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Cover: The 'Pack Horse Scene', Magela Creek Catchment, western Arnhem Land. Each horse is approximately 2½ metres from tail to nose. Designed by R.E. Barwick from scale drawings by George Chaloupka. See discussion in *Aboriginal History*, 3 (2), 1979:92-95.
Top: Edwin Verberg; Madeline Verberg, 1977; Ada and Maddie Verberg at St Gabrielle's School, Charters Towers, 1946.


- Photographs courtesy of Magdalene McIntosh
The Northern Territory Aboriginals Act of 1910 (later incorporated in Ordinances of 1911 and 1918) was the basis for control of Aborigines in the Northern Territory until 1953. As Rowley1 has pointed out, the legislation defined an ‘Aboriginal’ to include any person with an Aboriginal parent or grandparent, and paid particular attention to the ‘half caste’ offspring of an Aboriginal mother and non-Aboriginal father. The Chief Protector was the legal guardian of ‘every Aboriginal and half-caste child’ under the age of eighteen years.2 By deliberate policy half caste children were taken from their mothers and placed in institutions. By separating the generations the policy aimed at preventing the socialisation of such children in the Aboriginal culture.

Magdalene (Maddie) Verberg McIntosh, the daughter of a Dutchman and a ‘fullblood’ Aboriginal woman, was born in Darwin in 1934. To prevent her from being snatched away from her mother by government officials, her father divorced her mother and paid for Maddie to be a boarder at St Joseph’s Convent in Darwin, where she lived from the age of two. Following the bombing of Darwin in 1942, Maddie went with her father and sister Ada to live in Queensland. From 1945 to 1948 she was a boarder at St Gabrielle’s Girls School in Charters Towers. On her return to Darwin Maddie lived on her father’s property at Coomalie Creek. Maddie’s father gained permission for her mother to come and live in a house beside his, with the children, in the official capacity of housekeeper. He wanted the girls to know her. It was during these years, 1948-1955, that Maddie was able to learn about the culture of her Aboriginal mother’s community.

* Students in Dr Bruce Shaw’s anthropology course at Darwin Community College in 1978 were asked to write a short ethnography of some aspect of social life in the Darwin community for their major assignment. After reading sections of the Northern Territory Aboriginals Act of 1910, I (Rothwell) wanted to show the profound influence it had on the lives of people classified as ‘half castes’. To do this, I sought the cooperation of a friend, Maddie McIntosh, who told me her life story.

1 Rowley 1970:230-232. He also notes that ‘The recent trend has been for the special definition of person as “Aboriginal”, “native”, or “half-caste”, etc. to disappear’ (1970:341).

2 Northern Territory Acts of 1910 (No. 1024), South Australia. Section 9 says:
9. (1) The Chief Protector shall be the legal guardian of every aboriginal and every half-caste child, notwithstanding that any such child has a parent or other relative living, until such child attains the age of eighteen years, except whilst such child is a State child within the meaning of ‘The State Children Act, 1895’, or any Act amending or substituted for that Act.
(2) Every Protector shall, within his district, be the local guardian of every such child within his district
(3) Such local guardian shall have and exercise the powers and duties prescribed.
Maddie met and married Lorry McIntosh in 1955. They spent their first years of married life at El Sherana where their two daughters Dannylynn and Lynda Louise were born. After the mine closed the family made their home in Darwin, but due to Lorry’s work commitments the couple grew apart and separated. In 1974 Maddie began working as a Field Officer for the Northern Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service.

Maddie views the problems of the race relations situation in the Northern Territory from a ‘western’ perspective, as do her fellow workers. For example, while Aboriginal communities are prepared to pool their money to bail a relative or friend out of jail, the Aboriginal legal aid workers insist that if Aborigines want the Australian culture they must obey Australian laws. Yet Maddie shows sympathy for their problems. To her it appears highly questionable whether jail is the answer for youths who repeatedly commit crimes. Her solution — finding what each settlement has to offer in the way of employment for the Aboriginal boys who are not practising traditional ways — could be a better way to reduce offences. She insists also that Aborigines must be taught to understand ‘western’ values and the importance placed on individual ownership of material goods in Australian society. Maddie is distressed by the attitudes of many police officers today, although she can understand why they become frustrated in their work with Aborigines.

Reminiscences of Maddie Verberg McIntosh

I was born at the Darwin Hospital on the 8th of April 1934. My father Edwin Verberg was a Dutchman and my mother Madelene (Annilal) Verberg a fullblood Aboriginal of the Kungarakan tribe. Dad named me Magdalene, but always called me Magdalena. Today everyone calls me Auntie Maddie or Maddie.

Dad was born in Holland and when he was a teenager he went to America on a windjammer. While Dad was in America, he married a white woman and they had six sons and a daughter. When the marriage broke up, Dad decided to make a fresh start in life in Australia and came to this country about 1910. Dad owned a property at Adelaide River from about 1915. He built a dam between the high level and low level bridge so he could irrigate his farm to grow vegetables all year around. He had a citrus grove where the war cemetery is today and told us that after being successful for some years people became jealous of him. Government men started calling and later they condemned his farm stating

3 On arrival in Australia he called himself John Clyne, but as this sounded German he was threatened with internment during World War I. He then produced papers proving that he was Dutch by birth and a naturalized American, and afterwards used his correct name (personal communication, Tom Calma, Edwin Verberg’s son-in-law).
MADDIE

that there was a disease in the citrus trees. Dad eventually lost the property to the government. The government burnt out the orchard which consisted of 448 trees. He also had a farm at Coomalie Creek and one just outside Adelaide River which he named the Valley of the Moon. Before the First World War, Dad lived on his Adelaide River property which he farmed with the help of a group of Aborigines. Peter and Ada, a married fullblood Aboriginal couple who had a little boy, were among the group who worked for Dad. Peter got bitten by a death adder in the pumpkin patch and because Aborigines did not know how to use a tourniquet and cut themselves, he died. Dad wanted to take over and

I am indebted to the Darwin office of the Department of Agriculture for the following extracts from the Curator's card file at the Botanical Gardens (1920-1935): Citrus canker (*Pseudomonas sitri*) was discovered to be present in the Northern Territory in 1916. Trees that were found to be infected were destroyed in 1918 and compensation paid. In 1920 the Curator of the Botanic Gardens reported on gardens infected in Darwin. In 1922 after an official visit by Mr. Gerald Hill to inspect orchards and gardens where citrus plants were growing it was decided by the Government that all citrus plants were to be destroyed in the Territory. One of the most serious outbreaks appears to have been found at Verberg's place on the Adelaide River. Verberg wrote a very antagonistic [sic] letter to the Administrator at Darwin (at that time Staniforth Smith) noting that since Allen, who had inspected the orchard, was not a qualified Entomologist [sic] refused to take any account of his opinion that his orchard was infected. He furthermore noted that he valued the orchard at £4,000 and wouldn't sell it at that price since it was the only commercial orchard in the Territory. A further letter from Hill to Allen reports on additional samples sent from Verbergs, Flynn's, and Svensons gardens. All of them showed what Hill considered to be definite signs of the citrus canker. Apparently they thought they might get away with only destroying the infected plants but this was not found possible. They eventually had to destroy all of the citrus trees in the particular orchard in which they found it. There were three of these noted, at least the beginning, and under the heading 8th November 1921 these were listed:

1. With Verbergs place on Adelaide River "This is easily the premier citrus orchard which has ever existed in the N.T. The plants consisted of all well-known grafted varieties of oranges, mandarins, and lemons, on the eve of bearing or actually bearing at the present time and all four years old or more. They were well planted in approved distances and pruned on expert lines. There are furrows for irrigation between all of the rows and the irrigation works had been completed and are in use. The health of the trees was phenomenal for the Territory, obviously chiefly accounted for by the presence of irrigation and the general suitability of soil and situation". . . . pointed out that Verberg had been quite a service in showing that irrigation was possible on some of these soils and because of his great industry and keen disappointment in this loss he was recommending the highest amount of compensation that could be paid. Payment was made on a basis of £2 a tree for healthy trees and apparently £1 a tree for infected trees. Verberg had 448 trees, 219 of which were healthy. He drew compensation ordered at £867.

Maddie's account has telescoped two events: the burning of the orchard after World War I and the government's takeover of the property during World War II. When Edwin Verberg returned to the Northern Territory after 1945 he was told the government intended to keep the property. He was offered £16,000 in compensation but wanted more, so he took his case to the High Court. While the case dragged on Verberg lost money. Finally the Court ordered the government to pay him £7,000 (personal communication, Tom Calma).
look after Ada and her son Edwin but the tribe said ‘No’. We were never told the reason for their decision but I think it was to do with some superstition because Ada did not marry anyone else. However, they said *pudji* (that baby girl) in the *bindji bindji* (Ada’s tummy) can be your promised wife. Dad accepted the offer of the baby girl whom he named Madelene at birth and she later became our mother.

The name of Mum’s tribe is Kungarakan⁶ and they have nearly all died out now. Mum and Uncle Edwin are the only fullblood Aborigines left from that tribe. There has not been anything written about this tribe but perhaps that is because it was only a small group. At the moment another tribe called the Maranaggu tribe are trying to claim Mum and Uncle Edwin’s land. They claim that because they live off it the land is rightfully their land. In fact, there has been some ‘land right’ stealing going on for a few years. The group owned the inland area of the Wagait Reserve, one tribe has the coastal area of Wagait and Mum’s tribe used to be on the inland area. My aboriginal name is Anmilal the same as my mother’s. Not everyone gets an Aboriginal name, only if the tribe thinks you are worthy of such an honour. A lot of fullbloods today have not got an Aboriginal name. Mum lived with the tribe on Dad’s property when they worked for him and then when the group went off to Mt Bundey Station on walkabout, she would go with them. Dad looked after Mum like a daughter even though she often wandered with the tribe. She was a free sort of spirit and she was only about fifteen years older than us.

In those days, no Aboriginal woman was allowed to keep her half caste children, so Dad divorced Mum to keep us. It was common for any half caste children found in Aboriginal camps to be taken away and put in an institution.⁷ Dad, who was sixty-four years of age and always busy working on his farm, found it difficult to look after us properly so he sent us to St Joseph’s Catholic Convent in Darwin. Ada my sister was four and I was two years old when we left home for the first time. As there was no Stuart Highway, we travelled home on the train and Dad always met us with his horse and old green buggy. Dad came to see us each time he

⁶ Tindale (1974:229) describes the Kungarakan tribal location as: ‘Northwest of Mount Litchfield on midwaters of Reynolds River and on Adelaide River headwaters; an inland tribe extending to the western side of the Tabletop Range divide; northeast to vicinity of Rum Jungle and Batchelor’.

⁷ Bleakley (1929:15) noted that the ‘object of the home is to save these half-castes from the degradation of the blacks’ camp, properly care for and educate them, and fit them to take a useful part in the development of the Territory’. Yet proper facilities were rarely available: he said of one centre that ‘it is freely admitted that the housing of 76 children, of different sexes, in a house large enough only for one family, is not satisfactory’. The two main recommendations that he made regarding the future of half-castes revealed popular opinion and attitudes of the time: ‘(a) Complete separation of the half-castes from the aboriginals, with a view of their absorption by the white race; (b) Complete segregation from both black and whites in colonies of their own and to marry amongst themselves’ (1929:28).
shipped his produce to Darwin by train. When he went overseas to Singapore on business trips he brought us back dolls and toys. As Dad could afford to keep us in the convent we were very lucky, because most other coloured kids were sent to the Retta Dixon Home, Bathurst Island Catholic Mission, Goulburn Island Methodist Mission, Roper River Church Mission, Groote Eylandt Church Mission, Croker or the Oenpelli Church Mission. These children were separated from their parents at a very early age and that is why many of them do not have any real family today. They just don't know which area they came from in the Northern Territory, so they can't even start to look for their family.

I must admit I hated it at the convent as the nuns were very hard on Ada and I because we were coloured kids. There was real discrimination. Once when there were eggs missing from the fowl house, they reckoned that I had pinched them, but I don't suck eggs. As punishment, they dunked my head in a trough of water up and down, up and down, up and down shouting at me all the time not to tell lies. Another time when I was only a little thing, I was told to carry an earthen holy water container which I dropped because it was too heavy and a piece shot up and cut Ada. The nuns tried to tell me I wanted to kill my sister and locked me away in a dark room where I was very scared. I'll never forget those times and I'll never forgive them. We used to tell Dad what they did to us but what could he do? He was an old man who couldn't look after us properly, so he used to tell us to be good and he'd be back in Darwin to see us soon. Despite this, Dad was very kind to the nuns. Dad paid full fees for us, but because we were there he supplied the convent with pineapples, mandarins, oranges, lemons and grapefruit although Ada and I rarely got any of the fruit. I remember the weekends well. The nuns were always praying and Ada and I were always hungry so we used to hang over the fence in Cavenagh Street and ask day kids that we knew to go to their home and get us some food. We had enough friends to keep us going. Dad's visits to see Ada and I during my time at St Joseph's were the only good times that I recall of my days at that school.

After Japan entered the Second World War in December 1941, most of the women and children were evacuated from Darwin to Katherine or interstate. Dad would not allow us to be separated from him, so he eventually came in and collected us from school. It was the 19th of February 1942 and as we were travelling along the highway track near the 'ten mile', we heard planes in the distance, then they came closer and then there were very loud explosions. It was frightening but exciting but Dad would not take us back to see what had happened. Although I was only eight, I can still remember the war planes. When I see old war pictures, the noise that goes with the old Spitfires is exactly the same as the noise I heard on that day. Once we arrived at Coomalie Creek we stayed there for a while but Dad had troubles as the Australian soldiers used to fire at our farm. He told us it was because of the Australian attitude to new
Australians. Dad always hid us in the fertilizer for protection when the shooting was going on, but he wasn’t scared. He never was afraid of anything. It was us, always us, protecting us all the time. I don’t have good memories of the Australian soldiers as they caused further trouble by looting from the homes as soon as families had been evacuated.

Dad had fought in the Spanish American War of 1898 and at the end of the war was awarded a pension of $100.98 (American money) a month until the day he died. The army took over the Adelaide River property but because of Dad’s experience as a soldier and a farmer, he was offered the position as chief of farms which the army were using to grow vegetables to feed their men. Dad refused the position, he said, ‘No, where my girls go I go’. Dad got us on an American convoy which left Birdum to go through to Longreach in Queensland. Dad, Ada and I travelled to Longreach where we stayed with Mrs Moo-Fatt for a year. Mrs Moo-Fatt was Harry Chan’s sister-in-law. Dad left us with her and joined the American Army. He was an old man then, seventy or more, but he was accepted as a guard for the American Army at Garbet out from Townsville. He was always proud of his armband which he had worn in those days, even to the day he died. Dad was like a millionaire during the war years with his pay and pension.

In 1945, Dad enrolled us at St Gabrielle’s at Charters Towers and paid our fees himself, no Aboriginal grants or aids. We were the first two Aboriginal girls to attend this school, but by the time we left three years later, there were six coloured students. The teachers were prejudiced, I tell you now! Ada used to notice it and point it out to me. Dad, who was white, went on his own to enrol us at St Gabrielle’s. Later, when Dad returned to the school with two little darkies, Archdeacon Norman’s face dropped as they could not believe it, but they had to accept us as they had already taken the fees. This was a Church of England girls school. The Brother’s School, ‘All Souls’, was not controlled by prejudiced people as they allowed boys from Palm Island to attend as well as many of the Darwin Chinese boys. We enjoyed it at St Gabrielle’s and stayed for three years.

Although the teachers were prejudiced, it did not worry me as I got older. I began to realise that if I was going to let it worry me I was not going to get anywhere. What did it really matter if they were prejudiced? We proved that we were as good as them. I broke the school swimming record and my name is still on the trophies in the school library. We must have proved ourselves as they accepted us back the next two years. On holidays and at school, Ada and I used to fight a lot. Dad would say, ‘I’m going to send one of you two girls to a reform school’, but he would always look at me. Ada would pinch and belt me because I wouldn’t mend

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8 Harry Chan became the first elective president of the Northern Territory Legislative Council in 1965, and was mayor of Darwin 1966-1969 (Barr et al. 1978:15).
the holes in my brown rib stockings, but later she would darn them. I did not mind suffering a bit, as long as she did the work. What's a bit of pain! She often used to get on my back because I was lazy with those sort of jobs. After the teachers got to know us and like us at St Gabrielle's, I would say it was the happiest time of my childhood. I was good at art work and enjoyed it at school. I can do faces well. Dad paid for us to do all the other things at school like tap and ballroom dancing, Girl Guides, tennis and I learnt to play the piano while Ada learnt singing. I was no good at playing the piano from books, I wasn't interested. I got a cyst which remained on my hand for years where the teacher hit me in the same place with a ruler every lesson. I can play by ear though. Ada was not too good at the piano but she could sing. She won first prize in the Eisteddfod at Charters Towers and it was in competition with all the other schools, we were really proud of her.

When Dad came back to the Northern Territory after the war, he brought us with him. In 1948 schools reopened in Darwin so Dad sent us to St Joseph's again but it was only a few months later when the nuns decided that they were not going to have any new boarders, as the fees did not meet the costs of running the boarding section at the school. Ada was sixteen and as she was leaving school I think the nuns told Dad to take his other daughter too. I was a bit of a rebel at the convent when we came back. I didn't like kneeling, I used to get dizzy. The Catholic service was so long, a lot longer than at St Gabrielle's and I remember how they had treated me when I was a little thing. I used to refuse to get down on my knees, I wasn't a Catholic and it hurt me and I never forgave the nuns. I never forgave them because it is something that I could not forgive. They were preaching Christianity but they did not practise it. As far as I was concerned, (I was only a kid but even to this day and my children are the same) we have a deep seated feeling of right from wrong in the way that you put yourself on a plane in life and you must practise what you preach. My time at the convent turned me right off religion. Often now, the Mormons come around home and try to convert me, the Seventh Day Adventists, everyone wants me to become their religion, why me? Am I such a bad person? Everyone wants me. I cannot believe that there is one true religion. I do believe that there is a God, he helped me during Cyclone Tracy, he can't think I'm too bad!

We were the only family in our area with a roof still on our house after the cyclone. There were about eight killed around our neighbourhood. I tell ministers and priests I have a sense of values. My morals may not be very high but I do as I want to do and I don't ever try to do the dirty on anyone. I have my own set of rules. When I'm afraid I pray to the God I feel I know or when my kids have been sick I pray and when they are better I remember to say 'Dear Lord, thank you very much'. Now that God, that's the true God because I believe that religion comes from within, not what I read in a Bible.
As we were leaving school, Dad got permission from Native Affairs for Mum to come and look after us so that we would know our mother. He never blamed her for anything she did when she was young. Dad took us to the Darwin Hospital to get Mum. I was thirteen then and I didn’t know her but Ada recognised her straight away. Ada remembered Mum from the time she was in hospital with T.B. and Mum used to come and visit her all the time. Mum came to stay and brought her two little kids Edna and Elizabeth who were war babies. Ada and I lived with Mum and our new sisters in a Sydney William hut. Mum treated Ada and I like younger sisters and would always stick up for us if we were in trouble with Dad.

Dad lived by himself in an old sheet iron house. Mum had a hard life, she and Dad worked hard. Dad was old and every time he got wild with her he’d kick her out and she’d end up in Bagot. Later when he’d calm down he’d go and beg her to come home again. She was shunted backwards and forwards, she had no security. Dad didn’t have sex with her, instead she was like a young daughter. Dad threatened to kick us out but I just used to laugh and say, ‘You can’t kick me out, I’m too young’. I was a rebel, I was the only one who could stare him in the eyes. Dad had a blind belief that you couldn’t tell a lie and look a person in the eye. He always said that anyone who didn’t look him in the face was shifty so I’d never backed down, I always looked him in the eye. Dad never hit us, he was hard but kind. I was closer to Dad than the rest of the family. Dad was also strong willed and stubborn except with Mum, Ada or me. But apart from us, once he had made a decision he stood by it. During the depression years, Dad used to exchange vegetables for meat with Bill White who owned the Mt Bundey Station approximately six miles away from our place. This arrangement was quite successful for a long time until Bill White’s goats got into one of Dad’s vegetable patches on the Adelaide River farm. Dad shot all the goats, loaded them on his truck and drove to the Mt Bundey Station where he threw the goats at Bill White’s feet. Dad told Bill White that he could take Dad to court for compensation for shooting the goats, whereupon he would in turn charge Bill White the same amount of money for damage to his vegetable patch. The two men never spoke to each other again.

Another time was when Dad was at the Adelaide River pub: the barman charged him five pence instead of the usual four and a half pence for a glass of beer. He questioned the new price and was told it was because of a tax increase. Dad drank the beer but never entered the hotel again, instead, he bought his beer wholesale in Darwin and drank it at home or

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9 The term ‘Sydney William hut’, perhaps derived from a manufacturer’s name, is applied colloquially to temporary army barracks.

10 An Aboriginal reserve established in 1938 on the edge of Darwin, now surrounded by suburbs. It has long been a refuge for Aboriginal visitors to the city.
MADDIE

made it on the property. Dad had money but he wouldn’t spend it. For a long time our beds were made of the farm straw stuffed into calico covers. They were comfortable to sleep on, so we did not mind. We used to make our own bread and damper and salt the meat which would go hard like concrete, in fact almost white. There was plenty of food and we ate well.

Mum, Ada and I worked hard on the farm and Dad made us work in overalls. If blokes ever offered to carry a bag of sugar or rice for us, Dad would say, ‘the girls are big enough and strong enough to carry the bags’. He made us dress like men and would tell people that we were as good and as strong as men. If anything broke down, us girls would have to fix it. Dad taught us how to pull carburettors to pieces, operate the timing on the magneto of the rotary hoes, start the pump and drive the tractors. We were our own mechanics. Sundays were fun because other teenagers would travel from around the area to Coomalie Creek in an old Blitz truck. It was an all day trip and we would spend our time with them swimming together at the Coomalie Creek bridge. We weren’t allowed to have boyfriends though. So, if Dad heard us outside at night, he would come out of his house dressed in one of those American flannel nighties swinging a pitch fork or firing off the shot gun. Dad was famous for that!

The farm produced peanuts, fruit and all types of vegetables. Every Friday we brought our produce into Darwin and sold it from our shop which was where the Koala Motor Inn is now. The front entrance of the shop faced Daly Street. We sold tomatoes, cucumber, cabbages, lettuce, beetroot, carrots, pumpkin, watermelons and lemons. We supplied the Darwin Hospital, the Mitchell Street Mess, Qantas Mess, Shell Oil Company, Haritos, the Administrator, Tang’s store plus deliveries on the route to town. By late Friday we would have sold everything then we’d go to the pictures. Darwin was a city to us and it was good to come in each week even though we travelled at twenty-five miles per hour in Dad’s old truck. As we got a bit older, Dad allowed us to go to dances at the Catholic Palais. He used to leave us there honour bound to stay and he’d go to the pictures. About eleven o’clock, he’d collect us and then we’d all walk back to the shop together. On Saturdays we would travel back home again.

There was always a lot to do on the farm. We never got sick, we had a healthy life. We started with Dad early in the morning and worked in the garden, then in the heat of the day he rested like the old Aboriginal men, but the women and us, Ada, Edna, Elizabeth and I would go down to the billabong to find mussels or swim. At three o’clock we’d all go back to work.

The men used to outpace us. They would hoe two rows as we women did one. Dad never employed Europeans as there was always enough of us around. Dad used to pay the Aborigines the basic wage even when the
The cost of their flour, sugar, tobacco and tea would be taken out and they would be given the rest. Dad would buy second-hand bikes for the Aborigines so that they could ride to Batchelor and Adelaide River to gamble because that is how they used their money. Dad understood the ways of the Aborigines and allowed for their different way of life. The Aborigines used to be off without a moment’s notice for a few days or weeks if a relative turned up or just if they felt like leaving, then one day unexpectedly turn up again to stay on Dad’s farm. Dad could not rely on them staying for any length of time but they did work well when they were with him. In the wet season, the men would make fish spears and the women worked on their baskets and mats if they needed them, perhaps a mat to play cards on or sit on in the camp. Ada and I used to learn from them, which pleased Dad. The Aborigines used to use their skills to help Dad. They slatted bamboo to make a lattice wall on the verandah around the house and it was the Aborigines who helped Dad build a weir at Adelaide River between the high level and the low level bridge before we were born. Every wet season the river used to come up and run over all the vegetables but it did not wash the soil away. We didn’t worry though, because when the water ran through the house we used to pack everything up on the vehicle and go up and stay in the little hut we’d built on the Batchelor road. When the water went down we would move back home and carry on the same.

I like western food best to live on, but Aboriginal food is nice. I can eat it and I can find it. Oh yes, and a lot of Aborigines today can’t find it because they don’t know what to look for. We were lucky on the farm with Dad, we went out fishing and shooting. The Aboriginal women, especially Nellie who lived on the farm, would take us kids out on the river and teach us to catch bream and yabbies. The women also used to put their hands in the roots in the river and pull out a file snake, hold it firm, put the whole head of the snake in their mouth and jerk it and kill it like that. It is called a file snake because the outside of the skin is like a rasp, rough as a rasp, it has no scales. It tasted okay. We used to catch flying fox by shooting them. The brown ones were the best, we would find them in the jungle and bring them back to cook in hot coals. When the body and wings went hard, we would gut them, then put them back in to cook. I didn’t like the smell of the flying fox although they tasted good but bandicoot and goanna were better. We spent a fair bit of time in the jungle. The jungle was off the creek on the right hand side of the Batchelor road.

Rowley (1970:233) notes that the payment of wages in such circumstances was quite uncommon.
MADDIE

When Batchelor\textsuperscript{12} first started up, I used to go out with the Aborigines who collected leeches for me to give to a new Australian who was working at Rum Jungle Mine. He used to put the leeches on his varicose veins to suck the blood out and that would take the pain away. It really did work. He told us that doctors in England had the nickname of leeches because they used to bleed people. Sometimes we would go and collect long yams to take home and boil up, or bowitch which is a type of potato that grows on a stick and comes up after the first rains. It was hard to find but we always managed to get some which we would wash, rub off the outside skin and eat. It was very crunchy and tasty. Another fruit we used to pick was the sweet wild cherry plum. We also used to eat the wild skinny sugar cane in the wet season. It was easy to find in the long wet grass and it was really sweet, we'd suck it and throw the stalk away.

Of a night we'd have a corroboree and I used to dance. I would sing or dance at the drop of a hat. I loved it. Dad used to call me little black 'Shirley Temple'. Our tribal dance was with the string. Some of the tribe lived by the tank, another group by the billabong and others just around the farm area. People used to come and go. Dad had tribes from Daly River, Humpty Doo, Marrakai and even from Oenpelli from time to time. They would work just long enough to get a bit of money. To them there was no tomorrow like working for a future. They were happy nomadic people. After working for a while they would sit down to rest, play cards or have a talk. The didgeridoo would be going every night and the sticks clapping and we would all be singing. It was really good fun in those days, but it's not like that any more. The didgeridoo and sticks only come out when they are putting on a dance for other people. Dad had an old gramophone and we all used to dance to the music. The Aborigines liked the Western records like Tex Morton. The favourite songs were 'The Red River Valley' and 'The Yellow Rose of Texas'. They went crazy listening to those seventy-eight records. We could all play the mouth organ, not classy, but we could play tunes, no worries!

Ada and I only owned two dresses each. We used to swop and do all sorts of things to make our dresses look different. We taught ourselves to make clothes. Mum, she may be Aboriginal, but she can sew by hand. She can't cut out from a pattern but she can make full dresses with darts and waist and gee, she is good! She was really good at making dilly bags, she'd shred old dresses until she got the cotton, then rolled it on her leg until she turned it into a long twine ready to make the bags. As I say, this old girl Mum is good even though apart from her name she can't read or write. We were all pretty handy, you know. Well, we had to be! Edna and Elizabeth did not go in for this as much but perhaps they had

\textsuperscript{12} Batchelor was established by the government in 1952 to house the workers at Rum Jungle uranium mines (Barr et al. 1978 :3).
different interests as they were a lot younger than Ada and I. There was a lot of card gambling down at the black camp and Edna, Elizabeth and Mum used to go down and join in but not me. I gambled once and lost eight bob and that was it, I never played again.

After Ada was married in 1952, Dad took me to Holland. I was eighteen and Dad was about eighty. We had a fantastic time. Dad and I were very close. He showed me the house in which he was born and we also visited his brother. Soon after we came back from Europe, Dad decided I was old enough to go to the dances at Batchelor. There were only white boys and girls at the dances, no fullblood Aborigines ever went along. They had their own corroborees and I don’t think they would have been welcomed. I think I was about the only half caste but I always had a good time and plenty of dancing partners. It was at one of these dances that I met Lorry McIntosh. Lorry came from Mt Morgan in Queensland, which is a mining town where he’d done his apprenticeship as a fitter and boiler maker. On his way to Darwin he had worked at a number of places including Manus Island. We got engaged after about six months and went to Rockhampton to meet his parents and get married. Lorry’s parents were against our marriage, which got him all confused, so I moved into the local hotel. Lorry suggested that I return to Darwin and he would follow but I said, ‘I have a strong pride, I won’t go back to Darwin. I came down here to marry you and all my friends at Adelaide River and Rum Jungle know I have come down here to marry you so if I don’t get married, I’ll never go home’. I told him that Dad gave me money so I wouldn’t be his worry. Lorry was a man being torn two ways by his family and me. Lorry’s parents believed that once he’d married me he would have to look after all my relations, but this was untrue. As time passed we cared for his family, certainly not mine. His family wanted him to think it over, but Christ, we went together for six months so I mean how long does a man need? I couldn’t go back home because all our life Dad had brought us up with pride, we were the Verberg girls. It gets deep-seated inside you and nothing will change you. He taught us to be proud, not proud that we were coloured like they are trying to shove down kids’ necks these days, but proud that we were the Verberg girls. We must never bow down to anyone. We must do what we think is right and that is it. Ada and I were stubborn like Dad from the Dutch in us and free and easy going at the same time like the Aborigines. After a week Lorry came again to see me at the hotel, we were in love and we went and got married. It was a very good marriage, we are still married even though we do not live together. We spent our first years of marriage living just outside Adelaide River as Lorry got a job in a little mine. We were happy there and after a while he got a better job at El Sherana,13 a uranium mine.

13 Maddie says this mining settlement was located on the South Alligator River, not far from Pine Creek. El Sherana was an anagram, from the names of Bluey Kay’s three small daughters: Elvira, Sharen and Larna.
MADDIE

This was where I really matured. I was the only woman there for a long time. We lived in a tent at first then in a company house which we built. I got pregnant with my two kids while we were there and when they came along (Dannylynn was born in June 1958 and Lynda Louise was born in August 1962) life was even better. Lorry built a rotunda which was made of paper bark and was cool and weatherproof. I used to have plants all around it, the floor was concrete and we used to have our parties in there. It was a little beer garden. Lorry built swings for the kids and oh, it was good, we were so happy!

I used to spend a lot of my time making clothes for the girls and playing with them. When the neighbours' kids were on school holidays they all used to spend their time around my home. I often used to pile them into the landrover and deliberately drive along muddy tracks so we could have the fun of digging the vehicle out of the bogs. I also enjoyed the times when the Aboriginal groups camped nearby en route to Arnhem Land. The men wore cock-rags in those days and the women only wore clothes when strangers were around. One group would go through the Katherine Gorge up through the South Alligator River on their way to Kumpala Station, Jim Jim, out to Nylandji, then to Oenpelli. Oenpelli was a big mission where they would visit their relations. These days they travel by vehicle. One bloke called 'Donkey' had four wives and two of them were pregnant on one of their trips and the babies were born at El Sherana. The babies were little pink things and slept in bark. I used to take milk and nappies down to the mothers for their babies. A lot of Aboriginal women still practise infanticide. They always know if there will be something wrong with their baby. A pregnant woman will disappear from a group, squat over a burrowed-out hole and bury the baby if for some reason she thinks it should not live.

In the booming days at El Sherana, there were about 150 to 200 men. They mined the pitchblende which was the strong stuff, not this yellow cake, that's rubbish. The yellow cake is not as rich. The largest piece of uranium in Australia was found at El Sherana. I saw the men haul it up the shaft. Finally the contract ran out so the mine closed down but we stayed on for another couple of years while Lorry dismantled the equipment with a handful of about thirty men.

Dad died in 1965 at the age of ninety-six. The Council later named a street in Stuart Park 'Verberg Street' in memory of Dad. He left us a lot of money, a few thousand cash and some bonds. When we moved from El Sherana, we used the money to buy a block of land on the corner of Chapman Road and Chapman Court in Darwin for £700. The house cost us £10,000. It was strong, we put the foundations four foot into the ground and Lorry welded all the pipe himself. He got Nightcliff Builders in to help do the building but he checked their work. The house stood up well in the cyclone, only losing a couple of sheet irons off the roof. We
were happy until Lorry started business for himself. Once he became a partner in Inpact Engineering he worked seven days a week and we never spent time together.

Lorry travelled to Gove, Groote Eylandt and down the track to Francis Creek for Inpact Engineering, often staying away for days at a time. We grew apart. I was at a loose end and became discontented. I moved out of the house and took the girls with me. Lorry helped me find a flat in Progress Drive and helped us shift in and paid the bills until I got a job. My first job was car cleaning at Sutton Motors on about $54 a week but I worked that into a really good job. I then worked on a contract basis with six people working for me. Lorry used to come and visit us and we went out to see him. We grew closer again. It was better that way. I was independent and free. I rented a flat on Trower Road from the Housing Commission for a year then moved into one of their homes at Jingili.

As the girls grew up, I started to take an interest in sport and took up softball as Danny enjoyed it. We played together for the same club. Then Lynda wanted to play hockey so I had to also learn hockey. I was in my thirties when I took up these club competitive sports. I believe you must play sports with your kids. I have also coached softball and hockey teams. When soccer was being developed in Darwin, I agreed to play soccer in a team and we used to put on charity games. Later, we played in competition soccer and won one grand final as well as the Ampol Cup. The only time I've had health problems was through sport. I broke my ankle at softball and had to have an operation on my knee after an Aussie Rules football match. I went up for a mark and when I came down again, my foot went into the hole from where the sprinkler system operates. Did I cry, I was crying in temper because I wanted to play! I had practised hard and now all I had was a knee out of place. It was very painful and from then on I had trouble with my knee. Nearly every time I played sport it would click out and I'd have to click it back in again. Dr Selvey operated on my knee but couldn't fix it properly.

Our marriage changed from a love affair to a friendship. It's strange but friendships don't make marriages, that's why I say to people fight whatever you do, it is good for you to fight. You can't go through life just as friends. As I got older and wiser, I felt life had more for me. I didn't just want to be a housewife filling my time in with hobbies like photography, painting or dressmaking. Nothing ever goes back to what it was before although you can improve and go forward and bring it to level. Couples should not say, 'Oh I wish it was like it was before'. That's no good because if it becomes like it was before it isn't good enough as it didn't work out that way before, so that's why you always aim to go forwards working to improve your life style. Lorry always cared for us,
he is a good man. When the first car load got to Adelaide River after the cyclone and Lorry heard that Darwin was gone, he put water, axe, bedding and pillows on the truck and came to find us. He walked for miles to find us, unhurt.

A few days later, he sent a carpenter up to fix new iron on to the roof, and replace a few louvres. I did not evacuate after the cyclone. However, Lorry took the girls to Adelaide River. This was the loneliest time of my life. I used to sleep in the car in town sometimes. I think I was about the only woman in Jingili. It was eerie as there was not a sound. The food which the authorities gave us was very good. The helpers who came from other States were fantastic. It was worth being here to see how they worked. We cooked outside and had plenty of water from the large tanks. There were no real problems. I got extra food at times and took it down to the Aborigines at One Mile Dam. Those Aborigines just lay down in the ditches and the wind and trees blew over them during the cyclone. They had no other shelter.

In my home black is never mentioned as a colour. My girls don’t live at home anymore. Danny works for her father in his hotel at Adelaide River and Lynda is at Woodlands boarding school in Adelaide. I never get lonely though or live alone. I let anyone stay who needs a bed. My friends say, ‘let them go somewhere else’, but where can they go? I have dogs, cats and other pets which really belong to Lynda. There is always someone living in the house to feed the animals when I am away on working trips. I have male friends and enjoy their company, but I would never remarry, mostly because I like my independence but partly because Lorry is still the very best man and my girls’ father. I am proud of and love all my family, whom I spend time with quite often. Mum, who had a baby boy — Bruce — when I was twenty, is now married to Jack England and lives at Batchelor. She works hard attending to their pigs, chickens, and garden. She visits us about once a month when Jack brings her into town. Ada, Edna and Elizabeth all live in Darwin. Ada married Tom Calma and lives at Fannie Bay. They have four children, one boy and three girls. Lenore, their eldest girl, is married and lives in the northern suburbs of Darwin. Edna is married to Les Barolits and they have a boy and a girl. Elizabeth is married to Jim Delahunty and they have two boys. My young brother Bruce, who is a qualified electrician, is still single and working around the Darwin area.

Maddie Today

As a Field Officer, my job is to interview clients when they come into the office, to find out if their problem is legal or welfare. There are three solicitors and four field officers. We have courts at Katherine, Oenpelli, Groote Eylandt, Gove, Elcho Island, Maningrida, Garden Point and Darwin. Roper River is opening up this week. Our clients may be having problems
with the landlord, or a car dealer to whom they paid cash for a second hand car which broke down about twenty miles from Darwin. The Aborigines get taken time after time over car deals. They pool their money, buy a car and don’t read the small print that says ‘Sold as is’ so we can’t help them if they have this piece of paper. Another example is if an Aboriginal has been in an accident and there is likely to be an insurance claim, we visit them at the hospital to give assistance. We go out to any settlements if we are needed. I only have to be with a group for a week and I can understand their language but when I go away I forget it again. If the lawyer does not turn up at court, I speak for them. One time I got a girl, who pleaded guilty for cutting a white man with a knife, off on a $200 fine because it was his fault he got stabbed and I put the facts before the court. I also got a man off without losing his license for stealing a government vehicle. I communicate with the Aborigines, then I explain their case slowly and clearly to the magistrate. Another way we try to help is giving young girls confidence to help them in their new jobs and to stay employed. One young girl who started in town the other week was unhappy because her white workmates were showing her how to do things wrongly and she was getting into trouble with her boss. I told her to bounce the bloke who was giving her a hard time right back and let him know that she was there to stay. Anyway she stuck the job and now she gets on well with everyone.

We work in with the Social Development department all the time, handling anything from adoptions to funerals. Although our first duty is to the Aboriginal, we are happy to help Europeans whenever possible. A group of girls brought a white girl around home because she had taken an overdose of sleeping pills. I took her to hospital and helped her out, got a job for her as well as a place to live. I helped a Greek woman last week, an Aboriginal woman brought her to me. It’s good to help people. As many Aborigines cannot read and write, they really do need our help. Until 1973 Aborigines did not have any legal representation. In those days if an Aboriginal was picked up by the police for offensive behaviour or for being disorderly, he was wide open for insult, ridicule and prosecution. Also, the police did not understand that an Aboriginal’s way of behaving is really different from a European’s. An Aboriginal is loud when he is happy and even louder with a few beers. We often appear in court for the group of Aboriginal ‘metho’ drinkers who hang around Rain Tree Park. Each time one goes to court, he is fined $25 which he hasn’t got, so he goes to jail. Legal Aid has an unwritten policy where they bail no one out of jail or pay anyone’s fines. A lot of them won’t go on a pension as they have a deep seated fear of signing their name to anything. They would rather scrounge for food and go to jail if they have to, where they pay off their fine at $10 a day. They rather like jail — good food, nice rest, get all cleaned up, then out on the street again. One group would consist of a few white ‘plonkies’, fullbloods and half castes who stick together. A few are on a pension and they share among themselves.
There is no truly tribal group of Aborigines left in the Northern Territory. The Aborigines can be placed in three groups. Firstly Aborigines like me who are westernised, cannot speak Aboriginal languages and do not have any tribal culture. This includes all the intermarriages with other races. The second group is made up of those at One Mile Dam, Knuckey's Lagoon and groups who live around communities, buffalo shooting camps or stations. This group is westernised in their work, usually speaking a pidgin English as they have not been educated by the missionaries. They speak a few Aboriginal languages but they don’t practice traditional law or culture except corroborees which are held when someone dies. It is called the dead man’s ceremonies. The third group are the Aborigines who live on missions and settlements but live in their own area like Groote Eylandt, Gove, Maningrida and Elcho Island. They have their music bands and use the western tools that they like, while at the same time use the traditional law to advantage. For example, if a woman commits adultery, she can be punished to death but the men still like to live our way, like jump in a Toyota utility with a few cartons of grog and rifles to go off shooting.

I don’t believe anyone owes us anything. I am not going to say I’m black because the world wants me to say I am black and I can’t say I’m white because I’m not. I am me, Maddie, and a half caste. I used to wear bright colours to bring out the colour in my skin. You get out of life what you put into it. The European convicts’ descendants don’t go around saying ‘way back my great grandfather stole a loaf of bread and got put in chains and was treated as a sub-human so Britain owes me for that’. Admittedly, the Aborigines were treated badly in the early days, because by white society they had broken laws and they had to be punished, but that happened before and that is finished, this is the new world. As Aborigines now want the white man’s way of living, they must be taught to earn it, its not picnic day every day. In their old traditional way, their wants were so few they didn’t have to work, and now with the European way they must be taught to appreciate what they are given, otherwise they won’t ever have any sense of value for material goods. It is the understanding times now, the Aborigines must pull their weight and pay their way in life. I get frustrated at times trying to make Aborigines understand that we are not a treasury. We are not funded to fly them around, but we offer help through Social Development, Aboriginal Affairs, St Vincent de Paul and Red Cross.

I’ll try anywhere for help in their problem. Sometimes I feel the Aborigines have got too many rights for their own good. The white man creates the monster. If a white man says to an Aboriginal group drinking alcohol outside Woolworths, ‘Hey, you mob get on your reserve to drink’, the Aborigines will answer ‘Oh, we are not allowed to drink on our reserve’. The white man should then say, ‘Well, this is my place and you can’t drink here’ but the white man can’t say that, because the Aboriginal has
so many rights. You will never see a group of white men and women sitting and drinking on the hospital lawns, but the Aborigines do and get away with it.

Aborigines drink alcohol because they like it. I feel the problem is due to the way drinking was introduced by the government. Why didn’t they talk to communities and offer it to the groups? Fullblood Aborigines were rarely seen in town fifteen years ago. Only the odd stockman came to town and a few did their shopping on the fringes at Haritos. Now that alcohol has been introduced, a lot of them come to town because they are not allowed to drink on their settlements and missions. They must not take liquor on to the land where they grew up. I am certain, had they been allowed to take it to their dwellings without fuss, they would have stayed there and could have been taught how to handle it. Perhaps have a club like the clubs in Darwin with a few pool tables, a juke box, dart boards and keg beer with no spirits. Umbakumba has done this and opens from five to seven every night and Saturday and Sunday mornings. The idea was suggested by a bright young white man married to an Aboriginal girl.

I was going to suggest that the police learn the Aboriginal culture, but I’ve decided against it. What is the use? Out of all the cases heard a year, there may be twenty out of the lot that involve traditional laws. I don’t remember how many cases we have a year, but I know that the other month we had 250 cases for that month. Out of that every charge was a white-man-introduced crime. There was not one assault, but mainly illegal use of motor vehicles. Sometimes they knock off five or six vehicles a night, just to get from one place to another. If the vehicle runs out of petrol or breaks down, they leave it and knock off another vehicle. It does not worry them as they have no sense of responsibility. They also have no monetary or material values from their tribal ways to help them be respectful citizens. One thing I must say though, is I have found that Aborigines from outlying areas are very honest. They tell you straight but I suppose they have to because their mates will not let someone get away with telling lies.

All the authorities today say that Aborigines want tradition. It’s not like that any more. The Aborigines don’t want it, they only agree with the authorities because they get money. Anthropologists and professors don’t believe me when I tell this, because they don’t want to, but that’s how life is. I tell them the facts. I look at it realistically. It is good to have had a culture that lasted thirty thousand years. It worked when it was practised properly and was a good way of life for the people of that time, but this is the twentieth century and there are no tribal Aborigines left. They enjoy and want the western culture. They don’t want the old way. Only a few old ones go out to get turtles at Umbakumba but they use boats with an outboard motor. As well, the old men want to keep up the tribal laws which allow them several wives but the second and third wives are against this tribal system and we have many of them come to us at
MADDIE

Legal Aid. They want 'out' but we can't do anything to help. These women want a white man or to be left in peace, certainly not to be second or third wife being belted up because of the jealousies of the other wives. The wives lived happily together until the tribal structure broke down, but now this way of life causes big problems. If these girls get into Darwin they stay, as they like nice clothes and the European culture.

Aboriginal women look lazy and useless to European women, but you've got to remember that they have had no education standards in home-making services. Thousands of dollars are spent on homes for Aborigines but, while the government continues to spend money on the upkeep of European homes, no money is set aside to upkeep Aboriginal homes. What a waste of money! The government should build less houses and allow for their upkeep and, as well, educate the women on home-making practices. The women are not encouraged to act like European women. Instead, they are just expected to act that way. Once in their old tribal way, they worked on a system where they didn't have tin cans or paper. Their wants are few. So deep down, it is not in their knowledge to put scraps in bins. The young teenagers are interested in being clean and well dressed. So, it will improve.

The young ones enjoy the aimless way of life. The ones that go to court do not seem to have any sense of fear. Some of the little devils say 'Maddie, what do you think I'll get, what do you think I'll get?'. A lot of them like jail as they think their age group will look up to them when they come back home. As Aborigines do not understand a good behaviour bond, it is better for them to be fined because they are used to being punished immediately. We go out to the prison farm at Gunn Point where boys are completely happy with T.V. and good meals, but I must say that they do miss their families. The trouble starts among the teenagers who have not got work, up to the age of twenty-five when they seem to settle down with a woman who steadies them down. Apart from the main charge of illegal use of motor vehicles, they often steal liquor from people's downstairs bars. Oh, they are real monkeys for pinching liquor because they are idle with nothing else to do and often have not held a job at all. The government aren't really thinking about the Aboriginal boys who are not practising their traditional ways. The girls have no problems. They are now more independent, putting forward their ideas which are being backed by the missionaries. The Aboriginal girls usually prefer to have a white man. A lot of the white men in the districts around Darwin look after their black women and they are not too proud to carry a little half caste or full-blood baby around on their hip.

As to whether the missionaries have been a good thing for Aborigines, is a $64,000 question. Before the missionaries opened up the government's eyes, I don't think that the government would have interfered. The Aborigines had their own boats to fish and spears to hunt but soon after the missionaries, came the police stations and then trouble. I feel that they were better off when they were ignored.
In some instances today, Aborigines are tribal. But, as I said before, only to suit themselves. There was a trial by spear at Groote Eylandt this year. The police said it wasn’t to be, but they knew that they should keep out of the way and not get ‘heavy’. A trial by spear is when the victim has to stand up and let the men throw spears at him and he must dodge them. Oh, and they come like bullets! It’s a beautiful thing to watch. I watched one when we were on the farm because two young bucks took two of old Donkey’s wives bush for a week and when they came back they had to be punished. Members of old Donkey’s family worked themselves up at a corroboree, singing and dancing. Just like being intoxicated so they could not see a thing, making them mad and unreasonable, ready to fight. If the victim still remains unmarked, fair enough, it is forgotten. Once trial by spear is over, honour is satisfied in Aboriginal law.

If, however, a spear kills the victim, the police move in and the killer has to face European law. The boys at Dad’s farm were not killed, but Andy (who killed the victim at Groote Eylandt last year) was brought to trial. We explained it was trial by spear and many Aborigines from that area chartered a DC3 to come to Groote to say that Andy was a really good man. The judge put Andy on a three year good behaviour bond.

I have written an article on the problems that a defendant has with the police, looking at it from a defendant’s point of view. Before I was married, the policemen used to visit all the homes and settlements. A police officer in the early days was not someone who just grabbed hold of an Aboriginal, and he was guilty before he was tried, which it is like today. No, the policeman was our friend. His attitude was good. He was looked up to and respected. From my work, I know how nasty and arrogant police can be, how they hassle people and are often small minded in many ways. This is not a departmental policy though, the department is very fair to Aboriginal Legal Aid. However, it must be frustrating for a police officer because on some settlements the policeman knows whatever he does for the Aboriginal he won’t succeed. So often he must get to thinking ‘Oh, what do I care if they all kill themselves’. I get frustrated too. I took up smoking last year. I’d buy cigarettes for my clients to have one before a court case and end up having one with them.

Aborigines have a lot going for them today. Especially the children. A white working class man can’t get a grant to send his child to a good boarding school like I send my daughter. The poorer the Aboriginal child is in society today, the better chances he has if he knows how to take advantage of what he is being offered. Although many of the children go down to Adelaide to school, they don’t stick it as they always feel discrimination against them because of their colour and they feel lonely as they are such a big distance away from their relations for long periods at a time. I feel the government should make it more attractive for Aborigines to learn. They know the geography of their area, so teach them reading, writing and arithmetic, just give them the basis to develop. There has
been some talk of writing each Aboriginal language to teach them, but it is getting that way that many Aborigines cannot even speak their own language. I know fullblood Aborigines who cannot speak their own language. They are westernised, but still living in the humpy camps. My suggestion is that an Aboriginal teacher should speak their language but teach English by picture reading. Say, ‘this is a cat’ in her language while pointing to a picture of the cat. The Arunta tribe out of Alice Springs have their own written language and this has proved to be a success. They are proud to have their own primer.

One of the best things about my work is meeting people. I meet people from all walks of life from the degenerates to State ministers. My job keeps me alert and I feel I get my point across about what I’ve got to say. Everyone accepts me but I have a lot of arguments about one thing. I think that the full blood will accept a white man before a half caste but I’m all right, as they all know me or know of me, but I honestly feel that I am an exception. I do not know the reason for this Aboriginal attitude, but I know it is there. I must have some understanding of them as I spend my life trying to solve one or another of their ‘hang ups’ or problems. I like my job and slowly, if we try hard, the Aborigines will learn. When the law came in allowing Aborigines to drink in pubs if they wore footwear and a shirt, they conformed. It doesn’t matter how drunk they are, we never see Aborigines without their shoes and shirts. Now they learnt that, eh? One bloke came into the office today crying because someone had torn his shirt and it was not until we fixed it so he could keep it on, that he was happy again. It is going to take a long time but it will improve slowly year by year.

I help Aboriginal Affairs by giving talks. I have talked to Aboriginal school children in groups at schools on what National Aboriginal Observance Day means to the Aborigines. I talk from my heart and tell them that for the first time Aboriginal people are starting to be recognised as a race. Until recently, they were always looked down on as Jacky on the wood pile. He always stayed outside while everyone else ate inside. He didn’t have the right to drink and vote, but now Aborigines are becoming aware of responsibilities which they may take a long time to succeed in, but it is happening.

I didn’t tell the children that hundreds of Aborigines don’t vote because they are too embarrassed to ask how to fill out a voting card. We try to enrol as many Aborigines as possible, but a lot of them forget to go and vote on election day. Politics to me is a dirty word. It doesn’t matter what party is in, they never carry out their promises. These men are dishonest. I told my boss when I first went to work for Legal Aid — ‘Don’t ever ask me to lie because that is not to be part of my job’. The supporting mother’s pension was the worst thing that ever happened to Australia, because among the coloured people it is not being used
ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1979 3:1

correctly. However, if it is taken away from the mothers the kids will starve. The mothers just don’t distribute the money on their kids as they are supposed to, but instead they often give or gamble it away.

The Aborigines in the Northern Territory are better off than those in Queensland. Queenslanders are very racial prejudiced. A person doesn’t have to say anything if he is prejudiced. It is always there all around him. You can feel it. It closes in on you when you are near someone who is racist but, as I said before, I’m not ever going to get hung up on being black because more than black, I’m me. I’m Maddie. You know I’m in a no-man’s-land. You asked me if I was black or white and I said to you, ‘Well, I’m not white’, but I jokingly told James Galarrwuy Yunupingu, chairman of the Northern Lands Council, one day that he should get some land for me and he replied, ‘But you aren’t black, you aren’t Aboriginal’. My motto is that if I die tomorrow don’t be sad or have regrets for me because I’ve enjoyed every incident in my life. The good and the bad times have made me appreciate life and I understand problems of others through having had a number of my own.

NORTHERN AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL LEGAL AID SERVICE

and

DARWIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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THE JUDY INGLIS MEMORIAL PRIZE ESSAY 1978

The Judy Inglis Memorial Prize essay competition was established in 1965 by friends of the anthropologist Judy Inglis (1929-1962), to encourage research in Aboriginal studies, especially social change.

The closing date for entries in the 1979 competition is 15 December 1979. A prize of $50 is awarded for the essay judged to be the best, and publication in a suitable professional journal is anticipated. The competition is restricted to registered students at tertiary institutions in Australia. Essays must be of publishable quality, no more than 5,000 words, and written during 1979. Two copies, clearly typed on one side of the paper only, should be sent to: The Convenor, Judy Inglis Memorial Prize Committee, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, P.O. Box 553, Canberra City, A.C.T. 2601.

The 1978 competition attracted 35 entries from tertiary institutions throughout Australia. The judges were pleased to find entries from students training in anthropology, education, history, politics and sociology, and were impressed with the high standards of research and writing.

The Editorial Board of Aboriginal History has great pleasure in accepting for publication the winning essay for 1978.

THE FAILURE OF THE NEW SOUTH WALES MISSIONS TO THE ABORIGINES BEFORE 1845

John Ferry

It was over thirty years after the first settlement of New South Wales that the English missionary societies began specific attempts to evangelise the Australian Aborigines. These endeavours were part of a post-Napoleonic missionary fervour and coincided with the indifference to the religious needs of emigrants and colonists which had been a characteristic of the antipodean settlement during the war period. One feature of the early missionary efforts in New South Wales was that they were jointly funded by the missionary societies and the colonial government. The missionary societies no doubt hoped to repeat the ‘success’ of the L.M.S. in Tahiti a few years earlier, but they never channelled the money and resources into New South Wales that they did into the South Seas islands, even though they believed the Aboriginal population to be about three million.

1 Bollen 1977a: 361.
altogether indifferent to the Aborigines but no deep set hope of wondrous
tale pointed to Australia as a land of the Cross. There were other visions
and other priorities. Cook and Banks had carried home an arcadian vision
of the South Seas islands, and Rev. Thomas Haweis acknowledged the
influence of their journals in his decision to organise a mission to Tahiti.
Marsden, an agent of the Church Missionary Society and the London
Missionary Society, displayed a 'selective commitment to the indigenous
races of the region' manifested by his preference for the claims of the
Maoris over the Aborigines. The Church Missionary Society, under the
influence of John Grant and other Clapham Sect members, was interested
in evangelising the heathen of the great sub-continent of India and in the
1840s mysterious China would enthuse the missionaries of the various
societies. No great vision of an extended kingdom of God shimmered
over the forgotten Australian continent. In a sermon in 1795 Thomas
Haweis curtly dismissed New Holland as a 'receptacle of our outcasts of
society', and went on to describe the mystique of the neighbouring South
Seas islands — lands like the 'fabled Gardens of the Hesperides' wherein
lived exotic savages awaiting the word of God.

The priorities of missionary societies with limited funds at their
command reflect the influence of the secular mystiques that surrounded
places like Africa, India, China and the South Seas. Under such influences,
their commitment to the Australian Aborigines was half hearted at best.
It has been estimated that the expenditure of £52,000 from colonial
revenues between 1821 and 1842 was about ten times greater than the
combined net expenditure of the C.M.S., L.M.S. and W.M.S.

The British and colonial governments were motivated by a mixture
of humanitarianism and pragmatism in their support of Australian missions.
The British government was often the prime mover in forming contracts
with the missionary societies to evangelise the Aborigines. James
Stephen at the Colonial Office represented the Christian humanitarianism
of his age and successive governments during the 1830s found that
men with similar ideals formed a powerful lobby in this high water mark of
humanitarian concern in colonial affairs. On a more pragmatic level

5 Smith 1969:106.
6 Yarwood 1977:16.
7 Howse 1971:14, 77.
8 Bollen 1977b:287.
10 Bollen 1977b:288.
12 Knaplund 1953:17.
the British government was motivated by an expectation of concrete results in the form of improved race relations. In writing to Governor Bourke in 1831 on the agreement reached with the Church Missionary Society to form a mission at Wellington Valley, Viscount Goderich anticipated 'much advantage to the Natives themselves, as well as to the European Settlers who at present are exposed to the mischievous consequences of the predatory lives and habits of their neighbours'.

The local branch of the Aborigines Protection Society in 1838 perceived the same results from the raising of 'the Moral and Civil Condition of the Aborigines'. If expectations were high in the 1830s, they were soon to be dashed.

By the early 1840s the governments in Britain and Australia concluded that the missions had failed to achieve the expectations held out for them. Lord Stanley wrote to Gipps in 1842 of his 'great doubts as to the wisdom or propriety of continuing the Missions any longer'. Stanley's conclusions had been based on the missionaries' own reports which were anything but encouraging. Gipps was similarly sceptical, and a thirteen fold reduction in Crown Land revenues in 1842 prompted the withdrawal of government subsidies to the missions at Wellington Valley, Geelong and Moreton Bay. Even the primary aim of converting the Aborigines to Christianity was not realised. By 1848 the Lake Macquarie, Wellington Valley, Nundah, Buntingdale, Dunwich and Langhorne missions had all spluttered to an end. Only the Apsley Mission struggled on but it too was soon to fade away. By any yardstick, the first missions to the Aborigines were failures.

In determining reasons for this failure, one must take into account the fact that missionaries in other parts of the world were successful although many of their 'successes', such as that in Tahiti, were motivated in the initial stage by political considerations rather than genuine conversion. Missionary methods in Australia were basically similar to those in other parts of the world, and the missionaries themselves were drawn from much the same social background. The attitudes which missionaries held towards the Aborigines were no worse than those held by missionaries in the South Seas. Hugh Thomas could describe the Fijians as 'the very dregs of Mankind or Human Nature' and the Rev. Richard Armstrong could write of the Marquesans that 'the blackest ink

15 Colonist, 19 October 1838.
16 Stanley to Gipps, 20 December 1842, H.R.A. 1, XXII:437.
18 Gunson 1978:283.
that ever stained paper is none too dark to describe them'. In this context the derogatory remarks of Australian missionaries such as John Harper, who saw the Aborigines 'degraded . . . almost on a level with the brute' are not extraordinary. It is not sufficient to account for the failure of the Australian missionaries by chronicling their negative attitudes to the Aborigines, by referring to their bickering and personal weaknesses or by showing how insensitive they were to native culture and values. In these regards they were little different from contemporaries in other mission fields.

The cultural chauvinism and personal weaknesses of the Australian missionaries meant that any success would be long in coming. To this extent, the half-hearted backing of the missionary societies meant that the persistence shown in the South Seas islands would not be evident in Australia. The government's withdrawal of funds in 1842 ensured that further missionary endeavours would not be funded from that source. However this only explains why the missionary ventures were not persisted with and why new endeavours were not made in the 1840s. It does not explain why the early missions failed. To answer this question one must look at the unique nature of Aboriginal society and the unique nature of European settlement in Australia.

In the South Seas and in other mission fields, missionaries were addressing themselves to people who were accustomed to reasonably sedentary life styles. From their mission bases, missionaries in such areas could reasonably expect to communicate with significant numbers of natives. Furthermore the permanent missionary presence amongst a sedentary people offered greater opportunities for a sustained presentation of the message. In Australia, however, the bountiful food supplies so typical of Polynesia were absent, and the Aborigines were consequently disposed to a nomadic existence in search of food. The very establishment of a mission as a fixed focus of activity implied that the Aborigines should forego their nomadic life styles and lead a sedentary life on the stations. The Aborigines resisted this implicit injunction and all the missions had difficulties in keeping the Aborigines on the stations. J.C.S. Handt complained of the fitful impact of his message: 'The progress they have made has been but small hitherto, as the Children, like the Adults do not Stay for any length of time together, and forget in the bush part of what they have learned.'

23 'Report of transactions relative to the condition of the Aborigines in the District of Moreton Bay for the year 1841', (sub enclosure), Gipps to Stanley, 11 March 1842, H.R.A. 1, XXI: 739.
JUDY INGLIS MEMORIAL PRIZE ESSAY

One response to this situation was an attempt to keep the children on the mission stations. When Crown Land Commissioner Allman wrote in 1841 of his belief in the benefits of 'separating the Children of the present Generation from their parents and placing them under competent tuition',24 he was echoing a sentiment that could be traced back to the Revs. Samuel Marsden and Richard Johnson in the early years of the Colony. The Rev. William Watson of Wellington Valley was so enthusiastic in his pursuit of this policy that his colleague James Gunther reported that Aboriginal women hid their children upon the approach of the missionaries.25 But even the extreme measures of Watson did not meet with great success. The Aboriginal children were ultimately attracted to their own people where a secure and known life-style, and the prospect of marriage after puberty, acted as a far greater lure than the alien life style of the mission. It seems to have been a 'well known fact' among missionaries and settlers that 'Aboriginal Males, however useful and steady they may have been among Europeans when Boys, as soon as they grow up to manhood, they fall back into their wandering unsettled habits'.26

Attempts were made by various missionaries to wander with the Aborigines. The German missionaries at Moreton Bay saw the need to itinerate with the Aborigines as an 'imperative duty'27 and duly attempted to do so but only for brief periods since missionary labour was always needed for the growing of food at the station. This approach was also tried by the Buntingdale missionaries but only for periods of three or four weeks28 and in later years the Rev. William Watson estimated that he covered 'thousands of miles' in evangelising Aborigines.29 However the thought of moving permanently with the Aborigines was never seriously entertained by the missionaries. When George Langhorne suggested in a letter to the Colonial Secretary that part of his time be spent itinerating with the Aborigines, an immediate reply ridiculed the idea as detracting from the 'grand design' of forming a village.30 At best itinerating was seen as a temporary measure which would ultimately become unnecessary when the Aborigines 'settled down'. At worst itinerating was seen as counter-productive because it cut across the grain of those civilising habits the missionaries were trying to establish.

24 Allman to Colonial Secretary, 9 November 1841, (enclosure D1), Gipps to Stanley, 11 March 1842, H.R.A. 1, XXI:743.
26 H.R.A. 1, XXI:736.
27 Eipper 1841:14.
29 'A brief account of the origin and present state of the Apsley Aboriginal Mission, Wellington, New South Wales', (enclosure No. 12), Fitzroy to Grey, 17 May 1847, H.R.A. 1, XXVI:574.
30 'Additional memorandum by way of instructions to Mr George Langhorne . . .', 9 December 1836, Gurner Manuscripts, pp. 44-45.
By establishing mission stations in specific localities, the missionaries reduced the potential number of Aborigines with whom they could come in contact. Threlkeld's station at Lake Macquarie was situated within the boundaries of the Awabakal people, but Threlkeld failed to realise that the Awabakal were only a horde or sub-group of a tribe that extended right along the central coast from Tuggerah to Cape Hawke, and up the Hunter Valley. On one occasion Threlkeld did realise that the language of the Awabakal was understood by Aborigines with whom he came in contact at Maitland, but he made no attempt to extend his ministry to the people of the Hunter River valley. Indeed to have done so he would have had to adopt an itinerating ministry since none of the other hordes related by language to the Awabakal people would have settled on a mission station sited within Awabakal territory. As it was, Threlkeld's efforts remained directed at the people of Lake Macquarie whose numbers were probably never great.

Although the Wellington Valley mission was situated within the boundaries of the extensive Wiradjuri tribe, the missionaries would have nonetheless established regular contact with but a small horde of that tribe. It was not until 1840 that the Rev. James Gunther attempted to establish the extent of the Wiradjuri language and it is probable that the missionaries never realised that the majority of the Wiradjuri people lived on the plains and in river valleys south and west of Wellington. The missionary efforts were directed at a small number of Wiradjuri people on the northern extremity of tribal lands.

The Buntingdale mission straddled the boundary of two tribes. It might be thought, then, that the missionaries there would have been able to evangelise a greater number of Aborigines. However the siting of this mission produced difficulties of a sort not experienced at other missions. The mission itself was a buffer zone between two hostile tribes. One observer noted the consequent problems when he wrote that the site had been chosen 'in ignorance of the political relations of the different tribes'.

By the very siting of the missions and the nature of tribal Aboriginal society the number of Aborigines contacted by missionaries remained small. Even so, those Aborigines contacted resisted the Christian message. Part of the reason for this can be found in the fact that the missionaries could offer the Aborigines no tangible non-spiritual benefits from the adoption of Christianity. In places where the missionaries were successful such as Tonga, Hawaii, Tahiti and Fiji, the native chiefs were aware of substantial political benefits that would accrue from an adoption of

33 Colonist, 8 August 1840.
Christianity. Even in parts of Melanesia where society was not chiefdominated, material advantages attracted people towards Christianity. But the missionaries in Australia could offer no such incentives. The accumulation of political power, which was probably never pronounced in traditional Aboriginal society, became the more irrelevant in a situation where Aboriginal society was disintegrating under the impact of European settlement. The few benefits the Aborigines could obtain from contact with the Europeans were more readily obtainable in the settlements and farms than on the mission stations. Threlkeld complained that one of his erstwhile students was displaying 'his knowledge at Newcastle town, where drink has attractions far more strong than my study possesses at the Lake'. All the missionaries could offer was the occasional handout of food and even this was done reluctantly since in many instances the missionaries had difficulty feeding themselves.

The alternative life-style that the missionaries held forth as worthy of emulation would have seemed strange indeed to a nomadic people who hunted and gathered as an immediate response to the need for food. The virtues which John Locke wove around the tilling of the soil were not attended by tangible rewards on the mission stations. Crops failed year after year. As Gunther lamented:

Could we succeed with the cultivation of wheat and gardens, it would prove, I am certain, a great stimulus for exertion and improvement for several young men. But when almost every year the prospects of their labour are frustrated they become naturally quite disheartened. Our wheat has again entirely failed and our gardens are a scene of desolation and barrenness.

There was nothing attractive in the life style that the missionaries held to be so evidently worthy.

But it was not only the Christian life-style that the Aborigines ignored, but the basic Christian message. All the missionaries bemoaned the lack of converts after years of effort. Glimpses of an Aboriginal perspective on European ways can be gleaned from missionary journals and may in part explain the resistance of the Aborigines to the white man’s religion. Many Europeans reported that the Aborigines believed them to be spirits of dead tribesmen. William Buckley had experienced that belief in his contact with the Port Phillip tribes. Escaped convicts in the Moreton Bay area such as John Baker, Thomas Pamphlett, Samuel Derrington and James Davis were all ‘recognised’ as reincarnated tribesmen by the people with whom they fell in and afforded the full rights of the

36 Allen 1968:38.
37 See Threlkeld’s annual report, 1836, in Gunson 1974, 1:133.
38 ‘Annual report of the mission to the Aborigines at Wellington Valley, New Holland, for the year 1841’, (enclosure A), Gipps to Stanley, 11 March 1842, H.R.A. 1, XXI:736.
initiated, even to the extent of the scarification being ‘redone’. The white men were also attributed certain magical powers. George Clark, the escaped convict, reported that he was treated as a ‘superior being’ by the people of the Kamilaroi tribe with whom he wandered for five years. Magical qualities seem also to have been attributed to the white man’s cattle. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported in October 1842 that the Aborigines in the north west of New South Wales were spearing cattle for their ‘tongues and the kidney fat only’. The correspondent informed the Herald’s readers that the Aborigines were holding a bora ceremony in the district, and that ‘they danced with fat upon their heads and beef upon their spears’. This accords with the findings of recent anthropology where it is reported that the Aborigines frequently used kidney fat from certain native animals in sacred ceremonies and magic rituals. All this suggests that in the initial contact period the Aborigines believed that their world had been peopled by the reincarnations of dead men who brought with them from the world of the dead animals with magic qualities. Missionaries, too, came across this same belief. As late as 1864 the Rev. William Ridley reported that the Kamilaroi word for white person was ‘wunda’ meaning ‘ghost’. (Interestingly the word is still used by Aboriginal people in north western New South Wales to this day). An extension of this belief was that the Aboriginal would come back as a European after he died. This belief was widespread. Rev. Christopher Eipper wrote that ‘they seem to hold that after death they will be like whites, and that all white men have been black fellows before’. At Lake Macquarie Threlkeld was told by a mourner at an Aboriginal funeral that the dead woman was now in England. At Wellington Valley the Rev. William Watson recorded how this belief could undermine the Christian message. An Aboriginal in this area held that there was no point to becoming like a European in this life since he would return as a European in the next.

40 Cilento and Lack 1959:75-82..
41 *Sydney Gazette*, 8 December 1831.
42 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 October 1842, (editorial).
43 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 October 1842, (leader entitled ‘Namoi River’).
44 Elkin 1977:42.
45 Ridley 1864:11.
46 Eipper 1841:10.
48 I am indebted to Mrs Jean Woolmington of the University of New England for this reference (from the C.M.S. microfilms of the journals of Rev. William Watson in her possession), and for the implication to be derived from it.
It would have been meaningless for the missionaries to stress the imperative of Christianity in an area where the above belief was persistent. The emphasis which Christianity placed on death and the after life horrified the Aborigines who invariably asked the missionaries to desist when the subject was mentioned. However the entire Christian message with its complex concepts of sin, repentance, redemption, resurrection, grace etc. relied on a contemplation of one's own death and the consequences. Something akin to a tabu was associated with death in Aboriginal society and certainly the name of a dead person was never mentioned. There may well have been a cultural and psychological resistance to the reflections on death which the missionaries were continually attempting to encourage. While ever Aboriginal religious beliefs remained intact the task of the missionary would have been virtually impossible.

The missionaries in Australia were singularly unsuccessful in overthrowing Aboriginal religion. In Polynesia the religion was usually associated with idols, vengeful Gods and tabus. In true Biblical style the missionaries there were able to desecrate the idols and break the tabus and, by suffering no ill consequences, prove the impotence of the old gods. In Hawaii the overthrow of the old tabu system pre-dated the missionaries and was the result of the breaking of tabus unwittingly by early traders who suffered no ill consequences. In Australia however the Aboriginal religion was not susceptible to such attacks. Like the Christians, the Aborigines believed in a spirit world unseen yet ever present. The missionaries could not challenge the power of the spirits. Europeans, being spirits reincarnated might be expected to break 'tabus' which to the Aborigine were inviolable. By accommodating the European presence to their religion, the Aborigines were able to resist, even ignore, the attack on their beliefs made by the missionaries. The Aboriginal religion persisted despite the efforts of the missionaries. As late as the 1890s initiation ceremonies, the most sacred of all Aboriginal ceremonies, were still being practised in north west New South Wales. While ever Aboriginal tribal identity and the totemic system remained reasonably intact, the old religion would persist, not to be undermined until Aborigines themselves violated their own tabus, especially those associated with marriage. In some instances the tribal marriage laws persisted in New South Wales until well into this century.

50 Eipper 1841:10.
51 Gunson 1978:209.
52 Dodge 1965:117-119.
53 Mathews 1895:411.
54 Reay 1945:309-312.
So far I have examined the failure of the Australian missionaries in terms of the limitations of their outreach both in numbers of Aborigines evangelised and the lack of relevance of their message. However there is another dimension to the failure of the Australian missionaries. The presentation of the gospel to the Aborigines occurred within the context of a rapidly expanding European settlement. This fact distinguished the mission work in Australia from that in the South Seas and must go a long way towards explaining why the successes enjoyed by missionaries in other parts of the world were not experienced in Australia. It has already been shown that the missionaries could reach only small numbers of Aborigines for irregular periods due to the very nature and siting of mission stations. Under the impact of European settlement the numbers of Aborigines in contact with the missions dwindled annually. This was a feature of all the missions for none was established very far from European settlement. Threlkeld’s mission at Lake Macquarie was abandoned in 1840 because there were no Aborigines left in the district to evangelise.55 By 1848 the Wesleyan mission at Buntingdale was admitted to be a failure and it was further implied that it was difficult to get any native children to attend the school.56 As early as 1839 a secular opinion maintained that there were only twelve Aborigines permanently resident at Wellington Valley.57 By 1842 Gunther himself admitted that ‘the Number of Natives staying with us has for a long time been very small indeed’.58 In his 1837 report Threlkeld outlined the reasons, he believed, for the decline in Aboriginal numbers. Threlkeld listed drunkenness; diseases such as influenza, measles and whooping cough; and ‘the swelling tide of Emigration which has universally swallowed up the petty streams of Barbarism’.59 His analysis might well have been applied to all other missions.

The European settlements, far from acting in concert with the missions, provided those evils the missionaries most abhorred. The German missionaries complained that Aboriginal women were becoming prostitutes in the nearby penal settlement of Brisbane and that diseases were spreading disastrously, especially ‘that shocking malady which Divine Providence has ordained as the due reward for profligacy’.60 At Wellington Valley, William Watson complained that there was ‘scarcely a hut . . . where there is not a native female living in adulterous connexion with

56 Superintendent of Port Phillip, Evidence before the Select Committee on Aborigines and Protectorate, 18 November 1848, reprinted in Woolmington 1973:100.
57 Testimony of Henry Fische Gisbourne Esq. before the Executive Council of New South Wales, (enclosure A2 to Minute No. 12 of 1839), Gipps to Russell, 7 May 1840, H.R.A. 1, XX: 618.
60 Eipper 1841: 10.
the European inmates'. Watson even instanced an example of a stockman living with a girl of eight or nine years. In such a context it is hardly surprising that the missionaries' injunctions against sexual licence had minimal impact.

The obvious differences between the Christian ideal and the behaviour of the European settlers was certainly not lost on those Aborigines who were in a position to make the comparison. Rev. William Ridley reported in 1855:

One poor fellow on the Moonie addressed me in a long and pathetic harangue on the wrongs which his people have suffered at the hands of the white man, and urged upon me, as I had been telling the blacks not to do evil, to go round and tell the white men not to wrong the blacks, especially not to take away their wives'.

For a people for whom religious and social laws were one and the same, the behaviour of the Europeans, must have seemed strange indeed. One group of white men put forward the laws of a supposed omnipotent god while another group disobeyed those laws with impunity.

The settler impact must be taken very much into account when determining the failure of the missionaries. So too must the missionary techniques of establishing missions and expecting the Aborigines to quickly adopt the 'civilising virtues' of a sedentary life. However one must be careful not to view the Aboriginal as a passive prop on a European dominated stage. Events did not simply happen to the Aboriginal. He reacted to the situation that confronted him. He probably understood far more of the Christian message than the missionaries believed to be the case. In rejecting Christianity the Aboriginal was making an implicit statement that his own religion was sufficient. Historians can concentrate too much on the 'fatal impact' — the diseases, the massacres, the brutalisation — and ignore the resilience of Aboriginal attitudes, values and beliefs. Perhaps Aboriginal people in New South Wales today owe more to their tribal heritage than they do to the influence of the white man's system of values and beliefs.

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND

63 Sydney Morning Herald, 14 December 1855.
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By the late 1930s, as Professor A.P. Elkin has noted, the Mandate principle of the League of Nations Covenant had influenced people of goodwill, and anthropological research in Australia had begun to throw definite light on the problem of contact and depopulation and to spread reliable knowledge of the aborigines and their conditions. It seemed that if a positive policy designed to promote the progress of the aborigines were framed and implemented, they need not die out but might well play an important part as citizens of Australia. This view was expressed increasingly, and before the 1930s had gone by, every Government concerned with Aborigines (States and Commonwealth) modified its policies and administration.

Many of the circumstances in which a more positive policy was developed in the late 1930s are well known. What is not so well known is the pressure which was put upon the Australian authorities by the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland and its Standing Committee on Applied Anthropology. These notes are intended to round out the record of events by describing the contribution of Australianists in London in 1937-38. Early in 1939 the Minister then responsible for the Northern Territory, Mr (later Sir John) McEwen, announced what became known as the 'New Deal' policy for Aborigines under Commonwealth control. Professor Elkin had been his local advisor. But the Committee on Applied Anthropology had also helped to influence government action, by means of a memorandum which I drafted for the members.

Anthropology in Britain had developed largely around the Royal Anthropological Institute, and in the 1930s the Institute's London premises were the major centre for meetings of scholars interested in archaeology, ethnology, linguistics and physical anthropology. Anthropology was now taught at four British universities, but only about twenty men and women had completed postgraduate training in social anthropology. The Institute's membership included many talented scholars of

1 Elkin 1951:53-59.
3 Elkin was not consulted when the Committee's Memorandum was drafted, but I still have his letter of 23 February 1938 saying he had that morning received mine of 8 February with its news of London events. He urged me to:
Get down at once to the writing of a systematic study of cultural change and native administration. It should prove very useful. The Federal Government at present is trying to redeem the past. I am to have a long talk with the Minister of the Interior and the secretary of the Department tomorrow.

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private means who had no other institutional affiliation, and many distin-
guished colonial officials and missionaries who had published anthropo-
logical studies. Foreign visitors and students studying at British
universities, as well as colonial administrators on home leave, attended
and presented papers at the Institute's fortnightly meetings, where
discussion covered a wide range of topics of general interest, including the
practical problems of administration in the colonies and Dominions of the
British Empire.

Since the 1890s there had been much discussion in Britain of the
utility of anthropological research for enlightened administration. Pressure
groups had long attempted to influence the British government, the
authorities in the Dominions and local colonial officials to establish
University departments and research institutes to undertake field studies
and provide training for administrators and missionaries. The major
forums for debate on this issue were the Royal Anthropological Institute
in London, the British Association for the Advancement of Science (which
met in Australia in 1914), and international meetings such as the Pan-
Pacific Science Congress (held in Australia in 1923). The Australian
government was among the first to act on this advice, appointing a
'Government Anthropologist' in Papua in 1921 and another in the
Mandated Territory of New Guinea in 1924, and establishing a chair of
anthropology at Sydney University in 1925. Professor A.R. Radcliffe-
Brown offered short courses for administrators, as well as an under-
graduate and Master's degree programme soon after his arrival from
Capetown in 1926.

Since the sponsors of this chair had emphasised the need for practical
advice on 'native administration', it is not surprising that Radcliffe-Brown
focused on 'applied anthropology' in his presidential address to the
anthropology section of A.N.Z.A.A.S. in 1931, and that the government
anthropologists E.W.P. Chinnery and F.E. Williams discussed the need for
anthropological research and training in Australian-controlled territories in
their own A.N.Z.A.A.S. presidential addresses in 1932 and 1939.5

Yet the State governments which controlled all Aborigines except
those in the Northern Territory ignored the severe criticisms of their
administration published by anthropologists and others during the 1920s

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4 It is significant that a number of the Institute's presidential addresses were devoted to
the topic (Keith 1917; Myres 1929, 1931; Smith 1934). Professor John L. Myres
(1931:xxix) discussed administrators' prejudice against anthropology in his 1931
address, ruefully quoting a correspondent's comment that:

if at present the Colonial Secretaries look upon anthropology as a mild joke and
quite valueless as a means of promotion, it is very unlikely that any officer who
devotes himself to anthropology will be promoted to the post of Colonial Secretary
or of Governor.

See also Forde 1953, Kuper 1973, the papers in Asad 1973 and Owusu 1975, and the

5 Radcliffe-Brown 1931, Chinnery 1932, Williams 1939.
NOT BY EASTERN WINDOWS ONLY

and 1930s, although Prime Minister Scullin did take note of criticisms made by the Council of the Royal Anthropological Institute in a memorandum dated 2 October 1930. His 1931 reply explained that the Institute’s recommendations about reserved land and unified administration could not be implemented, because the Commonwealth government had found that the State authorities were ‘opposed to any such transfer of control’.

Pleas by interested bodies for Commonwealth control of Aboriginal affairs were again rejected as ‘impracticable’ at the 1936 Premiers’ Conference. But many concerned people hoped that the ‘Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities’ held in Canberra in April 1937 would lead to major reforms. Newspapers gave considerable publicity to the poor diet, health, housing and employment conditions of Aborigines in northern Australia, and to the policy decisions announced in the official report of this conference. In fact there was little result. The Commonwealth government announced that consultations on major issues would be deferred for a year, since the authorities would meet annually.

Therefore it seemed to us in London that there was an urgent need to publicise the issues — and so influence informed opinion — before the second conference of ‘Chief Protectors’ and other officials which was expected early in 1938.

In 1937-38 learned or interested bodies in England paid a remarkable amount of attention to the Australian Aborigines. In 1937 two notable Australianists were invited to address the Royal Anthropological Institute. On 5 January Mr N.B. Tindale showed a film and lantern slides illustrating ‘A day in the life of a Pitjandjara native, Mann Range, South Australia’. Among the discussants were three Australians: Professor V. Gordon Childe, Dr Ralph Piddington, and Mr W.E.H. Stanner (then a doctoral student in Professor Malinowski’s department at the London School of Economics, and temporary part-time research assistant to Dr Raymond Firth). In October 1937 Radcliffe-Brown, recently appointed to the Chair of Social Anthropology at Oxford, delivered a lecture on ‘Social organisation of Australian tribes’, and in June 1938 he was awarded the Institute’s

6 Elkin’s many publications and Thomson’s reports on his Northern Territory patrols are well known. Influential criticisms appeared in The Aborigines Protector, first published in 1935 by the Association for the Protection of Native Races; in Man (Piddington 1936); and in Mankind (McCarthy 1934; Stanner 1936). See also Warner, Radcliffe-Brown and Burton 1928.

7 Scullin 1931. Scullin and other delegates to the Imperial Conference held in London in October 1930 had been addressed by Lord Lugard on the topic of ‘Anthropology in administration'; Lugard and the Royal Anthropological Institute were also corresponding with Scullin about the threatened withdrawal of funds for the Sydney department (Lugard 1930; Elkin 1970:261-262).
Rivers Memorial Medal for his work in the Andaman Islands and Australia. 'Rev. A. Capell' was a discussant at a March 1938 meeting, and Firth and I were among the discussants of Miss Phyllis Kaberry's address, illustrated by lantern slides, on 'Women's secret corroborees in north west Australia' on 5 May 1938. Later in May Dr Donald F. Thomson (then visiting Cambridge) led the discussion at a Committee on Applied Anthropology meeting, and he showed his film 'An anthropological survey of Arnhem Land' to an appreciative audience at the Institute's meeting on 13 December 1938. The 1938 Wellcome Gold Medal for anthropological research was awarded to Thomson for an essay entitled 'The Aborigines of Arnhem Land and the problem of administration: a demonstration of the practical application of an anthropological method of approach'.

The 1938 issues of the Institute's monthly periodical *Man* contained papers by Tindale and Thomson, some speculation on the origin of the Tasmanians, strong criticisms by Radcliffe-Brown and Piddington of M.F. Ashley-Montagu's 1937 book on the Aborigines (which had a laudatory foreword by Malinowski), praise for Elkin's 1937 monograph on totemism, and criticism of current Australian policy by the reviewer of Chewings' popular book. The well-read (and well-connected) laymen and practical administrators who probably comprised a majority of the Royal Anthropological Institute's London membership at this time thus had access to information obtained by anthropological fieldwork, as well as the press reports on recent events in Aboriginal affairs.

The London press had given generous coverage of the condition of the Australian Aborigines during the 1930s, and on 25 November 1937 *The Times* published an article by 'an Australian correspondent' which caused quite a stir. This and the supporting leader were reprinted as a pamphlet (in an edition of around a thousand) widely distributed by the influential 'Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society' (Plates 1-4). I had signed the article but had to accept anonymity as the price of publication. Radcliffe-Brown told me that he protested to Geoffrey Dawson, the editor of *The Times*, who was also a Fellow of All Souls. But Dawson's assistant, Barrington-Ward, explained that *The Times* could not consider me a sufficient authority to write under my own name. However, Radcliffe-Brown at once wrote to *The Times* (Plate 5) in praise of the 'admirable' article — and in criticism of an over-sensitive and defensive letter written by Sir Hal Colebatch, the Agent-General for Western Australia in London.

8 The summary which appeared in *Man* (38, 1938:106) was later corrected (Thomson 1938).

9 The medal, then awarded for studies of culture contact and applied anthropology, had been won by Mair in 1936 and Fortes in 1937. As Thomson had already left England his medal was 'handed to his mother' at the Annual General Meeting of 27 June 1939 (*Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 69, 1939:123).
NOT BY EASTERN WINDOWS ONLY

Leading Article reprinted from

THE TIMES

Thursday November 25 1937

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES

Last month a pathetic petition reached the Governor-General of Australia. It was addressed to the King, and signed by over 1,800 "blackfellows," who asked His Majesty to save them from extinction and to allow them to be represented, directly or indirectly, in the Federal Parliament. In an article which is published on this page of The Times a well-informed Australian Correspondent draws attention to the needs of these unfortunate people. Their fear of extinction is only too well founded. It is believed that Victoria had 12,000 black inhabitants when white settlement began a century ago. It now has fifty. Tasmania may have had 2,000 aborigines in 1803 when the first settlers landed on the island. The last of them died in 1876. In the unsettled or thinly settled parts of Australia the same process of tribal decay and racial decline threatens the few score thousand surviving blacks. Its causes vary from district to district. A restless drift into areas of white settlement endangers some tribes; others are decreasing in numbers through diseases brought by Europeans and the physical weakness and sterility which they cause; many seem simply not to possess the power to adapt themselves to change and to be dying out partly through their inability to understand their real interests. It is unfortunately true that the obstinate preferences of too many aborigines who like overcrowding, break all the rules of health, and work for poor whites in return for cheap tinned food, tobacco, alcohol and cast-off clothes, tends to drive their friends to despair. Still the fact remains that the great majority of the blackfellows are underfed and get little medical attention. Their condition is the more surprising when it is remembered that the Australian administrators of British and Mandated New Guinea and the Melanesian Islands have shown a skill and humanity that has aroused general admiration.

The immediate cause of this deplorable state of affairs has been the lack both of trained administrators and of the funds which any comprehensive scheme of native administration requires. Professor Wood Jones, an eminent scientist, recently ascribed its ultimate cause to official and popular indifference. In his opinion neither the Australian Governments nor the Australian people had ever desired to preserve the natives. His farewell address to the Victorian Anthropological Society, a summary of which is also published in The Times this morning, is a scathing indictment of official neglect. At the same time recent measures taken by the Federal and State authorities of Australia indicate that sections of public opinion are beginning to be disturbed by the decline of the aborigines and by the emergence of a half-caste problem. A little over a year ago the Government of Western Australia introduced a Bill providing for the better control and protection of natives, the revision of enactments dealing with their estates and property, and the establishment of native Courts. Last April a conference of Federal and State authorities at Canberra discussed measures for the preservation of the aborigines, and by a majority recommended the absorption of the increasing proportion of half-castes by the whites, with education and employment at white standards, as the only solution of the half-caste problem. A few days ago the South Australian Government appointed an Aborigines Advisory Committee to examine the whole problem. Other schemes devised by Churches and humanitarian organizations are also under consideration. It is to be hoped that the Australian Governments and the Australian people will support a more constructive native policy than that of laissez-faire. Nearly a century ago a South Australian newspaper warned its readers in a leading article that the speedy extinction of the whole race is inevitable, save by the introduction of means for their civilization on a scale much more comprehensive and effectual than any yet adopted.

These words are even more applicable to-day.
DYING RACES OF AUSTRALIA

PETITION TO THE KING

‘BLACKFELLOWS’ IN NEED

From an Australian Correspondent

Some 1,800 members of the dying race of Australian "blackfellows" recently sent a petition to the King asking his Majesty to save them from extinction and to empower one of their own people, or a sympathetic white, to represent them in the Federal Parliament. They are not speaking for themselves alone.

In the far bush regions of the unsettled parts of Australia, and in the halfway house of the sparsely peopled sheep, cattle, and mining country, there are between 40,000 and 50,000 other blackfellows who need able and resolute help if they too are not all to go the way of the hundreds of tribes which have been obliterated in Queensland, Victoria, and New South Wales. Tribe after tribe can now be seen dying on their feet from causes which in many cases might have been avoided. One can travel for thousands of miles in the east and south over country which has no sound or echo of native life, where the tribes, after flinging a few spears, turned and helped with the development of land which they had been long possessed of, and soon after died out. The frontiers of settlement have been more or less stable for half a century, but the tribes keep on dwindling, so that, clearly, forces are still at work which cannot be attributed to the immediate and perhaps inevitable effects of rough frontier handling.

METHODS IN NEW GUINEA

It is an extraordinary comment upon the different methods of native administration within the Commonwealth that a petition should be sent to the King by the aborigines, when in Papua (British New Guinea) and in the Mandated Territory of New Guinea, for both of which Australia is responsible, the official skill and insight shown have earned high praise.

Much the same general problems are involved in native administration in all three areas, but it has seemed impossible within Australia to develop the administrative methods to a level comparable with that reached in Papua and Melanesia.

The primary reason is that “the native problem” in Australia has never been seen in the clear lines in which it presents itself in New Guinea. Once the worth-while Australian land was taken up by the old tribal owners, and after lingering for a few years, in most cases solved their own problem by dying out. The result has been that comparatively few Australians have ever seen a blackfellow, and their understanding of the “problem” is drawn from occasional newspaper articles and an uneasy feeling that the vanished blacks were probably not treated very well. Missionaries and the Protection of Native Races Association have not been able to arouse any lasting public interest, and almost the only serious movements for better treatment of natives have begun in the context of murder trials and atrocity charges. The outcome has usually been negligible. The cases were settled, the indignation subsided, and the movements faded out without political implement. Several piecemeal local reforms of recent origin are now under way, but are too fragmentary to arrest the decline of widely separated tribes.

A second reason is that the tribal disruption has gone so far that the practical difficulty of knowing where to start after 150 years of laissez-faire means heavy and persistent discouragement at the outset of any attempt to rebuild. A third reason is the baffling opposition of the blacks themselves. What can be done with tribes which refuse to give up a poor, unbalanced diet because they like it; live in insanitary huts because they wish to sleep near kinsfolk, and regard bacterial earth not as dirt, but as earth; and willingly break up their tribal life to work unwittingly to their own destruction for poor whites whose own livelihood often enough depends on a supply of unpaid labour? These initial difficulties become almost insuperable when the administrations’ funds are extremely limited (as they are), when there is no trained staff to make a career of native administration (as there is in New Guinea), and when
the supervision of the aborigines is left almost wholly to busy police, postal officials and others equally unequipped for a task for which men need the most careful coaching. The result has been that the administrations have been forced back on elementary protective measures which have necessarily taken on a repressive character, widening more than ever the breach between the intentions of "big fella Guv'mint" and the natives' interpretation of them.

THEIR OWN ENEMIES
Among people with a lifetime's experience of the blacks an attitude of complete despair for them is common. The aborigines are felt to be their own worst enemies, because of their inability to see where their best interests now lie. On all sides in "outback" Australia one hears that "the blacks are bound to die out." At least 150,000 have in fact died out, and the others assuredly will unless some action is taken with great determination and, above all, with expert knowledge of immediate requirements in different localities.

Many thousands of natives are living in bands of 10 or 20 or 30 in squalid camps, on the fringes of bush towns or cattle stations. They are quite detribalized and the spirit of life has not much reason to be strong in them. Many thousands are in large organized camps or reservations, such as those at Palm Island, Menindee, and Moola Boola. There are mission settlements in the rural areas of every State in the Commonwealth, each with its now settled population, and each of those in the more remote regions visited regularly by nomad tribes. Almost every country town has its handful of shabby, unkempt black hangers-on, who live in a half-world of their own, neither wholly black nor indifferently white, although the last days of their traditional tribal activity ended more than 50 years ago. At the other extreme are a great number of uncivilized tribes, representing at least several thousand individual natives, still living much as they did centuries ago, in the rough hills of the Kimberlies, in isolated parts of Cape Yorke, on the monsoon coastal flats of the Northern Territory, and in the arid wilderness of spinifex and mulga of Central and West Australia.

The blacks of all these different stages of degeneracy constitute not "a problem," but a series of separate problems. The need of a higher standard of nutrition is probably common to all; their medical supervision could be trebled and things still be undone; the legal system under which the conflicts which arise are now settled needs a great deal of adaptation to tribal complexities; but there is such variety in local conditions that it is a matter for policies rather than "a" policy. At Menindee medical help is welcomed, but on the outer edge of North Australian settlement the blacks ran in panic at the whisper of "doctor man," surgery there being not unrelated to sorcery. At Darwin the remnants of the tribes could not be sent back to bush life at pistol point, but in Cape Yorke are tribes who are reluctant to leave the shelter of the trees. On the Victoria River it would be easier to bind running water with string than to keep the tribes on their reserve, yet within 100 miles is a tribe for whom the only hope may be to keep them forcibly on their own land.

There are six different administrations each trying to deal with such situations, which have never been adequately studied. Each State is faced with declining tribes in a dozen different stages of detribalization. Land hunger, disease, poor food, sterility, dullness, epidemics, falling birth and conception rates, loss of social equilibrium, a widespread decline in tribal spirit, a drift to white settlements—all have had and are having their share in the break-up and extinction of the tribes; but the incidence of any one factor on each tribe, and on different tribes at different stages of disintegration, is not known to anyone.

LACK OF MONEY
Financial provision for the work is not adequate, and a hundred things have obscured its urgency. In the Northern Territory, for example, the administration in 1934 had to do the best it could with less than 10s. a year for each native [500,000 square miles in extent], and the natives themselves contributed several shillings of this sum, which had to cover the cost of all the undertakings for their welfare, including the rations for aged and sick people. Yet in this State it still seems possible with a resolute and an informed policy to prevent the disruption of tribes in several unsettled areas, but to do so it will be necessary to finance the work of the native administration upon a much more generous scale.

One alarming fact which has been discovered recently gives urgency to the natives’ petition that a last effort should be made to do something for them. It is the report of several anthropologists working among the tribes in the most remote parts of the continent that these undisturbed natives are restlessly moving off their traditional lands and that some are drifting into areas of white settlement. Once this drift passes a certain stage it will be irreversible. Segregation of some of these tribes still seems practicable, although it will be expensive to maintain adequate patrols, to supplement food supplies, and to provide proper medical supervision, especially where one tribe may inhabit an area as large as England. Otherwise the break-up of their old life is imminent, even if it is not already too late to prevent it. Disturbance and extinction are the beginning and the end of a process only too readily started among the tribes. Yet it cannot be said that every possible measure of assistance has been attempted.

Offers of assistance in distributing literature, arranging meetings and lectures and in securing Funds, which are urgently needed, will be welcomed by:

The Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society,
Denison House, Vauxhall Bridge Road, London, S.W.1

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NOT BY EASTERN WINDOWS ONLY

Letters to the Editor

THE AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES

CASE FOR SCIENTIFIC UNDERSTANDING

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—The admirable article on the subject of dying races of Australia which appeared in your columns on November 25 raised some points which have been somewhat obscured in the correspondence to which it has given rise. The really important point seems to be that it is the duty of the people of Australia to do more for the surviving remnant of the blackfellows than they are doing at present.

Let it be granted that the Governments of Australia are doing more for the natives than they used to do. There is still a great deal more that might be done, and a good deal that is called for in the name of common humanity. It is irrelevant to recall the callous brutality with which the white Australians have occasionally treated the occupants of the land they have taken, and equally irrelevant to refer to the exemplary benevolence of many of the pioneering squatters or the devoted labours of missionaries. What matters now is the present and the future, not the past.

Sir Hal Colebatch suggests that the Aborigines are dying out because they were "an already decaying people" when the first European voyagers landed on their shores. This is an idea that one often meets with in Australia, and it is sometimes offered as an excuse for not being more concerned over the fate of an unfortunate people. But there is nothing that a scientific could accept as evidence for this belief. Sir Hal Colebatch refers to the scanty aboriginal population in 1788. As I am the person responsible for the estimate of 300,000 as the total population at that date I may say that in the course of the studies on which the estimate is based I came to the conclusion that this was about as large a population as the country could support so long as the inhabitants had to depend on the natural food supply of wild animals and plants. The figure therefore gives no support to the thesis of Sir Hal Colebatch.

The blackfellows are dying out, already reducent to one-fifth of their former numbers, because their lands (and therefore their food supply) are taken from them, their social organization is destroyed, and new and deadly diseases for which they have no acquired immunity have been introduced, such as smallpox, tuberculosis, and gonorrhoea. What is needed to alleviate the unfortunate condition of the aborigines is:

1. A greater interest in the subject by the general public of Australia, many of whom have just as little personal knowledge of the blackfellows as we have of the Assyrians in Iraq; (2) a somewhat more generous financial provision; and (3), so far as concerns those whose tribal life has not yet been completely destroyed, utilization of the special knowledge of native life and native thought which is possessed by anthropologists who, in their field research, have been specially engaged in gathering it.

People having the best intentions often through ignorance do harm where they wish to do good, or fail to accomplish the good they intend. Many instances relating to the treatment of the Australian aborigines could be quoted, including some from the work of the missions. In all the social problems of our time one difficulty, and perhaps the greatest, is the lack of a real scientific understanding of how the mechanism of a social system works. This is very evident in our administration of subject peoples. It is still often very difficult to get people to recognize, what is none the less true, that a thoroughly trained and competent anthropologist can learn more about a native tribe in a few weeks than an untrained person can do in several years. The value of the expert knowledge that can be supplied by the anthropologist is now gradually coming to be recognized in some parts of the British Empire. The Commonwealth Government of Australia was in advance of many parts of the Empire in giving recognition to anthropological knowledge in its administration of the Mandated Territory of New Guinea. During the last 10 years all the cadets entering the administrative service have had a year of training at Sydney University in theoretical and applied anthropology.

Is there any good reason why more use should not be made of anthropological knowledge in Australia itself? Anthropologists sometimes make themselves unpopular with officialdom. By reason of the intimate contact that they have to maintain with the natives for months on end, investigating all the details of their lives, the anthropologists see abuses of which others are unaware. They are accused of taking sides with the blackfellows against their own people—the whites. There is doubtless some truth in that, for one cannot live in close contact with the blackfellows for months without learning to like them and appreciate their good qualities and without feeling sympathy with them and some indignation at the lack of humane consideration with which they are sometimes treated.

Yours faithfully,

A. R. RADCLIFFE-BROWN.
All Souls College, Oxford.

While the correspondence continued I was preparing the address on ‘Anthropology and the dying Australian Aborigines’ I had been invited to give at the Institute’s meeting on 11 January 1938. My criticism that administrators had made no attempt to ‘assess the reasons for past failure’ and my contention that the reforms announced in 1937 ‘appear to most anthropologists to be insufficient in scale and inadequate in conception’ were strongly supported by my fellow-student Phyllis Kaberry and my supervisor Raymond Firth from their own knowledge of Australian conditions.

I was already writing an angry commentary on Aboriginal administration (in which I attacked the ‘tragi-comic’ irrelevance of most of the 1937 conference resolutions) for a volume intended to ‘take stock’ of Australian society. Now I was asked to draft a memorandum to be sent to the Australian authorities by the Institute’s new Committee on Applied Anthropology. The Institute’s annual report for 1936-37, presented in June 1937, announced that this standing committee had been formed to promote research into the ‘problems of the contact of native peoples of Africa, Oceania and the Orient with western civilization’; the next annual report, presented in June 1938, stated that the Committee had been very active ‘in the first full session of its work’, having had seven discussion meetings and three business meetings.

It is a little difficult after so many years to remember — or to ask others to recall — all that happened, and it seems that the Institute no longer has all the documentation. But the records I have seen suggest that the interest of Institute members in ‘applied anthropology’ had been stimulated by, among other things, the public discussion of a burning issue: whether a case could be made for the return to Germany of some

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10 The Times 29, 30 November; 9, 15 December 1937.
11 A summary appeared in Man (Stanner 1938a).
12 Firth had supervised Australian field-workers while he was teaching in the Sydney department 1930-32; as Acting Professor he was in charge of the Australian National Research Council’s fieldwork programme in 1931-32. He and Phyllis Kaberry (1910-1977), like most others attending Malinowski’s seminars at the London School of Economics just before the war, were deeply concerned about the effects of rapid social change and confident that ‘practical anthropology’ could benefit indigenous communities. We were, it seems to me, as impassioned and as interested in political activism as the young anthropologists who demand ‘relevance’ and ‘commitment’ today.
13 Stanner 1938b.
15 I am indebted to Mr W.B. Fagg, Hon. Librarian and Archivist of the Royal Anthropological Institute, and his assistant Mrs J.M. Swart, for access to relevant minutes of the Committee and the Council. I thank the Council for permission to publish these extracts. I am also indebted to Dr James Urry and Miss Rosslyn Fraser for their help in providing information; to Miss B.J. Kirkpatrick, Senior Bibliographer of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, for her untiring assistance; and to my friend and co-author, Dr Diane Barwick, for much help and guidance.
of her former colonies. A Council sub-committee was set up to report on the anthropological implications of such contemplated transfers. On the strength of this report the Council of the Institute resolved on 23 February 1937 that ‘representations should be made to H.M. Government that no transfer of territory within or without the Empire should be undertaken without considering the anthropological implications of such transfer’. The Council minutes also record the establishment of a permanent committee (soon to be known as the Committee on Applied Anthropology) to ‘consider questions of the application of anthropological knowledge to practical problems’. Its first members were Dr (later Sir Edward) E. Evans-Pritchard (1902-1973), formerly Professor of Sociology at Cairo and currently Research Lecturer at Oxford; Dr Audrey I. Richards, already an authority on African nutrition and labour problems, who had recently accepted a lectureship at Johannesburg; Dr Lucy P. Mair, then ‘Lecturer in Colonial Administration’ in Malinowski’s department, who had already published two books on social change and ‘native policies’ in Africa; the archaeologist Mr Kenneth de Burgh Codrington, then Keeper of the Indian Section of the Victoria and Albert Museum; and Rev. Dr Edwin W. Smith (1876-1957), the missionary who had published classic works in applied anthropology and had been the first director of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures. This Institute had sponsored most of the fieldwork done by Malinowski’s students during the 1930s, with funds provided by the Rockefeller Foundation (which had also financed the fieldwork sponsored by the Australian National Research Council). The new Committee also included the officers of the Institute, ‘with powers to co-opt’.

The Council met on 16 March 1937 and set the new Committee its first tasks: to re-draft the earlier sub-committee’s report as a memorandum for the government, and to suggest specific investigations ‘in pursuance of the recommendations’. Dr Mair convened the first meeting on 23 April 1937 and was then appointed secretary. Those attending were all Council members: Mair, Richards, the Institute’s president (then the physical anthropologist Dr H.S. Harrison), the secretary Dr (later Sir Raymond) Firth, then Reader at L.S.E., and the treasurer, Mr Harold Coote Lake (1878-1939), who had long been secretary of the Folk-Lore Society. They resolved to co-opt additional members: the Oxford archaeologist and historian Professor (later Sir John) L. Myres (1869-1954), who had been

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16 The report of this Council sub-committee was signed by Charles Gabriel Seligman (1873-1940), who held the chair of ethnology at the University of London 1913-34, and by J.H. Driberg, E.E. Evans-Pritchard, R. Firth, L. Mair, J.L. Myres, A. Richards, and E.W. Smith. Mair (1972:290) comments that ‘some members of the committee believed that a move might be made to avert war with Germany by offering to restore her former colonies, and were anxious to have anthropologists included in the conference that they assumed would be held for this purpose’.

47
General Secretary of the British Association 1919-32, a past president and secretary of the Institute, the founder of *Man* and its editor 1931-46; Professor John H. Hutton (1885-1968), elected William Wyse Professor of Social Anthropology at Cambridge in 1937 and a member of the Indian Civil Service 1909-1936; Mr Jack H. Driberg (1888-1946), who had worked in the Uganda and Sudan administrations before becoming lecturer in anthropology at Cambridge in 1931; and Mr E.B. Haddon, only son of the famed Professor A.C. Haddon of Cambridge. Professor Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) was asked to serve as chairman. The other co-opted members were distinguished civil servants. The geologist and ethnologist Mr Charles William Hobley (1867-1947) had been Acting Commissioner for the East African Protectorate before his retirement from the Colonial Service in 1921. Lt-Colonel David L.R. Lorimer (1876-1962), formerly Quartermaster of the Khaiber Rifles, political agent and consul, had published extensively on Persian languages and led an anthropological expedition to the Hunza in 1934-35. Dr R.S. Rattray (1881-1938) had achieved fame for his many publications on the Ashanti while head of the Anthropological Department on the Gold Coast from 1921. Major (later Sir Hans) Vischer (1876-1945), a former missionary and Director of Education in Northern Nigeria, had been the senior education advisor to the Colonial Office since 1923 and was currently Hon. Secretary-General to the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures. Rev. T. Cullen Young, for many years a missionary in Nyasaland, was then Secretary of the United Society for Christian Literature.

As discussion of future work had been ‘postponed’ at this meeting, the draft ‘plan of future work’ attached to the agenda paper for the second meeting on 21 May 1937 was probably prepared by Dr Mair. These notes proposed that the Committee meet regularly for discussion of ‘problems of applied anthropology’ and made suggestions for action:

(a) the stimulation of popular and official interest through such means as the publication of articles in *Man*, representations to Colonial governments through the Colonial Office, or personal contacts with officials.

(b) discussions tending to the elucidation of concepts belonging to this particular aspect of anthropology, such as “detribalisation”, “cultural stability”, “cultural disintegration”.

(c) the organization and systematisation of plans of research in this field. This aim might be achieved by discussions within the Committee and with experts who have been engaged in research and can put before it the situation with regard to a particular problem, and by getting into contact with persons about to undertake investigations and enlisting their cooperation in accordance with a considered plan.
Suggested questions on which research might be pursued are: programmes of "popular" or "village" education in their relation to the actual circumstances of native life; the attitude of various governments towards sorcery; the evolution of native law, particularly amongst mixed populations; other sociological problems connected with their populations; attempts to improve diet, standard of living or economic technique of native communities and the reaction to them; modern developments in the function of native political authorities, and their relations with their subjects.

The next meeting of which the Institute retains a record was the business meeting of 3 December 1937. We are thus left uncertain about the activities of the Committee in the meantime. The only correspondence mentioned in the minutes was a letter from the Secretary of State for the Colonies acknowledging the Institute's letter about the formation of this committee. This meeting was chaired by Professor Malinowski; other members attending were the Institute's president (now Mr H.J. Braunholtz of the British Museum) and secretary (Dr Firth), Dr Mair, and Lt-Colonel Lorimer. Also present were Dr Margaret Read, who had made extensive studies of African education and nutrition, and the Australianist Miss Phyllis Kaberry.

The meeting of 3 December 1937 was notable for four decisions. The Committee resolved to invite certain learned or interested bodies to nominate representatives to the Committee, 'it being understood that only Fellows of the Institute were eligible for membership' and that not less than two-thirds of the Committee at any time were to be persons 'directly interested in anthropology'. The bodies named were the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures (later the International African Institute), the Royal African Society, the London Group on African Studies, the International Missionary Council, and the 'Aborigines Protection Society' (properly the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society). The Committee resolved to co-opt as members 'in their individual capacity' Professor A.R. Radcliffe-Brown (1881-1955); Dr Robert Redfield (1897-1958), who was in charge of the University of Chicago department which Radcliffe-Brown had left in 1937; Dr Felix M. Keesing (1902-1961), professor at Hawaii, who was completing a study of education in the Pacific; Dr Meyer Fortes, who had just returned from the Gold Coast to lecture at L.S.E.; Dr Ethel J. Lindgren, who had worked among the Khingan Tungus of northern Manchuria and was currently editor of the Institute's Journal; and Dr W.B. Mumford, who was on the staff of the Colonial Department of the University of London Institute of Education.

The Committee decided to co-opt further 'all government anthropologists serving in British territories'. Those named were Dr S.F. Nadel (1903-1956) who had recently accepted a post with the administration of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan (and who became the first Professor of Anthropology at the Australian National University 1950-56); Mr Godfrey
Dear Raymond,

I am disturbed to find that the print should be made.

I suggest that the point should be made that there is some evidence that the native diet in their improved condition, derived from wild animal and plants, etc., is physically much superior to their diet when they have to rely on rations, and that this deterioration in nutrition is true to the native diet by white.

I hope to see you in February.

Yours,

Ray.

Wilson (1908-1944), then in Tanganyika, who had just been appointed Director of the new Rhodes-Livingstone Institute; Dr Margaret J. Field, then employed by the Gold Coast government; Dr Donald F. Thomson (1901-1970), who had been commissioned by the Commonwealth government to report on Aboriginal welfare in the Northern Territory in 1935-37; Mr E.W.P. Chinnery (1887-1972), who was Government Anthropologist in New Guinea 1924-39 and then seconded as Director of Native Affairs in the Northern Territory until his retirement in 1946; Mr F.E. Williams (1893-1943), who served as Government Anthropologist in Papua from 1922 until his death; and Mr W.C. Groves (1898-1967), who was then Director of Education in Nauru and became the postwar Director of Education in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea. Finally, the Committee resolved to compile a list of experts to be invited to attend particular discussion meetings.

As I have already said, things moved rapidly in 1938. Item 3 on the agenda notice for the Committee's next business meeting on 14 January was: 'Future of Australian Aborigines. Proposed memorandum to the Australian Government. Mr Stanner will make a statement'. I have no record of my statement, but probably I developed the points made in my article in _The Times_ and in my address to the Institute only three days before. My recollection is that after I spoke I was requested to draft a memorandum to be sent to the Australian authorities. The Institute's secretary, Raymond Firth, then sent my draft to members of the Council; Radcliffe-Brown's reply of 22 January is reproduced here (Plate 6).

The minutes of the Council of the Institute record that on 25 January 1938: 'It was resolved to accept the substance of the Memorandum on the Condition of the Australian Aborigines leaving verbal modifications to the officers of the Committee on Applied Anthropology. The memorandum to be circulated to the Australian Governments'. The Council also resolved, at the meeting on 26 April 1938, that a letter 'to be sent to the Times with reference to the meeting of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society' should be left to the discretion of the officers 'in consultation with the Applied Anthropology Committee'.

On 14 February 1938 the secretary of the Institute sent copies of the memorandum to the Australian High Commissioner in London, Mr Bruce; to the Prime Minister, Mr Lyons; to all State Premiers and to the secretary of the 1937 Aboriginal Welfare Conference, Mr H.A. Barrenger, an officer of the Department of the Interior. The text of the memorandum (of which I kept a copy) is reproduced, with Firth's covering letter, as Appendix 1.

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17 Dr James Urry has reminded me that 'native diet' was an important topic for anthropological study at this period. Firth's 1934 paper stimulated publications in _Africa_ (9, 1936), and in the Institute's own _Journal_, and several official surveys were published by 1939.
According to the records in the possession of the Australian Archives, 18 Prime Minister Lyons (whose own file apparently has been destroyed) sent a copy to the Minister for the Interior, Mr McEwen. The Secretary of the Prime Minister’s Department merely acknowledged receipt of the memorandum, saying ‘full consideration will be given to the views expressed’. Barrenger advised the head of his department that copies had also been sent directly to him and to the State Premiers. In a minute to McEwen dated 6 April 1938 (annotated ‘seen by the Minister 13/4/38’) the Secretary of the Department of the Interior advised his Minister that:

It was intended that the conference of Chief Protectors should be held once a year. In view, however, of the Prime Minister’s proposal to hold a conference of Premiers on the matter of Aboriginal welfare, no good purpose would be served by holding the departmental conference this year.

The views of the Committee of the Royal Anthropological Institute are interesting, particularly those relating to nutrition and health and medical supervision. They fit in rather well with the outline of policy which you have in mind.

On 20 April 1938 Barrenger informed Firth that no conference of officers would take place in 1938 but a ‘Conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers’ would discuss Aboriginal welfare at ‘an early date’. In fact no meeting of officers was held until 1948 and the Ministers did not meet until 1951. But on the same date Barrenger sent copies of the memorandum to all who had attended the 1937 conference: Mr A.C. Pettitt (secretary of the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board); Mr S.L. Chapman (head of the Chief Secretary’s Department and nominal head of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines in Victoria); the Commissioner of Native Affairs in Western Australia, Mr A.O. Neville; and the ‘Chief Protector of Aboriginals’ in South Australia (Mr M.T. McLean), Queensland (Mr J.W. Bleakley) and the Northern Territory (Dr C.E. Cook).

In his covering letter Firth had drawn attention to the Memorandum’s emphasis upon the need for training Australian personnel in the ‘problems and practice of native administration’, yet training was not mentioned in the departmental attention given to the Institute’s approach. The need for anthropological training had also been discussed by Thomson, and was surely pointed out by Elkin, who had long been responsible, as had Radcliffe-Brown and Firth, for training officers for the administrative services of Papua and the Mandated Territory of New Guinea. In the upshot Mr McEwen appointed E.W.P. Chinnery to investigate the administration of Aborigines in the Northern Territory and then to serve as Director of Native Affairs. But their plans for administrative reform and training were disrupted by war.

Unfortunately the Committee for Applied Anthropology was also an early casualty of the war. Most anthropologists were soon involved in war duties, and black-outs and transport difficulties discouraged meetings in London. Between November 1937 and May 1939 the Committee held ten discussion meetings and sent a deputation to the Secretary of State for the Dominions to urge greater 'consultation of native opinion' about the transfer of High Commission territories to South Africa.19 The Institute's Annual Report for 1938-39, submitted in June 1939, noted that the Committee, with Dr Meyer Fortes as secretary, had had a successful session; the next annual report, in June 1940, announced that the Committee had not met during the year.20

There is indeed a considerable body of evidence that has not been studied closely for its bearing on changes in policy during the 1930s. I am thinking particularly of Radcliffe-Brown's presidential address to the anthropology section of A.N.Z.A.A.S. in 1931, and Firth's 1931 article on 'Anthropology and native administration', to which insufficient attention has been given. But it is clear from the record of events that the impulse to make changes did not come only from within Australia, and that 'not by eastern windows only' when daylight came, came in the light.

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19 See Man, 38, 1938:25-26, 41-42, 92, 106-107 and 39,1939:10-12, 43, 111. Mair (1972:290) records that the committee 'drew up a memorandum for submission to the Australian government on the question of whether the joint Anglo-French administration of the New Hebrides should be continued, and actually sent a deputation to the Colonial Secretary to put arguments against the cession to South Africa of Swaziland, Basutoland, and Bechuanaland'. A note in Africa (10, 1937:486) reports that in late 1937 the committee was 'preparing a memorandum dealing with problems arising out of modern developments in the payment of bride-price among the tribes of Eastern Central and Southern Africa'.

20 Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 69, 1939:127; 70, 1940:96. Council minutes for 14 November 1939 record that the Committee 'was to be kept in existence with the President [Radcliffe-Brown from June 1939 to June 1941] as acting Chairman and Dr Lucy Mair as Secretary'. But on 23 January 1940 the Council considered 'the proposal for a Committee on Anthropological Problems in International Affairs to study questions especially of a racial and socio-psychological character arising from the war', and resolved that 'this purpose would be best achieved by reconstituting the Committee on Applied Anthropology as a body comprising two sections each with its own Vice Chairman and Secretary, one to deal with colonial and native affairs and the other with international matters'. But the Council minutes of 20 February 1940 note that 'consideration of the revised constitution, terms of reference and personnel' had been deferred pending the completion of the Institute's 'Census of Anthropologists'. Council minutes up to 23 March 1943 make no further mention of the Committee (personal communication, Mrs J.M. Swart, 20 March 1979).

Sir,

The Council of the Royal Anthropological Institute begs to be permitted to bring to your attention the enclosed memorandum concerning the Australian aborigines. It has been drawn up for the Royal Anthropological Institute by its Committee on Applied Anthropology in view of the importance of the approaching Conference at Canberra of Chief Protectors of Aborigines from all parts of the Commonwealth.

A copy of the memorandum has been forwarded to the Premiers of each of the State Governments and to the Secretariat of the Conference.

In this memorandum the Institute has mentioned the need for training Australian personnel in the problems and practice of native administration. It refers particularly to the training which has been given in Sydney for some years to recruits, and to officers who already have experience, in the administrative services of Papua and the Mandated Territory of New Guinea. Similar training is also provided by the Colonial Office for all recruits to its African administrative services.

I have the honour to be,

Your obedient servant,

Hon. Secretary.

The Rt. Hon. J.A. Lyons, P.C., M.P.

Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia
The objectives of Australian native policy as defined by the Prime Minister of Australia in 1931 included: the protection of the nomadic tribes; the establishment and maintenance of inviolable reserves; the protection of the native women from moral abuses; the adequate feeding and medical supervision of broken down tribes; the economic protection of aboriginal employees; the assembly, education and training of mixed-bloods to allow them to take a place in the life of the Australian community. This policy has recently been restated in substantially the same terms.

Evidence in the possession of anthropologists shews that these objectives have not yet been reached, and explains some of the reasons why in a number of areas there is still a wide gap between the principles laid down and actual conditions.

Since 1926 expeditions have been made by 12 social anthropologists to North Queensland, Arnhem Land, the Daly and Fitzmaurice Rivers, Melville and Bathurst Islands, North Australia, Central and South Australia, and the Kimberley, Hall's Greek, and Laverton districts of Western Australia. The information collected in these scientific expeditions may not in all cases be in the possession of the authorities and Governments to whom it would be of most value. The Royal Anthropological Institute therefore begs to be permitted to draw the attention of the Prime Minister of Australia to these data, some already published, and some available in unpublished field reports.

This brief statement is intended to refer only to:

(a). - the most significant data collected by anthropologists who have worked in such native areas of Australia

and

(b). - certain practical suggestions based upon anthropologists' own interpretations of this information.

In submitting this memorandum the Royal Anthropological Institute wishes to make clear that it does not consider the formulation of aboriginal policy to be in any way its province. This statement adheres to that principle and is submitted in order to call attention to certain matters of fact in a disinterested attempt to help Governments in a difficult task.

The Royal Anthropological Institute also wishes to point out, in order to avoid misunderstanding, that the frequent public statements that anthropologists wish to preserve the aborigines in an ideal state, or as museum exhibits, or merely as specimens for scientific investigation are not true, and are not made with any authority from anthropologists. Moreover, these statements contradict the published views of many Australian anthropologists.

In the opinion of the Institute the problem of the aboriginal tribes today seems to be primarily a social and economic one, and as such can only be adequately studied by the techniques of the social anthropologist and the economist, although it is fully recognized that the medical and nutritional aspects of the problem are also of profound importance.

The aspects of the problem to which the Institute wishes to refer are:-

i. nutrition.

ii. health and medical supervision

iii. the state of aboriginal reserves.

iv. working conditions of aboriginal employees.

v. administrative personnel.

vi. finance.
In nearly every area studied by anthropologists the nutritional standard of most of the aborigines — particularly those in contact with civilization, has been found to be poor and dietetically unbalanced. This standard should be raised to a physiologically adequate level in order that the natives’ health, fertility, and general grip on life may be at least stopped from any further decline below the present low level until positive steps can be taken to improve them.

It would seem on field evidence to be wise to apply this also to nomadic tribes as well as to detribalized and semi-civilized natives, whose needs are superficially more obvious.

There is good evidence that in their original condition the natives’ diet, derived from wild animals and plants etc., was physiologically much superior to their diet now, when they are forced largely to rely on rations because their lands are occupied by whites. The official rations issued to infirm and indigent natives (as in Northern Territory and Central Australia) are insufficient in quantity and inferior in quality. They consist of small quantities of white flour, polished rice, tea, sugar and tobacco. There is usually no meat ration. The quantity is often just sufficient to induce natives to stay at or close to ration depots, and not enough to give them a full meal once a day. Frequently the food is shared under tribal obligation with other natives, and the entire issue is thus quickly consumed, even a few hours after distribution. The natives then exist as best they can until the next day of issue. The days of issue are variable at the discretion of the local protector, and it seems that the natives have not always received their rations at regular intervals. In one case the rations were three months overdue. In another case through an administrative misunderstanding the rations specifically intended for the infirm and indigent were issued to all the members of a tribe. Thus the whole tribe was being gratuitously encouraged to be parasitic, and the proportion of food available to each individual was quite insufficient to give them an adequate diet.

A medical examination would probably show that most of the partially civilized tribes are under-nourished. The diet of most of them suggests that they must be short of animal and vegetable proteins, fats, mineral salts and most vitamins. There is a high probability that this is true also and in much the same degree of aboriginal employees on many cattle stations and farms where the rations are of the same general type.

Stations and farms in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory differ greatly in size, economic return, the degree of detribalization of their employees, and the effectiveness of supervision. The rations tend to vary accordingly. The experience of anthropologists in most cases observed suggests that in all the rations, irrespective of quantity, the fresh meat allowance is either low or non-existent, the proportion of carbohydrates is relatively far too high (because of the great use of white flour and polished rice), and the other vital constituents are insufficient.

The diet of many white people in the same area is often little better because of the economic poverty of the country where these marginal pastoral and farming ventures are being carried on. It would appear, however, to disregard a cardinal principle of Australian living standards and wage policy to take this fact as an extenuation of the poor diet given the aborigines.

There can be no doubt that the nutritive factor is complicating the Government’s task, and could with advantage be given priority over more general questions of policy. The relation of poor food to the social debility of the tribes, to their low fertility and high death rates, and their lack of resistance to the spread of disease, may be very important. Several unanalysed forms of unrest in certain tribes (notably the population drift towards white settlements, and grievances against employers) can be attributed partly to the same factors.

Among the nominally nomadic tribes the position is even less known. Conditions on the tribal reserves cannot be spoken of with any certainty. Food shortage or deficiency (and there is at least some reason to believe they exist) could cause and may well be contributing to tribal mortality and disease without the factors becoming known.
On at least two of five reserves in North and Central Australia, if the preservation of the nomadic tribes as nomads is envisaged, their permanent water supplies could be improved, and their flesh and vegetable diet could with advantage be supplemented. Drought conditions occur annually in the dry season and seriously affect tribal life even in areas of high rainfall. Hard pressed sections of desert tribes are known to have visited Wave Hill, Hermannsburg, Alice Springs, and parts of Western Australia where drought conditions are more frequent and their intensity greater.

It might be possible by initial concentration on the nutrition of all aborigines to split the general problem into several more easily handled parts. Such a course would expose where and what physical deficiencies and dangers exist, and which tribes have been most neglected, and thus need help more urgently than others, an important consideration where finances are limited. The appropriate remedies in different localities should be apparent from a proper nutritive and medical survey. The information collected by such a survey would greatly increase the “control” over the native situation in all areas and maximize the benefits of any other remedial or palliative action taken by administration.

The nutritive conditions stated above are made possible by and to some extent are the direct result of:

1. the poor economic condition of white industry and settlement in the native areas, and the pressure of white settlers’ interests.
2. the small financial provision made for native welfare.
3. the paucity of information about the tribal state and working conditions of each native group.
4. difficulties created by the prevailing attitude of many Europeans towards the natives in their charge.

(ii) Health and Medical Supervision.

Each of the above four factors also operates to the disadvantage of native health and medical supervision, even where an effort is being made (as e.g. in the bush areas of the Northern Territory) not only to keep a check on disease and to provide some limited facilities for treatment, but also to take prophylactic measures.

On points of fact, anthropologists have observed that even in camps of semi-civilized natives, there are many cases of untreated venereal disease, yaws, fevers, common colds, incipient (and perhaps avertible) blindness, neglected eye infections, and (apparently) tuberculosis.

The conditions among nomadic tribes are not known although again, they may be serious. Conditions among native employees in at least some areas visited by anthropologists in Western Australia and the Northern Territory are not markedly better.

It appears that nothing adequate can be done under existing conditions to build up the aborigines’ resistance to, or power to cope with, the epidemic diseases which periodically affect them. Some malarial control and prophylaxis are attempted, lepers are incarcerated, venereal cases are treated as they become obvious, but there appears to be no financial possibility of taking tribal quarantine measures to prevent the spread of contagious diseases. The responsibility for giving simple treatments, for taking initial measures to prevent the spread of infections, or for detecting disease conditions in development, is left in nearly all the areas of dense native settlement with local protectors. Through lack of knowledge, isolation, and, it must be said, even at times through lack of interest or a bad reputation with natives, these men may not take action, or not be able to act in time to prevent or minimize casualties or mortalities. The natives themselves aggravate by fear, ignorance, and misunderstanding the difficulty of disease control, treatment, and prophylaxis, more perhaps than they aggravate the problem of their nutrition. Many of the less civilized tribes, e.g. on the Daly River, are apt to run away at the mention of “doctor” and every anthropologist has been made aware of the real, even if irrational, fear of white surgery. Many natives, particularly women, will not submit readily to examination. Others, unless their condition is very troublesome, will not seek treatment.
The establishment of a fund in the Northern Territory for the medical benefit of native employees was a most useful measure. But it has been rendered almost abortive in many areas. The indifference or poverty of some employers, the bad working conditions which result, the presence of much undetected illness in camps, the difficulty of employers in distinguishing malingering from real illness, the great distance from medical help, the impossibility of getting assistance in the wet season, the absence of local supervision of the way in which employees are treated, and native fear, ignorance, and unwillingness to be treated are all working against its success. Many of these conditions could be mitigated or avoided by a stronger liaison between natives, employers, and the central medical administration.

In particular, anthropologists are impressed by the need for some attempt to overcome the intense fear of bush natives, if medical facilities are to have their full effect. The removal and exile of lepers from their tribes, terrifying (though unfounded) stories of the surgical practices of white doctors, and the close association in the native mind of sorcery and some forms of surgery on the bodily cavities, are heavily disabling factors standing between the sick or diseased bush native and the doctors who could treat them. Some venereal disease is hidden because semi-civilized native women often fear public examination. The fact that medicines are sometimes labelled "poison" makes many natives afraid of them. The effects of strychnine used by dingo scalpers, the belief in the use of poisons by sorcerers, and garbled camp stories that whites want to poison the natives, to some extent inhibit a co-operative native attitude. The local treatment of aboriginal patients will have to find a way of circumventing these difficulties.

If it were possible (i) to decentralize medical supervision still further, (ii) to establish regular mobile medical patrols staffed by persons with whom the aborigines could become familiar, and approach with confidence, (iii) to establish local centres for treatment where sick natives would not have to go or be taken long distances into strange parts of the country, it seems likely that much of the local weakness of the system might be avoided.

(iii) Reserves.

The provision of inviolable reserves is a cardinal point in all Australian native policies. In no case known to anthropologists, however, are the reserves inviolable or unviolated. Pearlers, trepangers, doggers, miners, prospectors, pastoralists, and others find reasons to enter the largely unpatrolled reserves. When payable gold has been found in any reserve, as at Tennant's Creek, the term "inviolable" has ceased to have any meaning at all.

Other but less obvious influences are at work not only in damaging the sanctity of reserves but in making it doubtful whether reserves will soon be of any use. In Arnhem Land, on the Fitzmaurice River, on the Victoria River, and in the Warramulla spinifex desert of Central Australia anthropologists have found that the supposedly nomadic and uncivilized tribes are in reality substantially influenced by the radiated effects of white settlement. Many of these natives no longer make stone tools, many of them habitually smoke or are familiar with tobacco, desire tea and sugar, wear or are familiar with articles of white clothing, and are not as insulated from other white contacts as they were ten years ago. In the nomadic zones of Central, North, and Western Australia serious social disturbance of these "uncivilized" tribes is reported. Bands of restless natives have been reported some hundreds of miles from their traditional tribal countries. Nomadic aborigines from Arnhem Land and Port Keats have visited Darwin; Fitzmaurice River natives have been taken away to the buffalo camps of Arnhem Land; Warramulla natives have visited Wave Hill; at Alice Springs tribesmen from some hundreds of miles west have masqueraded as local natives; desert tribes of the Central steppes have been reported travelling southwards to country already emptied of its indigenous tribes, or south-west to Laverton in Western Australia. Possibly most of the reserves are affected by this tribal "drift". If this is true, the reserves may soon cease to be of any practical use. Whatever be the Government policy as to the upkeep of reserves, the size and tribal state of the
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population on each reserve should be found out as soon as possible in order that action
should not be based on a false estimate of the situation. The “protection” of whatever
populations are on the reserves in any case entails some attempt to check this drift.
It seems to this Institute that the discussion of the policy of reserves took place at the
last Canberra Conference without regard to the above considerations.

The actual population of the tribes as a whole, including those not in the reserves,
is not known with real precision. In one nominally nomadic area the official statistics
of population have been overestimated by between 10 and 20 per cent. This casts at
least some doubt on the rough assessments of population which have been made in
other unsettled areas.

(iv) Personnel.

As a statement not of opinion, but of fact, it may be pointed out that the training
of those persons who are in charge of the protection (i.e. local administration) of
natives in the actual tribal areas, their general level of education, their salaries, working
conditions, and their chances of an attractive career in aboriginal affairs, are not equal
to the qualifications demanded of and the conditions given to officers with similar
work to do in Melanesia, Papua, and Africa. The fact has serious consequences. The
position of local protectors is of critical importance since the application of the
principles of policy laid down by the Government depends on them. They are in
charge at the points where experience shows that the policy measures need their
most intelligent application. These are in many parts of Australia the very points where
most of the breakdowns occur.

The men given these heavy responsibilities are usually country policemen, postal
officials, or civilians. They always have other duties, sometimes incompatible with
those of a “protector”. Their position often calls on them to do things beyond their
competence, e.g. make statistical returns of demographic tribal information with
causes of death certified. Conditions and changes among tribes which ought at once
to be reported to the central administration are often not observed. The changing level
of the tribes on some reserves has thus escaped attention. Local protectors have not
the training which would help them to detect movements and conditions which are
not obvious on the surface, even to the scientist. For instance, a white farmer in North
Australia has been allowed since 1932 to employ members of a nomadic tribe, and has
induced them to become sedentary (and thus parasitic) for part of every year, to
supply him with unpaid and badly fed labour. The local protector in this case did not
see the effect of this on the tribe, since it was not obviously in want or obviously
badly treated. There are moreover, a number of areas in West Australia and the
Northern Territory where detribalized natives live and work for whites, but are not
under any regular supervision by Protectors. Some small outlying cattle stations are
seldom, if ever, visited by protectors on patrol. Because of this no close check can be
kept upon the treatment of local aborigines.

To the anthropologist it seems that such provisions of the native policy as
“protection of nomads”, “safe-guarding of native welfare”, “assimilation into the white
population”, etc., need to be translated into clear and practical rules for the
guidance of the local protectors. This demands an intimate knowledge of widely
different local conditions, and it demands no less an informed co-operation by the
protectors themselves. They are not now equipped to give it.

The training of a new administrative personnel, collaterally with the other
measures indicated in this memorandum would strengthen the present point of
breakdown — the local liaison between the policy and its direct application to the
aborigines.
Finance.

The common denominator of the above problems seems to be inadequate finance. It partly (though not wholly) explains why some of these conditions exist.

The scale of the problem seems in the past to have been greatly under-estimated. An intimate acquaintance at first-hand with the aboriginal situation suggests that nothing substantial in the way of improvement may be hoped for without a greatly increased expenditure.

CONCLUSION.

It would seem therefore that "the aboriginal problem" is in fact not one, but a series of related problems. In each, however, five of the six factors outlined in this memorandum — food, health, working conditions, local administration, and finance — are actively operating to the detriment of the aborigines in every State.

No one individual in Australia, however, is in a position to say what is the precise state of each tribe, what are its most urgent needs, and what are the most practicable local remedies. It is doubtful if even an adequate tribal map exists in Australia. There would appear to be a great need for a skilful co-ordination of all available information, for an immediate survey to fill in the gaps. Adequately financed administrations might then introduce remedial and progressive measures with the certainty that they know what their problems are, and which of these problems might with advantage be faced first.

The Royal Anthropological Institute fully shares the view of Australian Governments that the aborigines should be preserved.

As to the methods by which this objective may be attained there is some difference of opinion. The view taken in this memorandum is that if this is the end desired, it is necessary to halt the decline of the tribes before dealing with more general and more controversial aspects of policy.

The evidence possessed by the Institute points to the problems here outlined as being more immediately important than such problems as the assimilation into the white population of persons of native blood, the education of fullblood and mixed-blood children, the provision of special native courts, paternity and maternity allowances, and so on. These are all highly relevant matters, and if necessary can be dealt with collaterally, but should not be given priority over more immediate needs.

The problems of nutrition, health, working conditions, and reserves have a special urgency, e.g. in North Australia because of the reported intention to develop this area economically. Past experience shows that this will probably lead to a development of investment and industry at points where the contact with the aborigines is closest. The demand for native labour is likely to increase strongly, and added inducements will be held out to the aborigines to stay around settlements, mines, farms, stations, etc. The pressure of white investors' interests are then likely to submerge the interests of the aborigines, and attempts to impose stricter conditions of employment, housing, feeding, and payment of aboriginal employees will tend to be regarded as irksome restraints upon men seeking to develop the frontier areas. Each drive for greater production in the past in the cattle, gold, mining, and farming industries in North, West, and Central Australia has affected the local native populations and may do so again unless the position is closely watched and perhaps guarded against now. The boom of 1933 and after, for instance, led in North Australia to the employment of tribes which until then were still nomadic and largely unaffected by white influences. The general effect of new investment in North Australia will be to widen the area in which profits can be made, and thus widen the physical and economic contact with tribes. This has always proved to be unsettling to aborigines, and has tended to break tribes up into smaller segments. The future of the aboriginal tribes is thus closely bound with, and may materially contribute to, the economic future of areas enclosing or contiguous to their territories. Any future development of the North Australian pastoral industry, for instance, may find the low cost of aboriginal labour an invaluable assistance in competitive production.

Aboriginal policy should thus be adjusted to the wider economic and social policy of the same area.
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Top left: Mr Jimmy Russell
Top right: Mr Leslie Russell
Photographs by Graham Hureus

Lower left: Mrs Sarah Johnson
Lower right: Mrs Lily Hampton, Mrs Lizzie Williams, Mrs Eliza Kennedy
Photographs by Tamzin Donaldson
This essay discusses what is involved in making oral literature in Australian languages, especially songs, accessible to speakers of English. It offers a variety of linguistic, technical and above all historical and cultural reasons why so little has been attempted, and why so few of the attempts have been successful. In the course of the essay, I introduce a sprinkling of examples from an extensive oral literature whose full range remains unknown, and whose particular regional traditions are for the most part disappearing as the number of knowledgeable practitioners dwindles. My hope is that these examples will arouse interest in the creation of more and better 'translations', in the sense developed here.

The Aboriginal inhabitants of Australia first felt the impact of European invasion between the later eighteenth century and the early twentieth century. Before this invasion the Aborigines of mainland Australia numbered somewhere in the region of 300,000. Between them they probably spoke more than two hundred different languages. Most of these languages had a variety of named dialects, and one way in which people identified themselves was as 'owning' a dialect (or sometimes more than one) by virtue of their descent. Calculation of the number of distinct languages spoken over the continent is complicated by difficulties attaching to the use of the terms 'language' and 'dialect', as well as by the small amount of surviving information about some areas. Varieties of speech recognised socially as being different might or might not be closely related in terms of shared grammatical characteristics or mutual intelligibility.

Acquaintance with more than one language was a familiar feature of Aboriginal life. Marriage frequently linked speakers of different languages, and children regularly grew up with knowledge of languages other than the first they learned to speak. In some areas there were also special sub-languages which had to be used in the presence of certain relatives, or on secret ceremonial occasions.

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* This article is based on an address, with tape-recordings of my examples, given at the conference on literary translation held in May 1977 at the Humanities Research Centre, Australian National University. My work with Ngiyambaa speakers was supported by a grant from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.

1 Tindale's (1974) map gives an impression of the distribution of their speakers. But there are many problems associated with any attempt to map Aboriginal social and linguistic divisions, among them the fact that there is no neat coincidence between linguistic affiliation and land ownership. For a comprehensive introduction to the languages of Australia, see Dixon 1980.

2 For examples of ways in which languages or dialects are 'owned', see Sutton 1978, especially Appendix 2.
The linguistic habits of those Aboriginal communities which survived colonization have changed along with their life-styles, more or less drastically according to the length and nature of the non-Aboriginal presence. Initially, at least, people were exposed to an even greater variety of linguistic experience as they were forced from their home territories into closer contact with speakers of other vernaculars, and encountered English and sometimes other non-Australian languages. But everywhere the result so far has been a progressive threat to the viability of the Australian languages. Something like fifty of them now appear to be extinct, a hundred have fewer than ten speakers, and the remainder are in various states of health, with only about a dozen having more than five hundred speakers.3

My first examples of oral literature were contributed by the last generation of the Wangaaybuwan people who can still speak their language, Ngiyambaa. They were born around the turn of the century in the dry country to the northeast of Ivanhoe in central western New South Wales, north of the Lachlan and east of the Darling. As well as being the only fluent Ngiyambaa speakers, they are the only people who have personal memories of the last initiation ceremonies which were held in their territory, in 1914. One man who was ‘put through the rules’ then is still alive. He is, as far as he knows, the only living person to have been through even the first stages of initiation in western New South Wales.

At the time of these ceremonies, members of this generation were already learning English. In 1914 the last Wangaaybuwan person who never spoke English was already middle-aged. None of the young people growing up were of wholly Aboriginal descent — as one of this generation put it, ‘Our grandmothers were taken advantage of’. The kinship system was under pressure, people were ‘marrying wrong’, and only one woman alive today was able to marry a man of the appropriate kinship category (what they called ‘right meat’ for her).4 Their physical world had undergone dramatic changes too: one of the animals in the totemic clan system, the rabbit-eared bandicoot, was already extinct.

More than half a century later members of this generation recall some of the stories they learnt as children, and a number of songs composed well into the 1920s by people a generation older than themselves. When these songs were first sung to me, I realised how important song-making

3 Sutton 1975.
4 For a description of traditional social organisation and marriage rules among the Wangaaybuwan see Beckett 1959. The major source of this information was Fred Biggs, composer of the second Ngiyambaa song presented here.
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was to the Wangaaybuwan. They had continued to make and enjoy songs in Ngiyambaa when the traditional culture as a whole was under great stress. Indeed, one of the ways in which they responded to the rapid changes overtaking their way of life was to make songs expressing their reactions.

The words of the songs which survive usually consist of up to half-a-dozen economically evocative sentences. The lines do not form a narrative sequence, but include a high proportion of questions, imperatives, exclamations and suppositions as well as plain statements. They are not formally different in any way from spoken sentences of the language either in grammar or vocabulary, though singers never spontaneously isolate the words from their music as I have had to do here.

The first of my examples was composed by the late Jack King, father of Archie King, the lone survivor of those who were ‘made men’ in 1914. His affectionately teasing song is about the way in which a certain woman, never mentioned by name but immediately recognisable to his audience, reveals her emotions by mentioning the town Ivanhoe. For each line of the song-words, three versions are given below. The first is the Ngiyambaa sentence, with boundaries between morphemes marked by hyphens and equals signs, as well as word-boundaries by spaces. The second is a morpheme-by-morpheme gloss which gives the meanings of roots in lower case, and the function of affixes by abbreviations or equivalents in upper case. Where two morphemes of the language coalesce in such a way that a boundary cannot be marked between them by a hyphen in the top Ngiyambaa line, their functional glosses in the second line are linked by a plus sign. The third line is a word-for-word literal translation, with nothing added unless it is enclosed in parentheses, and with nothing taken away.

5 Since late 1972 the last surviving speakers have been passing on their knowledge to me. What I have learnt is recorded in my 1977 thesis, and in a forthcoming volume on Ngiyambaa (Donaldson 1980).

6 See Donaldson 1980, Appendix B, for Ngiyambaa songs commenting on events as various as innovations in diet and the arrival of the first train in their country. Versions of songs from the Pilbara making reference to a similar range of events appear in von Brandenstein and Thomas 1977. Goddard (1934) presents other examples in his discussion of the historical context of Aboriginal songs.

7 Dr Alice Moyle kindly allowed me to study her collection of ‘song-words’ (based on unpublished and published sources up to 1970) and made musical notations for all the Ngiyambaa, Diyari and Yolnu songs whose texts are presented here. The notations and the tape-recordings on which they are based are deposited in the Library and Resource Centre of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra.

8 See Appendix 1, which also explains the orthography used for texts and the choice of spellings for language names.
In Ngiyambaa the first word of the sentence is the most salient, just as the most stressed word is in an English sentence. Thus: Ivanhoe-ka:=lu ngiyiyi is equivalent to 'Did she say Ivanhoe?' In lines b and c this salience of the first word is maintained in the translation by keeping the equivalent phrase in the first position.

The influence of English on the vocabulary can be seen in the verb-stem panjtjitma-, from 'fancy it', and the noun-root wultuman, from 'old woman', both of which have been preferred to available Ngiyambaa equivalents.

The particles which are attached to the first word of a Ngiyambaa sentence to convert it from a simple statement to a question, hypothesis, exclamation, assertion, etc. are in evidence in lines a, c, and d. -ka: in line a, which marks a yes/no question, is glossed IGNOR because its function is ignorative. It indicates that the speaker does not know if 'Ivanhoe' is what has been said. It will be noticed that personal pronouns are also attached to the first word of the sentence. Pronoun boundaries are distinguished with an equals symbol.

It must be remembered that the text just presented is not only a partial record of the song; it is a partial record of a performance, or rather several performances. I have heard a number of people sing the song, including Lily Hampton, Eliza Kennedy and Sarah Johnson. The words given here are those I have heard used by the first two singers. Even a tape recording does not necessarily capture all the auditory elements of a single performance which both performer and audience would take for granted as part of it, let alone its social aspects. For instance, although my tape does not reveal it, when Sarah Johnson recorded this song she accompanied it by thumping her apron, which she had bundled into a tight wad on her thigh.
Oral literature can only be recorded in performance, and no particular performance can be definitive. Different performances may differ in many ways. Sarah Johnson’s version of the first line contained biyal, ‘always’, instead of the particle -ka: cited here; ‘She always mentions Ivanhoe’. And patterns of performance are as important to note as variations: for instance, singers of Ngiyambaa songs consistently repeat a song several times in succession and end abruptly, resuming conversation without a pause.

The second song is by the late Fred Biggs. Its words are if anything even more economical than those of the first, plunging the listener straight into a vivid little scene whose participants can only be identified by what one of them is saying. This text is taken from a recording made by Eliza Kennedy.

```
(a) kapukarahng-ku-ka:=nu: pala kapuka:
     bug-GEN-IGNOR=2ndSg+OBL head egg
Do you have the brains of a bug?

(b) wi:-mi-nja
   sit-WATCH-PRES
   (He) is sitting watching.

(c) wari:li-nja-pa:=na
    stand+ULT FOCUS-PRES-ASSERT=3rdSg
    ngana-y there-YONDER
    He’s over there, upright!

(d) waray-wa:-kara=lu
    bad-EXCLAM-SENS EVID=3rdSg+ERG
    yarutha:miyi
dream+PAST
    You can see he had a bad dream all right!

(e) warukay-dji=lu
    butt of tree-ABL=3rdSg+ERG
    ku:ngkaymi-ya watch from cover-PRES
    He is peering around the butt of (that) tree.
```

The way in which we are to interpret ‘stand’ in line c is made quite clear by the preceding line. The man who is ‘standing’ is also sitting down. Actually the Ngiyambaa is even more subtly indirect than the English in the way it sets the scene, because Ngiyamba third person pronouns do not distinguish the sex of their referents (but rather their visibility). The only way in which we know that it is a man and not a woman who has had a bad dream is because of the song-maker’s pun: the dreamer is capable of sitting and ‘standing’ simultaneously. As for the ‘bad dream’, there is badness and badness in both Ngiyambaa and English.

Another subtlety has also been lost in the translation of line c. In Ngiyambaa, if the action denoted by a verb is undertaken with some ulterior motive in mind, you add a suffix to the verb which allows you to go on to mention the focus of the behaviour. But you are not obliged to do so; you can let the listeners guess for themselves. To capture this, line c would have to read, ‘He’s standing over there for the sake of . . .’. 

67
The sort of detail which this song suggests to a Wangaaybuwan listener is revealed in the comments which Eliza Kennedy made after singing the song to a group of women, including younger women with less knowledge of Ngiyambaa, and myself. (Some interpolations in Ngiyambaa have been omitted.)

That was a nice little song, you know. Say we women was all over there, [pointing] and this fellow had a sleep and had this horrible bad dream, dreaming about women, see, and this is what he’s doing, he’s wari:linja with ‘something’. He’s going to do something about it, see, and he don’t know how to get about it, that’s why he’s at this tree, sort of peeping around and seeing if he can catch my eye or yours.

Translations from Aboriginal oral literature: the state of the art

Getting to know the Ngiyambaa songs made me wonder — if a dwindling speech community whose traditions are nearly lost produces songs like these, what else has been going on in the rest of the continent? Anyone who attempts to answer this question must depend heavily upon written translations, whether or not they have been trained in Australian linguistics, and whether or not they have a knowledge of one or more Australian languages. The number of languages and their distribution, as already outlined, make such a situation inevitable. However, some knowledge of what to expect (and what to be surprised by) in Australian languages is extremely helpful in assessing translations.

What about the translations I have found? Their variety is more impressive than their quantity or quality. For a start, a translation may or may not be based on an available text in the language of origin. This text may or may not be written in a comprehensible orthography. Even if the orthography can be interpreted, the text may or may not be split up properly into words, let alone analysed according to its constituent morphemes. Any grammatical analysis there is may or may not be backed up by the existence of a grammar or dictionary for the language concerned.

Whatever its qualities, this text in an Australian language may or may not be based on a tape-recording, which may or may not have been made with a flat battery in the middle of a dog-fight. The tape may record simply a single performance of the item, specially laid on for the investigator alone. If the performance involves several participants, the tape may have caught only what the person nearest the microphone was up to.

Among features of the performance which the tape cannot record may be activities such as dancing, ceremonial behaviour, mime, the making of string figures, narrative gestures, and so on; and the text based on the tape may ignore many of the features which the tape did record: music, falsetto impersonations of women by male narrators, variation in speed and tone of narration, even narrative devices such as a stream of sounds (ngo ngo ngo ngo . . .), to indicate that a situation in a story goes on and on and on.
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The sum of knowledge about oral literature in Australian languages filters through a web of such contingencies. The complex linguistic situation makes it hard for an outsider to become familiar with the full range of resources drawn on in the compositions of even a tiny fraction of the communities of the continent, and the technical problems involved in making recordings are considerable. But at a more fundamental level, the feelings and opinions of English speakers in Australia have had a greater influence on the quantity and quality of translations.

An image from a Ngiyambaa song will provide an entry for the history of relevant attitudes, and at the same time alert us to their living legacy. The line is about the (Australian) red-breasted robin:

walung-gula:y  dhun-lugu  yuga-yuga-nha
walu-LIKE tail-3rdSg+GEN shift-shift-PRES
(He) flirts his tail like (a) walu.

What is a walu, or alternatively, what are walu? (Ngiyambaa nouns are not specifically either singular or plural unless a number suffix is added.) On occasions I have put this question to people unfamiliar with the language, inviting them to think of the first simile which comes into their heads to describe the motion of a robin’s tail. The chances are that they will liken the robin’s twitching tail movement to that of a fan, perhaps prompted by the English name of those close relatives of the robin with rather similar behaviour, the fantails. Rightly rejecting ‘fan’ as a translation for walu on the grounds that the type of fan referred to was not traditionally used or popularly adopted by Aborigines, such people I have questioned are likely to find themselves at a loss for confident suggestions.

The simile has to be translated with a paraphrase. Every Australian knows the way in which the bark of gum trees peels and hangs in narrow ribbons. In Ngiyambaa those narrow hanging ribbons have a name, walu. But why should the twitching of a robin’s tail be likened to a walu? Well, it often happens that a walu which is hanging by a thread will catch a current of air and vibrate as if it had a life of its own.

Although we can probably all recognize the aptness of this simile when it is presented to us, it isn’t readily accessible to us imaginatively when we are trying to think of a simile to describe the robin’s tail ourselves. The vocabulary a language has is the product of the history and the cultural pre-occupations of its speakers; and its resources for simple snappy similes are in turn governed by its vocabulary.

When English speakers first came to Australia, they couldn’t see the wood for the trees. They were horrified by the unfamiliar and the nameless. No less a person than Charles Darwin...
was so appalled in January 1836 by the... 'extreme uniformity in the character of the vegetation' and the bark of the trees hanging dead in long shreds which swung about in the wind, making the woods so desolate and untidy, that when he left our country he wrote in his diary that he did so 'without sorrow or regret'.

Forty years later Marcus Clarke is equally ill at ease in the Australian bush which he idealizes as pervaded by 'Weird Melancholy'. He too is distressed by walu. He gives a generally vague description of the horrors of the landscape, but one sentence runs: 'From the melancholy gum strips of white bark hang and rustle'.

The story of English-speaking Australians' failure to accept walu as a proper and unalarming part of the landscape comes to a happy end with Judith Wright's poem 'Gum trees stripping'. Here walu provide a central suggestive image of seasonal change which is as natural as images of autumn leaves are to the poetry of England:

The hermit tatters of old bark
split down and strip to end the season;

And Australian English is now fully equipped to name those features of the landscape which matter to its speakers, partly by re-using English names such as robin, partly by borrowing words from Australian languages, including a number such as galah (gila:) or beelah (bila:r) which occur in Ngayambara and some of its neighbour languages. But we still don't look like getting a handy word for passing references to walu.

Let us now return for a moment to Marcus Clarke's melancholy landscape, this time to learn something about the history of attitudes to the landscape's inhabitants. He gave a reason for finding it so drear:

In historic Europe... every rood of ground is hallowed in legend and in song... But this our native or adopted land has no past, no story. No poet speaks to us. Do we need a poet to interpret Nature's teachings, we must look into our own hearts, if perchance we may find a poet there.

He also gave, in addition to a panoramic survey of the dreadful scene, a detail for us to focus on:

From a silent corner of the forest rises a dismal chant, and around a fire dance natives painted like skeletons. All is fear-inspiring and gloomy.

Although these two quotations come from adjacent paragraphs, Marcus Clarke is so absorbed in the indulgence of his own unease that it never occurs to him that the dismal chanters in the corner of his silent forest

9 Clark 1976.
11 Wright 1971: 133.
are actually chanting *something*, or that what they are chanting may, like historic Europe's legend and song, hallow every rood of ground — for them at least, if not for him.

Although art may flourish for art's sake, and translation is certainly an art, there is no such thing as translation for translation's sake. No one translates material from one language to another, particularly when the task is as arduous as it is in this field, unless they both value it themselves and feel that at least some speakers of the language they are translating it into will also do so. Marcus Clarke may have shown no interest whatsoever in the substance of the Aborigines' chants; how much more interested are today's Australians? In March 1977 *The Bulletin* asked a number of critics and writers whom they felt were the most undervalued authors in Australia today.12 Les Murray led off, saying 'Our most serious undervaluation is Aboriginal poetry . . . the poems set down in, say, Ronald Berndt's recent *Aboriginal Love Poetry*, mostly from Arnhem Land, and Strehlow's classic *Songs of Central Australia*.13

I would like to expand his point and put it slightly differently. Clearly we don't value such poetry enough to translate it in any quantity. But the reading public is dependent on translations for its knowledge of oral literature in Australian languages. Strehlow's was the first attempt to document the entire literature of a particular speech community and to distinguish its kinds. The anthropologists Ronald and Catherine Berndt, who have been publishing versions of Aboriginal literature from a variety of areas since the 1940s, have had few competitors.14 With so little material available, the public may also find it difficult to know what to make of what material there is. It is an ironic but inescapable fact that the only acknowledged judges of a particular translation are those who have no need of one — the people who are equally at home in the language and culture of both the original and its translation. The opinions of such judges about translations from Australian languages can rarely be heard by the people who need them. Supposing the language of the original is still spoken, bilingual people belonging to the community concerned are often illiterate, or else they are not interested in the world of literary criticism or familiar enough with it to make their views known there. Most readers of available translations are simply not in a position to begin to **evaluate** Aboriginal oral literature.

14 Royalties from an abridgment of *Love songs from Arnhem Land* will be used for an annual prize for Aboriginal students, to stimulate interest in traditional poetry and in innovative composition. The prize will be administered by the Aboriginal Arts Board (Berndt 1976b).
But that is not the end of the matter. The fact that judgments about oral literature in Australian languages are exceedingly hard to make with assurance does not mean that people are unwilling to judge it. What presentations there are of the stories and songs of the Aborigines have often been approached with a zest for judgment which is rarely met with in other fields of literature.

In 1957 F.T. Macartney wrote an essay entitled ‘Literature and the Aborigines’, which was superficially a plea for rational assessment of their literary capacities, based on an appeal for reliable information as opposed to unsubstantiated assertions about the quality of their compositions. One of Macartney’s targets was the Jindyworobak club, who were fiercely in favour of Aboriginal literature, on principle. Jindyworobak, in the words of the club’s founder, Rex Ingamells, ‘is an Aboriginal word meaning “to annex, to join”. The Jindyworobaks are those individuals who are endeavouring to bring Australian art into proper contact with its material’. In 1938 Ingamells prescribed the following approach to writing Australian poetry in English: “From Aboriginal art and song we must learn much of our new technique; from Aboriginal legend, sublimated through our thought, we must achieve something of a pristine outlook on life”. Macartney knows exactly how to pinpoint what is wrong with one of the techniques used by Ingamells when he tried to practise what he preached. Quoting a verse by Ingamells:

Far in moorawathimeering,
Safe from wallan darenderong
Tallabilla waitjurk wander
Silently the whole day long.

Macartney comments:

The Aboriginal words, taken from one of the many dialects in printed vocabularies, mean nothing to the reader, and if they evoke any association at all, this is because he believes they are Aboriginal, though the effect would be the same if they were nothing of the kind but merely invented.

But his common sense deserts him when he comes to discussing Aboriginal literature itself. He takes as his text the ‘Native Saying’ at the beginning of Harney and Elkin’s book *Songs of the songmen: Aboriginal myths retold* which the authors set out as follows:

15 Macartney 1967.
16 Ingamells 1969: 249, 264.
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Native saying: Mordja Amari Mordja / Ngu Borngga Amari Mordja.
Literal Translation:
   Forgotten I lost dreaming / Country I left forgotten lost.
Paraphrase: He who loses his dreaming is lost.\(^1\)

Macartney's quotation is set out in the same way. He describes the top line as being in 'Aboriginal language transposed ... into writing'; then the second line, referring to it (as do the authors) as the 'literal translation'; then he introduces the third as '... the tidy shaping of this into the epigrammatic neatness of the line “He who loses his dreaming is lost”'.

On the basis of these three lines set out in this fashion Macartney\(^1\) concludes that:

Apparently attempts at transliteration, the basis of all true translation, are abandoned as hopeless; for the impossibility of real equivalents, it must be remembered, is not just a matter of idiom, but the difference of a mentality expressing itself more like what we call the stream of consciousness than like our articulateness.

It does not seem to have occurred to him that Harney and Elkin may be guilty of a piece of mystification every bit as silly as Ingamells'. In fact the original language of this 'Native Saying' is nowhere identified, though the book includes a map which suggests that it could be any language from anywhere in the northern half of the Northern Territory. The principles of its transposition into writing are inadequately explained by the note on spelling which is provided. As for the so-called 'literal translation', it is clearly not such in the sense defined for the third lines of texts cited elsewhere in this essay; nor does it correspond to their second lines of morpheme-by-morpheme glosses. Far from reflecting anyone's stream of consciousness, this dollop of word-porridge demonstrates either the authors' lack of consciousness as to what a literal translation is, or their inability to construct one. The absence of 'articulateness' can safely be assumed to be theirs.\(^2\)

Macartney has not understood that human languages simply do not differ as grossly as he imagines. What he calls transliteration need never be abandoned as hopeless, except by those who do not know the languages they are dealing with. Languages do not differ so fundamentally in what they are able to say but rather in what they must say. The difficulties of translation arise at the level where the source and target languages offer a different range of compulsory choices of grammatical form and vocabulary.\(^2\)

\(^1\) Harney and Elkin 1968 (first published 1949).
\(^2\) To be fair, there is evidence to suggest that Elkin was attempting a 'salvage operation' on Harney's manuscript to ensure publication in 1949. The revised edition contains a memoir of Harney, who died in 1962, in which the journalist Douglas Lockwood suggests that Harney was able to think like an Aboriginal (1968: 5).

\(^2\) The point is exemplified in my discussion of the second Ngiyambaa song, and is expanded in Jakobson 1959.
They are difficulties of emphasis in communication, not of capacity to communicate. Twenty years after Macartney wrote one can hope that the level of general knowledge about such basic linguistic matters has risen sufficiently to prevent such misconceptions.

What is interesting about Macartney's judgment is not its wrongness, but its naturalness, given that he is not very sophisticated about the nature of language. If you assume that Harney and Elkin did a good job, and if you have not come across anything to disabuse you of your linguistic misconceptions, a judgment like Macartney's, given the evidence, is not only valid but inescapable. Apart from the grossness of his generalization from one 'Native Saying' to the literature of a continent, his final summing-up is not unfair:

To claim that this, or any other utterance in Aboriginal language, is 'capable of great strength and beauty, which can rise to great heights of feeling',22 or to suggest that it can have literary quality, is certainly to be doubted, as it certainly has not been demonstrated.

All records of oral literature require extensive documentation regarding performance, composition, transmission and the like. In addition, those who make translations from oral literature in languages which are neither widely spoken nor written have to prove that they really are translations. They need to be underpinned by the best that can be done in the way of original texts, grammars, dictionaries, tape-recordings, film and contextual accounts. Unless translations are undertaken in connection with activity of this kind on a considerable scale it will continue to be possible to blame the Aborigines for any defects in translators' presentation of their literature and, conversely, to attribute their achievements to translators' embellishments. The continuing oral transmission of most Aboriginal vernacular literature is threatened by social changes, despite the renewed commitment of some communities to their languages. If future generations are to have trustworthy records of what still survives, they need to be made now.

Aboriginal poetics and translation

So far, I have concentrated on the problems that confront non-Aboriginal people trying to find out about Aboriginal oral literature. I have mentioned the way in which the multiplicity of Australian languages, and the linguistic situation generally, affect the quantity and quality of translations. I would like now to point out how culture-bound my whole argument has been. It is typical of the members of a large monoglot culture to feel that the best way to respond to compositions in another language is to translate them. This is sensible communicative economics.

22 The quotation comes from Strehlow's introduction to his 1947 volume. Whatever the literary merits of the original utterance, the phrase 'He who loses his dreaming is lost' evidently has a certain appeal. The Australian folksinger Gary Shearston used it in a song entitled 'Aborigine' in the LP 'Dingo' released by Charisma in 1975.
Let us now turn to the speakers of these multifarious languages themselves. How do they react to the linguistic map, or their part of the map? What sort of communicative economics do they practise? Aboriginal attitudes both to the composition of oral literature and to its transmission seem to me to be intimately linked with their experience of multilingualism; attitudes which reveal, for those brought up on literature in English, whether written or oral, a novel emphasis on how words may be used in songs.23

All songs and many kinds of story are property in Aboriginal Australia. There is much regional variation but there are basically two types of ownership. The first type is collective, in association with ownership of land. Ownership of myths concerning ancestral journeys and their associated songs may be divided up and spread over a wide area crossing linguistic boundaries. Thus songs with more or less identical words may be sung in ceremonies by people who otherwise speak different languages or dialects. The second type of ownership is individual ownership by the composer. Songs owned in this way are, or were, often traded over large areas, with people sometimes setting out on considerable journeys to collect new songs. They are learned verbatim in the languages in which they are composed, maybe with some pronunciation changes to make them conform to the sound system of the learner's language.

There is thus no automatic reaction of alarm to the notion of singing a song some or all of whose words one cannot understand. One may learn a song and its interpretation as two separate items. Indeed, words or whole songs in other languages may sometimes be positively preferred. The English loan words encountered in the first Ngiyambaa song were being widely adopted in ordinary conversation at the time when it was composed. But an Aboriginal preference for using words from other languages is as likely to be linked with their being less well known and understood. Ironically, the only phrase which is now fully construable in the words of a song from the Port Augusta district transcribed by Daisy Bates is the borrowed 'Captain on a rough sea'.24 Ian Crawford writes of a ritual song used in the Kimberleys with words which do not belong to any local dialect. Though its singers were unable to tell him what these words

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23 I have emphasised song texts in this paper for practical reasons only: it is relatively easy to find short examples which can be appreciated without special knowledge of their cultural origins, despite the drawback that they are isolated here from their vocal and instrumental music. Indeed, their musical form probably saves them from a common fate of narratives — which is to undergo a series of re-workings progressively less faithful to the original tellings. One of the most widely available collections consists entirely of stories retold from other printed versions: Reed (1965: 5) admits that 'in a few cases the story may . . .  be of a composite character' because amalgamated from different sources.

meant, they turned out to be interpretable if assumed to be in Malay, meaning something like 'At the call to prayers, perform ablutions, take on fragrance, it is the holy time'.

Where preferences for exotic language play a large part in poetics, they are often accompanied by preferences for other types of esoteric language. There may be room for multiple interpretations. This possibility may be institutionalised, so that some types of song are always interpretable at several different levels. Certain layers of meaning, or even the song itself, may be withheld from certain people for specific reasons, such as their sex or inferior ceremonial status.

As a result, the words of some kinds of Aboriginal songs present a whole new dimension of tasks for the 'translators'. Instead of providing literal translations, they have to document interpretations. They have to establish the limits of interpretability, for Aboriginal songs may also contain 'nonsense' elements, in the same way as (for instance) folk songs in English have fol-de-rol refrains. And they must explain what they can about the history of forms which differ from those encountered in the ordinary spoken language of the singers. Aborigines in some regions may say some such words go back to the 'dreamtime'. But in view of the degree of Aboriginal interest in exotic language any assumption that unusual language in songs is archaic (i.e. that it has been transmitted verbatim from generation to generation while changes have been taking place in non-literary language) needs rigorous proof.

My final examples will illustrate some of these points. They are of two very different kinds of song, one from South Australia and one from the Northern Territory. But like the Ngiyambaa songs, they are all individually composed, and sung by the composer during his lifetime. They all involve a minimum of accompaniment and their performance does not require dancing or the participation of more than one performer. And none of them has ceremonial significance or 'inside' interpretations which it would be improper for an outsider to know or reveal.

The three South Australian songs were composed by the late Leslie Russell, one of the last knowledgeable speakers of Diyari, from the country around Cooper's Creek. He sang and explained them to Peter Austin, who has written a linguistic study of Diyari. Peter Austin transcribed them and provided the information presented here. The songs are designed

25 Crawford 1969: 316. Macknight (1972: 301) mentions a number of instances of Macassan ritual formulae being used in ceremonies in Arnhem Land by Aborigines who do not know their exact meaning.

26 See for instance Keen 1977.

27 A range of possible sources for 'phonological peculiarities' of Yir-Yoront song words is canvassed by Alpher (1976).

28 Austin 1978.
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to be accompanied by a pair of clicked boomerangs. They evoke an image or an incident with very few words indeed, used according to strict rules of composition. These words may be cited in conversation to identify the song, like the title or first line of a song in English.

The first song uses only four disyllabic words, which will doubtless seem cryptic at first sight.

ngapa kudu
water hole
thupu thupu
smoke smoke

But their choice is readily understood once one knows what scene is being evoked. ngapa kudu thupu thupu refers to a traditional technique for clearing muddy water. Gypsum burnt to a powder was thrown into the water-hole to settle the impurities as a sediment at the bottom of the water. When the gypsum was thrown in, a 'smoke' rose from the surface of the water. This, Leslie Russell explained, happened 'before the whites took the country'.

When the song is sung a meaningless sound is inserted between each word — ngapa nga kudu nga thupu nga — and the words are repeated as often as the singer fancies. When the singer draws a breath, or finishes his performance, he knocks off the final syllable of the final word and substitutes a glottal stop, for instance tlnP instead of thupu.

The next song contains three words:

ngapa puwa
water bore
kurripindani
rainbow

It commemorates the drilling of a bore at Mt Gason near the Birdsville track about sixty years ago. The composer, who was present, saw a rainbow in the first jet of water that gushed out. The previous song was made up of exclusively disyllabic words, so that the sound nga always occurred between words. Here, the third word, kurripindani, 'rainbow', has four syllables. nga is inserted after the second vowel of the second syllable — ngapa nga puwa nga kurripi nga ndani nga — and so on, always finishing on a word truncated with a glottal stop.

Another point to note about this song is that just as Jack King chose English words in preference to Ngiyambaa in the song about Ivanhoe, Leslie Russell has chosen a word from the neighbouring language Waganjuru for 'rainbow' in preference to the word for 'rainbow' in Diyari, kurikira, which also has four syllables. So of the three words of the song two are not Diyari — since puwa comes from English 'bore'.

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In the final example chosen to illustrate this type of song, the composer imagines himself the victim of a revenge party who sneak silently up on him wearing what English speakers know as ‘kadaitja shoes’ and strike him on the back of the neck, so as to kill him in such a way that his tongue protrudes, like a bullock’s when it is slaughtered, as Leslie Russell reminded Peter Austin after singing him the song.29

pinja-li [la]
revenge party-ERG [la]
nganha diya
me strike
thali thali
tongue tongue

The first two lines consist of a fully grammatical transitive sentence, pinjali nganha diya, ‘the revenge party strikes me’. The word pinja, meaning ‘revenge party’, the agent of the sentence, carries the ergative case inflection -li. (Before one tape-recorded performance of the song, Leslie Russell gives a spoken version of this sentence, in which he changes the word-order, placing nganha, ‘me’, at the beginning of the sentence. This is because he is explaining to Peter Austin that ‘It’s me the revenge party strikes’.)

The word pinjali with its ergative case inflection is trisyllabic. When this line is sung nga is inserted at the morpheme-boundary between the root pinja and the inflection -li, and an extra syllable la is added to make this form disyllabic. (The exact form of such an extra syllable varies depending on the nature of the form which it expands.) The words which constitute a sentence form an inseparable unit, but the line ‘tongue tongue’ may follow or precede them or be omitted altogether in any given repetition of the words within a performance of the song.

I have been at pains to explain the formal composition of these songs, but I have not indicated the range of topics they cover. Just to point out the difficulty of making generalizations as to the scope of their themes, I should mention that a similar Wanganuru song records the impression made on the composer by watching a white woman come out of the door of her house and proceed to wash it.30

29 In 1969 Luise Hercus tape-recorded an earlier, more vigorous performance of this song in which Leslie Russell sings it with Jimmy Russell, his ‘brother’ according to Diyari terms, his first cousin according to English usage.

30 Also tape-recorded by Luise Hercus.
TRANSLATING ORAL LITERATURE

Now to end with a glimpse of a less threatened tradition. My example comes from a community in north eastern Arnhem Land where the vernacular is still alive and well. It is a song recently composed by someone in his teens, David Marrputja Munungurr. He speaks Djapu, a Yolŋu language. Frances Morphy, who is working on a description of Djapu, recorded him singing the song and provided the text and explanatory information. Her translation is literal in the same way that the translations of the Ngiyambaa songs were. It reads as a simple description of pelicans journeying along loading their pouches with fish and running in an attempt to take off and fly. The pelican’s pouches are referred to as fishing nets, an obvious image if we consider both the purpose of the pouch and the shape of the local fish nets, which consist of a net scoop suspended from two rods hinged together at one end.

\[ \text{a m . . . .} \]

\[ \text{b nhirrrpa-n marrtjtji kanjpu-w maña ka:lumay put in-PAST go+PAST fishing net-DAT they+DUAL pelican thirrippi-wu inside-DAT} \]

Two pelicans went along putting (fish) into their fishing nets.

\[ \text{c nhirrrpa-n marrtjtji Palmi-lil thakkal-lil nhirrrpa-n put in-PAST go+PAST P.-ALL cheek-ALL put in-PAST} \]

(They) went to Palmi putting fish in (their) pouches.

repeat a

\[ \text{d tjuta tjuta tjuta tjuta creep creep creep creep (They) crept along} \]

\[ \text{e thakkal-lil nhirrrpa-n Palmi-lil cheek-ALL put in-PAST P.-ALL putting (fish) into (their) pouches (as they went) to Palmi} \]

\[ \text{f kuku-lil katjtjuy pala e e Wankurr-lil come+IMP-ALL go away+IMP away W.-ALL} \]

Come on! Away (you) go to Wankurr.

\[ \text{g m . . . . thu . . . .} \]

\[ \text{h nhirrrpa-n marrtjtji kanjpu-w put in-PAST go+PAST fishing net-DAT (They) went along putting (fish) in their fishing nets.} \]

31 Morphy n.d.

32 John Lirripya Munungurr, while a student at the School of Australian Linguistics, checked the text and resolved an outstanding translation problem.
Then they went along scooping up water in their fishing nets.

(They) run to take off . . . . . can't

Hey! big brother, fix pelican for us!

(They) went along putting (fish) in their fishing nets, dipping their pouches.

There is a problem at line k. Who is big brother, and why is he asked to fix pelican? It is helpful to recall that song-words are sometimes intended to be interpreted on more than one level at once. It is also necessary to know that the author, Marrputja’s, father owns a yellow Toyota called ka:lumay, i.e. ‘Pelican’ and that all Yolŋu cars are given names (the same names which were formerly given to canoes), and each clan has a set of these names. As well as being about pelicans, this song is also an account of a particular journey that Marrputja once made in the Toyota named Pelican, when his older brother was driving it. Lines a to h, where the pelicans fill their pouches, describes the car loading up with passengers, and the place-names mentioned are those through which this particular journey took them. At one point in the journey the ground was very wet. At line i where the pelicans scoop up water, ka:lumay the Toyota gets bogged. At line j the pelicans attempt to get airborne and the driver of the Toyota puts his food down hard, revs the engine and tries to get it out of the mud. Though it may not be obvious from the transcription of the words alone, this line when sung is superbly onomatopoeic at both levels of interpretation. The form pi:rrk has the literal meaning ‘can’t’ and can be understood, together with the following two syllables, which are present for their sound effect only, as an expression uttered by either the pelicans, or the Toyota. (Note that the verb in this onomatopoeic line is uninflected, as also at line d. Such uninflected forms
TRANSLATING ORAL LITERATURE

would not occur in similar circumstances in the spoken language.) So the plea at line k is the only part of the song which depends exclusively on the car-journey interpretation. It is made on behalf of the passengers in the Toyota, asking the driver to fix it and get them out of the mud so they can continue their journey.

Pelican’s is not the only journey which calls for special skills. The guidance of those in a position to make recordings and translations is vital if we are to make our way towards a better understanding of oral literature in Australian languages.

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL STUDIES

APPENDIX 1

All song-texts are set out in the same format whatever the language, using the same orthographic conventions, and the same abbreviations or equivalents for affix functions wherever practicable, thus affording a small opportunity for conclusions about likely recurrent characteristics of Australian sound systems and grammars.

Orthography (phonemic for each language)

A colon following a vowel indicates that the vowel is long. A dot under a consonant, for example ŋ, indicates retroflexion of the tongue. Voiced d and d contrast with voiceless t and t intervocally in Diyari. There is no voiced/voiceless contrast among stop consonants elsewhere in Diyari or in any of the other languages represented in this article. The voiceless series of symbols p, t, k is used to write them here. The following digraphs are used to represent certain consonants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonant</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Closest Sound in English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>th</td>
<td>interdental laminal stop</td>
<td>that, thin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tj</td>
<td>alveo-palatal laminal stop</td>
<td>jam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nh</td>
<td>nasal corresponding to th</td>
<td>onion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nj</td>
<td>nasal corresponding to tj</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ng</td>
<td>velar nasal</td>
<td>sink, sing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rr</td>
<td>trilled</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The spelling used for language names is that favoured by speakers of the language wherever there is vernacular literacy. Where this is restricted or non-existent, the spelling follows that found in the most authoritative scholarly work on the language concerned.
Affix functions

Particles
IGNOR Ignorative
HYPOTH Hypothesis
ASSERT Assertion
EXCLAM Exclamation
SENS EVID Speaker has sensory evidence for statement

INAB Subject’s inability to perform action
Person, 2ndSg Second person singular
Number 3rdSg Third person singular
DUAL Dual
PL Plural
EXC Exclusive of addressee

Verb
PRES Present tense
RECIP Reciprocal
NOW ‘Now’
WATCH ‘Watching’
ULT FOCUS Ulterior focus

Case forms
ERG Ergative (subject of transitive sentence)
GEN Genitive
OBL Oblique
ABL Ablative
DAT Dative
ALL Allative

Determiner
EST Reference of determiner has been established

suffixes
YONDER ‘Yonder’

Miscellaneous
UNIV Universal quantifier (‘all’)
HAVING Comitative ‘having’

Further explanation of suffixes occurring in the Ngiyambaa texts can be pursued in Donaldson 1980.

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Top: T.G.H. Strehlow, 1977

*Photograph courtesy of Canberra Times.*

Bottom: A.P. Elkin, 1979

*Photograph by Colin Roach, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies*
It is with deep regret that I record the death of Theodor George Henry Strehlow, which occurred in his old rooms at the University of Adelaide on 3 October 1978, in the presence of some of his friends and his wife. Ted Strehlow was renowned as a specialist in Aboriginal studies, concentrating on the Aranda virtually throughout his life.

Born at Hermannsburg on 6 June 1908, he was fortunate in having as his father the well-known Lutheran missionary, Carl Friederich Theodor Strehlow who wrote *Die Aranda-und Loritja-Stämme in Zentral-Australien* (Frankfurt, 1907), and whose death in 1922 is so movingly described in his son's *Journey to Horseshoe Bend* (1969). Ted Strehlow was deeply influenced by his father's educational background. Carl Strehlow had a great interest in classical literature and Germanic mythology. On coming to Australia (his son records), 'A new and exciting world of the mind had opened up for [him] after he had begun his work of collecting the sacred Western Aranda myths and songs' (T.G.H. Strehlow 1969:5).

Ted Strehlow carried this interest further, as he was able to do because of his training at Immanuel College and the University of Adelaide, in the Classics and in English literature. Like his father, he combined this with his Aranda studies. Speaking Aranda, German and English from early childhood he had the great advantage of being able to live within the area of his major interest, and the even greater advantage of the close friendships he established with Aborigines, to an extent that has been possible to relatively few anthropologists. The culmination of this rapprochement between the classical writing of Europe and the oral literature of the Aranda found its expression in that unique work, *Songs of Central Australia* (1971), which had been submitted for publication in 1956. Strehlow was a great humanist, with a thoughtful and informed approach to Aboriginal studies. More important, however, were his emotional roots in the culture of the Aranda people themselves. It was his attachment to their traditional life, even more than the actual content of the book, which marks this as his outstanding contribution.

Strehlow's academic career extended from the early 1930s. He became Reader (1954), then Professor in Australian Linguistics (1970-73); and on his retirement in 1974, Emeritus Professor. He received honorary doctorates from the universities of Adelaide and Uppsala. Over the years, he was able to carry out field research for fairly long periods — for instance, in 1931-34 and 1953-65, and intermittently until quite recently when his health was failing. His was not solely an academic interest. He was deeply involved in practical issues concerning the impact of Europeans on the life and culture of the Aranda and adjacent Aboriginal groups. During 1936-42, he was attached to the Commonwealth administration, first as a patrol officer and then as Deputy-Director of Native Affairs in charge of the Central Australian area.
His views on Aboriginal-European relations are best expressed in three of his pamphlets: *The sustaining ideals of Australian Aboriginal societies* (1956), *Dark and white Australians* (1957), and *Nomads in no-man’s-land* (1960). He was consistent in his view that there should be respect for and understanding of traditional Aboriginal society and culture, and that they had a special place in the emerging Australian nation; he emphasized that Aborigines should be consulted in all matters which concerned them; he reiterated that if there was an Aboriginal ‘problem’ it was also a ‘white problem’; he opposed assimilation if it meant the destruction of a people’s way of life; and he was insistent that Aborigines should be respected as persons, on equal terms with others, if the difficulties which faced them today were to be resolved.

Strehlow’s major contributions lay in the fields of linguistics and the detailed recording and analysis of Aranda religion. Having learnt Aranda as a child, he was in an excellent position to extend and systematize its study, and in 1942-44 published *Aranda phonetics and grammar* (Oceania Monographs, No. 7). This had originally been prepared in 1934 and 1937, and constitutes the first available complete study of an Australian Aboriginal language. His *Aranda traditions* (1947), initially assembled as three papers in 1934, is an important work on Aboriginal religion, providing an insight into the relationships between myth and ritual— an insight which has been equalled but not surpassed in recent years. It remains a basic text on Central Australia. The detailed nature of this stands out clearly against the more generalized writing of Baldwin Spencer. This theme was expanded over the years — most notably as contributions in three volumes edited by my wife and/or myself. In ‘The art of circle, line and square’ (in *Australian Aboriginal art*, 1964) he considered the genesis of Aboriginal art, which he saw as being primarily religious. In ‘Culture, social structure, and environment in Aboriginal Central Australia’ (in *Aboriginal man in Australia*, 1965) he demonstrated the relationship between Aborigines and their environment, considering the essential linkage between art, song, myth, dance, rite and drama and the ‘totemic’ landscape, all of which provided a feeling of oneness with nature. And in ‘Geography and the totemic landscape in Central Australia: a functional study’ (in *Australian Aboriginal anthropology*, 1970) the thesis he expressed related to the quality of the social order based on religion, which presented the setting for the processes of social control and law. With his ‘Personal monototemism in a polytotemic community’ (in a *Festschrift* paper for Jensen, 1964), these make a significant contribution in their own right.

I have mentioned the uniqueness of *Songs of Central Australia*. In this Strehlow encapsulates the essence of traditional Aboriginal life. That was possible only because he possessed a special kind of insight, rare among workers in the Aboriginal field: a deep feeling for the people themselves, with an appreciation of their aesthetic expressions combined
with the ability to translate the original Aranda, providing it with a traditional poetic quality. The impact Strehlow made and, in his work, continues to make, on the study of Aboriginal religion is yet to be assessed. There is, however, little doubt that within the area of song and translation he was and is paramount. The first article he published on this topic (‘Ankotarinja, an Aranda myth’, in Oceania, 1933) established him in that direction. His monumental work on Aranda song-poetry is one of the most remarkable and impressive yet published.

It was his concern with preserving a record of the fast-disappearing traditional life of the Aranda which led him and his second wife, Kathleen, to spend much of their time in recent years in endeavouring to form the basis of a Research Foundation. Through the work of his father and himself, much of Aranda culture which would have been irretrievably lost has survived. Some of this has been published; but the greater part of it, in manuscript form, together with photographs, films and recordings, has not. The Foundation which they envisaged was to be a place where all of this material could be stored, where research could be carried out upon it, so that it would become a continuing resource centre for Aranda and Loritja studies. Although a Committee had been set up to organize its establishment, great difficulties were experienced in obtaining adequate financial support.

Professor Strehlow had been ill, and had become increasingly disillusioned. However, he was considerably heartened by the plans to hold a special exhibition of his historical material. The date arranged for this was the evening of October 3, 1978. The exhibition was organized by his wife and himself to mark the official opening of the Research Foundation, named to commemorate his father and himself. He had been looking forward keenly to this. Tragically, and suddenly, his death came in the course of last-minute discussions at a meeting that afternoon, only a few hours before this event. Nevertheless, a decision was made to go ahead with the opening, as we all believe he would have wished. A record of that sad day is to be found in the Australasian Nurses Journal, (8 (3), 1978: 16-21, 30).

Professor Strehlow made significant contributions to the study of Aboriginal life and culture. His death leaves a considerable gap, impossible to fill. However, the vision of himself and his devoted colleague, Kathie Strehlow, in the form of the Strehlow Research Foundation, should ensure that his own and his father's work is kept alive.

Mankwakila rawapuwei
Mirkwatnjelentopindei
Nodding sleepily he keeps on listening;
Fast asleep he is resting without a stir.

(From the northern Aranda bandicoot song of Ilbalintja, verse 45: Songs of Central Australia, 1971: 140.)
The preservation of his unpublished materials is vitally important, for future use by professional scholars and, significantly, for oncoming generations of Aranda, who will over the years increasingly turn to their own unique traditional Aboriginal heritage to find personal and social meaning and emotional stability in contemporary society.

Ronald M. Berndt,
Foundation Professor of
Anthropology in the
University of Western Australia.

A.P. ELKIN (1891-1979): A PERSONAL MEMOIR

Peter Elkin Snr, for a long time the foremost authority on the Aborigines, departed this life the day after Aborigines Sunday 1979. The story of most of his life has been told. Here I record some recollections and impressions of the anthropologist who was my teacher and friend.

He was born, as I was, at West Maitland, New South Wales, but did not grow up there apart from living at Singleton while attending the Boys' High School at East Maitland. When he returned in 1930 as Rector of Morpeth with a Ph.D. in anthropology from University College, London, there was already a resident anthropologist. Walter J. Enright, a Maitland solicitor who had collaborated with R.H. Mathews in a paper on rock art in 1895, welcomed Elkin warmly. If there were any Aborigines around Maitland they were not visible. But Enright had befriended Aborigines of the Hawkesbury district, Port Stephens, and as far away as Taree and he introduced Elkin to them. They journeyed together, Enright recording details as a gifted amateur and Elkin investigating social organization and religion as a true professional.

I knew Enright, but I first encountered Elkin in my second year as an undergraduate at Sydney University, when I would have been reading Anthropology I if the Adviser to Women Students had not shunted me into other subjects. The slight, bird-like professor of anthropology was debating against John Anderson, one of several grand eccentrics around the quadrangle and the inspiration of many Arts students. Anderson's lilting cadences spread with honey his impressive and tortuous logic. This day he was persuasive as always, enlisting us flatteringly in his own intellectual elite. Elkin, however, took us down from our ivory towers. Looking like

1 Mainly in Berndt 1956; Berndt and Berndt 1965; Elkin 1958, 1959, 1962.
2 Elkin 1950.
OBITUARY

a country bank manager and using language a farmhand or engine driver
would have understood, he arranged his argument methodically and what
he said made absolute sense. He was obviously a great teacher. The next
time the Adviser to Women Students told me not to do anthropology, I
defied her.

A striking aspect of Elkin’s lectures was the enormous respect for
Aboriginal social organization and culture that he conveyed to us. This
comes out clearly in his writings, perhaps most prominently in his
Aboriginal men of high degree. Like Margaret Mead, he had a gift for
saying what he had to say simply and clearly; and his listeners and readers
were duly impressed with the dignity, seriousness, and complexity of Abo­
riginal life. When, later, I met Billy Rooke of Collarenebri, one of the ‘men of
high degree’, I found him to be a dignified old man living uncomplainingly
in appalling conditions. He reciprocated Elkin’s respect for him and
laid claim to a firm friendship.

During my second year of anthropology I went to Elkin, who was
always approachable, wondering whether I could meet some Aborigines
and get the feel of fieldwork. He arranged at once for me to spend a
vacation at the Cootamundra Girls’ Home. Later, when I had been doing
research among Aborigines in rural New South Wales, he invited me to
work briefly for the Aborigines’ Welfare Board while the city welfare
officer was on leave. This enabled me to see what happened to the girls
after they graduated from Cootamundra and entered the sedate loneliness
of domestic service.

Up to 1931 Elkin had been concentrating on the analysis of social
organization, ritual, mythology, and totemism. But when he came across
atrocities against Aborigines on the Forrest River and elsewhere he was
drawn into playing an active part in the Association for the Protection of
Native Races. He argued for more positive policies than that of ‘protection’
which was not even protective in its effects. In 1936 some Aborigines at
Burnt Bridge drew his attention to the way white people treated them and
immediately he began to address himself to the problems of ‘mixed-
bloods’, people of combined white and Aboriginal descent living mostly in
fringe camps and on supervised settlements.

As head of the only university department in Australia that taught
sociology as distinct from social work, Elkin saw the plight of Aborigines as
being comparable to that of the refugees who were escaping in increasing
numbers from the infamous Hitler and Stalin regimes and needed to find
secure places in Australian society. Both ‘Abos’ and ‘Reffos’ suffered the
handicaps of different languages, different cultures, and a lack of sympathy
that amounted to downright prejudice on the part of white Australians.
Elkin had idealistic dreams of the Aborigines becoming assimilated into
the greater Australian society as ethnic entities like the Irish and the

3 Elkin 1977 (first published 1945).
ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1979 3:1

Scottish had been assimilated, taking their places in many different walks of life, but perhaps coming together for some periodic celebrations equivalent to Highland Gatherings or St Patrick's Day. The success stories, against enormous odds, of Pastor Doug Nicholls and Captain Reg Saunders gave him hope. But the people who had to implement the assimilation policy tended to interpret it as plucking out favoured individuals and getting citizenship for them as a reward for virtue. Their only involvement in their own fate was their success in demonstrating middle class standards of home care and continuity of employment. These standards did not apply in the lowest rung of Australian society, the only one to which they could gain access without improved education and opportunity. Further, there would have been few middle class people who could have maintained these standards in a blacks' camp, at least without a better water supply and a guarantee of no discrimination on the part of tradespeople. Elkin saw all these problems and strove energetically to get citizenship for the Aborigines and improve their living conditions, health and education. He did what he could, and that was a great deal.

Elkin recruited me to work among Aborigines in New South Wales when I would have preferred to go to New Guinea if funds had been available. By 1959 I had worked in both Papua and New Guinea and I went to Elkin for advice on where to go in the Northern Territory. He suggested Borroloola. That was my last Aboriginal fieldwork. I formed some wonderful friendships with Aborigines, but it was heartbreaking to have to stand by helplessly while they were insulted, shoved around, spat upon, punished for speaking their minds, and deprived of many of the liberties white people took for granted. I did not have Elkin's knack of counting even the smallest gains in Aboriginal welfare and taking heart from them when the remaining problems loomed so large and so far from solutions.

It made me sad that Elkin's body was cremated, for when I learned of his death my first thoughts were of visiting the graveyard at Collarenebri with Billy Rooke's daughter, Una Thorne, and her possum familiar. I would have liked to gather some broken glass for his grave so that when the sun shone the sparkling light would return his spirit to us.

Marie Reay
Australian National University

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VOLUME THREE 1979
PART 2

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PACK-BELLS ON THE ROCK FACE: ABORIGINAL PAINTINGS OF EUROPEAN CONTACT IN NORTH-WESTERN ARNHEM LAND

George Chaloupka

Aboriginal rock paintings and engravings, where they appear as naturalistic representations, portray Aborigines' experience of their own world. As well as pictures of sacred mythological subjects they also portray people, tools and features of the environment at given periods of time. Where paintings are superimposed on each other, they often document change. A sequence of styles in which new weapons replace the old or where animals now extinct in northern Australia are depicted can be associated with the contents of occupational deposits ranging perhaps from 20,000 years ago until the present. On the walls of some rock shelters subjects radically different from older paintings are also depicted, chronicling the arrival of non-Aboriginal people.

A number of paintings depict the visits of 'Macassans' who probably began to visit northern Australia in the eighteenth century. The 'Macassans' sailed southwards from present day Indonesia in their praus to collect beche-de-mer, pearls and tortoise shell; contact with Aborigines was extensive and some Aborigines in turn visited Macassar on their boats. There are many rock paintings depicting aspects of these visits — pictures of praus (boats), smoke houses and personal belongings such as the ornamental kris (knife).

Some time after 'Macassans' had established contact with Aborigines on the northern coasts, Europeans began to settle. Their occupation of the land was seldom peaceful and the gun, the symbol of European violence and conquest, is commonly represented in the rockshelter paintings. Unlike the 'Macassans', the Europeans did not leave at the end of the season, so their influence was more profound. The Aborigines soon began to depict other aspects of European life: the range of new tools (often highly desired by Aborigines) and the new animals introduced.

In the shelters of the Wellington Range and in the other outliers of the Arnhem Land Plateau the history of European contact and settlement between the early 1800s and the mid-1950s is documented through paintings. The survey ships sent to chart the northern coasts and rivers, the supply boats for the first attempts to settle in northern Australia on the Cobourg Peninsula (Port Wellington in Raffles Bay in 1827 and Victoria in Port Essington between 1838 and 1849), and later the supply boats and merchant craft bound for Port Darwin — all are recorded in various places.

At one rock shelter is a panorama of Darwin harbour, complete with jetty, and two boats in midstream, one clearly a paddle steamer. Another site contains an illustration of a steamship which closely resembles that in a photograph of Darwin harbour taken in the 1880s by Police Inspector Foelsche. The painting faithfully reproduces not only the boat but also the goods discharged from the vessel. As boats were the only means of major supply and access to the northern settlements they dominate the contact paintings for some time.

1 On the Aboriginal rock art of this area see Brandl 1973; on aspects of chronology see Chaloupka 1977.
2 See the illustrations, some of which are my own, in Macknight 1976.
3 Recently Lyon and Urry (1979) have suggested that an Aboriginal rock painting near Sydney depicts European cattle which may have escaped from the settlements of the First Fleet in 1790.
4 See also the Victorian Aboriginal engravings of Murray River paddleboats on spear throwers (West 1978).
PACK-BELLS ON THE ROCK FACE

When the settlements on the Cobourg Peninsula were abandoned by Europeans the buffalos brought as food were abandoned and they spread outwards into the Alligator River area where they were exploited for their hides by hunters from the 1890s. The buffalo, and European hunters with their horses, weapons and implements all became new themes in the rock art. Some of the buffalo shooters constructed more permanent dwellings, which were also depicted on the rock shelter walls along with the cattle, goats and pigs they kept.

By the early years of the present century the tradition of rock painting had almost ceased in most areas of north-eastern Arnhem Land. In places, however, drawings were still made and some depict the continuing encroachment of European culture, reflecting an Aboriginal knowledge of wider aspects of Australian life. Pictures of motor vehicles, a four engined aeroplane with a comment on the Qantas Kangaroo Route to London and an outline of Sydney Harbour Bridge can all be assigned to the 1950s.

Of the hundreds of contact paintings covering a wide range of European subjects and activities only a few can be dated and specific historical events identified. One group of paintings which might be identifiable and possibly dated portrays a number of horses and riders. The paintings are located in an extensive shelter at the base of an escarpment in the catchment of Magela Creek in western Arnhem Land. The paintings could depict buffalo hunters, who were active with large teams of horses in this area at the turn of the century. However, if buffalo hunters were depicted it is unlikely that all horses would have riders (as they do in these paintings) for most of their horses were pack animals carrying provisions and hides. I argue here that the paintings (see cover illustration) show a nineteenth century European exploring party in this region, probably that of Leichhardt or McKinlay.

In 1844 Ludwig Leichhardt and his party on their epic journey from Moreton Bay to Victoria Settlement at Port Essington descended from the sandstone plateau of south-western Arnhem Land and followed a tributary which led them out onto the plains of the South Alligator River. They then crossed to the East Alligator, on the way meeting large numbers of Aborigines who were exploiting the resources of the vast wetlands. Relations between Leichhardt and the Aborigines were amicable and groups accompanied the Europeans until they crossed the East Alligator River and moved northwards toward the Cobourg Peninsula.

The second expedition in the area was led by John McKinlay, an explorer of some repute in mid-nineteenth century Australia. In 1866 McKinlay set out on a journey of exploration which was to end six months later in complete failure. The South Australian government had requested him to explore the country between the Adelaide and the Liverpool, Roper and Victoria Rivers and to report on suitable sites for a new capital of northern Australia to replace the unsuccessful settlement at Escape Cliffs.

On 10 January 1866, at the height of the wet season, McKinlay’s party left the settlement of Escape Cliffs, then the only European settlement in northern Australia. The party moved eastwards towards the Liverpool River where they intended to meet the survey ship H.M.S. Beatrice on 1 April. Captain Howard on the Beatrice waited at the rendezvous point but though he learnt of McKinlay’s movements and condition from various Aboriginal groups he encountered he did not meet with the exploration party. Six months after leaving Escape Cliffs McKinlay’s exhausted party managed to reach the East Alligator River, a mere 200 kilometers from their point of departure. The surveyor Edmunds, second in command, left a detailed account of this journey. He records how the expedition, consisting of 15 men, 45 horses and 69 sheep, spent

5 Leichhardt 1847.
the first two months crossing flooded plains and were periodically marooned on areas of higher ground surrounded by streams and bogs made impassable by the wet. After months of toil and privation most of the men were ill with dysentery or suffering from ophthalmia. Their provisions had run out by the time they arrived at a location they named Camp 39.

The sheep were long gone and the staple source of food was fresh or jerked horse meat. The party now found itself in a maze of rocky outliers and swamps. McKinlay grew despondent at the hopelessness of the party's situation and after climbing a peak to obtain a view of the country confided to Edmunds that the view made him 'turn sick and giddy'; he said he could do no more as 'fate is against us', and would tell the men 'that each must do the best he can for himself'. Edmunds disagreed and after four days of argument and reconnaissance the party finally found a way out through the swamps to the East Alligator River. Here, after killing the remaining 27 horses the party made a punt of saplings, laced the dried hides to the framework and sailed down the crocodile-infested river and back along the coast to Escape Cliffs. The rock painting frieze of horses and riders is situated in the vicinity of McKinlay's Camp 39. Members of his party did not record meeting any Aborigines in the area, or mention seeing any signs of their presence, but at that time of year the Aborigines would have been living in shelters high above the inundated valley floor. They would undoubtedly have been aware of the movements of the Europeans and the strange activities of the desperate party.

The paintings of the horses and riders are executed in a dark red pigment, imbedded now into the surface of the slightly protected, hard sandstone wall. There are eight horses and perhaps the trace of a ninth. The horses bear a resemblance to kangaroos, with fore-shortened front and long rear legs. But they are clearly horses: the hooves are distinctly shown and the bushy tails are carefully painted. Around the necks of the horses are bells, commonly used at this period on expeditions to locate animals that wandered off.

There is of course no way to prove that the paintings are of Leichhardt's or McKinlay's party. But Leichhardt passed some 30 kilometers to the north of this site and McKinlay was much closer. Seeing the paintings, I recalled the lines describing McKinlay's expedition written by Ernestine Hill:

Pack-bells in the jungle, ringing the white man's coming to earth's last wilderness . . .

And no doubt the Aborigines heard the bells and came to see, unobserved by the whites, the struggles of European enterprise to control their country.
PACK-BELLS ON THE ROCK FACE

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Segment of the ‘Pack Horse Scene’. Each horse is approximately 2½ metres long.

Photograph by George Chaloupka.

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Bruce Shaw and Jack Sullivan, Turkey Creek, October 1977
Photograph courtesy of Bruce Shaw
Jack Sullivan was born on Argyle station in 1901 to a European father of the same name and a ‘fullblood’ Aboriginal woman of Djamindjung background. He grew up on the station and in his twenties ‘came over to the white side’, a choice which was explicitly presented by European station managers to many ‘half caste’ Aborigines when they came of age to enter fully into the stock work economy. The choice made was irreversible. Thereafter Jack never fully participated in the traditional ‘Law’ of the Aboriginal community to which he was related. A few years after the death of Patsy Durack in 1933, Jack ‘pulled out’ of Argyle station and followed the life style of the ‘bag man’, working on the Dunham River, Mabel Downs and Lissadell stations. In 1971, he retired from station life because of ill-health and set up camp with his fullblood half-brother Bulla Bilingiin on the Kununurra Aboriginal camping reserve (Mirima Village). I met him two years later and together we began recording his life history. Jack is one of the few remaining ‘old identities’ of the East Kimberley. Some anecdotes from his younger days are recorded by Mary Durack. The reminiscences given here refer to the period between 1880 and his early childhood. Jack now lives in comfortable retirement at Turkey Creek.

Editing, transforming the narratives from the spoken to the written word, was relatively extensive. Together we have had more than forty recording sessions, continuing our discussions and revisions while proof reading. I strove to remain faithful to the original spirit and idiom of the accounts, at the same time placing them into standard colloquial English. The reader may detect that parts of the narrative are responses to questions. This was unavoidable, for it is the way in which such material must be gathered, intensively, with care and cross-referencing where possible. Unnecessary questioning and comment was on the whole kept to a minimum, though not always successfully. The following extract from one of the conversations between Jack and I in 1973 serves to illustrate how the original transcript appeared.

Old native bushrangers like?

I THINK SO, YEAH.

Old Major. Was up ere Texas. Not that feller? We didn’t talk about that?

NO WE DIDN’T WE . . .

No but we said about something that one now.

WE WERE GOING TO YEAH.

You know this story, Bulla, if I go wrong, you put me on the track? But what I heard from Sammy’s father see.

MMMM.

You got it on now? [The tape recorder]

YEAH YEAH.

Yeah, ow to start at Major, Kelly broughtim from Darwin. Jack Kelly. Brought Major from Darwin. He reared Major up. And Major got a y’know, bigger an bigger an bigger. An Kelly was a hard man on the boy. Used to belted Major, an y’know hangim up by the tree an all that stunt. Or put it over, throwim in the waterhole or sometime early in the morning or, sometime over night e’ll put im in a big sack bag an hangim up a tree.

MMMM.

* These reminiscences are a slightly abridged version of a chapter in a book-length life history which we have tentatively titled Banggaiyerri: the story of Jack Sullivan.

1 Durack 1935, 1940.
All that stunt y'know, e was a cruel feller this Kelly.

YEAH.

An Major got it y'know, bigger an bigger an stronger an, reckon e got fed up with old Kelly, so he got stuck into old Kelly. He belted old Kelly. See every-time any row Major just go up an slap old Kelly over. Y'know. He was y'know bluffin old Kelly. In them days they don't, didn't like to be any bluffed, like. From the black-feller or anybody. Them old white feller like, they was pretty hard blokes.

WHAT D'YOU MEAN BY BLUFF? STANDING UP TO HIM?
Yeah.

Documenting the lives of such men as Grant Ngabidj, Sandy McDonald and Jack Sullivan is one way in which I reached a greater appreciation of Aboriginal history from the people's perspective. The recording and interpretation of these reminiscences is one of the newer roles being filled by social scientists in this country. It is a form of anti-intellectualism to take the view that recent history, for the span of a little more than an elder's life time, is irrelevant for the present day. Many Europeans appear to hold this assumption, if current affairs discussions in the media are any guide, but recent history cannot be brushed aside. To believe that the historical legacy can have little effect today is the negation of common sense.

I believe one of the results of this movement is that the dichotomy between recent history and 'now' is becoming less sharp. There appears to be a kind of 'new wave', a critique in this country centring upon Aboriginal history from the Aboriginal perspective. Barwick, Urry and Bennett have brought together much of this material for the first time. However, publications on Aboriginal history by Aborigines, with or without European editors, are yet relatively few in number. Twenty-two Aboriginal authors are listed in the section on 'Aboriginal biographies and reminiscences' and fifty-six in the section titled 'Recording social change'. If the editorial contributions of European academics and commentators were removed the list would be considerably shorter. This is clearly strong evidence for a continued need to record Aboriginal history, and it seems to me that there is an important role for the partisan social scientist: the recording and interpretation of reminiscences from Aborigines who are unable through unfamiliarity with English, or illiteracy, incapacity such as age or injury, or because of busy work schedules, to do it alone. Accounts like Jack Sullivan's provide both new information and a new perspective for the writers of Australian history, who rely mainly on European records. Such studies are by no means antiquarian. They can throw light on the complexities of social change in rural areas like the East Kimberley.

Given the circumstances of Jack's life, it would be relatively easy to draw a picture of him as a person of mixed European-Aboriginal descent caught between two cultures. This word 'between' has appeared often enough in books on race relations in Australia to be a cliché. For that reason alone I think some of the assumptions implied in its use should be challenged. Stereotypes are to be distrusted in spite of the 'truths' upon which they are often based. Was Jack 'caught' between the worlds of the 'blackfeller' and the white man? Firstly, Jack's choice was made in response to the attitudes and expectations of all three status categories in the paternal, caste-like milieu in which he lived: fullblood Aborigines, half castes, and white men. Jack belonged to the two overlapping subcultures of fullbloods and half castes, which in turn were subsumed in the subculture of cattle station stockworkers. Because Europeans called the tune politically, half castes tended to identify more nearly with

2 Barwick, Urry and Bennett 1977:126-128; 141-169.
3 For example, Batty 1963; Hilliard 1968; Palmer and McKenna 1978.
THEY SAME AS YOU AND ME

them. Secondly, by his own account Jack led a relatively happy life. Like many of his contemporaries he was a multicultural person. Job satisfactions and human relationships on the whole afforded him immense pleasure and interest, and do so to this day, although they were not without their conflicts. Clearly he did not participate in the activities of his Aboriginal relatives as fully as he might have done; nor did he have many dealings with fullblood Aborigines outside his kinship circle. But these were accepted facts of life. I put the question to Jack recently and this was his response:

Y’know we used to go away workin’ in the yard somewhere. They used to say, “Why don’t you come up to us? You’re workin’ like a white feller”. I went to the boss after that. Then I pulled out like. I was just glad to get away from the mob. [But you still had something to do with Bulla? ...] Oh yeah. Must have friend y’know. Family y’know, never leave them right out. When they want anything they come up to my camp an’ sit down an’ I just givin’ what they want. But I never mix up with all the others.

Reminiscences by Jack Sullivan

I was with my mother in the bush every holiday until I was brought up and over twenty, then they put me among the white people. We left the blackfellers and were with the white men all the time. We did not go down to the boys’ camp; we could not go and talk with them. If you wanted to have a bit of a talk you had to sneak around. A lot of fellers would do that to have a corroboree and the boss or head stockman would not know. They would not let you go and have a bloody talk; the manager and all were shamed. They classed us as white men and we could not go back with the blackfellers. We had to sneak round to get a bit of girl, the same as the white man, instead of camping with them. You might go over and tell the girl to go down and meet you, for you could not go into their camp. You were sacked from the station if you did that, and if you went anywhere else every white man would be up against you: “You no good, you no good; you real blackfeller then”. They used to call us blackfellers straight away if we did anything like that: “Oh you a dog; you a blackfeller. You want to go down an’ joinim”. Yes, once they took you off the blackfellers and put you with the whites you could not go back again.

In those days white men and we half castes treated the blackfeller like a dog. We could go in and belt him or take his stud away for a night. That was why some fellers were speared, some half castes too, through chasing the black girls. The blackfellers would say: “Oh you a white man bugger; you biin leavim us”, and they always had something up against us, all the yellow fellers. They would tell you their opinion today a lot of fellers. Now I do not go and join them playing cards. I cannot. I was brought up as a white and cannot face the blackfeller. I cannot sit down and have a yarn with them. It is all right with my brothers Friday and Bulla but I cannot go out on the corroboree camp and sit down among the blackfellers and have a yarn and play cards. I could go and play with the girls all right — that was the white man’s bloody idea — but I do not join the girls much here, only old Peggy and all those, with whom I might have a joke and a bit of a talk. Peggy was nice, especially when she was young.

I was experienced on the job as a stockman and everything. Breaking in horses or mules was a white man’s job. By and by when yellow fellers got experience they could do it too. They paid me. In those days there was not big wages. I started off with thirty bob a week. Later we got only two pound eight shillings a week as white men for wages. The head stockman got five pounds and the cook I think four pounds. Being a head stockman meant that you had a hold of the game and had a station team young enough to do work. The blackfellers did not get anything as yet, only the white man and the yellow fellers. The boys were only just getting bread and meat in those days; they were under the white men.
There was some reason to hate the blackfellers in my days. I had to work them same as the white men; I had to liven them up. When they did not do what you told them, bang you went, knocked them over and all that. I was a bad bugger when I was in my time like: "Get out an get your bloody horse up. If you sleep over there well I jump the bloody horse on topa you", and that kind of thing. Old Johnny Walker did the same but he was never rough, just growling. I did a little fighting in my time; say, going and getting the calf horses early. Old Bulla was not a savage man with all the blokes who were with him but he used to work them hard.

It was pretty good in my days, peaceful, but in the earlier days when they came in to get Australia the white feller had to fight his way. When they did get a bit of ground to stand on they had to fight the blackfellers to get that land. And then they took the blackfellers afterwards and made them kings or something, to lift up their head and all that. They got a bit of ground, quietened the blackfellers, tamed them down and worked them. When the blackfellers had been made to understand the white man's way they were helping the white man then and fighting these wild ones. They would go up and talk to the wild ones in their lingo: "You wanta come up an me feller workin now. You can't killim bout bullock anything well they shoot you". But a lot of blackfellers would not come in; they wanted to fight them. Well, then they put a bullet in them. But the good blackfellers that came in, well they were all right. If the white man saw that that blackfeller was all right he put him in. If he ran away he would follow him and bring him back. If he ran away again well he followed him and shot him. That was what it was all about in those days. You see, they tamed one another, agreeing with one another. It was mostly before my time, but I saw a lot of it also when I was only a little boy, a few like that, not many. I know that in my time there were a few at Lissadell and one or two at Argyle. I saw them tied up at the post and then taken away the next morning and done in, the bush blacks. They would get a bush black and bring him in.

I think they came out in 1880 or something, Durack and Kilfoyle together from New South Wales. They formed the stations, on Stockade Creek first, and then they shifted over to the Behn only eight miles across when they reckoned Stockade was not good enough or something. Straight across at eight miles old Argyle was, on the Stockade Creek. Argyle and Rosewood were on the same creek when they first started. I suppose they picked out a better spot on the Behn for their cattle and their watering place and all that stunt. I have no idea why it was called Stockade. They were all named in the older days by Durack and Kilfoyle when they first came out. And they were there ever since till they sold out and the homestead went under the water. Things were peaceful only in the middle here. I think there was more murdering way down under and back on both sides. There was a lot of shooting down here in the west at the back of Wyndham way over Kalumburu way and all through there. A few got shot there and a white man was killed and all that, speared. At Mabel Downs

4 See McGrath 1978 for a discussion of the idea of 'taming' in early contacts along the north west Australian frontiers.

5 The Ord River Station was the first East Kimberley homestead to be founded and stocked in 1884. In 1885 the Duracks settled Lissadell. Argyle Downs and Rosewood stations were established in 1886. Wave Hill Station in the Northern Territory (abutting the East Kimberley region) was selected in 1880, and the Victoria River area stocked in 1883 (Durack 1933; Meggitt 1962:19).
They Same as You and Me

Creek they killed six thousand blacks I think, all burned beside the hill there. The mound is still there where they buried them on the side of the ridge. Actually there were three creeks running together. The government now calls it Mabel Creek but it was named Cartridge Creek. Where they cleaned out all the blacks in the early days they reckon there were about six thousand cartridge shells right where they got them, right outside the iron gate there where the crossing is. Old man Bridge told me that, on the map and everything. When Mabel Bridge, one of Joe Bridge's daughters, was born there they named the spring after her and so it changed from Cartridge Creek to Mabel Spring. Everybody, the Bridges, Muckelton and McKenzie all had little blocks there in the early days.

Johnny Durack

When I was a snipe I heard how Johnny Durack got bloody speared here between Argyle and Rosewood and killed, and they went out and fought the blackfellers. In those days you had to have a bloody squirt in your belt all the time because bad blackfellers could meet you anywhere and drive a spear into you; so a white man when he met a blackfeller would pull the gun out and shoot him. One had to win out on one side, the white or black. They all had the wind up on each other, right up to my bloody time. When they started forming the stations, Johnny Durack would ride around from the old station four miles out from Argyle. He had a pack and rode round and round to find the good places for stations. He was in the lead and another feller was driving his pack. He put down to where he was going to cross a creek and that was where he ran into the blackfellers. Instead of frightening them away he straightaway pulled out a gun — bang bang bang bang — and chased one feller down to the creek. The blackfeller ducked around and he passed him, looking out for him, and of course the blackfeller let drive from the side and got him. When his mate found out he got speared he just galloped away leaving the pack horses there. If he had let the blackfellers go it would not have happened, but they all had the bloody wind up. That Durack was speared three miles down at Surveyor's Hole on Farraday Creek and when they got the police and everybody together they went up to where the Waterloo road crossing is now. Before sunrise at five they raided the blackfeller's camp and the fighting was out on the flat. Those were Ngarinman blackfellers. They never ran away from the bullets, they stood and fought. Bullets went and spears went.

6 Number concepts are sometimes difficult to appreciate. Figures such as the 'thousand' cited by Jack would certainly indicate a great many souls. Grant's reference to multiples of twenty in his narrative (see note 11) probably were more realistic. Yet we cannot be sure that large-scale killings did not take place, as acknowledged by Biskup (1973:20) when he writes: 'In East Kimberley ... aboriginal reprisals were not reported until 1890. No one knew even the approximate number of the aborigines but it was believed to be large, perhaps 30,000 or more ... The number of aborigines shot by the settlers, miners ... and the police can only be guessed'. It must be remembered that the Ord River Basin was fertile, with year-round water sources and plentiful game, and that it would have been capable of supporting a relatively dense population. Elkin's (1932:297) estimate for the Kimberley as a whole was 10,000 persons and I suspect a conservative figure for the East Kimberley may have been around 8,000 to 8,000 people. While Biskup's figure does appear inflated, it is salutary. Certainly the number of Aboriginal deaths at the hands of whites was exceedingly high.

7 The spearing of John Durack or 'Big Johnnie' in November 1896 is recounted in part by Mary Durack (1959:299-301). Her report that the reprisal expedition ended inconclusively: 'The party broke up in disgust and whether further more successful reprisal measures were taken for this deed can never be known' (1959:286) stands in marked contrast to the oral tale given here. It is relevant to note Worsley's (1964:5), warning that: 'Difficult as the task may be, it is... often possible to distil history out of folk legend. And it is dangerous to discount the historical value of oral tradition totally...'. These sentiments are echoed by Vansina (1965:186) when he writes that 'The historian using oral traditions finds himself on exactly the same level as historians using any other kind of historical source material'. Moreover, oral traditions 'are sources which can be used for studying a fairly recent period of the past for all kinds of historical research' (1965:160).
They did not know what the bullets looked like. They were not bad blackfellers really, they had to fight for their living, for their country. They reckon, old Boxer told me, that they fought from when the sun rose at daylight — you might as well say five o’clock — till ten o’clock when a policeman named Collins was speared.® Collins Creek Crossing was named after him. It was not one mob of blackfellers involved but they were from everywhere — Rosewood and Spring Creek mobs — a lot round the middle of it where Kildurk station is now. A few blokes had little stations there, like Brand’s Pocket. Jack Beasley and Jack Brand, all of them, had a bit of a place out in the early days. It was a wonder they never got bloody speared.

Philchowski

That was how old Philchowski was speared here too.® It was the only time it was done here. They started fighting here once but they sort of broke it. The silly old bastard saw a mob of blackfellers at a bottle tree all heaped up so he galloped up and pulled out his squirt — bang bang bang bang — as much as to say get out of the way or something. See, when he came to that dinner camp he was half shot, returning with a pack load of grog from Wyndham to Rosewood where he worked. Anyhow, the blackfellers went away and he pulled off there, hobbled his horse out and had his dinner — I do not know whether he had dinner or grog — never thinking about those blackfellers he had fired a shot at, to twist back on him. Of course the old blackfellers had gone away all right, but just down to the creek, and they said: “That feller tryin to fuckin shoot us; we’ll go an spearim”. So Philchowski was just lying back having a dinner hour, reading when they came back and got him, drove the bloody spears into him. Old Wallambain was the blackfeller who killed him. They sure made a job of him then, put the spears into him and took and ate everything, the bones and tucker and left him with none. That was the only killing here. Jim Crisp, one of the stockmen at Rosewood, came down a few days later and found him. Philchowski was a cook at Rosewood. When he saw the camp he sang out, and when there was no answer he rode over and had a look: “Oh e died”. Of course, he was not all smashed but he was ripe, just about stinking there when they found him. Jim Crisp rode on to Ivanhoe.

8 Mary Durack (1959:351-352) separated the spearing of John Durack and Constable Collins by about three years. According to her account, Collins was dispatched in September 1893. However, Jack Sullivan was adamant that the (oral) testimony he heard recounted the two incidents as one. That is, by his account Collins was speared no more than a week after John Durack’s death, in the punitive expedition which followed: ‘When that bloke got speared, in September, this bloke come back and had a look, and they go out an get the blackfellers. That’s the same year, might be only a week after. Collins was with them. When they had the fight Collins got speared then’. (See also Gill 1977.)

9 Rudolph Philchowski, ‘a Count of the German Aristocracy’ (Durack 1931:5) was one of the early identities of the East Kimberley whose chief fame was that he became one of the few Europeans to be speared by Aborigines in that region. This took place near the Eight Mile Creek not far from the present township of Kununurra in July 1913. I collected several corroborative oral versions of his death at the hands of Wallambain. An example is Johnny Walker’s account (collected 1973): ‘Well you see he had his bed . . . When he [Wallambain] killed him he sort of . . . “Hoo”. Like he sort of, well according to their word, what word we heard through them [the oldpeople who recounted the tale], he sort of, “Ohh”. He sort of says, “You black bastards”. He spins around like this. He picked up the revolver: Bang bang bang bang [turning in a circle]. He only got five bullets in it. [Wallambain threw the spear at him?] He killed him first. He sort of fall down. I suppose when he tap him he pull the spear out and he run away. He never left no spear on him, you understand. It must have gone through here, like up here somewhere see. A shovel spear y’know very big, very shovel iron’. Many persons of German nationality were roaming the north of Australia in these years, displaced from their homeland by political conflicts in Europe.
'THEY SAME AS YOU AND ME'

The Duracks

I do not know whether any other Duracks shot blackfellers. These Duracks all here were never cold-blooded men like. It was before my time but I never heard that they had done any blackfellers in. Ambrose Durack would talk another bloke to do it but he never did it himself. It would be on his manager. He might say to a head stockman or somebody: 'What about do that bloke in?' That is all they did. The head stockman or somebody else would hunt away any blackfellers hanging about the run and if they found any good young boys they would bring them home. They used to do that all round the hill, go out for a few days with some tucker and a fly for the bullocks and chase them all out. They called it 'black hunting', chasing those fellers.

And if they could get a good girl when they rounded the camp and chased the mob away they might grab a couple and bring them in to the station to work, or grab a couple of young boys; the old fellers would get away. They would do that at Argyle but I never knew whether they murdered any boy. There was only one time when they grabbed a boy at the house in the night. They may have had a set on this station boy or some blooming thing. They grabbed him, kept him tied up for one day, and the next day they took him down past Hicks Creek junction somewhere and did him in, according to the old boys. They gave him tobacco and told him: "You can get away; go on, get away", but he was giving cheek and would not go. They were bailed up. "What can we do?" Charlie Darcy the white man asked the boys Boxer and old King Charlie, "We can't get away. E want to folle us back an e want to fight us". "Well", old Charlie said, "the best thing to do, putim away". See, to get him out of trouble they just put him away; I think they did that. In those days they reckoned that murdering somebody out in the bush was through the blackfeller Law, by which they sort of murdered one another, half-killing at first. You were not killed straight away. They speared you in the back I heard, knocked the boy down, gave him a few minutes, and as soon as he moved they pulled the spears out, breaking the bottle and leaving it in, and walked away. They would wipe the blood out. That was the Law. And the two little white things you see on top of the milky way at night, feathers or cloth like a white cloud, were their God or some blooming thing in their religion. They talked to those feathers, pointing a little bit of bamboo on the end of their spear if they had no gangala, fire stick. This was made from a soft tree and carried separately in a bundle with the firestick. Then they would sneak away and stop in the grass behind the bushes. The feller would gallop up: "Oh you the bloke kill me?" Another might sing out and give him an order: "Oh somebody kill you or snake bite you, or anything kill you, you finish". That was how they did it. The magic killed him in the bush according to the old blackfellers. So when he came into the station that was why they grabbed him and the white men did him in. The blackfellers did it first, murdered him first, therefore he could not get away. He had to go into the station to meet his bullet to finish him off because they gave him an order.

Lissadell

One feller at Lissadell I think shot a few. I know he split one old blackfeller with a bloody axe across the back; Jerry Durack, one of the Lissadell mob of Duracks. He was a cold-blooded feller. The blackfeller was not killed but crippled for his lifetime. He was living around Wyndham a couple of years after and would come out and frighten the other blackfellers. Old Humpy-backed Tommy they used to call him. It gave him a blooming short humpy back on. I do not know what happened over that. They told me after but I never took much notice being only a little feller. And there was the story about how two boys Charcoal and Nicholson were shot there at Dunham Gate on Lissadell. Jimmy the head boy shot Charcoal and old Daylight shot Nicholson. The two boys came down and took Jimmy's and Daylight's wives, who were nice and bloody young in those days, while they were out mustering.
Jimmy and Daylight had everything ready on the dray, a drum of kerosene and a stack of wood, and they burned the bodies to hide them from the police. Lake Hall was the manager at that time and M.J. Durack who was away came back a week later with two mules. He questioned Jimmy, who said that nothing had happened, that the two boys had run away. But M.J. said: 'You know where they are? Burnt down at Dunham Gate'. However, he let them off. Those other boys had made some trouble but they should have been let off.

Ningbing

They were shooting on Ningbing all round, every settler and white man when they came into the country. I heard about those boys being shot at Ningbing. Grant told me. He was only a little snipe when his mob were shot. Paddy picked him up. He was going to be shot too but Paddy spoke to Billy Weaber or someone. Grant's sister was older than Grant and Paddy wanted her. When my uncle brought me down to Ivanhoe with old Jimmy Walker she was only a little girl somewhere around twelve years old. By then she was Billy Weaber's stud. I saw Billy Weaber in 1925 at the Six Mile. He had a big curling moustache. All those fellers went away or died. Billy Weaber went blind and died in Queensland.

That was how people were murdering one another. Instead of singing out or something those blokes would let drive. It was their own fault but it was to protect themselves. Oh it was a hard thing till they bloody quietened the blackfellers. It never happened to me because I was only a snipe, but by jeez I was windy all the time. I saw it and I heard it. There was an outlaw named Pigeon at Winjina Gorge down Fitzroy Crossing way but I do not know a lot about him.

Major

I heard a little about a bushranger named Major at Texas Downs when I was only a kid, but he never came over here. I was told by blokes how it started. The story was well-known then. Major was the only blackfeller who went like that in this country. He was a stock boy till a bad man named Kelly started it. Major was a fullblood, Wadaman feller. This story about him I heard from Sammy Mulga's father.

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10 Jack and I established the date as about 1917-18.

11 Grant Ngabidj was a fullblood Aboriginal man belonging to the Gadjerong language group, a 'tribe' located traditionally on the northern seaboard of the East Kimberley between the Cambridge Gulf (W.A.) and the Keep River (N.T.). He was born around 1904 and died in July 1977. William Weaber, the station manager, and his confreres from Queensland took up Ningbing Station in 1907-08 (Lands and Survey Department, W.A., File 3115/64, 1964, Ningbing Station, Hooker Estates Ltd). Grant witnessed these men round up many of his local group; most were shot after he and his mother and sister were removed from the scene. Thereafter he was brought up on Ningbing and Carlton Hill stations. Like many of his contemporaries he began droving and other stock work when very young. His accounts revealed an activity and vitality of Aboriginal culture unsuspected by most Europeans in the area, which was already influenced by the 'feudal' system of the cattle stations. His adult life in the 1920s was violent, but became more settled in the following decade. In 1970 he moved to the camping reserve at Kununurra. I met him then but it was not until 1973 that we began to collaborate on his life history. Sadly, he died before the final completion of his book, soon to be published by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.

12 Discussing colonialism, William Willis Jr (1969:143) has remarked appropriately that: 'there is heroism in the struggle against white rule'. It is likely that the number of Aboriginal reprisals against white dominance were greater than is revealed in the European histories. Aboriginal 'bushrangers' such as Pigeon in the West Kimberley (1894), Major in the East Kimberley (1908) and Nemalak in the Victoria River Downs area (1932) are part of the oral tradition among the Aborigines of those regions today. I was privileged once to witness a histrionic re-enactment of Pigeon's exploits during a secular corroboree held at Kununurra camping reserve. Pigeon's career has been described by Biskup (1973:3), Durack (1941:14-16), Idriess (1952) and Haydon (1911:318-325).
Jack Kelly brought Major in from Darwin, reared him up, and he grew bigger and bigger. Kelly was a hard man on the boy. He used to belt Major and all that stunt, or throw him in a waterhole early in the morning. Sometimes overnight he would put him in a big sack bag and hang him up in a tree. He was a cruel feller this Kelly. And Major got bigger and bigger and stronger, and reckoned he got fed up with Kelly, so he got stuck into him and belted him. Every time there was any row, Major just got up and slapped old Kelly over. He was you know bluffling him, and in those days they did not like being bluffed by a blackfeller or anybody, those white fellers; they were pretty hard blokes. Anyhow, there was a policeman named Jock Miller who had resigned and was going to go away. He came to Kelly’s stock camp, and Kelly spoke to the copper. “Well”, the copper said, “I can’t very well do this; I’m resigned”. “Yeah, but . . .” he said — I think he must have paid the copper or something — “well deal to im before you go away”. So they tied Major up to a tree and cut a chap, a short bit of stick, to whale him. The copper said: “Oh he might see me do it; I’ll blindfold im”. They blindfolded Major and as soon as that was done he handed the stick to old Kelly. See, his boss Kelly was the bloke who really dealed to him. With the stick he whaled Major, whaled him, whaled him, and when he finished he handed the stick back to the copper and walked back and sat down. The copper came and stood, making out he was knocked up from belting him, but he was just putting it on. Then he pulled the blindfold off: “Now you know, Major, that a bit of a lesson like. It not my fault, Kelly’s”.

“Oh well”, Kelly said, “what about takin im down with you far as the Six Mile? When you go on the boat you can sendim back”. So the policeman took Major down with the chains to the Wyndham Six Mile, and when he got there he kept Major in his camp. In those days the blacks were pretty touchy then, wild like along the river here, and this copper said to Major: “Here’s a rifle Major. You’re a pretty good, sensible boy. Here the gun, an here’s half a packet of bullets. That protect you back to Texas. You might get killed on the road, I’ll lend you the gun — you can handim back to Kelly when you get there — to save you get killed on the road”. And he turned round and told Major: “You know that day that you gota hidin?” “Yes” , Major said, “yes”. He went on: “Not me that give you the hidin. Your boss gave you the hidin. He the bloke that deal to you”. Well he should not have told Major that eh? He said: “I’m goin away now; I’m goin on the boat. You were a pretty good boy. You helped me on you know, here an there”. He knew he was a beautiful good boy, this Major, and he was not for his boss. The copper was on Major’s side because he was going away. The copper stopped there and the next day he got on the boat and went away, and Major started home then back to Texas on foot. Oh he must have gone to some stations along here, Lissadell perhaps, and on to Texas. And he made up his mind: “I’ll shoot the old bugger”. That was his start as a bushranger. He went up there to old Growlagully station on this side of Texas, where Kelly had a station, arriving in the morning. A couple of old girls were there, sensible girls from Darwin or Queensland I think. Old Naula from Queensland was there. According to the tale, the cook blew off to the goat yard to milk the goats and Major raised the gun and shot him in the arm somewhere. I do not know whether he shot him dead. We saw it in a West Australian paper like a dictionary later on when a bloke named old Sandy picked it up over here

Worsley (1964:30) has remarked upon mental disorders caused by colonial warfare and colonisation. The idea of a ‘colonial pathology’ applies both ways. Many of the colonizers appear to have been little more than thugs. With the exploration of the north it became common practise to ‘adopt’ Aboriginal children to be trained as personal servants and as stockworkers on the sheep and cattle stations. Northern New South Wales and Queensland were initial sources for child taking, since by the 1880s the indigenous ‘tribes’ had already been decimated and individuals unattached to kinsfolk were wandering the countryside — for example, the adoptions of Nipper, Boxer and Ulysses by the Duracks (Durack 1959:330). Later the Aborigines who drifted to Darwin provided a pool of labour.
at Gum Creek, near the pump at Cross Key when I was on Rosewood; but I knew
the story before the book. I do not know who wrote it. Anyway, Kelly heard the shot
and sang out to the girls: “Who that?” “That’s your boy now, Major. Major comin.
Go away an lock yourself, don’t come out”. They saw Major coming up the creek,
“We’ll feed you in there”. “Oh”, and he locked himself in the house. Major hung
around there for a few days, and this old Naula told him: “Look young feller, more
better you go away; don’t you maka trouble. If you shoot your boss you got more
worse y’see. You more better go away. You go away”. That old woman had grown
Major up too. She was his old grandmother who came with him from Queensland.
They were on Kelly’s side those old gins, all the time; that was how they saved him.
Otherwise he would have been shot dead. That was Rosie, old Naula. Those Queens­
land girls used to carry a bloody squirt; I have seen them. They were allowed to
carry them. In those days the blackfellers were wild and if any one of them lived by
you or me we would be allowed to carry a gun, part-castes and any old girl too who
was sensible. In those days the old girls were hard on the blacks too. They would
string them up, flog a man, young boys with a whip to make them work for the boss.
Half castes had a better life than the fullbloods.

So Major went away, hanging around in the bush, and he came down to Black­
feller’s Creek between Lissadell and Turkey Creek. Old Blackfeller Creek station
crosses the main road to Hall’s Creek about eight or nine miles down from Turkey
Creek. It was the outstation to Lissadell according to the old fellers. Major picked up
a few boys and sneaked down onto two blokes there early in the morning and killed
them. He whaled one bloke with a wheel spoke — old George Fettel the caretaker —
and when the cook jumped out he hit him across the head with a hammer or some­
thing. He picked up more ammunition, guns and tucker from there and with a couple
of boys they took all the girls from there into the bush. They went to Violet Valley
and stayed for more than a year. The others had to go with him because he had the
gun.

Major hung about in a cave on a big hill in Growlagully country where they
could not get to him. He made a ladder or something which he could pull up so that
nobody could climb up, and put all his girls up there. By gee he was a tricky bloke!
He would sneak away and shoot a kangaroo or a bullock and bring them back and have
a feed up there with all his wives and a couple of old blackfellers. From the top he
could watch out all the time and people could not come round on him from the other
side. This was from out at Spring Creek, now Texas Downs country, hanging around
the Djaru people. Major was brought up Djaru and half-Gidja, half and half. The
Djaru people were at the top end of the Nine Mile way at Mistake Creek and around
Turkey Creek and Texas they all talked Gidja.

After one or two years Major left that blooming big hill. He spoke the Wadaman
language and, silly bugger, he wanted to go back to Darwin, through Wave Hill. If he
had stayed on that big hill he would still be there. He had his cousin-brother at
Rosewood here, and they reckon he came in there one night and told big Darwin
Neville: “I’m goin back now cousin. Give me a hand shake”. And he gave him a
hand shake. “That’s the last I see you. I think I’ll be shot”. I do not know what
brought it to his mind when he said that. “In a few days”, he said, “I’ll be leavin
Growlagully goin across to my country. I’ll be shot between my country an there.
They’ll catch me there now. Y’see I gotta go away. I’m fed up now. I don’t give a
damn hand about be shot or not. I done me day, I shot a few whites” — those two he
killed at Blackfeller Creek and the one at Growlagully.

He went back towards the Nine Mile that night after seeing his cousin. That was
the time he must have started to come across. Walking all the time, never riding a
horse, Major went across up the river to Red Butte, and that was where they found his
tracks. The bloody Wyndham, Hall’s Creek, Turkey Creek and Wave Hill police were
out looking for him, all the police boys and stockmen, the managers I suppose, a big
mob on his trail. He went across from Red Butte over the river on to the Spring Creek side, but not to Spring Creek — further up across to the Nine Mile — and out into the open then. He should have kept to the hills where he would have been safe. The Nine Mile is on the road going up to Ord River from Spring Creek. It is a highway now. When he shifted across and camped half-way they were on his wheel then. Next morning at sunrise on a little Nine Mile jump-up they got him. They fought and fought for a bloody good while. They shot a couple of boys down and some others ran away. And Major shot a bloody policeman through the ears. They got the other two boys first, shot down, but never old Major. He was behind an antbed with bullets hitting here and there. One of the old girls was loading the gun for him. He had a forty-four rifle then and I think a pistol too, six-shooters those old guns. They fought till they got him. They ended up shooting the old gin, who was loading the gun, through the bub. That buggered her, and one feller sneaked around and got him, shooting him in the arm. When that happened he could no longer load his gun. He lifted up his hands: "You got me", and they walked up and did him in. They shot him little by little — it was not a clean death — and cut off his hand and took it back. They could have taken him back alive, poor bugger.14

Major had two boys with him, and himself and five or six wives. One of those old girls only died two or three years back — Nancy the last one who died from Bow River; that was a long time she was living and she was not grey-haired at all. Her son Jimmy is around somewhere. I do not remember the year Major was shot because I was only a snipe. You might as well say 1905 or 1906. That is all I know about Major, what I heard from the old people. In the end he could not get his own master. He wanted to get old Jack Kelly his boss but there was no chance. Kelly always had his partners, like that old old gin. Only for that old girl who reared up Major, saved his life.

14 It is instructive to compare this oral version with three documentary sources: Fanning's original report contained in a West Australian Police Letterbook (1908-1910), a newspaper article written by Mary Durack (1932:7), and a brief mention in Buchanan (1934:168-171). If we attempted to establish beyond a doubt the reliability of one version over another, we would confront the difficulties of individual reporting and interpretation that are illustrated so well in the classic film 'Rashomon'. The rifle duel in which Major died took place in September 1908. The oral history related by Jack mentions irregularities in Major's death, but these were not revealed in the report of Constable Fanning (who headed the search party), nor by Durack or Buchanan. In these written testimonies descriptions of the final shoot-out are abbreviated. Vansina insists that social and cultural context affects the content of oral (and written) tales, and that 'Traditions are altered, more or less consciously, to fit in with the cultural values of the time' (1965:96). For example, the tone of Fanning's report is self-congratulatory: 'The jury added a rider to the effect we consider great credit is due to Constable Fanning for the most able manner in which he carried out his Duty under great and dangerous difficulties' (West Australian Police Letterbook 1908-10: 32). According to this source, there was a running battle. Major was wounded in the right wrist but could still use his rifle. Interestingly, Fanning declared that the woman Naula ('Knowla') was present (it was she who was wounded in the right side of the breast) and two other Aboriginal men (Dibbie and Nipper) were killed during this punitive expedition. Durack's version stressed two themes which are to be found in many of her other writings, feminine intrigue and 'savagery' versus 'civilisation': thus it was a jilted girl-friend named Biddy who purportedly betrayed Major, and the outlaw himself is painted as having 'the mind of a civilised man at war with the heart of a savage ...'. In Durack's version Major did not surrender and Naula died soon afterwards. Similarities in the description of the shooting, and the mis-spelling of 'Knowla', suggest that Durack may have used the police report as her main source. Jack Sullivan's oral version shifts the moral emphasis, extolling Major's courage and providing justification for his hatred of Europeans, Jack Kelly in particular. But all three narratives contain a common core of agreement on 'facts' and they are paradoxically complementary in the negative evidence they contain.
White men did not understand the blackfellers much. I have an old book about how the white man came out in the early days, how they formed Brisbane, and Melbourne in Victoria. There were only humpies and nothing else. You could see the river where they were, and they came out on a little launch to get themselves a place. And the next time you looked, opening at another page, you could see the bridge over that same place. I can bloody nearly read it. I heard the story before about when they first saw the white men over here now when they started coming out. You could see it in that old book where the blackfellers met the white men and everything. They got a little bit tame and although they wanted to kill this and kill that one, I think the leader blackfellers must have studied that they were the same humans as you and me — even though I am a different colour — and they left the hand up of their own tribe: “Now don’t kill this man”. They must have said that: “They same as you and me”. You can see how they started off all in that book, getting old tomahawks and scissors, old knives, a bag of flour, tobacco, tea and sugar. It is worthwhile to read that.

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THOMSON TIME

Athol Chase

During March 1979 four Aboriginal men from Lockhart River, Queensland, visited the National Museum of Victoria. Their journey, sponsored by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, was the result of their request to examine artefacts and photographs collected by Donald F. Thomson in this area of eastern Cape York during his fieldwork from 1928 to 1933. This material forms part of the extensive Donald Thomson Collection held at the museum.

Dr Thomson is well remembered by older Lockhart people. 'Thomson time', as it is known, refers to a critical period in the history of the Umpila and Kuuku Ya'u people who today are part of the Lockhart community. This period is recognized as the last time of bush living, when small remnant groups resisted pressure to move into the then newly formed Lockhart River mission, and chose instead to remain in their homelands along the coast. Thomson is therefore remembered today as having worked with the last of the 'bush people' — those whose knowledge and expertise was fully traditional and little affected by the contact process.

For some time Lockhart people have been aware that a collection of artefacts and photographs existed. Some of Thomson's writings with photographs of ceremonies had reached the settlement over the years, and visiting anthropologists have provided other evidence. Indeed, older people remember Thomson's interest in gathering artefacts. From the time of my first visit in 1971 Lockhart men had asked where the collection was, who had access to it, and what it was used for.

Today, older men and women at Lockhart believe their distinctive culture is in a precarious situation, and feel real concern about the loss of traditional knowledge. Throughout their settlement history the various European administrations have been unsympathetic to their traditional life style and sought instead to implement assimilationist policies. In recent years the rapid disappearance of old people with pre-mission experience has meant that expert knowledge of such matters as ceremony and land tenure is becoming severely restricted. Their concern has caused a number of requests to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies for assistance in revisiting homelands and recording territorial affiliations. Several visits have been carried out. Lockhart men have been equally concerned about the performance of initiation ceremonies. Although these rituals have continued, there is concern about the decline of specialist knowledge needed for the manufacture and use of certain artefacts which are critical to correct performance.

The trip to Melbourne by Jimmy Doctor, Billy Clarmont, Mick Omeenyo and Roy Larsen was made with the expressed intention of examining Thomson Collection material related to these ceremonies. The visitors were particularly concerned to learn exactly what was in the collection, who was claiming ownership of it, how access to the material was controlled and what information on ritual could be retrieved from the objects made so long ago. Although many of these matters are still being thought over, the visitors expressed appreciation for the extraordinary care given to the collection and the formal safeguards placed upon the sacred material by the National Museum.

What they had not expected to find was the extensive collection of photographs relating to other dimensions of life besides ceremony. They were confronted with a detailed visual documentation of the life of their people fifty years ago. As an anthropologist visiting the museum with them I could share something of their emotion in seeing — perhaps for the first time — those people whose names are still remembered in the vivid oral history of this community.
Today ‘legitimate custodianship’ is an issue for museums around the world, a complex issue being seriously discussed by curators and the communities whose past is recorded in museum collections. Curators everywhere are re-thinking the static approaches to display and preservation which prevailed in the past, and discovering that visiting ‘experts’ can add much to the documentation of material collected long ago.

This visit to the National Museum, in my view, suggests some of the benefits of co-operation between communities and curators. The Lockhart visitors clearly saw this museum collection as a reservoir of information about their culture, information thought to be lost but now available for use. This regained knowledge can be applied to current activities, in particular the formal ceremonies still important to this community. The stored information can also be used to enrich the present generation’s perceptions of their own history and identity. One of the first reactions of this group was to request copies of certain photographs so that younger people can ‘learn’ the past and its people.

This community (and others) have found that the National Museum and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies are sympathetic to the Aborigines’ wish to preserve — and utilise — their heritage. Certainly this museum’s response to Aboriginal concerns has demonstrated that curators and Aborigines have common interests, and that collections can be used in new ways. All of us who shared this rediscovery of the past felt that the visit was best described in a comment made afterwards by one of the Lockhart men: ‘Too many things to think about now’.

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY

Lockhart River visitors examining the Donald F. Thomson Collection:
(Left to right): Roy Larsen, Peter Ucko, Jimmy Doctor, Athol Chase, Billy Clarmont, Mick Omeenyo, Alan West (Curator of Anthropology)
Photograph courtesy of National Museum of Victoria
Ethnographic film-making is almost as old as cinema itself. In 1877 Edison, in America, perfected his phonograph, the world's first machine for recording sound — on fragile wax cylinders. He then started experimenting with ways of producing moving pictures. Others in England and France were also experimenting at the same time. Amongst these were the Lumière brothers of Paris. In 1895 they perfected a projection machine and gave the world's first public screening. The cinema was born. The same year Felix-Louis Renault filmed a Wolof woman from west Africa making pots at the Exposition Ethnographique de l'Afrique Occidentale in Paris. Three years later ethnographic film was being shot in the Torres Strait Islands just north of mainland Australia.

This was in 1898 when Alfred Cort Haddon, an English zoologist and anthropologist, mounted his Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to the Torres Strait. His recording equipment included a wax cylinder sound recorder and a Lumière camera. The technical genius of the expedition, and the man who apparently used the camera, was Anthony Wilkin. It is not known how much film he shot; unfortunately only about four minutes of it still exists. It is the first known ethnographic film to be shot in the field anywhere in the world. It is of course black and white, shot on one of the world's first cameras, with a handle you had to turn to make the film go rather shakily around. The fragment we have shows several rather posed shots of men dancing and another of men attempting to make fire by friction. Haddon's wax cylinder recordings, or those that survived, were deposited with the British Institute of Recorded Sound, London, in 1955 but it seems no work has been done on them.

The first major existing contribution to ethnographic film-making in Australia is that of Sir Walter Baldwin Spencer. As a young man of only twenty-six Baldwin Spencer came to Australia in 1887 to take up the position of foundation Professor of Biology at Melbourne University. A few years later he made his first scientific expedition into Central Australia. In Alice Springs, which was then a tiny telegraph station, he met Frank Gillen, who was in charge of the station. Gillen had a deep interest in, and respect for, the Aranda Aborigines around Alice Springs. As a result of this meeting, Spencer and Gillen became firm friends and commenced a joint study of the Aborigines which lasted for many years. Together they went deep into Aranda country, participating in the sacred life that is normally kept strictly from outsiders.

In 1900 Haddon, now back from the Torres Strait, wrote from Dublin to Baldwin Spencer in Melbourne. After congratulating him on the anthropological work he was doing, Haddon went on:

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1 This paper is not a definitive account of ethnographic film-making in Australia; my aim is to give a broad general survey only. It is based upon a talk which I gave to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies Ethnographic Film Conference, Canberra, May 1978. That talk was liberally illustrated with excerpts from the work of the film-makers I discussed. A draft of this present paper was circulated at the Symposium on Visual Anthropology of the Xth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Delhi, December 1978.

2 De Brigard 1975:15.

3 Personal communications, Dr G.E. Kearney, Department of Psychology, University of Queensland, and Mr Peter Gathercole, Curator, University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge.

4 Personal communication, Peter Gathercole.
You really must take a Kinematograph or a biograph or whatever they call it in your part of the world. It is an indispensable piece of anthropological apparatus . . . I have no doubt your films will pay for the whole apparatus if you care to let some of them be copied by the trade . . . I hope you will take a phonograph . . . You will have difficulty in getting your natives to sing loud enough.\footnote{Haddon 1900 MS.}

Baldwin Spencer took Haddon's advice and in 1901, on his fifth trip to Central Australia, he took amongst his bulky equipment a large Edison phonograph and a Warwick Cinematograph which together were regarded as 'magnificent equipment'\footnote{Moyle 1959:8.} as well they might be — cinema was still only six years old, still in its infancy. To go filming in the heat and dust of Central Australia today with all our modern lightweight equipment is still something of a technical nightmare. In Baldwin Spencer's day it must have been infinitely worse, travelling by horse and buggy or camel with such cumbersome and delicate equipment.

On his trip in 1901 Baldwin Spencer used his Edison phonograph (his wax cylinder recorder), for the first time a few days before he tried out the cinematograph. On 22 March 1901 he wrote in his diary, 'The phonograph is a beauty'.\footnote{Moyle 1959:9.} Several of his original fragile wax cylinder recordings still exist and have been successfully transferred on to tape.\footnote{For full account of Baldwin Spencer's recordings see Moyle 1959.}

On 4 April 1901 he tried out his movie camera for the first time. He recounts the event in his book \textit{Wanderings in wild Australia}:

There was a native camp out in the scrub . . . containing some thirty or forty men and women who had come in to perform a rain ceremony . . . This rain dance gave us the opportunity of experimenting with the cinematograph. It was a Warwick machine, and, if not actually the first, was amongst the earliest cinematographs to be used in Australia. It was certainly the first used amongst the Aboriginals. A diagram showed how to fix the film in the machine, so as to make it run round, but no instructions had been sent out as to what rate to turn the handle, so I had to make a guess at this. The focussing glass was, of necessity, small and you could only get a sideways and not a direct view of it, but after a little practice with a blank spool, I felt equal to the first attempt in real life . . . We had no idea what the Rain Ceremony was going to be like, so that all I could do was stand the machine on one side of the ceremonial ground, focus for about the centre of it and hope for the best. The lens allowed for a fair depth of focus, but the field of action covered by the natives was large and I had not, as in more recent machines, a handle to turn making it possible to follow up the actors if they moved about very much from side to side . . . When the performers came on to the ground I was ready for them, and started grinding away as steadily as I could at the handle, though at first the temptation was great to vary the rate of turning to suit the rapid or slow movements of the performers . . . The chief difficulty was that the performers every now and then ran off the ground into the surrounding scrub, returning at uncertain intervals of time, so that now and again, in the expectation of their suddenly reappearing, and fearful of missing anything of importance, I ground on and on, securing a record of a good deal of monotonous scenery but very little ceremony.\footnote{Spencer 1928:1, 359-360; further details of the actual filming may be found in Gillen's diary entries (Gillen 1968).}
ETHNOGRAPHIC FILM-MAKING

Today we have preserved some 7,000 feet of 35mm film shot by Baldwin Spencer on two trips: the first in 1901 in the desert country of Central Australia and the second in 1912 in tropical Northern Australia. Considering the conditions under which the material was shot and the fact that it was not transferred from the original nitrate negative until 1966, it is remarkably well preserved. The original negative appears not to have been edited.10

Spencer donated his film to the National Museum of Victoria in 1916 and there it remained in the museum vaults for over forty years. To the museum it was of course a treasure but also, as time passed, an embarrassment for they knew they were sitting on a potential incendiary bomb of unstable decaying nitrate film. Mercifully the museum staff declined to take the advice of the Chief Fire Officer of Melbourne to have it destroyed. I came across the film in 1966 when the director of the museum took me to a shed out the back. Here, for safety, were stored two tin trunks and in them, to my utter surprise, were Baldwin Spencer's original rolls of nitrate negative, still in their original cardboard boxes. With the agreement of the museum trustees the Commonwealth Film Unit (as Film Australia was then called) took over this material and supervised the making of a safety duplicate master from as much of it as possible. Some had disintegrated into jelly and some was just too badly shrunk to print but most of it was saved. Duplicate negatives now reside with the National Museum of Victoria, the National Library of Australia, and Film Australia.

The 1901 material covers sequences from thirteen different Aranda ceremonies. Baldwin Spencer described the material as 'the first attempt made to secure cinematograph records of native ceremonies: some of the negatives were quite good, others indifferent'.11 In fact some ceremonies were extremely well photographed, with individual shots of long duration in the best traditions of observational cinema. They appear mainly to be unposed and capture well the intensity of the individual performers.12

The 1912 material was shot in the northern part of the Northern Territory around Oenpelli, Flora River, and on Bathurst Island. Again it mainly covers ceremonial activities. Baldwin Spencer now had a panning head on his tripod so he could follow his subjects as they moved about. On Bathurst Island he filmed his longest sequence, of part of a Pukamuni ceremony (the Tiwi mortuary rites in which carved posts are erected around the grave of a dead person). It is interesting to compare this footage with very recent films of the same ceremony.13

On the 1912 expedition Baldwin Spencer also tried to film some domestic scenes but without much success. He explains why:

I spent some time trying to get cinematograph pictures of camp life. It would be quite easy to do this with a small hand machine of which, after a while, they would take little notice, but a large one attracts too much attention and makes their actions rather unnatural.14

One wonders what Baldwin Spencer might have been able to achieve if he had had our modern synchronous light-weight cameras and recorders.

10 In 1966 I made a 34 minute edited version of the Baldwin Spencer material under the title Aborigines of Central and Northern Australia 1901, 1912, for a Retrospective of Australian Ethnographic Film at the 1967 Festival dei Popoli in Florence. This film is not generally available. Rights to the Baldwin Spencer material reside with the National Museum of Victoria, Melbourne.

11 Spencer 1928:I, 374.

12 Much of Baldwin Spencer's footage is of secret/sacred ceremonies and should not be screened publicly. The same applies to other films containing secret/sacred material mentioned here. Extent of restriction is indicated in the filmography appended to this paper.

13 Mourning for Mangatopi by Curtis Levy, 1974, and Goodbye old man by David McDougall, 1977, both for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.

14 Spencer 1928:II, 900.
In 1917 William J. Jackson filmed a number of scenes of Aboriginal life on the North-West Scientific and Exploration Expedition to the West Kimberley. Attempts to locate the film footage have not been successful, although documentation relating to the film is held in the Battye Library, Perth. In 1922 Dr Brooke Nicholls, a Melbourne dental scientist, filmed people belonging to the Wonkonguru (now spelled Wang-ganuru) tribe living in north-eastern South Australia or possibly south-west Queensland. One print of his material was located in 1966 in the Mitchell Library, Sydney. So far as is known it was the only print in existence. A negative has now been made from this. The print consisted of four 3-minute edited films. They belonged to a series of films entitled *Native Australia*, apparently distributed by Kodak (Australasia) Pty Ltd. The four films are individually called *Australian Aborigines: Corroborees; Women at work and play; Implements and weapons; and Arts and crafts*. With the films went printed notes prepared by Brooke Nicholls 'the well-known travel-lecturer and naturalist [who] has spent many years in the study of the native tribes and wild life of Australia'. The films, and their accompanying notes, were obviously designed for a popular audience.

Brooke Nicholls gets considerably closer to his subjects with his camera than did Baldwin Spencer but I have the feeling that, unlike Baldwin Spencer, he viewed his subjects as objects of curiosity rather than as human beings to be respected. Many of the written titles that are inserted between sequences, for which he was presumably responsible, are at best fanciful and at worst objectionable; for example a shot of a man digging for roots is preceded by 'The Australian Aborigines are the nearest living relatives of the extinct anthropoid ape-like man'. Nevertheless Brooke Nicholls has given us a valuable film record from an area not filmed before, or possibly since, by ethnographic film-makers. His films cover a variety of scenes, albeit all rather short, including ritual, food gathering and preparation by men and women, games, making of artefacts, and armed combat between two men.

One of the most important contributions to Australian ethnographic film-making came during the 1930s. Between 1930 and 1937 the Board for Anthropological Research of the University of Adelaide, in close co-operation with the South Australian Museum, carried out a series of anthropological expeditions mainly in Central Australia. During these expeditions a remarkable collection of film records was made with a total running time of over ten hours.

The country where most of these films were made, the Western Desert of Central Australia, was then largely unexplored by white Australians and many hundreds of Aborigines still lived a completely traditional nomadic life there. It was a country far off the beaten track, where camels were a much surer means of transport than the motor trucks of the day.

None of the men involved in making these films was a professional film-maker and indeed few of them were trained anthropologists. Most were scientists and academics from other disciplines who were intensely interested in Australian Aboriginal culture and who realised the value of film for ethnographic recording. Norman B. Tindale was Curator of Anthropology at the South Australian Museum, Dr T.D. Campbell was a dental scientist at the University of Adelaide, O.E. Stocker was a Sydney businessman and a keen and talented amateur cinematographer, and Dr H.K. Fry (Dip. Anthrop., Oxford, 1912) was a medical practitioner in Adelaide. With little money and a minimum of film stock and equipment this band of enthusiasts produced

15 Robinson 1977.
16 Nicholls, *Native Australia* and unpublished MS.
17 Nicholls, *Native Australia*. 

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one of the most significant contributions to ethnographic film-making in Australia: Macdonald Downs expedition 1930, Cockatoo Creek expedition 1931, Mt Liebig expedition 1932, Mann Range expedition 1933, Ernabella expedition 1933, Diamantina expedition 1934, Warburton Range expedition 1935, Coorong expedition 1937.

They filmed a great range of activities in remarkable detail: daily life, food collecting and preparation, making of artefacts, studies in body movement and a great deal of sacred ceremonial life. They used a mobile camera and a full range of shots from long shot to extreme close up. Much of their film work is sensitive and of high quality. It reveals, with an extraordinary feeling of immediacy and veracity, the beauty and excitement of desert life.

In 1940 Charles P. Mountford, who was Honorary Associate in Ethnology at the South Australian Museum, made an expedition by camel south-west of Alice Springs into the country around Ayers Rock in Central Australia. Here he met a group of desert Aborigines with whom he carried out anthropological research.

He took a movie camera with him and with little knowledge of film-making he shot what was to become one of the most popular films ever made in Australia. It was called *Walkabout* (originally titled *Brown men and red sand*). It was in colour, and was, as far as I know, the first Australian ethnographic film to have a sound track added to it at the editing stage. The film was edited and narrated by Mountford. Its style is that of a personal travelogue, with plenty of scenes of the expedition and the country around the spectacular and gigantic monolith Ayers Rock. But the film also contains much detailed ethnographic material on the lives of the Aborigines of the area.

In 1942 Mountford returned to Central Australia for further anthropological research and filming. From this expedition he made *Tjurunga*, again in colour and with his own narration. This also has had immense popular success. In 1974, at the request of people living in the areas of filming, certain sequences of sacred/secret life were removed from *Walkabout* and *Tjurunga* and the two films were combined into one under the title *Walkabout* (1974 version). This re-editing was carried out by Film Australia which had inherited the safekeeping and distribution of these films from the old Department of Information. In 1948 Mountford accompanied a scientific expedition to Arnhem Land in Northern Australia and shot material which was made into *Aborigines of the sea coast* and *Arnhem Land*.

In 1947 the first ethnographic film on Australian Aborigines to be produced by professional film-makers was shot in Northern Australia. It was called *Primitive people — the Australian Aborigines*. The production company was Gaumont British Instructional Films but the location unit was entirely Australian. The director cameraman was veteran cinematographer George Heath; his assistant and the film's narrator was the then young Peter Finch. The film was shot around Arnhem Bay in north east Arnhem Land, and shows traditional life in the bush. By 1947 many of the people in the film were, in fact, living for at least some of their time at Yirrkala and other isolated church mission stations in the area.

The film is in three parts: *The nomads*, *The hunt* and *The corroboree*. The first part shows excellent scenes of daily life. The second part covers preparations for a wallaby hunt and the hunt itself. This is somewhat marred by intercutting between the hunters in Arnhem Land and their supposed prey in country that looks suspiciously like south-eastern Australia. *The corroboree* contains some important scenes of mortuary rites, but this is marred by a sound track of unidentified but apparently Aboriginal music that is certainly not from north-east Arnhem Land. It is matched with the image so as to suggest that it is a synchronous recording. The commentary throughout the three parts attempts to be sympathetic but is inaccurate in places and somewhat patronising. However the fine black and white visuals provide us with a valuable record.
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In 1949 A.P. Elkin, Professor of Anthropology at Sydney University from 1934 until 1956, made a film on the Maraian ceremony of south-west Arnhem Land. This was the first serious attempt to record a whole ceremony on film. It was also the first attempt to record a synchronous sound track of ceremonial music and singing. Synchronous sound equipment, in which sound recorder and camera are mechanically or electronically locked together, was not developed for 16mm portable cameras until many years after this. So, although Elkin's sound was recorded simultaneously, it could not be laid exactly in sync in the finished film because sound recorder and camera each ran at its own variable speed. Due to the vagaries of the wire recorders of the day and the short duration film magazines, the film is technically variable, but the importance and rarity of the record make it a valuable document.

In 1950 and subsequent years, T.G.H. Strehlow filmed over nine hundred ritual acts in Central Australia, mainly among Aranda and Loritja speaking people. Three films have been made from a small part of this footage: The kangaroo ceremonies linking Ajaii and Malupiti, The honey ant ceremonies of Ljaba and The native cat ceremonies of Watarka. The films are in colour with correct, but not synchronously recorded, natural sound. The films were edited under Strehlow's supervision by the Commonwealth Film Unit. Each film has an important commentary. Strehlow was born on Hermannsburg Mission in Central Australia and grew up speaking Aranda fluently. Because of his linguistic knowledge and his long association with the Aranda he had been able to give a rich interpretation of the songs and dances portrayed in the films. It is tragic that the remainder of Strehlow's footage could not have been fully documented, annotated and edited before his sudden death in 1978.

In 1951 the Board for Anthropological Research at the University of Adelaide re-commenced its film production programme. Over the next fourteen years Dr T.D. Campbell made nine colour films with the support of the Board and the voluntary help of his university colleagues. They were all made with Walbiri men and women of Central Australia who were living at Yuendumu Aboriginal settlement. Most of the films deal with Walbiri technology. They show this with detail and clarity. One of these films, Palya, shows the manufacture of gum from the resin of the spinifex grass of Central Australia. Spinifex gum has many uses, some, but not all, of which are shown in this film — in 1901 Baldwin Spencer used it to mend his wooden camera which was cracking in the heat of Central Australia.

Since its formation in 1961 the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies has been actively engaged in ethnographic film production, first by sponsoring productions and then by producing films with its own film unit. Its first production in 1962 was a co-production with the Australian Commonwealth Film Unit recording a series of dances at Aurukun Mission on Cape York. From this two films Dances at Aurukun and Five Aboriginal dances from Cape York were made. Because the sound could not be recorded with synchronous equipment the cutting of the films is determined by the need to keep sound and image as closely in sync as possible. This inevitably mars these two films.

Starting in 1963 four major ceremonial films were made for the Institute by independent film-maker Cecil Holmes. Cecil Holmes was one of the real battlers of the Australian film industry. His active film days were in the fifties and sixties when there was no Australia Council and no Australian Film Commission to give grants and blessings to would-be feature film-makers. His four films for the Institute are all


19 Spencer 1928:1, 374.
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comprehensive records of complex Arnhem Land ceremonies: *Djalambu* (1963), *Ubar* (1964), *Yabuduruwa* (1965) and *Lorrkun* (1966). These films, which vary in length from fifty-five minutes to over two and a half hours, are by far the most detailed film records made up to that time of Aboriginal ritual life in Arnhem Land. The participants in the films were all living on mission stations but they maintained a strong commitment to their traditional religion and its sacred ceremonies. The films are all in colour. The first, *Djalambu*, has correct but not synchronous sound. The other three have fully synchronous sound. They are the first ethnographic films in Australia to be recorded with synchronous sound equipment. They portray well the richness and complexity of Aboriginal ceremonial life.

I myself first went into Central Australia, to the Western Desert, in 1957 to make a film on a very remote weather station. Several nomadic family groups were camped not far from the weather station and I spent as much time with them as I could. On my return to the Commonwealth Film Unit I proposed a film on the daily life of a nomadic family. Eight years later my proposal was accepted, jointly by the Commonwealth Film Unit and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies which was to sponsor the production. The only trouble was that in the intervening eight years the desert had become practically devoid of people. When I set out in 1965 with Bob Tonkinson, then a young anthropology graduate from Western Australia, and Richard Tucker, a brilliant cameraman, there were as far as I knew possibly three or four family groups living somewhere in the heart of the desert, somewhere in an area about the size of England, Scotland and Wales put together. We were fortunate enough to meet Dja'amarra and his family.

From our filming with Dja'amarra and his family and other family groups on this and a subsequent trip to the Western Desert in 1967 I made a series of nineteen archival films called *People of the Australian Western Desert* and a more general film, *Desert people*. These films deal almost entirely with nomadic family life, hunting and gathering and technology. One family we filmed had been living at Warburton Mission for nine months. We took them back to their own country for filming. The other families we met in the desert. The films are black and white (originally shot in 35mm) with no sound except commentary. They are the last extensive film record of people living a traditional nomadic life in Australia.

In 1966 ethnographic film-making in Australia came of age, as it were, when the first 'Unesco round table on ethnographic film-making in the Pacific area' was held in Sydney. It was at this meeting, attended by a number of distinguished overseas ethnographic film-makers and academics, including Jean Rouch, Robert Gardner and Colin Young, that the outside world and also we ourselves here in Australia discovered that Australia had a remarkably rich history of ethnographic film-making. I think that meeting did much to ensure continued government support for ethnographic film-making in this country.

In the year prior to this, in 1965, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies formed its own one-man film unit with Roger Sandall as its producer-director-cameraman. Sandall was a graduate in anthropology from New Zealand, and had studied film production in the U.S.A. In his first three years as film-maker of the Institute he shot and produced films of six major ceremonies in Central and Northern Australia: *Walbiri ritual at Ngama* (1966), *Djunguan of Yirrkala* (1966), *Emu ritual at Ruguri* (1967-68), *Mulga seed ceremony* (1967), *Gunabibi: an Aboriginal fertility cult* (1966), *Walbiri ritual at Gunadjari* (1967).20 All of these were shot in 16mm colour.

20 After 1968 Roger Sandall made several more ethnographic films before leaving the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies in 1972.
with 100 per cent synchronous sound. Nicolas Peterson was anthropological adviser for all of these productions. The participants were all living on Government settlements or mission stations, but the filming often took place far from these settlements at important sites in the participants’ own country.

All Sandall’s ceremonial films are made with unobtrusive professionalism. They are characterised by a commitment on his part to record whole events, both spatially and temporally. Outside a small band of academics, this extraordinarily rich body of early work by Roger Sandall has remained virtually unknown in Australia because all the films are records of secret ceremonies and cannot be shown publicly. I attended a very private screening of one of Sandall’s films in 1976 at Yirrkala in north-east Arnhem Land, where the film was shot. The film was of the Djunguan ceremony in 1966. Besides myself the audience consisted of five or six clan leaders who had been involved in the ceremony — but in fact they were not an audience, they were still participants. As the film started they asked me to turn down the sound and then, with tears rolling down their cheeks, they sang and gently clapped as they relived the ceremony. It was one of the most moving scenes I have ever witnessed.

The first seventy years of ethnographic film-making in Australia marks, more or less, the end of an era. During this period the subject matter of ethnographic film was predominantly that of traditional Aboriginal life. Today’s films are about societies in change. During this first seventy years, while the relationship between the film-makers and the people they filmed was mainly one of mutual trust and respect, it was unmistakably the film-maker who guided the course of the film. Today there is a change of emphasis, a much closer co-operation in the film-making process itself between the film-maker and the people being filmed. The film-maker is now often invited by a particular community to make a film, and once there he is then guided by that community. The interaction between film-maker and subject becomes part of the film. With the advent of synchronous sound shooting and translation of dialogue a whole new, intimate and human dimension is being added to ethnographic film. With continued government funding of ethnographic film programmes and with the emergence of a number of new and talented film-makers over the last ten years ethnographic film-making in Australia looks as if it will be as productive in the future as it has been in the past.

FILM AUSTRALIA, LINDFIELD N.S.W.

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a. Classification by secret/sacred content: * indicates that some parts or reels are restricted; ** indicates that all or most is restricted.

b. Title (or descriptive title if unfinished production).

c. Year of shooting (if known, rather than year of completion).

d. Source for further inquiries.

e. Source of print in Australia shown in brackets if this is different from (d).

The National Library, Canberra, holds prints of many of these films.

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A LISTING OF ABORIGINAL PERIODICALS

Marcia Langton and Brownlee Kirkpatrick

This bibliography of journals, newspapers and newsletters issued by Aboriginal and white interest groups will prove an invaluable resource to students of Aboriginal history.

The list is based on the collection held at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies and was compiled by the Senior Bibliographer, Brownlee Kirkpatrick. Many people involved in Aboriginal affairs will recognise titles amongst the seventy-nine published by Aboriginal and Islander groups and communities and the thirty published by ‘white’ interest groups.

Students of Aboriginal history will find useful the early publications such as The Aboriginal, or Flinders Island Chronicle and the first ‘advancement movement’ newsletters, such as Abo Call. These contain the views of Aborigines on their social and political situation, views which were rarely reported elsewhere. Today Aboriginal thought is recorded in widely distributed national publications such as Identity and Aboriginal and Islander Forum. These will be pertinent to students of contemporary Aboriginal affairs.

The publications of Aboriginal organisations sometimes appeared irregularly, or soon ceased to appear. But, particularly in the case of the ‘advancement movement’ newsletters, many titles disappeared because they were subsumed in another journal. The growth of a national Aboriginal movement meant the unification of many smaller groups, whose views became expressed in national publications such as the annual reports of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATS1).

Today many communities publish newsletters, often in the local Aboriginal language, as a resource for the language renaissance which is occurring with the homelands and outstation movement. An example is the Yujana dhäwu from Yirrkala. Gabalgu jurra from Maningrida contains interesting local coverage of the activities of mining companies in the Top End.

The land council newsletters are the major published source of Aboriginal views on land rights. They are written and published in an Aboriginal context — unlike the ‘whitefella’ media whose coverage of land rights is distorted by cultural concepts such as ‘newsworthiness’, business interests, and just plain bias and ignorance. Land Rights News, published by the Northern Land Council, has covered most of the land claims lodged from the Top End, and is distributed to all Aboriginal groups in the Council’s area.

The Aboriginal context is one of burgeoning consciousness, self-organisation and confidence. The Aboriginal coverage of the meaning and effect of whitefella politics is astute and uncompromising. An example is the North Queensland Land Council’s coverage of Aurukun and Mornington Island affairs in early 1978 in N.Q. Messagestick. These newsletters are firstly political resources, keeping Aboriginal people in touch with their organisations and activities and informing their white readership of the subjective Aboriginal point of view.

Other newsletters and journals were published by white interest groups. Often the missionary organs provided only news of the ‘success’ of the Christian missions to Aborigines, for the white congregations whose donations subsidised missionary activities. Their reports were probably a major inspiration to the white view of Aborigines, and could give insights into Australian racism. Such journals will prove relevant for students of the colonisation of Aborigines.

The periodicals in the second part of this listing are important to Aboriginal history because they include much material written by Aborigines, or information on the lives of individuals and communities which is recorded nowhere else. The church periodicals listed here could be an important historical resource for researchers wishing
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to write community histories and biographies. Until the end of the 1960s government reports and newspapers scarcely mentioned Aboriginal views and activities. Publications like the Aborigines' Friends' Association Annual Report, the Aborigines Protector, On Aboriginal Affairs, Smoke Signals, and Victorian Aboriginal Group Annual Report gave a relatively well-informed and sympathetic coverage of Aboriginal opinions and political protest activities from the 1930s to the 1960s.

It concerns me that publications, as written expressions, have a limited value for the Aboriginal population, which in so many areas is still non-literate or semi-literate. An increasingly valuable alternative is the use of tape-recordings as news organs. The Moongong Darwung organisation in Western Australia, for instance, publishes tapes and sends them to subscribers.

My own experience, working on various Aboriginal newsletters and newspapers, has made me understand the importance of simply having the resources and skills for self-expression in an often hostile white environment which, because it has the power and resources, has historically defined us. In Redfern, in 1976, the Black Women's Action Group began to envisage Koobi-bina. We firstly needed some means of reply to the racist slander published in Sydney's afternoon press. Secondly, we were inspired by Abo Call, published in 1938 in Sydney by an Aboriginal political group. The descendants of these activists were in 1976 working in Redfern for the same aims as were articulated in Abo Call almost forty years previously.

As bilingual education and literacy are brought to more communities, especially remote ones, we can look forward to exciting and diverse expressions.

The following list of periodicals is divided in two parts: journals published by Aboriginal communities and organisations, followed by journals published by 'white'-controlled welfare and advancement associations and institutions. Included in the first list are some periodicals which were not under Aboriginal control in their early stages but later were either wholly or partially edited and written by Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. Although editorial responsibility for a few periodicals is uncertain (such as school journals in Aboriginal communities), they are included here because they serve an Aboriginal readership. It was thought useful to include journals published by welfare and advancement organisations whose membership was mainly non-Aboriginal. Some in this category are included in the first list of Aboriginal journals due to later changes of editorial responsibility. Journals published after 1969 by the successors to these organisations are omitted.

These alphabetical lists, based on the collection in the Library of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, are not complete.

The Senior Bibliographer (P.O. Box 553, Canberra, A.C.T. 2601) would therefore welcome information on journals not recorded here, and copies of the missing issues in runs of other listed journals. The Library will photocopy and return rare originals if owners have no duplicates.

Details are recorded in the following order: title of journal except for organisations issuing journals with common titles such as Bulletin, Journal, Newsletter, in which case the entry is under the name of the organisation; volume and or issue/part number; date of first and last issue (if publication has ceased); place of publication and actual date of publication if different from the date on the title-page; information on variant titles, irregular numbering and any other relevant details. A dash following the volume/issue number and date indicates that the journal is published currently. Where such details are not known, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies Library holdings are noted as a guide.
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Today see Australian evangel.


... divided by other concerns, and with a great impetus to discover new countries than to study them, constantly moving when they should have stayed at rest, biased perhaps by those unjust prejudices that cast a slur in our eyes on savage societies, or at least, witness of our European indifference for them, they did not sufficiently devote themselves to bringing back exact and complete observations; they have met the invariable end of those who observe in a precipitate and superficial manner — their observations have been poor, and the imperfection of their reports has been the penalty of our carelessness... the main object... would be the careful gathering of all means that might assist him to penetrate the thought of the peoples among whom he would be situated and to account for the order of their actions and relationships.

Joseph-Marie Dégérando — 1800¹

The use of historical literature as ethnographic source material has recently become as widely accepted by Australian prehistorians as by New Zealand and Pacific scholars. It has been so utilised since the nineteenth century in North America and for long by African historians and anthropologists. In all areas this probably stems from recognition of the wealth of information existing in the literature of the contact period. Such evidence often represents all that is known of many peoples, since certain groups did not survive physically, much less retain their traditional cultural forms, into the late nineteenth century when ethnographic studies began in earnest with an appreciation of the urgent need to record indigenous culture. Embedded in historical documents recording early settlement by Europeans and contact with the Indians are the only substantial accounts of the Huron and other tribes of north-eastern North America, as is the case in Australia for the Aborigines of Port Jackson in New South Wales as well as those of Tasmania. Many Australian prehistorians have been sensible of the value and importance of the source material available in the historical literature; few now ignore its evidence on the recent past. Historians also are directing attention to the problem of frontier contact history, of the interaction of Aboriginal and European groups in rural and urban communities, to Aboriginal history and the themes of race relations in Australian history.

All such studies, by prehistorians wishing to gain otherwise unobtainable data, and by historians hoping to illuminate a neglected aspect of Australian history, may be termed ethnohistory. They are often so labelled. Among Australian prehistorians ‘ethnohistory’ is now a well accepted part of ventures into reconstructing the Aboriginal past, but they often — and confusingly — refer to this as ethnography (the two words being used synonymously). Anthropologists use ethnography to mean descriptive accounts of a single culture, as opposed to comparative and theoretical

¹ Comments on ‘the observation of savage people’ written in 1800 to advise members of the ‘Société des observateurs de l’homme’ joining Baudin’s expedition to the Pacific (Moore 1969: 64, 70). This tradition of advice to travellers continued in France during the nineteenth century. A sociological and ethnographic questionnaire for travellers prepared by the ‘Société d’anthropologie de Paris’ in 1883 was answered by Lumholtz in 1889 (Birtles 1976). The British Association for the Advancement of Science and the Anthropological Institute first published Notes and queries on anthropology in 1874 ‘to promote accurate anthropological observation on the part of travellers...’ (Colliver 1976; Urry 1972).
studies. Further confusion is created by subsuming ethnohistory (in the sense of the use of historical evidence as data for creating historical ethnographies) under the activities of 'ethnoarchaeology'. There remain further questions on the ultimate aims of ethnohistory in the Australian context, as well as on its theoretical basis and philosophy. Have the practitioners of this branch of historical/prehistoric research given thought to the theoretical framework of their discipline? Perhaps Bodin's comments on the practice of history in 1565 apply to recent Australian ethnohistory:

I have been led to write this book, for I noticed that while there was a great abundance and supply of historians, yet no one has explained the art and method of the subject. Many recklessly and incoherently confuse the accounts, and none derives any lessons therefrom.

The present paper is concerned both to survey the practice of ethnohistory and its methodology in Australia and to raise certain theoretical issues relevant to the Australian context, particularly to prehistoric studies. The writer is convinced that such a survey is warranted by current theory and practice. One could argue that Bodin's comments do apply in this context, despite available exemplars in both theoretical and descriptive literature from the Americas and Africa. This is the more regrettable given the potential for ethnohistorical studies in this country. Further, ethnohistorical sources remain our major data base for large areas of temperate Australia, particularly the well-watered east coast which would have supported the majority of the Aboriginal population in the pre-contact period, with life styles markedly different from those of the ethnographically documented arid and tropical lands. We need the balance this data base can give our knowledge of culture and adaptation in Aboriginal Australia.

In this survey I have taken a broad view of ethnohistory, but my concerns are primarily with the significance for prehistorians and the prehistorians' use of ethnohistorical evidence. The ramifications of the subject as a whole are wide; there are problems needing deeper consideration than is possible in discussion constrained to the implications for prehistorians which have conditioned the lines of argument presented.

As the major influences on prehistory in Australia stem from Britain and the United States I have concentrated on the practice and theory of these areas.

Some problems of practice

Before considering practice, problems of definition arise. Is ethnohistory an independent entity, a discipline in its own right, or does the specific title merely reflect the academic's wish to categorise, so a specialised branch of one larger discipline acquires a spurious individuality and the scientific aura of a name derived from classical Greek? Yet for ethnohistory is this 'larger discipline' history or anthropology? Dening argues that: 'Ethnohistorians pursue the same ends by the same methods as historians. Ethnohistory is only history writ polysyllabically'.

In practice there seems considerable ambiguity — ethnohistory is referred to as a distinct study in its own right, but often seems regarded as little different from ethnography. In Australia many prehistorians show great interest in material they consider ethnographic evidence, though obtained by historical methods. Yet most local anthropologists show little concern for the potential of such records for the study of culture change over time. To North American practitioners ethnohistory is but part

3 Bodin 1945:14.
4 I should like to acknowledge here the assistance which I have had in clarifying my ideas, from discussions with Diane Barwick, Greg Dening, Niel Gunson, Campbell Macknight, E.J. Tapp and James Urry.
5 Dening 1966:23.
of the wider study of cultural anthropology, with a theoretical base and aims which are clearly anthropological. These ambiguities in practice raise fundamental questions of aims and methods. Also, one may doubt whether a sub-discipline can pursue the aim of one ‘parent’ by using the methods of another. Dening comments:

The discipline . . . is still unformed, a no-man’s land between anthropology and history. An ethnohistorian tends to be a historian who is an amateur anthropologist, or an anthropologist who is an amateur historian, and in consequence the object of suspicion of anthropologist and historian alike. The ethnohistorian’s prime concern is with the description of illiterate societies by literate observers at the time when contact between the two had not changed or destroyed the illiterate society. On every continent this period of contact and change has been caught in the journals and letters of explorers, administrators, traders and missionaries.6

Pacific and Australian prehistorians may have closer academic ties with history than their American or Canadian colleagues. The discipline has not developed here as part of anthropology (albeit its ‘lesser part’),7 for the anthropological traditions of Australian universities stem from those of the structural-functionalist school of British social anthropology, largely unconcerned with historical questions of development.

Ethnohistorical work by Australian prehistorians seems more descriptive than that in the Americas, either as a source of comparative data, or as factual ethnography (distinct only in its derivation from historical rather than contemporary fieldwork sources). It is not yet appreciated sufficiently as a study requiring its own specialised techniques and conventions, nor is its source material recognised as requiring special assessment of a kind distinct from that applied to the ethnographic record produced by professional anthropologists. In a history of contact in Western Victoria8 Corris discusses this problem of sources, but he does not consider the theory of the subject itself. Should it be labelled history or ethnography, or does it sit uneasily in a no-man’s land between the two, trying to achieve the aims of one discipline while using the evidence and techniques of the other as Dening suggests? The use of its data by some suggests that it is neither, merely a convenient source of useful information to be used for interpretative analogies. There is a grave danger here not only of a subject lacking a firm philosophical basis, but of serious misuse of historical evidence.

To most Australian prehistorians such historical research has been an adjunct to archaeological studies, used more to provide ethnographic analogy for interpretation of the material evidence recovered in excavation than data to be analysed and interpreted in their own right. Examples are numerous: Lampert’s discussion of the bone points from the Durras North sea-cave;9 Brayshaw interpreting the human remains from rock shelters in North Queensland;10 Haglund those from Broadbeach;11 Megaw and Poiner on the archaeology of the Sydney district;12 and my own use of the local historical literature on Aboriginal material culture to explain certain features of the stone artefact assemblages from the most recent levels of the Whiteman Creek

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7 Willey and Sabloff 1974:131, 179.
8 Corris 1968.
9 Lampert 1966.
10 Brayshaw 1977:267, 300-311.
11 Haglund 1976:77-86.
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rock shelter in the Clarence valley. Independent thematic studies based on the historical sources are rarer in Australia than these brief surveys of ethnohistorical data in relation to the archaeological material from one site or region. Yet this is an area where ethnohistory can develop considerable theoretical strength and make vital contributions to knowledge. Studies of this type for Australia include Hallam's book on the use of fire in the south-west, Lawrence and Poiner on subsistence economies, Jones on Tasmanian demography and use of dogs and Meehan's work on burial customs. In work on subsistence patterns and burial practices for the recent past my own research has drawn on ethnohistory and archaeological data.

Brief surveys of the ethnohistorical evidence as summaries of the final phases of Aboriginal prehistory are also used to introduce regional archaeologies. What we lack as yet in Australia is a published literature of regional ethnohistories comparable to Tooker and Trigger on the Huron, Gunther on the North West Coast tribes or Hickerson on the Chippewa. Regional surveys have proved popular prehistory thesis topics at the BA Honours level, although they remain rare for higher degrees. Among the latter, however, strictly archaeological studies often have a high content of ethnohistory, as in Allen's work on western New South Wales and Brayshaw's on the Herbert/Burdekin region of North Queensland. Regrettably many of these studies remain unpublished. Fewer still are the ethnohistorical studies undertaken independently of the degree-gaining training exercise.

Some problems of definition: the view from the Americas

Definitions are implicit not only in the expressed aims of a discipline, but also in what is seen by practitioners as its appropriate subject matter and proper scope. In North America ethnohistory first appeared in the form of summaries of the historical information on sites and localities introducing discussions of their archaeology. Ethnographic records of specific tribal groups were systematically compiled from the late nineteenth century; it was recognized that historical documents could provide the bulk of the raw data. These documents included a wide range of French, Dutch, English and Spanish historical sources from the colonial period. The term ethnohistory was first used in the sense of a distinct approach by Kroeber, in his work on the Californian Indians in the 1920s. Archaeological studies of Mesoamerica have also been historically oriented, with increasing use of the Spanish sources from the conquest period to supplement the material data from archaeology. Some demand further development of this aspect:

13 McBryde 1965.
14 Hallam 1975.
15 Lawrence 1968; Poiner 1976.
19 Sullivan 1964; Brayshaw 1966; Allen 1968; Sabine 1970; Lane 1970; Ross 1976.
22 Though see McBryde 1978c.
23 Compare with Chase 1976 and Swadesh 1975.
Maya studies suffer from unbalance... many archaeologists seldom lift their eyes from their excavations, to see how colonial sources can supplement their findings, or are content to satisfy their curiosity with Landa's account of the Maya.24

Yet in spite of practising a long established approach American ethnohistorians still seem concerned at ambiguities in aims and scope:

... If there are few ethnologically minded historians there are also equally few historically minded ethnologists. The reasons for the dearth in both cases is the same. Documentary study of American Indian groups has been tolerated, but not actively encouraged, in most of the anthropology departments in the land; ethnological study of the American Indians has been grudgingly allowed, if allowed at all, in history departments...25

The North American literature on ethnohistory reveals divergent views: some writers see it as closely allied to anthropological description (ethnography), others as 'the study of the history of the peoples normally studied by anthropologists...'.26 These diverse statements of aims and subject matter, do at least indicate that there is an awareness of philosphic issues, which often emerge in debates on the inter-relationships of anthropology, history, prehistory and archaeology. The interest has been sufficient to support a specialist journal (Ethnohistory) and to produce a large regional literature.

Sturtevant sees historians and anthropologists as differing on the question of using evidence derived from other disciplines. He views ethnohistory as combining two principal interests, the production of historical ethnographies and the historiography of non-literate cultures. 'Historiography' here is used to mean 'history' in general, with no theoretical implications. Other American scholars regard ethnohistory as a kind of 'anthropology with a time dimension', its ultimate aim being a controlled study of culture change during the contact situation.27

This theoretical approach implies that the historical element in ethnohistory lies not so much in the specific nature of the resulting narrative or the documentary evidence on which it is based, as in its chronological framework. By implication history is seen as a discipline concerned with particular events in time. This view of history is also implicit in the stress by Lantis, and the contributors to her volume on Alaskan ethnohistory,28 on the use of dated historical materials to document culture change. Diachronic and synchronic culture histories can thus be reconstructed. However this view of historical chronology is a limited one. Given the resolution of much historical evidence a precise chronological framework for events may not be attainable. For Lantis, ethnohistory comprises both ethnographies prepared on the basis of written historical documents and histories of particular groups reconstructed from their oral traditions.29 Townsend emphasises 'the fusing of historical documentation with ethnographic materials of the same period to provide a more complete picture of a culture'.30 The 'stuff of ethnohistory', according to Lantis, is the 'composite ethnography'.31

29 Compare Lantis 1970:5, 51.
Hickerson, in his work on the Chippewa, also develops the idea of time depth and cultural change. He explicitly states his theoretical stance, and his aim, which is the explication of Chippewa cultural organization and culture change. This he considers will lead to the statement of hypotheses leading to general laws on the processes involved:

Let ethnohistory be viewed here as the employment of one of a number of historical techniques for the purpose of reconstructing given cultures of the past, the relationship of environmental factors to sociocultural change in such cultures, and the reconstruction of the movement and location of identifiable populations . . . Ethnohistorians, then, apply the methods of historiography to the cultures in which they are interested in the light of their general anthropological experience, to gauge change that has taken place in them and to comprehend the historical factors involved in and determining change. By grasping the content and dynamics of aboriginal cultures, that is, tribal cultures as they existed before contact with European and other civilizations, we begin to encounter the problems of development and change on an evolutionary level. At this level the anthropologist has no alternative but to direct his energies to the solution of general laws of culture change. Ethnohistory, then, is the sub-branch of ethnology which employs historiographic method to lay a foundation for the formulation of general laws; in a word, ideographic means to nomothetic ends.32

Hickerson’s aims are anthropological rather than conforming to the normally accepted particularistic historical model; he stresses the formulation of generalisations on culture processes. Yet he also recognizes that historical evidence makes historiographical demands on those using it. To him documentary research is one of many avenues open to the anthropologist, who must then become acquainted with the techniques of historical analysis as well as those of anthropology;33 he must be rigorous in utilising historical archives, subjecting them to careful source criticism. Hickerson also stresses the potential of these sources: ‘Anthropologists must, . . . turn more and more to history as the primary means to salvage ancient culture, not for nostalgic reasons, but in order to explain evolution, the foundation upon which all cultural activity is built’.34 However he does not discuss the theoretical differences which may exist between the historian’s narrative of related events in temporal sequence and the ethnographer’s generalised ‘functional’ reconstruction of social relationships and structure.35

Hickerson’s theoretical stance represents one extreme. As in the ‘New Archeology’ of American prehistoric studies, its stress is on the ‘covering law model’. Trigger’s historical ethnography of the Huron,36 produced in the same decade, represents a differing philosophy. It surveys and collates the historical evidence emphasising inter-relationships between the elements of Huron society as a working system. It is in effect an ethnography, though the writer claims it to be distinct from the comprehensive comparative ethnological work by Tooker.37 Trigger relied on historical records, used ‘as if they were oral informants’,38 Whether this is a valid procedure might be debated. A comprehensive description of the society is presented,
the level of analysis imposed carefully determined after critical assessment of the evidence’s limitations. The description here is not generalisation in Hickerson’s sense, but still could be said to be 'significant description' in the sense that an historical narrative may be seen as 'significant narrative', when it incorporates interpretative judgments on the events chosen for inclusion and their inter-relationships. Description does not necessarily exclude analysis, nor imply a lack of awareness of more general cultural issues and the importance of explanation, as is often implied in the debates on the relationship between anthropology, prehistoric archaeology and history. This point is relevant for the status of historical ethnographies in ethnohistory. The aims of the exercises represented by *The Chippewa* and *The Huron* differ (as do the underlying philosophies of their writers); they need not be mutually exclusive but rather are complementary. Both approaches, in my view, are relevant and worthwhile: they apply different sets of questions to the evidence to illuminate different aspects of the past. The important reservation is whether the evidence available can sustain their development.

Brumfiel in a recent review shows sensitivity on these issues, stressing that it is the use of evidence which distinguishes ethnohistory from other branches of cultural anthropology:

The ethnohistorian deals with written documents, documents which are actual artifacts of the cultural system under study, and documents which describe the cultural system as seen by outside observers. What separates these three fields of culture study (i.e. ethnography, archaeology, ethnohistory) is not the theoretical perspectives or research goals of the specialists involved: these may vary as greatly within a given field as between two of the fields. Rather each field can be distinguished from the others by the unique methods which it employs to acquire, evaluate and interpret its particular type of data.

Brumfiel raises the question whether 'the stuff of ethnohistory' lies in the documents themselves or in the 'historically documented cultural systems', but emphasises two basic procedures for all who would use ethnohistorical data: firstly, 'the identification and location of relevant sources', and secondly, 'the development of "an adequate critical understanding" of these sources'.

Many would stress, as does Brumfiel, that ethnohistory can be defined only in terms of its methods, that it denotes a method or technique rather than a distinct discipline. As Carmack points out, ethnohistory faces the same dilemma as prehistoric archaeology in its status-struggles to maintain a separate identity within cultural anthropology. This is a problem applying particularly (and only?) to its practice in North America, a point not seen by Carmack. So, to him, there is a danger that its general theoretical framework will seem indistinct from that of the wider study of cultural anthropology.

39 Walsh 1967:32.
43 See the Fenton, Leacock and Washburn papers on this theme in the issues of *Ethnohistory* for 1961-62.
45 Carmack 1972:231.
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Ethnohistory is a special set of techniques and methods for studying culture through the use of written and oral traditions. As methodology it is complementary not only to archaeology, but also to historical linguistics, ethnography and paleobiology.46

These techniques are of course the historian's 'source preparation and criticism'. If the sources are oral tradition, as for example in Africa, then special problems emerge; these have been critically discussed by Vansina.47 Nevertheless critical evaluation remains of paramount importance. If one were to define a discipline according to its subject matter (rather than either its aims or its methodology) then the chief concerns of ethnohistory, according to Carmack, are 'specific history, historical ethnography and folk history'.48 Specific history in this context seems to include culture history,49 and the documentation of change over time stressed by Hickerson. So his views on the aims and scope of ethnohistory lie within the range already established for North American practitioners. Indeed there seems consensus on the parameters of this range amongst American workers.

Some problems of definition: European views

Ethnohistory as a self-conscious academic activity is a peculiarly North American/Pacific development in anthropology and prehistory. Its nearest parallels in studies by European prehistorians lie in the use of folk custom to provide ethnographic analogies, or the culling of ancient literary sources for the same purpose when interpreting sites or artefacts from the Iron Age communities on the fringes of the classical world. For the first we may cite Grahame Clark's use of comparative evidence from the 'folk culture' of European peasant societies to aid interpretation of finds from Mesolithic and Neolithic sites, especially the fishing and trapping methods of north-western Europe and the agricultural equipment and methods of the south-east. This study has not been developed by Clark as either ethnography or ethnohistory in itself, but as a source of analogy, an illumination of the life-style of a particular type of society. Let us take one example of his use of this kind of evidence to assist functional interpretation of archaeological remains. When discussing pike fishing among the Maglemosians of northern Europe he posits the theory that the barbed bone points recovered from their sites served as leister prongs.50 He refers to the numerical proportions of fish hooks and points in the deposits, together with ethnographic data on Lappland fishing to support the hypothesis. 'One is reminded', he says, 'irresistibly of Scheffer's description of fishing among the Lapps'.51 Yet (given the tenor of the argument) is the quotation irresistible or merely convenient, especially as it also offers suggestions towards seasonal use of the sites? Scheffer says:

Their way of fishing alters with the season, in the summer usually with drag nets, between two boats, or else with spears like tridents, but that they have more teeth. With these they strike pikes, especially when they ly sunning themselves near the top of the water: they do the same by night burning wood at the prow, by which light the fish are enticed thither.51

When Clark surveys the use of traps in the prehistoric hunting economies of northern Europe he again uses evidence from modern folk usage. This he interprets as representing survivals of very ancient methods and equipment. It therefore offers the

47 Vansina 1965.
49 Carmack 1972: 236.
50 Clark 1952:46ff.
51 Clarke 1952:47. The Scheffer description dates to the seventeenth century.
'cultural continuity' regarded as so important by most users of ethnographic parallels in the Americas and Australia.\textsuperscript{52} His paper in \textit{Aspects of archaeology in Britain and beyond} discusses the value of this approach,\textsuperscript{53} stressing the dangers of using ethnographic parallels with points familiar to workers in hunter-gatherer archaeology of Australia, Africa and the New World. By including among the sources of analogy the descriptions left 'by earlier observers'\textsuperscript{54} Clark adds historical evidence to that of ethnography.

Clark states that in writing \textit{Prehistoric Europe} he hoped to bring into focus 'two distinct lines of vision, those of the natural scientist and of the historian'.\textsuperscript{55} His main categories of evidence are archaeological, secondly ethnographic and ethnohistorical, and finally biological. He explicitly distinguishes observations or records by trained ethnologists from ethnohistorical data, described as 'uncritical but still useful records by early writers'.\textsuperscript{56} In a 1974 paper Clark acknowledges the impact on his thinking of a period spent in New Zealand, 'a country with a strong ethnohistorical tradition'.\textsuperscript{57}

Yet in spite of Clark's demonstration in the 1950s that such an approach could yield vital and otherwise unobtainable clues to understanding the past, there was little development of it by other writers on European prehistory. Clark's influence has borne more fruit in antipodean archaeology. Old World scholars seem to prefer an approach (at least for stone age studies) which is entirely non-text-aided, reconstructing the past strictly from the evidence of archaeology. Otherwise the nearest European parallel to the ethnohistorical studies of African, American, Pacific or Australian prehistorians is found in European 'protohistory' which uses the evidence to be gleaned from the writers of classical antiquity relating to the Iron Age Celts, Scyths and Germanic peoples. The \textit{Histories} of Herodotus is one of the finest ethnohistorical documents of any period with its descriptions of the culture of the Scyths and other non-literate peoples incorporated in, or peripheral to, the Persian and Greek world. For certain aspects of reconstruction, for example of social structure, religious beliefs and practices, the prehistorians of Iron Age Britain and Europe lean heavily on classical and Irish texts\textsuperscript{58} to supplement archaeological evidence. They move from one data base to the other, without examining the discrepancies in detail, a process which could lead to rewarding investigations of the interface between the two. The use of the literary sources by Ross, Powell and Piggott\textsuperscript{59} on the problems of Celtic religion closely parallels in practice that of Pacific and Australian ethnohistorians. Yet, perhaps because of the continuity between the ancient peoples being studied and the modern scholar of European cultural background, such investigations are not referred to as \textit{ethnohistory}. They are researching the prehistory of their own land; the heritage is not seen as alien, as belonging to a distinct ethnic group. The usual distinguishing label is 'protohistory', used to indicate the existence of historical sources. Their aims are seen as coterminous with those of both history and prehistory; indeed most workers in this particular field would see little difference in aim between history and prehistory. Yet even in the field of Iron Age protohistory the use of archaeological and historical sources in combined studies could be more effectively

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\textsuperscript{52} Peterson 1971:240; compare with Clark 1951:55-56.
\textsuperscript{53} See especially Clark 1951:62; also Clark 1962:116-118.
\textsuperscript{54} Clark 1951:64; compare with Clark 1974:40-44.
\textsuperscript{55} Clark 1952:vii.
\textsuperscript{56} Clark 1974:45.
\textsuperscript{57} Clark 1974:54. At least two of his former students working in New Zealand and New Guinea acknowledge the stimulus of his emphasis on the use of ethnographic sources in his teaching (Bulmer 1977:184, Shawcross 1977:277).
\textsuperscript{58} Jackson 1964.
\textsuperscript{59} Ross 1970; Powell 1959; Piggott 1968.
developed by both archaeologists and historians. There is scope for more interdisciplinary studies, for greater communication between classical historians and the Iron Age prehistorians, and above all, for more critical awareness of the potential of both categories of evidence.

**Antipodean ethnohistory**

The New Zealand tradition of ethnohistorical studies has produced excellent historical ethnographies, thematic investigations and archaeological interpretation. Here there has been a concern with the quality of the evidence 'derived from the writings of people who had no training in the importance of accurate detail'. Doubts have been expressed about the value of the European historical evidence, particularly by Buck who in 1926 gave priority to Maori oral tradition, stressing '... there is no comparison between the inaccurate writings of a globe trotting European and the ancient traditions of a cultured barbarian'. According to Dening certain New Zealand historians consider that the historical sources are often misused by those with anthropological aims. Such complaints indicate a sophisticated inter-disciplinary awareness yet to emerge in Australia.

Theoretical and philosophical problems are implicit in the study of cultures whose own concept of the past may differ from those of western traditions of historical enquiry, and may even by their canons be considered ahistorical. Stanner has argued that the Aboriginal world-view largely precluded the development of interests in narrative history of the kind familiar in western cultures. However there was an indigenous Polynesian and Maori interest in folk history, genealogy, oral tradition and the past development of local groups. This has been considered valid source material for historical and anthropological studies by both indigenous and European researchers. Evidence from the European literature of the contact period can be integrated with such oral traditions to create broadly based reconstructions of the past. For most Polynesians maintenance of traditional history has been, and is now, a highly valued form of scholarship. It has also of course achieved political significance, especially if land claims were involved. Traditional history is now of increasing concern to professional historians in Polynesia. They are involved not only as researchers, but also as teachers, responding to increasing local pressures on universities to develop courses in Pacific or regional history. New Guinea researchers regard the collection of local traditions and oral literature, with the later synthesis of these into a 'professional' historical format as of central interest. It is a field yet to be developed in Australia, though recent years have produced moves towards realising its potential.

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61 Buck 1926:182.

62 Buck 1926:182.

63 Dening 1966:27.

64 Munn 1971; compare with Davidson 1971.

65 Stanner 1966.


67 King 1975; Sorrenson 1977:466-472.

68 Bulmer 1971:43-44.

69 Articles in the first two issues of *Aboriginal History* show that the realisation of this potential is beginning in Australia with the presentation of Aboriginal oral traditions as the basis for historical analysis.
Australia: contact history, race relations, culture clash and Aboriginal history

While prehistorians and archaeologists here are directing more attention to the gleaning of vital historical information relevant to their research, Australian historians are discovering the complexities of contact history. In the earliest histories of the colonial enterprise Aborigines were merely included in descriptions of the 'natural history' of the new land, brief surveys of 'native life and customs' being prescriptive for such accounts. So, as Harrison notes,

Historians have largely ignored the black man of Australia... he is incidental to the trend of events which, since 1788, have combined to produce the Australia of today... the saga of rum, convicts, squatters, gold, political development and industrial expansion; and into this narrative the black man has seldom intruded for more than a moment. In fact, the Aborigines have more often been regarded as part of the natural environment — like koalas, gum trees or Ayers Rock — their characteristics being described rather than their actions narrated.70

Stanner has called this 'the Great Australian Silence'; he asserts that 'the dominance of European interest was total, unquestioned and inexpressibly self centred'.71 The general historian can no longer ignore the 'first Australians', and a substantial literature on contact history and race relations has appeared in the 1970s. There are major syntheses such as the first volume of C.D. Rowley's trilogy, entitled The destruction of Aboriginal society, monographs, theses at all levels, novels, articles, broadcasts, and a veritable flood of source books, as well as general accounts. The effect of this boom in contact studies may be assessed rapidly by scanning published bibliographies and recent review articles, for example those in volume one of Aboriginal History. The works cited by Markus72 relating to Australian race relations reflect the decline then resurgence of interest in the topic between 1900 and 1960. He lists five published before 1900, none up to 1920, three to 1940, 10 to 1960 and 85 after 1960. The sources of the indifference of earlier periods have been examined by Mulvaney and Stanner;73 the reasons for the present change will provide fascinating studies for later scholars of twentieth century Australian society!

Investigations of relations between communities of Aborigines and other Australians, and biographies of Aborigines, have not been seen as topics of priority in Australian historical studies. Corris stressed both aspects in his 1969 survey of ethnohistory in Australia, commenting that 'the bulk of the vast literature on the Australian Aborigines... has been innocent of emphases which could be called ethnohistorical'.74 We urgently need a series of regional contact histories testing the broad generalisations about culture conflict against carefully collated contemporary evidence on relations between Aborigines and settlers in the frontier districts. Much recent work however, as Reece points out, suffers 'from the general tendency to rush into print on an increasingly fashionable subject' and history is seen 'only as a grab bag for polemical argument'.75 Further, it has a certain guilt-ridden quality, as if to exonerate the present by blackening the past. This approach is often at the expense of valid historical interpretation; it is unlikely to be productive. As Stanner reminds us: 'we can neither undo the past nor compensate for it'.76

70 Harrison 1978:17.
71 Stanner 1969:12, compare with 13 and 17. For a discussion of the American situation see Prucha 1976:2, and his comments on the 'Indian barrier' to settlement in North America.
72 Markus 1977.
74 Corris 1969:201.
75 Reece 1979:268, 267.
76 Stanner 1969:44. See also Prucha 1976 for discussion of similar themes in United States contact history.
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Contact histories must be careful, rigorous studies researched with an awareness of anthropological as well as of historical issues. The historians should become familiar with the general anthropological literature as well as their local historical sources, to understand the economic basis and values of Aboriginal society. The issues resemble those discussed by West for colonial Pacific history. Appreciation of the values of both cultures is essential, nor can the researcher assume that because the literary evidence derives from the European party to the conflict, that Aboriginal motivations or perceptions are therefore either unimportant or unknowable. Aboriginal history has long been neglected in local historical and anthropological research. However some recent studies by anthropologists and linguists show how more information on Aboriginal perceptions may be elicited from the documents. The current enthusiasm for contact history has produced works showing neither knowledge of Aboriginal reactions to the conflict nor awareness that other versions may await definition and expression. These alternative versions when discovered may prove surprising, as both Sharp and Stanner found in investigating traditions of conflict situations.

Aboriginal researchers as well as other scholars must be involved in developing Aboriginal history. Aboriginal oral tradition, individual life histories and group experience must contribute, expressed within the framework of Aboriginal concepts of the past as well as in terms of western 'historical reconstruction'. Such histories lie within the scope of ethnohistory as defined by scholars working in the Americas, Africa and the Pacific; they should form a recognized strand within Australian studies. We must admit however that the practice of written history is a western tradition. Aboriginal historians may choose expression in other forms, or conform to the western conventions of historical writing but present differing evidence and differing viewpoints. Varying traditions of viewing and presenting the past (e.g. the mythological as against the chronological narrative and analysis) are relevant here; there may also be differences in concepts of time, of what constitutes historical truth, of historical relationships between events or what Vansina calls 'historical development'. Stanner has summarised Murinbata thought thus:

Earthly life was supposed to cycle between mystical source and mystical goal, but there was no first cause or final end... Neither individual nor total life was supposed to move towards an end that would consummate history; indeed there was no true sense of history at all.

He also notes that traditions about the past were neither created nor conceived as historical in our sense:

If one could speak of Murinbata tradition at all it had to be as the product of a continuous art of making the past consistent with an idealized present. There had been 'history' in the sense of events of both change and development; one thing had led to another, but 'what really happened' must rapidly have ceased to signify in important respects. There had been a continuous compounding of history.

77 West 1961.
79 Urry (1977) attacks many of these problems in his discussion of the difficulties of writing 'Aboriginal history'.
80 Stanner 1966:139-140; Sharp 1968:83-84.
81 Phillipson 1974; Vansina 1965.
83 Stanner 1966:138-139.
84 Stanner 1966:140. See also Charbonnier 1969:39.
Stanner found among the Murinbata differences in the perception of time: 'It is a painful wrench for a European mind to have to deal with so shallow a perspective on time and with mentalities that are ahistorical in outlook while asserting the contrary'.

Thus the 'Aboriginal history' that will emerge from Aboriginal tradition and oral sources may differ substantially from western Aboriginal history. As history in our sense it may prove unattainable just as Smail is convinced that a truly autonomous history of modern South East Asia by Asian scholars written outside the traditions of western scholarship must ever remain elusive.

The Australian evidence and its use

For most Australian prehistorians the use of ethnohistorical evidence is now an accepted aspect of the total attempt to reconstruct the unwritten Aboriginal past, utilising historical evidence relating to indigenous culture found in the documents of the contact period. Though the Australian literature rarely concerns itself with theoretical questions, the implicit aim seems to be to supplement the ethnographic record, which is meagre for so much of the continent. That is, the historical evidence is used as ethnographic evidence.

There is the obvious danger of using the literature uncritically as a source of convenient ethnographic parallels, or to build unstable reconstructions on selected evidence. The need for strict source criticism can easily be neglected or by-passed when the historical sources are mined as information quarries to provide basic material for comparative studies. Both Corris and Lawrence give theoretical consideration to the problems posed by their specialised evidence, particularly its fragmentary nature and lack of detail. They do not question the validity of this approach, though Lawrence comments that his work aims at:

... marshalling the available literature on various aspects of the subject and arranging it in such a way as to bring diverse observations to focus on a newly conceived problem.

In the practice of ethnohistory the major problems seem to arise from the nature of the evidence. Historical evidence so difficult to evaluate sets special requirements for its effective historical or ethnographic use. Major sources are the accounts of explorers and early settlers. The explorers were trained observers who had only brief opportunities for recording native peoples' behaviour whereas the settlers were for the most part untrained but made observations over long periods. In assessing both types of material we face the problem of evaluating the observers' perception of the observed. Nearly two centuries ago Degerando summarised clearly the inadequacies inherent in the record of the explorer, however conscientiously compiled. His strictures deserve serious attention.

The evidence on which ethnohistorical studies are based necessarily conditions the scope and quality of the resulting work. The evidence for the most part is fragmentary and non-comprehensive. Descriptions of Aboriginal culture were commonly incidental to the recording of other information; they were never intended to be comprehensive, balanced accounts. They should not be treated as such, especially in regard to negative evidence. The incomplete nature of the information applies to its representation over both time and space. The total range of evidence for

86 Smail 1960.
87 Corris 1968.
88 Lawrence 1968:10.
89 Degerando 1969:64-70.
the whole continent will not be comparable from area to area. So the hope that a careful sifting of all available historical sources will enable us to compensate with ethnohistories for our missing regional ethnographies may prove illusory. The fullest accounts are those of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when detailed accounts of new colonial endeavours were readily published and when Europeans showed intense intellectual concern with the life and culture of primitive peoples.90 This is also the period of the majority of highly qualified observers: Cook, Collins, Hunter, Oxley, Sturt, Mitchell. Examples include the documents of the First Fleet historians for Port Jackson, the early historical records of Tasmania, and the journals of explorers given a special brief to record native customs (such as the literature from Cook's *Endeavour* voyage or Baudin's expedition). The concentration of the comprehensive accounts in the earliest period of frontier contact, and the apparent diminution in both quality and quantity thereafter is equally a feature of sources on North American Indians. One is forced to conclude that there is adequate evidence for but part of the continent and for that for but a limited period. Moreover much of the extant evidence is not based on first-hand observation. Some workers have attempted to overcome this by distinguishing between direct or first-hand record and the reporting of local traditions or 'gossip' information.91 Such discrimination has obvious value, but it has been unevenly applied.92 Further, it is not the only criterion of quality to be invoked in evaluating ethnohistorical evidence.

The documentary evidence is often frustratingly inadequate in its ethnographic information, with tantalising gaps and omissions. I may quote Oliver Fry, Crown Lands Commissioner for the Clarence District of New South Wales, when he estimated that the region still sustained an Aboriginal population of at least two thousand:

The manners and customs of the primitive inhabitants of New South Wales are so generally known and so similar that I consider it superfluous to.allude further than to such distinctions as appear to me to exist between the tribes on the Clarence, and those I have known in other districts...93

Obviously the recording of Aboriginal life was incidental to other aims held by most writers, and the volume of evidence, even when a number of sources exist, may well be very small for any particular region or time period. Assuming that contact accelerated cultural change, close chronological and strict geographical controls are essential.94 Yet even so the evidence may be too scanty to sustain effective reconstruction, too diverse in quality to justify the 'pooling' process, the building up of a composite picture by matching the fragments of various writers in a giant ethnographic jig-saw game. Such a process can only be valid if the matching is of like quality with like, after careful source criticism. Lawrence, for example, argued that as few areas of Australia were sufficiently well documented to allow depth studies of a particular community, the viable approach was to cover large areas and so gain a substantial body of data. He admitted that the resulting picture lacked detail.95 But I would submit that the composite picture lacks resolution and is subject to distortion.

90 Smith 1960; Mulvaney 1958.
91 For example Meehan 1967-68; Allen 1968.
92 Compare Meehan's (Hiatt 1967-68) work on Tasmania and her study of mortuary practices (Meehan 1971).
93 Fry 1843.
94 For example, see Flood's (1973) study of the Southern Tablelands for which the ethnohistorical evidence is sparse. Flood was forced to cast a wide geographical net to build a generalised reconstruction.
95 Lawrence 1968:10.
For historical objectivity there should be a rigorous search through both published and unpublished literature to gain the widest possible range of data. Yet for some geographical areas and for some time periods sufficient evidence may not be recorded. Chance determines the survival of evidence, especially for periods and areas where there has been little pressure to preserve historical records, and which never attracted the attention of professional historians. In rural areas the survival of local records still often depends on the enthusiasms of a few concerned amateurs. The library of the Richmond River Historical Society in Lismore would not be so rich in regional source material if Louise Daley, an American immigrant who strongly believed in local history, had not devoted herself to its collection in the 1950s. Tasmanian studies now rely heavily upon the magnificent volume of Robinson's Journals edited by Plomley, a medical researcher. The documentary evidence which the Australian ethnohistorian is forced to use makes special demands in terms of source criticism, and the evaluation of evidence, the heart of the historian's task. There are problems in applying the standard conventions of source criticism to such intransigent material and such elusive (even at times unknown) authors. The problems curiously parallel those of the classical historian, whose evidence, and knowledge about his writer's background and total work, are often comparably insubstantial.

The major difficulty facing the workers in the field of ethnohistory is the quality and character of this source material, and how to use it effectively; many have tried to evade this problem or even ignore it. Such evidence must be evaluated in terms of internal study of the documents themselves for objectivity, coherence and consistency, then an assessment of the authors' objectivity, capacity and qualities. The acceptance or rejection of certain items must be consistent and unambivalent to avoid the dangers of evidence selectively used. Difficulties of course arise. Even when the writer of a document is known by name, the facts of his life and the kind of personal details which allow one to estimate the validity of his statements and any likely bias, may not be available. Researchers must be ever-conscious of the following characteristics of ethno-historical sources:

1. That the bulk of the evidence is not the synthesised results of the investigations of trained historians or trained ethnographers, but the raw material from which history is made by the application of careful historical assessment and critical testing;
2. That not all observations (even those that are direct and first hand) are of equal value as historical evidence, nor are all observers equally perceptive or reliable;
3. That we must be mindful of the problems of perception, record, bias, and personal interests, that are all relevant to the use of any historical account. These include coarse variations in accounts written from an overt standpoint (such as missionary or official records) and the more subtle variations reflecting current attitudes or barely selfconscious bias. They also include variations resulting from disparity in writers' capacity to observe and record, as well as in opportunities for observation and long term contact with Aboriginal groups. The experience of modern ethnographers, who admit that their early field-notes often need revision in the light of understanding acquired over time, counsels caution. The perceptions of Aboriginal life by runaways or 'castaways' such as Buckley, Barbara Thomson, Clark or Morrell must differ from those of explorers like Mitchell or Cunningham, or those of missionaries such as Threlkeld, Robinson or William Thomas. What aspects of the total lifestyle and

96 Compare with Hallam 1975. One wonders what further information awaits in the unpublished material for south-western Australia.
97 Plomley 1966.
99 Compare references to Aborigines in Bride 1898 with those of Anon. [Telfer] n.d. and Robinson (Plomley 1966); see also Brayshaw 1975.
culture are recorded? Why do we learn so little about the activities of women and their role in Aboriginal society? And so little about food-gathering, daily camp activities, tool making, and exchange, compared with tribal fights, burial customs and certain ceremonials? Is it the bias of male observers — or merely the lure of the exotic to mid-Victorian observers?

All the considerations discussed above affect the quality of the record, hence the usefulness of the observations in it as historical source material. For example we may have a valid, clearly recorded observation made by a Mitchell, Sturt or Cunningham, but because of the brevity of the explorer's contact with the Aborigines the fact recorded was not recognised — by him or those who use the source — to be atypical. One is reminded here of Dégérando's eight 'faults in the observations made up to the present'. This is a cautionary note for the ethnohistorian who wishes to build a generalised historical ethnography from the composite diverse and brief comments of a variety of observers rapidly passing through an alien landscape recording the particular activities of its people at one point in time.100

Granting all these aspects, can one test the validity of a reconstruction based on ethnohistorical evidence? This question is a genuine one with serious implications. I suspect it can only be considered in terms of the internal consistency of the source being used and of the qualities of its author. Independent yardsticks may not be available. In Records of times past I presented a study of material culture in the Richmond River district of northern New South Wales based on museum collections and the ethnohistorical sources, which are rich for this area, though largely unpublished. An interesting aspect of this study was to compare the range of evidence in the two: did they both present the same array or were there discrepancies? If there were discrepancies, how were these to be explained? Could the museum collections be used to test the literary accounts? In the museum collections one met some of the problems we have already seen in connection with literary evidence; they were not acquired in systematic research aimed at presenting a comprehensive collection representing the totality of items in use. Rather they represent casual acquisitions and souvenirs. Only Miss Bundock's collection made in the 1880s and early 1890s at Wyangarie (comprising half the total) can be described as comprehensive or made with an ethnographic aim, while her written account is one of our major sources, so limiting the value of the text. In surveying the museum collections we find them heavily weighted towards equipment concerned with fighting and hunting (about 64 per cent of the total); a further 27 per cent is made up of camp equipment (such as dilly bags, baskets and water vessels). The bias is heavily towards male equipment, with women's tools such as digging sticks poorly represented, also items concerned with the food quest and daily activities some of which do not feature at all (e.g. fishing nets, climbing vines, hunting nets, stone and shell knives, bone tools). So the material collection is not comprehensive; it could be said to reflect limited contact with the Aborigines especially as regards 'traditional' subsistence activities, and a bias towards weapons and fighting.102 An analysis of the literary evidence (which belongs to the same period of contact as the collections) shows the same emphases on hunting and fighting gear, and a similar stress on equipment for carrying goods and storing food or belongings. Personal ornaments and clothing get greater attention, but the paucity of references to women's equipment exactly mirrors the bias in the collections. It seems

100 See Macknight's (1974:146 note 1) comments on this point. Compare with Bulmer 1971.
102 On the Northern Rivers (in contrast to many other parts of south-eastern Australia) the rugged terrain in the foothills country, and the non-intensive settlement by pastoralists, allowed a greater degree of independent co-existence of the two societies and a greater retention of links with the Aboriginal past than elsewhere.
that the collectors and the recorders were reflecting similar ranges of preoccupations, bias, and interests, and similar ranges of opportunities for detailed observation. So, though the collections proved a satisfactory independent check on the literary sources at one level (that of the description of particular items which was shown to be very accurate), at another level, that of testing their comprehensive qualities in portraying a whole aspect of culture they added little information.

In this Richmond River study and in a study of New England subsistence economies the literary evidence has been analysed numerically, as a test of general impressions and concerns of the writers. However this practice must be regarded with caution. Because of the specialised nature of the evidence, it should not always, in my view, be subjected to statistical analyses or quantification, especially as the sample will generally be so small as to give a spurious exactitude to most results. The 'mentions' of writers and other historical sources cannot each be regarded as comparable items composing a 'population' in the statistical sense. To look for, and document, trends discernible in the whole body of available evidence, however, is valuable, indeed essential, if one is to avoid the criticism of selecting from the total data what is convenient for the present argument. The ethnohistorian, as any historian, must endeavour to search all available evidence and base his conclusions on evaluation of this broad information base.

When deriving ethnographic data from the historical literature in the practice of ethnohistory one is deriving the general from the particular, looking for data to make general statements on cultural behaviour. Often this particular evidence has insufficient breadth of relevance for this kind of extrapolation. It may not be amenable to the type of constructs the ethnohistorian wishes to place upon it. We often find evidence relating to particular events and circumstances extrapolated as the norm, not only for that place at that time, but for other places and at other times. Macknight is the only worker to show explicit awareness of this problem in published discussion. It could well have been considered by Hallam in her study of man, fire and ecology in south-western Australia. In such use of evidence the ethnohistorical document first becomes 'ethnography' (as if written by a person trained in modern anthropology), and then is seen as directly applicable to the pre-contact or remote past (see Bowdler's discussion of coastal economies). Hence a house of cards may arise composed of generalised statements about past behaviour on the basis of particular evidence from one present instance. Even more unstable structures arise when the prehistorian adds a few layers derived from archaeological data, and moves from one evidence base to the other, then back again.

The 'house of cards syndrome': A Victorian case study

The researcher is faced with what I call the 'house of cards syndrome' when attempting a 'total' cultural study for a region, utilising the information bases of archaeology, ethnography and history. Lourandos is engaged in work of this kind for south-western Victoria, with very rich and detailed documents in the Victorian journals of George Augustus Robinson. My own regional study of New England also used all three categories of evidence to supplement one another. To use evidence from such different sources can pose fascinating theoretical questions, but the practice involves accepting many statements (whose validity cannot be tested fully) as of equal

103 McBryde 1976.
104 Macknight 1975:146 note 1.
105 Hallam 1975.
106 Bowdler 1976.
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value. These 'house of cards' problems have been ever present for me in studying the exploitation of greenstone quarries as sources of material for ground-edge artefacts and the distribution of their products. This study is not only aiming at information on spatial distribution using petrological analyses, but also at a reconstruction of social and exchange inter-relationships between groups.108 Archaeological data on the distribution of artefacts from known quarry sources can be interpreted in non-text-aided analyses of spatial distribution and distance decay curves. An added dimension emerges however when these are matched against the ethnographic and historical information. We have an interesting material expression of the ethnographically documented division between Kulin and Kurnai groups of tribes in the distribution of artefacts derived from the Mt. William and Mt. Camel quarries (located in Kulin territory). These artefacts are rarely found in Kurnai Gippsland. There is also a neat match between the ethnographic and historical statements on the extent and direction of their distribution. This also applies to the Geelong quarries. The three categories of evidence produce confirmatory evidence; what then of discrepancies?

Some quarries with substantial archaeological distributions are not documented at all in the ethnographic or historical literature (notably the sites at Berrambool and Baronga on the Hopkins River). Their use perhaps belongs to the prehistoric period, and so was not known to the settlers of the Western District or Robinson's contacts? Or perhaps the lack of knowledge merely reflects the intense hostility between the two societies in this particular area of Victoria, and the severe mortality in the Aboriginal population recorded by Barwick.109 Dated excavated examples have some antiquity, but more evidence is needed before accepting the convenient explanation that these sites were not used in the post-contact period.

Problems of evidence emerge more strongly in assessing the situation for northwestern Victoria. According to Howitt110 axes were brought to this area from a quarry at Charlotte Plains (near Maryborough) for exchange at the meetings at Wirrengren Plains and Lake Hindmarsh. His source was an Aboriginal man with direct links to those involved, Sergeant Major (c. 1838-1903), described in the Howitt Papers as 'a Jajowrong (from his father) of the Pine Plains-Inglewood-St Arnaud district' and also as 'a Wotjoballuk of St Arnaud', who settled at Coranderrk during the 1880s and was Howitt's informant on 4 July 1902.111 Gregory discusses the site, and references corroborating Howitt are found in local historical sources.112 The distribution patterns for Mt. William and Mt. Camel axes, in the sample studied to May 1978, seemed to show a blank for the Wimmera/Mallee similar to that for Gippsland. I concluded that here we had another neat co-incidence of evidence from different bases.

As the Charlotte Plains site had never been located, and as Massola's conclusions that it lay near the Loddon in an area now flooded could be questioned on historical grounds, field studies were undertaken in 1978. With local advice we located the sites of the two oldest Charlotte Plains homesteads and the adjacent early bridge, landmarks to Howitt's informant. We searched all nearby stone outcrops but found no indications of quarrying nor of lithologies matching Gregory's identification. This result was perplexing, as Howitt's statement created the impression of a quarry comparable in importance to Mt. William. We then carried our investigations into the Wimmera/Mallee. If a large quarry near Maryborough did serve these regions (which themselves lacked suitable stone resources) then its products should be represented in the lithologies of

108 McBryde 1978b.
109 Barwick 1971 and personal communication; Corris 1968.
110 Howitt 1904:690 and Howitt Papers.
111 For information on Sergeant Major I am indebted to Diane Barwick.
112 Gregory 1907 I:212-213; Flett 1956:3; Smyth 1878 II:154-155; Massola 1966:271.
artefact collections. No large independent group has emerged from analyses for the area in state museum holdings, but in case collector bias was relevant here, we looked at artefacts in local museums and several large private collections in the Wimmera/Mallee. This group of approximately two hundred specimens produced not a new dominant lithology but large numbers of Mt. William and Mt. Camel artefacts; an unexpected result requiring rethinking of all previous interpretation. Howitt's informant may well have had direct knowledge of axe stone from Charlotte Plains being taken to Wirrengren Plains and Lake Hindmarsh for exchange in his lifetime, but this can hardly have been part of a long established or extensive practice. Yet the quality of Howitt's reporting is comparable to that for the Mt. William site and its far-reaching distribution networks. Its testing has come not from any internal evidence, but from archaeology and petrological analyses. More knowledge of the personal experience and qualities of Howitt's informants (and of the nature of Howitt's questioning!) would also assist assessment. Often independent testing of information against that of another category of evidence is not possible and evidence must be either totally accepted or totally rejected.

Evidence, aims and future directions in Australian ethnohistory

This leads to consideration of the ideographic discipline as compared with the nomothetic, the particularising versus the processual. Such concerns raise philosorphic questions which have been fully aired elsewhere,113 as well as arguments on the relative qualities and scientific credibility of the two approaches to the past. They need not be reviewed here, but they are relevant; their significance in terms of the collection, use and interpretation of evidence cannot be ignored. They should also be considered here because the debates on aims and methods in archaeology raised by the 'New Archaeology' are vital to the practice of prehistory and cannot be ignored. Both the particular and the generalising approaches have their own intrinsic validity and can give us insight into different dimensions of the human past. However they involve rather distinct procedures which should not be interwoven nor confused. They make different demands of their evidence. This may well be the heart of the matter for the ambiguity in the practice of ethnohistory. Evidence in the historical documents relevant to the Aborigines, usually relating to particular circumstances, may not be amenable to the type of generalising constructs the nomothetic ethnohistorian in his guise of historical ethnographer wishes to build upon it. One should point out however, that to describe history as the 'capturing of the unique' as does Hodgen114 (quoting Isaiah Berlin) is to leave much unsaid. Many anthropologists115 and prehistorians of the New Archaeology School attack history as concerned only with the particular. Setting up a 'straw man', they emphasise the 'idealist school of historians' and Collingwood's view of history as the science of past human actions whose subject matter is that which can be re-enacted in the historian's mind and thus is a study of thought. In this sense history captures the unique; but Collingwood would also stress that such thoughts must have qualities of universality to be the subject of history, so in a sense not unique. Hence the processes of nature to Collingwood were not the subject matter of history, being essentially ahistorical.116 There is no need to labour the point that strong schools of social and economic history exist, as much involved with the recurrent and with general propositions as is ethnography. History of all kinds, I would submit, is concerned with explanation.

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Given the intractable nature of ethnohistorical evidence, the difficulties of reconstruction, and current debates on the aims of prehistoric research, in summary there seem three likely lines of approach for those concerned to produce historical ethnographies: a purely descriptive approach, which aims at the collation of information encapsulated within the historical documents, but does not venture beyond the factual elements, giving little source criticism or ethnographic analysis; or work primarily concerned with the needs of archaeology or ethnography, which leaves the documents themselves unstudied; they serve merely as convenient 'data quarries'. In this approach ethnohistory itself is not seen as an independent discipline with its own contribution to history, ethnography, or prehistory. More congenial to the historian would be a third approach which develops rigorous and systematic studies based on the totality of evidence along thematic, tribal, or regional bases. Such studies must involve critical source assessment of a high level, combined with strict controls on chronology and location, so that the dangers of generality and vague comparison are avoided. Here the ethnohistorian may be faced with a choice of theoretical aims. Either (content with a reconstruction of certain aspects of Aboriginal culture) he produces an 'historial ethnography' or he can aim at eliciting hypotheses or even ultimately laws on the 'decay of tribal society', or elucidating the time dimension of cultural change and adaptation in recent Aboriginal society. It may be many years before Australian ethnohistorians wish to take a stand on these theoretical issues, but they must eventually do so. In the meantime we could well give serious thought to the specialised nature of the ethnohistorian's documentary evidence, and the best way of making effective use of what it offers in terms of otherwise unobtainable ethnographic data. Both historian and ethnographer must be willing to become conversant with the basic tenets of the other's discipline if this is to be achieved. These 'basic tenets' involve not only procedures and methodology, but also the philosophy and fundamental assumptions of each discipline.

Is ethnohistory therefore condemned to be little more than a descriptive collage of historical snippets, or a quarry for the convenient ethnographic analogy? Not necessarily so. Admit that of its nature (derived from its sources, methods and aims) it must always straddle other disciplines as indeed does also history. Admit further that perhaps it should not be regarded as an independent entity itself, as we saw from the problems encountered in defining it in terms of practice or content. Its contribution, however, can still be real, individual and analytical, particularly for Australia. In Australian studies so far the stress has been on the historical ethnography and on contact history. These are obvious and vital areas, but ethnohistory can be expanded to include fields already developed elsewhere and very relevant to Aboriginal studies. Social anthropologists have the opportunity for analytical processual work on culture-change, given the chronological control of historical documentation. There are also the possibilities for histories of individual tribal groups or communities, as well as personal biographies. A genuine Aboriginal history could emerge, even admitting the problems discussed above. We would hope for an active Aboriginal participation in this. The collection of oral traditions and folk histories could be part of this programme, which might indeed be seen as a project of urgency and priority. Bulmer claims a priority for this aspect of New Guinea ethnohistory above that for archaeological investigations.117 From such strands there could emerge culture-contact histories that examine the perceptions of those on both sides of the conflict, contributing to historical and anthropological research. Such studies require full data-bases in the sense of access to documents and sources. The discovery, editing and publishing of the basic historical manuscript resources is thus a project that deserves urgent attention from archivists and historians.118 We need more primary sources as meticulously edited as Plomley's Robinson journals and Gunson's Thelkeld papers.119 The paucity

117 Bulmer 1971:44.
118 See McBryde 1966.
119 Plomley 1966; Gunson 1974.
of evidence cannot be ignored. Ethnohistorians should develop a programme of cooperation with Australian historians in general, and in particular with those who are working in the field of local history to ensure that the vital documents and oral evidence in danger of destruction or loss are salvaged and made accessible to scholars. Our present ethnohistories are largely a response to the fact that serious ethnographic studies for much of our continent began too late; let us ensure that we are not too late also in acquiring the source material (both written and oral) for fully developed ethnohistory.

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Aborigines and change: Australia in the '70s. Edited by R.M. Berndt.* Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1977.
Pp. viii + 424. $18.95 h.b. $10.95 p.b.

These 28 chapters were papers presented to a symposium of Institute members in 1974 on 'problems inherent in the situation of Aborigines adapting to Australian-European society' (p. vii). The main focus was on traditionally-oriented groups — on 'changing frames of reference', education, urban situations, law and politics. The symposium had marked a new emphasis by the Institute on the study of social change. Professor Berndt writes that there is to be a 'new anthropology', in terms which seem to stake a special claim for the anthropologist to be the broker between the Aboriginal groups and the government. But as the recent history of the Northern Land Council shows, Aborigines are already depending on other kinds of special competence, and they speak for themselves (on issues like Aurukun). As this book shows, law, history, economics, administrative and political studies have important kinds of help to give; all mainly to provide knowledge to Aborigines of what they are up against. I think no Aboriginal anthropologist has yet studied the roots of anti-Aboriginal prejudice, in the public and in the bureaucracy, with which they have to deal. Professor Berndt is right when he argues that bureaucratic promotion of 'development' reduces Aboriginal choices — that 'the bonds of bureaucratization have them virtually helpless' (p. x). But perhaps some anthropologists, and some public servants working in the field, hold an ideal of 'partnership', which proved pointless in the worldwide anticolonial movement, with no more appeal to the colonised than 'trusteeship'.

Dr C.H. Berndt, in the concluding chapter, sees the permanent location of bureaucrats with Aboriginal groups as leading to ever deeper interference hastening social disintegration. 'The line between "influencing" and directing', she writes, 'is quite thin' (p. 410). This was a common feature of colonial administration — that the people had no way of distinguishing between a suggestion and a command backed by the whole power of the government. Dr Berndt argues that the very adoption of the new western structures for protection of a separate identity ensure that 'the content of that identity ... will ... be very different' (p. 410).

Kenneth Maddock tells of a group which has been making its own adaptations, in marriage custom, economic relationships, and in the adjustment of the ceremonial programme to the requirements of employment. Eric Kolig shows how a growing Aboriginal identity was rooted in common resistance to 'white' influences; and that a very non-material emphasis in the old culture has helped its survival (so far) in the face of material disaster. Susan Tod Woenne tells how establishment of the Docker River settlement not only attracted those who belonged to the country, but stimulated 'gradual extension of social, ritual and territorial networks' (p. 62). The old men of Jigalong, writes Robert Tonkinson, use the Council as a buffer against government, while they try to deal with alcoholism, breakdown of social controls and conflict with Aboriginal neighbours. Noel Wallace describes the effects of cash, women's employment and schooling of children on the ritual which is the basis of man's estate, so that the Pitjantjatjara youth follow those of other areas into the 'cultural abyss'. The people know well that they need autonomy and their own land. Wallace shows also how moves to decentralisation are leading to the growth of large centres of population at or near especially sacred sites. Lee Sackett describes the devastating impact of the pub at Wiluna on observance of the Law, which is maintained through pressure from Law-abiding visitors. Isobel White explains why the Yalata people prefer freedom of movement to possession of houses. W.J. Gray writes that Aboriginal movement to

* The Review Editor and Editorial Board considered that this volume merited discussion by reviewers who would assess its value to Aboriginal studies, and to the broader field of Australian history. We are grateful to G.D. Rowley and Beverley Kingston for undertaking the task.
the outstations in Arnhem Land frustrated government expectations that the settlements there would develop into towns. J.K. Doolan shows how a safe home base of their own has enabled the Gurindji to decide which of the pastoralists applying for their labour should be assisted — or rejected.

Now in each of these cases there is a degree of autonomous decision-making, and often in opposition to expectations of their advisers. Nicolas Peterson's chapter deals with Aboriginal economic decisions in the Central Reserve. While in the main they are target workers, they do not yet 'value material capital more highly than social capital' (p. 145) — a perceptive comment which goes deep. John Taylor describes malnutrition arising from the purchase of western supermarket food in the store. Cash opens up a wide world of never ending desires. The women buy industrial goods at the expense of nutrition, and try to save on the food to pay the rent. Both papers raise a central problem in the impact of cash on traditional subsistence economies. But this is the preliminary 'trade store' boundary of the cash economy. What chance have people in this predicament against international mining companies without effective government protection?

The remaining papers were offered mainly by specialists other than anthropologists. Klaus-Peter Koepping confirms in his study of Cherbourg settlement that not much has changed in the Aboriginal predicament in Queensland, with officialdom so all-powerful that he had to go through the system for information. Keith Cole tells how, after trying for decades to get the mission dwellers in Arnhem Land to give up their systems of belief, the Anglican missions came to concede that such systems may be seen as 'preparatory' to conversion instead of enemy propaganda. C.F. Makin discusses schools and other 'agents of change'. While seeming to know very well that 'development' requires autonomy, he limits his conclusions to the area of education. Robert McKeich, also an educationist, writes of the world of the part-Aboriginal. Only they, he says, can 'tell it as it is'. But since then we have had Kevin Gilbert's *Living Black*, and the writings of others. The publication of such works of protest form part of a growing world literature, largely in English, and marks the emergence of the entrapped minorities into national and international politics.

In a hard-nosed and pessimistic paper R.G. Hausfeld discusses the relationship of minority culture membership to health. His hypothesis is that groups which cannot organise their lives in accordance with their own values will be marked by high morbidity and by high incidence of emotional disturbance. A. — K. Eckermann found that Aborigines in one Queensland town married and interacted with white working class families. But even in the mixed marriages they retained Aboriginal child raising customs; and they keep their own folk-lore and history. Margaret Valadian and Diane Barwick defend a workshop for Aborigines they organised in 1971, which seems to have been a very sensible one, but was not approved by some professional educators. Fay Gale's paper, based on her research for the Poverty Survey, shows how the values of the extended family are reinforced in Adelaide by economic necessity. The 'family unit' saves money by sharing a house with kindred units. 'Is it really legitimate' she asks, 'to discuss such kinship ties solely in terms of traditional social values?' (p. 331).

There are two very useful chapters on Aborigines and the western law. Dorothy Parker travelled Perth and rural Western Australia with police officers, and found many ignorant and prone to disregard the law. (How easily they get away with this has been illustrated by the findings of the inquiry into the Skull Creek incident.) As for the crime statistics, they refer mainly to those 'without social or political power, who have been labelled "criminals" by social agents who possess too much power' (p. 350). The late Elizabeth Eggleston advocated an Aboriginal Legal Service with the Aborigines in control. Her paper was revolutionary in its attitude to the pecking order in Australian professional society, as is her 1976 book; but as quietly and logically
argued. Colin Tatz, the only contributor from political science, could still say that all the important decisions were being made by whites: that even in the Institute of Aboriginal Studies it was 'plain who are the students and who are the studied'. There is some useful comment in this chapter on the politics of the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee; on the Aboriginal moves to have a bargaining rather than an advisory role in the relationship of their national body with government. (This will always be resisted by the bureaucracy with vested interests in Aboriginal Affairs). Tatz warns that the likely alternative to effective institutions to deal with this whole problem will be violence. One of the less informed declarations of a recent Commonwealth Minister was that violence was abhorrent to both traditions — white and black; which illustrated the common tendency to look for solutions without knowing what is the problem.

No publication just like this will be possible again. Too much has happened since the 1974 meeting; and within the little world of the Institute it was happening then. In this volume, valuable as it certainly is, the Aboriginal group or person is the object of study. Now the object has become the participant, at least in politics; and more and more he sees as the problem not his unfortunate fellows, but the whites. Perhaps some day there will be serious studies by Aboriginal anthropologists of white prejudice, as part of the wider question of what makes white people act as they do.

C.D. ROWLEY

Aborigines and change: Australia in the '70s is a collection of papers (twenty-eight in all) edited out of a symposium in 1974 of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. They range from some fairly abstruse anthropological studies through some mixed history and educational theory to some very plain accounts of recent investigations into specific problem areas such as the extent of poverty among the urban Aboriginal population and the role of the Aboriginal Legal Aid services. There is no doubt that to the non-expert, but I hope, intelligent, interested, and sympathetic reader whom I am thought possibly to resemble, the plainer papers are more informative and accessible than those with complicated diagrams. But reading through the whole collection — which I expect is a task few non-experts will feel obliged to set themselves — my overall reaction was one of puzzled disquiet.

To begin, although this probably reflects my preoccupations as a teacher of Australian history, it is not easy from reading through these papers to get any clear idea of the nature and extent of change in the Aboriginal community in the 1970s despite the sub-title. One of the reasons for this is clearly that many of the papers were in fact written in or before 1974 and based on research or fieldwork done in the sixties or even earlier. There are frequent allusions to the upheavals in Australian politics in the early seventies and some editorial footnotes drawing attention to developments post-1974, but it was probably too early when the book went to press for much of an assessment to be made of the effects of another round of changes in government policy. Even so, a really usable account of change at policy level and expert guidance for interpreting official policy and administrative changes are wanting.

The collection seems rather piecemeal in other respects as well. Perhaps half the papers are research reports dealing with a particular group or settlement in great detail, and therefore involving only a couple of hundred individuals. (Would that the future historian of European society in Australia had so much detailed observation piling up!) The problem comes with the grandiose frameworks in which such tiny communities are set, or the dubious research propositions their every human activity is seen to substantiate. As a grab-bag of the research preoccupations of the late sixties, this may be as representative a sample as any, but to
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the outsider it also raises a few doubts about the perspective, purpose, and views of many of the contributors on the significance of their work. And here, the piece by Michael Howard, ‘Aboriginal political change in an urban setting: the N.A.C.C. election in Perth’ takes the cake. I commend his approach to all political scientists who have ever wished to know ‘why the various candidates received as many votes as they did, as well as why they were not able to garner more.’ (p. 379). As far as I can tell, however, the same approach applied to a society with which I am fairly familiar produces nonsense.

The Aborigines, to judge from many of the papers collected here, are in danger, not only from white society, but also from those who investigate them. We have long since learned to be cautious about the findings of well-meaning social investigators in the nineteenth century who first raised the cry about poverty and unemployment among the working classes. There may be a powerful debate going on about the proprieties of research which is both intrusive and potentially powerful and influential, but there is not much evidence of it here, except perhaps for a tendency to fierce conclusions which would not be tolerated by a more articulate group of subjects and an assumption of values which would at least be ridiculed. For example, there are some intriguing and valuable accounts of changes in Aboriginal society in Arnhem Land and Central Australia which elsewhere in human society have never been observed and must be inferred from the archaeological remains. But is it necessary to imply that such changes are bad or to suggest ways of countering them? Likewise, after reading descriptions of changes that have taken place in religious ceremonies and observance, for example the use of modern transport to move from site to site and the adaptation of modern materials for ritual purposes, I was reminded of plane-loads of Cardinals converging on Rome twice in two months to sit on plastic chairs and cast their ballots with biros. There are those, of course, who abhor these changes from traditional practice, but the point is surely that change is an indicator of survival.

In her conclusion Catherine Berndt calls on the Aborigines to make more use of research and of the people who do the research. She is right, except that a considerable amount of the research reported here is unusable, either because it is in impenetrable mumbo-jumbo, or else because it addresses itself to the false and fashionable questions of the rarefied journals. It also seems rather patronising and exploitative. I cannot be sure of this, but I do know how it feels to have a male 'expert' explain to me why I am as I am. I also know how it feels to be studied as a rare phenomenon for the sake of someone else's research — no more questionnaires on the role or status of female academics will be answered by me except on payment of an appropriate fee.

I have been unable to draw out of all these papers any clear guidelines as to where the scholarly experts closest to the Aborigines stand on the big questions of coexistence and survival. Nor can I find many clues to assist me in formulating my own personal attitudes as a citizen. Clearly I have been provoked and stirred to think, although I doubt that this collection will be used for that kind of purpose. It is more likely that more experts will dip into it for confirmation or support for yet another paper testing yet another precious theory. The best one can hope is that ultimately it will add to the anger and dismay of the Aboriginal people and that they will be able to reject the nonsense and turn the plain and useful pieces to their own purposes.

BEVERLEY KINGSTON

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In his Approaches to archaeology (1977) Peter Fowler defines archaeology as 'the study, or knowledge, of man-made things'; and in Analytical archaeology (1968) David Clarke is 'concerned with the recovery and study of relict artefacts', with all their spatial, temporal and contextual attributes. The raw data of the archaeologist are material objects — but his concern is with the behaviour of human groups or, more narrowly, past human groups. Archaeology has been regarded as the anthropology of extinct peoples, the time aspect of anthropology. But each moment the present becomes the past; and the past flows continually into the present. Is it not, then, equally valid to regard the study of extant peoples as simply a momentary cross-section of a total extinct/extant continuum? Some archaeologists have explicitly advocated a disciplinary concern with the totality of relationships between material culture and the behaviour of human groups, without restriction on time. In 'Melanesian and Australian exchange systems' (Mankind, 11, 1978) William Rathje maintains 'archaeology is the social science that studies the relation between material culture and behaviour in all times and places'; while in a review of Gould's Explorations in ethnoarchaeology (Mankind, 11, 1978) Peter White avers that 'archaeologists should study all relations between artefacts and their natural and cultural milieu, whether this is in the present or the past'.

Isabel McBryde does not concern herself here with the theoretical relationships between archaeology, anthropology and ethnohistory. Nevertheless, this set of essays lies right in the mainstream of concern as defined by Fowler: 'the landscape as an artefact created through time'; 'the use of all available evidence ... to study the interaction through time of Man and his environment in any given area'. They stem from 'a programme of local ethnohistories as topics for research theses at honours and master's level' carried out by students of prehistoric archaeology in the History Department of the University of New England under Dr McBryde's direction (p. 104).

Some of the fascination of this material lies in its sources. We meet the indefatigable Miss Mary Bundock, writing of the blacks she knew on the Richmond River from 'somewhere early in the fifties' when she and her brother hid in the scrub to watch a file of men, 'all painted and armed for a fight'. Her account is perceptive, but brief. The quality of her observation comes out most clearly not so much in this general set piece, as in the specific descriptions she gives of individual manufactured items, and the materials and techniques of their manufacture. These accompany objects she gave to the Rijksmuseum, in the Netherlands, and to the Australian Museum in the late 1880s and the 1890s. She gives each object its native name and often identifies the raw material botanically; e.g. in the Rijksmuseum are 'Two shields — native name Puchah' of the wood of Meryta sinclaivii (p. 145). A wooden bowl called 'Noundule' is made 'by cutting off and hollowing out the knots which grow on certain trees', this one being from the nettle tree (Urtica moroides) (p. 163). On a woven dilly bag donated to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, she has written 'Dilly bag "boombi" Xerotes multiflora R. Br. Wyangarie Casino M.E.B. 24/10/79' and on another 'Buchie ben made from "Buchie" rush cladium glomeratum R. Br. Wyangerie Casino M.E.B. 24/10/79' (p. 167). She describes a paddle-shaped wooden object as a 'short-bladed spear used in hunting (p. 151). And so on, showing always a meticulous and informed concern with botany, linguistics, and technology of manufacture and use, as well as the objects themselves. Miss Bundock was a pioneer of the detailed and total study and recording of 'all relations between artefacts and their natural and cultural milieu'. She represents the persistence into the
nineteenth century of an eighteenth century concern with knowledge in all its aspects, and, above all, the total study of a particular landscape and its people — a tradition exemplified in Britain by William Stukeley, and in Australia by George Fletcher Moore, who recorded Aboriginal vocabulary (technological, ceremonial, botanical, zoological and geological) in Western Australia in the 1830s.

It is inevitable that the original observations of the early New England settlers and visitors, such as Mary Bundock, W.J. Fanning, Bishop Turner or Rudolf Poch, should be fragmented as they pass through the analytical sieve of these studies by Dr McBryde and her students. This tendency is counteracted to some extent by arranging several sources together at the end of the volume, printed on a buff paper with sepia photographs. Despite notes on 'The collectors' and 'Documentation by the collectors . . .' in Dr McBryde's paper on museum collections, and brief perceptive notes in her introduction, I found it difficult to form an overall view of the data sources. I would have appreciated, first, a longer introductory history of European exploration and settlement, observers and records. Then, second, perhaps the printed sources. The museum materials surely also belong here as part of the data base. These established, the analyses would logically follow third.

Some of these analysts treat their material through a limited time range; others take a particular region; others a particular topic. I.C. Campbell is concerned with racial contact and conflict on the New England tableland; Brian Harrison restricts his canvas to the Myall Creek massacre, and particularly its aftermath in the closing of white ranks against those who treated black men as men. These papers do not contribute to the overall themes of material culture and Aboriginal ways of life treated in the rest of the volume. W.G. Hoddinott's account of languages and myths in the New England area is an essential complement and prelude to the economic and technological themes which dominate the remainder of the analyses. Localised myths relate to particular landscape features and ceremonial places and their peopling by animals, men, and powerful creatures such as the serpents living in particular waterholes; thus maintaining and reinforcing ties between Aboriginal groups and their terrain. J. Bellshaw's paper on demography, activity patterns and schedules is extremely important. The Northern Tablelands are seen as a 'marchland' of harsh environment, impinged upon largely by groups centred on the slopes to the Darling drainage to the west, and the densely settled rich coastal zone to the east. Very concentrated usage of, for example, fishing grounds at the mouth of the Clarence River, or large yam beds near Lake Richmond, produce an almost sedentary pattern of usage in the immediate coastal area. Aggregate densities of wide areas (the coastal zone, with 20 to 50 people per 100 square miles, the tableland with 5, the slopes with 10 or 15) reflect ratios between different types of terrain — coast, river, rainforest and mountains — rather than the carrying capacity of each.

Valerie Campbell's paper on the Macleay clarifies the resources of this valley (estuarine fish and shellfish; water birds and fish in swamps and streams; yams on river clays; game in forested hills) and the detailed pattern of Aboriginal activity, involving movement, agglomeration near the coast in the summer, scattering into the hills in the winter. The scale of operations involves weirs across streams and tidal fishtraps of stone. Sharon Sullivan turns north to the Richmond and the Tweed to document again an inland winter to coastal spring pattern of group movement; detailing animal and plant resources, and the methods and gear used to obtain and use fish, game, roots, Bunya nuts, etc., and the relationship of these activities to social organisations. Miss Bundock provides both documentary and artefactual evidence of climbing vines and nets both small and huge. Russell Pierce focuses on one small area at the mouth of the Richmond, drawing largely on the 1922 memories of septuagenarian John Ainsworth.
The remaining papers are even more specific, turning from total area accounts to individual structures. The data are drawn from fieldwork — Valerie Campbell recording fishtraps on the northern New South Wales coast, which provided abundant food and made possible semi-permanent settlement; Helen Bray describing stone arrangements in hilly country above the Macleay River; Sabine providing a note on an inconspicuous increase site; and Lane documenting carved trees. In each case, documentary or oral evidence is necessary to understand the field evidence — Mary Bundock once more on fish traps; a local informant around 1900 for stone arrangements; Radcliffe-Brown in the 1920s for increase centres; oral memories (and Etheridge’s 1910 account) for carved trees. Field evidence extends the application of verbal, and vice versa, every time.

Among the most valuable features of this book are its illustrations, reproductions of old photographs and drawings. Some are of high quality (e.g. Poch’s photographs of Clarence River engravings and of Grafton Aborigines or Mrs Macpherson’s drawing of the ‘Blacks’ Camp’ near Bingara). But some are too dark (e.g. Gardner’s drawings of equipment) or rendered obscure by over-reduction, for instance, his drawings of Aborigines on pp. 236-237. While for old photographs the original may be at fault, this does not excuse recent field photographs, as in plate 47, nor plate 50, which does not show what it purports to show.

It is a pity the Institute of Aboriginal Studies has allowed technical faults to mar a pioneer attempt to integrate documentary, oral, field and museum data into ‘a comprehensive picture of [Aboriginal material culture] as part of a functioning culture in a distinct environment’. This will remain a seminal study long after it has been paid the compliment of many imitations.

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The voyage to Marege’ is a stimulating and significant work. In a refreshing and compelling manner it draws attention to a generally neglected aspect of Australia’s past: the visits of the Macassan trepangers to the coast of the Northern Territory known to them as Marege’. From the inception of the trepang industry, some time during the half century after the Dutch conquest of Macassar in 1667/9, to its demise in 1906/7 these fishermen created and maintained regular contacts between northern Australia and their homeport on southern Sulawesi. During its heyday in the 19th century each season saw probably more than a thousand men undertake the voyage. Macknight argues convincingly that the little impact the Macassans made on the course of Australia’s economic and social development should not be accepted as the sole determinant of their historical significance. It is true that because of the nature of their business the encounters of the Macassans with the Australian Aborigines tended to be brief, but for several tribes they nevertheless meant a qualitatively unique link of communication with another world that was entirely alien to them. Moreover, in some aspects these contacts did have lasting consequences, such as the adoption of a considerable Macassan vocabulary in several Aboriginal languages, or the introduction of new conceptual and material items into their culture. Similarly, the paltriness of the custom duties contributed by the Macassans to the colonial and state treasury of South Australia is no true indication of the role and value of a fishing industry that white Australians through their own limitations could not maintain. For a proper assessment of the trepang industry, therefore, a wider canvas must be chosen. Macknight correctly sees it as an
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important facet of the total maritime development of Southeast Asia. Within the
context of the highly sophisticated societies and market economies of that area — where Marege' trepang was a standard description of the article — it was an
'unusually clear example of non-European business activity'.

The voyage to Marege' is foremost a business history of the trepang industry.
Its focus remains firmly fixed on the Macassans and their fishery, so that the reader
should not expect an exhaustive account of the impact of the Macassans on Aboriginal
society. Three major themes can be distinguished: the historical development of the
industry; its organisation, technology and seasonal routine; and finally the
relationship between Macassans and Australians.

From the beginning the trepang fishery was a commercial rather than a
subsistence industry. Virtually the only consumption market for the cured sea slug
was China. The estimated Macassan average annual production of 300 tons in the
nineteenth century gave them at least 25 per cent of this market. Whether the
Macassans could influence prices in China, or reversedly, whether and how fluctuations
in China affected prices, incomes, and generally the level of enterprise in Macassar,
is not fully discussed. Nor is the relationship between the trepangers and the
Chinese merchants who provided the communication with the Chinese market
made clear. In view of the paucity of the sources one may not hope for definitive
answers to such questions, but matters such as the marketing of the trepang and
the economic and social standing of the trepangers in Macassar should have been
broached. The discussion, which could justifiably have remained tentative, might also
have included a time dimension.

The latter general point, although decreasingly apposite, may also be made
regarding Macknight's treatment of the social and economic position of the crew,
the routine of the voyage, and the actual work of catching and curing the trepang.
Yet, here Macknight also shows his great historical craftsmanship and imaginative
qualities in piecing together information from many different types of sources into a
coherent and comprehensive picture. This applies particularly to chapter 5, 'The
archaeology of the industry', which provides an excellent insight into the technology
of trepanging, largely based on the results of archaeological field work. Moreover,
Macknight provides illuminating illustrations, and some most useful and excellent
maps and figures. I shall return later to the twin subjects of methodology and
presentation.

Two separate chapters have been devoted to the when, how and why of the
industry's beginnings and end. As is the case with so many other similar industries it
is impossible to determine an exact date for its inception. Macknight, however, has
succeeded in limiting the most likely range of years to the half century, most
probably even the quarter century, after Macassar was conquered by the Dutch East
India Company (V.O.C.) in the late 1660s. Although little specific literary evidence
is available, an array of circumstances, based foremost on the chronology of the
knowledge and consumption of trepang in China and the re-orientation of Macassan
maritime enterprise necessitated by its subordination to the trading and shipping
policies of the V.O.C., makes this conclusion readily acceptable. In order to do so
fully, however, one must discard radiocarbon datings derived from excavations of three
Macassan campsites in Marege'. Specimens taken from these locations yielded age
indications of about 200, 400 and 800 years which, if accepted at face value, suggest
the fishery must have begun at least 5 centuries earlier. In view of the 'historical'
evidence Macknight's opinion that these results are caused by some systematic
failure of the dating method used — which multiplies the calculated age by a factor
of four — must be upheld.
The last chapter, dealing with the demise of Macassan trepanging, shows how the arrival of white administration ultimately destroyed a basically sound, but foreign, industry. It seems to me that Macknight is somewhat too apologetic in assessing the restrictive policies of South Australia, and the men who shaped and executed them. Not only were the customs officials often themselves private entrepreneurs desirous of gaining a share or even a monopoly in the industry, but it is also clear that the Macassans were so easily liable to extortionate dues and later expulsion because they were non-whites.

For the readers of this journal perhaps the most interesting chapter is “The men of Marege’”, on the relations between Macassans and Aborigines. Although the emphasis remains on the impact of the Aborigines on the Macassans rather than on the reverse influences, the discussion is valuable for both perspectives. Attention is drawn to the considerable trading that took place in some seasons, and a summary given of the consequences of Macassan contacts on Aboriginal culture. Central to these exchanges were direct personal contacts which (beyond the expectable skirmishes and heterosexual encounters) extended to some Macassans settling in Marege’ and some Aborigines finding employment with the trepangers and accompanying them to Macassar. This chapter again shows Macknight’s great skill in handling oral and anthropological evidence and integrating it with what usually, but erroneously, is called ‘historical’ (i.e. written or printed) documentation.

This finally leads me to Macknight’s methodology, to which I referred earlier and which deserves special consideration. The voyage to Marege’ is based on an array of source material, of which the composition, if not unique, is certainly remarkable for its span, diversity and originality. Besides written and printed documents the sources include information gained through interviews and talks with Macassans and Aborigines, and from archaeological and anthropological fieldwork. No less remarkable is the admirable manner with which Macknight has succeeded in welding his heterogeneous material together and creating out of this blend a coherent business history of Macassan trepanging. That the picture he evokes is not entirely comprehensive does not diminish the achievement and value of the book. Macknight is to be commended for his imaginative approach, judicious analysis, and the great concern he has shown in also presenting his findings lucidly and graphically. One hopes indeed that Macknight’s multi-disciplinary, but fundamentally historical, methodology will be a beacon and stimulus for future similar studies.

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There has long been a need for a book accessible to school children which tells the story of Aboriginal resistance to European settlers, creates some Aboriginal heroes and brings to life the ruthlessness with which the British government put down this resistance. Since the publication of Rowley’s trilogy in 1970 most books in this area have been by and for the specialists so that little recent work has reached the general public. Only McQueen’s Penguin Connexions book Aborigines, race and racism published in 1974 reached a wider audience, but it unintentionally reinforced prevailing images of Aborigines with a series of photographs that made Aborigines look like freaks. Indeed his book demonstrated the difficulty of presenting a different image of Aborigines. There have also been a number of general pseudo-anthropological studies which portray Aborigines as a quaint people associated with snakes, spirits and the desert. A recent film, The last Tasmanian, which was shown on television, acknowledged Aboriginal resistance, but since the director considered
that the Tasmanian Aborigines were suffering from 'a slow strangulation of the mind', their resistance was only an aberration, and not a politically conscious act. Indeed there has been a marked reluctance on the part of most white Australian intellectuals to allow Aborigines any political reality in the nineteenth century, which says a great deal about the European mind in Australia.

Black resistance is different. As a book for a wider audience, particularly school children, it convincingly argues that the Aborigines are a political and a historically conscious people who resisted European invasion from the beginning and were often successful in restraining the flow of European settlement, that the British were aware of this resistance and used every means to crush it. The authors make accessible the work of specialist historians, by tracing colony by colony the nature of Aboriginal resistance and create some Aboriginal heroes and heroines in the process. After all the books which have portrayed settlers and colonial office officials agonising about the mass slaughter of the Aborigines, this one is refreshing and challenging. The chapters on Tasmania, Victoria and the Northern Territory are scrappy because they rely on out-of-date secondary sources, but other chapters like those on New South Wales and Queensland are very good indeed, relying heavily on the pioneering work of Raymond Evans. It is unfortunate the authors did not acknowledge their debt to his chapter in Exclusion, exploitation and extermination from which they took at least 29 direct quotes. Like Clive Turnbull's book, Black war, first published thirty years ago, this book is designed to shock white Australians into an awareness of repressive policies towards the Aborigines and to seek change. But Black resistance goes further. By using the ideas of Reynolds and Evans the authors demonstrate the refusal by the settlers and governments to accept Aborigines as a politically conscious people for fear of challenging the morality of their invasion. They also draw upon the theories of guerrilla warfare espoused by Che Guevara and the Viet Cong to understand the nature of Aboriginal resistance, possibly the most contentious part of the book, but these analogies work well and have already been used with great effect by other writers.

Some anthropologists have attacked the book for failing to take account of Aboriginal social organisation and for creating European-inspired Aboriginal heroes and heroines. Nor does the book take account of the complexities of European settlement or the absence of unity among the Aboriginal tribes in confronting the Europeans. The nature of Aboriginal resistance is undoubtedly more complex than this book allows, but the substance is not. I hope it is read by an audience wider than school children. It may serve to enable some white people to understand why most Aborigines still bear hatred for whites and why they feel no gratitude for the crumbs of land and money that have been tossed to them. Above all it may enable white people to confront the origins of their attitudes towards black people more honestly.

LYNDALL RYAN

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY

The two worlds of Jimmie Barker: the life of an Australian Aboriginal 1900-1972, as told to Janet Mathews. Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1977. Pp. xiii + 218. $5.00 p.b. only.

Aboriginal history from the late nineteenth century is largely the story of government settlements and church missions where tribal remnants were 'concentrated'. Initially, this process of uprooting and relocation was intended to protect Aborigines from extinction. But the institutionalisation of this system later served the convenient purpose of removing them from public view and public conscience.
The official records of what might be called the institutional era are more substantial than historians and anthropologists previously imagined. Diane Barwick has demonstrated the usefulness of the Victorian Aborigines' Protection Board material, and there is a great deal yet to be gleaned from the files of the Western Australia Department of Native Affairs this century. Of course, the material is often patchy. For example, Janet Mathews' extracts from the New South Wales Aborigines' Protection Board records relating to the Brewarrina station (which she uses as appendices) read like notes from the Inspector of Prisons.

Fortunately the story in this case has been filled out by the reminiscences of the Aboriginal Jimmy Barker, collated and edited by Mathews from tape-recordings which Barker began making on his own initiative. Mrs Mathews (the grand-daughter in law of R.H. Mathews, one of the earliest ethnographers of the Muruwari), was working on the Muruwari language in the late 1960s when she heard about Barker, and this book is the result of their collaboration. While the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies is to be congratulated for such a well-produced publication, it is a pity that Mathews was not asked to provide notes indicating, among other things, the accuracy of Jimmie Barker's memory. More importantly, there is the vexed question of authorship. It may be that Mathews' editing has been extremely light, but we can never be sure whose words we are reading. As an historian, I would have preferred a less polished and more disjointed product whose authorship was clearly established.

The son of a German station manager called Bocher and a part-Aboriginal woman whose mother was Muruwari, Jimmie lived as a child at Mundiwa (a camping reserve on the Culgoa River) and at nearby Milroy station where his mother worked as a domestic servant. Later they moved to the Brewarrina Aboriginal settlement where he received some rudimentary schooling. From childhood he had shown considerable skill in repairing machinery and building his own little inventions. Consequently he was pleased when the settlement manager told him that he had been apprenticed to an engineer. But it was all a ruse. Instead, the fourteen year old boy found himself indentured to work for four years on a distant farm for the sum of two shillings a week, paid to the Board on his behalf. If he had run away he would not have been allowed back to the Brewarrina settlement to care for his ailing mother. Nor would he have been able to escape the slights and insults handed out to Aborigines who scraped a living on the fringes of western towns. It was easier to maintain his self-respect on the settlement and this helps to explain why such an obviously talented Aboriginal spent his best years as a general handyman.

Jimmie had missed initiation when he was eleven because of his mother's insistence that he was too young (the normal age was about fourteen). And what may have been the last attempt by the Muruwari old men to pass on their secret knowledge failed a few years later in 1913 when six young conscripts managed to free themselves and escape into the bush. His mother's death in 1922 also spelled the end of one of the most tenacious Muruwari customs — the burning of the deceased's possessions (including government-issue blankets, much to the chagrin of managers). Jimmie kept his mother's most treasured belongings and while this created something of a sensation, people began to follow his example. The influenza epidemic of 1919 killed off most of the old people and henceforth there was little concern about 'correct' marriages.

It seems almost incredible now that the Ngemba and Muruwari peoples of western New South Wales should have been inflicted with a series of such lazy, cheating, bullying and alcoholic managers. However, controlling an Aboriginal 'mission' (as Aborigines described government settlements as well as church establishments) was poorly paid and possessed about the same kudos as running a leper camp. Apart from one manager who made some improvements, the best that Jimmie Barker could say about the others was that they 'did not hurt anyone seriously'. Their powers were virtually dictatorial. Any Aboriginal with the
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temperity to complain to the Board or to the police about such practices as the
misappropriation of welfare payments or over-charging for goods would have his
complaint referred back to the manager, who could then expel him as a 'trouble
maker'.

Today's Aboriginal activists and their white supporters may wonder why
Aborigines did not take the solution into their own hands. They may see Jimmie
Barker as an 'uncle Tom' figure who benefited from his mediating role between
'kooreys' and 'gubs'. This is how Jimmie would defend himself:

At times the Aborigines were so resentful that they made plans to retaliate and
attack the manager. Each time this occurred I was able to talk them out of it
with warnings that we had no say in what was right and nothing was in our
favour. Any aggression from us would mean twelve months in gaol; we must
endure these unpleasant events. I prevented a rebellion many times, for I knew
that the Aborigines would be the sufferers.

In our era of tent embassies and land rights it takes a special effort of the imagination
to appreciate the total powerlessness of those people. A good deal had to be borne
in order to prevent families from being split up, the ultimate sanction of white
authority. This point has been made very effectively by Alessandro Cavadini and
Carolyn Strachan in their film about the Palm Island strike of 1957.

Describing the anguish of 'King Clyde' and the other old men who saw their
world being swept away, Jimmie Barker recorded his own feelings about his
Aboriginal heritage: 'I might have modern views in many ways', he wrote, 'but
there is another line of thought which draws me backwards. I feel that I am living
between two worlds, and I am not even a full-blood'. Echoing the official orthodoxy
of his time, he believed that this painful situation would exist for perhaps another
hundred years until all Aborigines were 'fully assimilated into the white community'.

BOB REECE

MURDOCH UNIVERSITY

Pp. 128, illus. $2.95.

As a boy I remember hearing my grandfather talk of the 'Breelong Blacks'.
He had known some of the Mawbeys in Gilgandra, and he referred to what had
happened to their family as though to a well-known tragedy. I doubt if he mentioned
the Governors by name, but clearly he considered them Aborigines, and probably he
therefore thought himself superior to them. Yet he showed neither hostility towards
them nor shame for their condition. He simply told their story as one of many he
passed on of the early days, and as far as I could tell it was the only one in which
Aborigines or half castes were killers. Obviously he did not think that massacres were
a peculiar specialty of Aborigines.

Yet I suspect it is their colour, more than their deeds, which have given the
Governors prominence in the 1970s. In fairly rapid succession a novel, a film, and now
a biography have appeared, like my grandfather each treating the principals as
black, unlike my grandfather each seeing the cause of the tragedy in the void
between two cultures. A similar perception in the United States made a folk hero of
Geronimo, and possibly such a thing might happen to the Governors here. I don't
automatically disagree with history as propaganda, and much of it is that anyway,
consciously or unconsciously, but in the Governors' case it does demand an attempt
at estimating the impact of their Aboriginal heritage upon them, and this is a thing
conspicuously absent from all accounts about them so far.
There is clear evidence that Aboriginal attitudes and values mattered to the Governors. We see this in their readiness to share, their endurance, their bushcraft and their contempt for European ability in the bush, the manner of their separating from the slower fugitives including the Queenslander Underwood, their fatalism, and so on. Might not the Aboriginal background, then, help explain not only, indeed not mainly, why the Mawbeys were killed, and also many of the incredible events in the three months thereafter?

Brian Davies might reply that, even were it possible now to attempt such an assessment, such was not his purpose. He is a journalist, and this is a journalist’s book. The research is conscientious but stops once the story line is clear, the narrative has the rough edges of haste but it is clear and it keeps moving. This is a good story, aware of the great injustice with which white has treated black in Australia, but not touching the deeper questions which this treatment provokes.

What were the Governors doing? Between 20 July and 27 October 1900, when Jimmy was captured, they killed nine Europeans, wounded three, and raped one, robbed thirty five huts and homesteads and burnt two more, and committed nine highway robberies and numerous other thefts. They averaged over a crime a day, and they seemed to have wanted to make their pursuers look stupid. This is one of several traits they shared with earlier bushrangers like Ben Hall, yet as Davies points out unlike their predecessors the Governors were always on the run, with almost every man’s hand against them. They kept moving at literally a killing pace, averaging perhaps a thousand miles a month, mostly on foot, never pausing, never ceasing their attacks, not once attempting to negotiate with their enemies, until finally their skills and endurance were run to ground by the telegraph, the railway and the rifle. Their campaign smacks of a vendetta mainly, although not only against Europeans, for the Governors vowed revenge on Aboriginal enemies. It also suggests that they knew that in the end there would be nowhere for them to go — were they like Ben Hall in wanting to die game, or was there something in their Aboriginal traditions which prescribed how men without hope should die?

Yet while puzzles remain about the months after that night of carnage at the Mawbey homestead, the present evidence suggests a simpler explanation of the event itself. Jimmy Governor was driven to rage by the slighting of his efforts, by the contempt shown for his race and his manhood. It was not the first time in Australia that injustice has provoked such a response, nor should we assume that it will be the last.


This is the sixth special publication of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History; and as with the others (e.g. Women at work, 1975) it centres on an important theme in Australian history. The book contains fourteen chapters and a lively introduction. Four of the chapters deal with the reasons for working class hostility to Chinese immigrants in the nineteenth century. Several more discuss trade union and socialist attitudes to the White Australia policy after 1901. There are several case studies, including two on the infamous Queensland sugar industry; and Hank Nelson has contributed a sensitive account of race and labour relations in Australian New Guinea, called ‘From kanaka to fuzzy wuzzy angel’.

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Given the theme of the book it is disappointing that there is only one chapter on the labour movement and Aborigines. Nevertheless, Andrew Markus' 'Talka longa mouth' is a thorough account of union (especially pastoral union) attitudes to Aboriginal membership from 1890 to 1970. His suggestion that there was less discrimination than has been thought previously invites discussion, as does his assertion that the Communist Party of Australia's Aboriginal programme of 1931 'constituted the most radical demands being made by, or on behalf of, Aborigines till the 1960s'.

A second chapter on Aborigines — by R.G. Castle and J.S. Hagan — deals with structural economic changes and Aboriginal work experiences in the Bega area from the 1920s to the 1970s. The subject warrants a book-length study, but the chapter is unpretentious and stimulating, not least for its use of oral evidence.

Who are our enemies? deserves to find its way on to the reading lists of college and university courses in Australian history.

TOM STANNAGE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY


This is a short, but extremely useful, listing of bibliographies relating to Aborigines of use to those interested in Aboriginal studies. The entries are clearly presented with informative annotations; an index also assists the user. For historians it might have been helpful to list some of the overseas bibliographies and library catalogues which contain early and often obscure sources. A small inaccuracy on page ii relates to the A.I.A.S. library: no acquisition listing is published in the Institute's Newsletter, only current Aboriginal material is included in the Annual Bibliography. The March issue, however, does contain a listing of theses acquired annually by the Institute.

JAMES URRY AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

A REPLY TO MERVYN HARTWIG'S REVIEW OF RACE RELATIONS AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

Mervyn Hartwig and I obviously view things through different ends of the telescope and there is no harm in that. But any chance of a fruitful debate has been destroyed by his arrogance and scorn.

Hartwig, though, is his own worst enemy. Like many writers committed to a narrow ideological view of the world he has the knack of misquoting, misreading, and generally misrepresenting other people's work that he disagrees with. There is no point going through his comments line by line saying 'I did not write this' or 'this is out of context' and so on. But let two examples suffice to illustrate the range of his intellectual dishonesty.

I wrote (pp. 3-4) 'Aborigines led a parasitical — in a non-pejorative sense — existence. They had no agriculture or domestic animals, but foraged, gathered, hunted and fished . . .' Hartwig's smearing rendition becomes "'parasitical' [sic] hunter-gathering". In a footnote he dismisses my 'non-pejorative' comment and says that what I really meant was that 'Aborigines merely took from nature and in no way improved its productivity' (!)
This ability to ghost write my book so that it becomes something quite different in Hartwig's mind is really taken to extremes in this example: he argues that my conclusions tend to 'blame the victim' and that I say that 'Aborigines have not been the victims of an inherently unjust socio-economic order but of their own lifestyles'.

This is pure fiction. Read, for example, the following statement from p. 9 of my book (and its reiteration throughout):

Further, it must be noted that the present depressed socio-economic state of Aborigines is not directly attributable to the survival of some inherited prehistoric cultural or genetic programming, as is popularly assumed. Certain characteristics of prehistoric Aboriginal culture did determine early reactions to western man, and certainly influenced his attitudes towards and therefore policies for Aborigines... But there comes a time when responses to European colonisation by later generations of Aborigines are increasingly influenced by considerations other than those of their prehistoric culture, notably the way in which they were continually repressed and persecuted by Europeans. Thus present Aboriginal social and behavioural patterns are by no means unique for they have much in common with those of similarly placed ethnic minorities in other countries: it is a question of broad environmental influences — social, economic, political, psychological — and no longer of direct prehistoric cultural determinants.

I could also write at length about Hartwig's display of ignorance when he talks blandly about (and on behalf of!) the New Zealand 'working class' as opposed to the 'ruling class' and so on. But then his stock reply would doubtless be that New Zealanders (unlike Hartwig) don't really understand their situation as it really exists.

I could also challenge his view that my book is an 'insult' to Maoris and show him favourable reviews and comments by Maoris but presumably such people are just brown-skinned honkeys uninformed about the dialectics of neo-Marxism.

I believe that there is a difference between informed criticism and misrepresentation. I also believe that scholarly journals should have nothing to do with the latter.

K.R. Howe

Massey University
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Footnote style:

1 Rowley 1971:107; see also Elkin 1965.
2 Colonial Secretary to Denison, 7 January 1850 (TSA CSO 24/93/3033).

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Tasmanian State Archives, Colonial Secretary’s Office. (TSA CSO 8/157/1166; TSA CSO 24/93/3033).


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