more ground and with improved research, writing and design (including, importantly, redrawn maps). It is, overall, a thorough, chronological account. Ryan gets on with telling the story, largely undistracted by temptation to respond to Windschuttle's attack. Some important new ideas have, however, been shaped by that controversy.

Ryan's chapter title 'The Reckoning' might be recycled from her first book, but is newly apt in light of the history wars, that saw, as Tom Griffiths put it, historians 'exhuming bodies from the archives and counting them'. Ryan does offer a death tally, and from this concludes Tasmania's ratio of Aboriginal to settler deaths was 'only' 4:1; low compared to Raymond Evans' ratio of 12:1 in Queensland, a figure shared by Richard Broome in Victoria. Ryan argues that Broome's figure should be doubled, and from this concludes that the number of Aboriginal deaths in those three colonies alone is 7,000 more than Henry Reynolds' estimate of 20,000 for the whole of Australia. These are important new claims that require response and further consideration.

It follows that any attempts to reckon the total number of Aboriginal deaths should be based upon a solid estimate of the Aboriginal population prior to settlement. In this the numbers have varied greatly for Tasmania, but have often agreed at around 3,000 to 4,000. It is significant, and probably sound, that Ryan doubles this number. She attempts to historicise the population estimates under the umbrella term of 'scientific racism', in which the Aborigines were variously and repeatedly defined as having been too simple and too small a society to have survived, and thus 'faded away'. She brings together a range of scholars and projects dating from the mid-nineteenth century to the late twentieth century, including the work of EB Tylor (the 'father' of anthropology) in the 1890s and Rhys Jones, the first professional archaeologist to date Tasmania's occupation in the 1960s. This theoretical basis is arguably too broad and too blunt. Many of these scholars were interested in the effects of Tasmania's isolation, particularly in light of the Aborigines' relatively Spartan material culture, and while their ideas may now appear archaic and racist, few, if any, listed by Ryan were motivated to justify the then-assumed idea of extinction as natural. Windschuttle was. He took the lowest population estimate of 2,000 in order not only to have fewer Aborigines die, but to argue that they were too vulnerable to have survived anyway. If he misrepresented many of these older scientific ideas to serve this purpose, there is no need to do so again.

Windschuttle's real target – or perhaps his lure – was arguably not Ryan's careful account of war with its positive ending of survival, but an older, popular perception of Tasmanian history born from the myth of extinction. Since the late nineteenth century, Tasmania has been widely cited as Australia's – even the British Empire's – darkest hour. By the 1970s, in the first-wave of anti-colonial politics, Tasmania's story of extinction was recast (particularly in international scholarship and popular media) within a framework of genocide. Indeed for a time the terms 'extinction' and 'genocide' (as Ann Curthoys observes) became interchangeable in the Tasmanian context.

Ryan's first book described the contemporary Tasmanian Aborigines as 'victims of a conscious policy of genocide', but perhaps because of the term's association with extinction (and her focus on survival) it did not pursue the idea further. Since then, Henry Reynolds has argued that Tasmania does not offer a definitive case of genocide, while Curthoys has disagreed. In *Tasmanian Aborigines* Ryan describes the settler colonial society as having 'genocidal behaviour', and she finds it 'impossible not to agree' with Boyce's assessment that removal of the Aboriginal western nations was 'an act of ethnic cleansing that was tantamount to genocide'. But here her discussion on genocide closes. Considering the sophisticated nature of the discussions on genocide in Tasmania since the publication of her first book, Ryan's opinion would be welcome, not only on the technical applicability of genocide, but also its meanings within the broader representations of, and intense controversies over, Tasmania's colonial history.

*Tasmanian Aborigines* does not, however, aim to be a reflective history. It is an informative, formidable and fact-driven history of Tasmania's Aboriginal people, and in this is unparalleled and almost faultless. Reliable and solid in its research, *Tasmanian Aborigines* is also fuelled by evident compassion. This is a book that will extend and enrich the understandings of Tasmania's past.

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*That Deadman Dance* by Kim Scott, 400pp, Picador Australia, place, 2010, ISBN 9781405040440 (pbk), \$22.99.

*Shaking Hands on the Fringe: Negotiating the Aboriginal World at King George's Sound* by Tiffany Shellam, xii + 267 pp, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, WA, 2009, ISBN 9781921401268 (pbk), \$29.95.

Kim Scott's novel *That Deadman Dance* and Tiffany Shellam's history *Shaking Hands on the Fringe* emerge out of different writing traditions, but are drawn from readings of similar historical documents and time (the first decades of European contact with Aboriginal people), in the same place, King Georges Sound in the far southern corner of Western Australia. Both are important (Scott's obviously so having won the 2011 Miles Franklin Award) and accessible and will be read by people with little previous interest in the events of Western Australia's first frontier.

Here, on what has been called the 'friendly frontier', European officials like Captain Collett Barker, and doctors Collie and Nind, oversaw the small military presence from 1826 that became the tiny second colony of Western Australia in 1831. Each recorded their observations of aspects of Aboriginal society, religion, beliefs and practices in journals and published articles, providing Shellam and Scott with rich material for their writing. But it is the empathetic Collett Barker's journal that echoes most often in both works.

Barely a day passed in Barker's journal that the Aboriginal people of the region do not feature prominently (Mulvaney and Green 1992). He wrote of an intimate relationship with some Aboriginal people, especially Mokare and his family, who became more than occasional 'visitors to camp', sleeping in his hut, sharing ideas, food and ceremonies. Barker came to recognise and respect the complexity and dynamism of Mokare's world, remarking that its intricacies made it difficult for a European to comprehend. He noted that names for mountains, hills, river and the coastline, 'change at short distances', and were not always drawn from ancient mythological pre-historical times, but sometimes recalled recent events experienced by still living people (Mulvaney and Green 1992: 262). These are not people without history to Barker, but the notion of 'history' is unsettled in their hands.

Tiffany Shellam's micro-history follows writers such as Inga Clendinnen and Bronwyn Douglas into a close reading of key documents, to skillfully tease out 'repertoires' of cross-cultural encounters for Aboriginal people as well as for Europeans. This is more than a reading 'against the grain' or a 'two way' history; it is multi-dimensional in its illumination of texts, creating a world of actions and encounters and identifying the growing 'reservoir' of new knowledge that was built for both Aboriginal people and the 'newcomers' from the sea, the Europeans.

Shellam adopts 'King Ya-nup' as a collective name for any Aboriginal person who contributed to daily life of the King George Sound settlement from 1826 to the early 1830s. She does not use the term 'Noongar' for Aboriginal people of the area, as does Kim Scott, choosing instead to render a word from the available historical documents, *Kincinnup*, for her 'snapshot of a unique community' that is 'relevant for a very specific period of time and to a particular group of Aboriginal people and a particular selection of daily stories' (Mulvaney and Green 1992: 33). From King's journal of his week-long visit in December 1821, Shellam examines the minutiae of recorded meetings or sightings in texts and illustrations, using gazes, stances, distances between people and individual words to create a rich scene of exchange and mutual interest.

This ethnographic reading of the texts adopts Geertz's 'thick description' that turns a wink from a voluntary closing of one eye, to a purposeful and more deeply meaningful action, contextualised according to the possibilities of culture, place and time, and framed by Shellam's reading of the texts. Similarly the handshake is an action with many meanings and cultural and historical contexts that both Shellam and Scott utilise in their work. In 1834 Ensign Dale portrayed the handshake between Indigenous people and Europeans at King George Sound in a beautiful sketch. This image is on the cover of Shellam's book, symbolising her overall approach to cast Aboriginal people as actively engaging with Europeans and quickly doing their own reading of words and behaviours of the newcomers. Having met the French for whom the handshake was accepted practice, some time before the English, who were beginning their acceptance of the handshake between gentlemen in the early nineteenth century, Aboriginal people of the region put out their hand on meeting the newcomers from the sea.

For Scott the handshake has a darker, less historically specific side, signaling Noongar confidence, lack of fear and the false friendship from Europeans that would turn sour within decades of these first encounters. This is an exciting story of the first years of European occupation and settlement, a longer view than Shellam's. It is told through the eyes of a boy, Bobby Wabalanginyi, who experiences the best of what Europeans might offer in the first few years of contact, 'appropriating cultural forms – language and songs, guns and boats', grasping opportunities in the European ships, working with the white men to capture whales, learning to read and write with kindly Europeans and growing estranged, alienated, but never bitter as his land and people change. He is guide, translator, worker, the quintessential cross-cultural figure. Scott inhabits his characters with warmth and empathy, revealing the personalities of the friendly frontier through the friendliest of characters. He lingers over words and feelings without becoming self-indulgent. It is a book that could be read aloud and performed for its bubbling words and rich dialogue.

Scott the novelist is not as constrained to a close representation of the documents as is Shellam. As he states in the author's note, his book is 'inspired' by history. It is the result of extensive documentary research, immersion in historic linguistic documents, and years of sitting with his extended Noongar family listening and repeating words until they felt right. Characters and events in the novel criss-cross

with those of the historical documents; elements of Mokare's world as described by Collet Barker, names from Dr Collie and exploration relationships between Edward Eyre and his guide. Scott takes readers into a world where Aboriginal histories are told through song, stories and poetry. Bobby Wabalanginyi embodies history, dancing the old dances and creating new ones like the Dead Man Dance of soldiers with guns and a white ochre cross on their chests, mimicking the 'quick walking soldier Killam with the twist to his torso and the bad arm' or 'Guvnor Spender, nose up, hands going up and down, patting heads'. Bobby dances and sings characters to life, bringing their spirit into his and his people's world. Bobby, like the historical figure Tommy King, a prominent Noongar man of nineteenth century Albany, becomes a 'favourite' of tourists and travellers, throwing a burning Kylie in exchange for a coin. In Scott's novel Bobby tells his history to whoever will listen, adding, 'We learned your words and songs and stories, and never knew you didn't want to hear ours'.

Both Scott and Shellam slow down the frontier to imagine its smallest elements. Scott plays with words, while Shellam revisits historical moments in different chapters, to show the multiplicity of forms that can arise out of historical texts when they are used carefully. Both Scott and Shellam illuminate the human dramas of this frontier world without malice or meanness of spirit. Both substantially add to our understanding of contact history as a nuanced process, where lots of things were going on at once, where Europeans are brought into contact with Aboriginal people who hold a long history and robust culture. They explore the edges of historical imagination in a way that will help to keep Australian history alive.

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*Belonging Together: Dealing with the Politics of Disenchantment in Australian Indigenous Policy* by Patrick Sullivan, ix + 147pp, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2011, ISBN 9780855757809, \$39.95.

*Belonging Together* is an important book which attempts to provide an analysis, and identify a path forward, in Australian Indigenous affairs somewhere between the polarised opposites of a new assimilationism and rights-based self-determination. The question, as Sullivan puts it during the introduction, is:

How can we move towards a public policy philosophy in which Aboriginal and settler interests converge, without either perpetuating second class separate development in the name of self-determination or effacing Aboriginal differences? (pp. 1-2)

The background to this analysis is, of course, the widespread assertion of the failure of the self-determination policy, which dominated Indigenous affairs from the 1970s to the 1990s. Sullivan questions, but ultimately accepts, this diagnosis of policy failure.

In a sophisticated analysis of the notion of policy following Mosse, Sullivan notes that 'old policy is, by definition, wrong', while 'new policy is future oriented' and therefore 'does not have to demonstrate efficacy' (p. 87). He also notes that:

Changes in policy alter the terms of the discourse so that what was previously successful is now, by externally imposed definition, a failure, while the facts on the ground remain the same (p. 87).

Given this social constructionist approach to policy, Sullivan, like many, could rail against the changing discourse, but rather he accepts it as part of the 'self-referring' nature of government bureaucracy (p. 88). Sullivan clearly does accept that Indigenous development, at least in remote Australia, has not been optimal since the 1970s. But neither does he wish to enthusiastically support the neo-assimilationism that has in recent years become the polarised alternative policy prescription to self-determination. Instead Sullivan wants to develop what he calls a 'consolidated approach' to Indigenous affairs:

in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are seen as inextricably part of wider national administrative regimes and concerns, but which neither seeks to erase or enshrine cultural difference (p. 2).

The other descriptor which Sullivan uses for his preferred approach is 'intercultural', drawing on debates within the anthropology discipline. However, Sullivan is largely writing for a generalist readership and only devotes one chapter of seven to directly addressing his anthropological colleagues. The empirical heart of the book is an analysis of the major and continuing changes that have occurred in Australian Indigenous affairs administration since 2004, particularly at the Commonwealth level of government. With the abolition by the Howard Commonwealth Government of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander Commission in 2004, Sullivan sees Indigenous affairs administration entering a period of flux and uncertainty the likes of which has not been seen since the early 1970s. The product of that earlier period of flux and uncertainty was the Indigenous sector; a constellation of community-based Indigenous organisations supported and funded by government to deliver services to Indigenous people and also to develop Indigenous community authority, identity and leadership. Sullivan sees government, under the influence of the New Public Administration (NPM) movement, pulling back from this support for the Indigenous sector, particularly in its non-service-delivery roles. However, he argues persuasively and passionately that the sector needs to be seen as having ongoing value for the development of civil society among Indigenous Australians. He thus talks of the 'unacknowledged' role or contribution of the sector in modernising Indigenous experience, leadership and development, both in the recent past and into the future.

If Sullivan has a target for criticism in this book, it is the organisation and culture of modern government. One chapter focuses on accountability, another on bureaucracy and both are highly critical. Accountability within government is seen as currently too unidirectional, placing too much focus and emphasis on funding relationships. A case is made for 'continual reciprocal accountability' built on dialogue between government and community members through mechanisms such as citizen juries and surveys (p. 81). The culture of government bureaucracy is seen as inward looking and as having long vertical chains of command which isolate it from the lived reality of Indigenous people, its clients in Indigenous affairs; even when some of the bureaucracy's members are themselves Indigenous. Sullivan's prescription is to shorten these chains of bureaucratic command by regionalising much Indigenous affairs administration, giving it more discretion to work with the local and regional Indigenous sector and developing Indigenous involvement in local government. Though I have sympathy with this idea, Sullivan's contribution is I think just the beginning of a useful debate, rather than in any sense a well established argument. For example, Sullivan dismisses State and Territory governments, which have been increasingly drawn back into Indigenous affairs as a result of recent 'whole-of-government mainstreaming', yet he lauds the potential of local government. Why one type of regionalisation and shortening of chains of command is seen so negatively and the other so positively needs to be better argued and drawn out.

Sullivan does not entirely convince me in the prescriptive elements of his argument, nor even in some of his analytic elements. However, he does provide us with a conceptually sophisticated and an empirically informed account of recent developments in Australian Indigenous affairs which can at least get some better debates started about the way to move forward. Compared to much else that has been written on Indigenous affairs in recent years this is a 'must read' analysis, which does actually get beyond unhelpful, moralising polarities. Sullivan has both a deep knowledge and has thought long and hard about Indigenous affairs. *Belonging Together* is the valuable result.

Will Sanders

*Exploring the Legacy of the 1948 Arnhem Land Expedition* edited by Martin Thomas and Margo Neale, 471 pp, ANU E Press, Australian National University, Canberra, 2011, ISBN 9781921666445, \$39.95.

In 2009 'Barks, Birds and Billabongs', a symposium, was organised and hosted by the National Museum of Australia in Canberra to explore the historical consequences of 'The American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land' in 1948. The title of the book under review might more aptly refer to 'legacies' rather than 'legacy' even though the qualifying verb 'exploring' implies that its gifts are manifold. The book is based on a collection of papers presented at the symposium organised to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the 1948 expedition to Arnhem Land, and is itself a worthy legacy of the expedition. Discussion of the expedition as well as its results had already been well served by publications of two of the symposium's steering committee: a book about the expedition by Sally May and an article in this journal by Martin Thomas, which could also count as legacies. May and Thomas contributed chapters to the present book. In the prologue, the symposium steering committee, Sally May, Margo Neale, and Martin Thomas, say:

We hoped to encourage an understanding of the Expedition and its era, and we wanted to grapple with the many facets of its legacy. Some of these – such as the preservation of wonderful paintings and artefacts – are a source of wonder and pleasure for contemporary Arnhem Landers. Others – such as the removal of human remains – have caused argument and grief. These and many other issues were put on the agenda because we believed that a continuation of the original transnational and cross-cultural conversation was urgently required. This book is a continuation of that dialogue, involving 24 of the scholars who contributed to the original conversation (p. xii).

The 1948 expedition received a great deal of publicity at the time and it is salutary to consider the reasons for the ensuing diminution of interest in it and its results despite the fact that a number of intervening anniversary celebrations had been occasions for the participants to engage in nostalgic recollections of the expedition as adventure. The 60th was intended to be the occasion for analysis of its historical and scientific significance as well as celebration; as Thomas puts it (p. 26), the organisers and the contributors pursued 'the tripartite objective of celebrating, evaluating and collaborating' and achieved a 'truly seismic distinction between public events that was Barks, Birds & Billabongs in 2009 and the private anniversaries of previous years'. Thomas attributes the seismic distinction 'to the substantial representation from the main Aboriginal communities visited by the Expedition'. Their participation was surely an indication of one reason for the diminution of interest in the expedition itself: 'much of what it pioneered became commonplace' (Thomas 2010: 164). In the ensuing years as research was conducted in Arnhem Land it increasingly involved the active collaboration

of local Aboriginal people and their increasing assertion of ownership of research results. The symposium itself was both indicator and harbinger of that collaboration and ownership claim.

The book's collection begins with an overview of the 'Expedition as Time Capsule: Introducing the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land' (Thomas pp. 1–32), and the book's editors have arranged the following chapters by identifying common themes of the papers presented at the symposium, while acknowledging that the categories are overlapping: eight chapters focus on 'Engagement with Australian Cultures', six on 'Collectors and Collections', and five on 'Aboriginal Engagement with the Expedition'. The Time Capsule chapter includes the story of the expedition's collaboration between two of the United States' most prestigious research institutions (the National Geographic Society and the Smithsonian Institution) and the Australian government and its purpose in contemporary context. Its objective was not geographic exploration but 'the frontier of knowledge that members of the Expedition hoped to penetrate ... in the aftermath of the World War II [it was] emblematic of broader transformations in Australia and beyond' (Thomas 2010: 143):

In terms of diplomatic objectives, it reflected the desire of Ben Chifley's Labor Government, then in its last days, to shore up the relationship with the United States through an overt display of collaboration between the two nations. Widely reported in the press, and transmitted to the world through film, radio and print media, this 'friendly mission' was a public face to behind-the-scenes negotiations that would shape the trans-Pacific relationship for the remainder of the twentieth century.

Kim Beazley (pp. 55–72) argues that the pro-American sentiment of Australia's major political parties is indicated by the domestic support for the expedition as they adjust to a post-war climate of decolonisation and the demise of Britain as a global power. In addition, as Thomas argues (2010: 143), the United States 'had a long history of using cultural, scientific, and educational programs to pursue its strategic and political interests in foreign nations'.

Although after the Second World War the idea of an expedition through Arnhem Land was already anachronistic (and Thomas says that by the time the final volume of the four-volume report of the *Records of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land* (1956–64) was published, 'the whole project had attained something of a sepia hue' (p. 2)), the editors of the book 'propose that the fusion of nineteenth and twentieth-century modes of thinking greatly adds to the interest, complexity and ultimate significance of this event'.

Part One of the book 'positions the Expedition narrative in the context of Western structures, institutions and field of knowledge ... making a compelling argument about the interest of Westerners in Australia's Aboriginal cultures, and how the engagements resulting from that interest affected modernity in the post-war era' (p. 27). South Australian Charles Mountford was the leader of the 17-member Expedition and American archaeologist Frank Setzler was deputy leader; two

members were volunteers (one was the Territory character Bill Harney); 12 were Australians and five were Americans, one was female (not counting the leader's wife). The participants represented a mix of professional scientists and writer-photographers. Margaret McArthur was a professional scientist and although Bessie Mountford's presence was ostensibly that of wife and her contributions were under-recognised because 'traditionally deemed women's labour'. She was a former public servant and skilled typist and bookkeeper, and the 'meticulous Expedition archives, recording everything from emergencies to birthday greetings, were largely her doing' (Thomas 2010: 153).

Philip Jones (pp. 33–54) describes Mountford's background including his participation in Board of Anthropological Research expeditions that went north from Adelaide in the 1930s which introduced him to expedition experience. This was his introduction to the living cultures of Aboriginal art that preoccupied him for the rest of his life. Jones' account of the expedition's difficulties is more sympathetic to Mountford than to others. As noted, Kim Beazley (pp. 55–72) describes the political setting of the Expedition and includes the remarkable and highly confessional correspondence between Calwell, Minister in the Chifley Government and major supporter of the Expedition, and Setzler, which lasted long after the cold war. Mark Collins Jenkins (pp. 73–86), formerly a historian for the National Geographic Society, gives a portrait of Harrison Howell Walker, the Expedition's chief photographer, something of the *National Geographic* gentleman image and the *National Geographic*'s golden age. Tony MacGregor (pp. 87–112) provides an 'evaluation of Colin Simpson as a broadcaster and writer, whose world view was significantly altered by his stay in Arnhem Land'. Jon Altman's (pp. 113–134) description of the transformations in hunter-gatherer subsistence from the time of Margaret McArthur's study at Fish River in 1948 to his own on the Mann River in 2009 exemplifies the Expedition's effects on the discipline of anthropology: Margaret McArthur's paper 'The Food Quest and the Time Factor' published in Volume 2 of the records, was perhaps the Expedition's most enduring impact on anthropological theory when it was taken up by Marshall Sahlins to support his notion of the 'original affluent society'. The Expedition's effect on the discipline of archaeology is shown by Clarke and Frederickson (pp. 135–156) as they explain how the Expedition's legacy informed McCarthy's approach to fieldwork over a sustained period. Lynne McCarthy's (pp. 157–169) interview of Expedition botanist Raymond Specht indicates the significance of the developing ecological approach of botanists. Sally May's (pp. 171–190) chapter, the last of the first section, summarises the Expedition's origins, bases, and activities.

The second part of the book is on collectors and their collections, which range from archival films and papers through baskets and fibre objects, string figures, botanical specimens, and fish. Collection of bark paintings was a major concern of Mountford and archaeologist Expedition member Fred McCarthy and is dealt with *passim*. Robyn McKenzie (pp. 191–212) focuses on the remarkable string figures that McCarthy collected at Yirrkala, by 'his estimate one-fifth of all "known" string figures in the world at the time' (p. 191), and includes comparisons



based on her own research on string figures at Yirrkala in 2009. Louise Hamby (pp. 213–239) writes on baskets and other fibre objects as revealing ‘histories of their makers and their uses’. She observes that ‘the collected items represented a slice of life from a material culture point of view. They are representative of the materials available to their makers in 1948, which include fabric and wool, not just bark fibre and pandanus’ (p. 237). Joshua Harris (pp. 239–251) reports on the existence and recent curation of the films that Howell Walker took during 1948, ‘a modern-day success story in film archiving’ (p. 250). Denise Chapman and Suzy Russell (pp. 253–254) report on Mountford’s papers before, during and after the Expedition contained in the The Mountford-Sheard Collection of the State Library of South Australia. Gifford Hubbs Miller and Robert Charles Cashner (pp. 271–282) describe the tenacious collecting of Robert Rush Miller, who gathered more than 30,000 fish specimens. Margo Daly (pp. 283–310) titles her edited oral history of Raymond Specht ‘An Insider’s Perspective’; it contains Specht’s recall of his training and early background and his observations of members of the Expedition and interactions with local Aboriginal people as well as descriptions of his collecting and classifying procedures.

The third part of the book is on Aboriginal engagements with the Expedition, and focuses on the Expedition’s effects on the communities it visited. Bruce Birch (pp. 312–336), a linguist, provides an intriguing account of an ‘American clever man’ recorded in Iwaidja, which was without doubt inspired by David Johnson, the Smithsonian mammologist who walked from Cape Don to Oenpelli without a guide. Ian McIntosh (pp. 337–354) cites Ronald Berndt quoting Burramarra, a Yolngu clan leader at Elcho Island, as authority for the role of screening Expedition film at Elcho Island on the subsequent public display of sacred objects that came to be known in the anthropological literature as an adjustment movement (Berndt 1962). From there McIntosh segues to accounts that Burramarra gave him of Bayini, said to be pre-Maccassan visitors to north-eastern Arnhem Land. Linda Barwick and Allan Marett (pp. 355–376) use fine-grained analyses of Simpson’s song recordings from Oenpelli and Delissaville to illustrate how people were coping with the new social environments of missions and pastoral stations, where many were dislocated from ancestral country. The result of innovation and collaboration between people from a number of different language groups provided connections to traditional country that were preserved in song, while ‘ongoing attachments to their current residence were also fostered’ (p. 29). Martin Thomas (pp. 377–402) interviewed Gerald Blitner, the only living Aboriginal person who had a direct involvement with the Expedition, a few months before he died. Thomas refers to Blitner’s ‘penetrating observations of the Expedition’ and ‘traces in his life story how encounters with Fred Gray, Mountford and other outsiders helped in the development of a political style that empowered him in his later negotiations with the Balanda world’. Murray Garde’s (pp. 403–422) study of the Expedition’s recording of the Wubarr, a male initiation rite indigenous to Western Arnhem Land, echoes Blitner’s concerns about ‘the interface of the esoteric world of Aboriginal religion and the putatively open culture of scientific investigation’. Garde describes the offence caused by screenings of Expedition films, as happened at Gunblanya



before a mixed audience without prior consultation. But he also paints a more sanguine picture of the Expedition's documentation of culturally restricted material when it is repatriated in a consultative manner.

Margo Neale (pp. 423–436) has titled the Epilogue, 'Sifting the Silence', a reference to the symposium's aim to encourage participation by members of communities that had been visited by the Expedition:

The centrality of Indigenous voices ... during this symposium provided a partial ... rectification of the marginalisation of Indigenous perspectives six decades ago ... Already collections from the Arnhem Land Expedition were being rediscovered: film footage at the Smithsonian Institution; painting on paper at the State Library of South Australia archived among manuscripts; orphaned objects at the National Museum of Australia in Canberra; as well as Indigenous accounts of the Expedition, previously unheard outside the community (p. 425).

Concerning the human subjects of the Expedition's study, she says that they or their descendants

have now become beneficiaries of it in ways that were explored at the symposium. With the rise of knowledge centres in Arnhem Land communities, there has been a transfer of knowledge to the people whose culture and environment were the subjects of study. Images of objects collected in 1948 were received – not as relics of the past, but in a way that saw their reanimation as part of a continuing and changing contemporary culture. Attitudinal changes in research protocols, in social context, in the nature of history telling, and issue of who owns the past, were re-examined (p. 425).

Some 25 Arnhem Landers, representing each of the Expedition's major sites, participated in the symposium and conducted panels dealing with repatriation. It was their decision to show footage of Setzler's collection of human remains from burial sites at Arrkuluk in Western Arnhem Land so that people at the symposium could see what actually happened and understand Aboriginal people's distress and their need to have their old people returned to country (p. 425).

Nearly all the bones were exported to the United States, where they were accessioned into the collection of the Smithsonian's US National Museum. Bone collecting was never mooted in the build-up to the Expedition, although an agreement was reached that two-thirds of all specimens collected should remain in Australia. In 2008, the Smithsonian returned this proportion of its holdings of Arnhem Land human remains, and, in July 2010, in the wake of the Barks, Birds & Billabongs symposium, the rest of the human remains were released to three traditional owners from Arnhem Land (pp. 21–22).

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## Contributors

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# Information for authors

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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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