## ABORIGINAL HISTORY

### VOLUME FOUR

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*Photograph by L.A. Hercus*

Bottom: The Mudlunga or Tji-tji-Ngalla ceremony, photographed by Siebert near Killalpaninna in 1901.
*Photograph from J.W. Gregory, The dead heart of Australia, 1906.*
'HOW WE DANCED THE MUDLUNGA': MEMORIES OF 1901 AND 1902

Luise A. Hercus

One hot January day in 1967 I drove two old friends up to Marree from Port Augusta in a landrover. Mick McLean Irinjili (a Simpson Desert Wangañjuru man) was teaching me his language, and Murtee Johnny (a Yandruwanda, from the Strzelecki track) wanted to come home to his hut on the Marree reserve. People around Lyndhurst and Marree had recently claimed that Murtee was 104 years old and the oldest man in South Australia. So Mick and Murtee had a conversation which went something like this:

Mick: "I reckon, old fellow, if you're over a hundred, I must be the same."

Murtee: "I don't know. How can we straighten out which one is older? I've been working on stations for a long time. I've seen you way back in Kanowana." 1

Mick: "Were you around when that Mudlunga corroboree came through from a long way off, from the Wagaya country?"

Murtee: "Yes. I was only a very young fellow then, not yet through the (circumcision) rules."

Mick: "Yes, I was just a boy then too; I came down with that Mudlunga mob."

Murtee: "Well, we must be the same age then; we're the oldest around here. It was good, the Mudluga. I remember it, I can still sing it."

Mick: "Me too."

And both began to sing the initial verses of the Mudlunga corroboree just as they had learnt it in 1901.

We know that it was 1901 from published evidence. D.J. Mulvaney has examined the dated evidence for the spread of the Mudlunga or 'Molonga' ceremony in his important discussion of the transmission of ideas in Aboriginal society. 2 This account provides evidence from Aborigines who participated in this process of transmission. Biographical notes about other participants mentioned by Mick McLean and by Ben Murray follow the text material and translations.

1 Kanowana, where the homestead is now a ruin, was an important cattle station in the early part of this century, established by Thomas Elder. The name comes from the Yawarawarga guna-gawa 'excrement-throwing', i.e. chasing women and children away from a site connected with initiation rites. There is a major site associated with the 'Two Men' initiation song cycle close to the old homestead.

The travels of the Mudlunga in 1901-1902.
The Mudlunga ceremony was also called Tji-tji-ngalla by Gregory. This name derives from the often-repeated initial verses. It consisted of a most spectacular dance, described first by Roth. The performers wore unusual head-gear, carried bunches of box-leaves, and also had leaves tied to their ankles. The dance was accompanied by songs in the Wagaya language (spoken to the northwest of Mt Isa in Queensland) which were chanted by the spectators, both men and women.

Mick McLean here describes how it came to be known throughout the north-east of South Australia, an area that formed only a small part of its ultimate range. Speaking in Wangaardu, with a few sentences of English thrown in occasionally, he gave the following account of what happened:

3 Gregory 1906. He witnessed the performance at Peake Station, west of Lake Eyre.
4 Roth 1897:121. This account in no way corroborates the view put forward by Eliade (1968:244-268) and supported by Maddock (1974:3) that the Mudlurjga was an 'anti-European ceremony'. None of the people consulted, neither Mick McLean and Murtee Johnny who had actually performed the ceremony, nor Ben Murray and others (May Wilton, Adjamadana, Flinders Ranges; Granny Moisey, Gunu, western New South Wales) who remembered seeing it in their childhood, ever described it as anything other than a new and exciting ceremony. The statements that the Mudlunga was 'anti-European' may be traced to Siebert (1910:58-59). But Siebert's wording was cautious:

'Über den Ursprung des Tanzes und seine eigentliche Bedeutung wurden mir aber Mitteilungen gemacht, die die anderen Berichterstatter nicht zu kennen scheinen, ja mit den Angaben Roth's, was wenigstens die Zentralfigur der ganzen Darstellung anlangt, nicht übereinstimmen.'

'With regard to the origin of this dance and its real significance I received information which does not seem to have come to the notice of any of the other people who have reported on the Mulunga. My information does not agree with the statements of Roth, at least in what concerns the central figure of the whole performance.'

According to Siebert's informant this central figure represented a mythological grandmother ('kanini', a Wangaardu word) who in the end swallowed up all whites. The performance Siebert witnessed was supervised by an overweening man named Talatalana, who could speak Wangaardu, though he was probably a Waggamadla from north of Birdsville. His name means 'Seeing' in Waggamadla. As Siebert himself indicates (1910:59) there were features linking this particular ritual leader with the 'Grandmother from the Water'. This leaves little doubt that Roth's view was accurate for the main Mudlunga tradition and that the interpretation given to Siebert was secondary and possibly associated with just one person. Roth's view is confirmed by Mick McLean and Murtee Johnny, who actually danced the Mudlungra.

5 See map in Mulvaney 1976. He cites a 1930 article by Daisy Bates in The Australasian. I am indebted to Isobel M. White for further evidence of the rapid spread of the Mudlunga in South Australia:

The mulunga arrived at Penong on the West coast in 1915, taking thus 11 years to travel down from the Diamantina. Shortly before the mulunga reached Penong the wandji-wandji had arrived from the Nor'-west and had been performed at that place.

Bates (1918:165) had not been able to trace the wandji-wandji (also called wanna-wa) further back in its travels than Laverton but felt sure that it had started in the Kimberley area.
The Travels of the Mudlunga

1. bidji-gana ularaga malga ʉubindja, waŋgadi-ŋaŋu
   Paint-PERF history mark head-dress, emu -feather
   yaraba malga gumni-ŋa, argaba, bila, wandada-ra
   above mark place-PRES, ochre, black, down -CAUS
   bidji-ŋa.
   paint-PRES.
   'I know a great lot of it, but I don't know what it
   means (because it is in the Wagaya language), but I
   know the wadni wanga, the words of the song.'

2. gari-ri ŋharga-ra, yuwu danga-ŋura ganaŋaŋa
   They-ERG know -PUNC, people sit -CONT there
   'all them mob travel up and down' —
   gari-ri ŋharga-ra Gaŋa-ŋaŋa, gagari gari
   they-ERG know -PUNC Kalamurina-LOC, these they
   maba -yi -ŋa gari yuga-ŋa, gari
   group-ACT- I PRES they go -PRES, there
   manda-diga -lugu aŋali.
   take -return-HIST finally.

3. dâdla-ma-lugu âñi -ña
   Fear -Vb-HIST us Pl EXCL-ACC
   'he got horns like a bullock',
   ari -ña Bob Naylon, gawilja -buŋu
   we DI EXCL-ACC head gear-having,
   bugara ŋalgi-ŋa
   top-knot temple-LOC
   'bind'm up like feather duster'
   maŋgi -ri gaŋa-na, muɖuda nagari-ŋa ŋalgi-ŋa
   string-INST tie -PRES, like these -ACC temple-LOC
   gudni-ligu bugara ...
   put -HIST top-knot ...

4. yuga-lugu ari -ña manda-yiwa-ŋa yuga-lugu
   Go -HIST we DI EXCL-ACC take -TR I PRES go -HIST
'HOW WE DANCED THE MUDLUHGA'

ganaŋaŋa guda -lugu Malja-ŋa
there  sleep-HIST Mulyaninna-LOC

'down from where New Kalamurina now is' ŋurgu-du
good -EMPH

wadlu idni-gura guda wiŋa-wiŋa guda mani-libana
land be -CONT water much water take-ANC

budluga-gu Malja-ŋa.
bullock-DAT Mulyaninna-LOC.

5. buda-buda-ŋaridji-nana gaŋa -ŋa uga-(g)inda-du
Get down -descend-IMM creek-LOC he -DAT -EMPH

gaja ildjildja guru danga-ŋura guda mani-libana
 creek soakage other stay -CONT water take-ANC

waru ularaga-ŋa not ularaga-ŋa waru
long ago history-LOC not history-LOC long ago

Mingga-wamba guda -dubi-rigu yuga-lugu
Mingga-wamba water-hole-ALL go -HIST

'fill'm up and go right back to Kalamurina'.

6. Malja -ru yuga-lugu guda -rugu Gawari,
Mulyaninna-ABL go -HIST water-ALL Cowarie,

Gawari -ri yuga-lugu garu guda -lugu Gugura-na
Cowarie-ABL go -HIST there sleep-HIST Gugura-PROP

Gugura-ru yuga-lugu Widjiwidjini
Gugura-ABL go -HIST Widjiwidjini

'I never got tired'

bangida anda yuga-lugu, uda yuga-lugu
happy I go -HIST, then go -HIST

Widjiwidjini-na. gadi dani-li, biŋa-yi -naru
Widjiwidjini-PROP. Meat eat -HAB, hit -ACT-PLUP

rabidi, dalga, gabiri, gadni
 rabbit, bandicoot, goanna, frill neck

biŋa-ŋa-yi -gana, naŋabili-wa-lugu gari-na
kill-Sp-ACT-PERF, relax -TR-HIST they-ACC

ŋunda-ŋa 'ah gabiri biŋa-ru naŋabili-ŋa. wida
tell -PRES 'ah goanna kill-IMP relax -NP. Leader

banda Yaluyandi musterer madabupa.
great Yaluγandi musterer old man.
7. Widjiwidjini-ri yuga-lugu gala -ŋa guda -lugu
Widjiwidjini-ABL go -HIST creek-LOC sleep-HIST
'past Mt. Gason' gala -li yuga-lugu gala bangi-ŋa
'past Mt. Gason' creek-ADV go -HIST creek side -LOC
gananaŋa guda -yiwa-ŋa.
there sleep-TR -PRES.

8. ugaliri yuga-lugu garu guda -yiwa-lugu wara -ŋa
Then go -HIST there sleep-TR -HIST where-LOC
Gudjuru -ŋa (Gudjuru, that's 'Two Well')
Koochooweerinna-LOC
ugaliri yuga-lugu waŋa-waŋa mudlu -ŋana uga
then go -HIST early sandhill-EL he
yuga-ŋa, waŋa-buŋu, gari nanaŋaŋa.
go -PAST, word-having, they here.
'you know when you go through the Clifton Hill Gate,
there's a bit of a sandhill, Potato Tin Sandhill,
Buŋarugaŋa'
guni-guni-ŋa-yiwa-lugu wiða guda-yiwa-lugu.
camp -Sp-TR -HIST boss sleep-TR -HIST.

9. gaŋu wiŋa-wiŋa, uljuja njuŋu anduna gagu
There multitude, woman too, my sister
MidIa-Gadjiwana gadinari mudlu -ŋa
Nose -Turning other side sandhill-LOC
guni-guni-ŋa-yiwa-ga ani, ani waru
camp -Sp-TR -PAST we EXCL, we EXCL, long ago
gala -ŋa guda -yiwa-ŋaridji-ŋa gala bidla
creek-LOC sleep-TR -descend-PRES creek name
Buŋaruga-ŋa
Buŋaruga-PROP
'white fellows call'm "Potato Tin".'

10. guda -yiwa-ŋa, oh, muyu ŋuyu, waŋa-waŋa gari-ri
Sleep-TR -PRES, oh, day one, early they-ERG
igi -ŋa -gi mudlu -ŋa budluga-ŋaru
drive-PRES-EMPH sandhill-LOC cattle -manner
igi -ŋura gari-ri; muyu ŋaru yaraba waŋa-ŋura
drive-CONT they-ERG; sun this high rise -CONT
'HOW WE DANCED THE MUDLUnga'

gari ɲura-ɲa -ma-yiwa-lugu ɡanaɲaɁa gala-ɲa -ɡu.
they camp-LOC-Vb-TR -HIST there  creek-LOC-EMPH.

11. ɡanaɲaɁa-ɡana yuwu wila-wila danga-ɲura
There -EL people multitude sit -CONT
Dirba -ɡuli -ɲa. anio yuga-ɡa ɡar ɣu
Lagoon-waterhole-LOC.  We EXCL go -PAST there
Mudlunga Ɂi ga -ɲa. Maudie Naylon Agawiliga anduna
Mudlungga take-NP.
gagü ɡarु danga-lugu, ɲuuy-ɲa widji -ɲa
sister there sit -HIST, one -LOC become-PRES
anio Dirba -ɡuli -ɡa ɲura wila-wila, malga
we EXCL Lagoon waterhole-LOC camp multitude, not
njari-njara Mudlunga awaɗa waɣni -wa-lugu.
little  Mudlungga this follow-TR-HIST.

12. ɡanaɲaɁa '7 miles, what they call, we call'm'
There
Naɣani-ɲa, Mudlunga waŋa -lugu gala-ɲa; ɡana
Naɣani-PROP, Mudlungga dance-HIST creek-LOC; man
wila-wila Mudlunga wadni nani-na dinbaru,
multitude Mudlungga song see -NP fresh,
andi -li nani-ɲa, wadni maɲa, andi -li nani-lingu.
first-ADV see -NP, song new, first-ADV see -HIST.

13. m uyu bargulu bargulu ɲuyu danga-yiwa-lugu.
Day two two one sit -TR -HIST.
gari-ri ɲunda-ɡa gumbira-gumbira-ru Namani,
They-ERGtell -PAST dead -dead -ERG ŋgamani,
Yaluyandi, GaranuɁa, ɁulubuɁu 'not too many'
Yaluyandi, Garangura, ɁulubuɁu
Wangaŋuru, anduna mabu gari-ri manda-diga -ɲa,
Wangganguru, my mob they-ERG take -return-PRES,
uda.
now.

14. malga gudni-ɲa wadni-gu, argaba-ru, malja-ru,
Mark put -PRES song -DAT, ochre -INST, kopi -INST,
yalgiri-ri bidji-ɡa.
gypsum -INST paint-PAST.
15. njinda-buçu daña -nda gari, djalba
Bush -having stand -I PRES they, stick
baña-baña-buçu 'poor old buggers' anduna mabu,
long-long-having
näma jë gari
pittful they
güdjilä bänä wålambiläyi
güdjilä bänä wålambiläyi
djalba baña-baña-buçu daña -nda, gadla -buçu
stick long-long-having stand-l PRES, foliage-having
garä-na irdja waya-nda -lugu,
tie -PRES noise wish-1 PRES-HIST.
gurile wädjä wädjële
nijdjëri gële wädjële
Mudlunga wadni.
Mudlunga song.

16. dangu-lugu muyu ñuru -ña daña -ña-naru; uda
Stay -HIST day other-LOC stand-Sp-PLUP; now
yuga-lugu gari Bula-rugu 'ration day, Government
go -HIST they Bula-ALL
flour that time' gari-ri gaganaga-ña-ru
they-ERG there -EL -ABL
wiña-nda 'plenty bullock meat' gadi budlugu
get -PRES meat bullock
dani-wa-lugu 'damper' dani-wa-lugu didi
eat -TR-HIST eat -TR-HIST tea
bunda-lugu dangu-lugu.
drink-HIST stay -HIST.

17. gari wanga ñawi-nina 'ah aní yuga-bara
They word hear-IMM 'ah we EXCL go -HORT
manda-yiwa-lugu gagari-ña Gudna-ñawa-ñaña, nanañaça
take -TR -PURP they -ACC Kanowana -EL, here
"HOW WE DANCED THE MUDLUNGA"

waŋa -la -lugu.
dance-ALT-PURP.

'Tom Naylon's mother and Jackie Hughes's mother they were bigger than us, you know'.

anduna gagu -bula Darba-nangada mangaŋa gadjiwiri My sister-two, Darba-nangada girl big

Bina-winna 'she got two names' Mada-duru-duru.

Mudlunga ŋawi-danga-ŋura Mudlunga

18. 'They been waiting for that Gudna-ŋawa mob'

Mudlungga hear-sit -CONT Mudlungga

igi -ŋura uda wadni yuranga danga-lugu drive-CONT now song knowing sit -HIST
ganaŋa-ŋana, 'after they seen that wadni Mudlunga'.

there -EL,

18. 'They been waiting for that Gudna-ŋawa mob'

danga-ŋa wandi-nanga -ŋa anduna anja njara, sit -PRES wait -CONT S-PRES my father young,

anduna widiwa ani waŋa -nda ani mabu, my cousin we EXCL dance-PRES we EXCL mob,

ani ajuwa wiila-wiila Jim Naylon Arbilindiga we EXCL child multitude Jim Naylon Arbilindiga
gabiri ularaga Adnaljawara-ŋana, Adnaljawara goanna history Adnaljawara-EL, Adnaljawara

uga-guna wadlu:
he -POS country:

yądá nándá djáđí
álabídálbání

Arbilindiga-wadlu balu -ma-nda gana gadjiwiri, Arbilindiga-ground clear-Vb-PRES man big,

'but half woman half man' ani dangga-ŋa wadni we EXCL sit -PRES song

waŋa -nanga -ŋa, dangga-ŋa. Ngamani wiila-wiila dance-CONT S-PRES, sit -PRES. Ngamani multitude
dangga-ŋura madabuda gari.
sit -CONT old man they.
19. madabuda waduŋuru, anduna mabu, yuga-ŋura
Old man other, my mob, go -CONT
Gudna-ŋawa-ruŋu Yawarawarga-guna wadlu -ruŋu
Kanowana -ALL Yawarawarga-POS country-ALL
Mudlunga maba -ŋa-diga -luŋu, 'just like
Mudlungga collect-Sp-return-PURP,
mustering!'

20. wadni-ruŋu digi -ŋu maba -yiwa-na gari
song -ALL take back-PURP collect-TR -Sp they
bardjaŋa guru mabu, Naŋani -na, ganaŋaŋa;
all stranger mob, Old Lagoon-PROP, there;
'they know one another, but we are a stranger to
them' bardjaŋa wila-wila
all 'multitude,
'big fellows, tall fellows too'.

21. bardjaŋa yurangga-ma-ŋa, 'and we went on then,
All knowing-Vb-PRES,
finish'. diga -ŋu, diga -ŋa
Return-HIST, return-1 PRES
Gaŋa-maŋa-ruŋu-l'gi diga -ŋa ŋuŋa-ruŋu
Kala-murina-ALL-FIN return-1 PRES camp-ALL
wadili-ruŋu; bangidi diga -ŋu diga -ŋa
own -ALL; glad return-PURP return-1 PRES
danga-ŋu
stay -PURP.

22. nadaru yuga-ŋa Mudlunga wadni-buŋu yuga-na
After go -! PRES Mudlungga song -having go -NP
Gawiri-'gu -l'gi Madla-mirga-ruŋu manda-yi-gana
Cowari-ALL-FIN Dog -Hole -ALL take -TR-PERF
Gilalpa -ŋaŋa -gi -di.
Killalpaninnaj-EL-EMPH-EMPH.

23. anda yuga-ga, gari yuga-ga manda-yi -diga -luŋu,
I go -PAS1, they go -PAST take -ACT-return-PURP,
waŋa -la -lugu, 'bring'm back there again to Cowarie, dance-ALT-PURP,
big mob diyari, biggest mob again' danga-lugu stay -PURP,
uljuṯa gari njduŋu.
woman they too.

24. gari danga-lugu, gari yuda diga -nana, malga
They sit -HIST, they already return-IMM, not
gani: danga-lugu wayaŋda, missionary-rigu
too much sit -PURP wish-I PRES, missionary-ALL
diga -lugu Gilaiba -rugu, 'they're belonging
return-HIST Killalpaninna-ALL
to missionary, had to get back to learn this school'.

25. gari diga -ŋda, ani -du malaru
They return-I PRES, we EXCL-EMPH however
maba-yiwa -ŋda; gari wanga yani -la -mindja-ŋda
collect-TR-I PRES; they word speak-ALT-REFL -I PRES
'aniri yuga-ŋda gagari-na manda-diga -lugu.'
'we INCL go -I PRES those -ACC take -return-PURP.'

26. alada gari yuga-na manda-diga -lugu Daba -na,
Ready they go -PRES take -return-PURP Tuppana-PROP,
Arabana mabu manda-digga -lugu, wila-wila
Arabana mob take -return-PURP, multitude
manda-diga -lugu.
take return-PURP.

27. gari yada yuga-ŋda manda-yiwa-lugu
They again go -I PRES take -TR -PURP
Birgili -ri, waduŋuru yuga-ŋda garu -ru
Boomerang Hole-ABL, other go -I PRES there-ABL
manda-yiwa-lugu. 'they did get'm'.
take -TR -PURP.

28. manda-diga -na Algawira-ŋana; זמןל-ŋura ŋura,
Take -return-PRES Alkaowura-EL; lie -CONT camp,
gari ibali diga-gana! maṣabuṇa bula-ru 'ah they earlier return-PERF! Old man two-ERG 'ah
diga-na-u nura-rugulu, dadni-na gagari-na! return-NP-EMPH camp-ALL, leave-NP those -ACC!

29. yada diga-lugu gari; 'them two Mudlunga men trying Again return-HIST they;
to catch up with George Kempe's mob from the Peake,
they been camping along the Galbagana',
digi-lugu, 'that's how I saw George Kempe at take back-HIST,
Cowardie'.

30. anda danga-nura ganaŋaŋa Gawiri-na, gari I sit -CONT there Cowarie-LOC, they
manda-diga-na 'we came from Cowarie to meet take-return-PRES
those fellows'.

31. Mudlunga gari-ligu yuga-na, waŋa-waŋa Mudlungga see -PURP go -PRES, early-early
wanga-yiwa-lugu anda njuŋu Mudlunga mida-ma-lugu.
come up-TR -HIST I also Mudlungga link-Vb-HIST.

32. nuwu-na widji-ligu bangida, mabu wila-wila, One -LOC become-HIST glad, mob multitude,
ani-guna mabu ani Gawiri-na, gari we EXCL-POS mob we EXCL Cowarie-EL, they
guru-wili; adu anja yambana-na:
stranger-like; I.ERG father ask -PRES:
'indjali-naŋa wagaŋa, Andigirinja'? 'where -EL this, Andigirinja'?

33. 'wagaŋa aniri-guna manaŋaŋa-naŋa gala-naŋa 'This' we INCL-POS here -EL creek-EL
Bandi-naŋa Wanggarunu, Wanggarabana ganaŋaŋa-naŋa;
Bandi-EL Wanggarunu, Wanggarabana there -EL;
anĩ nuwu-na danga-libana, aja.
we EXCL one -LOC stay -ANC, true.
Translation

1. They painted on the markings for that corroboree, they put on a head-dress which had emu-feathers (tied up) on top, they painted themselves with red ochre and black manganese\(^6\) and (glued on) down feathers.

   I know a great lot of it, but I don’t know what it means (because it is in the Wagaya language), but I know the words of the song.

2. They had got to know it, the people staying there — all that mob had been travelling up and down (in Queensland) — they had got to know it (the Mudlunga) at Kalamurina, they had assembled in a group and gone (up north) and they had ultimately brought it back with them,\(^7\) (the Mudlunga).

\(^6\) *bila* ‘black’ refers to manganese dioxide ores which were used extensively for decoration. The main source of manganese dioxide in the area was a quarry below *Guguygana*, the lowest waterhole on the Koorakarina Creek on the west side of Lake Eyre.

\(^7\) The most likely area to have been visited by the Wangaguru was the Middle Diamantina, where Roth reported the *Mudlunga* in 1896.
3. They frightened us all — they had horns like a bullock — they frightened us two, Bob Naylon and me, they had this head-gear, this top-knot. It was tied up on top like a feather duster, they tied it up with hair-string and it bulged out above their temples.

4. They went, and they took us two with them, we went and camped at Mulyaninna, down from where New Kalamurina now is. That used to be good country, with a lot of water: people got water for bullocks at Mulyaninna (in those days).

5. We got down, descending into the creekbed (of the Diamantina), and we stayed at another soakage. At one stage long ago — not really ages ago, not in the dream-time, but in whitefellow time — people used to get water at Minga-wamba, fill’m up (their water-bags) and go right on to Kalamurina.

6. We travelled from Mulyaninna to the Cowarie waterhole and from Cowarie we went to camp at Gugura. We left Gugura to go to Widjiwidjini. I never got tired, I was happy to go. So we went to Widjiwidjini; we ate meat, we killed rabbits, bilbies, goannas, and also frillneck lizards we killed. We would settle down to have a rest for a moment and they (the old men) would give us the order 'go and kill some goannas and then you can have a rest!' The main ritual leader was an old Yaḻuyandi man — he was like a musterer.

7. From Widjiwidjini we went along the creek, the Diamantina, and we camped past Mt Gason. We followed the Diamantina along the bank, we camped there overnight.

8. And then we went and our next camping place — where was it now? — it was at Koochooweerinna, that’s ‘Two Wells’. Then we set off from there, but one man from the sandhill country (the Simpson Desert) went (ahead) early with a message. We camped again: you know when you go through the Clifton Hill Gate there is a bit of a sandhill, Buṉaruga, white people call it ‘Potato Tin Sandhill’.

8 Before the impact of rabbits really came to be felt, the vegetation in the Simpson Desert was according to all accounts much more luxuriant than what it is now. Several major floods have changed the whole aspect of the bed of the Diamantina, and many deep waterholes have been silted up and have turned into a shallow saline channel.

9 Minga-wamba was a Carpet Snake site on the lower Diamantina, below New Kalamurina. There is a particularly spectacular red sandhill just above the waterhole.

10 In this area at the turn of the century Aborigines were employed for nominal wages for precisely this task of carting water and also carting equipment like troughs. Mick McLean was able to locate and show us near the sacred site at Bayanda on the Diamantina the remains of an old trough, some six feet long, which his father had carried on his back all the way from Old Kalamurina, over thirty-five miles by the only feasible route.

11 Rabbits were plentiful in the Lake Eyre Basin by this time, but they had not yet completely replaced the smaller marsupials, among which the bilby or rabbit-eared bandicoot (Macrotis lagotis) dalga was the most important.
9. There was a vast crowd there (summoned by the message), women too, including my sister 'Nose-Turning'. We camped overnight on the other side of the sandhill. That was a long time ago. We camped where a little creek comes down. We call that creek Buparuga too, and white fellows call it 'Potato Tin'.

10. We slept there overnight, just the one night, and then early in the morning they made us walk along the sandhill, they drove us like cattle. And when the sun had risen high in the sky we settled down near the creek (the Diamantina).

11. There was a vast multitude of people at Old Lagoon Waterhole. We had gone there bringing them the Mudlunga corroboree. Maudie Naylon Agawiliga my sister, was staying there. We all joined up together at Old Lagoon Waterhole: there was an immense crowd there, not just a little one, we had all come to follow the Mudlunga corroboree.

12. There was a place (near Old Lagoon Waterhole), Nañani we call it, (white people) call it 'Seven Mile'. That's where they danced the Mudlunga corroboree in the creek so that a vast number of people should see this Mudlunga. That is how they all got to see something special, sensational, a new corroboree which they had never seen before.

13. Five days\(^1\)\(^2\) we stayed there. These old men, now long, long dead, showed the corroboree to us Ñamani, Yañuyandi, Garañura, Ñulu-bulu\(^1\)\(^3\) — not too many of them — and Wañgänuru. That's why they picked up my mob of Wañgänuru (to show us).

14. And then we put on decorations for that corroboree, we painted ourselves with red ochre and with kopi, that is gypsum.

15. We stood there holding bushy branches, and long, long sticks, we stood there, and all those of my mob, poor old buggers, poor things (and we sang):

\[
\text{gündjîlë bænä wâliambãliyî} \\
gündjîlë bænä wâliambãliyî
\]

\(^1\)\(^2\) Five nights represented the standard length of time for a full performance of the Mudlunga as reported by Roth (1897) and by Gregory (1906:218).

\(^1\)\(^3\) Ñulu-bulu was spoken on the Mulligan and belongs to the Pitta-Pitta language group (Blake 1979). Speakers of Wañgänuru and also speakers of Ñamani thought of the Ñulu-bulu as very different from themselves, with different customs.

\(^1\)\(^4\) Mick conveys by this expression that all participants, apart from himself and Bob Naylon, had died, and the whole group and their traditions had disintegrated.
Holding long, long sticks we stood, having tied on masses of foliage, so that we could make a loud (swishing) noise (and we sang):

\[ gur̓̂lə̂ wädjā wädjēlē \]
\[ q̓̂dja̲r̓̂ gēlē wądjā wądjēle \]

That was the Mudlunja corroboree.

16. They (my mob) stayed there one more day, and then they went to Bulana.\(^{15}\) It was ration day: there was Government flour that time. From the people (the Aborigines) that were living there, they managed to get plenty of bullock meat, and so they had a feast of bullock meat and they ate damper and sat about drinking tea.\(^{16}\)

17. And they heard (the old men’s) decisions: ‘let us go and fetch the people from Kanowana so that we can dance for them here’. Tom Naylon’s mother and Jackie Hughes’s mother were there — they were bigger than us two (Bob Naylon and me) you know — my two sisters Darba-nangada ‘Continually Trampling’, Tom Naylon’s mother and Jackie Hughes’s mother, she had two names Bina-winma ‘Large Lip’ (i.e. ‘Pelican’) and Mada-du-duru-duru ‘Large Island’ (both Yaluyandi names from the Waterfowl song cycle). They were big girls; they went on staying there to listen to the Mudlunga. They themselves became expert in the Mudlunga since they had been staying there for some time and had by now become thoroughly familiar with that Mudlunga corroboree.

18. They were waiting for that Kanowana mob, they sat waiting all the time. My father’s youngest brother, my cross-cousin (Bob Naylon) and I, we all danced, just our mob, just us; a big crowd of young people we were, including Jim Naylon Arbilindiga, who belonged to the Goanna history from Adnaljawara,\(^{17}\) Adnaljawara was his country:

\[ yādā nādā djadī \]
\[ ələbîdələbənə \]

\(^{15}\) Bulana simply means ‘The Two’ and probably refers to the Goyder Lagoon Waterhole which has the Yawarawarga name Dirba-gulina ‘The Two Waterholes’. Many of the Yawarawarga were camped there, having been driven off the Coongie Lakes and Cordillo Downs stations and they were receiving rations. For the events at Coongie, see Farwell (1950:161).

\(^{16}\) The group of Wanganuru to which Mick McLean belonged had left the Simpson Desert in late 1900 or early 1901, probably about six months before the events of the present account, and they had come to like tea and damper after some initial misgivings, as Mick McLean has explained (Hercus and Sutton, forthcoming).

\(^{17}\) Adnaljawara is a grub and goanna sacred site in the plain immediately south of Oolgowaa waterhole on the western edge of the Simpson Desert. It is just within Aranda country.
(that is the verse of the Aranda goanna song cycle from which he got his name). Arbilindiga that means ‘Clearing the Ground’ (in Aranda). He was a big man already initiated, but he was really half woman half man. 18 We all stayed there and we went on dancing the Mudlunga corroboree. A big lot of Namani old men were there too.

19. Another lot of old men from my mob were on their way to Kanowana to fetch people from there for the Mudlunga. They went to Kanowana, to Yawarawarga country to collect them for the Mudlunga — it was just like mustering.

20. They rounded up that mob to bring back for the corroboree at Old Lagoon. They knew one another (the people at Old Lagoon and the Yawarawarga), but we were strangers to the Yawarawarga. There was a big crowd of them, all big fellows, tall fellows too.

21. We taught them all thoroughly, and we went on then (until it was all) finished. Then we went back, we went right back to Kalamurina, home to our camp. We were happy to get back and to stay there.

22. Some time later we set out again, bringing the Mudlunga corroboree to Cowarie. We went right to Madla-Mirga ‘Dog Hole’ (the main Dog-site near Cowarie homestead). That’s where we brought it to the Killalpaninna people, yes even them!

23. I went, all (my mob) went to fetch them so that we could dance for them. We brought them back here to Cowarie, the biggest mob ever of Diyari people. They stayed (at Cowarie), women and all.

24. They stayed, but they soon left again. They didn’t want to sit about there for any length of time. They went back to Killalpaninna to the missionaries. They belonged to the missionaries: they had to get back to learn this school! 19

25. They went back, but we stayed together, and (the old men) had a discussion amongst themselves and decided: ‘let’s go and fetch those (other) people!’

26. So they got ready to go and fetch the people from Tuppana waterhole (on the lower Macumba). They fetched a mob of Arabana people, they collected a large crowd.

18 It seems surprising that such a person should have been initiated, but Mick’s statement corroborated on various occasions by joking references from other Wanganuru speakers about ‘old men’ particularly of Yaluyandi descent, who were ganâ (fully initiated), yet were  namā -buru   bugu -wili
breast-having   woman-like

19 The reference is to the Lutheran Missionaries at Killalpaninna. They were very strict about school attendance for people of Mick McLean’s age group, as is borne out by comments from Ben Murray, who was rescued by the missionaries from the de Pierres brothers and made to go to school at Killalpaninna (Hercus 1977b). Mick implied that the Killalpaninna people had not learnt the Mudluggage thoroughly enough. They did however perform the newly acquired corroboree on their return to Killalpaninna, as shown by the comments and the photographs contributed by Siebert (Gregory 1906:216).
27. And they set off to gather in the people from Boomerang\textsuperscript{20} waterhole; another lot (of Waŋanuru men) set out to fetch those people, and they did get them!

28. They went to collect the people from the Alkaowra flood flats. Their camp was there, but the people had gone. So the two old (Waŋanuru) men said: ‘let’s go back home and not worry about these folk’.

29. But they went over there again, those two Mudlunga men, trying to catch up with George Kempe’s mob from the Peake, who’d been camping at the Kulpakuna waterhole. The two Mudlunga men brought back (this mob to Cowarie). That’s how I saw George Kempe at Cowarie.

30. I’d been staying there at Cowarie, and (the two Mudlunga men) were bringing (the visitors with them to Cowarie). We came from Cowarie to meet those fellows.

31. They’d come to have a good look at the Mudlunga, they were up till the early hours and I also joined in that Mudlunga.

32. We were glad to meet up together. There was a vast crowd: there was our mob, our own mob from Cowarie, but those others appeared to me like strangers. So I asked my father (i.e. my father’s youngest brother): ‘where are these people from? Are they Andigirinja?’\textsuperscript{21}

33. (He said): ‘these are our own Waŋanuru and Wang’Arabana people from here and also from over there, from the Creek, from Bandi.\textsuperscript{22} Long ago we used to be together as one, that’s a fact!’

34. We stayed there (at Madla-Mirga) until we had thoroughly instructed those other people in the Mudlunga corroboree. Then they all split up. I went back to Cowarie, we did, Bob Naylon Gala-gadana and us. We returned to our fathers and mothers who were staying there. But George Kempe and his crowd, they set out and they turned off in another direction.

35. So finally they all went back (to their own place), the Arabana mob from Peake belonging to the Rain ‘history’\textsuperscript{23} and the Alkaowra mob. They were my own mob, poor buggers, and now there’s not a single one of them left.

\textsuperscript{20} Birgilifia ‘Boomerang waterhole’ (so called, from its shape) is on Brown’s Creek in the heart of Arabana country. A Mr Brown had tried unsuccessfully to keep sheep in the area for a few years, before the time of the Mudlunga.

\textsuperscript{21} The Andigirinja were real ‘strangers’. They are the Western Desert group who have taken over the Oodnadatta and Coober Pedy area, originally Aranda and Arabana country (see Tindale 1974:210).

\textsuperscript{22} Bandi is the main Snake totemic centre on the lower Macumba, not far from Noolyeana Lake. It was a site revered by Arabana, Waŋanuru and Aranda alike.

\textsuperscript{23} The major rain totem centre of the Arabana is Dandji-wanbada, a group of rocks in the Peake Creek north of the old Peake Station. Dandji-wanbada means ‘he is carrying his grandson’ and refers to the legend of a grandfather trying in rain to hold his young grandson above the fast-rising storm-waters of the Peake Creek.
'HOW WE DANCED THE MUDLUNGA'

In 1901 Siebert saw the Mudlunga near Killalpaninna, but it is clear from Mick McLean’s statements (line 24 of text) that the Diyari at Killalpaninna, subject to mission influence, were not as enthusiastic about the new ceremony as the Simpson Desert Waŋŋanuru. It was in fact again Waŋŋanuru people who in 1902 carried the Mudlunga still further south to Dulkaninna.

In February 1980 Ben Murray, who was born in Marree in 1893 of Afghan and Aboriginal parents, reminisced to me about the ceremony at Dulkaninna. He was then a boy of nine, brought up in an environment altered by European contact. His memories fit closely with those of Murtee Johnny and Mick McLean (who was reared in ‘traditional’ conditions in the Simpson Desert), but also show the perspective of his totally different background. The events he described must have taken place early in 1902, while Ben and his brother Ern were working for Harry Bosworth, who was then on Clayton Station.

The performance of the Mudlunga took place in the creek ‘just down from the bore drain’, as Ben Murray explained. Dulkaninna station was taken up by the Bell family late in the nineteenth century and the bore was put down in 1898. Just before the events in Ben’s story, and as a result of the drought in 1901-02, Dulkaninna was sold, but the Bell family acquired it again in 1932. Ben Murray’s camp was in the direction of Blaze’s Well, about ten miles north of Dulkaninna. George Barrett was at the station at the time of the Mudlunga but little is known about him except for the comments of Farwell. An old hut still stood at the well site when he visited the place: ‘It was there, according to police records of the early days, that Emma Gates and George Barrett were once arrested for selling sly-grog’. Farwell’s description notes that ‘All around were the decaying skeletons of cattle, victims of the last drought. Hot winds blow incessantly across this scalded clay flat between two sandhills’. It was probably much the same in 1902, at the time of the present story.

24 Gregory 1906:216.
27 Bonython 1971:27.
28 Farwell 1950:44.
29 Farwell 1950:47.
The Mudluyga at Dulkalinna

1. ari danga-da, mayuda Charlie Napier, half-caste, We two stay PRES, boss
   he talk Diyari ari yuga-nda ibi-ibi
   we two go -1 PRES sheep
   yagida -- ma-ña.
   yard Vb-PRES

2. ari yuga-nda wadni nani-ligu gala -rugu,
   We two go -1 PRES corroboree see -PURP creek-ALL,
   gala-ña gari waña -ñura Dulkalinna Creek down.
   creek-LOC they dance-CONT

3. 'All right, five days' uga yani-nda, gawu.
   he say -1 PRES, yes.

4. ari -ña yuwa guru-ru igi ra nani-
   We two-ACC man other-ERG make go-PUNC see
   diga -lugu, madabuda Yarinili-na, uga-ru
   return-HIST, old man Yarinili-PROP, he -ERG
   ñunda-da.
   show -PRES.

5. gari-ri burawa-ña, darga-ña-yiwa-nda
   -ERG -PRES, -Sp-TR -1 PRES
   ilina garī-li gaḍayabu-ña, djählba nayi ungu-ña
   thus tie -HAB head -LOC, stick here neck-LOC
   gari-gi -di dadlu gaña, uljula badni.
   they-EMPH-EMPH only man, woman not.

6. uljula gari danga-ña, minbaru-du gada-ñura
   Woman they sit -CONT, doctor -EMPH roam-CONT
   nadji-ña-ña yakuda - you got to have yakuda,
   watch-NP-LOC bag - bag,
   minbaru bidla Nadu-dagali-na, ŋamala-buʃu,
   doctor name Nadu-dagali-PROP, pity -having,
   yakuda-ña ŋaldja dawi -na, malga wadlu -ña.
   bag -LOC spit throw -NP, not ground-LOC.
7. yuwu gadjiwiri Micky-guna anja njara, madabuda
Man big Mick -POS father young, old man
Yundili-na uga-ru igi -ra gari-na.
Yundili-PROP He -ERG drive-PUNC they-ACC.

8. ari dijga -nana ṣura-rugu, gari yoga-nd-inaru
We two return-IMM camp-ALL, they go -Sp-PLUP
waŋa -lugu wadni, diga -nda ninda-rugu,
dance-PURP corroboree, return-PRES tree -ALL
they were camping at the creek there galaj -ña
creek-LOC
guda -ña gari.
sleep-PRES they.

9. malju-mayi mani-ligu Dulkaninna owner, Mr George
Food take-HIStory
Barrett, flour, tea, sugar, uga-ru quni-ra
he -ERG give-PUNC
government ration, anda danga-da old Charlie
I sit -PRES
Napier, towards Blaze's Well.

10. gulurú ward waŋanguwana
That's the only words I know, muyu bargulu anda
day two I
yuga-qa.
go -PAST

11. mubu baŋa-bára bi⁠irimbara -will űngu-ña gudni-li,
Stick long long spear-like neck-LOC put -HAB
didna-ŋa badara ga⁠fa-ŋa, irdja-bu⁠fu. gari
foot -LOC box tree tie -PRES, noise-having. They
wadni wagga-ŋura, gari wadni wa⁠fa⁠-ŋura,
corroboree sing -CONT, they corroboree dance-CONT
i⁠lina-wili mudu gari wa⁠fa⁠-ŋda piano!
thus-like as if they dance-I PRES

12. gira ga⁠dayabu-ŋa gari, ȵadla gari wangga-ŋa,
boomerang head -LOC they, group they sing -PRES
Translation

1. We two (my brother Ern and I) stayed there (on the way to Blaze's Well), our boss was Charlie Napier, a half-caste who spoke Diyari. The two of us were going around yarding sheep.

2. We went to the creek to see the corroboree. They were dancing in the creek, down from Dulkaninna.

3. 'All right five days (I give you off work)' he said, 'yes' (Charlie Napier said, speaking in Diyari).

4. Another man was in charge of us to see the corroboree and to take us back again, it was that old man Yarinili who showed us (the corroboree).

5. They cleared the corroboree ground, they were standing about; they had (something) tied up on top of their heads, like this, and they carried sticks on their necks, here! There were only initiated men (in the actual dance), no women.

6. The women were sitting down, and the clever man, the doctor, was moving among them to check that they each had a bag — you had to have a bag. The clever man was poor old Nadu-dagali, you had to spit into a bag and not on the ground. The prohibition against spitting on the ground is most unusual in Aboriginal ceremonies and may possibly be due to European influence.

7. The master of the corroboree (i.e. the man who took the part of the Mudlunga himself (Gregory 1906:219)) was the youngest brother of Mick McLean's father, it was old man Yundili. He was in charge of all of them.

8. The two of us went straight back to our camp; they, when they had finished dancing (for the night) returned to the trees (by the creek); they were camping by the creek.

30 For details of the life of Nadu-dagali see Hercus 1977b.

31 The prohibition against spitting on the ground is most unusual in Aboriginal ceremonies and may possibly be due to European influence.

32 Yundili had already taken part in the earlier travels of the Mudlunga as described by Mick McLean (line 18).
9. Mr George Barrett, the Dulkaninna owner, brought them flour, tea and sugar, he gave them the government rations. I was staying with old Charlie Napier on the way to Blaze's Well.

10. gulurú wari waŋgulbaná
that's the only words I know, on two (successive) days I went there.

11. On their necks they held long sticks, as long as big fighting spears, and on their feet they had tied (leafy twigs of) box-trees, making a lot of noise. Some were singing the corroboree while others were dancing, just as if they were dancing to the music of a piano!

12. A whole group were singing, (clapping) boomerangs above their heads, the women were beating their laps.

13. I didn’t go there any more (after the second night), it was so far away. I just didn’t want to. I was camped a long way off with the white man’s sheep.

Biographical Notes on Persons Mentioned

Mick McLean Irinjili was born near the Bilagaya migiri (buried artesian spring) in the Central Simpson Desert about 1888 and died in Port Augusta in 1977. He was the last desert Waŋgajuŋuru and his knowledge of the languages and traditions of the north-east of South Australia was unrivalled. For his biography see Hercus 1977a.

Murtee Johnny was also born about 1888, around Murtee-Murtee on the Strzelecki track, just south of where the Moomba oilfield is now. He became knowledgeable in Yandruwanda traditions as well as being a highly skilful rider and station-hand and worked mainly on Mt Hopeless station. He was the last of the Strzelecki Yandruwanda: his wife and young child along with his whole group died during the 1919 influenza epidemic; his brothers Murtee Mick and Murtee George died in separate cases, and in the latter case particularly gruesome boundary riding mishaps. Murtee Johnny’s final tragedy was that, in his own words, he ‘lived too long’. He saw the total disappearance not only of Yandruwanda traditions, but also of the type of pastoral work that he knew. Those who were around him in his last years did not understand him. As one well intentioned nursing sister put it: ‘Old Murtee is a deaf. But I try to make him talk about real things, even if it is only the weather, instead of all that stuff about “the red sandhill country” or “horses”.’ To him, ‘all that stuff’ was the only thing that was real and mattered. He died in Adelaide in 1977. Several photographs of Murtee were published in Hercus 1979.

Bob Naylon Galá-gadana ‘A Creek Travelling about’, also called ‘Milgili’, was a great friend of Mick McLean. He was probably the very
first part-Aboriginal on the lower Diamantina. He was the son of Tom Neaylon whose picture, with the caption ‘Tom Neaylon, cattle duffer’ appears in Farwell (1950:185). Bob Naylon was brought up entirely by his mother’s people, but he was acknowledged by the Neaylons. For the sad story of his inheritance and the cattle-duffing techniques of the Neaylons see Farwell (1950:173). Bob Naylon died in Birdsville in 1978.

Tom Naylon Ganbili belongs to a wholly Aboriginal family who took their name from the Neaylons. He was born about 1910 at Mt Gason. He is a remarkable horseman of wide fame and a skilful raconteur in both Waŋgaŋuru and English. He has worked on stations in the Birdsville area, managing Andrewilla station for some time. His mother ‘Elizabeth’ Darba-naŋgada (also called Garadjani) was part Waŋgaŋuru, part Yaḻuyandi from the Birdsville district.

Jackie Hughes, born about 1905, was the son of Billy Hughes, the part-Aboriginal who managed Mt Gason for some time (Hercus 1977b:73). Jackie Hughes was a widely experienced drover of the Birdsville area. He died in 1979.

George Kempe, a classificatory cross-cousin and friend of Mick McLean, was born about 1888 — he showed us his birth-place, a tree near the now ruined Wood Duck Station. He was the part-Aboriginal son of the owner of Wood Duck and Peake Stations, the Mr E.C. Kempe who was helpful to Spencer and Gillen (1912:13), and of whom Gregory (1906:140) says: ‘Mr Kempe . . . told us many interesting stories about the aborigines. He was more critical of the people than were the missionaries at Killalpaninna. But he appreciated their good points and was obviously very successful in handling them’. George Kempe was brought up by his Aboriginal mother and stepfather, and learnt cattle-work ‘the hard way’ at Wood Duck and Peake. He worked most of his life in that area, on what is now Anna Creek. He had a good knowledge of Aboriginal traditions and was a fluent speaker of Waŋgaŋuru. He died in Port Augusta in 1976.

Midla Gadjiwana ‘Nose-Turning’ (a reference to the Carpet Snake song cycle) was the Aboriginal name of Freda Merrick, a Waŋgaŋuru woman who was actually Mick’s classificatory cross-cousin. Freda married a Diyari man, Gottlieb Merrick, and spent much of her life at Killalpaninna Mission and later at Marree. Gottlieb Merrick is often referred to by Horne and Aiston (1924) and his brother Tim by Bonython (1971). Freda had become a good speaker of Diyari and was able to help Peter Austin in his studies of that language. She died in 1979.

Maudie Naylon Agawiliga was born in the Central Simpson Desert around 1886. She could still recall the desert and the times when as a small child ‘they carried me and took me all over that sandhill country
to Bayanda and to the Macumba, to the grub sites and to the snake sites. We went across the sandhills to my father’s mother’s country to Widjira (Dalhousie) and then back again. In the end we went down to the creek, the Diamantina, in the drought when there was nothing, no water.’ She and her family camped around the Clifton Hills area at first; this is where they were in 1901 at the time of the Mudlunja. She then lived for a while at Killalpaninya and then worked on Murnpeowie station. Later she married Bob Naylon and stayed in the Birdsville area. She died in Birdsville in February 1980. She was the last fluent speaker of Yaluyandi, Namani and Yawarawarga, so these languages effectively died with her. She was of course also fluent in her native Wangaŋuru.

Yarinili ‘Tod’ was a Simpson Desert Waŋgaŋuru. He was a ritual leader of the generation of Mick McLean’s father. After the time of the Mudlunja he lived in the Clifton Hills area and when quite elderly (probably around 1920) married the widowed Dandribilana ‘Judy True’, one of the last of the Yaluyandi of the lower Georgina (Eyre Creek) and the grandmother of Tom Naylon Ganbili. He worked for the Mortons on Pandie Pandie Station for a long time. His helpfulness is mentioned in Mrs E. Morton’s 1976 reminiscence. This publication also gives some evidence about the contemporary treatment of Aboriginal workers:

Aborigines are kind, clean, loyal and honest workers if treated properly. Unfortunately many are being spoiled by some whites . . .

The septic tank was out of order, and we wanted to get it fixed quickly as the temperature was rising and could reach 120 before noon. A loud whistle brought several Aborigines, but Tod was not among them — a special whistle was used when Tod or Dora (his step-grand-daughter) were wanted . . .

Race meetings were the big events of the outback. The last race in the program was always for Aboriginals, and was always popular. Tod, an aged black with a long white beard usually won this race . . .

Yarinili ‘Tod’ died at Pandie in about 1930, but he is still remembered with great affection by his step-grandchildren, the Naylon family.

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APPENDIX 1

The Phonemes of Arabana-Wanggurru

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stops</th>
<th>Labial</th>
<th>Interdental</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Retroflex</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>dj</td>
<td>g</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasals</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>nj</td>
<td>g</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laterals</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>lj</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vibrants</td>
<td></td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glides</td>
<td>w</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note

Certain nasals and laterals in Arabana-Wanggurru have pre-stopped allophones: -bm- corresponds to -m- at the beginning of the second syllable, -dn- to -n-, -dn- to -n-, -dl- to -l-, and -dl- to -l-. In order to make the spelling approximate as closely as possible to the pronunciation these pre-stopped consonants have been included in the orthography.

For simplicity the cluster -njdj- has been written as -ndj-.

APPENDIX 2

List of Abbreviations

ABL ablative
ACC accusative case
ACT active voice suffix
ADV adverb
ALL allative case
ANC ancient, distant past
CAUS causative case
CONT continuative participle, -nura
CONT S continuative stem-forming suffix
DAT dative case
DL dual
EL elative case
EMPH emphatic enclitic participle
ERG ergative case
EXCL exclusive
FIN finality marking suffix
HAB habitual participle
HIST historic past, used generally in an account of a series of events. In form this tense is identical with the purposive
HORT hortative suffix -bara
IMM immediate past tense
IMP imperative
INCL inclusive
INST instrumental
'HOW WE DANCED THE MUDLUNGA'

I PRES  intransitive present
LOC  locative case
NP  non-past
PAST  past tense
PERF  perfective aspect
PLUP  pluperfect-explicatory past
POS  possessive suffix
PRES  present tense
PROP  proper noun marking suffix -na
PUNC  punctiliar present (in transitive verbs only)
PURP  purposive
REFL  reflexive
Sp  speed form, implying action performed hastily or before departing
TR  transitory aspect
Vb  verbalizing suffix

In the translation brackets are used to enclose phrases that are not in the original, but have been added by way of explanation.

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A Private of the Royal Marines (1815) by J.C. Stadler.
Early European observers, unaware that adult Aborigines were usually fluent in several dialects or languages, often commented on how accurately they repeated English words and phrases at first hearing. Some also reported that Aborigines quickly distinguished differences in character and rank from their shrewd assessment of the peculiarities of European dress and behaviour. So acute was their observation and so skilful their mimicry that Europeans were sometimes disturbed as well as amused. Long before cartoonists ridiculed them, Aboriginal communities across the continent were making fun of European habits in their camp entertainments.

But in Aboriginal society careful observation and accurate imitation also had a more serious role. The 'foreign' languages of other communities had to be learnt to gain access to new knowledge. Song words and the complicated actions of dancers had to be mastered if new rituals were to be adopted.

There is much published evidence that encounters with strangers — Macassans, Torres Strait Islanders and others — have been memorialised in Aboriginal ritual performances. But European society had little spectacular ritual. The religious observances of the early settlers were drab in comparison to Aboriginal ceremonies. Their songs were not accompanied by dancing and there was little elaboration of costume or body decoration. The drill of military units did provide a comparable spectacle, with colourful uniforms and patterned movement directed by shouted orders or music. The early records suggest that Aborigines in many regions showed intense interest in military ceremonial. An all-too-brief account suggesting that the observed military drill might be memorialised in serious ritual performances was found in the letters written by Mrs Daisy Bates to the editor of *The Australasian*, William Hurst.

On 8 December 1801 Captain Matthew Flinders, R.N., brought H.M.S. *Investigator* to anchor in King George Sound, Western Australia. On 12 December the ship entered Princess Royal Harbour, on which the city of Albany now stands. Her captain and crew surveyed the sound, its islands and possible harbours, and collected wood and water. Meanwhile the naturalists studied the plant and marine life.

* I am indebted to James Urry and Diane Barwick for much assistance in the preparation of this paper, and to the Director and staff of the Royal Marines Museum, Southsea, Hampshire, for documentation and illustrations of the Marines' drill at the period of Flinders' voyage to Australia.
They remained for about three weeks, and during the whole time main­tained peaceful and friendly relations with the local Aborigines, with whom they exchanged gifts.

The naturalists measured some of the men, but the women ‘were kept out of sight with seeming jealousy’: the men appeared to think that Flinders also had women whom he kept hidden on board.¹ Flinders noted that the men looked like the natives of Port Jackson although the words of their language which he collected and wrote down were entirely different from the Port Jackson vocabulary. On 30 December 1801 Flinders² recorded his opinion of the day’s events:

On the 30th, our wooding, and the watering of the ship were com­pleted, the rigging was refitted, the sails repaired and bent, and the ship unmoored. Our friends, the natives, continued to visit us; and the old man, with several others being at the tents this morning, I ordered the party of marines on shore, to be exercised in their presence. The red coats and white crossed belts were greatly ad­mired, having some resemblance to their own manner of ornament­ing themselves; and the drum, but particularly the fife, excited their astonishment; but when they saw these beautiful red-and-white³ men, with their bright muskets, drawn up in a line, they absolutely screamed with delight; nor were their wild gestures and vociferations to be silenced, but by commencing the exercise, to which they paid the most earnest and silent attention. Several of them moved their hands, involuntarily, according to the motions; and the old man placed himself at the end of the rank, with a short staff in his hand, which he shouldered, presented, grounded, as did the marines their muskets, without, I believe, knowing what he did. Before firing, the Indians were made acquainted with what was going to take place; so that the volleys did not excite much terror.

Four days later the Investigator sailed away. Her captain and crew could not have imagined what would be the lasting effect of their visit.

More than a hundred years later, probably in 1908, Daisy Bates met near Albany a very old man named Nebinyan. In 1945 she recorded some of the information she gained from him in a letter to Hurst.⁴ She said Nebinyan had told her that the Aborigines of King George Sound

1 Flinders 1814:1.
2 Flinders 1814:1, 60-61.
3 At this period the uniform facings of Marines were white, but when they were granted the title of Royal Marines in 1802 the facings were changed to a blue shade (Director, Royal Marines Museum, personal communication).
4 Letter dated 2 June 1945, written from Streaky Bay (Daisy Bates Correspondence, La Trobe Library, Box 595, Envelope 4).
believed that Flinders and his men\(^5\) were the ghosts of their own dead ancestors, come back from Koorannup, the home of the dead across the sea. They thought the full dress parade of the Marines was a Koorannup ceremony.

They made a dance of the visit and parade . . . I got all this from the only old man left, a grandson born about 1830 or 40. He saw the dance as a boy and taught it as a man. He covered his torso with red and put white pipeclay across the red and did with his club what he had seen his fathers and grandfathers do as the bayonets were exercised. Nebinyan died in 1908 [sic] a very old man and he could tell me all the history of the visit — its importance made it a sacred dance and memory . . .

Daisy Bates visited King George Sound in 1908, in the course of her investigations sponsored by the Western Australian government. Later she was in the camp at Katanning after Nebinyan’s death, for she mentions in *The passing of the Aborigines*\(^6\) that during the whole of her stay in the Aborigines’ camp there a special fire was lighted every evening by a woman named Baiungan, to ‘warm’ the spirit of Nebinyan. He had died in the Katanning camp and to get to the site of his old shelter his spirit would have had to go through Baiungan’s hut and might have harmed her children. The fire was lighted on the outskirts ‘so that the spirit on its way back would rest and warm itself beside it and come no farther’. In her unpublished book\(^7\) she records the following details about Nebinyan’s prowess as a songmaker. Her account suggests that some local Aborigines were used as crew in the early days of whaling at Albany:

Nebinyan of Two People Bay, Tambellup etc. was the chief songmaker of his tribe, and composed many melodies which have become established as tribal ditties. The cadence and measure of these southern songs varies greatly, even amongst the singers themselves, the long drawn “aa” at the end of each song or verse, which is common in the Swan and Murray districts, being absent in Nebinyan’s songs.

In the recitative which dealt with Nebinyan’s whaling experiences, the whole gamut of native feeling appeared to be expressed: the sorrow of Nebin [sic], as he saw his fire (home) recede further and further away; the stealthy gliding over the water towards the resting whale, the sharp look out, the growing excitement as the huge fish was approached; the great seas that threatened to swamp the whale

\(^5\) The identification with Flinders was presumably Mrs Bates’ own interpretation of Nebinyan’s words. Hallam’s reference to Daisy Bates’ account derived from an undateable newspaper cutting (Hallam 1975:21-22; personal communication).


\(^7\) Daisy Bates Collection, Australian National Library (365/34/35).
boat; the swift and sure harpooning; the final surrender of the whale;
the triumphant towing back to ship or beach, and the great rejoicing
over the whale feast — each of these formed a song in itself, and the
actions peculiar to each “stage” were faithfully rendered. Many por­
tions of the song which had become familiar through frequent recital
were chorused by the male listeners, who kept up a murmuring
accompaniment throughout the recital, these choruses encouraging
the chief singer and urging him on to fresh efforts by the favour thus
shown to his compositions. The words of the song were merely the
names applied by the natives to the details connected with whaling,
but the actions accompanying the recitative illustrated the whole
proceeding. These recitals, which were however not very frequent,
often continued until the small hours of the morning, singers and
audience being often contentedly droned to sleep by the continuous
reiteration.

In the Daisy Bates manuscripts8 I have found four copies of Nebin­
yan’s genealogy, three in her handwriting and one typed by her secre­
tary (between 1936 and 1941). The typed version in the chapter on
genealogies9 is the same as two in her handwriting, one a page from
the original manuscript of her book10 and one in a notebook titled
Southern Pedigrees Book II.11 It is not clear whether the last is an
actual field notebook or one she wrote up later. The fourth copy,12
also in her handwriting, is inserted into the typed chapter on languages,
just before a vocabulary described as Kurin Wongi, from east of Katanning,
collected from two old women and one old man. This version
is slightly different and may be the earlier ‘MSS’ to which Mrs Bates
refers in the other three copies, since it shows the methods of spelling
and presenting genealogies which she used before Professor A.R.
Radcliffe-Brown suggested different methods of recording.13

The typed version of the genealogy is reproduced below, with my
translations inserted in square brackets. Mrs Bates followed the con­
ventional practice of using capitals for males and lower case for
females. Above each name is the kinship term identifying the person’s
relationship to Nebinyan; below the name she specifies moiety, totem,
a place or locality name, and language. The sign (=) indicates marriage.

8 I have examined the Daisy Bates collections in the Australian National Library,
Canberra; the La Trobe Library, Melbourne; the State Library of South Aust­
ralia, Adelaide; the Barr Smith Library, Adelaide University; the Battye Library,
Perth; and the University of Queensland Library. I am indebted to the many
librarians who have assisted me.
9 ANL 365/8/81.
10 ANL 365/8/262.
11 ANL 365/8/275.
12 ANL 365/41/3.
13 White (in press).
BIRTH AND DEATH OF A CEREMONY

NEBINYAN
over 80
Nebinyan was the last Two People Bay district native. His father’s father saw Flinders.
Nebinyan’s fathers were “gij-a burdon-ap-birder wani”, makers of the burdon (heavy war spear)
makers (bining gij burdon - making the burdon spear) of that district (Two People Bay, and apparently further inland) became extinct, all except Yagong, a blind old man now in Katanning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Man [father]</th>
<th>Ngank or gaiung [mother]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BURDUWUN</td>
<td>Nungilan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wordung [moiety, crow]</td>
<td>Manitch [moiety, white cockatoo]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merderang [totem, kind of fish]</td>
<td>Ngwar [totem, kind of possum]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yilbering [place name]</td>
<td>Yulingarap, near [place name]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two People Bay</td>
<td>Two People Bay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minung [language]</td>
<td>Minung</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEBINYAN</th>
<th>kord [spouse]</th>
<th>Ngunt [younger sibling]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wordung</td>
<td>Manitch</td>
<td>Wordung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merderang</td>
<td>Bwongar (sheoak)</td>
<td>Merderang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yilbering</td>
<td>Takillrap</td>
<td>Yilbering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minung</td>
<td>Lake Andrew</td>
<td>Minung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minung</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From earlier “MSS” [sic]
Nebin was born at a place on Oyster Harbor Bay, 5 miles from Albany, called Kattabumup, and is therefore the last remaining Albany district native. All his people are dead, except Kurralit [sic] who went away to the Blackwood or Bridgetown, and is believed to have married there.

On the handwritten page from which this was typed Mrs Bates has written in pencil in the margin (presumably after the page had been typed):

(“Boney”) Nebin or Nebinyan, a very old man in 1910, whose grand-fathers’ group saw Flinders in 1801 and learned a new dance from his parade of the marines, The Kurannup (heaven dance).

In the other, probably earlier, version of the genealogy inserted into the chapter on languages, Nebinyan’s parents are given as ‘Boormuwan’ and ‘Ngungulan’. This genealogy specifies that his younger brother and sister Tairit and Tootinwur ‘remained unmarried’. Nebinyan’s first marriage to ‘Ngooranit, a Taakelerup (Andrew Lake) woman’ was
childless. This version explains that Nebinyan ‘also married Ngoolagurt’, that her moiety was ‘Wordungmat (a wrong or “mootch” marriage)’, and that their two children ‘Danmera and Kuralit died’.

In this version the two children are entered as belonging to the Wordung (‘Wordungmat’) moiety, following their father in a society where moiety affiliation was patrilineal. But in the typed (presumably later) version the children are recorded as Manitch, the opposite of their father, and their mother’s moiety is not specified. In many, perhaps most, Aboriginal societies with named divisions — moieties, sections or subsections — in the case of a wrong marriage the ‘father is thrown away’ and the children belong to the division they would have been in had the mother married correctly. Mrs Bates herself noted this as a general rule, but because discrepant versions have survived we cannot know with certainty the moiety identification of Nebinyan’s children. Inheritance of totemic identification is also not clear in this genealogy. In the typed version Nebinyan, Tairit and Tutinwar have the same totem as their father, as does Nebinyan’s son Karalit, but not his daughter ‘Kaneran’. In the discrepant version Nebinyan’s brother Tairit has a totem ‘Wej (emu)’ different from both parents, Nebinyan’s daughter has a totem different from his, but her mother’s totem is not given in either version. This suggests that totemic affiliation is linked with place of birth, although this is not stated definitely in Mrs Bates’ writings about the area.

The discrepant handwritten version includes more extended notes than appear in the other three copies:

This pedigree was obtained from Nebinyan, the only living member of the groups whose parents and grandparents had contacted [sic] with Flinders in 1801.

Nebinyan was born at Oyster Harbour Bay, 5 miles from Albany, called Kattaburnup. Nebinyan must have been 80 when he died at Katanning in 1910 [sic]. His pedigree goes back towards Flinders’ visit which his father and grandfather perhaps had seen and known and had learned the Kurannup Song and Dance from the Marines parade, given the group by Flinders whose association with the group was most truly British in principle and honour during his three weeks there for repairs to his ship.

The Aborigines Department files do not with certainty identify the Nebinyan or Boney described by Mrs Bates, but some entries refer to a man of appropriate age in the Albany area. A ‘Boney alias Bonaparte’ born about 1846 received rations there in 1898; in 1901 his son was sent to the New Norcia Mission because Boney’s wife, presumably the mother, had died; in 1905 his camp and others were destroyed in a fire

14 Bates 1905-06.
15 ANL 365/6/433.
at Albany.16 ‘Nedenyan alias Boney’, an old man from ‘Sandalwood’, Salt River, was at Broome Hill and in need of rations in 1910, and a ‘Boney’ born about 1840 was receiving clothes or rugs at Katanning in 1911.17

The ceremony described to Daisy Bates by Nebinyan is not recorded in early writings about the Albany area.18 But her report is unlikely to be sheer invention. The likelihood that the 1801 performance of the Marines drill gave rise to the ritual described by Nebinyan is confirmed by another report from northern Australia. Dr Hermann Klaatsch, a German anthropologist who visited Melville Island in 1906, described a Tiwi dance derived from observations of the Marines at the Port Dundas settlement in 1824-1829.19

The crowning piece of these dance performances was the obviously unmistakable imitation of the sailors and officers of the old military settlement of Port Dundas. One of the two dancers acted the part of a marine [Schiffs-Soldaten] continuously kicking his legs behind him and moving his arms as if he was pulling on a ship’s rope. At the same time the other dancers stood stiff and upright to attention and with majestic hand movements imitated an officer giving orders.20

The memory of the military settlement has been preserved for three generations which proves in the first place that Melville Island people are excellent actors, and also how they maintain their vivid traditions.21

Elsewhere Klaatsch said of this dance:

The performers were painted most beautifully with white clay, and very likely this decoration is an imitation of white man’s apparel. The hands and feet being devoid of coloration, the impression of white dress is conveyed.22

16 I must thank Lois Tilbrook of Mount Lawley College for this information, derived from Aborigines Department files (1898/643; 1901/989; 1905/253; 1911/479A).
17 Aborigines Department files 1910/479. Mrs Bates’ notes suggest that Nebinyan died in 1908 or 1910. A further entry (AD 1913/1186) concerning a ‘Bona­parte’, his wife Polly and children Daisy, Toby, Carbaggie and Rosie who received rations at Albany in 1913 probably refers to another man. Mrs Tilbrook points out that there was much migration in the southwest at this period.
18 For example George Fletcher Moore, Isaac Scott Nind and Alexander Collie (Green 1979); D.A.P. West (1976 and personal communication).
20 John Campbell (1834:153) reported that the Melville Islanders were ‘very sensitive to any thing like ridicule. They are good mimics, have a facility in catching up words, and are gifted with considerable observation’.
21 No other accounts of this dance have been located, but the Tiwi of Melville Island are noted for incorporating their observations of European and Asian life in their own dance and ritual (Brandl 1970).
22 Klaatsch 1908:590.
There is considerable ethnographic evidence about the post-contact spread of sacred and non-sacred ceremonies. But the origins of ceremonies, songs and dance styles are poorly described. Throughout the continent the Aboriginal belief was — and still is today — that the sacred ceremonies were first performed by Ancestral Beings. They gave them to humans to perform in perpetuity, exactly like the original in every detail. No changes must be made in music, words or dance steps. Performers believe that they obey this injunction absolutely.\(^2\)\(^3\) Admittedly a less sacred, although heroically inspired, ceremony could arise from an individual’s dreams.\(^2\)\(^4\)

Daisy Bates’ letter concerning Nebinyan’s information is one of the few records we have of the exact origin of a sacred ceremony. If the sacred ritual of some Aborigines of King George Sound did indeed derive from the ceremonial drill of Flinders’ Marines it is interesting evidence of how an historical event entered Aboriginal mythology. The belief that the first European visitors were the returned spirits or reincarnations of dead Aborigines was widespread throughout Australia. If Flinders’ party were regarded as having returned from Koorannup, the home of the dead, then they shared something of the sacredness of the Ancestral Heroes. It is understandable that the ritual they performed was regarded as sacred, to be repeated by the men to whom it was revealed, and by their sons and grandsons.

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\(^2\) Certainly the Western Desert women who have shown me the secret-sacred women’s *inma* believe this.

\(^4\) For example, Berndt 1950:26-27, 31-32, 53-54.


——— 'Some notes on scientific travel amongst the black population of tropical Australia in 1904, 1905, 1906', Report of the Eleventh Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, 1907, 1908: 577-592.


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Malangi, wearing the medallion commemorating his contribution to the design of the Australian $1 note.

*Photograph by Penny Tweedie, 1979.*
On 14 February 1966, ‘C-Day’, Australia introduced decimal currency. Four new dollar bank notes ($1, $2, $10, $20) designed by Gordon Andrews were released. The one dollar note was described in various sources, official and unofficial, as featuring on the front a portrait of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II in the regalia of the Order of the Garter and a new exemplification of the coat-of-arms of the Commonwealth of Australia. On the back is a line interpretation of an Aboriginal bark painting and of Aboriginal rock paintings and carvings.1

The design of the back of the note consists of three distinct sections, as shown below. The stick-like hunters in the upper right hand section (known as mimi figures) were described in the official release as ‘cave paintings from western Arnhem Land of the Nalbidji people — more or less kindly spirit people who live in the rocks of the western Arnhem Land plateau’.2 The kangaroo, goanna and snake in the lower centre section are representations of X-ray art, also derived from the rock art of western Arnhem Land. The tree and everything to the left of it was redrawn from a bark painting from eastern Arnhem Land.

Design of back of the Australian $1 note, by permission of the Reserve Bank. Photograph by Colin Roach.

2 Pullen 1966.
Combining bark painting and rock art is like making a composite grouping of works by Velasquez, Goya, and Dali simply because they are all Spanish artists. The result appears reasonably harmonious but this is due to the indifference of the Western eye. Nevertheless some differences are readily observable; the *mimi* figures are stick-like while the figures from the bark painting are more solid. The X-ray snake exhibits vertebrae while the bark painting snake is filled with circles. The other figures show similar stylistic variation. The layman is not made aware of the difference in period of the design sources. The examples of rock art are of unknown antiquity and were discovered by C.P. Mountford in 1948. A contemporary Aboriginal artist living near Milingimbi, Malangi (sometimes called ‘Dollar George’) created the bark painting, but the original artist's identity was forgotten for three years.

I learned the circumstances leading to the selection of Malangi’s painting for the dollar note as a circuitous and confused story. The first version I heard was that an Arnhem Land bark painting in a French collection was seen by an Australian Prime Minister who urged its selection as a design for the new decimal currency.

The story began in 1963. Karel Kupka, a Hungarian art collector and anthropologist living in France, had met Malangi ‘through the kindly teachers of the Milingimbi Methodist Mission and . . . was struck with the astonishing personal style of his work’. Kupka, who had made several previous collecting trips to Arnhem Land, took Malangi’s painting ‘The Hunter’ back to Paris. There he gave several paintings, including Malangi’s, to the collection of the Paris Museum of Arts of Africa and Oceania for which he worked. He also secured finance from Qantas to stage an exhibition of art from Arnhem Land. By the time I made inquiries, a belief had grown up that either Harold Holt or William McMahon or both saw this exhibition and were so impressed by Malangi’s work that they recommended its use on the new notes. This story is apocryphal. The painting’s odyssey did begin with Karel Kupka and this explains why Malangi’s painting is now in Paris. The history of its selection, related to me by people acquainted with Malangi and with the story of the design, is strange, but it did not involve a Prime Minister.

In April 1963, the same year Kupka discovered Malangi’s painting, the Australian Government decided to convert to decimal currency and

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3 Pullen 1966.
4 Pullen 1966.
5 Helen Groger-Wurm, personal communication 23 March 1979; Allen 1975.
6 Information was generously provided, in letters and conversation, by Lance Bennett, 7 May 1979; H.C. Coombs, 1 March 1979; Alan Fidock, 18 May 1979; K.F. Thompson, 17 May 1979; Penny Tweedie, October 1979; John von Sturmer, 23 March 1979.
MALANGI

asked seven designers to submit suggestions and preliminary sketches. Among the guidelines for the artists was 'a suggestion that one note might embody an Aboriginal theme'. Kupka, on his collecting trip at this time, met A.C. McPherson, Secretary of the Reserve Bank of Australia, and gave him photographs of several bark paintings he had just collected. Among them was Malangi's painting. McPherson passed these photographs on to the seven designers. Gordon Andrews, whose designs were ultimately selected, incorporated Malangi's basic pattern.7

Between April 1963 and February 1966 the identity of the artist whose bark painting was used was forgotten. Malangi received no recognition or compensation for his contribution. Without the intervention of the journalist Roland Pullen and the mission teacher Alan Fidock he might forever have been unrecognized and uncompensated. Pullen first brought the oversight to public attention on 2 February 1966 in an article in the Adelaide Advertiser. Twelve days later the new dollar notes were seen by Fidock in Arnhem Land.8

Alan Fidock, one of the teachers at the Milingimbi Mission who had introduced Karel Kupka to Malangi, recognized part of the design as depicting the Gurrumurru myth which he knew to be the 'property' of Malangi. Fidock asked Malangi if he had agreed to the use of the design or the myth for the new money and discovered that he had not. Through the mission administration Fidock wrote to H.C. Coombs, then Governor of the Reserve Bank, suggesting that a suit might be brought on Malangi's behalf for breach of copyright. Coombs investigated the matter and found that indeed Malangi had received neither recognition nor reward. The portrait of the Queen was attributed to the artist Douglas Glass, but credit for the rest of the design had been given to Andrews, whose initials appear in the design at the lefthand side of the tree base. The designers were responsible for negotiating rights to sources included in their designs. Coombs could offer only one explanation for this oversight: he and other bank officers, and presumably Gordon Andrews, had assumed 'that the designs were the work of some traditional Aboriginal artist long dead'.9

Coombs 'gave instructions that Malangi was to be found and arrangements made for him to receive both a fee and some symbolic acknowledgement of his contribution to the design of the notes. After consultation with Malangi he was given . . . (a) medallion, a fishing kit and . . . (a) fee . . .'10 The fee was a thousand dollars, with which Malangi bought an aluminium dinghy and outboard motor. The fishing kit consisted of a tackle box complete with tackle and lures. The

8 Pullen 1966; Thompson, personal communication 1979.
10 Coombs, personal communication 1979.
medallion, of which Malangi is most proud, is a brushed silver disk approximately five centimetres in diameter, suspended on a silver chain. On the front of the medallion is the inscription:  

Presented to  
Malangi  
By Dr H.C. Coombs  
Governor  
Reserve Bank of Australia  
7th August 1967  

On the back is inscribed:  

To Commemorate  
His contribution to  
the design of the  
Australian $1 note  

Malangi's contribution to the dollar note depicts in part the mourning rites which are still performed at the death of a member of his clan, the Manharrngu. It tells the story of the ancestral hero Gurrumurringu, the great hunter. Gurrumurringu (the central figure) when hunting one day speared a wallaby (segmented, at top and bottom) and found yams and fruits (ovoid shapes around human figures). He was returning with these to his wife, Durandur (not pictured) when he stopped beside a waterhole beloved and protected by her, to rest and butcher the wallaby. At the waterhole lived an evil tree spirit. The tree depicted — a real tree which still stands beside the waterhole — is sometimes called a milk tree. The tree spirit sent out the brown snake which lived with him, to bite Gurrumurringu. As Gurrumurringu cooked a haunch of wallaby (top centre), he felt the sharp pain of the snake's bite and died. When he was found his clansmen (two figures flanking central figure) laid out his body and prepared it for burial (the crosshatching represents the painting of his body). They sang of his exploits and his death, and played the clapsticks over his body. Later his bones were transferred to a burial log (perhaps represented by the dark cylinder at base of tree).

11 Tweedie, personal communication 1979.  
12 There seems to be some difference of opinion about Malangi's clan identification: Fidock (n.d.) and Douglas and Oldmeadow (1968) give the name Manharrngu, and I have opted for this in deference to Fidock's place in the story. Tweedie (1979) says Liyagalawumirri, and Allen (1975) says Urgiganjdjar.  
13 I have here summarised Malangi's tale of Gurrumurringu from slightly varying versions recorded by Fidock (n.d.), Allen (1975), and Douglas and Oldmeadow (1968).
Problems still remain concerning the design. Who holds the copyright? Which copyright? The copyright for the painting or the design on the note? The Reserve Bank, the Paris museum, Kupka, Malangi, the Treasury and Gordon Andrews have all been suggested. It appears that the museum owns the painting, Malangi owns the original design, and the Reserve Bank has copyright over the design on the note.\footnote{Copyright law is a complex subject, and it is only in recent years that authorities have begun to consider the rights of 'tribal' artists. An Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies committee is currently examining this issue.}

And what of the other two-thirds of the design, particularly the kangaroo (between the \textit{mimi} figures and the X-ray art) that no one has ever mentioned? Was it a discovery of Mountford's or a creation of Andrews's? Whatever the story, it — like Malangi — was apparently forgotten.

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Top: Freddie Clay of Palm Island sweats on the bag, about 1950. Photograph courtesy of Alick Jackomos.

Bottom: Jimmy Sharman's tent, Sydney Show, about 1950. Sharman (holding hat) is flanked by boxer Dave Sands, and his son Jimmy Sharman Jnr. Photograph courtesy of Jimmy Sharman Jnr.
At first glance the money and prestige available to Aborigines through the sport of professional boxing suggest that boxing might have allowed Aborigines to escape the usual subordinate and outcast condition assigned to them by European-dominated Australian society. This paper attempts to examine the truth of this popular conception of boxing. It also seeks to retrieve the Aboriginal experience of the fight game, for of all sports, only football has rivalled the importance of boxing in Aboriginal community and sporting life and Aboriginal folklore. The examination of the Aboriginal experience in the world of boxing should increase our understanding of race relations in Australia.

Professional boxing is a distinctive sport because fighters are in the business of inflicting bodily injury for money in potentially tough physical encounters. The professionals are even distinguished from amateur boxers, because the 'lily-whites' are protected from injury by rigid rules and very strict refereeing. It is this fact of institutionalized violence which is at the core of the tight-knit nature of this sporting subculture, centred as it is around inner city gymnasiums where the faithful gather to talk their own jargon and watch the hopefuls go through the rituals of shadow boxing, skipping, bag punching and sparring. Boxers see themselves as different from other people; and

* I would like to thank the many members of the boxing fraternity who willingly gave of their time to talk boxing with me. The late Merv Williams, long-time boxing editor of the Sporting Globe, gave me much advice and access to his newspaper cuttings file. The newspaper files of George Bracken and Max Richards were also made available to me. I am indebted to Alick Jackomos for the use of photographs from his collection. Special thanks must go to Inga Clendinnen of LaTrobe University and my wife Margaret Donnan for their exhaustive comments on this paper. Lastly, I must thank John Hirst, June Phillip and others at LaTrobe University for their help, and the participants in the Sport in History Conference at the University of New South Wales in June 1979 for their suggestions.

My research included tape-recording interviews, each of about an hour's duration, in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Cherbourg and Warrnambool. The tapes and transcriptions are currently held by the author. I am grateful for the cooperation of the following Aboriginal boxers: George Bracken, Pastor Don Brady, Banjo (Henry) Clarke, Muscles (Ray) Clarke, Dudley Collins, Henry Collins, Graham Dicker, Geoff Dynevor, Jack Hassen, Dave Landers, Stan Lowe, Tony Mundine, Neil Patel, Jackie Ryan and Bobby Sinn (Wills) (possibly of Maori descent), Freddy Saunders, Hector Thompson, Buster Weir. The reminiscences of Amy Lowe and Mayberry Ford (née Richards) were also recorded.

Taped interviews were also conducted with non-Aboriginal boxers, trainers and commentators: I must thank Ray Hartge, Alan Moore, Billy Primmer and Wave Geikie; Snowy Hill, Ern McQuillan, Jim Peoples, Jimmy Sharman (II), Leo White; Eddie Gibbons, Ray Mitchell and Merv Williams.
those outside the sport see it as less than respectable. Indeed, many outsiders are ambivalent not only about the violence they associate with the sport, but about its traditional role as a vehicle for working class and ethnic upward mobility. In the past century, world championship boxing has been dominated by successive waves of impoverished ethnic groups, notably the Polish, Irish, Jews, Italians, Negroes and, recently, the Latin Americans.

The subculture of professional boxing is also a highly stratified world. At the bottom are the novices or ‘prelim boys’ and above them a hierarchy of boxers, ranked by their ring performances. Further up the scale are the trainers, managers, journalists and promoters, all of whom manipulate and control the boxing world and the boxer. The handlers control the destiny of boxers, few of whom are ever allowed — or able — to conduct their own affairs in the slippery world of match-making and promotion. As two students of boxing have noted:

Generally, the specialized trainer or trainer manager represents the authority-figure to the boxer, transmits boxing skills to him, and becomes his anchor point of emotional security. The trainer’s relationship with the boxer becomes crucial to his development.1

Confidence, which is the all important ethos in this world of man-to-man contests, further ensnares the boxer. He becomes dependent on other’s perceptions of his abilities and their assurances, especially those of his handlers and journalists. American Negro and ex-boxer Nathan Hare commented on the power relationship between the boxer and his manager: ‘In the exploitation of the boxer by his handlers, it is necessary to exercise intensive control and constraint over the fighter’s thinking and behaviour, to dominate the fighter and his total mood’.2 This dominance is exercised by men generally interested in money first and the boxer’s welfare second, within a professional sport notorious for its lack of regulations to protect participants.

Boxing has largely been a sport of ill-fortune for those who played it. Indeed, the word ‘play’ is generally not associated with professional boxing as it is with other sports, perhaps due to the injury rate. Virtually all fighters emerge with scarring, and one estimate is that 60 per cent of boxers are left mildly punch-drunk and 5 per cent markedly so.3 Most commentators agree that few boxers end up with much money. Life-long trainer Ern McQuillan stated that only 10 per cent of boxers saved their winnings.4 The manager’s 25 per cent, living expenses, taxes, women, friends, cars, liquor and gambling usually account for the rest. Fight money comes too fast for young boxers

1 Weinberg and Arond 1952:466.
2 Hare 1974:374.
3 Steinhaus quoted in Weinberg and Arond 1952:468.
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from poor backgrounds to hold onto. Again, a boxing career usually interferes with the development of other occupational skills and thus at the end of his career, the boxer is left occupationally unprepared to face the world. Added to this is the depression which results from loss of sporting prestige and income upon retirement at the early age of twenty-five or thirty. Unlike many other sports, the fringe and somewhat 'unrespectable' nature of boxing and boxers means that few commercial firms offer fighters lucrative jobs once their careers end.

Most Aborigines who fought in the rings of eastern Australia where the boxing subculture flourished, were recruited from rural areas and all 28 Aborigines who have held Australian titles came from the three mainland eastern states. Aborigines raised in these areas between the 1930s and the 1950s lived in a variety of situations: the majority on government reserves and mission stations or in depressingly poor and unhygienic fringe camps on riverbanks or the edge of towns. A small minority resided in standard housing in country towns or inner city suburbs of the capital cities.

The conditions in which Aborigines lived were also very varied. Though a number of anthropologists and sociologists who worked among rural and town Aborigines at this period have left detailed accounts it is difficult to generalize from their findings. However, most communities experienced unemployment or low wages, inadequate education and housing, poor diet and ill health as well as general racial prejudice. It could be argued that the Aborigines experienced the classic cultural disorientation and confusion of a colonized people as outlined by Albert Memmi and Frantz Fanon.

It also could be argued that by the 1940s the lifestyle of most Aborigines in eastern Australia was not traditional and simply reflected the 'culture of poverty' as elaborated by Oscar Lewis. Certainly most southern Aborigines by this time had both European and Aboriginal forebears, and many had been reared in circumstances similar to other poor working class Australians. Jeremy Beckett has argued that some Aborigines in rural eastern Australia have adopted the values and lifestyle of the nineteenth century white pastoral workers, immortalized as the 'nomad tribe' in Russel Ward's *The Australian legend* (1959). However, there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that the lives and culture of most Aborigines in the eastern states at this time was still distinctive, and that this different social milieu laid the foundations for a unique Aboriginal experience in boxing.

5 Kelly 1944; Reay and Sitlington 1948:181; Fink 1957; Calley 1956 etc.
7 Memmi (1965) especially section 2; Fanon (1967) especially chapter 1.
8 Lewis 1965.
9 Beckett 1965:8.

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Studies carried out among Aboriginal communities in eastern Australia from the 1940s to the 1960s, reveal that traditional values had not completely vanished, especially among the majority of Aborigines living on reserves or the fringe of country towns. This was most marked in Queensland yet kinship and community ties and terminology were still important in the inner suburbs of Melbourne. Residence was usually determined by kinship, though this was influenced in some areas by class and status considerations. Jeremy Beckett described how kinship bonds shaped the movements of Aborigines in the far west of New South Wales in the 1960s: ‘an Aboriginal may go 200 miles to a place where he is known, rather than 10 miles to a place where he is not. Usually, being known means having kinsfolk who will receive him and act as his sponsors in the local community’. Kinship ties still determined marriages to a large degree. Above all, kinship reciprocity still operated among most Aborigines, and was much more than simply the sharing and borrowing Oscar Lewis noted among the poor. Indeed as Jeremy Beckett remarked of the Aboriginal custom of sharing among kin:

Today, ceremonial is defunct and the rules are forgotten, but the general principle still holds. The obligation to share food, clothes and — more doubtfully — money, with kinsfolk who are in need is loosely defined and frequently evaded, but it is nevertheless recognized in principle and is of great social importance. Others have noted its continued power and existence. Traditional religious ideas, magical and medicinal beliefs were still held by many of the older people and displayed daily to the young. Death rites of speeding the spirit correctly on its way, of smoking the body, of wailing and disposing of the possessions of the dead were still in evidence, despite the acceptance of Christian ideas and practices. Belief in spirits of the dead or guwa, was still widespread amongst all generations in certain areas.

Besides the persistence of traditional ideas and modes, the background of the Aborigines differed from the general working class pattern because of the existence of a racial caste barrier to which Aborigines were subjected. The young Aboriginal boy growing up in or near the country towns where most boxers came from became aware that he was separated off from the rest of the community. If he went

to the ‘pictures’ he had to sit in segregated seating, and he experienced similar barriers at the local dances. Frequently the town’s swimming pool was barred to him. In Queensland and New South Wales he was often refused admission to the town’s State or convent schools, and compelled to use the settlement school. Only low-status labouring jobs were open to him. As he grew older, the Aboriginal youth perhaps discovered he was not allowed to drink alcohol (unless he lived in Victoria), so he consumed it furtively on the riverbank, partly as a test of manhood, partly as an act of defiance against the law. Thus he learnt both shame and anger. Whatever his preferred lifestyle, the Europeans in the town inevitably classed him as Aboriginal, and usually added that he ‘was like all the rest’. 17 There was virtually no social mobility between the Aboriginal group and the general community in rural areas.

Thus, Aborigines were trapped by the pervasive racial caste barrier which was accompanied by a syndrome of derogatory stereotypes about Aborigines. Intermarriage with Europeans was seen by many as a way to avoid such stereotypes; as Fink has commented, ‘it is only by ridding themselves of their aboriginal features that they can escape the stigma of the caste barrier.’ 18 However, in the 1950s this avenue for upward mobility across the caste barrier was really open only to Aboriginal women. Fink found that ‘very few dark men marry white women, as there is tremendous feeling against such matches on the part of the white community’. 19 The only way in which Aboriginal men could hope to cross the caste barrier was, they and others believed, through sport.

Aborigines have had a disproportionately high success rate in the boxing ring. Jerry Jerome from Dalby was the first Aboriginal to hold an Australian title, the middleweight crown in 1912 and 1913. After a lapse of twenty years a stream of Aboriginal titleholders began in 1933 with title wins by Ron Richards and Merv ‘Darky’ Blandon. From this time onwards, a racial group which comprised only one per cent of Australia’s population, produced an astonishing thirty of the 225 champions (or 15 per cent) of the eight major Australian professional boxing divisions. 20 Aboriginal boxers have also held six British Commonwealth titles and the World bantamweight title won by Lionel Rose (1968-69). A further twenty-seven have made unsuccessful attempts for Australian titles since 1930, at times losing because of

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17 Fink 1957:105. See also Reay and Sitlington 1948:185.
18 Fink 1957:101. See also Calley 1957; Rowley 1978:110-114.
19 Fink 1957:106.
20 Calculated from the files of The Sporting Globe, The Australian Ring Digest, and Fighter, and from Gibbons 1977:122-142.
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hard luck or an off night. Three Aborigines (Thompson, Mundine and Rose) have had unsuccessful fights for world titles. Rose’s unsuccessful title shot was during a comeback fight in the higher junior lightweight division against titleholder Numata in Japan in May 1971. The number of State titles held by Aborigines must be close to one hundred.

Nor have all the honours been confined to the professional ranks. Most of the ‘pros’ first made their mark in the ‘lily-whites’ where they carried off numerous titles. Aboriginal amateurs Adrian Blair, Eddie Barney (Eddie Gilbert’s son), Geoff Dynevor, Robert Carney and Joey Donovan have all been Olympic or Commonwealth Games representatives. Indeed, bantamweight Geoff Dynevor – the first Aboriginal medallist – won a silver medal at the 1970 Rome Olympics and a gold at the 1962 Perth Commonwealth Games. Below the successful were an immense mass of second-raters, ‘perhapsers’ and ‘preliminary boys’. Further down still were those who had only a few fights, for a lark or a quid. An unsung shearer, Freddy Saunders, said he fought ‘Tiger’ Parkes in Cairns in 1938 for £100. He had only three other fights.21

Aborigines – like all boxers – fought professionally primarily for the money that could be won. As Graham Dicker responded when asked did he want to fight for the cups or the money – ‘give me the dough!’22 Aboriginal boxers generally came from materially deprived and distressed families, often affected by unemployment and ill-health.23 Jack Hassen, lightweight champion of the 1950s, was orphaned at the age of two. The famous Sands brothers from Burnt Bridge reserve, near Kempsey, lost their father while still young, and many others came from struggling backgrounds. World bantamweight champion, Lionel Rose, who grew up in a camp near Drouin, Victoria, the eldest of the nine children of tent fighter Roy Rose, stated: ‘Ever since I was 10 I’ve wanted to be a champion to make money!’24 Like many other minority groups, Aborigines saw boxing as a way out. ‘It was a chance for money and security’ said Jack Hassen.25 Some, like Adrian Blair and Michael Karpaney, drifted into boxing because it was a family tradition to seek this escape through sport.

While it was relatively simple for Aborigines to become boxers, it was much harder for them to become skilful practitioners because of the prevailing prejudice in Australian society. Many Aborigines told me that there are hundreds of Lionel Roses, if only they had the opportunity to develop. But settlements and especially fringe camps which lacked basic amenities and decent housing were unlikely to have

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Top: Lionel Rose (centre back row), at Jackson’s Track, near Drouin, Victoria, about 1956.

Bottom: Manager Kid Young training boxers George Bracken (left) and Barney Walker (right), at Geelong, about 1955.

Photographs courtesy of Alick Jackomos.
ABORIGINAL HISTORY 4:1

gymnasiums and equipment. At Framlingham settlement near Warrnambool there were aspiring boxers, but no skipping ropes, punching bags or gloves. Banjo Clarke remembered that ‘the only time we’d see a glove was when we would jump into the ring’ in Warrnambool, barefoot, and fight ‘boys that were well trained, well conditioned to gloves and everything’.26 The Framlingham boxers even had to walk the twelve miles to Warrnambool on the day they fought. Billy Primmer, a European boxer from the town confirmed all this.27 He added that when his family fed and lodged Banjo before one big fight, he responded so much to the treatment that he won in the first round. At the other end of Australia, Geoff Dynevor, an Aboriginal gold medal winner, trained for much of the time at Cherbourg with gloves and a sugar-bag of sawdust.28 Poor health, poor housing and nutrition, inadequate tuition and other factors obviously compounded the problem of equipment. Marie Reay commented that the typical diet of an Aboriginal living in a New South Wales riverbank camp in the 1940s was tea and damper three times a day. She added that ‘many of the children suffer from bronchitis, pneumonia, general malnutrition, impetigo, sore eyes, and a number have had rickets. They have no resistance to colds and general epidemics’.29

Many Aboriginal boxers launched their careers in the boxing tents and most never got any further. Although I have been told that tent fighting was largely faked, it was a tough life. Participants suffered physical damage. Tent fighters often boxed five times a day and despite the acting many punches were taken, at times from enthusiastic and far heavier strangers. After the day’s show, the fighters had to pack up all the gear late at night and hit the road. The boxers, two-thirds of whom were Aborigines, slept in the tents and usually survived on soups, bread, saveloys and such. Billy Primmer described how one tent owner fed his men cold pies, which were thrown to them with the words ‘Here catch’, as if they were a pack of dogs.30 Conditions were not always appalling nor the treatment callous, and most Aborigines remember the free, matey and prestigious life in the tents. Yet in the long run it was a debilitating life and scarcely the ideal place from which to launch a career in the ring.

Those Aborigines who showed promise in tents or country stadium fights were channelled by contacts into the boxing subcultures of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. The gymnasium, a world of rhythmic sounds of feet and gloves, of fight talk amongst old pugs, and smells

28 Interview with Geoff Dynevor at Cherbourg, 1979.
29 Reay 1945:305.
of farts and sweat, was the centre of this subculture. Here many young Aborigines from the country felt secure and accepted. Here other Australians had a chance to become acquainted with Aborigines. Stan Lowe of western Victoria reminisced about the gym: 'There is something about it . . . boxers are close. They are interested in showing you what they know and you show them what you know . . . sort of talking things over . . . when you train there, you are just one of the boys, there is no special pet, you are all treated the same'.31 Dave Landers of Queensland agreed: 'We all used to get together, have a yarn, all the old timers, jockeys and other sportsmen would come in and yarn with you'.32

This camaraderie among boxers, black and white, was also commented upon by those who travelled in the tents, although one suggested that the inter-racial mateship was most evident when trouble arose with outsiders. Again, the boxing which flourished in Warrnambool in the mid-1940s seemed to bring the two races together. Instead of being the usual twelve miles apart, the parents of the Framlingham settlement boxers sat beside those of the European Warrnambool and district boxers, and all had a pie together afterwards at Bill's cart outside the Palais. As Billy Primmer remarked: 'Boxing brought the people together — you respected each other'.33

However, the world of urban professional boxing offered unique difficulties for Aboriginal as opposed to other Australian boxers. The special predicament of the Aboriginal boxer is that all big-time boxing is controlled by Europeans, from the training stage, right through to the promotion and media coverage of the sport. A number of Aboriginal boxers upon retirement have trained other fighters on a casual basis, but only one Aboriginal, Roy Carroll, has run a significant gymnasium. His Chippendale (Sydney) establishment which operated a few years ago is now defunct. The force of Weinberg, Arond and Hare's observations about the dominant-subservient nature of the manager-boxer relationship takes on a potentially more exploitative sense because of the addition of the racial factor. The black boxer-white manager relationship in many ways simply mirrored rather than challenged the control of white over black in Australian society.

This sporting relationship had a number of pertinent features. A considerable number of top-line Aboriginal boxers have lived with their managers, who encouraged this arrangement as it increased the dependence of the boxer, and also the surveillance capacities of the manager over his boxer's activities. If mates came around wanting a night on the grog they were often 'scooted off'. One boxer related how

he was allowed to sleep on the gym floor, though he did add that he ate and relaxed with the manager's family and was generally well treated. He eventually built a cubicle, wardrobe and a bed in the corner of the gym from his own earnings. Some trainers found their boxers jobs and lodgings through contacts. All this further increased the boxers' indebtedness to their trainers, and dependence on them. The ultimate in control (and a phenomenon which seems confined to Aboriginal boxers) is the fact that many managers handled their boxer's bank account. This was done either by a trust account needing a counter signature, or by actually holding onto the boxer's passbook. If the boxer resided in Queensland, as did Elley Bennett, the Queensland Department of Native Affairs controlled his winnings which were handed straight to the department by the manager. The boxer never even sighted his purse!

Most boxers submitted to this control, and few voiced (at least to this researcher) complaints about their manager. One did point out the irony perceived by all boxers, that his manager took twenty-five per cent of the purse, but no punches. He added that his particular manager, a car dealer, was never backward in selling cars to his boxers or convincing them to update when they had won a big fight. Whether the relations were generally good or whether most boxers submitted because they had few other options and also saw their destiny as being in their manager's hands, is hard to tell. One thing is certain, the control exercised by managers did not help the independence or self-esteem of the boxer, nor did it in the long run aid the retention of his money.

However, some boxers and trainers had very close and amiable relations. Kid Young (Leo White) and George Bracken were like father and son for ten years until a personal 'bust up'. The Molloys treated their boxers like one of the family and boarded them in their second house next door. Of course the most celebrated boxer-trainer relationship was that between Lionel Rose and the Rennies. Lionel, a fifteen year old with plenty of potential, landed on the Rennies' doorstep asking to be trained. He moved in shortly afterwards with the Rennies and their two sons, despite some financial strain on the family. While Jack taught him pugilism, Shirl Rennie taught Lionel Rose mathematics and how to manage in the world. They became mentors, parents and financial advisers and a measure of the trust in their relationship with Rose is the

34 Interview with George Bracken in Sydney, 1978.
35 Interview with Bennett's manager, Snowy Hill in Brisbane, 1978.
36 There have been claims (which need investigation) that a number of managers took 60 per cent and some took the lot, giving the boxer only his keep and pocket money.
37 Interview with Graham Dicker in Brisbane, 1978.
fact that no boxing contract ever existed between them. With a mother’s concern and not sounding like a manager, Shirl Rennie once remarked that her main concern for Lionel is that he ‘ends up a person. He doesn’t have to be wealthy . . . just someone who can hold his head up and be respected.’

Her purchase of a small sandwich shop in North Melbourne on behalf of Lionel, so that he could learn to manage money, was a concern all too rare among boxing handlers. Most managers viewed their Aboriginal proteges as fighters, not people. While fighters slug it out to make money, the winning of purses presents the problem of how best to handle the sudden inflow of cash. This not unwelcome complication was greater for most Aboriginal boxers, many of whom were still on that perilous journey between two value systems.

Prominent Aboriginal boxers have earned small fortunes in their time, enough to set them up for life. Champions Ron Richards, Dave Sands, Jack Hassen, Elley Bennett and George Bracken all earned in the vicinity of £20,000 gross during their approximate six-year stay at the top. More recently, titleholders such as Hector Thompson and Tony Mundine have earned far in excess of this. Lionel Rose grossed more than $350,000 during his career. However, most of these boxers have not retained much of their money. Mundine appears to be the exception as he owns two units and has bought a house for his parents. Dave Sands, tragically killed in a motor accident at Dungog in August 1952 when on the eve of a world middleweight title challenge, left his wife Bessie with a £2,000 debt on their house and little in the bank. His brother Russell, former Australian featherweight titleholder, died in 1978 without even enough to pay for his funeral. Obviously, taxation, the manager’s 25 per cent, and living, travelling and training expenses all eat into the gross, leaving possibly less than a third of the winnings. Indeed, all professional boxers, no matter what their race, generally end up with little of their winnings left.

Certainly, Aboriginal boxers were like most fighters in their tendency to use money quickly rather than save it. However, this was accentuated for two reasons. First, most Aborigines came from very deprived situations which encouraged the immediate use of what money there was and provided little opportunity to learn to manage it. Second, most Aboriginal fighters emerged from backgrounds where traditional ideas of immediate consumption and kinship obligations were still very much in evidence as argued earlier. Therefore, traditional

38 *Fighter*, April 1968. See also Rose 1969:50-56.
39 Corris 1967 contains some interesting comments on boxers and their winnings. See also Corris 1980, which was not available when this paper was prepared.
40 These financial estimates were compiled from fight reports, background articles and obituaries in the *Sporting Globe, Australian Ring Digest* and *Fighter.*
pressures combined with the usual ones to distinctively whittle away the resolve of many Aboriginal boxers to save. Most observers simply decided that this was due to their inability to handle money. The brothers of Ron Richards' wife helped Richards through his winnings. Dave Sands' five brothers were never broke while he had money and Merv Williams observed that 'there were always three or four coloured boys from the bush living at his [Sands'] place'. However when Dave Sands died Bill Larrigo, one of his Aboriginal protégés, gave part of his earnings to Sands' widow and children. Such was the Aboriginal mode of reciprocity! Again, Richards, the Sands, Bracken and Mundine all bought a home for their parents as well as themselves. The money left over after fulfilling family and kin obligations was generally consumed and not saved — and usually consumed in a communal way. As Buster Weir, a double bill fighter from Queensland recalled:

I just wanted to fight for the money. I'd get the money and race out and get a carton of grog. I was the captain to everybody, my mates would be sitting in the bleachers there and at half past nine I'd get into the bloke and finish him quick, grab the money and pay off and I'd run straight up to the pub and get a carton and away to a party! If you were only getting a pound a round, there was little to save, but enough for the moment.

Training and motivation as well as individual talent are essential in the arduous climb to the top in boxing. It is hard to tell whether Aborigines trained as hard as other boxers, especially given the preponderance of obviously racist and off-handed statements about their inborn laziness and inconsistency. What is certainly true is that Aborigines are not inherently lazy. The claim that they were lazy is a racist, unthinking generalization that does not stand up to scrutiny, yet it was made over and over again. The vigorous and disciplined nature of traditional initiation, the painstaking style of Aboriginal technology, and their intricate orally remembered religious ritual, are but some of the aspects of traditional Aboriginal culture which reveal great vigour and determination, not inherent laziness. Certain individuals must of course have been lazy, for Aborigines are only human. However, if the attitudes of some other Aboriginal boxers to the fight game were lax, this no doubt reflected the poor motivation and goal confusion which was produced by being torn between Aboriginal and European values, and the low self-esteem which resulted from being oppressed by a caste

41 Interview with Mayberry Ford, Ron Richards' sister, in Brisbane, 1978.
42 Sporting Globe, 23 August 1952. See also Mitchell 1965a:97.
43 Sporting Globe, 31 October 1952.
barrier. For instance, Charles Perkins, who clawed his way up through soccer, recalled his adolescent years in Adelaide:

I would think, "There must be something wrong with me that enables that bloke to call me a 'nigger', with so much feeling of hatred in his voice", I felt I was not good enough, an outsider, that I was not part of that school, I was not part of those people and I belonged to nothing.\textsuperscript{45}

Certainly, some Aborigines were less than the perfect boxer if the stories can be believed. Jerry Jerome at times secretly rode a tram rather than run to the destination of his roadwork; Elley Bennett was notoriously unfit for many of his fights; Bill Larrigo, who began a promising career with twenty-one straight knock-out wins, turned to 'the grog'; while Barney Walker, like a number of others, gave up a promising career allegedly to go 'walkabout'. However, Bennett was often unfit because he had no real opposition in Australia and Stadiums Ltd. brought too few imports to fight him. He only had the low number of forty-seven fights in nine years! Bill Larrigo may have had grave emotional problems or personal difficulties. Until we know it cannot be assumed that he was just another 'hopeless Aborigine'. Barney Walker was simply going home to see his family, like many other city-based Aboriginal fighters who became homesick and so went on so-called 'walkabouts'. Therefore, there were often good reasons for behaviour termed 'lazy' or 'inconsistent'. Kinship obligations and Aboriginal values often took precedence over success in Western terms.

On the other hand, some Aboriginal boxers showed even more determination than most other Australian boxers. Title contenders Michael Karpaney and Graham Dicker were just two who were noted for their dedication. The latter, who made five unsuccessful bids for Australian titles in a career spanning a decade, usually had two jobs as well as his fight career. Similarly, George Bracken showed great determination to regain his lightweight title and fight on for years while suffering from undiagnosed hepatitis. While generalizations are difficult it is clear that many Aboriginal boxers, like the people of the reserve and fringe communities from which they came, were ambivalent about the European values of the work ethic and individual success. As J.H. Bell observed of a New South Wales community: 'Their value system stresses co-operation and mutual aid among members, rather than competition and individual achievement'.\textsuperscript{46} Certainly they appeared more alienated from these values than other boxers with working class backgrounds.

\textsuperscript{45} Perkins 1975:31.
\textsuperscript{46} Bell 1965:406; see also Fink 1957:106-107 and Reay and Sitlington 1948: 199-200.
Unlike other Australians in the sport, many Aboriginal boxers have been faced with the awesome problem of identity. Only by denying their Aboriginal past could some escape the caste barrier and the continued depreciation of Aboriginal culture by white Australians. These pressures were increased by official 'assimilation' policies. Aboriginal boxer Jackie Ryan, a Queensland champion of the 1950s, used to pass himself off in the Sharman tent shows as Greek. When questioned last year about his heritage he stated that his parents were of Maori and French extraction though he did not discount vague Aboriginal connections. Yet his son Hiram Ryan, a Queensland University student, is proud of his Aboriginal heritage and refused to pass as Greek or whatever. An Australian champion claimed at the height of his career in the 1950s and again last year that he was of Maori descent, yet his trainer and members of the Brisbane Aboriginal community alleged he was of Aboriginal ancestry. The problem of identity gnawed at the Aboriginal boxer in a white-controlled sport. Jack Hassen, who married a girl from Cherbourg mission and who currently sees himself as part of the Aboriginal community at La Perouse, was once reported, way back in 1949 when he was trying to move up in the world, as disliking the label Aboriginal. Again, Merv Blandon, Australian champion in the 1930s, was only one-eighth Aboriginal and certainly considered himself European, but he was branded with the name 'Darky' by the fight fraternity. There was little guarantee that those who sought to escape the caste barrier would succeed.

Boxing helped encourage adoption of European values for those who aspired to them. For a start, the sport emphasized the work ethic, for to be a champion one had to train continuously and vigorously to keep fit and make weight. The dedicated boxer's life was disciplined by the clock. Up at five in the morning for road work; then off to either the gym or to work; to the gym for two hours at night, then early to bed. Boxing itself was dominated by bells and time limits — so many rounds at precisely three minutes. Life became regulated whereas both the traditional Aboriginal mode and transitional reserve life stressed less rigid rhythms. Again, Aboriginal values were centred on communal living and cooperative efforts, whereas the culture of boxing emphasized rampant individualism. You trained alone, fought alone. Only one man could be champion.

47 For instance see Beckett 1958 or the interviews in Gilbert 1977.
50 Sun, 20 March 1949.
Also, Aboriginal boxers were suddenly confronted with the glitter and prestige of material possessions such as fast cars, snappy clothes and houses. Some of the successful took up these things. A few married white Australians for what mixture of love and social aspiration not even they might be able to fathom. Some of the successful boxers even became critical and distanced from those of their own people who had not adopted middle class morals and manners. Hector Thompson considered that his being sent from a one parent home to Kinchela Boys' Home, Kempsey, was the best thing that ever happened to him. He was educated to intermediate standard and 'learned to work, to be clean and eat the right way and the right food'. 52 Even so, those who were at times critical of other Aborigines, still referred to them as 'my people' and to themselves as Aboriginal. They had refused to be absorbed because their experience of boxing was qualitatively different to other boxers and in ways was distinctly Aboriginal.

The Aboriginal boxer was partly forced into a distinctive experience because the boxing subculture in which he moved was permeated by the racist images of the wider society. While Tom Maguire's demand that the Sands brothers call him *Mister* Maguire might reflect the respect most managers required from their boxers, it also marked the views of a man who believed Aborigines were different because inferior. Maguire claimed they were difficult to handle and once remarked: 'It was useless trying to get them to do their best unless they were keen on the job. They just dig their toes in and leave you with the tickets'. 53 Other boxing handlers and commentators shared the racist belief that Aboriginal boxers as a group had certain inherent racial traits. Some even believed they were less intelligent than white boxers. Ern McQuillan spoke of his protégé, lightweight champion Jack Hassen, as he would of a clever animal: 'He is obedient, easy to handle, and quick to learn new points. He is inclined to take it easy sometimes, but he will always work hard when I drive him for extra effort'. 54

The Aboriginal 1 per cent of the Australian population has produced 15 per cent of the Australian boxing champions. If Aborigines were so 'inferior' why did they produce such a disproportionate percentage of titleholders? Much scholarship since the 1930s has rejected the racist notion that racial groups have inherent physical and intellectual attributes due to their racial characteristics. Recent scholars have further exploded the popular myth of the inherent physical superiority of Black American sportsmen, and instead have argued that they are so successful because they are more motivated to get on through sporting

52 Interviewed in Brisbane, 1978.
53 *Sporting Globe*, 16 August 1950.
54 *Sunday Herald*, 20 March 1949.
achievement. Yet, white racist popular opinion which extends back in English writing to the sixteenth century has often argued that the black 'races' have superior physical capabilities and the white 'races' have superior mental attributes.

This wrongheaded mythology is evident too in popular Australian opinion about Aboriginal boxers. Their speed, reflexes and punching abilities were always admired. Typically, one journalist remarked that 'they seemed temperamentally fitted for boxing, possessing the natural abilities required, courage, a quick eye, strength, perseverance, speed, endurance, toughness, fighting brains, and modesty that makes them adept pupils'. Others were not so lavish. Though praising many of their fighting talents, Ray Mitchell believed they lacked pride and heart, while Beverley Will, the editor of Fighter, repeating old stereotypes, stated: 'Their remarkable quickness of eye appears to have miscast these people as boxers without taking into account their natural submission to aggression'. The kindly, but patronising comment that they were 'a credit to their race' was often heard. Whenever an Aboriginal boxer performed, either well or poorly, his actions were generally explained by his Aboriginality — by his quick Aboriginal reflexes or lazy Aboriginal ways — not his traits as an individual.

Aboriginal boxers, caught in this racist image, often internalized it. Obviously the myth that Aborigines have inherent fighting abilities superior to Europeans was flattering to them. Thus, with a puff of pride Buster Weir remarked when interviewed: 'Aboriginals have been fighting since 1788 and before. It's natural for them to fight. You don't have to teach an Aboriginal to fight, you just put gloves on him and get him in that ring. He knows his business, he knows what he's there for'. Obviously, they clung to this belief as a comfort in a depressing world.

There was a sense in which positive images aroused by Aboriginal champions softened the viciousness of racist stereotypes. Ron Richards was an Australian idol in the 1930s and described as 'one of the finest types of young Australian sportsmen'. A number of Aboriginal champions received civic recognition, the most famous being Lionel Rose's reception at the Melbourne Town Hall where 6,000 people cheered and yelled, 'Good on ya, Lionel!' Rose later received an M.B.E. and was made Australian of the Year (1968). When he lost his

56 Jordan 1974: chapter 1; Smith 1960:70-72, 127; Broome 1979:352-357.
57 Comment found among George Bracken's newspaper cuttings.
58 Adam, July 1962.
59 Fighter, July 1970.
61 Australian Boxing Ring, 5 October 1932.
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title eighteen months later the press saluted him with 'Lionel Rose — a man!'. The Melbourne Herald even placed him alongside the noble diggers by saying he revealed 'Aussie digger defiance against rare defeat'.62 A generation earlier Dave Sands, the triple Australian champion who was killed when on the verge of a world title, enjoyed similar adulation. Kids crowded the gym to see him spar and city buses stopped to watch him jog past. 'A great Australian and gentleman' are the words which grace his memorial in Glebe. Like Rose, he was one of us. Yet this has not lasted, at least in Rose's case. A growing ambivalence developed towards him during his decline and come-back in the lightweight division. In more recent years the press have taken to highlighting his alleged indiscretions.

The adulation came not only from winning titles, but because Aborigines were generally exciting boxers. This was not due to inherent genetic factors, but to a lack of early expert tuition and sometimes fitness. Thus, they relied more than other boxers on walk-up aggression and one punch for victory, and therefore were great favourites with the fans who liked plenty of action. Fans remember the eight hectic Richards-Henneberry wars and the battles featuring Aboriginal 'K.O. merchants' such as the Sands brothers, Hassen, Bennett, Mundine and many 'prelim boys'. Others like Richards, Bracken and Rose were tough counter-punchers. As one commentator stated: 'There is something exciting about the Aboriginal fighters. They stir crowds with their flashy style, hard punching, natural skill and unpredictable character'.63 Fight fans could find themselves cheering madly for Aborigines in contests with European boxers, thus upsetting their usual opinions and creating some ambivalence towards Aborigines. However, white attitudes, whether favourable or not, rarely let the boxers escape the fact that they were Aboriginal.

Racial myths and strains were always there below the surface of the fight game. One important rule of thumb in professional boxing was that whenever possible a white and a black Australian should be matched. The prevailing belief among European handlers, promoters and commentators was that if two Aborigines were matched, they would not try hard. This was bad for business; 'fatal' in fact, said Merv Williams, Sporting Globe editor since 1940. When asked why, he added: 'Oh — they'd play ... they wouldn't hurt each other ... nine times out of ten they'd be talking to each other'.64 Ern McQuillan, match-maker at the Sydney Stadium for years agreed, but added that 'plenty of fire'

62 Sporting Globe, 30 August 1969 and Herald, 23 August 1969, respectively.
63 Michael Sutherland in Fighter, July 1970. See fights of Richards, Bennett, Hassen and Russell Sands described in Mitchell 1965b.
64 Interviewed in Melbourne, 1977.
often emerged in an inter-racial match. A country broadcaster, Eddie Gibbons summed it up: 'you never get a good game out of two niggers',

However, there is a great deal of contrary evidence concerning many furious fights between Aborigines. George Bracken fought hectic battles to K.O. conclusions against Russell Sands and Gary Cowburn. More recently Hector Thompson and Laurie Austin have had three hard title fights. Dave Landers, always a tough customer, had battles royal in the early fifties with Alfie Clay and Gordon Meredith. Of the latter he recalled: 'It was a ding-dong fight. He knocked me down. I knocked him down . . . everybody loved it. They reckoned it was the best fight they had seen in the Brisbane Stadium for years'. In the preliminaries there were quite a number of all-Aboriginal 'blood baths'. Sometimes if good friends fought they might hold back, but even this was not universal.

A more likely explanation of why black versus white was preferred, is that black-white encounters expressed the fascination of a society permeated by racist myths. As Banjo Clarke, a tent boxer from Framlingham settlement said: 'Aborigines were a big drawcard in the boxing tents. A lot of people would come to see the Aboriginals fight . . . they thought that Aborigines were better fighters and they were wild looking blokes up there on the boardwalk'. The (largely subconscious) fascination was created by the matching of 'dominant' against 'subordinate'; 'civilized' against 'wild'; the combat between 'different' races, and the antagonisms, confusions and excitement this raised in the fight fans. At fights in Victoria in the early 1960s observers heard cries of 'kill the black bastard'. The promoters were more fascinated by the money that rolled in from the packed crowds. In a way, these inter-racial contests could be a safety valve, because here the onlookers and participants were playing with the fire of archetypal opposites in earnest conflict, and yet it was only a game. It was civilized, controlled racial violence in which both sides could act out their aggressions, and yet, being confined to the ring, it posed no real threat to the existing race relations. An enraged Banjo Clarke bloodied and knocked out an opponent in one round who had earlier called him a 'nigger'. Henry Collins delighted in knocking out a policeman in a tent match at Casino — the very man who a week before had roughed up Collins when he dared to try and drink openly in a

69 Diane Barwick, personal communication, 1979.
hotel. Boxing as ritualized conflict provided a ‘safe’ outlet for these aggressions without overturning established relations. As Collins said with powerful understanding: ‘I felt good when I knocked white blokes out. I felt good. I knew I was boss in the boxing ring. I showed my superiority’, but he added ‘they showed it outside’.71

Indeed, white Australians at times showed their superior power outside the ring all too dramatically. The Aboriginal who boxed was usually more assertive than his kin and certainly enjoyed a reputation which left him more open to punitive action by the police and other Europeans for being smart or ‘uppity’. One Aboriginal ex-boxer, Banjo Clarke, related how a fellow Aboriginal boxer, Bobby King, was shot in the knee by police in the Shepparton area in the 1940s because, on a previous confrontation, he had not only refused to obey a command ‘to move along you black bastard’, but was unwise enough to flatten the police officer with one punch. After the shooting, Clarke said that King ‘just went down hill like that, he just crashed’.72 Another boxer, Henry Collins, was gaoled and bashed in Coff’s Harbour in the mid-1950s for refusing to move from the ‘whites only’ area in the town’s picture theatre.73 Other stories abound about Aboriginal boxers being ‘tried out’ by several police to see how good they were. Two or three allegedly hospitalized for six months Robert Cameron, a promising Grafton fighter. Jimmy Edwards, ex-Australian amateur champion is currently serving five years in Boggo Road gaol for brawling with police at the Ship Inn pub, South Brisbane. Popular champion George Bracken was pummelled for an hour at Innisfail police station after a fake arrest for car stealing in December 1957. As the detectives waded into Bracken with fists and rabbit-killers, one taunted him with: ‘I’ve seen you fight in Brisbane and you couldn’t fight for nuts. I’ll leave you here, you fucking mug, with Jim who was an amateur champion’.74 The successful Aboriginal had to be brought low and ‘proved’ inferior! Due to his ‘questioning’, Bracken was forced to miss two scheduled fights and lost £2,000 in earnings.

Although the world of boxing controlled Aborigines by racial stereotyping in much the same way as did the wider society, some positive experiences emerged in boxing for the development of individual Aborigines. As boxing is a culture of confidence, the training, fighting and winning experienced by Aboriginal boxers all developed their self-confidence. Travel (sometimes overseas), new environments and new

71 Interviewed at Cherbourg, 1979.
73 Interviewed at Cherbourg, 1979.
74 Affidavit, personal papers and press cutting from Truth, 8 February 1958 in possession of George Bracken.
acquaintances also combined to increase their assurance. Tony Mundine remarked: 'I was a bush boy with a tendency to be shy. Being in Sydney and boxing opened me; I came out of my shell. I met people and saw how other people lived'. With self-confidence and success came recognition and respect. Many Aboriginal boxers experienced the daily hellos from fans and liked it. Dave Landers commented that once people knew 'that you'd been a fighter, they would treat you pretty good and give you respect'.

Occasionally this self-confidence spilled over into other areas besides boxing. Bindi Jack, a shy Queenslander, was in no time at all after his arrival in Melbourne speaking at Christ Church, Fitzroy, under the guidance of Pastor (later Sir) Doug Nicholls, and accepting the Presidency of the Fitzroy Aboriginal Youth Club. George Bracken, who like most of his people heard the 'we don't serve niggers here' routine, occasionally spoke to school and church groups on Aboriginal matters. He gave statements to the press on race prejudice, the lack of Aboriginal education and welfare and criticised the dependency which settlement life created. Bracken could be constructive as well: he proposed an Aboriginal sports foundation to the then minister for Aboriginal Affairs, W.C. Wentworth, who took over the idea and initiated it. Bracken only had the confidence and the opportunity to make these statements because this one-time Queensland drover became a successful professional boxer. Other boxers, like Bobby Liddle, Jack Hassen, Clarrie Grogan, Buster Weir, Henry Collins and Dick Blair, to name a few, have played active roles in Aboriginal community affairs. In this way boxing instilled confidence which in turn caused some Aborigines to challenge the conditions under which they lived.

Above all, boxing provided needed heroes for a people attempting the difficult task of resisting cultural domination. If an Aboriginal triumphed in the ring, all his people felt like winners. Feasting allegedly occurred at Elley Bennett's birthplace, Boggimbah settlement, Frazer Island, every time Elley won a fight. It was said (in the contemporary vernacular) that 'all the lubras have his picture taken in various stances. The piccaninnies know his ring record off by heart'. Tent promoter Jimmy Sharman continually met Aborigines who claimed to be related to one of the greats. The six Sands brothers not only produced large boxing families but were the inspiration for numerous Aboriginal boxers who took on some combination of their name. This was the general pattern — the successful produced hopeful successors. Bracken

76 Interviewed in Brisbane, 1978.
77 George Bracken interview 1978 and his personal press cuttings.
78 Corris 1975:9-10 also discusses this point.
79 Sporting Globe, 2 February 1949.
wished to emulate Hassen; Rose sat in Bracken’s corner from the age of twelve; since then dozens have aspired to be new Roses. Boxing has become part of current Aboriginal folklore. Many Aborigines feel pride and become vocal about boxing. In Queensland thirteen settlements subscribed to _Fighter_ magazine in 1970; the Aurukun community alone ordered six copies.80

Overall, boxing did not prove to be a way out for Aborigines. Few boxers achieved lasting financial gains or recognition from the sport. Since they boxed as a way out of their predicament it could be argued that boxing was in this sense a nascent protest against the social system, against the poverty and discrimination they all experienced as children and adolescents. However, their protest against external dominance was stillborn because boxing could not hope to change anything. It was a sport controlled by Europeans and their values and was thus an integral part of the system that had to be changed. The conditions of the Aboriginal communities remained unaltered despite the few individual boxing successes.

It is true that many Aboriginal boxers received applause from fans, but it was always ambivalent praise, given on Europeans’ terms. They were always a ‘credit to their race’, still Aborigines, rarely individuals. Therefore, boxing reinforced the prevailing racial stereotypes rather than challenged them. As Paul Coe, Aboriginal footballer turned law-student has pointed out: to the European majority, Aboriginal sportsmen only have a body, not a mind.81 To allow (until recently) potential upward mobility to Aborigines only through sport, was to deny that Aborigines had any other skills and potentials than the physical. Boxing was an accomplice to this lie.

Upon retirement, most Aborigines have ended up back at square one or worse. Many Aboriginal boxers have returned to the settlements, though others have remained in the cities, not always with their own people. Quite a number lead stable, healthy (if not wealthy) lives. Others have fallen into distressed and alcoholic nightmares. The great Ron Richards was ‘saved from the grog’, vagrancy and hoodlums’ fists by being packed off to Woorabinda and later Palm Island within two years of his retirement.82 Ritchie Sands, seemingly a victim of the punches he received in the tents for seventeen years, found himself gaoled in the mid-1960s for assault.83 Boxing has done more to reinforce the basic oppression of Aborigines than to overcome it.

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80 _Fighter_, September 1970.
82 _Sporting Globe_, 7 May 1948, 26 October 1949, 12 April 1950.
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Top: A new kind of equality in the Northern Territory (AWM 67982).
Bottom: Accommodation provided by the Army for Aboriginal labourers at a camp near Katherine, N.T. (AWM 68025).

Photographs courtesy of Australian War Memorial.
The Australian Military Forces until early 1939 comprised a small permanent force and the citizen forces. The citizen forces were maintained by voluntary enlistment, by compulsory training under the provisions of Part XII of the Defence Act, or by a combination of these. Any force required for service outside Australia had to be voluntarily enlisted.1

Two documents laid down the criteria for enlistment into the Australian Army. These were the Defence Act and the Army publication Australian Military Regulations and Orders.2 The Defence Act placed no limitations upon the racial origins of voluntary enliestees but did require that all personnel take an oath of allegiance, thereby restricting enlistment to British subjects. Aborigines, being British subjects, were therefore not excluded from voluntary enlistment. Persons 'not substantially of European origin or descent' were, however, exempted from call-up for war service under section 61(1) (h) of the Defence Act, and from compulsory training under section 138(1) (b).

Contrary to the Defence Act, Australian Military Regulations and Orders no.177 stated that only persons who were 'substantially of European origin or descent' were to be enlisted voluntarily. This was only an Army order, did not affect the legal predominance of the Defence Act, and could be varied or waived to suit the requirements of Land Headquarters, the headquarters of the Australian Army.

As early as September 1939, small numbers of Aborigines had begun to be enlisted into the Army. The then Minister for Defence, Mr G.A. Street, had authorised the Commandant 7th Military District (the Northern Territory) to begin enlistment of a limited number of selected 'part-Aborigines' into units stationed in the Northern Territory.3 The

* This paper is based on a more detailed account of Army/Aboriginal relations in Hall (1979). I would like to acknowledge the assistance given to me through letters and interviews by T. Assan, E. Billy, L. Bon, Dr D. Devanesen, E.L. Gela, J. Hunt, W.A. Long, J. Luffman, J. Mooka, F.R. Morris, P. O'Driscoll, Rev. B. Pilot, and H.A. Stanton. Copies of letters and transcripts of interviews with the above are held by the Library, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra.

1 The Army War Effort; Australian Military Forces publication dated 31 August 1945; copy in Australian War Memorial, Canberra. For Aboriginal involvement in the First AIF see Clark 1973; Coulthard-Clark 1978.

2 Australian Military Regulations and Orders was a collection of regulations and orders of a long standing nature governing the administration of the Army.

3 Australian Archives, Accession MP431, item 849/3/1644.
Darwin Infantry Battalion, a regular Army unit based at Darwin, also had its own small contingent of Aboriginal servicemen, nicknamed the 'Black Watch' ostensibly after the famous British regiment. But despite these and other isolated cases, it was clear that in the first year of the war, while hostilities remained centred in Europe, the Army remained reluctant to enlist Aboriginal volunteers.

In response to an increasing number of requests by 'part-Aborigines' and 'fullbloods' to enlist, and confusion created by the fact that some Aborigines were already serving contrary to the previous orders, military commands sought clarification of the policy on enlistment of Aborigines and other non-Europeans. On 6 May 1940 a Military Board Memo was issued stating that the enlistment of persons of non-European origin or descent was 'neither necessary nor desirable'. It also drew attention to the extant orders and requested compliance. As Aborigines began to be turned away from recruiting offices throughout Australia, various agencies such as the Queensland Department of Native Affairs and the Aborigines Uplift Society took up the issue of Aboriginal enlistment. Their grievances centred round the inconsistency of Army policy.

As a result of pressure applied by these agencies, the matter of Aboriginal enlistment was reconsidered by the Military Board but its decision, promulgated on 13 August 1940, was that the provisions of the Defence Act and Military Regulation no.177 must continue to be adhered to. Medical Officers were, however, entrusted with the responsibility of determining if persons with 'some Aboriginal blood' were or were not substantially of European origin or descent. They were to be guided in this decision by the applicant's 'general suitability' and by the laws and practices of the State or Territory in which the enlistment would take place.

While the Army required a means of excluding unsuitable applicants for enlistment, the use of the applicant's race as a means of exclusion was insensitive and shortsighted. Trouble was bound to arise when Aborigines excluded for reasons not associated with their race, such as medical disability or inadequate education, believed their exclusion to be the result of racist policy. Similarly, the discharge from Army service of Aborigines already serving would also cause trouble. Though race was inappropriate as a means of exclusion and numerous other selection criteria existed by which undesirable would-be recruits could be excluded, the Military Board decision did possess flexibility.

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4 Johnston 1942:8.
5 Biskup 1973:208.
6 Australian Archives, Accession MP508, Item 275/750/1310. The Military Board was the highest policy authority in the Army.
7 As above.
8 As above.
Army could adjust the acceptability of Aboriginal recruits to meet changes in the demand for manpower and in this regard the Military Board decision represented an improvement over the earlier complete exclusion of Aborigines.

Aboriginal welfare organizations such as the Aborigines Uplift Society, the National Missionary Council of Australia and the Committee for Aboriginal Citizenship were nevertheless quick to protest. They claimed, erroneously, that Aborigines enlisted before the decision were now being discharged from the Army simply because of their race. Protest climaxed when on 4 January 1942 a Sydney newspaper published an article concerning an Aboriginal from Murwillumbah who attempted to join the AIF and was passed medically fit at the Murwillumbah recruiting centre. He and two other Aborigines from Grafton were sent to Sydney, but on arrival were immediately returned without explanation. As a result, private citizens, Aboriginal welfare organizations, and other interested groups criticised the existing Army policy and urged that enlistment of Aborigines be made easier.

By early 1942 however, the Japanese advance and the dwindling supply of manpower were beginning to force the Army to modify its attitudes. On 19 February 1942, Darwin was bombed and a Japanese invasion of the Australian mainland was feared. By March, the demand for additional manpower to meet the threat of invasion had become so acute that the remaining classes of men, those of only marginal military value, were called up. Consequently, the Army began to relax its attitude to the enlistment of Aborigines and although the wording of the orders did not change, Aborigines began to be enlisted in relatively large numbers.

Despite the discriminatory nature of recruiting policy, those Aborigines who succeeded in becoming enlisted members of the Army, and who served in conventional Army units, enjoyed an equality many had seldom experienced in the pre-war civilian environment. Pay and conditions were identical with those enjoyed by other soldiers, and opportunities for advancement existed for Aborigines possessing leadership qualities. An interesting effect of this Army equality is that no accurate record exists of how many Aboriginal soldiers served. Army records did not specify a soldier's race.

Although up to this time the Army had used the orders to restrict the entry of 'part-Aborigines' into most parts of the Australian Army, it had simultaneously been raising unconventional units manned almost entirely by persons of non-European origin or descent. The

9 The Army War Effort. These were married men aged 35-45 and single men or widowers without children aged 45-60.
Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit was an example of this inconsistency. This unit was raised to perform a particular task in a closely defined geographic area and its task was one that could not be performed by conventionally recruited units.

It had been recognised early in the war that Darwin would be particularly vulnerable to attack if Singapore and the Netherlands East Indies fell into Japanese hands. Darwin lay completely isolated on the north coast, closer to potential Japanese air bases in Sumatra and Java than to Sydney or Melbourne. Because of the relatively small size of the military force which could be allocated to the defence of Darwin, it was imperative that the effectiveness of the force be maximised by providing early warning of any Japanese attack. The Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit was therefore raised in 1941 to perform three tasks. The first was to provide flank protection to Darwin by organizing the Aborigines of the coastline to form an efficient coastwatching service based on their traditional local organization, which would report to a central base by radio. The Unit aimed to organize the Aborigines into a potential mobile patrol, again utilizing their existing local grouping, so as to carry out guerilla warfare against any Japanese landings. The Unit also aimed at gathering together a small unit of Aborigines with special prowess in hunting, craftsmanship, bushcraft, guerilla warfare and ambush, and to use these Aborigines for the instruction of members of the Independent (Commando) Companies in tropical bushcraft and in living on the resources of the country.

Squadron Leader Donald Thomson was seconded to the Army from the RAAF for the purpose of raising and commanding the unit.

10 The Japanese Army had shown a preference for landing some distance from their eventual objective, then moving overland to it. The Japanese invasion of Malaya, culminating in the capture of Singapore was typical of this technique. Without an early warning system, such a tactic may have gone unnoticed for some time in more remote parts of the coast of northern Australia.


12 Donald F. Thomson (1901-1970) was an anthropologist from Melbourne University. Before the war he had been engaged on extensive field work amongst the Aborigines of Cape York and Arnhem Land. His involvement in Arnhem Land began with the Tuckiar murder case which raised the question of the place of Aboriginal cultural imperatives in law. In 1935, Thomson was invited to go to Arnhem Land by the Minister for the Interior, to establish friendly relations with the Aborigines there, impress upon them the seriousness of major offences and report on ceremonial and other cultural aspects. Thomson spent twenty-six months amongst these people and found them to be far different from the popular image of treacherous savagery. It was because of his prior experience and friendly relationship with these people that he was made responsible for raising and commanding the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit.
In a patrol of Arnhem Land he recruited about fifty Aborigines, mainly from known fighting groups. Many were renowned for their prowess as spear fighters and before the war some had killed Japanese pearlers (and had served gaol sentences as a result). Recruits were given regimental numbers engraved on brass discs to be hung round their necks as a sign of their enlistment. 'Pay' consisted of a weekly issue of three sticks of tobacco, and the soldiers' equipment included tomahawks, knives, fishing lines and hooks, issued in the belief that a more efficient means of obtaining food would enable the soldiers to spend more time training and fighting the Japanese.

The fifty Aborigines of the unit represented only the nucleus of the force, as each soldier's task, should the Japanese invade, was to organize and lead other Aborigines in guerilla attacks against the Japanese. In such attacks these soldiers were to use their traditional weapons, the spear and spearthrower. Thomson felt that the issue of firearms and, indeed, any other type of military stores, would indicate to the Japanese that these Aborigines were in fact an organized military unit and that this would lead to severe Japanese retaliation against all Aborigines, whether fighting the Japanese or not.

The Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance unit was treated as an exception to the general Army policy of excluding Aborigines, due to the nature of the unit's tasks. Its tasks were essential to the security of Darwin and could not have been performed by other soldiers. Thomson stated that no European soldiers, however well trained, could match his Aboriginal soldiers in guerilla warfare, and it would obviously have been impossible for European troops to mobilize the other Aborigines in Arnhem Land as effectively as Thomson's Aboriginal soldiers. In addition, the unit's activities were restricted to a closely defined, remote locality where there was minimal chance that the unit would fight alongside conventional units or otherwise attract public attention. There was also no possibility that the unit would be deployed outside its defined area of operations.

Other units in which Aborigines predominated were sanctioned for similar reasons. Coastal Aborigines in both Cape York and Arnhem Land for example, were sought for enlistment into Army Water Transport units because their intimate knowledge of coastal waters was indispensable to small craft operations. The Army obviously desired

13 Australian War Memorial, CRS A2663, Item 741/5/9.
14 *ibid.* The only concession to technology was that the soldiers were taught how to make and use Molotov cocktails so that they could destroy aircraft on the ground and fuel and ammunition dumps.
15 *ibid.* See also Willey 1962. It was proposed that individuals from the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit be sent on 'commando' missions to Timor and Malaya but apparently this did not occur. The unit did not deploy as a formed body outside Arnhem Land.
the recruitment of Aborigines for these special tasks despite its stated rejection of Aboriginal recruits for more conventional units. This manipulation of policy was clearly discriminatory or exploitative.

Just as limited numbers of Aborigines had served as enlisted soldiers long before the war, so too had the Army employed civilian Aborigines on routine labouring work. These Aborigines were employed throughout Australia but Army units in the Northern Territory employed more Aboriginal labourers than other Army establishments. The Darwin garrison had employed six Aborigines as early as 1933 on tasks such as cleaning, clearing ground of undergrowth, sanitation, fatigue work and as mess orderlies, batmen and waiters. As the strength of the garrison increased, the demand for Aboriginal labour grew also. By late 1934 the number of Aborigines employed had doubled and by 1939, with the arrival of the Darwin Mobile Force, had risen to thirty.

In contrast with the official Army attitude regarding the recruitment of Aborigines in the first years of the war, which was characterized by refusal to consider 'fullbloods' and a reluctance to enlist 'part-Aborigines', the employment of Aborigines in a civilian capacity in Darwin in the early and mid-1930s was limited to 'fullbloods'. The Garrison Commander of Darwin stated that it was undesirable to employ 'part-Aborigines' under conditions prevailing in the Northern Territory at that time. This attitude reflected that of the civilian community: that the growing 'part-Aboriginal' population represented a threat to white Australia. The Army garrison in Darwin at that time was particularly conscious of local attitudes in this matter, being a permanent establishment, and had adopted these local attitudes as its own.

The rationale for the employment of Aborigines, and their conditions of employment in this period were strongly influenced by racism. Duties assigned to the Army's Aboriginal labourers included 'those which are normally carried out in all tropical countries by cheap labour, [the duties] not being assigned to Europeans for climatic and racial reasons'. Though labourers received rations from the Army, these were at half the scale of those for a European soldier and were supplemented by kitchen scraps. Officers of the garrison would allow no Aborigines other than their 'domestics' to enter their houses 'in view of the dangers to health from Aborigines even being close to places where food is kept or prepared'. Such racist attitudes towards the Army's Aboriginal employees were to continue until late 1941

16 Australian Archives, Accession MP508, Item 82/710/2.
17 Franklin 1976:81.
18 Australian Archives, Accession MP508, Item 82/710/2.
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when the huge influx of servicemen into Darwin, brought about by the threat of invasion, was to cause dramatic changes.

Japan entered the war on 7-8 December 1941 and on 9 December, after the formal declaration of war, Australian Army units began to move to their pre-selected battle stations to begin work on defences. The size of the force at Darwin grew rapidly, particularly after 19 February 1942 when the first Japanese air raid on Darwin underlined the threat of invasion. By late 1942 the combined strength of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Civil Construction Corps throughout the Northern Territory had reached over 100,000. Most of this force was stationed near Darwin, though some, particularly those units lending support to the fighting troops, were stationed at various centres along the length of the Stuart Highway. By 1943, military strength alone between Darwin and Mataranka was fifty thousand. By contrast, most of the white civilian population had been evacuated after the first Japanese raid and would have numbered no more than about one thousand in the Darwin-Mataranka area by early 1942.

As for the Aboriginal population, a census conducted in 1941 found that on 30 June the total Aboriginal and 'part-Aboriginal' population for the Northern Territory was 14,488. Though some 'part-Aboriginal' children were evacuated, most of the Aboriginal and 'part-Aboriginal' population remained in the Northern Territory.

These figures reveal three things. Firstly, the pre-war ratio of Aborigines to whites in the Northern Territory had been suddenly reversed; whites for the first time outnumbered Aborigines by about 6:1. Secondly, the huge influx of white servicemen resulted in thousands of men from the cities of south-eastern Australia having contact with Aborigines for the first time. They brought with them new attitudes which were a mixture of the more liberal if uninterested approach to Aborigines common in south-east Australia, a general ignorance of pre-war racial attitudes and conditions in the north, and the egalitarian influences of the Army society. This peculiarly Army approach to Aborigines replaced pre-war attitudes in the Northern Territory because the Army, due to its size, became the dominant social group in the north, while at the same time civilian influence

21 Censuses conducted in 1933 and 1947 show Darwin's non-Aboriginal population to have been 1,566 and 2,538 respectively (Commonwealth Year Books nos. 34 and 37). No figure is given for 1942 but it is reasonable to assume that had it not been for evacuation, it would have been somewhere between the 1933 and 1947 figures, or about 2,000. A reasonable estimate, taking evacuation into account, is about 1,000.
declined due to evacuation. Thirdly, the problem of supporting this huge influx of 100,000 servicemen in an area in which the industrial infrastructure had been designed for about two thousand Europeans, meant that many jobs were created to which Aborigines, representing the largest pool of available labour remaining in the Northern Territory, would inevitably be attracted.

As a result of the threat of a Japanese attack on Darwin, Aborigines were evacuated just prior to the bombing of Darwin from coastal areas to settlements established further inland. Both the Army and the Native Affairs Branch thought the evacuation necessary to ensure the Aborigines' safety in the event of further bombings or a Japanese landing; to prevent the Aborigines' assisting the Japanese; to ease the rationing situation, since many Aborigines previously employed by white civilians now required rations; to prevent contact with the troops; and lastly, to prevent the 'dissemination of contagious diseases'. As a result of this policy, new settlements were established at Mataranka Siding, Delissaville (Cox's Peninsula), 81 Mile (Adelaide River), Rock Hole Bore (Katherine), Graceville (Katherine), Marranboy (Beswick Creek), Larrimah (Nutwood Station) and Miligibidi (Snake Bay, Melville Island).

An unforeseen result was that some of these settlements came to be located near Army units whose task was to support the fighting units located nearer to the coast. These were the support units such as bakeries, hospitals, workshops, stores depots and the like, which required local labour. On 5 April 1942, officers of the Native Affairs Branch asked the Commanding Officer of an Army workshop located at Mataranka if Aborigines could be employed there. He agreed, and so began large scale Army employment of Aborigines in the Northern Territory. Work performed by the Aborigines at Mataranka included cement work, carting and shovelling sand and gravel, timber cutting, and cartage and stacking of ammunition. The Aborigines worked a ten hour day and in the opinion of their supervisors worked harder than either soldiers or civilian labour units in the Middle East.

This initial experiment was so successful from the Army's point of view that twenty more Aborigines and a part-Aboriginal were sought for enlistment into the Army as supervisors of Aboriginal labour gangs which the Army anticipated would be formed. These additional labour organizations were requested on 26 July 1942 and resulted in the establishment of a new labour settlement at Springvale Station, about four miles from Katherine. Shortly afterwards, similar labour settlements were also set up at Koolpinyah and Adelaide River in 1942 and

24 Australian Archives, Accession A431, Item 46/915.
26 Australian Archives, accession A431, Item 46/915.
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at Cullen in early 1943. Aborigines from existing settlements at Barrow Creek, Banka Banka and Elliott were also employed.

The figures in Table 1 show the extent of Army employment of Aborigines from May 1943.

Table 1: Sample figures showing the extent of Army employment of Aborigines and part-Aborigines from May 1943.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Darwin-Larrimah Area</th>
<th>Alice Springs-Elliott Area</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>May 1943</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>190</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>687</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1944</td>
<td>489</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>176</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>665</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1944</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>659</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1945</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>133</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>566</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1945</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>76</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>490</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1946</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>462</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1946</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>351</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>396</td>
</tr>
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</table>

For each man or woman employed the Army provided food, housing and clothing for his or her dependants. Thus the number of Aborigines brought into direct contact with the Army as a result of Army employment was considerably higher than the figures shown. By mid-1944 the Army was employing one-fifth of all Aborigines or ‘part-Aborigines’ in employment in the Northern Territory and was the largest single employer of Aborigines. The growing Aboriginal labour force was utilized on increasingly more diverse jobs. Semi-skilled work

such as assembly and cleaning of carburettors and gearboxes, driving, slaughtering, timber cutting, and sorting and reconditioning of tools and stores was performed by Aborigines as well as the general labouring tasks mentioned above. Female Aborigines performed gardening, hygiene, and maintenance tasks around settlements, and were employed in hospitals as orderlies and personal maids to matrons as well as providing staff for washing, ironing, and other household duties. Similar work was performed in Australian Women’s Army Service barracks, hostels and messes.²⁸

Both the scale and nature of Army employment of Aborigines was to have important consequences not only amongst Aborigines, but also amongst civilian employers. Although many of the tasks performed by Aboriginal labourers were mundane, some such as driving and stripping and assembling of vehicle parts represented a departure from the usual pre-war form of Aboriginal employment in the north, that of stock work. The conditions of employment which the Army offered its Aboriginal employees were generally better than those provided by pastoral employers.²⁹ Aborigines employed by the Army were paid at the rate of five shillings per week and were provided with free clothing and medical treatment, with full rations for themselves and for two dependants each.³⁰ Rations were similar to those of soldiers except that the native ration placed a greater emphasis on meat.³¹ The ration also included vegetables grown in Army gardens maintained by Aborigines. Army style messes and hygiene facilities, including showers, were provided. At Tennant Creek the Army established an Aboriginal hospital which gave free hospitalization to Aboriginal patients whether or not employed by the Army³² and to reduce unscheduled absenteeism, Aborigines were given a ‘walk-about’ period on full pay and rations after each period of twelve months work. This practice met with good results.³³ It was inevitable that some elements of Army discipline were applied to the conduct of labour settlements. Morning hut inspections and mess parades were common, and the dependants of Aboriginal labourers were often engaged in cleaning the camps under the supervision of Army non-commissioned officers.

Throughout the period that it employed Aborigines, the Army had remained largely unconcerned about its own impact on the traditional culture of its employees. Though the Army attempted to maintain the authority of tribal elders, encouraged cultural events such as ‘corroborees’ and consented to the practice of traditional medicine,

²⁹ See for example, Berndt and Berndt 1948:11.
³⁰ Australian Archives, Accession MP742, Item 275/1/123.
³¹ Australian War Memorial, CRS A2663, file 422/7/8.
³² W.A. Long, personal communication, 3 June 1978.
³³ Australian Archives, CRS A491, Item 46/915.
the act of establishing the labour settlements, and moving the Aborigines away from the coast to areas further inland, overwhelmed even the best attempts to protect the cultural groups. Aborigines from different areas were thrown together in the settlements. Warramunga and Aranda from central Australia were taken to Katherine, where after an initial period of fright and wariness, they lived and worked successfully (from the Army’s point of view) with largely ‘detribalized’ Wagait,34 while in the Tennant Creek hospital, the only common language amongst the Aboriginal patients was English.35

An even greater shock was provided by the white servicemen. Though the labour settlements were sited so as to avoid contact with servicemen, were declared out of bounds to them, and were policed by the Aborigines and European supervisors, European servicemen still came in search of women and often brought alcohol with them to bribe Aboriginal men. The resultant inter-racial trouble was particularly prevalent at Koolpinyah which was located close to several Army units only eighteen miles from Darwin.36

The breakdown of cultural barriers was in danger of being exacerbated further in early 1943 when the continuing demand for Aboriginal labour prompted a proposal to ‘gather together’ all Aborigines throughout Australia, whether ‘detribalized’ or not, to provide a massive labour pool. At a meeting held on 8 January 1943 called by the Army Inspector General of Administration to discuss Aboriginal employment, W.E.H. Stanner stated that an Aboriginal labour force of some thousands could be created and could be economically worthwhile.37 This meeting also proposed that Aborigines be withdrawn from Cape York for employment as labourers in the Northern Territory. Neither proposal was adopted, but they illustrate the disregard for the effect upon Aboriginal culture brought about by the pressing demand for labour, and by the increased powers vested in bureaucracies during wartime.

Despite these problems, the establishment of labour settlements did have some ‘positive’ effects for Aborigines. Many Aborigines enjoyed better living conditions and higher wages than they had previously, but other less tangible benefits such as ‘self-discipline’, ‘cleanliness’, ‘motivation to work’, and generally raised self-esteem, were also noted amongst Aborigines in Army settlements.38 In 1942, after Army employment of Aborigines had begun, there were only seven Aborigines

34 F.R. Morris, personal communication, 14 March 1978; see also Abbott 1950: 145.
35 W.A. Long, personal communication, 3 June 1978.
37 Australian Archives, CRS A431, Item 46/915; D.F. Thomson was also at this meeting.
38 As above.
in Alice Springs gaol compared with an average of over twenty in previous years, and the sheriff estimated that offences committed by Aborigines had dropped by 75 per cent. C.L.A. Abbott, the Administrator of the Northern Territory, regarded the steady and constant employment of Aborigines by the Army as being the main reason for this, and stated that this employment was the best thing to have happened to Aborigines since he had been in the territory.\(^\text{39}\) With the exception of those Aboriginal labourers from central Australia the majority of Aborigines employed had already begun the process of adjustment to white society before the war. Their experience of the labour camps assisted this process of adjustment, so that they could become more employable after the war, and have a better understanding of the cash economy.

Further improvements to the conditions of employment were proposed by the Army in November 1943. These were initiated by Brigadier E.M. Dollery, Commander Northern Territory Line of Communications Area, who was ultimately responsible for the recruitment and conditions of service for Aboriginal labourers. He proposed the raising of an ‘Aboriginal Employment Company’\(^\text{40}\) and a ‘Native Affairs Section’ for the better administration of the various Aboriginal labour camps controlled by headquarters. The Native Affairs Section proposal, which was adopted, consisted of European soldiers, male and female, who were located at each labour settlement. Their task was to conduct education and health training amongst the labourers and their dependants.\(^\text{41}\)

Both proposals indicate a changed perception of the Army’s role relative to the Aborigines they employed. Since both proposals were formulated in late 1943, they can be attributed in part to the changing war situation. By that time the crisis of invasion was past and the end of the war in sight. The proposals also reflect Brigadier Dollery’s far-sighted consideration of the problems likely to face Aborigines in the post-war environment. The transition from the relative benefits of Army employment back to pastoral work (for those Aborigines who could get it) would be an unsettling process and the future development of the Aboriginal population of the Northern Territory within the framework of the economic, political and social environment

\(^{39}\) As above.

\(^{40}\) Australian Archives, Accession MP742, Item 92/1/302; the ‘Aboriginal Employment Company’ was intended to provide an incentive to Aborigines to increase their wages, work skills and improve their English. Enlistment was to be restricted to those who fulfilled basic requirements and recruits were to receive the pay and conditions of other troops. Proposed first in November 1943, the scheme languished in the Departments of Army and Interior until June 1945 when it was abandoned due to the reduction of Army personnel in the Northern Territory at the end of the war.

\(^{41}\) Australian Archives, CRS A431, Item 46/915.
would demand Aboriginal leaders. These were not likely to emerge from the Army labour camps because few opportunities existed for Aborigines there to exercise leadership, and they received no formal training in it. The proposals, had both been implemented, would have provided greater opportunity for leadership development. Though several of today’s leaders in the Aboriginal community developed their leadership skills while serving in the Army, many more might have had such opportunities had the Employment Company proposal been adopted.

Rejection of Dollery’s proposal by Land Headquarters in Melbourne resulted in the adoption of a course guaranteed to preserve the status quo in the Northern Territory after the war. The decision was exactly what local pastoral interests wanted, as they were already upset that Aborigines were being so well treated by the Army and it would be ‘impossible’ for station owners to provide similar working conditions for Aborigines after the war. Pastoralists felt that Aborigines would return to the stations in a ‘pampered’, ‘arrogant’ and ‘insolent’ mood. They decried the fact that control of natives had been handed over to the Army who, they asserted, knew nothing about the ‘native question’, and whose interest in the Aborigines would cease as soon as the military situation improved and the Army withdrew from the Northern Territory.42

The wartime Army presence was so pervasive that it affected Aborigines who were neither soldiers nor civilian labourers. One of the earliest aspects of this type of contact was an increase in real or imagined inter-racial sexual liaisons. These were inevitable due to the movement of large numbers of soldiers to remote areas of Australia where the largest concentrations of Aborigines existed, but where few, if any, European women remained. The first cries of sexual scandal occurred during the development by the Army of the Stuart Highway between Birdum and Tennant Creek. Women’s organizations in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide stated that the construction of the road would attract Aborigines to Army construction sites with ‘disastrous consequences’. To combat this possibility, the president of the Feminist Club proposed that the Government should organise patrols of mature white women to safeguard the interests of Aboriginal women. To discourage the soldiers they recommended police patrols and health lecturers to warn of the risks of disease.43

These allegations caused concern to both the Army and the Department of the Interior and further incidents in Darwin led to the matter being considered by both departmental secretaries. The Department of the Interior concluded that the conduct of a small minority of soldiers

42 As above.
43 Australian Archives, Accession MP508, Item 256/701/90.
was to be deplored.\textsuperscript{44} As a solution, the Department proposed reducing leave privileges for soldiers, increasing the strength of town disciplinary patrols, the placement of these patrols under the command of an officer, and lastly the introduction of a Military Police unit. These measures, and the involvement of departmental heads, testify to the seriousness with which the problem was regarded. A further outburst of concern for the welfare of Aboriginal women came in late 1942 after 3,500 Negro troops of the United States Army were stationed at Mt. Isa.\textsuperscript{45}

By December 1942, the closely related problem of venereal diseases\textsuperscript{46} began to have an effect on relations between the Army and Aborigines. While operating near the mouth of the Roper River, 48 per cent of a commando unit of about 120 men suffered venereal diseases allegedly as a result of intercourse with Aboriginal women in that area, and similar rates were experienced by the Negro units stationed in Cape York. Surprisingly, there was no evidence of venereal disease amongst Australian Army personnel also stationed in Cape York.\textsuperscript{47}

Nevertheless, venereal disease was evidently capable of posing unacceptable limitations on unit efficiency and administrative support, and was considered a serious problem by the Army. The Director General of Medical Services suggested that the problem may have been created by soldiers in the first place, but this was never confirmed.\textsuperscript{48}

An Army officer was appointed to investigate the problem. He reported that although many Aboriginal women showed no signs of venereal disease, white men who cohabited with them invariably contracted it! He recommended the immediate removal of all female Aborigines and their married consorts from settlements close to troop concentrations, to more isolated mission stations. His recommendations were translated at a higher headquarters into an even more drastic response; the complete removal of as many Aborigines as possible from the Peninsula and their subsequent use elsewhere as labourers.\textsuperscript{49}

As the Aboriginal population of Cape York was more than two thousand the scale of action required meant that this plan was never implemented. Queensland's Director of Native Affairs opposed it on the basis of the difficulty and expense of the task, and the possible damage to the Cape York cattle industry in which many Aborigines were employed as stockmen. He suggested the more reasonable and

\textsuperscript{44} Australian Archives, Accession MP508, Item 5/701/47.
\textsuperscript{45} McIntyre 1976.
\textsuperscript{46} There is no evidence as to the exact form of venereal disease.
\textsuperscript{47} Australian Archives, Accession MP729/6, Item 16/402/111.
\textsuperscript{48} Australian Archives, CRS A373, Item S950.
\textsuperscript{49} Australian Archives, Accession MP729/6, Item 16/402/111.
practical alternative of evacuating and treating individual Aborigines shown by medical examination to be suffering from venereal diseases. This proposal met with some initial opposition from the Army’s Adjutant General (who believed that the periodical medical examinations would confer official approval on the behaviour of the troops) but this solution was eventually adopted. An added refinement was that the opportunity for contact between native women and soldiers was to be limited as far as possible by siting Army camps away from mission stations.

Only one attempt was made to solve the venereal disease problem by evacuating the Aboriginal population concerned. It ended in failure and as a result no further use of evacuation was contemplated. When Aboriginal women were reported to be having intercourse with Negro soldiers of a unit newly arrived in the vicinity of Cowal Creek Mission it was decided to move the Aboriginal settlement sixty miles away, despite the fact that medical examinations had revealed no disease. After a short interval however, some Aboriginal women had made their way back to the area of the Negro camp. When these troops moved on, it was decided to allow the Aborigines to officially re-occupy Cowal Creek. White troops remained nearby but there is no evidence that they had sexual relations with the women.

Encounters between Negro soldiers and Aborigines reveal a closer social relationship than was present between white troops and Aborigines. The common experience of racist discrimination was the key to this. Many Aborigines discovered for the first time that they were not alone in being the recipients of prejudice. Negroes also provided a new model of the ‘typical black’ for the benefit of both Aborigines and other Australians. These black men who had money, who were mechanics and operated bulldozers, caused Australians to alter their perception of Aborigines. A change in attitudes was also encouraged by wartime propaganda. But although this propaganda attempted to unite Australians against the threat of invasion and to deny the existence of any ‘master race’, numerous accusations of disloyalty came to be levelled at Aborigines, particularly those in north Australia, as the threat of invasion increased. There is no evidence of these accusations until early 1942, which suggests that the phenomenon was closely related to the threat of Japanese invasion. Typical of the more hysterical letters to newspapers concerning Aboriginal disloyalty was one which claimed that Japanese could pass themselves off as Aborigines by adorning their faces with burnt cork, and that Aborigines using

50 Berndt and Berndt 1951:266-267. Racism was a major topic of conversation amongst Aborigines and Negroes in Adelaide.
smoke signals could give information to Japanese reconnaissance planes '60 to 100 miles off the coast of Broome'.

An element of truth lay behind some of these accusations. The pre-war pearling industry had involved continuous contact between Japanese pearlers and Aborigines, and while some contacts between Japanese and Aborigines had been marked by brutality and exploitation of the Aborigines, in other instances the Japanese appear to have taken great pains to foster good relations. In addition, Japanese naval officers had sometimes visited the north coast of Australia as crewmen on pearling luggers, for intelligence gathering purposes. Suspicion of Japanese intentions in their relations with Aborigines led inevitably to suspicion of Aborigines. This became so indiscriminately applied that in the minds of those responsible for security all Aborigines living in the north, whether they had been in contact with the Japanese pearlers or not, were suspect.

Suspicion of Aboriginal loyalty was not lessened by the Aborigines' reaction to events up to early 1942. In the first year of the war there had been an increase of interest in and sympathy towards Aborigines as a result of wartime propaganda and the realisation of the value of Aboriginal labour. Some Aborigines became frustrated when this trend did not continue, and expressed their dissatisfaction by opposing minor government decisions and verbally supporting a Japanese victory over Australia. The deliberate Japanese policy of attacking the prestige of colonial powers in the South West Pacific area and the fostering of indigenous populations, helped to exacerbate Aborigines' frustration with whites. At the same time it posed an implied threat to white Australians. Minor restrictions imposed by the government due to wartime conditions became contentious issues and precipitated some of the outbursts of anti-government feelings by Aborigines. By early 1942 numerous reports had reached Army Intelligence suggesting apparently disloyal attitudes amongst Aborigines. Several instances of Aborigines in the north of Western Australia making pro-Japanese statements were reported, while in the Mount Magnet-Meekatharra area, Aborigines openly spoke of being 'boss' when the Japanese arrived. At Hope Vale Lutheran Mission in Queensland Aborigines allegedly stated that after their victory the Japanese would return Australia to the Aborigines, the rightful owners. At Cooktown similar trouble erupted during a tobacco shortage. These statements were taken to indicate a sympathy for the Japanese rather than frustration with the status quo.

52 Sydney Morning Herald, 11 March 1942.
55 Australian Archives, Accession MP 729/6, Item 29/401/626.
The seriousness with which the problem was regarded is indicated by the personal intervention of the Prime Minister, John Curtin, on 24 July 1942. He urged F.M. Forde, the Minister for the Army, to have Army officers discuss the matter of Aboriginal loyalty with State government authorities in Perth to ascertain the true attitude of the Aborigines. The Army, however, had already done this and had formulated plans for the control of Aborigines in the coastal area from Geraldton in the north to Trigg Island in the south. As early as June 1942, a Special Mobile Force stationed at Moora had begun to implement these plans by rounding up all unemployed Aborigines from the Midlands for internment in the Moore River settlement. Those Aborigines in employment were not permitted to leave their place of residence without permission, and the Deputy Director of Security for Western Australia requested the State government to compile a register of Aborigines so that they could be kept under observation. His justification was that Aborigines, who were now described as 'potential enemies', might become 'subversive' in the event of invasion.

In August 1942 the Army issued a further order extending these controls to the mouth of the Murchison River and by January 1943 sought further extension to areas of Western Australia. Opposition from the government and police, and the diminishing threat of invasion by that time, led to the abandonment of the idea. Up to this time, the measures adopted by the Army had resulted in the treatment of Aborigines in Western Australia along lines similar to that of enemy aliens. These policies and the harsh methods employed in their execution (often including physical force) led to considerable discontent amongst Aborigines, leaving them potentially receptive to infiltration by the Communist Party. Aborigines' protests against the Army in Western Australia were said to be organized by the Communist Party as part of its overall policy of wooing Aborigines. Although Communist Party involvement with Aborigines remained largely ineffectual to the end of the war such reports tended to confirm the Army's suspicions that Aborigines should be subject to strict security measures.

In Cape York, the Army conducted an investigation into the security situation and sought the opinion of superintendents of mission stations as far south as Aurukun. These superintendents (all but one of whom were European) believed that not one per cent of more than one thousand Aborigines in their control could be relied upon to be loyal. These findings were of course more an indicator of white perceptions of the security risk than of any 'real' disloyalty on the

56 As above.
58 Biskup 1973:211.
59 Australian Archives, CRS A373, Item 3950.
part of Aborigines. But by April 1943 the disloyalty of Aborigines in Cape York Peninsula had been accepted as fact by some elements of the Army, particularly the higher headquarters. A Headquarters Queensland Line of Communications Intelligence Report for the week ending 16 April 1943 stated that fullblood and part-Aborigines who had been travelling stock routes throughout the gulf country would be of 'inestimable value to the enemy' in an overland drive, being largely influenced by communist propaganda and easily swayed by agitators. Many of them, it concluded, would willingly help the Japanese.60 On 25 May 1943 the Army recommended that active measures be taken to improve the perceived security situation and proposed that patrols should endeavour to contact Aborigines with the aim of building up a better feeling amongst them towards Europeans. By displaying uniforms and arms, and giving Aborigines flour, sugar and tobacco in return for work, it was hoped to make a favourable impression.61 But few Aborigines could have missed the implied bribe and threat.

So far only official Army policies towards Aborigines have been examined. These policies originated in major headquarters such as Land Headquarters or Headquarters Northern Territory Force and tended to display a lack of uniformity in response to the questions of Aboriginal enlistment and employment. The more senior the headquarters, the more the policies initiated tended to reflect political constraints and hence the prevailing white racist attitudes. The response to Aborigines in operational units and junior headquarters was not only different from that of senior headquarters, but also less diverse. This is evident in the different approach taken to the formulation of policy by Headquarters Northern Territory Force, a relatively junior headquarters, as compared with that of Land Headquarters.

Headquarters Northern Territory Force became responsible for civil and military administration of the Northern Territory north of Alice Springs on 9 March 1942.62 At that time most decisions regarding the employment of Aborigines by the Army were made by this Headquarters located in the Northern Territory, which had seconded to it many members of the pre-war Native Affairs Branch of the Department of the Interior. Policies developed by this headquarters were therefore not only developed within the military system, but were developed from intimate knowledge of the situation and were executed by men relatively skilled and experienced in Aboriginal affairs. In contrast, Land Headquarters located in Melbourne had little inti-

60 Australian Archives, CRS A373, Item 5903. It is interesting that this information found its way to the United States, where it was apparently attributed to Western Australian Aborigines. See the National Times, 30 January-4 February 1978.

61 As above.

mate knowledge of the situation regarding Army use of Aboriginal labourers and had few experienced advisers.

Although authors of policies adopted by Headquarters Northern Territory Force were often unaware of the changes they were to inflict on Aboriginal cultures these did result in an improvement on pre-war conditions. In any case in military eyes they were formulated against the background of the war when security considerations clearly overshadowed concerns with the maintenance of Aboriginal cultures. Overall, Headquarters Northern Territory Force must be considered as having adopted comparatively progressive Aboriginal policies during its period of executing the administration of the Northern Territory. Some questions of Aboriginal policy, however, required the direction of Land Headquarters in Melbourne. This headquarters, because of its isolation from the problems involved, its assumption of white civilian attitudes and its concern with the realities of politics and finance, maintained a more jaundiced view of Aborigines and their capabilities as labourers despite assurances to the contrary from Headquarters Northern Territory Force and others. The effect of the different determinants operating upon these headquarters is exemplified in the proposal to raise an Aboriginal Employment Company in the Northern Territory and the subsequent quashing of the idea by Land Headquarters after inordinate delays.

In contrast personal relations between white and Aboriginal servicemen in operational units seem to have been less racist than relations between Aborigines and the Army as expressed in official Army policy. This was due to the nature of the Army and its effect on the individuals within it. The Army was a distinct social group which was separate from, yet at the same time part of, the society within which it existed. The recruit began a process of separation from civilian society at the moment of enlistment. Regardless of race, recruits were attested, issued with uniform, given military-style haircuts and identifying numbers. All recruits were subject to an additional code of military law, adopted military jargon and assumed a clearly defined place within the military hierarchy where their relations with superiors, subordinates, and peers were clearly defined and regulated through military discipline and peer group pressures. Military society was sharply stratified so that equality amongst members of the same rank was emphasised. These factors strengthened the identity of the separate Army society and thereby emphasised its difference from the civilian community. The recruit was forced to form friendships within his working group: rifle section, tank crew, transport platoon or whatever. Under combat conditions where there was a sense of common danger, common obligation, a need for unity and teamwork and a consciousness of sharing an intensely emotional experience, even
greater cohesive forces were present.63 This cohesiveness and interdependence within the group was sufficient to overcome the divisive effects of racism where the group was composed of European and Aboriginal soldiers.

Accounts of interracial relationships under combat conditions support his view. One Infantry section Commander described the relationship between European and Aboriginal soldiers of his section in terms of 'love', 'dependence', and 'brotherhood'. There was no place for racism in his small group.64 Other accounts recall Aboriginal soldiers who had developed firm friendships with European soldiers that they had seen action with, but these friendships gradually dissolved when the soldiers came home after the war, left the Army and assumed the ideals and roles of the civilian community once again.65 Ex-servicemen's recollections of their Aboriginal comrades nevertheless reveal a remarkable sense of equality and affection even today.66

Aboriginal accounts of the type of relationships they experienced though scarce, tend to confirm those above. Reg Saunders noted after the war that white soldiers he had met were not racist67 while another Aboriginal ex-soldier recalled that one of the memorable features of his service was the way in which both whites and Aborigines could combine in friendship.68 Racist incidents which did occur, such as Reg Saunders' occasional brawls with white soldiers, were rare and of a relatively benign type. Characteristically, interracial personal relationships were marked by a degree of co-operation and friendship seldom found in the contemporary civilian life.

Close interracial relationships also developed between Aboriginal labourers and white supervisors of labour camps in the Northern Territory but less scope existed for close relations between Aboriginal labourers and the soldiers. Labourers were not enlisted soldiers and their contact with whites was limited to those who supervised their work and to casual contacts. Their separateness from European soldiers was emphasised through careful siting of the labour camps away from these soldiers, and by declaring these camps out of bounds to all but the Aborigines and their white supervisors. Despite these difficulties, even fleeting relations were beneficial to the perception each had of the other. European servicemen revised their preconceived notions of

64 Gordon 1962:47.
65 Watson 1974:5.
66 Various ex-servicemen's letters to the author.
68 Read and Read 1978.
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Aborigines when they saw them for the first time while some Aborigines regarded soldiers as a 'new kind of white man'. Not even missionaries, according to many Northern Territory Aborigines, wanted or were able to achieve the same kind of relationships based upon equality, as were achieved by many soldiers.

By its involvement in employment of Aborigines through enlistment and as civilian labourers, the Army, or at least the lower level headquarters and individuals, demonstrated a sense of equality and a willingness to try new approaches to the 'Aboriginal question'. This pattern persisted from early 1942 to the end of the war. But the relationship expressed in official Army policy varied through the duration of the war and from one locality to another. Changes over time were linked to the threat of invasion and the consequent demand for manpower. The hasty discharge of the 'camping type' Aborigines after the war and the refusal of the Army to accept Aboriginal volunteers for service in the Japan occupation forces demonstrate the extent to which the demand for manpower at the height of the invasion threat forced the Army unwillingly to accept the recruitment of Aborigines.

Geographical variation in Army attitudes to Aborigines can be explained in terms of the strategic importance of various parts of Australia. The recruitment of Aborigines in north Australia when official Army policy denied entry to persons not substantially of European origin or descent can only be accounted for in this light. Aborigines could be recruited contrary to official policy so long as they remained out of the public eye and so long as they contributed to the defence of a strategically important area where other manpower was scarce.

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69 Brown 1976:89.
70 Read and Read 1978.
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Top: Sam Kennedy, Cowra N.S.W., July 1979.
Bottom: Frank Simpson, Young N.S.W., May 1979.
Photographs by Peter Read.
This paper is concerned with the lives of five men who had a close connection with Erambie Aboriginal Station, West Cowra, New South Wales. In the course of recorded conversations during 1979 they told me of their lives, attitudes and opinions. Their names are Frank Broughton (born at Brungle Aboriginal Station, near Tumut, in 1895), Paul Coe (Senior) (born in Cowra in 1900), Locky Ingram (born at Narrandera in 1903), Sam Kennedy (born at Junee in 1905) and Frank Simpson (born at Narrandera in 1903).

Several interweaving strands in their lives are examined. The first is their part in the industrial or rural workforce. All able-bodied Aborigines living on reserves or stations were required to seek work. At Cowra, since the Erambie reserve was too small for serious cultivation, the men sought employment in the white community. This paper is an attempt to assess the effect of several decades of working in this environment and the extent to which these men, as children, received education in the traditional language and culture of the Wiradjuri people. Since the men spent considerable periods of their lives living on or near managed reserves like Erambie, the effect of institutionalised life on residents is also discussed. A comparison is made between the views and attitudes of the five men and some of the younger people living at Erambie. It is argued that the circumstances and environment into which these men were born and grew to maturity were different to those experienced by other Aboriginal generations, and that these circumstances created attitudes and opinions peculiar to their generation.

Beckett has described a period of respite for north-western Aborigines in the 1880s. For a decade or two there was a period of calm between the violence of the first conquest and the more intensive
European settlement of the twentieth century. In the south-eastern portion of Wiradjuri country, an area roughly encircled by Narrandera, Tumut, Yass and Cowra, this period had already ended by 1880. The first pastoral settlement along the Lachlan occurred in the early 1830s; a decade later there were probably Aborigines living around the larger stations. No reliable population estimates are available for the Cowra area, but a comparison may be made with the 1845 Report of the Land Commissioner for the Wellington Valley, some one hundred kilometres north of Cowra. He estimated that half the Aborigines lived on settlers' stations, and the rest visited them occasionally. Nearly all the Aborigines gathered about the stations in winter.

The passing of the Robertson Land Acts in 1861 brought intensive land settlement much earlier to the Lachlan valley than it did to the north-west. The increasing number of small-scale free selectors in the decades following the Land Acts must have intensified the process of forcing those Aborigines living occasionally in the bush away from their traditional hunting and gathering grounds. A selector typically occupied less than six hundred acres and employed few, if any, hired labourers. It is probable that during the 1860s and 1870s the free selectors not only came to occupy land formerly held as leasehold by large estates, but also land which had hitherto been regarded as the preserve of Aborigines.

By 1900 the process of breaking up the large estates in the Lachlan region was far advanced. This contrasts with the north-west, where Beckett traces the dissolution of the old holdings to the period after the First World War. In the Cowra district some of the large holdings which had survived the incursions of the free selectors succumbed to the financiers. Many came under the control of banks or agricultural companies which probably found permanent Aboriginal station communities less acceptable than many paternalist squatter families had done. The pressure to move Aborigines from the stations probably intensified during the depression of the middle 1880s and the drought of the late 1890s and Aboriginal station people were encouraged to leave. Within a couple of decades the process was complete. For instance at one of the oldest stations, North Logan, it is recalled that the last of the Aboriginal community had moved to Cowra by 1910.

Circumstantial evidence also points to a considerable population shift by the Lachlan Aborigines towards towns like Cowra in the 1890s. The 1891 Annual Report of the newly formed Aborigines

1 Beckett 1978.
5 Recorded conversation Mrs Elizabeth Bennett, Cowra, 5 April 1979. Read Tape T105.

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Protection Board noted that the Aborigines near Cowra were employed only occasionally by selectors and station owners. The local Member of Parliament stated in 1897 that they had no home to go to nor work to do. Complaints by the European residents of Cowra about Aborigines around the town, first mentioned in the Board Report of 1894, may be taken as evidence of a fairly sudden and recent influx of Aborigines from the stations.

A further attempt was made by some of the residents of Cowra to have the Aborigines removed from the vicinity of the township, but in the absence of any other suitable site, and in view of the fact that there is a school for Aborigines at Erambie which the children attend regularly, the Board decided not to interfere in the matter. Further complaints were noted in the Board’s reports for 1903 and 1904. Finally in 1924 the Erambie Reserve became a supervised Aboriginal station:

As a result of complaints by the townspeople of Cowra regarding the necessity of resident supervision of Aborigines residing on and visiting the local Reserve, the Board decided to establish a regular Station at that place, and a substantial residence was, as a consequence, erected, and a Teacher-Manager appointed.

The economic and social forces which drove station Aborigines into towns were not confined to the Cowra district. A European resident recalled the last of the Aborigines leaving Ironbong station near Cootamundra in about 1910. In the same year a manager was appointed to the reserve at Yass to deal with people whom the Board characterized as ‘a source of annoyance’ to the townspeople.

No first-hand memories of the depopulation of the stations survive. Yet it is probable that the period 1890-1910 was one of disorientation and confusion for the Aborigines. They left pastoral stations which...
had been their home for many years and children born after 1900 in the Cowra district were the first generation to know only the government reserve as a home.

To the disorientation which must have accompanied the drift to the towns was added the confusing and at times contradictory legislation concerning Aborigines. As the five men reached maturity the inconsistencies must have become fully apparent. Although the section of the 1924 Report referring to the installation of a manager at Cowra implied that Aborigines were unwelcome about the towns, the policy regarding employment remained unchanged.

No one is allowed to remain in idleness on a Reserve, there to get into trouble and raise another generation of illegitimate children who would also become a burden on the State. Persons who ought to be working, according to the 1909 Aborigines Act, were not allowed to remain on a reserve. Regulation 28 required managers to withhold rations from anyone who refused work. These contradictory attempts to fill the stations with Aborigines and simultaneously empty them of able-bodied males may be seen as a legislative response both to white residents in country towns and to financial policies intended to keep station costs as low as possible. Broughton certainly remembered the punitive effect of regulation 28 at Erambie: 'We could have stayed on the mission — and starved!'

Unlike the reserves at Warangesda, on the Murrumbidgee, and Brungle, Erambie was too small a reserve to support itself. Only some five hectares were available for cultivation though this appears to have been rarely used. Thus the five men, in company with most of the other able bodied men at Erambie, were forced by the manager to seek work in the white community.

Simpson as a boy lived near Brungle, occasionally travelling with his white father, an itinerant musician. When he moved to Cowra in the 1920s he became a general farm labourer. Coe and several of his brothers were taken from an unsupervised life at Canowindra to the Mittagong Welfare Home in accordance with a provision of the Act. His father was a drover and therefore away for long periods. Coe recalled that a woman was supposed to look after them, but she was seldom there. He went to Mittagong when he was about ten and two years later was 'apprenticed' as a dairy hand before he returned to his father. In the early 1930s he returned to Erambie which became his base for employment as a drover. Kennedy's father, a white man, was a bootmaker living in Sydney until the 1919 influenza epidemic led

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14 The Aborigines Protection Act of 1909 provided in 11(1) that any child of an Aboriginal, or the neglected child of any person 'apparently having an admixture of Aboriginal blood in his veins' might be bound by indenture to a master. The Kinchela Home for Aboriginal boys opened in 1924.
him to set up his business at Woodstock, near Cowra. A relative of his Aboriginal mother, who lived at Erambie, came to visit. Shortly before or after this visit the family split up; Kennedy’s father moved away, and Sam saw him only once more. The rest of the family, including Sam, eventually settled on the edge of Erambie. Ingram, like many men whose families had once lived at Warangesda Mission Station near Darlington Point, learned to shear at Kooba Station nearby. Broughton also worked at Kooba. He was permanently employed as a woolshed hand and later, based at Erambie, followed a career in general labouring.

One of the most significant aspects of employment for these Aborigines was that their work-mates were mostly Europeans. All of them stated that at times they were the only Aborigines in their immediate group. The pressure to conform to the predominant white ethos — a pressure not felt so strongly by those working with other Aborigines on the larger reserves — must have been very strong. Beckett noted that ‘[s]ome Aborigines, particularly half castes, were able to enter the ranks of the drovers and shearers and become “smart men”. Nor did this require a drastic change in their identity, for in the fluid conditions of the frontier, work was the primary mode of identification, and the society made few other demands.’\footnote{15 Beckett 1978:27.} Away from the frontier, this generalisation lacks force. Aboriginal identity was required to be suppressed if success or acceptance was to be gained. This seems to have taken the form of an apparent disinterest in the Aboriginal past, which I shall discuss below, and a positive acceptance of certain European values.

The European ethic of diligent work-as-its-own-reward was one aspect of European values which emerged strongly in conversations with the men. Each of them described aspects of their work in detail. Broughton claimed that he could always find work whenever he wanted it; Coe that he had never been sacked in his life; Ingram that he had ‘rung’ Wanaaring shed, on the Paroo, in 1926. Kennedy summarised his career thus:

I was a linesman, leading hand linesman, on the Central West County Council, electricity. I was there for 37½ years, I think. It was all right, it was a pretty good job. I used to boss the rural crew, all these farmers and all that, and I built all them rural lines out, you know, ninety per cent of them anyway, for thirty miles round the town here.

Q: So you started off as a labourer and then got into the technical side after that?

Yeah, got into the technical side. Yeah, and I was troubleshooter for about thirty odd, thirty-three years I think. Used to do a lot of night work, you know, chasing troubles all over the countryside.
Only Simpson was less than proud of his work record: he seemed to have spent his life in casual rural work along the Lachlan and Murrumbidgee rivers. He preferred to talk of his travels and adventures rather than his work. As will be seen below, his knowledge of, and interest in traditional matters was greater than that of the other four. It is possible that a relationship exists between his lack of success in the white world and his Aboriginal interests. Nevertheless the impression gained with the other four men is that they willingly joined the white labour force at a time when skilled labour was highly valued. Their Aboriginality was held to be of less consequence than their competence, not only by their employers, but perhaps by themselves as well. Ingram gave food, but not money, to the Aboriginal community at Wanaaring Station and he lived in the shearsers' quarters. Coe once distributed a box of biscuits to Aborigines camped alongside the railway on the Nullarbor. Apparently as they went from job to job, or rose in seniority, they acquired a degree of self-reliance lacking among the permanent residents of Erambie. In conversations they were proud, sometimes fiercely proud, of their work records. Ingram summarised succinctly his estimation of the work ethic: 'I had respect. So long as I did my work I was right.'

Also noticeable in conversations was a lack of knowledge about, and an apparent disinterest in, the traditional Aboriginal past. None of the men knew the Wiradjuri language well. Simpson and Ingram had a vocabulary of about thirty words each, and to the latter such knowledge was only a curiosity. None of them could recall suppression of the language by teachers or managers. Yet neither could they recall any instruction by a grandmother or other relative who might have passed on traditional knowledge. Only Simpson could indicate that he had derived his information from a particular person: his mother. The shift from the stations, the increasing number of 'part-Aboriginal' people compared to those of full descent, the absence of relatives working far away, all seem to have changed Aboriginal family life. By 1900 it appears to have been common for children to grow up separated from relatives who might have been expected to take an interest in their 'education'. Coe and Kennedy spent their youth without direct contact with any older Aboriginal besides a single parent. All the consultants seem to have grown up exposed neither to traditional languages nor to ritual customs. It is likely, in fact, that although the

16 The journal of the Australian Inland Mission, Our Aim, contains records of missionary activity at Brungle, Warangesda and occasionally Erambie in the first decades of this century. For instance, the issue of March 1910 (5(7):3) noted that the manager had allowed Alick Russell, A.I.M. Native Helper at Brungle, to hold services in the homes of certain people, and to hold Sunday School for about twenty children.
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five men regarded language and ritual as a single entity of 'Aboriginal matters', the performance of traditional rituals had ceased a generation before the Wiradjuri language fell into disuse.

In the absence of evidence that the use of the language was suppressed by whites, two other explanations must be considered: that the knowledge of the language was withheld from the children of 1900 by their parents, or that the children were not interested in learning it. Reay, in the 1940s, noted the reluctance of some of the old people in the rural west of New South Wales to speak their language, and their confusion and shame if one of their number spoke it in front of unsympathetic Europeans.17

The five men were unable to provide much information as to why their knowledge of the language was slight. Broughton remarked that he picked up a few words while at Brungle, but that he never used them away from the community: 'I wouldn't have been too flash to use my own language'. One fifty-year-old Cowra woman suggested that the language was deliberately withheld from her mother's generation.

Q: Could your parents speak Wiradjuri?
Not my mum and dad, but my nanna could. She came over at Brungle . . . You weren't allowed to sit down and listen to them talk. Wouldn't talk in front of you.

Q: Why not?
I don't know, that's the thing that's got us puzzled. I mean, that's why none of us know the language . . . They were old when I was young, that's in the thirties, before '37. They were old women, so they'd be born . . . two generations back. See they wouldn't even talk it in front of my mother, and that, very rarely. They were very funny people, the older ones. They had to get in that little group, all that one age group, then they'd talk among themselves. But if you walked up, say you were an Aborigine, you walked up, they'd just close up like a clam.18

She did not know whether the old people in question, who comprised the generation of the parents of the five consultants, concealed the language for its own sake, or because they were talking about secret matters. A fifty year old Tumut man told me that the Wiradjuri language disappeared because it involved secret rituals no longer practised.19 There is certainly evidence of the same pressures being

17 Reay 1949:91.
18 Recorded conversation Mrs Valerie Simpson, Cowra, 14 April 1979, T100. One of the few recordings of the Wiradjuri language was made by Luise Hercus of Fred Freeman, Brungle, 23 December 1963. The original is in the possession of Dr Hercus.
19 Recorded conversation Mr Vince Bolger, Tumut, 8 March 1980, T137.
applied to both ritual and language elsewhere in Australia. Tamsin Donaldson noted a reluctance among some old people at Murrin Bridge to speak of ritual matters in front of younger Aborigines. Strehlow’s evidence suggests that some old Aranda men wanted to keep information secret, and also that young men were not always prepared to listen to their elders. The present writer has found some evidence of concealment of ritual knowledge from young boys in the Northern Territory.\textsuperscript{20}

The old people may have tried to cling to a last scrap of prestige or they may have thought their children were so dominated by foreign ‘civilisation’ that they did not deserve to be taught the language. While their children attended the government school at Erambie or at other stations there were fewer opportunities for learning to take place. As the five consultants reached maturity and joined the workforce, often in the company of Europeans, there were even fewer opportunities to speak the language.

It is probable that while many of the older generation were still fluent speakers of Wiradjuri in 1900, a decline in ritual practice had already occurred. R.H. Mathews, writing in the 1890s, had to rely on hearsay accounts twenty-five years old to describe a full initiation ceremony among the southern Wiradjuri. He noted that tooth evulsion, a stage of young men’s initiation rituals, had fallen into disuse by 1896 owing to the occupation of the country by Europeans.\textsuperscript{21} Not unexpectedly, the five consultants were able to tell me little of the ritual traditions. Only Simpson could contribute any information. In this sketchy account he describes an occurrence at Goolagong, forty kilometres west of Cowra:

\begin{quote}
Me and a mate, a cobber of mine, were camped in one place, and there was an initiation going on. In the middle of the night, Jack wakes me up. He said, “We’d better get out of this.” I said, “Why”? He said, “Look at the fire.” [We] just walked away about two hundred yards.
\end{quote}

Q: Could you hear anything, that time?
Nothing.
Q: How did you know the ceremony was going on then, if you couldn’t hear anything?
Oh, tell with the gum trees, all marked. You couldn’t read it, I couldn’t. All chopped in, in a box tree. But it was dry. All this writing was there. Well there was initiation going on, where we were camped.

Simpson also remembered some advice from his mother:

\begin{enumerate}
\item Mathews 1896; 1897:115. See also Howitt 1904:584-5.
\end{enumerate}
She said, "and when you’re coming into a strange camp, my son, always pluck a gum leaf, a gum leaf, carry it in your hand, walk in," she said. "One fellow," she said, "walked straight in the camp and he never had no gum leaf." She said, "do you know where they found his head? On a stump facing back from where he came. Killed him. Killed him stone dead."

Q: Why?

Didn’t belong to the tribe. In them days they were very strict. You couldn’t do that, you were breaking the laws, and the laws was their main statutes and judgments. Death was the penalty. Death was the penalty.

On another occasion Simpson told me that plans were made to initiate him. An old man at Moree had suggested it because, Simpson speculated, his friendship with a local girl might have caused trouble. The old man went away and Simpson never saw him again. Like Beckett’s consultant, Newton, Simpson was ‘never about when the ceremonies were on’ even though he recalled in 1979 that he had no objection to undergoing what was required.22 Ingram remembered that the boys were initiated by tooth evulsion and were taken out to be ‘shown the country’. The other three consultants remembered, or appeared to remember, nothing. Commenting on Simpson’s ‘initiation ceremony’ Broughton remarked pointedly, ‘I never saw any initiations, and I reckon Simpson didn’t either’. Both were reared in the same general area. From the evidence of the five men it appears that in the southern and eastern portions of Wiradjuri country most of the ritual culture had been abandoned shortly after they were born.

Simpson’s accounts of ritual life appear to be all that have survived in the memories of the five men. What remained of the old ways and the language may have been concealed from them, though fear of ridicule may have discouraged them from speaking about what they really knew. It may be that such knowledge, suppressed for so long, is now difficult for them to recover. It is also possible that knowledge has been concealed from the present writer. Yet there was nothing to suggest the conscious or unconscious dissembling experienced by Hausfeld at Woodenbong.23 In the course of some fifty conversations with older people along the Lachlan and Murrumbidgee rivers I have met no one who could remember more than thirty or forty Wiradjuri words, or knew more than Simpson about the traditional culture. One seventy year old man born at Brungle, Fred Collins, actually asked me why the Aborigines of the North Coast knew so much about their traditional culture, and his own people so little. He too had spent a good deal of his life away from other Aborigines. No suggestions

22 Beckett 1958:104.
23 Hausfeld 1963.
survive either in the Aborigines Protection Board records or in other sources, such as newspapers, that ritual was practised in the region after about 1900. The men seemed so willing to talk about themselves, and I can think of no good reason why all of them should conceal information at a time when a considerable kudos would attach to the recounting of traditional stories to younger people. Yet no one at Erambie was able to tell me stories which they had learned from the older people. Their knowledge about traditional matters, they said, had come from books.

While it seems apparent that among the survivors of this generation little knowledge of the language or the traditional culture has survived, we should also consider whether the survivors are in fact typical of their generation. The five men were subjected to government assimilation policies which demanded acceptance of certain working- and middle-class ethics of European culture. Yet there were the alternatives of alcohol, life on the river bank, and the violence typified by Jimmy Governor. Several of the consultants’ relatives died many years ago from cirrhosis of the liver, exposure or violence. Yet the diligent, the fearful, the humble and the pragmatic perhaps form the majority in any repressed society. Most institutionalised Aborigines accepted the rules (and a good part of the beliefs, folklore and prejudice) of European supervisors and workmates. It may be that some of those Aborigines who died younger were more at odds with the system: they risked death by exposure or alcoholism on the river bank rather than live on a reserve and be forced into the European workforce. It is possible that they knew more of the language and traditional culture. Yet all the evidence, both written and oral, points to the conclusion that by 1920 the ritual traditions were abandoned and the language was in decline in the Cowra and Brungle regions of Wiradjuri territory. Whatever knowledge the five men possessed they were under pressure to repress it as they worked in the European community.

A picture emerges of the kind of life these men lived in the first three decades of this century. They had been reared on or close to European institutions. They had not been exposed to much of the traditional culture. They worked at employment which they had to find themselves, and upon which they were expected to support themselves and their families. Away from the reserves their life was comparatively free of repressive legislation. For instance, they were for the most part left alone by the police. Coe stated that out bush he could drink in any hotel he pleased. Broughton, working at Parkes, was granted an exemption certificate in 1951 which enabled him to drink legally in a hotel. A shearer like Ingram was treated (he stated) much the same as a white man. From the outline I have drawn one might have expected the self-confidence of these men to have been the equal of any European of the same age. Yet in all our conversations I was
aware of an underlying insecurity. There were cracks in their apparent self-confidence. It was as if a desire to show whites that Aborigines were as good as anyone had been an important motivation in their lives. In unsolicited remarks like 'I never had the sack in my life' there was a plea for recognition. An awareness that in the end Europeans did not accept them as social equals, despite their best efforts in a free enterprise market, was never far away in our conversations.

Practically all Aborigines in New South Wales stood in the shadow of the Aborigines Act, the managed institution, the police. The end of seasonal work, the closing down of projects and the desire of the men to rejoin their families ensured a period of at least several months’ residence on Erambie every year. After the depression the Aborigines Act was amended (8A(1), No.32 of 1936) so that any Aboriginal 'living in insanitary or undesirable conditions' might be removed to a reserve on the order of a magistrate. Work was never so easy to find again. The drover Coe and the shearer Ingram, because of their skills, continued to be employed; Broughton and Kennedy (they stated) because they were hard workers. Yet all of them after the depression were periodically unemployed and in those periods lived on or near Erambie. As residents of the town or station they were now subject to the repressive legislation embodied in the Aborigines Act.

Life on a station like Erambie was governed by restrictions. Permission had to be sought to enter a station or reserve; the brother or spouse of a station resident might be denied permission to visit. Gambling, unseemly words, violence and the consumption of alcohol were prohibited. Houses were inspected regularly for cleanliness. Numerous Erambie residents have stated that it was commonplace for the police to enter houses without a search warrant and to arrest an occupant. Humiliations, at least in European terms, were common. Simpson was dragged by the heels by a manager at Brungle for being an illegal entrant. Ingram spent several periods in jail for consuming alcohol on the station. In addition to the often arbitrary exercise of the manager's very wide powers, many people told me of personal grievances over illegal actions by managers. Coe, for instance, though in his thirties, was given a thrashing by the manager without explanation. Broughton was told to move to Yass to collect his old age pension, though he was legally entitled to receive it at Erambie.

Some of the resentment at these incidents can be traced to the fact that the managers treated the men as though they were of little account; as though they had not made their way in the world independently. Another former Erambie resident, born in 1920, expressed the same feeling:

24 As a boy Kennedy spent some time at Erambie school, and lived near the Station. Since then he has lived in Cowra and has had little to do with Erambie.
25 Much of the evidence in this paragraph is drawn from Read 1980: ch. 5.
One of me best mates, he wanted to come in. This is only in recent years. The manager wanted to know, "Where'd you get permission from to come onto here?" "Oh, just come in to see me mate. I've known him for years."

"Well didn't you know you had to come over here first to the manager's residence and report first?"

And I thought I was pretty much up in the world and above that sort of thing! 26

Yet the speaker then went on to defend the entry-permit system for keeping out undesirable visitors. He shared the ambiguous attitude towards some of the injustices of the past which was noticeable amongst the five principal consultants. Perhaps as a consequence of the periods spent under managerial control, this generation apparently has a basic respect for lawful authority, even when it acted unlawfully. This is not to deny that there may have been periods of benevolent rule by certain managers, yet it was obvious that younger people at Erambie are far less tolerant at the injustices of the past than the five principal consultants. The self-reliance learned in bush-work did not necessarily imply a disrespect for authority. For instance, Simpson related how he had once found some dead sheep carcasses in a paddock after a bushfire. Unlike the bushman of the Australian legend he did not help himself; he asked permission to take one. (He was refused, though he was offered some other food.) Early education about the place of an Aboriginal in the European world and the authoritarian rule prevailing on government reserves, created attitudes rather different from white men of the same generation. Amongst them, Gammage suggests that self-reliance and a contempt for constituted authority went hand in hand.27

Aborigines on Erambie lived under an imposed authority and on the periphery of European social and economic life. On pastoral stations or in industrial workplaces they were men of more consequence. Skilled workers like Kennedy, Ingram and Coe must have been of considerable value to their employers. Younger people at Erambie today find it hard to understand the attitudes and values of these five men. They were assimilated more successfully into the dominant culture than any other generation, including that which grew to maturity in the 1950s and 1960s when the official assimilation policy was at its height. In the terms of this dominant culture one might have expected a wide gap to have existed between the parents of these men, who held the last of the secrets, and the men themselves, who were told nothing. Yet a wider gap appears to exist today between this generation and their grandchildren. The young people declaim against

26 Recorded conversation Mr Gordon Simpson, Cowra, 14 August 1979, T125.
managers whom they scarcely remember, while the old people, admitting they suffered under the Act, recall the past with affection.

Current attitudes are framed by group pressures and by personal experience. We cannot be sure that the comparative disharmony between the five consultants and their parents actually existed in the way it was described in 1979. Fifty years may have sharpened — or blunted — the animosity between generations. Old people may seek refuge in memories of the past in the face of hostility or lack of understanding by the young. Similarly the experiences of the consultants and their own young people have been different. Conversations with people under thirty at Erambie suggest that police harassment of Aborigines at Cowra and elsewhere worsened in the mid-1950s, reached a peak in the mid-1960s, and is now in decline. This story by a twenty-nine-year-old man is typical of such incidents.

I know when I worked at Wee Waa, in the cotton up there, — first day I walked into town, I had a place to stay, and money in my pocket, and I got vagged. I got ten days for it . . . See I’d come from Moree and Wee Waa, and I was going down. I’d seen the cotton manager . . . and I was ready to start the next morning. They lived down at the cotton gin, see, all the blacks. Some lived in bloody caravans, the others in tents, you know, and I was staying with them, see. With people down there. And I was walking down toward the cotton gin, I got lumbered. Copper pulled up and asked me my name, and where I was going. I told him how much I had [about twenty-five dollars] and I was to start the next day. Took me to the cop shop and I got ten days out of it for vag . . . [I worked round] the cop shop, washed their cars and mowed the lawn and that, and after I come out of there I was told to piss off out of town.28

Both the substance and tone of this account are in sharp contrast to the work memories of the old men. Harsh, unjust or illegal acts by authorities may have been less frequent up to 1930 because most Aboriginal males were in the workforce, and were not seen as a threat to order, as they were in the 1960s. Therefore they did not experience directly the change in police and local European attitudes. The relaxation of restrictions regarding citizenship, voting and drinking rights created the atmosphere of the freedom rides, the radical black movement and the Tent Embassy. In Cowra events were quieter, yet several young people have told me that their awareness of an Aboriginal identity of which they could be proud began by hearing about more radical events in other towns.29 With this awareness has come a

28 Recorded conversation Mr Richard Murray, Erambie, 5 April 1979, T95.
29 For example, recorded conversation Mr Michael Williams, Erambie, 15 April 1979, T104.
loss of sympathy for older Aborigines who are unenthusiastic about the radical black movement. One of my consultants was referred to derisively by a man in his twenties as 'The white blackfeller. He'd never been to jail in his life!'

In country towns like Cowra, freedom had a price unperceived by older Aborigines because they were not asked to pay it. Black militancy, even a black presence in town, stirred the old fears of European residents. One Aboriginal witness stated that it was not unknown in the 1960s for an arrest to be made as a man stepped over the Erambie boundary. Freedom within the law coupled with repressive actions by Europeans have caused a resentment and a hostility in the young which the old men cannot understand:

Paul Coe Sr.:
Well they want anything, they can go there [to the Aboriginal Legal Service] and get it. Now what are they doing if there's a court case, any Aborigine to be tried. Get a lawyer, take a lawyer, get a special lawyer. Put the file in on him I suppose and all that sort of business. Years and years ago they had to battle for themselves. No help like that. There's two or three young fellers been working in this legal service. They've had cars and all to run around in, run round for pubs and one thing and another. They've got them in the country, they've got them all over the place. Years ago Aborigines wasn't treated like that. And they were better off. And respected better. Some of the young generation now, they're not worth two bob. They're . . . they're . . . I don't know.

Q: It certainly sounds as though you've been respected all your life.

My word I was. I lived up to it. I tried to do it. You know what I mean. I done my best for everybody. Lived with them and done the rights things.

Q: I suppose young people might say, 'the coppers have got bad, so that's why we need the legal service'.

They've made it that way themselves. The young generation have made it that way themselves.

A second reason for the widening gap between the old and the young lies in the sense of temps perdu common among many old people, and strongest among those who have lost a controlling authority. A similar phenomenon, though in a different context, was noted by Barwick among old people regarding their time at Coranderrk and Cumeroogunga. There the early farming period was looked back to as a 'golden age of prosperity and security'.

30 Recorded conversation Mr Neville Williams, Erambie, 16 May 1979, T106.
harmonious at Erambie. Concerts, games and religious revival meetings are remembered nostalgically and cited as evidence of a more stable past. Though numerous instances are recounted of a manager’s irrationality or violence, European control is conceded to have had some advantages. Parental control is recalled to have been more effective. The old people, it is said, were shown some respect. Alcohol, controlled, was much less disruptive a force than it is now, and Broughton and Coe could see some advantages in the old drinking restrictions.

Young people are aware of these reflections on the changing pattern of life, and they too look back to a more stable past. Their quest for identity and stability has arched back, not to the youth of their grandparents, but beyond them to the time of the high culture. Accounts by historians and anthropologists, artefacts and maps of tribal divisions are seized upon with the greatest interest. My five principal consultants, however, showed very little enthusiasm for earlier accounts, such as those by Howitt and Mathews. One lady of sixty-six years, tears on her cheeks, lamented the passing of the post-Second World War Christian revival meetings. In contrast her twenty-nine year old relative who related the story of his arrest at Wee Waa, sadly remarked towards the end of our conversation, ‘I’d give anything to know my own language.’

If the young people have found a clue to consciousness-raising in a renewed interest in the old ways, it is more difficult to trace the world-view of the five consultants. Beckett suggested that people of the generation of George Dutton rejected the industry, thrift, regard for property and comfort of middle class Europeans, and emulated the model of the white nineteenth century pastoral worker. Yet at Cowra some of the men of 1900 did seem to have accepted the ethics of industry and diligence. Rowley though has suggested that the more closely Aboriginal culture in New South Wales is examined ‘the more closely do Aboriginal cultures conform to those of rejected racial minorities in other Western countries’. Later he notes that Aborigines, when denied a common identity with European Australians, have sought a distinctive ‘Aboriginal’ identity.

Doubtless there are many features common to the culture of the five men which may be identified as similar to other minority groups. A lack of interest in the pre-conquest past may be related to an apparent lack of interest in the facts of the European invasion which the writer has noted in the Northern Territory. For instance one man whose father was shot dead by a policeman at the time of the Coniston massacre in the Northern Territory described the murder (in the

32 Richard Murray, *ibid.*, recorded conversation Mrs Ethel Wedge, Erambie, 8 April 1979, T95.
33 Beckett 1965:8.
34 For example, Rowley 1971:163, 183.
same conversation) as when ‘my father met with an accident’. Several times while in Wiradjuri country I was told by older Aborigines that the settlement of the country by Europeans occurred with little violence or bloodshed. Yet the scanty written records of this period suggest the contrary. We could account for this lack of knowledge by a breakdown in communications between several generations, but there is also the possibility that Aboriginal people who have desired to succeed in a European world have unconsciously repressed speculation about, or even knowledge of, the past as the price that must be paid for white acceptance.

It could be argued, therefore, that at the time the five men reached maturity in the 1920s there were powerful pressures acting upon those who desired to succeed and to conform to the dominant ethos in thought as well as in action. And in their search for a stable identity the men perhaps fell victim to a widely held, and still prevalent, conviction in both black and white society that Aboriginal culture was dead in New South Wales. A popularised notion of culture involving ritual, dance, language and material artefacts has frequently been invoked to conclude that where these are absent, there can be no true Aboriginal culture. For example, consider this exchange during the 1967 Joint Parliamentary Inquiry into Aboriginal Welfare:

981. (Chairman) When you refer to a race with culture, our information is that there are only 177 full-bloods living in New South Wales. As there are so few full-bloods left, how can you possibly have a culture?

Witness. Well, there is a carryover from the tribal days that you will find around La Perouse and at various other places. Many Aborigines are very skilled in their own particular cultural arts . . .

982. (Chairman) That is arts and crafts, but by “culture” we mean folk lore, songs, or customs. Would that not be almost non-existent among the Aboriginal community?

That the Aboriginal witness did not challenge the Chairman’s definition of ‘culture’ indicates that he, perhaps like my five consultants, had come to believe that his culture was dead: yet the five men, though they did not always work with, or even associate with Aborigines, readily acknowledged their Aboriginal identity. Nor did they appear to be ashamed of this. Barwick concluded that only half a dozen elementary families in Victoria were so completely assimilated that their earlier identification or association with Aborigines was no longer meaningful to them. In the same way the five consultants at Cowra have clung to the ties of kinship obligations and responsibilities.

35 Recorded conversation Mr Tim Japangardi, Yuendumu, 18 August 1977, T56.
FATHERS AND SONS

While acknowledging their identity they have shown less interest than the young in the revival of black consciousness. The managerial system deprived them of the leadership which might ordinarily have been theirs, and there is no evidence that any of the five men were involved in leadership evolved in opposition to European rule. Perhaps as a consequence they partially came to believe that the management of stations like Erambie was executed better by Europeans than by their own people. In 1979 they had respect, but little authority. Rejected partly by their parents, the men of 1900 have found a *modus vivendi* within an ethical framework which found a partial favour by Europeans, yet was little understood by their own grandchildren.

A further clue to the continuing divisions between Aboriginal generations at Erambie lies in the constant shift in attitude towards them by European people. In the 1880s and during the depression of the 1930s government authorities wanted Aborigines to live on stations and reserves. In the 1920s and 1950s they wanted them to assimilate into the general community. Since the 1960s the assimilation policy has been abandoned by some officials, and adhered to by others. In a country town like Condobolin integration may be encouraged by a teacher, while the town magistrate may proceed as if there were no alternative to the assimilation of the Aboriginal community. Visiting activists and welfare agencies may encourage Aborigines to help themselves, yet in certain towns like Moree white antipathy may be as intense as ever. The immense change in attitude by Europeans has helped to alter Aboriginal self-perceptions, and ensure that no generalisations can be made on the basis of Aboriginal — or white — testimony unless the age and circumstances of each consultant are taken into account. For the young people have suffered as much as the old from the peculiar behaviour of Europeans, but that behaviour has produced not acquiescence but resentment.

The following extracts from conversations indicate how wide the gulf has become:

Locky Ingram (b. 1903):

I was at Nowra, and a lot of dark people up there, see, and they used to be bean picking. And one chap, he had one of them [exemption] cards . . . I walked in the pub, and the barmaid said to me, "what do you want?" I said, "Give us a middy of beer." "Have you got a card?" she said. I said, "What's the card for?" "You've got to have your name on it, and picture on it, on the card." I said, "Excuse me, I'm a Maori." She said, "You're a Maori, are you?" Called the boss. "Are you a Maori?" "Yes," I said. "I was born in Willeroo in New Zealand." So he passed me, see, he served me. So I

38 Recorded conversation Mr Neil Andrews, Cowra Aboriginal Legal Service, 16 May 1979, T110.
started talking in the "Maori" language: "Abi yu sheebang dauggee eh". And he started serving me.

Milly Butt (b. 1940):
I think this is one of the things that used to cheese me off. We went, my girlfriend and I, this is about 1960, we went into a hotel, and there were still those laws about Aborignals not being allowed to go into the hotels. So we used to drink at this one regular like, say every Friday night'd be a night out. And one night he says, "The police are coming in, so if they come, youse just tell them that youse are Maoris." I said, "No thanks, I'm Aboriginal. I'm not going to say I'm Maori just to get a drink," so we walked out. There's no way I would deny my identity for anything. It's never entered my mind to say it, to say that I was something else, a Maori or Fijian, or Islander, or what. I believe some of them have done this — maybe they just want to be accepted into white society, . . . but really I feel sorry for these people.39

Have the old men erected barriers between themselves and their children and grandchildren in just the same way as their own parents may have done seventy years ago? If so the causes are much the same. Each generation has been subjected to different pressures, by the black community as well as by the white, which have altered attitudes, beliefs and perceptions. Each generation has been only dimly aware of the new pressures which succeeding generations have had to face. Certainly the five consultants would be embarrassed at the force of the words of the last speaker. They were born into a world of European domination. In it they attained, mainly through their own efforts, the status of men of worth in their own eyes, and they hoped, in a wider world. They did not understand the world of their fathers, and they do not understand the world of their grandchildren. Despite the still very strong ties of kinship and sentiment, it is in the values and attitudes of the European world between the wars in which they feel most at home.

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Map 1  Tribal territory of the Guugu Yimidhirr and surrounding areas before 1870.

Map 2  European settlement around Cooktown by the 1890s.
Hopevale, the oldest surviving Aboriginal mission in North Queensland, has a continuous history as an institution from 1887 to the present. Social and genealogical continuities with the past are important for Hopevale people but modern life on the mission is also the product of ninety years of official administration. Descendants of the original inhabitants of the Cooktown area form part of the wider Cape York Aboriginal community produced by the haphazard workings of government policies, and today live in towns, on stations and other Queensland settlements. However, most of the people who can still lay claim to the area are members of the Lutheran community at Hopevale, tracing back genealogical connections within the mission five or more generations. Hopevale people maintain strong personal ties to their community and land, even if they have moved elsewhere. Although Hopevale is an artificial community, socially and geographically isolated by its founding missionaries, its roots lie deep in the history of the Cooktown area.

Hopevale people take a strong interest in their own history. The oldest people, whether born on the mission or brought there by police as children, grew up in an established mission society that became their entire universe — a universe which, during their lifetime, before and after World War II, underwent two complete transformations. Younger people know something of, but did not experience, a time when mission life apparently was insulated wholly from the outside world. They have heard of their ancestors who formed the core of the early mission, and of others who maintained the last autonomous Aboriginal groups in the area, often taking final refuge in small bush camps on mission land. Knowledge of the past at Hopevale, though rich, is unorganized, and largely contained in the memories of a few.

This paper explores the earliest period in the formation of the Hopevale community, the founding of the mission at Cape Bedford. Why did government, police or settlers want such a mission at all? Why did missionaries take it up? Why did Aborigines frequent the mission, and why ultimately, did they remain?

* We wish to thank John Beaton and Winifred Mumford for the maps, Elisabeth Patz for German translations, Konrad Rauh, Archivist at Neuendettelsau Mission Society, for copies of early correspondence, and Rev. I. Roennfeldt, the Archives of the Lutheran Church of Australia and R.M.W. Dixon for the loan of other historical materials.
European settlement subjected Aborigines to intense pressures and transformed with incredible speed the possibilities for Aboriginal life in the Cooktown hinterland. The transformation — initially often violent, and only latterly subject to any form of centralized direction — was nonetheless patterned: the fate of most Cooktown Aborigines was early elimination, and those who survived, both on and off the mission, took their places in the evolving colonizing society.

The missionaries shared with the rest of white society a conviction that European civilization was superior to Aboriginal savagery, but their well-articulated and self-conscious views about the nature and potential fate of Aborigines constitute the most important source for understanding the foundation of the mission community.

Whatever tales the Aboriginal people of lower Cape York might have heard about white men and their murderous weapons, they could never have been prepared for the amazing speed and massive extent of colonization and settlement when it occurred. In 1872 an expedition led by W. Hann was organized expressly for the purpose of investigating prospects for settlement and mining up to the 14th parallel.1 Hann's guarded report induced James V. Mulligan and six companions to leave almost immediately to prospect on the Palmer River, and the party returned south on the 3rd of September 1873 with news of payable gold.2 Within a week the government had commissioned a party to locate a port from which the new goldfield could be supplied.3 Two weeks later Mulligan and a party of one hundred miners with three hundred horses were back on the Palmer River.4

The speed of occupation and its transforming effects impressed even those engaged in the enterprise. When G.E. Dalrymple arrived at the Endeavour River mouth in late October 1873 he found an apparently empty and 'remote' place. The following morning the Leichhardt steamed into harbour carrying government police for a new port town, wardens for the goldfields, road engineers to prepare a route to the Palmer, and some seventy impatient miners.5 Dalrymple observed:

On Friday we had sailed into a silent, lonely, distant river mouth. . . . On Saturday we were in the middle . . . of a young diggings township — men hurrying to and fro, tents rising in all directions, horses grazing and neighing for their mates . . . the shouts of sailors and labourers landing more horses and cargo, com-

1 Hann 1873.
2 Jack 1921, 2:418.
3 Dalrymple 1874:1.
4 Dalrymple 1874:21.
5 Dalrymple 1874:21.
bined with the rattling of the donkey-engine, cranes and chains.6

By early March, only five months later, two tracks to the goldfields had been cut. The Cooktown Police Magistrate estimated that at any one time no less than 1,000 men were coming or going on the track; the population on the Palmer itself was 2,500 and expected to reach 5,000 by the end of the month. To feed them 2,000 horses were constantly on the road.7

By March 1874 the population of Cooktown had reached 2,500.8 One observer counted over 550 tents in the main settlement, and an equal number spread over an eighteen mile suburb.9 The main street was already lined by eight hotels and public houses, a brewery, a Chinese boardinghouse, various stores and other commercial establishments.10

More substantial evidence of permanency was soon forthcoming. By June 1875 the Crown had received more than £5,000 in land revenues;11 not only were substantial buildings erected on Charlotte Street but cattle already grazed on newly opened pastoral runs.12 Butcher’s Hill just northeast of the diggings opened in 1874; Mount Mulgrave to the west of the goldfield was settled in 1876.13

Farming properties began to be taken up along the north bank of the Endeavour River for some eighteen miles of its length, in particular at its junction with two permanent creeks, where the small township of Marton was established.14 Farming and pastoral settlement, hard on the heels of the gold rush and outlasting it by several decades, as well as the fishing industry which was established some time before the influx to Cooktown, interfered with local Aboriginal life far more than activity on the goldfields. In the early period, however, the large scale, continuous penetration of the bush by miners, digging and travelling on the roads, was the focal point of interaction between Aborigines and Europeans.

In early years miners feared Aborigines as ‘bloodthirsty cannibals’, and regarded their very presence as hostile. During the 1880s, however, pastoral and farming settlement rapidly expanded; new cattle runs were taken up in the dry, western country around Laura and the goldfields. Smaller farming and cattle properties spread along the

6 Dalrymple 1874:21.
7 Dalrymple 1874:21.
8 Dalrymple 1874:21.
10 As above.
12 QVP 1875, II:917.
14 See note 21. Outline Map of the Cook District Illustrating the Pastoral Hold-
Endeavour River branches and its tributary creeks. Aborigines came to be regarded by colonists as 'thieves and scoundrels'; complaints to the police reflected more concern for the predations of hunters on settlers' cattle than any genuine fear for the safety of the settlers themselves. Settlers, however, often phrased their complaints in terms of putative threats to their persons, or alleged attacks. Henry R. Jones wrote:

"... take my earnest and solemn warning that if some decisive steps are not taken at once to put a stop to these black raids, some of us about here will lose our lives, as the blacks are growing bolder and more mischievous every day. They are certainly worse about here now than they were years ago, as any mischief they do now is done with perfect impunity, at least as far as the Native Police are concerned. ... We are being impoverished almost daily by our losses in stock being killed and crippled and, what is still worse, driven all over the country."

The squatters objected to Aborigines not because they killed cattle but because by hunting they ran the cattle which then would not fatten. Aborigines crossing station land and camping at water holes were not approved of by settlers.

At this time police were willing to move Aborigines off settlers' land, to caution them against killing stock, and to hunt them down when they were considered threatening, but they were less prepared than many settlers wished to 'disperse' Aborigines — to shoot up Aboriginal camps — merely for hanging about. Fitzgerald, the Police Magistrate at Cooktown, remarked:

"It is utterly hopeless for him [the police inspector] to expect the good feelings of the majority of his neighbours — humanity is unrecognized — their creed: extermination of the natives."

As both Aboriginal men and women became useful in the colonial economy, not all settlers regarded extermination as a necessary policy. In fact, both official and popular opinion believed that Aborigines,
archaic remnants of an outmoded form of humanity with an anachronistic style of life, were destined to die out. According to a *Cooktown Herald* editorial in 1874:

> When savages are pitted against civilization, they must go to the wall; it is the fate of their race... Much as we may deplore the necessity for such a state of things, it is absolutely necessary, in order that the onward march of civilization may not be arrested by the antagonism of the Aborigines.19

For some colonizers of the Cooktown area, this belief morally required the conquering civilization to ease the pain of the last days of the Aborigines; for others, it was a justification for venality. Whatever their attitude toward Aborigines the very presence of the settlers soon made the Aboriginal hunting and gathering way of life impossible. In the Cooktown area this process occurred extremely rapidly.

The road to the goldfields, as well as the telegraph line to Maytown finished in 1876, followed the Endeavour River for almost its full extent.20 Police patrols and gold escorts made hunting and camping along this vital artery risky for Aborigines. In addition by the late 1870s scattered farm settlements existed along both banks of the river;21 during the next decade and a half settlement enclosed virtually all the land along the river, more than half of the right-hand branch, and all permanent waterways connected to them.

Following a government investigation into the possibility for tropical agriculture in the Cooktown area22 the McIvor River region north of Cooktown experienced a sudden sugar boom. In the McIvor region, unsettled prior to 1881, more than 13,000 acres were taken up by southern speculators in 1882.23 A map drawn in 1896 to show rural properties, displays the complete colonial dominion over all permanent water in the Cooktown area.24 In twenty years, just one generation, any possibility of living within a traditional economy had been denied the Aboriginal population.

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19 *Cooktown Herald*, sub-editorial, 24 June 1874.

20 The Cooktown-Laura Railway also followed this route and was opened in 1885. QVP 1886, III:151.

21 See Alex McNickle to editor, *Cooktown Independent*, dated 28 March 1897, published 7 April 1897, QSA COL/142; Pike 1979:53, 85, 88.


23 *Cooktown Chronicle*, 20 September 1879, ‘Closing of McIvor land’, mentions Baird, C. Walsh, and F.J.W. Beardmore, all Cooktown merchants; see also *Queenslander*, 23 October 1881, showing 15,000 acres at the McIvor applied for from Cooktown; *Queenslander*, 4 March 1882, p.261, col. 4; *Queenslander*, 18 March 1882, p.325, col. 1 (References courtesy of Ruth Kerr.)

24 QSA Map, N 1896, Cook.
By the late 1890s, W.E. Roth, the Northern Protector of Aborigines, pointed out to Queensland legislators that it was not feasible to expect people displaced by settlers simply to move on to the next river or creek, as this was certain to be owned by another group who would punish such trespass with death. In reality, however, the next river or creek was being taken up by colonial settlers. This situation drove Aborigines to beg, to steal food, or to prostitute themselves for tobacco or flour. Roth noted the situation confronting local Aborigines in the Cooktown area:

As a case in point, I may mention that of a Northern run with a seventy mile frontage on a main river, both sides, where the manager has had trouble with the blacks of late owing to their "disturbing" (not spearing) his cattle . . . The manager himself told the police that he would allow no blacks on the run and that "the trackers should shoot them — that was what they were kept for".

The effect on the people whose tribal land was in the immediate vicinity of Cooktown was also noted by Roth in his first report:

You may have wondered at my gathering so little information of scientific value concerning the actual Cooktown blacks: in fact they are so demoralised and yet half-civilised that it is extremely difficult to obtain anything really reliable concerning habits and customs of the "old days".

This was in 1898, one generation after the advent of the intruders.

This loss of Aboriginal self-sufficiency was to benefit the settler and the townsman, despite fears of Aboriginal predations on stock and goods. Destitute Aborigines constituted a convenient supply of cheap labour; stock workers, housemaids, errand boys, water carriers, and bedmates could be had for the cost of minimal rations and a bit of tobacco and calico. Even in the mid-'80s, police were wary of settler requests to arrest Aborigines camping on stations; they suspected that the settler wanted them rounded up and brought in to carry out stock work.

A reliable supply of labour was needed on stations. Some Aborigines were kept more or less permanently as domestics and stockmen; generally they received no wage, but they, and a number of their dependants, were fed and maintained. By the late 1890s when the options for self-sustenance in the bush had virtually disappeared and the numbers of such dependants, people begging or seeking work,

26 QNPA (1900) 1901.
27 Roth to Com. Pol., 4 March 1898, QSA COL/142, #3129 of 1898.
28 Brooke to Fitzgerald, 31 December 1882, QSA COL/A356, #1303 of 1883; see also QSA COL/A296, #2378 of 1880.
29 QNPA (1903) 1904.
HOW MUCH FOOD WILL THERE BE IN HEAVEN' grew too large, station managers requested police to remove them. Formal legal power to deport Aborigines to distant reserves was provided in the Act of 1897.30

The controversy in Cooktown over ‘bringing in the blacks’ reflects this ambivalence among settlers. In May 1881 the Cooktown police magistrate, Howard St. George, accompanied by two sub-inspectors and ten native troopers, travelled to Cape Bedford. They found no tracks so moved north to Cape Flattery. There they sighted some people, but failed to establish contact. St. George decided to send among them some of the boys who understood the language, and when peaceful relations have been established induce them to accompany them to the coast near Cooktown when I have no doubt that some of them might be induced to come over to town and if a beginning was once made they would be sure to repeat the visit.31

Police Magistrate Fitzgerald succeeded in camping with the Cape Bedford people the following month, and his report concluded that Cape Bedford should be reserved for Aborigines. A temporary reserve was immediately gazetted on the north shore of the Endeavour River mouth.32 Two months later the Mayor of Cooktown wrote to the Colonial Secretary:

Referring to the matter of the treatment of aboriginal natives in this district I beg to state that numbers of them are almost daily camped on the North Shore . . . If the work of civilising them is intended to be carried out they must be supplied with a certain quantity of food and in course of time no doubt some of them will be induced to ship in vessels engaged in the bêche-de-mer fishing and also in town.33

Next month his tone became more uneasy. He reiterated the need for the government to feed Aborigines until they took up what ‘work they may be found suitable for’ but warned ‘they are becoming a nuisance to the townspeople who complain of their being allowed into the town at all’.34 Aborigines were now crossing the river ‘to beg

30 QVP 1897, IV.
31 Howard St. George to Col. Sec., 27 May 1881, QSA COL/A314, #2395 of 1881.
32 This temporary reserve was cancelled in 1881 and 50,000 acres between the Endeavour and McIvor Rivers were gazetted in its place; Inspector Fitzgerald stated in 1886 that Cape Bedford was unsuitable and would never be self-supporting; Meston, quoting Fitzgerald, concluded it was little but bare rock and sea sand (Meston 1896). Roth (QNPA (1901) 1902) observed that less than 200 square miles of the total of the reserves was suitable.
33 John Davis to Col. Sec., ca. 23 September 1881, QSA COL/A344, #4154 of 1881.
34 John Davis to Col. Sec., 14 October 1881, QSA COL/A344, #4566 of 1881.
from house to house and in many instances terrify the inmates'. They within a few months townspeople demanded a regularised, supervised, rationed settlement be organized on the North Shore Reserve which would keep the 'naked savages' off the streets except when their labour was required.

By 1885 the *Cooktown Independent*'s editorial opinions reflected the changing climate: “Bringing in the blacks” is one thing, but keeping them in as a fraternity of thieves is another, and we won’t have it. The poor devils have been taught how to appreciate civilised food by a civilising and humane government, and then they are left to satisfy their cravings by preying on decent people in indecent costume, to the disgust of wives and daughters ... We still adhere to our opinion that they should be rounded in at the North Shore Reserve, and kept there by the aid of the police, with a qualified governor or teacher to show them how to work for their living, by cultivation, fishing, etc., and by hiring themselves out to bêche-de-mer boats. Every two or three months our fishermen have to go south for labour, while there are hundreds of black loafers about the suburbs. By confining them to their reserve, and establishing a labour depot under charge of a qualified protector, the town would be cleared of an intolerable nuisance and the demands of the fishing labour market met.

No Queensland mission society wished to start work on the North Shore Reserve, but a series of fortuitous events brought missionary Johann Flierl, later founder of the New Guinea Lutheran Mission, to Cooktown and ultimately to Cape Bedford. Delayed on his way to New Guinea, Flierl preached to an unenthusiastic German community and picked up a few words of Guugu-Yimidhirr from Aborigines he encountered about Cooktown. Stung by the remarks of the German Consul that missionaries had refused to work at Cape Bedford because it did not offer any prospects of material gain, and encouraged by Fitzgerald, Flierl applied to the Premier of Queensland to establish a Mission Station at Cape Bedford, pledging at least five years of school, gardening and Gospel. The government, in accepting the arrangement, offered to assist the missionary with buildings, tools, seeds and free rations for twelve months.

35 As above.
36 *Cooktown Independent* 14 February 1885, QSA COL/A422, #3053 of 1885.
37 Flierl 1910:57; *Deutsche Kirchen-und Missions-Zeitung* (from now on referred to as KMZ) 1885, #26 (Flierl letter of 8 December 1885).
38 Neuendettelsau Mission-Society Archives (from now on referred to as ND) Flierl to Deinzer, 24 December 1885 and 31 December 1885, ND; Flierl and Biar telegram to Premier Griffiths, 17 December 1885, ND; Flierl to Milman, P.M. Cooktown, 26 December 1885, ND.
39 Milman to Flierl, 12 January 1886, ND.
police also offered a native trooper as interpreter for the first month.  

Flierl saw both a pressing need to improve the lot of the Cooktown Aborigines and a particularly open field for Christian missionizing. He wrote:

The number of blacks in the close vicinity is supposed to be 400-500. Three years ago they were still cannibals [frassen sie noch Menschen] . . . only recently they started coming into Cooktown begging for alms. They have not had much contact with humans [sic]; they speak hardly any English. The 'ironclad' power of the police during former times should have trained them for Christianity [sic].  

Flierl’s earlier experiences with Aborigines in South Australia led him to observe carefully the North Shore natives’ appearance and customs: their dances were ‘ugly and disgusting’; their ‘bloodthirstiness’, preoccupation with ‘witchcraft’, ‘nakedness’, and their reluctance to work were ample evidence that the mission had much to contend with among ‘these poor pagans’. Missionary Pfalzer, a young seminary graduate who replaced Flierl at Elim in September 1886, decided after only a few months that his expectation that the Aborigines might have been partially ‘civilised’ by contact with Europeans was ill-founded. From being ‘notorious cannibals’ who ‘attacked anything that moved, be it animal or human, speared it, roasted it and ate it’, Pfalzer considered the Aborigines to have hardly progressed at all; changes that had occurred he attributed to violence between white and black: to ‘a number of terrible bloodbaths . . . — whether justified is a different matter — in which almost all fathers of children who are now ten years or older were killed’, and to police control of Aboriginal groups. Nevertheless, Pfalzer remarked, ‘robberies and lootings take place almost daily as well as injuries to whites and killings of Chinese’.  

Aborigines north of Cooktown had ‘noble acts’ to their credit, (rescuing shipwrecked whites), but also ‘despicable acts of treachery’ to their debit (for example, rebelling against a Cooktown fisherman near Lizard Island, throwing him overboard, and absconding with his boat). The missionaries were quite prepared to believe that the Cape Bedford people only recently had ceased cooking and eating their own

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40 Flierl report of 14 January 1886 in KMZ 12 February 1886.
42 Flierl’s final report before leaving for New Guinea, published in Kirchliche Mitteilungen aus und über Nordamerika . . . (from now on referred to as KM) 1886, #9.
43 Pfalzer to Connector, 6 February 1887, ND.
44 Flierl’s remarks, KM 1886, #9 for credit; Pfalzer to Inspector, 6 July 1887 (see KM 1887, #10) for debit.
dead; the Aboriginal practice of hauling around the wrapped and rotting corpses of deceased children, mourning over the remains for months at a time, was abhorrent to them. Here was evidence that, in their darkened and Christless lives, 'they have not our hope'.

The most immediate evidence the missionaries had for the degraded state of the Aborigines and hence their need for the Gospel, however, was in Cooktown itself. Missionary W. Poland, arriving from Germany in 1888, was puzzled that so many Aborigines were wandering about the town and not at the mission; he reflected afterwards that their presence in town was due to 'lust, alcoholism, and opium-addiction'.

The missionaries despaired at cultivating either soil or souls when their native labour periodically left the Mission for town, where they would beg from door to door, occasionally cut wood, carry water, or wash clothes. Aborigines themselves chided the missionaries for having mangal murr ‘short hands’, saying that on stations near town or at the 8-Mile Native Police camp, for a few days’ work, they could receive generous handouts. Pfalzer had to concede that by contrast two pounds of bread and a cup of tea was not much pay for two hours of hard labour on the mission. Missionary G.H. Schwarz thought that Aborigines’ working for food in Cooktown, or even begging, was not too bad: ‘much worse is the way in which black women and girls earn their food and tobacco, and one’s hair stands on end when one hears even the smallest children talk about this’. Though missionaries devoted their primary attention to the Aborigines on the Reserve who were subject to the lure of town and its demoralising influence, they were aware of ‘vast and promising’ opportunities for mission work among the ‘crowds of natives’ in the hinterland.

Flierl originally agreed to ask for no government support for the Mission Station (which he named Elim) after the first twelve months, but when government support ceased, in April 1887, it became progressively harder for the Mission to feed its inmates. As one agricultural venture after another failed, the missionaries were constantly in debt to Cooktown merchants, clamouring for money from Germany or South Australia. The missionaries at Cape Bedford, though, found the

45 Pfalzer to Inspector, February 1888, ND; Poland report to government, 21 June 1888, ND (KM 1888, #8).
46 Poland 1907, 2:2-4, ‘My arrival in Australia’.
47 Pfalzer to Inspector, 7 September 1887, ND.
48 Pfalzer to Inspector, 30 August 1888, in KM 1888, #11.
49 Pfalzer to Inspector, 12 March 1888, ND.
50 Schwarz to Inspector, 17 October 1888, ND.
51 Lutheran Church of Australia Archives (from now on referred to as LCA) 1.2, Meyer to Rechner, 5 August 1888.
52 Grope and Roennfeldt 1977:3; ‘Elim’ refers to Exodus 15.
53 Pfalzer to Inspector, 26 April 1887, ND, on end of government rations; Pfalzer to Inspector, 28 May 1888 and 3 February 1889, ND, on debts to Clunn in Cooktown and gifts from South Australia.
Queensland government cooperative, and they repeatedly asked for police assistance, both in keeping whites off the Mission, and keeping Aborigines, especially children, out of Cooktown and in school. They also sought partial financial relief by asking the government to subsidise the mission school. The missionaries themselves pinned their highest hopes for improving the natives on the school.

Flierl outlined his mission programme for the Police Magistrate:

... the main point of all Missionwork is to Christianise the heathen — so consequently they become good civilised too — and this chiefly has to be done by religious instruction and preaching of the Gospel. Thereby it is necessary to use as soon as possible the own language of the aborigines ... so they acquire a right understanding of the gospel of truth. On the other part in daily conversation and by teaching all what is possible must be done to communicate in English with the white people ... As well as for young people instruction in School being good means of education, so for adults work and especially work in gardens to become steadily and useful men.

He concludes:

A good furtherance in our work would be if the natives who frequent the township shall be kept away after opening a station for them.

He argued that:

the blacks need to be shown, taught, attracted to the outdoor work, which will turn this wilderness into a flowering garden; and they must learn to accept a way of life that gives them a safe and permanent food supply in return for the labour of their hands and the sweat of their brow.

Flierl apparently envisaged his task to include: (a) religious instruction, with (b) learning the native language as a prerequisite combined with (c) secular and practical education of children, and (d) training adults to do productive work, with the aim (e) of cultivating enough food to feed the station, thus (f) making it possible for the Aborigines to abandon their nomadic habits, and (g) insulating them from corrupting European influence. Flierl soon left for New Guinea, and the new missionaries, recent graduates from mission training at Neuendettelsau in Bavaria, were young and inexperienced.

54 Government Gazette 3 March 1886 forbids unauthorized entry into the Reserve; also Flierl to Rechner, 4 April 1886, LCA 1.1.
55 Pfalzer report, 5 March 1889, ND; he calls for Aboriginal children to be kept from Cooktown.
56 As above.
57 Flierl to Milman, 26 December 1885, ND; this is Flierl's copy of the letter he wrote in English, signed also by the lay-helper Biar.
58 Flierl to Rechner, 16 February 1886, LCA 1.1.
W. Poland came to Elim in June 1888 and remained for more than twenty years. A slight man with a partially paralyzed arm which hindered his ability to work physically, he took a strong interest in the Elim school children. But G.H. Schwarz was ultimately to have the most profound effect on the Mission community. He arrived at Cape Bedford aged nineteen in 1887 and remained almost without a break until 1942, when he was interned as an enemy alien. From 1889 onwards, Schwarz and Poland were jointly in charge of Mission activities. Poland and his wife cared mainly for schoolgirls at Elim, and Schwarz, physically imposing and a strict disciplinarian, managed a variety of agricultural and pastoral projects at Cape Bedford with Aboriginal labour. The two men complemented each other: Poland — kind, slight, in a "civilized" household where women cooked and sewed — sang hymns and played parlour games with young Aboriginal girls; Schwarz, a no-nonsense bachelor worked in the fields and mustered cattle, preaching the Gospel, disciplining disobedient Aboriginal youths, and defying "heathen" adults. These two men supervised the creation of the modern Hopevale community, and presided over local mission policy.

Flierl had appealed to the police to keep Aborigines out of Cooktown and to find ways to get them to frequent the Mission. For years the missionaries despaired of making any progress 'while the blacks are allowed, if not encouraged, to hang around Cooktown loafing, begging, and 'brawling'. Tribal fights, rumours of free blankets, pipes, tobacco or rations would lure them into Cooktown, and children would disappear from school to follow their parents. The missionaries were unsympathetic to the reasons Aborigines gave for leaving; Aboriginal warfare put the mark of Cain upon them. The missionaries struggled to supply enough food to keep Aborigines on the station. They decided

59 Poland to 'Red School' (a sponsoring school in Bavaria), KM 1892, #11.
60 Poland to Inspector, 12 February 1889, ND. See Rose 1978: Ch. 8. Although both missionaries clearly employed corporal punishment, Poland reported Schwarz did not believe in striking Aboriginal children but favoured ignoring them as a form of punishment (KM 1888, #12).
61 Schwarz was almost solely responsible for the direction of the Cape Bedford Mission from 1907 until 1942. Most Hopevale residents alive before World War II have very strong feelings about him, ranging from intense loyalty and devotion to resentment and hostility towards his demanding manner. He was convinced that Aborigines, no matter how civilized and well-trained they might appear, required firm supervision. No one now alive at Hopevale knew Poland when he was a missionary (although many met him during the War in southern Queensland), but considerable lore has grown up around him. A forgotten hero of the early mission is Johannes Pingilina, a Christian Aboriginal from Bethesda who was primarily responsible for helping the missionaries with the languages at Cape Bedford and Bloomfield.
62 Pfalzer to Inspector, 30 August 1888, ND (KM 1888, #11).
63 As above and Pfalzer to Inspector, 10 March 1888, ND, and Méyer to Rechner, 12 April 1887, LCA 1.2 (and see KM 1886, #6).
64 Pfalzer to Inspector, 30 August 1888, ND.
to try at least to keep school-age children on the station whether or not their parents could be induced to remain. At first the missionary would simply go to the camp and drag truants back to school over their mothers' objections but soon the missionaries decided that the children must be housed away from their parents on the station, and there take all their meals and attend school. The missionaries could thus keep children under control (and indirectly maintain a hold over their parents), and also remove them from evil camp influences. Pfalzer asserted: 'It goes without saying that they never hear or see anything good while they stay with the older generation'. Schwarz found that the 'girls listen in rapt attention to the filthy gossip the women bring back from Cooktown. The poor youngsters unwittingly absorb the most appalling moral poison'. Schwarz's solution was to house boys and girls in separate dormitories and to enforce a rule of silence at bedtime. According to the missionaries Aboriginal parents also tried to induce them to keep and feed infants, proposing to come only for periodic visits, though the missionaries refused to keep children below school age.

The government initially supplied rations to Aborigines on the Mission because they hoped that if the Aborigines received enough food it would prevent their wandering about and induce them to remain permanently on mission stations. The missionaries hoped to supply enough food to keep Aborigines from stealing mission food crops, to get them to cultivate gardens and to receive the Word of God. The Aborigines did not always seem to appreciate the efforts at cultivation made on their behalf. When Meyer tried to get them to drain a swamp near Elim for rice cultivation, they complained that they preferred to eat nuts from trees already growing there. Pfalzer considered it counterproductive to encourage Aborigines to fish or hunt to supplement dwindling rations: 'What they catch on the side they eat on the side, and if they ever have lots to eat by themselves, they don't turn up for work either'. Nor were Aborigines always impressed by the missionaries' generosity; they responded to the dictum that only those who worked would be fed by asking, 'Does the One in Heaven tell you

65 Pfalzer to Inspector, 4 February 1887, ND (KM 1887, #3).
66 Pfalzer to Inspector, 26 April 1887, ND.
67 Pfalzer to Inspector, April 1887, ND (KM 1887, #7).
68 Pfalzer to Inspector, 5 October 1888, ND (KM 1889, #2).
69 As above; Poland to Inspector, 5 October 1888, ND.
70 Meyer to Rechner, 8 July 1887, LCA 1.2.
71 Meyer to Rechner, 26 May 1887, LCA 1.2; Pfalzer to Inspector, 4 February 1887, ND.
72 Meyer to Rechner, 10 November 1886, LCA 1.1.
73 Pfalzer to Inspector, 6 September 1887, ND.
to give us so little?' 74 Quick to relate mission life to the promised Heavenly Paradise, they frequently asked ‘How much food will there be in Heaven?’ and ‘How much work will be done there?’ 75

The missionaries quickly realised that their goals were tied to a closed circle of necessity that was to plague them for sixty years. To become ‘civilized’, the Aborigines had to be induced to shun towns and other contacts with Europeans and to settle on the Mission; Aborigines were attracted to the Mission by ample supplies of food; such supplies could only be obtained through Aboriginal labour. 76 ‘The only thing that could keep these wildly roaming hordes together at all is work; and if they are to work, they must be fed’, wrote Pfalzer in 1887. 77 Thus began a continual, but rarely successful, effort to produce foodstuffs. The missionaries faced two insurmountable difficulties: they considered local Aborigines ‘incorrigible loafers’, in constant need of supervision, but always ready to eat rations. 78 They also discovered what early government officials already knew: that the land available was very poor. The missionaries searched the Reserve for better gardening areas, and Schwarz ultimately settled on the southern slopes of Cape Bedford, naming his station ‘Hope Valley’. 79

Although Flierl considered religious instruction to be the greatest priority, in the first years the missionaries had little time for preaching. They lamented their lack of progress in spiritual matters. In fact their metaphors of religious enlightenment reflect their mundane preoccupations. Flierl commented on the religious training of Aboriginal women ‘... if they could learn to clear the garden of weeds, they might come to appreciate the weeds in their hearts and minds and prepare a fine clean bed to receive the blessed Seed of God’s Word into their hearts’. 80 Pfalzer, in a more nutritive vein, hoped that ‘the heathen’s hunger for human flesh will soon be transformed into hunger for the Bread of Life’. 81 At Bloomfield Meyer and his staff, somewhat apologetically, put spiritual work after building and cultivation activities. 82

74 Pfalzer to Inspector, 3 December 1888, ND (KM 1889, #3).
75 Meyer to Missions Congregation, Adelaide, 2 June 1888, LCA 1.2 (KM 1888, #9).
76 Schwarz to Inspector, 17 October 1888, ND.
77 Pfalzer to Inspector, 6 September 1887, ND (KM 1887, #12).
78 Meyer to Rechner, 5 August 1888, LCA 1.2.
79 The first attempt at cultivation in 1887-88 failed (Schwarz to Inspector, 27 December 1887, ND); another attempt was made in 1889-90 and Schwarz moved there permanently when Poland’s bride arrived at Elim (Schwarz to Inspector, 21 October 1890, ND).
80 Flierl to Rechner, 6 March 1886, LCA 1.1.
81 Pfalzer to Inspector, 11 November 1886, ND (KM 1887, #2).
82 Meyer to Missions Congregation, 2 January 1889, LCA 1.2.
At Cape Bedford the missionaries tried to pursue Flierl’s program of learning the language and saving souls. The Elim school was conducted in Guugu-Yimidhirr. With the help of a Diyari evangelist, Johannes Pingilina, Schwarz translated the Lord’s Prayer into Guugu-Yimidhirr only three months after his arrival in Australia. As the missionaries became more proficient in the language, they appreciated its subtleties, although they clearly never grasped its basic grammatical structure. They were particularly pleased to discover expressions which seemed to encode religious concepts and considerable effort was devoted to uncovering native religious ideas. The missionaries, however, tried to oppose and correct these ‘mistaken notions’; Schwarz, at Hope Valley defiantly made his coffee over a Dhabul or ‘sacred’ fire. in the face of predictions that strange Aborigines would surely murder him. On the other hand, Pfalzer considered beliefs about transmigration of souls and rebirth (he thought Aborigines believed they would be reborn as whites), proved that some ‘spark of Divine Revelation’ remained even among these heathens, these ‘lowest of the low’ — and thus that even their wretched souls could be saved for the Kingdom of God.

The parents of children in the Cape Bedford school, passing back and forth between Cooktown, local farms, cattle stations and new goldfields north at Starcke River, were confronted everywhere with a white man’s world. The terms on which Aboriginal men and women could find flour, grog or a bit of tobacco in Cooktown were less easy than the missionaries imagined, even though the forty-odd hotels and grog shops in booming Cooktown were happy to pay Aboriginal help in liquor, and to sell them more for cash. It was profitable for publicans to employ Aborigines on whom they could depend and who could warn them about strangers who might have informed the police, once the

83 Pfalzer to Inspector, 5 February 1887, ND.
84 Schwarz to Inspector, 27 December 1887, ND (KM 1888, #4).
85 Poland's first systematic description of Guugu Yimidhirr, modelled on classical grammar, was in a letter to Neuendettelsau, 16 August 1889, ND. See Poland 1907, 1:14, and Roth 1901, which is based on information supplied by Schwarz and Poland.
86 Poland to Inspector, 5 October 1888, ND. There were some notable misunderstandings: Meyer’s rendering of ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery’ into Gugu Yalandji turns out to mean ‘Thou shalt not marry’. (Meyer to Rechner, 6 September 1888, LCA 1.2).
87 Schwarz to Inspector, 13 February 1888, ND (KM 1888, #5).
88 . . . and whites as sharks! Pfalzer to Inspector, 28 May 1888, ND (cf. KM 1888, #7). All the Cape Bedford missionaries seemed to subscribe to a theory that Aborigines were somehow degenerated from full human beings; Poland wrote: ‘These people are living proof of the low level a human can reach, when he lives like an animal, giving thought to nothing but the satisfaction of his physical needs’ (Poland to ‘Red School’ in KM 1889, #1).
restrictions on supplying Aborigines came into force. Chinese in Cooktown (merchants, market gardeners, miners) were able legally to import opium, and Aborigines acquired charcoal opium from them in exchange for work and sexual services. Police found this impossible to control, but were unable to convince the government to forgo the £20,000 a year opium import revenue. In 1904 Roth attributed the heavy death rate among Aborigines to opium.

The violence, disease and human decay which resulted from intoxicants offended Cooktown councillors and in 1885 an ordinance excluded Aborigines from town after dark. Missionaries and police tried to exclude Aborigines from town altogether, but their efforts failed because too many townspeople profited from Aborigines, relying on their cheap, casual labour and, increasingly, on the virtually free work of Aboriginal children. Roth described this practice:

Settlers in outside districts who have plenty of myalls about their country are often importuned by town residents and others to bring them in a boy or girl. In due time the child arrives. How the children are separated from their parents is a subject of conjecture and surmise. Most people will tell you they are better off with Europeans . . . Most of the children will bolt (if old enough and the distance is not too great) and then they are termed ungrateful by their owners. This practice has been going on for years, and with the exception of one or two cases . . . without good result to the children; they change masters and mistresses, prostitution and disease follow, they can only speak pidgeon English, and generally become pariahs among both whites and blacks.

The future of these children was even more uncertain than that of adults; stolen, or bought at a young age, raised as slaves, uneducated in Aboriginal or European knowledge, unshaped by either morality, they faced certain rejection by both worlds when set adrift to shift for themselves as adolescents.

Traffic in children, and the kidnapping of children and adults had been common on the east coast of Cape York before the establishment of Cooktown. This was the principal means of obtaining labour in the bêche-de-mer and pearlshell industry, as Roth reported in 1903:

At Cape York the bêche-de-mer fisheries have been going on for thirty years past now and the natives here — although hopelessly demoralised from a protective point of view — have, nevertheless,
... come to that stage of civilisation when their very existence is in a sense dependent upon the trade.\textsuperscript{95}

To recover pearlshell and bêche-de-mer Aborigines had to dive along reefs, and this was unpleasant, dangerous, and debilitating work. During the recrudescence of this industry in the late 1890s Roth observed the effects on young Aborigines:

The following...[eight] deaths all within eight weeks of the boys' return from the boats...may be directly attributable to the life, and exposure. All these boys were apparently in sound health at the time they were originally signed on, and, with one exception were well under twenty years of age. The symptoms were common: general emaciation, pains in the back and chest, coughing and the spitting of blood.\textsuperscript{96}

Not surprisingly few people knowingly and willingly shipped on these boats. Recruiting practices involved subterfuges, corruption, and outright force to obtain the divers desired.\textsuperscript{97} One ploy was to obtain the services of boys from the old men of a tribe through payments of flour and tobacco. As late as 1898 Roth reported such a case from Starcke River.\textsuperscript{98}

It was relatively easy for boats to abduct people along the coast. In 1882 the Collector of Customs at Cooktown was moved to observe, 'The mode of obtaining their services should, in the interests of common humanity, be more legitimately pursued than decoying them at every convenient spot along the coast and its islands irrespective of age or sex'.\textsuperscript{99} In 1884 Frank Lee was charged in Cooktown with running down a canoe, kidnapping three Aborigines and shooting or attempting to shoot the rest. The bêche-de-mer boats were willing to pay £4 a head to 'recruiters' of Aborigines at this time.\textsuperscript{1}

Fear ruled the boats, and captains developed elaborate procedures for protecting themselves against uprising, assault, and escape.

A Bêche de mer man owning a small vessel will sail from Thursday Island with two congenial ruffians...shipped as mate or cook...

He will then by presents and promises induce as many blacks, male and female, as he can carry to come on board...and sail for his ultimate destination — some islet or sand bank in the Great Northeast Channel, or far out on the Barrier Reef. Here he will erect his smokehouse and commence real operations. Taking all the male blacks he will sail to another sand bank, perhaps fifteen or twenty

\textsuperscript{95} QNPA (1902) 1903.
\textsuperscript{96} QNPA (1899) 1900.
\textsuperscript{97} QNPA (1903) 1904, quoting John Douglas, Police Magistrate, Thursday Island.
\textsuperscript{98} Roth to Com. Pol., 24 June 1898, QSA COL/142 (typed letters).
\textsuperscript{99} Collector of Customs, Cooktown, to Col. Sec., 2 March 1882, QSA COL/A333, #1385 of 1882.
\textsuperscript{1} QSA COL/A394, #4976 of 1884, March-June 1884.
miles distant, will there land them, and leaving them a small dinghy in which to reach the neighbouring reef where the bêche de mer is to be collected, he and his mates will return to their headquarters where they will revel in the society of the grass widows of the fish collectors, whom they will occasionally visit for the purpose of bringing in the fish obtained by them to the smoke house. Meanwhile the blacks will work patiently for a time, fed on a small allowance of 'sharps' (an inferior kind of flour) and such fish as they can catch. Those that get sick die unrelieved and unrecorded and they all live the hardest possible life, generally on the verge of starvation and frequently in want of water.2

Often Aborigines were put ashore hundreds of miles from their own districts, facing hostile tribes and predatory whites along their routes home.3 Women were detained on board for years at a time. Tooloo came to the attention of the police in Cooktown when she was around fifteen years old having been taken to sea some five years earlier by the schooner Flirt. Her companions were said to have run away off Cape Tribulation. She was left in the care of a Cooktown hotelkeeper, then 'decoyed away' by some native troopers. The captain of the Flirt tried to trace her, promising to return her to her native area and put her into domestic service.4 Another notorious incident occurred in 1882 when eighteen Aborigines aged nine to forty, procured from Townsville, arrived in Cooktown.

They drafted these 'boys' and gins after the manner of sheep, each captain casting lots for nine, mixed sexes, without reference to the inclinations or feelings naturally induced by the filial or friendly instincts of the parties concerned some of whom, I know, manifested a strong aversion to their separation. Amongst those who fell to the lot of Captain Webb of the 'Pride of the Logan' was a girl of 11 or perhaps 12 years old — a mere child, comparatively — who must have received shameful treatment on the voyage between Hinchenbrooke and Cooktown, as one Steve Barry, who belonged to the 'Reindeer' tender proceeded on board Webb's vessel, took forcible possession of this child, claimed her as his own and actually dragged her by the arm through the main thoroughfare of this town, despite my remonstrances until he lodged or secreted her in a public house, incidentally for very discreditable purposes.5

3 Roth to Com. Pol., 6 May 1898, QSA COL/142, #6944 of 1898.
4 Blakesley to Robert Grey, 24 September 1879, QSA COL/A250, #3427 of 1879.
5 Fahey, Harbour Master to Collector of Customs, 2 March 1882, QSA COL/A333, #1385 of 1882.
Inspector Fitzgerald received advice that he possessed no powers to prevent 'the carrying off of gins'. The abduction of children, however, could be prosecuted.6

The abuse of women in the fishing industry became a significant demographic factor. Venereal disease, the exposed life on the boats, the insecure existence, and the likelihood of early death all affected women's capacity to reproduce and to rear children. Just as every diseased or drowned diver was lost to the Aboriginal community, each woman dead or diseased or unable to care for her baby was a loss to her own generation and those following. The rapidly dwindling numbers of Aborigines in the Cooktown area reflected this situation.

The treatment of women and girls by these boat crews was regarded by police as one of the main causes of murder by Aborigines7 and eventually the shipping of women and children was prohibited.8 Fishing crews had long been accustomed to paying Aboriginal fathers and husbands in food and tobacco for the sexual services of their women. Miners took temporary possession of women in similar ways, though violent conflicts often arose when miners refused to return women to their husbands. These practices and the ambiguous position of the children resulting from such unions forced the government to attempt to control access to Aboriginal women. White rights to female labour, and the movements of Aboriginal women, were controlled by legislation and refinements of policy during the ten years after mid-1890.

Colonial officials regarded Aboriginal women as even more dangerously sexual than European women:

We can hardly expect the emotions of the savage woman to be under more severe control than those of the white. All aboriginal girls, with a few rare exceptions, would drift towards one common destination involving their own degradation and additional burdens on the state.9

Even where they were in legitimate employment their 'unowned' sexuality was considered a problem because their employers dismissed them if they became pregnant.10

Control of the Aboriginal women was essential in the implementation of Aboriginal policy:

6 Fitzgerald to Col. Sec. (and minute by Seymour, Commissioner of Police), 2 March 1882, QSA COL/A333, #1385 of 1882.
7 See Fahey to Col. Sec., 23 June 1882, QSA COL/A340, #3552 of 1882; St. George to Seymour, 3 March 1882, QSA COL/A333, #1228 of 1882; Meston 1896.
8 QNPA (1899) 1900.
9 QNPA (1902) 1903.
10 QNPA (1902) 1903.
Freedom for the women to come and go when and where they please will ensure a permanent increase of the half-caste population.\(^{11}\)

Roth was appalled by the abuse of half-caste girls, many of them bought as small children and raised as servants in Cooktown households.\(^{12}\) The girls themselves were the result of thirty years of abuse of their mothers. The very existence of these children and their vulnerability touched the sensibilities of officials and by 1902 a bureaucratic campaign was under way to bring children, especially girls, in from the bush,\(^{13}\) out of dangerous living situations\(^{14}\) with single men, aliens, publicans, etc. and to place them in institutions before they reached puberty.\(^{15}\)

The Act of 1897 and its amendment in 1901 regulated Aboriginal employment through permits and legal agreements which became the main means of controlling Aborigines in the colonial economy.\(^{16}\) Theoretically every case of employment was examined and approved by protectors; men's wages and conditions of employment were controlled, but the placement of girls and women most concerned protectors.\(^{17}\) During the period when the regulation of Aboriginal employment was undertaken seriously, authorities accelerated the removal of Aborigines to reserves. For 'humanitarian reasons', protectors incarcerated waifs and half-caste girls at missions for protection and training. Their future as adults on the missions was seen as a problem for, to allow them to marry tribal Aborigines was to throw away all the effort that had gone into civilizing them, but it was even more undesirable that they marry non-Aborigines.\(^{18}\) The rounding up of children and their placement on missions contained the seeds of later policies of permanent mission residence.

By 1896 the government had accepted that Aboriginal free access to towns was undesirable. The Colonial Secretary wrote:

Aboriginals are and should be removed after the sun goes down, and no law is necessary to justify this, save the law of necessity.\(^{19}\)

The reserve was their rightful place and here they were expected to remain unless gainfully employed elsewhere. Similarly, station managers and farmers only tolerated Aborigines usefully employed on their properties. Roth 'while anxiously striving to treat him [the Aboriginal]

\(^{11}\) QNPA (1901) 1902.
\(^{12}\) QNPA (1901) 1902.
\(^{13}\) QNPA (1899) 1900.
\(^{14}\) QNPA (1902) 1903.
\(^{15}\) QNPA (1902) 1903.
\(^{16}\) QNPA (1899) 1900.
\(^{17}\) QNPA (1902) 1903.
\(^{18}\) Meston 1896.
\(^{19}\) Police order, Inspector Lamond, Cooktown, 18 July 1896, QSA POL/12D/A1.
as a human being whose wishes should, as far as possible — i.e., within reasonable limit — be considered and respected' maintained that the forced transference of Aborigines to reserves could be justified where drought and settlement threatened starvation, where remoteness restricted access to medical and surgical requirements and where they could not be adequately protected against unscrupulous aliens and Europeans. By 1900 nearly all Aborigines not gainfully employed for lawful purposes by respectable Europeans were candidates for forced removal to reserves.

During the last decade of the nineteenth century Cape Bedford Mission became a small community, with a core of permanent residents whose entire existence was tied to an evolving Mission social life. Disillusioned by their failure to lure adult Aborigines to the station and unable to support and feed large numbers, the missionaries concentrated on an enclave of children whom they could carefully supervise. Agricultural efforts on a reduced scale were continued, with severely curtailed finances. Until the end of the 1890s and the arrival of the Protectors, Meston and Roth, the missionaries enjoyed little support from local authorities, even less from settlers, miners, timber-getters and fishermen. As Aboriginal numbers around Cooktown dwindled, the Mission became the last refuge for elderly 'heathen' Aborigines. By carefully marrying off Aboriginal women who were faithful converts to Christianity the missionaries established an isolated Lutheran enclave, while Aborigines outside either perished or developed radically new ways of life.

After missionary Pfalzer departed for New Guinea, leaving Schwarz and Poland alone at Cape Bedford Schwarz planned to reduce cultivation at the Mission to a level the missionaries, schoolchildren, and the few adults could manage. He could neither feed nor rely on the availability of a larger Aboriginal work force. From the time Schwarz moved to Hope Valley, leaving the Polands at Elim, there was a (normally amicable) division of labour between the stations. Poland and his wife kept the schoolchildren at Elim; Schwarz, the older children, and any adults who could be induced to work raised food crops and cattle at Hope Valley. Periodically, Schwarz attempted to consolidate the stations. In 1900 Elim closed and the Polands and their schoolgirls moved to Hope Valley. By 1902 Schwarz was trying to make a commercial success of copra and sisal fibres.

20 QNPA (1901) 1902.
21 From 1905-1907, Poland was on furlough in Germany, and left the mission in 1909; another missionary who had served in East Africa spent 1900-1901 at Cape Bedford but returned to Germany (Thiele 1938:116).
22 Schwarz to Inspector, 2 April 1889, ND.
23 Schwarz to Inspector, 12 July 1902, ND.
Relations between Mission and government underwent a series of reversals. In April 1889 Police Magistrate Milman recommended the government grant the Mission an annual subsidy of £200, subject to his continued good opinion of Mission management.²⁴ Milman advised Schwarz to use the subsidy for rations and to keep meticulous records so as to justify further requests for assistance.²⁵ Schwarz, always sceptical, agreed that while Aborigines might well come to the Mission if promised government-supplied rations and that this was better than driving them from the towns or stations, he was nonetheless anxious about too many Aborigines flocking to Elim for free food. He was also dubious about depending on government aid which was contingent on the goodwill of a sympathetic police magistrate,²⁶ Schwarz’s fears proved well founded; after a few years of favourable government inspections, the missionaries fell out with Police Magistrate Chester who in 1893 persuaded the government to cut off the subsidy. The official reason was to save money during a financial crisis, reflecting Chester’s opinion that ‘no practical result’ had resulted from the Cape Bedford work and that:

no result at all commensurate with the outlay is ever likely to be shown by the latter station and especially since it is impossible for . . . the police to force the aboriginal children to remain in the schools, as such action would be contrary to the essentially voluntary principle of the scheme and would, moreover, inevitably breakdown.²⁷

The missionaries felt that the police magistrate had ordered the subsidy discontinued because he was unable to persuade Schwarz and Poland to send some educated, well-behaved Aboriginal girls into Cooktown to work as domestics. Chester was determined to have the girls, but the missionaries left the choice to the girls, who refused.²⁸ Cape Bedford received no government subsidy between 1893 and 1 April 1897, when £5 per month was granted for Aboriginal relief, apparently at Meston’s suggestion.²⁹ In the interim the missionaries struggled to feed not only Aborigines but also themselves.³⁰ Uncertain funds were received from Neuendettelsau and emergency grants from South Australia.

²⁴ Milman report, 25 April 1889, QSA COL/139, #4058 of 1889; Poland to Inspector, 6 June 1889, ND.
²⁵ Schwarz to Inspector, 7 June 1889, ND (KM 1889, #8).
²⁶ Schwarz to Inspector, 10 July 1889, ND.
²⁷ Parry-Okeden to Rechner, 6 June 1894, LCA 1.2. The Police Magistrate argued, apparently without foundation, that ample native foods were available from the Reserve and the sea, so rations were unnecessary.
²⁸ KM 1894, #1.
²⁹ ‘Relief for Cape Bedford, 1897-98’, QSA COL/457, p.11; see also Meston 1896.
³⁰ Poland reported to Rechner on his own difficulties, 18 May 1891, KMZ 1892; Poland 1907, 1:16.
The government only approved a renewed annual subsidy of £100, 'conditionally on Missionaries Schwarz and Poland taking in hand some of the Cooktown aboriginal waifs and strays',31 after Schwarz approached Roth and argued that he had eighty or ninety Aborigines to feed daily who were otherwise starving. This was the beginning of a cooperative relationship between Schwarz and various Protectors of Aborigines and, over the years, many children from other parts of Queensland were transplanted to Cape Bedford.

Roth considered that a beneficial feature of the 1897 legislation was that it afforded protection to the missionaries who could (by taking out 'agreements' for employment 'on their own boys') keep Aborigines on the station. Without such agreements the young Aborigines 'as soon as they can make their way on their own, go off to Cooktown and accept any employment white people will give them'.32 The missionaries always had found their neighbours hostile to their enterprise, competing by underhand means for the services of the Aborigines the Lutherans also wanted.33 The local settlers also had their eyes on mission land, often expressing the sentiment that setting aside useful land for Aborigines only impeded progress. Commercial timber-getters fought to gain access to the Reserve and they received the support of the Cooktown Chamber of Commerce.

... it is scarcely logical to stop the development of a district by locking up some of its richest natural resources as far as the white man is concerned, while they are freely vested in the blacks to whom they are of no use whatever. The position is intolerable and of injustice to the capitalist who has invested capital in the latest machinery [i.e. sawmills] for the purpose of converting this latent wealth into actual money.34

At Cape Bedford the issue was cattle pasture. The Mission kept a small herd but neighbouring settlers freely ran their cattle on the Reserve,

31 Roth to Com. Pol., 6 June 1898, QSA COL/142, #7701 of 1898; also QSA COL/142: Schwarz to Roth, 16 March 1898, #15678 of 1898, and Roth to Com. Pol., 18 March 1898, #3421 of 1898 attachment; also QSA POL/1 Letterbook p.24, of 18 March 1898. Roth took a special interest in Cape Bedford and received letters written in Guugu Yimidhirr from Cape Bedford schoolgirls.

32 Roth's report, quoted in KM 1889, #3 and 4.

33 Poland to Inspector, 12 December 1901, ND. Poland was once approached on a Cooktown street by a landowner in the area who wanted to hire some Elim schoolboys, (Poland to Inspector, 28 February 1890, ND). Meyer reported that settlers near Bloomfield were continually trying to lure natives from the mission (letter to Rechner, 3 January 1890, LCA 1.2); Meyer himself was later involved in the irregular recruitment of some mission boys for fishing boats, which ultimately led to the government's insistence that he be removed (Parry-Okeden to Rechner, 28 August 1890, LCA 1.2).

34 Pruitt, Cooktown Chamber of Commerce, to Minister for Lands, 14 July 1891, Queensland Department of Public Lands (LR) 86-89, #14917 of 1891.
abused Aboriginal stockmen and apparently made off with Mission stock.  

In Cooktown itself the Mission's reputation was always fragile, among both Aborigines and Europeans. When Mission debts were high Meyer reported people in town would yell in the street: '. . . those bloody missionaries, always writing cheques when they can't pay . . .' Around the same time Aborigines in Cooktown told people that Schwarz had driven them from the station and complained of his meanness. Townspeople also encouraged Aborigines at the Mission to run away. Alex McNickle, a settler on the Endeavour River, considered that Cooktown people rather than the missionaries had 'reformed the Myall tribes adjoining the town up as high towards semi-civilization as they generally get' and the Mission boys he considered were work-shy and dishonest. He dismissed Meston's suggestions for increased Mission support:

> With regard to the Cape Bedford Mission station, if it costs £1000 per annum to teach 'a few gins' of one tribe, how much will it cost to reform the numerous tribes of Queensland blacks . . . Aborigines he believed were 'relics of humanity who must die out in a few years'.

McNickle's remark about teaching a few gins' reflects how, perhaps by default, the missionaries had come to focus their efforts on Aboriginal schoolgirls. Ultimately they used their control of these women to draw Aboriginal men into their proposed Christian community. The missionaries, long concerned for the welfare of Aboriginal girls, were horrified by the relations between Aboriginal men and women and refused to contemplate the prospect of any of their girls associating with heathen husbands. Young men, even those on the Mission, were 'utterly unreliable'. As the schoolgirls grew older, however, even the missionaries became sensitive to the 'bitter reproach' in the Aborigines' queries concerning their keeping marriageable girls on the station, since everyone (even little Mission children) knew that many local whites took sexual advantage of Aboriginal women.

35 Schwarz to Inspector, 8 June 1895, ND. One of the 'cattle-duffing' neighbours was reported jailed in 1898 (Poland to Inspector, 3 January 1898, ND; KM 1898, #3).
36 Meyer to Rechner, 7 March 1891, LCA 1.2.
37 Poland to Inspector, 7 December 1891, ND.
38 Poland to Inspector, 28 February 1890, ND (KM 1890, #6).
39 Alex McNickle letter to Cooktown Independent, dated 28 March 1897, published 7 April 1897, rebutting an article by Archibald Meston, Queenslander, 13 February 1897 (see note 21 above).
40 Poland to Inspector, 21 April 1889, ND (KM 1889, #7).
41 Poland to Inspector, 28 February 1890, ND (KM 1890, #6).
42 Poland to Inspector, 21 April 1889, ND. At this time both Schwarz and Poland were bachelors.
The missionaries lived in constant fear that older girls would be overcome by a desire to marry and would run away. They feared adults would simply abduct girls and so older students were closely supervised and their dormitory was guarded at night. In April 1889 five girls were lured away by a large mob of Aborigines passing through Elim on the way to a great yam-eating ritual on the McIvor River, but Schwarz and the McIvor Native Police Inspector fetched them all back again. The missionaries, betraying their own theories of sexuality, considered that the girls' own impulses and urges might get the best of them. Poland, warned by his Mission superior that the first girl to be baptised in the church might not be able 'to resist future temptation', replied that she was small and rather plain and 'might not be submitted to temptations'. Such anxieties held Schwarz and Poland back from baptising girls until they were considered strong enough not to fail their new faith. One girl did leave the Mission to marry a native trooper but died in childbirth shortly afterwards. Both missionaries and mission authorities frequently worried how to find suitable mates for Christian girls.

Ultimately the girls began to 'prove' themselves: they gave up smoking, cursing, fighting and sulking and they learned to do chores and to practise 'disinterested giving, unknown among their tribe'. Poland wrote of his little girl pupils:

> Once we see proof in the heathens that they are no longer slaves of their passions and low cravings, that they have ceased to subordinate themselves to sin, we may assume with confidence that the spirit of the Lord abides in their hearts and is working in their minds.

In 1895 five girls were christened and another eight at Whitsuntide 1898.

Similar success with Mission boys was not forthcoming. From the beginning boys often ran away just as the missionaries thought they

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43 Poland to Inspector, 28 February 1890, 22 April 1890 and 20 January 1893, ND.
44 Poland to Inspector, 21 April 1889, ND (KM 1889, #7); Schwarz to Inspector, 7 May 1889, ND (KM 1889, #7).
45 In his sketch 'A moral picture of the blacks', Poland (1907, 1:21-22) writes that while it is 'unjust to call the blacks animals', it is also 'foolish to consider them better than they are . . . Satan has them under his control. They are children of the Father of the Lie'.
46 Poland to Inspector, 20 January 1893, ND; and Poland's Easter report, KM 1891, #10. Poland even worried about the possible ill effects on his own son's morals if he continued to play with the 'scantily clad Papuan girls' (Poland to Inspector, 23 June 1899, ND).
47 Poland to Inspector, 12 February 1891 and 23 March 1892, ND.
48 Schwarz to Inspector, 20 May 1896, ND; Flierl report, KM 1898, #11.
49 Poland to 'Red School', KM 1892, #11.
50 Poland to Inspector, 6 June 1895 and 31 May 1898, ND (KM 1898, #10). Poland wrote enthusiastically: 'In the hereafter surely even black people must be beautiful'.
had began to progress. Boys often went to Cooktown seeking food or tobacco; they left the dormitory to dance in 'heathen' camps or to attend ceremonies. One young Aboriginal after ten years of 'model' behaviour one day ran off and later appeared in Cooktown, married and working on a fisherman's boat.51

The story of Podaigo, as told by the missionaries in detail, reflects their view of the problems. A year after his arrival at Elim Schwarz singled out Podaigo, then fifteen years old and a mission 'veteran', as the best school pupil. He was diligent, quick to grasp work, sincere and obedient.52 Podaigo made a good impression on Poland the day he arrived in Elim53 and, along with the girl Kakural (baptised Anna in 1896), appeared quickly to grasp and remember 'Christian concepts'.54 Podaigo was also the first child to learn to sing newly translated Guugu Yimidhirr hymns properly, to acquire a true appreciation of the Gospel message, to be able to ask relevant questions about it,55 and to have any success with arithmetic.56 The missionaries claimed he once spontaneously praised Jesus for saving him when out at sea on the mission boat during a storm.57

In 1889, however, when Podaigo was about sixteen, he began to show a certain restlessness. Poland thought he had begun 'to waver in his desire to please God', finding his manner vulgar and unpleasant when with other boys, unsure and nervous when with missionaries.58 Once when he was being 'lazy and clumsy' Schwarz slapped him and, in the ensuing scene, Podaigo picked up a spear which Schwarz seized to beat him further.59 Later the same year he again disappointed the missionaries by yielding to the urgings of certain elders and leaving the station to attend an initiation, where he could eat the forbidden yam.60 When he returned, apologising for allowing the old men to lead him astray, Podaigo was punished by being banned from church services for one month. To the missionaries' surprise he appeared not to have forgotten his schooling or Bible stories. Though grown from a child to a youth taller than Poland, 'only spiritually he [had] not grown strong yet'.61

51 Poland to Connector, 20 May 1897, ND; see also Poland 1907, 1:12-14.
52 Schwarz report, KM 1888, #9.
53 Poland to Inspector, 21 June 1888, ND.
54 Poland to Inspector, 5 October 1888, ND.
55 Schwarz to Inspector, 17 October 1888, ND.
56 Poland to Inspector, 12 February 1889, ND.
57 Poland 1907, 1:13.
58 Poland to Inspector, 12 February 1889, ND (KM 1889, #5).
59 Poland to Inspector, 12 February 1889. Podaigo 'shook with helpless rage' at this treatment, though afterwards he apparently bore Schwarz no grudge.
60 Poland to Inspector, 6 June 1889, ND (KM 1889, #8).
61 Poland letter in KM 1889, #11.
In September 1889 Podaigo fell into disgrace. Poland later called it the saddest day in his professional career. While on the beach near Elim Podaigo and another boy chased two Elim schoolgirls along the beach and into the water, saying 'shocking and disgusting' things. Afterwards he apparently chose as punishment to be tied up one full morning rather than to leave the station, but Poland was shocked to find him unrepentant and defiant. Shortly afterwards he picked up his spears and left the station, returning before Christmas after having worked for a local settler. He was 'sullen but untroubled by guilt' and though he told the missionaries he had come back because he had been made to work on Sundays, he told other boys that he had returned because the settler had run out of tobacco. Poland dispatched Podaigo to Hope Valley to work like the other older boys. Here he settled in, moody, but more capable than his fellows.

Although Podaigo had written a letter to Poland's bride-to-be in Germany, he was not on the station when the white women arrived in late 1890. He had been sent back to the settler from whom, it appeared, he had stolen a shirt and a pipe. Schwarz wrote to him telling him he could return to the Mission if he repaid the stolen items. Podaigo did not reappear for three years. On a Sunday in January 1893 he returned, accompanied by another long-time runaway. Poland had heard rumours that the boy, now nearly twenty, had been working around the McIvor River, and tried hard not to betray his joy at seeing him. 'It's me, I had to return to you, longing drove me back', Podaigo said. Poland thought him sincere, 'even though he used exactly the same words as all his countrymen use when they are feigning homesickness'. During his absence Podaigo had explored his transformed homeland and his own position in it. He had been all over the Cape, up to Batavia River visiting the newly established Mission, and to the tip of Cape York itself, moving from one settler to the next, learning to speak English, to work as a stockman and 'sizing up the white man' though not very favourably. He had 'experienced brutality' and was in fact running from the police when he came back to the Mission although the police agreed to let him remain there. The missionaries were confident he would quickly catch up in school and hoped he might exert a good influence on other boys, enjoying the 'standing'
that accrued to Aborigines who had lived outside the Mission in European society.\textsuperscript{70} Podaigo again worked at Hope Valley, although his health was poor.\textsuperscript{71} Poland observed that he still seemed to have romantic interest in Kakural,\textsuperscript{72} although the missionaries had little prospect that any of the girls would be able to marry at that time; none of the boys had demonstrated willingness to stay permanently on the Mission.\textsuperscript{73}

Podaigo’s health continued to fail. He stayed in the Cooktown hospital in mid-1893 with a persistent rash, and he reported that the hospital people repeatedly ridiculed the Mission’s work.\textsuperscript{74} Over the next year Cooktown exerted a growing hold on Podaigo. He would come occasionally to Hope Valley but Schwarz banished him as a bad influence. In April 1895 Poland wrote:

Now he has turned into a drunk in Cooktown, like so many men of his tribe. I met him there recently: he is just skin and bones. He wasted no time in asking me for money in an impertinent way.\textsuperscript{75}

The story ends, abruptly. Podaigo died in the native camp near Cooktown in July 1895; the Mission’s ‘earliest hope’ had come to nothing.\textsuperscript{76} He was no more than twenty-two.

Though the missionaries had more success in Christianizing young women their efforts were often short lived. Kakural, who with Podaigo had impressed Poland, was baptised, became extremely devout and faithful and went on to marry at the Mission. Her line also comes to an abrupt end; of her two children, one died single, and the other succumbed, along with his wife and all his children, to an epidemic at Woorabinda where the Cape Bedford people were removed during World War II.

The shrinking social resources of Aboriginal life eventually succeeded where the missionaries’ inducements of food and religion had failed. Young men found it virtually impossible to obtain marriageable women in the Cooktown region. Older men had traditionally monopolized young women but the situation was now complicated by competition for women from settlers and townspeople who appropriated young women and girls as servants or wives. The high death-rate among Aborigines also affected traditional prescriptive marriage rules.

Young men, on as well as off the Mission, faced as much difficulty in finding wives as the missionaries did in finding appropriate husbands for their Christian girls. The congruence of these needs ultimately was

\textsuperscript{70} As above.
\textsuperscript{71} Poland letter, KM 1893, #6.
\textsuperscript{72} Poland to Inspector, 24 May 1893, ND.
\textsuperscript{73} Poland, KM 1894, #1.
\textsuperscript{74} As above.
\textsuperscript{75} Poland to Inspector, 24 April 1895, ND.
\textsuperscript{76} Editor’s note in KM 1895, #7.
to determine the immediate future of the Cape Bedford Mission. In 1897, Schwarz, desperate to find a means to keep older boys on the Mission, finally asked them what would induce them to stay. They replied: ‘If you give us your girls as wives’.77

Though most Mission boys, like Podaigo, ran away and many perished outside, by the late 1890s four young men had begun religious education in earnest, in order to be baptised and to marry Christian girls, even though Flierl remarked in a report that this ‘hardly constitutes the right motive for entering the communion of saints’.78 The problem of establishing a core of Christian families among Cape Bedford Aborigines long had exercised the missionaries. As early as 1891 Schwarz considered bringing Aboriginal men, raised and trained on local properties, to marry mission-raised women, on condition that they undertook to stay on the Mission.79 Finally, in early 1901, three Christian women married men undergoing religious instruction, who, the missionaries claimed, promised to stay on the Mission, to refrain from heathen practices, to attend church and never to attempt to estrange their wives from their Lutheran convictions.80 Although Roth is quoted as being certain that the marriages were ‘in accordance with tribal law’,81 it is clear that the girls’ parents opposed the matches; a few days later one mother ‘delivered a loud and venomous diatribe’ against the Mission and all its inhabitants as her daughter’s rightful betrothed lived in the ‘heathen’ camp.82

Traditional Guugu-Yimidhirr life had revolved around food acquisition, and had been organized by principles of social regulation and the control of sexuality. The disruption of traditional life, both on and off the Mission, altered access to food and family structure. Aborigines were attracted to Cape Bedford by food; ultimately they were tied there by marriage. Schwarz wrote, apologetically, that the girls were not kept deliberately on the station to make the boys stay. He argued the girls had always been free to leave and stayed of their own free will.83 There is no doubt, however, that the women at Hope Valley helped launch the Christian community the missionaries envisaged. The missionaries had monopolized the only source of social survival open to Aborigines.

77 Poland to Inspector, 7 November 1897, ND.
78 Flierl report, KM 1898, #11.
79 Poland to Inspector, 7 December 1891, ND.
80 Poland to Inspector, 9 January 1901, ND.
81 Roth report to Parry-Okeden, KM 1899, #3 and 4.
82 Poland to Inspector, 9 January 1901, ND (KM 1901, #8 and 9).
83 Schwarz to Inspector, 3 September 1901, ND.
At the turn of the century Hope Valley was on the verge of becoming a very different sort of community. The missionaries had totally reorganized Aboriginal life on the Cape Bedford Reserve. In early 1900 Schwarz took new hope from his belief that the majority of the remaining 'Koko Yimidir tribe' were then living on the station. Part of the job of the Mission was now to protect the remnants of Aboriginal populations in the North, or, as Flierl expressed it in his report on the first ten years of Mission work at Cape Bedford, to give them 'a kind of Christian burial service, a kind of promising sunset glow, which cannot be followed by any bright dawn in this life here on Earth'. The Hope Valley community was soon to be swelled by refugees from the failing Lutheran Missions at Marie Yamba (Proserpine) and Bloomfield, as well as by Roth's promised 'waifs and strays'. Schwarz saw Hope Valley, now with an established core of Christian families, poised to cohere and grow under his own authority and leadership.

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QUEENSLAND'S KIDNAPPING ACT: THE NATIVE LABOURERS PROTECTION ACT OF 1884*

N.A. Loos

In the nineteenth century in far north Queensland the development of large-scale commercial bêche-de-mer fisheries was dependent upon the ready availability of cheap Aboriginal labour. So too was the pearl-shell industry until the mid-1870s when diving suits were introduced; even after this date, when new shallow pearlshell beds were discovered, there was a resurgence of demand for Aboriginal labour.1

The working conditions of the Aborigines in the fishing industries were harsh and the recruitment procedures often callous. These factors, combined with the dependence of the northern fishing industry on Aboriginal labour, provoked the first attempts in Queensland at protectionist legislation. Sixteen years before the passing of the first comprehensive protection act, the Aboriginal Protection Act of 1897,2 the Queensland legislature enacted the Pearl Shell and Bêche-de-mer Fishery Act of 1881, which in part attempted to regulate working conditions in the fisheries.3 The protective clauses in the legislation, however, were almost casually deleted during the bill’s progress through the legislature and any desire to regulate the working conditions of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders proved to be less important to the government than the collection of revenue from a valuable industry which came within its administration. Indeed, the need for special protectionist legislation might have continued to be ignored had it not been for the fact that atrocities associated with the northern fisheries became enmeshed with the Pacific Islander labour trade. It was only then that the Queensland government tried to protect its indigenous labourers and in 1884 passed the Native Labourers Protection Act.4 However, in its passage through both houses of the colony, it became clear that the protection of Queensland’s reputation and self-governing

* I am grateful for the comments of Brian Dalton, Hank Nelson, James Urry, Tom Stannage and Diane Barwick on an earlier draft of this paper.
1 Saville-Kent 1893:205-206; Aplin to Colonial Secretary 3 March 1875 in ‘Report on the Pearl Fisheries of Torres Strait’, Somerset Correspondence, Records 1872-1877. See Beckett 1977 for an account of Torres Strait Islander involvement in the pearlshell and bêche-de-mer industries.
2 An Act to make Provision for the Better Protection and Care of the Aboriginal and Half-caste Inhabitants of the Colony, and to make more Effectual Provision for Restricting the Sale and Distribution of Opium (61 Vic. No.17).
3 An Act to Regulate the Pearlshell and Bêche-de-mer Fishery in the Colony of Queensland (45 Vic. No.2).

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status was more important to Griffith’s Liberal ministry than the protection of indigenous labour. The resulting legislation protected capitalist enterprise, and the subservience of colonial ‘native’ policy to economic self-interest was further demonstrated when the 1884 Act became accepted as a means of protecting the interests of fishermen and not those of indigenous labourers.

From the early years of Australia’s settlement, well before Queensland separated from New South Wales in 1859, bêche-de-mer fishermen had periodically fished North Queensland waters. By the 1840s a ‘little trade’ in bêche-de-mer and such items as tortoise shell had been developed in Torres Strait by vessels from Sydney and Hong Kong bartering with Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. In fact bêche-de-mer had been a major item of New South Wales’ limited early trade with the Far East, and during the 1860s Captain Robert Towns had exploited the Barrier Reef to supply the local Chinese market. In the mid-1860s bêche-de-mer boats occasionally put in to Somerset, established in 1864 on the northern tip of Cape York Peninsula, and by 1869 the Prince of Wales Islanders were coming to Somerset to barter tortoise shell for tobacco and probably other European merchandise. This industry prospered when access to the large Chinese market was firmly established. In 1874, over sixty tons of bêche-de-mer worth at least £3,000 was obtained in the Torres Strait. In 1880, Queensland exported 98 tons 14 cwt. valued at £18,343 and, in 1883, a nineteenth century record of 342 tons 1 cwt. valued at £31,581 was exported, all but a few hundredweight going each year to the China market. Over one hundred boats were licensed for the industry in 1889: 62 from Port Kennedy on Thursday Island, 27 from Cooktown, and another half-dozen each from Cairns, Ingham and Townsville. Mackay was the southernmost point from which bêche-de-mer fishermen worked. Bêche-de-mer was the second most important fish export after pearlshell, slightly exceeding in value the edible oyster from southern Queensland.

5 Sir Samuel Walker Griffith was Premier 13 November 1883-13 June 1888 and 12 August 1890-27 March 1893.
6 Bolton 1963:76. Bêche-de-mer is a sea slug also known in the nineteenth century as trepang.
7 Loos 1976:89, 90.
8 Bolton 1963:76.
9 Cannon 1885:30.
10 Chester n.d.:13.
11 Aplin to Colonial Secretary, 3 March 1875, in Somerset Correspondence, Records 1872-1877.
13 ibid.:4; see also Saville-Kent 1893:204. I have followed the nineteenth century practice of referring to bêche-de-mer as fish.
The pearlshell industry developed from this earlier exploitation of the sea. Since first contact the Torres Strait Islanders and Aborigines of Cape York Peninsula had been observed to have pearlshell ornaments, but it was not until 1868 that a Captain Banner revealed the existence of extensive beds of high quality pearlshell at Warrior Reef, north-east of Thursday Island and about forty miles from the New Guinea coast. Shortly afterwards shell was discovered in Endeavour Strait and in various other areas in or near Torres Strait. In 1870, there were five vessels on the grounds employing 160 Pacific Islanders or 'kanakas'. Fifty tons of shell had been collected by mid-October. The police magistrate at Somerset, C. D'Oyly Aplin, issued the first comprehensive report on the new industry early in 1875, pointing out that 'the enterprise . . . seems almost to have escaped notice in Queensland'.

In 1872 the Queensland border was set sixty miles beyond Cape York, and in 1879 it was pushed further north to pass close to the New Guinea mainland coast. Virtually all the pearling grounds were then within Queensland's jurisdiction. There was some activity at Newcastle Bay immediately south of Somerset and along the west coast of Cape York Peninsula as far south as the Jardine River, but most of the fishing was to the north of Cape York. In 1874 it was estimated that 707 people were employed in the industry, raising shell valued at £27,849 and beche-de-mer valued at £3,000. No revenue was derived by the Queensland government from duties or licences, although the government outpost of Somerset increasingly had to exercise some supervision of the industry. The fishermen were already requesting that the government establishment be moved from Somerset to a more accessible central position in the islands. By this time pearl fishing stations, some of which were small villages, had been established at Warrior Island, Mount Ernest Island, Somerset, and Prince of Wales Island. In 1877, sixteen firms employed an estimated seven hundred non-Europeans and fifty Europeans on 109 boats. Pearlshell soon became Queensland's most important fishery and one of its more important export earners. Although the pearls were generally less numerous and inferior in quality to those collected in Western Australia, working owners claimed that pearls alone covered their expenses.

14 Beaglehole 1955:388.
15 'Notes on Pearlshell Fishery of Queensland' (QSA HAR/48:1).
16 Jardine to Colonial Secretary, 1 November 1870, in Somerset Correspondence, Letterbook 1868-71. See also Somerset Correspondence, Records from Letterbook of Police Magistrate 1869-1870.
17 Aplin to Colonial Secretary, 3 March 1875, in Somerset Correspondence, Records 1872-1877.
18 As above.
19 Chester to Colonial Secretary, 7 May 1877, in Somerset Correspondence, Records 1872-1877.
20 Saville-Kent 1890a:704-705.
The bêche-de-mer fishery was carried on chiefly by small luggers of five or six tons which made daily voyages from curing-stations to nearby reefs, or by a fleet of luggers which stayed in the vicinity of the reefs while one or more conveyed the catch to the curing station and brought back supplies. A few large schooners or ships of from twenty to fifty tons carried small boats and were fitted out as mother ships to cure the fish. The bêche-de-mer were collected by wading or diving from the reefs during the low spring tides. At the curing stations they were boiled in large iron cauldrons, gutted, dried in the sun, and then smoked. Finally, they were despatched to the nearest market.21

Throughout its history this industry needed a very large supply of cheap labour to gather and process the fish. Aboriginal labour was used at an early period although the number and proportion of mainland Aborigines are not clear because commentators did not always differentiate between them and Torres Strait Islanders. Sometimes, especially when describing working conditions or rates of pay, observers may not have taken mainland Aborigines into consideration at all.22 As well as the more permanent employment, there was much casual use of local Aborigines as opportunity and need arose. Thus, the Queensland Commissioner of Fisheries, W. Saville-Kent, as late as 1890 remarked on the use of casual Aboriginal labour which the 1884 Act had by then made illegal:

numbers of the natives at remote distances from the shipping ports, while willing to work for a month or two, or for a limited number of tides on the reefs in the immediate neighbourhood of their settlements, have a strong aversion to being transported to the shipping ports for registration.23

John Douglas, Government Resident at Thursday Island for the last fifteen years of the nineteenth century, admitted in 1890 that prevention of such casual employment would destroy the industry.24

It is probably impossible to estimate with any accuracy the number of Aborigines employed as regular labour in the bêche-de-mer industry in the early years. Saville-Kent, who was commissioned by the Queensland Government to investigate the fisheries of Queensland in 1889 and 1890, thought they were the most numerous group:

The crews employed in gathering bêche-de-mer consist chiefly of mainland Aborigines, or “Binghis”, as they are termed in the North,

21 Saville-Kent 1890b:728.
22 For example, Chester n.d.:13, talking of employment in the pearlshell industry, wrote: ‘They employed aboriginals and Kanakas and treated them well . . .’. See also Aplin to Colonial Secretary, 3 March 1875, in Somerset Correspondence, Records 1872-1877.
23 Saville-Kent 1890b:732.
24 Government Resident 1890:172.
with a frequent admixture of Torres Straits and South Sea Islanders and Manilla [sic] men.\(^25\)

Again he was supported by John Douglas, who estimated that almost half of the five hundred men and boys employed in the beche-de-mer trade were mainland Aborigines.\(^26\) This presumably referred only to the area under his jurisdiction and apparently did not include Aborigines later picked up as casual labour for the boats without official knowledge.\(^27\) Douglas reported in 1898, when the beche-de-mer was only about 6 per cent of that harvested in 1884, that there were about three hundred Aborigines employed in the fisheries on articles. As Douglas at this time refused to agree to employment of women or children below the age of puberty, there was probably a significantly larger number working in the fisheries casually or illegally.\(^28\) It would seem then from the above information that there may have been at least five hundred Aborigines employed in North Queensland in the beche-de-mer industry during a peak season.

The precise number of Aborigines employed in the pearlshell industry is equally difficult to estimate. Until 1874 the shell was entirely obtained by 'swimming divers' (non-Europeans, many of them Aborigines) who would gather the shell at depths of up to fifty feet. Boys of twelve to fourteen years of age could dive and bring up shell from depths of up to twenty-four feet. Much of the diving was done for about two to three hours at low tide.\(^29\) Such 'swimming diving' required a large unskilled work force and it seems that in these early years the fishermen in Queensland waters collected beche-de-mer as well as pearlshell.\(^30\) In 1874, several boats introduced diving suits which allowed depths of up to ninety and later up to one hundred and twenty feet to be fished.\(^31\) By 1877, sixty-three out of one hundred and nine boats were equipped with diving apparatus.\(^32\) Despite the heavy capital outlay of £200-£250 for each suit and pump, the working

\(^{25}\) Saville-Kent 1890b:728.

\(^{26}\) Government Resident (1885) 1886:49.

\(^{27}\) Roth to Police Commissioner, 6 May 1898 (06944 of 1898, QSA COL/142).

\(^{28}\) Stuart to Police Commissioner, 19 March 1898 (QSA POL/1:29), quoting from a telegram from the Government Resident, John Douglas. See also Roth to Police Commissioner, 6 May 1898, for Douglas’s attempt to prevent women and children being employed. For production of pearlshell and beche-de-mer, see QSA HAR/48, ‘Statistics: Pearlshell and Bêche-de-mer Fishery, Queensland, 1890-1910’, and Saville-Kent 1890b:730.

\(^{29}\) Aplin to Colonial Secretary, 3 March 1875, in Somerset Correspondence, Records 1872-1877.

\(^{30}\) Jardine to Colonial Secretary, 1 January 1872: Active had 47 tons of bêche-de-mer and one ton of pearlshell. See also Jardine to Colonial Secretary, 1 May 1873, in Somerset Correspondence, Records 1872-1877.

\(^{31}\) Aplin to Colonial Secretary, 3 March 1875; Saville-Kent 1893:205.

\(^{32}\) Chester to Colonial Secretary, 7 May 1877, in Somerset Correspondence, Records 1872-1877.
out of the shallower beds and the ability of one diver to stay under water for an hour or two soon established this as the standard method of obtaining pearlshell.33 This change meant a need for fewer but more skilled and reliable labourers. However, at various times, for example in the late 1890s, when new pearlshell beds were discovered, there was an upsurge in demand for Aborigines, experienced or inexperienced, to collect the shell by swimming diving.34

The Aboriginal way of life was obviously vulnerable to seaborne European intrusion. There were times, however, when such contacts made Europeans vulnerable to Aboriginal reaction. Indeed the first recorded fatalities caused by Aborigines in North Queensland occurred on the sea frontier in August 1861, four months after the first settlers arrived at Bowen. Two men on board the *Ellida* were killed at Shaw Island in the Whitsunday group after they foolishly placed themselves at the mercy of an Aboriginal group whom they then unintentionally alarmed.35 By the 1870s it had become part of the conventional wisdom of the sea frontier that boats should not anchor at night in vulnerable positions. Thus, after an unsuccessful attack was made on the crew of a cutter in North Queensland on 3 February 1879, the Sub-Collector of Customs at Port Hinchinbrook commented:

I would beg respectfully to state that the extremely treacherous nature of the blacks on this Coast Cannot [sic] be too widely made known and that it is downright unsafe for any vessel to anchor off any of these Islands [sic] without the strictest watch being kept on land.36

The fishermen of North Queensland knew that after a short time most Aborigines would want to go home. Indeed, it was conventional wisdom on the fishing frontier that even willing recruits, legally signed on, well-treated and receiving their promised wages, would desert within a few months if the opportunity arose.37 The Aborigines' desire to

33 Aplin to Colonial Secretary, 3 March 1875, in Somerset Correspondence, Records 1872-1877.
34 Saville-Kent 1893:205. See also Roth to Police Commissioner, 6 May 1898 (06944 of 1898, QSA COL/142).
35 Dalrymple, Bowen, to Colonial Secretary, 10 October 1861 (QSA COL/A22, 1861/2787). See also inquests into the deaths of N. Millar, Seaman, and Henry Irving, Squatter of Broadsound (QSA JUS/N3, 1861/65).
36 Griffin to Colonial Treasurer, 5 February 1879 (QSA TRE/A20, 1879/343). See also *Port Denison Times*, 4 July 1874, for account of an attack by Aborigines upon two men in a boat anchored off Great Palm Island for the night.
37 *Cooktown Courier*, 22 April 1892, "The Fisheries Act". This report of a petition of Cairns fishermen to the Chief Secretary indicated how completely accepted this belief was:

1st. We would point out that payment of wages every three months is quite unworkable when applied to floating stations (i.e., fishing carried on by large vessels, schooners, etc.), which start on a cruise of from 6 to 10 months

(footnote 37 continued on next page)
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return to their home territories, to participate in the religious ceremonies that sustained their way of life, to enjoy the warm social life and the varied economic pursuits was inexplicable to the fishermen. They dubbed it 'nostalgia' and were convinced that it could be such a severe malady as to cause death.38

In the early years of the fisheries conditions were unregulated and the wishes and well-being of the native labourers were disregarded by many of the fishermen. Some of the earliest extant records reveal kidnapping and retention of Torres Strait Islanders against their will,39 while conflict was reported between the natives of New Guinea and some pearlshell fishermen who sent Pacific Islanders to plunder their villages.40 Indeed the British government's interest in the Pacific Islander labour trade focused a revealing light on the fisheries. An investigation by Captain J. Moresby of H.M.S. Basilisk in 1872 indicated that a large number of Pacific Island labourers were employed under the British flag at the various fishing stations and some were being detained beyond their period of service. The fisheries were even described as 'uncontrolled', which was literally true as it was more than twenty-five years since the Torres Strait Islands and the adjacent coasts had been visited by a British man-of-war. Yet during this time trade had increased greatly.41 Some bêche-de-mer fishermen had settled on islands in the Torres Strait and were conducting their industry with kidnapped Torres Strait Islanders, principally women, from other islands. The police magistrate reported, 'They have already become a terror to the Natives of the smaller Islands in the Straits'.42 Thus, the mate of the Margaret and Jane was in the habit of compelling recruits to dive for shell by firing at them with a revolver and had shot two Torres Strait Islanders trying to escape.43 It was common not to put

37 (continued)
at a stretch, and extending from the reefs off Keppel Bay in the South to the reefs off Thursday Island in the North. . . . loss of time would occur when the seamen are paid, as they would certainly require a few days or weeks to spend their wages, and in the case of Aboriginals, if paid anywhere near their homes, they would clear out, in most cases for good.

38 Chester to Colonial Secretary, 19 December 1876, in Somerset Correspondence, Records 1872-1877.

39 Chester to Immigration Agent, Brisbane, 30 November 1869, in Somerset Correspondence, Records 1868-1871.

40 Jardine to Colonial Secretary, 1 November 1870, in Somerset Correspondence, Records 1868-1871.

41 Jardine to Colonial Secretary, 19 February 1872, enclosing copy of a letter from J. Moresby, Captain H.M.S. Basilisk, to Jardine, 17 February 1872, and copy of a letter from Jardine to Moresby, in Somerset Correspondence, Records 1872-1877.

42 Jardine to Colonial Secretary, 1 January 1872, in Somerset Correspondence, Records 1872-1877.

43 As above.
QUEENSLAND'S KIDNAPPING ACT

'natives' on ship's articles, consequently the land-bound police magistrate at Somerset could not investigate rumours concerning their deaths. Sometimes vessels avoided Somerset to prevent official enquiries. Aborigines were rarely specifically mentioned in these early reports; however, it is clear they were much abused.44

The type of men in both fisheries in the early years was such that maltreatment of the Aborigines was to be expected. Police Magistrate Chester wholeheartedly agreed with the opinion of his predecessor, Dalrymple, who had written:

There are of course among these men some of excellent character and integrity of purpose; but there are others of whom to say that they are about as bad a lot as sail out of any port on the earth, is not to say too much.45

The pearlshell industry lost much of this reputation, possibly because the higher capital investment dictated the need for more responsible management, and the need for more skilled and more reliable boat's crew left little scope for dragooned labour. But the bêche-de-mer industry retained its unsavoury reputation throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. Thus in his 1897 report W.E. Parry-Okeden, the police commissioner, claimed that the bêche-de-mer industry was 'dirty' but profitable, attracting the 'lowest class of whites and Manilla men'.46 But when pearlshell fishermen needed cheap Aboriginal labour as swimming divers to exploit newly discovered shallow beds, they treated the Aborigines just as callously as bêche-de-mer fishermen.47 Clearly the nature of the intruders' industry was as important in determining race relations on the sea frontier as it was on other frontiers of contact.

It is difficult to estimate the proportion of the labour force that was initially kidnapped by force, duped into undertaking engagements in the fisheries, or who misunderstood the nature of their future employment, as against those who were recruited willingly and remained contented with their employment. One can write with confidence, however, that the abuses associated with the fisheries were very serious, common, and often harmful to relations between the intruders and the Aborigines. They constitute an indictment of the men associated with the industry and the government that failed to control the

44 Chester to Colonial Secretary, 2 August 1876, in Somerset Correspondence, Records 1872-1877. Chester remarked that there were about five hundred 'natives' engaged in the industry, exclusive of Aborigines. See also Beddome to Colonial Secretary, 11 November 1873, in Somerset Correspondence, Letterbook 1872-1877. Jardine reported that there were large numbers of the 'natives' of the mainland and adjacent islands employed by pearlshellers as divers.

45 Chester to Colonial Secretary, 13 March 1877, in Somerset Correspondence, Records 1872-1877.

46 'Report to the Commissioner of Police', 1897 V & P, II:35.

47 Roth to Under-Secretary, Home Department, 13 March 1901 (QSA Lands Reserve No.91-14, I: 1901/7027).
abuses. The reports of government officials clearly substantiate this conclusion. In 1877 Brinsley Sheridan, Police Magistrate and Land Commissioner at Cardwell, notified the government of lawlessness in the pearlshell and bèche-de-mer fisheries:

I venture to bring under your notice the practice, which I trust is not common in the Pearl and Bèche-de-mer Fisheries in Torres Straits and its neighbourhood, kidnapping the natives along the coast and the adjacent islands, and forcing them to act as divers, etc. This offence is commonly known to the seafaring men frequenting the coast as 'shanghai-ing' them.48

Despite his pious hope that the practice was not common, he proposed that an extensive reserve be created in the Cardwell District, not only to 'put an end to an abominable traffic' but also to save the lives of whites and blacks in the ensuing conflict. Indeed, the Water Police Magistrate at Cooktown reported in the same year that the kidnapping of Aborigines had 'frequently resulted in the loss of life and valuable property' of the intruders.49

In 1882 B. Fahey, the Sub-Collector of Customs at Cooktown, had a blatant case of kidnapping brought to his attention. Like Sheridan earlier, he believed that Aborigines were 'far better off' employed in the fisheries and that in most cases they were willing to work for the fishermen. But he was appalled by the recruitment procedures:

I would point out that the mode of obtaining their services should, in the interests of common humanity, be more legitimately pursued than “indiscriminately decoying” them at every convenient spot along the coast and its Islands, irrespective of age or sex.50

The then police magistrate at Cooktown, Howard St. George, supported Fahey and reported 'numerous instances' of Aborigines being kidnapped,51 and the police commissioner acknowledged his helplessness.52 In February 1884, another kidnapping case was reported to the police magistrate at Cooktown, Hugh Milman, this time associated with a callous attempt to murder the Aborigines who had avoided capture. The Colonial Secretary, S.W. Griffith, pressed charges of kidnapping and intent to murder, but the culprit was not convicted despite enthusiastic efforts at all levels of law enforcement. Milman claimed that kidnapping of Aborigines was 'rife' and urged that he be allowed to

49 Fahey to Water Police Magistrate, Brisbane, 19 May 1877 (QSA TRE/A18/-1877/1306).
50 Fahey to Collector of Customs, Brisbane, 2 March 1882 (QSA COL/A333/-1882/1385).
51 H. St. George to Colonial Secretary, 3 March 1882 (QSA COL/A333/1882/-1385).
53 Milman to Under Colonial Secretary, 21 June 1884 (QSA COL/A394/1884/-4516). See whole file for the attempt to bring the culprit to justice.
visit the fisheries to report on them. Indeed the concern shown by Griffith and his subordinates indicated one aspect of the motivation behind the 1884 *Native Labourers Protection Act*.

The beche-de-mer and pearlshell fisheries in and near Torres Strait were associated with the Pacific Islander labour trade well before 1884. In 1872 the abuse of Pacific Islander labour stimulated the prompt investigation and granting of Queensland's request for extended territorial jurisdiction although broader imperialist, commercial, strategic, and humanitarian reasons were also involved. Unfortunately the Queensland government did not enforce its Polynesian labourers legislation in Torres Strait, and British legislation to control violence beyond the sixty-mile border was no more effective.

Well publicised abuses in the Pacific Islander labour trade (which took labour to Fiji as well as to Queensland) led the British parliament to pass the *Pacific Islanders Protection Acts* of 1872 and 1875 which made kidnapping (i.e. the recruiting of islanders by force or deception and their detention without consent) a felony. A commonly used short title for the 1872 Act was 'The Kidnapping Act'. All British recruiting vessels had to be licensed and vessels suspected of kidnapping were seized. The 1875 amendment also created the position of Western Pacific High Commissioner with jurisdiction over British subjects on islands which were not governed by any 'civilised' power eastward of 143°E longitude. However, the Torres Strait Islands were too remote for the imperial High Commissioner (the Governor of Fiji) to control. Serious abuses in the recruiting, conditions and payment of Pacific Islanders employed in the fisheries within and beyond the Queensland border continued. Many of the islands beyond Queensland's sixty mile limit 'had become the resort of criminals from all parts of the

55 35 and 36 Vict. Ch. 19: An Act for the Prevention and Punishment of Criminal Outrages upon Natives of the Islands in the Pacific Ocean. Its short title was *The Kidnapping Act, 1872* but it was also referred to as *The Pacific Islanders Protection Act of 1872*. 38 and 39 Vict. Ch. 51: An Act to Amend the Act of the Session of the Thirty-fifth and Thirty-sixth years of the reign of Her present Majesty, Chapter nineteen, intituled 'An Act for the Prevention and Punishment of Criminal Outrages upon Natives of the Islands in the Pacific Ocean'. The short title of the amended act was *The Pacific Islanders Protection Acts, 1872 and 1875*. Each Act could be referred to separately as *The Pacific Islanders Protection Act, 1872* or *The Pacific Islanders Protection Act, 1875*. The short title *Kidnapping Act, 1872* was still used after 1875.
56 Farnfield 1973:221. See also Parnaby 1964:12-27.
57 Normanby to Secretary of State for Colonies, 30 October 1872 (QSA GOV/26/1872/65). See also Chester 1877:1125.
The Liberal premier, John Douglas, was convinced that the gross abuses in the fisheries could be controlled by bringing them under Queensland's jurisdiction, an action which was endorsed by the McIlwraith government when it defeated the Liberal ministry. But this motive was secondary to Queensland's desire to annex the islands to the north, including New Guinea, to forestall their annexation by either France or Germany. The proposal was readily acceded to by the imperial authorities, who were glad to shed the responsibility. The Queensland government now had undisputed jurisdiction, and to police the fisheries it purchased at a bargain price one vessel, the schooner *Pearl*, which had a complement of a master and five men. It was a futile gesture.

In July 1879 a bill was introduced to the Queensland Legislative Assembly to regulate the pearlshell and bêche-de-mer fisheries. It was primarily concerned with collecting previously untapped revenue — earned mainly by New South Wales capitalists — through licence fees charged to vessels engaged in the industry, and rent on Crown land where fishing stations had been erected. It was also aimed at regulating the employment of Pacific Islanders. The Colonial Secretary, A.H. Palmer, admitted the fisheries were associated 'with a good deal of irregularity and lawlessness . . . about the Barrier Reef, and the islands that had lately come under the dominion of the colony'. However, he claimed there were very few complaints about the misuse of either 'Polynesian' (i.e. Pacific Islander) or 'other native labour', by which he meant Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. He neglected to point out that the labourers themselves would have found it almost impossible to register such complaints. The bill contained clauses that were at least aimed at prevalent abuses among 'native labourers', i.e. Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. Pacific Islanders and 'native labourers' were to be employed only under written agreement. They were to be discharged under supervision to ensure they were returned to their homeland or to the port from which they had originally embarked and not dismissed at any convenient spot the master might
choose. Other clauses aimed at ensuring that labourers received their stipulated wages. All deaths and desertion were to be recorded and the master was made accountable for his crew. No intoxicants were to be supplied to the labourers.

The Colonial Secretary explained that the term ‘native labourers’ was a new one intended to encompass those natives of Queensland (Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders) that were taken from the islands and coastal districts of the north without legal protection. Significantly, the bill had been drafted by the Immigration Agent experienced in the hiring and management of Pacific Islanders and by the police magistrate at Thursday Island.62 New South Wales investors responded with petitions claiming the proposed legislation would ruin the industry.63 The Colonial Secretary retorted: ‘The object of the Bill was to secure for Queensland what she should have had years ago:—namely, a revenue from the pearl-shell fisheries on her coast’.64

All clauses dealing with the ‘Native Labourers’ were put and passed except the clause which dealt with the disposal of the wages of deceased ‘Polynesians or Native Labourers’. Apparently the Queensland government could not legislate to dispose of wages earned on vessels belonging to another country, which, in this case, would mainly be New South Wales.65 Later the entire bill was withdrawn by the Postmaster-General in the Legislative Council because of the opposition of the New South Wales capitalists to the licence fees. The opinion of the British government as to the power of the Queensland legislature to pass such a bill also had to be ascertained.66

Palmer brought a new bill before Parliament in July 1881. The British government had now allowed that the scope of the legislation was within the power of the colonial government. Palmer once again stressed his concern for the lost revenue and prefaced this with a perfunctory concern for the ‘irregularities going on on the northern coast of the colony by those engaged in the pearl-shell and bêche-de-mer fishery . . . he could hardly call them outrages’.67 The bill was similar to the previous one except that the protests had effectively reduced the licence fees.68

62 QPD, XXIX (1879):767-768.
63 QPD, XXX (1879):1523, Griffith, in Committee. See also 1879 V & P, Second Session, II:951, 953 for the petitions.
64 QPD, XXX (1879):1523, Colonial Secretary in Committee.
65 QPD, XXX (1879):1732, Colonial Secretary in Committee.
66 QPD, XXVIII (1879):388, Postmaster-General, second reading of the ‘Pearlshell Fishery Bill’.
67 QPD, XXXV (1881):186, Colonial Secretary, the first reading of the Pearlshell and Bêche-de-mer Fishery Bill.
68 QPD, XXXV (1881):186, 187, Colonial Secretary.
In the bill a ‘native labourer’ was defined as ‘any Aboriginal native of Australia or New Guinea, or of any of the islands adjacent thereto’.69 It thus referred to people who would today be Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and New Guineans. Several clauses were designed to prevent native labourers being defrauded of their wages. Two were withdrawn when it was pointed out that they would discourage the spending of wages at Thursday Island and thus reduce the revenue raised there. A third, imposing a penalty on anyone selling intoxicating liquor to native and ‘Polynesian’ (really Melanesian) labourers, was withdrawn for similar reasons, and because the Colonial Secretary had recently been informed that ‘these men would not work without spirits, and consequently, it must be given to them’. The one remaining clause on payment of wages was subsequently withdrawn on the ground that it would be ineffective in isolation.70 As one member, Dickson, pointed out to his fellow members, every clause aimed at protecting the native and ‘Polynesian’ labourers had been withdrawn despite the Colonial Secretary’s initial claim that this was the prime aim of the legislation.71

Even if the Act had been passed in its original form it is doubtful if it would have controlled the abuses in the industry. There was only one vessel to supervise the ships, stations, and waters of the fisheries.72 The problem of kidnapping Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders was barely acknowledged. They could still be picked up after leaving port and disembarked before return. The whole problem of recruiting labour in northern waters, of fishermen persuading, deceiving or forcing Aborigines into service they would not have entered willingly, had not been addressed. The Act only required that ‘Polynesian’ and native labourers be employed under a written agreement and disembarked at a place approved by the police magistrate or principal customs officers.73 If a Pacific Islander or native labourer employed in the fishery was discharged without such approval, all maintenance costs and the expense of returning him to his homeland could be summarily charged to the fishing vessel master.74 This at least gave the government a legal means of fining a master who had kidnapped his labour, if by chance he was detected. Half-hearted attempts over three

69 QPD, XXXV (1881):186, 187. This was probably the definition expressed in the previously proposed Bill, but, as no complete original was printed in either the 1879 QPD or the 1879 V & P; this is not certain.
70 QPD, XXXV (1881):264, 265. Griffith and Colonial Secretary in Committee.
71 QPD, XXXV (1881):264, 265, Dickson in Committee. He actually mentioned ‘Polynesian’ labourers only; apparently this was a casual omission.
72 QPD, XXXV (1881):187, Colonial Secretary in first reading.
73 ‘Pearlshell and Bêche-de-mer Fishery Act of 1881’ i.e., 45 Vic. No.2, clauses 11, 12.
74 45 Vic. No.2, clause 12.
years to regulate the employment of native labour had achieved little; but legislation to collect revenues from the fisheries had overcome all obstacles.

In 1884 the Griffith Liberal Government prepared a bill more seriously aimed at preventing 'the improper employment of Aboriginal Natives of Australia and New Guinea on ships in Queensland waters'. It is clear that Griffith was motivated by reports of gross abuse among the Aborigines of north-east Queensland. It is equally clear, however, that his dominant and most immediate concern was the involvement of Queenslanders in the abuse of Pacific Islander labour which was the responsibility of the imperial authorities. In the parry and thrust of Parliamentary debate extracts of official reports from police magistrates at Cooktown and Thursday Island were read to the Legislative Assembly to refute the claim of the then leader of the opposition, B.D. Morehead, that there was no 'enormous harm' or injustice done to the natives of Australia and New Guinea. Evidence of brutality in southeastern New Guinea was also provided by the Queensland Immigration Department which supervised the labour trade then developing in that area. As reported by Louisiade Islanders to the Government Agent of the Ceara, the beche-de-mer fisherman had employed both Louisiade Islanders and Queensland Aborigines, and raped their women and flogged the men unmercifully. They had treated Queensland Aborigines worse than Islanders and shot anyone of either race who committed the slightest offence. The report was sent to the Immigration Department and then to the Colonial Secretary and Premier, Griffith.

In trying to get through the Legislative Council legislation that would look respectable to imperial authorities, the Postmaster-General stated explicitly:

No action was taken upon that report [of 1882] until May 1884, when the Acting Immigration Agent wrote to the Colonial Secretary with regard to a beche-de-mer trader carrying on business in the Louisiade Archipelago. When the accounts of present and past recruiting atrocities among North Queensland Aborigines were brought to his notice Griffith had immediately asked for reports from the Sub-Collector of Customs and police magistrate at Cooktown. Between 22 January 1882 and 26 March 1884 one fisherman had shipped seventy-eight Aborigines while

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75 48 Vic. No.20. See initial description in the Act itself (my punctuation). Here, I am not dealing with attempts by the administration in British New Guinea to control events in Torres Strait.

76 QPD, XLIII (1884): 211, Morehead, and 211, 212, the Premier, Griffith.

77 QPD, XLII (1884): 107, Postmaster-General. See pp.106, 107, Postmaster-General, for description of atrocities in Queensland waters.

78 QPD, XLII (1884): 107.
working in Queensland and New Guinea waters and failed to discharge eleven.\textsuperscript{79} Thus abuses concerned with Aboriginal labour in the fisheries became involved with other contemporary enquiries into the kidnapping of New Guineans in the wider Pacific Islander labour trade. The kidnapping of Aboriginal labour, which had previously been played down or ignored, was now publicly revealed. Several times in both the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council debates Queensland's reputation was declared an issue\textsuperscript{80} and frequently the government was accused of giving way to the humanitarians in the Colonial Office who tried to protect the interests of native peoples throughout the Empire.\textsuperscript{81} Indeed, Griffith's hope that 'the hon. members would assist in removing the stigma [of kidnapping Aborigines] on the colony's reputation'\textsuperscript{82} has to be seen in the wider context of the Pacific Islander labour question.

The McIlwraith government of 1879-1883, which had supported the importation of cheap coloured labour, had been replaced in November 1883 by Griffith's Liberal government which was strongly opposed to it.\textsuperscript{83} Indeed, this was one of the most important political issues in Queensland during the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1884, Griffith had passed legislation to confine Pacific Islanders to employment in sub-tropical or tropical agriculture\textsuperscript{84} and had tried to repeal the Queensland Act of 1862 that allowed the introduction of labourers from India,\textsuperscript{85} only to have his bill rejected by the Legislative Council.\textsuperscript{86} In 1884, Griffith also appointed a Royal Commission to enquire into Queensland vessels recruiting in the New Guinea area.\textsuperscript{87} The subsequent report revealed widespread abuses,\textsuperscript{88} Griffith's concern for Queensland's reputation and its autonomy was increased when a number of law cases involving serious charges against recruiters indicated the susceptibility of the Queensland law courts and government to

\textsuperscript{79} QPD, XLIII (1884):211, 212, the Premier.
\textsuperscript{80} QPD, XLIII (1884):190, Mr Brooks, second reading, 214, the Premier in Committee. QPD, XLII (1884):81, the Postmaster-General in Committee; 83, Walsh in Committee, criticised the government for posing before the world 'as desirous of protecting the aboriginal'; 110, Thynne, in Committee.
\textsuperscript{81} QPD, XLIII (1884):185, Morehead, second reading, QPD, XLII (1884):80, 108, Palmer in Committee; 82, Macpherson, in Committee; 83, 105, Walsh in Committee; 105, Murray-Prior, in Committee.
\textsuperscript{82} QPD, XLIII (1884):214, the Premier in Committee.
\textsuperscript{83} Parnaby 1964:104.
\textsuperscript{84} 47 Vic. No.12, clause 2. See Parnaby 1964:127.
\textsuperscript{85} 26 Vic. No.5.
\textsuperscript{86} Parnaby 1964:132.
\textsuperscript{87} 'Recruiting Polynesian Labourers in New Guinea and Adjacent Islands', 1885 V & P, II:797 ff.
\textsuperscript{88} Parnaby 1964:115.
public opinion. This situation was remedied by the Colonial Office in June 1884 when two crew members of the Stanley on trial in the Queensland Supreme Court for kidnapping were extradited and tried in the Court of the Western Pacific High Commission. Thus recruiters in the Pacific could no longer find refuge among Queensland sympathizers who placed less value on the lives of innocent blacks than on those of guilty whites. At the trial, the High Commissioner was highly critical of Queensland’s administration of recruiting. While Griffith acknowledged the lawlessness in the labour trade and the impotence of his administration, his government protested strongly against the High Commission’s infringing Queensland’s rights of self-government. Griffith had now added to his genuine concern for justice the need to demonstrate that Queensland could enforce appropriate legislation.

By July 1884 legislation had been drafted and Griffith introduced the bill to the Legislative Assembly. He limited his criticism principally to the bêche-de-mer industry on this occasion, as employment of Aborigines in the pearlshell industry had declined greatly with the introduction of diving apparatus. He introduced the bill as the ‘Native Labourers Protection Bill’ and pointed out clearly its functions:

I have reason to believe that, at the present time, great abuses prevail in that respect, and that great numbers of natives of Cape York Peninsula, both on the eastern and western side, are frequently taken on board vessels without supervision, and that sometimes they are brought back, and sometimes not; it is not known whether they are or not. There is no real reason why we should not protect the aboriginals just as the Polynesians are protected.

The main clause, derived from the imperial Act designed to prevent kidnapping of Pacific Islanders, provided that no native labourer (Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander) should be employed or carried on board any vessel trading in Queensland waters unless he was carried on ship’s articles ‘in like manner as a seaman forming part of the crew of the vessel’. The labourer had to be engaged in the presence of a

89 Enclosure in Musgrave to Derby, 8 May 1884 (Colonial Office, 234/44). Cited in Parnaby 1964:99.
90 Griffith to Musgrave, enclosure in Murray to Derby, 18 February 1884 (Colonial Office 234/44). See Parnaby 1964:98-100, for discussion of the law cases that affected Queensland’s reputation.
91 Enclosure in Queensland Agent-General to Colonial Office, 24 April 1884 (Colonial Office 234/25).
92 QPD, XLII (1884):107, the Postmaster-General in Committee; QPD, XLIII (1884):98.
94 QPD, XLII (1884):107, the Postmaster-General in Committee. See also 48 Vic. No.20, clause 2.
shipping master who had to explain the agreement carefully, record full particulars of the agreement, provide a description of the labourer sufficient to identify him and give an identification disk to the labourer for later reference by government officials. Where interpreters were needed, they were to be supplied. Each agreement was to describe the intended voyage or engagement (it could not exceed twelve months' duration), the task expected of the labourer, the wages due, and the scale of provisions and clothing to be issued.

Griffith attempted to separate the bill from the highly sensitive issue of imported black labour for plantations, but in the political climate of 1884 this proved impossible. Thus the principle that native labourers should not be maltreated was not disputed although the validity of the reports was challenged by some opposition members. When Griffith introduced the bill to the Legislative Assembly a strong objection to the penalties was declared at the second reading which failed to materialize in committee. Here, in fact, leading planter supporters like Hume Black adopted the anti-coloured labour polemics of Griffith's own party in urging amendments to safeguard the native labourers. Morehead pleaded: 'If hon. members really took an interest in [the native labourers] let them show it thoroughly, and do justice to them by having a schedule [of provisions] attached to the Bill, and by providing clothing'. Accused by a government member of 'exquisite fooling', he laughingly retorted: 'You want to have the monopoly of the Black question'. Griffith, who tried to insist that the bill was meant to prevent kidnapping, was embarrassed into accepting Black's amendments, derived from the Pacific Islander legislation, which could in no way be supervised in the fisheries.

In the Council the opposition allowed the bill to pass the second reading, thus technically accepting its principle, but determinedly set out to reduce the penal provisions which it claimed would inhibit or destroy the fishing industry. The poor state of the sugar industry was

95 QPD, XLIII (1884):183. See also 48 Vic. No.20, clause 3.
96 QPD, XLIII (1884):183. See also 48 Vic. No.20, clause 4.
97 QPD, XLIII (1884):183, second reading. See also 48 Vic. No.20, clause 5.
98 QPD, XLIII (1884):213, the Premier and Morehead in Committee.
99 QPD, XLII (1884):107, Murray-Prior, in Committee, and 109, Gregory, in Committee.
1 QPD, XLIII (1884):183, 184, Archer; 185, Palmer and Morehead, second reading.
2 QPD, XLIII (1884):215-218, Macrossan, Morehead, Black, in Committee.
3 QPD, XLIII (1884):215, Morehead and Brooks, in Committee.
4 QPD, XLIII (1884):217, 218, the Premier in Committee.
5 QPD, XLII (1884):105, Murray-Prior, in Committee, said: 'While it appeared to be a Bill to give Protection to native aboriginals, in reality it tended indirectly to abolish black labour altogether'. See also 107, Murray-Prior, and 109, Gregory, in Committee.
blamed on Griffith's opposition to black labour; and even a government supporter declared that capitalists had been frightened off and banks alarmed. One independent member said:

The Bill was framed very much in the same spirit as that which had guided the Government in their action with regard to kanaka labour — action which threatened to reduce one of the greatest industries in the colony to a state of complete destruction. The opposition in the Council to the bill's penal provisions obviously surprised the government. The penalties were based on the imperial Kidnapping Act of 1872, and were similar to those for infractions of the customs laws even where the amount smuggled was as low as £5. The proposed Clause 6 provided that if any vessel trading in Queensland waters carried any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander without meeting the provisions of the Act the vessel and her cargo were liable to forfeiture and the master and owner to a fine not exceeding £500. A vessel suspected of carrying an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander without observing the provisions of the Act could be seized and detained pending trial. Although the Postmaster-General pointed out that the penalties were similar to those contained in other legislation where there was a need to detain the vessel and often difficulty in exacting a fine, the power to seize or detain a vessel was rejected completely by the Council and the maximum fine reduced to £100. Like the Kidnapping Act of 1872, the bill sought to compensate indigenous people disadvantaged before the law by putting the onus on Europeans to prove that they had not dealt illegally with the recruits they intended to carry. Moreover the penalties for carrying recruits illegally were severe, and this allowed opponents to argue that the Act was treating all suspected or accidental infringements as if they were actual kidnappings. In reality, of course, the ordinary processes of law provided ample safeguards against the award of excessive penalties for mere technical infringements of the Act, but the opposition persisted in expressing horror at the enormity of the punishment hanging over the head of innocent captains. One opposition member claimed it was ‘the most severe and outrageous Bill ever brought before Parliament’ and the penalties ‘something outrageous’. The Postmaster-General, in exasperation, claimed it was the

6 QPD, XLII (1884):185, Heussler, in Committee.
7 QPD, XLII (1884):185, O'Doherty, in Committee.
8 QPD, XLII (1884):81, the Postmaster-General, second reading.
9 QPD, XLII (1884):81, 82, the Postmaster-General, second reading.
10 QPD, XLII (1884):80, 85, the Postmaster-General.
11 QPD, XLII (1884):82, 85, Macpherson in Committee; 48 Vic. No.20, clause 6.
12 QPD, XLII (1884):84, 106, 109, the Postmaster-General in Committee.
13 QPD, XLII (1884):109, Taylor, in Committee; 83, 109, Palmer in Committee; 82, King; 83, Walsh.
most debated bill in the Council for the last ten years. Both sides of the house clearly regarded the bill as important, but for different reasons.

It was quite obvious that the intensity of the Council’s opposition was reinforced by two other considerations. Firstly, members believed that the kidnapping of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders was not in itself a serious crime. Morehead, with his usual bluntness, said:

it would be as well for the [Premier] to tell the Committee some of the bad cases of kidnapping he referred to, as it might help them along. He had never yet heard what enormous harm was done to the blacks, even if they were kidnapped and put into a very much better state of life than they had followed previously.

Secondly, it was clear that opposition members were determined not to have men in the fisheries placed in danger of severe punishment even if they were guilty of committing the atrocities which had been described in the reports that Griffith and the Postmaster-General read to their respective houses. Once again the members opposing the bill had their experience with regard to Pacific Islander labour uppermost in their minds.

In June 1884, the police magistrate at Cooktown, Hugh Milman, proceeded to New Guinea to investigate, among other things, alleged cases of kidnapping. A recruiting vessel, the Forest King, was seized at his request on the justifiable suspicion that some of the recruits were kidnapped and none of them understood they were being recruited for three years. It seems, however, that the interpreters in this case were responsible and not the captain and the government agent. A Brisbane firm suffered severe financial loss through the detention of this vessel, which incensed supporters of the importation of labour. The apparent innocence of the firm and its captain provided timely propaganda; and in the Council debate on the Native Labourers Bill and in the Assembly debate on supply, the case was heatedly discussed. The leader of the assault on the Native Labourers Protection Bill, W.H. Walsh, broadened the scope of the argument:

14 QPD, XLII (1884):131, 180, Postmaster-General, in Committee.
15 QPD, XLIII (1884):211, Morehead, second reading. See also QPD, XLII (1884):80, Walsh; 82, King; 84, Forrest, in Committee.
16 QPD, XLII (1884):80, Walsh, Palmer; 84, Palmer, Forrest; 109, Taylor; 184, O’Doherty.
17 Milman to Colonial Secretary, 24 June 1884, and Griffith to Police Magistrate, Cooktown, 25 June 1884. QPD, XLIV (1884):1460, Black, in Committee, debate on supply.
18 QPD, XLIV (1884):1460, 1461, Colonial Secretary (Griffith), Black and McIlwraith, in Committee, debate on supply.
19 QPD, XLIV (1884):1460, 1461, Colonial Secretary, McIlwraith, Black, in Committee, debate on supply.
20 See footnotes, 58, 59, 60 above and QPD, XLII (1884):80, 84, Walsh; 81, the Postmaster-General, in Committee.
QUEENSLAND'S KIDNAPPING ACT

But when it came to dealing with the owners of kanaka vessels, and the employers of black labour, they were treated with the utmost severity of the law; and for the most venial offence their ships were seized. What became of the vessel [the Forest King] which went away recently . . . which was seized? 21

Some members, however, expressed the basic fear frankly: 'The penalties were far too excessive even for the most important infringements of the law'. 22

A third important consideration was unrelated to specific clauses in the bill. The two leading opposition members felt there was inconsistency in protecting Aborigines in the fisheries only and seemed genuinely alarmed that the Act might be the forerunner of a comprehensive policy of regulating the employment of Aborigines in other industries. The President of the Council, Sir A.H. Palmer, apologised for his unaccustomed intervention in the debate, adding that:

he felt it was his duty to protest against such legislation. Blacks were frequently engaged on stations; and, if it was made illegal to employ them on water, he did not see why the blacks employed on a station should not have to go before a land commissioner or a police magistrate to be engaged. The thing was a farce. 23

W.H. Walsh actually argued against such possible comprehensive protection:

Suppose a Bill of this kind were applied to the employers of black labour on pastoral stations, there would not be a black man in the country who would be able to get a living from a pastoral tenant, a farmer, or anybody else. At present there were many kind, charitable and good employers of a great many of our aboriginal population, and under such a measure as this they would be absolutely prevented through fear — through fear of informers — of the enforcing of arbitrary powers by the government — the liability of the Act being misconstrued by ignorant or prejudiced magistrates, or other officials — they would be absolutely deterred from employing any of these poor creatures. 24

By suggesting that legislation to protect Aboriginal labour from abuse would be used against a multitude of 'kind, charitable and good' employers by a conspiracy of 'informers' and bureaucrats in league with ignorant or prejudiced magistrates, Palmer and Walsh were obviously struggling to bolster a weak case.

The government wanted legislation of some sort to show the Colonial Office it was in earnest about preventing kidnapping. An

21 QPD, XLII (1884):83, Walsh, in Committee.
22 QPD, XLII (1884):84, Forrest, in Committee.
23 QPD, XLII (1884):80, Palmer.
24 QPD, XLII (1884):105, Walsh, in Committee.
amended bill was therefore better than no bill. Some opposition members of the Council declared they wanted the bill rejected completely;\textsuperscript{25} but the majority were unwilling to be seen opposing the principle but were determined to reduce the penalties for kidnapping indigenous labourers.\textsuperscript{26} And they succeeded. The penal provisions to ensure the proper discharge of native labourers on the ship’s articles were similarly emasculated. The maximum penalty for not discharging and paying a native labourer in the presence of the shipping master was reduced from £50 to £20, and the penalty for having fewer native labourers than indicated on the ship’s articles was reduced from £100 to £25 for every labourer not satisfactorily accounted for.\textsuperscript{27} In this weakened form the bill passed into law.

The 1884 \textit{Native Labourers Protection Act} failed utterly to prevent kidnapping. It was the only legislation that offered protection for the disadvantages experienced by Aborigines in relation to those colonizing their land and even then it only tried to control the grosser abuses in the least typical field of employment. Griffith had hoped that severe penalties would discourage most kidnapping. Yet in 1884 abuses in the New Guinea area had indicated that the 1872 \textit{Kidnapping Act} had not worked as a deterrent in the area under the jurisdiction of the Western Pacific High Commission. As Parnaby has remarked:

The events of 1883-1884 confirmed the growing impression in Queensland that recruiting could never be adequately regulated by colonial legislation, and that if the colony was to preserve, or rather regain, its good name, then recruitment must stop. Griffith introduced a bill for this purpose in October 1885.\textsuperscript{28}

The failure of the 1872 Act to prevent kidnapping occurred despite the fact that the Royal Navy was empowered to arrest vessels suspected of contravening the Act. Five schooners were built and manned solely to enforce it, the first leaving Sydney in June 1873. In addition, an administrative agency, the Western Pacific High Commission, was primarily concerned with maintaining law and order among the islands.\textsuperscript{29} In far North Queensland there was only the \textit{Pearl}. Griffith had indicated that a new gunboat might be sent to patrol the fisheries after the passing of the \textit{Native Labourers Protection Act}.\textsuperscript{30} This

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{25} \textit{QPD}, XLII (1884):109, Palmer, Taylor; 110, 111, Taylor, Murray-Prior, Walsh in Committee.
  \item \textsuperscript{26} \textit{QPD}, XLII (1884):110, 111, Thynne, Box, in Committee.
  \item \textsuperscript{27} \textit{QPD}, XLIII (1884):183, 184, the Premier, in Committee. See 48 Vic. No.20, clauses 7 and 8.
  \item \textsuperscript{28} Parnaby 1964:101.
  \item \textsuperscript{29} Parnaby 1964:167, 168.
  \item \textsuperscript{30} \textit{QPD}, XLII (1884):184, the Premier, second reading.
\end{itemize}
appears never to have occurred; the police commissioner, in 1896, and the Northern Protector of Aborigines in 1898, both commented on the need for a ‘smart steamer’ to prevent the abuses in recruiting for the fisheries.  

The Government Resident at Thursday Island, John Douglas, was an official with a long history of concern for the welfare of Aborigines. He tried to prevent the grosser abuses of Aboriginal labour from 1885 till the turn of the century. Douglas’s main legal control was the 1884 Native Labourers Protection Act under which all Aborigines were shipped. Despite his early optimism that the Act was a deterrent, Douglas found he had to use extra-legal powers to try to safeguard the interest of the native labourers. In 1894, after ten years’ experience with the Act, Douglas concluded: ‘I do not think that any good has come or can come from the Native Labourers Act in this district .... It is impossible to supervise [the bêche-de-mer industry] properly. To do so effectually would cost more than it is worth’.

Douglas was then referring to more than abuses in recruiting. The colonists and the government had come to look to the 1884 Act and the administration at Thursday Island as instruments of control to prevent Aboriginal attacks upon fishermen’s lives and property. Because of the employment of large numbers of Aborigines unfamiliar with the fisheries and the abuse of Aboriginal labour, such resistance was common, especially in and near the Torres Strait. Indeed, Douglas’s 1890 report upon the working of the 1884 Act, and much of his annual report for 1894, were a defence against the charge that his administration was failing to protect fishermen and an explanation of the uselessness of the 1884 Act in this regard. The conclusion reached in his 1890 report concerning the impossibility of preventing ‘outrages’ upon the fishermen indicated even more markedly how much the welfare of the Aborigines was at their mercy. He reported that no supervision of Aboriginal labour in the industry would make recruiting in areas such as the Batavia River — where the Aborigines would not accept or could not understand the fishermen’s conditions of employment — ‘a justifiable expedient ... except at a largely increased outlay’. Douglas recommended the establishment of a mission in this area, Mapoon, to ‘civilize’ the Aborigines to make safe the fishermen’s use of Aboriginal labour.

32 Roth to Police Commissioner, 6 May 1898 (QSA COL/142/1898/6944).
33 Government Resident 1894:912, 913.
34 Government Resident 1890:1565-1568; Government Resident 1894:911-913, 920-921.
35 Government Resident 1890:1567.
The regulations introduced to control abuses in the recruitment of Pacific Islanders in Melanesia were never applied to the recruiting of Aborigines in the fisheries except for the implied necessity of an interpreter to make sure that Aboriginal recruits understood the nature and conditions of their employment. There was no licensing of recruiting vessels, nor were government agents appointed to supervise recruiting. No authority was exercised over the kind of men allowed to recruit; no attempt was made to prevent fishermen from being rewarded according to the number of Aborigines recruited. Finally, there was no agency independent of the fishermen, such as the government agent on vessels recruiting in the islands, to ensure that recruits were correctly returned. By 1884, all of these measures had been introduced into the Pacific Islander trade.36

Griffith was willing to accept the emasculated bill despite the fact that it offered little hope of protecting the native labourers from brutal exploitation. He needed, at the very least, a token bill as window-dressing to reply to any Colonial Office enquiries. Even Griffith was unwilling to endanger a small though valuable industry by insisting on effective legislative or administrative action which would have diminished the abuses in the industry. As Douglas pointed out, the industry was not worth the expense of thoroughly supervising it. Nor apparently were the Aborigines who were suffering so much from its intrusion.

TOWNSVILLE COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

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AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL STUDIES
On 21 June 1845 a party of French Catholic missionaries, members of the Society of Mary (Marists) arrived at Sydney. They stayed there, living at Woolloomooloo, until November, arranging shipping to take them on to New Guinea and the Solomons. One of the party was Leopold Verguet, who subsequently left the mission in Melanesia and passed through Sydney again, briefly, in April 1847, en route to France. He later became a canon of the cathedral of Carcassone. There he wrote an account of his missionary travels, in which he included extensive descriptions of the people in the various places he visited. A talented artist, he illustrated his text with his own drawings. The first edition of Verguet's *Histoire de la première mission catholique au vicariat de Melanésie* was published at Carcassone in 1854.

The contacts with Aborigines described in the book occurred during his first visit to Sydney. The extract which follows is my selected translation of pages 38-48 of the second edition, published in Paris in 1861.

The value of Verguet's work stems in large part from the extreme paucity of firsthand accounts of Aborigines in the Sydney area in the 1840s. They had almost been wiped out there by that time, and any detail concerning them is to be welcomed. Even though the picture it presents is scarcely a beautiful one it is important in that it makes clear in particular and personal terms, and not in abstract and collective 'ones, the indignities inflicted on the Aborigines by European contact. Verguet’s account is also of interest in that it reflects what were then currently accepted opinions. Although he was a humane and sympathetic observer of non-Europeans, he still shared the view that there was little good to be said of Aborigines.

*Translation*

The Manners of the Natives Around Sydney

... Not all the natives are in the interior; there are some who keep wandering around Sydney. During the night they shelter in a wood, lighting a fire and dossing down beside each other. As soon as the sun rises they take the road to town, to beg and to get drunk. In the early days of colonisation they came to town in their bush clothes, that is to say entirely naked. But they have since been persuaded to present themselves decently clad. The men now wear trousers and jackets; and the women, long aprons and white smocks. Among them scarves and hats are common to both sexes, men and women alike wear them.

They gather gum from trees and bring it to town, where it is normally sold by the women. The English buy it from them for twenty-five francs [i.e. about £4] a hundredweight. This fortune does not remain long in the hands of the natives; they buy brandy with it and drink without moderation, making themselves drunk as soon and as often as possible. Poor natives! From their contact with Europeans they learn only our vices.

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1 For an account of this missionary effort see Laracy 1976 and 1970. For Marist beginnings in Sydney see Hosie 1968. Comments on Verguet (and also on Aboriginal missions) are contained in Wiltgen 1979.
In a letter of 15 August 1845, I wrote to M. Gary, my brother-in-law, 'it is not rare to see near the entrance to Port Jackson gatherings of natives. The rocks of the coast provide many caves there, where they can pass the night sheltered from bad weather. Furthermore these semi-naked people are not fastidious about their choice of a sleeping quarter. In good weather the first place they come to will do. I have often noticed two who come to pass the night in a forest beside our house, opposite our windows. They light a little fire and then lie down, smoking a pipe to put them to sleep; when the man has smoked enough, he passes the 'tongue-burner' to his wife. Soon they are asleep and the fire is out. Woken by the cold, they re-light their little fire, smoke another pipe, and go back to sleep. This sequence continues till morning. Then, they light their fire for the last time, warm their limbs, numb and covered with dew, eat and set out for Sydney. Their breakfast is scarcely tasty; you would need to be a savage to dare touch it. It consists of the remains of roast meat which they have begged the day before. They place the bones on a stone and remove the flesh from them with another stone, or they just gnaw them with their teeth. From their point of view they are happy and prefer their life to ours. The English have tried several times to make them abandon the unsettled life, but all such efforts have been useless. The savages have never been able to apply themselves to work. One governor built a house for them, which they could enjoy at their ease; they came to spend several days there but eventually became bored and returned to the bush.'

Early Wars against the Natives

In the early days of the colony when the Europeans were few the savages took advantage of their superior numbers to steal sheep and destroy gardens. The settlers, annoyed by this brigandage, were forced to repel them with musket fire and to hunt them like wild beasts. It is thus that Van Diemen's island has been entirely cleared of natives. I have heard it said that around Sydney there have been frightful massacres and that at certain times the ground has been strewn with the corpses of blacks. Although regretting that the English were not able to civilize the savages by gentle methods, one is inclined to excuse the settlers for their severity. The settler is not unwilling to share his civilization with a native, but he must also be careful to ensure the success of his affairs, or he will ruin himself and his family. If, when he is applying himself diligently to his work, the native obstructs him, has he not the right to repel force with force? The settler is on his own ground, he has paid the native for the land which he occupies and which he cultivates; he possesses it by title of rightful owner, both as conqueror and as cultivator. Even so, it may be concluded that the settlers whose main concern is religion, rather than commerce, would be the only ones to work efficiently on civilizing the natives.

The Tribe of Tamara

Following the conflicts between the natives and the settlers, the natives were forced to yield the land and retreat far into the interior.

2 This is probably a garbled reference to the Native Institution, a school founded by Governor Macquarie at Parramatta in 1815. It could also refer to Macquarie's attempt to create a black peasantry when in 1815 he established sixteen Aboriginal men and their families on land at George's Head.

3 For a recent useful, though slight, survey of 'contact history' see Willey 1979; see also Ross 1976.

4 This statement would have been news to the Aborigines of the time, as it is to those who are currently battling for land rights, especially in Queensland.
Those of them who decided to remain among the Europeans have become quite inoffensive people, but retain the distinctive characteristic of Australian natives. They are easy to approach and I have been able to study them at my ease. I have even dawnt several of them, whose portraits I have sent to Europe.

Belé, of the tribe of Tamara, is one of those I have drawn. I went to draw the natives in their camp under a rock at Double Bay, where I met them by chance. These natives spend the nights in woods on the edge of the town; they seek to shelter from the wind and camp sometimes in one place and sometimes in another. They shelter on the slope of a hill, under bushes or in holes in the rocks. I arrived at Double Bay about 8 a.m.; by the edge of the sea I met five natives eating. What a poor meal. But it was a pleasure to see them eat it. An iron cook-pot was in the midst of them. Into it they threw a handful of dried grasses which they drew out impregnated with a liquid; they then opened their mouths widely and put this disgusting grass in with two hands, and sucked it most enthusiastically. I asked them what was in the pot. They told me it was sugared water; there was also, very probably, a good quantity of brandy. Thus I explained to myself their delight with this favourite dish; and I understood that they did not swallow this dried grass but used it as a sponge. When the water was all gone they lit a pipe of tobacco which they then passed from one to another. All smoked it, even an old woman who was in the group. I asked them who was their chief. 'Tamara', they said. 'Is he with you?' I said. 'No,' they replied, 'he is up there under that rock'.

I climbed towards the rock indicated, and soon found myself in the midst of about twenty natives; the women, seeing me coming, wrapped themselves in their capes; they were apart from the men. 'Is Tamara here?' I asked them in English. The women answered in their own language and gestured towards the other end of the group. There I found Tamara and his wife peacefully smoking a pipe. I asked Tamara's permission to draw his portrait; he offered to come and pose at our house. But, remembering how much Belé, another native, had become bored the previous day sitting one hour in front of me on a chair, I preferred to run back to the house by myself and return to the rock with my paper and crayons. There under the rock I made portraits of Tamara, of a woman and of a child. The natives, at first timid kept their distance, then, little by little they gathered around to see my work, and as the picture advanced they burst out laughing in recognising their chief on my paper.

A Catechism Lesson

While I was drawing the portrait of a woman one of my confrères, Father Paget, who had joined me, questioned Tamara about his religious beliefs. The chief made himself understood in a kind of English jargon which the natives learn easily. He showed much good sense in his words; he was not embarrassed like the other natives his eye was lively and sharp; he was conscious of his superiority. We learned from him that the savages of these parts believed in a being who created the sea, fishes, trees, axes, fire, in fact, everything. 'Where will you go, Tamara, if you are good', my confrère asked him. 'I will go to Heaven', he replied. 'And if you were wicked where would you go?' I would go into the fire', he said. I have not changed his answers in any way. We spent all the morning there talking to these people and teaching them the catechism. They did not seem to me to be as deprived of intelligence as I had expected from reading the accounts of certain travellers. Still, this conversation was too serious to please all our audience, and so they gradually drifted away from us and picked up their blankets and went back to sleep around the fire.

5 This concoction was known as bull. For descriptions of how bull was made see Gunson 1974:1, 7f, note 62.

6 Paget was later killed in the Solomons. For an account of his life see Paget 1915.
ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1980 1:2

A Native Camp

When they were not passing the time eating or smoking, their whole occupation was to keep alive the fire, around which they were crouched. Wrapped up in their blankets they look like bundles or sacks of old clothes thrown here and there without any order. They were so well enveloped that you could not even see their heads. From time to time one of these inert bundles would come to life and there would emerge from it a black head covered with long crinkly hair, beneath which I saw two small eyes, thick lips, and above all two swollen cheeks which served as a bellow. At other times, it was a black arm, long and skinny, which came out through a hole in the blanket to throw a little dry wood on the fire. As soon as the flame flared, the head and the arm, having nothing more to do, retreated into their sanctuary.

These people love dogs very much and have a great number of them, with whom they share their food and their shelter. Moreover, when the native sleeps the dogs lie around him, and even on him, both to give and to receive warmth. Besides that, there was no mattress, no sleeping mat, even for the chief, only mother earth, nothing more. I leave it to the reader to imagine their filth; it is this as much as misconduct which causes the ulcers that can be seen on the legs and necks of several of them.

As I was about to go back to Sydney a native arrived. He had in his hand several wooden spears, several metres long and with three points at one end. I looked at these spears with an air of surprise, which seemed to ask what they were for. Tamara hastened to tell me that they were to harpoon fish; and, in fact, another native soon appeared with a fish in his hand. Having finished my business with Tamara I gave him some bread, some cheese and a cotton cap to thank him for his co-operation. He appeared to me well-satisfied. He was much more grateful for this mark of my affection than for that with which I flattered him in the beginning in telling him that his likeness would cross the sea and that it would carry his fame as far as Europe . . . 7

Catholic Missions Among the Natives

The English clergy, occupied with caring for the colonists, do not have enough priests to be able to afford to send any of them into the interior in pursuit of the natives. Some Italian priests of the Passionist order have undertaken this repulsive apostolate. They have to civilise and instruct the most wretched people on the earth. The native of New Holland is man fallen to the lowest level of degeneration. 8 However, despite what certain travellers and theorists have said, he is still, despite his faults, infinitely superior to a brute. But what a distance from the savage with black skin, with frail limbs and a wild look, from a savage, in a word, hideous to behold, to a European civilised by Christianity! The natives cannot easily think of non-material things. For several years the Passionist missionaries have worked with them. 9 They have had great difficulty learning the language; this language varies from place to place, each lot of people has its own dialect. The missionaries have not yet been able to baptise any of them. The task of these dedicated priests is very difficult; before turning them into Christians, they have to

7 Verguet here notes that in Sydney he also drew the portrait of the French consul, M. Faramond.
8 This is an idea which was once widely held, and still appears to survive in certain circles in Queensland. For an historical account of views about the place of Aborigines in the human group see Mulvaney 1964. On pages 50-52 of his book Verguet reiterates his belief in the basic humanity of the Aborigines in a subsection titled 'The common origin of all men'.
9 For accounts of this mission venture, which was undertaken from 1843 to 1847 on Stradbroke Island, near Brisbane, see Thorpe 1950, and Laracy and Laracy 1973.
civilise the people a little. Through dedication and patience the missionaries won
the confidence of a tribe; they asked the natives to allow some of their children to
be sent to the Catholic school in Sydney. The natives entrusted two children
to them and these were sent to Bishop Polding. These children were doing rather
well in their new life; but after some months, the parents, unable to endure the
separation, asked insistently to have them back. They accused the missionaries
of having killed the children and threatened them with death if they were not given
back to them soon. This argument was unanswerable; it was necessary to yield to
it and to renounce the fine hopes which had been held for the Christian education
of the children .

[Vergeret concludes his comments on Aborigines by quoting a long description
of them and of their way of life from a letter of one of the Passionists, Fr. Luigi
Pescioroli, dated 29 January 1844].

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10 In fact three Aboriginal children, two boys and one girl, were taken back to Sydney by
Polding after his visit to Stradbroke Island in May 1845. They stayed there for about five
weeks. At the same time Polding also took back with him two half-caste boys, sons of
an Irishman named Dick Smith, who were still with him in September 1845. See Thorpe
1950; also Forster 1979.

11 Verguet 1861:46-48. This letter, translated into English, is re-published in Thorpe 1950:
214-217.
Photograph by Geoff Lovell.
THE SOUTH WEST ABORIGINAL STUDIES PROJECT

Lois Tilbrook

The South West Aboriginal Studies project (SWAS) began at the end of the 1976-77 financial year when limited funding became available, through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, to the Aboriginal Teacher Education Program of Mount Lawley College. Over the next two years a research project was formulated to collect material on the history and cultural tradition of Aborigines of the south western region of Western Australia. This region is bounded by a line extending from the coastline south of the Murchison, in an arc south-eastwards to the southern coastline, east of Esperance. It corresponds to the 'circumcision line', south west of which circumcision was not practised, which formed a distinct socio-cultural region.1

The broad aims of the SWAS project were, to survey the available literature and documentation on Aborigines of the region, and produce a bibliography of relevant materials as a resource tool for future work, and to collect Aboriginal oral history and tradition, both to record this information before it was too late, and also ultimately to incorporate the material in descriptions of Aboriginal life from before European settlement up to the present.

The SWAS project was conceived from an awareness that little was written which put Aborigines of the south west into focus in the social history of the region or would assist in highlighting the problems this group of people face today. Existing works concentrate on the history of government administration of Aboriginal affairs2 and analyses of the social situation of this group of Aborigines reflect structural approaches and do not profess to convey a fuller understanding of the richer tradition of Aboriginal cultural life.3 Such works lack an Aboriginal input, except as the researched group. Other existing works do contain different material, though much more work in the area is needed.4 A number of references to Aborigines also exist, scattered through government files, letters, diaries, manuscripts, and theses. Unpublished sources are largely inaccessible except to academic researchers, even when their existence is known. There is a need for this material to become more readily available for schools and community and health workers' courses, for others involved with Aboriginal groups, as well as for Aborigines themselves.

The project

The start of any research project is always difficult. We started in two directions: first we commenced a survey of the written material on Aborigines in the south west, including research into archival material, particularly for the initial period of European settlement of Western Australia in 1829 and for the 1897 period when the State obtained control of Aboriginal affairs from the British Colonial Office.5 This latter period was of special interest as it represented the limit to which we could hope to collect oral accounts based on direct exposure; beyond that oral tradition would take over. Archival records might assist in making connections between the remembered past, and the experienced time leading to the present.

3 Howard 1978; Berndt 1969.
4 Hallam 1975; Berndt and Berndt 1979.
5 Anna Haebich was appointed Academic Research Assistant at the inception of the SWAS project, and continues to maintain ties with it. A second Academic Research Assistant, Toni Creed, was employed for a limited period to research archival material.
Secondly, fifteen Aborigines were employed to collect genealogies and oral family history. All of these people had family ties in the south west and were interested in collecting and recording their own genealogies and interviewing members of their families. We sought out mature people who could talk to older family members and adults, and whose own interest might be stimulated by having children who could benefit from the compilation of their family's history. The educational attainment of the collectors was not of major importance in their employment.

A training program was organised, teaching the collectors over two days how to construct genealogies, to tape record and how to interview. We thoroughly discussed the difficulties posed in recording information. One of our main concerns was that interviewees might refuse to co-operate when they saw research assistants taking notes especially as so many government agencies collected information from Aborigines who often felt powerless to resist them. Aborigines might also be worried by the use to which the material could be put. We thought that tape recorders might help to overcome this difficulty and that some people might also find tape recorders easier to use than taking notes. Some of the research assistants were not in the habit of writing extensively and found it an onerous task. Small cassette recorders were provided, together with an ample supply of tapes, and explicit instructions to find a quiet place in which to record interviews (this proved to be wishful thinking and background noise was a major difficulty in transcribing recordings).

Research assistants were employed on limited contracts for an equivalent full-time period. They worked at their own pace in fulfilling the terms of their contracts. One person took six months. In this case collecting the information was a prolonged process, although the final production was amongst the most interesting of all the material collected. The difficulties experienced with this person were due mostly to the novelty of the research work rather than any lack of willingness. This flexible method of employment permitted people to put time in over weekends, or when they made family visits, without feeling they were being pressured. Also, it ensured that when a visit to relatives was made and a key person was not at home, the exercise could be repeated at another time, hopefully with better results for the research. It also enabled people to cope with other matters without their employment being affected by a period of relative non-productivity.

All research assistants were contacted shortly after they began collecting information. Their material was carefully gone through and help and advice given where necessary. Most importantly, this early contact indicated to the research assistants whether they were doing what was required and often provided the necessary confidence for them to carry on. The need to develop a sense of self-confidence was felt most acutely by most of the people.

Progress payments were arranged to ensure that no one was out of pocket. For example, in making special visits to relatives living in the country where no mileage allowance was paid (because of budgetary limitations and also the task was seen as work combined with pleasure) a travelling subsidy was provided in some instances. The combination of interviews with family visits worked very well, and may even have stimulated more family contact where there was the added incentive of gleaning another piece of information to add to the jigsaw of a genealogy.

6 The following people were employed as research assistants: Moira Radloff; Leisha Eatts; Alicia Frinsina; Carrie Ugle; Kayleen Hayward; Jean Lewis; Lex Collard; Lyn Narkle; Moreen McGlade; Phyllis McGuire; Vi Chitty; Eddie Bennell; Cherry Hayward; Joanna Wright; Godfrey Colbung.
Genealogies

The genealogies were, for us, the most important material collected by the research assistants and also provided us with a sense of focus of the undertaking. Each genealogy had to be gone through meticulously, rough copies drawn up, inconsistencies detected and corrected. This frequently called for further information; muddles had to be sorted out, missing pieces had to be provided. We found that generation levels were frequently confused, and this was compounded by the use of common personal names within a family over several successive generations. We were particularly anxious to record anything that people could remember about ancestors who had lived during the nineteenth century, before memories faded.

The research assistants became deeply involved in constructing genealogies. Sometimes the smallest items of information were painstakingly gleaned from several people, who each knew a little but whose memories were vague. In piecing all this together surprising connections frequently emerged, such as being able to trace great-grandparents, or even grandparents where various members of a family in the past had been placed in institutions and family continuity lost.

We also searched for old photographs because of their value as a source of social documentation as well as being intrinsically interesting. The range and quality of photographs collected was tremendous. The oldest photographs were copied and returned to their owners, together with a new copy so that people could get some return for permitting us to use their possessions. At times, the only known photograph of a person was reproduced and preserved.

Displays

A number of people became involved in the SWAS project, because they had been contacted for information either directly by the research assistants or indirectly by others who had heard of the project. A public display of genealogies, photographs and documents was held at Mount Lawley College in August 1978, fourteen months after the project began to enable people to see what we were doing.

We were all acutely conscious that a degree of rivalry and friction exists between certain Aboriginal groups in the south west, and we feared that the genealogies might be a centre of controversy. Consequently it was decided to restrict the display of genealogical material to pre-1914. People could trace their own family ties back to that point, and then use the trees to go further. In point of fact some people born later than 1914 appeared on the trees and here we relied on the advice of our research assistants. Furthermore, visitors to the display often insisted on bringing their genealogies down to the present, and it is likely we were over-concerned on this issue. Documents were also displayed. These were from the Aborigines Department files 1897 to 1910, covering the period when the Aborigines Act of 1905 was introduced as State legislation. This was a particularly repressive piece of legislation which denied most fundamental rights to people classified as Aborigines in the wide terms of the Act. We also displayed photographs of people featured in genealogies and also of some of the documents. We were anxious to stress the positive contribution of Aborigines to the south west region and to counter negative images. For example, we took care to display evidence of Aborigines owning land.

We were worried about whether the display would be a success, fearing that only a handful of people would come to see it and that others might feel offended. Nothing like this had ever been attempted. In fact, we had underestimated the enthusiasm and interest of the public, especially Aborigines, and their fascination with genealogies and photographs. People came time and again, bringing different groups of relatives or friends with them. Fresh information and photographs were added, until the original genealogical charts looked like rough drafts. Many people
obtained tremendous pleasure from the photographs and for the first time saw pictures of relatives or people they had heard about but never met. The genealogies traced relationships back in time further than many people realised and new links between families were discovered. An estimated 1,500-2,000 people visited the display, the majority of whom were Aborigines.

In response to repeated Aboriginal requests the genealogies were redrawn and the entire display was taken to three regional centres in the south west: Albany, 410 kilometres from Perth, Narrogin, 280 kilometres north of Albany, and Bunbury (on the coast), 200 kilometres west of Narrogin. Again we acquired much new information as people added to the genealogies. A greater interest by the non-Aboriginal population of Albany may be accounted for in part, by the venue. The display was mounted in the modern Albany Art Gallery, adjoining the public library, whereas in Narrogin and Bunbury we were in old halls situated away from other sites of cultural activity and even passing traffic. About 1,000 people, the vast majority Aborigines, visited the country touring display.

The project began to unwind after the country tour. During 1979 a series of smaller displays of selected family trees and photographs were prepared for such occasions as 'Back to Tammin' week in the eastern wheatbelt, and for the Narrogin Show. A small, semi-permanent, display was mounted in Mount Lawley College, and we received other requests which we could not respond to because we lacked financial resources. We have been requested to hold displays at a number of venues throughout 1980 and will be able to meet some of these. A very exciting feature of the genealogies, and also a major problem, is that they have to be re-drawn as additional material is gathered. This presents a problem in terms of labour and finance, as does re-printing the photographs which invariably deteriorate while on show. The physical task of mounting display materials onto boards or stands is also a major undertaking.

What would we do differently?

With the benefit of hindsight we would devote a longer period to training Aboriginal research assistants, even if this meant extending their employment and engaging fewer people. The two days we did spend were hopelessly inadequate to equip anyone to go out into the field. We realised this at the time, and hoped that this would be compensated for by the support and supervision given while the task was being carried out.

A longer period of initial training, say four days, followed by a further short period of two days soon after starting to collect information, would be time well spent. The opportunity to meet as a group to talk over difficulties encountered in initial research would be invaluable. Information collecting is not everyone's forte and interviewers in approaching others for information first have to overcome their own inhibitions. Some of the research assistants felt that they were imposing themselves on the interviewees by asking them to give freely of their time and information. Just to be aware that others shared these feelings, and to learn how they handled this, would have bolstered people's self-confidence. To see how others were faring in recording information, would also help them to overcome their own hesitancy.

The limited contracts worked out at the individual's own pace, with progress payments, suited everyone except the College bureaucracy which attempted to 'regularise payments' and to introduce 'standard part-time contracts'. This eventually resulted in an uneasy compromise, with less flexibility on our part but greater 'regularity' of payments, and some financial hardship for research assistants whose money was delayed between 'standard pay days'.

We advertised the research assistant positions and displays in the local newspapers, through Aboriginal organisations, and by word of mouth. Our recruitments
eventually came from word of mouth contacts, and we could have saved money on newspaper advertising.

Every project has its own peculiar difficulties and problems. We were very fortunate in the choice of all those recruited to the project. We were also fortunate in the amount of overall freedom and flexibility we had in operating the project. This enabled us to respond to various needs as they arose. We had a place where visitors could be accommodated, cups of tea made, and interviews conducted if necessary. This was only possible because of the tolerance and understanding of those working in the Aboriginal Teacher Education Program who had to put up with streams of people, noise and other distractions on our behalf. Material resources were at our disposal such as stationery and clerical assistance. Other projects, with different regional variations and situational differences, would undoubtedly encounter other difficulties.

**What has emerged from the project?**

The SWAS project was a tremendously exciting and rewarding experience and continues to be so. The active involvement and support of Aborigines in Aboriginal research has been the most outstanding feature of the project. Their interest has not waned and since the displays many have visited us to go through the genealogies.

The SWAS project has also been the impetus for a number of other projects. Material on Nyungar, the language spoken by Aborigines in the south west aimed at the general and Aboriginal public has been prepared for publication. A range of material on traditional Aboriginal life in the area before European settlement in 1829 and an annotated bibliography have also been prepared, along with a publication based on the display which is to be published with the support of the Aboriginal Arts Board. Within Mount Lawley College south west Aboriginal material is now a feature of the courses offered, including a unit on the area in the Bachelor of Education.

Two volumes on Aborigines of the south west are being prepared as part of the Dictionary of Western Australians. This is an ambitious undertaking to compile a dictionary of all people in Western Australia from 1829 to 1914 as a contribution to the State's sesqui-centennial celebrations of 1979. Several volumes of this dictionary on various historical periods have already been published but virtually no Aboriginal material is included in them. The reason for this is that entries have been dependent on individuals submitting written family details by filling out special forms. The publicity has been oriented towards those with an interest in the colonial past and in establishing family links with early arrivals to the state from 1829 onwards. The idea of a special Aboriginal volume did occur to the organisers of the project, but the research necessary at the time seemed daunting.

The source material on the Aborigines of the early period of the state's history is documentary while for the latter periods it is mainly oral. As the two do not connect, except in rare instances, a separate volume on the 1829-1840 period is being undertaken. This volume poses a formidable task in the tracing of personalities and events where there are gross inconsistencies in spelling Aboriginal names often compounded by individuals having several names. Most of the available documentation reflects a lack of awareness of the significance of Aborigines in the events described. It also reflects very little clear understanding of Aboriginal culture or social organisation, and most of the entries involve males rather than females. Nevertheless, a fascinating picture of Aboriginal activity in the early days of Euro-

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7 Linguist W.H. Douglas has prepared this material.
8 Joint compilers are S.J. Hallam and myself.
Aboriginal settlement is being painstakingly constructed, particularly for the Perth-York-Pinjarra districts.

The second volume draws heavily on material contained in the genealogies, mostly collected by SWAS research assistants or during the displays. Here the main pitfalls are the vagaries of human memory, together with little available documentation and enormous difficulty in establishing any fit between written material, such as government files, and the genealogies.9

This dictionary project is most exciting. The Aboriginal volumes will place Aborigines alongside other groups in the recent history of the State, at least for the south west. Hopefully, it will contribute to a greater general interest in, and appreciation of, the Aboriginal population of the region. Similar volumes are planned for other areas of the state. The difficulties encountered for each historical period, as well as regional variations, will prove a fascinating challenge.

As the SWAS project developed we found ourselves moving towards the idea of an Aboriginal resource centre where the genealogical material and family history could be kept together with a whole range of specific and general information on the south west and other areas. The experience of the SWAS project is evidence enough that Aborigines are willing to participate in activities which they see as relevant to themselves. The continuing interest of non-Aboriginal organisations and groups indicates that they are also anxious to call upon resource material that they can relate to their own experience and knowledge. However, for the time being this cannot be achieved, mainly because of the cost involved.

It is hoped that the above account may be useful to others who may plan similar projects, and that they might benefit from our experience, and improve on our approach.10

Mount Lawley College of Advanced Education

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9 Joint compilers are Anna Haebich and myself.
10 We are aware of the work in this area carried out by Mollison and Everitt 1978.
ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIANS AND THE BICENTENNIAL HISTORY PROJECT

John Mulvaney

On 22 May 1980 a symposium was held at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies Biennial Meeting to discuss the Bicentennial History 1788-1988 project, in relation to its Aboriginal component. It was convened by Diane Barwick, Isabel McBryde and John Mulvaney. It was a positive meeting at which many ideas and suggestions were expressed.

Ken Colbung, Acting Chairman of the Institute, opened the meeting and gave the project his warm support. He was followed by Professor Ken Inglis, General Editor of the proposed volumes, who explained the scope of the project and the major role that Aboriginal history should have in it ('a social history about sorts of people who haven't had a go as yet'). He outlined the concept of 'slice history' whereby volumes will concentrate on particular years at fifty year intervals (1788, 1838, 1888, 1938, 1939-1988). It is expected that the 1988 Bicentenary will generate a great deal of narrative history so it is hoped the 'slice' approach will result in a challengingly different series.

Each volume is planned to be 150,000 words in length, with 100 illustrations. While the structure of volumes 1 and 5 is still undecided, the 'slice' approach for 1838, 1888 and 1938 is settled policy. Volumes need to be in editorial hands in 1984. In addition to this series other separate volumes are planned which will allow scope for Aboriginal themes, including some which may be excluded from the main series because of its format. These volumes include an historical atlas, a volume of statistical data and a single volume narrative survey of Australian history.

John Mulvaney presented some general thoughts about the series. He emphasised that the European history section in the 1788 volume, under Geoffrey Blainey's convenorship, could expect no more than about one fifth of that volume. He suggested that a 'slice' approach was a possibility with, say, one fifth of the volume devoted to Pleistocene (ice age) Australia, focused upon 17880 B.C. (but utilising Pleistocene data from any period and so avoiding the problem of change through time). One tenth of the space might be devoted to 1788 B.C. (post-glacial times), while the balance of the book would portray Aboriginal Australia in A.D. 1788.

In a stimulating session, Bill Rosser and Wayne Atkinson emphasised the tremendous potential for research into oral history, closely related to documentary evidence. Eve Fesl demonstrated the relevance of linguistic evidence for history and for tracing movements of people and reminded the audience of the need for further research into languages often described as 'lost'. There was value also in studying changes in the meaning of words through time.

Richard Wright, Carol Cooper, Athol Chase and Peter Lauer discussed the varieties of material evidence for Aboriginal history — including skin cloaks, photographs, museum artefacts, Aboriginal use of patent medicines, artists who adapted traditional art to new mediums, such as paper and other subjects.

The speakers and other participants raised many important issues, relating either to the philosophy and format guiding the volumes or to problems requiring greater research during the years to come. Some of these issues are listed below, although they are not set down in any order of importance or relevance.

**General Problems**

1. How best to integrate Aboriginal history in all volumes? Note that Aboriginal history is not simply contact history, featuring Europeans. Nor is it the
story only of those Aborigines who succeeded in adapting to European demands.

2. Should each volume contain relevant 'beyond-the-frontier' ethnographic reconstructions, or should much of this belong in the 'Australia in 1788' section, (e.g. should Victoria feature mainly in 1838; the Kimberleys in 1888, and if so, will this involve undue repetition)?

3. Is it valid to use late nineteenth century or twentieth century evidence in the 1788 section, or did changes distort the scene too much? If it is not so used, will the 1788 volume be forced to concentrate only on Aborigines of the Sydney region?

4. Should a volume have a few, several, or many authors?

5. Given the volume of maps on Australian history, which maps and how much detail should relate to Aborigines?

6. Obviously archaeological and ethnographic data are basic sources, but, to quote Athol Chase, we 'must avoid writing a history of objects and must relate it to people and events'.

7. Should different authors, starting from diverse theoretical standpoints, write on the same general problem?

Specific Problems

1. Major campaign on oral history.
2. Concentration on linguistics used historically.
3. Major research on tracing and evaluating visual sources such as paintings and photographs on a regional basis.
4. More research on 'transitional' society, especially for the evidence contained for contact influences in art and material culture.
5. Need to compile mini-biographies to illustrate the diversity of experience of the 'common' Aboriginal people.
6. Research into epidemics.
7. The spread and influence of 'biological' imports, such as domesticated plants and animals, weeds, diseases of flora and fauna.
8. Aboriginal architecture, transition of adjustment to a European built environment.
9. The role of pastoralism in the knowledge system of Aborigines.
10. Aboriginal oral history as a source for European history, especially trepang, sandalwood, pearling, buffalo shooting industries; also for Afghans and Chinese.
11. Aborigines and the two World Wars.
12. The Depression and Aboriginal society.
13. Aboriginal statements of their perception of what prehistory is about.
14. Detailed reconstruction or regional differences, particularly using ethnographic and ethnographic sources. Should cultural diversity be highlighted by a volume of plates?
15. The contrasting impact of Aboriginal technology (and fire) on the environment with that of the European; given environmental controls, the different ecological solutions.
16. Need to overcome the distortion in existing museum collections of artefacts — majority are weapons, very few deal with daily routine economic and social life.
17. Value of using artefacts in field situations as 'triggering objects' (Athol Chase's phrase) to assist recall by informants.

Advice

Your suggestions on any of the above issues, or on any other matters are invited. Send your letters to Diane Barwick, this journal's editor. It is proposed to hold a special meeting to draw up planning guidelines at the Brisbane ANZAAS Congress in May 1981. Further details on the project as a whole may be obtained from the Assistant General Editor, Dr S.G. Foster, Department of History, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University.

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
The purpose of J.J. Healy's *Literature and the Aborigine in Australia* is to describe and evaluate the attempts of our writers from the beginnings of settlement to 1975 to bring the Aboriginal within the bounds of their imagination so that he might become part of their consciously created world. The questions asked are: What image of the Aboriginal did successive writers have and how close was this image to reality? A third question which occurs to the reader's mind: what bearing did any of this have on lessening the distance between blacks and whites becomes explicit only occasionally. This last question is probably the most interesting to the general reader, but there are several reasons why the answer cannot be found here. In the first place, the definition of literature is too narrow. It covers only poets and fiction-writers and hardly mentions drama at all, and no works of non-fiction are examined. Secondly, the book deals with a country not renowned for its knowledge of or its interest in its own serious writers, so that it is unlikely that any of these would have had much influence outside small literary circles. For example, Furphy is discussed at some length, but Lawson is not mentioned. Yet Lawson was and probably still is known to hundreds, even thousands, who never heard of Furphy. Thirdly, there is no mention of 'popular' literature, such as women's magazines or *The Bulletin*. The last is a serious omission since Healy states in his Introduction, that when national self-consciousness 'was developed at the turn of the century the ground was prepared for a re-examination of the relationship of the new Australian community to the dispersed community of Aboriginal Australians'. Yet as late as 1949, *The Bulletin*, that trumpeter of national virtues, could use its customary abbreviation 'abo.' when describing the work of A.P. Elkin, in a paragraph the tone of which implies that it was nice for him to have such an interesting hobby. *The Bulletin*'s image of the Aboriginal would richly repay investigation.

However, no one man can do everything, and the value of Healy's book is that it raises so many questions. The fact that a task which should have been undertaken in this country long ago has been left to an English-born Canadian scholar is a comment in itself. Only three of Healy's references are to previous work in this field; two are unpublished theses by university students, both dealing only with fiction and one is an article by the novelist Randolph Stow. All of them were published as late as the 1960s.

Healy's approach to his task makes him able to suggest that there has been a kind of linear progress towards increasing clarity in the literary vision of the Aboriginal, the fullness of which is to be found in Herbert's *Poor Fellow My Country*; early writers, like the rest of their society, did not know enough to cope with the tasks of understanding. That excuse certainly will not wash today, and there is some doubt about how far back it should apply. According to W.E.H. Stanner, by the 1830s 'there was enough good information at hand to have made a difference if the compulsive structure of Australian interests had been open to it'. If the definition of literature is widened, Stanner's view is the more credible. It is doubtful whether later writers have grasped any more clearly the fundamental issues underlying the encounter between two opposite traditions than Alexander Harris in the 1820s and 1830s; or that they have been any more unselfconsciously delighted in their acceptance of tribal Aborigines as they were, than Jack McLaren (1926); or that they have written of Aboriginal problems more forcefully and beautifully than Paul Hasluck (1942), or Stanner (1968). If *Settlers and Convicts, My Crowded Solitude, Black Australians and After the Dreaming* are not works of art, there is something wrong with the definition of art.
Healy is on safer ground when he makes it clear, as his tale unfolds, that poets and fiction-writers as a group find it no easier to transcend the self than simpler souls; there is even perhaps a suggestion that their greater share of introspection and need of self-expression make it more difficult. Subconscious demands and desires condition what is perceived by even the most sensitive and imaginative of men. The clarity with which Healy himself observes this subjectivity wavers a good deal. He takes proper account of it in his careful and interesting analysis of the 19th century novelist Mrs Campbell Praed, noting the complicated responses to the Aborigines dictated by her contradictory childhood experiences of them, fused with the sexual fears which surfaced during her unhappy marriage and further confused by her vulnerability to the ignorance and prejudice around her. But he pays no attention to the part played in Katharine Prichard's writing by her equally difficult sexual history, by her confused ideas of sexual roles. He praises the short story 'The Cooboo' even more than most critics, but overlooks the strong element of projection in it, which makes one hesitate to accept it unreservedly as a faithful picture. He applies similar sweeping superlatives to Patrick White's portrait of the Aboriginal artist Alf Dubbo in *Riders in the Chariot*. White's generosity, he says, in choosing Dubbo as the vehicle of the difficulties of his own creative effort as an artist 'marks the highest point in the European consciousness of the Aborigine in Australian literature'. The conclusion seems to overlook the implications of the word 'generosity' and more importantly, the symbolic function played by Dubbo in White's Blakean psychological scheme. White is primarily interested in Dubbo because he is an artist, and Dubbo's blackness is necessary to his concept of the artist, not there for its own sake.

Healy's story begins with some fascinating thumb-nail sketches of random early encounters between Aborigines and white invaders, a straggling sailor from Cook's crew, escaped convicts who became 'white blackfellows', a policeman, an explorer and a squatter, from which he draws the conclusion that 'very little understanding of the Aborigine communicated itself to Europeans in the first half century of settlement'. Given the time at which settlement took place, the nature of the first settlers, the mixed and dubious motives for which the settlement was founded, the new attitudes to race beginning to percolate through the European consciousness from German philosophy, this was not surprising, though Healy does not take much account of such matters. Each of his chapters, nevertheless, contains valuable additions to the literary background, particularly that dealing with the attempts made in the 1870s and '80s by Rusden and George Gordon McCrae to use mythology as 'a point of entry into Aboriginal consciousness'. The Jindyworobaks of the 1940s were not the first in the field, though their contribution was more influential than Healy admits.

He devotes most of his attention to Xavier Herbert's work, and his careful analysis of *Capricornia* illuminates its structure even if he is reticent about its effects. He is certainly right to emphasise, in opposition to Vincent Buckley, that 'the impression of social injustice to the Aborigines has precedence over the cosmic injustice to all men', but we are left wondering whether he himself believes in a cosmic injustice. The idea would be perhaps as strange to Aborigines in their natural state as it appears to a Western logician or a Buddhist. The chief defect of this part of the book is the quite misleading summary of the Tuckiar case. That *Poor Fellow My Country* has 'brought the Aborigine into full focus' in white fiction is probably true; whether Herbert has achieved this feat without detriment to the novelist's art is a matter for debate of more significance than Herbert's admirers are prepared to admit. Healy's account of it is detailed and persuasive, but the sheer size of the novel and the ubiquity of the central character, a thin disguise for Herbert himself, infatuated with the sound of his own voice, make one hesitate. What are the hidden motives for such verbosity, even if the
author himself finally sees through it? There are all sorts of reasons for colonizing with words, as the Aborigines themselves have discovered. There are objections also to Herbert's handling of religious issues, which Healy fails to make clear; at times Herbert reminds one of a curious and intelligent child discovering exciting ideas for the first time.

The chapter on Western Australian novelists is full of interest, and so is the assessment of Brunton Stephens and Kendall, who, Healy says, institutionalized and consolidated the Aboriginal as a topic for satire. He also draws attention to Harpur's view of the European in Australia as part of a 'disturbed moral order', of which the killing of the Aborigine became the emblem, as with the Ancient Mariner and the albatross. It is a pity he did not mention Penton's *Landtakers* in this connection, a book which dramatises this same idea and opens up the vista of moral corruption which too often accompanied the squatters' search for new frontiers. Healy seems aware of the part played by some of these men in spreading racist ideas throughout the country, but does not really explore the theme.

The chapter on Furphy and Grant Watson is less successful. He does not take seriously enough Furphy's view of the part played by Aboriginal conservatism in contributing to the downfall of tribal life. This is odd in view of his quotation of D.H. Lawrence's remarks on the rigidity of tribal conventions, in the same chapter. The repressiveness of traditional Aboriginal society, especially for women, is too often explained away by those who are in no danger of having to suffer from it. Healy's whole discussion, during the section on Grant Watson, of the 'range of human choice' is superficial. He has not read enough of Grant Watson fully to understand him and he makes a number of factual mistakes about him, which there is not space to enumerate. The section on Judith Wright is inadequate and out-of-date; he does not mention later poems like *Two Dreamtimes*, addressed to the Aboriginal poet Kath Walker, which puts in poetic terms the point made long ago by Hasluck, when he traced the declining belief in principles of justice to the exigencies of the pastoral industry: in other words, the white man also lost his dreaming.

The most important omission, however, in the area Healy has defined for himself, is Alexander Harris, who, besides *Settlers and Convicts* (1847) a mixture of fact and fiction, wrote a novel which should have been of interest to Healy, *The Emigrant Family* (1849). Harris spent sixteen years in the colony working at various occupations on the land. His first book in particular contains the substance of most of the difficulties in black-white relations which have not been given a thorough hearing again until modern times. Harris had no colour prejudice at all. His definition of the word 'native' was simple: it meant anyone who was born in Australia. Black men and currency lads were Australians and all others were emigrants or new chums. His second book uses a Negro born in Australia as its central character, and one might argue that this man, Martin Beck, and his white fellow-Australian, Reuben Kable, represent the two potentialities of the emerging Australian character, the acquisitive versus the just soul, who loves his neighbour not more than, but as himself. Harris is absolutely fair to Beck, whose avarice he sees as having been fostered by his unfortunate childhood; he gives him his high moment of magnanimity, reserving his contempt for a white man with a similar warped character. His attitude to the Aborigines may appear to a superficial reader to have hardened between the two books, but it is explicable in terms of the viewpoint of the characters. In *Settlers and Convicts*, he addresses himself directly to black-white relationships and his approach is even-handed. His own feelings towards the blacks were full of friendliness and trust, and he reveals a considerable knowledge of their customs and capabilities. He was present in the colony during the Myall Creek murders and the subsequent executions, and was
dubious about the efforts to force British notions of law upon Aborigines all at once. The confusion, he feared, would lead to further violence from irresponsible whites. His argument here is closely reasoned and needs to be read in full, if it is not to be misinterpreted.

Behind his argument is the conviction that the main issue between the two races is the right to land, but he does not evade the ethical question which is too often ignored: whether a small people, simply by virtue of immemorial occupation, have a right to occupy land permanently, when it will support greater numbers who are in danger of starving if they do not emigrate. He freely admits the initial wrong: that the British are robbing the Aborigines of their land and that 'if we want a league of peace on equal terms, there is no road to it but we must give up our land and forsake their country', but he sees at the same time that 'it is rather the mode in which we seize and hold the soil that does the mischief than the act itself'. His suggestion for a way out of the intolerable dilemma was to identify the interests of the blacks with the small settlers, to encourage the amicable relations which establish themselves more easily with that class than with the squatters. The bitterness of the blacks, he argues, comes from the fact that they see the whites 'robbing out of mere wantonness, not from the pressure of necessity'.

They understand no theories about capital and labour, and pauperism and emigration; all they feel is they are wronged; all they see, the fact that it is done by those who are rich already, and do not want the soil for subsistence; not by the poor, who might be justified.

Harris was a firm Christian, but believed missionary efforts useless and absurd at that time. The subject arouses him to a pitch of eloquence when he imagines how an Aboriginal sees these efforts:

“You!” he says, “you, who tie one another up and flog one another within an inch of life, for one little hasty word; you, who begrudge one another enough to eat; you, who deprive me of my hunting-grounds, only to increase possessions for possessions’ sake; you, a people divided into two classes, the one hateful, the other contemptible, the tyrant and the slave; you, who keep and clothe and train men to slaughter as to a trade — you teach me to be better! Me, who walk the forest free, who appropriate no more than I need, who never fight but as a deeply injured man, who would not lay your bloody lash upon my dog, much less my brother, who in wrath remember mercy and give even the public culprit against whom I am to direct my spear at the command of the tribe, his shield to defend himself with — you convert me! Preposterous.”

Everything that Harris has to say on the subject bears out Stanner’s opinion over a hundred years later: ‘that the Aborigines have always been looking for a decent union of their lives with ours, but on terms that would let them preserve their own identity’. Since the referendum of 1967, this possibility has depended on a change of attitude in white Australians, for as Healy points out: ‘Laws that die in the books continue to live until they have died in the hearts of men’.

It is not possible to do justice to his book in a summary except to say that it is a valuable and stimulating introduction to the subject, intended primarily for a literary audience, though it will appeal to a general reader interested in Aboriginal affairs as well as literature. It is lively reading except for a few stylistic mannerisms and occasional precious allusions. Why call upon a German social philosopher to make a point which has been a commonplace in English literature since Wordsworth, for example? What makes one hesitate to accord the book a more definitive status is the absence of any firm theoretical foundation, and a tendency to use superlatives which cannot be substantiated. In his Conclusion, Healy notes the ‘deep pessimism about the foundations of Australian civilisation’ but does not analyse its causes, or confront the ethical dilemma posed by the existence of a
large continent inhabited by a few people — a dilemma still present with Australians today. Again, it would be true to say that ‘much of the energy of Australian literature in the twentieth century has been directed towards the recovery of the Aborigine by the Australian imagination’, but it is not true to say that the ‘dominant energies’ have been so directed. The twentieth century includes Richardson, Brennan, Boyd, FitzGerald, Hope, Slessor and many more, none of whom were interested in the question, in their writing, at any rate.

One can however heartily agree with Healy when he says that the next move in the attempt of literature ‘to grasp the phenomenon of man in his Aboriginal guise is likely to be made by the Aborigine himself’. One looks forward to Healy’s expanding his brief review of Aboriginal writers in English, and hopes he will be joined by Aboriginal literary critics who will look back at the picture he has made and paint their own version of it.

DOROTHY GREEN CANBERRA

Pp. xiii + 224. $58.60

A number of excellent works on individual Australian explorers have appeared over the last few years, but this book stands out from amongst them as being a uniquely handsome production: it deals with the work of the man who was appointed as ‘artist, naturalist and geologist’ to the Burke and Wills expedition.

Marjorie Tipping is the author of a thesis and also of several articles on Becker; she had become an authority on Becker even before the present major work and shows great knowledge and understanding of the artist’s life and times.

The present work consists of a number of distinct parts: it begins with a detailed biography of Becker, supported by archive investigations in both Germany and Australia. There follow excellent prints of all the drawings and water-colours that Ludwig Becker contributed during the course of the Victorian Exploring Expedition of 1860-61. Incredibly enough he created these fine works amid the hardships which resulted in his death on the 29th of April 1861 on the Bulloo. The book furthermore contains a map of all Becker’s overnight camps on the journey north, his letters and the scientific reports written during the expedition, and also a note on Hermann Beckler, the medical officer with the expedition who tended the dying Becker. Throughout the present work Becker appears as a scholarly and gentle man, enthusiastic about the beauty of the Australian outback.

There are no major criticisms at all that one could make of such an outstanding and sympathetically written work, but there are one or two minor points that call for comment. The translations from the German that are given in the text could be more literal: the moving tribute to Becker that is quoted (p.32) from the Australische Monatzeitung für die Colonieen und Deutschland (Feb. 1862) says that Becker has an honourable grave in the silence of the desert through ‘der Götter Wille’. This is rendered as ‘the will of God’, a translation which completely loses the romantic-archaising atmosphere of the little poem which speaks of ‘the will of the gods’.

By publishing the drawings and the accompanying comments of Becker, Marjorie Tipping has made a valuable contribution to Aboriginal Studies. Becker was in some ways ahead of his time: it is evident that he felt he was privileged to see the outback and the Aborigines. Marjorie Tipping conveys this very well except for the one unfortunate expression (p.34) where she refers to ‘the bewildered
primitives of the outback'. Becker's notes show more admiration for the Bagandji guide 'the brave and gallant Dick' than for anybody else on the expedition. Seeing that he had good contacts with the Aborigines, Becker obviously listened to Aboriginal speech more carefully than others of his time. Some of the words that appear in his notes, such as 'curali, white-winged chough' (p.102) and 'bounno, gecko' are good transcriptions of Bagandji words, as is proved by recordings of Bagandji made by the reviewer over 100 years later. The name of the vast Torrrowotto swamp was heard by Becker as Duroadoo (p.178), which is much closer to the traditional Maljangaba name Duru-gadu 'Snake's windbreak' than the standard rendering. But Becker's sensitive and beautiful drawings do even more justice to far western New South Wales and its original inhabitants than his rendering of names.

There are one or two technical linguistic matters that need amendment. The contention that W'anjiwalku and Maljangaba are the same language (p.124) is in contradiction with the evidence given by the late George Dutton (see J. Beckett 'George Dutton's Country' Aboriginal History vol.2, 1978, p.9) as its name even indicates: (balgu, walgu means 'speech' in Bagandji). Mootwingee, Becker's 'Mrtwanji' means not just 'green' (p.124); mutu means 'grass' and windji 'fresh'.

Both the author and the publishers are to be congratulated on this outstanding work.

LUISE HERCUS

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Pp. xv + 389. $25.00

An author, even a distinguished anthropologist, and man of affairs like Professor Stanner, who can publish 18 essays written over 35 years and can show in them consistency, the deepest perception, and the willingness to try to inspire an intelligent policy towards Aborigines and to spread an appreciation of their quality and thought life must have great confidence in what he has written to publish it now. Administrators of Aboriginal Affairs would repudiate or wish to forget many of the presumptions of their policy of 35, 25 and 15 years ago. Professor Stanner in 1979 would need, I think, to repudiate none of these essays, nor the thinking in them.

They are beautifully written, but they are not easy reading, for they demand concentrated thought to follow their deep insights.

In his essay 'Caliban Discovered' (1962) Professor Stanner looks at 'seven or eight fairly distinct views which can be labelled, with little more distortion than is inevitable in putting a tag on any dominant tendency. They were visions of Caliban, of The Noble Savage, of The Comic Savage, of The Orphan or Relict of Progress, of Primal or Protozoan Man, of The Last of His Tribe, of The Ward in Clancery, and of The Reluctant European. These phases of Australian misunderstanding of Aborigines have been the problem. What Professor Stanner is battling for in human understanding seems to be expressed in one of his passing sentences —

To understand Aboriginal culture, the customary way of life, is to see that it had its own civility and that, in particular matters, it was touched by genius. These facts are being recognised only now, after an intellectual psychological and moral struggle of the utmost difficulty.

Since 'now' in this passage was 1962, Professor Stanner cannot be accused of pessimism. The struggle is still on in 1979, and Professor Stanner is identified at
present with a battle to recognise the distinctive Aboriginal 'civility' by a treaty of
official Australia with a distinctive people — the Aborigines.

In his essay 'Religion, Totemism and Symbolism' Professor Stanner deals with
the once powerful idea that the Aborigine 'had no religion'. I cannot begin to
convey the thought of this beautifully expressed essay, but it does fully explain
two of his penetrating observations. The first 'There cannot have been many
primitive rites which so strongly suggested a conscious attempt by men to bind
themselves to the design in things they saw about them, and to the enduring plan
of life as they experienced it'. The second, that in Aboriginal thinking 'man's of
value in himself and for others, and there are spirits who care. That, by any text, is
a religious view of man'.

Professor Stanner is not a sentimentalist, for he notes that 'the worth of infants
and the very old was notoriously held of small account' by Aborigines: in desper­
ate circumstances both were left to die . . . Almost universally the valuation of
women was low in respect of their personal as distinct from their functional
worth'.

The essays range from scientific anthropology (rendered popularly intelligible
in beautiful prose) to the implications of the awards that gave Aborigines equal
pay before the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission hearing
in the Northern Territory in 1966. Curiously, although some thousands of Aborig­
ines were then employed, all the arguing about them was done by Europeans — the
representatives of the Commonwealth, the Cattle Producers' Council and the
Australian Workers' Union. It is symptomatic of Professor Stanner's practical
approach that he made the discussion of this case his Presidential Address to the
Canberra Sociological Society. And he foresaw the practical consequences of the
decision pretty well.

I profess no expertise, but having travelled 32,000 kilometres in Australia with
a Committee which heard evidence, through interpreters in some cases, from a
great many Aborigines, I can endorse a comment of Professor Stanner in his last
eSSay 'Aborigines in The Affluent Society' (1973). Writing of Aboriginal requests
he notes:

But widely the expressed wants are now more elaborate and far reaching.
They amount to a demand for the delivery to the grass roots of Aboriginal
Society of more of the valued goods and services by which we live, especially
perhaps the services: technical, educational, health, housing, communications,
commercial and even banking services . . . The idea of a single package deal for
the whole of Aboriginal Australia is an illusion.

One essay is on a straight Party political controversy. 'Land for Aborigines:
Mr Hunt's Criticisms Examined' (1973). It followed an announcement by the then
Prime Minister, Mr Whitlam, that Aborigines on Northern Territory reserves
would be given legal title to their traditional lands, that rights to timber and
minerals would go with the titles, and that ways would be found to give Aborig­
ines off the reserves effective association with the land. They now own land in the
Northern Territory about equal in area to Victoria.

This land question is a continuing controversy in Australia, notably in Western
Australia and Queensland, where the State Governments reject those concepts
stated by Mr Whitlam and adopted substantially by the present Commonwealth
Government. Professor Stanner pointed out in this essay that Mr Whitlam said
three things never before said by any Australian Prime Minister —

. that in settling and developing Australia we had in many places destroyed
Aboriginal society completely.
. now conscience, justice and humanity demand that we protect the rights of
those whose links with their traditional land were still unbroken.
. these rights will be granted by the Commonwealth.

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BOOK REVIEWS

These decisions cut at the nerve policy of centuries of Anglo-Australian history, from the enclosure movements of England, Scotland and Wales to Australian land settlement. This is simply that the powerful should take and keep the land. It was the policy of the dominant class at home in England — a fact often forgotten.

Professor Stanner's book is designed in all its component essays to help us understand Aborigines. It also helps us understand ourselves, for it is, in his words, 'an encounter of two peoples who in general have failed to comprehend the ethos and structure of each other's lives'.

KIM E. BEAZLEY

Pp. ix + 250. $6.95

and

Pp. x + 250. $18.50 h.b. $9.95 p.b.

Both these books are valuable contributions to the continuing argument about policy and administration affecting Aborigines. They also deserve serious attention because of the standing of their authors. C.D. Rowley was director of the Aboriginal research project of the Academy of Social Sciences and made the most comprehensive study yet undertaken in Australia of contact between whites and Aborigines. The highly practical intelligence of H.C. Coombs has been applied eminently for nearly forty years to several phases of policy formation and public administration in Australia and he played an influential part in shaping comment and policy on Aborigines during the nineteen-seventies.

Nevertheless, reading these volumes, one is reminded of the cynical remark that theological studies do not lead to fuller understanding of what God is but only add to one's knowledge of the arguments that men have used about God. In a similar sense these books are not Aboriginal studies but an account of arguments and controversies and different points of view among a white majority about what should happen or might happen to a coloured minority in Australia. The subtitle of Kulinma is Listening to Aboriginal Australians. That may be true for the author but the reader feels he is listening to Dr Coombs and learns more about the growth of his interest and ideas on this subject than about the mind of the Aborigines.

Both authors say with confidence what the views of the Aborigines are and perhaps, because of their close and assiduous attention to the subject, it is excusable that they should make some claim to know better than most of us what the Aborigines want. Below this is a basic thesis that the Aborigines should choose their own future and that their choice can be effective. Every now and again however a reader feels some doubts. One early cause of doubt arises when it seems that the Aborigines always seem to want what each of the authors thinks could be best for them to want. The account given of the thoughts and feelings of Aborigines usually reinforces the arguments of these two debaters. The reader begins to wonder whether they reached a conclusion by deduction from accumulated evidence of Aboriginal opinion or are reporting those expressions of opinion by Aborigines which accord with their own presentation of a case.
A more serious doubt persists when, after reading what this or that Aboriginal man told them, one reflects on the qualifications of any Aboriginal 'spokesmen' or witness to tell truly the mind of an inarticulate crowd. Mass observation is a tricky business even in a community of which the reporter is himself a member. In social history the 'voice of the people' often appears to have been the subsequent response by the crowd to the persuasions of a single reformer or even the outcome of a promoted campaign. Agitation — and the word is not used here in any condemnatory sense — is a stirring up of the many by the few and the few are not necessarily part of the many. Moreover organised movements for change or for assertion of sectional claims tend to produce their own functionaries. Even in the long-established field of trade unionism in Australia one sometimes has doubts whether the declaration of the militant president of a union always expresses exactly the wishes and views of the main body of workers. Similarly the movements in recent years for the advancement of Aborigines and the provision of special benefits for them have produced the Aboriginal functionary — a person who might be termed without offence a 'professional Aboriginal'. Some of those 'professionals' who are vocal today previously had little knowledge of and limited association with those whom they now call 'my people' and had voiced none of those views on land rights, sacred sites and other topics that they now assert with confidence.

These doubts about pronouncements, either by their own 'spokesmen' or by white debaters, on what the Aborigines themselves want are also conditioned by the diversity one finds in the group of people now identified as Aborigines. Thirty or forty years ago there was a tendency to differentiate between tribal Aborigines, partly de-tribalised Aborigines and those part-Aboriginal people who were living in various degrees of contiguity to and absorption into the general Australian community and to assume that what suited one group might not suit another. Nowadays the fully tribal desert nomad and the person with tertiary education and only one Aboriginal grandparent are both regarded as 'Aborigines' having a common voice and a common future. Policy for Aborigines nowadays covers a population that is large and diverse whereas it used to cover a smaller and more narrowly defined population that was nearly homogeneous.

Rowley, much more so than Coombs, is aware of the highly significant fact that historical change has taken place and is still taking place among all these people and that the tribal Aborigines in respect of whom policies were shaped forty years ago are in a vastly different situation and social and personal way of life today than they were then. In ten, twenty or thirty years even greater changes are likely to occur.

Many of these changes have taken place, not as a consequence of policy, but by reason of forces and influences which appear to be at work in all social situations. By and large, using broad and unscientific terms, the observable changes in the last thirty years have made the Aborigines more like Europeans than they used to be, in habit, outlook and method.

Leaving aside any question of whether this has come because they chose to change in this way or because they could not resist change, the central question is whether or not this gradual weakening of an old way of life and this move into a new way of life is at the heart of the problem of what is to become of the Aboriginal people in Australia. The Australian situation is not novel. Something similar has happened in many ages in many lands, where minority groups in a community have gradually changed their customs, lost their identity and either disappeared by merging with a majority or accommodated themselves to the larger community. In debating the future of the Aborigines we are not making plans for an unchanging situation or a stable community. Every decade the meaning of 'white' and 'coloured' in Australia is different, and the relationship is being affected by new influences.
In the light of history and current changes we may need to re-examine some of the assumptions which now underlie the policies which found favour in the nineteen-seventies, and especially the assumptions about separate development in a multi-cultural Australia. Can we accept separateness as one of the constants in the social situation both now and in the future?

The two authors appear to have fairly clear ideas about what should be done. Indeed, although 'paternal' is a word usually applied to the policies of half a century ago, the policies of today are much more definite on what should be done and what should not be done than they used to be and make less allowance for variation. This is in keeping with current ideas of social engineering in contrast to any idea of letting history happen — a purpose to control and even create the forces of change rather than to accommodate oneself to them in such a way as to minimise injury or injustice to anyone. The social engineers would not admit that the wisdom of political experience is to learn to roll with the punches. Social engineering itself is a concept which may need re-examination.

These general remarks on a changing situation need not detract from the merit of the two books under notice, even though the self-confidence of the authors may have provoked them. The merit of both books is a clear and reasoned exposition of white men's arguments about a major current controversy and some account of recent events in that controversy. Rowley is more comprehensive and more widely informed and has the authority of an acknowledged research worker in this field. Coombs yields much information about the development of his own interest and his own ideas on the subject, and indeed the fact that all except two of his chapters are a reprint of a succession of addresses or papers he prepared when officially concerned with Aboriginal affairs adds to the impression that this is primarily a record of his own growth. Both books make a valuable contribution to the discussion of recent events and to an understanding of arguments bearing on current controversies. They are frankly partisan but all the more readable and useful from that fact. They are not Aboriginal studies in the strict sense of that term, nor are they historical studies even though they yield some interesting material for further historical work.

Rowley recounts and discusses a number of situations relevant to his theme that the Australian institutions for law and order fail at present to ensure justice for Aborigines. He also relates his observations to wider experience in other parts of the world. He recounts those events which lead to his satisfying conclusion that 'at last Aboriginal man has begun to defend himself by acting like modern political man'. He adds that it is a challenge to the Aboriginal to surmount these hindrances and, 'for the benefit of the rest of us, as well as his own, retain those essential qualities which are Aboriginal'.

This reads rather like a theory that a group can enjoy the benefits and protection of a society without accepting full conformity to it. That is a proposition which also calls for re-examination. The phrase 'multi-cultural society' is being used rather loosely today both in this and other contexts. Does it mean little more than that Jews or Moslems can worship as they please and the Scots can wear kilts at Hallowe'en without ceasing to be responsible members of the Australian community; or does it mean that groups can live in one community while belonging to a separate social system, pressing separate claims to rights and observing separate laws? Or is it just a fashionable label about whose meaning many of those who use it are not clear?

PAUL HASLUCK

PERTH

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Pp.231. $9.95

This book is about the destruction of the tribes of the Sydney region. It is good to see an increasing number of publications which trace the darker side of Australia’s early history. By now many Australians know at least one version of the recent history of the Tasmanian Aborigines; and find it shameful. This book shows its readers that the same pattern of destruction and near extinction is not unique to Tasmania, but occurred throughout Australia. As in the Sydney area, whole tribes, different language groups, were exterminated. By its sheer weight of evidence, the book documents this process convincingly. It is a most useful source book, which provides much information about black-white relationships in early Sydney. Much of this information was previously unknown to, or not obtainable by, the general reader. A major virtue of the book is that it is available and readable.

However, partly because the book is aimed at the general reader, and will undoubtedly be used extensively by educators, it is important to draw attention to some of its factual and interpretive problems.

The book is poorly organised, repetitive and rambling, which makes it annoying to use. More importantly it is sometimes misleading. The first chapter is a very unsophisticated pastiche of the ethnographic and prehistoric sources, which includes out of date and dubious information, taken at face value. The author says, of the ancestors of the 1788 Sydney tribes — ‘as they spread through the southern continent, they absorbed or exterminated the original inhabitants until only pockets of the first Australians survived in Tasmania, and in the dense rain forests of North Queensland’ (p.14). It is a pity that this sort of prehistoric mythology is still being retailed, especially with assistance from the Aboriginal Arts Board.

It is also curious that the writer, apparently accepting as a fact this ‘invasion’ theory of the colonization of Australia by modern Aborigines, does not comment on it, or condemn it; since the rest of the book consists of a graphic account of the sins of a later set of invaders which wrought havoc on their predecessors in turn.

The book shows a less than adequate knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal culture. On one level, this produces puzzling statements such as ‘The Aborigines’ own dogs, like the dingo, did not bark’ (p.122). On another it leads to naive or misleading statements concerning Aboriginal behaviour. There is often little recognition that Aborigines are probably reacting in intelligent and calculated ways, in accordance with their own well established cultural patterns. A complex exchange, in which the Aborigines show the English how to locate water, is said to be due to their ‘innate good nature overcoming any consideration of their own best interests’ (p.67). This commentary hardly fits with another quoted description — that of the Aborigines taking by force a part of the fish caught in nets by the settlers (p.71). We learn also of an Aboriginal who had ‘come under a safe-conduct given by the tribes south of Broken Bay to see the wonders of the settlement and show his fighting skill’ (p.152). Apart from the fact that these tribal territories are elsewhere (p.208) described as ‘inviolable’ this statement paraphrases a contemporary European interpretation of Aboriginal behaviour, with no hint of the possibility of quite different Aboriginal motives for such a journey.

In short, the European colonists are quoted and paraphrased extensively, and this is not balanced by sufficient informed, intelligent comment on the situation as Aborigines might have seen it. In this regard the book can be compared unfavourably with W.E.H. Stanner’s article ‘The History of Indifference thus Begins’ in Aboriginal History, vol.1, no.1.

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This superficial understanding of Aboriginal culture, along with the sheer volume of quotation from 18th century European authors, gives an 18th century view of Aboriginal culture despite the author's undoubted sympathy for the Aborigines and their way of life. The book has a curiously old fashioned flavour; the author himself sometimes reads like an 18th century observer of quaint savages. He says of the colonists: 'A longer sojourn in the country usually brought a heightened appreciation of the black women's charms' (p.79), and of the Aborigines: 'Plenty of evidence emerged that Aborigines could learn a useful trade and the rudiments of reading and writing' (pp.211-12). Yet he himself quotes an example of an Aboriginal girl who won the first prize for scholarship in an open competition in the colony (p.19), an achievement rather more impressive than acquiring 'rudiments' of reading and writing.

The book, despite its great richness of source material, does not give us a clear picture of two distinct cultures, each of which lacks the facility to appreciate the other and each with its own imperatives. The Aborigines suffer, since they appear as stereotypes.

Despite this, the book has much to offer. For many it will be the first account of extermination of Aboriginal tribes on the mainland of Australia, and the first insight into the values and consequent actions of our ancestors which caused this tragedy. This is an important learning experience, and it is to be hoped that it will direct the presently prevalent but undirected guilt feelings of today's Australians into a less self-indulgent, more reasoned understanding of the processes of colonization in Australia, and their ongoing results.

SHARON SULLIVAN
NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE,
NEW SOUTH WALES

Pp. viii + 227. $15.00

This book is straightforward and orthodox. It begins with a survey of Aboriginal culture followed by an account of the arrival of Europeans and the impact they made upon Aborigines. The nature of Aboriginal resistance to the taking of their land, and the destruction of Aboriginal society is then examined. Next comes a discussion of the role of the 'enlightened colonists' — administrators, protectors, missionaries, churchmen. The book ends in the mid-1880s by which time Victoria's Aboriginal population had been reduced from about 11,000 to some 800, and these survivors came under the provisions of the 1886 Aborigines Protection Act.

The book is nicely produced and lucidly written yet there is so much déjà vu: the Aborigines living in harmony with nature in pre-European days; the racial superiority and brutality of the colonisers; the relative strength of Aboriginal resistance; the difficulties and weaknesses of the protectorates; the inherent contradictions in humanitarian policies which hastened rather than hindered the destruction of Aboriginal peoples and their culture; the reservation policies and the 1886 Act which was designed to protect Aborigines 'physically and morally' but which destroyed their 'rights and freedoms'. In every chapter there are loud echoes of Berndts or Blainey or Corris or Foxcroft or Hassel or Hasluck or . . . Reece, Reynolds, Rowley especially, and many more. The author's main problem, it seems, was deciding where to draw the line between generalizing about Aboriginal-European relations in Australian colonies as a whole, and examining Victoria
in particular. Change the names, dates and places and this study could just as easily be of New South Wales, or Western Australia, or South Australia, or all of them put together. It might be argued that this is the 'fault' of available material and that the author's conclusions must necessarily be the same as those of other writers. Yet perhaps it is because he asked the same questions and therefore got the same answers. Or was it that he gathered Victorian material to support (albeit unconsciously) current orthodoxies? Either way the chance to say something new, to examine, say, Rowley's (or others') overviews in detail at a regional level is lost. Indeed what is the justification for selecting Victoria in the first place? It had no particular European or Aboriginal cultural coherence, no specific geographical character, and even its own constitutional identity was non-existent until the 1850s when it ceased to be part of New South Wales. This is not to say that Christie should not have chosen to study this part of the continent, simply that he should justify doing so.

There are numerous topics the author might have examined in order to give a regional or local flavour to his work. He mentions, for example, that some Aborigines (before much European contact) wore clothes, built canoes, lived in villages, and had acres of trenching designed to help catch fish. Well, were not these the very signs of 'occupation' of the land and even nascent 'civilisation' that Europeans elsewhere in Australia said were absent and so justified their taking of 'waste land'? Did any Europeans in 'Victoria' make any distinction between such Aborigines and those in drier climes who conformed more readily to the stereotype nomad? And if so did any of them consider the legal and other implications? Were Aborigines always lumped together in the 'colonial mind', were local or district distinctions never made? Christie has not done so himself. He writes about the various types of colonists with their particular and often conflicting interests, but Aborigines are never so examined, they are always in the one category.

Another closely related topic that is worthy of much more detailed investigation is the Native Police Force. Christie makes no effort to explain Aboriginal troopers' effective brutality beyond mentioning that they were sent into enemy territory. He says that European officers deliberately exploited tribal enmities as a means of dividing and ruling Aboriginal groups. This suggests that at least some Europeans knew something about local Aboriginal 'politics' but Christie does not follow this up and so a whole dimension of the story is ignored. He examines the reasons why Europeans murdered Aborigines and vice-versa, but why should one group of Aborigines so ruthlessly destroy another? The activities of the Native Police Force suggest that frontier violence is inadequately explained simply in terms of racial/cultural differences. Here then was an excellent opportunity to investigate aspects of Aboriginal inter-relationships. Were any groups more keen to enlist than others, and why? Indigenous rivalries have long been seen as explanations why Pacific or African societies reacted as they did to European presence. While it would obviously be more difficult to do for Aborigines, the attempt should at least be made. After all, the book, according to its title, is supposed to be about Aborigines.

This study will be a useful introduction for those readers who know little or nothing about recent historiography of European-Aboriginal relations. Beyond that it is disappointing in its failure to examine a region in convincing enough detail to add to or subtract from what has been said many times before.

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MASSEY UNIVERSITY AND  
AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
BOOK REVIEWS


This book, the winner of the South Australian Biennial Literature Prize, is an account of the extended contact between European settlers and the Ngarrindjeri people of the Lower Murray Lakes area of South Australia. It includes a comprehensive study of the original culture of the Aboriginal people, their initial response to European encroachment, and their interaction with the new culture over a period of 140 years.

In some respects, the history of the Ngarrindjeri differs from that of other Aborigines. For one thing, they demonstrated a better-than-average ability to integrate with European culture, acquiring land, working as farm labourers, and winning important friendships among whites. For another, until the 1960s, they managed to retain a large part of their linguistic and cultural identity, in spite of close contact with a developed European community. This latter fact alone is sufficient to single them out as a worthwhile subject for study. In addition, especially valuable records exist of their relationship with the white community — records that include church and government documents, the minutes of the Aboriginals' Friends' Association of Adelaide, and the writings of the Reverend George Taplin, founder of the Ngarrindjeri Mission at Pt. McLeay. The detailed journals of Taplin (1859-1879) provide the historian with an approximation, at least, of the Aboriginal perspective on events; thus this study adds a valuable dimension and depth to our understanding of early contact relations.

The Conquest of the Ngarrindjeri succeeds in a number of respects: it is attractively written, carefully researched, and thoroughly documented. It is enlivened by a sensitive selection of detail and anecdote that reveals the character, courage, and ability of individual Aborigines. Much of the appeal of the book, in fact, derives from Mr Jenkin's personal commitment to the Ngarrindjeri people. Unfortunately, this commitment is also responsible for a number of shortcomings in the book as a piece of historical research. Mr Jenkin, like his predecessor, George Taplin, is at his best dealing with the flow of events and the details of personality. When he introduces comment and analysis his performance is uneven: objective, perceptive interpretation is interspersed with sweeping generalisations, inappropriate analogies and exaggeration. These deficiencies are not sufficient to destroy the book; they occur most frequently in the early chapters, and are offset by a great deal of admirable, carefully documented interpretation and comment. It is possible, perhaps, to make too much of the weaknesses, given the very great merit of the work as a whole. Nevertheless, deficiencies of this sort are important enough to require discussion at some length.

Some of the book's failings as history derive from its major source, the writings of Reverend George Taplin. For the last twenty years of his life, Taplin devoted himself to caring for, and writing about, the Ngarrindjeri people. Besides providing a daily account of the life of the settlement, he translated material for worship, and produced an anthropological and linguistic record in The Folklore, Manners, Customs and Language of the South Australian Aborigines (1879). Mr Jenkin assumes that Taplin's information is reliable, on the theory that he was present at the critical time and that he had 'no barrow to push'. But it is one thing to be free of anthropological and linguistic bias, and quite another to be a reliable source. Even though Mr Taplin must be credited with a large role in the preservation of Ngarrindjeri culture, he was a man of limited vision (a fact noted several times by Mr Jenkin). Where Taplin sticks to facts and events, there is no reason to doubt his accuracy, but where he attempts to investigate and interpret, there is every reason to suspect him. Even at the time, there was criticism of his anthropological work. Thus, a review in the Journal of the Anthropological Institute...
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(1881) commented, 'It is not for theories that this book will be valued and consulted'. In the *Revue d'Anthropologie* of the same year, a reviewer said of his anthropological questionnaire:

> Ce questionnaire est insuffisant et répond évidemment à un point de vue particulier, probablement celui du Dr Bleek et du Révérend Taplin. Il ne s'inspire pas des besoins en général de l'anthropologie et est personnel.

Equally, Taplin's linguistic work is amazingly lacking in insight and accurate observation, especially when compared with that of the Reverend Meyer (1843), who stayed only two years with the Ngarrindjeri. Most of the really useful linguistic material provided by Taplin was already recorded in Meyer's grammar and derived from it — Taplin's contribution was mainly in the area of vocabulary. The lesson to be learned from this, then, is that Taplin was a dedicated recorder of detail, but a faulty and unreliable source of comment. Yet Taplin's theories and interpretations appear to have had considerable influence on the judgments offered in this book.

Mr Jenkin is at pains to establish two main points: that Europeans were at best clumsy and indifferent, at worst callous and greedy, in their dealings with the Ngarrindjeri; and that the Ngarrindjeri were a unique, resourceful, and adaptable group of Aborigines. There is considerable truth in both these assertions, the first being the more regrettable in the light of the second. Both of these points could have been argued quite reasonably, from well-established evidence. Unfortunately, Mr Jenkin often overstates his case.

Aboriginal society, he says, differed from European society by having principles and practices 'consonant' with each other. The Ngarrindjeri were 'an example of refined egalitarian socialism', a people who 'showed the world that it was possible for socialism and the aristocratic life-style to be married harmoniously'. Such lofty analogies, drawn between Ngarrindjeri customs and institutions and those of advanced industrial societies, are both simplistic and misleading. They reflect an inexcusably Utopian view of primitive society, based on nothing more than extensive descriptions of a primitive economy. The natives' early kindness and lack of resistance to Europeans, presented as part of the 'noble savage' theme, might equally be attributed to antagonisms and divisions which appear to have existed between the tribes of Aborigines. There is ample evidence from the 1840s, for instance, of considerable conflict between the Milmenrura people and other 'Ngarrindjeri' groups. This conflict has considerable bearing on the behaviour of the natives after the incident of the brig 'Maria'. Mr Jenkin claims that the whites arbitrarily selected two native scapegoats and, in an act of outrageous inhumanity, hanged them for the massacre of the 'Maria' survivors. He does not account at all well for the equanimity with which the natives accepted this action. In another fairly full account of the incident, however, John Bull (1884) claims that the natives selected the victims, and that the hanging almost certainly prevented massive reprisals by the settlers. Other accounts of the time point to a considerable lack of concern amongst other Ngarrindjeri for the Milmenrura people who were involved. In short, the events were more complex, less black and white, than we are led to believe.

This practice of interpreting events and customs from a simplistic or pre-conceived viewpoint is carried to considerable lengths. Noting that the Aborigines prohibited certain foods to young men and boys, Mr Jenkin ascribes this to two possible motives: it either conserved certain species against over-exploitation or it preserved the more easily-caught species for disadvantaged members of society (or both). This interpretation implies that the Ngarrindjeri had very enlightened attitudes. But it is unlikely that the Ngarrindjeri would have seen the food taboos as conservationist, even if that was one of their effects. There is no evidence of conservationist mentality among the Ngarrindjeri, particularly after they acquired
guns in the 1840s. According to John Lewis (1922), the Coorong people he knew in his youth shot animals and birds indiscriminately, regardless of need. At the very least, Lewis’s observations suggest a lack of ‘consonance’ between native social principles and individual practice — a lack characteristic of most human societies, but not postulated for the Ngarrindjeri. Furthermore, it is likely that the Ngarrindjeri adhered to the usual Aboriginal food-sharing practices, which provided adequately for all disadvantaged people. There would simply be no need to retain certain easily-caught species for the infirm. Mr Jenkin’s interpretation, then, implies more than it should, and consequently contributes more than it should to the idea that the greedy, exploitive capitalism of the whites compared very unfavourably with the harmonious, egalitarian socialism of the natives.

Mr Jenkin notes a distinct European reluctance to grant power to Aboriginal leaders, in spite of their demonstrated ability. Yet he makes no mention of the divisions and jealousies within the Aboriginal community over those leaders. The community at Pt McLeay was heterogeneous, to say the least. It consisted of groups of Aborigines from all over the area, speakers of numerous dialects thrown together and cut off from their traditional sites and customs. The largest group appears to have been Yaraldi-speaking. A linguistic informant of the 1960s, a member of this group, commented on his resentment against ‘foreigners’ like James Ngunaiponi (one of the talented leaders), who came from another group and spoke a ‘strange’ tongue. It would be odd indeed if such a community could have achieved the harmony and unity of purpose they are credited with. The Aboriginal leaders’ failure to be more effective could derive from the antagonisms and divisions prevailing at Pt McLeay, as well as from the undoubted misjudgment of Europeans. For, despite the picture presented by Mr Jenkin, the Ngarrindjeri did not consider themselves one people; their adjustment to each other had to proceed alongside their adjustment to Europeans.

Mr Jenkin argues at length that the Ngarrindjeri were a unique people. It is not easy to determine his reasons: the record of events would have more to say to us if the Ngarrindjeri were not unique, but had much in common with other Aborigines. It is very likely that the influence of Rev. Taplin is decisive here. Taplin believed the Ngarrindjeri to be very different indeed — to be comprised of two mingled races, one of Polynesian origin. Without mention of that theory, Mr Jenkin adopts the ‘uniqueness’ theme, noting as evidence the robust Ngarrindjeri culture, their social cohesion, their linguistic distinctiveness, and their particular physical characteristics.

While it can certainly be argued that the Ngarrindjeri constituted a distinctive group in a number of respects, they were neither as different from their neighbours nor as exceptional as we are led to believe. The River Murray people were a husky, hirsute group, styled the ‘robust Murray people’ by early anthropologists. These characteristics, according to Mr Jenkin, differentiated the Ngarrindjeri from other Aborigines and were especially notable on a continent displaying great physical homogeneity. But it is not clear that the Australian Aborigine demonstrates remarkable physical homogeneity: Mr Jenkin’s anthropological sources could easily be challenged by others that note the physical diversity of the Aborigine and the existence of other enclaves of distinct physical types. Furthermore, the particular characteristics of the Ngarrindjeri were not confined to the one group, but extended up the Murray as well.

Linguistically, the Ngarrindjeri were certainly different from their neighbours to the west, as Mr Jenkin notes. But they were clearly related linguistically to their neighbours up the Murray River, which Mr Jenkin does not mention. In fact, their language, and undoubtedly their culture, have a great deal in common with other Murray River tribes, the ‘Meru’ group, the Ngintait, the Kureinyi, and the Yita Yita. With the closest people, the Ngayawung (Meru), the Ngarrindjeri...
shared only a small amount of vocabulary (about 20 per cent); but with the farthest tribe up the Murray, the Ngarrindjeri shared 61 per cent common vocabulary. On the linguistic evidence it may be postulated that the Ngarrindjeri originated up the Murray River, moving to their present location at the mouth at some later date. This theory is supported by the study of other linguistic affiliations up the Murray, and by Ngarrindjeri legends of emigration recorded in the 1960s. Thus there is evidence of linguistic distinctiveness in the immediate region, but not overall, and not of the order suggested by Mr Jenkin.

The case for advanced cultural development and social cohesion amongst the Ngarrindjeri, once again, undoubtedly has a basis in fact. The Ngarrindjeri lived in what anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown (1918) described as 'the most densely populated area on the Australian continent'. With an abundance of game, fish, fowl and vegetable food, this area was magnificently endowed for people living in the manner of the Aborigines. Thus it would not be surprising if the people were robust, their culture well developed, and their level of social cohesion above average. Their legendary history of battle and emigration might even argue for a higher degree of unity and social dynamism than the average. But there are no grounds for most of the extraordinary generalizations made by the author.

Perhaps the most important of these generalizations postulates a 'Confederacy' of the Ngarrindjeri. This term originated with Rev. Taplin, who neither defined his term, nor possessed the qualifications on which to make significant political judgments. Mr Jenkin adopts the term without defining it either, other than to describe the ways in which the Lower Murray tribes constituted a 'nation'. None of the ingredients of unity that he cites, however, include common political or social institutions, other than the 'Tendi'. In a rather dubious comparison, Mr Jenkin describes the Tendi as the 'High Court', the dispenser of the nation's justice. Since much of the dispensation of justice was done on a tribe and horde level (according to informants), we might well ask what kinds of judgment were made, how they were enforced, and where the laws originated. In place of this vital information, we are assured that, 'the Ngarrindjeri possessed a purely democratic form of government antedated the evolution of European democracy probably by thousands of years'. The only piece of evidence adduced for this latter statement is the fact that men were elected to the Tendi from the various tribes.

The anthropologist Tindale did not mention a Ngarrindjeri 'nation' at all in his study of Aboriginal tribes and territories in the 1930s. This is quite in keeping with the evidence, since no such nation is mentioned in any early writings other than Taplin's. The silence of Rev. Meyer on the subject of the 'nation' is particularly curious, given his many valuable comments on the culture of the Ramindjeri people. Furthermore, the word 'Ngarrindjeri', adopted by Taplin to refer to the assortment of people who congregated at Pt McLeay, did not originally apply to any particular group of Aborigines, but was used for any 'black-fellow' whatever, according to all early vocabularies. There was no term of the 'nation' as a whole; the groups and their various languages were distinguished by tribal names. For example, 'Yaraldi Kald' was the 'tongue' of the Yaraldi people. Although the different groups spoke dialects of the same language, intermarried, possessed similar cultures, the linguistic informants of the 1960s were inclined to emphasise their differences rather than their similarities.

Thus, although it is impossible, and undesirable, to dismiss the idea that the Ngarrindjeri possessed a noteworthy level of social cohesion, it is equally impossible to determine how significant it was, and certainly undesirable to use terms that presuppose a particular type of social and political organisation.

In attempting to redress the historical balance, then, Mr Jenkin sometimes loses sight of the most desirable methods of historical research. When he overlooks complexity and idealises the Ngarrindjeri, Mr Jenkin uses the same methods as early
apologists of white expansion and domination, with equally regrettable results. This is particularly unfortunate in this case, as all the points he makes have a basis in fact, and the study as a whole is an extremely valuable contribution to our knowledge of the impact of white policies and attitudes on Aboriginal people. It is a pity that high school and tertiary students, who have the most to gain from this very valuable book, are also those who should least be exposed to its shortcomings.

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Race relations in North Queensland. Edited by Henry Reynolds. History Department, James Cook University of North Queensland, Townsville, 1978. Pp. viii + 365. $4.00

This is a collection of sixteen essays by ten authors, all staff or students of the department publishing the book. Although some of the material has been published before, such as Henry Reynolds’ article on ‘The Other Side of the Frontier’, it is useful to have it readily available and put together with much new work. The essays range from general discussions of a theme with examples drawn from a wide area, such as Reynolds’ ‘Townspeople and Fringe-Dwellers’, which contains material from all over Queensland, to detailed local studies such as Noel Loos on Port Denison and Anne Allingham on the Burdekin Valley. About half the book is devoted to European-Aboriginal relations, followed by two pieces dealing with Melanesian labourers and their descendants, three essays on the Chinese in Cairns and on the Palmer River, a general summary of European attitudes to Aborigines and a particular study of European attitudes to Melanesian labour and, finally, a discussion of local attitudes to Italians between the two World Wars. The general themes coming out of the papers will not be new to anyone familiar with recent literature on the history of race relations in Australia, but these studies allow one to penetrate beneath generalizations spanning the generations and the continent. As pointed out in the Introduction, it was of interest for local students to see how ‘national issues had worked their way out locally’: for students elsewhere, it is enlightening to see the variety of local experience. Local history properly explored runs no danger of parochialism.

As in all collections, the standard of contributions varies, but what is most striking is the common methodology of the authors. All the papers are firmly based on detailed, primary research, chiefly in written records such as newspapers and government documents. Only Trish Mercer and Clive Moore in their chapter on ‘Australia’s Pacific Islanders, 1906-1977’ make substantial and successful use of original oral material, and that is very much in the context of a general essay rather than the comprehensive work on which both are currently engaged. Taken as a whole, the book represents a fairly conventional historical approach. I would not want to criticize it for this and, indeed, the work on the sources has been thorough and imaginative. However, the approach does have two apparent, though not inevitable, consequences. Firstly, it tends to impose structures which derive from white Australian experience. The clearest example is the separate treatment of European-Aboriginal relations and European-Chinese relations on the Palmer River Goldfield in two papers by Noreen Kirkman. More subtly, virtually all chapters accept descriptions of Aborigines, Chinese, Melanesians or Italians in terms of their relationship with a town or administrative area. Without underestimating the difficulties of sources and cross-cultural understanding, I believe that it is possible to give more attention to the non-white Australian side or sides of relations.

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Secondly, the approach leads to a concentration on the period from the middle of the nineteenth century to about 1920. The main exceptions to this are concerned with Melanesians and, of course, the Italians, but Janice Wegner's paper on the Aborigines of the Etheridge Shire from 1860 to 1940 is more typical. Less than a page is concerned with the last two decades of the date range. It is worth recalling that work on Papuan contacts down Cape York Peninsula or American servicemen, especially black servicemen, in the area during World War II could fall within the scope of the book's title, to say nothing of the recent history of Weipa or Palm Island. A notable absence is the lack of any paper concerned primarily with a mission.

These comments are no criticism of the valuable work reported on in these papers, but rather make the point that the training and approach of the researcher affect the shape and dimension of his or her conception of the past. It is instructive to compare this volume with Isabel McBryde's *Records of Times Past*, which represents the University of New England's attention to similar themes in local history. As the authors would probably be the first to recognize, these north Queensland essays by no means exhaust what is clearly an exceedingly rich field. Yet they mark a worthwhile stage towards a more comprehensive understanding.

In another sense too, the book represents only a stage towards what is possible. It is very modestly produced in a typed format — and is refreshingly modest in price! — but even in this form the material deserves rather more vigorous editing. There are some brief introductory comments by the editor, but the material itself appears to have been left in the form submitted. This leads to some repetition, such as the treatment of events at Battle Creek on pp.105-7 and pp.124-6, and Cathie May's two papers on the Chinese in the Cairns district could have been combined with advantage. The lack of an index is serious in a work of this kind. Some of the writing is still fairly raw (Is 'non-assimilatable' on p.327 really needed?) and there are more than a few typographical errors. At least these shortcomings serve to show students how much is involved in editing, and they do not seriously obscure the content of the book.

In the end, it is the content that matters, and what this book (and the other related work of the contributors which is helpfully listed) demonstrates very well is the deepening exploration of some new dimensions in Australian history. Not all Australians are white and British, not all have their past in temperate Australia and that past is not necessarily a comforting saga of progress. (The discomfort is not all past, for the invasion of Aboriginal Australia continues and 'pragmatic racism', to use Noel Loos' term for frontier attitudes has only changed its form in many boardrooms, government offices and country towns of 1980.) It is fitting that this part of our new understanding comes from Townsville. There are still some battles to come before Australians come to terms with their past, and their present, and this book is valuable ammunition. May there be much more of it from north Queensland.

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The words pioneer and frontier carry with them their own future sense. Frontiers become filled, pioneers are joined by settlers and become oldest residents. Yet
what word would we use for a pioneer who selected a frontier which never became popular; a person who did all the right things for a pioneer to do and yet never became revered because no one came to join him?

David Moore's book, *Islanders and Aborigines at Cape York*, is a pioneering publication. He has produced a work of creative imagination which straddles a frontier of historiography in Australia. Yet I am not hopeful that this book will be followed by others, that David Moore is at the head of a frontier of change.

Not long ago I informed one of our distinguished professors that I had been in Torres Strait with a view to studying its history. 'No', he said, 'That's not us. We are Australian history. That's more Pacific history.' Yet Moore is firmly within Australian Studies. His main characters are the Europeans who recorded Cape York events. He provides us with Oswald Brierly's written reactions to the adventure of meeting Barbara Thompson, a girl from Scotland, who was in 1849 ending some years unwitting residence up there, beyond the bounds of settlement. Later in the book he includes the 1860s descriptions by S.P.G. missionaries, Jagg and Kennett, to throw light upon the early years of European control at Somerset, that first outpost of the southern invaders.

These sources are regular ones, firmly in the tradition of Western historiography. Yet Moore's work differs in that he uses the European evidence in order to consider the mid-nineteenth-century manners and customs of the indigenous people dwelling about Cape York.

He does not labour the point that these tribes lived precisely on the most interesting ethnological meeting-place within Australia. The Aboriginal Gudang families shared life, usually amicably, with the Melanesian Kaurareg; the archetypical hunters related to people who represented the gardeners. In the loose thinking of ethnographic tradition the most primitive of mankind witnessed daily the example of men who had risen beyond mere hunting upon the first rungs of the ladder of human progress.

Moore reveals himself as having more complex interests and skills than most historians. He first visited Northern Australia as a prehistorian, carrying out field work at Cape York in 1971 and 1973. His bias is still towards the amassing of small detail which is the method of that discipline. He claims, in this book, to have left out all 'Passages having no relevance to the ethnography of the region ...'. Conversely he has also left out nothing which may be of the slightest detail. He has made use of his opportunity of getting Brierly's journals into print to include anything he has been able to find, in whatever other sources, about the way of life of these people. The book includes not only a glossary of the languages but also Moore's summary of the accumulation of our knowledge of their social organisation, economy, mythology and ceremony.

And the information presented to us in this manner is rich with potential. There is, for example, new insight upon race relations in the suggestion of the whole story awaiting a writer concerning what went on between Somerset magistrates, native policemen and the local tribes. Also a reader begins to form an idea of the rhythm of everyday life among the indigenous Australians. The mobility of people is much in evidence, their sense of place and ideas of far-away places and peoples comes across more richly than in any similar material I have seen. Alongside this one learns about trade relations across this sea and island world and, of course, about food, about choices of activity, gathering or gardening; about special treats and regular diets, and the good sense and practicability of the camping way of life becomes clear. Many researchers will be able to use the material presented in this work to form answers to their own, individual questions.

The Aborigines come through as estimable individuals revealed by name and seen, not merely through undiscriminating European eyes, but through vision informed of individual character and worth. Dowathoo, aged 23, is a model husband of 'Old Baki'. He is a pattern for husbands all over the world in the way he
will regularly carry the firewood, dig the yams and collect the mangrove shoots to please his wife. Meanwhile Baki herself gives hint of previous and unrecorded white contact, referring to herself as ‘Queen Woman Baki’ opening the page a little to the question of how much adjustment to accelerating change these Aborigines had already made.

The effect over-all is to substantially shift the viewing point from that of the nineteenth-century European peering dimly through his prejudices to that of a picture-gazer seeing Aborigines and islanders as well-rounded individuals operating within a social network of tribes across an extensive area of landscape. We see them at ease within their environment and sense the continuity and stability of the balance achieved which initiates in the reader the beginnings of the nostalgia represented in the artists impression of the front cover. It is Moore himself, in his editorial comments, who reminds us that the picture is a still from a cine. The very contacts which produced Brierly’s journals were among those which ended the sufficiency of local responses to natural challenge; the local inhabitants themselves being eager participants in the process of change and actively seeking relationships with the strangers.

Perhaps it was at this point that Moore stepped back from the bold step. Scarcely in this book are we given a historian’s summary interpretation, either of a departed community or of a series of events. Rather has Moore provided a smorgasbord from which any reader can construct his own repast. Maybe this is omission only in so far as it makes fallacy of the dust jacket statement that the volume contains an ethnographic reconstruction. Had reconstruction been attempted Moore would have closely approached the regular stance of historian, even though his interest is in a prehistoric people. In not making that commitment, to my mind the crucial one in the development of a tradition of Aboriginal History within Australia, he has chosen to remain on the edge; not historian but provider of documents, albeit fascinating ones, to the historian.

Probably the historian’s role was too daunting. For a history, properly-so-called, of Cape York Aborigines and islanders fits into no academic tradition within Australia. Despite what we like to think of as the general liberality of their private attitudes Australian historians are a conservative force within the nation. Their proper study is still the unfolding of the local variant of the English-speaking culture; minorities become of interest only as they are in process of being caught in the main stream, the main strength of Anglo-Saxondom with grudging admission of the Celts.

Yet this historians’ view of the Australian nation is wrong. Multicultural influences have now reached the stage of commonplace within the street-life of our communities. If it will take another decade for the same to be obvious in national circles of power, it appears it will take at least as long for the thinkers of Australia to grapple with the realities of their new community which is in the making.

By that time descendants of the Cape York Aborigines will be living and working in their thousands in our East Coast towns and cities. Thoroughly Australian by any test we can apply, some of them will be reading Australian History at school and college. We can guess already what the text books they read will suggest is ‘real history’ to these our Aborigines. By then I am afraid that David Moore’s Islanders and Aborigines at Cape York will still appear a pioneering work waiting vainly for the mainstream of historiography to catch up with it. I hope I am wrong.

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Black Reality describes the problems of Aboriginal housing policy, its failure and the factors which should be considered when developing housing policies for remote Australia. It is a study of a number of Aboriginal societies, which should not only be read for its own sake because it is well written, readable and thought provoking. Those who are associated with the development of housing policies for Aboriginal people in remote areas ought to have it to hand and take its lessons to heart.

The book consists of ten essays. The introduction and epilogue are by Dr Heppell, the editor, and eight others are essays by people who have made exhaustive studies of particular Australian Aboriginal communities and their housing problems; problems created by the policy makers, the administration and the builders, not by the Aboriginal people.

It is not the business of a review such as this to examine literary qualities, except to state that the book is well written and well produced. The plates and figures are very informative. The Index appears complete, but strangely does not include mentions of Ministers’ names, but does include others. Is there a political inhibition, which afflicts academia perhaps? The maps are helpful, although I think that for most readers the general map on page 4 could be more detailed. There is a substantial bibliography, listed as references with a number of the essays. I propose to consider the book’s contribution to the understanding of the Aboriginal situation and examine its judgment in areas in which I can claim to have some experience.

Every so often I make a firm decision not to read one more description of the Australian Aboriginal situation. It is too dispiriting. After all the effort, after all the studies, after all the speeches and, for the taxpayer, after all that money, we seem to have made so little progress. Progress is, of course, a matter of value judgment; but we seem to have gathered so little understanding, and the physical and psychological situation in which the Aborigines of Australia find themselves over most of this continent, remains unsatisfactory in the extreme. In fact, it is degrading, not only for the Aboriginal people, but for the society which allows it to persist.

But this book is not concerned with housing in Bourke, Redfern, Fitzroy, South Brisbane or South Perth; it is concerned with that large part of Australia that lies west of Bourke, east of Meekatharra and generally, but not exclusively, north of Capricorn.

Have you ever considered what administrative effort and visionary understanding is necessary to deliver a major design, construction and social product to approximately 200 widely scattered disparate communities, many of them beyond the limits of ordinary transport services?

The book does not aim to discuss this subject, but it is central to the whole question and should be the subject perhaps of another book.

In general, unless it is just my sensitivity, the book appears more critical or sceptical of Labor policy than it does of that of non-Labor governments. Two quotations from Dr Heppell’s introduction, pages 20 and 21, illustrate this point:

One cannot help noting the contradiction between the thread of the Labor argument and the notion of self-determination. It was assumed that all Aborigines would enter the mainstream of Australian life. The thrust of the policy was to provide education, teach domestic skills and encumber the ‘breadwinner’ with the European obligation to have to go out to work in order to retain his house. How ‘Aboriginality’ would be promoted under such a scheme is not at
all clear. For Labor the designation of Aboriginal poverty appeared to be based on conventional economic wisdom. It made no allowance for fundamentally different cultural and economic forms. It also suggests an inability on the part of the Labor government to come to grips with the extent of a problem which, by promising immediate housing to a number of remote Aboriginal groups, it had largely created for itself. This is not to say that the Liberal and Country Party governments emerge unscathed from the book.

Three of the essays are papers delivered to the ANZAAS Conference in 1975 and Labor policy was more topical at the time of their writing. The Labor Party became active in Aboriginal advancement in the fifties. Many members of the party and within the trade union movement joined advancement organisations. They joined members of all political parties, the churches and socially oriented organisations. A coalition of all shades of political opinion worked together to produce the overwhelming 'yes' vote for the Constitutional Referendum of 1967. Meetings in which prominent members of the Communist Party, the D.L.P., the Liberal Party, the Country Party and the Labor Party were involved were common. During the period 1963 or thereabouts to 1972, there was a gradual gathering of public concern and it made an impact upon the Government, which resulted in an increased effort in the area of housing. Compared to the needs of the time, it was still minimal, but it was apparent. However, as Dr Heppell points out, it was still European housing.

The book makes it clear that the Aboriginal people have a different view of what housing is from that of most other people in the world. There are very few people in the twentieth century who do not live in fixed abodes. There are lots of wanderers, caravanners, campers and people who live no-where, but the great proportion of the mass of society 'from Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strands' live in fixed housing.

The Aboriginal people of Australia have not done that in their 30,000 or 40,000 years of occupancy of this continent. I, for one, can't see the difficulty in meeting their needs. I agree with the points that are made, that there are no simple solutions, but there is no reason why there shouldn't be countless individual solutions. I write as one who spent a long period in the Australian Army, with one's home on one's back. We became trained, even highly trained, at being if not comfortable, at least covered or completely sheltered, no matter what the situation, with what one could carry. It is astonishing that Australia, where so many people take to the roads with caravans, campervans and tents, and do it comfortably in a nomadic way, has not been able to find an answer to the simple question: 'How do you supply the Aboriginal people with the means of adequate shelter in a country, in which their activities have become increasingly circumscribed?'

The needs are well expressed in Dr Heppell's introduction:

In summary, two important features of an Aboriginal camp are its openness and the internal mobility of elements within it (p.55).

J.P. Reser's essay, 'A Matter of Control':

A traditional Aboriginal moving into a European house might well be expected to experience an immediate and direct loss of control over his physical surroundings and circumstances. He has far less control over where he lives — he did not site the house himself and cannot move it. He has little control over who his neighbours are (p.67).

The contrast here between the traditional camp situation and the European planned Aboriginal community is quite marked — particularly in terms of scope for individual control of one's circumstances (p.69).
It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of a working fit between physical setting and behavioural norms (p.76).

So, firstly, the book is best described as setting out the ingredients of the cake, without giving the instructions for cooking. What can be done about the administrative impasse? Why is it that the good intentions of governments pronounced with fervour in Canberra end up being failures north of Capricorn? After some experience in government, I think I can give one reason. There is no continuity of political direction. In the last ten years there have been seven different Ministers and the result has been that no policy is pursued vigorously for enough time for errors to show up, changes to be made and for new directives to be given. The complexity of Australian administrative arrangements in an area which still has both a Commonwealth and State input just cannot be untangled without persistent and unrelenting pressure at the ministerial level.

The book would have been even more useful if it had a section devoted to the policy-making morass with which the Aboriginal people have to contend. A study of the administration of Aboriginal Affairs could be a companion volume and should give due weight to the political factor.

Dr Heppell sets out the problems created by such terms as ‘assimilation’ and ‘integration’ in developing policies, and the inability of the Government to recruit people sensitive enough and patient enough to be able to determine what the Aboriginal people really wish in any situation. No matter what the goodwill might be at the political end, the administrative apparatus has to satisfy the demands of the Auditor-General, the Treasurer, the Department of Construction, State Housing authorities and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and municipal authorities, but rarely, perhaps never, the Aboriginal people themselves. That is the overwhelming message of the book. The book is a very useful contribution to the understanding of the necessity to establish methods by which Aboriginal people should be able to decide their own environment and the fundamental difference between the way in which Australians of European origin and Australians of Aboriginal origin look at housing. Aboriginal people must not be circumscribed by walls.

The authors are rightly scathing in their criticism of what is termed ‘transition-al housing’. I recall my first visit to a Northern Territory settlement about twenty-two years ago. I saw these aberrations, line after line of them, and was told by the officials that it was a hopeless task. ‘You build these places for the Aboriginal people and they lock their dogs in them and sleep out under the trees’. I remember at the time, my remark: ‘That is pretty rough on the dogs’.

We have gone through cycle after cycle determining need, setting up a program and then building the same unsuitable accommodation. Little appreciation is shown by officials on the spot. The average Australian house is a complicated living machine — it is difficult enough for many urban Australians to manage it, and coming to terms with it is impossible for people whose whole philosophy is based on a different view of their environment.

Noel Wallace’s article, ‘Pitjantjatjara Witjja or White Man’s House’, points out (p.149) that the errors stem from the failure of the administration to understand the psycho-religious element and concentrates on the physical:

The plain facts are that, so long as the Aboriginal peoples’ philosophy is non-materialistic, no form of European-style house will be acceptable (p.151). I cannot understand, after all these years, why we have not been able to resolve the problem in the way the average Australian approaches a camping holiday for the family — a mobile, disposable home, adjusted to suit the whims of the climate, the changes in the weather and the requirements of the family as it also changes.
It is unfair, of course, to lay all the blame on officials on the spot. They have to take what they are given and make the best of it. Consider the Pintupi: In 1973, there were nearly a thousand Aboriginal people at Papunya, some 600 of the local residents, plus some 300 or thereabouts of the Pintupi, who had come in from the west and settled on the edge of the town or settlement. They were not welcome. In mid-1973, they became restless and packed up and went out to Yaaiyai, some 30 or 40 miles to the west. It was not long before their physical situation caused a public outcry. Despite departmental objections, tents from the Army were flown to Alice Springs and taken out to the Pintupi, who established a tented camp. The departmental objections were that they were a fire hazard — they would be careless of them. My own view was that the tents were expendable in the search for an answer. On the long road towards solving the problem by the Aboriginal people themselves, a tent here or there was of no great significance. This was not because I didn’t care about money, but I did know that Australian Housing Commissions spent somewhere between three and four years’ salary on the housing of any other Australian family. It made a useful contribution to the comfort and convenience of the Pintupi. It was piquant, even poignant, that a few weeks later, when I met some of the Pintupi people in Alice Springs, their leader said to me: ‘Minister, this new idea of tents is a great thing’. Why have we not used tents more effectively? I recall that at the time I discussed with the Commander of an infantry battalion the feasibility of his unit sending some people out into the desert, near Aboriginal settlements, to demonstrate the equipment that Australian soldiers use to make themselves comfortable and well fed in such situations. They would remain far enough away to be unobtrusive, but near enough for groups of Aboriginal people to visit and study the use of small portable cooking and camping equipment. Unfortunately, I was changed in my portfolio before there was time to try this experiment.

My own strongly held view was, and still is, that the Aboriginal people, given any reasonable opportunity to do so, would resolve the situation themselves, as long as they had sympathetic, patient people who could interpret their wishes and help bring them into administrative being. The one difference I have with Dr Heppell’s introductory essay is that he presumes that the word ‘housing’ in the Labor Party policy, and as I pronounced it myself as Minister, means the triple-fronted brick veneer of Australian suburbia. Housing to me was whatever a person meant it to be — ‘habitation’ is possibly a better term. It is the right housing when one calls it ‘home’ and feels at ease with it!

On the other hand, the book is a very valuable contribution to the understanding of the Aboriginal thought processes, and the difficulty we face in arriving at political decisions to understand and incorporate them in housing programs. The ‘problem’ can be simply stated: Deliver to each Aboriginal family the right to determine its own priorities and set its own specifications. The supply of materials necessary in a physical sense is complicated, but not difficult. The funds required are large, but not prohibitive in a $35,000 million budget. The political will exists, but has no imperative. It will act if the administrative processes are apparent. What prevents progress then?

My view is that it is the result of the tangle of administrative systems, with which we have suffocated this continent. A powerful business corporation can overcome this by circumventing it. A Commonwealth Government can call up powerful resources and overcome the administrative difficulties, given the will; but the climate of the new federalism will put the Aboriginal people’s needs in limbo forever as they encounter a labyrinth of administrative obscurantism.

There are a number of pre-requisites established by the authors, which must be adopted if we are to have effective implementation of Aboriginal Housing policies. Several are defined by implication — consistent political direction and clarification
of the administrative process are obvious needs. Dr Heppell defines others in his introduction. Housing policies must be Aboriginal-oriented, rather than administratively convenient, and an understanding of, and sympathy for, the communities' social structure is essential.

If I may make a political comment, in some areas the present Government has been long on expressions of aspiration and short on the application of funds. One of the greatest inhibitions against the development of effective Aboriginal policies has been the very strident campaign alleging extravagance and waste in Aboriginal affairs. This rose to a crescendo during 1974/75 and was aggravated by the Public Accounts Committee Enquiry, by press reports of the enquiry and by general allegations of waste. This has been a weapon, with which the Government has delayed Aboriginal advancement programs.

Further, the writers of the book appear to accept the financial clichés of the times, such as: 'In view of the shortage of funds and the economic crisis in the period 1973-79', as an excuse for government inaction. The Australian Gross Domestic Product grew from $40,000 million to $100,000 million in this period. We live in a community, in which very large sums of money can be allocated to every other form of human endeavour, as shown by $3 million weekly prizes in Melbourne Tatts Lotto. The attempt to catch up on 200 years of neglect should not be inhibited by financial policies tailored for affluent Australians. In Aboriginal affairs, financial stringency is no excuse.

The Editor expresses cynicism about government policies, particularly Labor Government policies. Policy was not just the prerogative of the Minister. The Party's Aboriginal Affairs Committee, a Caucus Committee with Senator Jim O'Keeffe as Chairman and Mr Manfred Cross, M.P. for Brisbane, as Secretary, was deeply involved in all major decisions. Aboriginal people and departmental officers were also involved. The National Aboriginal Consultative Committee was to be a vehicle by which the Aboriginal voice was heard in the Minister's office. It is gratifying that it is still in existence. It is mortifying that it has less status than it deserves.

An example of the need for Ministerial intervention is the history of the outstation movement as outlined, on page 171, in Dr Biernoff's paper on Eastern Arnhem Land. By late 1972 it had made little progress, but it gained impetus in 1973, when the Government directed the Department to encourage it. The natural administrative reaction was that if a group moves away from the established settlements they will be more difficult and expensive to service. Since the beginnings of settlement in Australia, small settler groups, no matter where they were on the continent, received as much benefit from government action as could be delivered to them. Schools, postal services and other amenities followed the movement of people, and it is not long since there were hundreds of schools in Australia with no more than ten or eleven pupils.

The book highlights the need for a detailed examination of the complicated process by which Australian Governments implement their policies in the States, and it is essential reading for all those involved in Aboriginal affairs. The work is about remote Australia, but the intensity of the problem is the same for almost all Aboriginal people. The detailed studies of the remote areas are a valuable addition to our knowledge and are written in language which makes sense to the lay reader.

Secondary schools requiring a reference book on family relationships and Aboriginal social organisations should add it to their shelves.

I consider A Black Reality: Aboriginal Camps and Housing to be the most informative and useful study of this subject inside one cover, and I congratulate

The cover note accompanying this book states 'This book provides a survey of studies so far made on various aspects of current Aboriginal economic life in different environments and raises questions of economic policy which follow from their results'. However, a precursor to that comment in the cover note also states that it is a synthesis of the available information on the economic status of Aborigines in Australia.

Whilst one cannot doubt the latter comment, as the authors take the reader through a bewildering patchwork of snippets of information which pass for Aboriginal statistics with a considerable degree of professionalism, the suggestion that 'questions of economic policy' are raised does not as adequately match the publicity announcement as it does the reference to the synthesis of available information.

In reading this book, one becomes impressed with the total inadequacy of the provision of statistical information on the social and economic condition of Australian Aborigines. This factor, alone, is the major reason why the book fails to provide the comprehensive outline of policy which one would expect from such a vainglorious preamble.

Be that as it may, I do not think that one should let the authors off lightly. This reviewer has frequently been critical of what he calls the descriptive school of economics. These people, in his mind, assault the reader with a plethora of information ranging over an almost incomprehensible range of subjects and, in the main, leave the reader to draw his own conclusion. In this way, economic analysis is supposed to be supplanted by the replication of figures. All that this technique does, in fact, is to blind one to real purpose for the figures being there in the first place.

Figures, in themselves, have little value except, perhaps, that comparative studies increase the pathos with which we can view suffering. However, what people want to know from economists is how do we get ourselves out of the mess. The reiteration of partly developed statistics (and I do not blame the authors for this) only tends to lead to greater despondency and an encouragement of the belief that the problem defies solution. This, in turn, tends to reinforce the ad hoc policies which have marked governmental approaches to Aboriginal affairs over the past century.

But is the condition of our knowledge of Aboriginal affairs such that it defies integrated analysis? I do not think so, although I have never had the courage to put forward any broad 'global' approaches. I believe, however, that they can be devised and have supported many of the policy suggestions of more knowledgable analysts than myself; notably, Dr Coombs and Professor Rowley.

My disappointment in this book, then, relates more to the failure of the authors to capitalize on the access to such a broad conspectus of information without honing it for the benefit of the reader to tell him where we should now go. Indeed, I might even say that there appears to have been a reluctance on the part of the authors to do this as they managed to review the economic status of Aborigines without discussing national economic policies/priorities and/or expenditures in any comprehensive way.
To make this comment is not to encourage short term sojourners into the field to come to rapid and quick conclusions about Aboriginal policy matters or, indeed, to suggest that national policies should be designed without the participation of Aborigines themselves.

My caution in this respect was enhanced by a rather cursory reading of what might be considered a somewhat competitive survey of the Aboriginal condition in the Northern Territory by Shann Turnbull entitled *The Economic Development of Aboriginal Communities in the Northern Territory*. In that study, Turnbull envisages the economic self-sufficiency of Aboriginal communities within the time span of some 20 years. This prediction is as optimistic, surely, as the pessimism of the present authors’ comment: ‘There are some links between the above explanations (their analysis) and the way in which even those developments which have failed to spark off processes of cumulative expansion (amongst Aboriginal communities)’ (p.187).

Good economic analysis needs to be a little more positive than that.

Where I believe the authors of *The Economic Status of Australian Aborigines* fail in their objective might be best illustrated by juxtaposing a warning contained in the early pages of their study that ‘the Aboriginal population will double by the year 2000’ (p.8) with the official commentary contained at the back of the publication that ‘massive Ministerial initiatives’ (p.190) have been undertaken to reverse the oppressed position of Aborigines in Australian society.

Nowhere in this study do we get the impression that far from being improved the Aboriginal condition, relative to that of other Australians, is actually deteriorating. This was spelt out by an official publication which was available to the authors but which put their case in more simple terms:

- Over half of the non-metropolitan Aborigines have no employment opportunities and are, in fact, out of work.
- Nine per cent have no electricity supply, 12 per cent have no sanitary services and 5 per cent have no running water supply.
- Twenty-eight per cent of all Aborigines live in improvised dwellings.

This is the simple challenge and is surely one easily overcome in a country as wealthy as ours is supposed to be and when the client community makes up less than 1 per cent of the national population.

If it is the product of ‘massive Ministerial initiatives’ it is time we were able to inform those responsible where they have gone wrong. These two prominent economists had the opportunity but failed to grasp it.

Maybe it is time for another national conference to review the priorities which have contributed to the current expenditure patterns and objectives of the ‘massive initiatives’. I am grateful to the authors for bringing this to my attention. They have done it with skill but not with what this writer believes is adequate purpose.

FRANK STEVENS

UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Pp. vi + 118. $2.50

Tatz’s book examines how contemporary political and legal policies affect Aborigines, particularly their effort to define and achieve their own aspirations.

The book begins on a pessimistic note when Tatz, using his previously published work, argues that race relations in Australia will inevitably get worse because whites are unable to deal directly with, or empathize with Aborigines, and because whites persist in blaming the Aboriginal victim, yet oppose ‘voluntary
'separatism' which he feels is a strategy Aborigines must use if they are to develop their own sense of identity. The crux of the identity question lies in the Aboriginal need to throw off white definitions of Aboriginality and develop their own definition of self. Self-definition, Tatz states, is the prerequisite for economic, political and legal power.

This leads to his main thesis, namely; that Aborigines have more hope for gaining power through the legal arena than through the political arena. He begins by examining the extent to which established political institutions (e.g., parliament, political parties, and the franchise) have served Aborigines, concluding that although Aboriginal participation has increased in these institutions, the institutions themselves have a limited role in the overall governing process. Secondly, he looks briefly at Aboriginal political structures (e.g., settlement and mission councils, the National Aboriginal Conference, and the councils likely to be empowered under the Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976), again concluding that these are generally ineffective instruments because they lack real authority and autonomy. Finally, he turns to the Commonwealth government's role in representing Aboriginal interests against those of the states, and after summarizing the Aurukun-Mornington Island affair in Queensland, he concludes that the federal government will readily sacrifice Aborigines for political expediency in its relations with the state governments. However, Tatz sees some hope for emerging Aboriginal leadership, exemplified by the chairman of the Northern Land Council, and he acknowledges some gains through pressure group activities, primarily those of FCAATSI, not those of government created groups like the National Aboriginal Conference.

The legal arena, where Tatz sees the greater power gain for Aborigines, is described in terms of 'positive' and 'negative' law, the latter meaning legislation which impedes Aboriginal aspirations because, among other things, it legitimizes prejudice (e.g., Queensland's Aborigines Act 1971) or because it is too vague and toothless to be meaningful (e.g., the Commonwealth's Racial Discrimination Act 1975). The answer lies in positive law which is specific about Aboriginal entitlements, is precise in formulation and is backed by powerful sanctions. An example is the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 which created the Land Councils and provided them with real authority and autonomy. These are seen as effective political instruments because they are embodied in law and cannot be readily disregarded by white interests. Tatz concludes his thesis by stressing that there is a small but 'convivial' body of law, both in Australia and internationally, which Aborigines should use and develop as a means of gaining power and protecting their interests.

In his final chapters Tatz states that like convivial law, Aborigines have not tended to use violence or to seek international support to further their interests although each can be a useful strategy.

This is a difficult work to review because, as Tatz acknowledges in his preface, it is 'an irregular undigested piece' designed to provoke debate and thought. The book's chapters are not separate articles standing on their own merit, nor are they explicitly linked by a flow of argument; the reader (and the reviewer) must piece the threads together for him/herself. Many of the issues Tatz raises — which are highly relevant to contemporary Aboriginal politics — are not clearly conceptualized or consistently developed. For example, after arguing that the regular political institutions are not productive avenues to power for Aborigines, he concludes that 'the bureaucracy' is the institution that counts, but he does not explain why this should be, or to what extent Aborigines have tried to use it or participate in it. Another illustration stems from the generality and the substantiation of his thesis that Aborigines can 'win more' from civil law procedures than from any political process. His thesis might well be questioned in the light of pressure group activities.
by the land rights movement and by the Aboriginal legal and medical services during the period he is describing (the late 1960s to the present). There is enough evidence to suggest that pressure group behaviour led to power in the political arena, and that this in turn resulted in significant laws for Aborigines (e.g., the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1976). Thus the relevant question seems to be not which arena (political or legal) is most productive, but what is the relationship between the two arenas, and how and when do Aborigines use them and to what effect. In short, I believe Tatz’s goal of showing how political and legal policies affect Aborigines has evaded him because he has over simplified the framework for his analysis.

Despite these shortcomings, the book has positive qualities. Its description of contemporary issues, particularly the Aboriginal franchise problems in the Kimberleys, Western Australia, and the Aurukun-Mornington Island affair in Queensland, makes the book a useful teaching resource. Its discussion of violence and international politics provides some comparative reference to indigenous minorities in other countries and underscores the magnitude of racism on an international scale. But the major contribution of the book will be the debate it fosters on whether indigenous ethnic minorities, like Aborigines, can establish their own definition of ‘Aboriginality’ in a way that compels the state to subscribe to it, or whether, as Robert Paine and others currently argue, ethnicity is largely a white ascribed definition, the result of the politics of culture. If the latter turns out to be the case in Australia, then the implications of this for Aboriginal political development are enormous for, among other things, it means that whites, who hold the defining power, can shift the definition of Aboriginality and continue to delegitimize emerging Aboriginal leadership.

SALLY WEAVER UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO


With the recent enhancement of the Northern Territory’s constitutional status and consequential political developments, there has been a marked rise in academic interest in the region by students of politics. The emergence of other issues of major political import — in particular, uranium mining and Aboriginal land rights — have also contributed significantly. The monograph under review is one of the products of that interest.

Initiated as the first project of the North Australian Research Unit of the Australian National University, the original intention was to analyse the inaugural election of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly in 1974. Subsequently, due to a number of delaying factors, the coverage was extended to include the 1977 election. The title, however, is somewhat misleading in that, although the two elections provide a central focus, the study is intended to be a record of political and constitutional development and an analysis of political behaviour in the 1970s.

One of the co-editors acknowledges that the book ‘is far from a definitive study of the politics of the Northern Territory’ and this reviewer finds it difficult to disagree with that assessment. Although the editors have made a respectable attempt at ordering and refining the material, at plugging gaps, and at extending the time-scale, their efforts were not entirely successful in overcoming basic problems with the original fieldwork. The major shortcoming is the obvious unfamiliarity of most of the contributors with Territory conditions, a feature which is
particularly evident in the opening chapters which purport to set the social and economic background and in those sections which deal with the 1974 election in the 'Top End'. The notable exception to this criticism is Dean Jaensch whose (non-editorial) contribution, happily, amounts to over half the text. Yet, even he, especially in his general summaries of the elections and in his comments on constitutional and electoral matters, seems at times quite remote from the reality of Territory politics.

Compounding the unevenness of the contributors' work is the lack of balance in the subject-matter. The 1977 election, on all counts more significant than its predecessor, is very superficially covered. Given the meagreness of detail and analysis on that election and the inadequate treatment of the inter-election period, one wonders if, except on the grounds of topicality, the decision to extend the project was warranted. The problem of balance is also noticeable in both the selection of regions and electorates for intensive survey and the level of analysis accorded to them. Moreover, although there is little overt bias, the A.L.P. receives a disproportionate share of attention; the other electoral contenders (the Country-Liberal Party, the minor parties, and independents) emerge largely as foils for the political activities of the A.L.P. A final general criticism is the large number of factual errors and ambiguities in the text. Thus, except for the technically competent statistical summaries, the quality of the book, at least to this reviewer, is disappointing.

Students of Aboriginal politics, however, will be better satisfied not because that dimension is free from the broad criticisms outlined above but because, for the first time, an assessment of Aboriginal participation in a Territory election (1974) has been undertaken in some depth. Although the conclusions on the level and nature of that participation may be depressing to those who search for evidence of an increase in general Aboriginal political consciousness and interest, the recent Territory electoral experience has emphasised the actuality and potentiality of Aboriginal influence.

In other geo-political divisions in Australia, few electorates can be affected by Aboriginal votes but, in the Territory, the size of the Aboriginal population and its concentration in non-urban areas make its influence far more widespread and crucial. Of the nineteen Assembly electorates, two are basically Aboriginal and six others contain large numbers of traditional Aborigines. That influence, of course, has been restricted by the voluntary enrolment provision and the low turnout of voters, some indication of which is given in the chapter by Hilary Rumley on Aboriginal participation in the 1974 election. It is a pity that a similar exercise was not attempted for 1977 thus making a direct comparison impossible. However, it is clear that, mainly through the efforts of the A.L.P. and Aboriginal pressure groups, total enrolment did increase significantly between 1974 and 1977. It has been estimated that, by 1977, valid Aboriginal votes had risen by over 40 per cent. With the change in legislation in 1979 to require compulsory enrolment, another sharp increase can be expected in the 1980 election even if turnout rates do not improve.

A marked change in party-support in the Aboriginal vote also occurred. In 1974, the C.L.P. received nearly 50 per cent and the A.L.P. about 40 per cent; in 1977, the comparative figures were 22 per cent and 70 per cent. As a result, three rural electorates were won by the A.L.P. Even in the more extensive treatment of the 1974 election, the analysis of Aboriginal voting behaviour is couched at a very general level with emphasis being given to the manipulative role of missionaries, pastoralists, political parties, and pressure groups. Although the conclusion that 'there (was not) any evidence that Aborigines were participants at any level beyond that of voting' probably is appropriate for both elections, its force
is weakened by the absence of any thorough examination of Aboriginal perceptions of issues, personalities and parties, or of the organization of their vote. Regardless of the reasons, however, the consequence of the shift in party-support by Aborigines by 1977 was certainly significant not only in the outcome of that election but also to party activities and attitudes in future elections.

It is easy to point to deficiencies in the treatment of the Aboriginal role in the elections but they are to be expected in an area so uncharted and inherently difficult to study. What has been done, particularly in respect of the 1974 election, on participation at the candidate and voter levels is instructive and will provide some sort of bench mark for later analyses of the electoral involvement of non-urban Aborigines. If for nothing else, the sections pertinent to these subjects make the book worth consulting.

ALISTAIR HEATLEY DARWIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE


_Somewhere Between Black and White_ is the third documentary novel in which the story of the pastoral strike in the north-west of Western Australia is central. Previous works (Aboriginal History Vol. 2, 1-2:1978, p.179) mention Clancy McKenna, a man of part-Aboriginal (Nyamil mother) and part-white (Irish father) descent. This book is not a history of the strike, however, it is more a biography of Clancy and, as the title implies, it focuses on the implication of being neither fully black or white in contemporary Australian society.

Kingsley Palmer wrote the story from taped material told to him by Clancy during the course of Palmer’s visits to the Pilbara, largely at the Aboriginal cattle station, Yandearra, and also during extended visits to Perth when Clancy had his sight restored by the removal of cataracts. He stayed at the Palmer home during most of the recuperative periods succeeding each operation, but he would periodically go off to a hostel (which he detested) because, he said, Kingsley and his missus would get sick of him if he was with them all the time. There was truth in that, of course, although it would have had more relevance to most other people, black or white, than Clancy. In brief, he was a charming, sensitive and intelligent man, a great _raconteur_ with a strong sense of humour. He was vastly more a friend than an object of research to Kingsley Palmer, and that is how Palmer has written about him. The reader can feel sympathy perhaps, anger certainly, for the sheer injustice of Clancy’s life, but never pity. The book succeeds in portraying a man who lived in full despite the constraints imposed by the wider society and who achieved a degree of contentment at times if, understandably, solace was ultimately too frequently found in a bottle.

In his introduction Palmer briefly recounts the social conditions giving rise to the numbers of people of mixed race living in the Pilbara area of Western Australia today and raises a number of issues that somewhere deserve detailed treatment, including the abject failure of successive government policies aimed at serving the interests of Aborigines but usually only serving vested white interests. Clancy had many reasons to be bitter about the way he was treated in life, a subject that he seems to have both comprehended and articulated more clearly in later years as he became increasingly aware of and reflective about the non-Aboriginal component of his parentage. Like his contemporaries he was raised as an Aboriginal, spoke and presumably thought in Nyamil and Nyangamada, depending on circumstances.
His learning to read, virtually a self-taught process, evidently had a big bearing on his attitudes of later years in which he sought to reconcile his position and try to understand the extent to which his mixed parentage had patterned his life. That he had a white father gave rise to vocal calls for equality, or at least a pro-rata degree of justice in his treatment by whites to the point of getting him into trouble at times. Clancy once met the Commissioner (Native Welfare):

"Well, what I want to know is this. How can I have the same rights as some of the others, living up at the One Mile. You see if I have a case of beer and the police come along, it won’t be any good, will it?"

"No," said the Commissioner, looking with interest at Clancy. "You’ve got to apply for your citizenship first."

"Well, you see, I thought I was born a citizen."

"And what makes you say that?"

"Well, white man first brought me into the country. I reckon I born with the full citizen."

The passage shows that although Palmer used tape-scripts as a basis for the book he has linked the material together in a literary style. That is at once open to criticism if considered from a strictly scientific standpoint. The writer could not be sure that on a certain day many years ago ‘it was hot in the sun and the wind blew from the east, hindering progress when the road turned towards the river’. Yet without that degree of literary license the book becomes unimaginable. It is essential in comprehending Clancy’s life to become aware of the environment in which he lived: the torrid heat, the dust and dryness, the sporadic violent rains and the interminable cycle of cattle station life, mustering, fencing and living in a proximity to the elements in a manner quite unknown to the majority of city-dwelling Australians. None of that could come alive in a prosaic rundown of average climatic factors.

Nevertheless the book is written with a substantial experience of the Pilbara on Palmer’s part in addition to the many and colourful descriptions provided by Clancy. To me, having also spent much time in the area and knowing Clancy McKenna personally, it has an authenticity that I believe does justice to the people and their land. In being eminently ‘readable’ it provides a fascinating and sympathetic insight for readers with no knowledge of the Pilbara or its people; at the same time it is useful reading for those who know something of, but wish to understand more of, the dilemma of being part-Aboriginal in Australia—although scholars may grumble at the lack of historical detail and absence of analysis.

W. DIX

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL STUDIES

The need for interpreting and translation services for Australian Aboriginals with special reference to the Northern Territory — a research report. Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Canberra, 1979.
Pp. vi + 57.

This excellent and thought-provoking report was commissioned by a Planning Group on Special Interpreter/Translator Needs, set up by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in early 1978, following a recommendation of an Inter-Departmental Working Party on Interpreters and Translators. Gloria Brennan, a member of the Research Section of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, is a native speaker of the Western Desert language and has a BA degree from the University of Western
BOOK REVIEWS

Australia with majors in anthropology and linguistics. The report shows her to be a sensitive and concerned person, but in addition a sensible and practical one, eminently suited to undertaking a study of this nature.

Ms Brennan has deep personal experience of the lack of communication between black and white in Australia; if she and her fellow-students spoke their own language when at school, they were ordered to 'stop speaking gibberish or you will be caned'. In compiling the present report Ms Brennan consulted with many Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory, with educational, judicial and other government bodies, and with linguists in the School of Australian Linguistics and in southern universities.

The difficulties of translation are illustrated by the Prime Minister's visit to Alice Springs in April 1978. Mr Don Ferguson, translator for Pitjantjatjara speakers, commented as follows:

'He said it was often necessary to give background to explain fully the meaning of one word or another. For example, a word such as "policy" would have to be explained culturally — through an example or two — before its semantic meaning could be explained. He had to go into some detail as to how the policy of the Prime Minister is implemented by his servants, which meant making the distinction between his personal staff (like secretaries, speech writers, etc.) and the Public Service (which required a further distinction to be made between the different departments involved, e.g. D.A.A., Prime Ministers and Cabinet). He had to explain that the Government had changed, that Gough Whitlam was no longer the "Boss man" and that this party was voted out, and that this lot were a "different mob". He then had to draw parallels to show that it was similar to the operations of an Aboriginal Council and to show its relationship with an administrative body such as The Central Australian Aboriginal Congress. He then had to (truthfully) tell the Pitjantjatjara that the Prime Minister's speech was "not clear for him to understand" because the English language was obscure. He also had to pause at intervals to get an indication from his audience whether or not there was any point in continuing to attempt to translate something which was so difficult (impossible?) to do in the time available.

'As is the custom, Don Ferguson also had to explain in narrative style how the Prime Minister travelled to their country . . .; whether he asked permission to go to other people's "ground" and whether he intended to come back again to visit them . . . He had to also explain the Prime Minister's style of delivery of his speech, that speaking by "throwing his voice" over everyone's head, without addressing anyone in particular is an acceptable speech style in white man's terms . . .'

Brennan emphasises that 'Aboriginal interpreters are not just people who know two languages. They should be seen as communicators, people who know two sets of culture and tradition, much of which is not just language, and who can effectively explain each to the other'. But a competence in two languages — and knowledge of two cultures — does not bring with it an automatic ability to translate between the two languages. Translating is a skill requiring definite training; a high priority must be attached to setting up appropriate training courses.

The need for more and better interpreting and translating services was emphasised by almost all the people involved in Aboriginal agencies to whom Brennan talked. 'There is a desperate need for both interpreting and translation services in the NT. Trained, highly qualified, specialised interpreters should be obligatorily attached to all hospitals, courts (magistrates and Supreme), Police Stations, Post Offices, Banks, Government Offices such as Social Security, Social Welfare, Employment . . .'. In addition, radio stations should employ people fluent in the local languages, and a proportion of broadcasting time should be given over to programs in Australian languages.
Brennan gives examples of white translators who just render those parts of a long speech by an Aboriginal which they (in terms of their white cultural values) consider to be important. An elder who spoke at length at a land rights meeting about his deep feeling for his homeland had his moving plea boiled down to: 'Harry X spoke about his desire to return to the land'.

When Brennan asked people how they went about finding an interpreter she was most often told 'one just asks around'. The competence of people put forward to interpret is seldom checked (Brennan could find only one instance of this happening). There is urgent need for — in each local centre — a register of competent interpreters, with their proficiency and reliability being verified, most especially by the Aborigines who may have to rely on them. When Brennan asked her own Ngaanyatara people who they would regard as being 'well qualified — fluent and trustworthy — to act as interpreters/ translators', she was given a list of nine people from a number of nearby communities; she was surprised at the omission of one person who she knew to be fluent in both English and the Western Desert language. The people said that he was a show-off, an unreliable person who would try to make himself the centre of attention in the court and attempt to impress the judge, rather than ensure that the defendant received a fair hearing. (And one can't help but speculate that someone of this type might be likely to impress white officials, and to be called on to interpret, if the decisions about who to use were made exclusively in that quarter.)

The report mentions a Certificate in Translation/Interpreting, which is proposed by the School of Australian Linguistics. It commends the work of the SAL (a part of the Darwin Community College) — which has the brief of providing training in all aspects of linguistics to native speakers of Australian languages, from all parts of the continent — and also of the Institute for Aboriginal Development. IAD has done a great deal of important work on the languages of the Alice Springs area, and is also developing courses in interpreting and translating. Brennan suggests, as a long-term goal, the setting up of a number of local 'Institutes of Aboriginal languages' — something like IAD — in areas in which Australian languages are still strongly spoken. These should be managed 'by and for Aborigines'; they should look after interpreting/ translating needs, and their staff should produce grammars, dictionaries, collections of traditional and contemporary literature, literacy materials, and so on, which would be printed and published by the local Institutes. This, the most important recommendation of the report, deserved to be considered very seriously by the government. As Brennan points out, there are thriving Institutes of this sort in comparable situations overseas.

As an important short-term aim she puts the proper remuneration of trained interpreters and translators. And it is suggested that local officers of DAA, and schoolteachers in predominantly Aboriginal areas, should be expected to learn something of at least one local language. There is a strong case for introducing incentive payments for such skills. Brennan draws analogies from New Zealand, a country that has set an example in this area which we should surely follow.

In his preface to the report the Director of the Research Section of DAA comments that 'as an official [Ms Brennan's] main concern is that policy may fail to reach its objectives as long as there are major communication difficulties between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals which could be alleviated/overcome by a greater use of interpreters and translators'. One can only hope that, as communication is improved, not only may Aborigines know better what policy is, but they may also come to have more of a hand in making it.

One of Brennan's most powerful paragraphs is: 'Few non-Aboriginals seem to question the quality of the channels used in consulting Aboriginals. Aboriginals are rarely asked whether they need an interpreter. It is generally assumed that the more powerful of the two parties will get his message across. The government's
policy of consultation requires that the message be transmitted and implemented; so far it lacks any requirement that the message is conveyed to recipients in a meaningful way.'

The most important point which comes across in this report is that 'Aboriginal' people throughout the Northern Territory express a strong determination to say something about their lives and their future. Community councils want to manage their own affairs by having a voice in any Government program whether it be the education of their children, or land, all of which they consider vital for their future. All discussions of interpreter/translator needs were preceded by comments on current Aboriginal affairs with complaints of "ill-informed programmes conceived and implemented by public servants down south". Aborigines maintained that very few government officials were able to find out how Aboriginals really thought, how they lived and what they wanted, much less heed what they said'. Interpreting/translating services do stand in urgent need of improvement, partly so that Aborigines may get fair treatment when they are tried according to an alien legal code, in European-style courts. But also so that Aborigines may hold a dialogue with the government and state the ways in which they wish to make their own decisions about their future. They are ready to talk. There is need of someone faithfully to interpret what they say. And someone to listen.

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On Social Justice Sunday late in 1978 I attended Mass in one of the more comfortable of Canberra's numerous comfortable suburbs. (Academics commonly reside in such localities). The parish priest announced that he had to bring the congregation's attention to a statement by the Catholic Bishops' Commission for Justice and Peace deplothing the sad plight of Aborigines, copies of which were available at the Church door. He then apologised that he had to make this announcement and said that he disagreed with the statement. Aborigines, he felt, had not been treated illegally and there was therefore, no reason why his superiors should get so concerned about them or why his congregation (themselves living on A.C.T. residential leases) should be made to feel guilty about the Aborigines' lack of land-rights or limited access to social services. The Church should stick to its spiritual ministry and not get involved in such mundane matters. No one voiced dissent, most seemed to agree.

This story indicates more than that Catholics are pretty indifferent to the misfortunes of the Aborigines. It shows that in that indifference, as in so many ways, Australian Catholics tend to share the views and values of most other Australians. Yet, as the bishop's statement shows such indifference is not absolute. Nor, as the special issue of the journal under review shows, has it ever been. There has long been a redemptive leaven of pastoral concern, at least among individuals within the Church. Still, it must be conceded — and lamented — that its influence was rarely strong enough to do the Aborigines much good. The few 'success stories' from Western Australia, that of the Benedictine abbey at New Norcia and of the Pallotine mission in the Kimberleys are well known. It is the virtue of this collection of articles to demonstrate that some consciences were at least stirred and some efforts were and are also being made elsewhere.

Sister Gregory Forster discusses Bishop Polding's efforts on behalf of the Aborigines. Since his main mission was to the scattered Irish settlers, and that was
work enough, it is commendable that he should have attempted also to embrace
the native settlers — whose way of life had already been destroyed in much of
New South Wales by 1820 when the Catholic Church was officially allowed to
function. It had suffered much more damage by 1835 when Polding reached
Sydney. While he was unable to repair the damage he at least made his views on
the moral responsibility of white Australians so clear that even in 1978 the
Catholic bishops considered them 'radical'. Dr Kevin Livingston puts Polding in
the broader context of 'voices in the wilderness', discussing his protestations at
the treatment of Aborigines in conjunction with those of William Ullathorne,
Columbus Fitzpatrick, J.H. Plunkett, Duncan McNab, Donald McKillop of the
Jesuit mission at the Daly River, Joe McGovern and John Healy. They are a noble
line of protesters, delivering their message from 1837 to 1948, but not finding a
large audience.

Coming to more recent times, words have been turned into actions. Fr Bernard
Flood describes the mission to the Aborigines begun in the Armidale diocese
under Bishop Doody in 1954. Dr Eugene Stockton surveys the efforts to assist
Aborigines within the Sydney Archdiocese between 1968 and 1978. And Fr Ted
Kennedy of the Redfern parish presents a sensitive and personal, yet humble, de­
scription of his ministry based on 'seven years' close association with aboriginal
people'.

This journal is far from providing a complete account of Catholic interest in
and dealings with Aborigines. Even so, it is a valuable contribution not only to
church history but to Aboriginal studies. More importantly, it is an encouraging
sign that one of the most influential institutions in Australian life is likely to take
an increasingly helpful interest in Aboriginal affairs.

HUGH LARACY

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Australian Aborigines, shadows in a landscape. Photography by Laurence Le Guay
Pp: 129. $15.95

Australian Aborigines, Shadows in a Landscape, purports to further our under­
standing and to offer a tribute to a 'gentle and joyous people' in a series of
impressions. Unfortunately, the visual images and text are neither well matched,
nor fitted to such an ambitious purpose. Journalist Suzanne Faulkinner has con­
tributed three biographical sketches of well known Aborigines, glimpses of life on
a cattle station and a settlement and several pages of potted history and pre­
history, while photographer Laurence Le Guay has contributed both colour and
black and white images of Aborigines, Australian flora and fauna, landscapes and
scenes of development in northern Australia.

One disappointing feature of this book is the poor integration of text and
image. Documentation of several of the photographs could have brought the
'shadows' to life. The Aboriginal women who are painting up, dancing and dis­
playing their painted bodies deserved to be named. Here we have Aboriginal
artists displaying their symbolic representations of the travels of the ancestral
heroes and re-enacting in ritual the dreamtime experience, but as it stands, the
reader knows nothing of this. Similarly, the text requires visual images to bring it
to life. Where are these great characters of the North? The images, written and
visual, are in different styles and rather than complementing each other, they are
often at cross-purposes.
I found many of the captions facile and offensive. While it may have been necessary to suppress the name of the cattle station 200 km north of Alice Springs (Anningie?), one wonders why the locations of several landscapes are omitted. Captions, such as 'emu' and 'kangaroo', add little to the photographs, while 'full blood male Aboriginal' is likely to offend many. Many of the photographs lack vitality, and I wonder why some were included. The mother and child on page 39 has real warmth and captures something of the joy of family life and personal bonds which are so central to Aboriginal people, but most of the studies in this book are static: they are of shadows, not of a living and proud people. I would query the propriety of including the photograph of a boy's initiation in a book designed for a wide mixed audience. Although there appears to be nothing sacred revealed in the photograph, it does portray a segment of ritual which is usually restricted to adult males. Certainly, it is in poor taste to have this photograph facing one of a Redfern Street (Sydney) scene. The comparison of the activities of youth may be drawn, but such a juxtaposition is more likely to damage the image of the 'gentle people' than to further understanding. The text is in the racy style of the journalist into a story. It is mostly anecdotal and is as likely to confirm racial prejudice as to dispel it. Had the final chapter, which contains useful information on the dispossession of Aboriginal lands and the colonization of Australia, come at the beginning of the book, the tales of abuse of Aborigines, of violence, prostitution and alcoholism would have been set in an historical context. As it is, the explanation comes too late; the reader is already wondering whether Aborigines are really human. There are errors, poor quality reporting, some interesting information and several nice pictures, but overall the book lacks style and I wonder for whom it is intended. Faulkner and Le Guay state it is not for the specialist, but even the layman deserves to know what he is looking at.

DIANE BELL

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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).